

Gy-aut-wa-chia, the Cornplanter commonly known as Captain John O'Bail, was the son of a Dutch trader named John A'Beel and a Seneca woman. His English name was a corruption of A'Beel and led to the belief that his father was Irish. His father, John A'Beel, in his younger days resided near Albany, New York, and traded with the Indians residing between the Hudson River and Fort Niagara. He lived with a Seneca woman for some time. A son was born whom she named Gy-aut-wa-chia, The Cornplanter. Cornplanter was carefully cared for by his mother and eventually rose by his great ability to be war chief of the Senecas. As a boy he was with the French at Fort Dusquesne at the time of Braddock's defeat, and was probably the leader at Cherry Valley and Wyoming instead of Brant, to whom tradition and poetry have assigned that bad eminence. After the Revolution he became a lover of peace and a friend of the whites, and largely forfeited his influence with his own people by his efforts to keep them from extermination. Peace was the unpopular side, and Red Jacket, who was not a fighter but every inch a politician, espoused the war side with all his eloquence and thereby supplanted Cornplanter, though he did not defeat that wise leader's specific purpose. Instead of giving up in defeat Cornplanter became more persistent than ever for the bringing about of a peace treaty with the whites, and with that strong determination to win which marked his character through life, he started alone on foot through the wild, unbroken wilderness of Pennsylvania to the City of Philadelphia, then the seat of the newly formed national government, and completed a peace treaty with General George Washington. This treaty made possible the early settlement of northwestern Pennsylvania and western New York, and history makes no mention of where it was ever broken, either by the Indians or the whites. The Senecas at that time numbered thousands of people but Cornplanter held them in control, believing the peace treaty to be sacred and not simply "a scrap of paper" as the Kaiser regarded his treaty with Belgium.

In recognition of Cornplanter's great service the State of Pennsylvania gave him a tract of land on the Allegheny River, twelve miles above Warren, that has always been known as the Cornplanter Reservation. It was there late in 1834 or early in 1835 that he died and was buried. About thirty years afterwards the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania erected over the grave of this illustrious warrior who had proven himself to be a true and loyal friend of the whites at a time when every friend was needed, a marble monument on which is inscribed a brief history of his career. The monument can be plainly seen from the Pennsylvania Railroad as the train passes the Reservation, located on the other side of the River from the Railroad, between the towns of Kinzua and Corydon. Cornplanter was about one hundred years old at the time of his death. He had three sons, Henry, Charles and William. Henry was educated in England, but his career, after returning to this country to take up the work which his father had so much at heart---of teaching the Indians to adapt themselves to the ways of the white people---was a great disappointment to Cornplanter. Henry died when still young. After the death of Charles and William, the two other sons, Solomon O'Bail, son of Henry, succeeded to the ^{chieftainship} ~~chieftainship~~ though his functions were not very active.

In 1895 when Warren held its Centennial Celebration, Solomon O'Bail, then about 81 years old, headed a delegation of over three hundred Seneca Indians that were the guests of Warren for three days and four nights, taking part in the greatest celebration Warren ever held. They were camped on the grounds in 42 tepees made for the occasion in true Indian fashion. Solomon O'Bail will be remembered by many who saw him at that time as a venerable, dignified, old gentleman, powerful in appearance, and it was the opinion of many that had the Seneca nation again engaged in war he might have led them with ability and courage.

Only once do I find mention made of Cornplanter meeting his father, and that is on page 126-128 of the book entitled "The Life of Mary Jemison, the White Woman of the Genesee" told by herself at

the age of 80 to Dr. James Everett Seaver, M. D. This book was first published in Canandaigua, New York in 1824, and since that time many editions have been published in both England and America. Harper Brothers, New York publishers, within the last two years have brought out another edition. Mary Jemison was of Irish parentage. She was captured by the Indians in 1755 when 13 years of age and lived with them until her death. Many of her descendents are living on the several reservations. In her book she speaks of camping at the mouth of the Conewango Creek in 1760, 162 years ago, within half a mile of your Post rooms. She was 17 years old at that time carrying her boy, Tom, nine months old. On the pages referred to she explains that Cornplanter and a British officer named Johnston commanding the British forces, organized an expedition of retaliation and revenge so large and strong that apparently nothing could avert its march or prevent its depredations. After leaving the Genesee they marched directly to some of the headwaters of the Susquehanna River and Schoharie Creek; went down that Creek to the Mohawk; thence up that River to Fort Stanwix; and from thence came home. On their route they burned a number of places, destroyed all the cattle and all other property that fell in their way, killed a number of white people and brought home prisoners.

