

= Molly Brant =

Molly Brant (c.1736 ? April 16 , 1796) , also known as Mary Brant , Konwatsi 'tsiaienni , and Degonwadonti , was a Mohawk woman who was influential in the era of the American Revolution . Living in the Province of New York , she was the consort of Sir William Johnson , the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs , with whom she had eight children . Joseph Brant , who became a Mohawk leader , was her younger brother .

After Johnson 's death in 1774 , Brant and her children returned to her native village of Canajoharie on the Mohawk River . A Loyalist during the American Revolutionary War , she fled to British Canada , where she worked as an intermediary between British officials and the Iroquois . After the war , she settled in what is now Kingston , Ontario . In recognition of her service to the Crown , the British government gave Brant a pension and compensated her for her wartime losses .

Since 1994 , Brant has been honored as a Person of National Historic Significance in Canada . She was long ignored or disparaged by historians of the United States , but scholarly interest in her increased in the late 20th century . She has sometimes been controversial , criticized for being pro @-@ British at the expense of the Iroquois . A devout Anglican , she is commemorated on April 16 in the calendar of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church (USA) . No portraits of her are known to exist ; an idealized likeness is featured on a statue in Kingston and on a Canadian stamp issued in 1986 .

= = Early life = =

Little is known for certain about Molly Brant 's early life . Named Mary , but commonly known as " Molly " , she was born around 1736 , possibly in the Mohawk village of Canajoharie , or perhaps further west in the Ohio Country . Her parents were Christian Mohawks . She may have been the child named Mary who was christened at the chapel at Fort Hunter , near the Lower Castle , another Mohawk village , on April 13 , 1735 . If so , her parents were named Margaret and Cannassware . Most historians believe that her father was named Peter . Joseph Brant , born in 1743 , was Molly 's brother or half @-@ brother .

One of Molly 's Mohawk names , perhaps her birth name , was Konwatsi 'tsiaienni , which means " Someone Lends Her a Flower " . Her other Mohawk name , given to her at adulthood , was Degonwadonti , meaning " Two Against One " . Her Mohawk names have been spelled in a variety of ways in historical records .

The Mohawk are one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois League . At the time of the American Revolutionary War , they lived primarily in the Mohawk River valley in what is now upstate New York . At some point , either before or after her birth , Molly 's family moved west to the Ohio Country , which was used as an Iroquois hunting ground .

After Molly 's father died , her family moved back to Canajoharie . On September 9 , 1753 , Molly 's mother married Brant Kanagaradunkwa , a Mohawk sachem of the Turtle clan . Possibly to reinforce their connection to Brant Kanagaradunkwa , who was a prominent leader , Molly and Joseph took their stepfather 's name as a surname , which was unusual for that time .

Molly Brant was raised in a Mohawk culture that was highly anglicized . In Canajoharie , the Brants lived in a substantial colonial @-@ style frame house and used many European household goods . The family attended the Church of England . Molly was fluent in Mohawk and English . It is not clear whether she was formally educated or whether she could read and write . There are several letters signed " Mary Brant " , but these may have been dictated by Molly and written by someone else . A letter from 1782 is signed with " her mark " , indicating that she may have been only semi @-@ literate .

In 1754 , Molly accompanied her stepfather and a delegation of Mohawk elders to Philadelphia , where the men were to discuss a fraudulent land sale with colonial leaders . The party traveled to Albany , where an English officer , Captain Staats Long Morris , nephew of Governor Lewis Morris of Pennsylvania , met and fell in love with Brant . She was then about nineteen years old and described as " pretty likely " , meaning " good looking " .

= = Consort of Sir William = =

When General Sir William Johnson , Superintendent for Northern Indian Affairs , visited Canajoharie , he always stayed at the house of his friend , Molly 's stepfather Brant Kanagaradunkwa . Johnson and Molly Brant became intimate ; in September 1759 , she gave birth to his son , Peter Warren Johnson , named for Sir William 's early patron and uncle , Admiral Sir Peter Warren . Brant lived with Johnson at Fort Johnson , and then Johnson Hall after 1763 , becoming effectively Sir William 's common @-@ law wife or consort . The couple had nine children together , eight of whom lived past infancy . They included the following :

Peter Warren Johnson (named after William Johnson 's uncle) ;

Six daughters , Elizabeth , Magdalene , Margaret , Mary , Susanna , and Ann (also known as Nancy) . Elizabeth married Dr. Robert Kerr , a British physician and magistrate . Magdalene married John Ferguson , who became a member of the Legislature of Upper Canada for Kingston . Ann (also known as Nancy) married a naval officer , Captain Hugh Early for whom Earl Street in Kingston is named after today . Margaret married captain George Farley of the 24th Regiment in Kingston . Mary remained single , although she also lived in Kingston with her sister , Magdalene , after the war . Susanna who married Lieutenant Henry Lemoine of the famous 60th American Foot regiment .

