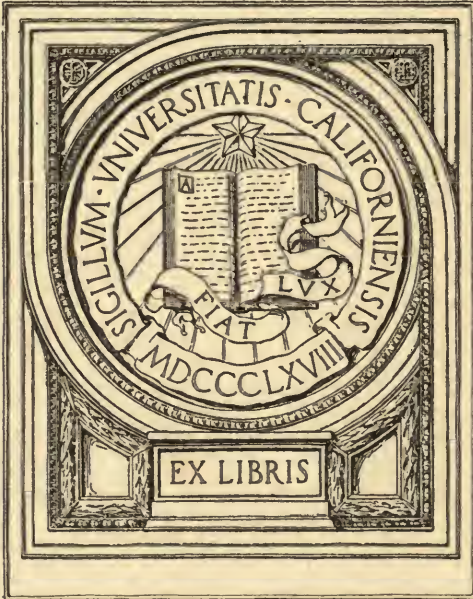


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OUR NEIGHBORS
THE TUSCARORAS

BY FRANK H. SEVERANCE

OUR TUSCARORA NEIGHBORS

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In the summer of 1915 I was invited to speak at the annual picnic on the Tuscarora Reservation. I was met at the Suspension Bridge station by a committee from the reservation and after a drive of a few miles through a well-farmed region was set down in a fine grove of old maples. Many people were there, perhaps as many whites as Indians, and the road was crowded with buggies, farm wagons and motor-cars. The somewhat renowned Tuscarora brass band was playing, on a platform. A row of booths—"hot dog" stands, amusement outfits, and vendors of fans, ice cream, etc.,—drew crowds; and by the time the president of the day was ready to introduce me for the talk, a baseball game was called in a neighboring field. It is a misguided speaker who would compete with a baseball game, on a pleasant summer holiday. However, there gathered on the plank seats in front of the platform a few hundred auditors; and I was much interested in noting the wrinkled, kindly countenances of the old folks, whose memories reached back to more primitive days on this reservation. But for their presence and courteous attention I should have hesitated to speak on a theme of such limited appeal, as history.

Thus it was with genuine gratitude that I tried to thank them for their friendly welcome, for it was indeed a privilege to meet with them. Could I have commanded the beautiful, figurative, strongly-expressive language of the old times, I might have symbolized the cordiality of their greeting by saying that they had swept the path clean between our lodges; that after my journey they had drawn the thorns from my feet, and bathed them, and given me soup; and that now the fire burned clear and we smoked the peace-pipe together. Instead of that, I told them, I

had come to them part of the way by train, they had met me with an automobile, and welcomed me with a brass band. "My word to you," I said, "is chiefly one of greeting. We are neighbors, and on this your holiday you have invited me as a neighbor, to share your pleasures. Like most of your neighbors in Western New York, I have long known something of you, and wish for a better acquaintance," and I went on to recall how, years ago, on the occasion when I was adopted by the Senecas, that it was Mrs. Mountpleasant—known among the whites as "Queen of the Tuscaroras"—who pinned an ancient silver brooch on my coat, and otherwise shared in the ceremony of adoption; she herself, though married to a distinguished Tuscarora, being a daughter of a long-prominent Seneca family.¹

It has often happened—more often than not, perhaps, in recent years—that the white speaker at these annual gatherings of the Tuscaroras, has been some prominent man of Western New York who spoke to them of farming or patriotism or politics. In trying to speak to these people of their own history I explained that my business was not farming, or politics; that my business—at least a part of it—was to study the records of the past and put them in order for others to study. Then I went on and sketched as well as conditions allowed, the story of the Tuscaroras.

It was not, I am sure, a very adequate review that I made; but the occasion awakened an interest in the subject which has led me into some further study; so that what here follows is not so much the address given in the maple grove on a hot summer afternoon, as it is a fragmentary record of Tuscarora history as I have found it in scattered but authentic documents.

Like most Indian records, it begins in the middle. No book, no writer, preserves for us the beginning chapters of the Indians' history. Their traditions for the most part

1. She was sister of Gen. Ely S. Parker, of Gen. Grant's staff in the Civil War.

are of a fantastic sort which cannot be correlated with facts which begin as definite records with the coming of Columbus. As regards the Tuscaroras, we know that in 1708 they lived in North Carolina, whither they are said to have gone from the North—from the land of the Iroquois, of which federation they had been a part. I do not know of any page in history, any document, that tells the story of their going.²

The story of their return can be told, in some measure. I attempt here only a contribution to the subject. Most writers who allude to it at all dismiss it by saying that the Tuscaroras returned to New York in 1715. They were indeed ninety years in coming back! Here is a true American odyssey, for the wanderings of Ulysses are surpassed by the experiences of these people, a handful of whose descendants are today our thrifty, progressive, self-respecting neighbors of the Tuscarora reservation.

