

Taking sides: political and social divisions in the Niagara area from 1780 to 1845.

Sir William Johnson

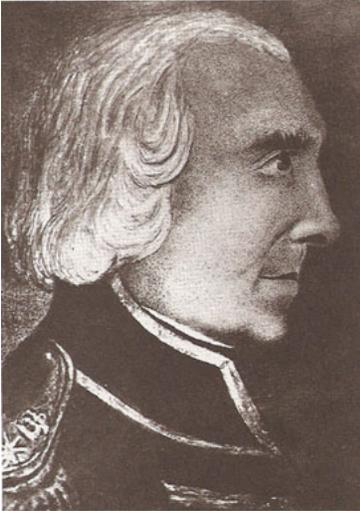


John Johnson

It began with Sir William Johnson's favoritism. Johnson came from Ireland to run the large estate of his Uncle, Admiral Warren, in the Mohawk Valley. He was given an army command in the French and Indian War and credited with winning the Battle of Lake George in 1755 and the Battle of Fort Niagara in 1759. He was made Superintendent of Indian Affairs and had many children by Iroquois ladies and some with Europeans. He had his son John and his two daughters by an indentured servant, a German girl; one daughter married his nephew Guy Johnson and the other married Daniel Claus. John Johnson, sent to England to refine him, to wear off the rustic edges of a frontiersman, was made a baronet by King George III who admired his father's accomplishments.

Sir William Johnson's longest attachment was to Molly Brant by whom he had eight children. Molly's brother Joseph, was part of Sir William's household from time to time and well known to the Johnson clan and to the Butlers.

Sir William Johnson, however, depended upon a neighbor in the Mohawk Valley John Butler as an aide in the Indian Department and also in the battles with the French when Butler was his second in command. Butler, the son of the army commander at Fort Hunter where the Mohawk and Schoharie Rivers meet, spoke Indian languages and



John Butler

knew Indian customs well. Of his children, the most famous or notorious to Americans for his escapades in the Revolutionary War was Walter, a charismatic historical figure.

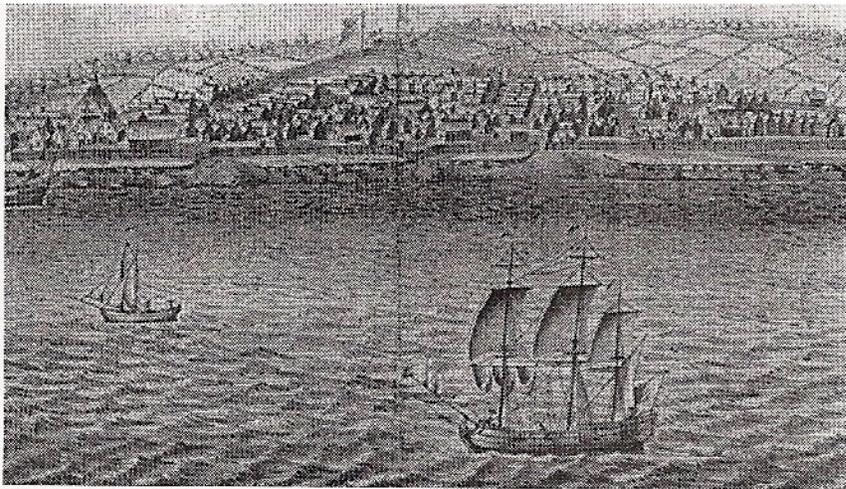
When Butler left his position in the Indian department about 1771 it was because of Sir William's decision to give the limited number of deputy appointments in the department to relatives, such as Claus and Guy Johnson, his sons-in-law, and John Dease, his nephew. Butler devoted himself to the development of his estate and owing to Johnson's approval had various civil and military appointments in Tryon County.

The British depended on Sir William to keep the Indians loyal when cries for independence came from colonists. Johnson must have seen Butler as indispensable to him in that regard.

The rivalry of Johnson's dependents pressured the old man before he died in 1774 to dispense with Butler's services. When Johnson drew up his will in early 1774, however, he named John Butler as one of his executors and a guardian of his children by Molly Brant. Guy Johnson and Dan Claus fled to Canada and went to Britain in late 1775 in the face of the American invasion of Quebec. Governor Carleton considered it akin to desertion and was angered when they persuaded the British Government to use the Indians in the war against Carleton's advice. Butler's obvious competence in dealing with the Indians and attempts by Guy Johnson and Dan Claus to undermine his reputation, put him in favour with both Carleton and [Governor-General] Haldimand. Carleton retained Butler as agent at Niagara and commissioned him to raise a regiment of Rangers despite Claus' derogatory letters, and Haldimand, not by chance, promoted him lieutenant-colonel in 1779, just when Guy Johnson arrived back in Canada from England. A short time later Haldimand intervened to prevent Guy Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, from removing Butler as deputy agent at Niagara. Both governors appreciated Butler's loyalty and deep sense of duty; Carleton described him as "very modest and shy."

