

---

# Cultural Landscape Report

## Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site

### Whitestown, New York

Part I: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis & Evaluation

Prepared For:  
New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region



Courtesy Rome Historical Society

Prepared By:

State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York  
Research Assistant John E. Auwaerter, Project Director George W. Curry  
November 2000

---

---

**Cultural Landscape Report  
Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site  
Whitestown, New York**

**Part I: Site History, Existing Conditions, Analysis & Evaluation**

Prepared For:

New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region  
Jamesville, New York

Prepared By:

State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Faculty of Landscape Architecture  
Syracuse, New York

Research Assistant John E. Auwaerter, Project Director George W. Curry

November 2000

---

## **Acknowledgments**

---

This Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) for Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site was produced by the Faculty of Landscape Architecture in the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry for the Central Region of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The report was prepared between June 1999 and October 2000 as a research project by John Auwaerter, a graduate student in the Master of Landscape Architecture program. Preparation of the report was overseen by a steering committee consisting of project director George W. Curry, Distinguished Teaching Professor; Barbara Giambastiani Bartlett, OPRHP Regional Restoration Coordinator; and Christine Capella Peters, OPRHP Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator.

The author would like to acknowledge the following individuals who assisted in the research and site analysis for this project: Nancy Demyttenaere, Oriskany Battlefield site manager; Roger Myers and Dennis Roberts, Oriskany Battlefield staff; Greg Smith, Paul Huey, and Lois Feister of OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford; Ray Smith, Tony Opalka, Pete Shaver, and Kath LaFrank of OPRHP Field Services Bureau, Waterford; Joseph Robertaccio and Alan Sterling of the Friends of Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site; Craig Williams and Phil Lord of the New York State Museum, Albany; Dr. William Forbes, historian of Holland Patent, New York; Gavin Watt, historian of King City, Ontario; Jim Morrison, historian of Gloversville, New York; Anthony Wonderley, Oneida Indian Nation Historian, via Oneida, New York; Karen Jacobsen, director of the Oriskany Museum; Richard Aust of the Oneida County Historical Society, Utica; Geoff Seltzer, geology professor, Syracuse University; Tanya Gossett, National Park Service Battlefield Protection Program, Washington, D.C.; Craig Davis, Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome; Ed Stein and Jo-Anne Faulkner of the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy; Tracy Maycock, Oneida County Clerk's office, Utica; Joe Carrado of New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) Region 2, Utica; and Pam Grupp of DOT Region 3, Syracuse. Thanks also to the many librarians, clerks, and secretaries who assisted with research into the repositories consulted for this project.

Special thanks go to George W. Curry, Barbara Giambastiani Bartlett, and Christine Capella Peters for their generous guidance and editing, and to Alice Ohstrom, retired of OPRHP Central Region, for her administrative support during much of this project.



## **Table of Contents**

---

Acknowledgments	i
Table of Contents	iii
List of Illustrations	v
INTRODUCTION	1
SITE HISTORY	
I.    Oneida Indian Homeland, pre-1705	11
II.   European Colonialism & American Independence, 1705-1785	25
III.  European-American Settlement & Agriculture, 1786-1876	59
IV.   Development of the Battlefield Memorial Park, 1877-1926	99
V.    State Development of the Battlefield Historic Site, 1927-2000	151
EXISTING CONDITIONS	211
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION	259
CONCLUSION	313
Annotated Reference List	317
Appendices	
Appendix A:  List of Repositories Consulted	337
Appendix B:  1976 National Register of Historic Places Nomination-Inventory Form	345
Appendix C:  OPRHP Memorandum re: National Register Evaluation	355
Index	359



Cover	"Oriskany Monument during the sesquicentennial," 1927. Reprinted with permission of the Rome Historical Society from Chester Williams, <i>Photographs of Rome, New York 1880-1930</i> (Rome Historical Society, 1975), 89.	
-------	--	--

### INTRODUCTION

Figure 0.1	Location of the Site in New York State	1
Figure 0.2	Location of the Site in the upper Mohawk Valley region	2
Figure 0.3	Table of research results organized by landscape characteristic	6
Figure 0.4	Existing Site boundaries	10

### SITE HISTORY CHAPTER 1

Figure 1.1	Topographic map of New York showing Haudenosaunee nation territories, c.1600	12
Figure 1.2	Albany-to-Oswego waterway	15
Figure 1.3	Wisconsin deglaciation in New York State	18
Figure 1.4	East-west section view north illustrating ravines and upland plateaus	21

### SITE HISTORY CHAPTER 2

Figure 2.1	Section view of an upland road through a forest, c.1777	26
Figure 2.2	Typical 18 <sup>th</sup> -century causeway construction	27
Figure 2.3	The Mohawk Valley, c.1772	28
Figure 2.4	Map of the upper Mohawk Valley showing land grants and patents	30
Figure 2.5	The Burgoyne Campaign of 1777	35
Figure 2.6	Oriskany Patent, survey limits of 1769	38
Figure 2.7:	Detail, map of the Oriskany Patent with annotation highlighting the military road, c.1869	42
Figure 2.8:	Battle of Oriskany, general troop movements	46
	Site History Chapter 2 Period Plan	57

### SITE HISTORY CHAPTER 3

Figure 3.1	Canals and railroads in New York State, 1859	60
Figure 3.2	Turnpike roads in the Mohawk Valley, c.1820	62
Figure 3.3	Map of Oneida County	65
Figure 3.4	Detail, 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson Erie Canal survey	70

Figure 3.5	Detail, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," G. Lansing, Surveyor, June 1785	72
Figure 3.6	Detail, "Map of Whitestown in Oneida County / Taken from Actual Survey By Peleg Gifford, Survr," 1806	75
Figure 3.7	Subdivision of Great Lot 4 in the Second Allotment of the Oriskany Patent	77
Figure 3.8	Detail, <i>Oneida County Atlas</i> (Gillette, 1858)	79
Figure 3.9	Detail, <i>Atlas of Oneida County</i> (Beers, 1874)	80
Figure 3.10	"The Battle-Ground of Oriskany," illustration of the Site by Benson Lossing, 1848	81
Figure 3.11	Holmes-Hutchinson Erie Canal survey showing location of the Battle of Oriskany, 1834	83
Figure 3.12	"Battle of Oriskany," fictitious illustration of the Site from Ballou's <i>Pictorial Drawing Room Companion</i> , 1857	84
Figure 3.13	"The Battle-Ground of Oriskany," detail of Lossing print showing Kent (later Ringrose) barn, 1848	91
Figure 3.14	Illustration of causeway and stone-arch bridge over Battle Creek, 1877	92
Figure 3.15	Photograph of the Ringrose farmhouse, the relocated Utica and Rome Plank Road Company tollgate house, c.1885	93
	Site History Chapter 3 Period Plan	97
<b>SITE HISTORY CHAPTER 4</b>		
Figure 4.1	Map of the New York City-to-Buffalo transportation corridor	99
Figure 4.2	Highway map of Oneida County, 1901	101
Figure 4.3	The Saratoga Monument	107
Figure 4.4	Marker on the Saratoga battlefield	108
Figure 4.5	Herkimer's march monuments in Herkimer and at Herkimer's birthplace	109
Figure 4.6	Map of the Utica & Mohawk Valley [electric] Railway, c.1910	111
Figure 4.7	Site ownership and boundary changes, 1877-1926	112
Figure 4.8	View northeast across the uplands of the Ringrose farm to the Battle Creek ravine, c.1879	113
Figure 4.9	View north through west ravine on Clarke-Metcalf farm, c.1879	114
Figure 4.10	View west across the uplands of the Ringrose farm from the Battle Creek ravine toward the Battle Monument, 1900	115
Figure 4.11	View east across Battle Creek ravine toward the Parkhurst-heir barns, c.1900	116
Figure 4.12	Map of the Site during the centennial celebration, August 6, 1877	118
Figure 4.13	The centennial celebration at the East Stand, view south through Battle Creek (east) ravine, August 6, 1877	119



Figure 4.14	"Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument Aug. 6, 1884"	122
Figure 4.15	View north toward the Battle Monument, c.1900	123
Figure 4.16	View north toward Herkimer's march monument, c.1926	124
Figure 4.17	"Proposed reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915	125
Figure 4.18	View east across uplands of Ringrose farm toward Battle Creek ravine and Parkhurst-heir farmstead, c.1922	128
Figure 4.19	View south through Battle Creek ravine, c.1912	129
Figure 4.20	View west across Ringrose farm to Battle Monument, 1891	130
Figure 4.21	View north through Battle Creek ravine, c.1900	132
Figure 4.22	View southwest toward Battle Monument, c.1912	135
Figure 4.23	Renderings of bas-relief bronze panels on the Battle Monument	139
Figure 4.24	View south of Road causeway and bridge from Battle Creek ravine, c.1912	140
Figure 4.25	View north from below Battle Monument across lowlands stretching to the Mohawk River, c.1912	142
Figure 4.26	View north toward Battle Monument and flagstaff, August 6, 1922	144
Figure 4.27	Typical bronze topographic relief tablet used on Herkimer's march monuments	145
	Site History Chapter 4 Period Plan	149
<b>SITE HISTORY CHAPTER 5</b>		
Figure 5.1	Map of the New York State Thruway near the Site, 1956	152
Figure 5.2	Plan of proposed State acquisition of the Saratoga battlefield, 1927	156
Figure 5.3	Map of historic sites under control of the State Education Department, c.1955	158
Figure 5.4	"Restoring" the Saratoga battlefield landscape, 1926	159
Figure 5.5	Plans for the construction of the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway, 1933	161
Figure 5.6	Aerial photograph of the Site and surrounding region, 1965	162
Figure 5.7	Site ownership and boundary changes, 1927-2000	164
Figure 5.8	Aerial photograph of the Site, c.1931	165
Figure 5.9	View northwest of the 1927 rest house, c.1940	166
Figure 5.10	"Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany," 1927	167
Figure 5.11	View south from the Battle Monument toward the speakers' platform erected for the 150 <sup>th</sup> anniversary, August 6, 1927	168

Figure 5.12	Rendering of the proposed monument to the "Unknown Patriotic Soldiers of Tryon County," c.1928	169
Figure 5.13	Detail, "Plan for Entrance Road to Oriskany Monument," c.1928	170
Figure 5.14	Rendered plan of proposed "Oriskany Battlefield State Park," 1955	174
Figure 5.15	Aerial photograph of Battle Monument, 1962	175
Figure 5.16	The rest house following rebuilding into a visitor center, 1967	176
Figure 5.17	View of the Battle Monument showing reforestation on the lowlands, 1999	177
Figure 5.18	Postcard of the Battle Monument, c.1962	180
Figure 5.19	View northeast of the Ringrose barns from the Road, 1949	190
Figure 5.20	View south of the Ringrose farmhouse from the Road, 1949	190
Figure 5.21	Side elevation, "Standard Rest House," c.1927	191
Figure 5.22	Plan, "Standard Rest House," c.1927	192
Figure 5.23	View north through Battle Creek ravine with footbridge in foreground, c.1970	193
Figure 5.24	View northwest of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument with vista of Battle Monument in background, c.1928	197
Figure 5.25	View northeast of the Battle Monument gateway, 1967	198
Figure 5.26	View northwest of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, 1949	201
Figure 5.27	View of wood-slat and concrete-end bench adjacent to visitor center, c.1965	202
Figure 5.28	View north of the brick seating/interpretive area, 1967	202
Figure 5.29	View west of c.1940s main entrance sign, 1980	203
Figure 5.30	View west of rustic welcome sign, 1979	204
Figure 5.31	View north of panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk, c.1976	204
	Site History Chapter 5 Period Plan	209
<b>EXISTING CONDITIONS</b>		
Figure 6.1	Oblique aerial view of the west half of the Site	211
Figure 6.2	Map of the Mohawk Valley in the vicinity of the Site	213
Figure 6.3	View west of the Road along east plateau	215

Figure 6.4	View west through Erie Canal	216
Figure 6.5	View west through former electric railway corridor	216
Figure 6.6	Composite tax map of properties adjoining the Site	217
Figure 6.7	Kozdra house	218
Figure 6.8	Mazur house	218
Figure 6.9	Neidl building	219
Figure 6.10	Fitzgerald-Grozsek house	219
Figure 6.11	Blair house	220
Figure 6.12	Parkhurst Cemetery	221
Figure 6.13	View from the Erie Canal towpath northeast across lowlands north of the Site	221
Figure 6.14	Ringrose farmhouse	222
Figure 6.15	Aerial view of the Donohoe property adjacent to the Site	223
Figure 6.16	Aerial view of the Walter Weigand property adjacent to the Site	223
Figure 6.17	Dingman house	224
Figure 6.18	Byron Weigandt house	224
Figure 6.19	Survey of the Site showing natural landforms and constructed features	226
Figure 6.20	Photograph of exposed subsoils at Burrows Excavating	227
Figure 6.21	Battle Creek near electric railway culvert	228
Figure 6.22	Aerial view of the east plateau space	230
Figure 6.23	Aerial view of the west plateau space	231
Figure 6.24	View north of Battle Creek ravine space from the causeway	232
Figure 6.25	Battle Creek ravine showing interpreted alignment of military road	234
Figure 6.26	Road trace on east slope of Battle Creek ravine	234
Figure 6.27	The walk to the visitor center	236
Figure 6.28	Gravel ravine path	236
Figure 6.29	Infrared aerial photograph of the Site illustrating forest cover and lawn	238
Figure 6.30	Pasture-line trees on west plateau	239
Figure 6.31	Roadside sugar maples on east plateau	239
Figure 6.32	Battle Monument sugar maples	240
Figure 6.33	White pine, Oneida Tree of Peace	240

Figure 6.34	East plateau trees	241
Figure 6.35	Horse barn	242
Figure 6.36	Battle Monument	243
Figure 6.37	Visitor center	244
Figure 6.38	Maintenance garage	244
Figure 6.39	Footbridge over Battle Creek	245
Figure 6.40	Unknown Soldiers' Monument showing obscured vista to Battle Monument	246
Figure 6.41	Battle Monument gateway and detail of gate	247
Figure 6.42	Split-rail boundary fence along Road	248
Figure 6.43	Unknown Soldiers' Monument gate	249
Figure 6.44	Battle Monument flagstaffs	249
Figure 6.45	Herkimer's march (beech tree) monument	250
Figure 6.46	Unknown Soldiers' Monument and relocated D.A.R. piers	250
Figure 6.47	Main entrance sign	251
Figure 6.48	Historical marker (small State Education sign) and bench	251
Figure 6.49	State Education Sign	252
Figure 6.50	New interpretive sign: welcome sign at north end of parking area	252
Figure 6.51	Operational sign at east end of gravel ravine path	253
Figure 6.52	Representative stone pile	253
Figure 6.53	Representative picnic table and barbeque on east plateau	254
Figure 6.54	Bird house south of parking area	255
Existing Conditions Plan		257

### **ANALYSIS & EVALUATION**

Figure 7.1	Overlay of 1789/90 Oriskany Patent survey on 1955 U.S.G.S. maps showing alignment of military road relative to state highway NY 69	267
------------	--	-----

# INTRODUCTION

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site [hereafter referred to as the "Site"] is an 80-acre property that encompasses the heart of the field on which the Battle of Oriskany was fought on August 6, 1777. A decisive skirmish in the opening years of the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Oriskany was part of the British Campaign of 1777 which ended in American victory at Saratoga. Following American independence, the Oriskany battlefield fell into obscurity during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the region was settled and the old-growth forest was cleared for agriculture. In the second half of the century, however, a small memorial park was privately developed on the battlefield following the national centennial in 1877. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the small memorial park was expanded into a State-owned historic site in which the lands encompassing much of the battlefield were preserved and interpreted.

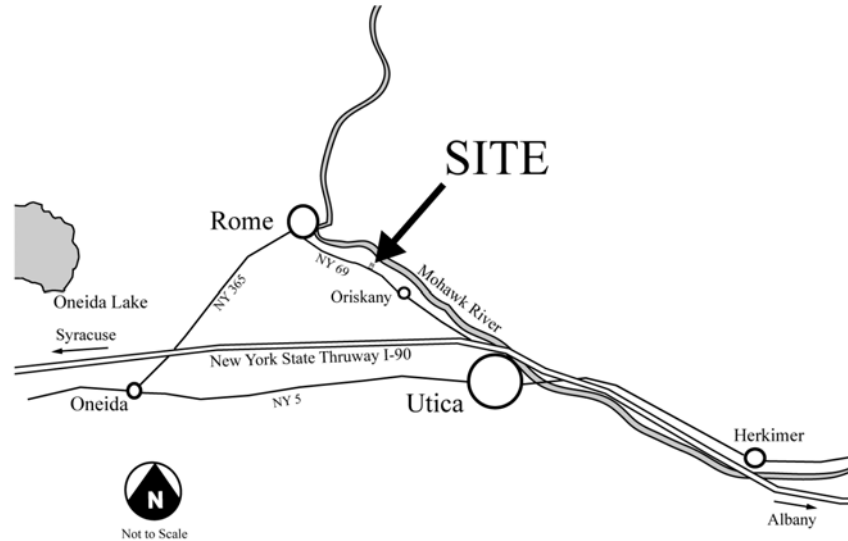


Figure 0.1: Location of the Site in New York State. Reproduced with permission from Grolier Encyclopedia, 1946, s.v. "New York."

## Introduction

---

The Site is located in the upper Mohawk Valley region of New York State in the County of Oneida, roughly halfway between the cities of Rome and Utica and about one-half mile south of the Mohawk River [Figures 0.1, 0.2]. The Site, which straddles the boundary between the City of Rome and the Town of Whitestown, is owned by the State of New York and is under the jurisdiction of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).



**Figure 0.2:** Location of the Site in the upper Mohawk Valley region. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

## Management Summary

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) is a comprehensive management document that traces the history of the development of a landscape and evaluates its existing condition relative to its historic character. The CLR for the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is intended to clearly identify the landscape characteristics and related features, values, and associations that make the Site historically significant, based on criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places. Through the CLR process of documentation and analysis, this report will provide a basis for management and treatment decisions about the landscape's built features, natural systems, and operation/maintenance.

The landscape of the Site has proved to be a challenging management issue due to several factors. Foremost has been the lack of documentation on the development of the landscape over time, both during the battle and later commemorative periods. This has weakened any attempt to connect and relate the Site to larger historic contexts such as transportation, colonial land speculation, and agriculture. The significance of the commemorative landscape has also not been articulated in relationship to the landscape of the battle period. Over time, this has resulted in the loss of landscape characteristics related to both periods. These management issues, among others, are addressed through the documentation and analysis provided in this CLR.

A comprehensive CLR includes the following parts:

- Introduction
  - Part 1: Site History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis and Evaluation
  - Part 2: Treatment
- (continued)

## **Introduction**

---

- Part 3: Record of Treatment
- Appendices, Bibliography, and Index<sup>1</sup>

Parts 2 and 3 are not being included in the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site CLR due to the limited scope of the project. A brief overview of treatment recommendations and recommendations for further work is provided in the conclusion.

### **Historical Summary**

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is primarily significant as the site of the Battle of Oriskany and is secondarily significant as a representative example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commemorative landscape. The first period of significance is August 6, 1777, the date of the Battle of Oriskany, a decisive ambush that occurred within a landscape context of forests and transportation corridors in the New York frontier of the upper Mohawk Valley. The second period of significance covers the continuity of commemoration and the development of a commemorative landscape on the Site beginning in 1877 within a landscape context of agricultural and transportation corridors. This commemorative period continues through the State's acquisition and development until 1955, when the present boundaries of the Site were established. These two periods of significance are directly related to the historic contexts of the Revolutionary War in New York and to the history of its commemoration.

The Mohawk River Valley follows a narrow corridor between the Adirondack Mountains to the north and the Allegheny Plateau to the south and stretches 100 miles from the Hudson River in the east to a watershed divide and portage known as the Oneida Carry at Rome on the west. For centuries, the Mohawk Valley provided the most viable way to reach the Great Lakes from the eastern seaboard as it formed the only water-level course across the highlands of the Allegheny Plateau. As a major transportation corridor, the landscape of the Mohawk Valley shaped trade, settlement patterns, and military developments across New York. For the League of the Haudenosaunee, whose homeland stretched across New York prior to European colonization, the Mohawk Valley provided the spine of their transportation network across the eastern half of the Long House, the symbol of their confederacy. As the English and the French vied for control of the interior of the continent beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and on into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Mohawk Valley became a highly strategic segment of the transportation corridor that stretched from Albany on the Hudson River to Oswego on Lake Ontario. The Oneida Carry portage at the western head of navigation on the Mohawk River formed a vital link in the corridor and was fortified beginning in the 1730s. During the French and Indian War (1753-1763), Fort Stanwix was built by the British on the Oneida Carry, along with a military road connecting it with settled parts of the Mohawk Valley to the east, on which the Site would later be located. After the French lost control of the continent to the British by 1763, the Mohawk Valley continued as an important trading route. As American Patriots fought for independence during the Revolution in the mid 1770s, the Mohawk Valley once again became the scene of decisive military action as the Americans sought to defend against British invasion from Canada. Following the Revolution, the Mohawk Valley grew into a prosperous agricultural region and developed industrial urban centers along major transportation lines, such as the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad which were introduced to the corridor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was in this Mohawk Valley context of transportation, trade, military development, and agriculture that the landscape of the Site took shape. In the time prior to European colonization, the Site was part of a vast northern hardwoods forest that was the homeland and hunting grounds of the Oneida Indians, a nation of the League of the Haudenosaunee, commonly known as the Iroquois Confederacy or Six Nations. The Iroquois Trail, the major route across the League from the Hudson River in the east to Lake Erie in the west, may have run through or near to the Site. While Europeans began to travel and trade through the upper Mohawk Valley beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until 1705 that the Site came under European ownership as part of the Oriskany Patent, a land grant that was acquired by five European investors at this time. The patent lands remained largely unsettled for much of the century, except for the military road to Fort Stanwix which ran through or immediately adjacent to the Site. In the vicinity of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert, Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1998), 3-4, 6.

## Introduction

---

Site, this road likely ran on a straight alignment on the uplands above the Mohawk River, and crossed numerous ravines in the area on earthen and log causeways.

In the summer of 1777, the British began a campaign to divide and conquer New York and thereby separate New England, considered the hotbed of Patriotism, from the rest of the colonies. The British campaign included a three-pronged attack: General Burgoyne would invade from Canada south through the Champlain Valley, General Howe would invade from New York City north through the Hudson Valley, and General St. Leger would invade from Canada west through the Mohawk Valley. All three forces were to meet in Albany, at the confluence of these three important transportation corridors.

Much of St. Leger's forces were composed of Indians, including Mohawk and Seneca from the League of the Haudenosaunee. During the preceding January, the League had suspended the Great Peace, which had bound them together for generations, over taking sides in the Revolution: the Mohawks, Cayugas, and Senecas sided with the British, while the Oneidas and Tuscaroras sided with the American Patriots. By August 3<sup>rd</sup>, St. Leger had advanced to the head of the Mohawk Valley and began a long siege against American Patriot forces at Fort Stanwix under the command of Colonel Peter Gansevoort. To aide Gansevoort, General Nicholas Herkimer called a relief force of an estimated 800 troops made up mainly of German Palatine farmers from the Tryon County Militia. This force assembled in the mid-Mohawk Valley and began a 40-mile march west to Fort Stanwix. At Oriska, an Oneida Indian village ten miles east of Fort Stanwix, the relief force was joined by a contingent of Oneida Indians. St. Leger learned of Herkimer's approach and sent a party to ambush the forces as they left Oriska. The party, composed of British regulars and Seneca and Cayuga warriors, among others, waited for Herkimer at a ravine along the military road, about two miles west of Oriska on the uplands above the Mohawk River. On the morning of August 6<sup>th</sup>, the British ambushed Herkimer's relief force in a bloody, hand-to-hand battle that raged on for nearly six hours. At the end of the fighting, General Herkimer was mortally wounded and nearly half of the Tryon County militia and Oneida contingent, and many of the British-allied Indians, lay killed or wounded. Both sides retreated and neither could rightfully claim victory. For the Haudenosaunee peoples, the Battle of Oriskany, as the ambush came to be called, marked the first time that they had fought one another in defiance of the Great Peace.

Despite heavy losses, the Battle of Oriskany proved to be a major strategic victory for the American Patriots because it weakened the British forces and resulted in British defeat at the Siege of Fort Stanwix. Due to the loss of their western prong, the British campaign became greatly weakened and General Burgoyne lost much-needed relief against the Patriots in the Champlain Valley. On October 17, 1777, Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga and the Patriots gained a decisive victory that marked a turning point in the Revolution.

Following the Revolution, the Oriskany Patent was subdivided and opened for settlement beginning in 1785. Along with Haudenosaunee homelands west of Fort Stanwix, the whole of central and western New York experienced explosive growth and settlement beginning at this time. In the region around the Site, settlers cleared the old-growth forests beginning in the late 1780s, and by the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Site had been settled by the Parkhurst family and was subsequently subdivided and farmed by the Ringrose family, among others. During the first decades of the 19th century, there was probably some disagreement about where the battle took place, but by the 1840s, the Site had been fixed as the location of the battle. While there may have been a flagstaff marking the Site after this time, it was not until the centennial of the battle in 1877 that there was consideration of creating a permanent memorial at the Site. Following a massive centennial celebration attended by an estimated 60,000-75,000 people, planning was begun for a monument and memorial park under the direction of the Oneida Historical Society at Utica. After the Society had purchased a five-acre parcel from the Ringrose farm, an 84-foot high stone obelisk was erected on a high point overlooking the Erie Canal, the New York Central Railroad, the Mohawk River, and the wide expanse of farmland that stretched east, north, and west into the Mohawk Valley. This battle monument was one of several erected across New York following the national centennial, including similar obelisks set in memorial parks at or near the Saratoga and Bennington battlefields.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was increasing interest in expanding the Oriskany five-acre memorial park in order to preserve and interpret the whole battlefield and improve its prominence as a tourist attraction.



Following national trends and based on efforts by private societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, and on State efforts to preserve its Revolutionary War battlefields, the memorial park was expanded into a public historic site that covered much of the purported battlefield by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The first plan for expanding the park was produced in 1915 and called for the creation of a 191-acre battlefield "reservation" which supporters hoped would become part of the National or State park systems. In 1925, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association acquired a 48-acre parcel as the first implementation of this plan, and in 1927, the State acquired the five-acre memorial park under jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation. By this time, several additional monuments and landscape improvements had been undertaken, including the addition of a rest house and a monument to the unknown soldiers of the battle. Due to financial and legal difficulties, and lack of historical documentation, the 191-acre reservation was never assembled, but the State did acquire a total of 80 acres when it finally purchased a portion of the Ringrose farm in 1952 and the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property in 1955, acquisitions which had been planned since 1927. At this time, the former Ringrose farm on the west side of the Site retained an open character and expansive views from the Battle Monument out into the Mohawk Valley. In contrast, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property on the east side of the Site had become by this time covered in large part by a northern hardwoods forest, a feature that evoked the landscape's character during the battle.

Following State acquisition of the entire Site in 1955, few improvements were made to the landscape despite ambitious plans developed during administration by the Department of Education. Signs and paths were added to improve interpretation of battle events, but visitors remained restricted to the southern third of the Site where the monuments and Battle Creek ravine were located. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, natural old-field succession on the northern two-thirds of the Site resulted in the loss of the expansive views and open spatial character that defined the western half of the Site since the time of the centennial celebration and the construction of the Battle Monument.

### Scope of Work and Methodology

The goal of the CLR for the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is to identify the characteristics and associated features of the landscape throughout its history, with an emphasis on the Site's two periods of significance: the Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777) and its period of sustained commemoration (1877-c.1955).<sup>2</sup> The three primary sections of the CLR Part I include: 1. Site History (chapters 1-5), which documents the evolution of the landscape characteristics and associated features through five historic periods defined by ownership and use; 2. Existing Conditions, which documents the current conditions of the Site and inventories landscape characteristics and associated features; 3. and Site Analysis, which summarizes historic and existing conditions of each landscape feature identified in the report, and then evaluates that feature's historic integrity and significance.

#### *Research Methodology*

Three levels of research are identified in *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*: exhaustive, thorough, and limited. A thorough level of research was undertaken for the report as a whole, with greater thoroughness given to research pertaining to the Site's two periods of significance and to specific character-defining features. A less thorough level of research was given to the history of the settlement and development of the Site after the battle up until 1876, as well as to the history of the Site as developed by the State after 1955 because these times fall outside the periods of significance. Due to the breadth and great age of many materials related to the Battle of Oriskany and its commemoration, an exhaustive level of research was not possible. While many sources were researched related to the broad contexts of the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, transportation, and commemoration, it was beyond the scope of this project to research all such sources given their great number and widespread distribution.

---

<sup>2</sup> This is the amended period of significance for the Site based on research completed for this CLR. The battle is presently listed as the only period of significance under existing National Register documentation. See "Analysis and Evaluation" chapter for further discussion and documentation regarding the periods of significance.

## Introduction

Two central research questions with relevance to the battle-period landscape were addressed in the Site Analysis section of the CLR: the location (alignment) of the military road and the location of the battle with respect to the Site. The history of the Battle of Oriskany as a military event was determined to be beyond the scope of this project given the lack of known primary documentation and archeological evidence. A well-documented account of the battle as it took place with relation to the landscape has never been written. Where found, primary-source information on the battle events and limits of the battle were incorporated into the report.

Research for the battle period proved challenging given that many accounts of the battle-period landscape, which were first published beginning in the 1830s, appear to have been based largely on local oral history. Much of this oral history was told by people who likely knew the landscape only after it had been settled and cleared for agriculture. Primary-source accounts of the battle-period landscape are very few. Those that have been reviewed for this report include the journals of Colonel John Montresor and General Jeffrey Amherst who oversaw construction of the military road (courtesy of Dr. William Forbes of Holland Patent); transcripts of accounts from battle veterans (many compiled by Joseph Robertaccio of Utica and James Morrison of Gloversville); documents related to colonial trade and military action; Oriskany Patent documents; and period maps of the Mohawk Valley. Many published histories of the Revolutionary War and the history of the Mohawk Valley were reviewed for relevant information and for an overview of the battle history.

Little had been known about the history of the landscape following the battle from initial settlement in the 1780s and 1790s through the development of agriculture up until the centennial in 1877. Sources consulted for this period included primary documents relative to the survey and partition of the Oriskany Patent, Erie Canal surveys, period maps, property records, and newspaper accounts. These same sources were consulted for information on the commemorative-period landscape, along with photographs, published materials on the centennial celebration, and Site records held in the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites and Central Region offices.

Research into relevant historic contexts was a primary focus of research given the significance of the Site as the location of an event, as well as the close relationship between the Site and regional transportation features and land development patterns. Relevant contexts that were researched included Haudenosaunee and Oneida history, colonial military developments in the Mohawk Valley, colonial land ownership, the Revolutionary War, transportation, agriculture, commemoration, historic preservation, and State development of parks and historic sites.

A list of all depositories consulted during research for this report is included in Appendix A. Figure 0.3 summarizes landscape characteristics that were researched and discussed in each of the chapters.

Landscape Characteristic	Period 1 Pre-1705	Period 2 1705-1785	Period 3 1786-1876	Period 4 1877-1926	Period 5 1927-2000
Natural Systems/Features	*	*	*	*	*
Spatial Organization	X	X	*	*	*
Land Use	*	*	*	*	*
Cultural Traditions	*	*	O	*	*
Cluster Arrangement	O	O	O	O	O
Circulation	X	*	*	*	*
Topography	X	X	*	*	*
Vegetation	X	*	*	*	*
Buildings and Structures	O	*	*	*	*
Views and Vistas	O	O	*	*	*
Constr. Water Features	O	O	X	X	X
Small-Scale Features	O	O	*	*	*
Archeological Sites	X	X	X	X	*

KEY: \* = Information Sought/Found X = No Information Found O = No Information Sought

**Figure 0.3:** Table of research results organized by landscape characteristic. J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

### *Organization of Report*

This CLR Part 1 for the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is organized according to the guidelines established by the National Park Service in its 1998 publication, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*. The primary sections of the CLR Part I are *Site History*, *Existing Conditions*, and *Analysis and Evaluation*. The following is a description of each section as organized for this CLR.

*Site History*: This section is organized into five periods, beginning with a brief overview of pre-European human occupation of the region entitled "Oneida Indian Homeland." The second period, entitled "European Colonialism & American Independence," begins in 1705 when the Site was sold to European land speculators as part of the Oriskany Patent. It was during this second period that the Battle of Oriskany took place along the military road within the old-growth forests of the Site on August 6, 1777. The third period, "European-American Settlement & Agriculture," begins with subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in 1785, which marked the beginning of settlement and agriculture on the Site. The fourth period, "Development of the Battlefield Memorial Park," begins in 1877 with the centennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany and covers a period of private commemoration at the Site. The final period, "State Development of the Battlefield Historic Site," begins with acquisition of the battlefield memorial park in 1927 by the State of New York and covers the State's development and preservation of the Site up until the present, 2000.

Each chapter of the Site History is organized into the following format:

#### **1. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

In this section are discussed the broad historic contexts of the Site, such as military developments, transportation, settlement, agriculture, regional development, and commemoration.

#### **2. SITE NARRATIVE**

This section provides a narrative of the history of the landscape both within and adjoining the Site, and is divided into three subsections. The history of the landscape that adjoins the Site but is not located within its existing boundaries is discussed under the subsection **Landscape Context**. The history of the landscape within the existing boundaries of the Site is discussed under the subsection **Site Development & Use**. A third subsection entitled **Site Boundaries** outlines property ownership within the existing boundaries of the Site.

#### **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

Landscape characteristics are general categories under which specific landscape features are grouped. This section provides a concise description of landscape characteristics and their associated features that exist within the boundaries of the Site. For the Site History chapters, this section also includes major features that are located adjacent to the Site such as the Road (old military road), the electric railway, the Erie Canal, and farm buildings. The National Park Service recognizes the following 13 landscape characteristics in its 1998 *Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*:

**Natural Systems and Features**: Natural aspects that often influence the development and resultant form of a landscape.

**Spatial Organization**: Arrangement of elements creating the ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create spaces.

**Land Use:** Organization, form, and shape of the landscape in response to land use.

**Cultural Traditions:** Practices that influence land use, patterns of division, building forms, and the use of materials.

**Cluster Arrangement:** The location of buildings and structures in the landscape [not applicable to the Site].

**Circulation:** Spaces, features, and materials that constitute systems of movement.

**Topography:** Three-dimensional configuration of the landscape surface characterized by features and orientation.

**Vegetation:** Indigenous or introduced trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and herbaceous materials.

**Buildings and Structures:** Three-dimensional constructs such as houses, barns, garages, stables, bridges, and memorials.

**Views and Vistas:** Features that create or allow a range of vision which can be natural or designed and controlled.

**Constructed Water Features:** The built features and elements that utilize water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions [none found on the Site].

**Small-Scale Features:** Elements that provide details and diversity combined with function and aesthetics.

**Archeological Sites:** Sites containing surface and subsurface remnants related to historic or prehistoric land use.<sup>3</sup>

The *Existing Conditions* and *Analysis and Evaluation* sections are organized slightly differently in order to address current Site management issues. In both of these sections, there is a clear distinction made between landscape characteristics and associated features that are located within the Site and under the jurisdiction of OPRHP, and those that are not. Both sections are organized according to the following format:

### **1. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT**

This section discusses those landscape characteristics surrounding and adjacent to the Site that are not under the jurisdiction of OPRHP but which are important to the Site's history and setting. These include natural systems and features of the region, transportation corridors, and adjoining properties.

### **2. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

This section addresses the 11 landscape characteristics that are found on the Site.

*Existing Conditions:* This section provides a detailed discussion of the physical attributes of the landscape context and landscape characteristics as presently exist in the year 2000. It also includes an assessment of the physical condition of each landscape feature according to the following three categories:

---

<sup>3</sup> Page, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, 53.

**Good:** Indicates the landscape feature shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

**Fair:** Indicates the landscape feature shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within three to five years to prevent further harm. The cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the significant characteristics of the feature, if left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, will cause the feature to degrade to a poor condition.

**Poor:** Indicates the landscape feature shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required.

**Unknown:** Indicates that not enough information is available to make an evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

*Analysis and Evaluation:* The first part of this section is the Statement of Significance, which includes a review of existing National Register documentation. The second part is the Site Analysis, in which individual landscape features relevant to the landscape context and landscape characteristics are analyzed. This analysis is organized for each feature according to the following format:

**Historic Condition:** a brief synopsis of the feature's history as documented in the site history section of the CLR up until the end of the period of significance in c.1955.

**Existing Condition:** a brief description of the feature as it has changed from 1955 (the end of the period of significance) to the present.

**Analysis:** A determination of whether the feature is extant and whether it contributes to the historic significance of the Site based on a comparison of historic and existing conditions. Features are determined to be "contributing" if they were present during the periods of significance, possess historic integrity to that period, and are related to the areas of historic significance. Features are determined to be "non-contributing" if they were not present during the periods of significance, no longer possess historic integrity, or are unrelated to the areas of historic significance. The historic integrity of each feature is evaluated against the seven aspects established by the National Register: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

As part of this analysis, this section includes a detailed review of documentation related to two issues central to the battle-period landscape: the location of the battle, and the location (alignment) of the military road.

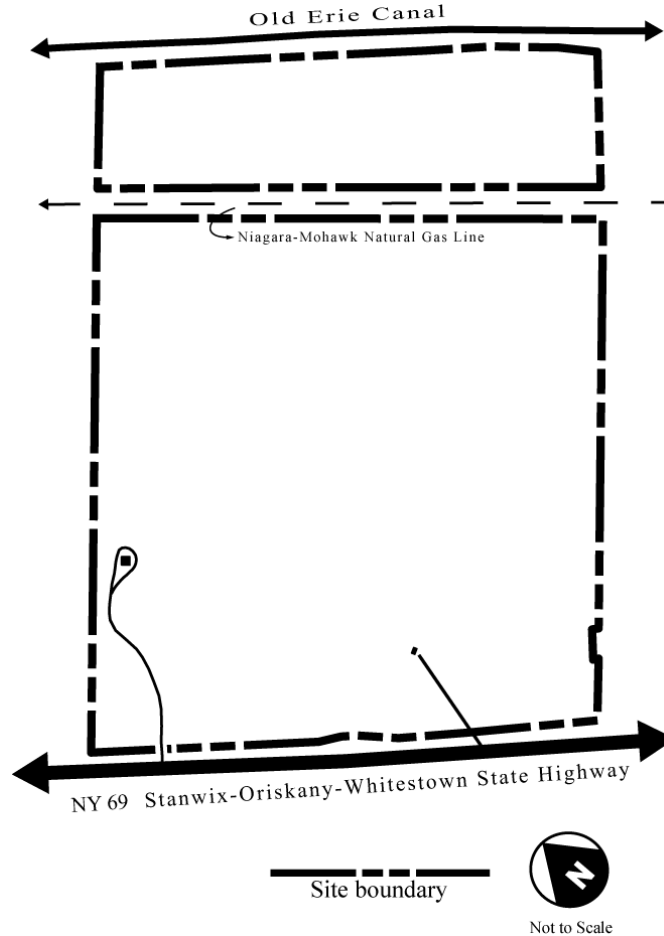
### Study Boundaries

The study boundaries for this CLR are defined largely by the present limits of the 80-acre State-owned historic site [Figure 0.4]. These boundaries follow the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway (NY 69) on the south; the State-owned Erie Canal on the north; and private property to the east and west. A 100-foot wide corridor cuts across the northern third of the Site. This corridor, formerly an electric interurban railway, is privately owned by the Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation and therefore falls outside of the Site's boundaries. The Site forms a rectangular parcel that, including the Niagara-Mohawk corridor, is approximately 2100 feet (north-south) by 1550 feet (east-west).

---

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan Guidelines," reprinted in Page, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, 67.

The significance and historic character of the Site are not limited to the landscape strictly within the bounds of the State-owned historic site. Therefore, this study has included a detailed look at broader landscape contexts such as natural systems, Oneida Indian land use, transportation corridors, regional urban centers, agriculture, and views.



**Figure 0.4:** Existing Site boundaries. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000, based on 1998 Oneida County tax map information.

## Summary of Findings

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is historically significant as the location of a decisive Revolutionary War battle and as a representation of a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commemorative landscape. The Site retains a relatively high level of historic integrity and conveys the significance of its landscape through its natural systems and features, vegetation, circulation, buildings and structures, and small-scale features. Significant features of the landscape include the natural landforms, topography, creeks, forest, monuments, and drives, as well as the landscape's relationship to adjoining transportation corridors of the Mohawk Valley.

# ONEIDA INDIAN HOMELAND, PRE-1705

## **Introduction**

In the centuries prior to its sale to a group of European investors in 1705, the Site was part of a vast landscape of forests, rivers, lakes, plains, hills, and valleys that formed the homeland of the Oneida Indians, one of the five (later six) nations of the League of the Haudenosaunee, more commonly known as the Iroquois Confederacy. This natural landscape was a significant part of Oneida culture, being a major element in their creation stories, social structure, and political organization.

## **1. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

### **Pre-European Contact History**

The pre-European habitation of New York State spans a long period of approximately 11,000 years, beginning soon after the retreat of the Wisconsin glacier. Archaeologists have divided this time into four general periods: the earliest, the Paleo-Indian period, lasting about 2,000 to 3,000 years; the Archaic period, beginning approximately 8,000 years ago and lasting for 5,000 years or more; the Woodland period, beginning about 3,500 years ago and lasting to the period of European contact; and the period of historic and proto-historic tribes, dating from about 1500 A.D. to modern times. Oneida Indian history falls within the Woodland and historic periods, but their ancestry traces farther back.

The Paleo-Indians were a thinly-scattered, nomadic people who hunted migratory animals such as mammoth, mastodon, and caribou that grazed on the open tundra landscape that developed following retreat of the glacier. As the glacier retreated farther north, clumps of spruce, fir, larch, and birch began to replace the tundra, followed by thicker stands of white and red pine. The migratory animals dwindled as the open areas became covered in forest. Beginning about 9,000 to 7,000 years ago, the Archaic period emerged as the northern hardwoods forest began to dominate. The Archaic culture was characterized by dependence on regional, rather than migratory, resources in a hunting-fishing-gathering subsistence pattern. These resource regions eventually became defined as exclusive territories for specific bands of people.<sup>1</sup>

Within the maturing environment of the northern hardwoods forest, the Woodland culture began to develop beginning about 3,000 years ago. Woodland culture was characterized by use of ceramics and elaborate mortuary practices. By the late stage of Woodland development, hunting-gathering-fishing patterns were supplemented by agriculture, which permitted the development of more permanent settlements. By about 1000 A.D., a distinct Iroquoian culture, which was present during the European contact period in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, had largely taken shape. Iroquois, a French word, defines a distinct linguistic and cultural people that lived in a wide expanse stretching from the present Province of Ontario southward to the Susquehanna region of Pennsylvania and from Lake Erie east to the Adirondack Mountains. The presence of an Iroquoian culture in New York State was the product of centuries of indigenous development that evolved out of preceding cultures in the same Northeast region.<sup>2</sup>

The Iroquois people were comprised of eleven groups or nations, five of which came together to form the People of the Long House, or the League of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy), which Haudenosaunee tradition states was founded around 1450 A.D.<sup>3</sup> The Five Nations, as the English colonists

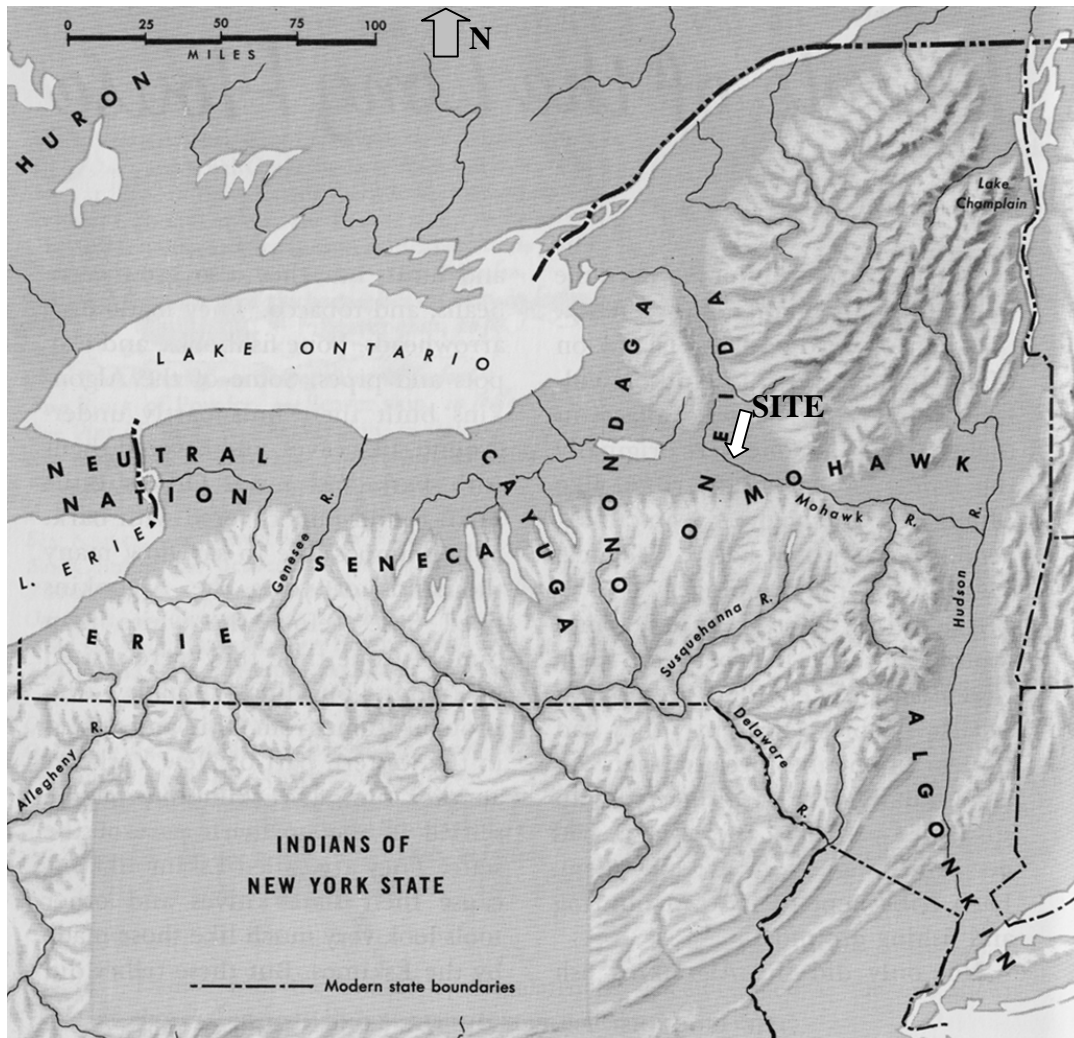
---

<sup>1</sup> Donald Lenig, "The Oneida Indians and Their Predecessors," in Virginia Kelly, ed., *The History of Oneida County* (Utica: Published by the County, 1977), 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> This is known as the *In situ* theory of Iroquois origins. See Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

called the League, included the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas.<sup>4</sup> The Mohawks were the "Keepers of the Eastern Door" and the Senecas were the "Keepers of the Western Door." The League of the Haudenosaunee stretched from Lake Erie west to the Hudson River, and within this territory were the headwaters of major rivers and transportation corridors in the northeastern part of the continent, including the Allegheny, Susquehanna, Delaware, Saint Lawrence, and Hudson Rivers [Figure 1.1].



**Figure 1.1:** Topographic map of New York showing Haudenosaunee nation territories, c.1600. Map drawn by Harold K. Faye. Reproduced from Bertrand M. Wainger et al., *Exploring New York* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942, third edition 1963), 38.

The League was represented by an allegorical Long House (the traditional building type of the Haudenosaunee) with its political seat in the central nation of Onondaga [near present-day Syracuse], where the Grand Council met and wampum records were kept. One of the major reasons for the creation of

<sup>4</sup> The Iroquoian Tuscaroras from the Carolinas became the Sixth Nation in 1722 and were given a small territory between the Oneidas and Onondagas. They would side with the American Patriots in the Revolution along with the Oneidas.



the League was the elimination of inter-tribal warfare through political means mandated by the Great Peace, *Kayenarhekowa*. The coming of the Great Peace was told in the constitution of the League:

*I, Deganawidea, and the union lords now uproot the tallest pine tree and into the cavity thereby made we cast all weapons of war. Into the depths of the earth, down into the deep underneath currents of water flowing to unknown regions we cast all the weapons of strife. We bury them from sight and we plant again the tree. Thus shall the Great Peace, Kayenarhekowa, be established.*<sup>5</sup>

Although each nation was bound together in the League through the Great Peace, each also continued to pursue its own national interests. Through their political unity, geographic advantage, and cultural prowess, the League of the Haudenosaunee became the predominant military and political power in eastern North America by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Oneidas were the "People of the Standing Stone," *Onyotaa:ka*.<sup>6</sup> Their vast homeland, comprising about 6 million acres and stretching about 200 miles from near the Susquehanna River in the south to the Saint Lawrence River in the north, and roughly 50 miles from Oneida Lake east to near West Canada Creek (present Village of Herkimer), belonged collectively to the Oneidas, who, as all Haudenosaunee, did not hold the European concept of private property ownership. The 27-known Oneida village sites were concentrated in present-day Madison County and western Oneida County, south and southeast of Oneida Lake. The vast area of their nation outside of this area was considered hunting territory. The area between the Oriskany Creek, two miles east of the Site, and West Canada Creek is believed to have been a buffer zone with Mohawk villages to the east.<sup>7</sup>

The Haudenosaunee, including the Oneidas, lived in stockaded villages that were usually on high ground near a water supply. Each nation typically had one major village, called a castle, with a population of several hundred up to a thousand or more inhabitants. Surrounding the villages were agricultural fields, where they raised corn, beans and squash, as well as tobacco. Once the agricultural soils became depleted and other resources became scarce, a village would be moved, generally within the same region; it is believed this occurred typically once per generation. As the power of the League of the Haudenosaunee increased, peace prevailed and smaller, less-heavily stockaded villages became more common.<sup>8</sup>

### **European Contact-Period History**

Beginning in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, European colonists first made contact with Iroquoian peoples, starting with French trading posts along the Saint Lawrence River. Later, the Dutch encountered the Haudenosaunee people upon their first voyage in 1609 into Mohawk territory in the upper Hudson Valley. By 1624, the Dutch had established a permanent trading post with the Mohawk at Fort Orange (later Albany), one of a series of small trade-oriented settlements they established along the Hudson River. These settlements were governed as the colony of New Netherlands by a trading organization, the Dutch West India Company. By the 1630s, the French were also venturing into Haudenosaunee territory, traveling for trading purposes south from the Saint Lawrence River region into Onondaga and Oneida territories.

The first documented contact Oneidas had on their homeland with Europeans occurred in December 1634, when the Dutch sent a party of men from Fort Orange to investigate French trading with the Haudenosaunee in the upper Mohawk Valley. One of these men, Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, recorded his journey to a large Oneida village near Oneida Lake. His journal marked the beginning of the contact (historic) period with the Oneidas. French Jesuit missionaries also came to Oneida territory following peace between the Five Nations and the French in 1653 and the establishment of a mission at

---

<sup>5</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 129.

<sup>6</sup> Oneida Nation, "A Brief History of the Oneida Indian Nation" (Online at [www.oneida-nation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML](http://www.oneida-nation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML), copyright 1998), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Lenig, "The Oneida Indians," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 8-9.

Onondaga in 1656.<sup>9</sup> In 1664, the English took over the Dutch colony, renamed it New York, and began to significantly increase trade and settlement across the colony, spreading farther west and north from the old Dutch posts along the Hudson River into the upper Mohawk Valley and Lake Ontario regions.

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century at the beginning of European contact, it is believed that as many as four Oneida villages may have been simultaneously occupied. The total Oneida population around 1630 is estimated at between 3,700 and 4,200. Around this time, European infectious diseases, to which the Haudenosaunee had no prior contact and therefore no immunity, began to decimate native populations. Van den Bogaert recorded a smallpox epidemic among the Mohawk in 1634, and it is likely that European diseases began to decimate the Oneidas beginning at the same time. At the end of this epidemic, it is estimated that the Oneidas were reduced to a population of between 1,500 and 1,800. In following decades, the Oneidas took in many refugees from wars with neighboring peoples and provided them with rights equal to native Oneidas as they tried to rebuild their population. By the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, reports showed that well over half of the Oneida population was non-native.<sup>10</sup>

The epidemic of European disease had grave consequences for Oneida society and culture, especially in combination with an onslaught of pressures from increasing European trade. European trade introduced great demand for the supply of furs on one side, and on the other, introduced new goods to which the Haudenosaunee became dependent, such as firearms, iron goods, and alcohol. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, there began a long and tortuous struggle between imperial trading powers in which the Haudenosaunee became inexorably involved. This struggle involved the Algonquin, Huron and French to the north and west, and the Haudenosaunee, Dutch, and later English to the south and east. European trading pressures in part caused the League of the Haudenosaunee to attack its related non-League Iroquois nations in the competition for furs. Between Van den Bogaert's visit in 1634 and the establishment of the Oneida Jesuit mission around 1656, the Iroquoian Huron, Petun, Neutral and Erie Nations were destroyed by League nations.<sup>11</sup> The European fur trade also caused strains within the League. The Oneidas and Onondaga, for example, were often harassed in their attempts to pass through Mohawk territory to trade with the Dutch at Fort Orange.

Due in large part to Haudenosaunee trade-related threats and attacks, the French led an expedition in 1696 against the Oneidas and Onondagas and burned their villages and crops. By the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Oneidas were in weakened condition, with decreased population, recently destroyed villages and crops, and increasing European travel through their territory. The 18<sup>th</sup> century would bring continued problems for the Oneidas, including factionalism, social disorganization, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the taking of Oneida land.<sup>12</sup> In 1705, English investors bought, under a European understanding of property ownership, the first part of the Oneidas' ancestral homeland: the 30,000-acre Oriskany Patent in which the Site was located.

## **Transportation**

During this historic period, the Mohawk River Valley provided a natural transportation corridor for the Haudenosaunee people. The valley was part of a major waterway that provided the only water-level pass from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes between the highland regions of the Appalachians and the Adirondacks [Figure 1.2]. This waterway, later known as the Albany-to-Oswego waterway, began with the Hudson River, which flowed from the Adirondacks south to New York City and the Atlantic Ocean. Approximately 150 miles north of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mohawk River joined the Hudson. The falls of Cohoes, however, blocked navigation at this confluence, so travelers used a 15-mile land route from Albany west to the frontier European settlement of Schenectady. From Schenectady, the Mohawk River provided a navigable waterway west through the narrow divide between the Appalachian highlands and the Adirondack foothills, except for a short portage at Fall Hill fault (later Little Falls) and numerous rifts and

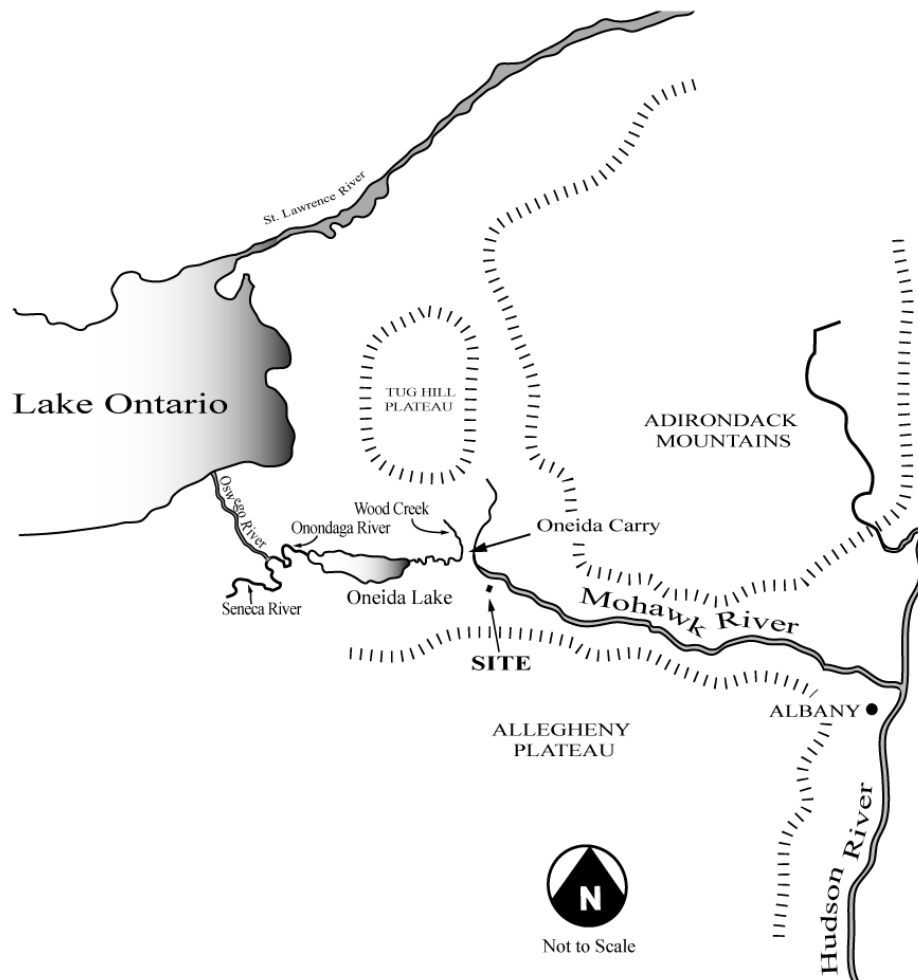
<sup>9</sup> William Starna, "The Oneida Homeland in the Seventeenth Century," *The Oneida Indian Experience* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-18.

<sup>11</sup> Lenig, "The Oneida Indians," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Starna, "The Oneida Homeland," 20.

shallows. At 120 miles west from the Hudson River in the Oneida homeland, the Mohawk River turned abruptly north against a watershed divide. At this point, there was a one-mile portage which was known by the Oneidas as the *Deo-wain-sta*, and by the English as the Oneida Carry or Great Carrying Place. Wood Creek, a tiny river on the west side of the Oneida Carry that was barely navigable during dry seasons, formed the next segment of the waterway. Wood Creek provided access to a series of small creek that led 18 miles to Oneida Lake. Once across 20-mile long Oneida Lake, travelers had a relatively short journey north to Lake Ontario via the Onondaga (later Oneida) and Oswego Rivers, the future location of Forts Oswego and Ontario. These rivers also provided access to interior points west such as the Finger Lakes.



**Figure 1.2:** Albany-to-Oswego waterway. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

On land, the Iroquois Trail, *Wä-ä-gwen'-ne-yuh*, followed much of this waterway. This trail, which served as the primary east-west thoroughfare connecting the main villages or castles of the League of the Haudenosaunee across their symbolic Long House, is believed to have been a well-worn groove of between 12 to 18 inches in width.<sup>13</sup> While the path followed the Mohawk River and other natural rivers and

<sup>13</sup> The English called the Iroquois Trail the Mohawk or Great Central Trail. See Albert C. Rose, *Historic American Roads* (New York: Crown, 1976), 20; Avery W. Skinner, "The Old Trail from the Mohawk to Oswego," *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association*, vol. 13 (1914), 199-209.

streams to the west, it generally avoided the lowlands for adjacent uplands, although there may have been seasonal-use trails adjacent to the riverbanks. The uplands generally provided a drier, more stable route for the trail as opposed to the swamps of the lowlands, but did have the disadvantage of greater changes in elevation, such as encountered in ravines. The high understory of the mature upland forests would have also provided easier passage compared to the lowlands which were typically dense with underbrush.

The Iroquois Trail ran from *Skä-neh'-ta-de* (near later Schenectady) in the east, and west of this village it diverged into two branches on the north and south sides of the Mohawk River. Near *Nun-da-dä-sis* (later Utica), the main trail continued due west toward the Oneida castle; trails leading northwest on both sides of the Mohawk River to the *Deo-wain-sta* (Oneida Carry) are believed to have been branches from the main trail that were not heavily used.<sup>14</sup> The branch trail on the south side of the Mohawk would have passed through or near the Site. From the Oneida castle, the trail continued to the Onondaga castle and then proceeded west along the northern edge of the Finger Lakes and ended at Lake Erie. Two other primary Iroquois trails, which formed an inverted triangle with the main trail, ran from *Ta-yo-ga* (later Tioga) on the Susquehanna River northwest to *De-o'-on-go-wä* (later Batavia) and northeast to *Skä-neh'-ta-de*. Another branch ran north from the *Deo-wain-sta* to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.

## **2. SITE NARRATIVE**

### **Landscape Context**

During this historic period in the centuries prior to 1705, the Site was part of a wide expanse of forests, rivers, lakes, plains, hills, and valleys that formed the homeland of the Oneida Indians. The Oneidas likely considered the area around the Site an important hunting and fishing ground. It bordered on a region stretching east from Oriskany Creek (present Village of Oriskany) to West Canada Creek (present Village of Herkimer) that archeologists believe was a buffer zone between the Oneidas and the Mohawks.<sup>15</sup>

The Iroquois Trail—the main east-west route across the League of the Haudenosaunee, followed the course of the Mohawk River and a branch leading to the *Deo-wain-sta* (Oneida Carry, later city of Rome) may have run through or near the Site. Aside from this trail, there are no known cultural features near or on the Site, as Oneida villages were concentrated in an area about 10 miles to the west, south and southeast of Oneida Lake. Temporary hunting and fishing camps may have existed in the area.

### **Site Development & Use**

During this historic period, the Site was part of the vast region that comprised the Oneida Homeland, and therefore would have had the same character and uses as the larger region.

### **Site Boundaries**

During this historic period, the Site was part of the wide expanse of territory belonging to the Oneidas, who held claim to their land collectively. They, as all Haudenosaunee, did not hold the European concept of private property ownership, and therefore property boundaries would not have been associated with the Site.

---

<sup>14</sup> Skinner, "The Old Trail," 201; Daniel Wagner, *Our County and Its People / A Descriptive Work on Oneida County, New York* (Boston: The Boston History Company, 1896), 20; Gilbert Haggerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull* (Providence: Mowbray, 1971), 12. Other sources state that the main trail went to the Oneida Carry and then continued southwest to the Oneida castle. See John Albert Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany* (Rome: Rome Sentinel Company, 1927), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Lenig, "The Oneida Indians," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 26.

### **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **Natural Systems and Features**<sup>16</sup>

During this historic period prior to 1705, the natural systems and features of the upper Mohawk Valley--the location of the Site--remained in their natural state that had evolved over thousands of years.

#### **Geomorphology**

The upper Mohawk Valley encompassed the upper reaches of the Mohawk River about 100 miles west of the its confluence with the Hudson River and 20 miles south of its source in the Adirondack foothills. The Mohawk Valley formed the only water-level pass connecting the watersheds of the Atlantic Ocean and Great Lakes between the two great highlands of the region, the Allegheny Plateau, part of the larger Appalachian formation, and the Adirondacks [Figures 1.1, 1.2, pages 12, 15]. Compared to the more easterly sections of the valley, the upper Mohawk Valley featured a relatively broad valley floor and low valley walls. Maximum relief in the portion of the valley near the Site reached about 600 feet, ranging from a lowpoint on the Mohawk River to the highest elevation of approximately 1010 feet on the north side of the valley.<sup>17</sup>

Aside from the Mohawk Valley, the major landforms in the region included Lake Ontario to the northwest, the highlands of the Allegheny Plateau to the south, the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains to the northeast, and the Tug Hill Plateau to the northwest.

#### **Geology**

Deposition from ancient seas, uplifting and movement of great landmasses, and glacial action shaped the geology of the upper Mohawk River Valley in the vicinity of the Site. This valley originally formed in the drainage divide between the uplifted landmasses of the Adirondack Mountains to the north and the Allegheny Plateau, an expansive highlands region that stretched south toward the Atlantic lowlands and west toward Lake Erie, to the south.

The southern side of the upper Mohawk Valley was formed by the northern extreme of the Allegheny Plateau. This plateau was formed of Ordovician and lower Silurian-period sedimentary rock built up by ancient seas during the Paleozoic era, about 420 to 600 million years before this time. During the Mesozoic Era, about 20 million years prior, the plateau was slowly uplifted to about 1,600 feet and slightly tilted to the south. The uplifted northern face of this plateau formed the highlands on the southern side of the Mohawk Valley, reaching upward of 1,000 feet in this region.

The north side of the upper Mohawk Valley consisted of the foothills of the southern extreme of the Adirondack Mountains. The oldest bedrock of the Adirondacks was formed of volcanic (igneous) rocks that were a southern extension of the Canadian shield which formed during Precambrian times about one billion years before.

The surface geology of the upper Mohawk Valley was formed largely by the action of the Wisconsin glacier, which retreated about 12,000 years before and had covered the land for the previous 288,000 years.<sup>18</sup> The ice reached depths of up to one mile, covering the highest uplands and exerting great pressure on the earth. In the upper Mohawk Valley, the late-period Wisconsin glacier advanced and retreated three different times, extending an arm known as the Oneida and larger Ontarian Lobes east into the valley. As the glacier moved, it ground up bedrock into till, smoothed down uplands, and rounded out valleys.

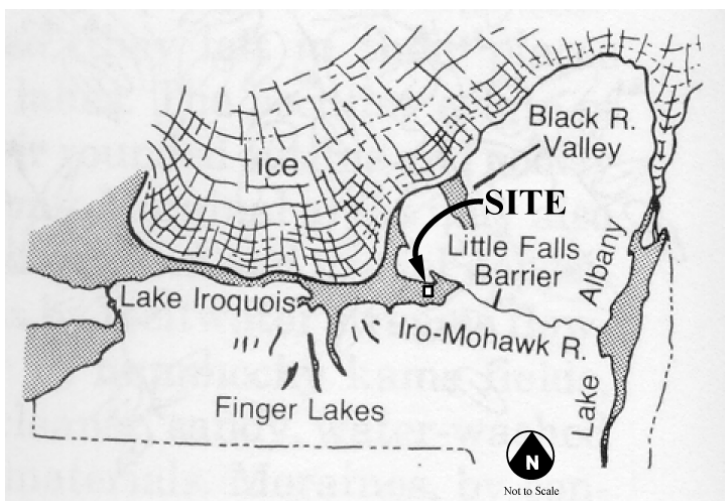
---

<sup>16</sup> See "Existing Conditions" section of the CLR for further information on the Site's natural systems and features, pages 197-199, 258-259.

<sup>17</sup> United States Geological Survey, 1:24 000 Oriskany Quadrangle map, 1955.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed analysis of the geology of the area around the Site, see James M. Loewy, "The Pleistocene Geology of the Oriskany, New York 7.5-Minute Quadrangle," M.S. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1983.

The relief of the Mohawk Valley was also shaped by the tremendous glacial meltwaters that formed Lake Iroquois, the much larger predecessor of Lake Ontario. Due to ice blockage in the Saint Lawrence River valley, all of the drainage from the western Great Lakes flowed into Lake Iroquois, which was dammed at its eastern end at the Fall Hill Fault.<sup>19</sup> From here, Lake Iroquois drained over a tremendous waterfall into the Iro-Mohawk River, the much larger predecessor of the Mohawk River. During the late period of glacial recession, the Site was under the shoreline of Lake Iroquois, which rose to the 550-foot elevation mark [Figure 1.3].<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 1.3:** Wisconsin deglaciation in New York State. Reproduced with permission from Bradford Van Diver, *Roadside Geology of New York* (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1985), 36.

As the glacier melted, all of the miscellaneous debris carried in the ice was deposited as till, usually a matrix of sands, silts, or clays with larger granules, pebbles, and cobbles. Water flowing through the till sorted the material, often carrying the smallest particles long distances. In the upper Mohawk Valley, the glacial meltwaters carried sands from upland till into Lake Iroquois, creating deep, sandy deposits on the lake floor. These shoreline (littoral) sediments created the uplands of the Site, which was situated under Lake Iroquois very near its shoreline.<sup>21</sup>

Over time, the waterfall of Lake Iroquois eroded the natural dam at the Fall Hill Fault, which resulted in lowered lake levels in the vicinity of the Site and exposed the sandy floor of Lake Iroquois. The Iro-Mohawk River developed in place of Lake Iroquois, leaving a floodplain on the former sandy lake floor approximately 1.25 miles wide. As glacial meltwaters continued to drain down from the uplands toward the river, the exposed sandy lake floor became eroded and covered with glacial outwash, composed of silt, sand, and gravel with larger material such as pebbles and cobbles.

As the glacier melted away, the Iro-Mohawk River became greatly reduced in volume and eventually formed the far smaller Mohawk River. Over time, the Mohawk River deposited rich alluvial soils within its floodplain. In addition to these soil deposits, the post-glacial period witnessed erosion by creeks and brooks that drained northward across the regional dip of the Allegheny Plateau, forming ravines. Some of these ravines may have had their origin in faults in the Allegheny Plateau during pre-glacial and glacial periods. Over the roughly 12,000 years after glacial recession, creeks and brooks eroded the northern edge of the Plateau, washing down glacial till and deeper sedimentary rocks.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Fall Hill Fault is located near the City of Little Falls in the mid-Mohawk Valley.

<sup>20</sup> The 550-foot contour is located a few hundred feet south and uphill of Route 69, which is the southern boundary of the Site.

<sup>21</sup> Loewy, "The Pleistocene Geology," 47-54 and appended Oriskany Quadrangle map.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Olney, "Natural Characteristics," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 10.

## Hydrology

The Site was situated about six miles east of the Oneida Carry, *Deo-wain-sta*, a portage over a divide between the Atlantic and Great Lakes watersheds. On the east side of the Oneida Carry, the Mohawk River drained east into the Hudson River and the Atlantic Ocean, while on the west side, Wood Creek drained north and west into several other waterways leading into Lake Ontario [Figure 1.2, page 15].

The Mohawk name for the Mohawk River was *Tenonanatche*, meaning the river flowing through the mountains, the Adirondacks and the Allegheny Plateau.<sup>23</sup> As it descended the Adirondack foothills, the Mohawk was a rapid and narrow river. The character of the river changed as it made a nearly 90-degree turn at the Oneida Carry to run east toward the Hudson River. East of the Oneida Carry and past the Site, the Mohawk River was a meandering, slower, and broader river through a broad floodplain.

Along the south side of the Mohawk Valley were many small watercourses that drained northward across the regional dip of the Allegheny Plateau. Within and adjacent to the Site were two creeks situated in deep ravines that were probably formed by glacial and post-glacial erosion. The creek running through the middle of the Site was later known as Battle Creek, while the creek adjacent to the Site was apparently never named. It is not known if the Oneidas named these creeks. During this historic period, these creeks followed a northerly, meandering course through ravines and across the floodplain until joining the Mohawk River.<sup>24</sup>

Wetlands characterized much of the Site during this period. Not only were there small wetlands associated with the creeks, but a great expanse of floodplain extended from the Mohawk River south to the edge of the uplands within the Site. In addition, the uplands were characterized by scattered swamps (wooded wetlands) formed in the closed depressions that were created during glacial recession.<sup>25</sup>

## Climate

The climate of the upper Mohawk Valley by the 17<sup>th</sup> century had probably been stable for over one thousand years. It was a temperate climate characterized by warm, dry summers and long, cold, and snowy winters. The valley formed a microclimate that was relatively warmer than the adjoining uplands to the north and south, but colder than the Lake Ontario floodplain to the west.<sup>26</sup>

## Ecology

During the ice age, forests of the Mohawk Valley region were forced south and the land was scraped clean of vegetation. After recession of the last (Wisconsin) glacier ending about 12,000 years before, vegetation began to reappear and the waterways took their shape that existed during this period. The forests stabilized about 1,300 years prior to the end of this period following a long period of succession and climatic change.

The forest of the upper Mohawk Valley region during this period was characterized as climax northern hardwoods, a dense deciduous-coniferous forest of hemlock, white pine, beech, birch, and maple, also known as a beech-maple forest.<sup>27</sup> Beech-maple forests grew mainly in central Pennsylvania and New York, with extensions into New England and west along the Great Lakes. Beech-maple forests were generally of great age by the time of European contact in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as these forests typically went on with little change for thousands of years due to their long-lived species and self-replacing characteristics. Windstorms, not fire, were typically the most significant force of change in these forests. Aside from breaks in the canopy caused by windstorms, the beech-maple forest was dark during the summer and

<sup>23</sup>Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: Nelson Greene, 1924), 26.

<sup>24</sup>No pre-Erie Canal maps illustrate Battle Creek or the unnamed creek along the western Site boundary. The natural alignment of both was altered with construction of the canal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>25</sup>Loewy, "The Pleistocene Geology," 89.

<sup>26</sup>Olney, "Natural Characteristics," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 14-16.

<sup>27</sup>Climax conditions exist when a plant community is in balance with the environment and when the dominant vegetation does not change. Dr. James L. Chamberlain, *Mohawk River Flood Plain, Oneida County, New York: An Ecological Interpretation* (Utica: Published by Oneida County, 1974), 7-10.

probably would have had limited understory. Individual sugar maples and beech trees are believed to have been typically about 90 to 120 feet tall and three feet in diameter. Hemlock, which grew in well-drained soils, would typically dominate areas and individual specimens often grew to a significant size.<sup>28</sup>

Climax forests also characterized the palustrine (wetland) communities bordering the Mohawk River, although these forests were characterized by greater change, so that the individual trees may not have been as old as those on the uplands. The original cover of the floodplain present during the period prior to 1705 was a swamp (a forested wetland) of cedar and hemlock, along with other species such as elm, maple, and birch. There were likely few areas of open marsh during this period.<sup>29</sup>

Through the introduction of agriculture during the Woodland Stage of Native American occupation, humans first began to have an impact on the forest ecosystem. The Oneidas practiced agriculture and would have cleared forests near their villages, but none of the villages are known to have existed within or adjacent to the Site, and none were large enough to have had an impact beyond their immediate ecosystem.

Little documentation has been found on the fauna of the region around the Site during this historic period. It is known that the Oneidas hunted white-tailed deer, elk, bear, beaver, and muskrat. Other large mammals in the area likely included fisher, felids, bobcats, lynx, wolves, and wolverines. The waterways and lakes of the region were also rich with diverse species, such as Atlantic salmon and trout, which were common in the Mohawk River and formed an important food source for the Oneidas.

### **Spatial Organization**

Available documentation makes clear that the Site was forested during this historic period.<sup>30</sup> Spatial organization on the Site would therefore have been defined by landforms such as ravines and steep slopes, with additional definition provided by creeks and the high canopy and large trunks of the mature forest. The old-growth trees of the forest likely provided a fairly open understory, except in wet areas and elsewhere where an open canopy may have allowed for the growth of thickets and other understory vegetation.

### **Land Use**

The Site was part of the vast, six-million acre territory of the Oneida Nation during this historic period. The upper Mohawk Valley region around the Site was not intensively used by the Oneidas, as their primary village (castle) and smaller settlements lay about 10 miles to the west, south and south-east of Oneida Lake. The Site was, however, part of Oneida hunting territory and also appears to have functioned as a buffer zone to the Mohawk villages east of West Canada Creek.<sup>31</sup> No documentation has been found on the existence of camps or other transient sites of habitation on or adjacent to the site during this period. The Iroquois Trail may have run through or near to the Site.

### **Cultural Traditions**

The Site was part of the Oneidas' homeland during this historic period and therefore would have held great cultural significance to them as part of a larger landscape. No specific cultural traditions have been documented that are associated with the Site in particular.

### **Cluster Arrangement**

Not applicable.

---

<sup>28</sup> Thomas M. Bonnicksen, *America's Ancient Forests* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 278-283.

<sup>29</sup> Chamberlain, *Mohawk River Flood Plain*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> See "Vegetation," page 21-22; most period descriptions of the battle mention the forest.

<sup>31</sup> Lenig, "The Oneida Indians," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 26; Starna, "The Oneida Homeland," 10.

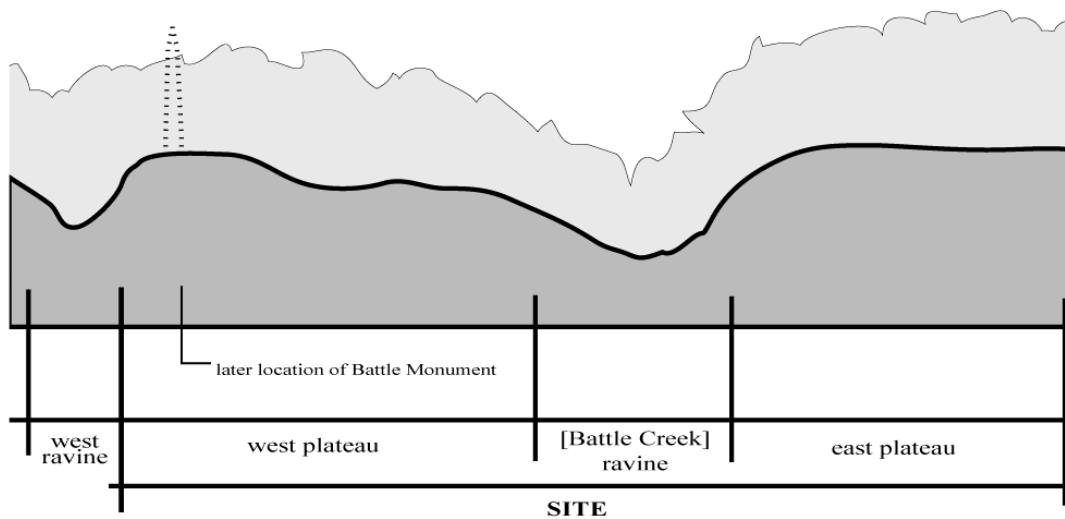


## Circulation

No information has been found on circulation features within or adjacent to the Site during this historic period. The Iroquois Trail, however, may have run through or near the Site. The portion of the trail through the Site would have been a branch from the main trail that ran through *Nun-da-dä-sis* (later Utica), southeast of the Site. This branch trail connected the *Deo-wain-sta* (Oneida Carry, later Rome) with the main trail via an alignment on the south side of the Mohawk River. The Iroquois Trail typically followed uplands above river floodplains, similar to the area found within the Site.

## Topography

The topography of the Site was formed largely by glaciers and other natural processes over a period of thousands of years. The uplands above the Mohawk River floodplain formed plateaus that were divided by deep ravines [Figure 1.4]. These plateaus in part had an undulating surface with depressions and hillocks. The uplands east of the Battle Creek, later known as the east plateau, rose steeply from the ravine and the lowlands, reaching a maximum slope of 60 percent. The uplands west of Battle Creek, later known as the west plateau, rose more gradually from the ravine and lowlands, but dropped off quickly to a second ravine to the west, located outside of the Site's boundaries. The lowlands formed a nearly level floodplain that stretched for over three-quarters of a mile to the Mohawk River.



**Figure 1.4:** East-west section view north illustrating ravines and upland plateaus. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000. Not to scale.

In addition to these geologic formations, the topography of the Site may have also been shaped during this period by windstorms. Such storms, or blowdowns, sometimes toppled large old-growth trees, particularly in the wet soils of the lowlands, leaving behind depressions and hillocks referred to as "windthrow mounds."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Norman A. Richard, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, to Dr. Paul Huey, OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, 12 July 1993, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford, archeology and site files for Oriskany Battlefield (hereafter cited as "BHS MSS").

## **Vegetation**

No Site-specific information has been found to document vegetation present on or near the Site during this historic period. Documentation from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, does describe mature forest near the Site, and it is likely that this same forest existed during this historic period as well, although it may have differed in the exact number and distribution of species. Most of this later documentation lists trees and does not discuss other types of vegetation.

Surveys for lots near the Site were made in 1789 and 1790, providing the earliest documentation on tree species within the forest. Notes from this survey listed the following trees in the uplands on lots near the Site: beech, maple, yellow birch, hemlock and basswood. On the lots bordering the Mohawk River on the lowlands in the vicinity of the Site, the survey noted the following trees: elm (on the river bank), beech, yellow birch, basswood, maple, hemlock, cedar, and black ash.<sup>33</sup> Other surveyors and visitors to the area in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries noted "old forests" around Oriskany Creek consisting of beech, maple, and basswood;<sup>34</sup> and a cedar-hemlock swamp (wetland forest) just west of Oriskany Creek.<sup>35</sup>

## **Buildings and Structures**

Based on available documentation, there were no buildings or structures on the Site during this historic period.

## **Views and Vistas**

Given the likely existence of a climax forest both on the uplands and floodplain of the Site, there probably were no significant views or vistas present during this historic period. Minor views likely existed through the high canopy and open understory of the forest.

## **Constructed Water Features**

Based on available documentation, there were no constructed water features on the Site during this historic period.

## **Small-Scale Features**

Based on available documentation, there were no small-scale features on the Site during this historic period.

## **Archeological Sites**

To date, no archeological sites dating from this historic period have been identified on or adjacent to the Site.<sup>36</sup> Given the Site's proximity to the Mohawk River and its tributaries, and its possible location along the Iroquois Trail, plus its lack of extensive ground disturbance, the Site likely contains a high sensitivity for the presence of prehistoric remains. A comprehensive archeological survey of the Site has not been undertaken.

---

<sup>33</sup> James Cockburn, Surveyor, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent / The Property of The Honorable John Lansing [Jr. (?)] and Abraham G. Lansing Esq. / Divided into Lots A. 1789 and 1790," surveys for Great Lot # 5 in the Second Allotment (west of the site), subdivision lots 1, 2, 5, and 6, New York State Archives, Albany

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), Letter IV, 130.

<sup>35</sup> Chamberlain, *Mohawk Valley Floodplain*, 10-11.

<sup>36</sup> Consultation with Cynthia Blakemore, Historic Preservation Program Analyst; review of archeology site sensitivity ("circles and squares") maps, New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Waterford, January 2000.

**Summary**

During the centuries prior to 1705, the Site was part of the Oneida Indians' ancestral homeland. The closest Oneida villages were to the west, south and southeast of Oneida Lake. The region around the Site was Oneida hunting ground that is believed to have bordered a large buffer zone with the Mohawks to the east. The main thoroughfare across the League of the Haudenosaunee, the Iroquois Trail, may have run through or near to the Site. The Site consisted of an undulating upland divided by a ravine with a second ravine along its west side, and a lowland extending north toward the Mohawk River. The land was covered in a climax northern hardwoods forest that likely consisted of beech, maple, yellow birch, hemlock, basswood, cedar, elm, and black ash. Based on available documentation, there were no cultural features on the Site.



# **EUROPEAN COLONIALISM & AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, 1705-1785**

---

## **Introduction**

The second historic period begins with granting of the Oriskany Patent in 1705 when the Site was removed under British law from the Oneidas' ancestral homeland, and ends in 1785 soon after the end of the American Revolution and just before the patent was subdivided into lots and opened for settlement. During these 80 years, the Site and its surrounding area remained covered by old-growth forest with the exception of two roads and small settlements at the Oneida Carry and Oriskany Creek.

While there was little physical change to the landscape during this period, the Battle of Oriskany did occur on the Site on August 6, 1777. This event forever changed the cultural significance of the Site and had far-reaching implications for the history of the Mohawk Valley, the League of the Haudenosaunee, New York State, and the nation.

## **1. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The 1705 granting of the Oriskany Patent occurred at the beginning of a century in which Europeans had an increasing impact on the Oneidas and other Haudenosaunee nations, as well as on the landscape of the Mohawk Valley. Changes in transportation, westward expansion of European settlement and land ownership, and military conflicts among the Haudenosaunee, French, British and American colonists were factors that all helped to determine the location of the Battle of Oriskany and its outcome.

### **Transportation**

#### **Waterways**

By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British were beginning to take advantage of the Mohawk River, as the Haudenosaunee long had, as the gateway to the Great Lakes and as a strategic route for control of the vast interior of the continent. The Mohawk River provided the most important segment of a nearly continuous waterway that linked Albany on the Hudson River with the fortified trading post of Oswego on Lake Ontario, providing access between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes [Figure 1.2, page 15]. As the only navigable waterway along the northeastern seaboard to pass west through the Appalachian highlands, the Mohawk River became a magnet for trade-related transportation, settlement, and military activities in the region.<sup>1</sup> The Battle of Oriskany occurred along this important corridor.

As the European fur trade grew, the Albany-to-Oswego waterway became increasingly important to the Haudenosaunee, who used it to transport furs from the Great Lakes region east to Albany. When Albany remained the British fur-trading capital of the region during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, travel on the Mohawk River west to the Oneida Carry was limited mainly to Haudenosaunee use. When the British moved some of their trading activity from Albany to a fortified trading post at Oswego on Lake Ontario, which was built in 1727, the waterway saw increasing European use.<sup>2</sup> Improvements were soon made to the waterway as its strategic and commercial importance rose. One of the earliest documented improvements to navigation on the Mohawk River was the construction of a short canal across an oxbow or neck in the river. This canal, which was built in 1730 soon after the British erected their trading post at Oswego, was located about 10 miles west of the Oneida Carry.<sup>3</sup> Wood Creek, the small stream on the west side of the Oneida Carry, was continually cleared of brush and supplemented with impounded water during this time.

---

<sup>1</sup> The upper Hudson River-Lake Champlain corridor also provided waterway access across the Adirondacks and Allegheny Plateau, but to the north toward Montreal and the Saint Lawrence River.

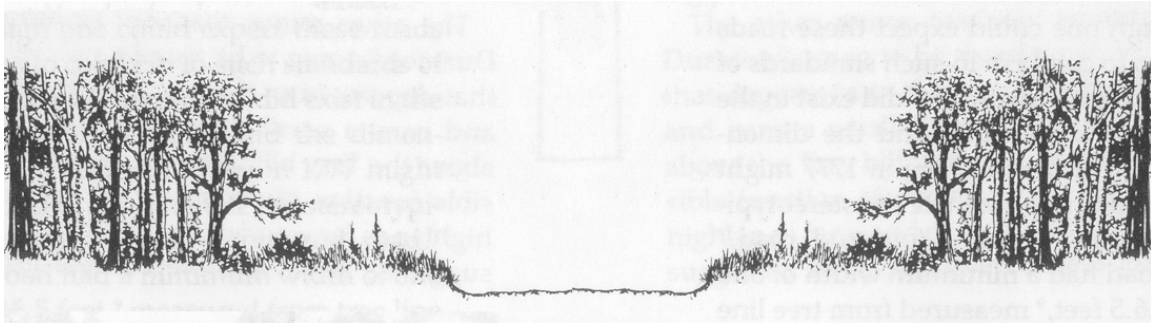
<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Hagerly, *Massacre at Fort Bull* (Providence: Mowbray, 1971), 13.

<sup>3</sup>"The Neck Canal of 1730," 1995 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, NYS OPRHP Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Waterford.

## Roads

Roads were a European introduction into the landscape of the Mohawk Valley region, and many of the earliest followed long-established trails used by Native Americans. In unsettled areas such as the upper Mohawk Valley, roads were used mainly to supplement waterways for long-distance travel, especially in winter. The Iroquois Trail was the land route through much of the Mohawk Valley at the beginning of this period, and roads were later built along the same general alignment. In contrast to foot trails which followed lines of sight, roads were laid out to facilitate vehicular transport.

Roads were often initially built near waterways, where industries and settlement first located. For long-distance roads, 18<sup>th</sup>-century British engineering practices usually dictated that they be built on terraces above the river floodplain, thereby avoiding unstable, wet soil conditions and thick underbrush. The greater stability of the uplands generally ensured that the road cut would endure longer than in the unstable soils of the lowlands, an important consideration given that the roads, once built, were often not well maintained. The rights-of-way for public roads around the time of the Revolution were between 2 and 4 rods (33' and 66') wide.<sup>4</sup> The actual roadbed was often much narrower (often 1 rod or less), and areas to either side were usually cleared of vegetation in forested areas to prevent obstructions [Figure 2.1].



**Figure 2.1:** Section view of an upland road through a forest, c.1777. Adapted from drawing in Philip Lord, *War Over Walloomscoick* (Albany: New York State Museum Bulletin No. 473, 1989), 26.

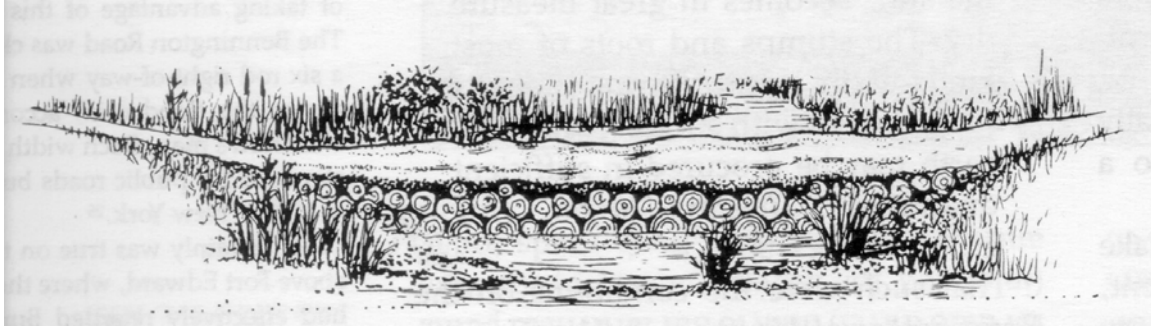
A drawback of road construction on the uplands was the existence of ravines, which were encountered throughout the Mohawk Valley and generally crosscut road alignments. At ravines, a road would generally be aligned farther uphill, where the ravine sections were more shallow and narrow. Roads would typically cross ravines on causeways, which were bridges composed of raised sections of roadbed built of earth and logs. For small streams, logs would be placed in the creek bed to allow the water to pass through the causeway [Figure 2.2, following page]. Logs were also used to pave roads through wet soils; this type of construction was often referred to as "corduroy."<sup>5</sup>

Standards set by the County of Albany in 1742, 1750, and 1760 for public "High Ways or Roads . . . westward on Both sides of the River [Mohawk], so far as the Christian Settlements now are or hereafter shall be settled" set standards to accommodate wagons measuring "4 feet 10 inches English measure" from the outside of wheel to wheel. The county standards also required clearing and maintaining the public roads, a perennial problem, "by Cutting and stubbing up the Brush, and lopping off the limbs of the Trees, that hang over said Roads, the Breadth of two Rods, and pulling up the stones that can be moved, and to carry them out of the Road at least the Breadth of one Rod."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Philip Lord, Jr., *War Over Walloomscoick* (Albany: New York State Museum Bulletin No. 473, 1989), 22-23. Lord examines the road through the Bennington Battlefield, then in eastern Albany County. An important distinction between that road and the military road past the Site is that the Bennington road existed in a settled area of the county, and therefore would probably not have been built under the supervision of the British colonial government.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Colonial Laws of New York* (Albany: Lyons, 1894), vol. 3, ch. 885, 761; vol. 4, ch. 1121, 456-466.



**Figure 2.2:** Typical 18<sup>th</sup>-century causeway construction. Reproduced from Philip Lord, *War Over Walloomscoick* (Albany: New York State Museum Bulletin No. 473, 1989), 30.

One of the earliest roads in the Mohawk Valley region was the one between Albany and Schenectady that was constructed during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first road constructed in the upper Mohawk Valley was probably one the British built across the Oneida Carry between Wood Creek and the Mohawk River during fortification of the area in the 1730s.<sup>7</sup> By the middle of the 18th century, the road between Albany and Schenectady had been extended west along both sides of the Mohawk River as far west as German Flatts. By the 1750s, a road existed on the lowlands along the south side of the Mohawk River from Fort Herkimer in German Flatts west to Forts Bull and Williams at the Oneida Carry.<sup>8</sup> This may have been built as a military road; it was replaced by a new military road in 1759, which continued in use into the Revolutionary War.

#### *Military Roads*<sup>9</sup>

Roads in unsettled areas such the upper Mohawk Valley were usually constructed by the British colonial government for military purposes. 18<sup>th</sup>-century military roads were constructed in a similar manner to civil roads, but with the goal of maximizing speed, easing transport, and increasing visibility. Military roads were typically built one rod (16.5 feet) wide and were located on high ground.<sup>10</sup>

Several military roads in the British American colonies were built during the French and Indian War in the late 1750s as the frontier between British and French-claimed areas came under increasing tension. In the western Pennsylvania frontier, a military road was built at this time across the Allegheny Mountains to access Fort Pitt (Fort Duquesne, later Pittsburgh) under the command of General John Forbes. Designed by the military engineer Bouquet, the Forbes Road, as it came to be known, was opened in 1757 along an old Indian trading path.<sup>11</sup> The Forbes Road generally took the high ground to avoid wet spots in valley areas, but due to the mountainous nature of the local topography, the road often wound around topographic obstacles and included features such as switchbacks. The Forbes Road involved significant construction, including grading and the hauling of large rocks to construct retaining walls. It generally crossed small streams by fording.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Weig, "Report on Fort Stanwix," 1.

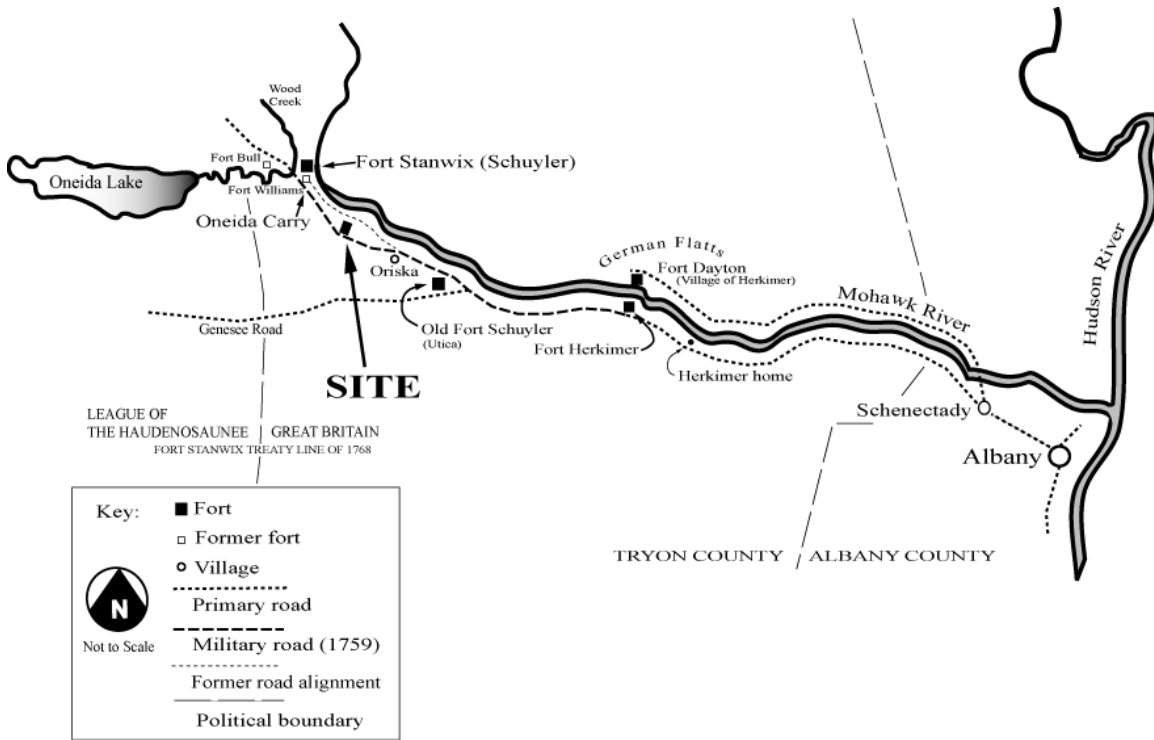
<sup>8</sup> "General Jeffrey Amherst's Orders to Ensigns Ratser and River, Albany, 23 May 1759," Amherst Papers transcriptions, collection of Dr. William Forbes, Holland Patent, New York; originals in collection #PRO W034, Public Record Office, Kew, England (hereafter cited as "Amherst MSS"). See also "Outline of the Mohawk River & Wood Creek," c.1755 map showing road leading to Forts Bull and Williams on south side of river, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica; "Part of the County of Albany . . ." c.1756 map and "Map of the County of Albany," c.1756, Crown Map Collection, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>9</sup> Specific standards and construction techniques for colonial military roads have not been found during research for this report.

<sup>10</sup> Lord, *War over Walloomscoick*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> National Highway Users Conference, *Military Roads / A Brief History of the Construction of Highways By the Military Establishment* (Washington, D.C.: Published by the Conference, 1935), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Williams, editor, *Bouquet's March to the Ohio / The Forbes Road* (Pittsburgh: The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1975), 39-40.



**Figure 2.3:** The Mohawk Valley, c.1772. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000, after map entitled "Communication between Albany and Oswego (T. Kitchen, 1772), New York State Library.

In 1759, British General Sir Jeffrey Amherst ordered construction of a military road to be built from Crown Point, on Lake Champlain in New York, across the Champlain Valley and Green Mountains of Vermont (then claimed by New York and New Hampshire) to the Connecticut River. This military road was the first road ever to cross the frontier of the forested Green Mountains. Under the direct supervision of Major John Hawkes, the road was built by 250 men, beginning at Chimney Point and working east; another 800 men helped complete the road on the east end.<sup>13</sup>

The military road to Fort Stanwix that ran past the Site was built at the same time in 1759 and under the command of the same general as the Crown Point military road. It, too, was built through a frontier area and forested conditions, but followed more level terrain since it ran along a valley. The Fort Stanwix military road was constructed as part of the British refortification of the Oneida Carry against the French threat, and like the Forbes Road, was designed by a military engineer, James Montresor. Between Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Creek, the military road ran on the uplands and replaced an earlier road that ran along the lowlands closer to the Mohawk River [Figure 2.3]. Following the end of the war, the military road fell into disrepair as the strategic importance of the Oneida Carry decreased. In the mid 1770s, however, the Oneida Carry took on renewed strategic importance as the American Patriots prepared for British hostilities. As part of the refortification of the Oneida Carry, the military road was rebuilt in 1777 by American forces under the command of General Nicholas Herkimer.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jan Albers, *Hands on the Land / A History of the Vermont Landscape* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 79-80. No information has been found on the design or alignment of the Crown Point military road.

<sup>14</sup> A second road paralleling the military road may have been built around this time along the north side of the Mohawk River. Claude Joseph Sauthier, "A Chorographical Map of the Province of New York" (London: William Fadden, 1 January 1779), reduced and copied from the original by Richard H. Pease, 1849. Reproduced in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849). This 1779 map is the first to document this road.



The Americans built other military roads during the Revolution. A one-rod wide military road was ordered built by the Continental Congress in 1776 between Newburg, Vermont and the Province of Canada. In 45 days, a contingent of more than 110 men completed 14 miles of the new road, which required cutting down large old-growth trees in the forested right-of-way, removing stumps and rocks, and building bridges and corduroy over soft ground.<sup>15</sup>

### **Settlement**

The attributes of the Mohawk Valley corridor for transportation also made it attractive for settlement by Europeans. Settlers moved into the region as the Hudson River Valley became settled and as the British sought to extend control over the Haudenosaunee homeland to the west, a region that was claimed by the French as well. As European influence over the region grew during this historic period, the League of the Haudenosaunee—particularly the eastern Mohawk and Oneida nations—experienced a parallel decline in their populations, the sovereignty of their homelands, and the integrity of their culture.

### **European Settlement & Land Speculation**

European settlement of the Mohawk Valley expanded in the decades leading up to the Revolution, but not quickly. At the beginning of this historic period at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Schenectady marked the western limits of European settlement. West of this lay a huge expanse of land claimed by the League of the Haudenosaunee, with the Mohawk and Oneida Nations in the Mohawk Valley. The French claimed the region to the north along the Saint Lawrence River and west in the Niagara Frontier. The Mohawk Valley thus became a contested region in trade and settlement between the French, English, and League of the Haudenosaunee.

Beginning early in this period, large tracts of Mohawk Valley land were often unfairly bought from the Haudenosaunee by British land speculators through British crown approval, following the creation of similar patents along the Hudson River during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the most powerful men in the province came to own vast tracts of the land in the Mohawk Valley, the most prominent being Sir William Johnson and George Clarke. Such land speculation was a common way of securing a fortune in the colonies. The official policy of Great Britain was to grant patents to spur settlement, thereby avoiding French claims to the region. Instead of encouraging settlement, many of these large patents checked westward expansion and bred economic and political animosities among New York colonists that would be resolved only after the Revolution.<sup>16</sup> By this time, much of the Mohawk Valley had been set aside as large land grants and patents [Figure 2.4, following page].

Despite the existence of large patents, European settlement did slowly encroach westward through the Mohawk Valley. The earliest European settlers were first the Dutch in the easternmost parts, followed by Germans from the Palatinate (*Pfalz*) region. The British government, hoping to secure the Mohawk Valley from the French who were vying for its control from the north and west, supported Palatine German immigration to the region beginning in 1712. Later waves of Palatine Germans were granted lands in the 1720s in the mid-Mohawk Valley in an area that would become known as German Flatts. Numbering initially over 2,000 and representing the largest influx of immigrants the Province of New York had yet experienced, these Palatine Germans expanded in population, established villages, and developed productive farms on the rich valley lands.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the Germans, Scots and New Englanders also migrated to the valley. The removal of the French threat after 1760 brought about increased immigration. By the eve of the Revolution, European settlement in the Mohawk Valley numbered around 10,000 and extended about 60 miles west of Schenectady to Burnets Field at German Flatts [later village of Herkimer]. A few scattered settlements occurred as far west as the Oneida Carry, most associated with fortifications such as Fort Stanwix or with Oneida villages.

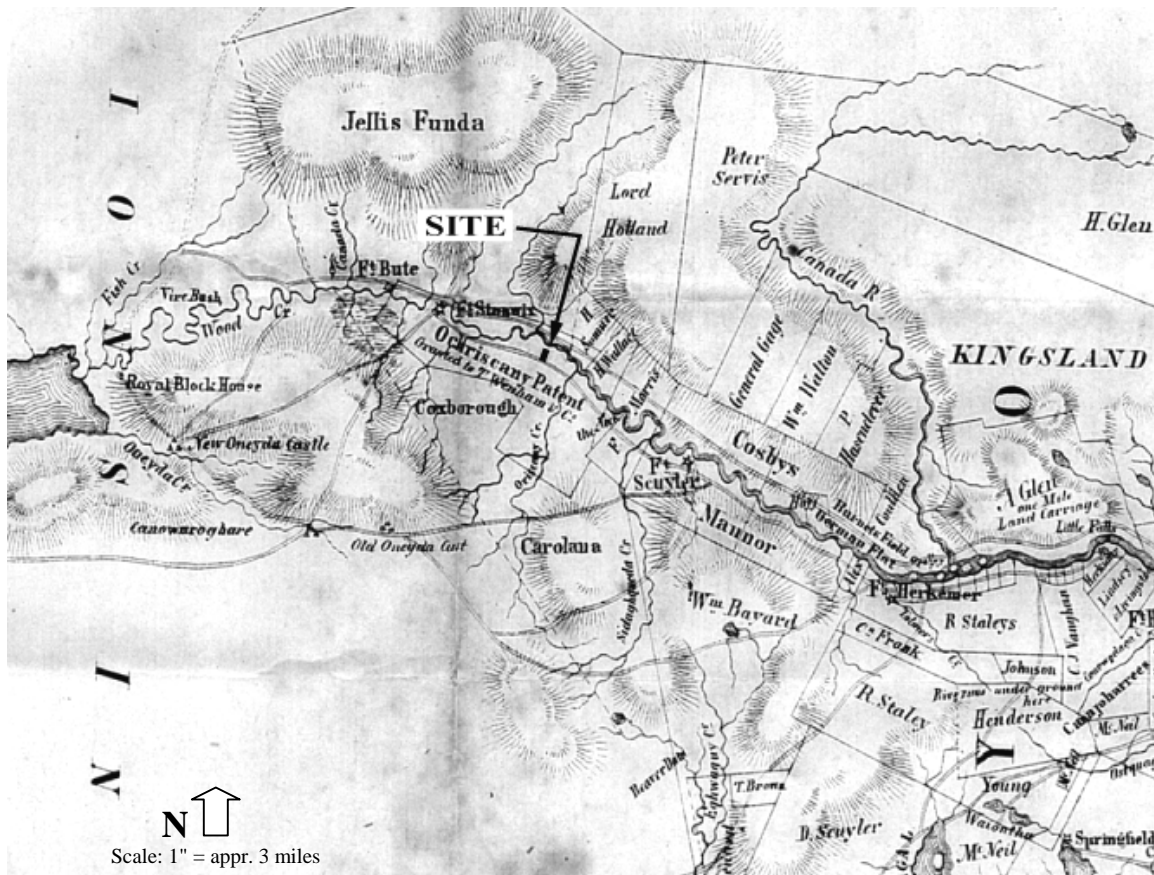
---

<sup>15</sup> Eric Sloane, *Our Vanishing Landscape* (New York: Ballantine, 1955), 62. No sources are provided for this account.

<sup>16</sup> Edith Fox, *Land Speculation in the Mohawk Country* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), ix, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

With European settlement of the Mohawk Valley came political organization of the territory. The County of Albany, organized in 1683, was extended westward to cover all that area in the Province of New York claimed by Great Britain. The formal western boundary of the county and province was established through a treaty with the League of the Haudenosaunee in 1763 at the end of the French & Indian War. The Haudenosaunee ceded lands east of the "Proclamation Line of 1763" which ran roughly north-to-south from near the Oneida Carry to the Susquehanna River and south through Tennessee. Lands east of this line were open for European speculation and settlement. In 1768, this line was modified under the Treaty of Fort Stanwix negotiated through Sir William Johnson. This treaty moved the line a bit east, but still left the



**Figure 2.4:** Map of the upper Mohawk Valley showing land grants and patents. Detail, Claude Sauthier, *A Chorographical Map of the Province of New York* (Charing Cross: William Fadden, 1779); annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

strategic Oneida Carry, as well as the eastern half of the Oneida homeland, under the control of New York. European speculation and settlement expanded greatly in the Mohawk Valley in the years following this treaty. By the early 1770s, the population of the Mohawk Valley had increased sufficiently to warrant its own political structure. In 1772, Tryon County was organized out of Albany County west of Schenectady, covering most of the Mohawk Valley [Figure 2.3, page 28]. Tryon County was organized into precincts, with the Site in the westernmost and unsettled precinct, Kingsland.

**Decline of Haudenosaunee Homelands**

The eastern Haudenosaunee nations, the Mohawk and Oneida, were significantly affected by European settlement in the Mohawk Valley prior to the Revolution. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the Mohawks had been decimated by disease and strife, and were reduced to two small isolated settlements. Most of their land in the valley had been taken over by Europeans, either purchased as speculative patent lands or settled and

cleared for agriculture.<sup>18</sup> In the decades leading to the Revolution, the Oneidas retained much of their land, although Europeans legally controlled most of the Mohawk riverfront, which was included in land grants such as the Oriskany and Sadequahada Patents and Cosby Manor. In 1763, the eastern half of the Oneida nation was placed under control of New York, a change further strengthened by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768.

Despite these legal issues, the Oneidas continued to have access to much of their homelands as they had for centuries due to the lack of European settlement in the upper Mohawk Valley prior to the Revolution. Their culture, however, was significantly impacted by the influx of Europeans into the larger region. The impact of European migration had begun in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with disease brought about by trade contact, and continued on in various other ways through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning with the establishment of a British trading post at Oswego in 1720s, there was a constant traffic of Europeans through the Oneida homeland that increased again with the building of Fort Stanwix on the Oneida Carry in 1758. This increased contact disturbed hunting grounds and expanded trade that brought in more liquor and displaced traditional goods. The Oneida population was greatly reduced from its pre-European contact level by the time of the Revolution, with periods of starvation recorded from the late 1750s into the early 1770s.<sup>19</sup>

On the eve of the Revolution, the principal Oneida village southeast of Oneida Lake, *Kanonwalohale*, had taken on a European appearance with orchards, grazing livestock, horses, and close to half of the buildings constructed of hewn logs or timber frames. The Oneidas dressed in European-made cloth and used European tools such as firearms, copper kettles, iron hoes, and other metal instruments. Under the influence of Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland, many Oneidas adopted Christianity as another layer of spirituality. Despite these changes, Oneidas still thought and lived traditionally.<sup>20</sup>

The League of the Haudenosaunee as a whole also showed the signs of decline evidenced by the Mohawks and Oneidas. At a time when it had been decimated by disease, wracked by trade conflicts and military alliances, culturally altered, and reduced in territory, the League of the Haudenosaunee divided in 1777 over taking sides in the Revolution. The Oneidas and Tuscaroras sided with the American Patriots, the Onondagas remained neutral, and the Senecas, Cayugas, and Mohawks sided with the British.

Like their European neighbors, the British-allied Haudenosaunee peoples suffered terribly during the war, with many of their villages destroyed by the American Patriots in retribution during the Sullivan-Clinton campaign of 1779, among other conflicts. The Oneidas and Tuscaroras also suffered retaliation for their support of the Patriots, and in 1780 they were forced to abandon their homelands and flee to Niagara and refugee shelters at Fort Stanwix and Schenectady.<sup>21</sup> They subsequently returned, but as with all of the Haudenosaunee nations, the Oneida and Tuscarora were forced to contend with a growing demand for European settlement in their homelands.

### **Military Developments**

As a vital part of the only navigable waterway across the Appalachians to the Great Lakes region, the Mohawk Valley during this historic period became a highly strategic corridor in Great Britain's century-long struggle against the French for control of the New York frontier and the interior of North America. The League of the Haudenosaunee, whose homelands included the Mohawk Valley, played a significant role in this imperial power struggle as the French and English vied for their support in defense and trade. The same Mohawk Valley fortifications that Britain developed to secure the region from the French would in turn be used against them by defiant colonists in the Revolution, including Fort Stanwix on the Oneida

---

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Wonderley, "1777: The Oneidas and the Birth of the American Nation," research exhibition script in preparation (Office of the Oneida Indian Nation Historian, 1996), 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Graymont, "The Oneidas and the American Revolution," in Jack Campisi and Laurence Hauptman, eds., *The Oneida Indian Experience* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 47.

Carry and the military road leading to it.<sup>22</sup> It was on this military road that the decisive Battle of Oriskany occurred on August 6, 1777.

### French & English Trade Competition

The growth in the military significance of the Mohawk Valley paralleled the intensifying competition for trade in the region. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Mohawk Valley held limited strategic significance for the British or the French. At this time, the valley had not yet become a vital transportation link because the region was still controlled by the League of the Haudenosaunee and European colonial trade occurred largely outside of Haudenosaunee lands. British trade was centered at Albany and Manhattan on the Hudson River and even north through the Champlain Valley to Montreal, and the French trade was found at scattered posts and fortifications along the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence River.<sup>23</sup>

As the link between the French and British domains, the Mohawk Valley witnessed numerous clashes and wars during this period as the two powers sought to dominate the fur trade from the Great Lakes region. In the process of strengthening their Great Lakes trade, the French built fortifications on Lake Ontario, including Fort Niagara in 1726, and sought to expand eastward and southward into the British domain of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. To counter this growing French trade advantage and aggression, the British began to expand west from Albany into Haudenosaunee homelands and the Lake Ontario region by the 1720s.<sup>24</sup> The League of the Haudenosaunee, which held much control over the supply of furs, tried to maintain their trade advantages with both the English and French. In order to do this and maximize the trade on which their lives depended, the Haudenosaunee provided increasing concessions to both powers in terms of access to their homelands.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1720s, British traders began moving trading posts from Albany to the shores of Lake Ontario at the head of the Oswego River. This location, known as *Choueguen* by the French and within Onondaga territory, was at the western end of the Albany-to-Oswego waterway through the Mohawk Valley. The League of the Haudenosaunee had long forbidden establishment of trading posts within their territory. In 1727, however, they gave the British permission to construct a permanent, fortified trading post at Oswego to counter the French post at Niagara, a sign of the Confederacy's increasing reliance on European trade. After this time, the British conducted significant amounts of trade from Oswego.<sup>26</sup>

### Military Developments Prior to the Revolution

British trade and fortification that began at Oswego in the 1720s had immense ramifications for the Mohawk Valley, because it soon translated into increasing traffic and military development of the Albany-to-Oswego waterway. At this time, the closest British fortification to Oswego along this waterway was Schenectady, over 150 miles away. Between lay a vast frontier that was open to sabotage by both the French and Indians, with the most vulnerable portion of the route being the Oneida Carry, where boats had to be carried across a one-mile portage.

As early as 1702, Haudenosaunee traders had petitioned New York for assistance in maintaining the portage across the Oneida Carry, an important point on their supply route to the British trading post at Albany in a region that had witnessed many French-sponsored attacks. With establishment of the British trading post at Oswego in 1727, the Albany-to-Oswego waterway was essentially taken over by the British as their trade supply route. While the route remained in Confederacy lands in the first half of the century, the Haudenosaunee allowed the British to secure the route in the interest of protecting trade. In October

---

<sup>22</sup> During this period, the term "fort" was used to denote many classes of fortifications, from large pallisaded bastions such as Fort Stanwix to small houses, such as Fort Klock near St. Johnsville which was the stone house of the Klock family that was pallisaded during the Revolution to serve as a neighborhood defense and refuge.

<sup>23</sup> Haggerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> David M. Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Haggerty, *Massacre at Fort Bull*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Governor Burnett to Board of Trade, 9 May 1727, in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1857), vol. 1, 447.

1736, the first British fortification was built at the Oneida Carry.<sup>27</sup> In 1746 during war with France, Britain constructed two small forts at the Oneida Carry, Forts William and Bull [Figure 2.3, page 28].<sup>28</sup>

Realizing the trade and strategic advantage of having the League of the Haudenosaunee on its side, the French tried to secure their support from the British, who claimed suzerainty over the Haudenosaunee since the 1680s. By the 1740s and 1750s, the League was becoming increasingly angry with the British for taking of their homelands by land speculators and making other forays into their territory, especially the Mohawk Valley. These hostilities erupted into the French and Indian War, which began in 1753 and lasted over seven years.

The British recognized the importance of further fortifying the Oneida Carry in this war to secure the strategic Albany-to-Oswego waterway. In preparation for a major attack against Niagara and the Great Lakes region, British Major General William Shirley moved his headquarters to Oswego and enlarged the fortification there. In order to secure the supply route to Oswego, he reformed Forts Bull and Williams at the Oneida Carry in 1755. In March 1756, a French party destroyed Fort Bull, and in response, the British built two new forts at the Carry, Fort Wood Creek and Fort Newport. Later in 1756, the French captured Oswego and the Oneida Carry forts and moved down the Mohawk Valley, burning German Flatts in 1757.<sup>29</sup>

In 1758, the British recaptured the Oneida Carry and instructed Brigadier John Stanwix to reformat the Site, to which the Oneida agreed based on several conditions, including that they have access to trade and that the fort be temporary. The new fort, larger than the previous ones constructed at the Carry, was named Fort Stanwix and was designed by Colonel James Montresor, the British Chief Engineer in America. Construction of the fort began in August 1758 and was under construction through 1761.<sup>30</sup> Along with the construction of Fort Stanwix, a military road was opened in 1759 from Fort Herkimer west along the south side of the Mohawk River to Fort Stanwix [Figure 2.3, page 28].<sup>31</sup>

By the 1760s, the British had reversed their fortunes and in 1763 secured victory over the French through a treaty that provided them control over all of New France, including areas bordering New York and the territory of the League of the Haudenosaunee. With removal of the French, the Oneida Carry largely lost its strategic significance, and much of the fur trade was inadvertently rerouted to Montreal. With little significance in trade or defense, Fort Stanwix was degarrisoned. In order to maintain a presence at the Carry on the controversial boundary between Haudenosaunee and British lands finalized under the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the British attempted to maintain Fort Stanwix, in spite of their promise to the Haudenosaunee that it would be temporary. Despite periodic activity and the presence of several European families living around it, Fort Stanwix and the military road that led to it eventually fell into ruin by the eve of the Revolution.

### **The American Revolution** <sup>32</sup>

With the passing of the French threat and the opening of land west to the Fort Stanwix Treat Line of 1768, the Mohawk Valley entered a period a relative peace during the late 1760s and early 1770s. European settlement expanded and the Haudenosaunee continued their military alliance and peaceful trade relations with Great Britain through the guidance of Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs and strong ally of the British Crown.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> "Papers Relating to the Oneida Country and Mohawk Valley, 1756, 1757," in *Ibid.*, 510.

<sup>28</sup> David M. Ellis, "Military Developments During Colonial and Revolutionary Era," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> John F. Luzader, *The Construction and Military History of Fort Stanwix* (Washington: National Park Service, Division of History, 1969), 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. William Forbes, "More New Light on Old Fort Schuyler," *Rome Historical Society Annals and Recollections* (October, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed account of the Battle of Oriskany, see "Site Development and Use," page 45 to 48.

<sup>33</sup> Luzader, *The Construction and Military History of Fort Stanwix*, 21.

Beginning in the early 1770s, however, the American colonies began to agitate for freedom from British regulations and taxation, which had been enforced with greater regularity since the close of the French and Indian War. This agitation came to a head in 1774-1775, when rebel colonists (Patriots) took over British sovereignty by organizing the Continental Congress, establishing an army, and appointing Indian commissioners. At the local level, extralegal bodies termed "Committees of Safety" were organized in order to sway public opinion in favor of the Patriot cause.

In the Mohawk Valley, the Tryon County Committee of Safety had much work to do in a region that had strong Loyalist (pro-British) support. Much of this support was due to the widespread influence of Sir William Johnson, who effectively acted as ruler of the county. Many valley residents still felt indebted to Britain for defense of the region during the French and Indian War, and many patent-holders maintained strong ties to the mother country. The large German population in the valley, however, had no ethnic ties to Britain and many resented British enforcement of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which forbade settlement west of the Oneida Carry and restricted direct trade with the Haudenosaunee. On the eve of the Revolution, Tryon County remained strongly divided between Patriot and Loyalist causes.

As with the European residents of the Mohawk Valley, the League of the Haudenosaunee became divided over taking sides in the Revolution. Due to this dissent and also to decreased population from disease, the Great Council of the Haudenosaunee covered the Council Fire at Onondaga in January 1777, signifying the temporary end of their confederacy. It has traditionally been told that the Council Fire was covered so that the individual nations could make their own hard choices as to whether to side with the Loyalists or the Patriots.<sup>34</sup> The Oneidas and Tuscaroras, who were more intricately involved with colonial culture, decided to side with the Patriots, while the Mohawk, Cayuga, and Seneca sided with the British. The Onondaga remained neutral.

Armed conflict in New York began with the capture of Fort Ticonderoga on May 10, 1775.<sup>35</sup> The question of independence from Great Britain took hold as the year progressed, and on July 10, 1776, provincial independence was declared through the Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York. The outbreak of war brought raids in the Mohawk Valley and other frontier areas of the state. On the Atlantic coast, British General Howe had amassed over 31,000 troops on Staten Island and bitterly defeated the American Patriots under General Washington, capturing New York City in the Battle of Long Island during August and September 1776. Later that fall, the British marched from Canada halfway down Lake Champlain and captured Crown Point, but the Patriots maintained control over Fort Ticonderoga at the south end of the lake. During the difficult winter of 1776-1777, the campaign shifted to New Jersey, where the Patriots held ground, winning victories at Trenton and Princeton.

During this time, the British were planning a major campaign for 1777. Their grand strategy was a three-pronged attack on New York, known as the Burgoyne Campaign, in which the British would divide and conquer the state in order to isolate New England, which they considered the hotbed of patriotism, from the rest of the states [Figure 2.5, following page]. General John Burgoyne was to move south down the Lake Champlain corridor from Montreal; Colonel Barry St. Leger was to move east from Lake Ontario through the Mohawk Valley corridor; and Sir William Howe was to move north up the Hudson River. All three forces were to meet in Albany. In order to implement this plan, the British needed Haudenosaunee forces and permission to march through their homeland. In early 1777, the British enlisted the support of the Senecas, Cayugas, and Mohawks.<sup>36</sup>

On the western front, St. Leger had reached Oswego on Lake Ontario by mid July. His force of only about 300 regular troops was joined by 380 Royal Yorkers under Sir John Johnson, 70 rangers (part of the colonial Indian department), 50 Canadians, and between 600 and 800 Indians (mainly Senecas, Cayugas, and Mohawks) under Chief Joseph Brant, for a total of 1,400-1,600 troops.<sup>37</sup> From Oswego, St. Leger's

---

<sup>34</sup> Wonderely, "1777: The Oneidas," 5.

<sup>35</sup> This outline of events during the Revolution is taken from "New York in the Revolutionary War," in Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, chapter 10.

<sup>36</sup> Graymont, "The Oneidas and the American Revolution," *The Oneida Indian Experience*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 130.

plan of attack was to take the Oneida Carry and its fortress, Fort Stanwix (renamed Fort Schuyler by the Patriots), which British intelligence indicated was in a state of disrepair. On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the British reached the Oneida Carry after some difficulty. To his surprise, St. Leger encountered a well-defended Fort Stanwix that had been rebuilt and refortified with 700 Patriot troops under the command of Colonel Peter Gansevoort. The Patriots refused St. Leger's demand for surrender and withstood siege while awaiting a relief column consisting of approximately 800 troops from the Tryon County Militia under the command of General Nicholas Herkimer. Mary Brant, the sister of Joseph Brant, sent messengers to St. Leger warning of Herkimer's approach.

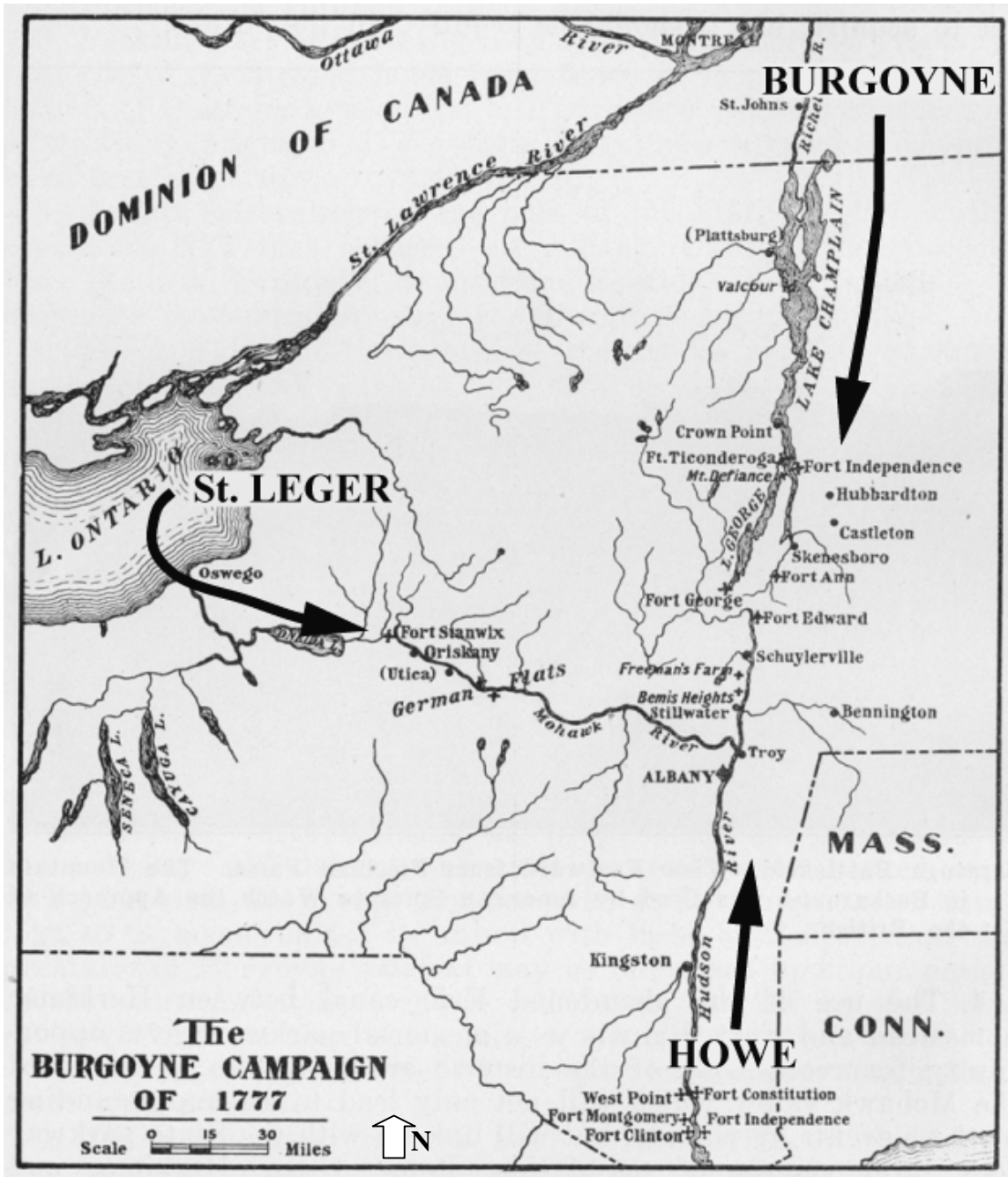


Figure 2.5: The Burgoyne Campaign of 1777. Reproduced from State of New York, Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report for the Year 1926* (Albany: Lyon, 1927), 40; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

On August 5, 1777, General Herkimer led the Tryon County Militia down the military road to near the small Oneida village of Oriska [later village of Oriskany], where they camped overnight [Figure 2.8, page 46]. On August 6, the militia was joined by a contingent of Oneidas on their final 8-mile march through the dense forests to Fort Stanwix. Between Oriska and Fort Stanwix, Herkimer's troops entered a trap where the military road descended a deep ravine. Here they were ambushed in a surprise attack by a British contingent made up mainly of Indians sent from Fort Stanwix in what would later be known as the Battle of Oriskany. The bloody battle raged for about six hours, decimating the Tryon County Militia and the Oneidas and also causing significant losses among the British-allied Indians.

The Battle of Oriskany had the character of a civil war, with Senecas, Cayugas, and Mohawks in direct combat with Oneidas, and Mohawk Valley farmers of the same families and communities fighting against one another. For the Haudenosaunee, the ambush was highly significant, for it broke the Great Peace, *Kayenarhekowa*, which had bound their confederacy together for generations but which had been suspended eight months earlier. The Oneidas quickly suffered retaliation for the side they chose, when the British destroyed Oriska soon after the battle.

Although the Tryon County Militia was decimated, the Battle of Oriskany effectively drained away badly needed British forces from the on-going Siege of Fort Stanwix, which would continue for another two weeks. The losses incurred by the British-allied Indians at Oriskany, along with the ambush of their camp, caused many of them to flee Fort Stanwix, leaving the British weakened. By mid-August, a large reinforcement under the command of General Benedict Arnold was marching west up the Mohawk River for the relief of Fort Stanwix and had reached German Flatts on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Upon hearing of this advance, St. Leger and his weakened forces abandoned the Siege of Fort Stanwix on August 23, 1777.

Despite its immediate losses, the Battle of Oriskany proved a great military victory for the Patriots, for it was instrumental in the British defeat in the Siege of Fort Stanwix, which stopped St. Leger's planned advance down the Mohawk Valley to Albany. The Battle of Oriskany also freed the relief forces under General Arnold to join General Gates in the conflict against General Burgoyne on the northern front at Saratoga. Earlier in the summer, Burgoyne's force of 8,550 troops had begun to advance south from Montreal down Lake Champlain and the Hudson River toward Albany. They made little progress due to Patriot blockade and did not reach Fort Edward, about 40 miles north of Albany, until July 30. The Patriots by early August were amassing a substantial force under General Gates. By this time, Burgoyne was worried about shortage of supplies, and he sent a force of 600 to capture a supply post at Bennington. This force, which Burgoyne supplemented by another 500 troops, was badly defeated by the Patriots on August 16<sup>th</sup> at the Battle of Bennington in Walloomscoick, New York. Greatly outnumbered by the Patriot forces, having lost a series of important skirmishes, and without the aid of St. Leger or General Howe (who never made it up the Hudson), Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga on October 17th, ending the Campaign of 1777 in British defeat. The Battle of Oriskany played a major role in this victory, and indeed in the future course of events in the war. The defeat of Britain's three-pronged attack on New York was the turning point of the Revolution, for it proved the military force of the Patriots and convinced France to aid the American cause.<sup>38</sup>

Despite this Patriot victory in 1777, violence continued to plague both Haudenosaunee and European residents of the Mohawk Valley throughout the war. Patriots looted and destroyed Mohawk settlements at Canajoharie and Fort Hunter after the Siege of Fort Stanwix. The British and their allied Indians in turn led a major raid through the valley in 1778, destroying German Flatts and many other settlements. To counter these attacks, Patriot forces under the direction of Generals Sullivan and Clinton began a far-reaching campaign in 1779 to destroy Haudenosaunee villages and reduce the Loyalist threat. Then in 1780, Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Mohawk war parties forced the Oneidas and Tuscaroras to flee to Niagara and then destroyed their villages. Guerilla warfare continued in the Mohawk Valley and other frontier areas of the state until October 1781, when the British finally surrendered at Yorktown. Peace between the United States and Britain was ratified in September 1783, and the British evacuated New York in the following November.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 112; Graymont, "The Oneidas and the American Revolution," *The Oneida Indian Experience*, 37.



