

LETTERS & PAPERS  
OF  
EZRA STILES  
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE  
1778-1795

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*Edited by Isabel M. Calder*

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Min<sup>r</sup> of Norwalk even from the first settle<sup>mt</sup> of that plantation.”

Magnal. Li 3. 219.<sup>13</sup>

[Endorsed]

Rec<sup>d</sup> Sep 17. 1771

### David McClure' to Ezra Stiles

Dartmouth College, in Han-  
over, New Hampshire Nov. 11. 1771.

Rev<sup>d</sup> and Honor'd Sir//

Imbol'ned by your kind invitation, I now set down to write you—the unwearied pains you have taken Sir, to search into the origin and antiquity of the natives of America, give me to imagine, that any information however small and immaterial, respecting the intricate and dubious enquiry, will be acceptable to you.<sup>2</sup> And as God in his gracious providence, seems to be destining me and my poor services, by present prospects, to the poor ignorant tawny immortals, of our land; gladly would I afford any assistance, in my power, in a pursuit so interesting and important, as their origen; an enquiry which has baffled the utmost efforts of the curious and inquisative, rightly to investigate; owing perhaps to the want of proper knowlege, of the Customs, Languages, Ceremonies and and especially the traditions of the Indians which from time immemorial, have been transmitted down, from father to son, and from generation to generation, and many of which I understand, they hold most sacred, and not to be divulged unless to particular Orders among them—those traditions if once fully known and rightly understood, I doubt not would cast light, and serve as a clue, to trace the source, from whence the Indians took their rise.

Since my return from Newport, where Rev<sup>d</sup> Sir, I had the honor of your notice, and admitted to the freedom of a correspondance, with a view to the above enquiry, my hon'd patron and friends think it my

<sup>13</sup> Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London, 1702).

<sup>1</sup> David McClure, 1748-1820, Yale College 1769. The experience of several weeks on the Muskingum in 1772 seems to have dampened his ardor for missionary work among the Indians.

<sup>2</sup> *Kiriath Sapher* Civitas Libri, among the Canaanites in the Time of Joshua. [Marginal note in the handwriting of Ezra Stiles.]

duty, to make a tour to the southward, among a *branch of the Delaware tribe, who live far remote, near the River Ohio*, where or near where the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mess<sup>rs</sup> Beatty<sup>3</sup> and Duffield,<sup>4</sup> a few years past, made a two months tour, under the direction of the Synod of New York. M<sup>r</sup> Beatty has published a narrative of the tour, and gives a very inviting account of the desires of the Indians, to receive the gospel, and the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Brainard<sup>5</sup> has wrote Doctor Wheelock,<sup>6</sup> of an agreeable opening for two or more missionaries, among those Indians, and has desired him to send a missionary or two among them. And altho' the undertaking appears weighty, and in some views of it gloomy, yet the good disposition the Indians shew to receive the gospel, calls loudly for some vigorous efforts and effectual trials to be made to reclaim those deluded ignorant savages, from their barbarism and infidelity, to the knowledge and worship of the only true God, and his Son our blessed Saviour.

The Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Kirkland<sup>7</sup> from Onoinda has lately made us a visit here, and brings very encouraging news from the Indians, especially those who live under his ministry—I inform'd him, Sir, of your writing him some time past, desiring him to give you a particular account of a certain rock, inscrib'd with Characters and hieroglyphics. he inform'd me, he had never been so happy as to receive your letter, which had he rec<sup>d</sup> he would gladly have informed you of all the indian curiosities, that came within his knowledge. *The large Rock you refer to Sir, lies on the Banks of the Ohio. M<sup>r</sup> Kirkland has never seen it, but has had considerable information respecting it from indians who have been at the place and seen the rock.* the Rock is one of the *sacra arcania* of their antiquities; and they endeavor to keep all Europeans from viewing

<sup>3</sup> Charles Clinton Beatty, c. 1715-1772, a Presbyterian clergyman who, in company with George Duffield, made a missionary tour through the frontier of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, in 1766, and published *The Journal of a Two Months Tour; with a View of Promoting Religion Among the Frontier Inhabitants of Pennsylvania, and of Introducing Christianity among the Indians to the Westward of the Allegheny Mountains*, in London in 1768.

<sup>4</sup> George Duffield, 1732-1790, College of New Jersey 1752, Presbyterian clergyman.

<sup>5</sup> David Brainerd, 1718-1747, entered Yale College in 1739 but was expelled for criticizing Chauncey Whittelsey, at that time a tutor in the College, in 1741. He was appointed missionary to the Indians by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in 1742.

<sup>6</sup> Eleazar Wheelock, 1711-1779, Yale College 1733, founder and President of Dartmouth College.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Kirkland, 1741-1808, College of New Jersey 1765, missionary to the Indians at Oneida and founder of Hamilton Oneida Academy, later Hamilton College.

it—I inquir'd particularly concerning it, *he told me the Indians informed him of the extent and situation of the Rock, I think he told me the dimensions of its level surface were 40 by 30 feet, all over inscrib'd with Characters, Emblems and Hieroglificks; that at a little distance from this large rock, were two smaller ones, fixed in the ground by hand, and that on them also were inscribed as above; that on the large rock were representations of Men, Women and Beasts, the Men habited in warlike attire and that under their feet in general were squares like the following*  $\square$  *with the figures 117 inscribed under them; and that other numbers which he could not recollect were inscrib'd under others*—which may we not imagine were the number of the Regiment or Legion to which the respective warrior belong'd whose images were cut out on the Rock?—that *in different places of the Rock were the hebrew Letters, Gimel, Daleth and He,*<sup>8</sup> *and many others inscribed; that the Indians from a religious devotion, frequently visit those Rocks and offer up sacrifices near them, and say that a sight of them makes them feel devout.* These are the particulars M: Kirkland has been able to collect respecting that intricate and surprising antiquity of the Indians, and which he tells me he lives in hopes of visiting. If providence should smile on my intended tour, into those parts, which will probably be next spring, by acco:<sup>a</sup> I shall not be far from the Rock, and if I'm permitted to view it, shall endeavor to make myself master of every thing valuable respecting it, and shall think myself happy Sir, if by any means I may be of service in tracing the origin of those crowds of rational tawny immortals who inhabit this vast extended Continent. O may the Blessed Redeemer ride triumphant among the Heathen! and vast Crowds of beings who are perishing in the shadow of Death, be illuminated with the light of divine revelation. I humbly ask an interest in your prayers for divine Light and Guidance; for

Rev<sup>d</sup> and Hon<sup>d</sup> Sir, Your very unworthy and obedient Serv<sup>t</sup>

DAVID MACCLURE

Rev<sup>d</sup> D: Stiles

P. S. please Rev<sup>d</sup> Sir, remember my Respects to M: Trevit<sup>o</sup>—

[Endorsed]

Received Dec 28 1771.

<sup>8</sup> גרמ [Marginal note.]

<sup>9</sup> Eleazar Trevett was a member of Stiles's Newport congregation in 1771.