

Three Rivers

Hudson~Mohawk~Schoharie

History From America's Most Famous Valleys

Mohawk Valley Indian Notes

Kateri Tegewitha - Lily of The Mohawks

Born on site where Goupil and Fr. Jogues shed their Blood - Methods Employed to Determine Exact Location.

From the St. Johnsville Enterprise and News, November 28, 1934

By Rev. Joseph Loyzance, S.J.

(Note: The usual spelling of the last name is Tekakwitha, Tegewitha is NOT a typo. - A.J Berry)

(The following article appeared in the Auriesville Pilgrim in July 1934 and was written by Fr. Loyzance who was the original purchaser of the land of Auriesville in 1884 which has gradually increased until the present. Here the beautiful shrine and coliseum now stands as a memorial to those brave martyrs who first brought the light of Christianity to the savage inhabitants of this section. -Editor of E & N)

Birthplace of Catharine Tegawitha

I have been requested to write a statement concerning the birthplace of Catharine Tegawitha, and I do it with pleasure, though I do not see the necessity of doing so, now that it has been satisfactorily identified.

In 1860, I was sent to Troy, NY as superior of St. Joseph's Residence. At once I made inquiries about the exact spot where Rene Goupil and Isaac Jogues had been slain by the Iroquois. I must say it was not an easy work to find it after two hundred years of darkness and many misstatements concerning the history of the Jesuit Fathers among the Iroquois, and the location of the Mohawk Castles; there was much confusion and apparent discrepancy on the various accounts given of the Mohawk villages.

Did Providence bring the Jesuit Fathers to Troy in 1848, and keep them there until now to determine the spot where Rene Goupil and Father Isaac Jogues shed their blood, to buy that spot, to build a shrine, to honor their memory and to send to Rome a postulatium for their beatification, and to inaugurate a pilgrimage to that holy place two hundred years after the Mission of the Martyrs had been suppressed? Digitus Dei est hic. This is the work of God.

In the beginning of our researches, 1876, everything seemed to lead us astray and to indicate that the Mohawk Castles were located on the north side of the river.

Rev. Father Lowry, Pastor of Fonda, had already built a church there as a memorial to Catharine Tegawitha taking this to be her birthplace.

Greenhalgh, a Dutchman, living in Fort Orange (Albany), visited the Mohawk Castles in 1677, and found them on the northern side of the river. His statement is published by O'Callaghan in his Historical Documents of New York State. His description gives sufficient facts as to the location of the four principal Mohawk Castles at that date (1677).

Was it not then, reasonable that we should look for the Mohawk Castles on the north side of the river? So we did. But as this theory could not explain many facts of history, written by our early Jesuit Fathers in the latter part of the seventeenth century, we were brought to consider more closely the various dates given by historians. We consulted the work entitled *Relations des Jésuites*; we consulted the letter of Father Jogues; we consulted Father Martin himself, Dr. John Gilmary Shea, Father

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Walworth of Albany, General Clark of Auburn; and many old maps were placed at our disposal in Albany the Historian of the New York State Library.

By degrees the light became brighter and brighter; and soon we were convinced that the Mohawk villages had existed, at least for some years, south of the river. This conviction became stronger by every new discovery. We compared dates and visited the first village of the Mohawks (Turtle, Osserman Gandahouague) 1884. Father Walworth and Dr. J. G. Shea were present; we had the letter of Father Jogues and the new map of General Clark; and we were all convinced that the Mohawks (1642-1666) had their three villages on the south side of the river.

Otherwise, as I shall state below, being certain that Gandahouge, Ossernon, the village, the nearest to the Dutch (now Auriesville), was the place where Rene Goupil and Father Jogues were put to death (1642 and 1646) and where Catharine Tegawitha was born 1656, we bought the land (ten acres), built a chapel, erected a memorial cross, and on the southern panel of the base of the cross wrote the above statement, sent it to Cardinal Gibbons, at the time of the III Plenary Council of Baltimore, and sent to the Holy Father, Leo XIII, a postulatum to introduce the Cause of beautification of Rene Goupil, Father Isaac Jogues and Catharine Tegawitha. In this petition are written the following words: *Duobus hisce martyribus accedit virgo Iroquasa, Catherine Tegawitha, Eodem loco nata, quo isti duo praecedentes Dei servi sanguinem suum funderunt.* (With these two martyrs is associated Catherine Tegawitha, an Iroquois maiden, born in the same place where the above named servants of God shed their blood).

The only reason why the name of Catharine Tegawitha was added to those of Rene Goupil and Father Isaac Jogues, in the postulation to His Holiness, Pope Leo XII is that she was born in the very same village where Rene Goupil and Father Jogues shed their blood, otherwise we would have had no reason to consider her, and still less reason to add her name to those of our martyrs for the Cause of Beatification.