## **Commemoration**

Immediately after the Battle of Oriskany, there was likely no time or strength on either the British or Patriot side to commemorate the dead even by the simple act of burial. During the rest of this historic period, there was mourning throughout the Mohawk Valley for the great losses incurred in the Revolution. The disastrous outcome of the battle for the Tryon County Militia and the Oneidas, and the continuing guerilla warfare throughout the Mohawk Valley during the rest of the Revolution probably gave residents there little ability or desire to formally commemorate the battle. It is not know if the Haudenosaunee either on the British or Patriot side formally commemorated the battle during this period.

Commemoration of Revolutionary battles did occur in other parts of the country during and immediately after the war. Public commemoration during this historic period usually took a temporary form, such as ceremonies, private observances, and religious sermons. The 1775 Battle of Lexington and Concord, for example, was commemorated beginning in 1776 through annual memorial sermons by Lexington's minister.<sup>39</sup> The federal government, however, recognized the need to commemorate significant persons from the Revolution in a permanent manner from the beginning. As early as 1777, the Continental Congress appropriated funds for erecting monuments in honor of slain heroes from the Revolution, including General Herkimer, but apparently few such monuments were erected until long after the Revolution. Congress also appropriated funds to erect monuments at the Yorktown, Saratoga, and Bennington battlefields.<sup>40</sup>

## **2. SITE NARRATIVE**

### **Landscape Context**

The landscape in the region around the Site remained largely an unbroken expanse of forested land during this period. The only physical changes in the landscape around the Site included change in ownership through granting of the Oriskany Patent, construction of the military road, and establishment of settlements at the Oneida Carry and Oriskany Creek.

### **Oriskany Patent**

In 1705, the Site became part of the Oriskany Patent, lying roughly in the middle of the 30,000-acre land grant that stretched along the south side of the Mohawk River from the Oneida Carry east past Oriskany Creek [Figure 2.6, following page]. This patent, which the Oneida contested, was the earliest major British land grant in the upper Mohawk Valley and included the strategic Oneida Carry and Mohawk River transportation corridor.

The Oriskany Patent was granted by Queen Anne on April 18, 1705 to five British shareholders: Thomas Wenham, George Clarke, Peter Schuyler, Peter Fantonier, and Roger Mompeson. The original patent document described the land as being a:

. . . certain parcel of land and woodland situate lyeing and being on both side of the Creek called Oriskenie beginning where it runs up the said Creek on both sides four English Miles and back into the Woods on said side two English miles, also of another parcel of Land and Woodland Situate Lying and being on both sides of the said Mohogs or

---

<sup>39</sup> Edward T. Linenthal, ed., *Sacred Ground / Americans and Their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 13.

<sup>40</sup> Ronald F. Lee, "The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973), 7-9.

Schenectady river beginning where the said Creek runs into the woods on sath side to a certain Swamp called Connigoticka . . .<sup>41</sup>

Throughout this historic period, the Oriskany Patent was held in common by the five investors and their ancestors and remained remote from the European-settled areas of the Mohawk Valley. The absence of development of the land during this period had much to do with the lack of consent among the shareholders and the Oneidas' claim that the granting of the patent was fraudulent.

George Clarke, who became one of the largest land speculators in the Mohawk Valley region during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and held high political office in the province, expanded his share of the Oriskany Patent to 15,000 acres by 1735. He was the most aggressive among the early shareholders in trying to develop the patent lands. In the 1730s, he petitioned the provincial government to attract settlement in the patent by draining bogs along the Mohawk River for the production of hemp, and by fortifying the Oneida Carry in order to secure the area from French and Indian attack. His plan failed largely due to disagreement among the patent shareholders.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 2.6:** Oriskany Patent, survey limits of 1769. Detail, Claude Sauthier, *A Chorographical Map of the Province of New York* (Charing Cross: William Fadden, 1779); annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

Through the influence of Sir William Johnson, the Oneidas finally released their claim to the Oriskany Patent lands in 1768 and 1769, 63 years after the grant was established. In return for full title, the patent shareholders paid the Oneida L 425 for the land and L 25 for their improvements.<sup>43</sup> In 1769, with clear title

<sup>41</sup> Oriskany Patent, 18 April 1705 (original copy), Clarke Family Papers, New York Historical Association Library, Cooperstown (hereafter cited as "Clarke NYSHA MSS").

<sup>42</sup> Fox, *Land Speculation*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

to the land, the first survey of the Oriskany Patent was completed.<sup>44</sup> On December 5, 1772, an indenture was signed that conveyed full rights to the patent lands, now assessed at "Containing 47,000 acres of land and the Usual Allowance for Highways" to John Wenham (home unrecorded), George Clarke (of Hyde, Great Britain), William Livingston (of New Jersey), James Van Cortlandt (of Yonkers), Augustus Van Cortlandt (of New York City), and Daniel Coxe (home unrecorded).<sup>45</sup> During the Revolution, Loyalist shares in the Oriskany Patent were confiscated by the State.

### The Military Road

Throughout this historic period, there were land routes that ran east-to-west along the south side of the Mohawk River through or near to the Site. At the time of the granting of the Oriskany Patent in 1705, the only land route was the Iroquois Trail, a footpath that likely ran on the uplands above the Mohawk River and may have included another route on the lowlands.

While the Mohawk River remained the primary means of long-haul transportation, roads also became necessary, especially in winter when rivers became impassable. With the establishment a British trading post at Oswego in 1727, transportation and trade in the Mohawk Valley corridor increased substantially. It was likely after this date, and probably around the time that the first fortification on the Oneida Carry was built by the British in 1736, that a road to the Oneida Carry was constructed. This road likely ran south of the Mohawk River on the floodplain (lowlands), north of the Site. A French description of this road around 1757 noted:

From Fort Williams [Oneida Carry] to Fort Kouari [Fort Dayton, later village of Herkimer] . . . The road follows the right bank of the river which is the South side . . . The road is bad for about four leagues [1 league = about 3 miles] after leaving Fort Williams. The road is marshy. The road is passable for sleds in winter and during the summer, and it can be easily passed on horseback at all times . . . after these four leagues, carts can easily go as far as Fort Kouari.<sup>46</sup>

This road apparently ran near the river. General Jeffrey Amherst, British Commander-in-Chief, noted in 1759 that this road crossed "Embouchures [point at which the creeks widen at their confluence] of the Creeks which fall into the Mohawk River."<sup>47</sup> General Amherst made this observation in preparation for construction by the British colonial government of a new road from Fort Dayton [German Flatts, later village of Herkimer] to Fort Stanwix during the French and Indian War. The British had been trying for a few years to construct a new road through the area, which in part remained the homeland of the Haudenosaunee. In June 1756, Sir William Johnson addressed the League of the Haudenosaunee with regard to this matter:

I must desire your liberty & assistance to cut open a Road through your Country from the German Flatts to Oswego . . . This Road will be of great advantage to you as well as us in Case of any alarm or Danger from the French. I can soon come to your assistance which at present would be very difficult from the Badness of the road [lowland road] . . .<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Survey date noted in "A Field Book of Sundry Tracts of Land in the State of New York / The Property of George and Edward Clarke Esqrs. / Compiled from the Originals and partly Surveyed," c.1790, Clarke NYSHA MSS; "Oriskany Patent," c.1769 map, Surveyor General Series Map Collection, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>45</sup> These men had gained title to the patent from the original holders. Oriskany Patent indenture dated 5 December 1772, Clarke NYSHA MSS. Various other shareholders owned interest in the patent during this period.

<sup>46</sup>"Topography of the Country between Oswego and Albany," Paris Documents XIII, c.1757, O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 10, 676.

<sup>47</sup> Amherst's Orders to Ensigns Ratser and River, Albany, 23 May 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>48</sup> Sir William Address to the Six Nations, 30 June 1756, London Documents, O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 10, 145.

The League responded:

Brother, Yesterday you desired us to continue keeping the Road [lowland road] clear and guarding the Battoes to Oswego . . . you also told us that there was but one Road to transport Provisions to Oswego and that very difficult as it was both dangerous and tedious, and that you wanted a Road by Land [upland?] through our country and desired our assistance as we knew the best ground to cut and make a road through . . . we freely consent that you shall have a Road and the Oneidas and Tuscaroras will assist you in opening it from the German Flatts to Canaghsaragy and the Onondagas will from that to Oswego . . .<sup>49</sup>

On August 7, 1756, Sir William Johnson sent out a public notice to hire construction workers.<sup>50</sup> Plans to build the road were soon halted, probably due to French capture of Oswego during the same month and their subsequent capture of the Oneida Carry as well. Only with British refortification of the Carry and construction of Fort Stanwix in 1758-59 did it become possible and necessary to build the new road.

In spring 1759, General Amherst began work with James Montresor, the Chief Engineer in America between 1757 and 1759, to oversee construction of the new road (referred to in later histories as the "military road"). General Amherst wrote on May 16, 1759 that this road would go from ". . . Rinklin, which is above Herkimer's [Fort Herkimer or Herkimer home] to Fort Stanwix . . .," a distance of about 30 miles. He stated that ". . . a shorter Route and much better might be taken by going farther from the River, and keeping on the Rising Grounds, by which the Creeks may be greatly avoided, and the Bridges not subject to be carried away with every flood."<sup>51</sup> The next week, Amherst ordered Ensigns Ratser and River and some light infantry of the 60<sup>th</sup> or Royal American Regiment to set out from Fort Stanwix and survey the ground between there and Fort Herkimer. Amherst detailed the following order, in which he repeats his plan of keeping the new road to the high ground:

As the Ground cannot be too narrowly surveyed before it is marked out, and that I would have it carried in as straight a Line as possible on the left [south] of the Road, which at present leads to Fort Stanwix, by which the Creeks may in part be avoided, and the Road be carried on the high Grounds as much as the Line they carry it in will allow of. . . by the most Exact survey they can take of the ground, and the Course of the Country, they are to mark such a Road as they judge will be best and shortest to lead from Herkimer to Fort Stanwix, which I imagine must be by turning out of the present Road at about Renolds, which is called the Little Indian Field [probably at Oriskany Creek, later site of Oriska,<sup>52</sup> and keeping to the left [south] of the path that is at present used to go to Fort Stanwix . . . to observe what bridges may be wanted, if at about halfway, there may be a strong Pass over any Creek, to Compute the distance as near they can, and to Carry the Road in as direct a line as the Ground will permit, that the distance may be shortened as much as possible.<sup>53</sup>

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, the infantry came back with the survey of the road. It was not until August 6<sup>th</sup> that Amherst wrote to General Gage at Crown Point requesting troops to construct the road:

The next thing I have to recommend to Your consideration is the opening of a free and uninterrupted communication by land from Herkheimer [sic] to Fort Stanwix . . . by causing a straight wide road to be cutt through the woods, which will render the

---

<sup>49</sup> Six Nations to Johnson, 1 July 1756, *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>50</sup> Sir William Johnson to the Inhabitants of Schoharie, Fort Johnson, 7 August 1756, in James Sullivan, ed., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921), vol. 2, 526-527.

<sup>51</sup> Amherst to Massey, Albany, 16 May 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>52</sup> A reference that suggests Oriska may have been called the Little Indian Field is a 1767 account calling it "the Indian field." Francis Grant, "Journal From New York to Canada, 1767" *Journal of the New York State Historical Association*, vol. 8 (1932), 188. See also Forbes, "More Light on Old Fort Schuyler."

<sup>53</sup> Amherst's Orders to Ensigns Ratser and River, Albany, 23 May 1759, Amherst MSS.

transportation of provisions, stores, and other requisites for the use of the army and garrisons, more certain and secure.<sup>54</sup>

Amherst requested that Major Browning at Fort Stanwix employ his garrison in building the road, beginning at Fort Stanwix and continuing east to Fort Herkimer. On September 3, 1759, Browning responded by ordering 38 men from Fort Hendrick [Little Falls] and Fort Herkimer and all available men from Fort Stanwix to work on the road project. General Nicholas Herkimer commanded the construction. The next week Browning sent an additional workforce of 75 men to assist Herkimer.<sup>55</sup>

Construction of the road began at Fort Stanwix and proceeded east toward Fort Herkimer.<sup>56</sup> Immediately east of Fort Stanwix, the road ran a short distance through the swamps to the "Saw Mill and Landing Place."<sup>57</sup> After the Landing Place, the road left the old road alignment, ascended the uplands south of the Mohawk River, and ran on a relatively straight alignment until it reached Oriskany Creek and the Little Indian Field. This new upland alignment replaced the old lowland road where it was at its worst.<sup>58</sup> As the road approached Oriskany Creek, it descended back onto the lowlands and rejoined the alignment of the old road located in the narrow space between the steep Oriskany Bluff and the Mohawk River.<sup>59</sup> From here to Fort Herkimer, a distance of about 22 miles, the new road stayed on or near the old lowland road alignment. To secure the road, a blockhouse named Fort Schuyler was built along with the road about halfway to Fort Herkimer at the confluence of the Mohawk River and the Schwein Fesser Kill.<sup>60</sup>

By September 18, 1759, Browning reported that Herkimer and his force of over 110 men had completed about 11 miles of the road, which would have placed them working on the old road alignment approaching Fort Schuyler. In the same report, Browning noted that this road ". . . tho superficial, is in the best direction, it will be of infinite service in winter."<sup>61</sup> The road on the new alignment between Fort Herkimer and the Little Indian Field therefore must have been relatively straight, as Amherst had ordered.

In the same September 18<sup>th</sup> report, Browning also added that ". . . as the road becomes easier, he [Herkimer] will proceed [sic] much faster, in order to effect it." Browning probably wrote that construction would proceed more quickly because the work involved rebuilding the old road rather than constructing an entirely new alignment, as was the case for the section between Fort Stanwix and the Little Indian Field. The work would also be hastened because Browning ordered another 20 men from Fort Herkimer, who he felt could be spared because ". . . the work will immediately be so near to them."

On October 13, 1759, Browning reported to Amherst that Herkimer had arrived at Fort Herkimer on the 11<sup>th</sup>: "The way is cleared, but several bridges still wanting, with much leveling."<sup>62</sup> "Leveling" probably referred to the grading necessary to build earthen causeways across the ravines.<sup>63</sup> On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Browning could report from Fort Stanwix: "With a Detachment from hence and the Lower Posts, we have

---

<sup>54</sup> Amherst to Gage, Camp at Crown Point, 6 August 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>55</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 3 September 1759, 13 September 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>56</sup> This description of the road construction and alignment is based on Amherst's correspondence and on a comparison of historic and current maps of the region.

<sup>57</sup> "Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at Oneida Station By Provincial Troops in 1758," *A Set of Plans and Forts in America Reduced From Actual Surveys* (London: Mary Ann Rocque, 1763), copy in Sullivan, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 3, 25.

<sup>58</sup> "Topography of the Country between Oswego and Albany," c.1757, in O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Paris Documents XIII, v. 10, 676. This traveler noted this road was "bad for about four leagues [12 miles] after leaving Fort Williams [Oneida Carry]."

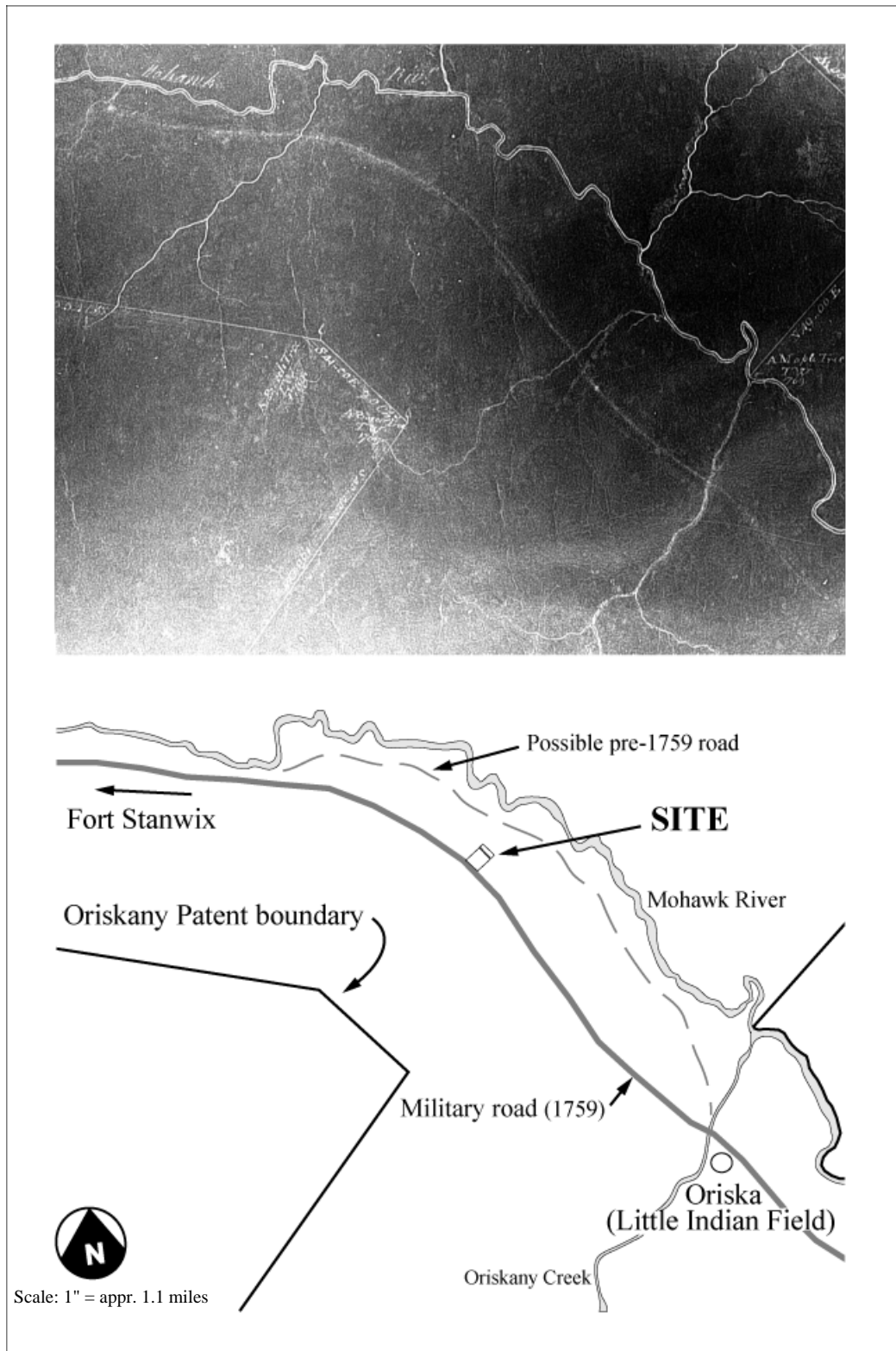
<sup>59</sup> The Oriskany Bluff is the name of the uplands in this area east of Oriskany Creek.

<sup>60</sup> Forbes, "More Light on Old Fort Schuyler," 1. Fort Schuyler was at the present site of Utica; historians usually referred to it as "Old Fort Schuyler" to distinguish it from Fort Stanwix, which was renamed Fort Schuyler during the Revolution.

<sup>61</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 18 September 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>62</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 13 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>63</sup> Pomroy Jones, in his 1851 history, described how prior to the Battle of Oriskany, a scout hid "in a hole dug in procuring earth to cover a causeway in the ravine" (a ravine east of the battlefield). Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome: Published by the author, 1851), 344.



**Figure 2.7:** Detail, c.1769 map of the Oriskany Patent with annotation highlighting military road. Map #465, Surveyor General Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

opened a Road to Fort Herkemer [sic]; they are now passing over it again to amend the defects."<sup>64</sup> According to one observation made soon after the road was completed, the new military road was best constructed between Fort Stanwix and the Little Indian Field (Oriska), where it was on a new alignment: "The road from Fort Herkeman [sic] to the Little Indian Field is not so carefully done as from thence to Fort Stanwix. The bridges over the swamps are very imperfect . . ."<sup>65</sup>

With French surrender in 1760, the Oneida Carry lost much of its strategic significance and the military road likely fell into disrepair along with Fort Stanwix. Fort Schuyler, mid-way on the road [later Utica], was in a "shameful state of decay" by 1764, probably reflecting the state of the military road as well.<sup>66</sup> In a 1769 survey of the Oriskany Patent, the Road was documented as the only route along the Mohawk River to Fort Stanwix. [Figure 2.7, preceding page].<sup>67</sup>

On the eve of the Revolution, the military road to the Oneida Carry again became strategically important. The American Patriots took over the Oneida Carry and reconstructed Fort Stanwix, which they renamed Fort Schuyler, and repaired the military road. On July 4, 1777 Peter Gansevoort, commander of Fort Stanwix, reported to General Schuyler that he needed troops for ". . . clearing the road from Fort Dayton, which is so embarrassed [sic] in places as to be almost impassable. . ."<sup>68</sup> On July 8, General Schuyler ordered General Nicholas Herkimer, who commanded the original 1759 construction, to begin repair of the road. His order suggests that the road did not need reconstruction, just clearing:

The road leading from Fort Dayton [later village of Herkimer] to Fort Schuyler [Fort Stanwix, later city of Rome] is so much encumbered with wood by the falling of trees across it, that it is rendered impassable for men or carriages: you will therefore please to order 200 of your militia to be employed in clearing it away with all the dispatch the nature of the service will admit of; each man bringing an axe with him.<sup>69</sup>

The military road proved significant to the Patriot cause during the British Campaign of 1777 as a vital supply link to Fort Stanwix. It was on this road that General Herkimer led the Tryon County Militia to the Battle of Oriskany in August 1777. During this time, the portion of the road east of Oriska [Little Indian Field] toward Fort Herkimer was in poor condition. Benedict Arnold wrote on August 23, 1777 from 10 miles above Fort Dayton on his way to Fort Stanwix: "The excessive bad roads and necessary precautions in marching through thick woods, retarded us so much that we have but at this moment reached this place . . ."<sup>70</sup>

After the Battle of Oriskany and the end of the Siege of Fort Stanwix later in the month, the military road probably witnessed no further organized military action, as the Oneida Carry remained in Patriot control. It is probable that the road deteriorated during the Revolution until it became rediscovered as an important transportation corridor in the settlement of the region following the war.

---

<sup>64</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 23 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>65</sup> T. Moncrieff to Amherst, East End of Oneida Lake, 30 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>66</sup> Forbes, "More Light on Old Fort Schuyler," 1.

<sup>67</sup> Oriskany Patent map (c.1769), Surveyor General Series Map Collection, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Gansevoort to General Schuyler, 4 July 1777, copy in undated transcript collection compiled by Joseph Robertaccio, Utica, New York, copy in Oriskany Battlefield site files, NYS OPRHP Central Region offices, Jamesville (hereafter cited as "Central Region MSS").

<sup>69</sup> Schuyler to Herkimer, 8 July 1777 (Schuyler Papers), copy in John Albert Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany* (Rome: Rome Sentinel Company, 1927), 139. The number of trees across the road may not have been the result of a long period of neglect so much as the effect of a windstorm. The year before, Lieutenant Ebenezer Elmer remarked that he had marched 12 miles to Fort Schuyler from Oriska ". . . on a blind path through the swamp wet and muddy . . ." It seems that Elmer may have taken the old lowland road, which had become nothing more than a path, possibly avoiding the military road due to the downed trees. Ebenezer Elmer Journal, *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, volume II, nos. 3 and 4 (1847), 188.

<sup>70</sup> Benedict Arnold to George Clinton, 23 August 1777, originally published in Public Papers of George Clinton, copy in Robertaccio transcript collection, Central Region MSS.

### Settlement at Oriska and the Oneida Carry

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the only settlement in the region was the Oneida castle located about 15 miles to the southwest of the Site. The area closer to the Site remained largely an unsettled expanse with two exceptions: one settlement at the Oneida Carry [later city of Rome], approximately 6 miles west of the Site, and one at Oriskany Creek [later village of Oriskany], approximately 2 miles to the east.

The Oneida Carry was first fortified by the British in 1736, but it is likely there were camps or other temporary quarters there prior to this time. The first permanent settlers at the Carry may have come after 1738, when Philip Livingston, a later shareholder in the Oriskany Patent, secured an agreement from the Oneidas to allow settlement there.<sup>71</sup> The first documented permanent settlers at the Oneida Carry were Colonel John Roof and a Mr. Brodock, who leased property from Oliver Delancy, another later patent shareholder.<sup>72</sup> Settlement at the Carry during this historic period was very limited and was centered around the fort and service of the traders. A traveler across the Carry in 1767 remarked that around the fort ". . . are some few wooden houses for Suttlers and those who supply the wagons on the carrying place."<sup>73</sup> On the eve of the Revolution in April, 1775, a Richard Duncan reported that the fort was in ruins, but ". . . there is fifty Acres of Land enclosed about the Fort, it is chiefly meadow, and five little huts of houses with a couple of Barns . . ."<sup>74</sup>

Closer to the Site was the small Oneida village known as Oriska (Oliska) that developed on the sheltered flatland along the east side of the Oriskany Creek near the Mohawk River. The words Oriskany, Oriska, and Oliska are derived from the Oneida *Ol hiske*, meaning "a place of nettles," nettles being an herbaceous plant with stinging hairs that grows in fields or woodland edges.<sup>75</sup> Oriska developed during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century along or near the road leading to the Oneida Carry. The earliest available reference to this settlement is on a c.1756 map of Albany County, in which four triangles mark an area labeled "Orhisconi" on the east side of the confluence of the Oriskany Creek and Mohawk River.<sup>76</sup> The next available reference is General Amherst's 1759 reference to the "Little Indian Field," most probably this same settlement.<sup>77</sup> Two years later, Sir William Johnson spent the night at "Oriske field." In 1765, Canaghquiesha, an Oneida sachem, wrote to Johnson that ". . . a German is gone to live at our large field Orisca which is our property," and during the same year, there was the first report of permanent settlement at the spot, seven Oneida "huts."<sup>78</sup> In 1767, traveler Francis Grant reported he visited Oriska, which he called "the Indian field."<sup>79</sup>

On the eve of the Revolution, there was a report of 10 "Indian" families living at Oriska, and another report of "Two Dutch houses standing upon the Oreska Creek and sundry Indian huts . . ."<sup>80</sup> Traveler Richard Duncan described similar conditions at Oriska in April, 1775:

The Oriskany Flatts is at present in the possession of Ten family's of Indians, who call themselves Onidas, there is two white men with their family's along with them, the one named William Cunningham, the other Hamarks Edegh, both from the German Flatts,

<sup>71</sup>Fox, *Land Speculation*, 12.

<sup>72</sup>Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 326-327.

<sup>73</sup>Francis Grant, "Journal of a Tour from New York to Canada, 1767," *Journal of the New York State Historical Association*, vol. 8 (1932), 188.

<sup>74</sup>Richard Duncan to James De Lancey *et al.*, 23 April 1775, Heath and Livingston Papers manuscript collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>75</sup>Nettles (family *Urticaceae*, genus *Urtica*) include about 50 species of annual or perennial herbs with mostly stinging hairs, widely distributed in both hemispheres. Liberty Hyde Bailey, *Hortus Third*, ed. Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium (New York: Macmillian, 1976), 1140.

<sup>76</sup>"Map of the County of Albany," c.1756, Crown Map Collection, New York State Archives, Albany. The map is catalogued c.1756; no date is printed on the map.

<sup>77</sup>Amherst's Orders to Ensigns Raters and River, Albany, 23 May 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>78</sup>Tony Wonderley, "Notes and Brief Chronology of Oliska, the Oneida Village at Oriskany," unpublished paper dated 16 September 1999, Office of the Oneida Indian Nation Historian, via Oneida, New York.

<sup>79</sup>Francis Grant, "Journal From New York to Canada, 1767," 188.

<sup>80</sup>Wonderley, "Notes and Brief Chronology of Oliska."



they tell me the Indians permit them to stay and cultivate a part of the Land on condition of their working and fencing the rest for them, however the Indians may tell a different story, and was sorry they were out a hunting when I passed by . . .<sup>81</sup>

A few days after the Battle of Oriskany in August 1777, British-allied Indians destroyed Oriska in retaliation for Oneida assistance to the American Patriots.

### **Site Development & Use**

For most of this historic period, the Site remained forested, undeveloped, and in the common ownership of Oriskany Patent investors. In 1759, the first major feature, the military road between Forts Herkimer and Stanwix, was constructed through or immediately adjacent to the Site. Based on available documentation, the natural landscape of the Site remained much as it had been during the previous historic period, except for the probable existence of openings in the forest canopy caused by a blowdown from a violent storm at some point prior to the Battle, probably in the year or two prior to 1777.<sup>82</sup>

While the landscape of the Site remained largely unaltered from the previous historic period, the Site did experience new uses. The military road brought transportation activities on or adjacent to the Site that, with the possible exception of the Iroquois Trail, previously were restricted to the Mohawk River and its adjoining lowlands, where the first road to the Oneida Carry was located. Most importantly, the Site witnessed a major military event on August 6, 1777: the Battle of Oriskany.

### **The Battle of Oriskany<sup>83</sup>**

While commanding the siege against Fort Stanwix, British General Barry St. Leger received word on August 5, 1777 that a large force under the command of General Nicholas Herkimer had set out from Fort Dayton in the German Flatts the previous day and was on its way to relieve Fort Stanwix under the command of Colonel Gansevoort. In less than 24 hours, St. Leger had planned an ambush and had organized a large force and selected a site. This force was under the command of Sir John Johnson, Colonel Claus, John Butler, and Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant. It was comprised of about 70 regular troops and 400 Indians, mainly Senecas and Cayugas.<sup>84</sup> Herkimer's force was comprised of about 800 troops from the Tryon County Militia made up largely of Palatine German farmer-soldiers. At Oriska, the small Oneida village about 8 miles east of Fort Stanwix, about 60 Oneidas under the command of Honyere Tewahongarahkon joined the militia.<sup>85</sup>

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Herkimer had reached Oriska and from here he sent messengers to Fort Stanwix requesting that Colonel Gansevoort organize a sortie to aid his troops on their final approach to Fort Stanwix. This sortie was to fire three canons when it was ready to leave Fort Stanwix as a signal for Herkimer to begin his march. The messengers went via the lowlands to avoid the British, but due to the difficulty of the route, did not make it to Fort Stanwix until the next day.

The morning of August 6, 1777 dawned hot and humid. The British force under Brant and Johnson set out for the ambush location, despite Seneca suggestions that a peace offer should be made. The location they selected was probably within 6 miles of Fort Stanwix, about 2 miles west of Oriska where the military road

<sup>81</sup> Richard Duncan to James De Lancey et al, 23 April 1775, Heath and Livingston Papers manuscript collection.

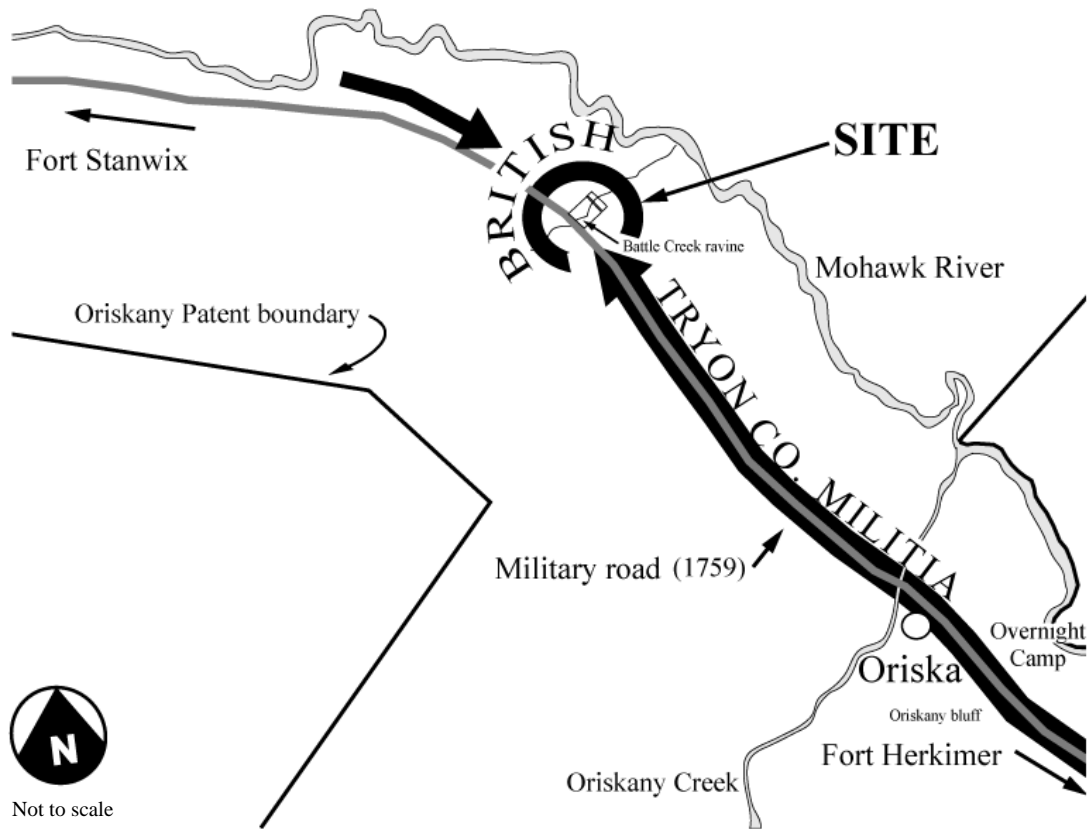
<sup>82</sup> It was probably debris from this "blowdown" that General Herkimer had to clear during repair of the military road.

<sup>83</sup> There are many varied accounts of the Battle of Oriskany. This brief account, which details the general outline of the battle as it related to the landscape, does not focus on military strategy or action. It is derived primarily from three well-documented contemporary histories: SJS Archaeological Services, Barrow, Arkansas, "A Place of Great Sadness / Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography" unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, 1998, the best documented account of the battle; Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972); and Kevin P. Piatt, "Opportunity Lost: The Battle of Oriskany and the Siege of Fort Stanwix" (M.A. Thesis, California State University, 1998).

<sup>84</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 138.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 132; Graymont, "The Oneidas and the American Revolution," *The Oneida Indian Experience*, 36.

crossed a deep ravine.<sup>86</sup> General Herkimer, his better judgement swayed by anxious soldiers waiting for the three-canon signal that never happened, pushed ahead from Oriska toward Fort Stanwix. Around 10 o'clock in the morning, the force began to enter the British trap [Figure 2.8]. The entire column, which probably advanced orderly by division with a long 15-wagon baggage train, may have stretched up to a half



**Figure 2.8:** Battle of Oriskany, general troop movements. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000, base map derived from c.1769 Oriskany patent map, map #465, Surveyor General Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany.

mile along the military road.<sup>87</sup> Herkimer, at the head of the column, passed across the causeway that carried the military road through the ravine and proceeded onto the next plateau, probably reaching near the next ravine to the west depending on the length of the column .

The British plan was to attack Herkimer's front guard once it had advanced far enough for the rear guard to pass into the ravine, at which time the forces hidden in the woods would close in on the entire column. The steep east wall of the ravine and underbrush in the marshy ravine bottom provided the concealment necessary to launch their surprise attack on the westward-advancing troops. The British troops were to take position in the front nearest the road, with their allied Indians in the flanks extending obliquely to road. The ambush, however, did not go according to plan. The Indians, impatient with waiting, attacked before

<sup>86</sup> Col. Claus to Secretary Knox, 15 October 1777, O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 8, 721. See "Site Analysis and Evaluation" for further discussion on location of the battle.

<sup>87</sup> There is no record of exactly how the militia marched. Luzader, "Construction and Military History of Fort Stanwix," 43, says it was a double column; Joseph Robertaccio, "Battlefield Revelations," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 15 August 1993, 6B, says the men marched three abreast.

Herkimer's rear guard had reached the ravine, rushing in with loud screams and attacking with tomahawks, spears, and hatchets. The British troops began to fire toward the Patriot column, threatening their allied Indians in front. British agent John Butler later wrote of this initial attack:

Myself with the Indians and 20 rangers were posted to flank them [Herkimer's troops] in the woods. This disposition was soon after a little altered by the Indians while the enemy was advancing, and when they were near enough threw a heavy fire on the rebels and made a shocking slaughter among the[m] with their spears & hatchets.<sup>88</sup>

The frenzy of this initial outbreak of the ambush frightened Herkimer's rear guard, many of who were able to escape because they had not yet reached the ravine. After the initial attack on the military road, the fighting dispersed over a large area to the cover of the woods, where huge old-growth and fallen trees provided cover during the chaotic, hand-to-hand, fighting. The battle was probably concentrated within the ravine and on the adjacent plateau and second ravine to the west, and spread toward the north as some of the militia tried to flee toward the Mohawk River. Militiaman Garred Van Brocklen stated that after fighting for a short while, ". . . he with the most Part of the Militia nere him did Retire toward the River or Rather to the right still fighting and Retreating."<sup>89</sup> Moses Younglove, General Herkimer's brigade surgeon, recounted this fighting in a poem:

Now hand to hand, the contest is for life,  
With Bayonet, tomahawk, sword, and scalping-knife;  
No more remote the work of death we ply,  
And thick as hail the showering bullets fly:  
Full many a hardy warrior sinks supine,  
Yells, shrieks, groans, shouts, and thundering volleys join;  
The dismal din the ringing forest fills,  
The sounding echo roars along the hills.  
Our friends and foes lie struggling in their blood,  
An undistinguished carnage strews the wood . . .<sup>90</sup>

The British officers, who had planned an organized ambush, lost control to the Indians who were more familiar with forest battle strategy. General Herkimer was wounded in the knee in the initial attack, but was able to provide some degree of command for his troops from a position which was probably on the edge of the west side of the ravine, where he purportedly sat on a log or on his saddle leaning against a tree.<sup>91</sup> Herkimer commanded his men to pair up behind the cover of the huge trees on the Site, which allowed one to reload while the other discharged and fended off attack.

During the late part of the battle around 3:00, a heavy rainstorm halted fighting, and once the rain subsided, the battle continued for only a short while.<sup>92</sup> The storm gave the remaining Patriots a chance to reorganize.

The planned sortie from Fort Stanwix, which was organized of 250 men under the command of Marinus Willett, never arrived at the battleground, likely because Herkimer had advanced before his messengers arrived at Fort Stanwix and because Willett was unaware of the British ambush. Willett's sortie did raid an important Indian camp near Fort Stanwix, and word of this reached the battleground. This raid, along with the loss of so many of their best warriors, probably caused the British-allied Indians to leave the ambush

<sup>88</sup> Butler to Sir Guy Carlton, 15 August 1777, quoted in Piatt, "Opportunity Lost," 69.

<sup>89</sup> Deposition of Garred Van Brochten, "Depositions by veterans of the Battle of Oriskany relating to the brave conduct of Col. Volkert Veeder, June, 1778," New-York Historical Society Manuscripts.

<sup>90</sup> Moses Younglove, untitled and undated poem, c.1778, reprinted in Piatt, "Opportunity Lost," 70.

<sup>91</sup> An 1884 account based on the story of M. M. Jones noted that Herkimer sat on the west side of the second ravine on the west side of the Site. S. North, "The Story of a Monument," *Magazine of American History*, vol. XII, no. 2 (August 1884), 103.

<sup>92</sup> Paitt, "Opportunity Lost," 78. Several 19<sup>th</sup>-century histories, e.g., Ellis Roberts, *The Battle of Oriskany* (Utica: Roberts, 1877), purport that the storm during the battle was the one that blew down many trees in the forest. It is more likely that the trees were blown down in a storm that occurred prior to July, 1777, when Herkimer led forces to clear fallen trees across the Road.

around 4 o'clock, with the British soldiers soon following. By this time, the Patriot forces were severely weakened, with many killed or taken prisoner and many having fled down toward the Mohawk River and back east toward German Flatts.

From a tactical standpoint, the British had succeeded in stopping the Tryon County Militia from advancing to the aid of Fort Stanwix. While the British did flee the Site, they probably did so knowing that the Patriots were too weakened to advance. Nineteenth-century historians, however, have often used the British retreat to signal an American victory. While the Patriots may have held the ground, they were picking up the wounded rather than staving off the British. The battle in the end was a disaster for the Tryon County Militia and the Oneidas, but a great aid to the Patriot forces at Fort Stanwix.

According to most accounts, the Patriot side suffered the greatest casualties. Estimates vary, but generally range around 500 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner out of a total of approximately 860. Most of the Tryon County Militia officers were killed, and General Herkimer died a few days later of complication from amputation of his wounded leg. On the British side, the estimates range from around 45 killed and an equal number wounded. Most of the British casualties were among their allied Indians, who lost many of their notable chiefs and warriors.<sup>93</sup>

After the fighting ceased, there were many bodies left on the battleground. Blakesnake, a British-allied Indian, reported that there were so many bodies that they did not try to bury them and instead covered them with branches.<sup>94</sup> Herkimer's troops left most of their dead, as it was struggle enough just to retrieve the wounded and return to their camp at old Fort Schuyler. A few of the bodies were laid out along the military road, while remains of others were found as far away as the mouth of Oriskany Creek. A few days after the battle, a traveler made the following observation of the battlefield:

I beheld the most shocking sight I had ever witnessed. The Indians and white men were mingled with one another, just as they had been left when death first completed his work. Many bodies had also been torn by wild beasts.<sup>95</sup>

It may have been planned that Benedict Arnold's relief troops would bury the dead as they passed the battlefield on the way to Fort Stanwix about two weeks after the battle, but according to one account, the stench from the bodies rotting in the August heat was so bad that the troops avoided the field.<sup>96</sup> Skeletons reportedly remained on the battlefield into the 1780s and 1790s during the next historic period when the area became settled and developed for agriculture.<sup>97</sup>

### Commemoration

No permanent, public commemoration of the battle is known to have occurred during this historic period at the Site. The Continental Congress did recognize the importance of the battle for the larger course of the Revolution. In October 1777, the Continental Congress issued the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That the governor and council of New York be desired to erect a monument, at continental expense, of the value of five hundred dollars, to the memory of the late Brigadier Herkimer, who commanded the militia of Tryon county in the State of New York, and was killed fighting gallantly in defense of the liberty of these states.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 136, 138.

<sup>94</sup> Governor Blakesnake, quoted in SJS Archeological, "A Place of Great Sadness," 82.

<sup>95</sup> Frederick Sammons, quoted in *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>96</sup> James Williamson, quoted in *Ibid.*, 83. Other accounts noted that Arnold and his forces did bury the dead in a mass grave on the lowlands east of Battle Creek.

<sup>97</sup> Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 361.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Allen C. Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1879), 149.

John Hancock forwarded the resolution to Governor George Clinton and the "Honorable Council of the State of New York" on October 5, 1777. Governor George Clinton then forwarded the resolution to the Tryon County Committee of Safety, stating: "Enclosed you have a copy of a letter and resolves of Congress for erecting a monument to the memory of your late gallant General. While with you I lament the causes, I am impressed with a due sense of the great and justly merited honour the continent has, in this instance, paid to the memory of that brave man."<sup>99</sup> Congress apparently did not specify the location of the monument, which subsequently became referred to as the "Herkimer Monument."

### **Site Boundaries**

During this historic period, there were no boundaries associated with the Site, as the Oriskany Patent was undivided and remained held in common by its shareholders.

Exact boundaries or limits of the battlefield are not known. Given that the battle did occur on the Site,<sup>100</sup> the fighting is believed to have occurred in an area greater than that included within the present boundaries of the Site, as the fighting dissipated throughout the woods and probably down toward the Mohawk River after the initial attack on the military road.

## **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**<sup>101</sup>

### **Natural Systems and Features**

There were no substantial changes to the natural systems and features of the Site, which was dominated by a climax northern hardwoods forest, from the previous historic period. Three minor changes did occur. First, the forest canopy was opened along the corridor of the military road in 1759. In July 1777, this corridor, which had become blocked by fallen trees, was reopened under the command of General Herkimer; no information has been found on how wide this opening was.<sup>102</sup> The fallen trees across the military road had likely blown down in a recent windstorm that had probably also opened sections of the forest canopy. According to battle veteran Moses Younglove, "There were many fallen trees on the ground."<sup>103</sup> The felling of trees in the forest, particularly in loose and wet soils, was a natural occurrence at the Site that had likely taken place before this storm. The second minor change to the natural features of the Site was a possible change in alignment or flow of Battle Creek due to construction in 1759 of the causeway that carried the military road across the ravine. No documentation has been found on the extent of this potential change.

Accounts of the landscape from the battle period provide some insight into the natural features of the landscape. Many accounts note the forest, the dominant natural feature of the Site, and the ravine. The Site also had marshes or swamps and possibly a spring. Battle veteran George Walter, after being wounded,

---

<sup>99</sup> William W. Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County; Or the Border Warfare of New-York During the Revolution* (New York: J. J. Harper, 1831), 83.

<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of documentation related to the location of the battle, see the "Site Analysis and Evaluation" chapter of this report.

<sup>101</sup> During this historic period, there is very little detailed documentation on the landscape of the battlefield available from primary source accounts. More detailed descriptions of the landscape are found in later secondary-source histories. These descriptions, which were written beginning in the 1830s, all appear to have been based largely on oral history and the authors' first-hand observations of the Site, which had significantly changed since the battle period.

<sup>102</sup> Schuyler to Herkimer, 8 July 1777 (Schuyler Papers), quoted in Scott *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany*, 139.

<sup>103</sup> "Battle of Oriskany / Record of the Narrative of Dr. Moses Younglove; Giving an Account of the Battle of Oriskany and of His Experience After Being Taken Prisoner," microfiche, American History Series, no date or place of publication, Bird Library microfilm collection, Syracuse University.

". . . crept to a spring and slacked his thirst."<sup>104</sup> Captain Henry Diefendorf ". . . begged for water and Sanders stamped a hole in the marshy soil, and as the water settled in it, he took off his shoe and in it gave the dying man a drink . . ."<sup>105</sup>

### **Spatial Organization**

The Site remained largely an unbroken expanse of climax forest defined by the uplands, lowlands, and ravines. The only change in the spatial organization of the Site from the previous historic period was the creation of a corridor through the forest as a result of the construction of the military road in 1759. Accounts suggest that this corridor was obstructed by vegetation in 1777, probably due to a windstorm that felled numerous trees across the road around this time.<sup>106</sup>

### **Land Use**

During this historic period, there were no documented land uses on the Site aside from transportation, which was introduced in 1759 with construction of the military road.<sup>107</sup> Transportation activities probably declined after the French and Indian War as the Oneida Carry lost its strategic importance. In 1777 during the Revolution, the road was rebuilt and reopened by the American Patriots. Throughout this period, transportation uses on or adjacent to the Site centered around trade and military activities, as there was little European settlement in the region at the time.

### **Cultural Traditions**

The Oneidas continued to consider the Site and the surrounding region part of their homeland during this period, despite its sale in 1705 through the Oriskany Patent. No documentation has been found on specific Oneida cultural traditions associated with the landscape of the Site in particular.

### **Cluster Arrangement**

Not applicable.

### **Circulation**

#### **The Military Road**

During this historic period, the military road between Forts Dayton (later village of Herkimer) and Stanwix (later city of Rome) was constructed through or immediately adjacent to the Site. An upland segment of the Iroquois Trail may have also run through or near to the Site during this period.

The term "military road" was apparently not used during this historic period. Maps and correspondence dating from this period and soon after refer to it as the "Road to Albany,"<sup>108</sup> "Road to Ge. Flats & Albany,"<sup>109</sup> "The Great Road from Schenectady to Fort Stanwix,"<sup>110</sup> the road between Fort Herkimer and Fort Stanwix, or simply as the "Road."<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Jephtha R. Simms, *The Frontiersmen of New York* (Albany: George C. Riggs, 1882/3), 93.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>106</sup> Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany*, 139.

<sup>107</sup> The Site may have had a transportation land use prior to 1759 through an upland route of the Iroquois Trail. No documentation has been found on the exact alignment of this trail.

<sup>108</sup> "Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at Oneida Station By Provincial Troops in 1758," copy in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 3, 25.

<sup>109</sup> Oriskany Patent Map (c.1769), New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>110</sup> This title was recorded in 1789, but was likely in use during this historic period. James Cockburn, Surveyor, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent / The Property of The Honorable John Lansing [Inn (?)] and Abraham G. Lansing Esq. / Divided into Lots A. 1789 and 1790," New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>111</sup> Amherst MSS.

The military road was built in 1759 under the direction of General Amherst and the British Chief Engineer in America, Colonel James Montresor, and rebuilt in 1777 by the American Patriots. Design standards for this or any military roads constructed by the British colonial government in North America during this period have not been found. Standards for public highways in Mohawk Valley are known through several laws passed by the County of Albany. These laws, however, applied only to settled areas of the county, where maintenance was regulated by the district overseer.<sup>112</sup> The military road between Forts Herkimer and Stanwix was west of the European-settled areas of the county and was built by the British colonial government. It therefore would probably not have been subject to county law.

While the military road may not have been subject to county road standards and laws, it likely reflected general road building technology of the period that required public rights-of-way of between 33 and 66 feet wide. The roadbed would have been far narrower, perhaps 1 rod or less, with cleared areas to either side [Figure 2.1, page 26]. Such clear zones would have also been essential on military roads in forested areas in order for visibility and security. At marshy areas and small creeks, roads were generally built on raised embankments called causeways, also often referred to as bridges [Figure 2.2, page 27].<sup>113</sup> When crossing ravines, roads of this period tended to be aligned toward the shallower and narrower upper ends, where the length and height of the causeway could be shortened.<sup>114</sup>

The following general details are known from General Amherst's correspondence in the planning and construction of the military road in 1759. Amherst's correspondence suggests that his plans were carried out as ordered.

- The road was intended to be wide.
- The road was intended to be built "in as straight a Line as possible."
- The road was intended to be built on the "high Grounds" as much as possible.
- The road was intended to be built across the ravines "in as direct a line as the Ground will permit."
- Construction of bridges [causeways] required "much leveling" [grading].
- The portion of the road between Fort Stanwix and the Little Indian Field [Oriska] was more carefully built than other parts.<sup>115</sup>

Period maps, battle accounts, and secondary sources based on oral history suggest several other details about the road:

- On a 1763 map of Fort Stanwix, the road near the fort is shown as being approximately 25 feet wide.<sup>116</sup> It is not known if this width was carried throughout, or if this width represented the cleared area or the actual road surface.
- Field survey maps of Great Lot 3 in the Second Allotment and Great Lot 1 in the Third Allotment of the Oriskany Patent (located a short distance to either side of the Site) made after the battle indicate that the military road or its right-of-way was 165 feet wide, and that it had a generally straight alignment, including sections over ravines. While the survey of the property lines is considered accurate by historians, it is not known if the road was drawn to scale.<sup>117</sup> The surveyor

---

<sup>112</sup> *Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution* (Albany: J. B. Lyon, State Printer, 1894), vol. IV, ch. 1121, 456-466; Volkert Veeder, Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 10 September 1999.

<sup>113</sup> For information on the causeway, see "Buildings and Structures," page 53.

<sup>114</sup> Lord, *War over Walloomscoick*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Amherst to Gage, Camp at Crown Point, 6 August 1759; Amherst's Orders to ensigns Ratser and River, Albany, 23 May 1759; Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 13 October 1759; T. Moncrieff to Amherst, East End of Oneida Lake, 30 October 1759 (all Amherst MSS).

<sup>116</sup> "Plan of Fort Stanwix Built at Oneida Station By Provincial Troops in 1758," copy in *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 3, 25

<sup>117</sup> James Cockburn, Surveyor, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent." According to Phil Lord, historian at the New York State Museum (telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 22 September 1999), these small-scale field surveys for individual lots were typically accurate. The survey was drawn at a scale of 40 chains (1 chain = 66 feet) to the inch; the surveyor used a 1/16" thick line to represent the military road.

nonetheless used a broad line to document the military road, indicating that it was a significant and probably wide road.

- A subdivision map of the entire Oriskany Patent made after the battle indicates that the military road followed a straight alignment adjacent to the Site.<sup>118</sup>
- "Holes" sufficient for men to hide in were reported near one ravine east of the Site. These holes were purportedly created during construction of the road, probably to secure fill.<sup>119</sup>
- By 1777, the road had deteriorated and was blocked by many fallen trees. General Herkimer led a force to repair and reopen the road; it is not known what the repair of the road entailed aside from the removal of fallen trees.<sup>120</sup>
- According to the first written history of the battle, the road crossed the marshy ravine floor by means of a "log causeway" which was "elevated and level."<sup>121</sup>

General Amherst did not provide details on alignment, width, surface treatment, or clear zone of the military road in his correspondence, and no further documentation has been found on these details in any other sources.<sup>122</sup>

### **Topography**

The construction of the military road through or immediately adjacent to the Site in 1759 resulted in changes to the topography as the land was leveled for the roadbed and as an earthen and log causeway was constructed across the ravine. It was reported that after clearing of the road corridor through the forest, there was still the need for "much leveling," indicating change to the topography.<sup>123</sup> The exact changes in the topography are not known.

Depressions across the Site may have been created around this time by trees uprooted in a violent storm before July 1777.<sup>124</sup>

### **Vegetation**

There were no documented changes to the type of vegetation on the Site from the previous historic period. The extent of the forest cover was altered through clearing for construction of the military road in 1759 and from a blow down that occurred prior to July 1777.

Several details about the vegetation on the Site are known from accounts of the battle and from later descriptions:

- The ravine bottom was marshy, and therefore likely contained wetland vegetation.<sup>125</sup>
- The area to the north of the battlefield, the lowlands, was "very swampy ground" and likewise would have contained wetland vegetation.<sup>126</sup>
- The battle occurred where "the underbrush were [sic] very thick."<sup>127</sup> Such conditions may have been found where there were breaks in the forest canopy or in marshy areas, such as in the ravine.

<sup>118</sup> G. Lansing, Surveyor, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," June 1785, New York State Archives, Albany. According to Phil Lord, historian at the New York State Museum (conversation with J. Auwaerter, September 1999), large-scale surveys and maps such as this are considered not to be as accurate as smaller-scale field surveys such as cited under the previous note.

<sup>119</sup> Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 344.

<sup>120</sup> Letter from General Herkimer to General Schuyler, 15 July 1777, copy in Robertaccio transcript collection, Central Region MSS.

<sup>121</sup> Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County*, 78.

<sup>122</sup> For an analysis of documentation related to the alignment of the military road in relationship to the existing highway, see the "Site Analysis and Evaluation" chapter of this report.

<sup>123</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 13 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>124</sup> See following discussion under "Vegetation."

<sup>125</sup> William Stone, *Life of Brant* (Albany, 1838), 233. Several other sources mention the marshy bottom of the ravine.

<sup>126</sup> Remark by militiaman Henery Seeber, quoted in Piatt, "Opportunity Lost," 77.



- This "underbrush" may also refer to vegetation that was removed from the road and discarded in the adjoining forest during reopening of the military road in July 1777.
- The trees were very large. Herkimer purportedly ordered men to fight in pairs behind the cover of trees; one veteran remembered that three men had taken cover during the battle "behing [behind] a Large hemlock Tree."<sup>128</sup> A post-battle account of the area noted that trees felled from the forest were 120 to 130 feet long.<sup>129</sup>
  - Several secondary-source accounts state that Herkimer, after being wounded, sat under and/or leaned against a beech tree.<sup>130</sup>
  - One of Herkimer's men was purportedly hung from a bayonet jabbed into a tree. This tree was locally known as the "bayonet tree," as the bayonet stayed in the tree for many years after the battle. It is not known what type of tree this was or where it was located.<sup>131</sup>
  - Many trees in the forest were blown down, most probably from a violent storm that passed through prior to July 1777. It was during this month that Herkimer led forces to open the road, which was "so much encumbered with wood by the falling of trees across it, that it is rendered impassable for men or carriages."<sup>132</sup> Veteran Moses Younglove remembered, "There were many fallen trees on the ground . . . two colonels . . . were snugly packed away under the roots of a fallen tree."<sup>133</sup>
  - One battle account mentioned that some of Herkimer's men hid in a "Pine Wood Thicket, of a very difficult access, encumbered with fallen Trees."<sup>134</sup>
  - The battle inflicted damage on many trees. Many years after the battle, Pomroy Jones remembered passing through the battlefield when he was seven and seeing the scars of the battle through the forest for about a mile; "Many of the trees, from the ground to the height of twenty or thirty feet, were so perforated with balls, that they had the appearance of a building lately battered by a hail-storm."<sup>135</sup>

## **Buildings and Structures**

### **Military Road Causeway**

Based on available information, the only structure built on the Site during this historic period was the causeway that carried the military road across the Battle Creek ravine. No documentation has been found on the details of this structure. 18<sup>th</sup>-century causeways were typically constructed of a footing of bound logs and saplings placed in the wet area cross-wise in the road and covered by an earthen surface [Figure 2.2, page 27]. The log foundation allowed the earthen road surface to easily drain and the waters of the creek to run through causeway.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Henery Walrath pension application, 11 February 1833, copy in *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>128</sup> Deposition of Lieut. William Hall, "relating to the brave conduct of Col. Volkert Veeder, June 1778," New-York Historical Society Manuscripts; Simms, *Frontiersmen of New York*, 102.

<sup>129</sup> Friedrich Rohde, "Journal of a Trip from New Jersey to Oneida Lake 1802," in Dean R. Snow, ed., *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 376.

<sup>130</sup> The primary source for this reference to a beech tree has not been found. Its earliest known secondary-source reference is from Benjamin Lossing's 1848 visit to the site, recounted in his *Pictorial Fieldbook of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1860), vol. 1, 245-246. Later references to the beech include one by J. Watts De Peyster, "Oriskany," *Magazine of American History* (January 1878), 25, and the 1912 Herkimer trail (beech tree) monument erected by the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. Several primary sources state that Herkimer sat on a log; e.g., c.1777 poem by Juvinus, "Genl. Harkemer's Battle," Marinus Willett Manuscript Collection folder 1775-1777, New-York Historical Society.

<sup>131</sup> Simms, *Frontiersmen of New York*, 103.

<sup>132</sup> Schuyler to Herkimer, 8 July 1777 (Schuyler Papers), copy in Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany*, 139.

<sup>133</sup> "Battle of Oriskany / Record of the Narrative of Dr. Moses Younglove," American History Series microfiche.

<sup>134</sup> Norton, quoted in SJS Archeological, "A Place of Great Sadness," 79.

<sup>135</sup> Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 361.

<sup>136</sup> Lord, *War over Walloomscoick*, 30.

### **Views and Vistas**

If the military road were constructed on a straight alignment, the road would have allowed long vistas, which would have served strategic purposes. It is not known how wide the clearing was through the forest along the military road. At ravines, vistas would have been foreshortened as the road descended onto causeways. This condition may have been a significant factor in the British selection of this Site for the ambush, since it contained a relatively deep ravine.

The open understory typical of the old-growth forests on the Site probably allowed limited views outside of the military road corridor. The numerous downed trees on the Site from a storm that likely occurred prior to July 1777, along with large tree trunks, would have blocked views and provided strategic places of concealment and protection.

### **Constructed Water Features**

Based on available information, there were no constructed water features on the Site during this historic period.

### **Small-Scale Features**

Based on available information, there were no small-scale features on the Site during this historic period.

### **Archeological Sites**

Based on available information, there were no archeological resources identified on the Site during this historic period.<sup>137</sup> There were, however, reports following the battle of human remains on the battlefield. Frederic Sammons observed a few days after the battle, "I beheld the most shocking sight I had ever witnessed. The Indians and white men were mingled with one another, just as they had been left when death first completed his work. Many bodies had also been torn by wild beasts."<sup>138</sup> Alexander Thompson traveled across the battlefield in 1783, reporting, "I went over the ground where General Herkimer [sic] fought Sir John Johnson . . . I saw a vast number of human skulls and bones scattered through the woods."<sup>139</sup> In 1788, Elkanah Watson noted on his tour of the battlefield, "in corroboration of the fact, of which they assured me, that many of the slain who were scattered through the woods were never interred, I saw numerous human bones, strewn upon the service [surface] of the earth."<sup>140</sup> None of these references can be geographically referenced, and it is not known for certain if the human remains were subsequently buried.

### **Summary**

During this historic period, the Site came under European ownership through the granting of the Oriskany Patent in 1705, although the Oneida Indians continued to consider the land part of their ancestral homeland. By 1763, the Site had become a part of the Province of New York under the colonial jurisdiction of Great Britain. The upper Mohawk Valley remained a largely unsettled region throughout this historic period, although it witnessed increasing European trade and military activity.

---

<sup>137</sup> Given that the Site is the location of the battle, there are likely battle artifacts and potential graves on the Site. A comprehensive archeological survey has not been undertaken at the Site.

<sup>138</sup> Frederick Sammons, quoted in SJS Archeological, "A Place of Great Sadness," 83.

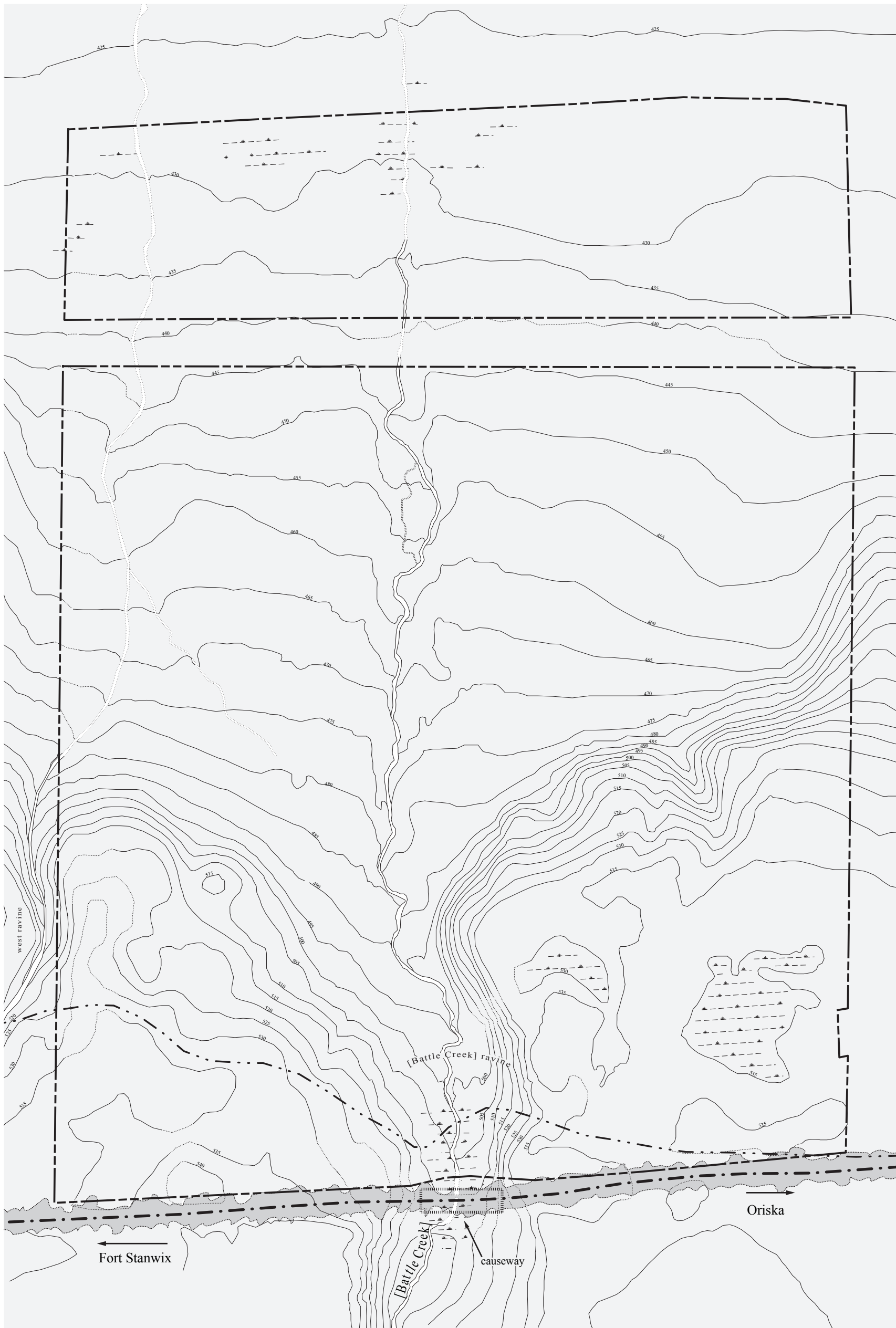
<sup>139</sup> Alexander Thompson Diary, Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C., reprinted in *A Salute to Courage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 282.

<sup>140</sup> Elkanah Watson, "Journal of Travels, 1788," *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*, 335-336.

Based on available information, it appears that the landscape of the Site changed only in 1759 through construction of the military road between Forts Dayton and Stanwix, and through openings in the forest canopy that were caused by natural processes such as windstorms. The military road ran through or adjacent to the Site and crossed the Battle Creek ravine via a log and earth causeway. In July 1777, the military road was repaired and reopened under the command of General Nicholas Herkimer. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of the following month, Herkimer led 800 troops comprising the Tryon County Militia, along with about 60 Oneidas, down the military road toward the relief of Fort Stanwix. At a marshy ravine, the militia fell under siege by a force of British and British-allied Indians in what would later become known as the Battle of Oriskany. Although this decisive battle ended in no clear victory for either side, it did play a major part in British abandonment at the Siege of Fort Stanwix and helped contribute to an American victory at Saratoga the following October.

Following the battle, the Site likely was littered with battle debris, but remained unsettled and undeveloped into the mid-1780s.





## LEGEND

Assumed limits of forest

Wetlands

480

5' contour

480

Assumed 5' contour

Creek

Assumed creek alignment

Centerline of military road (hypothesis #1)\*

Centerline of military road (hypothesis #2)\*

Approximate feature location

Added during period

Existing Site boundary (2000)

\* Note:

See Analysis and Evaluation chapter for explanation of two Road alignment hypotheses.

## Cultural Landscape Report Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site

Prepared for:  
New York State  
Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region, Jamesville, New York

Prepared by:  
State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York  
Research Assistant John Auwaerter & Project Director George W. Curry

## EUROPEAN COLONIALISM AND AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, 1705-1785

Period Plan 1 of 4

Scale: 1" = 200'

Map Sources:  
"Topography - Oriskany Battle Monument"  
(New York State Parks, 1970)  
"Oriskany Land Use History" (NPS, 1998)  
"Battle of Oriskany" (Ashton Bros., 1877)

Date: November 2000 / Drawn by: John Auwaerter

# **EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURE, 1785-1876**

---

## **Introduction**

In 1785, the Oriskany Patent was subdivided into lots, an event that began a new period in the history of the upper Mohawk Valley in which agriculture dominated the character of the landscape. In the area around the Site, lands were sold and leased, extensive farmlands replaced the forests, the Erie Canal and main east-west railroad across the state were built, the village of Oriskany developed at the location of Oriska, and two urban centers—Rome and Utica—developed to the east and west. This period ends in 1876 prior to the centennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany, an event which marked a new period in which commemoration became a permanent part of the landscape.

Following subdivision of the Oriskany Patent, the Site was leased to tenant farmers who cleared the forests, built houses, and developed farms. The military road was rebuilt as a turnpike and later a plank road, and along the northern edge of the Site, the Erie Canal was constructed. The Site was known locally as the location of the Battle of Oriskany, but there was little organized commemoration and no significant changes were made to the landscape for commemorative purposes.

## **1. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

### **Transportation**

During this historic period, the Mohawk Valley remained the primary transportation corridor in the region. The state's most important canals and railroads were built through this corridor, transporting new settlers to the west and carrying the products of a burgeoning agricultural and industrial economy. The main east-west road connecting Albany with Lake Erie and the western frontier of the state, however, diverged from the alignment of the military road during this historic period and bypassed the Site.

### **Waterways**

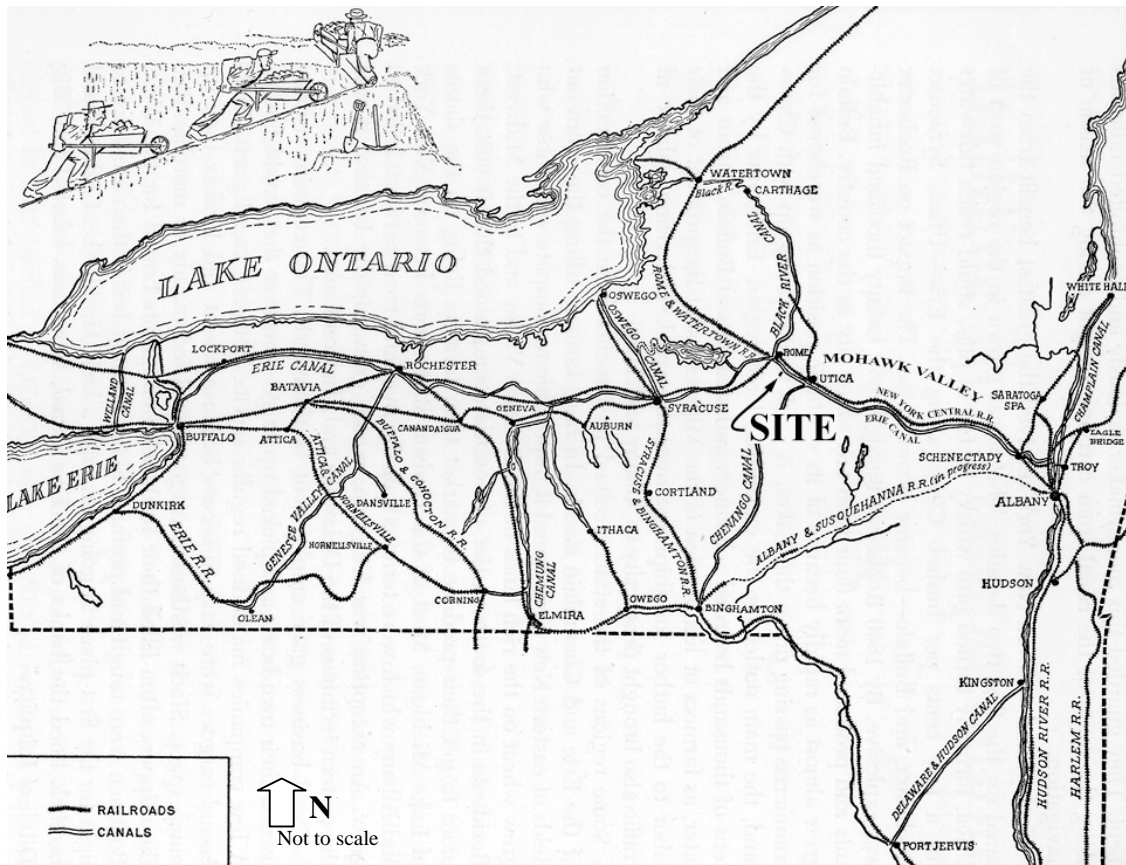
Although technology had changed, water transportation remained vital to the economy of New York during this historic period, especially for long-distance freight. After the end of the Revolution, the old Albany-to-Oswego waterway along the Mohawk River remained the primary means of navigation to the west. Significant efforts to improve the waterway were made in the 1790s. One impediment to navigation had always been the Oneida Carry, located eight miles west of the Site. By 1797, the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company had completed a two-mile canal that allowed navigation across the Carry, connecting the Mohawk River directly with Wood Creek.<sup>1</sup>

As settlement increased in central and western New York during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the demand grew for improved navigation. New York politicians realized the enormous economic potential the state held through its natural waterways to dominate transportation into the interior of the continent. The Mohawk Valley was recognized as the key to these transportation plans. Prior to the War of 1812, the State had begun to plan for a canal to connect the Hudson River and Lake Ontario via the Mohawk Valley. Following the war, the plan was revised to build a canal that would span the entire state from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. This new canal, called the Erie Canal, was begun in 1817 near the watershed divide at the Oneida Carry. The first section opened in October 1819 between Utica and Rome, and by 1825, the entire canal was completed. It stretched from Albany in the east to Buffalo on Lake Erie in the west.

---

<sup>1</sup> F. Daniel Larkin, "Three Centuries of Transportation," in Virginia Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County* (Published by the County, 1977), 33.

Lateral canals, including the Champlain and Oswego Canals, were built at the same time to connect other historically important waterways such as Lakes Champlain and Ontario.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 3.1:** Canals and railroads in New York State, 1859, illustrating concentration in the Mohawk Valley. Reproduced from David M. Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 246; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

The Erie Canal was a tremendous success from the beginning and brought great prosperity to New York State. Along with the Hudson River and its extensive network of lateral canals, the Erie Canal brought huge numbers of settlers into the state and carried vast agricultural and industrial cargo. The canal dominated long-haul transportation because it slashed the high freight costs of land transportation. The canal spurred the growth of numerous large urban industrial and commercial centers along its path, including cities such as Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, and greatly aided New York City's explosive growth. By the 1830s, the canal was carrying so much traffic that the State made plans for its enlargement and for the construction of additional lateral canals, which it could afford based on ample toll revenue. In Oneida County, three lateral canals were built beginning in the 1830s: the Black River Canal extending north from Rome, the Chenango Canal extending south from Utica to Binghamton, and the short Oneida Lake Canal extending west from Rome to Oneida Lake [Figure 3.1]. These lateral canals never became as successful as the mainline Erie, which by the 1840s had become a national transportation asset, with over half of its freight originating in the states to the west of New York.<sup>3</sup> By 1872, however, the Erie Canal had reached its peak use and quickly declined in the following decades due in large part to competition from railroads.

<sup>2</sup> David Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 244-245.

<sup>3</sup> Larkin, "Three Centuries of Transportation," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 33-34; Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 247.

## Roads

While long-distance transportation still largely centered on waterways, roads became vital for regional transportation and commerce during this historic period as the Mohawk Valley became increasingly settled. Roads were also seen as a reflection of pride and progress for such areas. Benjamin De Witt, in his 1808 report on New York State roads, remarked:

Where there is no agriculture, there are no roads; and without roads, there can be little commerce. Hence, the existence of roads has been considered as a line of demarcation between the civilized and the savage state; and hence, also, the excellence of public highways marks the degree of general improvement in a country.<sup>4</sup>

Following the Revolution, the settlement of New York advanced so rapidly that the State government could not handle the demand for new roads. In order to meet this demand, the State passed legislation following the British model that allowed for private companies to construct roads and charge tolls to cover expenses and profits. The roads built under this system were called turnpikes, a name derived from the gate used to allow passage onto the road once the toll had been paid. The first turnpike law was passed by New York State in 1797 for the Albany-Schenectady Turnpike, followed by the Great Western Turnpike chartered in 1798. By 1808, there were 88 incorporated turnpike road and bridge companies in the State of New York, with a capital of more than five million dollars. At this time, these companies had completed over 28 turnpikes and had built a total of 900 miles of road. Major turnpike roads through the Mohawk Valley region included the First Great Western Turnpike (later US 20), followed by the Mohawk Turnpike (later NY 5) which was chartered in 1801 to run to Utica and was then soon extended west as the Seneca Turnpike along the alignment of the earlier Genesee Road. Rome remained off of the main east-west turnpikes and was reached by a semi-circular spur off of the Seneca and Mohawk Turnpikes, the Rome Turnpike (later NY 69 & 365), chartered in 1805 and probably built soon after.<sup>5</sup> Many of these turnpikes followed the alignment of earlier Indian paths and colonial-period roads. The Mohawk Turnpike contained a branch along the south side of the Mohawk River that ran along the old alignment of the military road from Fort Herkimer (village of Herkimer) to Fort Schuyler (Utica). The Rome Turnpike probably followed the general alignment of the military road between Fort Schuyler and Fort Stanwix (Rome) [Figure 3.2, following page].<sup>6</sup>

While there were not any great technological advantages of turnpike roads over ordinary town and county roads, their design and maintenance was ideally supposed to be ensured through law and a constant revenue stream. State legislation chartering the turnpike companies typically outlined design standards, including the overall width of the road, width of the improved surface (often stone, gravel, or wood), distance between mileage markers and tollgates, construction of ditches, and placement of guide boards.<sup>7</sup>

Turnpikes remained an important means of transportation in New York throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with about 4,000 miles of turnpike built by the 1820s. Competition from the Erie Canal beginning in this decade checked the turnpike boom.<sup>8</sup> Another problem for turnpike companies was that many failed to earn enough revenue to pay for repairs that were constantly needed to gravel and earthen roadbeds.<sup>9</sup> The search for a more durable road surface led to experimentation with wood plank-and-sleeper surface, so-called "plank roads," beginning in Toronto in 1835. The first plank road in the state was built in 1846 between Salina (Syracuse) and Central Square. Plank roads became popular largely as farm-to-market routes because their stable surface allowed wagons to carry greater weight. They proved so successful that

---

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin De Witt, "A Sketch of the Turnpike Roads in the State of New York," in Secretary of the Treasury Gallatin, "Report on Roads & Canals," reprinted in *The New American State Papers* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1972), vol.1, 215.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

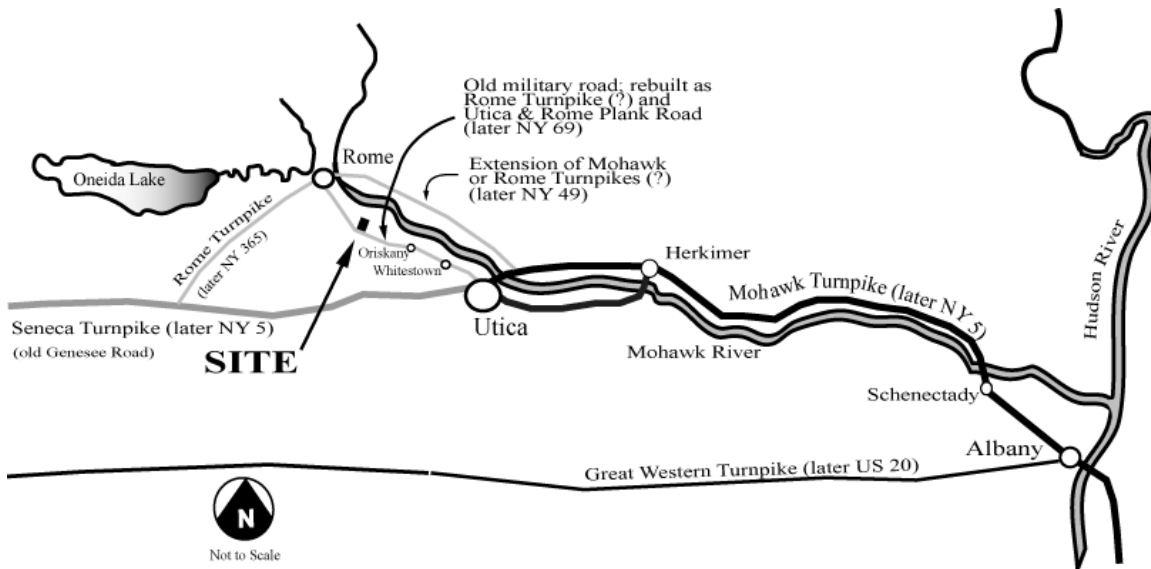
<sup>6</sup> The segment of the Rome Turnpike between Utica and Rome may have run on the north side of the river. See Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 6.

<sup>7</sup> S. De Witt Bloodgood, *A Treatise on Roads, Their History, Character and Utility* (Albany: Oliver Steele, 1838), 98.

<sup>8</sup> John Rae, *The Road and the Car in American Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 254.





**Figure 3.2:** Turnpike roads in the Mohawk Valley, c.1820. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000, based on map, "The Old Mohawk Turnpike," Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 6.

the State legislature passed a plank road act in 1848. During the next two years, over 182 companies were chartered to build plank roads, many constructed on the alignment of earlier turnpikes. The rage for plank roads, however, took on so quickly that there was insufficient time to test the durability of the technology. It turned out that the wooden planks often warped or rotted within seven years, requiring costly replacement. By the late 1850s, especially after the Panic of 1857, most companies had gone out of business and many plank roads were rebuilt with ordinary gravel and earthen surfaces.<sup>10</sup>

### Railroads

The dominance of the Erie Canal in the long-haul transportation infrastructure of New York State became challenged during this historic period by railroads, which first began to appear in the state during the 1830s. In the upper Mohawk Valley region, the first was the Utica & Syracuse Railroad, which was begun in 1837 and finished by 1839.<sup>11</sup> The Utica & Syracuse ran through Rome and followed the Mohawk River corridor on the same alignment as the former military road. In 1842, a complete railroad across the state from Albany to Buffalo was completed through connections among eight short lines. Because this railroad followed the same route as the Erie Canal, the State tried to preserve its investment in the canal by prohibiting the railroads from carrying freight. In 1847, this ban was lifted, but the State mandated that the railroads charge rates equal to canal tolls. By 1851, this mandate, too, was lifted, and in 1853, the eight short lines across the state, including the Utica & Syracuse, were consolidated to form the New York Central Railroad, which became one of the most powerful railroads in the country and continued New York's dominance in transportation [Figure 3.1, page 60].<sup>12</sup>

### Settlement

Following the Revolution, New York's western frontier from the upper Mohawk Valley to the Haudenosaunee territory that stretched from the Fort Stanwix Treaty Line of 1768 west to Lake Erie offered settlers a wide expanse of seemingly open and fertile land. Although Massachusetts initially

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Wagner, *Our County and Its People / A Descriptive Work on Oneida County, New York* (Boston: The Boston History Company, 1896), 225.

<sup>12</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 251.

claimed part of this land, the region fell under the jurisdiction of the State of New York. Fortifications within the interior of this region, such as Fort Stanwix, lost their strategic importance and often became the location of villages and cities.

Despite New York's claim, the region west of the Fort Stanwix Treaty Line of 1768 legally remained the homelands of the League of the Haudenosaunee following the Revolution. Most of the region, however, belonged to Haudenosaunee nations that had sided with the British, and the New York government therefore made little effort to promote their interests. The League of the Haudenosaunee had been greatly weakened in the war and their decreased population, estimated at around 6,000 following the Revolution, was of no match for the growing number of European-Americans pushing to speculate, develop, and settle their lands. Through a series of treaties negotiated between 1784 and 1790, the League signed away rights to most of their lands east of the Genesee River [Rochester], and became confined to small reservations.<sup>13</sup> The Oneidas, unlike other Haudenosaunee nations, received special protection of their homelands west of the 1768 Fort Stanwix treaty line based on their allegiance to the Patriots in the Revolution. Through the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, the Oneidas were promised protection for their lands and recognition of their sovereignty. New York State, however, negotiated treaties and purchases that soon resulted in the reduction of Oneida lands to a fraction of their size.<sup>14</sup> With so much of their sovereign land gone, many Oneidas moved to Wisconsin during the 1820s; by 1845, there were only 157 Oneidas recorded in New York.<sup>15</sup>

The removal of the Haudenosaunee from their homelands opened a vast region for settlement and land speculation. Thousands from across the eastern seaboard and as far away as Europe looked to New York, with its abundant natural resources, for farms, jobs, and investment opportunities. Eager to encourage settlement, the New York State legislature sold off great amounts of public lands for nominal prices. Some of the first lands to be sold after the Revolution were the Loyalist holdings that had been confiscated by the State during the Revolution. Many of these lands were in patents and grants east of the Fort Stanwix Treaty Line of 1768, including the Oriskany Patent. The State had abolished many of the patent laws that supported an aristocratic land system in order to prohibit the feudal relationships between tenants and landlords that had existed prior to the Revolution. In place of a feudal system, the State allowed land development in the patents on a leasehold basis, which had also existed during the colonial period. Under this system, patent holders would lease their land to tenant farmers in exchange for rent paid in money or goods. While this system was used across the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, there was a vast amount of land available for freehold or outright ownership in central and western New York by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The availability of these freehold lands tended to limit settlement in the Oriskany Patent and other lands then under the leasehold system.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the leasehold system, most of the arable land in New York became developed as farms by individual families. The amount of improved farmland rose from about 1,000,000 acres in 1784 to 5,500,000 acres in 1821, a large percentage of this increase occurring in newly settled areas of the western Mohawk Valley and points west. The process of settling and building a farm from the wilderness was a lengthy and laborious effort requiring felling of old-growth forests, building of houses and barns, and establishing community resources such as roads, churches, schools, and markets. Settlers often built their first houses of logs, a material readily available from forest clearing. Most settlers cleared no more than three or four acres a year, so that it often took a generation before a sizeable farm was developed.<sup>17</sup>

By 1820, New York State had attained status as the most populous state in the union, jumping from 340,120 in 1790 to 1,372,812 in 1820. The state remained predominantly rural, with only 15 percent of the population living in settlements of more than 3,000 people.<sup>18</sup> The Mohawk Valley enjoyed significant

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>14</sup> Oneida Nation, "A Brief History of the Oneida Indian Nation," online paper copywrite 1998, [www.oneidation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML](http://www.oneidation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Lenig, "The Oneida Indians," in Kelly, ed., *The History of Oneida County*, 29-30

<sup>16</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 150, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 160, 165.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 188.

growth during this period as settlers streamed into central and western New York and spurred growth of markets throughout the corridor. Although there was some European immigration, most of the settlers coming to New York during the post-Revolution period came from the New England states, where limited land and social limitations caused many to leave. The Mohawk Valley, especially its alluvial flatlands, attracted so many New Englanders that the character of the earlier Dutch and German settlements was largely overwhelmed. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale University, remarked in 1800 that towns in Oneida County had the same "sprightliness, thrift, and beauty" of their New England counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

New Englanders were the first Europeans to settle in the upper Mohawk Valley between German Flatts and Fort Stanwix in the old Kingsland District of Montgomery (Tryon) County following the Revolution.<sup>20</sup> The earliest community was Whitestown, which was founded in 1784 when Hugh White, who came from Middletown, Connecticut, started a farm on the south side of the Mohawk River between old Fort Schuyler [Utica] and Oriska. Others from Connecticut soon followed, and by 1788, the State established the Town of Whitestown, which included all of New York State from German Flatts west to Lake Erie, north to Canada, and south to Pennsylvania. Because of the extent of the town, the western frontier of New York was known for many years as "Whitestown Country."<sup>21</sup> The large number of settlers arriving in central and western New York following the Revolution quickly required that Whitestown and Montgomery County be divided, and by 1791, the area between Little Falls and Seneca Lake, including the upper Mohawk Valley region around the Site, was set off as Herkimer County. In the early 1790s, Whitestown was divided to form the towns of Rome, Westmoreland, Paris, and Steuben as settlements and farms grew across the region. In 1798, the upper Mohawk Valley had gained sufficient population to be set off as its own county, Oneida, with seats at Whitestown and Rome.<sup>22</sup>

By this time, significant portions of the county had been cleared for agriculture, farmsteads dotted the landscape, and villages developed at important crossroads. By 1810, the population of the Mohawk Valley, including the counties of Schenectady, Montgomery, Schoharie, Herkimer, and Oneida, increased by over 50 percent from the previous decade. Oneida County had a population of 33,792 in 1810, with most of its population east of the Oneida Carry.<sup>23</sup> By 1820, the population of the county had increased to 50,997, and to 107,749 by 1855, with nearly 27 towns established.<sup>24</sup> Development in the county, however, remained concentrated along the major transportation routes along the Mohawk River in the vicinity of the Site and along the Seneca turnpike [Figure 3.3, following page].

### Agriculture

Oneida County contained favorable conditions for the development of agriculture. The rich alluvial flatlands bordering the Mohawk River were considered excellent for cultivated crops, while the hillier uplands provided prime pastureland. The initial development of agriculture in the county, however, was slow in comparison to other parts of the state, probably due to the tenant farmer system in place in many of the county's patents and grants.<sup>25</sup> While colonial farmers often produced enough for their families and perhaps the local region, in the period between 1783 and 1825 an increasing percentage of farmers produced agricultural products for a wider national and even worldwide market. Improvements in transportation, especially with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1820s and the railroad in the 1830s, opened vast new markets for agricultural products from Oneida County in the expanding urban areas of the Northeast.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>20</sup> In 1784, Tryon County was renamed Montgomery County. In 1788, the State revised the boundaries of Montgomery County to encompass all of New York State, including the Haudenosaunee homelands east of the eastern counties of Ulster, Albany, Washington (Charlotte), and Clinton

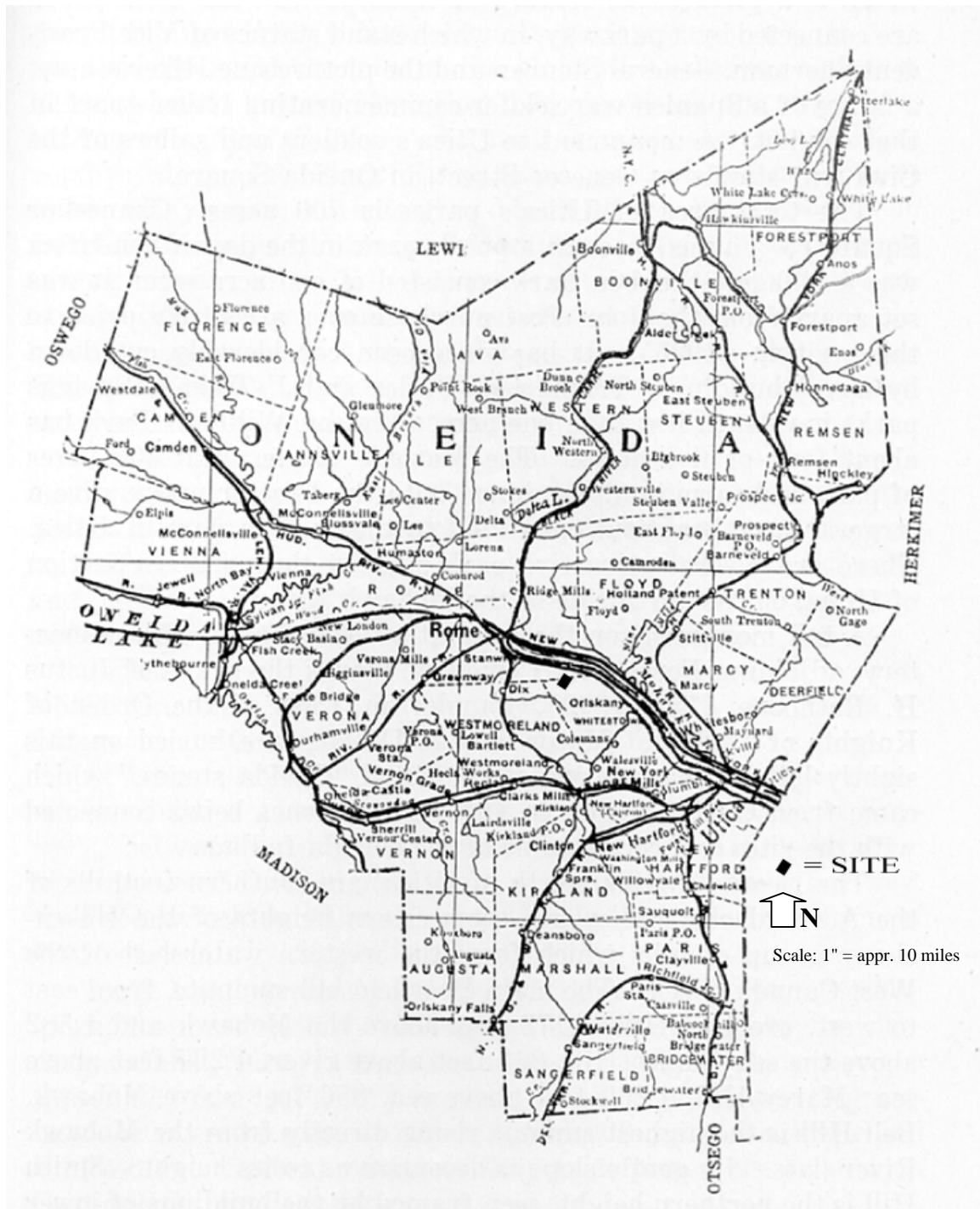
<sup>21</sup> Nelson Green, *History of the Mohawk Valley / Gateway to the West 1614-1925* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1925), vol. II., 1178.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 1146-1147.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1242.

<sup>24</sup> E. T. Maxon and M. Earl Carr, *Soil Survey of Oneida County, New York* (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, Government Printing Office, 1915), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Virgil Crisafulli, "Agriculture," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 49.



**Figure 3.3:** Map of Oneida County showing political divisions and transportation corridors. Reproduced from Nelson Greene, *The Mohawk Valley / Gateway to the West* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1925), vol. II, page 1826.

One of the most important of the early cultivated market crops in Oneida County was wheat, which had been grown in the eastern Mohawk Valley prior to the Revolution. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the whole Mohawk Valley became one of the primary wheat-growing regions of the country. A large percentage of the wheat market was foreign, and the passage of an embargo in 1808 forced many farmers to look for other crops. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 also brought competition from more productive

wheat-growing regions such as the Genesee Valley in western New York. By the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and on, Mohawk Valley farmers were diversifying their crops through cultivation of hay, oats, broom corn, barley, buckwheat, rye, and potatoes, along with bee culture and horticulture.<sup>26</sup> Beginning in the 1820s, hops became one of the county's major crops, and by the end of this historic period, nearly one-half of all hops used in the United States were grown in central New York.<sup>27</sup>

Livestock also formed an important part of agriculture in the Mohawk Valley during this period. The hilly uplands provided good pasture for sheep and dairy cattle. Merino sheep for wool production were introduced from the Berkshires into Oneida County soon after the first settlers arrived, and by 1811 the first wool textile mill had been established at Oriskany. Sheep raising reached a height in 1845, when over 200,000 head were recorded in Oneida County, representing 10 percent of the state total.<sup>28</sup> Along with sheep, dairy formed another important part of Oneida County's agriculture, and one that increased in importance throughout this historic period, especially after the 1850s when railroad freight made possible rapid transit of milk products to urban markets in the Northeast. Cheese making became an important industry in the upper Mohawk Valley, with the first cheese-factory in the country established at Rome in 1851.<sup>29</sup>

Due to the abundance of available land, pioneer farmers tended to practice extensive, rather than intensive, cultivation. Cultivation practices typically followed the three-crop system, where the fields would be cycled from grain to grass, and then left fallow. Not all farmers were so careful with their land, however. The alluvial lowlands along the Mohawk River were initially overcultivated in many places, which led to exhaustion of the soil.<sup>30</sup> Once exhausted, such fields often reverted to pasture. The rise of market competition and agricultural education, introduced through organizations such as the Oneida County Agricultural Society founded in 1818, led to generally improved farming practices throughout this historic period.

Agriculture in Oneida County reached a peak after the Civil War toward the end of this historic period. By 1875, 90% of all land in the county, 704,363 acres, was being farmed. About 500,000 acres, or 67 per cent of all farmland in the county, was devoted to livestock, the majority being dairy. Cattle numbered 98,648, of which 68,049 were dairy cattle. Head of sheep by this time had dwindled to 18,539. Hay occupied one-quarter of all farm acreage, while grains had decreased to nine percent.<sup>31</sup>

### **Regional Development**

Prior to the canal era that began after 1817, urban growth in New York centered on natural waterways and major roads, especially the primary east-west routes that provided not only inter-regional transportation, but long-distance travel to new lands in the western frontier. Many settlements developed where there was some settlement or fortification during the colonial period. Rome developed on the Oneida Carry around the remains of Fort Stanwix, Utica around old Fort Schuyler, and Oriskany at the Oneida village of Oriska. In the Mohawk Valley, urban growth remained concentrated along the Mohawk River, since the Erie Canal followed the same corridor.

The completion of the Erie Canal provided a tremendous impetus to the growth of urban centers along its path, growth that was further strengthened with the construction of railroads paralleling the canal beginning in the 1830s. The canal and later the railroad opened far markets to the Mohawk Valley as the Industrial Revolution brought about new demand for manufactured goods across the nation. As a main artery of transportation and commerce across New York State, the Mohawk Valley became a magnet for

---

<sup>26</sup> Greene, *History of the Mohawk Valley*, 1514.

<sup>27</sup> Randy Brouillette, "The History of Oneida County Agriculture," Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, on-line paper at [www.cce.cornell.edu](http://www.cce.cornell.edu), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Crisafulli, "Agriculture," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Greene, *The History of the Mohawk Valley*, 1522; Crisafulli, "Agriculture," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

industrialization. A remarkable concentration of industrial villages and cities developed along the valley, each with its brick factory buildings, central business district, and residential areas of varying size and scale.

During this historic period, Utica developed as the major urban center of the Mohawk Valley. Utica grew at a significant position on the transportation system of the valley, on the Mohawk River at the beginning of the Seneca Turnpike and Genesee Road, the main land routes to central and western parts of the state. By 1798, the settlement had grown to 50 houses and was incorporated as the Village of Utica. By 1832, seven years after completion of the Erie Canal through the community, Utica was incorporated as a city with a population of nearly 10,000. Extensive industry, beginning with cloth manufacture at New York Mills, spurred significant growth in the city, which overshadowed in size and prosperity its older neighbor to the northwest, Rome. By 1870, Utica had a population of 28,804. Although Rome was situated on the Oneida Carry, a key location in the colonial-period transportation corridor, Rome languished during much of this historic period from being off the Erie Canal and the primary east-west roads across the state.<sup>32</sup> In 1820, Rome [entire town] had a population of 3,569, greater than that of Utica; but by the next census in 1830, Rome had only grown to a population of 4,360. By 1870, when Rome was incorporated as a city, it had a population of only 11,000, less than half that of Utica.<sup>33</sup>

### Commemoration

Commemoration of the Revolution and other significant events from the nation's beginnings was not common in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the nation focused on the heavy work of developing its agricultural, industrial, and urban foundations.

Commemoration during this historic period more likely than not took the form of celebrations, sermons, and other types of memorial events. Many battlefields and other historic sites also began to appear in history books and illustrated publications beginning in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first published histories of the Battle of Oriskany appeared in the 1830s. By the 1840s, Benjamin Lossing began to compile an extensive illustrated history of the Revolutionary War that was published in 1860 as the two-volume *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*. Lossing included a contemporary engraving of the Oriskany battlefield that he made on a visit to the Site in 1848. In 1857, a fictitious illustration of the Battle of Oriskany was published in Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*.<sup>34</sup> These publications represented a form of commemoration, although one that had no direct impact on the landscape.

Some efforts were made at erecting permanent memorials after the Revolution, following the lead of the Continental Congress which allocated funds to erect numerous memorials to slain heroes of the Revolution, including General Herkimer. The citizens of Lexington, Massachusetts, for example, requested funds from Congress as early as 1791 to erect a monument in honor of the Minutemen who died in the Battle of Lexington and Concord, but to no avail. In 1799, however, they succeeded in receiving funds from the State legislature, and erected one of the earliest monuments to the Revolution, a short stone obelisk on a high pedestal. The cornerstone for a far larger obelisk at the site of the Battle of Bunker Hill was laid in 1825 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle, but was completed only in 1843, perhaps indicating lack of support. Concord erected another small obelisk in 1837.<sup>35</sup> On the Saratoga battlefield, a State-chartered association was established in 1859 to erect a monument on the spot where General Burgoyne surrendered, but work did not start until well after the Civil War.<sup>36</sup> Only the most prominent of Revolutionary War battlefields such as these received attention prior to the Civil War.

---

<sup>32</sup> E. Stevens Wright, "Rome," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 226.

<sup>33</sup> Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 66 (U.S. Census data).

<sup>34</sup> Benson. J. Lossing *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Bros., 1860), vol. 1, 243; "Battle of Oriskany, State of New York," engraving in Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* (1857), reproduced as a post card for sale at Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site.

<sup>35</sup> Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 13; Ronald Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Ellen H. Walworth, *Battles of Saratoga 1777 / The Saratoga Monument Association 1856-1891* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891), 45.

Overall during this historic period, permanent commemoration of historic sites such as battlefields remained uncommon and without support from the federal or many state governments. Following the Civil War and on the eve of the nation's centennial, substantial changes in American society forced new attitudes and support toward commemorating, marking, and preserving historic sites, particularly those associated with the nation's founding.

## **2. SITE NARRATIVE**

### **Landscape Context**

The landscape around the Site was transformed during this historic period through changes in transportation, settlement, and clearing of the forests for agriculture.

#### **The Road**

During this historic period, the upper Mohawk Valley in the vicinity of the Site east of Fort Stanwix remained an important transportation corridor, but the old military road ceased to be a primary thoroughfare. At the beginning of this historic period, the former military road was referred to as "The Great Road from Schenectady to Fort Stanwix," and was the only major road through the Mohawk Valley.<sup>37</sup> In 1800, the Seneca Turnpike was chartered as the extension of the Mohawk Turnpike west from Utica (old Fort Schuyler). Rather than taking the northwest loop along the Mohawk River toward Fort Stanwix and the Oneida Carry, the Seneca Turnpike diverged from the old military road at Utica and headed due west following the old Genesee Road toward the new western frontier of New York State that was opened following the Revolution.<sup>38</sup> The military road also apparently lost out as a feeder to Fort Stanwix (Rome) and the region to the northwest. The road along the north side of the Mohawk River from Utica, which had probably been built around the time of the Revolution, likely became the primary route to Rome and Sackett's Harbor on Lake Ontario.<sup>39</sup> The military road was probably maintained only as a local road to service settlers who began migrating to the region around the Site in the late 1780s. By 1805, the old military road was being listed as the "Road to Whitestown," suggesting only regional importance.<sup>40</sup>

Despite its decreased significance, the segment of the old military road between Utica and Rome (hereafter referred to as "the Road") did witness improvements, the first of which may have occurred as early as the 1794.<sup>41</sup> Prior to 1806, a new alignment that curved around the north slope of the hill on the west side of Oriskany was constructed [Figure 3.7, page 77]. A Mr. Parkhurst, one of the first settlers of the area, purportedly conceived of this project as a way to rid the Road of this difficult section.<sup>42</sup> This improvement

---

<sup>37</sup> James Cockburn, "A Field Book of part of the Oriskany Patent . . . Divided into Lots A. D. 1789-90," First Allotment, Great Lot 15, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>38</sup> The Cherry Valley Turnpike (later US 20) was also a primary east-west road across the state, but it ran south of Utica on the highlands above the Mohawk Valley.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Sculpl, *Map of New York State* (New York: J. Reid, 1796), *Map of New York State* (Philadelphia: A. Finley, 1827), New York State Archives, Albany. These maps only show a road on the north side of the Mohawk River and not the Road on the south side.

<sup>40</sup> "A Map of the Rome Turnpike Road / In conformity to the directions of the act entitled "An Act to incorporate the Utica & Rome Turnpike Road Companies passed April 10<sup>th</sup> 1805," Oneida County Map Room, Oneida County Office Building, Utica.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County, New York from 1700 to the Present Time* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1912), 457. Cookinham states that the Genesee Turnpike was built "about 1794" from Utica through Whitestown, Oriskany, Fort Stanwix, and Verona. According to Benjamin De Witt's 1808 survey of turnpikes in New York State, this was the route of the Rome Turnpike. No other reference to this road being the Genesee Turnpike has been found.

<sup>42</sup> This curved alignment is shown in Peleg Gifford, "Map of Whitestown in Oneida County / Taken from Actual Survey By Peleg Gifford, Survr," 1806, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica. The story of its construction was published in "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4. This article states: "The old road, that

may have been part of a larger reconstruction of the Road into a turnpike, part of the "turnpike mania" across the state during the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first plans to rebuild the Road into a turnpike appeared in 1801 under the charter of the Mohawk Turnpike, which was intended to run along the Mohawk River and end at Utica with a potential extension to Rome. This charter stated that if the "inhabitants residing upon or contiguous to the great road [the military road] . . . shall become stockholders . . ." then the directors of the company would extend the road to Rome. This portion of the turnpike, however, was not built under this charter.

The military road between Utica and Rome was instead likely rebuilt through legislation introduced under the Laws of 1804 and passed in April 1805 chartering the "Utica – Rome Turnpike Companies." With \$20,000 in capital stock, this company was charged with building the Rome Turnpike, a 20-mile road that was to run in a semi-circular alignment from the Seneca Turnpike (later NY 5) in New Hartford (east side of Utica) northwest through Rome [Figure 3.2, page 62]. The western part of this semi-circular route turned southwest from Rome (later Oneida Street) to join the Seneca Turnpike (later NY 5) at Oneida.<sup>43</sup> Under the legislation, the right-of-way of the Rome Turnpike was initially set at six rods (99 feet) wide, but was then reduced to four rods (66 feet). The turnpike was likely built soon after the charter was passed in April 1805.<sup>44</sup>

The Rome Turnpike apparently fell on hard times in the next couple decades. An 1827 map of New York State shows the primary road between Rome and Utica being on the north side of the river.<sup>45</sup> The turnpike company may have been dissolved by 1834, when the Road in the vicinity of the Site was referred to on a State survey not as a turnpike, but rather as the "Road to Whitestown;" an 1838 map of the county designated it as a "Stage Road."<sup>46</sup> An engraving of the Site made in 1848 documents a small portion of the Road, which appears to have followed a straight alignment past the Site and have an unimproved (earth) roadbed lined by farmers' fences.<sup>47</sup>

In the late 1840s, the Road was rebuilt as a plank road. In September 1847, the State chartered the Rome & Utica Plank Road Company with \$30,000 in capital stock according to the provisions of the Plank Road Law of 1847. According to the articles of association of the company, the plank road was to be constructed from the village of Rome, through the villages of Oriskany and Whitesboro, and terminate in the city of Utica.<sup>48</sup> On November 24th of the same year, Oneida County gave the Utica & Rome Plank Road Company "Authority to Construct" the new road along the alignment of the old military road. Noting that it was in the public interest for the company to acquire property for the road, the county gave the company a "Certificate of Location" in 1848, and it is likely that the road was constructed soon after.<sup>49</sup> An 1852 map of Oneida County documents that the Utica & Rome Plank Road generally followed the alignment of the earlier military road, although since the company did request permission to acquire property in its charter, it

---

which was traversed by Herkimer's army, went over the top of the hill, where several people still living remember to have ridden on it."

<sup>43</sup>New York State, Laws of 1804, 5, 6, Chapter 125, 287. Copy in unpublished paper, "A Digest of Laws Concerning Plank Roads and Turnpike Roads: Taken from the Session Books of the New York State Legislature," N.Y.S. D.O.T. Region 2 Offices, State Office Building, Utica. See also Benjamin De Witt, "A Sketch of Turnpike Roads," 217.

<sup>44</sup>No documentation has been found on details of the construction or alignment of the Rome Turnpike. "A Map of the Rome Turnpike Road" (c.1805) shows the proposed alignment of the west half of the Rome Turnpike between Rome and Oneida. This map of the west half of the turnpike lists the Road (east half of the turnpike) not as the turnpike but as the "Road to Whitestown." The map for the east half of the turnpike, however, is missing from the Oneida County Map Room. The index lists: "Rome Turnpike Road -- Seneca Turnpike in New Hartford to Rome, filed by Commissioners," a description that suggests the turnpike was indeed on the south side of the river.

<sup>45</sup>*Map of New York State* (Philadelphia: Finley, 1827).

<sup>46</sup>State of New York, Holmes Hutchinson, surveyor, "Survey of the Erie Canal" (Albany: Comptroller's Office, 1834), vol. 7, maps 39, 40, 41; *Map of the County of Oneida* (Ithaca: W. P. Stone, 1838).

<sup>47</sup>Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, vol. 1, 243.

<sup>48</sup>"General Plank Road Law; and Articles of Association of the Rome & Utica Plank Road Co. (Rome: A. J. Rowley, 1847), 17.

<sup>49</sup>Oneida County deeds, Book 133 (1847), 451; Book 138 (1848), 277. The 1847 "Authority to Construct" references a route specified in "said Application." This application has not been found. The "Certificate of Location" references a survey of the road, but this also has not been found.

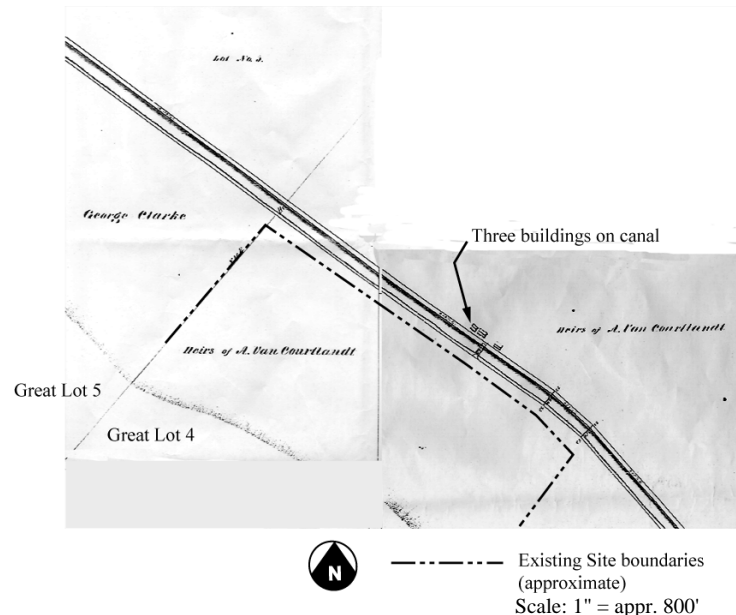


may have changed alignment in places. The company operated a tollgate house at the Rome-Whitestown boundary, just west of the Site.<sup>50</sup>

As with many plank roads across the state, the Rome & Utica Plank Road Company apparently fell into financial difficulty by the mid-1850s. On May 7, 1856, Oneida County granted the company authority to surrender and abandon the section that ran past the Site, from Rome to seven miles west of Utica.<sup>51</sup> It is likely that the Road was returned to a gravel or unpaved surface after this time. The tollgate house was purportedly moved to the south side of the Road opposite the Site and was used as a residence, probably by A. J. Kent, who owned the west side of the Site at this time.<sup>52</sup>

### The Erie Canal

While the Road ran along the south side of the Site, the Erie Canal ran along its north side. This section of the canal between Utica and Rome opened in October 1819.<sup>53</sup> There was probably limited traffic past the Site until the entire canal was completed in 1825. From then on through the remainder of this historic period, there was a great volume of traffic passing the Site during the navigation season. The amount of traffic on the canal for the entire state, measured in tons carried, gives an indication of the volume of traffic that was probably passing the Site. From an initial 218,000 tons in 1825, the amount carried on the canal increased to 4,650,00 tons in 1860 and 6,000,000 tons in 1872.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 3.4:** Detail, 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson Erie Canal survey showing section adjacent to the Site, volume 7, maps 40 and 41, map series A0848, New York State Archives, Albany; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> A. E. Rogerson & E. J. Murphy, Surveyors, *Map of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia: Newell S. Brown, 1852).

<sup>51</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 196 (1856), 359.

<sup>52</sup> Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 5 April 1938, copy in Oriskany Battlefield files (former site files) in the Oriskany Museum (hereafter cited as "Oriskany Museum MSS"). The tollgate house was purportedly moved to the location of the Ringrose farmhouse, which presently exists across from the Site, according to an interview with William Ringrose. Ringrose remembered hearing that David Lamphear [Lanfear] operated and later moved the tollgate house for his residence, but it was probably A. J. Kent, since he owned this property at that time. The 1852 *Map of Oneida County* lists A. J. Kent beneath "Toll Gate," suggesting he was the operator and/or resident of the building.

<sup>53</sup> Larkin, "Three Centuries of Transportation," in Kelly, *History of Oneida County*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The portion of the canal that passed the Site was identified as Sections 118 and 119. The canal, as originally built, was 40 feet wide and four feet deep. A group of three private buildings were located on the north side of the canal opposite the Site [Figure 3.4, previous page]. Beginning in the 1830s, an enlargement was planned to increase the width of the canal to 70 feet and its depth to seven feet. Due to a variety of factors, the enlargement of the canal in the vicinity of the Site was not completed until around 1855. The enlargement included a substantial realignment west of the Site to carry the canal directly through the center of Rome, which the original canal had bypassed. Near the Site, however, the canal was not realigned, except for a small section to the east. Property adjacent to the Site may have been acquired for the expansion.<sup>55</sup>

### Subdivision of the Oriskany Patent

Although very limited settlement did occur within the Oriskany Patent prior to the Revolution, it was not until 1785 that the patent was surveyed and subdivided in preparation for widespread settlement. The patent had been surveyed in 1769, but only to set external boundaries. On May 12, 1784, the State legislature passed an act that required the patent be subdivided. Under direction of Col Frederick Vishcher, a veteran of the Battle of Oriskany and the first judge of Montgomery County, Misters Ten Eyck, Schuyler, and Peak were appointed as agents to partition the patent, and Garret Lansing was appointed as surveyor.<sup>56</sup> In June 1785, Lansing completed the survey that divided the patent into six "Allotments," each of which was then subdivided into a series of "Great Lots," which generally contained over 700 acres each [Figure 3.5, following page].<sup>57</sup> The Great Lots were appropriated to a single or multiple owners of the patent, apparently identified by their relationship to the original five owners, as documented on the subdivision maps as "Right of those holding under." Tory owners had their interest in the patent confiscated by the State during the war.

The owners of the Great Lots were free to further subdivide their property into smaller lots. Great Lots 1 and 3, for example, were apparently bought from the State by John Lansing Junior and Abraham G. Lansing, who hired surveyor James Cockburn to plat subdivision lots in 1789 and 1790. Great Lot 15 of the First Allotment, located near Oriskany Creek, was subdivided into 12 lots, each containing about 40 acres. This section later developed into the western part of the village of Oriskany. Great Lots intended for farmland, such as all of those in the Second Allotment including the Site, were subdivided into larger lots, generally about eight per Great Lot, each with about 120 acres.<sup>58</sup>

### Regional Settlement and Development

At the beginning of this historic period, the region around the Site remained largely old-growth forest with the exception of the military road, the Oneida village of Oriska, and Fort Stanwix. Oriska, located about two miles east of the Site, grew into the village of Oriskany; Fort Stanwix, located about six miles west of the Site on the Oneida Carry, developed into the village of Rome. The region in between these two settlements, including the Site, became farmland. A surveyor for the lands of George and Edward Clarke in the Oriskany Patent provided the following "General description of Oriskany" around 1790 (excerpt):

There is still an Indian Village in this Tract [Oriska] consisting of about Twenty Families, and on the expence Lott [Rome] there is a Grist and Saw Mill erected by Mr. Lynch. Notwithstanding the fertility of the Soil in this Tract it is liable to the following

---

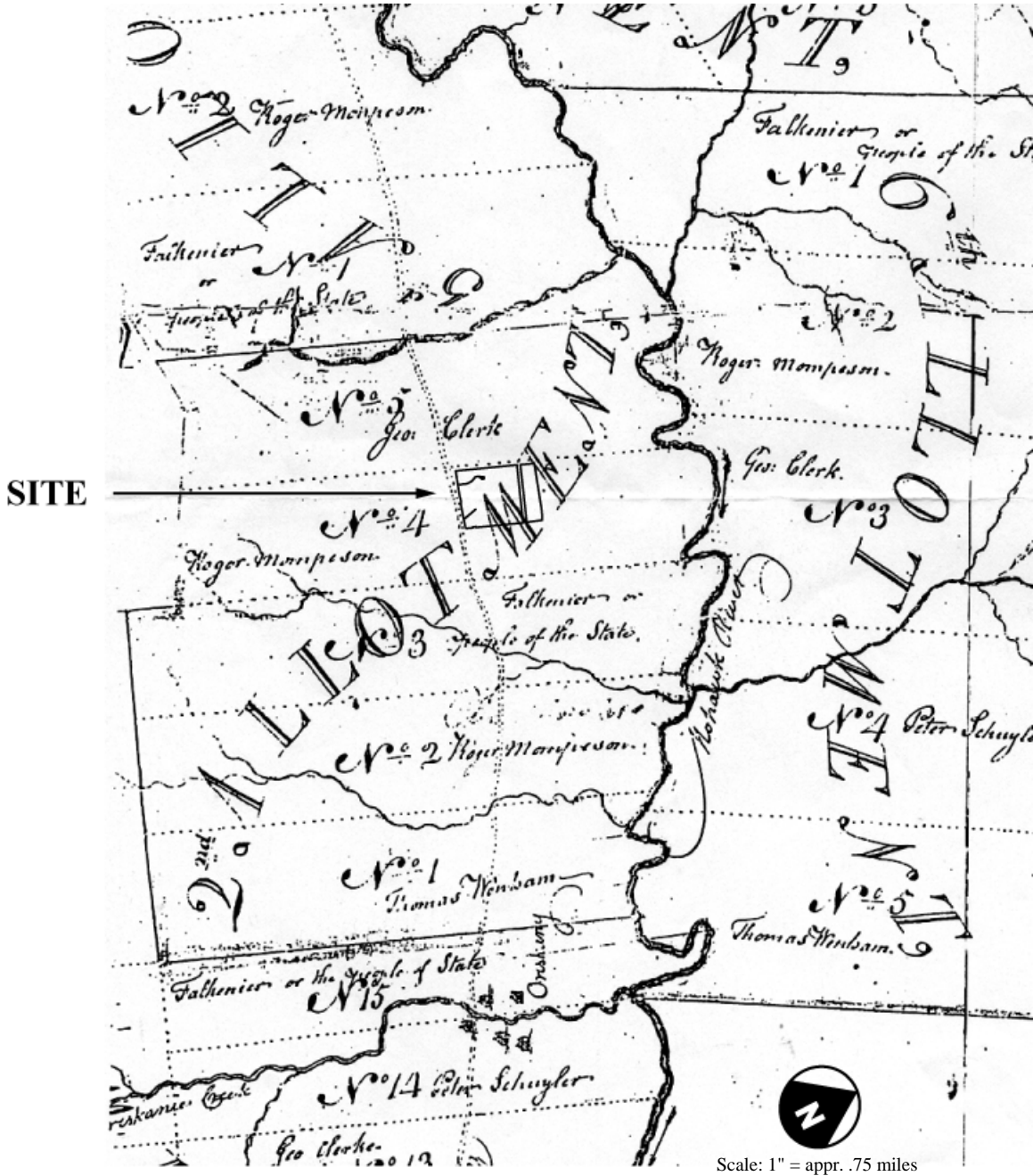
<sup>55</sup> State of New York, "Enlargement of the Erie Canal from Stanwix to Oriskany" (Albany: Canal Commissioners, c.1851), Sections 119 and 118, New York State Archives, Albany; Craig Williams, Historian, New York State Museum, conversation with J. Auwaerter, 17 July 1999.

<sup>56</sup>G. Lansing, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," 19 January 1786, New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts; includes appended notes by Victor Paltsits.

<sup>57</sup> G. Lansing, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," June 1785, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>58</sup> James Cockburn, Surveyor, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent / The Property of The Honorable John Lansing Junior and Abraham G. Lansing Esq. / Divided into Lots A. 1789 and 1790," New York State Archives, Albany.

inconveniencies, the Winters are Long & the Snow Lies very deep, often Six Foot upon a Level. The flatts along the River are over Flow'd every Spring at the time the Snow goes off, betwixt the Flatts and upland, and along the Wood Creek are very large Swamps, in some parts a Mile in Breadth, and Lies so low that I am doubtful of their being a possibility of draining them.<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 3.5:** Detail, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," G. Lansing, Surveyor, June 1785, Map #54, Surveyor General Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

<sup>59</sup> "A Field Book of Sundry Tracts of Land in the State of New York / The Property of George and Edward Clarke Esqrs. Compiled from the Originals and partly Surveyed," c.1790, 4, Clarke NYSHA MSS.

In 1785, Oriska contained about six buildings. In 1787, there were purportedly three houses of European settlers and six log cabins of Oneidas.<sup>60</sup> In 1789-1790, James Cockburn recorded in his survey for subdivision of the Oriskany Patent adjoining Oriskany Creek, ". . . the Indians has made an Improvement of about 3 Acres on which Stands some of their Houses. The Great Road from Schenectady to Fort Stanwix goes thro it."<sup>61</sup> The Oneida residents of Oriska believed they were being cheated out of their land by the land speculators. In answer to the Oneidas' concerns, Governor Clinton responded in 1788 that their land had already been sold in 1705 as part of the Oriskany Patent.<sup>62</sup> By 1793, the Oneidas had all likely left Oriska.<sup>63</sup> In 1802, Colonel Garritt Lansing of Albany purportedly began the settlement of Oriskany near the site of Oriska. Waterpower from the Oriskany Creek and its location on the Erie Canal provided significant impetus to the community's growth into a small industrial center based on cloth and iron manufacture. During this historic period, Oriskany remained an unincorporated hamlet within the Town of Whitestown.

A much larger settlement developed around Fort Stanwix, which was largely abandoned following a flood and fire in 1785. The next year, the area encompassing the Oneida Carry and Fort Stanwix was surveyed as the "Expense Lot" which was created to cover costs of subdividing the Oriskany Patent. The Expense Lot was bought at auction in 1785 by Dominick Lynch, who eventually amassed about 2,000 acres around the Oneida Carry, where he surveyed lots for a city to be named "Lynchville." In the early 1790s, this area was chartered as the Town of Rome. The completion of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company Canal across the Oneida Carry in 1796 aided navigation through the settlement and spurred growth of the community which had about 20 houses by 1799 and about 50 by 1810. Lynch's initial plans to lease rather than sell his lands garnered him little favor with early settlers, so that when the settlement was incorporated as a village in 1819, the residents chose to adopt the same name as the town, Rome, instead of Lynchville. In 1817, the Erie Canal was begun in the Town of Rome, but bypassed the village so that the community did not soon experience the same growth brought on by the canal as other cities such as Utica did. In the 1830s, village promoters were successful in having the Utica & Syracuse Railroad run through the village, and in 1844, the enlarged Erie Canal was rerouted through the center of the village close to the site of Fort Stanwix. Here, the Black River Canal, a lateral canal running north to Watertown, was also being built during this time. These improvements in transportation made Rome more industrially competitive. By 1840, Rome had grown to a population of about 2,500 centered on small industries that included cotton and grain mills, a brewery, and an iron foundry. It was not until after the Civil War, however, that the community experienced any major growth in population and industry. In 1870, Rome was incorporated as a city with a population of 11,000. The city charter encompassed the entire Town of Rome, although only a very small percentage of the area was urbanized.<sup>64</sup>

The region between the communities of Rome and Oriskany, which spanned the political division between the Towns of Rome and Whitestown, developed into a farming district. The development of agriculture spread slowly westward from Whitestown, which by 1792 was already surrounded by highly cultivated fields.<sup>65</sup> Due to the leasehold system permitted under State law, many early settlers in the area between Rome and Oriskany did not purchase their land, but rather leased it from owners of the Oriskany Patent. For example, Great Lot 5 of the Second Allotment, which bordered the western boundary of the Site, was assigned to the "Right of those holding under George Clarke" in the 1785 subdivision. George Clarke (senior) was an original 1/5<sup>th</sup> investor in the patent and left his interest to his son, George.<sup>66</sup> By 1791, George Clarke had subdivided Great Lot 5 and leased five of the eight lots to farmers, with the remaining

---

<sup>60</sup> Greene, *The History of the Mohawk Valley*, vol. II, 1878.

<sup>61</sup> Cockburn, "A Field Book of the Oriskany Patent . . . 1789 and 1790," remarks under "Lot No. 5" of Great Lot 1, Second Allotment.

<sup>62</sup> Wonderley, "Notes and Brief Chronology of Oliska," 3.

<sup>63</sup> Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 806.

<sup>64</sup> Scott, John Albert, *Rome, New York: A Short History* (Rome: Rome Historical Society, republished 1983), 8-14, 24.

<sup>65</sup> "Description of the Country Between Albany & Niagara in 1792," O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, vol. 4, 1105.

<sup>66</sup> George Clarke (2nd) owned and leased to tenant farmers vast amounts of land throughout the Mohawk Valley. The Clarke family continued to own Oriskany Patent lands until 1887. Wagner, *A Descriptive Work on Oneida County*, 98.

three pending.<sup>67</sup> In 1795, Amos, Joshua, and Jeremiah Burrows among others signed an indenture for lots 6 and 7 in Great Lot 5, which bordered the western boundary of the Site.<sup>68</sup> These leases typically covered a period of three generations; upon death of the third farmer, the land would revert back to the owner.<sup>69</sup>

Such leaseholds were apparently quite extensive in the region. In his travels through the upper Mohawk Valley in 1802, the Reverend John Taylor remarked:

The same evil operates here, however, as in many parts of this country—the lands are most of them leased. This must necessarily operate to debase the minds and destroy the enterprise of the settlers—altho' the rent is small—only 9 an acre; yet if men do not possess the right of soil, they never will nor can feel independent.<sup>70</sup>

According to the Clarke leases, farmers were renting land near the Site by 1791, indicating that some settlement, clearing of the forest, and development of agriculture was underway. By 1802, however, the area between Whitestown and Rome was still very much in the process of settlement. In this year, Friedrich Rohde, a German geologist, traveled along the military road between Whitestown and Rome and recorded the following description of the area:

Today it was just a short trip from Whitestown to Rome, formerly Fort Stanwix. The entire region is even more recently developed than the one mentioned yesterday [Whitestown]. Only at Oriskany Creek was there an attractive and stately house and garden, as well as a grist and saw mill, which belonged to the owner of this district. Otherwise you see almost exclusively log houses until near Rome, where it also looked somewhat better as in the previously mentioned place. The millions of stumps, dried or half-burned trees, 120 to 130 feet long, lying by the thousands crisscrossed over one another alongside the road, does not afford the most pleasant sight.<sup>71</sup>

An 1806 map of the Town of Whitestown documents that there were 10 houses on the old military road (which may have already been rebuilt as a turnpike) west of Oriskany Creek. The area south of the road was noted as "Mostly Forest." No houses were shown along the road within or adjacent to the Site [Figure 3.6, following page].<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the region on the south side of the Mohawk River, the region opposite the Site on the north side of the Mohawk Valley in the Towns of Floyd and Marcy also developed into an agricultural district during this period. A small settlement called Floyd Corners developed at a crossroads about three miles due north of the Site. Although distant in terms of transportation routes, Floyd Corners was likely visible from the uplands of the Site during this period.

In the following decades, the remaining arable land between Oriskany and Rome was cleared and developed into farmland, either as pasture or cropland. Across this region, the spatial character of the landscape was likely defined by topography, hedgerows, and by remnant woodlands on steep slopes and other non-arable land.<sup>73</sup> An 1858 map of Oneida County documents that there were widely scattered houses along the Road between Oriskany and Rome, most all of which probably were associated with individual farmsteads [Figure 3.8, page 79]. This map also documents that a small hamlet, "Stanwix," had developed on the turnpike where it intersected the road from Westmoreland (NY 233) and the Erie Canal, about one mile east of Rome. During this period, only two roads branched off the turnpike in the

---

<sup>67</sup> "Account of Mr. Clarkes Lotts in Oriskanie," "Oriskany Patent Land Records, 1790-1892" (lands of George Clarke), Box 143, George Hyde Clarke Family Papers at Cornell University, Ithaca (hereafter cited as Clarke Cornell MSS).

<sup>68</sup> "Oriskany Patent Land Records, 1790-1892", indenture for lots 6 and 7, Box 125, Clarke Cornell MSS.

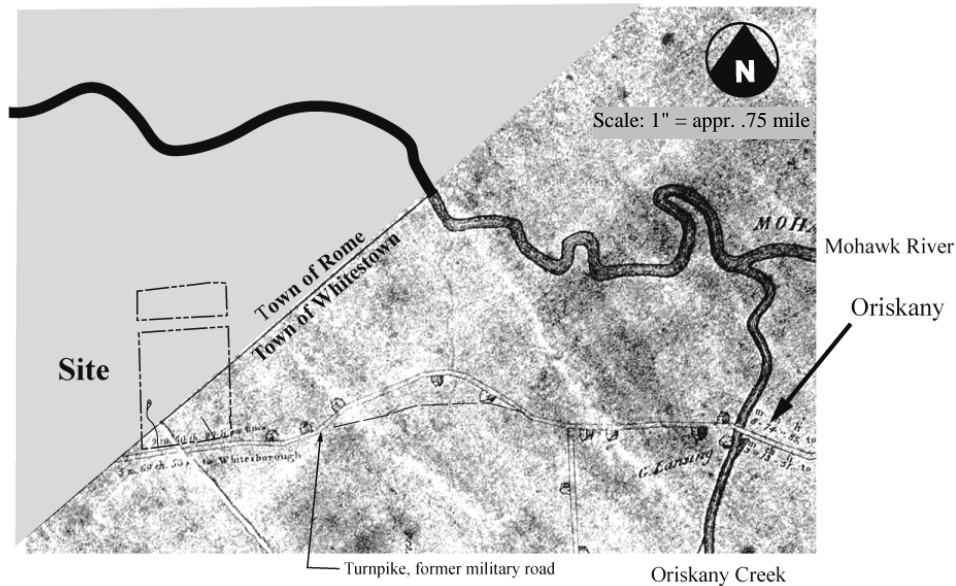
<sup>69</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 159.

