



Bloody Mohawk: The French and Indian War & American Revolution on New York's Frontier

By Richard Berleth

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This sweeping historical narrative chronicles events instrumental in the painful birth of a new nation from the Bloody Morning Scout and the massacre at Fort William Henry to the disastrous siege of Quebec, the lopsided Battle of Valcour Island, the horrors of Oriskany, and the tragedies of the Pennsylvania Wyoming Valley massacre and the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition's destruction of the Iroquois homeland. Caught in the middle of it all was the Mohawk River Valley. Through 1763, culminating with the French & Indian War, a series of colonial conflicts between the French and British raged along the North American frontiers. In the Province of New York, French intrusions were turned back with great loss of blood and treasure at places like Lake George and Ticonderoga, while Mohawk Valley towns were raided, plundered, and sometimes, as with Schenectady, virtually wiped off the map. In the American Revolution, patriots wrenched the Mohawk Valley from British interests and the Iroquois nations at fearsome cost. When the fighting was over, the valley lay in ruins and as much as two-thirds of its population lay dead or had been displaced. But by not holding this vital inland waterway the gateway to the West, the river between the mountains America might have lost the Revolution, as well as much or all of the then-poorly-defined province of New York. Oriskany, Cherry Valley, Cobleskill, Canajoharie, German Flats, Unadilla, Andrustown a line of battle sites and destroyed settlements, colonial and Native American, smoldered the length of the Mohawk Valley by war's end, all the way to the Finger Lakes region where the great towns of the Seneca Indians lay in ruins in the wake of Washington's reprisals for the Wyoming Valley raid. The fury of the war increased year by year in the Mohawk Valley, escalating to total war and near-genocide. It didn't have to be that way. Streaming with colonial traffic, the Mohawk River Valley earlier in the 18th century had become a place where the core ethnic groups of an emerging nation Native Americans, Palatine Germans, Scots-Irish, Dutch, English, and Highland Scots met in commerce and partnership and relative peace and security. Then, wrenched apart by brutal political partisanship, the very social and cultural diversity of the Mohawk corridor made the upheavals when they finally came as violent and pitiless as anywhere.

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Editorial Review

Review

Bloody Mohawk offers an enjoyable and readable run through the history of the Mohawk River Valley, embroiling the French and British empires, the Iroquois Federation and various American settlers ranging from Dutch fur-traders to German farmers to New England's evangelicals. I love the way Berleth balances a mighty landscape against equally compelling characters. Constant warfare made this strategic waterway a scary place for much of the 18th century, a terror spread over a landscape of rivers, lakes and portages long obscured by modern development. Berleth's keen sense of geography makes readers want to get out their bicycles, canoes and walking boots to explore the physical terrain he animates with historical figures that show the power of dueling empires and organized Native Americans. --Kathleen Hulser, Public Historian, Senior Curator of History, New-York Historical Society

Richard Berleth creates an exceptional narrative here that is forever driven by the unique geography of the Mohawk Valley, as well as by the people who settled there from the powerful Iroquois, to avaricious European fur traders, to the colonials who fought in and ultimately won a series of devastating eighteenth-century wars. --Robert Weibel, New York State Historian & Chief Curator New York State Museum

From the Inside Flap

This sweeping historical narrative chronicles events instrumental in the painful birth of a new nation from the Bloody Morning Scout and the massacre at Fort William Henry to the disastrous siege of Quebec, the heroic but lopsided Battle of Valcour Island, the horrors of Oriskany, and the tragedies of Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley massacre and the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition's destruction of the Iroquois homeland in western New York State. Caught in the middle of it all was the Mohawk River Valley.

Berleth explores the relationship of early settlers on the Mohawk frontier to the Iroquoian people who made their homes beside the great river. He introduces colonists and native leaders in all their diversity of culture and belief. Dramatic profiles of key participants provide perspectives through which contemporaries struggled to understand events. Sir William Johnson is here first as a shopkeeper, then as a brother Mohawk and militia leader, and lastly as a crown official charged with supervising North American Indian affairs. We meet the frontier ambassador Conrad Weiser, survivor of the Palatine immigration, who agreed not at all with Johnson or his party. And we encounter the young missionary, Samuel Kirkland, as he leaves Johnson's household for a fateful sojourn among the Senecas.

Johnson's heirs did much to precipitate the outbreak of violent hostilities along the Mohawk in the first months of the War of Independence. Berleth shows how the Johnson family sought to save their patrimony in the valley just as patriot forces maneuvered to win Native American support. When Joseph Brant rushed Native Americans to war behind the British, it fell to General Philip Schuyler, wealthy scion of an old Albany family, to find a way to protect the Mohawk region from British incursion. His invasion of Canada fails; his tattered army fights at Valcour Island, Ticonderoga, Hubbardton, retreating steadily. Not until on the line of the Mohawk was the enemy stopped.

About the Author

Richard Berleth received his Ph.D from Rutgers University in 1970 and is currently Chair of the Communication Arts Department at St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights, New York. Previously he taught English at Pace University and Russell Sage College, was a managing editor for Time/Life Books, a

marketing manager for McGraw-Hill, and a senior vice president at Simon & Schuster. His other books include "The Twilight Lords: An Irish Chronicle, "; "The Orphan Stone: The Minnesinger Dream of Reich"; "Samuel's Choice"; (children's) and "Mary Patten" (children's).

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