

Ontario County Times, 16 Apr. 1897

Among the Indians

A Sketch of the Life as an Interesting Character

A Friend of Red Jacket

Seven years of Jasper Parrish's Youth Were Spent in Captivity Among Several Indian Tribes – His Kindness to them.

In the old Canandaigua cemetery stands a plain and unpretentious marble headstone, which marks the last resting place of Jasper Parrish, one of the most remarkable residents of this village during the early part of this century. The truth of his strange adventures might be doubted were it not for the fact that Capt. Parrish himself has left an account of his life and career. This narrative, which is written in a very graphic manner, is now in the possession of William Gorham, of Canandaigua, a grandson of Capt. Parrish, to whom the writer of this article is indebted for the loan of the manuscript, as well as for other valuable information relating to the subject of this sketch.

CAPT. JASPER PARRISH

Jasper Parrish was born in the year 1766 at Windham, Conn. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary war his father had settled near the headwaters of the Delaware river in this state, having made a clearing in the forest with his axe, and built a log hut for himself and his family. One summer's day in the year 1778, when Jasper was a lad of 11 years, he and his father, while about six miles from their home, were surprised and captured by a party of Munsee Indians. They were carried up the Delaware to a place known as the "Cook House," where they were separated. The father was taken to Fort Niagara and delivered to the British, and two years later was exchanged and returned to his home; while the son was given to a chief called Capt. Mounsh, and remained a captive among the Indians nearly seven years. He stayed among the Munsee tribe until October of the year in which he was captured, when his master took him to Chemung, at that time an important Indian settlement. As they entered the village they were met by a crowd of howling savages who pulled Jasper from his horse and beat him brutally with clubs and the handles of their tomahawks until he was more dead than alive.

Soon afterward Jasper was sold to a Delaware Indian family that treated him kindly. Nevertheless, he had to endure terrible hardships, suffering severely from both cold and hunger. In the winter when the rivers were frozen and the ground covered with snow, Jasper and the Indian boys were often compelled to throw off their blankets and leap into the water through holes cut in the ice. This was done in order to render their bodies less sensitive to cold. Once, also, he narrowly escaped losing his life. One evening two Indians who were ugly from drink sat down opposite him at the camp-fire, and began to plan how they might get money with which to buy more rum. Finally, one proposed that they kill Jasper and take his scalp to the fort, and obtain the bounty offered by the British for Yankee scalps. Jasper, being familiar with their language, was instantly on his guard, so that when one of the Indians drew a half burnt brand from the fire and hurled it

at his head, he dodged the missile, and being a swift runner, escaped into the forest. The next morning when the Indians had recovered from the effects of the British rum, he returned to camp, and was not further molested.

Parrish remained with the Delawares until the spring of 1780. During his stay with them, he witnessed their defeat by the expedition of General Sullivan, at Newtown – near where Elmira now stands – and accompanied them on their retreat to Niagara, after the battle. His master took him to the fort, and finding no white man wishing to purchase him, sold him for \$20 to a Mohawk chief of some prominence, called Captain David Hill. This proved to be a most fortunate change for Parrish, because Captain Hill grew to be very fond of him, and at length brought him before the council of the chiefs, and formally adopted him as his son, giving him the name of Sne-ed-ah-wah. His life among the Mohawks was a happy one, as he was allowed to spend his time in hunting, fishing and trapping, being forced to do no labor beyond his strength, and was always supplied with good food and cloth. He remained with this tribe five years, until after the treaty of Fort Stanwix, in 1784, when he returned to his family, who were then living at Goshen, Orange county.

After his release from captivity, Parrish was little better than the savages among whom he had dwelt, for, although he could speak fluently six Indian languages, he had only a faint recollection of English. He attended school for nine months after his return, but except for that short period of instruction, his education was wholly obtained by his contact with others, and his personal observation.

However, Capt. Parrish became very valuable to the government as an interpreter, acting in that capacity at numerous conferences and councils, and officiated at the adoption of the famous Pickering treaty of 1794. In 1792, he was appointed by President Washington interpreter to the Six Nations, and in 1803 became government sub-agent to the same tribes, holding both offices up to the beginning of Jackson's second administration. He removed to Canandaigua in 1792, having previously been married to the daughter of Gen. Edward Paine, the founder of Painesville, O. He built himself a house on the corner of Main and Parrish streets, which latter bears his name, and resided there until his death, which occurred in 1836. Capt. Parrish is described as being tall, slender in his youth, but somewhat stout in his later years, with light hair and mild blue eyes. His portrait is not that of a rough backwoodsman or trapper, but rather that of a cultured and refined country gentleman.

