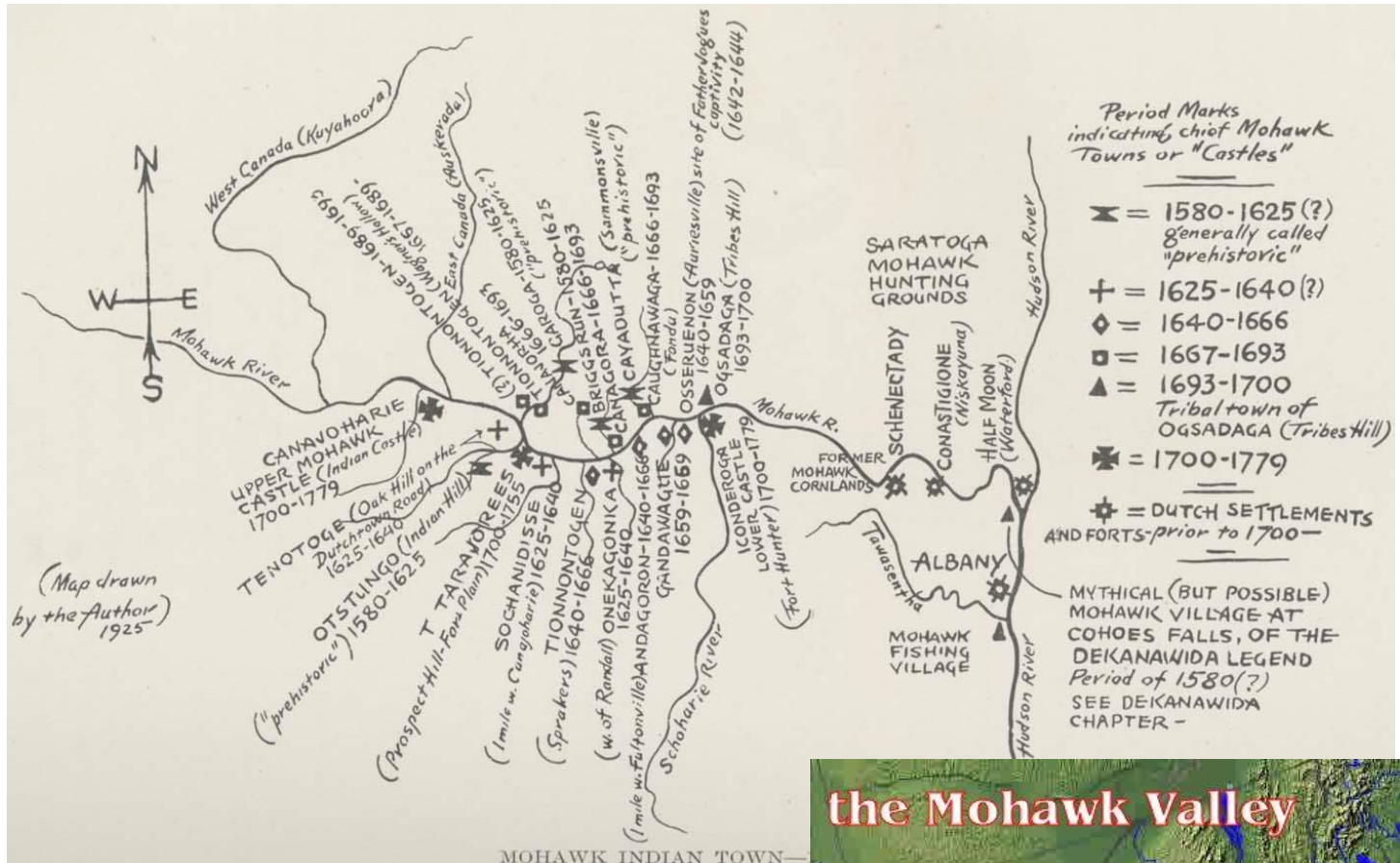


Sir William Johnson (taken from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography)

Superintendent of Northern Indians; b. c. 1715, eldest son of Christopher Johnson of Smithtown (near Dunshaughlin, Republic of Ireland) and Anne Warren, sister of Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Warren*; d. 11 July 1774 at Johnson Hall (Johnstown, N.Y.).



