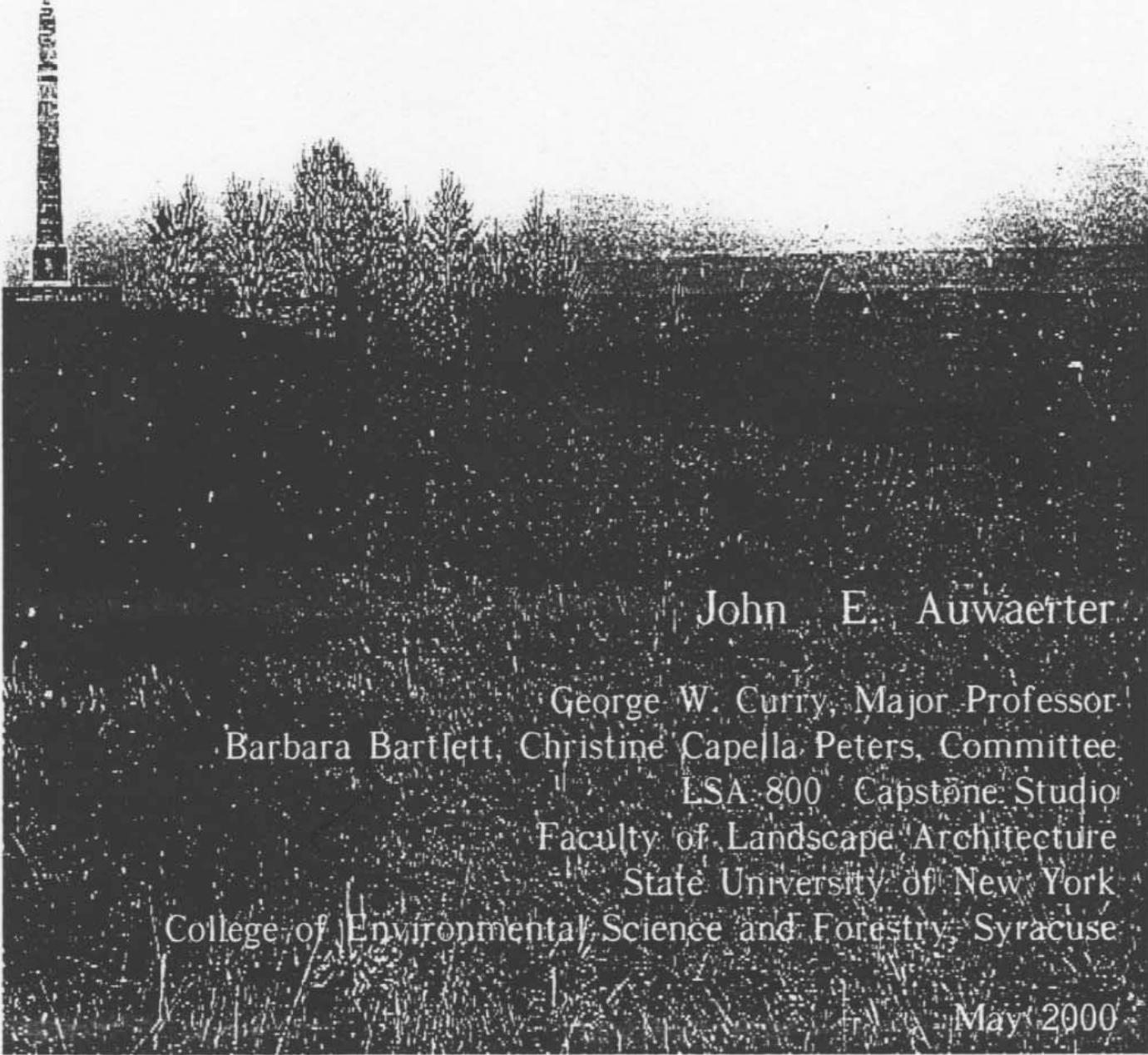


Conserving a Landscape Palimpsest: Interpretive Interventions at Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site



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May 2000

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By

John Auwaerter

LSA 800 Capstone Studio Report
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

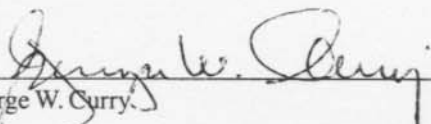
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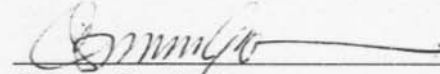
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ABSTRACT

This capstone studio explores treatment issues in cultural landscape conservation at the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site, a National Historic Landmark in the City of Rome and Town of Whitestown, New York. Cultural landscape conservation is a specialty in the profession of landscape architecture that strives to balance historic preservation and the dynamics of natural processes. This studio explores the question of whether there is a treatment that resolves the Site's seemingly contradictory historic landscape characteristics. Can the Site be treated in a manner that improves the landscape's interpretive potential while preserving and enhancing its complex layering of features and traces, including those that directly contribute to the Site's historic significance and those that are associated with the Site's broader historic context?

The Oriskany Battlefield has two periods of historic significance: the Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777), which took place within a landscape of old-growth forest and transportation corridors; and the period of sustained commemoration (1877 to c.1955), which took place within a landscape of agriculture, reemergent forest, and transportation corridors. A landscape palimpsest--a rich layering of landscape features--remains from these two periods, but has been concealed by natural processes and maintenance practices. Through an analysis of site history and existing conditions, a treatment is developed in this studio that addresses landscape characteristics from one or both periods of significance in both a physically distinct and overlapping manner. This treatment is achieved through intervention into three landscape characteristics: spatial organization (largely defined by vegetation), views and vistas, and circulation. The resulting plan provides a representation of the spatial organization of the forest context and open space and views of the agricultural context, and links these landscapes through improved pedestrian access along new paths and historic transportation corridors.

While this plan achieves the purpose of the studio to preserve historic landscape characteristics and improve the interpretive function of the landscape, the design solution is not universally applicable to cultural landscapes. The process used in developing this design, however, should be applicable to the treatment of most cultural landscapes.



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this capstone studio is to investigate treatment issues pertaining to cultural landscape conservation, a specialty within the profession of landscape of architecture that strives to balance historic preservation with the dynamics of natural processes. The Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (hereafter, "the Site"), a designated National Historic Landmark that is significant as the location of a decisive Revolutionary War battle and as a late 19th and early 20th-century memorial to that battle, is the object of this studio.

The landscape of the Site contains multiple layers of features from different periods in its history. While certain landscape features are intact and serve as the focus of interpretation, others are ignored because they are not directly related to the Site's historic significance. Many of these latter features are landscape traces, fragments of lost features and contexts that exhibit overlapping spatial and temporal organization. Such traces, however, can serve important interpretive purposes by revealing clues to historic development patterns; their preservation can result in a realistic historic continuum in the landscape and a powerful connection between past and present. A cultural landscape such as the Oriskany Battlefield is much like a palimpsest, a medieval writing parchment which was reused multiple times, showing layers of earlier writing.

The management of the Site's landscape presents a challenge. Landscape is the Site's primary interpretive element, and interpretation is the primary way in which the battle is today commemorated. The existing landscape, however, does not strongly convey the history and significance of the Site, probably as a legacy of its complex and seemingly contradictory historic characteristics. These characteristics relate to two periods of significance that are associated with contrasting landscapes: one forested (battle period), one primarily agricultural open space (commemorative period). Today, neither landscape is evident. Traces of the battle and commemorative landscapes remain, but have been concealed through maintenance practices and the dynamics of natural processes. Many historic landscape features are inaccessible, concealed, and removed from their historic landscape context.

This studio explores the question of whether there is a treatment that resolves the Site's seemingly contradictory historic landscape characteristics. Can the Site be treated in a manner that improves the interpretive potential of the landscape while preserving and enhancing its palimpsest of features and traces, including those that directly contribute to the Site's historic significance and those that are associated with the Site's historic context?

This question is explored through evaluation of the Site's history and its existing conditions, following the methodology for the preparation of Cultural Landscape Reports that has been established by the National Park Service. From this analysis, goals and objectives are outlined in conjunction with articulation of a management philosophy created around the need to improve interpretation and comply with state historic preservation law. Finally, treatment is developed, focusing on conceptual design but also including some detailed design to illustrate intent.



SITE DESCRIPTION

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is an 83-acre property owned by the State of New York and managed under the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The Site is a National Historic Landmark that is significant as the location of a decisive Revolutionary War battle that took place on August 6, 1777. The Site is additionally significant for the permanent commemoration to that battle that developed between 1877 and c.1955, a period in which the present property boundaries and designed landscape feature such as the battle monuments and drives were established.



Figure 1: Regional Location Map

Note: arrow points to Site

(Source: N.Y.S. Department of Economic Development, 1999)

The Site is located in the upper Mohawk Valley about one-half mile south of the Mohawk River halfway between the cities of Rome and Utica in Oneida County [Figure 1]. The Site lies on the boundary of the City of Rome and the Town of Whitestown between the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway (NY 69) on the south and the old Erie Canal on the north. A 100-foot wide strip owned by Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation, formerly the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway, runs across the northern half of the Site.

The landscape of the Site is characterized by the uplands of the Mohawk Valley on the southern third, and the lowlands or floodplain of the Mohawk River on the northern two-thirds. A ravine formed by the Battle Creek divides the uplands roughly in half, forming what is called the west and east plateaus. The majority of the Site is forested, except for lawn maintained on the southern half around the two major monuments, the 1884 Oriskany Battle Monument on the west plateau and the 1927 Unknown Soldiers Monument on the east plateau [Figure 2]. Asphalt-paved drives lead to both monuments. A small visitor center is housed in a converted 1927 pavilion near the Battle Monument. A 19th-century barn and 1970 maintenance shed, located near the highway west of



the ravine, are the only other buildings on the Site. Visitor access is limited to areas around the monuments and to a gravel path that leads into the ravine and connects the two plateaus.

The Site is presently open between May and October and receives an annual visitation of approximately 8,000 according to OPRHP records. A hiking and biking trail, part of the New York State Canalway Trail, is expected to be built on the Old Erie Canal towpath along the north edge of the Site in 2000.



Figure 2: Aerial View Looking North toward the Mohawk River
(Source: Landcare Aviation, Inc., 1999)



SITE HISTORY OVERVIEW

The history of the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site landscape falls into five major periods dating from pre-1705 to the present. The following is a brief overview of each period.¹

I. ONEIDA HOMELAND, pre-1705

Landscape Context: Forest and Transportation

The Site during this historic period lay along a significant transportation corridor in the midst of a vast old-growth forest that was the ancestral homeland of the Oneida Indians, a nation of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Iroquois Trail—the main east-west route across the Confederacy—followed the course of the Mohawk River and ran near or possibly through the Site. The Mohawk River, located about one-half mile north of the Site, became a conduit for transportation as it formed a primary link in the only inland waterway to cross the Appalachian Mountains and connect the Great Lakes

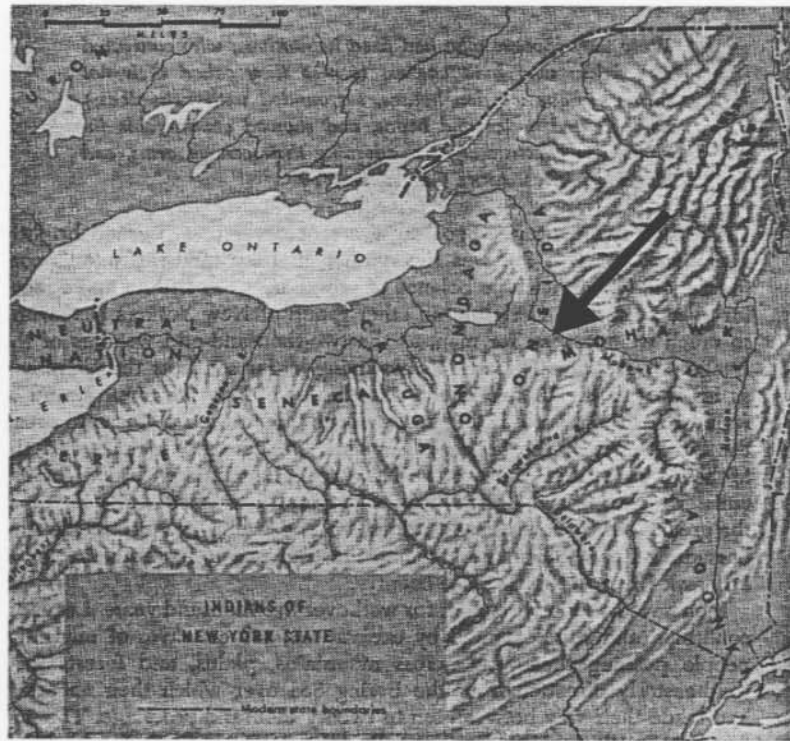


Figure 3: Map of New York State illustrating Mohawk Valley and Iroquois Nations
Note: arrow indicates location of Site
(Source: Ellis et. al., 1957)

with the Atlantic Ocean [Figure 3]. The Mohawk River provided navigation from the Hudson River west to a watershed divide located about eight miles west of the Site at the present location of the city of Rome. Called the Oneida Carry or Great Carrying Place by the English, this watershed divide required a short portage to reach another chain of navigable waterways leading to Lake Ontario and the vast interior of the continent. England and France increasingly vied for control of the Mohawk River corridor during this historic period as their imperial interests in the Great Lakes region increased, giving rise to military conflicts and an increasing impact on native cultures.



Aside from the Iroquois Trail, there were no cultural features near or on the Site based on available documentation, as Oneida villages were concentrated in an area about 10 miles to the west, south and southeast of Oneida Lake. Temporary hunting and fishing camps may have existed around the Site.

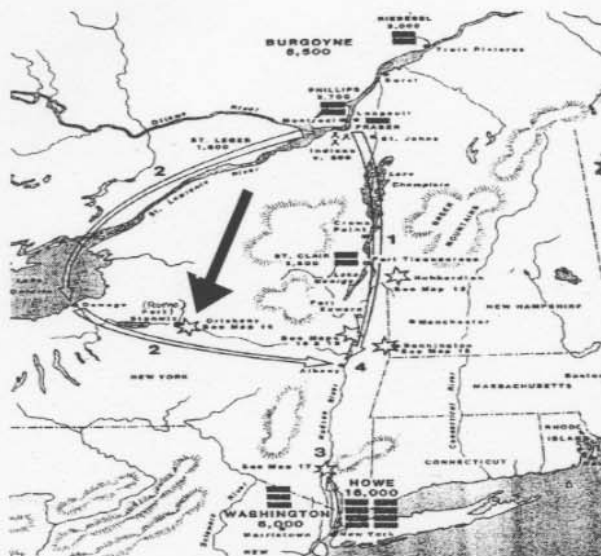


Figure 4: Map of Burgoyne Campaign
(Source: Gephart, 1984)

During this historic period, European settlement remained well east of the Site near in the lower (eastern) Mohawk Valley.

II. EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM AND AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, 1705-1784

Landscape Context: Forest and Transportation

During this historic period, the Site and its surroundings remained forested and largely undeveloped, except for a corridor cleared for construction of a military road in 1759. The Site, however, was removed under British law from the Oneidas through establishment of the 47,000-acre Oriskany Patent, which was granted in 1705 to five British land speculators. Despite European ownership of the land, the Oneidas likely continued to use the region for hunting and fishing as they had for generations. The Oriskany Patent lands during this period were at the frontier of colonial New York and remained largely unsettled.

The upper Mohawk Valley corridor around the Site saw an increase in European presence during this historic period. The English and French continued to vie for control of the valley for trade and transportation. In the 1730s, Britain fortified the Oneida Carry, and it was likely around this time that they built a road along the lowlands north of the Site, paralleling the Iroquois Trail, to support their fortifications. In 1756, hostilities between the imperial powers erupted into the French and Indian War. In this war, the British re fortified the Oneida Carry with a new fort, Fort Stanwix. In order to provide reliable land access to the new fort, the British built a military road in 1759 to replace the old lowland road, which was often impassable due to wet conditions. This military road, which served as the primary route to the colony's western frontier from Schenectady to Fort Stanwix, was built along the uplands above the Mohawk River. Documentation suggests that the military road followed the same alignment of the existing state highway adjacent to the Site, although it descended far more steeply into the ravine on a shallower earth and log (corduroy) causeway.

The military road fell into disrepair following the French and Indian War, as the Oneida Carry lost its strategic significance with removal of the French threat and as settlement remained constrained in the lower and middle Mohawk Valley. With the outbreak of hostilities between American colonists and Britain in 1775, the upper Mohawk Valley gained renewed strategic importance. The British planned a major attack for the summer of 1777, known as the Burgoyne Campaign, to isolate New England from the rest of the colonies by dividing and conquering New York [Figure 4]. The plan entailed a three-pronged attack where General St. Leger would advance east from Lake Ontario to Fort Stanwix and then through the Mohawk Valley, General Burgoyne would advance south through the Champlain Valley, and General Howe would advance north up the Hudson Valley, all three meeting in Albany. Much of St. Leger's 1,500-troop force relied on Seneca, Cayuga, and Mohawk Indians; the Oneida and Tuscarora, however, sided with the American Patriots. Long weakened by European presence, the Iroquois Confederacy divided in January 1777 over taking sides in the Revolution.

On August 3, 1777, St. Leger reached the Oneida Carry and Fort Stanwix, which along with the military road had been rebuilt by the Patriots, beginning a long siege. The 700-troop Patriot force at Fort Stanwix, however, needed reinforcement. A relief column consisting of approximately 800 troops under the command of General Nicholas Herkimer soon began their march down the Mohawk Valley, following the military road. This relief column was composed of mostly farmer-soldiers of the Tryon County Militia and a contingent of Oneidas. St. Leger learned of the militia's approach and planned a surprise attack with a force of about 470 troops, roughly 400 of which were Senecas and Cayugas. On August 6, 1777, the Tryon County militia began its final approach toward the relief of Fort Stanwix from their overnight camp near the Oneida village of Oriska. In a deep ravine along the military road [the Site], the British and their allied Indians, hiding in deep forests, ambushed the Tryon County militia in a bloody battle characterized by hand-to-hand fighting that raged for six hours. Fighting dispersed across the woods, and generally led north toward the Mohawk River, as many of the soldiers tried to escape along the brook (Battle Creek) that led out of the ravine. The Tryon County militia suffered a tremendous



Despite heavy losses, the Battle of Oriskany, as the ambush came to be known, turned out to be a significant victory for the Patriot cause, for it greatly weakened the British and caused St. Leger to abandon his siege at Fort Stanwix. This in turn greatly aided the Patriot cause against Burgoyne in the Champlain Valley, which ended in Patriot victory at Saratoga and defeat of the British Campaign of 1777. The victory at Saratoga is often considered by historians to be the turning point of the Revolution in favor of the Patriot cause.

Landscape Context: Agriculture and Transportation

The map illustrates the layout of the Sixty Allotment, which is divided into eight numbered sections. Section 1 is at the top right, section 2 is below it, and section 3 is to the left of section 2. Section 4 is below section 3, section 5 is to the left of section 4, and section 6 is to the right of section 4. Section 7 is below section 6, and section 8 is below section 7. A 'SITE' is marked in section 2. The map also shows the 'First Allotment' to the right, 'Coxes Patent' at the bottom, and 'Third Allotment' to the left. 'Dry Creek' and 'Coxes Creek' are shown flowing through the area. The map is labeled with 'Sixth Allotment' at the top, 'First Allotment' at the bottom right, 'Coxes Patent' at the bottom left, and 'Third Allotment' on the left side.

In 1785, the Oriskany Patent, which had been held in common by its owners since 1705, was subdivided into what were called Allotments and Great Lots, which were then further subdivided and offered for sale or lease. The Site fell within Great Lot 4 of the Second Allotment [Figure 5]. While many of the Great Lots were subdivided in the 1780s and early 1790s, Great Lot 4 may not have been subdivided until 1800, perhaps due to the presence of remains from the Battle of Oriskany. The Site fell mostly within subdivision lot 2, which was recorded in a perpetual lease executed in 1816 as belonging to John Parkhurst; the Parkhursts, however, had likely developed the Site for farmland years before this. Around 1830, the Parkhurst family sold the west half of subdivision lot 2 to the Kent family, establishing another subdivision line with subdivision lot 2 that ran roughly along Battle Creek. Parkhurst descendants retained ownership of the east half of subdivision lot 2 for the remainder of this period, while the Kents sold the west half to the Ringrose family around 1860. The Site remained active farmland during this period, characterized by cultivated fields and pastures marked by hedgerows and fences that followed properties lines established through subdivision of the Oriskany Patent [Figure 6, following page].

