

**ILLUSTRATIVE LETTERS**  
**FROM THE**  
**SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON MANUSCRIPTS.**

---

In printing in full the following letters from the Johnson Collection, two objects have been considered. It has been thought wise to print certain letters that the members of the Society and others interested might know in more detail the nature of the manuscripts in our collection and the manner in which they are being calendared for historical use. These particular letters have been selected because they form a united group concerned with the foundation of an English settlement in what was at that time the far west. They are noteworthy in that they illustrate one stage in the accomplishment of the British and especially the Colonial purpose to contest with the Indians and with France or Spain if necessary, the possession of the territory west of the Allegheny mountains.

*Sir William Johnson to Gov. William Franklin of New Jersey.*

JOHNSON HALL June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1766.

*Sir:*

I have been favored with your Letter of the 7th Inst together with the Enclosures containing a Letter from the Company with the Reasons for Establishing the Colony &c of all which I before gave my approbation & shall cheerfully do every thing consistent with my Office for Carrying it into Execution as early as possible;—I have already hinted the Affair in a Letter to the Lords of Trade & I am somewhat of Opinion it would answer better that I recommended it in Gen.<sup>l</sup> Terms, as an Affair I had heard was in Agitation, but as it is deemed necessary to the design that I sho<sup>d</sup>. enclose it I shall not Scruple to lay it together with my recommendation thereof before the Ministry under a flying Seal to your father who will doubtless be consulted on the Occasion.—

I have sounded Gen.<sup>l</sup> Gage on the Occasion, who declines being concerned I apprehend it will not be the Case with Lord Adam Gordon. As to what you say of apply<sup>g</sup> for an Extensive boundary I agree in opinion with you on the Utility of it, but the Government should I think be previously Sounded on that head Least it might obstruct or retard the Design—

I am persuaded you will use all your Endeavors for bringing the Murderers of the Indians to Justice, the Conduct of the frontier Inhabitants in many Colonies being such as gives us great reason to dread a Renewal of that Cruel War from which we are but Just freed, every Week brings me fresh Complaints from the Inds & but Just now I have recd an Acct of the Murder of 4 Onondagas on their return from the South ward with 2 or 3 more tow.<sup>g</sup> Fort Pitt So that I have great reason to doubt of Succeeding in attempting to Calm the Minds of a Revengefull people to whom we are Giving fresh provocation.

I promise myself great Satisfaction from your friendly Correspondences which I shall be glad to improve by every occasion that Offers as I am—

Gov.<sup>r</sup> Franklin

I shall write to the Compy by next Opp<sup>n</sup>—

*Sir William Johnson to Gov. William Franklin of New Jersey.*

JOHNSON HALL July 8<sup>th</sup> 1766—

*Sir:*

The 20<sup>th</sup>. ult<sup>o</sup>. I acknowledged the receipt of your last favor, & Signified my Intentions of Enclosing the plan for the Colony with my Recommendation to the Ministry which I now send you with a Letter thereon to M<sup>r</sup>. Secretary Conway, wherein I have said all that I could Venture to do from my

very slender knowledge of him and the delicacy of the Subject but I hope the Nature of it and the interest of some Gentlemen at home, may render it an Object worthy of attention.

As I have not had the pleasure of your father's Correspondence I just wrote him a few Lines wch you can Explain more fully as I should think it were better that my Letter was put into the Office for the Sec' of State but this I Submit to his discretion & hope You will write him thereon.

I am sorry it goes over at a time when from the daily Murders & Encroachments complained of we have all the reason imaginable to Expect an Ind<sup>a</sup> War. Sev.<sup>l</sup> other Murders have been Committed Since my last so that I know not where it will end.

As I am Just Setting off to meet Pontiac & the Western Nations who are arrived at Ontario for that purpose I have only time to add that I am with much Esteem, Sir,

Yours Etc

I shall be very Glad to hear from you & shall return in Three Weeks—

*Sir William Johnson to Benjamin Franklin.*

JOHNSON HALL July 10<sup>th</sup> 1766—

Sir—

At the Request of your Son Gov.<sup>r</sup> Franklin, & sev.<sup>l</sup> Gent.<sup>s</sup> of Pensilvania, I now enclose you a Scheme proposed for establishing a Colony at the Illinois, together with my Letter to M<sup>r</sup> Secretary Conway in fav.<sup>r</sup> thereof, which the proposers denied might be transmitted thro' your hands— I have accordingly sent it under a flying Seal, & must request you to forward it as Addressed—

I daily dread a Ru[p]ture w<sup>th</sup> the Ind.<sup>s</sup> occasioned by the Licentious Conduct of the frontier Inhabitants who Continue to Rob, and Murder them.—I am imediately to meet *Pontiac* with the Western Nat.<sup>s</sup> at Ontario and wish I may be able to satisfy them.—

Altho' I have not had an Opportunity of Cultivating your Acquaintance I shall always be Glad to render you, or yours any Services as I am, &c

To

Benj.<sup>n</sup> Franklin Esq.—

*Sir William Johnson to Gov. William Franklin.*

JOHNSON HALL July 28<sup>th</sup>. 1768.