Another important connection to Sir William Johnston before the Revolutionary War was Richard Cartwright of Albany, New York, who ran an Inn and a merchant business,

which supplied Johnson and his Highland settlers with goods imported from Europe. The Cartwright family belonged to that faction of the elites who remained loyal to Britain. Not only were the Johnsons allied with them but the Butlers were even closer. During the Revolutionary War, Richard Cartwright helped Walter Butler escape from an Albany prison, and his son Richard Cartwright Jr. became Colonel Butler's secretary in Butler's Rangers making war out of Fort Niagara. My ancestor Richard Beasley was closely allied with his cousins the Cartwrights. Hannah Cartwright, Richard Cartwright Sr's wife, was sister to Richard Beasley's father Henry, whose father, John, was an English schoolteacher in Albany. The Revolutionary period involving these people in espionage and clandestine operations I deal with in my book *From Bloody Beginnings: Richard Beasley's Upper Canada*.



View of Albany, New York, ca 1715, as John Beasley knew it. The fort is high on the hill overlooking the town. A wash drawing by Thomas Davies.

John Johnson and his brother-in-law Daniel Claus tried to turn Chief Joseph Brant against Butler by inferring that Butler opposed using the Indians in the war when Butler was under orders to restrain them. After General Washington, the rebel commander, employed the Oneidas, the British gave Butler permission to employ the Iroquois. Brant grew to trust Colonel Butler, despite what John Johnson said about him.

What truly angered the Johnson clan was John Butler's control over supplies to the forts and the Indians; Butler selected the suppliers and took a certain percentage of the profit, which the Johnsons envied. John Johnson went to England to lobby for his appointment as Superintendent of the Northern Indian Department to supervise the

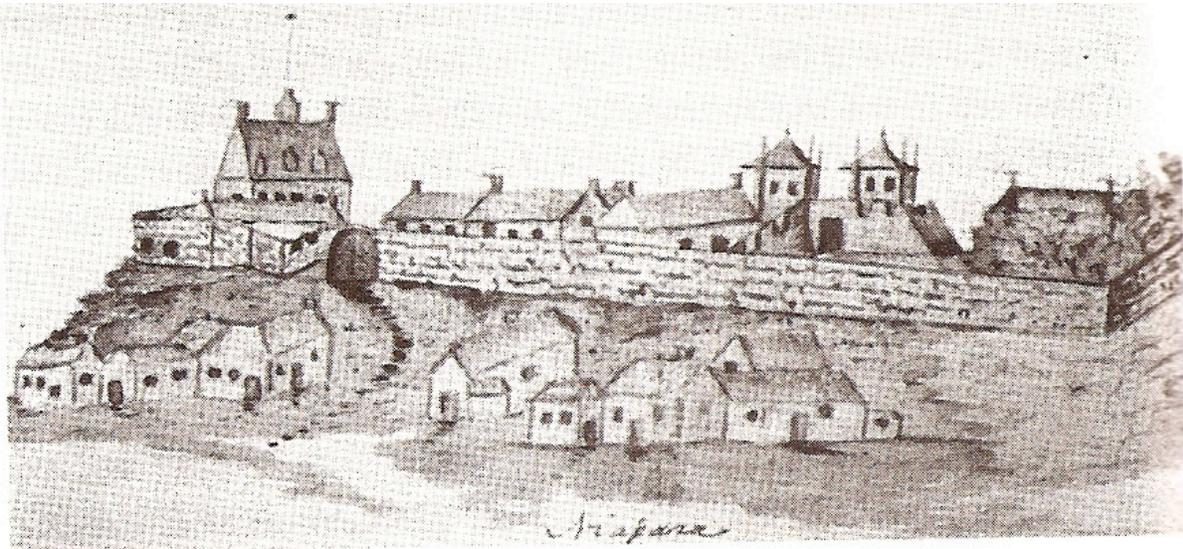
supplying of the forts and the Indians. Owing to Johnson's superior social standing, General Haldimand had to appoint him. Butler received the news with disbelief. As he said to young Cartwright, how could Haldimand not avoid taking into account his long experience with Indian affairs and his knowledge of Indian customs and languages? Devastated, he knew that all power had gone to the Johnsons and that his family and those Rangers who had flocked to his standard were going to lose out in the scramble for land and benefits when the war was over. He remained as Deputy Superintendent of the Six Nations, but the divide between the Johnson camp whose power came from English connections and the Butler camp of locals without connections in England was to cause resentments for years to come.



