

**Indigenous Trading Women of the Borderland Great Lakes, 1740 to 1845**

by

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to Allison. During this process, she always let me know that no matter how hard it got, there was always a super hero nearby if needed.

## Acknowledgements

This project began during my time as Masters student in the Department of Gender Studies at Queen's University. Frustrated with my own public education on Canada's history of colonialism and slavery, I was researching how Ontario high school textbooks mobilized indigeneity and blackness at strategic moments to support Canadian national narratives. Joseph Brant and his sister Molly Brant appeared in textbooks and as Loyalist founding figures. I was vaguely familiar with Joseph and Molly from my own high school years, but I was curious to find out more about their lives. I began to see what else had been published about them. During this process, I came across information that was new to me. Joseph and Molly both owned slaves of African descent.

Surprised by this fact, I was eager to learn more. However, it wasn't easy. Other than a few minimal facts, there was little information about their role as slave owners. Struggling to find information on the history of Native and black relations in Canada, I broadened my search. Through my university's library catalog, I found one book listed on the topic: *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*, a collection of essays edited by Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland. I dove into the collection and was amazed and impressed by what I read. This book was a big part of why I applied to Michigan. I had never taken a course through a History department during university. But I knew that if I was going to pursue a PhD, it would be a historical project.

Without the support of amazing advisors during my time at Queen's, I never would have pursued a PhD or started this project. Scott Morgensen and Katherine McKittrick were particularly instrumental in my decision to apply for PhD programs and to decide to come to University of Michigan. Kathy Baer, Terrie Easter Sheen, and Autumn Rymal provided administrative support. Thanks also to my cohort at Queen's—Katherine Mazurok, Dana Wesley, Ayca Tomac, Leora Jackson, Jillian Burford Grinnell, and Shannon Coyle—you all showed me that despite its issues, academia can also be a supportive, positive space.

Since I arrived at University of Michigan, I could not have asked for a better mentor than Tiya Miles. From my first year, she has supported me every step of the way. She has challenged me intellectually, patiently introduced me to her archival research methods, and has always taken me seriously when I've been anxious about doing justice to the lives of the women in this project. Her class that I took in my second year was particularly instrumental to the development of this project during its early stages. She has answered endless questions, not only about my dissertation, but about professionalization in general. She has helped me network, and through the people she's introduced me to, I've had my first opportunities to publish. She patiently coached me through the process of applying for fellowships and jobs. Tiya has modelled not only how to be a scholar, but how to be a mentor.

I have been lucky to have had two wonderful and generous advisors at University of Michigan. Michael Witgen has patiently introduced me to the field of Native American History, and in particular, educated me about the Great Lakes. His recommendations and advice have been integral to my transition to becoming a historian and to the growth of this project. Without his suggestions, this project would have a much narrower conceptual and geographic focus. His

advice to include Ozhaguscodaywayquay not only changed the shape of this project, but has affected the projects I plan to pursue in the future.

I am fortunate to have had the support of numerous American Culture and Native American Studies faculty members during my time at Michigan, including Paul Anderson, Sandra Gunning, Kristin Hass, Nadine Naber, and Dan Ramirez. Mary Kelley and Amy Sara Carroll were particularly instrumental in making me feel welcome during my first year. Since I first received my acceptance to Michigan, Maria Cotera has enthusiastically welcomed me, and generously shared her time and sharp insights on the relationship between gender, sexuality, and settler colonialism. Likewise, Greg Dowd has been helpful since my first visit to campus. Along with Michael, Greg has good-naturedly helped me navigate the field of Native American History and historical methodologies more broadly. Furthermore, his eye for detail has improved my scholarship and my writing. Scott Lyons' Native American Literatures class was integral to my development as a scholar. Scott has pushed and challenged me intellectually in the very best ways, and he has always been enthusiastic and supportive of my work. Also, I also could not have asked for a better Director of Graduate Studies during my final years than Stephen Berrey. He has generously made himself available for feedback on fellowship applications, applying for postdocs and jobs, and negotiating offers. I also want to thank numerous staff members who have helped me along the way, including Doretha Coval, Mary Freiman, Judith Gray, Wayne High, Faye Portis, and Tabitha Rohn. Marlene Moore is always generous with her time and has been extremely helpful from beginning to end. I am thankful to her for being available to help navigate the administrative end of the process. A very special thanks to Tammy Zill whose enthusiasm, energy, and sense of style always brought a smile to my day. I feel grateful to have

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At University of Michigan I have found numerous supportive communities. I want to thank all my colleagues and peers who have offered helpful feedback, influenced my work, challenged me to think in new directions, and provided support and commiseration during difficult academic and political times. Throughout the years, I've received advice and help from several advanced graduate students, including Katie Lennard, Elspeth Martini, and Marie Stango. I am grateful to the support of my cohort, particularly during our time taking classes and teaching. Many thanks to Bonnie Cameron, Joo Young Lee, and Kyera Singleton for their friendship. A special thanks to Orquidea Morales for helping me celebrate good news with a delicious brunch and for generously providing feedback on my introduction.

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During this project I have been welcomed by staff at numerous libraries and archives, both near and far. I also benefited from month-long residences at the American Philosophical Society and the Newberry Library. Funding from the APS provided access to their rich collections on Pennsylvania history and gave me an opportunity to become acquainted with the social, cultural, and political worlds that Sally Ainese navigated during her marriage to Andrew Montour. Their rich ethnographic collections also provided helpful background on Sally Ainese's ancestry. The Newberry's extensive collections on American Indians were integral to the development of this project, particularly my research on Ozhaguscodaywayquay. I would like to thank the staff at both libraries, especially Earle Spamer, Patrick Spero, Jessica Weller, Kristin Emery, and Seonaid Valiant. A special thanks to Brad Hunt for fostering a supportive environment among fellows and for arranging a tour of the stacks. Thanks to Jim Green for helping me to arrange reasonable and convenient housing during my stay in Philadelphia. Dee Andrews was not only a wonderful housemate at the Library Company, but also supportive and empathetic as I dealt with a difficult personal situation. I would also like to thank Robert Dale Parker, whose generosity with his extensive knowledge of the Johnston family was integral to

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And last but not least, I would like to thank Eugene Campbell, my partner and best friend. He kept me company at conferences and on research trips. He let me add detours to our vacations so we could visit historic sites, as demonstrated by the pictures and anecdotes in the conclusion. He made runs for food and coffee to help get me through different stages of this process. He prepared delicious margaritas after hard days. He designed a wonderful office and patio, so I had two lovely writing spaces at home regardless of the weather. He has seen me and helped me when I'm at my worst. He pushes me to get outside my comfort zone, and if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have spent nearly as much time outside, exploring or camping in the areas where the women in my project lived. The geographic descriptions in this project are much richer due to my experiences exploring with Eugene. And most of all, he has supported me from day one. He has had faith in me throughout this whole process, even when I didn't have faith in myself.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation illustrates the role of indigenous trading women in significant events that shaped the borderlands Great Lakes region, including the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War, the Northwest Indian War, and treaty negotiations. Understanding the role of Native women traders is necessary to understanding both how these events unfolded and how they were affected by gendered indigenous practices, including kinship and hospitality. These women influenced the flow of commerce by producing and distributing valuable trade goods and contributed to the mapping and enforcement of political borders through their participation in legal conflicts and treaty negotiations. Recognizing the lives of Great Lakes trading women is essential to understanding the intertwined development of economics and politics in the region. Furthermore, ignoring the contributions of indigenous trading women enforces male-centered, settler colonial narratives of the region that demotes the women to the accessories of their EuroAmerican partners.

While previous scholarship on gender and the Great Lakes has focused on indigenous women's role in fur trade marriages, this project examines indigenous women in the Great Lakes borderlands as independent economic and political agents and illustrates how settler colonialism operated as a gendered process. As EuroAmerican settlement increased, customs like coverture were enforced and Native kinship networks and forms of inheritance were eroded, creating fewer opportunities for indigenous women to acquire property. However, elite Native women drew on multiple subversive and gendered forms of resistance, including kinship networks, language

skills, and knowledge of trade networks, to attempt to navigate a settler colonial system designed to deny indigenous land claims.

This project covers the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century and is grounded in the lives of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women who operated as adroit transnational actors in the borderlands Great Lakes, including Sally Aitse (Oneida), Molly Brant (Mohawk), Ozhaguscodaywayquay (Ojibwe), and Magdalene Laframboise (Odawa). While Haudenosaunee women traders in the lower Great Lakes struggled to retain their political influence and control of property amidst intensifying settler colonialism after the turn of the nineteenth century, Anishinaabe women traders maintained their political and economic influence in the upper Great Lakes into the mid-nineteenth century. Indigenous women traders throughout the region were transitional figures of Native survivance who worked to preserve themselves and their families among intensifying settler colonial development in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. Tracking the lives of indigenous trading women in the Great Lakes borderlands requires a broad territorial focus, including the Susquehanna and Mohawk River Valleys to the south shore of Lake Superior. By demonstrating how Ohio Valley, western Pennsylvania and New York, and the Ontario Peninsula operated as a distinctive lower Great Lakes region, this project demands a reorientation of Great Lakes geography. Trading women's political and economic networks demonstrate connections between the political and economic systems in the lower and upper Great Lakes, while simultaneously illustrating how each region was gendered differently due to indigenous roles, EuroAmerican marriage customs, and colonialism.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Native Great Lakes Trading Women's Economic and Political Labor**

In March of 1746, a man of Haudenosaunee and Algonquian ancestry crossed the Appalachian Mountains heading west to the Ohio Country. His wife, children, and seventy-nine-year-old mother accompanied him. Since his mother, Madame Montour, was blind, her son led her on horseback across the rugged, forested mountain range.<sup>1</sup> Madame Montour, had traveled extensively throughout her life. She was born in the St. Lawrence Valley but had lived at Michilimackinac, Detroit, the Ohio Country, Albany, and several other communities. In her elder years, she lived in modest conditions in relative obscurity, but for much of her life she was known as a renowned interpreter throughout the eastern Great Lakes. Women like Madame Montour are often framed as an uncommon example, but her success as an interpreter is indicative of a larger pattern that emerged in the Great Lakes where Native women worked as their own economic and political brokers. Great Lakes trading women challenge standard male-focused narratives of the region. These women influenced the outcomes of major imperial and colonial conflicts, shaped the development of political borders, and affected the flow of commerce and capital in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania (MPCP), Volume 5, (Harrisburg, PA: Theo Fenn & Co, 1851), 762; for original see, Examination of Montour and Patton before the Governor of Pennsylvania respecting the road to Ohio and French Forts, March 6 1754, Indian and Military Affairs of Pennsylvania, 1737-1775, American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA), Mss.974.8.P19, pg. 153; Weiser to Spangenberg, May 5, 1746, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA, Box 121, Folder 8, Item 1.

Madame Montour's successful career is a prologue to a group of Native women traders who emerged in the eighteenth century Great Lakes. While historians have focused on Madame Montour's life due to her fur trade marriages with prominent EuroAmerican and Native men, she is part of a larger history of gender in the Great Lakes that has received little attention. Her life served a template for another another group of elite Native women who worked not only as interpreters, but also as their own principle brokers in trade to accrue political influence and economic wealth by acquiring land and other valuable forms of property during periods of political upheaval. Native women traders used their prosperity to further their own political goals and to ensure their family, friends, and community had necessary resources, such as trade goods, food, and accommodations, during times of violent wars, intensified non-Native settlement, and the formation of international borders. While focused on the lives of elite Native women, this project examines a range of diverse labor practices by women with varying social statuses throughout the region.

Examining the strategies Native women traders used to increase their property holdings at different stages of their lives offers a unique perspective on the history of the region, including new possibilities to explore familiar events. Despite the lack of attention paid to their lives, these women show up in surprising places, like important turning points in the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War, the Northwest Indian War, and the solidification and enforcement of the United States and British Canada border. In many other areas of North America, Native women had reduced options to work as their own political and economic brokers from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Yet a variety of distinctive regional characteristics contributed to the development of a group of trading women in the Great Lakes, including political turbulence, demographics, and the physical landscape.

For instance, the region was home to large populations of Native peoples, such as the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg, Shawnees, Miamis, Wendats (also known as Wyandot in some communities), and many others.<sup>2</sup> While disease and imperial wars introduced by Europeans had reduced some Native populations on the Atlantic coast and eastern Great Lakes, in the western part of the region, Native peoples were the majority population into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The demographics of the region meant Native women were often exposed to numerous indigenous and European languages during their childhood and adolescence. The ability to speak multiple languages had a variety of benefits, including broadening their trade networks and creating job opportunities as interpreters and messengers. Furthermore, the landscape provided Native women with a series of waterways for transportation, while challenging EuroAmerican settlers with its difficulty to navigate. Native women traded in furs, but they also dealt with a variety of numerous valuable natural resources in the region, from gathering ginseng roots, to growing and harvesting corn, to brewing cider from apples harvested from local orchards, to organizing large communal camps dedicated to producing maple sugar.

Native women succeeded as prosperous traders in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Great Lakes for many reasons, including numerous and polyglot Native communities, frequent periods of political upheaval, and a landscape that was both difficult to navigate and rich in resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) and Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 2015).

## **Archives, Gender, Intimate Partnerships, and Labor**

This project focuses on a group of elite Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women: Sally Ainese (Oneida), Molly Brant (Mohawk), Ozhaguscodaywayquay (Ojibwe), and Magdalene Laframboise (Odawa). Their social status is characterized by inherited kinship connections to well-respected indigenous families. They used their high status within Native communities and valuable linguistic and diplomatic skills to create relationships with influential EuroAmerican fur traders and colonial officials. Their status allowed them to acquire multiple forms of property, including land and sometimes slaves of African and Native descent. The scope of my archives is a result of the complexities of understanding the lives of elite Native women in this period. Because elite women came from powerful Native families and chose to expand their kinship networks to include influential mixed-ancestry and EuroAmerican men, many moments of their lives are recorded in archival sources. These women are traceable due to their relationships with men whose records were deemed important enough to preserve. Yet, using archival evidence to center the women's careers also challenges male dominated narratives of the region by emphasizing the women's roles in important political events that shaped the region.

Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women appear in archival documents, yet these women produced few documents themselves.<sup>4</sup> They were wealthy but had little access to or interest in reading or writing in English or other European languages, leaving few extant archival records.

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<sup>4</sup> To track the women through their travels I have visited numerous archives in New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, and Ontario. These archives have ranged from larger sites, like the American Philosophical Society and the Newberry Library, to smaller regional archives, like Bayliss Public Library (Sault Ste. Marie), and Clarke Historical Library (Mount Pleasant, MI). I have spent extensive time at local archives, like the Detroit Public Library, the William L. Clements Library, and the Bentley Historical Library. Since Native women traders often crossed over what became the border between the United States and Canada, I have also visited Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa, ON) and other regional Ontario archives, like the Archives of Ontario (Toronto, ON) and Queen's University Library (Kingston, ON).

As a result, I draw extensively on legal records produced by local and colonial governments, including land disputes, notarial records, treaties, and financial records, such as ledgers and account books from local, regional, and national archives on both the Canadian and American sides of the border. Since Native women left few archival documents themselves, historians working on Native women's history have used a variety of ethnographic strategies, such as drawing from the fields of archaeology and anthropology and using material culture and oral histories, to piece together, interpret, and recover narratives about Native women.<sup>5</sup> This project requires threading together moments of the women's lives that are recorded to create a social and cultural portrait of a group of women whose importance to the region has been missed. The methods of composite biography place the women's lives in relation to each other and demonstrate how certain women used multiple creative strategies to achieve financial security in the multi-ethnic world of the Great Lakes borderlands, including drawing on their kinship connections and knowledge of indigenous customs and languages.

The breadth of my archives illustrates the unique challenges of understanding Native women's experience in this period. To gain a greater insight into Native women trader's lives, I visited relevant historic sites, including Fort Johnson, Fort Niagara, Fort Stanwix, Fort Michilimackinac, Fort Mackinac, the Johnston residence at Sault Ste. Marie, and St. George's Cathedral in Kingston. I have also spent significant time hiking in places where Native women traders lived and worked, including on the south shore of Lake Superior (such as Munising and Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan), the Straits of Mackinac (including Mackinac Island, Mackinaw City and St. Ignace), the east coast of Lake Michigan (such as the Grand River, Manistee River, and

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<sup>5</sup> Shoemaker (ed.), *Negotiators of Change*, 3; Purdue (ed.), *Sifters*, 4-5; Kugel and Murphy, *Native Women's History*, xxiv-xxv.

Platte River), and the northeastern shore of Lake Ontario (like the Cataraqui River). Visiting time in areas the women lived and traversed allowed me to partially understand the material surroundings of Native women traders' lives.

Multiple forms of intimate partnerships, including marriage, played a critical role in politics, diplomacy, and economics in the region. Marriages between people from different kinship groups tied together disparate families and communities.<sup>6</sup> One of the questions the archival records raise is how to classify the intimate relationships that indigenous women formed with EuroAmerican and mixed-ancestry men. Sometimes archival sources provide details about these pairings, such as whether or not they were formalized *à la façon du pays*, or in “custom of the country,” which referred to indigenous marriage ceremonies common in the Great Lakes.<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, these marriages were later confirmed in a Christian church in the EuroAmerican custom. Other times, intimate relationships could be short-term and informal. At times, these short-term partnerships coincided with shared business interests. Some women participated in multiple types of relationships throughout their lives. In this project, when an intimate partnership is conferred in the “custom of the country,” I consider the couple married. If the couple later affirms their marriage in a Christian church, I clarify that the marriage is also recognized under EuroAmerican law. I use the the term intimate partnership to refer to short or longer-term sexual relationships that do no appear to be formalized through Native or EuroAmerican ceremonies.

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah M. S. Pearsall, “Native American Men—and Women—at Home in Plural Marriage in Seventeenth-Century New France,” *Gender & History* 27, no.3 (November 2015): 595, 603.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Woman and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001),18.

The question of marriages and intimate partnerships also raises complexities around the names of the women. Most of the women go by multiple names throughout their lives, and sometimes their name changes are related to their relationship status. In some cases, such as with Ozhaguscodaywayquay, her Ojibwe name is well-known and it is recorded that she usually spoke Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language) throughout her life. As a result, she is referred to by her Ojibwe name throughout this project. In other cases, such as that of Molly Brant, while we have information on her Mohawk names, in archival documents she was usually referred to by her EuroAmerican name (Molly or Mary).<sup>8</sup> Still in other cases, such as with Magdelaine Laframboise and Sally Ainse, their Odawa or Oneida names are not known. Sally's case is further complicated since she goes by multiple given names (Sally and Sarah) and by multiple surnames depending on her relationship status. Furthermore, at times the surname that Sally uses to refer to herself does not match the surname that British colonial officials and settlers use to refer to her.<sup>9</sup> The issue of naming in Sally's life becomes even more complex since some of her long-term intimate partners, such as her first husband, Andrew Montour, had multiple indigenous and given names, and multiple spellings of his surname.<sup>10</sup> For the sake of

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<sup>8</sup> Molly Brant's Mohawk name at birth was likely Konwatsi'tsiaienni ("someone who lends a flower") or Tenkonwatonti ("she who is outnumbered" or "two against one"). For Mary's multiple Mohawk names, see Katherine J. McKenna, "Mary Brant (Konwatsi'tsiaenni): 'Miss Molly,' Feminist Role Model or Mohawk Princess?" in *The Human Tradition in the American Revolution*, eds. Nancy Lee Rhoden & Ian K. Steele (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 184. Barbara Graymont only uses Konwatsi'tsiaenni, "Konwatsi'tsiaenni." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. Vol. 4, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaeni\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaeni_4E.html), accessed February 25, 2014. Maurice Kenny uses the name Tekonwatonti, *Tekonwatonti/Molly Brant (1735-1795): poems of war*, (Fredonia, N.Y: White Pine Press, 1992), 199. James Thomas Flexner also refers to Molly as version of Tekonwatonti (Degonwadonti). James Thomas Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet: A Biography of Sir William Johnson*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959), xvii, 186.

<sup>9</sup> The complications regarding Sally's names are discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Montour went by many names throughout his life, including French Andrew, Henry Montour, Andrew (or Andreas) Sattelihu, Echnizera, and Oughsara. For more on Andrew Montour, see James Merrell, "'The Cast of his Countenance': Reading Andrew Montour," in *Through a Looking Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, Fredrika J. Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 13-39.

clarity, I refer to the women either by their indigenous name (if it was known and there is evidence it was regularly used throughout their life) or by the given, English name by which they were most commonly known. This avoids permanently linking or “fixing” them to any male intimate partner, emphasizing how they operated as independent brokers in trade.

In different ways, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women in the Great Lakes entered into intimate partnerships as a strategy to increase their access to property, including land and goods. Yet, not all women in the Great Lakes had access to kinship networks for support. Certain groups of women were left particularly vulnerable to the violence of colonialism, particularly enslaved Native and black women who were transported to the region against their will. Unfamiliar with the geographic landscape and without kinship networks as a source of support, these women were susceptible to sexual violence by their owners and other community members. Enslaved Native and black women and men were common in political and economic hubs of the Great Lakes, like Detroit or Michilimackinac. Colonial American historian Brett Rushforth has demonstrated how indigenous and Atlantic forms of slavery shaped the institution of slaveholding in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Great Lakes.<sup>11</sup> Elite Native women traders were not separated from this system of violence: some of them participated by owning Native and black slaves throughout their lives. Native women traders’ slaveholding practices must be examined within the context of kinship practices indigenous to the Great Lakes, which included slavery and adoption, and in relation to the sociopolitical changes that occurred as EuroAmerican settlement intensified and EuroAmerican institutions began to be implemented and enforced on the ground.

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<sup>11</sup> Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Sometimes Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women traders owned slaves due to their intimate relationships, such as when Molly Brant inherited slaves from her long-time partner, Sir William Johnston. Enslaved people would accompany Molly during the Revolutionary War, helping to support her domestic, political, and economic work as she traveled for meetings and conferences between the Haudenosaunee and British military and political officials. Other times, Native women owned slaves to support the production of goods that they used for trade, including cider (as in the case of Sally Ainse) and maple sugar (as in the case of Magdelaine Laframboise). The relationship between labor and gender in the Great Lakes was complex. Social customs, like marriage, had different effects depending on a women's social status. For example, historian Sarah Pearsall explains that in Algonquian and Haudenosaunee communities, the practice of men having multiple wives had different meaning to different women. For some women who ran larger households, plural unions offered benefits, such as sharing the labor with other women. In some cases, sisters married the same man, and they would help each other run the household, protect each other, and care for each other's children. However, for other women, especially captive women, plural marriage meant a coercive system of labor that could include natal alienation and death.<sup>12</sup> While grounded in the lives of elite Native women, this project also examines multiple forms of labor performed by women with varying social statuses throughout the region.

Scholars in Native American Studies and Women and Gender Studies often frame colonialism as causal to the institution of heteropatriarchy in indigenous societies in North America. For instance, Ella Shohat argues that colonialism plays a role in establishing or at least encouraging patriarchal structures and heterosexual codes subordinated to colonial power. She

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<sup>12</sup> Pearsall, "Native American Men—and Women," 603.

notes that “Indigenist feminist claims for the egalitarian nature of some precolonial societies cannot all be dismissed as romantic nostalgia” and that “such a blanket denial of indigenous American claims raises questions about the investment in the equalizing narrative of patriarchy and heterosexism on both sides of the divide.”<sup>13</sup> However, historical work on the Great Lakes complicates these claims by showing how Native social formations and structures in the Great Lakes relied on systems of tribal difference that also contributed to class hierarchies. While the resulting hierarchies operated in different ways in Native social formations in contrast to European and colonial social formations, it is important to acknowledge that Native societies in the Americas were not inherently egalitarian.<sup>14</sup> Examining the lives of elite Native women traders further illustrates the complicated relationship between gender, sexuality, class, and colonialism in the Great Lakes. Great Lakes trading women both contributed to gendered and racialized violence by participating in the indigenous slave system in the region, and experienced legislated dispossession when their claims to property were denied by EuroAmerican officials.

Native women traders participated in a variety of forms of labor throughout their lives, including harvesting and producing multiple types of trade goods, running and maintaining large tracts of land, providing housing and hospitality during political conferences and events, and working as messengers, translators, and liaisons during political conflicts. Furthermore, women worked in the fur trade, but they also traded in a range of goods, from maple sugar to cider to

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<sup>13</sup> Ella Shohat, *Talking Visions: multicultural feminism in a transnational age*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 22-3. For examples of other texts that make a similar causal connection between colonialism and heteropatriarchy see Kim Andersen, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000), Qwo-Li Driskill, *Queer indigenous studies: critical interventions in theory, politics, and literature*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces between us: queer settler colonialism and indigenous decolonization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), and Mark Rifkin, *When did Indians become straight?: kinship, the history of sexuality, and native sovereignty*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Along with Rushforth’s work, historians focusing on gender roles in Algonquian communities in the Great Lakes have also noted how inequalities underpinned Native societies in the region. For instance, Sarah M.S. Pearsall argues that there was an “endemic if low-lying level of violence” in seventeenth century Algonquian Great Lakes communities. Pearsall, “Native American Men—and Women,” 599, 601.

ginseng to silver, as a strategy to maintain their affluence through multiple shifts in imperial power and changes in the sociopolitical landscape of the region. At times, Native women traders turned to the labor of enslaved women and men to support their growing businesses.

### **Borders, Marriages, and Settlement in the Lower and Upper Great Lakes**

This dissertation examines indigenous women in the Great Lakes borderlands as independent economic and political agents. Previous scholarship on the gender and the Great Lakes has focused on indigenous women's role in fur trade marriages. In *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, Jennifer Brown, an anthropologist, examines Native women's roles in Canadian fur-trade societies established in the institutional frameworks of the North West and Hudson Bay Companies between 1780 and 1830. She argues that by the 1830s, increased availability of British and European wives decreased the status of Native women in the region.<sup>15</sup> In *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*, Sylvia Van Kirk argues Native women worked as cultural mediators between Native communities and European fur traders, and that the position of cultural mediator often led to a high quality of life that could be used to their advantage. For example, Van Kirk notes that Native women married to European traders had increased access to European goods and were often viewed as more influential when visiting trading posts.<sup>16</sup> Similar to Brown, Van Kirk demonstrates that as the numbers of EuroAmerican women increased throughout the nineteenth century, Native women

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<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 97-110; 211-7.

<sup>16</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many tender ties: women in fur-trade society, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg, MB: Watson & Dyer, 1980), 65, 172-89.

and their daughters from fur trade marriages saw their status decline.<sup>17</sup> However, neither Brown nor Van Kirk pay attention to the labor of and lives of independent women in the fur trade (whether unmarried or widowed).

Recent community-based studies have produced more nuanced perspectives on gender and the fur trade in the Great Lakes. During the growth of Native women's history throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, historians like Susan Sleeper-Smith and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy examined Native women's agency over their economic labor and personal relationships, while being attentive to the ways intensified colonialism brought drastic changes to Native communities.<sup>18</sup> For instance, Sleeper-Smith builds on the work of earlier scholars like Van Kirk and Brown, to illustrate how both real and fictive kinship is central to understanding Illinois and Miami women's experience around southern Lake Michigan. She demonstrates that certain Native women drew on Catholicism to support their own decisions in their personal and economic lives, even when their families disagreed with their choices (such as resisting a

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<sup>17</sup> Other texts on gender and the fur trade that demonstrate a clear declension narrative are Carol Devens' study of the relationship between Great Lakes Native women and missionaries during the fur trade and Mary C. Wright's examination of economic development and Native American women in Pacific Northwest during the early nineteenth century. Devens proposes that Native women's status diminishes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when European missionaries and the fur trade disrupted gender balance in Great Lakes Native communities. She argues that the fur trade offered few economic opportunities for Native women, since French traders wanted furs obtained by men rather than the small game, tools, utensils, and clothing produced by women. As a result, Ojibwe women shifted from "producers in their own right" to auxiliaries helping their male partners obtain furs. Wright suggests that while Native women played important roles in the fur trade, such as working as intermediary traders, fathering food, and manufacturing crafts, they also contributed to the shift from subsistence economies to market economies. She argues that this economic transformation led to a loss of power for Native women as they became pushed into the domestic sphere with limited access to public arenas. Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 13-8; Mary C. Wright, "Economic Development and Native American Women in the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Quarterly* 33, no.5 (Winter 1981): 525-6.

<sup>18</sup> Theda Purdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Ann Marie Plane, *Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Michelene L. Pessantubbee, *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast*, (University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Karen L. Kilcup & Stephen Brandon, *A Cherokee Woman's America: Memoirs of Narcissa Owen, 1831-1907*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Sarah Carter & Patricia A. McCormack, *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, (Athabasca University Press: 2011); Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 2013).

marriage).<sup>19</sup> Murphy examines how mixed-ancestry families in the fur trade community of Prairie du Chien fared as Anglo-American settlers became the majority and Anglo-American institutions gained control.<sup>20</sup> In the process, she illustrates how mixed-ancestry and Native men and women experienced settler colonialism in different ways: while men gained opportunities for civic engagement, women experienced a decline in property rights and loss of political opportunities and authority.<sup>21</sup>

Sleeper-Smith and Murphy bring attention to the role of kinship and women as intermediaries between their families and imperial power, but do not focus on Native women as their own independent economic and political brokers. In an article published in *Ethnohistory*, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver,” Bruce White broaches the subject, explaining how Anishinaabe women in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Great Lakes produced and traded in resources traditionally harvested by Anishinaabe women, like wild rice and maple sugar.<sup>22</sup> He argues that Anishinaabe women were a vital link between communities, but that they did not usually participate in trade ceremonies or receive credit from traders. However, this dissertation demonstrates that a specific group of elite Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women entered the market as traders, participated in trade ceremonies, and received large amounts of credits from merchants from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century in the Great Lakes region.

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Woman and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 43-53.

<sup>20</sup> Lucy Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce M. White, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory* 46, no.1 (Winter 1999): 121.



Figure 1. Map of the Great Lakes. John Cary's early nineteenth century map visually illustrates the division between the upper and lower Great Lakes. The divide between the lower and upper Great Lakes run approximately from the bottom of Green Bay in Lake Michigan, to Saginaw Bay and over towards the Bruce Peninsula in Lake Huron. Source: John Cary, *Cary's New Atlas, containing distinct maps of all the principal states and kingdoms throughout the World. From the latest and best authorities extant.* London: Printed for J. Cary, Engraver and Map-seller. No 181 near Norfolk Street, Strand. 1808. via Wikimedia Commons.

Rather than focus on an individual community, this dissertation has an expansive geographic focus that reflects the area where indigenous women traders lived and worked. These women's lives stretched from the Susquehanna and Mohawk Rivers in the southeastern areas of the Great Lakes, to the Straits of Mackinac, the St. Mary's River, and Chequamegon Bay in the northern Great Lakes. This projects defines the lower Great Lakes as the lands surrounding Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and the southern half of Lake Huron (including parts of present-day New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Ontario), and defines the upper Great Lakes as the

lands around northern Lake Huron and Lake Michigan and Lake Superior (including parts of present-day northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario).

Since the 1990s, historians have shown how both the lower and upper Great Lakes were transnational borderlands, shaped by multiple imperial and colonial powers and numerous, powerful Native societies, such as the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg, and the Dakota. Richard White's foundational work focuses on the Middle Ground which, consists of the *pays d'en haut*, or upper country, including the lands around Lake Erie (but not those south of Lake Ontario which fell under the control of the Haudenosaunee). White argues that while violence and conflict were common in the middle ground, neither Algonquian nor French peoples used violence to control one another.<sup>23</sup> He argues further that after the War of 1812 limited opportunities existed for Middle Grounds to exist in certain parts of the lower Great Lakes region, particularly the Ohio Valley. Borderlands scholarship has often focused on the ways Native peoples used competing powers to their advantage, such as the conflict between France and Britain to control the Ohio Valley in the mid-eighteenth century<sup>24</sup> However, recent studies by historians focused on Native American history have demonstrated that political divisions between indigenous societies, such as the rivalry between the Anishinaabe and Dakota, rather than tensions between imperial powers were more meaningful in several regions, including the Great Lakes.<sup>25</sup> Historians, such as Michael Witgen, Michael McDonnell, and Cary Miller,

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<sup>23</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x, 50-2.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron. "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History." *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 814-41; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists In the Heart of the Continent*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 5-46; Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Pekka

demonstrate how Anishinaabeg and Dakota political formations shaped the region. For instance, while White's main focus is French and Algonquian relations, Witgen's main focus is on relationships between Native social formations, such as the Anishinaabeg and the Dakota, two of the largest, most successful groups to dominate the western interior.<sup>26</sup> The Anishinaabeg and Dakota occupied what Witgen terms the Native New World: a transregional space that was an autonomous Native social world that survived into the early nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The Native New World land was not under the exclusive dominion of a single individual or nation, but was instead a shared resource, where use rights were claimed, negotiated, and exercised in a process of creating a shared landscape and social identity.

Like Witgen, Michael McDonnell focuses on the strength of Anishinaabe political structures within the region, however, he focuses on the Odawa communities in the Straits of Mackinac from the seventeenth century up to the American Revolutionary War. McDonnell illustrates that if we "face east from Michilimackinac instead of west from Montreal or Jamestown" we understand a story about the Great Lakes that is driven by Native peoples.<sup>28</sup> Cary Miller takes a different direction by producing a social and cultural history of Anishinaabe communities in the southern Lake Superior region. Miller focuses on the hereditary, military, and religious leaders and their kinship networks between the French and Indian War and the arrival of missionaries in the nineteenth century. She challenges the idea that the Anishinaabeg consisted of divided, individual bands that had limited sources of power by illustrating the

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Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 338-61.

<sup>26</sup> Anishinaabeg refers to a collective identity shared by number of peoples, speakers of Anishinaabemowin (or the Anishinaabe language) who inhabited the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi valley. The French referred to these linguistically related people as Algonquian. Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 4

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 2015), 13.

importance of villages within the region's political landscape.<sup>29</sup> While EuroAmericans viewed Anishinaabe villages as having limited power, they confused the systematic, flexible, and fluid structure of villages in Anishinaabewaki for weakness.

Great Lakes historians have demonstrated the importance of Native social and political formations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Great Lakes borderlands, but they have spent little time focusing on how gender shaped the sociopolitical landscape of the region.<sup>30</sup> However, Native women traders were adroit transnational actors who traversed multiple types of borderlands during their lives. During their childhoods and careers, the women moved between numerous Native communities, creating expansive kinship ties and developing valuable diplomatic skills. They crossed indigenous and imperial borderlands during major transnational events that shaped the region, like the French and Indian War in 1763. After the formation of a boundary between British territory and the newly formed American republic in 1783, Native women in the lower Great Lakes also crossed an international border. Well into the nineteenth century, Great Lakes trading women's property claims contributed to shaping regional and international borders.

The creation of borderlands and borders affected women differently in the lower and upper Great Lakes. While the international border between British Canada and the United States in the lower Great Lakes was determined by the turn of the nineteenth century, in the upper Great Lakes, uncertainties about the border stretched into the mid-nineteenth century, illustrating the limited reach of British and American jurisdiction in the area. In the lower Great Lakes,

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<sup>29</sup> Cary Miller, *Ogimaag: Anishinaabe Leadership, 1760 to 1845*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 3

<sup>30</sup> Despite the many strengths of their works, these historians do not engage in any sustained analysis of the ways in which colonialism, gender, and sexuality mutually shaped each other in the Great Lakes. For a more in-depth discussion of gender in *An Infinity of Nations*, see Heidi Bohaker, "An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2014): 461-66.

Haudenosaunee women reached the height of their political and economic influence around the Revolutionary War, but they found limited opportunities to obtain property after the turn of the nineteenth century. The War of 1812 and resulting Treaty of Ghent hardened a boundary formed by the Jay Treaty and American and British officials used the enforcement of the border to bolster their own sovereignty over the territory they claimed in the region. Yet, in the upper Great Lakes however, certain Anishinaabe women were able to take advantage of distinct regional opportunities to acquire property into the second half of the nineteenth century. While the Treaty of Ghent attempted to create an international border through the falls of the St. Mary's River, between British territory on the north bank and American ground on the south side, neither government had the ability to actually enforce the border or control the large Anishinaabe populations living the borderland region.

Tracking the lives of indigenous trading women in the Great Lakes borderlands demands a reorientation of Great Lakes geography. Early American historians have viewed the Ohio Valley as a separate region from the Great Lakes, however, this understanding is based on present-day conceptions of borders. The political and economic lives of indigenous trading women demonstrate that the Ohio Valley is part of a larger lower Great Lakes region that also includes western Pennsylvania and New York, and the Ontario Peninsula. The lower Great Lakes were connected to political and economic systems in the upper Great Lakes; however, a variety of factors caused these areas to be gendered differently, such as indigenous social roles, EuroAmerican marriages customs, and colonialism.

The lower Great Lakes were predominantly the homelands of Haudenosaunee peoples, who were matrilineal, while the upper Great Lakes were largely the homelands of the Anishinaabeg, who were patrilineal. In Haudenosaunee nations, women performed agricultural

duties integral to the community's survival and had authority over who controlled and worked the land. When a woman married, her husband moved into her family's longhouse, and she maintained control of all their property. This was staunchly different than English patriarchal gender roles, where women were seen as dependent on men and incapable of being legal property owners.<sup>31</sup> For Mohawk and other Haudenosaunee peoples, extended family and the local community were in many ways one and the same, represented visually in the longhouse.<sup>32</sup> Longhouses were the oblong-dwellings used by Mohawk and other Haudenosaunee peoples during the colonial period, created from saplings for frame and bark for the covering.<sup>33</sup> Historian Gretchen Green describes how, "the village was the longhouse writ large, and the tribe was the longhouse writ larger. The union of the five Iroquois tribes—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, with the sixth, Tuscarora, joining in 1720, was the highest expression of the longhouse metaphor."<sup>34</sup> Within the longhouse, the "matron" was responsible for tending fires to prepare kettles of food, that she distributed to all members of the longhouse based on need.<sup>35</sup>

Haudenosaunee women were responsible for planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops, along with distributing food equitably within the household once it had been processed.<sup>36</sup> They also influenced hunts, wars and political councils through their ability to provide or withhold food to the community.<sup>37</sup> Haudenosaunee hospitality customs demonstrate the connection

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<sup>31</sup> Molly may have spent time in a longhouse during the earlier part of her childhood, such as the time spent in the Ohio Valley.

<sup>32</sup> Gretchen L. Green, "Gender and the Longhouse: Iroquois Women in a Changing Culture," in *Women and Freedom in Early America*, ed. Larry Eldridge, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Judith K. Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women among the Iroquois," *Ethnohistory* 17, no. 3/4 (1970): 156.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Molly Brant refers to herself as a "being at the head of a Society of six Natn matrons." Claus to Haldimand Sept 6, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, Ontario, H-1449, pg. 68; Henry Lewis Morgan, *Houses and house-life of the American aborigines*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Gretchen Green, "Gender and the Longhouse," 11.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, "Economic Organization and the Position of Women among the Iroquois," 153.

between politics and the domestic world of family and kin.<sup>38</sup> Haudenosaunee women's control of property in the domestic realm allowed them to also trade in hospitality practices, such as offering housing and food for guests during diplomatic events in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By trading in hospitality, Mohawk women, like Molly Brant, increased their political and economic influence throughout the lower Great Lakes.

Anishinaabe societies were structured by doodemag, or kinship networks, that were each associated with other than human progenitor beings.<sup>39</sup> The original clans were the crane, catfish, loon, bear, marten, and moose, though by the eighteenth century many more doodem existed.<sup>40</sup> In Ojibwe spiritual beliefs, the world is animated by a spiritual power. Birds and animals were believed to precede human life on earth and possess intelligence and an understanding of the seasons, weather, hunting, procreation, and the importance of home, allowing them to guide the original people who may not have survived without their help.<sup>41</sup> Underlying the doodem tradition was deep respect for the relationship between the human and animal worlds.<sup>42</sup> Children inherited their various doodemag identity from their fathers, and Anishinaabe women kept their doodem identities when they married, thereby providing their families with a second set of kinship connections to rely upon.<sup>43</sup> Doodemag shaped marriage and alliance patterns, facilitated long distance travel, and facilitated the negotiation of community resources.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jan V. Noel, "Revisiting Gender in Iroquoia," in *Gender and Sexuality in Indigenous North America, 1400-1850*, eds. Sandra Slater and Faye A. Yaborough, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 52-74.

<sup>39</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 33, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 27

<sup>41</sup> Heidi Bohaker, "Kinship Networks in the Great Lakes Region," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 63 no. 1 (2006): 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; Bohaker, "Indigenous Histories and Archival Media," in *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas*, eds. Matthew Cohen and Jeffrey Glover, (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014):109.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Historian Bruce M. White explains that for the Ojibwe, “marriage was defined by the decision of two parties, sometimes through the intercession of parents or other relations, to sleep, live, and carry on their day-to-day lives together.”<sup>45</sup> These marriages did not involve ceremonies that were familiar to Europeans, but they often involved the ceremonial exchange of gifts.<sup>46</sup> In addition to their doodemag, the Anishinaabeg had a sense of themselves as members of a small extended family band who wintered together, as well as a larger group of people who inhabited the same region or area during the summer season.<sup>47</sup> Ojibwe historian Brenda Child has shown that in Anishinaabe society gender roles were considered to be mutually supportive, the collective labor practices of women were valued, and women’s legal rights were respected, especially with regard to water.<sup>48</sup> Anishinaabe women’s knowledge and control over food supplies in a harsh environment ensured their status. Anishinaabe women’s gender roles were similar to that of Mohawk women. Women’s participation in the seasonal round of gathering food, their firmly held rights to maple sugar groves, and the systematic labor organization used by the female collective to control the wild rice harvest assured them a constant measure of power and respect.<sup>49</sup>

When the French and British (and eventually Americans), entered the region, they brought a variety of marriage customs. Yet they also had to adapt to indigenous social practices to find common understandings as a strategy to make alliances with Native families and enter the commercial networks in the region. Ethnohistorians of the Great Lakes have illustrated how the alliance system between the French and the Anishinaabe worked as a combination of French

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<sup>45</sup> White, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver,” 128.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>48</sup> Child,  *Holding Our World Together*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 48.

diplomacy and Algonquian kinship rituals, including gift-giving.<sup>50</sup> For the alliance to work, both sides needed to recognize each other as kin. The French saw themselves as the head of this family, by assuming the role of the French Father. In their mind, Native allies became the children of the father, creating a relationship based on the obligations that members of an extended family owed to one another. On the ground, the French had limited power, and Anishinaabe peoples saw themselves entering a relationship of reciprocal power and obligations. The Anishinaabeg would engage with the French politics of the middle ground when it suited their own purposes.<sup>51</sup> Reciprocal gift-giving and trade, not paternalism, were the cornerstones of the relationship. Gift exchanges served as one way to incorporate newcomers into the community.<sup>52</sup> Gift exchanges tied allies together as family and ensured allies were obligated to take care of the needs of their trading partners in the same way that they provided for the needs of their extended families.<sup>53</sup> Cary Miller shows that Anishinaabe oral tradition illustrates how regardless of how “pitiable” one may have been, when one accepted a gift, they had to fulfill promises made to perform certain ceremonies or use the gift in appropriate ways or the gift would be withdrawn.<sup>54</sup> In other words, when an individual accepted the gift, the conditions that came with a gift were also accepted.

Similar to gift exchanges, marriages were a way to create ties between disparate families. During the fur trade, marriages *à la façon du pays* or “of the custom of the country”—as opposed

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<sup>50</sup> Witgen explains that the concept of gift-exchanges is based on the works of anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins. Sahlins characterizes these gift-exchanges as a form of positive reciprocity where allies were obligated to provide for the needs of their trading partners in the same way that they provided for the needs of their extended families, Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 124. For more on the ways gift-giving structured the Great Lakes region, see Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 123-126; and White, *The Middle Ground*, 15-6, 36-40; 95-105; 112-119.

<sup>51</sup> Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 207-9, 217,

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Ogimaag: Anishinaabe Leadership*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 124.

<sup>54</sup> Cary Miller, “Gifts as Treaties: The Political Use of Received Gifts in Anishinaabeg Communities,” *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2002): 223.

to Christian marriages—were common in the Great Lakes between white men and Native women. For indigenous peoples, these marital alliances created reciprocal social ties that served to consolidate their economic relationships with the incoming strangers. For EuroAmerican men, the marriages gave them access to powerful indigenous family networks with an extensive linguistic, social, and geographic knowledge. Marriages *à la façon du pays* were the basis of the political economy of the fur trade and created personal alliances that produced new structures of kinship.<sup>55</sup> While these marriages differed from indigenous marriage practices, they also diverged from French and British customs. In French colonial settlements in North America, the *Coutume de Paris* governed domestic life.<sup>56</sup> The *Coutume de Paris* boldly claimed it would be the governing legal authority for the marriage, even if the couple moved to a place with different marriage laws.<sup>57</sup> It allowed several rights to women, including prenuptial agreements that often explicitly laid out inheritance laws terms. Furthermore, a husband could not sell or mortgage property that his wife had brought into the marriage.<sup>58</sup> Unlike the *Coutume de Paris*, under the British custom of coverture, a woman merged her legal identity into that of her husband when she married.<sup>59</sup> Coverture meant that upon marriage, a woman became legally ‘veiled’ or “covered” by her husband.<sup>60</sup> She could not sue, be sued, enter into contracts, make wills, keep her own earnings, or control her own property. A woman who married a British man under British laws became civilly dead.

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<sup>55</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 211.

<sup>56</sup> While definitely established in settlements like Montreal and Quebec by 1664, it took longer for the *Coutume de Paris* to be fully institutionalized in different regions of the Great Lakes. Carl J. Ekberg, and Sharon K. Person, *St. Louis Rising*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 127.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>59</sup> Renée Jacobs, “Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the United States Constitution: How the Founding Fathers Ignored the Clan Mothers,” *American Indian Law Review*, 16, no. 2 (1991): 510-11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

French and British marriage customs were implemented in uneven and varying ways throughout the Great Lakes. For instance, Michael McDonnell argues “middle grounds” were only established between Europeans and Native peoples of the Great Lakes near forts. To the French, these forts were at the center of their world in the Great Lakes. Yet for the Anishinaabeg, these forts were on the periphery of the vast territory of Anishinaabewaki.<sup>61</sup> Anne Hyde has demonstrated the tenuous hold the United States had over the territory in the nineteenth century west, and argues that many groups could emerge as the one in control.<sup>62</sup> Sometimes it was Native nations, sometimes it was European invaders, sometimes it was imperial Anglo-Americans, and sometimes it was personally motivated pirates. This political uncertainty led to a redefinition of family, kinship, and gender roles.

Colonial authorities could control the social customs within forts, but they had limited power in the vast Great Lakes region beyond the forts, since throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, parts of the Great Lakes continued to operate as Native space. While the fur trade brought French and British colonial powers to the region in search of valuable furs to send back to Europe, outside the St. Lawrence Valley and a handful of other forts throughout the lower Great Lakes, there was little permanent European settlement. The fur trade is an example of colonialism focused on resource extraction (animal pelts). However, settler colonial policies also shaped the Great Lakes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to theorist Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism depends on settlers’ desire and need for access to indigenous land, the erasure of indigenous claims to the land, and the subsequent development of a new colonial society on an expropriated land base that believes they have a legitimate claim to the

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<sup>61</sup> Michael McDonnell illustrates how the Odawaag were at the heart of a powerful economic and political network and could manipulate relations with newcomers, like Europeans, to their advantage. *Masters of Empire*, 15.

<sup>62</sup> Ann Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 15.

land.<sup>63</sup> Settler colonialism is different from resource colonialism because the colonizers come to stay—the goal is founding long-term, permanent settlements, rather than extracting resources. Settler colonialism is about both access to land and being able to make a rightful claim to the land, usually through the erasure of indigenous peoples either through physical removal or cultural assimilation.<sup>64</sup>

By focusing on the Great Lakes more broadly, this dissertation illustrates the ways that settler colonialism operated as a gendered process throughout the region.<sup>65</sup> After the American Revolution, settler colonial development intensified on both the British and American sides of the border in certain areas of the lower Great Lakes, including the Ontario Peninsula and the Ohio Valley. Great Lakes trading women who had used multiple strategies to expand their kinship networks, including forming intimate multiple partnerships with mixed-ancestry and EuroAmerican men, found their property threatened under this influx of settlers. Until the turn of the nineteenth century, these strategies helped indigenous women to create prosperous trading businesses. However, as Anglo-American customs like coverture were enforced, these practices became a liability. Increased EuroAmerican settlement eroded Native kinship networks and forms of inheritance in the lower Great Lakes, creating fewer opportunities for indigenous

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<sup>63</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no 4 (2006): 387-409.

<sup>64</sup> For the defining characteristics of settler colonialism. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, no 4 (2006): 387-409. For a discussion of settler colonialism as one of several types of colonialism, see Nancy Shoemaker, “A Typology of Colonialism,” *Perspectives of History*, (October 2015), 29-30.

<sup>65</sup> Other Great Lakes historians, such as Lucy Murphy, have examined how successive waves of immigration affected specific fur trade communities in the Great Lakes. She argues that while mixed-ancestry fur trade families retained their economic power by diversifying their economies, the lead rush in the 1820s brought increased Anglo-American and black laborers to the region, which resulted in American officials and settlers seizing valuable lands, dispossessing Native people in the process Lucy Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

women to acquire property. These women drew on multiple subversive and gendered forms of resistance, including kinship networks, language skills, and knowledge of trade networks, to attempt to navigate a settler colonial system designed to deny indigenous land claims. However, despite their efforts, there was little space for Native women to act as powerful, independent economic and political brokers in this new era of the lower Great Lakes.

While settler colonialism intensified in the lower Great Lakes in the decades immediately after the Revolutionary War, the Anishinaabeg remained the most influential political power in the upper Great Lakes until the mid-nineteenth century. As a result, while Haudenosaunee women traders in the lower Great Lakes struggled to retain their political influence and control of property after the turn of the nineteenth century, Anishinaabe women traders maintained their political and economic influence in the upper Great Lakes into the mid-nineteenth century. Indigenous women traders were transitional figures of Native survivance who worked to preserve themselves and their families among intensifying settler colonial development in the first half of the nineteenth century.

### **Chapter Overview**

This dissertation is divided into two sections based on geography and thus allows for a regional comparison between the political and economic influence of Native women traders, and the relationship between gender and settler colonialism. The first section consists of chapters one to four and is grounded in the lives of Sally Aitse (Oneida) and Molly Brant (Mohawk) in the lower Great Lakes. The second section consists of chapters five and six and shifts the geographical focus to the upper Great Lakes, focusing on two Anishinaabe women,

Ozhaguscodaywayquay/Susan Johnston (Ojibwe) and Magdelaine Laframboise (Odawa). The split geographic focus also parallels a generational shift in the dissertation. The first half of the study describes a group of Haudenosaunee trading women who were a generation older than the Anishinaabe women in the second half.

Chapter One, “Taking Up Goods: Family Networks, Imperials Wars, and the Emergence of Trading Women, 1740-1762,” investigates how Sally Ainse, Molly Brant and other Native women found opportunities to enter the market as traders during the French and Indian War. During the turbulence of the war, they found opportunities in the multiethnic spaces of the Mohawk, Susquehanna and Ohio River valleys in the lower Great Lakes. They drew on connections from their childhoods and first intimate partnerships, travelled extensively throughout the Ohio Valley, Pennsylvania and New York, and managed large, assorted households. In the process, the women developed multiple skills that allowed them to emerge as independent traders and diplomats after the French and Indian War in the Mohawk Valley region. In Chapter Two, “A Place of Her Own: Trading in Goods and Services to Acquire Property, 1763-1777,” I focus on the turbulent decades of the 1760s and 1770s, when Sally, Molly, and other Native women drew on the strategies they had developed during the French and Indian War, such as trading in political skills (hospitality and interpreting) and goods (silver, alcohol, and ginseng) to expand their trade networks. As a result, their careers prospered and they were able to acquire land for their families. However, the political upheaval that created opportunities for their businesses also contributed to their loss of property by the beginning of the American Revolutionary War.

Chapter Three, “Taking What They Pleased: Gender, Opportunity, and Violence During the Revolutionary War, 1778 to 1787,” examines how elite Native women like Molly Brant and

Sally Ainese found opportunities during the War to expand their political influence in hubs of the region such as Detroit, Niagara, Carleton Island, and Montreal. While Sally and Molly's prosperity increased, other women of Native and African descent were enslaved at the same sites in the same period. Both Molly's political work as a liaison and negotiator between the Mohawks and the British, and Sally's role as an influential merchant, were supported by the labor of enslaved women and men. Chapter Four, "Settling in the Lower Great Lakes: Gender, Borders, and Property, 1788-1823," examines Molly and Sally's ability to maintain their financial prosperity in the post-Revolutionary War era as EuroAmerican settlement rapidly increased in the lower Great Lakes. Focusing on the political and community labor performed by Molly Brant and Sally Ainese in the last decade of the nineteenth century illustrates the women's extended influence as adroit transnational political diplomats in the post-Revolutionary War years. However, changes in the region, such as increased EuroAmerican settlement also threatened the women's prosperity. In particular, Sally entered a long legal battle with the colonial government of Upper Canada, illustrating the repercussions of EuroAmerican legal institutions, such as coverture, on the lives of Native women traders. Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe kinship practices no longer structured the region, and women like Sally found fewer opportunities to own property.

Chapter Five, "Influential Lineages in the Upper Great Lakes: Anishinaabe Marriages, Kinship Practices, and Trade Networks, 1790 to 1816," overlaps temporally with chapter four, allowing for a comparison between the upper and lower Great Lakes at the turn of the nineteenth century. Examining relationships between Anishinaabe women, like Ozhaguscodaywayquay (Ojibwe) and Magdelaine Laframboise (Odawa), and EuroAmerican fur traders demonstrates how the two couples' early financial success depended on the kinship connections and skillsets

the women developed from childhood in the Lake Superior and Lake Michigan regions. At the turn of the nineteenth century in the upper Great Lakes, Anishinaabe kinship practices shaped both the women's households and the politics of the region. Chapter Six, "Furs and Maple Sugar: Anishinaabe Women's Industries in the Nineteenth Century Upper Great Lakes, 1816-1845," illustrates how Anishinaabe women not only maintained, but increased their political and economic authority after the War of 1812 by drawing on Anishinaabe heritage and skillsets, even as American government agents attempted to assert control over the territory and enforce the border in the region. In particular, the women's prosperous maple sugar production extended their economic influence into the mid-nineteenth century. Producing maple sugar required the women to maintain control of valuable tracts of property. The women acquired their property by drawing on kinship connections with American officials and their respected position within Anishinaabe communities. The wealth these women achieved through the maple sugar industry allowed them to invest in their families and communities, such as developing local churches and schools.

Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women traders show up in surprising and unexpected ways at important political events that shaped the eighteenth and nineteenth century, like the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War, the Northwest Indian War, and nineteenth century treaties between Native nations and EuroAmerican officials. Recognizing the careers of women like Sally Ainsie, Molly Brant, Ozhaguscodaywayquay, and Magdelaine LaFramboise shifts our understanding of these familiar events by taking seriously the role of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe women in shaping the sociopolitical landscape of the region. Native Great Lakes trading women are critical to understanding how this borderlands region developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These women shaped the flow of

commerce and capital through the distribution of valuable trade goods, influenced the outcomes of major imperial and colonial conflicts through diplomacy and hospitality, and contributed to the mapping of political borders through their land claims. Without their economic and political labor, the region would have been a vastly different place by the era of the Civil War in the mid-nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Taking Up Goods: Family Networks, Imperial Wars, and the Emergence of Trading Women, 1740-1762**

In mid-October of 1745, a multiethnic Oneida woman named Sally Ainse made an abrupt departure from her home at the Indian trading town of Shamokin on the Susquehanna River. Leaving her elderly mother-in-law and two Moravian missionaries (or United Brethren, a largely German-speaking Protestant denomination) alone in her house, she set off on an eighty-mile journey to visit her mother. When her husband returned from a three-week trip, the Moravians informed him of her absence, adding they did not know why she left but upon her departure she had been “not in a good mood.”<sup>1</sup> And how could she have been? Her husband himself had complained to these guests that their cramped household offered the poorest living conditions of his life. Andrew’s absence during the the important fall harvest time when Haudenosaunee men typically helped the women gather crops, might have contributed to Sally’s decision to depart. The harvest was particularly important in 1745 since the Montours had little to eat other than corn.<sup>2</sup> Sally Ainse met up with her husband the following day in the nearby town of Ostonwakin.<sup>3</sup> Two days later, the couple returned to Shamokin and the missionaries were relieved that they were in a good moods, as “both were very friendly.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mack Shamokin Diary September 13 1745–November 10, 1745, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA, October 16 and 28, pg. 40. Translated by Katherine Faull, <http://shamokindiary.blogs.bucknell.edu/texts/the-english-text/mack-diary-september-13-1745-november-10-1745/>, accessed February 15, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Nov 3, pg. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Oct 21. pg. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Oct 23, pg. 36.

The tensions between Sally, her husband (Andrew Montour), her mother-in-law (Madame Montour), and the Moravian missionaries illustrate the linguistic, cultural, political, and religious complexity that existed within the community during the mid-eighteenth century. In 1745, Sally and Madame Montour had divergent expectations regarding gender roles and running the household at Shamokin, due to cultural, political, and perhaps linguistic differences. While the difference in age and seniority may have contributed to the tensions between Madame Montour and Sally Ainese, the same tension does not seem to exist between Sally and elder women with seniority in her own family

By examining the early lives of Native women, such as Sally Ainese and Molly Brant, in Pennsylvania, the Ohio Valley, and Haudenosaunee territory from 1740 to 1763, I illustrate how Native women's future political and economic careers were influenced by their upbringing and family connections; their first long-term relationships; the diverse spaces where they lived, such as the Susquehanna River and the Mohawk Valley; and the political tensions of the French and Indian War. While many details of the women's early lives are unclear, tracing what we do know about each woman and her intimate, familial, political, and economic relationships demonstrates how the women learned strategies to develop careers as traders and diplomats while living in the diverse indigenous communities of western Pennsylvania and New York during the French and Indian War. During Sally's relationship with Andrew Montour, she sometimes traveled through the Pennsylvania and New York backcountry with Andrew to multiple Indian councils, while at other times she stayed at home, managing their property, raising their children, and hosting guests. Both traveling and managing the household gave Sally the opportunity to develop skills to emerge as an independent trader and diplomat after her separation from Andrew during the French and Indian War. Next, examining how Molly Brant's early life and the familial

connections fostered her relationship with William Johnson, I show how she strengthened her own political and economic status in Mohawk communities and developed valuable diplomatic skills.

### **Sally Ainse and Andrew Montour: A Multiethnic Oneida Partnership**

Sally Ainse's relationship with Andrew Montour provided multiple opportunities to support her budding economic and political labor, including extending her kinship networks, strengthening her connections to Moravian missionaries, and attending Indian councils throughout the Pennsylvania and New York backcountry. Little is known about her background or early life. What we know can be pieced together through references she makes in land petitions when she is in her early sixties and living in Upper Canada and through her marriage to Andrew Montour. Sally Ainse claimed an Oneida identity most frequently throughout her life. Occasionally she claimed a Shawnee identity. At other times, she is identified by her partners and missionaries as Nanticoke or Conoy.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps she met Andrew Montour through Oneida family and tribal connections, since Andrew's father was Oneida. Since Oneidas are matrilineal and the Shawnee, Nanticoke, and Conoy are patrilineal, her mother may have been Oneida, and her father Shawnee, with close connections to Conoys and Nanticokes.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In 1758 Andrew Montour introduces Sally as the kinswoman of a Conoy leader. Sally also had a Nanticoke brother who she maintained contact with throughout her life. Richard Peters Diary (No. 15) September-November 1758, Richard Peters Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, Vol. 44, October 25, 1758; David Zeisberger Diary, Moravian Archives (MA), Bethlehem, PA Box 152, Folder 7, November 7, 1785.

<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Greg Dowd for first suggesting this possibility to explain Sally's affiliations to Native social formations. Franck Speck, "The Nanticoke Community of Delaware," 1915, Frank G. Speck Papers, APS, Mss.Ms.126, Box 24 (referred to as Speck Papers): Ibid., "Indians of the Eastern Shore of Maryland," 1922, Speck Papers, Box 22, Folder 1.

In a land petition from the 1790s, Sally Ainse describes herself as being raised along the Susquehanna River, although she does not describe or identify the tribal affiliation of the community she was raised in.<sup>7</sup> In the same land claim, Sally also describes living with Oneida relatives along the Mohawk River after separating from Andrew Montour.<sup>8</sup> These may have been the same relatives who raised Sally along the Susquehanna. When Sally left the Montour residence in 1745, she traveled to see her mother who lived approximately eighty miles from Shamokin. If Sally's mother was Oneida, she probably traveled eighty miles north up the Susquehanna, near the present-day Pennsylvania-New York border, or perhaps further into Haudenosaunee territory, where the Susquehanna connected to Otsego Lake. The Susquehanna River begins at Otsego Lake in Haudenosaunee territory (present-day Cooperstown, New York), and flows southwest into Pennsylvania. The Mohawk River runs east to west, just a few miles north of Lake Otsego.<sup>9</sup> Sally clearly valued her maternal family, as she maintained a connection with her mother during her relationship with Andrew Montour.

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<sup>7</sup> For Sally's description of her early life and marriage, see Upper Canada Land Petitions, "Sarah Ainse" Petition 17, Microfilm Reel C-1615, A Misc. 1788-1843, RG 1 L3, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, ON. (referred to as Upper Canada Land Petition 17).

<sup>8</sup> Upper Canada Land Petition 17. Missionary Samuel Kirkland describes Sally as a "half sister of Skenandoes, one of the Oneida chiefs." Walter Pilkington, *Journal of Samuel Kirkland: 18<sup>th</sup>-century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College*, (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1980), 34.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that the approximate distance between Shamokin and the Mohawk River is about two hundred and twenty miles, almost three times the distance of eighty miles that Sally claimed to have traveled to see her mother in 1745. What could explain the discrepancy in distance? Sally may have misestimated the distance that she traveled to see her mother when she left the Montour residence in 1745, or perhaps she purposefully supplied the Moravians with a less than accurate number. Furthermore, her Oneida family may have lived along the Susquehanna River south of Otsego Lake during her childhood and had moved north to the Mohawk River in the late 1750s when Sally's intimate relationship with Andrew Montour ended. After separating from Andrew and beginning a career on her own, it seems likely that Sally would return to the community who raised her. However, since Sally also claims both an Oneida and Shawnee identity throughout her life and has ties to Nanticoke and Conoy peoples, it is also possible that Sally's family was scattered throughout Haudenosaunee territory, New York, Pennsylvania, and the Ohio Valley, and she lived with different family members throughout her childhood and after her divorce.

Sally Ainse's husband, Andrew Montour, had a complex identity. He inherited influential connections to the Oneidas from his father, an Oneida leader who died in 1729.<sup>10</sup> His mother was the skilled interpreter of French and Algonquian descent, Madame Montour. Throughout her life she worked as an interpreter at multiple important sites in the Great Lakes, including Michilimackinac, Detroit, and Albany. Like his mother, Andrew was fluent in multiple languages – English, French, Delaware, Shawnee, and one or more Haudenosaunee languages.<sup>11</sup> He followed in his mother's footsteps, becoming a noted interpreter and diplomat throughout Pennsylvania, New York, and the Ohio Valley.<sup>12</sup> During his long political career, he worked with English colonial officials, Moravian missionaries, and Native leaders and went by many names, including French Andrew, Henry Montour, Andrew (or Andreas) Sattelihi, and Echnizera or Oughsara.<sup>13</sup> Before he married Sally, Andrew was married to the granddaughter of a Delaware leader, Allompis.<sup>14</sup>

Sally Ainse's partnership with Andrew Montour supported her burgeoning political career by giving her opportunities to interact with Moravian missionaries. Andrew's partnership with Sally began in 1744 or 1745. The earlier insights about their relationship come from Moravian missionaries that visited the couple. Andrew met the Moravians in 1742 when he acted as a guide and interpreter for Count Zinzendorf, a renowned Moravian leader. In the summer of 1745, Sally received a visit from Moravian leaders David Zeisberger and Joseph Spangenberg,

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<sup>10</sup> James Merrell, "'The Cast of his Countenance': Reading Andrew Montour," in *Through a Looking Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, Fredrika J. Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Through his father's Oneida connections and his relationship to Sally, it seems almost certain that he was fluent in Oneida, along with perhaps other Haudenosaunee languages as well.

<sup>12</sup> James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 55.

<sup>13</sup> Howard Lewin, "A Frontier Diplomat: Andrew Montour," *Pennsylvania History* 33, no. 2 (April, 1966): 159.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania (MPCP), Vol. 7, (Harrisburg, PA: Theo Fenn & Co, 1838-52), 95.

before missionaries visited the Montour residence in the fall. When Zeisberger and Spangenberg reached Shamokin on July 8, they “immediately crossed over to the island to see Andrew Sattlihu’s family, to deliver a message to his wife.”<sup>15</sup> The Moravians may have been delivering a message for Andrew to Sally in Andrew’s absence, or they may have been delivering a message to Sally directly. Sally may have been introduced to the Moravians through Andrew or she may have been introduced through her own family.<sup>16</sup> Either way, Sally’s relationship with Andrew provided her with more opportunities to build relationships with the Moravians.

Yet Andrew Montour’s career as interpreter, diplomat, emissary, and go-between made life difficult for Sally Ainese. In the five years from 1746 to 1751 Sally Ainese moved several times with Andrew Montour: from Shamokin to the Ohio Valley, from the Ohio Valley back to Pennsylvania to property on Conodoguinet Creek, and then to a nearby property on the Juniata River. In the spring of 1746, approximately six-months after Andrew’s absence caused tensions between Sally and his mother, the family left Shamokin and crossed the Appalachian Mountains. Madame Montour joined them.<sup>17</sup> The family arrived in Miami and Shawnee territory south of Lake Erie. The Appalachians, a densely wooded mountain range, now separated Sally from her mother who she visited in 1745. Andrew’s motivation for the move is unclear. He had an aunt living among the Miamis in the area, and he could have been strengthening his relationship with local Native peoples.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Sally’s family connections to the Shawnees contributed to the move.

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<sup>15</sup> “Spangenberg’s Notes of travel to Onondaga in 1745,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 3, no. 1 (1879): 64.

<sup>16</sup> When Sally is living at Detroit she visits a nearby Moravian settlement to visit her brother Samuel, a Christian Indian is described as Nanticoke by the Moravians in this instance. David Zeisberger Diary, MA, Box 152, Folder 7, November 7, 1785.

<sup>17</sup> Merrell, “Cast of his Countenance,” 25; MPCP Vol. 5, 762; Weiser to Spangenberg, May 5, 1746, MA, Box 121, Folder 8, Item 1.

<sup>18</sup> MPCP, Vol. 3, 295.

At some point in 1748, the Montour family left the Ohio Country and returned to the Susquehanna area. They settled about fifty-five miles south of Shamokin near Conodoguinet Creek. Andrew Montour started to build a house and hired a builder from Philadelphia to begin construction. However, the Governor's Council of Pennsylvania refused to acknowledge Andrew's claim to the land.<sup>19</sup> With their home threatened, the next several years were likely tense for the Montours. In 1751, Andrew sought permission from the Onondaga and from the Governor's Council at Philadelphia to move to a new property in the Kittochtinny Hills near the Juniata River's intersection with the Susquehanna River.<sup>20</sup> The Haudenosaunee were noncommittal, but Robert Hamilton, the governor of Pennsylvania, granted Andrew permission to reside on lands that were not yet purchased from Indians by the colonial government of Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup> The family moved to a one hundred and forty-three acre property just south of the Juniata River. The acreage was north of Kittochtinny Mountain and west of the Susquehanna, on a small waterway called Montour's Run, near its junction with Sherman's Creek.<sup>22</sup> The new property was only about fifteen miles north of the Conodoguinet property. While Andrew found a new home for his family, he continued to travel frequently to the Ohio Country, Pennsylvania, and Haudenosaunee territory, acting as an interpreter at political councils. As result, Sally Ainse was left to maintain the property and the household.

These moves differed from the seasonal migrations of most Oneida women. Many Native women in the Great Lakes had a history of mobility, including Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Shawnee women: they migrated seasonally, returning every to year to the best places for

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<sup>19</sup>For more on Andrew's challenges concerning the property, see Merrell, "Cast of his Countenance," 30.

<sup>20</sup>Colonial Records of Pennsylvania (PCR), Series V, (Harrisburg, PA: T. Fenn & co., 1831-53), 567.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail* Vol. 2, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1977), 227.

gathering, farming, fishing, and hunting.<sup>23</sup> The seasons and the resources the land produced in the various seasons traditionally governed native women's mobility, and the seasonal rounds that Native women participated in were essential to the economy of the community.<sup>24</sup> However, unlike most Oneida women, seasonal rounds did not govern Sally Ainese's mobility during her intimate partnership with Andrew Montour. Oneida and many other Native women's mobility would have been organized around food sources and resources to provide for their families. However, Sally had to adapt to the new environments, discover new food sources, and develop other strategies to provide for her family in potentially unfamiliar territory, perhaps with limited help from other Native women.

Sally Ainese's domestic life was also disrupted by her husband's drinking. Andrew Montour was a notoriously heavy drinker and fan of rum.<sup>25</sup> He was certainly not alone in imbibing: Native and British peoples frequently consumed large amounts of alcohol, and at times, the intoxication of Natives frustrated British officials.<sup>26</sup> In March of 1753, Andrew was arrested, probably due to his drinking.<sup>27</sup> Other employees of the Pennsylvania Company were reluctant to pay the fifty pound fine to save him the sentence: "Indeed I would have suffered him to have gone to jail for he is an expensive man having a wife who takes up Goods at any rate and to any value, but as he is going to Onondago in a publick character and is lately chosen a member of the Onondago Council for the Ohio Indians it may be dangerous to the Publick to

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<sup>23</sup> Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 2013), 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Merrell, "Cast of his Countenance," 27.

<sup>26</sup> Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 136; William S. Dunn Jr., *Frontier Profit and Loss: The British Army and the Fur Traders, 1760-1764*, (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 95

<sup>27</sup> Lewin, "Frontier Diplomat," 157.

suffer him to be imprisoned.”<sup>28</sup> It appears that Andrew’s tendency towards heavy drinking and Sally’s extravagant spending habits were frustrating colonial officials. However, the same officials required Andrew as an ally, due to his extensive political connections within multiple Native social formations. Sally’s economic situation had improved since she was living at the small residence in Shamokin. She had gone from very poor living conditions to “taking up goods at any rate and value” which contributed to her husband being viewed as an “expensive man.” While her husband’s political connections may have helped to finance her improved lifestyle, the phrasing she “takes up Goods at any rate and to any value” indicates that Sally was already purchasing goods for herself and her household.

Sally Ainese had three children with Andrew Montour between 1746 and 1755. The extent to which this affected her political career is unclear. However, as the political tensions of the French and Indian War increased, Sally would continue to find new ways to enter the market place and continue to take up goods, expanding her career as a trader.

### **The Beginnings of Sally Ainese’s Political Career in the French and Indian War**

Andrew Montour’s involvement in the French and Indian War launched the official beginning to Sally Ainese’s political career. Around the outbreak of the war, she was often alone managing the family properties while Andrew traveled to political councils in the Ohio Valley, at Logstown Pennsylvania, and at Winchester Virginia.<sup>29</sup> These councils, however, brought him

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<sup>28</sup> Letter to Richard Hockey from Richard Peters, 1753. *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 39, no. 2 (April 1915): 239.

<sup>29</sup> At some of these conferences Andrew Montour played a major role. For instance, at Logstown the Virginians and Haudenosaunee were discussing the 1744 Treaty of Lancaster. The Virginians claimed that the Haudenosaunee had already agreed to cede these lands, which they used as their hunting territory, and the Virginians were asking the Indians from the Ohio Valley to confirm the treaty and permit British settlement. In response, Andrew Montour and

into contact with a young George Washington, who would send Sally Ainese her first recorded invitation to participate in a council. Through George, Andrew was further drawn into the building tensions between the French and English over control of the forks of the Ohio River: whichever power controlled the forks had access to the interior of the continent, regardless of whether they were interested in the territory as a resource for furs or as space for new settlements.<sup>30</sup>

Sally Ainese may have attended some of the important councils with her husband, but she also was left to maintain their household and raise their children during Andrew Montour's extended absences on expeditions throughout western Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley. In the spring of 1754, the French captured the small Virginian fort at the forks of the Ohio River and renamed it Fort Duquesne. In response, Washington and his troops invaded, intending to recapture the forks of the Ohio River. Following one confrontation, they began to construct their own fort eighty-three feet in diameter, named Fort Necessity, upon which they could defend themselves and recapture the forks of the Ohio River.<sup>31</sup> In June of 1754, Andrew Montour met up with George Washington and his troops at the fort and attended a council arranged by

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Tancharison, the Delaware Half-King, created a trap of their own. According to historian Richard White, "they reasoned, and the Ohio Indians later pressed the point, that if the Virginians had to ask permission to build on the land, then they did not own it. And in agreeing to recognize the larger cession, they were merely deferring the matter to Onondaga." The following year, Andrew Montour denied that the Indians had ever sold or released the Ohio Country. William Darlington, *Christopher Gist's journals: with historical, geographical and ethnological notes and biographies of his contemporaries*, (Pittsburgh: J.R. Weldin & Co., 1893), 49, 165-6; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 236; Letter to Richard Hockey from Richard Peters, 1753, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 239.