Can the Above Statement be Proved Historically Beyond Any Doubt

It is true, I have before me at the present writing neither the necessary books nor the various maps of the Mohawk Valley, locating the various castles of the Indians. Besides, the question is a very intricate one, there being much discrepancy and apparent contradiction with writers. Moreover, the Iroquois from time to time moved their villages from one place to another. Thus we see that the Canadian settlement now at Caughnawaga has moved five times.

The names the Mohawks gave to their villages and country were barbarous names to the ears of Europeans, who, as they could not pronounce those Indians words, gave them names of their own. For instance, the very word Mohawks was changed by the Dutch into Maqua, Maqoius and by the French into Aniers, Anjes, Agniers. Hence, the first village of the Mohawks had a least half a dozen names.

Despite all these difficulties, in the year 1884, we surmounted all obstacles reconciled apparent contradictions, and arrived at the above conclusions.

I will try to recall how we traveled with safety and success through a dark and unknown country-we used historical dates as landmarks to guide our steps.

Who Were the Mohawks?

The Mohawks were one of the five nations or tribes of the Indian Confederation called Iroquois. These Five Nations, beginning from the East, the nearest to the Dutch, in fort Orange (Albany) were the Mohawks (Agniers, Maquaas), Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas.

In 1712 the Tuscaroras came from Carolina and became members as a sixth nation of the Iroquois confederation.

How Many Villages had the Mohawks (1642-1666)

In 1642-1646 the Mohawks had only three villages. Father Jogues remained thirteen months in captivity among the Mohawks, visited their three castles and was tortured in each of them. In his letter he gives the name of each castle; he never mentioned a fourth one. He says the distance between Fort Orange and the First Village, that of the Agniers, was from ten to twelve leagues; between the First Village and the Second about two leagues and a little more between the Second and the Third.

In October, 1666, Lord de Tracy, at the head of twelve hundred warriors came from Quebec and burned the three castles of the Mohawks.

Were the Three Mohawk Castles Located on the Southern Side of the Mohawk River Till 1666?

They were located south of the river till 1666.

1. Old geographical maps represent the three villages of the Mohawks on the south of the river.
2. By the testimony of Father Jogues himself, the first village of the Mohawks lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Schoharie Creek with the Mohawk River, at a distance of three-quarters of a mile from each. Therefore, on the south side.
3. Father Martin in the Life of Father Jogues, pages 85 and 86; with whom General Clark and Dr. John Gilmary Shea agree, places the three villages on the south side of the river.
4. Father Walworth (see Life of Kateri Tegawitha), accompanied by General Clark, visited at the sites of the Mohawk villages and their testimony is final that till 1666 the Mohawk Castles were located on the south side of the river.
5. In the Life of Father Jogues (page 86) it is stated that "Father Jogues and his companions taken prisoner by the Iroquois, coming from Canada, crossed the river before reaching the First Village of the Mohawks."
6. In 1666, Lord de Tracy, at the head of his twelve hundred warriors, coming from Quebec, crossed the river before reaching the three Mohawk villages, which he burned. (Life of Kateri Tegawitha, by Miss Walworth, page 75 and following).

General Clark expressly states that the three villages were on the south side of the river. He says: "Fortunately, the very particular account of Father Jogues' captivity and the death of Goupil furnished a sufficient number of references to the topography of the locality to enable me, after many years' study, to identify, with almost absolute certainty, the exact site of this one castle, Ossernenon. This gave the key to the second the third."

Therefore, till 1666 Mohawk villages were located on the south of the river.

What Was the Location of the Three Mohawk Castles on the South Side of the River and by What Names were They Called? (1642-1666)

General Clark briefly expresses it. "The Mohawk Castles: First, Second and Third (from the east) correspond to Lower, Middle and Upper, and also to the Turtle, Bear and Wolf. Kateri Tegawitha dwelt at the first or Turtle Castle which was the nearest to the Dutch settlers." (Life of Kateri page 301.)

First Village-Ossennenon, Gandaohuhague (Father Cholonis, S. J.), Gandaouague (M. Marcoux), Gandagaro (Father Jogues), Canagiero (Vanderdonk), Caughnawagah (i.e., district of the rapids).

Third Village-Tionnontoguen (deux montagnes rapprochees, Twin Mountains-Relations). The names given by the English to the five nations have been generally adopted by all writers.

Location of the Three Villages (1642-1666)

Father Jogues says the distance from Fort Orange (Albany) to the First Village was from ten to twelve leagues; between the First and the Second about two leagues; and between the Second and Third, a little more than two leagues.

Dr. John Gilmary Shea in the Life of Father Jogues, (page 85), thus gives the result of the careful exploration of General Clark; "Ossernon is near the present station of Auriesville in Montgomery county; Tionnontoguen, on a hill just south of Sprakers Basin about thirteen miles west of Ossernon; Andagaron between them and like them on the south side of the river."

Were the Mohawk Castles Moved? When and Where?