Hand to
hand
fighting
in the
ravine at
Oriskany

John Johnson blamed Butler for failing to control the Indians at the Oriskany Creek ambush during the Revolutionary War. Johnson and his Highland Greens militia had come from Quebec to join the British regiment driving down from Fort Niagara on the American Fort Stanwix. With the British was Butler and his Rangers and the Iroquois under Butler's command. Detailed to set the ambush, Butler's men and Indians and Johnson's men with some British regulars waited for the American reinforcements in the ravine and surprised them. Unfortunately the Indians attacked too soon, thus inadvertently allowing the rebels to reform and try to save themselves. Johnson blamed Butler for the lack of a complete destruction of the rebel relief column. Butler, realizing he needed more loyalist officers to lead and control the warriors, sent his son Walter

and others into rebel territory to recruit loyalists. Walter was betrayed by an Oneida Indian and imprisoned in Albany.



The drawing of Fort Niagara shows the traders' houses outside the fort where young Richard Beasley and his cousin Richard Cartwright Jr kept their supplies. Richard Cartwright Jr, disgusted with the cruelties and inhumanity of war, resigned as Butler's secretary of the Rangers and went into the fur trade with Robert Hamilton as his partner. Hamilton had spent time in Detroit under the tutelage of the long-time fur trader, John Askin, and married Catharine, Askin's eldest daughter by his Ottawa Indian wife, thus solidifying an important relationship owing to Askin's merchant connections to suppliers in Montreal. Richard Beasley with trading posts at the Head of the Lake and Toronto and his partner Peter Smith stationed in Port Hope were partners to the larger partnership of Askin, Hamilton and Cartwright. Before the Constitutional Act of 1791 creating Upper Canada, Robert Hamilton and John Butler served together on the Land Board for the Niagara Region. There was a stronger relationship of the Laurentian merchants with Butler than with the Johnsons. Moreover, Butler bought the southern Niagara Peninsula from the Mississauga Indians for settlement and set up the agricultural system, for which the people at Fort Niagara and surroundings were grateful. But apparently he did not keep the respect and allegiance of his Rangers after the war; it was the enterprising Robert Hamilton who dominated the Niagara area with his Scots relatives, which he brought from Scotland to run his many businesses. So widespread was his influence that the small group of reform-minded officials in York such as the Chief Justice called them a "Shopkeeper Aristocracy of Scotch pedlars".

One of the reformers Attorney General Weekes was indiscreet in criticizing in court a Governor who favoured the merchants. William Dickson, one of Hamilton's nephews from Scotland, the opposing lawyer, challenged him to a duel for his indiscretion and killed Weekes. This marked him for later humiliation by Weekes best friend, Joe Wilcocks, the colourful politician and later traitor.