<sup>70</sup> "Journal of the Rev. John Taylor, on a Mission through the Mohawk and Black River Country in the Year 1802," in O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of New York State*, vol. 3, 1136.

<sup>71</sup> Friedrich Rohde, "Journal of a Trip from New Jersey to Oneida Lake 1802," in Snow, *In Mohawk Country*, 376.

<sup>72</sup> Gifford, "Map of Whitestown in Oneida County," 1806.

<sup>73</sup> Lossing, illustration entitled "The Battle-Ground of Oriskany," vol. 1, 245.



**Figure 3.6:** Detail, "Map of Whitestown in Oneida County / Taken from Actual Survey By Peleg Gifford, Survr," 1806. Courtesy of Oneida County Historical Society, Utica; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

vicinity of the Site, one a short distance to the west (later Monument Road) and a farm road a short distance to the east (later Reber Road). A schoolhouse and cheese factory existed near the intersection of this farm road during this historic period.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the Road, the Erie Canal also acted as a magnet for development in the region around the Site. An 1834 survey documented that there were groups of buildings (probably houses and barns, and possibly hostleries) scattered along the canal. In the middle of Great Lot 5, which adjoined the west side of the Site and was leased from George Clarke, there were three buildings on the south side of the canal and a bridge. Adjacent to the Site, within Great Lot 4 on land owned by the "Heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt," were three buildings on the north side of the canal and a bridge, about 800 feet east of the present western property line of the Site [Figure 3.4, page 70].<sup>75</sup> While many buildings and structures were removed for enlargement of the Erie Canal during the 1850s, these three buildings adjacent to the Site on the north side of the canal along with the bridge remained standing through 1869, near the end of this historic period.<sup>76</sup>

## **Site Development & Use**

### **Site Ownership & Tenancy**

In the 1785 subdivision of the Oriskany Patent, the Site fell within the western half of Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment, bordering Great Lot 5 to the west [Figure 3.5, page 72].<sup>77</sup> Great Lot 4 consisted of 740 acres and was assigned to Roger Mompeson according to a map of the patent made in June 1785.<sup>78</sup> A

<sup>74</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Philadelphia: D.G. Beers, 1874).

<sup>75</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, E 7-41, 42.

<sup>76</sup> State Engineer and Surveyor Van R. Richmond, "Enlargement of the Erie Canal from Utica to Higginsville," (Albany: Canal Commissioners, 1869), vol. 5, Section 119, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>77</sup> Map of Whitestown, "New Century Atlas Oneida County New York" (Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907), 10.

<sup>78</sup> G. Lansing, "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," June 1785, Great Lot 5, which bordered the western side of the site, was the "right of George Clarke."

second version of the subdivision map produced in January 1786 indicated that Great Lot 4 was the "Right of Augustus Van Cortlandt and those holding under Roger Mumpeson [sic]."<sup>79</sup> Roger Mompeson, who was one of the original five investors in the Oriskany Patent in 1705, died in 1715. He left his interest in the patent to his wife, Martha. She then conveyed her interest to John Chambers in 1734. In 1735, Chambers in turn conveyed his 1/5<sup>th</sup> interest to George Clarke and Augustus Van Cortlandt.<sup>80</sup> These two men and their descendents held common interest in the patent along with several others until the 1785 subdivision, when ownership was conveyed to individual Great Lots. Augustus Van Cortlandt and his heirs eventually gained ownership of Great Lot 4 from those holding under Roger Mompeson; George Clarke owned Great Lot 5, but may have had some interest in Great Lot 4.<sup>81</sup>

It appears that Great Lot 4 may have been subdivided later than the adjoining Great Lots. Great Lot 5 (adjoining the west side of the Site) was subdivided by 1791, and Great Lot 3 (east of the Site) was surveyed in 1789-1790. Great Lot 4 may have been subdivided and settled later than the adjoining Great Lots possibly due to the fact that human remains from the Battle of Oriskany were still on the ground at least into the early 1790s. On his trip up the Mohawk River in 1788, Elkanah Watson found unsettled, wooded conditions on and around the Site. He was shown the battlefield by two Germans to confirm stories that "many of the slain who were scattered through the woods were never interred."<sup>82</sup> In 1792, four years after Watson, a Judge Vanderkemp passed the battlefield and noted:

I had advanced but a few steps when my attention was fixed on a number of skulls, placed in a row on a log near the road. I was informed by workmen that this place was the fatal spot on which the murderous encounter happened between Gen. Herkimer and his sturdy associates and the Indians and English . . .<sup>83</sup>

Vanderkemp's account suggests that the forests on or near the Site were in the process of being cleared. The next year, John Heckewelder visited the battlefield and reported, "The Skulls & Bones of the Slain are to be seen in abundance."<sup>84</sup> It seems unlikely that Heckewelder would have seen these remains if the land had been entirely cleared. These accounts, however, are not referenced to a specific location and may have referred to a wider area than that occupied by the Site or even Great Lot 4.

Great Lot 4 may actually not have been subdivided or settled until after 1800. An 1806 "Indenture of 4 Parts" in the papers of George Clarke, who was possibly a part owner in Great Lot 4, indicates that James Cockburn had been hired to survey "Lot Number four in the second Allotment of the said patent" in December 1800. Cockburn was to ". . . explore and class the said Lots tracts or parcels of Land into two classes or parcels of equal value."<sup>85</sup> Great Lot 4 was eventually subdivided into eight parcels [Figure 3.7, following page].

Despite the likely subdivision of Great Lot 4 after 1800, it appears that the owner of Great Lot 4 may have allowed some settlement on the Site prior to its subdivision, according to secondary sources. A history of Oneida County published in 1878 stated that John Parkhurst, originally from Connecticut, had settled on the "Oriskany battle-ground" in 1789.<sup>86</sup> The 1792 and 1793 accounts noted above, however, suggest that this date is too early, unless Parkhurst had settled in the vicinity of, but not on, the battlefield.

<sup>79</sup> G. Lansing, "Map of the Survey and Partition, of Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," 19 January 1786.

<sup>80</sup> Wagner, *A Descriptive Work on Oneida County*, 95-98.

<sup>81</sup> Augustus Van Cortlandt to John Parkhurst, Oneida County deeds, Book 35, 322-324, recorded 5. February 1822. See also property ownership documented on 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson canal survey, E 7-40, E 7-41.

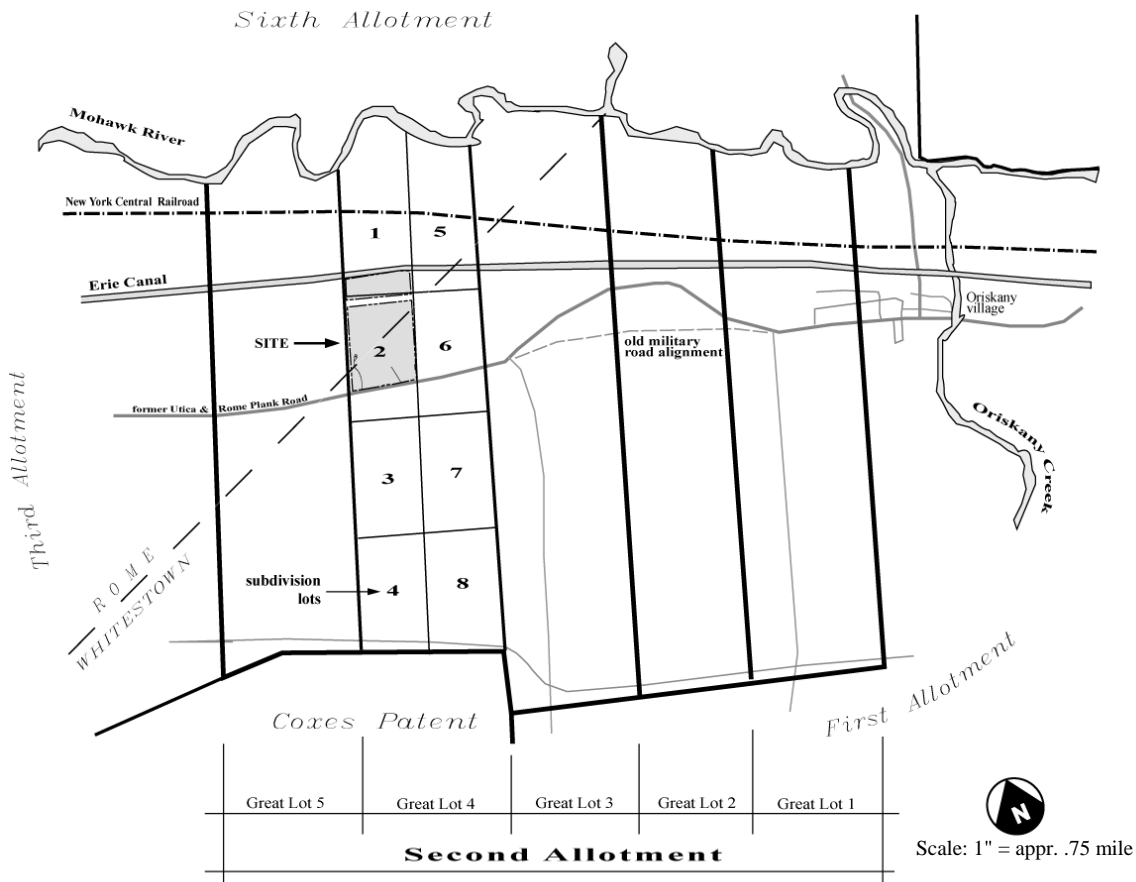
<sup>82</sup> Elkanah Watson, "Journal of Travels," in Snow, *In Mohawk Country*, 335.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Wagner, *A Descriptive Work on Oneida County*, 735.

<sup>84</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, ed., *Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 301.

<sup>85</sup> "Indenture of Four Parts," 1806, box 121, #3, Clarke Cornell MSS. The existence of this indenture in the papers of George Clarke indicates that he may have owned an interest in Great Lot 4 along with Augustus Van Cortlandt as one of those "holding under Roger Mumpeson" (as recorded on the 1786 Oriskany Patent map).

<sup>86</sup> Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878), 573. The 1800 Federal Census listed John, Jonathan, Josiah, and Nathan Parkhurst as living in Oneida County. Phillip McMullin, ed., *New York in 1800* [Federal census of 1800] (Provo, Utah: Gendex Corp., 1971), 176.



**Figure 3.7:** Subdivision of Great Lot 4 in the Second Allotment. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000, based on *New Century Atlas Oneida County New York* (Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907), Map of Whitestown, 10.

Two unpublished histories of the Site state that the property was first settled by John Parkhurst and his two sons, Simeon and George, "in about 1795."<sup>87</sup> Another history suggests, probably inaccurately, that the Burrows were the first to settle on the Site. Major M. M. Jones, whose father purportedly visited the battlefield as a child in the 1790s, stated in 1883 that a log house had been erected and about an acre of ground had been cleared on the battlefield by "an Elder Burrows" prior to 1797.<sup>88</sup> An indenture in the papers of George Clarke, however, indicates that Amos, Joshua, and Jeremiah Burrows had signed leases in 1795 for lots not in Great Lot 4, but in Great Lot 5 which bordered the west side of the Site.<sup>89</sup>

If John Parkhurst had settled on the "Oriskany battle-ground" in the 1790s, his residence was not within or adjacent to the existing Site. A map of the Town of Whitestown made in 1806 documented that there were no houses on the Road within or adjacent to the Site (the road frontage of the Site is entirely within the

<sup>87</sup> Roger Myers, Historic Site Assistant, "Oriskany Battlefield / The Past 200 Years," unpublished, undated paper, Central Region MSS. No source is provided for the date 1795.

<sup>88</sup> Remarks of Major M. M. Jones quoted in "Informal Ceremonies Saturday," *Utica Daily Herald*, 30 July 1883, 2.

<sup>89</sup> "Oriskany Patent Land Records, 1790-1892", indenture for lots 6 and 7 in Great Lot 5, Box 125, Clarke Cornell MSS. This area may well have been part of the battlefield, but is not presently part of the Site. The 1834 Holmes Hutchinson survey of the Erie Canal (map E 7-40), shows Great Lot 5 still under the ownership of George Clarke; Great Lot 1 in the Third Allotment adjoining Great Lot 5 on the west, was under the ownership of "Snyder, Tryon and Burrows" at this time.



Town of Whitestown).<sup>90</sup> Three houses are shown to the east where the Road curves to the north, corresponding to the western part of Great Lot 3 [Figure 3.6, page 75].

While it is possible that John Parkhurst and his sons had begun to farm within Great Lot 4 prior to its subdivision and as early as 1795, the first available Oneida County record of Parkhurst tenancy of the land on and near the Site is a perpetual lease that was executed on October 21, 1816.<sup>91</sup> This was an indenture made between Augustus Van Cortlandt of Yonkers "for and in consideration of the yearly rents and covenants hereinafter reserved and contained" on the part of John Parkhurst of Whitestown for Great Lot 4, subdivision lots 5, 6, and 7 consisting of 291 acres, and subdivision lots 2 [containing the Site], 3, and 8 consisting of 250 acres, for a total of 541 acres.<sup>92</sup> According to this indenture, John Parkhurst and his heirs were to pay Van Cortlandt or his assigns an annual rent of \$52.04 beginning on October 21, 1817. On September 18, 1818, John Parkhurst conveyed the lease for his property in Great Lot 4 to his two sons, Simeon and George W. F. Parkhurst.<sup>93</sup> By this time, John Parkhurst would have been about 88 years old, Simeon would have been about 67, and George W. F. would have been about 52 years old. John Parkhurst died in July 1819.<sup>94</sup> John Parkhurst's age suggests he may have been settled in the area for some time, and that earlier leasehold agreements were simply not entered in Oneida County records.<sup>95</sup>

In 1819, subdivision of the 541-acre Parkhurst farm occurred when John Parkhurst transferred his leasehold in half of subdivision lot 8 in Great Lot 4 (southeast of the Site) to James Christie.<sup>96</sup> By 1830, the west half of subdivision lot 2, amounting to 38 acres on the west half of the Site, was divided off from the rest of the Parkhurst farm. This property was part of a larger parcel of Parkhurst property that was transferred to Alexander (A. J.) Kent.<sup>97</sup> At this time, Great Lot 4 was still owned by the heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt according to a State canal survey, documenting that the Parkhursts and Kents remained tenant farmers.<sup>98</sup> An 1830 map of the Oriskany Patent lists "J.V.C.," probably an heir of Augustus Van Cortlandt, as owner of the Site as part of subdivision lot 2 of Great Lot 4.<sup>99</sup>

An 1852 atlas of Oneida County shows A. J. Kent living just west of the Site at the boundary of Rome and Whitestown; an 1858 map shows him living on the south side of the turnpike opposite the Site [Figure 3.8, following page].<sup>100</sup> In 1858, Kent transferred his property, including the Site, to Evan Griffiths, who in 1861 transferred it again to William Ringrose.<sup>101</sup> This land, along with property south of the Road and possibly additional land to the west on Great Lot 5, was held by William Ringrose through the remainder of this historic period, but was still recorded on an 1869 State canal survey as being under ownership of the

---

<sup>90</sup> Gifford, "Map of Whitestown," 1806.

<sup>91</sup> The Oneida County grantor and grantee indexes (1791-1884) reveal no entries prior to 1822 under the names of Parkhurst, George Clarke, or Augustus Van Cortlandt. An exhaustive title search of Oneida County records was not undertaken for this report. Pre-1798 Herkimer County property records were destroyed in a fire.

<sup>92</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 35, 322-324, recorded 5 February 1822.

<sup>93</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 35, 324 (also recorded in 1822).

<sup>94</sup> According to Parkhurst cemetery records in Central Region MSS, John Parkhurst was born about 1730 and died 11 July 1819; Simeon Parkhurst was born about 1751 and died 3 December 1825; George W. F. Parkhurst was born between 1762-9 and died 9 June 1842.

<sup>95</sup> The title history following the first recorded transfer of lease to Simeon and G. W. Parkhurst in 1818 remains unclear. The transfer of title (either leasehold or freehold) by descent from generation to generation in the Parkhurst family was not consistently recorded in county deeds and often included complex transfers of undivided interests. For an explanation of the title history of the Parkhurst property (east half of the Site), see letter, Nathaniel L. Goldstein and Warren H. Gilman, State Department of Law to Dr. Albert B. Corey, State Historian, 18 December 1952 [concerning Mohawk Valley Historic Association property acquisition], Central Region MSS.

<sup>96</sup> Oneida County deeds, John Parkhurst to James Christie, Book 32, 82-83; Book 71, 124.

<sup>97</sup> Untitled paper, "Owners of the Oriskany Battlefield Property," Central Region MSS. This listing of owners does not reference lots numbers.

<sup>98</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, E 7-41.

<sup>99</sup> "Map of Oriskany Patent / Recorded this 19<sup>th</sup> day of July A.D. 1830 at 11 O'Clock A.M." "J. Morris" is probably James Morris, listed on other lots; "J.V.C." is probably J. Van Cortlandt.

<sup>100</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858).

<sup>101</sup> Deed, William Ringrose Estate to New York State Department of Education dated 15 December 1952, Central Region MSS.



Figure 3.8: Detail, *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt.<sup>102</sup> An 1874 map of Whitestown documents "W. Ringrose" on the property [Figure 3.9, following page].

The east half of subdivision lot 2, amounting to approximately 50 acres on the east side of the Site, was transferred in 1843 to Susannah Lanfear, a Parkhurst heir, who resided and farmed the property with her husband David throughout the remainder of this historic period.<sup>103</sup> Susannah Lanfear retained leasehold title only because the property, as with apparently all of the land in Great Lot 4, remained under the ownership of the heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt through at least 1869. 1852 and 1858 maps of Oneida County show D. Lanfear or Lamphier on the north side of the road on the east side of a creek, corresponding to the east side of the ravine [Figure 3.8]. An 1874 map documented Lanfear residency, but also indicated a "Mrs. M. Gibson" (also a Parkhurst heir) near the east boundary of the lot [Figure 3.9, following page].<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> A 1869 state canal survey lists the heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt as still owning Great Lot 4, the same owners as listed in the 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson survey. According to Craig Williams of the New York State Museum (conversation with J. Auwaerter, 11 May 2000), these canal surveys generally provided accurate property ownership information.

<sup>103</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Corey, 18 December 1952.

<sup>104</sup> *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874); Durant, *History of Oneida County* (1878), 573.



**Figure 3.9:** Detail, *Atlas of Oneida County* (Philadelphia: D. G. Beers, 1874), map of Whitestown; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

The land adjoining the west side of the Site within Great Lot 5 was recorded as belonging to George Clarke in the 1834 State canal survey. In 1852, it was recorded as belonging to "R. R. C." (likely a Clarke heir); by 1858, a house owned or lived in by "E. Metcalf" had been built adjacent to the western boundary of the Site [Figure 3.8, preceding page]. Three other houses under Metcalf ownership were recorded to the west where the road crossed the Rome-Whitestown boundary. On an 1874 map, the Metcalf house on the north side of the road adjacent to the western boundary of the Site was recorded as "G. C.," probably an heir of George Clarke, from whom the Metcalf family was still leasing the property [Figure 3.9].<sup>105</sup>

To the east of the Parkhurst-Lanfear farm on subdivision lot 6 of Great Lot 4 were farms owned by G. W. Parkhurst, M. Parkhurst, and W. Evans between 1852 and 1874.<sup>106</sup>

### Agriculture

Once the Parkhurst family had initially settled the land and cleared the forest around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it appears that the Site throughout this historic period remained active farmland, characterized by scattered dwellings, barns, and a landscape divided by pastures and cultivated fields that followed patterns first established by the subdivision of the Oriskany Patent. The Site was described in 1848 as being "in the midst of a beautiful agricultural country."<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> *Map of Oneida County, New York* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874).

<sup>106</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874).

<sup>107</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 243.

John Parkhurst purportedly amassed 700 acres of land in and around the Site within Great Lot 4, although the 1816 indenture indicates a total of only 541 acres.<sup>108</sup> The original Parkhurst house corresponding with the farm on the Site was probably on the south side of the road, east of the Battle Creek ravine. This was built at some point after 1806.<sup>109</sup> No information has been found on the type of agriculture the Parkhursts practiced during this early part of the period. Their neighbors to the west, the Burrows, by 1796 were growing corn and wheat, and had an orchard.<sup>110</sup> By the time that John Parkhurst transferred his leasehold to his sons in 1818, it is likely that his family had developed an extensive farm on and around the Site. Upon the death of John Parkhurst in 1819, a small family cemetery was begun in the middle of the farm at the boundary between subdivision lots 2 and 6, north of the Road.

As the Parkhurst descendants increased in number, the farm was subdivided into smaller parcels under separate leaseholds. The west half of the Site became part of the Kent farm by 1830. In August 1848, author Benjamin Lossing made a detailed sketch of the Site looking west from the east side of the Battle Creek ravine [Figure 3.10].<sup>111</sup> In his sketch, Lossing illustrated a largely open landscape with a barn on the



**Figure 3.10:** The Site in 1848, view west from the east side of Battle Creek ravine. The Road and the Kent barn are at the far left of the illustration, Battle Creek and a corduroy (log) farm road are in the middle ground. Reproduced from Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Bros., 1860), vol. 1, 245.

north side of the road and west of the ravine, scattered trees and hedgerows, and a series of fenced pastures extending perpendicularly to the Road, which was soon to be rebuilt as the Utica and Rome Plank Road. Lossing referenced potatoes being planted on the Site, and illustrated cattle grazing in the ravine. By 1858,

<sup>108</sup> Durant, *History of Oneida County*, 573.

<sup>109</sup> Gifford, "Map of Town of Whitestown," 1806. This map documents there were no houses near the Site.

<sup>110</sup> Subindenture, Amos Burrows to Abel Burrows, Lots 6 & 7, Great Lot 5, Second Allotment, 15 April 1796, Clarke Cornell MSS.

<sup>111</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

A. J. Kent had moved the tollgate house from the Rome-Whitestown boundary to the south side of the Road opposite the Site for use as his home.<sup>112</sup> Following a brief tenancy under Evan Griffiths between 1858 and 1861, the farm was acquired by William Ringrose. In an 1869 Oneida County directory, William Ringrose was listed as a farmer of 80 acres in Oriskany.<sup>113</sup> Ringrose lived in the former Kent house (old tollgate house) through the remainder of this historic period.<sup>114</sup>

After initial settlement, the east half of the Site was occupied by Parkhurst heirs for all of this historic period. The earliest detailed information on this portion of the Site was recorded in Lossing's 1848 illustration [Figure 3.10, preceding page]. While Lossing primarily showed the Kent farm on the west half of the Site, he did document Battle Creek ravine, which was then being farmed by David Lanfear, who was married to a Parkhurst heir. In this illustration, the ravine itself was largely cleared of vegetation and was being grazed by three cattle. The Lanfear farmhouse and barn was located on the east side of the ravine.<sup>115</sup> By the 1870s, the Lanfears had an apple orchard that extended north of their farmhouse.<sup>116</sup>

### Commemoration

Given that human remains persisted on the battleground as late as 1793, it is possible that some type of commemoration of the battle was undertaken as part of a mass burial prior to settlement of the land. The Parkhurst family was farming within Great Lot 4 by 1816 at the latest, and it appears that most of their land, including the Site, was cleared for agriculture by this time. Preservation of the battleground for commemorative purposes, or the creation of a permanent commemorative memorial, was apparently not a consideration during this historic period, as the Parkhursts and successive tenants of the Site focused on working the land. The 1844 Lossing sketch of the Site documents no permanent features in the agricultural landscape related to commemoration of the battle.

The earliest available documentation of land being marked as the location of the Battle is found in the 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson survey of the Erie Canal [Figure 3.11, following page].<sup>117</sup> This survey, however, placed the battle as occurring near an unnamed brook on the western half of Great Lot 5, which was owned by George Clarke and adjoined the western boundary of the Site. In 1844, the first recorded commemorative event took place, but not at the spot the canal survey identified, but rather on the Site. The disagreement between this event and the 1834 canal survey suggests there was confusion during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century over exactly where the Battle occurred.

The 1844 event was an enormous Democratic rally that was held within the Battle Creek ravine. The chief speakers at the rally, which was organized partly to commemorate the Battle, were John A. Dix and Senator Dickinson, and the audience was estimated at 15,000 people.<sup>118</sup> A platform was erected on the west side of the ravine where it was believed that General Herkimer fell. No permanent commemorative features were built on the Site as part of this event, and it appears the area was soon returned to agricultural use.

Aside from this 1844 rally, no record has been found of any other formal commemorative events on the Site during this historic period. It is possible, however, that local people commemorated the Battle in an informal manner during this historic period, as the Site was documented as the location of the Battle in maps produced in the decades after the 1844 rally. An 1858 map published by Gillette identified the Site with a flag positioned at the ravine and marked "Oriskany Battle" [Figure 3.8, page 79]. An 1874 Beers

<sup>112</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); "Toll Road Once Ran Past Oriskany Battlefield; Old Gate House Afterwards Served as Dwelling," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 5 April 1938 (copy from Oriskany Museum MSS).

<sup>113</sup> Childs, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Oneida County* (1869), 363.

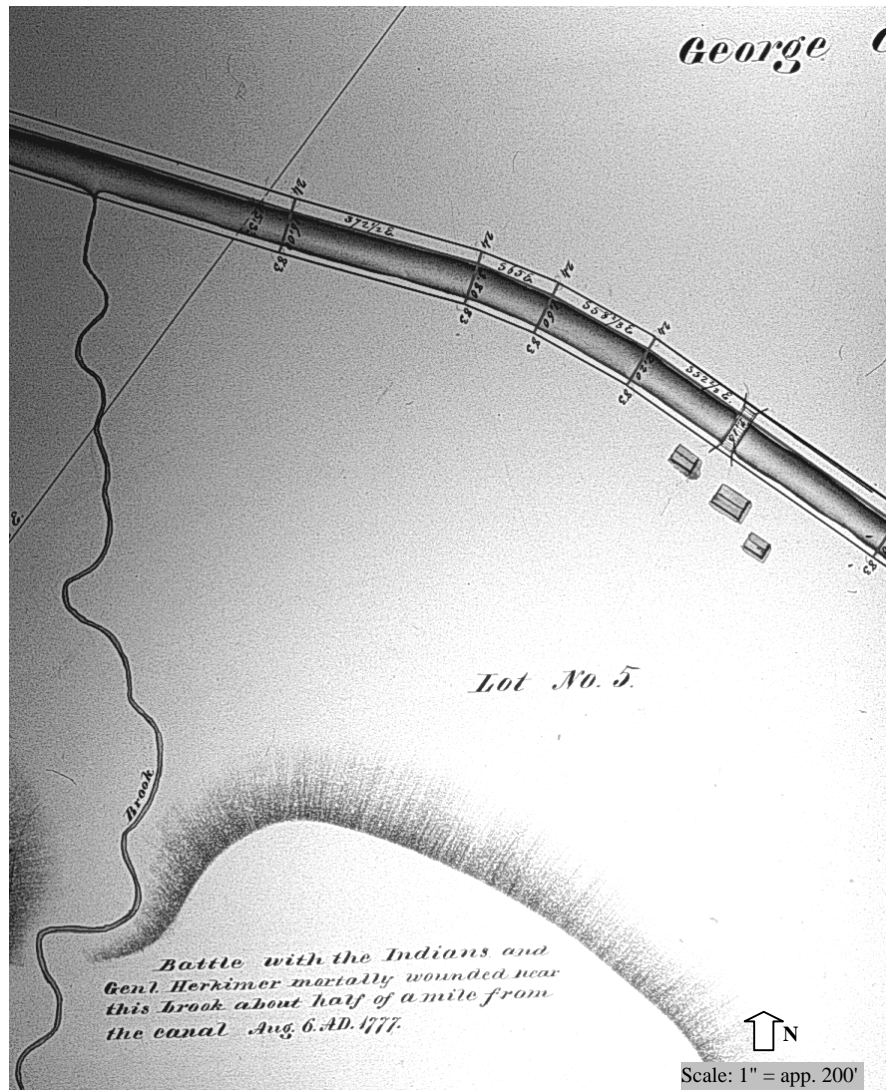
<sup>114</sup> "Toll Road Once Ran Past Oriskany Battlefield."

<sup>115</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874); "The Battle of Oriskany," drawn by Aston Bros., Utica and published in the *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

<sup>116</sup> "The Battlefield As It Was 50 Years Ago," 1927 reprint of article originally published in the *Rome Sentinel*, 31 July 1877, copy in "Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Scrapbook," Rome Historical Society. No further information has been found on the Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear) farm during this historic period.

<sup>117</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, E 7-41.

<sup>118</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245-246 (note). No information has been found on why the Democrats chose to commemorate the Battle.



**Figure 3.11:** Detail, 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson Erie Canal survey indicating purported location of the Battle of Oriskany on Great Lot 5 (west of the Site), Map series A0848, volume 7, map 39, New York State Archives, Albany.

atlas labeled the Site "Oriskany Battle Ground" [Figure 3.9, page 80].<sup>119</sup> The flag symbol on the 1858 map may have in fact indicated a flagstaff that marked the purported location of where Herkimer sat under a tree and directed the battle. It is not known when this flagstaff was erected, but it was documented as existing by the mid-1870s on the western ridge of the Battle Creek ravine on lands owned by William Ringrose.<sup>120</sup> Aside from this flagstaff, no record has been found of any other commemorative features on the Site during this historic period.

While there is little record of permanent commemorative features on the Site, there were efforts throughout this historic period at both the state and federal levels to secure the \$500 that was appropriated by the Continental Congress in 1777 to the State of New York for a monument to General Herkimer. This

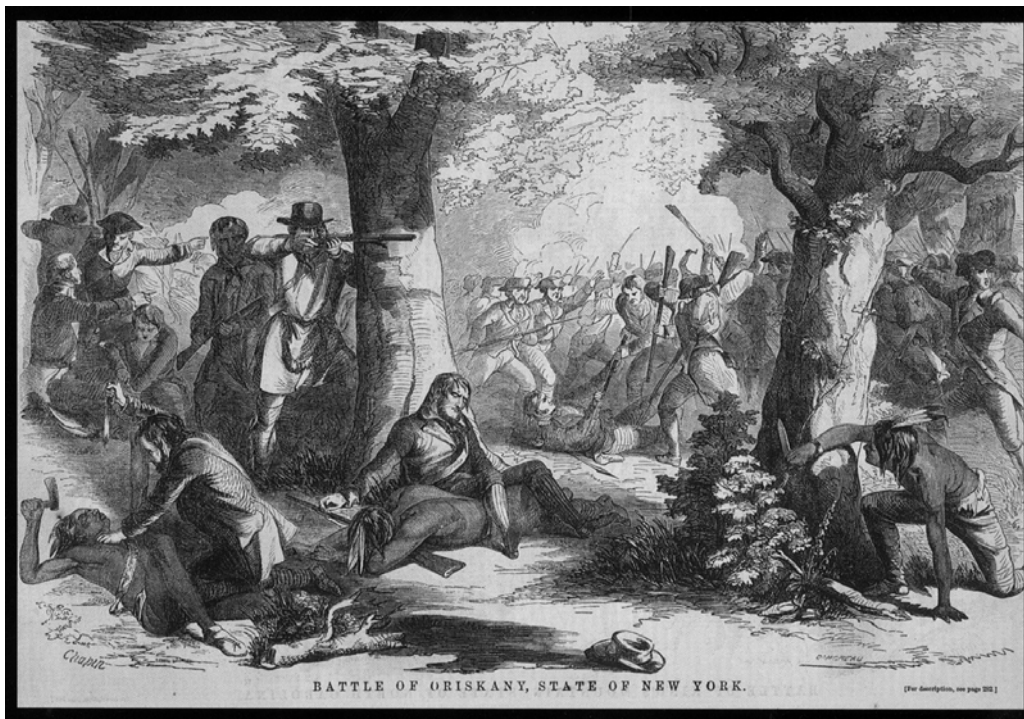
<sup>119</sup> *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874).

<sup>120</sup> "The Battlefield As It Was 50 Years Ago."

appropriation, however, was never secured during this historic period, probably reflecting the lack of widespread public support for establishing memorials to commemorate historic sites.

The wording of the original resolution of the Continental Congress left the task of locating and erecting the monument to the State of New York, but the funding was to be at Congressional expense. The first recorded action on this resolution came in January 1803 when Representative K. Van Rensselaer made a report to Congress requesting that Congress appropriate the Continental Congress allocations to erect monuments to General Herkimer, along with Generals Wooster, Davidson, and Scriven.<sup>121</sup> Based on available documentation, no further action was taken on this report.

In 1827, upon the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle, George Clinton, Governor of New York, asked the State Legislature to take action on the long-delayed Herkimer monument. A committee was created and on April 16, 1827, the Assembly passed a bill entitled, "An act to provide for the erection of a monument in honor of General Nicholas Herkimer." The bill was read in the Senate the same day, but the Legislature adjourned on April 17<sup>th</sup> and failed to pass the bill into law. In his next and last annual message to the Legislature in 1828, Governor Clinton again called for consideration of the bill. A committee again drafted a bill that for the first known time specified a location for the monument at Herkimer's place of interment at his home near Little Falls in the Mohawk Valley and not on the battlefield. Once again, however, the Legislature adjourned without passing the bill into law.<sup>122</sup>



**Figure 3.12:** "Battle of Oriskany," originally published in Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 1857, copy produced by Modern Postcard c.1998, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site.

<sup>121</sup> Benjamin Poore, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Government Publications of the United States, September 5, 1774 to March 4, 1881* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 7<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 50. Van Rensselaer also requested new funding to erect monuments to Generals Warren, Mercer, Nash, and Baron de Kalb.

<sup>122</sup> Allen Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1879), 148-149.

At the federal level, further action on the Herkimer monument was undertaken in the 1840s. In November 1845, the New-York Historical Society presented in the House a "Proposal carrying into effect resolution of Continental Congress in 1777, which appropriates money to erect monument to Herkimer."<sup>123</sup> Based on this proposal, legislation was presented in 1846 by Representative D. P. King under Bill #469 recommending appropriation for the Herkimer monument.<sup>124</sup> The House apparently took no action, for in February 1849, the New York Legislature sponsored a resolution in the House "asking for passage of law to carry into effect resolution of Congress in 1777 to erect monument."<sup>125</sup> Despite this support, Congress took no action on appropriating funds for the Herkimer monument at this time or during the remainder of this historic period. It is not known if a location for the monument was specified in these federal actions.

While there was no success during this period in erecting a permanent memorial to the battle, the Battle of Oriskany was featured in published histories and illustrated works. As previously noted, Benjamin Lossing's two-volume work on sites associated with the Revolutionary War included a section on the "Oriskany Battle-Ground," along with an illustration [Figure 3.10, page 81]. Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, published in 1857, featured a fictitious illustration of the heat of the battle within the forest [Figure 3.12, preceding page].<sup>126</sup> Although neither illustration affected the actual landscape of the Site, both served as forerunners of the commemorative landscape that took shape after 1876. Both were a form of commemoration that linked historic events with landscape.

### **Site Boundaries**

At the beginning of this historic period, the Site was an undivided part of Great Lot 4 in the Second Allotment of the Oriskany Patent. At some time between 1789 and 1806, and most likely in or soon after December 1800, Great Lot 4 was subdivided into eight lots.<sup>127</sup> Although documentation on the exact boundaries of the subdivision lots have not been found for this report, the Site appears to have occupied most of subdivision lot 2, which came under the leasehold of John Parkhurst between circa 1795 and 1816 along with subdivision lots 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8, amounting to 541 acres.<sup>128</sup> In 1830, subdivision lot 2 was further subdivided as part of a larger farm belonging to the Kent family that extended south of the road.<sup>129</sup> William Ringrose, who acquired this farm in 1861 and retained it through the remainder of this historic period, may have added additional property to the west of the Site within Great Lot 5. The east half of subdivision lot 2, amounting to approximately 50 acres, came under the title of Susannah Parkhurst Lanfear in 1843 and remained so through the rest of this historic period.

## **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

### **Natural Systems and Features**

At the beginning of this historic period, the old-growth northern hardwoods forest remained intact on the Site, except for a swath along the military road. Although no specific description of the forest and other natural systems on the Site was recorded during this historic period, survey accounts of two subdivision lots in close proximity to the Site provide information on natural systems present during the time. A lot bordering the west side of the Site and spanning the lowlands and uplands was described around 1790 as being "in general a good lot -- Watered in the NE by a small run -- Banks of which is rough and the Land

<sup>123</sup> Poore, House Document no. 21, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, vol. III, 508.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., House Reports no. 695, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, vol. IV, 528.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., House Misc. Docs., No. 55, 30<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, vol. 1, 573.

<sup>126</sup> "Battle of Oriskany," postcard taken from Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 1857, reprinted by Modern Postcard, no date or place of publication, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site.

<sup>127</sup> "Indenture of Four Parts," 1806, Box 121, #3, Clarke Cornell MSS.

<sup>128</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 35, 322-324, recorded 5 February 1822.

<sup>129</sup> "Owners of the Oriskany Battlefield Property," unpublished paper, Central Region MSS.



Adjoining Stony – Timber Beech, Birch, Maple and Hemlock." A lowland tract to the northwest of the site was described as being "a poor Lot, and is chiefly included in a Large Swamp."<sup>130</sup>

At some time between circa 1795 and 1816, the old-growth forests of the Site were probably all removed by the John Parkhurst family, who held a leasehold on the Site and adjoining lands which they developed into a farm. A traveler through the area between Oriskany and Rome in 1802 witnessed "millions of stumps, dried or half-burned trees, 120 to 130 feet long, lying by the thousands crisscrossed over one another alongside the road."<sup>131</sup> It is likely that such conditions characterized the Site at this time.

Hydrological systems on the Site were also altered during this historic period. Construction of the Erie Canal beginning in 1817 changed the course of Battle Creek and the unnamed creek along the western boundary of the Site. Prior to the canal, Battle Creek continued on a relatively straight northerly course until it reached the Mohawk River. In the original Erie Canal with its four-foot high prism, Battle Creek probably ran into the canal over a spillway, as did similar small creeks in the region.<sup>132</sup> With enlargement of the canal in the 1850s, Battle Creek could no longer be handled with a spillway due to increased, seven-foot height of the prism. Battle Creek was apparently not large enough to warrant a culvert, and so it was diverted into a new channel that ran along the south side of the canal until it reached a culvert east of the Site. The clearing of the land on the Site and in the larger region likely impacted drainage and runoff, which may have altered the course and volume of Battle Creek.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to changes to the creeks, it is likely that as part of the development of the Site into a farm, some of the swamps may have been drained, notably the one above the east side of Battle Creek ravine.

### **Spatial Organization**

The subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in 1785 into Great Lots established a pattern of property lines that ran north and south, largely perpendicular to the military road. The subdivision of the Great Lots continued the rectangular, grid-like pattern of property lines. This subdivision had a significant effect on the spatial organization of the site as it was developed into farmland.

A sketch made of the Site by Benjamin Lossing in 1848 provides several clues to the spatial organization of the Site during this period [Figure 3.10, page 81].<sup>134</sup> This sketch illustrates the influence of the Oriskany Patent subdivision lines in determining spatial organization of the landscape. Lossing illustrated a series of three pastures, including one in the ravine, that were delineated by fences running on or parallel with property lines derived from the Oriskany Patent subdivision. The pasture fence in the middle ground of the sketch, for example, does not follow the winding course of the creek, but rather a straight line extending north from the Road. A hedgerow on the horizon of the sketch likely marked the boundary between Great Lots 4 and 5 on the western boundary of the Site.

### **Parkhurst Cemetery**

In addition to the above noted spaces within the Site, a small family cemetery was established immediately adjacent to the east boundary of the Site in what would have been the middle of the Parkhurst farm. This cemetery was begun in 1819 with the burial of John Parkhurst, the family patriarch, according to extant grave markers. When the east half of the Site was subdivided to form the 50-acre farm of Susannah Parkhurst Lanfear, the cemetery fell on the boundary between that farm the adjoining farm of G. W. Parkhurst. It is unknown if this cemetery had any spatial definition within the adjoining farms during this historic period through the use of features such as vegetation, fences, or markers.

---

<sup>130</sup> Survey of the Second Allotment, Great Lot 5, subdivision lots 5 and 6, "Field Book of Sundry Tracts of Land in The State of New York The Property of George and Edward Clarke Esqrs," 24, 25, Clarke NYSHA MSS.

<sup>131</sup> Friedrich Rohde, "Journal of a Trip from New Jersey to Oneida Lake 1802," in Snow, *In Mohawk Country*, 376.

<sup>132</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, volume 7, maps 39, 40, 41.

<sup>133</sup> By 1877, Battle Creek had purportedly "shrunk to half its former size," a description probably referring to its volume. "The Battlefield as it was 50 Years Ago."

<sup>134</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

## Land Use

At the beginning of this historic period, the only documented land use within or adjacent to the Site was transportation, the military road. In 1817, construction of the Erie Canal brought additional transportation activities adjacent to the Site. Residential land use during this period is documented only on the east half of the Site on the Parkhurst-Lanfear farm, as the farmhouse for the Kent/Ringrose farms on the west side of the Site was on the south side of the turnpike.<sup>135</sup>

Between c.1795 and 1816, the Parkhurst family introduced agriculture on the Site, and this remained the dominant land use through the rest of this historic period. In Oneida County, crops popular with early settlers during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century included corn, wheat, some vegetables, fruits, nuts, oats, and hops.<sup>136</sup> If the Parkhursts were growing the same crops as their neighbors to the west were growing by 1796, then they would have had a corn field, an orchard, and a wheat field.<sup>137</sup> In 1848, Benjamin Lossing recorded cattle grazing in the ravine and referenced potatoes being grown on the plateau west of the Battle Creek ravine.<sup>138</sup> A poem published in 1859 referenced a "dairy cow" on the battlefield.<sup>139</sup> By the 1870s, the Lanfears (Parkhurst heirs) had an orchard on the uplands east of the ravine.<sup>140</sup> Stone piles were likely built during this period on the lowlands east of Battle Creek, indicating that the area was likely cultivated.<sup>141</sup>

## Cultural Traditions

Cultural traditions on the Site during this period were dominated by those associated with Anglo-American agricultural practices. Although the landscape was dominated by agriculture, Anglo-American cultural traditions associated with military commemoration may have taken place on the Site during this period, although there was probably little impact on the landscape. As documented on period maps, the Site was known as the location of the Battle of Oriskany by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it is therefore possible that people may have visited the Site to commemorate the battle.<sup>142</sup> The only known permanent commemorative feature erected during this period was a flagstaff on the Ringrose farm near the west ridge of Battle Creek ravine.

## Cluster Arrangement

Not applicable.

## Circulation

### **Farm Road Across Battle Creek**

An undefined farm road across the Battle Creek ravine was recorded on the Site by Benjamin Lossing in 1848 [Figure 3.10, page 81].<sup>143</sup> This road was constructed of logs embedded in the marshy soil, a type of construction referred to as corduroy, and was located north of the Road. At the time, this farm road was

---

<sup>135</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852), *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858), *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874). The east side of the Site may have also served a commercial land use where John Parkhurst maintained a "public house" across from his home during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Durant, *History of Oneida County* (1878), 573.

<sup>136</sup> Maxon and Carr, *Soil Survey of Oneida County*, 8.

<sup>137</sup> Subindenture, Amos Burrows to Abel Burrows, Lots 6 & 7, Great Lot 5, Second Allotment, 15 April 1796, Clarke Cornell MSS.

<sup>138</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245-246.

<sup>139</sup> Phineas Camp, *Poems of the Mohawk Valley* (Utica: Curtiss & White, 1859), 47.

<sup>140</sup> "The Battlefield As It Was 50 Years Ago."

<sup>141</sup> Paul Huey, "Field Report and Recommendations on Oriskany Battlefield," unpublished paper dated 12 November 1992, NYS OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Oriskany Battlefield archeology and building files, Waterford, New York (hereafter cited as "BHS MSS"), 3.

<sup>142</sup> *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858), *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874).

<sup>143</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 243. Lossing claimed this path was the remains of the corduroy roadbed or causeway from the military road.

functioning as a cattle crossing on the Kent farm, and no documentation has been found to suggest it had served any other function. Local oral tradition identified this road as the remains from the military road causeway across the ravine.

### Other

Little documentation has been found for this report on circulation within the Site aside from the farm road across the ravine. There were likely unimproved roads and walks to the Parkhurst-heir farmstead on the east side of the Site, and to the Ringrose barns on the west side of the Site. Given the agricultural use of the Site, it is likely that there were other informal or undefined farm roads and paths.

### Adjacent Circulation Features

#### *The Road*

Following the Revolution, the Road ceased to be maintained as a military road was probably repaired or rebuilt to service settlers who began migrating to the region around the Site beginning in the late 1780s. Some improvements may have been made at this time when the section of the military road across the hill west of Oriskany was realigned prior to 1806.<sup>144</sup> The military road may have been rebuilt as the Rome Turnpike after 1805, although no conclusive documentation on this has been found. The State legislation incorporating the Utica-Rome Turnpike Company set the right-of-way for the turnpike at a maximum of four rods (66 feet).<sup>145</sup> The turnpike appears to have followed a straight alignment across the Battle Creek ravine and past the Site (corresponding to the alignment of the later state highway).<sup>146</sup> A State law passed in 1807 mandated that the improved road surfaces of turnpikes be 28 feet wide, "bedded with stone, gravel, sound wood, or other hard substance" and that the road be crowned and built with ditches to either side if necessary. It is not known if the Rome Turnpike followed these 1807 standards.<sup>147</sup>

An illustration of the Site made in 1848 by Benjamin Lossing [Figure 3.10, page 81] depicts the Road with what appears to be an earthen surface on a straight alignment that descended into the ravine. It is likely that the old log causeway built across the ravine for the military road had been reconstructed as a more permanent and higher structure, probably for the turnpike. The Road was again rebuilt as the Utica & Rome Plank Road around 1848. The New York State "General Plank Road Law" passed in May 1847 specified that plank roads, including the Utica & Rome,

. . . shall be laid out at least four rods wide [66 foot right-of-way], and shall be so constructed as to make secure and maintain a smooth and permanent road, the track of which shall be made of timber, plank, or other hard material, so that the same shall form a hard and even surface, and be so constructed as to permit carriages and other vehicles conveniently and easily to pass each other, and also, so as to permit all carriages to pass on and off where such road is intersected by other roads.<sup>148</sup>

No details have been found on the construction details of the Utica & Rome Plank Road. An 1852 map of Oneida County documents that the plank road followed a straight alignment across the ravine (the same as the later state highway), and at the Rome-Whitestown boundary just west of the Site, there was a tollgate house as permitted under State law.<sup>149</sup> Given that the plank road followed the alignment of the earlier turnpike, it is possible that the then-existing causeway and bridge over Battle Creek were retained. By 1856, the Utica & Rome Plank Road was abandoned and probably at this time the plank paving and tollgate

---

<sup>144</sup> Gifford, "Map of Whitestown," 1806.

<sup>145</sup> State of New York, Laws of 1804-1806, Chapter 125, 287. The existing right-of-way remains at 66 feet.

<sup>146</sup> Gifford, "Map of Whitestown," 1806. This map may actually illustrate the alignment of the military road prior to its reconstruction into a turnpike, although the section over the hill west of Oriskany had already been realigned.

<sup>147</sup> "A Digest of Laws Concerning Plank Roads and Turnpike Roads," NYS DOT Region 2, Utica. No further documentation has been found for this project on any other design details of this road, such as its width, surface treatment, or associated structures.

<sup>148</sup> "General Plank Road Law," 10.

<sup>149</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852).

house were removed. The Road then likely reverted to local public maintenance and witnessed no further changes through the end of this historic period.

### *Erie Canal*

The section of the Erie Canal that passed the Site was opened in October 1819. It was 40 feet wide and four feet deep. The south canal wall alongside the Site was earthen and appears to have been at or near grade given that nearby streams were run over this wall on spillways. A farm bridge was located on the canal about 800 feet east of the Site's west property line. This bridge led to a group of three buildings on the north side of the canal.<sup>150</sup> In the 1850s, the canal was enlarged to 70 feet wide and seven feet deep. At this time, the south canal wall was enlarged to its present height of about three to five feet above the adjoining land.

### *Railroad*

The mainline railroad through the Mohawk Valley passed the Site about 700 feet north of the Erie Canal. Construction on the railroad, which was originally chartered as the Utica & Syracuse Railroad, began in 1837 and was finished by 1839. The railroad continued in operation through the remainder of this historic period. Based on available documentation, there was no physical access between the Site and the railroad during this period, although the railroad was visible from the uplands of the Site.

## **Topography**

The topography of the Site likely underwent only two significant changes during this historic period, and these occurred alongside its boundaries. The first change may have come with the building of the Rome Turnpike around 1806, at which time the old military road causeway was likely rebuilt and enlarged. Along the north side of the Site, the construction of the Erie Canal beginning in 1817 resulted in a change in the topography through construction of earthen walls to enclose the canal prism, which measured four feet deep and 40 feet wide, and which was enlarged by 1855 to seven feet deep and 70 feet wide. Aside from these two changes, there were likely minor changes to the topography of the Site through filling of swamps on the uplands, grading for buildings and paths, and leveling of the soil through cultivation. A drainage ditch from the swamp on the east plateau to the adjoining Battle Creek ravine may also have been built during this period. This swamp was located to the rear of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead.

## **Vegetation**

### **Forest**

According to Benjamin Lossing's 1848 illustration of the Site [Figure 3.10, page 81], all of the old-growth forest had been cleared on west half of the Site, but there were scattered trees. By the end of this historic period, however, the steep slope of the east side of Battle Creek ravine, which was not illustrated by Lossing, was documented as being forested with both coniferous and deciduous trees.<sup>151</sup> This forest likely was a remnant of the old-growth forest, although individual trees had likely been removed at some point during this period. This steep slope probably remained forested because it was not suitable for agriculture and because the trees helped to stabilize the slope. The portion of the slope near the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, close the Road, was kept clear.<sup>152</sup> It is also likely that the swamp on the east end of the east plateau was forested, given that it was also unsuited for agriculture; the swamp adjacent to the ravine on the east plateau may have been drained during this period, so its forest may have been removed.

---

<sup>150</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, volume 7, maps 39, 40, 41. Battle Creek is not documented in this survey.

<sup>151</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 90.

<sup>152</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245. This portion of the slope appears in the foreground of Lossing's illustration as meadow and scrub growth.

There was also low scrub or successional growth scattered across the Site during this period, such as in the west ravine and likely adjoining the creeks, canal, and wetlands. Young forest trees may have been found in these areas.

### **Herkimer Tree**

In 1848, Benjamin Lossing recorded the location of the purported beech tree under which General Herkimer sat and directed the battle. This location was near a pasture fence that extended along the west side of the Kent (later Ringrose) barn on the west plateau [left middle ground of Figure 3.10, page 81]. According to Lossing, only a depression remained at the site of the tree, which had been cut down by a previous owner of the farm for "a more precious hill of potatoes."<sup>153</sup> This tree would have matured in the forest and therefore was likely tall and narrow. The tree was not replanted during this period.

### **Pastures and Cultivated Fields**

Benjamin Lossing sketched in 1848 that the west plateau was maintained as a series of linear pastures extending perpendicularly to the Road [Figure 3.10, page 81]. At the time, these pastures were being grazed by cattle. A portion may have also been under cultivation prior to 1848 for growing potatoes.<sup>154</sup>

### **Hedgerows**

Lossing's 1848 sketch illustrated fences dividing the pastures west of Battle Creek. By the end of this historic period, low hedgerows were growing between these pastures. These hedgerows may have grown around the fences, which were not illustrated in a lithograph of the Site made soon after the end of this historic period. No information has been found on the specific vegetation within the hedgerows.<sup>155</sup>

### **Apple Orchards**

Toward the end of this historic period, there were apple orchards on the lowlands and uplands east of Battle Creek on the Parkhurst-heir farm, as well as scattered apple trees on the uplands of the Ringrose farm.<sup>156</sup> No other information has been found on these orchards.

### **Ravine Elm**

An American elm (*Ulmus americana*) was located on the west side of the Battle Creek ravine northeast of the Ringrose barn during this period. This elm was mentioned by the Rome *Sentinel* at the end of this historic period and was probably the same tree that Benjamin Lossing illustrated in the sketch he made of the Site in 1848 [Figure 3.10, page 81].<sup>157</sup>

### **Other**

In his 1848 illustration of the west side of the Site, Benson Lossing documented scattered individual trees that were mostly deciduous, but included one conifer [Figure 3.10, page 81].<sup>158</sup> Many of the trees may have been species from the forest, such as beech, sugar maple, and hemlock.<sup>159</sup> No further information has been found on the exact number or location of individual trees on the Site during this period.

---

<sup>153</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245-246.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91.

<sup>156</sup> "Oriskany Battle Ground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4; 1884 photograph, "Dedication of the Herkimer Monument," Cookinham, 34. No further information has been found on these orchards.

<sup>157</sup> "Oriskany . The Battle Ground," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877;" Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

<sup>158</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

<sup>159</sup> "The Battlefield as it was 50 Years Ago."

## Buildings and Structures

### **Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead**

The farmhouse of Susannah Parkhurst Lanfear and her husband David was on the north side of the Road, east of the Battle Creek ravine. To the rear of the farmhouse was a barn and a pump.<sup>160</sup> This farmstead may have been built in 1843 when the Lanfears acquired the 50-acre farm from the larger Parkhurst farm. No further information has been found on the appearance of this farmstead during this historic period.

### **House of Mrs. Gibson**

An 1874 map [Figure 3.9, page 80] indicates that the house of Mrs. Gibson was located on the north side of the Road at the eastern edge of the Site, east of the Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear) farmstead. Mrs. Gibson was also a Parkhurst heir.<sup>161</sup> No other record of this house has been found; it is possible that the map incorrectly located the house, which may have been on the adjacent farm to the east, later owned by Ella Parkhurst Carr.

### **Ringrose Farmstead**

The first barn on the west side of the Site may have been built as early as 1830, when this portion of the Site was subdivided from the larger Parkhurst farm by Alexander Kent. The earliest documentation of a barn on the west side of the Site is found in Lossing's 1848 sketch. He illustrated a gable-roof barn, probably of the common English plan, with its ridge parallel to the Road, located on the north side of the Road at the top of the slope west of the ravine [Figure 3.13].<sup>162</sup> It probably was an English barn (or variant of), one of the most popular types of barns in the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. English barns were characterized by gable roofs and a tripartite plan with a central door opening onto a threshing floor flanked by two mows or stock aisles.<sup>163</sup> At this time, the barn would have been owned by A. J. Kent. By the end of this historic period when the property was owned by William Ringrose, this barn had likely been doubled in length.<sup>164</sup> At this time the farmhouse associated with the barn was located on the south side of the Road, and was the old tollgate house from the Utica and Rome Plank Road.



**Figure 3.13:** View west of Kent (later Ringrose) barn with Road to left, 1844. Detail, "Battle Ground of Oriskany," Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Bros., 1860), vol. 1, page 245.

<sup>160</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" [map] *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

<sup>161</sup> Gifford, "Map of Town of Whitestown," 1806; *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874); Durant, *History of Oneida County* (1878), 573.

<sup>162</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245. This location corresponds to the location of the existing maintenance garage.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Rawson, *The Old House Book of Barn Plans* (New York: Sterling, 1990), 32.

<sup>164</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany," *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

## Temporary Structures

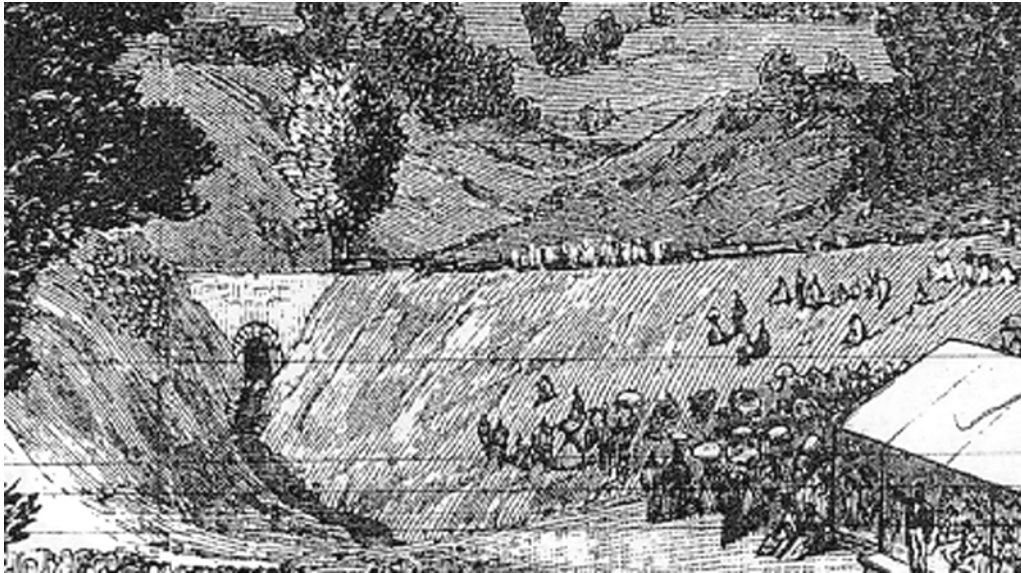
### *1844 Speakers' Stand*

A frame speaker stand was erected on the west side of the Battle Creek ravine for a Democratic rally held in 1844. The remnant framework of this stand was illustrated in Lossing's 1848 sketch of the Site [middle-right ground of Figure 3.10, page 81 (looks like a fence)].<sup>165</sup>

### **Adjacent Buildings and Structures:**

#### *Road Causeway and Bridge*

The earthen causeway that carried the Road over the Battle Creek ravine, which may have been built as early as 1805 for the Rome Turnpike, or possibly around 1848 for the Utica & Rome Plank Road, featured a short-span single-arch masonry bridge over Battle Creek. This bridge had stone parapet walls, a plank bottom, an outlet (north) opening measuring four feet wide and six feet high, and an inlet opening measuring four feet wide and four feet high.<sup>166</sup> The earliest available illustration of the causeway and bridge was made at the time of the centennial in 1877 [Figure 3.14].



**Figure 3.14:** View south of causeway and stone-arch bridge over Battle Creek, 1877. Detail, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877, vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, front page.

#### *Buildings on Erie Canal*

A complex of three buildings on the north side of the Erie Canal about 800 feet east of the west property line of the Site was documented on an 1834 canal survey [Figure 3.4, page 70]. A bridge provided access to this complex from the south side of the canal. The buildings likely formed a farmstead associated with

<sup>165</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

<sup>166</sup> Bridge details are taken from New York State Department of Public Works, "Preliminary Survey Transit" [Survey for Stanwix-Oriskany Whitesboro State Highway], dated October 6 - November 5, 1931. Unlike the existing causeway, the earthen fill did not extend across the ravine, but only to the edges of the bridge.

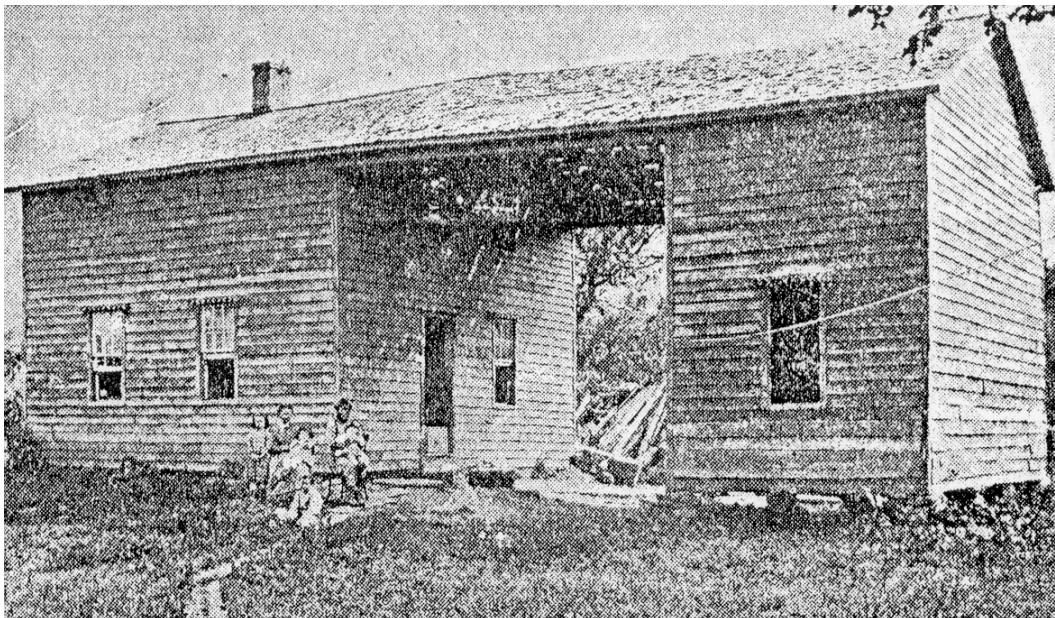
the land north of the canal on subdivision lot 1 of Great Lot 4, which was owned by the heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt. This complex was also shown on an 1869 survey of the canal.<sup>167</sup>

#### *G.W. Parkhurst House*

Maps produced in 1852, 1858, and 1874 indicate the home of G.W. Parkhurst being on the south side of the road, east of the ravine. G.W. Parkhurst purportedly lived in a "portion of the old place" of John Parkhurst, possibly indicating that this house was the original Parkhurst farmhouse.<sup>168</sup>

#### *Tollgate House (Kent-Ringrose Farmhouse)*

The tollgate house, which was originally located on the Rome-Whitestown boundary just west of the Site, was purportedly moved by A. J. Kent to the south side of the road opposite his barns on the west side of the ravine (present location of Ringrose farmhouse). This building had a gable roof, clapboard siding, and six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The building originally straddled the road and featured two bays on one side and one bay on the other [Figure 3.15].<sup>169</sup> Its design, notably the windows, suggests that the building was likely constructed in 1848 for the plank road, rather than in 1806 for the turnpike. The Kent family used this building as their residence, as did William Ringrose.



**Figure 3.15:** View south (?) of the Ringrose farmhouse, c.1885. This building was the relocated toll gate house probably built for the Utica and Rome Plank Road. Reproduced from Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 5 April 1938.

<sup>167</sup> 1834 Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey, map E 7-41; 1869 Erie Canal survey, Sections 119 and 118, 22-26a/b.

<sup>168</sup> Durant, *History of Oneida County* (1878), 573. The G. W. Parkhurst was demolished in the 1980s or early 1990s; the foundation remains.

<sup>169</sup> "Toll Road Once Ran Past Oriskany Battlefield."



### *Metcalf House*

A house on the north side of the Road adjacent to the west boundary of the Site within Great Lot 5, is documented in 1852 as belonging to "R. R. C.," probably an heir of George Clarke; by 1858, this house was listed as E. Metcalf, likely a tenant farmer. In 1874, this same house was recorded as "G. C.," probably also an heir of George Clarke, from whom the Metcalf family would still have been leasing the property.<sup>170</sup> No information has been found on the appearance of this house.

### **Views and Vistas**

During this historic period, the clearing of the forest for agriculture opened expansive views from the Site into the Mohawk Valley and beyond to the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains north of the Mohawk River.<sup>171</sup> By the close of this historic period, the steep slopes of the eastern side of the ravine were wooded. These woods would have blocked expansive views from a portion of the east plateau.<sup>172</sup>

### **Constructed Water Features**

According to available documentation, there were no constructed water features on the Site during this historic period.

### **Small-Scale Features**

#### **Agricultural Fences**

Fences were a common part of the agricultural landscape of the Site during this historic period. As early as 1796, the Burrows farm to the west of the Site was described as having a fenced corn field and a fenced orchard.<sup>173</sup> The first documentation of fences on the Site is found in an 1848 sketch, in which are illustrated cross and rail fences along pasture lines that extended north from the Road.<sup>174</sup> Illustrations of the Site made soon after the close of this historic period show both post and rail, and cross and rail fences.<sup>175</sup> The exact extent and location of fences on the Site during this period is not known.

#### **Ringrose Flagstaff**

By 1877, just after the close of this historic period, a flagstaff existed on the purported spot where General Herkimer sat and directed the battle. This spot was on the farm of William Ringrose and was just above the west side of the Battle Creek ravine.<sup>176</sup> A later history noted that this flagstaff had been erected "by some patriotic early settler" near the rotting stump of the beech tree under which Herkimer purportedly sat.<sup>177</sup> An 1858 map used a flag symbol to mark the location of this feature, and is possible that this symbol indicated an actual flagstaff.<sup>178</sup> No information has been found on the appearance of this flagstaff.

---

<sup>170</sup> *Map of Oneida County* (Brown, 1852); *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858); *Atlas of Oneida County* (Beers, 1874).

<sup>171</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

<sup>172</sup> Beech, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91.

<sup>173</sup> Subindenture, Amos Burrows to Abel Burrows, Lots 6 & 7, Great Lot 5, Second Allotment, 15 April 1796, Clarke Cornell MSS.

<sup>174</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245.

<sup>175</sup> Beach, *The Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 90, 126.

<sup>176</sup> *The Battlefield As It Was 50 Years Ago*.

<sup>177</sup> David H Beetle, *Along the Oriskany* (Utica: Published for the Utica *Observer-Dispatch* by Louis Heindl & Son, 1947), 178. This information was from an interview with William Ringrose, son of William Ringrose.

<sup>178</sup> *Oneida County Atlas* (Gillette, 1858).

## Other

### *Stone Piles*

During this historic period, there likely existed a number of stone piles scattered along the lowlands east of Battle Creek. Based on current archeological investigations, these stone piles were likely made at some point during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and may have been assembled to collect debris--mainly stones--that turned up during cultivation.<sup>179</sup> These piles, if they were made as a result of cultivation, likely appeared prior to 1877. At this time, David Lanfear, farmer of the land east of Battle Creek where the stone piles were located, reported that he did not cultivate any portion of the farm.<sup>180</sup> No information on the exact number or appearance of these stone piles during this period has been found.

## Archeological Sites

During this historic period, there were stories about mass graves and battle artifacts being found on or near the Site. These resources likely influenced perceptions of the landscape. Benjamin Lossing recorded upon his tour of the Site in 1848, "Arrow-heads, bullets, bayonets, tomahawks, pipes--are still found there by the cultivator. The bowl of an earthen pipe was shown to me by a resident upon the ground . . . which he plowed up the day before."<sup>181</sup> Pomroy Jones, in his 1851 history, stated that the early settlers of the region gathered skeletons that remained from the battle and interred them in a common grave.<sup>182</sup> These are the only two known stories recorded during this period regarding archeological resources on the Site, and neither referenced a specific location on the Site. There were likely many other stories that were part of local oral tradition.<sup>183</sup>

## Summary

The landscape of the upper Mohawk Valley underwent significant change during this period as the old-growth forests were cleared for settlement and agriculture by European-Americans, beginning in 1785 with subdivision of the Oriskany Patent. Two urban industrial centers, Rome and Utica, developed to the east and west of the Site. The historic use of the Mohawk Valley as a significant transportation corridor, however, continued. Although the military road declined in significance, the Erie Canal and the mainline railroad across the state followed this corridor.

The landscape of the Site likewise underwent significant change as the Parkhurst family cleared the forests on the Site for agriculture at some point between 1795 and 1816, opening up broad views into the Mohawk Valley. In 1819, the Erie Canal opened along the northern boundary of the Site. By the 1830s, the railroad was built north of the Site, and the Parkhurst farm was subdivided. By the end of this historic period, the Site contained the 50-acre Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear) farm to the east of Battle Creek, and part of the Ringrose farm to the west. The Site was known locally as the location of the Battle of Oriskany, but there was little organized commemoration and no known permanent changes were made to the landscape for commemorative purposes aside from the addition of a flagstaff.

---

<sup>179</sup> Bureau of Historic Sites memorandum, Chuck Fisher to Paul Huey, 18 May 1993, BHS MSS.

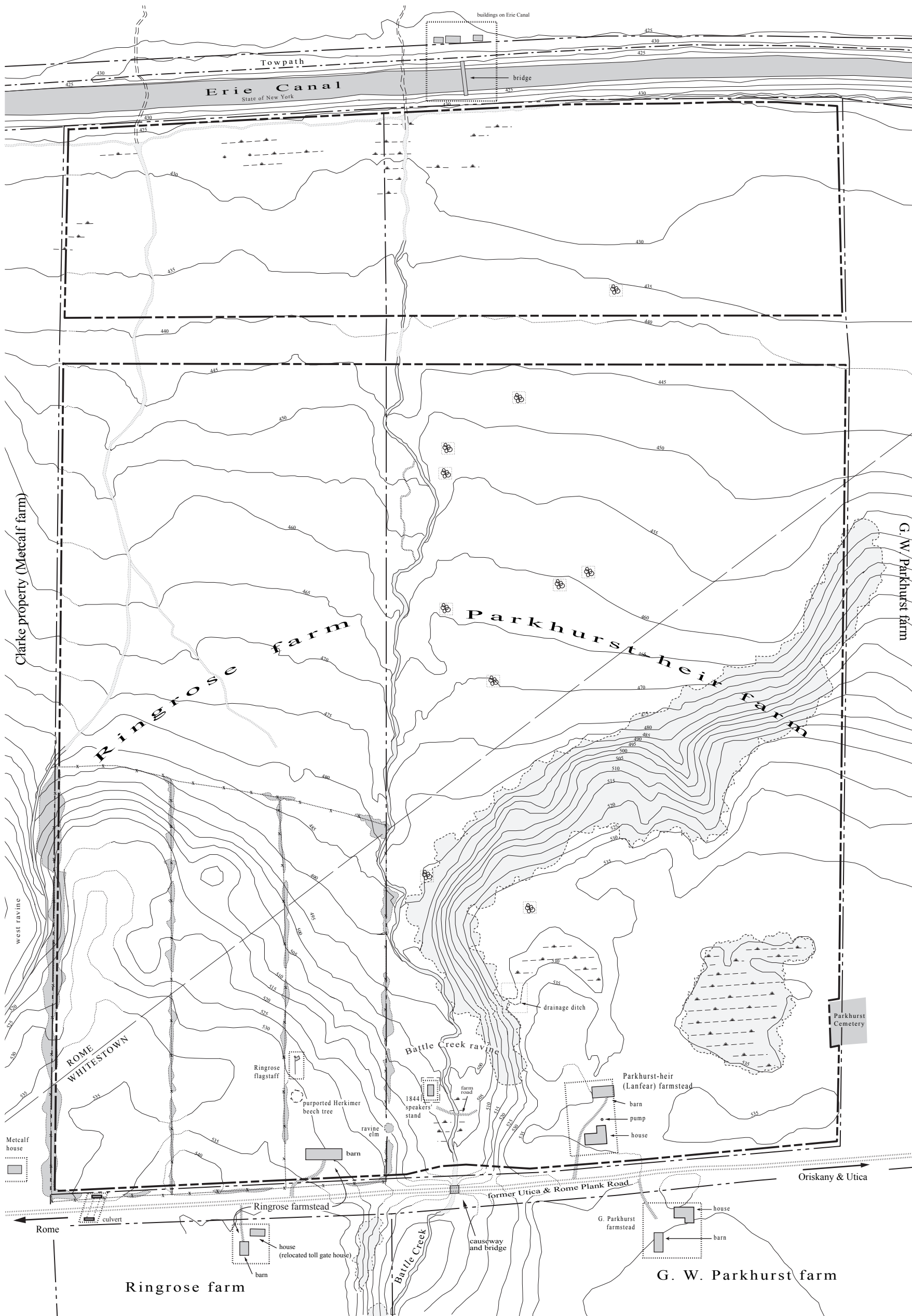
<sup>180</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4.

<sup>181</sup> Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 246. The present location of these and other artifacts is unknown.

<sup>182</sup> Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 361.

<sup>183</sup> Additional stories were recorded at the time of the centennial celebration in 1877. See Site History Chapter 4.





### LEGEND

- Assumed limits of forest
- Assumed hedge/scrub
- Approximate individual tree location
- Wetlands
- 5' contour
- Assumed 5' contour
- Creek
- Assumed creek alignment
- Approximate road/path alignment
- Centerline of road or path
- Building /structure
- Stone pile
- Flagstaff
- Assumed fence location
- Assumed feature
- Approximate feature location
- Removed during period
- Added during period
- Existing Site boundary (2000)
- Period property boundary
- Removed property boundary

Note:  
Agriculture, practiced in cultivated fields, orchards, and pastures, was introduced to the Site during this period. The exact location and extent of these agricultural landscapes are unknown. Most of the old-growth forest was removed during this period.

## Cultural Landscape Report Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site

Prepared for:  
New York State  
Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region, Jamesville, New York

Prepared by:  
State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York  
Research Assistant John Auwaerter & Project Director George W. Curry

## EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURE, 1786-1876

Period Plan 2 of 4

Scale: 1" = 200'

Map Sources:  
"Topography - Oriskany Battle Monument"  
(New York State Parks, 1970)  
"Oriskany Land Use History" (NPS, 1998)  
"Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field"  
(Thomas, 1915)  
"The Battle of Oriskany" (Ashton Bros., 1877)  
"Erie Canal survey (Holmes-Hutchinson, 1834)

Date: November 2000 / Drawn by: John Auwaerter



# DEVELOPMENT OF THE BATTLEFIELD MEMORIAL PARK, 1877-1926

## Introduction

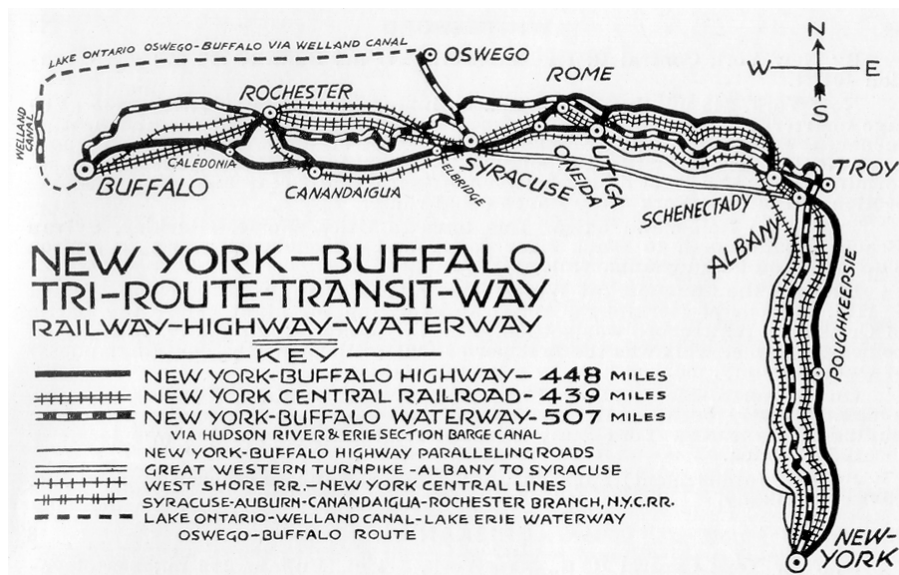
The coming of the centennial of the Battle of Oriskany in 1877 brought about widespread recognition for the Site, plans for a grand celebration, and the establishment of a permanent memorial. In the open fields of the Ringrose and Parkhurst farms that overlooked the upper Mohawk River Valley, area historical societies, private citizens, and public officials worked to create a commemorative landscape. By the early 1880s, a small memorial park with a prominent monument had been completed to mark the location of the battle. Following this initial activity in the 1870s and 1880s, interest in the Site waned, but by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was growing interest in expanding the small memorial park into a public reservation in which the entire battlefield would be preserved.

In the opening years of this historic period, the landscape surrounding the Site remained much as it had during the prior historic period: an open agricultural district adjacent to busy transportation corridors. Changes in transportation and agriculture and a growing emphasis on commemoration and historic preservation set in motion more significant changes in the landscape toward the end of this historic period.

## 1. HISTORIC CONTEXT

### Transportation

The Site's close proximity to primary transportation routes, first evident in the military road and then in the Erie Canal, was lost during this historic period, although the Mohawk Valley between Rome and Schenectady remained a primary part of the New York City-to-Buffalo transportation corridor across the state [Figure 4.1].



**Figure 4.1:** New York City-to-Buffalo transportation corridor; the Site lies between Utica and Rome. Reproduced from Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 21.

## Waterways

At the beginning of this historic period, the State's canal system was suffering under increasing competition from the railroads. In 1882, with strong political support from New York City merchants and others who valued the canal as a check on the power of railroads, the State eliminated tolls on the canal in the hope of attracting more use. Traffic on the canal system, however, continued to decline and by 1900, only a small fraction of the state's total freight was being carried on the state's interior waterways. In spite of this decline, there was a strong movement to improve the canal system, as before in large part promoted by New York City merchants who wanted to protect the city's commercial supremacy. In 1903, state voters approved a \$101,000,000 appropriation to rebuild the State's canal system. The new canal, which was begun in 1906 and completed in 1918, was named the New York State Barge Canal System, and was composed of the mainline Erie Division and lateral Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Divisions.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the old canal system, the new Barge Canal made use of natural waterways in addition to artificial channels. Much of the old canal was abandoned through the Mohawk Valley and in its place, the Mohawk River was canalized. West of Utica and past the Site, the Barge Canal was built in a new artificial channel on the north side of the Mohawk River, well north of the Site.<sup>2</sup> Many different plans were made to convert abandoned portions of the old canal into a highway. Within many cities and villages, the canal was converted into highways beginning in the 1920s, but in rural stretches, the canal was usually abandoned, filled, or retained as feeders (water supply) for the Barge Canal.

## Roads

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, roads throughout New York State had seen little improvement since the close of the Civil War as resources were directed toward development of faster and more efficient railroads and to a diminishing degree, canals. Indeed no major technological changes had been implemented on a large scale since the plank road "craze" of the late 1840s. Outside of cities and villages, most roads were unimproved (without a hard surface) and were often in poor condition. Maintenance was generally the responsibility of local commissioners with limited financial means to improve long stretches of rural roads that were mainly used by local farm vehicles. By the 1880s and 1890s, however, the growing popularity of the bicycle, which led to an increased use of rural roads, initiated a movement for improved roads. Farmers soon joined this movement because they began to see improved roads as an alternative means of transportation to railroads, which had been a target of farm discontent during the period. In 1892, the National League for Good Roads was founded, and the following year, the federal Department of Agriculture made roads one of its official concerns. The growing popularity of the automobile beginning in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century added another constituency supporting the call for improved roads, one that would quickly grow to dominate the movement.<sup>3</sup>

With increasing demand for improved roads and particularly farm-to-market roads, New York State began to take action beginning in the 1890s. Following New Jersey's legislation enacted in 1891, New York passed legislation in 1898 that for the first time provided State aid for county and town highways. This aid was for maintenance or new construction, and usually involved surfacing either in concrete or bituminous macadam pavement. In 1901, Oneida County produced a plan of their highway improvement plan, which designated the road on the north side of the Mohawk River as the main highway to Rome [Figure 4.2, following page]. By 1915, the State had expended approximately \$97,000,000 on road improvement from two bond acts totaling \$100,000,000, providing the State with the most extensive improved road system in the country. In 1918, federal aid for road improvement was instituted, giving further momentum to the increase in road construction across the state.<sup>4</sup> Much of this increase in road building was in response to the sharp rise in automobile ownership beginning in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1915, there

---

<sup>1</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 563.

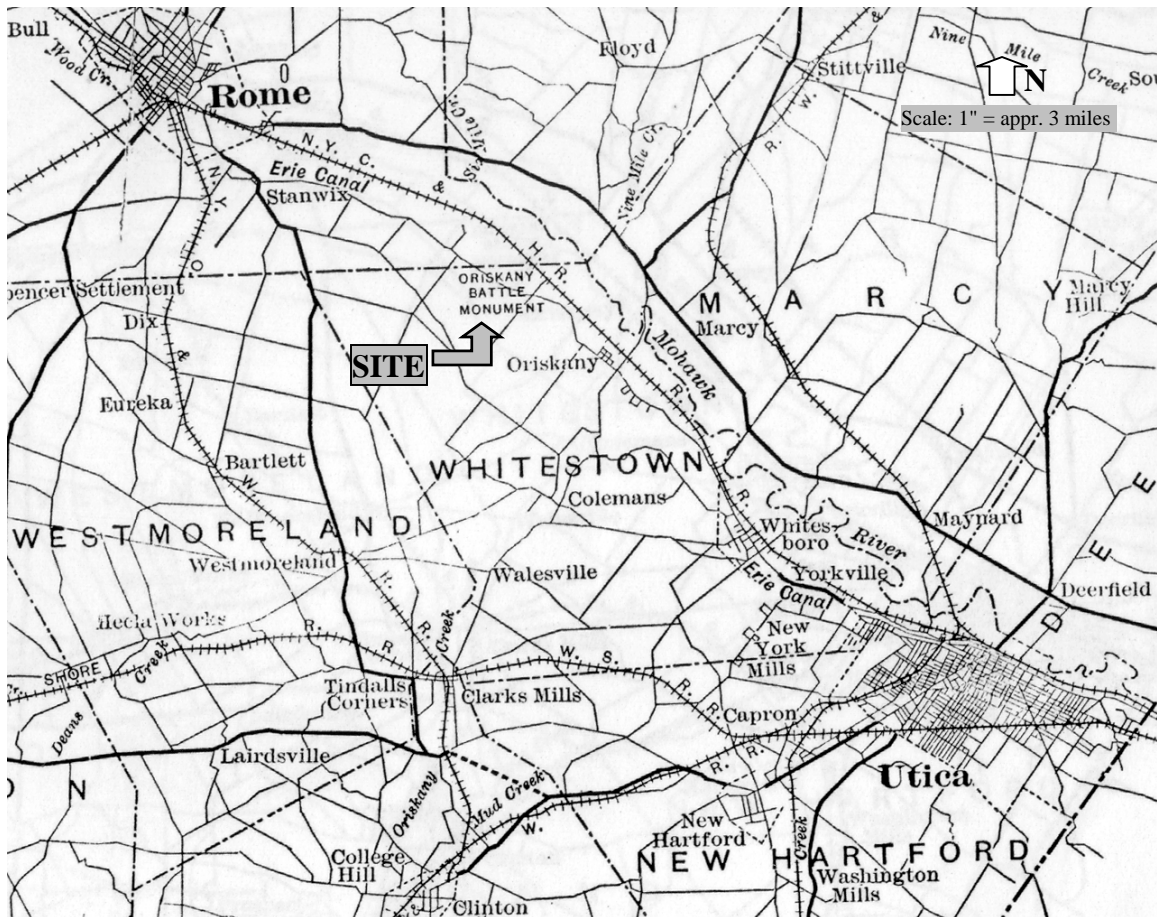
<sup>2</sup> Roy G. Finch, *The Story of the New York State Canals* (Albany: Office of the State Engineer and Surveyor, c.1925), 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> John Rae, *The Road and the Car in American Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 31, 36.

<sup>4</sup> James Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief, *History of New York State 1523-1927* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1927), vol. V, 2217-2224

were 255,000 motor vehicle registrations in New York State; by 1925, this number had jumped to 1,626,000.<sup>5</sup>

In the upper Mohawk Valley region, the State improved the old Mohawk Turnpike on the north side of the river between Schenectady and Utica in 1922 as part of the larger New York-Buffalo Highway, designated as NY 5. A parallel highway on the south side of the Mohawk, designated as NY 5 S, had been improved west to Oriskany, but had not been extended to Rome. At this time, the State was also considering turning the old Erie Canal from Schenectady to Buffalo, which passed adjacent to the Site and through Rome, into an improved highway.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 4.2:** Detail, "Highway Map of Oneida County Showing 'Highways that public interest demand the improvement of,' 1901, showing major route between Utica and Rome on north side of Mohawk River. Published as a supplement to the *Utica Daily Press*, Rome Historical Society, map drawer C21, file 4.

### Railroads

In contrast to the public canals, private railroad companies in New York State gained in size and power during this historic period. The main lines across the state enlarged their embankments and added additional tracks during this period. In 1900, the New York Central widened its embankment to 60 feet, and maintained six tracks along its right-of-way through the Mohawk Valley.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 553.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: Nelson Greene, 1924), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Chamberlain, *Mohawk River Floodplain, Oneida County, New York: An Ecological Interpretation* (Utica: Oneida County Department of Planning, February 1974), 4.

In addition to the railroads, a new type of rail service began to appear by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: the small-gauge electric railway. First begun in the 1880s, the electric railway became widespread in cities across the state by 1900, replacing the horse-drawn streetcar. The big rail companies at first saw no real competition, but during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the electric railways were extended to connect adjoining suburbs and cities, creating stiff competition in regional passenger service. The electric railways, also called trolleys or interurban railways, typically offered greater convenience, comfort, and frequency than the big railroads. By 1910, over 4,000 miles of electric railway had been built by 100 companies, many following the rights-of-way of the railroads. Most cities in densely populated regions of the state were interconnected by electric railways, including Utica and Rome, whose railway crossed the Site. By World War I, the interurban electric railway system of the state had reached its height and soon began to decline due to competition from the automobile.<sup>8</sup>

### **Agriculture**

The expansion of farming in the Middle and Far West during this historic period, along with improvements in rapid transportation, continued competitive pressures on farmers in New York State that had begun earlier in the century. This competition was largely responsible for the transformation of the typical New York farm by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from a general agriculture of mixed crops, to a specialized, mass-produced agriculture of only a few crops. Specialization during this period was also advanced through improvements in technology, which allowed for displacement of men by horses with the mower, reaper, thrasher, and later, the internal combustion engine. Advances in education and greater application of scientific principles also became important forces in agriculture during this period.

Dairy, fruit, truck (vegetable) and poultry farming became dominant types of specialized agriculture in the state by 1900. Dairy, however, developed into the state's most important agricultural enterprise in every county outside of Long Island and New York City. Technological advances, such as the widespread introduction of silos around this time, allowed for year-round production of milk.<sup>9</sup> Good grazing lands, proximity of large markets, ample agricultural infrastructure, and extensive transportation facilities gave New York an advantage in the dairy industry, in which it ranked first across the country in the production of milk and cream for fluid use by the 1920s. Despite the successes of the dairy industry, agriculture as a whole during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century began to slowly decline across the state, with persistent loss in total farmland and number of farms. New York farmers still often faced stiff competition from farmers in other parts of the country where more expansive terrain or better climate and soils were available. Between 1910 and 1925, for example, the area of the state in farms declined from 22,030,367 to 19,269,926 acres.<sup>10</sup>

In Oneida County, agriculture reached a peak during this historic period. Despite competition from western farms, the total farm acreage in the county increased markedly between 1880 and 1910, contrary to state trends and probably due to the county's strong dairy industry. In 1880, 72 per cent of the total area of the county was improved farmland, constituting about 541,628 acres; by 1910, these figures had jumped to 86.3 per cent or 690,431 acres. Oneida County ranked first in the production of dairy products among New York counties by 1900, and remained in the top six counties through the remainder of this historic period.<sup>11</sup> Beginning around 1890, farmers in the county began to ship their milk to the New York City market, and by 1915, that market was receiving the bulk of the county's milk. The increase in dairy production in the county coincided with an increase in farmland devoted to pasture. Between 1900 and 1915, for example, the amount of pasture in clover increased by 200 per cent, while the area in alfalfa rose 850 per cent. Many dairy farmers during this period also grew vegetables for the county's important canning industry.<sup>12</sup> While dairy dominated agriculture during this period, muck-land crops such as celery and onions also became

---

<sup>8</sup> Ellis et al., *A Short History of New York State*, 550.

<sup>9</sup> There is no record of the Ringrose farm on the Site ever having a silo.

<sup>10</sup> Sullivan, *History of New York State* (1927), vol. V, 2292-2295.

<sup>11</sup> Crisafulli, "Agriculture," in Virginia Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County* (Utica: Published by the County, 1977), 104.

<sup>12</sup> Randy Brouillette, "The History of Oneida County Agriculture," Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, on-line paper at [www.cce.cornell.edu](http://www.cce.cornell.edu), 1.



important and were well-suited to cultivation in the lowlands typical of the Mohawk Valley and Oneida Lake areas. The river flats between Utica and Rome were in fact the most valuable agricultural lands in the county during this period, averaging over \$175 an acre in 1915, compared with the county-wide average of \$22.77 an acre.<sup>13</sup>

### **Regional Development**

During this historic period, Oneida County, like the rest of the state, experienced a rapid growth in population and urbanization. Most growth in the county was occurring in compact industrial villages and cities of the Mohawk Valley, while rural areas began to decline with changes in the agricultural economy. Rural population density in New York State reached a peak in 1880.<sup>14</sup> The Town of Whitestown, which included a large part of the Site, rose from a population of 4,368 in 1875 to 10,183 in 1920. Much of this growth, however, likely occurred in the two villages within the town, Oriskany and Whitestown.<sup>15</sup> The extension of the electric trolley from Utica in the 1890s provided an impetus to the town's suburban development and the growth of small villages such as Oriskany.

Utica continued to develop during this period as the major urban center in the upper Mohawk Valley based on service, transportation, and textile industries. From a population of 32,496 in 1875, the city nearly tripled in size to 94,156 in 1920. Rome also prospered during this period as it developed industries based on copper and brass manufacture beginning in the 1870s. The population of the city (which included the Village of Rome and the entire surrounding 73-square mile Town of Rome) rose from 12,251 in 1875 to 26,341 in 1920.<sup>16</sup>

### **Commemoration**

#### **Historic Background**

The years after the Civil War and into the national centennial of 1876 witnessed the creation of many historical societies and monument associations along the Atlantic seaboard whose focus was commemoration and marking of sites associated with the Revolution and the nation's founding. Federal and State governments also became increasingly involved in commemoration during this period. Such forces brought about a new era for the Oriskany Battlefield, one that closely followed similar developments at the two other battlefields in New York associated with the Burgoyne Campaign: Bennington and Saratoga.

The effects of the Civil War spurred renewed interest in the sacrifices made in prior wars. As this interest grew, so too did interest in the nation's colonial and Revolutionary history on the eve of the national centennial. The national centennial heightened consciousness at all levels of American society in the country's past, notably through the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, which was the country's largest exhibition of the arts, manufactures and products to date and one of the first to focus on the nation's colonial history.

By the time of the nation's centennial, American society had changed in ways that lent more support for commemorating historic sites than had existed in the decades prior to the Civil War. As the nation matured and grew in power and prestige, and as its population became ever larger and more heterogeneous, many supported the development of a strong and unified sense of national identity founded on a common culture. Many also sought to develop the American culture in a way that would compare favorably with Europe. While there was a growing movement that recognized America's natural resources as a foundation of its identity and culture through the establishment of national parks, the country's history was also beginning to be viewed as a vital component of the national identity and culture, particularly the valiant sacrifices made

---

<sup>13</sup> Maxon and Carr, *Soil Survey of Oneida County, New York* (Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, Government Printing Office, 1915), 8-10, 12.

<sup>14</sup> John H. Thompson, *Geography of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 179.

<sup>15</sup> Census data, Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 66.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

during the Revolution. The national centennial occurred at a time when great wealth was being amassed in burgeoning industrial cities of the Northeast, a condition that made possible financial support for commemorating historic sites.

Largely as a result of these social changes, over 50 new patriotic societies were founded in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many a direct product of the national centennial.<sup>17</sup> Permanently marking and commemorating significant events from the country's past became an important civic duty and a sign of patriotism and cultural unity. Such commemoration during this period focused primarily on military events and heroes, and largely on those of transcendent national historical importance.<sup>18</sup>

At the federal level, Congress began to take action during this period on commemorating the nation's early history and its more recent sacrifices during the Civil War. The federal government established a system of national cemeteries in 1867, one of the first of which was the Gettysburg National Cemetery in 1868. These cemeteries served not only as places of burial, but as places of commemoration to the larger battle marked by prominent monuments. Much in the same spirit, Congress during the years of the national centennial finally allocated funds that had been appropriated by the Continental Congress during the Revolution to erect monuments at important battlefields such as Yorktown, Bennington, Saratoga, and Oriskany, among others.<sup>19</sup>

Following the national centennial, the federal government began to expand its role in commemoration. Congress during these years considered many bills that would have provided federal assistance not only in marking battlefields, but in acquiring them as well, thereby moving beyond its earlier involvement in the establishment of national cemeteries.<sup>20</sup> In 1895, Congress authorized the establishment of four major military parks on Civil War battlefields, including Gettysburg. The following year, the Supreme Court ruled that acquisition of private property through eminent domain for purposes of historic preservation was a public use and one that was necessary for the welfare of the republic. The case in fact involved a battlefield, Gettysburg.<sup>21</sup> This federal action was based on previous private and State efforts to preserve battlefields, and in some instances was an outgrowth of the establishment of national cemeteries. In preserving the cultural landscapes of battlefields, Congress was in many ways applying the same concepts it was using at the time to conserve natural landscapes through the establishment of national parks, such as those at Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant established in the 1890s.<sup>22</sup> Federal involvement in battlefield preservation continued through the remainder of this historic period into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the national military parks were excluded from the National Park System, which was established in 1916.

The beginnings of New York State's involvement in historic preservation dates back to before the Civil War, when in 1850 it purchased the Hasbrouck House, George Washington's headquarters in Newburgh on the Hudson River and preserved it as the nation's first public house museum. Those who favored preservation of the property at this time reasoned:

If the love of country is excited when we read the biography of our Revolutionary heroes . . . how much more will the flame of patriotism burn in our bosoms when we tread the ground where was shed the blood of our fathers, or when we move among the scenes where were conceived and consummated their noble achievements.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ronald F Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973), 6.

<sup>18</sup> W. Brown Morton, "What Do We Preserve and Why?," *The American Mosaic / Preserving a Nation's Heritage* ed. Robert Stipe and Antoinette Lee (Washington: US/ICOMOS, 1987), 150.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the Military Park Idea*, 18, 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9. While none of the bills passed, the beginnings were established for a federal policy on historic preservation

<sup>21</sup> *United States v. Gettysburg Electric Railway Company*, 1896.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the Military Park Idea*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 1 (1976), 13, cited in Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 4.

It was not until the centennial years, however, that the State of New York took much concerted effort at preserving historic sites such as battlefields. New York concentrated its own centennial celebrations on the state's important Revolutionary War history. While most of the numerous celebrations across New York were privately organized and supported, the State lent support and published the proceedings of six major celebrations at Kingston, Oriskany, Bemus Heights (Saratoga), Old Fort Schoharie, Schuylerville (Saratoga), and Cherry Valley.<sup>24</sup> The State also allocated funds to assist in erecting monuments at these historic sites, such as a \$25,000 allocation made in 1880 for the Saratoga Monument, which was being built at the time by the private Saratoga Monument Association, and \$3,000 for the Oriskany Monument in 1882.<sup>25</sup>

Following its landmark action taken during the 1880s to establish the Adirondack Park, the State of New York became increasingly active in scenic and historic preservation. The State's efforts were in large part supplemented through the work of a quasi-public organization, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (A.S.H.P.S.), based in New York City. The Society, which was chartered by the State in 1895 as the Trustees of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects in New York State and reported annually to the Legislature, was formed to protect scenic and historic land across the state through acquisition and advocacy. From its beginning, the A.S.H.P.S. actively promoted the preservation of Revolutionary-period historic sites.<sup>26</sup>

In 1895, the State acquired the Saratoga Battle Monument and its surrounding two acres; in 1897, it acquired 35 acres encompassing the Stony Point Battlefield on the Hudson River; and between 1897 and 1900, it acquired 35 acres encompassing the Lake George Battlefield in Caldwell. These properties represented the State's earliest efforts at preserving Revolutionary battlefields and monuments, although the sites were managed by private organizations. In 1904, the State acquired Fort Brewerton on Oneida Lake, and in 1910, it acquired 25 acres containing the ruins of the fortifications at Crown Point on Lake Champlain. In 1913, around the time that a movement was begun to acquire and preserve lands encompassing the Oriskany battlefield, the State passed legislation to acquire 171 acres of the Bennington battlefield, 16 acres of the Newtown battlefield near Elmira, and 150 acres of the Herkimer Home near Little Falls, each to be "preserved for the benefit of the people of the State of New York as an historic landmark and for educational and patriotic purposes." By 1918, the State of New York owned 37 reservations of scenic and historic significance, six of which were under the custody of the A.S.H.P.S.<sup>27</sup>

Private societies also were increasingly active in historic preservation by the turn of the century and into the second and third decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1890, the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) was chartered as a patriotic organization for women with ancestors who fought in the Revolution. Activities of the D.A.R. focused on preserving and marking sites associated with the Revolution. In April 1911, the Oriskany Chapter of the D.A.R. was founded. By 1923, the Oriskany Chapter had 28 members.<sup>28</sup> In New York City, the Sons of Oriskany was also founded around this time for similar purposes. Another important private organization of the period was the New York State Historical Association, chartered in 1899, which maintained custody after 1913 over the State-owned reservations of Bennington Battlefield and Crown Point, among others.<sup>29</sup> Other groups were formed specifically for acquisition and preservation of battlefields and other historic sites, such as the Saratoga Battlefield Association, formed in 1923.<sup>30</sup>

Many historic and patriotic groups were founded in response to growing automobile tourism. An umbrella organization with a focus on tourism and regional promotion was the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, founded in 1920 by a large number of historic and patriotic societies from Albany to Rome. Included

---

<sup>24</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91.

<sup>25</sup> *History of the Saratoga Monument Association*, 106; S. North, "The Story of a Monument," *Magazine of American History*, vol XII, no. 2 (August 1884), 101.

<sup>26</sup> American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, *18<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*, 1913, 222, New York Public Library.

<sup>27</sup> American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, *Annual Report of 1918*, 63-68.

<sup>28</sup> Florence Skidmore Brown Menges and Mrs. Charles White Nash, *History of the New York State Conference Daughters of the American Revolution* (Published by the Daughters, c.1923), 347.

<sup>29</sup> American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, *Annual Report of 1918*, 196.

<sup>30</sup> National Park Service, "History of the [Saratoga National Historical] Park," on-line paper [www.nps.gov/sara/s-prkhst.htm](http://www.nps.gov/sara/s-prkhst.htm), n.d., 1.

among these societies were the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., Herkimer Home Commission, U.S. Daughters 1812, Utica Colony New England Women, and the Little Falls, Fulton County, and Schenectady Automobile Clubs, among many others. Over 500 delegates from these societies met at the Herkimer Home in August 1920 to launch the organization. The Mohawk Valley Historic Association's articles of incorporation stated it was founded for:

. . . historical and literary purposes, and to provide accurate and reliable historic information for map makers, road users, and all visitors of the Mohawk Valley . . . the preservation and maintenance of all historic places and records; to cooperate with all patriotic and historic organizations in the erection of markers and monuments . . . to collect, preserve and publish the history and historical records . . . and all other articles which may establish or illustrate such history as growth and progress of population, wealth, education, agriculture, arts . . . to the end that the Mohawk Valley may be revered and her people made conscious of her priceless historic treasures.<sup>31</sup>

The inclusion of automobile clubs in the Association's roster reflected the importance of automobile tourism in its mission. In 1924, the Association published an automobile-oriented tourist guide of the valley, in which it was noted,

. . . it is to the advantage of the people of the valley to make their homeland as attractive as possible to the tourist. Automobile camps, countryside inns, boating and bathing places, public golf links and playgrounds are features worthy of consideration in an age that counts the Turnpike motor car tourists of a season by the hundreds of thousands. . . . all historic sites should be marked by signboards or artistic permanent memorials and guide boards placed to give full information on all Turnpike subjects for the benefit of motorists.<sup>32</sup>

Private associations such as the Mohawk Valley Historic Association and the D.A.R. did not work alone in their efforts to preserve historic sites, but in many cases cooperated with local, state, and even national governments to achieve their goals.

### Design of Commemorative Landscapes

During the Centennial years at the beginning of this historic period, the design of commemorative landscapes remained centered around erecting monuments within small parks. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this type of commemoration constituted the most popular form of historic preservation, which was more about preserving and perpetuating memory than it was about preserving land and other physical features. In 1884, for example, the Congressional House Committee on the Library recommended federal aid in preserving Revolutionary battlefields. The Committee clearly articulated the importance of erecting monuments:

The scenes enacted at these spots changed the world's history from Yorktown to this day. The nation, brought into being by the enactment of these scenes, cannot afford to neglect the memory of those who enacted them; nor fail to mark the places of their enactment.<sup>33</sup>

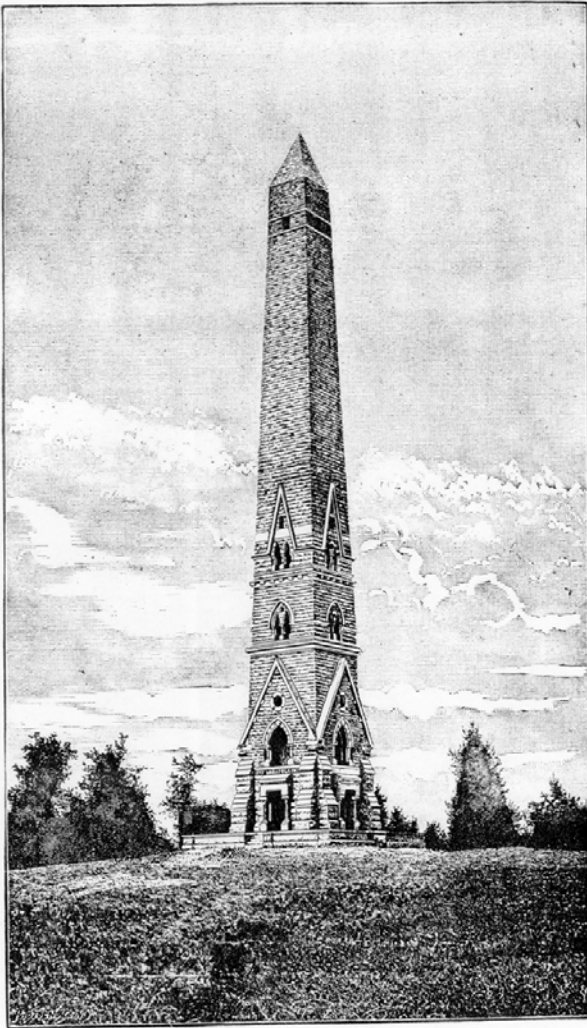
The design of monuments and the small parks on which they often stood was derived during this period from a number of sources. The earliest battle monuments, such as those in Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill erected in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, likely remained as influential precedent. These early monuments were often placed in urban civic spaces, such as village greens and parks. All three were designed as obelisks, a form that was originally developed by the ancient Egyptians as symbols of sun worship at temple entrances. During the Renaissance, the obelisk found new popularity

---

<sup>31</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, "Articles of Incorporation, List of Officers and Executive Committee; Object of Association with Addresses and Letters of Explanation" (Published by the Association, c.1920).

<sup>32</sup> Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea*, 11.



SARATOGA MONUMENT.

"Monuments make, as well as mark, the civilization of a people."

**Figure 4.3:** The Saratoga Monument, begun in 1878. Reproduced from Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth, *Battles of Saratoga 1777* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891), 104.

Saunders in the 1860s was an early example of the lawn style. This rural cemetery featured a prominent central monument flanked by gravesites and ample open lawns. Saunders described his effect as "simple grandeur," and noted that "Grandeur . . . is closely allied to solemnity."<sup>36</sup> This cemetery also featured a perimeter stone wall, which served to set its sacred space apart from the surrounding landscape of the battlefield.

It was perhaps this idea of simple, solemn grandeur that guided many of the efforts to create commemorative landscapes on Revolutionary battlefields during the years of the national centennial,

as a monument marking important civic spaces. Sculptor Horatio Greenough, who assisted in the design of the Bunker Hill Monument, called the obelisk "the most purely monumental form of structure." In the context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century cemeteries, obelisks were popularly viewed as a link between graves and heavens.<sup>34</sup>

The use of funerary models to mark battlefields was a logical one, given that battle monuments were erected at least in part to commemorate the dead. Cemeteries were, in fact, a type of commemorative landscape and their development was not unrelated to the development of battlefields in the years following the national centennial. The design of cemeteries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century changed dramatically from typically small and crowded church graveyards to expansive, park-like rural cemeteries beginning in the 1830s. Rural cemeteries were designed according to naturalistic models and an overall pastoral image with curvilinear roads, vegetation planted in masses, directed views, and Romantic structures that evoked antiquity through the use of styles such as Classical, Egyptian, and Gothic. Most rural cemeteries featured very large and prominent monuments that served as focal points, with obelisks one of the most popular types.

After the Civil War, rural cemeteries remained popular, but a new landscape design, known as the "lawn style," began to appear. This style, which was first developed in the 1850s by landscape gardener Adolph Strauch, eliminated much of the clutter of earlier rural cemeteries and was characterized by large open spaces, broadly curving roads, more spacious arrangement of monuments, and wide vistas.<sup>35</sup> The Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, designed by William

<sup>34</sup>Kenneth Jackson and Camilo Jose Vergara, *Silent Cities* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> Blanch Linden-Ward, "Cemeteries," in *American Landscape Architecture* (Washington: The Preservation Press, 1989), 121-122.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Lee, "The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea," 17.

including the one at Oriskany. In New York State, several of these landscapes featured prominent monuments set within small parks with expansive views into the surrounding countryside. The most exuberant example of the period was the Saratoga Battle Monument, a 154-foot high obelisk with Egyptian and Gothic detailing set in a two-acre park overlooking the Hudson River, adjacent to a cemetery in Schuylerville off of the main battlefield [Figure 4.3, preceding page]. The foundation of the obelisk was laid by 1878 and the entire structure, including its rich interior furnishings, was completed by 1891.<sup>37</sup> A 306-foot obelisk of rusticated granite, with an interior and observation level, was dedicated in the same year on a small park in Bennington, Vermont to commemorate the Battle of Bennington in near-by Walloomscoick, New York. A much simpler obelisk was completed in 1879 on a one-acre plot at the Newtown Battlefield outside of Elmira. Although more of a grave marker and located within a family cemetery, a 50-foot obelisk of rusticated granite was built in 1896 in honor of Nicholas Herkimer, general at the Battle of Oriskany, at his home in the Mohawk Valley near Little Falls. These monuments were set in landscapes that permitted expansive views and were usually associated with simple drives and open lawns. All were roughly contemporary with the Oriskany Battle Monument, which was dedicated in 1884.

Soon after the centennial years, the design of commemorative landscapes began to shift away from an emphasis on singular monuments toward preservation of the battlefield and the marking of key battle locations. This necessarily broadened the scope of the commemorative landscape and required a different approach to design by expanding commemoration toward education and interpretation of battle events. One of the earliest and most extensive of such efforts was at Gettysburg, first undertaken by the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association beginning in 1864. Although the Association at first was concerned primarily with the cemetery, by 1887 the State of Pennsylvania had appropriated funds to allow the Association to purchase the first lands on the battlefield. By 1890, with the assistance of other states, the Association had acquired several hundred acres, opened 20 miles of road, and supervised the placement of nearly 300 markers. Treatment of the landscape focused on preservation or restoration<sup>38</sup> to the condition during the battle, and erecting markers and monuments along the public roads.

This treatment was applied to other Civil War battlefields as they came under federal ownership through the War Department, perhaps the most active of public entities during the period dealing with battlefield preservation. The number of national military parks grew rapidly, with bills to authorize over 23 new national military parks introduced between 1901 and 1904.<sup>39</sup> By this time, the federal government was instituting a new method of preserving battlefields, known as the Antietam Plan. In contrast to acquiring large tracts of land, as was done at Gettysburg and other battlefields, the Antietam plan called only for the acquisition of strips of land along the lines of battle (where the actual fighting took place) to allow construction of drives and monuments. Under this plan, the adjoining farmland would be left in private ownership and under cultivation to maintain battle-period conditions. The Antietam Plan remained central to battlefield preservation under management of national military parks by the War Department.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 4.4:** Marker on the Saratoga battlefield installed in 1883. Reproduced from Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth, *Battles of Saratoga 1777* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891), 104. The marker reads: "Saratoga 1777 / The Site of Bemus's Tavern."

<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth, *Battles of Saratoga 1777 / The Saratoga Monument Association 1856-1891* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891), 45, 53, 68.

<sup>38</sup> The term "restoration" was understood differently at this time than it presently is in the National Park Service. The word was used to refer to the practice of rehabilitating or repairing, with reference to conditions that may have been based on historical stereotype. Due to military science, battlefield restoration, however, was probably one of the few instances in which "restoration" in part meant a return to documented historic conditions, since the idea was to maintain strategic conditions present during the battle.

<sup>39</sup> Lee, *The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea*, 22, 38.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

In New York State, work at preserving and marking battlefields began around the same time as Gettysburg. In 1883, at a time when the Saratoga Battle Monument was still being constructed off of the battlefield, Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth organized the placement of seven granite tablets to mark key locations on the Saratoga battlefields, which were then private farmland [Figure 4.4, previous page]. The Saratoga Battle Monument Association published a "Guide to the Battle Ground" in 1891. It noted that a drive there from Saratoga Springs, "around and through all the interesting spots and back again, makes a drive of about twenty-four miles. Taken leisurely, it is a delightful day's expedition." The guide suggested visitors follow existing roads to see "relics," "an old graded road, made by Burgoyne," and roadside tablets which marked and described key events.<sup>41</sup> Except for the roads, this tour took visitors through or alongside private land, much of it active farms.

In a similar manner, in 1912, the march of General Herkimer and the Tryon County militia through the Mohawk Valley to Oriskany was marked through the placement of a chain of 14 granite monuments with bronze tablets. This effort was spearheaded by various chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution in the Mohawk Valley. The first marker was located at General Herkimer's home near Little Falls, and the last was located on the Oriskany battlefield memorial park. Others were located at the site of Herkimer's birthplace east of the village of Herkimer, the site of Fort Dayton in Herkimer, the site of Fort Schuyler in Utica, and at the site of Oriska in the village of Oriskany [Figure 4.5].



**Figure 4.5:** Herkimer's march monuments near site of Herkimer's birthplace, c.1912 (left) and at site of Fort Dayton in the village of Herkimer, c.1924 (right). Reproduced from Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 231, 222.

Despite these early efforts at battlefield preservation and landscape interpretation in New York State, there were apparently no plans developed for treatment of battlefields as historic sites, based on available documentation. Much of the Saratoga, Bennington, and Oriskany battlefields remained farmland that was only beginning to be acquired for preservation as historic sites by the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Walworth, *Battles of Saratoga 1777*, 125-126.

<sup>42</sup> No documentation has been found for this project on the treatment of battlefield lands in New York State aside from the immediate confines of the small memorial parks and primary monuments. Given that New York State had acquired the Stony Point, Lake George, and Bennington battlefields by 1913, however, it is likely that some concepts for the treatment of these landscapes had been developed.

## 2. SITE NARRATIVE

### Landscape Context

During this historic period, the region around the Site remained an active agricultural district. Toward the end of this period in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, farming began to decline and some land was reverting to forest. The Site remained within a major transportation corridor, but the area around the Site became less busy as the Erie Canal was abandoned and major automobile roads were built elsewhere.

### **The Road**

During this historic period, there were no known improvements made to the Road, in particular to the section between Oriskany and Rome that ran past the Site. It probably remained unchanged since the plank road had been abandoned in 1856. According to a 1901 map of Oneida County, the highway between Utica and Rome that ran on the north side of the Mohawk River was designated for improvement, while the Road, which was part of the larger south-shore turnpike, was not. This suggests that the north side highway was the primary route connecting the two cities.<sup>43</sup> By 1907, much of this north-shore route had been improved, and the south-shore route (the Road) was only designated for improvement.<sup>44</sup>

Plans for improvement of the Road continued through the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1917, the *Utica Daily Press* reported that there was a movement for Oneida County to build "good roads" on the approach to the battlefield.<sup>45</sup> This effort had been organized by the "Road Committee" of the Herkimer County Historical Society. In May, 1920, this society again called for organizations across the valley ". . . to unite in a patriotic and educational movement to speedily designate the public highway from Schenectady to Rome and nearby places of interest as the 'Mohawk Valley Historic Highway,' or some other suitable name." The Mohawk Valley Historic Association took the lead on this effort following its establishment in August 1920. In 1922, the Association passed a resolution that the eight miles of highway between Oriskany and Rome be improved, the section from Utica to Oriskany probably already having been reconstructed.<sup>46</sup> In the Association's 1924 tour guide, it was noted that planning was still underway for this improvement.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Erie Canal**

Traffic passing the Site on the Erie Canal reached a height in 1870 and declined during subsequent decades as railroads dominated passenger and freight service. As use of the Erie Canal declined, many of the buildings that lined it began to disappear, especially those that serviced canal traffic. The Erie Canal was maintained as a navigable waterway by the State up until about 1917, when the eastern section of the Erie Division of the Barge Canal between Rome and the Hudson River was completed.<sup>48</sup> The Barge Canal, which was begun in 1906, was built on the north side of the Mohawk River, approximately three-quarters of a mile north of the old canal and the northern boundary of the Site. Although the section of the old canal between Stanwix and Oriskany remained watered and under State ownership, navigation on this stretch was no longer possible once farm bridges were replaced with fill and culverts at some time after 1920.

---

<sup>43</sup> "Highway Map of Oneida County Showing 'Highways that public interest demand the improvement of,'--Under Chapt. 115 Laws of 1898," c.1901, Oneida County Map Room, Oneida County Office Building, Utica.

<sup>44</sup> *Road Map of Oneida County, New York 1907* (Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907).

<sup>45</sup> "Oriskany National Park," *Utica Daily Press*, 15 January 1917, copy in Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>46</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, *1925 Yearbook*, 70, 83-85

<sup>47</sup> Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 280.

<sup>48</sup> Finch, "The Story of the New York State Canals," 17.



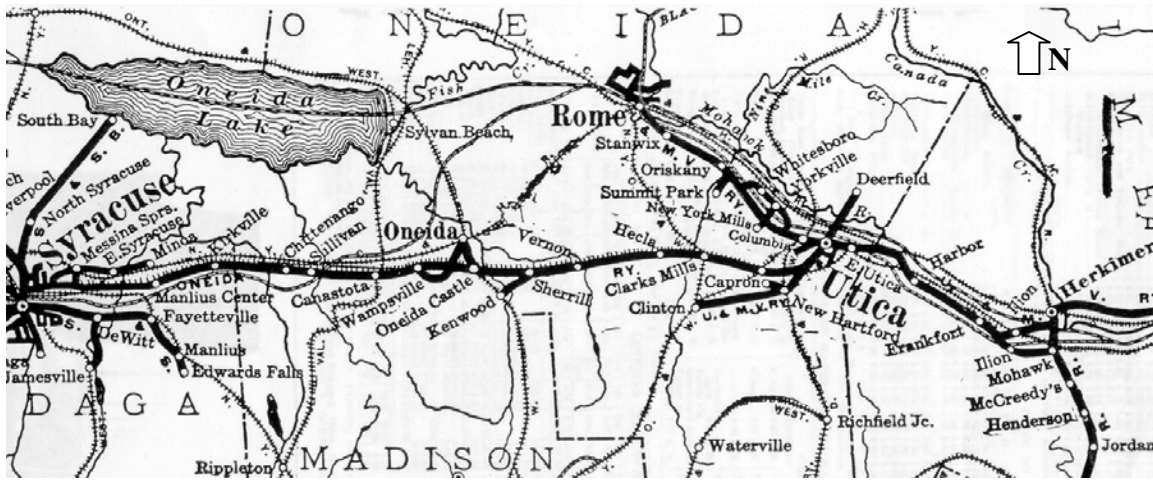
## Railroads

### *New York Central*

Throughout this historic period, the New York Central maintained its main trunk line across the state north of the Site on a raised embankment within the floodplain of the Mohawk River. This line continued to provide freight and passenger service.

### *Electric Railway*

On June 21, 1902, the Rome extension of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company opened between Oriskany and Rome, running through the Site. The Utica & Mohawk had its origins in the first electric trolleys in Utica, which began operation in 1890. By 1897, the railway had been extended to Oriskany and was also being extended to the east toward Herkimer, forming a regional interurban railway [Figure 4.6]. The line also linked with the Oneida Railroad (Utica to Syracuse) to the west. In 1910, the Utica & Mohawk Valley merged with Syracuse and Rochester systems to form the "New York State Railways Company." In the 1920s, ridership on the line began to decline as the automobile gained in popularity and as the State began to improve more and more highways.



**Figure 4.6:** Map of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway and connecting lines. Reproduced from a c.1910 timetable, "trolley" vertical file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

## Regional Development

During this historic period, the village of Oriskany continued as a small industrial center based on the manufacture of textiles and iron. The community also became more closely linked with the city of Utica, when in 1897 the electric railway was extended to Oriskany. The electric railway provided direct access to Oriskany's Summit Park, a popular regional recreational destination. In 1902, the electric railway was extended to Rome, giving Oriskany a direct link with the region's other major urban center. In 1914, Oriskany was chartered as a village, and in 1920, it had a population of 1,101.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the growth of Oriskany, development remained confined largely to within the village limits and had little physical impact on the landscape near the Site. The growth of Rome, more distant than Oriskany but larger in size, also had no physical impact on the landscape of the Site, despite that the Site lay partially within the Rome city limits. Stanwix, located approximately six miles west of the Site where the Road crossed the Erie Canal, developed as a small suburb of Rome during this period. Another settlement in the vicinity of the Site was the tiny hamlet of Floyd Corners, located about three miles due north of the Site on

<sup>49</sup> Greene, *The Old Mohawk Valley Turnpike Book*, 22.

the opposite side of the Mohawk Valley. Although not physically linked, Floyd Corners was visible from the uplands of the Site. As with many rural hamlets, Floyd Corners likely experienced a stable or declining population during this period.

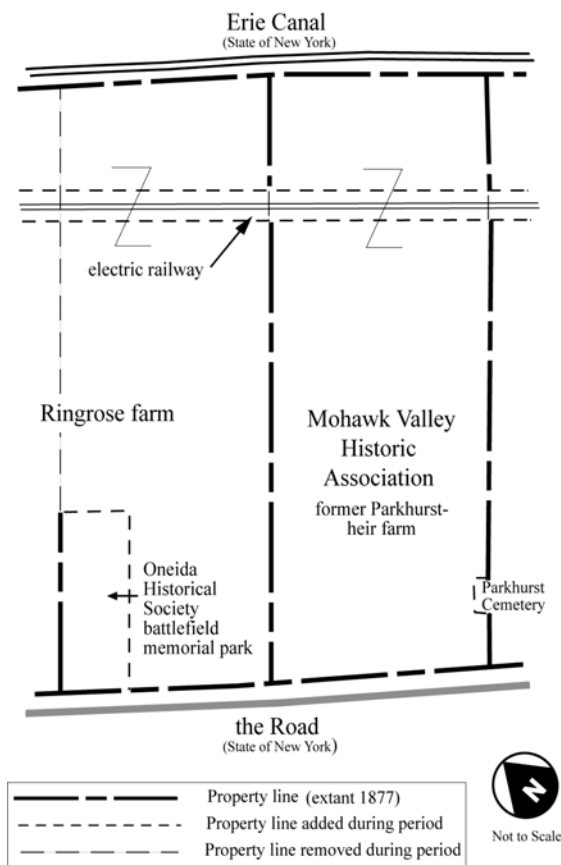
**Site Development & Use**

During this historic period, the landscape of the Site began to change as agriculture in part ceased, particularly on the Parkhurst-heir farm, and was replaced by natural systems, such as forests, and designed commemorative landscapes. The major events on the Site during this period included the centennial celebration of 1877, the acquisition of 4.87 acres (hereafter referred to as five acres) by the Oneida Historical Society in 1880 for a memorial park, the 1884 dedication of the Battle Monument, the dedication of the Herkimer's march monument in 1912, and the acquisition of the former Parkhurst-heir farm by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association in 1925.

**Site Ownership [Figure 4.7]**

At the beginning of this historic period in 1877, the approximately 38 acres of the west half of the Site was part of the larger farm of William Ringrose. In 1880, William and Kate Ringrose sold a five-acre parcel of their farm to the Oneida Historical Society for development of a memorial to the Battle of Oriskany.<sup>50</sup> In 1901, the Ringroses sold a 100-foot wide corridor running generally east-to-west through the northern third of their farm to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company.<sup>51</sup> After 1880 and prior to 1915, the Ringroses acquired approximately 50 acres to the west of the Site that was formerly was the Metcalf farm.<sup>52</sup>

Title to the approximately 50 acres of the east half of the Site was held by Susannah Lanfear, a Parkhurst heir, at the beginning of this historic period. In 1891, as part of the legal dedication of the Parkhurst Cemetery that straddled the eastern limits of her property, Susannah Lanfear deeded the portion of the cemetery on her property to George N. Parkhurst as trustee of the Parkhurst Cemetery Association. As part of this deed, Lanfear granted a right-of-way from the Road to the cemetery.<sup>53</sup> Susannah Lanfear died between 1893 and 1895 and left the 50-acre farm to her daughter, Sarah Lewis, who in 1901 sold a 100-foot wide corridor running generally east-to-west through the northern third



**Figure 4.7:** Site ownership and boundary changes, 1877-1926. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 400, 166.

<sup>51</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 562, 476. The deed lists the transfer to the Utica Suburban Railway Company.

<sup>52</sup> George Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915, Oneida County Historical Society MAP AR ORI.6.

<sup>53</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 490, 23, as repeated in Book 1472, 547. This right-of-way was an approximately 10-foot corridor that was centered on the property line between the Road and the cemetery, as recorded in New York State Department of Public Works, "Map of Land...to be Acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield...Mohawk Valley Historic Association Reputed Owner" (Utica: Department of Public Works, District No. 2, July 1952).

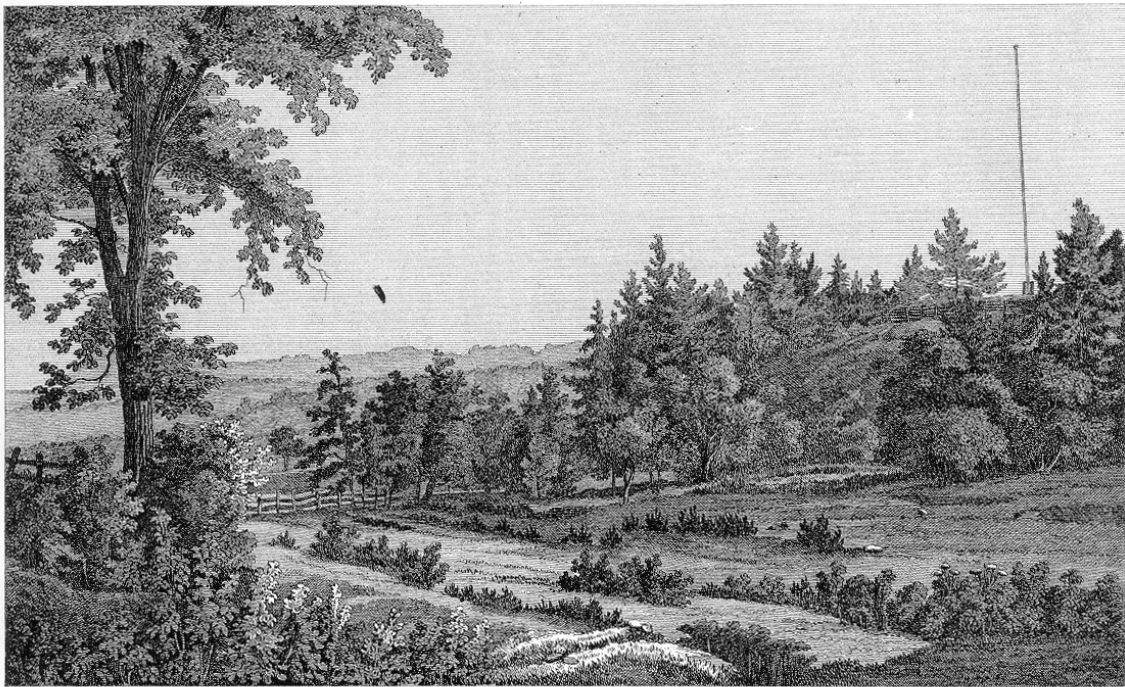
of the farm to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company. In 1913, Sarah Lewis died, leaving the property to her daughter, Catherine Lowery. In November 1925, Lowery conveyed the property to The First National Bank and Trust Company of Utica as trustee for the Mohawk Valley Historic Association.<sup>54</sup>

According to a canal survey made in 1869, the heirs of Augustus Van Cortlandt may have still held freehold title to the Ringrose and Parkhurst-heir property on the Site at the beginning of this historic period. No information has been found on exactly when freehold title was acquired. It likely occurred prior to 1880, when William and Kate Ringrose were listed as the sole grantors of the sale of 4.87 acres to the Oneida Historical Society. By this date, however, the property adjoining the west side of the Site was still under leasehold from George Clarke to W. L. Metcalf.

### Agriculture

At the beginning of this historic period, the Site consisted of the 50-acre farm of Susannah Parkhurst and David Lanfear and part of the 80-acre farm of William and Kate Ringrose.<sup>55</sup> An observer in 1877 spoke of the battlefield existing "where now orchards and rich meadows extend, and grain-fields are ripening for the harvest."<sup>56</sup>

The Ringrose farm occupied the west half of the Site, from the Road north to the Erie Canal, in addition to land south of the Road. The Ringrose family lived in the old tollgate house, which A. J. Kent had relocated



SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY, AT PRESENT DAY.

East Ravine

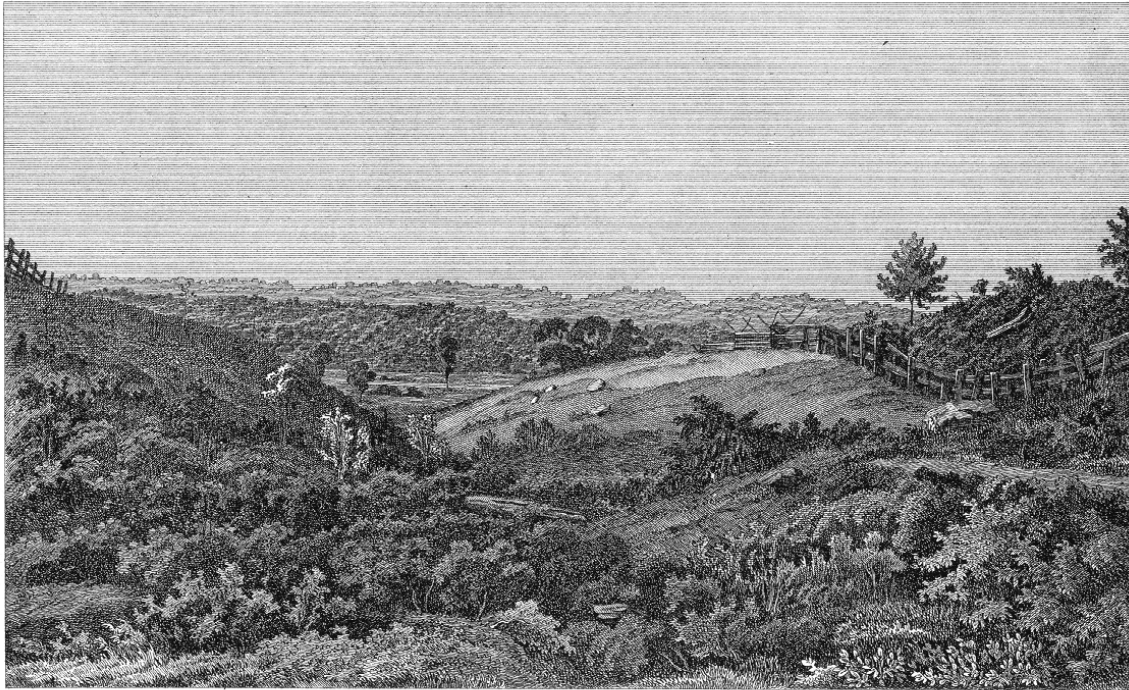
**Figure 4.8:** View northeast across the uplands of the Ringrose farm to the Battle Creek ravine, c.1879. Reproduced from Allen C. Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1879), 91

<sup>54</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Corey, 18 December 1952, Central Region MSS.

<sup>55</sup> *Kimball's Oneida County Directory* (Watertown: M. M. Kimball, 1878), 269. Listings: Lanfear, David 50 -- Oriskany; Ringrose, Wm 80 -- Oriskany.

