

Charlotte Kasper

ARTH 318

Final Paper

Clashing American Geographies: Investigating Colonial-Native American Diplomacy
Through a Cartographic Powder Horn

On May 24, 1763 two Americas converged at the estate of the largest single landowner in New York's Mohawk Valley. There, Sir William Johnson (1715-1774) and Haudenosaunee leaders convened to discuss Anglo-American policies shaping the land they and their communities inhabited.¹ As they spoke, the very estate where they met, Johnson Hall, was undergoing construction, which served both as an indication of the incessant growth of colonial power and of Johnson's prosperity. Until now, the history of this meeting was confined to pockets of information tucked away in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*.² However, a new proposed gift to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, offers another view into this meeting and its larger political and cultural context. The object is a ceremonial powder horn decorated with a map of the surrounding territory

¹ Called by Anglo-Europeans, the "Iroquois Confederacy," the Haudenosaunee are comprised of six nations: Kanien'kehaka or Mohawk; Onayotekaono or Oneida; Onundagaono or Onondaga; Guyohkohnyoh or Cayuga; Onondowahgah or Seneca, and Skaruhreh or Tuscarora. While many members of these nations use their native and anglicized nation names interchangeably, I will use the native names throughout this paper except when referring to a geographical context or quoting historic sources. Similarly, I have privileged the use of native names for individuals but retained their English names for clarity. For a discussion of the Haudenosaunee in the 17th and 18th centuries see, Daniel K. Richter, *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

² William Johnson, James Sullivan, and Alexander Clarence Flick, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1965).

and the message “TURTEL / ABRAM / HIS HORN / FOR HIS AIDE / TO YE CROWNE / 24TH MAY ANO / DOMI 1763 / FROM HIS GOOD / FRIEND / JOHN JOHNSON (figure 1).”³

Just as the horn is inscribed with cartographic imagery, it also inscribes the intersections between Native American and colonial cultures, violence, landmaking, and personal relationships. On the horn’s body, pictographic representations of Anglo-colonial structures are juxtaposed with Native places — named but not depicted — illustrating that at its core, Turtel Abram’s horn is an object of colonial diplomacy, though one with an agenda of displaying the conquest of Haudenosaunee land. Since the ownership of land was a distinctly colonial concept, inscribing Anglo-American buildings onto the map suggests the intended permanence of colonial settlements and erasure of Native territory. While the history of Anglo-American encroachment on Haudenosaunee lands in the Mohawk Valley is clearly presented in the powder horn’s iconography, much is uncertain about the identity of “Turtel Abram” and the larger context of the powder horn’s presentation.⁴ What is certain, however, is that as Sir John

³ After I expressed my interest in American decorative arts, Thomas Michie, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the MFA, Boston, suggested I undertake research on this powder horn, which is an anticipated gift to the museum. For general information on powder horns see: William H. Guthman, *Drums A’beating, Trumpets Sounding: Artistically Carved Powder Horns in the Provincial Manner 1746-1781*, (Hartford, Connecticut: The Connecticut Historical Society, 1993).

⁴ The uncertainty surrounding the identity of “Turtel Abram” is indicative of the limited primary sources available on this topic and their quality, which results from the object’s origin in the 18th century as well as its relation to the under-researched fields of Native American history and powder horns. Further, previous scholarship on this particular object is limited to that accompanying its attempted sale at auction through Sotheby’s auction house on January 19, 2019. Though incomplete, this research served as the launching point into studying the powder horn. During the process, however, it became clear that the current interpretation of the horn is in many ways erroneous, if not impossible. Even as the information available disproved much of the previous scholarship, that work necessitated patching together sources which were at times incomplete or at odds with one another. In truth, the identity of “Turtel Abram” may always be obscured by available sources and centuries past. The following pages set out a deeper reading of this object, critique the existing scholarship, and propose a new narrative while remaining transparent about the reliability of particular sources.

Johnson gave Turtel Abram the horn, he symbolically reconfigured the land, privileging colonial geographies over Native ones.

The powder horn measures a foot and a half from end to end and can be broken up into three sections. At one end is the “button,” a wooden cover that fits over the horn’s wider opening and keeps gunpowder from escaping. The other end of the horn is capped by two interlocking pieces called the “collar” and “screw tip.” The button, collar, and screw tip are made of wood (to prevent sparking the gunpowder) that has been stained near-black. Stretching from button to screw tip is the horn’s body — the actual cow horn. The body’s deep honey color signals its value, as it is the most desirable color when collecting powder horns.⁵ The horn has a slight sheen, perhaps indicating the presence of a lacquer though whether that lacquer would be original is unclear.⁶ Of the three sections, the horn body is the most highly ornamented: the cartographic imagery and inscriptions are all inscribed into its surface.

