

= Battle of Cobleskill =

The Battle of Cobleskill ( also known as the Cobleskill massacre ) was an American Revolutionary War raid on the frontier settlement of Cobleskill , New York on May 30 , 1778 . The battle , having taken place in the modern @-@ day village of Warnerville , NY near Cobleskill @-@ Richmondville High School , marked the beginning of a phase in which Loyalists and Iroquois , encouraged and supplied by British authorities in the Province of Quebec , raided and destroyed numerous villages on what was then the United States western frontier of New York and Pennsylvania .

A small party of Iroquois entered Cobleskill and drew the local defenders into a trap set by a much larger party of Iroquois and Loyalists under the command of Joseph Brant . After killing a number of the militia and driving off the remainder , Brant 's forces destroyed much of the settlement . New York 's defenders retaliated against Brant 's actions against Cobleskill and other communities by destroying Iroquois villages later in the year , and Continental Army forces destroyed more Iroquois villages in the Sullivan Expedition of 1779 .

= = Background = =

With the failure of British General John Burgoyne 's campaign to the Hudson after the Battles of Saratoga in October 1777 , the American Revolutionary War in upstate New York became a frontier war . British leaders in the Province of Quebec supported Loyalist and Native American partisan fighters with supplies and armaments . During the winter of 1777 ? 78 Brant and other British @-@ allied Indians developed plans to attack frontier settlements in New York and Pennsylvania . In February 1778 Brant established a base of operations at Onaquaga ( present @-@ day Windsor , New York ) . He recruited a mix of Iroquois and Loyalists estimated to number between two and three hundred by the time he began his campaign in May . One of his objectives was to acquire provisions for his forces and those of John Butler , who was planning operations in the Susquehanna River valley .

In 1778 the settlement of Cobleskill , New York consisted of twenty families living on farms spread out along Cobleskill Creek . It was part of the Schoharie Creek area which was a significant source of food for the Patriot war effort . Its principal defense was the small local militia under Captain Christian Brown . When attacks by the Iroquois were rumored to be coming in the spring of 1778 , the militia appealed for additional defenses . Continental Army Colonel Ichabod Alden sent a company of thirty to forty men from his 7th Massachusetts Regiment under Captain William Patrick to reinforce the militia .

= = Battle = =

On the morning of May 30 Brant laid a trap for Cobleskill 's defenders . He sent forward a small number of natives as a lure . Captain Patrick 's force and the local militia spotted them near the southern edge of the settlement . Despite Captain Brown 's warning that the Indians might be setting a trap , Patrick pressed forward as the natives withdrew , engaging them in a running battle . After about one mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) Brant sprung his trap , and Patrick 's company was engulfed by Brant 's larger force . Both Patrick and his second in command were killed in the battle , as was about half of their force . Brown organized the remaining forces into a fighting retreat back into the settlement . Five men took refuge in the house of George Warner which the attackers set on fire , killing all five men . A total of 22 settlers were killed , eight were wounded , and five captured by Brant 's men , while Brant 's force suffered an estimated 25 casualties .

= = Aftermath = =

Brant and his men burned ten houses and associated outbuildings before withdrawing , killing any cattle they could not take . Brant took five [ seven ] prisoners , [ which the Indians prepared to burn at the stake as retribution for a previous group of captives effecting an escape from the Indians ,

killing several Indians to do so . This group of seven prisoners were made to gather wood for their own funeral pyre , and the fire was actually lit , before one of the captives , Lt. Maynard , a freemason , gave the mason signal of distress . Chief Brant noticed this , and stopped the execution . All of the seven captives were then made to march 40 days , first to Montreal , then to Quebec , obtaining only the sustenance they were able to gather while on the forced march . On the journey the Indians forced these seven captives to repeatedly " run the gauntlet " and forced them at times to keep their fingertips pushed into hot glowing pipe bowls for the Indians ' amusement . They were never given a choice of their future or lives by the Indians , or Chief Brant at any time . At Quebec these seven were ransomed by the Iroquois to the British authorities , and were kept at Quebec as prisoners of war until the treaty of 1783 . The account of Lt. Maynard is related in " 1000 Famous Freemasons " along with stories of an additional five masons , other revolutionary patriots , who were likewise saved by Brant . The groups capture and journey is chronicled in " Forests and Clearings by BF Hubbard , Montreal , 1874 pp. 62 ? 63 @-@ 64 . ] Brant continued to build his forces and raid frontier communities in the Mohawk valley . He considered following up the attack on Cobleskill with one on Cherry Valley , but because the militia was on high alert , he instead withdrew back to Iroquois territory . Cherry Valley was the scene of a massacre the following November by forces led in part by Brant .

New York Governor George Clinton , who had been considering operations against Onaquaga , enlarged those plans after the raid on Cobleskill and Brant 's attack on German Flatts in September . In October 1778 Continental and militia forces destroyed Onaquaga and Unadilla , another Indian village that supported Brant and Butler .

The settlers of Cobleskill who were rendered destitute by the action received £ 200 in compensation for their troubles . Settlers from many area communities began withdrawing to larger , better fortified communities like Cherry Valley ( which began construction of a fort after the raid ) and Schenectady . This action and later ones by Brant and Butler contributed to the decision by the Continental Congress to authorize a major Continental Army expedition into Iroquois territory . Commanded by Generals John Sullivan and James Clinton , the 1779 expedition systematically destroyed the villages of Iroquois tribes fighting for the British , but did little to stop the frontier war .