

A preliminary word.

I have occasionally wondered: what are the odds of two members of the club scheduled to read within a short time of one other, choosing the same topic. Well, that unlikely coincidence has almost happened. Not a direct hit, but a near miss.

You will, of course, remember James Wesner's fine paper about the expulsion of the Acadians from eastern Canada that Richard Lauf read on January 19th.

Tonight's paper deals with the years just before those we heard about on January 19th, and specifically with a diplomatic mission that played a vital part in the removal of the French from Acadia.

FOUR RED KINGS AND A QUEEN

The kings were getting cranky. And who could blame them?

So, too, were the men assigned to look after them. After all, they'd been entertaining these royal visitors not for hours, not for days, not for a week, but for almost two months. They had shown the Royals the sights of Boston, they had introduced them to every official they could think of, they had arranged dinner parties, visits to forts, receptions of all kinds, and in desperation they had organized a week-long hunting expedition to Chelmsford. The hunting had been good, but on their return they'd been told the ship that was to take them to England still was not ready to set sail. The kings muttered among themselves and threatened to go home. The chaperones did their own share of muttering, but agreed that these high-maintenance guests must at all costs be detained long enough to board the ship and make the trip to England. Furthermore, the trip must be a success. The future of the Continent rested on it. So who were these royal travelers, and why was their crossing the Atlantic so important? What, in brief, was going on?

As you remember, in the 17th and early 18th centuries, there was bitter rivalry between France and England over who controlled eastern North America. The French occupied Eastern Canada while England occupied New England, New York state, and much of what lay south of it. The land that lay between French America and English America, a kind of sparsely-populated no-man's-land, was occupied by Native-Americans, mostly Mohawks, who disliked white men of any nationality, and were prepared to switch allegiances whenever it suited them. French or English; English or French, it didn't really matter.

In 1709, the year before our saga opens, the English decided the time was ripe to end its long-standing rivalry with France. It was time, in brief, to grab Canada. A two-pronged attack was proposed: one prong designed to take Quebec, the other to take Montreal. The plan depended on the Royal Navy, which was to bring troops and supplies to Boston, then set off again, immediately, to lay siege to Quebec. The English soldiers, off-loaded in Boston, would join the colonial militias and their

Mohawk allies for the long overland march to Montreal. That was the plan. But that isn't what happened.

The colonists, for their part, did what was asked of them: they mustered troops; they stockpiled supplies; and they rounded up the Mohawks. What's more, they pep-talked the tribesmen into a fury. By spring of 1709, everybody was spoiling for a fight. But then - the Royal Navy failed to show up. And without the Navy, there could be no invasion of Canada. Big disappointment. Everybody felt let down – especially the Mohawks.

The colonial leaders, disgusted by their masters in England, learned in due course the reason for the No-Show. The ships, meant for America, and freighted with troops and supplies, had been diverted to Spanish waters to support efforts (so they were told) more vital to English interests. But what, protested the colonists, what could be more vital to English interests than the control of the North American continent? As for the Mohawks, they returned home sorely disappointed, and still more uncertain who to support in the perplexing games the white men, French and English alike, seemed always to be playing.

It was all part and parcel of the War of the Spanish Succession. But Bostonians and New Yorkers weren't interested in Europe's convoluted politics. What they wanted was simple: they wanted to drive the French out of Canada. Angry and perplexed, the colonial leaders sought a way to recapture London's attention. Now remember, an overseas colony with a gripe didn't have many ways of expressing anger and frustration. All it could properly do was to send a delegation to London to plead its cause. But the colonists knew, from long experience, that delegations of that kind got short shrift. Passed from office to office, they would be treated with condescension, and, unless an influential friend in court could be found, it would be sent home feeling rebuked and humiliated.

But after this most recent disappointment (the failure of the fleet to show up as promised) a small group of New Englanders came up with a new approach. They weren't going to be fobbed off on some jumped-up bureaucrat and sent home with empty promises. They were going right to the top – to the Queen herself.