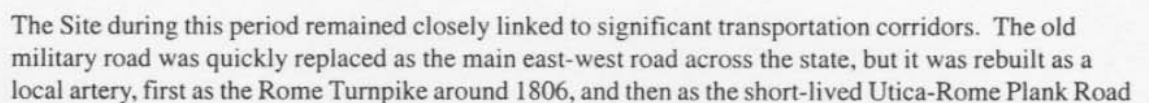




Figure 6: The Site as viewed west from the ravine, 1844
(Source: Lossing, 1860)

in 1848. Along the northern boundary of the Site, the Erie Canal was built beginning in 1817, replacing the Mohawk River as the navigable waterway across the Appalachian Plateau. The Erie Canal became the primary transportation corridor across New York State and a major artery to the West, expanding agricultural economies and giving rise to numerous industrial cities along its path. By the 1830s, the Mohawk Valley became the location of another important transportation artery, the mainline railroad across the state, which ran north of the Site. The canal and the railroad reinforced the historic importance of the Mohawk Valley as a transportation corridor of state and national significance.

The Site was recognized locally as the location of the Battle of Oriskany during this period, but available documentation suggests there was little permanent commemoration undertaken. Oral history, first recorded beginning in the 1830s, placed the location of the battle at the Site and military road as being north of the turnpike (existing highway).

IV. PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BATTLE MEMORIAL, 1877-1926

Landscape Context: Agriculture, Transportation, and Re-emergent Forest

With growing interest in the nation's colonial and Revolutionary War-period history during the centennial of the nation's independence in 1876, there was a movement across New York to mark and commemorate its Revolutionary-period historic sites. The State passed resolutions and documented centennial celebrations at six such sites in the old Hudson-Mohawk-Champlain frontier: Kingston, Bemus Heights and Schuylerville (Saratoga), Old Fort Schoharie, Cherry Valley, and Oriskany.

At Oriskany, a massive centennial celebration was organized through the efforts of the Oneida Historical Society, a private group recently organized in Utica, the primary urban center of the region located about 10 miles east of the battlefield. On August 6, 1877, a crowd estimated at between 60,000 and 70,000 people arrived by road, canal boat, and train and gathered in the ravine and the wide-open spaces of the fields of the Site to hear speakers commemorate the battle [Figure 7]. Following the celebration, plans were developed to permanently commemorate the battle with a monument. In 1880, the Oneida Historical Society purchased a 4.8-acre parcel on the plateau west of the ravine from the Ringrose farm. Funding for a monument to the memory of General Herkimer had been allocated by the Continental Congress soon after the battle in 1777, and the Oneida Historical Society and local politicians by this time gained appropriation of these funds for a monument at the Site. In 1884, under the direction of the Society, the Oriskany Battle Monument, a large limestone obelisk with bronze relief panels depicting scenes the Battle was completed. The monument was erected on a high point at the edge of the uplands west of the ravine overlooking the wide expanse of the Mohawk Valley. From this point, the monument

was visible to the thousands who passed the site on the New York Central Railroad and the Erie Canal.



Figure 7: View south into ravine during 1877 Centennial Celebration
(Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1877)

By the early 20th century, there was renewed interest in the battlefield. In 1912, a small bronze and granite monument was erected along the entrance drive by the Daughters of the American Revolution, Oriskany Chapter, as part of a chain of similar monuments marking the route of General Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia. Soon after this time, there were calls to expand the small 4.8-acre memorial into a larger park that would preserve more of the land on which the battle occurred. In 1915, when the federal government was developing the National Park System, the Oneida Historical Society and others active in advocating preservation of the battlefield called for the creation of a national park on the Site. Plans called for the acquisition of 191 acres to preserve the land on which the battle occurred. Nothing came of these plans.

Throughout this historic period, the Battle Monument remained surrounded by wide expanses of open farmland that swept gently down toward the Mohawk River. The small battle memorial and its prominent monument never developed into a major attraction. With the advent of the automobile in the early 20th century, however, there was movement to make the battlefield into a more significant tourist attraction. The Mohawk Valley Historic Association, Inc. was established in 1920 to promote tourism and preservation of historic sites throughout the valley. In 1925, the Association bought the former Parkhurst 50-acre farm east of the ravine in the hopes of eventually donating the property to the state or federal governments for a park. The Association petitioned the state to rebuild the former turnpike (old military road) in order to improve access to the battlefield. In 1927, the Society erected a limestone and granite monument on their property to the unknown soldiers of the Battle. North of this monument, the Association probably maintained a small picnic ground. The Association's site remained separated from the original 4.8-acre memorial by a portion of the Ringrose dairy farm.

During this historic period, the Site was mostly open field, although by the end of the period, farming had largely ceased on the east half of the site and the forests were begin to reappear. Despite the forest, open views and spatial character remained dominant from the Battle Monument. Transportation changed during this period as well. The Erie Canal declined in importance due to competition from the railroads, and by 1918, the State of New York had replaced it with a bigger canal, the Barge Canal located near the banks of the Mohawk River. The old canal along the Site was abandoned, although it remained watered. Transportation, however, had increased again in 1901 along the north part of the Site when a trolley line was built across the Ringrose and Parkhurst farms, linking Rome with Utica and other cities down the Mohawk Valley. The former turnpike became a minor road as the primary artery between Utica and Rome was developed north of the Mohawk River. Despite the advent of automobiles during the late part of this period, this road remained unimproved.

V. STATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC SITE, 1927-Present

Landscape Context: Agricultural Decline, Re-emergent Forest, Transportation, and Suburban Development

With the advent of the nation's sesquicentennial in 1926, the State of New York charged the Conservation Commission with purchasing, restoring, and rehabilitating Revolutionary battlefields and sites across the state, with a particular focus on those associated with the Burgoyne Campaign of 1777. Among the battlefields were Oriskany, Bennington, and Saratoga. Included in the recommendations of this commission was the acquisition of the Oriskany Battlefield memorial and additional battlefield land. At this time, the state was exploring the purchase of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property, the 4.8-acre memorial owned by the Oneida Historical Society, and a portion of the Ringrose farm. The Ringroses, however, were apparently asking so high a price that they brought the total acquisition costs for the state above the amount appropriated. For this reason, the state only acquired the 4.8-acre memorial, which was donated by the Oneida Historical Society in June 1927 in time for the sesquicentennial celebration on August 6th. The state immediately made several improvements to the property, including the rebuilding of the drive and construction of a small pavilion/rest house. This pavilion, which was identical to one built at the Bennington Battlefield, was placed just below the Battle Monument to take advantage of expansive views across the Mohawk Valley [Figure 8, following page].



The Mohawk Valley Historic Association's long-held desire to see the former turnpike rebuilt into a modern highway was fulfilled in 1933 with construction of the federally funded Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway. This new road featured concrete pavement and a higher, flatter causeway across the ravine.

Despite the state's interest in preserving land on which the Battle of Oriskany took place, it did not

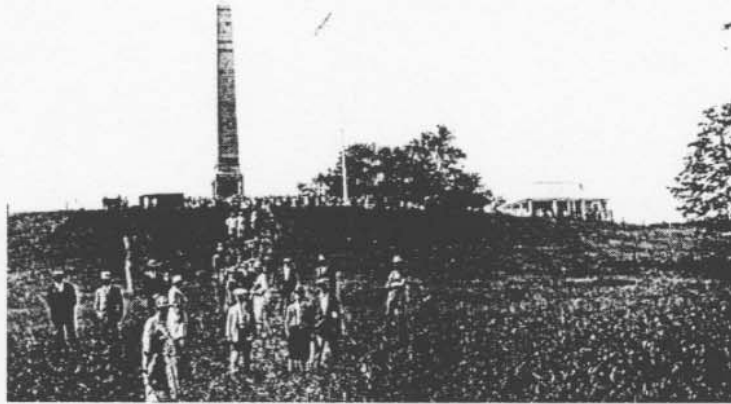


Figure 8: 1927 view south across pasture toward Battle Monument and pavilion
(Source: Williams, 1975)

acquire any further property for decades. The Mohawk Valley Historic Association purportedly continued to offer their 45 acres, but the state apparently did not take their offer because the property was not contiguous to its 4.8-acre parcel. In between the two parcels was a portion of the Ringrose dairy farm, which remained in operation. The Ringroses were apparently unwilling to sell this property, probably because it was an important part of their farm that included their barns. By 1952, however, William Ringrose had died, and his wife did not continue the farm. In this year, Mrs. Ringrose had the farm subdivided and she sold to the state the 30 acres lying north of the 4.8-acre state parcel and running north to the Erie Canal and east to the Mohawk Valley Historic Association property. Following this acquisition, the state took renewed interest in the Association's property. After clearing a complicated title, the state acquired the Association's 45 acres in 1955, thus completing the existing property boundaries of the Site and fulfilling long-held plans for preservation of battlefield land. The 100-foot wide corridor across the northern third of the Site from the interurban railway, which ceased operation in the late 1930s, remained in private ownership.

By 1955, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association's property had been out of cultivation for many years and forests covered most of the parcel, except for lawn maintained along the highway around the Unknown Soldiers Monument and a small field along the edge of the uplands. With sale of the Ringrose farm to the state, the fields went into old-field succession. The state also soon began to implement plans to develop the Site into a park with a museum, picnic grounds, caretaker's cottage, and other amenities. The large Ringrose barn was demolished and the area around it was graded and maintained as lawn instead of pasture, but no further work was completed aside from paving of the entrance drive and construction of a parking area alongside it, and relocation of the entry piers to the Unknown Soldiers Monument. It was not until the 1960s, when there was a renewed effort among the state's congressional delegation to give the Site to the National Park Service, that any significant work was done. This work, however, only involved reconstruction of the 1927 pavilion/rest house into a small visitor center in 1965. In 1970, a maintenance shed was constructed near the site of the Ringrose barns, and a gravel path across the ravine with a bridge over the Battle Creek was constructed around 1976. In 1997, following closure of the Site by the state between 1990 and 1993, the visitor center was rehabilitated. These projects constituted the only significant changes to the Site made between 1955 and the present, aside from changes in vegetation and minor built additions such as interpretive signs, benches, and fencing.



EXISTING CONDITIONS, ANALYSIS & EVALUATION ²

This chapter provides an analysis of existing and historic conditions at the Site. Through this analysis, the various extant landscape features are evaluated to determine whether they contribute to the historic character of the Site. This analysis, which must be completed before appropriate treatment plans can be developed, identifies three existing landscape characteristics that warrant treatment: spatial organization, views and vistas, and circulation.

The Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is a National Historic Landmark significant under National Register Criterion A as the site of a decisive Revolutionary War battle that occurred on August 6, 1777 in old-growth forests along the military road to New York's western frontier.³ Under National Register Criteria A and C, the Site is additionally significant at the state and local levels for the ongoing commemoration to the battle between 1877 and c.1955 and for the commemorative landscape that developed in the context of an open agricultural district on an important transportation corridor. The Site possess two periods of significance: August 6, 1777 and 1877-c.1955, each associated with a distinctly different landscape. Historic landscape features are thus associated with either one or both of these periods of significance.

In order for a cultural landscape such as the Oriskany Battlefield to convey its historic significance, it must possess historic integrity. Historic integrity is generally analyzed through a comparison of existing conditions against historic conditions at the end of the period of significance, which for Oriskany is c.1955. The National Register defines seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Assessing landscape integrity is often quite complex due to the dynamic quality of natural processes. According to the National Park Service,

No landscape appears exactly as it did 50 or 100 years ago. Vegetation grows, land uses change, and structures deteriorate. Historic integrity is determined by the extent to which the general character of the historic period is evident, and the degree to which incompatible elements obscuring that character can be reversed. . . . With some landscapes, change itself is a significant factor and is considered in assessing integrity. Depending on the type of significance, the presence of some characteristics is more critical to integrity than others.⁴

The most significant changes in the existing condition of the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site in 2000 from the end of the period of significance in 1955 have resulted from the natural process of old field succession, which has significantly altered historic spatial characteristics and views, particularly from the west plateau. Access and vegetation management practices have also been altered and have obscured historic landscape features and contexts. While individual built features have also been altered, these changes have not had as significant an impact on the overall historic character of the Site.

Existing conditions are recorded on the accompanying plan and aerial photograph [Figures 9 and 10, pages 11-12]. The following is a brief overview of existing conditions and an analysis of historic integrity for primary landscape features on the Site, listed by landscape characteristic.⁵

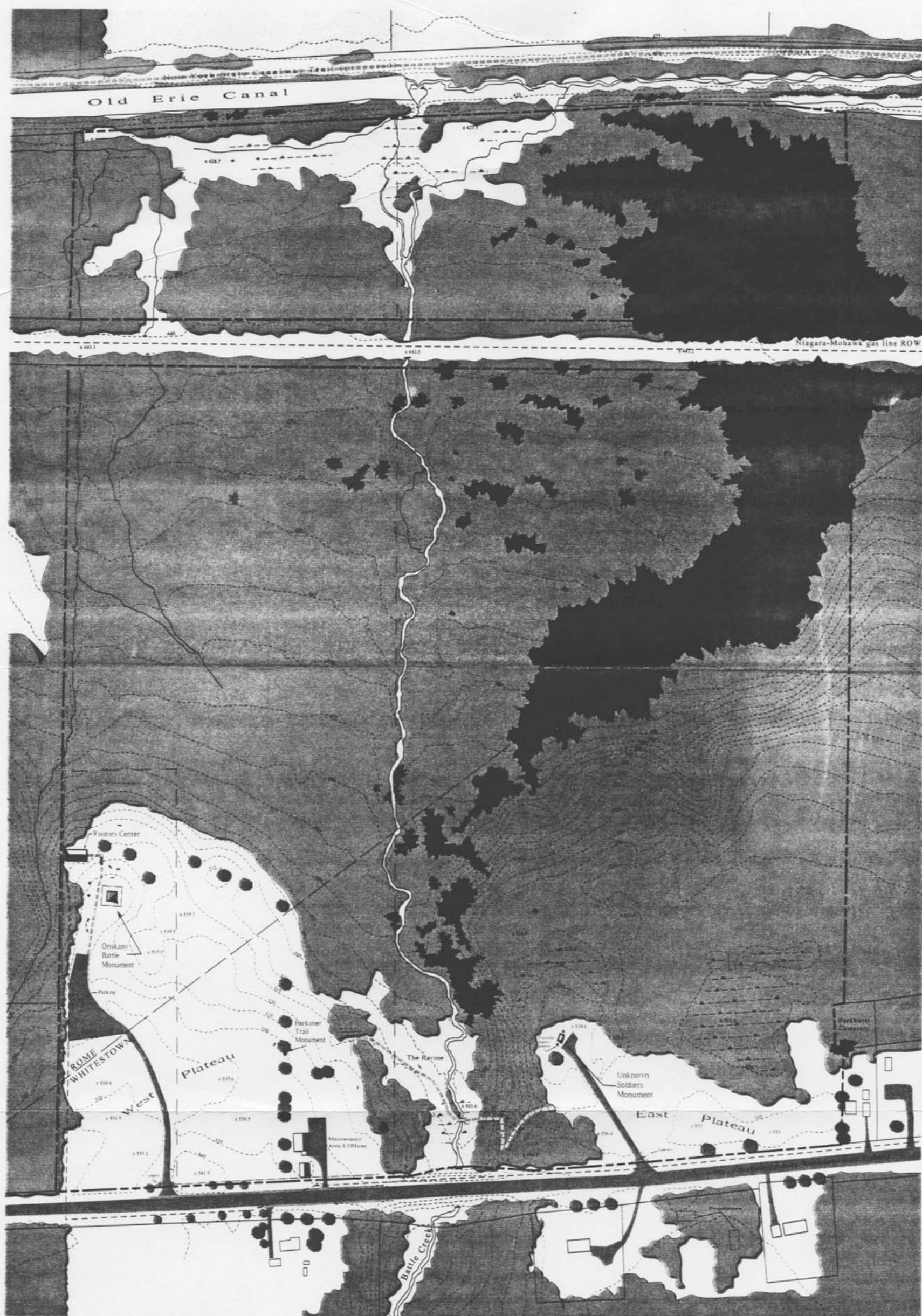
I. NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES

1. Battle Creek

Historic:



During the battle period (August 6, 1777), Battle Creek ran north through the middle of the Site and into the Mohawk River. The course of the creek at the north end of the Site was changed with construction of the Erie Canal after 1817, first terminating over a spillway in the canal, and then after 1845 diverted to run east along the south bank of the enlarged Erie Canal.



KEY

NATURAL FEATURES

coniferous forest

deciduous forest

old-field succession

1-year meadow

lawn

dormant pasture

wetlands

5' contours

water

BUILT FEATURES

vehicular circulation

path

utilities

Site boundary

former property boundary

adjacent property boundary

political boundary

Site building - structure

off-Site building

stone pile

sign

bench

flagpole

fence



Conserving a Landscape Palimpsest:
Interpretive Interventions at
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD
STATE HISTORIC SITE
ROME & WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK

TITLE: EXISTING CONDITIONS

FIGURE 9
SCALE: 1" = 200'

JOHN AUWAERTER

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MAP SOURCES:
ORISKANY AND THE HISTORY OF THE
ORISKANY BATTLE MONUMENT
NEW YORK STATE PARKS

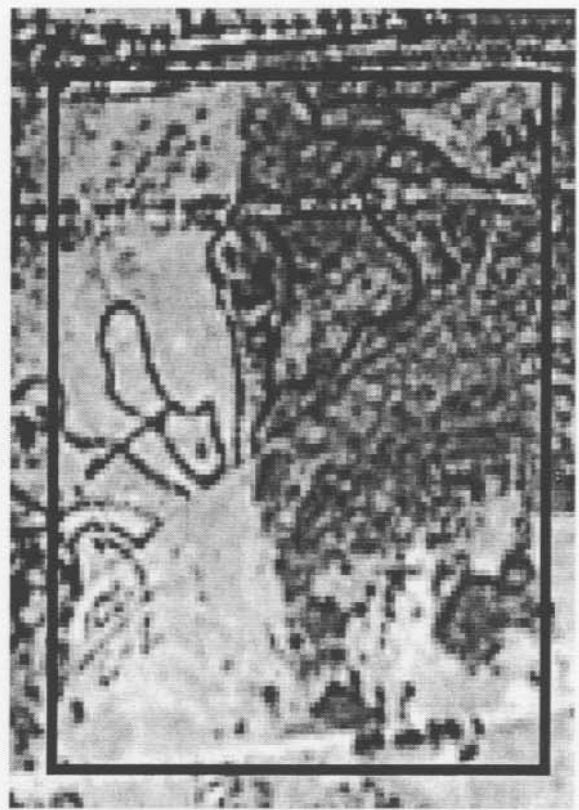
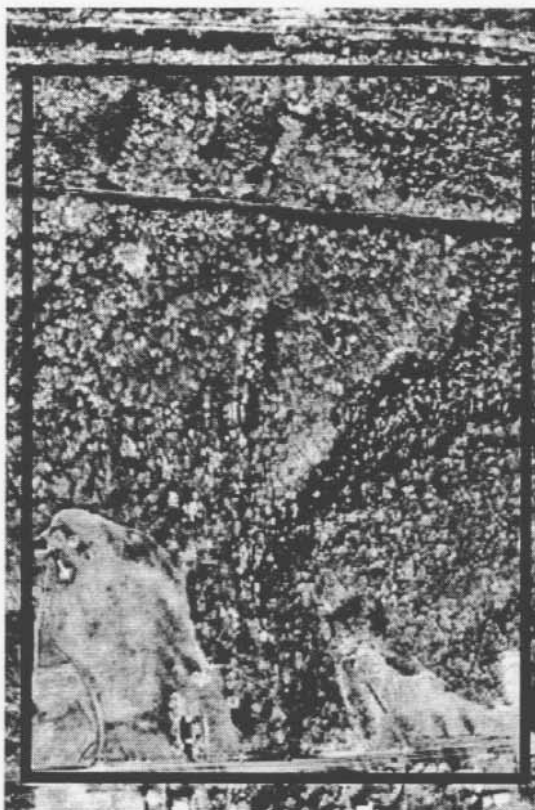
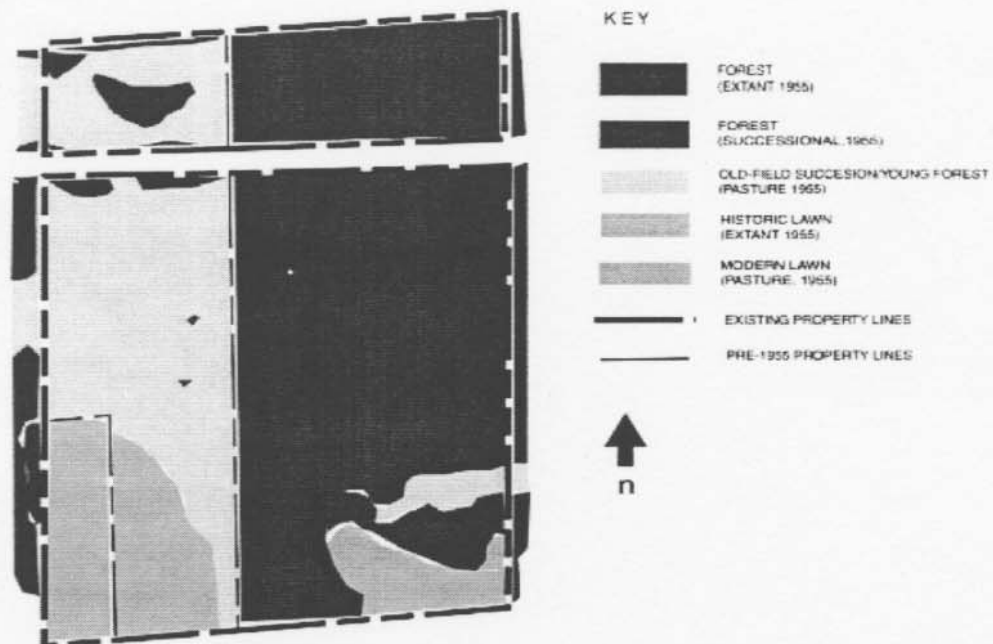


Figure 10: Analysis of historic spatial organization defined by vegetation patterns

Top: Analysis of existing vegetation

Bottom: Contrast of 1999 (left) and 1957 (right) aerial photographs

Note: Highway is at bottom, Erie Canal at top of graphics

(Sources: top: author, 2000;

bottom left: NYS DEC / OPRHP; right: USDA)



Existing:

Battle Creek flows north through the property, and then turns east along the south bank of the Erie Canal. Since 1970, a portion of the creek has naturally diverged on a due north course through a break in the canal wall.