The map on the horn body illustrates geographies from what is now upper New York State and Canada, an area frequently featured on cartographic powder horns.⁷ In addition to the cartographic elements, the inner side of the horn’s curve features a British coat of arms, while the outer side displays the presentation inscription, which takes up a substantial amount of the horn body’s length and is uninterrupted by the cartographic imagery. All of the writing on the horn was executed in the same font, and,

⁵ Guthman, *Drums A’beating, Trumpets Sounding*, 27.

⁶ A thorough investigation of the powder horn including examination under a microscope and chemical analysis of the surface would provide a lot of information about this object, but that work will have to wait until the powder horn has been officially acquired by the museum.

⁷ My research led me to find a number of cartographic powder horns of this area, including seven at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which I visited and discussed with John Byck, Assistant Curator of Arms and Armour, and Edward Hunter, Armorer and Conservator. *Ibid.*, 19.

that fact, combined with the consistency of letter stylization (especially the sideways “s”), indicates that the horn was engraved by one artisan. The inscription carvings, however, are somewhat less confident than the location names which could suggest that the artisan was not particularly experienced at producing inscriptions.⁸

The powder horn’s inscription is, without a doubt, the feature of the object which lends itself the best to research. It provides allusions to singular figures (including Turtel Abram and John Johnson), as well as a place (Johnson Hall) and a date (May 24th, 1763). The inscription’s intimacy — indicating friendship between Turtel Abram and John Johnson — underscores the extent to which 18th-century diplomatic relations between the British crown and Native Americans were tied to personal relationships. This lesson was likely one John Johnson learned from his father, as affability and relationship-building were William Johnson’s forte and the root of his effectiveness negotiating with Native Americans. Even so, it is difficult to grasp the significance of such relationships without first understanding the broader landscape of the Seven Years’ War in North America.

As the historian Eric Hinderaker has noted, the empires of North America can better be understood as “processes than structures,” for they were constructed through the interactions of people who “could shape, challenge, or resist colonialism in many ways.”⁹ In the 18th-century Mohawk River Valley, cultural exchanges shaped both the course of empires that stretched across the New World and the chain of events that

⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁹ Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xi. This quote is also included in the introduction to: Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-66*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), xix.

ultimately led to the American Revolution. In particular, the protracted conflict known as the Seven Years' War (1754-63) had an enduring impact on the fate of North America's Native and colonial communities. Despite its importance, the Seven Years' War is often relegated to the background of America's historical memory, overshadowed by the American Revolution, and kept in company with the nation's "lesser conflicts" such as the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the Spanish-American War. The Seven Years' War was the fourth clash between France and Great Britain within the hundred year period beginning in the late seventeenth century. Of those confrontations, the Seven Years' War is often considered the most important as the first truly global war and because its result was the first resounding victory to emerge from Britain and France's territorial struggle.¹⁰

While the Seven Years' War was a global enterprise, the seat of conflict remained in the New World, especially in the land stretching from what is now upstate New York to Quebec — territory that includes the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys. This explains, in part, the frequent depictions of this region on cartographic powder horns of this era, including Turtel Abram's horn. The Seven Years' War was especially relevant for the shaping of these two river valleys' political, economic, and cultural geographies, as well as to the development of the New World.

A key component of these geographies of conflict was the fact that throughout the war, the majority of Native Americans were allied with the French.¹¹ In this light,

¹⁰ This is synthesized from my larger research into the Seven Years' War. Primarily, this draws on the work of Fred Anderson including: Anderson, *Crucible of War*; Fred Anderson, *The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War*, (New York: Viking, 2005).

¹¹ Timothy Shannon, "Seven Years' War in New York State Introduction," *New York History*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (Fall 2005), 413.

