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## An Overview of the Battle of Oriskany

The Battle of Oriskany, fought on August 6, 1777, takes its place in history as one of the bloodiest battles of the American Revolutionary War. The Oriskany Battlefield was the location where a small detachment of British soldiers, British loyalists, and their Native American allies ambushed the Tryon County Militia, and their Oneida allies. This ambush was meant to aid in the larger British plan to take control of the entirety of New York State including its waterways. Participants on both sides of the conflict suffered vast casualties; over half of all those who fought in the battle perished.

In the Mohawk Valley, the American Revolutionary War became a civil war. People connected through ties of kinship and their shared use of the land fought on opposing sides in the conflict. Haudenosaunee participants faced each other from opposing sides of a conflict for the first time since the establishment of their Great Peace hundreds of years earlier. The people and the land of the Mohawk Valley were deeply affected. The consequences of this conflict spanned generations.

The Battle of Oriskany was not a clear victory for either the Loyalists or the revolutionaries, but the events of that day changed the course of the entire war. Haudenosaunee support for the British cause was weakened and the Oneidas, in particular, strengthened their support of the revolutionaries. Most importantly, General Nicholas Herkimer and his men, along with the resistance efforts at Fort Stanwix, prevented the British from gaining control of the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys with their substantial food crops and lucrative waterways. These combined efforts resulted in a decisive American victory at the Battle of Saratoga and helped to begin to turn the tide of war in favor of the revolutionaries.



## The Three-Pronged Attack

The British moved to isolate New England from the other colonies and sought to accomplish this through the British control of New York. General Burgoyne designed a three-pronged attack to be executed in October 1777. Burgoyne was to march south from Canada through the Champlain Valley, General Barry St. Leger was to attack from the West, and General Howe was to bring reinforcements from New York City. St. Leger lay siege to Fort Stanwix on August 2, 1777 which prompted the Tryon County Militia, led by Nicholas Herkimer, to mobilize a relief effort. Ultimately, the British plan failed and with it their attempt at securing the Mohawk Valley.

## Oneida White Pine of Peace

The White Pine of Peace was planted by the Oneida Indian Nation on August 6, 1983 to honor their ancestors who fell during the Battle of Oriskany. This tree symbolizes Kayenarhekowa, the Great Peace, which brought together the League of the Haudenosaunee by the Great Law Giver. This Confederacy was fractured by the divided loyalty of the member nations during the American Revolutionary War. This pine is a metaphor for nurturing the growth of peace.



## Oriskany Battle Monument

The 85-foot tall Oriskany Monument was dedicated on August 6, 1884; 107 years after the Battle of Oriskany. In 1927 five acres of the battlefield, including the monument, were made into a New York State Historic Site to memorialize those who fought and died at Oriskany.



## Historic Sites of Interest

### Herkimer Home State Historic Site

Situated overlooking the Mohawk River, this Georgian-style mansion was home to General Nicholas Herkimer. Herkimer's estate was home to many over the years, including his family, enslaved people who helped run the estate, soldiers encamped during the war, and neighbors seeking refuge from the fighting in the Mohawk Valley.

200 NY-169  
Little Falls, NY 13365  
(315)823-0398

### Steuben Memorial State Historic Site

The Steuben Memorial honors the "Drillmaster of the American Revolution," Baron von Steuben, whose valuable wartime services have been described as being second in importance only to those of George Washington.

9941 Starr Hill Rd.  
Remsen, NY 13438  
(315)655-3200

### Johnson Hall State Historic Site

Johnson Hall was the 1763 Georgian-style estate of Irish immigrant Sir William Johnson and Molly Brant, a Mohawk Indian, and their eight children. Johnson was the largest single landowner and most influential individual in the colonial Mohawk Valley.

139 Hall Ave  
Johnstown, New York 12095  
(518)762-8712

### Fort Stanwix National Monument

Known as "the fort that never surrendered," Fort Stanwix, under the command of Colonel Gansevoort, successfully repelled a prolonged siege, in August 1777, by British, German, Loyalist, Canadian, and American Indian troops and warriors commanded by British General St. Leger. The failed siege combined with the battles at Oriskany, Bennington, and Saratoga thwarted a coordinated effort by the British in 1777 to take the northern colonies.

200 N James St  
Rome, New York 13440  
(315)338-7730



# Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site Walking Tour

7801 New York 69  
Oriskany, New York 13424  
(315) 655-3200



New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation