# John Johnson, Sir Biography

## John Johnson, Sir

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# Biography

Sir John Johnson (1742-1830), American loyalist leader, engaged in military activities on the New York frontier during the American Revolution and was later a leader of the Tory refugees in Canada.

John Johnson was born in the Mohawk Valley, N.Y., the son of Sir William Johnson, a British colonial official. With his father's backing, John became a captain in the New York militia and fought during Chief Pontiac's rebellion. Sir William's prestige also accounted for John's being knighted during a visit to England in 1765. On his father's death, he inherited the title of baronet, lands estimated as high as 200,000 acres, and significant influence with the surrounding Indians and the British government.

Like his father, Sir John Johnson supported British authority along the frontier. In 1775, at the beginning of the American Revolution, Johnson began gathering ammunition and recruiting supporters. When threatened with force by Gen. Philip Schuyler, Johnson agreed to disarm his men, and when it became apparent that he would soon be arrested, he fled to Canada. He was promptly commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the British provincial forces and began raising a force of loyalist rangers.

Johnson marched with the British officer Barry St. Leger against Ft. Stanwix in 1777. But while St. Leger's men were successfully repulsing an American relief force at Oriskany, Johnson and his rangers were routed by a sortie from within Ft. Stanwix. Later, Johnson participated in Indian affairs and led a series of raids into the Mohawk Valley.

Whatever the limited value of his military activities during the Revolution, Johnson retained his prestige among British officials. Based in Canada, he was commissioned as Indian superintendent in 1782. He was compensated for the loss of his property in New York by grants of land and substantial cash payments. When the Revolution was over, he was given the task of explaining the consequences of the terms of the peace treaty to England's Iroquois Indian allies. He also supervised the settlement of loyalist refugees along the St. Lawrence River and remained active in Indian and loyalist matters. His notoriety as a leader of British and Indian raiding parties along the frontier ensured that he would never be allowed to return from Canadian exile to New York. He lived on--relatively wealthy and still influential--in Montreal, dying at the age of 88.