<sup>30</sup>Washington was instructed to deliver a notice of trespass to any French officers in forts in the Ohio Valley, and to establish alliances with Native social formations in the valley. George Croghan was recruited as an interpreter and advisor on Indian affairs, and Andrew Montour was also recruited to command a contingent of American scouts and to offer presents to the Miamis and Delawares. George Washington, *Journal of Colonel George Washington, commanding a detachment of Virginia troops, sent by Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia, across the Alleghany Mountains, in 1754*, (Albany: J. Munsell's Sons, 1893), 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-7.

Washington with the Delawares, Shawnees, Haudenosaunee.<sup>32</sup> In early July, the English lost a major battle with the French at the fort. While other Native allies left Fort Necessity before the battle, Andrew Montour stayed and fought with the English. Andrew was also one of only eight Native guides when he served with the English a year later when General Edward Braddock marched on Fort Duquesne in the Battle of Monongahela. Before the English defeat at Fort Necessity, many other Native peoples were already gathered at the fort—not only warriors, but also families including numerous women and children. Between the Native families and British reinforcements arriving from the colonies, the specter of hunger loomed over the fort.<sup>33</sup>

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1755, less than three months after Edward Braddock’s failed expedition, George Washington wrote to Andrew Montour, asking him to visit Fort Cumberland and to bring Sally Ainese as she will be “paid the best wage and be well provided for.”<sup>34</sup> Had George met Sally or had he only heard about her from Andrew Montour, George Croghan, John Harris, and other mutual acquaintances? Since George Washington was willing to pay Sally Ainese “the best wage” separately from her husband, it is possible they had met previously in person. Did Sally meet Washington while traveling to councils with Andrew? Did they meet at Fort Necessity? It is possible Sally and her children were one of the Native families gathered at the fort in June 1754. Sally’s potential presence at the fort raises several other questions. Was she involved in the Indian councils that occurred at the Fort between Washington, Haudenosaunee, Shawnees, and Delawares that her husband attended? Sally’s multi-ethnic,

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<sup>32</sup> Washington, *Journal of Colonel*, 102; Alan Axelrod, *A Savage Empire: Trappers, Traders, Tribes, and the Wars the Made America* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011), 182-9; White, *The Middle Ground*, 237-41.

<sup>33</sup> Axelrod, *A Savage Empire*, 182.

<sup>34</sup> Letter to Andrew Montour from George Washington, September 19, 1755, George Washington Papers, Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799: Letterbook 1, Aug. 11, 1754 - Dec. 25, 1755, Library of Congress (LOC), Washington, D.C., 204-5, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/>, accessed September 20, 2014.

Oneida and Shawnee background would have been useful. Regardless of whether she was directly involved in the council, did she share her husband's apparent loyalty to Washington and the British? If her own Shawnee or Oneida family members were involved in the councils, did their agendas differ from Andrew Montour's? How would Sally have navigated these differences? Was Sally attempting to secure food sources for the hungry Native women and children camped near the fort? Supplies and provisions were tight at Fort Necessity, and Sally had previous experience with providing for large groups of visitors. It is impossible to determine the answers to these questions with any certainty, but the questions themselves illustrate the complicated familial and political webs that Sally Ainese found herself enmeshed in during the build up to the French and Indian War.

George Washington's September 1755 letter is also the first documentary evidence of Sally Ainese being paid a wage for her political labor and of her direct involvement with the French and Indian War. George knew Andrew well and his specific request for Andrew Montour *and* Sally Ainese suggests she had some language or cultural skills that Andrew lacked. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, Washington sent another letter to Montour reiterating his wishes: "I wrote you a letter of invitation sometime ago, desiring yourself, your family, and friendly Indians to come and reside among us."<sup>35</sup> Washington goes on to say since Montour had not responded to his September letter, he is "induced to send another express with the same invitation: being pleased that I have it in my power to do something for you, on a better footing that it ever has been done."<sup>36</sup> Referencing their history during expeditions through the Ohio Valley, and fighting at the Battle of Fort Necessity and the Battle of Monongahela, Washington wrote that he has "had

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<sup>35</sup> Letter to Andrew Montour from George Washington, October 10, 1755, *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

sufficient proofs” of Montour’s courage. He also assured Montour that he had the “chief command” and was “invested with power to treat [Native peoples] as Brethren and allies; which [he] is sorry to say, has not been of late.”<sup>37</sup> Washington appears to be referencing Native peoples’ increased sentiment of distrust towards the British, due to mistreatment by Braddock. Yet despite his long history with Andrew Montour, it was clearly important to George Washington that Sally Ainese also attend since he requested her by name and assured she would be paid the best wage and be well provided for. Washington was desperately searching for Native allies who could provide intelligence on Native peoples allied to the French, since the insurgence of the Ohioan Delawares and Shawnees had cut-off the English from all information on French plans and movements in the Ohio Valley.<sup>38</sup> Sally’s multiethnic connections to the Nanticokes, Conoys, and Shawnees would have been particularly valuable in 1755. Sally not only had desirable and valuable skills during the French and Indian War, she had skills that were rare enough that even her mixed-ancestry husband from a lineage of renowned interpreters did not possess them.<sup>39</sup>

At her home with Andrew on the Juanita River, Sally Ainese experienced a similar mix of challenges and opportunities as those that had characterized her time at Shamokin. A few months after the Battle of Fort Necessity, in September 1754, Conrad Weiser, an interpreter and colonial official, visited Andrew Montour and Sally Ainese’s property, where he found about fifteen Native men, women, and children visiting.<sup>40</sup> Sally killed a sheep for the visitors and also

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory Evans Dowd, “‘Insidious Friends’: Gift-Giving and the British Cherokee Alliance,” in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, eds. Andrew Cayton & Frederika Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 125

<sup>39</sup> Washington does not clarify what kind of work Sally would perform for compensation. She may have provided linguistic or diplomatic skills for the war.

<sup>40</sup> PCR, Vol. 6, 151.

complained that the visitors had done great damage to the Indian corn. Did Andrew bring the Native visitors to his residence after the Battle of Fort Necessity so they could stock up on supplies and food? Or were these Native peoples displaced from their homes due to the violent conflicts breaking out throughout Pennsylvania between the French, the English, and their Native allies? Sally's domestic situations at Shamokin and at the Juniata River a decade later are similar: in both instances she was responsible for farming and agricultural labor such as butchering livestock and harvesting corn, to feed her not only her family, but also visitors.

The early years of Sally Ainese's marriage to Andrew Montour entailed many hardships: cramped and crowded living conditions; pressure to provide food and shelter to numerous Native and non-Native visitors; maintaining the household during Andrew's absences; legal troubles and jail time; Andrew's frequent indulgence in alcohol; and multiple changes in residences motivated by Andrew's involvement with regional politics, sometimes over long distances. Despite the stress of these travels and Sally Ainese's duties at home, she gained valuable skills and political connections to men like George Croghan and George Washington.

### **Intimate Conflicts, Custody, and New Beginnings**

Sally Ainese experienced an important change in early 1756: her marriage with Andrew Montour ended. Despite the major disruptions that this change created in her life, including separation from her children, it ultimately led her to an independent career as a trader in Haudenosaunee territory. Andrew spent significantly more time on the property between December of 1754 and May of 1755 than in the previous years. Perhaps more time at home increased rather than alleviated the stress on their relationship. Andrew was also at risk of losing

his Juniata River property, and this must have increased the strain. After Richard Hamilton, the governor of Pennsylvania, granted Montour rights to the property, Conrad Weiser and Robert Peters (who previously denied Montour's Conodoguinet property claim) purchased the Juniata Valley from the Haudenosaunee at Albany in 1754. This purchase included Andrew Montour's tract of land and threatened his homestead.<sup>41</sup> If Andrew spent more time at home and drank more due to the stresses of the Juniata Valley purchase and the conflicts of the French and Indian War, his demeanor may have been volatile.<sup>42</sup> Increased access to alcohol, and in particular rum, generated a host of social ills in Native communities during the French and Indian War, including domestic violence.<sup>43</sup> Andrew's heavy drinking could have even led to domestic violence at the Juniata River property before the separation.<sup>44</sup>

While the specific reasons for the split are unclear, they separated between December of 1755 and April of 1756. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1755, the Pennsylvania Council received a petition from "*Andrew Montour, Indian Interpreter . . . [who] since the late unfortunate Defeat at Monongahela (where he suffered considerable damage) has been greatly straitened in his Circumstances, and is indebted to sundry Persons in several sums of Money, for which his goods are now taken in Execution, by Reason whereof his Family is greatly distressed.*"<sup>45</sup> The petition states Montour was employed in the service of the British against the French, and he "has left his

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<sup>41</sup> While Andrew had kinship and political connections to certain groups of Haudenosaunee, they had multiple reasons to sell the land to Pennsylvania. Perhaps the Haudenosaunee were more invested in demonstrating and affirming their collective control over land and territory than the individual rights of the multi-ethnic Oneida Andrew Montour. Perhaps, the Haudenosaunee envisioned the Juniata Valley as a land of lines dividing Native peoples from settlers, rather than Montour's vision of a place where lines blurred and diverse peoples came together.

<sup>42</sup> For evidence of Andrew's temper, see an incident that Weiser describes, Hanna, *The Wilderness Trail*, Vol. 1, 232

<sup>43</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 135.

<sup>44</sup> Sally was busy starting her own political career, and Andrew was spending more time around the house. On top of that, Andrew was likely anxious over his property that was threatened by recent land deals may have contributed to gendered tensions in the Montour household.

<sup>45</sup> Pennsylvania Archives (PA), Series 8, Vol. 5, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Archives, 1914), 4093.

wife and Children in this Province; he therefore humbly prays that this House will be pleased to afford his said Family, during his Absence, such Relief, and provide for them in such Manner, as their Circumstances may require.”<sup>46</sup> Andrew Montour’s petition highlights several important characteristics about his relationship with Sally in December of 1755. First, he and Sally Ainse appeared to still be partners in early December of 1755 since he requests that the province of Pennsylvania help provide for Sally and the children in his absence. Second, Andrew appears to have experienced financial difficulties since the Battle of Monongahela in the summer of 1755. Perhaps these difficulties also contributed towards tension between him and Sally. While his comment that his family is “greatly distressed” could only be referring to the economic condition of Sally and the children, it could also be referencing tensions developing between Andrew and Sally. This petition was also filed approximately three months after George Washington wrote to Andrew Montour requesting his services and inviting Sally Ainse and offering to pay her wages and ensure she is “well provided for.” George’s letter indicates that both Andrew and Sally had various means of providing for themselves and their families in the fall of 1755. Perhaps Andrew exaggerated the economic distress of his family to the Pennsylvania Council as a strategy to gain support from the province after the province had purchased the Juniata Valley, including Montour’s property, a year before.

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1756, less than six months after Andrew Montour’s petition to the council of Pennsylvania, a council was held between Robert Hamilton, the governor of Pennsylvania and some Native peoples. The council gave Andrew Montour custody of his three children with Sally Ainse, and a daughter by his former wife.<sup>47</sup> In February of 1756, approximately two months

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> MPCP Vol. 7, 95-6.

before Sally lost custody of three of her children, the province of Pennsylvania paid an account to Hannah Boyd, “Entertainment and Necessaries supplied to Andrew Montour’s wife and children.”<sup>48</sup> Hannah was a colonial woman in Philadelphia who was a caretaker for the Montour children after Sally and Andrew’s divorce. Perhaps Andrew’s December 1755 petition had swayed the council of Pennsylvania, and in response to Andrew’s petition and allegiance to the British, they provided financial support for his family while he continued his political labor for the province of Pennsylvania. However, the wording “Andrew Montour’s wife and children” does not necessarily indicate that Montour and Ainsie were still engaged in an intimate relationship. In August of 1756—approximately four months after the council where Sally lost custody—the province of Pennsylvania “paid Sundries for Andrew Montour and his wife and children.”<sup>49</sup> It seems that Sally would still be referred to as Andrew Montour’s wife for several years after they separated.<sup>50</sup>

On April 17, the governor had several conferences with Conrad Weiser, Native peoples, and the Commissioners about “the Indian Presents, Rewards of Scarroyady and Montour, and other Matters.”<sup>51</sup> Most of this conference focused on Weiser and whether or not he was willing to commission a company of Indians along with his own company in the war. However, there was a memorandum from April 20<sup>th</sup> added to this conference stating:

the Indians had a long conference with the Governor. They put Andrew Montour’s children under his care, as well the three that are here, to be independent of the Mother, as a Boy of twelve years old, that he had by a former wife, a Delaware, a grand daughter of Allomipis. They added, that he had a Girl among the Delawares called Kayodaghscroony, or Magdalena, and desired she might be distinguished, enquired after, and sent for, which was promised.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 5, 4183.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 4348

<sup>50</sup> For more on Sally being referred to as Andrew’s wife after their separation, see later on in this section discussing Sally’s political work at Fort Johnson. See also the Introduction and Chapter 3 for the discussions on naming.

<sup>51</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 5, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 95-6.

No further information is given about the motivations for why Andrew Montour's children were put under his care, rather than the care of Sally Ainse or his first wife. While Andrew Montour's motivations for fostering the children are unclear, he may have seen it as an economical option that would provide his children with a more diverse skillset in a changing world. The council attempted to put *all* of Andrew's children under his care—not just his children with Sally. Since the decree affected Andrew's first wife and Sally, it does not appear that Sally did anything specifically that would cause her to lose custody of her children. She may have been financially unable to provide for her children and develop her career, and chose to leave them in their father's custody. He may have believed raising and educating his children in the English language, in a colonial town would give them their best chance to succeed later in life as multi-ethnic Oneidas in a turbulent and quickly-changing landscape.

Tracing the Montour children through payments to their caregivers and guardians, we gain insights into Sally Ainse and Andrew Montour's separation. One of these caretakers was Hannah Boyd, who received multiple payments for the Montour children from 1756 to 1759. While Sally and two of her eldest children received payments from Hannah in the summer of 1756, Sally seemed to be separated from her youngest child, Debby Montour. On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1756, the province of Pennsylvania, "paid Indians Sundries for nursing Andrew Montour's youngest child."<sup>53</sup> At the time, Debby was less than a year old and separated from her mother.<sup>54</sup> Debby Montour was still being nursed two years later in the summer of 1758.<sup>55</sup> In a 1766 petition to the council of Pennsylvania by one of her caretakers, Debby Montour is described as having been

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Vol. 6, 4656

<sup>54</sup> Based on Nicholas Montour's baptism date, the payments for nursing, and the 1766 petition, Debby Montour was probably born in the fall of 1755.

<sup>55</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 6, 4860.

“supported from her infancy at public expense.”<sup>56</sup> By the fall of 1756, Sally was living in the Mohawk Valley area and gave birth to another child. Sally and Andrew Montour were listed as the parents of a boy who was baptized as Nicholas Montour in October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1756, in Albany, New York.<sup>57</sup>

Andrew Montour arranged for his children to be fostered by British families in Philadelphia, where they would be educated in colonial schools and prepared for the changing space of the eastern continent, where multiethnic, polyglot spaces like Shamokin were becoming increasingly rare and British colonial towns increasingly common. Did Sally Ainsie support Andrew Montour’s vision for their children? Did Sally lack a voice in the matter, since eighteenth-century British custom was for the father to receive custody of children?<sup>58</sup> Did Sally have financial difficulties that contributed to Andrew receiving custody of the children? After being separated from their mother by the fall of 1756, payments continued to be made for the three elder Montour children between 1756 and 1766. Their caretakers received payments for board, schooling, medicines, and clothing, such as hats and shoes.<sup>59</sup>

The continued payments from the province of Pennsylvania to the Montour’s children caregivers and educators make it tempting to believe that their father secured a comfortable life for his children. However, on May 31, 1757, less than a year after their mother lost custody, the two eldest Montour children ran away from their guardians.<sup>60</sup> A number of circumstances could

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<sup>56</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 7, 5933.

<sup>57</sup> Joel Munsell (ed.), *Munsell’s collections on the History of Albany*, Volume IV, (Albany: J Munsell, 1871), 148.

<sup>58</sup> Richard H. Chused, *Private Acts in Public Places: A Social History of Divorce in the Formative Era of American Family Law*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 69.

<sup>59</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 6, 4655, 4859, 4873, 4860; 4873, 5064, 5146, 5272, 5464; PA, Series 8, Vol. 7, 6225-6, 5782-3.

<sup>60</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 6, 4655.

have contributed to the children's unhappiness, including separation from their mother or strained relationships with their guardians.

Furthermore, Debby Montour—the last child Sally had with Andrew before their separation—also appears to have lived a life of hardship after being taken from her mother as a breast-feeding infant. On September 19, 1766 it recorded in the Pennsylvania House that:

daughter of Andrew Montour who hath been supported from her infancy at the public expense, is in immediate want of necessary clothing, and that the person with whom she now lives being a poor man, cannot keep her longer, unless he be forthwith paid the arrears of her board and schooling for the last year. It was resolved by the House that Mr. Specker be requested to take upon him the care of the said girl, so far as to defray the charges which have already accrued for her maintenance, and provide her with decent clothing, at the public expense, till she can be bound out with the consent of her father, or otherwise disposed of.<sup>61</sup>

A decade after she was separated from Sally Ainse, the province of Pennsylvania had grown tired of supporting Debby Montour. Debby risked being indentured as a servant or “otherwise disposed of.” Between Sally's two eldest children attempting to run away and Debby's situation in 1766, the Montour children do not appear to have been comfortable—economically or emotionally—after being separated from their mother.

While Sally Ainse had recently been separated from her children, the political career that Sally began during her partnership with Andrew, began to flourish. Sally had a much smaller household to care for, giving her more freedom to travel. When she and Andrew separated, she may have been in favor of her children being fostered so that she could focus on her businesses. Sally moved from Pennsylvania to the New York area between summer of 1756 (when she is last recorded as receiving payment from the province) and the fall (when Nicholas Montour was baptized). Several factors may have motivated Sally's decision to move to New York either

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<sup>61</sup> PA, Series 8, Vol. 7, 5933.

shortly before or after Nicholas' birth. In particular, Sally had Oneida relatives in the area.<sup>62</sup> Her relatives could help look after her son, as she worked as an interpreter. On March 11, 1757, Sally was employed at Fort Johnson, and acted as interpreter for a meeting between William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and a Conoy chief from Otsinigo (Chenango, present-day Binghamton). The chief also had close relations with Nanticokes. Johnson was sending wampum belts to the Conoy and Nanticokes advising them to remain loyal to the British, to be wary of the French, and to observe the miserable condition of the Delaware and Shawnees that joined the French<sup>63</sup> Andrew Montour does not appear to be present at this meeting and Sally seems to have been acting in her own capacity. Since Sally had connections to the Conoy and Nanticokes she may have been the only interpreter proficient in those languages.

A month after Sally Ainsie interpreted at Fort Johnson, Andrew Montour left Onondaga to travel to the Oneida Castle with the purpose of visiting Sally.<sup>64</sup> Even if Sally and Andrew remained friends, it seems odd he would go to Fort Johnson to visit her. They may have maintained a business relationship after their separation. Or perhaps Andrew regretted ending their relationship. It may have been genuine regret or he may have missed the role she played in maintaining the household and providing hospitality through food and lodging to visitors. Sally may have also supported his diplomatic work with her knowledge of numerous indigenous languages. In that case, he may have decided to visit Sally to seek her help or advice regarding a political matter.

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<sup>62</sup> In a late eighteenth century land petition, Sally describes living with Oneida relatives in the Mohawk Valley after separating from Andrew Montour, Upper Canada Land Petition 17.

<sup>63</sup> Sir William Johnson Papers (SWJP) Volume 9, ed. James Sullivan (Albany: The University of the State of New York 1921-65), 633-34.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 661.

Her separation from Andrew Montour and the French and Indian War allowed Sally to expand her business as a trader. In the winter and spring of 1757, Sally Ainse was based in the Mohawk Valley and travelling to important hubs in the area for trade, such as Fort Johnson and Schenectady. She developed large accounts with merchants in Schenectady, a major trading post further east down the Mohawk River from Fort Johnson. Schenectady was only about 20 miles northwest of Albany where Nicholas Montour was baptized in the fall of 1756. Daniel Campbell was one of the primary merchants in Schenectady. Important Native and non-Native peoples from the Mohawk Valley and Haudenosaunee territory further west held accounts with Campbell. In the summer of 1757, Campbell lent cash to Andrew Montour. By the fall of 1758, Sally Ainse (listed as Monture in the account books) had her own account.<sup>65</sup> Sally purchased a variety of supplies from Daniel between 1758 and 1762 including material for creating clothing like strouds of cloth, linen, thread, ribbon, and beads; food and beverage products, like cheese, raisins, mustard, allspice, chocolate, almonds, sugar, coffee, and tea; copious amounts of alcohol including cordials, Madiera, West Indian and common rum, and wine; tobacco and pipes; and a variety of other products such as gun powder, French blankets, and glass bowls.<sup>66</sup> After purchasing the goods, she would bring them to other areas, such as deeper into Haudenosaunee territory, west of the Mohawk Valley, and sell them. Sally often purchased the goods on credit and made payments in cash, furs (including beaver, fishers, fox, raccoons, otter), and goods she

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<sup>65</sup> Account Book 1756-1764, Daniel Campbell Papers, SC11062, New York State Library (NYSL), Albany, NY, Box 18, November 27, 1758, pg. 82. (referred to as Campbell Papers).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Box 16, December 29, 1759, pg. 141; February 11, 1760, pg. 150; February 20, 1762 pg. 152; March 22, 1760, pg. 155; April 24, 1760, pg. 160; July 6, 1760 pg. 176; and Box 18, November 17, 1758, pg. 82; December 13, 1758, pg. 83; December 21, 1758, pg. 84; December 29, 1758, pg. 85; January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1759, pg. 87; February 7, 1759, pg. 89; February 15, 1759, pg. 90; April 19, 1759, pg. 96; June 8, 1759, pg. 100; June 20, 1759 pg. 107; September 9, 1759 pg. 120; September 15, 1759 pg. 121.

produced, such as leggings.<sup>67</sup> She used cash for the majority of her purchases and tended to pay off her debts promptly.<sup>68</sup> For instance, on February 9, 1760 Sally received a credit for a cash payment and for a pair of leggings, and two days later, she purchased a green rug, sixty pounds of cheese, a barrel of rum, a barrel of wine, and paid for transportation of the goods.<sup>69</sup> Historians focusing on gender and economics in New York have noted that Sally's payments in cash illustrate both her own ability to obtain cash and the abilities of her customers in other areas of the Mohawk Valley to also obtain cash.<sup>70</sup> Sally Aitse continued to trade with Daniel Campbell during her time in the Mohawk Valley.

In the Mohawk Valley, Sally Aitse found a space where woman had played an active role in the fur trade during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, trekking furs to Albany and Canadian fur posts more north in the St. Lawrence Valley.<sup>71</sup> By the spring of 1760, Sally was bringing the items she acquired at Schenectady to places like Fort Johnson, where she supplied liquor for a burial at Fort Johnson on March 9.<sup>72</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century and throughout the French and Indian War, Haudenosaunee women were particularly active in the liquor trade.<sup>73</sup> During the war, Native women found ways to access market economy by trading in commodities such as furs, producing material products, such as shirts, wampum, and moccasins for sale, and selling surplus supplies.<sup>74</sup> Native women's involvement in trade and market economy increased during the war as men's productive labor was directed towards

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Box 16, pg. 134, pg. 136; November 24, 1759, pg. 137; December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1759, pg. 141; February 9, 1760, pg. 149; June 5, 1760 pg. 166; July 5, 1760, pg. 175; August 4, 1760, pg. 102; and Box 18, February 7, 1759, pg. 89; April 10, 1759 pg. 96; June 8, 1759 pg. 106; and September 9, 1759, pg. 120.

<sup>68</sup> Aileen Button Agnew, "Silent partners: the economic life of women on the frontier of colonial New York," (Ph. D. University of New Hampshire 1998), 185.

<sup>69</sup> Account Book 1756-1764, Campbell Papers, Box 16, February 9, 1760, pg. 149 and February 11, 1760, pg. 150.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Agnew, "Silent partners," 180.

<sup>72</sup> SWJP, Vol. 3, 997.

<sup>73</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 133, 136.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 135.

warfare.<sup>75</sup> By trading at forts and settlements, producing desired commodities, attending political conferences, and acting as hosts and consorts, Native women played a central role in generating and mediating cultural exchanges during the French and Indian War.<sup>76</sup> However, few women in the area purchased as large quantities of any item for cash as Sally. Her generous use of cash and her continuing, long-term contact with influential merchants emphasizes the economic influence she wielded within the syncretic British-Haudenosaunee economy of the area.<sup>77</sup>

Sally Ainese's success as a trader allowed her to make her first, independent land purchase. In the summer of 1762, Sally brought wine to Fort Stanwix and met with Mohawk leaders in order to receive some land for her youngest child, Nicholas. She acquired a six-mile tract of land that stretched from two bastions of Fort Stanwix from her Oneida relatives.<sup>78</sup> Fort Stanwix was a colonial fort erected in 1758 by the British to protect the Oneida Carrying place, or the portage between the Mohawk River and Lake Oneida. The Oneida Carrying place was part of the major transportation route between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes: people and goods took the Hudson River at the Atlantic Ocean up to the Mohawk River, which brought them to the Oneida Carrying Place, where they portaged to Wood Creek, which flowed into Lake Oneida. From Lake Oneida, travelers would continue down the Oswego River that eventually flowed into Lake Ontario near Fort Oswego. Along with a strategic location near major waterways, Sally also wanted the land to be near the old Oneida Castle which was only about

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>77</sup> Agnew, "Silent Partners," 183.

<sup>78</sup> SWJP, Vol. 10, 481.

fifteen miles southwest of Fort Stanwix, so the British would be unable to lay claim to it—a strategy that would turn out to be unsuccessful.<sup>79</sup>

At the the time of her meeting with the Mohawks, Sally Ainse was also in her last trimester of pregnancy. On September 15, she gave birth to a boy named “Christian Chamble.”<sup>80</sup> In the Fort Herkimer church records Sally is listed as “Sara Monduir auf Fort Stanwix.” The father is listed as “John Chamble, ein Major.”<sup>81</sup> The records seem to refer to John Campbell, a Scottish man who immigrated to North America and began a military career in 1744.<sup>82</sup> Sally and John did not maintain a relationship after the pregnancy: John was in Cuba when Christian was born, and when he returned to mainland North America, he settled in the St. Lawrence Valley where he married a French woman from a prominent family.<sup>83</sup> In the fall of 1762, Sally had acquired land near Fort Stanwix and was living on it with her two sons—Nicholas, who was 6 years old, and Christian, an infant. Some of her Oneida relatives may have also lived on the property to help her raise her two youngest children.

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<sup>79</sup> For Sally’s description of her purchase of the Fort Stanwix property, see Petition 17. For her struggles over the land see Sir William Johnson’s denial of her deed, Jelles Fonda affidavit, July 18 1785, in *Calendar of New York Colonial Manuscripts Indorse Land Papers*, Volume XXXIX, (Albany: Weed Parsons & Co, 1864), Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 407.

<sup>80</sup> See Records of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of German Flatts in Herkimer, town of German Flatts, Herkimer County, N.Y. (edited by Royden Woodward Vosburgh and transcribed by the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society), Newberry Library (Chicago, IL), Microfilm 938 Reel 5 No.4.

<sup>81</sup> From the transcription, it is unclear if the “auf Fort Stanwix” refers to Sally or John. In the transcription “auf Fort Stanwix” is listed to the right of Sally’s name, but directly underneath “ein Major.” The entry could be referencing that Sally has property by Fort Stanwix, or it could be referencing that John was a major at Fort Stanwix. I have been unable to find any information on a John Campbell (or related name) working as a major at Fort Stanwix. However, I have found a John Campbell who worked as a lieutenant on military expeditions throughout New York in the 1750s. By March of 1762, Campbell was promoted to captain and he was deployed for Cuba. Sally gave birth in mid-September of the same year, and the timing indicates she conceived the child before John left for Cuba, probably in January or February. For more on Campbell, see Douglas Leighton, “Campbell, John (1721-95),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/campbell\\_john\\_1731\\_95\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/campbell_john_1731_95_4E.html), accessed August 20, 2016.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

When Sally's decade-long intimate partnership with Andrew Montour had ended, she found opportunities in the political turbulence of the French and Indian War to operate independently as a trader and interpreter in the Mohawk Valley, where there was a long history of Native women's involvement with the fur trade. Her burgeoning business and her Oneida connections allowed her to purchase land for herself and her youngest sons near Fort Stanwix. Sally was separated from Andrew, but she was committed to developing her career and acquiring property to support herself and her children.

### **Molly Brant's Mohawk Upbringing and the Persistence of the Mohawk Valley Legend**

Molly Brant was born in the Mohawk Valley, probably around 1736, making her approximately eight years younger than Sally.<sup>84</sup> During her early years, she was raised by a Protestant Christian Mohawk couple, Margaret and Peter (Tehowagwengaraghkwin) who were registered at the Chapel in Fort Hunter, near the lower Mohawk Castle of Tionondoroge.<sup>85</sup> However, the local church records at Fort Hunter do not clearly indicate if Peter is Molly's biological father or a stepfather. The christening records for April 13, 1735 list a child named Mary as the daughter of Margaret and Cannasware. If this child is Molly (who also went by the name of Mary throughout her life), Peter was not her biological father and she had a different father than her younger brother Joseph Brant who was born in 1743.<sup>86</sup> Joseph's father was named

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<sup>84</sup> Lois M. Feister & Bonnie Pulis, "Molly Brant: Her Domestic and Political Roles," in *Northeastern Indian Lives 1632-1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press: 1996), 298; James Taylor Carson, "Molly Brant: From Clan Mother to Loyalist Chief," in *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, ed. Theda Perdue (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>85</sup> Carson, "Molly Brant," 51; Gretchen Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant, and Their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation," *Ontario History*, 81, 1989; 235-250.

<sup>86</sup> Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807, Man of Two Worlds*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 1984), 40; Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 298.

Peter (Tehowaghwengaraghkwin), who also appears to raise Molly during her early years.<sup>87</sup>

There are no baptisms in 1736 for a Molly or Mary, so either year is a possibility.

Sometime after February 6, 1742, Molly Brant's parents, Margaret and Peter, moved into the Ohio Country for several years, where Molly's brother, Joseph Brant (Thayendenaga), was born in the spring of 1743.<sup>88</sup> Like his sister Molly, he was a member of the Wolf Clan through his mother's lines.<sup>89</sup> At some point while the family lived in the Ohio Country, Peter died and Margaret brought her children back to the Mohawk Valley between 1746 and 1750.<sup>90</sup> Andrew and Sally Montour moved to the same area in the spring of 1746. It is possible the Montour and Brant family's time in the Ohio country overlapped by a few months or by several years. Sally, a late teenager in a new marriage, and Molly, a child of about seven or eight years old, might have even lived among the same communities.

Back in the Mohawk Valley, Margaret settled at Canajoharie, also known as the Upper Mohawk Castle, located on the south side of the Mohawk River, thirty miles from lower castle, Tionondoroge located at Fort Hunter.<sup>91</sup> Margaret began an intimate partnership, with a man named Lykas.<sup>92</sup> However, the partnership was short-lived as Lykas died by the spring of 1750,

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<sup>87</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Carson, "Molly Brant," 51; Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," 236; Kelsay *Joseph Brant*, 39, 43.

<sup>89</sup> In her biography of Joseph Brant, Kelsay states that there is some evidence that Joseph Brant was descended on both sides of his family from Wyandot (Huron) captives taken on the north shore of Lake Ontario and adopted into the Longhouse. However, her only source for this theory is William Stone's nineteenth century biography, and Stone also does not provide an archival source for the claim. Kelsay, 43; William L. Stone, *The Life and Times of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1865), XX.

<sup>90</sup> Kelsay explains that a man named Joseph is baptized in the Fort Hunter records on February 16, 1744, but this date seems rather early for Margaret's return. Furthermore, this particular Joseph was likely an adult, since his parents were not listed at the time of his baptism. Kelsay suggests Joseph Brant's baptism is not recorded since Margaret probably returned to the area when the Anglican clergy Barclay left Fort Hunter, and before Reverend John Oglivie came to replace him. Kelsay *Joseph Brant*, 44.

<sup>91</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 44; Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 298.

<sup>92</sup> He may have come back with Margaret and her children from the Ohio Country, or their partnership may have begun when she returned to the Mohawk Valley.

during a war-party to fight the Catawbas (similar to Andrew Montour's father).<sup>93</sup> Despite the upheaval in Margaret's family, they were financially comfortable and lived in a two-story, European style house filled with middle class furnishings.<sup>94</sup> Margaret supported the family by engaging in the liquor and ginseng trade.<sup>95</sup>

Between the end of 1752 and the spring of 1753, Margaret Brant gave birth to a young boy. The boy's father was a leader, Brant Kanagaradunkwa, a wealthy man who owned a horse and wagon, some fat cows, and a good house near Fort Hunter.<sup>96</sup> He was also a friend of the Irish trader, William Johnson, who had immigrated from Ireland in 1738 and lived across the Mohawk River.<sup>97</sup> Margaret and Brant's child was baptized on March 4, 1753, as "Jacob." Little else is known about this brother of Molly Brant, but a few months later on September 9, 1753, Margaret and Brant were married. Brant moved to Canajoharie and lived with Margaret, Molly's brother Joseph (who was about ten years old), and Molly (a young woman of seventeen or eighteen years).<sup>98</sup> By 1754, Molly Brant lived in the best house in Canajoharie due to her mother's marriage. The house had a stone cellar, clapboard siding, a fireplace, glass windows, plaster walls, and out buildings.<sup>99</sup> Molly also traveled with her stepfather to Philadelphia that same year. On their way home to Canajoharie, they stopped at Albany and a military officer praised her looks, and "fell in love with Ms. Mary Brant."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Carson, "Molly Brant," 51.

<sup>95</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 45.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>97</sup> Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 298.

<sup>98</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 53-4.

<sup>99</sup> David B. Guldenzopf, "The Colonial Transformation of Mohawk Society," (Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1986), 104-12; Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 300.

<sup>100</sup> Arthur S. Wolcott (ed.), *Daniel Claus's Narrative of His Relations with Sir William Johnson and Experiences in the Lake George Fight* (New York: Society of Colonial War in the State of New York, 1904), 8.

. While little is known about the meeting of Sally Ainese and Andrew Montour, there is a common and persistent myth about the meeting between Molly Brant and William Johnson that appears in local history sources on the Mohawk Valley and in biographies of William Johnson, Joseph Brant, and Molly Brant. The general idea of the story is that Molly first attracted William's attention during a militia muster, when she leaped upon the back of a horse behind an officer and hung on as the horse ran about the field. However, this myth obscures the existing relationship between their families. William Stone's popular and often-cited 1838 biography of Joseph Brant contains an in-depth description of the mythic meeting. I quote Stone at length, for the full effect of his description:

The traditions of the Mohawk Valley state, that the acquaintance of Sir William with Molly had a rather wild and romantic commencement. The story runs, that she was very sprightly and very beautiful Indian girl of about sixteen when he first saw her. It was a regimental militia muster, where Molly was one of a multitude of spectators. One of the field-officers coming near her upon a prancing steed, by way of banter she asked permission to mount behind him. Not supposing she could perform the exploit, he said she might. At the word, she leaped upon the crupper with the agility of a gazelle. The horse sprang off at full speed, and, clinging to the officer, her blanket flying, and her dark stresses streaming in the wind, she flew about the parade-ground swift as an arrow, to the infinite merriment of the collected multitude. The Baronet, who was a witness of the spectacle, admiring the spirit of the young squaw, and becoming enamored of her person, took her home to become his wife.<sup>101</sup>

In *Johnson of the Mohawks: A Biography of Sir William Johnson, Irish Immigrant, Mohawk War chief, American Solider, and Empire Builder* published in 1930, Arthur Pound describes a condensed version of Stone's encounter: "We know of no livelier tale in American folk lore than this one, and rejoice that there is no evidence to destroy the veteran valley tradition that the Colonel, beholding the light-limbed maiden leap lightly on the crupper of an officer's steed, fell head-over-heels in love with her."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Stone, *The Life and Times*, 2387 (footnote).

<sup>102</sup> Arthur C. Pound, *Johnson of the Mohawks: A Biography of Sir William Johnson, Irish Immigrant, Mohawk War chief, American Solider, and Empire Builder* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 140.

James Thomas Flexner's 1959 biography of William Johnson, *Mohawk Baronet*, provides a highly gendered, racialized, and sexualized description of the encounter. Flexner begins by recounting the "Mohawk Valley legend." Flexner's account is more detailed than Pound's and more reminiscent of Stone's:

According to Valley legend, Johnson was trying to bolster morale on his frontier with a militia muster when a royal officer cavorted up on a highbred steed. From a clump of trees, a beautiful Indian maiden was drawn to the beautiful horse. She touched the gleaming flanks, fingered the silver bridle, and then with one light, graceful movement leaped from the ground and landed behind the officer, astride on the horse's bare back. He winked at the watchers; he made his mount gallop, turn, spin, rear, and leap. The girl's comely legs tightened, but she sat upright, her hands relaxed at her sides, her black hair streaming, a banner of youth and joy. The backwoodsmen flocked to admire, and the great Sir William helped the Mohawk maiden dismount.<sup>103</sup>

In their descriptions, the authors constantly draw attention to Molly Brant's physical beauty, long dark hair, maidenhood, and athletic agility. Molly was a "sprightly and very beautiful Indian girl," or in other words, a "light-limbed maiden," who leapt lightly upon the crupper of the prancing horse with the "agility of a gazelle" while the horse sprang off at full stream, causing her to cling to the officer with her "dark tresses streaming in the wind." It was these qualities that caused William Johnson to fall deeply in love with Molly. Flexner seems to further emphasize Molly Brant's connection to animals and the earth by describing her as entering the scene from behind a clump of trees and being attracted to the horse by some unknown force. An affinity seems to be drawn between Molly and the horse, and the description of the horse's flanks and bare back further exoticizes the scene. Molly's physical body is described as sprightly, light-limbed, and with animal-like agility reinforcing racial stereotypes of the nineteenth and early twentieth century where Native peoples are seen as less civilized. Molly's sexuality and race are simultaneously emphasized through descriptions of her physical beauty, including her dark,

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<sup>103</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet: A Biography of Sir William Johnson*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 185.

flowing hair and emphasizing her maidenhood. Flexner also describes how Molly Brant was “at twenty-one or twenty-two, a ripe age among the short-lived Indians, she had seen much of her forest world, had sat at many a council fire.”<sup>104</sup> Once again, he associates Molly with the natural world (this time with the forest, previously with the trees and horse), reinforcing the noble savage trope that Native peoples are inherently closer to nature. Depicting Native people as savage and primitive (with short-lived lives) also reinforces the vanishing Indian trope that Native peoples would disappear in the face of EuroAmerican “progress” and “civilization.”<sup>105</sup> As a sexualized, Native woman, Molly partakes in physical exploits and challenges that would be viewed as improper for European or non-Native women at the time. However, a young Native woman partaking in these activities is portrayed as exoticized and sexually enticing.

Native literary theorist Shari Huhndorf explains that Native women have historically represented the “New World,” and as result their sexuality stood in as a metaphor for the willing submission of Native societies and the availability of their territories, “virginity” that ostensibly offered itself for capture.<sup>106</sup> Flexner’s sexualized descriptions of Molly Brant and his association of her with the natural world reinforce the trope of Native women’s sexuality representing the “available” land of the New World. Huhndorf and other contemporary Native women have issued critiques of the ways colonization has exerted social control through the management of Native women’s bodies.<sup>107</sup> Jean Barman argues that colonization’s campaign to control Native sexuality so profoundly sexualized Native women that they were rarely permitted any other type

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>105</sup> For more on the noble savage trope, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 87. For more on the vanishing Indian trope, see Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, xiii, 42-3, 135-7, 139-43; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 64-5, 77-8.

<sup>106</sup> Shari Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 106.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Also see, Audra Simpson, “From White into Red: Captivity Narratives as Alchemies of Race and Citizenship,” *American Quarterly* 60, No. 2 (June 2008): 251-8.

of identity, and as a result, even indigenous women's agency was sexualized..<sup>108</sup> Molly Brant's agency in the development of her relationship with William Johnson is clearly reduced to her overt sexuality in the retellings of the Mohawk Valley myth by Stone, Pound, and Flexner.

Since Molly Brant and William Johnson probably met through Brant Kanagaradunkwa, it is extremely unlikely that there is any truth to the legend. Even Flexner admits that there is little historical accuracy to the story and explains, "Probably this account of Johnson's recognition of his greatest adoration is correct only in its mood of wonder."<sup>109</sup> William Johnson travelled to Canajoharie and stayed at the Brant house, because of his friendship with Brant Kanagaradunkwa. He and Molly Brant met during this period.<sup>110</sup> Molly's responsibilities in the home would have included preparing food with her mother, serving it at the table, and eating with the men. William was likely drawn to Molly's domestic skills, her knowledge of Haudenosaunee politics, and physical appearance. Molly may have noted her father's esteemed opinion of William, along with his economic wealth, and his outgoing personality. William Johnson's political and economic influence would have been especially appealing to Molly Brant: during times of military conflict, Mohawk women's main priority was the physical safety of themselves and their families.<sup>111</sup> Molly might have noted that William's home, Fort Johnson, could provide a secure location for her to manage a household. She may also have noticed that his political influence could ensure that family members, like her brother Joseph, had access to

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<sup>108</sup> Jean Barman, "Indigenous Women and Feminism on the Cusp of Contact," in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, eds. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, (Vancouver & Toronto: University of British Columbia, 2010), 264.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> John Christopher Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family: patron and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire, 1742-77," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, Syracuse N.Y., 1975), 206; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 67.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

schooling in English and a career in the military. Molly Brant and William Johnson's relationship began sometime between 1757 and early 1759.<sup>112</sup>

When William Johnson's and Molly Brant's partnership began, he already had three children by Catherine Weisenberg, a German woman who was his indentured servant.<sup>113</sup> Catherine lived at Fort Johnson with her elderly mother until her death in the spring 1759.<sup>114</sup> In April, William was ordering mourning materials and a friend wrote, "When I left you I thought there appeared little hopes of Ms. Katys [Catherine's] Life. I condole with you thereupon."<sup>115</sup> Unlike Molly Brant, Catherine does not appear in Johnson's papers as having made household purchases or being thanked by guests for her services as hostess.<sup>116</sup> Molly and Catherine's relationship with William Johnson probably overlapped, since Molly gave birth to her first child with William five months after Catherine's death.

In all likelihood, William Johnson's probably frequently kept multiple women as sexual partners. By the mid-1750s, rumors circulated in London about the number of William's Native concubines, and some rumors speculated as many as seven hundred mixed-race offspring.<sup>117</sup> While these rumors are surely exaggerated, there is evidence that before his partnership with Molly, William fathered two other mixed-ancestry children. One of these children was named

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<sup>112</sup> Flexner assumes that their relationship began in 1757 or 1758. However, it also seems possible they were not a couple until the end of 1758 or the beginning of 1759. Their first child was born in September of 1759, illustrating Molly and Johnson were a couple by the beginning of 1759 at the latest. Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet*, 186.

<sup>113</sup> Catherine is only referred to as Johnson's wife in his will. There are no records of their marriage at Fort Hunter, just a few miles up the river from Johnson Hall. It seems Johnson married Catherine shortly before her death or that Johnson circulated rumors about the marriage occurring on her death bed. The story of the marriage (whether it occurred or not) legitimated Johnson and Catherine's three children. SWJP, Vol. 12, 1070; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 68.

<sup>114</sup> Feister and Pulis "Molly Brant," 300; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 68.

<sup>115</sup> Documents relative to the colonial history of the state of New-York (DCHNY), Vol. 2, (Albany: Weed and Parsons, 1853), 785.

<sup>116</sup> Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 360.

<sup>117</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 53.

Brant Kaghenehtago, and when he grew up he was called Brant Johnson, or William Brant Johnson.<sup>118</sup> He was born in the 1740s, and may have been a close relation of someone in the Brant household. The other boy was younger and named William Tagwirunta, and was more often referred to as William of Canajoharie.<sup>119</sup> These two boys and Johnson's three children with Catherine all remained part of the Johnson household after Molly's arrival.

Molly Brant's union enhanced her social status and provided her with significant wealth and security.<sup>120</sup> However, Molly also experienced challenges in her new life. Rather than being a resident of a matrilineal, Mohawk household, Molly Brant was now a member of a patriarchal household where the presence of indentured servants, black slaves, and Euro-American stepchildren made for complex lines of power that she needed to carefully negotiate.<sup>121</sup> Like Sally Ainsie, Molly Brant was frequently left to run the household since politics often drew William Johnson away from his residences for extended periods. During his travels, he also courted other Native women from elite Great Lakes families. In September of 1761, he traveled from Fort Johnson to Detroit for a pivotal meeting with Native communities of Detroit and further west.<sup>122</sup> William Johnson wanted to investigate the rumors of an impending uprising of western Native groups against the British, and to dispel any uneasiness the western Natives had

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<sup>118</sup> Some historians have speculated that the children's mother was Caroline Hendrick, a Mohawk woman from a powerful family, who Johnson began a relationship with after Catherine Weisenberg's death. These same historians seem to suggest that Catherine Weisenberg died around 1745, and that Sir William Johnson lived with Caroline for several years before she died, and he eventually took up with Molly. However, there seems to be much stronger archival evidence illustrating Catherine died in 1759, and that Johnson's mixed-race children were from an intimate partnership that occurred while Catherine was alive. There does not appear to be any archival evidence suggesting that Caroline Hendrick specifically was the mother of these children. Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 68; Carson "Molly Brant," 50; and Gundy, "Molly Brant," 98.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 140.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>122</sup> Karen Marrero, "Founding Families: Power and Authority of Mixed French and Native Lineages in Eighteenth Century Detroit," (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2011), 274.

about the British dominance with the French and Indian War drawing to a close.<sup>123</sup> He also spent copious time socializing with women from elite political families of Detroit.<sup>124</sup> Johnson entertained them with refreshments, such as “cake, wine, and cordial” or “rusk (a crisp bread) and cordial.”<sup>125</sup> He also hosted several balls that lasted through the night, and in at least one case, until seven the next morning. At one of these extravagant events, he led Marie Angelique Cuillerier in the first dance of the evening. Marie Angelique was the daughter of Métis Antoine Cuillerier *dit* Beaubien, Detroit's second largest slaveholder, a wealthy merchant, and a member of an extensive and powerful mixed Native-French family network.<sup>126</sup> In reflecting on the evening in his diary, Johnson remarked, “I opened the ball with Mademoiselle Curie - a fine girl.”<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, William Johnson promised he would write Marie Angelique Cuillerier after he returned to the Mohawk Valley.<sup>128</sup>

There is a good possibility Molly would have more been more threatened by William’s potential relationship with Marie Angelique than his intimate relationship with Catherine Weisenberg: Catherine was a white German indentured servant who lacked the important political and economic familial ties of Marie Angelique. However, Marie Angelique Cuillerier and William Johnson did not seem to have communicated after his 1761 Detroit visit. In 1765 Marie Angelique married James Sterling, a British merchant at Detroit.<sup>129</sup> It is impossible to know if Molly Brant discovered William’s courting of Marie Angelique and if her dismay may have contributed to the end in communication. While moving to Fort Johnson increased Molly’s

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 274-5.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>125</sup> Stone, *The Life and Times*, 462; Marrero, “Founding Families,” 275.

<sup>126</sup> Marrero, “Founding Families,” 275.

<sup>127</sup> Stone, *The Life and Times*, 459.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Marrero, “Founding Families,” 281.

financial security, she would also have disagreements with William about her role in regional politics.

### **Molly Brant and William Johnson's Multiethnic Fort Johnson Household**

Fort Johnson (sometimes referred to as Mount Johnson), was down the river from Canajoharie. When Molly Brant moved in, she became the manager of a large household that included Catherine Weisenberg's three children, Catherine's elderly mother, William Johnson's two children of mixed-ancestry, indentured servants, and black slaves. Molly became familiar with the household while pregnant with her first child. The indentured servants and slaves would ease Molly's labor by performing domestic tasks, giving more time for Molly to devote to household management and Mohawk politics.<sup>130</sup>

Fort Johnson was a large, stone structure on the north side of the Mohawk River that served as an informal military during the French and Indian War and British-allied visitors frequently stopped by seeking accommodations.<sup>131</sup> Molly Brant and Sally Ainese may have met when Sally visited the residence working as a trader and interpreter. As a multiethnic Oneida woman, Sally would have been comfortable in the heterogeneous household. The house had two separate wings, each one-story high and approximately thirty feet long and eighteen feet deep.<sup>132</sup> In one of the wings was a store, where Johnson stowed peltry and kept supplies for himself and

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<sup>130</sup> For more on black women's reproductive labor, Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 1987; Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood" in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, eds. E. Glenn, et al., (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in New World Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>131</sup> W. Max Reid, *The Story of Old Fort Johnson*, (New York, London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 10, 12.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

nearby residents. The other wing was the servants and slaves quarters.<sup>133</sup> Along with the main house, there was a mill, a barn, and a stone blockhouse.<sup>134</sup> William Johnson had fifty to sixty servants employed at Fort Johnson, along with his black slaves.<sup>135</sup>

While managing Fort Johnson would have been a large job, Molly Brant was not content laboring only in the domestic realm. In May of 1759, William Johnson left Fort Johnson on a military venture. The British were attempting to take over the French-controlled Fort Niagara as part of the French and Indian War. Molly was pregnant and left in charge of the household. Both Molly Brant and Sally Ainsie were responsible for managing large properties while their partners' political careers took them away from home. In the summer of 1759, Molly wrote to William requesting that she join him in the campaign against the French.<sup>136</sup> Her motivations for wanting to travel on a military campaign while late in her third trimester could range from preferring the political work that she was exposed to during her childhood to the domestic labor of managing a large household; to missing William Johnson, the father of her first child and her partner for approximately a year; to feeling compelled to participate in the military campaign to represent Mohawk interests during the expedition. Perhaps it was a combination of the above and other factors.

Regardless of her motivations, Molly Brant would have been useful as a diplomat and liaison between the Mohawk and western Haudenosaunee nations, like the Senecas, in encouraging them to side with the British over the French.<sup>137</sup> However, she was not given the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Mendel, Mesick, Cohen, *Fort Johnson, Amsterdam, New York: a historic structure report, 1974-1975* (Washington: Technical Preservation Services Division, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, 1978) 13.

<sup>135</sup> Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1846), 172-3.

<sup>136</sup> SWJP, Vol. 13, 125.

<sup>137</sup> Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," 238.

opportunity to join William Johnson. He wrote to her from Oswego telling her not to make the trip.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps Johnson was worried about being embarrassed by having a visibly pregnant, Native woman involved in military diplomacy. Perhaps he was genuinely concerned for her safety during the trip and the potential of her giving birth either while traveling in an isolated area or near military conflict.<sup>139</sup> Molly stayed home and gave birth to her first child, a boy, in September. He was named Peter—perhaps after the father who raised Molly while she was living in the Ohio Valley during her childhood, or perhaps after Peter Warren, William Johnson’s friend and benefactor.

Molly Brant and William Johnson each brought different gender ideals to their relationship, particularly in the realm of politics. Haudenosaunee women were involved in political affairs on multiple levels. For instance, women exercised influence over warriors partially through their production and control of crops.<sup>140</sup> However, William viewed politics as a male realm and he sought to physically exclude women from male spaces.<sup>141</sup> For instance, along with instructing Molly not to meet up with him in the summer of 1759, he banished the Mohawk women who arrived with warriors prior to the Battle of Lake George to Schenectady on wagons.<sup>142</sup> After the French and Indian War, Johnson sought to restrict Mohawk women’s attendance at political conferences.<sup>143</sup> In response, the Mohawk leaders declared that since they “proceed from [the women] & they provide [their] warriors with provisions,” and the Mohawk women ignored Johnson’s request and continued to attend conferences.<sup>144</sup> Johnson

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<sup>138</sup> SWJP, Vol. 13, 125.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 143.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 53, 143.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 144.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> SWJP, Vol. 3, 711-12.

demurred, responding to them that he did not see “any Necessity there was for the presence of women & Children, and therefore I Called none but those who where qualified for, and Authorized to proceed on business; And although I am obliged to your Women for their Zeal & Desire to promote a good work.”<sup>145</sup> Johnson viewed Mohawk women who wanted to influence politics as a costly and unwanted intrusion on military affairs. Yet despite his wishes, the women continued to be present at military encampments, eventually forcing him to employ their services as messengers, scouts, or interpreters, like Sally Ainsie.<sup>146</sup>

Despite William Johnson’s belief that Mohawk women should not play a role in the male political world, he also knew that a relationship with Molly Brant strengthened his own political position in the Mohawk Valley. William once explained that Molly’s brother Joseph would be useful because of his “connection and residence” at Canajoharie.<sup>147</sup> Molly offered William similar connections. Molly Brant’s stepfather, Brant Kanagaradunkwa, owned one of the largest homes at Canajoharie, along with horses and cattle.<sup>148</sup> Through his relationship with Molly, William was able to make his friends at Canajoharie into family members and strengthen his ties to the Mohawk people, and Haudenosaunee more broadly.

Molly Brant also increased her financial security through her relationship with Johnson. Molly was permitted considerable autonomy in the management of household affairs, and similar to Mohawk women in Native communities, she played an important role as hostess.<sup>149</sup> Molly’s relationship with William also benefited her community. Women of Canajoharie reached out to Molly in times of need, such as when the women of a Mohawk family requested black mourning

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> DCHNY, Vol. 7, 580; Feister and Pulis, “Molly Brant,” 301.

<sup>148</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 141.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 141.

shrouds.<sup>150</sup> Through her intimate partnership, “Miss Molly” was able to connect Mohawk women with ceremonial goods that were formerly obtained only through traders.<sup>151</sup> As Molly’s economic privilege became further entrenched, so did her political influence.

The French and Indian War provided opportunities for Native women, such as Sally Ainese and Molly Brant, to enter the market economy as men’s productive labor was redirected to warfare.<sup>152</sup> The culturally and ethnically diverse spaces of the Mohawk Valley, Susquehanna Valley, and the Ohio Valley combined with the political tensions of the War to produce trading Native women, like Sally Ainese and Molly Brant. In February of 1763, the French and Indian War officially came to an end.<sup>153</sup> In the decade following the war, these women found ways to capitalize their knowledge and skills to increase their wealth and opportunities.

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<sup>150</sup> SWJP Vol. 7, 379.

<sup>151</sup> Carson, “Molly Brant,” 52.

<sup>152</sup> MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, 135-6.

<sup>153</sup> Axelrod, *A Savage Empire*, 233.

## CHAPTER 2

### **A Place of Her Own: Trading in Goods and Services to Acquire Property, 1763-1777**

When Sally Aitse's marriage to Andrew Montour ended, she lost custody of her children. However, her divorce also created opportunities for her to develop a thriving career. Between the French and Indian War and the early years of the American Revolutionary War, Sally Aitse's business flourished as she diversified her trading by dealing in an increased variety of goods, including furs and ginseng, and she expanded her trade routes north and west. Her success depended on her mobility, and she regularly traveled by canoe between Michilimackinac and Schenectady, growing her business and attempting to secure her Oneida Castle property. Her decision to relocate to Michilimackinac for part of the year led to new intimate, political, and economic relationships with influential men like William Maxwell, Benjamin Roberts, and John Askin. During the beginning of the Revolutionary War, she moved her permanent residence to Detroit. Her decision to relocate was partly due to business opportunities and partly due to her losing ownership of her property near Fort Stanwix.

While Sally Aitse was busy developing her business through her travels, Molly Brant was focused on raising her children while managing the large household of Johnson Hall. She was responsible for providing hospitality, including food and lodging for visitors attending the various Indian Councils held at the residence. In the process, she expanded her political networks in Mohawk and British communities. Johnson Hall was both a multiracial and hierarchical household, illustrated by the prominence of slaves and indentured servants. Molly Brant inherited several slaves from Sir William Johnston when he died in 1774. Examining his will, I

shall later in this chapter further demonstrate the gendered and racialized tensions in the household. After William's death, Molly moved a short distance from Johnson Hall to Canajoharie where she worked as a trader in her childhood community to support her family, until violence from the Revolutionary War caused her to abandon her property and migrate further.

### **“It is clear to everyone who the rum belongs”: Sally Ainse’s Expansion of Goods and Trade Routes**

After the French and Indian War, Sally Ainse was separated from her first husband and focused on developing a career as an independent trader in the Mohawk River Valley region. While historians such as Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown have extensively documented the role of women in the fur trade, most of the research has focused on Native or mixed-ancestry women's relationships with non-Native men, often framing the Native women as cultural mediators who benefited from increased access to European goods through marrying fur traders.<sup>1</sup> While these works examine the women's labor within their relationships, including the processing of furs and repairs of necessary supplies, like canoes and moccasins, they do not examine Native women as traders in their own capacity. Literature on the fur trade has paid little

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many tender ties: women in fur-trade society, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg, MB: Watson & Dyer, 1980); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 1980. For more recent work on gender and the fur trade that develops a more nuanced analysis of the role of married women and their kinship networks in the fur trade see, Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women & French Men*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Lucy Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Ann Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); and Lucy Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: a French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

attention to the lives and labor of single or unmarried women. Sally Ainese is one example of a Native woman who traveled great distances alone and possibly with dependents, to make a profit in the fur trade and invest in property for herself and her family. While she would enter short-term intimate partnerships with several men after she separated from Andrew Montour, she acted as her own independent broker in trade and diplomatic affairs.

In 1764, Sally Ainese lived on her Fort Stanwix property, focused on growing her business by diversifying the goods she traded in and expanding her trade routes. Missionary Samuel Kirkland stopped at “Sally Monteurs” in the spring of 1764 and she provided him with lodging. Samuel also brought a Native woman sick with a fever to Sally, and she “treated her with great kindness & among other thing urged her in the most pressing manner to wean her child, who was nearly 2 ½ years old & not to give it the breast another day or she would go into consumption.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Sally’s advice came from her own personal experience as a mother, or from her time spent with female Oneida relatives.

While based on her Fort Stanwix property, Sally Ainese continued to travel by canoes down the Mohawk River to Schenectady, approximately ninety miles away, where she traded in a wide range of goods, including furs and ginseng. At Schenectady, she supplied merchants with numerous furs, including marten, mink, muskrat, otters, fishers, and foxes in return for cash and trade goods.<sup>3</sup> It is possible she trapped the animals and processed the furs herself, but it is more

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Pilkington, *Journal of Samuel Kirkland: 18<sup>th</sup>-century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College*, (Clinton, NY: Hamilton College, 1980), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Account Book 1756-1764, Daniel Campbell Papers, SC11062, New York State Library (NYSL), Albany, NY, Box 16, November 17, 1759 pg. 134, November 23, 1759, pg. 136, November 29, 1759, pg. 137, December 29, 1759, pg. 141, February 9, 1760 pg. 149, February 11, 1760, pg. 150, February 20, 1760, pg. 152, March 22, 1760, pg. 155, April 24, 1760, pg. 160, June 5, 1760, pg. 166, July 4, 1760, pg. 175; April 4, 1760, pg. 162, July 6, 1760, pg. 176; March 24, 1764, 350, and June 29, 1764, 370 (referred to as Campbell Papers); Book 1, Daniel Campbell Papers, Box 18, November 27, 1758, 82, December 12, 1758, 83, December 21, 1758, pg. 84, December 29, 1758, pg. 85, January 12, 1759, pg. 86, January 20, 1759, pg. 87-9, February 15, 1759, pg. 90, April 10, 1759, pg. 96, June 8, 1759, pg. 106, June 20, 1759, pg.107, September 7, 1759, pg. 119-20, and September 15, 1759, pg. 121.

likely that she received them in trade for liquor. By May of 1766, Sally had expanded her trading to include ginseng.<sup>4</sup>

Sally Ainsie's role in the ginseng trade in the 1760s reflects both her participation in transcontinental trade in commodities like fur and ginseng, and her involvement with local economies shaped by both Native peoples and European traders and merchants. The ginseng trade is an early example of transcontinental, global trade connections: Native peoples harvested ginseng, selling to European buyers who shipped it across the Atlantic, where the root eventually made its way into the hands of merchants in China, where it has been considered to have medicinal and healing properties.<sup>5</sup> The height of the eighteenth century ginseng trade was between 1751 and 1753 and driven by the Chinese market. However, ginseng continued to be gathered, traded, and used as a common medium of exchange between Native peoples and merchants throughout the Mohawk Valley until the late eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Ginseng roots could be harvested from early summer till late in the fall.<sup>7</sup> From 1750 to 1770, it was common for Mohawk peoples to dig for ginseng, and bring it to traders in exchange for rum or other items.<sup>8</sup> A Moravian missionary observed over one hundred Cayuga and Oneida people digging for roots in the Mohawk Valley in 1752.<sup>9</sup> Many Oneida peoples showed interest in selling fish, fur, and ginseng as cash-generating ventures to obtain food and clothes.<sup>10</sup> In one

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<sup>4</sup> Campbell and Andrews Account Book, 1765-66, Campbell Papers, Box 19, Item 2, May 1766 and June 25, 1766.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Hellyer, "The West, the East, and the insular middle: trading systems, demand, and labour in the integration of the Pacific, 1750-1875," *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 3 (Nov 2013): 403 and Louis O. Williams, "Ginseng," *Economic Botany* 11, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1957): 344.

<sup>6</sup> David L. Preston, *The Texture of Contact: European and Indian settler Communities on the Frontiers of Iroquoia, 1667-1783*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 210.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Preston, *The Texture of Contact*, 103, 207.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>10</sup> Karim M. Tiro, "'We Wish to Do You Good': The Quaker Mission to the Oneida Nation, 1790-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, no. 3 (2006), 368. Other Native peoples such as the Ojibwe also sold a variety of wild plants

instance in 1766, Sally brought in 900 pounds of ginseng. She likely collected the ginseng roots found by other Native women, likely by trading for liquor or other goods, similar to how fur traders amassed furs from individual trappers.<sup>11</sup> Mohawk and other Native peoples may have preferred to bring their ginseng to Sally, spoke their language and was familiar with their customs, rather than to a European merchant.

The year 1766 marked a shift in Sally Ainsie's life: her trading business and residence shifted west to Michilimackinac and Detroit. In the fall of 1766, Sally's routes extended three hundred miles west to the north shore of Lake Erie.<sup>12</sup> John Porteous, a Scottish fur trader who traded at Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Schenectady, reports that she was heading with some goods to winter at Long Point. However, rather than stay at Long Point for the winter, when agreeable weather came she departed for Michilimackinac, approximately four hundred miles to the northwest. In total, her journey from Fort Stanwix to Michilimackinac covered over seven hundred miles. Sally probably arrived at Michilimackinac, located on the south shore of the Straits of Mackinac where Lake Huron meets up with Lake Michigan, between December of 1766 and early February of 1767, which is typically when the straits freeze—inhibiting navigation by canoe.<sup>13</sup> The fort had a harsh climate. Snowfall over the winter months averaged four to ten feet and tended to cover the ground for three and half to four and a half months of the year. When the straits froze, ice would stack against the shore, sometimes reaching six feet high

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for crops, including ginseng, see Chantal Norgaard, "From Berries to Orchards," *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 58 (FN21).

<sup>11</sup> C Campbell and Andrews Account Book, 1765-66, Campbell Papers, Box 19, Item 2.

<sup>12</sup> Journal of John Porteous from Detroit to Schenectady Oct 23-Dec 2, 1766, John Porteous papers, Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit, MI.

<sup>13</sup> Sally's arrival at Michilimackinac likely occurred before the straits froze rather than in early spring, as by June of 1767, Sally was traveling back to New York. Letter from William Maxwell to William Edgar, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1767, William Edgar Fonds, MG19-A1, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, ON (referred to as Edgar Papers). The Straits of Michilimackinac often remained frozen till early April in the 1760s, see Alexander Henry, *Attack at Michilimackinac: Alexander Henry's Travels and adventures in Canada and the Indian territories between the years 1760 and 1764*, ed. by David A. Armour, (Mackinac City: Michilimackinac State Historic Parks, 1971), 35.

and making navigation impossible.<sup>14</sup> While based in Michilimackinac, Sally continued to travel seasonally for trade to Schenectady and Detroit between 1768 and 1772.<sup>15</sup>

Increased trade opportunities in the upper Great Lakes and the encroachment of settlers upon Oneida lands in New York, might have motivated Sally Ainse's relocation to Fort Michilimackinac. During part of her residence at Michilimackinac, Sally Ainse lived with William Maxwell. The couple developed an economic and intimate relationship. Maxwell was a Scottish immigrant who had originally settled in New Jersey and assumed the position of Deputy Commissary of Stores and Provisions for Fort Michilimackinac in the summer of 1766.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that Sally and William previously met during Sally's first marriage or during her years trading at Schenectady. William may have delivered flour to General Braddock's expedition during the French and Indian War as the English forces traveled towards Fort Duquesne in the Ohio Valley.<sup>17</sup> Sally Ainse's first intimate partner, Andrew Montour was part of Braddock's expedition, and if Andrew and William met, it is possible that William later traveled to Andrew and Sally's Juniata Valley residence.

In 1760, William Maxwell was appointed the commissary of Provisions Business at Fort Schenectady and he worked in the position until his move to Michilimackinac.<sup>18</sup> The British army assigned one commissary to each major military post for the purpose of superintending the supply of bread and other provisions for the troops.<sup>19</sup> A king's commissary normally did not stand very high in the estimation of officers, partly because it was considered a civilian position,

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth M. Scott, *French Subsistence at Michilimackinac, 1715 to 1781*, (Mackinaw City: Michilimackinac Historic Parks, 1985), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from William Maxwell to William Edgar, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1767, Edgar Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Henry M. Ward, *General William Maxwell and the New Jersey Continentals*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

since it was unbecoming for officers and gentlemen to be concerned with trade. Commissaries were in charge of the post's storehouse and negotiated with merchants for the purchase of all provisions. Sally Ainse was regularly travelling from the Oneida Castle area for trade during William's tenure as commissary. If the two met at Schenectady, Williams's transfer to Michilimackinac may have contributed to Sally's decision to expand her trade further west into the Great Lakes and move her own residence to Michilimackinac in the winter of 1766-7.

When she arrived at the Straits of Mackinac, Sally Ainse likely moved into the settlement adjacent to the fort with many other Native and mixed-ancestry traders. If she knew William Maxwell previously, she may have moved directly into his residence. Housing in the small fort was inadequate in the 1760s, since many of the houses were being razed and rebuilt.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the British military displaced more and more French traders from their homes inside the fort, resulting in the establishment of an unofficial community to the east of the fort to house French and British traders, along with some Native peoples.<sup>21</sup> By the early 1760s, a lack of barracks for soldiers and a significant increase in the number of families at the the fort contributed to the housing shortages.<sup>22</sup> While being the King's Commissary was not an elite post, it would have ensured William Maxwell had access to housing during the shortages, perhaps contributing to Sally's interest in an intimate relationship.

Fort Michilimackinac was one of the most northern and remote British posts and a drastic change from the Susquehanna Valley, Mohawk Valley, and Ohio Valley in the lower Great Lakes where Sally Ainse spent the first half of her life. The British gained control of the fort from the French in 1761, but in 1763 they were banished from the fort by Anishinaabe peoples

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<sup>20</sup> Scott, *French Subsistence*, 37.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

during the beginning of Pontiac's War. The British did not reclaim control until 1764.<sup>23</sup> The fort sat among small sand dunes, just south of and overlooking the straits connecting Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. The surrounding area consisted of numerous hills, ridges, plains, swamps, lakes, and rivers.<sup>24</sup>

Despite its condition, the fort was the ideal location for Sally Ainese to grow her business. While it seemed remote to the British, it was centrally located among large communities of Anishinaabe peoples who annually gathered at the straits in the summer for trade and diplomacy. The fort was a hub for merchants, traders, and Native peoples involved in the fur trade in the upper Great Lakes. Along with the large Anishinaabe populations, a variety of peoples lived at the fort, including British soldiers and military personnel; French civilians and traders; Irish, British, and Scottish merchants; traders raised in fur-trade families where Native women married European men; free and enslaved peoples of African descent; and enslaved Native peoples from further west who were usually captured in conflicts and taken to Michilimackinac to be sold.<sup>25</sup>

Despite its harsh climate, the region also offered a variety of environmental advantages for Sally Ainese, including a large number of animals that were a source of furs and a necessary source of protein.<sup>26</sup> If Sally hunted animals and processed furs herself, she was simultaneously growing her business and providing food for her household. She probably also drew on her earlier experience growing and processing corn, as corn, beans and squash were the primary cultivated foods at the fort. As an Oneida woman, Sally was familiar with all the three of the plants since they were staples in the Haudenosaunee diet. Known as the Three Sisters, they were

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<sup>23</sup> Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 8; Lyle M. Stone, *Fort Michilimackinac, 1715 to 1781*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), 37.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, *French Subsistence at Michilimackinac*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Harry M. Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Stone, *Fort Michilimackinac*, 9, 36.

regarded by the Haudenosaunee as the sustainers of life. The plants played a central role in the origin story of Sky Woman, who held them in her left hand as she fell from the sky.<sup>27</sup>

Sally Ainese's trade activities drew her into political drama in the fort the year of her arrival when rum went missing from the fort. Benjamin Roberts was appointed the Indian Commissary at Michilimackinac on June 23, 1767, and he subsequently entered a bitter feud with Robert Rogers, the post commandant.<sup>28</sup> In accordance with an order given by General Thomas Gage, the commander in chief for all British forces in North America, Robert Rogers had the fort's rum supply for the Indian trade lodged in the provision storehouse. However, some rum managed to be snuck out of the fort and Benjamin Roberts accused Robert Rogers of intending to use the rum for his own dealings with Native people. In August of 1767, Benjamin Roberts wrote to Guy Johnson and explained that the missing rum was reported on the shore opposite the fort (the north shore of the straits). Meanwhile, Rogers ordered Maxwell to take charge of the rum and store the rum in the King's Store—to which they both had access. However, Roberts accused Rogers of having no business with the rum since he wanted it for his own purposes, and he refused Rogers the lock and key to where the rum was kept.

Benjamin Roberts claimed that William Maxwell and Sally Ainese were responsible for the rum leaving the fort: “some of the kegs are suspected to belong to Sally Montour, or the Dep Commissary—the men that were concerned in carrying out the Rum, were in Capt Rogers service and immediately after my procuring the Party ran away in the only good boat belonging

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<sup>27</sup> Benjamin David Kern, “A Woman Between Two Worlds: Molly Brant and the American Revolution,” (Master of Arts Thesis, Miami University, 2013), 14; Kristin Lynn Rozell, “Redefining Native American autobiography: the case of Tekonwatonti,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Arlington, 2005), 33; Everett Parker, *The Secret of No Face: An Ireokwa Epic by Chief Everett Parker and Oledoska* (Healdsburg, CA: Native American Publishing Co., 1972), 5, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 10.

to the place . . . It is clear to everyone who the rum belongs.”<sup>29</sup> Roberts’ claim that the rum belonged to “Sally Montour, or the Dept Commissary” and “It is clear to everyone who the rum belongs” shows Sally and William were operating as both intimate partners and business partners in the summer of 1767.<sup>30</sup> Both Roberts and Rogers left Michilimackinac as a result of the drama over the rum.<sup>31</sup> Due to their absence, Maxwell benefited by having increased clout over provisions at the fort and Native affairs in the upper Great Lakes.

Sally Ainse was drawn to the straits of Mackinac for trading opportunities, and her years at the fort were marked by regular travels to Detroit and Schenectady to exchange goods. For instance, Sally left the fort by early summer to trade in the Mohawk Valley in the colony of New York. On June 29, 1767. William Maxwell sent a letter to his friend, William Edgar, a merchant based in Detroit but who also had property in New York, explaining, “As for Saley’s not visiting you yet I do not think it strange for according to her usual way of travelling its likely she will not arrive at New York at your place before the Fall, but that will not hurt me as I still preserve the philosophy I acquired at Detroit some of which you are acquainted with.”<sup>32</sup> William also reflects on the effect of Sally’s travels on their personal relationship. Williams’s claim that Sally’s

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<sup>29</sup> Sir William Johnson Papers (SWJP), Volume 12, (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921-65), 357.