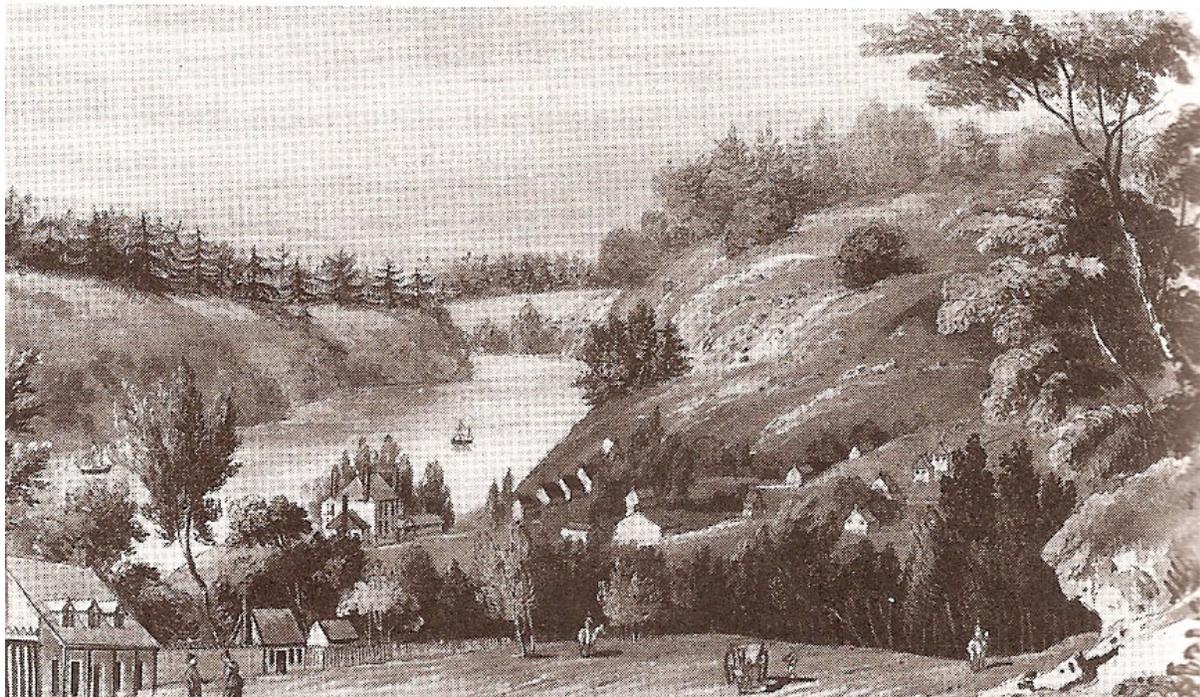
Richard Beasley



Chief Joseph Brant



Robert Hamilton



Robert Hamilton's home [centre left] at Queenston Landing as painted by Lady Simcoe

Sir John Johnson as a member of the Executive Council of Quebec in Montreal worked to destroy Butler and deny him and his clan any power in the new community. Sir John recommended lists of names to be appointed to positions in the new Upper Canada, excluding Butler and all members of Butlers Rangers from consideration. As early as 1782 Johnson tried but failed to remove Butler from his post of Deputy Superintendent of the Six Nations and replace him with his nephew William Claus. Claus succeeded to the post after Butler's death in 1796.

Sir John Johnson, who had lobbied to be appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the new Upper Canada, fumed that Colonel John Simcoe was chosen over him; Johnson as Superintendent of Indian Affairs worked to turn the Indians against Simcoe and his plans to settle Upper Canada. Simcoe chose Butler for Lieutenant of Lincoln County in Niagara. It was hoped that the county lieutenants would foster a nucleus of privileged families to develop an aristocracy.

To help him develop the country out of Niagara, Simcoe resurrected his old Loyalist Regiment, the Queens Rangers, from Revolutionary War days. A surgeon with the Rangers, Robert Richardson, married Madeleine Askin, younger sister to Catharine Hamilton. They were friends to Lady Simcoe and feature in her famous diary. Madeleine's first son John, born in 1796, became Canada's first novelist, the only literary genius to come out of the Niagara region. The Richardson family, owing to its ties to the Simcoes, Hamiltons and Askins, were acquainted with the machinations of the Johnson-Butler feud. Doubtless young John Richardson grew up aware of the Johnson clan's goals to control the Indians. His father could have told him how John Johnson used Joseph Brant's friendship to recommend him to represent the Senecas in return for the right to dispose of those Seneca lands in New York State claimed in the name of the Johnson family. By selling the lands Johnson restored the family fortune. Later Johnson and his nephew William Claus in the Indian Department plotted against their old friend Joseph Brant to supplant his influence among the Six Nations. When Brant tried to sell the northern part of the Indian grant along the Grand River to settlers through agents such as Richard Beasley, he discovered how Claus, working in collusion with the Lieutenant-Governor who succeeded Simcoe, tried to discredit him with the Six Nations.



Lady Simcoe's wash painting of Richard Beasley's houses on the shore of Burlington Bay in 1796

Richard Beasley was elected to the provincial Assembly. With help from influential friends like Robert Hamilton and the enterprise of the Mennonite community in Pennsylvania, he and Brant were able to win out over the government opposition and bring in settlers to Waterloo County and elsewhere. The intrigues to settle Upper Canada townships comprised American land brokers, Indian Chiefs, agents for Brant like Richard Beasley, settlers from the states like the Mennonites who wanted to escape from the type of settler moving west onto Indian lands, and Upper Canadian government officials, who looked for ways to swindle lands for themselves. Also nation builders such as Aaron Burr, US vice-president, schemed to send American settlers to buy up townships and then declare Upper Canada independent and ready to join the US. William Claus of the Indian Department detested Richard Beasley for winning the battle over the settlement of Waterloo County and tried discrediting him with the English officers during the War of 1812, in which Richard commanded the 2nd York militia. Claus continued undermining Brant and his successor John Norton, Teyoninhokowaren, so that the Indian Department allied to the ruling oligarchy posed a threat to the Six Nations leadership over many years.



William Claus



John Norton, Chief Teyoninhokorwaren



Major John Richardson

John Richardson knew John Norton well and modeled the character of Wacousta after him in his eponymous novel. Since Richardson left Canada after the War of 1812 and did not return for 23 years, he would have learned of Claus's antagonism to Norton in letters from family. He seems to have nurtured a dislike for the Johnsons. His displeasure with Sir William Johnson becomes blatant in a short story, "Ampata; a Tale of Lake George", about the battle between the French and English in 1755, which is collected in his Short Stories.



