Guy Johnson’s Opinions on the American Indian

In writing his well-known History of America (1777 and subsequent editions), Dr. William Robertson, King’s historiographer for Scotland and principal of the University of Edinburgh, sought information from many correspondents in the new world. His queries concerning the nature of the American Indian and his culture found their way to the Indian trader and diplomat George Croghan, and Croghan’s answers, now in the Cadwalader Collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania were printed in The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography in 1947. Now another set of answers to the same queries, prepared by Colonel Guy Johnson, have been found among the Claus Papers of the Canadian Archives. Not only are these comments interesting in themselves, but they provide a comparison or verification of opinions held by two well-informed contemporaries.

Dr. Robertson was well advised to seek the answers to his queries from Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Northern Department and long-time associate of the Six Nations, especially the Mohawks, among whom he was rated as a sachem. No better authority could have been found. Compared with his experience, Cadwallader Colden’s treatise was the work of a comparative novice. The request came to Sir William in a letter from Governor William Franklin of New Jersey, son of Benjamin Franklin, dated Burlington, May 25, 1774:

At present I beg leave to address you an Application I have just received from the celebrated Doctor Robertson, of Edinburgh, the Nature and Occasion of which you will see by the enclosed Papers Your much admired Account of the Manners and Customs of the Indians, lately published in the Philosophical Transactions, has occasioned you this Trouble; nor, indeed is there any one so well qualified to answer the Doctor’s Wishes on this Subject as yourself. If you should think proper to gratify him with
Answers to such of his Queries as are more immediately in your way, which I doubt not you will be so kind as to do if your Leisure will permit, I shall be greatly obliged to you if you would transmit them to me, that I may forward them to him thro' the Hands of M' Strahan.¹

The letter was indorsed “Gov' Franklins Letter with Inclosures of a curious nature.” The “much admired Account of the Manners and Customs of the Indians” was embodied in a letter to Arthur Lee of the Philosophical Society on February 28, 1771, in response to an inquiry.² This was followed by further correspondence; a letter from Dr. Lee in June, 1771, was answered by Sir William on March 28, 1772, with additional information on Indian customs and language.³ Dr. Robertson may have seen this later letter before he formulated the queries sent to George Croghan in August, 1773, and subsequently submitted to Sir William.

Guy Johnson, Deputy Agent of Sir William on numerous occasions and Secretary of Indian Affairs since 1762, was fully acquainted with these accounts by Sir William, if he did not actually help formulate them, as he suggests in his reply to Dr. Robertson. Indeed, the draft of the second letter is in Guy’s handwriting. Nevertheless, Guy Johnson was fully capable of formulating his own answers to the queries, and he certainly had the interest and inclination to do so. The death of Sir William on July 11, 1774, left the queries of Dr. Robertson unanswered, and Guy assumed the congenial task.

Guy Johnson, son of John Johnson and nephew of Sir William Johnson, was born in County Meath, Ireland, in 1740. He came to America in 1756, landing in Boston without money and eventually proceeding to New York and to the Mohawk country to seek help from his already famous relative. Soon employed by his uncle on various tasks, he displayed an adaptability which must have greatly pleased the Indian agent. Guy was fluent, wrote a good hand, and showed talent as a cartographer. Although earlier employed as a

¹ Sir William Johnson Papers (Albany, N. Y., 1921-1951), VIII, 1158-1159. The original letter is in the British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 29237, fol. 3. William Strahan, King’s Printer, was a correspondent of Benjamin Franklin’s.


