

# QUEEN ANNE'S GIFT OF SILVER TO THE ONONDAGA INDIAN CHAPEL

JOSCELYN GODWIN,  
assisted by E CONSTANCE POWELL



Fig 1 Relevant sites in New York State.  
(Map by Ariel Godwin)

trade and traffic between the hinterland, with its inexhaustible natural resources, and the coastal cities, with their growing populations and potential for transatlantic trade. The main resources at the time were forest products (timber, potash, resin) and animal furs, especially beaver, used throughout Europe for making felt hats. The Mohawk region also separated the British colonies of North America from the French colony of Canada at a time of bitter rivalry between the two empires for control of the New World.

The original inhabitants of the region were the Iroquois, a confederacy of native Americans consisting of five 'nations' or tribes. In order from west to east and from Niagara to the Hudson they were the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk; joined in 1722 by the small Tuscarora tribe. The Onondagas occupied a central position, both geographically (near modern Syracuse) and as the seat of the 'council fire' at which collective decisions were taken.

Both the French and British vied for the Indian trade, exchanging cheap manufactured goods and alcohol for valuable furs, and for the Indians' assistance, or at least neutrality, in a long series of wars. For half a century the French had been sending missionaries to convert the Iroquois to the Catholic faith and to ally them with Canada. Faced with the alarming prospect of a chain of French forts across Iroquois country the British called a council with the Five Nations at Onondaga; on 1 and 2 May 1699 they heard their complaints that they neither protected the Indians against the French and rival tribes, nor sent missionaries to them.<sup>1</sup>

*Silver Studies*, *The Journal of the Silver Society*, no 28 (2012, pp 24-33) carried an article by Lauretta Harris and Tinker McKay: 'Chapel Plate for Nova Scotia'. Besides its chief subject, it discussed and illustrated the silver communion set given by Queen Anne to the Mohawk Indian chapel in 1712, and mentioned in passing her similar gift to the Onondaga chapel. The present article chiefly concerns the latter.

## Background

The geopolitical background essential to this history is as follows [Fig 1]. The Appalachian mountain chain effectively closes the north-east coast of the United States from parts west. The only watercourse through the mountains is the Mohawk River, which begins near Lake Ontario and joins the Hudson River north of Albany, the capital of New York State. Whoever controlled this waterway controlled the flow of

<sup>1</sup> Joshua V H Clark, *Onondaga; or Reminiscences of Earlier and Later Times*, Syracuse, 1849, vol 1, pp 286-96.

- 2 The entire text is in John Wolfe Lydekker, *The Faithful Mohawks*, Cambridge, 1938, p 9.
- 3 Joshua V H Clark, op cit, see note 1, p 212, citing *London Documents*, 1700.
- 4 Richmond P Bond, *Queen Anne's American Kings*, Oxford, 1952, p 34.
- 5 The best documented accounts are Lydekker's, op cit, see note 2, based on the archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and Bond's, *ibid*, based on government documents.
- 6 Richmond P Bond, op cit, see note 4, p 39, disposes of the legend that there were originally five chiefs, one of whom died on the voyage.

On 25 October 1700 the Earl of Bellamont, Governor of New York, wrote to the Lords of Trade and Plantations about the problem. His proposal was approved and forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he requested

some Ministers of the Church of England to instruct the Five Nations of Indians on the Frontiers of New York and prevent their being practis'd upon by French Priests and Jesuits . . .<sup>2</sup>

In 1701 William III gave £500 to build a fort in Onondaga country and £800 for presents to the Indians; he is said to have sent over plate and furniture for a chapel but I have not found any corroboration for this.<sup>3</sup> The Indians, in return, signed over 800 square miles (2,072 square km) of their hunting grounds but no chapel was built for the Onondagas either then or later. This omission would have consequences that continue to the present day.

In 1708 the colonists set out plans for a major attack on Canada which were sanctioned on 1 March 1709 by the British government who also promised to send a large fleet in their support. As soon as the news arrived in America, forces were gathered and placed strategically, ready to go into action as soon as the fleet appeared. They waited all summer but no fleet came. Finally in October a curt letter arrived. Sorry, it said, but Queen Anne had decided to send the fleet to the Spanish peninsular instead.<sup>4</sup>

#### **The appeal to Queen Anne**

After this disappointment the colonial leaders devised a publicity stunt. They would send a representative directly to the Queen, accompanied by Indian