He possessed remarkable influence over the Indians of the Six Nations, for he never forgot their kindness to him while he was a captive among them, and acted in accordance with this feeling of gratitude. The Indians not only justly considered him as their truest friend and protector among the white men, but also stood in awe of him. His word was law to them. Even Red Jacket, the great sachem of the Senecas, who bent the councils of the Six Nations to his will, was awed by this quiet and unassuming man. Capt. Parrish used to delight in telling this story as illustrative of his power over Red Jacket. One evening

Red Jacket came to his house drunk and in a particularly ugly mood, and when Mrs. Parrish opened the door, stood with his tomahawk uplifted as if about to strike, and inquired "Is She-ed-ah-wah at home?" Mrs. Parrish, not at all terrified by his menacing looks and gestures, replied, "He is here, and is looking at you now." Instantly Red Jacket lowered his tomahawk, and became sobered and subdued. In later years some of the Oneida and Onondaga Indians, wishing to show their affection for Capt. Parrish, were accustomed to make a visit to him once or twice a year, and even after his death these simple-hearted and affectionate Indians appeared at the house of his daughter, saying, "We come to see Sne-ed-ah-wah's papoose." And thus these friendly visits to his children and grandchildren continued until about ten years ago, when they finally ceased. As death drew near Jasper Parrish might well look back upon his career with a feeling of satisfaction not unmingled with pride. He had labored the greater part of his life to improve the deplorable condition of his dark-skinned brethren; he had brought to bear upon them every christianizing and civilizing influence possible, and had lived to see his efforts crowned with a considerable degree of success.

Henry W. Hamlin.

Canandaigua, N. Y., Wednesday, June 21, 1922

A Table With a History Shown in the Museum

Once the Property of Jasper Parrish, the Government Indian Interpreter – Stood in His Kitchen.

In the "Old Fashioned Kitchen" in the Historical Society's building in Canandaigua, is an old cherry table, about whose battered top and rickety legs cling memories of the days when white settlers were driving their first stakes in what had only recently been an unknown wilderness. The table was once the property of the Government Indian interpreter, Captain Jasper Parrish, as is authentically known, and standing as it did in the kitchen of his house in Canandaigua in the last years of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth could recite, had it the gift of speech, many a tale of romance

[Parrish's Table Appears in the Foreground of This Picture.]

and adventure. Around its capacious top on more than one occasion there gathered the sachems of the Six Nations, assembled to receive the agreed annuities, and there smoked the pipe of peace with the doughty captain, partook of his venison, or not unlikely imbibed from the "big kettle" of rum, whose presence was considered in those days necessary to the successful issue of every social entertainment or solemn conclave in which the susceptible sons of the forest participated.

The story of Jasper Parrish has never been fully told and never will be until a writer, gifted with imaginative power, has filled out the skeleton of known facts, regarding his life with the flesh of tradition and clothed with romance. He left a personal record written in his old age but it is a bare statement of facts and to an unimaginative reader would yield small interest.

But to a boy, who needs no aid of picturesque language to realize what six years of captivity among the Indians must have contained of hard [Captain Jasper Parrish. Spent Six Years in Captivity among the Indians.]

experience and stirring adventure, the simple narrative unfolds a tale of absorbing interest.

Jasper Parrish the manuscript relates, was at work in the field with his father about six miles from their home, at the headwaters of the Delaware river in this State, when surprised and captured by a small party of Monsee Indians. This was on the 5th of July, 1778, when Jasper was eleven years old. Father and son were taken by their captors up the Delaware river to an Indian settlement, called Cookhouse. Ten days later the father was separated from his son, taken to Fort Niagara, and there surrendered to the British. Two years afterwards he was exchanged as a prisoner of war and he then returned to his family.

Captain Mounsh took the boy Jasper to his family and left him with them while he was absent for extended periods. Jasper was kindly treated and relates that at one time, when very ill with dysentery, he was urged by his custodians to try certain Indian remedies. At first he refused, fearing poison, but then took the herb syrup offered and was at once relieved. They threatened, however, to take his scalp by and by, and so he was kept in a state of apprehension.

