

Slide 1: TITLE SLIDE (INTRODUCTION)

Good evening, thank you for coming.

Walking along the misty shores and white pines of Lake George, New York, surrounded by the splendor of the Adirondack Mountains, it is hard to imagine that 250 years ago this area was the scene of a brutal struggle for control of an empire between the French, the English, and the Iroquois Confederacy known as the French and Indian War. In an era when waterways were the modern equivalency of super highways, the Lake George – Hudson River corridor became vital to this war effort. A fourteen-mile overland route called the Military Road was cut through the wilderness in 1755, linking British fortifications on Lake George and the Hudson River. Sites along the Military Road played significant roles in two campaigns during the war. Despite the historical importance of these sites, few people visit them, or even know that they exist. The original trace of the Military Road has vanished from the landscape, and metal wayside markers modestly signify the presence of historic sites. This project examines the preservation and interpretation of French and Indian War sites along the Military Road, concluding with a recommendation for a Military Road Trail that would facilitate a better visitor experience in Lake George, New York.

Slide #2: OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

The following is an overview of my presentation this evening.

- We'll begin with identifying the Research Problem and Research Questions
- Describe the Methodology for the project
- Provide Geographic Context of the Military Road
- Provide some Historic Context of the French and Indian War
- Examine Three Case Study Sites along the Military Road
- Identify National Preservation and Interpretive Programs that serve as models for a Military Road Trail
- Propose some Recommendations for a Military Road Trail Program
- Suggest a Recommendation for further action

Slide #3: Research Problem and Questions

The research problem that I identified for this project was how French and Indian War sites along the Military Road in Lake George, New York, can best be preserved and interpreted for visitors.

Some research questions I considered for this project include:

- Why should French and Indian War sites be preserved?
- What are the challenges to visiting French and Indian War sites in Lake George?
- Why put these sites in the context of the Military Road?
- What national models are helpful in preparing a Military Road Trail?

Slide #4: Methodology

The following methodology was applied to researching and writing this project.

Literature Review

Historical Research

Three Site Visits

National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program

Military Road report

Interviews with local, state and federal stakeholders

Slide #5: Geographic Context

- Map of New York
- Lake George located HERE – sixty miles north of Albany.
- This was part of the North American frontier.

Slide #6: Geographic Context

- Military Road ran for fourteen miles between Fort William Henry, on the southern shore of Lake George, to Fort Edward, on the east bank of the Hudson River.
- Blue line approximates route.

Slide #7: Historical Context

- French and Indian War was a conflict between three empires vying for control of the North American continent.
- France's North American empire, New France, (SHOWN IN BLUE) was a Catholic empire based primarily on a trading economy drawing on strong alliances with North American Indian tribes. The area of New France stretched in a huge arc from the Gulf of the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes, the Mississippi Valley, and the Gulf of Mexico, including the contested area of the Ohio River Valley (POINT OUT ON MAP). The French were determined to hold on to their territory against any real or perceived invasion by British settlers.
- The British colonies (SHOWN IN RED) were part of a Protestant empire based largely on farming, settlement, and transatlantic commerce. The British colonists were hemmed in along the Atlantic coast, with ocean on one side and the Appalachian Mountains on the other. With these limitations, the British colonies eyed the area of the Ohio River Valley for expansion.
- The Iroquois Confederacy, comprised of five tribes in the upstate New York area, occupied land in both territories. The French and Indian War began essentially as a boundary dispute over land in the Ohio River Valley region, an area that included modern-day Pittsburgh.

Slide #8: Historic Context

- The French and Indian War began in 1754 with a battle between colonial provincials, led by a 22 year old George Washington, and the French and their Indian allies at Fort Necessity, in western Pennsylvania.

Slide #9: Military Road Historic Context

- Responding to French war plans, the British devised a four-pronged attack for 1755. One of those prongs included the Lake Champlain – Lake George – Hudson River corridor.
- Colonel William Johnson was given command of this campaign and was ordered to lead an army of provincial forces to attack the French at Fort St. Frederic (Crown Point.)