Conservative heads were skeptical, saying in effect: Our masters in London have always thought of us as transatlantic bumpkins. If we act the part they will be justified in that opinion. London operates by the book. If we have grievances, and certainly we do, we must go through proper channels. We destroy our credibility and any chance of success if we think we can barge in on the Queen and dump our problems in her lap. It simply won't happen.

But now someone had apparently come up with a way around the problem – at least in theory. It was common knowledge that England's monarch never sat down to sort out problems with commoners, especially commoners from overseas. At the same time it was well known that sovereigns could, and sometimes did, meet and talk with other sovereigns. And that is why, in the first months of 1710, the chiefs of four Mohawk tribes, suddenly found themselves being called "kings," and were waiting in Boston to sail to England to meet the Queen.

Late in February, after two months of delay, the HMS *Reserve* finally boarded her passengers, cast her lines,

and set off for England. While the ship wallows eastward across the Atlantic for yet another two months, let's pass the time with a look at this curious delegation. First, who were these so-called kings? To begin with, what were their names? In all candor it must be acknowledged that to western ears their Mohawk names sound ridiculous. To give an example, the most powerful king of the four was known to his fellows as Tee Yee Neen-Ho Ga Row. One might be excused for asking: Is this the name of a Mohawk chieftain, or is it a bad hand at Scrabble? The escorts who accompanied the kings solved the name-problem by conferring on them new names: Hendrick; Brant; John; and Nicholas, and this is how we will refer to them as we proceed.

Hendrick, the ranking chief of the four, led the Mohawks, and was a Christian convert. In 1740, thirty years after tonight's story, he visited England again, to pledge his loyalty to George II. He lost his life at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. Brant, another convert to Christianity, was about 37 years old and led the Maqua tribe. He was sickly, apparently indisposed during much of his time in England, and died shortly after his return from the trip. A

footnote about Brant: his name tends to be remembered in connection not with him but his more celebrated grandson Joseph Brant (1742-1807) whose loyalty to the English led to his fighting for the English during the American Revolution. He went twice to England and became a friend to the Duke of Northumberland. Northumberland commissioned Gilbert Stuart to paint Brant's portrait, and that portrait was sold last summer by Sotheby's for four million pounds. About the third king, John, little is known except that he and Hendrick were kinsmen, both being members of the Wolf clan. Nicholas, the fourth king, came from a community of Mahicans who occupied land south of Albany, and was called "King of the River Nation." Individually and collectively, the four were not likely to be overlooked. A contemporary source describes them as:

Well form'd, being of a stature neither too high nor too low, but all within an inch or two of six foot; their habits are robust, and their limbs muscular and well shap'd; they are of brown complexions, their hair black and long, their visages are very awful [meaning 'inspiring awe'] and majestic, and their features regular enough, though

something of the austere and sullen; and the marks with which they disfigure their faces do not seem to carry so much terror as regard. [Vaughan, p. 118].

As for the white men who accompanied the chiefs, the man in charge was Peter Schuyler of Albany. Quite possibly he was the one to think of the direct approach to the Queen. He had political savvy, serving, as he did, in the New York Colonial Council. The Schuyler name gave him recognition among the colonists, and his integrity when dealing with Native-Americans had earned him widespread respect. Furthermore, he could speak the language of the Mohawks adequately, and when adequacy was not enough, he could call on his cousin Abraham Schuyler, who spoke fluently.

Also of the party was Francis Nicholson, a colonial administrator by profession, who at various times served as governor or lieutenant-governor of New York, of Maryland, of Virginia, and of South Carolina. An implacable hatred of the French, and a determination to see them driven from North America undergirt all his postings. In addition, he enjoyed a familiarity with

London's foreign services that could not help but be of use to the present delegation.

