

2012

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Brant Venables

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Recommended Citation

Venables, Brant (2012) "A Battle of Remembrance: Memorialization and Heritage at the Newtown Battlefield, New York," *Northeast Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 41 41, Article 8.

<https://doi.org/10.22191/neha/vol41/iss1/8> Available at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha/vol41/iss1/8>

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A Battle of Remembrance: Memorialization and Heritage at the Newtown Battlefield, New York

Brant Venables

On 29 August 1779, Loyalist soldiers and Native American warriors fought against overwhelming numbers of invading Continental forces in the Battle of Newtown. After Newtown, the Continental forces destroyed 40 Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) towns. In 1879, Newtown Battlefield, near present-day Elmira, New York, was transformed into a heritage landscape memorializing the victors and the early expansion of the United States. To analyze the changing rituals of memorialization from 1879 to 2012, I examined monuments, interpretive signage, and primary-source documents, such as speech transcripts and newspaper accounts. I concluded that the rituals of memorialization at Newtown reflected the U.S. national attitudes and expectations of each era, initially silencing and gradually acknowledging British, Canadian, and Native American perspectives. This evolution eventually began to balance the portrayals of the North Americans who took part in the battle: the Continental forces and the Crown forces of Haudenosaunee, Delaware Indians, and Loyalists.

Le 29 août 1779, le paysage de Newtown, New York, a été baigné du sang de deux combattants irréconciliables: les soldats loyalistes et les guerriers amérindiens défendant leur patrie ont été défaits par les forces écrasantes de l'armée continentale. Après Newtown, les forces continentales ont détruit quarante villages Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). En 1879, le champ de bataille de Newtown a été transformé en un paysage patrimonial commémorant les vainqueurs et l'expansion des États-Unis. Pour analyser comment les rituels de commémorations ont changé de 1879 à 2004, j'ai examiné les monuments, les panneaux d'interprétation et les documents de sources primaires tels que les transcriptions de discours et les articles de journaux. J'en ai conclu que les rituels de commémoration observés à Newtown reflètent les attitudes et attentes des États-Unis de chaque époque, reconnaissant éventuellement les perspectives britanniques, canadiennes et amérindiennes. Cette évolution a finalement équilibré les représentations des Nord-Américains qui ont pris part à la bataille: les forces continentales et celles de la couronne formées par les Haudenosaunee, les Indiens du Delaware, et les loyalistes.

Introduction

On 29 August 1779, the landscape of Newtown, New York, was bathed in the blood of Native American warriors and their Loyalist allies defending the Native Americans' way of life against Continental forces sent to destroy it. General George Washington's orders to the Continental commander, General John Sullivan, on 31 May 1779, specifically stated: "[T]he immediate objects are the total destruction and devastation of [the Haudenosaunee] settlements, and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground & prevent their planting more" (Flick 1929b: 90). The battle set the stage for the Sullivan Campaign, a Continental offensive that set out to neutralize Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) military strength along the frontier and to lay waste to all Haudenosaunee settlements in what is now central and western New York. In 1879, the centennial anniversary of the battle

at Newtown celebrated the victory of the Continental forces as a righteous cause while vilifying Native Americans and Loyalists. Since then, Newtown Battlefield has been the site of conflict over memory and heritage. The politics of inclusion and exclusion at different historical moments have shaped how the Battle of Newtown is remembered and memorialized. Memory, heritage, commemoration, and silences—that is, what is denied or forgotten—are the key threads in the memorialization at Newtown.

Throughout this article, I use the term Continental forces to refer to both the Continental soldiers and the militia that took up arms against the British Crown. I have chosen to use Continental because it avoids past nation-centric terms, such as American and patriot, because both the Native Americans and the Loyalists also believed they were (and are) Americans and patriots defending their families, lands, and ways of life.

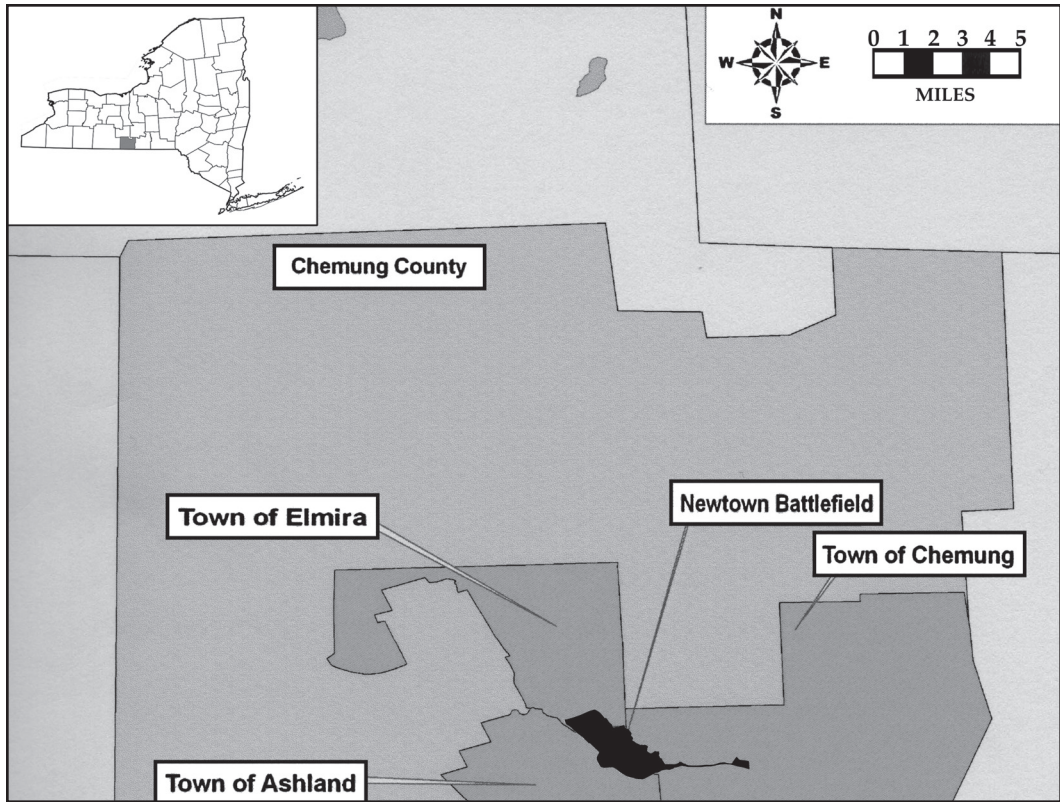


Figure 1. Location of Newtown Battlefield in Chemung County, NY. (Map by the author, based on maps courtesy of the Public Archaeology Facility, Binghamton University, 2013.)

The public memory of the Battle of Newtown, near present-day Elmira, New York (FIG. 1), and the narrative of the devastating Sullivan Campaign historically have been constructed from the Continental point of view by American historians and New York State agencies. This incomplete and prejudiced narrative helps perpetuate anti-Native American sentiments, especially regarding current land claims (Hansen and Rossen 2007). While past eras influence subsequent eras, these influences are invariably “understood and remade through the dominant discourses of the present day” (Smith 2006: 58–59). Paul Connerton notes that experiences in the present are also “causally connected with past events and objects” (Connerton 1989: 2). We experience the present through memories that frame the ways we recall past events and their impacts (Connerton 1989: 20). In this way, the past and the present become intertwined

as specific memories are constructed and reinforced in the present. These memories, in turn, impact what is recalled or forgotten about the past (Connerton 1989: 20–21). Throughout American history, this framework has created a linear conception of history that focused a collective national memory on the importance of elites and national heroes (Shackel 2001: 3). But today’s archaeologists, historians, and heritage managers no longer assume that all stakeholder groups should share a common memory of the past (Lowenthal 1985; Linenthal 1991; Little 2007).

Heritage is understood by scholars to be a cultural practice that is “involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings” (Smith 2006: 11). While a physical location can exist as an “identifiable site of heritage,” cultural processes and activities are what give a heritage site value and meaning (Smith 2006: 3). These

cultural processes and activities are usually reflected in commemorations that commonly involve monuments and signage identifying a place as “symbolic of particular cultural and social events” (Smith 2006: 3). In addition to commemorative ceremonies, society preserves historical memories of important events in a tangible material form, such as monuments and memorials (Moyer and Shackel 2007: 109). “Images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past” are imparted and sustained through rituals (Connerton 1989: 3–4). Whenever elites or stakeholders manipulate any collective memories or heritage narratives created through commemorative processes, silences may occur and a part of the past is entirely forgotten or at least ignored (Shackel 2001: 3; Smith 2006: 30). Such silences often occur at the expense of the memories and importance of the heroes of minority groups (Shackel 2001: 3; Smith 2006: 30). These silences are part of the production of history which contributes to the formation of celebrations that create powerful narratives that enhance the perspective being celebrated while imposing silences on the perspectives being ignored (Trouillot 1995: 118).