<sup>30</sup> Sally was unlikely to be at Michilimackinac at the time of the incident. Maxwell’s June 29<sup>th</sup> 1767 letter to Edgar indicates that Sally Ainse was probably not at Michilimackinac in August of 1767, as she was expected to arrive at Edgar’s place in New York “before the fall.” While she may have reached New York by August, it is highly unlikely she had visited New York and returned to Michilimackinac by the time of Roberts’ August letter

<sup>31</sup> The summer of 1767 incident over the rum is demonstrative of the larger conflict over Roberts and Rogers’ disagreement over who had authority over the provisions that Maxwell supervised. Eventually Rogers had Roberts arrested, and Maxwell was one of thirteen men who sat as a court of inquiry regarding Roberts’ actions. However, Roberts was eventually sent to William Johnson, Molly’s spouse, at Johnson Hall to hear the case. Meanwhile, Roberts brought charges against Rogers for embezzlement and conspiring to create a separate state in the west. Rogers was in heavy to debt to traders to Michilimackinac and was arrested by the order of Thomas Gage and sent to Montreal in irons to answer for charges of treason and embezzlement. Rogers was tried in October of 1768, and eventually acquitted, and returned to England. As a result of the political drama at the fort, Maxwell was free of competition from the Indian commissary (the post was discontinued after Roberts), and now had the responsibility of supply provisions to the two military companies at the post and supplying rations for Native peoples. Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, June 29, 1767, Edgar Papers.

travels “will not hurt [him]” due to the “philosophy” he acquired during his time at Detroit were probably referencing his time at the town when serving in the Royal American (60<sup>th</sup>) Regiment. The regiment assumed garrison duty at the western posts after the resolution of the French and Indian War.<sup>33</sup> William Maxwell purchased houses during his time at the fort, and was later frustrated by his attempts to sell his Detroit property while living at Michilimackinac.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that he—like many other British traders after the French and Indian War—developed a relationship with a Native or mixed-ancestry woman at Detroit to strengthen his political and economic ties to the community, which he may have been reference in his letter to his friend.<sup>35</sup> Maxwell never married and his relationship with Sally is apparently the closest he ever came to finding a marriage partner.<sup>36</sup>

In September of 1767, Sally had returned to Michilimackinac and was trading in pelts, liquor, ginseng, and imported items like Congo tea. William Maxwell sent another letter to William Edgar discussing her plans for the upcoming months: “I am obliged to you for the offer of goods for Salley but she is not thoroughly determined what to do. She is in some thought to send down the Country but if she would deal at Detroit as long as you would Sell as good as cheap as others you might depend on my interest for her custom.”<sup>37</sup> In the same letter, Maxwell complained to Edgar about his treatment of Sally Ainese’s account: “Salley is charged in this Account 46 lbs. for a pound of Congo Tea bought of Mr. Abbott. I think either him or you made

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<sup>33</sup> Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 8-9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Karen Marrero, “Founding Families: Power and Authority of Mixed French and Native Lineages in Eighteenth Century Detroit,” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2011), 193, 280-2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> The timing of Sally’s departure from Michilimackinac to New York and return to Michilimackinac is still unclear. While Maxwell’s June 29 letter to Edgar states Sally will be expected in New York by the fall, she appears to have returned to Michilimackinac by early September. Since Edgar was expecting Sally in June but Maxwell assured him it was normal for her routes to take longer, it is possible she arrived in the New York area in July, stayed for a few short weeks, and then left to return to Michilimackinac. William Maxwell to William Edgar, Sept 3, 1767, Edgar Papers, 136.

a mistake of 30% for I think 26 pounds to be more so in all reasonable.”<sup>38</sup> William Maxwell served as an advocate to ensure Sally Aitse received the best prices.

During her trading ventures, Sally Aitse spent long periods of time travelling alone from Haudenosaunee territory in present-day western New York, to Michilimackinac in the present-day northern shore of Michigan’s lower peninsula. Schenectady and Michilimackinac are separated by over seven hundred miles, and if Sally was stopping at Detroit as part of “her usual way of traveling” she was likely covering closer to eight hundred miles by canoe, over a period of several weeks and possibly months. Sally Aitse’s youngest sons, Christian Campbell and Nicholas Montour, may have joined her. In 1766 when Sally was spotted trading on the north shore of Lake Erie, Christian would have been four years old and Nicholas would have been ten years old. She may have taken her sons to Michilimackinac with her. While there was no school at Michilimackinac at the time, Nicholas may have traveled with Sally, and in the process gained an education in various routes throughout the Great Lakes and the fur trade business.<sup>39</sup> Sally may also have arranged for Christian to be raised by her Oneida relatives and for Nicholas to go to school in the New York or Detroit areas.<sup>40</sup> At school, Nicholas would receive training in a possible career, such as merchandising. Molly Brant and William Johnson set up such an arrangement for their eldest son, Peter, when he was close to Nicholas’ age.<sup>41</sup> While the archive is unclear as to how Nicholas spent the years between 1766 and 1773, by 1774 he was equipped

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<sup>38</sup>Mr. Abbott is of the merchant firm Abbot & Finchley, based in Detroit (Burton). Congo or congou tea refers to a high quality type of black Chinese tea that was made from one of the later pickings from the plant, resulting in a coarser product than the earlier crops that produce pekoe tea and souchong tea. *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1820*, (Wolverhampton, U.K.: University of Wolverhampton, 2007) , <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/traded-goods-dictionary/1550-1820/confectio-alkermes-corkscrew#h2-0002>, accessed March 17, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from John C. Jackson to David A. Armour, January 25, 1984, Sally Aitse File, Michilimackinac State Historic Parks Archive (MSHP), Mackinaw City, MI.

<sup>40</sup> One of Andrew Montour’s sons spent 6 months of 1764 boarding with a colonial family. This might have been Nicholas or could have been one of Andrew’s older sons. SWJP, Vol. 7, 1060.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

to enter the fur trade as a clerk with Benjamin and Jacob Frobisher at the northern post of Churchill, Manitoba, where the Churchill River empties into the west side of James Bay.<sup>42</sup>

Regardless of how Sally arranged for Nicholas' education, his background served him well in the fur trade. He had a successful career with the Northwest Company before retiring in Quebec.<sup>43</sup>

If either of her children accompanied Sally Ainese, she had the added responsibility of caring for them along with herself and her trade goods. If she traveled alone, she had the added mental and physical challenge of having to rely solely on herself. While Sally encountered trading posts and military settlements en route, such as Fort Niagara and Detroit, most of the territory she traveled was thickly wooded and relatively isolated. She would have met families and communities of Native peoples throughout her travels. As a multilingual Oneida woman and translator, she could communicate with the Native peoples she encountered with relative ease. Most of these Native communities would have been situated in strategic locations, either near trading posts, prime hunting and fishing areas, or key waterways strategic for transportation and trade throughout the Great Lakes. Waterways were the most efficient form of transportation in the area, and like others in the fur trade, Sally traveled by canoe or bateau (a larger boat designed specifically for carrying goods on rivers and lakes), just as she did when traveling throughout northern Lake Michigan for trade.<sup>44</sup> While traveling on waterways during the day, she would meet various other Native peoples and Europeans working in the fur trade and engaged in small trading deals while traveling to supplement her income. However, these interactions likely

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<sup>42</sup> While many of the main events in Nicholas Montour's life are recorded, Christian is difficult to trace after his birth. For an overview of Nicholas Montour see, François Béland, "Montour, Nicholas," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/montour\\_nicholas\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/montour_nicholas_5E.html), accessed July 18, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Milo M. Quaife (ed.), *John Askin Papers*, Vol. 1, (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), 50.

consisted of quick encounters with practical discussions about the impending weather, water levels in the streams, or snippets of local political news or gossip.

Despite the personal hardships she experienced at Michilimackinac and while traveling, Sally Ainese's decisions to diversify her range of trade goods and to expand her trade routes into the west were smart choices—particularly since she would lose ownership of her Fort Stanwix property by 1772.

### **“She tired me heartily”: Economic and Gendered Tensions at Michilimackinac**

Sally Ainese's relationship with William Maxwell provides insights about her personality and priorities. Sally and William's relationship became strained after the Robert Rogers and Benjamin Roberts dispute over the rum. By May 26, 1768, they were no longer sharing a residence. William Maxwell explained the situation in a letter to his friend and fellow businessman, William Edgar:

I must tell you I am a widower, Salley has eloped from her Bed and Board, and lives in a house of her own; it would fill many sheets to tell all the causes of such a breech, but I will tell you the two largest and spring of all the rest was Marriage or a large settlement, none of which seemed to please me, till I was better convinced of her sincerity. I was willing to a small settlement for one year, and in that time if her temper would please me I would have pleased her if I could, but she would not trust me nor I her, so she walked off and I did not hinder her for she had tired me heartily (I mean with her tongue and hands both). I believe Socrates as a whole need no more be quoted for his patience with his wife where my storey is known, as I thought as paper was scarce to have filled no more than other side when I began, but you see how the subject has stolen on me till I have filled both and must conclude with answering you. I am as usual your sincere friend.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1768, Edgar Papers.

Maxwell's letter to Edgar provides numerous provocative insights about his relationship with Sally, and also leaves many questions unanswered. What is clear, is that Sally's priorities were marriage or a large settlement. Sally is probably referring to a marriage *a la façon du pays* or "of the custom of the country" which were common in the Great Lakes during the fur trade era, as opposed to a Christian marriage.<sup>46</sup> In terms of the land, throughout her life Sally was motivated to purchase property. Perhaps she believed she had better chances of success as a multiethnic Oneida woman property-owner near Michilimackinac—a multicultural hub surrounded by largely Native space—rather than the Mohawk Valley, where British settlements were increasingly encroaching on Haudenosaunee and other Native communities. Sally's interests indicate she was looking for a long-term commitment from William that he was unwilling to make since he doubted her "sincerity" and felt she could not be trusted. Instead he offered her a compromise of a small settlement for a year and if her "temper" pleased him during that time, he would agree to her original offer. However, Sally refused to compromise and "walked off."

William Maxwell "did not hinder" Sally as "she had tired [him] heartily." Maxwell then makes the addition, "I mean with her tongue and hands both." Previously in the letter William alluded to Sally's "temper," referring to her disposition.<sup>47</sup> His emphasis on Sally's temper, his reference to Socrates' wife (who is sometimes referred to as the proverbial shrew), and his description of her tiring him with "her tongue and hands" imply Sally and William engaged in verbal and physical altercations during their relationship. His wording positions Sally as the apparent cause of the altercations.<sup>48</sup> However, we do not have any sources shedding light on

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<sup>46</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, "[A]n Unpleasant Transaction on This Frontier": Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 25, no. 3 (Fall, 2005): 417-8; Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many tender ties: women in fur-trade society, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg, MB: Watson & Dyer, 1980).

<sup>47</sup> "Temper," *Dictionary of the English language*, ed. Samuel Johnson, (Dublin: W.G. Jones, 1768, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).

<sup>48</sup> "Xanthippe," In *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, Elizabeth Knowles (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005),

Sally's feelings about the separation and the verbal and physical violence during their relationship. No doubt she had a different version for the causes of the interpersonal conflicts. Alcohol may also have added to Sally and Maxwell's verbal and physical altercations, as both parties had plenty of access to liquor since they were trading in rum. While William was tired of Sally's temper, her departure affected him deeply as he wrote to his male friend, "as I thought as paper was scarce to have filled no more than other side when I began, but you see how the subject has stolen on me till I have filled both and must conclude with answering you."<sup>49</sup>

While Sally Aitse and William Maxwell separated in the spring of 1768, they continued to maintain some sort of relationship, however, whether it was a sexual relationship or only an economic one remains unclear. On August 14, 1768—less than three months after Sally "eloped from her bed and board"—William Maxwell sent a letter to William Edgar and enclosed some of Sally Aitse's silverwork to send to a silversmith for repairs, including a large hair plate, armbands, a smaller hair plate, nine brooches, and some hairpins. The items suggest Sally had a preference for extravagant silver accessories, as she invested a portion of her profits from trade in silver accessories that would visibly speak to her wealth and display her own personal style. Historian Gail MacLeitch surmises that due to the monetary value of silver in the lower Great Lakes, choosing to display silver accouterments was a way of displaying economic status.<sup>50</sup> Sally Aitse's fashionable taste made an impression on men throughout her life. During her time with Andrew Montour, Sally Aitse was described as "taking up goods at any rate." Thirty years after she was living at Michilimackinac, Alexander Coventry, a doctor from New York lodged with

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<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780198609810.001.0001/acref-9780198609810-e-7804>, accessed April 20, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1768, Edgar Papers.

<sup>50</sup> Gail D. MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 209.

Sally on her farm in the Thames River Valley (in present-day Ontario) in the late eighteenth century and remarked, “She has lived in fashion: her household furniture is now worth £500. In fact she has been a bon vivant.”<sup>51</sup>

During her time at Michilimackinac, Sally Ainse developed another business relationship with John Askin, a Scots-Irish immigrant, who had arrived at Michilimackinac with the British army in 1760 and become a prominent fur trader, landowner, merchant, and slave owner in the Great Lakes. In the spring of 1774, John recorded that Sally, or “Mrs. Ainsse,” went in a boat for the Grand Traverse or to meet the Odawa.<sup>52</sup> Grand Traverse Bay was approximately one hundred miles south of Michilimackinac on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. This would be a relatively easy trip for Sally who was skilled at traveling alone in a canoe for trade. She had decades of experiences travelling the Susquehanna River and Mohawk River and made frequent trips between New York, Detroit, and Michilimackinac in the 1760s. This is also the first archival evidence where Sally’s surname is recorded as “Ainse” rather than as “Montour,” the surname of her first husband. For the rest of her life, Sally was most commonly known by the surname “Ainse.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Alexander Coventry, *Memoirs of an Emigrant The journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D.; in Scotland, the United States and Canada during the period 1783-1831* Vol. I, (Albany: The Albany Institute of Art and History, 1978), 859.

<sup>52</sup> Milo M. Quaife, the historian who edited the collection of published Askin papers, believes Askin is likely referring to Sally Ainse. My own archival research indicates that there do not appear to be other women in the area who would use the name and have the skills or trade connection to travel to Grand Traverse Bay by canoe to trade with the Odawaag. Quaife, *Askin Papers*, Vol. 1, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Ainse may have been the surname of one of her parents or it could have been a created identity, like Madame Montour, the mother of her first husband Andrew. Many variations of Ainse appear in the archives, like Ans, Ains, Anis, Hans, or Hands. Some historians researching the Montour family have assumed that Sally entered a relationship with Joseph-Louis Ainsse, a French Canadian interpreter at Michilimackinac, after she broke-up with Maxwell. While Sally and Joseph-Louis share a surname (Ainse) and its related variations (Hains, Hans, etc.), archival evidence has yet to be found supporting a partnership between them. Joseph-Louis Ainsse arrived at Michilimackinac in 1767 and in early 1768, he received the position of official interpreter, which he lost while imprisoned for part of the Robert Rogers affair, but had regained the position by 1771. In 1775 he married Marie-Thérèse Bondy, a French Canadian woman, at Michilimackinac. Some historians of the Montour family that have posited a relationship between Joseph-Louis Ainsse and Sally Ainse, suggesting that Sally’s move to Detroit in the mid-1770s may be related to a break-up with Joseph-Louis over his relationship with Marie-Thérèse Bondy. Letter

Sally Ainse experienced another change during this period: she lost her Fort Stanwix property. The political and physical landscape of Haudenosaunee territory in western New York had rapidly changed after the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. In 1768—the year that Sally Ainse moved out of the house with William Maxwell—the Haudenosaunee negotiated the Treaty of Fort Stanwix with William Johnson as the main representative for the British. The treaty redrew the north-south line dividing between British and Native territory formed after the Royal Proclamation of 1763 at the conclusion of the French and Indian War. The new boundary extended only a modest distance beyond New York’s settlements but then bulged westward across Pennsylvania, and down the Ohio River as far as the mouth of the Tennessee River, adding the southwestern quarter of Pennsylvania, all of present-day West Virginia, and most of Kentucky to the colonial domain. As a result, the treaty increased the land available for the British to settle on by cutting into Native territory.<sup>54</sup> However, it was not just the British who benefited from the treaty—Johnson minimized the land cessions for Haudenosaunee peoples as a reward for negotiating with the British.<sup>55</sup>

With the influx of settler and land speculators into the Mohawk Valley and further west, Sally Ainse’s Fort Stanwix property was very desirable. In 1772, William Johnson rejected her

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from John C. Jackson to David A. Armour, January 25, 1984, Sally Ainse File, Michilimackinac State Historic Parks Archive, Mackinac City. Frederick Hamil, *Sally Ainse, Fur Trader*, (Detroit: Algonquin Club, 1939) 5; David A. Armour, “Ainsse, Joseph-Louis” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainsse\\_joseph\\_louis\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainsse_joseph_louis_5E.html), accessed July 18, 2015; Alison Hirsch, “‘The Celebrated Madame Montour’: ‘Interpreters’ Across Early American Frontiers,” *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4, (2000): 112.

<sup>54</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 353 and Alan, Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 41-4.

<sup>55</sup> Great Lakes historians such as Richard White have argued that the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix is an example of the Haudenosaunee ceding land of their supposed “dependents” to protect their own land. In return for the land gained along the Ohio River, Johnson minimized land cessions for Haudenosaunee peoples. The treaty benefited the Haudenosaunee as it temporarily protected their own lands from the encroachment of Anglo settlers. The treaty benefited the British government by increasing their claim to land east of the Appalachians.

Oneida deed and procured her land for a cartel of friends.<sup>56</sup> When Sally secured the deed she specifically asked for property near the Oneida Castle in hopes to protect it from increased settlement. However, Sally's plan had failed. After 1772 and the loss of her property, Sally is no longer recorded as traveling to Schenectady. By the mid-1770s, she moved to Detroit and never again lived east of the Ohio Valley.<sup>57</sup> Sally Aulsebrook may have lost her property at Fort Stanwix, but her decision to expand north and west allowed her to escape most of the violence of the early years of the Revolutionary War. Molly Brant was not so lucky.

### **Economic Prosperity and Gendered Tensions at Johnson Hall**

While Molly Brant rarely appears in William Johnson's papers during the early years of their intimate partnership at Fort Johnson, she appears more prominently during their life at Johnson Hall from 1763 to 1774. Molly and William moved to the new residence from Fort Johnson, approximately 10 miles away. Johnson Hall was about five miles north of the Mohawk River and connected to the river through a series of small creeks that ran south through the property. Compared to Fort Johnson, Johnson Hall also had increased grandeur and prestige: it was a two-and-a-half story Georgian house of wood on a seven hundred acre plot of land.<sup>58</sup> Fort Johnson has been described as a "fine stone house," but Johnson Hall was characterized as a "larger baronial manor."<sup>59</sup> The wood was marked with vertical lines on the white siding to

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<sup>56</sup> Jelles Fonda affidavit, July 18 1785, *Calendar of New York Colonial Manuscripts*; Benjamin Roberts to Sir William Johnson, Dec 24. 1766 MG 19 F 35 (PSGIA) 1<sup>st</sup> Ser., Lot #651, LAC; and Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 408.

<sup>57</sup> Isaac Todd wrote to William Edgar in May from Michilimackinac that, "Sally is not here at present." Isaac Todd to William Edgar, Michilimackinac, May 27, 1772, Edgar Papers; "Macomb Ledger," L5: 1780-84, Macomb Family Papers, BHC, pg. 53.

<sup>58</sup> Wanda Burch, "Johnson Hall," in *Encyclopedia of New York State*, eds. Peter R. Eisenstadt and Laura-Eve Moss, (Syracuse University Press, 2005), 826.

<sup>59</sup> H. Pearson Gundy, "Molly Brant: Loyalist," *Ontario History*, 45 (1953): 98.

simulate stone blocks.<sup>60</sup> At the main entrance to the residence, Doric pillars supported a pediment and were accented with a type of ornate bracket to support the pediment.<sup>61</sup> The mansion contained an attic, a basement which held the kitchen and butler's quarters, and a main floor containing two parlors with a center hall in between—a common layout for larger homes of this period.<sup>62</sup>

The formal colonial-style mahogany staircase rose to the second floor, filled mainly with bedrooms. Each bedroom was luxuriously outfitted with waist high paneling, crown moldings, two windows, and a fireplace. Molly Brant outfitted her room with Mohawk furnishings mixed with British and other global items as accessories, showing how she maintained ties to Mohawk cultural practices while living in the “baronial manor” of Johnson Hall. Her bedroom was one of the most colorful: it was decorated in a deep red contrasting with a brilliant blue.<sup>63</sup> The room had a low pallet with an Indian blanket and Indian style rugs, rather than the European style four - poster bed and Oriental rugs, the common aesthetic in upper class colonial homes at the time.<sup>64</sup> The possessions in Molly Brant's room were exempt from William Johnson's will indicating that the contents of the room were her own belongings.<sup>65</sup> She also owned four green rugs, four large rose blankets, two pairs of green velvet leggings, two scarlet cloaks, several red and blue handkerchiefs and three blankets that were red on one side and blue on the other and one green blanket with ribbons.<sup>66</sup> Similar to Sally, she also liked silver accessories. She owned a silver

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<sup>60</sup> Louise M. Hubbard. “Colonial-American Home of a Baronet.” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, (Feb 09, 1957): C2

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*; Betty Pepis, “Historic Homes of New York,” *New York Times*, (June 6, 1954): SM46.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Lois 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, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press), 305.

<sup>66</sup> List prepared at Niagara, April 27, 1778, effects and possessions left behind in 1777, transcribed in David B. Guldenzopf, “The Colonial Transformation of Mohawk Iroquois Society,” (PhD dissertation, university of New

watch, two pairs of silver buckles, two hundred silver broaches, and three hundred silver crosses. While some of these items could have been intended for trade purposes, they also reflect her personal taste, further indicated by her choice in silver housewares, including six tablespoons, twelve teacups, a pair of sugar tongs, and two silver mugs.<sup>67</sup> Molly's possessions reflect the mix of Mohawk and British Atlantic worlds that she lived in. While she owned Mohawk styled blankets and rugs, she also owned a variety of possessions from around the globe including "2 Japan'd Candlesticks," "1 piece chintz & 1 piece silk for gowns," "a violin & set of music books."<sup>68</sup>

Molly Brant was responsible for managing a large household. Between 1759 and 1774 William Johnson was gone (at a conservative estimate) from Johnson Hall over twenty percent of the time, sometimes for as long as two months at one time. During these periods, Molly was responsible keeping things running smoothly.<sup>69</sup> Along with the spacious main house, there were many outbuildings including a grist mill, blacksmith shop, an Indian store, barns, and a stone house (which archaeologists believe to have been the slave quarters), and a large garden composed of four rectangular beds, each 4 feet wide and 12 feet long, running parallel, like railroad tracks, with a 6-foot space in between.<sup>70</sup> Each of the beds would be for a different category of plants: one for medicinal plants; another for ornamental and household plants; a salad (the medieval English word for salad) bed with lettuces, onions and other culinary plants; and one with the staples like corn, beans and squash.<sup>71</sup> A sundial, bench or garden ornament would

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York at Albany, 1986), 204-5, also reprinted in Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own*, (Niagara: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 37-8.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Feister and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 29.

<sup>70</sup> Anich, "Experts search for artifacts at Johnson Hall site," Laurence Sombke "Colonial Roots: Gardens in Early America Were both Practical and Decorative" *Times Union*, 11 Jul. 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

sit in the center of the four-square garden. Fruit trees with names like Esopus Spitzenburg apple, English Black Heart cherry, Bon Critoner pear surrounded the gardens. The fruit trees were joined by a variety of berry bushes, including gooseberries and currants. Like other gardeners in New York at the time, Johnson would have grown dozens of other plants, including melons, cabbage, peas, carrots both white and orange, cauliflower, tobacco and all kinds of herbs, both culinary and utilitarian.

William Johnson clearly valued his garden and apparently brought his well-to-do guests, such as fellow New Yorker Alexander Hamilton, to his gardens to point out a new plant or to show off his gardening skills.<sup>72</sup> However, the garden also suggests Molly Brant's importance in the household. Just as Sally Ainese would have harvested the Three Sisters of corn squash, and beans at Michilimackinac, Molly grew and harvested the plants at Johnson Hall illustrating the importance of Mohawk culture and customs within the household. Molly was also a skilled healer and she may have planted and tended the medicinal plant garden. While there is little archival evidence of Molly Brant operating as a herbalist or healer during her time at Johnson Hall, in the later years she used her knowledge of plants to help the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, recover from illness.<sup>73</sup> The herb garden at Johnson Hall contained herbs used by Native peoples throughout the northeast, such as bee balm (also known as bergamot or Oswego tea), and Seneca Snakeroot.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Mary Quayle Innis (ed.) *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, (William Briggs: Toronto, 1965), 274-5; Gretchen Green "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant, and Their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation." *Ontario History* 81 (September 1989): 241; Jean Johnston, "Ancestry and Descendants of Molly Brant," *Ontario History* 63 (June 1971): 90.

<sup>74</sup> The Seneca people discussed the medicinal attributes of the herb to John Tennent in the early eighteenth century, a Scottish medical practitioner who eventually introduced the root to the Western world of medicine. Eventually in the early nineteenth century, the root was employed in cough remedies as an expectorant. Norm Kenkel and Candace Turcotte, "Seneca snakeroot: an important medicinal plant," *Prairie Garden*, (Annual 2001): 87 and Virgil J. Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 38; Mary Siisip Geniusz,

Molly Brant's role in the household is further illustrated by William Johnson's will where she is described as the "prudent & faithfull Housekeeper" of Johnson Hall.<sup>75</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, a "housekeeper" usually referred to a woman who supervised the female servants of the household and who was in charge of hospitality.<sup>76</sup> The amount of authority a housekeeper held depended on the household. It was a flexible term with its specific meaning dependent on the context. At Johnson Hall, Molly was responsibly for providing for the numerous Native and non-Native visitors, including elite colonial men, such as governors, judges, English nobility and their attendants and families, and overseeing the slaves slaves and the large staff of servants, a cook, a gardener, a farm overseer, a secretary, and bookkeeper.<sup>77</sup>

By trading in hospitality at Johnson Hall, Molly Brant increased her political and economic influence throughout the Mohawk Valley. Visitors to Johnson Hall often commented on her esteemed role in the household. Witham Marshe, who served as the Secretary of Indian Affairs under Sir William Johnson, sent Molly his compliments and called her "chgiagh," which is likely a contraction of her Mohawk name or an affectionate nickname.<sup>78</sup> Lord Adam Gordon,

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Wendy Makoons Geniusz, Annmarie Geniusz, *Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask: Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 224-7.

<sup>75</sup> SWJP Vol. 12, 1070.

<sup>76</sup> In eighteenth century upper class English household, housekeeper, cook, and nurse were the upper level female servants. When a husband was married, then housekeeper was under the authority of the wife and usually responsible for managing the other domestic servants. In households ran by unmarried men, housekeepers sometimes took on the role of a mistress of even wife. Some married men chose their housekeepers for second wife when they were widowed. In some contexts, men also referred to themselves as housekeepers. In these contexts, they used the term positively to refer to the process of setting up and managing a house that they owned. Depending on the context, housekeeper in eighteenth century English households could refer to domesticity (usually when discussing women) or ownership and authority over property (usually when discussing men). Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2013), 136-7; Karen Harvey, "Men Making Home: Masculinity and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Homes and Homecomings: Gendered Histories of Domesticity and Return*, eds. K. H. Adler, Carrie Hamilton, (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 77-8; and Lois 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, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press), 302.

<sup>77</sup> Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 302, Milton W. Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson, colonial American, 1715-1763*, (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 35; 301.

<sup>78</sup> SWJP Vol. 11, 72; Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 302.

a visitor from England, sent “[his] love to Miss Molly and thanks for her good Breakfast.”<sup>79</sup>

Molly Brant frequently received gifts, as well as accolades in return for her hospitality: George Croghan (an acquaintance of Andrew Montour’s, Sally Ainese’s first husband) sent trinkets from London for Molly and the children, Normand MacLeod sent blankets from Niagara, and John Van Eps sent her a leg of venison.<sup>80</sup> Molly Brant also hosted New York Governors Henry Moore and William Tyron. Other distinguished guests included John Penn and Chief Justice William Allen of Pennsylvania.<sup>81</sup> Many of these guests brought their attendants and sometimes their families.<sup>82</sup> Molly’s hospitality—the food she prepared, the welcoming environment she created, the order she maintained—became a type of valuable trade good.

Thomas Jones, a lawyer from New York, produced an account of the Johnson household that gives insight into Molly Brant’s daily life. In the mornings, William Johnson dedicated his time to business and his duties as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs.<sup>83</sup> Jones describes Johnson Hall as “always full” and “travelers from all parts of America, from Europe, and from the West Indies, daily resorted to his house, in their respective tours through the country.”<sup>84</sup> All visitors were “met with the same kind of treatment, the most unbounded hospitality.”<sup>85</sup> Molly’s days were filled with greeting visitors and ensuring that her “unbounded hospitality” made them feel welcome and comfortable. Jones’ account describes the visitors’ daily routine during their stay:

The gentlemen and ladies breakfasted in their respective rooms, and, at their option, had either tea, coffee, or chocolate, or if an old rugged veteran wanted a beefsteak, a mug of

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<sup>79</sup> SWJP Vol. 13, 376.

<sup>80</sup> SWJP Vol. 4, 501; SWJP, Vol. 6, 604; SWJP, Vol. 7, 409.

<sup>81</sup> Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson*, 25; Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 25.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson, *A Library of American Literature: An Anthology*, Vol. 3: *Literature of the Revolutionary Period, 1765–1787*, (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1891), 137-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

ale, a glass of brandy, or some grog, he called for it, and it always was at his service . . . After breakfast, while Sir William was about his business, his guests entertained themselves as they pleased. Some rode out, some went out with guns, some with fishing-tackle, some sauntered about the town, some played cards, some back-gammon, some billiards, some pennies, and some even at ninepins. Thus was each day spent until the hour of four, when the bell punctually rang for dinner, and all assembled.<sup>86</sup>

While Molly had a household staff, including servants and slaves to help serve the breakfasts, she was responsible for orchestrating the meal and ensuring each guest received a suitable breakfast. Lord Adam Gordon's thanks to Molly for the "good breakfast" indicate that visitors were aware of Molly's role in providing hospitality. While William Johnson was busy with work and the guests entertained themselves, Molly Brant's day was filled with greeting new visitors, tending her sections of the garden, making arrangements for the evening meal, and socializing with the female visitors by taking walks around the estate and spending time in the gardens.

Dinners at Johnson Hall were an extravagant affair and the menu reflects Molly Brant's influence. Thomas Jones describes the dinner table as seating "seldom less than ten, sometimes thirty. All were welcome. All sat down together. All was good cheer, mirth and festivity. Sometimes seven, eight, or ten, of the Indian Sachems joined the festive board."<sup>87</sup> The "plentiful" dinners consisted "of the produce of his estate or what was procured from the woods and rivers, such as venison, bear, and fish of every kind, with wild turkeys, partridges, grouse, and quails in abundance. No jellies, creams, ragouts, or syllabubs graced his table."<sup>88</sup> While Molly had a cook and household staff to help prepare the meals, dishes being produced by local produce procured from the estate or the nearby "woods and rivers," indicate Molly's influence in planning the meals. Due to her childhood in Canajoharie and the Ohio Valley, Molly Brant was much more knowledgeable about food produced from the area than dishes prepared in European

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

styles, such as “jellies, creams, ragouts, or syllabubs.”<sup>89</sup> Various types of alcoholic beverages were also at the table, including Madeira, ale, strong beer, cider, and punch: “Each guest chose what he liked, and drank as he pleased.”<sup>90</sup> The dinners often lasted until three in the morning, however, everyone “retired when he pleased. There was no restraint.”<sup>91</sup> Molly may have taken part in the dinnertime festivities until the early dawn hours, or she may have chosen to retire earlier, since she was involved with planning breakfasts for the visitors.

As the female head of household, Molly Brant would have been particularly responsible for ensuring that all the women attending enjoyed themselves. Her guests expected her to display herself with the proper appearance and manners. For upper class colonial women, lavish parties were an opportunity to demonstrate their rank by competing with friends in the social group to see who was the best dressed and most beautiful for the occasion. Using fashion choices to display social status distinguished a person and their immediate social circle in a much larger hierarchy of class. Historian Lucia McMahon demonstrates that along with displaying good taste in fashion, upper class colonial women were praised for “skillfully enacting a style of living rooted in the easy sharing of intellectual pleasures.”<sup>92</sup> Molly seems to have excelled under these

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<sup>89</sup> Syllabubs are an English dairy dish which probably first evolved during the sixteenth century. Syllabubs were a type of dessert made from cream and wine, and served cold in an ornate glass. During the eighteenth century, syllabubs were an important feature of the dessert course in British and some other European communities and they were frequently served on tiered trays, often with jellies. However, towards the end of the century ice cream became increasingly popular in England, eventually usurping the syllabub's role as a sweet but refreshing finish to the end of the meal. Carol Wilson, “Cheesecakes, Junkets, and Syllabubs,” *Gastronomica*. 2, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 19-23.

<sup>90</sup> Stedman and Hutchinson, *A Library of American Literature*, 137-8.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 78-9.

demands, as throughout her life she impressed numerous distinguished colonial women with her hospitality, manners, fashion, and knowledge of politics and medicine.<sup>93</sup>

To ensure Johnson Hall was supplied for dinner parties and Indian Councils, Molly Brant traveled to the local store or nearby merchants in Schenectady and Butlersbury, to make purchases, such as blankets, fabric (linen, calico, silk), ribbons, sewing thread, tea, saddle lace, and one dozen cream-colored cups and saucers.<sup>94</sup> Molly's trips were necessary to keep the household outfitted and supplied for the numerous Indian Conferences held on the property. Between 1763 and 1774, there were at least twelve official Indian conferences and numerous other meetings at Johnson Hall.<sup>95</sup> Hundreds of Native peoples from across the northern colonies attended, and they all needed to be housed, fed, and given presents to reassure them of the support and friendship of the British government.<sup>96</sup> More than once, William Johnson complained about his house being "constantly Full of Indians."<sup>97</sup>

William Johnson's participation in Indian Conferences provides insight into the contrasting gender roles between Mohawk and British communities. In 1763 William Johnson attended a council in Canajoharie to discuss land cessations. He met with approximately thirty Mohawk men and thirty-three Mohawk "principal women."<sup>98</sup> The women supported the leaders' decisions to refuse to cede any land to Johnson, and the leaders deferred to the women, describing them as "the Truest Owners being the persons who labor on the Lands."<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>93</sup> Some of these women include Elizabeth Simcoe and Sarah McGinnis. Mary Quayle Innis (ed.), *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, (William Briggs: Toronto, 1965), 136; Green, Gretchen. "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant, and Their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation," *Ontario History* 81 (September 1989): 241; Jean Johnston, "Ancestry and Descendants of Molly Brant," *Ontario History* 63 (June 1971): 90.

<sup>94</sup> SWJP Vol. 12, 532-616 and SWJP, Vol. 13, 506-32.

<sup>95</sup> SWJP Vol. 1, xxv-xxxiii.

<sup>96</sup> Feister & Pulis, "Molly Brant," 302.

<sup>97</sup> SWJP Vol.13, 376; SWJP Vol. 6, 178-84; SWJP Vol. 12, 461.

<sup>98</sup> SWJP, Vol. 4, 50.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

women declared, “they would keep their Land, and did not chuse to part with the same to be reduced to make brooms.”<sup>100</sup> The women not only supported the leaders’ decision to dispute the land cessation, they were positioned as the owners of the land, who were unwilling to part with it since they depended on the land for their agricultural practices. Previously, at an Indian Conference at Johnson Hall in April of 1762, William Johnson informed the Mohawk women that he did not wish them to attend the conference.<sup>101</sup> To Johnson, women were an unnecessary presence at conferences that contributed to costs by requiring clothing and food and he after the long and costly French and Indian War under pressure from his superiors to economize on Indian expenses<sup>102</sup> He also subscribed to English patriarchal gender roles, where women are seen as dependent on men and excluded from political and economic affairs, such as land sales.

Where did Molly Brant fit into these strained gender dynamics at Johnson Hall and the Mohawk Valley? Unfortunately, Molly Brant does not appear in the archival records on the Indian Conferences. However, Molly’s childhood experiences indicate she was exposed to and involved with Haudenosaunee and British affairs in the region.<sup>103</sup> Molly Brant’s step-father—Brant Kanagaradunkwa—helped raise Molly and also attended the Canajoharie conference in 1763, supporting the Mohawk women’s position as rightful owners of the land. Molly Brant was a Mohawk woman and like her step-father and childhood community, saw women as the rightful owners of the land.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>101</sup> SWJP Vol. 3, 707.

<sup>102</sup> Gail D. Danvers, “Gendered Encounters: Warriors, Women, and William Johnson,” *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 2, (Aug., 2001): 202; Michael J. Mullins, “Personal Politics: William Johnson and the Mohawks,” *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1993): 352.

<sup>103</sup> Molly Brant grew up in an important Mohawk family in Canajoharie and she maintained ties with her maternal family after Sir William Johnson’s death.

Since Molly Brant lived with William Johnson and helped run Johnson Hall, her peers have often viewed her as a Loyalist committed to the British crown, rather than a Mohawk woman committed to her nation. For instance, in his account of his visits to Johnson Hall, John C. Ogden describes Molly Brant as an always faithful and useful friend to the British government during her time at Johnson Hall. He recounts she would often persuade the obstinate chiefs into a compliance with proposals for peace during the negotiation of treaties and land sales.<sup>104</sup> While John Ogden positions Molly Brant as faithful to the British, he overlooks Molly's commitment to her family and Mohawk peoples. Molly may have viewed an alliance with the British as the best chance for the Mohawk peoples to survive with a large land base in a politically turbulent time period. While British men may have read Molly's actions as supporting the British crown, she probably viewed her actions as dedicated to the continual survival of the Mohawk nation. Molly Brant's long-term relationship with William Johnson and the multiple connections between the Brant and Johnson families suggests that both families saw their political success as dependent on mutual alliances between British and Mohawk peoples. William Johnson was described once by a Mohawk leader as being split between his loyalties to the Governor of New York and the Mohawks.<sup>105</sup> Despite the impressions of British visitors, Molly Brant's Mohawk possessions in her bedroom, her support of Mohawk community members during her partnership to William Johnson—such as connecting Mohawk women with valuable ceremonial supplies when in need—and her return to her maternal family in Canajoharie after William Johnson's death indicate Molly Brant's continued support of Mohawk people.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> John C. Ogden, *Tour Through Upper and Lower Canada*, (Wilmington: Bonsal and Niles, 1800), 60-1.

<sup>105</sup> Council held at Albany July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1753, "Council Minutes of New York, 1745-1751," in *Calendar of Council minutes 1668-1783*, Vol. 21, (Albany: State University of New York, 1902), 433; Mullins, "Personal Politics," 351.

<sup>106</sup> SWJP Vol. 7, 379.

While managing the large household, Molly Brant was also busy raising children. She had three children at Fort Johnson, Peter, Elizabeth and Magdalene, and another five children while at Johnson Hall, Margaret, George, Mary, Susanna, and Anne.<sup>107</sup> She was also responsible for helping to raise William Johnson's three children from his previous intimate relationship with Catherine Weisenberg—his indentured servant of German descent. These children lived at Johnson Hall until they were in their early twenties. Johnson's mixed-race children from a previous Native intimate, such as William Tagwirunta, more often referred to as William of Canajoharie, and William Brant Johnson, also lived at Johnson Hall.<sup>108</sup> In total, Molly Brant would have been responsible for raising eight of her own children and helping to raise five children from Johnson's previous relationships.<sup>109</sup>

While Molly Brant could read and write in Mohawk, it is unclear if she had an English education.<sup>110</sup> However, she provided her birth children with an English education and

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807, Man of Two Worlds*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press), 68.

<sup>109</sup> Johnson also appears to have courted other women during his intimate relationship with Molly, but there is no evidence that he had another intimate partner concurrent with Molly Brant after Catherine Weisenberg's death, and he does not acknowledge any children from other women during this period.

<sup>110</sup> Eleazar Wheelock noted that Joseph received a letter from Molly while at school, but Wheelock had not read it because he had assumed it was in Mohawk. Some historians suggest that she received schooling, as Sir William Johnson wrote letters to her while he was away from home and there are a few letters that exist from Molly herself. General Frederick Haldimand's papers contain a letter "translated from Mary Brant's letter to Col. Claus" dated April 12, 1781, Carleton Island. Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, historians of Molly Brant, have suggested this letter was translated from Mohawk to English. The letter exists only in translation and is signed by "Mary Brant." A receipt dated October 11, 1782 is also signed by "wari" (Mary) and the words "Mary Brant her mark" are written around the letters, but this is also only as a transcription. Two letters exist by Molly Brant in the Daniel Claus Papers, dated 1778 and 1779, but they are both written in different hands. Each is in a flowery style distinct from Claus's, and there is a possibility either could be by Mary's handwriting. However, they could also be written by an amanuensis. Another possibility is that Molly penned the Mohawk letters herself, and dictated the English letter to her daughters. Some historians believe Molly Brant had an English education. Earle Thomas, "Molly Brant," *Historic Kingston* (Kingston, On: 1989), p. 14; Barbara Graymont, "KOÑWATSIT'SIAIÉÑNI (Mary Brant)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaienni\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/konwatsitsiaienni_4E.html), accessed October 21, 2014; Gretchen Green, "Molly Brant, Catharine Brant, and Their Daughters", 236; E.B. O'Callaghan (ed.) *Documentary History of the State of New York (DHNY)*, Vol. IV, (Albany: Charles van Benthuyesen, 1851), 330; SWJP, Vol. 8. 125, 139. For Molly's translated letter to Claus and discussion of the letter, see Mary Brant to Daniel Claus, April

opportunities and skills needed to become cultural mediators in the borderland Great Lakes during the politically turbulent years leading up to the American Revolution. Molly's children attended a school in nearby Johnstown.<sup>111</sup> Molly's eldest child Peter went beyond the local school: he attended Eleazar Wheelock's school in Albany and another in Schenectady.<sup>112</sup> After 1772, Molly rarely saw Peter, as he was sent to Montreal for further schooling where he lived with a French family and subsequently with a medical doctor, all while being supervised by Daniel Claus (William Johnson's son-in-law).<sup>113</sup> In 1773, at the age of fourteen, he moved to Philadelphia for training in merchandising.<sup>114</sup> Peter addressed letters to his "Honored Father" and "to [his] mother," and enclosed letters to his sister Elizabeth.<sup>115</sup> Similar to his mother at Johnson Hall, Peter actively maintained ties to Mohawk cultural practices: in correspondence with Molly he asked her for an "Indian Book, for [he] was Afraid [he'll] lose [his] Indian tongue" without more practice.<sup>116</sup> In his letters, Peter also requested a new violin, a new watch, and books in English and French to read during his leisure time. In one letter he asked that his love be given to his mother, and in another he wrote his mother reminding her that he had asked her to send him Indian curiosities to show interested gentlemen and ladies.<sup>117</sup>

During her years at Johnson Hall, Molly Brant was responsible for raising multiple children and ensuring the household was well-stocked to support the numerous guests who needed food and lodging when they visited for Indian Councils and other political events.

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12, 1781, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, LAC, p. 180; Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 33; Receipt signed by Mary Brant, certified by John Johnson, Oct 12. 1782, Haldimand Papers, LAC, Reel A684, p.117.

<sup>111</sup> Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant," 305.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid and Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 35.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> SWJP Vol. 8, 1139-40.

<sup>117</sup> SWJP, Vol. 8, 635-36, 1139.

Molly's life at Johnson Hall, her bedroom furnishings, her dinner party menus, illustrate how she adapted Mohawk customs into a changing, colonial world.

### **A Baronial Manor and a Racialized Space: Slavery at Johnson Hall and in the Mohawk Valley**

Johnson Hall was a multiethnic, yet highly hierarchical space consisting of William Johnson, a British man and head of the household; Molly Brant, a Mohawk woman and William's spouse and housekeeper; and William's children from previous relationships, including Catherine Weisenberg and Mohawk women, and from his current partnership with Molly Brant. Early American historian William B. Hart describes how indentured servants; white laborers; black and occasionally Native slaves all existed on the lowest rungs of the hierarchical household.<sup>118</sup> Numerous and varied guests also frequently visited and sought lodging in the residence. At Johnson Hall, "persons of Indian, African, and European heritage intermingled in a Rabelaisian world of myriad ethnicities, recast identities, and unexpected roleplaying."<sup>119</sup> Johnson directed his tailor to outfit the slaves in a modified Mohawk garb, fashioning their blankets into coats to make fieldwork easier. Typically, coats were a part of male Mohawk dress codes.<sup>120</sup> A person with dwarfism whose ethnicity is not certain entertained guests with his expert violin playing. A German butler named Frank was in charge of the needs of the Johnson family. A pair of white men—possibly twins—with dwarfism waited on guests. An Irish schoolmaster,

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<sup>118</sup> 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*, eds. Andrew Cayton & Frederika Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 102.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>120</sup> Stephanie Pratt, *American Indians in British Art, 1700-1840*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 97.

Wall, taught English and manners to Johnson's mixed-race children and the white children of his tenants. A mixed black and Native waiter accompanied Johnson whenever he traveled. Johnson referred to this man, named John Abel, as "Pontiac" and it is unclear whether this was intended as comment on his servant's rebellious behavior or to belittle the Odawa warrior of the same name, who in protest of the English victory in the French and Indian War, led a multinational Native uprising against English settlements, from the northern Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean known commonly as Pontiac's War.<sup>121</sup> Visitors to the hall included military officers, land speculators, members of the St. Patrick's Masonic Lodge (which was also headquartered at Johnson Hall) and a blind harpist named John Kain.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, with its numerous, multicultural visitors, information frequently circulated among visitors about the whereabouts of missing slaves, both black and indigenous, throughout western New York.<sup>123</sup>

Despite the information on the eclectic residents of Johnson Hall, there is limited information available about the details of William Johnson's slaves. Owning black slaves was not uncommon in the area. It was common for Dutch and English households in the area to own slaves, often including one young black woman in charge of domestic duties.<sup>124</sup> The wealthier estates often owned a dozen or more slaves. The wealthiest man in the New York back country, William Johnson owned at least forty slaves throughout his life.<sup>125</sup> Johnson reportedly had

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<sup>121</sup> Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens,'" 102.

<sup>122</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 27.

<sup>123</sup> Some of the runaway slaves may have been kidnapped in Indian raids, but most had escaped from their masters. Some slaves perceived the New York frontier as a "free zone" and crossing its boundary changed one's status for "unfree" to "free." As a result, Dutch and English slave-owners from the Connecticut River valley to the Mohawk Valley had to contend with the persistent problem of slaves running away to their neighbors. There were also a small number of free black households in the Mohawk Valley. Runaways may have found assistance from these families and/or attempted to "blend in" as a free blacks. However, the runaway slaves and free blacks were a small proportion of persons of African descent in the area. Hart, "Black 'Go Betweens,'" 97-8.

<sup>124</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 27.

<sup>125</sup> It is unclear how many black slaves Sir William Johnson owned at Johnson Hall, but approximately forty names of slaves appear in individual Johnson documents between 1738 and 1774. See, Wanda Burch, "He Was Bought at

problems with his overseer, the Irish tenant Thomas Flood. Flood drank too much, which contributed to his harsh treatment of slaves.<sup>126</sup> While Flood left Johnson Hall several times, he always returned and, apparently, was always taken back. Other accounts also suggest the possible use of violence to discipline slaves at Johnson Hall.<sup>127</sup> In 1747, Johnson bought a Dutchess County estate, including nineteen slaves, “though only about ten or eleven of them were able-bodied men or women, the rest being age infirmed or children.”<sup>128</sup> Johnson’s comments on the slaves’ bodies indicate he wanted slaves as laborers on his estate. Johnson avoided indigenous slaves, called *panis*, because he complained that he could not force them to work.<sup>129</sup> However, he was occasionally obliged to accept them as part of diplomatic exchanges with the Mohawks. Johnson’s reluctance to keep Native slaves, particularly those acquired from his Native allies is peculiar since Native slaves were used as laborers in households and in the fur trade throughout the Great Lakes. While Johnson’s close relationship with the Mohawks explains why he would keep Native slaves descended from Haudenosaunee allies, it does not explain his overall resistance to indigenous slaves. A possible explanation is that Johnson projected a European racialized worldview where people of African descent were considered most suitable for physical labor.<sup>130</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century in the Mohawk Valley, colonial elites

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a Public Sale’: Slavery at Johnson Hall,” *The Sunday Leader-Herald*, February 27, 2000, page 8A, <http://fulton.nygenweb.net/history/slavery/JH.html>, accessed August 15, 2015.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> For instance, goods shipped to Johnson Hall included items such as "handcuffs" for slaves, Sir William Johnson placed advertisements in eighteenth-century New York newspapers in search of runaway slaves, and an enslaved man named Dick ran away in 1773 because he was “sent down to New York to be shipt but not liking to go to sea ran off.” Charles R Foy, *Ports of slavery, ports of freedom: how slaves used northern seaports' maritime industry to escape and create trans-Atlantic identities, 1713-1783*, (PhD dissertation Rutgers University, 2008), 155; *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Issue 1151 (November 15, 1773): 3.

<sup>128</sup> August C. Buell, *Sir William Johnson*, (New York: D Appleton and Company, 1903), 31.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Whether due to genuine compassion for Native peoples or a racialized worldview where only peoples of African descent were seen as legitimately enslavable, Johnson was also horrified by the prospect of an indigenous slave being shipped to the British West Indies in 1771, and he vowed to see if he could arrange for the slave to work off his debt to his master as a boatman in Albany. Hart, “Black ‘Go Betweens,’” 93-4; DHNY, Vol. 2, 570.

increasingly articulated racialized worldviews, believing that people of African descent were biologically part of a wicked and immoral race, making them as inferior, ideal for physical labor, and enslaveable.<sup>131</sup>

A black woman named Jenny served Molly Brant as her enslaved servant.<sup>132</sup> Molly Brant inherited Jenny and her sister, Juba, after William Johnson's death. The sisters remained with Molly at least a decade afterward.<sup>133</sup> Molly depended on the labor of Jenny and other slaves within the main residence to fulfill her responsibilities during her partnership with William Johnson. Jenny and her sister most likely looked after Molly Brant's children, taking on a similar role to many enslaved black women on southern plantations.<sup>134</sup> The slaves would have been particularly useful to Molly during the large Indian Conferences at Johnson Hall when hundreds of Native peoples would visit the property.

While Molly Brant negotiated the often-contradictory gender and racial ideologies circulating throughout Johnson Hall, she profited from the labor of black slaves.<sup>135</sup> Molly's role as a slaver owner is reflective of her elite social status in the Mohawk Valley. This status was a result of her intimate partnership with William Johnson and her Mohawk upbringing and family connections. While Mohawk cultural and political practices shaped the Mohawk Valley, the

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<sup>131</sup> Hart, "Black 'Go Betweens,'" 94.-5

<sup>132</sup> Burch, "He Was Bought at a Public Sale."

<sup>133</sup> SWJP Vol. 12, 674, 1062-75.

<sup>134</sup> For more on black women's reproductive labor, Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 1987; Patricia Hill, Collins, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood" in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, eds. E. Glenn, et al., (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in New World Slavery*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For a discussion on how black women's reproductive labor became imbedded in the cultural stereotype of the "mammy," see Kimberley Wallace-Saunders, *Mammy: a century of race, gender, and Southern memory*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

<sup>135</sup> For more on Native women as slave owners and their relationship to their slaves albeit in a very different geographic context, see the discussion of Peggy Vann in Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

arrivals of Europeans and transatlantic slavery imported racialized hierarchies into the region.<sup>136</sup> Many English and other European colonial officials believed a wide range of heritable racial characteristics were inherent in racialized peoples.<sup>137</sup> This view was just beginning to emerge in the colonies in the mid-to-late seventeenth century and became more prominent throughout the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century the view popularized and solidified.<sup>138</sup> In the middle of the eighteenth century in western New York, it was becoming common to believe that the behavior, moral qualities, and status of persons of African descent were universal, immutable, and inherited. The dark brown skin of Africans now stood as the mark of their inferior status in colonial American society.<sup>139</sup>

The Haudenosaunee people have a long history of indigenous slavery—with a separate genealogy from the transatlantic slavery that developed post-1492.<sup>140</sup> In the mid-seventeenth century, the Haudenosaunee began to expand westward into Huron territory, creating frequent violent conflicts between Haudenosaunee and Huron peoples.<sup>141</sup> Both sides captured slaves during these conflicts, and the slaves were adopted (to varying degrees) into their new Native

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<sup>136</sup> For more on the transatlantic slave trade, see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). For the development of racialized slavery in North America, see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1975); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>137</sup> Hart, “Black ‘Go Betweens,’” 94.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-5.

<sup>140</sup> Indigenous slaveries and transatlantic slaveries would interact, collide, and blend together in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. However, it is important to acknowledge both histories of slavery, particularly since assuming indigenous slaveries are equivalent to transatlantic slavery or that indigenous slavery is a spin-off of transatlantic slavery erases Native political institutions and self-determination. Brett Rushforth. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012) and E.A.S Demers, “John Askin and Indian Slavery at Michilimackinac,” in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, edited by Alan Galloway, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 391-416.

<sup>141</sup> Rushforth. *Bonds of Alliance*, 24.

social formation.<sup>142</sup> Some of these adopted slaves were tortured and ritually killed as part of ceremonies that vented grief over relatives lost in war. These ceremonies were both a violent, cruel system of assimilating outsiders and an effective means of strengthening a depleted population, and replenishing the spiritual power of Mohawk lineages through the incorporation of living members and the dying of enemy warriors.<sup>143</sup> Slavery within the Great Lakes was indigenous because it was practiced by Native peoples, and because the peoples practicing it were indigenous to the slave system.<sup>144</sup> In other words, the Native people from various social formations residing in the region partook in reciprocal slave raiding, trading, and negotiating.<sup>145</sup> Living within the reach of both potential slaves and potential slavers helped to mediate the violence of the trade—despite the cruelty of some of the rituals associated with the trade. Indigenous slavery in the Great Lakes was not driven by a high demand for slaves, but the political and cultural imperatives of enslavement and the desire to create alliances within the politically fragmented world of the Great Lakes.<sup>146</sup>

As a Mohawk woman raised by a Mohawk mother, Molly Brant was aware of the Haudenosaunee history of slavery and the strategy of incorporating captives to bolster the Haudenosaunee population. While slave raids between the Haudenosaunee and Huron peaked in the mid-seventeenth century, Native social formations throughout the Great Lakes continued to participate in the indigenous system of slavery as a strategy to create political alliances throughout the eighteenth century. For the Mohawks, since women were keepers of the family and the fields, they provided the bulk of the family's nutritional needs and made all major

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<sup>142</sup> Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekawitha and the Jesuits*, Oxford University Press, 2004, 26.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

decisions affecting the family.<sup>147</sup> Slaves would be responsible for helping Native women with subsistence and agricultural labor.<sup>148</sup>

At Johnson Hall, the slaves in the house assisted Molly Brant with her domestic duties. Scholars have tended to view Molly Brant's managing of domestic slaves at Johnson Hall and ownership of slaves after William's Johnson death as part of her assimilation to British culture.<sup>149</sup> Molly liked adopted Mohawk and EuroAmerican conceptions of slavery and race. However, positioning Molly's relationship to slavery as only evidence of her assimilation erases the Haudenosaunee history of slavery. For many Mohawks, Molly's acquisition of slaves would be viewed as an expansion of Molly's familial obligations and kinship networks.<sup>150</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century in the Mohawk Valley and at Johnson Hall in particular, transatlantic slavery and hierarchical views of race intersected with indigenous forms of slavery, and intertwined within the complex world of political alliances in the borderland Great Lakes. Slim archival details make it difficult to discern if Molly viewed her black female slaves as racialized others, as a type of adopted kin, or as both.

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<sup>147</sup> Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens,'" 105.

<sup>148</sup> Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 59.

<sup>149</sup> Molly Brant is often positioned in popular and academic histories as a Mohawk woman who throughout her life becomes a Loyalist and assimilates to British culture Gundy, "Molly Brant,"; Johnston, "Ancestry and Descendants," *Ontario History* 63 (June 1971): 86-92; Gretchen Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," ; and James Taylor Carson, "Molly Brant: From Clan Mother to Loyalist Chief," in *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, ed. Theda Perdue (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 48-59.

<sup>150</sup> Historian Daniel Richter argues that captives taken by the Haudenosaunee were viewed as slaves by Europeans, but were actually adoptees who had been incorporated into kin networks but had been less assimilated. Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 69.

## Losses that could never be made up: Molly Brant's Final Years in the Mohawk Valley

William Johnson's death in 1774 brought an end to Molly's life as the hostess and domestic manager of Johnson Hall. Johnson's will illustrates both the racial hierarchies and cultural, political, and racial diversity of the household. Early on in his will, he expresses his desire to be interred near his "beloved wife, Catharine." Catherine was Johnson's indentured servant. She was rumored to have married Johnson on her deathbed. However, there is no archival documentation that indicates a marriage occurred. Johnson probably invented the marriage to legitimize his children with Catharine.<sup>151</sup> After acknowledging Catherine, William changes the subject to the issues of providing mourning materials for Molly Brant, the Mohawk community, and the slaves and servants of Johnson Hall:

I direct and desire my hereinafter mentioned executors provide mourning for my housekeeper, Mary Brant, and for all her children; also for young Brant and William, both half-breed Mohawks, likewise my servants and slaves; it is also my desire that the sachems of both Mohawk villages be invited to my funeral, and there to receive each a black shroud blanket, crape and gloves, which they are to wear, and follow as mourners, next after my own family and friends.<sup>152</sup>

William Johnson provided mourning materials for his dependents, who he listed in a hierarchical rank of importance: Molly, her children, his children from his previous Mohawk partner, and his servants and black slaves. He also attempts to maintain the appearance of his strong relationships with the Mohawks after his death by inviting the leaders of both Mohawk villages to the funeral, providing mourning materials for them." Later in his will, he describes Molly Brant as his

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<sup>151</sup> Even if a legal marriage did occur, Catharine's ethnic identity, class, and gender (as a German indentured servant woman) created a power imbalance between herself and Johnson. It is dangerous to read any form of Catharine's consent into the possibility of a marriage, due to her social positioning and role as Johnson's indentured servant. Even if Catharine did consent to some form of sexual relationship or marriage with Johnson, her choices must also be contextualized within the violence of her circumstances: separated from her community and home country, she was in a strange land, filled with Native peoples who spoke languages she did not understand, and Sir William Johnson was responsible for providing her with the resources she need to survive, such as shelter, food etc.

<sup>152</sup> SWJP, Vol. 12, 1070.

“prudent and faithful housekeeper.”<sup>153</sup> William Johnson’s description of Molly Brant as housekeeper and Catherine Weisenberg as his wife demonstrates both his ideas about race and his shrewdness in building alliances with the Mohawks. He sanctioned his relationship with Catherine Weisenberg according to English customs legitimating his children of Irish and German descent, even though and unlike Molly, Catherine did not have any significant responsibility in running the household. At the same time, William chose an ambivalent term to define Molly Brant’s role, allowing him to avoid offending his Mohawk allies and risking the British-Mohawk alliance. While in British colonial society a housekeeper was usually under the authority of the wife, this meaning did not necessarily transfer to Mohawk communities.<sup>154</sup> In certain English contexts housekeeper could also refer to the owner of property, and since in Mohawk societies, women owned the family’s lodging and furnishing, the term could refer to Molly’s responsibility and authority in the household.<sup>155</sup> The opening paragraph of his will illustrates the complex world of Johnson Hall, a multiracial place where William Johnson attempted to honor an alliance with the Mohawks while entrenching his own versions of EuroAmerican racial hierarchies, demonstrated by his ownership and preference for black slaves and the favoritism of Catherine and her children in his will.

William Johnson left Molly Brant a tract of land in the Mohawk Valley, along with two black slaves, sisters named Jenny and Juba, and two hundred pounds New York currency.<sup>156</sup> He also left land in the Mohawk Valley for all of his children with Molly. This was a particularly valuable inheritance since land in the region was coveted by both the Haudenosaunee and European settlers. Peter, Molly’s oldest son, inherited several tracts of property, including a 100

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, 136-7.

<sup>155</sup> Harvey, “Men Making Home,” 77-8.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

acre farm with a mill, tenants, and homes.<sup>157</sup> While William's children with Catherine would be the main heirs in his will, he ensured that all of his children with Molly received property.<sup>158</sup> Johnson knew his children would continue to be involved with Mohawk Valley politics and wanted to maintain a cordial relationship with the Mohawks. Providing property for Molly and her children was one way to show his continued commitment to the Mohawk people, even though he refused to recognize Molly as his wife. The total inheritance that William Johnson left for his children with Molly Brant was 32, 000 pounds. This amount is almost exactly equal to the amount he left his white sons-in-law, Daniel Claus and John Johnson.<sup>159</sup> However, it is also important to note that the approximately 32, 000 pound inheritance of Daniel Claus and John Johnson was split two-ways, whereas the 32, 000 pound inheritance for the Brant children was divided eight-ways. William Johnson and Molly Brant had two sons (Peter and George) out of their eight children. Peter inherited the largest amount of property from the will. Gender differences largely defined how the inheritances were distributed in the will. For instance, John Johnson, William Johnson's eldest white son, received the largest inheritance. William Johnson's daughters with Catharine Wiesenberger received inheritances through their husbands (Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson). Peter, Johnson's eldest son with Molly, received the largest inheritance

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<sup>157</sup> Peter also inherited another 100 acres along the Kingsborough; three hundred acres with buildings and tenants along the Mohawk River; 4,000 acres from the Kingsland Patent; and 1,600 acres with improvements elsewhere. In Tryon County, New York, only the estates of Guy Johnson (Sir William Johnson's oldest son), Daniel Claus (Sir William Johnson's son-in-law), and John Johnson (Sir William Johnson's other son-in-law) exceeded Peter's.

<sup>158</sup> Along with property, Johnson then instructed money from his annuities paid to Peter, his "natural son by said Mary Brant," the sum of three hundred pounds sterling, and to each of the rest of his seven children with Molly, one hundred pounds each. Young Brant and William of Canajoharie, "two Mohawk lads," were also given the sum of one hundred pounds each. After payments to his Mohawk children, Johnson made John Johnson, his eldest son by Catharine, the heir to the remainder of the funds in his annuities. Johnson split up another chunk of annuities to be divided among his two sons-in-law, Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson. John Johnson inherited one-fourth of Johnson's slave and cattle, and his daughters Ann Claus and Mary Johnson, received two-fourths of his slave and cattle. The last fourth was to be divided among Molly Brant's children, except for two horses, two cows, two breeding cows, and four sheep, which were given to young Brant and William of Canajoharie. Molly Brant's children also received all of Johnson's "own wearing apparel, woolen and linen, &c." SWJP, Vol. 12, 1070.

<sup>159</sup> John Christopher Guzzardo, "Sir William Johnson's Official Family: Patron and Clients in an Anglo-American Empire, 1742-1777," (PhD Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1975), 289.

of all of Molly's children. Peter also received more in annuities than his siblings: Johnson instructed Peter, his "natural son by said Mary Brant," to be paid the sum of the sum of three hundred pounds sterling," and the "rest of his seven children with Molly" received one hundred pounds each. Young Brant and William of Canajoharie, "two Mohawk lads," were also given one hundred pounds each.<sup>160</sup>

After William Johnson's death, Molly Brant left Johnson Hall. She returned to her childhood community of Canajoharie with her youngest children and two slaves. Her eldest son, Peter, was busy with his developing political career.<sup>161</sup> Molly sent some of her older daughters to school in Schenectady.<sup>162</sup> Molly's mother, Margaret, still lived in Canajoharie. Molly's younger brother Joseph was currently living with his mother at Canajoharie. Molly may have moved into her mother's home, or she may have used her inheritance from William Johnson to find alternate housing.<sup>163</sup> Molly's life had drastically changed and she would have to find new ways to support herself and her youngest children.

Along with changes in her domestic situation, the outbreak of the American Revolution also brought a new intensity and anxiety to Molly Brant's life. Close family members including her brother (Joseph or Thayendenagea) and her eldest son (Peter), fought in alliance with the British.<sup>164</sup> A year and a half after the eruption of the Boston Tea Party in December of 1773, the

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<sup>160</sup> SWJP, Vol. 12, 1070.

<sup>161</sup> Peter had returned to Philadelphia after his father's death and joined the British Indian Department under the command of his brother-in-law (through one of Sir William Johnson's children with Catherine Weisenberg), Guy Johnson. In 1775 after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, he was stationed near Montreal and witnessed the American forces marching into Canada that fall. In 1776 he traveled to England as part of a Loyalist Delegation with other members of his family: Guy Johnson (brother-in-law), Daniel Claus (brother-in-law), John Johnson (Sir William Johnson's only son with Catherine Weisenberg), and Joseph Brant (Peter's uncle and Molly's brother). Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 41.

<sup>162</sup> This may have been the same school that Peter attended during his childhood, and was likely run by St. George's Anglican Church. Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 140.

<sup>164</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 43.

Thirteen Colonies were in an uproar and many British Loyalists fled to Quebec, including Guy Johnson, William Johnson's son-in-law. Guy had inherited the position of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District and fearing capture as a loyalist, he fled with his wife (William Johnson's and Catherine Weisenberg's daughter), and three young children at the end of May in 1775. A group of Mohawks from Canajoharie, including Joseph Brant, joined him.<sup>165</sup> In 1776, Guy's brother-in-law, John Johnson, also fled to Quebec, abandoning Johnson Hall to American troops. At some point between 1775 and 1777, Molly Brant's mother, Margaret, left Canajoharie to live with her Cayuga relatives.<sup>166</sup> Yet, Molly Brant remained.<sup>167</sup> Perhaps the ties to the community where she was raised were strong enough to outweigh the fear of political conflict. Perhaps Molly Brant was already invested in the conflict and was more interested in attempting to exert her political influence than fleeing the turbulence.

During the beginnings of the war, Molly Brant drew on her Mohawk and British connections to operate a small business as a trader. In August of 1775, Tench Tilghman, the secretary for an Indian commission appointed by the American Congress, visited Canajoharie and wrote an account of his experience. Commenting on the changes in Molly Brant's life after William Johnson's death, Tench Tilghman describes Molly as, "the favourite Mistress of the late Sir William Johnson [who] now lives at Canajoharie," but has "fallen from her high estate."<sup>168</sup> He notes that she lived "with Sir William for 20 years and was treated with much attention as if she had been his wife. He had several children by her, for all of whom he provided at his Death, he left her a tract of land and some money upon which she carries on a small trade, consisting

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<sup>165</sup> Feister and Pulis, "Molly Brant" 307.

<sup>166</sup> Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 149.

<sup>167</sup> Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin (eds.), *Citizen Soldier, the Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield*, (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society), 63.

<sup>168</sup> Alexander Harrison (ed.), *Memoir of Lieu. Col. Tench Tilghman*, (Albany: J. Munsell), 83.

chiefly I believe in rum which she sells to the Indians.”<sup>169</sup> Molly’s mother had traded in alcohol, and Molly saw other Native women engaged in the rum trade during her time at Johnson Hall and, like Sally Ainese, at Fort Johnson.<sup>170</sup> She was familiar with the practice of Native women selling alcohol to supplement their income in the Mohawk Valley, and may have turned to the practice herself. However, Tilghman could also have been relying on stereotypes of drunken Indians when stating he “believes” she carried on a small trade “chiefly” in rum.

While Trench Tilghman’s account is useful to gain insights into the changes in Molly Brant’s life, his narrative reveals as much about his own beliefs as it does about Molly’s life. Tilghman’s descriptions embody the trope of the Vanishing Indian and the idea that Native nations were unable to survive in the face of American expansion.<sup>171</sup> Along with describing Molly as “fallen from her high estate,” he describes Canajoharie as, “where the small remains of that once warlike and powerful nation now dwell in a few miserable huts.”<sup>172</sup> Later in the report, he describes Molly as a “poor creature.”<sup>173</sup> Tilghman’s phrasing of “that once warlike and powerful nation” clearly illustrates the logic of the Vanishing Indian: The Mohawks and the Six Nations confederacy were some of the most important political forces within the Great Lakes between the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.<sup>174</sup>

Trench Tilghman also describes Molly Brant as “descended from and connected with the most noble families of the Indians, [so] she was of great use to Sir William in his treaties with those people. He knew that women govern the politics of savages as well the refined part of the

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> SWJP, Vol. 3, 997.

<sup>171</sup> Robert F Berkhofer. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, (New York: First Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Harrison, *Memoir*, 86.

<sup>174</sup> The Six Nations confederacy consisted of the Mohawks, Onondagas, Oneidas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras. White, *The Middle Ground*, 187-8.

world and therefore always kept up a good understanding with the brown ladies from Conjohare.”<sup>175</sup> Molly Brant’s usefulness to William Johnson undermines Tilghman’s previous statement that her status declined after Johnson’s death. Since Molly is described as “descended from and connected with the most noble families of Indians” and she provided William Johnson with the familial and political connections that he required to successfully negotiate with Native peoples, it seems unlikely that she would experience a decline in status (particularly within the matrilineal Mohawk community of Canajoharie) after the death of her spouse.

Molly Brant was still in a state of mourning during Tench Tilghman’s visit: “One of the company that had known her before told her she looked thin and asked her if she had been sick, she said sickness had not reduced her, but that it was the remembrance of loss that could never be made up to her, meaning the death of Sir William.”<sup>176</sup> Molly attributes her thin appearance to the emotional toll of losing her partner of over twenty years and the father of her children. Tilghman also describes her as, “[saluting] us with an air of ease and politeness, she was dressed after the Indian manner, but her linen and other clothes the finest of their kind.”<sup>177</sup> His descriptions of her seem to reinforce that Molly’s physical appearance was not due to her “falling from her high estate,” but instead as she tells him, a result of deep emotional loss.

Molly Brant’s enduring political status is also evident in Tench Tilghman’s description of her interaction with Samuel Kirkland, an Oneida missionary:

Upon seeing Mr. Kirkland . . . she taxed him with neglect in passing by her house without calling to see her. She said there was time when she had friends enough, but remarked with sensible emotion that the unfortunate and poor were always neglected. The Indians pay her great respect and I am afraid her influence will give us some trouble for we are informed that she is working strongly to prevent the

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<sup>175</sup> Harrison, *Memoir*, 83.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

meeting at Albany, being entirely in the interests of Guy Johnson, who is now in Canada.<sup>178</sup>

Tilghman's report illustrates his reflections on both Molly Brant's personality and the political tension of the times. Molly is described as confident and assertive personality: she is comfortable with chastising Kirkland for his neglect in visiting her. Perhaps Molly even drew upon Christian discourses emphasizing the piety and holiness of the poor in her reminder to Samuel Kirkland that, "the poor were always neglected." Samuel Kirkland visited and lodged with Haudenosaunee women throughout his travels, including staying with Sally Ainese when he travelled through Fort Stanwix in 1764. Tench Tilghman's description of Molly Brant's influence with Native peoples reflects his anxiety over the growing political tensions between the British and the American Rebels. It also demonstrates his specific concerns about how Molly's could affect the meeting at Albany further illustrating her enduring political influence after the death of William Johnson, particularly within Canajoharie and other Native hubs in Haudenosaunee territory.

American Captain Joseph Bloomfield's account of Canajoharie in the summer of 1776 confirms Molly succeeded in providing for her family after William Johnson's death. He reports, "in this place lives Miss Molly (the noted Indian Squagh kept by Sir Wm. Johnson) & her Eight Children & who were all well provided for by the Vigorous old Baronet before his death."<sup>179</sup> Eight days later Bloomfield returned to, "the house of Miss Molly . . . who by the generosity of her Paramour Sr. Wm. Johnson has every thing convenient around her & lives more in the English taste than any of her Tribe. She . . . has the remains of a very lively person."<sup>180</sup> During the beginning of the Revolutionary War, she was living in a European-style house surrounded by

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 63.

the goods she later listed in her Loyalist claim, including fine ceramics, silver, furniture, and other household items.<sup>181</sup> A month later, Joseph Bloomfield received, “a Pair of Elegant Leggings made in the Indian Fashion by Miss Molly & her Daughters.”<sup>182</sup> Bloomfield describes one daughter as “Very handsome” and both were “richly dressed agreeable to the Indian-Fashion.”<sup>183</sup> Molly and her daughters produced clothing items, such as leggings, to sell in her store and supplement her income. Bloomfield’s description of the leggings indicates the excellent quality of workmanship and the desirability of items produced by the Brant women.

Molly Brant and her children were finally forced to leave Canajoharie after the Battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1777. The battle was fought near an Oneida settlement, and some of the Oneidas who sided with the Americans were burned out.<sup>184</sup> Before the battle, Molly sent information to the British troops about the location of a group of American rebels who would pass by their camp that night.<sup>185</sup> Daniel Claus reports that due to her actions, “the rebel Oneidas . . . revenged upon Joseph’s Sister and her family (living in Upper Mohawk Town) . . . robbing them of cash, cloaths, cattle &c. and driving them from their home.”<sup>186</sup> The Canajoharie home was no longer safe and Molly fled with her children to Onondaga, the council place of the Haudenosaunee to air her grievances regarding the Oneidas over her loss of property.<sup>187</sup> Daniel Claus also records that after leaving Canajoharie, Molly Brant brought her family to Cayuga, approximately forty miles west of Onondaga, where she “fixed herself & family at the principal Chiefs house.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 44.

<sup>182</sup> Lender and Kirby, 63.

<sup>183</sup> Lender and Martin, *Citizen Soldier*, 72.

<sup>184</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 45.

<sup>185</sup> DHNY, Vol. 7, 721.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 725.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

One of Molly Brant's daughters later testified about their departure from Canajoharie. She explains that her mother "did not leave the States until some time after the Revolutionary War broke out, her wish was to remain on her own property but she was advised by General Herkemer to leave the Country under the representation that her life would be Endangered."<sup>189</sup> A few days later , the family were "greatly alarmed one night soon after they had retired, by a loud & continued knocking at the doore, which several men entered and enquired if Capt. Brant was in the house, to which my Mother replied he was not."<sup>190</sup> The officers searched the house looking for Joseph Brant. Soon, Molly received warning that someone was coming to take her and her family from Canajoharie to Albany, where the jail was located. Molly "would not leave her house [and] the Servants were on the watch throughout the Night."<sup>191</sup> When the several "persons were seen on the premise," Molly snuck herself and her children out of Canajoharie, with the help of neighbors and slaves.<sup>192</sup> With "reluctance & with a Sore heart taking her Children Seven in Number two black men Servants & two female Servants" the Brant family commenced a "trackless route at night . . . journeying thro this wilderness to Canada."<sup>193</sup> The two black male servants were certainly slaves Molly and her daughters inherited from William Johnson, and the two female servants were Jenny and Juba, the two black enslaved women Molly inherited. Molly Brant was responsible for traveling with seven children and her slaves over two hundred and fifty miles to Quebec to reach safety.<sup>194</sup> Based on Daniel Claus' account,

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<sup>189</sup> "Testimony of a Child of Molly Brant (probably Margaret)," reprinted in Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 115 (Hamilton Papers, Box 1 Folder 12, transcribed by Milton Hamilton from the Draper Manuscript Collection).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> The account mentions "servants" but the child is likely referring to the slaves that Molly Brant inherited from Sir William Johnson.

