WHO WERE THOSE GUYS?
Jim Richardson concludes his chronicling of the destruction of Hanna's Town, the first county seat and court of justice west of the Alleghenies, and the people who took part in the July 13, 1782, attack.

**Sayenqueraghta**

The answer to the question, “Who were those guys?” becomes clear when reading the correspondence between the officers at forts Niagara and Detroit, and General Frederick Haldimand, governor and military chief of the northern theater stretching from Quebec to Illinois. The following quotes from these letters, held at the British Museum archives, reveal the play-by-play preparations for, and leaders of, the attack on Hanna’s Town.

This excerpt is from Sir Guy Johnson to Frederick Haldimand, October 1, 1780, regarding a likely Indian strike on Fort Pitt:

> My late letter from McKee gives me reason to believe that a good body of Indians may strike a successful (attack) about Fort Pitt at this time as the Rebels have drawn many people from that quarter to invade the Indian country. As it will likewise make a diversion in force if the Indians invaded, to show we are not unmindful of their situation and as Sayenaraghta [sic] has declared his resolution to go there in person, with Kayashota, the party will be strong and united...."
The potential attack is confirmed by Brigadier General H. Wilson Powell, commander of Fort Niagara, in writing to Frederick Haldimand, May 28, 1781: “In consequence of the movement of the rebels toward Sandusky, Skiangharahtha [sic] has determined to proceed with 200 warriors to the neighborhood of Fort Pitt in order to make a diversion.”

Frederick Haldimand wrote to Brigadier General Powell on March 25, 1782, that he would attempt to detain Sayenqueraghta and his warriors:

Major Ross mentions that he will have everything ready by the first of April but from the present severity of the frost there is not the least appearance of the communications being open before the 1st. He does not say what no of Indians he would wish to have but I shall detain Schandarghty [sic], who was preparing to go to the neighborhood of Fort Pitt with 200 of his best warriors. So he may have as many as he thinks will be necessary....

“...The Seneca Chief Sayengaraghta [sic] with about 250 warriors set off yesterday with an intention to cutt off a village near Fort Pitt,” noted Lieutenant Colonel John Butler to Captain Matthew, Haldimand’s secretary, June 1, 1782. “As the party is large, have thought proper to order Capts Powell and Lottridge, 2 Lts and 3 volunteers with some Forresters to accompany them.”

Lieutenant Colonel Butler sent confirmation to Major Arendt DePeyster, commandant at Fort Detroit, June 12, 1782: “three hundred with Sayengaraghta [sic] at their head, have set off with a resolution to destroy that settlement. I have sent with them 2 Captains, 2 Lts, 4 volunteers, and a few men.... A few days since we have had three deserters from Fort Pitt, one of whom has gone with Sayengaraghta [sic] to aid his party to pilot them to the settlement....”

And finally, Lieutenant Colonel Butler wrote to Captain Matthews, August 5, 1782, after the attack:

Sayengaraghta [sic] and His Party are returned from war, after burning and destroying Hanna’s Town and the Country for seven or eight miles round it, this settlement were about 30 miles below Fort Pitt, on the road to Philadelphia, they killed between three and four hundred head of horned cattle, 70 horses, sheep and hogs innumerable, and brought away to their villages 70 horses and two cows—Also killed 15 of the enemy and took 10 prisoners....

The above dispatches clearly indicate that Sayenqueraghta was held back from moving on Fort Pitt, but after two years he finally had enough of British interference and left unannounced for Hanna’s Town. Sayenqueraghta, or Old Smoke, was a member of the Turtle Clan and the ranking war chief of the Seneca during the Revolution. He was born in early 1700 and died in the late 1780s. He rose rapidly in the esteem of the Seneca Nation and due to his exploits against the Cherokee was elevated to war chief in 1751. A valued member of Iroquois diplomatic councils in Philadelphia in 1754 and at Easton, Pennsylvania, in 1758, a year later he led his warriors allied with the British in the French and Indian War to assist Sir William Johnson in the capture of Fort Niagara. In April 1764, at a council at Johnson Hall, Sayenqueraghta’s name heads the list of the Seneca chiefs who signed the peace accords to end the French and Indian War. He was also at the 1768 treaty council at Fort Stanwix to draw the boundary line between Indian and European settlement. At the end of the French and Indian War he tried to take the famous Pennsylvania captive Mary Jemison away from her Seneca husband and release her to the British, but was unsuccessful.