Thus, when a site is interpreted, preserved, and commemorated, the question arises as to which narrative(s) will be elevated to the status of official heritage, how past events will be interpreted and presented to the public, and what memories they will elicit. This manipulation or forgetting of the past “often comes at the expense of a subordinate group” (Shackel 2001: 3). Because a heritage site can be used as a political and cultural tool, subgroups within a nation can use heritage to define the narrative of a site to legitimize their “identity, experiences and social/cultural standing” (Smith 2006: 52). On historic battlefields in the United States, such as Newtown, the narrative often reflects patriotic themes and memorializes the war and the heroism of the soldiers (Linenthal 1993: 3–4). This narrative is too often only from the perspective of the winners of the war.

In this article, I refer to the themes of memory, heritage, commemoration, and silence in my analysis of the transformation of the monuments, signage, and commemorative events at the Newtown Battlefield over time. My research demonstrates the dynamic nature of the heritage narrative of Newtown and how it evolved, with ever-increasing multivocality,

in response to changing national attitudes toward race and dissent in the United States. In this way, I show that the heritage narrative of Newtown did more than construct the memory of the historical event; it also reinforced the values of the time period in which the memorializations took place. Before discussing the memorialization and commemoration of the Battle of Newtown, I will first place the battle in its historical context within the American Revolution. I then briefly describe the various stakeholders in the commemorations of the Battle of Newtown and what the battle means to them. Finally, I have chosen to analyze four anniversaries—the very first known commemoration, held at the 100th (1879) anniversary, during the American Revolution centennial; as well as the 125th (1929); 200th (1979); and 225th (2004). These commemorations anchor the narrative of the battlefield memorialization over time. I selected these anniversaries because they are well documented and involved a range of heritage activities that recast the dominant narrative of the site. I also briefly discuss commemorations in 1912 and 2011 to explore the evolution of the memorialization. For each anniversary, I note which descendant communities had a presence at the commemorative ceremonies. I also analyze the tone used to characterize the combatants and, by extension, their descendant communities—see Venables (2013) for a more detailed description of my methods. In this article I demonstrate how each memorialization event evolved from previous ones, and how the heritage narrative influenced and was influenced by changes within American society.

The Battle of Newtown in the Context of the American Revolution

The Haudenosaunee—meaning the People of the Longhouse—originally included the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas (Engelbrecht 2003: 129). At the start of the American Revolution, the Haudenosaunee officially declared neutrality (Fischer 1997: 21–23). In July 1777, rival factions split apart the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and this rift resulted in members of each nation being given the freedom to choose to side with the Crown, to join the Continentals, or to remain neutral (Fischer 1997: 21–25). Thus,

the American Revolution expanded into a multinational civil war.

After the British defeat at Saratoga in October 1777, the British adopted a new strategy. This strategy focused the British forces against New Jersey, Philadelphia, Newport (Rhode Island), and the South (Mackesy 1964: 218–219, 251–256; Shy 1990: 195–200). New York City became a permanent base for both the British army and navy (Mackesy 1964: 251–256). The new strategy also increased Native American involvement in the northern colonies because of the British-sponsored hit-and-run attacks against settlements along the western frontiers of Pennsylvania and New York (Fischer 1997: 19–20; Shy 1990: 195). This strategy resulted in a cycle of attacks and counterattacks between Crown and Continental forces.

For example, on 3 July 1778, 200 Loyalist Rangers and 300 Crown-allied Native Americans attacked Continental settlements in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania (Flick 1929b: 9; Holmes 1977: 1). When Continental troops, primarily militia, left their fort to pursue the Rangers and Native Americans, the Crown forces successfully ambushed and killed most of the Continental forces (Fischer 1997: 27).

In October 1778, in retaliation for this attack at Wyoming, Continental forces from Cherry Valley, New York, assaulted Onoquaga, a Native American town located along the Susquehanna River (Taylor 2006: 74, 93). While most of the civilian inhabitants had time to flee, several Native American children hiding in cornfields were bayoneted and killed by the Continentals (Preston 1989: 100–101; Taylor 2006: 94).

Seeking revenge for the assault on Onoquaga, Rangers, Mohawks, and Senecas attacked the Continental base at Cherry Valley on the night of 9 November 1778 (Holmes 1977: 2). In addition to 11 soldiers, 33 civilians—mostly women and children—were killed (Holmes 1977: 2; Williams 2005: 180, 182). Although raids and counterraided defined the war along the frontiers of Pennsylvania and New York, the Continentals deliberately omitted the brutality of their own raids and their contributions to this cycle of horror when creating their own propaganda and subsequent heritage narratives.

As General Sullivan's army moved north from Pennsylvania into the southern tier of what is now New York State, the leaders of the Crown forces devised a plan to ambush the Continentals at Newtown (Flick 1929b: 136; Fischer 1997: 86). An ambush was the only practical alternative to harassing the Continental army while on the march because the Continental forces outnumbered the forces of the Loyalist and Crown-allied Native Americans by more than four to one (Flick 1929b: 136; Fischer 1997: 86). Continental riflemen acting as scouts, however, discovered the ambush and alerted General Sullivan so he could order the Continental forces to deploy for battle (Williams 2005: 268–269). Over 4,000 Continental soldiers engaged about 600 Loyalist and Crown-allied Native Americans (Graymont 1972: 206–213; Fischer 1997: 93). Despite these overwhelming odds, the outnumbered Crown forces held the Continental forces at bay for two hours with no artillery or cavalry support (Williams 2005: 269). After two hours of battle, Continental infantry, supported by their artillery, executed a successful flanking maneuver and threatened to surround the outnumbered Crown forces, thus forcing them to withdraw (Williams 2005: 269–270).

Following this battle, the Continental forces, led by Oneida scouts, marched through Haudenosaunee lands in what is now central and western New York (Williams 2005: 293). The Sullivan Campaign destroyed 40 Native American towns (Williams 2005: 293). As a result of the devastation, the Haudenosaunee fled to the British garrison at Fort Niagara. Inadequate supplies and one of the worst winters ever recorded, however, created extreme hardship and resulted in the death of many of the refugees (Graymont 1972: 220; Fisher 1997: 192; Williams 2005: 291–292; Venables 2013: 18–20).

The Multiple Meanings of Newtown

The moral and military complexities of the frontier war, the Battle of Newtown, and the Sullivan Campaign shaped the tone of future commemorations. The governments and private individuals financing the monuments and commemorations controlled the narrative. The patriotic narrative reflected the U.S.

national ideology of Manifest Destiny. Over the course of two centuries, the memorializations of Newtown and the question of whose views would be used to interpret these events slowly evolved within the broader national context of continually changing American perspectives on the past.

The Battle of Newtown and the larger Sullivan Campaign have several narratives as defined by their various stakeholders. The public narratives presented by the monuments and commemorations most often reflected only one of these perspective. Diverse stakeholder narratives do exist, however, and many stand in marked contrast to the narratives presented on the monuments and in the commemorations. For many years, some of the stakeholder narratives were silenced. For descendants of the white Continentals and those who follow their reasoning, the battle of Newtown represents both a symbolic victory for the Continentals, one that opened present-day central and western New York to white settlement, and an act of vengeance for the Wyoming and Cherry Valley massacres. For the descendants of the Oneidas, who provided scouts for Sullivan, the narrative is one of pride in their pro-Continental stance. They now refer to themselves as “the first allies” (Oneida Indian Nation 2011). The descendants of the pro-British Haudenosaunee and their Delaware allies focus their narrative of the battle on a defense of their ways of life and their homelands. Today the descendants of the Loyalists, including the descendants of the Crown-allied Native Americans, participate in an extensive Canadian organization known as the United Empire Loyalists. The United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada is similar to the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution which is an organization for the descendants of the Continentals. Members of the United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada maintain the narrative that their ancestors fought to defend the British government and monarchy, which they believed had the legitimate right to govern the Thirteen Colonies. In 1879, when the 100th anniversary was celebrated, the Battle of Newtown was still important to each of these groups. But during the commemorative events, the descendants of the Loyalists and Native Americans who fought for the Crown were excluded and, in the celebratory speeches, vilified.