Analysis: Existing, Contributing

Battle Creek maintains generally the same character it had at the end of the period of significance, except at the north end along the canal. The new branch of the creek that has developed since 1970 follows the approximate alignment of the creek that existed during the battle period and prior to the enlargement of the Erie Canal.

2. Forest

Historic:

Old-growth northern hardwoods and hemlock forest covered the Site during the battle period, except along the corridor of the military road. During the early commemorative period, the Site was largely open agricultural land, except for remnant woods along steep slopes. After 1925, most of the east half of the Site was beginning to reforest.

Existing:

In 2000, over two-thirds of the Site is covered in forest of varying age [Figure 10, page 12]. The east half of the Site (former Mohawk Valley Historic Association property) contains the oldest forest on the Site, most growth dating prior to 1925, although the Hemlock woods on the steep east slope of the ravine was extant as a feature during the 19th century. The former Ringrose farm property on the west side of the Site is characterized by advanced old-field succession on the lowlands north of the Battle Monument, and by lawn on the former upland pastures east of the Battle Monument. A young forest that has regenerated largely since 1970 now characterizes the advanced old-field succession. It is composed primarily of Poplar, Red Maple, and thickets of Hawthorne and Honeysuckle and other remnant old-field successional growth. Field trees, primarily Sugar Maple, are found throughout the forests as remnants of agricultural field conditions.

Analysis: Forest-East Half: Existing, Contributing (as a feature)
Forest-West Half: Existing, Non-contributing

The forest on the east half of the Site is approaching an age where it is similar in character to the forest that existed during the battle period. This portion of the forest is therefore considered to have integrity as a feature to the battle period. In material, this forest also has integrity to the commemorative period since much of its existed prior to 1955. The advanced old-field succession (young forest) on the former Ringrose farm has no historic integrity to either the battle or commemorative periods. The character of this young forest, with its relatively open spatial character and successional tree and shrub species, is dissimilar to the forest of the battle period and cannot be considered to have integrity as a feature or material. This forest did not exist during the commemorative period.

II. SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Historic:

During the battle period, the spatial organization of the Site was subtly defined by the natural topography within the forest, except for the military road, which defined a distinct corridor space. During the early commemorative period, the spatial character of the Site was largely open, although topography and field patterns, which followed property lines first established through subdivision of the Oriskany Patent beginning in the 1780s, provided subtle spatial definition across the landscape. By 1925, the spatial character of the Site had become more defined. The west half of the Site, where the Ringroses continued to farm, had by this time become spatially distinct from the east half, where farming had largely ceased and forests were regenerating. A grove of trees had grown by this time in the ravine to the west of the Battle Monument, providing some encl-





Figure 11: c.1930 aerial view north toward Erie Canal
(Source: OPRHP)

sure and definition to this west side [Figure 11].

Within the west half of the Site, subtle distinctions in spatial organization were defined by this time through the mown lawn of the 4.8-acre memorial and the higher grasses of the Ringrose pastures, two of which were on the uplands and one on the lowlands. Within the east half of the Site, the Mohawk Valley Historic Association maintained a lawn area along the highway and north to the Unknown Soldiers Monument that defined a space distinct from the re-emergent forest to the north.

Existing:

The Site is composed of three primary spaces: the lawn area around the Battle Monument, the lawn area around the Unknown Soldiers Monument, and the forest that extends north from these two spaces. The two lawn areas open directly off the highway corridor. In addition to these primary spaces, subspaces are found within the ravine, the maintenance area at the site of the Ringrose barns west of the ravine, and along the corridors of the former trolley line and the Erie Canal.

Analysis: East Half Spatial Character: Existing, Contributing
 West Half Spatial Character: Altered, Non-Contributing

The historic spatial organization of the east half of the Site remains largely unaltered since the end of the period of significance in 1955, although several small open areas have reforested. The spatial organization of the west half of the Site, however, has changed markedly since 1955. The regeneration of the forest has closed off the expansive spatial character of the original 4.8-acre memorial around the Battle Monument that historically extended north across the lowlands toward the Erie Canal, New York Central Railroad, and Mohawk River. This change in spatial character has resulted in a reorientation of the landscape toward the highway and away from the Mohawk Valley. In addition to the impact of forest regeneration, the extension of lawn across the former Ringrose pastures east of the Battle Monument has removed subtle spatial distinction between the original 4.8-acre memorial property and the surrounding open space.



III. LAND USE

Historic:

During the battle period, the only documented land use on or near the Site was transportation [the military road], although the Oneidas were likely hunting and fishing in the area as well. During the commemorative period, agricultural, transportation, and recreation [commemoration] were the dominant land uses, in addition to minor residential use. By the end of the period of significance in 1955, residential and agricultural land uses had disappeared from the Site.

Existing:

Existing land uses on and adjacent to the Site are transportation (NY 69, proposed Canalway Trail) and recreation (commemoration, picnicking, and festivals).

Analysis:

Recreation and transportation were land uses that existed during the periods of significance and remain today, although in modified form.

IV. CIRCULATION

The upper Mohawk Valley was a significant transportation corridor at the local, regional, and national levels during the battle and commemorative periods and remains an important corridor to the present. The Site contained or is adjacent to roads, canal, trolley, and pedestrian trails.

1. Roads

Historic:

Prior to the battle period, a relatively straight military road was built in 1759 along the uplands above the Mohawk River and crossed the ravine by means of an earth and log causeway. This road served as the primary land route through the Mohawk Valley to the western frontier of New York delineated at Fort Stanwix. It was on this road at the Site that the Battle of Oriskany began. Prior to the commemorative period, the former military road had been rebuilt as a turnpike and a plank road, for which the causeway spanning the ravine was raised. The next major improvement came in 1933, when the road was reconstructed on the same general alignment as the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway. As part of this work, a concrete roadbed was constructed and the causeway was again raised. Throughout the commemorative period, the road served only as a secondary highway linking Rome and Utica.

In addition to the road, two drives were built on the Site during the commemorative period. An unpaved, curved drive with a loop around the Battle Monument was built at some point after 1883; this drive was widened and paved with gravel by the State in 1928. A second unpaved drive was built to the Unknown Soldiers Monument around 1927.



Existing:

The existing highway, designated as NY 69, is the 1933 highway [Figure 12]. Significant changes have included repaving, installation of asphalt-paved shoulders and concrete gutters, regrading alongside the causeway and shoulders, and replacement of guiderails and signs. Much of this work was under-



Figure 12: View west on highway across ravine
(Source: author, 1999)

taken in a rehabilitation project in the early 1980s. This road is presently not interpreted as being historically associated with the Site.

The drive to the Battle Monument (identified as Rome Avenue on some maps) has been altered since the end of the period of significance; both are paved in asphalt. In 1961-2, an asphalt-paved parking area was built off the west side of the drive. During the late 1960s, the loop around the monument was removed and the remaining drive was paved in asphalt. The drive to the Unknown Soldiers Monument was probably paved around this time as well.

Analysis: NY 69: Existing, Contributing (as a feature)
Site Drives: Existing, Contributing

The existing state highway is intimately linked with the history of the Site, particularly with the battle period. [Note: although owned by the State, the road is maintained by a separate state agency and is not legally part of the Site.] The road retains a low level of historic integrity to either the battle or commemorative periods in terms of design and materials. As a landscape feature, however, the highway retains integrity to both the battle and commemorative periods. It is the same circulation feature (a road) on the same location; it is a direct descendent of the military road, the turnpike, and the plank road. It is the same feature on which the battle was fought and the same feature off of which the commemorative landscape developed.⁶

The drives to the monuments, although altered, retain sufficient historic integrity to convey their historic condition. The loop around the monument, although now covered in grass instead of gravel, retains its original roadbed.

2. Erie Canal

Historic:

The Erie Canal was built along the present north property line of the Site beginning 1817; it was enlarged after 1845. The canal was abandoned in the 1920s during the commemorative period after it had been replaced by the New York State Barge Canal, Erie Division, which was constructed about 2,000 feet north of the canal along the Mohawk River. The canal (old Erie Canal) remained watered throughout the period of significance, although after it was abandoned it was no longer navigable due to the construction of earthen causeways in place of bridges. There were no permanent bridges or other means of access to the Site from the canal during the commemorative period.



Figure 13: View west along prism of Erie Canal
(Source: author, 1999)

Existing:

The old Erie Canal has deteriorated significantly since the end of the period of significance in 1955 [Figure 13]. Since 1970, the canal east of Battle Creek (middle of the Site) has been dewatered due to the collapse of a culvert east of the Site. A breach in the canal wall opposite Battle Creek has also developed; this may have led to a lowering of the remaining water level to only a foot or two. A beaver dam is retaining the water in this section. In addition to changes in water level, thick vegetation has grown up along the canal walls and within the canal prism in the dewatered section.

Analysis: Erie Canal: Existing, Contributing



Despite deterioration, the Erie Canal retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic form and function. It is historically significant independent of the Site and is eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. [Note: the canal, although owned by the State, is maintained by a separate state agency and is not part of the Site.] Although not directly linked with the significance of the Site, the old Erie Canal is an important component of the historic landscape context of the Site and is a

powerful reminder of the importance of the Mohawk Valley as a significant transportation corridor. The Erie Canal did play a role in commemoration activities and influenced the development of the commemorative landscape of the Site.

3. Former Trolley Line (Niagara-Mohawk gas transmission corridor)

Historic:

In 1902, the Rome extension of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railway opened; it ran along a 100-foot wide corridor through the northern third of the Site, south of the Erie Canal. The trolley was merged and consolidated several times under different names. In 1933, the same year the road was rebuilt as the Stanwix-Oriskany-Whitestown State Highway, the trolley ceased operation.

Existing:

The trolley corridor is presently owned and maintained by Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation as a natural gas transmission line. The company maintains the corridor as an open space through the re-emergent forest. Nothing remains from the trolley near the Site except for concrete culverts over Battle Creek and two other small creeks.

Analysis: Former Trolley Line: Existing, Contributing (as a feature)

Although it lacks sufficient historic integrity as a trolley line, the linear character of the corridor is intact and conveys its historic use for transportation. [Note: this corridor is legally not part of the Site and is under private ownership]. In the sense of a landscape feature, the former trolley corridor is significant as part of the landscape context of the Site in the area of transportation. It also likely played a role in access to the Site during the commemorative period.

4. Paths/Trails

Historic:

There is documentation of only one path on the Site during the periods of significance: the walk leading from the circular drive around the Battle Monument down a set of stone or concrete stairs to the pavilion. This was built along with the pavilion in 1927. There may have also been a path from the Unknown Soldiers Monument north to the picnic area, farms trail, and temporary paths in use during commemorative events. No documentation has been found on these features.

Existing:

The path to the pavilion exists, but its stone or concrete stairs have been replaced with wood stairs. This path was also altered in the 1960s with the removal of the circular drive around the Battle Monument, when it was extended on the former roadbed to the parking lot. A gravel path was built around 1976 leading across the ravine. This path included a small wooden bridge across Battle Creek.

Analysis: Pavilion Walk: Existing, Contributing
 Gravel Ravine Walk: Existing, Non-contributing

The pavilion walk, although substantially altered in material, is a contributing feature. The gravel ravine walk is a modern addition and does not contribute to the historic significance of the Site. It does, however, illustrate the historically interpreted location of the military road.



V. TOPOGRAPHY



Figure 14: Topographic Site map
Note: box indicates Site boundaries
(Source: OPRHP, 1970)

Historic:

The natural topography of the Site, characterized by rolling uplands dissected by a ravine and lowlands stretching north toward the Mohawk River, was largely formed during retreat of the glacier about 12,000 years ago [Figure 14]. During the periods of significance, this natural topography was altered only in a minor way through construction of the Erie Canal and a causeway across the ravine, filling of swampy hollows, and plowing for cultivation. The construction of the Battle Monument and drive required some cutting and filling.

Existing:

Since the end of the period of significance, the only changes to the topography include grading undertaken in the 1950s around the site of the Ringrose barns, and filling undertaken in the early 1980s adjacent to the highway as part of the widening of the shoulders and improvement of drainage into the ravine.

Analysis:

Topography, one of the Site's most important historic features, remains largely unaltered from the periods of significance.

VI. VEGETATION

Historic:

Vegetation is defined for this report as the planted trees, shrubs, and grasses outside of agriculture and the larger natural systems of forests and wetlands. During the commemorative period, there were scattered deciduous trees across the Site and roadside, but much of the Site was devoid of plantings. A line of trees, probably planted during the period of significance, was maintained along a pasture line extending north from the Ringrose barns. The 4.8-acre memorial and area around the Unknown Soldiers Monument were kept in lawn.

Existing:

Since the period of significance, several trees have been planted on the Site, notably three Sugar Maples around the Battle Monument and to its east, a White Pine. Daylilies are found along the foundation of the remaining Ringrose barn, and a line of trees marks the former pasture line north of the maintenance garage [Figure 15]. Two Sugar Maples, remnants of the roadside plantings made prior to reconstruction of the highway in 1933, are located east of the Unknown Soldiers Monument. Several young maples line the highway on the west side, probably planted during the rehabilitation of the highway in the early 1980s.



Figure 15: View of tree line extending north
along maintenance garage
(Source: author, 1999)

Analysis:



The only plantings that fall within the period of significance are the pasture-line row of trees extending north from the Ringrose barn, the remnant roadside Sugar Maples, and the daylilies along the Ringrose barn. The Sugar Maples around the Battle Monument, while fine specimens, detract from historic

spatial character and views. The White Pine east of the Battle Monument, while not of historic significance, does have cultural (ethnographic) significance to the Oneidas.

VII. BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Historic:

During the battle period, there were no buildings on the Site and only one structure, the military road causeway. At the beginning of the commemorative period in 1877, there existed at least two houses and a barn on the east half of the Site, and there were barns belonging to the Ringrose farm on the west half of the Site [Figure 16]. With development of the commemorative landscape, the Battle Monument was erected in 1883, followed by a frame pavilion erected by the State in 1927 [Figure 17]. By this time, the two houses and a barn on the east half of the Site had been removed. No further buildings or structures, aside from minor features such as ulverts, were added to the Site during the period of significance.

Existing:

Changes to buildings and structures since the period of significance have been the demolition of two of the three Ringrose barns in the 1950s, enlargement of the pavilion in 1965 with a second remodeling in 1997, and the addition of a maintenance garage in 1970 [Figure 18].



Figure 18: View south of maintenance garage and remnant Ringrose barn
(Source: author, 1999)

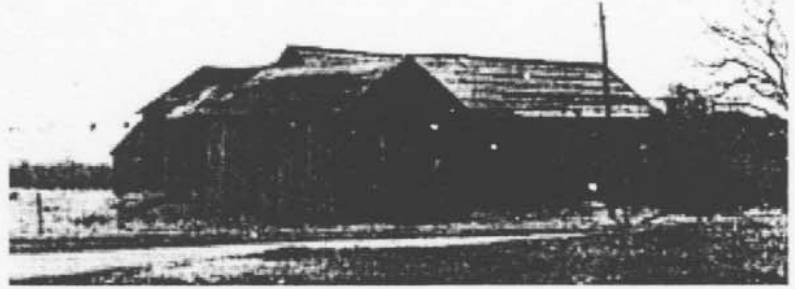


Figure 16: View northeast toward Ringrose barn complex, 1949
Note: small barn in foreground remains standing
(Source: Utica *Observer Dispatch*)



Figure 17: View northwest to 1927 pavilion, c.1950
(Source: OPRHP)

Analysis

Oriskany Battle Monument: Existing, Contributing
Ringrose Barn: Existing, Contributing
1927 Pavilion: Existing, Contributing (as a feature)
1970 Maintenance Garage: Existing, Non-Contributing

The Oriskany Battle Monument retains a high level of historic integrity. The Ringrose Barn is a remnant of a complex of three barns; although it is not directly associated with the historic (commemorative period) significance of the Site, this building is an important feature of the historic landscape context. The 1927 pavilion was significantly altered in 1965 and again in 1997. In terms of its historic design and materials, it lacks sufficient historic integrity. As a landscape feature, however, the location and massing of this building remain substantially intact and convey significance related to the development of the commemorative landscape.

VIII. VIEWS AND VISTAS

Historic:

During the battle period, there were limited views on the Site, except for the vista down the corridor of the military road. In contrast, during the commemorative period there were expansive views from the Site out across the Mohawk Valley north to the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. The Battle Monument was erected at the edge of the uplands to take advantage of these expansive views, and also to garner views from the thousands who passed it on the New York Central Railroad and Erie Canal, as well as those passing on the highway to the south. Because of these views, the commemorative landscape developed with an orientation to the north. In 1927, the state erected a pavilion just below the Battle Monument to capture views out over the Mohawk Valley from the front porch. By this time, the forest was reestablished on the east half of the Site, but this growth did not block the expansive views of the Mohawk Valley from the Battle Monument area.

In addition to the major viewshed across the Mohawk Valley, a vista was designed in the siting of the Unknown Soldiers Monument. This was located at an angle where visitors facing the monument would be able to glance ahead across the ravine and see the Battle Monument, with the Mohawk Valley stretching out beyond it. Given the interest of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association (which erected the monument) in automobile tourism, the view of the monument from the highway was also a factor in its placement.