<sup>56</sup> "Address of Hon. Ellis H. Roberts," *Memorial of the Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Oriskany* (Utica: Ellis H. Roberts & Co., 1878), 75.

to the south side of the Road during the 1850s. At the time of the centennial celebration in 1877, the Ringroses maintained one large barn on the north side of the Road in addition to a barn adjacent to the house.<sup>57</sup> The land immediately to the west was owned by George Clarke and leased by W. L. Metcalf.<sup>58</sup> To the east was the Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear), which was separated by the steep, wooded east side of the ravine. Alithograph of the battlefield published in 1879 illustrates that the Ringroses kept their uplands on the west side of the ravine as a series of linear pastures running perpendicularly to the road and divided by low hedgerows [Figure 4.8, preceding page.]. At the border between these upland pastures and the lowland was a three-rail fence that ran parallel to the road. The western edge of the Ringrose farm, bordering the Clarke-Metcalf property in Great Lot 5, was defined by another rail fence. The steep slopes adjoining this part of the Ringrose farm were shown in the lithograph to be covered in growth typical of old-field succession, which covered much of the west ravine on the Clarke-Metcalf property [Figure 4.9].<sup>59</sup>



SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY, AT PRESENT DAY.

West Ravine.

Lith. by Weed, Parsons & Co. Albany, N.Y.

**Figure 4.9:** View north through west ravine on Clarke-Metcalf farm; Rinrose farm (Site) to right of fence, c.1879. Reproduced from Allen C. Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1879), 127.

In 1884, at the time of the dedication of the Battle Monument, the lowland section of the Ringrose farm extending north from the monument to the Erie Canal was described as a "rough field," perhaps a dormant pasture.<sup>60</sup> In 1885, Ringrose built a new farmhouse on the south side of the road opposite the Oneida Historical Society property to replace the old tollgate house, which was probably demolished.

Little information has been found on the type of agriculture the Ringroses were practicing at the time of the centennial celebration and the building of the Battle Monument. The existence of hedgerows and pastures suggests the Ringroses kept livestock, probably dairy cattle. A photograph taken during the 1884

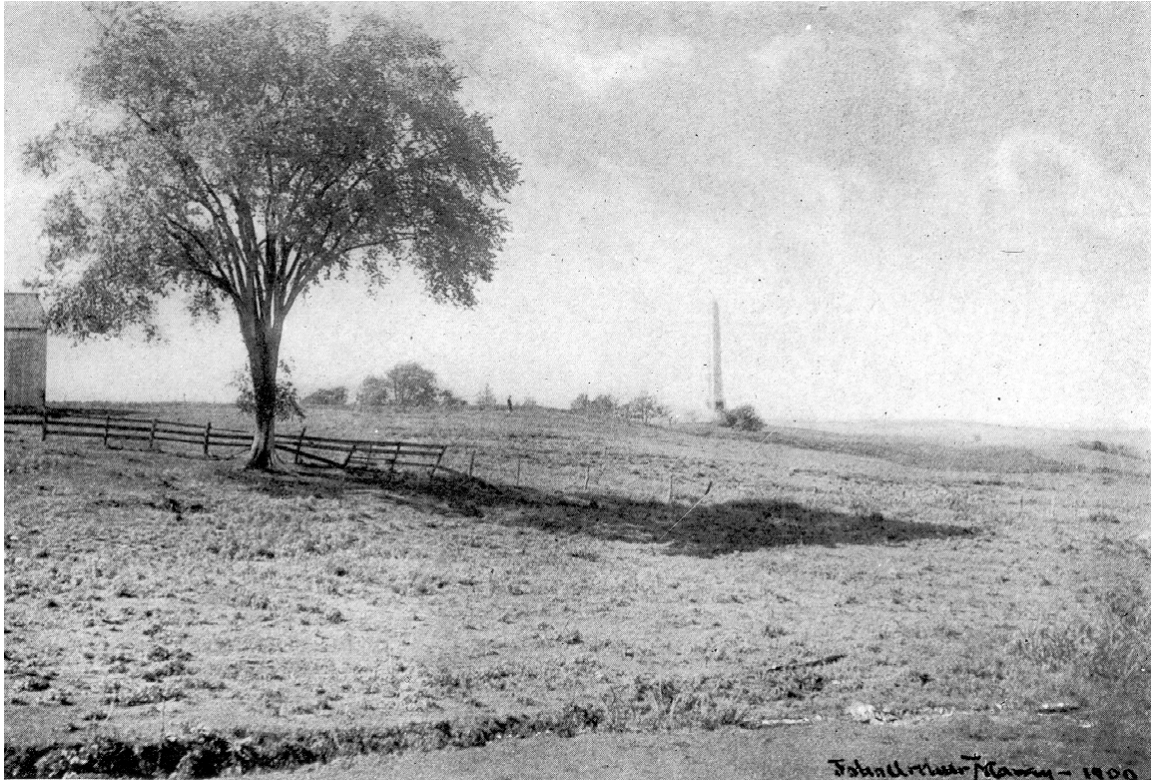
<sup>57</sup> "Oriskany. The Battle Ground -- Past and Present--The Coming Celebration," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

<sup>58</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 400, 166, recorded 13 January 1881.

<sup>59</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91, 127.

<sup>60</sup> "Dedication of Oriskany Monument" *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1884, 1.

dedication shows several apple trees near the monument that may have been remnants of an orchard [Figure 4.15, page 123].<sup>61</sup> An 1891 sketch of the monument documented the same pastures illustrated in 1879; by this time, however, the Ringroses had replaced the hedgerows with post and wire fences. By the turn of the century, well-grazed pasture occupied the uplands of the Ringrose farm, with a large Elm located between the barn complex and the creek [Figure 4.10].<sup>62</sup> One and possibly two barns had been built off of the original barn. By the 1910s, the formerly "rough pasture" extending north to the Erie Canal was a grazed pasture with the electric railway line running across it.<sup>63</sup>



**Figure 4.10:** View west across the uplands of the Ringrose farm from the Battle Creek ravine toward the Battle Monument, 1900. Reproduced from Max W. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1907), 437.

In 1910, William Ringrose was listed as a farmer who held title to his land and had a son, "Wm. Jr, Antel."<sup>64</sup> In 1917, he was listed as a dairy farmer and owner of 200 acres; 84 of his acres lay north of the road within the Site and adjoining land to the west formerly farmed by the Metcalf family.<sup>65</sup> If his dairy farm encompassed the entire 200 acres, then William Ringrose would have had a comparatively large dairy farm in Oneida County, where the average farm at the time was 100 acres.<sup>66</sup> By this date, he had added two smaller barns adjacent to the original large barn west of the ravine. No information has been found on

<sup>61</sup> "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument, August 6, 1884," in New York State Historical Association *Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 340.

<sup>62</sup> Max W. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley: Its Legends and Its History* (New York: Putnam's Sons / Knickerbocker Press, 1907), 437. This elm is identified as the "ravine elm" under the section, "Landscape Characteristics."

<sup>63</sup> Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County, New York from 1700 to the Present Time* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1912), 34.

<sup>64</sup> *Hewitt's Rural Directory of Oneida County, New York* (Fulton, New York: Clarence E. Hewitt, 1910), 157.

<sup>65</sup> *American Agriculturalist Farm Directory and Reference Book of Oneida County, New York 1917* (New York: Orange Judd, 1917); George H. Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," plan dated 1 December 1915, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

<sup>66</sup> Maxon and Carr, *Soil Survey of Oneida County*, 9.

when William senior died, but at some point during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, William junior took over the farm, although it remained listed as the estate of William Ringrose.

The east half of the Site followed a different development pattern than the west half during this historic period. At the time of the centennial celebration, the east half was the farm of Susannah Lanfear, a Parkhurst heir, and her husband, David. The Lanfears had a 50-acre farm and maintained a farmstead consisting of a house and barn on the uplands on the east side of Battle Creek ravine.<sup>67</sup> According to an 1877 interview with David Lanfear, he did not cultivate any portion of the farm, but rather maintained an



**Figure 4.11:** View east across Battle Creek ravine toward the Parkhurst-heir barns, c. 1900. Reproduced from Max W. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1907), 421.

apple orchard on the uplands adjacent to the farmstead and on the lowlands. Like William Ringrose, Lanfear also probably raised dairy cattle.<sup>68</sup> An 1877 lithograph [Figure 4.8, page 113] documents that the steep eastern slope of the ravine was heavily wooded, largely by conifers, probably hemlock.<sup>69</sup> Prior to 1907, the Parkhurst heirs built a second barn within the farmstead [Figure 4.11].<sup>70</sup>

David Lanfear died in 1888, and Susannah between 1893 and 1895. She left the 50-acre farm to her daughter, Sarah Lewis. Lewis and her husband apparently continued the farm, according to a c.1900 photograph of the east side of the ravine that shows grazed pasture, wire-and-post fencing, and two barns [Figure 4.11].<sup>71</sup> By 1910, however, the Lewises may have no longer been farming, since they were not listed in a rural directory of Oneida County.<sup>72</sup> Sarah Lewis died in 1913, leaving the property to her daughter, Catharine Lowery and her husband, Sam.<sup>73</sup> A 1915 map of the property illustrated that woods had grown back on a good portion of the lowlands, a 1917 directory did not list the Lowerys, and a c.1924 photograph of the ravine documented that only one of the barns was standing [Figure 4.18, page 128].<sup>74</sup> These conditions suggest that, counter to the country trend of growth in dairy farming, Catharine and Sam Lowery may have ceased farming. In 1925, Lowery sold the farm to the Mohawk Valley Historic Association.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle Of Oriskany," map, *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

<sup>68</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4; "Oriskany . The Battle Ground -- Past and Present--The Coming Celebration," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

<sup>69</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91.

<sup>70</sup> "Oriskany Battle-Field, East Side of Ravine," in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 421.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>72</sup> *Hewitt's Rural Directory of Oneida County, New York*, 157. William Ringrose is listed.

<sup>73</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Corey, 18 December 1952, Central Region MSS.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915; *American Agriculturalist Farm Directory-1917*; Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 280. A c.1931 aerial of the Site from the south [Central Region MSS, original in Oriskany Museum] illustrates that by this date, the lowland areas were in an advanced stage of old-field succession, suggesting that farming had ceased on this portion many years prior.

<sup>75</sup> The Association did not farm the property, but it may have leased portions of the uplands for use as pasture.

## Commemoration and Development of the Commemorative Landscape

### *The Centennial Celebration*

In June 1877, the newly-founded Oneida Historical Society at Utica began to plan a celebration to mark the centennial of the Battle of Oriskany, scheduled for Monday, August 6, 1877. This celebration was the first major project of the young society, which issued the following statement during their first organizational meeting for the event on June 8<sup>th</sup>:

One hundred years from August 6, 1777, there occurred, near the junction of the Oriskany and Mohawk streams, the most desperate and sanguinary, and one of the most important battles of the American Revolution. On that spot the whole military force of the Mohawk Valley, proceeding to the relief of besieged Fort Stanwix, encountered the invading army, and nearly one-half laid down their lives in defense of home and country. This conflict prevented the union of the invaders with Burgoyne, at the Hudson, and contributed to his surrender. . . . It is eminently proper, in this era of centennial celebrations of the Revolution, that this event should be suitably commemorated. The Battle of Oriskany is the prominent feature of revolutionary history in this section. It seems to devolve upon the Oneida Historical Society, as nearest to the locality, to take the initiative steps, and to invite the cooperation of other organizations and individuals, throughout the Mohawk Valley, in an appropriate and worthy celebration of this memorable conflict, upon its hundredth anniversary.<sup>76</sup>

Oriskany was to be the third of several major centennial celebrations in New York State. The first was held on May 8, 1877 in New York City to celebrate the adoption of the state constitution; the second, also to celebrate the constitution, was held on July 30<sup>th</sup> in Kingston. Sub-committees for the Oriskany celebration were formed to plan for invitations, a monument, military, firemen, grounds, transportation, and reporters, among others.

The Oriskany celebration was planned to take place on the battlefield, which local oral history had long, but not conclusively, identified as being on the farms then owned by the Ringrose and Parkhurst heirs. Representatives from across the Mohawk Valley as far away as Schenectady County helped plan the event and many towns went as far as to organize their own "Oriskany Centennial Celebration Committees." The event was intended not only to commemorate the Battle, but to increase its recognition throughout the Mohawk Valley, the state, and nation. As one member of the Oneida Historical Society remarked, the celebration was a chance "...whereby the rectitude of history may be vindicated, and the name of Oriskany be ranged alongside of those of Saratoga and Yorktown, as theatres of the most momentous events in the great revolutionary struggle of our grandsires..."<sup>77</sup>

Although maps dating back to the 1850s had identified the Ringrose and Lanfear (Parkhurst-heir) farms as being the location of the Battle, there had been little organized or permanent commemoration at the Site, except for a political rally held in 1844 and a flagstaff erected on the Ringrose farm. However, as the sixth of August, 1877 approached, the battlefield farms, with their pastures and scattered hedgerows extending south of the Road and north to the Erie Canal and New York Central Railroad, became alive with activity. Farmers whose fields would be used for the centennial celebration were purportedly very willing to cooperate with event organizers, even though many had to harvest their crops early in order to allow crowds onto the battlefield.<sup>78</sup> Activity at the Site began to develop in earnest during the weekend prior to the 6<sup>th</sup>. Six different villages of tents and booths, referred to as camps, were set up on the Ringrose, Lanfear, and G. W. Parkhurst farms [Figure 4.12, following page]. A great number of refreshment stands were also set up, as well as two main speakers' stands and a grand marshall's tent measuring 110 feet by 80 feet. By Sunday, there were already an estimated 5,000 people at the battlefield. The *Utica Daily Observer* reported,

<sup>76</sup> Oneida County Historical Society, *Memorial of the Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Oriskany*, 3-4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>78</sup> *Utica Daily Observer* 12 June 1877, 3.

The appearance of the grounds is much like that of one of the mushroom villages that spring up in the oil regions, or as one prominent German remarked yesterday, "It resembles Dannybrook Fair, but without the traditional shillelahs."<sup>79</sup>



**Figure 4.12:** Map of the Site during the centennial celebration, August 6, 1877. Drawn by Aston Brothers, reproduced from the *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

The celebration officially began at midnight on Monday, August 6<sup>th</sup> when Sherman's Band of New Hartford, which accompanied Young's Cavalry Corps, gave a "sacred concert" amid a "grand midnight illumination with Chinese lanterns and locomotive headlights."<sup>80</sup> Salute was fired and as the much-anticipated day dawned, great crowds of people began to descend on the Site, joining the many already there. They came by foot and carriage along the Road, by canal, and by railroad. The *Utica Daily Observer* advised visitors to take the fast canal steamers "Charles E. Crouse" and Jacob Amos Jr., which were making continuous trips to and from the Site, in order to "avoid the dust and inconvenience of the railroad."<sup>81</sup> The railroad, which had set up a temporary "battle ground station," captured much traffic, with its trains

<sup>79</sup> "Our Centennial," *Utica Daily Observer*, 6 August 1877, 1.

<sup>80</sup> "The Coming Centennial," *Utica Daily Observer*, 3 August 1877, 2.

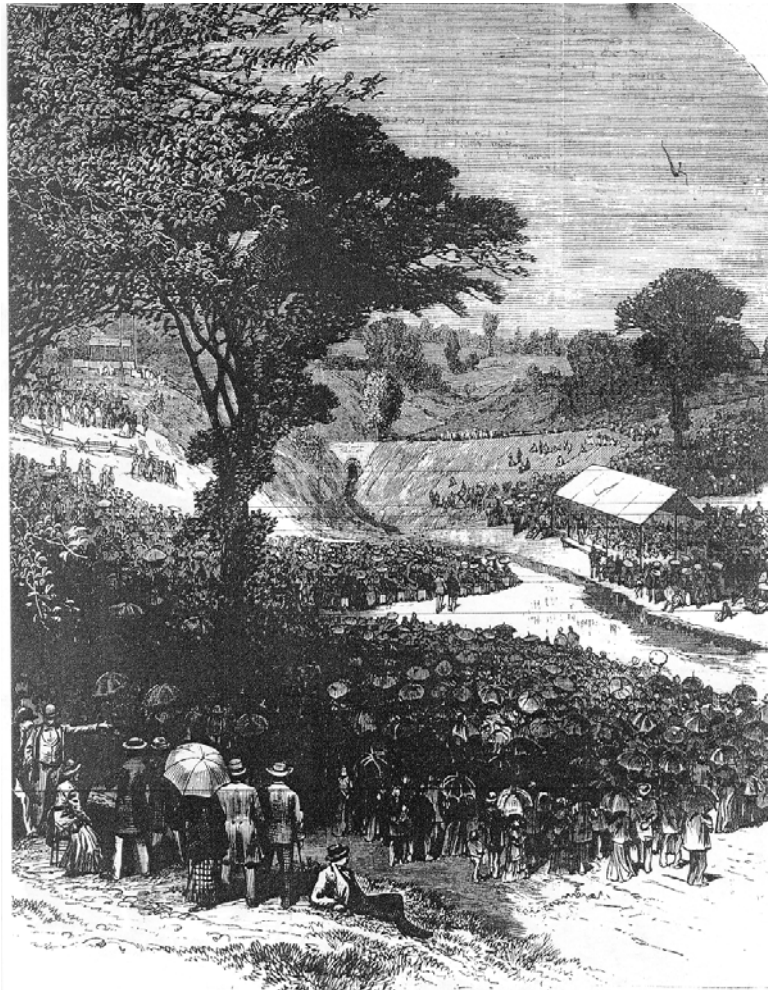
<sup>81</sup> *Utica Daily Observer*, 2 August 1877, 4.



purportedly full to capacity and people riding on the roofs and hanging off the sides.<sup>82</sup> The *Daily Observer* provided the following account of the celebration as it had progressed by early afternoon:

It was ushered in at the battlefield with booming of cannon, the flashing of a thousand lights, and the cheering of a great multitude. It is being appropriately celebrated by the largest demonstration known in the history of this section. Business is practically suspended in this city, as it is indeed throughout the valley. A crowd which defies numeration is on the sacred soil . . . Utica is today a deserted city. Every imaginable form of locomotion has been taxed to its utmost to convey the vast crowds from this city. . . . Over all the roads beading west, there has been continuous travel for the last nine hours, carryalls, hacks, private vehicles of every form, date, and description thronged the highways. The speedy little steamers and their larger and more significant sisters have puffed up and down between the canal banks, groaning beneath the unaccustomed weight of thousands.<sup>83</sup>

The beginning of the celebration was officially marked by the start of "The Grand Procession" from Oriskany village beginning at 11:10 a.m. Over 120 troops from across the Mohawk Valley marched in the procession, such as the Grand Army of the Republic, fire departments, bands and drum corps, village trustees, artilleries, the "Flag of Old Fort Stanwix in possession of Mrs. Abraham Lansing," "150 Carriages of Citizens," "Oneida Indians," "Veterans of 1812 in Carriages," and the "Column of Mechanics from Babbitt's Whitesboro Iron Works, Mounted," etc. Spectators lined both sides of the road for the roughly two-mile route to the battlefield. The Oneida Historical Society reported that the route provided ". . . a magnificent view of the grand panoramic beauty of the Mohawk Valley and the hills beyond, brilliant with emerald hues." As the procession passed the Battle Creek ravine, all of the troops honored the spot by dipping their flags. The head of the



**Figure 4.13:** View of the centennial celebration at the East Stand looking south through Battle Creek (east) ravine, August 6, 1877. Reproduced from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877, vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, front page.

<sup>82</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 65.

<sup>83</sup> *Utica Daily Observer*, 6 August 1877, 1.

procession reached the entrance to the battlefield, which was just west of the ravine, at 12:20 p.m., and led to the grand stand (West Stand) located in a natural amphitheater on the plateau west of the ravine on the Ringrose farm.<sup>84</sup> From this stand, there was a view over nearly the whole grounds.

The schedule of events began with literary exercises, starting with an address of welcome by former Governor Horatio Seymour and followed by "Afternoon Exercises" which were organized at two locations: the "West Stand" (grand stand) and the "East Stand" [Figure 4.13, preceding page]. At the East Stand, which was located on the west bank of Battle Creek on the western edge of the Parkhurst-heir farm, crowds tried to gather in the shade of the remnant forest that covered a portion of the east slope of the ravine, and under the large elm on the west side of the ravine. At each stand, patriotic letters, remarks, and speeches were read and given by many dignitaries on the significance of the battle, the role of the Mohawk Valley in the Revolution, and the significance of the battlefield.<sup>85</sup>

Two speeches stood out as re-evaluation of the folklore of the battle. Robert Ellis, who gave the longest speech of the celebration, provided the first scholarly account of the battle based on his thorough research into published histories, manuscripts, and British documents. Ellis was one of the first historians to highlight the important role that the Iroquois Confederacy (League of the Haudenosaunee) played in the battle, although he did not specifically mention the Oneidas' support of the Patriot cause. Ellis was also one of the first to view the landscape of the Site as an historic and interpretive feature when he proclaimed, "The ground tells the story of the fight. . . the forests are gone, and the Mohawk and the hills and the ravine and 'Battle Brook,' are the sole witnesses to confirm the traditions which have come down to us."<sup>86</sup>

The speech of Lieutenant Governor Dorsheimer was important for its reevaluation of the German-American contribution to the battle, which had also to date been given little weight in histories of the battle. Given at a time when the German states had recently been united into the German Empire, Dorsheimer told how the victory at Oriskany was the German-American contribution to American independence:

And this was a German fight. The words of warning and encouragement, the exclamations of passion and of pain, the shouts of battle and of victory, and the commands which the wounded Herkimer spake, and the prayers of the dying, were in the German language. I say you may well be proud of it, for it is the contribution which men of your race have made to the work of American independence.<sup>87</sup>

The Oriskany centennial celebration turned out to be the largest gathering ever held in Oneida County. The *New York Times*, which provided a front-page story on the celebration, estimated the crowd at between 40,000-60,000. The Oneida Historical Society estimated the crowd at between 60,000-75,000, later reporting:

Men, women and children, old and young, rich and poor--all classes went "on to Oriskany." The roads, lands, by-ways, hills, valleys, were black with people who were brown and begrimed with dust. There was no end to the stream of humanity until nearly dark, many visiting the grounds even at dark.<sup>88</sup>

Despite the discrepancy in numbers, the crowd was huge, especially given that the City of Utica only had a population of 33,000 at the time and Oneida County only had 115,000.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Oneida County Historical Society, *Memorial of the Centennial Celebration*, 7-14. The West Stand was near the later location of the Battle Monument.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> O'Donnell, "Oriskany, 1877: The Centennial and the Birth of Frederic's *In the Valley*," 154.

*The Oriskany Battlefield Memorial Park & Monument*

The centennial celebration brought momentum to plans for erecting a monument to the battle and General Herkimer. Securing the original Continental Congress appropriation for a monument to General Herkimer was the initial focus of these efforts and several speakers at the centennial celebration discussed the importance of this effort. A Judge Bacon called on Congress to provide the funds it had first allocated for a monument to General Herkimer in 1777, "...to erect upon this ground a column, which, if it shall not like that which on Bunker Hill . . . at least declare that . . . something was done which . . . shall not willingly suffer to perish from the memory of those who now inhabit this pleasant land, or the generations that are to follow."<sup>90</sup> All profits from the celebration were to go toward building a permanent battle memorial at the Site.

The interest that the celebration generated in a memorial soon translated into changes in the Site's landscape. The memorial effort was spearheaded by the Oneida Historical Society, with much of the work accredited to its president, former Governor Horatio Seymour and the General Herkimer Monument Committee formed on August 18, 1877.<sup>91</sup> The Society considered erecting historical markers and monuments among its most important work in preserving local history.<sup>92</sup> One of the first objectives of the Society was to secure the 1777 Continental Congress appropriation. Congressman William J. Bacon of Oneida introduced a bill in 1878 granting \$4,100 for the monument, an amount which was calculated by applying simple interest for 101 years on the original \$500 appropriation. Bacon's bill failed, but the next year, the new congressman from the Oneida district, Cyrus Prescott, reintroduced the bill and it was passed. During this time, the committee worked on securing private contributions, which amounted to several thousand dollars. Historian Jephtha Simms and the General Herkimer Monument Committee raised \$1,000 by securing \$1.00 from residents of the Mohawk Valley who had ancestors that fought in the battle. The Society also appealed to the State for aid, and in 1882, the Legislature appropriated \$3,000 for the monument. The Legislature also appropriated \$3,000 worth of stone from the Erie Canal weigh lock at Utica, which had been removed during the same year after the abolition of canal tolls.<sup>93</sup> The Society raised \$12,103.12 for the proposed monument.<sup>94</sup>

In 1880, four years prior to the completion of the project, the Society had purchased a small, five-acre parcel from the farm of William Ringrose for \$387 in a deed executed on December 31, 1880.<sup>95</sup> These five acres were to become a small park in which to place the proposed monument.<sup>96</sup> The parcel was selected by the Oneida Historical Society because it purportedly encompassed the heart of the battlefield where the fiercest fighting occurred, and because it included a prominent high point for the proposed monument at an elevation of 105 feet above the Erie Canal. This high ground provided a location for the monument that would not only overlook the Mohawk Valley, but the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad as

---

<sup>90</sup> Oneida Historical Society, *Memorial of the Centennial Celebration*, 56-57. Previous efforts to secure this funding referred to the "Herkimer Monument;" with its construction on the battlefield, however, it came to be known as the Oriskany Battle Monument. After construction of this monument, an effort was begun to construct a separate monument to General Herkimer. The committee for this monument considered removing Herkimer's grave to the battlefield in 1891, but due to local sentiment, instead concentrated on building a monument at his gravesite and home near Little Falls, which is today the Herkimer Home State Historic Site. A smaller obelisk was completed there at Herkimer's grave in 1896.

<sup>91</sup> S. North, "The Story of a Monument," *Magazine of American History*, vol. XII, no. 2 (August 1884), 101.

<sup>92</sup> Oneida Historical Society, *1903-1905 Yearbook* (Utica: Published by the Society, c.1906), x-xi.

<sup>93</sup> "The Story of a Monument," 101-102; *New York Times*, 23 December 1883, Central Region MSS.

<sup>94</sup> Oneida Historical Society, *Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society 1881-1884* (Utica: Published by the Society, c.1885), 223-225.

<sup>95</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 400, 166-167. The deed was entered into county records on January 13, 1881.

<sup>96</sup> The creation of a battle memorial on a small portion of the larger battlefield was a typical practice of the day, when historic preservation was more about erecting monuments and holding commemorative events than it was about physical preservation of the entire battlefield. Agriculture during this period was also at the heart of the region's economy, and removal of the battlefield lands from agricultural use was probably viewed as unnecessary and unproductive. The Ringroses may have agreed to sell a portion of their farm because they may have been in the process of acquiring additional farmland to the west, which they were documented as owning by 1915. Acquisition of the entire battlefield was not necessary given the open agricultural character of the landscape; the proposed monument could still make use of views across adjoining farms, which were under no threat of development.

well. As one period account noted, "Millions of American eyes will rest each year upon the monument which recalls the story of what it cost to keep the valley free."<sup>97</sup> The rectangular shape of the parcel was probably determined by the existing Ringrose pastures, the property line along the west ravine, and the presence of the Ringrose barn complex to the east.

The Oneida Historical Society contracted with the Mount Waldo Granite Works of Maine and the National Fine Art Foundry of New York for the design of the monument on July 4, 1882. Work on the proposed 84-foot high stone obelisk was approved by the Society on October 11, 1882 and began the following year under the general supervision of William Jones of Utica. Mr. Jones constructed the 13-foot deep foundation, and the Mount Waldo Granite Works built the granite pedestal. This latter firm also supervised construction of the monument's shaft under subcontract to Alexander Pirnie of Remsen, Oneida County.<sup>98</sup> The shaft was constructed of Onondaga limestone salvaged from the decommissioned Erie Canal weigh lock at Utica that was donated by the State of New York.<sup>99</sup>

By December 1883, the New York *Times* reported that the monument was nearly complete, except for installation of four large bronze panels being produced by Maurice J. Power of the National Fine Art Foundry, along with proposed fencing and grading. The bronze panels, which were ". . . calculated to give this monument rank as an artistic memorial work," according to the *Times*, were installed the following summer.<sup>100</sup> The first of these panels carried a commemorative inscription by Professor Edward North of Hamilton College and the second panel carried the roster of battle veterans. The remaining two panels were bas-relief sculptures designed by William Rudolf O'Donovan; the Society had selected his work over that of a Mr. Richards. One of the sculptures illustrated General Herkimer lying wounded under a tree, and the other was a scene of combat between a Patriot and an Indian over a dead Tory. These were installed by Robert Hughes of Utica over a period of 14 days in June, 1884. William Ringrose was paid \$12.83 for his assistance in setting the tablets.<sup>101</sup>



**Figure 4.14:** View northwest toward the Battle Monument entitled "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument Aug. 6, 1884." Reproduced from New York State Historical Association *Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 340.

The monument was fully completed in time for a dedication celebration held on August 6, 1884, to which an estimated 3,000-6,000 people came [Figure 4.14]. The ceremony exercises were held on the north or shady side of the monument, where a speaker's stand was erected. A German hymn sung by the Utica *Maennerchor* opened the ceremony, followed by a prayer and presentation address by John F. Seymour, chairman of the Committee on Monument. The Oneida Historical Society published the following description of the dedication ceremony and the new monument with its surrounding landscape:

<sup>97</sup> "The Story of a Monument," 102.

<sup>98</sup> New York *Times*, 23 December 1883, clipping in Central Region MSS. Pirnie (or Purniex) also built the Walter Scott monument in Edinburgh, Scotland, and the Baron Steuben monument in Oneida County (presently owned by OPRHP).

<sup>99</sup> New York *Times*, 23 December 1883; untitled article, Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1884, copy in Central Region MSS; Oriskany Battle Monument manuscript collection, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

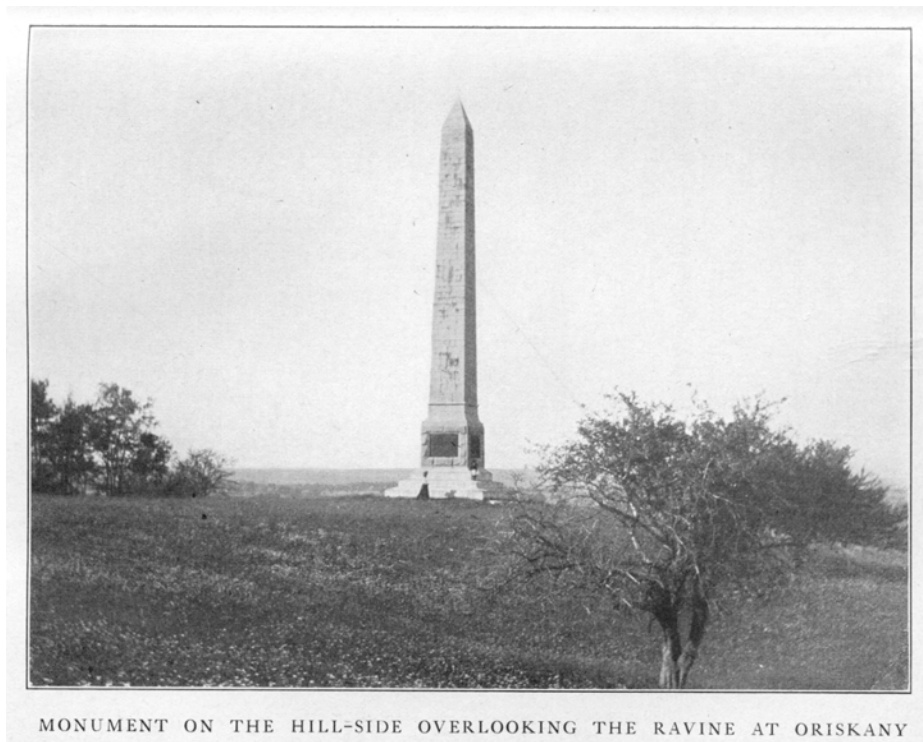
<sup>100</sup> New York *Times*, 23 December 1883.

<sup>101</sup> Oriskany Battle Monument manuscript collection, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

They came in cars, in canal steamboats, carryalls, hacks, carriages, and wagons. . . . The fences surrounding the fields in the neighborhood of the monument, were lined with vehicles of every description. As the sun shone brightly, every tree and bush was surrounded by a group eager to enjoy the shade. . . [The monument] stands on a hill naturally terraced, which commands a most beautiful view of the Mohawk valley for ten or fifteen miles east and west, and nearly as many miles north. Directly opposite the monument is the little village of Floyd Corners, and the white spire of its church gleams from among the trees. . . . In the foreground, the boats on the canal, the numerous trains passing on the Central road [railroad], and the long line of visitors trudging their way up the hill from the boats and cars, formed a scene of animation. The green hills on the opposite side of the valley, thickly sprinkled with shady groves, and studded here and there with the white of farm houses and the red of farm barns, formed a fitting back ground to this scene of life. The blue hills on the extreme right and left completed the picture. From the railroad or canal where many of the visitors landed, the picture was scarcely less grand. On the top of the hill 100 feet high, rises the massive monument, its tall obelisk piercing the sky.<sup>102</sup>

#### *Post-Battle Monument Development of the Memorial Park*

Following the dedication of the Battle Monument in 1884, there were few improvements made to the five-acre memorial park. A fence had been specified to be built around the monument, but was not part of the initial improvements.<sup>103</sup> A conspicuous gateway to the park was planned. By January of 1885, the Oneida Historical Society had purchased a set of limestone entry piers with iron picket gates and was storing them



**Figure 4.15:** View north toward the Battle Monument, c.1900. Reproduced from Francis Whiting Halsey, *The Old New York Frontier* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, 197).

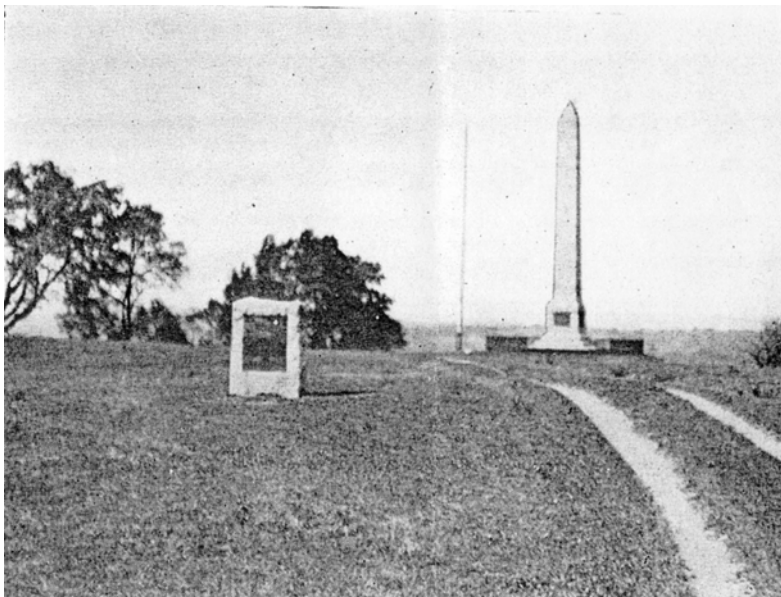
<sup>102</sup> *Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society 1881-1884*, 191-192.

<sup>103</sup> "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument Aug. 6, 1884," published in Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1912), 34.

in the Ringrose barn until construction could proceed in the spring.<sup>104</sup> The gateway was installed at the Road at the southeast corner of the park, probably where access to the monument had already been established. This access was probably provided by an unimproved drive consisting of two tracks in the open meadow.<sup>105</sup> Into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the memorial park remained largely undifferentiated from the surrounding agricultural fields [Figure 4.15, previous page].

It was likely not until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that any further changes were made to the landscape of the memorial park. An iron picket fence around the monument was installed between 1900 and c.1912.<sup>106</sup> On June 14, 1912, a small granite monument was dedicated in the memorial park. This was the last in a chain of 14 marking the line of march of General Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia from Herkimer's home near Little Falls to Oriskany. Mrs. Delight R. Keller, Chairman of the Committee of the New York State D.A.R. for the Preservation of Historic Sites, had introduced this effort at the national society D.A.R. meeting in Washington, D.C. in April 1911, and the project was subsequently completed by several D.A.R. chapters throughout the Mohawk Valley. Mr. W. Pierrepont White of Utica undertook the research to document the route followed by Herkimer. All of the markers featured bronze tablets with a uniform relief map showing the route of Herkimer's march and were placed either on boulders or rough-hewn granite blocks.<sup>107</sup>

This Oriskany marker was given jointly by the Oriskany Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of Oriskany, based in New York City. The rusticated granite marker was set on the west side



**Figure 4.16:** View north toward Herkimer's march monument with unimproved drive at the right and Battle Monument and flagstaff to the rear, c.1926. Reproduced from John Albert Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany* (Rome: Rome Sentinel Company, 1927), 223.

of the unimproved drive about halfway to the Battle Monument where it was believed General Herkimer sat and directed the battle [Figure 4.16; Figure 4.5, page 109]. All of the markers were dedicated as a part of a pageant that followed the route and reached the Oriskany Battlefield at dusk. The Oriskany marker was unveiled by the chapter regent, Mrs. Laura Mayhew Meyer in ceremonies attended by Thomas F. Conway, Lieutenant Governor of New York.<sup>108</sup>

It may have been at this same time in 1912 that a tall flagstaff was erected by the German-American National Alliance of New York State off the northwest corner of the Battle Monument [Figure

<sup>104</sup> Imperial Fire Insurance Company policy, 2 January 1885, Oriskany Battle Monument file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

<sup>105</sup> A portion of the drive is shown in a c.1913-1926 photograph in John Albert Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany*, 223. The road appears to follow the same alignment as the existing (2000) drive, but likely did not include a loop around the monument.

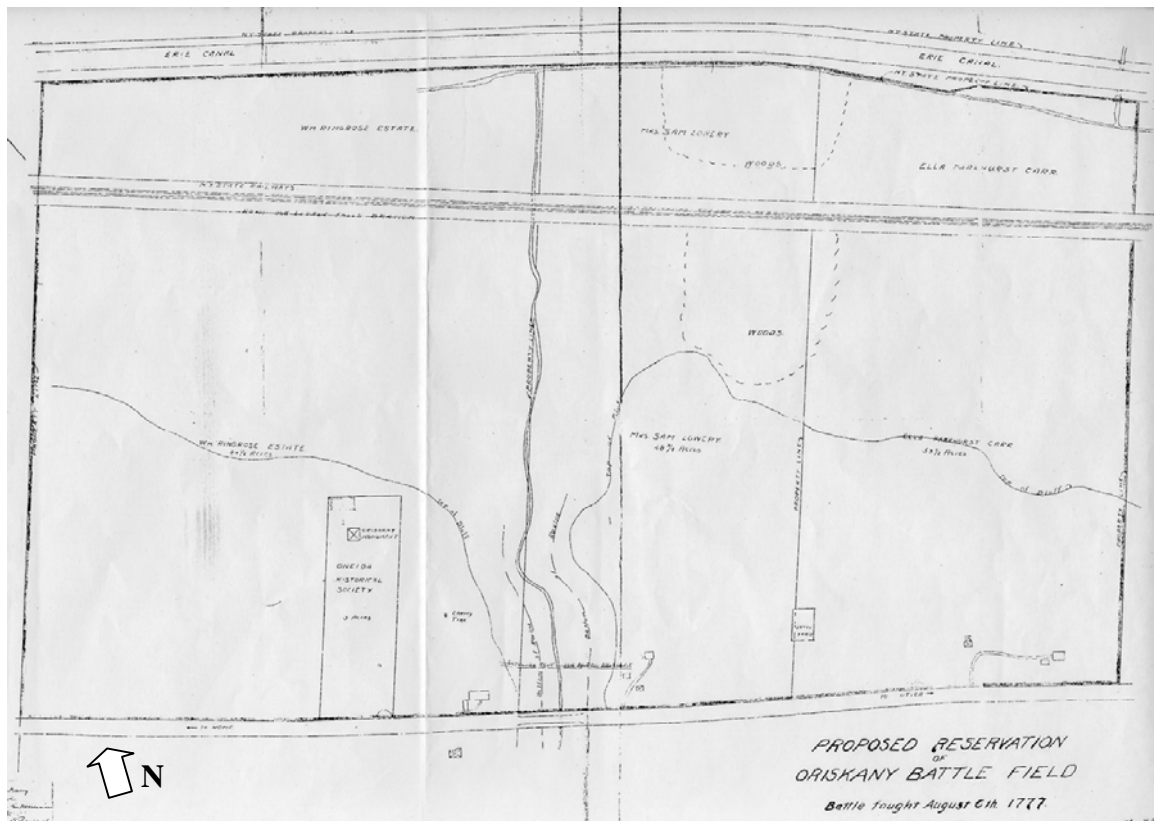
<sup>106</sup> 1900 photograph of the monument, in Max W. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (1907), 413; c.1912 photograph of the monument, Cookingham, *History of Oneida County* (1912), 38.

<sup>107</sup> American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, *Eighteenth Annual Report* (1913), 600-601.

<sup>108</sup> *History of New York State Conference, Daughters of the American Revolution*, 347.

4.16, preceding page].<sup>109</sup> The Alliance had also funded the first of the 14 markers at the Herkimer Homestead near Little Falls, a property that it jointly operated with the D.A.R.<sup>110</sup>

After 1913 until the end of this historic period in 1926, there were no documented changes to the landscape of the memorial park, but ambitious plans were being proposed. In 1915, plans were begun to expand the five-acre memorial park into a 192-acre "reservation" in which all of the purported lands on which the battle was fought would be acquired and preserved. This "Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field" included the 84 acres of the Ringrose farm lying north of the Road, the entire 48 acres (50 minus the amount acquired by the electric railway) of the Parkhurst-heir farm, and the 53-acre farm Ella Parkhurst Carr to the east, along with the five-acre memorial park [Figure 4.17].<sup>111</sup> This reservation was proposed soon after New York State had acquired both the historically-related Bennington battlefield and General Herkimer's home as historic sites in 1913. The Oriskany battlefield lands were also under the potential threat of inappropriate development. It had only been a decade since the electric railway was run across the battlefield, and the decline of the Parkhurst-heir farm likely caused concern about its future development.



**Figure 4.17:** "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," drawn by George H. Thomas, 1 December 1915, Map AR ORI.6, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica. Battle Creek ravine is at the center of the map.

<sup>109</sup> This flagstaff is illustrated in a c.1924 photograph, Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 277; it not present in a c.1912 photograph in Cookingham, *History of Oneida County* (1912), 38. The flagstaff predates 1917, when the charter of the German-American National Alliance was revoked.

<sup>110</sup> The German-American National Alliance was a Congressionally-chartered organization whose purpose was to preserve German culture in the United States and to make known the German contribution to American history. The Herkimer Homestead and the Oriskany Battlefield provided prominent examples of such German contribution. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, German culture was being assimilated at a quickening pace into the dominant Anglo-American culture as German immigration slowed over highs reached during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Alliance was the object of anti-German sentiment during World War I, and its charter was revoked by Congress in 1917.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

The Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. and the Herkimer County Historical Society likely commissioned the plan of the proposed reservation. In December 1916, the two societies joined forces to promote the idea of the reservation and to have it incorporated into the newly-established National Park System.<sup>112</sup> Mrs. Laura Mehew Myer, regent of the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., was adamant that the Oriskany battlefield be improved:

We shall never be satisfied until the Oriskany Battlefield becomes the property of the State or Nation and is set aside as a National Park. . . We have before us a long and difficult task. Yet when we realize that all except five acres of our own revered Oriskany Battlefield is a cow-pasture, neglected and overgrown with bushes and weeds, we can never rest content until it, too, comes to its own.<sup>113</sup>

The Oriskany Chapter worked with local Congressman Homer P. Snyder to present a bill in 1916 calling for an appropriation of \$25,000 to acquire 165 acres of the proposed reservation.<sup>114</sup> Hearings on the proposed bill were to be presented before the House Committee on Military Affairs, but were purportedly postponed due to preparedness activities prior to World War I.<sup>115</sup> With onset of American participation in World War I, the movement to expand the Oriskany battlefield memorial park fell dormant. Following the war, however, the project received renewed attention when the Herkimer County Historical Society and the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. among many other groups, formed the Mohawk Valley Historic Association in 1920. The preservation of the land encompassing the Oriskany battlefield was one of the priorities of the new organization. One of its early objectives was to purchase the 48-acre Parkhurst-heir farm on the east side of the ravine then owned by Mrs. Catherine Lowery as a first step in expanding the memorial park. The Association likely concentrated on this parcel because by this time most of it was no longer active farmland, while the adjoining Ringrose farm remained a working dairy. In 1924, an anonymous "Mohawk Valley Dutchman" began a campaign for the Association to raise subscriptions to purchase the parcel. Working with Mrs. James Corbitt of the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., a 60-day option was secured for the Association to purchase the 48 acres from Mrs. Lowery for \$4,800. This effort, however, failed due to a lack of subscribers. In September 1925, a committee under the direction of the Association's president Louis M. King was formed to revive the proposal, with the goal of offering the property to the State free of cost for a "pubic park." The committee secured the help of Senator Elihu Root, who lent his support in gaining subscriptions. The Association undertook a successful 10-day campaign to raise the \$4,800 purchase price, and on September 15, 1925, the Association directors authorized the purchase, which was finalized soon after. The property was held in trust for the Association by The First National Bank and Trust Company of Utica.<sup>116</sup>

It is not known if the Mohawk Valley Historic Association made any improvements to the former Parkhurst-heir farm immediately after it acquired the property, although it was probably working on plans to erect a monument and make other improvements. The Association did continue to press for public acquisition of the five-acre battlefield memorial park and other lands in the proposed reservation. To the public, it appeared that the Oneida Historical Society was doing little to maintain or promote the memorial park. The *Utica Observer-Dispatch* made the following report on the Site in 1922:

Rising from a lonesome hill at the left of the car line, Utica to Rome, at a point just beyond Oriskany, is a long shaft of stone. Cattle graze at the foot of the hill in a meadow whose carpet of grass and wild flowers is laid irregularly over hummocks and marshes. The shaft receives but scant attention nowadays from the average passerby, yet it marks the scene of what has been termed the *Thermopylae* of the American Revolution--the Battle of Oriskany.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, *1925 Yearbook*, 83-84.

<sup>113</sup> Mrs. Meyer was speaking at the ceremonies celebrating the State purchase of the Herkimer Home; quoted in unauthored and undated article, "The Oriskany Battlefield Becomes a National Park," Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>114</sup> "For Purchase of Battlefield," *Utica Daily Press*, 30 December 1916, copy in Oriskany Museum MSS. No information has been found on what portion of the original 192-acre reservation was excluded from this bill.

<sup>115</sup> "Oriskany National Park," *Utica Daily Press*, 15 January 1917, copy in Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>116</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Dr. Corey, 18 December 1952, Central Region MSS.

<sup>117</sup> *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 30 July 1922, copy in Oriskany Museum MSS.



### **Site Boundaries**

At the beginning of this historic period in 1877, the property within the existing boundaries of the Site consisted of two parcels: the west half of subdivision lot 2 belonging to William Ringrose, and the east half of subdivision lot 2 belonging to Susannah Lanfear, a Parkhurst heir. The Ringrose farm included additional property on the south side of the road, and after 1880, to the west of the Site within Great Lot 5. The east half of subdivision lot 2 constituted the entire property of Susannah Lanfear. In 1880, a third parcel was created within the existing boundaries of the Site when 4.87 acres were subdivided from the Ringrose farm and sold to the Oneida Historical Society for the battlefield memorial park. In 1891, Lanfear deeded a small parcel along the eastern boundary of her property for legal establishment of the Parkhurst Cemetery. In 1901, a fourth parcel was created when a 100-foot wide corridor across the northern third of the Site was sold by the Ringroses and Sarah Lewis (daughter of Susannah Lanfear) to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company (Utica Suburban Railway Company). The sale of this corridor in 1901 required subdivision of the Ringrose and Parkhurst-heir farms, resulting in a total of six parcels within the existing boundaries of the Site. No further changes in boundaries occurred after this date during this historic period.<sup>118</sup>

## **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

### **Natural Systems and Features**

In the early years of this historic period, the natural systems of the Site remained largely unchanged from the previous period. Much of the land was in some stage of agricultural use, either as cultivated field, orchard, active pasture, or meadow. Remnant forests remained on the steep slopes of the ravine and likely on other non-arable portions of the Site. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the decline of agriculture on the east half of the Site allowed for natural succession to occur. This natural process resulted in the re-emergence of forest on a substantial portion of this half of the Site by the end of this historic period in 1926.

Two large swamps remained on the uplands of the Parkhurst-heir farm; the swamp adjacent to the Ravine may have been drained during this period, when a ditch was dug from the swamp to the ravine. A "spring hole" existed on the Ringrose farm at the top of the west slope of the ravine by 1927, and probably much earlier.<sup>119</sup> It was likely used for drawing water. With construction of the electric railway across the Site in 1901, minor changes to the hydrology of the Site occurred through the building of culverts and a raised embankment.

### **Spatial Organization**

#### **Ringrose Farm (West Plateau Space)**

By 1915, the Ringrose farm occupied 84 acres north of the Road, about 35 of which were within the Site. Much of the farm was kept as open pasture, except for the steep slopes of the west ravine, which were partially wooded. There was little spatial distinction between the Ringrose farm and adjoining farms during the early part of this period, except at the wooded east slope of the Battle Creek ravine on the adjoining Parkhurst-heir farm [Figure 4.18, following page]. By the end of this period, old-field succession and reforestation on the former Parkhurst-heir farm resulted in a distinct edge along the east property line.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> The Parkhurst Cemetery and electric railway corridor are outside of present Site boundaries.

<sup>119</sup> Wm. Pierrepont White, "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany" (map), copyrighted 1927, published in the *Herkimer Evening Telegram*, 4 August 1927, 3.

<sup>120</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

### Parkhurst-Heir Farm (Mohawk Valley Historic Association Property / East Plateau Space)

The Parkhurst-heir farm was probably never as open in terms of spatial character as was the Ringrose farm. The steep banks of the uplands sloping down into the Battle Creek ravine and the lowlands to the north were at least partially forested as early as 1879 [Figure 4.8, page 113].<sup>121</sup> These banks remained forested throughout this period [Figure 4.18]. By the 1920s, the lowlands on the farm were out of agricultural use and the forests were beginning to grow back. On the uplands, wooded areas also existed on and around the two swamps and around the farmstead.<sup>122</sup> The open areas on the uplands, however, were largely enclosed by forests at this time.



**Figure 4.18:** View east across uplands of Ringrose farm toward Battle Creek ravine and Parkhurst-heir farmstead, c.1922. Reproduced from Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 280.

### Ravine Space

During this historic period, the Battle Creek ravine retained a distinct spatial character based on its topography. Trees provided further spatial enclosure only along the steep east banks north of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead. The less steep west sides and open north end of the ravine were largely free of trees and were therefore less enclosed. The south side of the ravine was enclosed by the earthen causeway that carried the Road across the ravine, which was lined by trees by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. [Figure 4.19, following page].

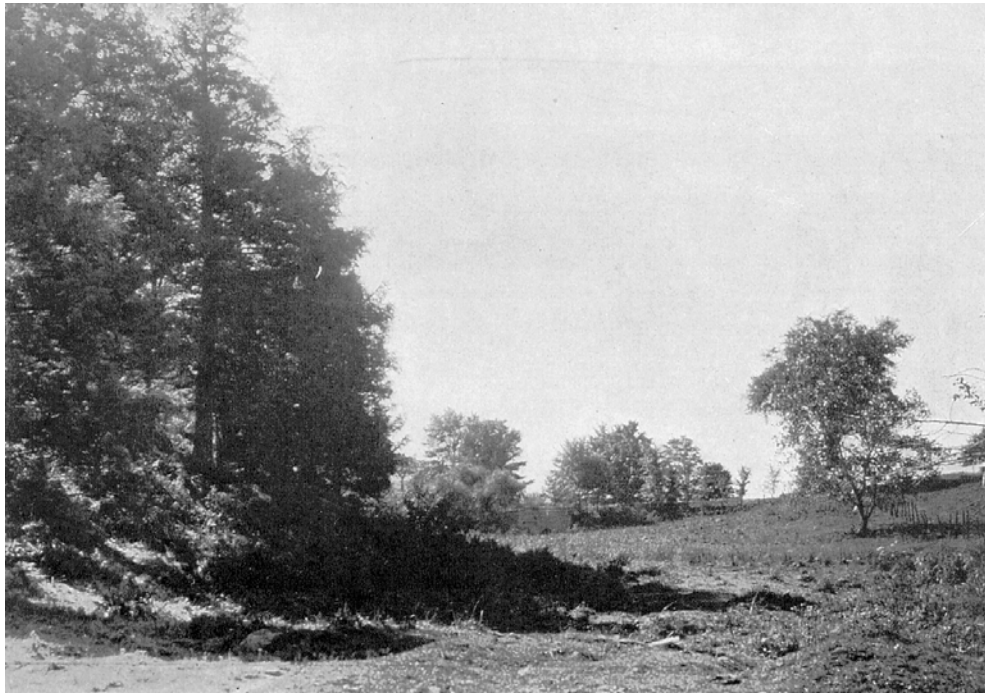
### Parkhurst Cemetery

No information has been found on the spatial character of the Parkhurst Cemetery during this historic period. The cemetery was likely within an area of open farmland, but there may have been trees and groundcover that accentuated the spatial distinction provided by the grave markers. In 1891, property boundaries were established for the cemetery apart from the adjoining Parkhurst-heir and G. W. Parkhurst farms, and a right-of-way was granted across the Parkhurst-heir farm between the cemetery and the Road. The Parkhurst Cemetery Association was established as part of this legal delineation of the cemetery, with

<sup>121</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 1879.

<sup>122</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

George N. Parkhurst as the first trustee. There were eight burials between 1877 and 1926, the last and final one occurring being George N. Parkhurst in 1917. There were approximately 23 marked burials by this date.<sup>123</sup>



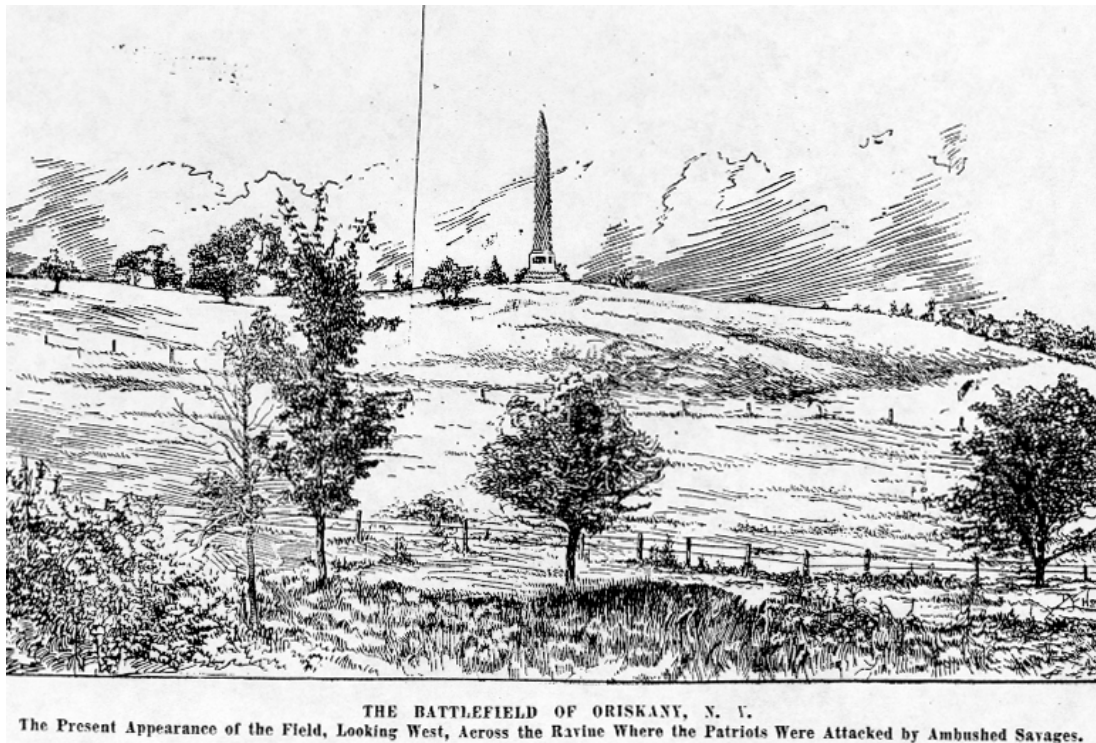
**Figure 4.19:** View south through Battle Creek ravine, c.1912, with causeway and bridge in distance. Reproduced from New York Historical Association *Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 332.

### Battlefield Memorial Park

With creation of a battlefield memorial park by the Oneida Historical Society beginning in 1880, a five-acre portion of the Ringrose farm was set apart from the agricultural use of the surrounding land. The dimensions of this parcel were likely established according to the dimensions of the pastures in the Ringrose farm, which paralleled property lines first established through subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Even with the construction of the Battle Monument in 1883-84, however, this parcel probably remained distinct from the surrounding farm only by pasture fences and by the topography along its west side, which dropped off sharply into the west ravine [Figure 4.20, following page]. The gateway at the Road, however, did provide a formal entrance to the park, which actually had two fronts: one facing the Road, and one facing the Mohawk Valley, Erie Canal, and Mohawk River. Visitors during the two major celebrations during this period entered the Site from both directions. At the dedication of the Battle Monument in 1884, there was some successional growth in this adjoining west ravine; by 1900, this growth had matured to provide a distinct edge to the western side of the memorial park adjoining the Battle Monument.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Mrs. Arthur E. Davies, Whitesboro, Regent of Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., unpublished record of Parkhurst Cemetery burials, Central Region MSS.

<sup>124</sup> "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument Aug. 6, 1884," photograph in Cookingham, *History of Oneida County* (1912), 34; "The Oriskany Battle-Field," 1900 photograph taken in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 437.



**Figure 4.20:** View west across Ringrose farm to Battle Monument, showing spatial context of memorial park within agricultural fields, 1891. Reproduced from *Utica Saturday Globe*, 8 August 1891, clipping from Oriskany Museum, Oriskany Battlefield files.

### The Road

At the beginning of this historic period, there probably was little spatial distinction between the corridor of the Road and the adjoining farmland, except where the Road crossed the Battle Creek ravine over the causeway.<sup>125</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Road was lined by trees through the Parkhurst-heir farm and across the ravine, providing the corridor more of an enclosed spatial character. There were only a few widely-spaced trees through the Ringrose farm.<sup>126</sup>

### Electric Railway Corridor

When the electric railway was built in 1901, it passed through open farmland and therefore did not form a distinct space. By the 1920s, however, the fallow lowland fields of the Parkhurst-heir farm were maturing into forest that enclosed the corridor as it passed through the east half of the Site.<sup>127</sup>

### Land Use

Agriculture remained an active use on the western half of the Site (Ringrose farm) throughout this historic period, except within the five-acre memorial park. On the east half of the Site (Parkhurst-heir farm), agriculture diminished as a land use toward the end of this historic period, especially on the lowlands.

<sup>125</sup> View of Battle Creek ravine, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877, Vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, cover page.

<sup>126</sup> Cookinham, *The History of Oneida County* (1912), 38; c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

<sup>127</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

Residential use continued at the Parkhurst-heir farmstead at the top of the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine probably until 1925, when the farm was sold to the Mohawk Valley Historic Association.

In addition to the Road and the Erie Canal, another transportation use was introduced when the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway was constructed in 1901. Transportation on the Erie Canal diminished throughout this historic period, and likely ceased after 1917, when the New York State Barge Canal opened.

Commemoration became a permanent land use on the Site beginning in 1880, when the Oneida Historical Society purchased a five-acre parcel from the Ringrose farm for the purpose of establishing a memorial to the Battle of Oriskany. In 1925, commemoration became a permanent land use on the east half of the Site when the Parkhurst-heir farm was purchased by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association. There had probably been some type of commemoration occurring on this property since soon after the centennial celebration, when a flagstaff was erected on the northwestern edge of the upland plateau above the ravine.

### **Cultural Traditions**

The centennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1877 established a formal association between the Site and the cultural tradition of commemoration. As evidenced through the centennial celebration and building of the Battle Monument, commemoration focused on two primary cultures: the Anglo-American colonial heritage of the state and nation, and the German-American heritage of the Mohawk Valley. No record has been found on the incorporation of Haudenosaunee or more specifically Oneida cultural traditions during this historic period.

Although there was a renewed interest in the contribution of German-Americans in the Battle of Oriskany, according to available information, the Anglo-American tradition of commemoration was the only cultural tradition that influenced the development of the Site's landscape during this historic period. This tradition was an overlay on the existing cultural tradition associated with Anglo-American settlement and agricultural practices.

### **Cluster Arrangement**

Not applicable.

### **Circulation**

#### **Farm Road Across Battle Creek (Interpreted Military Road Trace)**

The remains of a farm road across the marshy bottom of the Battle Creek ravine, first illustrated by Benjamin Lossing in 1848, were evident as late as 1900 [Figure 4.21, following page].<sup>128</sup> These remains consisted of logs embedded in the soil. Local tradition, which was reinforced during the centennial celebration, identified this as remains from the corduroy causeway built to carry the military road across the ravine. It likely served as a farm road, but by 1900 no longer provided access across Battle Creek. The trace probably disappeared entirely by the end of this historic period.

#### **Road on East Slope of Battle Creek Ravine**

A road was likely constructed during this historic period along the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine extending north from the Road, with another section extending south of the Road. This feature may have been built for activities at the East Stand during the centennial celebration, although it could have been an improvement of an earlier farm road.<sup>129</sup> The East Stand was located on the west bank of Battle Creek and faced its audience on the east side of the ravine. It is possible that this road provided access to the east side

---

<sup>128</sup> "Oriskany Battle-Field, East Side of Ravine," Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 421.

<sup>129</sup> No documentation on this drive has been found, but clear traces of it presently remain both north and south of the Road.

of the ravine from the Road without going down the steep east slope through the Parkhurst-heir farmstead that was located on the top of the ravine. By the 1920s, the road was probably no longer used.<sup>130</sup>



**Figure 4.21:** View north through Battle Creek ravine, showing trace of road across Battle Creek, c.1900. Reproduced from Max Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 427.

### Battle Monument Drive

It is likely that a drive was established on the Ringrose farm during the centennial celebration where the pageant entered the battlefield on its way to the West Stand, probably at some point west of the Ringrose barn. Further work on the drive may have been done with construction of the Battle Monument. It is likely that a drive had to be graded through the hillocks and depressions on the memorial park in order to allow access for construction equipment. The most feasible location for this drive was at the southeast corner of the five-acre park because the natural grade dropped off to the west, and the property to the east was not owned by the Oneida Historical Society. Upon completion of the Battle Monument in December 1883, the *New York Times* reported that "a little necessary grading" still needed to be done.<sup>131</sup> It is possible that this "grading" had to do with construction of a road, but no mention was made in this article, or any other documents relating to the building of the Battle Monument, to a drive connecting the Road with the Battle Monument. Around 1885, gateposts with an iron fence were constructed at the Road, providing a formal entry point to the memorial park.<sup>132</sup> These were likely placed where there was an existing drive.

<sup>130</sup> Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 280. This photograph provides a faint view of the drive as part of the grassy slope.

<sup>131</sup> "Herkimer and His Men," *New York Times*, 23 December 1883, clipping in Central Region MSS.

<sup>132</sup> Policy of Imperial Fire Insurance Company of London dated 2 January 1885 for an iron fence and gateposts, Oriskany Battle Monument file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

A photograph of the Battle Monument taken in 1900 documents that there was no improved drive circling the monument, and nor one leading up to it.<sup>133</sup> A survey made in 1915 documents drives leading to the Ringrose barns and the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, but shows no drive between the Road and the Battle Monument [Figure 4.17, page 125].<sup>134</sup> The earliest available documentation of the drive is found in a photograph taken between 1913 and 1926. This photograph looking northwest toward the Battle Monument illustrates a single set of well-worn tracks in the mown field arcing from the direction of the gates northwest around the Herkimer's march monument [Figure 4.16, page 124]. A 1922 photograph illustrates that there was no improved drive around the monument at this time [Figure 4.26, page 144].<sup>135</sup>

### Other On-Site Circulation Features

In addition to the Battle Monument drive and the road on the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine, there were drives leading from the Road to the large Ringrose barn, and from the Road to the barns at the rear of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead [Figure 4.17, page 125].<sup>136</sup>

According to period accounts, many visitors to the centennial celebration and Battle Monument dedication ceremony arrived on the Site from the canal and railroad across a "rough field."<sup>137</sup> No physical traces or documentation have been found on a defined path from the railroad and canal to the Site.

A right-of-way was established in 1891 when the Parkhurst Cemetery Association was chartered.<sup>138</sup> This right-of-way went from the Road to the cemetery along the eastern boundary of the Site. It is not known if any built circulation features were ever associated with this right-of-way.

### Adjacent Circulation Features

#### *The Road*

Despite various plans for its improvement, there were no changes made to the Road near the Site during this historic period, based on available documentation. The Road retained the same dimensions, earthen surface, causeway, and stone-arch bridge over Battle Creek. Near the end of this historic period, the Road was documented as crossing on an earthen causeway that went from an elevation along the Ringrose farm of 488.2 feet to a low point of 470.91 over Battle Creek, and back up to an elevation of 491 feet along the Parkhurst-heir farm. There was a deteriorated stone-arch culvert over Battle Creek, a drainage pipe near the center of the Oneida Historical Society's memorial park, guide posts west of the park gateway, and guiderails along the causeway.<sup>139</sup>

#### *The Erie Canal*

During this historic period, there were only two documented changes to the physical form of the Erie Canal. During the centennial celebration, a temporary boat landing and pontoon bridge were constructed over the canal just east of Battle Creek to provide access to the Site for visitors arriving by both canal and railroad. The *Rome Daily Sentinel* reported that the pontoon bridge would be "wide enough for eight men to march abreast."<sup>140</sup> Prior canal surveys made in 1834 and 1869 documented a group of three buildings

<sup>133</sup> "The Oriskany Monument," Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 413.

<sup>134</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

<sup>135</sup> "Oriskany Battlefield Monument," Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 277.

<sup>136</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

<sup>137</sup> "Dedication of Oriskany Monument" *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1884, 1

<sup>138</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 490, 23.

<sup>139</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Preliminary Survey Transit" [survey for proposed Stanwix-Oriskany Whitesboro State Highway], dated October 6 - November 5, 1931. No further information was provided about the Road surface or associated features.

<sup>140</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" (map), *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1; "Oriskany . The Battle Ground -- Past and Present--The Coming Celebration," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

with a bridge across the canal opposite the Ringrose property. A 1920 survey of the canal documented that the bridge and buildings had been removed.<sup>141</sup>

While there was little physical change to the Erie Canal, the amount of traffic on it diminished substantially during this historic period, and probably ceased soon after its replacement by the New York State Barge Canal, the eastern half of which was completed in 1917.

### *Railroad*

During this historic period, the New York Central Railroad, successor to the Utica & Syracuse Railroad, gained an increasing amount of traffic as it assumed dominance of long-haul transportation across the state over the Erie Canal. The railroad, which was located about 700 feet north of the Site, was visible from the uplands of the Site. During the centennial celebration and probably other major events, the railroad provided passenger transportation to the Site. From the railroad, visitors crossed agricultural fields and the Erie Canal before reaching the Site.

### *Electric Railway*

The Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company (Utica Suburban Railway) acquired property through the Site for its electric railway from William Ringrose and Sarah Lewis in June 1901. The company acquired a 100-foot wide corridor and constructed a raised embankment across the Site with two sets of tracks lined by poles carrying single overhead wires above the tracks.<sup>142</sup> Concrete culverts were constructed across Battle Creek and the unnamed creek along the western boundary of the Site. This line between Rome and Oriskany began service on June 21, 1902. A September 1910 timetable for the line indicated there were 34 westbound and 36 eastbound trains passing the Site each day, beginning around 5:45 am and running until 1:00 am. The closest stops to the Site were at Oriskany, about 2 miles east, and Stanwix, about six miles to the west.<sup>143</sup>

## **Topography**

The only documented changes in the topography of the Site during this historic period were made through construction of the Battle Monument. The exact degree and location of change in topography is not known. The excavation of the large, 13-foot deep foundation for the Battle Monument would have produced a significant amount of fill that was likely placed in the vicinity. The *New York Times* reported in December 1883 that "a little necessary grading" still needed to be done.<sup>144</sup> A photograph of the Battle Monument taken during its dedication in 1884 shows exposed soil extending around and south of the monument, soil that probably corresponded to areas of fill from excavation from the foundation.<sup>145</sup> Other minor changes in topography also occurred with construction of a drive to the Battle Monument.

---

<sup>141</sup> State of New York, "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State, Made Pursuant to Chapter 199, Laws of 1910 and Amendatory Laws," approved March 3, 1920, maps 320, 321, New York State Thruway Authority, Syracuse office.

<sup>142</sup> The only available photograph of the tracks through the Site is a c.1912 photograph taken from the monument in Cookinham, *History of Oneida County*, 34.

<sup>143</sup> Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway (New York State Railways) timetable, effective September 19, 1910, trolley vertical file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

<sup>144</sup> "Herkimer and His Men," *New York Times*, 23 December 1883, 1.

<sup>145</sup> "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument," Cookinham, *The History of Oneida County* (1912), 34.



## Vegetation

### Forest

In 1877, the Rome *Sentinel* reported, "At Present the battlefield is entirely bare from trees."<sup>146</sup> Although this was probably an exaggeration, the Site was primarily open fields at this time, but there were scattered patches of remnant forest, particularly along the steep slopes of the Battle Creek ravine and along the eastern edge of the west ravine adjacent to the Battle Monument [Figure 4.22; Figure 4.8, page 113]. Species in these woodlands were likely remnants from the original forest and may have included beech, sugar maple, and hemlock. With the decline of agriculture on the Site, young forest occupied a good portion of the lowlands of the Parkhurst-heir farm by 1915.<sup>147</sup> By the end of this historic period, much of these lowlands were forested.<sup>148</sup>



**Figure 4.22:** View southwest toward Battle Monument, showing forested slope of west ravine, c.1912. Reproduced from New York Historical Society *Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 332.

### Herkimer Tree

In 1877, David Lanfear, farmer of the east half of the Site and husband of a Parkhurst, showed a reporter from the *Utica Daily Observer* "with unerring certainty" the spot where the purported tree had stood under which General Herkimer sat and directed the battle, although the paper did not note exactly where this was. Like Benjamin Lossing before him, Lanfear identified the tree as a beech and remembered seeing the tree before it was cut down prior to his ownership of the farm (pre-1843). Lanfear also remembered that the tree was marked with the word "Herkimer," and that it was cut down and sold for firewood. Although the stump was gone by 1877, Lanfear remembered that it had remained for many years.<sup>149</sup> A 1915 survey of the Site indicated a "cherry tree" was located near the purported site of the Herkimer tree. This is the only tree shown on the plan and may have been planted to indicate the location of the Herkimer tree, although the plan makes no note of such.<sup>150</sup> The cherry might have been planted as a replacement for the Ringrose farm flagstaff, which had been removed by this time.

<sup>146</sup> "Oriskany . The Battle Ground," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

<sup>148</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site, Central Region MSS.

<sup>149</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4. The stump had in fact probably been gone since at least 1844, because it did not appear in Benjamin Lossing's illustration made in this year.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battlefield," 1915.

## Pastures

Prior to natural succession on the Parkhurst-heir farm and elsewhere, much of the Site was maintained as pasture, probably for dairy cattle. None of the Parkhurst-heir farm was under cultivation during this period.<sup>151</sup> No information has been found on the specific types of vegetation that made up these pastures.

## Hedgerows

Lithographs of the Site published in 1879 document that the upland pastures of the Ringrose farm were divided by low hedgerows [Figure 4.8, page 113]. These hedgerows probably grew up around pasture fences, which were illustrated by Benjamin Lossing in his 1848 engraving of the Site. By 1879, however, the fences had apparently been removed. By 1891, the hedgerows had been removed and replaced with post-and-wire fences [Figure 4.20, page 130].<sup>152</sup>

## Ravine Elm

A large elm (*Ulmus americana*) was located on the west side of the Battle Creek ravine northeast of the Ringrose barns during this period. This elm was mentioned by the Rome *Sentinel* in 1877 and was photographed in 1900 [Figure 4.10, page 115].<sup>153</sup>

## Apple Orchards

The Utica *Daily Observer* reported in 1877 that David Lanfear maintained "a fine apple orchard" on the lowlands east of Battle Creek. The Rome *Sentinel* reported that Lanfear also maintained an apple orchard to the rear (north) of his farmstead on the uplands east of Battle Creek.<sup>154</sup> The Ringroses may also have maintained an apple orchard. By the 1880s, there were scattered apple trees in the vicinity of the Battle Monument [see Figure 4.15, page 123], but no information has been found to indicate that these were remnants of an orchard.

## Roadside Trees

An illustration of the causeway made in 1877 showed no trees along the Road in the area of the ravine, but by 1912, trees were photographed growing along the slopes of the causeway. A survey of the Road made several years after this historic period documented large trees along the causeway and the section of the Road east of the ravine across the Parkhurst-heir farm [Figure 4.19, page 129]. Species included elm, maple, ash, and cherry. The section of the Road across the Ringrose farm at this time contained only one roadside tree, a young elm.<sup>155</sup>

## Lawn

A photograph taken in 1900, prior to the addition of the monument fence, illustrates a rough lawn or meadow around the Battle Monument [Figure 4.15, page 123]. By 1912, the grass around the monument and the newly-installed Herkimer's march monument had become more regular and manicured, possibly as a result of improvements that included addition of the fence around the monument [Figure 4.16, page

---

<sup>151</sup> "Oriskany Battle Ground," Utica *Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Beach, 91; Utica *Saturday Globe*, 1 August 1891.

<sup>153</sup> "Oriskany . The Battle Ground," Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877; "The Oriskany Battle-Field," 1900 photograph in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 437.

<sup>154</sup> "Oriskany Battle Ground," Utica *Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4; "Oriskany. The Battle Ground," Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

<sup>155</sup> View of Battle Creek ravine, Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877; "The Easterly Ravine," pre-1912 photograph in Cookingham, *The History of Oneida County* (1912), 38; State of New York, "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," survey and construction plans dated 10-31-1933, NYS DOT Region 2, Utica.

124].<sup>156</sup> In 1926, however, a committee planning for State acquisition of the memorial park recommended that the State should "keep the grass cut around the monument and the entrance as a lawn for the year 1927."<sup>157</sup> This suggests that the grass on the five-acre memorial park may have been previously maintained as more of a meadow than a lawn.

## **Buildings and Structures**

### **Ringrose Farmstead**

In 1877, the Ringrose farmstead contained one gabled, vertical-plank barn west of the ravine with its ridge parallel to the Road.<sup>158</sup> This was likely the same barn illustrated by Benjamin Lossing in 1848, but may have been doubled in length to about 70 feet by 1877.<sup>159</sup> This extension required banking, where most of the foundation was exposed due to the slope that led down into the ravine. The main door of this barn was on the south side in the middle of the structure.

The Ringrose farmhouse was located on the south side of the Road opposite the barn. Prior to 1885, this farmhouse was the former tollgate house that had been relocated by A. J. Kent in the 1850s. It included a barn on the west side of the house. In 1885, one year after the Battle Monument was dedicated, William Ringrose erected a new farmhouse, purportedly on the same site as the tollgate house.<sup>160</sup> Ringrose built his two-story 'L'-plan clapboarded house in a vernacular Italianate style, complete with a low, hipped roof, wide overhanging eaves, two-over-two double-hung sash windows, and Classical trim.

By 1900, the Ringroses had built a second gabled, vertical-plank barn to the rear (north) of and perpendicular to the original barn.<sup>161</sup> By 1915, they had also added a small, gabled, vertical-plank barn to the south of and perpendicular to the original barn, closer to the Road. This building may have been used as a horse barn.<sup>162</sup>

### **Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead**

At the time of the centennial, the Parkhurst-heir farmstead consisted of a house and a barn. The house was a side-gable structure with a rear wing, and had a pump to the rear. The barn was located directly to the north of the house.<sup>163</sup> By 1907, a second barn set slightly west of the house and closer to the ravine had been added [Figure 4.11, page 116].<sup>164</sup> Both barns had vertical-board siding and gable roofs with the ridges parallel to the Road.

<sup>156</sup> 1900 photograph, "The Oriskany Monument," in Reid, 413. Two later photographs show closely-shorn grass: "Oriskany Battlefield," c.1912 photograph, Cookinham, *The History of Oneida County* (1912), 38; "Oriskany Battle Monuments," c.1926 photograph in Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany*, 223.

<sup>157</sup> "Suggestions for Consideration of Oriskany and Fort Stanwix Sub Committee of Advisory Committee to Conservation Commission," unpublished paper, c.1926, BHS MSS.

<sup>158</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" (map), *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1. This barn is shown as a relatively long structure. The Ringroses also had a barn to the rear of their house on the south side of the Road.

<sup>159</sup> The c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site shows a slight break in middle of the roof, suggesting that the barn may have been doubled in length. This break is also shown in a 1949 photograph, "State Park Proposed at Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

<sup>160</sup> "Toll Road Once Ran Past Oriskany Battlefield; Old Gate House Afterwards Served as Dwelling," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 5 April 1938, copy in Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>161</sup> "The Oriskany Battle-Field," 1900 photograph in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 437. The 1915 Thomas survey of the Site does not show this barn.

<sup>162</sup> One of these barns may have been the barn that was relocated from the west side of the Ringrose farmhouse. This barn was shown on the west side of the farmhouse on the 1877 Ashton Brothers map of the battlefield, but not on the 1915 Thomas survey.

<sup>163</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" (map), *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

<sup>164</sup> Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 421; Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

The Mohawk Valley Historic Association acquired the Parkhurst-heir farm in 1925, but the farmstead remained standing through 1927.<sup>165</sup>

### House of Mrs. M. Gibson

This house, which was only documented on the 1874 Beers atlas of Oneida County on the eastern edge of the Parkhurst-heir farm, was not documented on 1877 and 1915 maps of the Site.<sup>166</sup> The 1874 documentation may have been an error, and the house of Mrs. Gibson may actually have been on the farm to the east later owned by Ella Parkhurst Carr.

### Battle Monument

The design and contract for the proposed 84-foot high Battle Monument was approved by the Oneida Historical Society on October 11, 1882 and construction began the following year under the general supervision of William Jones of Utica. Under this contract, the Society was responsible for the construction of the 13-foot deep and 24-foot wide foundation, which was built by Mr. Jones of Onondaga limestone salvaged from the Utica Erie Canal weigh lock and donated by the State of New York. The foundation was laid in Portland and Howe's Cave cement and Schoharie Sand. The next section to be built was the 19-foot high pedestal, which was constructed of Maine granite by the Mount Waldo Granite Works. The pedestal featured a three-stepped dressed ashlar plinth rising to a rusticated ashlar dado designed to hold bronze tablets. A time capsule was placed in the center of the pedestal by the Oneida Historical Society. The shaft, which rose from a flared base of dressed granite, was built of the same salvaged Onondaga limestone as the foundation; the stone was cut, dressed, and laid by Alexander Pirnie under supervision of the Mount Waldo Granite Works. The final component of the stone structure was the pyramidal cap, which was made of regular-coursed dressed granite. Masonry work was completed by December 23, 1883, according to the *New York Times*.<sup>167</sup>

The remaining work involved fabrication and installation of four large, 54.5"-high by 72"-wide bronze panels cast by Maurice J. Power of the National Fine Art Foundry. Two of these panels featured text, and two featured bas-relief sculpture designed by William Rudolf O'Donovan. The first of these panels cost \$500 and carried the following commemorative inscription by Professor Edward North of Hamilton College:

HERE WAS FOUGHT / THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY / ON THE SIXTH DAY OF  
AUGUST, 1777; / HERE BRITISH INVASION WAS CHECKED AND THWARTED;  
HERE GENERAL NICHOLAS HERKIMER, / INTREPID LEADER OF THE  
AMERICAN FORCES, / THO' MORTALLY WOUNDED, KEPT COMMAND OF  
THE FIGHT / TILL THE ENEMY HAD FLED. / THE LIFE BLOOD OF MORE THAN  
TWO HUNDRED PATRIOT HEROES / MADE THIS BATTLE GROUND / SACRED  
FOREVER.

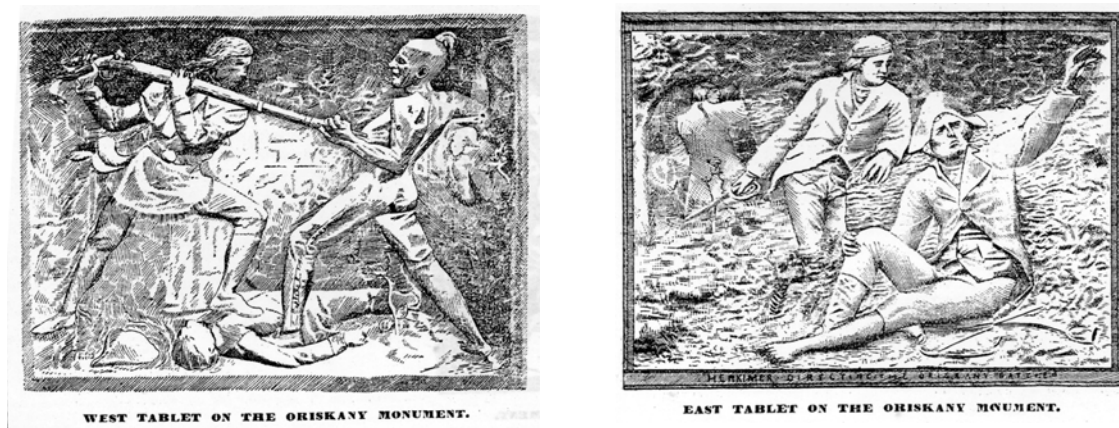
THIS MONUMENT WAS BUILT / A. D. 1883, IN THE YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE  
107, / BY GRATEFUL DWELLERS IN THE MOHAWK VALLEY / UNDER THE  
DIRECTION / OF THE ONEIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY / AIDED BY THE  
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT / AND THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

<sup>165</sup> White, "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany" (1927). The farmstead is shown in this plan.

<sup>166</sup> Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" (map), *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1; Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

<sup>167</sup> *New York Times*, 23 December 1883; *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1884; Oriskany Battle Monument manuscript collection, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

The second panel, which cost \$618, carried the roster of battle veterans as estimated at that time. The bas-relief bronze panels, each of which cost \$1,000, depicted General Herkimer directing the battle and a scene of "Indian Combat" [Figure 4.23]<sup>168</sup>



**Figure 4.23:** Renderings of bas-relief bronze panels on the Battle Monument. Reproduced from *Utica Saturday Globe*, 8 August 1891, clipping in Oriskany Battlefield files, Oriskany Museum.

### Temporary Structures

During the Centennial Celebration, there were many temporary pavilions and stands erected on the Site. The *Utica Observer* reported that there were about 100 refreshment stands set up on the battlefield. There were six camps or groups of tents set up for the centennial: the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion Encampment and the Capt. Ames Cavalry on the portion of the Ringrose farm south of the Road [off-Site]; the Adjutant Bacon Cadets on the east side of the Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear) farmstead; Young's Cavalry and Skillin Post on the uplands north of the Lanfear farmstead; and the Chismore Post on the Ringrose farm north of the Road. A temporary pontoon bridge and boat landing were constructed on the canal, just east of Battle Creek [Figure 4.12, page 118].<sup>169</sup>

There were two primary structures which served as speaker stands during the centennial: the West Stand, located in a natural amphitheater on the west plateau of the Ringrose farm; and the East Stand, located on the west bank of Battle Creek north of the Road. The East Stand was shown in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* as a four-bay single-ridge pole structure with open sides and probably a cloth roof covering [see Figure 4.13, page 119]. A narrow platform for speakers extended in front of the stand, facing east toward the audience area on the east side of the ravine. This placement provided for a natural amphitheater. A speaker stand was also erected on the north or shady side of the Battle Monument during its dedication in August 1884. No further information has been found on this structure.<sup>170</sup>

### Adjoining Buildings and Structures

#### *Road Causeway and Bridge*

There were no documented changes during this historic period to the causeway and bridge across the Battle Creek ravine. An illustration of the structure was produced in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in

<sup>168</sup> Receipts, Oriskany Battle Monument file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica. The mark of W. R. O'Donovan is on the General Herkimer tablet, but not on the Indian Fight tablet.

<sup>169</sup> Referenced in O'Donnell, "Oriskany, 1877: The Centennial and the Birth of Frederic's *In the Valley*," 152; Aston Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany" [map], *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1.

<sup>170</sup> *Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society 1881-1884*, 191.

1877, showing the earthen causeway and single-arch masonry bridge with high parapet walls [Figure 4.13, page 119], and a photograph of the ravine taken around 1912 showed the same structure [Figure 4.24].



**Figure 4.24:** View south toward Road causeway and bridge from Battle Creek ravine, c.1912. Detail of a photograph in New York Historical Society *Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 332.

#### *Buildings on Erie Canal*

The complex of three buildings and a bridge documented in canal surveys of 1834 and 1869 on the canal adjacent to the Site may have been removed as early as 1877. The pontoon bridge and boat landing for the centennial celebration were built in the same general area, suggesting the buildings and bridge had perhaps been removed by this date; they were not documented on an 1877 map of the Site. At this time, land to the north of the Site was owned in part or whole by a Mr. Tryon. In a 1920 survey of the canal, the buildings and bridge were not shown.<sup>171</sup>

#### *G. W. Parkhurst House*

The house of G. W. Parkhurst, located on the south side of the Road nearly opposite the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, remained standing throughout this historic period. At the time of the centennial celebration, it was still occupied by G. W. Parkhurst, who was born in 1814 and died in 1890.<sup>172</sup>

#### *Metcalf House*

William Ringrose acquired the Metcalf farm, which adjoined his farm to the west within Great Lot 5, at some point after 1880 and prior to 1915. By 1915, the Metcalf house on the north side of the Road had been removed.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>171</sup>"The Battle of Oriskany," drawn by Aston Brothers, published in the *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1; State of New York, "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State, Made Pursuant to Chapter 199, Laws of 1910 and Amendatory Laws," approved March 3, 1920, maps 320, 321.

<sup>172</sup> Parkhurst Cemetery, marker for George W. Parkhurst.

<sup>173</sup> Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

*House of Ella Parkhurst Carr*

A 1915 survey documented that the 54-acre farm adjoining the Site to the east was owned at this time by Ella Parkhurst Carr; the previous owner was George W. Parkhurst. This farm contained two side-by-side houses and a barn on the eastern half of the property.<sup>174</sup>

*Electric Railway Culverts*

As part of the construction of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway in 1901-1902, concrete culverts were built where the line crossed Battle Creek and the unnamed creek along the western boundary of the Site. Battle Creek required a sizeable culvert due to a drop in grade, with an approximately 8-foot high wall on the north side and a 6-foot high wall on the south. The walls and opening were rectangular. No documentation has been found on the culvert on the unnamed creek; it was likely smaller than the Battle Creek culvert.

**Views and Vistas**

At the beginning of this historic period, most of the Site and its surroundings was open farmland. From the uplands of the Site, broad views existed across the Mohawk Valley to the foothills of the Adirondack to the west, north, and east. Less expansive views would have existed toward the south due to the rise in topography. Views were probably restricted by the woodlands on the steep eastern slope of the ravine, and by a narrow woodlot that developed on the eastern side of the west ravine adjacent to the Battle Monument. Toward the end of this historic period, expansive views from the uplands of the Parkhurst-heir farm were blocked by forest.

The broad views possible from the uplands were a primary influence in the design and placement of the Battle Monument, as were views from the Erie Canal and New York Central Railroad along the lowlands south toward the uplands. Many descriptions of the landscape during the centennial celebration in 1877 and the dedication of the Battle Monument in 1884 praised the expansive views. The march of the centennial pageant along the Road, for example, reportedly ". . . gave all a magnificent view of the grand panoramic beauty of the Mohawk Valley and the hills beyond, brilliant with emerald hues."<sup>175</sup> During the monument dedication, The Rome *Daily Sentinel* reported ". . . exclamations of delight upon looking at the scene presented by the beautiful fields and patches of woodland which stretch out before the eye to the north, west, and the east, were heard upon every hand" [Figure 4.25, following page].<sup>176</sup> Another account noted that with the view from the railroad and canal, "Millions of American eyes will rest each year upon the monument which recalls the story of what it cost to keep the valley free."<sup>177</sup> The Oneida Historical Society recorded that the Battle Monument commanded a "most beautiful view of the Mohawk Valley for ten or fifteen miles east and west, and nearly as many miles north."<sup>178</sup>

In addition to the Battle Monument, another feature on the landscape that took advantage of the expansive views was the flagstaff that was erected between 1877 and 1879 on the northwest corner of the uplands on the Parkhurst-heir farm. The Rome *Daily Sentinel* reported that this tall flagstaff, the base of which was hidden by remnant forest on the steep slopes, could be seen "up and down the Mohawk for miles."<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

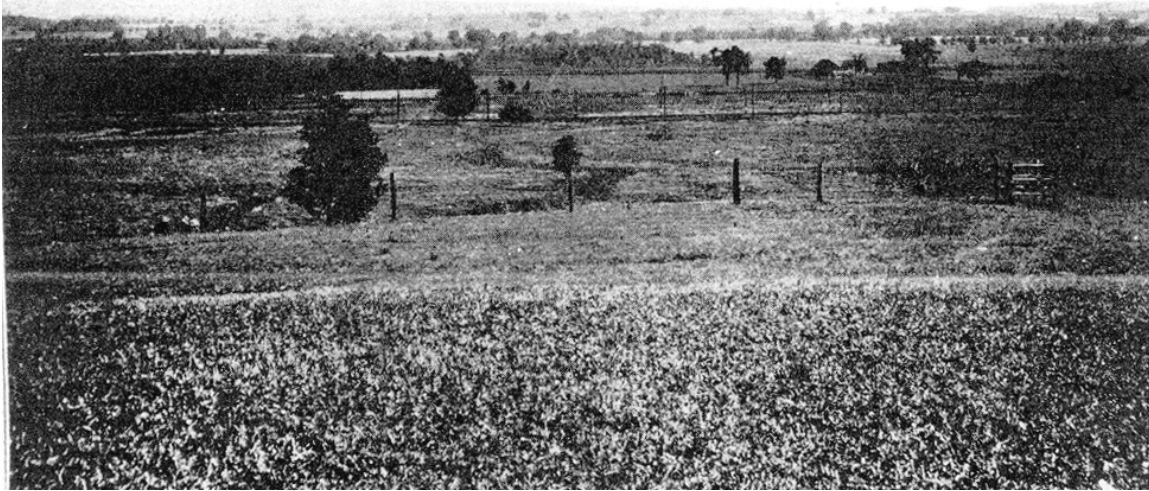
<sup>175</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 63.

<sup>176</sup> "Dedication of Oriskany Monument," Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1884, 1.

<sup>177</sup> "The Story of a Monument," 102.

<sup>178</sup> *Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society 1881-1884*, 191-192.

<sup>179</sup> "Oriskany. The Battle Ground," Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.



**Figure 4.25:** View north from below Battle Monument across lowlands stretching to the Mohawk River, c.1912. Reproduced from Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1912), 38.

### **Constructed Water Features**

According to available documentation, there were no constructed water features on the Site during this historic period.

### **Small-Scale Features**

#### **Gates and Fences**

##### *Agricultural Fences*

Throughout this historic period, a variety of agricultural fences existed on the Site. Lithographs of the Site published in 1879 documented a three-plank fence on the Ringrose farm separating the lowland pasture from the three upland pastures, and a mixture of cross-and-rail and three-plank fences along the western property line adjoining the west ravine [Figures 4.8, 4.9, pages 113, 114].<sup>180</sup> An 1891 sketch of the west plateau documented that the Ringroses had built post-and-wire fences to separate the upland pastures, replacing the hedgerows that were extant around 1879 [Figure 4.20, page 130].<sup>181</sup> A remnant three-plank fence separated the Ringrose barn complex from the adjoining ravine pasture belonging to the Parkhurst heirs in a photograph dated 1900 [Figure 4.10, page 115].<sup>182</sup> Photographs taken during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrated post-and-wire fences around the upland pastures on the Ringrose farm; the fence separating the upland pastures from the larger lowland pasture included a turnstile in a photograph published in 1912 [Figure 4.25].<sup>183</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*, 91, 127.

<sup>181</sup> "The Battlefield of Oriskany, N.Y.," *Utica Saturday Globe*, 1 August 1891.

<sup>182</sup> "The Oriskany Battle-Field," photograph in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 437.

<sup>183</sup> "The Swamp of the Oriskany Battlefield," photograph in Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (1912), 34.



Little documentation has been found on fences on the Parkhurst-heir farm. An illustration of the centennial celebration in the ravine depicted a cross-and-rail fence at the top of the ravine adjacent to the farmstead [Figure 4.13, page 119].<sup>184</sup> A photograph of the east slope of the ravine published in 1907 documented there were post-and-wire fences and a section of three-plank fence along the top of the ravine adjoining the farmstead. [Figure 4.11, page 116].<sup>185</sup>

#### *Battle Monument Gateway*

On January 2, 1885, the Oneida Historical Society took out a policy for \$175 with the Imperial Fire Insurance Company of London to cover "An iron fence, gates, posts and supports with cedar braces, stored in William Ringrose's frame barn; situated near the Oriskany monument grounds in the town of Whitesboro, Oneida Co. NY."<sup>186</sup> These items constituted the entrance gate to the Battle Monument drive, which the Society probably installed the following spring. The posts were pyramidal-capped dressed limestone piers, approximately 10 feet tall by three feet square and set approximately 12 feet apart. Off of the piers were hung swinging iron gates built of round three-quarter inch iron pickets. To either side of the piers were iron fences that extended in 31-foot long semi-circles toward the Road. These were 42 inches tall and composed of pointed three-quarter inch-round iron pickets fastened at the bottom and top to flat iron straps.<sup>187</sup>

#### *Battle Monument Fence*

At the time of its dedication in 1884, there was no fence around the Battle Monument. A photograph taken in 1900 documented there was still no fence, but by 1912, a tall, iron picket fence had been installed around the perimeter of the monument.<sup>188</sup> Such fences were a common funerary element in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but this one may have also served a practical purpose to protect the Battle Monument, given the remote location of the Site.

#### *Site Boundary Fences*

When the Oneida Historical Society purchased five acres from the Ringroses in 1880, the deed specified that the Society shall "make and maintain" fences around the property.<sup>189</sup> In December 1883, The New York Times reported that the Society still needed to "fence the lot." An 1891 sketch of the upland pastures of the Ringrose farm indicated the Society still had not built a fence around their property. By the 1920s, however, there was 193 feet of wood fencing along the memorial park's frontage on the Road. No additional information has been found on this fence.<sup>190</sup> The remaining sides of the property were likely enclosed by post-and-wire pasture fences.

### **Flagstaffs**

#### *Ringrose Farm Flagstaff*

The flagstaff erected on the Ringrose farm just above the Battle Creek ravine prior to the centennial celebration was removed by 1915. It may have been replaced by a cherry tree marking the purported location where General Herkimer sat and directed the battle.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>184</sup> View of Battle Creek Ravine, *Frank's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877.

<sup>185</sup> "Oriskany Battle-Field, East Side of Ravine," photograph in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 421.

<sup>186</sup> Imperial Fire Insurance Company policy, 2 January 1885, "Oriskany Battle Monument," Oriskany Battle Monument file, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

<sup>187</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," Assistant Superintendent of Lands and Forests (unsigned), 8 May 1928, BHS MSS.

<sup>188</sup> "The Oriskany Battle Monument," photograph in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 413; "One of the Ravines of the Oriskany Battlefield Looking Westward," photograph in Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (1912), 38.

<sup>189</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 400, 166-167.

<sup>190</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield;" MacDonald to William Murray, 5 February 1929, BHS MSS.

<sup>191</sup> George H. Thomas, "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field," 1915.

*East Stand-area Flagstaffs*

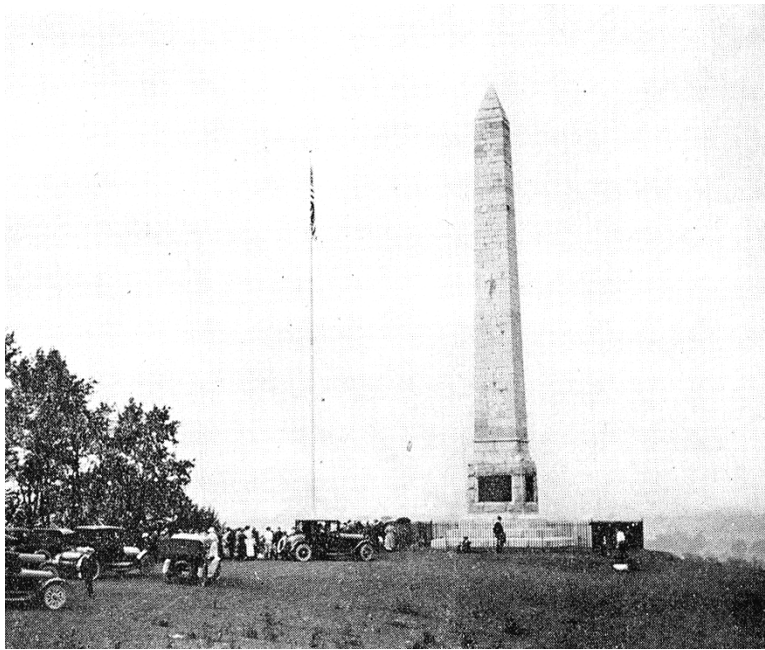
During the centennial celebration, there were two small flagstaffs at the top of the east side of the Battle Creek ravine, opposite the East Stand and adjacent to the Parkhurst-heir farmstead [Figure 4.13, page 119]. These may have been temporary flagstaffs erected for the celebration. They were no longer standing by 1922.<sup>192</sup>

*East Plateau Flagstaff*

At some point after the centennial celebration and before 1879, a large flagstaff was erected on the Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear) farm at the northwest corner of the plateau above the east side of the Battle Creek ravine. On July 31, 1877, the Rome Sentinel reported: "At the point on Mr. Lanfear's land made by the juncture of the Battle Creek ravine and the lowland of the Mohawk Valley, an immense staff is to be erected that will be visible up and down the Mohawk for miles."<sup>193</sup> This flagstaff, which was illustrated in a lithograph of the ravine published in 1879 [Figure 4.8, page 113], appears to have been about 80 feet tall or about twice the height of the ravine, with a ball finial and a wide base.<sup>194</sup> This flagstaff stood through 1927.

*Battle Monument Flagstaff*

Around 1912, a tall wood flagstaff was erected by the German-American National Alliance off the west side of the Battle Monument.<sup>195</sup> It was about 60 feet tall and featured a white shaft above a molded, dark painted hound (base) and a ball finial. This flagstaff stood through 1927.



**Figure 4.26:** View north of Battle Monument and flagstaff, August 6, 1922. Reproduced from Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: published by the author, 1924), 277.

<sup>192</sup> View of Battle Creek ravine, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 25 August 1877; c.1922 photograph, "Oriskany Battlefield," in Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*, 280.

<sup>193</sup> "Oriskany. The Battle Ground," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877.

<sup>194</sup> "Scene of the Battle of Oriskany at Present Day / East Ravine," Beach, 91.

<sup>195</sup> Steuben Society of America, "The Battle of Oriskany / Issued in Commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle" (Published by the Boston Branch of the Society, 1927), 2. This flagstaff is not present in a c.1912 photograph, [Cookingham, *The History of Oneida County* (1912), 38], but may have been erected around the same time that the Herkimer's march monument was dedicated in 1912. The flagstaff predates 1917, when the charter of the German-American National Alliance was revoked.

### Herkimer's March (Beech Tree) Monument <sup>196</sup>

On June 14, 1912, a monument was dedicated marking the purported location where General Herkimer sat under a beech tree and directed the battle [Figure 4.16, page 124]. It was funded by the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. and was located mid-way between the Road and the Battle Monument on the west side of the drive. It was the last in a chain of 14 marking the line of march of the Tryon County militia from Herkimer's home near Little Falls to the Oriskany Battlefield. This chain of markers was erected through sponsorship of various D.A.R. chapters throughout the Mohawk Valley. The first marker was located at the Herkimer home, and others were located in places such as St. Johnsville,<sup>197</sup> Whitesboro, and Oriskany village.

The monument was a rusticated granite slab with a 30" high by 24"-wide inset bronze plaque cast by Paul E. Cabaret & Company of New York City. The plaque featured a topographic illustration of the route of the march through the Mohawk Valley [Figure 4.27], and bore the following additional legend:

40 MILE ROUTE TAKEN BY GEN. HERKIMER AUG. 3-6 / 1777 FOR THE RELIEF OF FORT STANWIX. THE / BATTLE OF ORISKANY AUG. 6, BETWEEN / HERKIMER'S MEN AND ST. LEGER / WITH HIS INDIANS WAS THE / TURNING POINT OF THE / REVOLUTION

NEAR THIS SPOT / STOOD THE BEECH TREE, / WHICH DURING THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY / SHELTERED THE WOUNDED GEN. HERKIMER / WHILE HE GAVE ORDERS / THAT MADE SARATOGA POSSIBLE / AND DECIDED THE FATE OF A NATION

PLACED BY ORISKANY CHAPTER, / DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, / OF ORISKANY, / AND THE SONS OF ORISKANY OF NEW YORK CITY / JUNE 14, 1912



**Figure 4.27:** Typical bronze topographic relief tablet used on Herkimer's march monuments. Reproduced from State of New York, Conservation Commission, *Annual Report for the Year 1926* (Albany: Lyon, 1927), 42. Each monument, such as the Oriskany one, typically contained additional legend specific to its particular location.

<sup>196</sup> Based on available documentation, this monument did not originally have a specific name. The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society referred to the set of 14 as the "Markers on the Line of Herkimer's March" (*Annual Report*, 1913, 600). It was subsequently referred to as the "beech tree monument" or the "D.A.R. monument."

<sup>197</sup> The bronze tablet from the St. Johnsville marker is now located in the Site's visitor center.

## Other

### *Stone Piles*

During this historic period, there likely still existed a number of stone piles scattered along the lowlands east of Battle Creek. No information on the exact number or appearance of these stone piles, but they were likely created during the previous historic period when the land was under cultivation.

## Archeological Sites

During this historic period, there were no archeological resources that were documented on the Site, but several stories about archeological finds were recorded at the time of the centennial celebration, in addition to earlier stories published by Benjamin Lossing and Pomroy Jones.

The *Utica Daily Observer* reported David Lanfear's story in 1877 of a mass grave that was dug under the command of Benedict Arnold soon after the battle on the lowlands of his farm. Mr. Lanfear said this grave was located, "on the brow of a bluff, half a mile beyond the ravine where the battle commenced," where he maintained an orchard (probably the north end of the lowlands east of Battle Creek). According to a Mr. Easton of Oriskany, a large mound once marked the location of this mass grave. The mound was purportedly destroyed by a former farmer of the property "long years ago" who "let loose his swine," which rooted up the bones and destroyed the grave. One of these bones, which was kept by G. W. Parkhurst, was "remembered as a great curiosity" and was purportedly from a man nearly seven feet tall.<sup>198</sup>

The *Rome Sentinel* reported in 1877 of the story, which had purportedly been handed down by survivors of the battle who visited the scene after the Parkhursts settled there, that a grave containing over 30 bodies was located "near Battle Creek, and north of the spot where the speakers' stand is to be erected." The grave was subsequently never located.<sup>199</sup>

According to an 1877 article in the *Utica Daily Observer*, Mr. William Tryon, who farmed land north of the Erie Canal, "has faithfully preserved all that his plow and spade have turned up. He now has a keg full of memorials of the battle." Mr. D. R. Shaw, owner of the hotel in Oriskany, purportedly had the only stone tomahawk taken from the battlefield, as well as "Indian arrow heads of stone, an Indian pipe of Missouri soapstone, and other articles."<sup>200</sup>

## Summary

Between 1877 and 1926, the character of the Site's landscape changed through the introduction of permanent commemoration and the decline of agriculture. A massive celebration marking the centennial of the Battle of Oriskany--the largest celebration the region had ever held--took place on the Site and set in motion plans to permanently commemorate the battle. At this time, the Site encompassed the Parkhurst-heir farm and a portion of the Ringrose farm, and was bordered by the Erie Canal on the north and the Road on the south. In 1880, the Oneida Historical Society purchased five acres from the Ringrose farm to establish a memorial park. Four years later, the society dedicated a prominent, 84-foot high stone obelisk as a monument to the battle. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, local interest was mounting to improve the small memorial park. In 1912, the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. erected a small monument on the Site as part of a chain of 14 marking the trail of General Herkimer and the Tryon County militia. Around this time, the

---

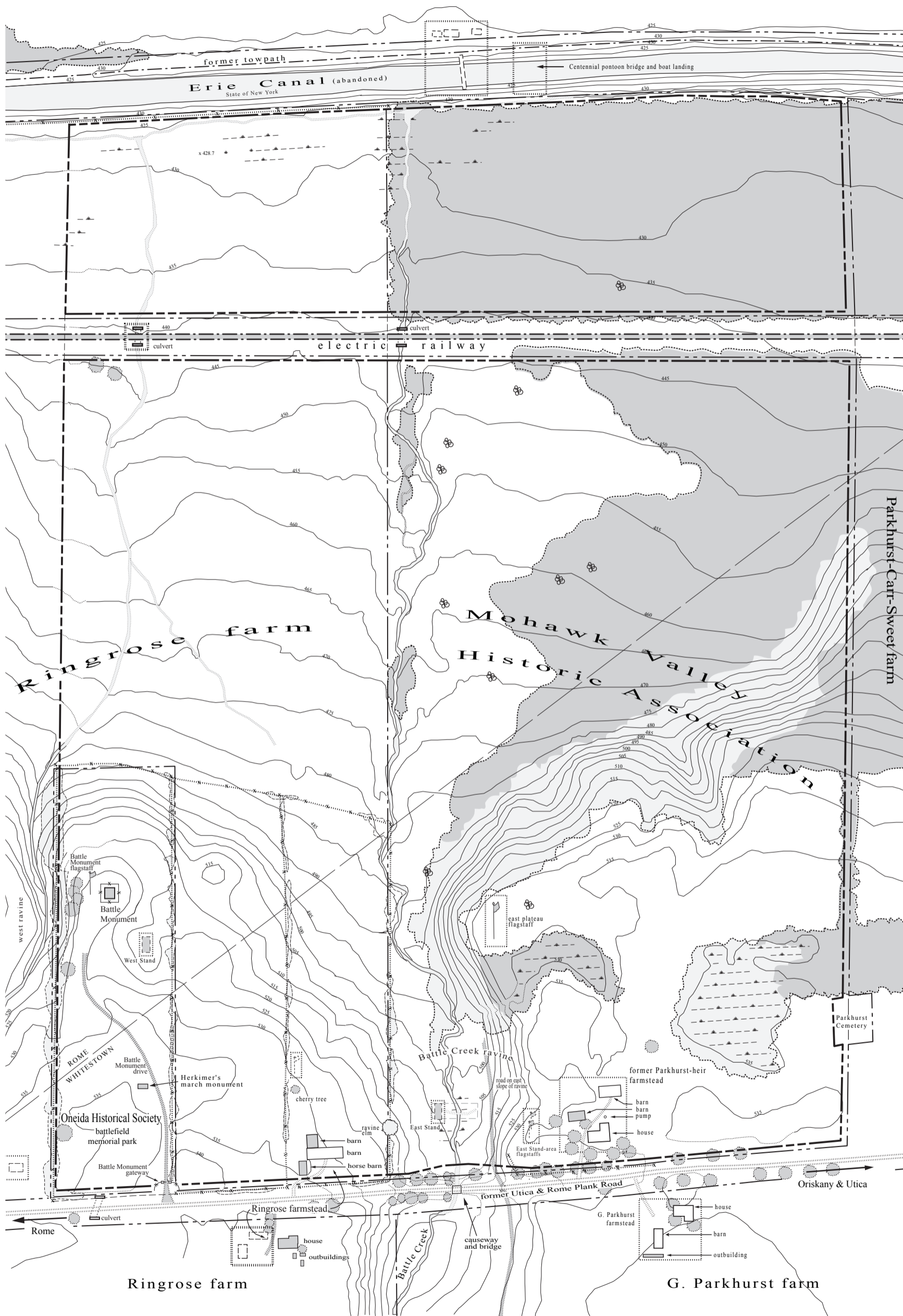
<sup>198</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 5.

<sup>199</sup> "Oriskany. The Battle Ground -- Past and Present--The Coming Celebration," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 31 July 1877. The *Sentinel* did not report on the mass grave mentioned in the *Daily Observer* article, nor did the *Daily Observer* article mention the grave in the *Sentinel* article.

<sup>200</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 5. The location of these artifacts is unknown.

D.A.R. and other groups began to actively promote enlargement of the memorial park, following national trends. In 1915, a plan was produced calling for a 191-acre reservation in which all of the land encompassing the purported battlefield would be preserved. By 1925, the first land acquisition in fulfillment of this plan was completed by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association through its acquisition of the fallow Parkhurst-heir farm on the east side of Battle Creek. The land surrounding the five-acre memorial park remained at this time the working Ringrose dairy. It would take another thirty years, however, for completion of a public historic site on the battlefield.





### LEGEND

- Approximate limits of forest
- Individual tree
- Approximate individual tree location
- Wetlands
- 5' contour
- Assumed 5' contour
- Creek
- Assumed creek alignment
- Approximate road/path alignment
- Centerline of road or path
- Building / structure
- Stone pile
- Flagstaff
- Approximate fence location
- Assumed feature
- Approximate feature location
- Removed during period
- Added during period
- Existing Site boundary (2000)
- Period property boundary
- Removed property boundary

Note:  
Agriculture, practiced in cultivated fields, orchards, and pastures, continued on the Site during this period. The exact location and extent of these agricultural landscapes are unknown. Cultivated fields and orchards were removed during this period.

**Cultural Landscape Report**  
**Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site**

Prepared for:  
New York State  
Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region, Jamesville, New York

Prepared by:  
State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York  
Research Assistant John Auwaerter & Project Director George W. Curry

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE**  
**BATTLEFIELD MEMORIAL**  
**PARK, 1877-1926**

Period Plan 3 of 4

Scale: 1" = 200'

Map Sources:  
"Topography - Oriskany Battle Monument"  
(New York State Parks, 1970)  
"Oriskany Land Use History" (NPS, 1998)  
"Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field"  
(Thomas, 1915)  
"Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany"  
(White, 1927)

Date: August 2000 / Drawn by: John Auwaerter

# **STATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC SITE, 1927-2000**

---

## **Introduction**

In 1927, the five-acre battlefield memorial park developed by the Oneida Historical Society was acquired by the State of New York, marking the beginning of public acquisition of the Site that would be completed only by the 1950s. This transfer also marked the beginning of the transformation of the memorial park into an historic site that would preserve the entire battlefield, a process that was planned by the D.A.R. beginning in the 1910s and continued through the 1950s. Instead of the practice of erecting prominent monuments to mark the location of the battle, the emphasis of commemoration during this period shifted toward preservation and interpretation of the battlefield landscape, following national trends that had first begun in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **1. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

During this historic period, motor vehicles came to dominate transportation in the region over waterways and railroads, resulting in a tremendous increase in road construction and use.

### **Transportation**

#### **Waterways**

The state's Barge Canal System, which replaced the Erie Canal upon its completion in 1918, remained working throughout this period, but it never became as economically successful as the old canal. From the 1920s through the 1950s, the Erie Division of the Barge Canal System, which followed the Mohawk Valley and ran north of the Site, carried substantial portions of the state's petroleum, sand and gravel, cement, grain, stone, and other heavy bulk commodities. The volume of traffic, however, declined as competition from trucking increased and as ocean-going vessels were able to access the Great Lakes following completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959. By the 1990s, the Barge Canal System carried virtually no commercial traffic, but did witness an increasingly large amount of recreational boating. Along with vestiges of the old Erie Canal, the Barge Canal became an important resource in the state's tourism and recreation industries by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, a major state-wide hiking and biking trail system was planned to parallel the Barge Canal and the old canal system, running from Albany to Buffalo. Known as the Canalway Trail, this system followed the Old Erie Canal State Park between Syracuse and Rome, with an extension to Oriskany past the Site planned as of the year 2000.

#### **Roads**

Transportation during this historic period became dominated by the motor vehicle. Building on efforts begun during the prior historic period, an extensive system of local, county, state, and federal highways was constructed from the 1920s through the 1970s to meet the demands of a commercial and passenger transportation system that was shifting away from mass transit toward individual vehicles. By the 1960s, the number of motor vehicle registrations in New York State rose to 5.8 million, translating to a ratio of one vehicle for every three inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> By the end of the century, this ratio had reached nearly one vehicle for every inhabitant of the state, or about 18 million vehicles.

An increasing demand for recreational long-distance automobile travel pushed the first widespread construction program of limited access highways in the state beginning in the 1920s. Termed "parkways," these limited-access highways were built largely under the direction of the State parks commissions as scenic, non-commercial motorways designed to connect the developing system of State parks. In 1926 as

---

<sup>1</sup> Thompson, *Geography of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 267.



part of the State's proposed restoration of Revolutionary battlefields, plans were developed for building a "memorial parkway" along the abandoned right-of-way of the Erie Canal through the Mohawk Valley to connect the region's historic sites, to be known as the Oriskany-Herkimer Memorial Road.<sup>2</sup> This project, however, was never built.

While the State was building limited-access parkways for passenger cars, it was also continuing to build a system of improved highways for local and long-distance commercial and passenger use. Off of the major trunk highways, such as NY 5 across the Mohawk Valley, the State built an extensive system of lateral highways, many of which were improved with federal aid. Counties and towns also improved their system of roads with state and federal aid. Despite this extension of improved highways across the state, there was growing demand for a parallel system of commercial-use limited access highways (freeways). In the 1930s, planning was begun for the first such freeway to connect New York City with Buffalo. Called the New York State Thruway, this freeway was begun in 1946 and was completed largely by 1954. Although it followed the historic transportation corridor of the Mohawk Valley, the Thruway bypassed Rome and the Site and ran due west from Utica, following an alignment parallel to the earlier Seneca Turnpike and NY 5 [Figure 5.1]. A connection to Rome from the Thruway was later built parallel to the old Rome Turnpike extending southwest to Oneida [later NY 365 and 49].

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a concerted effort by the State to upgrade and standardize its system of rural highways based in large part on design standards developed for high-speed freeways. This was accomplished through widening travel lanes, installing paved shoulders, straightening curves, flattening slopes, enlarging and standardizing signs, maintaining clear zones (removing trees, buildings, and other fixed roadside objects), and installing guiderails and barriers. In contrast to earlier roads and parkways that followed existing topography and were designed for slower speeds, implementation of these design standards in many cases separated roads from their surrounding landscape.



**Figure 5.1:** Map of the New York State Thruway in the vicinity of the Site, 1956. Detail of a map in the brochure, "New York State Thruway / The Main Street of the Empire State" (Convent Station, New Jersey: General Drafting Co., 1956).

### Railroads

Despite their dominance during the previous historic period, railroads also became weakened during this period due to competition from motor vehicles. The first rail casualties were the electric railways, which declined prior to World War II and became extinct by the 1950s. Between 1920 and 1945, nearly 1,500 miles of interurban electric railway had been abandoned across the state.<sup>3</sup> The electric railways declined quickly because the automobile easily filled the same short-distance transportation needs in a way that allowed for individual mobility over an indefinite geographic area. Many municipalities also quickly

<sup>2</sup> State of New York, Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report For the Year 1926* (Albany: Lyons, 1927), 38. The Conservation Commission was renamed the Conservation Department in 1927.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, *Geography of New York State*, 267.

replaced their electric railways with busses. In Oneida County, electric railways, including the Utica & Mohawk Valley that ran through the Site, disappeared by 1941.<sup>4</sup>

The New York Central Railroad, the main line of which went through the Mohawk Valley, enjoyed busy freight and passenger service prior to World War II as one of the main trunk lines across the state. By 1962, however, nearly 35 percent of all trackage present in the state in 1913 had been abandoned, and the main trunk lines were declining as well, evidenced by the merger of the New York Central with the Pennsylvania Railroad into the Penn-Central in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> By the 1970s, Penn-Central had gone bankrupt and was merged along with six other major lines into the federally-owned Conrail system, created in 1976. Passenger service on the line was also transferred at this time to a federally-chartered system, Amtrak. By the 1990s, however, the Conrail system across was competing successfully with trucking, and its main trunk line through the Mohawk Valley became increasingly busy with freight trains.<sup>6</sup> Amtrak passenger service through the Mohawk Valley remained weak but largely stable in the face of continued dominance by private motor vehicles.

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture in New York State continued to slowly decline during this historic period as a defining force in society and in the shape of the rural landscape. Increasing competition from western and southern farmers, improvements in rapid transportation, advances in mechanization and bioengineering, and other technological advances resulted in a smaller, but often more efficient, number of farms across the state. By the 1960s, New York had just half of the amount of land in farms that it had in 1875, declining from 90 percent to 41 per cent of all land. The number of farms also declined dramatically, from about 155,000 in 1930 to 65,000 in 1960.<sup>7</sup> Change continued at an even more rapid rate between the 1960s and 2000. By 1997, the total number of farms had dropped to 31,757 and the amount of land in farms decreased to about 24 percent. Throughout this historic period, dairy remained New York's leading agricultural product, accounting for over one-half of the state's farm cash receipts, followed by horticulture.<sup>8</sup> Despite gains in productivity, many especially small and mid-size farms across the state struggled with rising costs and decreasing profits. The decline in the physical appearance of many farms reflected such economic conditions.

Oneida County agriculture paralleled these state trends. The amount of land in the county devoted to farming dropped to about 30 per cent, but the amount and value of its agricultural products stayed high. Dairy remained the dominant agricultural product, comprising about two-thirds of total output, but the county dropped from its rank as first among New York counties in the production of dairy products in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, down to seventh in the 1990s. Vegetable growing and canning, another important local industry, died out by the early 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

The character and location of farms across the county also changed dramatically during this period, especially beginning in the 1960s. Farm frontage on roads near cities and villages such as Rome and Oriskany became more valuable for suburban housing than for the production of agricultural crops. This often led to strip development, as farmers tried to balance increasing expenses from property taxes and machinery with decreases in revenue. Farmland in such stretches often became hidden from public view. In other areas such as the Mohawk River floodplain, ecological concerns gained priority over agricultural productivity, leading to the abandonment of farms or to their acquisition as nature preserves.

---

<sup>4</sup> F. Daniel Larkin, "Three Centuries of Transportation," in Virginia Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County* (Utica: published by the County, 1977), 36.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *Geography of New York State*, 267.

<sup>6</sup> Conrail website, [www.conrail.com](http://www.conrail.com), "Briefing Book," 14 June 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Crisafulli, "Agriculture," in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 50; Thompson, *Geography of New York State*, 202.

<sup>8</sup> "Historical Highlights: 1997 and Earlier Census Years," 1997 Census of Agriculture--New York State Data, United State Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

<sup>9</sup> Randy Brouillette, "The History of Oneida County Agriculture," Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, on-line paper at [www.cce.cornell.edu](http://www.cce.cornell.edu), 2.

## Regional Development

This historic period began during a prosperous period when Utica, and to a lesser extent Rome, remained the dominant economic, political, and social centers of the upper Mohawk Valley region. Between 1920 and 1930, the City of Utica grew from 94,156 to 101,740, a substantial rate but slower than in its boom period prior to World War I. The City of Rome, with its greater land area, grew from 26,341 in 1920 to 32,338 in 1930. The rural areas of the region continued to decline in population at this time, although those areas close to the cities experienced suburban growth. The Town of Whitestown grew from a population of 10,183 in 1920 to 11,818 in 1930.<sup>10</sup>

The Great Depression years of the 1930s brought the beginnings of significant economic change to the region. The textile industry, on which Utica and its surrounding towns developed, largely disappeared by the 1950s as production shifted south toward cheaper modes of production. In response, Utica began to transition at the time to the manufacture of hard goods. Smaller industrial centers such as Oriskany were not able to adapt as well to collapse of the textile industry and fell into significant decline. Rome continued to be home to brass and copper manufacturing as it had since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but became increasingly reliant on federal military development beginning in World War II. In 1942, the city became home to the 2,000-acre Griffiths Air Force Base, which by the mid-1970s developed into a 4,000-acre facility employing over 8,000 people.

These economic shifts, notably after World War II, came at a time when changes in society and transportation led to parallel changes in the landscape of the region. With increasing use of motor vehicle transportation, creation of an extensive improved highway network, popularization of suburban living, and implementation of legal and fiscal policies that favored suburban development, cities across New York began to lose population to surrounding towns, especially after World War II. These forces resulted in a dramatic shift from dense, mixed-use development and investment within town and village centers surrounded by agriculture, to a pattern of disinvestment within town and village centers and construction of sprawling suburban development following established road networks through rural areas where land was often cheap and regulations few. This shift also hastened the decline of agricultural economic and social structures due to rising land values and property taxes.

This shift in physical development patterns continued the downward spiral for the majority of urban centers in the upper Mohawk Valley throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rome and Utica responded to this decline beginning in the 1950s by implementing reconstruction of their urban cores under the federal Urban Renewal program. In the hopes of garnering the nascent tourist industry in the face of its declining copper and military industries, Rome oversaw reconstruction of Fort Stanwix by the National Park Service and recreation of an Erie Canal village in the early 1970s. These interventions, however, did little to stem urban decline, which continued into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. A downturn in the already declining economy of the upper Mohawk Valley in the 1980s, which was precipitated in part by the closing of the Griffiths Air Force Base, made conditions worse for suburbs as well as cities and villages. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, suburban development continued as many people chose to live farther and farther out from declining urban centers.

Population statistics reflected these changes in the region. The City of Utica declined from its peak population of 101,531 in 1950, to 91,611 in 1970, followed by a more precipitous decline over the next two decades to 68,637 in 1990. Rome, which enjoyed more sustained stability in its population due to Griffiths Air Force Base and to its larger land area that incorporated suburban development, rose from a population of 41,687 in 1950 to 50,148 in 1970, and then declined to 44,350 in 1990. The suburban Town of Whitestown grew substantially between 1950 and 1970, rising from a population of 12,686 to 21,382; the decline of the 1980s and 1990s, however, also affected this suburb, as its population decreased to 18,985. Between 1990 and 1998, the Utica-Rome region suffered the notoriety of being the second-fastest declining

---

<sup>10</sup> Census data in Kelly, ed., *The History of Oneida County*, 66.

Metropolitan Statistical Area in the country, dropping in size by 6.9 per cent with a loss of nearly 22,000 people.<sup>11</sup>

The economic decline of the upper Mohawk Valley, however, brought about renewed planning for the economic and social renewal of the region, beginning in earnest in the 1990s. A major component of the renewal efforts revolved around tourism and recreation, with focus on the area's waterways, historic communities and sites, scenery, and natural areas. Recreational boating on the Barge Canal, hiking and biking on the Canalway Trail along the old Erie Canal, revitalization of historic downtowns, farmland preservation, and the promotion and improvement of historic sites such as Fort Stanwix were given new emphasis as central components in the future economy of the region.

## **Commemoration**

### **Historic Background**

During this historic period, battlefield commemoration became centered around landscape preservation and restoration. Increasing mobility, wealth, and leisure time among a large portion of the American public translated into increasing tourism and interest in historic sites and parks. These developments were paralleled by increasingly active government participation in natural conservation, recreation, and historic preservation.

#### *Battlefield Preservation*

The 1920s witnessed a renewed interest in battlefield commemoration at the federal level, with an emphasis at first on marking World War I battle sites in Europe. At home, interest in battle commemoration was also mounting, but the way in which it was practiced was shifting from a focus on singular monuments toward landscape preservation, following the precedent of the National Military Parks established in the 1890s. In the mid-1920s, federal studies had been completed for the establishment of military parks at Yorktown, Fredericksburg, and Petersburg. In 1926, 28 bills were introduced into Congress for the establishment of battlefield reservations, as well as for erecting monuments and markers. Congress also passed legislation during this year that provided for a broad survey of battlefields across the country. This survey, which was undertaken by the Secretary of War between 1926 and 1932, ranked battlefields according to two categories of importance. The most important battlefields were classified as worthy of commemoration by the establishment of national military parks; these included the Revolutionary battlefields of Saratoga and Yorktown. The second category warranted designation as national monuments and possible land acquisition. This category was broken down into those that warranted marking of battle lines, and those that only warranted a single marker to indicate the location of the battle.<sup>12</sup>

In New York, the State government was also becoming increasingly involved in battlefield preservation. At a time when the State was developing an extensive system of parks, public ownership was seen as a reflection of an historic site's significance and as a guarantee of stewardship. Preservation through public acquisition was also gaining popularity as battlefield lands came under increasing development pressures. The new-found popularity of many historic sites for automobile tourists brought about a ripple effect of commercial development on adjacent roads.

In 1926, on the eve of the Sesquicentennial of the Burgoyne Campaign, various historical societies and other organizations had joined in support of an ambitious plan to combine the Saratoga, Bennington, and Oriskany battlefields into a unit park under public ownership. This plan had received enthusiastic public support, including that of Adolf S. Ochs of the *New York Times*.<sup>13</sup> Probably in response to this public

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; current Census data for Utica-Rome Metropolitan Statistical Area, online at [www.census.gov/population/estimate/metro-city](http://www.census.gov/population/estimate/metro-city).

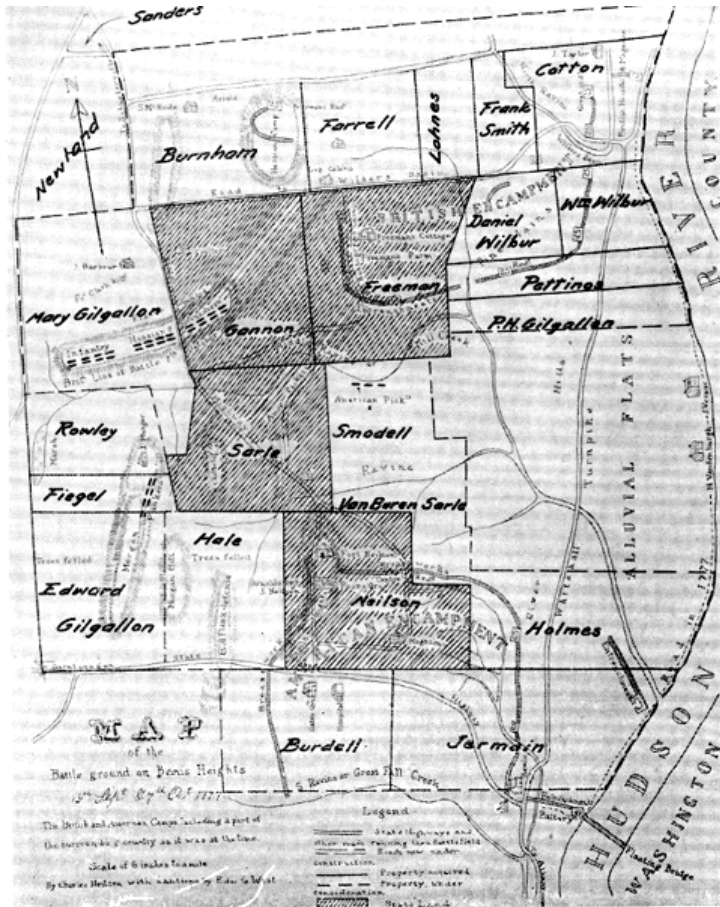
<sup>12</sup> Ronald Lee, "The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973), 49. No information has been found on the criteria used to distinguish the two categories of battlefields.

<sup>13</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, *1925 Yearbook* (No publisher noted, c.1926), 72.

interest, the State Legislature passed a law in 1926 appropriating \$65,000 for acquisition and \$75,000 for the "improvement and rehabilitation" of Revolutionary battlefields and other historic sites, although the law did not call for establishment of the combined unit park. The focus of this act was the acquisition and rehabilitation of the Saratoga, Bennington, and Oriskany battlefields, all of which were associated with the Burgoyne Campaign of 1777. The work of this law was assigned to the Division of Lands and Forests within the Conservation Commission, and a temporary "Advisory Board on Battlefields and Historic Sites" was set up to guide the work.<sup>14</sup> The Conservation Commission reported at the start of this 1926 campaign,

For 149 years the lovers of American history had hoped that the hallowed Oriskany, Bennington and Saratoga fields would be preserved for posterity and that they would be public places, instead of being privately owned. . . . The action was made possible by the great demand of the people, through the press of the State, who advocated the idea of acquisition and restoration earnestly.<sup>15</sup>

The legislation emphasized the preservation of battlefield landscapes and "restoration" to battle-period conditions with the addition of visitor amenities. As part of this law, for example, the State acquired 660 acres in 1926 as the first step in preserving the entire Saratoga battlefield, expanding on its previous acquisition of the battle monument and two-acre park established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century [Figure 5.2].<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 5.2:** Plan of proposed State acquisition of the Saratoga battlefield, 1927. Reproduced from State of New York, Conservation Department, *Annual Report for the Year 1927* (Albany: Lyon, 1928), 50.