By the time of the Revolution, Sayenqueraghta, leading warrior and diplomat, was in his late 60s or early 70s, which didn’t seem to slow him down, for when he could, he rode horses into action. He may well have even come by canoe on part of the way from Buffalo Creek, for abandoned canoes drifted to Fort Pitt. Clearly
Sayenqueraghta must have ridden horseback to Buffalo Creek, based on the 70 horses that were captured in the Hanna's Town attack. He was said to be an imposing figure, over 6 feet tall. General Haldimand said of Sayenqueraghta: "by many degrees the most leading and the man of most consequence and influence in the Six Nations." At a council at Irondequoit, New York, in July 1777, the Seneca, persuaded by the oratory of Sayenqueraghta, leaned toward neutrality. However, Major John Butler persevered and the upshot of the council was the Seneca joining the conflict as British allies against the rebel forces. The council elected Sayenqueraghta as the principal Seneca war chief and Cornplanter of the Wolf Clan as second ranking. At this time the Seneca had as many warriors as all the Six Nations combined.

His first military role in the Revolution came at the end of the conference when Major John Butler of the Indian Department was ordered by Brigadier General Barrimore Matthew St. Leger to send warriors for his attack on Fort Stanwix. The St. Leger force of 1,500 consisted of Sayenqueraghta and his Senecas, the Mohawks under Joseph Brandt, Butler's Indian Department personnel, and 500 regular troops, including Sir John Johnson's detachment from the King's Royal Regiment of New York. While St. Leger was besieging Fort Stanwix, Molly Brandt sent word to her brother Joseph Brandt that General Nicholas Herkimer and 800 Tyron County militia were on the way to raise the siege. St. Leger could not send all of his force, as he was attacking Fort Stanwix, thus he assigned Sir John Johnson as the head of 600 regulars, rangers, and Indians to confront Herkimer. The real leaders, however, were Sayenqueraghta and Cornplanter, who planned the ambush at Oriskany in consultation with Johnson and Butler. Of the 800 or so Tryon militia, over 465 were killed and many wounded or captured. Although the casualties on the British and Indian side were light, 7 rangers and regulars and 33 of the Indians were killed, of which 17 were Seneca. They suffered a terrible blow: 9 of their principal chiefs died in this ferocious battle. It was in this action that Sayenqueraghta committed himself to all out warfare against the Rebel forces, for his eldest son Tocenando was killed there.
I have a personal connection with the American side of this battle, for my ancestor Sergeant James Davenport of the 9th Massachusetts Regiment, commanded by Colonel James Wesson of General Ebenezer Learned’s Brigade, was defending the fort against St. Leger and his army. He fervently wrote in his diary: “our enemy were driven off by good American troops, that can by the help of providence, drive or take any troops or savages the tyrant can send to destroy America.”

Captain John Powell and Captain Robert Lottridge, Jr.
John Powell’s and Robert Lottridge’s careers in the Indian Department were also intertwined with Seneca chief Sayenqueraghta and the Iroquois during the Revolution. John Powell was born in Tyron County, New York, in 1746 and was an unmarried blacksmith and farmer who occasionally worked for Sir William Johnson. He fled the Mohawk Valley with Sir Guy Johnson in 1775, in 1776 became a lieutenant, and a year later a captain in the Indian Department commanded by Major John Butler at Fort Niagara.