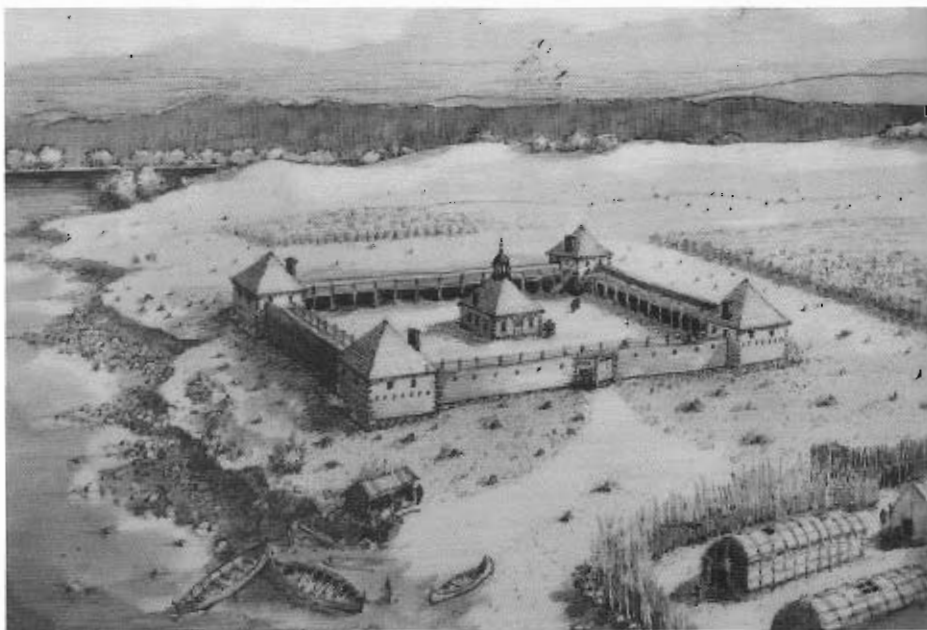
sachems or chiefs. This would show the English that the Indians were their friends and could be counted upon to help beat the French. It would also impress the Indians and sway them toward the English side.

The tale of the Indians' visit in the spring of 1710 has often been told.<sup>5</sup> Pieter Schuyler, former Mayor of Albany, chose three chiefs from the Mohawks and one from the Mahicans (an Algonquin tribe).<sup>6</sup> Although the tribes were anything but monarchic and only numbered in the hundreds the chiefs were promoted for the occasion as 'kings'. For all of April and half of May they were fêted by high society, shown Britain's armed might at Greenwich, Woolwich and Spithead, taken to cock-fights and the theatre, and painted by John Verelst. Despite the intrusive curiosity shown by high and low alike, the Indian chiefs conducted themselves with perfect decorum, and on 19 April had an audience with the Queen at her court at St James's Palace.

The Queen was charmed and responded generously: she decreed that the Mohawks and the Onondagas should each have a fort, a well furnished chapel, and a house and stipend for a missionary. The chiefs returned laden with presents including three dozen looking-glasses, one gross of large jew's-harps, 400lb of gunpowder, and a magic lantern. On 7 August 1710 Sir Robert Hunter, the Governor of New York, held a conference in Albany with the chiefs of the Five Nations, including the four sachems, and gave them further presents. A contract for the Mohawks' fort and chapel was signed with five Dutch carpenters from Schenectady and work began towards the end of 1711.

Fig 2 Fort Hunter, enclosing the Mohawk chapel (reconstruction), 1712.

(From display case at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site)



The Mohawk chapel was situated where the Schoharie creek flows into the Mohawk River. It was surrounded by a fort, at first called the Queen's Fort and later Fort Hunter [Fig 2]. Harris and McKay quote the order of 10 April 1712 for the communion silver that was to be sent to each chapel:

One Silver Chalice, a Patten and a small flagon,

but the gift seems to have multiplied like the loaves and fishes. In the delivery note of 20 May 1712 the Mohawks alone were given six pieces: two flagons, one alms basin, one salver, one chalice, and one paten.<sup>7</sup> Max Reid, writing in 1901, counted seven: two flagons, two chalices, two patens, and one alms basin.<sup>8</sup> The corresponding set given to the Onondagas comprised six pieces: two large flagons, one chalice, a large and a small footed paten, and an alms dish. So instead of the intended six there were thirteen pieces of communion plate in all in Queen Anne's gift.

### The Mohawk chapel silver

The history of the Mohawk tribe's communion service during the Revolutionary war is worth a short digression. The Rev Henry Stuart, a giant of a man who plays an important part in this story, arrived at Fort Hunter in 1770 to find the chapel in a derelict state of repair. Sir William Johnson, a great landowner and Commissioner for Indian Affairs, paid for a new floor, pulpit, desk, communion table, windows, belfry, and a bell. Stuart held two Sunday services, one for European residents and one for Mohawk converts; by July he could report to his patron in London, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, that 100 Indians attended his Sunday evening service (but that he got paid nothing for it as they were very poor), and on Whitsunday there were fourteen Indian and thirteen white communicants,<sup>9</sup> presumably using Queen Anne's gift.

When the Revolutionary war came to the Mohawk valley legend has it that the

<sup>7</sup> See both notes in Laurretta Harris and Tinker McKay, 'Chapel Plate for Nova Scotia,' *Silver Studies, the Journal of the Silver Society*, no 28, 2012, p 32.

<sup>8</sup> W Max Reid, *The Mohawk Valley, Its Legends and Its History*, New York, 1901, p 97.

<sup>9</sup> John Wolfe Lydekker, *op cit*, see note 2, pp 130-131.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk: The French & Indian War & American Revolution on New York's Frontier*, Hensonville, 2009, p 243.

<sup>11</sup> John Wolfe Lydekker, *op cit*, see note 2, p 165.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p 174.