Saratoga Battlefield. Shaded portions show state owned land

<sup>14</sup> State of New York, "An act making an appropriation for the rehabilitation and improvement of historic battlefield sites," Laws of New York, 1926, Chapter 767, 1442; also Chapter 768.

<sup>15</sup> Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report For the Year 1926*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> State of New York, Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report For the Year 1926*, 26.

*Development of the New York State System of Parks and Historic Sites*<sup>17</sup>

The Saratoga battle monument was part of an extensive collection of parks, reserves, and historic sites that the State of New York had acquired by the middle of the 1920s. The State had begun this collection with its acquisition of the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh in 1850, development of the Catskill and Adirondack Preserves beginning in the 1880s, and creation of the first state park in 1883, the State Reservation at Niagara. The breadth of the State's holdings had become so extensive and managed under so many different agencies and private organizations that a major reorganization was undertaken in the 1920s during an era when there was increasing tourism and public demand for outdoor recreation. In 1923, a unified State park program was instituted as part of an ongoing reorganization of State government that had begun after World War I. This program called for the creation of regional State Park Commissions and an oversight body, the State Council of Parks, which became headed by Robert Moses. In 1925, the Central New York State Parks Commission was established for parks within Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego, and Otsego Counties. Parks, forest preserves, and historic sites in Oneida County, along with most of the Mohawk, upper Hudson, and Champlain Valleys, were managed as part of the separate Adirondack Forest Preserve and thus fell under the control of the Conservation Commission.<sup>18</sup>

In 1926, the Conservation Commission was reorganized as the Department of Conservation to unify management of the State's forest preserves, parks, and historic and scenic sites. This gave the Department of Conservation control over nearly all of the State's "historic and scientific" sites, which by 1926 included the following battlefields and Revolutionary-period properties: Washington's Headquarters, Knox Headquarters, Herkimer Home, Newtown Battlefield Reservation, Lake George Battleground Park, Bennington Battlefield Park, Crown Point Reservation, Stony Point Battlefield, Fort Brewerton, the Old Senate House, and the Saratoga Battle Monument.<sup>19</sup>

Under this reorganization, historic sites were placed within the Division of Parks, except for those within the Adirondack Forest Preserve Region, which were placed within the Division of Lands and Forests. This latter category included most of the historic sites, which were concentrated in the Mohawk and upper Hudson Valley regions and by this time included the Saratoga, Bennington, and Oriskany battlefields. Several State historic sites also continued to be in the custody or management of private organizations. Called "New York State Historic Reservations," these sites included Bennington Battlefield Park and Lake George Battleground Park, in the custody of the New York State Historical Association; and Stony Point Reservation and Fort Brewerton in the custody of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, among others.<sup>20</sup>

From 1926 through the 1930s, the Department of Conservation oversaw an extensive expansion of the State's "park and parkway system," as it was known. By 1940, there were over 70 State parks and an extensive network of parkways. During this period, however, there was little development of the historic sites system, perhaps reflecting the Department's unease between its traditional emphasis on natural conservation and recreation at the parks, and historic preservation and education at the historic sites. In 1944, this unease apparently became manifest as 27 historic and scientific sites, including Oriskany Battlefield, were transferred to the State Department of Education. Several, such as the Newtown Battlefield near Elmira, remained within Conservation. The Department of Education oversaw growth in the system during the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the acquisition of four new historic sites, bringing

---

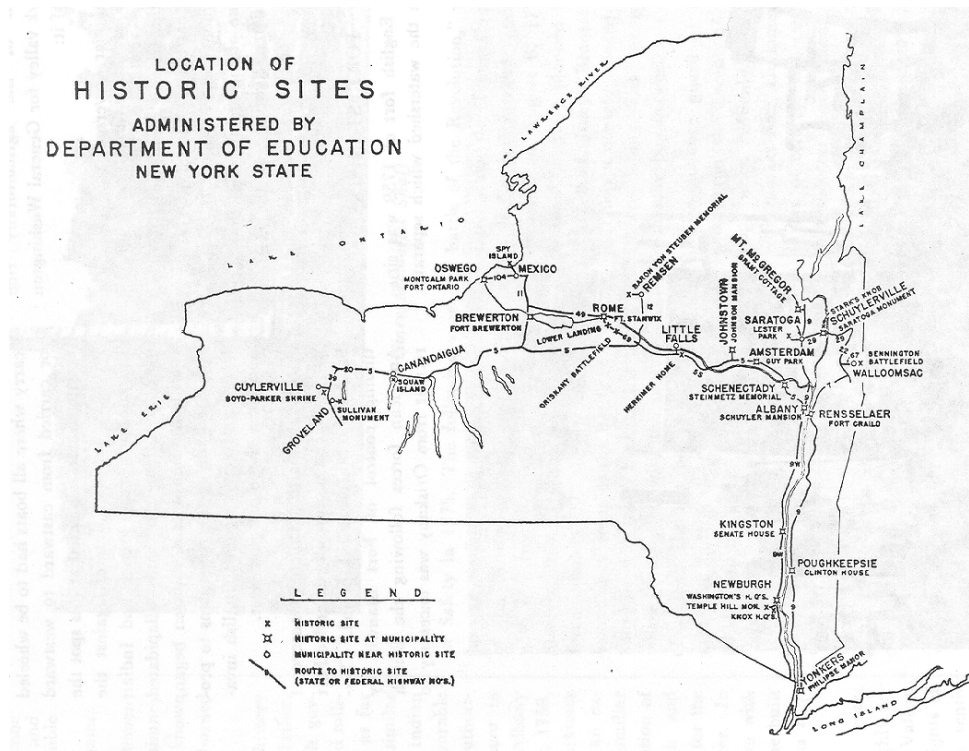
<sup>17</sup> This is only a brief overview. A history of the development of the New York State Parks and Historic Sites system, which has never been compiled, is beyond the scope of this project.

<sup>18</sup> The 1926 legislative mandate to acquire and improve the Saratoga, Bennington, and Oriskany battlefields therefore became the responsibility of the Conservation Commission. Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report for the Year 1926*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> State of New York, Laws of 1926, Chapter 619, Sections 242, 247.

<sup>20</sup> Conservation Department, *Seventeenth Annual Report for the Year 1927*, 35-42, 119-120; see also 1930 and 1940 annual reports.

the total to 21 under its direct management [Figure 5.3]. After this time, however, there was little growth in the system.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 5.3:** Map of historic sites under control of the State Education Department, c.1955. Reproduced from a State Education Department brochure, "Historic Sites of the Upper Mohawk," (undated), Oriskany Battlefield files, Oriskany Museum.

In 1966, the State's historic sites were transferred back to the Department of Conservation and placed under control of a new division, the New York State Historic Trust, which was created in 1966 in part to implement the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Trust became part of the Division of Parks and was made a member of the State Council of Parks. Actual administration and operation of historic sites was undertaken by the regional State Park Commissions on behalf of the Trust.<sup>22</sup>

With establishment of the Historic Trust, the State began to expand its historic sites system, adding such notable sites as Olana, New Windsor Cantonment, Lorenzo, and Sackets Harbor Battlefield.<sup>23</sup> In 1970, the Department of Conservation was reorganized into the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Division of Parks was separated into the Office of Parks and Recreation within the Executive Department. In 1972, the Historic Trust was replaced by the Division for Historic Preservation, and within the Division, a Bureau of Historic Sites was established to manage historic sites, including Oriskany Battlefield. In 1980, the State gave new emphasis to its historic preservation responsibilities and passed a law paralleling the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, under which all state agencies had to comply. As part of this law, Parks and Recreation was renamed the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

<sup>21</sup> New York State Education Department, "Historic Sites of New York State," c.1955 pamphlet, Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>22</sup> *The New York Redbook 1967-68* (Albany: Williams Press, 1968), 382.

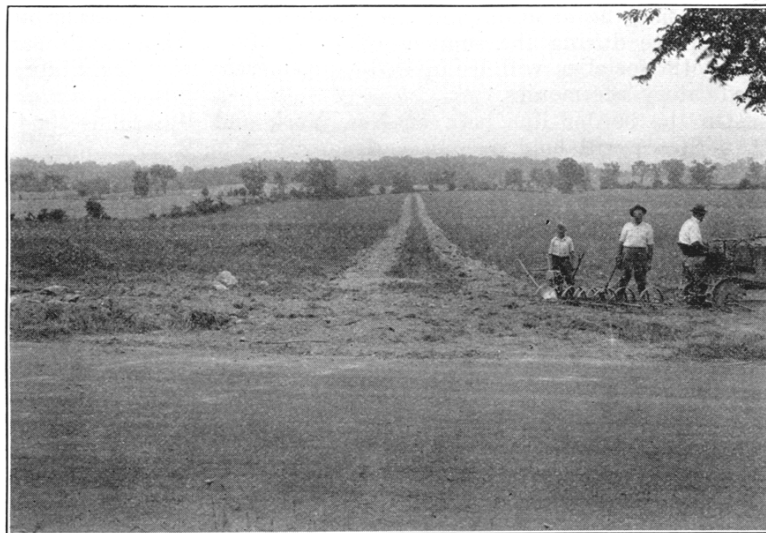
<sup>23</sup> Natural Heritage Trust, "Fifty Years New York State Parks 1924-1974" (Albany: copyright by the Trust, 1975), not paginated.

Although there was the legal commitment to historic preservation in State government, growing budgetary constraints through the 1980s and into the early 1990s forced delays in maintenance and cutbacks in operating expenses at many parks and historic sites across the system. By the mid and late 1990s, however, economic prosperity in the New York metropolitan area and a new emphasis within OPRHP on private-public partnerships led to renewed investment into the infrastructure of the parks and historic sites systems.

### Design of Commemorative Landscapes

As battlefield commemoration shifted during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from an emphasis on erecting individual monuments to preserving battlefield landscapes, treatment and design shifted to an emphasis on interpretation of battle events and landscape "restoration" to battle-period conditions, often retrofitted for automobile tourism. This type of treatment had been well established by the 1920s through precedent at the large National Military Parks, such as Gettysburg.

By the 1920s, the idea of "restoration" based on historic scholarship was gaining popularity.<sup>24</sup> Major restoration projects during the period, most importantly Colonial Williamsburg begun in 1926, lent widespread public appeal to the idea of restoration and living history. The concept of restoration designed to meet the needs of tourism was evident in New York State's 1926 program to preserve battlefields from the Burgoyne Campaign. Under this program, not only were all lands encompassing the historic battlefields to be acquired, but the landscape was also to be restored to battle-period conditions and be made accessible to visitors coming via automobile. Interpretive signs and markers, colonial-style pavilions and rest houses, picnic and camping facilities, gravel-surfaced drives, and commemorative features such as monuments and flagstaves, were common elements in landscape design at State-owned historic sites of the period.



Saratoga Battlefield. Beginning the Work of Restoration. Building Road from State Highway to Site of Powder Magazine.

**Figure 5.4:** "Restoring" the Saratoga battlefield landscape, 1926. Reproduced from State of New York, Conservation Commission, *Annual Report for the Year 1926* (Albany: Lyon, 1927), 50.

At the Saratoga Battlefield, for example, the Conservation Commission reported that as part of the 1926 State plan, it had "restored" (reconstructed) the powder magazine and General Poor's Headquarters, had laid out about three miles of gravel roads, and had built a "comfortable camping place for tourists who wish to visit the battlefields" [Figure 5.4]. To enhance interpretation, the Commission also reported that it had

<sup>24</sup> The concept of restoration at the time was not equivalent to the treatment of restoration as presently defined under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Restoration at the time was more akin to the treatment of rehabilitation.



placed interpretive signs across the battlefield under the direction of the State Historian. Still planned was additional land acquisition and construction of a parking lot and six comfort stations. The Commission also reported that an observation tower ". . . should be located in an advantageous spot so that the people who visit the field may see the whole battleground and visualize the entire movements of the two armies on these days of strife."<sup>25</sup>

Interpretation, restoration, and access were also the focus at other historic sites under the State's 1926 battlefield restoration program. At the Bennington Battlefield, a central monument illustrating in bronze relief the battlefield and troop movements had already been erected prior to 1926. The Commission believed this method of marking battlefields was unique in the country. To this monument were added three smaller granite monuments marking the lines of battle, a Colonial Revival "rest house," and a flagstaff. A new concrete road was also planned through the battlefield.<sup>26</sup> At Fort Ticonderoga, a private restoration was coordinated with State efforts to mark the Knox Trail leading to Boston. And in the upper Mohawk Valley, the State acquired and marked part of the site of Fort Stanwix in the City of Rome and the Lower Landing on the Mohawk River to complete a chain of Revolutionary-period sites that included the Oriskany battlefield. The Commission was also planning for acquisition of the Oriskany Bluff between Oriskany and Whitesboro, and construction of a "memorial parkway" along the old Erie Canal through the Mohawk Valley to connect the historic sites associated with the Burgoyne Campaign, from the Herkimer Home near Little Falls to the site of Fort Stanwix.<sup>27</sup>

Following World War II and into the Bicentennial years, restoration, interpretation, and access remained the focus of treatment at commemorative battlefield and military landscapes. There was also an increasing public demand at both state and federal levels for active recreation at parks, and this demand also affected some historic sites where facilities such as ball fields and expanded picnic areas were planned. By this time, interpretation was also changing and single monuments no longer proved as evocative as they had during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many historic sites were redesigned and reinterpreted to provide interactive experiences that would allow visitors to easily understand the appearance and feeling of an event, building, or landscape during the historic period. Tours, maps, interpretive markers, and orientation centers thus became important for visitors to understand the history of sites such as battlefields. As Americans became increasingly reliant on movies and television for their information, interpretation at historic sites also began to rely on audio-visual components.

The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 established the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation as the operating guidelines by federal and later state agencies. The Standards helped to begin a movement away from an emphasis on restoration and reconstruction toward preservation and respect for the continuum of history. In battlefield landscapes, this shift resulted in acknowledgment of the significance of post-battle features, such as commemorative monuments, and the need to interpret the dynamic and contextual nature of landscapes.

## **2. SITE NARRATIVE**

### **Landscape Context**

#### **The Road**

By 1927, there were continued calls for the improvement of the section of the Road between Oriskany and Rome. The main portions of the sesquicentennial celebration of the Siege of Fort Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany in 1927 were held in Rome purportedly because the Road could not handle the 20,000 "motor cars" expected for the celebration. Organizers felt, however, that the Road could accommodate a limited 500 cars an hour for those wishing to see the battlefield.<sup>28</sup>

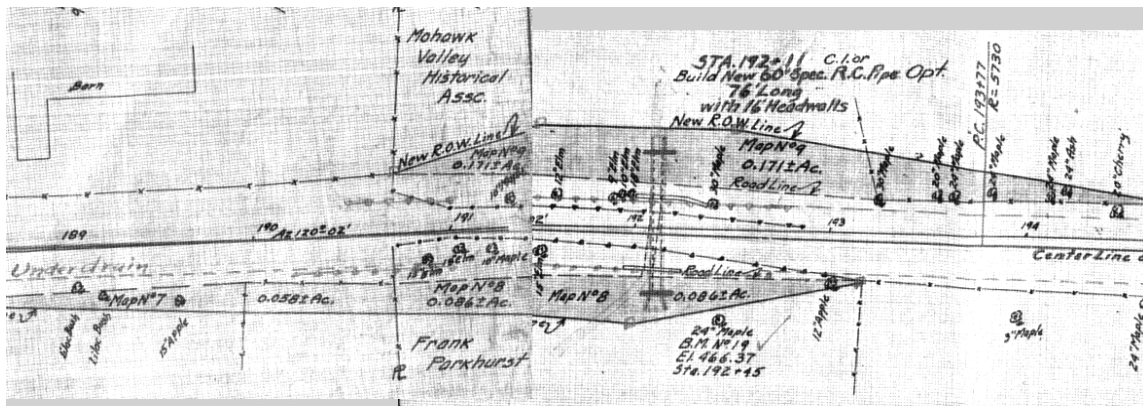
<sup>25</sup> Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report for the Year 1926*, 34.

<sup>26</sup> Conservation Department, *Seventeenth Annual Report for the Year 1927*, 42, 117.

<sup>27</sup> Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report For the Year 1926*, 28-30.

<sup>28</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, *1925 Yearbook* (no publisher noted), 79.

It was not until 1931, however, that a project to improve the Road was begun, the third major reconstruction since it was initially built as a military road in 1759. Preliminary surveys were completed between October 6 and November 5, 1931 for the new highway, which was to be called the "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway." By March 1933, property acquisition plans had been completed, and by the following October, plans and profiles for the reconstruction had been finalized [Figure 5.5]. The project was built by the New York State Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, and was listed as Federal Aid Project No. "N.R.S. 693-A."<sup>29</sup> The new highway, which featured a concrete roadbed, straightened curves, and flattened slopes, was built in 1934. The old stone bridge over Battle Creek was replaced with a concrete culvert as part of enlargement of the causeway. The new highway followed the previous alignment, although through the Village of Oriskany it was built on a new alignment over the abandoned Erie Canal. The new highway was designated as NY 5-S, an extension of the main east-west road through the Mohawk Valley on the south side of the river.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 5.5:** Plans for the construction of the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway, detail of area at causeway across Battle Creek ravine, 1933. New York State Department of Public Works, 31 October 1933, New York State Department of Transportation Region 2 offices, Utica.

By 1955, the State had changed the route designation of the Road to NY 69, possibly as part of the revamping of the area's highway system that came with the opening of the New York State Thruway in October 1954.<sup>31</sup> NY 69 passed beneath the Thruway in the Village of Whitesboro, but an interchange at this location was not built. At the west end of NY 69 near Rome, further changes were made to the highway in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the construction of the Rome arterial system.

In the vicinity of the Site, however, no changes were made until the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) undertook pavement and drainage improvements in the early 1970s. In 1982, the DOT began a more significant project in which property was acquired to expand the right-of-way along certain sections, widen travel lanes, pave shoulders, and improve drainage.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Preliminary Survey Transit" dated October 6 - November 5, 1931, "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," construction plans dated 10-31-1933, appropriation plans dated March 28, 1933, N.Y.S. D.O.T. Region 2, Utica. Note: appropriation plans refer to the "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro County Highway."

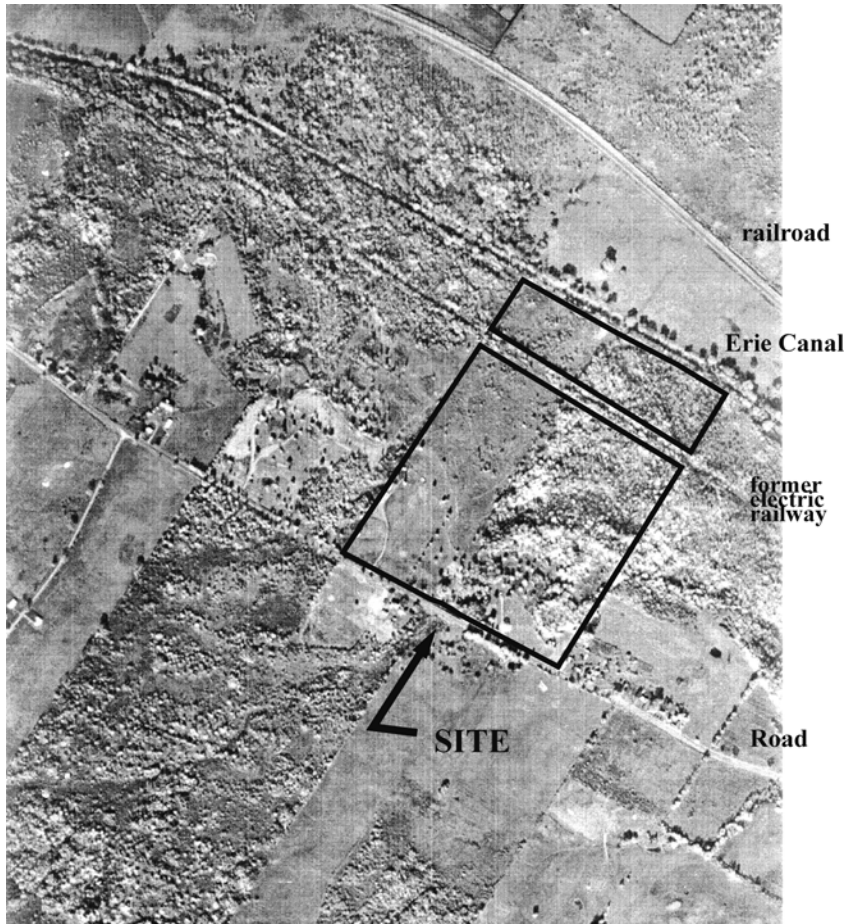
<sup>30</sup> State of New York, "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State made Pursuant to Chapter 542, laws of 1939 and Amendatory Laws Dated and approved, May 25, 1942," map 316.1, New York State Thruway Authority, Syracuse office. The old section of the Road through downtown Oriskany is presently Utica Street.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, 1:24,000 Oriskany, N.Y. quadrangle map, 1955.

<sup>32</sup> New York State Department of Transportation, "50' Plan & Mainline Profile, Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro S.H. 8455," dated 1-8-82, N.Y.S. D.O.T. Region 2 Offices, Utica.

## Erie Canal

Throughout this historic period, the old Erie Canal between Stanwix and Oriskany remained abandoned, but in State ownership and largely intact [Figure 5.6]. At some point after 1918 and possibly during this historic period, farm bridges across the canal were replaced with culverts and earthen fill, thereby eliminating the possibility of navigation. In 1934, the portion of the canal through the Village of Oriskany was filled for construction of NY 5-S, the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown Highway, and further sections were filled or destroyed with later construction of the NY 365 / NY 49 interchange near the hamlet of Stanwix. Breaks in the canal walls and collapse of wood-plank and stone culverts led to lowering of the water level. Vegetation grew up along the canal walls, but the old towpath was maintained as a mown corridor to maintain access through the area.



**Figure 5.6:** Aerial photograph of Site and surrounding region, 1965, Oneida County file, Bird Library aerial photograph collection, Syracuse University; annotated by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

## Railroads

### *Electric Railway (Niagara-Mohawk Natural Gas Transmission Line)*

By the 1930s, the New York State Railways Company, successor to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway, was failing and in June 1933 it ceased operation of the Rome-Little Falls line that ran through the Site.<sup>33</sup> By 1952, however, the corridor was still owned by what was apparently a successor to New York State Railways, the Utica Transit Corporation. In 1954, Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation purchased the

<sup>33</sup> Robert Gurley, *Here Comes the Trolley* (Published by Richard Steinmetz, 1964, [no place of publication noted], 1974), 4.

corridor for construction of an underground natural gas transmission line. The corridor remained in use for gas transmission after this time.<sup>34</sup>

#### *New York Central Railroad (Conrail, CSX)*

The New York Central Railroad became the Penn-Central in the 1960s and then following bankruptcy, it was reorganized in the 1970s under federal control as Conrail for freight and Amtrak for passenger service. Freight and passenger service remained active on these tracks throughout this historic period, with an increasing number of freight trains through the 1990s. In 1999, the private CSX Corporation took over freight operation and maintenance of the line.

### **Regional Development**

During this period, the region between Rome and the Village of Oriskany changed from a largely open agricultural district to an area characterized by scattered commercial, residential, and industrial suburban development, reforested land, and widely scattered farms.

The Village of Oriskany witnessed limited growth during this period. Like most small urban centers across the state, the village lost much of its industrial and commercial base. Oriskany rose from a population of 1,101 in 1920 to 1,450 in 1990, with a large percentage of this increase probably due to suburban growth.<sup>35</sup>

In 1955, much of the area between the Village of Oriskany and Stanwix remained open farmland, but by the mid-1960s, a large portion of the land was out of agricultural use and was becoming reforested [Figure 5.6, preceding page].<sup>36</sup> By the 1990s, fallow farmland on the river flats north and east of the Site was preserved as the Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area through the Department of Environmental Conservation. Industrial development was concentrated well south of the Site around the Oneida County Airport, while residential development occupied an increasing amount of road frontage on fallow farmland throughout the area. Much of this residential development was characterized by scattered single-family homes on large lots, although several larger-scale subdivisions had been built, including one along Monument Road just west of the Site.

### **Site Development & Use**

Agriculture disappeared as a land use on and around the Site during this historic period as the State acquired a total of 80 acres by the 1950s, including a portion of the Ringrose farm. With the end of agriculture on the Site, forests grew back on most of the fields, except where lawn was maintained around the primary monuments.

### **Site Ownership**

On June 14, 1927, the State of New York purchased the five-acre battlefield memorial park from the Oneida Historical Society for \$1.00.<sup>37</sup> At this time, the memorial park was surrounded on all sides by the Ringrose farm, which was owned by the estate of William Ringrose and covered 30 acres on the west half of the Site in two separate parcels. The 48 acres covering the east half of the Site were divided in two parcels owned by the First National Bank and Trust Company of Utica in trust for the Mohawk Valley Historic Association dating back to a transaction with the Parkhurst heirs completed in 1925. On

---

<sup>34</sup> State of New York, "Map of Land ... to be acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield ... Estate of William Ringrose, Reputed Owner" 11 August 1952; Oneida County deeds, Book 1460, 555. No information has been found on when the gas line was installed.

<sup>35</sup> Census data in Kelly, ed., *History of Oneida County*, 66; current United Census data for Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

<sup>36</sup> 1955 U.S.G.S. Oriskany quadrangle map; 1965 aerial photograph, Oneida County file, Bird Library, Syracuse University.

<sup>37</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 874, 225.

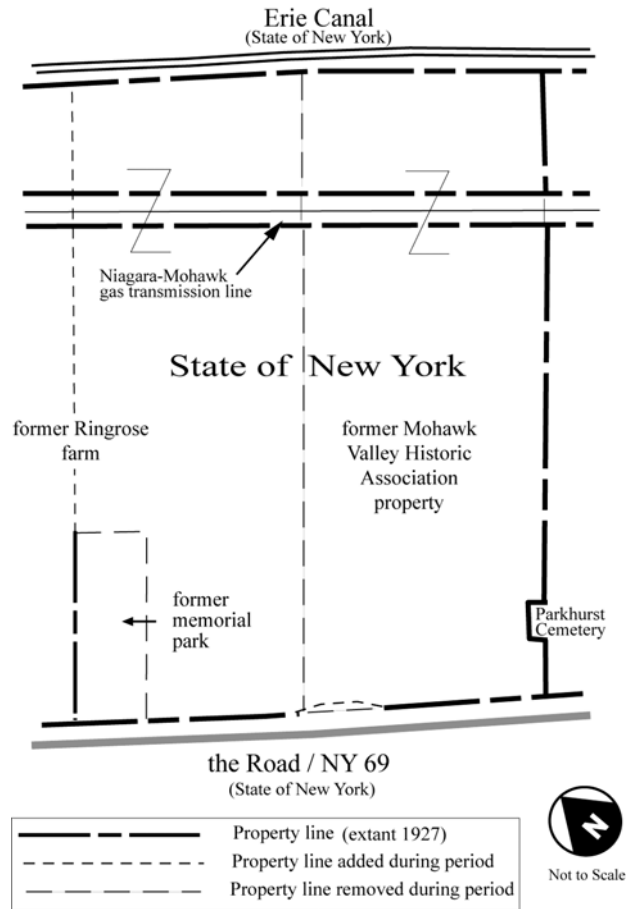
November 13, 1939, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association acquired full title to the 48 acres from the successor First Citizens Bank and Trust Company of Utica.<sup>38</sup>

After years of planning, New York State acquired title to an additional 75 acres of the former Ringrose farm on December 15, 1952. This property was on west half of the Site and was subdivided from the larger Ringrose farm. The State purchased this property from Bessie L. Ringrose, Zelpha Ringrose Henderson, and Harriet White (widow and sisters of William Ringrose) for \$5,500.00.<sup>39</sup> The State received title to the two parcels on the east half of the Site as a gift from the Mohawk Valley Historic Association on April 23, 1955.<sup>40</sup> This property came with a right-of-way between the Road and the Parkhurst Cemetery.

The old Erie Canal continued in State ownership throughout this period. The Road was apparently owned by Oneida County prior to 1933. In this year, as part of the reconstruction into the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway, the Road came under State ownership. The State expanded the 66-foot right-of-way at the ravine by acquiring a small, .171-acre parcel from the Mohawk Valley Historic Association to expand the causeway. This parcel extended in a trapezoidal form 25 feet north of the Road within the ravine.<sup>41</sup> The 100-foot wide trolley corridor that crossed the Site was purchased from the Utica Transit Corporation (successors to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway, and the New York State Railways) by the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation in 1954 [Figure 5.7].<sup>42</sup>

**Agriculture**

At the time the State acquired the memorial park in 1927, the east half of the Site was owned by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, which did not farm the property.<sup>43</sup> The west half of the Site surrounding the memorial park was the farm of William Ringrose, who operated a 30-cow dairy at the time. Ringrose was born in 1883 and was the son of William Ringrose Senior, who had purchased the farm in 1861.<sup>44</sup> To the east between the memorial park and Battle Creek ravine was the Ringrose barn complex, and across the Road was the Ringrose farmhouse. The Ringrose farm occupied a total of 84 acres north of



**Figure 5.7:** Site ownership and boundary changes, 1927-2000. Drawn by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 1007, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 1385, 271.

<sup>40</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 1472, 545.

<sup>41</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," appropriation plans dated March 28, 1933.

<sup>42</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 1460, 555.

<sup>43</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site, Central Region MSS. This aerial clearly shows open lawn or meadow on about 75% of the uplands on the east half of the Site; the Association may have rented out some of this land for pasture.

<sup>44</sup> David H. Beetle, *Along the Oriskany* (Rochester: Published for the Utica *Observer-Dispatch* by Louis Heindl & Son, 1947), 177.

the Road, including land to the west of the memorial park, as well as additional land south of the Road. Through the 1930s, Ringrose maintained a series of pastures on the uplands that extended perpendicular to the Road; the lowlands appear to have been one undivided pasture that was used less intensively than the uplands. The pasture between the electric railway and the Erie Canal was no longer in use by this time and was covered with scrub growth characteristic of old-field succession. The lowland pastures south of the electric railway also exhibited some successional growth by this time [Figure 5.8].<sup>45</sup>



**Figure 5.8:** c.1931 aerial photograph of the battlefield memorial park with its drive and monument, partly reforested Mohawk Valley Historic Association property at right half of photograph, and open fields of the Ringrose farm at left half of photograph. The electric railway and Erie Canal are visible at the top of the photograph. Original framed photograph courtesy of the Oriskany Museum.

In 1949, William Ringrose was planning to retire as caretaker of the State's memorial park, and by this time he had probably ceased his dairy operation.<sup>46</sup> Ringrose had died by 1952 when half of the farm was sold to the State. At this time, the west half of the farm to the west of the Site was in an advanced stage of old-field succession, reflecting that this land had ceased to be active pasture many years before. The east half of the farm within the Site, except for the area between the electric railway and the Erie Canal, remained open meadow.<sup>47</sup> The State removed pasture fences and demolished two of the three barns by the late 1950s. The lowland pastures were allowed to reforest, and the upland pastures were maintained as lawn. Much of the wide expanse of open farmland south of the Site, which was partly owned by the Ringroses, also fell out of agricultural use and became reforested by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>45</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph; 1938 aerial photograph with soils designations, ARZ 3356, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

<sup>46</sup> "State Park Proposed at Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

<sup>47</sup> 1957 aerial photograph with soils designation, ARZ 7P26, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

## Commemoration and Development of the Commemorative Landscape

### *State Acquisition and Development of the Battlefield Memorial Park, 1927*

By the mid-1920s, the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. and the Mohawk Valley Historic Association were finally meeting with some success in their efforts to preserve and secure public acquisition of the Oriskany battlefield. As part of the 1926 State act to acquire and restore Revolutionary-period battlefields through the Conservation Commission, a subcommittee entitled "Committee for the Commemoration of the Burgoyne Campaign in the Fort Stanwix-Oriskany-Mohawk Area" was formed to plan for development of the Oriskany battlefield and other sites in the upper Mohawk Valley region. The subcommittee had to work with a \$9,000 allocation for acquisition of land and \$16,000 for rehabilitation. By the end of 1926, the subcommittee had recommended to the Conservation Commission the following items pertaining to the Oriskany battlefield:

- Transfer of the five-acre memorial park from the Oneida Historical Society to the State;
- Transfer of the 48 acres owned in trust for the Mohawk Valley Historic Association to the State;
- Acquire by gift or purchase all of the 88 acres owned by the Ringrose heirs, according to current farm values;
- Acquire by gift or purchase land along Bloody Brook [Battle Creek] from the ravine north to the Mohawk River;
- Set aside \$2,000 of the \$16,000 rehabilitation allocation to clean and repoint the Battle Monument, paint the iron fence, and maintain the ground of the memorial park as a lawn;
- Erect wooden interpretive signs, white with black letters, to be replaced later with permanent markers;
- Build a parkway along the abandoned Erie Canal from Fort Stanwix through the Site and east to the Herkimer Homestead, and that this road be known as the "Memorial Parkway, Oriskany Road."<sup>48</sup>

By the close of 1926, the Conservation Commission reported to the Legislature that it had asked for the transfer of the battlefield memorial park and the 48-acre Mohawk Valley Historic Association property. The intervening Ringrose farm, however, had not yet been acquired, but the subcommittee reported that it anticipated it would soon do so. The reason that this property had not been acquired was that the Ringroses, who still maintained an active dairy farm on the property, were asking too high a price given the appropriated funds. The Advisory Board therefore recommended that the land be acquired by purchase through allocation of additional funds, or through condemnation, which meant delay until further legislation could be passed.<sup>49</sup> Despite this setback, the



**Figure 5.9:** View northwest of the 1927 rest house with loop drive in foreground, c.1940. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

<sup>48</sup> "Suggestions for Consideration of Oriskany and Fort Stanwix Sub Committee of Advisory Committee to Conservation Commission," unpublished paper, 1926, BHS MSS.

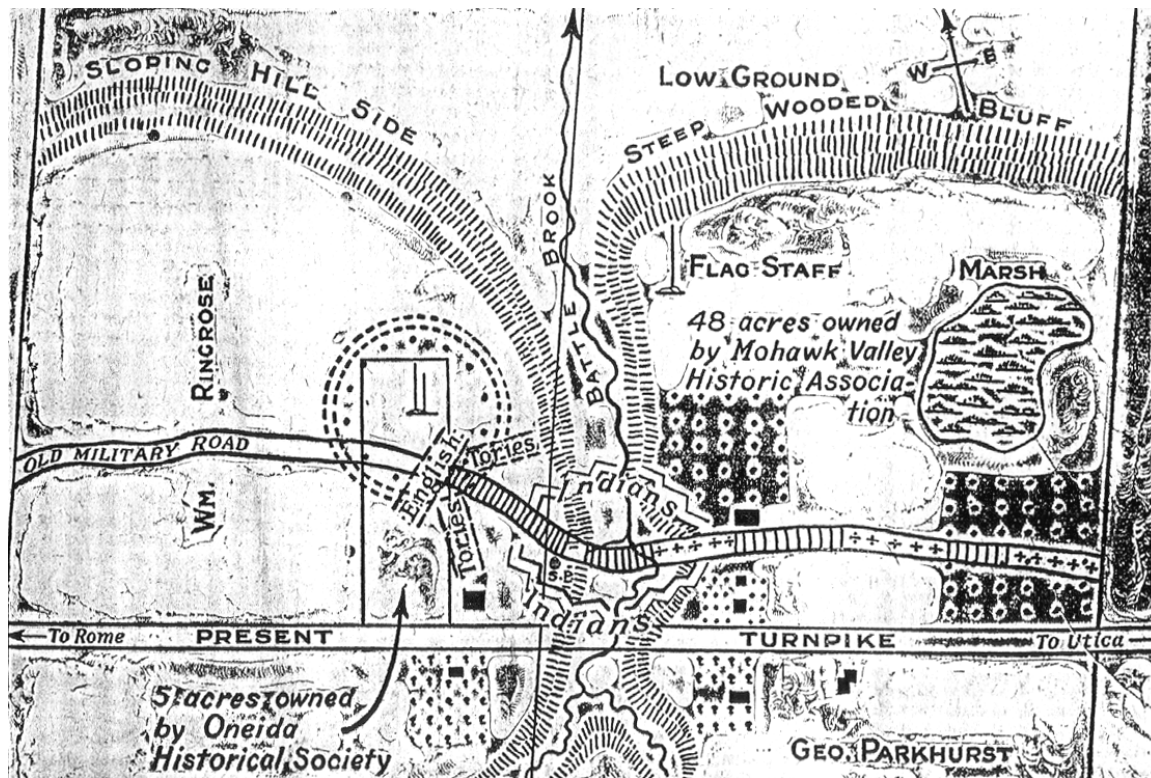
<sup>49</sup> Conservation Commission, *Sixteenth Annual Report For the Year 1926*, 27-28, 38; "Suggestions for Consideration of Oriskany and Fort Stanwix Sub Committee."

Conservation Commission went ahead with acquisition of the five-acre memorial park in order to proceed with plans for the sesquicentennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany planned for August 6, 1927. The State postponed plans for acquisition of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property until the intervening Ringrose property could be acquired.

On June 14, 1927, the State secured title to the five-acre memorial park from the Oneida Historical Society for \$1.00. Soon after this, improvements were begun. The Battle Monument was repointed at a cost of \$500 and a new bronze plaque was added listing an additional 241 veterans. A Colonial Revival-style frame "rest house" was erected at a cost of \$4,000 off the northwest corner of the Battle Monument, following the same design as those at Saratoga and Bennington [Figure 5.9, previous page]. Other improvements included installation of gravel paving on the 8-foot wide drive to the Battle Monument, and painting of the fences and Battle Monument flagstaff. Probably as a result of the failure to acquire the Ringrose farm, along with lack of historic documentation, interpretive markers were not installed at key battlefield locations, as had been accomplished at Saratoga and Bennington.<sup>50</sup>

*The Sesquicentennial Celebration and Maintenance of the Battlefield Memorial Park, 1927-1952*

On August 6, 1927 at 9:30, a grand celebration marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany and the Siege and Relief of Fort Stanwix was opened with a ceremony on the Oriskany Battlefield before an audience of 3,000. William Pierrepont White, President of the Oneida Historical Society, produced a map of the battlefield showing purported troop movements overlaid on the landscape as it existed in 1927 [Figure 5.10]. For the celebration, a large, raised speakers platform, decked out in white cloth and flags,



**Figure 5.10:** "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany," copyright 1927, William Pierrepont White. Not to scale. Lines on Road indicate troop movements and dashed circle with flagstaff in the middle indicates "Herkimer's final order of battle;" key for other graphics not available. Reproduced from *Herkimer Evening Telegram*, 4 August 1927, 3. Base map originally published in Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878).

<sup>50</sup> Conservation Commission, *Seventeenth Annual Report For the Year 1927*, 42; Unpublished certification dated 25 July 1927 by Herbert F. Prescott, Secretary of the Conservation Department, for allocation of funds for the development of the Fort Stanwix-Oriskany area, BHS MSS.



was erected between the Battle Monument and the Road [Figure 5.11; see also front cover of report]. Dr. Alexander C. Flick, State Historian, accepted the gift of the Battle Monument and memorial park from the Oneida Historical Society on behalf of the State. The *New York Times* reported,

Cloudless blue skies and cool breezes from the Adirondacks made this a perfect day for an outdoor celebration. Crowds standing alongside the battle monument at Oriskany could see the green Mohawk Valley stretching away for miles into the distance. Today it was a region of peaceful farms and thriving communities; but the Oriskany battlefield was a reminder that all was not so peaceful 150 years ago . . . Today the loudest noise was the whistle of a locomotive down in the peaceful valley; 150 years ago Oriskany echoed with the war cries of red Indians, the crackle of rifle fire, the shouts of fighting men.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 5.11:** View south from the Battle Monument toward the speakers' platform erected for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, August 6, 1927. The Ringrose farmhouse is in the left distance. Reproduced from *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1927.

The Oriskany ceremony was part of a much larger celebration before an estimated crowd of 50,000, the highlight of which was an elaborate 1,000-actor pageant of the Battle of Oriskany and Siege of Fort Stanwix set in a small-scale replica of the fort at Mohawk Acres just outside of Rome. An aerial display over the area by Commander Richard Byrd and Lieutenant Lester Maitland, among others, added to the excitement of the day. The Oriskany-Fort Stanwix celebrations were the first of 15 celebrations planned by the State Department of Education that included a joint ceremony with Vermont at Bennington and the culmination ceremony at Saratoga on October 8<sup>th</sup>.

Following the improvements made in 1927, the State undertook few other changes to the memorial park over the next 25 years. In 1928, the drive to the Battle Monument was widened to 14 feet, and plans were made, but never progressed, to install an iron picket fence along the Road. On July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, William Ringrose, farmer of the adjoining land, was hired by the State as caretaker of the memorial park.<sup>52</sup> He maintained the lawn and throughout the year, he raised the flag daily. In 1930, the Battle Monument flagstaff that was erected by the German-American National Alliance around 1912 was replaced by a

<sup>51</sup> "50,000 See 'Battle' at Fort Stanwix . . . Oriskany Commemorated," *New York Times*, 7 August 1927, 2-1, 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> Ringrose remained caretaker at least until December 1949, and probably until his death sometime prior to 1952. His successor was Leo Dunn, who remained caretaker into the mid-1970s.

shorter steel pole, and the following year, 825 feet of Cyclone chain-link fence was installed along the west property line.<sup>53</sup>

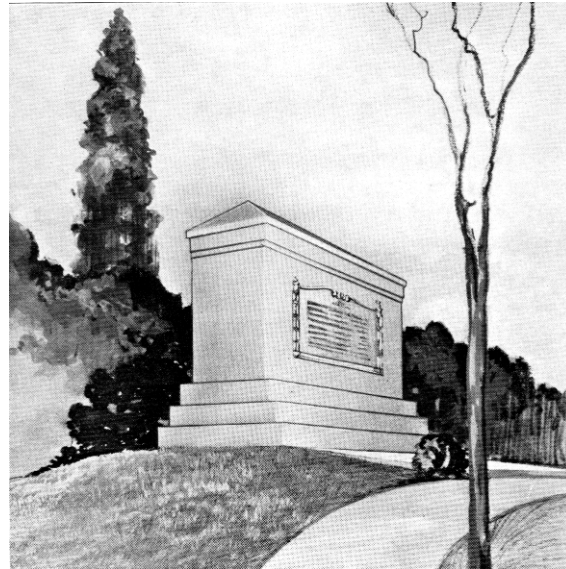
The battlefield memorial park remained well visited during this time. In September 1929, caretaker Ringrose estimated that 44,000 people had visited between 1928 and 1929; between 1930 and 1931, he estimated that 30,000 people visited.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Development of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association Property, 1927-1952*

Two years prior to the sesquicentennial celebration in 1927, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association had purchased 48 acres encompassing the old Parkhurst-heir farm on the east half of the Site. The Association saw their purchase as only the first step in the development of a public historic site that would preserve the entire Oriskany battlefield and give it the "... same level of care and reverence now given the fields of Valley Forge and Gettysburg."<sup>55</sup> Their plan was to gift the 48 acres to the State of New York as part of its development of the battlefield, but due to legal and financial issues concerning the intervening Ringrose farm property and title, this was not accomplished in time for the sesquicentennial celebration.

Despite this setback, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association went ahead with development of a monument on its 48 acres, perhaps with the thought that it would make the land more attractive for State acquisition. On August 8, 1927, two days after the sesquicentennial celebration, the Association voted at its annual meeting to plan for erecting a monument to the estimated 260 unknown soldiers of the battle. The Association took this action as a follow-up to its achievement in listing additional names of veterans on the Battle Monument. In 1927, the Parkhurst-heir house and two barns remained, but were likely soon demolished in preparation for construction of the new monument.<sup>56</sup>

The Association contracted with the firm of Joseph J. Nelbach & Sons of Utica to design and build the Unknown Soldiers' Monument at a cost of \$3,500, of which the Association already had \$1,500 left over from the purchase of the 48 acres in 1925. The Nelbach firm, which had built the obelisk at the Herkimer Homestead, produced a drawing of the proposed monument showing a rectangular, 10-foot high stone monolith on a stepped based with a sloped cap; the firm also proposed a small paved plaza between the monument and a curved entrance road. Two bronze tablets, to be produced by the Rome Novelty Works, were planned for the front and back of the monument [Figure 5.12].<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 5.12:** Rendering of the proposed monument to the "Unknown Patriotic Soldiers of Tryon County," c.1928, probably drawn by Nelbach & Sons. Reproduced from a copy in Oriskany Battlefield files, Oriskany Museum.

<sup>53</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," Assistant Superintendent of Lands and Forests (unsigned), 8 May 1928, BHS MSS; "State Park Proposed at Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1; Beetle, *Along the Oriskany*, 177-178.

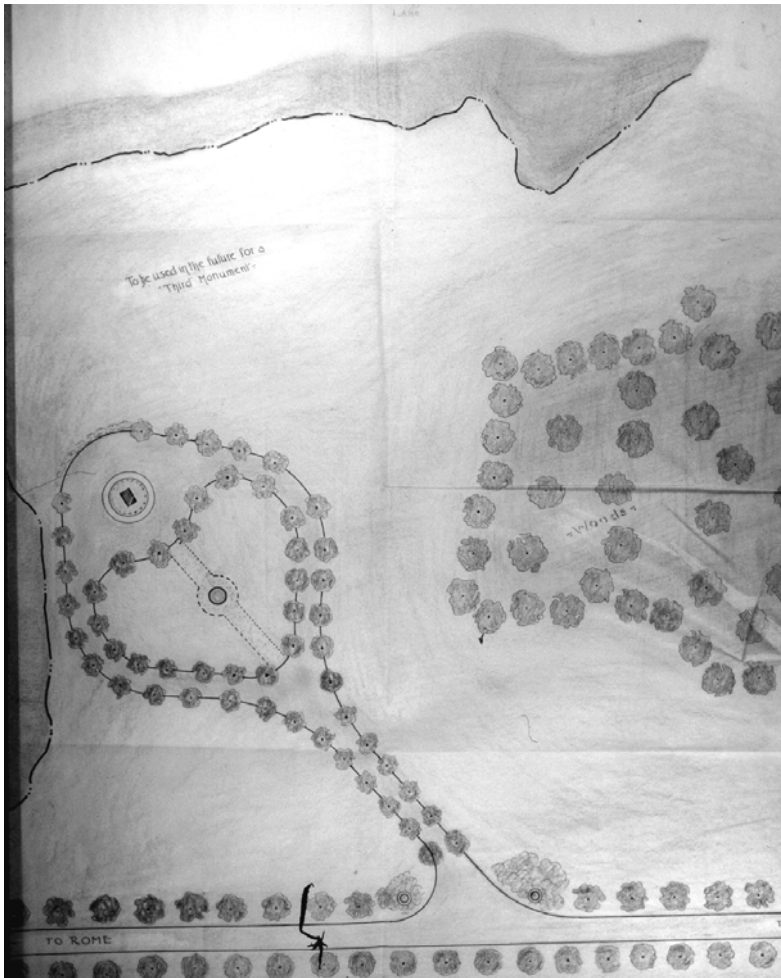
<sup>54</sup> William Ringrose to Mr. A. S. Hopkins, 25 September 1929, 2 October 1931, BHS MSS.

<sup>55</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, "Annual Meeting Number 6" (1925), 19, New York Public Library.

<sup>56</sup> White, "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany," 1927. This plan shows three buildings in the Parkhurst-heir farmstead.

<sup>57</sup> "Plans Honors For Unknown Revolutionary War Heroes / Historic Body to Erect Stone Near Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch* [?], c. 9 August 1927, clipping in Oriskany Museum MSS.

A location for the Unknown Soldiers' Monument was selected at a high point above the east side of the Battle Creek ravine where it was believed the old military road descended into the ravine and where it could be seen from the Road. The monument was also likely oriented toward a view of the Battle Monument to the west. A temporary, 200-foot long approach drive was constructed from the Road to the monument. Construction began in 1928 on a slightly revised design that featured an overhanging, nearly-flat cap and simpler bronze tablets. In order for the new monument to match the older Battle Monument, weathered limestone from the abandoned aqueduct that carried the Erie Canal over the Oriskany Creek was used to construct the shaft.<sup>58</sup> On August 3, 1928, just prior to the dedication ceremonies scheduled for Oriskany Days on August 6th, a landscape plan for the area around the new monument was completed [Figure 5.13]. This plan called for a formal 35-foot wide tree-lined drive that would extend on axis with the monument and at a diagonal to the Road. A planted island with a central feature, probably a flagstaff, was planned to spread out in front of the monument.



**Figure 5.13:** Detail, "Plan for Entrance Road to Oriskany Monument," c.1928. Courtesy of the Oneida County Historical Society, Utica. Battle Creek ravine is to the left and the Road is at the bottom of the plan.

was planned to spread out in front of the monument. To the north of the monument, the plan specified the location of a future third battlefield monument, about where the tall flagstaff had been erected between 1877 and 1879.<sup>59</sup>

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument was completed in time for dedication ceremonies during Oriskany Days, August 6, 1928, but the temporary approach drive remained the only improvement to the landscape. The monument was surrounded by open lawn that stretched south and east toward the Road, and a short distance north toward a grove of trees. An open view extended down into the ravine and west toward the Battle Monument and the Mohawk Valley beyond. The ceremonies were attended by about 300 people, who listened to the dedication by W. Pierrepont White; the monument was unveiled

<sup>58</sup> "Oriskany Ceremonies / Outline of Program for Dedication of Oriskany Monument to Unknown Dead," unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS. Another article, "Site for Memorial to Unknown Patriotic Dead of Battle of Oriskany Is Inspected Today," unsourced, Oriskany Museum MSS, states that the stones would be coming from the Sauquoit Creek (Whitestown) aqueduct.

<sup>59</sup> "Plan for the Entrance Road to Oriskany Monument / Made for The Oneida Historical Society, William Pierrepont White (President)," August 3, 1928, MAP AR ORI.5, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica. The designer of this plan is not known.

with the purported sword of General Herkimer, by Colonel John Vrooman, his great-grandnephew and president of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association.<sup>60</sup>

Following the dedication, there was progress on one feature of the landscape plan. In 1928, the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. announced its intention to erect a "Memorial Gateway" at the entrance of the proposed formal drive. Plans called for two stone gateposts with bronze plaques to be built by Joseph Nelbach at a cost of \$600.<sup>61</sup> Despite that the formal drive was not yet built, the two stone posts were dedicated at the drive's planned entrance on August 6, 1929. A highlight of the dedication ceremony, which was attended by about 500 people, was the dropping of flowers from airplanes over the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. The gateway was presented by Mrs. Nettie Parkhurst, regent of the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the installation of the D.A.R. "Memorial Gateway," the formal drive was never built. The Mohawk Valley Historic Association had anticipated that the drive would be built once the 48 acres were turned over to the State.<sup>63</sup> State acquisition of the 48 acres, however, remained stalled for many years. The Association made no further improvements during the next 26 years that they owned the property.

#### *Plans for Developing a Battlefield Historic Site, 1927-1952*

In the early decades of this period, both the Mohawk Valley Historic Association's 48-acre property and the five-acre State-owned memorial park functioned as memorials in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sense of commemoration through single monuments. From the beginning of this period, however, the State, D.A.R., and the Association, among other groups, continued to call for public acquisition of 191 acres to preserve the entire battlefield. This had been the mission of the D.A.R. since 1915, and the Association had passed a resolution as early as 1925 calling for the proposed reservation to become a national park.<sup>64</sup> The immediate block to the State's plans for acquisition of the proposed reservation was the Ringroses' high asking price for the property; the State thus stalled plans to receive the Association's 48 acres.

After the sesquicentennial celebration in 1927, there was apparently some movement on assembling the various parcels in the proposed reservation. During dedication ceremonies of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and D.A.R. Memorial Gateway in 1928 and 1929, there was anticipation that the State or Federal government would soon acquire the battlefield. One newspaper even reported in 1929 that arrangements were being made "for the transfer of the Association's battlefield property to the state of New York, at which time Governor Roosevelt will accept the field and its monuments . . .".<sup>65</sup> In 1930, however, the Rome *Sentinel* reported that the Association was facing legal obstacles in the transfer of the 48 acres to the State.<sup>66</sup> These obstacles were most likely the complicated title to the 48 acres. It turned out that title to the property did not rest solely with Catherine Lowery, the previous owner, but rather in part with six other Parkhurst heirs.<sup>67</sup> Despite this obstacle, the Association continued to pursue plans for State acquisition and development. It was given some hope for federal acquisition during the early 1930s when the State historic site at Saratoga battlefield became a National Park. Senator Copeland, sponsor of the Saratoga bill, stated that he believed the Oriskany battlefield should also ultimately be taken over as a "national memorial" since it was part of the Saratoga campaign.<sup>68</sup> The National Park Service came to inspect Oriskany, but the effort apparently went no further.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>60</sup> "Dedicate Monument to the Battle of Oriskany Heroes," unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>61</sup> "Complete Plans for Memorial Gateway," 16 August 1928, unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>62</sup> "Oriskany Gateway / Battlefield Dedication Exercises--Addresses--Valley-wide Interest," unsourced Fort Plain [?] newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS; "Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Ground," unsourced newspaper article, Oriskany Museum MSS; "D.A.R. Memorial Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Battlefield," Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1929, 14.

<sup>63</sup> "D.A.R. Memorial Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Battlefield."

<sup>64</sup> Mohawk Valley Historic Association, "1925 Yearbook," 70.

<sup>65</sup> "Oriskany Gateway / Battlefield Dedication Exercises--Addresses--Valley-wide Interest."

<sup>66</sup> "Valley Historic Society Seeks Park at Oriskany," Rome *Sentinel*, 6 August 1930.

<sup>67</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Corey, 18 December 1952, Central Region MSS.

<sup>68</sup> "Urges National Memorial for Oriskany Battlefield," c.1933 unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>69</sup> Harry Bush to Lulu M. Martin, Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., 24 March 1941, Oriskany Battlefield files at Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome, New York (hereafter cited as "Fort Stanwix MSS).

Despite lack of federal support, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association continued to press for State acquisition of the Site. The Association went before the State Council of Parks in December 1935 to lobby for the creation of a Mohawk Valley State Park Commission and for promotion of the Oriskany battlefield. Harry Bush, President of the Association, remarked, "As I look forward I see a glorified park laid out in such a way as to be the Mecca of students and sightseers." The Association at this time reported that President Bush ". . . lights the way to the creation of a beautiful site which will attract hundreds of thousands of motor tourists each season . . ." <sup>70</sup> In 1936, the Association reported that State Senator Hampton of Oneida County had introduced a bill for the purchase of the "connecting land" [Ringrose farm] between the Association and State property, along with establishment of a commission to administer the Site. This bill was not passed. <sup>71</sup> The Association continued to press State Parks into the early 1940s, but was apparently turned away by Chairman of the State Council of Parks, Robert Moses. According to President Bush, Moses was "not at all interested in anything outside of New York City, Jones Beach in particularly [sic]." <sup>72</sup>

In 1944, management of the State's historic sites was transferred from the Department of Conservation to the Division of History and Archives within the Department of Education. Conservation had undertaken little development of the State's historic sites; its last significant addition to the system came in 1930, when the Steuben Memorial was acquired. With the transfer to Education, however, came renewed hopes for expanding and improving the Oriskany battlefield. At this time, the press was reporting on the Site,

Frankly, it's a pretty sad sight. Grass and brush grow high along the roadway. Despite the individual efforts of various organizations to keep up the area, the territory on which the battle was fought is a pretty unkempt piece of land. <sup>73</sup>

In 1949, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association under its new president, Harvey Chalmers II, began a renewed effort to achieve State acquisition of 128 acres of the battlefield. This effort called for purchase of the 75 acres of the Ringrose farm north of the Road that would have included the west ravine on the west side of the Battle Monument. After a year of lobbying, this effort was met with success that was attributed in large part to the efforts of State Assemblyman Francis J. Alder of Rome and support by the Department of Education. In April 1950, the State approved a plan to acquire the Association's 48 acres, but only a portion of the Ringrose farm. Under the recommendation of Dr. T. Wood Clarke, President of the Oneida Historical Society, the State did not agree to purchase the 40 acres of the Ringrose farm west of the Battle Monument that included the west ravine. According to Dr. Clarke, this area was "bare" and had no historic significance, although he thought it might be an appropriate location for a veterans' cemetery. <sup>74</sup> The State probably supported Clarke's recommendation because it also reduced the cost of acquisition at a time of budget constraints.

On April 13, 1951, Governor Dewey signed two bills to begin establishment of a "major state historic site" at Oriskany. One bill set aside \$500 to cover costs of transferring the Mohawk Valley Historic Association's 48 acres to the State, and the other appropriated \$10,000 for the purchase of 35 acres of the Ringrose farm and for improvements to the Site. State Historian Albert B. Corey strongly supported the effort and promised to take quick action. <sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> "Oriskany, A Reality and a Vision," Mohawk Valley Historic Association, *1936 Yearbook*, 4-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Bush to Martin, 24 March 1941, Fort Stanwix MSS.

<sup>73</sup> "State Park Proposed at Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

<sup>74</sup> "Approves Plan," *Utica Daily Press*, 26 April 1950, 1.

<sup>75</sup> "State Plans Historic Shrine on Expanded Oriskany Site," *Utica Daily Press*, 14 April 1951, 1.

*State Development of the Historic Site, 1952-Present*

With state legislation in place, the State Department of Education under the direction of the State Historian Dr. Albert Corey began to articulate objectives of the planned development for Oriskany. In June 1952, an internal memorandum outlined some specific components of this plan:

## Immediate:

Clean up area	Tear down present barns
Identify places and areas of fighting	Set up markers
Open old road	Set out trees and shrubs
Water supply for visitors	Parking area – enlarge
Building for equipment	

## Long Range:

House for caretaker	Recreation area
Museum <sup>76</sup>	

The first objective to be implemented in the proposed historic site was the purchase of 35 acres of the Ringrose farm encompassing the west half of the Site, north and east of the State-owned five-acre memorial park. The State looked over the Ringrose property in the fall of 1952, and recorded that the land was "disused pasture, with scattered sprout growth," that it contained "very old barns, unpainted," one of which had blown down, and that the land was partially enclosed by a "poor fence."<sup>77</sup>

On December 15, 1952, the State completed purchase of the property from Bessie Ringrose, the widow of William Ringrose, and two of his sisters for \$5,500. Transfer of the 48-acre Mohawk Valley Historic Association property on the east half of the Site was still tied up at this time by problems with outstanding title interests. On December 18, 1952, the State Department of Law notified Dr. Corey of this problem, and recommended that the only way for them to approve the title transfer was through proof of "actual, continuous, exclusive, open and notorious possession under claim of title adverse to all the world" since 1925 by the bank which held the title in trust for the Association until 1939.<sup>78</sup> Title was apparently cleared by April 23, 1955, when the 48 acres was gifted to the State by the Association. This transaction completed the State's property acquisition on the Site, although the property amounted to less than the 191-acre reservation proposed in 1915 by the D.A.R. and the more recent proposal by the Association for a 128 historic site.<sup>79</sup>

In August 1953, Dr. Corey described his plans in which he reiterated the intent of his earlier memorandum, focusing on improved visitor services and "restoration" of the landscape to battle-period conditions. He was proposing to clear brush to undertake an archeological and historic survey of the Site, replant the forest that existed during the battle, build a caretaker's house on the east side of the Site, rehabilitate the rest house, and develop an educational museum.<sup>80</sup> A "Joint Legislative Committee to Study Historic Sites" had recommended an Oriskany Battlefield museum be established with a State appropriation of \$200,000.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> State Education Department internal memorandum "Oriskany Battlefield Plans," 27 June 1952, BHS MSS.

<sup>77</sup> John J. Vrooman, Supervisor of Historic Sites, to Mr. N. J. Barry, Attorney General's Office, 17 September 1952, BHS MSS.

<sup>78</sup> Goldstein and Gilman to Corey, 18 December 1952, Central Region MSS.

<sup>79</sup> It appears that following State acquisition of the 80-acres, the involvement of private societies in the development and maintenance of the Site largely disappeared. The Mohawk Valley Historic Association apparently had no further involvement in the Site after it sold its property in 1955. The Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. disbanded in 1956. Mrs. William L. Hobba, New York State Regent D.A.R., e-mail letter to J. Auwaerter, 1999. No information has been found on when the M.V.H.A. disbanded.

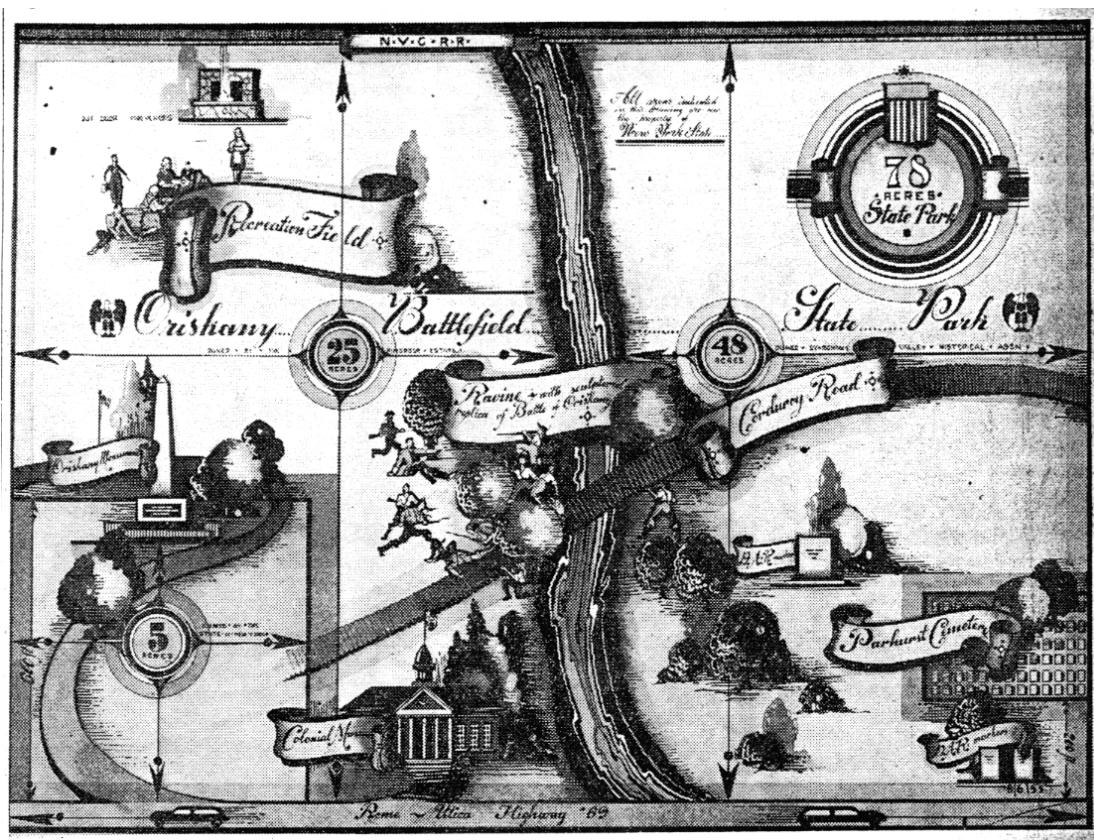
<sup>80</sup> Albert B. Corey to Mr. Edward Seelig, 27 August 1953, BHS MSS.

<sup>81</sup> American Legion of Oneida County, report for 1958-1959; cites report of the Joint Committee dated 20 February 1951, BHS MSS.

By December 1953, work had begun at the Site. A bulldozer leveled off the area at the top of the west side of the Battle Creek ravine, and within the ravine, brush was being removed by hand to allow historians to evaluate the area.<sup>82</sup> The large Ringrose barn was probably demolished at this time. While this work was occurring, Dr. Corey had been working with Assemblyman Ira F. Domser to refine development plans for the proposed historic site, which was being referred to as a "state park." The plans developed with Assemblyman Domser had a strong recreational component; Corey, however, was reportedly hesitant about developing recreational facilities at the Site.<sup>83</sup> A local newspaper reported that the proposed "Oriskany Battlefield State Park" would include the following features:

- a "simulated battlefield," including a rebuilt corduroy road;
- "painted concrete figures representing Continental and British Soldiers and Indians;"
- a "Colonial Museum;"
- a rehabilitated Parkhurst Cemetery, to which the graves of Revolutionary Soldiers from a New Hartford cemetery might be relocated;
- "recreational area for visitors and picnickers," to be located at the north-east portion of the park. This area would include fireplaces, tables, benches, recreational equipment, and possibly a pool, which the paper reported could be constructed by damming "the stream."<sup>84</sup>

In August 5, 1955, an illustrated master plan of the proposed "Oriskany Battlefield State Park," by William de Dieperink van Langereis, art curator of the Oriskany Historical Society, was published on the front page of the *Utica Observer-Dispatch* [Figure 5.14]. This plan showed all of the elements developed by Corey



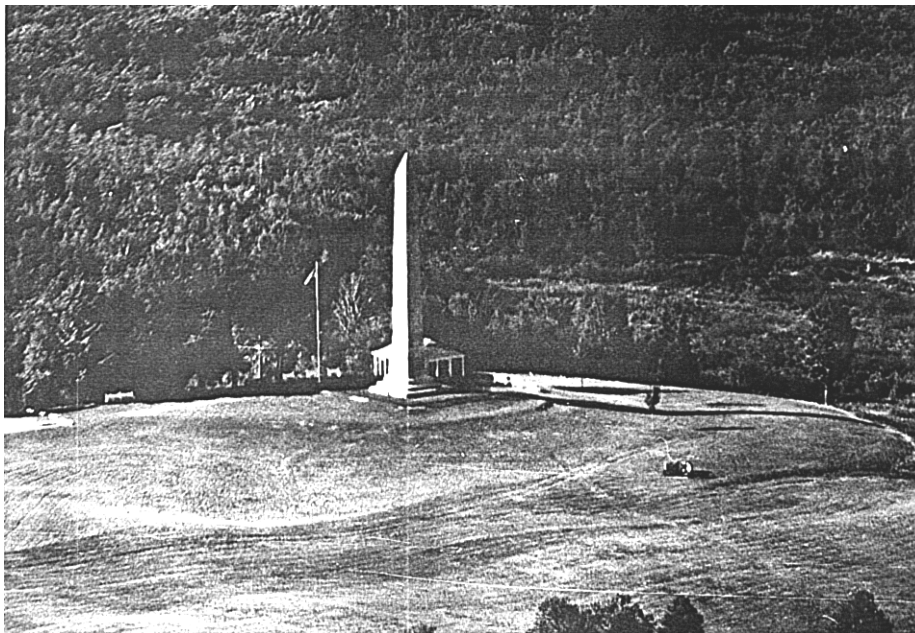
**Figure 5.14:** Rendered plan of proposed "Oriskany Battlefield State Park" by William de Dieperink van Langereis. Reproduced from *Utica Observer-Dispatch* 5 August 1955, 1-A.

<sup>82</sup> "Begin Oriskany Site Work" (captioned photograph), *Utica Daily Press*, 1 December 1953.

<sup>83</sup> Miscellaneous letters signed by Dr. Corey, 1958, BHS MSS.

and Domser, but indicated a "Recreational Field" on the lowlands in the northwest part of the Site, the "sculptured replica of the Battle of Oriskany" to be located in the ravine, and the Colonial Museum to be on the site of the Ringrose barns, along with existing monuments and gateposts.<sup>85</sup>

Despite these ambitious plans, improvements came very slowly to the Site over the next decade. By August 1959, no elements of the master plan had been built. The *Observer-Dispatch* reported that a 50-car parking lot was proposed, along with a new "rest house" and six wood interpretive markers. The paper also noted there was interest in reviving the bill to establish a "state museum and shrine" at the Site.<sup>86</sup> Between 1960 and 1961, two new lavatories were installed in the existing rest house, six picnic tables were added, six benches were replaced, an outdoor drinking fountain was installed, a large interpretive sign was erected, and the parking area was doubled in size. The portion of the drive that looped around the Battle Monument was also removed at this time, and just outside of its old path, three Sugar Maples were planted [Figure 5.15]. According to Dr. Corey, these improvements were part of a "considerable transformation" of the Site over the previous 15 years.<sup>87</sup> By this time, the lowlands had grown into a scrub-covered expanse, and the adjoining ravine to the west and the northern half of the east plateau had reforested.<sup>88</sup>



**Figure 5.15:** Aerial view northwest of Battle Monument showing removed loop drive. Henry DeWolf Aerial Surveys, Rochester, 29 March 1962. Reproduced from print in Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

The public, however, remained disappointed at the condition of the Site. The Oneida County American Legion was reportedly "hopping mad," contending that the State had ignored the battlefield. Louie G. Sunderhaft, Chairman of the Legion's Committee on Historic Sites of Oneida County, stated, "It's visited by people from all over the world, but just now it's a disgrace." He, together with the Oneida Historical Society, the Village of Oriskany, Oneida County, and other groups looked to the federal government to acquire the Site as a national park, as others had done in the past. Sunderhaft pressed Representative

<sup>84</sup> "Will Continue Working For Park, Domser Says," unsourced c.1955 newspaper clipping (probably Rome *Sentinel*), Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>85</sup> "Oriskany Battlefield Historic Site," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 5 August 1955, 1-A.

<sup>86</sup> *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 4 August 1959, 13.

<sup>87</sup> Dr. Albert B. Corey to Mr. William C. Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS; Henry de Wolf, Rochester, Aerial photograph of Battle Monument area dated 29 March 1962, BHS MSS.

<sup>88</sup> 1965 aerial photograph of region around Site, Oneida County file, Bird Library, Syracuse University.



Alexander Pirnie of New Hartford, who introduced a bill into the House.<sup>89</sup> On March 14, 1962, a parallel Senate bill was introduced by Senators Keating and Javits. These bills were "To provide for the establishment of the Oriskany Battlefield National Historic Site," and called for acquisition of the Site, plus the addition of a museum, a statue of Herkimer, and markers, structures, and landscaping.<sup>90</sup>

Javits and Keating pressed the Department of the Interior's Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments to reassess findings on Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Battlefield that it had produced in September 1960 as part of a theme study entitled, "The War for Independence." The Advisory Board had found at that time that Oriskany Battlefield was "not of exceptional value (national significance) in commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States." By May 3, 1962, the Board had reassessed its findings and adopted a resolution again concluding that Oriskany Battlefield ". . . is of State and local importance rather than national significance. The nationally important event of the campaign is already commemorated at Saratoga National Historical Park."<sup>91</sup> As a result of this finding, the Department of the Interior submitted on June 25, 1962 an "adverse legislative report" on the bills pending to create the Oriskany Battlefield National Historic Site.<sup>92</sup> The bills thus failed to pass. Despite this purported lack of national significance, the Site was registered as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) on November 23, 1962 through a program established under the Historic Sites Act of 1935 to register nationally-significant properties.

These efforts at gaining national recognition may have encouraged the State to make further improvements to the Site. In May 1963, work began on rebuilding the 1927 rest house into a visitor center with a single display room containing dioramas of the battle [Figure 5.16]. This project was probably designed as a

temporary solution to the need for a museum and interpretive center, which was called for as part of the State's expansion of the Site in 1951 and which had been a major component of the 1955 master plan. As part of this work, metal interpretive markers, similar in design to the State Education roadside historic markers, were installed around the Battle Monument and along the west slope of the Battle Creek ravine. These were the first documented interpretive markers on the Site.<sup>93</sup>

On August 3, 1963, a NHL certificate was presented as part of Oriskany Day



**Figure 5.16:** View west of the rest house remodeled into the visitor center, 1967. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

<sup>89</sup> "Battle Site Funds Asked from U.S.," unsourced newspaper article, c.1962, BHS MSS.

<sup>90</sup> United States Congress, 87<sup>th</sup> Cong, 2d sess., S. 2995, March 14, 1962.

<sup>91</sup> "Statement on Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Battlefield in New York State," draft paper dated August 6, 1962, Fort Stanwix MSS.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> "Development of the Battlefield as an Historic Site," unsourced article, Central Region MSS; 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library.

ceremonies. Congressman Alexander Pirnie gave the main address, and several people made remarks expressing the hope that the battlefield would still become a national park.<sup>94</sup> A bronze NHL marker was added in October 1963.

During this time, plans were renewed for construction of a caretakers cottage and landscape improvements. Drawings for a small Cape Cod-style house were completed in September 1965. It was to be located to the northwest of the remaining Ringrose barn, which was to be demolished, and access was to be from a new entry drive off of the Road. A screen of Austrian pines was planned to surround the house and drive, and a split-rail fence was to be installed along the Road. Specifications were developed in 1967, but the \$15,000 project never was undertaken, perhaps because of the transfer of the Site from the Department of Education back to the Department of Conservation, which became official on September 1, 1967.<sup>95</sup>

The 1967 transfer of the Site to Division of Parks within the Department of Conservation was followed in 1970 by separation of Parks into a newly created Office of Parks and Recreation.<sup>96</sup> No improvements to the Site were planned following this transfer, although a new maintenance garage was built behind the remnant Ringrose barn in 1970. In 1974, the Site was transferred to the newly created Division for Historic Preservation and placed under the management of the Bureau of Historic Sites. Again, no immediate changes were in store for the Site, although the bicentennial years of the mid-1970s did witness several interpretive improvements. In 1976, a gravel path was built through the ravine along the interpreted location of the military road, and in 1977, new benches were installed and a panoramic interpretive kiosk was built east of the Battle Monument, near the brick seating area. The dioramas in the visitors' center were removed and replaced by an audio-visual presentation.<sup>97</sup> A bicentennial celebration, far smaller than the centennial or sesquicentennial celebrations, was attended by about 15,000 people, and included a 2-day march to the Site from the Herkimer Homestead and a reenactment of the battle.



**Figure 5.17:** View northwest of the Battle Monument showing reforestation on the lowlands. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum to the Director from Ronald F. Lee, Regional Director, Northeast Region, National Park Service, 7 August 1963, Fort Stanwix MSS. As an NHL, the Site became automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.

<sup>95</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Caretakers Cottage," plans dated 8 September 1965, BHS MSS; John Clark to Charles Kawecki, 8 August 1965, BHS MSS.

<sup>96</sup> In 1980, the name was changed to the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

<sup>97</sup> "Development of the Battlefield as an Historic Site," unauthored paper, Central Region MSS. The dioramas were given to the Oriskany Museum.

By the late 1970s and 1980s, the State was recognizing the importance of post-battle development of the Site in its interpretation. During this time, the battle period, with an emphasis on August 6, 1777, was identified as the primary focus of interpretation. A secondary interpretive focus was identified as the period of development from the end of the Revolution to the present time, with a focus on early land ownership, the 1877 centennial, the building of the Battle Monument, State acquisition in 1927, and subsequent efforts to preserve the Site.<sup>98</sup> Despite interpretation of both of the battle and commemorative periods, no plans were developed to preserve the salient landscape characteristics of either the battle or commemorative periods.<sup>99</sup>

The late 1970s and 1980s also saw few built changes to the Site in the context of increasing State budget constraints. During this period, the abandoned pasture stretching across the lowlands north of the Battle Monument grew into a young forest, eventually blocking expansive views from the Site into the Mohawk Valley by the late 1990s [Figure 5.17, previous page]. Reforestation in the ravine blocked the vista between the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. By the early 1990s, State budget constraints had become so significant that the Site was officially closed to the public beginning in fiscal year 1990-1991, marking a lowpoint in the long struggle for the battlefield to become a major historic site. The total budget for the Site was reduced from \$35,000 to \$1,700, forcing reduced mowing and other maintenance. In response to the closure, the local community reached an agreement with the State to operate the Site during the summer. Local volunteers and the Whitestown highway department opened and closed the gates and mowed the grass, and local Moose and Masonic chapters provided funding for guides and interpreters on the weekends.<sup>100</sup>

This lack of State investment in the Site, as in the 1930s and 1960s, again encouraged community leaders to seek federal help and develop private support. With the backing of Congressman Boehlert of New Hartford, the National Park Service contacted the State in the fall of 1993 regarding the possibility of incorporating the Site into the National Park System through a merger with Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome.<sup>101</sup> Community support of the Site was formalized in 1994 with establishment of the "Friends of Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site," one of many in an increasing emphasis in public-private partnership at State historic sites.

In May of 1994, the State reopened the Site for seasonal operation between May and October, and began a revitalization campaign with the assessment of the condition of the Site's monuments, interpretive facilities, and landscape. Planning was also begun during this time by the State and the National Park Service to document the history of the Site's landscape. As previously advocated under the leadership of the D.A.R. in the 1910s and 1920s and the Mohawk Valley Historic Association from the 1920s through the 1950s, planning was once again begun to explore the feasibility of expanding the limits of the Site to incorporate adjacent lands on which the battle may have occurred to the west, south, and east.

While these planning efforts were underway in the mid-1990s, the State completed several improvements. Between 1996 and 1998, the Battle Monument was repointed and its bronzes conserved, the visitor center was renovated with a new interpretive exhibit and exterior modifications, new benches were installed, a walk and lighting were added around the Battle Monument, and signs were repaired and replaced. Plans also called for expanded use of the Site, designed to increase attendance and revenues with events such as art shows, picnics, and antique fire engine displays added to the traditional Oriskany Days anniversary celebration on August 6<sup>th</sup>. During the late 1990s, attendance increased from about 2,000 in 1995-96, to about 8000 in 1999-2000. Few changes were made to the landscape, except that the lawn area was expanded back to limits that had existed prior to closure of the Site in 1990.

---

<sup>98</sup> OPRHP Central Region, "Interpretive Statement for Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site," c.1980, Central Region MSS.

<sup>99</sup> OPRHP Central Region memorandum, Larry Gobrecht to Jim Gold and John Lovell, 1 July 1993, BHS MSS.

<sup>100</sup> "Oriskany Folks Rally to Keep Battle Site Open," *Observer-Dispatch*, 19 February 1992, 5-A.

<sup>101</sup> "Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Briefing Report for Commissioner Castro," internal memorandum dated December 1996, Central Region MSS.

### Site Boundaries

At the beginning of this historic period in 1927, the property within the existing boundaries of the Site consisted of five parcels: the five-acre memorial park, owned by the State; 30 acres of the 84-acre portion of the Ringrose farm occupying the west half of the Site; and 48 acres owned by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association occupying the east half of the Site. Both the Ringrose and Association properties were divided into two parcels by the electric railway corridor.

In 1933, the State of New York, Department of Public Works changed the boundaries of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property by acquiring a small, .171-acre parcel to expand the causeway that carried NY 69 over Battle Creek. This parcel extended in a trapezoidal form along the north side of the Road within the ravine.

In 1952, the State purchased 30 acres of the Ringrose farm located north and east of the memorial park; this required subdivision from the remaining 54 acres of the farm located north of the Road. In 1955, the State received as a gift the 48-acre Mohawk Valley Historic Association property. At some point following 1955, the property was legally combined to form two parcels lying north and south of the Niagara-Mohawk (electric railway) corridor. The north parcel lay within the City of Rome, with the south part partly within the Town of Whitestown and the City of Rome.

## **3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

### Natural Systems and Features

This historic period witnessed a return to forested conditions on much of the Site. As a result of natural succession, the forests that had grown back by 1927 on the lowlands of the east half of the Site had spread by the 1990s to cover the lowlands on the former Ringrose farm, as well as portions of the uplands, particularly on the east plateau. By the 1990s, the forest on the former Ringrose farm was dominated by young successional species, such as poplar, birch, and shrubs, while the older forest on the east half was characterized by hemlock, maple, and beech. Properties adjoining the Site to the east and west also became reforested by this time.

The hydrological natural systems of the Site also changed in several ways during this period. The first change may have occurred with reconstruction of the culvert and causeway for the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway between 1933 and 1934. This may have resulted in minor shifts to the alignment and flow of Battle Creek. Farther down stream, deterioration of the old Erie Canal by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century allowed Battle Creek to reassert its original course due north toward the Mohawk River. A new branch of the creek developed north of the electric railway corridor and ran through a break in the canal wall beginning at some date after 1970.<sup>102</sup> A third change to the Site's hydrology occurred when the course of the unnamed creek running from the west ravine was realigned to follow the western boundary of the Site, or the dividing line between Great Lots 4 and 5. This work was probably undertaken by the Soil and Water Conservation District around 1938 when the property was still part of the Ringrose farm.<sup>103</sup>

The "spring hole" that existed by 1927 on top of the west side of the ravine was probably removed by the State during grading operations undertaken in November and December 1953, following acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> c.1970-1975 infrared aerial photograph of Oriskany Battlefield, Ed Kupiec, Photo-Interpretation Services, Barneveld, New York, personal collection of Joseph Robertaccio, Utica, New York. This photograph does not show the new branch of Battle Creek.

<sup>103</sup> 1938 aerial photograph with soils designation, ARZ 3356, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy. This aerial indicates soil conservation work was planned; the unnamed creek is marked as having a winding course.

<sup>104</sup> "Begin Oriskany Site Work," *Utica Daily Press*, 1 December 1953.

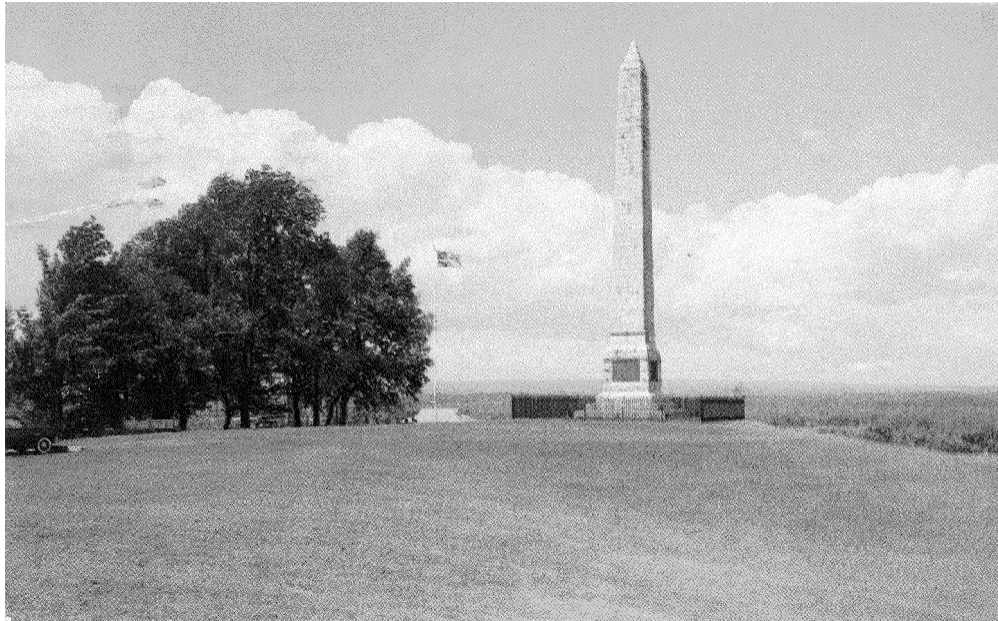
## Spatial Organization

### East Plateau Space

At the beginning of the period, the east plateau, location of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and formerly the Parkhurst-heir farm, contained scattered trees and woods within the swamps, on steep banks, and along the Road. The space here opened off to the west, northeast, east, and southeast.<sup>105</sup> By the late 1950s, the east plateau had become enclosed by vegetation along the entire Battle Creek ravine and the north half of the plateau had become partially enclosed by scattered trees.<sup>106</sup> By the 1990s, the space had become more enclosed due to reforestation on all sides except along the Road.

### West Plateau Space

Through the 1970s, the west plateau retained an expansive spatial character, particularly to the north across the lowlands that stretched toward the Mohawk River [Figure 5.18].<sup>107</sup> The west plateau was only partially enclosed by emergent forest in the west ravine and on the east half of the Site. Prior to the 1950s, the west plateau was divided into subtle subspaces through pasture fences and meadows that contrasted with the lawn of the memorial park. With State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, this spatial definition was lost when the entire area became maintained as lawn. By the 1980s and 1990s, the lowland north of the Battle Monument had matured into a young forest that enclosed the west plateau space. The space became defined by the edge of the surrounding forest, which was created by mowing patterns that followed topographic lines. This change in spatial character effectively blocked the north front of the Site that faced toward the Mohawk River, leaving the west plateau open only from the Road.



**Figure 5.18:** View north of west plateau and Battle Monument. Reproduced from a c.1962 postcard (Rome: Margo Studio, no date), Oriskany Battlefield files, Central Region, Jamesville. Note open spatial character and views.

<sup>105</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

<sup>106</sup> 1957 aerial photograph with soils designation, ARZ 7P26, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

<sup>107</sup> c.1970-1975 Kupiec infrared aerial.

### **Ravine Space**

During this historic period, the Battle Creek ravine retained a distinct spatial character based largely on its topography. The amount of enclosure varied over the years; during the early years of this period, it was enclosed along its eastern side by forest growth on the steep east bank. The south end toward the Road remained largely open with scattered trees (largely elm) due to mowing undertaken by the Site caretaker, Leo Dunn [Figure 5.23, page 193]. This mowing ceased after Dunn retired around 1976.<sup>108</sup> After this time, the ravine grew back with mixed forest and wetland vegetation.

### **Parkhurst Cemetery**

During this historic period, the Parkhurst Cemetery became surrounded by forest, except on the west side, where a narrow section of lawn was maintained extending north from the Road. The cemetery was abandoned at some point during this period by the Parkhurst Cemetery Association.<sup>109</sup> Any spatial distinction it may have had during the early part of this period was lost by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were no burials during this historic period.

### **Battlefield Memorial Park**

Following its acquisition by the State in 1927, the five-acre memorial park continued to be part of the larger space of the adjoining Ringrose farm, although its lawn provided some spatial definition with the adjoining fence-lined pastures. In 1930/31, the western edge of the space was lined by a Cyclone fence, and the adjoining ravine became reforested during the following years. Upon State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the subtle spatial distinction between the memorial park and the adjoining pasture to the north and east was removed when the State extended the lawn of the park onto the former pastures and removed pasture fences. Only the western edge of the space remained, since this edge stayed the boundary of the Site. There remained little trace of the spatial definition of the memorial park by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Road Space**

At the beginning of this historic period, the Road was enclosed by trees through the east half of the Site. With rebuilding of the Road in 1933/1934, most of these roadside trees were removed and were apparently never replanted. After this time, there was probably little spatial definition to the Road.

### **Electric Railway (Niagara-Mohawk Gas Transmission Line) Corridor Space**

The growth of forests along the lowlands of the Site, first along the east half and later along the west half, closed in the formerly open spatial character of the electric railway corridor. The forests grew back to either side of a mown strip maintained by Niagara Mohawk for access to its natural gas transmission line, which was built at some point after 1954. By 1957, the corridor was enclosed on the east half of the Site, and lined by scattered trees on the open west half.<sup>110</sup> By the 1980s, the entire corridor was enclosed by forest.

---

<sup>108</sup> Dennis Roberts, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site staff, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 7 October 1999.

<sup>109</sup> George N. Parkhurst, the original trustee of the cemetery association since 1891, died in 1917, and it is possible that the cemetery became abandoned after this time. George N. was the last burial in the cemetery.

<sup>110</sup> 1957 aerial photograph, Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

## **Land Use**

Prior to late 1940s, agriculture coexisted with commemoration as the primary land uses on the Site. By this time, however, William Ringrose had probably ceased his dairy farm. With State acquisition of part of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the land became converted to commemorative use. Active recreational uses were planned for the Site during the 1950s, but were never implemented. By the late 1990s, new recreational uses were introduced to the Site as non-commemorative arts and antique fire engine festivals were held on the grounds to increase visitation and revenues.

Transportation remained an active land use adjoining the Site throughout this period. On the Road, traffic volume generally increased during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, paralleling big rises in automobile ownership.<sup>111</sup>

## **Cultural Traditions**

During this historic period, the Anglo-American cultural tradition of commemoration remained dominant at the Site. This tradition evolved from a prior emphasis on singular monuments toward an emphasis on preservation and interpretation. This shift became manifest in State acquisition of 84 acres of the battlefield, the introduction of interpretive markers, the development of a visitor orientation center, and the existence of battle reenactments.

The shift toward preservation and interpretation was also joined by a growing recognition of the Oneida Indian contribution to the Battle of Oriskany and the significance of the battle in Oneida history and culture. The Oneidas' role became increasingly emphasized in interpretation of the battle by the early 1980s. In 1983, the Oneidas planted a white pine near the Battle Monument as a symbol of peace and in honor of their ancestors who fought in the battle. By the 1990s, the Oneida Indian Nation was playing an active role in annual anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Oriskany.

## **Cluster Arrangement**

Not applicable.

## **Circulation**

### **Farm Road Across Battle Creek (Interpreted Military Road Trace)**

Traces of corduroy log-paving across the ravine from a probable farm road disappeared prior to this historic period. The ravine became overgrown with brush, but was cleared in 1953 as the State began investigations of the area and preparation for improvements. A footbridge was installed in the 1960s near the spot where the farm road crossed Battle Creek. This was built of logs, probably to simulate the appearance of the corduroy on which the military road probably crossed the marshy ravine.<sup>112</sup> In 1976, this bridge was replaced as part of a gravel path that was built across the ravine to correspond with the interpreted alignment of the military road.

### **Road on East Slope of Battle Creek Ravine**

This road could have last been used prior to reconstruction of the Road in 1933-1934, when the causeway was raised. This change in elevation blocked access from the Road. The drive remained as a trace throughout the remainder of this period. In 1976, construction of the gravel path across the ravine altered a small portion of the trace.

---

<sup>111</sup> On the old Erie Canal, pedestrian and bicycle transportation is expected to be reintroduced along the old towpath with construction of the Erie Canalway Trail in 2000.

<sup>112</sup> Undated (c.1970), untitled photograph of log footbridge, view north through ravine, BHS MSS.

### Battle Monument Drive

With acquisition of the five-acre memorial park in June 1927, the State began to plan for improvements on the drive, which at the time was unpaved and extended from the Road, but did not loop around the Battle Monument. Work, however, was not undertaken until the following year. On April 7, 1928, Arthur Hopkins of the Conservation Department wrote Frank Kirkland, A.I.A., "Registered Architect, Licensed Engineer and Surveyor, Rome, N.Y.," that the drives on the Site were "in such terrible condition." On April 9<sup>th</sup>, Kirkland provided Conservation Department Commissioner MacDonald with a proposal to construct a three-inch deep graded gravel or crushed stone drive. The drive was to feature furrows on the sides to hold the gravel or stones in place, and a 16-foot wide by 30-foot long parking space along the side. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, Commissioner MacDonald responded that the drive had to be "at least" eight feet wide and had to extend from the Road "to and around the Monument." On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Kirkland's office submitted a statement for \$400.00 for "grading and resurfacing roadway and parking space with eighty-five tons of crushed stone at Oriskany Monument." On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1928, Kirkland wrote Hopkins that the drive had been completed.<sup>113</sup>

The drive around the Battle Monument was designed as a one-way loop, and the parking area was designed for two cars.<sup>114</sup> The eight-foot wide drive, however, proved too narrow. On May 10, 1929, Frank Kirkland submitted to Arthur Hopkins a proposal for widening the drive to 14 feet with four inches of crushed stone. The increase was to be distributed evenly on both sides of the drive, and earthen shoulders were proposed to keep the stone in place. Kirkland estimated that this work would cost \$590; on May 13<sup>th</sup>, Hopkins submitted a formal order for the work, which was reduced to the sum of \$498.00.<sup>115</sup> An aerial photograph of the Site taken around 1931 shows that the drive was not widened at the entrance due to the narrow spacing of the stone gateposts. This aerial also indicates there was no parking area, suggesting that parking was accommodated on the drive or grass [Figure 5.8, page 165].<sup>116</sup> In 1941, the gravel drive was tarred.<sup>117</sup>

Significant changes were made to the drive in the years following transfer of the Site to the Department of Education in 1944. Between 1958 and 1963, a parking area was built contiguous to the west side of the drive. At this time, the drive was likely paved in asphalt and the entrance widened, which required resetting the gateposts from eight to 20 feet apart. The drive was apparently reduced in width from 14 feet to 11 feet as part of this paving project. The portion of the drive that looped around the Battle Monument was removed by March 1962 and replaced by a linear path extending from the end of the drive to the rest house [Figure 5.15, page 175].<sup>118</sup>

### Unknown Soldiers' Monument Drive

As part of the construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument in 1928, a temporary 200-foot long drive was built between the Road and the monument. The alignment of this drive may have been influenced by the Parkhurst-heir farmstead or its remains, which were located on the southwest side of the drive. In August 1928, a landscape plan was produced for a formal drive that featured a 35-foot wide tree-lined drive extending on axis from the monument to the Road [Figure 5.13, page 170]. The proposed drive circled the monument and featured an island plaza with a central feature, probably a flagstaff.<sup>119</sup> The Association held back on building the proposed drive in the hopes that the State would undertake the improvements once it

<sup>113</sup> Arthur Hopkins to Frank Kirkland, 7 April 1928; Kirkland to Commissioner Macdonald, 9 April 1928; MacDonald to Kirkland, 11 April 1928; Kirkland office account statement signed by Frank George, 30 April 1928; Kirkland to Hopkins, 3 May 1928, all BHS MSS.

<sup>114</sup> In 1928, two sign were requested: "One Way Road, Entrance" and two signs, "Parking Place." "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," Assistant Superintendent of Lands and Forests (unsigned), 8 May 1928, BHS MSS.

<sup>115</sup> Frank George to A. S. Hopkins, 10 May 1929; Kirkland to Hopkins, 13 May 1929, BHS MSS.

<sup>116</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

<sup>117</sup> Woodford to Hopkins, 27 May 1942, BHS MSS.

<sup>118</sup> DeWolf aerial photograph dated 29 March 1962 showing removed loop, BHS MSS.

<sup>119</sup> "Plan for the Entrance Road to Oriskany Monument / Made for The Oneida Historical Society, William Pierrepont White (President)," August 3, 1928, MAP AR ORI.5, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.



acquired the property.<sup>120</sup> In 1929, the D.A.R. erected gateposts at the planned entrance to the formal drive, east of the temporary drive. 1933 highway construction plans documented that the "Dr. to Monument" was located near the ravine, while the "Stone Posts" were located farther east on the property.<sup>121</sup> Despite grand plans, the formal drive was never built. The temporary drive was improved with 14-foot wide asphalt pavement, probably after the State acquired the property in 1955. Wood barrier gates were installed at the entrance to the drive around 1996.

### **Battle Monument Parking Area**

When the Battle Monument drive was improved by the State in 1928, parking was provided along the edge of the drive. By the late 1950s, however, a larger parking area was needed. In October 1958, State Historian Albert Corey presented a plan to expand parking at a cost of \$1,000.<sup>122</sup> In 1961, the parking lot was doubled in size into a triangular area extending west from and contiguous with the Battle Monument drive. It was paved in asphalt and curbed two years later by D & H Blacktop at a cost of \$140.<sup>123</sup>

### **Maintenance Drive**

Prior to State acquisition, the Ringrose barns contained a drive that ran from the Road on the west side of the horse barn to the large barn. This drive was likely removed with demolition of the large barn in the 1950s. An unpaved 50-foot long drive on a new alignment was later built 20 feet east of the horse barn.<sup>124</sup> During or after construction of the maintenance garage in 1970, the drive was paved and enlarged to about 134 feet in length and 25 feet in width. This increase in width allowed space for staff parking.

### **Temporary Construction Drive**

When the rest house was converted into a visitor center in 1963, a temporary access road was constructed to avoid the steep slope around the Battle Monument. This road began at the Battle Monument drive about 300 feet north of the Road, continued north on the east side of the Battle Monument, and then looped to the west around the base of the slope to the visitor center. This road was removed by 1965.<sup>125</sup>

### **Walks, Paths, and Trails**

#### *Walk to Visitor Center (Rest House)*

Prior to reconstruction of the drive in the early 1960s, there was no defined path to the Rest House. Around 1962, the portion of the drive that looped around the Battle Monument was removed, and between 1963 and 1964, the rest house was converted into a visitor center. As part of this conversion, a straight walk was installed to connect the visitor center with the parking area following the alignment of the old drive. This new walk, which was surfaced in stone dust by November 1964, included a set of stone steps with a simple two-plank handrail leading down to the new visitor center. At the base of the steps, a concrete path turned 90 degrees for the short distance to the visitor center [Figure 5.16, page 176]. This portion of the path contained two steps down to the visitor center.<sup>126</sup> Between 1985 and 1986, the stone steps were replaced with an open-tread wood staircase, and in 1998, the portion of the path between the stairs and the visitor center was graded to remove the two steps and repaved in bluestone.

---

<sup>120</sup> Rome *Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1929, 14.

<sup>121</sup>"Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," construction plans dated 10-31-1933.

<sup>122</sup> Albert Corey to L. G. Sunderhaft, 23 October 1958, BHS MSS.

<sup>123</sup> Albert Corey to William Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS; D & H Blacktop receipt dated 10 July 1963, BHS MSS.

<sup>124</sup> "Topography / Oriskany Battle Monument," Prepared by Dickerson, Czerwinski & Warneck for Central New York State Parks Commission, October 1970, Central Region MSS.

<sup>125</sup> 1964 aerial photograph of west half of Site and land to the west, taken for a mining project, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site files (hereafter cited as "OBSSH MSS"); 1965 aerial, Bird Library aerial photograph collection, Syracuse University.

<sup>126</sup>Paul Cousin, Rome, receipt dated 17 November 1964 for \$80 of stone dust on "new road surface" (walk that replaced drive), BHS MSS; "Oriskany Battlefield Museum," photograph dated 21 June 1965, BHS MSS.

### *Ravine Paths*

Pedestrian access into the ravine existed by 1965 when an historical marker was installed on the west side of Battle Creek. The alignment of paths through the ravine at this time is not known, but by 1970, there were two footbridges across Battle Creek in the ravine located 110 feet and 280 feet north of the base of the causeway.<sup>127</sup> In 1976, a 5-foot wide gravel path was constructed across the ravine, roughly following the interpreted location of the military road and crossing Battle Creek at the location of the south footbridge. This path followed a switch-back up the steep east slope of the ravine toward the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. Split-rail fences were installed along portions of the path around 1997 to serve as handrails.

### *Other Paths & Trails*

No documentation has been found on paths or trails that existed prior to the State's acquisition of the entire Site in the 1950s. There were, however, likely trails that led to the east plateau flagstaff and the ravine from the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. Trails that may have existed from the Erie Canal were likely abandoned by this period as automobiles became the major form of transportation to the Site.

## **Adjacent Circulation Features**

### *The Road*

When the State acquired the memorial park in 1927, the Road remained about 15 feet wide and unimproved with an earthen surface. At the Battle Creek ravine, the Road crossed on an earthen causeway that went from an elevation along the Ringrose farm of 488.2 feet to a low point of 470.91, and back up to an elevation of 491 feet, along the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property. In preparation for reconstruction, State highway surveyors recorded in 1931 and 1933 that the Road retained a stone-arch culvert over Battle Creek and a buried "old culvert" west of the Battle Monument drive, guide posts along the drop-off west of the gateway, and guiderails along the causeway.

Reconstruction of the Road into the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway got underway between 1933 and 1934. Plans called for widening, installing concrete pavement, straightening the horizontal alignment across the ravine, rebuilding the causeway, replacing culverts in the causeway and west of the Battle Monument drive, and installing new guiderails. Reconstruction of the causeway, which was undertaken to improve sight distances and widen the pavement, constituted the most significant changes to the Road [Figure 5.5, page 161]. Its alignment over the causeway was straightened; a 25-foot deep right-of-way in the ravine was purchased from the Mohawk Valley Historic Association to accommodate its enlargement; the vertical alignment was raised four feet over Battle Creek and lowered one foot at the top of the east side of the ravine, resulting in a 3.7 percent slope on the east and a 4.9 percent slope on the west side of the ravine; the stone culvert was replaced with a concrete culvert; and most of the trees lining the Road in this area were removed. Tile underdrains were installed on both sides of the Road on the causeway approaches.<sup>128</sup>

There were few changes made to the Road after this reconstruction. By 1952, a natural gas line owned by the Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation had been laid along the north side of the Road.<sup>129</sup> In the early 1970s, the culvert located west of the Battle Monument drive gateway was removed and the slope was extended.<sup>130</sup> The tile underdrains on the approaches to the causeway were probably replaced at this time

---

<sup>127</sup> 1970 topographic map, Central Region MSS.

<sup>128</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Preliminary Survey Transit" dated October 6 - November 5, 1931; "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," profiles and plans of existing and proposed conditions, 1933, NYS DOT Region 2 Offices.

<sup>129</sup> State of New York, "Map of Land . . . to be Acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield . . . Estate of William Ringrose, Reputed Owner," Department of Public Works, District No. 2, August 11, 1952.

<sup>130</sup> c.1970-75 infrared aerial photograph. This photograph shows what appears to be a recently graded area west of the gateway.

with concrete gutters. In 1982, additional work was undertaken to resurface the Road in asphalt and to improve drainage at the ravine, which occurred primarily on the south side of the causeway. Shoulders along the entire Site were graded and widened.<sup>131</sup>

### *The Erie Canal*

Throughout this historic period, the old Erie Canal remained abandoned, but under State ownership. Much of the canal retained full water levels into the 1960s [Figure 5.6, page 162]. By 1969, however, a deep hole had developed at Culvert No. 12 located east of the Site where Battle Creek flowed under the canal.<sup>132</sup> It was likely this hole that caused lowering of the water level, but a c.1975 aerial photograph indicates the entire stretch in the region of the Site retained some water.<sup>133</sup> At some point after 1975, the section of canal east of the line of Battle Creek became dewatered, possibly due in part to a break that had developed in the south canal at this spot. A beaver dam maintained minimum water levels in the portion of the canal to the west. By the late 1990s, the canal contained significant vegetation along its entire banks and within the prism east of Battle Creek, but the towpath remained mowed and accessible.

### *Electric Railway (Niagara-Mohawk Natural Gas Transmission Line)*

The electric railway was in decline by the late 1920s; on June 29, 1933, the Rome-to-Little Falls branch of the New York State Railways (successor to the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway) that crossed the Site ceased operation.<sup>134</sup> At some point after 1933, the tracks and poles were removed. The corridor remained under ownership of the successor railway company, which by the 1950s was known as the Utica Transit Corporation. At some point after Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation purchased the corridor in 1954, an underground natural gas transmission line was installed.<sup>135</sup> Niagara-Mohawk maintained a mown strip approximately 30 feet wide through the corridor.

## **Topography**

During this historic period, there were several changes to the topography of the Site. Construction of the rest house and drive around the Battle Monument in 1927, and the construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument in 1928, probably resulted in minor alteration of the topography. The extent of these changes is unknown.

In November and December 1953, the State undertook fairly extensive grading with a bulldozer at the top of the west side of the Battle Creek ravine on the former Ringrose farm.<sup>136</sup> This work may have been part of the demolition of the two of the three Ringrose barns. The extent of this change in topography is unknown.

In the early 1970s, the drop-off from the Road west of the Battle Monument drive was filled as part of the removal of the culvert located there. This area of fill and grading probably extended 150 feet into the Site.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> New York State Department of Transportation, "50' Plan & Mainline Profile, Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro S.H. 8455," dated 1-8-82, N.Y.S. Department of Transportation Region 2, Utica.

<sup>132</sup> State of New York, "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State, Made Pursuant to Chapter 199, Laws of 1910 and Amendatory Laws," approved March 3, 1920, Map 320. This map has a notation about Culvert No. 12 dated 1969.

<sup>133</sup> c.1970-75 Kupiec infrared aerial photograph.

<sup>134</sup> Robert Gurley, *Here Comes the Trolley*, 8.

<sup>135</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 1460, 555.

<sup>136</sup> "Begin Oriskany Site Work," *Utica Daily Press*, 1 December 1953.

<sup>137</sup> c.1970-75 Kupiec infrared aerial photograph.

## Vegetation

### Forest

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the young forest on the east half of the Site matured and became characterized by species such as sugar and red maple (*Acer saccharum*, *a. rubrum*), ash (*Fraxinus sp.*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and beech (*Fagus sp.*). Several of these species existed during the battle period in the old-growth forest. On lowlands of the west half of the Site, reforestation was well underway by the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the late 1990s, this forest was characterized by young successional species such as poplar (*Populus sp.*) white pine (*Pinus strobus*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), apple (*Malus sp.*), and thickets of dogwood (*Cornus sp.*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera sp.*), raspberry (*Rubus sp.*), grape (*Vitis labrusca*), and sumac (*Rhus sp.*). Scattered field trees, remnants of agricultural use and open spatial character, remained widely scattered throughout the Site's forest.

### Pastures

At the beginning of this historic period, the land surrounding the five-acre memorial park was active pasture belonging to William Ringrose's dairy farm. There were three pastures enclosed by post-and-wire fences: two smaller ones on the uplands, and one large one on the lowlands which was probably less intensively used. A fourth pasture located between the electric railway and the Erie Canal was apparently not in use at this time.<sup>138</sup> By the late 1940s, Ringrose had likely ceased to farm. A 1949 photograph indicates that Ringrose, who was caretaker of the Site, was maintaining his upland pastures adjacent to the Battle Monument as mown meadow.<sup>139</sup> After State acquisition of the farm in 1952, much of the upland pastures became maintained as lawn and the lowland pasture was left to natural succession.

### Apple Orchards

The apple orchards present on the Parkhurst-heir farm during the 1870s likely disappeared prior to State acquisition in 1927.<sup>140</sup>

### Ravine Elm

The large elm (*Ulmus americana*) growing on the west side of the Battle Creek ravine, which had been referenced in 1877, was evident in the c.1931 aerial of the Site [Figure 5.8, page 165]. By 1965, this large elm was still standing, but probably soon succumbed to Dutch elm disease, which was spreading through the region around this time.<sup>141</sup>

### Lawn

Upon acquisition of the memorial park in 1927, the State probably began regular mowing of all the grass on the five-acre property.<sup>142</sup> The following year, it improved the lawn. In May 1928, the State requested 25 pounds of grass seed and a 16-inch ball bearing lawn mower.<sup>143</sup> The area around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument on the east plateau was also being maintained as a lawn by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association around this time. In the 1950s, the former upland pastures of the Ringrose farm on the west plateau were converted to lawn. The limits of this lawn were defined by the curving edge of the uplands.<sup>144</sup> During budget cutbacks and closure of the Site in 1991, the amount of lawn was decreased. Only the lawn

<sup>138</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

<sup>139</sup> Photograph of Battle Monument, *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949.

<sup>140</sup> No apple orchards are apparent in the c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site, Central Region MSS.

<sup>141</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS; 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library.

<sup>142</sup> "Suggestions for Consideration of Oriskany and Fort Stanwix Sub Committee of Advisory Committee to Conservation Commission" (unpublished paper, c.1926, BHS MSS).

<sup>143</sup> Assistant Superintendent, Lands and Forests, "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield / May 8, 1928," BHS MSS; Order request from Lands & Forests, Albany, May 11 for Oriskany Battlefield Maintenance & Operation, May 11, 1929 (?), BHS MSS.

<sup>144</sup> These lawns were probably never improved, because they retain a wide variety of herbaceous perennials.

adjacent to the drives, the visitor center, and the walk to the ravine were mown.<sup>145</sup> When the State officially reopened the Site in 1993, the lawn was eventually returned to its pre-1991 limits.

### Roadside Trees

When the State Department of Public Works surveyed the Road for construction of the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway in 1931, it documented that trees lined the Road along the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property, including eight maples ranging in size from 20 inches to 30 inches diameter breast height (dbh), plus a 24-inch dbh ash and a 20-inch dbh cherry.<sup>146</sup> Along the causeway, there were younger trees, including a 10-inch dbh maple and four elms ranging in size from nine to 18 inches dbh. The trees from the causeway to the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive were removed for construction of the highway in 1933/34 and by subsequent highway improvements. Two of the roadside maples remained standing through the remainder of this period.

In the early 1980s, the Department of Transportation planted Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*) along the west plateau, one west of the Battle Monument drive and three between the horse barn and the drive as part of work on the Road.<sup>147</sup>

### Pasture-Line Trees

In 1930, the pasture line running on the west side of the Ringrose barns was marked only by a fence, although during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the line had been marked by a hedgerow. By 1965, approximately 13 trees grew along the former pasture line from the Road north to the edge of the lowlands [Figure 5.6, page 162].<sup>148</sup> This row, which consisted of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) may have been planted by the State soon after its acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952 in order to screen the barns, one of which was retained as a maintenance building. The Herkimer's march monument was relocated adjacent to one of the sugar maples in this row in the early 1960s. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, eleven trees remained .

### Battle Monument Sugar Maples

Three sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) were planted along the north side of the Battle Monument by March 1962 [Figure 5.15, page 175].<sup>149</sup> These were likely planted during the previous year when the loop drive around the monument was removed and the parking lot expanded.

### Trees along Northern Edge of West Plateau

By the 1960s, several specimen trees were growing along the northern edge of the west plateau, east of the Battle Monument [Figure 5.6, page 162].<sup>150</sup> These trees were likely black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), and were likely planted at the same time as the black cherries in the pasture-line. A red maple (*Acer rubrum*) was also planted, probably at a later date than the black cherries.

### White Pine, Oneida Tree of Peace

During formal ceremonies held on August 6, 1983, a white pine (*Pinus strobus*) was planted by Oneida Indian Nation representatives on a knoll at the upland edge of the west plateau east-north-east of the Battle Monument. It was at this time that Oneidas were becoming more involved in the Site. They offered to plant the white pine, a traditional Oneida and Haudenosaunee symbol of peace, to honor their ancestors

---

<sup>145</sup> OPRHP, "Turf Management Alternatives," May 1991, plan 23-006, Central Region MSS.

<sup>146</sup> New York State Department of Public Works, "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," 31 October 1933.

<sup>147</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 28 June 2000.

<sup>148</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS; 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library.

<sup>149</sup> DeWolf Aerial photograph dated 29 March 1962, BHS MSS.

<sup>150</sup> 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library.

who had fought in the battle.<sup>151</sup> The white pine also symbolized the Great Peace, *Kayenarhekowa*, which had bound together the League of the Haudensaunee and which was first broken at the Battle of Oriskany.

### Austrian Pine

A clump of Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) was growing at the top of the west slope of the Battle Creek ravine by the 1970s and was later surrounded by successional growth. Several volunteers subsequently were established farther north at the bottom of the ravine. The Austrian pine was a popular planting in State Parks during the 1960s and 1970s, and may have been planted in part to screen the maintenance garage from the ravine, or perhaps to replace the ravine elm that had stood near the same spot.

### East Plateau Trees

During the early years of this historic period, the east plateau was characterized by numerous individual trees [Figure 5.8, page 165].<sup>152</sup> By the 1970s, the trees north of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument were absorbed into the forest that grew up on the north half of the plateau. The open lawn area on the south half of the plateau contained several large trees around its perimeter and along the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive. By the late 1990s, only four individual trees remained, three of which were contiguous to the surrounding forest. These included, aside from the roadside sugar maples, a black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) adjacent to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, a sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) near the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmhouse, and a sugar maple and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) near the east end of the east plateau.

### Other Plantings

#### *Battle Monument Groundcover*

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) was planted as a ground cover inside the Battle Monument fence after rehabilitation of the monument and the fence in 1998.

#### *Daylilies*

Clumps of daylilies (*Hemerocallis sp.*) existed during this period at the northeast and southeast corners of the Ringrose horse barn, as well as along the Road east of the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive. No information has been found on when these were planted. The daylilies around the horse barn were removed in 2000 during repairs to the building's frame.

#### *Naturalized Periwinkle*

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) was growing during this period on the lower portions of the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine, north of the gravel path. No information has been found on when this was planted. Periwinkle, a non-native species, was a popular planting during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially for difficult banks and slopes. This periwinkle may have been planted by the Parkhurst heirs as part of their farmstead, or as a beautification effort by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association. It is also found throughout the Parkhurst Cemetery.

#### *Plantain Lilies*

Variegated plantain lilies (*Hosta sp.*) were planted around the Herkimer trail monument and the D.A.R. gateposts in 2000.

---

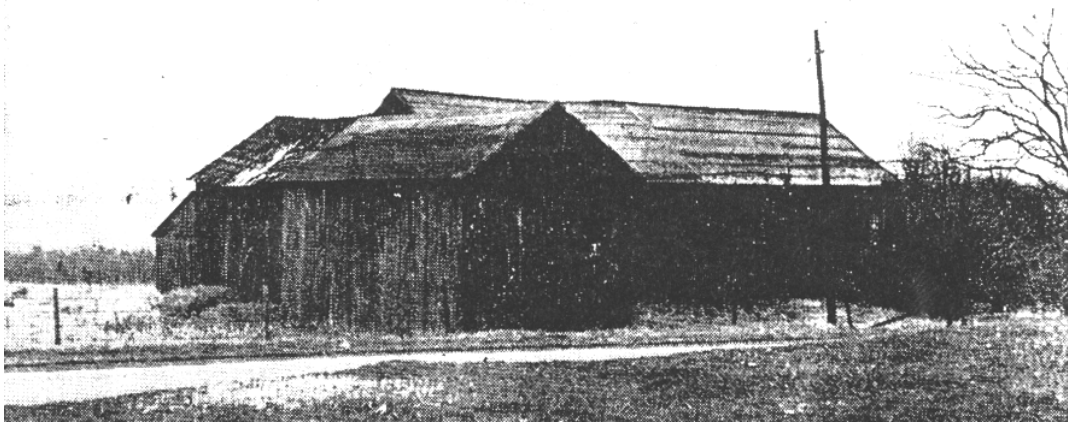
<sup>151</sup> Roger Myers, former Site staff during the 1970s and early 1980s, telephone interview with J. Auwaerter, 23 June 2000.

<sup>152</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS; 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library.

## Buildings and Structures

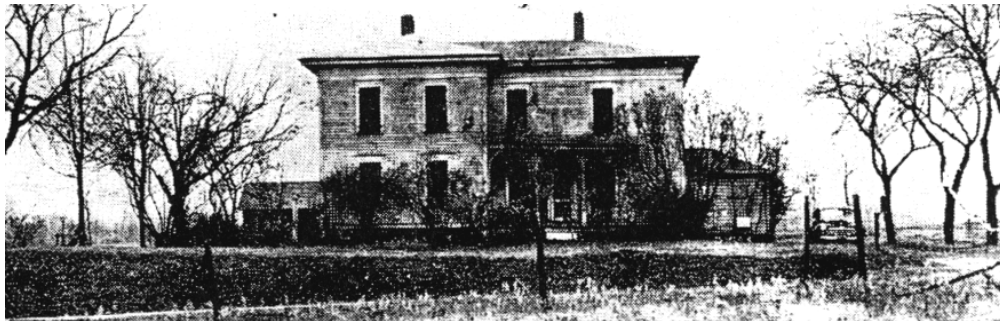
### Ringrose Farmstead

The three Ringrose barns on the Site remained in use at the beginning of this historic period as part of the Ringrose dairy farm. At some point, probably in the 1940s, William Ringrose ceased farming. A 1949 photograph of the barns showed one to the rear of the large bank barn with a deteriorated wood-shingle roof [Figure 5.19]. The roofs of the other two barns were sheathed in roll-asphalt.<sup>153</sup> In September 1952, the State Supervisor of Historic Sites recorded the barns were very old; an unpainted one, probably the barn to the north of the large bank barn, had blown down. The large bank barn was probably demolished when the State brought in a bulldozer to level the top of the ravine in late November 1953.<sup>154</sup> The Ringrose farmhouse, located off the Site on the south side of the Road opposite the barns, remained standing and under private ownership throughout this period [Figure 5.20].



**Figure 5.19:** View northeast of the Ringrose barns from the Road with the horse barn in foreground, 1949. Reproduced from *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

The small barn located closest to the Road, referred to as the horse barn, was retained as a maintenance and storage building by the State, although long-range restoration plans for the battlefield called for its demolition. Over the years, repairs were undertaken on the building, including replacement of the vertical-plank siding and installation of roll asphalt roofing. In 1997, the windows were repaired and the rafters were reinforced, and in 2000, a thorough repair of the heavy-timber frame and a reconstruction of the east façade were undertaken.



**Figure 5.20:** View south of the Ringrose farmhouse from the Road, 1949. Reproduced from *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

<sup>153</sup> "State Park Proposed at Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

<sup>154</sup> Vrooman to Barry, 17 September 1952; "Begin Oriskany Site Work" (captioned photograph), *Utica Daily Press*, 1 December 1953.

### Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead

The Parkhurst-Heir farmstead, which consisted of a house and two barns, existed at least two years after the Mohawk Valley Historic Association purchased the property in 1925. The farmstead was likely removed in 1928 during construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, which was built to the north of the barns. The farmhouse may have been moved to a location one-quarter mile to the east.<sup>155</sup>

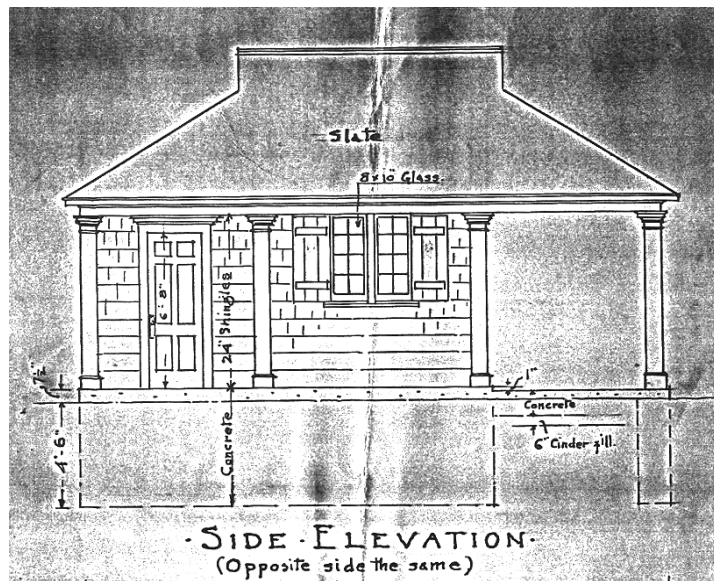
### Battle Monument

The Battle Monument was repointed as part of the State's acquisition and rehabilitation of the memorial park in 1927. At this time, a new bronze tablet listing an additional 241 names of veterans was added under the direction of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association and dedicated during the sesquicentennial celebration on August 6, 1927. This tablet was made by the Rome Novelty Works, the same firm that made the tablets on the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and D.A.R. Memorial Gateway.<sup>156</sup>

Aside from the planned addition of a public address system around it in 1959, the only changes made to the Battle Monument after 1927 involved repointing and conservation of the bronze tablets. In September 1943, the Commissioner of Architecture provided an estimate of \$1,200 for repointing. The next repointing came in 1970, when scaffolding was erected around the monument. In 1990, the Bureau of Historic Sites completed conservation treatment on the five bronze tablets on the Battle Monument, and in 1998, the entire monument was again repointed.<sup>157</sup>

### Rest House (Visitor Center)

The State's major addition to the Site upon its acquisition of the memorial park in 1927 was the construction of the rest house [Figure 5.21]. This small Colonial Revival-style frame building was designed by Sullivan W. Jones, State Architect, and Stanton P. Lee, Associate Architect of the Division of Architecture within the State Department of Public Works. The architects used their "Standard Rest House" design for the Oriskany project; the same plans were used for a rest house at Bennington Battlefield which was built around the same time. The Oriskany rest house, which measured 26 feet 6 inches deep and 20 feet wide, featured cedar shingle siding, a hipped and gable roof, and eight-light paired casement windows with batten shutters. The front of the building was three bays deep, with each bay divided by a post or pilaster, and was set on an unexcavated concrete foundation. The front bay



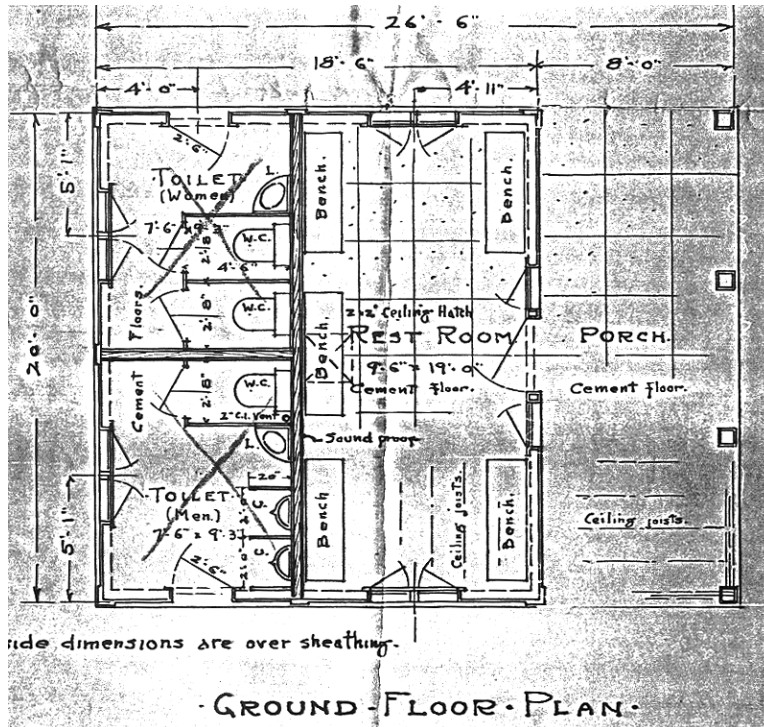
**Figure 5.21:** Side elevation, "Standard Rest House," State of New York, Department of Public Works, Sullivan Jones State Architect, c.1927. Oriskany Battlefield maps and plans, Central Region, Jamesville.

<sup>155</sup> White, "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany," 1927; Joseph Robertaccio, conversation and site inspection with J. Auwaerter, 8 October 1999.

<sup>156</sup> "Plans Honors For Unknown Revolutionary War Heroes," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*[?], c. 8 August 1927, clipping in Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>157</sup> *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 11 October 1959, B-2; William Haugaard to John White, 10 September 1943, BHS MSS; 1990 conservation reports by Heidi Miksch, BHS MSS.





**Figure 5.22:** Plan, "Standard Rest House," State of New York, Department of Public Works, Sullivan Jones State Architect, c.1927. Oriskany Battlefield maps and plans, Central Region, Jamesville.

was an open porch that permitted views out into the Mohawk Valley.

The plan of the rest house was organized into four rooms [Figure 5.22]. Across the front third of the building was the porch, which contained a cement floor, an exposed joist ceiling, and a centered six-panel door with sidelights through which was the "rest room" which occupied the middle third of the building. This room contained five benches, a cement floor, and an exposed joist ceiling, and was lit by casement windows on the north and south walls and sidelights in the door. The rear third of building was occupied by two rest rooms, which were equipped with toilets from the Chemical Toilet Corporation of Syracuse. Both rest rooms were lit by a set of paired casement windows at the rear, and were entered from the exterior through six-panel doors in the sides of the building.<sup>158</sup>

No significant alterations were likely made to the rest house until May 1963, when the State began work on converting the building into a visitor center [Figure 5.16, page 176]. The 1927 building was gutted and the front porch was torn down. In place of the porch, a longer and slightly taller gable-roof addition was built as an interpretive center complete with dioramas of the battle. The front of this addition featured a simple gable wall with flush eaves, small eaves returns, a paired entrance door, and a circular modillion with the State seal and the words "NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC SITE VISITOR CENTER." The addition contained no windows in order to allow for the installation of dioramas of the battle, which were designed by Gardell Christensen of the Department of Education. The two rest rooms at the rear of the building were retained, but modernized with replacement of the chemical system by a standard septic field that was built downhill and north of the building. An oil-fired heating system was also installed, along with a brick chimney on the north side and an underground oil tank. The new visitor center was dedicated on August 3, 1963, although the dioramas were not completed until 1968.<sup>159</sup>

The next changes to the building came in 1977, when the dioramas were replaced with an audio-visual slide presentation as part of interpretive changes at the Site made under the direction of the Bureau of Historic Sites. In the early 1980s, the building's septic system was replaced, roughly in the same location. Between 1997 and 1998, the visitor center was again rehabilitated. The audio-visual components in the main room were replaced with interpretive wallboards and a new recessed, glass-wall entranceway was installed to

<sup>158</sup> State of New York Department of Public Works, Division of Architecture, Sullivan Jones, State Architect, "Standard Rest House / Location / Oriskany Battlefield," undated plans, elevations and details, Central Region MSS; Commissioner MacDonald to Chemical Toilet Corporation, 18 July 1928, BHS MSS. No information has been found to verify that the interior of the rest house was built as planned; based on review of period photographs, the exterior was built as proposed.

<sup>159</sup> Miscellaneous receipts for materials, May through September 1963, BHS MSS; "Development of the Battlefield as an Historic Site," undated and unauthored paper, Central Region MSS.

provide natural light in the formerly windowless room. This new entranceway was set within an elliptical-arched opening and featured a secondary pair of exterior batten doors that were designed to be closed during off-hours. The exterior entrances to the toilets were removed and interior access was created through an opening in the west wall of the main room. The oil-fired furnace was replaced by a propane heating system, and the exterior brick chimney and underground fuel tank were removed.

### Maintenance Garage

In 1970, a new maintenance garage was built on the north side of the Ringrose horse barn by workers from B.O.C.E.S.<sup>160</sup> The one-story building measured 24 feet deep by 36 feet long and featured a low gable roof, two overhead garage doors, one-over-one double-hung sash windows, and T-111 wood siding. In 1985, a 10-foot wide shed-roof addition was built along the west side of the building, and around 1990, a small, temporary metal storage shed was added to the south side.

### Footbridges

By 1970, two footbridges crossed Battle Creek within the ravine at a point 110 and 270 feet north of the base of the causeway. These may have been built around 1966, when a historical marker was installed in the ravine, reflecting that there was some type of pedestrian access into the ravine at the time. The footbridges were constructed of unmilled logs without railings [Figure 5.23].<sup>161</sup> In 1976, the south footbridge was replaced when a gravel footpath was constructed across the ravine. A new footbridge was built with dimensioned lumber; it measured 4 feet wide, 18.5 feet long, and contained 3.5-foot tall railings.



**Figure 5.23:** View north through Battle Creek ravine with footbridge in foreground, c.1970. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

<sup>160</sup> Dennis Roberts, conversation with J. Auwaerter, 7 October 1999; "Topography / Oriskany Battle Monument," October 1970, Central Region MSS.

<sup>161</sup> 1970 topographic map; undated, untitled photograph of ravine with log footbridge in foreground, BHS MSS.

### Staircase at Visitor Center Walk

A set of stone steps was constructed by November 1964 to allow access down the five-foot high slope to the visitor center. These steps were undressed limestone, and were flanked by a two-plank wood railing on the west side.<sup>162</sup> A second railing was subsequently added to the east side. Between 1985 and 1986, the stone steps were replaced with a four-foot wide wood staircase with 13 steps and wood handrails to either side.

### Ravine Viewing Platform

Around 1987, a raised wood-frame viewing platform was built adjacent to Battle Creek off the north side of the gravel ravine path. This platform measured about 14 feet wide and 12 feet deep, and was used largely during school and other large group tours as a place for guides to explain the significance of the ravine. This platform was removed due to deterioration around 1993 after the Site was reopened by the State.<sup>163</sup>

### Temporary Structures

As part of the State's sesquicentennial celebration held at the Site on August 6, 1927, a large, raised speakers' platform was erected between the Road and the Battle Monument on the east side of the drive. This platform, which featured raised corner posts that held three flags each, was decked in white cloth.<sup>164</sup> Various platforms, tents, and other temporary structures have been installed on the Site during special events throughout this historic period.

### Mechanical Systems

#### *Electric Service*

During the State's rehabilitation of the battlefield memorial park in 1927, there were plans to extend electric service to the Site in order to light the Battle Monument. Utica Gas & Electric provided the Conservation Department with a \$1700 estimate for electricity to reach the Site from their "present line of poles," which were likely in or near the village of Oriskany, as there were no utility poles along the Road at this time.<sup>165</sup> Probably on account of the high cost, electric service was not installed at this time.<sup>166</sup>

There was apparently no electric service at the Site into the 1950s. In September 1953, John Vrooman, Superintendent of Historic Sites, wrote Niagara-Mohawk requesting installation of electric power.<sup>167</sup> It was probably at this time that a line of poles along the west property line from the Road to the rest house was installed. A second service was extended into the ravine with a utility pole and box on the west slope near the Road.<sup>168</sup> This service was probably installed in the 1960s to provide lighting during activities in the ravine. A third service was added when the maintenance garage was constructed in 1970.