Now It must not be thought that our oceangoing Mohawks were, in 1710, the first aboriginal people to visit England. Far from it. So far as I know, that distinction goes to an Eskimo, or Inuit, who was caught and brought unwillingly to London during the reign of Henry VII, more than a century earlier. The details of the visit and the source of the story have long since escaped me, so I can't cite chapter and verse, or even vouch for its truth. But the outlines are these. The unfortunate Eskimo, brought to England under duress, and exhibited as a freak, found the English climate hard to tolerate. Compared to the Arctic, England in mid-January was stiflingly hot, and as spring approached and temperatures soared into the low 50s, he found himself on the verge of heat prostration. Those who were showing him soon realized that the less he wore, the more people came to gawk. Parka and mukluks had long since been shed, so the poor, sweating Eskimo took to receiving visitors stripped to his sealskin drawers. The ladies of Tudor London, not previously known for their interest in anthropology, came in droves,

and the warmer the weather, the greater their number. I have forgotten the outcome of the story if ever I knew it. But as the decades passed, and the voyages of trade and exploration became more ambitious, native people were abducted in greater numbers. They had become a profitable commodity for the amusement of a public avid for novelty.

And then, in 1616, there was Pocahontas – in a class by herself. She was the daughter of chief Powhatan (who ruled much of seaboard Virginia), and as such was referred to at the time as “princess” Pocahontas. She married an English settler named John Rolfe, and this alliance did much to assure the survival of the infant colony at Jamestown. The marriage of an Englishman to a “princess”, the daughter of a Native-American “king,” set off alarm bells in the English court. King James I, a strange, insecure man, thought the couple might be planning to set up a rival monarchy in Virginia, with themselves as rulers. He summoned them to England, where “princess” Pocahontas, having more status than her farmer-husband, was received at court. She reassured the jittery king, and won the admiration of

persons not given to admiring aborigines. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of their visit, while waiting for a ship to carry them home to Virginia, Pocahontas died, and is buried at Gravesend.

It's worth noting that Pocahontas was not, as Disney Studios would have us believe, a big-breasted Hollywood sexpot. The only contemporary likeness of her, a portrait-engraving by Simon de Passe, shows her with high cheek bones and an almost Asiatic appearance. In the engraving she wears an incongruous top-hat and a dress decorated with tiny buttons. The Virginia Historical Society, where I was employed for thirty-five years, has long owned two tiny engraved gold buttons that are said to have come from that very dress. I like to think that these minute objects that I have often held in the palm of my hand, might possibly have belonged to this remarkable woman. Of course, there are lots of questionable relics floating around. But these came to the Society early in its history, and from a descendant of Pocahontas. Yes, there were, and still are descendants, but it was a near thing. Pocahontas and John Rolfe had one child. That child, in turn, had one child. And that

child (of the third generation) had just one child. So for three generations, at a time when early death and infant mortality were the norm, this family held on by a thread. Uniting as they do, the blood of a Native-American chieftain and an English planter, the descendants of Pocahontas occupy a remarkable symbolic place in the history of Virginia and the nation. And this from a time some years before the Mayflower. Nowadays the descendants of Pocahontas are legion, and at least one branch of the family keeps her memory alive by perpetuating the names Powhatan and Pocahontas. As a child I knew a descendant named Pocahontas, "Pokey" to her friends; she had a daughter, also Pocahontas, who was called "Hontas

These digressions I hope have eased the tedium of the two-month trip across the Atlantic. With land in sight, it is time to return to 1710. The HMS *Reserve*, bearing the royal passengers and their chaperones, arrived in Portsmouth, on the south coast of England, on April 2, 1710. We don't know if they spent time adjusting to terra firma, but soon they were on their way by coach to London. One can imagine the sensations of the Mohawks

as they entered the city and experienced for the first time London's teeming streets, its close-packed buildings, noise, confusion, and stench. Accommodations had been arranged for them at an inn near Covent Garden called the Two Crowns and Cushions. The name referred to the previous monarchs, William and Mary, who had ruled jointly. William and Mary had died without children, so Anne, Mary's sister, had succeeded to the throne as Queen Anne. It may be worth mentioning, that Thomas Arne, the proprietor of the inn occupied by the Mohawks, was at the time rejoicing in the birth of a son. The baby boy became a musician, and many years later composed the music for "Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the Waves."

