Corn Planter (Ki-on-twog-ky), Seneca Chief
by F. Bartoli, New York, 1796
[Courtesy of The New York Historical Society, New York City]
ON THE Upper Allegheny in Warren County, near the New York state line, there are today two state-erected monuments to Indians. One is a marble shaft set up many years ago as the state’s tribute to Cornplanter, one of the greatest of his race; the other is a tract of land given to him and his heirs forever—all that is left to his people for a place they can call their own in Pennsylvania. Some forty of his descendants, all Senecas, still live there in our last remaining Indian settlement.

Neither monument is very impressive to the casual eye. What importance the place has arises out of the reasons for its being where it is, who lived there, and what happened there. For the last fifty years of its effective life, Seneca, and hence much of Iroquois, policy in the Allegheny Valley was administered from this spot or near it; and here was born the “new revelation,” out of national disaster, which is still the religion of a large part of the Iroquois today, wherever they are.

Morgan’s classic picture of the original League of the Iroquois as a longhouse, sheltering a happy family of five nations and organized to

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1 Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on October 29, 1940. Mr. Deardorff is vice president of the Warren Bank and Trust Company, Warren, Pennsylvania, and chairman of the Cornplanter Indian Committee of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies. — Ed.
“secure universal peace and welfare among men by recognition and enforcement of the forms of civil government,” may be a pathetic fallacy; but it is a picture. The Mohawk eastern door of the longhouse was on the Hudson; the western, at the Lakes. Inside the latter, near the Genesee banks, sat the Senecas, whose job it was to keep slippery the elm-bark threshold so that foes might fall down on it. In the middle, about Syracuse, the Onondagas tended the central council fire. Oneidas and Cayugas took places respectively to the east and to the west of the Onondagas.

It need not surprise us that the federal ideal of the League was never perfectly realized in practice at any time amongst the Iroquois, any more than it has been amongst ourselves. As with our own states, these peoples were drawn together for the strength that union could give in the service of self-interest. Each of the Five Nations reserved to itself in the beginning almost complete autonomy in local affairs and at times went its own way. The Mohawks and Oneidas were closest to the British and Dutch, and they eventually became so dependent that they were mere tools of anti-French policy. The Senecas, on the other hand, faced the rest of a hostile continent pretty much on their own and had to conduct themselves accordingly. They could not, as did the Mohawks, flee to the shelter of Mount Johnson at every forest rumor, driving Sir William to a distraction that he could not show them but that he confided to his letters.

Even a single nation did not always act as one. When the British took over Fort Niagara in Seneca country, those living near-by could well afford to become as British as the Mohawks. But their brethren, several hundred miles away down the Allegheny and on the Ohio, where the British-French conflict was still undetermined, could not be so certain as to where their interests lay. They had to guess right or perish.

The white man came to this country wanting gold, fish, and furs. Of the first there proved to be none; of the second, a great plenty for the taking, without reference to the aborigines; but for the third commodity, French, Dutch, and English were largely dependent on the Indians in one way or another. So it is that, if one must over-simplify the really very complex story of Indian-white relations from the earliest times, it can best be resolved in terms of the fur trade.
The French, headquartered at Quebec and Montreal, were first to realize their opportunities in the back-country, sending hucksters far north and west to collect the furs where they were, paying for them first in gauds and then — as the producers learned what was going on in the world — with the standard currency of the Indian trade: cloth, utensils, powder, guns, and rum. In French hands the business was government-sponsored and controlled, and at one time or another it employed most of the modern techniques of price-fixing, subsidies, and even of "ploughing under" the surplus by burnings, under official eye, of thousands of skins in times of market-glut.

With the Dutch and the English the pattern was different. By offering cheaper goods in greater variety they induced the Indians to come to their main posts, only latterly further west than Albany. True, many Dutch and English traders went about amongst the Indians, but they were generally a hard lot and were regarded by the more responsible in the trade — even by the Indians themselves — as more of a liability than an asset to the business. Except as they occasionally served as spies or messengers, they seldom had official status or protection in New York. That colony's policy counted on the Indians themselves to act as middlemen; and the Iroquois lay naturally to hand and eager to serve this purpose.

The Iroquois bestrode a country whose central position and unique system of lakes and rivers made it a natural gateway to the interior, through which went rum, powder, and strouds to the Ottawas, Miamis, and other "far Indians" in the fur country, and by which came back the beaver and deerskins to pay for them. New York itself was poor in furs. Its crop had been reaped early. In 1671 it was remarked that scarce a single beaver remained there. Without goods of their own to exchange for what contact with the white man had made necessities for their existence, the occupants of this key position had to choose whether to move, starve, or control the trade they themselves could not originate.

One does not have to assume that the Iroquois were naturally smarter, fiercer, or stronger than the other Indians about them to account for their role in the years between 1600 and 1800. Their virtues were mothered by their necessities. It seems possible, in the light of recent knowledge, that the formation of the League itself grew out of the
compulsions laid upon these nations by their position. The fact that they occupied territory between the English market headquartered at Albany and the producers of raw materials determined the alliance between the British and the Iroquois which John Fiske called "the pivotal fact" in our history. The French and the French-controlled Indians were competitors of both. Until 1763, when France finally retired from the field, the vital question for all concerned was: Shall the furs go to Albany or to Montreal?

