

= Lachine massacre =

The Lachine massacre , part of the Beaver Wars , occurred when 1 @, @ 500 Mohawk warriors attacked by surprise the small , 375 @-@ inhabitant , settlement of Lachine , New France at the lower end of Montreal Island on the morning of August 5 , 1689 . The attack was precipitated by growing Iroquois dissatisfaction with the increased French incursions into their territory , and was encouraged by the settlers of New England as a way to leverage power against New France during King William 's War .

In their attack , the Mohawk destroyed a substantial portion of the Lachine settlement by fire and killed or captured numerous inhabitants , although historic sources have varied widely in estimates of the number killed , from 24 to 250 .

= = Background and motivations = =

The Mohawk and other Iroquois attacked the French and their native allies for a variety of reasons , related to both economic and cultural circumstances .

= = Cultural motives = =

The Europeans ( French , Dutch and English ) in the Northeast developed a fur trade with natives , including the Five Nations of the Iroquois ; beaver furs were most desired . However , in the 17th century , the dominance of what historian Daniel Richter refers to as ? Francophiles ? or French takeover , contributed to an erosion of French @-@ native relations . The French mission to assimilate natives required the abandonment of native tradition , which was met with resistance . By 1667 , large numbers of Huron and Iroquois , especially Mohawk , started arriving at the St Lawrence Valley and its mission villages , to escape the effects of warfare . Many traditionalists , including some Mohawk , resented the Jesuits for destroying traditional native society but were unable to do anything to stop them . However , traditionalists reluctantly accepted the establishment of a mission in order to have good relations with the French , whom they needed for trade . This cultural invasion increased tensions between the two factions . The relationship between the French and the Iroquois were strained long before the Lachine Massacre , as the French maintained relations with other tribes as well , both for trade and war alliances , such as the Abenaki . In 1679 , following the end of the Iroquois war with the Susquehannock and the Mahican , the Iroquois raided native villages in the West . Pushing out Siouan tribes to the west , they claimed hunting grounds in the Ohio Valley by right of conquest . These were kept empty of inhabitants in order to encourage hunting . As a result , the Iroquois regularly raided trading parties in the western frontier which under French protection , and took loot from them . Following military confrontation in 1684 , though the Iroquois negotiated a peace treaty with New France governor Le Febvre de la Barre , the treaty stated the Iroquois were free to attack the western Indians . The French Crown objected to the treaty , and replaced LaBarre with the Marquis de Denonville . He was less sympathetic to native relations , and did not pay attention to the Iroquois @-@ Algonquian tensions . In part , the Iroquois attacked the French because they were not willing to accept constraints against their warfare related to traditional Iroquois enemies .

What were known as " mourning wars " were also an important cultural factor in native warfare . Natives fought war to ? avenge perceived wrongs committed by one people against another ? . These mourning wars were also a means to replace the dead within a native community . In times of war , natives would capture members of another native group and adopt them in order to rebuild their society . When new diseases such as smallpox killed large numbers of native people within their communities , survivors were motivated to warfare in order to take captives to rebuild .

= = Economic motives = =

What the Iroquois wanted was not war , but instead a better share of the fur trade . To serve as

punishment for attacks on French fur fleets , New France ordered two expeditions under Courcelles and Tracy into Mohawk territory in 1666 . These expeditions burned villages and destroyed much of the Mohawk winter corn supply . In addition , Denonville ' s 1687 invasion of the Seneca nation country destroyed approximately 1 @, @ 200 @, @ 000 bushels of corn , crippling the Iroquois economy . This kind of aggression served as fuel for the Iroquois ' retaliation that was to come .

Following two decades of uneasy peace , Britain and France declared war against one another in 1689 . Despite the 1669 Treaty of Whitehall , in which European forces agreed that Continental conflicts would not disrupt colonial peace and neutrality , the war was fought primarily by proxy in New France and New England . The British of New York prompted local Iroquois warriors to attack New France ' s undefended settlements . While the British were preparing to engage in acts of warfare , the inhabitants of New France were ill prepared to defend against the Indian attacks ' due to the isolation of the farms and villages . Denonville was quoted as saying ' If we have a war , nothing can save the country but a miracle of God , ' .

= = The attack = =

On the rainy morning of August 5 , 1689 , Iroquois warriors used surprise to launch their nighttime raid against the undefended settlement of Lachine . They traveled up the Saint Lawrence River by boat , crossed Lake Saint @-@ Louis , and landed on the south shore of Montreal Island . While the colonists slept , the invaders surrounded their homes and waited for their leader to signal when the attack should begin . They attacked the homes , breaking down doors and windows , and dragging the colonists outside , where many were killed . When some of the colonists barricaded themselves within the village ' s structures , the attackers set fire to the buildings and waited for the settlers to flee the flames . According to a 1992 article , the Iroquois , wielding weapons such as the tomahawk , killed 24 French and took more than 70 prisoners . Other sources , such as Encyclopædia Britannica , claim that 250 settlers and soldiers lost their lives during the ' Massacre . ' The Iroquois wanted to avenge the 1 @, @ 200 @, @ 000 bushels of corn burned by the French , but since they were unable to reach the food stores in Montreal , they kidnapped and killed the Lachine crop producers instead . Lachine was the main departure point for westward @-@ traveling fur traders , which may have provided extra motivation for the Mohawk attack .

