



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Stepping Back in Time: Exploring Central and Northern New York History

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STEPPING BACK IN TIME: EXPLORING CENTRAL AND NORTHERN NEW YORK HISTORY

Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

As residents of Central and Northern New York, we're fortunate to live in an area that is rich in history. Across our region, the historical sites that dot our communities tell the story of our heritage to future

generations and serve as reminders of the past.

Just recently, the New York State Board for Historic Preservation recommended more than two dozen properties, districts and resources to be added to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Included in the list of those recommended was the Fort Ontario Military Reservation in Oswego. The recent nomination expands and replaces an earlier National Register listing to provide for a more accurate and inclusive boundary that better reflects its military past. In addition, the new nomination also pays tribute to the fact that Fort Ontario was the sole refugee camp in the United States from 1944 to 1956 for victims of World War II and the Holocaust.

In addition to the Fort Ontario Military Reservation, our region is known for many more sites and historic happenings, including the following:

The Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site: After war broke out between Great Britain and the United States in 1812, Sackets Harbor became the hotbed for military and naval activity for Lake Ontario and the upper part of the St. Lawrence Valley. Today in Sackets Harbor, you can tour the battlefield, visit exhibits and watch reenactments in the summer months.

Oswego, the home of Dr. Mary Walker: Did you know the Town of Oswego is home to the only woman ever to receive the Medal of Honor? In November of 1865, President Andrew Johnson signed a bill to award Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, a battlefield surgeon in the Civil War, with America's highest military award.

Today, a statue created in her likeness stands in front of the Town Hall, honoring her for her bravery and service.

The War of 1812 and St. Lawrence County: Jefferson County isn't the only place in our region touched by the War of 1812. Throughout St. Lawrence County, a number of sites are known for their role in the War of 1812. For more information, visit the St. Lawrence County Historical Association's website at www.slcha.org. There, you'll find the "War of 1812 Virtual Trail," which maps out points of significance throughout the county.

Our heritage is more than what's found in the pages of history books—it's something that's very much alive today at the many places that serve to pay tribute to the past. Not only do historic sites play a major role in improving the quality of life in our communities, they also often times contribute to economic growth by attracting tourists to the regions where they exist. To learn more about our state's history and sites of significance, I encourage you to visit the New York's State Historic Preservation Office's website at www.parks.ny.gov/shpo/.