#### *Sanitary Systems*

As part of its initial construction in 1927, the rest house was equipped with a chemical sanitary system supplied by the Chemical Toilet Corporation of Syracuse. In May 1928, "chemicals for toilet" were in the list of items needed for the season.<sup>169</sup> When the rest house was converted into a visitor center in 1963, a new sanitary system was installed that made use of a standard septic field. This field was built about 15

---

<sup>162</sup> "Oriskany Battlefield Museum," photograph of front façade of visitor center dated 21 June 1965, BHS MSS.

<sup>163</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 18 July 2000. An image of this structure has not been found.

<sup>164</sup> "Crowd on Oriskany Battlefield Paying Respect to Heroes," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1927, 5.

<sup>165</sup> Utility poles do not appear in the c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site, Central Region MSS.

<sup>166</sup> Samuel H. Beach et al., to Commissioner Alexander MacDonald, 1 July 1927, BHS MSS.

<sup>167</sup> John Vrooman to Niagara Mohawk, 25 September 1953, BHS MSS.

<sup>168</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 28 June 2000.

<sup>169</sup> Commissioner MacDonald to Chemical Toilet Corporation, 18 July 1928, BHS MSS; "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," 3 May 1928, BHS MSS.

feet north and downhill of the building. Around 1981, this system was replaced, probably at the same time the system for the maintenance garage was installed.<sup>170</sup>

When the maintenance garage was built in 1970, it contained no water or sanitary systems. In December 1980, plans were developed to install a septic tank and field, and work was undertaken soon thereafter. The septic tank was installed due north of the building, and the field was built east and downslope of the drive.<sup>171</sup>

#### *Wells*

A 58-foot deep well with a six-inch casing was installed 31 feet south of the rest house when the building was constructed in 1927. A second well servicing the maintenance garage was sunk in the tree line off the southwest corner of the building around 1981.<sup>172</sup>

#### *Fuel Tanks*

A 1,000-gallon underground fuel tank located south of the visitor center was removed in 1998 when the heating system was converted to propane.<sup>173</sup> This tank had been installed during reconstruction of the rest house into the visitor center in 1963. Prior to this time, the rest house was unheated.

A second underground fuel tank was added to the Site around 1976. The hole for this tank measured 4 feet by 8 feet, and was about 4 feet deep.<sup>174</sup> This tank was probably installed near the maintenance garage.

### **Adjacent Buildings and Structures**

#### *Road Causeway and Bridge/Culvert*

In 1933, the stone-arch bridge that carried the Road across the Battle Creek ravine was documented as being in poor condition, with deteriorated parapet walls. At this date, the bridge was between 85 and 128 years old, depending on whether it had been built around 1805 for the turnpike or around 1848 for the plank road. Due to its condition and plans to enlarge the causeway, the bridge was replaced by a reinforced concrete culvert between 1933 and 1934 as part of the construction of the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway. According to construction plans, the culvert was to be 76-foot long, 60-inch "R.C. (reinforced concrete) or "C.I." (cast iron) pipe with 16-foot headwalls; the concrete option was built. The earthen causeway was to be raised about four feet over Battle Creek, from an elevation of 471.7 to 474.7 feet. This rise required widening of the causeway from about 40 feet to 75 feet.<sup>175</sup>

#### *Road Culvert West of Battle Monument Drive Gateway*

In 1933, the Department of Public Works recorded that there was a buried 50-foot "old culvert" about 100 feet west of the gateway at the Battle Monument drive. This culvert likely connected at one time to a stone-lined drainage ditch which led to a wet low area located about 100 feet to the north and south of the drive. Between 1933 and 1934, this culvert was replaced with a 44-foot long, 20-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipe. In the early 1970s, this culvert was removed and the adjoining area on the Site filled and graded.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 14 July 2000.

<sup>171</sup> Central New York State Park & Recreation Commission, "Oriskany Battlefield Proposed Sewage Disposal System," 12 December 1980, Central Region MSS.

<sup>172</sup> "Oriskany Battlefield Proposed Sewage Disposal System," 12 December 1980.

<sup>173</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 28 June 2000.

<sup>174</sup> Bureau of Historic Sites memorandum, D. L. Wentworth et. al. to P. R. Huey, 5 May 1976, BHS MSS.

<sup>175</sup> "Preliminary Survey Transit," 1931; "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," 1933

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*; "50' Plan & Mainline Profile," 1982. This culvert is not shown on these 1982 plans.

### *Electric Railway Culverts*

At some point after the electric railway between Rome and Utica ceased operation in 1933, the tracks and poles were removed. The concrete culverts that carried the railway across Battle Creek and the unnamed creek along the western boundary of the Site were retained. When this unnamed creek was realigned in 1930s, two pipe culverts were installed. After its acquisition of the property in 1954, Niagara Mohawk installed an underground natural gas transmission line through the corridor. The culverts were retained in order to carry the gas line. By the late 1990s, one of the two pipe culverts carrying the creek near the western boundary of the Site had collapsed.

### *G. W. Parkhurst House*

The G. W. Parkhurst house, located on the south side of the Road across from and east of the Unknown Soldiers Monument, was owned by Frank Parkhurst in 1933. The house was demolished by the early 1990s. Ruins of the rubble fieldstone foundation remained at this time behind volunteer vegetation. Two small residential lots were subdivided from the property after the 1970s. A log-cabin style house, owned by Marie and Loren Dingman in 1998, was built directly opposite the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. A one-story ranch-style home, owned by Byron Weigandt in 1993, was built on the second plot opposite the east end of the Site.<sup>177</sup>

### *Ella Parkhurst Carr House*

The house and farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr, located to the east of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property, was formerly part of the farm of G. W. Parkhurst. By 1933, it was owned by Charles A. Sweet. At some point after this date, the farm was subdivided into five small residential lots along the Road. The lot adjacent to the Site, owned by Beth Blair in 1998, was occupied by a small, one-story gable-front house and garage; the former Carr-Sweet farmhouse was probably the house at 7195 Route 69 owned by Joseph and Betty Kozdra in 2000.<sup>178</sup>

## **Views and Vistas**

### **Views**

For much of this historic period, the Site retained expansive views. From the Battle Monument, views of the Mohawk Valley existed to the northwest, north, and east into the late 1970s and early 1980s [Figure 5.18, page 180]. These views were largely eliminated through old-field succession on the lowlands of the Site and the adjoining land to the west, which reforested by the 1980s. By 2000, only screened views of the highlands on the north side of the Mohawk Valley were possible from the Battle Monument during the winter months. Views from the Battle Monument across the open farmland to the south also disappeared during this period.

When the Unknown Soldiers' Monument was originally constructed in 1928, there were views of adjoining farmland to the east and south, and select views out into the Mohawk Valley between forested areas on the steep slopes of the adjoining uplands. By the 1960s, reforestation on the east plateau had effectively closed in all views from the monument to the west, north, and east. Only limited views existed across the lawn that stretched toward the Road.

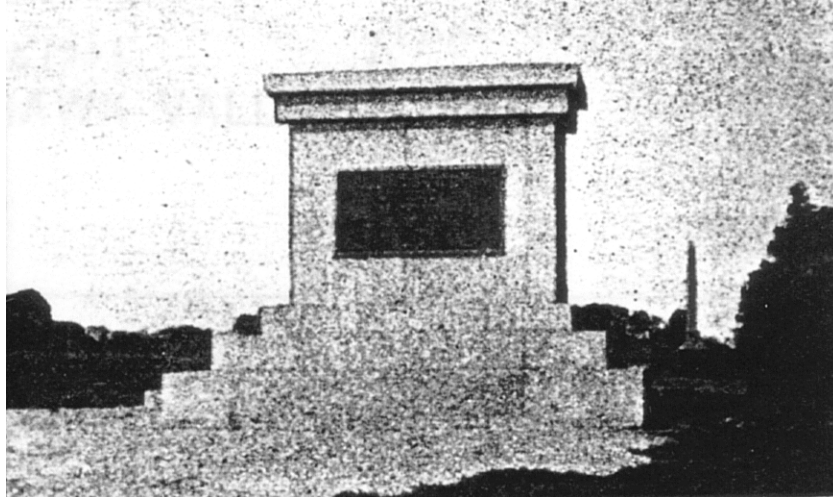
---

<sup>177</sup> "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," 1933; Icon Architecture and the Saratoga Associates, "Oriskany Battlefield Land Use History" (Prepared for the National Park Service, June 1998), figure 18.

<sup>178</sup> "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid," 1933;"Oriskany Battlefield Land use History," figure 18.

### Unknown Soldiers' Monument Vista

The placement and orientation of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument suggests that it was designed with a vista toward the Battle Monument and the Mohawk Valley beyond. It was also likely oriented for view by motorists passing west on the Road. Although no documentation exists on this design intent, period photographs of the monument show the Battle Monument visible in the background [Figure 5.24]. This vista was framed to the north by forest growth along the steep banks of the ravine.<sup>179</sup> By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the vista toward the Battle Monument had been obscured through reforestation in the ravine .



**Figure 5.24:** View northwest of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument with vista of the Battle Monument in background, c.1928. Reproduced from Mohawk Valley Historic Association letterhead, Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

### Constructed Water Features

According to available documentation there were no constructed water features on the Site during this historic period.

### Small-Scale Features

#### Gates & Fences

##### *Agricultural Fences*

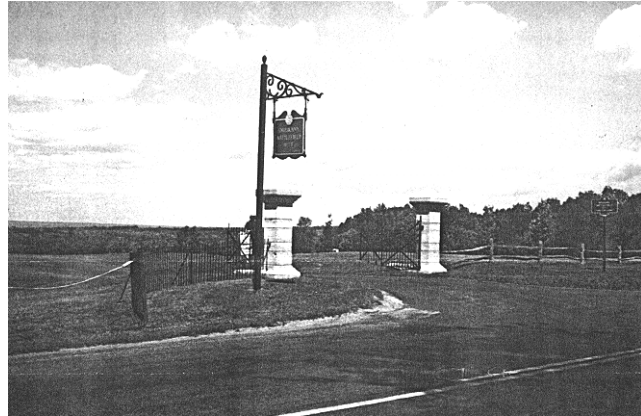
At the beginning of this historic period, post and wire fences enclosed the pastures of the Ringrose farm. In 1953, the *Observer-Dispatch* reported that a "steel fence," probably a post and wire fence, separated the five-acre memorial from the newly acquired property.<sup>180</sup> The State removed these fences soon after this time. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the only remnants of agricultural fencing on or adjacent to the Site were along the Erie Canal west of Battle Creek. These remnants consisted of wood posts and barbed wire fencing.

<sup>179</sup> Photograph of Unknown Soldiers Monument showing alignment with and vista to the Battle Monument. Featured on letterhead of Mohawk Valley Historic Association, John Vrooman to Commissioner MacDonald, 6 September 1929, BHS MSS.

<sup>180</sup> Utica *Observer-Dispatch*, 31 May 1953, B-7.

*Battle Monument Gateway*

This gateway, constructed around 1885 of limestone piers, iron-picket gates, and iron-picket curved fences, remained intact through the 1950s. In May 1928, the gates were recorded as being "in need of some repair" and were being removed to a blacksmith shop.<sup>181</sup> Around 1962, as part of the reconstruction of the Battle Monument drive, the piers were reset to approximately 20 feet apart to accommodate widening of the entrance. The limestone piers were reset on concrete footings and the iron gate was extended with the addition of welded-steel picket panels in order to span the widened drive. Two limestone blocks were set to the rear of the piers, possibly as stops to the gates. The portion of the curved fence extending from the east pier was probably also removed at this time. A two-rail split-rail fence was installed in its place along the Road between the pier and the Ringrose horse barn. Between 1976 and 1980, the curved fence extending from the west pier was replaced with a short section of split-rail fence.<sup>182</sup> In 1998, the stone piers were repointed and reinforced with cables bands.



**Figure 5.25:** View northeast of the Battle Monument gateway from the Road, with remaining curved iron gate on west (left) side, 26 June 1967. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

*Battle Monument Fence*

There were no documented changes during this period to the iron picket fence around the Battle Monument. It was repaired and repainted in 1998.

*D.A.R. Memorial Gateway*

On July 28, 1928, the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., offered to erect a gateway to the Unknown Soldiers Monument, which was then nearing completion. Joseph Nelbach & Sons of Utica, which also built the monument, were contracted to undertake the project at a cost of \$600. The gateway, which was completed in time for dedication on August 6, 1929, consisted of two rusticated, six and one-half foot tall granite piers with pyramidal caps and bronze tablets. The tablet on one pier contained the following text:

THESE POSTS ERECTED BY THE ORISKANY CHAPTER DAUGHTERS OF THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION. ORGANIZED WITH THE SPECIAL OBJECT OF MAKING  
A NATIONAL PARK OF THE ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD 1929

The tablet on the second pier contained the following text:

ERECTED BY ORISKANY CHAPTER, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION. A TRIBUTE TO COLONEL JOHN W. VROOMAN, WHO FEDERATED  
THE COUNTIES OF ONEIDA, HERKIMER, FULTON, MONTGOERMY, SCHOHARIE  
AND SCHENECTADY INTO THE MOHAWK VALLEY HISTORIC ASSOCIATION,  
WHICH LED THROUGH POPULAR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE PURCHASE OF THIS 48  
ACRES, AND THE ERECTION OF THE MEMORIAL MONUMENT TO THE  
UNKNOWN DEAD OF THE ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD

<sup>181</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," 8 May 1928, BHS MSS.

<sup>182</sup> "Site for Caretaker House," photograph dated 21 June 1965, BHS MSS; photograph of entrance marked "Spring '76," photograph of "Oriskany Battlefield 1777" sign, dated 1980, BHS MSS.

The gateposts were set 35 feet apart and 70 feet from the Road, east of the temporary drive, in anticipation of construction of the formal drive and highway improvements [Figure 5.13, page 170]. The formal drive, however, was never built. The gateposts were eventually relocated to either side of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, probably after 1955 when the State acquired the property and when the temporary drive was paved.<sup>183</sup>

### *Boundary Fences*

The east, north, and west sides of the memorial park were lined by post-and-wire pasture fences at the beginning of this period. At this time, there was also 193 feet of wooden fence parallel to the Road to the west of the Battle Monument drive gateway. In 1929, the Conservation Department received an estimate of \$396.57 and plans from the Albany office of Cyclone Fence Company to replace this wooden fence with an iron picket fence matching the curved ones to either side of the gateway.<sup>184</sup> This work was not undertaken. Between October 1, 1930 and September 20, 1931, 825 feet of chain-link fence was installed by the Cyclone Fence Company along the west property line of the five-acre memorial park. This fence remained through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>185</sup> Around 1962 during reconstruction of the Battle Monument gateway, a two-rail split-rail fence was installed along the Road between the gateway and the horse barn [Figure 5.25, previous page]. At some time around 1980, five sections of split rail fence were installed on the west side of the gateway.<sup>186</sup> Aside from the split-rail fence along the Road, the State did not install boundary fences on the perimeter of the Site or along the former electric railway corridor.

### *Unknown Soldiers' Monument Gate*

A set of timber gates were installed at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive around 1996, about 18 feet from the edge of the Road. These gates were four feet-six inches high and 13 feet one-inch long, and were built of dimensional lumber with strap hinges.

## **Flagstaffs**

### *East Plateau Flagstaff*

This flagstaff, which was erected between 1877 and 1879 on the northwest corner of the east plateau, remained standing in 1927 [Figure 5.11, page 168]. It was removed prior to c.1930, probably during construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument in 1928 when plans were produced showing a third monument to be located in its place.<sup>187</sup>

### *Battle Monument Flagstaffs*

In July 1927, as part of the State's acquisition and rehabilitation of the memorial park, the wood flagstaff erected by the German-American National Alliance off the west side of the Battle Monument was painted and supplied with a new halyard (rope) by Pierce Jones of Utica at a cost of \$150. The pole was to be painted white and the hounds, green. At this time, the flagstaff may have been warped toward the east from

<sup>183</sup> "Oriskany Gateway / Battlefield Dedication Exercises--Addresses--Valley-wide Interest," unsourced [Fort Plain?] newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS; "Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Ground," unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS; "D.A.R. Memorial Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Battlefield," *Rome Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1929, 14.

<sup>184</sup> William Murray, Cyclone Fence Company, to Arthur Hopkins, 6 March 1929, BHS MSS.

<sup>185</sup> William Ringrose to Mr. A. S. Hopkins, 2 October 1931, BHS MSS. Although no location was indicated in the correspondence, the only cyclone fence on the Site in 2000 is along the west property line.

<sup>186</sup> Photograph of gateway, view east, dated 26 June 1967, BHS MSS; photograph of Site entrance sign, view west, dated 1980, BHS MSS.

<sup>187</sup> The flagstaff is shown in White, "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany" (1927); the flagstaff does not appear in the c.1931 aerial photograph of the Site, Central Region MSS.



the prevailing westerly winds.<sup>188</sup> This may have led to a decision to replace the flagstaff, which was done between August and October 1930, when a painted steel pole was installed. The project was undertaken by Frank Kates Steeple Jack Company of Utica at a cost of \$125.<sup>189</sup>

Between 1984 and 1985, a second painted steel flagstaff was added 37.5 feet north of the 1930 flagstaff. This one was donated by Mrs. Francis Drees of Clinton.<sup>190</sup> In spring 1999, both flagstaffs were repainted, the 1930 one in white and the 1985 one in silver/aluminum. At this time, these two flagstaffs flew the United States, New York State, Grand Union, and Oneida Indian Nation flags between May and October.

### **Herkimer's March (Beech Tree) Monument**

At some point after the State acquired the Ringrose property in 1952, the Herkimer' march monument, which had been installed in 1912, was relocated from the west side of the Battle Monument drive to the western edge of the ravine, and was set in a concrete footing. This move may have occurred in 1961 when the drive to the Battle Monument was paved and the entrance widened, at which time the limestone gateway piers were moved and reset onto concrete footings. Although no documentation was found on why the monument was relocated, the new location was probably determined to be more accurate based on Benjamin Lossing's 1848 sketch of the Site and description of where General Herkimer purportedly sat under a beech tree to direct the battle. The only work to the monument after this time was conservation of the bronze tablet, which was undertaken in summer 1990 by the Bureau of Historic Sites.

### **Unknown Soldiers' Monument**

Between 1927 and 1928, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association contracted with the firm of Joseph J. Nelbach & Sons of Utica to build the Unknown Soldiers' Monument at a cost of \$3,500; the Rome Novelty Works were subcontracted for the bronze tablets.<sup>191</sup> The monument was located at a high point above the east side of the Battle Creek ravine, to the rear of the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead. This location permitted views out toward the Battle Monument and the Mohawk Valley in the distance, and also allowed the monument to be seen by motorists driving west on the Road.

The Nelbach firm produced a rendering of their proposed design, which was a rectangular stone monolith with a pyramidal cap, a stepped base, and tablets framed by garlands and a scroll pediment [Figure 5.12, page 169]. The monument was design with two fronts, one facing the Road, the other facing west toward the ravine and the Battle Monument. Construction began in 1928 on a slightly revised design that featured an overhanging, nearly-flat cap and simpler bronze tablets. In order for the new monument to match the older Battle Monument, weathered limestone from the abandoned aqueduct that carried the Erie Canal over the Oriskany Creek was used to construct the shaft. The cap was made of newly-quarried Vermont granite.<sup>192</sup> The base of the ten-foot tall monument measured 12 feet-six inches long and nine feet wide, and stepped up to a shaft measuring seven and one-half feet long and four feet wide [Figure 5.26, following page].

---

<sup>188</sup> Telegram, Pierce Jones to Department of Conservation dated 22 July 1927, BHS MSS; 1927 photograph, "Oriskany Monument during the sesquicentennial.," in Chester Williams, *Photographs of Rome New York 1880-1930*, (Rome: published by the author, 1975), 89.

<sup>189</sup> MacDonald to Frank Kates Steeple Jack Company, 13 June 1930, 6 August 1930, BHS MSS; Frank Kates receipt, 6 October 1930, BHS MSS.

<sup>190</sup> Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 14 July 2000.

<sup>191</sup> "Plans Honors For Unknown Revolutionary War Heroes / Historic Body to Erect Stone Near Oriskany," *Utica Observer-Dispatch* [?], c. 9 August 1927, clipping in Oriskany Museum MSS.

<sup>192</sup> "Oriskany Ceremonies / Outline of Program for Dedication of Oriskany Monument to Unknown Dead," unsourced newspaper clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS. Another article, "Site for Memorial to Unknown Patriotic Dead of Battle of Oriskany Is Inspected Today (also unsourced clipping, Oriskany Museum MSS), states that the stones would be coming from the Sauquoit Creek (Whitestown) aqueduct.

The tablet on the east side, read as visitors face west toward the Battle Monument, contained the following inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN PATRIOTIC SOLDIERS OF TRYON COUNTY WHO, UNDER  
THE LEADERSHIP OF COLONEL EBENEZER COX, COLONEL JACOB KLOCK,  
COLONEL PETER BELLINGER, AND COLONEL FREDERICK VISSCHER,  
FOLLOWED

HERKIMER

THROUGH THE BLOODY BATTLE OF ORISKANY, AND HERE ON AUGUST 6, 1777,  
CHECKED ST. LEGER'S ADVANCE UPON ALBANY, ADMINISTERING THE FIRST  
DEFEAT TO THE ADVANCING COLUMNS OF BURGOYNE  
THEIR PATRIOTIC SACRIFICES ARE COMMEMORATED BY THE MOHAWK  
VALLEY HISTORIC ASSOCIATION IN THE ERECTION OF THIS MONUMENT

own Soldiers'  
a *Observer-*  
1949, B-1).

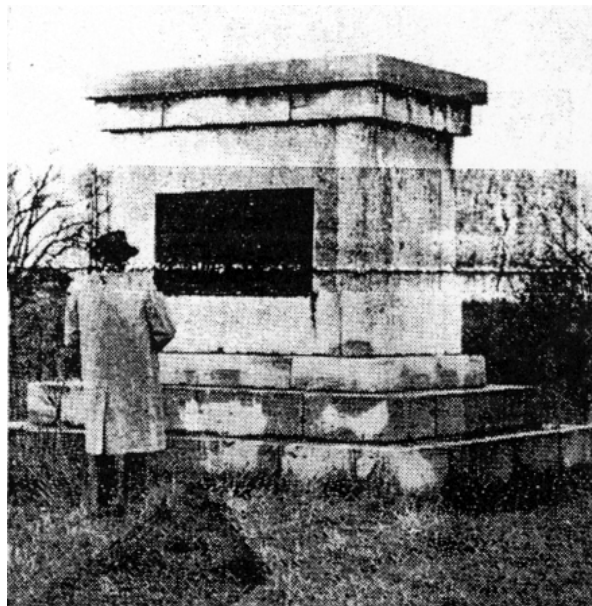
The tablet on the west side, read as visitors faced the Road, contained the following inscription:

TRYON COUNTY

ERECTED FROM ALBANY IN 1772 BY REQUEST OF SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, WAS  
THE FIRST RE-DIVISION OF THE ORIGINAL SIXTEEN COUNTIES ERECTED IN  
1683 IN THE PROVINCE OF NEW YORK; OCCUPYING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE  
MOHAWK RIVER THE INDIAN FRONTIER, WITH FORT STANWIX AT ITS  
WESTERN EXTREMITY.

IT WAS DIVIDED INTO THE DISTRICTS OF MOHAWK, CANAJOHARIE, PALATINE,  
GERMAN FLATTS AND KINGSLAND.

IN 1777 FORT STANWIX, FORT DAYTON, OLD FORT SCHUYLER, FORT  
HERKIMER AND THIS BATTLEFIELD OF ORISKANY WERE IN THE KINGSLAND  
GERMAN FLATTS DISTRICTS.

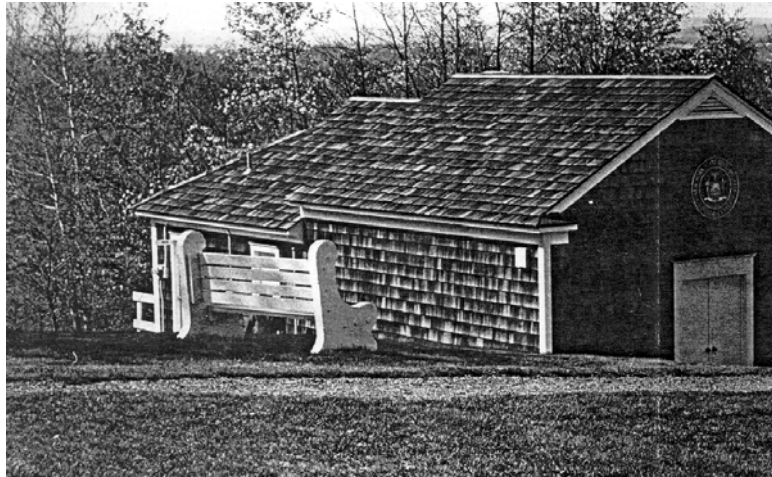


**Figure 5.26:** View northwest of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, 1949. Reproduced from *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, 18 December 1949, B-1.

## Benches

### *Individual Benches*

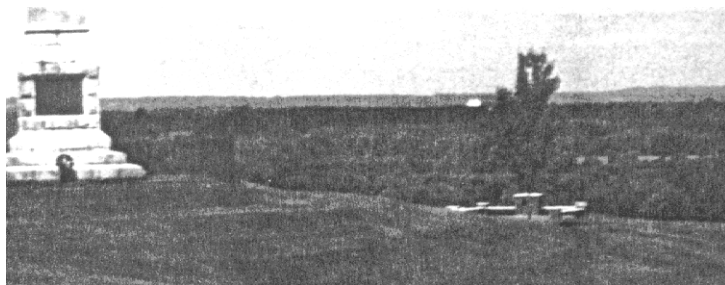
Based on available information, benches were first added to the Site by the State as part of its acquisition and rehabilitation of the memorial park in 1927. These benches were of standard, simple park design built of unadorned curved cast-stone ends spanned by wood slats. They were placed around the Battle Monument fence inside of the circular drive, two each on the south, west, and north sides.<sup>193</sup> Around 1962, the benches were replaced or repaired, and relocated as part of the reconstruction of the Battle Monument drive [Figure 5.27]. By 1970, there were a total of nine such benches located along the slope north of the Battle Monument.<sup>194</sup> In 1977, these benches were removed and replaced with two benches built of square concrete ends and wood slats located on the north side of the Battle Monument fence. In addition, wood picnic tables and a wood bench were placed to the west of the walk to the visitor center.<sup>195</sup> In the mid-1990s, these picnic tables and benches were removed. In 1996-1997, new cast-iron and wood-slat benches were installed along the walk to the visitor center to either side of the State Education sign, north of the Battle Monument, and adjacent to the Herkimer's march (beech tree) monument.



**Figure 5.27:** View northwest of wood-slat and concrete-end bench adjacent to visitor center, c.1965. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford. Pictured is probably of a 1927 bench that was originally adjacent to the Battle Monument fence and relocated in 1962.

### *Brick Seating/Interpretive Area*

In the early 1960s, the State Education Department was planning to build a combination outdoor seating and interpretive area as part of its conversion of the Rest House into an interpretive visitor center. In April 1962, Albert Corey wrote that the department was working ". . . on an interpretive device which will take the form of an outside rest area where people can sit around on a low stone wall and listen to the story of the battle of Oriskany. This is a very



**Figure 5.28:** View north of the brick seating/interpretive area, with Battle Monument at left, 1967. Detail of a photograph in Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

<sup>193</sup> Undated photograph of rest house and stone-dust drive, c.1931, BHS MSS; c.1931 aerial photograph of Site, Central Region MSS.

<sup>194</sup> DeWolf aerial photograph, 1962; Albert Corey to William Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS; 1970 topographic Site map.

<sup>195</sup> Undated, untitled c.1980 photographs of the Battle Monument area, BHS MSS.

expensive item and will take some time to set up."<sup>196</sup> This feature was built in brick and formed a 20-foot deep by 20-foot wide 'U'-shaped object composed of two facing benches spanned by a wall that housed a push-button self-interpretive audio device.<sup>197</sup> This feature, which was built a short distance downhill off the northeast corner of the Battle Monument, was removed around 1976 [Figure 5.28, preceding page].

## Signs

### *Main Entrance (Battle Monument Drive) Sign*

In May 1928, there were plans for erecting a "sign similar to those at the Saratoga Battlefield calling attention to the fact that this is the Oriskany Battlefield area under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Department."<sup>198</sup> No further information has been found on this sign. A tall mast-arm sign was installed on the west side of the entrance to the Battle Monument drive outside of the gates at some point after 1944 under jurisdiction of the Site by the State Department of Education. This sign, which followed a standard design used at the department's other historic sites, featured a metal post with a ball finial, scrolled mast arm with a lantern, and a Colonial Revival-style wood sign board with a stylized broken pediment, black face, and the words "ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD 1777" and "STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION" along the bottom [Figure 5.29]. This sign was removed around 1992 when two new entrance signs were installed by the Bureau of Historic Sites.<sup>199</sup> The pole of the old sign was stored outside of the horse barn. The new signs, which followed a standard design used by OPRHP throughout the Historic Sites system, were built of brown sign boards, white lettering, and gray-painted wood frames capped by ball finials. The main site-identification sign was installed on east side of the drive on the outside of the gates, 16 feet back from the edge of the Road. This sign measured four and one-half feet wide and eight feet tall overall. A smaller informational sign was installed on the inside of the gates, 22 feet north of the gatepost. It measured four and one-half feet tall and four and one-half feet wide overall.



**Figure 5.29:** View west of c.1940s main entrance sign, 1980. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

### *Historical Markers (Small State Education Signs)*

In August 1959, the *Observer-Dispatch* reported that there were plans to install six wood interpretive markers across the Site, along with other improvements. It was not until 1966, however, that markers were installed. In July 1966, the Sewah Studios of Marietta, Ohio submitted a receipt for four "historical markers" set on steel posts. The signs, which were similar to the Department of Education's familiar small roadside markers, were cast metal and painted blue with gold leaf lettering. Each measured approximately three feet wide by two and one-half feet tall. The four markers were entitled: "Ambush Started Here," "The Military Road," "The Rally," and "In the Valley Homes." In the following October, Sewah submitted

<sup>196</sup> Albert Corey to William Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS.

<sup>197</sup> Untitled photograph of Battle Monument dated 26 June 1967, BHS MSS; 1970 topographic map, Central Region MSS.

<sup>198</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," 8 May 1928, BHS MSS.

<sup>199</sup> 1980 photograph of entrance sign, view west, BHS MSS; Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 28 June 2000.

another receipt for a fifth sign, "General Herkimers' Troops." This last sign was apparently never installed. Each sign cost \$160.<sup>200</sup>

*State Education Sign*

Between 1960 and 1962, a "large sign describing the historic importance of the battlefield" was installed at a cost of \$100 under direction of the State Department of Education. The sign, which was placed at the northern edge of the parking lot, was made by the State Department of Public Works of cast metal and followed the same format and design as the large markers that were installed under the direction of the State Education Department at highway rest stops and the rest areas along the Thruway during the 1960s. It measured six feet wide, four and one-half feet high, and was set on raised posts. The title of the sign read: HISTORIC NEW YORK / SITE OF THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY / AUGUST 6, 1777. This was followed by text that described the battle and events leading up to it. This sign was removed from the Site in 1976 and stored in the maintenance garage. In winter 1998-1999, the sign was repainted and reinstalled at its original location.<sup>201</sup>

*Rustic Welcome Sign*

Around 1976, a large wood frame sign set on posts and capped with a cedar-shingled gable roof was installed at the north end of the parking lot [Figure 5.30]. This sign, which was about eight feet tall, was likely installed as a replacement of the large State Education Sign, which was removed in 1976. The dark-brown signboard read "ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD WELCOME," and featured two slots for brochures and space for posting notices. It was removed in the late 1980s.<sup>202</sup>



**Figure 5.30** View northwest of rustic welcome sign, 1979. Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

*Panoramic Photo-Interpretive Kiosk*

Around 1976, two interpretive panels were installed east of the brick interpretive-seating area off the northeast corner of the Battle Monument [Figure 5.31]<sup>203</sup> These panels, one of which measured about 10 feet and the other five feet long, faced southeast and northwest, and contained panoramic photos of the battlefield, which were designed to orient visitors to battle location and important features in the landscape. Both were removed in the early 1990s.



**Figure 5.31:** View north of panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk, c.1976. Detail of a photograph in Oriskany Battlefield files, Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford.

<sup>200</sup> Sewah Studio receipts dated 27 July 1966 and 13 October 1966, BHS MSS.

<sup>201</sup> Corey to Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS; "The Honor Roll, Newsletter to the Descendant Registry," May 1999, Central Region MSS.

<sup>202</sup> Untitled photograph of welcome sign dated "Winter 79," BHS MSS; Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 28 June 2000.

<sup>203</sup> Undated, untitled photograph of remains of brick seating area and panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk, c.1976, BHS MSS.

### *New Interpretive Signs*

Between 1993 and 1994 after the State reopened the Site, a series of nine illustrated interpretive signs were installed between the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers Monument, two of which were welcome signs. These signs were designed and built by the Bureau of Historic Sites and were made of wood frames and set on wood posts. The signboards, which were faced in clear acrylic, were designed to be removed during the off-season. Most of the signboards measured 20 by 26 inches.

### *Operational Signs*

In addition to markers and interpretive signs, a series of operations signs were installed across the Site at various times. These included two parking signs and a one-way directional sign at the loop around the monument installed in the late 1920s. A series of five warning and restriction signs installed in the ravine area in 1977.<sup>204</sup> In 1993 and 1994 operational and welcome signs were added at the parking area, above the visitor center, and at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive. There were many other small signs installed over the years, such as one at the service drive, and along Battle Monument and Unknown Soldiers Monument drives, and but no documentation has been found on when they were added.

### **Other**

#### *Stone Piles*

A series of five stone piles scattered along the lowlands east of Battle Creek were identified by the Bureau of Historic Sites in 1992. At this time, there were two hypothesis about the origin of the piles: 1. They marked the location of mass burials from the Battle of Oriskany; 2. They were made as a result of field clearing practices undertaken when the land was cultivated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>205</sup>

The following year, the piles were mapped by a surveying class from Mohawk Valley Community College. For this project, a total of five large and five small stone piles were identified; one of the large piles was on the uplands, but the remaining ones were scattered in an irregular line east of Battle Creek on the former Parkhurst-heir farm. The largest pile measured about 12 by 15 feet and almost two feet high, and most were composed of rounded stones. After this survey was completed, a team from the Bureau of Historic Sites under the direction of Chuck Fisher undertook testing of the stone piles in May 1993. These tests turned up 19<sup>th</sup> century artifacts that revealed the piles post-dated the Revolutionary period and therefore did not likely mark burials.<sup>206</sup>

#### *Metal Survey Markers*

One round, bright-finish metal survey marker was placed in the middle of the west plateau, near the former eastern property line of the memorial park during this period. This marker was identified by a triangle with the initials "MI" on the 1970 topographic map of the Site. No information has been found on when this marker was installed.

#### *Exterior Lights*

When electrical service was brought to the Site around 1953, exterior lights were likely added, but no information has been found on specific fixtures. During rehabilitation work in the late 1990s, floodlights were added or replaced at the Battle Monument, flagstaffs, and parking lot. Floodlights were added to the main entrance sign in 2000.

---

<sup>204</sup> "Memorandum, Regarding Oriskany Battlefield," 8 May 1928; Paul Huey, "Oriskany Battlefield Sign Tests," hand-drawn map dated 6 May 1977, BHS MSS.

<sup>205</sup> Paul Huey, "Field Report and Recommendations on Oriskany Battlefield," 12 November 1992, BHS MSS.

<sup>206</sup> Susan Anacker, Party Chief, "Plat of a Survey for Oriskany Battlefield S.H.S.," 15 May 1993, OBSHS MSS; Archeological Testing at Oriskany Battlefield," Memorandum, Chuck Fisher to Paul Huey, 18 May 1993, BHS MSS.

### *Picnic Tables & Barbeques*

Between 1960 and 1962, six "additional" picnic tables were placed in the "picnic area" at a cost of \$220.<sup>207</sup> This picnic area was probably the picnic tables and barbeques that existed around the Unknown Soldiers Monument by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Drinking Fountain*

Between 1960 and 1962, two outside drinking fountains were installed at a cost of \$150. One of these fountains was located on the outside wall of the visitor center; no information has been found on where the second fountain was located.<sup>208</sup>

### *Bird Houses*

Two small, pole-mounted wood bird houses with a single openings and shed roofs were made on the Site around 1985 and installed on at the east and west edges of the west plateau.

### *Planted Urns*

Two wood planters were installed to either side of the entrance to the visitor center by 1980.<sup>209</sup> During renovation of the building in 1998, two small synthetic terra cotta urns were placed at the same location . These planters were typically filled with a mixture of flowering annuals and were stored inside during the winter.

## **Archeological Sites**

Several minor archeological investigations were undertaken on the Site during this period. A comprehensive archeological survey was not undertaken.

### **Investigations in Battle Creek Ravine**

In 1953, the Utica Observer-Dispatch reported that historians were clearing out the ravine by hand in search of data. This work was part of the plan of State Historic Albert Corey to undertake an "archeological and historical" survey of the Site.<sup>210</sup> No documentation has been found on the extent or findings of these investigations.

### **Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead**

Limited archeological testing by the Bureau of Historic Sites in May, 1977 at the top of the east side of the Battle Creek ravine and in the adjoining picnic area revealed some 18<sup>th</sup>-century material and a stone foundation.<sup>211</sup> This foundation was most likely part of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, but was not identified as such as part of this investigation

---

<sup>207</sup> Albert Corey to William C. Rohl, 30 April 1962, BHS MSS. No information has been found on the previous picnic tables

<sup>208</sup> Corey to Rohl, 30 April 1962; Dennis Roberts, telephone conversation with J. Auwaerter, 18 July 2000.

<sup>209</sup> c.1980 photograph of the visitor center, BHS MSS.

<sup>210</sup> "Begin Oriskany Site Work," Utica *Daily Press*, 1 December 1953; Albert B. Corey to Mr. Edward Seelig, 27 August 1953, BHS MSS.

<sup>211</sup> "Archeological Testing at Oriskany Battlefield," memorandum, Paul Huey to Dick Haberlen, 10 May 1977, BHS MSS.

### Investigations into Military Road

In summer 1993, the Bureau of Historic Sites, under the direction of Paul Huey, undertook limited archeological testing in search of the roadbed of the military road in the vicinity of the historically interpreted alignment north of NY 69. The investigations turned up "nothing indicative of the road."<sup>212</sup>

### Miscellaneous Battle Artifacts

As during previous historic periods, there were stories of findings of battle-related artifacts on and adjacent to the Site. Thomas Evans, who lived near the Site during the 1930s, remembered that this uncles and Mr. Ringrose (former owner and caretaker of the Site) found artifacts such as buttons, musketballs, and buckles that were plowed up in the field south of the Site. More recent reports during the 1990s have referenced findings of 23 English half pennies, a ram rod, and an 18<sup>th</sup>-century amputation saw belonging to Dr. Moses Younglove in the west ravine, a line of Jaeger balls on the east side of the Battle Monument, and metal detection in the Battle Creek ravine.<sup>213</sup> None of the findings have been documented.

**Stone Piles** (see "Small Scale Features," "Other.")

### Summary

At the beginning of this historic period, the Site consisted of a small memorial park owned by the Oneida Historical Society, the dormant Parkhurst-heir farm purchased by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, and the active Ringrose dairy farm. The east half of the Site was partly forested, while the west half remained open agricultural fields that permitted expansive views from the Battle Monument north into the Mohawk Valley. In 1927, the State of New York purchased the memorial park as the first part of a plan to establish a public reservation to preserve the land on which it was believed the battle occurred. The State improved the drive to the Battle Monument and erected a rest house. In 1928, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association oversaw the construction of a monument to the unknown soldiers of the battle and other improvements on the east plateau. It was not until the 1950s that any further land acquisitions or significant changes to the Site were undertaken by the State. In 1952, the State purchased part of the Ringrose farm between the memorial park and the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property, and in 1955, it purchased the latter property, completing its acquisition of the existing 80-acre Site. The State made many minor changes between the 1950s and 2000. It demolished two of the three Ringrose barns, removed the loop drive around the Battle Monument and built a parking area around 1961, rebuilt the rest house into a small visitor center in 1963, installed interpretive signs, added a maintenance garage in 1970, and provided picnic tables and barbecues. The most significant changes, however, resulted from natural succession on the lowlands of the former Ringrose farm. This area reforested by the 1980s, resulting in alteration of the Site's historic character-defining spatial organization and views.

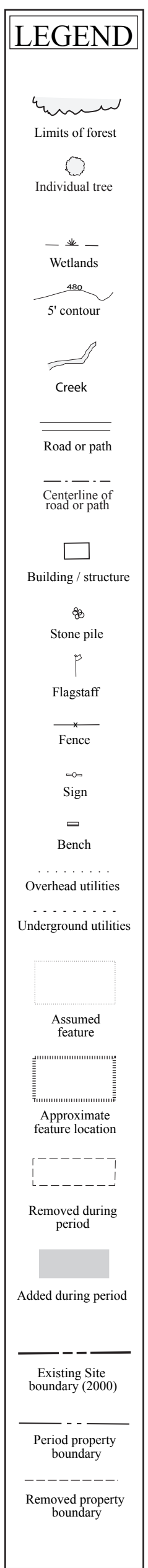
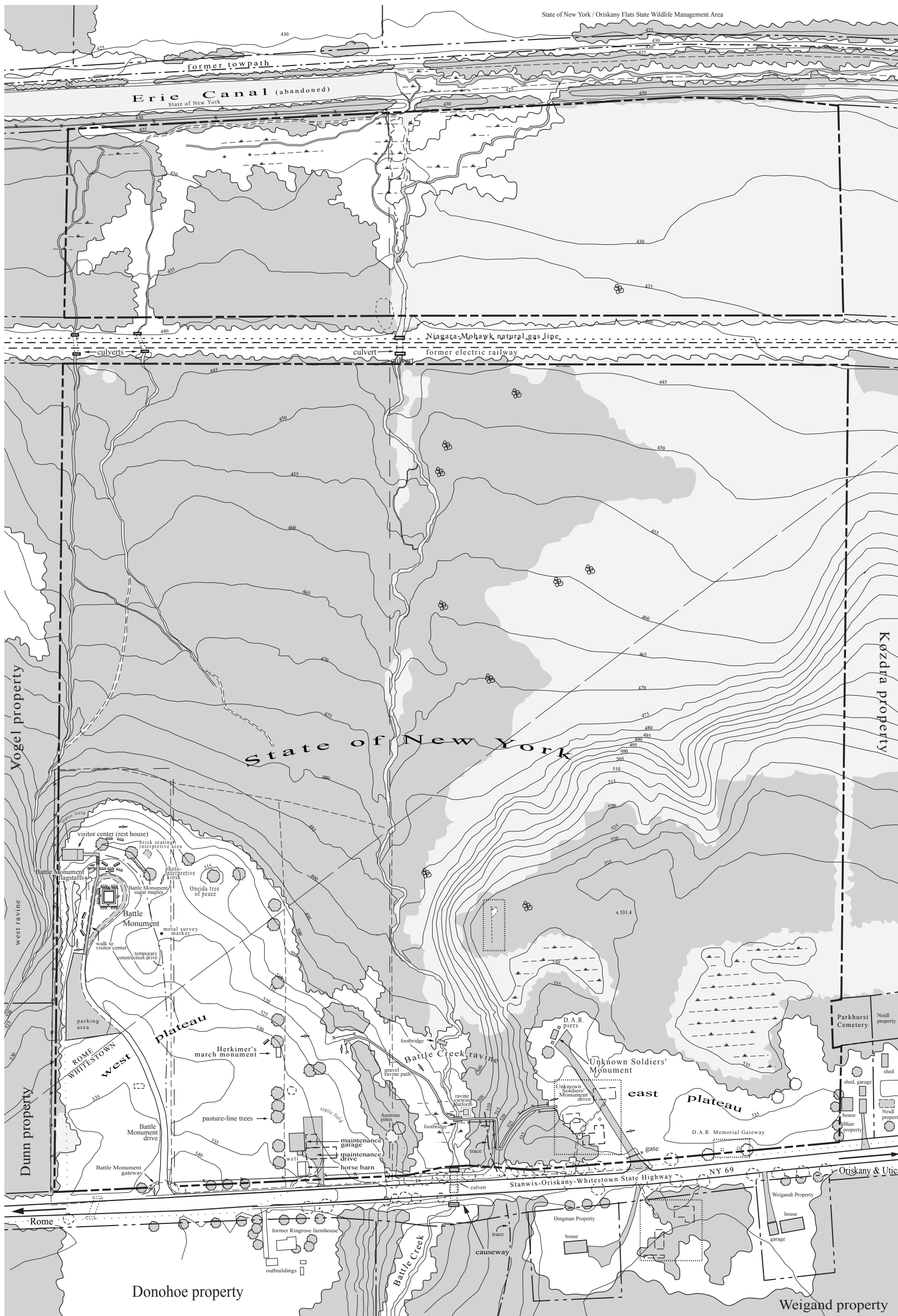
---

<sup>212</sup> Paul R. Huey to Norman Richards, 10 August 1993, BHS MSS.

<sup>213</sup> Joseph Robertaccio, conversation and site inspection with J. Auwaerter, 8 October 1999.







**Cultural Landscape Report**  
**Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site**

Prepared for:  
 New York State  
 Office of Parks,  
 Recreation and Historic Preservation  
 Central Region, Jamesville, New York

Prepared by:  
 State University of New York  
 College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
 Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York  
 Research Assitant John Auwaerter & Project Director George W. Curry

**STATE DEVELOPMENT OF**  
**THE BATTLEFIELD**  
**HISTORIC SITE, 1927-2000**

Period Plan 4 of 4

Scale: 1" = 200'

Map Sources:  
 "Topography - Oriskany Battle Monument"  
 (New York State Parks, 1970)  
 "Oriskany Land Use History" (NPS, 1998)  
 "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany"  
 (White, 1927)  
 Highway construction plans (NYS Dept. Public  
 Works, 1933)

Date: November 2000 / Drawn by: John Auwaerter

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

---

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections that document the existing physical condition of the landscape within and adjoining the Site as of the year 2000. The first section, "Landscape Context," provides a concise description of the landscape that adjoins the Site but which is not under the jurisdiction of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The second section, "Landscape Characteristics," provides a detailed description of the existing condition of all landscape features that are within the boundaries of the Site and under the jurisdiction of OPRHP.



**Figure 6.1:** Oblique aerial view north of the west half of the Site, 1999. Courtesy of Landcare Aviation, Whitestown, New York.

For each landscape feature, an assessment of its physical condition is provided based on a simple visual inspection. Condition is assessed according to the following four categories:<sup>1</sup>

**Good:** Indicates the landscape feature shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and is as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions.

**Fair:** Indicates the landscape feature shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within three to five years to prevent further harm. The cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the significant characteristics of the feature, if left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, will cause the feature to degrade to a poor condition.

**Poor:** Indicates the landscape feature shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required.

**Unknown:** Indicates that not enough information is available to make an evaluation.

### *Site Boundaries*

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from National Park Service, "Resources Management Plan Guidelines," reprinted in Robert Page et al., *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, 67.

The Site occupies 80 acres that extend along the north side of NY 69 (Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway) north to the old Erie Canal [Figure 6.1, previous page]. The boundary between Rome and Whitestown crosses the Site at a diagonal from southwest to northeast at a point approximately 250 feet south of the Battle Monument. The Site consists of three tax parcels. The portion of the Site within the City of Rome is identified as parcel 260-2-28 and contains 44.8 acres. The portion of the Site within the Town of Whitestown is divided into two parcels. Parcel 275-2-41 on the west half of the Site contains 9 acres; parcel 275-2-1 on the east half of the Site contains 28.2 acres. A 100-foot wide corridor owned by Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation passes across the northern third of the Site and bisects parcels 260-2-28 and 275-2-1.<sup>2</sup>

## **1. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT**

### **Natural Systems & Features**

#### **Geomorphology**

The Site is located in the upper Mohawk Valley approximately 120 miles west of the Mohawk River's confluence with the Hudson River and 20 miles south of its source in the Adirondack foothills. The Mohawk Valley lies between the Adirondacks to the north and the Allegheny Plateau to the south and forms the only water-level access across these two highland regions. The Mohawk Valley in the vicinity of the Site is almost imperceptible from ground level as it averages about 10 miles in width and is framed by low, rounded hills to the north and south. The maximum relief in vicinity of the Site is roughly 600 feet, ranging from a lowpoint on the Mohawk River at 419 feet to the highest elevation of approximately 1010 feet on the north side of the valley [Figure 6.2, following page].

The natural systems of this temperate region are defined by Lake Ontario to the northwest, the highlands of the Allegheny Plateau to the south, the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains to the northeast, and the highlands of the Tug Hill Plateau to the northwest.

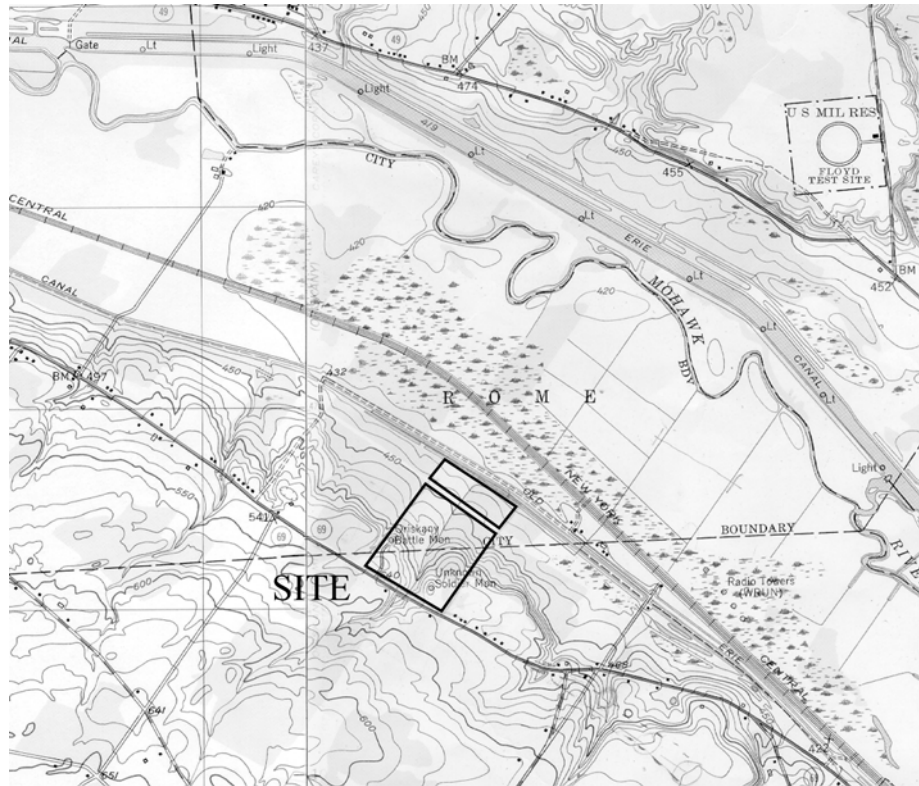
#### **Geology**

The Site is situated within the northern edge of the Allegheny Plateau geologic province, an expansive highlands region that stretches south into Pennsylvania and west toward Lake Erie. The bedrock of the plateau is composed of Ordovician and lower Silurian-period sedimentary rock built up by ancient seas during the Paleozoic era about 420 to 600 million years ago and subsequently uplifted and tilted toward the south. The uplifted northern face of this plateau forms the highlands on the southern side of the Mohawk Valley, which reach upward of 1,000 feet in this region. These highlands, which are not visible from the Site, run in an east-west line about nine miles to the south.

The north side of the Mohawk Valley also has highlands reaching 1,000 feet, but these are part of the foothills of the southern extreme of the Adirondack Mountains geologic province. The oldest bedrock of the Adirondacks is composed of ancient volcanic (igneous) rocks that are a southern extension of the vast geologic formation known as the Canadian Shield that formed during Precambrian times about one billion years ago. Portions of the Adirondack foothills are also composed of later sedimentary formations. Unlike the Allegheny highlands to the south, the Adirondack foothills are visible from the Site and frame the northern horizon.

---

<sup>2</sup> 1998 Oneida County tax records in "Land Use History for the Oriskany Battlefield" (Saratoga Associates and ICON Architecture, 1998), Figure 18.



**Figure 6.2:** The Mohawk Valley in the vicinity of the Site, detail of 1955 Rome and Oriskany U.S.G.S. 7.5-minute quadrangle maps.

The surface geology of the upper Mohawk Valley is largely glacial in origin, dating to the Pleistocene Epoch that ended about 12,000 years ago, commonly known as the Ice Age.<sup>3</sup> The gently rolling hills and valleys of the region and deep deposits of till and outwash sediment were largely shaped by the glacier and its meltwaters. Till, formed as the glacier moved and ground up the bedrock, is characterized in this region by a matrix of sands, silts, or clays with larger pebbles and cobbles. Outwash sediment, formed during melting of the glacier, is characterized by concentrations of pebbles and cobbles carried by moving water, and by lacustrine sand, which is sand deposited on the bottom of lakes.

The surface geology of the region was also shaped over the last 12,000 years through erosion of bedrock and glacial deposits by the numerous rivers and creeks that drain northward toward the Mohawk River. Such erosion created or deepened ravines and left deposits of till washed down from the uplands. Deep deposits of muck and other soils in the floodplain of the Mohawk River and other smaller waterways were formed through the erosion of smaller particles and accumulation of organic matter.

### Hydrology

The major hydrological feature in the vicinity of the Site is the Mohawk River, a 140-mile long waterway that is part of the Hudson-Mohawk watershed that covers much of northern and eastern New York State. The Site, which lies about 1200 feet south of the Mohawk River, is located about 20 miles from its headwaters in the Adirondack foothills north of Rome and about 120 miles west of its confluence with the

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed geologic analysis, see James M. Loewy, "The Pleistocene Geology of the Oriskany, New York 7.5-Minute Quadrangle," M.S. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1983.

Hudson River at Cohoes. As the Mohawk descends the Adirondack foothills, it is a rapid and narrow river, but its character changes markedly as it makes a nearly 90-degree turn at Rome to run east toward the Hudson River. In the vicinity of the Site, which lies east of Rome, the Mohawk River is a meandering, slower, and broader river with a low gradient of only 3 feet per mile. The river occupies a broad floodplain known as the Mohawk Valley trench or Erie belt line that is about .71 miles wide in the section between Rome and Utica that passes the Site.<sup>4</sup>

Along the south side of the Mohawk Valley are many relatively small waterways that drain northward across the regional dip of the Allegheny Plateau. Several of these, such as the Oriskany Creek about two miles east of the Site, are relatively large and are pre-glacial in origin, occurring in old fault lines in the uplifted plateau. Battle Creek and the unnamed creek along the west boundary of the Site were formed largely by the action of glaciers and from post-glacial erosive action.

### **Climate**

The Mohawk Valley forms a microclimate more moderate than the climate in the uplands to the north and south, being more similar to the climate of the Lake Ontario Plain that stretches west from the valley. This climate is classified as humid-continental, characterized by warm, dry summers and long, cold, and snowy winters. The last killing frost is typically in mid-May, while the first is in early October. The annual rainfall in the upper Mohawk Valley is between 40 and 50 inches, including a mean annual snowfall of between 80 and 90 inches. The winters typically record only 35 percent of possible sunshine, with a mean January minimum temperature of 10 to 12 degrees Fahrenheit. The growing season is between 135 and 150 days, with 55 to 60 percent of possible sunshine recorded during this time. The mean July maximum temperature is 80 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>5</sup>

### **Transportation Corridors**

#### **The Road (NY 69)**

The Road, presently named the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway and designated as NY 69 (State Highway 8455), was built between 1933 and 1934 on the alignment of an earlier turnpike and plank road connecting Utica and Rome, roads which were in turn likely built on the alignment of a 1759 military road. The Road borders the entire southern boundary of the Site, is maintained by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), Region 2 (Utica) and is posted at 55 miles-per-hour in the vicinity of the Site. The State-owned right-of-way follows a straight alignment and is approximately 75 feet wide and expands to a width of up to 115 feet at Battle Creek. The Road consists of a concrete bed with an asphalt overlayment and is divided into two 11-foot travel lanes and four-foot shoulders, with 3-foot wide concrete gutters on the approaches to the Battle Creek ravine [Figure 6.3 following page].<sup>6</sup> Through the ravine, the Road is carried on an earthen causeway through which Battle Creek passes in a reinforced 60-inch diameter concrete pipe culvert with rectangular headwalls built in 1933/34. The causeway is approximately 80 feet wide and reaches a maximum height of about 15 feet. The sloping walls of the causeway are maintained as grasses and scrub growth that is occasionally mown.<sup>7</sup>

Condition: Fair

<sup>4</sup> James Chamberlain, *Mohawk River Flood Plain* (Utica: Oneida County Planning, 1974), 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen S. Olney, "Natural Characteristics," in *The History of Oneida County* (1977), 14-16.

<sup>6</sup> New York State Department of Transportation, "50' Plan & Mainline Profile, Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro S.H. 8455," dated 1-8-82, NYS DOT Region 2, Utica.

<sup>7</sup> As of July 2000, borings into the causeway have been taken to investigate potential remains from the military road and subsequent road construction beneath the existing roadbed. This work is being done under contract to the New York State Department of Transportation in preparation for replacement of the 1933/34 concrete culvert that carries Battle Creek through the causeway, which exhibits some deterioration



**Figure 6.3:** View west of the Road along east plateau illustrating pavement and drop in elevation across Battle Creek ravine. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### Former New York Central Railroad (CSX)

The mainline railroad between Albany and Buffalo, formerly Conrail and before it the New York Central Railroad, was originally constructed between 1837 and 1839. It runs through the Mohawk Valley and passes approximately 700 feet north of the north property line of the Site [Figure 6.2, page 213]. This railroad contains two active tracks that are used for freight and passenger service. Freight service on the line is operated by CSX Corporation, which carries over 23 million tons of freight across the state yearly, primarily automotive, grain, food, paper, and chemicals. Federally-chartered Amtrak operates eleven daily passenger trains on the railroad through its Empire Service between New York City and Toronto, Canada.<sup>8</sup> The railroad can be heard, but not seen, from the Site.

Condition: Unknown

### Erie Canal

The Erie Canal was begun in 1819 and borders the entire northern boundary of the Site. Although abandoned for navigation, the corridor remains under ownership of the State of New York. The canal structure consists of a prism (section that holds water) that is 70 feet wide and seven feet high. The south canal wall rises about three to five feet above the adjoining topography of the Site and is bordered by a drainage ditch. The canal walls and much of the dewatered prism are covered in dense vegetation, including deciduous trees, some conifers, and wetland grasses [Figure 6.4, following page]. Remnants of a post-and-wire pasture fence line the south canal wall west of Battle Creek. The former towpath is maintained as a mown corridor that is largely enclosed by vegetation on the south side adjoining the canal prism, but is open toward the expanse of fallow fields and wetlands that stretch north toward the railroad. East of a line corresponding with Battle Creek and the middle of the Site, the prism is dewatered. West of this line, the prism retains about 1 or 2 feet of water that is detained by a beaver dam and which is covered in thick algae during warm weather. A break in the south canal wall corresponding with the middle of the Site allows a branch of Battle Creek to flow into the prism and join a stream draining the watered section of the prism.

Condition: Poor

<sup>8</sup> Conrail website, [www.conrail.com](http://www.conrail.com), "Briefing Book;" CSX website [www.csxt.com/abt/communities/ny.htm](http://www.csxt.com/abt/communities/ny.htm).



**Figure 6.4:** View west along Erie Canal from break in the canal wall near the middle of the Site; beaver dam in foreground. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

#### **Former Electric Railway Corridor (Niagara-Mohawk Gas Transmission Line)**

A 100-foot wide corridor owned by the Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation crosses the northern third of the Site. This corridor, which was built around 1902 for the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company, contains an underground natural gas transmission line that crosses over three culverts. The largest, located at Battle Creek, is a cast concrete box culvert with headwalls. It is approximately 8 feet high on the north side and six feet high on the south. The two small waterways on the western edge of the Site are carried under the corridor through pipes with concrete headwalls, one of which has collapsed. The corridor is maintained as a mown strip approximately 30 feet wide; the remaining 35 feet to either side is largely forested, with several areas of partly open wetland [Figure 6.5]. Access through and onto the Site from this corridor is prohibited but is not physically restricted. In addition to Niagara-Mohawk maintenance vehicles, the corridor is also used by snow mobiles and other off-road vehicles.

Condition: Fair (condition of underground gas line is unknown)



**Figure 6.5:** View west through former electric railway corridor adjacent to the Site. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.



Adjoining Properties<sup>9</sup>

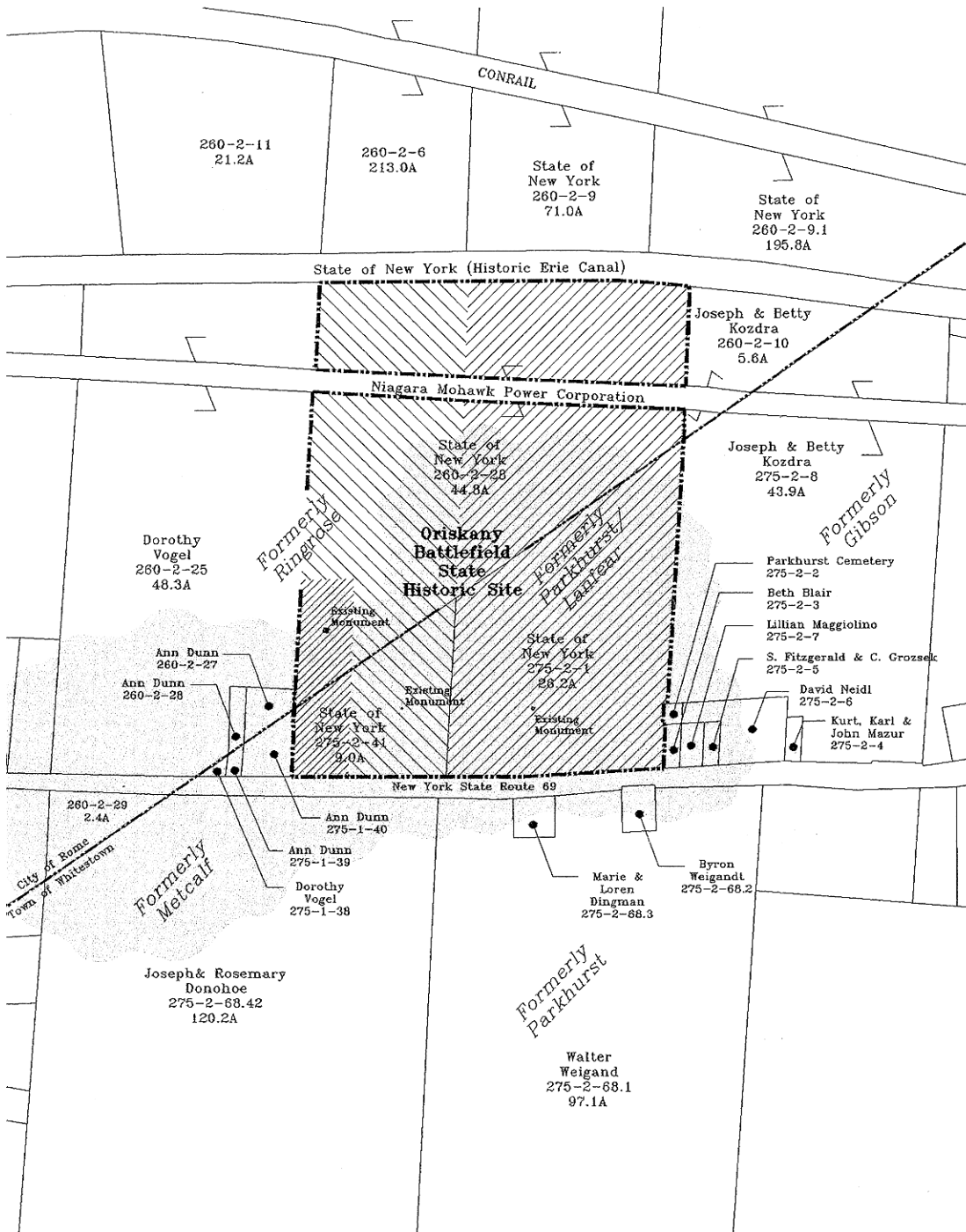


Figure 6.6: Composite tax map of properties adjoining the Site, 1998. Reproduced with permission from "Land Use History For The Oriskany Battlefield (Prepared for the National Park Service by the Saratoga Associates and ICON Architecture, 1998), Figure 18.

Ea

<sup>9</sup> Information in this section is taken from site inspections, 1999 aerial photographs, and Oneida County composite tax information in "Land Use History For the Oriskany Battlefield" (prepared for the National Park Service by the Saratoga Associates and ICON Architecture, 1998).

*Joseph & Betty Kozdra Property*

7195 Route 69

Parcels: 260-2-10, City of Rome, 5.6 acres

275-2-8, Town of Whitestown, 43.9 acres

The 49.5-acre Kozdra property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. It extends from NY 69 to the Erie Canal and borders most of the eastern edge of the Site. The northern three-quarters of the property consists of a forest that extends from the upland edge across the lowlands. Most of this forest is over 70 years old.<sup>10</sup> The south quarter occupies the remaining uplands and contains two large hay fields circled by dirt tracks, a house, and several outbuildings. The house, which appears to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century building with early 20<sup>th</sup>-century alterations, is set back from the Road across a lawn with scattered mature conifers [Figure 6.7]. It is one and one-half stories with a side gable roof, clapboard siding, two-over-two double-hung sash windows, an enclosed entry porch, and a stone chimney, and is painted white.



**Figure 6.7:** View northeast of Kozdra house. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

Condition: Unknown

*Kurt, Karl & John Mazur Property*

7907 Route 69

Parcel: 275-2-6, Town of Whitestown, .32 acre



**Figure 6.8:** View north of Mazur house. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

Condition: Unknown

*David Neidl Property*

This property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. This property contains a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century house that is set back from the Road across an open lawn [Figure 6.8]. The area to the rear of the house is wooded. The house is one story and consists of two gable-front sections that are spanned by a recessed enclosed breezeway. It features replacement one-over-one double-hung windows, wide clapboard siding, and decorative scalloped-end vertical boards in the front gables, and is painted white and green.

<sup>10</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

7901 Route 69

Parcel: 275-2-6, Town of Whitestown, 2.39 acre

This property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, is 'L'-shaped and extends west to the Parkhurst Cemetery to the rear of three properties that front on the Road. It was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. It consists of a non-residential building set back from the Road and surrounded by a wide variety of newly planted shrubs and herbaceous perennials [Figure 6.9]. Constructed around 1943,<sup>11</sup> this one-story, side-gable building is built of concrete blocks and contains steel-frame windows and is painted light green. The roof appears to be recent addition. An asphalt and gravel driveway winds from the front of the building to the rear of the property. An open area with landscape construction materials is to the rear.



**Figure 6.9:** View northeast of Neidl building. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

Condition: Unknown

*S. Fitzgerald & C. Grozsek Property*

7891 Route 69

Parcel: 275-2-5, Town of Whitestown, .32 acre



**Figure 6.10:** View northeast of Fitzgerald-Grozsek house. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

This property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property to the north, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. It consists of a house set back from the Road across an open lawn [Figure 6.10]. The one-story frame house consists of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century side-gable section onto which a gable-front wing has been added. The house has one-over-one double-hung sash replacement windows, beige vinyl siding, and maroon shutters. A two-car garage is to the rear and is reached by an asphalt driveway.

Condition: Unknown

<sup>11</sup> David Neidl, conversation with J. Auwaerter, July 2000.

*David Neidl (formerly Maggioliono)*

Parcel: 275-2-7, Town of Whitestown, .44 acre

This property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property to the north, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. This property fronts on the Road and contains a lawn, a small frame shed, and an asphalt driveway. A depression in the middle of the property marks the site of a house that was destroyed by fire.

Condition: Unknown

*Beth Blair Property*

7885 Route 69

Parcel 275-2-3, Town of Whitestown, .32 acre

This property, located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Site, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property to the north, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. This property consists of a small house and two outbuildings that are set back from the Road across a lawn framed by conifers to the west along the eastern boundary of the Site. To the rear of the property is the Parkhurst Cemetery. The house, built in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, is located only several feet from the Site's property line and is set apart from the Site only by a line of conifers with open understory [Figure 6.11]. The



**Figure 6.11:** View north of Blair house. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000. The Site is at the left beyond the white pine.

house is one story and consists of a low gable roof, irregularly-placed double-hung and casement windows, and clapboard siding, and is painted white. One outbuilding is a single-bay gable-front garage sheathed in vertical-board siding painted white. It is set in front of and west of the house, and is reached by an asphalt-paved driveway. The second outbuilding is a small pre-fabricated frame shed located to the rear of the garage.

Condition: Unknown

*Parkhurst Cemetery*

Parcel 275-2-2, Town of Whitestown, .171 acre

The Parkhurst Cemetery is an abandoned 19<sup>th</sup>-century family burial ground located on the eastern boundary of the Site. The limits of the cemetery into the Site approximately 10 feet, and a right-of-way exists partly on the Site. This right-of-way is approximately 10 feet in width and follows the Site's property line from the Road to the cemetery, a distance of about 190 feet.<sup>12</sup> The cemetery is forested and contains 32 marked burials dating from 1819 to 1917. The markers are mostly 19<sup>th</sup>-century marble headstones and footstones, except for three larger, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century granite monuments. Many are tilted. There is no visible trace of boundary markers or a fence. Aside from periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) that covers much of the

<sup>12</sup> Oneida County deeds, Book 490, 23; shown on New York State Department of Public Works, "Map of Land...to be Acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield ... Mohawk Valley Historic Association Reputed Owner" (Utica: Department of Public Works, District No. 2, July 1952), Central Region MSS.

ground, vegetation in the cemetery consists of volunteer trees that are also found in the adjoining forest to the north and northwest [Figure 6.12].

Condition: Fair



### North Side

The north side of the Site is bounded by the Erie Canal. North of the canal and east of the alignment of Battle Creek is the Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area, a 750-acre State preserve under the jurisdiction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. West of this preserve are large parcels under private ownership [names of owners not available]. The former New York Central Railroad (now CSX) crosses these properties about 700 feet north of the northern boundary of the Site. The winding Mohawk River is about 1300 feet farther to the north at its most southerly alignment. The Erie Division of the New York State Barge Canal System is located another 1200 feet to the north. The region between the Mohawk River and the Site is a level area characterized by abandoned agricultural fields, drainage ditches, wetlands, and young forest. Many of the drainage ditches follow property lines established through the initial subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in the 1780s.

**Figure 6.12:** View east of Parkhurst Cemetery from Site illustrating wooded conditions and variety of markers. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

Condition: Unknown



**Figure 6.13:** View northeast from the Erie Canal towpath across lowlands (Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area) north of the Site. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

## West Side

### *Dorothy Vogel Property*

Parcel 260-2-25, City of Rome, 48.3 acres

Parcel 275-1-38, Town of Whitestown (less than 1 acre)

The Vogel property, located along the western boundary of the Site, was formerly part of the Ringrose farm and prior to that, the Metcalf farm. It is a largely forested track extending from the Road to the Erie Canal. Portions of this forest vary in age, but most are generally less than 35 years old.<sup>13</sup> The west ravine and unnamed brook adjacent to the Battle Monument are within this property. There are no buildings or structures.

Condition: Unknown

### *Ann Dunn Property*

Parcel 260-2-27, City of Rome (less than 1 acre)

Parcel 275-1-40, Town of Whitestown, 1.3 acre

Parcel 260-2-28, City of Rome (less than 1 acre)

Parcel 275-1-39, Town of Whitestown (less than 1 acre)

The Dunn property, located along the western boundary of the Site, was formerly part of the Ringrose farm. It consists of two small adjoining parcels that front on the Road. The property is forested and adjoins the unnamed creek that flows into the west ravine. The forest is generally less than 35 years old and is characterized by thick underbrush. An abandoned stone-lined well is at the rear of the property and daylillies are near the Road.

Condition: Unknown

## South Side (Across NY 69)

### *Joseph & Rosemary Donohoe Property*

Parcel 260-2-29, City of Rome, 2.4 acres

Parcel 275-2-68.42, Town of Whitestown, 120.2 acres

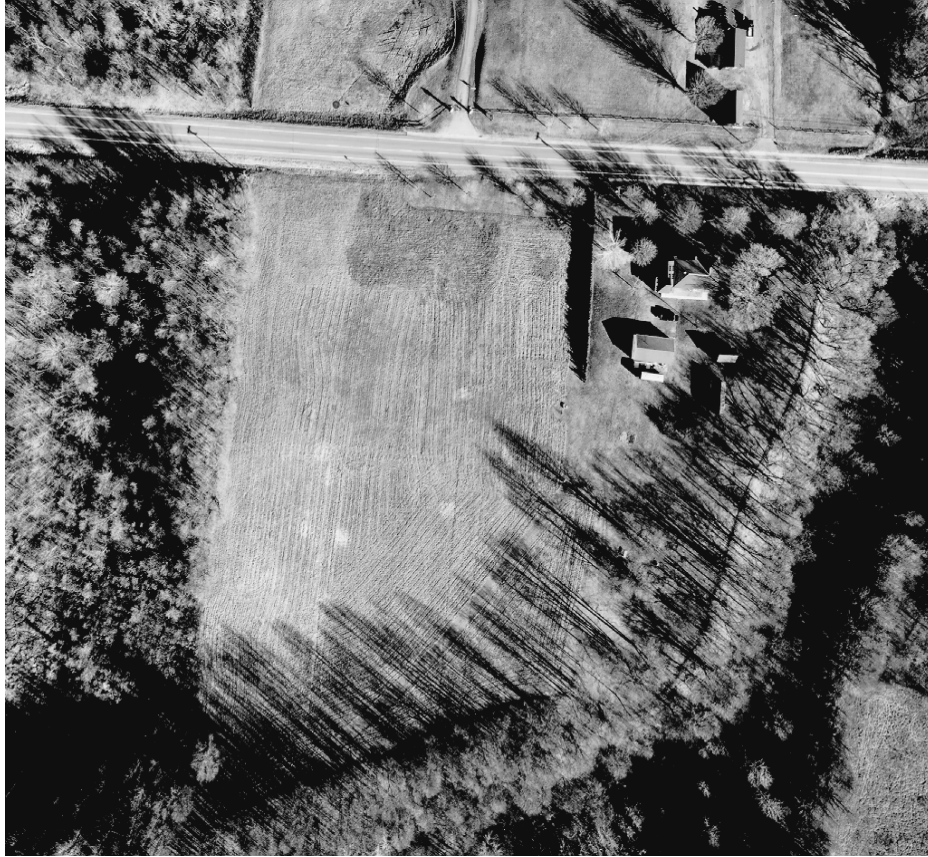
The Donohoe property is located south of the Road, opposite the west half of the Site, and was formerly part of the Ringrose farm [Figure 6.15, following page]. It consists of about 1750 feet of frontage along the Road and extends to the south about 3000 feet. The property is undulating and forested except for an open area that occupies about seven acres opposite the Site. This open area is maintained as mown field and contains the former 1885 Ringrose farmhouse [Figure 6.14] and three other small outbuildings. Battle Creek winds through this property from southwest to northeast. The creek is within a broad ravine in the northern end of the property.

Condition: Unknown



**Figure 6.14:** View south of former Ringrose farmhouse. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> 1965 aerial photograph, Bird Library, Syracuse University.



**Figure 6.15:** Aerial view of the Donohoe property adjacent to the Site. Photograph by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 1999. The Battle Monument drive is at the top center of the photograph, Battle Creek ravine and former Ringrose farmhouse are toward the right.



**Figure 6.16:** Aerial photograph of the Walter Weigand property adjacent to the Site. Photograph by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 1999. Battle Creek ravine is at the left of the photograph and the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive is at the top center.

*Walter Weigand Property*

Parcel 275-2-68.1, Town of Whitestown, 97.1 acres

The Weigand property is located south of the Road, opposite the west half of the Site, and was formerly part of the George W. Parkhurst farm. It consists of about 1100 feet of frontage along the Road, excluding two subdivided parcels, and extends about 3000 feet to the south. The property is about one-third forested, one-third active agricultural land, and about one-third fallow field. The active agricultural portion appears to be used for growing hay. A portion of the Battle Creek ravine is within the northwest corner of the property, and a stone foundation (probably from the G. W. Parkhurst house) is near the Road opposite the drive to the Unknown Soldiers Monument [Figure 6.16, previous page].

Condition: Unknown

*Marie & Loren Dingman Property*

7854 Route 69

Parcel 275-2-68.3, Town of Whitestown, .84 acre

This property, located south of the Road and adjacent to the east side of Battle Creek ravine opposite the Unknown Soldiers Monument, was subdivided at an undetermined date from the adjoining Weigand property, formerly the G. W. Parkhurst farm. The property consists of a house set back from the Road in an open lawn lined by deciduous trees along the Road and successional vegetation to the east, south, and west [Figure 6.17]. An asphalt driveway aligns with the drive to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and extends at a diagonal back to the house. The c.1980 house is a log-cabin style one-story building with a front porch.



**Figure 6.17:** View south of the Dingman house from the Road showing deciduous trees in front lawn. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

Condition: Unknown

*Byron Weigandt Property*

7878 Route 69

Parcel 275-2-68.3, Town of Whitestown, .69 acre



**Figure 6.18:** View south of the Weigandt house from the Road. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

This property, located south of the Road opposite the east half of the Site, was subdivided at an undetermined date from the adjoining Weigand property, formerly the G. W. Parkhurst farm. The property consists of a one-story house set back from the Road in an open lawn with widely scattered deciduous trees and bordered by successional growth to the south, east, and west. The house is a c.1970 side-gable building with white siding and black shutters [Figure 6.18]. An asphalt driveway leads straight back from the road to a detached garage located on the west side of the house.

Condition: Unknown



## **2. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

### **Natural Systems and Features**

#### **Geology**

##### *Bedrock*

The bedrock deep beneath the Site and the surrounding area is composed of Ordovician and lower Silurian-period sedimentary rocks. Among the specific rocks are Utica Shale (the oldest type) composed of a black-to gray calcareous argillite; Frankfort formation comprised of a series of dark and light gray sandy shale layers with thin beds of dolomite; Oneida Conglomerate consisting of white quartz and crossbedded sandstone pebbles; and the Clinton Sauquoit beds composed of gray and red sandstone, gray fissile shale, sandy shale, and quartz conglomerate.<sup>14</sup> None of this bedrock is exposed on the Site, but eroded and fractured pieces from bedrock located uphill to the south of the Site were over time ground into till and washed down into the floodplains of the creeks and rivers by glacial meltwaters and post-glacial erosion.

Condition: Unknown

##### *Landforms and Subsurface Soils*

The Site is comprised of three main landforms that were shaped during the glacial and post-glacial periods: the uplands, Battle Creek ravine, and Mohawk River floodplain (lowlands). The uplands lie in the southern third of the Site, while the Mohawk River floodplain occupies the northern two-thirds. The ravine runs roughly through the middle of the upland section of the Site. A second, unnamed ravine ("west ravine") lies along the western boundary of the Site. The uplands feature two relatively level areas to either side of the Battle Creek ravine that are referred to as the "east plateau" and "west plateau." Both have a maximum elevation of about 540 feet and drop off 80 feet toward the floodplain to the north [Figure 6.19, following page].

The subsurface soils on the Site were deposited during glacial retreat beginning about 12,000 years ago. As the glacier melted, it formed Lake Iroquois, the larger predecessor of Lake Ontario. The shores of Lake Iroquois reached the 550-foot elevation mark, located a few hundred feet south of NY 69. The Site was therefore beneath Lake Iroquois and near its shoreline.

Drainage and runoff into Lake Iroquois from the melting glacier carried fine particles (sand) from upland glacial till. As runoff reached the quieter waters of the lake, they were deposited on the lake floor and over time built up very deep, sandy deposits identified as lacustrine sand.<sup>15</sup> These sandy deposits beneath the Site, which may reach upwards of 20 to 30 feet in depth, may be overlain in part with a mantle of glaciofluvial outwash [Figure 6.20, page 227]. This outwash typically consists of cobbles, pebbles, and other larger particles of glacial till that were deposited by moving water as the level of Lake Iroquois retreated and as glacial outwash continued to flow over the old lake floor. No investigations into the subsurface soils of the Site have been undertaken to identify these deposits.<sup>16</sup>

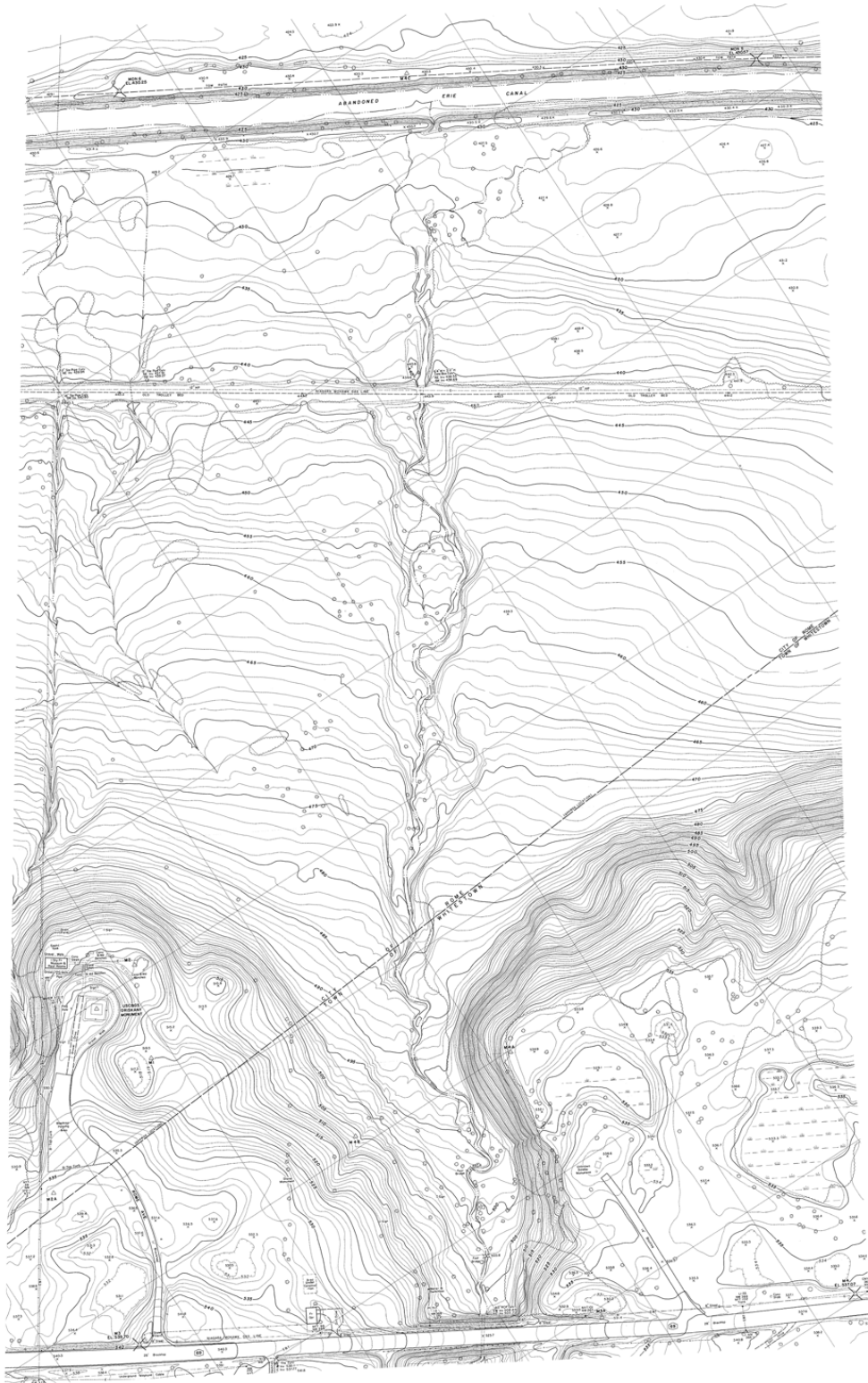
The subsurface soils on the Site were shaped by glacial and post-glacial action. While the ravine was clearly shaped in large part by the erosive action of Battle Creek, the origin of the 80-foot high edge and undulations of the uplands are less certain. The upland edge of the Site, consisting of the slope between the

---

<sup>14</sup>Nelson Dale, *Geology and Mineral Resources of the Oriskany Quadrangle (Rome Quadrangle)* (Albany: New York State Museum Bulletin 345, June 1953), 22-35.

<sup>15</sup>Loewy, "The Surficial Geology of the Oriskany, N.Y. 7.5-Minute Quadrangle," 49, 60.

<sup>16</sup>An excellent exposure of the lacustrine sands overlain by thin beds of glacial outwash can be seen at Burrows Excavating, located south of NY 69 just east of Oriskany Village. This exposure is likely very similar to what exists beneath the Site.



**Figure 6.19:** Topographic map of the Site showing natural landforms and cultural features. Surveyed by Dickerson, Czerwinski & Warneck for the Central New York State Park & Recreation Commission, October 1970.

plateaus and the lowlands, may have been shaped by the erosive action of the Iro-Mohawk River acting on the old sandy lake floor, or by an earlier readvance of an arm of the Oneida Lobe of the Wisconsin glacier. The undulations on the uplands, particularly the west plateau, may have been formed by the littoral (shoreline) waters of Lake Iroquois acting on its sandy floor.<sup>17</sup> Another theory on the origin of these undulations is that they were formed after the shoreline of Lake Iroquois had receded through the action of glacial meltwaters flowing down the Battle Creek drainage corridor over the exposed sandy lake floor.<sup>18</sup>

Condition: Unknown



**Figure 6.20:** View of exposed subsoils at Burrows Excavating, south side of NY 69, Oriskany. This cut illustrates lacustrine sands and glacio-fluvial outwash mantles that likely also characterize subsoils at the Site. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### *Surface Soils*

The surface soils of the Site were formed largely by glacial outwash, alluvial (floodplain) deposition, and accumulation of organic matter. The following soils have been identified on the Site by the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District:<sup>19</sup>

East and West Plateaus (uplands):

**Chadakoin Silt Loams (115 B):** Deep, gently sloping, well drained, low lime soils formed in glacial till on uplands. Available water capacity is moderate. Permeability is moderate in the upper part of the subsoil and moderately slow to moderate in the lower part of the subsoil and substratum. Soils are Non-Highly Erodible Land.

**Chadakoin Silt Loams (115 C):** Deep, sloping, well drained, low lime soils formed in glacial till on uplands. Available water capacity is moderate. Permeability is moderate in the upper part of the subsoil and moderately slow to moderate in the lower part of the subsoil and substratum. This soil is Highly Erodible Land.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Seltzer, Professor of Geology, Syracuse University, field review of battlefield geology with J. Auwaerter, January 2000.

<sup>18</sup>The deep lacustrine sands at Burrows Excavating exhibit a thick outwash mantle of glaciofluvial gravel, gravel that was deposited by river and glacial meltwaters draining down the Oriskany Creek valley. Seltzer, field review.

<sup>19</sup> Non-technical soil descriptions, 1981 aerial soils map for the Oriskany Quadrangle, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

Kendaia Silt Loam (136 B): Deep, gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained, medium acid, loamy soil, formed in glacial till. The available water capacity is high. Permeability is slow. This soil is considered to be prime farm land and Non Highly Erodible. Soil may have Hydric inclusions within the unit.

Upland Edges (including ravine walls):

Chadakoin Silt Loams (115 D): Deep, moderately steep, well drained, low limes soils formed in glacial till on uplands. Available water capacity is moderate. Permeability is moderate in the upper part of the subsoil and moderately slow to moderate in the lower part of the subsoil and substratum. This soil is Highly Erodible Land.

Chadakoin Silt Loams (115 E): Deep, steep, well drained, low lime soils formed in glacial till on uplands. Available water capacity is moderate. Permeability is moderate in the upper part of the subsoil and moderately slow to moderate in the lower part of the subsoil and substratum. This soil is Highly Erodible Land.

Lowlands (floodplain):

Adrian Muck (212): Deep, level to nearly level, very poorly drained, medium high lime organic soil formed in outwash plains and lake plains. The thickness of the organic deposit is 16 to 50 inches over sand. The available water capacity is high. Permeability is moderately rapid. Adrian soils are Hydric.

In addition to these native soils, there are also Udorthents (22) found across the Site. Udorthents are defined as altered soils (cut and fill). The only large deposits are found adjacent to, but not within the Site on the former electric railway corridor (Niagara-Mohawk gas transmission line), Erie Canal, and the causeway.

Condition: Unknown

## Hydrology

### *Battle Creek*

Battle Creek follows a meandering course through the middle of the Site [Figure 6.19, page 226]. It is a small creek, averaging about five feet in width [Figure 6.21]. Within the ravine, Battle Creek is associated with scattered wetlands on the relatively level ravine floor between the 495-foot elevation and the causeway. From this point north across the lowlands, Battle Creek contains one and sometimes two terraces that mark previous water levels. These terraces are best defined



**Figure 6.21:** View south along Battle Creek from electric railway culvert. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

between the 470 and 480-foot contours, and between the 445 and 460-foot contours. Battle Creek is also called Bloody Brook or Battle Brook.

North of the former electric railway corridor (Niagara-Mohawk gas transmission line), Battle Creek enters a more level and swampier area. Just north of the 435-foot contour, the creek forks. The smaller and younger west branch continues straight toward the Erie Canal, which it enters through a break in the canal wall. The larger and older east branch veers northeast and runs along the base of the south canal wall until it passes under the canal through a culvert well east of the Site.

Condition: Unknown

#### *Unnamed (West Ravine) Creek*

The unnamed creek located just west of the Site's west property line runs through the west ravine. About 200 feet north of the visitor center, this creek aligns with the west property line in a constructed ditch. The ditch continues along the property line until it reaches the Erie Canal, where it turns west to follow the south canal wall. At the canal, this creek is joined by a smaller and less defined creek that runs approximately 100 feet east of and parallel with the ditch beginning at a point about 450 northeast of the visitor center. This smaller creek is probably the former alignment of the unnamed creek that existed prior to construction of the ditch.

Condition: Unknown

#### *Wetlands*

The lowlands of the Site form the southern extent of the Mohawk River floodplain. Flooding and soil moisture conditions in this area have been greatly reduced over time by extensive drainage ditches in the floodplain to the north, and by the flood-control system of the Barge Canal.<sup>20</sup>

All of the lowlands, except for a small area in the northwest corner of the Site, are classified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as wetlands and identified as OR-25.<sup>21</sup> In addition, there are two federally-designated wetlands on the Site. The swamp on the uplands east of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument is classified under the National Wetlands Inventory as PFO1E: a palustrine, forested system that is broad-leaved deciduous, non-tidal, and seasonally flooded/saturated. The second federally-designated wetland runs along the Erie Canal at the northern edge of the Site. This wetland is classified as PSS1B: a palustrine, scrub-shrub system that is broad-leaved deciduous and saturated.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to classified wetlands, there are several other wet areas on the uplands. On the east plateau, there is a swamp north of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. This swamp is partly drained by a ditch that extends west into the Battle Creek ravine. On the west plateau, there is a wet area in the low ground north of the Road and west of the Battle Monument drive, and in a depression between the drive and the maintenance garage. Both of these areas are mown less frequently than the adjoining lawn during wet periods.

Condition: Unknown

#### **Ecology**

Riverine (flowing, non-tidal waters), palustrine (wetland), and terrestrial (upland) systems comprise the dominant ecological communities of the Site, which belongs to the eastern extreme of the Great Lakes

<sup>20</sup> Chamberlain, *Mohawk River Floodplain*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> New York State Fresh Water Wetlands map (1978 edition), Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

<sup>22</sup> National Wetland Inventory map (1995 edition), Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy.

Plain ecozone rather than to the Mohawk Valley ecozone.<sup>23</sup> An ecological inventory of the Site (e.g., survey of specific communities, identification of endangered species, etc.) and was not undertaken for this project.

Condition: Unknown

### **Spatial Organization**

#### **East Plateau Space**

The east plateau space, location of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, is characterized by an open lawn that extends across the southern part of the uplands east of the ravine [Figure 6.22]. The east plateau is approximately 500 feet wide and 300 feet at its deepest. This space is defined by forest/mowing edge on the east, north, and west. To the south, the space is partly closed by vegetation on the south side of the Road. The north edge of the space runs at a diagonal on axis with the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. A small subspace is formed by a mown area that extends north from the Road through the forest to the Parkhurst Cemetery along the east property line.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.22:** Aerial view of the east plateau space. Photograph by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 1999. The Road is at the bottom of the photograph and the Unknown Soldiers' Monument is toward the upper left corner.

<sup>23</sup> General reference from "Ecological Communities of New York State" (Albany: published by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, not dated).

### West Plateau Space

The west plateau space, location of the Battle Monument, is a large area of open lawn that extends across the gently sloping uplands west of the ravine, and measures approximately 600 feet wide by 750 feet deep [Figure 6.23]. It is defined by forest/mowing edge on the east, north, and west sides that roughly follows the 505 contour line. On the south, the space continues across the Road into a field on the Donohoe property. A subspace is formed on the eastern part of the west plateau by a line of trees running perpendicularly from the Road north along the west side of the maintenance garage along a former pasture line.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.23:** Aerial view of the west plateau space. Photograph by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 1999. The Road is at the bottom of the photograph and the Battle Monument is toward the upper left corner.

### Battle Creek Ravine Space

The Battle Creek ravine space is defined by the topography of the ravine walls and causeway, and by the forest that encloses a relatively open, marshy area at the bottom of the ravine on the east, north, and west sides [Figure 6.25]. It measures about 150 feet wide by 300 feet deep. Spatial definition is strongest along the east side, where the forest is most mature and the topography most steep; the topography on the west side is largely obscured by vegetation. The west side of the ravine, with its more gradual slope and younger forest, is not strongly defined. The south side is defined by forest only. The north end is defined by the 15-foot high causeway that carries the Road across the ravine.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.25:** View north through Battle Creek ravine space from atop the Road causeway; gravel ravine path footbridge in middle ground. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### Land Use<sup>24</sup>

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is open to the public from early May through mid October, Wednesday through Saturday and Monday holidays from 9:00 to 5:00, and on Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00. Annual visitation for fiscal year 1999-2000 was 8093. The Site is administered by the Central Region of OPRHP, and is operated and maintained by staff based at the Site. There are two permanent full-time (year-round) staff, two seasonal assistants, and auxiliary summer help. The staff also oversees operation at two additional State Historic Sites: Steuben Memorial, located in Remsen about 12 miles north of the Site, and Burroughs Memorial near Roxbury in the Catskills about a two-hour drive to the southeast. A maintenance garage and administrative offices are located on the Site. The Friends of Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is a private organization that supports the preservation and operation of the Site in cooperation with OPRHP.

The Site is primarily maintained for passive commemorative purposes, with a focus on interpretation of battle events and the battlefield landscape. A small visitor center, located near the Battle Monument, provides orientation on the history of the battle and the development of the Site. Two restrooms are located at the rear of the building. The public is free to roam the southern third of the Site that opens off the Road, on which is located the Battle Monument, visitor center, Herkimer's march monument, ravine, Unknown

---

<sup>24</sup> Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site records provided by site manager Nancy Demyttenaere.



Soldiers' Monument, and interpretive markers. Access to the Battle Monument and Unknown Soldiers' Monument meets Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, but the walks and paths to the visitor center and ravine do not due to steep slopes. Self-guided and guided tours are available. Public access to the forest that occupies the northern two-thirds of the Site is prohibited. The primary commemorative event, and the one that has been held at the Site for most years since 1877, is the ceremony marking the anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Presently called the "Annual Solemn Commemoration Ceremony," this event includes historic music, dedications, wreath laying, musket salutes, a luminary display, and a reception by the Friends of Oriskany. A month of mourning follows the event

In addition to commemoration and interpretation, there are recreational uses at the Site. A small picnic area is located on the east plateau near the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, and additional picnic tables are located near the parking lot and visitor center. These facilities are used primarily for sitting and seldom for picnicking. Ceremonies, celebrations, and festivals that have been introduced to the Site in recent years include "Armed Forces Day" on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the "Annual Art Show & Strawberry Festival" on June 10<sup>th</sup>, "Antique Engine Fair & Family Picnic" on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, "Heroes and Legends" on September 9<sup>th</sup>, and "Volunteer & Friends Recognition Day" on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Public arrival at the Site is primarily by private automobile and sometimes by charter bus. Vehicles usually access the Site by the Battle Monument drive, off of which there is a parking lot that holds approximately 25 cars. Vehicles can also use the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive where there is space for several cars to park. Gates close access to both of these drives during off-hours. The drive to the Maintenance Garage is limited to use by staff.

Condition: Not applicable

### **Cultural Traditions**

The Site remains is closely tied to the Anglo-American tradition of commemoration focused on monuments, historic preservation, and interpretation. Since the 1980s, there has also been an increasing recognition of the cultural traditions of the Oneida Indians and other Haudenosaunee nations. The Oneida Indian Nation participates in the Annual Solemn Commemoration Ceremony [formerly known as Oriskany Days], honoring the anniversary of the battle on August 6<sup>th</sup>, and they planted a white pine, a traditional symbol of peace, at the Site in 1983. The Site is strongly linked to Haudenosaunee cultural traditions because it was part of the Oneida homeland on which the Battle of Oriskany occurred, and because the battle caused the first breaking of the Great Peace that had bound the League Haudenosaunee together.

Condition: Not applicable

### **Cluster Arrangement**

Not applicable.

### **Circulation**

**The Road** (See "Landscape Context")

#### **Farm Road Trace Across Battle Creek (Interpreted Military Road Trace)**

Although no there are no documented remains of the battle-period military road or the later farm road at this location, the topography of the ravine at this location has been interpreted as evidence of a trace of the military road and log causeway.<sup>25</sup> The presently interpreted location of the military road crosses Battle Creek about 300 feet north of the Road and is roughly paralleled by the gravel ravine path. This

---

<sup>25</sup> Robertaccio, "A Field Report," Central Region MSS.

topographical trace is primarily a depression or "saddle" at the top of east side of the ravine, as well as a gentle slope on the west side of the ravine extending to the northwest. One of the small historical markers indicates the interpreted location of the military road at the edge of the west plateau [Figure 6.25].

Condition: Fair



**Figure 6.25:** View east across Battle Creek ravine along interpreted alignment of military road with gravel ravine path in distance. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

**Erie Canal** (See "Landscape Context")

### Road Trace on East Slope of Battle Creek Ravine

A road trace measuring approximately 10 feet wide extends along the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine north from the Road about 200 feet [Figure 6.26]. Between the Road and the gravel ravine path, the trace is fairly distinct, with evidence of cut and fill. This section contains patches of coarse gravel and pebbles, and is covered in saplings. North of the path and down onto the ravine floor, the trace becomes less distinct with no evident cut and fill. South of the Road, there is another road trace that aligns with the trace on the Site. Volunteer saplings and erosion are evident throughout.

Condition: Fair



**Figure 6.25:** View east of road trace on east slope of Battle Creek ravine. The trace corresponds with the dark shadow (area of cut) beneath the crest of the hill; the Road is at the right. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

**Battle Monument Drive**

The Battle Monument drive may have been built as early as 1885, was rebuilt in 1928, and was altered in the early 1960s. It is 550 feet long and 11 feet wide, and follows a partial 'S' alignment that winds from the Road northwest to a point 90 feet south of the Battle Monument [Figure 6.23, page 231]. The drive begins on an alignment perpendicular with the Road, where it crosses an area of cut and fill. After the fill, the drive veers 20 degrees to the west before making a 45-degree curve north toward the Battle Monument. At this 45-degree curve, an irregularly-shaped parking area extends from the drive to the west property line. The drive is paved in asphalt and is bordered by lawn and contains a stone and iron gateway at its entrance. There are no curbs or other edging to the pavement.

Condition: Good

**Electric Railway** (See "Landscape Context")

**Unknown Soldiers' Monument Drive**

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive was originally built c.1928. It is 310 feet long and 14 feet wide and leads along a diagonal from the Road northwest to the foot of the monument [Figure 6.22, page 230]. The drive extends from the Road at an angle of 60 degrees and aligns at a 40-degree angle south of the axis of the monument. The drive widens in front of the monument into an irregular area approximately 25 feet long by 10 feet deep that serves as a small parking area. The drive is paved in asphalt and is bordered by lawn and contains a set of timber gates at its entrance. There are no curbs or other edging to the pavement. The asphalt in front of the monument is deteriorated.

Condition: Fair

**Battle Monument Parking Area**

The Battle Monument parking area, built between 1958 and 1963, is an irregularly-shaped lot that extends from the Battle Monument drive to the west property line [Figure 6.23, page 231]. It measures 190 feet long and is 115 feet at its widest, and is contiguous with the drive. Drainage from the parking lot flows through a single break in the curb on the west side of the parking lot, and from there empties into the adjoining unnamed creek in the west ravine. The area is paved in asphalt that matches the asphalt of the Battle Monument drive. The area is not marked, but is edged by white-painted asphalt curbs on the west, south, and north sides, and can hold about 25 cars.

Condition: Fair

**Maintenance Drive**

The maintenance drive was first built as an unimproved 50-foot long drive at some point after the State acquired the Ringrose property and after it demolished the large Ringrose barn. During or after construction of the maintenance garage in 1970, the existing drive was built. This drive is 15 feet wide and 135 feet long; in front of and north of the maintenance garage, the drive widens to 32 feet [Figures 6.23, page 231]. The drive is paved in asphalt that has an irregular edge on the east side. A chain strung between the split-rail fence that extends along the Road serves as a gate.

Condition: Fair

## Walks, Paths, and Trails

### *Walk to Visitor Center*

The walk to the visitor center, constructed c.1963, extends for 190 feet on a straight alignment from the parking lot past the west side of the Battle Monument to the top of the slope extending down to the visitor center [Figure 6.27]. This walk is seven and one-half feet wide and is paved in asphalt, except for a 24-foot section before the slope that is four feet wide and is paved in gravel. At this slope, there is a set of wood stairs with wood handrails. At the bottom of the stairs, the walk turns 90 degrees to the west and extends a short distance to the visitor center. This portion of the walk, which was rebuilt in 1998, consists of three-foot wide rectangular bluestone slabs.

Condition: Fair



**Figure 6.27:** View north along the walk to the visitor center from end of drive and parking area. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

### *Gravel Ravine Path*

The gravel ravine path, built in 1976, extends approximately 560 feet from the east edge of the west plateau across the Battle Creek ravine and up to the east plateau [Figure 6.28]. The path is five feet wide and has no defined edge except where it is retained by embedded logs along raised beds of crushed stone in steep and wet areas. Along the steep east side of the ravine, the path follows a switchback that turns 90 degrees to the south for 70 feet and then turns northeast for 90 feet until it aligns with the portion of the path across the ravine floor. The path is surfaced in gray gravel. Split-rail fences line portions of the switchback and entrances to the path at the east and west ends. The path crosses a simple wooden footbridge over Battle Creek.

Condition: Good

**Figure 6.28:** View west along gravel ravine path toward west plateau. One of the historical markers (small State Education signs) is at the right. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.



*Bluestone Walk around Battle Monument*

A two-foot wide walk, built in 1998, extends around the perimeter of the Battle Monument. This walk, which is inside the fence around the Battle Monument, is built of two-foot wide rectangular bluestone slabs and is not accessible to the public.

Condition: Good

**Other**

In addition to constructed paths, there are several actively used trails (unimproved paths) that wind through the forests, such as along Battle Creek and along the top of the east side of the ravine. These are presently used by Site staff to access the forest.<sup>26</sup>

Condition: Unknown

**Topography****Natural Topography**

The natural topography of the Site is composed of three main sections: the uplands, the Battle Creek ravine, and the Mohawk River floodplain (lowlands). The uplands occupy the southern third of the Site and the floodplain occupies the northern two-thirds. The Battle Creek ravine roughly bisects the uplands, forming the east and west plateaus. A second ravine is located just off the west side of the Site [Figure 6.19, page 226].

The uplands have an undulating character marked by numerous hillocks and closed depressions. The east plateau has a large level area at an elevation of 530 feet to 535 feet with two large, closed depressions. This plateau drops off sharply to the ravine and lowland on an average slope of approximately 40 per cent, reaching a maximum slope of approximately 60 percent along the ravine. The west plateau has a more gradual slope of approximately 15 percent that drops off at a diagonal to Battle Creek from a highpoint of 540 feet east of the Battle Monument drive. North and west of the Battle Monument, however, the slope reaches upwards of 50 percent in the vicinity of the west ravine.

The lowlands section begins around the 480-foot contour and has a gentle slope of approximately 5 percent down toward the 425-foot contour at northern boundary of the Site adjacent to the Erie Canal. The area is scattered with windthrow mounds, which are hillocks with corresponding depressions created when mature trees are blow down and uprooted in wet soils.

Condition: Good

**Constructed Topography**

Significant areas of cut and/or fill are located along the Battle Monument drive in two locations adjacent to and 100 feet north of the gates; at the parking lot; around the Battle and Unknown Soldiers' Monuments; north of the visitor center at the location of the septic field; at the top of the west side of the Battle Creek ravine in the vicinity of the maintenance garage; and along a ditch that drains the swamp north of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument into the ravine [Figure 6.19, page 226].<sup>27</sup>

Subtle topographic features, probably from agricultural activities, are found on the west plateau between the maintenance garage and the Battle Monument drive. These consist of three distinct linear depressions that run perpendicular to the Road, in between which are numerous smaller and less distinct linear

<sup>26</sup> The location of these paths have not been documented for this report.

<sup>27</sup> Comprehensive documentation of cut and fill and other ground disturbance was not completed for this report.

depressions. On the lowlands east of Battle Creek, the ground may have been leveled at some point due to cultivation.

Condition: Good

## **Vegetation**

### **Forest**<sup>28</sup>

The forest on the Site, defined as all wooded areas, occupies generally the northern two-thirds of the Site, portions of the Battle Creek ravine, and the northern half of the east plateau [Figure 6.29]. Remnant field trees, primarily sugar maple, are scattered throughout the forest. The forest on the steep slopes east of Battle Creek and on portions of the north half of the east plateau is the oldest on the Site, although individual trees are generally less than 100 years in age. This forest is dominated by hemlock, sugar maple, red maple, and beech. The forest on the lowlands east of Battle Creek is generally less than 70 years old. It includes the same species as the older forest, plus hickory, white pine, black cherry, and white ash. The forest on the west side of Battle Creek is overall less than 25 years old, and is characterized by poplar, white pine, red maple, apple, and thickets of dogwood, honeysuckle, raspberry, grape, and sumac. The forest north of the electric railway corridor is dominated by swamps, with wetland grasses and trees. The eastern portion of this section is less wet and is covered in forest similar to that on the lowlands to the south and east of Battle Creek. The edges of the forest around the east and west plateaus is dominated by sumac, grape, box elder, viburnum, black cherry, raspberry, apple, Virginia creeper, and numerous herbaceous perennials. The Battle Creek ravine contains wetland species such as willow, cattails, ferns, elm, and milkweed.

The forest along the west boundary of the Site is kept cleared in the path of the electric service that extends from the Road to the visitor center.

Condition: Unknown

### **Lawns**

There may have been lawns on the Site by 1884 and possibly earlier. There are two lawns presently maintained on the Site which open off the Road on the east and west plateaus [Figure 6.29]. Both are kept at around two and one-half to three inches in height, are not fertilized, and are mown with reel-type and rotary mowers. The lawns contain a variety of grasses, mosses, and herbaceous broadleaf perennials such as strawberry, plantain, clover, and fleabane.



**Figure 6.29:** Infrared aerial view of the Site illustrating forest cover and lawn. The partly de-watered Erie Canal is at the top of the photograph. Photograph by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> A comprehensive survey of the forest's flora and fauna was not completed for this report.

The lawn on the west plateau roughly follows the west property line, the 505-foot contour line along the north side, and an irregular line running roughly parallel with the ravine on the east. This lawn is mown less frequently around wet areas on the west side of the Battle Monument drive and the Road, and between the drive and the maintenance garage.

The lawn on the east plateau forms an irregular circle around the Unknown Soldiers Monument, and then extends on the north side at a diagonal on axis with the monument. The west edge of this lawn roughly parallels the ravine. The lawn extends back into the forest to the Parkhurst Cemetery along the east property line.

Condition: Good

### Pasture-Line Trees

Eleven deciduous trees, which were likely planted in the mid-1950s, are located within the west plateau space in a line that extends perpendicular to the Road, approximately 20 feet west of the maintenance garage [Figure 6.30]. There are six sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) on the southern part of the line that range in size from 24 to 30-inch diameter breast height (dbh). Five black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) are located in the northern part of the line and range in size from 24 to 50 inches dbh. These trees are located slightly off the line formed by the sugar maples. Several of the sugar maples exhibit die-back in the upper canopies, and one black cherry exhibits trunk rot.

Condition: Fair



**Figure 6.30:** View north from the Road along pasture-line trees. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### Roadside Trees

There are presently six individual roadside trees on the boundary between the Site and the highway right-of-way. On the west plateau, there are Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*) which were planted around 1984, one west of the Battle Monument drive and three between the drive and the horse barn [Figure 6.42, page 248]. These are all between 10 and 12 inches dbh. On the east plateau, there are two mature sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*), likely planted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, located between the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive and the east property line. These two trees measure between 28 and 30 inches dbh, and exhibit die-back in the upper canopy [Figure 6.31].

Condition: Fair



**Figure 6.31:** View east of roadside sugar maples on east plateau from Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive. Two clumps of daylilies are in the middle ground. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.



### Battle Monument Sugar Maples

Three sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) are located along the upland edge in an arc around the Battle Monument [Figure 6.32]. These three trees were planted around 1961 during reconstruction of the Battle Monument drive. They measure 26, 18, and 26 inches dbh.

Condition: Good

**Figure 6.32:** View north of Battle Monument sugar maples. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

### White Pine, Oneida Tree of Peace

The white pine (*Pinus strobus*), Oneida tree of peace, was planted in 1983 on the 515-contour knoll at the northern edge of the west plateau to the east-north-east of the Battle Monument [Figure 6.33]. It measures 15 inches dbh.

Condition: Good

**Figure 6.33:** View west of white pine, Oneida tree of peace, with Battle Monument in background. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, 2000.



### Trees along Northern Edge of West Plateau

Three black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), probably planted in the mid-1950s, line the northern edge of the west plateau space [Figure 6.23, page 231]. Each measures between 42 and 60 inches dbh. There is also one red maple (*Acer rubrum*), probably a later planting, which is a multistemmed specimen with each trunk measuring about 12 inches dbh.

Condition: Good



### Austrian Pine

A group of three Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*), probably planted in the 1970s, exist along the western edge of the naturalized area of the Battle Creek ravine east of the maintenance garage. Several young volunteer Austrian pine are within the ravine.

Condition: Good

### East Plateau Trees

Aside from the two sugar maples along the Road, there are four individual trees on the east plateau apart from the forest. A large black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), probably planted in the mid-1950s, is located off the southwest corner of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. It measures 40 inches dbh and was recently pruned. A large sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), probably a 19<sup>th</sup> century planting, exists to the west of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and borders the forested area of the ravine [Figure 6.34]. This tree measures 50 inches dbh and is located near where the Parkhurst-heir farmstead stood. A red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and sugar maple, probably at least 40 years old, adjoin the woods just west of the lawn that extends back to the Parkhurst Cemetery. The red maple measures 30 inches dbh and the sugar maple measures 28 inches dbh.



**Figure 6.34:** View south of large sugar maple near site of Parkhurst-heir farmstead (left middle ground) west of Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive, one of the east plateau trees. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

Condition: Good

### Other Plantings

#### *Battle Monument Groundcover*

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), planted in 1998, serves as a ground cover for the area inside the Battle Monument fence. The plants are young and not well established.

Condition: Fair

#### *Daylilies*

Two large clumps of orange daylilies (*Hemerocallis sp.*), age unknown, exist along the embankment adjacent to the Road on the east plateau [Figure 6.30, page 239]. Another planting, made in 2000, exists at the base of the State Education sign.

Condition: Good

*Naturalized Periwinkle*

Naturalized periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), date of planting undetermined, exists along the east bank of the Battle Creek ravine, north of the gravel ravine path. Naturalized periwinkle is also found throughout the Parkhurst Cemetery.

Condition: Good

*Plantain Lilies*

Variegated plantain lilies (*Hosta sp.*) were planted in 2000 around the perimeter of the Herkimer's march monument, the D.A.R. gateposts, and the State Education sign.

Condition: Good

**Buildings and Structures****Ringrose Farmstead -- Horse Barn**

The horse barn is a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century frame barn built as part of the Ringrose farmstead [Figure 6.35]. The building is located 24.5 feet north of the edge of the Road and 27 feet from the maintenance drive. The building measures 20 feet by 30 feet and has a two-bay plan, vertical-board siding, and a roll-asphalt sheathed gable roof with the ridge perpendicular to the road. Framing consists of milled heavy-timber corner posts, beams, and sills which rest on a rubble foundation wall along the north side and on rubble piers beneath each post. In summer 2000, the east elevation was rebuilt with new doors as part of a repair of the timber frame. The north gable wall has a six-light single-sash window in the attic and a blind window on the main level. The south gable wall, which faces the Road, also contains a six-light attic window, plus a four-light single-sash window on the main level. A batten door, possibly intended for loading into the attic, exists between the attic and main levels. The west side of the barn features a line of six single-light square windows.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.35:** View northeast of the horse barn from the Road with maintenance garage at left. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

**Battle Monument**

The Battle Monument is a massive stone obelisk that was built between 1883 and 1884 according to design of the Mount Waldo Granite Works of Maine and the National Fine Art Foundry of New York City [Figure 6.36, following page]. The foundation measures 13 feet deep and 24 feet wide and is built of Onondaga limestone that was salvaged from the Erie Canal weigh lock at Utica and laid in Portland and Howe's Cave cement and Schoharie Sand. Rising from the foundation is a 19-foot high pedestal constructed of Maine granite. The pedestal features a three-stepped dressed ashlar plinth rising to a rusticated ashlar dado with recesses on each side that hold single bronze tablets. A time capsule made by the Oneida Historical Society (present Oneida County Historical Society) is encased in the center of the pedestal. The shaft of the

obelisk, which rises from a flared granite base, is built of regularly coursed Onondaga limestone, also salvaged from the Utica weigh lock. The shaft is terminated by a regular-coursed, granite pyramidal cap. The overall height of the monument is 84 feet, and it was last repointed in 1998.



**Figure 6.32:** View north of Battle Monument with drive in foreground. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

There are four large, 54.5-inch high by 72-inch wide bronze tablets on each side of the pedestal cast by Maurice J. Power of the National Fine Art Foundry. Two of the tablets feature bas-relief sculpture designed by William Rudolf O'Donovan. The tablet on the east side of the monument depicts General Herkimer directing the battle, and the tablet on the west side depicts a battle scene between Indians and Patriots. The remaining two tablets feature text. The tablet on the south side, facing the Road, carries a commemorative inscription by Professor Edward North of Hamilton College. The tablet on the north side of the monument carries the roster of battle veterans known in 1883. A second bronze tablet listing additional names of battle veterans is beneath the original tablet and was installed in 1927. This tablet measures 24 inches high and 84-5/8 inches wide.

Condition: Good

### Visitor Center

The visitor center is a one-story frame building constructed in 1927, substantially rebuilt in 1963, and renovated in 1998. It is located 80 feet off the northwest corner of the Battle Monument and 12 feet down grade from it [Figure 6.37, following page]. The building measures approximately 42 feet long and 23 feet wide and has a gable facade, cedar shingle siding, and simple white-painted wood trim. The roof is sheathed in three-tab black asphalt shingles and is built of two sections. The front of the building has a gable roof, and the rear half has a lower hip and gable roof. The front gable façade features flush eaves with minor eave returns, a triangular gable vent, and an elliptical-arch entrance. This entrance contains double-leafed batten doors that open to a recessed glazed wall containing double-leafed full-length glazed single-light doors. Two casement windows at the rear of the building light the restrooms.



**Figure 6.37:** View southwest toward visitor center with staircase on the visitor center walk at the left. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

The interior of the visitor center has three rooms and a hallway. The main front room contains an interpretive exhibit on the history of the Site. At the rear of this room is a hallway off of which are two restrooms located at the rear of the building.

Condition: Good

### Maintenance Garage

The maintenance garage, built in 1970, is located 80 feet north of the Road and 26 feet north of the horse barn [Figure 6.38]. It measures 34 feet wide and 36 feet long, and the exterior is sheathed in brown-painted T-111 wood siding. The roof is a low-pitched side-gable with a shed extension on the west side. The front of the building, which faces east toward the ravine, contains new vinyl-clad overhead garage doors, a single entry door, and a single one-over-one double hung sash window. Double-hung windows are also found on the north and west sides. Off of the south side of the building is a temporary white-painted metal-sided shed addition constructed in 1999.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.38:** View southwest of the maintenance garage with horse barn and former Ringrose farmhouse to the right. The maintenance drive is in the foreground. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### Footbridge

A wood footbridge, built in 1976, carries the gravel ravine path across Battle Creek [Figure 6.39]. This footbridge is located 110 feet north of the base of the causeway and measures four feet wide and 18.5 feet long. The structure is built of dimensioned lumber and consists of two stringers carrying plank treads. The sides of the bridge are lined by three and one-half feet high, two-plank railings that are extended beyond the bridge with single-plank rails connecting to posts with ball finials. The footbridge is painted ochre.



**Figure 6.39:** View east of footbridge over Battle Creek.  
Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

Condition: Good

### Staircase at Visitor Center Walk

A wood staircase, built in 1986, carries the walk to the visitor center down the five-foot high slope north of the Battle Monument [Figure 6.37, preceding page]. This staircase measures four feet wide and has 13 treads and wood handrails to either side. It is painted brown.

Condition: Good

### Mechanical Systems

#### *Electric Service*

There are two active electric services to the Site. The original service, added around 1953, extends along the western boundary of the Site from the Road to the visitor center. It is carried on two standard wood utility poles. The second service, added around 1970, connects to the maintenance garage directly from the main service on the Road. An inactive electric service (installation date unknown) is located in the southwest corner of the ravine. This service consists of a single standard wood utility pole with a meter box.

Condition: Good

#### *Sanitary Systems*

The sanitary system for the visitor center was installed around 1981 and is located approximately 15 feet north of and down hill from the building. The sanitary system that services the maintenance garage, located north and east of the building, was installed around the same time. Both systems consist of concrete septic tanks, p.v.c. sewer pipe, and a septic field of perforated p.v.c. pipe.

Condition: Unknown

#### *Wells*

The visitor center well, built around 1927, is located 31 feet south of the visitor center. It is 58 feet deep and has a six-inch casing. The maintenance garage well, built c.1981, is located near the pasture line trees off the southwest corner of the maintenance garage. No information has been found on its dimensions. Both wells are flush with the ground surface.

Condition: Unknown

## Views and Vistas

### Views

The view of the Mohawk Valley from the Battle Monument, which was extant when the monument was built in 1884, is obscured. The only open views that exist within the Site are those across the east and west plateaus. From the Road, the highlands on the north side of the Mohawk River are just visible above the forest to the north of the Battle Monument.

Condition: Poor



**Figure 6.40:** View northeast of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument showing the obscured vista to the Battle Monument at left. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### **Unknown Soldiers' Monument Vista**

A vista of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, designed around 1928, exists for motorists traveling west on the Road. This vista is across the open lawn of the east plateau space; the other side of this vista toward the Battle Monument is obscured by vegetation [Figure 6.40]

Condition: Poor

## Constructed Water Features

There are no constructed water features present on the Site.

## Small-Scale Features

### Gates & Fences

#### *Agricultural Fences (Remnant along Erie Canal)*

Remnants of a wood post and wire pasture fence, probably built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Ringrose farm, exist along the north boundary of the Site along the Erie Canal west of Battle Creek. This fence consist of wood posts (probably locust) and barbed wire. It may be within the "blue line" that delineates the boundary of canal lands.

Condition: Poor



*Battle Monument Gateway*

The Battle Monument gateway, constructed c.1885, is located on the Battle Monument drive approximately 15 feet from the edge of pavement on the Road [Figure 6.41]. The gateway consists of two dressed ashlar limestone piers and a pair of iron gates. The piers are approximately 10 feet tall by three feet

square and are set about 20 feet apart. Each features a base, shaft, and pyramidal cap, and retains iron fence anchors on the outer sides. The gates consist of two panels that measure overall four feet tall and nine feet-three inches wide. The panels adjacent to the piers, which measure five feet nine inches wide, are the original gates. Three-foot-four-inch welded extension panels are attached to each of the original panels. At the rear or north of each of the piers is a two-foot square limestone block. These blocks contain iron ghost marks and appear to function as stops for the gates.

Condition: Good

*Battle Monument Fence*

The iron fence surrounding the Battle Monument, built c.1912, is five and one-half feet tall and 40.5 feet square [Figure 6.36, page 243]. The fence consists of one-inch square spiked pickets and two and one-half inch square spiked corner posts. The fence is painted black and is reinforced by a series of evenly-spaced iron braces along the inner side.

Condition: Good

*D.A.R. Piers (Memorial Gateway)*

The Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) piers were made in 1929 by Joseph Nelbach & Sons of Utica and are located to either side of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument [Figure 6.40, page 246]. The piers were originally designed as a gateway and were moved to their present location, probably in the late 1950s. Each stone pier measure six and one-half feet tall and is composed of a rusticated shaft set on a low base and topped by a pyramidal dressed cap. The stone is gray granite. Each pier contains a bronze tablet made by the Rome Novelty Works that is located on the front or east side and measures approximately two and one-half feet high and eighteen inches wide. The tablet on the south-west pier contains an inscription expressing the hope of the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R. that the Site be made a National Park. The north-east pier contains an inscription expressing gratitude to John W. Vrooman for his efforts in founding the Mohawk Valley Historic Association and its work in preserving a portion of the Site and erecting the Unknown Soldiers' Monument.

Condition: Good

*Boundary Fences*

There are presently two boundary fences. A Cyclone-brand chain-link fence, installed c.1931, extends for approximately 825 feet along the west property line from the visitor center to the Road. Most of the posts have been replaced with snow-fence stakes. The chain-links are heavily rusted.

Condition: Poor

Along the Road on the west plateau, a two-rail split-rail fence, installed in parts between 1962 and 1980, extends for approximately 480 feet from the Battle Creek ravine to the Battle Monument drive gateposts [Figure 6.42]. A short section extends 50 feet south and west in a semi-circle on the west side of the drive. This fence is stained brown.

Condition: Good

*Unknown Soldiers' Monument Gate*

A set of timber gates, built around 1996, are at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive, 18 feet from the edge of the Road [Figure 6.43, following page]. These gates are four feet-six inches high and 13 feet one-inch long, and are built of dimensional lumber stained brown.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.42:** View west of split-rail boundary fence along Road with the horse barn at right and Norway maple roadside trees in left distance. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.





**Figure 6.43:** View east of Unknown Soldiers' Monument gate. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

## Flagstaffs

### *Battle Monument Flagstaffs*

There are two flagstaffs on the west side of the Battle Monument [Figure 6.44]. The first flagstaff was built in 1930 and is on axis with the Battle Monument. It is approximately 35 feet high and has a concrete foundation and a raised ball finial. It is painted white. The second flagstaff was built in 1984/85 and is located 37.5 feet north of the first flagstaff. It is approximately 35 feet high and has a concrete foundation and a ball finial, and is painted aluminum.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.44:** View north of Battle Monument flagstaffs: 1930 flagstaff in foreground, 19884/85 flagstaff in background. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.



**Figure 6.45:** View southeast of Herkimer's march monument with Battle Creek ravine in background. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

### Herkimer's March (Beech Tree) Monument

The Herkimer's march monument, dedicated in 1912 west of its present location, is approximately 275 feet north of the Road in the pasture-line row of trees west of the maintenance garage [Figure 6.45]. The monument is a rusticated gray granite slab measuring three feet wide, six feet tall, and one and one-half feet wide. It is set on a concrete footing and features a bronze tablet on the west side. The bronze tablet measures 30 inches high and 24 inches wide, and was cast by Paul E. Cabaret & Company of New York City. The tablet bears a legend and a topographic illustration of the trail of General Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia between Herkimer's homestead near Little Falls to the Oriskany Battlefield.

Condition: Good

### Unknown Soldiers' Monument

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument, built in 1928 by Joseph Nelbach & Sons of Utica, is located about 300 feet north of the Road and 65 feet east of the top of the ravine [Figure 6.46]. The base measures 12 feet-six inches long and nine feet wide, and the shaft measures seven and one-half feet long and four feet wide. The overall height of the monument is about 10 feet. The monument is a rectangular stone monolith with a flat overhanging cap, stepped base, and bronze tablets on the front and rear. The monolith or shaft is Onondaga limestone that was salvaged from the Erie Canal aqueduct over Oriskany Creek. The cap and base are gray Vermont granite. The tablets are approximately five feet wide and two and one-half feet high



**Figure 6.46:** View northwest of Unknown Soldiers' Monument and relocated D.A.R. piers. Photograph by G. Curry, SUNY ESF, 1999.

and were made by the Rome Novelty Works. The one on the east side, viewed with the Battle Monument in the background, contains a commemorative inscription to the unknown soldiers of the Battle of Oriskany. The tablet on the west side, viewed with the Road in the background, contains an historical description of the development of Tryon County.

Condition: Good

## Benches

### *Individual benches*

There are five benches on the west plateau that were installed in 1998. Two are located to either side of the State Education sign, two are located north of the Battle Monument, and one is located west of the Herkimer's march monument [Figure 6.48; Figure 6.49 following page]. They are about five feet long and have black-painted cast-iron frames and green-painted wood-slat seats and backs, and are set on concrete foundations.

Condition: Good

## Signs

### *Main Entrance (Battle Monument drive) Signs*

The main entrance sign was installed around 1994 to replace an earlier sign. It is located on the east side of the Battle Monument drive 16 feet back from the edge of the Road [Figure 6.47]. This sign is four and one-half feet wide and eight feet tall overall. A secondary Site identification/information sign, also installed around 1994, is located on the east side of the drive, 22 feet inside of the gatepost. It measures four and one-half feet tall and four and one-half feet wide overall. Both of these signs are of a standardized design used at State Historic Sites, with brown sign boards, white lettering, and gray-painted wood frames. The signboards are set on two raised posts with pyramidal lead-coated copper caps.



**Figure 6.47:** View east of main entrance sign. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.



Condition: Good

### *Historical Markers (Small State Education Signs)*

Four small metal markers, fabricated in 1966 by Sewah Studios of Marietta, Ohio, are located between the Battle Monument and the ravine. Each marker is in the shape of a shield and is fixed on three and one-half feet tall steel-pipe posts set in a concrete footing [Figure 6.48]. The markers measure three feet wide by two and one-half feet tall, for an overall height of six feet. They are fabricated of cast metal with raised lettering and borders, and are painted blue with gold accent. The New York State emblem is at the top of the shield, with the title of the sign and the legend below it. The four markers are entitled "Ambush Started Here," located in the ravine; "The Military Road," located at the top of the west side of the ravine across from the maintenance garage; "The Rally," located on the north side of the Battle Monument

**Figure 6.48:** View north of the ravine across from the maintenance garage; and bench north of Battle Monument. Photograph by J. Auwaerter

and "In the Valley Homes," located north of the Battle Monument.

Condition: Good

#### *State Education Sign*

The State Education Sign, originally installed between 1960 and 1962, was removed around 1976 and then re-erected in 1998/99. It is located on or near its original location on the west side of the walk between the parking lot and the visitor center [Figure 6.49]. The sign measures six feet wide, four and one-half feet high, and is set four feet above the ground on aluminum I-beams set in raised concrete footings. The sign is fabricated of cast metal with raised letters, and is painted blue with gold accent. The legend provides an historical overview of the battle.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.49:** View north of State Education sign. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.