<sup>13</sup> Charles M Johnston (ed), *The Valley of the Six Nations. A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River*, Toronto, 1964, p 235: Abbreviations spelt out.

communion plate was buried beneath the dirt floor [sic] of the Fort Hunter chapel<sup>10</sup> and that, after the war, some Mohawks came secretly to dig it up and bear it back over the Canadian border. It is a good story but open to doubt. During the war Stuart wrote long reports describing the desecration of the chapel, his maltreatment by the 'Patriots' and his perilous journey to safety in Canada. In a letter of 13 October 1781 he wrote from Montreal:

I left the Books belonging to the Mission with a Friend in Schenectady, as also the Church Plate, not thinking it safe to risque it with my own Baggage, not being even under the Protection of a Flag.<sup>11</sup>

By July 1783, with the war almost at an end, the Society's Journal recorded Stuart's report that:

the Plate belonging to the Mohawk Chapel is yet safe; as also the Furniture of the Reading-Desk and Communion Table. The Pulpit-Covering was stolen, when the Church was plundered. Neither is the Society's Farm at Fort-Hunter considered by the State as forfeited. The Plate and Books belonging to the Mission he has thought proper to order to be sent to Montreal, by the first safe conveyance; and waits for the directions of the Society, as to the rents of the Farm.<sup>12</sup>

Once arrived in Canada John Stuart settled with some of the Mohawk exiles at the Bay of Quinte, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, first called Tyendinaga and now Desoronto, after their chief. A larger party of Mohawks, led by Joseph Brant, settled on Grand River, between Lakes Ontario and Erie in present-day Brantford, and built a

small church. Apparently the Desoronto Mohawks held on to Queen Anne's gift, for we find Daniel Claus, Deputy Agent for the Six Nations, writing on 23 April 1787 to Under-Secretary of State Evan Nepean in London:

"Capt" Brant at his Departure from home requested me to represent to you that as Government was graciously disposed to encourage their settlements in religious as well as in other Matters, he could wish to have in his new Church such Ornaments as were over the Altar of the Church of Fort Hunter on the Mohawk River sent there by her Majesty Queen Ann of glorious Memory by the first Indian Missionary part of them were lost or destroyed by the Americans during the Rebellion. The Ornaments consisted of two Tables painted black wrote upon in gold Letters The Lords prayer, Creed & Ten Commandments, a purple Altar or Pulpit Cloth with the usual Embroidery in gold and a Communion Service of solid plate; the two latter articles were saved by the Missionary having them at his house among his Effects. But their having since the peace formed two Settlements as above mentioned and his Brants Settlement having no Claim [to] the Ornaments which belonged to Fort Hunter; His Church which was built at the Expense of Government was entirely destitute of such ornaments And therefore would be extremely happy to have it decently ornamented as it would be greatly pleasing to the Congregation as well as striking the Visiting Neighbouring Indians with awe and respect.<sup>13</sup>



Fig 3 The Mohawk chapel silver.  
(From display case at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site)

The answer was presumably negative. In the summer of 1788 Stuart finally went to Grand River, taking with him at least some of the plate and church furnishings from Fort Hunter.<sup>14</sup> An arrangement was made to divide Queen Anne's gift between the two Mohawk chapels in Canada. In 1836 a visitor reported:

The Mohawk Indians have preserved the communion plate given to them by Queen Anne, part of which is kept at the Mohawk village, and the remaining portion at the Mohawk settlement, in the Bay of Quinte.<sup>15</sup>

Max Reid, writing in 1901, is more specific:

To the Grand River band was given the alms basin and one each of the other pieces, also a large Bible. The Indians at the Bay of Quinte have a flagon, paten, and chalice [Fig 3].<sup>16</sup>

The chapel at Fort Hunter stood until 1820 when it was demolished to make

way for the Erie canal: the definitive solution to the problem of traffic between the hinterland and the coast. All that remains today of Queen Anne's gifts is the parsonage, built by the Rev William Adams in 1734,<sup>17</sup> and as such the earliest building in the Mohawk valley [Fig 4], and of course the silver which remains in the custody of the Mohawks and is used in their churches in Canada to the present day.

#### The Onondaga chapel silver

The Onondaga communion service had a very different destiny.

Each piece bears the Royal arms, the cipher AR, and is inscribed:

The Gift of Her Majesty Ann. by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. and of Her Plantations, in North America, Queen to Her Indian Chappel of the Onondawagus.

14 John Wolfe Lydekker, *op cit*, see note 2, p 186.

15 Charles M Johnston, *op cit*, see note 13, p 263, quoting Thomas Rolph, *A Brief Account of Upper Canada*, Dundas, 1836.

16 W Max Reid, *op cit*, see note 8, p 97. Photographs of the Grand Bay/Brantford set of four pieces are in Reid, p 95, and in Lydekker, *op cit* p 31. The Bay of Quinte/Desoto set of three pieces is illustrated in a flyer issued in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth II's visit on 9 October, 2002. (Courtesy of St Peter's Church Archives, Albany.)

17 A New York State historical marker dates the house to 1712. It was possibly built on an earlier foundation as the date 1712 appears on an arch in the basement, according to John J Vrooman, *Forts and Firesides in the Mohawk Country*, Philadelphia, 1943, p 102.

<sup>18</sup> Later reports of the inscription do not mention an engraved date. Lacking access to the Mohawk silver or to adequate photographs, the matter remains open.

<sup>19</sup> Joshua V H Clark, *op cit*, see note 1, vol I, pp 214-15.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication, 19 October 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Joshua V H Clark, *op cit*, see note 1, vol I, p 295.