Existing:

Old-field succession (forest) on the lowlands and edge of the uplands extending north from the Battle Monument has obscured the expansive views across the Mohawk Valley [Figure 19, following page], as well as the views of the monument from the Erie Canal (only the top of the Battle Monument is visible from the railroad). These views, however, remained intact into the 1970s. Growth of the forest in the ravine has also obscured the vista between the Battle and Unknown Soldiers Monuments. The view of both the Unknown Soldiers and Battle Monuments from the highway remain intact.

Analysis:	View over the Mohawk Valley from the Battle Monument: Non-existing
	View from the Erie Canal/Railroad to the Battle Monument: Non-existing
	View of the Battle Monument from the highway: Existing, contributing
	View of the Unknown Soldiers Monument from the highway: Existing, contributing
	Vista between the Battle and Unknown Soldiers Monuments: Non-existing

Old-field succession has obscured major views and vistas, which were some of the most significant historic landscape characteristics of the Site. While the major views and vistas are largely non-existing, the forest that has obscured those views is quite young (post-1970) and not historic as a feature or material (see Natural Systems discussion).

IX. SMALL-SCALE FEATURES

Historic

Prior to the commemorative period, small-scale features such as fences, gates, and stone piles (from the clearing of fields) and other agricultural features were built on the Site. During the commemorative period, several designed small-scale features were installed. These included stone gateposts with iron fences marking the entrance to Battle Monument drive (c.1885); an iron fence around the Battle Monument; a small monument (one of series) erected in 1912 marking the march of General Herkimer and the Tryon County Militia; an Unknown Soldier's Monument erected in 1927 by the Mohawk Valley Historical Association; stone gateposts erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) marking the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive (1929); and various benches, signs, and flagpoles.



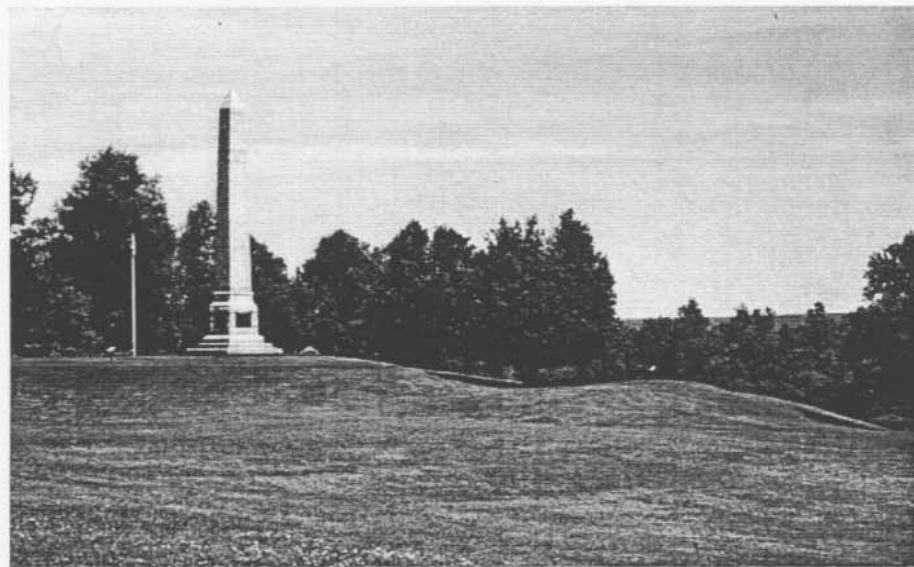
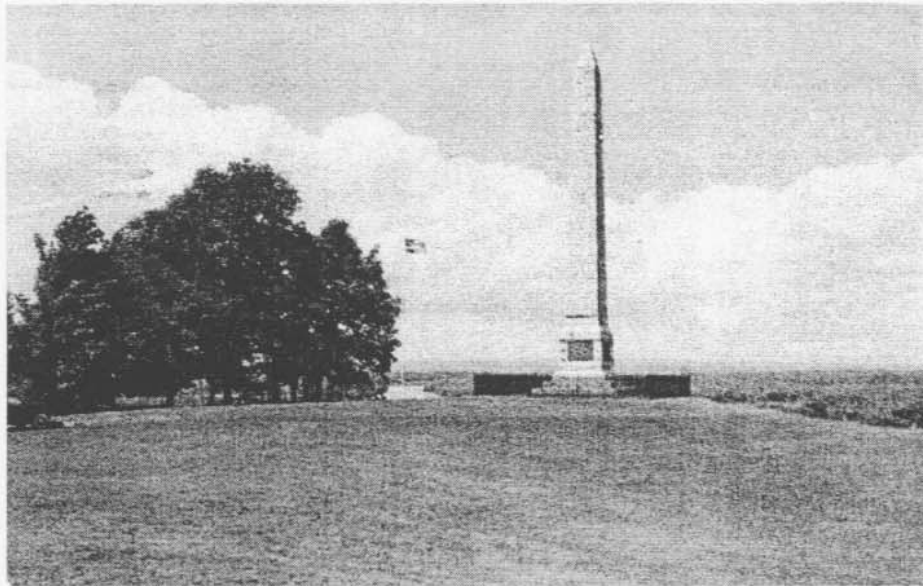


Figure 19: Comparison of c.1965 (top) and 1999 views from the Battle Monument
(Sources: top: Margo Studio, Rome; bottom: author)



(D.A.R.) marking the entrance to the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive (1929); and various benches, signs, and flagpoles.

Existing

Extant small-scale features include the Unknown Soldiers Monument, now flanked by the relocated set of D.A.R. stone gateposts [Figure 20]; the iron fence around the Battle Monument; two flagpoles adjacent to the Battle Monument; a series of cast-metal and wood-frame graphic interpretive signs; iron-and-wood benches; picnic tables and grills; and split-rail fence along the highway on the west side of the Site.

Analysis	Battle Monument drive gateposts: Existing, Contributing
	D.A.R. gateposts: Existing (relocated); Contributing
	Battle Monument iron fence: Existing, Contributing
	Interpretive signs: Existing, Non-Contributing
	Picnic tables and grills: Existing, Non-Contributing
	Benches: Existing (replacements), Non-Contributing
	2 flagpoles: Existing; 1 Contributing, 1 Non-Contributing
	Split-rail highway fence: Existing, Non-Contributing
	Locust-pole and barbed wire pasture fence (along Erie Canal): Existing, Contributing

Many of the small-scale features on the Site are modern additions that do not contribute to the historic character of the Site, but do not detract from it either and serve contemporary needs, such as interpretation and other visitor services.

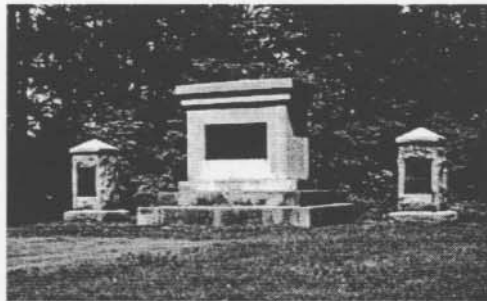


Figure 20: Unknown Soldiers Monument and relocated D.A.R. gateposts (Source: author, 1999)

Several small-scale features, however, do detract from the historic character of the Site in their present condition. The D.A.R. gateposts were relocated to either side of the Unknown Soldiers Monument, where they detract from the historic design and setting of the monument. The gateposts possess integrity of design and materials and warrant removal to their original location at the entrance to the drive. The permanent grills and temporary picnic tables are presently sited close to the Unknown Soldiers Monument, and are incompatible with the commemorative intent of the monument area. The split-rail fence along the highway suggests a suburban aesthetic that is incompatible with the historic character of the Site.

X. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

A comprehensive archeological survey has never been undertaken at the Site. Archeological resources, however, may be contributing resources. For example, there have been rumors and long-held oral history that there are burials from the battle on the Site, and the location of these burials would be a significant feature in the battle landscape. Other sites such as the site of the Parkhurst-family house and barns on the east side and the location of the 1877 Centennial Celebration speaker stands in the ravine, would contribute to the historic agricultural and commemorative contexts of the Site.



TREATMENT

I. GOALS

The overall goal of this studio is to produce a treatment plan that preserves and enhances historic landscape features and contexts so that they may serve as interpretive elements of both the battle (August 6, 1777) and commemorative (1877-c.1955) periods, while maintaining and reinforcing the historic use of the Site for commemoration. This plan will be largely conceptual, although some details will be developed to illustrate design intent.

Existing conditions and management practices at the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site conceal some of the most significant landscape characteristics from both historic periods. Visitors to the Site, for example, have limited access to landscape features related to the battle period, such as the mature forest that represents a fragment of the vast old-growth forest that dominated the battle landscape, and the existing state highway that is a direct descendent of the military road on which the battle occurred. From the commemorative period, landscape features have either been lost entirely, or remain intact but have lost their historic landscape contexts. The Battle Monument, for example, was designed in an open agricultural context that provided expansive views out across the Mohawk Valley to the foothills of the Adirondacks. Today, the open spatial character and views have been lost to old-field succession (process of vegetation development from field to forest) and modern lawn maintenance. The challenge of this studio is therefore to explore whether these significant and divergent landscape characteristics and contexts (forest, agriculture) from the battle and commemorative periods can be preserved and enhanced for interpretive purposes in a manner that respects and reveals the historical continuum of the landscape, including the dynamics of natural processes.

In order to develop appropriate treatment objectives to fulfill this goal, it is first necessary to articulate a management philosophy that is appropriate to the historic significance, level of integrity, and contemporary use of the Site.

II. MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The management philosophy for the Oriskany Battlefield landscape outlined in this studio has been developed around state historic preservation law and the goal of preserving and enhancing historic landscape features and contexts for interpretive purposes.⁷ Interpretation—the act of explaining and revealing the significance and history of the Site—serves today as the primary form of commemoration and therefore is significant in developing a landscape management philosophy.

Landscape features and contexts can act as powerful interpretive features, which allow visitors to experience a tangible link with the past.⁸ Landscapes often contain a rich layering or palimpsest of features from various periods, illustrating a broad range of historical development. In this sense, the Site, with its landscape palimpsest, provides a narrative (a story and the way it is told) related not only to the battle, but also to the continuum of uses and processes that continue into the present, evidenced by ecological succession, agriculture, transportation, and commemoration.⁹ According to Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton, “landscape not only locates or serves as background setting for stories, but is itself a changing, eventful figure and process that engenders stories.”¹⁰

The landscape of the Site (aside from specifically interpretive features such as signs and exhibits) illustrates several types of landscape narratives. One key type is memory; the monuments on the Site speak to the way in which past generations commemorated the battle and reflect dominant ideologies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This provides visitors with insight not only into the battle events, but also into past cultural values that demand contrast with the present.

Another key type of landscape narrative at the Site is setting and topos, evident both in the remnant pastoral and forest landscapes that are highlighted through contrast with one another. The forest, the dominant feature during the battle period, has conventionally been understood as the setting for wilderness, danger, and chaos which are very appropriate characteristics for war. The pastoral landscape, dominant in the commemorative period, recalls retreat from complexities of urban life and a nostalgic return to nature, characteristics appropriate to the act of commemoration of sacrifice to one's country. Association is also a type of landscape narrative evident at the Site, found in features such as the White Pine near the



Battle Monument that is associated with Oneida tradition and represents peace and the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy, which was first broken at the Battle of Oriskany.¹¹ Lastly, processes evident in ecological succession form a type of landscape narrative at the Site that speaks to the continuum of nature and cultural change, historically from forest to field, and today from field to forest.¹²

In addition to managing landscape for interpretive purposes, as a state-owned historic site that is a designated National Historic Landmark, treatment is required under the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law to follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, guidelines which are established through the National Park Service. The Standards are broken down into four types of treatment: preservation (sustaining existing form, integrity, materials); rehabilitation (repair, alterations, additions while preserving historic features); restoration (accurately depicting the character extant during the period of significance); and reconstruction (depicting historic features through new construction).¹³ Restoration and reconstruction have often been used as the preferred treatment at historic sites and museums.

While restoration and reconstruction are often successful as treatments for architecturally-significant buildings and structures from the perspective of both historic preservation and interpretation, they are often less successful as treatments for a cultural landscape, with its palimpsest or complex layering of features and strong linkages with the larger landscape context.¹⁴ A good local example of the failure of restoration and reconstruction as a treatment for a cultural landscape is found at Fort Stanwix National Monument in the heart of downtown Rome, New York. The timber fort was built in 1759 and disappeared during the early 19th century as the city of Rome grew around it. In the early 1970s, without adequate documentation on the exact appearance of the fort or its surrounding landscape, the historic urban fabric present on the large 15-acre site was completely demolished for reconstruction of the fort within an expansive lawn. The reconstructed Fort Stanwix today has no relationship to the surrounding urban fabric, even though historically the growth of Rome was closely linked with the fate of the Fort¹⁵ [Figure 20]. Through such a reconstruction, interpretation becomes a simplistic story without any connection to the present, rather than a complex and honest narrative in which the past is intertwined with the present. As landscape historian Catherine Howett has remarked,



Aerial view of Rome, NY prior to reconstruction of Fort Stanwix, 1959 (FOST Park Archives).



Aerial view of Rome, NY after reconstruction of Fort Stanwix, 1976 (FCST Park Archives).

Figure 20: Impact of reconstruction treatment on a cultural landscape: Rome, New York
(Source: Auwaerter/Uschold, 1999)



Often the very look of a carefully restored building, garden, or landscape is so devoid of the ambiguity and complexity of living places that it will strike the visitor, although perhaps not consciously, as all too easily comprehensible, an oversimplified and sterile cliché that masquerades as historic text.¹⁶

The Secretary of the Interior Standards also speak to this issue. Standard #3 states:

*Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development . . . will not be undertaken.*¹⁷

Restoration and reconstruction are also not appropriate as overall treatments for the landscape of the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site due to its complex landscape typology (historic site [battlefield], vernacular landscape, and designed landscape) and its level of historic integrity. Battlefields are generally very difficult to restore to conditions that even remotely resemble those present during the battle.¹⁸ At Oriskany, the conditions of August 6, 1777, such as the debris of the battle (bodies, horses, guns, tomahawks, wagons), the large trees of the old-growth forest, the old military road, and the larger context of a vast wilderness have all been concealed and displaced by later layers of landscape development. Restoration to the battle period would also require the removal or alteration of significant features from later historic periods. Even the landscape of the more recent commemorative period has been significantly altered through the loss of its agricultural context to suburban development and ecological succession.

While the historic landscape contexts and some of the historic features on the Site are no longer intact, many of their traces do remain and can provide compelling evidence of historic conditions in a way that enriches narrative and provides a powerful connection between past and present. Traces—such a field tree in a younger forest—can serve as interpretive features without restoration or reconstruction to an historic condition.

In addition to traces, there are three broad landscape characteristics that have remained fairly constant and provide a narrative richness and further thread of continuity between the past and the present. One of the most prominent of these characteristics is found in natural processes. The running of Battle Creek, the growth of forests, the periodic flooding of the swamps and wetlands are dynamic but have always existed on the Site, although in altered form. Second, transportation has also always been a significant characteristic of the Site and its context within the upper Mohawk Valley and is evident in the ongoing-use of NY 69 (a descendent of the military road) and the remains of the old Erie Canal and the trolley line. Third, commemoration of the battle is a use that has been ongoing at the Site since 1877 and is visible in the built features such as the monuments and markers. Restoration and reconstruction would result in removal or concealment of many of these landscape characteristics.

In terms of modern use of the Site, restoration and reconstruction once again become inappropriate treatments because new uses need to be introduced, or existing uses need to be expanded to additional portions of the Site. Although commemoration remains the dominant existing use of the Site, the way in which commemoration is practiced has changed. Today, there is a greater emphasis on interpretation as a form of commemoration. Unlike past generations, the Battle Monument and Unknown Soldiers Monument, among others on the Site, no longer communicate their commemorative purpose to most modern visitors as evocatively as they had to past generations. Most modern visitors are probably unfamiliar with the general history of the battle, and expect more of a direct experience that visually depicts historic conditions.

Given these conditions, the appropriate management philosophy for the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site is one that respects the continuum of landscape development in a manner that preserves and enhances those features that convey the historic significance of the site within its historic landscape contexts, and allows for compatible new features and uses. Rehabilitation—for the Site as a whole—is the appropriate treatment for such a management philosophy under the Secretary of the Interior Standards.¹⁹ Rehabilitation does not preclude the use of the preservation, restoration, or reconstruction treatments for select features.

III. OBJECTIVES

The analysis of historic (August 6, 1777 and 1877-c.1955) and existing conditions outlined in Chapter II identified three broad landscape characteristics that warrant treatment in order for the Site to better reflect the historic characteristics and contexts of its landscape and fulfill modern commemorative-interpretive uses. Although the Site contains two periods of significance that are each associated with very different landscapes—one forest (battle), the other agriculture (commemorative)—the history of the landscape lends itself to representing these two periods on physically separate portions of the Site which are



linked through natural processes, transportation resources, and uses that were present during one or both periods of significance.

Based on this evaluation, the overall objective of this studio is to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate historic landscape features from both the battle and commemorative periods in a manner that reveals the historic contexts and development patterns of the Site and allows visitors the opportunity to see the continuum of landscape development from the past through to the present.

This objective can be accomplished through intervention into three broad landscape characteristics: spatial organization, views and vistas, and circulation.

1. Spatial Organization

- Represent the open spatial character of the agricultural context present during the commemorative period.
- Reveal historic field and lot-line patterns.
- Reorient the west half of the Site toward the Mohawk Valley.
- Represent the subtle spatial distinctions of the agricultural field patterns present on the west side of the Site during the commemorative period.
- Preserve the spatial character of the Unknown Soldiers Monument and east plateau.
- Reinforce the spatial character of the highway as a linear corridor and integrate the space into the Site.

2. Views and Vistas

- Represent the expansive views present during the commemorative period from the Battle Monument north into the Mohawk Valley.
- Represent the expansive views present during the commemorative period from the Erie Canal (and railroad to the north) south toward the Battle Monument.
- Preserve the view of the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers Monument from the highway.
- Restore the vista from the Unknown Soldiers Monument to the Battle Monument.

3. Circulation

- Provide and/or improve pedestrian access (trail system) to the major landscape features of the Site.
- Provide ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) access to the major landscape features of the Site.
- Retain the existing path into the ravine and link it with new trail system.
- Establish a pedestrian and bicycle entry at the Canalway Trail along the old Erie Canal (proposed construction: 2000) to improve pedestrian access and linkages with other recreational resources in the region.
- Remove primary visitor entry and services from the Battle Monument area to a centrally located, accessible site; restore the existing visitor center to its historic character as a passive-use (commemorative) pavilion.
- Remove primary vehicular entry and parking from the Battle Monument and Unknown Soldiers Monument drives.
- Restore the historic character of the monument drives.

IV. PROPOSED TREATMENT

The following is a description of the design solutions for each objective, organized according to the three landscape characteristics of spatial organization, views and vistas, and circulation. The master plan of the proposed conditions is shown in Figure 22 (following page).

1. Spatial Organization



Overall Description:

As shown on the spatial organization diagram and aerial perspective [Figures 23 and 24, pages 28-29], the proposed spatial organization of the Site is characterized by two overall zones: the mature forest of



KEY

NATURAL FEATURES

- coniferous forest
- deciduous forest
- old-field succession
- 3-year meadow
- 1-year meadow
- lawn
- dormant pasture
- deciduous coniferous existing trees
- proposed tree planting
- wetlands
- 5' contour
- water

BUILT FEATURES

- vehicular circulation
- path
- boardwalk
- bridge - culvert
- utilities
- Site boundary
- former property boundary
- adjacent property boundary
- political boundary
- Site building - structure
- off-Site building
- stone pile
- sign
- bench
- flagpole
- fence



Conserving a Landscape Palimpsest:
Interpretive Interventions at
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD
STATE HISTORIC SITE
ROME & WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK

TITLE: PROPOSED CONDITIONS FIGURE: 22
SCALE: 1" = 200'

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MAP SOURCES:
"ORISKANY LAND USE HISTORY" NYS, 1998
"TOPOGRAPHY - ORISKANY BATTLE MON" NYS, 1998
"NEW YORK STATE PARKS, 1998"

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KEY

SPATIAL CONTEXTS

forest -
natural systems

off Site
forest -
natural systems

agriculture -
open space

off-Site
agriculture -
open space

designed
landscape

transportation



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TITLE: SPATIAL ORGANIZATION DIAGRAM

FIGURE: 23
SCALE: n.t.s.

