

CHAPTER VII.

Early Settlement of the Mohawk Valley — Van Corlear's Patent — Settlement at Schenectady — German Palatinates at Schoharie Creek, at Canajoharie and Palatine Village — Their Character and Customs — Located there as a Defense against the French Invasions — The Plan not Fully Successful — Sir William Johnson forms the Germans into Militia Companies — French and Indian Land Grants — Charters of New York and Pennsylvania Compared — The Former a Royal Province — Patents Issued Including Lands in Montgomery County.

AS has been briefly mentioned in one of the preceding chapters, civilized settlement began in the Mohawk valley in 1661, when Arent Van Corlear purchased from the Indian proprietors a large tract of land in the vicinity of Fort Orange, and another covering the present site of Schenectady. In 1684, nearly twenty years after the conquest of the Dutch by the English, the purchases made by Corlear were confirmed by Governor Dongan. During the period of the early wars between the French and Indians, there was but little attempt at settlement in any of the frontiers, such efforts being attended with many hardships and great danger. Even Schenectady, protected as it may have been, was (as has been narrated), surprised and destroyed by the French and Canadian savages in February, 1690. Notwithstanding this fearful tragedy, before the lapse of a little more than a score of years another attempt was made at the colonization of the valley, and this time too in the region farther west, being within the territory afterward formed into Montgomery county.

During the early years of the seventeenth century, Europe was subjected to a series of religious wars, in which the Romanists were opposed to Protestantism, their determination being to crush the latter out of existence. One of the localities seriously affected by this conflict was the Lower Palatinate in Germany; a province peopled by a hardy, though obstinate and ignorant race. To escape persecution this people fled from their native country and found temporary refuge in England. In 1702 Queen Anne succeeded King William, and the way

was soon provided by which the German refugees were given a home in the new world. The first of the Palatinates (as they were called), arrived in New York in 1707, followed in 1710 by a larger number—estimated at three thousand. The projectors of the colonization scheme intended that the Palatinates should settle in the Mohawk valley, but on examination of that region with reference to its adaptability the scheme was found to be impracticable, and the emigrants were located in the Hudson river country. A portion of the original number, however, remained in New York, while many went to Pennsylvania and became permanent residents. There were many causes which wrought dissatisfaction among the Palatinates in the Hudson river district, chief among which was the fact that they were obliged to serve under government agents; who were often both tyrannical and dishonest.

From this and other causes the poor Germans became greatly discontented with their abode, and many determined to seek homes elsewhere, particularly in the region which (as they claimed) Queen Anne had promised them. In fact they were so bent in this purpose that the authorities were obliged to use force to hold them to their contracts. At last the officers in charge became discouraged in their endeavors to improve such refractory settlers, and therefore permitted them to gratify their desires, the government hoping the removal might afford protection against the incursions of the French, and their Indian allies. In 1712, by permission of the Mohawks, a number of these families located on the Schoharie Creek, but later on they had disputes concerning their land titles. In 1723 colonies of Palatinates moved farther up the Mohawk and settled at Canajoharie and Palatine. In 1722 a number of them purchased lands in the vicinity of Fort Hunter, while others settled on West Canada creek. On the 19th of October, 1723, Stone Arabia patent was granted to twenty-seven Palatinate families whose members numbered one hundred and twenty-seven. Their lands included 12,700 acres, which were divided into twenty-seven equal parts, and laid out into lots to assist in this division.

The provincial authorities erred in their estimate of the value of the German settlers as a means of protection against invasion. On the contrary the very character and customs of this people seemed to almost invite a hostile attack, and it was not until several years after the arrival

ince of New York, and those points in which it differs from almost all others on this continent, although they emanated chiefly from the same source. No better illustration of this difference can be made than by comparing the charters of Pennsylvania and New York.

The former was granted to William Penn in payment of a debt due his father, Admiral William Penn, from the British government. By that charter the fee in the province passed to the grantee, subject only to the Indian title, which Penn was obliged to extinguish at his own cost. This having been done, the patentee was the absolute owner of the lands thus granted; and all emoluments were his own. Of similar character also was the charter by which in 1664 Charles II granted to his brother James, Duke of York and Albany, the vast territory which included all that is now the state of New York. The Duke of York, by that grant (and others of later date), became proprietor of the land, with the same rights and powers, and subject to the same conditions regarding Indian titles, as William Penn; and the patents which were made to various sub-proprietors, either to favorites or for considerations, between 1664 and 1685, by the duke, were made from the same relative position as Penn occupied during his proprietorship.

