

# FORT GEORGE POST

The Newsletter of the Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George) Alliance

PO BOX 26, LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK 12845

www.lakegeorgebattlefield.org

WINTER 2021

## Summary of President's Annual Report to the Membership

Presented at the Annual Membership Meeting, September 5, 2020 by Zoom

1. Thanks were given to the members who were able to attend by Zoom. While we would have preferred our annual picnic in the park, SARS CoV 2 pandemic has restricted access to the park. COVID-19 has changed so much for us...but we do have to remember back to our ancestors who died from epidemic diseases during the colonial wars and perhaps know somewhat how frightening that must have been for them as it is for us.
2. Two dignitaries from NYS DEC attended our meeting. DEC's Regional Attorney, Donald Boyajian attended, representing Region 5 and the Region 5 acting director, Joseph Zalweski. Charles Vandrei, NYS DEC Historical Preservation Officer, also attended. I have been working closely with Don and Chuck on our new Cooperation Agreement which is in the final review process (It is now finalized and signed.) Chuck also has been a principal on the Courtland Street project as was reported last year and as well as our "go to guy" for work in the park. Both Mr. Boyajian and Mr. Vandrei made positive comments about working with the Alliance and looked forward to working with us in the future.
3. First, our required reporting to the federal government on the 990-N form and to the Attorney General (AG)(CHAR 500) is completed. Because of our grants for the VIC,

even though for the federal government we could file the postcard 990-N, the AG required us also to submit a 990-EZ form. Fortunately, Rosemarie Earl, our treasurer, had completed a 990-EZ form for us last year although it was not necessary for any submissions. As I did the 990-EZ, I was grateful to both Rosemarie for her work and for Bill Herrlich for his past work. Since the EZ requires averaging of 5 years of donations for each person donating to the organizations to ensure a specific threshold is met, that means going through 5 full years of donations. Bill had done that each year so I was able to pull all of his work plus the electronic forms from Rosemarie. We have been very lucky to have such detail-oriented persons as our treasurers. We have not received our annual request for the NYS Education Department Charters report yet, but that will be completed when we do. (The Charters report has now been filed.)

4. On thank you's, I want to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to Marcia Verville, who stepped up last year to serve the remaining one year as a Trustee for the organization. Now that the year has ended, she has asked to retire from the Board. She has been a thoughtful and dedicated trustee and has provided me with a great historical perspective on the Alliance. Also, she is our "spy in the park" on her daily walks! That I

hope she continues!

5. On another note, I would ask all of us to extend well wishes to our dedicated long-time officer and board member, Larry Bennett, who is having some ill health at this time.
6. I hope you have had a chance to visit our new website, lakegeorgebattlefield.org. After some normal fits and starts, it has really bloomed, thanks to the dedication of John DiNuzzo, our vice president, and Christine Sullivan, our webmaster. John remarked how valuable an interactive website is and has worked hard to keep it vital and up-to-date.
7. Last year, I spoke about our ability to apply to Parks and Trails for grants for activities in the Park. We were awarded a small grant to upgrade the current signage in the park. While the grant was to be announced in March, COVID-19 and the budget crisis has delayed the availability of the funds until the end of August. While the timing is off for how we planned to do this project, we will go forward, coordinating with DEC to do the project.
8. The Visitors Interpretive Center is still going forward although the time line has been significantly affected by COVID and the state processes. In my last conversation with Dave Wicks, principal for the Lake George Park Commission, there is expectation that build for the modular will be done in the fall with site placement and finishing in the spring. This is a one year delay. I am concerned even with that time line as there has been a significant shortage of construction lumber and

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## *Introducing John DiNuzzo,*

### **Vice President of the Alliance**

*(As we noted in our last newsletter, we would like to introduce our officers and Trustees to our members. In this article, we are introducing John DiNuzzo, who will become President of the Alliance in August 2021!)*

John DiNuzzo joined the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance Board of Trustees in 2016. John previously served as a Trustee for the Shaker Heritage Society (Albany, NY) and chaired the committee that created a memorial to Igor Sikorsky, inventor of the modern helicopter, in Trumbull, CT. A security executive at MetLife, John has also led a number of business associations and civic groups, including local chapters of Big Brothers-Big Sisters and the American Heart Association. He has combined business know-how and a love of history to help the Alliance expand its services to members through a number of initiatives, including the creation of our web site. John believes that the opening of the new Visitor Interpretive Center, along with a growing recognition by historians and the general public of the Battlefield Park's extraordinary role in the two key North American conflicts of the 18th Century, will propel a new era of appreciation and support for our beautiful site.

John and his wife, Carol, reside in Trumbull, CT. and Lake George. They have two children and three grandchildren.



*John DiNuzzo, Vice President  
of the Alliance*

## *Summary of President's Annual Report*

*continued from page 1*

other materials with an upswing in pricing so I am not sure if that will also affect the project. As a result, until we have a firmer time line, we have not looked for more grant money, although at this time we do have the basics in place to open the VIC. (see current picture of the VIC!) There are two projects related to the VIC which are very exciting. First, we are grateful to Rick Conley for his excellent modeling of the forts. A picture was in the latest newsletter. Next, Tim Conley has surprised us with a beautiful original oil painting of Fort George. He and his wife are new members of the Alliance. We are very grateful to Tim for this beautiful Gift. Tim spoke a few words about his love of the Park and the work that resulted in the

beautiful painting. Thanks were expressed to Tim for this wonderful gift.