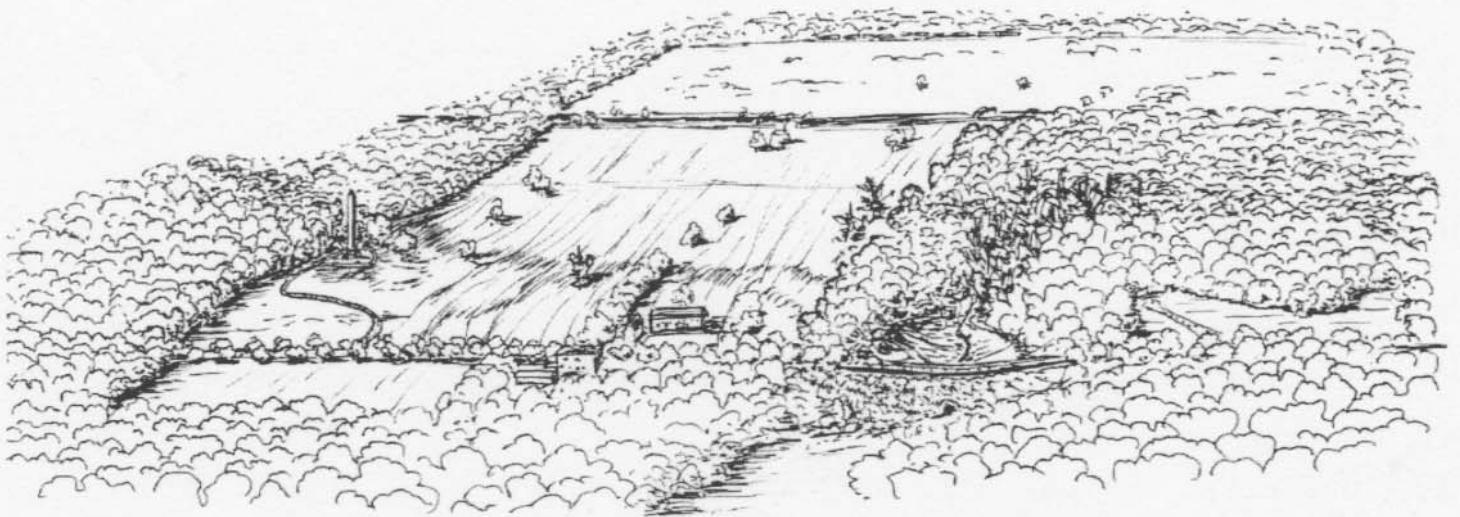
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MAP SOURCES:
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD MONUMENT
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD MONUMENT
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD MONUMENT



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Interpretive Interventions at

ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD

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TITLE: AERIAL VIEW NORTH FROM HIGHWAY
TOWARD MOHAWK RIVER

FIGURE: 24
SCALE: n.t.s.

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the east half of the Site and the open space of the west half of the Site. In addition, historic transportation corridors along the highway, former trolley line, and old Erie Canal will be maintained and incorporated into the Site. This spatial organization approximates that present at the end of the period of significance around 1955 and which is clearly evident in a 1957 aerial photograph of the Site [see Figure 10, page 12].

This design requires clearing of the advanced old-field succession (young forest) that has grown up on the former Ringrose farm on the west side of the Site. This forest does not contribute to the historic character of the landscape because it has grown up since the end of the period of significance, and as a feature, it is unlike the historic forest of the battle period due its species composition, open spatial character, and remnant successional understory.

Within the open space of the west half, four spaces are proposed which are subtly defined by differences in meadow vegetation, from lawn to early succession [Figure 25, next page]. These spaces include the original 4.8-acre memorial, two narrow pastures to its east, and one large pasture to the north on the lowlands. By 1955, the two upland pastures were recently abandoned, and the larger lowland pasture was in the early stages of succession. Traces of this historic spatial organization are evident largely from an aerial perspective in old fence lines and dead furrows. The spaces defined by this vegetation reflect the historic agricultural context in which the original 4.8-acre memorial developed, a narrative of agricultural use and decline. This treatment would also illustrate a transect of ecological succession from lawn to old field to forest, a narrative of the on-going dynamics of natural processes [Figure 26, page 32].

All three of the transportation corridors are separate from the site and would require cooperation from New York State Canal Corporation, New York Department of Transportation, and Niagara Mohawk Corporation (trolley corridor) in order to implement this plan.

Design Details:

a. Clearing of the Advanced Old-Field Succession

Under this plan, the advanced old-field succession (young forest) would be cleared back to the limits approximating those shown in the 1957 aerial. The line of clearing, however, would be held back at least 20 feet from the edge of Battle Creek on the east and an unnamed creek on the west in order to protect these stream corridors from erosion. A survey of this area should be made prior to clearing to identify trees that should be preserved. These include the few trees that pre-date 1955 (such as two Sugar Maples near the trolley corridor), and post-1955 trees that possess significant aesthetic, ethnographic, or ecological value (e.g., the White Pine near Battle Creek and the trolley corridor), providing they do not detract from the open spatial character and views. These remnant young trees would also provide a trace of the young forest.

In the lowland pasture area noted as “old field succession” [see Figure 22, page 27], remnant early and mid-successional growth, including herbaceous plants and woody shrubs such as Hawthorne, Honeysuckle, and Dogwood, would be retained. In this way, the late layer of old-field succession—the trees—would be removed to reveal an earlier condition. The young forest along the west side of the ravine within the proposed 3-year meadow would be cleared of all woody plants to return it to meadow.

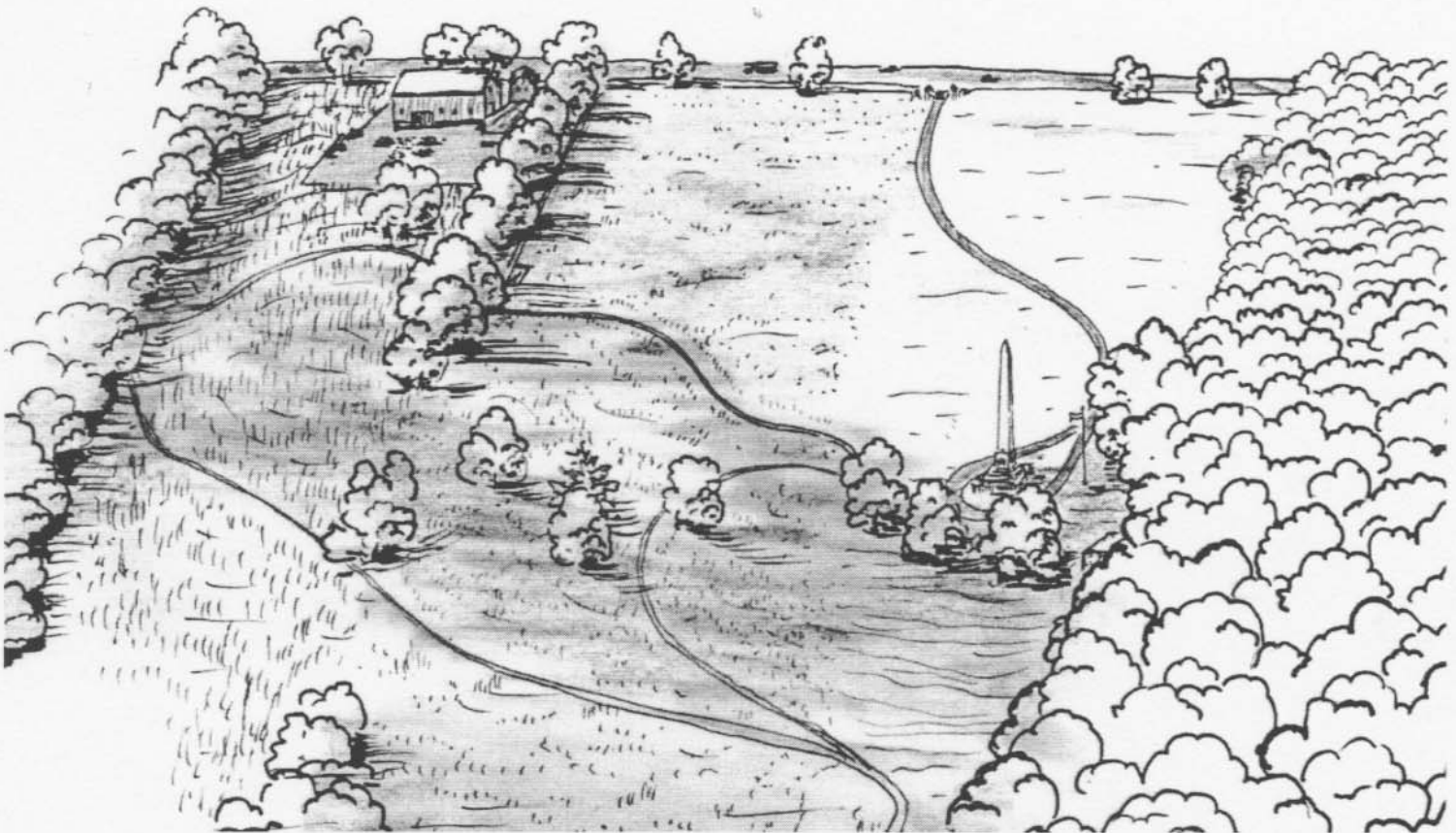
b. Proposed Meadow Vegetation

Proposed meadow vegetation will maintain open-space characteristics and define subtle differences among four subspaces that define historic use and ownership patterns according to its managed state of succession²⁰ [Figure 22, page 33]. This meadow vegetation would also establish long edges to the forest, which will make the forests a more visible characteristic of the landscape when viewed from open spaces.²¹



Lawn: Lawn shall be maintained as is within the limits of the original 4.8-acre memorial, as well as in the area around the Unknown Soldiers Monument.

1-Year Meadow: This meadow is proposed for the existing lawn/former pasture defined by the east side of the 4.8-acre memorial parcel, the highway to the south, the line of trees near the maintenance shed, and the upland edge to the north. It would be composed of the existing grasses and field herbs



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TITLE: AERIAL VIEW SOUTH TO
BATTLE MONUMENT, VISITORS
CENTER, AND HIGHWAY

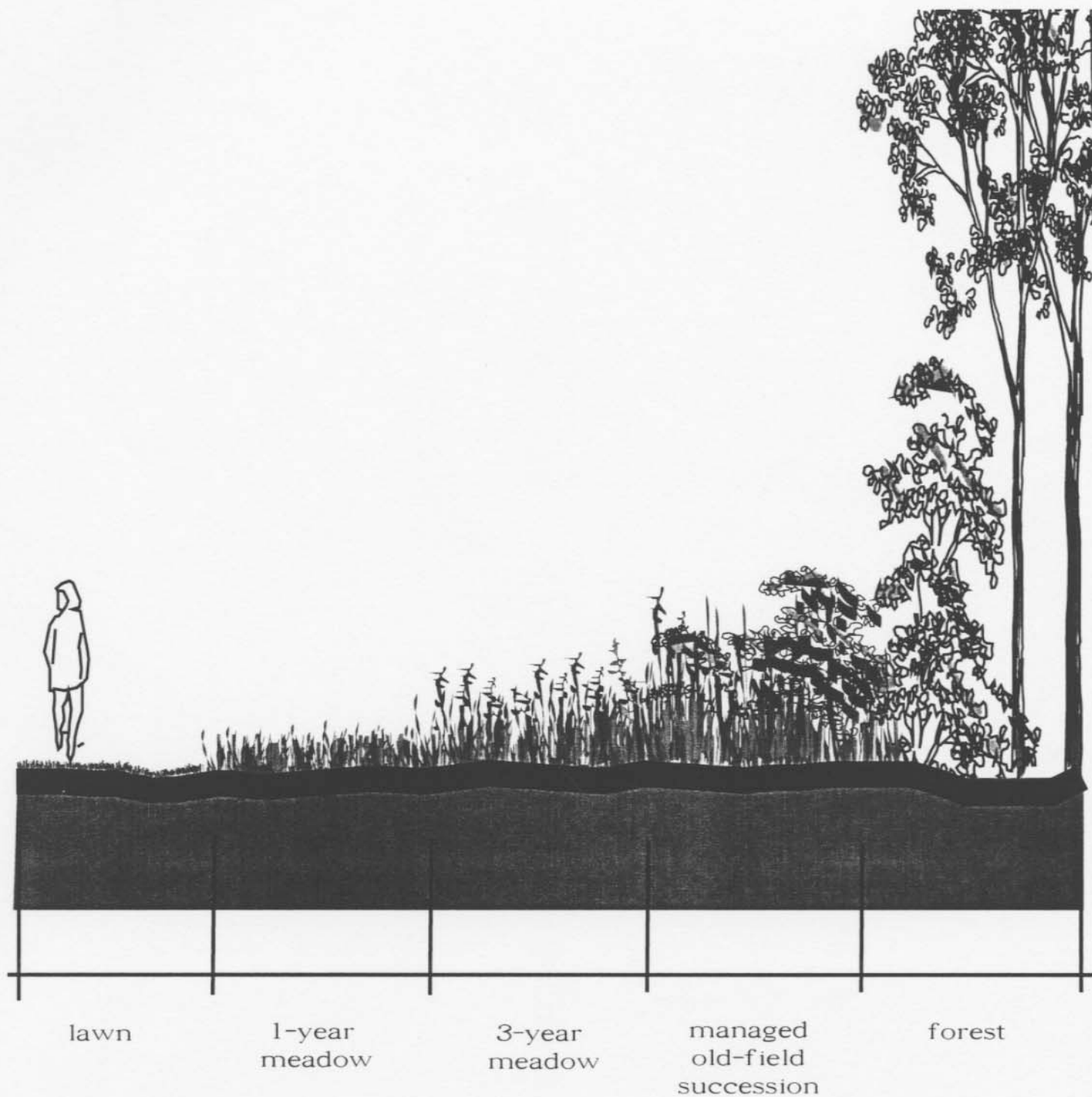
FIGURE: 25
SCALE: n.t.s.

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TITLE: VEGETATION TRANSECT FIGURE: 26
SCALE: 1" = 5'

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such as Aster, Clover, Lamb's Quarters, and Queen Anne's Lace. There would be limited color in this meadow due to the height and rate of cut. The vegetation would be maintained at an overall height of approximately 1-2 feet, between the level of the adjoining lawn and 3-year meadow. The rate of cut would have to be determined based on experience due to unknown species composition and fluctuations in yearly growth rates, but should equate to one or twice a year. This space is needed approximately once a year for large gatherings (such as Oriskany Days on August 6th), at which time it would be appropriate to cut the meadow so that it may be used as a lawn.

3-Year Meadow: This meadow is proposed for the existing lawn/former pasture defined by the east side of the line of trees near the maintenance shed, the cut-back forest edge proposed along the ravine, and the upland edge to the north. Height and vegetation composition would distinguish this meadow from adjoining spaces and also serve to screen the parking area that is proposed within it. This meadow would be composed of grasses and a greater diversity of herbs and legumes than in the 1-year Meadow, such as Butterflyweed, Common Mullein, Fireweed, Goldenrod, Nettles (namesake of Oriskany), Queen Anne's Lace, Thistle, and Yarrow, which would be managed to reach seasonal maturity and produce flowers and a variety of color and texture. This vegetation would be managed at an overall maximum height of approximately 4-5 feet.

The rate of cutting would have to be determined based on experience due to unknown species composition and yearly growth rates, but should equate to once every two to three years. The meadow would be cut to a height above 2 feet, the maximum height of the 1-year meadow.

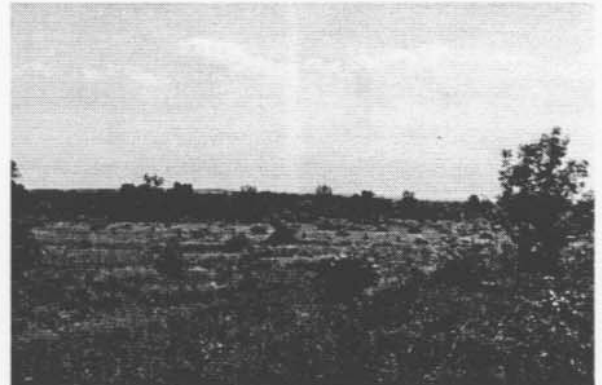


Figure 27: Existing old-field succession north of Erie Canal
(Source: author, 1999)

Old Field: This meadow is proposed for upland edge and lowlands stretching from the Battle Monument north to the Erie Canal on the west side of the Site. This meadow would initially be composed of the existing remnant old-field successional species that remain after removal of trees, such as thickets of Dogwood, Hawthorne, and Honeysuckle. After removal of the trees, old-field grasses, herbs, and legumes such as those in the 3-year Meadow should quickly reestablish. This meadow would appear similar to the existing field north of the Erie Canal [Figure 27], and consist of ample open space characterized by grasses, herbs, and legumes in the 4-to-5 foot range, scattered shrubs up to 8 feet, and young trees such as Sumac, Cedar, and Poplar. The meadow would have to be thinned prior to dominance of tree species, which can establish in 10-to-12 years, in order to maintain an early-to-mid stage of old field succession. The rate of cutting and thinning would have to be determined based on experience due to unknown species composition and yearly growth rates.

c. Transportation Corridors

The transportation corridors on and adjacent to the Site are significant from the perspective of treatment and interpretation because they offer connection between the two different proposed spaces of the Site, the forest on the east and the open space on the west [see Figure 22, page 27].

Erie Canal: Most of the trees along the canal are proposed for removal in order to restore the historic open spatial character between the corridor and Site. Some of the trees would be retained to provide vertical elements that would make the canal more visible in the landscape.

Former Trolley Line: This corridor would be maintained as is on the eastern half of the Site; on the western half, all post-1955 growth within the corridor, which is 100 feet wide, would be removed in order to restore the open spatial character of this side of the Site. The linear character of the corridor would be preserved, and would be articulated within the surrounding old-field meadow by continued mowing of the corridor as presently done by Niagara-Mohawk.



Highway (NY 69): New roadside plantings are proposed to incorporate the highway corridor into the larger space of the Site for interpretive purposes and to make the highway a more visible and defined

Highway (NY 69): New roadside plantings are proposed to incorporate the highway corridor into the larger space of the Site for interpretive purposes and to make the highway a more visible and defined space within the landscape. These plantings are intended to relate to both the battle and commemorative periods and link both the forest and open space contexts of the east and west sides of the Site. The plantings would in part represent the forest of the battle period and rural roadside trees of the commemorative period. Through roadside plantings, the historic linear spatial characteristics of the highway corridor will be enhanced; at the same time, the plantings will integrate the corridor into adjoining woodlands while maintaining views into the adjoining open spaces and screening incompatible land uses.

Forest and rural roadside trees in this region were dominated by Sugar Maples. The proposed plantings include Sugar Maples, but also incorporate several other varieties and species of similar habit in order to promote diversity that will guard against catastrophic disease.

Slightly offset single row of trees are proposed for both sides of the road, set at approximately 9 feet from the edge of pavement within the 66-foot highway right-of-way²² [see Figure 38, page 48]. These would establish the section of road crossing the battlefield as distinct zone within the larger corridor. Along spaces where views from the highway and an open spatial character are proposed, such as along much of the west side of the Site and along the Unknown Soldier's Monument, trees would be widely planted and have a high canopy in the character of rural roadside trees. The sections adjacent to the modern houses opposite the Unknown Soldiers Monument and at the eastern end of the Site would be closely spaced with a low canopy to provide screening. The sections adjacent to woods, primarily at the ravine and at the western boundary of the Site, would also be closely spaced and may, depending on space, be planted to the rear with additional trees in order to integrate the row into the adjoining woods. These sections would also be allowed to establish understory to maintain a woodlands character.

d. Other

Picnic Area: In order to remove the picnic facilities presently situated around the commemorative space of the Unknown Soldier's Monument, a new picnic area is proposed within the woods at the northwest corner of the East Plateau [see Figure 22, page 27]. The understory would be cleared and an earthen or mulch-covered floor would be maintained.