1879: Memorializing Newtown to Justify the 19th-Century Indian Wars

Prior to 1879 there was no official battlefield park at Newtown and, therefore, no official location to erect monuments or to conduct memorial events. The centennial of the American Revolution inspired a group of individuals to plan a memorial for Newtown. Sometime between 1878 and 1879, public-spirited citizens gathered at the Fisher House in Wellsburg, New York, to organize a commemoration for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Newtown, proposing to create a commemorative park (Appleman 1935: 1). Alfred Searles donated the first acre to create the Newtown Battlefield Park. This acre overlooks the Newtown Battlefield, atop what is now known as Sullivan Hill (Appleman 1935: 1).

In 1879, the first monument, the Sullivan Monument, was erected on the newly established

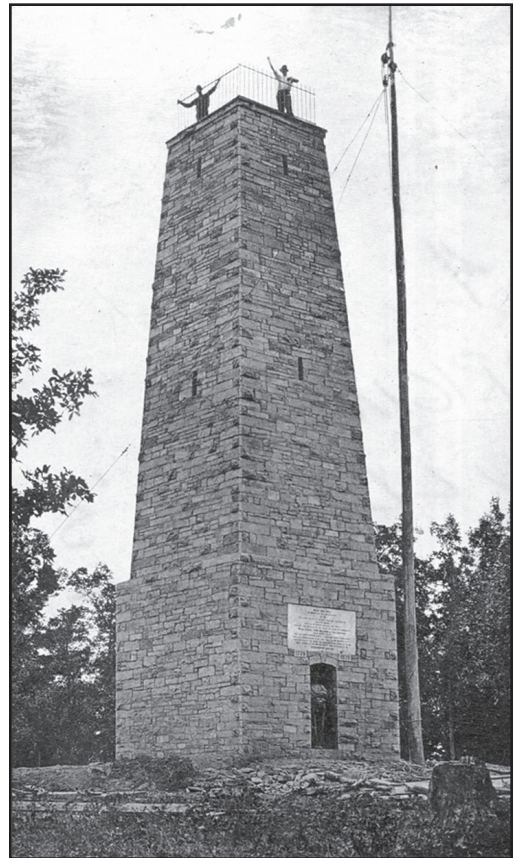


Figure 2. The Sullivan Monument, ca. 1879. (Photo courtesy of the Chemung County Historical Society, Elmira, NY.)

park land (FIG. 2). The monument was paid for by local citizens organized as the Newtown Monument Association (*Elmira Adviser* 1879; Cook 1887: 391–393). The 40 ft. stone tower was constructed of locally quarried rough fieldstones, although a specific quarry is not credited for the material (Appleman 1935: 1). The tower had an internal staircase allowing visitors to climb to the top and view the battlefield landscape, most of which lay below the hill. Even though the tower was only located on a very small section of the battlefield where some of the Crown forces had retreated at the end of the battle, the organizers of the 100th anniversary felt that it was more important for the monument to be dramatically visible to all travelers in the area, rather than located in the valley where most of the fighting had occurred (Appleman 1935: 1). To that end, the monument stood on the highest cleared location in what is now state park property and known as Sullivan Hill. (This original tower was near the location of the present Newtown Monument. When the original tower collapsed, the present tower replaced it in 1912.) By placing the 1879 tower at such a dramatic height, the organizers made a powerful symbolic statement that asserted the importance of the battlefield to New York history. As an extension of the commemoration activities, the tower also reinforced the importance of the battle in opening the area to the first white settlers, an event appreciated by their late 19th-century descendants (Cook 1887: 439). A plaque on the monument celebrated this expansion of white settlement and the importance of the Battle of Newtown by attributing national significance to the event:

[T]he forces of the Six Nations ... were met and defeated by the Americans ... whose soldiers ... completely routed the enemy and accelerated the advent of the day, which assured to the United States their existence as an INDEPENDENT NATION [emphasis in the original] (Cook 1887: 393).

In addition to the dedication of the memorial, several prominent individuals gave speeches at the anniversary celebration. One of these speakers was General William T. Sherman, the Union general during the American Civil War who was famous for his capture of the Confederate city of Atlanta, Georgia and his

subsequent March to the Sea in 1864. At the time of the celebration, General Sherman commanded the entire United States Army and was directly involved in the Indian Wars being fought west of the Mississippi (Utley 1973: 15–16). General Sherman gave two speeches during the anniversary celebration. Significantly, at the beginning of his first speech, he referred to the battlefield as sacred ground:

[W]herever men worked for liberty and for law, if a single man falls, the ground becomes sacred; and you are the better for coming to honor it by an occasion of this kind. When you go home, you will be better patriots and better men, because you have come here to recognize the fact that you have stood upon the battlefield, where fell even but four men, in a battle where liberty and law was the issue of that fight. (Cook 1887: 439)

This reflected a pervasive idea in 19th-century post-Civil War America: the deaths of soldiers made battlefields sacred (Gatewood and Cameron 2004: 193). At the time, veterans' organizations were transforming Civil War battlefields into memorial landscapes. General Sherman, as a Civil War veteran speaking about a Revolutionary War battlefield, also demonstrated that this trend applied to more than just Civil War battlefields. Additionally, General Sherman drew analogies between the Continental motivations in the American Revolution and those of the Union during the Civil War, using the term liberty to represent either freedom from the British (the Continental perspective) or emancipation for the African American slaves (the Union perspective), and using the term law as synonymous with fair representation in government (the Continental perspective) or the legal right of the Federal government (the Union perspective). General Sherman reinforced the belief that the North had historically been on the side of morality, an important detail for an audience that likely included Civil War veterans or families of Civil War soldiers.

In 1879, Sherman was serving as the commanding four-star general of the United States Army, directly involved in the ongoing Indian Wars (Utley 1973: 15–16). Based on his firsthand knowledge of the Indian Wars, Sherman also took the opportunity to link

Newtown, the Sullivan Campaign, and the commemoration to current events:

We are all at war. Ever since the first white man landed upon this continent, there has been a battle. We are at war to-day—a war between civilization and savages. Our forefathers ... came to found an empire based upon new principles, and all opposition to it had to pass away, whether it be English or French on the north, or Indians on the west. ... [Washington] gave General Sullivan orders to come here and punish the Six Nations, for their cruel massacre in the valley of the Wyoming. ... General Sullivan obeyed his orders like a man and like a soldier, and the result was from that time forward, your people settled up these beautiful valleys all around here. ... This valley was opened to civilization; it came on the heels of General Sullivan's army, and has gone on, and gone on until to-day. The same battle is raging upon the Yellow Stone. (Cook 1887: 439)

General Sherman justified the Battle of Newtown and the Sullivan Campaign by appealing to the 19th-century belief in Manifest Destiny. This perspective rationalized the taking of Native American lands and the continuing wars with Native American nations. In addition to speaking on the American Revolution, General Sherman referred to the French and Indian War of 1754–1763 when he stated the need for the opposition from the “French on the north” to pass away. Following the victory of the British in this war, these northern lands controlled by the French were transferred to Britain in 1763. Following the end of the American Revolution in 1783, the lands south of the Great Lakes, once claimed by France and Britain alike, were transferred to the new United States. General Sherman validated the exclusion of the Loyalists by noting how “all opposition to [the U.S.] had to pass away, whether it be English or French” (Cook 1887: 439). In this context, it would have made little sense to include the viewpoints of the Loyalists or Native Americans in the 1879 commemoration.

In addition to the speeches at the memorialization ceremonies, the audience heard a poem written and recited by Guy Humphreys McMaster. The first section poetically portrays the Continental commander, General John Sullivan, and the Mohawk leader, Joseph Brant (Cook 1887: 402–408).

McMaster imagines Brant giving a rallying speech to his warriors and Loyalist allies prior to going into battle:

These are the hungry eaters of land—the
greedy
Devourers of forest and lake and meadow and
swamp;
Gorged with the soil they have robbed from the
helpless and needy,
The tribes that trembled before their martial
pomp.

These are the rich, who covet the humble goods
of the poor;
The wise, who with their cunning, the simple
ensnare;
The strong, who trample the weak as weeds on
the moor;
The great, who grudge with the small the earth
to share.