Lottridge was born in Athens, New York, in 1747 and was descended from Palatine immigrants from Germany who had arrived in the Hudson Valley 37 years earlier. Ten years later, the family had moved to the Mohawk Valley on lands owned by Sir William Johnson. Lottridge’s father, Robert Lottridge, Sr., was a captain in the Indian Department during the French and Indian War. Robert became a tailor in Johnstown and in 1776 joined Sir John Johnson in escaping to Montreal—leaving his family behind as prisoners of the Rebels. Lottridge joined the Indian Department in 1776 as a lieutenant, remaining in Montreal until he was ordered by Daniel Claus, a deputy superintendent of the Indian Department in Montreal, to join the attack on Fort Stanwix. Since Butler took with him the entire Indian Department personnel from Niagara, John Powell may also have been present at Fort Stanwix, but his name does not appear in the records. What role Lottridge and Powell played in the siege and ambush at Oriskany is not known.

Both Lottridge and Powell were, however, part of a force of 110 Indian Department members and Butler’s Rangers commanded by Major Butler as well as 465 Indians, mostly Senecas and Cayugas, under the leadership of Sayenqueraghta, who attacked Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, on June 30, 1778. There they annihilated a brigade of 450 local militia, and when the populace capitulated, they destroyed all but one of eight forts, burning 1,000 houses and mills and taking 1,000 head of cattle, sheep, and pigs. Butler and Sayenqueraghta gave written immunity from further attack to one of the garrison’s if they remained neutral. Marking this note was Sayenqueraghta’s Turtle Clan symbol. Butler restrained his Indian allies and was proud of the fact that no
noncombatants were killed or captured. He also left Forty-Fort standing as a refuge for the inhabitants.24

Due to their war-time experiences, Powell and Lottridge were veteran campaigners in the Indian Department. Lottridge spent the winter of 1778–1779 at Sayenqueraghta’s town of Canadasaga, while Powell remained at Fort Niagara. Lottridge had been sent to Canadasaga as assistant to Captain John Johnston of the Indian Department to support the Seneca and Sayenqueraghta. This was a sensitive territory for Sayenqueraghta as it was his ancestral village situated at the head of Seneca Lake, New York. Due to the incessant raiding by the British into contested Rebel territory, General George Washington ordered Major General John Sullivan to attack and destroy the villages of the Six Nations Iroquois with 4,500 Continental troops. At the same time Colonel Daniel Brodhead struck northward up the Allegheny River from Fort Pitt with 600 troops, including detachments of Westmoreland County militia and rangers in support of Sullivan. Moving up the Susquehanna River, July 1779, into Seneca country, Sullivan met his first resistance at the Delaware village of Newtown on the Chemung River. Here Major Butler, with 300 of his rangers, members of the 8th King’s Regiment, Captain Powell, and others of the Indian Department plus 300 Indians, mostly Seneca led by Sayenqueraghta, Cornplanter, and Brandt were defeated on August 29; they retreated to Canadasaga. Sullivan spent September 7 and 8 burning Sayenqueraghta’s town. Prior to its destruction, Canadasaga had been impressive: 50 houses, fruit orchards, vast fields of corn, and other crops. Butler and his small force again withdrew, preparing to fight near the Seneca town of Kanawagoras. Led again by Sayenqueraghta, Cornplanter, Joseph Brandt, and Major Butler they were unable to make a stand and had to flee with hundreds of refugees to Fort Niagara. Powell was not in this action, for Butler had sent him on September 8 to Fort Niagara to implore Lieutenant Colonel Mason Bolton, its commander, to send every warrior and soldier he could spare to Kanawagoras. Lottridge was not involved in the defense of the Seneca homeland, for Butler had ordered him on July 23 to take a party of 45 Indians, Butler’s Rangers, and a few regular troops to strike Canajoharie. After a series of misadventures they struck at German Flats with little effect.

Sir Guy Johnson, Superintendent of the Indian Department for the Northern District, went to Fort Niagara in October 1779. Here Lottridge and Powell became his major assistants at councils to placate the Iroquois who had suffered so much in the Sullivan campaign. The winter was one of the severest on record and between November 1778 and the following March, there were 7,365 Indians (including 4,700 women and children) and loyalists to be supported by provisions at Fort Niagara, mainly as refugees. At this same time, Lottridge and Captain William Johnston, Jr., carried relief supplies to the Seneca and Delaware camps at Cattaraugus Creek, New York, where they had set up camp after being displaced by Brodhead’s expedition to the upper Allegheny River.25 It is my supposition that Sayenqueraghta planned the attack on Hanna’s Town as revenge for Brodhead’s invasion into Iroquois territory.