"General Johnson at the commencement of the engagement was wounded," he wrote, "and, retiring from the field, left General Lyman in command. Stationing himself in front of the breast-work, surrounded by the greatest of danger—with a serenity of countenance which all admire, yet few can command—Lyman issued his orders wherever occasion required during five consecutive hours. The main body of the French sustained the shock with great courage.... It is somewhat surprising that General Johnson did not order a continued pursuit of the retreating enemy; as there is little reason to doubt, considering the fatigues which they had undergone the two previous days, that the whole body would either have been destroyed or taken prisoners. General Lyman

warmly urged the proposition, but Johnson from some inexplicable cause refused to comply; and it is only to be accounted for, by reviewing the inactivity and slothfulness

which the British commander had evinced. His majesty was so well pleased with this event as to create Johnson a baronet, and parliament voted him a present of five thousand pounds sterling; while Lyman—to whom Johnson was indebted for this victory, yet had not generosity enough to mention his name in his official report—was unknown in England as the officer to whom the need of praise was properly due.

“Johnson was an uneducated adventurer, suddenly raised to distinction by the aid of powerful friends to whom he made himself convenient by his energy, shrewdness and activity; while Lyman was dignified in person, greatly beloved by the soldiers, and moreover was distinguished for learning and science. It therefore is not to be wondered at, that Johnson entertained towards Lyman an implacable jealousy. Not content with placing on his own brow the laurels he neither won nor merited, but in order to gratify the demon within his breast, he employed agents to calumniate his officer, who he felt was in every respect his superior.”

This criticism strikes the reader as gratuitous and can be understood only against the background of the Johnson-Butler feud. The rivalry when brought into the arena of government appointments pitted the officer class as represented by the Johnsons against the merchant class of Butler’s associates. As the Niagara area attracted settlers this difference grew starker and developed political factions.

Richard Beasley formed an alliance of assemblymen, who were for the farmers rather than for the oligarchy of the cities, to bring about reforms in the countryside. For instance in 1799, Beasley and David McGregor Rogers, nephew of the famous Robert Rogers of Rogers Rangers, wrote a bill proposing a canal between Lakes Ontario and Erie to improve communication and trade, but it took decades before the Welland Canal was built. Robert Hamilton, whose wide-flung influence and patronage gave the Niagara region stability, died in 1809 and made his Scots nephews, William Dickson and Clark executors of his will. These nephews with Hamilton’s help had become very wealthy but they disassembled Hamilton’s empire for their own sakes and thereby turned Hamilton’s children, whose interests they were to protect, against them. Here was an example of the European-born proponents of the oligarchy opposed by the native-born whose ideas of developing the country differed greatly. One of Hamilton’s sons, George, part Indian like his cousin John Richardson, founded the city of Hamilton and was allied with Richard Beasley in the reformist camp. Settlers from loyalist families such as Abraham

Markle and the very early settlers such as Jean Baptiste Rousseau joined with a reformist Irish group of officials around Joe Willcocks, who opposed the roughshod manner in which the English soldiery treated the settlers. Disaffection among citizens in Niagara was widespread for most of the war and some of the reform-minded were

harried by officialdom to such a point that they joined the American invaders. It took the stupidity of the American forces laying waste much of the land and burning Newark to unite the citizens against the Americans.



William Dickson

Pause for a moment over the picture of William Dickson, the man who killed Attorney General Weekes in a duel. Joe Willcocks and other reformers went over to the American forces, formed a regiment called Canadian Volunteers and terrorized the Niagara region. When Willcocks helped burn Newark, he took Dickson prisoner, left Dickson's crippled wife helpless in a snow blizzard outside their burning home and magnificent library, and sent Dickson walking for hundreds of miles east to imprisonment near Albany. This could be called sweet revenge for the death of Weekes, his close friend.



Robert Gourlay

Nothing could dramatize the divisions greater than the oligarchy's treatment of the reformer Robert Gourlay after the war. Gourlay saw the distress and tried to rally the settlers while Reverend Strachan, an influential force on the Executive and Legislative Councils, symbolized his opposition.