**Figure 6.50:** One of nine new interpretive signs: welcome sign at north end of parking area. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

#### *New Interpretive Signs*

A series of nine wood-frame illustrated interpretive signs exist between the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. These were installed between 1993 and 1994 and were made by the Bureau of Historic Sites. Most of the signboards feature text and illustrations and measure 20 inches by 26 inches, and are mounted at a height of four feet on frames painted ochre [Figure 6.50]. The signboards are removed during the winter.

The seven signs are entitled:

1. "I will face the enemy"
- 2 & 3. "Campaign of 1777" (two signs)
4. "A final attempt"
5. "The Oriskany Battle Monument"
6. "The Ambush"
7. "The Military Road and the Ravine"
- 8 & 9: Welcome signs at parking area and Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive

Condition: Good

#### *Operational Signs*

There are generally two types of operation signs. Small-scale warning and restriction signs, installed around 1977, are made of wood with incised lettering. These include "DOGS MUST BE ON LEASH" at the two drives, and "NO BICYCLES BEYOND THIS POINT" at either end of the gravel ravine walk [Figure 6.51, following page]. Three signs in the design of the new interpretive signs installed in 1993/94, serve as welcome and entry signs at the Battle Monument parking area and Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive, and a third locates the visitor center at the top of the staircase on the walk to the visitor center. Other



signs include warnings against improper use of the Site on the gates to the two drives, and a restriction sign at the drive to the maintenance garage.

Condition: Good

**Figure 6.51:** View east of typical operational sign located at east end of gravel ravine path. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

## Other

### *Stone Piles*

Five large and five small stone piles, likely assembled during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are located east of Battle Creek. All of these piles are on the lowlands, except for one at the northeast corner of the east plateau. These piles consist of primarily rounded stones, with the largest pile measuring 12 feet by 15 feet and almost two feet high [Figure 6.52]. Based on excavation of a representative example, the piles contain leaves, humus, small clam shells, bottle glass sherds, sherds of glazed redware, and an iron wood-splitter's wedge.<sup>29</sup>

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.52:** Representative stone pile. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Bureau of Historic Sites memorandum, Chuck Fisher to Paul Huey, 18 May 1993, BHS MSS.

*Metal Survey Marker*

A bright-finish round metal survey marker is located in the west plateau roughly between the Battle Monument and the maintenance garage near the former boundary of the memorial park. The age of this marker is not known. It is identified by a triangle with the initials "MI" in the 1970 topographic map of the Site.

Condition: Good

*Exterior Lights*

Site lighting consists of recently installed fixtures. There is a tree-mounted floodlight (installed c.1998) at the northwest corner of the parking lot; four floodlights (c.1998) directed at the Battle Monument from inside the Battle Monument fence; two floodlights (c.1998) directed at the flagpoles from inside the Battle Monument fence; incandescent lights (1998) with porcelain shades on the exterior of the visitor center; exterior floodlights on the maintenance garage; and two ground-mounted incandescent floodlights (2000) directed at the main entrance sign.

Condition: Good



**Figure 6.53:** View south of representative picnic table and barbeque, east plateau south of Unknown Soldiers' Monument. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.

*Picnic Tables and Barbeques*

Thirteen wood picnic tables are located across the Site, with eight concentrated in the area around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and the rest around the Battle Monument [Figure 6.53]. The picnic tables are painted brown and are stored by the maintenance garage during the winter. There are also four raised barbeques that were probably installed in the 1960s around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. These consist of steel boxes with grates set on steel poles, and are painted black.

Condition: Good

### *Bird Houses*

Two small bird houses, installed around 1985, are located along the west property line south of the parking area and at the forest edge east of the maintenance garage. These are built of wood and feature single openings with gable roofs [Figure 6.54]. They are mounted about five feet off the ground on wood poles, and are removed during the winter.

Condition: Good

**Figure 6.54:** View west of bird house south of parking area. Photograph by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 2000.



### *Planted Urns*

Two small planted urns are in front of the visitor center between May and October. These were added after the visitor center was renovated in 1998. The urns are about eighteen inches tall and are made of simulated whitewashed terra cotta and feature an ornate design. They are usually planted with a colorful mixture of flowering annuals.

Condition: Good

## **Archeology**

Although there are many stories about archeological remains on the Site related to the battle, none have been professionally documented to date. A comprehensive, professional archeological survey has never been undertaken at the Site. There have been limited investigations by the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites at the stone piles, the ravine, the interpreted location of the military road, at the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmhouse, and at the location of post-holes for interpretive markers. Archeological resources were only found at the Parkhurst-heir farmhouse site. Investigations into the stone piles revealed that they were likely built as debris collection piles and were not remnants of some larger resource or burial site.

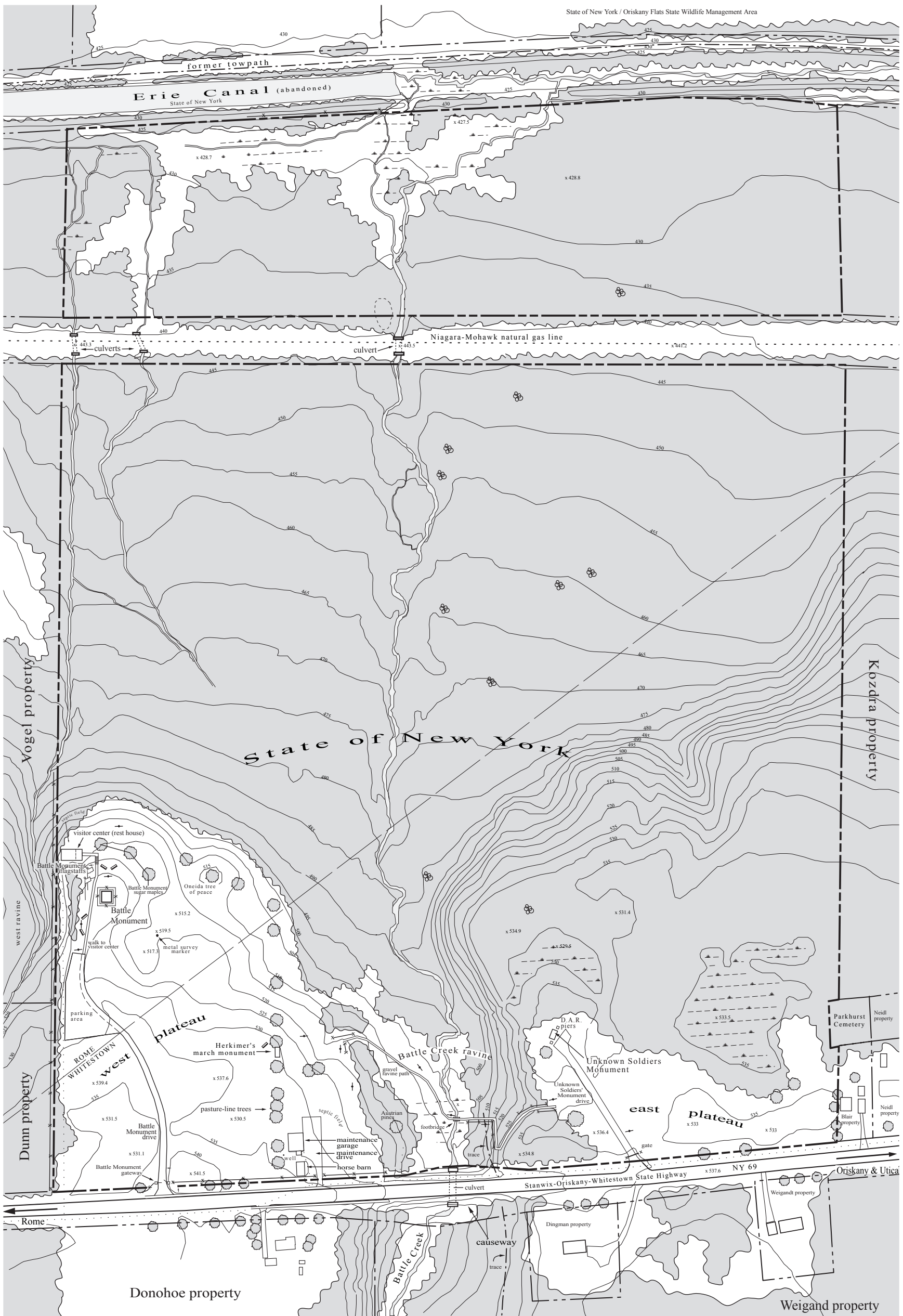
### **Site of Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead**

The site of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead at the top of the east side of the Battle Creek ravine is the only documented archeological resource on the Site. This resource is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century stone foundation which was only partially excavated by the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites in 1977.

Condition: Unknown







### LEGEND

- Limits of forest
- Individual tree
- Wetlands
- 5' contour
- Creek
- Road or path
- Centerline of road or path
- Building / structure
- Stone pile
- Flagstaff
- Fence
- Sign
- Bench
- Overhead utilities
- Underground utilities
- Site boundary
- Adjacent property boundary

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural Landscape Report</b> <b>Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site</b></p> <p>Prepared for: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Central Region, Jamesville, New York</p> <p>Prepared by: State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Syracuse, New York Research Assistant John Auwaerter &amp; Project Director George W. Curry</p>	<p><b>EXISTING CONDITIONS</b> <b>2000</b></p>	<p>Scale: 1" = 200'</p> <p>Map Sources: "Topography - Oriskany Battle Monument" (New York State Parks, 1970) "Oriskany Land Use History" (NPS, 1998)</p> <p>Date: November 2000 / Drawn by: John Auwaerter</p>
--	---	--

# **ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

---

## **Introduction**

The Analysis and Evaluation chapter involves two primary sections: 1. A review of existing National Register (National Historic Landmark) documentation and a proposed updated statement of significance; and, 2. An history integrity analysis of the Site's landscape context and all of its landscape characteristics. Both of these components have been developed according to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation of Historic Properties. Information for the significance statement is derived from the existing National Historic Landmark / National Register documentation, more recent evaluations completed by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the findings of the site history section of this report.

There are two periods of historic significance associated with the Site: August 6, 1777, the date of the Battle of Oriskany (battle period, as presently documented); and 1877-c.1955, the period of sustained commemoration and development of the commemorative landscape (commemorative period, as recommended in this report).<sup>1</sup> The site analysis compares conditions during these historic periods with existing conditions to identify those landscape characteristics and associated features that have historic significance and historic integrity. In addition, detailed analysis is provided for three issues where there is conflicting or non-conclusive documentation in the historic record: the location of the battle, the location of the military road, and the existence of battle-related archeological resources.

## **1. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Review of Existing National Register Documentation**

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) on November 23, 1962 based on a reconnaissance survey of the Site undertaken by National Register staff earlier in the year.<sup>2</sup> No boundaries for the listed property were established at that time. All NHLs were automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places when that program was implemented in 1966.<sup>3</sup> A National Register Inventory-Nomination Form was not completed for the Site until January 1976, and was not signed by the National Register program until July 25, 1978 [Appendix B]. This form was completed by Richard Greenwood, Historian for the Landmark Review Task Force within the Historic Sites Survey program of the National Park Service. It was only with completion of this form that a statement of significance and boundaries for the listed property were established.<sup>4</sup>

As with most early Inventory-Nomination Forms, the 1978 form for Oriskany Battlefield is generally not specific regarding individual landscape characteristics and associated features, and has several inaccuracies in its description and boundaries. Since it was developed for a National Historic Landmark, the focus of the designation is on the national significance of the Site. It limits significance to Criterion A under the area of military history for the Site's association with the Battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1777. The form lists only 70 acres of the Site, being the portion between the Road and the former electric railway corridor.<sup>5</sup> Within the statement of significance, the form makes brief mention of two landscape features, noting that despite the loss of the original forest, Battle Brook and the ravine were still "readily recognizable." Under

---

<sup>1</sup> Both periods are referred to as the Site's "historic period" or "period of significance."

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, inventory form for Oriskany Battlefield, prepared by Charles E. Shedd, Jr., 14 February 1962, Fort Stanwix MSS.

<sup>3</sup> National Register-listed properties were subsequently listed in the State Register of Historic Places when that program was instituted in 1980-81.

<sup>4</sup> National Register Inventory-Nomination Form, "Oriskany Battlefield" (Prepared by the National Park Service, 20 January 1976).

<sup>5</sup> The nomination map documents the nominated property as including land to the west of the Site and excludes a portion of the Site east of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. This shift in boundaries was likely an error, since the description of the property includes only the "State park."

section 10, the form states that the structures within the nominated property (the monuments, buildings, and drives of the commemorative period) do not contribute to the national significance of the Site.

Around 1980, the Central Region of OPRHP developed an interpretive statement that began to address the history of the Site as it developed after the battle. In 1993, the Central Region and the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites completed a preliminary review and reassessment of the National Register documentation that further articulated the significance of post-battle development. In this review, OPRHP outlined the built features on the Site and recommended that those dating from the early commemorative period (Battle Monument, Unknown Soldiers' Monument, D.A.R. gateposts, etc.) be considered contributing features. Other than these, landscape features were not evaluated, but the review did note the contrasting qualities of the landscape during the battle and commemorative periods.<sup>6</sup>

Through research for the site history of this CLR, information has been found to document the significance of the commemorative landscape and commemoration at the Site between 1877 and c.1955 in a state-wide context. Research has also revealed the significance of the Site's landscape contexts (natural systems, transportation, and agriculture) to both the battle and commemorative periods, as well as the significance of the battlefield to the culture and history of the League of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy).

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the existing National Register/National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation be updated based on the following revised statement of significance.<sup>7</sup> This revised statement of significance should be forwarded to the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for their concurrence. A formal amendment to the National Register/National Historic Landmark designation should also be undertaken.

### Revised Statement of Significance

The National Register contains four criteria to evaluate properties for quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. A property is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places if it possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory of history.<sup>8</sup>

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (the Site) meets National Register Criteria A in the areas of military history, as presently documented in the National Historic Landmark designation. Based on the findings of this report, the Site also meets Criteria A and C in the areas of Native American heritage, recreation [commemoration], and architecture. The Site is historically significant at the national level as the location

---

<sup>6</sup> Central Region OPRHP memorandum, Larry Gobrecht to Jim Gold and John Lovell, 1 July 1993, BHS MSS. Copy included as Appendix C of this report.

<sup>7</sup> The NHL designation would remain based on the nationally-significant association of the Site with the Battle of Oriskany, although through the amendment the state and local significance of the Site's commemorative period would be acknowledged. The National Register of Historic Places, in which all NHLs are automatically listed, recognizes properties that are significant at the state and local levels.

<sup>8</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, "National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (Washington, D.C.: published by the Department, 1991), 2.

of the Battle of Oriskany, a decisive skirmish that took place on August 6, 1777 as part of the British Campaign of 1777. This battle aided the American Patriot cause in the Revolution and resulted in the first known breaking of the Great Peace that had bound together the nations of the League of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy). The Site is additionally significant at the state and local levels as a representative example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commemorative landscape. The Site is associated with significant commemorative activities that memorialized, marked, and later preserved the battlefield under private and public leadership beginning in 1877 and continuing through c.1955.

In addition to these areas of significance, the Site is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as a Traditional Cultural Property due to its association with Haudenosaunee traditional beliefs related to their cultural history, specifically to the breaking of the Great Peace and subsequent decline of traditional homelands and lifeways. The National Register guidelines state that a property may have traditional cultural significance if its significance is derived from the role the property plays in a community's historically-rooted beliefs, customs, and practices.<sup>9</sup> The findings of this report, however, are insufficient to document the significance of the Site as a Traditional Cultural Property. A context study of Haudenosaunee ethnography with specific reference to the landscape of the Site is needed to document this area of significance.

#### *The Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777)*

In 1777, the British planned a campaign to split the colonies by conquering New York State through a three-pronged attack that would converge on Albany. The main forces under the leadership of Major General John Burgoyne were to invade from Canada south through the Champlain Valley, General William Howe from British-held New York City was to proceed north through the Hudson Valley, and General Barry St. Leger was to invade from Canada via Lake Ontario east through the Mohawk Valley. The Mohawk Valley, the only water-level access between the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes across the Allegheny Plateau, had long been a magnet for both Native American and European colonial transportation, trade, and settlement.

In late July 1777, St. Leger led his expedition consisting of British regulars and a large contingent of Indians to Fort Stanwix at the head of the Mohawk Valley where he met unexpected resistance from the American Patriots under the command of Colonel Peter Gansevoort. To aid Gansevoort, General Nicholas Herkimer assembled a relief force comprised of 800 Tryon County militia, made up primarily of German Palatine farmers from across the Mohawk Valley. At Fort Dayton near his home in the middle Mohawk Valley, Herkimer began the forty mile march west to Fort Stanwix. At Oriska, an Oneida village two miles east of the Site, Herkimer was joined by a contingent of Oneida Indians, one of two Haudenosaunee nations that sided with the Americans. Upon hearing of the American advance, British leaders Sir John Johnson and Colonel John Butler were sent by St. Leger to ambush Herkimer and his troops. The British assembled a large contingent of Indians under the command of Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, and chose as their point of ambush a ravine along the military road in the deep woods about six miles west of Fort Stanwix. The landscape provided good conditions for the ambush, as the steep ravine walls and heavily wooded conditions allowed for easy concealment. Here on August 6, 1777, the unsuspecting Herkimer and his troops marched into the ravine on the causeway of the military road and fell into a fierce attack characterized by gunfire and heavy hand-to-hand combat. Brutal fighting continued for six hours and both sides suffered heavy losses, with neither achieving a clear victory. The British-allied Indians finally abandoned the fight and turned back to Fort Stanwix, and the wounded Herkimer and his remaining troops returned east down the Mohawk Valley. General Herkimer subsequently died of his wounds at his home near present-day Little Falls.

---

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (Washington: National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 38, no date), 1. According to a recent ethnographic study, "There is strong ethnographic support for the nomination of Oriskany to the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property." See SJS Archeological Services, Inc., "A Place of Great Sadness / Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography" (Barrow, AK: Prepared for the National Park Service, c.1998), 14.

The Battle of Oriskany is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national and state history. Despite the absence of a clear victory, the Battle of Oriskany proved significant in the turn of events in the British Campaign of 1777 and the Revolutionary War as a whole. The losses by the British and their allied Indians in the Battle of Oriskany led to their abandonment of the Siege of Fort Stanwix and made possible continued American control of the Mohawk Valley. The Battle of Oriskany thus became important precedent in the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga, which is considered by many historians to be the turning point of the Revolution in favor of the Americans. Oriskany checked the advance of St. Leger down the Mohawk Valley, thus cutting off British reinforcement for Burgoyne at Saratoga and freeing up American reinforcement.

In addition to its significance in the area of military history, the Battle of Oriskany is significant in the area of Native American heritage. The Battle of Oriskany marked the first time that League of the Haudenosaunee nations fought one another in defiance of the Great Peace which had bound the nations of the League together for generations but which had been suspended earlier in the year. The Battle of Oriskany continues to hold cultural significance to the Haudenosaunee, notably the Oneida on whose ancestral homeland the battle occurred.<sup>10</sup>

#### *The Commemorative Period (1877-c.1955)*

On August 6, 1877, the largest gathering ever held in the Mohawk Valley occurred at the Site in commemoration of the centennial of the Battle of Oriskany. This marked the first known event on the Site organized specifically to commemorate the battle, and the ambitious plans for the event captured the attention of much of New York in the summer of 1877. The centennial celebration was privately organized by the Oneida Historical Society, but was part of a series of State-sanctioned events organized to commemorate the centennial of the Revolution in New York and the beginnings of State government. Surrounded by the wide-open agricultural fields and open views that had replaced the forest of the battle period, an estimated 60,000-75,000 people came to the Site by railroad, canal, and road and heard speeches by prominent state and local politicians and historians on such topics as the history of the battle, the role of German-Americans, and the contribution of the Mohawk Valley to the Revolution. This celebration documented the history of the battle, which up until this point was known largely through oral history. It established an interpretive narrative on the location of the military road, the appearance of the landscape, and the events of the battle that remained largely unchanged to the present.

The 1877 centennial also marked the beginnings of sustained efforts to mark and later preserve the battlefield. In 1880, the Oneida Historical Society acquired a small five-acre parcel, and in 1884, erected a large stone obelisk as a memorial to the battle. The open agricultural surroundings, with broad views across the Mohawk Valley to the Erie Canal and New York Central Railroad, directly influenced the design of the five-acre memorial park. This small park reflected broader trends in the development of commemorative landscapes that were evident in similar memorial parks and monuments established around the same time at places such as the Saratoga and Bennington battlefields.

By 1915, the first plans were made to expand the small memorial park into a publicly-owned historic site in which the entire battlefield would be preserved and interpreted, following national models that had been developed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at battlefields such as Valley Forge and Gettysburg. In 1925, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, a private coalition of local historical societies, began to implement this plan through the acquisition of 48 acres on the east side of Battle Creek. In 1927, another part of this plan was accomplished through State acquisition of the five-acre memorial park. It was not until 1955, however, that most of the battlefield, encompassing the existing limits of the Site, had been acquired and assembled under State ownership.

The Site, as it was used and developed during the commemorative period between 1877 and c.1955, embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period and type, and is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local and state history. The establishment of the

---

<sup>10</sup> For additional information on the significance of the Site to Haudenosaunee ethnography, see SJS Archaeological Services, "A Place of Great Sadness / Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography."

memorial park in 1880, the three primary monuments, and the Site's development into a State-owned historic site during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrate broader trends in commemoration and historic preservation in the state-wide context of the history of military commemoration and the design of commemorative monuments and landscapes.

## **2. SITE ANALYSIS**

This section contains three components. First, there is an overview of documentation regarding the location of the Battle of Oriskany and the Site. Following this section is the analysis of the landscape context of the Site, comprising those properties and landscape features that fall outside the jurisdiction of OPRHP, but which are adjacent to the Site and are important to its history and setting. This section includes a detailed analysis of documentation relative to the alignment of the military road. The third and last component is an analysis of all landscape characteristics and associated features that are within the Site and fall under the jurisdiction of OPRHP. This section includes a detailed analysis of documentation related to battle-related archeological resources on the Site.

The site analysis process consists of a comparison of historic and existing conditions for each landscape feature that presently exists or existed historically. This analysis is organized according to the following format:

**Historic Condition:** A brief synopsis of the feature's history as documented in the site history section of the CLR up until the end of the period of significance in c.1955.

**Existing Condition:** A brief description of the feature as it has changed since 1955 to the present.

**Analysis:** A determination of whether the feature is extant and whether it contributes to the historic significance of the Site based on a comparison of historic and existing conditions. Features are determined to be "contributing" if they were present during one or both of the periods of significance, possess historic integrity, and are related to the areas of historic significance. Features are determined to be "non-contributing" if they were not present during the periods of significance, no longer possess historic integrity, or are unrelated to the areas of historic significance. The historic integrity of each feature is evaluated against the seven aspects established by the National Register: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

## **LOCATION OF THE BATTLE**

The Site has been consistently identified as the location of the Battle of Oriskany since the 1840s, but available documentation does not conclusively support this location. While the exact extent of the battle remains uncertain to this date and probably never will be known, the opening of the battle and the center of fighting have been historically interpreted as occurring in the area around the west plateau and Battle Creek ravine.

The following primary accounts, secondary accounts, and archeological evidence are reviewed to assess the documentation supporting the Site as the location of the battle.

### **Primary Accounts**

First-hand accounts recorded soon after the battle provide some details on the location of the battle in relationship to Fort Stanwix and Oriska. The most specific location given in any available primary source is in the October 1777 report from British Colonel Claus, a veteran of the battle, in which he recalls that the battle occurred "within 6 miles of the Fort," a measurement close to the actual distance of approximately

5.5 miles.<sup>11</sup> A poem believed to have been written soon after the battle placed the location closer to Fort Stanwix, stating that the Tryon County Militia marched from Oriska, "About the space of 4 full Miles." The Site is about 2.5 miles from Oriskany Creek.<sup>12</sup> Other primary accounts simply verify the general location, such as that the battle occurred "Upon the border of the Orisque" [Oriskany Creek], or "about half way between the Fort and a Stream called Orhiska or Ariska."<sup>13</sup> The account of John Heckewelder, who traveled across the battlefield in 1793, also provides some details on location. He encountered a scattering of human skeletons, purportedly from the battle, "After riding about 7 Miles . . ." from Judge White's, now the Village of Whitesboro, a measurement close to the actual distance of approximately six miles.<sup>14</sup> Veterans of the battle also provided some specific information on location in their pension applications made in the 1830s. John Roof, age 70 in 1832, remembered that the battle occurred "four miles from Fort Stanwix" (Roof had grown up at Fort Stanwix, so he probably knew the area well); James Dickson remembered in 1832 that the battle occurred "near Oriskany creek about four miles from Fort Stanwix;" and John Duesler, age 75 in 1833, remembered that the militia "had not gone far" after starting off from Oriskany on the morning of August 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>15</sup> Given that these pension accounts were made over 50 years after the battle, when oral tradition may have already fixed the Site as the location as the battle, the reported distances may be suspect.

There is insufficient agreement among these primary sources to draw any conclusions about the exact location of the battle, although they do agree on the general area. In addition to sources that describe distance, primary-source descriptions of the battlefield landscape also are another source of information regarding location. There are, however, very few which mention distinguishing features of the landscape. One of Herkimer's men, Lt. Jacob Sammons, recounted that the battle took place "in a marshy ravine."<sup>16</sup> Governor Blakesnake, one of the Seneca war chiefs, stated that the battle occurred "Near a Small creek."<sup>17</sup> These descriptions, however, are too vague to distinguish the ravine on the site (Battle Creek ravine) from others in the vicinity. The military road probably crossed 12 ravines between Oriskany Creek and Fort Stanwix, approximately four of which were as deep or deeper than the Battle Creek ravine.<sup>18</sup>

### Secondary-Source Accounts

Local oral history with specific reference to the location of the battle was first documented beginning in the 1830s. One of the earliest oral histories was recorded by Pomroy Jones, who had visited the battlefield as a young boy in the 1790s and identified the Site as the location of the battle.<sup>19</sup> It seems unlikely that Pomroy Jones or other local residents would have mistaken the location of such an important event. However, by the late 1790s the landscape between Oriskany Creek and Fort Stanwix had changed significantly from battle conditions through settlement and clearing of the forests for agriculture; around 1805, the military

---

<sup>11</sup> Col. Claus to Secretary Knox, October 15, 1777, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, v. 8, 721. The modern mile is equal to the British statute mile that was legalized in 1593 at 1,760 yards. This would have made it the official mile at the time of the battle, but the popular conception of a mile may still have been linked to the old English mile, which equaled about 1.5 modern miles. *Grolier Encyclopedia*, 1946 edition, s.v. "Mile."

<sup>12</sup> "Gen. Harkemer's [sic] Battle / a New Song to the Tune of the British Boys," undated transcript c.1777, Marinus Willett Manuscript Collection, New-York Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> "Dairy of Peter Saily on a Journey in America in the Year 1784," in Snow et al., *In Mohawk Country* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 298; Norton, quoted in SJS Archeological, "A Place of Great Sadness," 78-79.

<sup>14</sup> Measured along State Route 69. Paul A. W. Wallace, ed., *Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 301.

<sup>15</sup> Battle of Oriskany veterans' pension applications transcripts, personal collection of transcripts, James Morrison, Gloversville, New York.

<sup>16</sup> Battle account of Lt. Jacob Sammons in Simms, *Frontiersmen of New York*, vol. 2, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Governor Blakesnake to Lyman Draper, quoted in SJS Archeological, "A Place of Great Sadness," 82.

<sup>18</sup> Based on analysis of USGS Rome and Oriskany Quadrangle maps. Three of these ravines occur on a hypothetical straight alignment of the military road over the hill west of Oriskany village.

<sup>19</sup> Jones's history was published in 1851 as *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Published by Pomroy Jones, 1851). Jones's history was elaborated upon by his son, Major M. M. Jones, who in 1883 told of specific battlefield landmarks that were purportedly shown to Pomroy in 1797 by Mr. Fox, a battle veteran. Remarks of Major M. M. Jones, "Informal Ceremonies Saturday: At the Deposit of Records Where Herkimer Fell," *Utica Daily Herald*, 30 July 1883, 2.

road was rebuilt as a turnpike. Such changes to the landscape may have disoriented peoples' memories of where the battle occurred.

The earliest published history of the battle, Campbell's 1831 *Annals of Tryon County*, does not specifically locate the battle but rather states that it occurred "a few miles from the fort," perhaps reflecting disagreement over location.<sup>20</sup> Others published during the 1830s also do not specifically locate the battle. A further indication of the uncertainty over the location of the battle at this time is reflected in an 1834 survey of the Erie Canal, which located the battle west of the Site [Figure 3.4, page 70].<sup>21</sup> The surveyors recorded, "Battle with the Indians and Genl. Herkimer mortally wounded near this brook about half a mile from the canal." The referenced unnamed brook was located on the western portion of Great Lot 5, about 3900 feet west of Battle Creek [the Site was in Great Lot 4]. This survey also identified Battle Creek as being about 1500 feet still farther west, on land owned by Thomas Britts in the Third Allotment, west of Great Lot 5.<sup>22</sup>

After this canal survey, the next site-specific reference to the battle was made in 1844, when a Democratic rally was held in the Battle Creek ravine within the confines of the Site, partly to commemorate the battle.<sup>23</sup> The first history that documents the Site as the location of the battle was Benjamin Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (1860), which included a sketch of the Site the author made in August 1848. Lossing was shown the Site at this time by "a resident upon the ground" who had purportedly turned up battle artifacts in the fields.<sup>24</sup> Subsequent histories all fixed the battle as occurring on the Site.

### **Archeological Evidence**

Another source of information related to the location of the battle is archeological evidence. There have been many reports since the time of the battle of human remains and battle-related artifacts being found on the Site [refer to analysis and evaluation of archeological sites, page 310]. These reports, however, are undocumented and largely anecdotal, and therefore provide no conclusive documentation on the location of the battle. A comprehensive, professional archeological survey has never been undertaken to verify the Site as the location of the battle.

## **LANDSCAPE CONTEXT**

This section summarizes and analyzes historic and existing conditions for all landscape features that are important to the setting of the Site, and determines whether each feature contributes to the Site's historic significance.

### **Natural Systems & Features**

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period (August 6, 1777), the Site was part of a vast old-growth forest situated on the edge of the uplands and floodplain in the upper Mohawk Valley. The Mohawk River, fed by numerous creeks flowing from the south through ravines, was the major hydrologic feature in the region. During the commemorative period (1877-c.1955), most of the forests in the upper Mohawk Valley had been cleared for agriculture, but the landforms and hydrologic systems remained largely intact, with the exception of changes incurred through the construction of the Road, Erie Canal and Barge Canal, railroad, and electric railway. By the end of this historic period around 1955, some of the farmland had been abandoned and was reverting back to forest.

<sup>20</sup>Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County* (New York: J. J. Harper, 1851), 78.

<sup>21</sup>Holmes-Hutchinson Erie Canal Survey, 1834, E 7-40, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., E 7-39.

<sup>23</sup>Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book* (New York: Harper Bros., 1960), vol. 1, 245-246, fn. Lossing claimed a speaker's stand he illustrated in a sketch of the Site was left from this 1844 rally.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.



**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, farmland has continued to be abandoned and a large percentage of the region surrounding the Site has reverted to forest or other natural areas such as marshes and swamps. Landforms and hydrologic systems have remained largely unchanged.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The natural systems and features of the upper Mohawk Valley region, including landforms, forests, rivers, creeks, and wetlands, contribute to the historic significance of the Site as part of the larger landscape context. The natural systems and features that were present throughout the historic periods, particularly the landforms and hydrologic systems, retain integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association. Some natural systems and features, such as the forest, have changed in material, but in part exhibit integrity of feeling and association. The continued existence of the geologic, hydrological, and terrestrial features of the region surrounding the Site provide an important part of the historic continuum between the historic periods and the present.

## **Transportation Corridors**

### **The Road**

**Historic Condition:** The Road was originally constructed under British General Amherst's command in 1759 as a military road linking Fort Dayton (present village of Herkimer) with Fort Stanwix (present city of Rome) during the French and Indian War. The Road was most likely built on a straight alignment that crossed the Battle Creek ravine on a raised earth and corduroy (log) causeway. After a period of deterioration, the Road was reopened and repaired by the Americans in 1777 prior to the Battle of Oriskany, which occurred along the Road. As settlement spread in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Road was rebuilt, probably as a turnpike in c.1805, and then as a plank road in 1848. The straight alignment past the Site was retained and the causeway was raised in height and incorporated into a stone-arched bridge across Battle Creek. Between 1933 and 1934, the Road was again rebuilt as the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway, which was designated as NY 5-S and later NY 69. This highway generally followed the same straight alignment and still crossed on an earthen causeway, which was once again raised in height. The highway featured a new concrete roadbed with two 10 or 11-foot travel lanes, and a new concrete culvert carrying Battle Creek through the causeway.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, the Road has been resurfaced in asphalt, the shoulders have been widened, drainage and grading have been altered adjacent to the causeway over Battle Creek, and new roadside features such as signs and guiderails have been installed. The road presently consists of two 11-foot travel lanes, four-foot shoulders, and three-foot wide concrete gutters on the approaches to the causeway.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Road contributes to the historic significance of the Site as a central feature of the commemorative-period landscape, and is the same feature that was present during the battle period, probably on the same alignment. Although the surface has been paved in asphalt, the shoulders widened, and new roadside furniture installed, the Road retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to the late commemorative period. It continues as a two-lane highway on a straight alignment past the Site. The Road remains intimately linked with the historic context of transportation in the Mohawk Valley, a context that was significant to the history of the Site both during the battle and commemorative periods.

#### *Analysis of Military Road Alignment*

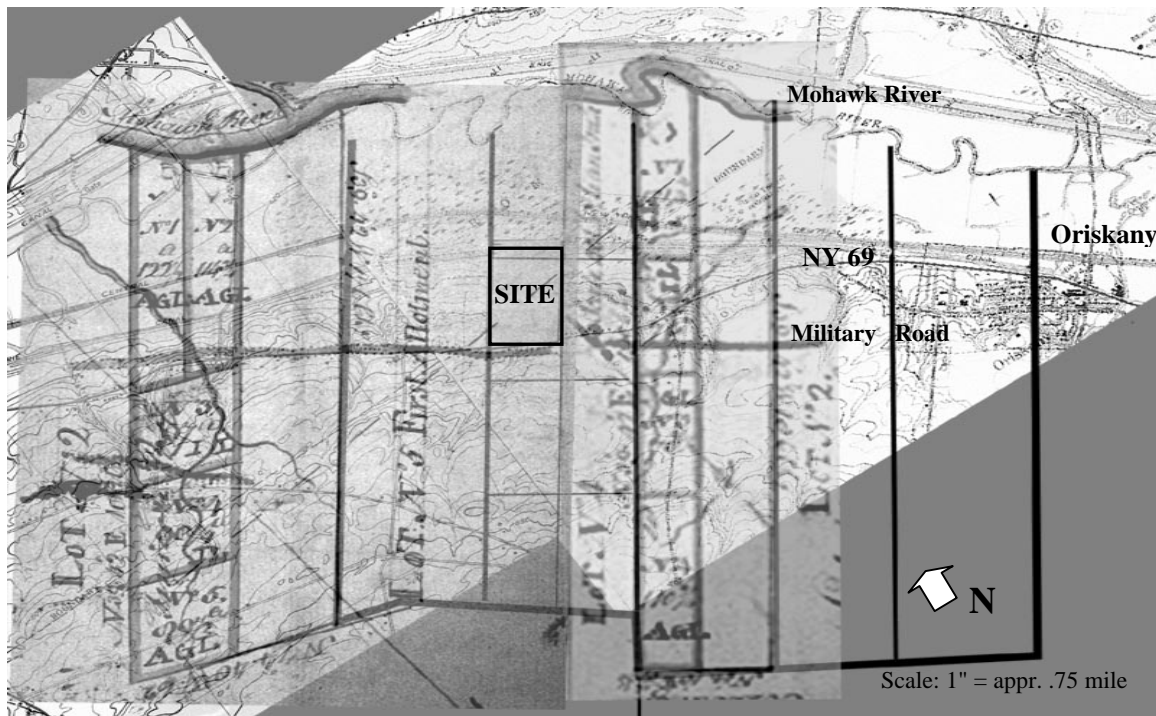
In addition to its integrity to the commemorative period, the Road also retains integrity of association to the 1777 military road, since it is the same transportation feature that existed during the battle period. The Road, however, may retain additional integrity to the battle period. While there is ample documentation that the 1934 highway follows the same alignment as the earlier

plank road and turnpike, there is no documentation conclusively showing the alignment of the military road or any of its other design characteristics. Since the 1840s, it has been interpreted that the military road followed a winding alignment north of the existing highway. Based on research for the site history section of this report, however, there is strong evidence that the alignment of the existing highway follows the same alignment as the military road. The following is an analysis of documentation supporting this alignment and the historically-interpreted curving alignment of the military road north of the existing highway.

*Hypothesis #1: Straight Alignment Contiguous with Existing Highway*

Under this hypothesis, the alignment of the military road was for the most part contiguous with the present state highway along the south side of the Site. The following primary-source documentation along with an analysis of the existing landscape support this as the most likely alignment of the military road.

- General Amherst ordered a wide road to be built, to be "carried in as straight a Line as possible" and carried across the ravines in "as direct a line as the Ground will permit."<sup>25</sup> Subsequent reports during construction indicate that this section of the road between Oriska and Fort Stanwix was the most carefully built.<sup>26</sup>
- In 1789-90, field surveys of Oriskany Patent Great Lot 3 in the Second Allotment and Great Lot 1 in the Third Allotment documented that the military road ran on a straight alignment, close to the later alignment of state highway NY 69 in the vicinity of the Site [Figure 7.1]. Both of these lots included ravines, although not as deep as the Battle Brook ravine. The large-scale 1785 map of the entire Oriskany Patent also documented



**Figure 7.1:** Overlay of 1789-90 Oriskany Patent Lansing subdivision survey maps on 1955 U.S.G.S. Rome and Oriskany quadrangle maps showing alignment of military road (dark thick line) in comparison with the existing state highway, NY 69 (light narrow line). Overlay by J. Auwaerter, SUNY ESF, 1999. Note: the subdivision map incorrectly identifies the Great Lot west of the Site as being in the First Allotment.

<sup>25</sup> Amherst's Order to Ensigns Ratser and River, Albany, 23 May 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>26</sup> T. Moncrieff to Amherst, East End of Oneida Lake, 30 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

- that the military road followed a generally straight alignment [Figure 3.5, page 72].<sup>27</sup>
- The military road followed a straight alignment across the hill directly west of the Village of Oriskany around which the existing state highway and Utica Street presently bend [Figure 7.1, previous page].<sup>28</sup> Given that the military road continued straight across this topographic obstruction with its three ravines, it is unlikely that it would have veered off its straight alignment as it approached the relatively minor topographic obstructions at the Site.
  - It was reported to General Amherst during construction of the military road that there was the need for "much leveling" at the bridges [causeways].<sup>29</sup> This suggests that the military road did not curve around rises or depressions that may have been in the way of the road. One such rise existed along the east edge of the Battle Creek ravine. The most efficient way of constructing an earthen causeway would have been to "level" or cut the grade along the top of the ravine and move the fill down into the ravine.
  - Although the original 1785 subdivision of the Oriskany Patent did not follow the military road as a boundary between lots, subsequent subdivisions for lots near the Site did follow the military road prior to its replacement by the turnpike (present state highway NY 69) around 1805. The subdivision in the Second Allotment for Lot 2 in Great Lot 5 (the Great Lot on the west side of the Site) ran along "the north side of the hiway [military road] thence running westerly with the hiway sixty rods . . ." <sup>30</sup>
  - The military road was likely rebuilt as the Utica & Rome Turnpike around 1805, soon after the first European Americans settled Whitestown.<sup>31</sup> The present highway is largely contiguous with the turnpike and later plank road alignments. Given that the military road was built on a straight alignment and included a substantial structure such as a causeway, it is unlikely that the turnpike builders would have expended the extra effort to build an entirely new roadbed.
  - Limited archeological testing in the ravine along the alignment under hypothesis #2 revealed nothing indicative of a roadbed.<sup>32</sup>

A weakness with this hypothesis is the fact that all of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century histories that describe the location of the military road state that it ran north of the present state highway and in some cases, that it was winding and narrow (see documentation under hypothesis #2). There are several reasons, however, to discount these early descriptions, which took hold in many later histories and persist in current interpretation.

The early histories of the battle first appeared beginning in the 1830s and were therefore written long after the military road had likely been replaced by the Utica and Rome Turnpike around 1805. The descriptions of the military road in these early histories were probably based on oral history, which by the 1830s may have popularized a romantic view of the old military road through contrast with the straight turnpike. None of the accounts reference a "military road," reflecting perhaps that none knew its origins or other specifics about its construction. Such a view is reflected in William Tracy's 1838 account of the battle, in which he calls the military road a "path" (see following discussion under hypothesis #2). Logs

<sup>27</sup> Lansing, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent . . . 1789 and 1790," "Map of the Survey and Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent," 1785, New York State Archives, Albany.

<sup>28</sup> Survey of Great Lot 3 in Lansing, "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent . . . 1789 and 1790;" "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4. Straight sections of the Road align to either side of this hill (Utica Street in Oriskany village and the Road/NY 69 past the Site).

<sup>29</sup> Browning to Amherst, Fort Stanwix, 13 October 1759, Amherst MSS.

<sup>30</sup> Sub-indenture, Amos Burrows to Joshua Burrows, 11 February 1795, Clarke NYSHA MSS.

<sup>31</sup> "An Act to Incorporate the Utica & Rome Turnpike Road Companies," passed 10 April 1805, Oneida County Map Room. An 1806 map of Whitestown documents that the Road, probably the new turnpike, curved around the hill west of Oriskany village. Gifford, "Map of Whitestown," 1806, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica.

<sup>32</sup> Traces of the military road under this hypothesis are below the present roadbed of the existing state highway or have been destroyed by subsequent road construction. Paul R. Huey, Sr. Scientist (Archeology) to Dr. Norman A. Richard, August 10, 1993, BHS MSS. The archeological testing was undertaken by OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites.

across the marshy floor of the ravine, which may have been placed there for a farm road, provided necessary evidence of the old military road.

Given that there were few people living in the area around the battlefield prior to construction of the turnpike in 1805, it is possible that no one remembered that the turnpike was constructed on the alignment of the military road. The vast changes in the landscape around the battlefield through clearing of the forests for agriculture probably disoriented peoples' recollections, including those of battle veterans, as to where the military road ran. An 1834 survey of the Erie Canal placed the battle west of the existing Site, indicating there was even disagreement on where the battle occurred.<sup>33</sup> Given this, it is likely that there was also disagreement on the location of the military road.

*Hypothesis #2: Presently and Historically Interpreted Alignment North of Existing Highway*

Under this hypothesis, the military road was narrow and followed a winding alignment north of the existing highway and curved to the southwest on the plateau west of the ravine [Site History Chapter 2 Period Plan, page 57]. The military road purportedly wound around the various hillocks and depressions on the Site. This hypothesis is based on secondary-source histories written beginning in the 1830s that were largely based on local oral history and on undocumented traces of the military road. The following documentation has been used to substantiate this hypothetical alignment:

- Tracy, 1838: "The path [military road] then leading from Oriskany to the fort [Fort Stanwix] passed the gulph which constitutes the present boundary of Rome at a distance of twenty or thirty rods [1 rod = 16.5 feet] north of the present road to Rome at that point."<sup>34</sup>
- Jones, 1851: The road ". . . crossed the deep ravine, some thirty rods north of the present road to Rome."<sup>35</sup>
- Simms, 1882: ". . . a wagon road [the military road] had been previously constructed upon a narrow, winding causeway . . ."<sup>36</sup>
- M. M. Jones, 1883: "Traces of the old road [military road] were found passing out of the deep ravine and then other traces as they may be found now crossing this smaller ravine [west ravine] a few rods in front and southerly from this monument [Battle Monument]."<sup>37</sup>
- Logs in the bottom of the ravine north of the turnpike, first documented by Losing in 1848 and evident as late as 1900, have been cited as being remains from the causeway of the military road.<sup>38</sup>
- The most descriptive of the early accounts of the military road alignment appeared in the Rome *Sentinel* and the Utica *Daily Observer* during the Centennial. These articles both reflected the strong tradition at the time that the military road was a winding path or trail that ran on an alignment north of the present highway.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Holmes Hutchinson Erie Canal survey (1834), E 7, maps 39, 40, 41.

<sup>34</sup> William Tracey, *Notices of Men and Events Connected With the Early History of Oneida County / Two Lectures Delivered Before the Young Men's Association of Utica* (Utica: R. Northway, 1838), Lecture 1.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *Annals and Recollections*, 344.

<sup>36</sup> Simms, *Frontiersmen of New York*, 70.

<sup>37</sup> Second-hand account of Major M. M. Jones of his father's tour of the battlefield by battle veteran Mr. Fox. Utica *Daily Herald*, 30 July 1883, copy in Robertaccio transcript collection, Central Region MSS.

<sup>38</sup> Losing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 245; c.1900 photograph of ravine in Reid, *The Mohawk Valley*, 421.

<sup>39</sup> "The Battlefield as it was 50 Years Ago," Rome *Sentinel* (31 July 1877). Copy in Rome Historical Society, "Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Scrapbook;" "Oriskany Battleground," Utica *Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 4-5.

- A c.1931 aerial photograph showed a trace or light area corresponding with this hypothetical alignment across the battlefield.<sup>40</sup>
- A slight depression or "saddle" (possible cut) is evident along the east ridge at this hypothetical alignment.

There are several weaknesses with this hypothesis. First and foremost, this alignment contradicts General Amherst's orders that the military road be wide and straight, including sections at ravine crossings. A winding narrow road would have proved a strategic disadvantage. Second, this hypothesis contradicts the survey of Great Lot 3 that documented the military road followed a straight alignment just east of the Site across a similar, although shallower, ravine. Third, there were no topographical remains of the causeway in the ravine shown in Losing's 1848 sketch, despite that Amherst's correspondence suggested there was much "leveling" (grading) undertaken, probably to build the causeways. Fourth, secondary sources do not agree on the alignment of the military road. Tracy and Jones stated that it crossed the ravine at between 20 and 30 rods (330 feet and 495 feet) north of the "present road" which was contiguous with the alignment of the existing highway; the alignment suggested by the Rome *Sentinel* and the presently interpreted alignment is about 170 feet north of the present state highway.

#### *Summary*

Available documentation supports hypothesis #1 that the military road was contiguous with the existing highway. Therefore, in addition to integrity of association, the existing highway may also retain integrity of location and design (straight alignment, existence of a causeway) to the battle period. There is also the potential, under National Register criterion D, that there may be archeological remains beneath the existing highway that could provide important information about the military road. Although the Road has lost integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling from the battle period, it retains sufficient integrity to convey important characteristics of the military road, since it is the same feature (a road), being used for the same purposes (transportation) on the same general alignment.

#### **Former New York Central Railroad**

Historic Condition: The railroad through the upper Mohawk Valley, located 700 feet north of the Site, was completed in 1839 and existed during the commemorative period as the main line between Albany and Buffalo, paralleling the Erie Canal. In the 1850s, it became part of the New York Central system. During major commemorative events, such as the 1877 centennial, the railroad brought visitors to the Site. The railroad was also visible from the uplands of the western half of the Site through the end of the historic period.

Existing Condition: The former New York Central Railroad, which became Conrail in the 1970 and is currently operated by CSX Corporation, continues in service on two tracks in its historic location. It does not provide transportation to the Site. The railroad can be heard, but not seen, from the Site.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing (setting)

The former New York Central Railroad contributes to the historic significance of the Site. Although not physically linked with the Site and no longer visible in its viewshed, the railroad is an important component in the historic transportation context of the Mohawk Valley together with the Road, the Erie Canal, the electric railway, and the Mohawk River. The transportation characteristics of the Mohawk Valley were significant in determining the location of the Battle of Oriskany and the development of the commemorative landscape. The Battle Monument was intended to be seen from the thousands traveling on the railroad. Aside from of alignment (location), the historic integrity of the railroad as an individual feature has not been assessed.

---

<sup>40</sup> Robertaccio, "A Field Report On The Old Military Road through Oriskany Battlefield," unpublished report, 1995, Central Region MSS.

## Erie Canal

**Historic Condition:** The section of the Erie Canal between Utica and Rome that passed the north side of the Site opened in October 1819, and the entire canal was completed in 1825. The canal at this time was 40 feet wide and four feet deep. By 1834, a group of three buildings had been built on the north side of the canal about 800 feet east of the west property line of the Site, along with a bridge across the canal. In the 1850s, the section past the Site was enlarged to 70 feet wide and seven feet deep. During the 1877 centennial celebration, visitors arrived at the Site on the canal. A temporary pontoon bridge and boat landing were constructed on the canal for the celebration just east of Battle Creek. A heavy volume of traffic passed the Site on the canal into the 1870s, but declined into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1918, the Erie Canal was abandoned and replaced by the Erie Division of the New York State Barge Canal System, located north of the Mohawk River. By this time, the group of three buildings on the north side of the canal and the bridge had disappeared. The Erie Canal was kept watered and under State ownership, but not navigable. It remained in the viewshed of the western half of the Site through the end of the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** The Erie Canal structure has deteriorated since the historic period, and much of the prism became dewatered by the 1970s. There are no bridges, culverts, or canal-related buildings adjacent to the Site. Despite breaks in the canal walls and extensive growth of vegetation, the canal structure remains largely intact, but is no longer visible from uplands of the Site.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing (setting)

The Erie Canal contributes to the historic significance of the Site. It is an important component in the historic transportation context of the Mohawk Valley together with the Road, the former New York Central Railroad, the electric railway, and the Mohawk River. The transportation characteristics of the Mohawk Valley were significant in determining the location of the Battle of Oriskany and the development of the commemorative landscape. The Battle Monument was designed to be seen from the Erie Canal. Despite that it no longer retains its historic water levels and is enclosed by vegetation, the section of the canal adjacent to the Site retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character and use. It retains integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association. The Erie Canal is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places independent of the Site.<sup>41</sup>

## Former Electric Railway Corridor (Niagara-Mohawk Gas Transmission Line)

**Historic Condition:** In June 1902, the Rome extension of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway Company was opened. This electric interurban railway passed through the northern third of the Site on a 100-foot wide corridor purchased from the Ringrose and Lanfear families. The railway was likely used to transport visitors to the Site during special events, such as the 1927 sesquicentennial. In the 1920s, ridership began to decline due to competition from automobile transportation. In June 1933, the line ceased operation, and the rails and electric lines were removed at some point after this. In 1954, the corridor was sold to the Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation, which built an underground natural gas transmission line through the corridor. The corridor remained visible from the uplands of the western half of the Site through the end of the historic period. On the eastern half of the Site, the corridor became enclosed by forest by this time.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, forests have enclosed the entire corridor. A 30-foot wide mown strip is maintained by Niagara-Mohawk above the gas transmission line that is located underground in the former embankment of the electric railway. A large concrete culvert over Battle Creek and two smaller culverts over the creeks at the western end of the Site, and the raised earthen embankment remain intact.

---

<sup>41</sup> OPRHP, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau (SHPO) records, Waterford, New York.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing (setting)

The electric railway corridor contributes to the historic significance of the Site. It remains an important component in the historic transportation context of the Site together with the Road, the former New York Central Railroad, the Erie Canal, and the Mohawk River. The transportation characteristics of the Mohawk Valley were significant in determining the location of the Battle of Oriskany and the development of the commemorative landscape. Although the rails and electric lines are gone,<sup>42</sup> the corridor retains integrity of location, design, feeling, and association. The linear character of the corridor strongly conveys its origin as a transportation feature.

**Adjoining Properties** [Map: Figure 6.6, page 217]

**East Side**

*Joseph & Betty Kozdra Property*

7195 Route 69 (49.5 acres)

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, this property adjoining the east side of the Site was part of the larger forest and may have witnessed some fighting, given its location along the military road. Along with the Site, this land within Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment came under the ownership of Roger Mompeson and Augustus Van Cortlandt when the Oriskany Patent was subdivided in 1785. Around 1800, Great Lot 4 was subdivided and much of it was developed by the Parkhurst family into a farm of over 500 acres. By 1819, a small family cemetery was begun on the farm. In the 1850s, the farm was reduced to 100 acres and was owned by M. and G. W. Parkhurst. By 1915, the portion adjoining the Site had been divided into a 53-acre farm belonging to Ella Parkhurst Carr, which by 1933 had been sold to the estate of Charles A. Sweet. At this time, the lowlands were reverting to forest. Further subdivision of the property, with the creation of small residential lots fronting on the Road, may have begun as early as 1943.

**Existing Condition:** The Kozdra property is a 49-acre parcel that extends from the Road to the Erie Canal and adjoins much of the east side of the Site. The northern three-quarters of the property consists of a forest that extends from the upland edge across the lowlands. Most of this forest is over 70 years old.<sup>43</sup> The south quarter occupies the remaining uplands and contains two large hay fields circled by dirt tracks, a house, and several outbuildings. The house, which appears to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century building with early 20<sup>th</sup>-century alterations, is set back from the Road across a lawn with scattered mature conifers. There are five small lots to the south and west of this property that front on the Road (see following descriptions for Mazur, Neidl, Fitzgerald-Grozsek and Blair properties).

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing (setting)

No documentation has been found to support the fact that a portion of the battle occurred on this property, although the Tryon Count militia passed on or adjacent to it on the military road. The transportation corridors and the forest and other natural systems that are within this property contributes to the historic significance of the Site as part of its broader setting, although the property is largely not visible from the Site due to topography and forested conditions. The house on the property at 7195 Route 69 may be a 19<sup>th</sup> century Parkhurst farmhouse that was altered during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It does not individually contribute to the historic significance of the Site based on available information. While it may have been part of the larger agricultural context of the commemorative period, it is far enough away [approximately 900 feet east of the Site's east property line] to have had little part in the Site's historic setting. Based on available information, this property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, although a detailed analysis of its integrity has not been undertaken.

<sup>42</sup> The rails and electric lines may have been removed prior to 1955 during the historic period.

<sup>43</sup> c.1931 aerial photograph, Central Region MSS.

*Kurt, Karl, & John Mazur Property*  
7907 Route 69 (.32 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Mazur property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property [see above] to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet.

**Existing Condition:** This property contains an early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century house that is set back from the Road across an open lawn. The area to the rear of the house is wooded. The house is one story and consists of two gable-front sections that are spanned by a recessed enclosed breezeway.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Mazur property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While it may have been developed toward the end of the commemorative period, it relates to 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development in the region, a context that does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. This property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*David Neidl Property*  
7901 Route 69 (2.39 acres)

**Historic Condition:** The Neidl property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property [see above] to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. The concrete-block building on the property was purportedly constructed around 1943 for the Oriskany Museum.<sup>44</sup>

**Existing Condition:** This property retains the c.1943 concrete block building, which is painted light green and has a new gable roof. It is surrounded by a variety of recently planted shrubs and herbaceous perennials and a newly rebuilt driveway. An open area with landscape construction materials is to the rear of the building.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Neidl property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While it may have been developed toward the end of the commemorative period, it does not appear, based on available information, to relate to the commemorative context of the Site. The building has been substantially altered since its original construction, with a new addition and a gable roof, and the setting has been altered through modern plantings. The property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*S. Fitzgerald & C. Grozsek Property*  
7891 Route 69 (.32 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Fitzgerald-Grozsek property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property [see above] to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. The small house on the property may have been built toward the end of the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** This property consists of an early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century house set back from the Road across an open lawn. The original side-gable house has a recent gable-front addition, and is sheathed in beige vinyl siding. A two-car garage is to the rear and is reached by an asphalt driveway.

---

<sup>44</sup> David Neidl, conversation with J. Auwaerter, July 2000. No further information has been found on the origin of this building.



**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Mazur property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While it may have been developed toward the end of the commemorative period, it relates to 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development in the region, a context that does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. This property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*David Neidl (formerly Maggioliono)*

Between 7891 & 7885 Route 69 (.44 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Neidl (formerly Maggioliono) property, located east of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property [see above] to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. A small house may have been built on the property toward the end of the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** This property contained a small house and garage. The house burned in the 1990s and was subsequently demolished. The garage and a lawn remain.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Neidl (formerly Maggioliono) property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While it may have been developed toward the end of the commemorative period, it relates to 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development in the region, a context that does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. This property does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*Beth Blair Property*

7885 Route 69 (.32 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Blair property, located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Site on the north side of the Road, was subdivided at some date after 1940 from the Kozdra property [see above] to the north and east, which was previously the farm of Ella Parkhurst Carr and Charles Sweet. The small house on the property may have been built toward the end of the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** This property consists of a small house and two outbuildings that are set back from the Road across a lawn. The house is located only a few feet from the Site's eastern property line. A line of conifers with open understory divides this property from the Site. To the rear of the property is the Parkhurst Cemetery.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Blair property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While it may have been developed toward the end of the commemorative period, it relates to 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development in the region, a context that does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. This property is within the viewshed of the Site. It does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*Parkhurst Cemetery*

Rear of 7885 Route 69 (.171 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The first recorded burial in the Parkhurst Cemetery was John Parkhurst, the family patriarch, in 1819. In 1891, the cemetery property was subdivided from the adjoining Parkhurst and Parkhurst-heir farms. As part of the deed, the Parkhurst Cemetery Association was established and an access right-of-way was dedicated between the cemetery and the Road, a distance of about 190 feet. The last recorded burial in the cemetery was made in 1917.

**Existing Condition:** The Parkhurst Cemetery, located adjacent to the Site, is forested and contains 32 marked burials dating between 1819 and 1917. The cemetery contains the burials of John

Parkhurst and David Lanfear, among others who were owners of the Site. The markers are all largely intact, but some are tilted and eroding. Aside from the markers, no documentation has been found on the historic appearance of the cemetery. The cemetery retains a right-of-way along the eastern property line of the Site that extends from the Road to the cemetery. Ownership of the cemetery presently remains in question, as the Parkhurst Cemetery Association, which was established in 1891, has long been abandoned. State law does not contain any provisions regarding the maintenance or ownership of abandoned family cemeteries.<sup>45</sup>

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Parkhurst Cemetery contributes to the historic significance of the Site as part of the agricultural context in which the commemorative landscape developed. The Parkhursts were the first to develop the Site into a farm in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the family continued to own and/or farm a portion of the Site until 1925. The Parkhurst Cemetery is the only intact built feature near the Site that remains from the family's long association with the land. It was likely visible from the east plateau of the Site during the commemorative period. The Parkhurst Cemetery retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It does not, however, appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register Criteria exclude the listing of cemeteries, unless they illustrate great age, distinctive design values, or association with events and persons of transcendent importance.<sup>46</sup>

### North Side

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the land extending north of the Site to the Mohawk River was a floodplain occupied by old-growth wetland forest. It is possible that some of the battle occurred on this land as soldiers fled toward the Mohawk River. William Tryon, who farmed land north of the Erie Canal during the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, purportedly found battle artifacts in his fields.

Along with the Site, this land fell within Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment and came under the ownership of Roger Mompeson and Augustus Van Cortlandt in the 1785 subdivision of the Oriskany Patent. Great Lot 4 was subdivided around 1800 and was subsequently cleared for agriculture and crossed by the Erie Canal (1819) and the railroad (1839). The Mohawk River floodplain was considered some of the best agricultural land in the region, and numerous drainage ditches were constructed to further improve its agricultural value. Many of these drainage ditches were built paralleling property lines established through the Oriskany Patent subdivision. A group of three buildings was located by 1834 on the north side of the Erie Canal, opposite the west side of the Site; these disappeared prior to 1920. During the commemorative period, this land was within the viewshed of the Site.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, the farms in the floodplain north of the Site have ceased operation, but many of the drainage ditches remain. While some of this land remains in private ownership, much of it is part of the Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area under the jurisdiction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. About half of the land is forested, while half exhibits old-field succession dominated by tall grasses and shrubs. The railroad and the Barge Canal remain in service, while the Erie Canal is abandoned but largely intact. This area is not visible from the Site.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing (setting)

Documentation suggests that a portion of the battle may have occurred on this land, as soldiers fled north to the Mohawk River from the center of fighting near Battle Creek. No specific

---

<sup>45</sup> Edward Hand, Senior Investigator, New York State Department of State, Division of Cemeteries, e-mail sent to J. Auwaerter, 30 June 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Criteria Consideration D, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 15, 1991), 34-35.

reference to fighting on land north of the Site, however, has been found. During the commemorative period, this area was within the viewshed of the Site. The transportation corridors and the forest and other natural systems in this area contribute to the historic significance of the Site as part of its broader setting. The agricultural drainage ditches and remnant fields in this area reflect early land development patterns (Oriskany Patent) and agricultural practices that also influenced the landscape of the Site during the commemorative period. These properties do not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register based on available documentation, although a detailed analysis of integrity has not been undertaken.

## West Side

### *Dorothy Vogel Property* (approximately 49 acres)

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the land to the west of the Site was forested, contained a deep ravine, and fronted on the military road. It is likely that some of the battle took place on this land.

In the subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in 1785, this land fell within Great Lot 5 of the Second Allotment under the ownership of George Clarke. By 1791, Clarke had this lot subdivided and by 1795, he had leased subdivision lots 6 and 7, encompassing the land adjoining the west side of the Site, to Amos, Joshua, and Jeremiah Burrows. The Burrows cleared the land for farming. By 1858, this land was being leased by Clarke to E. Metcalf, who lived in a house adjoining the Site [on Dunn property, see following]. William Ringrose incorporated this property into his adjoining farm between 1880 and 1915, and probably removed the house during this time. By the end of the historic period in the 1950s, much of the property was reverting to forest, but it remained in Ringrose ownership.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, this former farmland has become completely forested. This forest forms the western edge of the Site. The west ravine runs through this property. There are no documented built features on this property.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Vogel property is potentially significant as the location of a part of the Battle of Oriskany. This property forms the western boundary of the Site and was within its viewshed during the commemorative period. The transportation corridors and the forest and other natural systems that are within or adjoin the property are also related to the historic contexts of the Site and contribute to its broader setting. Based on available documentation, there are no built features on the property that contribute to the historic significance of the Site. A detailed analysis of the property's historic integrity has not been undertaken.

### *Ann Dunn Property* (approximately 4 acres)

**Historic Condition:** During the battle, fighting likely took place on the Dunn property, as it was on or near the north side of the military road and near the west ravine. The property later fell within Great Lot 5 of the Second allotment adjacent to the western boundary of the Site, and was owned by George Clarke and leased to E. Metcalf, who likely lived in a house that was on this property. During the commemorative period, the property was part of the Ringrose farm and was visible from the Site. The Metcalf house was likely removed by Ringrose following his acquisition of the property between 1880 and 1915.

**Existing Condition:** The Dunn property was subdivided at some date after 1952 from the Ringrose farm [later Vogel property] to the north and east. Leo Dunn was formerly the caretaker of the Site. The property became forested by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. A stone-lined well and daylilies (*Hemerocallis sp.*) on the property may be remnants from the Metcalf house.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Dunn property is potentially significant as the location of a part of the Battle of Oriskany. This property forms a small part of the western boundary of the Site and was within the Site's viewshed during the commemorative period. The forest and other natural systems that are within or adjoin the property are also related to the historic contexts of the Site and do contribute to its broader setting. Based on available documentation, there are no built features on this property that contribute to the historic significance of the Site. A detailed analysis of the property's historic integrity has not been undertaken.

### South Side

*Joseph & Rosemary Donohoe Property*  
(122.6 acres)

**Historic Condition:** The Donohoe property, located south of the Site's west plateau, was on or near the south side of the military road during the battle period, and contained a section of Battle Creek ravine. Fighting likely occurred on a portion of this property.

Along with the Site, this land fell within Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment and came under the ownership of Roger Mompeson and Augustus Van Cortlandt in the 1785 subdivision of the Oriskany Patent. Around 1800, Great Lot 4 was subdivided and much of it was developed by the Parkhurst family into a farm of over 500 acres. The Parkhurst farm was subsequently subdivided into smaller parcels. Between 1830 and 1952, the Donohoe property was part of a larger farm that included the west half of the Site. This property became part of the Kent farm by 1830, the Griffiths farm between 1858 and 1861, and the Ringrose farm after 1861. In 1885, Ringrose built an Italianate-style farmhouse near Battle Creek, opposite his barn on the north side of the Road. This farm was held by the Ringrose family through the end of the historic period in c.1955, although by this time it was largely out of agricultural use.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, much of the 122-acre Donohoe property has reverted to forest, except for about a seven-acre meadow across from the Site's west plateau and west of the former Ringrose farmhouse. There are several outbuildings associated with the house.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Donohoe property is potentially significant as the location of a part of the Battle of Oriskany, since it adjoins the south side of the Road (likely military road) and contain a portion of the Battle Creek ravine. During the commemorative period, the property was part of the open agricultural space that included the west plateau, and the remnant open space that presently exists continues to be part of the west plateau space. This open space and the former Ringrose farmhouse (part of the larger Ringrose farmstead that includes the horse barn on the Site) contribute to the historic agricultural context of the Site; these features appear to retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. A detailed analysis of the remainder of the property's historic integrity has not been undertaken.

*Walter Weigand Property*  
(97.1 acres)

**Historic Condition:** The Walter Weigand property, located south of the east plateau, likely fronted the south side of the military road during the battle period and contained a section of Battle Creek ravine. Fighting likely occurred on a portion of this property.

Along with the Site, this land fell within Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment and came under the ownership of Roger Mompeson and Augustus Van Cortlandt in the 1785 subdivision of the Oriskany Patent. Around 1800, Great Lot 4 was subdivided and much of it was developed by the Parkhurst family into a farm of over 500 acres. The Parkhurst farm was subsequently subdivided

into smaller parcels. The Weigand property was the farm of George. W. Parkhurst by the 1850s, George Parkhurst by 1907, and Frank Parkhurst by 1933. This farm contained an early Parkhurst farmhouse which was located opposite the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive. By the end of the historic period in the 1950s, most of the property remained open farmland. No information has been found on when this property went out of the Parkhurst family.

**Existing Condition:** About one-third of the 97-acre Walter Weigand property is used for agriculture, one third is forest, and one-third is fallow field. The stone foundation of the Parkhurst house remains between two subdivided properties fronting the Road [Byron Weigandt and Dingman, see following descriptions]. Each of these subdivided properties contains a modern dwelling and is less than one acre.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Walter Weigand property is potentially significant as the location of a part of the Battle of Oriskany, since it adjoins the south side of the Road (likely military road) and contains a portion of the Battle Creek ravine. During the commemorative period, the property was part of the open agricultural space that included the east plateau, and was therefore part of the agricultural context of the Site. While a large portion of this property remains in active agriculture (the only such property near the Site), the farmland is largely screened from view of the Site by the modern Dingman and Byron Weigandt houses and successional growth along the Road. A detailed analysis of the property's historic integrity has not been undertaken.

*Marie & Loren Dingman Property*  
7854 Route 69 (.84 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Dingman property, located south of the Site opposite the Unknown Soldier's Monument and adjacent to Battle Creek ravine, was not a separate property during the historic period. This property was historically part of the G. W. Parkhurst farm.

**Existing Condition:** The Dingman property was likely subdivided from the surrounding Walter Weigand property in the 1980s, around which time the existing log-cabin style house was probably built. The house is set back in an open lawn lined by deciduous trees along the Road and successional vegetation to the east, south, and west. An asphalt driveway aligns with the drive to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and extends at a diagonal back to the house.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Dingman property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. The property was developed after the historic period. The property, with its c.1980 house, detracts from the historic character and setting of the Site.

*Byron Weigandt Property*  
7878 Route 69 (.69 acre)

**Historic Condition:** The Byron Weigandt property, located south of the Site southeast of the Unknown Soldier's Monument, was not a separate property during the historic period. This property was historically part of the G. W. Parkhurst farm.

**Existing Condition:** The Byron Weigandt property was subdivided from the surrounding Walter Weigand property, probably when the existing house was built around the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> In addition to the house, the property consists an open lawn with widely scattered deciduous trees and bordered by successional growth to the south, east, and west. The house is a simple, one-story side-gable building with white siding and black shutters. An asphalt driveway leads straight back from the Road to a detached garage located on the west side of the house.

---

<sup>47</sup> This house may have been built as a replacement for the former G. W. Parkhurst farmhouse, the foundation of which is located to the west of this property.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The Byron Weigandt property does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. The property was developed after the historic period. The property, with its c.1970s house, detracts from the historic character and setting of the Site.

## **LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

This section summarizes historic and existing conditions for all landscape features that exists or existed historically within the current boundaries of the Site. This information is analyzed to determine whether each feature contributes to the Site's historic significance.

### **Natural Systems and Features**

#### **Geology**

**Historic Condition:** The sedimentary bedrock, glacial till and lacustrine sands, soils, and natural landforms present on the Site were formed by deposition from ancient seas, glacial action, and post-glacial erosion. The landforms consisted of the Mohawk River floodplain, the undulating uplands, and the Battle Creek ravine. Aside from minor cutting and filling and natural erosion, the geology of the Site was constant in both the battle (August 6, 1777) and commemorative (1877-c.1955) periods.

**Existing Condition:** There have been no significant changes to the geology of the Site since the end of the historic period.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Site's geology, particularly the obvious landforms, retains a high level of historic integrity and remains one of the most recognizable landscape features from the historic period. The Site's geology retains integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association. During the battle period, the ravine formed a major strategic element, while in the commemorative period, the position of the Site on the uplands overlooking the Mohawk River strongly influenced the development and design of the landscape. The continued existence of geologic features provide an important part of the historic continuum between the historic periods and the present.

#### **Hydrology**

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the primary hydrologic features on the Site were Battle Creek (then probably unnamed) and an unnamed creek along the western Site boundary. Both creeks flowed through ravines in the uplands, then in a relatively straight alignment across the lowlands to the Mohawk River. Battle Creek likely flowed through an earthen and log causeway beneath the military road. During the commemorative period, the volume and size of the creeks may have been altered through clearing of the forests and the development of agriculture. The alignment of Battle Creek was altered at the northern end of the Site with the construction of the Erie Canal after 1819. In the 1850s during enlargement of the canal, Battle Creek was diverted toward a culvert east of the Site. Around 1938, the unnamed creek was realigned to follow the west property line of the Site along the lowlands.

In addition to the creeks, numerous wetlands existed on the Site during the battle period, notably on the lowlands but also in the ravine and in depressions on the uplands. By the commemorative period, the wetlands on the west plateau were altered for agricultural use, and one on the east plateau was partly drained through a ditch leading to the ravine.

**Existing Condition:** Since the end of the historic period, the alignment of Battle Creek at the northern end of the Site has shifted. A new branch has developed north of the former electric railway corridor that flows north into the Erie Canal through a break in the canal wall. The unnamed creek and upland wetlands are probably unchanged since the end of the historic period.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The hydrological features of the Site, consisting of Battle Creek, the unnamed creek along the western boundary of the Site, and scattered wetlands, contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Primary accounts and later histories mention the creek and marshy conditions in the ravine as an important feature of the battlefield landscape. Aside from the shift in course of the northern end of Battle Creek, partial realignment of the unnamed west creek, and drainage of some wetlands, the Site's hydrologic features retain integrity of location, materials, feeling, and association.

## Ecology

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the ecology of the Site was part of the larger terrestrial and riverine systems of the upper Mohawk Valley. By the commemorative period, the ecology of the Site had changed significantly with the removal of the forests and the dominance of agriculture. Toward the end of the historic period, forest ecological communities became reestablished as abandoned agricultural fields on the east half of the Site reverted to forest.

**Existing Condition:** Since the end of the historic period in c.1955, forest ecological systems have once again dominated the Site, except on the uplands where lawn is maintained. An ecological assessment of the Site has not been undertaken for this project.

**Analysis:** Unevaluated

While a forest ecosystem has returned to the Site, it is not known if this system is similar to that which existed during the battle period. The ecology of the Site has changed significantly over time, and the present ecology is more than likely a complex hybrid of animal and plant species and habitats that bear only broad similarity to that which existed during the battle or commemorative periods.

## Spatial Organization

### East Plateau Space

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the east plateau was an undifferentiated part of the upland forest defined only along its edges by topography. During the commemorative period, the east plateau consisted of agricultural fields partly enclosed by remnant forest growth along the steep banks to the north and east along the Battle Creek ravine and lowlands, and in two swamps. In the years after construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument in 1928 through the end of the historic period in c.1955, the east plateau became defined by lawn that extended east and south of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument to the Road. This space allowed motorists driving west on the Road to view the monument; the space may also have been defined by plans for a diagonal drive that was to be on axis with the monument. A few large individual trees were located at the southwest corner of the space, near the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead. Through the screen of roadside trees was a wide expanse of farmland stretching to the south. Many of the roadside trees were probably removed with construction of the highway in 1933-1934. By the end of the historic period, the east plateau was bordered to the north by scattered trees and the wooded slope along the lowlands, to west by partly forested slopes of the ravine, to the south by roadside trees, and to the northeast by a wooded swamp.

**Existing Condition:** Since 1955, the grove of scattered trees located north of the monument have grown into a forest, and the openings in the forest along the ravine have enclosed. The east plateau is presently characterized by open lawn measuring approximately 500 feet wide and 300

feet at its deepest, and is defined by forest on the east, north, and west sides, and by two modern houses, trees, and scrub growth along the south side of the Road.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The east plateau space contributes to the historic character of the Site. It retains integrity of location, design, feeling, and association. Although more enclosed than it was during the historic period, the east plateau retains its historic spatial character defined by open lawn extending east and south from the Unknown Soldiers' Monument to the Road.

### West Plateau Space

Historic Condition: During the battle period, the west plateau was an undifferentiated part of the upland forest defined only along its edges by topography. During the commemorative period, the west plateau was part of a larger agricultural space that stretched north across the fields that covered the gentle slope extending down to the lowlands and the Erie Canal, and south across the Road to adjoining fields. The east side was defined by forest along the steep banks of Battle Creek ravine, and a clump of trees provided some enclosure on the west side of the Battle Monument. Toward the end of the commemorative period, reforestation in the west ravine provided enclosure along the west side of the west plateau.

Internally, the west plateau was subtly divided into three rectangular subspaces that extended perpendicularly to the Road: the five-acre battlefield memorial park on the west and two similarly-sized pastures to the east. Toward the end of the historic period, these subspaces were defined only by differences in the height of grasses and by pasture fences. Upon State acquisition in 1952, the pastures were combined with the memorial park through uniform mowing and removal of fences. The State set the east pasture containing the Ringrose barns apart by planting a row of trees.

Existing Condition: The west plateau is characterized by open lawn measuring approximately 600 feet wide by 750 feet deep, and is defined by forest on the west, north, and east sides. The forest edges on the north and east sides have been maintained by mowing patterns that roughly follow the 505-foot contour. The west side of the space generally follows the west property line. The south side of the space is partly open and extends into a meadow on the Donohoe property on the south side of the Road. Internal spatial definition is provided by a row of eleven trees on the west side of the maintenance garage that marks a former boundary between pastures.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The west plateau space does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site due to its loss of integrity. Reforestation on the lowlands north of the Battle Monument has resulted in the loss of the historic open space that defined the spatial character of the west plateau throughout the commemorative period.

### Battle Creek Ravine Space

Historic Condition: During the battle period, the Battle Creek ravine, measuring about 150 feet wide and 300 feet long, was a forested space defined by a steep slope to the east, a more gentle slope to the west, and the causeway of the military road to the south. There was likely no open space except along the military road. The ravine was the scene of the opening fighting in the Battle of Oriskany. By the commemorative period, the forests in the ravine had been cleared except along portions of the steep east slope; the space opened toward uplands to the west and the lowlands to the north. The southern edge of the space became more defined as the causeway was built higher, first around 1805 or 1848 for the construction of the turnpike or plank road, and then in 1934 with construction of the existing highway. The ravine was the location of commemorative events in 1844 and 1877, among others. By the early 1950s, there was successional growth in the ravine characterized by young trees, shrubs, and grasses.



**Existing Condition:** Following the historic period, the ravine was mown in between scattered deciduous trees, primarily American elm. By the late 1970s, mowing ceased, the older elms were removed, and forest and wetland vegetation was allowed to develop, providing enclosure on the north and west sides. The wetlands of the ravine are characterized by species such as cattail, fern, willow, dogwood, young elm, and milkweed.

**Analysis:** Existing, contributing

The Battle Creek ravine space contributes to the historic significance of the Site. It was most likely a significant space in the opening fighting in the Battle of Oriskany, and retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Although the existing amount of enclosure differs from that present during the battle and commemorative periods, the overall spatial character of the ravine as a space distinct from the adjoining uplands remains evident.

**Parkhurst Cemetery** [See "Landscape Context"]

### **Battlefield Memorial Park**

**Historic Condition:** With creation of a memorial park by the Oneida Historical Society in 1880, a five-acre portion of the Ringrose farm was set apart from the agricultural use of the surrounding land. The dimensions of this parcel were likely established according to the dimensions of the pastures in the Ringrose farm, which paralleled property lines first established through subdivision of the Oriskany Patent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This space was distinct from the surrounding farm only by pasture fences and by the topography along its west side, which dropped off sharply into the west ravine. Over the next few decades, reforestation in the adjoining ravine began to provide a distinct edge to the space to the west of the Battle Monument. In 1927, the memorial park was purchased by the State, but continued to be mostly open on all sides except the west. Upon State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the subtle spatial distinction between the memorial park and the adjoining pasture to the north and east was lost when the State extended the lawn of the park and removed pasture fences.

**Existing Condition:** Since the historic period, the former limits of the battlefield memorial park have remained largely obscured, except along the west side which remains part of the Site's current boundary. A Cyclone fence also marks the former west boundary of the memorial park. Aside from a subtle linear depression along the former east property line of the park, there is no trace of this space.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The five-acre battlefield memorial park was never a strongly defined space within the larger agricultural landscape. It was subtly defined by fences and contrast of lawn with pasture during the historic period. This spatial definition largely disappeared soon after State acquisition of the Ringrose farm at the end of the historic period following removal of pasture fences and uniform mowing across the west plateau.

**The Road** [See "Landscape Context"]

**Electric Railway (Niagara-Mohawk) Corridor** [See "Landscape Context"]

### **Land Use**

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the Site was the homeland of the Oneida Indians, who likely used the region as their hunting and fishing grounds, and was the scene of military action. The military road ran alongside or through the Site. By the commemorative period, the Site was used for agriculture by the Parkhurst-heirs and Ringrose families. In 1877, sustained commemorative use of the Site began with the first parcel dedicated for that use in 1880 by the

Oneida Historical Society. By 1925, agriculture had ceased on the east half of the Site and was replaced by commemorative uses on the uplands through acquisition of the property by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association. By the end of the commemorative period in c.1955, agriculture had also ceased on the west half; the entire Site came under State ownership at this time and was dedicated for commemorative uses.

**Existing Condition:** The Site is presently maintained as a State Historic Site and is used primarily for commemorative purposes, although limited non-commemorative recreational activities such as picnicking, an art show, and a fire engine festival have been introduced.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The existing primary commemorative use contributes to the historic significance of the Site. Although the character of commemoration has changed since the historic period, the overall intent of commemoration remains the same. A portion of the Site had been continually used for commemorative purposes since 1877. Existing recreational uses, such as limited picnicking, non-commemorative festivals are, however, not compatible with the historic commemorative use of the Site.

### **Cultural Traditions**

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, Anglo-American and Oneida Indian military cultural traditions influenced the landscape of the Site. The only permanent change in the landscape associated with these cultural traditions was the military road. During this time, the landscape remained the ancestral homeland of the Oneida Indians and was likely still used as part of their hunting and fishing territory. By the commemorative period, the landscape of the Site had been reshaped by Anglo-American cultural traditions associated with agriculture and transportation. During this period, the landscape of the Site became dominated by the Anglo-American tradition of commemoration. German-American cultural traditions were also evident at the Site, but primarily only as a use during commemorative events, such as the 1877 centennial.

**Existing Condition:** The landscape of the Site continues to largely reflect the Anglo-American cultural tradition of commemoration that is focused on monuments, historic preservation, and interpretation. Since the 1980s, the cultural traditions of the Oneida Indians have become evident in the landscape, notably through planting of a white pine, the Oneida Tree of Peace, east of the Battle Monument in 1983. Oneida cultural traditions are also present as a use of the landscape during certain commemorative events.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Unevaluated

The existing cultural traditions associated with the Site contribute to its historic significance. The Site continues to exhibit the historic influence of Anglo-American cultural traditions associated with commemoration. This tradition is overlaid on an earlier tradition associated with Anglo-American agriculture.

Further information is needed to evaluate Oneida Indian cultural traditions at the Site and to define the ethnographic significance of the Site. The Site is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as a Traditional Cultural Property [see Statement of Significance, pages 260-261]. The single extant landscape feature associated with Oneida and Haudenosaunee cultural traditions is the white pine, a symbol of peace, that was planted on the west plateau in 1983. This feature, however, is a modern planting that does not contribute to the significance of the Site based on the military and commemorative historic contexts. The entire Site, however, as a place with its natural landforms, forests, and other natural systems, may be significant in the context of Oneida and Haudenosaunee cultural traditions. As the location of the Battle of Oriskany where the Great Peace was first broken, the Site holds ethnographic significance to the Haudenosaunee people.

## Cluster Arrangement

Not applicable.

## Circulation

**The Road** [See "Landscape Context"]

### **Farm Road Trace Across Battle Creek (Interpreted Military Road Trace)**

Historic Condition: The first record of this farm road was made in 1848 by Benjamin Lossing, who illustrated a series of logs across Battle Creek in the bed of the ravine in his engraving of the Site. At the time, the feature was used as a farm road and crossing. Lossing described the logs as the remains of the military road causeway, and subsequent histories into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century all likewise identified the remains. The last record of this feature was made prior to 1907 by Max Reid, who photographed the remains of what he called the "Log Road." Except for topographic traces, the remains of the farm road apparently disappeared by the end of the historic period.

Existing Condition: The logs of the farm road no longer exist, but several features are interpreted as being traces of the military road. These traces include a depression or "saddle" at the top of the east side of the ravine, which corresponds with the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, together with the gentle slope up the west side of the ravine on which the farm road may have run. The general area around these features, rather than the features themselves, are presently interpreted to the public as indicating the location of the military road.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The farm road trace across Battle Creek contributes to the historic significance of the Site. The trace retains integrity of location and association. While research for this report strongly suggests that the alignment of the military road followed the existing highway and not the alignment of the farm road, the site of the farm road and remaining traces are significant for illustrating the historically interpreted location of the military road. Since at least the 1840s, the military road has been interpreted as a winding, narrow path that crossed the ravine north of the existing highway. It was this interpretation that persisted throughout the historic period.

**Erie Canal** (See "Landscape Context")

### **Road Trace on East Slope of Battle Creek Ravine**

Historic Condition: The origin of the road on the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine is not certain, but it was likely used to gain access to the ravine during the enormous centennial celebration in 1877. The road may also have served as a farm road (separate or in addition to the interpreted military road trace) for the Parkhurst-heir farm, given the steep slope of the east side of the ravine. The road last functioned prior to 1934 when the causeway was raised with reconstruction of the Road. The rise in the elevation of the causeway removed access to the road from the Road (existing highway), and it ceased to be used after this time.

Existing Condition: This road remains as a distinct 10-foot wide trace between the Road and the gravel ravine path, with obvious cut and fill. A less distinct trace continues north of the gravel ravine path.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The road trace on the east slope of Battle Creek ravine contributes to the historic significance of the Site as part of the commemorative landscape. It is likely the only trace of the enormous commemorative event that took place in the ravine during the centennial celebration in 1877.

Through its alignment and surface characteristics, the trace retains integrity of location, feeling, and association sufficient to convey its historic character and use.

### **Battle Monument Drive**

Historic Condition: The Battle Monument drive likely existed in part by 1885 when the Battle Monument gateway was constructed. At this time and into the 1920s, the drive was unimproved and consisted of two packed soil tracks on a partial 'S' alignment that probably extended mid-way to the Battle Monument. In 1928, the year after State acquisition, the drive was improved to an eight-foot width and was paved in crushed stone. The drive was extended in a loop around the Battle Monument to allow cars to reverse direction. In 1929, the drive was widened to 14 feet, except at the entrance due to the spacing of the gateposts.

Existing Condition: Between 1958 and 1963, a parking area was constructed off the west side of the drive. In 1963 the drive was altered in three ways: at the entrance, the drive was widened, which required moving the gateposts to 20 feet apart; the loop around the Battle Monument was removed; and the remaining portion of the drive was reduced to 11 feet in width and paved in asphalt. Instead of the loop, cars reversed direction in the parking lot.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The Battle Monument Drive contributes to the historic significance of the Site. It was major feature of the commemorative-period landscape, particularly during State ownership, and retains substantial integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Alterations that detract from the drive's historic character include removal of the loop around the Battle Monument, asphalt paving, and addition of the parking area along its west side.

### **Electric Railway (See "Landscape Context")**

### **Unknown Soldiers' Monument Drive**

Historic Condition: The Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive was constructed as temporary access to the monument around 1928. It measured 200 feet long and was built at an alignment of 50 degrees south of the axis of the monument. During the historic period, the drive was likely unpaved and did not extend up to the monument. Plans for a grander drive on axis with the monument were drawn up in 1928, but were never implemented.

Existing Condition: The Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive was probably paved along with the Battle Monument drive in 1963. The drive extends up to the monument for an overall length of 310 feet and a width of 14 feet. In front of the monument, the drive broadens into an area measuring approximately 25 feet long by 10 feet deep. This section is used for parking, as is the lawn adjacent to the drive.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive contributes to the historic significance of the Site, although it was intended as a minor, temporary feature of the landscape. The drive retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association to the historic period. Alterations that detract from the drive's historic character include the broad area in front of the monument and the asphalt paving.

### **Battle Monument Parking Area**

Historic Condition: The parking area off the west side of the Battle Monument drive did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: In 1958, a parking area was constructed off the west side of the Battle Monument drive south of the loop, and in 1961, this area was doubled in size. No information has

been found on how the area was surfaced during this time. In 1963, the parking area was paved in asphalt and asphalt curbs were installed. There is no distinction between the drive and the parking area.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The parking area did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It detracts from the historic character of the Site because of its large scale and materials, and because it compromises the historic design of the Battle Monument drive.

### **Maintenance Drive**

Historic Condition: The maintenance drive did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: The maintenance drive was first built as an unpaved 50-foot long drive at some point after the State acquired the Ringrose property and after it demolished the large Ringrose barn. A concrete pad connected this drive with the horse barn. During or after construction of the maintenance garage in 1970, the existing asphalt drive was built. This drive is 15 feet wide and 135 feet long; in front of and north of the maintenance garage, the drive widens to 32 feet. The drive contains no curbs and has an irregular edge along its east side.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The current maintenance drive did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Although located in an area that was historically utilitarian, the drive detracts from the historic character of the Site due to its large scale and materials.

### **Temporary Construction Drive**

Historic Condition: The temporary construction drive to the visitor center did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: When the rest house was converted into a visitor center in 1963, a temporary access road was built so construction machinery could avoid the steep slope around the Battle Monument. This road began at the Battle Monument drive about 300 feet north of the Road, continued north on the east side of the Battle Monument, and then looped to the west around the base of the slope to the visitor center. This road was removed by 1965, and there is presently no visible trace of it.

Analysis: Not existing

This drive was not built during the historic period. Its placement and materials detracted from the historic character of the Site for the short period that it existed.

### **Walks, Paths, and Trails**

#### *Walk to Visitor Center (Rest House)*

Historic Condition: The walk to the visitor center did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: Prior to creation of the visitor center between 1962-1963, there was no defined pedestrian circulation connecting the loop drive around the Battle Monument with the rest house. Visitors could apparently walk down the grassy slope from the Battle Monument at any point. When the State removed the loop drive around the Battle Monument and rebuilt the rest house into a visitor center between 1962 and 1963, a 190-foot long walk was built along a straight alignment between the parking area and the visitor center. This walk was initially paved in stone dust and included a set of stone steps down the slope to the visitor center. At some point, the walk

was paved in asphalt and between 1985 and 1986, the stairs were rebuilt in wood. In 1998, the portion of the walk between the visitor center and the stairs was repaved in 3-foot wide bluestone slabs.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The walk to the visitor center did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It detracts from the historic character of the Site due to its alignment and materials that contrast with the alignment and materials of the loop drive around the Battle Monument that it replaced. The walk does, however, provide a necessary visitor service.

*Gravel Ravine Path*

Historic Condition: The gravel path in the Battle Creek ravine did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: Defined pedestrian access into the ravine likely existed by 1965 when an historical marker was installed on the west side of Battle Creek. It may have also been at this time that two foot bridges were constructed across Battle Creek at about 110 and 200 feet north of the base of the causeway. No documentation has been found on whether there were improved paths at this time in the ravine, although some type of improvement was probably necessary given the marshy conditions. In 1976, a five-foot wide gravel path was constructed across the ravine connecting the east and west plateaus. It was built partly on fill, crossed Battle Creek on a wooden footbridge at the location of the earlier south footbridge, and ascended the steep east slope of the ravine on a switchback.

Analysis: Existing, non-contributing

The gravel ravine path did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It does not detract from the historic character of the Site due to its small scale and materials that are compatible with the surrounding natural environment.

*Bluestone Walk around Battle Monument*

Historic Condition: The bluestone walk around the Battle Monument did not exist during the historic period. The space between the fence and the monument was kept as lawn or possibly a low ground cover during the historic period.

Existing Condition: A two-foot wide bluestone walk was built around the perimeter of the Battle Monument in 1998. This was installed to facilitate access and the placement of commemorative wreaths and other objects inside the fence.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The bluestone walk around the Battle Monument did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. The walk does not detract from the historic character of the monument due to its small scale and compatible materials.

*Other Paths & Trails*

Historic Condition: No documentation has been found on paths or trails that existed on the Site during the battle period. The Iroquois trail ran across the uplands above the Mohawk River and therefore potentially went through the Site. During the commemorative period, there were likely a variety of paths and trails across the Site. Visitors to the Site during the centennial celebration arrived via the Erie Canal and railroad. To reach the uplands and ravine where the celebrations were held, visitors followed one or more rough trails across private farmland. These trails were likely used only during major events at the Site until automobiles became the dominant form of transportation during the later commemorative period. There may have been more defined trails

or paths leading to the Ringrose flagstaff on the west side of Battle Creek ravine, and to the east plateau flagstaff at the northwest corner of the uplands east of the ravine.

**Existing Condition:** Several actively used trails wind through the forests, such as along Battle Creek and along the western edge of the uplands on the east side of the ravine. Some of these are presently used by Site staff to access the forest.

**Analysis:** Unevaluated

The location and origin of the existing paths and trails through the forest have not been documented for this report.

## **Topography**

### **Natural Topography**

**Historic Condition:** The natural topography of the Site [similar in definition to the Site's geology, see page 279] was characterized by uplands, lowlands (Mohawk River floodplain), and the Battle Creek ravine. The uplands east of the ravine were characterized by steep slopes and two major depressions. The uplands west of the ravine were characterized by gentler slopes and an undulating surface. There were only minor changes to the natural topography of the Site during the historic period [see following discussion, "Constructed Topography"]

**Existing Condition:** The natural topography of the Site remains largely unchanged since the historic period.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The natural topography of the Site contributes to the historic significance of the Site, and was a characteristic feature of the landscape during both the battle and commemorative periods. The natural topography retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

### **Constructed Topography**

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the only man-made change to the topography occurred adjacent to the Site with the construction of the military road, which required filling and construction of a causeway across the ravine. During the commemorative period, topographic changes were largely limited to fill and grading around the Battle Monument and drive, the rest house (visitor center) and the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. Minor changes were also made for agricultural use, as evidenced by grading for barns, leveling through cultivation, and furrows from cultivation or fence lines. A drainage ditch was likely constructed at some point during the historic period between the ravine and the adjoining swamp on the east plateau. In late 1953, the top of the west side of Battle Creek ravine was graded, probably during demolition of the large Ringrose barn.

**Existing Condition:** Between 1958 and 1963, an area west of the Battle Monument drive was graded for parking. Minor grading was also likely undertaken for construction of new septic systems at the visitor center and maintenance garage around 1981.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The man-made topographic features that date to the historic period contribute to the historic significance of the Site. These features include the grading around the Battle Monument and drive, the Unknown Soldiers Monument, and other minor topographic features related to agricultural use of the Site such as the furrows in the west plateau. These features retain a high level of historic integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association, as there is no record of alteration since this historic period. The leveling undertaken in 1953 along the top of the

west side of the ravine did not result in a conspicuous topographic feature and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. The grading undertaken after the historic period at the Battle Monument parking area and other places do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site.

## Vegetation

### Forest

Historic Condition: Based on available documentation, the entire Site was forested during the battle period except for a clearing adjoining the military road and possible breaks in the forest canopy due to felled (windthrown) trees. This old-growth forest was likely characterized by an enclosed overhead plane, open understory, and large-scale individual trees. Surveys made in 1789 and 1790 recorded beech, maple, yellow birch, hemlock and basswood in the upland forest near the Site. The lowland forest contained elm, beech, yellow birch, basswood, maple, hemlock, cedar, and black ash. By the commemorative period, most of the forest had been cleared, except along steep, non-arable areas such as the east slope of the Battle Creek ravine and in the west ravine. The trees in these remnant forest patches were probably harvested at times, so that the forest conditions on the Site fluctuated. Toward the end of the commemorative period, the forests grew back on much of the Site on the east side of Battle Creek, except along portions of the uplands. The portion of the Site west of Battle Creek remained mostly open farmland through the end of the historic period.

Existing Condition: Since the end of the historic period, the lowlands west of Battle Creek have reforested. This forest is less than 25 years old and is characterized by a partially open overhead plane and sections of dense underbrush. Young successional species such as poplar, birch, black cherry, apple, and thickets of red dogwood, honeysuckle, raspberry, grape, and sumac are found in this forest. The forest east of Battle Creek is generally over 70 years old and is characterized by an enclosed overhead plane and a generally open understory. Here are found more mature species such as hemlock, sugar maple, red maple, and beech. Remnant field trees, primarily sugar maple, remain scattered throughout the forest.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The forest east of Battle Creek, which existed by the late commemorative period, contributes to the historic significance of the Site. Although it has matured since the historic period, it retains a generally high level of historic integrity. In its species composition and general spatial character, it also recalls the forest that existed during the battle period.

The forest west of Battle Creek has developed largely since the 1970s on abandoned Ringrose farmland, and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Due to its spatial characteristics and species composition, this forest is unlike the forest that existed during the battle period.

### Herkimer Tree

Historic Condition: In 1848, Benjamin Lossing recorded the first Site-specific reference to a beech tree under which General Herkimer purportedly sat and directed the battle. In his sketch of the Site, Lossing indicated the former location of the beech in a depression to the north of the Kent (later Ringrose) barn on the west plateau. In 1877, David Lanfear repeated this story, but also added that he remembered the tree had been cut down prior to his ownership of the adjacent farm on the east side of the ravine (pre-1843). Lanfear also remembered that this tree was marked with the word "Herkimer." At this time, a flagstaff marked the purported location of the Herkimer beech on the Ringrose farm. By 1915, a cherry tree had been planted near the spot of the beech tree; no information has been found on when the cherry was planted or removed. At some point soon after the State acquired the Ringrose farm in 1952, a row of sugar maples was planted through or near the purported location of the beech.



**Existing Condition:** Around 1961, the Herkimer's march monument was reset to the purported location of the beech tree described by Lossing. The monument was set on the south side of a sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), which was one in a row extending back from the west side of the horse barn along a former pasture line. This row of sugar maples was likely planted by the State in the 1950s to screen the maintenance area. The sugar maple adjacent to the monument presently measures 30 inches diameter breast height (dbh).

**Analysis:** Not existing

The Herkimer beech tree featured prominently in many histories of the Site. There is, however, no conclusive documentation that General Herkimer sat under a beech tree while directing the battle. The Herkimer's march monument is in the general area of the Herkimer beech tree illustrated by Lossing in 1848 and described by Lanfear in 1877. The existing sugar maple was probably planted in the 1950s prior to the relocation of the Herkimer's march monument as part of a row and not as a replacement for the Herkimer beech tree. Given that it did not exist during the commemorative period, the absence of the Herkimer beech does not diminish the Site's historic character.

### Pastures & Cultivated Fields

**Historic Condition:** Pastures and cultivated fields dominated the landscape beginning with settlement of the Site by the Parkhurst family, possibly as early as 1795, but more likely after 1800. Aside from orchards located on the lowlands east of Battle Creek and possibly on portions of the uplands west of Battle Creek, most of the Site was pasture at the beginning of the commemorative period, except for steep, non-arable areas in the ravines. By 1925, most of the pasture had disappeared from the portion of the Site east of Battle Creek on the former Parkhurst-heir farm. On the west half of the Site within the Ringrose farm, the pastures likely all became fallow by the late 1940s. Upon State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the upland pastures of the Ringrose farm were converted to mown lawn, and the lowland pasture was left to natural succession. No documentation has been found on the type of vegetation in the pastures during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** Since the end of the historic period, natural succession was allowed to occur in the lowland pasture west of Battle Creek, and the upland pastures were maintained as lawn. There are presently no pastures on the Site.

**Analysis:** Not existing

Although there may be remnant pasture grasses and herbaceous perennials in the lawn of the west plateau, the pasture present during the historic period, as vegetation feature, is not intact. Since the pastures, as a vegetation feature, disappeared by the very end of the historic period, their loss does not diminish the historic character of the Site.

### Hedgerows

**Historic Condition:** Hedgerows developed between the upland pastures of the Ringrose farm on the west plateau between the 1840s and the 1870s, likely along fence lines. The species composition of these hedgerows is not known. The hedgerows were cleared when post and wire pasture fences were installed by 1891.

**Existing Condition:** There are no hedgerows on the Site.

**Analysis:** Not existing.

The hedgerows on the upland pastures of the Ringrose farm disappeared during the historic period, and their loss therefore does not diminish the historic integrity of the Site. They were part of the Site's agricultural context during the early commemorative period.

## Apple Orchards

Historic Condition: Apple orchards existed by the 1870s on the lowlands and uplands of the Parkhurst-heir farm on the east side of Battle Creek. By the 1880s, apple trees also existed on the uplands of the Ringrose farm in the vicinity of the Battle Monument, but it is not known if they were remnants of an orchard. No information has been found on what types of apple trees were in the orchards. Apple orchards disappeared from the Site by 1930.

Existing Condition: There are no apple orchards on the Site. Many volunteer apple trees exist on the Site, primarily in the edges of the forest on the west plateau, lowlands, and Battle Creek ravine.

Analysis: Not existing

Apple orchards disappeared during the historic period, and their loss therefore does not diminish the historic integrity of the Site. They were part of the agricultural context of the Site during the early commemorative period.

## Ravine Elm

Historic Condition: In 1848, Benjamin Lossing illustrated a young tree, probably an American elm (*Ulmus americana*) at the top of the west side of the Battle Creek Ravine to the east of the Kent (later Ringrose) barn. In 1877, the Rome *Sentinel* mentioned in its description of the battlefield a large elm located at this same location. This elm was subsequently photographed in 1900 and 1931 photographs.

Existing Condition: The large American elm on the Ringrose Farm was illustrated in 1949 and 1965 photographs. It disappeared at some point after 1965, probably as a result of Dutch elm disease, which was spreading through the region around this time.

Analysis: Not existing

The large elm on west side of the ravine to the northeast of the Ringrose barns was probably the most prominent single tree on the Site during the commemorative period. Since it likely existed throughout the commemorative period, its loss diminishes the historic character of the Site.

## Lawn

Historic Condition: Upon completion of the Battle Monument in 1884, a rough lawn or meadow was probably maintained around the monument. At some point prior to State acquisition in 1927, and possibly between 1900 and 1912 as part of improvements that included installation of the fence around the Battle Monument, the lawn around the Battle Monument may have been improved. The rest of the memorial park was probably maintained as a meadow until the State acquired the property in 1927, at which time the entire five acres probably became regularly mown. In 1928, the State reseeded the lawn across the memorial park and bought a lawn mower. Another lawn was established around this time on the east plateau as part of the construction of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. This lawn extended from the monument east and south toward the Road. At some point after State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the upland pastures between the Battle Monument and the ravine became regularly mown and maintained as a lawn.

Existing Condition: Since the historic period, lawn has been maintained on the east and west plateaus. On the west plateau, the edges of the lawn are defined by the Road, the west property line, and roughly the 505-foot contour line extending on the north and east sides. On the east plateau, the edges of the lawn are defined by the east side of the ravine, a line running at a diagonal on axis with the Unknown Soldiers' Monument on the north, by the east property line, and by the Road. A section of lawn extends back into the forest to the Parkhurst Cemetery along the east property line. The lawns appear to be in good condition.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

Lawn contributes to the historic significance of the Site and was a distinctive landscape feature of the commemorative period. The existing lawn retains substantial integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association. On the east plateau and within the memorial park, lawn existed for much of the commemorative period, while the lawn on the former Ringrose pastures on the remainder of the west plateau was likely introduced at the very end of the commemorative period.<sup>48</sup>

### Roadside Trees

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, the Road was lined by the edge of the forest, while during the commemorative period, the Road was lined by a variety of individual trees. In 1933, the Road east of the Battle Creek ravine was documented as being lined on both sides by maples, elms, ash, and cherry. Many of these trees were removed for construction of the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway in 1933/1934. No replacement roadside trees were apparently planted. At this time, there was only one tree along the Road west of the ravine through the Ringrose farm.

**Existing Condition:** Two sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) remain from the historic period along the Road east of Battle Creek ravine. The Roadside tree along the Ringrose farm was removed at some point and the Road is now lined by a rows Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*). Four of these trees were planted around 1984 to either side of the Battle Monument drive. These trees may be within the State-owned highway right-of-way.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The two roadside sugar maples on the east plateau contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they existed during the historic period. The row of Norway maples on the west plateau did not exist during the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Due to the open spatial character of the west plateau during the historic period, this row detracts from the historic character of the Site.

### Pasture-Line Trees

**Historic Condition:** There were likely no trees along the pasture line that extended perpendicularly to the Road on the west side of the Ringrose barns prior to State acquisition of the property. At some point after the State acquired the Ringrose farm and probably in the mid 1950s, a row of trees was planted along the former pasture line that extended along the west side of the horse barn on the west plateau. These trees were probably planted to screen the barn from the Battle Monument.

**Existing Condition:** The pasture-line trees presently consists of six large sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) between the Herkimer's march monument and the Road, and five large black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) from the monument north. Several of the sugar maples are exhibiting significant die-back in the upper canopies, and one black cherry has advanced trunk rot.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The pasture-line trees contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They were likely planted at the very end of the historic period, and their placement illustrates the change in use of the property from agricultural to commemorative as the State likely intended to hide the agricultural context of the Site (Ringrose barns). The pasture-line trees as a feature retain integrity of location, design, setting, material, and association.

---

<sup>48</sup> While these lawns as vegetation feature fall within the historic period, the spatial character that developed due to reforestation around the west plateau lawn occurred after the historic period.

### East Plateau Trees

**Historic Condition:** There were a variety of individual trees across the east plateau during the historic period. These were likely concentrated during the early commemorative period around the Parkhurst-heir farmstead. During the later commemorative period during ownership by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, the area north of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument was characterized by numerous individual trees that formed a large grove. The black cherry off the southwest corner of the monument was likely planted at the very end of the historic period in the mid-1950s along with similar black cherry on the west plateau.

**Existing Condition:** There are presently four individual trees on the east plateau, aside from the two roadside trees. These include a black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) located off the southwest corner of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, a large sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) to the southwest of the monument near the former location of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, and a red (*Acer rubrum*) and sugar maple adjoining the woods just west of the lawn that extends back to the Parkhurst Cemetery.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing.

The four individual trees on the east plateau contribute to the historic significance of the Site since they appear to have existed during the historic period. They retain integrity of location, materials, and association. The setting has changed, since these trees were once several of many specimens across the east plateau during the historic period. The large sugar maple may be a remnant of the Parkhurst-heir farmstead, which was part of the agricultural context of the Site during the commemorative period.

### Trees Along Northern Edge of West Plateau

**Historic Condition:** Trees may have been first planted along the northern edge of the west plateau by the State at the very end of the historic period in the mid-1950s along with the pasture-line trees.

**Existing Condition:** Aside from the white pine, Oneida tree of peace, there are four large trees that line the northern edge of the west plateau to the east-north-east of the Battle Monument. These are three black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), similar to the pasture-line of trees and planted at the end of the historic period around c.1955, and one multi-trunk red maple (*Acer rubrum*), probably 25 years old.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The three black cherry along the north edge of the west plateau contribute to the historic significance of the Site, since they were likely planted at the very end of the historic period. They retain integrity to the historic period, although they were likely far small in size. Given their limited number and placement, their present size does not detract from the open spatial character and views that existed on the west plateau during the historic period. The red maple appears to have been planted after the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site.

### Battle Monument Sugar Maples

**Historic Condition:** The three sugar maples around the Battle Monument did not exist during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** Around 1961, three sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) were planted along the north and northeast side of the Battle Monument. These were likely planted just after the loop drive around the Battle Monument was removed. They presently measure between 18 and 26 inches diameter breast height.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The Battle Monument sugar maples were planted after the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. As a group, they detract from the open spatial character and views from the Battle Monument that were significant landscape features during the commemorative period.

### White Pine, Oneida Tree of Peace

Historic Condition: The white pine (*Pinus strobus*), Oneida tree of peace, did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: The white pine located on the 515-foot contour knoll located east of the Battle Monument was planted in August 1983 by the Oneida Indian Nation as a symbol of honor to their ancestors who fought in the battle. There are scattered naturally-occurring white pine in the Site's forest.

Analysis: Existing, Unevaluated

The white pine, Oneida tree of peace, did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic character of the Site within the historic contexts of military history and commemoration. This tree, however, relates to the significant Oneida and larger Haudenosaunee contribution in the Battle of Oriskany. As a species, white pine has ethnographic significance as an Oneida and Haudenosaunee cultural symbol of peace. It symbolizes the Great Peace, *Kayenarhekowa*, which bound together the League and which was first broken at the Battle of Oriskany.

The Site is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as a Traditional Cultural Property [see Statement of Significance]. The white pine, Oneida tree of peace, may contribute to the historic significance of the Site as a Traditional Cultural Property because it relates to the Oneida and larger Haudenosaunee beliefs about their cultural history. Further evaluation is needed to define the ethnographic significance of the Site in order to evaluate this white pine, given that it is a modern planting that is not a replanting of an historic tree.

### Austrian Pine

Historic Condition: There is no record of Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) existing on the Site during the historic period.

Existing Condition: A group of three Austrian pines exists on the west slope of the ravine to the east of the maintenance garage. These were likely planted during the 1970s, perhaps in part to screen the maintenance garage from the ravine or as a replacement for the ravine elm, which may have died around this time. There are several volunteer Austrian pines in the ravine.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The Austrian pines on the west slope of the ravine did not exist during the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They detract from the historic character of the Site because they are a non-native species that reflect planting preferences common in State parks during the 1960s and 1970s.

### Other Plantings

#### *Battle Monument Groundcover*

Historic Condition: During the historic period, there was low groundcover (probably grass) inside the battle monument fence. No documentation has been found on the exact type of groundcover.

**Existing Condition:** In 1998, periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) was planted inside the Battle Monument fence when the walk was installed around the monument.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The periwinkle inside the Battle Monument fence was planted after the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. As a low groundcover, however, this periwinkle does not detract from the historic setting of the Battle Monument.

#### *Daylilies*

**Historic Condition:** No documentation has been found for the existence of daylilies (*Hemerocallis sp.*) on the Site during the historic period. Daylilies were, however, a popular rural planting during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Existing Condition:** In 1999/2000, daylilies were planted at the base of the State Education Sign. Two clumps of established daylilies exist near the Road on the east plateau.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing / Unevaluated

The daylilies planted beneath the State Education Sign are a recent introduction and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Insufficient information has been found to evaluate the established clumps of daylilies on the east plateau.

#### *Naturalized Periwinkle*

**Historic Condition:** No documentation has been found for the existence of naturalized periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) on the Site during the historic period. Periwinkle was, however, a popular planting in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Existing Condition:** In 1999/2000, naturalized periwinkle exists along the east bank of Battle Creek ravine, north of the gravel ravine path. Naturalized periwinkle also exists throughout the Parkhurst Cemetery.

**Analysis:** Existing, Unevaluated

Insufficient information has been found to evaluate the naturalized periwinkle in the Battle Creek ravine. The periwinkle in the Parkhurst Cemetery probably dates to the historic period, since the cemetery received its last burial in 1917. The periwinkle in the ravine may be an historic planting made around the same time by the Parkhurst heirs or the Mohawk Valley Historic Association.

#### *Plantain Lilies*

**Historic Condition:** Based on available documentation, there were no plantain lilies (*Hosta sp.*) on the Site during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** In 2000, variegated plantain lilies were planted around the perimeter of the Herkimer trail monument, the D.A.R. gateposts, and the State Education Sign.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The existing plantain lilies are modern plantings and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. These plantings detract from the historic character of the Site because they alter the historic relationship of the Herkimer trail monument and the D.A.R. gateposts to the ground plane.

## **Buildings and Structures**

### **Ringrose Farmstead (Horse Barn)**

**Historic Condition:** A barn may have first been built on the west plateau around 1830 when the property was subdivided from the larger Parkhurst farm by Alexander Kent. It was not until 1848, when Benson Lossing sketched a gabled barn at the top of the west side of Battle Creek ravine, that this structure was first documented. By 1877 during ownership of William Ringrose, the barn had probably been doubled in length. At this time, the associated farmhouse was located across from the barn on the south side of the Road. This was the old Utica and Rome Plank Road tollgate house, which had been relocated by Kent in the late 1850s. In 1885, William Ringrose replaced the tollgate house with a new Italianate-style farmhouse. By 1900, Ringrose had built a second gabled barn to the rear (north) of the large barn for his dairy. A third, smaller barn (present horse barn) was added on the south side of the large barn prior to 1915. All three barns likely ceased to be in agricultural use by the late 1940s. By 1952, the barn on the north side of the large barn had blown down. The State demolished the large barn after it acquired the Ringrose farm in 1952. This likely occurred in late 1953.

**Existing Condition:** The horse barn remains standing and was repaired in the summer of 2000. The two doorways on the east front, which were likely altered after the historic period, are being redesigned in a manner that is more compatible with the overall details of the building. A one-story maintenance garage was constructed on the north side of the horse barn in 1970. The Ringrose farmhouse also remains, but is on the Donohoe property outside the boundaries of the Site. The farmhouse contains several outbuildings which were not evaluated for this report.

**Analysis:** Existing (horse barn), Contributing <sup>49</sup>

The Ringrose farmstead contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it conveys the historic agricultural context that was significant in the development of the commemorative landscape. Although the Ringrose farmstead has lost two major components (two barns), it retains sufficient integrity to illustrate its historic character and use. The horse barn retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The two barns were likely removed at the very end of the commemorative period, and their loss therefore does not diminish the historic character of the landscape. The farmhouse [located off Site and discussed under Donohoe property, page 277] remains largely intact aside from alterations to the windows.

### **Parkhurst-Heir Farmstead**

**Historic Condition:** The Parkhurst-heir farmstead was likely first built following subdivision of the larger Parkhurst farm in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; this may have occurred when Susannah Parkhurst Lanfear acquired title to the property in 1843. By 1877, the farmstead consisted of a house and a barn at the top of the east side of Battle Creek ravine. A second barn was added prior to 1907. Both barns had vertical-board siding and gable roofs with the ridges parallel to the Road. These buildings existed at the time the Mohawk Valley Historic Association acquired the farm in 1925. By 1927, the Association had likely removed the buildings as it developed the Unknown Soldiers' Monument to the rear of the farmstead.

**Existing Condition:** The Parkhurst-heir farmstead does not exist. Foundations for one of the buildings were uncovered during archeological investigations undertaken in 1977.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The Parkhurst-heir farmstead no longer exists. There is no trace of the farmstead aside from archeological remains [see discussion of archeology sites, page 311]. The Parkhurst-heir farmstead was part of the agricultural context of the Site during the early commemorative period.

---

<sup>49</sup> The horse barn is presently identified as a non-contributing resource per a 1993 evaluation of the Site. Central Region OPRHP memorandum, Larry Gobrecht to Jim Gold and John Lovell, 1 July 1993, BHS MSS.

Since the farmstead was removed for the addition of the Unknown Soldiers Monument and development of the east plateau into a commemorative park during the historic period, its loss does not detract from the historic character of the Site.

### House of Mrs. Gibson

**Historic Condition:** A house belonging to a Mrs. Gibson (a Parkhurst heir) was documented on the 1874 Beers atlas of Oneida County. This map located the house on the east plateau near the eastern edge of the Site. The house was not documented on 1852 and 1858 maps of the region, nor on 1877 and 1915 maps of the Site.

**Existing Condition:** The house of Mrs. Gibson does not exist on the Site.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The house of Mrs. Gibson was likely mistakenly documented as being on the Site on the 1874 Beers atlas.

### Battle Monument

**Historic Condition:** Construction of the Battle Monument began in 1883 under the direction of the Oneida Historical Society. The monument was an 84-foot high granite and limestone obelisk designed by the National Fine Art Foundry of New York City and the Mount Waldo Granite Works of Maine. Two bronze bas-relief tablets were designed by William Rudolf O'Donovan, one tablet carried an inscription written by Professor Edward North of Hamilton College, and a fourth tablet carried a roster of known veterans. The monument was built on high ground at the north edge of the west plateau, overlooking the Mohawk Valley, the Erie Canal, and the New York Central Railroad within the five-acre memorial park purchased by the Oneida Historical Society from the Ringrose farm in 1880. The monument was dedicated on August 6, 1884. Around 1912, an iron fence was installed around the monument. In 1927, the monument was repointed and a fifth bronze tablet listing additional veterans was installed. In 1970 and 1998, the monument was again repointed.

**Existing Condition:** Since the historic period, there have been no changes to the Battle Monument aside from repointing and conservation of the bronzes.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Battle Monument contributes to the historic significance of the Site and is the most prominent built feature from the commemorative period. The monument illustrates prevalent practices in military commemoration during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century characterized by placement of prominent monuments in small parks. The bas-relief sculpture on the monument also illustrates the historic narrative of the battle during the commemorative period. As an individual feature, the Battle Monument is also significant as an intact and representative example of a large-scale, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century civic monument. Aside from the loss of part of its historic setting due to reforestation and loss of views, the Battle Monument retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

### Visitor Center (Rest House)

**Historic Condition:** The visitor center was originally built in 1927 by the State as a Colonial Revival-style rest house. The building contained two small restrooms, a waiting room, and a porch, and was located off the northwest corner of the Battle Monument. From its front porch, there were expansive views across the Mohawk Valley. The overall design and use of the rest house reflected prevailing attitudes toward commemoration during the period. The State used the same design around the same time in construction of a rest house at the Bennington Battlefield.



**Existing Condition:** In 1963, the rest house was substantially altered and expanded into a visitor center. Between 1997 and 1998, the building was renovated with a new entrance, siding, and interior arrangement.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

Due to substantial renovations since the historic period, the visitor center no longer contributes to the historic significance of the Site. The building has lost integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, and its historic setting has been partly altered. The loss of integrity detracts from the historic character of the Site.

### Maintenance Garage

**Historic Condition:** The maintenance garage did not exist during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** The maintenance garage, a one-story low gable-roof frame structure with T-111 wood siding and two garage bays, was built in cooperation with B.O.C.E.S. in 1970. It was located on the north side of the horse barn adjacent to the site of the large Ringrose barn. In 1985, a shed-roof addition was built along the west side, and around 1990, a temporary metal storage shed was built on the south side.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The maintenance garage was built after the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Although it is located near the site of the Ringrose barns (one of which remains) in an area that historically served a utilitarian purpose, its overall massing and details detract from the historic character of the Site.

### Footbridge

**Historic Condition:** Based on available documentation, there were no footbridges across Battle Creek during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** By 1970, two footbridges built of unmilled logs existed across Battle Creek at 110 and 270 feet north of the base of the causeway. In 1976, a new footbridge was built across Battle Creek at the location of the south footbridge as part of a gravel path then being constructed across the ravine. This bridge was built of dimensional lumber.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The footbridge across Battle Creek did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It does not detract from the historic character of the Site due to its unobtrusive design that is compatible with the surrounding natural environment.

### Staircase on Visitor Center Walk

**Historic Condition:** The staircase at the walk to the rest house (visitor center) did not exist during the historic period. There was no defined circulation to the rest house during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** A set of undressed stone steps was installed by November 1964 during construction of the walk from the parking lot to the recently-completed visitor center. Between 1985 and 1986, the stone steps were replaced by a wood staircase with wood railings.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The staircase on the walk to the visitor center did not exist during the historic period and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Along with the larger walk, the staircase detracts from the historic character through its relatively conspicuous design that is incompatible with the open, grassy slope that existed historically. It does, however, provide a necessary visitor service.

### Ravine Viewing Platform

Historic Condition: The ravine viewing platform did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: A raised wood-frame viewing platform was built around 1987 adjacent to Battle Creek off the north side of the gravel ravine path. This platform was removed due to deterioration around 1993 after the Site was reopened by the State.

Analysis: Not existing

The ravine viewing platform was built after the historic period and therefore did not contribute to the historic significance of the Site.

### Mechanical Systems

#### *Electric Service*

Historic Condition: Electric service was introduced to the Site around 1953 at the very end of the historic period. This service ran on two standard wood utility poles along the west property line from the Road to the rest house.

Existing Condition: The 1953 service from the Road to the visitor center exists. Two other services were subsequently added, one to the maintenance garage around 1970, and another into the ravine at some point after the historic period. The ravine service is presently not active.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The rest house service contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it was added at the end of the historic period and represents evolving levels of visitor services at the Site as part of the larger history of commemoration. The two wood poles and wires, however, are not character-defining features of the landscape. The other two services were added after the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site.

#### *Sanitary Systems*

Historic Condition: In the initial construction of the rest house in 1927, a chemical sanitary system was installed. No further information has been found on this feature.

Existing Condition: When the rest house was converted to a visitor center in 1963, a standard septic field was installed north of the building. In 1981, this system was replaced, and at the same time, a second septic system was added to the north and east of the maintenance garage. The remains of the 1963 septic tank and field remain on the lower slope north of the visitor center.

Analysis: Existing, non-contributing

The existing sanitary systems were installed after the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site because they are not visible.

#### *Wells*

Historic Condition: A 58-foot deep well with a six-inch casing was installed 31 feet south of the rest house when the building was constructed in 1927. It has a cap that is flush with ground level.

Existing Condition: The 1927 well continues in service. A second well servicing the maintenance garage was sunk in the pasture line off the southwest corner of the building around 1981. It has a steel cap that is flush with ground level.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The 1927 well contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it was constructed during the historic period and represents evolving levels of visitor services as part of the larger history of commemoration. It is not, however, a character-defining feature of the landscape. The 1981 well does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site, nor does it detract from the Site's historic character because it is largely invisible.

### Temporary Structures

**Historic Condition:** A raised wooden speakers' stand was erected on the west side of Battle Creek in the ravine prior to the historic period during the 1844 Democratic rally. During the commemorative period, there were a variety of temporary structures constructed on the Site. Many were erected during the centennial celebration, including the West Stand built in the present vicinity of the Battle Monument and the East Stand in the ravine, along with hundreds of tents and smaller stands. During the sesquicentennial celebration in 1927, a large raised speakers' platform was built south of the Battle Monument.

**Existing Condition:** There are no temporary structures on the Site that date from the historic period.

**Analysis:** Not existing

By nature of their intended use, temporary structures erected during the historic period have not survived to the present. Such structures, however, were important components of the landscape at various times during the historic period and illustrated the commemorative use of the Site.

### Views and Vistas

#### Views

**Historic Condition:** During the battle period, there were likely only limited views on the Site through the high understory of the old-growth forest. By the commemorative period, the old-growth forests had been cleared for agriculture. These conditions allowed for expansive views from the uplands of the Site to the east, north, and west across the Mohawk Valley. During the early commemorative period, views from the east plateau were partially enclosed by remnant forests along steep banks adjoining the Battle Creek ravine and the lowlands, while the west plateau remained largely free of trees, except for some in the adjoining west ravine. In 1883, the Battle Monument was placed on the upland edge of the west plateau to take advantage of these expansive views, as well as to be seen from the major transportation corridors that crossed through the Mohawk Valley. These expansive views featured prominently in many descriptions of the Site during the historic period. In 1927, the rest house was likewise placed to take advantage of these views. Throughout the commemorative period, the views from the east plateau probably became increasingly restricted as reforestation took place on the lowlands and continued on the uplands. The view to the west from the Battle Monument also became restricted toward the end of the historic period due to reforestation on the adjoining land.

**Existing Condition:** Since the end of the historic period, reforestation on the lowlands west of Battle Creek has blocked the expansive views from the Battle Monument north into the Mohawk Valley, and the views from the valley south toward the monument. These views were intact through the 1970s, and became mostly blocked only by the late 1980s and 1990s. The highlands on the north side of the Mohawk Valley are visible from the Road above the forest.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The growth of the forest on the lowlands west of Battle Creek has blocked the expansive views into the Mohawk Valley from the Battle Monument that were one of the character-defining features of the commemorative period landscape. These views directly influenced the design and placement of the Battle Monument and rest house (visitor center), and also provided visual access

from the Site to the natural and transportation contexts that were significant in the history of both the battle and commemorative periods. The loss of these views detracts from the historic character of the Site.

### **Unknown Soldiers' Monument Vista**

**Historic Condition:** Based on available documentation, the Unknown Soldiers' Monument was placed near the east edge of the Battle Creek ravine and oriented to frame a vista toward the Battle Monument to the west, and a vista from motorists traveling west on the Road.

**Existing Condition:** Since the historic period, the vista from the Unknown Soldiers' Monument to the Battle Monument has been lost to reforestation in the ravine. No documentation has been found on when during this time the vista was lost. The vista of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument from the Road remains.

**Analysis:** Not Existing/ Existing, Contributing

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument vista toward the Battle Monument disappeared after the historic period. This vista was a character-defining landscape feature and its loss detracts from the historic character of the Site. The vista from the Road to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association and therefore contributes to the historic character of the Site.

### **Constructed Water Features**

Based on available documentation, there were never any constructed water features on the Site.

### **Small-Scale Features**

#### **Gates and Fences**

##### *Agricultural Fences (Remnant along Erie Canal)*

**Historic Condition:** During the commemorative period, there were a variety of agricultural fences on the Site, including cross-and-rail, three-plank, and post-and-wire fences. These were located along property lines and in between pastures. Most were probably used to contain livestock. The agricultural fences on the Parkhurst-heir farm east of Battle Creek were likely all removed during the historic period, as agricultural use of this area ceased early. The State likely removed most of the agricultural fences on the Ringrose farm when it acquired that property in 1952.

**Existing Condition:** A remnant of a wood post-and-barbed wire agricultural fence, likely from the Ringrose farm, exist along the Erie Canal west of Battle Creek. This fence may be within the "blue line" of the canal (off -Site).

**Analysis:** Existing , Contributing

The remnant post-and-wire fence along the Erie Canal contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it reflects the agricultural context that was significant to the historic development of the commemorative landscape. The fence, although deteriorated and only a remnant of a larger system of fences, retains integrity of location, materials, feeling, and association. All other agricultural fences were probably removed during the historic period.

*Battle Monument Gateway*

**Historic Condition:** In 1885, a gateway consisting of a pair of 10-foot tall limestone piers with iron picket gates and fences was installed at the southeast corner of the memorial park. To either side of the piers were 31-foot long section of iron picket fence that curved out toward the road. The piers were set approximately eight feet apart.

**Existing Condition:** Around 1962 as part of the reconstruction of the Battle Monument drive, the piers were reset to 20 feet apart to accommodate widening of the entrance. The limestone piers were reset on concrete footings and a new welded-steel picket gate was fabricated to span the widened drive. Two limestone blocks were set to the rear of the piers, possibly as stops to the gates. The portion of the curved fence extending from the east pier was probably also removed at this time and replaced by a split-rail fence.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Battle Monument gateway contributes to the historic significance of the Site as part of the first generation of commemorative features on the Site, and reflects the original design intent and scale of the memorial park. Although the posts have been relocated, the fences removed, and the gates have been widened, the gateway retains substantial integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

*Battle Monument Fence*

**Historic Condition:** At the time of its dedication in 1884, there was no fence around the Battle Monument. By 1912, a tall iron picket fence had been installed about ten feet from the base of the monument. The fence may have been built to reinforce a sacred commemorative zone around the monument. It likely also served a practical purpose during the historic period to keep vandals away from the monument, a purpose it continues to serve to the present.

**Existing Condition:** There have been no significant changes to the battle monument fence since the historic period. It was repaired and repainted in 1998.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The Battle Monument fence contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it existed during the historic period and directly relates to the commemorative use of the Site. It retains a high level of historic integrity with no significant changes since the historic period.

*D.A.R. Piers (Memorial Gateway)*

**Historic Condition:** In 1929, the Oriskany Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution erected a gateway to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. This gateway was located east of the temporary drive at the planned entrance of a formal drive leading on axis to the monument. Called the "Memorial Gateway," it was built by Joseph Nelbach & Sons of Utica, and consisted of two rusticated six and one-half foot tall granite piers with pyramidal caps and bronze tablets. One bronze tablet contained an inscription in gratitude to John Vrooman of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, and the other contained an inscription expressing the D.A.R.'s wishes that the Site be made a National Park.

**Existing Condition:** At some point after the State acquired the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property in 1955, the granite piers were relocated to either side of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. No information has been found on when after 1955 this occurred.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The D.A.R. piers contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They reflect the involvement of private societies in the development and preservation of the Site during the commemorative period, and they also reflect the grander aspirations for the Site that were never fulfilled. The piers

retain a high level of integrity aside from location, setting, and feeling. While as objects they are unchanged, their present placement detracts from the historic setting of the Unknown Soldiers' Monument and also obscures their historic design as a gateway.

#### *Site Boundary Fences*

**Historic Condition:** By the 1920s, there was 193 feet of wood fencing on the Road frontage of the five-acre memorial park. The remaining sides of the property at this time were likely enclosed by post-and-wire pasture fences. Between 1930 and 1931, the State erected a Cyclone chain-link fence along the west property line of the memorial park. Upon State acquisition of the Ringrose farm in 1952, the fences along the north and west side of the memorial park were probably soon removed.

**Existing Condition:** The c.1931 Cyclone fence remains along the west property line, although most of the posts have been replaced with snow-fencing stakes. It is in poor condition and heavily rusted. A two-rail split-rail fence was installed along the Road between the Battle Monument gateway and the horse barn around 1962 when the gateway was reconstructed. Another section of split-rail fence was added to the west side of the gateway prior to 1980.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The Cyclone boundary fence contributes to the historic significance of the Site because it was installed during the historic period and reflects the original limits of the Site as defined by the five-acre memorial park. Despite replacement of most of its posts, it retains substantial integrity of location, materials, feeling, and association. The split-rail fences were installed after the period of significance and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They detract from the historic character of the Site because they are incompatible in materials and design with the curved-sections of iron picket fence which they replaced to either side of the Battle Monument gateway. They are also a modern design that does not relate either directly to the historic commemorative landscape or indirectly to its historic agricultural context.

#### *Unknown Soldiers' Monument Gate*

**Historic Condition:** Based on available documentation, there was no gate at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive during the historic period. Stone piers were installed by the D.A.R. in 1929 at the proposed location of a formal drive to the monument, located east of the temporary drive.

**Existing Condition:** Around 1996, a set of timber gates were installed at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive, 18 feet from the edge of the Road.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The timber gates at the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their small scale and unobtrusive design.

#### **Flagstaffs**

##### *Ringrose Farm Flagstaff*

**Historic Condition:** By 1877, there was a flagstaff on the Ringrose farm at the purported location of the Herkimer beech tree at the top of the west side of the Battle Creek ravine. This flagstaff may have existed as early as 1858. No documentation has been found on the appearance, exact location, or fate of this flagstaff. It was removed prior to 1915, and was probably replaced by a cherry tree.

**Existing Condition:** The Ringrose farm flagstaff does not exist.

Analysis: Not existing

The Ringrose farm flagstaff disappeared during the historic period between 1877 and 1915, and its loss therefore does not diminish the historic character of the Site. It may have been the earliest permanent commemorative feature on the Site.

*East Stand-Area Flagstaffs*

Historic Condition: During the centennial celebration, there were two small flagstaffs at the top of the east side of the Battle Creek ravine, opposite the East Stand and adjacent to the Parkhurst-heir farmstead. These may have been temporary flagstaffs erected for the celebration, given their wood-stake bases. There were no longer standing by 1922.