³ Draft in Harvard College Library. This will be printed in Vol. XII of the Johnson Papers. The letter from Dr. Lee has not been found.
ranger, he was commissioned as lieutenant in the New York regiment on December 2, 1759, and served in the expedition against Montreal in 1760. In July, 1761, he accompanied Sir William on his trip to Detroit and subsequently was continually engaged in the handling of Indian affairs. When the office of Secretary of Indian Affairs became vacant, he was preferred for that office by Sir William, but his appointment was held up by Amherst in favor of Dr. Richard Shuckburgh, whom Guy eventually succeeded. He married Sir William's daughter Mary (or Polly) in 1763, and in 1765 as a reduced officer received a grant of 2,000 acres of land. He became a colonel in 1768, and upon the death of Sir William succeeded to his office as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

Sir William built for Guy and his wife a frame mansion, Guy Park, on the Mohawk not far from Fort Johnson. This home, as Guy mentions in his preface to his answers, was struck by lightning in June, 1773, and destroyed with a great loss of valuable books, maps, and papers; it was rebuilt in stone, and stands today in the present city of Amsterdam, a historic site owned by the state of New York.

The date at the bottom of the manuscript of Guy Johnson's answers to Robertson indicates that it was prepared at Guy Park, but the second date shows that Guy took it to London with him in November, 1775. As a Tory and a King's officer for whom things were becoming extremely uncomfortable in the Mohawk Valley, Colonel Guy had gone off with his family and some two hundred men to Canada by way of Oswego in June, 1775. From there he went to England where he stayed until the summer of 1776, when he left for America, landing on Staten Island. He left his affairs in London with James Phyn, erstwhile merchant of Schenectady. Johnson participated in the Revolutionary campaigns, using his influence with the Indians in behalf of the Crown. He continued as Superintendent of Indian Affairs with his headquarters in Canada until 1782, when he was succeeded by Sir John Johnson, Sir William's son. Thereupon Guy returned to London where he died on March 5, 1788.

Compared with George Croghan's replies to the same queries, Guy Johnson's views suffer from oversophistication and his zeal to interpret rather than to report (e.g., his reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and to Don Ulloa's remarks on the Peruvians). Yet, when it
becomes a matter of fact upon which both agree, one can be sure of their authority. There is also some tendency on the part of Guy to be discursive in his answers. It should be noted further that query 31, which elicited his discussion of American game, crops, and improvement of land, as well as the status of provincial troops, was not covered in the Croghan answers.

On most points Johnson and Croghan were in agreement. They appeared to disagree on queries 4, 6, 13 and 15, and on questions 7, 20, 26, 27 and 29 their replies are different without representing disagreement. Croghan thought “thire Songs when Danceing is Intierly on Love & Galentry,—butt thire Warr Songs is a kind of prayer” for help to conquer their enemies (query 4). Guy found Indian songs and dances to be derived from “Solemn Rites and original institutions,” dependent on oral tradition, the meaning of which was generally forgotten. Indian appetites (query 6) Guy felt far exceeded those of the white men, but both agreed that their fasting led to immoderate eating and drinking. Croghan thought the Indian women “generally as prolific as ours” (query 13), whereas Guy reported “The Proportion of Births is not so Great as in Civilized Nations,” which “is generally and I believe truely ascribed to Intemperance.”

With regard to parental and filial affection (query 15), Croghan saw no difference from white people; Guy said the Indians had it in high degree, but that parents were overindulgent and that children did not return affection to aged parents, who when old and incapable of labor might be buried alive!

It would be interesting to report that Dr. Robertson used this information in his widely circulated book on America, but that seems not to have been the case. Not only did he not acknowledge this help in footnotes to his later editions, but actually seems to have retained views at a variance with this testimony. Yet, in justification it might be pointed out that his historical account of America never reached the eighteenth century, and that both Croghan and Guy Johnson testified to the Indians being much affected by intemperance, disease, and other corrupting influences of the white man, points made in the history. Dr. Robertson’s preface did promise,

4 In his preface Dr. Robertson acknowledged the help of Gov. Thomas Hutchinson and two Protestant missionaries to the Iroquois, Gideon Hawley and David Brainerd. Croghan’s journal was referred to in one of Dr. Robertson’s notes.
however, to acknowledge the aid of many persons "when I enter upon the History of North America." 

