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Work continues on Lake George Battlefield Park VIC

September 9, 2020 by Gillian Burdett

The COVID-19 pandemic has put on hold many Lake George Battlefield Park activities this summer. In May, the DEC posted "no picnicking" signs throughout the day-use area; the weekly history walking tours, offered each summer by The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, were canceled. The Alliance, a friends group of the state park, moved its annual membership meeting, which normally is held in a park pavilion, to an online Zoom event.

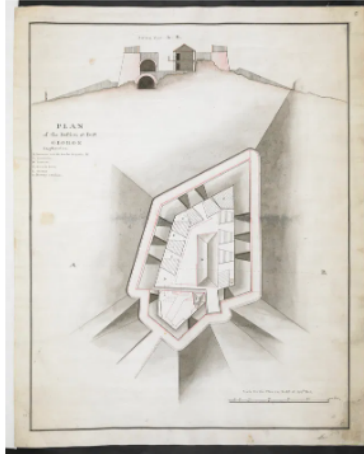
The main subject of this year's Sept. 5 meeting was the continuing work on displays for the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitors Interpretive Center. For years, Alliance members have envisioned a VIC to help park visitors understand the history of the grounds and provide space for artifacts retrieved from the park during recent archaeological digs. The vision became a plan when the Lake George Park Commission included space for a VIC on the ground floor of their to-be-built new offices on Fort George Road.

Construction of the new office building has been delayed, but behind the scenes, the Alliance has continued work on the displays that will fill the center once the building is completed.

"The VIC is still going forward, although the timeline has been significantly affected by COVID and the state processes," says Alliance President Lyn Karig Hohmann "If you drive by the park, you'll see there are some foundations in place ...no buildings, just some foundations and construction machinery." The structure planned for the Fort George Road site is a modular building. Construction will begin off-site this fall, Hohmann says, and according to LGPC Executive Director Dave Wick, it should be ready by late spring 2021.

Last December, the Alliance was awarded an Alfred Z. Solomon Charitable Trust grant to create and install 10 educational wall panels in the Battlefield Park VIC. The panels will describe the park's history with segments dedicated to Native American activity, the French and Indian War era and the American Revolution years. The grant also provides for two exhibit cases to display artifacts found in the park

Model builder Rick Conley is creating detailed models of the Fort George barracks and the stockade fort based on plans from 1759. Alliance trustee, historian Russell Bellico, speaking at the Sept. 5 meeting, says he believes the models are "crucial to understanding the site."



Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library

Other planned displays include a model of the *Radeau Land Tortoise*, a military vessel that now sits on the bottom of Lake George, a painting of the Fort George Bastion by Queensbury artist-historian Tim Cordell and a replica of the Revolutionary War-era uniform worn by the First Pennsylvania Battalion.

The plight of the battalion at Fort George made news this winter when a construction crew uncovered a Revolutionary War-era burial site on Cortland Street in Lake George Village. During the Revolution, Fort George served as a hospital for troops infected with smallpox. Archaeologists have determined the Cortland Street site hold the remains of the disease's victims. One soldier was buried in his uniform, and a uniform button identified him as a member of The First Pennsylvania. Rob Frasier, a reenactor and period tailor, recreated the soldier's coat and it will be displayed in the VIC to honor the patriots that died at Fort George.

"I think we have enough items to have quite a visitors center to open," says Hohmann, " — the modelings ... the panels, the display cases, and we'll have certainly a nice collection of artifacts also for display." The Alliance continues to seek donations and new members to support the organization and the VIC. Hohmann has identified other grant opportunities but says she is holding off on applying until the building construction timeline firms up.

Alliance Vice President John DiNuzzo notes that in addition to the expected opening of the Visitors Interpretive Center, 2021 also marks 100 years since the Mohawk Warrior fountain, which was refurbished in 2005, was gifted to the park. Next year is also the Lake George Battlefield Alliance's 20th anniversary. Anyone wishing to join the Alliance or make a donation may do so through the [Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance website](#).



Visitors picnic on the historic grounds of Lake George Battlefield Park.



The Mohawk Warrior fountain was gifted to Lake George Battlefield Park in 1921.

Featured photo: Workers pour footings for the new Lake George Park Commission offices on Fort George Road, 07/30/2020.