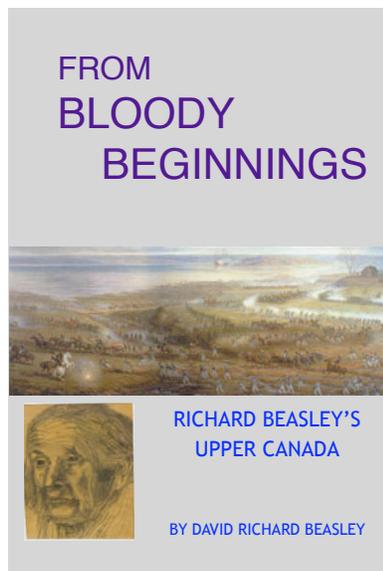


Reverend Jock Strachan

Strachan objected to the last question that Gourlay asked the farmers in a questionnaire—What, in your opinion, retards the Improvement, of your township in particular, or the Province in general; and what would most contribute to the same?—Strachan saw it as an attack on the clergy reserve lands which had been criticized for obstructing movement about townships and retarding development. He set out to ruin Gourlay by instructing the new Lieutenant-Governor to ban all political meetings. So severe was the reaction from the oligarchy [veterans of the war

would not receive pensions if they supported reform and so on] that officials who originally supported Gourlay turned against him. Important Niagara citizens such as Clark and William Dickson, cousins of Gourlay, had encouraged his reform efforts because they hoped to profit from the sale of their lands to immigrants that the reforms would bring in. But now they were the first to prosecute him on trumped up charges. Despite thousands of supporters about the province, Gourlay, having spent months in the Niagara jail, came out for his trial a disoriented and sick man and was banned from the country. Niagara saw many tempestuous arguments between Gourlayites and supporters of the oligarchy in the years after 1820, which led to rebellion in the late 30s.

Isaac Swayzy is a case in point. He was a loyalist, worked on secret service missions during the Revolution, settled in St Davids, was elected to the Assembly and represented the farmers but was imprisoned briefly for sedition by the authorities and later went over to the interests of large land speculators and became known as anti-republican. He was accused of counterfeiting, horse-thievery and lesser crimes but given a commission to lead the Artillery Drivers during the War of 1812 in which he distinguished himself. He spied for the Lieutenant-Governor and publicly maligned Robert Gourlay. In 1820 he lost his Assembly seat to an opponent who portrayed him as a stooge of the executive government. For decades he had been a divisive force in the Niagara area, an opportunist who thrived and helped ruin the honest reformer.



Richard Beasley was Gourlay's most influential supporter. He was elected Chairman of the Upper Canada Convention of the Friends of Inquiry in York by delegates from across the province to petition the Prince Regent about the farmers' grievances. Strachan sent spies and made false reports to the incoming Governor. Here is the relevant passage from *From Bloody Beginnings* written as if by Richard Beasley [the Thomas Erskine he refers to is the great trial lawyer and defender of civil liberties Lord Erskine with whom he corresponded]:

An article in a Washington newspaper praising Gourlay was reprinted in Canadian papers and

made the fighter for justice known throughout the continent. Here was another Thomas Erskine arguing with clarity and reason for justice against the dark forces of corruption and intimidation. When I read this, I feared swift retaliation. I suspected that the provincial administrator who hired Isaac Swayze to search out seditious behaviour would ask him to spy on Gourlay. I had known the swarthy, scar-faced Swayze for years as a scoundrel who pretended to foster the interests of his Niagara constituents in the Assembly when working for the oligarchy.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Convention, I sent a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Maitland dated August 1, 1818 that would arrive in York when he was expected there. I outlined the problems the Assembly had with the administration, the inability of the Assembly to resolve the people's grievances, and included a printed "Principles and Proceedings" showing what had been agitating the public mind. "It will require but a glance to be assured that serious causes must exist for such agitation," I wrote, "and an inquiry should be made into the state of this province." James Durand's criticism of his fellow Assemblymen seemed tepid beside what I wrote, but then I was conveying the frustrations of thousands that after countless meetings throughout the province, the debates and resolutions, the sabotage of our efforts by unprincipled persons, and the expectation after twenty years of many governors and disappointments in their conduct of civil affairs, our citizens should be ignored and humiliated by the last governor. I admitted that the people had shown too little attention to the character of those elected to public office but that "the people at large have at last been roused to a just sense of all this trifling and indecency; they see their property reduced a full half, from the maladministration of good laws; they see prosperity completely checked; they witness discontent and poverty, under the most genial clime and rooted in the most fertile soil; they fear subjection to a foreign power, if war should again be waged; they dread a separation from the mother country, which they would most grievously lament; they wish to make an effort of recovery from all this disgrace and danger; they entreat your instant and earnest aid to assist them."

Selected by the Convention, George Hamilton, William Kerr and I sought to hand the Convention's petition to Lieutenant-Governor Maitland when he arrived. My letter announcing our intention may have led Maitland to leave York immediately for Niagara Falls to consult with the merchant élite in Niagara and to Colonel Talbot's holdings on Lake Erie where that local tyrant would have pooh-poohed our grievances.