Today Dr. Robertson's book is little read for accurate information on the Indians, but students may be grateful for such intimate knowledge and testimony as that of George Croghan and Guy Johnson.

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Answers to Dr. Robertson's Queries respecting the North American Indians*

As Doctor Robinson is entitled to the Assistance of all friends to Literature, it would give me particular pleasure, to contribute in any shape to his Satisfaction by affording any information in my power on the subject of his Labours, particularly, since by the sudden Death of Sir William Johnson, he is deprived of that Gentleman's Valuable Communications, however, the many Years I acted as his Deputy, during which I took uncommon pains in Enquiries of that nature, and the Office I now have the honour to hold as Superintendent of Indian Affairs justify my attempting an Answer to the Doctor's Queries. I call it but an Attempt, as, by the Destruction of my House last Year, by Lightning, I am deprived of a curious and valuable Collection that would have enabled me to afford the Doctor a good deal of Satisfaction.

Sir William Johnson who communicated the Queries to me, proposed to confine his Remarks to the Six Nations, of whom he had the most particular Knowledge; and as they are a great and respectable Confederacy, I mean to follow the Same Method; and for the same reasons, Only promising that the difference of Accounts given by Authors, have been sometimes owing to their relying on Ignorant Interpreters, but may generally be attributed to the Slender Opportunities they had of distinguishing between antient Customs, and

5 A posthumous edition of Robertson's History of America (Albany, N. Y., 1822) carried an additional section supplied by his son from Robertson's manuscripts, but this historical portion carried the story of Virginia only to 1688, and of New England to 1652.

* The queries are given in italics from the Croghan copy.
modern, between Solemn rites, and Amusements, & that shou’d I fall Short of the Dr’s expectations, I shall make up for it by strict Im-
partiality, Suggesting nothing but what may be perfectly relied on.—

1 [Is the bodily Constitution of the Indians as vigorous and Robust as that of the Inhabitants of the Ancient Continent?]

As to the first Query respecting the bodily Constitution of the Indians, it is perhaps harder to be answered than all the rest—for the Construction of the Men’s Bodies and Limbs, being in general more delicate than Ours, and their Lives a Mixture of fatigue and Indolence, it is not easy to determine how they might appear if they lived as we do. The Make of their Bodies renders them very agile, and they pass from one Extreme to another, without any visible Incon-
venience, and recover very easily of dangerous Wounds, and Dis-
eases: but they generally break much earlier than an English Farmer, which may perhaps be owing to the Extremes they go thro’, and the too Copious Use of Spirituous Liquors: neither are they in general so strong as our People, tho’ they are more Capable of bearing Hard-
ships, and fatiguing Journies at the worst of Seasons than we are,—
but their fatigues are the Effect of necessity; for the Majority of them would not even Hunt, if they could be provided with proper Food otherwise, a Remark I thought it necessary to make, as I believe it is generally imagined that they are highly gratified with it as an Amusement.

2 [Is the beardless countenance and the want of hair on every part of the body but the head natural to all the Indians?]

As to the Beardless Chin, and Want of Hair, and other parts of the body, it is owing to themselves, and not the Effect of Nature. They are averse to wearing hair on those parts referred to, though it grows plentifully where it is not prevented; and I have seen Several Indians with Beards; but it is a general Custom with them, on its first Ap-
pearance to pluck it out with a twisted Brass Wire, and afterwards to apply Ointments to the Parts which at length overcome the Hair. and I have seen White Men employed in the Indian Service in the late War, who followed the same Method and got rid of their Beards effectually.
3 [Are the Indians defective in the Animal Passions for their females, and are they inferior to the People of the Ancient Continent both in desire and ability?]