Turtel Abram's horn is compelling as a rare example of Anglo-Native alliance, highlighting the often forgotten notion that Native Americans were not united; thus, the powder horn's presentation inscription and the British royal coat of arms reveals not only the relationship between two individuals, but also the attempts to foster an alliance between Anglo-colonizers and Native Americans despite conflicts over land ownership. Indeed, the primary reason that the majority of Native peoples allied with the French was because the French settled in smaller numbers than the British and, therefore, posed a reduced risk of land theft.¹² Additionally, a faction of French Catholics were concerned with converting Native Americans and learned Native American customs in order to effectuate conversion.¹³

If, as Hinderaker proposes, the cultural interactions in the New World shaped the course of empires, then the English diplomat, Sir William Johnson, was at the world's center. Born in Ireland, Sir William is best known for his role as the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northern colonies in which his relatively successful diplomacy served as the general exception to British colonial-Native relations. His son, Sir John Johnson (1741-1830) is the John Johnson who gave the powder horn to Turtel Abram. Both Sir William and Sir John Johnson were linked to the Kanien'kehaka Nation familiarly in addition to diplomatically as Sir William fathered two children with his Kanien'kehaka mistress, Molly Brandt.¹⁴ Though Sir John Johnson

¹² Daniel K. Richter, *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The Sotheby's auction catalogue text asserts that John Johnson was "the only surviving child of Sir William Johnson (1715-1774) and Molly Brant, a Mohawk Indian." However, this is untrue, as Sir John Johnson was the first born of William Johnson and his first wife, Catherine Weissenberg: "Genealogy of the Johnson Family," *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 1, xxxv-xxxviii. "The Highly Important 'Turtle

was not himself the son of Molly Brandt, he came of age in a home that was managed by her and which was marked by its multiculturalism. In fact, though Sir William Johnson originally journeyed to the New World as an overseer and purchaser of land, it was his concerted effort to adopt Haudenosaunee languages and customs that elevated him to his diplomatic role.¹⁵

Even though Sir William Johnson, as all colonizers, was complicit in the theft of Native land, he was intimately connected to the Haudenosaunee communities surrounding his home, Johnson Hall. *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* abound with instances highlighting Sir William Johnson's ability to take part in Haudenosaunee ceremonies and of the genuine authenticity and emotional connection of Sir William Johnson's relationship with some members of Haudenosaunee nations — particularly the Kanien'kehaka. One especially moving moment occurred on May 22, 1763, amid the conference, when it was recorded that:

Being all Assembled in y^e. Council Room to the am^t. Of 129 -- the *Onondaga* Speaker with 3 Strings of Wampum, agreeable to their Manner, Wiped away the Tears from Sir W^{ms}. Eyes for y^e. Loss of his Father,¹⁶ so as that he might look chearfully & friendly at his Bretheren present, the Six Nations ... [they do a condolence ceremony and give him gifts] Here Sir W^m returned them thanks for their regard Shewn to him on this Occasion, — and then went thro y^e Ceremony of Condolance for the many losses *they* had Sustained during the War. — This was done by Belts & Strings, in return for those given by them.¹⁷

Abram' French and Indian War Polychrome-Decorated Map Presentation Powder Horn, Johnson Hall, Johnstown, New York, May 24, 1763," sothebys.com, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/collection-anne-h-frederick-vogel-iii-n10003/lot.1121.html>.

¹⁵ Charles H. Ashton and Richard W. Hunter, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Johnson Hall, (United States Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, 1984).

¹⁶ Christopher Johnson, who died in 1763.

¹⁷ William Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 10, 674-676.

During the conference, a speaking representative for the Onundagaono nation performed a condolence ceremony for Sir William Johnson's father, who had recently passed away. He not only presented Sir William Johnson with three strings of wampum, but also metaphorically wiped away his tears, powerfully demonstrating the intimacy and strength of Sir William Johnson's connections with members of the Haudenosaunee. Following the ceremony for his father, Sir William Johnson returned the gesture by executing a condolence ceremony for the losses Native Peoples suffered throughout the Seven Years' War. Through the exchange of ceremonies and similar gifts, Sir William Johnson demonstrated his understanding of Haudenosaunee customs. His manor house, Johnson Hall, functioned as a kind of diplomatic salon, where many events, including the presentation of the Turtel Abram powder horn, occurred. Indeed, according to Johnson Hall's National Historic Landmark Register form, "Johnson Hall became the site of many meetings and councils with the Native American tribes and it was there that gifts from the British government were distributed."¹⁸ Regardless of the efforts to learn Kanien'kehaka customs, Sir William Johnson's background as a purchaser of Native land complicates him as a diplomatic figure, emphasizing that however his intentions were perceived by the Kanien'kehaka, he sought, first and foremost, to expand his own land and wealth.