It is certain that the three Mohawk Castles were moved. A fact of history beyond any doubt, admitted by all, is that Lord de Tracy burned them in 1666. General Clark, who has located all the Iroquois villages and the fourteen chapels and churches built among the Five Nations, discovered Gandahouague to have been built, or rebuilt one mile west of the First Village, west of the Auries Creek.

When? He cannot ascertain the date. It may have been done at the time of the great ravage of small pox, 1659-1660. When Catharine Tegawitha was four years old, she lost her mother and her brother by small pox and she herself was attacked by the disease and bore the marks for life.

The Mohawks of Gandahouague certainly rebuilt their village across the river in 1667, one mile northwest of Fonda, on a high plateau (now Veeder's Farm) and a chapel west of the Cayadutta Creek; and they called their new village Caughnawaga. From this the Canadian settlement of the Catholic Mohawks took its name.

We find Andagaron rebuilt across the river 1667, three miles west of Caughnawaga, so that St. Peter's Chapel served for two villages.

Tionnontoguen was rebuilt, first, one mile west of its former site, and later across the river. After the burning of their three villages they at once provided some shelter while they continued to raise their crops, and proceed to rebuild their castles.

Father Pierron says that the Mohawks had seven large villages (1672-1684). But the new ones on the north of the river and the temporary ones built immediately after the first of 1666, easily made up seven. Hence there is no contradiction in these dates and facts.

When and Where was Catharine Tegawitha Born?

It is admitted by all that Catharine Tegawitha was born in the year 1656. She was not born in Fonda, for the simple reason that the Mohawks in 1656 had not a single village on the north side of the Mohawk River.

Father Cholenec who wrote three lives of Catharine Tegawitha, one in Latin and two in French says: Catharine naquit en 1656 à Gandahouague, village le plus rapproché des Hollandais. (Catharine was born in 1656, at Gandaougue, the village nearest to the Dutch.) (*Vie de Catherine Tegakwitha*, page 22.)

Father Chauchetière in his *Vie de la Bonne Catherine* says that Catharine was born in the land of the Mohawks. (page 22.)

Father Cholenec was Superior of the Jesuit Residence at Sault St. Louis. He, like Father Chauchetière, was the confessor of Catharine.

The testimony of Father Cholenec and that of Father Chauchetière, to whom she appeared three times after he death settled the question for any who is not entirely incredulous.

The Jesuit Fathers Fremin, Pierron and Bryas, describe "Gandawague as the very place watered by the blood of Jogues." Father Jogues himself says in his letter: "That René Goupil was killed in the first village, Osserenon and his body thrown in the creek nearby." General Clark in his map calls the creek of Auriesville, "Goupil Creek." Father Walworth and Dr. J. G. Shea in 1884 were fully convinced "That the present shrine at Auriesville marks the place where Catharine was born and Rene and Jogues slain." Thus all evidence point to Auriesville as the birthplace of the Lily of the Mohawks.

On What Grounds did Some People Believe that Catharine Tegawitha was Born in Fonda?

Some people were induced to believe that Catharine Tegawitha was born in Fonda for the Following apparent reasons:

1. They were not well versed in the history of the Mohawks and did not consult the right authorities: They did not read the Relations of the Jesuit Fathers nor the four or five lives of Catharine Tegawitha written by them or did not pay sufficient attention to the data of the Mohawk history.
2. On account of the variety and also similarity of Mohawk names, so often changed by Europeans, or badly transcribed by copyists, Gandahouague, Ganadaga, Gandowague, Caughnawage, which means always the same thing-the district of the rapids.
3. After Lord de Tracy had in 1666 burned the three Mohawk villages, the Mohawks who lived at Gandawage (Auries Creek) at the Castle of the Turtle, at Ossernenon, meaning the First Village, rebuilt a new village at Caughnawaga, one mile northwest of Fonda and of course at the age of ten or eleven went there and lived there and attracted the attention of the Jesuit Fathers, who came to preach the Gospel to the Mohawks and the other four nations, after a treaty of peace had been signed by the French, 1667.
4. Because she was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676 at the age of twenty at St. Peter's the parish church at Fonda by Father de Lamberville.
5. Because the settlement of the Catholic Mohawks in Canada took the name of Caughnawage; and because Catharine went from Fonda to Canada and lived there.

Why Do We Insist so Much on Locating the Three Mohawk Castles up to 1666 on the South of the River?

1. Because it is a fact of history, now proved beyond any doubt, Rev. Father Clarence Walworth, Dr. J. G. Shea, General Clark, Father Felix Martin. S. J. vouch for it.
2. Because these three villages are holy places, sanctified by the blood of many martyrs, among who were René Goupil, S. J., Father Bressani, S. J., and Father Isaac Jogues, S. J.
3. Because it is very important to know the very spot of these villages, that we may venerate them and invoke the protection of those martyrs in our temporal and spiritual wants.

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