

Chapter 5 Eighteenth-Century Power Shifts

1. The Refusal of Some English Prisoners to Return to English Life

As Europeans battled for control of the continent of North America, they enlisted indigenous people to fight for them. Indeed, the Indians had no choice but to form alliances with Europeans if they were to gain access to the firearms they had come to need for both hunting and self-defense. The war parties took many prisoners according to their custom, and these were usually given the opportunity to become part of the tribes. Some of the prisoners lived in hopes of being ransomed, but others became "white Indians," preferring to remain with their Indian families rather than return to colonial life.

In 1750, in the wake of King George's War, French and English authorities negotiated an exchange of prisoners who were living with Indians in the opposing territory. Here a French officer reports that he has turned over 24 (including 21 colonists and three unnamed Mohawks) to an English representative, but that 13 colonists have given reasons for refusing to leave.

General Return of the English prisoners detained in the government of New France

<i>Prisoners' names</i>	<i>Observations</i>
Anthony Van Schaik, Captain of the Militia of the Government of New York	Depart with Mr. Stoddert for Fort St. Frederic
John Vroman	
Peter Vosborough	
William Goff	
Christopher McGraw	
John Philips	
Edward Varen	
Benjamin Blachford	
Peter Clincton	
John Thompson	
Daniel Eden	
Albert Vedder	
Adam Mole	
Francis Conner	
Cornelius Sprong	
Elisha Stansbury	
Timothy Colbe	
Southerland Fort	
Timothy Colson	
Peter Dogaman	
Mattée Gatrour	
3 Mohawks	Total: 24
Rachel Quackenbus	Has abjured and desires to remain in the Colony. Mr. Stoddert has spoken to her repeatedly, without being able to persuade her to accompany him.
Samuel Frement, a Negro	Remains in the Colony for reasons set forth in the Minute of the 26th June, 1750 [which explained "all negroes being slaves, in whatever country they reside"]
Simon Vort, Philip Philipson, Thomas Volmer	They have declared that they wish to remain with the Iroquois of Sault St. Louis, having made abduration, as appears by Sieur Douville's letter

Jacob Suitzer	Desires to remain with the Indians of Sault St. Louis
Jacob Volmer, Joshua Nicolson, Henry Piper	Joshua Nicolson is disposed to go; the other two desire to remain with the Iroquois of the Lake of the Two Mountains and Nipissings, who, moreover, are unwilling to allow any of the said prisoners to leave at any price whatsoever, as they love them very much
Christian Volmer	Is hunting with the Iroquois of the Lake of the Two Mountains, and on his return will be set at liberty if he wish to return to New England
John	Desires to remain with the Abenakis of St. Francis, as appears by the process-verbal of the 23rd of June, 1750
Edward Cheaole	Married to a Squaw among the Hurons of Lorette, and desired to remain with them
An old man	Is hunting with the Hurons of Lorette, and will be set at liberty on his return if he be inclined to go to New England

I, the Undersigned, Lieutenant of Infantry in the troops of New-York, deputed by order of Mr. Clinton, Governor of the said New-York, to the Marquis de Jonquière, Governor-General of New France, do declare to have received from the said Marquis de la Jonquière the twenty-four prisoners mentioned in the present list, with whom I will proceed, forthwith, to Fort St. Frederic under the guidance of Sieur de Bleury, Ensign of Infantry, where arriving I promise to dispatch one or two prisoners to inform my Governor that they are at liberty, so that he may send, at the same time, all the prisoners, both French and Indians, who may be in his hands, to Mr. Lydieus, and give orders to the officer who will have charge of them to send me an express on their arrival at that place to inform me thereof, and to tarry one day so that they may be exchanged, one against another, at the foot of the great Carrying place of Lake St. Sacrament, whither I will repair in order to conclude the reciprocal exchange of the French and English prisoners. And as regards the thirteen others, also mentioned in the present list, it has not been in our power to bring them back with us, notwithstanding the facilities and orders said Sieur de la Jonquière has given, for the reasons annexed in the present list. In testimony whereof the said Marquis de la Jonquière hath signed with us, the English deputy aforesaid.

Done, in duplicate, at Montreal, the twenty-seventh of June, one thousand seven hundred and fifty.

Signed: LA JONQUIERE and B. STODDERT

Copy of the letter written by Sieur Douville, commandant of Sault St. Louis, to the Marquis de la Jonquière, Governor General of New France, 27th June, 1750

Sir,

The English prisoner, belonging to la Delisille, has come to tell me that I could have the honor to inform you he did not desire any longer to return; that the principal reason is that he has embraced our religion; that when he told the English he wished to return, he acted unreflectingly. On the other hand that his father is dead, and by the laws of his country whoever has been ransomed, if obliged to borrow the money, is bound for service until he have repaid, by his labor, the sum he cost; that he prefers being a slave with the Indians than in his country where there is no religion.

He who belongs to Ononraguete's nieces has come to tell me, also, that inasmuch as his elder brother, who is at the Lake of Two Mountains, will not return, neither will he; that his father was poor; that he must work all his life to pay his ransom; on the other hand, he has embraced our religion, which is the strongest reason.

Ononraguete said to him, in my presence: You are at liberty to go away if you like. He answered, No; that he hated too strongly the English Nation, where he was almost a slave, to give up his religion and his liberty.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Signed: DOUVILLE

Source: Edward O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 10: *Transcripts of Documents in the Archives of the Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, at Paris* (Weed, Parsons & Co., 1858), pp. 214-16.

Study: There have been many interesting studies of "white Indians." A fascinating place to begin is John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (Alfred Knopf, 1994). James Axtell includes a thorough study of the issue in *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford University Press, 1986).