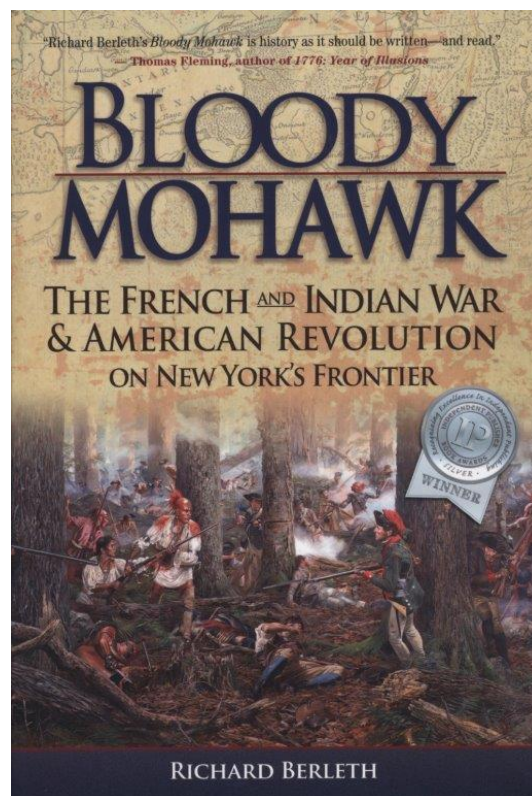


Bloody Mohawk: The French and Indian War & American Revolution on New York's Frontier.

Reviewed by Rich Barbuto

If you wargame this period, you have probably read Richard Berleth's book; it is that popular. If you are mildly interested in the period, then this is still worth the price (US\$20). It will make you more interested and ready to acquire figures. For wargamers, it is chock full of battle narratives and all the leading characters. If you like to game new scenarios, especially skirmish or engagements with fewer than 1500 fighters, you cannot go wrong. There are 321 pages of text with useful maps. The 24 pages of end notes are bursting with anecdotes and 'the rest of the story.'



Let me digress for a paragraph to tell you how I became interested. I teach a six-hour course on the American Revolution entitled "The American Revolution: a New Idea and a New Nation." Well, one of my students was a retired Air Force officer who highly recommended the book. In the course I describe Bunker Hill, Saratoga, Cowpens, and Yorktown as each is different enough to illustrate the evolving strategic situation. Anyway, of course I knew about the invasion of Canada and the battle for Quebec City as well as Oriskany. But by and large, if I have any spare time, I read more on the War of 1812, my specialty. So, I didn't acquire the book. Then, months later, I met my student and now friend in Kansas City at a presentation on the Battle of Trenton given by a colleague of mine. He once again enthusiastically recommended *Bloody Mohawk*. So, I get it from Amazon --- and could hardly put it down; it is written so well!



During the colonial period, New York was not the most populous of the 13 colonies. Even North Carolina had more people. The settled area stretched from New York City north to Albany on the Hudson. North of Albany, or west along the Mohawk River, the colony was all frontier with scattered small settlements. The Iroquois Confederacy owned the central and western part of the colony. This body agreed to allow settlers into the Mohawk Valley as far west as Fort Stanwix at the western end of the Mohawk River Valley. The Mohawk tribe commanded the eastern part of the confederacy while the fierce Seneca guarded the west. The settlers were a mix of German Palatines, Scots-Irish, Dutch, Irish, and of course, English. Interestingly, for the most part, the settlers lived easily with the Native Americans. The Indians traded furs for iron articles: pots, knife blades, tomahawks. Woven fabric, glass beads, weapons, powder and lead were popular. The settlers sold excess grain and livestock to feed folks in Albany and elsewhere. Life was hard but good.



Until the Revolution, that is. Each group and tribe was fractured by the new spirit of independence. The whites self-identified as Loyalists (Tories) or Rebels (Patriots). Many of the Loyalists and Rebels were connected by blood, marriage, religion, or business. These people knew one another very well. Too well. The confederacy too was fractured with many of the Oneidas falling in with the revolutionaries, while the people of the other five tribes were either supporters of King George or were neutral. But no one could be neutral for long when the first liberty poles arose and the tarring and feathering began. Loyalists formed units such as Butler's Rangers and the King's Royal Regiment of New York. The Rebels seemed to take control early and many Loyalists fled, only to see their houses and lands taken over by neighbors. Loyalists and natives answered with fiery, deadly raids.



By war's end, a full one-third of the population of the Mohawk Valley was dead from battle, famine, or winter. Another third had fled to Canada or the Hudson Valley. Over a hundred communities were nothing but ashes. The Iroquois Confederacy was all but broken and the native population was a shadow of its pre-war numbers. The author paints a gripping, stark picture.

If you are old enough to have seen *Drums Along the Mohawk*, you are familiar with the battle of Oriskany and the siege of Fort Stanwix. General Herkimer led about 760 militiamen and 60 Oneida Indians to relieve Fort Stanwix. Along the way, his column crossed a wooded plateau bounded by two ravines. Joseph Brant, the well-educated, brilliant and ferocious Mohawk, lay in wait with about 800 native warriors, Loyalist volunteers and rangers, and Hanau riflemen. The battle raged for hours and the casualties were horrific. The American militia and Oneidas suffered 80% casualties. The mixed British-Mohawk force lost about 250 dead or mortally

wounded. The total losses exceeded Monmouth and Yorktown. Historians believe Oriskany to be the deadliest single day of the war.



So, in summary, *Bloody Mohawk* provides all you need to start wargaming the French and Indian War or the Revolution on New York's frontier: the scenarios and the inspiration. I very highly recommend this book, even if just for the entertainment and education.

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