George Johnson .

In Johnson 's will , Molly is referred to as his " housekeeper " , which at the time meant that she ran the household , served as hostess , and supervised the female servants and slaves . According to the historian Barbara Graymont , " Mary Brant presided over Johnson 's household with intelligence , ability , grace , and charm , and she effectively managed the estate during Johnson 's many and prolonged absences . " Johnson and Brant 's relationship was public ; she received gifts and thank @-@ you notes from prominent visitors such as Lord Adam Gordon . Johnson used his connection with Brant to further his public and private dealings with the Iroquois . Brant 's role as Johnson 's domestic and political partner was well known . " Before the age of forty , " writes Feister and Pulis , " she was already a legendary figure "

William Johnson died in July 1774 . In his will he left land , money , and slaves to Brant and her children ; He left Johnson Hall to John Johnson , his eldest son by his first common @-@ law wife , Catherine Weisenberg , a Palatine German immigrant . Molly returned to Canajoharie with her children , personal belongings , and slaves . There she lived a comfortable life in a large house , and prospered as a trader .

= = American Revolution = =

Brant supported the British Crown during the American Revolutionary War . From her home in Canajoharie , she provided food and assistance to Loyalists who were fleeing from New York to Canada . Despite harassment from local Patriots , she remained at Canajoharie for the first two years of the war .

A turning point came in 1777 when British forces invaded New York from Canada and laid siege to Patriots in Fort Stanwix . In August , when Brant learned that a large body of Patriot militia was on its way to relieve the fort , she sent Mohawk runners to alert the British commander of the danger . This information enabled a British , Mohawk , and Seneca force to ambush the Patriots and their Oneida allies in the Battle of Oriskany . After this battle , in which Iroquois warriors fought on both sides , the war in the Mohawk Valley became particularly brutal . The Oneida and Americans retaliated against Brant by pillaging Canajoharie . Brant fled with her children to Onondaga , the Iroquois capital . Her departure was so precipitate that she had to leave most of her belongings behind .

At Onondaga , the Iroquois held a council to discuss what course to take . Most Iroquois favored assisting the British , but after the Battle of Saratoga , it seemed unlikely that the British could win . Sayenqueraghta , a Seneca chief , urged the Iroquois to withdraw from the war . Brant criticized Sayenqueraghta 's advice , invoking the memory of Sir William to convince the council to remain loyal to the Crown . According to Daniel Claus , a British Indian agent and Sir William 's son @-@ in

@-@ law , Brant was " in every respect considered and esteemed by them [the Iroquois] as Sir William 's Relict [i.e. widow] , and one word from her is more taken notice of by the Five Nations than a thousand from any white man without exception " .

Much of Brant 's influence came from her connections to Sir William Johnson and her stepfather Brant Kanagaradunkwa . Additional influence came from the fact that women in matrilineal Iroquois society had more political influence than women in patriarchal societies . Because Brant 's ancestry is unclear , historians have apparently disagreed about whether she was born into an influential clan . Brant has been described as the " head of the Six Nations matrons " , although historian Robert Allen writes that " there is no substantive evidence to suggest that Molly was ever a clan matron or mother within the Iroquois matrilineal society " . Fiester and Pulis write that " although not born to the position , she became one of the Mohawk matrons " .

In late 1777 , Brant relocated to Fort Niagara at the request of Major John Butler , who wanted to make use of her influence among the Iroquois . At Niagara , Brant worked as an intermediary between the British and the Iroquois , rendering , according to Graymont , " inestimable assistance there as a diplomat and stateswoman " . Meanwhile , in November 1777 Brant 's son Peter Johnson was killed in the Philadelphia campaign while serving in the British 26th Regiment of Foot .

In 1779 , Brant visited Montreal , where some of her children attended school , but headed back when the Americans began their invasion of Iroquoia that year . Because of the war , she could only get as far as the British post at Carleton Island , where many Iroquois refugees had fled from the Americans . There she continued her work as an intermediary . The British commander considered Brant 's influence " far superior to that of all their Chiefs put together " . Brant was unhappy with having to live in an army barracks with her children . Hoping to keep her favor , the British built her a house on the island in 1781 , where she lived with her children and four slaves for the remainder of the war . Throughout the war , Brant played important roles as a negotiator , mediator , liaison , and advocate for Mohawk and Iroquois peoples at Fort Niagara , Montreal , and Carleton Island .