When the first white settlers appeared in North Carolina they found certain settlements of Indians with characteristics different from the neighboring tribes. They were of Iroquoian stock, as we know them today, but no attempt is made to fix the date of their going into the South. Their villages were on the lower Neuse, the Trent, the Tar, the Pamlico and other streams—in general, they were scattered through the region south of the present Raleigh. There were at least fifteen Tuscarora towns, with a population, as given in 1711, of 4,000.

Now begins the familiar story. The white settlers appropriated their lands, kidnapped their children and sold them into slavery. Here is a fine theme for the Unpopular History of the United States!

Naturally enough, Tuscarora enmity was aroused; a conspiracy was formed, and massacres occurred. In the years

2. There is a tradition that they went first to the Mississippi, then turned back, reaching North Carolina; but it is only tradition.

1711 to 1713 there were two outbreaks, which are spoken of as the two Tuscarora wars. The first "war" began with the capture of Lawson, surveyor-general of North Carolina, and of the Baron de Graffenried, by some 60 Tuscaroras. Lawson was given a trial before an Indian council and was put to death. This was in September, 1711. In the same month they, and several neighboring tribes, massacred about 130 of the whites. Colonel Barnwell came from South Carolina to help the suffering colonists, and drove the Tuscaroras into one of their palisaded towns about 20 miles from present Newbern. Here there was a battle, in which the Tuscaroras got the worst of it, so that they accepted terms of peace as offered by Barnwell—terms which, according to the Indians, he at once broke. Certain it is that some of the Tuscaroras, falling at this time into the hands of the whites, were sent away into slavery.

Under this new provocation, the Tuscaroras appealed to neighboring tribes, planning a wholesale attack on the whites; meanwhile the settlers again called on South Carolina, which colony sent Colonel James Moore with a body of militia and some 900 Indians who professed hostility to the Tuscaroras. These were in fact, by this time, a tribe at bay. Reduced in numbers, scattered, feeling that they had no friends, they had, even the year before, made appeals to neighboring governments, for some measure of justice.

The Tuscarora wars in North Carolina were brought on by the whites. Characterized by barbaric and cruel acts, as was to be expected in the warfare of an uncivilized folk, even their white enemies recognized that these wars were waged in defense of home and rights as the Indian knew them. The peace-loving, diligent Tuscarora farmers and fruit-growers of Niagara County today should be proud, and not ashamed, of their fighting forefathers of the Tuscarora wars.

Evidently looking to a removal from North Carolina, and a location in a less hostile neighborhood, the Tuscaroras in 1710—more than a year before the massacre—had sent an embassy to the Government of Pennsylvania. At Conestoga, June 8th, they were met by two white commissioners, and by Conestoga and Shawanese chiefs. The fugitive Tuscarora asked for a cessation of hostilities, and made overtures for peace which have been recorded as follows:

“By the first belt, the elder women and the mothers besought the friendship of the Christian people, the Indians and the Government of Pennsylvania, so they might fetch wood and water without risk or danger. By the second, the children born and those about to be born, implored for room to sport and play without the fear of death or slavery. By the third, the young men asked for the privilege to leave their towns without the fear of death or slavery to hunt for meat for their mothers, their children, and the aged ones. By the fourth, the old men, the elders of the people, asked for the consummation of a lasting peace, so that the forest (the paths to other tribes) be as safe for them as their palisaded towns. By the fifth, the entire tribe asked for a firm peace. By the sixth, the chiefs asked for the establishment of a lasting peace with the Government, people, and Indians of Pennsylvania, whereby they would be relieved from ‘those fearful apprehensions they have these several years felt.’ By the seventh, the Tuscarora begged for a ‘cessation from murdering and taking them,’ so that thereafter they would not fear ‘a mouse, or anything that ruffles the leaves.’ By the eighth, the tribe, being strangers to the people and Government of Pennsylvania, asked for an official path or means of communication between them.”³

From this time date the negotiations which resulted in the reception of these people as a part of the League of the Iroquois. The Conestogas were Senecas, and well disposed towards the Tuscaroras. The Provincial Council of Pennsylvania was evidently moved by something akin to pity, but before expressing willingness that the Tuscaroras should come within their borders, told them they must bring a certificate of good behavior from the Government of North Carolina!