Once the chiefs were settled in their lodgings, their most pressing need was for appropriate clothing. The general public, of course, hoped to see them in native dress, the more barbaric the better, but for most occasions, particularly for the audience with Queen Anne, new clothing was required.

The contemporary historian John Oldmixon satisfies our curiosity as to where the four kings went to exchange

their furs and skins for clothes more acceptable to English eyes. They were 'cloath'd,' he tells us, 'by the Playhouse Taylor, like other Kings of the Theatre.' [Bond, p. 97]. Whatever extravagance the theatrical tailor may have had in mind, restraint was called for, at least for the presentation outfits. The queen's consort, Prince George of Denmark, had recently died, and the court was in mourning. A picture survives of Hendrick, the ranking chief, in his presentation suit. It was black and of conventional European cut. With the other chiefs turned out similarly, they would have made a somber and distinguished delegation. But heads would most certainly have turned. For London had rarely seen bronze faces - let alone bronze faces picked out in elaborate piercings. Nor were they accustomed to seeing mourning suits worn open from neck to waist, with large expanses of bronze torso on display. But this, we have reason to think, is what the Mohawks were wearing on April 19, 1710, when they left their lodgings to wait upon Queen Anne.

If truth be told, Queen Anne was no treat. As previously noted, she had succeeded to the throne in 1702,

following the deaths of England's only joint monarchs, William and Mary, Mary being Anne's older sister. It was generally assumed that William and Mary, staunch Protestants, would provide England with a reliably Protestant successor. But things hadn't worked out that way. There were no children. So Anne, also a Protestant, succeeded to the throne. Anne was more than ready to take over from her sister. She had always detested Mary, and had loathed Mary's husband. Anne's bad disposition was not helped by the fact that she was stout and unattractive. Her husband, George of Denmark, no more attractive than she, was a heavy drinker and struggled with severe asthma. An unkind observer once suggested that the reason George snorted and gasped was to let it be known he was still alive; otherwise he might have been removed for a premature burial. [Elizabeth Longford; Oxford Book of Royal Anecdotes, p. 285]

If George suffered from asthma, Anne's affliction was gout, to which was added a yet more grievous affliction, the loss of all her children. Seventeen times she had been pregnant - her husband was alive to that extent - and seventeen times she had had miscarriages, or the babies

had died. Only one child, a fragile little boy, had survived to age eleven. A repeated cycle of joyful anticipation followed by bitter disappointment took a heavy toll on the queen, both physically and emotionally. Time and time again she had failed in a monarch's prime obligation to the nation: to provide an heir to the throne. Late in her life she became a virtual recluse. This unattractive, unhappy, neurotic woman was the Great Queen before whom the Mohawk chiefs were setting out to do homage.

Accompanied by Sir Charles Cottrell, the Queen's Master of Ceremonies, and by their colonial chaperones, the Mohawks proceeded in two coaches to St. James's Palace. Here they were met by the Lord Chamberlain, and escorted into the presence of Queen Anne and her ministers. The address to the Queen, carefully prepared by the colonists and probably vetted beforehand by the Foreign Office, was duly delivered and translated on the spot into English. "Great Queen," it began, "we have undertaken a long and tedious voyage, which none of our predecessors would ever be prevail'd upon to undertake ..."

It continued by reminding Her Majesty of the loyalty

of her Mohawk friends, and of their disappointment at the royal Navy's failure to come to their aid the previous year, with the result that the planned attack against Canada had to be given up. The address reviewed the situation in America in a frank and forthright manner. Indeed, some in the room might have perceived a veiled threat in the words: "In case our Great Queen should not be mindful of us, we must, with our families, forsake our country and seek other habitations." No great linguistic skill was needed to interpret this as "If you don't want us as allies, there are French-speaking people who will be glad to welcome us." Ending on a note that everyone could applaud, the chiefs asked for missionaries to preach the Anglican faith, thereby to counteract the idolatry being spread by French Jesuits. The Queen accepted the address then handed it on to her ministers for consideration. On a more practical level, she said the Crown would pick up the expenses of the trip, and in a few weeks would deliver to their homeward bound ship, a cornucopia of useful and joyful presents. The chiefs, for their part, reciprocated by giving her examples of native jewelry and wampum. As this much-anticipated audience

concluded, everybody involved had reason to think it a success.