Cornplanter had learned from his mother who his father was and where he resided and when the expedition came to Fort Plain on the Mohawk where old John A'Beel lived, Cornplanter and a number of his Indians took him prisoner. This was the first time that Cornplanter had ever seen his father and he took him prisoner in order that he might make an introduction leisurely and become acquainted with the man to whom, though a stranger, he was satisfied he owed his existence. He led him up the river about ten or twelve miles, and then stepped before him, faced about and addressed him in the following terms: "My name is John O'Bail, commonly called Cornplanter. I am your son. You are my father. You are now my prisoner and subject to the customs of Indian warfare, but you shall not be harmed. I am a

warrior. Many are the scalps I have taken. Many prisoners have I tortured to death. I am your son. I am a warrior. I was anxious to see you and greet you in friendship. I went to your cabin and took you by force, but your life shall be spared. Indians love their friends and their kindred and treat them with kindness. If now you choose to share the fortune of your yellow son and live with my people I will cherish your old age with plenty of venison and you shall live easily, but if it is your choice to return to your fields and live with your white children I will send a party of my young men to conduct you back in safety. I respect you, father. You have been friendly with the Indians and they are your friends." Old John chose to return. Cornplanter, as good as his word, ordered an escort to return him to his home, which they did with great care.

Between the pages 126 and 127 is an old time wood-cut of Cornplanter, identical with a photograph which I had taken of a lithograph, evidently published in a magazine many years ago and now in the possession of Joseph Keppler, son of the founder and proprietor of the Comic Weekly Puck. Mr. Keppler, a man of wealth and interested in Indian affairs, has given freely of his money and time in assisting the Seneca Indians, and especially was he helpful to Mrs. Converse, the White Mother as the Indians called her, who lived near Binghamton, New York, and who for many years devoted her time and energy in helping the Indians. Mrs. Converse gave the lithograph to Mr. Keppler and told him that the older Indians who had known Cornplanter said that it was a very good picture of him in his warrior outfit. Cornplanter did not have the Indian features but resembled his father, although he had the yellow skin of the Indian. At the time we gave the Warren Centennial Celebration in 1895 there was a pen and ink drawing on exhibition made of Cornplanter by some unknown artist and when shown to Solomon O'Bail, his grandson, he said "My grandfather had the features of a white man. This is the likeness of my uncle Charles on my grandfather's shoulders." Very little attention was given to the matter at the time, but later on when the history of the Centennial

was being prepared for publication, a modern half-toned picture was made of the sketch and it was found that Solomon O'Bail was correct, for by referring to page 4 of the History of Warren's Centennial on which the half-tone of the supposed picture of Cornplanter appears, and to page 11 where the picture of Charles and William O'Bail appears, it is plain to be seen that the face of Charles, Cornplanter's son, is identical with the face of the picture on page 4, but as no other picture was available and in the belief that the subject would never come up for controversy it was decided to include it with the other illustrations. But as these pictures, discovered later, dating back to 1824, have never been repudiated by the older members of the Seneca Nation or by his white friends of the past who knew him personally, I felt justified in having an oil portrait made of the photograph in my possession and offering it as the best and truest likeness of Cornplanter known to be in existence. You will note that the ears have been mutilated as well as the nose, as Cornplanter submitted to the torture of mutilation to test his endurance and courage as was the custom of the Indians of that period. In some manner the right ear was torn out and you will observe that the necklace on the right side is suspended from the collar decoration, while the other side is strung through the large opening in the left ear, also note the silver nose ring which he always wore.