<sup>193</sup> "Testimony of a Child of Molly Brant," in Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 116. "Canada" refers to the British province formally known as Quebec during the Revolutionary War.

<sup>194</sup> The testimony does not mention the family making stops at Onondaga or Cayuga, but it is possible that Molly and her children stopped at these sites before continuing their journey to Canada.

the family stopped at Onondaga and Cayuga before heading to Niagara. In April 1778, Jelles Fonda, on behalf of the American Commissioners of Indian Affairs, visited Canajoharie and took affidavits documenting the plundering of the community. Molly's success after the death of William Johnson is ironically shown by her loss of property: Molly Brant had the longest claim of any filed by a displaced Mohawk from either Canajoharie (the Upper Castle) or Fort Hunter (the Lower Castle).<sup>195</sup> Some of the goods listed from the Brant home were two quarts full of silver, several gold rings, eight silver buckles, a large quantity of silver broaches, and several silk gowns.<sup>196</sup> While Molly lost her property, she managed to keep her family safe during the war.

By 1777, Molly Brant's life had changed drastically. William Johnson was dead and Molly was the sole provider for her family. A deepening military conflict between the British and the American rebels caused Molly to leave her home in Canajoharie head towards British territory in Quebec. A letter from 1779 by Daniel Claus, relates that after 1777, Molly found the Haudenosaunee, "in general very fickle & unstable, and even the head Man of the Senecas, with whom she had a pointed Conversation in publick Council at Canadasegey [an Indian town located at present day Geneva in western New York] reminding him of the former great Friendship & Attachment which subsisted between him and the late Sr. Wm Johnson, whose Memory she never mentions but with Tears in her eyes, which affects Indians greatly."<sup>197</sup> Molly was held in high-esteem by the Haudenosaunee, "for she is in every Respect considered & esteemed by them as Sr. Wms Relict, and one word from her is more taken Notice of by the five Nations than a thousand From any white Man without Exception."<sup>198</sup> Molly Brant continued to

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<sup>195</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 37.

<sup>196</sup> Maryly B. Penrose, *Indian Affairs Papers: American Revolution*, (Liberty Bell Association, 1981), 134.

<sup>197</sup> Claus to Gov. Frederick Haldimand, Aug 30, 17779, Haldimand Papers, LAC, Add. MSS 21774, pp. 57-8. See also Claus to Haldimand, Aug 30, 17779, Claus Papers, LAC, MG19 F1 2, 131-33. These are two versions of the same later—the former sent to Haldimand, and the latter a draft by Claus.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

draw on her connections through her Mohawk lineage and her role as William Johnson's spouse and "relic," increasing her political influence in both British and Mohawk communities.

Molly Brant and Sally Ainese both raised their children, shared a taste in extravagant fashion accessories. They both became involved with political drama within various hubs of the Great Lakes, such as Johnson Hall, Canajoharie, and Michilimackinac. But after William Johnson's death, Molly Brant was able to achieve what Sally Ainese failed to attain, albeit for a short period of time: Molly was a legally recognized—by Native and non-Native peoples—property owner in the Mohawk Valley. Molly's success was due to her maternal family, childhood community ties, and her relationship with William Johnson. Until the American Revolutionary War, Molly Brant's relationship with William Johnson protected her from the threat of intensified EuroAmerican settlement that Sally Ainese experienced. Whereas Sally Ainese's claim to the land was not acknowledged by British officials and white settlers were able to receive title to the property, Molly Brant was driven from her home by American-allied Oneidas. Eventually, both women lost their land in the Mohawk Valley. However, over the next decade, the two women would develop new strategies to acquire property in locations, including Detroit, Fort Niagara, and Carleton Island, during the American Revolution.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Taking What They PleasEd: Gender, Opportunity, and Violence During the Revolutionary War, 1778 to 1787**

On November 21, 1779, Guy Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs and William Johnson's son, complained to Colonel Claus, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. John Johnson's complaint focused on Molly Brant's behavior at Fort Niagara. The storekeeper informed Johnson that she "used to go to the stores and take out everything she pleased and give to her particulars. She is certainly you know pretty large minded I have taken care that she should have plenty: beside which she made a visit here and helped herself."<sup>1</sup> At the time, Molly Brant was living at Carleton Island but she spent the majority of 1777 to 1779 at Fort Niagara, a British military headquarters on the Niagara River, which connected Lake Ontario to Lake Erie.

While elite Haudenosaunee women like Molly Brant and Sally Ainese found opportunities to grow their businesses during the American Revolutionary War, a different group of racialized women (of both Native and African descent) were at a high risk for violence. Examining Molly Brant's time at Fort Niagara and Carleton Island during the American Revolutionary War demonstrates how she capitalized on her background of providing food and lodging to help supply family, friends, and Native peoples affected by the war with necessary provisions. Molly increased her political power and transformed herself into an indispensable ally of British Loyalists, using her resulting authority to lobby for Mohawk peoples. However, she also

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<sup>1</sup> For the transcription, see Sir John Johnson to Daniel Claus, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1779, Daniel Claus Papers MG19-F1, Vol. 26, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, ON, Microfilm Reel C1485, pg. 174 (referred to as Claus Papers); for the original see, Sir John Johnson to Daniel Claus, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1779, Claus Papers, Vol. 25, Microfilm Reel C1485, pg. 155.

benefited from the labor of the slaves she inherited from her relationship with William Johnson. Molly accrued power in some of the same sites that became hubs for enslaved peoples of Native and African descent captured during the war in the lower Great Lakes, illustrating how a woman's kinship connections were integral to defining her social status.

Like Niagara, Detroit offered opportunities for a certain group of Native women and risks of enslavement for others. Sally Ainese built on the economic and intimate connections she made in the Susquehanna River Valley, the Mohawk Valley, and Straits of Mackinac to develop a thriving trade business. She became a legally recognized land owner and owner of multiple slaves of African and Native descent. These slaves supported Sally's burgeoning career as an independent trader, property owner, and landlord. While non-Native peoples poured over the Appalachian Mountains and increasingly settled in western New York (near Sally's old Fort Stanwix property) and the Ohio Valley, Sally purchased a large tract of land from Ojibwe friends along the Thames River. The Thames River fell within the land technically controlled by the British with the passage of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. However, in reality, the British held no functional jurisdiction over the area. Sally planned to move to the Thames River property where she intended to build a house, orchard, and farm land. She also intended to lease plots of her tract to friends and family. Sally envisioned creating a community on her property of extended kin. Slave labor would support the development of her Thames River acreage, just as it supported her Detroit household.

### **The Mohawk Matron of Fort Niagara**

When Molly Brant left Canajoharie for Cayuga in the summer of 1777, she was encouraged by Major John Butler, a British Loyalist, officer of the Indian Department, and old acquaintance from the Mohawk Valley, to move to Fort Niagara.<sup>2</sup> John Butler was confident that Molly Brant's influence with the Mohawk and knowledge of British and Native cultures and politics would allow her to act as an intermediary and conduit for information between Native peoples and British forces gathered at the fort. She arrived at Niagara in the winter of 1777. During her time at Niagara, she acted independently in several important roles: she provided aid to the British and Native peoples who gathered at the British headquarters, and she adapted traditional Mohawk forms of hospitality to support her family, friends, and the community of diverse British-allied Native peoples gathered at the fort. While upholding her responsibilities to her community as a matron, she also had to cope with multiple personal losses amidst the upheaval of the war.

Niagara lay on the Niagara River that connected Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. Further west, Fort Detroit was built on the Detroit River that connected Lake Erie to Lake Huron through Lake St. Clair. Control of these forts determined who had access to the Upper Great Lakes, an area dense with valuable furs.<sup>3</sup> The British had captured Fort Niagara in 1759 from the French under the command of Sir William Johnson during the French and Indian War, and its strategic location and well-engineered structure made it a natural headquarters for the British and a

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<sup>2</sup> Claus Papers, Vol. 2, Microfilm Reel C1478, pg. 132; Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own*, (Niagara: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 51.

<sup>3</sup> At the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, the British chose to move Fort Michilimackinac on the south shore of the straits of Mackinac, to a high bluff on Mackinac Island in the middle of the straits—a location that they deemed more defensible. The British not only abandoned but destroyed Michilimackinac to ensure Americans could not use the fort for supplies. Keith Widder, "Effects of the American Revolution on Fur-Trade Society at Michilimackinac," in *The Fur Trade Revisited Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, & Donald P. Heldman, (Mackinac Island, Michigan 1991), 309.

frequent base of operations for their Native allies.<sup>4</sup> At Niagara, Butler would organize troops that would use the fort as a base to defend against American advances between 1777 and 1783.<sup>5</sup>

Fort Niagara was actually a variety of communities, with varying degrees of interaction and separation between the groups.<sup>6</sup> Within the walls, garrison contacts with Native peoples were limited. The Indian department and trading community had frequent and close contact with Native peoples. The Marine Corps were housed across the river. Significantly, the Indian camps of Native peoples driven from their homelands due to the violence of the war, stretched eight miles from the fort. Some Native peoples had easier access to the fort than others, and this included Molly and Joseph Brant. Molly had a house just outside the fort walls.<sup>7</sup> The site also had specific significance to Haudenosaunee peoples as a place for holding traditional councils. The fort sat on Seneca land, and the Senecas considered the British be leasing the riverbank. Seneca community members frequently visited the fort to trade and monitor their property.<sup>8</sup>

Molly Brant was responsible for providing hospitality to the Native peoples who gathered at the British headquarters. In the short period between January and June of 1779 six Indian Conferences were held at Niagara.<sup>9</sup> In the past, Molly had provided food and lodging, for large numbers of Native and non-Native guests at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall. At Niagara, Molly Brant adapted traditional forms of Mohawk hospitality so that they would be effective at British military outpost during a turbulent war. She arranged for housing and food, provided services as an interpreter, and assisted with gathering intelligence. Molly was unable to rely on

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<sup>4</sup> Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own*, (Niagara: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807, Man of Two Worlds*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press), 236.

seasonal cycles of harvesting or her own garden at the fort. She had to find other methods to provide for her relatives, including developing relationships with important colonial officials and merchants. In October of 1778, the merchants Taylor and Duffin arrived at Niagara with a trunk for Molly Brant from Daniel Claus. However, they were not able to give her the trunk because she was away in “the Indians towns.”<sup>10</sup> The merchants postponed writing to Claus until she returned, which took 10 days. Upon her return, the merchants delivered her trunk immediately and paid her 25 pounds Halifax currency from General Frederick Haldimand, governor of the province of Quebec. Molly was “mightily pleased with his Excellency’s notices of her.” She continued:

if it were not for the service She thinks She can be here: in advising & conversing with the Indians: she wou’d go down to Canada with her Family. She desires Mr. Taylor to inform you [Claus] the manner she lives here is pretty expensive to her: being obliged to keep an open house for all those Indians that have any weight in the Six Nations confederacy.<sup>11</sup>

By lobbying to British officials for increased support, she extended her hospitality to Native communities coping with the violence and displacement of the war at Niagara, just as she once extended hospitality to Native and non-Native visitors at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall. Upon receiving her trunk, Molly Brant supplied Taylor and Duffin with news of her brother, including his destruction of “a great part of these back settlements” while “he & his party has Shewn dispositions of Humanity to the Woman & Children & Persons not found in Arms” and his plans of “penetrating through to the Army of New York, with only three or four with him.”<sup>12</sup> Molly also shared her own opinions on Joseph’s plans, including the risk for the New York plan “being

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor & Duffin to Claus, 26 October 1778, in Maryly B. Penrose (ed.), *Indian Affairs Papers*, (Franklin Park, NJ: Liberty Bell Associates, 1981), 167-8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor & Duffin to Claus, October 26, 1778, in Maryly B. Penrose (ed.), *Indian Affairs Papers*, (Franklin Park, NJ: Liberty Bell Associates, 1981), 167-8.

too great” and wishing instead for him to come to Niagara or visit Claus and Haldimand in Montreal.<sup>13</sup> Molly was clearly aware of her own political value to Native people: she valued her hospitality and political labor so greatly that she chose to live in political hubs providing hospitality rather than settling in an area with her family. Earlier that year, Molly expressed her desire to return to the Mohawk Valley as she hoped, “the Time is very near, when we shall all return to our habitations on the Mohawk River.”<sup>14</sup> Despite her desire and the political labor she devoted to attempt to make her dreams a reality, Molly would never return to live in the area.

Molly Brant’s hospitality at Niagara differed from her previous work at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall in several important ways. At her homes in the Mohawk Valley, Molly Brant provided hospitality as either the step-daughter of Brant Kanagaradunkwa or as the spouse of Sir William Johnson, whereas during the American Revolutionary War, she operated independently. Furthermore, at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall, Molly’s hospitality illustrated the close connection between the domestic and political worlds of the Mohawk Valley: by providing hospitality in the home, Molly aided the political efforts of Sir William Johnson and Mohawk peoples. During the American Revolutionary War, Molly Brant usually provided hospitality from a military community, like Fort Niagara or Carleton Island. In particular, Fort Niagara was notorious for drinking, brawling, prostituting, and cheating.<sup>15</sup> Crude taverns, stores, and bordellos sprouted up on “the Bottom,” the riverside flat below the fort that boasted of Native sex workers infamous for both their beauty and drinking.<sup>16</sup> Molly Brant provided hospitality out of a crowded, rowdy, predominantly male environment while separated from her closest family

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Molly Brant to Daniel Claus, June 23 1778, Claus Papers, Vol. 2, Microfilm C-1478, pg. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 102.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

members; William Johnson was dead, her youngest children were in school at Montreal, and Peter, her oldest child, was fighting in the war. Some historians argue that during her time at Fort Niagara and Montreal, her political duties become more important than her domestic duties.<sup>17</sup> However, as hospitality customs demonstrate, for Mohawk women, politics and the domestic world of family and kin were always intertwined.<sup>18</sup> Throughout her life, Molly Brant partook in the gendered political practice of Mohawk hospitality. Molly spent most of her childhood with her mother, Margaret, and her step-father, Brant Kanagaradunkwa, in Canajoharie. She helped her mother provide food for their family and for visitors, including political officials like Sir William Johnson. While Molly spent most of her childhood in an English style house in Canajoharie rather than a longhouse, Mohawk customs and practices were an important part of her upbringing.

Later in the fall, Molly Brant carried information from British officials to Haudenosaunee leaders. Daniel Claus asked her “to communicate . . . Intelligence to her Brother & the Chiefs of the 6 Nations & with my Salutation and Request to persevere faithful to their ancient Friend and Ally the Great King of England.”<sup>19</sup> The British officials clearly valued Molly Brant’s presence, labor, and loyalty, despite her expenses and the complaints of Guy Johnson that opened this chapter. Claus described her as, “having been their Confidant in every Matter of Importance & was consulted thereupon, and prevented many unbecoming & extravagant proposal to the Commanding Officer at Niagara.”<sup>20</sup> In a different draft of the letter, Claus described her as,

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<sup>17</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 55.

<sup>18</sup> For a larger discussion of the problems with a domestic and public divide in Haudenosaunee social life, see Jan V. Noel, “Revisiting Gender in Iroquoia,” in *Gender and Sexuality in Indigenous North America, 1400-1850*, eds. Sandra Slater and Faye A. Yaborough, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 52-74.

<sup>19</sup> Claus to Haldimand, November 5, 1778, in Penrose, *Indian Affairs*, 169.

<sup>20</sup> Claus to Haldimand, August 30, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, LAC, Microfilm H-1449, pg. 65. (referred to as Haldimand Papers)

“[preventing] many at mischief & more so than in her Bror Joseph whose present Zeal & Activity occasioned rather Envy & Jealousy.”<sup>21</sup> Despite Joseph’s many military successes with the British, Molly’s hospitality, presence, and influence were more valuable to the British officials within hubs of the Great Lakes and neighboring communities. British officials also viewed Molly as less threatening than her brother, due to British understandings of gender roles. To the officials, while women could support men’s political efforts, women were not viewed as possible leaders in their own right. Similarly, these officials viewed Molly’s hospitality as supporting Loyalist causes. They did not understand Mohawk women’s political influence in their own societies or that for a Mohawk woman, her hospitality work was a form of Haudenosaunee political diplomacy.<sup>22</sup> To the British, powerful Mohawk men, like Joseph Brant, were a possible threat to their authority. Powerful Mohawk women, like Molly Brant, were not.

Most of the losses Molly Brant experienced during the war were related to family. She had to leave her home in the Mohawk Valley and was often separated from her closest family members while traveling to perform her political labor. Some of her family members were also killed in the war. In 1777, her son Peter was killed at Fort Mifflin, one of the strongholds for the Americans on the Delaware River, south of Philadelphia.<sup>23</sup> In November of 1778, Molly expressed her sadness to a merchant at Niagara telling him she, “is under a great concern at the loss of her two Sons, being dear to her as being her children and a loss to her that she cannot write her thoughts herself nor she has anybody to apply for to do it for her. Were they still alive, she thinks one of them might be with her sometimes.”<sup>24</sup> The other “son” she referenced was

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<sup>21</sup> Claus to Haldimand, August 30, 1779, Claus Papers, Vol. 2, microfilm reel C-1478, pg. 131-33.

<sup>22</sup> Noel, “Revisiting Gender,” 58-9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> For transcription see, Taylor and Duffin to Daniel Claus, November 24, 1778, Claus Papers, Vol. 26, Microfilm C-14785, pg. 58-9. For original, see Taylor and Duffin to Daniel Claus, November 24, 1778, Claus Papers, Vol. 25,

likely William of Canajoharie, Sir William Johnson's son from a previous relationship with a Mohawk woman, whom Molly Brant helped raise.<sup>25</sup> She also worried about her family members who were still fighting in the war, like her brother Joseph.

The strain of the war and worries about her family members might have contributed to tensions during Molly Brant's final year at Fort Niagara. Molly was an ally to the British, but at times disagreed with British policies and worried they put her family members in danger. An account of life at the fort published in 1831 based on the recollections of Revolutionary War veterans suggests that Molly Brant became hostile to an American captive named Lieutenant Colonial William Stacey. Apparently, Molly "resorted to the Indian method of dreaming. She informed Col. Butler that she dreamed she had the Yankee's head, and that she and Indians were kicking it about the fort."<sup>26</sup> Colonel Butler apparently appeased Molly by ordering a small keg of rum, but shortly after she dreamed a second time that "she had the Yankee's head, with his hat on, and she and the Indians were kicking it about the fort for a football."<sup>27</sup> Colonel Butler ordered her another keg of rum then, "told her, decidedly, that Col. Stacia should not be given up to the Indians."<sup>28</sup> However, this anecdote reveals as much about some veterans prejudice towards Native women and indigenous spiritual beliefs as it does Molly Brant's desire for revenge.

The narrative was published around fifty years after the event and Molly Brant was frequently mythologized in a gendered and racialized manner in nineteenth century histories.<sup>29</sup> If

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Microfilm C-14785, pg. 42; Jean Johnston, "Molly Brant: Mohawk Matron," *Ontario History* 56 (1964): 118; Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 55.

<sup>26</sup> William W. Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County, Or the Border Wars of New-York, During the Revolution* (New York: J & J Harper, 1831), 182.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Brant's biographer in the twentieth, Isabel Kelsay, notes that the commandant of Fort Niagara, Lieutenant-Colonel Mason Bolton did send Stacey to Montreal for "fear of what the Indians might do to him" and argues that the commandants' actions "lends some credence to the story," see Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 686 n2. However, Bolton's

there is truth in the narrative, her attitude toward Colonel Stacey probably stems from his involvement during the war. For instance, Molly may have resented Stacey's participation in attacks on her family members, or his perpetuation of violence on Haudenosaunee women or families during battles.<sup>30</sup> If Colonel Stacey had killed Haudenosaunee peoples, Molly Brant may have seen him being "given up to the Indians" as the necessary exchange for Stacey's atonement. Molly's desire for revenge would have been driven by the loss of personal family members and the Haudenosaunee condolence traditions. To cope with grief after warfare, it was customary for the Haudenosaunee to perform an elaborate condolence ceremony where they ritual mourned for their losses.<sup>31</sup> These ceremonies were based on the encounter between Hiawatha and Deganwidah, the two men responsible for the founding of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy between the Onondaga, Mohawks, Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca.<sup>32</sup> Hiawatha, an Onondaga headman, was upset over the death of his daughters, and left his village. On his travels, Deganwidah, a Mohawk, who used strings of shells beads to soothe Hiawatha's grief. This beadwork, known as wampum, and functioned as a record of political proceedings, their symbolic significance, and as a gift to cement alliances between groups. Wampum illustrates how conceptions of grief and mourning also shaped Haudenosaunee politics and diplomacy.

The continued turbulence of the Revolutionary War led to continual changes and upheaval in Molly Brant's life. By the summer of 1779, Niagara was even more crowded.

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words suggest that if Molly had issues with Stacey, other Native peoples did as well and her feelings were likely representative of the Native community at Niagara.

<sup>30</sup> Stacy was involved in attacks against Loyalists that included Molly Brant's friends and family like John Butler and Joseph Brant. Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 57; William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanegea*, (Alexander V. Blake: New York, 1838), 372, 374, 386-7.

<sup>31</sup> Gail D. Danvers, "Gendered Encounters: Warriors, Women, and William Johnson," *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): 194.

<sup>32</sup> Condolence and mourning also shaped Haudenosaunee diplomacy, politics and social life. When the Haudenosaunee negotiated peace treaties with former enemies, they often phrased the treaty in the language of mourning and condolence. Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-2, 37-8,

Campaigns by General John Sullivan and James Clinton had driven even more Loyalist and Native peoples to the fort. By the fall, more than five thousand Native peoples fled to Niagara. In an attempt to reduce the fort's population, Mason Bolton, the Commandant at the Niagara, suggested that Molly Brant and her family be transferred to Montreal.<sup>33</sup> While other women and children were also transferred from the fort, Molly and Bolton had clashed, and he was eager to be rid of her.<sup>34</sup> Molly and her family accepted the invitation in the summer, and settled in at Montreal. When Daniel Claus arrived in Montreal at the end of August, Molly had only been in the city a short time, but she was eager to talk to Daniel. As soon as Molly learned he arrived in the city, she paid him a visit.<sup>35</sup> She reported her unhappiness about leaving Niagara because it caused her to "leave her old Mother & Other Indn Relations & friends."<sup>36</sup> Molly once again emphasized to British officials the importance of family members in her life. Molly missed her mother and friends and may have worried that without her presence at the fort, they would have less access to adequate food and housing. In fact, Daniel Claus's letter goes on to explain, "[Molly's] absence would be regretted by the generality of the five Nations."<sup>37</sup> He was apprehensive about Molly's move to Montreal because, "she seems not at all reconciled to this Place & Country . . . and I am apprehensive her staying here would be more expensive than at Niagara."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Haldimand to Lt.-Col. John Butler, June 7, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21764, Microfilm Reel H-1447, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136.

<sup>35</sup> Claus to Haldimand, Aug 30. 1779, Haldimand Papers, Microfilm H-1449, pg. 63; H. Pearson Gundy, "Molly Brant: Loyalist," *Ontario History*, 45 (1953): 102.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 65.

Molly Brant soon found reasons to be transferred back to Niagara. In the late summer of 1779 an American military force entered western Haudenosaunee territory and began destroying villages and crops in an effort to end Six Nations support of the British and participation in the war.<sup>39</sup> Molly immediately expressed a desire to return to Niagara as she believed, “her Staying away at this critical Time, may prove very injurious to her character hereafter, being at the head of a Society of six Natn matrons, who have a great deal to say among the young Men in particular in time of War.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, if Molly was, “to forsake them now, they might impute it to Fear, and that she for saw or knew of an impending Danger over the Confederacy.”<sup>41</sup> In Haudenosaunee nations like the Mohawk, matrons were an elite class of women who were the heads of respected households, who were also responsible for distributing food. The position was earned, rather than inherited.<sup>42</sup> When a leader died, matrons were also responsible for selecting someone new for the position.<sup>43</sup> The role of matrons indicate how women’s political influence was recognized and institutionalized in Haudenosaunee societies. As a matron, Molly was responsible to her Mohawk community. Molly’s response to the American pressure in Haudenosaunee territory illustrates the importance of community to Molly. She cared deeply about how she was perceived by other matrons and members of the community and did not want to appear like she was forsaking her responsibilities to them.

Molly Brant’s request to return to Niagara was granted. Frederick Haldimand agreed that, “If she thinks her presence necessary above, she must be suffered to depart—Colonel Johnson

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<sup>39</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> Claus to Haldimand Sept 6, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, H-1449, pg. 68.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Judith K. Brown, “Economic Organization and the Position of Women among the Iroquois,” *Ethnohistory* 17, no. 3/4 (1970): 153.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

will of course provide for her Journey, and give her whatever presents may be necessary.”<sup>44</sup> He told Guy Johnson, “I have acquainted Colonel Claus that Miss Molly is to act as she thinks best, whether in remaining in this Province, or Returning to the Seneca Country: and that your or Col. Claus will give her such presents as you may think necessary, if she goes, provide for her Journey as it seems to be a Political one.”<sup>45</sup> Johnson agreed with Haldimand that Molly’s services “will be of great use to the Kings Service at this time.”<sup>46</sup> Presents played an important role in shaping Native and EuroAmerican alliances in the Great Lakes. Part of the gift exchange was based on practicality: Native peoples received presents of food, ammunition, clothing, rum, and other necessities which were particularly valuable during periods of war, when seasonal harvests were disrupted. But the most important role of presents was their diplomatic function. They were signs that the people gifting the presents were true friends. When Native peoples arrived at forts and received presents, it was a way of confirming and strengthening the relationship between the allied parties.<sup>47</sup>

Molly Brant, Frederick Haldimand and his colleagues and superiors, all seemed to agree about the importance of her political journey back to Niagara and perhaps to Seneca country. However, in addition to her political motivations, Molly also had to worry about her family and securing the safety of her children during the war. Frederick Haldimand suggested to Daniel Claus and Guy Johnson that she leave her children at school for her travels, and Johnson replied that he would “furnish her in the manner you are pleased to mention, but her anxiety to have her Children with her seems insurmountable, however I shall manage about in the best manner in my

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<sup>44</sup> Haldimand to Claus, Sept 9, 1779, Haldimand papers, Add. MSS 21714, H-1449, pg. 70.

<sup>45</sup> Haldimand to Guy Johnson, Sept 9, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21767, H-1448, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Guy Johnson to Haldimand, Sept 16, 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21767, H-1448, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Ingram, *Indians and British Outposts in Eighteenth-Century America*, 21, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650- 1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 112–15, 403–4.

power.”<sup>48</sup> Molly was forced to make difficult decisions. Were her children safer in Montreal where they would be separated from their mother, but in contact with family friends and hopefully removed from the main battles of the war? Or should she travel with her children in order to protect them, but also to risk bringing them to turbulent areas? Despite her anxieties, she chose to leave her two youngest daughters with Daniel Claus. The chance for her children to gain an education may have also contributed to her decision. Daniel described Molly instructing him to send her eight and ten year old children to school.<sup>49</sup> Molly may have decided it was safest for her youngest daughter to remain at school in Montreal while she attempted the passage back to Niagara. She might have arranged to have her daughters join her once the war tensions subsided. Despite her increased political responsibilities, Molly’s children’s safety and welfare continued to be a top priority in her life, as demonstrated by her continued attempts to secure their safety and education during the war. One of the only surviving letters by Molly Brant deals mainly with British and Native politics in the Great Lakes, but she closes with, “My Children Join in love to their Sisters”<sup>50</sup>

Molly Brant departed for Niagara from Montreal with a group of Mohawk peoples. Their first stop was at Carleton Island. The island was the location of a British post situated to protect the important waterway connecting Montreal and other settlements in Quebec with the rest of the Great Lakes. In early October, she sent a letter to Daniel Claus explaining her frustrations with their journey and stay at Carleton Island: “We arrived here the 29<sup>th</sup> Last month after a Tedious

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<sup>48</sup> Haldimand to Guy Johnson, Sept 9 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21767, H-1448, pg. 35; Haldimand to Daniel Claus, Sept 9. 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, H-1449 pg. 70; Guy Johnson to Haldimand, Sept 19. 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21767, Microfilm Reel H-1448, pg. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Claus to Haldimand, Sept 13. 1779, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, H-1449 pg. 72.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Brant to Claus, Oct 5. 1779, Carleton Island, Claus Papers, Vol. 2, Microfilm Reel C-1478, pg. 135-6. Transcribed in Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 63. Molly may not have written the letter herself, and she may have dictated it to someone, perhaps one of her daughters.

and disagreeable Voyage; where we remain and by all Appearance may for the winter I have wrote to Colo. Butler and my brother Acquainting them of my situation, desiring there advice, as I was left no Direction Concerning my self or family, Only when a Vessel Arrived , I could get a passage to Niagara.<sup>51</sup> Molly was correct: she stayed at Carleton Island over the winter. In fact, despite the original plans to travel to Niagara, she would stay at Carleton Island for the remainder of the war.

Along with seeking advice on how to handle her current situation, Molly Brant once again acted as conduit for information between Native and British forces. In the letter, Molly noted her willingness to use her “little services should be wanted which you know I am always ready to do.” She explained to Daniel Claus, “the Indians are a Good dale dissatisfied on Acc’t. of the Colo’s [Colonel Guy Johnson’s] hasty temper which I hope he will soon drop Otherwise it may be Disadvantageous I need not tell you whatever is promised or told them it Ought to be performed.”<sup>52</sup> Molly warned Daniel about the Native communities’ dissatisfaction with Guy Johnson and reminded Daniel of the importance of agreements built on mutual trust and exchange, such as treaties and gift-giving ceremonies in her chastisement that “whatever is promised or told them it Ought to be performed.” Molly referenced the long tradition of gift-giving that occurred between the British and Haudenosaunee. During his life, Sir William Johnson cemented a relationship with Mohawk peoples through generous gifts. Even when he was hired by the state of New York, he continued to give gifts from his own storehouses. While he hoped to be reimbursed by the state, this practice also allowed him to continue to give gifts in his own name, allowing him to extend his own personal kin network beyond the Mohawks.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Michael J. Mullin, "Personal Politics: William Johnson and the Mohawks." *American Indian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1993): 251.

Historian Daniel Ingram describes how when Native peoples visited forts, they were taking a “leap of faith” since they had no way “of knowing the efficacy of British or French words.” Giving presents of valuable goods to a friend was a step toward proving one’s trustworthiness, and Native peoples interpreted any restriction or withholding of gifts as an alteration of the terms of their friendship and alliance with the British.<sup>54</sup>

Molly Brant drew on her familial history of agreements with the British to remind them of their obligation to other Native peoples. In return, she offered the British valuable services, including supplying Daniel Claus with integral information about Native politics, and warning him when the British’s allies were discontent with the alliance. In her letter, she continued to inform Claus that the Loyalists’ Native allies are, “much dissatisfied on Account of [Guy Johnson] taking more Notice of those that are suspected than those that are know to be Loyal, I tell this only to you that you Advise him on that head.”<sup>55</sup> Being a Mohawk woman gave her particular influence in terms of dealing and trading with the British. Each nation in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had a specific role, and the Mohawks were keepers of the eastern door.<sup>56</sup> Geographically closest to the Atlantic, the Mohawks had developed close relationships with British newcomers since their arrival in the Mohawk River Valley. Molly Brant’s relationship with Sir William Johnson epitomized the familial connections that were formed between the two groups. The British viewed the Mohawks as the most powerful of the Haudenosaunee (and the Haudenosaunee as the most powerful Native peoples in the region).<sup>57</sup> While this was an erroneous belief based on British misunderstanding of Native diplomacy,

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<sup>54</sup> Ingram, *Indians and British Outposts*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Gretchen Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” *Women and Freedom in Early America*, ed. Larry Eldridge, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 120-2.

Molly could exploit British beliefs for her own benefit. They put increased value on her because of her Mohawk identity and she could leverage this to help immediate and extended family.

Without Molly Brant's information, the British would have been uninformed with the needs and wants of their Native allies, weakening their military strength and making them vulnerable to attacks by Americans. The British had good reasons for wanting to keep Molly Brant satisfied and content even though her strong-willed personality and insistence on prioritizing the needs of Mohawk people frustrated them. For example, in the fall of 1779, she frustrated Guy Johnson by going to the stores to "take out everything she pleas'd & give to her particulars."<sup>58</sup> Johnson may have been referencing Molly Brant's time in Montreal when she would have provisioned herself and her entourage with supplies from the general stores to prepare for their (anticipated) journey to Niagara. Or Molly may have chosen to "got to the stores" and "take out everything she pleas'd & give to her particulars" because the Mohawks were dissatisfied with Guy paying more attention to Natives who were suspected to have sided with the American forces than those remaining loyal to the British.

While Molly Brant maintained an "open house" for Native peoples and continued to profit from the hospitality skills developed at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall, her slaves performed the majority of the domestic labor in the household, allowing Molly to focus on hosting. Molly's increased political and hospitality duties during the war contributed to her relying upon the labor of unfree women and men of African descent. Jenny (also known as Jane) Fundy, Juba Fundy, and Abraham Johnson fled Canajoharie with Molly and stayed with her throughout the war. Molly inherited Juba and Jenny after Sir William Johnson's death, and it is

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<sup>58</sup> For the transcription, see Sir John Johnson to Daniel Claus, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1779, Claus Papers, Vol. 26, Microfilm Reel C1485, pg. 174; for the original see, Sir John Johnson to Daniel Claus, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1779, Claus Papers, Vol. 25, Microfilm Reel C1485, pg. 155.

likely that Johnson also owned Abraham Johnston before his death. Throughout her travels during the war, Molly kept her dependents, including slaves, together. Her decision allowed the Fundy sister and Abraham to maintain ties with each other, but it also allowed Molly to continue to profit from their labor and enslavement. When Molly traveled to Montreal for familial and political duties, her slaves either traveled with her providing assistance or remained at the Brant household Niagara.<sup>59</sup>

What was life like for the Fundy sisters and Abraham—the black slaves of a politically active, influential, Mohawk woman in British and Native communities? Molly Brant owned the two sisters during their teenage and early adult years. As enslaved women, they experienced violence, upheaval, and a fundamental loss of freedom. William Johnson had acquired the sisters at a younger age—perhaps their mother lived at Fort Johnson or Johnson Hall and bore them on the properties. Either option—being separated from their mother and purchased at a young age by William Johnson or being born to an enslaved woman on one of Johnson’s properties—

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<sup>59</sup> While Montreal did not have a large slave population under British rule, slaves were a fixture in wealthy households in the city until 1800. The first abolition bill debated by lawmakers in Quebec was introduced in 1787, before the partition of the colony into Upper and Lower Canada (Montreal became part of Lower Canada and Fort Niagara and Cataragui, the British settlement closest to Carleton Island, became part of Upper Canada). The Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada introduced a gradual abolition bill in 1793. Historian Frank Mackey argues that the gradual abolition law in Upper Canada removed all doubts about the legality of slavery and give it legislative sanction by prescribing the rules that it would continue. In contrast, Lower Canada did not introduce a gradual abolition law. As a result, slavery was not formally recognized by legislature and was challenged in the courts. By 1800, slavery no long continued in Montreal. Meanwhile, in Upper Canada, slavery continued till the second decade of the nineteenth century, and technically remained in force until Britain’s emancipation law overrode it in 1830. Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*, (Montreal: Queen’s-McGill University Press, 2010), 6, 10, 38-40. Mackey’s work is the most thorough study of end of slavery in Lower Canada. There has been little work on slavery under British rule in Montreal. There have been several studies on slavery under the French regime and in Upper Canada. Marcel Trudel, *L’esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l’esclavage*, (Québec : Presses de l’université Laval, 1960); Daniel G Hill, *Freedom Seekers: Blacks In Early Canada*, (Toronto: Stoddart Publications, 1994); Afua Cooper, “Acts of resistance: Black men and women engage slavery in Upper Canada, 1793-1803,” *Ontario History* 99, no. 1 (2007): 5-17; Abigail Bakan, “Reconsidering the Underground Railroad: Slavery and Racialization in the Making of the Canadian State,” *Socialist Studies* 4, no.1 (Spring 2008):3-29; Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Gregory Wigmore, “Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland,” *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 437-54; and Brett Rushforth. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

indicates the violence the sisters likely experienced throughout their lives. At Johnson Hall, they were exposed to ethnic and linguistic diversity, both within the polyglot household and while working at the large, multiethnic Indian Councils held on the property. But they were also witnessed and possibly experienced punishments enforcing racial hierarchies and ensuring the productivity of enslaved laborers, including working under an overseer who was notorious for his harsh penalties.<sup>60</sup> Then they lived with Molly Brant in crowded, male-dominated British forts in the lower Great Lakes during the American Revolutionary War at Fort Niagara and Carleton Island. In particular, Fort Niagara was a strange place to be a slave owned by a Mohawk woman allied with Loyalists. At the fort, British officials and their Native allies, including Joseph Brant, planned their most violent and successful expeditions to American territory, such as missions into the Cherry and Wyoming Valley.<sup>61</sup> From Fort Niagara many war parties set out to pillage and burn towns of their political enemies, killing or capturing those in their path. The war parties would return with the prisoners from the expeditions—men, women, and children. The returning soldiers would often celebrate by consuming large amounts of alcohol.<sup>62</sup> While the Fundy sisters performed daily tasks to support Molly, such as helping to raise her children and help with feeding and housing the constant visitors, they were at a high risk for sexual violence in the crowded fort filled with volatile, often inebriated soldiers.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Wanda Burch, “‘He Was Bought at a Public Sale’: Slavery at Johnson Hall,” *The Sunday Leader-Herald*, (February 27, 2000), 8A, <http://fulton.nygenweb.net/history/slaveryJH.html>, accessed February 1, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Claud H. Hulzén, Sr, *Historic Old Fort Niagara*, (Niagara: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1939), [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/New\\_York/Niagara/Youngstown/Fort\\_Niagara/\\_Texts/HULOEN/5\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/New_York/Niagara/Youngstown/Fort_Niagara/_Texts/HULOEN/5*.html), accessed February 10, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> For more on the history of black women as caregivers for children of other women, see Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York: Routledge, 2002); Elizabeth Fox Genovese, *Within The Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of love, labor of sorrow: black women, work, and the family, from slavery to the present*, (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17 (1987): 65-81; Deborah Stevenson *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, (Oxford University Press, 1996); and Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t*

It is impossible to know exactly how the sisters' lives changed from living at Johnson Hall to Canajoharie to Fort Niagara. Small opportunities may also have existed for the sisters during the Revolutionary War that did not exist at Johnson Hall. They may have had access to greater mobility than slaves owned by white British or American men and women, such as accompanying Molly Brant on her travels to Montreal. In Mohawk communities, captives had freedom to move throughout the region and often performed the same labor as their host family.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps, like the Sun Fish, a black man married to a Seneca woman who was a paid informant for Sir William Johnson in the 1760s, they may have performed diplomatic labor.<sup>65</sup> For instance, they may have developed useful political skills through exposure to Native languages and diplomacy, and assisted with distributing the provisions Molly received from merchants and local stores. Of course a stark difference remained between the Sun Fish and Molly's slaves: the Sun Fish was free.

Molly may have adopted a Haudenosaunee view of captivity and adoption, rather than a racialized view of chattel slavery. In this case, the sisters would have been viewed as adopted family members (albeit with a lesser status). Historian Jon Parmenter explains, "a preliminary probationary period (during which time they were most likely to be tortured and/or executed), actual killings of captives destined for adoption occurred infrequently, and almost never for reasons that contemporary Iroquois people would have regarded as capricious."<sup>66</sup> Similarly,

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*I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985). It is also important to note that the archival record does not indicate if either of the Fundy sisters gave birth to their own children during their years with Molly Brant.

<sup>64</sup> Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1701*, (East Lansing, US: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 153.

<sup>65</sup> 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*, eds. Andrew Cayton & Frederika Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 88-81.

<sup>66</sup>Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*, 153; Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 13, 27-8; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 43

Daniel Richter argues that captives taken by the Haudenosaunee were viewed as slaves by Europeans, but were actually adoptees who had been incorporated into kin networks but had been less assimilated.<sup>67</sup> Regardless of their exact status in her household, Molly depended on the labor of her slaves to support her political and economic labor throughout the war, emphasizing how depending on a woman's kinship connections and social status, the Revolutionary War could be a time of opportunity or violence.

### **Molly Brant's "Far Superior" Influence at Carleton Island**

High-ranking British officials' descriptions further demonstrate Molly Brant's important role on Carleton Island as an influential Mohawk woman. In the winter of 1780, Captain Malcolm Fraser, who was in command at Carleton Island, reported that Molly had "her usual Zeal for Gov't. by her constant endeavors to maintain the Indians in his Majestys interest."<sup>68</sup> A month after he mentioned, "the Chiefs were careful to keep their people sober and satisfied . . . their uncommon good behaviour is in a great Measure to be ascribed to Miss Molly Brants Influence over them, which is far superior to that of all their Chiefs put together and she has in the course of the Winter done everything in her power to maintain them strongly in the Kings Interest."<sup>69</sup> Malcom Fraser desired Molly Brant's presence at Carleton Island, and he appears confident that she was a good influence on the other Native people settled at the island. He also felt the expense of providing for Molly was justified: "tho she is insatiable in her demands for her own family, yet I believe her residence here has been a considerable savings to Government,

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<sup>67</sup> Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>68</sup> February 23, 1780, Claus Papers, Vol. 2, Pg. 178.

<sup>69</sup> Fraser to Haldimand, March 21, 1780, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21787, Microfilm H-1452, pg. 117.

as she checked the demands of others both for presents & provisions.”<sup>70</sup> Molly used her political influence with the British to lobby for resources for her relatives. She may have “checked the demands” of others for “presents & provisions” by promising to provide them with needed supplies herself, or she may have emphasized the importance of sacrificing during times of war and the need to support the British during the war, due to their longstanding relationship with the Mohawks.

Molly Brant’s political status ensured that she could pressure the British to take better care of her family. By the middle of June in 1780, she decided to go to Montreal and appeal to Frederick Haldimand to improve her family’s living situation on the island. Despite his compliments about Molly in his winter letters, Malcom Fraser was worried and upset about Molly’s trip up the St. Lawrence River: “Joseph Brant’s Sister Miss Molly left this place yesterday along with Colonel Butler much against my inclination as I have been informed she is gone to ask Your Excellency for favors & I have no Doubt but She will be unreasonable in her Demands—her family however is numerous and not easily maintained in the decent footing upon which she keeps them.”<sup>71</sup> He also predicted, “she will probably wish to change her place of Residence and may want to go to Niagara where she will be a very unwelcome Guest to Col. Bolton.”<sup>72</sup> During Molly’s time at Niagara, Mason Bolton was the Lieutenant-Colonel. Malcom Fraser’s comments suggest that Molly left Niagara not only because of overcrowding (the official reason Mason Bolton requested her transfer), but also because of personal disagreements between the two.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Fraser to Haldimand, June 21, 1780, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21787, H-1452, pg. 163-4.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

At the island, Molly Brant was unhappy with her cramped housing situation. Her displeasure is not surprising since later in the letter Fraser adds, “In case Your Excellency would wish her to remain here it were good that some little box of a house were built for her as it would be more comfortable to her family than living in a Barrack room.”<sup>73</sup> Molly was distressed living in a cramped barrack room, along with her family members and dependents. To perform the political work expected of her she needed to be able to provide hospitality to Native visitors—a tricky task when operating out of a crowded room designed for an individual male soldier rather than a family with “numerous” members. Malcom Fraser was also exasperated that Molly Brant chose to maintain her “numerous” family in such “decent footing” (since the British government would be financing her choice), again illustrating her dedication to her family’s financial security—even at the risk of angering British officials. Fraser also remarks, “if She be not humoured in all her demands for herself and her dependents (which are numerous) the violence of her temper be led to create Mischief.”<sup>74</sup>

Malcom Fraser was motivated to find ways to convince Molly Brant to stay at Carleton Island, indeed his frustration with her could have stemmed from fear. If Molly left Carleton Island he would lose her assistance with over one hundred Native refugees on the island. Malcom Fraser explained to Frederick Haldimand that he built for her at his own expense a “tolerable good garden” and “contributed all in [his] power to have made her Situation as comfortable as possible—indeed she seems very well-pleased with such treatment, and I have every reason to be satisfied with her Conduct through the winter—and as I know herself and her family to be steadily attached to Government I wish them to be attended to.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Fraser to Haldimand, June 21, 1780, Haldimand Papers, Add. Ms. 21787, Reel H-1452, pg. 164.

When Molly Brant arrived in Montreal to petition for better housing, Daniel Claus reported, “last Thursday [Molly] arrived at my House with her son George & her Attednt. Butler from Carleton Island.”<sup>76</sup> Molly planned to “get something done for her and her family . . . to attain a certain settlement upon her & children, three of whom become now soon marriageable . . . she expects an answer by Saturday.”<sup>77</sup> While Malcom Fraser sent letters to Frederick Haldimand, Molly Brant lobbied her case in front of her old friend Daniel Claus, who clearly recognized Molly Brant’s value, as he suggested a salary of 200 pounds be awarded to her.<sup>78</sup> Haldimand also ordered a house built on Carleton Island that “will lodge Her and Family comfortably, chusing a favorable Situation within a few hundred Yards of the Fort.”<sup>79</sup> When Fraser relinquished command of the island in 1781, Claus gave the new commander, “particular directions regarding Miss Molly’s treatment, she had got into her new house, and seemed better satisfied with her situation than I had ever known before.”<sup>80</sup> While she spent over a year on Carlton Island in a cramped space, Molly finally won her battle for adequate housing for her family.

The family members living at Carleton Island with Molly Brant varied from year to year. In the summer of 1781, Daniel Claus wrote to Frederick Haldimand from Montreal, “Ms. Mary Brant has been here for some days, and yesterday set off for Carleton Island again, taking away her son George, and Susan & Mary two of her Daughters who were here at school near 2. Years, Margaret an older sister left this abt. a year ago.”<sup>81</sup> Molly’s daughters received an education in

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<sup>76</sup> Claus to John Johnson, June 26, 1780, Claus Papers, Vol. 26, Microfilm reel C-1485, pg. 219.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Captain Robert Matthews to Fraser, July 17, 1780. Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21788, Microfilm H-1452, pg. 72.

<sup>80</sup> Fraser to Haldimand, December 13, 1780, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21788, Microfilm H-1452, pg. 214.

<sup>81</sup> Claus to Haldimand, July 25, 1781, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, H-1450, p. 251.

reading and writing English, and George received more study of the science than “he will have occasion for” and was described as a “promising Lad.” Claus continued, “There are left at school two of Brant Johnson’s Daughters, whose Mother is daily expected to take them away, the eldest a fine genius & great Arithmetician.”<sup>82</sup> The following summer, Daniel Claus wrote from Montreal that Molly Brant’s, “two girls are lately gone to Niagara having finished their Learning after a 3 years stay at this place. A Boy and Girl of Mary Johnsons remain, but expect to be taken away shortly by their mother.”<sup>83</sup> In a “Return of Loyalists on Carleton Island” dated November 26, 1783, Molly Brant’s household was listed under the category of Indian Department and was recorded as including Mary Brant and all six of her daughters (the eldest, Elizabeth, was 20 years old, and the youngest, Nancy, was ten years old). Her surviving son, George, had apparently returned to school, since he was not listed on the residence. Molly’s age was listed as 47.<sup>84</sup> Along with Molly’s daughters, the Carleton Island Brant household consisted of William Lamb, a thirteen-year old American captive taken by Joseph Brant from Delaware County New York, in April 1780 when the boy was ten years old, and three slaves: Abraham Johnston (45 years old), Juba Fundy (23 years old), and Jenny Fundy (20 years old). Throughout her travels from Canajoharie, Onondaga, Cayuga, Fort Niagara, Montreal, and Carleton Island Molly’s slaves supported her political and economic labor.

As the war progressed, Molly Brant became increasingly worried about her brother, Joseph Brant, and his treatment by the British. In the spring of 1781, Joseph was involved in a

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<sup>82</sup> Since Molly Brant viewed William of Canajoharie (one of Sir William Johnson’s sons from a previous intimate partnership with a Mohawk woman) as her own son, it is likely that she also viewed Brant Johnson (a child from a different one of Sir William Johnson’s previous relationships with a Mohawk partner) and his children as her immediate family.

<sup>83</sup> Claus to Haldimand, July 25, 1782, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, Microfilm H-1450, pg. 251.

<sup>84</sup> This document is the main reason the year 1736 listed as her commonly accepted birth year.

brawl with an official from the Indian department.<sup>85</sup> Molly took the incident seriously and expressed to Daniel Claus:

it touches me very sore to hear from Niagara how my younger Brother Joseph Brant was used the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, by being almost murdered by Col. Johnsons people, what adds to my grief and Vexation is, that being scarce returned safe from the rebel Country, he must be thus treated by these of the Kings people who always stay quietly at home & in the Fort, while my Brother Continually exposes his Life in going against the Enemy taking pris'rs as far as in his power.<sup>86</sup>

Molly's complaint emphasizes the role of Native warriors in aiding the British and demonstrates how her loyalty to the British is connected to what she believed were Native people's best chances for on-going self-determination. For example, she continued to warn Claus, "it is hard for me to have an only Bror. Whom I dearly love to see him thus treated, but what I am most concerned about is that it may affect the Kings Indn. Interest. The whole Matter, is that the Officers at Niagara are so haughty & proud, not knowing or considering that the Kings Interest is so nearly connected with that of the Indians."<sup>87</sup> Molly connects her worry over her brother with the interest of both Native nations and the King, and both parties' interests were intrinsically connected with each other in Molly Brant's world. During the War, Molly frequently warned the British of the danger of not providing their Native allies with the necessary presents. In this instance, Molly Brant reminds Daniel Claus that without the help of their Native allies, the British have little chance of success in the war. Once again, she reminded Claus that Mohawk peoples were an equal ally to the British, rather than subjects.

Despite her many responsibilities and the crowded and tense conditions, there were also opportunities for excitement and celebration on the Island. In 1780, Gilbert Tice, wrote to Daniel

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<sup>85</sup> Calloway, *The American Revolution*, 144.

<sup>86</sup> Mary Brant to Claus, April 12, 1781, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21774, H-1450, pg. 169. The original letter was in Mohawk but only the English transcription has survived, see Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 69.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

Claus. Molly Brant, Daniel Claus, and Gilbert Tice all lived in the Mohawk Valley region before the outbreak of the war. In his letter, Gilbert begins by describing how Molly was very helpful in explaining Daniel's previous letter to Native peoples on the Island. Then he turns to personal matters: "Miss Molley and the Children are in good Health – and wee Pass our time Very Agreeably Considering all things. Wee have a Ball once a week-and Several other things to Pass the time."<sup>88</sup> Despite the responsibilities, turmoil, and violence that the war brought, Molly Brant and her children on Carleton Island were healthy and also had opportunities to enjoy themselves at weekly gatherings.

At the dinners and balls held on the island, Molly Brant's style was drawn from both Haudenosaunee and European cultures. At one dinner in 1780, an army officer's wife reports Molly Brant wore, "a traveling dress, a calico bedgown, fastened with Silver Brooches and a worsted mantel."<sup>89</sup> Bedgowns were simple, utilitarian items that were designed as a loose jacket-like piece without fastenings worn by many eighteenth-century European women, and by the 1780s, they were also worn and adapted by Native women.<sup>90</sup> Molly Brant had chosen a European mode of clothing that had been adopted and incorporated by Native woman.<sup>91</sup> She also chose to accessorize with silver trade broaches, which were usually worn by Native peoples. In both fashion and politics, she borrowed from European cultures when it was useful to her,

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<sup>88</sup> Gilbert Tice to Claus, Feb 12, 1780, Claus Papers, Vol. 2, Microfilm Reel C-1478, pg. 173-5.

<sup>89</sup> Matild (Hanna) Lawrence Schiefflin to John Lawrence, December 4, 1780, in *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 72, No. 2 (1941): 120-3.

<sup>90</sup> Brigade of the American Revolution, *Women's Dress During the American Revolution*, (Brigade of the American Revolution Press, 2004), 27 and Ronda McConnon, "The Short Gown and Bedgown," 18<sup>th</sup> Century New England Life, [http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org/18cnel/short\\_gown.htm](http://www.18cnewenglandlife.org/18cnel/short_gown.htm), accessed January 25, 2015; Jason Melius, "For the Ladies," *A Parcel of Strouds, Duffields, Blankets, Silver Trinkets and other suitable Articles for that Trade*, <http://aparclofstroudsduffieldsblanket.weebly.com/basics-for-women.html>, accessed January 25, 2015.

<sup>91</sup> When discussing Native peoples in the Louisiana area, Sophie White argues that adoption of this garb by Native women did not denote that they had become "Frenchified" or assimilated to European culture. Instead, borrowing Europeans fashions evoked the immediate French Canadian precursors of this style, with corresponding variations in French and Canadian nomenclature. Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 62.

combining them with her Haudenosaunee roots. A decade later, when Molly Brant was in her late fifties, she was reported as retaining “the manners and dress of her tribe” when visiting the Niagara region.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the displacement that many Native and non-Native Loyalists experienced during the war, Molly Brant also had the chance to reconnect with female acquaintances from the Mohawk Valley, like Sarah McGinnis (maiden name Kast) a Loyalist woman familiar with the Haudenosaunee. Sarah had married Timothy McGinniss (also known as ‘Teddy’ or “Tedy Magin’), a captain in the Indian Department and one of Sir William Johnson’s closest aids.<sup>93</sup> The McGinnisses undoubtedly attended many of the lavish dinners held at Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall, where she and Molly would have been acquainted. Timothy McGinniss died at the Battle of Lake George during the French and Indian War in 1757. Sarah frequently assisted in Indian Affairs, both before and after her husband’s death. During the Revolutionary War when she was in her early sixties, Daniel Claus sent Sarah McGinniss to deliver a Loyalist message to Cayuga villages. Sarah was fluent in Mohawk, and likely had many conversations with Molly, first at Niagara and later at Carleton Island. The women’s past experiences and recent adventures would have given them plenty to discuss.<sup>94</sup>

Molly Brant found a way to turn the turbulence of the war into opportunities for a diplomatic career. She turned to the labor of the enslaved women she inherited from Sir William Johnson to help maintain her household and her travels, allowing Molly to focus on politics and reminding the British of their reciprocal relationship with the Mohawks.

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<sup>92</sup> Marjorie Freeman Campbell, *Niagara: Hinge of the Golden Arc*, (Toronto: Ryerson University Press, 1958), 166.

<sup>93</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 70.

<sup>94</sup> Huey and Pulis note that Molly Brant had been living among the Cayuga while Sarah McGinnis was there and their paths might have crossed. *Ibid.*

## **Molly Brant and the Mohawks: On The Different Side of a New Border**

Molly Brant believed a strong alliance with the British would put the Mohawks in a favorable position when the war ended. She was probably shocked and dismayed when the war finished and she learned that the British did not uphold their end of the bargain. She had spent the past eight years of her life encouraging, cajoling, and persuading Mohawk and other Native people to remain loyal to the British. Hostilities between the Americans and the British ended in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris. The British agreed to cede all forts from Oswego to Michilimackinac, including Niagara and Detroit, to the Americans, although the British would maintain control of the western forts until the 1790s.<sup>95</sup> However, the document did not mention the Mohawks or other Native peoples allied to the British, and made no attempt to protect the Mohawk right to their homelands, despite repeated promises.

The treaty created a new border through Haudenosaunee territory between the newly formed American Republic and British provinces throughout the lower Great Lakes. In the process, Molly Brant's inheritances in the Mohawk Valley were permanently lost. Throughout the war, Molly had expressed her continual desire to return to the Mohawk Valley—a dream that would never be fulfilled. For the young, financially unstable, United States, the treaty was a huge victory. For the Haudenosaunee it was a devastating loss and shocking betrayal. Not only did their traditional homelands wind up on the American side of the border, they found that the British were willing to treat them as subjugated pawns to pass off to American control.<sup>96</sup> Molly

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<sup>95</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 111, 114, 294; Timothy D. Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1815*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 11-2; White, *The Middle Ground*, 472.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 112.

had allied with the British and traveled large distances throughout the Great Lakes relaying information between Mohawk people and British officials because she believed that allying with the British was the best choice for the Haudenosaunee people.<sup>97</sup> Now, a new border had been drawn east to west for the first time and implemented without Mohawk or Haudenosaunee consultation and separating the Haudenosaunee who fought beside the British from their homelands.<sup>98</sup>

If Molly Brant was angry at the outcome of the war, she was not alone. Many Haudenosaunee people felt betrayed and protested the new border, lobbying for access to territory that they viewed as their ancestral lands. The British eventually acquiesced and the Haudenosaunee received rights to two tracts of land in the colony of Quebec: one near the Grand River, north of the east end of Lake Erie and the Niagara River, and the other on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario, near the Bay of Quinte and thirty miles west of Kingston.<sup>99</sup> Molly Brant did not move to either of these tracts of land. Instead, in 1784 she (and other women from Carleton Island, including Sarah McGinnis) moved to Kingston, a settlement on the northeast shore of Lake Ontario, only sixty miles northwest of Carleton Island across the St. Lawrence River. The British government built a house for Molly in the town and due to “the early and uniform fidelity, attachment and zealous services rendered to the King’s Government by Miss Mary Brant and her Family” she was also granted a pension of 100 pounds a year” (approximately \$15,000 in today’s currency).<sup>100</sup> Molly’s pension is a reflection of British

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<sup>97</sup> In the post-Revolutionary War era, Mohawks would be able to continue to call on the British for support more than any other Native nation. In turn, the British relied on them to help secure the American-British borderlands in the lower Great Lakes. Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 40.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-6.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-2.

<sup>100</sup> Haldimand to John Johnson, May 27, 1783, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 217775, Microfilm H-1449, pg. 124. Currency calculations between the eighteenth century and present present many complications. To achieve these

recognition of her labor during the war: her political skills and experience made her an indispensable ally to the British.

Molly Brant and her family also received compensation for their wartime losses—both because numerous British officials testified on their behalf, including Guy Johnson, John Johnson, Daniel Claus, Joseph Chew, and John Butler, and because the British colonial government hoped it would be a means of ensuring continued support from the Mohawks.<sup>101</sup> A house was also built for Joseph Brant, but he used the residence mainly for visiting his sister and friends in the area and chose to settle permanently at the Mohawk Grand River settlement.<sup>102</sup> The fate of the enslaved people Molly owned is uncertain. While they may have moved with her to Kingston and continued to support her household, Molly may have sold them or given them their freedom, they may have escaped, or they might have died.<sup>103</sup> As Molly built a new life for herself at Kingston, she must have had mixed feelings. The British had recognized her role in the war and provided her with a house and a pension. But despite her labor during the war, Haudenosaunee peoples were left out of the Treaty of Paris that created a new border through their lands and the rest of the lower Great Lakes. About to turn fifty years old, Molly had chosen to live in a developing settlement, close to her daughters and other women from Carleton Island,

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estimate value, I used a calculator available at *Measuring Worth*. It is also helpful to think about average wages, and economic historians have shown the average wage in the late eighteenth century was slightly over 100 pounds “Computing 'Real Value' Over Time with a Conversion between U.K. Pounds and U.S. Dollars, 1774 to Present,” *Measuring Worth*, <https://www.measuringworth.com/m/calculators/exchange/>, accessed November 20, 2016; Ed Crews, “How Much Is That In Today’s Money,” *Colonial Williamsburg*, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/Summer02/money2.cfm>, accessed November 20, 2016.; Olaff Simons and Mathia Böhne, “Great Britain: Prices and Wages,” *Pierre Marteau’s Virtual Publishing House*, [http://pierre-marteau.com/wiki/index.php?title=Great\\_Britain:Prices\\_and\\_Wages](http://pierre-marteau.com/wiki/index.php?title=Great_Britain:Prices_and_Wages), accessed December 1, 2016,

<sup>101</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 75; Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exile*, 193.

<sup>102</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 75. Kevin Quinn, “Joseph Brant: Kingston’s Founding Father?” *Historic Kingston*, Vol. XXVIII, (Kingston, ON: Kingston Historical Society, 1979), 80-1; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 120.

<sup>103</sup> There are no archival records for Molly’s slaves after the 1783 Carleton Island census.

but separated from the two largest Mohawk communities. She was once again entering a new stage of her life in an Anglophone frontier community.

### **Sally Ainse's Property in Detroit**

For Molly Brant, the American Revolution marked a period of mobility as she moved from the Mohawk Valley, to Niagara, to Montreal, to Carleton Island, and eventually to Kingston. For the multiethnic Oneida trader Sally Ainse, the American Revolution marked a geographic reorientation. Between the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, Sally traveled extensively between Schenectady, Detroit, and Michilimackinac. But from 1775 onwards, Sally's life became grounded in the Detroit River region and adjacent areas such as the Thames River Valley. While Sally was no longer traveling large distances, she continued to travel within the area, making connections with local traders, merchants, and missionaries, while developing a thriving business. At Detroit, she became a legally recognized property owner for the first time, and she also began to diversify into other forms of property.

In 1775, Sally Ainse was spending significant time in the prosperous fort town of Detroit, located along the Detroit River connecting the western end of Lake Erie to Lake St. Clair and the southern end of Lake Huron. Detroit offered numerous advantages for a Native woman looking to grow her business. By 1778, she relocated permanently from Michilimackinac to Detroit. Detroit's location on a much-traveled route between the western interior and Atlantic Ocean better allowed Sally to leverage her far-reaching connections, which spread from Pennsylvania to New York to the Ohio Valley to Michilimackinac. Detroit's location also provided a milder climate than Michilimackinac that would allow for a longer season of travel on waterways and a

longer growing season. The multiplicity of Native languages spoken near Detroit offered opportunities for Sally to wield her language skills in order to advance her trading business.<sup>104</sup> Sally Aitse made the most of her far-reaching family connections, her previous experience in commercial exchanges, and the gendered and racial dynamics of this port town, where mixed-ancestry women wielded significant political and economic authority, to expand her business and her investments in property.

Sally Aitse had connections to mixed-ancestry and British family networks influential in the Detroit area, including the Askin family, the Edgar family, and the Couc family Business friends from her years at Michilimackinac, like John Askin and William Edgar, resided in Detroit during the 1770s and 1780s. William Maxwell, Sally's previous intimate and business partner, also maintained commercial connections in Detroit. Sally was also connected to the Couc/Montour family through Andrew Montour, her previous spouse and the father of her children. Andrew Montour's mother was the well-known interpreter, Madame Montour, who spent time at Detroit in the first decade of the eighteenth-century, but by the mid-eighteenth century, during Andrew's marriage to Sally, she worked as an interpreter in Pennsylvania.<sup>105</sup> Sally, Andrew, and his mother had lived in the same residence during at least part of Sally's marriage to Andrew.<sup>106</sup> The Couc/Montour family had roots in Detroit that extended to the early

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<sup>104</sup> For Sally's fluency in Native languages, Linda Sabathy-Judd, *The Moravians in Upper Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 159.

<sup>105</sup> There has been considerable debate over Isabelle/Elizabeth Couc's background in various secondary sources. Karen Marrero, "Founding Families: Power and Authority of Mixed French and Native Lineages in Eighteenth Century Detroit," (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2011), 187-8; James H. Merrell, "'The Cast of his Countenance': Reading Andrew Montour," in *Through a Glass Darkly* eds. Mecheal Sobel & Frederika J. Teute, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 69; Alison Duncan Hirsch, "'The Celebrated Madame Montour': 'Interpreting' Across Early American Frontiers," *Explorations in American Cultures* 4: 2000, 90-1.

<sup>106</sup> Hirsch, "'The Celebrated Madame Montour,'" 108.

eighteenth-century, and they were one of Detroit's earliest and most powerful Native and French-mixed families.<sup>107</sup>

The port town was a major entr pot for the fur trade, serving as one of the interior headquarters and exchange points for forts further west.<sup>108</sup> At the same time, Detroit was becoming fully integrated into the Atlantic economy of the east. This location between the fur trade and Atlantic economies made it ideal for Sally Ainse to leverage her far-flung familial, economic and political relationships. These relationships spread from the upper Great Lakes to the Ohio Country and eastern Great Lakes, where some of her Oneida and Shawnee relatives likely still lived.<sup>109</sup> The town's population—mostly French, mixed-ancestry, and Native American traders—continued to out-produce their British counterparts, who had gained official control of the town at 1760.<sup>110</sup> At the river town, Sally found not only an economic hub that was geographically central, but also a space where women of mixed-ancestry were an integral part of the economic and political fabric.

Sally Ainse took advantage of her familial, intimate and economic connections, Detroit's favorable location, and the timing of the American Revolutionary War to expand her trade business. She established a thriving household that was legally recognized by British officials. She bought a house and lot within the fort for 120 pounds New York Currency.<sup>111</sup> In 1779, Sally bought the neighboring lot for 80 pounds New York Currency.<sup>112</sup> At Fort Stanwix, Sally had

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<sup>107</sup> Marrero, "Founding Families," 187.

<sup>108</sup> Catherine Cangany, *Frontier Seaport: Detroit's Transformation into an Atlantic Entr pot*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>109</sup> Marrero, "Founding Families," 270; Cangany, *Frontier Seaport*, 19.

<sup>110</sup> Marrero, "Founding Families," 277.

<sup>111</sup> Detroit Notarial Registers, B, 1766-1780, Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit MI, pg. 168; Clarence M. Burton, *History of Detroit 1780 to 1850*, (Detroit), 173; Frederick Hamil, *Sally Ainse: Fur Trader*, (Detroit: Algonquin Club, 1939), 6.

<sup>112</sup> Detroit Notarial Registers V, 1776-1784, LAC, pg. 153; Hamil, *Sally Ainse*, 6.

asserted a claim to land but never received recognition by British colonial officials. At Michilimackinac, Sally had attempted and failed to use her intimate connections to own a house within the fort.<sup>113</sup> But at Detroit, Sally Ainse became a legally recognized householder and landowner by British officials. Sally also became the owner of a different type of property: slaves.

Sally Ainse was listed on the 1779 census as owning one male and two female slaves, along with flour and livestock.<sup>114</sup> In the 1782 Detroit census, she was recorded as owning one female slave, an increased number of livestock, flour, and corn.<sup>115</sup> This decade in Detroit is the first time in which Sally Ainse was recorded as owning enslaved people (who may have been Native American or African American). Sally's decreased holdings in slaves from one man and two women to one woman between the censuses may indicate a choice on her part to leverage her property in enslaved human beings in order to invest elsewhere, such as in her larger livestock holdings and in later land purchases. In 1789 she sold a "negro man called Frank about twenty-five years old" to a neighbor, showing that she owned a black male slave at some point between the census of 1782 and the sale of 1789.<sup>116</sup> Between the 1782 census and 1789 she gained another male slave. She may, however, have been leasing or renting out her slaves during the time of the 1782 census and at least one was back in her possession by 1787. Or she may have owned different men in 1779 and 1787. If so, the slave she owned in 1779 may have met numerous other fates, such as escape, finding a route to manumission, being gifted to one of Sally's relatives, or dying.

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<sup>113</sup> Its possible Sally may have succeeded at securing property from Native friends in the nearby suburbs of Michilimackinac for which few records exist, but she does not appear to own property within the fort.

<sup>114</sup> Michigan Pioneer Historical Collection (MPHC), Volume X (Lansing: Thorp & Godfrey, 1888), 316.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 609.

<sup>116</sup> Detroit Notarial Registers, Vol. 3, LAC, pg. 344.

While Sally Ainse used her connections with distinguished business men in Detroit to expand her trade networks and to increase her affluence, other women of Native and African-descent were traded by Sally and her business associates as forms of property and symbols of status. Sally might have acquired her slaves through her business associates at Detroit or Michilimackinac, such as John Askin or William Macomb, or from a previous intimate partner, such as William Maxwell, as both men had connections to the Great Lakes slave trade. Askin, who moved to Detroit from Michilimackinac in the 1770s, was one of the most prominent and active slaveholder-merchants in the Detroit region by 1787, when his inventory noted his ownership of two black men named Jupiter and Tom, one woman named Susannah and her two children, one woman named Mary, one “Panis” (Native) man named Sam, and one black boy named George.<sup>117</sup> Macomb was one of the largest slave owners in Detroit during and after the Revolutionary War.<sup>118</sup> In 1778, William Maxwell wrote from Michilimackinac to William Edgar at Detroit arranging for the shipment and sale of a “little Pawnee wench” and a “negro wench with a fine child”<sup>119</sup> The slave woman of African descent with child was also described as, “a fine wench [who] sews and does work, speaks good English and French.”<sup>120</sup> There is no direct evidence that Sally Ainse acquired her slaves from business acquaintances like John Askin or William Macomb, or from William Maxwell and William Edgar’s Michilimackinac-Detroit slave trading.<sup>121</sup> However, Sally owned slaves while living at Detroit and she clearly had

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<sup>117</sup> Inventory Book, Detroit, Jan 1, 1787, John Askin Papers, Box 22, 16, BHC.

<sup>118</sup> William Macomb Farm, *Mapping Slavery in Detroit*, <http://mappingdetroitslavery.com/map.php>, accessed January 12, 2016.

<sup>119</sup> William Maxwell to William Edgar, Michilimackinac, August 24, 1778. William Edgar papers, 1760-1812, LAC, MG19 AI Vol. 3, M119. (referred to as Edgar Papers)

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Maxwell and Edgar discussed the sale of women of Native and African descent in 1778 and in the Detroit census of 1779 Sally owned three slaves (two females and one male). The timing makes it possible that Sally acquired one or more of her slaves on the 1779 census from Maxwell and Edgar (while unlikely it is possible that all three of Sally’s slaves were purchased from Maxwell and Edgar, i.e. the young Pawnee woman, the black woman, and her child).

connections to multiple men who were major players in the Great Lakes slave trade who could have supplied her with slaves.

By the late eighteenth century, an unusual gendered and racialized dynamic occurred in the Great Lakes region: certain political and economic communities, like Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Niagara, were reflective of a blend of Native and European economic and political influences, such as a hybrid form of slavery that was neither fully “Atlantic” nor “indigenous.” This dynamic created space where a certain group of Native women were able to achieve significant forms of wealth, including slaves, while other Native women were at a significant risk for being enslaved. Like the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe peoples ritually killed and adopted captured slaves to vent grief over relatives lost in war, to strengthen depleted populations, and to replenish the spiritual power of families through the incorporation of adoptees.<sup>122</sup> Many of these slaves in the Great Lakes were captured from Native societies farther west.<sup>123</sup> When the French and eventually the British entered the Great Lakes, they began to participate in the indigenous slave trade as a strategy to create alliances with Native peoples.

Examining William Maxwell’s involvement in the Great Lakes slave trades between 1770 to 1778 provides insights about the gendered and racial dynamics within the household Sally shared with William in the late 1760s.<sup>124</sup> In 1770, Maxwell wrote to his friend William Edgar from Michilimackinac, “I have since sent you a fine young Pawnesse to sell for me—do not sell her for less than £30 and as much more as you can; if you cannot sell her directly and you have no use for her give her to some good woman for victuals. I expect to get leave to come

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<sup>122</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 26.

<sup>123</sup> Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 169-173; Carl J. Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 10, 12.

<sup>124</sup> Maxwell’s involvement with the slave trade at Michilimackinac may have extended for a longer period, however these dates are what the archival record indicates.

down next summer and I may possible take her down the country with me, but sell her if you can.” William Maxwell drew on his Detroit connections to take advantage of the larger community and need for household domestic labor.<sup>125</sup> His specification that that she be sold for not less than £30, reveals both her market value in his eyes, and his desire to increase his own economic standing. What is unclear is whether his comment to give the young Pawnee woman to “some good woman for victuals” indicated a genuine concern for the slave or his own dark humor. Historian Elizabeth Demers suggests former and argues that Maxwell's insistence on the right price and the right placement (albeit temporarily) suggests concern for the Native girl beyond the marketplace. Demers reasons that his request that she be given to “some good woman” merely for her keep, coupled with his possible plans to take her downriver himself in the summer, indicated the trader's concern for her welfare even more, perhaps, than his concern for her value.<sup>126</sup> Demer's analysis assumes that Maxwell uses victuals to mean ‘board’ (a possible synonym for the word). However, victual also means “food useable by people” and the plural refers to “supplies of food or provisions.”<sup>127</sup> The dictionary definition for the term shows how Maxwell may have used the term in a grisly joking matter—emphasizing the disposability of the enslaved woman's body to his male friend.

William Maxwell's involvement in the Great Lakes slave trade, his language in letters to discuss enslaved women, and his history of a turbulent relationship with Sally Ainse indicate that his interest in the woman was most likely based on sexual coercion. Historian Brett Rushforth has argued that in Great Lakes borderland communities in the eighteenth century, the line

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<sup>125</sup> . E.A.S Demers, “John Askin and Indian Slavery at Michilimackinac,” ed. Alan Gallay in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 162.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Demers also notes that the suggestion the Native girl be given “to some good woman” could indicate a trade of the slave's domestic labors for meals and board. A widowed or independent trading woman similar to Sally Ainse may have found this deal particularly appealing.