The Tuscarora belts—sign of their supplication—were sent by the Conestogas to the head council of the Five

3. Bureau of American Ethnology, “*Handbook of American Indians*,” Part II, p. 843.

Nations at Onondaga; and here their story becomes a part of that of New York State.

Even after their appeal to Pennsylvania, the Tuscaroras were again involved in strife with the ever-encroaching whites. With the Coree Indians—a neighbor tribe which had its own grievance against the settlers—as allies, in June, 1711, they fell on the Swiss and Palatine settlers of the Trent valley, killing some 70 of them, with much destruction of property. Could the story of this so-called massacre have been preserved for us by a Tuscarora historian, the record would no doubt be less favorable for the unfortunate settlers than that we now have; but even the story that has come down to us shows the whites in a bad light. According to De Graffenreid, one of the causes of the war was the “rough treatment of some turbulent Carolinians, who cheated those Indians in trading, and would not allow them to hunt near their plantations, and under that pretense took away from them their game, arms and ammunition,” and that the despised Indians being “insulted in many ways by a few rough Carolinians, more barbarous and inhuman than the savages themselves, could not stand such treatment any longer.”

There are many phases of the strife in North Carolina which no attempt is here made to trace. The grievances of the Tuscaroras were, in brief, the seizure of their lands, the driving off of the game, the constant cheating by traders, the capture of their children—and sometimes of adults—and their sale into slavery. The traffic of early American settlers, in Indians as slaves, is a shameful subject still awaiting a thorough setting-forth by some competent and judicious historian.

The principal purpose of these notes is, to trace the advent of the Tuscaroras in New York State.

It was in the time of Governor Hunter that news of these southern outbreaks began to reach the North. The Indians

of New York Colony were so aroused that we find the Governor writing to the Lords of Trade, June 23, 1712: "The war between the people of North Carolina and the Tuscarora Indians is like to embroil us all. The Five Nations, by the instigation of the French, threaten to joyn them, though very lately they sent me by their own messengers to them, their offers to interpose amicably in that matter. I have sent some men of interest with them to dissuade them from their fatal design, with presents and promises. . . . They arē but a handful, and puffed up with the court has been made to them." Again, writing to Secretary Pople, September 10, Governor Hunter gave utterance to his apprehensions: "The Five Nations are hardly to be dissuaded from sheltering the Tuscarora Indians," and then he complains that he cannot furnish "out of my own pockets," the presents they seemed to expect.

The proposed removal of these southern Indians is seen, therefore, as something more than the advent and peaceful settlement of a few hundred folk among their ancient tribesmen. The matter was at once given a political importance out of all proportion to the facts. The Five Nations were by no means wholly in alliance with the French of Canada, yet Hunter, in his representations to officials in England, sought to show that the coming of the Tuscaroras was by the instigation of the French; thus, in this same year of 1712, we find the Lords of Trade solemnly assuring the Earl of Dartmouth that the Tuscarora strife was "like to embroyle all the Continent."

The next year, Hunter still being Governor, three experienced men, Hendrick Hansen, Johannes Bleecker and Lawrence Claessen, were sent to the council house at Onondaga to confer with the Five Nations. Claessen was an interpreter famous for many years in the service of the English. On their way to Onondaga he learned that a report had spread that the English "had resolved to kill and destroy

all who had Black pates, meaning thereby all the Nations of Indians." On approaching Onondaga Castle, he says, "we were met by about 150 Indians, old and young, who surrounded us and set up a wild shrieking and uproar." The sachems were eager to know if all Indians were to be destroyed. This report the commissioners ascribed to French influence.

At the council they met four Tuscaroras, who had come from the South with wampum belts. This is the first record we have of the presence of these people in New York State. At the council one of them, addressing the sachems of the Five Nations, said: "I come here to tell you that we consent to what you have for two years requested of us"—meaning that "whenever the Five Nations should have need of them, they should be always ready at their orders"—a very characteristic turning of the matter, by which the cause of their removal was shifted to the New York Indians. It was perfectly well known to the English in New York that this tribe was fugitive from their English enemies in North Carolina; yet for some years the effort was kept up to implicate the French of Canada in their removal.