As to the next Query—I answer, that, although the Indians appear to be little attracted by personal beauty, yet they are no means defective in the Animal Passion for their Females or in Constitutional Vigour, but thro' Education and Habit they do not manifest them to Superficial Observers. for I remember about twelve Years since the Chiefs of the Six Nations in public Congress with Sir William Johnson Comented the Degeneracy of their Warriors, who then pursued Intrigues, and did not Conceal them by which they became Enervated, whereas anciently no Man had any Intercourse with the Sex till the Age of thirty, as it debilitated them, and drew their Attention from the Pursuit of Glory and Military Achievements. Now, the Indians being all Warriors whilst young, & valuing themselves on that Reputation, affect a Coldness of Character, however Amorous, there being no Reputation derived from the latter, by which, and the uncommon affectation of Modesty in their Women, when sober, Strangers are easily deceived; besides which Indians, who naturally are very Jealous, assume a Seeming Indifference for the Sex in Order to Satisfy their Doubts by rendering those whom they Suspect more unguarded in their Actions.—Therefore the Indians are by no means chaste, but being naturally of a cold Behaviour, rather than Disposition, they Spartan like, avoid the outward appearance of an Attention to that, which derogated from their Military Merit.

4 [Have their Songs and Dances any Reference to Love and Gallantry?]

The Answer to the next Query respecting their Songs & Dances, and whether they have References to Love, or War &c, would require great Enlargement, as much depends on their Songs,—but Confined to the Latitude of the Query, it is sufficient to Observe in general that they have for the most part a relation to, and are the Remains of Solemn Rites and Original Institutions, of which, as they depended merely on Oral Tradition, they in general retain only the forms at present, having lost much of their Ancient Mythology & Constitu-
tion thro’ their Intercourse with the White People; so that among Some Nations, that is become a Sport, which was Originally a Solemn Rite, and very few Indians are found who understand the purposes of their Institution. The first Indian Dance I ever saw, on my Arrival in America, gave me reason to believe what I have since found to be true.—An Assembly of persons dancing around a fire, and at certain periods bowing their heads low, and pronouncing the same words Yo he wah appeared as the Remains of some Religious Worship, and an ingenious Man who resided thirty years in the Indian Country, built an Hypotheses on it, deriving them from the scattered Hebrews, on a Variety of Conjectural Proofs, I believe never yet published. Among others he considers the Worship of the Deity under the Attributes of Fire, Light, & Spirit as contained in the Yo he wah, which he took infinite pains to prove was the Original Sense, and Pronunciation of the Hebrew Jehovah. But without rest-ing much on his Authority, it is certain that the Indian songs are chiefly on Subjects in which Love has no part. Of the Solemn kind are their War Songs, wherein they generally express in half a dozen words often repeated, their Designs against an Enemy, or their Prowess, And their Ordinary Songs that I consider as the Relicks of some Solemn Rites and which are danced by their young Men almost every night, and their Dances in which Women are introduced, which are more common than either, and which are chiefly accompanied with Sounds, have little and sometimes no meaning, but merely as an Accompaniment to the Measure, and this may suffice respecting their Dances as it is a large and Curious field that w’d exceed the Limits of my Design.—

5 [Do their common discourse relate much to the Animal Passions between the Sexes.]

With regard to the Subject of their common Discourse, it generally relates to their Warlike Achievements, or Hunting, or to any droll Adventures they met with in the course of which an Indian’s Slipping off a log, in Crossing a Brook, or missing a fair Shot, affords infinite Laughter, and sometimes Amours with the Sex are introduced, on which Occassions they are by no means delicate, but the latter is Seldom the subject of much Conversation.
6 [Is the appetite of the Indians for food greater or less than the Europeans?]

The Appetite of the Indians far exceeds that of the White Men. They are necessitated often to fast for a long time, and therefore eat with little Moderation. They in general hold it necessary to eat what is Set before them, and when in Places where they can be Supplied regularly, they eat much more than the Europeans.—

7 [Is the period of human life longer or shorter among them than in Europe?]