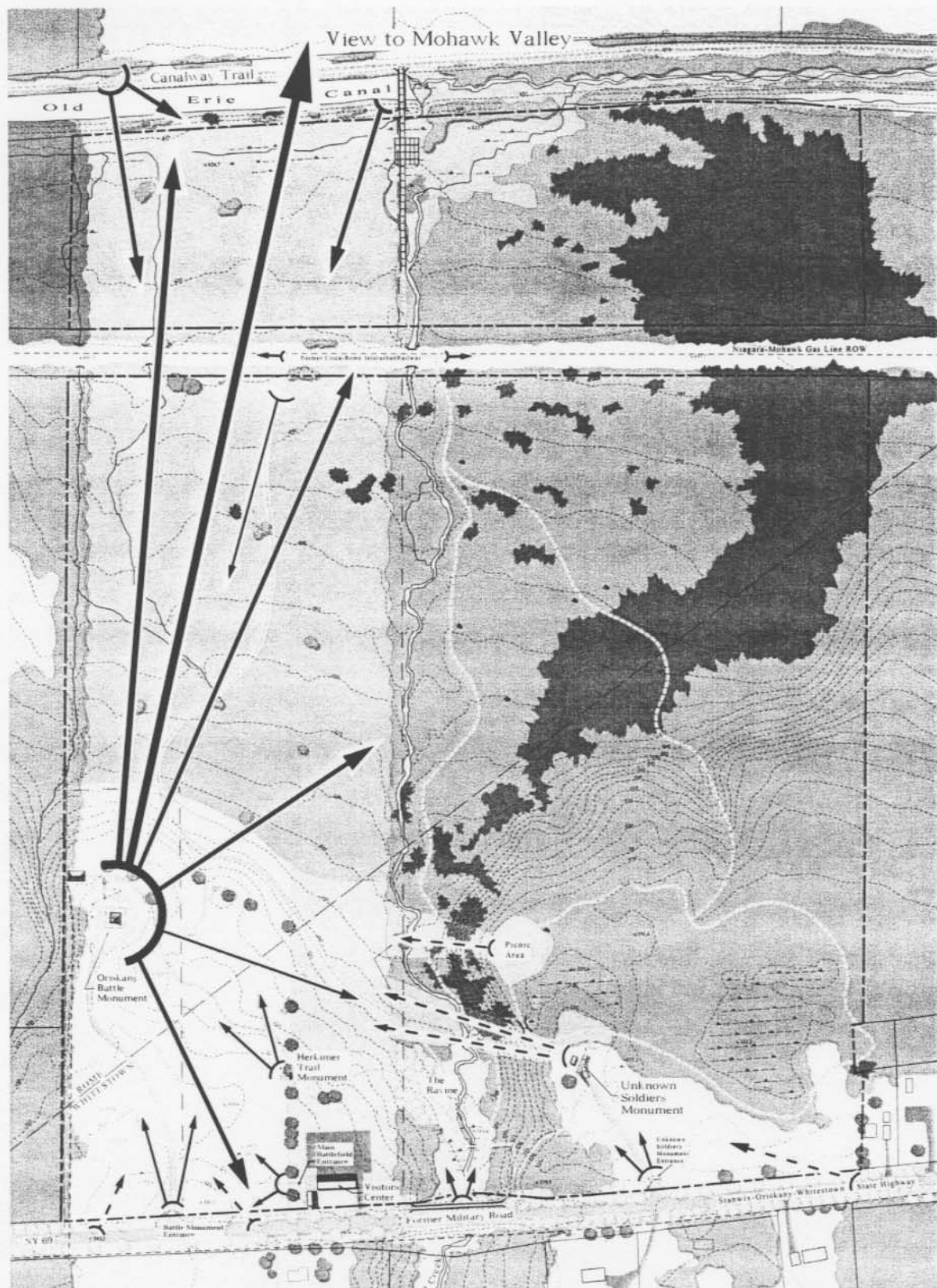
Unknown Soldiers Monument Area: A minor change is proposed for the woods immediately north of this monument [see Figure 22, page 27]. This space historically was not defined by a strict break between open space and forest, as currently exists, but rather by a gradual transition characterized by individual trees. This plan proposes to reestablish this transition and soften the edge of the space by removing the understory in the section of woods behind the monument that extend back to the swamp.

2. Views and Vistas

Overall Description:

The intent of this plan is to reintroduce a portion, or representation, of the expansive views that were a central characteristic of the commemorative-period landscape. The reintroduction of these views would rely largely on the implementation of the proposed spatial organization. The primary views would be from the Battle Monument area 180 degrees to the north, east, and south [Figure 28, next page]. From this point, visitors would see all of the significant landscape characteristics of the Site: its context within the Mohawk Valley; its place along a significant transportation corridor (views of the Erie Canal, trolley, highway, and railroad in the distance); the fields of the Site's commemorative context, and the forests of its battle context. Other views would be established from the proposed Erie Canalway Trail and former trolley corridor up to the Battle Monument. Existing views from the Herkimer Trail Monument to the Battle Monument and from the highway toward the Unknown Soldiers and Battle Monuments would be preserved. Filtered vistas (directed views) would be reestablished from the Unknown Soldiers Monument to the Battle Monument, and another would be introduced from the proposed picnic area to the Battle Monument.





KEY



Views
& Vistas



Filtered
Views
& Vistas



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ROME & WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK

TITLE: **VIEWS & VISTAS DIAGRAM**

FIGURE: 28
SCALE: n.t.s.

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MAP SOURCES:
ORISKANY LAND USE HISTORY, 1880, 1900,
1920, 1940, 1960, 1980, 2000
NEW YORK STATE PARKS 10-0



Conserving a Landscape Palimpsest:
Interpretive Interventions at
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD
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TITLE: VIEW NORTH FROM BATTLE
MONUMENT TOWARD ERIE
CANAL AND MOHAWK VALLEY

FIGURE: 29
SCALE: n.t.s.

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Design Details: a. Views

View North from the Battle Monument and South from the Erie Canalway Trail: The major work required to reestablish these views would be clearing of the young forest north of the Battle Monument [Figure 29, page 36]. As noted under discussion of spatial organization, the proposed old-field succession of this area would be maintained to prevent the reestablishment of the forest. In addition to clearing of the young forest, three large Sugar Maples around the Battle Monument, which were planted in the 1960s, require changes because they would block a significant portion of the view. Under this plan, the middle tree would be removed and the trees to either side of it would be pruned to raise the canopy above the level of view.

Views of the Battle and Unknown Soldiers Monuments from the Highway: The proposed roadside tree plantings discussed under spatial organization would be designed to maintain the views of passing motorists and pedestrians through manipulation of spacing and canopy height.

b. Vistas

Battle Monument-Unknown Soldiers Monument Vista: To reestablish this vista, which historically framed the Battle Monument and Mohawk Valley beyond from the Unknown Soldiers Monument, the mixed deciduous and coniferous forest in the intervening ravine will require thinning and raising of the canopy [Figure 30, next page]. This would produce a filtered rather than open vista; the vista also would not extend beyond the Battle Monument to the Mohawk Valley due to the forest that has grown on the property adjoining the west side of the Site. Despite this, the historic intent of visual linkage between the two major monuments of the Site would be reestablished.

Picnic Area-Battle Monument Vista: No information has been found to document that this area historically had a visual link with the Battle Monument. Its position on the northwestern edge of the uplands on the east side of the Site, however, presents an opportunity to provide a compelling visual link between this forested area and the Battle Monument that would provide interpretive opportunities for the proposed new picnic area. Thinning and raising of the forest canopy would be required to create this vista.

3. Circulation

Overall Description:

Intervention into the circulation systems of the Site is proposed to follow the same concepts that organized those for spatial organization and views and vistas [Figure 31, page 39]. Circulation would be organized according to new entry nodes at the highway and canal. From these two nodes, a system of pedestrian trails is proposed to provide controlled access to all of the major landscape characteristics of the Site, including natural features (topography, forest, wetlands, Battle Creek), agricultural traces (old fields, Ringrose barn, Parkhurst family cemetery), transportation (highway/military road, former trolley corridor, Erie Canal) and designed commemorative landscapes (monuments, drives, pavilion). This system of trails would significantly expand pedestrian access, which is presently limited to a small portion of the site, while at the same time controlling access so that sensitive natural and cultural features would not be damaged. Within this system would be an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant circuit on both the uplands and lowlands that would access significant features and characteristics of the Site. The historic character of several circulation features would also be restored under this proposal.

Design Details:

a. Visitor Center Area / Main Site Entrance:

A relocated visitor center, which would serve as the main entry node into the Site, is proposed for the former location of the Ringrose barn complex, at the present location of the maintenance garage [Figures 32 and 33, pages 40-41]. This area would provide a compatible location for visitor services because it was historically the location of service buildings (the Ringrose barns); it would be partially screened from the Battle Monument area by an existing row of trees and the proposed 3-year meadow; it would be screened from the ravine by woods (along with some supplemental plantings); it would require minimal grading for the parking lot; and it would be located nearly at the center of the Site, providing





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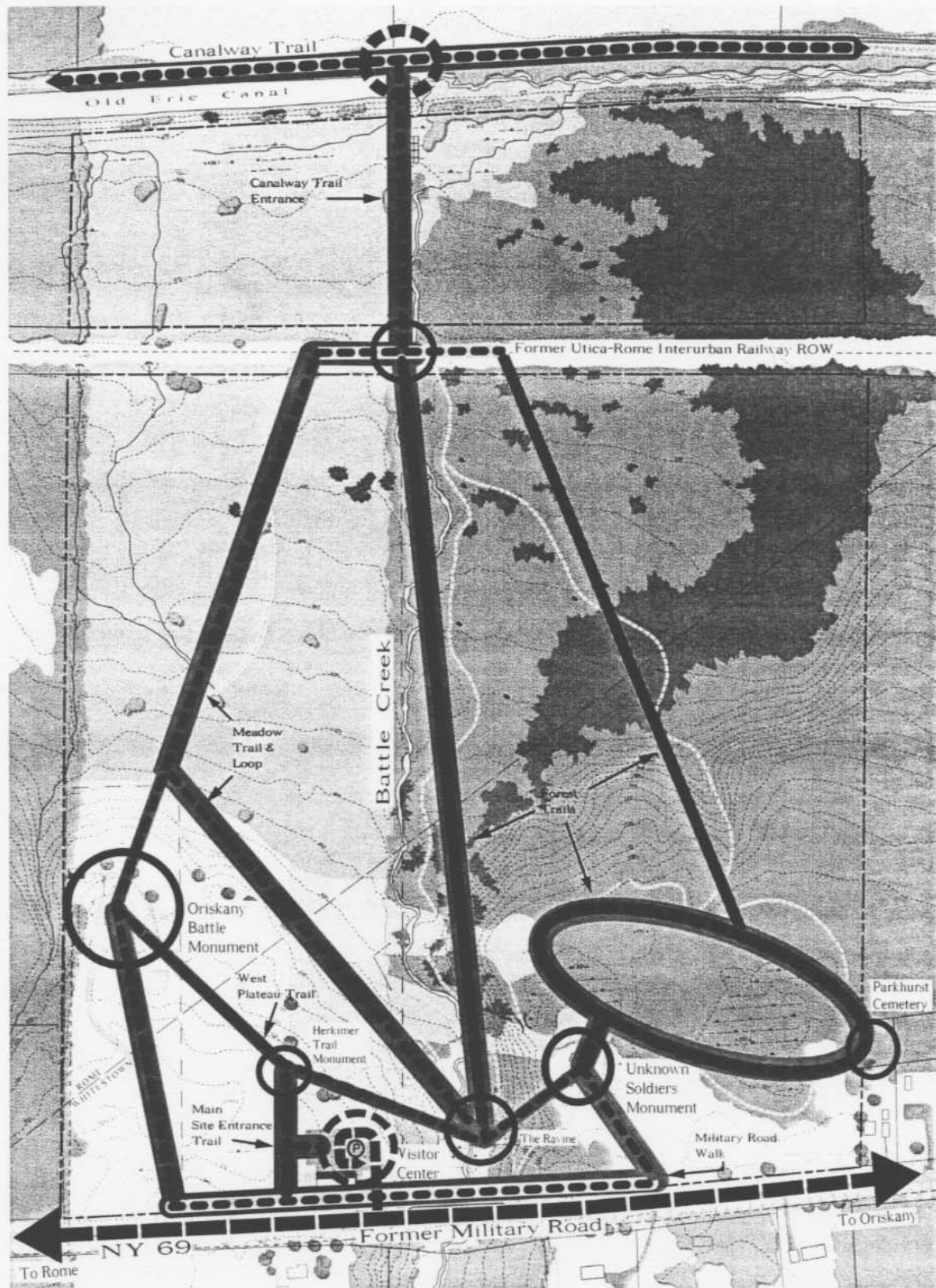
TITLE: VISTA FROM UNKNOWN
SOLDIERS MONUMENT TO
BATTLE MONUMENT

FIGURE: 30
SCALE: n.t.s.

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KEY



vehicular
circulation



pedestrian
circulation



ADA accessible
path



interpretive node



entry node

Interpretive Emphases

battle period
(forest context)

commemorative
period
(agricultural context)

transportation



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TITLE: CIRCULATION DIAGRAM

FIGURE: 31
SCALE: n.l.s.

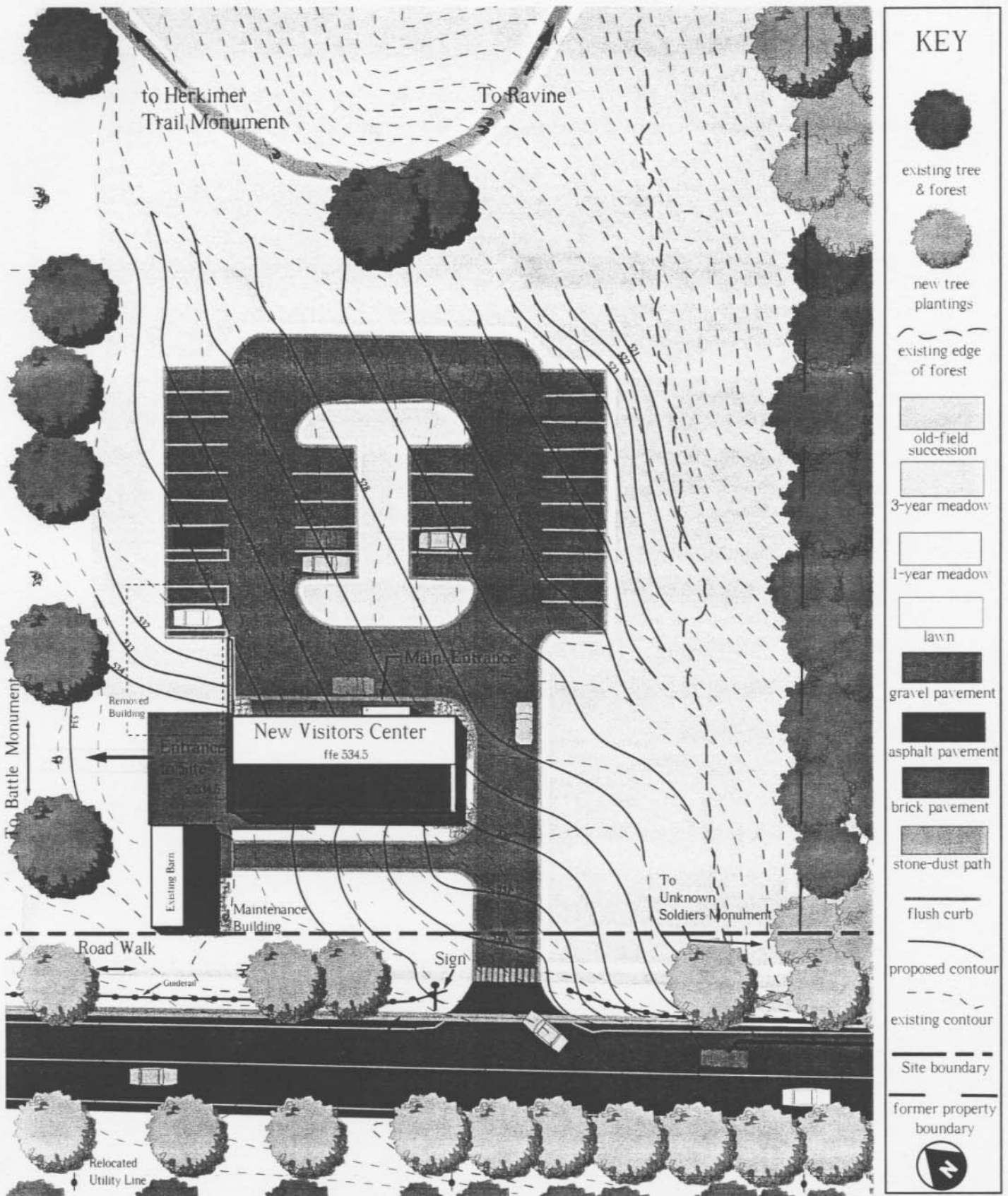
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MAP SOURCES:
ORISKANY LANDLINE HISTORICAL MAP
TOPOGRAHY - ORISKANY BATTLE MONUMENT
NEW YORK STATE PARKS/DAW



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TITLE: **PROPOSED VISITOR
CENTER AREA**

FIGURE: 32
SCALE: 1" = 40'

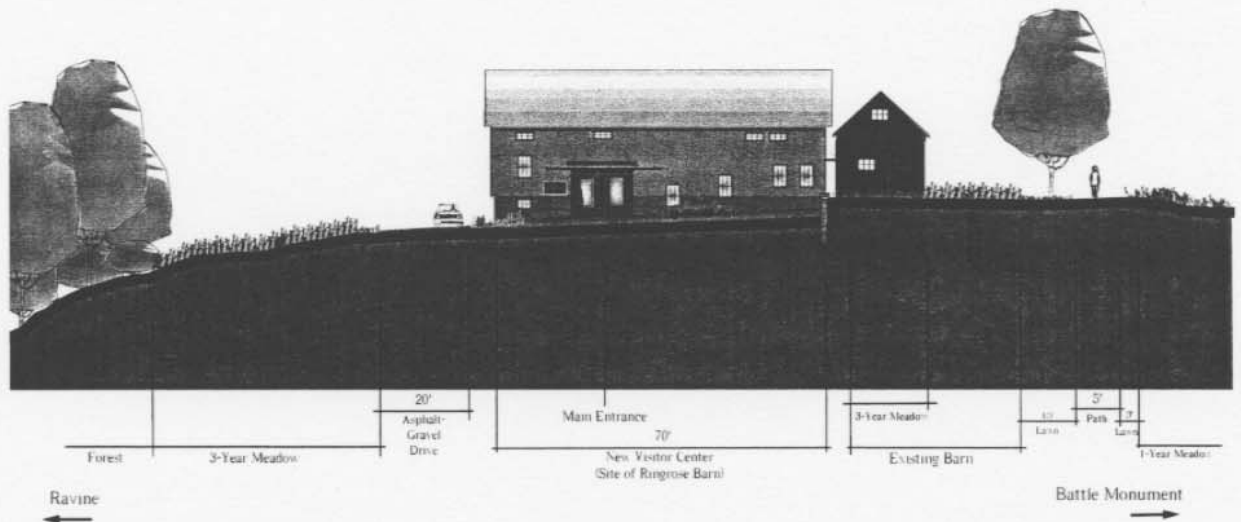
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MAP SOURCES:
TOWN AND LAND USE HISTORICAL DATA
FROM ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD
AND STATE HISTORICAL



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TITLE: SECTION, PROPOSED
VISITOR CENTER AREA

FIGURE: 33
SCALE: 1" = 40'

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The parking lot, which would be accessed by a new two-way drive off of the highway, is proposed as gravel or gravel-embedded asphalt bordered by a flush concrete curb. This pavement would provide a softer-appearing surface that is more compatible with the rural character of the surrounding context. The lot would be graded to allow sheet drainage, following natural contours; the 3-year meadow and wooded area downslope from the parking lot would provide natural filtering before runoff reaches Battle Creek. The parking area would be bordered by a narrow mown edge. An central island planted in 3-year meadow is included to reduce the apparent size of the parking lot, which is proposed to accommodate 29 vehicles, including 2 handicapped spaces, and loading space for inter-city tourist busses. There are presently about 25 parking spaces located in the lot off of the Battle Monument drive, along with a few more around the maintenance area.

