

FROM JOHN ASKIN TO THOMAS SMITH¹

Detroit January the 5th 1793

Dear Sir: I have just received your letter of the 31st Dec. and as it was always my intention, so soon as the ice was good to send out a sloop by which you could come in so as we might have some conversation together, and as I have still the same desire, I will for the present only give a few general answers to what you have wrote me. First respecting Lafond² I would never wish to trust a man that requires watching; but as it is done & perhaps I would have done the same, I now [wish] every fair means may be taken to get all you can from him & all others that owe for surely in so small a trade I find the debts very considerable, & many of them I fear very doubtful, so much so that I would now take the same articles that were given, back again in payment. when I have seen you we will determine whether or no it will be best to send M^r Norton³ to Lafond, for whilst you are in

1 From the original manuscript in the Dominion Archives in Ottawa.

2 Apparently this was Antoine Lafond, who was a fur trade employee in the Maumee region in this period. A contract made by him with Ronald McDonell at the mouth of the Glaize, Sept. 15, 1796, to serve the firm of Leith, Shepherd, and Duff of Detroit as clerk for the ensuing season, under the immediate direction of John McDonald, is preserved in the Burton Hist. Coll. Prior to this date he had been employed in the same region by George McDougall of Detroit.

3 John Norton was a half-breed, his mother being Scotch and his father a Mohawk. He was educated in England and seems to have enjoyed the favor of Joseph Brant, upon whose death in 1807 Norton put himself forward as principal chief of the Mohawk. According to another account Norton was a Scot who served as a private in the British army, from which he obtained his discharge in 1788 and subsequently settled on the Grand River and "assumed all the appearances, habits, and manners of the Indians." Whatever his ancestry, there is no doubt that Norton posed as a chief of the Mohawk, and was accepted as such by the British Indian Department. An entry in John Askin's Journal, April 25, 1798, indicates that he was then interpreter at Niagara and that he had formerly been engaged in trade. He was active in the War of 1812, and commanded the Mohawk in the battle of Queenston. He seems to have been regarded by the British authorities as a man of undoubted ability and influence, but much given to scheming and intrigue. He died sometime subsequent to March 3, 1819; where and how, is unknown. See *Canadian Archives Report for 1896*, viii, ff.