The Northern Colonies in America, and the Country of the Six Nations, are extremely healthful in general, but as the transition from Winter to Summer is very Sudden, it appears as if the health of the Inhabitants was very much affected by it. The Complexion is not so good as in England, and neither Whites or Indians are in general so long lived in them, though perhaps the latter are chiefly injured by their Intemperance,

8 [What are the Diseases to which they are most subject]

besides the Venereal Disorder, in the Cure of which they are very Successful, they are Subject to Rheumatic Complaints, Consumptions, and Glandular Diseases, but the small Pox is most fatal to them.—

9 [Does Polygamy (or having a number of Wives) take place among the Indians of North America.]

With regard to Polygamy, it does not meet with encouragement, nor is it usually found among Northern and Warlike People. Some Indians, indeed, among the upper Nations have two Wives, but it is not general, & there are some Batchelors among them. all this will be easily accounted for in answering the next Query before me:

10 [Are their marriages permanent, or when dissolved how are their offspring disposed of?]

for as their Marriage depend much on the Will of the Parties, except those made in their infancy by Parents, they change for the better, when they please. The Requisites in a Wife are Industry, and Skill in
the Tasks imposed on her, as in a Husband, Address in Hunting, but several of the Nations for some Years past grow more constant, and alter so much from their Original Manners, that in half a Century more, they will, with difficulty, be traced. As for the Offspring, they generally go with the Mother, who is the Fountain of Honour, the Children her property, and all Descents, in the Maternal Line.—

11 [What is the Characters of the Indian women with respect to chastity both before and after Marriage?]

With regard to their Chastity, it is hard to determine: they speak much of their Virtue, and Constancy in former ages, and they still affect its Appearances; neither are there wanting some Instances at present; but they are more uncommon among the unmarried than the Married women, many of whom are Strictly Chaste, & (which will answer the next Query)

12 [In what manner are the Women treated by their Husbands?]

They are generally well treated by their Husbands when Sober, though they do all the Offices of Labour, & from their Irregular Lives, & Indulgence

13 [Whether are the Indian Women Prolific, that is, have many Children?]

14 [Do many of the Children die young?]

to their Children, many die young. The Proportion of Births is not so Great as in Civilized Nations; but this is generally, and I believe truely, ascribed to Intemperance.

15 [What is the State of parental affection and what Returns of filial Duty and attachment when compared with the State of those passions in other Nations.]

With regard to Parental Tenderness, the Indians appear to possess it in a high degree; but they carry it to a dangerous Indulgence, which is seldom returned with the same Warmth by their Posterity, who at some times have been known to bury their aged Parents alive, when incapable of Labour, & have not been condemned for it, but this practice is not universal, and wears out fast.
16  [What are their Ideas of Property? Whether does the product of their agriculture and the Game which they take in hunting belong to the Community or the Individual.]

As to their Ideas of Property &c. their several Confederacies have their own Limits, and each Nation its particular Boundary, which is in general further Subdivided between each Tribe. but they have no Property in Common, the Product of the Labour & Hunting of each Individual, being at his own Disposal.—

17  [What degree of authority do their Sachems or Chiefs possess. Is it confined to Military Command alone, or is it likewise exercised during peace]

The Authority of their Sachims, or Chiefs, is not (at present) coercive; tho' I have reason to think it was more than it was now. It consists in the Power of Convening the People, and proposing matters to them, for their Compliance, the Success of which much depends upon their Influence, and the Strength and Reputation of their Connexions. In War it consists in advising and directing Operations, the bulk of the People paying no regard to public Affairs.