The British were cognizant of the suffering that many civilian and military captives endured in Indian captivity and went to great lengths to ransom or argue for their release to British control.26 Powell exemplifies this policy. One of the festive occasions at Fort Niagara in 1780 was his wedding to Jane Moore, who at age 20 had been captured two years earlier with her mother and two sisters.
Sergeant James Davenport's epaulets, and baby booties made from a British uniform coat and pants. Davenport was in the 9th Massachusetts Regiment and fought at Fort Stanwix. Deborah Harding

during the Cherry Valley attack. Lottridge remained at Fort Niagara through April, assisting Sir Guy in Indian Department affairs, and must have been a celebrant at Powell's wedding as was Joseph Brandt. Jane, her mother, and a sister had been released to Major Butler in July 1779, but her other sister remained among the Seneca into the 1780s. Mary Jemison remembered the Moore family when they were held captive at or near her residence of Little Beard's Town. She also knew of Powell's marriage to Jane Moore. The newlyweds lived in a house at the fort and John Powell even obtained a black servant for Jane. The rest of her family was repatriated later that year. John was certainly sensitized to the plight of Iroquois captives by his wife, and he made every effort to obtain their release into British hands. On a raid in the Schoharie Valley that July, Joseph Brandt captured militia Captain Alexander Harper, Jane's uncle. Brandt knew that Harper was related to Jane and was able to deliver him to Fort Niagara, thus preventing his captivity among the Iroquois.  

In 1780, Captain Lottridge led a small force to join Sir John Johnson on an attack on the Mohawk Valley, but arrived too late, and after raiding the German Flats area, he returned to Fort Niagara. Sir Guy Johnson reorganized the Indian Department into seven companies and in November promoted Lottridge to captain. These were informal companies of British Indian allies headed by one of the captains of the Indian Department from Fort Niagara. Lottridge was assigned to take charge of the Cayugas and Tuteloes and in the reorganization, Captain Powell was placed in charge of the Lower Senecas, most of whom were refugees at Fort Niagara. Through 1781, he and Lottridge organized the resettlement of the Seneca, Cayuga, and Tuteloes to Buffalo Creek, south of present day Buffalo, supplying them with building and agricultural tools and provisions. This settlement included Sayenqueraghta and his family. On July 15, Lottridge set off with Captain William Caldwell of Butler's Rangers to attack the Schenectady region, but met up with another war party; with combined forces of 87 rangers and 250 Indians, they attacked settlements as far east as Kingston, New York. Lottridge did not return to Fort Niagara until September 7, after some 500 miles on the trail and almost two months in the field.

Lottridge and Powell were in Montreal as witnesses in Sir Guy Johnson's fraud case from November 5, 1781, returning to Fort Niagara in May 1782, just in time to be sent with Sayenqueraghta to attack Hanna's Town.
Sayenqueraghta was not unfamiliar with Western Pennsylvania as it appears he had led an attack of 36 warriors in the direction of Fort Pitt earlier that year. Kayashota (Guyausuta) probably was his second in command and he, of course, was very familiar with Western Pennsylvania. One of three deserters from Fort Pitt also served as a guide. This individual may have been from 9th company of a Maryland Regiment, three of whom deserted at about the time of the attack. Upon arriving back at Fort Niagara, Powell submitted his attack expenses: 38 pounds and one shilling.26

In addition to Kayashota, other participants in the Hanna’s Town attack were Honayewus (Farmer’s Brother) and Captain John Decker. Kayashota was a senior Seneca chief of the Wolf Clan who was born about 1725 in what is now the Genesee area of New York. He moved to Ohio with his family as a boy, ending his life at the Complanter Grant in northwest Pennsylvania in 1794. Complanter was awarded land north of Warren by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in January 1791, which in 1964 was flooded by the Kinzua Dam. Kayashota is famous for his role in escorting George Washington in 1753 to Fort LeBoeuf to demand the French leave the Ohio Valley. He had fought with the French against Braddock and was at the siege of Fort Pitt during Pontiac’s Rebellion, which was lifted by Henry Bouquet in 1763.