To control the western and southern fur trade the Iroquois had first to establish their hegemony over neighboring Indians who were as anxious to buy at wholesale as are we, and did not immediately see the advantage of doing business through a middleman. They were inclined to go around the Iroquois to deal directly with the French or with the English colonies to the south. So the Iroquois had to "enlighten" them. More than a hundred years of wars and shotgun alliances were necessary fully to establish Iroquoian protective custody and to extend the League's more or less real authority wherever the trade sought an outlet through the more northerly colonies.

About the middle 1600's it became necessary to "enlighten" the Eries, the Andastes and other tribes living south of the Lake Erie shores and in the Allegheny Valley. The major part of the job, as usual, fell to the Senecas who were executors of Iroquois policy in these parts. At the successful conclusion of this war the Senecas let themselves in for at least three important changes. First, since the conquered were also of Iroquoian stock, the captives were easily assimilated; but in the process Seneca internal clan organization was modified. Second, large Seneca contingents moved from the old locations into western New York and the Allegheny Valley to hold the conquered in check. Third, the Senecas assumed a new responsibility. The span of the western gate widened to north and south. Their and the League's policy for the valley was "no permanent settlements, either white or red." Seneca outposts in charge of "regents" or "border barons" appeared farther and farther down the valley, where the first white traders from Pennsylvania and Virginia, such as Le Tort, Weiser, and Croghan, met them. Wandering bands of dispossessed Delawares, Shawnees, Mahicans, and others sought and got permission to settle temporarily in designated spots, but always under
watchful Seneca eyes. White traders, French and English, were welcomed. Allegheny River Senecas worked on the Joncaires' Niagara portage concession, and helped French expeditions over the "hogsback" into Lake Chautauqua. When the rum or the powder got too bad, delegations of Senecas from Buckaloons (now Irvine, Warren County) went to Philadelphia to protest.

Then in 1749 something happened that eventually transformed this relatively bloodless commercial contest into the first of all world wars. When Celoron, at the site of Warren, first openly claimed for the French King all of the Ohio and Allegheny valleys, the watchful Indians recognized the significance of what they saw. The lust for trade had turned into a lust for land, so as once and for all to master the trade. One may be sure that council fires burned long in the restless forest and that red brows knitted hard over their new problem. Here was an open challenge to Indian policy for this valley: "No permanent occupation." Characteristically, the Indians waited to see what would happen. It was sixteen months after the event before a Cayuga chief finally delivered to Sir William Johnson one of Celoron's plates and so made real to him what had before been only rumors.

In the contest that followed, the Indians' position was described by one of them as that of a "piece of cloth between two blades of a shears." Peter Wraxall, Johnson's secretary for Indian affairs, who ought to know, said that "to preserve the Ballance between us & the French is the great ruling Principle of the Modern Indian Politics. I believe their Affections are in our Favour, but their Fears are on the French side. . . . Thus while the Indians promise us fair & even mean it, the French overawe them from acting up to their Inclinations."

Successive setbacks to the British cause, such as Washington's and Braddock's defeats, caused all but the most subservient of Johnson's Mohawks to stop, look, and listen. Much as they liked the English, the Iroquois did not want to bet on the wrong horse.

With the final defeat of the French at Quebec and their retirement from the country after the peace of 1763, the Indian's "shears" had become a single British blade aimed straight at the red man's heart. The Allegheny River Senecas under Guyasuta joined with the western Indians under Pontiac in a desperate, nearly successful, attempt to exter-
minate the British and the Americans. After their failure, the Senecas retired up the Allegheny, to await hopefully another contest between claimants to their lands where they might find something to their own advantage in the distress of the contestants.

In 1775 the Allegheny Senecas were settled in "towns" strung along the river banks for some forty-five or more miles, from the "lower town" on the present Grant, above Warren, to Olean, New York. Here, in well-organized communities and on the flats above and below them, they raised their crops and kept their eyes on small bands of Delawares and Shawnees settled at Buckaloons, Tidioute, Hickory Town, Tionesta, and over on French Creek.

For the most part, during the Revolution, they took direction — as did the New York Senecas — from the British commanders at Fort Niagara and their appointed representatives amongst the Indians. They were effective at Oriskany, Cherry Valley, and Wyoming, led by the Mohawk, Brant, and by their own chief warrior, Sayenqueraghta. But they had special problems of their own in another direction, involving the settlements around Fort Pitt; and they were, indeed, a sore trial to the commanders of the Western Department there. Something could be done about Delawares and Wyandots, but these canoe-loads of naked warriors, who came up from the Allegheny at night, struck, and ran, were harder to handle.

Finally, on August 11, 1779, when Sullivan was driving against the main League towns near Elmira, Colonel Brodhead left Fort Pitt with 605 soldiers and some Delawares and headed for the Seneca and Munsee towns on the Upper Allegheny. He had a brush or two with Indians on the way up, left the river at Warren, crossed the Scandia ridge, and came down on the Seneca town at the Grant. He said that for three days his troops burned the houses and destroyed the corn, as fine as any the colonel had ever seen. His report to Washington claims a perfect score for the expedition.