18  [Is the authority of their Chiefs hereditary elective, or merely the Result of their merit & Eminent Qualities?]

and the authority of the Chiefs being generally the Result of their Merit, is not Conferred, merely by Collecting the Suffrages of the People, but like all their Measures, is proposed in Public Meeting by some persons of Influence, assented to by a few more and the business [is done] for the Majority, with the Younger people, are generally Silent & Sel[dom] asked Opinions.—However, there are in most Nations some particular Families, who, (by ancient Prescription) furnish a Sachim to their Tribe, and this Office is often Conferred on a Child, & since their Connexion with the English, he is generally brought to the Superintendant, to be approved of, and receive his Medal; a Ceremonial I performed a few weeks ago. There are also particular Offices (often hereditary) for keeping the Belts of Wampum which are their Records, and taking care of Kayenarongsera, or their public Concerns.
19 [Do they exercise any Criminal Jurisdiction by punishing such as are guilty of Acts of Violence? or is the Right of Revenge left wholly in the hands of private Persons?]

The Right of Revenge is generally left to the parties aggrieved, or their friends, tho' sometimes the Chiefs will meet, and destine a person to die for some public Offence, chiefly a Charge of Witchcraft, in which they all believe; but they are by no means fond of Punishment, and often beg our People, and the Soldiery off for Offences committed against them.—

20 [What are the motives and objects of their Wars?]

As their Natural Genius inclines them to War, and that they always consider their happiness, as depending on their Military Skill, they use all Methods & all things to preserve that Spirit, so that they require less Motives than other People, nevertheless they chuse to be provided with them. they generally are Encroachments, Jealousies, National Affronts, Frauds, &c, in which they can have no Relief, but from War,

21 [Whether is any considerable number of their Prisoners spared and adopted, or are they mostly put to death?]

and as for their Prisoners, they are generally adopted, unless Sacrificed to the Resentment of some powerful Individual.—

22 [Whether is their fortitude under torture general, or do many of them Sink and loose their Spirits under their sufferings?]

The Indians by Example, and Precept, are endowed with a kind of Passive Valour, which enables them to Support various Modifications of Cruelty, with astonishing Patience, so as even to Sing, and insult those who inflict it. Instances of their Sinking under them, are very uncommon, and they Support themselves under grievous Diseases, without Repining, with a Strange Insensibility, and may be said to posses more Passive than Active Valour.

23 [Do they discover any considerable degree of Industry and Ingenuity in their Works of Art?]

As they have very few Wants, they have little of Arts among them. their works in that way, of the Imitative kind, discover uncommon Ingenuity, & their Substitutes for Wants, are equally Curious.—
This turn they manifest when among Europeans, but they do not discover much Industry in their Pursuits, which they hold to be beneath the Dignity of a Warrior. Don Ulloa’s Remarks thereon respecting the Peruvians, may in many points be applied to them.—

24  [Whether have they any Songs or Poems containing traditions concerning the History of their Country? Or whether could a literal translation of these be procured?]

Their Songs are too Short and contain too few Words to hand down any Traditions: but their Chiefs frequently repeat their History, and Mythology to the young Men, to be transmitted to Posterity.—

Translations of their Songs may be easily procured, but I know of none that are worth transmitting for the Reasons before given.

25  [Whether have they any Idea of a Deity as the Creator and Governor of the World?]

They have an Idea of a Deity who rules, and is the Author of all things, as well as of an Evil Spirit, who is at Variance with him & the World, into which he introduced Confusion, and that he flew over the face of the Earth, rendering it uneven, and forming Mountains & Vallies, Cataracts, Rocks, &c, concerning all which they have a Variety of Stories, which renders it extremely difficult to reduce their Mythology to any regular System.

26  [Is there anything remarkable in their Religious Rites?]

The Metamorphosis of Ovid will give some Idea of many of them: but they are too Numerous to be introduced here, & differ much from one another.

27  [What is their Ideas with respect to a future State?]