But you are the valiant braves of
Ho-de-no-sau-nee;
The tribes of the East were weaklings, with
hearts of the deer;
Unconquered in war you are, and ever shall be,
For your limbs are mighty—your hearts are
void of fear. (Cook 1887: 406)

The forcefulness of Brant's imagined speech indicates that the audience already understood Native American views of the Sullivan Campaign. At first glance, the inclusion of such sentiments might seem to convey a fair-minded desire to include Native Americans in the 100th anniversary. The final verse of McMaster's poem, however, conveys the triumph of the audience's own nation, when McMaster introduces a personification of the U.S. flag, whose domain was the result of God's plan—Manifest Destiny:

The Flag replied, from lowlands by the river...
[“]What was, is not to be—thus heaven
Has ordered, and I [the U.S. Flag] come. The
blight
Must fall; the wilderness must wither;
The ancient race must disappear, and hither
New men must come; another tree [that of the
United States] must root,
And grow and send its stately branches up,
While your great tree [Tree of Peace, symbol of
the Haudenosaunee Confederacy] lies
prostrate at its foot,
A crumbled trunk. Thus for time, but then,
When hate is gone, and passion's fire is dead,
And just compassion fills the hearts of men,
In friendship shall the white hand meet the red,
And over both my guardian wings shall
spread.” (Cook 1887: 408)

The poet conveys and reinforces the 19th century concept of the vanishing Indian: "the ancient race must disappear, and hither/new men must come; another tree must root." These lines emphasize that because the "ancient race" of Native Americans "must disappear," either any surviving Native Americans would assimilate and vanish into the American mainstream, or all of them would simply die off. While the poet acknowledges Native American perspectives, he reinforces the 19th-century belief that Indians are members of a disappearing race whose cultures and nations are destined to be replaced by white settlers and institutions: "another tree must root [American culture],/and grow and send its stately branches up,/While your great tree [the Haudenosaunee] lies prostrate at its foot,/a crumbled trunk." A subsequent line foretells the future: "In friendship shall the white hand meet the red." This might initially appear to indicate eventual reconciliation, but the phrase "And over both my guardian wings shall spread" (guardian wings representing the American government) makes it clear the poet is referring to a resolution, not a reconciliation. The protective wings of the American government spreading over the Native Americans symbolize the loss of Native American autonomy and sovereignty. Given this context of conquest, contemporary Native Americans had no role at the commemoration because both the poet and the audience imagined Native Americans fading away into history.

Memorializing Fallen Foes and Marking the Battlefield: 1880 to 1912

In the 1890s, while not associated with any greater memorialization event, the Elmira Sons of Veterans Reserve Company of the Sons of Union Veterans national organization erected a monument on the supposed mass grave of the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans (*Elmira Star-Gazette* 1962). It is designed to look like a 19th century headstone and it is made out of limestone. The dedication text read: "OUR FOE, REDMEN & BRITISH WHO FELL AUG. 29, 1779 LIE HERE" (FIG. 3). The monument, shaped like a gravestone, may be an extension of the theme of reconciliation between North and South (Linenthal 1991: 56–66, 93). Starting around the 1880s, commemorations at battlefields such as Gettysburg began to

reflect an ideology of reconciliation. This ideology judged the causes of both North and South as equal because of the martial valor and devotion that the soldiers on both sides demonstrated for their causes (Linenthal 1991: 93). By the 1890s, this ideology led to the belief that the monumental landscape of Gettysburg should tell the Confederate story more fully (Linenthal 1991: 108). The martial valor and devotion that the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans displayed at Newtown may have inspired respect for their cause, according to this ideology of reconciliation. Thus, this national ideology of reconciliation may have inspired the members the Elmira Sons of Veterans Reserve Company to erect the monument. This monument has been moved from its original location and now sits in Knoll Cemetery, about 2 mi. southeast of the border of Newtown Battlefield State Park.

In 1907, the Newtown Battle Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, a group dedicated to perpetuating the ideals of the War for Independence, inscribed a large granite boulder to mark a part of the battlefield that lay on the low ground below the Sullivan

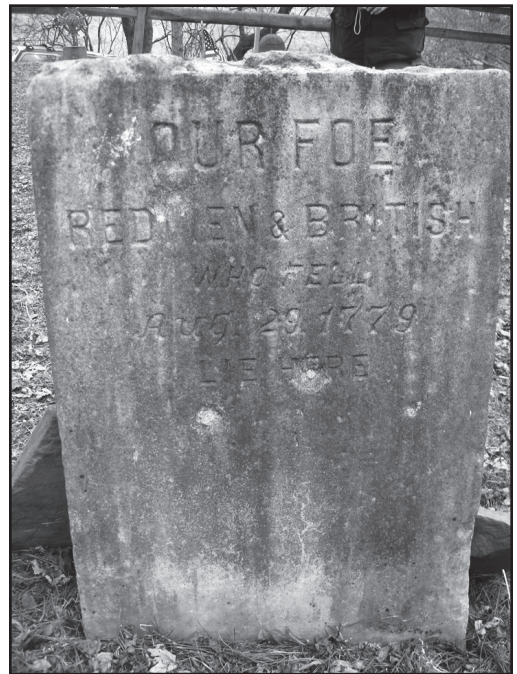


Figure 3. 1890s Sons of Union Veterans marker. (Photo by the author, 2013.)



Figure 4. Sons of the American Revolution 1907 Monument. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

Monument (American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 1913: 245) (FIG. 4). Apparently, the organization sought to designate the location of some of the most significant fighting on the battlefield. It is unknown whether tourists who visited the 1879 Sullivan Monument, atop the mountain overlooking the main battlefield, expected the tower monument to be *on* the main battlefield, as would have been the case with monuments to Civil War battles (Harrison 1993: i-v). Therefore, the 1907 commemorative boulder may have been placed from a practical interpretative standpoint as much as the placement may have been motivated by a desire by the Sons of the American Revolution

to reinforce the Continentals' claim to how the battle should be interpreted.

From the Rubble: The 1912 Memorialization

The 1879 stone monument collapsed during a thunderstorm on 30 August 1911 (Greg Smith 2012, pers. comm.). The collapse was attributed to structural weaknesses caused by a large hole in the side of the monument. It is unknown when or how this damage occurred. Local legend, however, records that several boys were exploding black powder near the monument and that this created the initial hole that the forces of nature subsequently expanded (Greg Smith 2012, pers. comm.). In 1912, Hattie F. Elliott donated 15 ac. of land adjacent to the old tower to New York State. She was the daughter of Alfred Searles, the man who donated the original acre for the 1879 Sullivan Monument. The land became the core of the Newtown Battlefield Reservation, and, on 29 August 1912, a new granite obelisk monument was dedicated atop Sullivan Hill as a replacement for the 1879 tower (American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 1913: 245) (FIG. 5). In the 19th century, obelisks were common monuments, found on military sites, in cemeteries, and even erected to honor famous people, such as the Washington Monument obelisk in Washington, D.C. (Curl 1980: 40, 346). The 1912 erection of an obelisk at Newtown was in keeping with this commemorative style, popular since the 19th century.

The Sullivan Monument also had a new plaque installed at its base, with the following text:

NEAR THIS SITE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 1779 WAS FOUGHT
THE BATTLE OF NEWTOWN.
BETWEEN
CONTINENTAL TROOPS COMMANDED BY
MAJOR GENERAL JOHN SULLIVAN
AND A COMBINED FORCE OF
TORIES AND INDIANS UNDER
COLONEL JOHN BUTLER
AND
JOSEPH BRANT,
AVENGING THE MASSACRES OF
WYOMING AND CHERRY VALLEY
DESTROYING THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY
ENDING ATTACKS ON OUR SETTLEMENTS
AND THEREBY OPENING
WESTWARD THE PATHWAY OF CIVILIZATION.



Figure 5. The 1912 Sullivan Monument. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

This plaque continues the trend of excluding Native Americans and Loyalists from memorialization activities at Newtown. The plaque reinforced the 19th-century concept of the vanishing Indian and expanded on that theme by emphasizing the destruction of the government of the Haudenosaunee. In this way, a visitor might assume that, while members of the Haudenosaunee may not have completely disappeared, they no longer existed as a functioning political entity or a unified people. In fact, the Haudenosaunee government of chiefs and clan mothers was still meeting at Onondaga, the capital of the confederacy, where it continues to meet today.

The 1912 dedication ceremony included a parade of both military and civic organizations

that stretched for a mile and a half through the streets of Elmira, New York (American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 1913: 245). Marching in the parade were 800 National Guard and regular army soldiers (*Elmira Weekly Advertiser* 1912; American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 1913: 245). Numerous prominent individuals attended the events, including Governor John Alden Dix, and U.S. Army Brigadier General Albert L. Mills, who attended as the representative of President William Howard Taft (American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 1913: 246). No representatives from Native American nations or the United Empire Loyalists were mentioned in the newspaper accounts of the events.