Slide #10: Military Road Historic Context

- Johnson ordered his men to construct a supply magazine – eventually Fort Edward - on the banks of the Hudson and to clear an overland route heading north that would link the Hudson River to Lake George to the northwest. This road was to be built on well-drained terrain to allow for the movement of heavy wagons, bateaux (flat-bottomed boats), gear, and artillery.
- The fourteen-mile Military Road was completed three days after Johnson's arrival on August 23rd, 1755.

Slide #11: Significance of the Military Road in the French and Indian War

- The Military Road was in active use from August 1755, until the end of the French and Indian War in 1763.
- Military Road played a role in two significant campaigns: the Battle of Lake George on September 8, 1755, and Siege and Massacre of Fort William Henry in August 1757.

Slide #12: Last of the Mohicans

- While the Battle of Lake George is not as well known to modern audiences, the siege of Fort William Henry is more recognizable due to the popularity of James Fennimore Cooper's "Last Of The Mohicans."
- This is a still from the 1992 movie portraying the massacre that occurred after the British surrendered the fort. The dirt road running through the center would have been the Military Road.

Slide #13: Massacre Site Today

For an interesting comparison, here's what the Massacre site looks like today.

It is worth noting that there is not a single sign or marker that commemorates or interprets this iconic location.

Slide #14: Anchor Fort, Fort William Henry

- Peak of its usefulness - August 1755 to 1757 - Military Road was anchored at each end by a major British fortification.

- Northern terminus of the Military Road was Fort William Henry, built by the British on the southern shore of Lake George in September 1755. Fort William Henry was burned by the French in August 1757. No other fortification was built on the site for the remainder of the war; a reproduction was built on the original foundations in the 1950's.

Slide #15: Anchor Forts – Fort Edward

- Southern terminus of the Military Road was Fort Edward, located along the eastern bank of the Hudson River, and built by the British in August 1755.
- Fort Edward was never attacked by the French, and it remained an important fortification for the remainder of the War. It eventually fell into ruin, and was used by the locals for its building material. Today, no visible remains of Fort Edward exist, but it is a rich archaeological site.

Slide #16: Paper Case Studies Map

- This project examined six sites as preservation and interpretation case studies.

Slide #17: Presentation Case Studies Map

- Today, we will look at three sites as case studies - three battlefields from the September 8, 1755 Battle of Lake George.
- Not interpreted together or collectively - three different owners – vary in how they are preserved and interpreted.

- One site was commemorative - one was preserved (and created) for its tourist value - one the result of a concerted preservation effort.

Slide #18: Three Case Studies Introduction

As William Johnson moved north on his newly constructed Military Road towards Lake George, the French and Mohawk forces under Baron Dieskau were moving south along Lake George to attack the British. Johnson, Dieskau, and their Mohawk allies would soon clash at three spots along the Military Road. These three sites are our case studies.

Slide #19: Bloody Morning Scout

- First engagement - the Bloody Morning Scout – occurred at a spot along the Military Road about four miles south of Lake George.
- The French troops and their Mohawk Indian allies laid an ambush for the British troops, which ended with their bloody and chaotic retreat back along the Military Road to their camp on Lake George. Mohawk leader Chief Hendricks and Colonel Ephram Williams, commander of the Massachusetts provincials, were both killed during the engagement.

Slide #20: Bloody Morning Scout

- Site of Bloody Morning Scout is commemorative – obelisk monument erected in 1854 by alumnus of Williams College in honor of Colonel Williams, killed during the engagement.

- Site is a battlefield without markers, cannons. Guests have no context for the narrative of the battle.

Slide #21: Bloody Morning Scout

- Bloody Morning Scout site is located in a forested area just north of the retail outlet corridor of Lake George Village. A pull-off on the shoulder of Route 9 allows visitors to pull over and read the wayside marker or park their car and visit the monument site. The site is well marked from the road. The Warren County Bikeway runs on east side of site, providing another access point.
- Commemorative site in yellow, approximate battle site in red.

Slide #22: Bloody Morning Scout

- Three waysides erected by Williams College inform visitors about Colonel Williams and the events of the Bloody Morning Scout engagement. Unfortunately, the Military Road is not mentioned at all. Other signs were erected by the Boy Scouts as part of a troop project, but those panels discuss the monument and the history of local railroads, and are located along the bike path. The third sign obviously provides no contextual information whatsoever.
- None of the waysides attempt to orient the visitor to the battle site, and the narrative is heavily balanced towards a single stakeholder.