Though all the Indians have an Idea of a future State of Existence those who retain their antient Usages, bury Arms & Implements with the Deceased, for which they conceive they will have Occasion in the other World.—This Custom, you know, is found among many Savage Nations.
28 [Can any Specimens of their eloquence be procured. I mean literal translations of their Harangues such as Colden has published in his History of the 5 Nations]

With regard to the Language of the Americans, they may be referred to a few Mother Tongues, nevertheless there is an Accidental Difference between each of the Six Confederate Nations, which at most is not more than between the Erse and the Irish, & chiefly arises from a difference of Pronunciation.—To enter fully into their Languages, wou'd require a larger Scope than I have given myself at this time.—One thing I must, however Observe, neither do I recollect that it has ever been Remarked that the Six Nations who chiefly inhabit the Middle Country, South of Lake Ontario appear to have forced a Settlement where they now are, and to be distinct from the rest, and their Language is so peculiar, that they neither understand, or are understood by their Neighbors, whilst the Ottawas, & Chippewa's, North of the Lakes, can make their wants known to the Southern Indians, as well as to the Indians of New England &c. The Language of the other Nations also abound in Labials, very few of which are to be found in that of the Six Nations.—

Specimens of their Eloquence can easily be transmitted. they abound in Figures, which are Strong and Expressive, & they deliver them with a good Grace.—Speaking of a Grievance affecting one of their Tribes at a late Congress, they Said, “The Fire this has kindled, is at present Small, and has caught but one Tree, but if not immediately extinguished, ’twill Seize on the Forrest, and become ungovernable.” I have already observed that a particular Enquiry into their Languages would be a tedious Work, it woud require a seperate Paper. their Genius, and Structure being not easily or briefly described. That of the Six Nations (and it hold good with many others) has, as is the Case with all Languages, suffered some Change, it consists of a few Simple, but expressive Words, sufficient to convey their Ideas, & like the Latin contains the Article in the Noun, and also expresses the Adjective in the Noun in the direct Sense. e.g. Ungive is a person, Deea is good, they therefore Say, Ungivedeeea, a good Person, Ungivedodoxa, a bad Person. a Road, Yohate,—Suppressing the last Syllable, & Combining the Adjective they say, Yohateeaa, a good Road &c.—I forbear entering on the form of Distinction used by each Sex to express the same Idea, which is peculiar to the
Indians, as it has been mentioned in Sir William Johnson’s letters in the Philo. Transactions; but I must observe that they use Modes of Speech & a Stile in public Transactions, which differs much from ordinary Conversation, is not commonly known among themselves, and hardly intelligible to our Interpreters, and that the Women do not make use of the same Substantive with the Men, a Strange Peculiarity, but in them founded on the Pride of Superiority. As they made new Discoveries and became acquainted with the White People, they framed a multiplicity of words to express their ideas of sensible Objects by a Combination of their Qualities, and Uses, and these words are generally long, some of them consisting of 10 short syllables, and even more, and they abound most among the Nations who border on the Colonies; besides which many Birds &c are called by names formed from Letters expressing their Ordinary Notes, and some from their most distinguishing qualities (Cahunk, as they Sound it, perfectly expresses the Noise, or the Note of the Wild Goose), in short, their Language fully expresses all their Passions, and Original Ideas, & is only defective in those nicer Distinctions and Refinements the effects of Education.

Sing’ Num. Plur. Num.

Gaintr un gh qua I Love Yougwaner un gh qua We love
Saner un gh qua Thou Lovest Yener un gh qua Ye love
Raner un gh qua He loveth Heener on gh qua They love

29 [What is the State of Population among the Tribes which have little Intercourse among the Europeans?]