Only in late October 1818, after the various duties that we had to fulfill, did Hamilton, Kerr and I come together to formulate the final language. The Assembly was in session. Maitland in his address severely attacked the loyalty of those who



Peregrine Maitland

attended the Convention, which made Kerr doubt that Maitland would receive them. Hamilton said that the man would be foolish to reject the petition out of hand, that we had to grant him common sense; moreover, we had heard that Maitland, when traveling through the eastern part of the province, was shocked by the poverty of the settlers who were surrounded by wild lands owned by absentee speculators living in Montreal. Arriving in York, he chastised the officers of the Land Department for withholding grants, asking high fees and responding slothfully to the settlers' requests. Thus Hamilton, his bearded face bright in expectation, and William Kerr, bearing the burnished skin of a man experienced alike in the Canadian wilderness and

the formal councils of Indian and white, approached Maitland's secretary, Major Hillier, with confidence.

"We have a petition for His Excellency General Maitland that the representatives of the people at the Convention of Friends to Enquiry humbly submit through us," Kerr said and offered the pages of the petition to the young major. "When will the Governor be pleased to receive it?"

"One moment, gentlemen," Hillier said in a clipped English accent, and, taking the papers, walked quickly into the room from which he had come to them.

'Let's hope for the best,' Hamilton smiled.

"That man has an officious air that I don't like," Kerr said with a grimace.

"A sign of things to come, I wonder?" Hamilton mused.

Hillier reappeared walking quickly toward them. He handed the petition back to Kerr. "His Excellency will see you. The Surveyor-General Ridout is with him."

Kerr looked questioningly at Hamilton as they followed Hillier into a long, richly furnished room where Maitland stood in full dress uniform, a bored expression on his fresh, wide face, his large eyes giving the men approaching an impression of profound disinterest.

"What do you want?"

Kerr stated that they wished to present him with a petition from the

Convention of the Friends of Enquiry.

“I am surprised,” Maitland said in an offended tone, “that you would present a petition from an unconstitutional meeting.”

“Sir,” Hamilton spoke up quickly, “I beg leave to say that the Convention is not unconstitutional.”

“Yes, sir,” Maitland turned on him angrily, his large eyes rounding like saucers, “it is unconstitutional! In every country! You have your lawful representatives; you have two sets of representatives. Let the subjects assemble and petition in a lawful manner and I will receive their petitions and forward them, but this I will not receive.” He turned away abruptly.

As Kerr and Hamilton bowed and turned to go, they caught sight of Ridout smirking at them from the side of the room. Hillier accompanied them out without a word.

“His Excellency has made a mistake,” Hamilton said ruefully to Kerr, but loud enough for Hillier to hear.

They came to me at the Court of Quarter Sessions in Hamilton. That evening, I helped prepare a response, emphasizing that it was our birthright to ask for a redress of grievances and wished to give our Lieutenant-Governor another opportunity to read the petition, unwilling as we were to inform our constituents of the ungracious reception we met with. We had our letter with the petition delivered to Government House in York. Hillier returned the petition with the words—“His Excellency declines receiving it.”

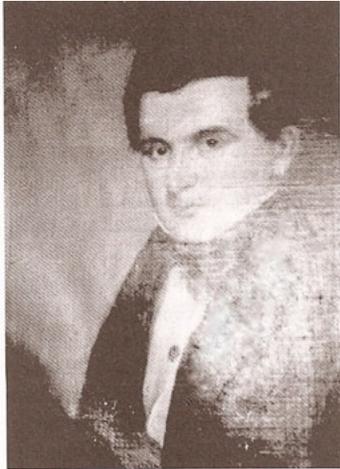
We were upset to have our petition rejected out of hand by a soldier who understood nothing of our country, refused to interest himself in its citizens whom he was sent to serve, and reiterated the autocratic, stupid and insensitive rule that we had come to despise, but my anger was like a whisper to the roar that erupted around the country when Maitland’s attitude was reported in the newspapers. The Convention selected us to represent the people because our backgrounds and careers would, at the least, bring respect and attention from the Lieutenant-Governor. Kerr, grandson of Molly Brant and Sir William Johnson, distinguished himself as leader of the Canadian Indians in the late war. George Hamilton, son of the powerful Robert Hamilton, had extensive contacts and influence throughout the province. As an old-timer established in many pursuits—the fur trade, the merchant business, land speculation, the political class, the judiciary and the militia—I enjoyed respect and deference from people in all occupations. When

Reverend Strachan advised Maitland to treat us like schoolboys, he had no idea that he was destroying the benevolent reputation of the Governor among the people whose aspirations rested in his authority.