The Tuscaroras further said at this time that they were under command of the Five Nations, and were their subjects, "and that wherever they should please to tell them to go and reside, there they would make their dwelling," and the arrangement was confirmed with twenty large belts "and twice three strings of wampum."

After this the sachem Decanasora, "in full meeting not only of the sachems but of all the inhabitants," etc., assembled at Onondaga, said:

"Brother Corlear [the Governor of New York], says that the Queen's subjects towards the South are now at war with the Tuscarorase Indians. These Indians went out heretofore from us, and have settled themselves there; now they have got into war, and are dispersed, and have abandoned

their castles. But have compassion on them. The English have got the upper hand of them; they have abandoned their castles and are scattered hither and thither; let that suffice; and we request our Brother Corlaer to act as mediator between the English of Carrelyna and the Tuskaroras, that they may be no longer hunted down, and we assure that we will oblige them not to do the English any more harm; for they are no longer a Nation with a name, being once dispersed."

The emissaries of the Tuscaroras returned to the South; nor do we find further record of that tribe in New York until September 25, 1714, when sachems of the Five Nations, addressing the Governor at Albany, said: "We acquaint you that the Tuscarore Indians are come to shelter themselves among the Five Nations. They were of us, and went from us long ago and are now returned and promise to live peaceably among us; and since there is peace now everywhere, we have received them. We desire you to look upon the Tuscaroras that are come to live among us [as] our children who shall obey our commands and live peaceably and orderly."

A portion of the Oneidas' territory was assigned to them, bounded by the Susquehanna on the south, the Unadilla on the east, the Chenango on the west. How many made up the first band that came, seems nowhere stated. They did not all leave North Carolina at once, nor did they all come through to New York. In 1720 some of them were living in Virginia, and complaints reached New York's governor—Burnet—of robberies committed by straggling bands of Tuscaroras and others of the Iroquois. Two Tuscaroras came to Governor Burnet with a war belt from the Governor of Virginia (as they said), asking that the Five Nations should declare war on the Catawbias. About this time the New York tribes reported to Burnet that French Indians (*i. e.*, tribes in allegiance to the French in Canada), were

living with the Tuscaroras "near Virginia, and go backwards and forwards."

None too clear, such records; but they do make plain that the return of the Tuscaroras to their ancient home in New York was by no means the simple migration it has been made to appear.

In 1722, the Tuscaroras, having been formally incorporated into the League, were sharing in councils with the English at Albany. Others of the tribe had settled with the Iroquois of Conestoga in what is now Lancaster County, Pa.; and still others pitched their lodges with Shawanese and Mohawks at Oquaga, now Windsor, Broome County, N. Y. In 1736, an enumeration of the Five Nations, made by an officer in French-Canadian service—probably either the elder Joncaire or La Chauvignerie—reported 250 men in the Tuscarora village "near the Onondagas." With the Oneidas and Cayugas, the Tuscaroras were called "younger brothers," one of the three younger branches of the Iroquois Confederacy. Their subordinate position was shown in 1726 when there was great turmoil over the building of Fort Niagara. When Burnet asked the Six Nations why they had allowed it, he was told, it was the Onondagas who had given consent, while "the Cayugas and Tuscaroras sat still and heard the Onondagas speak."

The Tuscaroras who had not yet emigrated, continued to be involved in troubles to the southward. In 1726 they, with some Mohawks, Senecas, and Canada Indians, were charged with having raided and killed Indians of other tribes in South Carolina. This again aroused the administrators of New York, who never ceased to fear French influence. In 1737 we find Lt. Gov. George Clarke, in council at New York, June 30, urging the Six Nations to keep the Shawanese "among yourselves, as you have the Tuskierores, to prevent their going to the French." In this

he failed, for the Shawanese were, for the most part, under French control, down to the conquest of Canada.

For a good many years, we find the Tuscaroras scattered in many bands, living with friendly tribes in several states. A report of 1741 calls them the Tachekaroreins. Six years later the French officer La Chauvignerie boasted at Montreal that the Onondagas, Senecas, Cayugas, Oneidas and "Tescarorins" were "all well disposed towards the French." Again he said, they gave pledge of their "perfect neutrality." In 1748, Daniel de Joncaire, at Quebec, assured the Governor, La Galissoniere, before whom he appeared with 80 Indians of the Six Nations, that they were "empowered to speak for the Taskorins," who were friendly to the French. Such assurances signified little. By this time, such Tuscaroras as were resident in New York were thoroughly in obedience to the stronger tribes of the League. In 1753 Colonel (afterward Sir) William Johnson advised the Oneidas: "Have your castles as near together as you conveniently can with the Tuscaroras, who belong to you as children." This relationship, he added, "makes it necessary for me to fix a new string to the cradle which was hung up by your forefathers when they received the Tuscaroras."