Slide #23: Lake George Battlefield Park

- Second engagement of the Battle of Lake George occurred shortly after the fight at Bloody Morning Scout. Retreating British provincials arrived at their camp on the shore of Lake George, found cover behind a hastily-constructed barricade made of overturned wagons and boats, and positioned four cannons to fire on the Military Road.
- French troops charged the barricade and met with devastating fire from British cannon. The French Mohawks were disinclined to follow their French comrades into this maelstrom. The French and Indian forces eventually retreated north to Fort St. Frederic. French commander Dieskau was mortally wounded in the fight.

Slide # 24: Lake George Battlefield Park

- Lake George Battlefield Park is a 35-acre part of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, and located on the southern shore of Lake George, just east of Fort William Henry.
- Park is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as a campground and picnic area with historic ruins, creating a mix of commemorative, interpretive, and recreational elements.
- This park was an example of a purposeful preservation by the Society of Colonial Wars, who in 1892 purchased the grounds of the battle and the remains of Fort George to make a battlefield park.

Slide #25: Lake George Battlefield Park

- Lake George Battlefield Park is rich in French and Indian War sites. The park contains a portion of the site of the Battle of Lake George, ruins of Fort George (built in 1759), and archaeological remains of the smallpox hospital and barracks from Fort William Henry, located just a few hundred feet away.
- Interpretive signage erected by the department of environmental conservation that attempts to orient the visitor to the site.
- Commemorative features in the park include a 1902 monument commemorating the Battle of Lake George and featuring bronze statues of Chief Hendrick and William Johnson.

Slide #26: Monument Dedication

- The monument's dedication, on September 8, 1903, was well-attended and helped to spark interest in commemoration of the war in the area.

Slide #27: Lake George Battlefield Park

- This map shows the location of the Battlefield Park.
- While it is a Battlefield Park, the majority of the site of the Battle of Lake George lies underneath the Lake George Forum - an ice skating rink and conference center. The actual site of the battle is not marked with interpretive waysides, and it is difficult for the visitor to understand the context of the battle when on the site.

- The Military Road would have run through the Park in approximately the same location as the modern park road. POINT OUT ROAD, BATTLE SITE, FORT GEORGE.

Slide #28: Lake George Battlefield Park

- A major concern is the disconnect between Lake George Battlefield Park and Fort William Henry. (POINT ON MAP) The strong narrative link between the two sites and the short distance between could provide the perfect opportunity for the two sites to present a unique French and Indian War visitor experience.
- Currently there is no partnership between the two stakeholders, truly a missed opportunity for a beneficial private/public partnership.

Slide #29: Lake George Battlefield Park

What the park lacks in visitor amenities and interpretive material, it makes up for in dramatic value. Much of the park retains an eighteenth-century appearance, largely due to its inclusion in the Adirondack Forest Reserve. Visitors can glean a momentary sense of what the landscape may have looked like to William Johnson and Baron Dieskau in 1755.

Slide#30: Bloody Pond

- Third engagement was known as the skirmish at Bloody Pond, occurred shortly after engagement at Lake George.

- Responding to the sounds of battle coming from the lake, a colonel at Fort Edward sent a detachment north for intelligence. These provincials ran into a group of French and Mohawk troops who were attempting to return to the site of the Bloody Morning Scout to scalp and plunder. The provincials drove off these stragglers, inflicting heavy losses to the French.
- This last engagement took place along the Military Road in a marshy area with several natural springs bubbling to the surface. Rather than bury the dead soldiers, legend has it that they were thrown into one of these springy ponds, and that the blood from the dead and wounded turned the standing water red.

Slide #31: Bloody Pond

- The site of Bloody Pond is located along Route 9, about two miles south of Fort William Henry, wedged between Route 9, a western-themed campground, and a sushi restaurant.
- Historic markers located next to Bloody Pond – easy to see from the road. This plaque, erected in 1906, gives a brief account of the engagement but provides no context for the French and Indian War or the Military Road.
- Their prominent location has always been beneficial for this site. The problem is - this isn't Bloody Pond.
- The current "Bloody Pond" was created by the town of Caldwell right next to the plank road (now Route 9) so that tourists riding the stagecoach to Lake

George could see “Bloody Pond” as the drivers recounted “bloody and gory stories of war.”