The Indian story is different. They say that Farmers Brother, Governor Blacksnake, and Cornplanter were elsewhere with their men, and that the women, children, and old men had fled to Cornplanter Peak across the Allegheny from Jennesadaga. In the night they descended on Brodhead’s advance guard and killed six, whose graves on
the Grant the Cornplanters of today still show. Farther up-river, at Jimersontown, just south of Salamanca, the Indians surrounded the advance party, who entrenched themselves. Twelve soldiers were killed and buried there. At this point there are still unmistakable signs on the ground of a circular earthwork. Brodhead’s account of his trip is detailed until he left Warren. After that no one has been able to determine where he went and what he did besides burning towns and crops. Some students think he may have made Olean Point, much farther up the river, but the Indians say, “No,” and it is most unlikely he went so far. A little judicious digging would help settle the point.

Somewhere in this hullabaloo a young half-breed was gathering battle scars in behalf of the British and his own people. Born about 1740 at Conawaugus, New York, of the temporary union of an Albany Dutch Indian trader, John Abeel, and a Seneca woman, he inherited the best of both white and Indian blood.

Although Cornplanter (or Gy-ant-wa-kia) was half white, he was all Indian. As a young man just married he had gone to his white father to ask for “a kettle and a gun.” He was turned away with neither. From that time on he lived and thought as an Indian. Apparently he could neither read nor write and if he knew English he concealed the fact. If we remember him for the help he gave the whites, it is because he considered it the only way to help the Indians.

He emerged from the Revolution a principal war chief of the Senecas. At a post-war Fort Pitt council he learned for the first time that the British, contrary to their solemn promises, had abandoned their Indian allies to the colonists, and from that time on he threw in his lot with the new country, believing that his people’s wisest course lay in making the best possible terms with it.

This policy was neither easy nor popular. Always there was a strong element in opposition, led by such bitter-enders as Red Jacket. Outlaw whites made his course harder by murdering his people and plundering his camps. This could be borne; but the government-countenanced Indian land swindles of the early 1800’s were harder to explain away. Often he doubted the wisdom of his own course.

If his Senecas had thrown in entirely with the other Indians who through the post-Revolutionary period defeated one government force
after another, the story of these parts might be quite different. But he held most of his unhappy Senecas in check. At the numerous treaties where Pennsylvania and the federal government acquired Indian land titles, he was usually present, either as chief spokesman for his people or to help persuade others, often over furious opposition from other chiefs and sachems. At the request of Washington he used his influence with the Ohio and Michigan Indians to persuade them to peace; but it took Wayne’s bloody work at the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 to convince them that Cornplanter had been right, and to quiet this frontier.

If a statesman is one who unites in himself the vision of a prophet, the persuasive powers of a politician, and the force of a leader, Cornplanter fits the specifications as do few other Indians. He was in a way the Marshal Petain of his day, and for nearly fifty years his town of Jennesadaga on the Cornplanter Grant was his Vichy, so to speak.

After the treaty of Fort Harmar near Marietta, Ohio, in 1789, at which Indian titles to the Erie Triangle were acquired with Cornplanter’s help, General Richard Butler, one of the commissioners, wrote to President Mifflin of the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council suggesting a gift of 1,000 to 1,500 acres to the Seneca chief in recognition of his service and “to fix his attachment to the State.” In February the Ohio Company of Associates had ordered a tract one mile square set aside at Marietta for Cornplanter, and this may have suggested the idea.

The Indian story is that the commissioners at Fort Harmar had reserved for the chief a tract of 640 acres there and had given him a warrant for it, but that on his way home the “deed” was stolen from him. Within the last week (October, 1940), one of the Cornplanter heirs drew a map of Marietta on a piece of board to show exactly where this tract lies today, with the existing markers that bound it. For many years the heirs have tried to get it back, an attempt recently temporarily abandoned. Cornplanter in his own time employed Hugh Brackenridge to recover it for him.

Whatever the truth of this story, on March 24, 1789, the Council considered General Butler’s recommendation and sent it on to the Assembly which passed a resolution the same day asking the Council to have 1,500 acres “in this tract or country on Lake Erie” surveyed to
Cornplanter. But Pennsylvania was in the throes of framing a new constitution, and the matter went over.

In May, 1790, the Six Nations protested to Pennsylvania that bad white people plundered their camps. On the tenth, President Mifflin wrote to Cornplanter inviting him and two fellow-chiefs, Halftown and New Arrow, to Philadelphia in September to lay their complaints before the Assembly. As Cornplanter was starting, four drunken white men killed two of his Senecas at a tavern on Pine Creek. Word was sent at once by other whites to the Council, and for the next few months its activity in this matter was the Council's main business, evidencing the respect in which the still powerful Senecas were held. Rewards were offered for the murderers; presents of money were sent to the families of the Indians; and one emissary after another went out to labor with them. Even President Washington took a hand and sent Colonel Timothy Pickering to represent the federal government in the matter.

Cornplanter played his usual role of peacemaker, and he did not get away from home until late in September. He and five others arrived in Philadelphia on October 22, 1790, bearing letters of the most flattering character from Hugh Brackenridge, Robert Galbraith of Greensburg, and General John Wilkins, Jr.