Not only did Johnson partake in Haudenosaunee ceremonies, but he also cultivated close relationships with specific Kanien'kehaka leaders. In particular, "Johnson dealt extensively with the Peters' brothers, especially Hendrick [Theyanoguin]

¹⁸ Charles H. Ashton and Richard W. Hunter, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Johnson Hall.

and Abraham [Kaneghstase]; the common bond between Johnson and Hendrick and Abraham was their pro-English sentiments.¹⁹ The Peters brothers' alignment with the British crown was not only apparent in their relationship with Sir William, but also through their early acquisition of a surname.²⁰ Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) and Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) also had a half-brother named Karaghiagdatie (Nickus Peters), who was the son of a Kanien'kehaka woman from the wolf clan (figure 2).²¹ While Sotheby's previous scholarship on the powder horn suggests that Turtel Abram was the brother of "Chief King Hendrick Theyanoguin Peters," the available genealogical and biographical information indicates that this is probably incorrect.²² Even if this particular designation is inaccurate, the especially intimate bond between the Peters and Johnson families suggests that Turtel Abram may have been another member of the Peters family. Another instance exemplifies the closeness of Sir William's relationship with this family: during a conference to discuss land policy while Sir William was briefly removed from his position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, the Kanien'kehaka tried to intercede. According to Hinderaker:

Hendrick sat, and Abraham [Kaneghstase] rose to make one final point. Though they had given Governor Clinton a belt to take across the ocean with him, asking that Johnson be reinstated by the Crown to manage Indian affairs, they feared that it had been "drowned in the sea." He gave DeLancey a belt renewing their request. The belt, according to Pownall, "was as rich & larg a Belt as that which they gave in answer to ye Covenant Belt." The implication was that Johnson's restoration was as important to them as the

¹⁹ Barbara J. Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears: A Mohawk Family History*, (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1996), 172.

²⁰ Their surname was selected in reference to their father, whose name was Peter. Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds*, (Syracuse N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1984) 50.

²¹ Figure 2 contains an abridged genealogical tree of the Peters family with information consolidated from Sivertsen. Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears*, 146.

²² "The Highly Important 'Turtle Abram,' sothebys.com.

alliance itself. Then Abraham turned to the Albany commissioners and declared, "The fire here is burnt out."²³

As Hinderaker notes, the giving of a belt as large as the Covenant belt implies that Johnson's restoration was as paramount to the Kanien'kehaka as the alliance itself. Kaneghstase's (Abraham Peter's) declaration that "the fire here is burnt out," ended their speech and, symbolically, their collaboration with the colonial officials. The depth of scholarship discussing Sir William Johnson's relationship with Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) overshadows that between the baronet and Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters).²⁴ While it is true that Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) and Sir William had a closer relationship (Theyanoguin apparently accompanied Sir William to England), accounts included in Hinderaker's book *The Two Hendricks: Unravelling a Mohawk Mystery* give an indication of Kaneghstase's (Abraham Peter's) character and how he was perceived by colonial officers.²⁵ A letter recounting a visit to the Christian mission village of Stockbridge, Massachusetts written by colonial officer Sergeant Edwards refers to Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) as "a man of great solidity, prudence, devotion, and strict conversation" and who "acts very much as a person endowed with the

²³ Eric Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks: Unraveling a Mohawk Mystery*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 244.

²⁴ One example of an article discussing Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) and Sir William Johnson's relationship is: Timothy J. Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (1996): p. 13, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2946822>.

²⁵ Though routinely recounted, whether or not Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) travelled to Europe with Sir William has become the subject of scholarly debate. For sources indicating that Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) indeed travelled with Sir William see: Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier." "The Highly Important 'Turtle Abram,' sothebys.com. For sources doubting these claims see: Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 321. Alden T. Vaughan, "American Indians Abroad: The Mythical Travels of Mrs. Penobscot and King Hendrick," *New England Quarterly* 80 (June 2007): 299-316.

simplicity, humanity, self-denial and zeal of a true christian."²⁶ Additionally, it is known that Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) was literate which, combined with his English name and relationship to Sir William Johnson, may have influenced the scholarship suggesting that he was Turtel Abram.²⁷ Regardless, the inclusion of an inscription on an otherwise cartographic and pictorial powder horn raises the notion that whomever he was, Turtel Abram was probably also literate and therefore likely from a well-established Kanien'kehaka family, such as the Peters family.

