

Statues in the Lake George Battlefield Park

Since the initial purchase of these lands by New York State in 1898 for public preservation and recreation purposes, the Lake George Battlefield Park (“Battlefield Park”) experience has been enhanced by the addition of memorials which commemorate some of the noteworthy people and events that transpired here. The Unknown Soldiers’ Memorial, dedicated in 1935 over the remains of four Provincials who lost their lives in the Battle of Lake George (see *The Unknown Soldiers’ Memorial* article elsewhere on this site), and the Knox Trail monument installed in 1926 to mark the 150th anniversary of the remarkable transport of artillery for the Patriot cause from Ticonderoga to Boston, have both attracted large numbers of visitors eager to pay tribute to the heroic individuals involved.

There are also three statues in the Battlefield Park that combine history, art and spirituality, in a manner that complements the magnificence of the lake. The statues were all created and dedicated in the first half of the 20th century, when the Battlefield Park was fairly new and leaders of government and private historical associations sought to provide respectful methods of remembrance.

The three statues found today in Battlefield Park provide visitors with a sense of tranquility and appreciation to both the subjects of the memorials and the noted sculptors who created them. No visit to the Battlefield Park is complete without spending time before the statues and considering the scope of humanity they represent.

The Battle of Lake George (Sir William Johnson-King Hendrick)— Dedicated 1903



The first statue erected in Battlefield Park was dedicated on September 8, 1903—the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Lake George. The “Battle of Lake George—Sept, 8, 1755” statue is more commonly referred to by the names of the two heroes of that battle whose images are represented in bronze: Sir William Johnson and King Hendrick.

At the time of the battle—actually a series of three skirmishes that occurred, in part, on the grounds of what is now Battlefield Park--the Irish-born Johnson (1715-1774) was serving as King George II’s Superintendent of the Iroquois Confederacy and a newly-minted Major General of the Colonial Army. Johnson bestowed the name of “Lake George”, in honor of his king, on what had been known as Lac du Saint Sacrement since the French had first come to the region in the mid-1600s. It was under his leadership that the British-aligned forces, mostly comprising American-born provincials, overcame a surprise attack by the French and their Native American allies at Lake George. The victory was a significant moral win for the British in the French and Indian War, on the heels of their humiliating defeat under General Braddock at the Battle of the Monongahela (in modern-day western Pennsylvania) earlier that summer. In the victory, Johnson sustained a wound that would prove bothersome for the remainder of his life.

King Hendrick (1691?-1755), leader of the Mohawk warriors who supported the British, was a long-time trusted confidant of William Johnson. In the initial skirmish of the Battle of Lake George, known as the Bloody Morning Scout, Hendrick and the Mohawks were accompanying Col. Ephraim Williams and his provincial troops south of Lake George when they were ambushed by the French under Baron de Dieskau. Both King Hendrick and Col. Williams were killed in the attack. The surprise of the ambush forced the British to retrench north to their Lake George encampment, where they would ultimately emerge victorious in the day’s overall battle.

The bronze Battle of Lake George statue of William Johnson and King Hendrick sits atop a granite pedestal in the northern portion of the Battlefield Park, on the east side of Fort George Road. To bring attention to what was then a new park in the New York State recreation system, the State and the Society of Colonial Wars of the State of New York collaborated on producing the statue as a centerpiece for the site. The dedication ceremony

for the statue in 1903 was a major event, with Governor Benjamin O'Dell providing the keynote address before thousands of spectators. In addition to Governor O'Dell, the Governors of Vermont and Connecticut, and the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts were present to view the unveiling of the statue.

The sculptor of this statue was Albert Weinert (1863-1947). Weinert was born in Leipzig, Germany, immigrated to the United States in his 20s, and created most of his best remembered works here, including a number of sculptures at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

Mohawk Warrior—Dedicated 1921 (refurbished 2005)



As Battlefield Park became a popular destination during the early part of the 20th century, and the William Johnson-King Hendrick statue evolved into a “must-see” aspect of the Park, officials recognized that the region’s first inhabitants were also deserving of recognition.