Joshua Clark, the early historian of Onondaga, wrote:

By this [the inscription on the pieces], it would seem, that the good Queen contemplated the erection of a chapel in the Onondaga country, and the furnishing it with a suitable communion service; and why the plan was broken up, or the valuable plate designed for it, received another destination, is now probably past explanation, unless it be the following, which we have presumed. On the plate presented to the Mohawks, the date is 1712.<sup>18</sup> The two sets were undoubtedly ordered at this time. But as yet, there had been no chapel erected for the Onondagas and the probability is, the date was omitted at the period of its manufacture, to be engraved at the time it should be proper to present it to this people. And it is highly probable that the missionary

intrusted with its care, was instructed also to effect the building of the chapel. Frequent mention is made in the London Documents, of the anxiety of the Home Government to effect that object. St. Peters was organised in 1716, and as the chapel for the Onondagas was not built as was anticipated, this valuable memento of a sovereign's kindness was lost to them and retained at Albany.<sup>19</sup>

Evelyn Constance Powell, archivist of St Peter's Church, Albany suggests that it was a mistake on Governor Hunter's part not to have ascertained the monarch's alternative wishes, should no chapel be built for the Onondagas, for this has remained a matter of contention to this day.<sup>20</sup> Just as Harris and McKay's article on the Nova Scotia silver sought to clarify a vexed question of ownership, so this study will explain the complex history of claims to the Onondaga communion service. Three entities are involved: St Peter's Church, the Onondaga nation, and the Diocese of Central New York. I will take them in turn.

### The Guardians

Whatever the prospects presented to Queen Anne, the hopes of building a chapel and installing a missionary in the Onondagas' territory were not realistic. The tribe was probably chosen because it held the council fire for the whole Iroquois confederacy but, unlike the Mohawk valley, long settled by Dutch, German, and British immigrants, Onondaga was deep in Indian territory and 150 miles (241km) from Albany. A survey of 1700 had already reported that there was no suitable place for a fort there.<sup>21</sup> This is why, when the

Fig 4 Queen Anne's parsonage, near Fort Hunter, 1734.





Fig 5 The first St Peter's Church, Albany, 1716, with steeple, 1751, and Fort Frederick. From a nineteenth-century engraving in St Peter's Episcopal Church.

Queen's gift arrived, Sir Robert Hunter took it into his care, keeping it at Fort Frederick at Albany.

In 1712 an Anglican congregation was formed in Albany and in 1714 the Crown made a grant of land beneath the fort for a church: the first Anglican church north of New York City and west of the Hudson river. The parchment grant shows Queen Anne holding the orb and sceptre, with two Indians kneeling before her *bearing gifts of beaver and wampum*. A stone church, funded by Governor Hunter and public subscription, was opened in 1716 and dedicated to St Peter [Fig 5]. For a while the silver dropped out of sight until, on 15 May 1739, the church

requested from the Lieutenant Governor, George Clarke,

several pieces or mensels  
[=tableware] of English wrought  
plate,

to be delivered on request back to Clarke, his heirs or successors. On 29 August 1740 the Rev Henry Barkley (or Barclay) gave a bond for £150 for its safekeeping and its transfer was authorised.<sup>22</sup> In 1768 George III granted a charter of incorporation to the parish of St Peter's: a status confirmed after the American Revolution.

St Peter's Church was rebuilt twice by distinguished American architects: in 1802 by Philip Hooker in Federalist style (American Georgian) and in 1857 by Richard Upjohn, making it one of the first and finest Gothic Revival churches in the USA [Fig 6].<sup>23</sup> The silver has remained in its keeping through all these

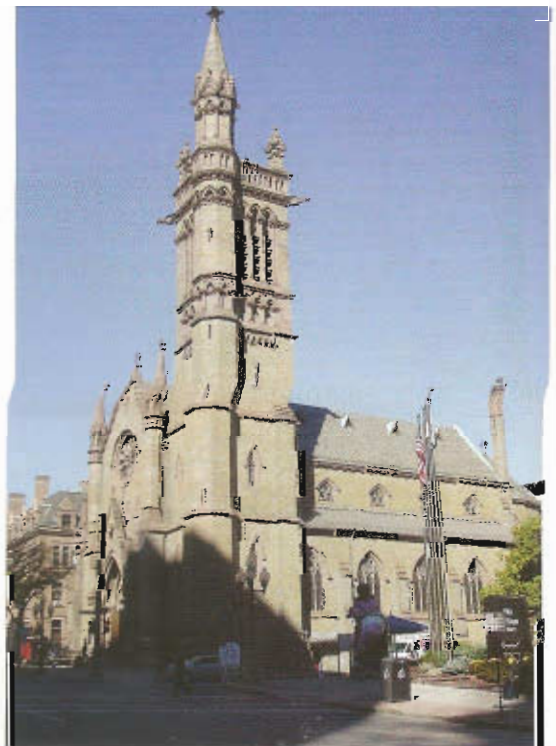


Fig 6 The third St Peter's Church, Albany, 1857; the tower 1876.

<sup>22</sup> *Syracuse Post Standard*, 22 March 1944.

<sup>23</sup> Its decorations include a window designed by Edward Burne-Jones and made by the William Morris Company in 1880

24 Richard Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk*, New York, 2010, pp 271-272.

changes and remains the object of considerable pride. After the Second World War a war memorial at the north-west end incorporated a glass-fronted cabinet for its display.