Sir,

M<sup>r</sup> S. Wharton delivered to me your kind favor of the 23d of May with the Several Inclosures for which I give you many thanks.— I hope you will Excuse my having deferred an Answer

to it, until my return home which was some days ago, having received it Whilst on a Tour to the seaside for the recovery of my health which was brought very low thro my fatigues etc.—

Tho' I by no means accuse you of neglect of Writing I shall be very happy in your agreeable & friendly Correspondence abstracted from any motives arising from the Subject.

The Extracts you were pleased to send me were very Acceptable, as they contain abundance of Judicious Remarks, & Sufficiently shew my much esteemed M<sup>r</sup>. Franklin's Experience, attention & knowledge in American affairs.—

You must before this time have been advised of the new arrangement of all these matters, and of the Reform by which the Management of the Indian Trade is Committed to the Care & Charge of the respective Colonies Whereby the Alterations which you wisely foresaw, are in part made, the powers of the Super.Intend.<sup>t</sup> are however pretty Strongly tho' Generally Expressed, their sallaries increased, but they are limited to a very Small Annl. Sum for the Various Services & Contingent Expences of their Departments. The Event of which, you seem so Justly Sensible of that I cannot but be intirely of your Opinion, altho' I find that the Lords of Trade think every post that is kept up sho.<sup>d</sup> be Garrisoned by the Kings Troops, Yet there will be sundry other Expences found necessary for the Colonies to be at for the preservation of the Trade, which may render it impracticable, as a Union of Sentiment on these Occasions cannot be Expected, for the reasons you have Judiciously Assigned.—

The Settlement of the Boundary Line will I believe shortly take place, it is only retarded by reason of the distant residence of the Shawanese & Delawares whose presence I Judge necessary not as Owners of the Land but as Nigh Neighbours to the Settlements, to whom they may easily be troublesome— Your Province does not appear concerned in this Line, but as the Governmt. think the Colonies should give all security to the Transaction by Laws, to prevent their people from Transgressing, which may be a Case Common to every Colony, I thought it best to mention it, and in Case you think the attendance of one or two Commissioners from Your Government necessary to attend the Treaty You will doubtless take measures accordingly—

I have only now to add that I am  
with perfect Esteem, Sir, Your Excellys &c

His Excell<sup>t</sup>  
Gov.<sup>r</sup> Franklin

*Sir William Johnson to Gov. William Franklin.*

JOHNSON HALL June 12<sup>th</sup>. 1769.

*Dear Sir,*

Your kind Letter of April 10th relieved me from the Suspence which your Long Silence occasioned and which you have sufficiently accounted for. Indeed my own Situation has been such since we parted, that I can the easier excuse any omission of that nature in another, and this hitherto prevented me from Setting you a good Example, tho' I could not pretend to afford you equal entertainment from the unimportant events of these parts.

I began a Letter near three Weeks ago, but dropped it in Expectation of having something worth communicating in a little time altho' I have waited to no purpose.

I thank you for the Copy you transmitted me, & shall Settle the Matter with Col. Croghan as you desire when he & I has more Leisure than we have had Since his arrival in these parts, and I shall likewise talk fully to him upon the Subject. I hope it will go on with better success than it has hitherto done, but think it will require time and perseverance.

You have doubtless before this time heard from our Friend Wharton, as I expect to do but have not as yet. Neither have I had any account from any person concerning the event of his Voyage, or on the Subject of the Retribution. The Letter from the Sec.<sup>y</sup> of State which I have Just received by the paquet containing very little, and nothing material, and by my other Letters I find that the Whole face of things is much as it was when we heard before. The nature of the dispute about the Rights of Parliament, and the disturbed State<sup>t</sup> of Affairs at home Create so many difficulties that when it wil end, or other business be fully attended to must be uncertain—I thank you kindly for the Pamphlet you sent me which is I think a very good performance, and I fancy I could guess the Author of it—in return I send at your desire by this opportunity Evans's Manuscript Journal, I also inclose you Copys of the Two Letters from the Two Clergymen which you wanted, I have since had several Curious & Extraordinary Letters from Parson, Williamson al.<sup>y</sup> Johnson one of a Very late date, All on the Subject of Lands & Establishments for the faithfull & desiring to know why I did not make public the boundary that they might take possess<sup>n</sup> of their lands. There are no New Steps taken for carrying on the pious work and the Oneidas have thro' some disgust withdrawn most of thier Children from the Seminary, I believe all attention is more directed to the Susquehanna Vales, concerning the Settlement of which I hear they have come to Some Strong resolutions in Connecticut.