For the remainder of his life, Kayashota worked with Sir William Johnson and Sir Guy Johnson in support of the British cause, both as a warrior and diplomat. Farmer’s Brother took his name from a meeting after the Revolution with George Washington, who the Indians referred to as the Great Farmer. Captain John Decker (Dah-gah-non-do) was a Seneca warrior born near Franklin, Pennsylvania, who lived until 1851 dying at age 108. Hanna’s Town was the only campaign in which he participated during the Revolution.27

The Aftermath

There is confusion surrounding whether Sayenqueraghta planned to lead an attack on Hanna’s Town or Wheeling or both on the same military strike. It is clear to me that he selected Hanna’s Town as the target in early 1782, if not earlier. The two most important military and political centers in Western Pennsylvania were Fort Pitt and Hanna’s Town—the judicial center of Western Pennsylvania where many militia units formed to join larger forces in attacks on Indian and British installations along the western frontier. Sayenqueraghta’s force struck Hanna’s Town and went back to Buffalo Creek and Fort Niagara as is evident in the correspondence of Huffnagle and Butler. It appears that historians’ confusion comes from the fact that on September 11, 1782, a force of 50 Butler’s Rangers were led by Captain Andrew Bradt out of Fort Niagara, and 238 Indians attacked Wheeling, Virginia. Thus, these two attacks, so close together, may have been misinterpreted as one longer campaign or a splitting of a single force to attack Hanna’s Town and Wheeling simultaneously.28

Lottridge settled back in at Tosioha, the main village at Buffalo Creek where Sayenqueraghta resided. It was after 13 days of travel and 14 days captivity at Cattaraugus that Elizabeth Brownlee and her daughter Jane finally reached Buffalo Creek where they spent a further four months as prisoners. In her pension application, Elizabeth said she was about to be put to death until Lottridge told the assembled council that “she could afford them no amusement in dying by any mode of torture they could inflict...”29 They heeded his advice and took a very sick Elizabeth with Jane tied to her back to Fort Niagara, where both were sold to a British officer: Elizabeth for $20 and two gallons of rum and Jane for $10. This officer may well have been Captain John Powell who, with his wife Jane, the former Cherry Valley captive, took Elizabeth and daughter into their home and nursed them back to health. She and her daughter as well as Elizabeth Hanna and her daughter Jane, held captive in Montreal, were eventually repatriated, arriving back at Hanna’s Town over a year after their capture.

Lottridge was a great favorite with Sayenqueraghta and Ojageghte, the leading Cayuga chief, and when he was transferred in 1783 to Karaghiyadirha on the upper Genesee River, both chiefs protested to Brigadier General Powell and Joseph Brandt, but to no avail. They then went to Sir Guy Johnson and Lieutenant Colonel John Butler and in August, Butler ordered Lottridge back to Sayenqueraghta’s village at Buffalo Creek.30

On March 24, a year later, captains Robert Lottridge and John Powell were discharged from the Indian Service on half-pay. Lottridge (whose family had remained prisoners of the rebels throughout the war) and Powell settled their families in what became Ontario. Lottridge died in 1790, but Powell served in the War of 1812 as the commander of artillery in the 5th Lincoln militia. He battled at Queenston Heights, was captured at Fort George in 1813, imprisoned in Burlington, Vermont, and eventually rescued by a British raid. It is not known when he died.31
Sayenqueraghta and most of the Senecas did not move to Ontario where Joseph Brandt established a reserve for Six Nations Iroquois, but remained at Buffalo Creek, dying there sometime in the late 1780s. In 1787, Lieutenant John Enys of the 29th Regiment met Sayenqueraghta at a council at Fort Niagara and noted he was “the only crowned head in America” describing him as “a sensible old man and has been a very good warrior in his day...” Yet Joseph Brandt received more acclaim than Sayenqueraghta, the ranking Iroquois war chief during the Revolution, due to the fact he could read and write English and left a large body of materials for historians, while Sayenqueraghta was illiterate.