The State of Population is greatest where there is the least Intercourse with the Europeans, who finding their general Passion for Spirituous Liquors, (in which most uncivilized people agree with them), & deriving great Profits from the Sale of it, have introduced it in such great Quantities, that it is become the Constant Subject of Complaint,

30 [Has the use of Spiritous liquors, and the Communication of the small Pox been as fatal to them as is commonly said?]

tho’ the Indians honestly Confess they cannot resist the Temptation when Set before them. Another Circumstance is, that by Intoxication
they become the Dupes of mean, avaricious Men, who deceive them in the Quantity, and Value of their Peltry, and render them poor and discontented, but it is peculiarly fatal to their Constitutions, & to their Increse, which together with the Small Pox causes many Nations to dwindle away, for in the height of the latter, they generally plunge themselves into the Water, which they apprehend will relieve them, by which the disease is struck in, & generally proves Mortal.—Some of them have, however, of late laid aside that practice, and Sir Wm Johnson caused most of the Mohawks to be Inoculated, which was attended with so much Success that they much approve of it. but they are not so regular as to Confinement, or Regimen.—

31 [No query 31 was listed with Croghan's answers. The question evidently concerned American flora and fauna and may have been followed by some general queries as to crops, the improvement of lands, and the colonists.]

The Deer in the Northern Colonies is not as large as in England, but are by many preferred for their Flavor, and it is generally observed that the Wild Animals of a Carnivorous Nature are less fierce than in Europe. With regard to the tame Animals, tho' they are remarked to degenerate, it may be principally attributed to the want of Attention in Raising them, and keeping them from Intermixing with Smaller Animals of the same Species, unless the Effect can be accounted for from the Sudden Change of Seasons, and Severity of the Winter, for the Pastures are naturally good, and when improved by Cultivation as rich as in any Country.—The American Forrests certainly abounded with Game formerly, but thro’ the Increase of the British Settlements, and the many idle fellows who of late Years interfere with the Indians in Hunting, the game is much dispersed, and in some places extremely Scarce.—

It may be a matter of some Difficulty, as well as Delicacy for a European to without the Suspicion of Partiality to determine with respect to the Constitution &c of the People in our Colonies, and indeed, they differ widely from each other, The People on the Sea Coasts of the Colonies from New Jersey South, being in general Subject to disagreeable Disorders, whilst those living West of the Mountains, are Strong and healthful,—but in the more Northerly Colonies and in this Province, in general the People are Robust, and
live to a good Age, tho' they are not, I think, so long lived as in England, but the Women are equally prolific with any others.—

As for the Provincial Troops, Such of them as were kept under strict Discipline, and Served for some time, discovered as much strength of Constitution [as] others. But the Provincials in general were raised every Spring, & disbanded every Autumn, and in general Commanded by plain Men, Strangers to Discipline, and of such Stations at Home, as prevented them from Exercising that Authority which is so essential to a Military Profession, least they Should offend their Neighbours, who were their Soldiers, and whose Ideas were not very reconcileable to Strict Discipline, or Obedience to Men often their Equals, & sometimes even their Inferiors in some of the Colonies.

With regard to Effects produced by Improvements of the Country &c they are (I speak of the Northern Colonies) obvious; for on Clear- ing Swamps, & heads of Waters, the larger Streams have gradually diminished, and the Influence of the Sun has been found greater, & the Winter less Severe, tho' the Quantity of Rain does not appear to have increased, and of the late Years the Winters set in later, than formerly.—Wheat is usually Sown in the beginning of October in those Parts, and reap'd in July, and generally produces about 10, or 12 for one; but other Grains have a much greater Proportional Increase, Indian Corn in Particular. Barley is but little regarded here. Wheat has latterly fetched about 3s/6 Ster* Pr. Bushel at Albany Market, and Oats scarce half as much. With these latter matters, I confess myself but little Conversant; but if I can be of any Use in treating any of the other Subjects separately at large, Dr Robertson may freely lay his Commands upon me, as I shall feel a sensible pleasure in gratifying to the utmost of my power the least request of a Gentleman, to whom the Public is so much in debted for some of the most elegant & distinguished Productions of the Age we live in—

Guy Park [ ] 1775

Col* Johnsons most respectful Compliments to Dr Robertson he still Expected to have seen him at London, but as Col Johnson is now going for America, it is recommended to be forwarded by Mr Phyn, & will transmit Dr. Robertson's Answer—

[London May] [1776]