The main entrance to the visitor center is proposed at the south side of the parking lot on the site where the largest of the Ringrose barns stood into the mid-1950s. The existing 1970 maintenance garage, which partially occupies this space, would be demolished [see Figure 18, page 19]. The existing smaller Ringrose barn, presently partially used for storage, would be preserved on the exterior and rehabilitated on the interior into a maintenance facility. The new building, although only conceptualized for this studio, would approximate the massing and materials of the demolished Ringrose barn [see Figures 11 and 16, pages 14 and 19] to be compatible with the surrounding agricultural context. It is proposed to be (30 feet wide by 70 feet long and have a gable roof, wood siding and stone foundation. It would be partially banked, with the main entrance at a level halfway between the basement and the first floor. Inside this entrance, stairs and an elevator or ramp would lead to the basement and main floors. The basement would provide space for offices, while visitor services and exhibits would occupy the main floor. Additional space would be available on a second or attic level. The main floor would access the Site via a small brick-paved plaza on the west side of the building, enclosed by the existing Ringrose barn to the south. This area would provide visitor orientation (such as maps and signs) and access to the Site's path system.

c. Canalway Trail Entrance

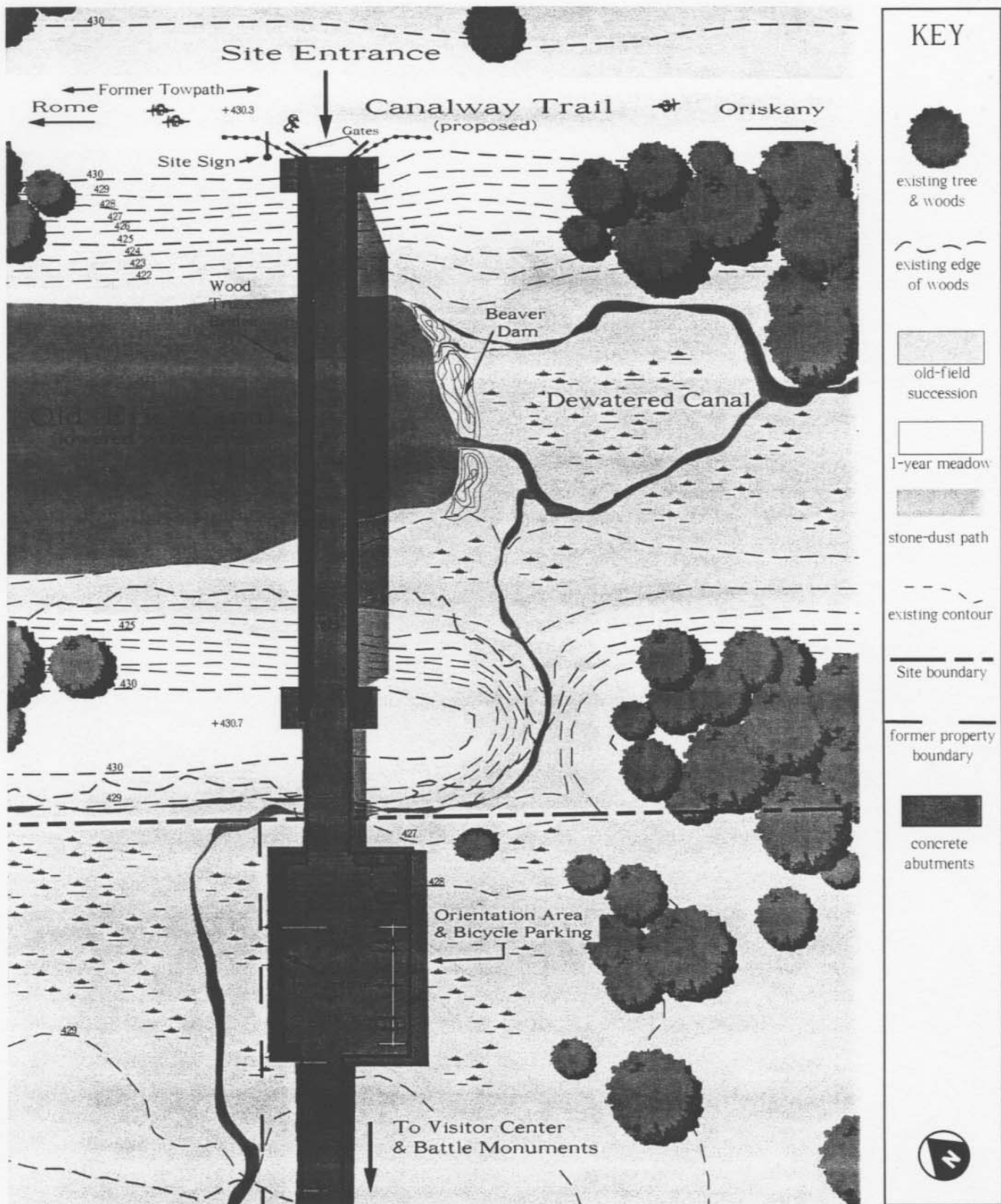
The Canalway Trail entrance is proposed near the center of the north boundary of the Site, providing equal access to both the east and west sides of the Site [Figures 34 and 35, pages 43-44]. This location is also where the watered section of the Erie Canal ends, and where a branch of Battle Creek has broken through the south canal wall. This location therefore provides opportunities to interpret the history of the Erie Canal and the dynamics of natural processes.

The Canalway Trail, which is proposed for construction beginning in spring, 2000, will be an 8-foot wide, stone-dust surfaced bike and pedestrian path built on the old towpath.²³ The entrance or trailhead to the Site would be directly off of this trail on a 7-foot wide wood-truss bridge with concrete abutments in the canal walls. The design of the bridge is intended to be modern yet compatible with the type of bridges that may have been built over rural stretches of the canal. A gate would be provided at the north end of the bridge in order to close access to the Site. Just after the bridge on the boardwalk would be a rest area providing visitor orientation, benches, and bicycle parking, since bicycles are not allowed on the Site. This entrance trail would continue over the adjoining wetlands on a raised boardwalk extending south to the limits of the wetlands near the fork in Battle Creek, and then south a short distance to the trolley corridor walk and entrance to the Site's trail system.

d. Pedestrian Trail System

The proposed pedestrian trail system will provide controlled access across the Site and will form linkages and nodes at the primary interpretive features of the Site. Trails would be of two types: a 5-foot wide stone-dust path through open space (meadow) contexts, and a 4-foot native soil path through forested areas²⁴ [Figures 36 and 37, pages 45-46]. In the 1-year and 3-year meadows and the old-field succession, the paths would feature 3-foot wide mown shoulders to keep visitors separate from tall grasses and to enhance the spatial identity of the path corridors. The paths should require minimal grading or removal of significant vegetation; however, in wet areas, the grade may have to be raised. On the steep slopes of the upland edges, paths may require embedded logs (steps) to stabilize the path and ease access. The existing gravel path through the ravine would be retained and distinguished from proposed paths through its surface treatment. The following is an overview of the proposed trails:





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TITLE: CANALWAY TRAIL
SITE ENTRANCE

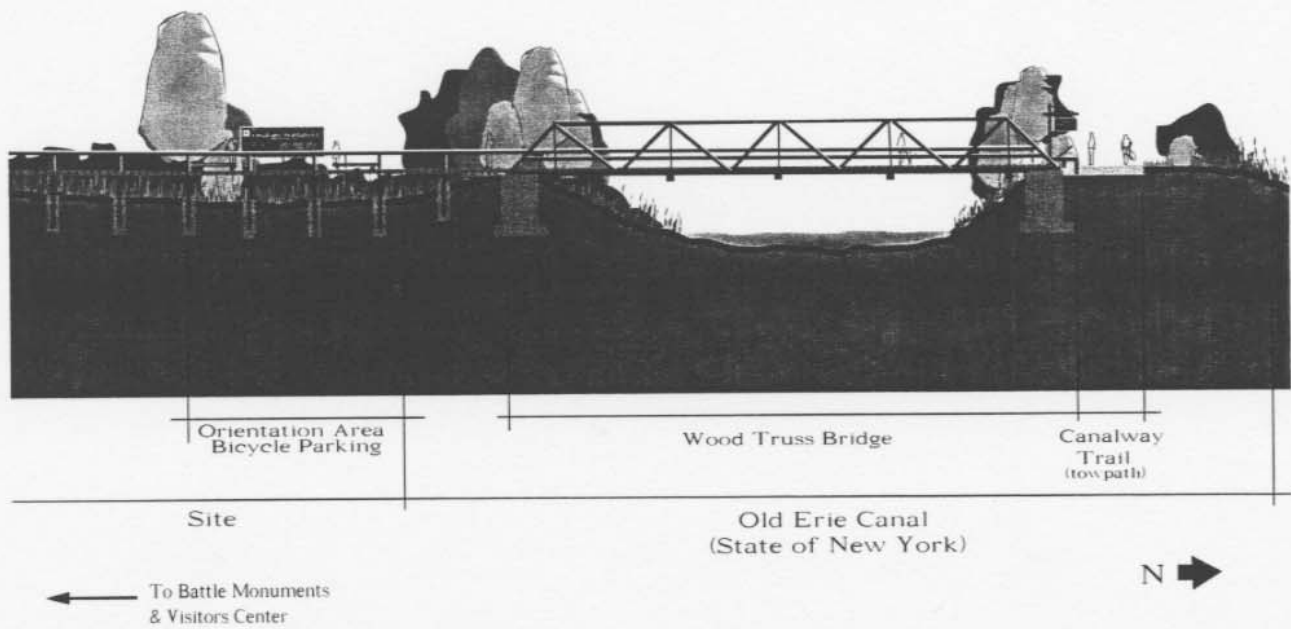
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FIGURE: 34
SCALE: 1" = 20'

MAP SOURCES:
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD HISTORICAL MAP
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD HISTORICAL MAP
ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD HISTORICAL MAP



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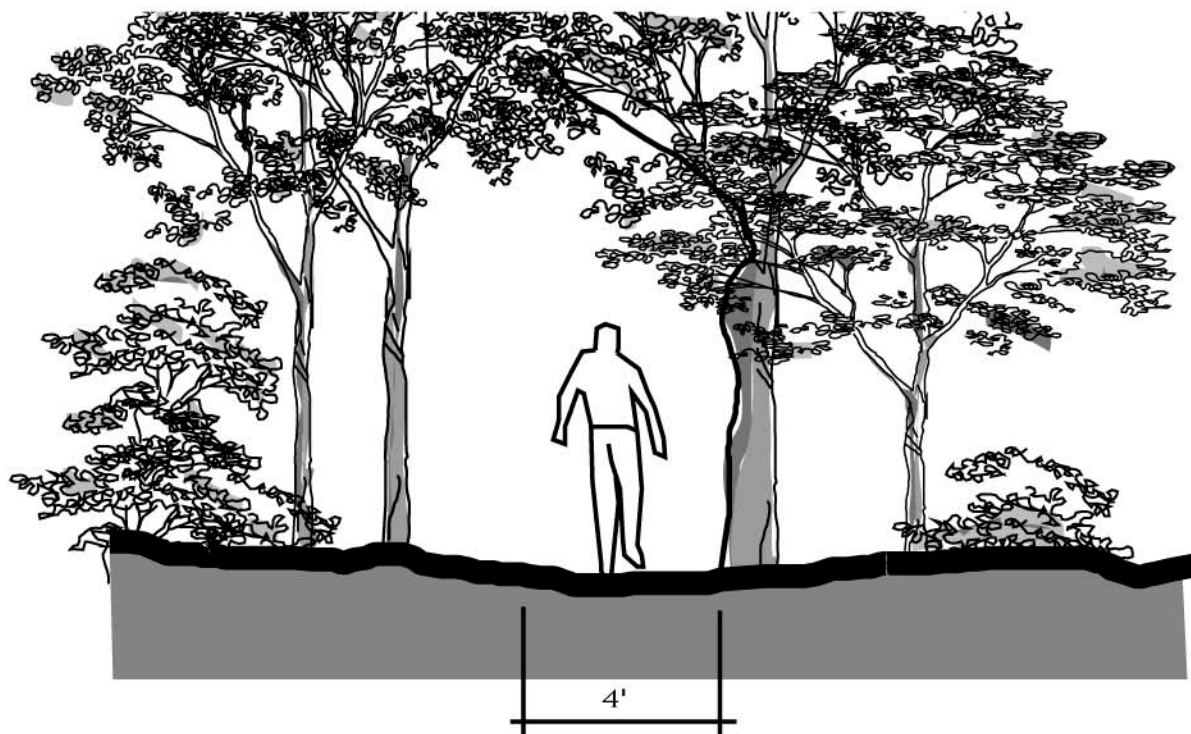
TITLE: SECTION WEST THROUGH ERIE
CANAL AND CANALWAY TRAIL
SITE ENTRANCE

FIGURE: 35
SCALE: 1"= 300'

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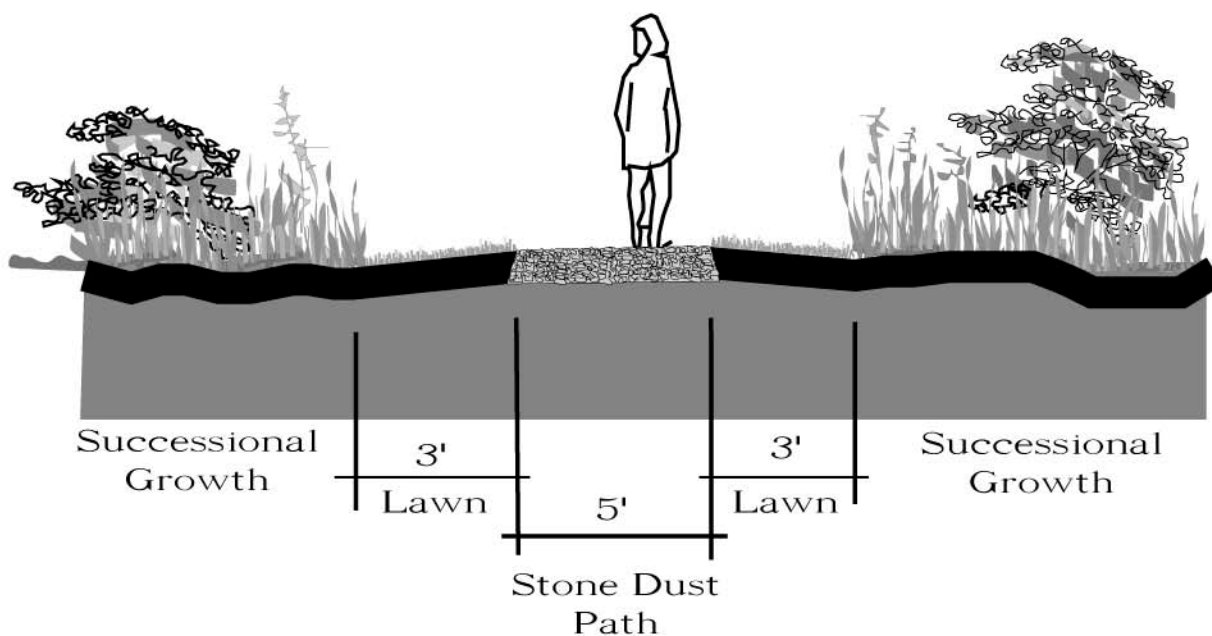
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Native Soil Path

Section Through Forest Path



Section Through Old-Field Succession



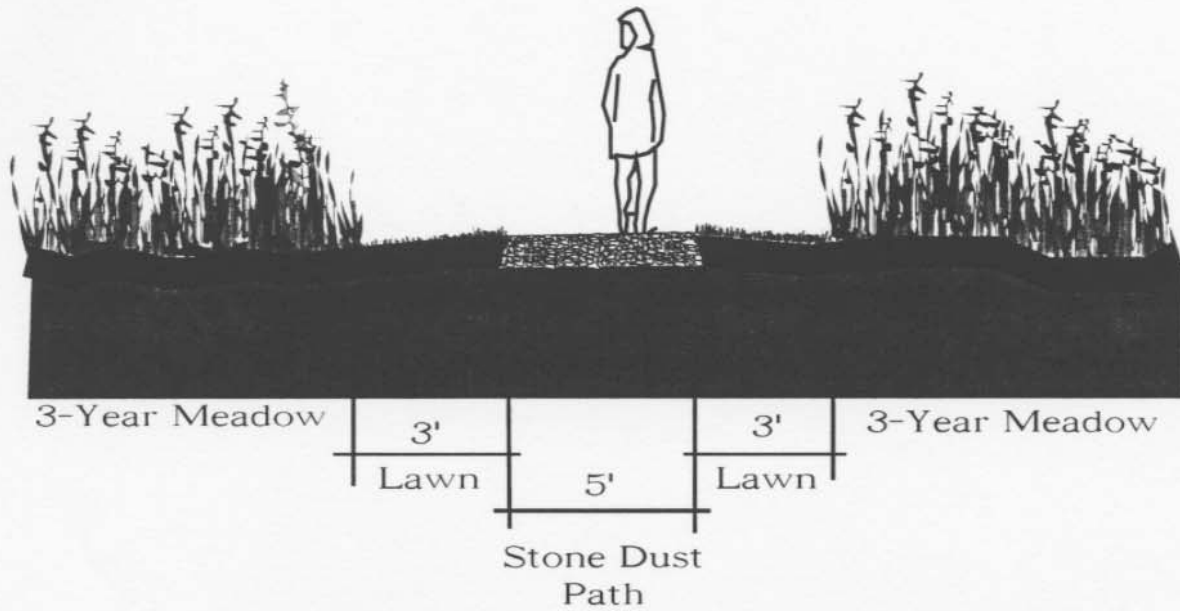
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TITLE: **PATH SECTIONS**

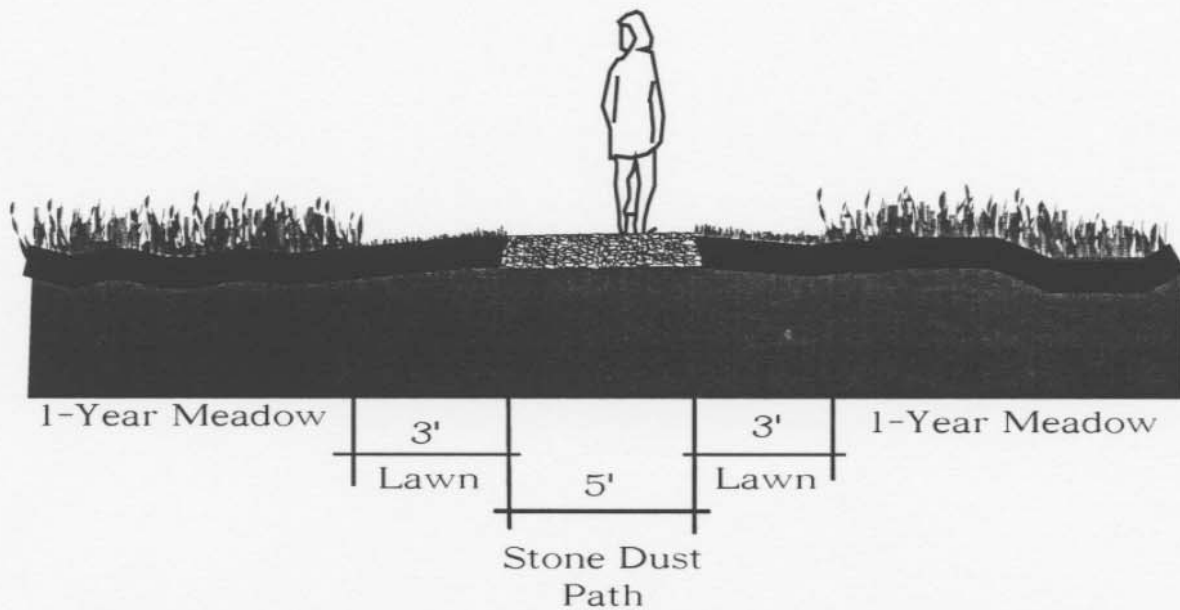
FIGURE: 36
SCALE: 1" = 5'

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Section Through 3-Year Meadow



Section Through 1-Year Meadow

Main Site Entrance Trail: This trail, which would open off the west side of the proposed visitor center building, follows the existing row of trees between the 1-year and 3-year meadows and leads to the Herkimer Trail Monument to the north and the Military Road (highway) trail to the south. As a collector trail, it would be 8 feet wide, 3 feet wider than other meadow trails.