The inclusion of a parade of U.S. soldiers symbolically asserted U.S. military power, and reaffirmed the Battle of Newtown as a victory for the Continental army, America's first national army. The presence of Brigadier General Mills indicates the continued importance of the Battle of Newtown and the Sullivan Campaign in the national Continental-based ideology.

When the 1912 tower was erected, the ideological power of Manifest Destiny, which had previously been the driving force behind the application of military might during the Indian Wars, was being applied overseas. Manifest Destiny once again justified the use of military power in the quest for land, power, and wealth that defined America's elite. Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski (1984: 249) noted that "[s]ome people thought that the closing of the frontier, industrial overproduction, and labor unrest portended a crisis. They believed that America's history was one of expansion." The 1912 commemoration took place in this context. Because of this attitude and the inability to expand further on the North American continent, it became imperative to apply the ideology of Manifest Destiny to expansionist efforts in other areas of the globe to stave off any perceived crises. Such expansionist efforts included the 1898 Spanish-American War, the 1899 Open Door Policy that opened China to U.S. trade, the 1910 intervention in Mexico, and the intervention in Nicaragua during 1911–1912 (Millett and Maslowski 1984: 267–284, 301, 319). While the Indian Wars had ended, the ideology of



Figure 6. 1929 roadside marker for the location of Loyalist and Native American breastworks. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

Manifest Destiny and expansion continued, as the United States began to build an overseas empire. This ideology was reflected in the text on the 1912 monument, and the monument represents continuity in the patriotic interpretation of events at Newtown. Therefore, just as in 1879, the 1912 heritage narrative of Newtown continued to emphasize the positive depiction of the Continentals and their descendants, while excluding or negatively portraying the groups which had opposed the Continentals.

To be Neutral or Patriotic? The Heritage Narrative Struggle in 1929

On 29 August 1929, the people of New York and the descendants of Continental families celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Newtown. The 150th anniversary marked a turning point in the commemorations of Newton with the gradual introduction of neutral narratives on interpretive signs and in publications written by the state historian, Alexander C. Flick.

Three years prior to this anniversary, the New York State Education Department initiated the State Historic Marker Program. This program began as part of the commemorations of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the American Revolution and remained in operation until 1939, by which time over 2,800 cast-iron site markers had been erected throughout the state (New York State Museum 2012). These

road signs provided the date of the historic event, along with a short paragraph or sentence explaining the significance of the site in New York State history. Of the 2,800 markers, 11 were placed on or near Newtown battlefield (FIG. 6). These markers provided brief descriptions of significant events at each location:

1) LINE OF RUDE BREASTWORKS WHERE BRITISH AND INDIANS DISPUTED ADVANCE OF SULLIVAN'S ARMY AUGUST 29, 1779 (Location: intersection NYS 17 and 367).

2) THIS RIDGE FORTIFIED BY THE BRITISH FORMED THE SOUTH LINE OF DEFENCE AUGUST 29, 1779 (Location: NYS 367 south of Lowman).

3) LINE OCCUPIED RIFLE CORPS UNDER GENERAL HAND AT OPENING OF BATTLE AUGUST 29, 1779 (Location: NYS 17 at Lowman).

4) CAMP OF GEN. CLINTON'S BRIGADE SULLIVAN-CLINTON CAMPAIGN AUGUST 28, 1779 (Location: NYS 17, 2 mi. west of Chemung).

5) CAMP OF GEN. MAXWELL'S BRIGADE SULLIVAN-CLINTON CAMPAIGN AUGUST 28, 1779 (Location: NYS 17, 2 mi. west of Chemung).

6) MILITARY ROUTE OF THE SULLIVAN-CLINTON ARMY ON ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BRITISH AND INDIANS OF WESTERN NEW YORK IN 1779 (Location: NYS 17 at Chemung).

7) MILITARY ROUTE OF THE SULLIVAN-CLINTON ARMY ON ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BRITISH AND INDIANS OF WESTERN NEW YORK IN 1779 (Location: NYS 17 near Chemung-Tioga County line).

8) SULLIVAN-CLINTON CAMPAIGN ARMY CAMP ON RIVER FLATS TO SOUTH AUGUST 27, 1779 (Location: NYS 17, ½ mi west of Chemung).

9) [ARROW] SULLIVAN ROAD OVER NARROWS MOUNTAIN BUILT FOR USE OF SULLIVAN'S ARMY EXPEDITION AGAINST INDIANS 1779 (Location: NYS 17, ½ mi. west of Chemung).

10) MILITARY ROUTE OF THE SULLIVAN-CLINTON ARMY ON ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BRITISH AND INDIANS OF WESTERN NEW YORK IN 1779 (Location: NYS 13 and NYS 17 in Elmira Heights).

11) MILITARY ROUTE OF THE SULLIVAN-CLINTON ARMY ON ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BRITISH AND INDIANS OF WESTERN NEW YORK IN 1779 (Location: NYS 17 at entrance to Newtown Battlefield State Park).

These 11 markers did not, on the surface, favor one descendant community's narrative over another's. Most of the markers were placed miles from the battle site, extending



Figure 7. The 1929 New Hampshire State Monument. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

Newtown's influence beyond the park borders. While these signs primarily note Continental routes and positions indicating that they were intended to stake a claim to areas important to New York's Continental heritage, the new signs lacked condescending or derogatory terms referring to the Loyalists or Native Americans. In addition to the public presentation of neutral or objective markers, the 1929 anniversary also was marked by publications written and edited by Alexander C. Flick (Flick 1929a, 1929b), the official state historian and the chairman of the Executive Committee on the Commemoration of the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign (Flick 1929b: 3). These publications, some of which were free, included reprints of documents from all three sides: the Continentals, the Loyalists, and the Indians.

During and following the First World War, American interest in British history and culture increased because the United States was allied with Britain during the war (Hofstadter 1955: 277–278). Reprints of historic documents written by Loyalists satisfied Americans' newfound curiosity about the British. Additionally, veterans returning from the trenches of Europe brought with them a respect for British soldiers. These feelings may have influenced the desire to reevaluate the portrayal of the British and Loyalists as villains.

This trend of neutrality is reflected on a plaque on a monument to Sullivan and the New Hampshire Brigade of the Continental army that was erected in 1929 by the State of New Hampshire (FIG. 7). There are no negative comments about the British. Unlike the texts on both the 1879 and 1912 Sullivan monuments, the 1929 New Hampshire monument did not use any space to glorify the Continentals' actions. Rather, it simply referred to the "MEMORABLE SULLIVAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SIX NATIONS OF INDIANS." No phrases were used to vilify the Native Americans. New Hampshire may have had little use for maintaining the 1879 narrative, since none of the affected Native American nations resided within its borders.

Following the trend of monuments erected at Newtown, in 1929 the State of New York

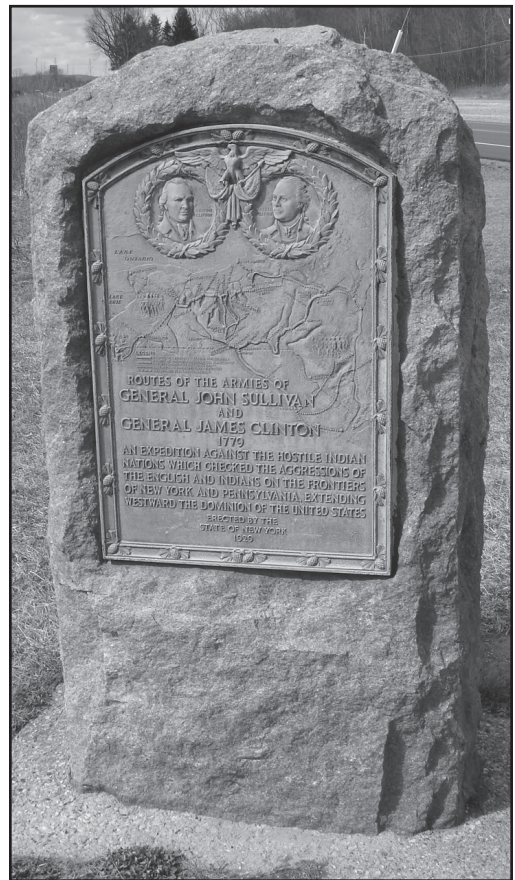


Figure 8. The 1929 New York State Monument. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

placed a marker midway between the location of the breastworks of the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans, and Sullivan Hill (FIG. 8). The plaque on the monument displayed a map of the route of the Sullivan Campaign with the caption:

ROUTES OF THE ARMIES OF GENERAL JOHN SULLIVAN AND JAMES CLINTON 1779 AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE HOSTILE INDIAN NATIONS WHICH CHECKED THE AGGRESSIONS OF THE ENGLISH AND INDIANS ON THE FRONTIERS OF NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA, EXTENDING WESTWARD THE DOMINION OF THE UNITED STATES.