### The Claimants

The Onondagas had generally been on the British side during the Revolutionary war and, like the Mohawks, they paid a heavy price for their loyalty. On 19 April 1779 the rebel Colonel Goose van Schaick led a punitive expedition deep into the Iroquois territory and destroyed their village. In his book, *The Bloody Mohawk*, Richard Berleth wrote:

In a few furious moments, one of the most sacred sites of Iroquoian culture was desecrated and ruined.<sup>24</sup>

The Iroquoian confederacy never recovered its council fire or its integrity. To prevent any future united movement on the part of the Indians those tribes left in New York State were placed in widely separated reservations. The Onondagas now occupy about 7,300 acres (2,954 hectares) south of Syracuse. Since the devastation of 1779 they have never been numerous: the population at the last census (2010) was 468.

In the nineteenth century Christian missionaries had to compete not only with each other but with a resurgence of the native religion. In 1799 a chief of the Seneca tribe named Handsome Lake, whose malaise and alcoholism reflected the depressed state of his people, had a series of visions: he was taken up to heaven where he met Jesus and George Washington, amongst others. The message he brought back was that the Indians should not follow the white man's ways (or drink his liquor) but hold to their own traditions and faith: whereas white men had *their* Gospel, Indians now had the *Gaiwi'io* or 'Good Word.' Handsome Lake's preaching caused a spiritual revival as powerful as that which was simultaneously gripping Christian America. He died in 1815 during a visit to the Onondaga reservation and is buried there.

In view of this it is quite surprising that an Episcopal mission started on the reservation in 1816, apparently with



Fig 7 The Church of the Good Shepherd among the Onondagas, near Syracuse, 1870.

some success.<sup>25</sup> When a new diocese was founded for Central New York, the first bishop, Frederic Dan Huntington, immediately turned his attention to the mission. On taking office in 1869 he saw to the repair of its wooden building and added a chancel and a belfry. It was consecrated in 1870 as the Church of the Good Shepherd among the Onondagas, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places [Fig 7].<sup>26</sup> A monthly newsletter dating from the end of the century lists the Sunday services conducted by the Rev William Doane Manross: matins at 10:30, Holy Eucharist at 11:00, Sunday school at 3:30, evensong and address at 4:00. On Rogation Sunday 1899, in proper Anglican style, they 'beat the bounds' of the parish.<sup>27</sup>

The periodic attempts of the Onondaga Christians to obtain the Queen Anne silver have given rise to the 'tomahawk incident' or legend, as I suspect it to be because of its stereotyping and recurrent character. The plainest version is that sometime after 1740, when a deputation of Onondagas went to Albany to claim the silver,

Crown officials gave them a rather heathenish reception; it enraged the Onondagas to such an extent that one of them made vigorous protest with his tomahawk.<sup>28</sup>

The *Albany Times Union* twice printed a more colourful version, dating it to 1803:

An unknown Onondaga warrior threw a tomahawk at St Peter's Rector Frederick Beasley 181 years ago, missing the cleric's head.<sup>29</sup>

Carlyle Adams, a qualified historian, was responsible for the most elaborate version, dating it to 1876:

In that year a party of Onondaga braves from up-state New York came to Albany in full war regalia and entered the rectory of St. Peter's to demand what they believed to be their silver . . . After the request was denied one of the Indians threw a tomahawk which was imbedded in the wall just above the chair where [the rector's wife] Mrs. Battershall sat.<sup>30</sup>

To return to established facts: in 1896 the Rev Manross petitioned St Peter's to release the communion set for the Indians' use. He was refused, and the arguments continued for several years, although somewhat palliated in 1912 when the Women's Auxiliary of the diocese of Central New York presented the mission with a gilded silver communion set costing \$125.<sup>31</sup>

The Church of the Good Shepherd continued to hold services, perform baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials up to 1952.<sup>32</sup> The mission then lapsed for five years and the building was vandalised. In 1958 the Church Army, an enthusiastic youth organisation, moved in to repair and revitalise it. By the time of its centenary celebrations in 1968, it boasted a choir of thirty-two and seventeen 'acolytes' who read morning and evening prayer in the absence of the priest.<sup>33</sup> Over the next decades membership declined to the point where the church was no longer self-supporting and the need for repairs was overwhelming; in November 2013 the Board of the Diocese decided to end the ministry.<sup>34</sup>

### The Settlement

We turn now to the third player in this drama, the diocese of Central New York. The question of the ownership of Queen Anne's gift resurfaced in the

25 Hugh R Jones, 'Notes on Queen Anne's Gift of a Silver Communion to Her Indian Chappel of the Onondawgus,' 1 December 1988. Jones was a lawyer and Chancellor of the Diocese of Central New York. He does not state his source. Typescript in the archives of the Diocese of Central New York.

26 NRHP 97000113, added 8 May 1997.

27 *Te-Ho-Ti-Ka-Lan-Te, Church of the Good Shepherd*, vol 2/3, June 1899. Archives of the Diocese of Central New York.

28 Hugh R Jones, op cit, see note 25.

29 *Albany Times Union*, 23 September 1984. The newspaper repeated the story on 29 April 1989.

30 Carlyle Adams, 'Historic Communion Service in Use Today at St. Peter's', *Albany Times Union*, undated clipping in St Peter's Church Archives.