<sup>127</sup> “Victual,” Merriam Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/victual>, accessed March 5, 2017.

between whether a woman was a wife, a sex slave, or some combination thereof is often impossible to tell from the historical records.<sup>128</sup> Rushforth further argues that the knowledge that masters took advantage of slaves' vulnerability and sexual accessibility—even at young ages—was widespread, and as such vulnerability was considered to be a basic element of female slaves' experience throughout hubs of the Great Lakes like Michilimackinac and Detroit.<sup>129</sup>

Rather than William Maxwell's concern for the "fine young Pawnesse" being based on the kinship obligations woven into Native forms of slavery in the Great Lakes, he may have acquired the "fine young Pawnesse" to provide domestic and sexual labor within his household, after ending his relationship with Sally Ainse. It is also possible Sally and William's relationship and William's ownership of the Native woman overlapped. The enslaved woman may have provided domestic labor during the couples' time together at Michilimackinac. After Sally's departure, William may have turned to the enslaved woman for domestic *and* sexual labor. It is also possible Maxwell sexually coerced the slave during his intimate partnership with Sally—particularly during her long periods away traveling and trading in Detroit and Schenectady. If there was a female Native slave in William and Sally's Michilimackinac household, tensions over William's sexual relations with both women may have contributed to Sally's temper and her "tiring" William with her tongue and hands both.<sup>130</sup>

While there is no firm evidence that William Maxwell sexually coerced or physically mistreated his slave, his letters discussing his relationship with Sally Ainse allude to verbal and physical arguments between the two. William's temperament and the prevalence of the abuse of

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<sup>128</sup> Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 255-8.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Letter from William Maxwell to William Edgar, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1768, Edgar Papers. Sally's intimate relationship with William Maxwell is discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

enslaved Native women in the Great Lakes, suggest the Pawnee woman was in a very vulnerable position. Unlike Sally, the young Pawnee woman would not have been able to choose to leave. She was also more vulnerable to physical attacks and had to worry about repercussions if she defended herself. She was stuck with Maxwell until she was transported to Detroit where William Edgar would attempt to find her another owner. Detroit, a town that offered opportunities for Sally Ainese, was a site of violence for the woman owned by William Maxwell.<sup>131</sup> Maxwell's suggestion that Edgar give the enslaved Native woman "to some good woman for victuals" or bring her down country with him may also indicate a type of sexual jealousy. If the enslaved woman stayed with a woman before she was sold, Maxwell would not have to concern himself with her developing a similar blurred relationship between intimate partner and sex slave with the owner of the household while still being owned by Maxwell. While William Maxwell was interested in selling the enslaved woman—probably to another male trader who would take advantage of her domestic and sexual labor—he may have been jealous over the possibility of the enslaved woman performing sexual and domestic labor for another male trader while he was still her legal owner. Perhaps he was both making a grisly joke that emphasized her disposability while at the same time showing his sexual jealousy by suggesting she be housed with a woman if she could not be sold.

William Maxwell was often involved in the transport of slaves from Michilimackinac to Detroit. In 1771, Isaac Todd, a merchant in Michilimackinac and acquaintance of William and Sally's, wrote to the Edgar firm in Detroit that, "a very fine Negro wench and child about 15 months old" were sent to Michilimackinac under the care of a French man with orders to sell her

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<sup>131</sup> Rushforth discusses how some enslaved women in Detroit during the French regime found possible routes to freedom through marriage. Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 255-74.

for “\$900 in peltry or goods, which is equal L120 York with order if he cannot sell her for this to deliver her to Mr. Maxwell.”<sup>132</sup> Todd explained that he “spoke to Maxwell to strive and get her put into [Edgar’s] hands which he will very willing do to serve [Edgar].”<sup>133</sup> The black woman and child had a temporary home with Maxwell until they were brought to Detroit and given to William Edgar to sell for no less than 120 pounds New York Currency. In return, Maxwell expected credit given to him for the sum of whatever she may sell for. William Maxwell continued to be involved with the Great Lakes slave trade until at least 1778, when he arranged the transportation of a “pawnee wench and child” from Michilimackinac to William Edgar in Detroit. The term wench which describes a woman with both low social status and loose morals, became increasingly racialized in English North American communities in the eighteenth century.<sup>134</sup> As the anecdotes with Maxwell illustrate, Revolutionary War-era Detroit was a key time and place for the procurement of slaves in the upper Great Lakes, and in particular, Native women were frequently enslaved. Numbers of enslaved black and Native peoples increased in Detroit during the war. Slaves from centers like Michilimackinac were often shipped to Detroit. Furthermore, wartime dislocation meant that Native slaves who had been captured by indigenous people of other tribes and traded to Europeans in Detroit were being joined by greater numbers of black slaves, many of them captured in Kentucky during British and Indian raids on American

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<sup>132</sup> Isaac Todd to William Edgar, August 27, 1771, Edgar Papers.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1-2, 9, 175.

settlements.<sup>135136</sup>

Relocating to Detroit during the Revolutionary War allowed Sally Ainse to significantly increase her property holdings, including her land and slaves. While Sally owned at least one black male during her time at Detroit, it is unclear if the female slaves in her household were of African or Native descent. Although Detroit was under British control during Sally's residency, the town operated as a geographically central largely diverse, multiracial space, surrounded by numerous Native communities and hunting grounds. In this already unusual Detroit River Region, the American Revolution created a volatile moment in which British and American men had significant motivation to seek out alliances with Native people who controlled a significant portion of the trade goods in the area. In the social, commercial, and political character of that late eighteenth-century town, Sally was able to channel her experience and skills into the formation of such alliances. This allowed a Native woman to develop significant property holdings and to enjoy a privileged lifestyle. However, Detroit was also a space of violence for one hundred and ninety-six enslaved women of Native and African descent.

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<sup>135</sup> While in 1773, 6.2 % of Detroit's population was enslaved, in 1782 that number had risen to 8.2%. By 1782, the year that Sally Ainse owned one female slave, the number of slaves in Detroit had reached 280 persons living in 84 slaveholding households, both within the fort and on the farms stretching along the river. Emily Macgillivray and Tiya Miles, "'She Lived in Fashion': A Native Woman Trader's Household in the Detroit River Region," *A Place in Common: Telling Histories of Early Detroit*, eds. Karen Marrero and Andrew Sturtevant, Lansing: Michigan State University Press (forthcoming; 2018); Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, forthcoming 2017).

For numbers of slaves in Detroit, see the 1773 and 1782 census. MPHC, Volume X (Lansing: Thorp & Godfrey, 1888) 312-26 & 601-11.

<sup>136</sup> Emily Macgillivray and Tiya Miles, "'She Lived in Fashion.'"

## The Household of a Multiethnic Oneida Merchant

Sally Ainse's household in Detroit consisted of herself as the head of household, her slaves of African and Native descent, and the occasional male intimate partner. In some ways, her household was similar to that of a typical Great Lakes trader's household in the mid-eighteenth century, consisting of a European trader and a Native or mixed-ancestry woman, most often Catholic and matrifocal since the homes reflected the type of households in which their wives were raised.<sup>137</sup> Similar to Sally, women within the "typical" Great Lakes household were responsible for processing peltry, producing an agricultural surplus, and producing various items necessary for the fur trade, such as snowshoes. Sally was familiar with harvesting and producing goods for trade, such as ginseng, and for sustenance, such as the corn she harvested during her relationship with Andrew Montour. However, rather than engaging in trade alongside a husband or in a husband's absence, Sally conducted trade as her own principal broker.<sup>138</sup>

Owning slaves would have certainly helped Sally Ainse in caring for her livestock and in processing agricultural and orchard products for trade. Sally's slaves increased her capacity for production, and as a result her economic profit. The enslaved man in her household surely supported her activities by engaging in agricultural work in her corn fields and orchard, tending to livestock, hunting, and helping to transport Sally's trade goods. The enslaved women in her household might have engaged in the processing and preparation of foodstuffs as well as other heavy domestic duties such as laundering and manufacturing clothing. Sally's account with one merchant shows that she purchased butter from another woman in Detroit, illustrating that

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<sup>137</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Woman and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 60.

<sup>138</sup> Marrero, "Founding Families," 280-282.

women producers of goods were also part of Sally's economic network and indicating the larger importance of women's agricultural production for households at Detroit.

Other wealthy women of Native and French descent living in Detroit were also prosperous landowners who engaged in trade and relied on slave labor to help maintain their households.<sup>139</sup> Although it is unclear how much direct contact Sally had with women like Angelique Godefroy and Marie Angelique Cuillerier *dit* Beaubien, they lived in the same neighborhood. Angelique, Marie Angelique, and Sally Ainse all appear to have been part of an elite group of women from respected fur trade and Native families who played important roles in Detroit as interpreters, traders, and property owners. While Sally stood out from these women in several ways—she was not Catholic, she was not formally married while she lived in Detroit, and she did not have any immediate family members living at Detroit—her household appears to have been similarly configured.

Throughout her residency in Detroit, Sally had accounts with other merchants for over 2000 pounds New York Currency.<sup>140</sup> In the spring of 1777, she purchased several silk handkerchiefs and multiple yards of “fine” ribbon, indicating that she had money to spend on stylish accessories.<sup>141</sup> Just as she had done at Michilimackinac, she continued to prioritize spending at least some money on items to show off her fashion sense. In December of 1780, she received two bateaux loads of flour on the list of merchandise ordered by the merchants of Detroit during a time when flour was a desirable item in the town.<sup>142</sup> The Revolutionary War led to dramatic inflation at Detroit. For instance in 1778, inflation was so extreme that attempts

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 270-81.

<sup>140</sup> Milo M. Quaife (ed.), *John Askin Papers* Volume 1, (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), 193; Originals in Ledger, 1783, Askin Papers, Box 1, BHC.

<sup>141</sup> April, 1777, Thomas Smith Ledger, 1779-1800: L4, Thomas Smith Papers, BHC, 77.

<sup>142</sup> MPHC Vol. IX, (Lansing: Thorp & Godfrey, 1908), 508-9.

were made to regulate the price of wheat, flour, peas, and corn, partly because trading in agricultural products like wheat and corn became integral to the fur trade industry.<sup>143</sup> In the 1779 census Sally had 100 pounds of flour, and by the 1782 census, Sally is listed as having 600 pounds of flour and eight bushels of wheat. Sally increased her agricultural holdings between the 1779 and 1782 census, either as a result of an uptick in her wheat production, or by acquiring more wheat through trade of goods like furs, textiles, or alcohol (rum, cider, or other spirits). Sally's possession of large amounts of wheat during a period when grain prices were inflated illustrates her savvy business-sense and investments in highly desirable goods.

The fact that her household was located within the heart of the town highlights not only Sally Ainse's economic status, but also her immersion within the complex social and cultural landscape of Detroit. Sally owned two lots within the heart of Detroit. The first lot was sixteen feet wide, fronting on St. James Street and extending back fifty-five feet to St. Joseph Street, and bounded on the northeast by St. Peter Street, and on the other side by a lot belonging to Antoine Chatelain.<sup>144</sup> The second lot was the same size, a total of thirty-two feet wide at the river front.<sup>145</sup> Significantly, Sally's household was located directly across from Ste. Anne's Roman Catholic Church.<sup>146</sup> Ste. Anne's Church functioned as an important gathering place for religious and social life in the predominantly Catholic city.<sup>147</sup> There is no evidence indicating that Sally was Catholic; her adjacent location to the church does not appear to have been motivated by her own religious faith. However, Ste. Anne's served as a central communal location for many of the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 69, 77.

<sup>144</sup> Detroit Notarial Registers, B, 1766-1780, Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit MI, pg. 168; Clarence M. Burton, *History of Detroit 1780 to 1850*, (Detroit), 173; Frederick Hamil, *Sally Ainse: Fur Trader*, (Detroit: Algonquin Club, 1939), 6.

<sup>145</sup> Detroit Notarial Registers V, 1776-1784, LAC, pg. 153; Hamil, *Sally Ainse*, 6.

<sup>146</sup> Ainse's home was located near the church before the Detroit fire of 1805 when Ste. Anne's was relocated.

<sup>147</sup> Edward J. Hickey, *Ste Anne's Parish: One Hundred Years of Detroit History*, ed., Joe L. Norris, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1951).

city's prominent families. It was therefore a place that Sally may have visited to maintain her social and business connections.

In addition, Sally Ainse's enslaved men and women may have had links to the church and its parishioners. The records of Ste. Anne's indicate scores of baptisms, births, and deaths of slaves, chiefly because French slaveholders were expected to baptize their human property.<sup>148</sup> Sally Ainse's slaves are difficult to trace as their names are not noted in the census records, but it is plausible and even likely that they visited the church to attend masses or baptisms. If the enslaved individuals in Sally's household were acquired through her connections in Michilimackinac, there is a greater chance that they may have been Catholic and attended Ste. Anne's.<sup>149</sup> Since the slaves of many of Detroit's elite families attended Ste. Anne's, the enslaved man and women owned by Sally could have been in contact with other slaves in the town, who may have been of Native or African descent. During the Revolutionary War, the borderlands Great Lakes provided much opportunity for Native women traders like Molly Brant and Sally Ainse, but also held hostage a high number of Native American slave women who lived within local households and were often active in the church.

Sally Ainse's prospering business allowed her to make the largest land purchase of her life while living at Detroit: in 1780, she purchased a tract of land from the Ojibweg living on the Ontario Peninsula between Lake Erie and Lake Huron. Sally's tract of land was twenty-five miles in length, running along the north side of the Thames River beginning from the mouth of the river at Lake St. Clair (just north of Detroit) and with a depth of six miles from the north

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<sup>148</sup> The Ste. Anne's Records for the accounts of numerous baptisms and deaths of black and Native slaves Ste. Anne's Church Records, Bentley Library (BL), Ann Arbor, 86966mf, 534c, 535c, 536c.

<sup>149</sup> Demers, "John Askin and Indian Slavery," 398.

bank.<sup>150</sup> Most speculators knew Great Britain prohibited direct sales from Native peoples. However, on the ground the Ontario peninsula was under Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee control. Sally may have viewed her identity as an Oneida woman with expansive kinship ties as a way around the prohibition. Throughout her life she drew on Native and non-Native kinship connections to acquire land. If she was aware of the prohibition to purchase lands from Native peoples, she may have seen herself as exempt due to her recognition of the ongoing authority of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee, and her extended kinship connections to these communities. Sally bought the land for a total of 650 pounds in New York currency. Sally Aitse was one of the first people to acquire a large tract of land on the Thames. As she bought the north bank of the river from Lake St. Clair to the Forks, non-Native, male traders began to purchase the south bank, just as land speculators had engaged in similar activities after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768 and had taken ownership of Sally's lands near the fort. The Thames was also an ideal location for both settlers and Native peoples given that the river operated as a well-travelled highway between Fort Niagara and Detroit.<sup>151</sup> Sally's experiences before and after the Revolutionary War, including the loss of her land at Fort Stanwix, the thriving business she developed at Detroit, the trade connections she fostered with Ojibwe peoples, and the desirability of the location, all contributed to her interest in land along the Thames. In 1787, Sally moved from her Detroit residence to her Thames River land with the intent to grow her trade business

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<sup>150</sup> Detroit Notarial Register, VI, 1776-1784, LAC, pg. 143; "Sarah Aitse," Petition 45, Upper Canada Land Petitions, Microfilm C-1609, 1797, Volume 2, A 4, RG 1L3, LAC (referred to as "Petition 45").

<sup>151</sup> Petition 17, 1789, Upper Canada Land Petitions 1763-1865, Bundle A4, Volume 3, RG1 LAC, Ottawa, ON, Canada, Microfilm reel C-1615, pg. 503-5 (referred to as Petition 17). While men who bought property on the Thames before the McKee purchase of 1790, many of them were granted legal right to the land due to decisions by local land boards. Frederick Hamil, *The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640-1850*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 11, 34.

and develop further agricultural opportunities.<sup>152</sup> However, one of her sexual relationships with a trader at Detroit, John Wilson, would later affect her Thames River land claim.

John Wilson became a member of Sally Ainese's Detroit household for a few years in 1780s.<sup>153</sup> Wilson was a trader in the Detroit area, likely of British descent.<sup>154</sup> While relationships between French men and Native women led to the formation of mixed-ancestry family networks in the area, British traders found it difficult to access these networks that controlled the Great Lakes region after the withdrawal of France from North America in 1763. British traders who were successful in the Great Lakes trade secured their entrance through intermarriage with Native and mixed-race women. For example, James Sterling entered the trade through his marriage to the mixed-race Angelique Cuillerier, part of the affluent Cuillerier and Beaubien networks.<sup>155</sup> Sally Ainese had been engaged in previous intimate relationships with both Native and European men, Andrew Montour and William Maxwell. In the fur trade communities of the Great Lakes, when women were widowed or separated from their intimate partners, it was

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<sup>152</sup> Petition 17; Petition 45; and Detroit Notarial Register D, BHC, 67.

<sup>153</sup> Further evidence of Sally's relationship with Wilson, see, Patrick McNiff to Governor of England, 5 December 1793, Upper Canada Civil Secretary's Sundries RG5A1 Vol. 8, LAC, Microfilm C4505, pg. 3282. (referred to as "Upper Canada Sundries").

<sup>154</sup> Little specifics are known about Wilson's background. In 1793 while surveying Sally Ainese's Thames River property, Patrick McNiff claimed he did "not know any such person as Sally Ainese," but that there was a "Sarah Willson an Indian woman has laid her claim to a large Tract . . . if it can be said [that] she has any just claim to land there, the land cannot justly be deemed her property alone, as her husband, Mr. Wilson is now living at Niagara or near it." The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* lists a "John Wilson," who is born in 1776 in New Jersey. While he moved to Niagara in Upper Canada in the 1790s, his biographical entry never mentions him residing in Detroit, and his birth year makes it impossible that this is the same John Wilson that Sally shared an account with beginning in 1782. John Wilson appears in other ledgers of Detroit merchants, so he appears to be a trader at Detroit. He may have moved to Niagara at some point, or McNiff may have mistook the John Wilson who moved from New Jersey to Niagara for John Wilson the trader at Detroit in the 1780s. See Patrick McNiff, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1793, Detroit, Civil Sundries, Upper Canada Sundries, Microfilm C-4505, pg. 3282; Robert Lochiel Fraser, "Wilson, John" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/wilson\\_john\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/wilson_john_8E.html), accessed October 11, 2014.

<sup>155</sup> For more on James Sterling, see Marrero, "Founding Families," 193 and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 64. For more on British and Native intermarriages in the Great Lakes generally, see Nicole Satrun, "British Métis in Eighteenth-Century Detroit: The Askin and Mitchell Families," in *Revolutionary Detroit: Portraits in Political and Cultural Change 1760-1805*, eds. Denver Brunsmann & Joel Stone (Detroit: Detroit Historical Society, 2010), 42-4.

viewed as beneficial for these women to forge new partnerships: marriage was a kinship marker, and remarriages represented a further expansion and incorporation of new kin and allies.<sup>156</sup>

Partnering with John Wilson added to the kinship connections that Sally had acquired through earlier intimate relationships. John may have been drawn to Sally's extended family connections in Detroit and throughout the Great Lakes, along with her access to trade with Native communities and her skills as an interpreter.<sup>157</sup> However, entering into a relationship with John Wilson was also a risky move for Sally. Under the British custom of coverture, a woman merged her legal identity into that of her husband when she married, and she could not sue, be sued, enter into contracts, make wills, keep her own earnings, or control her own property.<sup>158</sup> There are no archival records that indicate Sally Ainse and John Wilson married in an Anglo-American ceremony. If they did marry, it was probably in an Indian ceremony *à la façon du pays*, or "in the custom of the country," that could be easily dissolved by the will of both parties. However, some British colonial officials ended up viewing the couple as married—a misunderstanding that caused Sally significant legal trouble around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Sally Ainse and John Wilson shared an account with merchant Thomas Smith in 1782 and were living together at some point during the 1780s in Detroit, although it is unclear for how long.<sup>159</sup> John Wilson appears on the 1782 Detroit census under "Wilson & Dolsin." "Dolsin"

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<sup>156</sup> Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 53.

<sup>157</sup> Sabathy-Judd, *The Moravians in Upper Canada*, 159.

<sup>158</sup> Renée Jacobs, "Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the United States Constitution: How the Founding Fathers Ignored the Clan Mothers," *American Indian Law Review*, 16, no. 2 (1991): 510-11.

<sup>159</sup> They purchased a variety of household items from Smith. The majority of the account entries are for between July 1782 and September 1785. Entries for interest add to the amounts still owed in September 1791 and 1796. In the ledger, payment towards the joint account is always attributed to Sally. For instance, Sally made two payments in 1785. The outstanding amounts that accumulate interest are from a 1782 entry that consists of a gallon of wine, a gold watch for John Wilson, and two strouds of blue cloth. While they share an account, both Sally and John keep their individual surnames on the account and Sally is listed as making payments under a variation of her own

undoubtedly refers to Matthew Dolson, who purchased the lot beside Sally in Detroit in 1785 and later moved to the Thames River near Sally. The fact that Wilson and Dolson cohabited in a household in 1782 suggests that either they were business partners or friends. Perhaps Sally's relationship to John along with her physical proximity to Matthew Dolson's lot strengthened the relationship between Sally and Matthew, leading Sally to later sell him some of her land. Despite confusion around John Wilson's identity, the multiple connections between Sally, John, and Matthew illustrate the closely-knit social world of Detroit and the surrounding area.

In 1785, Sally Ainse traded on the Clinton River, northwest of the fort town, with Moravians, who first moved to the Detroit River region in the spring of 1782, arriving from the Sandusky area of the Ohio Valley.<sup>160</sup> Moravian missionary David Zeisberger records in his diary that on Monday, November 7, "A trader's wife, Sally Hans, came here to sell goods, and stayed until the 10<sup>th</sup>. She took in from the brethren seventy bushels of corn for goods. She spoke with Samuel about her land on the east side of St. Clair, where for she would be glad to give us strip."<sup>161</sup> Sally is described as a trader's wife by Zeisberger, and the missionary could have been referencing John Wilson. However, despite this description, she operated independently, exchanging goods for corn and also proposing to sell some of her recently acquired property to

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surname (Hainse or Hands)—never Wilson. Thomas Smith Papers, L4: Ledger 1779-1800, BHC, pg. 100. A secondary source, Frederick Hamil's *Sally Ainse: Fur Trader*, published in 1939 provides some clues about the relationship. Hamil cites one of John Askin's ledgers from 1783 to 1787, held at the Burton Historical Collection in Detroit: "In 1783 Sally's account with John Askin showed that she owed him over 1256 pounds. On September 12, John Wilson, gave Askin two notes to cover her debt and closed out her account. These notes were paid off by Wilson with various payments ending in April, 1784. In effect, then, John Wilson took over Sally's account in September 1783, and carried it as his own. It seems apparent that this was the Wilson that Sally was living with about this time," see Frederick Hamil, *Sally Ainse: Fur Trader* (The Algonquin Club: Detroit, 1939), 12. However, I have looked through all of John Askin's ledgers at the Burton and consulted the archivist, and they do not possess a ledger that matches Hamil's citation or the dates listed. I have been unable to locate the ledger that Hamil cites where John Wilson pays Sally's account. However, further evidence of their relationship is that in 1788, Chippewa chiefs granted a leading merchant a tract of land "beginning at a farm in possession of Sarah Ainse, alias Wilson." See Detroit Notarial Register, Vol. 3, LAC, pg. 398-402.

<sup>160</sup> Earl P. Olmstead, *Blackcoats Among the Delaware*, (Kent, OH: Kent state University Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>161</sup> Eugene Bliss (ed.), *Diary of David Zeisberger a Moravian Missionary Among the Indians of the Ohio*, Vol. 1, (R. Clarke & Co, 1885), 248.

the Moravians. Sally may have been living with John, but she continued to operate in business as her own principal broker.

A different translation of David Zeisberger's diary from the same day describes Sally Ainse as a Nanticoke woman and Samuel, a Christian Indian, as her brother.<sup>162</sup> For different reasons, both Sally and her brother moved to the Detroit River region during the American Revolutionary War. Sally arrived from Michilimackinac during the beginning of the war, and Samuel arrived with other Christian Indians and Moravians from the Ohio Valley region in the summer of 1781.<sup>163</sup> While the violence and resulting dislocation of the war often disrupted Native families, in the case of Sally and her brother it provided opportunities for them to reconnect.<sup>164</sup> Her brother's connection to the Moravians probably contributed to her desire to sell them land. She may have been drawing on her experience in Haudenosaunee communities in the Mohawk Valley area, as Mohawks, Oneida, and other Haudenosaunee peoples leased land as strategy to control increased non-Native settlement.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> November 7, 1785, David Zeisberger Diary, Box 152, Folder 7, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA.

<sup>163</sup> Olmstead, *Blackcoats Among*, 59.

<sup>164</sup> It is unclear how much time Sally and Samuel spent together during childhood: Sally and Samuel may have had contact with the Moravians while being raised in a multiethnic community along the Susquehanna that included Nanticoke members or it is also possible Sally and Samuel were raised by different family members and they each formed their own connections to Moravian communities, and later reconnected as siblings. It is also unclear if Sally's connection to the Moravians are through her brother, another family member, or her partnership with Andrew Montour. Either way, Sally's consistent contact with the Moravians throughout her life is at least in part because of her brother's connection to the Christian community.

<sup>165</sup> Mohawk people began to lease land during the late 1760s and early 1770s, to avoid selling land to Anglo settlers, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 38-9. Oneida people leased land and were willing to provide Anglo-American settlers with some land, provided the Oneidas received annual rent and retained ultimate title as landlords after the Revolutionary War. The Oneidas also offered to lease a buffer zone of their land to New York state as an attempt to stall off American expansion and settlement after the war. He also provides an overview of Oneidas leasing land to the state of New York while under increased pressure by settlers. Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 148-9, 164, 169-94.

Like many Native women in eastern North America, Molly Brant and Sally Ainese both experienced major changes in their lives during the Revolutionary War. Sally Ainese moved to Detroit and became both a slave owner and legally recognized property owner. Molly Brant moved multiple times: from Canajoharie, to Fort Niagara, to Montreal, to Carleton Island, to Kingston. At times, Molly was forced to move to protect her own safety, other times it was motivated by her desire to aid British and, most importantly, Haudenosaunee causes. The political tensions of the war also create opportunities for the women to further their careers as traders, interpreters, and messengers to in important communities like Niagara and Detroit. However, in the coming years, both women would have more political challenges to navigate, including increased non-Native settlement in the lower Great Lakes and debates over the border in the Ohio Valley, leading to the Northwest Indian War. These changes would have very different effects on the lives of Molly Brant and Sally Ainese.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Settling in the Lower Great Lakes: Gender, Borders, and Property, 1788-1823**

In May of 1794, Richard England, the Commanding Officer of Detroit reported to John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, that he was doing everything in his power to encourage all local Native people to promptly head to Auglaize in the Ohio Valley.<sup>1</sup> England also reported that he asked civilians in Detroit to refrain from selling rum to Native peoples to help expedite the process, and they all agreed, except for “*Sally Ainse*, who availed herself of the general prohibition, and privately disposed of a sufficient quantity to keep an entire Band Drunk.”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis in original) While Molly’s work during the Revolutionary War focused on strengthening the British and Mohawk alliance, Sally became explicitly involved in regional politics in the post-Revolutionary War-era.

While Molly was able to maintain her wealth during the increased non-Native settlement in the late eighteenth century until her death, Sally encountered significant legal difficulties in regards to the land she purchased in the Thames River Valley. Examining Molly Brant’s retirement on Lake Ontario demonstrates her decision to live in the community of Kingston, surrounded by a network of women friends and relatives. Kingston’s strategic location facilitated her continued travel to visit family and to attend important political negotiations. In her elderly

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<sup>1</sup> R.G. England to John Graves Simcoe, May 29, 1794, Detroit, *Correspondence of John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 2, ed. E.A. Cruikshank (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923), 252.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

years, her main focus was supporting her family and community, including continuing her work as an herbalist and founding a church.

Examining Sally Ainese's life in the Thames River Valley illustrates how she expanded her trade networks and agricultural productivity while being drawn into the political tensions between the British, Americans, and multiple Native social formations in the Ohio Valley that led to the Northwest Indian War. The final section of this chapter focuses on Sally's legal troubles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and how increased non-Native settlement and the enforcement of Anglo-American legal customs threatened her position as a property owning Oneida woman.

Both Molly Brant and Sally Ainese used a variety of strategies to gain economic, political, and social autonomy within an increasing EuroAmerican male dominated space. However, Molly was able to maintain her affluence during intensified settler colonialism and the development of international boundaries in the 1790s, while Sally's wealth was threatened as the British colonial government refused to recognize her land claim. Molly's success and Sally's troubles demonstrate how intensified EuroAmerican settlement in the late eighteenth century was shaped by British gender and sexual norms, that in turn shaped the political and economic context for Sally and Molly.

## A Mohawk Woman's Post-War Life

After the Revolutionary War, Molly Brant settled in Kingston in a house built for her by the British colonial government.<sup>3</sup> While she continued to travel to places like Niagara for political work as tensions built between the British, the Americans, and numerous allied Native social formations over the the location of a border in the Ohio Valley, she also spent copious amounts of time with family and friends and became a leader in the local community, working as a healer and helping to found a church. Kingston was a developing town with few amenities. By 1795—nine years after Molly moved to the community and the year before her death—the community was described as containing:

a few more buildings [than Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake] but they are neither as large nor as good . . . many of them are log-houses, and those which consist of joiner's work, are badly constructed and painted . . . No town hall, no court-house, and no prison have hitherto been constructed . . . The town is seated on rocky ground; and not the smallest house can be built without the foundation being excavated in a rock . . . There is but one church in Kingston, and this, though very lately built, resembles a barn more than a church.<sup>4</sup>

The town sat on the limestone north shore of Lake Ontario (the cause of the rocky ground). While the town lacked amenities and and the limestone footing made building difficult, it was ideally situated at the intersection of important waterways in the lower Great Lakes. Kingston was located on the north shore of the eastern end of Lake Ontario, near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. A skilled paddler could head east down the river to large cities like Montreal or Quebec, or they could head west down the north shore of the lake to the Mohawk settlements near the Bay of Quinte and Grand River. It was also possible to head north on the Cataraqui

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<sup>3</sup> Haldimand to John Johnson, May 27, 1783, Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 217775, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, ON, Microfilm H-1449 p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Francois Alexandre Frederic duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travel through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, (London: R. Phillips, 1800), 269, 286, 287.

River into Anishinaabe territory, which connected to a series of inland lakes and the Rideau River, before eventually reaching the Ottawa River. Traversing west on the Ottawa River was a popular fur trade route to reach Lake Huron and the western Great Lakes region.

It is unclear if Jenna, Juba and Abraham, the slaves Molly inherited from William Johnson, moved with her from Carleton Island to Kingston. If they remained with Molly, they would have helped maintain her house in her retirement and aided her on her travels to visit family members. However, there is also the possibility they died due to illness or that they escaped to freedom from Kingston, using the waterways to their advantage and perhaps heading to Montreal or Niagara or heading north into a region that EuroAmericans rarely entered unless they were working in the fur trade. It is also possible that Molly freed them during her retirement.<sup>5</sup>

Along with its strategic location, Kingston also offered another benefit to Molly Brant: a community of familiar women, including her daughter and Loyalist friends she knew from the Mohawk Valley, Fort Niagara, and Carleton Island, like Sarah McGinniss.<sup>6</sup> Molly chose to live near her daughters and female friends, rather than settling at one of the larger Mohawk communities further west on Lake Ontario at Tyedinaga or Grand River (where her brother Joseph resided). Molly wanted to be close to her daughters as their families expanded. Elizabeth, her eldest daughter, married Dr. Robert Kerr, a physician and magistrate, in 1783.<sup>7</sup> They lived in

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<sup>5</sup> Accounts of Molly during her retirement by people such as John C. Ogden and Elizabeth Simcoe do not mention her slaves, indicating that they likely no longer lived with Molly at this time. If Molly did own slaves in Kingston, they would have been a signifier of her wealth and status in the developing town. While Upper Canada is often remembered as being the final destination for the Underground Railroad, many colonial officials and elite families continued to own slaves into the nineteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Gretchen Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant, and Their Daughters: A Study in Colonial Acculturation." *Ontario History* 81 (September 1989): 241; Jean Johnston, "Ancestry and Descendants of Molly Brant," *Ontario History* 63 (June 1971): 90.

<sup>7</sup> Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own*, (Niagara: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997), 77.

Kingston until 1789, when they moved to the Niagara area.<sup>8</sup> Magdalene married John Ferguson, who became a member of the Legislature of Upper Canada for Kingston.<sup>9</sup> Ann (also known as Nancy) married a naval officer, Captain Hugh Early for whom Earl Street in Kingston is named after today.<sup>10</sup> Margaret married captain George Farley of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment in Kingston. Mary remained single, although she also lived in Kingston with her sister, Magdalene, after the war.<sup>11</sup> The only daughter who did not remain in the area was Susanna, who married Lieutenant Henry Lemoine of the famous British 60<sup>th</sup> Foot regiment.<sup>12</sup> Molly's son Peter died during the war, and her other son, George, lived near the Grand River Mohawk community (and home of Joseph Brant, Molly's brother) where he married, ran a farm, and taught school until his death in 1826.<sup>13</sup> Molly probably visited with George when she traveled to the Grand River and Niagara area for family visits and important political events.

Molly Brant worked hard to keep her family close. Even when she was busy working as liaison, messenger, and negotiator for the British during the Revolutionary War, she always prioritized the needs of her family, including providing them with housing, food, and education. Historians of the Brant family, like Gretchen Green, have surmised that while her choice is reflective of the traditional, strong Haudenosaunee mother-daughter bond, Molly Brant may also have been unwelcome at the Mohawk communities as they may have viewed her as a 'sell out' to the British.<sup>14</sup> However, since Molly maintained a strong relationship with her brother and

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<sup>8</sup> Charles G. Roland, "Kerr, Robert," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kerr\\_robert\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kerr_robert_6E.html), accessed February 8, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, "Ancestry and Descendants," 90.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Earl Street runs from the waterfront downtown area of Kingston west to Queen's University Campus. It is a popular residential street for both city-residents and university students.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Also known as the Royal American Foot Regiment.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," 241.

regularly traveled to the Mohawk community near Grand River for special events, she clearly sustained a connection to the Mohawk communities even if some members disagreed with Molly and her brother's decisions and strategies.<sup>15</sup> Since Molly continually prioritized the well-being of her family during the tumultuous years of the Revolutionary War, her decision to settle in the same area as her daughters was the next logical step.

Kingston's location made it easy for Molly Brant to continue to travel for necessary political work or to visit her relatives in other areas in the lower Great Lakes. Molly's son-in-law stated in a 1797 petition that in 1785 Molly visited Schenectady, New York. American officials offered her and her family land if the Brant family agreed to return south of the border formed in 1783. However, Molly Brant and Joseph Brant both rejected the offers.<sup>16</sup> Increasing tensions between the Americans, the British, and Native peoples within the Great Lakes after the Revolutionary War contributed to the Americans' offer. Both Britain and the United States saw the value in allies skilled in translation, mediation, and diplomacy—allies like Molly and Joseph.

In June of 1793, Molly Brant visited Niagara for two purposes: her daughter Susanna married Lieutenant Henry Lemoine, and there was an important conference with an American delegation of commissioners scheduled for the same week in Sandusky, Ohio, over the disputed Ohio boundary.<sup>17</sup> Her brother Joseph planned to attend the meeting since he was playing a leading role mediating tensions in the Ohio Valley.<sup>18</sup> After the Treaty of Paris, Congress

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<sup>15</sup> The Mohawk community at the Bay of Quinte mainly consisted of Mohawks from the lower Castle or Fort Hunter area, while the community at Grand River mainly consisted of Mohawks from Upper Castle or Canajoharie area. Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807, Man of Two Worlds*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 370; Benjamin David Kern, "Molly Brant in the American Revolution: An Iroquois Woman Between Two Worlds," (Master's Thesis, Miami University, 2013), 54.

<sup>16</sup> Americans also offered Joseph a pension for life in 1785 if he would move across the border. Memorial of John Ferguson, "Petitions for Grants of Land in Upper Canada, Second Series, 1796-99," in *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, ed. E.A. Cruikshank, Vol. XXVI, (Toronto: William & Briggs, 1930), 170

<sup>17</sup> Huey and Pulis, Molly Brant, 79.

<sup>18</sup> Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," 90.

authorized a commission to inform the Native peoples of the Ohio Valley of the United States' intention to establish a boundary between American and Native territory running from the mouth of the Great Miami River to Lake Erie, giving the United States control of most of present-day Ohio.<sup>19</sup> When Native leaders objected to the boundary, the commissioners informed them of their intent to claim the country by conquest. While some Native leaders agreed to the boundary by signing the Treaty of Fort McIntosh in 1785, many Native people viewed the treaty as illegitimate and organized a multiethnic confederacy in response.<sup>20</sup> Fighting broke out between British and American traders, rival Native villages, and newly arrived American backcountry settlers in search of land further contributing to the formation of a pan-Indian alliance, known as the Western Confederacy.<sup>21</sup> In 1788, Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, was supposed to negotiate with the confederacy but he rejected a proposal by moderate members, like Joseph Brant, to accept the Muskingum River as the boundary (giving the United States the eastern quarter of the Ohio), and refused to budge from the Fort McIntosh boundary.<sup>22</sup> As a result, fighting broke out between the Western Confederacy and American forces in 1790 and 1791, with the Confederacy winning some battles and also suffering major losses, including the burning of towns and crops like corn, beans, pumpkins and stacks of hay.<sup>23</sup>

When Molly Brant travelled to Niagara in June of 1793, an American delegation of Benjamin Lincoln, Timothy Pickering, and Beverley Randolph were supposed to meet with the Confederacy at Sandusky. These commissioners were chosen for their reputation as

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, "'Just and lawful war' as genocidal war in the (United States) Northwest Ordinance and Northwest Territory, 1787–1832," *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no.1, (2016): 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ostler, "'Just and lawful war,'" 6; White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650- 1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 436.

<sup>21</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 433-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ostler, "'Just and lawful war,' 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ostler, "'Just and lawful war,' 8.

“distinguished men of moderation” and were even accompanied as official observers by six Quakers and a Moravian missionary, with the idea that the Christian pacifists would promote a just and conciliatory Indian policy.<sup>24</sup> The American party also included Mohican and Haudenosaunee leaders.<sup>25</sup> The commissioners entered through the “backdoor” of the Ohio Valley at Niagara to avoid travelling through the disputed Ohio Valley territory.

Molly Brant was certainly used to managing polyglot groups of Native peoples and convincing them to work together for similar goals, as she had demonstrated throughout her life at Fort Johnson, Johnson Hall, Fort Niagara and Carleton Island, and Joseph Brant may have turned to his elder sister for advice. During June and July—the same time Molly was at Niagara for her daughter’s wedding—the commissioners stayed with the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe at Niagara, and waited to hear if the leaders of the Confederacy would agree to meet with them. Neither Haudenosaunee messengers nor a delegation of confederation leaders, led by Joseph Brant, informed the Americans that the Ohio boundary line had become the *sine qua non* for peace. Joseph Brant was in favor of a compromised boundary of the Muskingum River—a compromise that worried British leaders like John Graves Simcoe and Alexander McKee who wanted the Americans fully expelled from the Ohio Valley.<sup>26</sup> Many Miami and Shawnee villages were against the Muskingum boundary because they would lose some villages on the north side of the river if the boundary was enforced. British Indian agents like Alexander McKee and Matthew Elliott had kinship ties to these communities.<sup>27</sup> However,

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<sup>24</sup> Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 279.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 461-2.

<sup>27</sup> Larry L. Nelson, *A Man of Distinction Among Them: Alexander McKee and the Ohio Frontier Country, 1754 to 1799*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 26-8, 63.

Joseph Brant received backing from many of the Great Lakes Anishinaabe communities.<sup>28</sup> With the Confederacy deep in debate about whether to meet with the commissioners and whether or not to accept the Muskingum compromise, Molly Brant likely met with commissioners and the Haudenosaunee leaders during their stay in Niagara. Joseph Brant may have specifically asked Molly for support in lobbying communities throughout the Great Lakes area to support his position.

In the end, Joseph Brant and Molly Brant's far-reaching influence was not enough to affect the conference. By July, the commissioners left Niagara and went to Matthew Elliott's farm across the river from Detroit.<sup>29</sup> The Americans stalled at Elliott's farm. However, the Confederacy council of Miamis and Shawnees at the Maumee River still refused to meet the commissioners unless they first promised to concede the Ohio River as the boundary.<sup>30</sup> Negotiations pushed later into the summer but in the end failed. The American commissioners were unwilling to cede the Ohio Valley, as only continued public land sales could generate the revenue needed to sustain the new nation's government and fund its Revolutionary War debt.<sup>31</sup> The failed negotiations further divided the Confederacy between moderates, like Joseph Brant, who favored a compromise boundary along the Muskingum River that would concede the eastern quarter of Ohio already partially settled by Americans, and hard-liners, particularly the Shawnees, who led attacks on St. Clair's American army while Joseph Brant was negotiating with the American federal government in November, 1791.<sup>32</sup> Joseph Brant blamed the influence of Alexander McKee for encouraging the Shawnees.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 281.

At the same time, Alexander McKee blamed Joseph Brant for creating divisive misunderstandings as a translator and go-between for the Americans and Confederates. John Simcoe ended up supporting Alexander McKee and suspected that Joseph Brant sought to draw the British into war with Americans by publically blaming McKee. Simcoe described Brant as “true to the Indian Interest, and honorable in his attachment.”<sup>33</sup> In some ways, he was right and Joseph Brant, like Molly Brant, certainly had Mohawk and *not* British interests at heart. However, Joseph Brant’s goals were in direct conflict with John Simcoe’s. When Simcoe took power in the spring of 1792 as the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, the tension over the border crisis was high and the new province was at the center of the conflict. In 1791, the British passed the Constitutional Act, dividing the old province of Quebec into two new colonies: Lower Canada (based in the St. Lawrence Valley and including Montreal and Quebec) and Upper Canada (running along Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and including Niagara and the the Ontario Peninsula to the Detroit River).<sup>34</sup> With his aggressive plans for the settlement of Upper Canada, Simcoe was mainly interested in using Native peoples to support British imperial goals of resisting American encroachment. Within the colony of Upper Canada, Native nations like the Mohawk were increasingly viewed as deferential, dutiful, dependents to the British Crown rather than as distinct allies on separate and equal footing with the British.

As the border conflict continued to intensify in the 1790s, Molly Brant dealt with personal tragedies. She had already lost her spouse in 1774, her oldest son in 1777, and her long-time, loyal friend Daniel Claus who died in 1787. In 1794, her oldest daughter Elizabeth died while giving birth to her son, Robert Kerr Jr. The next year, another daughter, Susanna, died less

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 268.

than two years after being married at Niagara. Susanna's youngest child (and Molly's grandchild) died at the same time. While mourning the deaths of her daughters and grandchild, Molly witnessed further misfortune within her family. The death of Susanna and her child contributed to mental health issues in her young husband, Lieutenant Henry Lemoine. Lemoine went to Kingston where he visited Magdalene (Susanna's sister) and her husband, John Ferguson. Molly was also at the Ferguson house when he arrived. Lemoine proceeded to ask for Mary's (the sister of Susanna and Magdalena, and the only unmarried sister) hand in marriage. Mary's feelings about the incident are unclear, but both Molly and Magdalena were opposed to the match and refused to let Lemoine see Mary. Lemoine then committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with a pistol in the parlor of the house.<sup>35</sup> Molly and Magdalena's opposition to Lemoine's proposal to Mary must have stemmed from a place of concern and anxiety about Lemoine's mental stability or in his treatment of Susanna.

In between the deaths of her daughters Elizabeth and Susanna, Molly Brant returned to Niagara to meet up with her brother and other relatives. On her return, she traveled with Elizabeth Simcoe, the wife of the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, on their personal boat. Elizabeth enjoyed Molly's company: "I relented in favor of Brant's sister who was very ill and very desirous to go. She speaks English well & is civil & very sensible old woman."<sup>36</sup> Molly Brant also frequently visited the Simcoe house in Kingston for dinner, where Mohawk and British politics were discussed. John C. Ogden, an American traveler visiting Kingston, commented "when Indian embassies arrived, [Molly Brant] was sent for, dined at Governor Simcoe's, and was treated with respect by himself, his lady, and family."<sup>37</sup> Along with

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<sup>35</sup> Green, "Molly Brant, Catherine Brant," 90.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Quayle Innis (ed.), *Mrs. Simcoe's Diary*, (William Briggs: Toronto, 1965), 136.

<sup>37</sup> John C. Ogden, *Tour Through Upper and Lower Canada*, (Wilmington, DE: Bonsal and Niles, 1800), 37.

political advice, Molly also used her medicinal skills to benefit the community. Mrs. Simcoe called upon Molly for her skills as an herbalist, preferring Molly's advice to "that of a Horse Doctor who pretended to be an apothecary."<sup>38</sup> Molly was an avid herbalist and gardener. Using plants to heal sickness was a form of hospitality that Molly had partaken in throughout her life. Once again Molly used her skills to cultivate relationships with prestigious British officials. She may have attempted to convince Simcoe to uphold the long-standing relationship between Mohawk and British peoples, where both groups were viewed as equal subjects.

Religion also played an important role in the final decade of Molly Brant's life. She became a prominent member of the Anglican community in Kingston. For years the government supported the position of a minister in the town, held by Reverend John Stuart. Stuart also worked at Fort Hunter (the lower Mohawk Castle and a short distance from Canajoharie, the Upper Castle) during Molly Brant's years in the Mohawk Valley before the Revolutionary War. However, in 1791, churchwardens in Kingston became responsible for supporting their own minister.<sup>39</sup> As a result, they ordered the erection of a new church. It was built in 1792 and Molly is the only woman listed in the founding charter.<sup>40</sup> It is unclear when Molly began to practice parts of Christianity during her life. Christian Mohawk parents may have raised her, or she might have started practicing the religion during her years with Sir William Johnson, or she may have turned to Christianity to cope with some of the family losses she experienced during and after the Revolutionary War.<sup>41</sup> Rather than convert to Christianity, she might have drawn on aspects of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>39</sup> "Molly Brant," Cataraqui Archaeological Research Association, <http://www.carf.info/kingston-past/molly-brant>, accessed March 2, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 77; "Molly Brant Celebration Day" Pamphlet, Molly Brant Collection, Queen's University Archives (QUA), Kingston, ON. There also is a plaque on the wall inside that lists the charter-members.

<sup>41</sup> Molly may have been raised a Mohawk Christian, as there were churches being developed within the Mohawk Valley during her childhood and records of Mohawk children being baptized. Reverend John Stuart, who established

religion that appealed to her and served her purposes. Mohawk women incorporated aspects of Christianity on their own terms, rather than converting to a singular religion.<sup>42</sup> The blending of Christian and Mohawk customs is evident in John C. Ogden's description of Molly attending a local church. Ogden, a traveler to the community, records:

we saw an Indian woman, who sat in an honourable place among the English. She appeared very devout during the diving service, and very attentive to the sermon. She was the relict of the late Sir William Johnston . . . and a sister to the celebrated Col Brant . . . [She] dined at governor Simcoe's and treated with respect by himself, his lady and family . . . She retains the habit of her country women, and is a Protestant.<sup>43</sup>

Molly was a Mohawk woman comfortable dining with the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada and practicing Protestantism, while retaining the "habits of her country women." Since Mohawk customs and ideas of Christian proper decorum sometimes overlapped, Molly could blend Christianity and Mohawk practices. For instance, acting according to Mohawk hospitality customs, including the sharing resources with visitors and distributing food and clothing to community members in need might be viewed by EuroAmericans as those of a charitable Christian woman.<sup>44</sup>

Molly Brant moved between the Native, British, and blended communities of the Great Lakes. Archeological excavations on Molly Brant's property in the late twentieth century uncovered a variety of goods indicating her elevated social and economic status, her personal preferences, and the blend of Haudenosaunee and British cultures that influenced her life. These

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the Anglican church at Kingston, was previously a minister at Fort Hunter in the Mohawk Valley before the American Revolutionary War, Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 77.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Woman and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2005); Michael Leonard Cox, "Wendats, Presbyterians, and the Origins of Protestant Christianity on the Sandusky River," in *From Huronia to Wendakes: Adversity, Migrations, and Resilience 1650-1900*, Thomas Peace and Kathryn Magee Labelle, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 111-43.

<sup>43</sup> Ogden, *A Tour Through Upper and Lower Canada*, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, "'[A]n Unpleasant Transaction on This Frontier': Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 25, No. 3 (Fall, 2005): 433.

goods ranged from less expensive ceramic wares, to fine glassware identified as being British military issue (perhaps one of the gifts given to Molly by General Haldimand and Daniel Claus), to fifty-two small beads typical of those used in Native beadwork, to personal accessories like bone and ivory toothbrushes, bone lice combs, and an amethyst finger ring.<sup>45</sup>

On April 16, 1796, Molly Brant died in Kingston, approximately sixty years of age. By that time, she had outlived her parents, her spouse, several of her children, a grandchild, and many of her friends. Close to her children until the very end, she died in the home of her daughter Magdalene Ferguson.<sup>46</sup> Reverend John Stuart buried her in St. George's churchyard.<sup>47</sup> After her death, Molly's daughter Magdalene inherited the property, illustrating how Molly continued to provide for her daughters after her death. The Brant property continued to be owned by women of the extended Brant family until the late nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, Molly Brant's death marked the end of an era: during the Revolutionary War Molly Brant was one of the most useful and valuable allies to the British. Less than two decades later during the War of 1812, the British would not turn to Mohawk or Native women in the lower Great Lakes for help in the same capacity.

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<sup>45</sup> "Molly Brant," Cataraqui Archaeological Research Association, <http://www.carf.info/kingston-past/molly-brant>, accessed March 2, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 86.

<sup>47</sup> The exact location of her burial plot is unknown. None of the late eighteenth century burial plots are marked. Author visit to St. George's Cathedral, November 2016; H. Pearson Gundy, "Molly Brant: Loyalist," *Ontario History*, 45 (1953), 107; Huey and Pulis, *Molly Brant*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> Molly's daughter Mary probably continued to live with Magdalena. Molly's only surviving son, George, was married, and had a farm near Grand River. He may not have been interested in the property, and Molly may have wanted to ensure her daughters were provided for. After Magdalene, Molly's other daughter Margaret, inherited the land. In 1829, the land ownership was questioned and the Board of Ordnance attempted to dispossess Margaret several times. After Margaret died (sometime between 1844 and 1846) the property was passed on to her widowed daughter-in-law, Jemima Farley. Jemima maintained the homestead from 1847 to 1874 on behalf of her son and daughter, who were the heirs and great grandchildren of Molly Brant. Jemima Farley is presumed to have been deceased by 1875, marking the end of the Brant ownership of Farm Lot A. According to the Assessment Rolls, by 1892 neither of the two Brant homes were standing. Gundy, "Molly Brant," 107; "Molly Brant," Cataraqui Archaeological Research Association.

## **Building a Multiethnic Oneida Community on the Thames River**

In 1787, Sally left Detroit and moved to her Thames River property. At this new property, Sally increased her agricultural productivity and leveraged political tensions in the area to transform her land into a meeting space for multi-ethnic, allied, Native peoples. However, she also engaged in the largest legal battle of her life over the property, threatening her success. Despite the physical distance, Sally Aitse's property was connected to Detroit through important waterways in the region, like the Thames River and Lake St. Clair. Sally's property paralleled the Thames River, which functioned as a type of fluid highway, connecting people, goods, and communities between Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie, and Lake Huron. Sally could travel up the Thames River to Lake St. Clair, paddle across the approximately twenty-five mile lake and then paddle another five miles or so up the Detroit River to reach the town. Lake St. Clair's shallow depth made it easy paddling for Sally, who had extensive experience traveling waterways of the eastern and upper Great Lakes. Sally was familiar with the waterways, since she used part of the route when traveling between Michilimackinac, Detroit, and Schenectady in the 1760s and early 1770s. Sally Aitse maintained ties with important community members of the Detroit River region and continued to travel to Detroit for trade and other business matters, including winning several suits for debt in August 1792.<sup>49</sup>

While Sally Aitse focused on developing a section of the land for herself, she also had plans for the full extent of the property by leasing out parcels to friends and relatives.<sup>50</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> John Askin Petty Ledger M (1806-1812), Burton Historical Collection (BHC), Detroit, MI, pg. 58; Catherine Cangany, *Frontier Seaport: Detroit's Transformation into an Atlantic Entrépot*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>50</sup> Petition 17, 1789, Upper Canada Land Petitions 1763-1865, Bundle A4, Volume 3, RG1 LAC, Ottawa, ON, Canada, Microfilm reel C-1615, pg. 503-5 (referred to as Petition 17).

Thames River property also allowed Sally to increase her agricultural production of trade goods. She had an apple orchard on her property and used the apples to brew cider that she traded.<sup>51</sup> Sally's slaves would have become increasingly important after her move to the Thames, where their labor would be used not only to build a new house, but also to clear land, fence property, and plant crops like corn, and tend the apple orchards. It is unclear how many slaves Sally brought with her from Detroit to the Thames, but she brought at least one man of African descent named Frank whom she sold to Joseph Cissney in 1789. Local historians have surmised that she must have brought more than Frank to work on the property, due to the extent of her holdings.<sup>52</sup> Frank was sold to Cissney along with a plot of land she had listed in the name of her son, Nicholas Montour.<sup>53</sup> Cissney paid 200 pounds for the 12 acre lot, which included a good house built with a cellar and stable and six acres of clear fenced land.<sup>54</sup> Sally Ainese had her own house built on Lot 10, and her cleared land extended into Lot 11, with the orchard straddling the two lots.<sup>55</sup> Within two years of moving to the property, Sally cleared and built structures on the lot she was occupying, and on adjoining lots which she sold, indicating she brought several slaves to her property to develop the lots.

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<sup>51</sup> Sally's trade in liquor and cider contributed to the purchase of the Thames River property. In 1788 (one year after moving to the property) she provided "one hundred and fifty pounds in horses, guns, rum, and cider" to the Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians to finish paying for the property. See, Petition 45, A Bundle 4, 1796-1798, RG 1 L3, Vol. 3, LAC, Microfilm C-1609, pg. 842 (referred to as Petition 45). For Sally's orchard see, Patrick McNiff, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1793, Detroit, Upper Canada Civil Sundries, RF 5 A1, LAC, Microfilm reel C-4505, pg. 3284. (referred to as Upper Canada Sundries).

<sup>52</sup> "Unknown Sally Ainese Article" from Sally Ainese, Binder H-2, Kent Black Historical Society, pg. 6. <https://ckbhs.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/sally-ainse01.pdf>, accessed on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Hamil, "Slave Exchanged for Dover Farm Later Dies on Sandwich Gallows," from Sally Ainese, Binder H-2, Kent Black Historical Society, <https://ckbhs.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/sally-ainse02.pdf>, accessed on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Petition 19, Bundle: A Misc. 1788-1843, LAC, microfilm Reel: C-1615, pg. 511. (referred to as Petition 19). Cissney never lived on the property, allowed the house to go to ruin, and apparently let several apple trees be dug up and carried off.

<sup>55</sup> Upper Canada Civil Secretary's Sundries, Microfilm reel C-4505, pg. 3284.

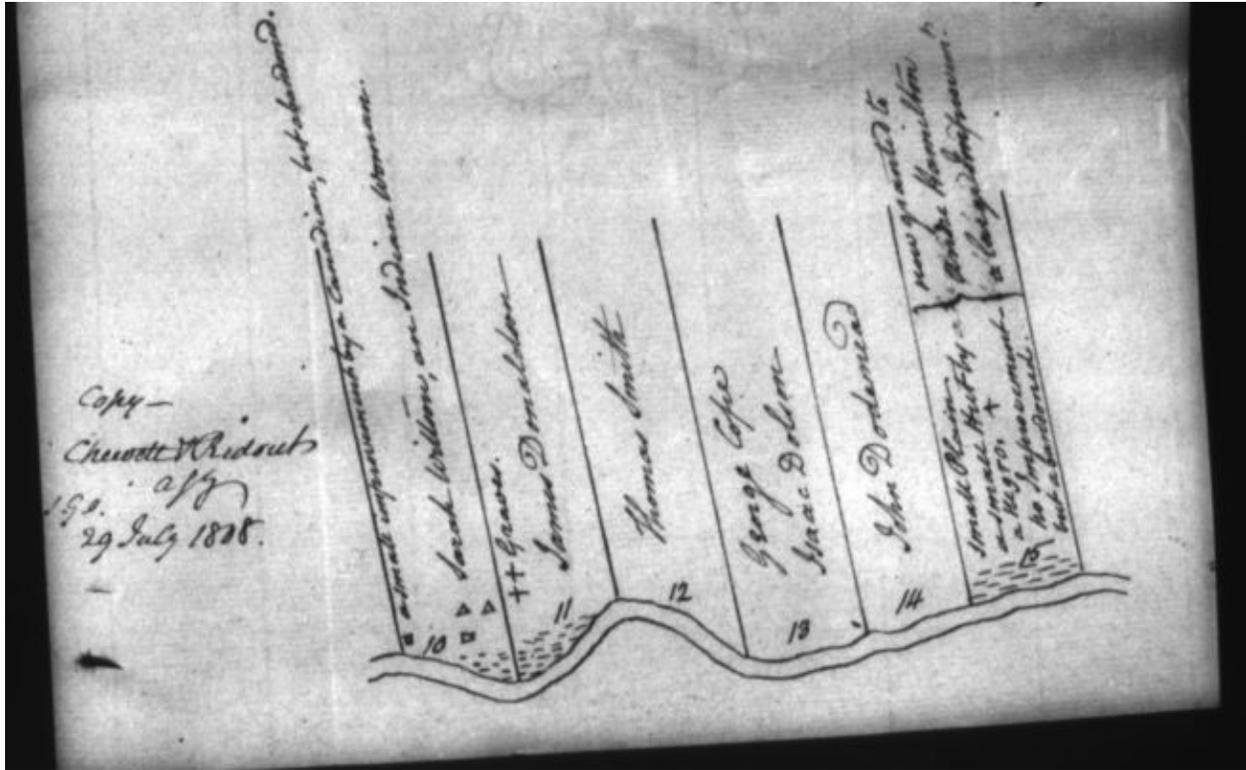


Figure 2. Patrick McNiff's 1793 Survey. This survey of the Thames River shows plot 10 occupied by, "Sarah Willson, an Indian Woman." In his accompanying letter, he notes that on plot 15 there, "was a small plain, where a negro had a built a hut and tilled some part of the plain, but clear no land."

Source: Patrick McNiff to Governor of England, 5 December 1793. Upper Canada Civil Secretary's Sundries RG5A1 Volume 8. Library and Archives Canada. Microfilm reel C4505. pg. 3284.

Sally Ainese left Detroit and moved to her Thames River property with Frank and possibly other slaves in 1787, which was the same year that the Northwest Ordinance was passed in the American claimed Northwest Territory (which became Michigan Territory in 1805).<sup>56</sup> The Ordinance was enacted in New York City by the Continental Congress at the same time as the Constitutional Convention was meeting in Philadelphia, and was reaffirmed in 1789 during the first session of the United States Congress.<sup>57</sup> It opened up land in the Great Lakes region for

<sup>56</sup> While Detroit fell within the bounds of the Northwest Territory, the British occupied the town until the enforcement of the Jay Treaty in 1796. Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 111.

<sup>57</sup> Ostler, "A Just and Lawful War," 3.

settlement by allowing for the creation of territories north of the Ohio River and outlining paths to statehood, resulting in the creation of Ohio (1803), Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), Michigan (1837) and Wisconsin (1848).<sup>58</sup> It also included a clause against slavery, forbidding the introduction of new slaves.<sup>59</sup>

Both the Northwest Ordinance (1787) and Constitutional Act in Upper Canada (1791) show how British and American powers exerted settler colonial power to map out the lower Great Lakes, each asserting their own claim to a different region by creating new territories, provinces, districts, and counties. The tensions created by increased settlement in the area contributed to the Northwest Indian Wars on the American side of the border and Sally Ainsie's legal battle on the British side of the border. During the same period, the gradual abolition laws enforced by the Northwest Ordinance and Upper Canada Act Against Slavery (1793) legally sanctioned slavery by prescribing the rules that it would continue.<sup>60</sup> However, these laws also contributed to a porous border for enslaved peoples who quickly learned they could seize their freedom by crossing the river.<sup>61</sup>

In 1797, Alexander Coventry, a doctor previously from New York, lodged with Sally Ainsie. After arriving at her house, located on a hill overlooking the willow-tree lined river, he noted his impressions of her appearance, furniture, and spending habits.<sup>62</sup> Coventry provides one of the most in-depth descriptions of Sally's household on the Thames River:

Going down the River, we stopt a little while at Mrs. Hands an "Oneida Squaw," who has a good farm here and a tolerable good house with furniture in the English style, having

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>59</sup> Gregory Wigmore, "Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 444.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*, (Montreal: Queen's-McGill University Press, 2010), 38-40.

<sup>61</sup> Wigmore, "Before the Railroad," 438.

<sup>62</sup> Untitled Article, Sally Ainsie, Folder 1, Kent Historical Society, pg. 64.

several pictures and a considerable plate. She is almost the only instance I have met with, of the Native American preferring or approaching civilized life. Mrs. Hands seems to be a full blooded native, but is remarkably tall and elegant in her person. Her features are by no means disagreeable, although I suppose she is nearly 50 years old. She was dressed fully in English mode with a long gown and hair flowing loose behind. She has been temporary wife to several men (eminent merchants), has at one time traded largely in merchandize in Detroit . . . She has lived in fashion: her household furniture is now worth £500. In fact she has been a bon vivant and spent her thousands.<sup>63</sup>

At first, Sally's prosperity in Detroit carried over to her household on the Thames. She continued to use her financial affluence to acquire stylish accessories. She lived her life as a "bon vivant." Her taste in furniture matched her personal style. Sally Ainse was a woman who appreciated fine accessories—whether she was adorning her home or herself. Historian Alan Taylor has noted that Coventry underestimated Sally Ainse's age, as she was in her sixties at this time of his visit.<sup>64</sup>

What Alexander Coventry fails to mention in his description of Sally Ainse's household is that a thriving, diverse community also developed on her property. Historian Helen Hornbeck Tanner notes multiple families of English, German, French, and Native heritage settled at the site of modern day Chatham, Ontario, in a community known as Sally Ainse's, or less accurately, Sally Hand's.<sup>65</sup> In Richard White's canonical Great Lakes history *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, the settlement "Ainse" (established in 1787) appears on a map of the lower Great Lakes during the late eighteenth century as a white settlement marked on the Thames River.<sup>66</sup> The only other settlements on the Thames River that

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<sup>63</sup> Alexander Coventry, *Memoirs of an Emigrant The journal of Alexander Coventry, M.D.; in Scotland, the United States and Canada during the period 1783-1831*, Vol. I (Albany: The Albany Institute of Art and History, 1978), 859.

<sup>64</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 401.

<sup>65</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 89; Edmund De Schweinitz, *Life and Times of David Zeisberger: The Western Pioneer* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & co., 1870), 613.

<sup>66</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 414-5.

White marks are Ojibwe villages near the mouth of the Thames on Lake St. Clair. On the Thames River, Sally developed a community of free Native, German, French, and mixed race peoples, along with enslaved peoples of African and Native descent brought along by their owners. These polyglot, mixed communities were common along the Susquehanna River during the French and Indian War, and they extended throughout the Ohio Valley into the late-eighteenth century. However, throughout the lower Great Lakes these multiethnic communities became increasingly rare as EuroAmerican settlement increased on both sides of the border around the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

While managing her property on the Thames, Sally Ainese became increasingly involved with political tensions between Native, British, and American peoples in the Great Lakes in the post-Revolutionary War era. Largely due to her friendship with Joseph Brant, Sally Ainese was drawn into the work of the Western Confederacy. From her Thames River property, Sally Ainese frequently travelled to Detroit and served as a messenger between Joseph Brant and other Native peoples of the Great Lakes. In 1794, Joseph described Sally Ainese as the friend of the Haudenosaunee and they found her to be a “very serviceable woman during the late war as well as since the peace, always paying particular attention in giving every assistance in her power to such of our people as were on business in those parts.”<sup>68</sup> Approximately six months later in January of 1795, Joseph Brant wrote, “In consequence of receiving a message from the Lake

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 516-7

<sup>68</sup> Brant’s quote also implies that Sally Ainese was also involved in politics during the war, however, I have not found further details about this political work. Joseph Brant to E.B. September 21, 1794, Detroit, Simcoe Transcripts Packet A17, Captain Brant 1794-6, LAC.

Indians, I now send two men with my answer to them, which will be delivered them by Mrs. Sarah Ainse, they having authorised her to receive any message from us in their absence.”<sup>69</sup>

Sally Ainse frequently carried messages to Native peoples throughout the Great Lakes in 1795. On January 26, Sally Ainse sent a message from Detroit to Aguisha, the senior chief at River Raisin and enclosed a belt, a string of wampum, and two speeches by Joseph Brant to the Odawaag and the rest of the Three Fires (the Ojibweg and Boodewaadamiig). Sally Ainse assured Aguisha “that [Joseph Brant] has no doubt [Aguisha] will continue steadfast in his friendship to [Joseph] and his five nations.”<sup>70</sup> Sally also “begged [Aguisha] not to be biased of any stragglers but to remain, as you always have been . . . an affectionate brother to your friends of the five Nations.”<sup>71</sup> In a March letter, Simcoe mentions, “Where Mrs. Ainse mentions the stragglers I presume she means the Shawanese, who the late Commissioners of the United States characterized to me as having no lands whatsoever of their own or any claims whatsoever.”<sup>72</sup>

In early February, Sally Ainse wrote a letter to Joseph Brant assuring him she had passed on his speeches, belts, and string to Aguisha, while also sending copies to St. Joseph’s and Saginaw. She reported that she was afraid the speeches would be of little effect since Native peoples were “sneaking off to General Wayne every day.”<sup>73</sup> Wayne was a United States Army officer. He was sent to the Great Lakes when the Western Confederacy leaders, like Joseph Brant, Blue Jacket of the Shawnees and Little Turtle of the Miamis, consolidated an alliance with the British (albeit temporarily) that won major battles against the Americans in the early 1790s.

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<sup>69</sup> Joseph Brant to Alexander McKee, Jan 14, 1795, Grand River, *Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 3, 258.

<sup>70</sup> Sally Ainse to Aguisha, Jan 26 1795, *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> John Simcoe to Lord Dorchester, March 16, 1795, *Ibid.*, 327

<sup>73</sup> Sally Ainse to Joseph Brant, February 6, 1795, *Ibid.*, 287.

While the British had been concerned with Joseph Brant's position in 1793 over the Ohio Boundary dispute, the failure of the Western Confederacy to reach a compromise with the Americans served temporarily to consolidate the alliance between the Confederacy and the British. The British aided and supported the Confederacy, hoping to weaken American authority in the region, and in return the Confederacy turned to the British for supplies and financial support to organize warriors. In response, George Washington (who had sought to hire Sally Ainsie during the French and Indian War) dispatched General Anthony Wayne to gain control of the Ohio region. In August, 1794, Wayne mounted a decisive victory over the Confederacy at the Battle of Fallen Timbers at Maumee, Ohio (located just south of present-day Toledo), a short distance from Detroit. During the battle, Wayne's army killed approximately forty to sixty warriors, but the worst destruction came afterwards when the army burned cabins and cornfields, uprooted gardens, and despoiled graves a long a fifty-mile stretch of the Maumee River.<sup>74</sup> To make matters worse, the Confederacy attempted to retreat to Fort Miami, a nearby British post, but the commander refused to open the gates. He was fearful that supporting the Confederacy would draw the British into a war with the American military, when the British were already fighting Revolutionary France.<sup>75</sup>

After the Battle of Fallen Timbers, General Wayne worked on negotiating the Treaty of Greenville with Native peoples in the area. With towns in ruins and British assistance nowhere to be found, many leaders decided to sign the summer of 1795.<sup>76</sup> The Treaty ceded most of the lands within the Ohio Valley to the United States. Sally Ainsie and Joseph Brant exchanged most of their letters between the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville. After Sally

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<sup>74</sup> Ostler, "A Just and Lawful War," 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

expressed her concern to Joseph about more and more Native peoples “sneaking” off to negotiate with General Wayne in January, in February she held a council at her house on the Thames River with a messenger of Joseph Brant’s, a Huron, and a Cognawaga. Sally received information that the Native peoples at Sandusky made a “permanent peace” with the Americans associated with General Wayne, and were growing skeptical of British allied leaders, like Joseph Brant, Alexander McKee, and Governor Simcoe. Joseph Brant later received confirmation of Sally’s intelligence from a Mingo with a message from the Shawnee.<sup>77</sup>

Working as a messenger provided multiple benefits for Sally Ainse. As she traveled to various Native communities near Detroit and the northern Ohio Valley, she could also bring goods to trade. Furthermore, as Joseph Brant’s message illustrates, other Native messengers held conferences at Sally’s Thames River property. These conferences were an opportunity for her business: every conference attendee was also a potential customer for Sally. By involving herself with the political tensions of the lower Great Lakes, Sally furthered her political and economic influence—strengthening trade connections to nearby Native communities and transforming her own property into a mini-hub of the region where political meetings, social gatherings, and economic exchanges took place.<sup>78</sup> Similar to Molly Brant, Sally Ainse traded in both goods and services on the Thames River.

The relationship between Sally Ainse’s trading business and her political work is evident in the opening anecdote of this chapter. In May of 1794, Richard England, the Commanding

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<sup>77</sup> Brant to Joseph Chew, February 26, 1795, *Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 3, 310.

<sup>78</sup> There are no official records of Sally receiving presents or payments for her work. However, Sally’s economic business tends to be preserved in the ledgers of the prominent male merchants she worked with. If Sally was receiving payments from Native peoples who attended the meetings, it is unlikely for the records to be preserved.

Officer of Detroit complained to John Graves Simcoe, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada:

I directed Captain Elliott to use every means in his power to expedite all the Indians in the neighborhood of this Fort to the Glaize, and by advertisement *requested* that the public at large would not sell rum to the Indians for three days, which they have in general cheerfully attend to, except *Sally Ainse*, who availed herself of the general prohibition, and privately disposed of a sufficient quantity to keep an entire Band Drunk.<sup>79</sup> (emphasis in original)

From April to May of 1794, Matthew Elliott and other British agents were encouraging Native peoples in the lower Great Lakes to congregate at Auglaize (the Glaize) where they would march north against the Americans and General Wayne.<sup>80</sup> By supplying Native peoples at Detroit with rum, Sally increased her economic profits and disrupted the British organizing. However, this anecdote also raises questions about why Sally would purposefully disrupt the British and Western Confederacy congregating at Auglaize, when a few months later, she was working for Native people allied to the British, like Joseph Brant. While the Western Confederacy was an alliance of Native groups, there were conflicting goals and power struggles within the Confederacy.<sup>81</sup> Gatherings at Auglaize, a Shawnee stronghold, further threatened to draw leadership power away from Brant and the Six Nations.<sup>82</sup> When Matthew Elliott was working to organize at Auglaize, Joseph Brant was busy convincing the Haudenosaunee settled in New York to move across the border to the Grand River reserve within British territory.<sup>83</sup>

As an Oneida woman, Sally Ainse allied herself with Joseph Brant and the Haudenosaunee faction of the Confederacy. By discouraging Native peoples from congregating at Auglaize, Sally may have felt she was supporting Joseph's rallying of the Six Nations to

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<sup>79</sup> R.G. England to John Graves Simcoe, May 29, 1794, *Ibid.* Vol. 2, 252.

<sup>80</sup> This march ended with the botched and unsuccessful attack on Fort Recovery. White, *The Middle Ground*, 466.

<sup>81</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 433-6, 444-8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 281.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 286.

Grand River *and* the Haudenosaunee's larger leadership role within the Western Confederacy. While many Oneida sided with the Americans during the Revolution, Sally Ainse traded and worked mainly in forts and communities claimed by the British, increasing her motivation to align herself with Haudenosaunee who were also allied with the British, like Brant. In March of 1795, Joseph Chew, an official in the British Indian Department, provides insights into Sally Ainse's political support: "I am of the opinion that Capt'n Brant's friend, Miss Sarah Ainse, is of the party who endeavored to take the Indians and lessen their confidence in Colonel McKee."<sup>84</sup> By supporting Joseph Brant and the Haudenosaunee, Sally also found a possible way to seek revenge on Alexander McKee, who played a central role in Sally Ainse's legal struggles in the 1790s. Sally's political work also allowed her to strengthen her ties to Joseph Brant and the Grand River Mohawks in particular—a relationship that she would attempt to leverage when her legal conflict with the local land board began.

Sally Ainse's business continued to prosper as she became involved with Native and British politics in the region. However, Sally also encountered significant problems at the property. A striking difference between Sally's households at Detroit and on the Thames was that while her land at Detroit was legally recognized by the colonial powers, the Land Board of Upper Canada never legally recognized Sally's land purchase from the Chippewa for the Thames River tract. Shortly after she moved from Detroit, Sally's home on Thames became mired in legal battles with local land boards and the Executive Council of Upper Canada.