George Dupont Pratt, son of Standard Oil magnate Charles Pratt, became New York State’s Conservation Commissioner in 1915. Pratt, a long-time supporter of the arts as well as conservation causes, commissioned Alexander Phimister Proctor (1860-1950) to sculpt a Native American tribute. The result was a bronze statue, “Mohawk Warrior”, that depicts a Native American pausing for refreshment in a forest environment. The scene recalls a past when the survival of native peoples in the

Adirondacks depended primarily on their relationship with nature, and the critical role that water played for both sustenance and mobility.

Born in 1860 in Bosanquet, Ontario, Proctor moved as a child with his family to the midwestern and western United States, ultimately settling in Denver. Young Proctor absorbed the frontier spirit of the times, taking a great interest in outdoor activities such as hunting and hiking in the great Rocky Mountains. His fond remembrances of wildlife and Native American culture remained with him as he decided in his 20s to refine his skills in New York as an artist, painter and sculptor. In addition to Mohawk Warrior, Proctor’s sculptures of famous Americans such as Theodore Roosevelt and Robert E. Lee, and animals (the puma, the horse, the bison, etc.) can be found at public parks throughout the US.

Mohawk Warrior is located on the east side of Fort George Road, near the pavilion picnic area. The work, which was refurbished and rededicated in 2005, features water running into a pool to simulate the warrior being invigorated by a cool, clear mountain stream.

Saint Isaac Jogues—Dedicated 1939

The third of Battlefield Park’s statues is that of Saint Isaac Jogues, the French Jesuit priest who first arrived in North America in 1636 and is credited with being the first Caucasian to view the lake he named Lac du Saint Sacrement (Lake of the Blessed Sacrament). Jogues’s name for the lake remained until Sir William Johnson changed it to Lake George in honor of King George II over 100 years later. Jogues was ultimately martyred by members of the Mohawk tribe in 1646 near present-day Auriesville, NY, and was canonized a saint by Pope Pius XI in 1930.



The statue was funded as a peace memorial by the New York State Legislature and dedicated in July 1939, two months prior to the outbreak of World War II in Europe. It portrays Jogues in the final years of his life—including the mutilated fingers that resulted from his torture by the Mohawks several years before his martyrdom—hailing the lake he saw as representative of the wonders of God’s earthly creations, as he grasps a crucifix in his left hand. At the base of the statue are the Latin words which are the motto of the Society of Jesus, the formal name of the Jesuit order—“AD MAJORUM DEI

GLORIUM” (to the greater glory of God). From his pedestal located to the west of Fort George Road, St. Isaac Jogues gazes at the splendor of the waters he so greatly admired.

Charles Keck (1875-1951) was commissioned by the State to create the Jogues memorial following a national call for proposals. A lifelong New Yorker, Keck had a long, successful career that produced numerous monuments and architectural sculptures that can be viewed throughout the United States today. Among the other statues for which Keck is known are that of Huey Long at the US Capitol, and one that depicts the explorers Lewis and Clark in Charlottesville, Va.

Statues in the Modern Context

The “newest” of the statues in Battlefield Park was dedicated more than 80 years ago. It’s been said that the public’s interest in American history—or *any* history, for that matter—is dwindling more with each passing generation. Moreover, the cost of erecting statues to heroes from a distant past, and the controversies the statues frequently engender, make the effort more troublesome than modern government leaders generally wish to withstand. While there are a number of other historically significant events that occurred within the Battlefield Park’s boundaries—many of the atrocities of the Fort William Henry massacre (1757) and the launching of General Amherst’s successful 1759 attack on Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga), to name just two from the French and Indian War—massive new commemorations of such events are very unlikely in the near future.

But whether or not the future holds additional statues for the Battlefield Park, the sculptures we’ve profiled in this article represent, along with The Unknown Soldiers’ Memorial and the Knox Trail monument, *history* to many people. Their presence at the site over several generations has resulted in these remembrances becoming bona fide attractions of their own, stops within the Battlefield Park for history enthusiasts and picnickers alike to view and admire. And for some small percentage, perhaps, the planting of an initial curiosity to learn more about what these memorials represent in the building of the United States of America.