- So what we have here is a modern creation for tourists interpreted as an authentic historic site, while the actual site is threatened by development.

Slide #32: Bloody Pond

- The original Bloody Pond site is now covered up by hillside slump and disturbed by railroad construction.
- The actual site of Bloody Pond not visible from the road, but is visible from the Warren County Bikepath – access very difficult.
- Signage erected by the Boy Scouts puts the Bloody Pond engagement in the context of the Battle of Lake George but makes no mention of the false interpretation or of the context of the Military Road.

Slide #33: Bloody Pond

- No pull-off or parking area at the site; visitors must either park across the street at a souvenir shop and cross a busy highway or park on same side of the road at the sushi restaurant. Visitors must stand on the side of the road dangerously close to traffic to read the plaque.

Slide #34: Sites Conclusion

We can draw the following conclusions from these site studies.

- One, no narrative connection to other sites from the Battle of Lake George.
- Two, there is a disconnect between stakeholders
- Three, there is an indifference to the value of preservation

Slide #35: Cultural Landscape

- Together, the Military Road and its sites form a cultural landscape – unique geographic area with cultural and natural resources –creating a dramatic setting that enhances the visitor experience and helps define the F&I War in Lake George, NY.

Slide #36: National Preservation Programs

- My next step was to look at several national preservation and interpretive programs that united multiple sites with a narrative and logistical framework.
- The sites I looked at were:
 - Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
 - Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
 - Forbes Trail

Slide #37: National Preservation Programs

- Battle Road
- Civil War Trails

Slide #38: Recommendations for a Military Road Trail

After researching these programs and looking at the preservation and interpretive issues of the French and Indian War sites in Lake George, I came up with a list of nine criteria for a Military Road Trail program.

1. Include the elements of a cultural landscape by encompassing the natural and cultural heritage elements of the Lake George and Military Road area.
2. Encourage visitors to visit other historic sites, as cross-marketing historic sites encourages visitor ship among sites with a shared narrative or geographic context.
3. Create a non-profit Foundation for Trail management that would operate the trail program and provide logistical coordination for the sites, ensuring the delivery of a consistent vision and mission.
4. Give multiple stakeholders a place “at the table.” The trail’s narrative should embrace the diversity inherent in the story of the French and Indian War as well as the reality of the needs of multiple landowners.
5. Emphasize local ownership of sites, working with local land owners to integrate the sites with the needs of the community and various stakeholders.

Slide #39: Recommendations

6. “Blur the boundaries” between landscape and community by incorporating waysides, historic structures, and the historic landscape into one seamless visitor experience.
7. Designate an anchor site that would provide narrative and logistical framework to visiting the sites along the Military Road, serving as a visitor orientation center.
8. Create an Interpretive Plan to provide a consistent, unified narrative and vision for the historic area.
9. Install consistent wayside and highway signage and utilize new interpretive technology.

Slide #40: Further Action

To address the issue of the lack of local preservation ordinances and policies, it is my further recommendation that the local governments undertake a gateway study for economic development, similar to the one Orange County, Virginia undertook this year after the controversy surrounding the Wilderness Battlefield Wal-mart. Such a study would help Lake George to balance the pressing needs of development, with historic preservation of its significant French and Indian War heritage.

Slide #41: Military Road Trail

In conclusion, a Military Road Trail would frame a unique cultural landscape that includes the environment and sites, traditions, and cultures of the Lake George and Military Road area, imparting a sense of place with a unique character. These sites are infused with a complex layer of values and multiple stakeholders, all of which should be considered under a values-centered preservation effort. I believe that the proposed Military Road Trail, designed with these criteria in mind, would unite these sites under a single-story narrative and logistical framework, increasing visitor understanding and appreciation of the French and Indian War in Lake George, New York.

Slide #42: Last One!

Thank you, this concludes my presentation for this evening!

I will now take any questions you may have.