While the Sotheby's catalogue entry accompanying its presentation at auction asserts that Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) was the Turtel Abram referred to by the powder horn, this attribution of Turtel Abram's identity is impossible.²⁸ Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) and his brother were the sons of a "Bear clan matron named Canastasi Koaroni and a Mohican father named Peter who died while Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) was still a child..."²⁹ Kanien'kehaka families are matrilineal, meaning that Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) and Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) were of the Bear, not Turtle, clans. Additionally, at the time of the presentation of the powder horn, Sir John Johnson would have been twenty-two while Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) would have been in his seventies and an established chief.³⁰ Regardless of the closeness between the families, it seems unlikely that they would be the "good friends" as the

²⁶ Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 212. N.b. I have been unable to locate the original source that is quoted for myself, however Hinderaker cites the following: Edwards to Hubbard, 31 Aug. 1751, *MHSCI* 10:142-53; quotes: 144, 145.

²⁷ Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 212.

²⁸ I have been unable to locate a direct reference to a "Turtel Abram," even among sources discussing Theyanoguin's (Hendrick Peter's) brother.

²⁹ Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 159.

³⁰ Sivertsen notes that Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) died in 1757 and that he was in his 60s by 1754. Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears*, 146, 172.

horn's inscription suggests. Rather, it is more plausible that Sir John Johnson would present the powder horn to a younger Kanien'kehaka representative who, like him, was poised to gain power through familial affiliations.

Barbara J. Sivertsen's book, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears: A Mohawk Family History*, exposes two facts which further disqualify the previous scholarship on this object, as understood by the Museum of Fine Arts and Sotheby's. First, Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) died in 1757, before the date inscribed on the powder horn, rendering it impossible for him to be Turtel Abram.³¹ Second, Sivertsen's research distinguishes between Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) and Abraham Teyorhearsere, a Kanien'kehaka chief also known as "Little Abraham," whereas previous research from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Sotheby's conflated these two figures.³² However, even as it opens up these possibilities, Sivertsen's book should be used cautiously for, as Hinderaker writes, "while her effort to reconstruct Hendrick's genealogy is plausible, it is also highly conjectural."³³ Therefore in this study, as in Hinderaker's writings, Sivertsen's work is regarded as possible, but not absolute.³⁴

While this research disproves the assertion that Kaneghstase (Abraham Peters) and Turtel Abram are a singular figure, it also suggests an alternative: that Turtel Abram was the son of one of the Peters brothers. According to Sivertsen, Kaneghstase

³¹ Ibid., 146.

³² According to Sivertsen, "Little Abraham" was in fact given this name as a method of distinguishing the two respected chiefs. For separation of these two figures see: Ibid., 170. Because some of Sivertsen's work is circumstantial, I also confirmed the differentiation of the figures using the index of *The William Johnson Papers*, which does list them separately: Johnson, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 14, 3-4. For conflation of these two figures see: "The Highly Important 'Turtle Abram,' sothebys.com.

³³ Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 321.

³⁴ Ibid.

(Abraham Peters) married a Kanien'kehaka woman named Gesiha, with whom he had four children: Adam Addyngkahnorum, Isaac Dekayenensere, Sara, and Abraham.³⁵ Although Gesiha's lineage is unknown, the notion that she was a turtle is not outlandish, especially considering that both Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) and Karaghiagdatie (Nickus) married turtle women.³⁶ Given the naming of his youngest son "Abraham" it seems likely that this younger family member could be the Turtel Abram honored by the horn, especially since he was born in 1731 and therefore would have been within ten years of Sir John Johnson's age, making them more fitting diplomatic partners and "good friends."³⁷ However, Sivertsen writes that Kaneghstase's (Abraham Peters') son Abraham possibly died between 1744-8, though she offers no sources mentioning his "possible" death.³⁸ Regardless, the unquestionably close relationship between Johnson and Theyanoguin's (Hendrick Peter's) families make it more likely that John Johnson's "good friend" belonged to this network. Considering the absence of evidence for Abraham's death, the possibility remains that Turtel Abram was in fact Kaneghstase's (Abraham Peters') youngest son. If this is the case, the presentation horn thus acted as a way to tie the future generation of leaders to one another.

Evidence that Turtel Abram belonged to Theyanoguin's (Hendrick Peter's) family also appears inscribed upon the horn itself. Beside the tail of the unicorn from

³⁵ Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears*, 146.

³⁶ Hinderaker, *The Two Hendricks*, 159. I had previously considered that Turtel Abram was the son of Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) or Karaghiagdatie (Nickus Peters), but it seems that neither had a son named Abraham.