Unlike the neutral-text New Hampshire monument, the New York State text clearly maintained the heritage narrative introduced in 1879, reflecting the fact that the state was still embroiled in controversial policies toward the Haudenosaunee (Hauptman 1988: 12–13).

A fly-over of the U.S. Navy dirigible, the *Los Angeles*, marked a major highlight of the 150th anniversary celebration (*Chemung County Historical Society* 1992: 4,154–4,155). The *Los Angeles*, originally a German airship, was given to the United States as part of Germany's reparations following World War I. Because the dirigible was one of the most impressive airships of the time, the fly-over asserted U.S. military strength. Showcasing the newest aspect of American military power reinforced the continuity of military victories dating back to the Continental forces at the Battle of Newtown. In this way, while most of the physical markers erected during this time were neutral in tone, the commemorative ceremonies, such as the fly-over by the dirigible, were in stark contrast with their reinforcement of enduring American military power.

The tension over how the heritage narrative of Newtown would be shaped in the post-World War I cultural environment was reflected in the dominant American culture. American society of the 1920s was defined by the conflict between a broadening, more inclusive society that slammed head first into the defenders of the older exclusionary, status quo that predated the horrors of the First World War's trench warfare. In 1927 the hit musical, *Showboat*, challenged Americans to stand up to higher ideals by presenting the dilemmas caused by racial bigotry. *Showboat* was based on a 1926 novel of the same name by Edna Ferber, with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. The

musical dealt with miscegenation and had a large cast of both whites and African Americans who portrayed aspects of American life from the 1870s until 1926 (Kreuger 1977: 3–51, 72–74, and 236). During the Roaring Twenties movies such as the silent film entitled *America* were made that reflected resistance to the cultural changes that were occurring. These movies impacted the perception of the American Revolution and reinforced the long-standing disdain for the Loyalists and Native Americans who had fought for the British. *America* was made in 1924 by the innovative, but racist film maker D.W. Griffith. Griffith's most infamous film, *Birth of a Nation*, which was released in 1915 has been criticized for negatively depicting African Americans, its proslavery stance, and heroically depicting members the Ku Klux Klan. In *America*, the actor Lionel Barrymore played an evil, leering Captain Walter Butler, a Loyalist who fought at Cherry Valley (Griffith 1924). A strong, silent, but sinister portrayal of the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant was also a main feature of this film (Griffith 1924).

These tensions were reproduced along state lines, with the 1929 New Hampshire monument that reflected the emerging neutral narrative standing in contrast to the 1929 New York State monument that perpetuated the 1879 narrative. These two state monuments highlight the importance that the present-day has on determining whose heritage narrative will be used and/or reinforced to create a recollection of the past that is most advantageous to those in power.

Telling the Other Side: Political Activism and Its Impact in 1979

The year 1979 marked the 200th anniversary of the Sullivan Campaign. As part of the celebrations, the State of New York erected three new interpretive signs on the Newtown Battlefield Park lands that carried on the trend begun in 1929 to present a neutral description of the battle itself, objectively describing the positions and movements of both forces. One sign addressed some of the events and motives leading to the Sullivan Campaign. The second sign was a large map of the battlefield that located various important geographic features and identified the initial locations of the combatants: the Loyalist/Crown-allied Native American forces and the Continentals. The

final sign described the movements of the combatants during the Battle of Newtown and the ultimate Continental victory.

At first glance, the first sign seems to maintain a Continental-centric narrative of the causes of the Sullivan Campaign condemning only the raids of the Crown-allied Native Americans and not the attacks of the Continental forces in 1778:

During 1778 pillaging raids and attacks were increasingly numerous and disastrous to frontier settlements in New York and Pennsylvania. Massacres at Wyoming Valley and Cherry Valley emphasized the need to organize a drive against the marauders.

The text makes it appear that the British and Native Americans were the only aggressors in these frontier conflicts. However, the sign also acknowledges other motives by the Continentals beyond immediate military objectives:

General George Washington, in planning the campaign, had also realized that unless the Americans were in possession of these lands at the end of the war, they might not become part of the new nation. Although the Sullivan-Clinton campaign failed to capture the British forts [at Oswego and Niagara], it secured this territory for the United States in 1783. Within a very few years, thousands of settlers moved into what was then the western frontier.

In this regard, the sign delineates one of the major issues important to the Haudenosaunee descendant communities: that the Sullivan Campaign was part of a larger Continental land grab that continued in the aftermath of the Revolution and had a permanent impact on the demographics of the area (Taylor 2006: 175, Jordan 2008: 337). Significantly, the sign emphasizes that the Continentals realized the value of Haudenosaunee lands before and while they were planning the campaign. This text marked the end of the earlier position that the Continentals recognized the value of Haudenosaunee land only as a happy coincidence after the campaign.

In the context of the 1970s, the subject of the Continentals' greed for Haudenosaunee lands may have been included in the commemoration because of the growing presence of Haudenosaunee and other Native American groups, such as the American Indian Movement, in public and legal spheres. The Red Power movement made it less realistic for New York State to assume that

the Continentals' greed for land could be whitewashed away. For example, in 1971, the Haudenosaunee forced the state and the federal governments to abandon plans to widen Interstate 81 onto Onondaga lands (Hauptman 1986: 221–222). That same year, the Haudenosaunee pressed for the return of sacred wampum that New York State had obtained illegally in the late 1890s (Hauptman 1986: 218–220). On the national level, in 1973, the American Indian Movement seized Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site of an 1890 slaughter of Lakotas by U.S. forces (Akwesasne Notes 1974).

The 1979 commemoration also was part of the celebrations of the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Issues of memory and memorialization emerged in the midst of tensions between the patriotic fervor that existed in 1879 and the wider social and political perspectives of the 1970s. Analysis of the 1979 commemoration of Newtown reveals that these tensions impacted the memorialization of the 200th anniversary at the site. The New York State Bicentennial Commission recognized these tensions as early as 1974, when it issued a remarkable statement in *A New York State Guide to Local Bicentennial Planning* that encouraged a wider perspective so that the politics of exclusion might give way to inclusion.

On the very first page, the commission noted:

The American Revolution has made a lasting impression on the American memory because it was more than a war for independence: it was also a revolution in American life.... Yet not everything the war brought was good. Some Americans suffered even as other Americans sought freedom. American Indians and Americans who remained loyal to the king were victimized. Revolutionary ideology spurred the move toward freedom for some black Americans, but for thousands of others, the promise of liberty and equality was unfulfilled.

It is precisely this mixed legacy that gives the Revolution its significance. (New York State Bicentennial Commission 1974: 1)

This balance and moderation is reflected in the sign installed at the Battle of Newtown site. Written in a fairly neutral tone, the sign refrains from using pejorative names for the Loyalists and their Native American allies, a



Figure 9. The 1979 Masonic Order Plaque. (Photo by the author, 2013.)

distinct change from the tone and names—such as “savage”—used 100 years earlier:

As the Americans proceeded up the Chemung Valley that Sunday morning, their scouts observed fortifications built of logs, stones, and earth...near the Indian village of Newtown. Concentrated at the angle of the fortifications, and with another force on the higher ridge, the Indian strategy was to pour a deadly fire into Sullivan’s advancing army.

The American’s basic strength lay in the artillery they placed on a ridge 300 yards from the angle of the enemy’s fortified line. With a frontal attack by cannon and rifle fire, and simultaneous flanking assaults, the Continental troops were able to force a retreat, for most of the Indians were not accustomed to these regimented warfare tactics. Without their Indian allies, the British and Loyalists were also forced to retreat, and the opportunity to destroy or cripple the Sullivan-Clinton campaign was lost.

The tone of the text is objective. But the sign includes some historical inaccuracies, such as, “most of the Indians were not accustomed to these regimented warfare tactics.” This skews the narrative to make it appear that the Continentals’ use of European infantry tactics carried the day almost as soon as the attack began. Left out is the fact that the Continentals’ frontal and flanking attacks were not simultaneous, despite the sign’s claim to the contrary. The Native Americans and Loyalists held out for two hours, without artillery and outnumbered more than four to one. And lastly, the Continentals’ overwhelming numbers would have made it difficult for them to have been defeated.