On October 1, Jasper set out with his master for Chemung. Upon arriving there he was surrounded by Indians, greeted with the scalp halloo, "qua-qua!", torn from his horse and beaten until his body was covered with bruises. Then his master interfered, crying "It is enough!" A few days later, Jasper was sold to a Delaware Indian family for \$20, and taken to the south side of the Tioga river. His old master was killed a few days later in a drunken brawl at Fort Niagara. Young Parrish remained on the Tioga river during the winter and spring of 1779, suffering much from cold and hunger. His food consisted of venison, wolf, dog, fox and muskrat meat, and occasionally a wild bird with a 'little corn.' The fact that there was no salt for the food occasioned him much discomfort. He was compelled to follow the example of the Indian boys and jump through a hole in the river ice into the frigid water. This, he was told, would harden him. He had to do it repeatedly and in the coldest weather.

At one time during a hunting expedition, his Indian companions ran out of lead from which to make bullets but to his surprise, after a short absence from camp, they came back with a quantity of ore, from which by a crude smelting process they secured some twelve pounds of good lead.

He seldom heard an English word spoken but learned to speak the Indian language with facility. Jasper was at this place on the Tioga river when General Sullivan's army marched through the Iroquois country and was with the squaws and young Indians when the treated after the battle of Newton, and met them at Painted Post. Parrish afterward proceeded with the Indian party, by way of Bath and Genesee to Fort Niagara, then the British post.

Mr. Parrish records that at one time the Indians gathered at the Fort engaged in a drunken frolic that resulted in the death of five of them, and more would have been killed if the chiefs had not interfered. The boy learned here that the British were offering a guinea bounty for every Yankee scalp brought in, and he adds that he was afterwards informed that the main purpose of this offer was to induce the Indians to disperse as they were becoming troublesome. As he was resting near a campfire one night with a couple of the Indians, he overheard them form a plan for taking his scalp and selling it to get money with which to buy rum. Thus warned, he watched his companions and when he saw one of them take a half burned stick from the fire and hurl it at his head, he was able to avoid a deadly blow by a quick jump, and escaped into the neighboring bushes. He remained outside until morning, when the Indians had sobered up and he could safely return.

His master offered to sell Jasper to the white people at the Fort, but none would buy. Finally a fine looking Mohawk, named Captain David Hill, bought him for \$20. Hill lived near the fort, and, becoming a member of his family, Jasper was compelled to learn the Mohawk language, which was entirely different from the Delaware.

The change of masters proved fortunate, however, and he lived with Captain Hill's family for more than five years, being provided in the meantime with all the necessary clothing and with abundance of food. He passed his time in hunting, fishing and working, but says he was never compelled to do work beyond his strength.

In November, 1780, the chiefs of the Six Nations held a council at Fort Niagara and Captain Hill took his prisoner into the midst of the gathering and formally adopted him into his family as his son. A large belt of wampum was placed about his neck and other ceremonies observed. Jasper moved with his Indian father, the following May, to the site now occupied by Lewiston and there he continued to dwell with the family until the close of the Revolutionary War. He traveled with Captain Hill in the meantime among other tribes, and testifies that he was invariably treated kindly and granted many favors.

In September, 1784, at a treaty of peace between the United States and the Six Nations, made at Fort Stanwix (now Rome, N. Y.), the Indians promised to release all their white captives. There were ninety-three of these, young Parrish among them, and in November of the same year he was taken to Fort Stanwix and given his liberty. He immediately sought out his family, whom he found living at Goshen, Orange county. Mr. Parrish says that upon thus returning to civilization he found that he could hardly make his friends understand him, he spoke such broken English. He was thereafter able to spend only nine months in school and with that exception was entirely self-taught for his intercourse with the world.

In November, 1790, Mr. Parrish was requested by Colonel Timothy Pickering, United States Government Commissioner, to act as interpreter at a council to be held with the Indians at Tioga Point. Later, in July, 1791, he acted in the same capacity at a council at Newton Point, near Elmira. Earning commendation for the faithful and

accurate manner in which he rendered the Indian language into English, he was appointed in April, 1792, as standing interpreter for the Six Nations and instructed to reside at Canandaigua, under the direction of General Israel Chapin, the Government agent. He acted as the chief interpreter at the great Pickering council at Canandaigua in 1794. In 1803, after serving as interpreter for thirteen years, Mr. Parrish was made sub-agent also, and he continued to hold both offices through successive administrations, until President Jackson's second term. Mr. Parrish in his work with the Indians, we are told, endeavored to inculcate habits of industry and to instruct them in agricultural pursuits and the use of property. He states that these endeavors found a friendly disposition among the Indians, except on the part of Red Jacket, the famous Seneca orator, and that they welcomed the coming of missionaries and school masters. Under his instruction and with supplies furnished by the Government, they were enabled to raise a surplus of grain and live in comparative comfort. But Red Jacket continued to oppose all innovations, declaring that they were created Indians and they should remain Indians. He never would relinquish the Pagan habits and customs.