In 1685, however, the Duke of York himself became king of Great Britain, and as his charter naturally merged in the crown, the government of his possessions changed from a proprietary one to a "royal province." Instead of being governor of the colony, the king held the power only of appointing that functionary, and thus indirectly controlling its affairs, but still receiving specified revenues from its land sales.

Little was done in the way of granting land in the province of New York earlier than the first quarter of the seventeenth century, although under the duke's title some grants were made even before he became king. But after the year 1734, and particularly after the English and French were really contending for supremacy in America, the government disposed of much of the available territory of the province, and it is a noticeable fact that by far the greater part of the early land grants included portions of old Tryon county, though as yet in possession of the *Mohawks*. An explanation is found in the fact that this region was under the special control of Sir William Johnson. His influence among

the Mohawk Indians is surprising to all who do not consider the relations that existed between himself and the red men, and the great value of the presents he made them. We know, indeed, that during the last score of years of Sir William's life, the Mohawks were to a large degree dependent upon his bounty for their support, and under such circumstances we are not surprised to learn that for a merely nominal consideration he could induce them to part with such of their domain as he or his favorites desired to possess. It has been asserted that the baronet secured the Indian title to the immense tract known as the royal grant from King Hendrick as the result of a dream, but while many doubt this story, its narration suggests the extraordinary influence of Sir William over the Mohawk nation. According to the records, the royal grant embraced ninety-three thousand acres of land lying between East and West Canada creeks, and north of the Mohawk river, and was patented to Sir William Johnson by letters issued April 16, 1765. King Hendrick was killed in September, 1755, ten years previously; and yet it may be true that the old chief released the Indian title long before his death, and the purchase thus made was confirmed by the king ten years afterward.

The titles of many of the old land grants are still preserved and are occasionally referred to in modern conveyances. The reader will of course understand that all these grants were made prior to the revolution, but though issued during the British dominion, many were afterward confirmed by the state authorities, while the other portion was confiscated and sold as the property of enemies. These persons were called tories, and though they did not in all cases bear arms against American independence, their conduct was sufficiently inimical to justify confiscation. The most important instance of this kind was found in Johnson Hall and the surrounding estate. It was sold by the state authorities, and was finally purchased by the ancestor of the present Wells family, in whose possession it still remains.

Beginning soon after 1700, and thence throughout the years down to the outbreak of the revolutionary war, there was granted to various individuals and companies an aggregate of more than a thousand square miles of land in what afterward became Montgomery county; and while these many patents had a bearing on the early history of this region,

further reference to them at this time is not necessary, as they are made a part of the history of the towns in which they were respectively situated.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, BARONET.

A CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF THE FOUNDER OF JOHNSTOWN.

HAVING made frequent reference to that remarkable man known first as William Johnson, land agent; then as Colonel Johnson; later as General Johnson, and finally as Sir William, we now propose a brief review of the leading events of his life, though we shall hardly expect to do justice to the most eminent character in the civil and military record of the province of New York, being limited to a mere outline of his illustrious career.

William Johnson, the son of Christopher and Anne (Warren) Johnson, was born in county Down, Ireland, in the year 1715. His uncle, Sir Peter Warren, had married an American woman, and became possessed of an extensive tract of land in the Mohawk valley. It contained 14,000 acres (originally granted in 1735 to Charles Williams) and located between the Mohawk and Schoharie rivers, in what is now the town of Florida. In 1738 William Johnson came hither to serve as superintendent of this estate, whose development was of great importance to its proprietor, since the purchase was a speculation from which he had great hope of financial profit. With this view young Johnson, under the direction of his uncle, cleared part of the land, putting it under cultivation, and also surveyed the entire tract, dividing it in a manner that would attract settlers of limited means. An important feature in this work was the erection of a mill. He also established himself in trade, a store being necessary to public convenience, and thus extended every inducement that could assist the new settlement. Later on, in view of the hostility between the British and French, and as well be-

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