Military Road (highway) Walk: This proposed trail would run parallel to the highway, 17 feet from the travel lane within the 66-foot highway right-of-way [Figure 38, page 48]. The straight alignment of this trail will follow the historically straight alignment of the road. The trail will be accessed from the Main Site Entrance Trail and extend to the Battle Monument drive on the west and the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive on the east, both of which will be converted to primary pedestrian use. The trail will cross the ravine on a raised boardwalk built into the side of the highway causeway. The boardwalk will dip into the ravine at a 5 percent accessible slope, suggesting the earlier, lower elevations of the causeway when it carried the Military Road and the turnpike/plank road across the ravine. It will also provide visitors a good vantage point into the ravine [Figure 39, page 49].

Trolley Corridor Walk: This short trail would provide connection from the Canalway Trail entrance to primary trail system of the Site [see Figure 22 and 31, page 27 and 39]. The straight alignment of this trail and its forced end and transition onto the meadow and forest trails is intended to direct attention to the historic use of the space as a transportation corridor. Appropriate access-control features along this corridor would be trail gates and pasture fences (such as locust post and barbed wire).

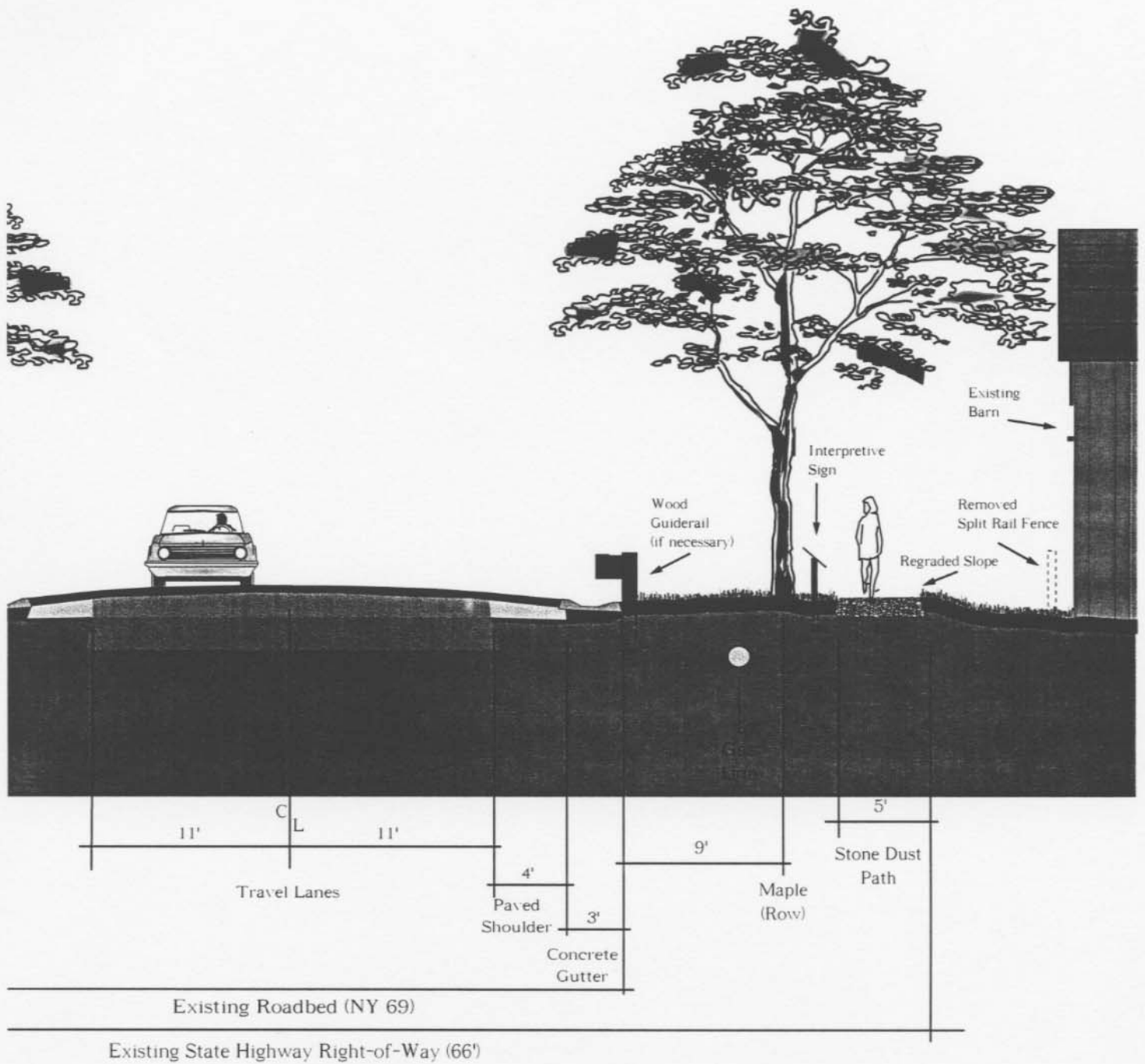
Meadow Trail: The meadow trail would take visitors into the agricultural context of the commemorative period [see Figure 22 and 31, page 27 and 39]. This trail would cross the old-field succession, and when headed south, would be directed toward the Battle Monument at the edge of the uplands. When headed north, the trail would be directed toward the bridge at the Canalway Trail entrance. As this trail winds uphill toward the Battle Monument, it would transition from old-field succession to lawn, 1-year meadow, and then back to lawn. A spur is proposed along the edge of the uplands through the 3-year meadow and into the ravine to connect with the forest trails.

Forest Trail: The proposed forest trail consists of three sections[see Figure 22 and 31, page 27 and 39]. The first would lead along the natural terrace on the east side of Battle Creek and would provide views of the creek and access to stone piles and field trees which are traces of the agricultural use of the land. This section would continue north into the ravine up to the existing gravel path. A second section of the forest trail would branch off the first section near the trolley corridor and wind across the lowlands toward the uplands, again passing several stone piles. This section would ascend the uplands alongside an existing swale, where it would intersect the third section of the forest trail, a loop around the east plateau. This loop would take visitors either west toward the picnic area and the Unknown Soldiers Monument, or east toward a swamp and the Parkhurst family cemetery [located adjacent to the Site], and then back to the Unknown Soldiers Monument. A bridge would be necessary where this loop crosses over a drainage ditch to the rear of the Unknown Soldiers Monument. Access to the visitor center would be gained from an extension of the existing ravine walk.

West Plateau Walk: This proposed walk follows the existing undefined path linking the pavilion (existing visitor center), Herkimer Trail Monument, and ravine trail, and would link with the existing walk to the pavilion down a set of stairs from the Battle Monument [see Figure 22 and 31, page 27 and 39]. This trail would cross lawn, 1-year and 3-year meadows, and the woods and wetlands of the ravine.

ADA Trail Accessibility: The proposed trail system would provide a number of opportunities for access by mobility-disabled persons through trail loops where sustained running grades do not exceed 5% and maximum grade does not exceed 10%.²⁵ The following upland trails would be accessible: The military road walk, which would connect to the Battle and Unknown Soldiers Monuments from the proposed visitor center and provide visual access to the ravine; the main Site entrance trail, from the military road walk to the Herkimer Trail Monument; and the forest trail loop on the east plateau, which would be accessed from the Unknown Soldiers Monument. All of these upland trails would also be accessed through motorized assistance from the visitor center. On the lowland trails, an accessible loop would be provided from the Canalway Trail entrance to the trolley corridor walk and the meadow walk/meadow walk spur, heading back at the ravine on the section of the forest walk along Battle Creek.





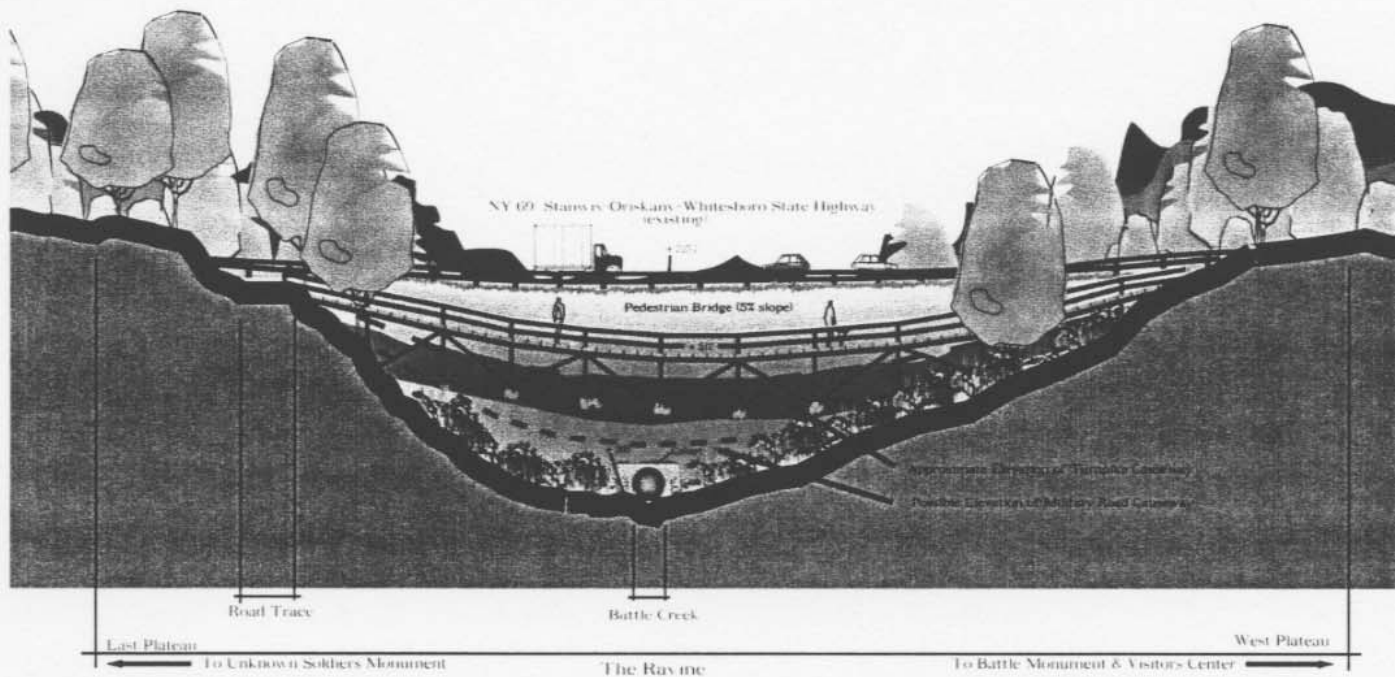
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TITLE: HIGHWAY/ PATH SECTION FIGURE: 38
VIEW WEST FROM BARN SCALE: 1" = 20'

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	Conserving a Landscape Palimpsest: Interpretive Interventions at ORISKANY BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC SITE ROME & WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK	TITLE: SECTION VIEW SOUTH FROM RAVINE TOWARD MILITARY ROAD WALK & HIGHWAY CAUSEWAY FIGURE: 39 SCALE: 1" = 50' vertical 1" = 20' horizontal JOHN AUWAERTER George W. Curry, Major Professor Barbara Giambastiani Bartlett, Christine Capella Peters, Committee LSA 800, Spring 2000 - Faculty of Landscape Architecture SUNY COLLEGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND FORESTRY, SYRACUSE
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d. Monument Drives

The drives to the Battle Monument and the Unknown Soldiers Monument are proposed as pedestrian ways with limited vehicular access for motion-disabled persons and maintenance vehicles [see Figure 22, page 27]. The gates at the Battle Monument drive would thus remain closed, and gates would be erected between the relocated D.A.R. gateposts at the Unknown Soldiers Monument drive. The Battle Monument drive would be restored to its pre-1955 conditions, with removal of the parking lot and asphalt surface, and reconstruction of the loop around the monument. The drive would be resurfaced in gravel. The Unknown Soldiers Monument drive, which was originally proposed as a 33-foot wide approach, would also be resurfaced in gravel. The end of this drive at the monument, which is presently an undefined, broken-up expanse of asphalt, will serve as a small, rectangular plaza under this proposal.

e. Highway

The roadbed of the existing highway, designated as NY 69, would remain unaltered under this proposal. The 66-foot right-of-way, as previously noted under discussion of spatial organization, would be altered through plantings and addition of a walk.

It is recommended that changes to the roadbed and its functional classification be explored in cooperation with the state Department of Transportation. The existing highway is posted at 55 m.p.h., and cars often speed by at higher rates, most without any idea that they are traveling through the commemorative zone of the battlefield. Changes in the width or pavement of the shoulders, and the width of the travel lanes, could serve to slow and calm traffic, resulting not only in greater respect for the battlefield, but also in a safer and more relaxed atmosphere for those walking along the historic corridor. These changes would work in conjunction with the proposed roadside plantings, and would be made more effective through distinctive highway signs marking the limits and entrance to the Site.

V. TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL ACQUIRED LAND

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is presently exploring options to acquire historic battlefield land in private ownership on the west, south, and east sides of the Site. Land north of the Site (north of the Erie Canal) is presently state owned and managed by the Department of Environmental Conservation as part of the Oriskany Flats State Wildlife Management Area.

While design details were not explored for land outside the existing limits of the Site for this studio, general concepts have been and are illustrated on the concept diagrams for spatial organization, views and vistas, and circulation [Figures] and in the following:

1. Property bordering west side of the Site (Vogel/Dunn; 37 acres)

It is proposed that this property be maintained as forest in the process of succession. Removal of this forest, much of which is of an age and character similar to that on the east side of the Site, would not significantly improve interpretation of historic landscape contexts and features. While this property was part of the Ringrose farm, during much of the commemorative period there was a large grove of trees along the west side of the Battle Monument on this property, and the existing forest continues to organize the space in a similar manner. This forest also serves an ecological function in protecting the ravine and stream bank along the boundary of the Site. This property could provide additional opportunities for trail access. A high point above the ravine on this property also has the potential to provide visitors with a dramatic view of the Battle Monument.



2. Property south of the Site (Donahue; 120 acres)

It is proposed that the existing open space and farmhouse of this property be maintained as part of the agricultural context of the Site. The open space was historically part of the Ringrose farm that also occupied the west half of the Site. The existing farmhouse, although altered, provides an important interpretive link to the Site's agricultural context. This house could also function as additional space for Site offices or visitor services.

3. Property east of the Site (Parkhurst Cemetery; 2nd parcel, 44 acres)

This property is a mix of residential, forest, and field, and also includes the Parkhurst Cemetery. This abandoned cemetery, which falls under the ownership of the Town of Whitestown, has an intimate link with the history of the Site and could serve a significant interpretive function in its existing condition if access is provided. A preservation plan should also be drafted and implemented. The second parcel should be maintained as part of the forest context of the Site, given that it adjoins the forested east half of the Site and has little historical relationship to the open agricultural space in which the commemorative landscape developed.



CONCLUSION

Through the design exploration of this studio, it is evident that the landscape of the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site can be treated to improve its interpretive function in a manner that preserves the existing palimpsest of landscape features, enhances those features directly associated with the Site's historic significance, and reveals those traces associated with the Site's historic landscape context.

This design exploration, however, did not produce solutions that could be standardized and applied to any cultural landscape with similar needs. The Site presented unique conditions that allowed for the physical separation of landscape characteristics associated with its two periods of significance, and at the same time, the integration of those distinct landscape characteristics through historic and contemporary circulation features.

This studio did illustrate a process that could be applied to treatment of most cultural landscapes. Through documentation of a landscape's history, a close analysis of historic and existing conditions, and development of a management philosophy that respects the palimpsest of landscape features and contexts, a cultural landscape may be treated in a manner that preserves its historic character and enhances its potential to serve interpretive purposes.



ENDNOTES

¹ This overview is taken from John Auwaerter, Research Assistant and George W. Curry, Project Director, "Cultural Landscape Report, Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site" (SUNY ESF, Faculty of Landscape Architecture, pending completion summer 2000).

² This section provides a preliminary summary of analysis and evaluation. The final analysis and evaluation of landscape characteristics is forthcoming in the Cultural Landscape Report.

³ The National Register Criteria are defined as: "The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and: A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinct." National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 16A" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991). Note: the outdated National Register listing presently only identifies the Site as significant under Criterion A.)

⁴ Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert, and Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1998), 71-72.

⁵ Information for this section has been developed from documentation in the Cultural Landscape Report, which includes site inspections and aerial photographs.

⁶ Documentation strongly suggests that the military road followed the same alignment as the existing highway, but is not conclusive. It is known that the turnpike and plank road followed the same alignment as the highway. See the Cultural Landscape Report, Site History chapter 2.

⁷ Maintenance and budgetary constraints, along with the visitor services and amenities, is largely beyond the scope of this project.

⁸ In order to achieve its interpretive potential, landscape often requires supplemental interpretive elements such as guides, markers, signs, etc. The development of such interpretive elements, while likely necessary for the Oriskany Battlefield landscape, is beyond the scope of this project.

⁹ See Matthew Pottleiger and Jamie Purinton, *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998), 5-11.

¹⁰ Pottleiger and Purinton, 5-6.

¹¹ Ray Halbritter, "The Battle of Oriskany," on-line paper www.oneida-nation.net/facts/Oriskany.html, published by the Oneida Nation and dated 10/1/99, 2.

¹² Pottleiger and Purinton, 11.

¹³ *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, 82.

¹⁴ Renee Friedman, "For the Curator of Trees and Teacups / The Landscape as Artifact," *CRM*, volume 17, no. 7 (1994), 5-6.

¹⁵ John Auwaerter and David Uschold, "Cultural Landscape Inventory for Fort Stanwix National Monument" (National Park Service, 1999), 2-3, 8.

¹⁶ Catherine Howett, "The Role of the Interpretive Program in the Restoration of Historic Landscapes," in *Breaking Ground: Examining the Vision and Practice of Historic Landscape Restoration* (Winston-Salem: Old Salem, Inc., 1999), 49.

¹⁷ Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, editors, *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (Washington: National Park Service, 1996), 49.

¹⁸ Reuben M. Rainey, "The Memory of War: Reflections on Battlefield Preservation," *The Yearbook of Landscape Architecture - Historic Preservation*, Richard L. Austin et. al., editors (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1983), 79.

¹⁹ See Appendix 'A' for the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

²⁰ Information on old-field and meadow species and ecological succession taken from John C. Kricher, *A Field Guide to Eastern Forests - North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), 93-130.

²¹ Oliver W. Lucas, *The Design of Forest Landscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 114.

²² A guiderail may be necessary with tree plantings set 9 feet from the edge of paving, depending on the D.O.T.'s interpretation of the AASHTO standards. If necessary, this guiderail should be an inconspicu-



ous type, such as Cor-ten cable or timber used on state parkways and scenic byways.

²³ Project Review files for New York State Canalway Trail, Stanwix-Oriskany section, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, Waterford.

²⁴ Trail design information is taken from Karen-Lee Ryan, Trails for the Twenty-First Century (Washington, D.C.: Published for the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy by Island Press, 1993).

²⁵ Recreation Access Advisory Committee, "Executive Summary / Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreational Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas" (Developed for the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, July 1994).



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Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 25 August 1877, Vol. XLIV, no. 1,143, cover page and 419. Full page engraving of the centennial celebration of the Battle of Oriskany, and short article, "One Hundredth Anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany."

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APPENDIX

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties*

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alterations of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

* Source: Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, editors, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (Washington: National Park Service, 1996), 49.