Near the 1912 Sullivan Monument there is a small granite plaque erected by members of the Masonic order (FIG. 9). The text is simple: “SULLIVAN CLINTON CAMPAIGN 1779 1979 LASTING MEMORY TO OUR MASONIC BROTHERS.” There were members of the Masonic order on both sides of the battle, including Joseph Brant and John Sullivan. The choice to simply state that the plaque was to the memory of “OUR MASONIC BROTHERS” makes it a memorial to the Masons who fought on both sides of the battle, instead of a memorial to only the Masons who fought for a specific side. This reflects the neutrality that was introduced to commemorations in 1929 and expanded during the 1979 commemoration efforts to move toward recognizing and incorporating the memories of both sides into the battlefield’s heritage narrative.

In addition to the installation of the interpretive signs, participants portraying Continentals, Loyalists, and Indians reenacted the battle. This inclusiveness reflected the ideology of the era; the Civil Rights Movement and the American Indian Movement had demonstrated to the country that Native Americans were still here and were here to stay. Just as African Americans brought the issues of slavery and racism into the heritage discourse, so too were Native Americans able to bring the issues of attempted cultural extermination into the heritage discourse. The new signs and reenactments marked a movement to a broader narrative, but there was still room for improvement. While the signs were more neutral in tone, they still contained historical inaccuracies.

Preserves and Preservation: The 225th Memorialization

In 1991 state budget cuts threatened to close the park and the Chemung Valley Living History Center operated the Newtown Battlefield on behalf of New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (Chemung Valley Living History Center 2012). Around this time, the Chemung Valley Living History Center began holding annual events to mark the anniversary of the battle (Murray 2004a). A much grander celebration than preceding anniversary events was planned to commemorate the 225th anniversary in 2004 (Murray 2004a). One article announced that the two-day anniversary would include a series of events to honor those who had died and/or lost their homes as a result of the Battle of Newtown:

Sunday marks the 225th anniversary of the battle in which American troops led by Maj. Gen. John Sullivan forced American Indian, British and Loyalist forces from the area and destroyed Indian crops and villages.

A series of events held today through Sunday will honor those who died or lost their homes in the Battle of Newtown. (McCarthy 2004)

Hence, some of the events were dedicated to telling the Loyalist/Crown-allied Native American side of the story.

At least one local farming family, seeking to take advantage of the increase in tourism, recognized the importance of acknowledging the Native American and Loyalist participation in the battle. The owners of Lowman Farm, where part of the battle took place, created their own brand to market jams, jellies, preserves, and other goods at the anniversary (Aaron 2004). Their products carried the name Battlefield Brand, and the logo, specially designed for the 225th anniversary, features a Continental soldier, a Native American warrior, the American flag, and a variation of the Union Jack (Aaron 2004). The owners of Lowman Farm explained that they had chosen those symbols because they felt it was important to acknowledge the Native American role in the battle, and that the Native Americans originally farmed the area (Aaron 2004).

About 800 re-enactors attended the 225th anniversary, more than double the number of re-enactors in 1979 (Murray 2004b). At least

one of the re-enactors, Glen Bentz, was of Seneca descent (Bentz 2004). Anniversary events were no longer closed to participation by the Native American descendant community and the descendants of the Loyalists. While it is unknown exactly when this broader opportunity to participate arose, it is clear that at least some members of formerly excluded descendant community groups had made progress in navigating the politics of inclusion and exclusion to become an included group. Linenthal noted that, while the late 19th century saw an adoption of an ideology of reconciliation at the memorial events at Civil War-battlefields, such as Gettysburg, there will always be some people who maintain that only one cause was the right one (Linenthal 1991: 91, 95). Such beliefs are not restricted to the end of the 19th century or to flag-waving U.S. citizens at memorial events today, as an article in the Spring 2012 issue of the *Loyalist Gazette* demonstrates. In the article, the esteemed late Canadian author, journalist, and philosopher, Peter C. Newman, described how “the United Empire Loyalists, as they called themselves, escaped from the yoke of being indentured to the pride, prejudice and brutality of the Rebels who had expropriated the Thirteen Colonies” (Newman 2012: 14).

Excluded No More: Loyalists and Indians at Memorializations

Every year, the anniversary of the Battle of Newtown is celebrated on the Newtown Battlefield Park grounds. The continued inclusion of re-enactors is an important part of the events. Unlike previous anniversaries, in 2011 re-enactors from the United Empire Loyalist descendant community participated (Pétrin 2011: 22). In addition, not all re-enactors portraying the Native Americans were white men dressed up as Native Americans: the re-enactors portraying the Native Americans included one man of Mohawk descent and another of Delaware descent (United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada 2011). Therefore, 132 years after the Continental-centric 100th anniversary, the memorialization at Newtown has become one in which the Loyalist and Native American descendant communities participate and can share their side of the story of the Battle of Newtown.

Building on this change, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation erected six new interpretive signs with new texts in 2009. These new texts correct the historical inaccuracies in the original 1979 interpretive signs (Greg Smith 2012, pers. comm.). These new signs cover more than just the Battle of Newtown and the Sullivan Campaign. One sign is devoted to discussing the African American Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) company that was active at the park during the 1930s; the second sign covers the history of the Newtown Battlefield Park since its creation in 1879; the third sign addresses the impact of the American Revolution on the Haudenosaunee; the fourth sign addresses frontier combat in 1778; a fifth sign covers the entire Sullivan Campaign and its impacts; and the sixth, final sign covers the Battle of Newtown.

The last three signs are of particular importance to memory and memorialization at Newtown. The main text of the sign describing the frontier in 1778 focuses on how the battles of Wyoming Valley and Cherry Valley justified the Sullivan Campaign. In this regard, the sign does not appear to break significantly with the standard story told from the Continental side. However, the accompanying map highlights the Native American settlements attacked by Continentals, as well as those attacked by the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans. Additionally, the caption under a painting of the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant notes that: "[A]lthough he was a force of restraint, Americans associated his name with the worst violence and alleged atrocities of the frontier warfare." Noting that Joseph Brant restrained his warriors, contrary to the usual Continental narrative, is an important step away from a Continental-dominated interpretation of Newtown.

The interpretive sign covering the Sullivan Campaign also breaks with the longstanding Continental narrative by stating the following: "[T]housands of Seneca and Cayuga refugees sought relief at British-held Fort Niagara, and that winter many died of starvation and exposure." This sentence laid out the cost in Native American lives—a fact that was previously ignored in early anniversary events. At earlier commemorative events, Continental descendants maintained tight

control over who was included and excluded, as well as which memories were used to define the heritage narrative of the Newtown Battlefield. This new direction is also apparent in a highlighted "sidebar," a paragraph offset from the main interpretive text. This sidebar states bluntly: "[S]ome historians contend that opening Indian lands for settlement was General George Washington's ultimate purpose for Sullivan's expedition." While the anniversary events in the late 19th and early 20th centuries appealed to notions of the vanishing Indian, this new text takes that narrative and rewrites it from the Haudenosaunee point of view: namely, that the Sullivan Campaign was at its heart intended as a land grab, which could conveniently be justified by the Haudenosaunee attacks against Continental frontier settlements.

Finally, a new sign erected in 2009 atop Newtown's Sullivan Hill (FIG. 10) provides Native American and Loyalist perspectives for a more objective narrative of the battle than the one written in 1979. The new sign emphasizes that the Loyalists and Native American forces withdrew when threatened with encirclement and certain destruction, a stark contrast to the 1979 sign's erroneous statement that the Native Americans lack of experience with European military tactics forced them to retreat. Additionally, the new sign indicates that General Enoch Poor's flanking attack encountered spirited resistance and erupted into the fiercest fighting on the battlefield. This again contrasts with the 1979 sign that left the reader with the impression there was no significant resistance to General Poor's men. Finally, the new interpretive sign notes that a "running fight" continued for about a mile, as the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans retreated, a detail left out of the 1979 interpretive sign. This is an important fact, because the new sign indicates that the Loyalists and Crown-allied Native Americans maintained sufficient discipline to carry out a fighting retreat and were not in a disorganized flight. As a result of these subtle and not-so-subtle changes, the memory and memorialization of the Battle of Newtown are transforming and redefining the politics of inclusion and exclusion that create the battlefield's heritage narrative.

The Battle of Newtown - August 29, 1779

The Major Battle of the Sullivan Campaign



This sketch from the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel Adam Haller is the only period map of the battlefield. The "XXXX" marks near the summit of the mountain show the location of the Native American force; the yellow bar indicates one of Sullivan's Brigades. The red line shows the retreat route of Sullivan's brigades near the village of Newtown the night after the battle. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Is the Park Part of the Battlefields?