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph Chew to Thomas Aston Coffin, March 26, 1795, Montreal, *The Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 3, 334.

## Settler Colonial Settlement and Coverture in the Thames River Valley

Sally Ainse's Thames River property was located on the British side of the border formed by the Treaty of Paris in 1783. While the property was technically under the jurisdiction of the colony of Quebec, Native peoples remained the demographic majority. The Land Board for the District of Hesse, which extended westward along Lake Erie to Detroit, formed over five years after the Treaty of Paris and met for the first time on June 19, 1789. Two months after the Land Board formed, she filed a petition to Lord Dorchester, the governor of the province of Quebec, to have her ownership of the Thames River Property recognized. Her petition was presented to the Land Board in September of 1789.<sup>85</sup> In attempts to have her legal ownership to the property recognized, Sally filed numerous petitions and employed a variety of rhetorical techniques, including positioning herself as a Loyalist and emphasizing her occupancy of the region before other EuroAmericans.

In the meantime, the Land Board moved forward with mapping out the new district. While the Board originally planned to focus on settling the tract of land along the north shore of Lake Erie, it determined that no townships could be laid out fronting the lake because the high banks made the land inaccessible from the water. Land without access to a major waterway was considered undesirable, since waterways were the most efficient forms of transportation. As a result, the Board decided to first develop townships for Loyalist settlers on the Thames River, and directed surveyor Patrick McNiff to begin surveying.<sup>86</sup> Sally's property was in the direct path of the Land Board's new plans.

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<sup>85</sup> Petition 17.

<sup>86</sup> Frederick Hamil, *Sally Ainse: Fur Trader*, (Detroit: Algonquin Club, 1939), 16 and John Clarke, *Land, Power and Economics in Upper Canada*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 83-6.

As Patrick McNiff began surveying the river, the government of Upper Canada implemented the “chequered plan” where only two lots in each of the first two concessions in each township could be granted to settlers, and the rest of the lots would remain Crown Land. This plan was used for townships on navigable waters throughout the province. McNiff protested that not only did the “chequered plan” keep settlers from the navigable waters, it also endangered the land of any British subjects that had already settled along the Thames.<sup>87</sup> The Land Committee of Canada agreed with McNiff and ordered that all front lots in townships on navigable waters should be granted to settlers. While this Act was passed in 1791, the Canada Act, which separated the colony of Canada into two provinces, Upper Canada Lower Canada was passed in the same year. As a result, the new plan was never implemented. In 1792, John Graves Simcoe arrived to fill the post of Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada. Simcoe temporarily reaffirmed the old “chequered plan,” but in July he agreed with the Board to open both sides of the Thames River to settlement, except for a reserved block of forty lots around the juncture of the Forks.<sup>88</sup>

The formation of the Land Board emphasizes several key points that arise regarding Sally Ainsie’s land claims in Upper Canada. First, the debate over the “chequered plan” emphasizes the importance of navigable waters to trade, transportation, and settlement at the time. Second, many of the people engaged in debates about the Land Board (such as Thomas McNiff and John Simcoe) became key players in Sally’s land claim. Third, the larger political changes (such as the Canada Act) illustrate how within just over a decade the Thames River area transformed from Ojibwe space to an area mapped and controlled by British colonial powers. The debates on settling the Thames illustrate how the colonial government was instituting

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Frederick Hamil, *The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640-1850*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 18-20.

policies to encourage landownership by European-descended Loyalist men. Sally garnered extensive support from local Native peoples, including the Ojibwe whom she purchased the land from and from her Haudenosaunee friends. She even received support from important colonial officials, such as John Graves Simcoe the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, but even this was not enough to sway the Land Board that consisted of local settlers in her favor.

White men who settled on property along the Thames River before the formation of the local Land Board were granted legal deeds.<sup>89</sup> Yet as an Oneida woman, Sally Ainse had to turn to a variety of creative strategies to attempt to have her property ownership recognized. In her first petition to the Land Board, she describes herself as entering: “into a Treaty with the Chippewa nation for a tract of land on the north side of the [Thames River] in the year of 1780 . . . from the mouth of said River up to the Forks about twenty five miles in length by six miles in breadth.”<sup>90</sup> Sally mobilized multiple rhetorical strategies to position herself as a legitimate property owner in the eyes of the British colonial government, including describing herself as a Loyalist. In her 1789 petition, she states, “from her attachment to the British Government she abandoned her possessions at Fort Stanwix and came into this district [District of Hesse in Lower Canada].”<sup>91</sup> She does not mention that she was denied a deed from the government of New York for her lands at Fort Stanwix, but describes choosing to abandon her lands due to her loyalties to the British during the Revolutionary War. Since the success of her land claims in Upper Canada would ultimately rest on whether or not the Land Board honored her Indian deeds, it makes sense that she did not mention that her claim in New York failed because Sir William Johnson would not recognize her Oneida deed. In another instance she states that she, “lost a great deal of land

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<sup>89</sup> Hamil, *Sally Ainse*, 16 and Clarke, *Land, Power and Economics*, 83-6.

<sup>90</sup> Petition 17.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

at Fort Stanwix which was given to me by my own peoples and was taken from the Petitioner by the Rebels.”<sup>92</sup> In this petition she implies she was forced to leave her Fort Stanwix property because of American rebels. Sally stresses how she chose to maintain her ties to the British during the Revolutionary War, and how she lost lands due to her ties to the British. Perhaps she hoped she would receive similar treatment to Mohawk women who identified as Loyalists, such as Molly Brant who was granted land in Kingston after the Revolutionary War.

Along with positioning herself as a Loyalist, Sally Ainse also stressed that she occupied the land before most EuroAmericans: “That the petitioner have petitioned the board for the land, which she bought from the Indians of River La Tranche [the Thames River] and paid a great deal for and was the first that ever settled on the afore said lands before any white people ever thought to settle there.”<sup>93</sup> She clarifies that she purchased the land on the Thames for, “for herself and friends who were Loyalists, and has served his Majesty since o’before the late Unhappy Rebellion.”<sup>94</sup> She emphasizes that the land is not just for her friends and relatives, but for her friends and relatives who were Loyalists to the British Crown. Once again, Sally positioned herself and her friends as Loyalists in attempt to sway the Board in her favor.

Sally Ainse originally requested three hundred acres from the Land Board, “beginning at the forks running westward, and thirty-three and one third acres in depth, but with leave to settle upon it such people as are worthy.”<sup>95</sup> She may have realized the futility of asking the board to honor her right to all of the land she purchased and requested only the piece of land most

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<sup>92</sup> Petition 19, Upper Canada Land Petitions 1763-1865, Bundle A4, Volume 3, RG1 LAC, Canada, Microfilm reel C-1615, pg. 513-4 (referred to as Petition 19).

<sup>93</sup> Petition 18, 1791 Upper Canada Land Petitions 1763-1865, Bundle A4, Volume 3, RG1 LAC, Microfilm reel C-1615, pg. 506-8. (referred to as Petition 18).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Petition 17.

valuable to her. The size of the land she requested was bigger than the lots awarded to settlers by 100 acres. She must have been aware of the changes occurring in the Thames Valley and strategically adjusted her claim. Within five years of the government's purchase, the number of settlers in the area increased substantially. One of the founding Moravian missionaries of the nearby town Fairfield, described the encroachment of white settlement in 1795: "Since we moved here [in 1792], the number of settlers on this river has grown to the extent that they are now on our boundary line three miles from the town. There were no settlement within thirty miles of us when we arrived. Soon it will be settled like this upstream as well."<sup>96</sup> Sally's property was downriver of the Moravian settlement. Within three short years, the land on the Thames went from having very few non-Native residents to being filled with settlers.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1792, David William Smith, secretary to the Land Board, wrote to Alexander McKee, "Sally Ainse having professed a petition to the Land Board of Hesse for certain Lands, at the River la Tranche, which she states was not included in what was sold to the Government, but that that Indians had reserved them for her use."<sup>97</sup> David Smith notes that Alexander McKee made no mention of Sally Ainse in a letter about the purchase from the Ojibwe in 1790, and "the Board presumes therefore that little attention is to be paid to what she has asserted in her petition."<sup>98</sup> McKee responded the same day to inform Smith, "I have only to answer thereto, that all the Land as specified in the deed of Cession, except there which I have herefore mentioned to the Board, in my letter which you have referred to."<sup>99</sup> McKee acknowledges:

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<sup>96</sup> Linda Sabathy-Judd, *Moravians in Upper Canada: The Diary of the Indian Mission of Fairfield on the Thames, 1792-1813*, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2013), 89.

<sup>97</sup> Land Petitions in Upper Canada Sundries, 1808, Vol. 8, RG 5 A1, LAC, Microfilm C-4505, pg. 3258. (referred to as Upper Canada Sundries)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Some of the chiefs of the River la Tranche did indeed speak to me, after the purchase, to beg that Sally Ainse might not be turned off her land she occupied on that River, and my answer was that a Board was established by Government for settling all matters related to lands, and I'd no doubt the Board would consider her, as they did all others who have similar claims.<sup>100</sup>

On April 6, the Land Board settled the matter. They decided it was “their opinion that no attention can be paid to [Sally Ainse’s] pretensions, further than any she may profess by petition to the Governor and Council for a single lot of about 200 Acres.”<sup>101</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the Board confirmed they “took up the petition of Sally Ainse, which from the Official correspondence from Colonel McKee, they cannot attention to.”<sup>102</sup> The Board also referred to Native legal customs to back-up their decisions: “Mr. Montignie begged leave to observe that he attended the council wherein the purchase was made from the Indians, that he is confident no wampum was delivered there, in order to make any reserve that the Rive La tranche in favor of Sally Ainse.”<sup>103</sup>

The Land Board’s decision did not deter Sally Ainse. She attended the meeting and in response to the decision she presented a report from “The Chiefs Agushaway and three others of the same Nation” stating they:

Hereby declare that the Indians of River la tranche, when they sold the Lands at River la tranche, that they told Captain McKee that there was a tract of Land that they had gave their Sister Sally Ainse, which they would not sell, as she had always used them well and likewise they gave Colonel McKee a string of wampum, and he the said Colonel McKee told them that she was a good woman and received the wampum, saying that he would do all he could and speak to the Commanding Officer about it; this was before they had signed the deed for the Land.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 3259.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 3260.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 3261.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Six other chiefs signed the statement, including Tuekinagosey, Shunaduck, Wawisque, Mashkewapo, Kewetaskina, and Nuango. Ibid., 3263, 3262.

Sally also provided further documentation for her claim including two registered deeds and a receipt.<sup>105</sup> The land board attempted to reference Native legal customs to justify their decision, at the same time as they ignored the documentary evidence provided by Sally and other Native peoples (including the Ojibweg who sold her the land).

In October of 1792, the tide finally seemed to swing in Sally Ainese's favor. Under the direction of Lieutenant Governor Simcoe, the Executive Council ordered a compromise that directed the Land Board to award Sally a total of eight lots, including her farm.<sup>106</sup> While Simcoe supported Sally's claim, he also attempted to appease the Land Board by suggesting, "If therefore the land Board of Essex and Kent can find out means to do Justice to Mrs. Ainese...to satisfy the present Possessors, (and till of late the unauthorized Intruders on the land in question) I am persuaded it would meet their approbation."<sup>107</sup> In August of 1793, Sally attended a meeting of the Executive Council at Navy Hall in Upper Canada. The Council again confirmed that she should receive a certificate for her claims on the Thames, consisting of eight lots on the north side of the River where she had made improvements.<sup>108</sup>

Despite John Simcoe's attempt at a compromise, the Board was not happy with the Executive Council's decision. They argued that they denied Sally Ainese's claim on the basis that Simcoe himself directed the Land Board to view any lands granted by "Indians to individuals" to

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<sup>105</sup> The first deed was from from Tekameghasii, Megiri, and Ochipue, Ojibwe ogimaag and dated 19 September 1780. It was for "a tract of Land on the North side of the River a la tranche beginning at the Entrance of said River, running then up opposite the fork, and one hundred and fifty Acres in depth." The second deed was from Ojibwe ogimaag Athick, Chapaqui, Tackamacoi, and Mashgiegago, Neguassigan, Notanoca, and Scashineme for £80 New York currency in goods, and a belt of wampum, and dated 11th October, 1783. It was for "a tract of Land on the North Side of the River a la tranche beginning at the Entrance of said River, running thence up opposite the fork: one hundred and fifty Acres in depth." The receipt was signed by Shaboqui, Tuckimagasey, Genonechison, and Sapanse, and dated November 20, 1788. Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 3270. In November, Simcoe clarified "she alone is legally entitled to the Lands in dispute." Ibid., pg. 3271.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 3273.

be invalid.<sup>109</sup> The colonial government attempted to curb land speculation by banning the sale of Native lands to settlers. The policy was grounded in a paternal policy towards Native peoples, where they were seen as needing protection by the colonial government from encroaching settlers. The Land Board's decision was supported bolstered by the paternalism in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which stated that, "no private person" should purchase lands from "the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians."<sup>110</sup> The Board also referenced Alexander McKee's 1790 purchase and again maintained that Sally's lands were not excluded—once again ignoring the documentation and testimony of the Ojibweg Sally purchased the land from. The Board concluded by suggesting Sally Ainse and the settlers "whose lots she claims to have been granted" should attend a meeting in early September, with the hope of coming to a mutually agreeable arrangement.<sup>111</sup> In the eyes of the Land Board, John Simcoe's compromise in favor of Sally Ainse set an ominous precedent for all of the certificates that they had already issued. The certificates that the board had issued were the foundation for settler land titles in the whole of the Thames Valley. By ordering a compromise in favor of Sally, the Executive Council threatened the stability of settler land claims. Rather than enforcing the Executive Council's decision, the Land Board procrastinated enforcing it.<sup>112</sup>

During the September mediation, the Land Board offered Sally Ainse "an equal quantity of Land as she now claims, either on the River Thames or in any other Place she should fix on

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 3275.

<sup>110</sup> For the full text of the Proclamation see, "The Royal Proclamation - October 7, 1763," *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/procl1763.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/procl1763.asp), accessed June 22, 2017. While the Land Board refused to grant Sally Ainse her property because of she purchased it from Native peoples, they often granted titles to white men who squatted on land along the Thames River. In the eyes of the Land Board, squatting was considered a legitimate way to gain property, but purchasing lands from Native peoples was not.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 3276

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 3276; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 409-10.

within the direction of the Board” along with Fifty Pounds N.Y. Currency for each of her lots.<sup>113</sup> However, for “Mrs. Ainse, but nothing would content her but the immediate Possession of her land.”<sup>114</sup> Since Sally Ainse refused to leave her land, the Board further delayed the matter by once again delaying all further proceedings on the matter until John Simcoe could weigh in once more.

In November, John Simcoe once again ruled in Sally Ainse’s favor:

Sally Ainse should receive her Title deeds for the Land specified in the Minutes, as soon as possible; you will also be so good to write to Sally Ainse acquainting her of this Circumstance, and likewise that if any Persons continue to persevere in their occupation of those Lots granted to her by the Council, they will be prosecuted to the utmost rigor of the Law, by the King's Attorney General, at the same time if Sally Ainse thinks proper to compromise matters with any. People who are settled upon her property, she will be perfectly at liberty to do so, but it must be fully explained to her, that this depends totally upon herself.<sup>115</sup>

He also stated that those petitioning against Sally should be informed he has “confirmed her Rights, [and] it is not in His Excellency's the Lieutenant Governor's power to comply with their wishes.”<sup>116</sup>

Despite John Simcoe’s attempts to clarify the matter, the Land Board once again stalled. Their attorney general claimed “that the description given by Sally Ainse of her lands is far too general for the purposes of a grant, without risking injury to her neighbours in the same Township, Having no plan of it in this Office you will oblige me, by procuring from your Deputy Surveyor, an official description of her lands founded on that.”<sup>117</sup> The Board hired Patrick McNiff for the survey, who complicated the issue of her ownership by reporting: “I do not know any such person as Sally Ainse; nor do I know of any Lots or Farms claimed by any person of

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<sup>113</sup> Upper Canada Sundries, pg. 3277.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 3278-9.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 3279.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 3280.

that name on River la Tranche. Sarah Willson an Indian woman has laid her claim to a large Tract . . . if it can be said [that] she has any just claim to land there, the land cannot justly be deemed her property alone, as her husband, Mr. Wilson is now living at Niagara or near it.”<sup>118</sup>

Patrick McNiff’s report illustrates more details about Sally Ainse’s land claims:

I found settled on Lot No. 10 an Indian Woman who calls herself by name of Sarah Willson. She informed me she had an Indian deed for a tract of Land commencing at a creek O, a small distance below the old village and extending thence along the north shore up to a Plains at Q, opposite to the fork where Clark Mills are now built, and extending back one hundred and fifty acres now comprehending the whole front of Township No.1 and nearly half the first lot of the second township, with six additional lots laid out on the great Plains from No. 1 downwards; she then informed me that the tract from first to last cost her seven hundred pounds (she did not say what currency).<sup>119</sup>

Patrick also describes Sally as having a house in the upper half of Lot No. 10., fencing in a field in Lot 11, and planting a small orchard.<sup>120</sup>

Patrick McNiff refused to acknowledge that a Sally Ainse lived on the Thames as a way to complicate her claim to the north side of the Thames River. If Sally’s claim to the property was invalid, the land was freed up for Loyalist men of EuroAmerican descent. Patrick McNiff claimed he only knew a Sarah Wilson, even though his description of “Sarah Willson’s” lands match the descriptions that Sally provided in her land claims, deeds, and receipts. Since Patrick was hired by the Land Board to survey the Thames for the specific purpose of resolving Sally Ainse’s land claim, he must have been aware that Sally Ainse and Sarah Wilson were the same person. After all, they were both Native women who claimed to have an Indian deed for the same tract of land. It seems absurd that Sally Ainse would confuse the matter herself by providing only

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 3281-2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> See Figure 2 for McNiff’s diagram.

the name Sarah Wilson to Patrick, especially when she had filed numerous petitions to the Land Board and Executive Council under the name Sally Ainse.

Furthermore, Sally Ainse's short-term intimate partnership with John Wilson was during her residency at Detroit—not the Thames River. She does not mention John Wilson in her land claims when she moves to the property. He is not mentioned in the statements that the Ojibwe chiefs submitted to the Executive Council. Visitors to Sally's property, like the Moravians and Alexander Coventry, do not mention Wilson. Perhaps John Wilson visited Sally Ainse occasionally, but he was not a long-term resident nor were they legally married in a British custom at the time of the survey. While no marriage records exist for any of Sally's relationships, British officials may have assumed that Sally and John were married *à la façon du pays* or "in the manner of the country" when they lived together at Detroit, and either partner could decide to end the relationship. However, under the British concept of coverture, a woman merged her legal identity into that of her husband when she married.<sup>121</sup> In the eyes of British officials and settlers, if Sally Ainse was married, she was no longer viewed as a legal property owner and could not hold legal title to real estate.<sup>122</sup> This was in stark contrast to many Native polities, such as the Oneida and other members of the Six Nations, where women frequently owned property, including a family's lodgings and its furnishing and agricultural land. In their process of mapping out the colony of Upper Canada, the Land Board enforced coverture to disenfranchise Native women property-owners, like Sally Ainse. Sally held deeds and receipts to the property and had curried the favor of Ojibwe and Haudenosaunee leaders and even the

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<sup>121</sup> Renée Jacobs, "Iroquois Great Law of Peace and the United States Constitution: How the Founding Fathers Ignored the Clan Mothers," *American Indian Law Review* 16, no. 2 (1991): 510-11.

<sup>122</sup> Anne Marie Wambeke, "Robert and Elizabeth Rogers: The Dissolution of an Early American Marriage," in *Revolutionary Detroit: Portraits in Political and Cultural Change 1760-1805*, eds. Denver Brunsmann & Joel Stone, (Detroit: Detroit Historical Society, 2010), 49.

Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, yet Patrick McNiff and the Land Board erased the legitimacy of her claims by asserting she was married. As a result, a large and desirable chunk of land was opened up to European-descended male settlers and families. In this instance, Sally's gender and sexual history (being a woman who engaged in short and long term partnerships with men, thus contributing to the confusion around her name) and the British practice of coverture, gave Patrick McNiff the excuse he needed to interfere with John Simcoe's decision.<sup>123</sup>

Patrick McNiff's delays in surveying the land worked in the Land Board's favor. In December of 1793, Sally Aitse wrote a letter to David William Smith asking him to prepare a deed for her, as "the persons now in possession of [her] land still persevere in continuing so, telling [her] they are ignorant if ever [she] had a foot of land about this country notwithstanding they offered [her] some time ago 50 pounds each for [her] right in it. But finding [she] did not intend to dispose of it, they say it was granted them by the land Board."<sup>124</sup> Smith responded he did not have the authority to grant deeds and passed her letter on to the attorney general. In February, Sally sent a much lengthier letter to David. She chastised him:

I therefore hope sir, you will recollect that twas your promise time after time that induced me to be so easy in his affair, depending so much on your promised hand which I really thought you were sympathized with me in the injustice which I was likely to suffer, and which has since come to pass; I find Dear Sir I am greatly deceived, you had the declaration of the Indian chiefs, you saw (I presume) thus the deceit and I may say villainy that was carried only by the opposite party. You must remember that you yourself said before Col Brant and many others at the same time that my land should not be granted until the affair was entirely settled and sure enough it is now settled in an unjustifiable manner.<sup>125</sup>

She stated that her property was "openly plundered" and "but as it is allowed, for one Gentleman's word to be taken, and to over throw the oaths of eighteen or twenty Indian Chiefs, I

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<sup>123</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 409.

<sup>124</sup> Upper Canada Sundries, pg. 3286.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 3287.

have a poor chance to go to the law.” As British laws and practices became more common, Native men’s testimony was regarded as less reliable and worthy than that of British male settlers.

David Smith sent an equally passionate response back to Sally Ainese, informing her he received her “extraordinary letter” and reminding her of the ways he had supported her claims, including procuring the order of council for her land and writing several letters on her behalf to the board, Surveyor, and Attorney General.<sup>126</sup> He also reminded Sally she paid him well for his services, and informed her, “when you reflect on these circumstances you will be sorry for having written me such a letter . . . I put your business in a proper train and because I did so, you lavish your anger on me.”<sup>127</sup> Smith further asserted, “your land is secured to you; so far as my interference could operate.”<sup>128</sup>

Struggling to find help from British men like David Smith, Sally Ainese also drew on her friendship with Native chiefs for support. On June 28, 1795, Mohawk chief and loyalist Joseph Brant wrote to John Butler, “that the lands of Sally Ainese were promised to be put in her possession, which never has been done, she is one of ourselves, and has been of service to us in Indian Affairs at this place, and I hope you will give all the assistance you can, as the lands of Sally Ainese were certainly her own, and part of them settled.”<sup>129</sup> Joseph Brant referenced the help Sally Ainese contributed to the Haudenosaunee cause during the Northwest Indian War: Sally’s political work allowed her to strengthen connections to Native leaders in the nearby area

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph Brant to John Butler, Detroit, 28th June, 1795, *The correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 4, 33-4. The Mohawk peoples brought up Sally’s land claims in July, 1795 when they had a council at Newark.

and these allies supported her during her land claims. The following year, Joseph wrote, “You know very well that Sally Ainse’s land was her right, before the purchase was made by the Government [in 1790], and the land board cut it in pieces afterwards.”<sup>130</sup>

While Sally Ainse’s political work strengthened her ties to the Mohawks, it also had consequences. The members of the Board used this support against her claim to position Sally as a trouble-maker who roused the Haudenosaunee against the British. In February of 1796, Sally Ainse wrote to Joseph Brant thanking him and the Mohawks. However, she was concerned, “as the usurpers of [her] property now imagine themselves more secure on my lands than ever and are selling it as fast as possible.”<sup>131</sup> Sally was “in despair of ever obtaining [her land]” since “neither Deed or certificate was granted, and even the lot [she was] obliged to retire to, may be taken from [her] as [she] have nothing to show for it.”<sup>132</sup> Sally’s letter also reveals the animosity of the Land Board. She reports, “Mr. Askin and Mr. W. Robertson go so far as to say that what the Land Board has done the King cannot disapprove, so Sir you may judge I have but a poor prospect.”<sup>133</sup> Sally Ainse traded with John Askin at Michilimackinac and Detroit, yet now she found herself battling him over her land claim. Sally was also told by Mr. Leith, a member of the Board, that she, “endeavored to stir up the Five Nations to war against Government in consequence of [her] petition to them, and said [she] should never enjoy a foot of my land as he was a Member of the board.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Brant to DW Smith, Grand River, April 3, 1796, *Correspondence of the Honourable Peter Russell*, Vol. I, eds. E.A. Cruikshank and A.F Hunter, (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1932): 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Sally Ainse to Simcoe, Detroit Feb 20, 1796, Simcoe Transcripts, G-23 H-I-1, LAC, Vol. III, Folder zz, pg. 20.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

Later, Sally Ainse reached out to David Smith again about “the very disagreeable subject of [her] land.”<sup>135</sup> Reminding him of a meeting he attended at Alexander McKee’s house regarding her land claim, she told him:

You may recollect that Capt Elliott prevented Mr. Duggan from putting down the Chiefs’ Declaration in consequence of Col McKee being absent and said that when Col McKee came, they should be assembled again and speak face to face, and you said at the same time, that my land should remain vacant till that took place and the matter cleared up, but it has not took place yet, neither will it be allowed.<sup>136</sup>

Sally was clear she was not attempting to blame David, “but merely to lay before you another instance of [her] ill usage.”<sup>137</sup> David responded in March, assuring Sally that the government bears her good will, as demonstrated by Simcoe professing an order in favor of her lands.<sup>138</sup> He explained, “circumstances I presume which could not then have been anticipated are the occasion of your present difficulties; I do not believe they arise from any want of inclination in the Lieut Governor to serve you but originate from the very singular situation in which you are placed, relatively with those who claim your land under certain Regulations.”<sup>139</sup>

While David Smith claimed to be advocating on behalf of Sally Ainse, he was also well-known for using his position to claim the most desirable tracts of land for himself. Smith acted as clerk to the Hesse District land board from 26 Dec. 1791 to 7 June 1792 and served as the surveyor general for Upper Canada between 1792 and 1798.<sup>140</sup> In 1803, Lord Selkirk, a colonial official who was later responsible for bringing the Red River district under British colonial

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<sup>135</sup> Upper Canada Sundries, pg. 3291.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 3292.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> S. R. Mealing, “Smith, Sir David William,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith\\_david\\_william\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_david_william_7E.html), accessed June 27, 2016.

control, wrote in his diary, “The lots marked D.W.S. are sure to be the choice spots.”<sup>141</sup> In the spring of 1799, John Johnson, the son of Molly Brant’s long-time spouse Sir William Johnson, wrote to Peter Russell affirming that Sally Aitse, “can be gratified in [her] wishes.”<sup>142</sup> He asserted she should receive the eight lots she received from the Ojibwe “which were promised to her in three different Councils with the Chiefs of several nations by Governor Simcoe.”<sup>143</sup> John Johnson also stated that he would “talk the matter over with Mr. Smith” and mentioned several less “weighty” reasons Sally’s claim should be honored. David assured Sally he was working for her best interests, yet he never mentions to Sally the support from potential allies like John Johnson. David Smith was interested in procuring desirable lands and his assurances to Sally Aitse were lies to cover up his own attempts to acquire the best tracts.

It is doubtful that David Smith ever seriously lobbied on Sally Aitse’s behalf to John Simcoe, but John also had his own reasons for withdrawing support from Sally. John Simcoe began to resent Joseph Brant’s constant charges that Alexander McKee, the Indian Affairs agent of Upper Canada, had betrayed Native peoples of the area by undermining the American peace bid of 1793.<sup>144</sup> In the spring of 1795, Joseph Chew wrote, “I am of the opinion that Captain Brant’s friend, Miss Sally Aitse, endeavored to take the Indians from or lessen their confidence in Col. McKee.”<sup>145</sup> Sally Aitse had ample reason to distrust Alexander McKee during her land claims. In the fall, Lord Dorchester complained about Joseph Brant opening, “a Correspondence with Miss Sally Aitse” and “[he] has held Council & sent Messengers without communication at

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<sup>141</sup> Lord Selkirk, November 20, 1803, *Lord Selkirk’s Diary, 1803-1804*, Vol. 35, ed. Patrick White, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 17958), 151.

<sup>142</sup> John Johnson to Peter Russell, Fort George, May 27, 1799, *Peter Russell Papers*, Vol. 3, pg. 212.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Joseph Chew to Thomas Aston Coffin, March 26, 1795, Montreal, *The correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, Vol. 3, 334.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

all or consulting with Col. McKee.”<sup>146</sup> John Simcoe was also hesitant to support Sally Ainse since Joseph Brant’s own land claims along the Grand River would benefit from her success. John realized a favorable ruling for Sally Ainse would jeopardize not only settler land claims along the Thames (as the Land Board had pointed out in 1792), but settler land claims throughout Upper Canada, like in the Grand River area, and as a result, undermining British authority throughout the province. As settlers on Sally Ainse’s land began to sell her land for profit against her wishes, John Simcoe looked the other way and shortly afterwards, returned to England in July, 1796 due to health issues. He never returned to Upper Canada.<sup>147</sup>

Sally Ainse continued her legal battle and turned to a different strategy: emphasizing her kinship ties as a multiethnic Oneida woman. In 1797 she filed another claim signed by her son, Nicholas Montour, as her agent and attorney. While Sally claims an Oneida identity in all her earlier land petitions, this time she identified as Shawnee. Earlier in her life, Sally was described as Conoy and Nanticoke—both Algonquin social formations near the Atlantic coast with close ties to the Shawnee. Her brother, Samuel, also identified as a Nanticoke. McKee had Shawnee relatives—including a wife and children. By positioning herself as Shawnee and kin to Alexander McKee, she attempted to remind him of an obligation to her.<sup>148</sup> Hopefully she could change his opinion on her land claim and he would testify that the Ojibwe did specify that her tract was exempt from the McKee purchase. Sally enclosed multiple documents to support her claim, including a deed from the Ojibwe in the Thames River area from October 11, 1783; a

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<sup>146</sup> Lord Dorchester to John Graves Simcoe, November 5, 1795, *Ibid.* Vol. 4, 126.

<sup>147</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 410. and R. Mealing, “Simcoe, John Graves,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 5., University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simcoe\\_john\\_graves\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/simcoe_john_graves_5E.html), accessed April 22, 2016,

<sup>148</sup> Alexander McKee’s father, Thomas, married a Native woman, Mary, who was captured and adopted by the Shawnee as a child. While Mary may not have been Alexander’s biological mother, she raised him. Alexander also married a Native woman who was also probably a Shawnee woman or a captive raised by the Shawnee. Nelson, *A Man of Distinction Among Them*, 26-8, 63.

receipt for the money she paid toward the property from 1788; and a declaration from the Ojibwe that Sally Ainse's land should be exempt from the McKee purchase.<sup>149</sup>

Despite the ample documentation, Sally Ainse's 1797 claim had the the opposite effect to what she intended. In 1798, the Executive Council responded to her 1797 claim by reversing their previous favorable rulings:

Resolved in consequence that as it appears to the board from the said Report that no Promise whatever was made by the Chippewas [Ojibweg] in favor of Sally Ainse in the Cession Made to the King in the Year 1790 and that a full valuable consideration was paid by His Majesty to that Nation for the Lands when sold. Sally Ainse can have no claim upon the Crown for any part of the Lands there ceded. The Prayer of their Petitioner cannot be granted.<sup>150</sup>

The Council had grown tired of her pleas and saw no immediate need to rally Native support from Joseph Brant or Sally Ainse since tensions along the British-American border had temporarily, albeit briefly, subsided.<sup>151</sup>

In 1798 Sally Ainse experienced further hardships, and she turned to her family members and friends at the Moravian community of Fairfield. In the fall, her harvest filled barn burned to the ground. A missionary wrote, "she came here in need and got help. Having heard of the mishap our people felt great empathy and collected twenty bushels of corn of their own accord."<sup>152</sup> The Moravians might have helped Sally as a simple act of Christian charity. They had also experienced tragedy and dispossession due to EuroAmerican expansion and may have sympathized with Sally. Furthermore, Sally had family members living at Fairfield, likely reinforcing the missionaries' decision to help. Sally's brother Samuel lived at Fairfield. The siblings reconnected in the Detroit region in the 1780s. At the time, Sally even offered to sell a

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<sup>149</sup> Petition 45.

<sup>150</sup> Upper Canada Sundries, 3296.

<sup>151</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 402.

<sup>152</sup> Sabathy-Judd, *Moravians in Upper Canada*, 159.

piece of her Thames River land to the Moravians. In late 1792, Samuel was part of a scouting mission to inspect the site on the Thames River location before the Moravians departed Detroit in April.<sup>153</sup> The nearby location of Sally's property probably encouraged him to speak highly of the site.

Another relative of Sally Aitse's, Mary Montour, lived at Fairfield. Mary was the sister of Andrew Montour.<sup>154</sup> Mary arrived at Fairfield in the fall or winter of 1790. While Mohawk was her mother tongue she also spoke Wyandot, Odawa (Ottawa), Ojibwe (Chippewa), Shawnee (Shawano), Delaware, English, and French.<sup>155</sup> Missionaries at Fairfield described Sally as "[understanding] and [reading] most of the Indian languages."<sup>156</sup> Sally and Mary could have conversed in any of the multitude of Native languages they were skilled in. Sally must have enjoyed reconnecting with a woman with whom she shared languages, family, and memories.

Since Sally Aitse's economic, legal, and (occasionally) political activities are recorded through the records of British, Native, and mixed-ancestry men, they provide little details on her relationships with other women. However, during her life Sally chose to live in areas where networks of politically and socially influential Native women resided, such as Oneida communities along the Mohawk River; Michilimackinac with its location near large Odawa communities; and Detroit with its network of wealthy mixed-ancestry women. Due to her expansive kinship ties, Sally found opportunities to develop a prosperous trading business throughout the lower Great Lakes in the second half of the eighteenth century. Unlike Sally,

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<sup>153</sup> Earl P. Olmstead, *David Zeisberger: A Life among the Indians*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 92.

<sup>154</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 402. David Zeisberger, *Diary of David Zeisberger a Moravian Missionary Among the Indians of the Ohio*, Vol. 2, ed. Eugene Bliss, (R. Clarke & Co, 1885), 149.

<sup>155</sup> Zeisberger, *Diary of David Zeisberger*, 149.

<sup>156</sup> Sabathy-Judd, *Moravians in Upper Canada*, 159.

EuroAmerican women would not have had the geographic knowledge or ability to traverse the region by canoe. They also lacked the needed kinship connections to establish themselves with the commercial elite at the important regional sites, like Michilimackinac and Detroit. When Sally Ainse experienced legal troubles and other hardships at her Thames River property, she must have been glad to have family close by. Similar to Molly Brant, Sally Ainse wanted to live in a community surrounded by friends and family. She explained in a land petition “that [she] did not mean to keep all the land to herself but for the purpose of settling her friends and relations and to have about her such as were agreeable.”<sup>157</sup> She valued her relationships with family and friends and turned to her support network at Fairfield to help sustain her during times of legal and economic hardship.

The stress of Sally Ainse’s long legal battle and economic hardships took their toll. In 1803, a Moravian missionary from the Fairfield settlement described her as “very old.”<sup>158</sup> This description stands in contrast to Alexander Coventry, who visited Sally six years prior and described her as, “remarkably tall and elegant in her person.”<sup>159</sup> Coventry also estimated her age to be about fifty, when in reality she was closer to sixty. Within six years, Ainse’s age was much more apparent. Coventry visited her before the Executive Council reversed their decision in 1798 and before her barn burned down.

In 1804, Nathan Bangs, a Methodist missionary, visited Sally Ainse on her Thames River tract. Nathan’s description of Sally’s portrays her as a generous host, but also as pious and a humble:

I rode 10 miles and preached in the house of an Indian woman, the widow of a French Canadian, who had left her considerable property. She was a good, simple hearted,

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<sup>157</sup> Petition 17.

<sup>158</sup> Sabathy Judd, *Moravians in Upper Canada*, 297.

<sup>159</sup> Coventry, *Memoirs of an Emigrant*, 859.

earnest creature and reminded me of the Shunamite as she prepared for me, in an upper room, a bed, a table, a chair, and a candlestick. In this room, I preached, and ate, and slept, and no one was allowed to enter it in my absence except to keep it in order. She never asked me to sit at the table with her deeming herself unworthy, but prepared my food and put it on the table in my room. She considered herself highly honored by having the Gospel preached in her house. When I parted with her the next day after my visit, in shaking hands she left a dollar in my palm. It was much needed, for I was nearly out of money.<sup>160</sup>

This description of Sally is a far cry from the outspoken woman and ‘bon vivant’ who demanded property or marriage from William Maxwell in the 1760s or who had one of the largest lines of credit in Detroit during the Revolutionary War or who purposefully flouted British Indian policy in the 1790s in Detroit by selling rum to Native peoples. Sally had spent increasing time at the Moravian settlement, and even if she did not join the Moravians as a “Christian Indian” (as her brother and sister-in law did), she developed a great respect for the religion and its practitioners.<sup>161</sup> Her gift of a dollar despite her financial troubles shows her generosity and respect of Nathan Bangs. Perhaps she also hoped that helping a missionary in need would bring her some sort of blessings, whether in her current life or the after life. While she was still persistently fighting for her property, she must have been increasingly aware of her mortality in the final decades of her life.

By the early nineteenth century, Sally Ainese’s life had changed drastically from her previous time at Detroit, or other Native hubs of the Great Lakes, like Michilimackinac. Just over a decade since she moved to her Thames River property, she was unable to gain the deed or title to her property and had to seek support from her friends when her barn, filled with trade and food supplies, burned to the ground. While she still benefited from relationships with her family members and friends, including powerful Native leaders like Brant, she was also unable to

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<sup>160</sup> Abel D. Stevens, *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs*, (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1863), 138.

<sup>161</sup> Sabathy-Judd, *Moravians in Upper Canada*, 159.

transform these relationships into economic, legal, or political power that would have enough impact upon the politicians and bureaucrats of Upper Canada.

### **Insistence on Settlement: The Resolution to the Sally Ainse Dispute**

Sometime between the summer of 1808 and 1809, Sally Ainse moved off her Thames River property to the community of Malden, located on the British side of the Detroit River, but she does not appear to have purchased any property.<sup>162</sup> Just over twenty years before, Sally had left Detroit for her spacious Thames River settlement with aspirations to build a community for her friends and family. At the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, she found herself once again living on the Detroit River, but on the opposite shore and struggling commercially. The drawn-out legal battle drained her financially. During and immediately after the American Revolutionary War, Sally owned two lots in a prime location across from Ste. Anne's church and had large accounts with some of Detroit's most prominent merchants. Yet in Malden, she is never listed as a property-owner and she may have rented a room or was offered housing by a friend. The decline in her economic status is illustrated by her 1804 account with John Askin. He simply stated he gave her a quart of whiskey and he "[did] not mean to ask for payment."<sup>163</sup> When living at Detroit, in the 1780s she had a 3,000 pound credit account with the same merchant. John Askin may have given her the whiskey because of their long-standing business relationship that persisted for decades from Michilimackinac to Detroit, or he may have felt guilty for Sally's declining economic status and the role that he played as a member of the Land Board that not only denied Sally's land claims but also successfully swayed the Executive

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<sup>162</sup> Malden is the location of present-day Amherstburg, Ontario (east of Bois Blanc Island in the Detroit River).

<sup>163</sup> John Askin Petty Ledger M, 1806-12, BHC, 58.

Council to enforce the denial. Perhaps his small act of generosity was a combination of these two motives or his self-imposed penance. After all, he was a shrewd businessman with his own complicated relationship to indigeneity (he owned an enslaved Native woman and having several children with her). Perhaps Askin both respected their decades long business relationship and was threatened by an independent, Native woman owning a large amount of desirable property.<sup>164</sup>

Despite her financial problems, Sally Ainse continued her legal battle. In July of 1808 she sent another petition to the Executive Council.<sup>165</sup> This time she employed a similar tactic to her 1789 petition where she described herself as a Loyalist that “lost a very valuable tract of land at Fort Stanwix” and “her brothers the Chippewas [Ojibweg] taking pity on her gave her a valuable tract of of land on the River Thames and for which she in return made considerable presents.”<sup>166</sup> She also restated that the Ojibweg [Chippewas] “obtained a promise from Col. McKee that the said tract should be secured to your petitioner.”<sup>167</sup> Sally proceeded to give a brief history of the petitions she had filed, ending with her correspondence with John Simcoe in 1796 when he agreed to “prosecute those who should continue obstinately in possession” of her land. Yet once again, the Executive Council simply reaffirmed their 1798 decision that “No reservation had been made by the Chippewas [Ojibwe] in favor of Sally Ainse and therefore she could have no claim to any part of the land ceded.”<sup>168</sup> Included with the affirmation were copies of documents

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<sup>164</sup> Askin owned an enslaved Native woman named Monette, in the mid-eighteenth century. While he eventually freed Monette, he continued to participate in the Great Lakes indigenous slave trade while raising his children of mixed Native and European descent. Detroit Notarial Register, Vol. A, BHC, pg. 68 and 69 and E.A.S Demers, “John Askin and Indian Slavery at Michilimackinac,” in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, ed. Alan Gallay, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 391-416.

<sup>165</sup> Upper Canada Sundries, pg. 3297-8.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 3298.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 3256.

submitted by Sally and the Land Board in support of their own positions during the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>169</sup>

Despite her persistence, Sally Ainse never received the legal title to her land. In January of 1809 Sally filed another petition stating that in October of 1792 she was “invested with a certificate for eight lots on the land in the first concession of the 1<sup>st</sup> Township on the north side of the river Thames.”<sup>170</sup> Once again she was denied. She filed another petition in 1815. This time the Executive Council responded that the matter was closed because she was dead (even though she would live until 1823). In their mind, Sally Ainse was no longer a threat or even a nuisance they had to deal with. After the long legal battle, Sally Ainse was drained financially and EuroAmerican settlers effectively claimed their right to the property she had cultivated.

The denial of Sally Ainse’s land claim is an example of the intensification of settler colonialism throughout the lower Great Lakes. The number of EuroAmerican settlers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the continual denial of Sally Ainse—a Native woman—as a legally-recognized property owner all appear to embody the core tenets of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism depends on both access to land and being able to make a rightful claim to the land, usually through the erasure of indigenous peoples either through physical removal or cultural assimilation.<sup>171</sup> The Executive Council’s 1815 decision not only reiterated their denial of Sally Ainse’s land claims, but they even proclaimed she was dead, allowing settlers to become the rightful inhabitants of her land.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Petition 45.

<sup>171</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no 4 (2006): 387-409.

When Sally Ainse actually died in 1823, she was approximately ninety-five years old. Her financial status had changed drastically. Sally Ainse, who once lived in fashion, died in debt, living in humble settings in a community where she never owned land. She owed money to her lawyer Robert Pattinson. Pattinson died in 1817 and the executors of his estate took over Sally Ainse's estate. It is no coincidence that much like her financial status, the landscape of the property she once owned had changed drastically by the time of her death: the region that was Ojibwe space in 1780 became the site of a prosperous Oneida woman's developing homestead worked by the labor of her slaves by 1787. By the time Sally died in 1823, settler colonial legal customs had mapped and divided her property allowing it to be filled with EuroAmerican residents.

In the years following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, the lower Great Lakes shifted from being controlled by Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples to a space increasingly filled with non-Native settlers, creating fewer opportunities for Haudenosaunee women to succeed as traders. Molly Brant's and Sally Ainse's experiences in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century illustrate how the lower Great Lakes shifted from being structured by Native kinship connections to being structured by British customs like coverture. As tensions once again developed between the British and Americans in the first decade of the nineteenth century, British leaders would not turn to the economic and political labor and influence of Haudenosaunee women.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Influential Lineages in the Upper Great Lakes: Anishinaabe Marriages, Kinship Practices, and Trade Networks, 1790 to 1816**

In 1806, an Odawa woman, Magdelaine Marcot Laframboise, her European husband, Joseph Laframboise, and two Osage captives, traveled from their residence on Mackinac Island, located in the straits connecting Lake Huron to Lake Michigan, to the Grand River area near the southeast shores of Lake Michigan.<sup>1</sup> Magdelaine Marcot and Joseph Laframboise's relationship was representative of typical marriages *à la façon du pays*, or in the custom of the country, which were usually between a European trader and a Native or mixed-ancestry woman. However, the violence that marked the union between an Ojibwe woman and Irish fur trader was atypical. In 1792, the father of an Ojibwe woman, named Ozhaguscodaywayquay, or Woman of the Green Prairie, arranged for her to marry an Irish fur trader, John Johnston. Ozhaguscodaywayquay was unhappy with the marriage, and after her first few days of living with John, she fled back to her Ojibwe community. Furious because she had left her husband, her father beat his daughter and threatened to cut off both her ears. He then took her back to John with a gift of furs and corn.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Therèse Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days of Mackinac Island," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, (CSHSW) Vol. 14, Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1898), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Brownell Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, Vol. 3 (London: Saunders and Oatley, 1838), 204.

Examining both of these marriages and the prosperous households that developed out of the unions illustrates the ways Anishinaabe kinship and gender dynamics shaped the world of the upper Great Lakes in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The lower Great Lakes transformed drastically between the late eighteenth century and the end of the War of 1812. However, the upper Great Lakes remained largely Anishinaabe space until the mid-nineteenth century. Native forms of kinship prevailed as fur trade families with ties to powerful Anishinaabe families, like the Johnstons, Laframboises, Schindlers, and Cadottes, continued to influence politics and economics in the region. Beginning with a comparison of the upper Great Lakes with the lower Great Lakes in the early nineteenth century, this chapter demonstrates how opportunities existed for Anishinaabe women because of the sociopolitical and geographic landscape of the region. Changes occurred in each woman's household when the War of 1812 broke out and multiple family members were drawn into the conflict. However, despite the attempt of British and American powers to draw an international border through the St. Mary's River, the upper Great Lakes remained Anishinaabe space. EuroAmerican settlement rapidly increased in the early nineteenth century in the lower Great Lakes, but in the upper Great Lakes the most prosperous families consisted of Anishinaabe women, with kinship ties to powerful families, married to EuroAmerican fur traders.

### **An Ojibwe Family in the Upper Great Lakes**

Sally Ainse lived as far north as Michilimackinac—on the straits connecting Lake Huron to Lake Michigan—but there were other important Native hubs farther north and west. Almost directly north of Michilimackinac, lay Bow-e-ting, or as the French called it Sault Ste. Marie. The St. Mary's River flowed into Lake Huron a few miles northeast of Mackinac Island. Bow-e-

ting lay up the river past St. Joseph's, Neebish, and Sugar Islands, where the St. Mary's River connected with the east end of Lake Superior. The river connecting the lakes formed a rapid, or a *sault* in French.<sup>3</sup> When the French arrived in this area in the mid-1600s, they called the residents "ouichtigouian" which later was recorded as "Batchewana Irini." In Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinaabe language) this translated as the peoples of Bow-e-ting, or as the French recorded in the Jesuit Relation of 1642, the people of the Sault.<sup>4</sup>

Several hundred miles west of Sault Ste. Marie along the south shore of Lake Superior or Gichigamiing, lay Shaagwamikong, or as the French referred to it, La Pointe du Chequamegon (in what is now northern Wisconsin), another important Anishinaabe community.<sup>5</sup> Anishinaabe historian Michael Witgen demonstrates that like Bow-e-ting, the name for this village also functioned as a geographic description translated into French by missionaries.<sup>6</sup> La Pointe referred to a small peninsula that stretched across the top of a bay at the southwest end of Lake Superior. Shagwaamikong, the Anishinaabe place name, translates into "soft beaver dam."<sup>7</sup> Witgen explains that this name was linked to a story about Nanabozho, the trickster figure who plays prominent roles in Anishinaabe origin stories.<sup>8</sup> In the story, Nanabozho is a human-size shape-shifting hare who created the peninsula to trap a giant beaver.<sup>9</sup> However, the beaver escaped, breaking the dam, and the resulting flood created the bay. Like Nanabozho, the Anishinaabeg came to the area to hunt beaver and the origin story of the village signified the

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 44.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 31.

<sup>6</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 65.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Hambleton and Elizabeth Warren Stoutamire, eds. *The John Johnston Family of Sault. Ste. Marie*. (N.p: John Johnston Family Association, 1992), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Anishinaabe connection to hunting territory in the marshlands that drained into Superior from the west. Sault Ste. Marie and Chequamegon were both important sites that gave shape to Anishinaabewaki, the physical and cultural landscape in the upper Great Lakes created by the Anishinaabe connection to one another.<sup>10</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay, an Ojibwe girl, was born in an Anishinaabe community near Chequamegon in the mid-1770s, and raised by her parents. As a child, she was exposed to the gender roles and practices in Anishinaabewaki. As long as Native kinship structures shaped social relations in a region, Anishinaabe women could continue to find ways to operate as their own principal economic brokers and acquire property for their families and communities. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's father, Waubojeeg (the White Fisher), was a famed ogimaa (or chief). He was known for his civil and political leadership, along with his skill in narrative and song. He was part of the Caribou doodem.<sup>11</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's family connections illustrate the main political division of the upper Great Lakes between the Anishinaabeg and Dakota. While French, British, and American powers had attempted to claim the region since the seventeenth century, it remained largely Native space with the Anishinaabeg and Dakota as the two most powerful sociopolitical powers.<sup>12</sup> Waubojeeg's father, Ma-mongazida, was also a respected Ojibwe ogimaa. Ma-mongazida's mother (Waubojeeg's grandmother and Ozhaguscodaywayquay's great-grandmother) was part of an Ojibwe band with kinship connections to the Dakota in the late seventeenth century. She married a Dakota leader and had two sons, one of whom was named

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 66, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Child,  *Holding Our World Together* , 45.

<sup>12</sup> Witgen,  *An Infinity of Nations* , 21.

Wabashaw (Ma-mongazida's elder brother).<sup>13</sup> In the late seventeenth century, western communities in Anishinaabewaki, like Chequamegon, formed alliances with eastern Dakota bands. As a result, throughout early eighteenth century the cultural, political, and kinship ties between the people of Chequamegon, and the doodemag of Keweenaw, Michilimackinac, and Bow-e-ting were strong enough to sustain the inclusion of certain Dakota bands within the political orbit of the western communities of Anishinaabewaki.<sup>14</sup>

As the French attempted to assert political authority in the upper Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century by building new posts, violence increased between western Anishinaabe communities, Anishinaabe communities around Green Bay, Dakota bands, and Nehiyawa-athinuwick (Cree) peoples. The increased violence threatened the alliance between the Anishinaabe of Chequamegon and the Dakota.<sup>15</sup> In 1728, Dakota and some western Anishinaabeg were still living together. However, the following year the French became directly involved, contributing to the collapse of the Dakota and western Anishinaabeg alliance (and leaving the French powerless to defend their posts).<sup>16</sup> With the collapse, a new vast alliance of Anishinaabeg, Nehiyaw-athinuwick (Cree), and Nakoda peoples developed that rivaled that of the Dakota-Lakota alliance for dominance in the west.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of these events, the community where Ma-mongazida's mother lived was broken apart. It was no longer safe for his mother to return with her Dakota husband to his family's territory, so in the 1730s she agreed to leave her husband and her son Wabash to move

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<sup>13</sup> C.H. Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, (MPHC) Vol. 32 (Lansing: Michigan State Historical Society, 1902), 347; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 204.

<sup>14</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 279, 305.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

back with her Ojibwe family to the Chequamegon area.<sup>18</sup> She entered a second marriage to an Ojibwe man from the reindeer doodem. Their first child was Ma-mongazida, who became a leader in the Chequamegon community after fighting with the French (perhaps opposite Andrew Montour) during the French and Indian War, and later (after the French withdrawal from the Great Lakes) allying with Sir William Johnson.<sup>19</sup> Despite Ma-mongazida's involvement with Ojibwe and European alliances, his main concern was Anishinaabe and Dakota politics which posed the most imminent danger to his community.

Each fall, Ma-mongazida, his family (including his son Waubojeeg), and his band of about twenty people plus children established a hunting camp west of Lake Superior, towards the Dakota territory. One year, several Dakota men fired several shots toward Ma-mongazida's lodge. He immediately exited, saw the Dakota men and pronounced his name in Dakota. Next he demanded if his brother, Wabashaw, was among the Dakota attacking the encampment.<sup>20</sup> The firing immediately ceased, and Wabashaw emerged. The two brothers entered the lodge that had just been fired upon together. As Wabashaw bent over to enter, he was struck on the head with a club by Ma-mongazida's young son, Waubojeeg.<sup>21</sup> Wabashaw was pleased with his nephew's courage and declared he would be a brave ogimaa and great enemy of the Dakota.<sup>22</sup> Even during high tensions between the Anishinaabeg and Dakota, the bonds of kinship provided possibilities for alliance. Waubojeeg would follow in the path of his father and uncle, becoming a renowned orator and leader of the community at Chequamegon. He was known for administering justice to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Jameson says she moved to Chequamegon occurred in 1736, but it could have occurred at any time post-1729. Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 304.

<sup>19</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 348; Jameson, *Winter Studies in Canada*, 205.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 207.

<sup>21</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 207.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

his people, being a skilled hunter, and providing amply for his family.<sup>23</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's family members were imbedded within some of the most important political divisions and alliances of Anishinaabewaki.

Wabash was right: Ozhaguscodaywayquay's father grew up to become a respected ogimaa. Waubojeeg had a commanding presence: he was six feet six inches tall, with a slender build.<sup>24</sup> Around the age of thirty, he married for the first time.<sup>25</sup> This woman was a widow, and they had at least one son together.<sup>26</sup> The union ended due to unknown causes. Two years later he married a much younger woman who gave birth to Ozhaguscodaywayquay. She was of the bear doodem, and around fourteen years old at the time of the marriage.<sup>27</sup> Wives and husbands had to be from different doodemag, which led to expansive, flexible networks of hospitality among kin and fostered political alliances across communities.<sup>28</sup> Disparate communities along Lake Superior separated by hundreds of miles could be drawn into relationships of kinship, hospitality, and reciprocity through marriages. Waubojeeg and his wife had six children together. When the hunting season was over, Waubojeeg used his spare time to add to the comforts of his lodge. The lodge where Ozhaguscodaywayquay was raised was an oblong shape, sixty feet long, and made by setting two rows of posts firmly in the ground and then sheathing the sides and roof with the smooth bark of the birch.<sup>29</sup> In the center was a post crowned with the carved figure of an owl, which veered with the wind. Waubojeeg may have selected the bird as a good omen, since it was

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<sup>23</sup> Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," 352.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," 352; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 209.

<sup>26</sup> Chapman says they had one son, but Jameson reports they had two. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," 352; Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 209.

neither his own nor his wife's doodem. The owl signaled his presence, and when he was absent from his lodge for long hunts, it was taken down.<sup>30</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay grew up in a household typical of an elite Anishinaabe family. EuroAmerican fur traders were eager to make alliances with influential Anishinaabe families to gain better access to goods, like furs. In her teenage years, Ozhaguscodaywayquay's life would become intertwined with John Johnston, an Irish fur trader. John arrived in Montreal from Ireland the summer of 1789.<sup>31</sup> He stayed with Andrew Todd over the winter. Andrew Todd's uncle, Isaac Todd, was at Michilimackinac with Sally Ainse in the late 1760s and early 1770s, illustrating the interconnected networks of fur trade families throughout the region.

During the Revolutionary War, British forces moved their fort from the south side of the straits of Mackinac to the island. In the spring of 1790, John and Isaac left for Mackinac Island by way of the Ottawa River and arrived by July.<sup>32</sup> In mid-August, Isaac outfitted John with a large canoe and assigned five Canadians (men from families of French descent in the colony of Quebec) who worked as voyageurs in the fur trade to accompany John to the southwest shores of Lake Superior.<sup>33</sup> Due to high winds, John and his men did not reach the Chequamegon area until late September.<sup>34</sup> Unfamiliar with the climate and sociopolitical norms of the regions, John was quickly acquainted with the harsh realities of the environment and trading in the Superior region. In mid-November, the Canadians deserted John. In a letter written in his elderly years, he recalls they took his, "fishing canoe, an oil cloth, heats, axes, etc., and nearly all my fish, leaving me

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<sup>30</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 209.

<sup>31</sup> John Johnston Letter V, St. Mary's Falls, April 28, 1828, in Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," 339-40.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Todd's uncle, Isaac Todd, was a trader at Michilimackinac in the 1760s and 1770s who had contact with Sally Ainse.

<sup>33</sup> John Johnston Letter V, St. Mary's Falls, April 28, 1828, in Chapman, "The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo," 341.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

only a lad of 17 or 18 who slept in my little kitchen and we could luckily speak a little Ottawa [Odawa], by which he could make the Chippeways [Ojibweg] understand him.”<sup>35</sup> John continued to reflect on his isolation:

I had as neighbors two Canadians who from having acquired a knowledge of the language had become traders, they as well as their men knew of the desertion of my people and connived at, if not encouraged them in it. I was thus left in the midst of savages and Canadians, much baser and more treacherous than they, to encounter a winter on the shore of Lake Superior, with only one attendant, a very short allowance of provisions, and deprived of the means of fishing, which I had flattered myself would have been a sure resource, at least against actual want.<sup>36</sup>

John’s worries were grounded in reality: the climate at Chequamegon was much harsher than Montreal, with gales and snowstorms frequently blowing in from the north off of Lake Superior.

John Johnston was determined to be like Robinson Crusoe and make the best of his situation by preparing for the winter by chopping wood. He made good progress with his last helper, but they battled fatigue and hunger due to their meager supplies. The men were isolated. Not only were they abandoned by the voyageurs and leery of their Canadian neighbors, most of the Anishinaabeg had left the area for their winter hunting grounds, usually deeper in the interior further north and west. John recalls that the only Anishinaabe person remaining was the father of the ogimaa (Ma-mongazida) and a few of his family members. They returned from an expedition to a “small river in the bay of St. Charles” just as the ice to Chequamegon Bay was closing. John’s Canadian neighbors rushed into the water and helped Ma-mongazida and his family haul the canoe to shore. However, in return they took the eight or ten beavers Ma-mongazida had killed and, in John’s words, “kept him, his two wives, and a Mrs. Mayer, one of his daughters who wintered with him, in a constant state of intoxication for some days, at the end of which they

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

fairly turned them out of doors, telling them they must provide for themselves, as they would feed them no longer.”<sup>37</sup> The women Johnston called “Mrs. Jayer” was Waubojeeg’s sister, Obemaunoquay (also Marie or Bion-ne-quay) who married John Sayer, a prominent trader, around 1780.

Sometime after the incident with John’s neighbors, Ma-mongazida arrived at John Johnston’s doors and complained of hunger, particularly since his wives could not access a deposit of wild rice they had stored at a considerable distance, since winter storms in the area created an accumulation of snow that was too deep to walk in without snow shoes.<sup>38</sup> Ojibwe people called wild rice manoomin or “the good seed that grows in the water.” The seasonal grain was a sacred food and dietary staple and was largely harvested and traded by Ojibwe women, who were responsible for drying and storing large quantities of food to get through the long, cold winters.<sup>39</sup> While men were out hunting, the women often accessed their stored winter staples, like wild rice and maple sugar.<sup>40</sup> Lack of access to these stores meant a risk of starvation. John reminded Ma-mongazida that he owed him a small credit from before his hunt, but Ma-mongazida explained he could not pay him since John’s neighbors had taken his furs and he “knew not what he had received in return except his meat and drink for a few days.”<sup>41</sup> John accepted Ma-mongazida’s excuse and in return, Ma-mongazida showed Johnson “a large bugle belt, with which, and a silver gorget he had been presented by Sir William Johnson after the fall

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Johnston Letter V, 341. Richard White also describes how one winter in the in mid-seventeenth century, so much snow accumulated in the area that even on snow shoes up to six feet in length and a foot and a half wide, the snow would not support them. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 8.

<sup>39</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 24; Bruce M. White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade." *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 1 (1999): 124.

<sup>40</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 20.

<sup>41</sup> John Johnston, Letter VI, St Mary’s Falls, 10 June 1828, in Chapman, “The Historic Johnston Family of the Soo,” printed in Chapman, 342.

of Fort Niagara to the British forces. He said he had kept his belt free from stain until now, and hoped his son Waubojeeg would continue to do so after he should be gone to the land of spirits.”<sup>42</sup>

Ma-mongazida reached out to John Johnston in a time of need and John was willing to help. John’s action forged bonds between the Ojibwe family and the newly arrived Irish immigrant. In his willingness to share food, John acted according to Anishinaabe social customs: to be able to survive the harsh winters in the Lake Superior region, the Anishinaabeg relied on assistance both from other families who would share food and from manidoog who could provide extra aid in locating food or other resources during scarce times.<sup>43</sup> Gift exchanges functioned as insurance policies: the more families you shared food with during times of need, the more they would reciprocate when they had plenty and your resources were scarce.<sup>44</sup>

Ma-mongazida referenced his gift from Sir William Johnson to signal that he and John Johnson had come to an agreement and forged a relationship. The gift served as a record of the terms and signaled that the holder accorded the same respect that he felt for the agreement.<sup>45</sup> By referencing his silver gorget, Ma-mongazida hoped to explain to John that he wanted to form reciprocal agreements with British subjects based on mutual honor and respect. He probably employed a strategic tactic so that John would be more likely to honor his needs. The strategy worked and both sides reaffirmed an alliance.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Cary Miller, “Gifts as Treaties in Anishinaabeg Communities,” *American Indian Quarterly*, 26 No.2, (Spring 2002), 222.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>45</sup> Cary Miller, *Ogimaag: Anishinaabe Leadership, 1760 to 1845*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 33.

## An Ojibwe Marriage in the Upper Great Lakes

John Johnston was introduced to Ozhaguscodaywayquay through Waubojeeg. Later in the year, when Waubojeeg and his kin returned to Chequamegon to meet up with Ma-mongazida and other smaller family groups, John continued to maintain a connection with the Anishinaabe community. Nineteenth century British travel writer, Anna Brownell Jameson, who spent extensive time with the Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston later in their marriage, describes how John began to go on hunting expeditions with Waubojeeg. On one of these expeditions, John saw Waubojeeg's eldest daughter, and "'no sooner looked than he sighed, no sooner sighed than he asked himself the reason,' and ended by asking his friend to give him his beautiful daughter."<sup>46</sup> While gift exchanges were one way to form a bond of kinship and incorporate an individual into the community, marriage created a much stronger bond. Fur traders like John sought to marry into communities with whom they traded, because they recognized this intensified the obligation of their wives' relatives to bring furs to their posts.<sup>47</sup> Waubojeeg was cautious in his response. According to Jameson, Waubojeeg informed John:

'White man! . . . your customs are not our customs! You white men desire our women, you marry them, and when they cease to please your eye, you say they are not your wives, and you forsake them. Return, young friend, with your load of skins, to Montreal; and if there the women of the pale faces do not put my child out of your mind, return hither in the spring, and we will talk farther; she is young, and can wait.'<sup>48</sup>

Thomas McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Trade from 1824 to 1830 who spent time at the Johnston residence in the mid-1820s, recounts a similar story in *Sketches of a Tour of the Lakes*: Waubojeeg tells John that if he returns, then he "will give you my daughter."<sup>49</sup> Literary historian

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<sup>46</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 210.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, *Ogimaag*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 210-11.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of a tour to the Lakes, of the Character and Customs of the Chippewa Indians, and of Incidents Connected with the Treaty of Fond du Lac, 1827* (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1972), 190.

Dale Parker says Jameson and McKenney are presumably drawing on family stories, but the supposed quotations “sound so stereotypically like the white cliché of EuroAmerican’s interpretations of how Native peoples speak.” As a result, Parker surmises, “Waubojeeg’s quotation depends on Jameson and McKenney’s own paraphrases.”<sup>50</sup> Jameson and McKenney’s paraphrase of Waubojeeg reveals as much about their own bias as it does the historic events, but they are the only records regarding John’s marriage proposal. Both Jameson and McKenney were raised in Anglo-American colonial societies and had little understanding of Anishinaabe kinship. Parker describes Jameson as a “prototypical feminist” and notes that McKenney had a reputation for sexual harassment, and these individual differences contributed to their choice of language.<sup>51</sup> Despite the bias, both Jameson’s and McKenney’s translations imply that Waubojeeg and John discussed marriage negotiations and Ozhaguscodaywayquay was not involved. John was stubborn and according to Jameson, “ardently in love, and impatient and impetuous, after the manner of my countrymen, tried arguments, entreaties, presents, [but] in vain—he was obliged to submit.”<sup>52</sup> Waubojeeg had successfully delayed the marriage proposal, at least temporarily.

There are multiple reasons why Waubojeeg may have been hesitant to agree to the proposal, despite his friendship with John Johnston. Parker suggests that Waubojeeg was particularly hesitant to consent to his daughter marrying a fur-trader of European descent since he had witnessed his sister being left by John Sayer. However, John Sayer and Obemaunoquay were probably still married at this time.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps Waubojeeg observed the earlier tensions in his

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Dale Parker (ed.), *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 76 (FN5).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 211.

<sup>53</sup> Sayer and Obemaunoquay had at least three children together. It is unclear if Obemaunoquay and Sayer were temporarily separated by the early 1790s, or if Sayer had left Obemaunoquay with her father as he was increasingly drawn into the fur trade—establishing his own trading warehouse at Sault Ste. Marie in 1790, joining the Northwest

sister's marriage, which led to his reluctance towards the proposal or perhaps he simply preferred that his daughter marry someone within their community. Several other women in his family also married fur traders, including his second cousin, Ikwesewe, whose father Waubujejack (White Crane) was the head of the Crane doodem.<sup>54</sup> Ikwesewe married Michel Cadotte (le grand), *à la façon du pays* in the 1780s, shortly after Cadotte followed in his father's footsteps by entering the fur trade. Cadotte was born to a French father, Jean Baptiste Cadotte (Sr) and Anastasie in 1764 at Bow-e-ting, educated in Montreal, and worked in the fur trade in the Superior region. By 1793, the couple had moved to a large island in the Chequamegon Bay (present-day Madeline Island) and established a thriving fur trade post. Due to their kinship connections and the seasonal travels of Ojibwe people, Ikwesewe certainly knew Waubojeeg and Ozhaguscodaywayquay. Her marriage to Michel Cadotte was an example of a successful fur trader marriage that exemplified the mutual benefits for both families.

Since Waubojeeg had turned down John Johnston's marriage proposal for the time being, John headed to Montreal for the summer, which meant traveling an approximate distance from New York City to present-day Miami, Florida mostly by canoe.<sup>55</sup> Despite the distance, John

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Company, and regularly travelling to the west region of Lake Superior for trade. Parker writes that since Johnston only refers to a "Mrs. Sayer" and makes no mention of her husband, appears that their marriage had ended. However, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* entry on Sayer says he arrived with his Native family at the NWC's Fond du Lac district headquarters near the western end of Lake Superior, on 12 Sept. 1793. In 1799, Sayer was the head of the Fond du Lac Department for the Northwest Company and in 1803-4, he traded on the St. Croix River. Sayer and Obemaunoquay had three children together. Historians Eileen M. MacMahon and Theodore J. Karamanski state Sayer and Obemaunoquay separated in 1804 and he married a non-Native woman, Elizabeth McPherson, in 1805. Sayer and McPherson had three children together. See Robert Dale Parker (eds). *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 7; Bruce M. White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 46:1 (Winter 1999): 124, 131; and Douglas A. Birk, "Sayer, John," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 19, 2016, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sayer\\_john\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sayer_john_5E.html); Eileen M. MacMahon and Theodore J. Karamanski, *North Woods River: The St. Croix River in Upper Midwest*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2009), 40.

<sup>54</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 33; Julia Warren Spears, "Reminiscences of Julia Warren Spears: St. Louis County Historical Society - 1919 Account," *Native American Press / Ojibwe News*, Jun 28, 1996, pg. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 7.

came back to Chequamegon in the fall. Upholding his end of the deal, Waubojeeg consented to the marriage, “after making [John] swear that he would take her as his wife according to the law of the white man, till death,” and “gave him [John] his daughter, with a long speech of advice to both.”<sup>56</sup> John had upheld his end of the agreement and in all likelihood, Waubojeeg felt bound to uphold his end, particularly since John saved Waubojeeg’s father (Ma-mongazida) and family members from starvation the previous winter. John’s interest in Ozhaguscodaywayquay indicates he had learned one of the first lessons of the fur trade for European men: their success depended on conducting business relationships with Ojibwe women, along with men.<sup>57</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay underwent preparations for the ceremony including fasting alone, in a lodge built by herself of cedar boughs as a process to connect with a spirit guardian.<sup>58</sup> Traditionally, fasting and seclusion from family and community were part of the Ojibwe female experience at puberty.<sup>59</sup> Ojibwe women regarded this as a time for female mentoring and mothers and grandmothers attended the girl during days of seclusions, advising and instructing her on development changes and societal responsibilities. While Ozhaguscodaywayquay had already undergone the rites regarding puberty, the ceremony to prepare her for marriage had several parallels. Jameson records that she:

dreamed continually of a white man, who approached her with a cup in his hand, saying, ‘Poor thing! why are you punishing yourself? Why do you fast? Here is food for you!’ He was always accompanied by a dog, which looked up in her face as though he knew her. Also she dreamed of being on a high hill, which was surrounded by water, and from which she beheld many canoes full of Indians, coming to her and paying her homage; after this, she felt as if she were carried up into the heavens, and as she looked down upon the earth, she perceived it was on fire, and said to herself, ‘All my relations will be burned!’ but a voice answered and said, ‘No, they will not be destroyed, they will be saved;’ and she knew it was a spirit, because the voice was not human. She fasted for ten days during which time her grandmother brought her at intervals some water. When

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<sup>56</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 211.

<sup>57</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 32.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 5.

satisfied that she had obtained a guardian spirit in the white stranger who haunted her dreams, she returned to her father's lodge carrying green cedar boughs, which she threw on the ground, stepping on them as she went. When she entered the lodge, she threw some more down upon her usual place, (next to her mother), and took her seat. During the ten succeeding days she was not permitted to eat any meat, nor anything but a little corn boiled with a bitter herb. For ten days more she ate meat smoked in a particular manner, and she then partook of the usual food of her family.<sup>60</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's dream was recounted to Jameson decades after its actual occurrence. Parker reads the story as a "reconstruction that fits the way events turned out." Despite its biases, Jameson's account shows that Ozhaguscodaywayquay was not eagerly anticipating her marriage. For instance, Jameson describes her as feeling nothing but "reluctance, terror, and aversion" to the negotiations of the marriage process.<sup>61</sup> The beginning of the marriage further demonstrates Ozhaguscodaywayquay's unhappiness about the situation: "on being carried with the usual ceremonies to her husband's lodge, she fled into a dark corner, rolled herself up in her blanket, and would not be comforted, nor even looked upon."<sup>62</sup> Waubojeeg's request for marriage until death could have contributed to Ozhaguscodaywayquay's fear.<sup>63</sup> Historian Bruce White shows that among the Ojibwe, there were many possibilities for dissolving marriages. While Waubojeeg was trying to ensure his daughter would not be abandoned by her husband, his request was uncommon in Ojibwe marriages. At fifteen years old, it would be understandable if Ozhaguscodaywayquay felt alone and vulnerable in a marriage with stipulations that worked outside of Ojibwe social practice and custom. Furthermore, John had no kin nearby, so Ozhaguscodaywayquay was isolated with her husband for her main source of company.

While Ozhaguscodaywayquay's vision quest can be read as reconstruction that fits the way her future turned out, it can also be read as an example of how Anishinaabe customs

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<sup>60</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 212-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 213

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver," 135.

influenced her worldview.<sup>64</sup> White suggests that Ozhaguscodaywayquay's vision quest also "bear[s] the clear imprint of Ojibwa culture." Vision quests were shaped by the Ojibwe education process, which included telling stories. White argues that Ozhaguscodaywayquay's vision quest bears resemblance to stories she may have been told during childhood, including a story about a woman who married a beaver.<sup>65</sup> White contends that Ozhaguscodaywayquay's experience was shaped by her understanding of community needs and the knowledge that a marriage to an outsider would be of benefit to the women's relatives. Ozhaguscodaywayquay understood that there was a social purpose in undertaking a marriage with a person who could provide something useful to the community. Her understanding of the importance of incorporating outsiders into communities came from observing family members and from learning Anishinaabe stories during her childhood, like the Woman who Married a Beaver, illustrate the importance of women who marry outsiders.<sup>66</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay probably drew on Anishinaabe stories and customs to reconstruct her vision quest in a way that fit the way her life turned out.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston were married *à la façon du pays*. John gave her a blue and white enamel ring surrounded by pearls and centered with a lock of his own hair

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<sup>64</sup> Some anthropologists in the twentieth century took a differing view than Parker and White, arguing that Ozhaguscodaywayquay's vision quest is suspect because she would have been violating Anishinaabe custom by sharing her dreams from the vision quest, see Ruth Landes, *The Ojibwa Women*, (Lincoln and Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>65</sup> White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver," 136.