Discovering that indeed there was no law forbidding the Convention, Maitland asked the Assembly to pass one. The Assembly declared that it was the only lawful body representing the people, and acts of publishing notice of, attending, and voting at unlawful assemblies constituted a “high misdemeanor”. Assembly members, frightened by charges of sedition and loss of their livelihoods or simply reactionary supporters of the status quo, must be named for posterity—Swayze, Fraser, Cotter, Clench, Hart, Van Koughnett, James Durand, Burnham, Cameron, Peter Robinson, Howard, Jonas Jones, and Robert Nelles. Durand, who had been an avid supporter of Gourlay, now put his business interests first. Opposing this loss of liberty on behalf of the citizens was Willet Casey, member for Lennox and Addington, standing alone.

Gourlay called the Act, the Gag Law—“A babe of Wellington, come o’er the sea,/Has, with thy own foul fingers, gagg’d thee!” he wrote in the *Niagara Spectator*. Isaac Swayze accused the editors of seditious libel. William Dickson and William Claus, magistrates, gaoled them while Swayze, reporting his action to Major Hillier, warned that more people in government service supported the editors than he would have believed. [Maitland had been one of Wellington’s generals.]

Richard Beasley was convicted on trumped up charges in a military court [William Claus was Chairman] at which he was not allowed to defend himself. Some of his closest associates such as the Nelles brothers betrayed him. But being a colonel he called a court martial on himself at which he could have witnesses and defend himself and overturned the verdict. The Reverend Strachan joined with William Claus to persuade the Lieutenant-Governor to dismiss him as magistrate, judge and militia colonel. Times were hard for Richard, but he fought back and as the first representative from Halton District he led the Assembly to declare the delegates of the Convention loyal citizens and restored all their rights. He worked with the reformer John Rolfe to legislate civil liberties into law and have them approved by the British government. The energy for reform came from Toronto and districts other than Niagara where Richard Beasley’s former colleagues and friends either worked against him or followed silently, perhaps enduring too much contention in recent years.



Charles Richardson

Just before the Rebellion, in the 12th parliament [1834-36] and the 13th parliament, which began its 4-year term in 1836, Charles Richardson, John Richardson's young brother, was elected to represent Niagara in the Assembly. He articulated in the law office of the Attorney-general John Beverly Robinson, the most right-wing politician one could find and the man who prosecuted Gourlay. Charles Richardson was among the men encouraged by Robinson to dump William Lyon Mackenzie's printing press in Lake Ontario, thereby unwittingly making Mackenzie popular and bringing rebellion one step closer. Niagara town must have been more conservative than reform to have elected him. He encouraged his brother, now a famous writer in Europe, to return to establish a conservative press to counteract the reformers.

John Richardson returned as correspondent for the *Times* of London to report on the Canadian rebellion. His politics were a cross between Tory and Liberal. For instance, he supported Lord Durham's proposals for reforming Canada which caused the Tory *Times* to dismiss him. He eventually founded a Tory-oriented newspaper, but, like many of his projects, it failed and, after many tribulations, he found himself the Superintendent of Police on the Welland Canal, being built in 1845 by Irish navvies whose frequent rioting

terrified the adjoining communities.



Port Robinson, enlarged canal.

His job was made more difficult by his enemies: first, the Reformers who, resenting his appointment by the conservative Governor-General, controlled the Board of Works, which employed him; second, the local supporters of a Conservative, who had expected to get the Superintendent appointment, made everyday life difficult for him; third, American contractors

on the canal, whom Richardson criticized for paying starvation wages and siphoning the

profits over the border to enrich American properties, worked with the Board of Works to discredit him. Richardson faced a daunting task dealing with deliberate incitements of the Protestant Irish against the Catholic Irish canal workers in huge riots which he with his small police force had to quell. The affronts and attacks upon him so affected his wife that she died of apoplexy. He buried her in the Butler burial ground from his brother Charles's house in Niagara, which demonstrates an allegiance of the Richardson family to the Butlers these many years later.



Charles Richardson's home in Niagara-on-the-Lake with an extension on the right has been a B&B for some years.

His last days in his Superintendent's cottage were poignant. His police force disbanded, he was embattled by an unruly mob who knew he was powerless to control it and sought by creditors who would jail him if he ventured outside. After a week in his cottage he stole in the dead of night to his stable, saddled his horse and rode for his brother's house in Niagara.

In Montreal he was badgered by Niagara magistrates for monies he supposedly owed the district [fines collected in court, which he contributed to the welfare of the starving workers]. The new Governor-General Elgin, son-in-law to the late Lord Durham, quashed the charges as unwarranted. It was only after he migrated to New York City to find publishers for his writings that Richardson wrote "Ampata" with its criticism of Sir William Johnson, thus awakening in this student of history a curiosity about the Johnson-Butler feud which left a legacy of divided camps in the Niagara region.