“The Warpath of Empire”: Preservation and Interpretation of French and Indian War Sites in Lake George, New York

Presented by Stephen Oetken for HISP 711
Presentation Overview

• Research Problem and Research Questions
• Methodology
• Geographic Context
• Historic Context
• Three Case Study Sites
• National Preservation and Interpretive Programs
• Recommendations for a Military Road Trail Program
• Recommendation for Further Action
Research Problem

How can the French and Indian War sites along the Military Road in Lake George, New York best be preserved and interpreted for visitors?

Research Questions

- 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?
Methodology

- Literature Review
- Historical Research
- Site Visits
- National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program
- Military Road report
- Interviews with local, state and federal stakeholders

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The French and Indian War
1754 - 1763

Historic Context

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Crown Point
40 miles north

Fort William Henry
Bloody Pond
Halfway Brook
The Hudson River
Fort Edward

Wood Creek

Ruins of Fort Anne

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Significance of the Military Road in two French and Indian War Campaigns

The Battle of Lake George
September 8, 1755

Siege and Massacre of Fort William Henry
August 1757

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Fort William Henry
- Built 1755
- Burned 1757
- Reconstructed 1956

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Fort Edward
- Built 1755
- Decommissioned 1761
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Three Case Study Sites

Bloody Morning Scout

Battle of Lake George

Bloody Pond

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Case Study #1: Bloody Morning Scout

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Three different signs at Bloody Morning Scout

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Case Study #2: Lake George Battlefield Park

French and Indian troops aligned along Military Road

Lake George

British camp

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At a junction along a historic waterway connecting the Hudson and Champlain, this site was the scene of several bloody engagements during the French and Indian War of the American Revolution. This park commemorates several notable battles, including the 1755 Battle of Lake George, the surrender of Fort Ticonderoga in 1777, and the subsequent British raid in 1778. The park includes fort and outworks重建, as well as sawmills and mills.

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Current “Bloody Pond”

Location of real Bloody Pond

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No narrative connections between sites

Disconnect between stakeholders

Indifference to the value of preservation

Three Case Study Sites
Conclusions

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The Military Road and its sites form a cultural landscape.
Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

National Preservation and Interpretive Models

Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail

Forbes Trail, Pennsylvania

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Battle Road at Minute Man National Historic Park

National Preservation and Interpretive Models

Civil War Trails

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Recommendations for a Military Road Trail

1. Include the elements of a cultural landscape.

2. Encourage visitors to visit other historic sites.

3. Create a non-profit Foundation for Trail management.

4. Give multiple stakeholders a place “at the table.”

5. Emphasize local ownership of sites.
6. “Blur the boundaries” between landscape and community.

7. Designate an anchor site.

8. Create an Interpretive Plan.

9. Install consistent wayside and highway signage and utilize new interpretive technology.
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Thank you!

Any questions?

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