31 Multiply this sum by about 100 to reflect a century's depreciation of the dollar.

32 Register from 1932-1952, in Diocesan Archives.

33 100th Anniversary 1868-1968 of Church of the Good Shepherd, Onondaga Indian Reservation, Nedrow, New York. Booklet in Diocesan Archives.

34 Joan Green, Diocesan Archivist, to the author, 4 January 2018. When I visited the church on 25 October 2017 I found it still bearing its nameboard but being used for storage and accommodation. I do not know what has become of the silver-gilt communion set.

35 Bishop Whitaker to Hugh R Jones, attorney and Chancellor of the Diocese of Central New York, 2 January 1985. Diocesan Archives, citing *Albany Times Union*, 23 September 1984.

36 Copy in Diocesan Archives, dated 22 June 1988. *My italics*.

37 *Syracuse Post Standard*, 31 August 1990.

38 Robert E. Eggenschiller to Bishop Whitaker, undated letter received 4 May 1990: "As per our discussion, the replica set will be the one we will bring to Syracuse in September 1990." Diocesan Archives. The reason seems to have been the high cost of security, transportation and insurance of the originals.

39 Walton W Battershall and Joseph Hooper, *A History of St. Peter's Church in the City of Albany*, Albany, 1900, p 493.

1980s in a climate of Indian claims on lands said to have been illegally taken from them in the eighteenth century. In 1984 Bishop O'Kelley Whitaker visited the Church of the Good Shepherd to hear the concerns of the members of the vestry that the silver should be in their hands. He was told that with the growth of a Native American identity, the Longhouse, i.e. the tribe's leaders, looked down on Christian Indians, and that possession of this gift would give the latter needed prestige.<sup>35</sup> In the following year, 1985, the Episcopal Church canonised the first Native American in its calendar of saints: David Pendleton Oakerhater (O-kuh-ha-tah) (circa 1847-1931), who had been ordained a deacon in Grace Church, Syracuse in 1881. The idea arose among the church dignitaries that to celebrate his day, the 1 September, the Queen Anne silver should be brought to the Church of the Good Shepherd and then to St Paul's Cathedral, Syracuse. At the Diocesan convention of 1988 it was even resolved:

That the Diocese of Central New York send word to the Diocese of Albany and St. Peter's Church to thank them for their caretaking, and be it further RESOLVED, That this 119th Convention encourage resumption and continuation of conversation between the Bishops of Central New York and Albany with respect to *transfer to the Onondagas of the Communion set intended for them by Queen Anne with delivery to the Diocese of Central New York for safekeeping*.<sup>36</sup>

This was too much to ask. St Peter's consented in principle to a twenty-four hour loan for the Oakerhater commemoration on 1 September 1990, of the Queen Anne silver 'or the

duplicates' (see below). The communion set would be transported under armed guard from Albany to Syracuse Cathedral, but not to the Church of the Good Shepherd.<sup>37</sup> Indian reservations have a somewhat special legal status and there was a fear that the silver might never come back.

For a year the arrangements occupied the highest levels of the Episcopal Church, their lawyers, an insurance company (which quoted a value of \$450,000), and the local Sheriff's department. The churches wanted the emphasis to be on the commemoration of David Oakerhater, but naturally the newspapers of both Syracuse and Albany were more taken with the idea of Indians waiting 300 years for their silver. In the event only four pieces were loaned and these were the replicas mentioned below.<sup>38</sup> One of the positive results was that the history of the Queen Anne silver was thoroughly researched by the Hon Hugh R Jones, an attorney and Chancellor of the Diocese of Central New York; out of this came the final legal opinion and a sort of quietus on the subject.

The sticking-point was that Queen Anne specifically gave the silver, as the inscriptions state, not to the Onondagas as such but to 'her Indian Chappel of the Onondawgus,' which has never existed. As early as the 1890s the Hon Orlando Meads had written an open letter to the Rector, Walton W Battershall, stating the position:

I make a case that it was never intended as a gift for the Onondagas as a tribe, but part of the necessary outfitting of a Royal chapel.<sup>39</sup>

In the booklet available in St Peter's, a former Rector concluded:



Fig 8 Replicas of the Onondaga chapel silver, circa 1890. 1980

### Originals and replicas

In style the Onondaga chapel silver closely resembles the Nova Scotia plate apart from the fact that the lids of the flagons are more domed and the knobs of the chalices more compressed. The originals are not exhibited in St Peter's. The church owns and displays replicas of seven pieces: including a pair of chalices whereas the original gift included only one [Figs 8 and 9]. The church archives hold no record or memorandum of when this replica set was made, by whom, or how it was paid for. They are minutely faithful to the originals both in form and in the engraving of the inscriptions, properly omitting only the English hallmarks; they lack any other marks whatsoever. They are in fact silver-plate and were made by J Wippell & Sons of Exeter. This firm of ecclesiastical outfitters, founded in

Fig 9 Replica of a chalice, circa 1890. 1980



The Queen could not have envisioned the eventual independence of the American colonies and the founding of the Church of the Good Shephard [sic] of the Onondaga in the 1870s can in no way be construed as the rightful heir to a gift given by a foreign monarch some 160 years earlier for the purpose of securing religious and political allegiance to that foreign monarch, now long dead, and the Empire she ruled ... In its early history, and at the time of Queen Anne's sending of the communion silver, St. Peter's was the Royal Chapel to the local inhabitants and to the Onondagas and other Native American tribes who lived and converged on the Albany area.<sup>40</sup>

40 Rev Canon Robert E. Eggenschiller, 'The Queen Anne Silver Communion Service.' Undated booklet.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.wippell.com/Special-pages/Search-Results.aspx?searchtext=queen+anne&searchmode=anyword> Accessed 6 January 2018.

