

Cattaraugus in 1779-1780

Unpublished documents tell about Cattaraugus in its earliest years, and about the complex relations and negotiations among the Senecas, Munsee Delawares, and Loyalist officers. Story is compiled from:

- Lieut. William Johnston - journal kept at Cattaraugus in 1779-80 (manuscript) [WJJ] [*Beinecke Library, Yale University*]
- Col. Guy Johnson - journal of visit to Buffalo Creek and Cattaraugus, June 1780 (microfilm) [GJJ] [*Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa*]
- Col. Guy Johnson - "Minutes of Indian Affairs" [MIA] kept at Fort Niagara (microfilm) [*Library and Archives Canada*]
- Sir Frederick Haldimand - correspondence with Guy Johnson and others (microfilm) [FHP] [*British Library, London*]

Oct. 30, 1779 - "Guyasuta and eight of his people arrived from Canawago [on Allegheny R.] and made Col. [Guy] Johnson ... and assured him that he would remember the promises he had made him in 1774 and would ever act towards him as he had done towards Sir William Johnson." [MIA]

Nov. 6, 1779 - "One of the Delawares waited upon Col. [Guy] Johnson this morning in the name of the rest, and told him that such of the nation as lived upon the Ohio [meaning Allegheny River] designed to come and reside together at a village called Kadaragoras [Cattaraugus] . . . Col. Johnson told him it was his intention to send clothing and other necessaries to the Indians at the Ohio as soon as he could get it [sic] brought over the lake, and had signified the same to them by a message which Guyasuta was to deliver." [MIA]

Nov. 17, 1779 - "This morning Lieutenants William Johnston and Robert Lotteridge were sent with clothing etc. to the Senecas and

Delawares on the Ohio. Mr. Johnston is to remain at the village [of] Kadagaras till further orders." [MIA]

Nov. 17, 1779 (cont.) - Col. Johnson sent the following speech to the Indians: "I send you Lieut. Johnston and Lieut. Lottridge to salute you in my name and to give my love and regard to all your chiefs, warriors, and also to your women and children whose case I have considered, and as I am sensible many of you have met with losses of late I have agreeable to my promise to Guyasuta sent you by this opportunity a quantity of clothing for your people, and also some powder and lead to enable your warriors to hunt for their families . . . I have ordered your friend Lieut. William Johnston to assist his relation who is with you, and to remain at your place during the winter, and he will transmit [to] me any news you have ... " [MIA]

Nov. 18, 1779 - Lieut. Johnston "set out for Cattaraugus with a bateau by Col. Johnson's orders." [WJJ]

Nov. 26, 1779 - Johnston "got to Cattaraugus being detained by great storms on the lake." [WJJ]

March 2, 1780 - Guyasuta informed Guy Johnson that "the number of Seneca warriors there [Cattaraugus] were above 60, and about 120 or 130 Delawares fit for service." [MIA]

March 3, 1780 - Hearing that western Indians (Chippewas and Hurons) had invited the Ohio Delawares to join them, Guy Johnson addresses them at Fort Niagara: "... Cattaraugus, which borders upon Lake Erie, is conveniently situated, and the soil fertile, I think it a very proper place for the Senecas and Delawares of Ohio to settle at ... " Guyasota responded "that they had heard with satisfaction everything that Col. Johnson had said, but as the Delawares did not thoroughly understand it, they would take the belt with them to their camp, and have it properly explained to them, and give their answer tomorrow." [MIA]

March 6, 1780 - "The Delaware with Guyasuta met Col. Johnson this morning and spoke to him as follows . . . Brother! What you said to us at our last meeting was very agreeable, and we shall attend to your words and lay them up in our hearts, and be guided by them. [We] shall follow your advice, and not remove to any distance from our former settlements." [MIA]

March 8, 1780 - "Guyasuta came to Col. Johnson's quarters and acquainted him that the Delawares ... had determined on following his advice in all matters, and holding his belt fast. That they would settle at Cattaraugus, the ensuing season, but that they meant for the present to go to war without further delay, and requested an equipment for that service." The war party was clothed and equipped on March 9-10. [MIA]

March 14, 1780 - Six Delaware chiefs from Cattaraugus meet with Guy Johnson at Fort Niagara. He presents a wampum belt and distributes gifts. Each received a blanket, hat, shirt, scarlet leggings, and silver ornaments. In return, the Delaware spokesman "returned him many thanks, and desired that he would not let any uneasiness remain on his mind in regard of them, as they were determined always to look up to him and the Six Nations." [MIA]

March 29, 1780 -After a private conference with Guy Johnson, Guyasuta announces in meeting at Fort Niagara "that the Six Nations were entirely of Col. [Guy] Johnson's opinion, that the Delawares should settle at Cattaraugus and that they would send them a message expressing their sentiments on this head." [FHP]

May 3, 1780 - "Tewante, a chief of the Delawares, came in with his family and acquaints me the snow is very deep at Ohio, which causes the Indians delay." [WJJ]

May 4, 1780 - William Johnston journal: "Tewante further acquaints me he will sett off from here in four days for Ohio, to

accompany his people down to this place. On their arrival here they will consult together where is the properest place to fix on to plant. They have likewise sent a message to the Delawares of Chemung and the other Indians of their nation acquainting them they judge it best for all of them to fix and settle together at one place ... I have told Tewante the Six Nations as well as yourself [Guy Johnson] desires they may settle here [Cattaraugus] as the properest place and have given them reasons it would be best for them so doing. Likewise told them the consequences of their delay now the season is passing by for them to plant, all which he [Tewante] appeared to pay great attention to." [WJJ]

May 7, 1780 - Johnston writes that the ice has broken up on Lake Erie. [WJJ]

May 10, 1780 - Johnston writes: "We continue in a starving condition, no provision[s] to be purchased at any price, no dependence but employing squaws to dig and fetch us wild beans, wild potatoes, roots, etc. This day a great match with the Indians of playing ball." [WJJ]

May 17, 1780 - "Tewante the Delaware chief arrived here [and] acquaints me [that] some of his people is come and some a' coming ... " [WJJ]

June 1, 1780 - Guy Johnson writes to Governor Frederick Haldimand: "The Village of Cattaraugus ... is now much increased. I have drawn together the people of the scattered Villages that were destroyed by the Virginians [the Indians' name for the American Patriots] to that place, as it is one of the frontiers, and on a route to Ohio, they already amount to near 700 souls, and are very conveniently situated ... " [FHP]

Guy Johnson kept a journal of his visit to Buffalo Creek and Cattaraugus in early June 1780. Here are excerpts describing his arrival at Cattaraugus:

June 7, 1780 - "A very rainy day which prevented the going to Cattaraugus, received an account that the war party had returned from Ohio with 26 prisoners and scalps (10 of the latter). Cleared and opened our encampment and caught many fine bass."

June 8, 1780 - "At 9 a.m. went up the creek to the town landing, found some strong rifts but it is in general 50 yards wide and sufficiently navigable for boats. The settlement is in fine plains on the left, about 6 miles up by water. Was received in very polite manner by 140 warriors painted, with colors flying [British flag], who fired 3 volleys, which was returned by the war party, and after shaking hands with the chiefs and acquainting them with the occasion of my visit, and inviting them to my encampment the next day. Left them a keg of liquor and returned. The Indians expressing infinite satisfaction at my having visited them. They are in great want of everything. The first encampment is the Onondagas, the next the Senecas, and the Ohio Delawares above them." [GJJ]