- Early in 1738 Johnson came to America from Ireland to oversee an estate that his uncle Sir Peter Warren had acquired near Fort Hunter, in the Mohawk valley of New York.
- With much capital supplied by his naval uncle, Johnson became within a decade of his arrival the most substantial businessman on the Mohawk. Employing white indentured labourers and black slaves, he established a 200-acre farm on the south bank of the river; in 1739 he bought an 815-acre tract on the north side with access to the King's Road, which reached as far west as the Oneida Carrying Place (near Oneida Lake). Through an agent he began trading in imported English goods to the Indian settlement of Oquaga (near Binghamton). He also contracted with farmers for their surpluses of wheat and peas.

- By 1743 he had opened trade to Oswego (Chouaguen), the principal fur-trading post of British America. His shop on the King's Road served as the supply centre for all his dealings, and he thus cut into the long-established monopoly of the Dutch houses in Albany. He also shipped his own goods to New York City, where they were sold or transported either to the West Indies or to London.
- In April 1745 he was made a justice of the peace for Albany County. Between 1745 and 1751 he was colonel of the Six Nations Indians, a responsibility formerly held in commission by several Albany fur-merchants. His influence with the Six Nations, especially his neighbours the Mohawks, soared, for he had ready access to provincial funds to pay the Indians regularly for their services.



- In February 1756 Johnson received a royal commission as “Colonel of . . . the Six united Nations of Indians, & their Confederates, in the Northern Parts of North America” and “Sole Agent and Superintendant of the said Indians.”
- Johnson had resigned his military commission late in 1755, and thereafter his duties largely concerned Indian affairs.
- Indian affairs acquired a new dimension and a new importance with the fall of New France. Problems that had necessarily been dealt with piecemeal during the war now demanded broader approaches. Johnson’s policy, never spelled out in much detail despite various promptings from London, had four main points:
 - The purchase of Indian lands should be controlled at a pace determined by the tribes’ willingness to sell.
 - Trade should be restricted to designated posts and be carried on at fixed prices by traders required to post bond and licensed annually.
 - To oversee the administration the superintendent would have need not only of deputies but also of commissary-inspectors, interpreters, and gunsmiths.
 - To finance its operation he suggested a tariff on rum.

- After the fall of New France the colony was placed under military rule. Major General Jeffrey Amherst was served as commander-in-chief.

- Amherst's dislike and contempt for the Indians are amply reflected in his journals and correspondence, though it may perhaps be doubted whether he was more bigoted than the average official of his time.

- As superintendent, Sir William Johnson was under the orders of Jeffery Amherst (the commander-in-chief in North America). **The Two men differed greatly in opinion on how to deal with First Nations. Since the real instrument of British power in America was the army, Amherst's views carried the day.**



- Whereas Johnson wished to encourage the supply of arms and ammunition to the Indians, Amherst, who put little value on their services, wished to restrict it.
- Whereas Johnson always worked diplomatically for an accommodation with the Indians, Amherst wished to deal forcefully with any tribe that opposed British arms.
- The 1763–64 Pontiac Rebellion would doubtless have resulted in a serious clash between Johnson and the commander-in-chief had not Amherst, at the height of the crisis, been given leave to return home to England.
 - His successor, Gage issued no direct orders and left Sir William free to work out details. In this way peace was made with Pontiac and his allies, and little retribution was taken for the deaths of nearly 400 soldiers and perhaps 2,000 settlers. **This was the TREATY OF NIAGARA (1764)**



Taken from the United States National Register of Historic Places Inventory — Nomination Form:

At the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, Sir William set about creating a home in a setting appropriate for a baronet and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He had been using the phrase "Johnson Hall" in his correspondence for over a year, probably anticipating construction of this new estate with the coming of peace. Johnson's choice of the word "Hall," meaning the manor house of an estate with tenants, can be seen here as a portent of his intentions. Construction began on May 10, 1763, under master builder Samuel Fuller, who may have also built Sir William's earlier house, Fort Johnson, in 1749. The Hall was not the only building erected; others built in the next few years included a coach house, mill, storehouse, and the two flanking stone buildings (of which one has survived).

- In 1768, London abandoned its centralized control of Indian affairs, and each colony was left to develop as best it could its relations with the Indians on its frontier. This decision coincided with another the home authorities made for economy, to withdraw garrisons from the western posts.
- Johnson did not live to participate in the American Revolution although his legacy of diplomacy with the First Nations was undoubtedly a factor in drawing five of the six nations in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy into the Revolution on the side of the British Crown. In July of 1774, while addressing a group of about 600 Aboriginal People at Johnson Hall, Sir William suffered a fatal stroke. The Johnson Hall property passed to Sir William's son but was seized by New York State and sold after the Revolution. It remained in private hands and underwent numerous changes, until reacquired by the State in 1906.