Cornplanter was well known to the residents of Warren previous to 1835 for he frequently visited the town, coming down the river from the reservation in his canoe. He was a man of good business judgment and upright in all his transactions. My father-in-law, the late Judge S. P. Johnson, came to Warren in 1834 and opened an office for the practice of law. A few years previous to that time Mr. Ludlow, a finely educated and wealthy gentleman of New York City, moved to Warren and became interested in the purchase of the valuable pine-lands throughout this section. He, as I remember the story as told to me by Judge Johnson himself, wanted to purchase some timber from Cornplanter, and Cornplanter came to Warren in his canoe to complete

the deal and insisted on having an attorney draw up the contract. Mr. Ludlow invited Judge Johnson and Archibald Tanner, Grandfather of A. T. Scofield, to take dinner at his home and meet Cornplanter. Judge Johnson told me that Cornplanter was in full Indian regalia. He understood English and spoke it very well and proved a good entertainer as all were interested in his remarkable career and experiences. After dinner Judge Johnson drew up the contract, and Cornplanter, without making any changes whatever signed it, as did Mr. Ludlow, and told Judge Johnson that he was very much pleased, and that he considered it just and fair to both sides, and that from that time on he wished to retain him as his personal attorney and as attorney for the Seneca Indians residing in the state of Pennsylvania. Judge Johnson had business with him quite a number of times during the year that followed. Cornplanter was taken ill, and calling the tribal chiefs together told them that as long as Johnson lived to retain him as their legal advisor and friend, with the result that Judge Johnson was attorney and advisor of the up-river Indians from 1834 to the time of his death, 1893. During that long period of time he adjusted all their legal difficulties and domestic problems, practically assuming a dictatorship. He visited the several reservations hundreds of times. He knew them by name and they always consulted him on the most trivial matters. It was through Judge Johnson's efforts that an appropriation was made by the State of Pennsylvania for the erection of a monument over Cornplanter's grave, and as local representative of the Quaker Indian Committee it was he that eventually had the land divided among the several families, the direct descendants of Cornplanter being given first choice. During the early days of his practice there were many Indians living up the river, and hardly a day passed but that some of them visited the Johnson office or were seen eating lunch on the porch of his home, receiving help at his hands. For all his services he received very little money, but was liberally supplied with choice game, berries, and whatever the Indians thought would be acceptable as gifts. At his death Col. James O. Parmlee, his step-son and law partner, looked after the affairs of

the Indians, and at his death the business was scattered among the several attorneys of Warren.

As one of the executors of Judge Johnson's estate, I was brought in contact with the Indians at various times and have done what I possibly could to help those that are left. Most of the Indians who knew Judge Johnson have passed away, but during their life time I was always pointed out as Johnson's son and treated with the greatest courtsey and respect.

On July 4th, 1895, the great day of the Warren Centennial, W. H. Allen, W. A. Talbott and myself, composing the Indian Committee, were publicly adopted into the Seneca Nation and given the names of noted Indian chiefs of the past. I was adopted into the Wolf Clan and given the name of Gar-no-gwah; Talbott, Skan-dyo-gwa-di; Allen, Sa-go-gaah-sch. A full report of the Indian Committee and the doings of the Indians during the celebration will be found in the History of Warren's Centennial beginning at page 109.

I have tried in this paper to impress upon you the fact that in giving the name of Chief Cornplanter to your Post you did not take the name of a renegade, worthless Indian, but the name of a man who was honored and respected, not only by his own people but by the whites as well, who admired him for his courage, persistence, and honorable principles, his belief in justice and brotherly love, and all the high qualities that help to make real men of men.

I now take great pleasure in presenting to Chief Cornplanter Post, No. 135, American Legion, this oil portrait of Chief Cornplanter, painted by Elton W. Davis, a Warren artist, to be hung in the rooms of your Post, and may it always be an inspiration to your members to be square and upright in your dealings with your fellow men, and to cultivate those virtues which the grand old Chief possessed and which brought to him the confidence and respect of his red brothers and white brothers alike.