The following day the chiefs were taken to Richmond where the Duke of Ormond hosted a dinner party in their honor. “They feed heartily,” a contemporary observer noted, “and love our English beef before all other victuals ... [and] they seem to relish our fine pale ales before the best French wines.” (Vaughan 126). The day after Lord Ormond’s party the Queen put a barge at their disposal wherein they travelled to Greenwich, site of the Royal Naval Hospital. Continuing downriver, they were invited to inspect the dockyards at Woolwich, before being welcomed aboard one of Her Majesty’s yachts by a delegation from the Admiralty.

I cannot reconstruct the visitors’ day by day calendar of engagements. Suffice it to say that for five weeks they were run off their feet. They dined with William Penn. They visited St Paul’s cathedral and the Banqueting House at Whitehall. They conferred with the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. They reviewed infantry and cavalry formations in Hyde Park. They attended morning prayer at St. James’s Chapel. They met

officers from the Hudson's Bay Company to discuss an expanded fur trade and ways to wrest some part of it from French competition. They called on the Church of England's overseas missionary agency, resoundingly called the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The Society agreed to send two missionaries to Mohawk country, and to provide funds for the construction of a chapel, a school, and a rectory. With less enthusiasm it promised to look into the liquor problem in America, though it probably realized the futility of trying to stop the sale of alcohol overseas. As the meeting concluded the clergy gave each of the kings a leather-bound Bible and Prayer Book.

One wonders what took place at these official meetings. English dignitaries on one side of the table, four tattooed bronze faces on the other. As has been asked in another context, 'what do you say after you've said "Hello"? With all communication conducted through an interpreter, proceedings must have advanced at a slow pace. The seating arrangements, too, must have presented a problem because as one observer remarked, the kings "... never sit on chairs or benches, but on their heels, which

makes their knees, when they stand upright, bag out before.” [Vaughan 119]. Did each delegation follow its own seating preference, some on chairs, some on the floor? One cannot picture noble lords, and eminent divines squatting on their heels. Unfortunately no description records the scene. We will never know whose knees were baggy and whose were not.

Lest you think the kings’ handlers allowed their charges too little diversion, let’s turn now to some less weighty highlights of the trip. We’ll join them for a performance of Macbeth at the Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket. Even though the play was a familiar one and the leading man, Robert Wilks, was a last minute replacement, the theater was packed. Word had gotten ‘round that the kings would be there. A contemporary takes up the story:

The curtain was drawn, but in vain did the players attempt to perform. The mob, who had possession of the upper gallery, declared that they came to see the kings, ‘and since we have paid our money, the kings we will have.’ Whereupon Wilks came forth, and assured them the kings were in the front box. To this the mob replied, they could not see them, and

desired they might be placed in a more conspicuous point of view – ‘otherwise there shall be no play.’ Wilks assured them he had nothing so much at heart as their happiness, and accordingly got four chairs, and placed the kings on the stage, to the no small satisfaction of the mob, with whom it is a maxim to have as much as possible for their money. (Bond, p. 4)

The Mohawks, in brief, were a sensation. All of London wanted a glimpse of them. Playhouses, concert halls, and theaters could expect full houses with the promise of the kings being there. Where did they go? To the Bedlam asylum to see the lunatics; to Hockley to witness feats of strength; to cock fights, concerts, taverns and eating places; to Punch’s Theatre for a performance of Powell’s Marionettes; to the upper end of St. Martin’s Lane to see a Company of what were called “Artificial Actors” [probably puppets], preceded by “The Admirable entertainments of a girl of five years old, dancing with swords.” [Ashton, pp.222-23]. Every time the celebrities emerged from their lodgings, a mass of people surged round them to gawk and to touch their clothes. As

previously noted, the frantic pace proved too much for one of the chiefs, he is thought to be Brant, who retired to his room, severely indisposed, thereby missing most of the later events of the visit. His malady proved more serious than at first appeared, for he died not many weeks after returning home.