<sup>42</sup> William Nelson Fenton, *Iroquois Journey: An Anthropologist Remembers*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 2007, pp 116-17. Borrowing the pieces at Tyendanege "proved too complicated even to attempt."

<sup>43</sup> *Albany Daily Gazette*, 26 February 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur G Grimwade, *London Goldsmiths 1697-1837, their Marks & Lives*, 3rd ed, London, 1990, no 736.

Fig 10 The Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.



1789, currently advertises such replicas for sale, illustrating the Onondaga chapel pieces on its website and stating that they were made for St Peter's, adding that there would be an extra charge for engraving.<sup>41</sup>

It seems that the originals have never left Albany since they were deposited there, a remarkable feat of preservation on the part of St Peter's Church, although they have occasionally been lent for exhibitions within the city. In 2007 William Nelson Fenton, a member of the church, succeeded in uniting the Onondaga with the Mohawk chapel silver from Brantford, for an exhibition in the New York State Museum on the visit of the Four Chiefs to London.<sup>42</sup> The Onondaga chapel silver was shown at the Albany Institute



Fig 11 Chalice and flagons from the Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.

of History and Art in an exhibition: 'St Peter's Church: 300 Years of History and Art' (3 March- 27 May 2012).<sup>43</sup> They otherwise repose in a bank vault.

On 17 May 2018 I had the privilege of viewing and handling the original communion service [Figs 10 to 23]; apart from some wear to the marks due to cleaning, the pieces are in virtually mint condition. There are no dents and the engraving on the alms dish was as crisp as if in 300 years no coins had ever been dropped in it. Since the Britannia standard was in force at the time of their making, the pieces all bear the Britannia mark and the leopard's head erased. The date letter is Q for 1711-12 and the maker's mark is G enclosing A, for Francis Garthorne.<sup>44</sup> There is also a second, unmarked chalice, engraved 'St Peters Church Albany 1834': evidently an early replica made to match the pair of flagons.



Fig 12 Flagon, from the Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.

### Chalices and communion cups

The basic communion set of Queen Anne's gifts comprised three pieces: flagon, chalice and paten (see below); the small patens also did duty as covers for the chalices. The Onondaga chapel silver, however, has both a large paten for the host, engraved on the upper surface, and a small one, engraved on what might seem the underside, showing that it was primarily intended to cover a chalice, with its foot uppermost.

Ecclesiologists may have noticed and questioned the word 'chalice' used for what they would term 'communion cup'. Strictly speaking a chalice is a pre-Reformation design with a broad and often sexafoil base, a prominent knop, and a comparatively small bowl for the wine, since only the priest drank from it. These vessels were banished at the Reformation together with the theology that went with them, and the laity was allowed to participate in the 'Lord's Supper' in both kinds. This required larger vessels for wine and water, supplied from the flagons that are the glory of post-Reformation communion silver.

The word 'chalice', present together with 'cup' in the Prayer Book of 1548/49, was absent from the 1552 revision,<sup>45</sup> only to return in 1662 after the restoration of the monarchy. By 1700, as we have seen from the documents cited above concerning Queen Anne's gift, the once banished word was again in common parlance. The relevance to the Indian silver is that the Anglican Church in New York had to compete with the French Canadian Catholics on the one hand, and the New England Calvinists on the other. Both were eager to draw the Indians into their fold. The silver given to the tribes (and to American churches: see below) was conspicuously Anglican. E Alfred Jones remarked on the uniformity of such communion cups or chalices:

As will be observed, they were all plain and have bell-shaped bodies supported on stems which are in most cases divided by knops or mouldings of different sizes and

Fig 13 Alms dish, from the Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.  
(Photograph: St Peter's Church Archives)



Fig 14 Detail of the Royal arms on the alms dish [Fig 13].



45 See *The Two Liturgies*, A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552, with other Documents, London, 1844.

- 46 E Alfred Jones, *The Old Silver of American Churches*, Letchworth, 1913, p xlix.
- 47 See George Munson Curtis, *Early Silver of Connecticut and its Makers*, Meriden, 1913, for photographs of some of these remarkable church collections.
- 48 Arthur G Grimwade, op cit, see note 44, no 3570.
- 49 See Sir Charles Jackson, *English Goldsmiths and their Marks*, 3rd ed, Woodbridge, 1989, p 139.



Fig 15 Above: Paten, from the Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.

while the inscription and the royal arms advertised the monarch as head of the church.

#### Comparable vessels in American churches

Francis Garthorne's work, along with that of his relative George Garthorne, is represented in America by other royal gifts. We rely here on the encyclopedic work of E Alfred Jones, already cited.