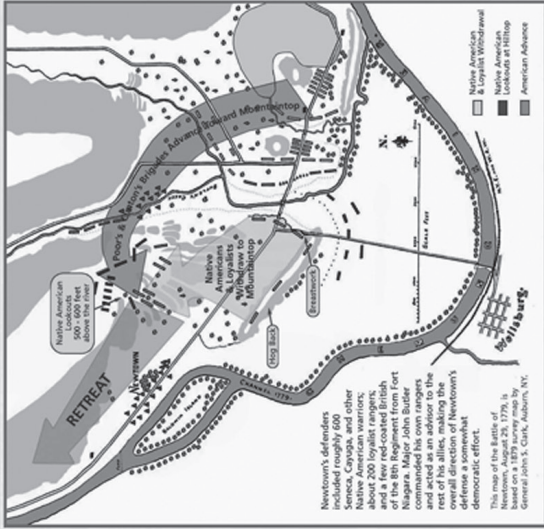
Since the battle's centennial in 1879, people have disagreed on the exact location of the battle's key events and whether any fighting took place near the present-day monument. Nobody knows for certain, but chances are good that it did. Sullivan and many of his officers described the route of Poor's and Clinton's brigades and the associated fighting as passing over the top, or summit, of a very large hill or mountain. Regardless, the top of this mountain has always been a key landmark in descriptions of the battle.

To protect the village of Newtown, about 600 Native American warriors, 200 loyalists, and a handful of British soldiers erected and camouflaged a half-mile-long breastwork of logs in the village overlooking a creek, hoping to surprise Sullivan's men as they advanced. Lookouts were posted atop the mountain behind the breastworks to attack Sullivan's army if the opportunity arose. Sullivan's scouts, however, detected the trap.

Sullivan sent two brigades under Generals Enoch Poor and James Clinton on a long, sweeping march to capture the mountain and cut off their enemies' retreat. Poor's men rushed to the summit, fired, and scattered the lookouts. Meanwhile, Sullivan's artillery and the threat of encirclement caused the loyalists and warriors to abandon the breastwork and withdraw to the mountain. Somewhere below the summit, they collided with the left wing of Poor's brigade in the battle's fiercest fighting. A running fight ensued for more than a mile along the mountain, as loyalists and Native Americans made their escape.

The enemy probably having intelligence of their approach, posted a number of troops on the top of a mountain, over which [Poor and Clinton] had to pass.

Journal of Lieutenant Colonel Adam Haller, The Battle of Newtown, August 29, 1779



This map of the Battle of Newtown, August 29, 1779, is General John S. Clark, Auburn, NY.

Figure 10. The new Battle of Newtown interpretive sign. (Image by New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, 2009.)

Conclusion

While the gunpowder smoke and the sounds of the original battle have long since dissipated into the hills, the Battle of Newtown remains significant in the histories of New York State, the Haudenosaunee, and the Loyalists. While most of the events of the Revolutionary War occurred on American colonial soil, the Battle of Newtown was fought in Haudenosaunee territory, beyond the official territorial boundaries of British North America. The battle was not simply the Continentals vs. the British. Here, at Newtown, Native Americans defended their homelands against invaders, but, after a courageous resistance, they were defeated. The struggle by the Haudenosaunee for their land rights during the Revolutionary War remains an important issue among the Haudenosaunee today. Consequently, the Battle of Newtown is a heritage site with a history of conflict, both in the actual battle and over whose memories are used to construct the narrative of the battle.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion present in the battle's memorializations over time are important to understand that "patriotic," nationalistic local organizations, together with the government of New York State, initially controlled the heritage narrative of the Newtown Battlefield. This article also demonstrates an ongoing evolution of the heritage narrative at Newtown that reflects adaptations to the times of each memorial period.

In 1879, the stone tower raised to commemorate the battle recognized the heritage landscape at the Newtown Battlefield. This commemoration reflected the ideology of the era: the years between 1870 and 1910 marked the period in American history most notable for erecting monuments to honor "mighty warriors, groups of unsung heroes, and great deeds" (Kammen 1991: 115). The 1879 monument and the patriotic dedication speeches symbolized New York State's participation in what was a greater national movement to "ensure continued allegiance to patriotic orthodoxy" at battlefields throughout the United States (Linenthal 1991: 5). This patriotic orthodoxy evolved slowly to incorporate a more multivocal—and less jingoistic—view of history. By 2011, both Native Americans and re-enactors from the

United Empire Loyalist descendant communities in Canada could be found representing their ancestors at the yearly anniversary events. Additionally, the staff of New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has written and replaced the 1979 interpretive signs. Unlike previous interpretive signs, these new signs have the potential to do more than continue the tradition of a neutral rendition of history begun in 1929, and certainly provide a more multivocal interpretation of the battle than the fervent one-sided perspective of 1879. The new signs present a narrative that combines the Continental, Loyalist, and Native American memories, while maintaining historical accuracy. As a result, visitors better understand and are better prepared to continue the debate over the complex social, political, and economic issues that triggered the Sullivan Campaign.

To conclude, I would like to return to the 1879 commemoration. One of the speakers, Erasmus Brooks, described the burning of the Haudenosaunee fields of corn, beans, and squash, the crops known among the Haudenosaunee as the Three Sisters. Brooks dramatically referred to "the destruction of all [Haudenosaunee] homes, all their crops, all their possessions. It changed cultivated fields, ripe for the harvest, into the desolations of the three furies—ferocity, fire and famine" (Cook 1887: 417). Quite literally, the Three Furies of Sullivan's army destroyed the Three Sisters. Since the year 1779, the narrative of the Battle of Newtown has been negotiated and renegotiated; this process continues today. The issues and perspectives commemorated in the landscape of the Battle of Newtown will, in all probability, reflect the dominant spirit of the United States and its people at the time. Because of the ever-changing political climate in the United States, the question remains whether that tone will backpedal to mimic earlier eras. Will the memorialization of Newtown revert to the original 1879 agenda and serve as a memorial to the Three Furies of General Sullivan's army, glorifying the opening of central and western New York to white settlement? Or will the memorializations continue their multivocal trend of slowly acknowledging and memorializing the Native Americans and their Loyalist allies who fought at Newtown in defense of the Three Sisters and the different ways of life of both the Loyalists and the Haudenosaunee?

An interpretation of the battlefield that integrates the heritage narratives of diverse interests, including the Continentals, will confirm the words of Canasatego, an Onondaga Haudenosaunee spokesman, who addressed colonial diplomats in 1744 at a council in Lancaster, Pennsylvania: "You who are wise must know, that different Nations have different conceptions" (Franklin 1987: 970).

I argue in favor of the continued expansion of the current emphasis on a multivocal heritage narrative that integrates the multiple perspectives of the different participants present at the battle. Perhaps Native Americans and United Empire Loyalists will help write narratives for future signs and monuments. Providing park visitors with an interpretation that reflects the views of all stakeholders will initially be a jolt, both morally and factually, to those who are only familiar with the narrative perspective of one group. However jarring a multivocal heritage narrative may be, continuing along this path will do much to rectify the silences imposed by the original heritage narratives that glorified the Three Furies and vilified those who resisted their westward march.

Acknowledgments

I greatly appreciate the many helpful comments and valuable suggestions made on two drafts of this article by Professor Siobhan Hart of Binghamton University. I would like to thank Greg Smith at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for his generosity in giving me useful insights into the history of Newtown Battlefield State Park and for allowing me access to his agency's extensive archives on this state park. I also thank Dr. Paul Huey, who allowed me to study his extensive collection of documents on the Newtown Battlefield State Park, all of which he accumulated during his highly productive career at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. I am grateful to the archivist Rachel Dworkin at the Chemung County Historical Society who was very helpful during my research in the society's archives and who provided an historic photo used in this article. I appreciate the useful comments by the anonymous reviewers. Finally, I thank Professor Randall McGuire, my advisor at Binghamton University, for his continuing support and sage advice.

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Author Information

Brant W. Venables is a doctoral student in historical archaeology at Binghamton. Brant has participated in numerous pre-contact and post-contact excavations in the Northeastern United States. His interests in heritage issues include a continuing collaboration with descendant communities in central New York State. This collaboration has resulted in the creation of two permanent museum exhibits and a brochure for an archaeological walking tour in Robert H. Treman State Park.

Brant W. Venables, M.A.

Doctoral Student

Department of Anthropology

Binghamton University

P.O. Box 6000

Binghamton, NY 13902-6000

brant.venables@gmail.com