<sup>66</sup> White argues that Ozhaguscodaywayquay was familiar with the story, The Woman who married a beaver. White was told the story by Kagige Pinasie, an Ojibwe man living at Fort William on the north shore Lake Superior at the turn of the twentieth century. In the story, a woman meets a man in human form and he asks her to come live with him. She agrees and eventually they marry and have children. Her husband provided her with ample food and clothing. Yet, eventually she noticed that she had married a beaver. She noticed that her husband and children would leave the house with a human, but they would always return with items like kettles, bowls, knives, and tobacco—all things used when a beaver is eaten. Her husband and children could go with the humans, and the human would kill the beaver, but the the beavers were never really killed and instead, were sent back home with gifts. Continually, the family's wealth grew. Eventually the woman's husband died. When she returned to live with human beings she instructed her community that they should never speak ill of a beaver or they would never be able to kill one. 109-11.

under glass, to seal the betrothal.<sup>67</sup> Anna Jameson reports that according to Ozhaguscodaywayquay, John treated her with the “utmost tenderness and respect, and sought by every gentle means to overcome her fear and gain her affection.” However, on the tenth day of her marriage, Ozhaguscodaywayquay ran away from John, and after fasting in the woods for four days, reached her grandfather’s, Ma-mongazida’s, residence.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, Waubojeeg, who was away at his hunting camp, dreamed that his daughter had not listened to his advice for conducting herself with “proper wife-like docility” and “he returned in haste two days' journey to see after her; and finding all things according to his dream, he gave her good a beating with a stick, and threatened to cut off both her ears. He then took her back to her husband, with a propitiatory present of furs and Indian corn, and many apologies and exculpations of his own honor.”<sup>69</sup> Was Jameson accurately reporting Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s feelings when she described her as being treated with the utmost respect by John? Did John’s behavior actually contribute to her decision to leave? Regardless of the specific reasons for her decision, when recounting the experience of her marriage to Jameson she might have modified the story to reflect Anishinaabe narratives, like the woman who married a beaver. For instance, Ozhaguscodaywayquay told Jameson that John treated her only with kindness and respect, including giving her a stove, before she ran away. Similarly, the beaver treated his wife with respect and brought her gifts in the form of trade goods. It is important to remember that even if John did treat Ozhaguscodaywayquay exactly as Jameson described, he also accepted her back from Waubojeeg after she had been beaten and threatened. John appears infatuated with Ozhaguscodaywayquay since they first met, and physical attraction may have played a part in his

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<sup>67</sup> Marjorie Cahn Brazer (ed.), *Harps Upon the Willows: The Johnston Family of the Old Northwest*, (Ann Arbor: Historical Society of Michigan, 1993), 51.

<sup>68</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 214.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

decision. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's family connections were further incentive to pursue the marriage. He was attracted to Ozhaguscodaywayquay, and he also recognized the value of a union with her. His acceptance of Ozhaguscodaywayquay in this state calls into question how much John cared for her wellbeing at this time, and indicates he wanted to protect what he saw as both a striking and valuable investment.

Neither the compelled marriage nor the assault enforcing it is typical of Anishinaabe or fur-trade marriages.<sup>70</sup> Other historians have illustrated how at least some women in fur trade marriages had a certain amount of control over the relationship, shown by their ability to separate from their husband and dissolve the relationship easily.<sup>71</sup> Margaret Fuller, whom Parker describes as a "transcendental feminist writer" visited with Ozhaguscodaywayquay's daughter, Jane, in 1843. Jane described how despite experiencing hardships, Ojibwe women held a position "higher and freer than that of the white woman."<sup>72</sup> Yet the violent start to Ozhaguscodaywayquay's union with John Johnston illustrates how marriages based on alliances between Anishinaabe women and European traders could be characterized by force or coercion. While the assault was not the norm, there has also been relatively little work on gender, violence, and the fur trade in the Upper Great Lakes. Child's work on Ojibwe women illustrates that gender roles in Anishinaabe societies were usually mutually supportive, with the collective labor practices of women highly valued and respected.<sup>73</sup> In contrast, work on gender and violence in the Great Lakes slave trade suggests that enslaved women of Native descent were at particular

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<sup>70</sup> Landes, *The Ojibwa Women*; Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": *Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Child, *Holding Our World Together*; Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*.

<sup>71</sup> White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver," 133. White states that, "it is open to question whether this was the case with most such marriages."

<sup>72</sup> Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes in 1843*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 108-9.

<sup>73</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 46.

risk of violence because they were separated from their kin and community. Historian Brett Rushforth argues that the knowledge that masters took advantage of slaves and captives vulnerability and sexual accessibility—even at young ages—was widespread, and that such vulnerability was considered to be a basic element of female slaves’ experience throughout communities of the Great Lakes like Michilimackinac and Detroit.<sup>74</sup> However, Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s case stands out. She came from a powerful family, was not enslaved, and her father physically assaulted her to enforce a marriage between her and a white trader. Her case raises questions about the space for coercion within families in Anishinaabewaki. An alternative reading of the woman who marries a beaver is that the wife’s self-sacrifice is venerated. Since most influential Anishinaabe families often had powerful male figures (both as the head of households, and in the case of ogimaa like Waubojeeg, in the community), Ozhaguscodaywayquay may have felt she had little choice other than to accept the marriage with John. This indicates that while Ojibwe women could be “higher and freer” than Anglo-American women, there was also the chance for coercion among kin of elite families in certain circumstances, and that women were particularly vulnerable to this coercion. When recounting her marriage to Jameson, Ozhaguscodaywayquay may have drawn on the Anishinaabe stories an attempt to make sense of the coercion she experienced, in particular framing the marriage as necessary to benefit and provide for her family.<sup>75</sup>

A variety of reasons appear to have contributed to Waubojeeg’s violent reaction to Ozhaguscodaywayquay running away. Waubojeeg must have felt obligated to hold-up his deal with John, particularly after John Johnston shared his scarce food supplies with Waubojeeg’s

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<sup>74</sup> Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 2014), 258.

<sup>75</sup> Many thanks to Mallory Whiteduck whose comments were very helpful in developing this alternate reading of *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*.”

father the previous winter. John's kindness to Ma-mongazida and his return to Chequamegon illustrated his loyalty and good intentions in Waubojeeg's eyes. However, more importantly, in Anishinaabe custom the exchange of gifts of food during times of scarcity forged a reciprocal bond between John and Ma-mongazida's family. Waubojeeg felt obligated to uphold this bond since John's gifts were responsible for saving his father from starvation. Furthermore, a marriage between his daughter and an honorable trader with reliable access to European goods surely seemed like an ideal way to expand Waubojeeg's family's influence and economic stability. He was aware that some European and EuroAmerican men abandoned their Ojibwe wives, but he was also aware that unions between men of European descent and Ojibwe women could establish families whose power and influence in the fur trade extended through generations, like the Cadotte's.<sup>76</sup> With a marriage between Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston, the two family lines became bonded as kin, or meyaagizid, creating a mutually beneficial alliance between them. Through marriage, John gained the alliance of Waubojeeg, a man of political influence and a demonstrated ability to be a leader for his community. As a father-in-law, Waubojeeg, could be an informal economic agent with traders and could persuade them to be friends and clients.<sup>77</sup> By enforcing his will on Ozhaguscodaywayquay, Waubojeeg repaid a debt to John and welcomed the Irish trader as kin.

After being sent back to live with John Johnston, there are no more recorded reports of violence between Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her family. However, violence may still have occurred: Ozhaguscodaywayquay might have continued to resist her marriage and experienced

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<sup>76</sup> Parker has a similar but different read on Waubojeeg's intention. He suggests Waubojeeg acted out of a combination of respect for Johnston's loyalty, personal friendship, or gratitude to Johnston for sharing his scarce food supplies with his father the previous winter; sensing a greater reliability in Johnston than in other traders; and deferring to encroaching white authority. Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 9.

<sup>77</sup> White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver," 130.

further violence inflicted by Waubojeeg that is not recorded. Alternately, Ozhaguscodaywayquay may have been observing her father's directives to protect herself from the risk of another assault. Approximately a year into their marriage, several events changed the couple's lives. First, in the summer Waubojeeg died of tuberculosis.<sup>78</sup> Second, Ozhaguscodaywayquay gave birth to her first child on October 16, 1793, a son named Lewis Saurin.<sup>79</sup> Third, shortly after Ozhaguscodaywayquay gave birth, the couple moved east along the shore of Lake Superior to Bow-e-ting, or Sault Ste. Marie on the St. Mary's River, where the lake connected with Lake Huron and the lower Great Lakes.

The journey to Sault Ste. Marie was approximately four-hundred-miles by canoe along the south shore of Lake Superior. While the trip was half the distance of the eight-hundred miles Sally Ainese travelled from Fort Stanwix to Michilimackinac, it was a grueling journey along Lake Superior, the largest, deepest, coldest, and most turbulent of the Great Lakes. Ozhaguscodaywayquay would undertake the journey with a new-born infant and in the late fall, when Lake Superior gales were especially prone to blow-in. Ozhaguscodaywayquay likely used a cradle board, a practical item created by Anishinaabe women that allowed them to carry their youngest child while performing tasks like harvesting food, and the gathering of edible roots, nuts, berries, maple sugar, and wild rice.<sup>80</sup>

The couple departed from Chequamegon and while there is no narrative that accompanies their trip, drawing on records of John Johnston's previous journeys along Lake Superior's south shore and recent work by Anishinaabe historians, one can surmise how the physical and sociopolitical landscape they traversed differed from the lower Great Lakes at the turn of the

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<sup>78</sup> Brazer, *Harps Upon the Willows*, 79.

<sup>79</sup> Hambleton and Stoutamire, *The John Johnston Family*, 8; Brazer, *Harps Upon the Willows*, 367.

<sup>80</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 16.

nineteenth century. The trip began easily for skilled paddlers: they left behind the relatively sheltered waters of Chequamegon Bay and followed a shoreline of sand hills covered with cherry shrubs and other foliage.<sup>81</sup> After the Bad River, which was named for its wide shallow stream that was almost impossible to navigate even by skilled Anishinaabe canoers, the coast changed to clay banks before descending into a sandy beach. Next, they passed by the Black and Montreal Rivers. Soon the Porcupine Mountains towered above the shore—the highest summits on the lake’s south shore. Next they reached the Ontonagon River, approximately thirty miles east of the Porcupine Mountains, and the site of another Anishinaabe community.

Shortly beyond the Ontonagon River and after approximately the first hundred and fifty miles, the family reached the Keweenaw Peninsula. Rather than paddle the shoreline of the largest peninsula in the lake, they cut across the peninsula, making use of Portage Lake. The beginning of the trek involved a portage over a muddy end of the marshy lake. Next they paddled into the main body of the inland lake, and then headed east towards the river’s mouth at Keweenaw Bay. While the lake was protected from the full force of Lake Superior’s waves, it had high shores that made it difficult to dock a canoe. At the southwestern point of the lake on a grassy plateau about sixty feet above the water lived a community of Anishinaabe peoples with communal gardens.<sup>82</sup> Upon reaching the east side of the peninsula, they paddled across Keweenaw Bay and the smaller Huron Bay, before paddling along the rocky shore-line of the Huron Mountains, heading towards present-day Marquette. For many parts of this stretch the shore was lined with rugged black rock-faced cliffs where it would be difficult to dock if a storm blew in. The next stretch of shore provided a break from the rougher shoreline. They paddled

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<sup>81</sup> John Johnston, “An Account of Lake Superior.” In *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest Récits de voyages, Lettres, et Rapports Inédits Relatifs au nord-Ouest Canadien*, Vol 2., L.R. Masson (ed.). (Quebec: Imprimerie Générale Côté et Cie, 1890), 167.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

along expansive beaches heading towards Au Train and Munising Bay. Grand Island, home of another Anishinaabe community, protected Munising Bay from the powers of the open lake. In recounting his journeys along Lake Superior, John Johnston describes Munising Bay as “land gently rising from the water’s edge and terminating in a chain of mountains from which the cascades is a projection; and surely if ever Milton’s description of ‘shade above shade a woody theatre’ was realized, it is here.”<sup>83</sup> The bay provided a welcome break for paddlers, especially since beyond the bay loomed one of the most challenging fifty-mile stretches of the paddle.

The next stretch of shore consisted of over fifteen miles of towering, sheer sandstone cliffs rising hundreds of feet above the water. Beaches and areas to pull canoes ashore were few and far between. An unexpected storm in this area could spell disaster, as Lake Superior’s waves can easily reach over ten-feet. Waves also break off of the sheer cliffs, creating even more waves that are tricky to paddle. Unskilled paddlers could find themselves smashed against the cliffs before they reached the safe haven of a sandy-shored cove.<sup>84</sup> John described the cliffs as, “perfectly perpendicular, and in a distance of three leagues, has three little bays nearly at equal distance, and is if placed by the hand of providence to ensure the safety on a coast otherwise not to be attempted in any season.”<sup>85</sup>

After the cliffs there stretched twelve miles of beach before the paddlers faced another five-miles of steep, sand cliffs that also provided a challenge during inclement weather. In his account of his first journey to the Chequamegon area, John Johnston recalls that the Anishinaabeg called this area Negouwatchi or Sandy Mountain.<sup>86</sup> He describes how, “you are

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>84</sup> For the unpredictability of Lake Superior and the size of its waves, see Ibid., 154.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 153.

struck with wonder on finding yourself on a sandy plain several miles in extent, the side of which, front the lake, is one hundred to two hundred feet and nearly perpendicular.”<sup>87</sup> Johnson warns travelers that you frequently see sand and stones rolling down the slope, and during storms, “There are two or three crevices in a distance of two leagues where you could save [yourself] . . . but you may inevitably lose your canoe.”<sup>88</sup> Upon reaching the end of the sand cliffs, the couple reached *grand marais* or great marsh. The final hundred miles of their trip was relatively easy, passing by an almost continuous stretch of beaches with banks lined with conifer trees rising fifteen to twenty feet on the way to Whitefish Point.<sup>89</sup> Once they rounded the point, they paddled across the shallow, usually calm waters of Whitefish Bay. They passed by Point Iroquois, and then entered the St. Mary’s River. Even before entering the river, the lake had significantly narrowed. The couple could see the rocky, rugged mountains rising along the northern shore as they finished their journey to Bow-e-ting.

The landscape they traveled through was the center of what Anishinaabe historian Michael Witgen calls the Native New World, a sociopolitical space that arose when European peoples from the Old World entered the upper Great Lakes and began forming relationships with the Anishinaabeg and other Native polities in the region.<sup>90</sup> The Native New World originated in the Great Lakes, the northern Great Plains, and the northern Boreal forests, and was a transregional space at the heart of the North American fur trade consisting of inland trade connecting Native peoples with little or no direct contact with Europeans to an emerging world market economy.<sup>91</sup> While French and English traders both attempted to assert control of this

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 21.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 19.

region, it remained largely Native space with the Anishinaabeg and Dakota as the two most powerful sociopolitical powers. By the time of the French and Indian War, French posts in Anishinaabewaki were politically and militarily inconsequential in terms of supporting New France, and despite claims by French officials, they had little control on the ground in a region of thousands of indigenous peoples.<sup>92</sup> The posts would also remain inconsequential to the British until the War of 1812, when battles between British and American forces would occur at the eastern end of the upper Great Lakes, near Mackinac Island.

During their journey from Chequamegon to Sault Ste. Marie, the newlyweds did not pass one military fort, indicating what little control British and American powers held over the region. Instead of forts, they passed by numerous autonomous, Anishinaabe communities near sites like the Ontonagon River, the Keweenaw Peninsula, Grand Island, and Whitefish Bay. Witgen explains that the Anishinaabeg did not imagine themselves collectively as a nation, but instead as a people comprising related but distinct and autonomous communities who performed and enacted their identity as a lived relationship on the land.<sup>93</sup> Anishinaabewaki describes the landscape created by that lived relationship. Within the Anishinaabeg social world, both collective and political authority were tied to membership within a kinship community. The Anishinaabeg world was defined by meyaagizid (kin or those who belonged) and inawemaagen (outsiders without connections).<sup>94</sup> Kinship for the Anishinaabeg was not only biological, but could also be created socially, making the space of Anishinaabewaki infinitely expandable.<sup>95</sup> Anishinaabewaki was built on mutual alliances, however Anishinaabewaki was also a multi-

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 33, 35.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 279.

polar social formation with multiple centers of power among the doodemag of the Anishinaabeg at places like Michilimackinac, Bow-e-ting, Keweenaw, Chequamegon, Green Bay, and Detroit.

The couple's journey illustrates the vast differences between the lower and upper Great Lakes in the 1790s. While Moravians on the Thames River were shocked at how settlers now filled the valley and lined the river banks, the south shore of Lake Superior remained exclusively Anishinaabe space. On their expedition, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John encountered Anishinaabe peoples, and perhaps a handful of fur traders who, like John, intermarried with Anishinaabe women and were integrated into their wives' families. Fur traders of American and European descent traveled through the area, but to have access to the best furs they often needed to form Anishinaabe kinship connections by entering into relationships with Anishinaabe women. Few of these fur traders had interest in settling permanently in the area, and the majority of those who did settle permanently married into powerful Ojibwe families, like Michel Cadotte's marriage to Ikwesewe and John Johnston's marriage to Ozhaguscodaywayquay. Entering into Anishinaabe kinship networks was necessary for EuroAmerican traders to achieve financial success in the area.

Once they arrived at the St. Mary's River, the couple received little respite from their journey. They built a log cabin on the south side of the rapids. Jean Baptiste Cadotte (Michel's father) lived two lots away from the couple's new home, illustrating how family connections extended from Chequamegon, near the southwestern end of Lake Superior, to Bow-e-ting or Sault Ste. Marie, at the lake's eastern end. The Johnston house was the largest in the region. Parker describes the home as exuding "baronial splendor" on the frontier."<sup>96</sup> Along with the

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<sup>96</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 9.

house, several outbuildings were built including, barns, warehouses, a fur press, store, wine cellar, root cellar, milk and ice houses, carpenter and blacksmith shops, and a windmill.<sup>97</sup> The barn was used for housing cows, hogs, sheep, and poultry. Fields of vegetables, including corn and potatoes, were planted, along with fruit trees and flowers. Their river also provided an abundant supply of fish, and they often had venison and other wild game.<sup>98</sup>

According to recorded family history, the marriage between Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston improved from its violent beginnings. Jameson describes how after living at Bow-e-ting for several years, Ozhaguscodaywayquay was “seized with a longing once more to behold her mother's face, and revisit her people.”<sup>99</sup> Rather than traversing the distance by canoe, Anna Jameson says John purchased a small schooner that “he fitted out, and sent her, with a retinue of his clerks and retainers, and in such state as became the wife of the Englishman, to her home at La Pointe, loaded with magnificent presents for all her family.”<sup>100</sup> According to Jameson, after this trip, “she soon returned to her husband, and we do not hear of any more languishing after her father's wigwam. She lived most happily with John for thirty-six years till his death, which occurred in 1828, and is the mother of eight children, four boys and four girls.”<sup>101</sup> Jameson uses the anecdote to illustrate Ozhaguscodaywayquay's contentment with her marriage. However, it also demonstrates her connection to her mother and her desire to travel to maintain connections to her family and the Ojibwe community at Chequamegon. In 1796, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John welcomed their second eldest son, George, and in 1800 they welcomed their first daughter, Jane. At the mixed-Anishinaabe and French settlement of Bow-e-ting that became known as

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<sup>97</sup> Map of Johnston House and Outbuildings, MPHIC Vol. 32 opp., 326.

<sup>98</sup> Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, Harper, 1832, entry for Aug 26, 1817.

<sup>99</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 215.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Sault Ste. Marie, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John's family grew. Their household would become one of the most thriving and influential in the area for decades to come.

### **An Odawa Marriage in the Upper Great Lakes**

A young Odawa woman named Magdelaine Marcot also entered into a marriage *à la façon du pays* with a EuroAmerican fur trader. Magdelaine was familiar with marriages in the custom of the country from a young age, since she was born into an Odawa fur trade family. Her mother Marianne, or Marie Amighissen (sometimes called Thimatee) was the daughter of Kewinaquot, an Odawa ogimaa. Her father, Jean Baptist Marcot, was a high-ranking trader in the Northwest Company. Marianne and Jean Baptist were legally married in a ceremony performed at Michilimackinac on July 24, 1758, by the Jesuit priest M. L. Le Franc. Magdelaine was the youngest of seven children.<sup>102</sup> Her elder sister, Therèse, was the second youngest. The two sisters would remain close throughout their lives.<sup>103</sup>

Magdelaine Laframboise's upbringing near the eastern shores of Lake Michigan was typical of children raised in fur trade marriages. The Marcot family home was in the village of St. Joseph's, in southwestern Michigan near where the St. Joseph's River enters Lake Michigan.<sup>104</sup> The small settlement had a population of forty-nine persons.<sup>105</sup> Most households on the census consisted of a French trader and an Anishinaabe wife. Several of the families also owned *panis*, indigenous slaves or captives.<sup>106</sup> The family moved to Michilimackinac during the

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<sup>102</sup> "The Mackinac Register, Marriages in the Parish of Michilimackinac, 1725-1821," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* (WSC), Vol. 18, (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1898), 484-5.

<sup>103</sup> Four of the other children's names are not known. John E. McDowell, "Therèse Schindler of Mackinac: Upward Mobility in the Great Lakes Fur Trade," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 61, No. 2 (Winter, 1977-1978), 126.

<sup>104</sup> Present day Niles, Michigan.

<sup>105</sup> "Census of the Post of St. Joseph's," Haldimand Papers, 1780, MPHIC, Vol. 10, 407.

<sup>106</sup> While the distinction between slave and free is clear in chattel slavery, the line between indigenous slaves, captives, and adopted family members (sometimes with a lower class distinction in the household) was porous and

American Revolution due to Jean Baptist's ties to the British.<sup>107</sup> In June of 1780, near the time of Magdelaine's birth, her father pledged to establish a village on the island after the British decided the fort needed to be transferred for security reasons during the Revolutionary War.<sup>108</sup> In July of 1782, he joined other "merchants and inhabitants" in a petition for a priest to minister and serve the people of Mackinac.<sup>109</sup> Like Sault Ste. Marie, Mackinac Island (and previously, Michilimackinac) was an important hub in the Great Lakes and a site where Native peoples and fur traders gathered to exchange goods. Magdelaine was baptized on the island by a visiting priest on August 1, 1786.<sup>110</sup> The family may have continued to travel to St. Joseph's: Jean Baptist may have stocked up on goods at Mackinac Island to bring to St. Joseph's for trade.<sup>111</sup> The family also traveled to a winter settlement in western Lake Superior country.<sup>112</sup> Both Magdelaine and her sister may have made the long, strenuous journey when they were infants.

In 1783, the sisters' lives changed drastically: Jean Baptist was killed, possibly by a Dakota man, while trading at the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers.<sup>113</sup> Their mother chose to relocate her family to an Odawa community near St. Joseph's. When Jean Baptist was alive, he sent his children to Montreal for school, but Magdelaine and Thérèse spent most of their childhood among the Odawaag (the plural of Odawa) with their mother. They would learn the skillsets needed to survive in the region, such as curing pelts; creating goods for the fur trade like

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shifted. Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekawitha and the Jesuits*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 26; Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: material culture and race in colonial Louisiana*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 103; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 66.

<sup>107</sup> Edwin O. Wood, *Historic Mackinac the historical, picturesque and legendary features of the Mackinac country*; Vol. 2, (The MacMillan Co.: New York, 1918), 238.

<sup>108</sup> MPHC, Vol. 10, 405.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 599.

<sup>110</sup> David A. Armour, "Marcot, Marguerite-Magdelaine," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/marcot\\_marguerite\\_magdelaine\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/marcot_marguerite_magdelaine_7E.html), accessed October 11, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> McDowell, "Thérèse Schindler," 126.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> MPHC, Vol. 11, 350.

moccasins, canoes, and baskets; and taking part in seasonal rounds to gather food including harvesting berries, drying fish, and producing maple sugar, along with maintaining fields of corn. Magdelaine could not read or write, but she could speak Odawa and French fluently.<sup>114</sup> The sisters' childhood gave them valuable experience for their future careers as traders. Raised by their mother, they would learn essential skills such as producing fur trade goods like moccasins and makaks (also known as mococks), birch bark baskets for drying maple sugar, while being exposed to the customs and practices of the fur trade.<sup>115</sup>

Like her mother, Magdelaine would marry a fur trader. When she was around 14 years old, in 1794, she married Joseph Laframboise, a fur trader of French descent *à la façon du pays* or in the custom of the country. Joseph was thirty years older than Magdelaine. On 11 July 1804 they solemnized their marriage before a missionary at Michilimackinac.<sup>116</sup> Magdelaine Marcot and Joseph Laframboise's marriage was in many ways a typical fur trade marriage: Joseph was a Catholic, French fur trader and Magdelaine was an Odawa, Catholic, young woman whose family had ties to the fur trade. Magdelaine and her husband centered their trade in the Grand River Valley area of southwestern Michigan near where she was raised. They traveled to Mackinac Island in the summer as part of their trading business. Joseph's ties also extended as far as Montreal and Wisconsin.<sup>117</sup> The couple was immersed within a web of Anishinaabe and Catholic fur trade family connections.

Historian Susan Sleeper-Smith describes a typical Great Lakes trader's household in the mid-eighteenth century as consisting of a European trader and a Native or mixed-ancestry

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<sup>114</sup> Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island," WSC, Vol. X, 40.

<sup>115</sup> Child, *Holding Our World Together*, 20.

<sup>116</sup> Armour, "Marcot, Marguerite-Magdelaine."

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

woman, and most often Catholic and matrifocal. These partnerships reflected the type of households in which the wives were raised.<sup>118</sup> Women's work within the typical Great Lakes household was valued, since they were responsible for processing peltry, producing an agricultural surplus, and producing various items necessary for the fur trade, such as snowshoes, moccasins, canoes and food supplies.<sup>119</sup> Anishinaabe women also played the role of liaisons between traders and their kin, educating their own natal families and white husbands about gender role expectations and other cultural differences.<sup>120</sup> The Laframboise household was representative of this regional pattern.

Joseph Laframboise was a devout Catholic. Elizabeth Baird Fischer, the granddaughter of Magdelaine's sister Therèse, reports, "Out in the Indian country, timed by his watch, [Joseph] was as faithful in this discharge of duty as elsewhere. Whenever in any town where the bells of his church rang out three times three, — at six in the morning, at noon, and at six in the evening, — he and his family paid reverent heed to it." Elizabeth reports that Magdelaine was also a practicing Catholic. She maintained Joseph's custom as long as she lived. For instance, the moment the church bells rang for prayers, "she would drop her work, make the sign of the cross, and with bowed head and crossed hands would say the short prayers, which did not last much longer than the solemn ringing of the bells."<sup>121</sup> A daughter, Josette, was born into their household in 1795. In 1800, she was baptized on Mackinac Island, where her mother was also baptized.

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<sup>118</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*, (Cambridge: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 60.

<sup>119</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk "The Role of Native Women in the Fur Trade Society of Western Canada, 1670-1830." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 7, no. 3 (1984): 10.

<sup>120</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 4; Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 33.

<sup>121</sup> Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days," 38.

As the opening anecdote of this chapter describes, tragedy struck the family in the fall of 1806. Magdelaine and Joseph Laframboise departed from Mackinac to travel to their wintering spot in the Grand River area in *batteaux*, larger boats used in the fur trade for traversing the lakes and rivers without rapids or portages (which required lighter birch bark canoes). They brought with them their two Osage servants, Angélique La Croix and her son Louison.<sup>122</sup> They headed west out of the Straits of Mackinac into Lake Michigan, along Waugoshance Point, and south down the lake's eastern shore, passing by the crooked tree that marked L'Arbre Croche, an Odawa village, where they may have stopped to visit and trade. They continued south, across the long *traverses* or crossing of Little and Grand Traverse Bay, where they would be exposed in open waters away from shore if a storm blew in. They continued on through the Manitou Passage, passing by the immense sand dunes and cliffs on the mainland. Eventually the dunes changed from massive steep cliffs to wood covered hills and eventually they reached the mouth of the Muskegon River—their stop before reaching the Grand River.<sup>123</sup> They set up camp along the shores of an inland lake and began trading with local Odawaag.

During his trading, Joseph Laframboise refused to deal with a man named White Ox who demanded more whiskey.<sup>124</sup> When Joseph retired to his tent, he knelt to say his prayers and the man returned and shot him dead.<sup>125</sup> Magdelaine knew she was closer to the Grand River than her Mackinac residence, and with the help of her slaves she packed up her husband's body and continued to Grand River where he was buried with the help of the Odawa community.<sup>126</sup> While

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 38. For a discussion of the Lacroix family as slaves, see Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, "Women, Networks, and Colonization in Nineteenth Century Wisconsin," in *Contours of a People: Métis Family Mobility and History*, Nicole St. Onge and Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (eds.), (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014): 242.

<sup>123</sup> Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days," 38.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 39.

violent acts like murder were not uncommon within fur trade communities in the Great Lakes, the sudden death of her husband must have taken Magdelaine by surprise. While she was surely distraught over the tragic loss of her husband and business partner, she made the strategic decision to continue on to Grand River. During moments of tragedy, Magdelaine's elite social status was beneficial: she was able to rely on the labor of her servants to transport her husband's body and her familial connections to help with the burial.

While Magdelaine Laframboise stayed at Grand River over the winter, continuing on the trading business, the Odawaag captured White Ox and brought him to Magdelaine so she could decide his fate. She chose to forgive White Ox and never saw him again. In Anishinaabe communities, it was common for the murder of a family member to be repaid either through the killing of the offender or the exchange of gifts in repayment, an act often known as covering the dead.<sup>127</sup> Magdelaine's decision to forgive White Ox without him or his family covering the dead could be evidence of her strong Catholic faith. In the Catholic religion, forgiveness of sins was key doctrine and Magdelaine chose to forgive the person who committed murder against her husband. The following June after her husband's death, she returned to Mackinac with her furs and procured a license as a trader. She was ready to carry on the family business.

### **Elite Anishinaabe Households of the Upper Great Lakes**

Like Ozhaguscodaywayquay at Sault Ste. Marie, Magdelaine Laframboise developed a prosperous household on Mackinac Island, maintained by Native servants, such as Genevieve

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<sup>127</sup> Richard White describes covering the dead as a process where mourners are consoled by providing them with gifts, such as trade goods and brandy. White, *The Middle Ground*, 140-1. For more on Anishinaabe condolence rituals in the Great Lakes, see Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 185, 201-11.

Maranda, who Magdelaine owned until her death. After her husband's death, she took over the trading business and joined her elder sister Therèse; together they worked as independent brokers in the fur trade. Therèse married George Schindler, a Mackinac Island trader, in 1804, and they made the island their home.<sup>128</sup> Like Molly Brant at Kingston, Magdelaine chose to build her home where she was near female relatives. Both Magdelaine and Therèse were supported by the labor of Native servants and slaves. There is a long history of indigenous slavery in the Great Lakes. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg ritually killed and adopted captured slaves to vent grief over relatives lost in war, strengthen depleted populations, and replenish the spiritual power of families through the incorporation of adoptees. When the French and eventually the British entered the Great Lakes, they began to participate in the indigenous slave trade as a strategy to create alliances with Native peoples. Many slaves in the Great Lakes were captured from Native social formations farther west, who after the French arrived commonly became known as *panis*.<sup>129</sup> These slaves were brought to places like Detroit, Michilimackinac and Green Bay, hundreds or perhaps thousands of miles away from their immediate family and extended kin, where they were then adopted into their new families to varying degrees. Sometimes they would become fully integrated members of the family replacing a deceased family member, whereas other times they would be members of a household, but with a distinct, lower rank.<sup>130</sup>

Elizabeth Baird Fischer, the grand-niece of Magdelaine Laframboise and grand-daughter of Therèse Schindler, mentions servants named Genevieve Maranda and Francois. It is unclear how Fischer differentiates between the terms slave and servant. At first she describes Genevieve

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<sup>128</sup> McDowell, "Therèse Schindler," 128.

<sup>129</sup> Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2003): 787.

<sup>130</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 103.

Maranda as a servant who “who remained with her until death.”<sup>131</sup> Yet when describing the journey to sugar camps in the Straits of Mackinac, she says the boat crew “were also accompanied by their servants,—old Angelique, a slave, and her son, Louizon.”<sup>132</sup> This suggests that Fischer may have used the terms servant and slave interchangeably.<sup>133</sup> Further illustrating the ambiguity in Elizabeth’s usage of the terms, Francois is described as “the son of a slave, whom my grandmother reared” and “was her companion.”<sup>134</sup> Fischer’s shifting between the terms servant and slave and her description of Magdelaine raising slaves suggest Magdelaine was partaking in the indigenous form of slavery in the Great Lakes, where certain captives were integrated and adopted into families, albeit while often marked by a lower status (indicated by Fisher’s description of them as servants).<sup>135</sup> The intergenerational pattern of Odawa women integrating members of the La Croix family into their household illustrates the continued prevalence of indigenous forms of social relations and the continued political and economic power of Odawa family networks in the upper Great Lakes in the nineteenth century.

Great Lakes historian Lucy Murphy describes the Lacroix family as slaves, but also recognizes the ambiguity in their status. According to Murphy, Magdelaine Laframboise owned Angelique and Louison, and Therèse Schindler’s daughter, Marianne Schindler Fischer (born in 1790), owned Catherine (or Catish) La Croix, Angelique’s daughter and Louison’s sister.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days,” 39.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Great Lakes historian Lucy Murphy argues Magdelaine owned Angelique and Louison, and Therèse Schindler’s daughter, Marianne Schindler Fischer (born in 1790), owned Catherine (or Catish) La Croix, Angelique’s daughter and Louison’s sister. Angelique was captured as a child around 1790 in what is now southern Missouri and was sold or given to the Laframboise family, becoming the slave of Magdelaine. Murphy, “Women, Networks, Colonization,” 242.

<sup>134</sup> Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days,” 32.

<sup>135</sup> Rushforth argues that indigenous systems of slavery worked to move captives “up and in” toward “full, if forced, assimilation” whereas Atlantic slavery moves slaves “up and out” by excluding slaves and their descendants from full participation in the master’s society even when freed. Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 66.

<sup>136</sup> Murphy, “Women, Networks, and Colonization,” 242.

Angelique was captured as a child around 1790 in what is now southern Missouri and was sold or given to the Laframboise family, becoming the slave of Magdelaine. While Murphy uses the term “slave,” her research also shows how the difference between the status of servants and slaves in the Laframboise and Schindler households is unclear. Murphy argues that the La Croix family were considered members of the Odawaag, like the Laframboise and Schindler families, and they had some say in their labor, including which family members they worked with. George Schindler, Therèse’s husband, wrote to Elizabeth, “Catish said that she will go and stay with you [when your baby comes].”<sup>137</sup> Catish may have had a variety of reasons for wanting to stay with Elizabeth, including preferring the management of the Baird Fischer household to the Schindler household, or she may have genuinely wanted to help with the new baby. Perhaps she preferred Elizabeth’s or perhaps she would prefer to care for an infant rather than perform other labor she would have been tasked with on Mackinac Island. The La Croix family being recognized as Odawaag is further evidence that the Laframboise and Schindler families participated in a Great Lakes form of slavery where captives could be adopted and integrated into families.

For the next fifteen years, Magdelaine Laframboise continued to winter in the Grand River area.<sup>138</sup> In June, she would return to her Mackinac home until the early fall. The La Croix family maintained her Mackinac residence and supported her travels throughout the Great Lakes. Mackinac was an important community in Anishinaabewaki, particularly for the Odawaag. Mackinac Island and the waters surrounding it were key to Odawa cosmology.<sup>139</sup> In numerous

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<sup>137</sup> George Schindler to Elizabeth Baird, May 7[?], 1825, Box 1, Folder 1, Baird Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (Madison, WI), <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:1165>, accessed February 1, 2017.

<sup>138</sup> Magdelaine wintered where the So-wan-que-sake (meaning forked stream and referring to the Thornapple river) emptied into the Grand River George H. White, “Sketch of Rix Robinson,” MPHIC, Vol. 11, 193; Albert Baxter, “Some Fragments of Life at Grand River Valley,” MPHIC, Vol. 17, 325–26.

<sup>139</sup> Michael McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the making of America*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015), 22.

sacred stories, aadizookaanag, the island is the literal birth place and center of the world. Various Anishinaabe stories note that Michabous, the Great Hare, began rebuilding the world at the island. He placed the most fish in the nearby waters and taught the people how to catch them.

Along with being situated in the heart of Anishinaabewaki, Mackinac Island was also the heart of the continent in the early nineteenth century. For hundreds of years it was a strategic entry point into and out of continental North America. As early American historian Michael McDonnell describes, “Any nation, European or Native, who wishes to pass back and forth from the east to west, or indeed even from north to south would have to come through either Michilimackinac or the Sault sixty miles to the north. If Michilimackinac was the door to North America, the Odawa, backed up by a powerful array of relations across the Lakes, held the key.”<sup>140</sup> From the island, a savvy paddler could go just about anywhere on the continent. They could travel southwest to the western shores of Lakes Michigan, to the communities of Green Bay, or Chicago. From there, short manageable portages could take them to either the Wisconsin or Illinois River, which emptied into the Mississippi River. From the river, the rest of the continent east of the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico were accessible. Alternately, Lake Michigan provided routes along its eastern shore, like the ones Magdelaine used to travel to the Odawa communities at L’Arbre Croche, the Muskegon River, and the Grand River area. A traveler could also head north to Sault Ste. Marie and into Lake Superior, whose many rivers and tributaries give access north to the country towards Hudson’s Bay. By heading east and south through Lake Huron, they would reach the Georgian Bay, the Detroit River, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario, providing multiple routes to the St. Lawrence Valley and the Atlantic ports of Montreal and Quebec. Magdelaine Laframboise utilized many of these routes throughout her life. Along

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 12-3.

with regularly traveling between Mackinac Island and Grand River, she also traveled along the north shore of Lake Michigan, heading west to visit family at Green Bay. Other times, she headed east into the Georgian Bay, taking the Ottawa River to Montreal. Like Molly Brant, she arranged for her children to be educated in the city. As McDonnell reminds, us “From Michilimackinac, anything [was] possible.”<sup>141</sup>

The Odawaag used the abundant birch and cedar trees to build canoes capable of handling the turbulent waters of the larger lakes. These crafts were essential for fishing in the resource rich waters of the the straits and facilitated Anishinaabeg seasonal mobility. The Odawaag were especially known for their skills as paddlers and their ability to travel across open expanses of the lakes, and were some of the only Anishinaabeg to venture out across the open waters out of sight of land.<sup>142</sup> Magdelaine was a skilled paddler, which allowed her to continue on the family trading business as a widow. While her life had changed with the death of her husband, her Odawa kinship connections gave her access to the furs she needed to build prosperity and she had indigenous servants to support her labors. Her residence was ideally located in one of the central communities of the upper Great Lakes. While Sally Ainese’s household holdings and property were declining in the early nineteenth century, in the Anishinaabe world of the upper Great Lakes, Magdelaine became known as Madame Laframboise—one of the most successful traders in the region.

Much like Magdelaine Laframboise’s residences, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston’s home was ideally located. At the time, Sault Ste. Marie was at the edge of British and American control—both political nations asserted a claim to the land but neither had the ability

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 25.

to extend much influence. To British settlers in the Thames River Valley or along Lake Ontario near the Grand River reserve, and to Americans streaming into Detroit and the area surrounding southeast Michigan from the Ohio Valley and the east coast, Sault Ste. Marie was at the far northern frontier. Yet to Anishinaabe peoples and employees of the fur trade, Sault Ste. Marie was one of the cultural and political centers of Anishinaabewaki.<sup>143</sup>

When Ozhaguscodaywayquay arrived in the area in 1793, she and her husband found four French families and a seasonally varying number of Ojibwe people. For the Ojibwe, the Sault was a thriving summertime center of people and culture.<sup>144</sup> The Johnston children grew up in a world made-up almost exclusively of Anishinaabe and fur-trade families, which consisted of non-Native men involved in the fur trade and Native wives. While the Americans technically claimed the south side of the St. Mary's River where the Johnstons' built their home, from the Treaty of Paris in 1783 after the American Revolution, the British held onto their forts in the upper Great Lakes in the hopes the boundary could be contested. The British also held sway among the largely French-speaking white people, and the community was built on both sides of the river with families frequently crossing the porous border as part of their daily lives. No American official would visit Sault Ste. Marie until 1820. By 1826, one hundred and fifty-two people of white and racially mixed descent were living at Sault Ste. Marie, including thirty women.<sup>145</sup> As late as 1831, a visitor to the home of Jane Johnston, who was married to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, noted that most of the white inhabitants have Indian wives and that all of the

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<sup>143</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 12.

<sup>144</sup> Anna M. Johnstone, "Recollections of One of the Old Houses of the Soo," Johnston Family Papers, Bentley Historic Library (BHL), University of Michigan (Ann Arbor); Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 18.

<sup>145</sup> McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour of the Lakes*, 158.

young women were half Ojibwe.<sup>146</sup> In the upper Great Lakes region, Anishinaabe women were the majority well into the nineteenth century.

Both the Laframboise and Johnston families were connected to many of the most prominent families in the region at Mackinac Island and Sault Ste. Marie. Magdelaine was connected to numerous influential Anishinaabe women. Her elder sister, Therèse Schindler, was another influential and prosperous woman on the island. At St. Joseph's, Therèse married a French voyageur working the fur trade, Pierre Lasaliere. They had one daughter, Marianne. By the time Marianne was baptized at nine years old in 1799, Pierre had left Therèse. She remarried in 1804 to George Schindler, a trader on Mackinac Island, and by the next year, she moved from St. Joseph's to Mackinac Island. While Schindler was a Protestant, they were married in a Catholic ceremony, and Joseph Laframboise, Magdelaine's husband, was one of the witnesses. Therèse hosted numerous parties during her life at Mackinac—since she was a full time resident, unlike Magdelaine who wintered at the island but spent summers in the Grand River area, her residence was more suited to hosting large parties.<sup>147</sup> Magdelaine and Therèse were also friends with Elizabeth Mitchell, an Odawa woman who worked as a trader while living at Mackinac Island full time. She was the wife of Dr. David Mitchell, a surgeon for the British army, and the couple also owned slaves.<sup>148</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston's family were imbedded in the social fabric of the south shore of Lake Superior. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's half-brother Waishkey and her brother Keewyzi both lived in the Sault Ste. Marie area and wielded great cultural influence and

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<sup>146</sup> Douglas Houghton. Letter to Richard Houghton, 15 June 1831, "Trip To Sault Ste[.] Marie, 1831." Philip P. Mason (ed.), *Michigan History* 39, no. 4 (December 1955): 474-80.

<sup>147</sup> McDowell, "Therèse Schindler," 133.

<sup>148</sup> Susan Sleeper Smith, "An Unpleasant Transaction on the Frontier: Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25.3 (2005): 420.

authority.<sup>149</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay's aunt, Obemaunoquay, who was married to John Sayer, may have spent time in the Sault Ste. Marie area in the early nineteenth century.<sup>150</sup> The Johnstons also had ties to other important Anishinaabe families, like the Cadottes. The world where Ozhaguscodaywayquay's and Magdelaine Laframboise's children would grow up immersed in Anishinaabe and fur trade family networks, almost never seeing a white woman who did not have kinship connections to an Anishinaabe family.<sup>151</sup> Jane, the Johnston daughter who spent the most time traveling to cities during her life and who routinely lived among English speakers, was described as speaking English with great charm but a curious accent, which had elements of French, Irish, English, and Ojibwe.<sup>152</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston also adopted an infant, Nancy Campbell. Nancy was the daughter of their friend Captain Campbell, who was killed in a duel around 1808 or 1809 near St. Joseph's in the southwest region of the lower peninsula of Michigan.<sup>153</sup> Nancy was brought up and treated "in every respect with the care and tenderness of one of their own children."<sup>154</sup> Adoptions were a part of Anishinaabe cultural practice and would have been familiar to Ozhaguscodaywayquay as well as to John, through his experiences as a fur trader. The Anishinaabeg used adoption as a way to increase populations during times of war and

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<sup>149</sup> Charles E. Cleland, *Place of the Pike (Goonzhekaaning): A History of the Bay Mills Indian Community*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 14-27.

<sup>150</sup> Two of Obemaunoquay's sons with John Sayer received land grants along St. Mary's River in the 1826 Treaty of Fond du Lac between the Ojibwe and United States. Lands grants were given to children of mixed Ojibwe and EuroAmerican descent as a type of inheritance through their Ojibwe kinship connections and to maintain a cohesive community between Ojibwe peoples and children of mixed heritage. Treaty of Fond du Lac, 1826, *Indians Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II*, edited by Charles J. Kappler, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 269. Available online at: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/VOL2/treaties/chi0268.htm> (accessed October 1, 2016); Jeremy Mumford, "Mixed-Race Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Family: The Schoolcrafts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1824-7," *Michigan Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 13.

<sup>151</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 18.

<sup>152</sup> Jameson, *Winter Studies*, 319; Eliza R. Stansbury Steele, *Summer Journey in the West*, (New York: John S. Taylor, 1841), 109.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

population loss.<sup>155</sup> Since Nancy Campbell had kinship connections to the Johnston family and was not acquired through warfare or trade, her full adoption into the Johnston family makes sense in an Anishinaabe-centered world. While racialized forms of slavery were gaining prominence in the lower Great Lakes in the nineteenth century, in the upper Great Lakes, Anishinaabe forms of kinship, including adoption rituals, continued to dominate.<sup>156</sup>

At Sault Ste. Marie, Ozhaguscodaywayquay's life was filled with responsibilities: maintaining her household and the outbuildings; producing agricultural products for sustenance and to trade, including raising livestock and growing agricultural products, like corn and flour; and raising and educating the children so that they would have opportunities to succeed in Anishinaabewaki or in the growing British and American cities to the south and east. The family also expanded: she gave birth to their second daughter, Eliza, in 1802, their third daughter, Charlotte, in 1806, and William, in 1811, their third son. To care for her children while maintaining the household, Ozhaguscodaywayquay drew on Ojibwe traditions, such as the use of the dikinagun or cradle board. Ojibwe women used cradle boards to bring their youngest child along while harvesting food in the natural environment, including the gathering of edible roots, nuts, berries, maple sugar, and wild rice. Cradle boards were usually constructed of a linden or maple wood frame that supported an elaborately decorated cloth used for carrying children. Ojibwe historian Brenda Child explains the Ojibwe story describing the origin of the

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<sup>155</sup> Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 24.

<sup>156</sup> The popularity of racialized slavery also varied throughout the lower Great Lakes, depending on geography and political climate. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the slave labor force on both sides of the Detroit river melted away: the 1810 Detroit census lists only seventeen slaves and the 1820 census lists none. The earliest postwar surveys for the Canadian side of the river in 1818 and 1820 also make no references to slaves. However, it's important to note that slaves in the Detroit River region and neighboring Thames River Valley were able to acquire their freedom long before slaves held elsewhere in Upper Canada and Michigan, where slavery persisted until the mid-1830s. Gregory Wigmore, "Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 453.

cradleboard: a young woman gave birth to male twins who were manidoog or spiritual beings. She put the new twins in cradle boards and carried them on her back so the child's feet did not touch the earth, and as a result, the story explains human infants do not walk at birth, unlike many newborns in the animal world.<sup>157</sup> At the head of the cradle board is a hoop-like attachment that served multiple purposes.<sup>158</sup> By using a cradle board, Ozhaguscodaywayquay would have been able to bring her children with her while performing household and agricultural labor. Children also became exposed to the skills performed by their mother, and began learning valuable skills at a young age. As Ozhaguscodaywayquay adopted the seasonal rounds she grew up with at Chequamegon, including gathering nuts, roots, and berries, producing maple sugar, and preserving and drying fish, to life at Sault Ste. Marie, the cradle board would allow her to continue her labor as both a mother and provider.

The Johnston household was multiethnic and multilingual. John Johnston worked at continuing to learn Ojibwe and Ozhaguscodaywayquay learned English. However, she chose to speak only Ojibwe, and the ways she raised her children and provided for her family in the nineteenth century show her commitment to Ojibwe customs and practices.<sup>159</sup> The children were fluent in Ojibwe, English and French. Ojibwe was most commonly used for communications among family members, and Eliza, like her mother, would not speak English.<sup>160</sup> The children all received a basic European-style education from their father and were introduced to the classics at an early age. John Johnston was an avid reader, and he built a large library in the family home.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Child,  *Holding Our World Together*, 16.

<sup>158</sup> Cradleboards could also have a netting attached to protect babies against insects. A hoop at the top served as a convenient handle to move the cradleboard from place to place. It also serves as a preventative measure by ensuring that if the cradle board falls face downward, the hoop would protect the baby from harm since the baby is strapped to the board. Bead work, toys, and other items, were attached to the the hoop. *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>159</sup> Hambleton and Stoutamire, *The John Johnston Family*, 11.

<sup>160</sup> McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour of the Lakes*, 150.

<sup>161</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 13.

Travelers were surprised by “the value and extent of this gentleman’s library; a thousand well bound and well-selected volumes, French and English, evidently much in use, in winter especially.”<sup>162</sup> While Ozhaguscodaywayquay would teach the children skills, such as making maple sugar, fishing for whitefish, and needle and quill work, John ensured the children were also learning to read and write English and French by drawing on his library. All the children other than Jane spent several years away from the Sault for schooling in Canada or the United States, from Montreal to Detroit to Sandwich and Cornwall in Ontario to other schools in New York state. However, much of their formal European education took place within the home.<sup>163</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay was the main teacher for their Anishinaabe education. John was a poet and a naturalist: his future son-in-law Henry Rowe Schoolcraft recorded several of his poems and his own memoirs are filled with detailed observations of the natural world on his first journey to Chequamegon. John was also a devout Christian and frequently read the bible.<sup>164</sup> All of the children would grow up to be practicing Protestant Christians, even though most of the other Christians in the area were French-speaking Catholics.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay was often in charge of the household since John Johnston would travel for extended periods of time. In 1804, John’s mother died in Antrim, Ireland and he inherited the family estate of Craighallynoe. As a result, he sailed for Ireland in 1809 and brought his daughter Jane with him. John left Jane with his sister and her namesake Jane Johnston Moore, as he thought it would behoove Jane to be raised by his sister who he believed could provide Jane with more thorough schooling, and he continued north to Dublin and his estate. However, the voyage and weather were hard on Jane, and she missed her home and

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<sup>162</sup> John J. Bigsby, *The Shoe and Canoe or Pictures of Travel in the Canadas*, Vol. 2, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 127.

<sup>163</sup> McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour of the Lakes*, 150.

<sup>164</sup> Hambleton and Stoutamire, *The John Johnston Family*, 11; Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs*, 81-82.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay. Furthermore, Jane Moore's husband died, leaving her in financial trouble. After three to four months, John returned and brought Jane to England, where she spent a few more unhappy months before they took the long voyage back to the Sault in 1810.<sup>165</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay must have missed her daughter and worried about her during her voyage and time in Ireland. Separated from her mother, her siblings, and surrounded by a strange culture, it is easy to see how the journey took a physical and emotional toll on Jane.

While dealing with the separation from her eldest daughter, Ozhaguscodaywayquay remained in charge of the household and businesses during John Johnston's absence. Ozhaguscodaywayquay would frequently step into the role of the head of household and was responsible for maintaining the family property, including, the barns, warehouses, a fur press, store, wine cellar, root cellar, milk and ice houses, carpenter and blacksmith shops, and a windmill.<sup>166</sup> She would also be responsible for overseeing the care of the various animals raised in the barns on the property, including hogs and cows whose meat would feed the family or be traded.<sup>167</sup> She also took part in seasonal harvests, such as the production of maple sugar.<sup>168</sup> The success of Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John's marriage at Sault Ste. Marie required her to act as an independent head of household. Based on the family's political and financial standing, Ozhaguscodaywayquay was adept and skilled at running the household.

Upon his return to Canada, John Johnston considered buying a farm near Montreal so his children would have access to better schools and so he could enter the more sophisticated social

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<sup>165</sup> Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs*, 58-9; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, "Notes for Memoir of Mrs. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft," MPHIC, Vol. 36, 96.

<sup>166</sup> Map of Johnston House and Outbuildings, MPHIC, Vol. 32, opp. pg. 326.

<sup>167</sup> Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, Harper, 1832, entry for Aug 26, 1817.

<sup>168</sup> In 1832, Presbyterian missionary Jeremiah Porter wrote that Ozhaguscodaywayquay had been going to Sugar Island to make sugar "every year for the last 28." 5 April, 1832, Jeremiah Porter Diaries, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit, MI.

life of the city.<sup>169</sup> However, these plans never manifested. Perhaps his experience with Jane's health issues and homesickness in Ireland made him question the wisdom of moving his children *and* Ozhaguscodaywayquay away from Sault Ste. Marie, out of Anishinaabewaki, and into a large city that was the hub of colonial officials rather than Ojibwe peoples.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay might have pressured John to keep the family in the upper Great Lakes. Moving to a new geographic area could threaten some aspects of their trading business, including the production of maple sugar. Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her children were John's main reason for staying in the upper Great Lakes area. His decision to give up his dreams of a cosmopolitan life in Montreal was likely due to Ozhaguscodaywayquay's influence in the marriage, his devotion to keeping his wife happy, and his anxiety regarding removing the children from their home after his experience with Jane in Ireland.

### **Anishinaabe Women and the the War of 1812**

For approximately the first decade of the nineteenth century, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and Magdelaine Laframboise were often occupied with raising their children and growing their family trading businesses. When the War of 1812 was declared in the summer of that year, both families coped with multiple changes. In particular, the Johnston family experienced long-lasting repercussions from the war. While the war was officially declared on June 18, 1812, the news did not reach the upper Great Lakes until early July.<sup>170</sup> John Johnston joined the British effort and was the captain who helped lead British forces to surprise the garrison on Mackinac Island, taking control and effectively bringing the war to the upper Great Lakes and Anishinaabewaki on

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<sup>169</sup> Schoolcraft, "Memoir of John Johnston," 58, 60, 64.

<sup>170</sup> Hambleton and Stoutamire, *The Johnston Family*, 13.

July 17.<sup>171</sup> Lewis, their eldest child, also fought in the war and ended up being severely wounded.<sup>172</sup> While John was at Mackinac Island, American troops showed up at John's store on the south side of the river at Sault Ste. Marie. George was in charge and despite his protest that all the contents were private property and there was no Northwest Company property on site in any way, the Americans ransacked and burned stores and warehouses and looted the house.<sup>173</sup> When John returned home, he found he had lost \$26,144.60 in property.

Despite this loss, John continued to work for the British during the war. In 1814 he returned to the island with Jane. While John was busy defending the fort against an American attack and briefly taking command, the eldest Johnston daughter, Jane, aided the war effort by sewing linen shirts for two Americans who were captured when advancing on the fort that was defended by mainly Anishinaabe warriors.<sup>174</sup> Jane was joined by Josette Laframboise, Magdelaine Laframboise's daughter, illustrating the close knit social world of Anishinaabe and fur trade families in the Upper Great Lakes.<sup>175</sup> Therèse Schindler's daughter, Marianne, was also on the island during the war.<sup>176</sup> Marianne moved to Prairie du Chien from Mackinac Island when she married Henry Monroe Fischer in 1809. Marianne and her daughter, Elizabeth, traveled to Mackinac to visit Therèse and Magdelaine before the war was declared, and they remained on the island until the fighting subsided. The war brought several women from the Johnston, Laframboise, and Schindler families together on Mackinac Island illustrating the perseverance of Anishinaabe women's kinship networks.

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<sup>171</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 12.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>173</sup> Schoolcraft, *Memoir*, 66-68; Memorial of John Johnston Presented in London, Dec 22 1819 to the Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury," MPHC, Vol. 25, 663.

<sup>174</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 12-3

<sup>175</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 77 (FN 10).

<sup>176</sup> McDowell, "Therèse Schindler," 132.

When the War of 1812 ended in 1814 with the Treaty of Ghent, a new line dividing British and American territory technically divided the upper Great Lakes. However, on the ground, the region remained Anishinaabewaki.<sup>177</sup> At Sault Ste. Marie, the north side of the St. Mary's River was claimed by the British, while the south side was claimed by the Americans. Families like the Johnstons, whose property was on the south side of the river, stayed put. Mackinac Island was claimed by the Americans, and the British established a new post on nearby Drummond Island. While the War of 1812 confirmed an international border through the upper Great Lakes in the minds of EuroAmericans negotiating the treaty at Ghent, little changed on the ground for residents. For British or Americans to have influence in the area, they relied on alliances with powerful Anishinaabe families, like the Johnstons or the Laframboises.

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<sup>177</sup> Historians have debated the effects of the War of 1812 on the sociopolitical fabric of the lower and upper Great Lakes. Some, like Richard White, have argued Anishinaabeg and other Native peoples lost power and influence after the war. Others, including Michael Witgen and Susan Sleeper-Smith, have illustrated how Anishinaabeg influence and power continued in certain regions into the mid-nineteenth century. White, *The Middle Ground*, 516-7; Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 323-25, 332, 339, 358; Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 97, 117, 124.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Furs, Maple Sugar, and Churches: Anishinaabe Women's Industries in the Nineteenth Century Upper Great Lakes, 1816-1845**

The War of 1812 brought changes to the upper Great Lakes, such as increased American settlement, the negotiation of treaties, and the creation of a British and American border through the St. Mary's River. However, under this context of expanded American presence, Anishinaabe women used creative strategies to not only maintain, but to increase their political and economic authority. Ozhaguscodaywayquay drew on her kinship ties and authority within Anishinaabe communities to become involved in major political negotiations in the area, such as the arrival of Lew Cassat Sault Ste. Marie and the Treaty of Fond Du Lac in 1826. In contrast, Magdelaine Laframboise negotiated with the Americans on an economic level: she was a successful trader with the American Fur Company in the years following the War of 1812. Each woman drew on their Anishinaabe heritage and skillsets to build their prosperity, such as running maple sugar camps that produced large amount of maple sugar—a valuable trade item. These women used the prosperity gained from economic and political labor to invest in their local communities by developing churches and schools for Anishinaabe community members.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's and Magdelaine Laframboise's careers illustrate the pattern that when Native women were able to retain control of their own property such as land, trade goods, and agricultural products, they maintained their status and influence in Anishinaabe and mixed-heritage fur trade communities. Their status stemmed from their connections to respected

Anishinaabe lineages, and they extended their influence through incorporating influential EuroAmerican men into their kinship networks. Elite Anishinaabe women wielded influence in negotiations with EuroAmerican officials. Yet in the eyes of the officials, the women's roles were minimal and most of their labors were attributed to male family members. In contrast to government officials, mixed-ancestry and EuroAmerican traders realized the value of Anishinaabe kinship connections and treated Anishinaabe women as independent economic agents. These traders realized the skillsets Anishinaabe women brought to the fur and maple sugar trades and saw clear economic benefits in working with the women.

### **Councils, Treaties and Furs: Anishinaabe Women's Industries in the Changing Landscape of the Upper Great Lakes**

By the end of the War of 1812, the Johnston family suffered several setbacks, including the injuries Lewis sustained and property lost from John Johnston's store.<sup>1</sup> However, despite these hardships the family continued to persevere, and they were helped by the strength of their Anishinaabe kinship and community connections. In May of 1814, John was authorized by the British imperial government to act as Civil Magistrate and Justice of the Peace for the Indian Territories outside the Provinces of the Upper and Lower Canada and areas under the U.S. Government.<sup>2</sup> In 1816 he also became agent for the district of the south shore of Lake Superior

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Johnston, *John Johnston's administratrix. Petition of the widow and administratrix of John Johnston, of the falls of St. Mary's, in the territory of Michigan, praying compensation for property seized and carried away by the American army, during the late war with Great Britain. January 7, 1836. Referred to the Committee of claims,* (Washington D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1836), available at the Clements Historical Library (CHL), Ann Arbor, MI. Call no. D C 1836 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Hambleton and Elizabeth Warren Stoutamire, eds. *The John Johnston Family of Sault. Ste. Marie.* (N.p: John Johnston Family Association, 1992), 13. Hambleton and Stoutamire cite, "Commission of John Johnson as Civil Magistrate and Johnston of the peace," May 12, 1814, by George Prevost, Governor of Lower Canada. Owned by Charles B. Wheeler, II Bethesda, MD.

for Astor's American Fur Company.<sup>3</sup> While John was not compensated for the loss of property from his store, his positions as a civil magistrate and agent with the American Fur Company are evidence of John's influence within Sault Ste. Marie and nearby communities. In 1816, the American government attempted to strengthen its control of the upper Great Lakes region by passing a law that prohibited foreigners from engaging in the U.S.-Indian trade without special presidential exemption. John Johnston was considered a British foreigner in the eyes of the United States, but he continued his trade in the region, even though he was technically no longer legally allowed to trade with the Anishinaabeg. That same year, the Northwest Company asked him to voyage to the Fort William post on the far northwest shore of Lake Superior to settle differences between the company and the Hudson's Bay Company, which had seized the post.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Johnston home was damaged during the American attack on the northern British side of the river during the war, the couple built a larger house in 1815-16 on the southern bank of the river.<sup>5</sup> Several years later in 1823, they renovated again to add a log addition for Jane and her new husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft.<sup>6</sup> The main house also underwent several more renovations over the following years, including the addition of clapboard and dormer windows.<sup>7</sup> As the Johnston house was expanded and renovated, the family also grew. Ozhaguscodaywayquay gave birth in 1814 to her fourth daughter (Anna Marie) and in 1816 to her fourth son (John MacDougall).

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1851), 71, 73-4. In 1816, Congress passed a law that only American citizens could trade in the Superior region but Johnston ignored it.

<sup>4</sup> Johnston in his capacity as Civil Magistrate, was offered 50 pounds by NWC but refused compensation. See, Robert Dale Parker (ed.), *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 13

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Author visit to John Johnston House, August 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make*, 13.

John Johnston continued to travel to attempt to seek compensation for his losses during the War of 1812 and for his career. As a result, Ozhaguscodaywayquay took on increasing responsibility in the household. In 1816 along with traveling to the western Lake Superior region, John traveled to York (present-day Toronto) to seek compensation for his losses in the war. However, the colonial government informed John his request was too late for consideration. Three years later, he traveled to London to attempt again to seek compensation. John presented his claim on December 22, 1819, but his claim was never honored since his post was on the American side of the border.<sup>8</sup> John found himself in a difficult place: the Americans refused to pay him because he was a British subject, and the British refused to pay him on the grounds that his post was on American soil. Most of the wealth that John had accumulated in the fur trade to support his family disappeared during the war. After his time in England, he visited relatives in Ireland. When he left Ireland in May 1820, he had received no compensation for his wartime losses.<sup>9</sup>

While John Johnston was away, Ozhaguscodaywayquay maintained the household. She raised the children she gave birth to after the war; she supported her elder children who were still living at home, and she ran the family businesses. She also became involved in regional politics. Most notably, she prevented an uprising of the Ojibweg at Sault Ste. Marie against Lewis Cass, the governor of Michigan Territory.<sup>10</sup> Lewis Cass was the first American official to visit Sault Ste. Marie when he arrived in 1820. He called the leaders of the Ojibweg to a council on June 16, 1820. Only younger ogimaag (chiefs), including Sassaba arrived. Sassaba, who was also a brigadier in the British army during the War of 1812, and spent significant time with Lt. John J.

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<sup>8</sup> Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Johnston, "Reminiscences," 60.

Pierce and David Bates Douglas, members of Cass's expedition. Sassaba objected to the Americans' presence in the region and their plans to build a fort at the site of a large Anishinaabe burial ground located on the American side at the St. Mary's River's narrowest point. He wanted the Americans to remain at Mackinac and Green Bay. Sassaba underlined his status by referencing his position as a warrior.<sup>11</sup> Since the Americans were outsiders in terms of the Ojibwe-British alliance, younger ogimaag were sent to the council with Cass. These ogimaag dealt with inawemaagen (outsiders without connections) and when necessary made war, rather than the elder senior ogimaag, who were responsible for both greeting meyaagizid (kin) and allies and negotiating peace.<sup>12</sup> Cass proceeded to lay tobacco plugs before the ogimaag and explained through an interpreter that due to the 1795 Treaty of Greenville that ended the Northwest Indian War, the United States received title to any land previously transferred to the French or English governments now within the bounds of the United States.<sup>13</sup> Since the French were the first Europeans to occupy Sault Ste. Marie, the United States now claimed the area.

The ogimaag ignored the gifts and politely claimed to have no knowledge of the former grant, repeatedly refusing to recognize this transfer of jurisdiction in their homelands.<sup>14</sup> They also outlined many of their concerns, including the construction of an American fort on an Anishinaabe burial ground. They worried the construction would scare away fish, their primary food source.<sup>15</sup> When Cass refused to withdraw his demand for a land cession for the fort,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For analysis of the chiefs sent to meet Cass, see Cary Miller, "Gifts as Treaties: The Political Use of Received Gifts in Anishinaabeg Communities," *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2002): 229. For a discussion of inawemaagen and meyaagizid see, Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 31, 33, 55, 63, 75, 76, 122, 126, 138, 205-7, 341, 366.

<sup>13</sup> Cary Miller, "Gifts as Treaties," 229.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Sassaba stood up, planted his war lance in the ground and kicked away the gifts of tobacco, rejecting both the gifts and the Americans' proposal. He and the other young ogimaag returned to their homes, and Sassaba hoisted a British flag above his lodge.

Lewis Cass rightfully interpreted Sassaba's actions as hostile, and he feared an attack from the Ojibweg. After ordering his men to arms, he strode over to Sassaba's home with only an interpreter, took down the flag, flung it to the ground, and trampled it. In Cass's mind, his action demonstrated disdain for the British and the assertion of American control over the territory. To the Ojibweg, the territory was controlled by the Anishinaabeg, who had formed an alliance with the British. As a result, they viewed Cass's action as a defilement of their treaty with the British and possibly as a declaration of war. Anishinaabe historian Carey Miller explains, "If Sassaba's actions could be read as a tossing down of the proverbial gauntlet, Cass had just picked it up."<sup>16</sup>

Lewis Cass rebuked the ogimaag through his interpreter for their hostility towards the United States. As a result of his announcement, the Ojibwe community sent their women and children to the Canadian side of the river to defend their village. The Americans viewed this as a further precursor to war and fortified their camp. George Johnston had attended the meeting. According to his narrative, after the women and children left for their village on the British side of the river, he made his way home and "met [his] mother opposite [his] office and she, appearing much agitated, accosted [him], saying: 'For God's sake, George, send instantly for the elder chiefs, for that foolish young chief, Sessaba, will bring ruin to the tribe, and get them

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 230.

assembled here.” As a result, George dispatched messengers for the ogimaag and elders who assembled in his office where he addressed them with the following words:

My friends and relatives, I am young and possess very little wisdom to give you advice at this present time; it is from you I should receive it, but on this occasion allow me to give you a few words of warning.... You are all of you aware that hostilities between Great Britain and the United States have ceased. Peace now exists. The two nations are now living on friendly terms; one of your young men has misbehaved himself and has given a gross insult to the government of Michigan, a representative of the president of the United States, by hoisting the British flag on his acknowledged territory. You can not expect that the British government will sustain him in such an act. I understand that he has gone to arm himself and raise warriors; now be wise and quick and put a stop to his wild scheme and suppress the rising of your young men. The firing of one gun will bring ruin to your tribe and to the Chippewas, so that a dog will not be left to howl in your villages.<sup>17</sup>

At this time, Ozhaguscodaywayquay appeared and according to George, “with authority commanded the assembled chiefs to be quick, and suppress the follies of Sessaba, the chief.”

Ozhaguscodaywayquay was respected for her kinship networks that extended throughout Anishinaabewaki, by many of the ogimaag in the room.<sup>18</sup> Her father, Waubojeeg, was a ogima at the prominent community of La Pointe. Her husband, John, was also a known as a generous trader, bolstering her family’s position of respect. Shingaukonse (sometimes referred to as Shingwaukouse), the orator of the tribe, was selected with other men to stop Sassaba’s proceedings and they started down the road where they met with Sassaba.

Shingaukonse headed directly to Sassaba to deliver the message from the assembly at George’s office. When he arrived, Sassaba had already changed from his British uniform to war

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Historians have taken different positions on how Ozhaguscodaywayquay gained respect within Anishinaabeg communities. Like Cary Miller, I argue that Ozhaguscodaywayquay was respected for both her inherited and created kinship connections. Charles Cleland has argued that the Crane doodem were the “undisputed leaders of the eastern Lake Superior Chippewa” and because Ozhaguscodaywayquay is from the Reindeer doodem her authority did not derive from her family connections. Instead, Cleland argues that Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s vision quest before her marriage is indicative that she held a supernatural power that gave her authority in situations between the Anishinaabeg and EuroAmericans. See, Miller, “Gifts as Treaties,” 231 and Charles Cleland, “Cass, Sassaba and Ozhaw-guscoday-way-quay: History, Ethnohistory, and Reality,” in *Entering the 90s: The North American Experience*, Thomas E. Schierer (ed.), (Sault Ste. Marie, MI: Lake Superior State University Press, 1991), 80-1.

paint. American forces had killed Sassaba's brother during the War of 1812. Sassaba was looking to exact his revenge in accordance with Anishinaabe mourning rituals. Yet even after Sassaba struck Shingaukonse's shoulder with a war club, [Shingaukonse] "kept up his oration and with his eloquence and the power vested him by the chiefs, he prevailed on the party to return quietly to their respective lodges, then situated at the head of the portage and along the shore of the falls." The mission was a success as soon after a messenger reported that Sassaba's party had returned to their homes.<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime, Ozhaguscodaywayquay sent George Johnston to warn the Americans that if they refuse to listen to Shingaukonse, they could be attacked during the night by Sassaba's party.<sup>20</sup> At this point, George assembled the ogimaag once again and arranged for an apology to Cass and offered his office as a council room. The meeting led to the consummation of a treaty between the parties and George received two bottles of wine and tobacco in payment for his role. Ozhaguscodaywayquay is not recorded as receiving payment for her role; the American officials either underestimated her responsibility in the negotiations or they valued her contribution but did not view her capable of handling her own economic affairs and, as a result, paid her eldest son for her labors since her husband was absent. It was likely the latter option, since Thomas McKinney noted several years after the event that Cass, "felt himself then, and does yet, under the greatest obligation to Mrs. J for her co-operation at that critical moment."<sup>21</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay drew on her kinship ties to influence the Ojibwe leadership at Sault Ste. Marie and to prevent a conflict from breaking out in the region. She also drew from

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<sup>19</sup> Johnston, "Reminiscences," 60.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, "Gifts a Treaties" 231.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas L. McKenney, *Sketches of a Tour of the Lakes: of the character and customs of the Chippeway Indians, and of incidents connected with the treaty of Fond du Lac*, (Baltimore: F. Lucas, 1827), 183. Originals at American Philosophical Society.

decades of experience dealing with British merchants and politicians through her marriage to John. She must have been aware that the British resources were financially tapped out and that Britain had no interest in sending supplies and men to support the Ojibwe battle against the Americans, just a few short years after signing the Treaty of Ghent. She must have been worried about the violence and disruption that a battle against the Americans would bring to the region, especially after so many Anishinaabe families suffered injuries and losses during the War of 1812. Ozhaguscodaywayquay came from a family of strong Ojibwe leaders, and she saw the upper Great Lakes as part of Anishinaabewaki. The Anishinaabeg were the demographic majority in the area. Americans had little geographic knowledge of the area and relied on interpreters and guides for survival. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a complete American takeover of Anishinaabewaki seemed like a remote possibility: the British also had an interest in the region and they already had a relationship with the Anishinaabeg at Sault Ste. Marie. Ozhaguscodaywayquay may have seen that creating a relationship with the Americans was a way to leverage the Anishinaabe's position with the British.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Anishinaabe peoples strengthened political ties through alliances, and she may have viewed a friendly relationship with Americans as a way to strengthen the position of the Ojibwe village of Sault Ste. Marie within Anishinaabewaki.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's political influence continued after John Johnston returned from his trip overseas. Since John was unsuccessful in being compensated for his property losses from the war, her diplomatic and economic labor became even more important to the family. In 1821, John and Ozhaguscodaywayquay affirmed their relationship with a Christian marriage ceremony

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<sup>22</sup>For more on how competing imperial powers benefited Native peoples see, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104, No. 3 (Jun., 1999), 814-841.

at Mackinac Island.<sup>23</sup> John kept his promise to Waubojeeg: he was committed to Ozhaguscodaywayquay throughout his life. The marriage is also the first time Ozhaguscodaywayquay is recorded as participating in a Christian ceremony. In 1823, another family marriage occurred when their daughter Jane married Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Jane's dowry came from her parents' trading business and was worth over 2,000 pounds (approximately \$10,000).<sup>24</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay used the kinship connections forged between Jane Johnston and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to her benefit in 1826. That year, Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her son-in-law attended treaty negotiations between the Anishinaabeg and the American government near Fond du Lac, by the west end of Lake Superior. Congress wanted to define the boundary between Anishinaabewaki and Dakota lands and also wanted to obtain the rights to mine copper on Anishinaabe lands. The Anishinaabe's land base was still largely intact, and they agreed to allow mining and mineral extraction but clarified that the grant did not "affect their title over the land, nor jurisdiction over it."<sup>25</sup> They also negotiated for government annuities and to award allotments of tribal lands to "half-breeds."<sup>26</sup> Historian Jeremy Mumford argues that land grants to individuals were common in Indian treaties due to both the motives of negotiators and the Ojibweg's desire to provide for relatives of a tribe who were no longer a part of it.<sup>27</sup> While negotiators saw the land grants as a way to assimilate "half breeds" and to privatize parts of

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<sup>23</sup> Certificate of Marriage of John Johnston and Susan, April 29, 1835, George Johnston Papers, BPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

<sup>24</sup> Richard G. Bremer, *Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar: The Life of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft*, (Mount Pleasant, MI: Clarke Historical Library, 1988), 97.

