



Beyond Penn's Treaty

Letter, account of Canandaigua Treaty negotiations

ID_TEI: SW_Letters_1794_12_20

TYPE_OF_MANUSCRIPT: letters (correspondence)

CALL_NO: Mss 004/ 1794 12 02

DATE: 1794

LOCATION: Swarthmore College

AUTHOR: John Parrish, others

SUMMARY: John Parrish was a Quaker minister and member of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting for the Northern District. He travelled first to visit the Delaware Indians in western Pennsylvania in 1773. Letter from Parrish, Bacon, Savery, and Emlen to the Meeting for Sufferings summarizing the events at Canandaigua in the fall of 1794.

How to cite: Accessed online Thu 03 Jul 2025 04:56 AM EST

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To the Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends

Agreeably to our prospect of attending the Treaty to be held with the Indians of the Six Nations at Canandague in New York Government, we left this City the 15th of the 9th Mo: and reached that place on the 26th of the same: On our arrival we found but about 160 collected, and these chiefly of the Oneida Tribe, with whom we had divers conferences before the others came in; we also found about 30 Members of our religious Society settled within the compass of fifteen Miles of the place of Treaty who had emigrated chiefly from the New England Governments, these friends in their distant & scattered situation appeared glad to see us and engaged our attention & concern. — We had Meetings on the first Days of the Week during our continuance there, which were held to satisfaction and attended by our fellow professors & many others both Indians & Whites; amongst these people we apprehend a few Books might be profitably distributed. —

All the Indians who were expected being at length assembled to the amount of 1600 and upwards, the Treaty commenced; we attended all the public Councils as well as some which were held by the Commissioner more privately, and had frequent & satisfactory opportunities of conference with the Sachems & other Chiefs, in which we endeavoured to impress their Minds with a sense of the advantages to be derived from living in peace one with another and with all Men, and of the expediency of leading a more sober & quiet Life, that they might draw down the divine Blessing upon them; they heard us with attention and we hope it was not without some good effect. — They stil^l retain a lively remembrance of the just & friendly treatment their forefathers experienced from the first founder of Pennsylvania, continue to distinguish him by the name of Onas and consider friends as his descendants, expressing that "if we deceive them they can no more place any confidence in mankind".

As an enquiry had been made in time past respecting the original Owners of the Land about Hopewell in Virginia; soon after the Indians were collected, some of the principal Chiefs of the different

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Nations visited us on the occasion and revived the subject, expressing their gladness that friends were willing to do justice; divers conferences were held amongst themselves and with us relative to that business, the Issue of which was that we were all of opinion the Tuscaroras were the people who formerly owned that Country; they are now the sixth Nation in the Confederacy, live on the Seneca's Land and sit with them in Council, but we believe are not considered as having a right in the Soil: General Chapin, Superintendant of the Six Nations upon enquiry being of the same opinion, gave us his judgment in writing, which we have now to present to the Meeting. — About 20 Delawares also attended the Treaty, some of whom came from Conestogoe Manor & complained to us of the murder of their relations and of their having been driven from their possessions without any just compensation being made, requesting we would mention it on our return, that the Injuries done them & their people might be redressed.

Early in the Business we presented the address of friends, which was read & interpreted, they were attentive to its contents and expressed their satisfaction.

During our stay with them they made several speeches to us, and some difficulties occurring in the course of the Treaty, they requested our council & advice, which we gave them as well as we were qualified in our delicate & trying situation: some of these Speeches express a regard & friendship for our religious society, which, with some observations & occurrences contained in our Notes, may if the Meeting thinks proper be selected with the assistance of a few friends & offered to a future Meeting.

It may be proper to remark that altho' it afforded us satisfaction that a Treaty was concluded in such a manner as that we hope peace is established between the six Nations & the United States, yet as it confirms the right of the United States to large Tracts of their Country which were obtained by ~~right~~ conquest we were therefore most easy to omit subscribing our Names as witnesses to the Articles thereof.

At the close of the Treaty we assembled the Chiefs of all the Nations and delivered them the presents of friends, which they

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gratefully received; Jasper Parrish an Interpreter for Government distributed them at their request agreeable to the Numbers contained in each Nation. —

We continued with them about seven weeks, and had no cause to doubt our having been in our proper places, yet with sorrow had to observe that the pernicious effects of spirituous liquors being handed freely to them were highly injurious and considerably retarded the Issue of the Business.

Many are the Difficulties & Sufferings to which the Indians are subjected and their present situation appears loudly to claim the Sympathy & attention of the Members of our religious Society & others who have grown numerous & opulent on the former inheritance of these poor declining people: we cannot but believe some mode may be fallen upon of rendering them more essential service than has yet been adopted.

Our Engagements were often very trying & trying, yet thro' the kindness of providence we were preserved in much harmony & Unity through them all, and on the whole have reason to hope, the object of the Concern was in some degree answered, I are thankful in being permitted to return home with a portion of peace after an exercising & fatiguing Journey —

Philad: 20th 12 mo: 1794 —

John Parrish
David Bacon
William Avery
James Emlen

Original signatures I am sure x

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