³⁷ Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears*, 146.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the British coat of arms is the location “Hendrick,” located on the western bank of “Ye Mohawk” river (figure 3). This is likely referring to the present-day town of Canajoharie, otherwise known as the “upper Mohawk castle,” where Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peters) resided. Therefore, the location of the ceremony and the seat of colonial power in Native territory is inscribed directly into the landscape depicted on the powder horn. When the powder horn was inscribed, Theyanoguin (Hendrick Peter’s) was no longer alive, so the fact that Canajoharie would still be named for him indicates a deeper purpose: to mark the placement of Theyanoguin’s (Hendrick Peter’s) family on the land, asserting their ownership despite the growing theft of land by colonizers. Recognizing Native ownership to any degree demonstrates the horn’s purpose as an object of diplomacy.

However, only colonial buildings, forts, churches, or homes — indicated by pictographs — appear on the powder horn. Native lands are marked solely with words, meaning only literate persons could study the horn and recognize any Native American presence. This at once claims the permanence of colonial structures and suggests the impermanence and mobility of Native lands and settlements. While Native conceptions of geographies contained fluid borders, the juxtaposition of vague “Inyan Landes” with grounded colonial structures speaks to the perceived mutability of Native land in the eyes of colonizers — a mutability that constituted the land as ready for the taking. This becomes especially resonant when it is considered that this object was given during a conference discussing the theft of Native land by colonial officers, including Sir William Johnson.

The juxtaposition between the permanence of colonial structures and impermanence of Native ones is furthered by the inclusion of a curious set of three buildings on the right bank of the Mohawk River, directly across from Hendrick's castle. While the buildings' stylization resembles that of the houses at the bottom of the horn, where New York City is portrayed, the buildings are the only non-fortifications to be included outside of New York City. Beneath the buildings, the phrase "S.WJohn" is visible. This structure then, is Johnson Hall.

The engraving of Johnson Hall contains three buildings, basic in form, with the center building represented as the largest and in front of the other two; all are surrounded with a wall. Additionally, an unidentifiable silo-like tower is set aside from the overlapping buildings, located within the walls but near the eastern bank of the Mohawk river. In actuality, Johnson Hall is located twelve and a half miles east of the Mohawk river, or about a four hour walk.³⁹ This distance reinforces the point that the geographies inscribed onto the powder horn are symbolically rather than functionally accurate. They demonstrate colonial dominance under the guise of diplomacy rather than providing wayfinding assistance. Regardless, the drawing of Johnson Hall resembles the structures actually on that site, with its three buildings grouped alongside one another (Figure 4).⁴⁰

³⁹ Google Maps (Google), accessed December 20, 2019, [https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Mohawk River, New York/Johnson Hall State Historic Site, 139 Hall Ave, Johnstown, NY 12095/@42.9990294,-74.624917,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x89d94b30fbd1ca13:0x11f4b64adc539c5!2m2!1d-74.5793051!2d42.9878177!1m5!1m1!1s0x89de8d4a06ad4e01:0xbc192bb2aa011ef!2m2!1d-74.3834744!2d43.0163262!3e2](https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Mohawk+River,+New+York/Johnson+Hall+State+Historic+Site,+139+Hall+Ave,+Johnstown,+NY+12095/@42.9990294,-74.624917,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x89d94b30fbd1ca13:0x11f4b64adc539c5!2m2!1d-74.5793051!2d42.9878177!1m5!1m1!1s0x89de8d4a06ad4e01:0xbc192bb2aa011ef!2m2!1d-74.3834744!2d43.0163262!3e2)).

⁴⁰ A breakdown of Johnson Hall in its nomination form for the National Register of Historic places describes the building as "an 18th century Georgian home of imposing proportions, flanked by two dependencies and situated in a park-like landscape of more than 18 acres. The house sits atop a small

While it is possible that Sir William Johnson's familiarity with Haudenosaunee customs shone the brightest within Johnson Hall's Georgian walls, his position as Superintendent of Indian Affairs put him in a place of authority over the Kanien'kehaka. Indeed, while the conference at Johnson Hall in 1763 discussed the policies shaping the land, they were also convened to discuss Pontiac's War, which directly followed the Seven Years' War and was concurrent with this meeting.⁴¹ Heightened Native American discontent with colonial British policy and actions, including General Amherst's reprehensible gift of smallpox-infected blankets, ignited Pontiac's War. Indeed, even as Sir William remains well known for his positive relationships with the Haudenosaunee, and in particular the Peters family, this only demonstrates one facet of the history. As Sivertsen recounts:

The French governor had told Nickus [Karaghiagdatie] and his fellow prisoners that the English had wanted the French to join in a plot to kill all the Mohawks (the governor naturally refused, he said). Nickus [Karaghiagdatie], incensed, stormed into William Johnson's house with Hendrick [Theyanoguin] and Abraham [Kaneghstase]. Only three days of persuasion by Johnson could convince them that the French government had lied.⁴²

Even if this story is apocryphal (Sivertsen does not provide a citation for it), the notion that Johnson convinced the Peters family that the English meant no harm is powerful, especially given the actions of Amherst. If the story is true, it demonstrates

knoll, faces southeast and is at the northwestern end of a circular drive that projects northward from Hall Avenue." Ashton and Hunter, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Johnson Hall.