Captain Parrish, an excellent painting of whom hangs in the gallery of pioneers in the Court House in Canandaigua, died in this town in 1836, and his remains were interred in the pioneer cemetery here, where a headstone, still standing, marks his grave. C. F. M.

Transcript, Saturday, November 21, 1931

A Famous Salemite Goes to the Block

Colonel Timothy Pickering (1745-1829) - By Gilbert Stuart

Timothy Pickering was a son of Timothy and Mary Wingate Pickering of Salem, Mass. He was graduated from Harvard in 1763 and was admitted to the bar in 1768. In 1776 he married Rebecca White. In 1777 he joined Washington's army at Morristown, N. J. The Commander-in-Chief soon appointed him adjutant general. In 1780 he succeeded General Green as quartermaster general, which office he resigned in 1785. He settled in Philadelphia for a time, but returned to Massachusetts in 1801, and became a United States senator and a member of Congress. He died in Salem, Mass. His "life" was written by his son, Octavius Pickering, completed after the latter's death in 1868, by Charles W. Upham, and published in four volumes in Boston, 1867-73.

Stuart's portrait of Colonel Pickering is included in a collection of fourteenth to nineteenth century paintings from The Ehrich Galleries to be dispersed at auction at the American Art Association Anderson Galleries (New York city) this evening.

Friday, February ?th, 1803.

Thomas Jefferson,
President

of the
United States of America

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting.

Whereas a treaty was held on the 30th day of June under the authority of the United States with the Seneca nation of Indians, at Buffaloe creek in the county of Ontario and state of N. York, and at the said

treaty in the presence of and with the approbation of John Taylor, Esqr. a commissioner of the United States, appointed to hold the same, an Indenture or agreement was entered into between the said nation of Indians & Wilhem Willink and others hereinafter mentioned, which indenture or agreement is in the words following:

This Indenture made the 30th day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and two: Between the Sachems, chiefs and warriors of the Seneca Nation of Indians of the first part, and Wilhem Willink, Peter Van Eeghen, Hendrick Vedenhoven, W. Willink the younger (son of Jan) Jan Gabriel Van Staphorst, Roelof Van Staphorst, the younger, Cornelius Vollenhaven an Hendrick Seye, all of the city of Amsterdam and Republic of Batavia, by Joseph Ellicott, Esquire, their agent and Attorney of the second part. Whereas, at a treaty held under the authority of the United States with the said Seneca nation of Indians, at Buffaloe creek in the county of Ontario and state of New-York, on the day of the date of these presents by the honorable John Taylor, Esquire, a commissioner appointed by the President of the United States to hold the same in pursuance of the constitution, and of the act of Congress of the United States in such case made and provided, a convention was entered into in the preference and with the approbation of the said commissioner between the said Seneca nation of Indians and the said Wilhem Willink, Peter Van Eeghen, Hendrick Vollenhoven, W. Willink the younger, I Willink the younger (son of Jan) Jan Gabriel Vanstaphorst, Roelof Van Staphorst the younger, Cornelius Vollenhoven and Hendrick Seye, by the said Joseph Elicott their agent and attorney, lawfully constituted and appointed for that purpose.

Now this Indenture Witnesseth, That the said parties of the first part for and in consideration of the lands hereinafter described do hereby exchange, cede, and forever quit claim to the said parties of the second part, their heirs and assigns, All those lands situate, lying and being in the county of Ontario and state of New-York, being part of the lands described and reserved by the said parties of the first part in a treaty or convention held by the honorable Jeremiah Wadsworth, Esquire, under the authority of the United States on the Genesee river the 15th day of September, 1797, in the words following, viz. Beginning at the mouth of the eighteen mile or Kogh-quaw-qu creek, thence a line or lines to be drawn parallel to lake Erie, at the distance of one mile from the lake, to the mouth of Cataraugos creek, thence a line or lines extending twelve miles up the north side of said creek at the distance of one mile therefrom, thence a direct line to the said creek, thence down the said creek to lake Erie, thence along the lake to the first mentioned creek, and thence to the place of beginning. Also one other piece at Cataraugos, beginning at the shore of lake Erie on the forth side of Cataraugos creek, at the distance of one mile from the mouth thereof, thence running one mile from the lake, thence on a line parallel thereto to a point within one mile frm the Con-non-dan-we-gea creek, thence up the said creek one mile on a line parallel thereto, thence on a direct line to the said creek, thence down the same to lake Erie, thence along the lake to the