It was not his first trip to Philadelphia. He must have recalled with special pleasure the visit of 1786 when the infant society of the Sons of St. Tammany had lionized him, escorting him from the Indian Queen Hotel to their Wigwam on the Schuykill's banks, where, to the tune of thirteen cannon-salutes and huzzas from the two thousand assembled, Cornplanter and the senior Tammany sachem had exchanged courtesies and speeches. At its annual meeting several weeks later Miss Eliza Phile had presented the society with a portrait of Cornplanter, "taken from the life," to commemorate the visit. A toast had been drunk to "Our Brother Iontonkque or the Corn Plant"; and the second in rank of Tammany's thirteen sachems had been invested with a gorget of office bearing Iontonkque's name, thus establishing him as a patron saint of the society next below their eponym.

Cornplanter addressed the Council on October 23, 1790, and asked for time in which to prepare a real speech. On the twenty-ninth he
made it, laying out in orderly Indian fashion his grievances and suggestions one by one, concluding with a request that the lands about Buckaloons be given to his friend and interpreter, Joseph Nicholson. The Council replied the next day; provided for new coats and presents; and rather hoped the Indians would be on their way. But one of the party, Chief Great Tree, got himself wounded somehow and a Dr. Jones certified to the Council on November 5 that the chief could not travel, so the whole party stayed over to await the arrival of President Washington in Philadelphia, the new national capital. On December 29, there was an exchange of speeches between Cornplanter and Washington, and the latter’s is still remembered by the Senecas because in it Washington promised them access to the courts and federal protection in their land dealings.

During this period Cornplanter asked about his promised lands, indicating that he would prefer three tracts on the Allegheny to the 1,500 acres in the Erie Triangle. Mifflin told him that, inasmuch as the state government was about to be changed under the new constitution, the matter had best wait until the new officials took office in December.

On January 22, 1791, Mifflin, now governor, recommended to the new Legislature the gift of the three tracts requested by Cornplanter in lieu of the 1,500 acres in the Erie Triangle. An act was accordingly passed on January 29, approved on February 1, and on the third Governor Mifflin directed a survey of the lands so designated.

One of these tracts was to include 600 acres on the Allegheny around Cornplanter’s main town of “Jenuch Shadega” and two near-by islands in the river — the present Cornplanter Grant; 600 acres on the Allegheny’s west bank, including a Delaware town, “by the Senecas called Conenugaya,” now in Forest County just below West Hickory; and 300 acres on Oil Creek, including an oil spring, the present business section of Oil City.

Each of these tracts has an interesting history, and that of the last two is so confused as to justify, for once, an exact statement about them based on the original records in the Land Office at Harrisburg and in the several county courts.

On July 2, 1795, Cornplanter met Alexander McDowell, the district surveyor, at the Oil City tract. There “The Gift” (303 acres 87
perches with the usual allowances) was surveyed. On the fourth, the Forest County tract (613 acres 142 perches) was laid out and named "Richland." On the ninth was surveyed "Liberality Island" (66 acres 51 perches); on the tenth "Donation Island" (53 acres 67 perches); and on the twelfth, "Planters Field" (660 acres 45 perches), which, with the two islands, is today the Cornplanter Grant. All were returned on March 9, 1796. Patents for all but "Richland," the Forest County tract, were made to Cornplanter on March 16, 1796. "Richland" never was patented to Cornplanter. By deed dated July 2, 1795, two days before it was surveyed, he had sold the tract to General John Wilkins, Jr., to whom a patent was issued on May 18, 1796. Because this tract was at the time in Allegheny County, then in Venango County, and included in Forest County only in 1866, it has been difficult to trace. In fact, after prolonged search by a number of interested persons, it has been determined only recently to be the land now included in the farm of Mr. George L. King, about three miles below West Hickory. This is important because it fixes the location of Hickory Town at this period. Anyone who has tried to nail down this elusive and often-mentioned settlement from contemporary maps and travelers’ diaries knows that Hickory Town has been a hard bird to catch. "Richland" became a source of further confusion when another patent for this tract was issued on August 1, 1865, to Cornelius Curtiss of Camden, New Jersey, a speculator, on the application of C. Heydrick. "Richland" was still in Venango County at the time; and a great many tears have been shed by sentimentalists over this robbery of the poor Indians by a "city slicker." As a matter of fact, neither Cornplanter nor his heirs ever claimed this tract; and the Indians know nothing about it. If we have tears to shed, we might prepare to shed them now for Curtiss who was haled into the Crawford County court the next year and stripped of everything he had on a levy of over a quarter of a million dollars. It is known that General John Wilkins farmed the place, for in 1798 the Philadelphia Quakers bought a yoke of oxen and a cow from him for their three young missionaries working amongst the Senecas — and the cow proved so old that she was not worth driving up the river.