⁴¹ "The Highly Important 'Turtle Abram,' sothebys.com.

⁴² Sivertsen, *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears*, 147.

the same marriage between diplomacy/friendship and ownership/conquest that is materially clear in this cartographic powder horn.

As an object, powder horns are intimately connected to violence. They are, after all, intended to carry gunpowder. While this powder horn was considered an object of diplomacy, its ornamentation of a colonial map to a Kanien'kehaka leader on stolen land enacts violence by superimposing Anglo-colonial geographies over an existing native landscape. While Turtel Abram's horn still contains a myriad of mysteries, one aspect is indisputable: the horn contains a geography that both accommodates and restricts Native American presence and sovereignty, referencing Native geographies but ultimately emphasizing imperial control.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Fred. *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-66*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.
- Anderson, Fred. *The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War*. New York: Viking, 2005.
- Ashton, Charles H. and Richard W. Hunter. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Johnson Hall. United States Department of the Interior, National Parks Service, 1984.
- Guthman, William H. *Drums A'beating, Trumpets Sounding: Artistically Carved Powder Horns in the Provincial Manner 1746-1781*. Hartford, Connecticut: The Connecticut Historical Society, 1993.
- Google Maps. Google. Accessed December 20, 2019.
[https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Mohawk River, New York/Johnson Hall State Historic Site, 139 Hall Ave, Johnstown, NY 12095/@42.9990294,-74.624917,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x89d94b30fbd1ca13:0x11f4b64adc539c5!2m2!1d-74.5793051!2d42.9878177!1m5!1m1!1s0x89de8d4a06ad4e01:0xbc192bb2aa011ef!2m2!1d-74.3834744!2d43.0163262!3e2](https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Mohawk+River,+New+York/Johnson+Hall+State+Historic+Site,+139+Hall+Ave,+Johnstown,+NY+12095/@42.9990294,-74.624917,11z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x89d94b30fbd1ca13:0x11f4b64adc539c5!2m2!1d-74.5793051!2d42.9878177!1m5!1m1!1s0x89de8d4a06ad4e01:0xbc192bb2aa011ef!2m2!1d-74.3834744!2d43.0163262!3e2)
- Hinderaker, Eric. *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Hinderaker, Eric. *The Two Hendricks: Unraveling a Mohawk Mystery*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Johnson, William, James Sullivan, and Alexander Clarence Flick. *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1965.
- Kelsay, Isabel Thompson. *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807: Man of Two Worlds*. Syracuse N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1984.
- Richter, Daniel K. *Trade, Land, Power: The Struggle for Eastern North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Shannon, Timothy J. "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (1996): 13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2946822>.

Bibliography Continued

Shannon, Timothy J. "Seven Years' War in New York State Introduction." *New York History*. Vol. 86. No. 4. Fall 2005. 413-416.

Sivertsen, Barbara J. *Turtles, Wolves, and Bears: A Mohawk Family History*. Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1996.

Sotheby's Website. "The Highly Important 'Turtle Abram' French and Indian War Polychrome-Decorated Map Presentation Powder Horn, Johnson Hall, Johnstown, New York, May 24, 1763." Sothebys.com. Accessed November 19, 2019.

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/collection-anne-h-friederick-vogel-iii-n10003/lot.1121.html>.

Vaughan, Alden T. "American Indians Abroad: The Mythical Travels of Mrs. Penobscot and King Hendrick." In *New England Quarterly* 80. June 2007. 299-316.