<sup>25</sup> Treaty of Fond du Lac, 1826, *Indians Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II*, edited by Charles J. Kappler, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 269. Available online at: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/VOL2/treaties/chi0268.htm>, accessed October 1, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Mumford, "Mixed-Race Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Family: The Schoolcrafts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1824-7," *Michigan Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-4.

Anishinaabe land in an effort to assert American control over the territory, the Anishinaabeg viewed the grants as a strategic move to strengthen the connection between family members. At Fond du Lac, land grants were reserved for forty-five Ojibwe women who married white men, as well as their children. Ozhaguscodaywayquay was the first name on the list and she was the only woman to receive an additional allotment for each grandchild. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's property was on Sugar Island, a prime location for the production of maple sugar, which was Ozhaguscodaywayquay's specialty.<sup>28</sup> Schoolcraft helped negotiate the treaty and listed his mother-in-law under her Anishinaabe name, Ozhaguscodaywayquay, rather than her Christian name, Susan Johnston. As a result, he disguised the benefits that his wife and children received from the treaty and his resulting conflict of interest, from Congress.<sup>29</sup> American government officials downplayed Ozhaguscodaywayquay's role in the negotiations with Cass at Sault Ste. Marie in 1820 and in the 1826 Treaty of Fond du Lac, instead attributing political acumen to her male family members, like her son George Johnston and her son-in-law Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's involvement in politics illustrate how in Anishinaabewaki, kinship connections and political networks were always intertwined.

Along with Ozhaguscodaywayquay's name being at the top of the list of land grants, the Johnston family was the only family to receive grants for a third generation (Ozhaguscodaywayquay's grandchildren) which indicates the family's privileged status in the community.<sup>30</sup> She was also the only person whose location for the grant was specified: "The locations for Oshaguscoday wayquay and her descendants shall be adjoining the lower part of the military reservation, and upon the head of Sugar Island."<sup>31</sup> Other beneficiaries were to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Kappler, *Indians Affairs*, 269.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

receive 640 acres per person along the shores and islands of the St. Mary's River. George Johnston's wife, Wassidjeewunoqua, and their children, also received land—further ensuring that multiple generations of Johnston family members received land grants from the treaty. Other members of Ozhaguscodaywayquay's Anishinaabe kin network also benefited from the grants, including Henry and Thomas Sayer (the sons of Ozhaguscodaywayquay's aunt, Obemaunoqua), and Waybossinoqua, and John J. Wayishkee, the children of Wayishkee (Ozhaguscodaywayquay's brother).<sup>32</sup> Many other elite Anishinaabe families appear in the land grants, including the Cadottes and the Oakes.<sup>33</sup> While the majority of individuals receiving land grants were from intermarried families, a few individuals who were "Chippewas of unmixed blood" also received grants, including Odishqua, and Pamidjeewung, both of Sault St. Marie.<sup>34</sup>

For Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her children, the grants were viewed as a legitimate inheritance due to their familial connections to Anishinaabewaki. While Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her descendants benefited personally from the grants, the larger Anishinaabe purpose of grants was to tie family members who were not formally part of Ojibwe bands to Ojibwe family members.<sup>35</sup> Since the Anishinaabeg did not give up title to any of their lands in 1826, the only land grants specified were for intermarried families or Anishinaabe kin that the United States government did not view as formal band members. Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her family received tracts of property on Sugar Island. Ozhaguscodaywayquay aimed to build a community

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<sup>32</sup> John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press: 2013), 193.

<sup>33</sup> While Ozhaguscodaywayquay appears first on the list and the Johnston's are the only family to receive grants for their grandchildren, the Cadotte family appears multiple times on the list, including Saugemaqua, widow of the late John Baptiste Cadotte, and to her five children; Michael Cadotte, senior, son of Equawaice; Equaysay way, wife of Michael Cadotte, senior, and to her children living within the United States; and Ossinahjeunoqua, wife of Michael Cadotte, Jr. and each of her children, one section. Kappler, "Treaty of Fond du Lac," *Indian Affairs and Treaties*, 269.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

of kin who would help support the family business of producing maple-sugar. The expansion of the fur trade in the nineteenth century was leading to an overall decline of beaver and the region's future was shifting to more renewable resources, such as maple sugar.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay's plans were grounded in traditions of Anishinaabe women's labor and keen insights into the economic future of the upper Great Lakes drawn from the knowledge she gained through her life-long experiences in the region. The American government agreed to granting tracts of property to "half breed" family members as an attempt to assimilate intermarried families. Yet rather than assimilate, women like Ozhaguscodaywayquay used the grants to continue long-standing Anishinaabe subsistence practices, like maple sugaring. Furthermore, while the United States would assert jurisdiction over increasing parts of Anishinaabewaki in the mid to late nineteenth century and narrowed the Anishinaabe land base as a result, the lands granted to elite families were protected as private property. As the owners of the property, women like Ozhaguscodaywayquay would have complete control of the profits produced from economic activities on their land, such as harvesting maple sugar.

By the mid-1820s, Ozhaguscodaywayquay took on a more prominent role in the household. John Johnston was in his sixties and his health was declining. He frequently battled illnesses. As a result, Ozhaguscodaywayquay was increasingly responsible for the household's financial security. In the spring of 1828 John was able to travel to New York, but he contracted a fever during the trip. When he returned he had to be carried off the boat on a stretcher.<sup>36</sup> He died on September 22, 1828, leaving Ozhaguscodaywayquay to maintain the household and support their children. The court listed his belongings as amounting to \$1300, and some of the

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<sup>36</sup> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to George Johnston, September 24, 1828, George Johnston Papers, BPL, Box 3, Folder 2.

most valuable items listed were a gold watch at \$100, his books at \$100, 33 brass kettles worth \$150, and 22 pounds of silver plate valued at \$350.<sup>37</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay remained in the family home in Sault Ste. Marie and she continued the family business of working in trade, even as she cared for her daughter Charlotte who was dangerously ill the winter of after John's death. Ozhaguscodaywayquay must have been relieved when Charlotte recovered by mid-January of 1829.<sup>38</sup>

While caring for her children, Ozhaguscodaywayquay also continued the family trading business. Her son William assisted. She outfitted many influential families in the region with supplies, including the Ermatingers, Piquettes, Audrains, and Schoolcrafts. The goods she sold included various forms of alcohol like cider, shrubs (also known as "drinking vinegar" and usually consisting of a mixture of fruit, vinegar, sugar, and sometimes liquor), rum, wine, and whiskey; imported luxury goods like ivory combs and coffee pots; items for creating clothing, including flannel, cotton, ribbons, and thread; agricultural and food products produced on their property, like flour, corn, pork, and beef; and items produced by herself and her daughters, like baskets and moccasins. She also traded in her specialty, maple sugar.<sup>39</sup> Moving away from furs, Ozhaguscodaywayquay focused on alcoholic beverages, agricultural products, and Anishinaabe specialty items, such as moccasins and maple sugar.

Magdelaine Laframboise, also turned to trade to support her family after the death of her husband. Like Ozhaguscodaywayquay, she had extensive kinship connections to respected Anishinaabe families and was knowledgeable about the geographic and sociopolitical landscape

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<sup>37</sup> Order of Judge Probate, July 1820, 1829, Schoolcraft Papers, Lake Superior State University, (Sault Ste. Marie, MI), Microfilm Reel 19.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to George Johnston, January 14, 1829, George Johnston Papers, BPL, Box 3, Folder 2.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Johnston, Manuscript account journal of store at Sault Sainte Marie, Mich, 1830-31., Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, Microfilm 1159.

of the region. While grieving from the loss of her husband, Magdelaine wintered at Grand River and summered at Mackinac Island. Magdelaine's children drew on their mother's status and wealth to further increase the family's social status by marrying into prominent families in the region. In April of 1816, Magdelaine's daughter, Josette, married Captain Henry Pierce, the commandant of Mackinac Island's military garrison.<sup>40</sup> Magdelaine was unable to attend the wedding, since she was still trading at Grand River for furs. However, when she returned to the island, a lavish party was held in June to celebrate the wedding. The party was held at the house of Elizabeth Mitchell, a prominent Anishinaabe woman and member of the Mackinac Island community. The union represented a joining of two prominent families—one Anishinaabe and one American. Henry's brother, Franklin, became president of the United States in 1852. Unfortunately, four years after their marriage, Josette died suddenly from an unexplained illness.<sup>41</sup> Her infant son, Langdon, also died.

During this period, Magdelaine Laframboise worked for the American Fur Company, but records of her accounts did not survive.<sup>42</sup> In 1819, she was hired by the American Fur Company for an annual salary of \$500, including covering the cost of her boatmen and supplies, but it is unclear what her profits would have been.<sup>43</sup> She retired from the fur trade in 1822, but she continued to produce valuable goods, like moccasins and maple sugar, to pay for her personal expenses.<sup>44</sup> American Fur Company records from its Mackinac Island store between 1824 and

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Therèse Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, (CSHSW), Vol. X, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1898), 40-1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, "'An Unpleasant Transaction on the Frontier': Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac." *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (2005): 435

<sup>43</sup> For Magdelaine being hired for \$500, see Mrs. Arthur Thurner to John McDowell, July 12, 1979, John E. McDowell Papers, Clarke Historical Library (CHL), (Mount Pleasant, MI), Box 1, Folder 3. For a different and higher estimate of her income, see John E. McDowell. "Madame La Framboise," *Michigan History* 56, no. 4 (1972): 278.

<sup>44</sup> Baird, "Reminiscences," 41.

1827 show Magdelaine frequently purchased clothing and fashion items, like sewing silk, taffeta ribbons, silk shawls, multiple yards of cotton fabrics, “fine men’s shoes,” seal skin shoes, and alcohol, like Madiera wine, sherry wine, port wine, and whiskey. While she usually purchased goods with cash, in the summer of 1826 she paid in moccasins and makaks (sometimes referred to as mokuks) of maple sugar.<sup>45</sup>

In 1823, Magdelaine Laframboise received a tract of land along the Grand River from the nearby Odawaag.<sup>46</sup> The grant stated: “Know all whom these may concern by these payments that whereas we the undersigned chiefs of the Indian Tribes of Grand River are connected by Blood related with Madelon Laframboise of Michilimackinac And whereas also we are desirous of doing good unto her and her descendants or offspring.” The grant also demonstrates both a blend of Anishinaabe and EuroAmerican concepts of land ownership and Magdelaine’s continued kinship obligations to her Odawa relatives. Yet the deal also illustrates how the Odawaag near Grand River were familiar with EuroAmerican conceptions of land ownership and utilized EuroAmerican legal terminology to make the land sale appear binding in a court of law.<sup>47</sup> However, despite the Odawaag’s attempt to sanction the sale, the transaction would be unconstitutional from the point of view of the American federal government, unless the transfer was embedded in a federal treaty.

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<sup>45</sup> Account of Madeline Laframboise, in American Fur Company Mackinac Island Account Book Retail Store, 1824-1827, pg. 63, American Fur Company Records located in Robert Stuart House, CHL, MSS F-65, Reel 2.

<sup>46</sup> Donation of Indian Chiefs to Madelon Laframboise (1823), Henry S. Baird Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), (Madison, WI), Series 2, Box 6, Folder 1.

<http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/baird/id/3911> (accessed April 1, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the land grant, see Brad Devin Edward Jarvis, “‘A Woman Much to Be Respected’: Madeline Laframboise and the Redefinition of Métis Identity,” (Master of Arts Thesis, Anthropology, Michigan State University, 1998), 88-9. For a discussion of how the Odawaag of Michigan adapted American concepts of land ownership to resist removal, see M. McClurken, “Ottawa Adaptive Strategies to Indian Removal,” *Michigan Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1986): 29-55.

Magdelaine Laframboise’s on-going relationship with the Anishinaabeg also helped determine her choice in fashion. She was known to wear “full Indian costume.”<sup>48</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay also dressed, “nearly in the costume of her nation—a blue petticoat, of cloth, a short gown of calico, with leggings worked with beads, and moccasins.”<sup>49</sup> While women like Molly Brant and Sally Ainse drew from Haudenosaunee and EuroAmerican styles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, women like Magdelaine and Ozhaguscodaywayquay dressed in the Anishinaabe fashion throughout their careers as traders and during their retirement. Magdelaine’s fashion choices illustrate her commitment to visually expressing her Odawa identity. As a trader, her ability to thrive came from the familial connections and skills she gained growing up in Odawa communities. In the upper Great Lakes, women like Magdelaine and Ozhaguscodaywayquay could draw on their status as Anishinaabe women to succeed as traders and to influence political negotiations. While Sally Ainse’s status as a single, multiethnic, property-owning woman was a liability in the Thames River Valley in the nineteenth century, in the upper Great Lakes, the Anishinaabeg remained the most powerful political entity. As a result, Anishinaabe women operated as their own principal brokers in trade and benefited from their status as members of respected families.

### **“Resembling a Factory”: Anishinaabe Women and the Maple Sugar Trade**

In 1831, Ozhaguscodaywayquay sold the Johnston family business to the American Fur Company. Producing maple sugar became the center of her business.<sup>50</sup> Maple sugar (in various

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<sup>48</sup> Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days,” 40.

<sup>49</sup> McKenney, *Sketches of a tour*, 182.

<sup>50</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay continues on business with William and in 1831 sells business to AFC, see George Johnston to the Rev Henry Kearney, March 20, 1831, Johnston Family Papers, call no. 85221 Aa 2, Bentley Historical Library (BHL), Ann Arbor, MI, Box 1, Miscellaneous Notes and Fragments.

forms, such as syrup, solid sugar, taffy and candy) was an important staple throughout Anishinaabewaki. In Anishinaabemowin, the sap is called a variety of names, including, ninaatigwaaboo translating to ‘maple tree water’, wiishkabaaboo translating to ‘sweet water’, and zisbaakwadaaboo translating to ‘sugar water.’<sup>51</sup> The running of maple sap was a welcome sign of spring. The best years for syrup came from winters with deep freezes and large snowfall accumulation. Ojibwe women favored the flavor and texture of the first run of sap, as they believed heavy rains in the spring ruined the taste of the syrup. Producing maple sugar was the responsibility of the women who returned annually to sugar bushes (or forests of maple trees) where they held usufruct rights to communal property.<sup>52</sup> During the fall, women would often cache food at the sugar bush work site, including wild rice and dried corn and fruit.

Women were also responsible for gathering birch bark, basswood, and hemlock to make the needed utensils: casseaus or buckets that collected sap from the trees; spouts made from basswood; hemlock branches for stirring the sap; makaks, which were baskets where the syrup was laid out to dry and crystallize into sugar; and gass, which was made from the inner bark of basswood and used to sew the casseaus and makaks together.<sup>53</sup> Birch bark served many functions, since it could hold and boil liquids without degrading. For large scale sugar production like Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s operation, as many as two thousand taps were used. Ojibwe women also used moose hides to create large reservoirs for the sap. Kettles were

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<sup>51</sup> Alan Corbiere, “Ninaatigwaabo: Maple Water, An Anishinaabe History of Maple Sugaring,” *Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Cultures*, <http://grasac.org/exhibit/ninaatigwaaboo-maple-water>, accessed April 1, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, (New York: Penguin, 2012), 20.

<sup>53</sup> Childs, 20; Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days,” 30.

purchased from traders and used to boil the clear, watery maple sap down to a sweet amber liquid.

The process of reducing sap to sugar usually took about twenty-four hours and the fire needed to be kept burning the entire time.<sup>54</sup> After this thickening process, the liquid was spread out in a large trough, where women worked with paddles to make granulated maple sugar that would then be stored in makaks. The sugar needed to be put into the makaks while warm, as it would not pack properly cold. Packing the sugar was a difficult task that the owner of a sugar camp usually oversaw.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the year, maple sugar seasoned wild rice, vegetables, corn, berries, fish, and meat.<sup>56</sup> During her childhood, Ozhaguscodaywayquay would have learned to make sugar from family members, like her mother, and her aunt, Obemaunoquay.<sup>57</sup>

Presbyterian minister Jeremiah Porter left an account of Ozhaguscodaywayquay's sugar making in the spring of 1832. Porter describes how he joined her daughters who went "to visit their mother whose sugar camp is on an island in the River about six miles below." The party consisted of sixteen people carried in four sleighs, since snow still covered the area, creating the appearance of "Frebru", [which] appeared strange for the fifth of April." Henry Rowe Schoolcraft recounts a similar expedition to Ozhaguscodaywayquay's sugar camp and he describes how, "Winter has shown some signs of relaxing its iron grasp, although the quantity of snow upon the ground is still very great and the streams appear to be as fast locked in the embrace of frost as if it were the slumber of ages."<sup>58</sup> Schoolcraft, also provides insight into the

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<sup>54</sup> Baird, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>57</sup> For evidence of Obemaunoquay running her own sugar camp, see Sylva Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 80.

<sup>58</sup> Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs*, 162.

importance of sugar making to the Anishinaabeg. It was a “business every one is more or less interested . . . Sleighs and dog trains have been departing for the maple forests, in our neighborhood, since about the 10<sup>th</sup> instant, until but few, comparatively, of the resident inhabitants are left. Many buildings are entirely deserted and closed.”<sup>59</sup> Sugar making was a key part of seasonal rounds, and women were an integral part of the entire process.

Upon arriving at the island Jeremiah Porter and his companions walked to Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s lodge, “about half a mile thro’ a beautiful maple orchard, the trees of noble growth.” Ozhaguscodaywayquay has “been on that island to make sugar ever year for the last 28. She makes usually more than three thousand pounds.” To support her extensive sugar making production, Ozhaguscodaywayquay had lodge “made of bark & mats spread on poles . . . larger than many a house. Probably it is 35 feet long & 25 broad & high. On each sides are beds raised from the ground. A fire in the middle extends from end to end of the lodge.” When they collected enough sap, kettles were hung over the fire and sugar was all boiled within the house creating “a scene of industry indeed.” Schoolcraft described the lodge as “resembling a factory” with about twenty kettles hanging over the fire.<sup>60</sup> Along with the sugar production, Anishinaabe women were “all around sewing Mococks, made from birch bark to contain the sugar.” Porter describes a dinner in the lodge, followed by singing their favorite hymns, and engaging in lively discussions for several hours. Schoolcraft also emphasizes the hospitality of the gathering, describing how the custom is for everyone to contribute something in the way of “cold viands or refreshments” and the “principal amusement consisted in pulling candy, and eating the sugar in every form.”<sup>61</sup> While Porter and several of the daughters left in the evening to return home,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Ozhaguscodaywayquay would spend another month at the camp involved in the industrious sugar production operation.<sup>62</sup> Sugar-making was a large, well-orchestrated production, but it was also a time for celebration, coinciding with the early stages of spring and the beginning of the transition from winter, when food sources were scarce, to the plentiful times of spring, summer, and early fall. Children delighted in maple snow cones and sugar candy, while adults would indulge in hot coffee and tea made from the clear maple water. Fresh fish could be served with sauces of dried cranberries and blueberries cooked and sweetened with the new maple syrup.<sup>63</sup> Through a mixture of labor and celebration, Ozhaguscodaywayquay's industrious sugar camp produced approximately 3,500 pounds of "sugar of excellent quality" in a season.<sup>64</sup>

Sugar Island also played a role in the border negotiations in the region. In 1828, American and British powers agreed that the international boundary should run through the St. Mary's River.<sup>65</sup> However, they both claimed Sugar Island. The Americans argued that the 1826 Treaty of Fond du Lac, where Ozhaguscodaywayquay inherited property on Sugar Island, acknowledged the American claim to the island.<sup>66</sup> Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her Anishinaabe relatives saw the treaty as a way to ensure the most valuable property was kept in the hands of Anishinaabe families, rather than under American control. The Americans used the rhetoric of the treaty to serve their own purposes in negotiations with the British. In 1842, the British agreed to the boundary and confirmed the island was under American jurisdiction.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jeremiah Porter Journals, 5 April, 1832, Jeremiah Porter Papers, BHC.

<sup>63</sup> Childs, *Holding Our World*, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Anna Brownell Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, Vol. 3, (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 217.

<sup>65</sup> Karl S. Hele, "The Anishinaabeg and Métis in Sault Ste. Marie Borderlands: Confronting a Line Drawn Upon the Water," in *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands*, ed. Karl S. Hele, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2008), 69.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

Therèse Schindler, Magdelaine Laframboise's older sister, also ran a large maple sugar camp. Therèse Schindler's camp was located on the nearby Bois Blanc island, five miles east of Mackinac in Lake Huron. It consisted of over one thousand maple trees. Therèse usually employed three men and two women to perform the labor. Much like at Ozhaguscodaywayquay's camp, sap was collected in birch bark buckets, carried by shoulder yokes, and dumped into brass kettles suspended over open fires. Therèse's granddaughter, Elizabeth, describes heading to the sugar camp on a dogsled, along with Francois Lacroix, an Osage captive who was probably the nephew of Catish (the daughter of Magdelaine's servant, Angelique).<sup>68</sup> An Anishinaabe sugar camp consisted of a variety of forms of labor. The owner of the camp oversaw the activities (usually a woman). Meanwhile, family members, hired laborers, and indigenous captives and slaves all contributed to tasks needed to convert sap to sugar. Francois was also responsible for checking on the camp during the summer, and in the process he would hunt for pigeons and ducks to bring back to Mackinac.<sup>69</sup> In some cases, indigenous captives were responsible for laboring at the camp and maintaining the camp in the off season.

While the sugar harvest required hard work, it was also a time of celebration. Therèse Schindler would hold parties during the end of a harvest. In one instance, five men and women arrived to Bois Blanc. The women brought with them their own frying pans and they used them to make thin French pancakes, or crepes. During the party, the women were busy frying up crepes—allowing them to cook on one side then flipping them over by tossing into the air. The men also decided to partake in the challenge of flipping the delicate pancakes. Elizabeth, Therèse's granddaughter, notes that this took a bit of practice, and "Never did I see objects miss

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<sup>68</sup> Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island," 32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

so widely the mark aimed at. Many fell to the fire, as if so intended. Some went to the ground and one even found its way to a platform above the head of the turner.”<sup>70</sup> The crepes flew everywhere, provoking laughter from the party guests. Bets and challenges were made. For instance, Henry S. Baird (the future husband of Elizabeth) held out his cap and challenged Mrs. John Dousman, the wife of a prominent fur merchant, to flip her cake into it. She surprised him by easily performing the feat. The evening finished up with a dinner of partridge roasted on sticks over the fire, rabbit stuffed with squirrel and “cooked, French fashion,” and crepes and maple syrup.<sup>71</sup>

Producing sugar on a large scale was a way for elite women like Ozhaguscodaywayquay and Magdelaine Laframboise to maintain their wealth into the mid-nineteenth century. EuroAmerican settlers who had increased in the area after the War of 1812 were not able to partake in maple sugar production with the same success as Anishinaabe women. Even if they managed to acquire the land, they did not have the knowledge to create the necessary utensils or to carry out the process, unless they married an Anishinaabe women.

### **“A Remarkable Thing”: Fostering Community Through Churches and Schools**

In her retirement, Magdelaine Laframboise focused on her family, community, and church. Historian Susan Sleeper-Smith describes how, “in Odawa fashion, she shared her resources with visitors, distributing food and clothing to Indians. Her actions sealed the bond of friendship among the Odawa, and she acted as a summer patron, sharing her wealth with her

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

family that came to Michilimackinac.”<sup>72</sup> She often walked on the shoreline of the island, greeting friends and newcomers.<sup>73</sup> She took care of family members when they visited the island, including her sister Therèse Schindler’s grand-daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>74</sup> One of Magdelaine’s slaves, Catish, helped take care of Elizabeth.<sup>75</sup> Magdelaine’s own grand-daughter, Harriet Josette Pierce, wrote to Magdelaine in the spring of 1835, reminiscing:

I have always loved to dwell upon the scenes of my childhood, when it was you, who nursed me with care and left not a wish unsatisfied: scarcely thought had [?] but what as realised; I remember the many many little acts of kindness you wont to do for me. Do you remember our rides across the Lake in the winter? How you used to delight in making me candy? I could fill my paper with other incidents that my memory still cherishes.<sup>76</sup>

Magdelaine played a large role in raising her grand children and nieces. Anishinaabe traditions such as taking rides across the lake to harvest maple sugar and producing maple candy, left memorable impressions on the young relatives she helped raise.

Magdelaine Laframboise also taught herself to read French and took in young women who “had no opportunity to receive instruction in church matters” and hired people to teach them, while continuing her own education in the process.<sup>77</sup> While she was a devout Catholic, she also took in children attending the Protestant school as boarders. By the time a separate Protestant mission and school was established, she opened a Catholic school for girls in her own

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<sup>72</sup> Sleeper-Smith, ““An Unpleasant Transaction,”” 433.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>74</sup> Baird, “Reminiscences of Early Days,” 41.

<sup>75</sup> Elizabeth remembers Angelique fondly in her memoirs, however, white children who were raised by enslaved black women also use terms of endearment to describe the slaves. In this instance, there is a similarity between the labor performed by an Osage slave owned by an Odawa woman in the 1800s and the labor performed by enslaved black women throughout the US at the same time. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987; Patricia Hill, Collins, “Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood” in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, E. Glenn, et al., eds. New York: Routledge, 1994; and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in New World Slavery*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Harriet Josette Pierce to Magdelaine Laframboise, April 21, 1825, (Baird Papers), Wis Mss V, WIHV94-A1354, Wisconsin State Historical Society (WSH), (Madison, WI), Box 1, Folder 3.

<sup>77</sup> Baird, Reminiscences of Early Days,” 41.

home.<sup>78</sup> Sleeper-Smith argues that by taking in mainly female boarders, Magdelaine “reinvigorated the matrifocal households that had evolved with the fur trade.”<sup>79</sup> When taking care of her grand-nieces and granddaughters and establishing a boarding school for girls within her home, Magdelaine drew on Anishinaabe social practices.

Magdelaine Laframboise’s niece, Marianne Schindler (the daughter of Therèse and mother of Elizabeth Baird Fischer) also ran a school and prioritized taking care of Anishinaabe kin. Marianne carried on the tradition of promoting education by opening a boarding school for girls on Mackinac Island.<sup>80</sup> She also worked at L’Arbe Croche and Grand River teaching and translating books for the Odawaag.<sup>81</sup> One morning in 1820, she woke up to find a wigwam pitched on her yard. Inside was John Tanner, a white man from Kentucky who was captured by the Shawnee, then sold to the Anishinaabeg and raised by an Odawa woman, Netnowkwa. A few years before, John had returned to Kentucky with his biological brother James, but John was unhappy and his brother suggested he return to the upper Great Lakes. Since Therèse Schindler had once been kind to John, he decided to seek out her daughter, Marianne. Marianne took in John’s two daughters, Lucy and Martha, educated them in her school, and raised them. She also took in John’s Anishinaabe wife, who worked in the Schindler homes as a servant.<sup>82</sup> Great Lakes historian Lucy Murphy notes that both Marianne Schindler and her daughter, Elizabeth Baird, traveled to be with family and friends in times of childbirth, disease, or distress, illustrating that

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<sup>78</sup> Sleeper-Smith, ““ An Unpleasant Transaction,”” 434.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> John E. McDowell, “Therèse Schindler of Mackinac: Upward Mobility in the Great Lakes Fur Trade,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 61, no. 2 (1977): 137.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 237; The name of John Tanner’s wife is not known. For John Tanner’s narrative, see John Tanner, *A narrative of the captivity and adventures of John Tanner, (U.S. interpreter at the Sault de Ste. Marie.): during thirty years residence among the Indians in the interior of North America*, ed. Edwin James, (New York: G & C & H Carvil, 1830).

women of mixed Anishinaabe and EuroAmerican ancestry followed similar patterns of Anglo-women.<sup>83</sup> However, Marianne Schindler and Elizabeth Baird's travels can be viewed as demonstrating the continued prevalence of Anishinaabe hospitality and kinship networks which created a support system for Anishinaabe women and their children. For instance, their elder relative, Magdelaine Laframboise drew on her success in the fur trade and Anishinaabe hospitality practices to help raise family members and take in boarders in need of education.

A loyal Catholic, Magdelaine Laframboise used her wealth from the fur trade to support the local church. She is widely cited as donating the land for Ste. Anne's church on Mackinac Island. However, as Michigan historian John McDowell points out, Magdelaine's son, Joseph Laframboise, and her grand-daughter, Harriet Pierce, owned three lots on the island, including the lot donated to the Catholic church and the lot where Magdelaine built her residence. Harriet was interested in the lot Magdelaine planned to donate to the church and the lot occupied by Magdelaine. Harriet's father had "made improvements in considerable amounts" to "the house in which [Magdelaine] lived and fencing the lots etc."<sup>84</sup> Harriet, notes she "could in case of agreement sign over my claims to the lot upon which the church stands," but in return she wanted title to the house, reasoning that she and her husband had a large family to support.<sup>85</sup> She wrote again to her grandmother in December, noting she was disappointed she had not received a response to her spring letter. She had almost concluded that Magdelaine had "forgotten [her]: but when I reflect upon the appearance of your affection and the kindness you bestowed when I visited you, I banish the thought."<sup>86</sup> She explained she did not want to sign over her lot to the

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<sup>83</sup> Lucy Murphy, "Women, Networks, and Colonization in Nineteenth Century Wisconsin," *Contours of a People: Métis Family, Mobility, and History*, eds. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 242.

<sup>84</sup> Harriet Josette Pierce to Magdelaine Laframboise, April 21, 1835, Baird Papers, WSH, Box 1, Folder 5.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, Harriet Josette Pierce to Magdelaine Laframboise, December 9, 1835, Baird Papers, WSH, Box 1, Folder 5.

church before consulting her father. She promised that after consulting with him, she would sign over the church property if she received, “the lots which is [hers], I mean the lot which you live on.”<sup>87</sup> Despite the affection shown by her grand-daughter, Magdelaine must have been worried about being evicted. Harriet wrote again the following summer and mentioned that Magdelaine had requested she visit Mackinac that summer. Harriet agreed to the visit but upon her arrival she wanted to deal with the issue of the lots.<sup>88</sup> She assured Magdelaine that even though she wanted ownership of the lot since she had a large family that needed “what little she has,” Magdelaine would always be welcome to live there.<sup>89</sup> Harriet’s goal seemed to be to ensure she had legal ownership of the lot so that when Magdelaine died, her ownership was guaranteed. She stressed that she did not want to evict her grandmother while using the house for herself and her family.

Michigan historian John McDowell points out that the letters indicate it is unclear which woman actually donated the property to the church. Regardless of who made the donation, Magdelaine Laframboise influenced the decision. While Harriet Pierce’s relationship with her grandmother was strained over the issue, throughout the letters she expresses deep affection for her grandmother and a desire to visit her. Harriet’s letters also indicate she was influenced by her father who wanted to ensure she was taken care of financially.<sup>90</sup> McDowell describes Harriet as young, concerned about her future, and perhaps a little thoughtless of her grandmother’s feelings. In the end, Magdelaine and Harriet remained close and a lot was signed over to the church as Magdelaine desired. Throughout their lives, the Laframboise and Schindler women established schools and churches to ensure Anishinaabe and mixed-ancestry children of fur traders had the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Harriet Josette Pierce to Magdelaine Laframboise, July, 1826, Baird Papers, WSH, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

opportunity to learn to read and write in English for a world increasingly based in Anglo-American practices.<sup>91</sup>

While Ozhaguscodaywayquay was busy producing and trading in maple sugar, she also undertook community projects, like contributing to a small Presbyterian church being built in Sault Ste. Marie in 1832. By that time, Ozhaguscodaywayquay, George, and her four daughters had all converted to Christianity and regularly attended church.<sup>92</sup> In May of 1832 (four years after John Johnston's death), Presbyterian missionary Jeremiah Porter came across Ozhaguscodaywayquay at John's grave weeping, and displaying "a most delightful instance of conjugal affection."<sup>93</sup> Porter also adds, "I met the daughter, Mrs. S on her husband[s]s arm retiring to the same sacred spot to weep." Henry Schoolcraft reports on January 1<sup>st</sup> in 1833, "A remarkable thing recently transpired. Mrs. Susan Johnston, a widow—an Indian woman by father and mother—built a church for the Presbyterian congregation at this place. The building, which is neat and plain, without a steeple, was finished early in the fall, and has been occupied this season for preaching, lectures."<sup>94</sup> Investing in a church was a way for Ozhaguscodaywayquay to extend her political influence in the local community. By establishing a Presbyterian church, she ensured that a public space was provided for the tradition of Christianity that she practiced.<sup>95</sup>

Magdelaine Laframboise was a devout Catholic since her marriage to her second husband, but Molly Brant, Sally Ainese, and Ozhaguscodaywayquay all turned to Christianity

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<sup>91</sup> Sleeper-Smith, "An Unpleasant Transaction on the Frontier," 433.

<sup>92</sup> Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs*, 400-10 and 431.

<sup>93</sup> 10 May 1832, Jeremiah Porter Journal 1831-32, BHC (originals at Chicago History Museum).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>95</sup> It is of interest that Ozhaguscodaywayquay's daughter Charlotte was married to an Anglican minister, William McMurray, and that Ozhaguscodaywayquay built a Presbyterian and not Anglican church.

later in their lives. Molly and Ozhaguscodaywayquay both donated land for churches to be built where they retired. Ozhaguscodaywayquay and her children also regularly attended Presbyterian services in the Sault Ste. Marie area. Schoolcraft, her son-in-law, was a Presbyterian, which may have encouraged Ozhaguscodaywayquay to choose that particular Christian church.<sup>96</sup> Sally Ainse never officially joined a church, but she sometimes attended Moravian ceremonies in her elder years. Her brother became a Moravian earlier in their life and Sally had lifelong friendships with Moravian missionaries. She was able to seek help from the Moravians when her barn burned down in the early nineteenth century, illustrating how they were an integral part of her support network later in life. In different ways, each woman found the church to be an integral part of their social life and community networks.

Practicing Christianity (to differing degrees and extent) became another method for Native women to extend their kinship networks and strengthen their privileged position in the communities where they lived. Over the past decade, scholarship on Native peoples and Christianity in the Great Lakes has illustrated how Native peoples drew on aspects of Christianity that were useful to them and that served their own purposes, in some ways developing their own indigenous form of Christianity. Under this framework, engaging with Christianity does not necessarily mean a lack of engagement with Haudenosaunee or Anishinaabe religious practices. Instead, Native peoples incorporated aspects of Christianity on their own terms, rather than converting to a singular religion.<sup>97</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith illustrates

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<sup>96</sup> Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 71. Ozhaguscodaywayquay's other daughter, Charlotte, married an Anglican missionary in 1833.

<sup>97</sup> For examples of scholarship that looks at Native peoples' engagement with Christianity, see Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Woman and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Great Lakes*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Alan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2005); Michael Leonard Cox, "Wendats, Presbyterians, and the Origins of Protestant Christianity on the Sandusky River," in *From Huronia to Wendakes: Adversity, Migrations, and Resilience 1650-1900*, Thomas

that Magdelaine Laframboise acted in the Odawa fashion of sharing resources with visitors and distributing food and clothing to Native people. At the same time, these behaviors might be viewed as those of a “charitable Christian, eager to befriend and evangelize ‘needy’ Indians.”<sup>98</sup> EuroAmerican visitors viewed Magdelaine as a converted Christian. They did not understand that many of the aspects of Catholicism she adopted were similar to Odawa customs and practices.

Magdelaine Laframboise also drew on Christianity to fulfill her own goals, such as funding schools and churches to support the education of Native women. In other cases, local Christian communities served as extended support networks for Native women, like the help Sally received from the Moravians in the early nineteenth century. Some women, like Molly Brant and Ozhaguscodaywayquay had daughters who married EuroAmerican men who practiced Christianity. The mothers may have become familiar with Christianity not only through their intimate partners, but also through their daughters. As their daughters became familiar with Christianity through their husbands and incorporated aspects into their own religious practices, women like Molly and Ozhaguscodaywayquay might have too. Native women traders freely incorporated various aspects of EuroAmerican culture into their own lives when it was useful to them whether it was trade goods, fashion items, or religious practices.

In her elder years, Ozhaguscodaywayquay influenced and supported her community through helping to found a Presbyterian church. She also focused on ensuring the continued financial security of her immediate family. In 1836 when the United States government signed

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Peace and Kathryn Magee Labelle, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 111-43. For an in-depth discussion of Anishinaabe’s relationship with Christianity in the nineteenth century, see Michelle Cassidy, “Both the Honor and the Profit”: Anishinaabe Warriors, Soldiers, and Veterans from Pontiac’s War through the Civil War, University of Michigan, Doctoral Dissertation, 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Sleeper-Smith, ““An Unpleasant Transaction on the Frontier,”” 433.

another treaty with Ojibwe and Odawa peoples, leading to the cession of 102,400 acres of Anishinaabe land, many families received financial settlements from the federal government, including the Johnstons.<sup>99</sup> In mid-summer, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft began recording debt claims and taking censuses of the Indians bands within the ceded area, who were entitled to receive annuities. In the fall, over four thousand Anishinaabe peoples poured into Mackinac with claims, and remained on the island until the end of the distribution. Due to their elite status, the Johnstons fared well in the claims. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was the estate administrator and John's estate was valued at almost \$70,000. Ozhaguscodaywayquay inherited almost \$8,000 and the remainder was divided among the children. Ozhaguscodaywayquay gave her share to Henry to invest, and many of the children followed her lead. He received about \$44,000 from the estate and from funds the children received through land grants and trading debt claims to invest in real estate in Detroit. Unfortunately, the Panic of 1837 caused a financial crisis throughout the United States, real estate values declined, and Schoolcraft's investment of the money turned out be another family loss that would never be recovered.<sup>100</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay attempted to rectify her financial hardship by seeking the remuneration John Johnston was denied for their family property lost in the War of 1812. She sent a detailed document to the United States government outlining the family's losses during the war. She opened by establishing:

That previous to, and during the late war between the United States and Great Britain, she was a resident, and still continues to be a resident, of [St. Mary's Falls]. Events which she will proceed to mention, caused aggressions upon and a seizure of private property, of which she is the legal representative, and for which she claims remuneration. In order to set this claim in it is proper light, she remarks, that she is the daughter of a Chippewa

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<sup>99</sup> Bremer, *Indian Agent*, 173.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-11. For one discussion of George Johnston's investments with Schoolcraft, see Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to George Johnston, May 22, 1837, BPL, George Johnston Papers, Box 3, Folder 1.

chief of Lake Superior. Mr. Johnston, her late husband, came to American in 1790, and shortly after settled himself at St. Mary's in the prosecution of the fur trade.<sup>101</sup>

Ozhagusodaywayquay opened by stating where she lived and asserting her Anishinaabe kinship ties. She used her residence at Sault Ste. Marie and her kin connections to establish her claim that private property was seized from her family during the War of 1812. She asserted John's independence from British companies, like the Northwest Company: "at no time during any period of [John Johnston's] residence in the country from his arrival in it in 1790, to the day of his death in 1828, was he an agent, partner, or clerk of this company. Neither did he purchase his supplies from them, nor dispose of his returns to them, being in the practice of dealing with private firms in Montreal, who imported their goods direct from England."<sup>102</sup>

Ozhagusodaywayquay's petition to the American government gives insight into her own determination and will-power, but also into the resources she had available as an Ojibwe woman living in the Lake Superior region in the mid-nineteenth century. Ozhagusodaywayquay pointed out that while American troops were told not to seize private property, in terms of the Johnston residence it was "totally disregarded by the soldiery, who completely stripped the premises and left nothing but the bare walls of wrecks of mutilation." Ozhagusodaywayquay also clarified why she was filing the claim regarding her private property in 1836 when the incident occurred during the War of 1812:

Upwards of twenty-one yeas have now elapsed since these depredations were committed. Mr. Johnston died in 1828 after a strenuous but unsuccessful struggle of fourteen years to recover his former position, leaving your memorialist with seven children to provide for. Time has shed its mellowing influence upon these transactions: death has put his seal upon many of the actors: but it has left the widow and her children as the victims of a

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<sup>101</sup> Susan Johnston, *John Johnston's administratrix. Petition of the widow and administratrix of John Johnston, of the falls of St. Mary's, in the territory of Michigan, praying compensation for property seized and carried away by the American army, during the late war with Great Britain. January 7, 1836. Referred to the Committee of claims,* (Washington D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1836).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

loss, which more and more felt as years take from the ability of action and add to the incapacity of uncertainty of age. The period seems to have arrived for the favourable consideration of her claim. Having no longer a protector to look to, having exhausted her ingenuity of resource, and with infirmities of age fast pressing upon her she now appeals to Congress for redress.<sup>103</sup>

Ozhaguscodaywayquay invokes the idea of being without a protector, referencing a tradition in the Great Lakes where the Anishinaabeg formed alliances with EuroAmerican powers, viewing them in terms of a benevolent father or protector who was bound to Anishinaabe peoples through a series of gift-giving ceremonies and was obligated to ensure the well-being of Anishinaabe peoples.<sup>104</sup> Yet despite her attempts, Ozhaguscodaywayquay was unsuccessful in convincing a EuroAmerican branch of government to honor the Johnston family's loss of property.

In some ways, Ozhaguscodaywayquay's situation is similar to how Sally Ainese was denied property ownership of her land claim in the Thames River Valley. However, unlike Sally, Ozhaguscodaywayquay had other methods of supporting herself and her family. She retained control of her land on Sugar Island that she received in the Treaty of Fond du Lac, allowing her to run her industrious maple sugar camp. Magdelaine and her sister Therèse were also granted land in a treaty between American officials and the Anishinaabeg at Chicago in 1833.<sup>105</sup> However, another Anishinaabe woman, Elizabeth Bertrand Mitchell, found her property threatened by EuroAmerican officials. Elizabeth married David Mitchell, a British subject and doctor, in 1776. When the British moved their fort from the south side of the straits to Mackinac Island in 1780, the Mitchells also moved.<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth had Ojibwe and Odawa relatives. When Americans regained control of Mackinac island after the War of 1812, her husband left

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> For more on the political role of gift-giving in the Great Lakes, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Cary Miller, "Gifts as Treaties,"; and Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*.

<sup>105</sup> Kappler, "Treaty with the Chippewa etc. 1833," *Indian Affairs and Treaties*, Vol. 2., 406.

<sup>106</sup> Sleeper-Smith, "An Unpleasant Transaction," 428.

Mackinac for the nearby, British-controlled, Drummond Island. Elizabeth stayed on Mackinac to run her business. Anishinaabe women traders like Elizabeth, Magdelaine, and Thérèse, visited daily with Native peoples on Mackinac and within the region after the war to provide them with provisions.<sup>107</sup> The recently assigned U.S. Indian agent, Henry Puthuff, was worried that American control over the region was being thwarted by Elizabeth Mitchell whose loyalties rested with her Anishinaabe family or British husband, rather than the U.S. government. He threatened to arrest Elizabeth if she did not cease communication with Native peoples.<sup>108</sup> He also made a series of attacks on Elizabeth's character where he relied, in Sleeper-Smith's words, "on a gendered discourse that dismissed Mitchell as a married woman and the legal dependent of her husband."<sup>109</sup>

Henry Puthuff viewed Elizabeth as a British subject rather than an Anishinaabe woman because of her marriage. As Sleeper-Smith shows, by nationalizing Elizabeth's identity as the wife of a Briton, Henry denied her kinship ties to the Anishinaabeg.<sup>110</sup> He even seized Round Island, which was deeded to Elizabeth by Anishinaabe relatives.<sup>111</sup> By asking her to cease communications with her relatives, Puthuff effectively asked her to give her up career and family. Elizabeth could not represent herself legally in American courts, except through her spouse. Furthermore, she spoke a mixture of Ojibwe, Odawa, and French, rather than English. She "figuratively and legally lacked the ability to speak or act without [her husband's] assistance."<sup>112</sup> The situation was even more complicated since as a British citizen, her husband

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 427. For one of Puthuff's attacks see, Clarence Edwin Carter, ed. *The Territorial papers of the United States*, Vol. 10 (Washington DC, 1942), 595.

<sup>108</sup> William Henry Puthuff, Michilimackinac, Oct. 5 1815. *MPHC*, Vol. 16 (Lansing: 1910), 254.

<sup>109</sup> Sleeper-Smith, "An Unpleasant Transaction," 428.

<sup>110</sup> Sleeper-Smith, "An Unpleasant Transaction," 430.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

could not seek redress in American courts. Elizabeth avoided this dilemma by temporarily moving to Drummond Island with her husband. In the mean time, the solution came through diplomatic channels with the assistance of the British: Elizabeth returned to Mackinac Island by agreeing to minimize her relationship with her Anishinaabe relatives. In reality, she probably just hid these relationships from Henry. Her youngest son also became a U.S. citizen and her trading partner.<sup>113</sup> In 1819 Puthuff was replaced as Indian Agent and left the island.

Henry Puthoff attempted to use coverture to depict Elizabeth as the subject of her husband, similar to how British officials used coverture to define Sally as the subject of John Wilson. However, at Mackinac Island and Sault Ste. Marie, American and British officials enforced EuroAmerican customs with varying degrees of strictness. Many officials on both sides of the border recognized the enduring political power of the Anishinaabe communities and continued to make strategic alliances with them. Agents who did not have Anishinaabe kinship connections often stayed in the area for only a short time—like Puthuff. When such an individual left the the area, it was even easier for Anishinaabe women to resume business as usual. Since Anishinaabe families retained the majority of political and economic power in the upper Great Lakes in the early nineteenth century, Anishinaabe women like Ozhaguscodaywayquay, Magdelaine Laframboise, and Elizabeth Mitchell were able to maintain most of their property even when EuroAmerican governments failed to view them as valid economic actors with rights.

By the late 1830s, Ozhaguscodaywayquay had battled several illnesses.<sup>114</sup> While she outlived several of her family members, including her husband, she died in 1843, a year after her

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>114</sup> Jane Johnston Schoolcraft to George Johnston, June 15, 1839, George Johnston Papers, BPL, Box 1, Folder 14.

eldest daughter Jane.<sup>115</sup> Her life ended in Sault Ste. Marie—the community she moved to approximately half a century before.<sup>116</sup> Magdelaine Laframboise died a few years after Ozhaguscodaywayquay in April, 1846 at Mackinac Island.<sup>117</sup> She was buried under Ste. Anne’s church beside her daughter, Josette. Therèse outlived her sister and continued to live at Mackinac until the death of her daughter, Marianne, in 1853. She moved to Green Bay, where she lived with her granddaughter, Elizabeth until her death in 1855. Her body was returned to Mackinac Island and she was also buried at Ste. Anne’s church.<sup>118</sup> At some point before she died, Magdelaine emancipated at least one of the family slaves, Francois (Catish’s son). He moved to Cross Village, along with his mother. Louison also gained his freedom: he married in 1834 and the family moved from Mackinac Island to Grand River.<sup>119</sup> Opportunities would exist for the children and grandchildren of Anishinaabe women, but the deaths of Ozhaguscodaywayquay, Magdelaine Laframboise, and Therèse Schindler marked the end of an era in the upper Great Lakes.<sup>120</sup> They lived during a period when multiple Anishinaabe women became successful traders and through their extensive family, economic and political networks shaped the landscape of their communities and the broader region.

The American and British border was confirmed in 1842, shortly before both women died. After the mid-nineteenth century, EuroAmerican settlement increased in the Great Lakes as

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<sup>115</sup> Her eldest daughter Jane died in 1842, after many years of poor health. Jane and Henry Schoolcraft’s first child, Wily, died of croup in 1827 at three years old, and Jane increasingly battled depression and physical illness after his death. Jane Johnston Schoolcraft to George Johnston, March 26, 1827, George Johnston Papers, BPL, Box 1, Folder 10.

<sup>116</sup> James L. Schoolcraft to George Johnston, November 28 1843, George Johnston Papers, BHC, Detroit.

<sup>117</sup> McDowell, “Madame La Framboise,” 286.

<sup>118</sup> *Wisconsin Necrology*, Vol. 1, 202, copy in John E McDowell Papers, CHL, Box 1; McDowell, “Therèse Schindler of Mackinac,” 142.

<sup>119</sup> Baird, *Reminiscences on Mackinac Island*, 42.

<sup>120</sup> Other Anishinaabe women traders, like Elizabeth Mitchell, had also died by this time. Elizabeth died in 1827. David A. Armour, “David and Elizabeth: The Mitchell Family of the Straits of Mackinac,” *Michigan History* 64, no. 4 (1980): 17-29.

the fur trade declined and other industries, such as logging and mining, emerged. Rather than being based on Anishinaabe kinship connections and skillsets, these new industries were controlled by companies owned by EuroAmerican men. The construction of locks in the Saint Mary's River in the nineteenth century allowed large freighters to pass from the lower Great Lakes into Lake Superior, feeding the expanding new industries and changing the landscape of Anishinaabewaki. In Canada, beginning in the 1850s, a series of legislative acts would be passed to define the term "Indian," culminating in the Indian Act, implemented in 1876, which gave the federal government the ability to legislate Native identity and lead to the creation of reservations.<sup>121</sup> On the south side of the border, the Treaty of 1855 included a clause that dissolved the Sault Ojibwe's tribal government and in place implemented the payment of compensation and the provision of individual allotted lands. In 1887 the United States government instituted allotment on a national scale through the Dawes Allotment Act, which restructured Native communities, land use, and claims to citizenship.<sup>122</sup> Three decades after the deaths of Ozhaguscodaywayquay and Magdelaine Laframboise, neither side of the border looked the same.

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<sup>121</sup> Hele, "The Anishinaabeg and the Métis in the Sault," 71. For an overview of the Indian Act and its lasting effects, see Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. For a discussion of the Dawes Act, see Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 75, 77, 78-9, 81, 167, 213. For an overview of the Indian Act and the Dawes Act, see Andrea Marak and Gary Van Valen, "Introduction: Transnational Indians in the American West," in *Transnational Indians in the American West*, eds. Andrea Marak, Clarissa Confer, Laura Tuennerman, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2015), 8-9.

## CONCLUSION

### Remembering Native Women Traders in the Great Lakes Borderlands

In 1752, after a long and prosperous career, Madame Montour died. While she is often framed as a rare example of a Native woman who became a successful interpreter, in the next hundred years, another group of indigenous women found opportunities to build illustrious careers for themselves working as traders, interpreters, and political liaisons throughout the same Great Lakes region that Madame Montour traversed. Despite the important role played by Great Lakes trading women, local, regional, and national histories barely engage with their contributions. When the women receive attention they are usually framed as extraordinary examples, similar to Madame Montour. In a 2011 *MLive* online newspaper article, David Schmid, an amateur historian and historical re-enactor who has studied fur trading of the Great Lakes and early French explorers, discusses Magdelaine Laframboise, stating, ““For a female to be that involved in the fur trade — to be the boss — was incredible.””<sup>1</sup> Framing Native women traders as part of a larger pattern, rather than as individual aberrations, forces us to contend with the ways that indigenous women shaped the sociopolitical landscape of the region, including the development of political borders and the negotiations of treaties.

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<sup>1</sup> Garrett Ellison, “Lowell fur trading post was manned by Michigan's most famous woman pioneer,” *MLive*, November 21, 2011, [http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/11/lowell\\_fur\\_trading\\_post\\_was\\_ma.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/11/lowell_fur_trading_post_was_ma.html), accessed March 25, 2017.

Sally Aitse, Molly Brant, Ozhaguscodaywayquay, and Magdelaine Laframboise all had long, successful careers as traders. They were all involved in significant events that shaped the political landscape of the Great Lakes, from attending Indian councils during the French and Indian War, to acting as translators and negotiators during the Revolutionary War and the Northwest Indian War, to supporting the Anishinaabe and British alliance during the War of 1812; and influencing treaties in the Lake Superior region. However, very little historical work has focused on the role of Native women traders as political and economic actors in the Great Lakes. In some cases, Canadian or American national narratives include Great Lakes trading women, yet in other cases, they are rarely mentioned, except by local historians. Examining how the women's stories have been commemorated, altered, or ignored, illustrates a major reason why the women have not been featured as important historical actors in the United States or Canada: their stories challenge present-day conceptions of gender, sexuality, race, and settler colonialism on both sides of the northern border.

### **Sally Aitse: Multi-Ethnic Oneida Entrepreneur**

Out of four main women in this dissertation, Sally Aitse's contributions to the landscape of the lower Great Lakes have been the most ignored in the present. Her vast trading networks that spanned the lower Great Lakes, her economic prominence in Detroit during the Revolutionary War, her involvement in the Northwest Indian Wars in the Ohio Valley, and her role in the development of the Thames River Valley in southern Ontario receive little attention on either side of the border.<sup>2</sup> Sally Aitse's career was long, diverse, and impressive. She traded

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<sup>2</sup> Historians also have paid little attention to Sally Aitse. She is the focus of one local history pamphlet and mentioned in a few recent Great Lakes History books. For the local history text, see Frederick Coyne Hamil, *Sally*

in ginseng, silver, furs, rum, and cider. She was a property owner for large tracts of property at multiple points of her life and she hosted political conferences on her properties. Yet while she is occasionally mentioned by local media, museums, and historical societies, there are no memorials or plaques to remind people of her contributions in places like Chatham, Ontario or Detroit, Michigan.<sup>3</sup> She is not mentioned in the exhibits or tours at historic sites, such as Fort Michilimackinac, Fort Johnson, or Fort Stanwix.<sup>4</sup>

In Canada, Sally Ainse's story is particularly difficult to incorporate into national narratives. She is a reminder of the ways that the colonial government of Canada disenfranchised Native peoples from large swathes of land, denying their rights to ownership and refusing to issue deeds. EuroAmericans poured into the region, claiming land that was already owned by Native peoples, including women like Sally Ainse, and far more easily acquired deeds and legal recognition as land owners. Sally's story draws attention to the systemic dispossession of Native peoples in the Ontario peninsula—one of the most populated regions of Canada in the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup> As a result, she draws attention to the problems with Canadian narratives that emphasize peaceful settlement based on fair agreements with local Native peoples. Sally also

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*Ainse, Fur Trader*, (Detroit: Algonquin Club, 1939). For more recent Great Lakes histories, see Alan Taylor, "Epilogue," in *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 296-504 and Catherine Cangany, *Frontier Seaport: Detroit's Transformation into an Atlantic Entrepôt*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 18-20. There is also a Dictionary of Canadian Biography entry for her, John Clarke, "Ainse, Sarah in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, , [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainse\\_sarah\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ainse_sarah_6E.html), accessed March 20, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of local media see, Jim and Lisa Gilbert, "Sharing local history in bits and pieces," June 8, 2012, *Chatham Daily News*, <http://www.chathamdailynews.ca/2012/06/08/sharing-local-history-in-bits-and-pieces>, accessed February 10, 2017. For examples of local museums engaging with Sally Ainse, see "Museum London Event: A Personal 1812, with Exhibition Tour by Laurence Grant," 2013, Ontario Museum Association, <http://www.museumontario.ca/museum/Museum-London/whats-on/events/A-Personal-1812--Exhibition-To>, accessed March 21, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Author visits Fort Michilimackinac State Historic Park (Mackinaw City, MI), June 2014 and Fort Stanwix National Park (Fort Stanwix, NY), October 2015.

<sup>5</sup> This region of Ontario includes Greater Toronto Area (or GTA), the largest city in Canada, and many other mid-size cities, including Hamilton, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, London, and Windsor.

illustrates how instituting the British custom of coverture strategically targeted indigenous women for dispossession. Furthermore, her legal dispute calls into question the legitimacy of settler colonial land claims in the Thames River Valley and throughout southern Ontario more broadly. As American historian Alan Taylor has noted, recognizing Sally's claims would have also legitimized Joseph Brant's claims in the Grand River area.<sup>6</sup> Both of these claims entailed large tracts of valuable land. A different legal outcome for Sally may have changed the legal and political borders within the region.

Sally Ainese's story in the Thames River Valley also complicates national and regional narratives that position Canada as the final destination of the Underground Railroad.<sup>7</sup> As a multi-ethnic Oneida woman who owned slaves in the Thames River Valley, she draws attention to the ways race and gender shaped the region at the turn of the nineteenth century and how the institution of slavery continued in colonial Canada until after the War of 1812. Throughout her life, Sally enforced gendered and racialized forms of violence throughout the Great Lakes through her participation in the Great Lakes slave trade. Yet she was also strategically dispossessed of her lands by colonial officials and settlers. Both of her experiences—as a prosperous trader who owned land and slaves and as nearly destitute woman stripped of her land and sources of income—push back against popular Canadian regional and national narratives.

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 402.

<sup>7</sup> Sherene Razack, *Looking white people in the eye: gender, race and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*, (University of Toronto Press, 2002); and Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*, (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 2009). For a discussion of the erasure of Canada's history of slavery, see Katherine McKittrick. "'Their Blood is There, and They Can't Throw it Out': Honouring Black Canadian Geographies,' *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7, (2002): 27-37 and Abigail Bakan, "Reconsidering the Underground Railroad: Slavery and Racialization in the Making of the Canadian State", *Socialist Studies* 4, no.1 (Spring, 2008), 3-29.

## Molly Brant: Mohawk Matron

In the present, Molly Brant is remembered very differently on both sides of the border. From an American standpoint, Molly Brant was on the losing side of the Revolutionary War.<sup>8</sup> She remains an important local history figure in the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York, where she is usually positioned as an exotic, Indian woman, or a “woman between two worlds,” serving as liaison between her longtime partner, Sir William Johnson, and the Mohawk nation.<sup>9</sup> However, she is rarely part of national narratives that include women like Pocahontas and Sacajawea.

In Canada, Molly Brant plays a more prominent role. She is framed as a Loyalist and sometimes even considered as a type of founding figure.<sup>10</sup> In 1986, the Canadian government issued a commemorative stamp in her honor, depicting the face of a Mohawk woman imagined to be Molly. She is one of the few Native women frequently included in Canadian high school history textbooks.<sup>11</sup> Molly plays an especially prominent role in the local history of the town where she retired—Kingston.<sup>12</sup> There are two historical plaques dedicated to her in the city.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Benjamin David Kern, “An Iroquois Women Between Two Worlds: Molly Brant and the American Revolution,” (Master of Arts Thesis, Miami University, 2013), 2.

<sup>9</sup> “Molly Brant: Woman of Two Worlds” is the title of a brochure on her life produced by the State of New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Johnson Hall Historic Site. Collected on an author visit to Fort Johnson and Johnson Hall (October 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Kern, “An Iroquois Women,” 91.

<sup>11</sup> Emily Macgillivray, “Red and Black Blood: Teaching the Logic of the Canadian Settler State,” (Masters of Arts Thesis, Queen’s University, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> “Molly Brant Honored in Ceremony,” Monday August 26, 1999, Molly Brant Fonds, QUA; Molly Brant Celebration Day advertisement, Molly Brant Fonds, QUA.

<sup>13</sup> One plaque is adjacent to front doors of Rideaucrest Home (175 Rideau St) and the other is in front St. George’s Anglican Cathedral (270 King St. East). See, “Mary (Molly) Brant (Tekonwatonti) (ca. 1736-1796),” Ontario Historical Plaques, [http://ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque\\_Frontenac51.html](http://ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque_Frontenac51.html), accessed November 20, 2016; Ontario Heritage Foundation, “News Release: A Historical Plaque in Kingston to Commemorate Molly Brant,” September 10, 1975; Molly Brant Fonds, QUA. For a pamphlet about the dedication of the plaque, see “Historic St. Paul’s Anglican Churchyard, pamphlet, Molly Brant Fonds, QUA.

There is also a recently-opened public elementary school named in honor of Molly in the same city.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 3. Molly Brant Plaque. In Kingston, Ontario, multiple plaques around the city honor Molly Brant, including this historic marker in front of St. George's Cathedral on King Street East. Source: Author photograph, November 2016.

Yet Molly Brant's lack of visibility in the United States and her visibility in Canada as a Loyalist founder both ignore her on-going identification as a Mohawk woman committed to Mohawk self-determination. In Canadian narratives, Molly Brant is portrayed as a staunch ally for the British. In reality, she was dedicated to preserving the Mohawk and British alliance. She

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<sup>14</sup> The school is located in Kingston's north end, a working class and lower income neighborhood. See Julia McKay, "New School Named After Molly Brant," June 17, 2015, *Kingston Whig Standard*, <http://www.thewhig.com/2015/06/17/new-school-named-after-molly-brant>, accessed April 20, 2017, and Molly Brant Elementary School, at <http://mollybrant.limestone.on.ca/>, accessed April 20, 2017.

believed that the alliance offered the Mohawk peoples the best chances for on-going survival and autonomy. Molly was committed to her Mohawk family and community throughout her life.<sup>15</sup>

Remembering Molly Brant only as a Loyalist erases her contributions as a Mohawk woman, effectively “whitewashing” Molly Brant so that she fits within a nationalist Canadian history where Native women’s political authority is minimized or erased, unless it aids British men.<sup>16</sup> However, focusing on Molly Brant’s political and economic labor destabilizes the seamless narrative of settler colonial development told in popular Canadian histories. Molly Brant’s legacy—leaving land for Mohawk women in her family—stands in opposition to the development of settler colonial laws and the practice of coverture that the government of Upper Canada worked to enforce as the turn of the nineteenth century approached. Neither the American nor the Canadian narrative of Molly Brant seriously considers the ways she acquired property and invested in self-determination for herself, her family, and her community.

### **Ozhaguscodaywayquay: Maple Sugar Merchant**

The Johnston family is recognized as one of the most influential fur trade families in the nineteenth century upper Great Lakes and as founders of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Several of Ozhaguscodaywayquay and John Johnston’s children are well-known in the region. For instance,

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<sup>15</sup> Gail MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 142.

<sup>16</sup> A write-up about Molly Brant by the Canada Post Corporation is titled “Molly Brant: Mohawk Loyalist.” In the write-up Molly is described as being remembered with pride in Ontario for her, “strength in a time of turmoil, her unwavering loyalty, and her role as leader and counselor to her exiled people.” Molly’s most important contribution to politics is framed as encouraging the Haudenosaunee to remain loyal to the British. There is no engagement with why she encouraged the loyalty (other than she herself being a Loyalist which is attributed to her connections to Sir William Johnson). Julie Faulkner, “Molly Brant: Mohawk Loyalist,” Canada Post Corporation, <http://www.historywomen.com/earlyamerica/mollybrant.htm>, accessed March 25, 2016.

in the twenty-first century, their daughter, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, has been nationally recognized for her poetry and ethnographic writings.<sup>17</sup> The city of Sault Ste. Marie currently owns and operates a refinished version of the Johnston family home (circa the 1820s) as part of their Historic Water Street district. The house is open for tours from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's house is also part of the district.



Figure 4. The Historic Johnston Home. The home is open tours from Memorial Day to Labor Day and is located on Water Street in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The the St. Mary's river and bridge across the United States-Canadian border and are visible beyond the house.  
Source: Author photograph, September 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Literary historian Robert Dale Parker has published many of Jane's writings, Robert Dale Parker (ed.), *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). He has also created an accompanying website about Jane's life and her writings, <http://thesoundthestarsmake.com/>, accessed April 5, 2017. Jane is also included in the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, see "Jane Johnston Schoolcraft," Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, <http://www.michiganwomenshalloffame.org/Images/Schoolcraft,%20Jane%20Johnston.pdf>, accessed April 5, 2017.

The tour of the Johnston house emphasizes how John Johnston and Ozhaguscodaywayquay were “pioneers” in the community. Perhaps drawing on early historical work on gender in the Great Lakes, historical interpreters frame Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s role in terms of being a cultural mediator between John Johnston and Anishinaabe peoples. She is described as being like a “Pocahontas of the Great Lakes.”<sup>18</sup> While some of the Johnston family’s maple sugar making tools are on display, Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s role as a maple sugar producer is framed in terms of subsistence. She is described as struggling to support her family after John’s death. John was framed as the main provider, despite archival evidence that John’s trading business was declining during the end of his life. Visitors do not learn of Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s role as an economic agent and trader who produced vast amounts of maple sugar throughout her life. Nor do they learn about her role in key political debates in the region, such as influencing negotiations at the Treaty of Fond du Lac or the importance of her Sugar Island property in the American and British Canada border debates. This erasure is particularly ironic since the St. Mary’s River and the bridge that serves as the official border crossing are both visible in the distance beyond the historic Johnston home. Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s role in the Treaty of Fond du Lac and negotiations over the international border have been well documented by Great Lakes and Anishinaabe historians, even though there has been little sustained engagement with Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s life as whole.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Author visit to the Historic Johnston Home, Sault Ste. Marie, MI, September 2016.

<sup>19</sup> For histories by Anishinaabe historians see, Cary Miller, “Gifts as Treaties: The Political Use of Received Gifts in Anishinaabeg Communities,” *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2002): 231; Robert Dale Parker, “The World and Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft,” in *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, ed. Robert Dale Parker, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 6-19; Karl S. Hele, “The Anishinaabeg and Métis in the Sault Ste. Marie Borderlands Confronting a Line Drawn Upon the Water,” in *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: The First Nations Experience in the Great Lakes’ Borderlands*, ed. Karl S. Hele, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press), 69-70, 76; and Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the*

Just as Molly Brant's life story has been adjusted to fit common narratives of early Canadian colonial history, Ozhaguscodaywayquay's story has been co-opted to fit common narratives surrounding the founding of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Ojibweg and Anishinaabe peoples are seen as important to the romantic mythology of the region's past, yet their individual political and economic contributions are erased. As a result, historic sites avoid seriously engaging with the labor performed by Anishinaabe women. They also avoid questions of Native sovereignty in the past or the present and ignore how the region transformed from an Anishinaabe space to an American settler space between the 1840s and 1860s. The Johnston family appears frequently in northern Michigan's history, but Ozhaguscodaywayquay's economic and political contributions remain obscured.

### **Magdelaine Laframboise: Runner of the Straits**

Out of the four main women in this dissertation, Magdelaine Laframboise is the most well-known on the American side of the border. While Magdelaine is not often covered in expansive histories of Native women in the United States, she appears frequently in regional histories. For instance, historians like Lucy Murphy and Susan Sleeper-Smith have illustrated the rich and prosperous lives of Magdelaine Laframboise and her sister, Therèse Schindler. Magdelaine is a popular figure in local historical narratives in western and northern Michigan.

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*Native New World Shaped Early North America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 11, 342, 343, 353, 354, 356. It is also interesting that Parker's book was available for sale at the Johnston Family home during the author's visit in September 2016.

She is featured in the Lowell Historical Museum.<sup>20</sup> There is a historical marker for Magdelaine and her husband Joseph's trading post at Stoney Lakeside Park in Lowell.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 5. The Harbor View Inn. Magdelaine Laframboise's house on Mackinac Island has been renovated and is now an inn where visitors can spend the night in her room. Source: Author photograph, June 2014.

Furthermore, her Mackinac Island residence has been renovated into the Harbor View Inn. Tourists can spend a night to “experience what it was like to live in Magdelaine’s time by staying at the Harbour View Inn’s elegant Chateau LaFramboise – one of the finest historic hotels in Michigan.”<sup>22</sup> The website provides a brief biography of Magdelaine that covers the main events in her life, but fails to put them in context of Anishinaabe politics of the region. For instance, the site notes she, “defied the odds, overcoming sexism and racism to become one of the most successful traders of her time.”<sup>23</sup> Yet the site does not clarify that the sexism and racism

<sup>20</sup> Luanne Kaeb, “Madame LaFramboise, 1779-1846,” Lowell Area Historical Museum, 1992 (updated 2013), [http://www.lowellmuseum.org/?page\\_id=3664](http://www.lowellmuseum.org/?page_id=3664), accessed March 25, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Garrett Ellison, “Lowell fur trading post was manned by Michigan’s most famous woman pioneer,” *MLive*, [http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/11/lowell\\_fur\\_trading\\_post\\_was\\_ma.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/11/lowell_fur_trading_post_was_ma.html), accessed March 25, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> See The Harbor View Inn website, <https://www.harbourviewinn.com/hotel-history-mackinac-island/>, accessed March 25, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

emanated from the increasing EuroAmerican presence in the region. Within Anishinaabe communities, Magdelaine had an elite social status due to her familial connections and access to valuable trade goods.

Magdelaine was buried under Ste. Anne's church on Mackinac Island. At some point, her remains were moved to the yard during renovations, either in the late nineteenth century or mid-twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> In July, 2013, her remains were returned to her original resting place under the church.<sup>25</sup> While news outlets reported on the events, a local company that provides ghost tours of the island, *Haunts of Mackinac*, ignored the news and continued to profit off a story grounded in Magdelaine's anger over the removal of her bones. The tour's story is based on local lore that when her bones were relocated to the courtyard, the church steeple began to lean and the foundation started to crumble. According to the story, these events continued until the church built two statues (of St. Anne and the Virgin Mary) by Magdelaine's crypt to appease her restless spirit. As a result, the crumbling stopped.<sup>26</sup> To provide further evidence of Magdelaine's ghost, *Haunts of Mackinac* tour manager, Kimberley Cenci, states that the church has been rewired from top to bottom four times, and lights still turn off and on above people's heads and she has

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<sup>24</sup>For the renovations and move occurring the late nineteenth century, see Frank Straus, "Description of Mackinac Island From 1944 Sounds Familiar Today," August 27, 2016, *Mackinac Island Town Crier*, [http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2016-08-27/Columnists/A\\_Look\\_at\\_History.html](http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2016-08-27/Columnists/A_Look_at_History.html), accessed March 25, 2017. For claims that the move occurred in the mid-twentieth century during the building of a church basement, see "LaFramboise, Important Historical Figure in Fur Trade, To Find Final Resting Place," July 26, 2013, *Mackinac Island Town Crier*, [http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-07-26/News/LaFramboise\\_Important\\_Historical\\_Figure\\_in\\_Fur\\_Tra.html](http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-07-26/News/LaFramboise_Important_Historical_Figure_in_Fur_Tra.html), accessed March 25, 2017 and Samantha Radecki, "Historical Figure to Be Disinterred, Moved Inside Church Museum," July 19, 2013, *Mackinac Island Town Crier*, [http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-07-19/Top\\_News/Historical\\_Figure\\_to\\_Be\\_Disinterred\\_Moved\\_Inside\\_C.html](http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-07-19/Top_News/Historical_Figure_to_Be_Disinterred_Moved_Inside_C.html), accessed March 25, 2017.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. See also, Kaeb, "Madame LaFramboise, 1779-1846," and Samantha Radecki, "Memorial Honors Fur Trader LaFramboise," August 2, 2013, *Mackinac Island Town Crier*, [http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-08-02/Top\\_News/Memorial\\_Honors\\_Fur\\_Trader\\_LaFramboise.html](http://www.mackinacislandnews.com/news/2013-08-02/Top_News/Memorial_Honors_Fur_Trader_LaFramboise.html), accessed March 25, 2017.

<sup>26</sup>Kim Schneider, "Ghostly or ghastly: There's a Mackinac Island tour for you when you win \$500 prize," *MLive*, September 8, 2013, [http://www.mlive.com/travel/index.ssf/2013/09/ghostly\\_or\\_ghastly\\_theres\\_a\\_ma.html](http://www.mlive.com/travel/index.ssf/2013/09/ghostly_or_ghastly_theres_a_ma.html), accessed March 25, 2017.

“seen it [herself].” She also describes how “tour-goers detect a blue mist floating above the grave.”<sup>27</sup> Cenci’s statements are from September, 2013—two months after Magdelaine’s remains were reinterred in the church. However, Cenci never mentions the re-internment, allowing the company to continue to profit off the story of Magdelaine’s “anger.”

When I took the *Haunts of Mackinac* tour in June 2014, I was told a story similar to what Cenci relayed. There was no mention of Magdelaine’s remains being reinterred in 2013. On the tour, Magdelaine was described as an isolated case of a successful Native woman. There was no discussion of Anishinaabe political formations or how her success as a trader was connected to her extensive Odawa kinship connections. Magdelaine’s inclusion in the tour is indicative of a larger pattern of commercial ghost tours that appropriate and profit off of stories of indigenous and racialized people.<sup>28</sup> Indian ghosts function as a reminder of a past Native presence that has been removed and displaced to make room for the development of the United States. Ghosts of Native peoples can be included in commercial tours, without tourists feeling uncomfortable about land dispossession or issues of indigenous sovereignty in the present. Even though Magdelaine’s remains were reinterred in their original location, tour guides continue to tell a scintillating tale about the haunting of a revengeful Native woman without ever engaging with Anishinaabe politics—in the nineteenth or twenty-first century.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion on the meanings of Native American ghosts, see Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush (eds.), *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011). For a discussion of race and the ghost tour industry, see Tiya Miles, *Tales From the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memoires of Slavery from the Civil War Era*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

The contributions of Great Lakes trading women to the sociopolitical and economic development of the Great Lakes are usually erased, minimized or co-opted on both American and Canadian sides of the border. Yet Native women traders were involved in many significant political events that formed the region, including the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War, the Northwest Indian War, and treaty negotiations. Understanding the role of Native women traders is necessary to understanding how these events unfolded and how they were affected by gendered indigenous practices, including kinship and hospitality. Furthermore, these women influenced the flow of commerce by producing and distributing valuable trade goods, and their land claims contributed to the mapping and enforcement of political borders. Ignoring the role of Native women traders enforces male-centered, settler colonial narratives of the region that demote Native women to the accessories of their EuroAmerican partners. Recognizing the lives of Great Lakes trading women is essential to understanding the intertwined development of economics and politics in the region. Without their contributions, the Great Lakes region would not have looked the same in 1845 and it would not look the same in the present-day.

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