Annapolis parish, Maryland, has a communion set given by William and Mary. The flagon is marked with Francis Garthorne's sterling mark, FG above a rosette,<sup>48</sup> with the date mark for 1695-96; the remainder of the service is of the same year, marked GG above a pellet for George Garthorne.<sup>49</sup>

Christ Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts has a chalice, small paten and a flagon presented by the same monarchs, marked by Francis Garthorne in 1694-95.

In Trinity Church, New York City, Francis Garthorne was responsible for both the William and Mary communion service (chalice, paten and flagon of



Fig 16 Left: Detail of the engraving of the paten [Fig 15].

width. The numerous silver services of plate given by the English sovereigns, William and Mary, queen Anne, George II and III, to the Colonial churches of America, have chalices of the kind just mentioned.<sup>46</sup>

The standardised vessel exemplified an Anglican compromise: it resembled neither the traditional Catholic form, nor the mish-mash of domestic beakers, mugs, tankards and caudle cups used by the Congregationalists,<sup>47</sup>

Fig 17 Cover of the chalice, from the Onondaga chapel silver, Britannia standard, London, 1711-12, maker's mark of Francis Garthorne.



Fig 18 Detail of the marks on flagon [Fig 12].



Fig 19 Detail of the marks on flagon cover [Fig 12].



Fig 20 Detail of marks on cover of flagon [Fig 12].



1694-95) and the Queen Anne service which, like the two services given to the Indians, all bears his mark (see below).

Wycomico church, Northumberland, Virginia, has a chalice by Francis Garthorne of 1711-12: not a royal gift but bought with a legacy of £5 for the purchase of communion plate from Hancock Lee (1653-1709).

In closing it may be useful to list the other gifts made by Queen Anne to American churches, either directly, or through royal support of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Some of these churches proudly acknowledge their Queen Anne silver, using it on feast days and lending it for display but others are silent about it, probably for reasons of security, or because it seems out of character with

50 E Alfred Jones, *op cit*, see note 46, p xlix.



Fig 21 Detail of the marks on the alms dish  
[Fig 13].

their contemporary mission. E Alfred Jones wrote:

In addition to her gifts of silver services to Trinity church, New York, and Trinity church, Newport, queen Anne was the donor of nine chalices, all of one type, to American churches, the nine having been made by two London silversmiths, John Eastt [sic] and William Gibson.<sup>50</sup>

The eleven churches in question are as follows:

New Jersey: St Mary's, Burlington: chalice and small paten, William Gibson, 1705-6; St Peter's, Perth Amboy: chalice and small paten cover, William Gibson, 1705-6.

New York: St George's, Hempstead, Long Island: chalice and small paten, John East, 1708-9; Trinity Church, New York City: two chalices and small patens, two flagons, alms dish, Francis Garthorne, Britannia standard, undated; Christ Church, Rye, Long Island: chalice and small paten, John East, 1708-9;



Fig 22 Detail of the marks on the chalice cover  
[Fig 17].



Fig 23 Detail of the marks on the paten  
[Fig 15].

St Peter's, Westchester (now Bronx): chalice and small paten, John East, 1708-9.

Pennsylvania: St Paul's, Chester: chalice and small paten, William Gibson, 1705-6; Trinity Church, Oxford: chalice and small paten cover, William Gibson, 1705-6; Christ Church, Philadelphia: chalice, small paten and flagon, John East, 1707-8.

Rhode Island: Trinity Church, Newport: silver-gilt chalice and small paten, John Bodington, 1702-3. Gift of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; St Paul's, Wickford (formerly Old Narragansett church): chalice, small paten and flagon, William Gibson, 1706-7.

To which should be added some unconfirmed claimants:

New Jersey: Christ Church, Shrewsbury: chalice and paten, early eighteenth-century, unmarked. The church's website and other sources attribute them as a gift of Queen Anne of 1708.

New York: Grace Church, Jamaica, Long Island: chalice and small paten, John Wisdom(e), 1704-5. Gift of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Not mentioned in current sources.

St Andrew's, Richmond, Staten Island: two chalices and a paten, not mentioned by E Alfred Jones. The church's website attributes them as a gift of Queen Anne of 1712.

Maryland: Christ Church, Wayside (formerly Piccawaxon, now Newburg): chalice and paten, not mentioned by Jones or on the church's website.

Maryland Historic Sites Inventory, August 1978, states

Still in use by the church is its Queen Anne communion silver.

Of all these gifts from Queen Anne none, but the set at Trinity Church, Wall Street, equalled in generosity the communion services given to her Indian subjects and none, I imagine, carries with it such a fascinating burden of history and controversy as the Onondaga silver, destined for a chapel that was never built. There is something both noble and tragic about it: noble, in the restrained beauty of the articles themselves and their sacred purpose; tragic, as reminders of the cost at which the United States came into being.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Father Paul Hartt, Rector of St Peter's Episcopal Church, Albany, for granting access to the Queen Anne silver; to E Constance Powell, Archivist of the church, for her invaluable assistance and advice and to Joan Green, Archivist of the Diocese of Central New York, for making it possible to complete the later history of the Onondaga Chapel silver.

All photographs are by the Author unless otherwise credited.

*Joscelyn Godwin is Professor of Music Emeritus at Colgate University in New York State. His recent books include Upstate Cauldron: Eccentric Spiritual Movements in Early New York State and The Starlight Years: Love and War at Kelmscott Manor, 1940-1948. He is a member of the Silver Society and an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.*