I wish I could dispose of my right on Susquehanna below the price I mentioned, especially as you Signify an Inclination for it, but really, from the Trouble & Expence it has already put me to, and the price I have been very lately offered for a great part of it, I cannot consistently do it. The Account of its being very hilly & Stony must have arisen from some misinformation, for except where some points of hills happen to Come to the River which occupy but a Very Small part of it, It is perhaps as Rich & Valuable for the Generality as any Land whatsoever, & this is allowed by some who have carefully viewed & are now Sollicitting me to dispose of it. As to Indian Intelligence I cannot say any thing Satisfactorily. The Commissaries are withdrawn, & I don't see any speedy prospects of such Establishments on the part of the Colonies as will Answer the purposes of preserving peace & Extending Commerce, neither can it be expected that they will make an adequate provision, or from their different Interests unite in a matter of that nature so as it may be attended with any Good effects, I have kept Interpreters & Smiths as yet at the posts, without which, affairs would not have gone on so easily as they have done,—Belts however, Said to come from the Southward are amongst the Indians & there has been an Alarm lately at Detroit which Frightened & Stopped the Traders at Niagara, & has induced the Inhabitants of the first mentioned Settlement to fortify themselves on the opposite Side of the River, which will probably alarm the Indians & may have consequences different from what is intended.

I think to go up the Country for a little time & do what little I can under the present restrictions for preventing any Union to our prejudice, and as my health is but very indifferent may possibly go down to the Sea Side in the fall when if I should happen to be near you, you may be Assured that I should Visit Burlington with great pleasure—In the Meantime I shall be happy in hearing from you whenever your Leisure will admit you to write to him Who is Always with great Sincerity D' Sir,

His Excell.<sup>ty</sup>  
Gov.' Franklin

Mess.<sup>rs</sup> Wells & Smith by whom you wrote the 29<sup>th</sup> April, forwarded the Letter but did not come this way, which deprived me of an opportunity of shewing them those Civilities which your Friends sho<sup>d</sup> Always receive at my hands.

*Sir William Johnson to Gov. William Franklin.*

JOHNSON HALL Aug.' 23<sup>d</sup>. 1769.

*Dear Sir*

Upon my return from Seneca which was about 12 days ago

I had the favor of your kind Letter of the 11.<sup>b</sup> of this Month which till now I could not Answer, & even now I cannot be as particular as I co.<sup>d</sup> Wish, for not being able to Write without much pain tho I have a Great deal of business on my hands, for on my return in the Night from the Hut of a Chief near Onondaga where I held a private Conference My Canoe overset, & I had to make the Shore & get up a Bank in the Dark with much difficulty in effecting which I tore my Swelled Leg very much on a Small Stump, so as not yet to be able to go into my study, or write without great Inconvenience tho' it is recovering much faster than I Expected.

I most kindly thank you for the news communicated in your Letter as well as for the perusal of what you wrote to Col. Croghan who has received it; My Letters from home seem to Express a dissatisfaction, at the Great Extent of the Cession beyond the Kanhawa, tho' it is indisputably the Lands of the 6 Nations, & if it had been denied, the Latter wo.<sup>d</sup> have proved Worse Enemys than the Cherokees can be, besides I believe the Virginians wo.<sup>d</sup> have settled on it at all Events. It is however left to me now, that in case I don't think it good policy to give up that part it will be Confirmed. I wish I could say the same as to the Grant of the Traders to which objections are made.—

I can Just say a Word as to my late Tour. I met near 2500 Ind.<sup>a</sup> at Seneca assembled from the Sev.<sup>l</sup> Villages, & I found them more dissatisfied than I hope I left them. They are greatly discontented at the Withdrawing people from the posts Which it is not in my power to Continue there, & I don't find the provinces inclined to do any thing material on that head.

The Ind.<sup>a</sup> are likewise dissatisfied with the N Englanders Intrusions into Pennsylvania, which they say will involve their people in disputes, They complain bitterly of Ill usage & Acts of Injustice at the posts & frontiers & say that the other Confederacys have invited them to Joyn in Measures for redress, And Indeed from the sev.<sup>l</sup> Discoveries I have Made The belts Constantly passing thro the Nations from the French, The late proceedings on Ohio, & their Speeches at Ilinois, I must have very unfavorable Sentiments of their Intentions.—After a meeting to be held soon at Onondaga I shall know more, In the meantime I use all my endeavors to prevent a Gen.<sup>l</sup> disaffection, & to keep matters quiet as long as the present State of things will admit of—I persuade myself I have no occasion to Apologize for not being more particular under my present Circumstances, and Wishing to hear from you by every opportunity Convenient to yourself

I remain with Great Cordiality & Truth Dear Sir &c  
His Excell<sup>ty</sup> Gov<sup>r</sup> Franklyn—

Sir John Sends his best Compliments, as does Guy who desires me to tell you that he Wrote you a Long Letter last month, & will give you the Trouble of more whenever he has Subjects for them.



Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.