In 1755 Tuscaroras and Oneidas served with the English forces at Lake George;⁴ and the next year we find Sir William Johnson writing to the Lords of Trade that the Tuscaroras were asking for a garrisoned fort near their town; he saw in this a proof of loyalty.

In Sir William's journal of his negotiations with the Indians, in the summer of 1756, are interesting records, showing the status of the Tuscaroras at this time. That they were well trusted may be gathered from the fact that they were employed as spies in Canada. Some of them were at a conference in Montreal, whereof Vaudreuil wrote

4. Vaudreuil to M. de Machault, Sept. 25, 1755.

that the Tuscaroras had "accepted the hatchet from the English." Some soldiers of the 44th Regiment, at Schenectady, had killed three Tuscaroras; had cut off the head of one of them, called Jerry, and set it on a stake in the camp; and had otherwise angered them. Johnson was a good deal disturbed over it, for beside the resentment the quarrel had aroused, several of the Tuscarora chiefs had been so well received at Montreal that he feared they would all go over to the French. At a council at Onondaga, and at a camp at Oneida, the Tuscaroras showed him a French wampum belt, which was virtually an invitation. But Sir William, as usual, was equal to the occasion. He spoke to them pleasantly, he gave them presents, and he promised them a fort. The following extracts from his journal illustrate his effective diplomacy.

Being gathered at the Onondaga council-house, he said:

Brethren of the Tuscarora: It gives me great satisfaction to find you living in so compact a body, and as I well know your attachment to your Brethren the English, I shall be inclined to do anything which may contribute to your safety and welfare. You will be much safer here with a good outwork on the hill than as you now are, wherefore if you incline to have one built there I will order it to be done immediately and give you several guns to mount in it or anything else for your defense; and as you as well as the Onondagas complain of the want of provisions, send some of your young men down to my house and I will send you a sufficient quantity to serve you until your crops come in.

Brethren, I must strongly recommend unanimity to you in your councils and actions and then you will be ready to join his Majesty's arms whenever I call upon you, as I have now sharpened your hatchet and given you all necessary complements of war. [And he gave them a wampum belt.]

To which the Sensureera, their chief, spoke as follows:

Brother: We are glad you approve of our situation and way of living. We shall think ourselves much safer with such a house as you propose and hope you will not defer building it as soon as you can, also to send us some Swiffel guns and ammunition in plenty; then you may depend upon it we will make the best defense we can should the French attempt to molest us there. We will also be ready to rise up at your call. We have neglected hunting this great while watching a call from you so that we are very poor and in want of many necessaries for our families which we hope you will supply us with as our only dependence at these times is on you. [Gave a belt.]

In August of this summer the Tuscarora sachems went to Sir William's house at Fort Johnson, where he spoke to them as follows:

Brethren of Tuscarora: As I understand you are to set off to-morrow I have prepared everything for your people and journey as you desired, viz.: Indian corn for the support of your families until your crops are ripe, swivel guns for your fort, clothing for your people and men to build a good block house on the eminence which commands your fort. As your father the King takes care of you and as you see all the nations are turning out some of their young men to war against our common enemy, the French, I now expect by this belt of wampum that you will encourage your young men to turn out also which will induce me to supply your further wants. [A belt of wampum given.]

Their answer:

Brother: We of the Tuscarora Nation are very thankful to our father the King and you for supplying our wants so far and building a place of security for us. You may be assured we the sachems will acquaint the young men of our Nation with your desire, and encourage them to comply with it. At the same time we must tell you we did not expect you would call upon us till you were ready to move with your army, when we all promised to join you whenever you went as our hunting is entirely impeded by this quarrel between you and the French, and as none of our Nation ever go to Canada we have no way to supply our families but by applying to you. What you have now given us is very considerable and satisfactory, yet it is far short of what we really want. [A belt.]