Illustrations



Figure 1.
Powder Horn, 1763, Length: 18 in., Private Collector/Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

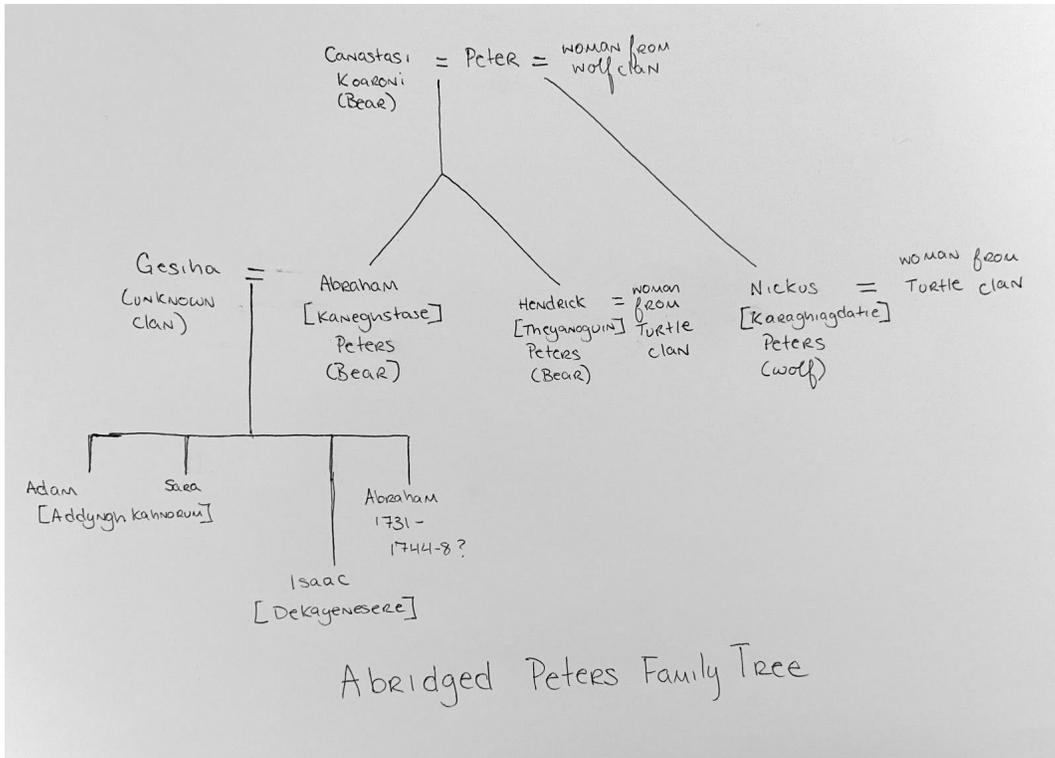


Figure 2.
Abridged Peters Family Tree.

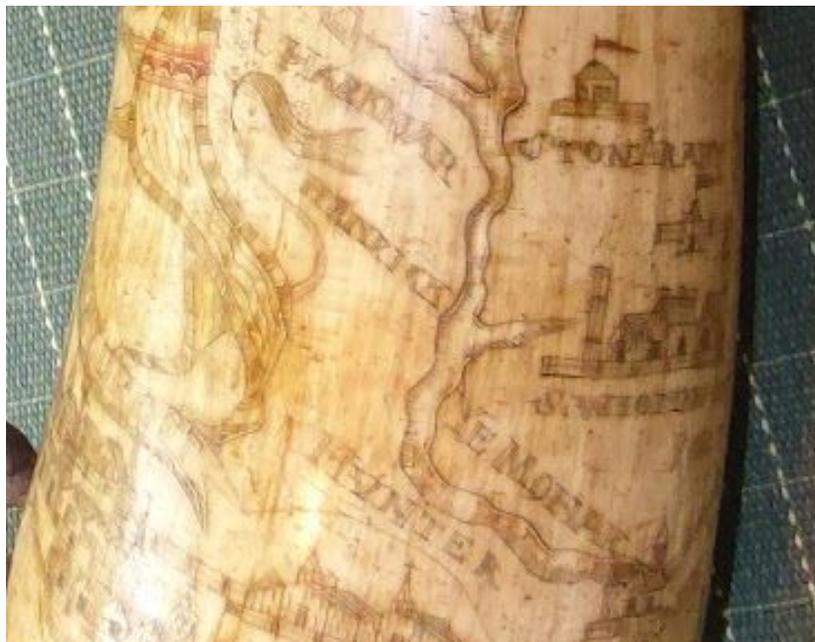


Figure 3.
Detail of Powder Horn, 1763, Length: 18 in., Private Collector/Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston, Photograph taken by Nonie Gadsden.



Figure 4.
Samuel Fuller, Johnson Hall, 1763 with later additions, Johnstown, New York.