A tale hangs by "The Gift" at Oil City, too — a tale not yet finally told, because the Cornplanter heirs are still trying to get it back.
On May 29, 1818, Cornplanter sold "The Gift" to William Connelly of Venango County and William Kinnear of Centre County, as tenants in common, for $2,120. It appears that only $250 of this was in cash; and the Indian claim is now and has always been that counterfeit money was paid. Whether this is true or not, something happened, because on October 24, 1818, William Connelly quit-claimed his undivided half back to Cornplanter for "one-half the $250 the consideration money to him in hand paid and the further payment of $75 good and lawful money of Pennsylvania." Since both Connelly and Kinnear were men of reputation, it seems more likely that the payment to Cornplanter was in some one of the many depreciated currencies then afloat, which the emphasis on "good and lawful money of Pennsylvania" in the second deed seems to support. At any rate, Cornplanter and Kinnear appeared to be partners. But that was not the way it worked out. Apparently Cornplanter did not pay Connelly all the $225 he owed him and the sheriff sold out his interest on Connelly’s judgment, delivering a deed to Alexander McCalmont, the buyer, on November 22, 1819. But Kinnear still owed Cornplanter for the half he had bought and judgment was recovered against Kinnear in favor of Cornplanter. This judgment was transferred to Warren County after its organization in 1819, and on December 5, 1828, a jury there again found for Cornplanter and judgment against Kinnear was again awarded. The judgment was last revived by Cornplanter’s administrator at No. 53 June Term 1837, Warren County. An Indian never forgets. The Cornplanter heirs remembered their claim to this tract, now become the business section of Oil City, and pursued it.

Agitation continued until May 5, 1897, when the Pennsylvania Legislature directed the attorney general to inquire into the matter. He did; and on the twenty-first reported back that only the courts could determine it. On the same day, at the Presbyterian Church on the Grant, all the heirs assembled in person or by proxy, signed a contract with Hargest & Hargest, attorneys of Harrisburg, to prosecute the claim. I have not learned what, if anything, they did.

However, by an Act of May 29, 1908, Congress specifically gave the Cornplanter heirs the right to bring actions in the circuit courts of the United States to recover possession of lands or to quiet titles. I have
not been able to find that any action has been brought under this; but I am confident that, if and when the Cornplanter heirs get their financial wind, Oil City will be theirs, or they will know the reason why.

The third tract is the present Cornplanter Grant in Warren County, which is now the permanent home of only about forty of the Cornplanter heirs living there near their Seneca friends and relatives on the Allegany Reservation just over the New York state line. There are, however, nearly 550 persons with an interest in this property, whose legal status is most peculiar. The patent issued to Cornplanter, and his heirs and assigns, was like all others and conveyed the same title, except that he was not required to perfect it by settlement or payment. However, when Warren County was organized in 1819 for judicial purposes, taxes were assessed against the Grant and on one occasion the sheriff went to collect. He was received in silence in Cornplanter's house. Around the walls stood thirty of the chief's young men, each with a rifle. No word was said; but the sheriff was a smart man and could take a hint. The annoyance continued and notes were extracted from the chief which he probably thought settled the matter. When he learned that they only made it worse, he appealed once more to his old friend the governor of Pennsylvania. The response was handsome. Under date of April 2, 1822, the Legislature directed the state treasurer to pay the tax notes and all taxes due; exempted the Grant from any kind of taxes so long as Cornplanter or his heirs held it; provided heavy penalties for trespass on the property; and authorized the appointment of commissioners to interview the old chief and explain the objects of the act. On the sixth day of July, the chief met the state commissioners at Warren and delivered himself of a really good speech — the most eloquent that Warren County has ever heard, I am sure.

Cornplanter died on February 18, 1836, and letters of administration were issued on May 29, 1837, to Robert Falconer. On August 31, the heirs petitioned the Warren County Orphans Court for a partition of the Grant, and an inquest was awarded. What became of it, I do not know. Perhaps the court, on consideration, decided then what it formally determined later — that it had no jurisdiction. The heirs then living sold and leased parts of it as though it had been divided. Maybe they had agreed amongst themselves. In any event, the Act of May 16,
1871, specifically authorized the Warren County Orphans Court to appoint commissioners to make partition on petition of a majority of the heirs. Such a petition was forthcoming, and three Quakers were appointed commissioners on June 10, 1871. It is said that all the heirs were represented at the hearing, held in the schoolhouse on August 21. Allotments were made, surveyed, and mapped. On December 5 the findings were confirmed by the court. By this action the Grant was divided and everyone seemed satisfied.

But the Act of 1871 went further. After partition, the owners were permitted to sell only to descendants of Cornplanter or to other Senecas; and the Grant was again declared exempt from taxes or from any judicial sale except to Senecas.

This created a peculiar title and an interesting problem, both rather thoroughly explored from the state’s standpoint after the death of Marsh Pierce, Cornplanter’s grandson, on November 3, 1899. Marsh Pierce was in all respects a remarkable man. The Quakers had done well by his education. He was a builder by trade, and a forward-looking citizen. At his death he left five sons: Gibson, Oakley, Amos, Toppley O’Connell, and Windsor. On December 7, 1908, Gibson, the oldest, asked the Warren County Orphans Court for a partition of the lands amongst the five. On February 13, 1909, the other four alleged that Gibson was not Marsh’s son, and the case went to trial. The court appointed a master to take testimony. He interviewed, through an interpreter, some nineteen Indian witnesses, most of them old people. The revelation here of ways of actual Indian life in the middle 1800’s makes fascinating reading. The judge found Gibson to be Marsh’s son and awarded an inquest to make partition.

