



Chief Brant of the Mohawks

(1742-1807)

Speech to Lord George Germaine (1776)

INTRODUCTION

Brant was educated at Lebanon, Connecticut. He became an interpreter and secretary to Sir William Johnson, visited London in 1776 and 1784, and translated parts of the New Testament into the Mohawk language. In 1775 he and other Indians joined British General Montgomery's expedition into Quebec. At the Battle of the Cedars, fought near Montreal, they defeated a small force of New Englanders led by Ethan Allen, who was taken prisoner and transported to Britain in the same ship with Brant in 1776.

Brant went to London on behalf of the Mohawks to seek redress for lands they had lost on the Mohawk and Upper Susquehanna Rivers. The American Revolution had begun. Brant made his appeal to Lord George Germaine, the British secretary of state. King George promised Brant redress if the Mohawks would continue to support him in the war. Brant agreed, returned and fought the Americans on the New York frontier, the territory where, later, James Fenimore Cooper lived and set some adventures of his frontier American hero Natty Bumppo. Brant commanded the Indians at the battles of Oriskany and Newtown. At Oriskany, he laid a trap for Americans led by Colonel Cox, ambushed and wiped them out. A biography of Brant was written by William L. Stone.

SPEECH TO LORD GEORGE GERMAINE

Brother Gorah:—We have crossed the great lake and come to this kingdom with our superintendent [of Indian Affairs], Colonel Johnson, from our Confederacy of the Six Nations and their allies, that we might see our father, the great King, and join in informing him, his counselors, and wise men, of the good intentions of the Indians, our brothers, and of their attachment to his majesty and his government.

Brother, the disturbances in America give great trouble to all our nations, and many strange stories have been told to us by the people of that country. The Six Nations, who always loved the King, sent a number of their chiefs and warriors with their superintendent to Canada last summer, where they engaged their allies to join with them in the defense of that country, and when it was invaded by the New England people they alone defeated them.

Brother, in that engagement we had several of our best warriors killed and wounded, and the Indians think it very hard they should have been so deceived by the white people in that country; many returning in great numbers, and no white people supporting the Indians, they were obliged to return to their villages and sit still. We now, brother, hope to see these bad children chastised, and that we may be enabled to tell the Indians who have always been faithful and ready to assist the King what his majesty intends.

Brother, the Mohawks, our particular nation, have on all occasions shown their zeal and loyalty to the great King; yet they have been very badly treated by the people in that country, the city of Albany laying an unjust claim to the lands on which our lower castle is built, as one Klock [father-in-law of Colonel Cox, killed at Oriskany], and others do to those of Canajoharie, our upper village. We have often been assured by our late great friend, Sir William Johnson, who never deceived us, and we know he was told so, that the King and wise men here would do us justice. But this, notwithstanding all our applications, has never been done, and it makes us very uneasy.

We also feel for the distress in which our brothers on the Susquehanna are likely to be involved by a mistake made in the boundary we settled in 1768. This also our superintendent has laid before the King. We have only, therefore, to request that his majesty will attend to this matter: it troubles our nation and they can not sleep easy in their beds. Indeed, it is very hard, when we have let the King's subjects have so much land for so little value, they should want to cheat us in this manner of the small spots we have left for our women and children to live on. We are tired out in making complaints and getting no redress. We therefore hope that the assurances now given us by the superintendent may take place and that he may have it in his power to procure us justice.

We shall truly report all that we hear from you to the Six Nations on our return. We are well informed there have been many Indians in this country who came without any authority from their own and gave us much trouble. We desire to tell you, brother, that this is not our case. We are warriors known to all the Nations, and are now here by approbation of many of them, whose sentiments we speak.

Brother, we hope that these things will be considered, and that the King or his great men will give us such answer as will make our hearts light and glad before we go, and strengthen our hands, so that we may join our superintendent, Colonel Johnson, in giving satisfaction to all our Nations when we report to them on our return, for which purpose we hope soon to be accommodated with the passage.