= = Aftermath = =

Word of the attack spread when one of the Lachine survivors reached a local garrison , three miles ( 4 @. @ 8 km ) away , and notified the soldiers of the events . In response to the attack , the French mobilized 200 soldiers , under the command of Daniel d 'Auger de Subercase , along with 100 armed civilians and some soldiers from nearby forts Rémy , Rolland and La Présentation , to march against the Iroquois . They defended some of the fleeing colonists from their Mohawk pursuers , but just prior to reaching Lachine , the armed forces were recalled to Fort Rolland by order of Governor Denonville . He was trying to pacify the local Iroquois inhabitants . Governor Denonville had 700 soldiers at his disposal within the Montreal barracks , and might have overtaken the Iroquois forces . He decided to follow a diplomatic route .

Numerous attacks from both sides followed , but none were fatal , and the two groups quickly realized the futility of their attempts to drive the other out . In February of 1690 , the French began peace negotiations with the Iroquois . The French returned captured natives in exchange for the beginnings of peace talks . Through the 1690s , there were no major French or native raids and , even against the will of the English , peace talks continued . This time of relative peace eventually led to the Montreal Treaty of 1701 , by which the Iroquois promised to remain neutral in case of war between the French and English .

Following the events at Lachine , Denonville was recalled to France for matters unrelated to the massacre , and Louis de Buade de Frontenac took over governorship of Montreal in October 1689 . Frontenac launched raids of vengeance against the English colonists to the south " in Canadien style " by attacking during the winter months of 1690 .

= = Bias = =

Francis Parkman , an American historian who was one of the first to write about natives within the colonial historical narrative , argues that the Iroquois wars ? were products of an ? insensate fury ? and ? mad ambition ? " . He said that the Iroquois waged wars due to the extinction of the beaver , their growing dependence on European goods , and resentment at the extermination of native culture . Parkman argues that the Iroquois had become so dependent on European goods that they needed these items in order to survive . In his research , Parkman had no evidence to support his claims . He assumed that the natives ? culture was inferior to the British @-@ American , and overlooked potential reasons for the Iroquois attacks . Parkman ? s interpretation neglected to explain why the Iroquois had waged war against other native groups as well . Parkman ? s view would later on be dismissed due to its ethnocentric interpretation of the events .

Jose Brandao , a historian specializing in North American Native history , suggests that contemporary analyses of the Lachine Massacre continue to demonstrate cultural bias . Brandao criticizes historians Parkman , Charles McIlwain , and George Hunt for citing the growing dependence on European goods ( which were , according to these historians , viewed by the Iroquois as superior to other goods ) as a reason for Iroquois dissatisfaction and violence . Brandao dismisses this theory as a largely ethnocentric interpretation with little evidence to support it . Brandao also dismisses Hunt ? s suggestion that natives , similar to the Europeans , waged wars for economic reasons .

= = Historical accounts = =

According to historian Jean @-@ Francois Lozier , the factors influencing the course of war and peace throughout the region of New @-@ France were not exclusive to the relations between the French and Iroquois , or those between the French and British crowns . A number of factors provide context for the Lachine Massacre .

Sources of information regarding victims of the Iroquois in New France are the writings of Jesuit priests ; the state registry of parishes in Quebec , Trois @-@ Rivières , and Montreal ; letters written by Marie Guyart ( French : Mère Marie de l ? Incarnation ) ; and the writings of Samuel Champlain . However , the accuracy of these sources and reports vary . For instance , in the town of Trois @-@ Rivières , approximately one third of deaths attributed to the Iroquois are missing names . According to Canadian historian John A. Dickinson , although the cruelty of the Iroquois was real , their threat was neither as constant nor terrible as the sources of the time represented , but they were feeling under siege .

European accounts of the Lachine massacre come from two primary sources , survivors of the attack , and Catholic missionaries in the area .

Initial reports inflated the Lachine death toll significantly . Colby arrived at the total number of dead , 24 , by examining Catholic parish registers before and after the attack . French Catholic accounts of the attack were recorded . François Vachon de Belmont , the fifth superior of the Sulpicians of Montreal , wrote in his History of Canada :

After this total victory , the unhappy band of prisoners was subjected to all the rage which the cruellest vengeance could inspire in these savages . They were taken to the far side of Lake St. Louis by the victorious army , which shouted ninety times while crossing to indicate the number of prisoners or scalps they had taken , saying , we have been tricked , Ononhio , we will trick you as well . Once they had landed , they lit fires , planted stakes in the ground , burned five Frenchmen , roasted six children , and grilled some others on the coals and ate them .

Surviving prisoners of the Lachine massacre reported that 48 of their colleagues were tortured , burned and eaten shortly after being taken captive . Further , many survivors showed evidence of ritual torture and recounted their experiences . Following the attack , the French colonists retrieved many English @-@ made weapons which the Mohawk had left behind in their retreat from the island . The evidence of English arming the Mohawk incited a long @-@ standing hatred of the English

colonists of New York and demands for revenge . Iroquois accounts of the attack have not been recovered , as they were recounted in oral histories . French sources reported that only three of the attackers were killed . Because all written accounts of the attack were by the French victims , their reports of cannibalism and parents being forced to throw their children onto burning fires may be exaggerated or apocryphal . At the same time , the Mohawk and Iroquois used ritual torture after warfare , sometimes to honor the bravery of enemy warriors . It was common practice among native tribes at the time .