place of beginning; reference being thereunto had willfully appear. Together with all and singular the rights, privileges, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, or in any wife appertaining. And all the estate, right, title and interest whatsoever of them, the said parties of the first part, and their nation of, in and to the said tracts of land above described, to have and to hold all and singular the said granted premises, with the appurtenances, to the said parties of the second part, their heirs and assigns, to their only proper use, benefit and behoof forever.

And in consideration of the said lands described and ceded as aforesaid, the said parties of the second part, by Joseph Ellicott their agent and attorney as aforesaid, do hereby exchange, cede, release and quit claim to the said parties of the first part and their nation (the said parties of the second part reserving to themselves the right of pre-emption), all that certain tract or parcel of land situate as aforesaid. Beginning at a post marked No.), standing on the bank of lake Erie at the mouth of Cataraugos creek, and on the north bank thereof, thence along the shore of said lake N. 11 E. 21 chains, east thirteen degrees east 45 chains, N. 19 E. 14 chains 65 links to a post, thence east 119 chains to a post, thence south 14 chains 27 links to a post, thence east 640 chains to a post standing in the meridian between the 8th and 9th ranges, thence along said meridian fourth 617 chains 75 links to a post standing on the south bank of Cataraugos creek, thence West 150 chains to a post, thence north 290 chains 25 links to a post, thence west 482 chains 31 links to a post, thence north 219 chains 50 links to a post standing on the north bank of Cataraugos creek, thence down the same and along the several meanders thereof to the place of beginning. To hold the said parties of the first part in the same manner and by the same tenure as the lands reserved by the said parties of the first part in and by the said treaty or convention entered into on Genesee river the 15th day of September, 1797, as aforesaid, were intended to be hed. In testimony whereof the parties to these presents have hereunto, & to two other indentures of the same tenor & date, one to remain with the United States, one to remain with the said parties of the first part, and one other to remain with the said parties of the second part, interchangeably set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Con-ne-a-ti-a, his mark,	x
Koe-en-twah-ka, or Cornplanter, his mark,	x
Wou-dou, gooh-ka, his mark,	x
Te-kon-nou-du, his mark,	x
Sa-gee-yes, his mark,	x
Jaw-ye-car-na, or Blue Sky, his mark,	x
Koying-quau-tah, or Young King, his mark,	x
Ka-oun-doo-wand, or Pollard, his mark,	x
Con-na-wau-de-an, his mark,	x
Soo-noo-you, his mark,	x
Au-wen?-sa, his mark,	x
Soo-geo-ya-wan-law, or Red Jacket, his mark,	x

Cosh-kau-tough, his mark, x
Te-yo-kai-hos-sa, his mark, x
Ona-ya-wos, or Farmers Brother, his mark, x
So-nau-goi-es, his mark, x
Gish-ka-ka, or Little Billy, his mark, x
Sux-sa-bo-wau, his mark, x
Wilhelm Willink, Pieter Van Eeghen, Hendrick Vollenhoven, W. Willink,
the younger, I. Willink the younger (son of Jan) Jan Gabriel Van
Staphorst, Roelof Van Staphorst, the younger, Cornelius Vollenhoven,
and Hendrick Seye, by their Attorney.

(L. S.) Joseph Ellicott.

In testimony whereof, I have caused the Seal of the United States to
be hereunto affixed, and signed the same with my hand. Done at the
City of Washington, the (L. S.) twelfth day of January, in the year of
our Lord one thousand eight hundred and three, and in the twenty
seventh year of the Independence of the said United States.

TH: Jefferson.

By the President,
James Maddison,
Secretary of State.

IRON WORKS.

The subscriber would rent a set o works, situated within twenty miles
of the boatable waters of James River; consisting of Furnace, Forge,
Mill, Saw-mill, and every necessary appendage, all new and finished in
the completest manner of any in America; having abundance of water,
wood, and ore of the best quality, and lying in a healthy country
where provisions also are abundant and cheap. Fifteen or twenty able
negroes may be rented with the works, if specially applied for.

Ferdinando Fairfax.

Shanr. Hill, near Charleston, Virginia.

N. B. Applications by letter must be postpaid.

January 28.

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