But on June 17, 1911, Amos came into court with a motion to stay proceedings. He contended that the court lacked jurisdiction because all the parties at interest were Indians, not citizens, subject only to the laws of the Seneca Nation, whose quasi-independent existence had been recognized by Congress in 1849; and, besides, that Seneca inheritance is always through the mother’s side and white laws do not apply. So the court appointed an auditor to consider all this. Over the following years two more judges heard the case and all decided that their courts had authority in the premises, ordering the allotment to proceed. At one point the
case went even to the Superior Court. On November 11, 1921, the estate property was sold for $900 to Gibson Pierce, at the courthouse in Warren.

At this point an Indian lawyer from the Cattaraugus Reservation stepped in and did such a good job that on November 13, 1922 — fourteen years after the start — a fourth judge held all proceedings void, and decided that his court had no jurisdiction, mainly on the ground that he doubted its ability to protect the sheriff of Warren County if the Indians resisted him.

When the federal authorities came to look into this matter in recent years, in connection with the proposed Allegheny Reservoir, or "Kinzua Dam," they concluded that "insofar as the United States was and is concerned, this (Cornplanter) reservation is individual property over which the United States has no jurisdiction." The basis for this opinion is outlined in House Document No. 300, 76 Congress, First Session, 1939.

Just where this leaves the Grant legally it is hard to say. But the Indians get along fairly well just the same. Starting with the 1871 partition, they have recognized as heirs all descendants of Chief Cornplanter, whether the descent be through the mothers' or fathers' line. But one dear old lady rather wishes there were someone to whom she could appeal, because she thinks that a line fence in process of erection is on her land and she cannot find anyone with authority to stop it.

The Moravian Zeisberger talked religion with the then chief of the Upper Allegheny towns in 1767; and Waterman Baldwin, a teacher, and his Bible were there as early as 1791. But educational and missionary work really started in 1798 with the arrival of three young Quakers from Philadelphia, accompanied by older brethren to set them up in business. Joel Swayne and Halliday Jackson settled down at Old Town, some nine or ten miles above Jennesadaga, where they planned to turn warriors into farmers and artisans. Henry Simmons, Jr., stayed at Jennesadaga with Cornplanter and took over the departments of morals and education. Quakers never proselyte. These tried to make the Indians domestic, sober, and industrious by precept and example.

But the Indians showed a strong curiosity about the Bible, especially about stories of the creation, heaven, and hell. They invited young Sim-
mons to meet with their men in council where they questioned him closely about these things. His previous experience amongst the tame Stockbridges had taught him that Indians have no direct interest in education, since they have no use for it. But, as his job was to school them, he shrewdly used these occasions to point out that, if some of them would learn to read, they could figure out the answers for themselves. He pressed the point until they agreed to let him go to work on some of the youngsters.

His first school was in Cornplanter’s home, and a schoolhouse of sorts was built in the latter part of 1798. In bad weather it was full; in good, empty.

Simmons’ Bible stories were getting results, however, even though of an unexpected sort. Visions are no novelty amongst the Indians; but the current product had a strange look, as it reflected Simmons’ stories fermented in the Seneca minds. Young men told about trips to a beautiful house where they were not allowed to stop. Behind it was another, but of a different sort. Indians with twisted faces met them there, and offered cups of melted lead to drink. When the visitors said, “I can’t drink melted lead,” they answered: “Why not? You drink whiskey, don’t you?” The dreamers drew the moral and took the pledge. This was what Simmons wanted; but somehow he did not like the way it came about.

Cornplanter’s half-brother, Handsome Lake, had been with him for some years, a very sick man, worn out by liquor and in bed most of the time. Although he bore one of the most honored of Seneca names, “Ganio-da’io,” no one paid much attention to him. But Handsome Lake had kept an ear out for what was going on.

One day he “passed out.” The neighbors thought he was dead and sent for Cornplanter and Simmons. The former was in no hurry to come, doubtless thinking it good riddance. Someone felt a little warmth about Handsome Lake’s heart, so it was decided not to bury him at once. Some time later — about June 15, 1799 — he suddenly sat up and called for everyone to come hear his vision to end all visions.

Simmons, Swayne, and a great crowd assembled. The whole story is written down in Simmons’ diaries, just come to light. Handsome Lake told how three of the Four Angels appeared to him, each with a differ-
ent berry bush. He was directed to eat, with the promise that if he did so he would live until these same berries ripened next year. Dr. Arthur C. Parker of the Rochester Municipal Museum (whose aunt was one of the few Indian teachers at the Grant) has taken down from the lips of Edward Cornplanter "The Code of Handsome Lake," and the New York State Museum has published it in its Education Department Bulletin No. 530. So I shall not discuss it here. This vision and those that followed established Handsome Lake as the prophet of the "new revelation," and the Grant as holy ground for his followers.

The "Code" reminds one of the Koran. It is a disjointed collection of several hundred pronouncements made by the prophet at various times and set down later by his disciples. Simmons' influence is very plain; although, until the discovery of his diaries, the sources of the "Code" had never been identified. It all adds up to an excellent rule of life for this people in its emphasis on sobriety, industry, and domesticity translated into terms they could understand. Simmons himself recognized that Handsome Lake's teachings were aimed at the same mark as his; but their unorthodox and strongly red coloring disturbed him. So in 1799 he retired to think over what he had started.