Existing Condition: The East Stand-area flagstaffs do not exist.

Analysis: Not existing

The East Stand-area flagstaffs disappeared during the historic period, and their loss therefore does not detract from the historic character of the Site. They were a part of the commemorative landscape that reflected the massive scale of the centennial celebration.

*East Plateau Flagstaff*

Historic Condition: Between 1877 and 1879, a large flagstaff was erected on the northwest corner of the uplands east of the Battle Creek ravine on the Parkhurst-heir farm. This flagstaff was probably about 80 feet tall, featured a ball finial, and was intended to be seen from up and down the Mohawk Valley. It was removed between 1927 and 1930; the Mohawk Valley Historic Association, which had acquired the property, was planning a monument in its location around this time.

Existing Condition: The east plateau flagstaff does not exist.

Analysis: Not existing

The east plateau flagstaff disappeared during the historic period, and its loss therefore does not diminish the historic character of the Site. It was likely a very prominent feature during the early commemorative period.

*Battle Monument Flagstaffs*

Historic Condition: Around 1912, a prominent flagstaff was erected by the German-American National Alliance on the west side of the Battle Monument. This wood flagstaff was about 60 feet tall and featured a white shaft above a molded, dark (possibly painted wood or bronze) base and a ball finial. In 1927, this flagstaff was repainted and supplied with a new halyard. In 1930, it was replaced with a new painted steel flagstaff that was about half its height, or about 35 feet. This new flagstaff was located on axis with and on the west side of the Battle Monument.

Existing Condition: Between 1984 and 1985, a second 35-foot tall painted steel flagstaff was installed north of the 1930 flagstaff. It was donated by a Mrs. Francis Drees of Clinton.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing / Non-contributing

The flagstaff erected by the German-American National Alliance disappeared during the historic period and was replaced a smaller flagstaff in 1930. This 1930 flagstaff remains unaltered and contributes to the historic significance of the Site. The Drees flagstaff was installed after the period of significance and therefore does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It does not detract from the historic character of the Site because it is compatible in design and materials with the 1930 flagstaff and reflects continued historic use of the Site for commemoration.

### **Herkimer's March (Beech Tree) Monument**

Historic Condition: The Herkimer's march monument was installed in 1912 and was funded by the Oriskany Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution as one of fourteen in a chain of similar monuments marking the route of General Herkimer and the Tryon County militia on their march to the relief of Fort Stanwix. The monument was designed as a rusticated granite slab with a relief bronze plaque designed by William Pierrepont White and cast by Paul E. Cabaret & Company of New York City. The monument marked the purported location where General Herkimer sat under a beech tree and directed the battle. It was installed on the west side of the Battle Monument drive about half-way between the Battle Monument and the Road. Based on available documentation, there were historically no plantings around the base of the monument.

Existing Condition: At some point after the State acquired the Ringrose farm in 1952, the Herkimer's march monument was relocated to the pasture-line of trees on the west side of the horse barn. It was likely relocated in 1961 during reconstruction of the Battle Monument drive.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The Herkimer's march (beech tree) monument was installed during the historic period and although it was relocated around 1961 after the historic period, it contributes to the historic significance of the Site. The monument retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Its relocation may have been intended during its initial placement in 1912 when the location of the beech tree described in 19<sup>th</sup> century histories was on the private Ringrose farm. The monument is a reminder of the strong ties between the Site and the larger context of the Mohawk Valley.

### **Unknown Soldiers' Monument**

Historic Condition: The Unknown Soldiers' Monument was erected by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association in 1928 and designed and built by Joseph Nelbach & Sons of Utica. The monument was constructed of salvaged Erie Canal limestone and gray Vermont granite, and featured two bronze tablets. One tablet contained an inscription in honor of General Herkimer and the unknown soldiers of the battle, and the other contained an historical account of the development of Tryon County. The monument was positioned at the top of the east side of the Battle Creek ravine with a vista of the Battle Monument. Its orientation was also likely intended to make it visible to motorists traveling west on the Road.

Existing Condition: The Unknown Soldiers' Monument exists and is unaltered from the historic period. At some point after 1955, the D.A.R. piers (Memorial Gateway) were relocated to either side of the monument, and reforestation in the ravine blocked the associated vista to the Battle Monument.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

The Unknown Soldiers' Monument contributes to the historic significance of the Site as a major feature of the commemorative period and as a reflection of private efforts at developing the battlefield into an historic site. It also reflects the growing importance of automobile tourism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through its relationship to the Road. The Unknown Soldiers' Monument retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; the only substantial loss of integrity is its setting, which has been diminished by placement of the D.A.R. piers and the loss of the Battle Monument vista.



## Benches

### *Individual Benches*

**Historic Condition:** In 1927 as part of its improvement of the memorial park, the State installed six benches around the Battle Monument fence. These benches were typical, simple park design of the period characterized by cast-stone curved ends and flat wood slats. No documentation has been found on benches existing prior to State acquisition in 1927, or on benches installed by the Mohawk Valley Historic Association around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument.

**Existing Condition:** In 1962, the benches around the Battle Monument fence were replaced or repaired, and were relocated to the north side of the monument and the west side of the walk to the visitor center. By 1970, there were a total of nine such benches located along the slope north of the Battle Monument. In 1977, these benches were removed and were replaced by two benches with square cast-stone ends and wood slats on the north side of the monument, and by wood picnic tables and a wood bench placed along the west side of the walk to the visitor center. By 1996, the 1977 cast-stone and wood slat benches had been replaced, and a series of curved iron-frame and wood-slat benches were installed. These were placed to either side of the State Education Sign, north of the Battle Monument, and in front of the Herkimer's march monument where benches had not existed during the historic period.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The existing iron-frame and wood-slat benches did not exist during the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. They detract from the historic character of the Site due to their placement and design that are incompatible with historic conditions.

### *Brick Seating/Interpretive Area*

**Historic Condition:** The brick seating/interpretive area did not exist during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** In 1962, a brick seating/interpretive area was built a short distance downhill and northeast of the Battle Monument. This feature contained two benches and a push-button self-interpretive audio device. It was removed around 1976.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The brick seating/interpretive area did not exist during the historic period. It detracted from the historic character of the landscape due to its placement, massing, and materials.

## Signs

### *Main Entrance (Battle Monument Drive) Signs*

**Historic Condition:** Around 1944, a tall Colonial Revival-style mast-arm sign was installed during operation of the Site by the State Education Department. This sign, which followed a standard design used at the State's historic sites, featured a metal post with a ball finial, scrolled mast arm with a lantern, and a scrolled-pediment wood sign board. There were likely signs identifying the Site present prior to 1944, but no documentation has been found on them.

**Existing Condition:** Around 1994, the mast-arm sign was removed and replaced by two smaller signs that followed standard State historic site design (brown face, gray frame). The main identification sign was placed outside the gateway, and a smaller information sign was placed inside the gateway. The pole and mast-arm of the c.1944 sign are in storage.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The two existing main entrance signs were installed after the historic period and therefore do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. While they are dissimilar in design from the 1944 sign, these two signs do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their unobtrusive design. The loss of the c.1944 Colonial Revival sign detracts from the historic character of the Site because it was a highly visible feature of the later commemorative period and reflected the Site's relationship to the larger State system of historic sites.

*Historical Markers (Small State Education Signs)*

Historic Condition: The historical markers did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: In 1966, four cast-metal markers set on steel posts were installed between the Battle Monument and the Battle Creek ravine. These markers were made by the Sewah Studios of Marietta, Ohio, and were modeled after the Education Department's small roadside markers first installed in the 1930s. A fifth sign, entitled "General Herkimer's Troops," was ordered from Sewah, but was apparently never installed.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The four historical markers or small State Education signs do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their small scale and unobtrusive design and because they relate to continued commemorative use.

*State Education Sign*

Historic Condition: The State Education Sign did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: The State Education Sign was installed between 1960 and 1962. The sign measures overall about eight and one-half feet high and six feet wide. It was made by the State Department of Public Works of cast metal and followed the same format and design as the large markers that were installed under the direction of the State Education Department at highway rest stops and the rest areas along the Thruway during the 1960s. The sign was removed in 1976 and reinstalled in 1998/1999.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The State Education Sign does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because it was erected after the historic period. In its overall large scale, it detracts from the historic character of the Site. This type of sign was largely designed to be read at a distance or from a car, and therefore appears awkward in its placement close to the walk leading past the Battle Monument.

*Rustic Welcome Sign*

Historic Condition: The rustic welcome sign did not exist during the historic period.

Existing Condition: Around 1976, a wood-frame sign set on posts and capped with a cedar-shingled gable roof was installed at the north end of the parking lot. The sign was removed in the late 1980s.

Analysis: Not existing

The rustic welcome sign did not exist during the historic period. Its rustic design related more to natural areas and preserves than to historic sites, and therefore detracted from the historic character of the Site.

*Panoramic Photo-Interpretive Kiosk*

**Historic Condition:** The panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk did not exist during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** Around 1976, two large interpretive panels were installed east of the brick interpretive-seating area off the northeast corner of the Battle Monument. These panels faced southeast and northwest, and contained panoramic photos of the battlefield, which were designed to orient visitors to battle location and important features in the landscape. It was removed in the early 1990s.

**Analysis:** Not existing

The panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk did not exist during the historic period. It detracted from the historic character of the Site due to its large scale.

*New Interpretive Signs*

**Historic Condition:** The new interpretive signs did not exist during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** Between 1993 and 1994 after the State reopened the Site, a series of seven illustrated interpretive signs was installed between the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers Monument. These signs were designed and built by the Bureau of Historic Sites and were made of wood frames and set on wood posts.

**Analysis:** Existing, non-contributing

The new interpretive signs do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their relatively small size and unobtrusive design.

*Operational Signs*

**Historic Condition:** A series of operational signs were installed on the Site after the State acquired the Site in 1927. Several of these had to do with directing traffic on the Battle Monument drive and consisted of small-scale, low post-mounted wood signs. No information has been found on other operation signs that existed during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** A variety of operation signs exist on the Site around the Battle Monument, in the ravine, maintenance garage drive, and near the Unknown Soldiers Monument. All were installed after the historic period. Identification signs are mounted on trees around the boundaries of the Site.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

The existing operational signs do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were all installed after the historic period. They are generally small in scale and therefore do not detract from the historic character of the Site. An exception is the two warning signs on the Battle Monument gateway that obscure the iron gates.

**Other***Stone Piles*

**Historic Condition:** During the historic period, stone piles were scattered on the east side of Battle Creek. The exact number and extent of these piles during the historic period is not known.

**Existing Condition:** In 1993, the stone piles were first mapped. A total of five large and five small stone piles were identified; one of the large piles was on the uplands, but the remaining ones were scattered in an irregular line east of Battle Creek on the former Parkhurst-heir farm. The largest pile measured about 12 by 15 feet and almost two feet high, and most were composed of rounded stones. After this documentation was completed, a team from the Bureau of Historic Sites undertook testing of the stone piles in May 1993. These tests produced 19<sup>th</sup> century artifacts that revealed the piles post-dated the Revolutionary period and therefore did not likely mark burials from the Battle of Oriskany.

**Analysis:** Existing, Contributing

The stone piles contribute to the historic significance of the Site. Based on the 1993 sample analysis, the stone piles contain 19<sup>th</sup>-century artifacts that indicated they may have been built as a result of field-clearing practices. They are therefore likely traces from the farm that once occupied the east half of the Site, and thus contribute to the historic agricultural context of the Site during the commemorative period.

*Metal Survey Marker*

**Historic Condition:** No information has been found on a round metal marker in the west plateau during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** A bright-finish round metal survey marker is located in the west plateau, roughly between the Battle Monument and the maintenance garage near the former boundary of the memorial park. It is indicated by a triangle and the initials "MI" on the 1970 topographic map of the Site. Information on the age of this marker, or what it marks, has not been found. A second marker is purportedly located in the west plateau, but could not be found for this project.

**Analysis:** Unevaluated

It is not known if the survey marker existed during the historic period.

*Exterior Lights*

**Historic Condition:** Electric service was introduced at the Site around 1953 at the end of the historic period. No record has been found on exterior lights installed at this time.

**Existing Condition:** Exterior flood lights are presently found around the Battle Monument, flagstaves, parking lot, and main entrance signs.

**Analysis:** Existing, Non-contributing

All exterior lights on the Site do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. It is not known if they replaced earlier fixtures. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their small scale and unobtrusive design.

*Picnic Tables & Barbecues*

**Historic Condition:** According to available documentation, picnic tables and barbecues did not exist on the Site during the historic period.

**Existing Condition:** In the early 1960s, six picnic tables were added to the Site, probably around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument, adding to several that might have already existed. Four raised steel barbecues were also probably installed at this time. Thirteen wood picnic tables are presently located across the Site, with eight concentrated in the area around the Unknown Soldiers' Monument. The picnic tables are stored adjacent to the maintenance garage during the winter.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The existing wood picnic tables and steel barbecues do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. They reflect the emphasis on recreation in plans for the Site beginning in the late 1950s and 1960s. They detract from the historic, passive commemorative use and character of the Site.

*Drinking Fountains*

Historic Condition: Based on available documentation, drinking fountains did not exist on the Site during the historic period.

Existing Condition: Between 1960 and 1962, outside drinking fountains were installed at a cost of \$150. One was installed on the outside of the visitor center; no information has been found on where the second was installed, or when they were removed.

Analysis: Not existing.

The drinking fountains did not exist during the historic period and therefore did not contribute to the historic significance of the Site.

*Bird Houses*

Historic Condition: According to available documentation, there were no birdhouses on the Site during the historic period.

Existing Condition: Two small pole-mounted wood bird houses with single openings and shed roofs were installed around 1985. They are located along the west property line south of the parking lot and at the forest edge east of the maintenance garage.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The two wood bird houses on the Site do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they were installed after the historic period. They do not detract from the historic character of the Site due to their small scale and unobtrusive design.

*Planted Urns*

Historic Condition: According to available documentation, there were no planted urns or showy annual plantings on the Site during the historic period.

Existing Condition: In 1980, wood planters were placed to either side of the main entrance; these were installed after the historic period and removed prior to 1998. Two small, ornate simulated terra cotta urns were placed to either side of the walk in front of the visitor center beginning after renovation of the building was completed in 1998. These are typically planted with a mixture of flowering annuals and are stored inside during the winter.

Analysis: Existing, Non-contributing

The planted urns do not contribute to the historic significance of the Site because they did not exist during the historic period. They detract from the Site's historically simple, solemn character.

**Archeological Sites**

Historic Condition: Although there were many stories about archeological remains such as mass graves and battle artifacts on the Site, no battle-related archeological sites were documented during the historic period. There are, however, several specific references to archeological remains on or near the Site. These include the following:

- Loring, in his 1848 tour of the battlefield, was told: "Arrow-heads, bullets, bayonets, tomahawks, pipes—are still found there by the cultivator. The bowl of an earthen pipe was shown to me by a resident upon the ground...which he plowed up the day before."<sup>50</sup>
- Pomroy Jones, in his 1851 history of Oneida County, stated that the early settlers in the region gathered skeletons that remained from the battle and interred them in a common grave.<sup>51</sup>
- Historian Ellis Roberts reported in 1877: "Skeletons have been found in the smaller ravine about two hundred rods west [west ravine], and at the mouth of the Oriskany, an extent of a mile and a half; and gun-barrels and other relics along the line of the Erie Canal, and down toward the river."<sup>52</sup>
- An 1877 newspaper account told of how the Parkhursts, the first settlers of the Site, often found human bones and collected them in piles, which they would bury. In addition to these remains, the same account told the story of a grave of over 30 bodies that was supposed to be located near Battle Creek within the ravine. The account noted that this grave had never been found.<sup>53</sup>
- The *Utica Daily Observer* reported in 1877 of David Lanfear's story of a mass grave that was dug under the command of Benedict Arnold soon after the battle on the lowlands of his farm. Mr. Lanfear said this grave was located, "on the brow of a bluff, half a mile beyond the ravine where the battle commenced," where he maintained an orchard. According to a Mr. Easton of Oriskany, a large mound then no longer extant once marked the location of this mass grave. The mound was purportedly destroyed by a former farmer of the property "long years ago" who "let loose his swine," which rooted up the bones and destroyed the grave. One of these bones, which was kept by G. W. Parkhurst, was "remembered as a great curiosity" and was purportedly from a man nearly seven feet tall.<sup>54</sup>
- According to an 1877 article in the *Utica Daily Observer*, Mr. William Tryon, who farmed land north of the Erie Canal, "has faithfully preserved all that his plow and spade have turned up. He now has a keg full of memorials of the battle." Mr. D. R. Shaw, owner of the hotel in Oriskany, purportedly had the only stone tomahawk taken from the battlefield, as well as "Indian arrow heads of stone, an Indian pipe of Missouri soapstone, and other articles."<sup>55</sup>
- Thomas Evans, who lived near the Site during the 1930s, remembers that his uncles and Mr. Ringrose (former owner and caretaker of the Site) found artifacts such as buttons, musketballs, and buckles that were plowed up in the field south of the Site.<sup>56</sup>

There were also several accounts of human remains on the battlefield in the years after the battle, but none of these were specifically referenced to the Site (see Site History chapters 2 and 3). No documentation has been found on the location or disposition of the above-listed archeological finds.

**Existing Condition:** Beginning in the 1950s, the State began to undertake archeological investigations at the Site. Documentation of these investigations, however, has only been found for those undertaken through the Bureau of Historic Sites beginning in the 1970s at the stone piles, the ravine, the interpreted location of the military road, at the site of the Parkhurst-heir farmhouse, and at the location of post-holes for interpretive markers. Significant archeological resources were only found at the Parkhurst-heir farmhouse site. Investigations into the stone piles revealed

---

<sup>50</sup> Benson J. Loring, *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1860), vol. 1, 246.

<sup>51</sup> Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Published by the author, 361).

<sup>52</sup> Ellis Roberts, *The Battle of Oriskany: Its Place in History / An Address at the Centennial Celebration, August 6, 1877* (Utica: Roberts, 1877), 21.

<sup>53</sup> "The Battlefield As It Was 50 Years Ago," 1927 reprint of article originally published in the Rome *Sentinel*, 31 July 1877, copy in "Fort Stanwix and Oriskany Scrapbook," Rome Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> "Oriskany Battleground," *Utica Daily Observer*, 25 June 1877, 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Robertaccio, "A Field Report On the Old Military Road through Oriskany Battlefield, analysis of historic documentation and pictorial history of the site," unpublished paper dated 24 November 1995, 6-7, Central Region MSS.

that they were likely built as debris collection piles and were not remnants of some larger resource or burial site.

**Analysis:** Based on available information, there is only one documented archeological resource on the Site that contributes to the historic significance of the Site: the foundation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Parkhurst-heir farmhouse or barn on the east plateau. This foundation, although not a visible landscape feature, relates to the agricultural context of the commemorative period.

There are presently no documented archeological resources on the Site from the battle period. Important archeological remains of the military road may be extant beneath the existing highway. Provided the military road followed the same alignment as the highway, the causeway across the Battle Creek ravine may contain remains that provide information on the original construction, elevation, and details of the military road and corduroy causeway.

In addition to battle-period archeological resources, there may also be resources that contain the potential to reveal important information related to the use and development of the Site during the commemorative period. Such resources may exist, for example, at the location of the Ringrose barns (although this area has probably been disturbed); from the temporary tents and stands of the centennial celebration; from trails leading from the Erie Canal; and from missing small-scale features such as flagstaffs.

### **Historic Integrity -- Summary Analysis**

The National Register recognizes seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. An historic property generally must retain sufficient integrity in these seven aspects in order to convey its historic significance and be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Site retains a relatively high level of historic integrity based on a comparison of existing conditions with conditions at the end of the period of significance (c.1955). The integrity of the Site has been assessed in this CLR during the battle (August 6, 1777) and commemorative (1877-c.1955) periods.

The landforms of the Site--the uplands, Battle Creek ravine, and lowlands that stretch north toward the Mohawk River--have remained largely unchanged and are today central to the Site's historic significance both during the battle and commemorative periods.

From the battle period, the Site retains integrity of location and association, and in part, feeling. The Site's natural systems and features, land use, circulation, and topography during the battle period remain evident in the landscape. A mature northern hardwoods forest, although a second generation and far younger forest than the old-growth forest of the battle period, has re-emerged on a portion of the Site, and the Road remains a central feature of the landscape, although it, too, has changed significantly since the battle-period military road. The landscape context of the Site from the battle period has also changed significantly as the virgin old-growth forest frontier has been replaced over the past two centuries with agriculture and suburban residential land uses. Some of the forest context has returned in recent decades through the decline of agriculture and subsequent reforestation.

From the commemorative period (1877-c.1955), the Site retains an overall high level of historic integrity in terms of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Site's historic land use, cultural traditions, circulation, topography, buildings and structures, and small-scale features remain largely intact. Significant changes since the end of the commemorative period include the loss of spatial organization and views and vistas through reforestation, and several changes to buildings and small-scale features. The landscape context of the commemorative period has changed as agriculture has declined and as reforestation and suburban residential land use has spread.

## Annotated Reference List

### Written Material<sup>1</sup>

#### **Primary Sources --Manuscript Collections & Unpublished Materials**

Amherst, General Jeffrey. Correspondence related to the construction of the military road between Forts Herkimer and Stanwix dated May 16, 1759 to October 30, 1759. These papers provide some of the few references to the general alignment and construction of the military road. Cited as Amherst MSS.  
[Collection of Dr. William Forbes, Holland Patent, New York]

Clarke Family--Oriskany Patent holdings. "A Field Book of Sundry Tracts of Land in the State of New York / The Property of George and Edward Clarke Esqrs. Compiled from the Originals and partly Surveyed." C. 1790. A hand-written description without maps of subdivided lots in the Oriskany Patent and several other patents. Although the Oriskany Battlefield lot is not described, the lot to the west is (Second Allotment, Great Lot 5, subdivision lot 6). Cited as Clarke NYSHA MSS.  
[Clarke Family Papers, New York Historical Association Library, Cooperstown]

Clarke, George Hyde, Family Papers at Cornell University. Collection includes the following relevant information: Box 120, #1: Deed/"Release of Indians of all claims" 2 March 1768; "Indenture of Four Parts" signed by Augustus and Elizabeth Van Cortlandt and others dated 12 June 1806; Box 113, #1: Original Oriskany Patent dated April 18, 1705; "A Survey of Lots No. 4 & 8 in Great Lot 3 in the Fourth Allotment, 1797;" Box 143, #1: "Account of Mr. Clarke's Lotts in Oriskanie," dated 1789; Box 125: "Oriskany Patent Land Records, 1790-1892" (lands of George Clarke); also large collection of unindexed indentures and leases. Although the deeds and surveys in the collection do not include the Site, they do provide information on the history of the patent and the Site's landscape context. Cited as Clarke Cornell MSS.  
[Kroch Library, Collection #2800, Cornell University, Ithaca]

Cockburn, James, Surveyor. "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent / The Property of The Honorable John Lansing [Jr. (?)] and Abraham G. Lansing Esq. / Divided into Lots A.D. 1789 and 1790." Contains field notes and maps for lots adjoining the Site; describes vegetation and notes existence of "Great Road to Fort Stanwix."  
[Manuscript Collection SC21244, Box 1, Folder 19, New York State Archives, Albany]

Covenhoven, Hall, Van Brochten. Depositions by veterans of the Battle of Oriskany relating to the brave conduct of Col. Volkert Veeder, June, 1778": Depositions of Garred Van Brochten, Isaac Covenhoven, and Lieut. William Hall.  
[Manuscripts, NYS Box 2, folder Council of Appointment A.D.S., New-York Historical Society, New York City]

Davies, Mrs. Arthur E., Whitesboro, Regent of the Oriskany Chapter, D.A.R., unpublished list of interments at the Parkhurst Cemetery. Compiled October 26, 1927.  
[OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville, New York]

Fonda, Adam to the Committee of Schenectady, 8 August 1777. One of the earliest descriptions of the battle.  
[Rare Books & Manuscripts, Emmet Collection, item no. 4611, New York Public Library]

Heath and Livingston Papers, Letter of Richard Duneau to James De Lancey, Augustus Van Cortlandt et. al. dated 23 April 1775 (describing Fort Stanwix and the village of Oriska); Brockholdt Livingston to Governor Livingston (Trenton) dated 11 November 1783 (discussing land values in the Oriskany Patent).  
[Massachusetts Historical Society Library, Boston]

Juvinus. "Gen. Harkemer's Battle . . . To the Field officers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> New York Battalion the following Song is Humbly Inscribed by their very humble Servant / Juvinus" (Poem).  
[Marinus Willett Manuscript Collection folder 1775-1777, New-York Historical Society]

Montesor, Colonel John, Journals. Excerpts pertaining to the building of the military road between "Fort Stanwix and Herkemers" (1759), 70-71, 73.  
[Collection of Dr. William Forbes, Holland Patent, New York. Originals in New-York Historical Society Library.]

---

<sup>1</sup> Text in brackets [ ] refers to location of primary-source or rare documents.



## Reference List

---

Morrison, James, transcription collection. Annotated transcriptions of pension applications from veterans of the Battle of Oriskany. Compiled from records in Herkimer, Montgomery, and Fulton Counties. These pension records, most dating to the 1830s, provide only a few general references to the location and landscape of the battlefield.  
[Personal collection of James Morrison, Gloversville, New York]

Fort Stanwix National Monument, Oriskany Battlefield National Historic Landmark (NHL) file. Contains supporting documentation and nomination forms for NHL designation and correspondence related to efforts at making Oriskany a National Historic Site (primarily dating from the early 1960s). Cited as Fort Stanwix MSS.  
[Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome, New York]

New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) Records for Stanwix-Oriskany Whitesboro State Highway 69. "Preliminary Survey Transit" notes, October 6-November 5, 1931 (G.H. Briggs), file 6351.00. Construction diaries, September 21, 1933-August 31, 1934 (Graham); 1984 plans for drainage improvements at the east ravine. These records document construction of the present highway alignment and the alignment of the pre-1933 road.  
[DOT Region 2 Offices, Utica]

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation records:

Bureau of Historic Sites, site, plan, and archeology files for Oriskany Battlefield. These files contain plans, archeological surveys, receipts, correspondence, and photographs relating to existing conditions, building projects, and proposals for the site dating largely from the 1930s to the present. Cited as BHS MSS.  
[Bureau of Historic Sites, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford]

Central Region Administration offices, site history, plan, and map files for Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site. Cited as Central Region MSS.  
[Central Region, Clark Reservation State Park, Jamesville]

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site office, site history files, maps, and photographs. Cited as OBSH MSS.  
[Oriskany Battlefield, NY 69, Whitestown].

Oneida County Historical Society (Oneida Historical Society at Utica) collections:

*Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society*: 1881, 1881-86, 1887-89, 1892-98, 1905, 1903-5, 1910-14. Covers the period of the society's acquisition of the battlefield and erection of the Battle Monument. The Transactions, which are primarily speeches and not the proceedings or minutes of the society, do not provide information on the battlefield landscape.

"Oriskany Battle Centennial." Contains correspondence relating to the celebration of the centennial of the Battle of Oriskany. Little pertains directly to the landscape of the battlefield.  
Collection MSS.1 OBC.1

"Oriskany Battlefield Monument Records 1882-85." Contains accounts, bills, receipts, correspondence, insurance papers, Tryon County militia records and various other materials relating to the monument erected under the auspices of the Oneida Historical Society.  
Collection MSS.1 OBM.1

"Herkimer Monument Receipts 1882-83." Contains reports of the committee, receipts, and various other items related to erecting a monument to General Herkimer at the Site. The Oriskany Battlefield monument was also called the Herkimer monument. The "Herkimer Monument Committee Papers" (1890) refer to the work of the commission formed to erect a separate monument at General Herkimer's home near Little Falls.  
Collections MSS.1 HMC.1, HMC.1 REC.1

Oriskany Museum, Oriskany Battlefield files. These files were formerly the working park files and were transferred to the museum when the Site was closed in the early 1990s. Contains newspaper clippings, correspondence, flyers and other miscellaneous documents. Cited as Oriskany Museum MSS.  
[Oriskany Museum, Oriskany, New York]

Preston, Amariah, Order Book (Fort Stanwix Orderly Book), 12 August to 14 October, 1758. This manuscript describes the daily orders during the building of Fort Stanwix; it contains one reference to the "New Road," possibly the military road.  
[Rare Books and Manuscripts, New York Public Library]

## Reference List

---

Robertaccio, Joseph, unpublished collection of transcribed primary documents related to the Battle of Oriskany. Includes excerpts from John Johnson's Orderly Book, Tryon County Committee of Safety papers, Papers of George Clinton, Lyman Draper manuscripts; letters and diaries from General Herkimer, Benedict Arnold, members of the New York Regiments, General St. Leger, etc.  
[Copy in Oriskany Battlefield files, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]

### Primary Sources -- Published Materials

Alber, Thomas S., editor. *Chainbreaker: The Revolutionary War Memoirs of Governor Blacksnake as told to Benjamin Williams*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 128-131, 876-891.  
Provides an Iroquois perspective on the Battle of Oriskany; little information on the Site's landscape.

*American Agriculturalist Farm Directory and Reference Book of Oneida County, New York 1917*. New York: Orange Judd, 1917. Information on Ringrose farm.

American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. *Annual Reports*, 1896-1918. The 1913 report contains "General Herkimer's March August 3-6 1777 / Account of the Dedication of Fourteen Tablets . . . June 14, 1912." Although the reports contain no other specific reference to Oriskany, they are important for establishing the context of state-wide efforts at preserving battlefields and other military sites during the period.  
[New York Public Library]

Beach, Allen C, Secretary of State. *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York*. Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1879. Provides information on the 1877 centennial celebration, including descriptions of the landscape and the state-wide context of centennial celebrations.

Bloodgood, S. DeWitt. *A Treatise on Roads, Their History, Character and Utility*. Albany: Oliver Steele, 1838.

Camp, Phineas. *Poems of the Mohawk Valley*. Utica: Curtiss & White, 1859. Relevant poems include "Battle of Oriskany," "Death of Herkimer," and "Relic of Oriskany." These early poems about the battlefield discuss landscape features, reflecting popular understanding of the battlefield during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century prior to creation of the memorial park. "Relic of Oriskany" is about a Revolutionary War-era musket that was uncovered in a farmer's field on the battlefield.

Child, Hamilton. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Oneida County, New York for 1869*. Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1869.

Daughters of the American Revolution. "Unveiling of Markers under Auspices of the Daughters of the American Revolution of the Mohawk Valley, Flag Day, June 14, 1912 / Commemorative of General Herkimer's March to the Oriskany Battlefield August 3-6, 1777." No publisher noted.  
[New York Public Library]

De Witt, Benjamin. "A Sketch of the Turnpike Roads in the State of New York." In Secretary of the Treasury Gallatin, "Report on Roads & Canals." Reprinted in *The New American State Papers*. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1972. vol. 1 (Transportation), 215-218.

Dwight, Timothy. *Travels in New England and New York*. Barbara Solomon, editor. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969. Dwight provides an account of his passage through Oriskany battlefield in 1822, which included several landscape-related observations.

Grant, Francis. "Journal from New York to Canada, 1767." *Journal of the New York State Historical Association*, vol. 8 (1932), 182-189. Provides a description of the landscape in the region around the Site.

Johnson, Sir John. *Orderly Book of Sir John Johnson During the Oriskany Campaign*. Edited by William Stone with an introduction by J. Watts de Peyster. Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1887. Johnson focuses on military actions; there is no detailed account of the battlefield landscape. The appendix contains primary source letters.

Johnson, Sir William. *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, James Sullivan, ed. (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921).

## Reference List

---

*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877, Vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, cover page and 419. Full page engraving of the centennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany, and short article, "One Hundredth Anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany."

Lossing, Benson. J. *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*. New York: Harper Bros., 1860, vol. 1. Although largely a secondary-source account of the Fort Stanwix-Oriskany campaign, this book is important for documenting through the author's own sketches and descriptions the condition of the Site in 1848. Also includes references to many primary sources.

Mohawk Valley Historic Association, publications:

*Articles of Incorporation, List of Officers and Executive Committee; Object of Association with Addresses and Letters of Explanation*. (No publisher noted, c.1920).

*Annual Meeting*. (No publisher noted, no. 6, 1925).

*1925 Yearbook*. (No publisher noted, c.1926).

*1936 Yearbook / Second Annual Mohawk Valley Historical Conference*. Fort Plain: Standard Print Shop, 1936.

[New York Public Library]

New York, State of. *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*. 5 volumes. Albany: J. B. Lyon, State Printer, 1894. Includes laws related to colonial road standards in the County of Albany, chapters 885 and 1121.

New York, State of. *General Plank Road Law; and Articles of Association of the Rome & Utica Plank Road Co.* Rome: A. J. Rowley & Co., 1847. This document does not contain any specific information on the alignment or design of the plank road or its predecessor turnpike.

[University of Michigan Transportation Library]

New York State Department of Conservation [Conservation Commission]. *Annual Reports*, 1926-1944. Albany: J. B. Lyon, Printer (1926-pre 1940); New York: Publishers Printing Company (1940-44).

New York State Department of Education. "Historic and Scientific Sites of New York State," (c.1952); "Historic Sites of New York State," c.1956. Published brochures.

[Oriskany Museum; OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]

New York *Times* articles [clippings in OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]:

"The Commemoration of the Battle of Oriskany . . ." 23 December 1883.

"Herkimer and His Men." 23 December 1883

"In Memory of Herkimer." 7 August 1884.

"The Battle of Oriskany / Centennial Celebration." 7 August 1877.

"50,000 See 'Battle' At Fort Stanwix . . . Oriskany Commemorated." 7 August 1927, 2-1, 2-3.

O'Callaghan, E.B., editor. *Documentary History of the State of New York*. 4 volumes. Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849. A collection of primary-source documents and illustrations that include the context of Indian relations, transportation, trade, and settlement in the Mohawk Valley.

O'Callaghan, E.B., editor. *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York / Procured in Holland, England, and France by John Romeyn Brodhead, Agent*. 10 volumes. Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1857.

Documents include correspondence of Colonel Claus, Col. Guy Johnson, Sir William Johnson, Governor Burnet and others relative to Oriskany and the upper Mohawk Valley. These documents provide historic context, but no detailed information on the Site's landscape.

Oneida Historical Society at Utica. *Memorial of the Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Oriskany, August 6, 1877*. Utica: published by the Society, 1878. Includes transcripts of battle-period documents (St. Leger, George Clinton, British Annual Register, others), texts of speeches, and description of the celebration.

Pumpelly, J. C. "Fort Stanwix and Battle of Oriskany / An Address Delivered Before the Society of the Sons of the Revolution in New York City, December 3, 1888." In *Our French Allies in the Revolution and Other Addresses*. Publisher and date of publication not noted. Although largely a romantic, secondary-source history of the battle, this work is important for reflecting the patriotic spirit of commemoration during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

[New York Public Library]

## Reference List

---

Rome *Daily Sentinel* [clippings in Oriskany Museum]:

- "Oriskany / The Battle Ground -- Past and Present--The Coming Celebration." 31 July 1877.
- "Dedication of Oriskany Monument." 6 August 1884.
- "DAR Memorial Gateposts Dedicated at Oriskany Battlefield." 6 August 1929, 14.
- "Valley Historic Society Seeks Park at Oriskany." 6 August 1930.
- "Toll Road Once Ran Past Oriskany Battlefield; Old Gate House Afterwards Served as Dwelling." 5 April 1938.

Snow, Dean R., Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna, editors. *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. Includes the following relevant accounts: Harmen Meynderstz van den Bogaert, "A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635;" "Diary of Peter Saily on a Journey in America in the Year 1784;" Elkanah Watson, "Journal of Travels, Principally by Water, from Albany to the Seneca Lake," 1791; Friedrich Rohde, "Journal of a Trip from New Jersey to Oneida Lake," 1802.

"Souvenir Program / 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany and the Siege and Relief of Fort Stanwix / Saturday August 6, 1927." Publisher not noted.  
[Oriskany Museum]

Spafford, Horatio Gates. *A Gazetteer of the State of New York*. Albany: H. C. Southwick, 1813.

Thompson, Alexander diary, Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. Published in *A Salute to Courage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

Utica *Daily Gazette*:

- "Lt. Governor Dickson's Speech at Oriskany." 9 August 1844, 2.
- "The Number at Oriskany," "Oriskany Mass Meeting." Published as special-edition *Oneida Ranger* (pro-Whig arm of the *Gazette*), 9 August 1844, 4.
- "The Convention at Oriskany." 6 August 1844, 2.

Utica *Daily Observer*:

- "Oriskany Battleground: Its Present Condition and a Glimpse of Its Past." 25 June 1877, 4-5.
- "Oriskany: The Coming Celebration." Series of articles, including 12 June 1877, 3; 2 August 1877, 2; 3 August 1877, 2; 4 August 1877, 5.
- "Our Centennial." 6 August 1877, 1.
- "Our Centennial." 7 August 1877, 1 (includes map by Ashton Brothers, "The Battle of Oriskany").

Utica *Daily Press*:

- "For Purchase of Battlefield." 30 December 1916. [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]
- "Oriskany National Park." 15 January 1917. [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]
- "Largest Crowd Ever Gathered in County Attended Centennial." 6 August 1927, 11.
- "Elaborate Programs Mark Rome and Oriskany Celebrations." Special edition flyer, August 7, 1927. [Rome Historical Society]
- "Oriskany Monument Dedicated." 6 August 1928. [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]
- "Approves Plans for State Park at Oriskany Site." 26 April 1950, 1.
- "Begin Oriskany Site Work." December 1, 1953 [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]

Utica *Observer Dispatch*:

- "Move for National Park at Oriskany on 145<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." 30 July 1922, 1.
- "Site for Memorial to Unknown Patriotic Dead of Battle of Oriskany is Inspected Today." 1 August 1928 [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]
- "Complete Plans for Memorial Gateway." 6 August 16, 1929 [Clipping, Oriskany Museum]
- "State Park Proposed at Oriskany." 18 December 1949, B-1.
- "Dewey Stamps OK on Project / Oriskany Site to Become Major Historical Shrine." 13 April 1951, 1.
- "Korea 2<sup>nd</sup> Oriskany, Corey Says at Rites." 31 May 1953, 7B.
- "Battlefield Improvements to Start in 10 Days." 4 August 1959, 13.
- "Three Plaques are Ordered for Oriskany." 11 October 1959, 2-5.
- "Oriskany folks rally to keep battle site open." 19 February 1992, 5-A.

Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway (New York State Railways) timetable, effective September 19, 1910.  
[Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]

## Reference List

---

Wallace, Paul A.W., editor. *Thirty Thousand Miles With John Heckewelder*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958. Heckewelder provided an account of his travel across the Oriskany Battlefield in 1793.

Wasmus, J. F., Journal of. Published in Doblin, Helga and Mary C. Linn. *An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life / The Journal of J. F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776-1783*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. Wasmus provides a three-page account of the Battle of Oriskany (although he was not actually there), but without any specific description of the landscape.

Younglove, Samuel. "Battle of Oriskany / Record of the Narrative of Dr. Moses Younglove; Giving an Account of the Battle of Oriskany and of His Experience After Being Taken Prisoner." microfiche, American History Series. No date or source; prior to 1897.  
[Bird Library, Syracuse University]

### Secondary Sources:

Albers, Jan. *Hands on the Land / A History of the Vermont Landscape*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. Contains a brief, but undocumented account of the 1759 Crown Point military road.

Bailey, Liberty Hyde, Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, editors. *Hortus Third*. New York: Macmillian, 1976.

Beetle, David H. *Along the Oriskany*. Rochester: Published for the Utica *Observer-Dispatch* by Louis Heindl & Son, 1947. Provides a brief account of the battle and development of the battlefield as an historic site; also information on existing conditions, including quotes from caretaker William Ringrose.

Bonnicksen, Thomas M. *America's Ancient Forests / From the Ice Age to the Age of Discovery*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Brouillette, Randy. "The History of Oneida County Agriculture." Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, on-line paper at [www.cce.cornell.edu](http://www.cce.cornell.edu), 13 June 2000.

Campbell, William W. *Annals of Tryon County; Or the Border Warfare of New-York During the Revolution*. New York: J. J. Harper, 1831. This book is important as the earliest published history of the Battle of Oriskany. Campbell references and prints in full many primary source documents, but provides no description of the landscape.

Chamberlain, James L. *Mohawk River Flood Plain, Oneida County, New York: An Ecological Interpretation*. Utica: Oneida County Department of Planning, February 1974.

Clarke, T. Wood. *The Bloody Mohawk*. Port Washington: Friedman, 1968 reprint of 1941 edition. A largely undocumented history of the battle; includes a c. 1940 photograph of the Battle Creek ravine.

Cookinham, Henry. *History of Oneida County, New York from 1700 to the Present Time*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1912. This history provides the standard battle account, but also includes four period photographs.

De Peyster, J. Watts. "Oriskany." *Magazine of American History*. January 1878, 22-29. A detailed secondary account of the Fort Stanwix-Oriskany campaign; sources not documented.

Durant, Samuel. *History of Oneida County, New York*. Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878. Provides information on the Parkhurst family and on the histories of Whitestown and Rome.

Duryee, Ruth et. al. *History Supplement / New York State Organization / Daughters of the American Revolution*. Printed by the DAR (no place of publication noted), April 1953. Provides a short history of the Oriskany Chapter and notes its goal of making the battlefield a state park. [Excerpt from DAR Office of the Historian General, Washington, D.C.]

Ellis, David M., James A. Frost, Harold C. Syrett, and Harry J. Carman. *A Short History of New York State*. Ithaca: Published by Cornell University Press in Co-operation with the New York State Historical Association, 1957. General reference for New York State history.

Fiske, John. "Ticonderoga, Bennington, and Oriskany." *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 63, no. 3 (March 1889), 413-414.

## Reference List

---

- Forbes, Dr. William. "More New Light on Old Fort Schuyler." In Rome Historical *Society Annals and Recollections*, October 1983. This short article discusses the construction of the military road between Fort Hunter and Fort Stanwix in the context of the construction of Fort Schuyler (Utica).
- Fox, Edith M. *Land Speculation in the Mohawk Country*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949. This work provides historic context for the Oriskany Patent and general development of the Mohawk Valley during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Graymont, Barbara. *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972. Provides an account of the Battle of Oriskany.
- Graymont, Barbara. "The Oneidas and the American Revolution." In Campisi, Jack and Laurence Hauptman, editors. *The Oneida Indian Experience*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988. Provides an account of the Battle of Oriskany and context for the Oneidas role in it.
- Greene, Nelson. *A History of the Mohawk Valley / Gateway to the West 1614-1925*. 2 volumes. Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1925. Includes a detailed account of the Fort Stanwix-Oriskany campaign. Although not well documented, it appears that the account is largely taken from 19<sup>th</sup> century histories. The description of the Site is partly from the author's own visits in the early 1920s. Appendix includes primary source material, including correspondence from Colonel Willet, German Flats Committee, and a series of veterans' personal experiences.
- Greene, Nelson. *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book*. Published for the Mohawk Valley Historic Association. Fort Plain: Nelson Greene, 1924. A tourists' guide that documents conditions in the 1920s, including two photographs of the Site, information on the Herkimer's march monuments, and secondary-source history of Oriskany and region.
- Grolier Encyclopedia*, 1946 edition. S.v. "Mile."
- Gurley, Robert. *Here Comes the Trolley*. Published by Richard Stenmetz (no place of publication noted), 1964. Contains some information on the electric railway that ran through the Site.  
[Oneida County Historical Society]
- Hagerty, Gilbert. *Massacre at Fort Bull / The De Leery expedition against Oneida Carry / 1756*. Providence: Mowbray, 1971. Provides limited information on the development of the Oneida Carry.
- Halbritter, Ray, Oneida Nation Representative. "The Battle of Oriskany." Online paper at site: [www.oneida-nation.net/facts/oriskany/html](http://www.oneida-nation.net/facts/oriskany/html). Dated 1 October 1999. Provides a history of the battle from a modern Oneida perspective.
- ICON Architecture and The Saratoga Associates. "Land Use History For The Oriskany Battlefield." Unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, 30 June 1998. Provided tax-parcel information for Site and surrounding properties.
- Jones, Pomroy. *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County*. Rome: Published by the author, 1851. An early published history of the battle; provides some information on the battlefield landscape, including post-battle development.
- Kelly, Virginia B., Oneida County Historian, editor. *The History of Oneida County*. Published by the County, 1977. Provides contextual information for transportation and agriculture, military developments, natural resources, and general histories of Whitestown and Rome.
- Lee, Ronald F. "The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea." Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1973. Provides context for the development of battlefields as historic sites during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Linenthal, Edward T. *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Provides context on the development of commemorative landscapes.
- Lord, Philip. *War Over Walloomscoick / Land Use and Settlement Pattern on the Bennington Battlefield--1777*. Albany: New York State Museum Bulletin No. 473, 1989. Contains a chapter on 18<sup>th</sup>-century road building.

## Reference List

---

Loewy, James M. "The Pleistocene Geology of the Oriskany, New York 7.5 Minute Quadrangle." Syracuse University Department of Geology thesis, December 1983. Provides information on the glacial origin of landforms in the area around the Site.

Luzader, John F. *The Construction and Military History of Fort Stanwix*. Washington: National Park Service, Division of History, 1969. Provides a history of transportation and military developments at the Oneida Carry, focusing on period between 1700 and 1777.

Maxon, E. T. and M. Earl Carr. *Soil Survey of Oneida County, New York*. Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, Government Printing Office, 1915. Information on soils, topography, agriculture of Oneida County (section of map covering the Site not available).

Marshall, Douglass W. "British Engineers in America 1755-1783." *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* (Great Britain), Autumn, 1973. Provides names of British Engineers-in-Charge during the construction of Fort Stanwix and historic context for the building of colonial military roads during the period.

Menges, Florence Skidmore Brown and Mrs. Charles White Nash. *History of New York State Conference / Daughters of the American Revolution / Its Officers and Chapters*. Published by the Daughters of the American Revolution (?), c.1923. Provides a history of the Oriskany chapter from 1910 to c.1923.

"Neck Canal of 1730." National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1995  
[Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Waterford, New York]

*The New York Red Book*. Review of editions 1944-1990. Provides State Education listings of historic sites under its control with brief descriptions of each site; documents changes in management of historic sites from Conservation to Education to Parks.

New York State Department of Transportation. "A Digest of Laws Concerning Plank Roads and Turnpike Roads: Taken from the Session Books of the New York State Legislature." Unpublished, unauthored paper in vertical files on road history.  
[DOT Region 2 Offices, Utica]

North, S. "The Story of a Monument." *Magazine of American History*, vol. XII, no. 2 (August 1884), 97-112.

O'Donnell, Thomas F. "Oriskany, 1877: The Centennial and the Birth of Frederic's *In the Valley*." In *New York History* (New York State Historical Association Quarterly), vol. 7, no. 2 (April 1976), 139-164. Secondary-source on the centennial celebration.

Oneida Nation. "A Brief History of the Oneida Indian Nation." Online at [www.oneida-nation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML](http://www.oneida-nation.net/BRHISTORY.HTML), copyright 1998. Oneida history from a contemporary perspective.

Piatt, Kevin P. "Opportunity Lost: The Battle of Oriskany and the Siege of Fort Stanwix." M.A. Thesis, California State University Domingues Hills, Spring, 1998. Contains bibliography that lists many county pension records and other primary-source documents. Emphasis is on the military strategy of St. Leger.  
[Fulton-Montgomery Community College Library]

Poore, Benjamin. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Government Publications of the United States, September 5, 1774 to March 4, 1881*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885. Provides list of federal action on Herkimer monument.

Rae, John B. *The Road and the Car in American Life*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971.

Rainey, Reuben M. "The Memory of War: Reflections on Battlefield Preservation." In *The Yearbook of Landscape Architecture / Historic Preservation*, edited by Richard L. Austin, et. al. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983. Provides historic context on battlefield design, preservation, and interpretation.

Reid, Max W. *The Mohawk Valley: Its Legends and Its History*. New York: Putnam's Sons / Knickerbocker Press, 1907. A largely undocumented history; includes four period photographs of the Site.

Robertaccio, Joseph S. "A Field Report On the Old Military Road through Oriskany Battlefield, analysis of historic documentation and pictorial history of the site." Unpublished paper dated 24 November 1995.  
[OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]

## Reference List

---

- Robert, Ellis H. *The Battle of Oriskany: Its Place in History. An Address at the Centennial Celebration, August 6, 1877*. Utica: Roberts & Co., 1877. This document was the first scholarly account of the battle. No primary documents are cited for description of the landscape.
- Rose, Albert. *Historic American Roads / From Frontier Trails to Superhighways*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1976. Provides limited historic context for the Iroquois Trail and plank roads.
- Schoolcraft, Henry. "Historical Considerations on the Siege and Defense of Fort Stanwix in 1777." In *Proceedings of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1846*. New York: Press of the Historical Society, 1846, 132-158. This early history of the battle uses the account of veteran Col. Lawrence Schoolcraft and letters of Marinus Willett, and the earlier histories written by Stone and Campbell.
- Scott, John Albert. *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany; with Index / Supplement to the Edition of 1927*. Rome: Rome Sentinel Company, 1927. Provides a detailed account of the Battle of Oriskany that is well referenced to primary source material. There is little detailed information on the landscape aside from two photographs.
- Scott, John Albert. "Fort Stanwix and Oriskany: The Complete Book." Scrapbook of newspaper articles (mostly Rome and Utica papers) related to Fort Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany. Not dated. [Rome Historical Society]
- Simms, Jephtha R. *The Frontiersmen of New York . . .* Albany: George C. Riggs, 1882/3. 2 volumes. References primary materials and includes remembrances of Oriskany veterans.
- SJS Archaeological Services. "A Place of Great Sadness / Mohawk Valley Battlefield Ethnography." Barrow, Arkansas: Written for the National Park Service, c.1998. This study concentrates on the impact of the Revolutionary War on the Iroquois, with particular emphasis on the Oneidas and the impact of the Battle of Oriskany. The report makes a series of findings as to the ethnographic significance of the Oriskany Battlefield; it also contains a detailed account of the battle, which is based largely on primary materials, many of which have not been used in other studies of the battle. These materials include documents from the National Archives of Canada, the Papers of Daniel Claus, the Haldimand Papers, the Colonial Office Records from Kew, the Draper Manuscripts, the Court Martial of General Philip Schuyler, the Writings of George Washington, the Journals of Samuel Kirkland, and the battle account of Norton. Aside from the Norton account, the researchers used often-cited sources on the battle, including documents of St. Leger, Schuyler, Colbreth, and Claus, and later histories by Jones, Simms, Stone, and Willett. [OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- Skinner, Avery W. "The Old Trail from the Mohawk to Oswego." In *Proceedings of the New York Historical Association*, volume 13 (1914), 199-209. This article is more about the military developments than about the building of the trail (military road).
- Sleeman, G. Martin, editor. *Early Histories and Descriptions of Oneida County, New York*. Utica: North Country Books, Inc. 1990. Late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts; those pertinent to Oriskany include writings by Campbell, Taylor, and DeWitt Clinton.
- Sloan, Eric. *Our Vanishing Landscape*. New York: Ballantine, 1955. Contains a chapter on roads that includes a discussion of a Revolutionary-era military road in Vermont.
- Starna, William A. "The Oneida Homeland in the Seventeenth Century." In Campisi, Jack and Laurence Hauptman, editors. *The Oneida Indian Experience*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988. Good background on the history of the Oneidas around the time of European contact.
- Stipe, Robert E. and Antoinette J. Lee. *The American Mosaic / Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington: US/ICOMOS, 1987. Provides history of historic preservation.
- Stone, William L. *The Campaign of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne and the Expedition of Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger*. Albany: Joel Munsell, 1877. Landscape descriptions in this text are taken from DePeyster and Campbell; primary sources in appendices.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Life of Joseph Brant - Thayendanegea Including The Indian Wars of the American Revolution*. New York: George Dearborn & Company, 1838. Includes an account of the Battle of Oriskany but little detail on the landscape.



## Reference List

---

Sullivan, Dr. James, Editor-in-Chief. *History of New York State 1523-1927*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1927. General reference on New York State history.

Thompson, John H. *Geography of New York State*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966. General reference on New York State.

Tischler, William H., editor. *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*. Washington, D. C.: The Preservation Press, 1989. Provides context on the design of commemorative landscapes.

Tracy, William. *Notices of Men and Events Connected With the Early History of Oneida County / Two Lectures Delivered Before the Young Mens' Association of Utica*. Utica: R. Northway, 1838. Contains a short description of the Battle of Oriskany; one of three early secondary accounts dating from the 1830s.

Van Diver, Bradford. *Roadside Geology of New York*. Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing, 1985. Provides information on the geology of the upper Mohawk Valley.

Von Klock, Max Otto. *The Battle of Oriskany August 6, 1777*. Pamphlet published by Steuben Society of America, Boston Branch; Oriskany Unit, 1927. This work is important for reflecting early 20<sup>th</sup>-century German-American attitudes toward their ancestors' role in the battle and place in American history. The account of the battle is largely taken from William Stone. Includes a pre-1927 photograph of the monument with a flagstaff erected by the German-American National Alliance prior to 1918.

Wagner, Daniel. *Our County and Its People / A Descriptive Work on Oneida County, New York*. Boston: The Boston History Company, 1896. A comprehensive account of the development of Oneida County that relies on many primary sources. Includes a detailed account of the battle, but little detail on the landscape.

Walworth, Mrs. Ellen Hardin. *Battles of Saratoga 1777 / The Saratoga Monument Association 1856-1891*. Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891. This history provides background on a monument and battlefield park contemporary with Oriskany.

Willett, William M. *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett, Taken Chiefly From His Own Manuscript*. New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1831. William Willett was the son of battle veteran Marinus Willett, and his account is purportedly taken from his father's memoirs. Along with Campbell's *Annals of Tryon County*, this is one of the earliest histories of the battle.

Wonderley, Anthony. "Notes and Brief Chronology of Oliska, the Oneida Village at Oriskany." Unpublished paper dated September 16, 1999.

[Oneida Indian Nation, Office of the Nation Historian, via Oneida, New York]

\_\_\_\_\_. "1777: The Oneidas and the Birth of the American Nation." Research exhibition script in preparation, Shako:wi Cultural Center, Oneida Indian Nation, September, 1996.

[Oneida Indian Nation, Office of the Nation Historian]

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Oneidas." Unpublished history of the Oneida dated 29 April 1998.

[Oneida Indian Nation, Office of the Nation Historian]

## Graphic Material

### Maps and Plans

- c.1750 "Outline of the Mohawk River & Wood Creek." No source or date. Does not show any detail aside from outline of the rivers.  
[F1 OCP.1, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- c.1756 "Part of the County of Albany in the Province of New York." No source or date. Three-part large-scale map of the Mohawk River from the Hudson River to Oneida Lake and north to Oswego. Documents a road on the south side of the Mohawk River between present Utica and Rome; Fort Stanwix not yet built.  
[Crown Collection Volume 1, Series 1, Maps #48, 49, 50, New York State Library, Albany]
- c.1756 "Map of the County of Albany." No source or date. Large-scale map from Fort Hunter west to Oriskany; Site just off map. Documents road on south side of Mohawk River.  
[Crown Collection Volume 1, Series 1, Map #4, New York State Library, Albany]
- c.1758 "Plan of Fort Stanwix / Built at Onnida Station 1758." No source. Plan, scale 100' = 1", focuses on Fort Stanwix but does show the "Road from Ft. Harkiman" approaching from the west (south) side of the Mohawk River.  
[Crown Collection, volume 2, Series 1, Map #50, New York State Library, Albany]
- 1772 "Communication between Albany and Oswego / Engraved for Mr. Mants History of North America By T. Kitchen, Hydrographer to his Majesty." 1772. Documents waterways and trails/roads from the Hudson River to Lake Ontario; shows the Road between present Utica and Rome.  
[Copy from library flyer, "The Way West," New York State Library, Albany]
- c.1776 "Plan of the Western Country." No source or date. Rough hand-sketch map; damaged (unreadable) around the Site.  
[Map # 747, Map Collection N72, New York State Archives, Albany]
- c.1769 "Oriskany Patent." No source or date (patent was surveyed in 1769). Notes patent boundaries, waterways, the Road, and Fort Stanwix; does not indicate patent subdivision.  
[Map #465, Surveyor General Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany]
- 1779 "A Chorographical Map of the Province of New York . . . By Claude Joseph Sauthier Esqr." January 1, 1779. Charing Cross: Engraved and Published by William Fadden. Reproduced in O'Callaghan, E.B., editor. *Documentary History of the State of New York*. Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849. Documents roads, patents, and forts in the upper Mohawk Valley.
- 1785 "Map of the Survey & Partition of the Oriskany or Oriskary Patent." G. Lansing, Surveyor, June 1785. Illustrates "Great Lot" subdivision lines and names of owners.  
[Map #54, Surveyor General Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany. Undated copy at New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts (contains notes about lot ownership that are not on the State Library copy); 1866 copy at Rome Historical Society; 1916 copy by G. O. Stedman, Architect made from map found in papers of Harvey S. Bedell, Rome, Oriskany County Clerk, Map Room, map roll 24-23.]
- c.1789 "Oriskany Patent." No source or date. This map shows subdivision of Lots 4 and 5 in the Second Allotment.  
[Map # 106, Comptroller's Map series (roll), New York State Archives, Albany; 1976 hand-drawn copy by R. Scott map C21, file 4, Rome Historical Society]
- 1789-1790 Survey field maps for Oriskany Patent, Second Allotment, "Great Lot 3 West Half "(adjoins east side of battlefield), and Third Allotment, "Great Lot 1" (west of Site). In Cockburn, James, Surveyor. "A Field Book of Part of the Oriskany Patent / The Property of The Honorable John Lansing [Inn (?)] and Abraham G. Lansing Esq. / Divided into Lots A. 1789 and 1790."  
[Manuscript Collection SC21244, Box 1, Folder 19, New York State Archives, Albany]
- c.1790 "A Map of the Oriskany Patent n.259 Granted to Peter Schuyler & others 18<sup>th</sup> April 1705." No source or date. Rolled map; watercolor and ink. Shows lots and waterways, but no roads.  
[Map #106 (roll), Comptroller's Maps, no series number; Cabinet 'A', New York State Archives, Albany]

## Reference List

---

- 1793-1794 "Map of Part of the State of New York . . . Made in 1793-4 by John Aldam and John Wallis." Copied from the original by Van Benthuyssen, Albany, no date. Notes major roads (Genesee Turnpike, but not road to Fort Stanwix), waterways; survey of Military Tracts.  
[Map collection C3k, file 3, Rome Historical Society]
- 1803 "A Survey of Mohawk River, Schenectady to Rome." Survey by Benjamin Wright, 1803. Photographed copy. Little detail in area near Site; documents original alignment of Mohawk River.  
[Oneida County Historical Society, Utica (no file number)]
- c.1805 "A Map of the Rome Turnpike Road / In conformity to the directions of the act entitled "An Act to incorporate the Utica & Rome Turnpike Road Companies passed April 10<sup>th</sup> 1805." No source; indexed as 1805 (probably not the map date). Documents old and proposed alignment of the turnpike section west of Rome to Oneida Castle (Route 365); no map available for eastern section to Utica (Route 69). Section of turnpike that likely passed the Site, listed as covering the section from "New Hartford to Rome" and filed by the Commissioners, is missing.  
[Oneida County Map Room Map # 178, Oneida County Office Building, Utica]
- 1806 "Map of Whitestown in Oneida County / Taken from Actual Survey By Peleg Gifford, Survr." 1806. Earliest found map of Whitestown; shows buildings, roads, and forest cover.  
[MAP OC WHI.1, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1809 "Map of Oriskany Patent / Subdivided into Lots 1789" J. Randel, February 1809.  
[*New York State Patents* (no publisher noted), 1736-1871, 29, New York State Library, Albany]
- 1829 "Town of Whitestown." *An Atlas of the Towns in the County of Oneida*, map XXII, 1829. Rough hand-drawn map. Illustrates property boundaries in Whitestown, along with the canal and roads; the Road is mistakenly shown on the north side of the canal.  
[MAP OC GEN.1 1829, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1829 "Oneida County Showing Original Patents, Grants, &c. From the Surveyor General's Map 1829." Copy in Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County*. Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878.
- 1830 "Map of Oriskany Patent / Recorded this 19<sup>th</sup> day of July A.d. 1830 at 11 O'Clock a.m." No source, 1830. Documents subdivision of 2<sup>nd</sup> Allotment, Great Lot 4 along with several other Great Lots; Site in west half of subdivision lot 2 recorded as belonging to "J.V.C." and "J. Morris."  
[Oneida County Map Room, Map Roll 6-26, Oneida County Office Building, Utica]
- 1834 Holmes-Hutchinson canal survey. New York State Canal Commission, 1834. Volume 7, maps 39, 40, 41. Indicates property lines and ownership, topography, and buildings in vicinity of canal; notes location of battle within Great Lot 5 west of Site.  
[Series A0848, New York State Archives, Albany]
- c.1851 "Enlargement of the Erie Canal from Stanwix to Oriskany." New York State [Canal Commission ?], not dated. Sections 119 and 118, pp. 22-26a/b. Documents changes to be made to the canal during enlargement, including acquisition of property and removal of buildings. Documents conditions for a short distance beyond the blue line.  
[New York State Archives, Albany]
- 1852 *Map of Oneida County, New York*. Philadelphia: Newell S. Brown, 1852. Route 69 shown as a plank road; tollgate on city/town line near the Site; notes battlefield.  
[Framed on wall, NYS DOT Region 2, Room 1207, Utica; copy, Town of Rome Historian]
- 1858 *Oneida County Atlas*. Gillette, 1858 (no place of publication noted). Documents lot lines, roads, and property owners/residents; notes "Oriskany Battle."  
[Item 74762, Sheet 2, New York State Archives, Albany]
- 1869 "Enlargement of the Erie Canal from Utica to Higginsville." New York State, State Engineer and Surveyor Van R. Richmond, 1869. Volume 5, Section 119. Documents canal development and alignment adjacent to battlefield; does not document conditions beyond the blue line.  
[New York State Archives, Albany]

## Reference List

---

- 1874 *Atlas of Oneida County*. Philadelphia: D. G. Beers, 1874 (reprinting). Maps of Whitestown and Rome; shows land ownership or residency, buildings; notes "Oriskany Battle Ground."  
[Bird Library, Syracuse University]
- 1877 "The Battle of Oriskany." Drawn by Aston Bros., Utica. Published in the *Utica Daily Observer*, 7 August 1877, 1. Plan of the Site showing general topography, buildings, residency, the purported alignment of the military road, the present road, the Erie Canal and location of the pontoon bridge and boat landing, and location of camps set up during the centennial celebration.
- c.1878 "Plan of the Battle of Oriskany." Drawn by "S.W.D." c.1878. In Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County*. Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878, 10. Sketch plan of the topography, roads, troop placement, and c.1878 land ownership on the battlefield. Map reproduced and annotated by W. Pierrepont White and published in the *Herkimer Evening Telegram*, August 4, 1927.  
[Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1898 "Oriskany, N.Y." 1:62,500 quadrangle map. Washington: United States Geological Survey, March 1898 (reprinted 1938).
- c.1901 "Highway Map of Oneida County Showing 'Highways that public interest demand the improvement of,' – Under Chapter 115 Laws of 1898." Map approved by the Board of Supervisors of Oneida County, 1901. Published as a supplement to the *Utica Daily Press*.  
[Map drawer C21, file 4, Rome Historical Society]
- 1907 "Road Map of Oneida County, New York 1907." Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907. Illustrates roads designated for improvement, including the Road; notes "Oriskany Battle Monument."  
[Map Room, framed above map cabinets, Oneida County Clerk, Oneida County Office Building, Utica]
- 1907 "New Century Atlas Oneida County New York." Philadelphia: Century Map Company, 1907. Map of Whitestown, 10; map of Rome (town), 58-59. Illustrates patent subdivision lots, roads, and residency.  
[Map Room (no file number), Oneida County Clerk, Oneida County Office Building, Utica]
- 1915 "Proposed Reservation of Oriskany Battle Field." George H. Thomas, 1 December 1915. Map/plan showing proposed 191.5-acre site.  
[MAP AR ORI.6, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1920 "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State, Made Pursuant to Chapter 199, Laws of 1910 and Amendatory Laws." State of New York, approved March 3, 1920, maps 320, 321. Documents ownership, lot lines, buildings, and roads adjoining canal lands; only ownership and lot lines indicated at Site.  
[NYS Thruway Authority, Canal Commission Offices, Syracuse]
- 1927 "Plan of the Bloody Battle of Oriskany." Copyright 1927 by William Pierrepont White. Published in the *Herkimer Evening Telegram*, 4 August 1927, 3. Annotated version of "Plan of the Battle of Oriskany" published by Durant in 1877.
- c.1927 "Standard Rest House / Location / Oriskany Battlefield." State of New York Department of Public Works, Sullivan Jones, State Architect, undated. Plans, elevations and details for the "Rest House and Comfort Station."  
[Blueprint, 23-010-1, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1928 "Plan for the Entrance Road to Oriskany Monument / Made for The Oneida Historical Society, William Pierrepont White (President)." Source not noted, dated August 3, 1928. Proposed landscape plan for east plateau at proposed Unknown Soldier's monument. Ink and colored pencil on trace paper.  
[MAP AR ORI.5, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1931 "Preliminary Survey Transit." New York State Department of Public Works, dated October 6 - November 5, 1931. Hand-drawn field survey for Stanwix-Oriskany Whitesboro State Highway. Documents buildings, trees, and other features of the Site alongside highway.  
[NYS DOT Region 2 Offices, Utica]

## Reference List

---

- 1933 "Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro State Highway With Federal Aid." New York State Department of Public Works; construction plans dated 10-31-1933; appropriation plans dated March 28, 1933. Documents vertical and horizontal alignment of new and proposed road, including an elevation of the Battle Creek culvert. [NYS DOT Region 2 Offices, Utica]
- 1942 "Map of a Portion of Erie Canal Lands Belonging to the State Made Pursuant to Chapter 542, Laws of 1939 and Amendatory Laws." State of New York; dated and approved, May 25, 1942. [Map 316.1, NYS Thruway Authority, Canal Commission Offices, Syracuse]
- 1942 "Indians of New York State." In Bertrand M. Wainger et. al. *Exploring New York*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942 (third edition, 1963), page 38. Map of New York State showing topography and Iroquois nation territories.
- 1952 "Map of Land...to be Acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield...Mohawk Valley Historic Association Reputed Owner." Utica: New York State Department of Public Works, District No. 2, July 1952. [Office of the Historian, City of Rome]
- 1952 "Map of Land ... to be Acquired by the State of New York as an Addition to Oriskany Battlefield . . . Estate of William Ringrose, Reputed Owner." Utica: New York State Department of Public Works, District No. 2, 11 August 1952. [NYS OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1955 "Rome, N.Y. NW/4 Rome 15' Quadrangle." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Geological Survey, 1955.
- 1955 "Oriskany, N.Y. NE/4 Rome 15' Quadrangle." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Geological Survey, 1955.
- 1956 "Map of Bessie L. Ringrose Estate Property / Town of Whitestown and City of Rome." J.E. Burdick, 22 October 1956. Property map of 123.3-acre Ringrose property on south side of Route 69; shows course of Battle Brook with dam mid-way on the property. [MAP OC RES.1 1956, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- 1952 "Oriskany Battlefield Caretakers Cottage." New York State Department of Education, 1952. Plans and elevations of proposed building on west plateau. [OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1970 "Topography / Oriskany Battle Monument." Prepared by Dickerson, Czerwinski & Warneck for Central New York State Parks Commission, October 1970. 2 sheets, 50 scale, 1-foot contours. Also documents vegetation, built features, and waterways (not property boundaries). Eastern extreme of Site not included. [OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1980 "Oriskany Battlefield Proposed Sewage Disposal System, Plans and Details." Drawn by McClure, Central New York State Park & Recreation Commission, 12 December 1980. Documents existing maintenance building and parking lot. [Drawing 23-003, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1980 "Oriskany Battlefield Maintenance Building Plan." Drawn by McClure, CNY State Park & Recreation Commission, dated 15 December 1980. Building floor plan and utilities. [Drawing 23-004, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1982 "50' Plan & Mainline Profile, Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitesboro S.H. 8455." New York State Department of Transportation, dated 8 January 1982. Drawing numbers 50P-1 through 50P-4, with as-built revisions. Documents ROW acquisition at ravine, property ownership, major trees, and built features within State ROW. [NYS DOT Region 2, Utica]
- 1991 "Turf Management Alternatives." Drawn by "C.W.B." 1991. 50 scale drawing of southern end of the Site showing existing and proposed mowing lines, vegetation, and built features. [Drawing 23-006, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]

## Reference List

---

- 1993 "Plat of a Survey for Oriskany Battlefield S.H.S." Project for Surveying 4, Mohawk Valley Community College, Susan M Anacker, Party Chief. 15 May 1993. Location of stone piles, overlay on 1989 site plan, reduced to scale of 1" = 20'. Second copy made at 100 scale.  
[Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site office, Whitestown]
- 1997 "Oriskany Battlefield, Oneida County, New York, Segment 01." Prepared by National Park Service Land Acquisition Division, drawing 015/80,000, 1997. Property map of Site and adjoining properties, scale 1" = 400'.  
[Drawing 23-013, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]

## Illustrations & Photographs

- 1848 "The Battleground of Oriskany." Engraving, view west across the west plateau from east side of Battle Creek ravine; earliest illustration of the Site. In Benson Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860) vol. 1, 245.
- c.1857 "Battle of Oriskany, State of New York." Fictitious engraving of battle drawn by "Chapin." Published in Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 1857. Reproduced as a post card by Modern Postcard.  
[Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Whitestown]
- 1877 Lithograph [?], view south into Battle Creek ravine. Shows centennial celebration, causeway, landscape south of Site. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 25 August 1877, vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, cover page.
- c.1879 "Scene of the Battle of Oriskany, At Present Day," two ink lithographs by Weed Parsons & Company, Albany. One is of the "west ravine" looking north; one is of the "east [Battle Creek] ravine" looking northeast. In Allen C. Beach, *Centennial Celebrations of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Company, 1879), 91, 126.
- c.1884 "Photo-engraving" of Oriskany Monument. View northwest with tree or shrub in foreground. Made by "Photo Eng. Co. NY." (Source unknown; probably taken from Battle Monument dedication pamphlet, 1884).  
[Copy, OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- c.1885 Photograph of Ringrose farmhouse, the relocated Utica and Rome Plank Road Company tollgate house. Published in Rome *Daily Sentinel* 5 April 1938.  
[Copy, Oriskany Museum]
- 1884 "Scene at Dedication of Oriskany Monument Aug. 6, 1884." Photograph of the monument surrounded by crowd looking northwest. Earliest photograph of the Site; also reproduced in numerous other publications. Collection of Hon. Henry J. Cookinham. Published in *New York State Historical Association Proceedings*, vol. 14 (1915), 340.
- 1891 "The Battle of Oriskany, N.Y. The Present Appearance of the Field, Looking West, Across the Ravine Where the Patriots Were Attacked by Ambushed Savages." Ink sketch. Published in Utica *Saturday Globe*, August 8, 1891.
- c.1900 "Monument on the Hill-Side Overlooking the Ravine at Oriskany." Photograph, northwest view of Battle Monument with woman and child at its foot. In Francis Whiting Halsey, *The Old New York Frontier* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 197.
- 1900 Photograph of Battle Monument, view northwest with three people in foreground. Taken by John Arthur Maney. In William M. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 413.
- 1900 Photograph of Battle Monument from west side of Battle Creek ravine; ravine elm and barn to left. Taken by John Arthur Maney. In William M. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 437.
- c.1900 Photograph of Battle Creek ravine, view north with "old wood-road" in foreground." Taken by John Arthur Maney. In William M. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 427.
- c.1900 Photograph of Battle Creek ravine, view east toward two Ringrose-heir barns with purported "Log Road" in foreground. In William M. Reid, *The Mohawk Valley* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 421.

## Reference List

---

- c.1912 "Showing [Battle] Monument and [west]Ravine Looking Westward" [southward]. Photograph. In New York Historical Association *Proceedings*, v. 14 (1915), 332. Also in Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1912), 38.
- c.1912 "Showing Easterly [Battle Creek] Ravine Looking Northerly" [southerly]. Photograph. In New York Historical Association *Proceedings*, v. 14 (1915), 332. Also in Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1912), 38.
- c.1912 "The Swamp of the Oriskany Battlefield." Photograph, view north north-east across lowlands from edge of uplands north of Oriskany Monument. In Henry Cookinham, *History of Oneida County* (Chicago: Clarke, 1912), 38.
- 1922 "Oriskany Battlefield Monument." Photograph, view north-west toward monument with cars parked on field during 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. In Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: Nelson Greene, 1924), 277.  
Private collection.
- c.1922 "Oriskany Battlefield." Photograph, view from monument east toward Battle Creek ravine. In Nelson Greene, *The Old Mohawk Turnpike Book* (Fort Plain: Nelson Greene, 1924), 280.
- c.1926 Photograph, view north-west from lower part of Battle Creek ravine with Oriskany Monument to left and highlands on north side of Mohawk Valley in distance. Not dated; rest house not present.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1926 "Oriskany Battle Monuments." Photograph, view northwest toward Herkimer's march monument and Battle Monument with unimproved drive in foreground. In John Scott, *Fort Stanwix and Oriskany* (Rome: Rome Sentinel Company, 1927), 223.
- 1927 "Oriskany Monument during the sesqui." Photograph, view south south-east toward the Oriskany Monument from the lowlands with rest house to right and people ascending the hill. Copy in Chester Williams, *Photographs of Rome, New York 1880-1930* (Rome Historical Society, 1975), 89.
- 1927 "Crowd on Oriskany Battlefield paying Respects to Heroes . . ." Photograph of sesquicentennial celebration, view south from Battle Monument toward speaker stand, Ringrose house in distance. In Rome *Daily Sentinel* (Saturday Evening edition), 6 August 1927.
- c.1927 "To the Unknown Patriotic Soldiers of Tryon County . . ." Copy, drawing of proposed monument with circular drive in foreground. Copy also includes a photograph of the monument's bronze plaque dated 6 August 1928.  
[Oriskany Museum]
- c.1928 "Monument to Unknown Soldiers of Oriskany." Photograph taken between 1927 and 1933, with vista of Battle Monument in background. In Lou D. MacWethy, Compiler, *The Book of Names* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969, reprint of 1933 St. Johnsville edition), 130. Also appears along with photograph of Battle Monument and Herkimer Homestead in Mohawk Valley Historic Association letterhead (c.1920s).  
[Oneida County Historical Society, Utica]
- c.1930 Photograph; view of rest house north-west from circular drive north of Oriskany Monument.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1930 Photograph; view east from circular drive around Battle Monument toward Battle Creek ravine. Not dated; pasture fences remain; Parkhurst-heir farmstead not present.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1931 Aerial photograph of the Site, oblique view north with numbered features. Illustrates west boundary Cyclone fence installed in 1930; Road not yet improved (undertaken in 1933-34).  
[Oriskany Museum (original purportedly hung in Oriskany diner); copy at Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Whitestown]

## Reference List

---

- 1938 Aerial photograph with soils designation, ARZ 3356.  
[Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy]
- c.1941 Photograph; "Bloody Gulch at Oriskany." View north along east side of Battle Creek ravine from the Road. In T. Wood Clarke, *The Bloody Mohawk* (Port Washington, 1941), 216.
- 1949 Series of photographs of the Site, including the Battle Monument, Unknown Soldiers' Monument, William Ringrose, Ringrose barns and house, D.A.R. memorial gateway, and Battle Creek ravine. In *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, December 18, 1949, page B-1.
- 1949 "Oriskany Battlefield - near Rome, N.Y." Photograph by John J. Vrooman. "View northwest from Battle Creek ravine toward Battle Monument.  
[Kroch Library, Cornell University, Ithaca]
- c.1950 Photograph, view north from Battle Monument to rest house and flagstaff with Mohawk Valley in distance.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1953 "Begin Oriskany Site Work." Photograph, view from west side of Battle Creek ravine to Battle Monument. In *Utica Daily Press*, 1 December 1953.
- 1957 Aerial photograph with soils designation, ARZ 7P26.  
[Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, Marcy]
- 1962 Aerial photograph dated March 29, 1962 by Henry DeWolf Aerial Surveys, Rochester. View northwest toward Oriskany Monument.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1962 "Oriskany Monument." Color post card, view north toward Battle Monument; loop drive around monument removed (c.1961), but rest house not yet renovated (1963). Margo Studio, Rome, postmarked 21 September 1966.  
[OPRHP Central Region, Jamesville]
- 1964 Aerial photograph of west half of Site and land to the west. Taken for a proposed mining project, 1964.  
[Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Waterford]
- 1965 Six photographs dated 21 June 1965 of the rest house renovated into the "Oriskany Battlefield Museum." 2 interiors and 3 exterior views.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1965 "Site for Caretaker House." Two photographs dated 21 June 1965. View southeast from near Battle Monument across field to Ringrose house, and view from the Road toward the Battle Monument.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1965 "Storage Barn." Photograph dated 21 June 1965. View southeast of Ringrose horse barn.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1965 Regional aerial photograph dated 7-65.  
[Oneida County aerial photograph collection, Map Department, Bird Library, Syracuse University]
- 1967 Photograph dated August 6, 1967; view north of navy personnel raising the flag of the USS Oriskany on the Battle Monument flagstaff.  
[Oriskany Museum]
- 1967 Three photographs dated 26 June 1967. View northwest of the front of visitor center; view north of the Battle Monument; and view north northeast of the Battle Monument gateway.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford].
- c.1970 Photograph marked "NYSHT 7-1970." View northwest from Battle Monument over visitor center.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1970 Photograph marked #56152. View northwest from east side of mown Battle Creek ravine through young elms; State Education historical marker in distance.



## Reference List

---

- [OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1970 Undated photograph. Close-up view north of the rough log foot bridge over Battle Creek; ravine is mown and contains numerous young elms.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1970 Photograph marked "NYSHT 7-70." Close-up view east southeast of Battle Monument with flagstaff to right.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1970 Two photographs marked "NYSHT 7-70." Close-up view north of Battle Monument with scaffolding; close-up view south-east of Battle Monument with scaffolding and visitor center, stairs, and benches in foreground..  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1971 "Oriskany Battle Monument, erected 1884, Rome vicinity, New York." Photograph, view northwest toward Battle Monument with young maples in background.  
[Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome]
- c.1975 Infrared aerial photograph of Oriskany Battlefield. Ed Kupiec, Photo-Interpretation Services, Barneveld, New York. Photograph is undated, but is post 1970 (maintenance garage exists) and pre-1976 (gravel path through ravine is not present).  
[Collection of Joseph Robertaccio, Friends of Oriskany Battlefield]
- 1976 Undated photograph; view north toward brick seating/interpretive area (apparently being disassembled) and panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk northeast of Battle Monument.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1976 Photograph marked "Spring, 1976." View north through Battle Monument gateway; iron picket fence remains to west.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1979 Photograph marked "Winter 79." View west toward rustic welcome sign.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1980 Photograph. Close-up view west of mast-arm main entrance sign, "Oriskany Battlefield 1777."  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1980 Photograph marked "Summer 1980." View east toward gravel ravine path and wood footbridge over Battle Creek.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1980 Photograph marked "1980." View west of front of visitor center.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1980 Photograph. View north from parking lot toward Battle Monument.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1980 Photograph. View northeast toward Battle Monument with young sugar maples in background.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- c.1980 Photograph. View southeast of Oriskany Monument; square-end benches and stone steps present.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1980 Photograph marked "1980." View south of panoramic illustrated interpretive kiosk east of Battle Monument; Ringrose house in background.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1981 Photograph marked "Oct 81." View east-north-east of Battle Monument gateway with mast-arm sign.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]

## Reference List

---

- 1984 Two photographs. View from Battle Creek ravine area northwest toward Battle Monument with partially open view into Mohawk Valley; view from east side of ravine with gravel ravine path in foreground and top of Oriskany Monument visible above trees.  
[OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, Waterford]
- 1998 Set of infrared aerial photographs of the Site and surrounding region. Flown by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 16 November 1998.  
[Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Whitestown].
- 1998 Set of aerial photographs of the Site and surrounding region. Flown by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 19 December 1998.  
[Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, Whitestown].

## Personal Interviews & Conversations

Demyttenaere, Nancy, manager  
Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site  
Conversations regarding existing operation of the Site with J. Auwaerter, summer 1999 to fall 2000.

Forbes, Dr. William  
Cedarwood  
9796 Powell Road  
Holland Patent, NY 13354 (315) 865-4678  
Telephone conversations and e-mail inquiries to J. Auwaerter, fall 1999 to spring 2000. Received transcripts of Amherst and Montesor journals in Dr. Forbes' collection related to the building of the military road in 1759, and assistance on other materials related to early roads in the upper Mohawk Valley.

Lord, Phil  
New York State Museum  
Historical Survey  
Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12230 (518) 486-2037  
Telephone conversations with J. Auwaerter on history of roads in New York State and the history of the Bennington Battlefield, summer and fall 1999.

Morrison, James.  
95 Lincoln Street  
Gloversville, NY 12078 (518) 725-6737  
Telephone conversations with J. Auwaerter, summer and fall 1999. James Morrison is an historian of the Battle of Oriskany. He provided direction on research and sent copies of his transcripts of Montgomery, Fulton, and Herkimer, and Madison County pension accounts for Oriskany veterans.

Museum of Applied Military History  
Gavin Watt  
85 Fog Road  
King City, Ontario, Canada L7B 1A3 (905) 833-6435  
Telephone conversations with J. Auwaerter, summer and fall 1999. Gavin Watt is a historian who studies the Loyalist involvement in the Revolution and the Battle of Oriskany in particular. He provided direction on avenues of research. Mr. Watt has a collection of Loyalist records related to the Battle; these were not researched by the author.

Myers, Roger  
Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site  
Conversations and Site inspection with J. Auwaerter, winter to summer 2000. Roger Myers provided information on the Site based on his recollections as manager from the 1970s through the 1980s.

## Reference List

---

Robertaccio, Joseph

Friends of Oriskany

10 Rose Mary Street

Utica 13501 (315) 798-5064

Telephone conversations and site inspection with J. Auwaerter, fall 1999. Joseph Robertaccio provided research leads and information on battle-related features and existing conditions.

Roberts, Dennis

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site

Conversations and Site inspection with J. Auwaerter, summer 1999 to summer 2000. Dennis Roberts provided information on the Site based on his recollections as staff there from the 1970s to the present.

Seltzer, Geoffrey

Professor, Earth Sciences (Geology)

Heroy Lab

Syracuse University (315) 474-2672

Conversations and Site visit with J. Auwaerter to assess geology, fall and winter 1999-2000.

Smith, Ray

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

Waterford, New York (518) 237-8643

Conversation with J. Auwaerter regarding expanding period of significance to include the commemorative period, fall 1999.

Williams, Craig

New York State Museum

Historical Survey

Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12230 (518) 486-2037

Meeting and telephone conversations with J. Auwaerter, fall 1999. Craig Williams provided information on the history of the Erie Canal and assistance in review of historic canal documents in the State Library.

## **Appendix A: List of Repositories Consulted and Results**

Albany County Hall of Records

Mary Wallen

250 South Pearl Street

Albany, NY 12202 (518) 447-4500

The Hall of Records, the Albany County depository of historic public records, has no maps of the upper Mohawk Valley (which was part of Albany County prior to the creation of Tryon County in 1772), nor any records pertaining to the Oriskany Patent.

American Antiquarian Society

Thomas Knoles, Director of Reference Services

185 Salisbury Street

Worcester, MA 01609 (508) 755-5221

Letter of inquiry sent. Received information on potentially relevant diaries and other manuscripts, including Alexander Bliss diary (travel through Mohawk Valley, 1825), Asa Burr diary (progress of British armies in Mohawk Valley, 1758); Philip John Schuyler letterbook (record of orders in response to British offensive in New York, 1777); also U. S. Revolution collection. Not researched by author.

Colgate University Library

Hamilton, New York

Web catalogue reviewed; no pertinent resources not available elsewhere.

Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library

Archives & Manuscripts

Ithaca, NY (607) 255-3530

Searched Clarke family papers: Oriskany Patent surveys, indentures, original patent document; Sparks collection: de Fleury map of Fort Stanwix showing "Road to Albany;" 1949 photograph of Oriskany.  
[Cited as Cornell Clarke MSS]

Daughters of the American Revolution, National Society

Office of the Historian General

Elva B. Crawford, Archivist/Historian

1776 D Street NW

Washington, D.C. 20006 (202) 879-3241

Letter of inquiry sent. Received direction on further research regarding Oriskany Chapter.

Daughters of the American Revolution, New York State Society

Mrs. William L. Hobba, State Regent

6007 Lockport Road

Niagara Falls, NY 14305-3534

Letter of inquiry sent via e-mail. Received information regarding history of state and Oriskany chapters.

Cincinnati, University of, Library

German-American Collection

Don Heinrich Tolzman.

Letter of inquiry sent via e-mail. Referenced catalogue; several works related to the Revolutionary War and New York State history from a German-American perspective. Appears to contain no works with specific reference to Oriskany and its landscape; materials not researched.

Erie Canal Museum, Syracuse

Mark Kozial

318 Erie Blvd. East

Syracuse, NY 13202 (315) 471-0593

Telephone inquiry. The museum has no information on the Erie Canal in the vicinity of the Site beyond canal surveys (also available at State Library and Thruway Authority offices in Syracuse).

## Appendix A: List of Repositories Consulted and Results

---

### Fort Stanwix National Monument

Craig Davis

Rome, NY (315) 336-2090

Searched collection of copies of primary source documents, secondary-source histories, and the National Historic Landmark file on Oriskany Battlefield.

### Fort Ticonderoga

Thompson-Pell Research Center

Ticonderoga, NY 12858

Letter of inquiry sent. No reply.

### Friends of Oriskany Battlefield

Joseph Robertaccio. Alan Sterling

Alan Sterling (6646 Bruce Road, Canastota 13032, (315) 697-7406) provided transcripts of battle-period diaries and direction on research.

Joseph Robertaccio (10 Rosemary St., Utica 13501 (315) 733-1916) provided aerial photographs, direction on research, and information from personal research on the landscape. He has also assembled a chronologically-arranged collection of transcripts of primary source documents related to the Battle of Oriskany. This set includes full citations or excerpts from the following sources (Note: author of published material noted in [ ]):

Bronck Family Letters, Greene Historical Society

*Clinton, George, Public Papers of*

Depositions of John Garrison, John Lewis, Engign Garrd Van Bracklin, New-York H.S.

Diary of Lt. Alexander Thompson, Society of Cincinnati Collection

*Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York* [O'Callaghan]

Emmet Collection, New York Public Library

*For Want of a Horse* [George F. G. Stanley]

"Fort Stanwix Historic Structure Report" [Luzader]

*Fort Stanwix and Oriskany* [Scott]

Haldimond Papers

*Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Germaine letters)

Kings Royal Regiment of New York [?]

Lyman Draper Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society

Marinus Willet Manuscript Collection, New-York Historical Society

"Memorandum of my journey to Fort Stanwix [James Kent

Mintes of the Council of Appointments, New-York Historical Society

Pension Claims/Applications, National Archives Record Group

*Remembrance for 1777, The* [Kaswrk]

Tryon County Committee of Safety, Minutes of

Tryon County, Annals of [Campbell]

### Harvard University Library

Jennie Rathbun

Houghton Library, Manuscripts Department

Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2441

Letter of inquiry sent; received information on holdings of Jared Sparks Collection; not researched. This large collection (18-drawer card catalogue) contains Revolutionary War-period records pertaining to New York State and may contain documents pertinent to the landscape of the Site. This collection has apparently never been researched for information on Oriskany. Harvard also has an extensive collection of early maps.

### Herkimer County Records Office

Herkimer County Court House

Herkimer, NY 13350 (315) 867-1209

Telephone request for information (the Site was within Herkimer County between 1791 and 1798). The county has no deeds or maps dating prior to a fire that destroyed all records in 1804.

### Herkimer County Historical Society

Sue Perkins

400 North Main Street

Herkimer, NY 13350 (315) 866-6413

Telephone inquiry. The society has no materials related to the Site, the Oriskany Patent, or early roads.

Johnson family papers (published materials):

*The Papers of Sir William Johnson*. Edited by James Sullivan. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921. Finding guide: Calendar of the Sir William Johnson Manuscripts in the New York State Library (Compiled by Richard Day. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1909. No pertinent information found.

*Orderly Book of Sir John Johnson During the Oriskany Campaign*. Edited by William Stone with an introduction by J. Watts de Peyster. Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1887. No pertinent information found.

Landcare Aviation, Inc.  
Franz Schneider  
Oneida County Airport  
Whitestown, NY (315) 736-4225  
Current (1998) standard and oblique aerials of the Site.

Library of Congress  
Web catalogue <http://lcweb.loc.gov/catalog/>  
Search produced no resources not available elsewhere. Photograph and manuscript collection not researched.

Massachusetts Historical Society Library  
Nicholas Graham, Reference Librarian  
1154 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA (617) 536-1608  
Letter of inquiry sent. Received response that library contains three letters with the following headings: "Battle of Oriskany" (25 August 1777), "Oriskany Flats" (23 April 1775), and "Oriskany Patent" (11 November 1783) in the Livingston and Heath collections. Letters not examined by author.

Montgomery County Department of History and Archives  
Volkert Veeder  
Fonda, NY 12068 (518) 853-8186  
Telephone inquiry. The Site was within the jurisdiction of Montgomery County from 1772 (as Tryon County) until 1791, when it was split off under Herkimer County. The department has no early records pertaining to the Oriskany Patent, the battle, or road building.

Montgomery County Court House Record Room  
Mrs. Mielus  
Fonda, NY 12068 (315) 853-8111  
Telephone inquiry. The Site was under the jurisdiction of Montgomery County from 1772 (as Tryon County) until 1791. The county contains no deeds, maps and other information related to the Oriskany Patent.

Montgomery County Historical Society  
Christine Steenberg  
Routes 5 & 6  
Fort Johnson, NY 12070 (518) 842-7490  
Telephone inquiry. The historical society has a copy of the "Proceedings and Field Book of the Survey, Partition and Division of the Oriskany Patent 1785" in the Frey Collection. The Society has a description of Great Lot 4 in the Second Allotment (the Site) which describes the boundaries of the lot, but has no map. This document was not examined.

National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program  
Tanya Gossett  
Heritage Preservation Services  
1849 C Street, NW (NC330)  
Washington, DC 20240 (202) 343-3449  
Telephone inquiry regarding battlefield CLRs and other relevant information. Received technical publications on battlefield preservation, examples of battlefield preservation plans, and General Management Plans.

New Jersey Historical Society publications:

Bloomfield, Joseph. *Citizen Soldier / The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield*. Edited by Mark Lender and James K. Martin. Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1982. No pertinent information found.

Elmer, Ebenezer. "Journal Kept During An Expedition to Canada in 1776: By Ebenezer Elmer, Lieutenant in the Third Regiment of New Jersey Troops in the Continental Service, Commanded by Colonel Elias Dayton." In *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, vol. II, nos. 3 and 4 (1847), 98-194; vol. III, no. 1 (1848). Continued as "The Lost Pages of Elmer's Revolutionary Journal" in New Series no. 4, vol. X (October 1925), 410-424. No pertinent information found.

The New-York Historical Society Library

Manuscripts Department

Mariam Touba

170 Central Park West

New York, NY 10024 (212) 873-3400

Searched New-York Historical Society Proceedings, Gates and Willett papers, Veeder-Fisher depositions, and materials related to Oriskany, roads, Tryon County, and the Mohawk Valley. The file, "Clippings relative to the erection of monument to unknown dead at Battle of Oriskany 1928" and "Report of the Herkimer Monument Commission" could not be found.

New York Public Library

Humanities & Social Science Library, Rare Books & Manuscripts

Fifth Avenue

New York, NY (212) 930-0830

Searched collection pertaining to Mohawk Valley Historic Association, American Scenic & Historic Preservation Society, Philip Schuyler letters, Emmet Collection, Gansevoort-Lansing Collection, Journal of William Colbrath, and other materials related to Oriskany, roads, Tryon County, and the Mohawk Valley.

New York State Historical Association

Library-Manuscripts Division

Fenimore House

Cooperstown, NY 13326 (607) 547-1400 (continued)

Searched collection for materials related to the Oriskany Patent. The library has a field book for lands of George Clarke in Oriskany Patent that describe lots adjacent to the battlefield, and a c.1770 Oriskany Patent indenture.

New York State Canal Corporation

Bob Edick

Thruway Office Building

290 Elwood Davis Road

Liverpool, NY (315) 437-2741

Searched copies of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century canal surveys.

New York State Department of Transportation Region 2

Joe Carrado

State Office Building, Room 1207

Utica, NY 13501 (315) 793-2438

Information on Route 69: 1933 Construction and Appropriation maps; 1933/34 construction diaries; 1933 survey notes; 1981 Construction/Appropriation maps; 1852 Map of Oneida County; general files on history of State roads in Region 2.

New York State Library & Archives

Dr. Jim Folts

Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12230 (518) 474-6282

Searched 18<sup>th</sup> century maps of the Mohawk Valley; Oriskany Patent documents; canal documents and maps; 19<sup>th</sup> century histories and atlases.

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Central Region, Administrative Offices  
Clark Reservation, Jamesville (315) 492-1756  
Site files and plans for Oriskany Battlefield; Department of Conservation yearbooks 1926-1944; copies of documents related to history of battlefield.

Bureau of Historic Sites  
Lois Feister, Paul Huey, Greg Smith, Larry Gobrecht  
Peebles Island State Park, P.O. Box 219  
Waterford, NY 12188 (518) 237-8643  
Archeology site files; general site files (historic receipts, correspondence, photographs); flat files (building plans and site maps).

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau  
Ray Smith  
Peebles Island State Park  
Waterford, NY 12188 (518) 237-8643  
National Register nomination file and research file for Oriskany Battlefield; discussion regarding National Register status of individual landscape features.

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site Office  
Nancy Demytennaere, Dennis Roberts, Roger Meyers  
Route 69  
Whitestown, NY 13424 (315) 768-7224  
On-site files (newspaper clippings, photographs, etc.) were removed to the Oriskany Museum during the time the Site was closed in the early 1990s. Dennis Roberts and Roger Myers provided information on the recent history of the Site since the mid-1970s; Nancy Demytennaere provided direction on research and information on current Site operations.

New York State Department of State, Albany

Kathy  
(518) 474-6740  
Telephone request for holdings of historic maps and land records related to the Site and the Oriskany Patent. The Department retains no pertinent information (historic records were transferred to the New York State Library & Archives).

Oneida County Historical Society (Oneida Historical Society at Utica)

Richard Aust, curator  
1608 Genesee Street  
Utica, NY 13502-5425 (315) 735-3642  
Collection includes early maps of area; property maps and proposed plans for Oriskany Battlefield; vertical file on county streetcar systems; manuscript collections for the Oriskany Battlefield centennial and monument; published local histories and directories.

Oneida County Clerk's Office and Map Room (Records Center)

Tracy Maycock, Senior Clerk, Joe (maps)  
County Building, Park Ave.  
Utica, NY 13502 (315) 798-5901  
Searched map and grantor/grantee indices. Several relevant maps and deeds found. Request for deed search sent to Tracy Maycock, who sent pertinent entries (Van Cortlandt, Parkhurst, Ringrose) from the grantor/grantee indices; unable to complete request due to complexity of title to the Site.

Oneida County Planning Department

Steve Olney, Cary Flack  
County Building, Park Ave.  
Utica, NY 13502 (315) 798-5901  
Department contains no relevant documents; staff provided contacts at other county offices.



## Appendix A: List of Repositories Consulted and Results

---

### Oneida County Department of Public Works, Engineering Division

Jim Barcovac, Tim Decker

Airport and Judd Roads

Whitestown, NY 13424 (315) 736-3071

The only early materials the DPW has are 1933 construction plans (also at NYS DOT) and a 1907 road map of Whitestown.

### Oneida Indian Nation

Tony Wonderley, Historian

221 Union Street, P.O. Box 662

via Oneida, NY 13421-0662 (315) 361-6430

Battle history online: [www.oneida-nation.net/facts/oriskany.html](http://www.oneida-nation.net/facts/oriskany.html)

Telephone request for information. Received several articles on the history of the Oneida nation and role of the Oneidas in the Revolution.

### Oriskany Museum

Karen Jacobsen, Director

420 Utica Street, Box 284

Oriskany, NY 13424 (315) 736-7529

Uncatalogued files formerly held at the Site (primarily newspaper clippings, photographs); published sources on Oriskany; c.1931 aerial photograph (original); Oriskany anniversary brochures.

### City of Rome Department of Engineering

Joe Guglielmo

(315) 339-7627

Telephone inquiry. The department has no old records on Route 69 or other pertinent information.

### City of Rome, Erie Canal Village

Mary Reynods

(315) 337-3999

Telephone inquiry. Erie Canal Village received old documents from the county over the years; only ones related to the Site include an 1804 map of the county and towns (does not show roads) and a 1967 Oriskany commemorative brochure.

### Town of Rome Historian

Frank Clark

(315) 339-7628

Provided a 19<sup>th</sup> century map of Oneida County locating the battlefield; no other pertinent information.

### Rome Historical Society

Kathleen

200 Church Street

Rome, NY 13340 (315) 336-5870

18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century maps; 19<sup>th</sup>-century histories of Rome; "Highways" and "Fort Stanwix" vertical files; "Fort Stanwix and Oriskany" scrapbook; photograph collection.

### Sons of the American Revolution, Oriskany Battle Chapter

Charles Spence, Jr., President

4781 Clinton Road

Whitesboro, NY 13492

Letter of inquiry sent. Letter returned by USPS.

### Steuben Society of America

67-05 Fresh Pond Road

Ridgewood, NY 11385 (718) 381-0900

Letter of inquiry sent. No reply.

## Appendix A: List of Repositories Consulted and Results

---

Syracuse University Library: Bird, Special Collections, Geology, Law, and ESF/Moon Libraries  
Syracuse, NY 13202

Extensive collection of published primary and secondary source materials and bibliographies related to the Battle of Oriskany and colonial/Revolutionary-period history of New York; 19<sup>th</sup> century history of Oneida County; State and federal laws; information on ecological systems; links to electronic databases (RLIN).

RLIN Research Libraries / Bibliographic File is a comprehensive database covering the collections of the Oneida County Historical Society, New York State Library, New York Public Library, Cornell and Yale Universities, and the Library of Congress. Searched under keywords Oriskany; roads-New York State; Mohawk Valley; Revolutionary War; Oneida County.

Tekawitha Shrine  
Father Kevin Kenny  
R.D. 1

Fonda, NY (518) 853-3646

Telephone inquiry. The Tekawitha Shrine formerly included the now-defunct Mohawk-Caughnawaga Museum. Most of the museum contents were transferred to the Fort Plain Museum. The Shrine's vault still contains archives, including a collection entitled "Mohawk Valley Historic Association" per the Cornell/NYS Library RLIN database. These materials are not accessible according to Father Kenny. Volkert Veeder of the Montgomery County Department of History and Archives plans to go through the materials with Father Kenny and determine appropriate depositories, after which time the materials will be accessible to the public. The date at which this work will be done is not known.

Town of Whitestown

Mary Lou Barry, Town Clerk  
8 Park Avenue

Whitesboro, NY 13492 (315) 736-4224 (continued)

Telephone inquiry regarding town meeting minutes, Overseer of Highway records, and other pertinent town records. All pre-c.1900 town records were lost in a fire.

Town of Whitestown Historian

Don Hartman  
(315) 736-4916

Telephone request for information. No reply.

United States Army Military History Institute  
Historical Reference Branch

Dennis J. Vetock, Acting Chief

United States Army War College and Carlisle Barracks

22 Ashburn Drive

Carlisle, PA 17013-5008 (717) 243-1756

Letter of inquiry sent via e-mail. Received list of published materials in collection relevant to military roads.

Manuscripts collection not researched (requires site visit).

United States Department of Agriculture

Oneida County Soil & Water Conservation Service

Jo-Anne Faulkner, Ed Stein

9026 Rt. 49

Marcy, NY 13403 (315) 736-3334

1938-to-present aerial photos, soils and wetland maps.

Utica Public Library

303 Genesee Street

Utica, NY 13502 (315) 735-2279

Utica *Daily Observer* and other 19<sup>th</sup>-century local newspapers on microfilm. Research limited to publication at time of the 1844 and 1877 celebrations. The library has no other materials related to the battle or battlefield aside from secondary sources such as Oneida County histories.

Yale University Manuscripts and Archives

Danelle Moon

Sterline Memorial Library

P.O. Box 208240

New Haven, CT 06520-8240 (203) 432-1744

Letter of inquiry sent via e-mail. Received response; nothing pertinent to Site.

**Appendix B: 1976 National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form**

Form 10-10-200 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Oriskany Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON

Oriskany Battlefield

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

State Route 69

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oriskany

VICINITY OF

31

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

36

Oneida

65

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of New York, Division of Parks and Recreation

STREET & NUMBER

South Swan Street Building

CITY, TOWN

Albany

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Oneida County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Utica

STATE

New York

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7** DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- The Oriskany Battlefield is located on the southwestern slope of the Mohawk River Valley, one and three quarters miles west of Oriskany, on State Route 69.
- The Revolutionary road used by Morkimer and his troops ran roughly parallel to Route 69 as it passes along the battlefield, at a distance of 170' to the north. Although no evidence of the historic road exists, its approximate location has been indicated by State markers. The battleground was thickly forested at the time of the battle, but the land has long since been cleared, and except for some second growth beech and oak trees in and below the ravine, the battlefield is kept as a lawn. The ravine itself is roughly thirty five feet deep with moderately steep sides. When Route 69 was constructed, the middle of the ravine was filled to carry the road. Otherwise, Battle Brook still follows the same course down the cut, and the floor of the ravine is generally marshy. The undulating land on either side of the ravine slopes down gently to the north for approximately 650' from Route 69, when the drop to the valley floor becomes more precipitous.
- The State park consists of eight-seven acres of land, with approximately 1550' of frontage on Route 69, which extends roughly from a point just east of the Unknown Soldier Memorial to a point just west of the entrance road and parking lot. Within the State park are three structures; two single story garages or workshops on Route 69 just west of the ravine, and the visitors center, a small two story structure just north of the Oriskany Battle Monument obelisk. Aside from these buildings there are a collection of markers, which include the obelisk, and three stone markers grouped around it, a stone slab marking the approximate site of the beech tree under which Morkimer directed his troops during the battle, just west of the ravine, and the Unknown Soldier Memorial, which is located on the eastern crest of the ravine. There is a parking lot located south of the obelisk as well.
- Across Route 69, which measure the approximate southern extent of the battlefield, is a farm house was a cluster of outbuildings. On either the east or west side of the park are private residences, and to the north, the park extends well beyond the northern limit of the battlefield almost to the Mohawk River.

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES August 6, 1777

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Battle of Oriskany, August 6, 1777, was a small but bloody engagement between American militiamen attempting to relieve besieged Fort Stanwix, and a combined force of Loyalists and Indians. Although the patriot force failed to raise the siege, the unseasoned militia bore the full brunt of a savage ambush and showed both courage and determination to stand in defense of their homes.

The Oriskany Battlefield, presently contained in a state park, has suffered relatively little intrusion. Although the forest which cover the battleground has been cleared and is replaced by well-tended parkland, Battle Brook and the marshy ravine where the ambush occurred are still readily recognizable. The park, located on State Route 69, five miles east of Rome, New York, contains a monument to the Tryon militia, as well as markers indicating the course of the battle.

#### History

The proposed British campaign of 1777 called for a three-pronged invasion of New York with Albany as the central objective. General Burgoyne was to lead the main body down the Hudson Valley, General Howe was to move up the Hudson from New York City, and Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger was to head east from Oswego, through the Mohawk Valley to Albany.

St. Leger's expedition set out from Oswego on July 26, 1777. His regular British and German troops had been augmented by Loyalists from the Mohawk Valley, under the command of Sir John Johnson and Colonel John Butler, and Indians of the Six Nations, under Joseph Brant. The combined force proceeded east rapidly, to attack the major obstacle to the invasion, Fort Stanwix, on the present site of the city of Rome.

St. Leger reached the fort on the second of August, only to find that it was too strong and too heavily manned for him to risk a direct assault. Consequently, he positioned his troops for a siege.

Meanwhile, the patriots of Tryon County had learned of the invasion and were mustering at Fort Dayton, some thirty miles below Fort Stanwix. The commander of the militia was to be General Nicholas Herkimer, one of the most prominent settlers in the Mohawk Valley. The assembled force, which totalled 800 volunteers and some sixty Oneida scouts, set out to relieve the beleaguered garrison on the fourth of August. In advance, Herkimer sent runners to alert the fort's commander, Peter Gansevoort, and to arrange for a sortie from the fort in conjunction with the militia's attack. Gansevoort was to signal for the attack with three cannon shots.

Form No. 10-300a  
(Rev. 10-74)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Significance  
CONTINUATION SHEET History ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

On the morning of the sixth, as Herkimer drew within striking distance, he held a council of war. Although the general advised that they wait for Gansevoort's signal, the more impetuous younger officers urged that they attack immediately. Herkimer finally acquiesced and set off on the road to Fort Stanwix. He rode at the head of the main column of 600 men which was followed by the wagon train and the 200 men of the rear guard.

Having learned of Herkimer's advance, St. Leger dispatched a detachment of Loyalists and the entire contingent of Indians, numbering approximately 900 braves, to intercept the relief column before it reached the fort. The spot chosen for the ambush was six miles east of the fort, near the village of Oriskany, where the road passed through a ravine. A small, marshy stream, now called Battle Brook, flowed through the ravine, where it was crossed by a narrow corduroy road. The steep sides of the ravine, and the surrounding slopes were heavily wooded. The British positioned themselves in an elongated circle, centered around the ravine, and open on the eastern end. The ambushers were to hold their fire until the entire column had entered the trap, when the gap at the eastern end would be closed and the column surrounded.

As the attackers were already in position as the militia approached, preliminary scouting would have warned the Americans of the ambush, but no such scouting was done. The column entered the ravine and Herkimer had already crossed it and was on the opposite side when the Indians prematurely attacked the rear of the column. The rear guard had not yet entered the trap and so escaped to the east, with some Indians in pursuit. The rest of the column however was quickly hemmed in and fired upon from all directions by well concealed enemy. Herkimer himself was wounded in the leg at the first fire, but nonetheless coolly organized his panicked men into an irregular circle so that they could return their fire on all sides. This was the sort of warfare which the Indians excelled in, and in the heavy forest growth, they frequently dashed in to tomahawk a soldier who was trying to reload his gun. The unseasoned troops withstood forty-five minutes of this fierce attack, until a sudden downpour brought a temporary halt in the engagement. Herkimer took advantage of the lull by reorganizing his troops on the hillside west of the ravine, where he paired his men, so that one might cover the other while he was reloading. After an hour of rain, the sky cleared and the battle was rejoined. As it continued though, the Indians, who had sustained severe losses, began to lose interest in the costly battle. A second detachment of Loyalists arrived, who reversed their coats

Form No. 10-300a  
(Rev. 10-74)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET      Significance-  
History      ITEM NUMBER 8      PAGE 2

and sought to approach the enemy as fellow patriots. The ruse was discovered however and a fierce hand to hand combat ensued. With no immediate victory in sight, the Indians chose to withdraw, and the Loyalists were forced to join them and return to their camp. The militia were too battered to pursue. Instead they gathered their wounded and returned to Fort Dayton.

Although the relief column had failed to reach Fort Stanwix, the second part of Herkimer's plan had been carried out successfully. A large sortie was made by the fort's garrison, which succeeded in striking the British camps and destroying most of what they did not carry back into the fort. The siege was not lifted until the end of August, when St. Leger, once again deserted by his Indian allies, was forced to flee before a relief column headed by Benedict Arnold.

Although the Battle of Oriskany could not be termed an American victory, it was perhaps the fiercest engagement of the war, and the Americans gave as well as they got. An estimated 150 to 200 militia men were killed, among whom was General Herkimer, who died after the battle, and of the British force, approximately 100 to 150 were killed. However, the drain on St. Leger's resources and the knowledge that the Mohawk Valley contained patriots will to stand and fight for their homes were definite factors in the subsequent failure of the British invasion of the Mohawk valley.

Form No. 10-301  
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Oriskany Battlefield

AND/OR COMMON

Oriskany Battlefield

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

Oriskany

VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Oneida

STATE

New York

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE U.S.G.S. 7.5' Oriskany Quad.

SCALE 1:24,000

DATE 1955

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES

INT: 2000-75



No. 10-301a  
(2-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**NAME**

HISTORIC  
Oriskany Battlefield  
 AND/OR COMMON  
Oriskany Battlefield

**LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN  VICINITY OF STATE COUNTY  
Oriskany New York Oneida

**PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Robert E. Greenwood DATE OF PHOTO 1975  
NEGATIVE FILED AT Historic Sites Survey, Washington, DC 20240

No. 10-301a  
(2-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

**NAME**

HISTORIC  
Oriskany Battlefield  
 AND/OR COMMON  
Oriskany Battlefield

**LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN  VICINITY OF STATE COUNTY  
Oriskany New York Oneida

**PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT R. E. Greenwood DATE OF PHOTO 1975  
NEGATIVE FILED AT Historic Sites Survey, Washington, DC 20240

**IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET  
View north across the battlefield from the crest of the western slope of the ravine.  
Obelisk marks the site of Herkimer's final stand. PHOTO NO.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Hoffman Nickerson, The Turning Point of the Revolution (Boston, 1928).  
 Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1952), vol 2.  
 , The American Revolution in New York: Its Political, Social and Economic Significance (New York State Division of Archives and History, Albany, 1926).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 70 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	47,0	47,0	47,9	41,0	B	1,8	47,0	1,2	47,9	0,2
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C	1,8	46,9	51,8	47,9	3,4	D	1,8	46,9	0,9	47,9	7,8
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (See USGS Map)

Beginning at Point 3 on the northern curb of State Route 69, 250' south of the Unknown Soldier Memorial, proceed northeast in a straight line to the 450' contour line. Thence proceed northwest along said contour for 2400', thence proceed southwest in a straight line to the northern curb of Route 69, and thence southeast along said curb to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose the heart of the Oriskany Battlefield. The enclosed structures do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1/20/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

DC

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Nov 23, 1962  
 George J. ...  
 DATE: July 27, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1/25/78

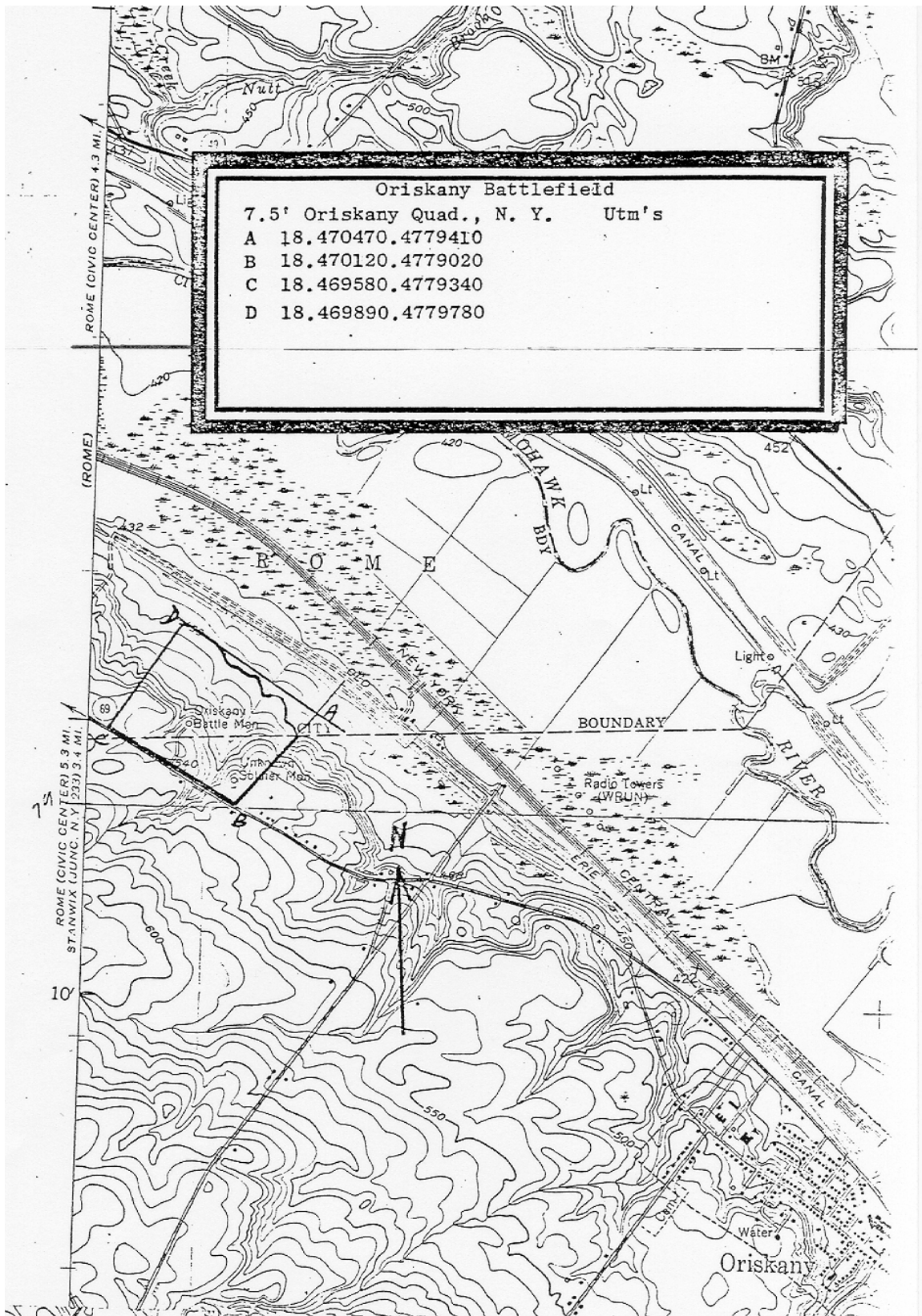
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

LANDMARKS



**Appendix C: 1993 OPRHP Memorandum re: National Register Evaluation**



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Central Region — Jamesville, New York 13078  
M E M O R A N D U M

315-492-1756  
FAX: 315-492-3277  
William L. Murray,  
Regional Director

July 1, 1993

TO: Jim Gold and John Lovell  
FROM: Larry Gobrecht  
SUBJECT: Oriskany Battlefield designation

**Background:**

The Battlefield was listed as an NHL back in 1962, but it was not until 1978 that the NPS did a boundary study and redocumentation that defined the designated area as 70 of our 87 acre park. I have not been able to locate a map here that shows property boundaries so I can figure out why the whole park did not get designated. Once a good base map is located with park boundaries on it, I can create a map from the verbal boundary description in the nomination. As would be expected, the nomination states that all the non-battle related features of the site are considered non-historic. In sum, we don't have a map showing the designation and the nomination does not deal with assessing the possible significance of any of the post-battle cultural features. Like the Steuben Memorial, Oriskany is a shrine- and there is no official recognition of that history. I must say that I was impressed when I learned from site signage that 70,000 people visited the site for the 1877 centennial celebration.

**Boundaries:**

Until I can get a map put together I can do little in assessing the appropriateness of the boundaries. It seems clear from the preliminary information that the designation managed to pick up the extent of the battlefield-- but how they ended up with 70 acres is not explained in the text. I have asked Barb Giambastiani to see what she can find in the Region's map files.

**Cultural features:**

We have to start from scratch in this area as the nomination does not concern itself with anything except the battlefield. There is no SLUS for the site-- so the list below represents what I was able to identify at the site and I have provided some annotations where necessary.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Agency





New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Central Region — Jamesville, New York 13078

Battlefield-- contributing site

Obelisk-- contributing object

Beech Tree DAR monument-- contributing object

Unknown Soldier monument-- contributing object

John Vrooman monument-- contributing object

DAR to NPS monument-- contributing object

Stone gates-- contributing structure

Iron fence around Obelisk-- contributing structure

Visitor Center-- non-contributing building

This was once a contributing building-- but the State managed to modernize it in the 1960s and ruin its period design qualities.

Maintenance building-- non-contributing building

small horse barn-- non-contributing building

This is probably a 19th century building, clearly used for a stable. Since it has no immediately evident link to the commemorative park it would have to be considered non-contributing. It does not appear to be individually eligible. It may have been moved to the site from another location or have been associated with the farm complex across the road.

viewing platform-- non-contributing structure

footbridge-- non-contributing structure

(archeological sites, if any, need to be included as well)

#### Recommendations:

The first task is to prepare a base map that has designation boundaries, circulation, cultural features, and property lines on it. I believe Tom has a recently prepared contour map that would provide a starting point.

The second task should be to prepare the SLUS using the cultural feature list above as a starting point. The SLUS will have to tackle some difficult issues and the central one is; are we going to keep it as a commemorative park with a shrine and expansive lawns or let it grow up to be like the forested battlefield it was at the time of the engagement? Signs of the conflict are already evident at the site and in currently circulating memos. The conflict is nowhere more apparent than right at the stone gates where formal, dressed stone piers and iron gates are connected to split rail farm fence on either side. When the wrought iron fence that once separated the sacred ground from the surrounding vernacular rural landscape was replaced with split rail-- the split personality of the site (perhaps unconscious) emerged and it is there for us to consider its effect. We should debate the message of the site and settle on a consistent approach before anything else is done there.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Agency

♻️ printed on recycled paper

315-492-1756

FAX: 315-492-3277

William L. Murray,  
Regional Director



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

315-492-1756

Central Region — Jamesville, New York 13078

FAX: 315-492-3277

JOHN K. DAVIDSON  
Commissioner

ACROSS the State road from the main entrance is an undeveloped parcel. I have no idea what it is zoned or what the likelihood of development. We should look into acquiring an easement to protect the entrance area from incompatible development. I would hate to see the same thing happen here as happened next to the front entrance to the Steuben shrine.

WILLIAM L. MURRAY  
Regional Director

cc: CMG  
BGB  
TDC  
KLG  
PRH

.

*Note: Numbers in italics indicate existing conditions chapter*

- Agriculture, 64, 66, 102, 113, 153,
  - on Site, 80, 164.
- Albany-to-Oswego waterway, 14, 25, 32, 59
- Apple orchards, 90, 136, 187, 290
- Archeological sites, 22, 54, 95, 146, 206, 255, 310
- Barbeques - *see picnic tables*
- Battle Creek, 19, 228, 279 - *see also hydrology*
- Battle Monument, 122, 138, 191, 242, 296
- Battlefield memorial park, development of, 121, 166
  - State acquisition of, 167
- Battlefield memorial park, spatial character of, 181, 282
- Battlefield preservation, 155
- Beech tree - *see Herkimer tree*
- Beech tree monument - *see Herkimer's march monument*
- Benches
  - brick seating/interpretive area, 202, 305
  - individual, 202, 251, 305
- Bird houses, 206, 255, 309
- Blair property, 220, 274
- Buildings and structures, 22, 53, , 91, 137, 190, 242, 295
- Burgoyne Campaign of 1777, 35
- Causeway, over Battle Creek - *see Road, The (NY 69)*
- Circulation, 21, 50, 87, 131, 182, 233, 283
- Climate, 19, 214
- Commemoration
  - 1844 Democratic rally
  - 1877 centennial celebration, 117
  - 1927 sesquicentennial celebration, 167
  - general history of, 37, 48, 67, 82, 103, 117, 155, 166
  - landscape design, 106, 159
  - significance of, 260
- Creek, unnamed, through west ravine, 19, 228, 279 - *see also hydrology*
- CSX (Conrail) - *see New York Central Railroad*
- Cultural Landscape Report
  - definition of, 2
  - existing conditions, criteria for evaluating, 9, 211
  - organization of, 7
  - research methodology, 5
  - Site analysis, definition of, 263
  - study boundaries, 9
- Cultural traditions, 20, 50, 87, 131, 182, 233, 283
- Culverts
  - electric railway, 141, 196 - *see also electric railway corridor*
  - Culverts, continued
    - on Road, west of Battle Monument drive, 195
  - D.A.R. piers - *see gates & gateways*
  - Daylilies, 189, 241, 294
  - Dingman property, 224, 278
  - Donohoe property, 222, 277
  - Drinking fountain, 206, 309
  - Dunn property, 222, 276
  - East plateau, spatial character of, 128, 180, 230, 280
  - Ecology, 19, 229, 280
  - Electric railway corridor, 111, 134, 152, 181, 186, 216, 271, 282
  - Electric service, 194, 245, 298
  - Erie Canal, 59, 89, 100, 110, 133, 162, 186, 215, 270
    - buildings on adjacent to Site, 92, 140
  - Fences
    - agricultural, 94, 142, 197, 247, 301
    - Battle Monument, 143, 198, 248, 301
    - boundary of Site, 143, 199, 248, 302
  - Fitzgerald-Grozsek property, 219, 273
  - Flagstaff
    - Battle Monument, 199, 249, 304
    - East plateau, 144, 199, 303
    - east stand area, 144, 303
    - Ringrose farm, 94, 303
  - Footbridge, 193, 245, 298
  - Forest on the Site, 22, 52, 89, 135, 187, 238, 288
  - Fuel tanks, 195
  - Gates & gateways
    - Battle Monument, 143, 198, 247, 301
    - D.A.R. Memorial (D.A.R. piers), 171, 198, 248, 302
    - Unknown Soldiers' Monument, 248, 303
  - Geology, 17, 212, 225, 279
  - Geomorphology, 212, 17
  - Gibson, Mrs., house, 91, 296
  - Ground cover
    - periwinkle around Battle Monument, 189, 241, 294
    - periwinkle in Battle Creek ravine and Parkhurst Cemetery, 189, 242, 295
  - Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), 11
    - see also Oneida history and culture*
  - Hedgerows, 90, 136, 290
  - Herkimer monument, proposed, 90, 121
  - Herkimer tree, 90, 135289
  - Herkimer's march monument, 145, 200, 250, 304
  - Horse barn - *see Ringrose farmstead*
  - Hydrology, 19, 213, 228, 279
  - Iroquois Trail, 15, 20, 22, 39, 50
  - Kozdra property, 218, 272
  - Landscape design - *see commemoration*



- Land Use, 20, 50, 87, 130, 182, 217, 232, 282
- Lawn, 136, 187, 238, 291
- Lights, exterior, 205, 254, 308
- Maintenance garage, 193, 244, 297
- Mazur property, 218, 272
- Mechanical systems, 194, 245, 298
- Metcalf house, 94, 140 - *see also Dunn property*
- Military Road, analysis of documentation on
  - location and alignment, 266
- Mohawk River - *see Natural Systems and Features*
- Mohawk Valley, upper
  - as strategic colonial trade corridor, 32
  - European contact-period history
  - European settlement in, 29
  - land speculation in, 29, 38, 44
  - military significance prior to the Revolution, 32
  - Pre European contact-period history
  - role of in the Revolution
  - rural and urban development in, 66, 71, 103, 111, 154, 163
  - settlement following Revolution, 62
- Mohawk Valley Historic Association
  - acquisition and development of Parkhurst-heir farm, 169
- National Register of Historic Places (National Historic Landmark)
  - existing documentation, 259
  - proposed revised Statement of Significance, 260
- Natural systems and features, 17, 49, 85, 127, 179, 225, 265, 279
- Neidl (former Maggioliono) property, 220, 273
- Neidl property, 219, 273
- New York Central Railroad, 62, 89, 101, 111, 134, 153, 163, 215, 270
- New York, State of, history of park and historic site system, 157
- Niagara-Mohawk gas transmission line - *see electric railway corridor*
- Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation - *see New York, State of*
- Oneida Carry, 15, 19, 21
- Oneida Indians
  - cultural traditions at Site, 283
  - history and culture, 11
  - impact of battle upon, 36
  - ethnographic significance of Site to, 233, 262
  - see also Haudenosaunee*
- Oriska, Oneida village of, 44, 71
- Oriskany, Battle of, 36, 45-47, 310
  - analysis of documentation on location of, 263
  - significance of, 260
- Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (the Site)
  - development of by New York State, 171
- Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, con't.
  - historical summary, 3, 313
  - location of in Mohawk Valley, 2
  - location of in New York State, 1
  - ownership, 75, 112, 163
  - property boundaries, 16, 49, 85, 127, 179, 212
  - see also battlefield memorial park*
- Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area, 221, 275
- Oriskany Patent
  - granting of, 37
  - subdivision of, 71
- Parkhurst Cemetery, 86, 112, 128, 181, 220, 274
- Parkhurst, Carr, Ella (Charles Sweet), house, 141, 196
- Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear/Lewis/Lowery) farm, 128, 169, 180
- Parkhurst-heir (Lanfear/Lewis/Lowery) farmstead, 91, 137, 191, 206, 280, 296, 311
- Parkhurst, G. W., house, 93, 140, 196 - *see also Walter Weigand property*
- Parking area
  - at Battle Monument, 184, 235, 285
  - see also maintenance drive, Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive*
- Pastures and cultivated fields, 90, 136, 187, 290
- Picnic tables and barbeques, 206, 254, 254, 309
- Plantain lilies (hosta), 189, 242, 295
- Planters at visitor center, 206, 255, 309
- Ravine, Battle Creek, spatial character of, 128, 232, 281
- Recommendations
  - treatment - *see Treatment considerations*
  - for further research, analysis, and documentation, 314
- Rest house - *see visitor center*
- Ringrose farm, 70, 113, 164, 276
- Ringrose farmstead, 91, 137, 190
  - farmhouse, 222, 277, 295
  - horse barn, 242, 295
  - see also Donohoe property*
- Road, The (NY 69)
  - analysis of documentation on location and alignment, 266
  - as military road, 39, 50, 68
  - as Rome Turnpike, 268, 61, 68, 88
  - as Utica & Rome Plank Road, 69, 88, 91
  - as Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway (NY 69), 161, 185, 214, 266
  - causeway over Battle Creek, 53, 92, 139, 195
  - historical overview, 266
  - 20th-century plans for improvement of, 110
- Roads, general
  - 18th-century standards, 26
  - 18th-century military roads, 27

- Roads, general, continued
  - late 19th-early 20th century developments, 100, 151
- Roads on Site
  - Battle Monument drive, 132, 183, , 235, 284
  - farm road (trace) across Battle Creek, 87, 131, 182, 233, 283
  - maintenance drive, 184, 235, 285
  - temporary construction drive, 184, 286
  - trace on east slope of Battle Creek ravine, 131, 234, 284
- Roads, on Site, continued
  - Unknown Soldiers' Monument drive, 183, 235, 285
- Route 69 - *see Road, the*
- Sanitary systems, 194, 245, 299
- Signs
  - historical markers (small State Education signs), 203, 251, 306
  - large State Education sign, 204, 252, 306
  - main entrance, 203, , 251, 306
  - new interpretive, 205, 252, 307
  - operational, 205, 252, 307
  - panoramic photo-interpretive kiosk, 204, 307
  - rustic welcome sign, 204, 307
- Small-scale features, 94, 142, 197, 247, 301
- Spatial organization, 20, 50, 86, 127, 180, 230, 280
- Staircase on visitor center walk, 194, 245, 298
- Stone piles, 95, 146, 205, 253, 308
- Survey maker, 205, 254, 308
- Temporary Structures, 92, 139, 194, 299
- Tollgate house, 93 - *see also Ringrose farmstead*
- Topography, 21, 52, 89, 134, 186, 237, 287
- Treatment considerations, 314
- Trees
  - along former pasture line on west plateau, 188, 239, 292
  - Austrian pine, 189, 241, 294
  - on east plateau, 189, 241, 292
  - ravine elm, 90, 136, 187, 291
  - Roadside, 136, 188, 239, 291
  - sugar maples around Battle Monument, 188, 240, 293
  - white pine, Oneida tree of peace, 188, 240, 293
  - see also Herkimer tree (beech tree)*
- Unknown Soldiers' Monument, 170, 200, 250, 304
- Unknown Soldiers' Monument vista, 197, 246, 300
- Vegetation, 22, 52, 89, 135, 187, 238, 288
- Views and vistas, 22, 54, 94, 141, 196, 246, 300
- Viewing platform, in Battle Creek ravine, 194, 298
- Visitor Center (rest house), 166, 176, 191, 243, 297
- Vogel property, 222, 276
- Walks and paths
  - bluestone walk around Battle Monument, 237, 287
  - gravel ravine path, 185, 236, 286
  - to visitor center, 184, 236, 286
- Weigand, Walter, property, 224, 277
- Weigandt, Bryon, property, 224, 278
- Wells, 195, 245, 299
- West plateau, spatial character of, 127, 180, 231, 280
- Wetlands - *see hydrology*