Brother: As we have rejected all the great offers of the French Governor lately made us and of the priest at Swegachie,⁵ and as we have been and are now firm friends of yours, we are now under some apprehensions that the French may attempt destroying us especially when our young men turn out to war against them, wherefore we should be glad you would send some men to our Castle to protect our families and in that case we beg you may choose a good discreet officer and sober party.

Sir William's answer:

Brethren of Tuscarora: I shall let Lord Loudoun know your desire, and when I know his pleasure, shall acquaint you with it.

The allegiance of the Tuscaroras to the English interest may fairly be dated from these conferences of 1756. With the Oneidas they became the most stanch and trusted allies of the English, throughout the war with France.

5. Oswegatchie, now Ogilensburg.

Their head man, in those days, was designated, in English reports, as Segwarusara, Sequareesera, and other spellings, obviously of the same word. Many years later we find it as Sagareesa, Sacarese, etc., interpreted as "Sword-carrier." It is a title, and not an individual name.⁶ Other chiefs or sachems mentioned in the 18th Century are Rudt, Kanigot and Thighrorotea.

In 1763 the Tuscaroras had 140 fighting men—and probably more than twice as many women and children—in one village six miles from the principal Oneida village. There were still several Tuscarora settlements in the Susquehanna valley; those who had stopped at Tamaqua, Pa., in 1713 appear to have removed after two years. These were adopted by the Senecas "as children." It remains to trace briefly the fortunes of some of these people who had remained in North Carolina, where their number had been estimated—probably over-estimated—at from 3,000 to 4,000. Sir William Johnson even reported that in six North Carolina towns they numbered 5,000 or 6,000; but subsequent records do not account for such numbers. In 1766, 160 Tuscaroras, just from North Carolina, came in on Sir William Johnson. and were sent to New York villages.

In 1767 there was another fragmentary migration, many Indians of various tribes, including the Tuscarora, being attracted to the Moravian Mission at Friedenshuetten, on the Susquehanna near Wyalusing. The missionaries reported that they were lazy "and refuse to hear religion." Some of them who had camped near the river, were so alarmed at a snowfall, the first they had ever seen, that they begged the missionaries to give them refuge.

Various companies of them coming into the Colony of New York, sites were assigned them. In the northern part

6. In 1794 we find the Tuscarora "Sacharese" visiting Philadelphia with Cornplanter, to attend a treaty; at which he asked that proper young men be sent as teachers to the Tuscaroras.

of the Oneida territory, already mentioned, they were allotted to Ganasaraga—near present Sullivan Madison County; and to Kaunehsuntahkeh—exact site uncertain. Of the migration of 1766, Sir William Johnson wrote to the Earl of Shelburne, December 16th of that year:

This moment an interpreter arrived here with several Tuscarora chiefs returned from North Carolina, whither they went last spring in order to bring the remainder of their tribe out of danger from that government, which they have now done to the number of 160, and they have produced to me certificates of their quiet behavior and decorum, under the seals of the magistrates of the several districts thro' which they passed; notwithstanding which, by the account the interpreter and they give me, as also from the letters I received by them, I find that on their way, their lives were several times attempted by the frontier people, who assembled for that purpose, to prevent which for the future, one of my officers that way, was necessitated to put the Crown to the charge of an attendant white man, and that on their return, having sold part of their lands in Carolina, and purchased sundry horses, wagons, etc., for carrying some effects, they were again used ill at Paxton in Pennsylvania and robbed of several horses, etc., valued at £55; of this the Tuscarora chiefs complained to several of the Six Nations, and I have just now with difficulty prevented them from making a formal complaint to the whole Confederacy, on promising them that it should be inquired into.

I am persuaded Governor Penn will do all he can on receipt of my letter, but these sort of lawless people are not easily detected, being screened by one another. There have been several instances of much of the same nature lately in different quarters on the frontiers.

The Tuscaroras shared in the treaty of Fort Stanwix, October 24, 1768, at which was established the boundary line between the Northern colonies and the Indian lands. It may be noted here that they later shared in the following treaties with the United States Government: Fort Stanwix, 1784; Fort Harmar, Ohio, 1789; Canandaigua, 1794; Oneida, 1794; and Buffalo Creek, 1838.

At Fort Herkimer, in 1785, they were made a party to the treaty by which the Oneidas ceded to the State of New York the lands they had occupied from a time unrecorded. Thus they were again scattered. In after years, we find settlements of Tuscaroras at or near the east end of Oneida Lake; on Cayuga Inlet; and on the Genesee below Avon.