The Hanna’s Town attack occurred as the Revolution was in its closing phase, nine months after Cornwallis’ surrender at Yorktown. The British saw the “handwriting on the wall” and on January 24, Haldimand wrote to Guy Johnson that he “could not encourage the Indian expedition to Fort Pitt.” On July 8 and 9, Haldimand wrote to Brigadier General Powell, commander of Fort Niagara, to hold Sayenqueraghta from the warpath. But Sayenqueraghta, Kayashota, Lottridge, and Powell had already left to attack Hanna’s Town. Powell wrote to Haldimand on June 27 saying, “those who went unsolicited to Fort Pitt afford proof that the Indians are still staunch.” There was one last raid near Hanna’s Town in April 1783 in which four Delaware Indians killed two men and captured a 17-year-old boy. Brigadier Allan Maclean, commander of Fort Niagara, wrote Haldimand that the Delawares were reprimanded for their action.

Hanna’s Town never recovered from the destruction; only two houses and Fort Reed were left standing. Five years after the attack, it was described as having only 13 miserable log cabins. The county seat and court moved to Greensburg in 1786 with the first court session held on January 7, 1787. Hanna’s Town turned from county seat to farmland.

Looking southwest to the excavation of Foreman’s Tavern, 1970, with Forbes Road at right. James B. Richardson II

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Powell may have been a member of the party of 400 butler's Rangers and Iroquois that attacked German Flats on September 16 and 17, 1778, laying waste to everything along 20 miles of the Mohawk River. At this time Powell was a member of Captain William Caldwell's detachment and both Caldwell and Captain Joseph Brandt led the force to German Flats. Stevens 1990, 8-9. Lottridge and Powell also may have participated in the November 11-12, 1778, Cherry Valley raid in New York. There is no record of either Lottridge or Powell taking part in this foray, although the eminent historian Paul L. Stevens feels they must have been present. The 640 Iroquois, Butler's Rangers, Indian Department personnel and regular troops were led by Complanter, Joseph Brandt, and Captain Walter Butler, Major John Butler's son. Forty-eight soldiers and civilians were killed and captured, and due to Walter Butler's dismay at the killing of women and children, he sent about 38 of the prisoners back to Cherry Valley. Freyer, 144-146. Graymont, 184-191. Stevens 1990, 9-10. 1991, 14. G. F. Williams, 114-133, 173-188.


As an example of the British sensitivity to the captives issue, when Col. William Crawford, a close friend of Washington, was tortured, it elicited a reprimand to the Indian Department from Haldimand, and De Peyster wrote to Alexander McKee to tell the chiefs that he would not tolerate this form of warfare and threatened to withdraw troops if this conduct against prisoners persisted. George Washington was also distressed by the senseless murder of the Moravian Delawares in a December 11, 1782 letter to Irvine declared: “such excursions serve only to draw resentment of the Savages...” John C. Fitzpatrick, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1938), vol. 25, 420.

In the Spring of 1780, Powell rescued a number of Benjamin Gilbert's family, who had been captured on a raid in Pennsylvania and were taken to Sayenquaghta's village near Fort Niagara. Powell was instrumental in bringing Elizabeth Peart, a Gilbert relative, into his house where he and Jane kept her and her child until she was sent to Montreal along with the Gilberts. In 1781, Powell affected the release of two other Gilbert relatives, Benjamin and Thomas Peart, the latter joined the Indian Department as a Forester. Lottridge made every effort for the release of Rebecca Gilbert, who was adopted by Sayenquaghta as his daughter, but was unsuccessful. While he and Powell were in Montreal in 1781 to testify at the trial of Sir Guy Johnson for mismanagement of Indian Department funds, they brought gifts and assured the Gilberts that Rebecca would be released soon. Frank H. Severence, Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family, 1780-83, (Cleveland, The Burrows Brothers Company, 1904). Stevens 1990, 19-21, 24.