= = Final years and legacy = =

When Carleton Island was largely abandoned in 1783 , Brant moved to Cataraqui , now Kingston , Ontario , where the government built her a house and gave her an annual pension of £ 100 . The property that she was assigned was Farm Lot A in Kingston Township , along the northern limit of the town . It was only 116 acres instead of the standard 200 acres because it was encroached upon by the Clergy Reserve . Brant and her family received compensation from the British government for their losses in the American Revolution . Hoping to make use of her influence , the United States offered Brant compensation if she would return with her family to the Mohawk Valley , but she refused .

Brant lived in Kingston for the remainder of her life , a respected member of the community and a charter member of the local Anglican Church . Her son George Johnson , known as " Big George " among Natives , married an Iroquois woman and became a farmer and teacher ; her daughters married prominent white men . She died in Kingston on April 16 , 1796 , at about age 60 , and was buried in St. Paul 's Churchyard , Kingston 's original burial ground , now the site of St. Paul 's Anglican Church . The exact location of her grave is unknown .

Brant 's legacy is varied . Since 1994 , she has been honored as a Person of National Historic Significance in Canada . Brant was long ignored or disparaged by historians of the United States , but scholarly interest in her increased in the late 20th century . The Johnson Hall State Historic Site in New York now interprets her public and private roles for visitors . She has sometimes been controversial , criticized for being pro @-@ British at the expense of the Iroquois . According to Feister and Pulis , " She made choices for which she is sometimes criticized today ; some have seen her as having played a large part in the loss of Iroquois land in New York State . " Brant saw the Mohawk and Iroquois ' best chance of survival as lying with the British . When history is painted in EuroAmerican terms of British versus American , it is easy to see Brant as a traitor . However , Brant saw herself as Mohawk and Iroquois woman first , and she made strategic choices that she believed would best benefit her peoples .

Brant is commemorated on April 16 in the calendar of the Anglican Church of Canada , as well as the Episcopal Church . No portraits of her are known to exist ; an idealized likeness is featured on a statue in Kingston and on a Canadian stamp issued in 1986 .

= = Archaeology = =

In 1988 , archaeological testing was conducted at the site of the former home of Molly Brant in Kingston , Ontario , in preparation for a construction project . Salvage excavations were carried out in 1989 . Much of the original site of the Brant homestead had been disturbed by industrial activities .

The area had been the location of the Kiwanis Playing Field , and was not disturbed until Imperial Oil bought the property in 1938 . At this time , the below ground remains of the structures were likely removed . Excavations revealed the remains of a privy , which contained over 5 000 artifacts of domestic and personal items from the 19th century .

= = Recognition in Kingston = =

On August 25 , 1996 the City of Kingston proclaimed Molly Brant Commemoration Day . The Mohawk Nation - Bay of Quinte , the Corporation of the City of Kingston , the City of Kingston Historical Board , Mr. John Boxel (Molly Brant Sculptor) and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada agreed to commemorate her life with the creation of a bust representing Molly Brant along with an historic monument at the front entrance of Rideaucrest Home on Rideau Street in Kingston . The memorial sculpture was unveiled at Rideaucrest on Molly Brant Commemoration Day . The commemoration began with a service at St. George 's Cathedral , a tobacco burning and wreath laying ceremony at St. Paul 's Anglican Church and a reception at Rideaucrest where the sculpture of Molly Brant was unveiled in the eastern courtyard .

The Molly Brant Foundation was established in 2005 in honour of Molly Brant . It focuses its not for profit work on urban Aboriginal research in the Kingston area .

The Molly Brant One Woman Opera , composed by Augusta Cecconi Bates , was first performed at St. George 's Cathedral in Kingston on April 25 , 2003 under the aegis Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation . It has since evolved into a four act opera which grew out of the original one woman opera of 2003 . The 2003 production was sung by Kingston soprano Rhona Gale , with Carrie Wyatt , flute , and the composer at the piano .

On June 17 , 2015 , Limestone District School Board trustees selected Molly Brant as the name for a new elementary public school located on Lyons Street on Queen Elizabeth Collegiate property . Scheduled to open for the 2016 - 17 school year , the 49 000 square foot building will educate students from First Avenue and Frontenac Public Schools .