

the country to the south of this great water chain—chiefly that territory now comprising the State of New York.

These tribes, though very far behind the state of civilization common to even the most primitive of the three more southern aboriginal peoples above-named, yet possessed many characteristics which placed them beyond comparison in advance of more northern or western tribes. They lived in villages, cultivated a coarse grain known as maize, which has since become a staple product of most of the countries of the world within the limits of a temperate clime; had made some progress in some of the more necessary arts of life, and recognized certain fixed principles of public policy in their intercourse with other tribes.

Such were the people whom the first white adventurers found in possession of the country on their arrival. Fugitives from the vengeance of their former fellows, Colonists in the newly revolutionized United States, for having espoused during the revolution the side of their King and fatherland against their adopted country. The first white men who ever, as actual settlers, set foot upon that whole extent of country now forming these two Counties, were Nathaniel Ashford and James Stevens, who as the first settlers, not only within the whole tract of country bordering the north shore of Ontario, deserve here a passing notice.

Mr. Ashford was a descendant of Thomas Ashford, from the town of Ashford, Kent County, England, who emigrated to America in the early days of the colonial times. He was a man of some means and influence, and at the breaking out of the Revolution, not only opposed it morally, but took arms in defense of the Royal cause, and served in a variety of capacities throughout the war, being an officer in the colonial attachment of Burgoyne's army which was captured at Saratoga. Previous to the Revolution the family, and also those of Mr. Stevens, who was likewise of English descent, owned large properties in Dutchess County, New York. The termination of the war left the former "Tories" completely at the mercy of the Continentals, who, persecuted and slew many; and to avoid the reign of terror inaugurated by the "Regulators" after the acknowledgment of Independence, Ashford and Stevens fled with their families, as did thousands of others, to seek safety under the British Flag. It will be remembered that after the declaration of peace, the question of jurisdiction of a certain portion of the N. W. part of New York State bordering the Niagara river was left undecided. The British still maintained a fort there, and the locality became the rendezvous of the thousands of U. E. Loyalists and their families, as well as the remnant of the Iroquois who had taken sides in the war against the Colonists. It was the hope of the Loyalists, as well as the promise of the British Government, that some provision would be made in the final treaty of amity between the two nations, whereby they should return undisturbed to their old homes; but the British, anxious to colonize their illimitable expanse of wilderness to the north of the "Thirteen Provinces," totally ignored the promises originally held out to the Loyalists. Ashford and Stevens had been waiting and watching, since 1783, at Fort Niagara, in hopes of being able finally to return and occupy their property; but when, in 1792, the balance of New York was surrendered and the British garrison withdrawn from what is now the American Fort Niagara, they abandoned all hopes of returning, and