The kings proved a popular subject for those who scribbled for a living. On street corners throughout the city vendors hawked sheets printed with ballads and doggerel celebrating the visitors. Few of these efforts rise above this kind of thing: "Four monarchs of worth/From their kingdoms set forth/Without hose or shoes to their feet/In order to know/How affairs did here go/And of things of importance to treat." (Bond 70) And so on, in this vein, for far too many stanzas. A recurring plot line had it that one of the kings falls in love with an English maiden, and who should join the lovers in holy matrimony but Queen Anne herself. Even Addison and Steele jumped on the bandwagon, using the chiefs' supposed naivete as a way of satirizing English manners and politics. But the ponderous satire of these essays rests uneasily on the pages of the *Spectator* and the

Tatler. It is probably safe to say that nothing of lasting literary value came from the visit of the Native Americans.

Some of the poetic effusions of the day were embellished with crude woodcut pictures of the chiefs. Of these, most were based on the official portraits, painted by John Verelst at the Queen's command. Verelst's small portraits show three of the visitors dressed in white, knee-length bathrobes, over which each wears a scarlet cloak to the floor. The open bathrobes reveal more copper-colored chest than Anglo Saxons were accustomed to see. The fourth portrait depicts the ranking chief, Hendrick, decked out in the finery, already described, that he wore at the presentation ceremony. After the portraits were completed, copies in mezzotint were made and were offered for sale. A smaller version, head and shoulders only, on one sheet, allowed the portraits to be enjoyed by the less affluent public. Examples of the prints survive, though today they are rare and valuable. The paintings themselves were first housed in Kensington Palace, later at Hampton Court. In 1977 the British government gave them to Canada, and

as recently as 2008-2009 they came to Washington on loan, and could be seen at the Smithsonian.

Eventually, all parties come to an end, and England's five-week gala for the four red kings was no exception. The guests of honor said their official good-byes on May 3rd, 1710, then travelled by way of Hampton Court and Windsor back down to Portsmouth on the south coast. Here, on board the HMS *Dragon*, they opened their farewell presents, gifts from the English government. A marvelous miscellany, designed to gladden the heart of any backwoods chieftain, it included: a variety of brass kettles, three dozen looking glasses, six kinds of knives, 43 linen shirts, two dozen large scissors and two dozen small scissors, tobacco boxes, two gross of colored glass necklaces, one gross of other necklaces, razors, two kinds of combs, four hundred pounds of gunpowder, ten pounds of vermilion, a picture of Queen Anne, and for each of them a hat, a gun, a sword, and a pair of pistols, together with a trunk to pack them in .

The HMS *Dragon*, with the four k and their chaperones, set sail from England on the 8th of May, 1710. It arrived safely in Boston on July 15.

So what was the result, if any, of this strange diplomatic mission? Suffice it to say, it was not the hoped-for conquest of Canada

The Admiralty did, in fact, send ships and soldiers to North America in the fall of 1710, but so few of both, that Francis Nicholson was forced to curtail his military objectives drastically. Instead of setting out to take the whole of Canada, he now set himself a more modest goal: taking just its eastern province. In this he was successful, neatly plucking Acadia from the rest of French Canada, and adding it to England's bag of overseas prizes. The name of the province was changed from Acadia to Nova Scotia, and its principal town, previously known as Port Royale under the French, became Annapolis Royal in honor of the English queen.

The following year, 1711, a larger force tried to carry out the much discussed two-pronged strategy: attacking Montreal and Quebec at roughly the same time. But it proved unavailing, especially the effort to take the great citadel at Quebec. And then, two years later, hostilities between the French and English were brought to a close (at least for a time) by the Peace of Utrecht. It wasn't

until 1759, more than forty years later, that Britain, joined by her colonies, and her Native American allies, succeeded in wresting Canada from the French. But that story, and the story of the curious little man named General James Wolfe who made it all happen, must be saved for another time.

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