

GEORGE WASHINGTON BELT

also Great Chain or Canandaigua Treaty Belt

The George Washington Belt, also called the Great Chain or Canandaigua Treaty Belt is the friendship belt created from the Canandaigua Treaty or Pickering Treaty meeting in 1794. The thirteen human figures symbolize the original thirteen colonies of the young and newly formed democracy of the United States of America. The two smaller figures in the center represent the Indigenous "Keepers of the Eastern and Western Doors" of Haudenosaunee territory, and the house represents both the Haudenosaunee Longhouse and the U.S. Capitol Building, with the open door symbolizing hospitality and peace between the two nations. Each of the figures are linked by clasped hands to form a chain of friendship which represents the ongoing alliance between the United States and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The Canandaigua Treaty was intended to establish peace and friendship between the United States and the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and is considered the foundation of "modern" U.S.-Haudenosaunee relations. In 1794, more than 1,600 Haudenosaunee representatives met with Colonel Timothy Pickering, the U.S. representative selected by President George Washington, for a treaty council in Canandaigua, New York. The negotiations were mediated by trusted Quaker representatives selected by the Seneca. The treaty gave land claimed by the U.S. in the problematic Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1784 back to the Haudenosaunee and set new land boundaries agreed to by both nations. The treaty also recognized the sovereignty of the Six Nations to govern and set their own laws and firmly established a goal of "perpetual" peace between both nations. It was signed on November 11th, 1794 by sachems representing the Grand Council of the Six Nations. Notable attendants included Cornplanter (Seneca), Handsome Lake (Seneca), and Red Jacket (Seneca) who had distinguished themselves as sachems and leaders during the political negotiations and battles of previous years. Although the Canandaigua Treaty has been violated many times by the U.S. government and its citizens, it is still recognized as an active political agreement by both the Haudenosaunee and the United States. In observance of the original treaty promises the U.S. distributes \$10,000 worth of goods to the Six Nations each year in recognition of Article Six, an obligation to "promote the future welfare of the Six Nations" in perpetuity. The annual Canandaigua Treaty Day Celebration on November 11th commemorates the treaty in Canandaigua, New York and serves to "polish the chain of peace and friendship" between the Haudenosaunee and the United States.