Perhaps half of the Iroquois follow Handsome Lake today. The Cold Spring council house, near the Grant, is headquarters for this so-called "pagan" element. They do not like that word, though. As Mrs. Alice White, who lives by the council house, said not long ago: "We are not old-fashion people. The last time the gods spoke to men they spoke to Handsome Lake, so we are the new-fashion people."

The combined influence of the Quakers and Handsome Lake produced such salutary effects as those reported in the manuscript autobiography of John Wrenshall, preserved in the Methodist Collection at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. Wrenshall was a Pittsburgh merchant. Writing about 1803, he reports that the Indians from Senesadaga came down usually twice a year with furs, moccasins, deer hams, bearskins, and tallow, to trade with him. Wrenshall considered them "equal to the white people by nature, in point of integrity, and possessed as many virtues." They refused treats of liquor, so he gave them sugar and water, which they "took in great plenty."

The Quakers built mills and introduced fences and farm implements.
About 1806 they acquired from the Holland Land Company a tract near Quaker Bridge, New York, where they built a school for training "in the useful arts," which is still in existence at Tunesassa.

In 1814 Robert Clendenon and his wife and daughter took charge; and in 1816 Joseph Elkinton came to teach at Jennesadaga and the other towns. In those early days school was an off-and-on affair, usually reflecting cycles of Indian attraction and aversion to white ways, as when Cornplanter himself in February, 1821, ordered Elkinton to close his school and go home. This mirrored the strong feeling aroused by the Indian land swindles of that era. However, in 1824, the Indians were asking the Quakers to re-establish their work.

In 1856 the Warren County superintendent of schools, riding along the river bank, came across a group of Indian children from the Grant. He talked with Marsh Pierce, the head man there. Pierce secured $175 from the Seneca Nation with which he himself built a schoolhouse, now occupied by his youngest son as a summer camp. By an Act of the Legislature, approved on April 18, 1856, $100 per year was appropriated, to be spent by the Warren County superintendent.

Miss Juliet Leadeth Tome (grandmother of the present very capable instructor, Miss Lucia Browne) was the first teacher. The Act of April 13, 1903, provided $3,000 for a new schoolhouse and teacher's apartment. Annual grants have been gradually increased to $1,500, and fifteen children are in attendance there this year (1940).

In 1815 the Western Missionary Society sent Samuel Oldham to the Indians. Congregationalists carried the work at Jennesadaga until April 10, 1883, when the "Alleghany and Cornplanter Presbyterian Church" was enrolled by Buffalo Presbytery. On September 17, 1885, the present church was dedicated; and on November 1, 1936, the congregation transferred to Erie Presbytery, which gives $300 a year to its support. Rev. Paul G. Miller, of Bradford's East End Presbyterian Church, ministers. Miss Louise Gordon and Mrs. Harriett Bennett are elders.

In early days north-bound Indians and whites left the Allegheny at Warren, mounted the ridge to a point beyond Scandia, and proceeded thence to the east down Cornplanter Run to pick up the river again at the Grant, thus cutting out the great river bend. No doubt this practice had something to do with the location of Jennesadaga at this point on
the river. The Act of April 4, 1838, opened a road directly over the ridge to the river at the New York state line. This road left the old trail at the top of the ridge, leaving Jennesadaga stranded about four miles downstream.

In 1805 the Quakers had urged the Senecas to make a road along the river from the Grant to the upper towns. This was more easily said than done: the river and the mountains are so intimate with one another for much of this way that there is little room for a road. Until this year such parts of the road as were made fell into the water every winter and were shoveled out again in the spring. Of necessity, the Grant inhabitants, including the school teacher, "holed up" for the cold spell, except when they could cross the river ice. By Act of May 11, 1899, the Legislature gave $50 a year for the maintenance of this road, an amount that was increased in 1913 to $100, then to $300, where it remains. This money is paid to the treasurer of Elk Township and spent by its road supervisors.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has one accomplishment to its credit for the year 1939 in this connection to which it has probably not laid claim. Its pilgrimage to the Grant that year, and the attention it called to this forgotten spot, spurred the officials into building what is, in effect, an almost new road through the Grant which should be completed next summer. One never knows what a well-conducted pilgrimage cast upon the waters will bring back with it.

In the Grant cemetery, halfway between the graves of Cornplanter and his wife, stands a monument to the chief erected by Pennsylvania under the Act of January 25, 1866. At the dedication on October 18 of that year, the Hon. James Ross Snowden delivered the principal address. The next year, in joint session on March 14, the House and Senate asked him to repeat it for them. At its conclusion this address, with other Cornplanter material, was ordered published as a public document. The monument is the first known to be erected in this country by any public authority to any Indian; and I think the Legislature's action must, too, be without parallel. But many of these men had known Cornplanter. Their action was a sincere tribute to an unlettered Indian who, in the words of the monument's inscription, was "distinguished for talents, courage, eloquence, sobriety and love of his tribe and race."
Life on the Grant goes at an easy gait. In winter there is the frozen river; and the long, flat, snowy road on which to play "snow snake." Ezra Jacobs, one of the Iroquois "snow snake" champions, lives here; so the game is well played. When the teacher can get out to the stores, she goes laden with lists of dye-stuffs for the splint baskets, secret ingredients for the "snow snake" wax, and solvents for the medicinal herbs and roots gathered in the summer and fall and worked up in the winter. Cellars are full of dried corn and squash; canned dandelion, wild onion, fruits, and berries; and jars of venison and noodles. There is plenty of wood and no one is cold.