They had espoused the cause of the Colonies against Great Britain; whereupon Indian allies of the British raided the Tuscarora towns in the Genesee valley and destroyed their crops.

More than half a century had elapsed since these people had made their home within the bounds of New York State. Now they were again homeless. About the close of the Revolution, a company of them settled at Johnson's Landing, four miles east of the mouth of the Niagara. From this neighborhood two families made their way to the northeastern limits of the present reservation in Niagara County, a place where there was a fine stream, with walnut and butternut trees; and here they wintered. Others joined them, with the tacit consent of the Senecas, who claimed all this region as their own domain. This was the beginning of the present Tuscarora reservation.⁷

At the treaty of 1797, at Geneseo, between the Senecas and Robert Morris, for the United States, the Tuscaroras complained that they had received nothing for giving up the lands granted them among the Oneidas. The justice of their cause was admitted, and there were set aside for them at this time two square miles—1,280 acres—covering their settlement on the ridge east of Lewiston. To this the Seneca Nation added a square mile. In 1800 a delegation went to North Carolina to try and collect payment for lands formerly occupied by their people. The details of the undertaking cannot be entered upon here. Suffice to say, it was measurably successful; so that by 1802, with the aid of the North Carolina Legislature, the former Tuscarora lands were leased, yielding \$13,722. With this sum the Secretary of the Treasury bought from the Holland Land Company, for the Tuscaroras, 4,329 acres adjoining the three square miles already occupied; thus making the

7. Elias Johnson, the Tuscarora historian, tells the story of this settlement in his "*Legends, Traditions and Laws of the Iroquois*," etc., Lockport, 1881.

entire reservation in Niagara County, 6,249 acres; and here the Tuscaroras still abide, less than 500 souls.⁸

It was at the time of the North Carolina leases, that the last considerable migration of these people occurred. In 1820 some 70, out of a population of about 300, left the Niagara reservation, and settled with Mohawks and other Indians on the Grand River in Canada.

The actual migration of the Tuscaroras, then, as we have shown, from North Carolina to New York State, occurred at various times from 1712 to 1802. Now began a series of efforts to dispossess them in New York State and remove them to various places in the West. Into the intricate history of these attempts, it is not here designed to enter. About 1818 it was proposed to purchase lands in the neighborhood of Green Bay, Wisconsin, held by the Menomonees and Winnebagoes, and transfer to them certain New York tribes, the Tuscaroras among them. The scheme came to naught. Later, their removal to the Indian Territory was undertaken, and in May, 1846, about 40 were induced to embark on a Lake Erie steamboat. Some 200 Tuscaroras, Senecas and others, finally reached the promised land of the Indian Territory. Within a year, a third of them had died from privation and disease. The Government, however benevolent its designs, had failed in giving proper care to its incapable wards; and the misconduct of agents turned the attempt into a cruel and fatal fiasco, the story of which may be traced in treaties and memorials through many years.

A brighter chapter in Tuscarora history is the record of missionary work amongst them. Some progress they have made in agriculture, in education. They still have prospective revenues from unexpired leases in North Carolina. They live for the most part in comfort, and are a

8. For recent statistics of population, etc., the reader is referred to Government census reports. In 1890 they numbered 439; in 1910, 382.

shining example for trustworthiness, thrift and morality among all of our Indian neighbors of Western New York.

Something of the foregoing historical sketch, its author attempted to give at the picnic in the maple grove; and by way of a farewell word, he added—recalling the fashion of ancient days:

“Brothers, I have spoken. If I had strings and belts of wampum, as your ancestors would have had, I would have given them to you, as I spoke, to confirm my words. You must imagine that I have done so; and now I give a very large belt, with the pipe woven in it, to keep the chain of friendship bright and shining.”

NOTE:—The Tuscarora Nation still claims title to extensive tracts of land in North Carolina. In 1917, Mr. Glenn A. Stockwell, of Niagara Falls, under instructions of the Tuscarora Nation, prepared a petition and submitted it to the Attorney-General of the United States, setting forth the claims of the Tuscaroras against the State of North Carolina. It recites many historical incidents of interest, especially in relation to the leasing of Tuscarora lands.