The Cornplanters have been church members for years, but they have not lost all interest in the council house and what goes on there. Especially as they get older the festivals draw them: Strawberry in the spring, Green Corn in the fall, and New Years at the right January moon, with the Husk Faces on the fifth night. Seneca gossip and politics, too, take a lot of time. Hunting and fishing go on all year 'round, for this right is undoubtedly theirs — always reserved in grants of Indian lands.

Most of the Cornplanter heirs are out and about, hustling for livings as teachers, preachers, lawyers, railroad men, artisans, and farmers. But here on the Grant there is no place for these things. One should keep fat and warm and well with as little work as possible so that he may have time to live.

Windsor Pierce, youngest son of Marsh, lives in a fine house on a good farm up on the Cattaraugus, near the Thomas Indian School. In his time he has built railroad bridges, college stadiums, and what-not; he has fought in the Spanish-American War; and he has been the friend of presidents and governors, as was his illustrious ancestor. But Windsor is getting along in years now, and he likes to get back to the Grant for the summer and fall. Since Governor James came in August, 1940, many other people have come, too; so Windsor has been fixing up his old house here with lumber from the governor's adoption-ceremonial platform. But he has time, as always, to knock off for a talk. He accepts a cigarette with, "You're getting me into bad habits" (He is sixty-eight, and it is his first in years).

Old Mrs. Bucktooth has come down from the hill for water, and she
stops to visit for awhile. Windsor goes out to look for the cow, as it grows dark.

The visitor's watch says 6:00 and he must be getting along. But Windsor's clock, ticking away on the stove, says 7:50.

"Windsor's still on fast time, I see."

Mrs. Bucktooth glances at the clock and shrugs.

"What's the difference?" says she.

And who shall say she is wrong?

That is the Cornplanter Grant today — except for superficies, much as it always has been.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

George T. Hunt's *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Relations* (Madison, Wis., 1940) is a recent re-examination of the sources in Iroquois history for the period before 1700. Hunt agrees with an estimate of the fur trade's importance as an economic determinant made twenty-five years earlier by Charles H. McIlwain as editor of *An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs Contained in Four Folio Volumes, Transacted in the Colony of New York, from the Year 1678 to the Year 1751*, by Peter Wraxall (*Harvard Historical Series*, Vol. 21 — Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1915).

The Albany Trade Commissioners, whose transactions Wraxall abridged, surrendered administration of British and Colonial relations with the Indians to William Johnson. To date, the New York State Library has issued nine of the proposed twelve volumes of *Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, N. Y., 1921—). These, taken with the large mass of related material already in print through this and allied agencies, will sometime make good digging ground for another Wraxall.

Dr. W. N. Fenton's Iroquois paper in *Essays in Historical Anthropology in North America* (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., 1940) is a late and excellent conspectus. The interested reader is referred to the extended bibliographies in this and in the Hunt book.

The New York Senecas have been under eyes as expert as those of the Buffalo Historical Society and the Rochester Municipal Museum for a long time. Their first interest, naturally, has been in those headquartered in their own state; and there is still plenty to do there. The Allegheny Valley Senecas are the same people — and yet not the same. Any expectation that Pennsyl-
vianians would take over at the state line and develop the very important story of their own has been disappointed. The Pennsylvania Historical Commission has just issued *A Partial Bibliography of the Archaeology of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States* (Harrisburg, 1941), which includes ethnological and historical titles as well. Nearly a thousand works are listed. Scarce a dozen relate to the Allegheny Valley Iroquois. They remain as obscure today as they were nearly two hundred years ago when Evans had to map their country from hearsay. Yet, during several critical periods of our history, red and white alike acknowledged that theirs was the determining influence in the outcome. The current and projected activities of the Pennsylvania Historical Survey, WPA, and the Pennsylvania Historical Commission will go far to remedy this defect.


All that relates to grants, surveys, etc., in this paper has come from photo-stats of the originals in the Land Office, Department of Internal Affairs, Harrisburg. Legislative enactments have been taken from *Statutes at Large*, since most of these special acts are available nowhere else. The story of lawsuits, land partitions, and so on is written in the records of Venango, Forest, and Warren counties, where there is a really formidable lot of material.

Of semi-public and private sources mention must be made of the diaries and reports of Quaker missionaries, some published from time to time in *The Friend*. The rest it is hoped may be published soon. The Quaker archives at and near Philadelphia and the three volumes at the Tunesassa school contain in manuscript a running record of almost everything that happened on and about the Grant for a century after 1798. The original autobiography of John Wrenshall, Pittsburgh merchant, is in the custody of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

Much, too, has been gotten from the Indians themselves, who cherish papers for generations and set great store by legal documents of all sorts.

Identification of the “Richland” site was made possible through the generous and expert labors of Miss Nancy C. Morrow of Oil City, and Messrs. M. A. Carringer and A. C. Brown, lawyers of Tionesta.