Among other things, it set forth that the Tuscarora lands in Bertie County, North Carolina, were confirmed to them by Treaty in 1748. May 2, 1778, the rights conferred by Treaty were reaffirmed by Act of the North Carolina Legislature and the lands were exempted from taxes. It was at that time enacted by the Legislature that Tuscarora lands which had been leased to various settlers should revert and become the property of the State at the expiration of the leases if the Tuscarora Nation was extinct or if the Tuscaroras had entirely abandoned or removed themselves from the State lands.

In 1802 the North Carolina Legislature passed an Act for relief of the Tuscaroras. It stated that as these Indians had asked authorization to lease the residue of their lands they were so authorized in regard to the Bertie County lands for a term to expire when the leases which had been made in 1766 should end. Commissioners were appointed to carry this Act into effect. Leases under this Act were to be “held and deemed the occupancy and possession of the Tuscaroras,” as if the Indians actually resided on said lands.

The above Acts were passed prior to the adoption of the Constitution of the United States by North Carolina.

Apparently, in 1801, the Tuscaroras named certain chiefs to confer with the State of North Carolina and the Federal Government in regard to further leases of their lands. William R. Davie was appointed United States commissioner to act for the Government in negotiations with the Indians. The next year, November 15, 1802, North Carolina passed an Act authorizing the chiefs to lease their lands and stipulating that the governor of the State should appoint three commissioners to carry out the Act. Commissioner Davie and the Indian delegates entered into an agreement which, had it been ratified by the United States, would have become a Treaty. In 1803, Thomas Jefferson, then President, submitted such a draft of a proposed Treaty to the Senate, which body consented to its ratification; but it is asserted that the Treaty was never proclaimed or ratified by the President and is, therefore, of no force.

In 1828, North Carolina again enacted legislation affecting the Tuscarora lands. Their sale was sanctioned and the Governor appointed a commissioner who sold the equity of redemption of the State for \$3,250, or at the average of eight cents per acre. Some of the deeds executed under this Act show that large tracts of the Indians' lands were sold at prices much below this average. In one case 900 acres were conveyed for \$13.50; another tract was sold for an average of 1½

cents per acre. The commissioner in this negotiation, Bates Cook, appears to have received the funds paid in these transactions.

November 19, 1831, certain chiefs of the Tuscaroras executed a deed reciting the sale above mentioned and acknowledging the receipt of \$3,250 for their lands. The Indian signatures to this deed are of interest, for some of the names have long continued to be well known on the Tuscarora Reservation. They are: William Chew, Nicholas Casie, George Warchief, Jonathan Printup, Matthew Jack, William Johnson, Isaac Miller.

All of the leases above indicated appear to have expired July 12, 1916. Under Act of the State Legislature October 15, 1748, these lands on the expiration of the leases were to revert to the State. It is claimed, however, that none of the leases made under the sanction of the legislative acts were ever ratified by the United States Government. It is further claimed that the Federal Government had and has sole power and jurisdiction in the matter. In consequence of this interpretation it is understood that claims in behalf of the Tuscaroras are still being urged for suitable compensation for their North Carolina lands. It is alleged that they did not receive all of the lease money, even the small rates above stated. In some cases it is alleged that the rental was as low as 2 mills per year per acre and that a large part of what is due them was wrongfully withheld from the Indians.

In a word, it is claimed on behalf of the Tuscaroras that the title to the North Carolina lands which have been under lease for so many years, is still vested in the Tuscarora Nation. It is claimed that the various legislative acts of the State of North Carolina have been of no force or effect in so far as they attempt to alienate the title of the Tuscarora Nation in the lands in question. Finally, it is claimed that the only attempt at treaty between the Indians and the State of North Carolina sanctioned by the Federal Government is without force inasmuch as it was never ratified and proclaimed.

The Tuscaroras now residing in Niagara County have asked that Congress pass an enabling Act directing and permitting them to bring action against either the State of North Carolina or persons occupying and claiming title to the lands. In pursuance of this action the Messrs. Watts, Stockwell & Hunt, attorneys at Niagara Falls, in behalf of the Tuscaroras, prepared the petition as above stated, setting forth the foregoing and other pertinent facts; and this petition, with a brief prepared by the attorney for the State of North Carolina, and a report by Indian Commissioner Cato Sells, was submitted to the Attorney General at Washington in 1917. It is understood that the Attorney General ruled that the Indians should be permitted to bring said suit; but it is reported that the decision of the Attorney General's office has since been reversed; according to which the Government now takes the position that no proceedings should be instituted. Whether this is a final action in the long-contested case or not it is impossible at present to say.