- As our last item of business, Charles Vandrei updated the membership about the Courtland Street rescue archaeology work: He noted that the sifting was almost done, but it would take to probably 2022 (The new date is 2023, due to delays caused by COVID restrictions.) before the analysis was finally done and the Patriot's bones were laid to rest in the Park. The Respectful Reburial Committee is at work on this project. He also noted that it was likely that the remaining section of the lot would be donated to make a memorial pocket park for the Town of Lake George. ■

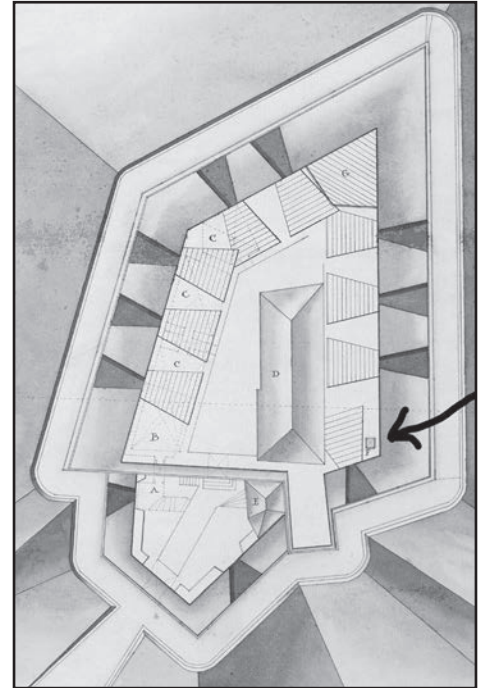
## Fort George: As described, 1777

In 1777, Fort George and its environs changed hands from American to British and back, but for both was a storage depot and guardian of southern Lake George. There are interesting modest descriptions of this fort found in the record from both sides of the conflict that year.

The first is found in a letter from Major General Schuyler to General George Washington, written on July 18th, 1777 from Saratoga. The Major General had received a letter from Washington written on the 15th, questioning the loss of Fort George to the British. (These letters as well as many others are available at <https://founders.archives.gov>) What follows was the rather sarcastic and biting defense of the loss of that fort which, fortunately for us, includes a description:

“The Gentlemen your Excellency mentions, who “consider Fort George *extremely defensible*, and that a spirited brave judicious Officer with two or three hundred Men, aided by the armed

Vessels I have built on the Lake, would retard General Burgoyne’s passage for a considerable Time, if not render it impracticable, *and oblige him to take a much more circuitous and difficult Rout.*” If these Gentlemen ever were at Lake George, the most favorable Supposition I can make of their extraordinary Assertion is that they were blind, or that it is so long ago that the Size of the Fort; its Situation and every other Circumstance is irradicated from their Memories—The Fort was part of an unfinished Bastion of an intended Fortification—the Bastion was closed at the Gorge, in it was a Barrack capable of containing between thirty and fifty Men; without Ditch; without Well; without Cistern; without any picket to prevent an Enemy running over the Wall: so small as not to contain above an hundred & fifty Men: commanded by Ground greatly overlooking it, and within point Blank Shot, and so situated that five hundred Men may lay between the Bastion and the Lake without being



This picture is a section from the “Plan of the Bastion of Fort George” 1759 from the Norman B. Levanthal Collection. The arrow denotes the feature in the plan labeled cistern. Archaeological digs showed neither a well or cistern in that area. While the letter from Schuyler states there is no well, the report of Lieutenant John Enys in 1780 states the fort had a very good well. (*Chronicles of Lake George*, R.Bellico, p.181.)

seen from this *extremely defensible* Fortress.” (The letter continues with a description of the vessels that were under construction and not completed due to lack of rigging and guns.) (<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/033-10-02-0323>)

His report seems in concurrence with that of James M. Hadden, a British lieutenant who traveled to the Fort as part of the Burgoyne campaign:

“Fort George which stands near the water at the end of the Lake, is a small square Fort faced with masonry and contains Barracks for about a hundred Men secured from Cannon Shot. This

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Picture of the model of Fort George by Rick Conley at the site of Fort George in the park. The model in this picture is not quite complete as it is missing the guard station at the entrance. The fort is complete at this time.

# Considering the IFS

## A tribute to Dr. David Starbuck

By Lyn Karig Hohmann

There are so many “ifs” in life – If I hadn’t gone to Fort Edward Days over twenty years ago, would I have ever met David Starbuck? Like so many who came into his orbit, that chance meeting lead me on to a totally new venture in my life. I certainly know that if David had not done the digs at Lake George Battlefield Park, the Alliance would not have been born and the Visitors Interpretive Center would not be opening soon! Fortunately, the good “ifs” happened for all of us, David did have field schools in the park, the Alliance celebrates its 20th birthday this year and the Visitors Interpretive Center for the park will open. We will be eternally grateful to David for so generously sharing his knowledge with all of us.

Sadly, David died on December 27, 2020 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer, and virtually to the end, he was working on his dig on Rogers Island in Fort Edward. He had only recently retired as professor of anthropology at Plymouth State University and was organizing his newly built archaeology laboratory and library on his beloved farm. He had only a few months before published a summary report on his work in Battlefield Park. In it, he organized the collection of artifacts in a manner that will serve as a blue print for the displays in the VIC. Further, he had organized the collection of artifacts from his recent park digs for delivery to the NYS Museum. In that process, he showed me how he had separated the best artifacts in the collection in a way that they would be easy for the Alliance to pull for our exhibits. David took great effort at his end to ensure that the Alliance would be able to tell the archaeological story of the Park, even when he wasn’t here.

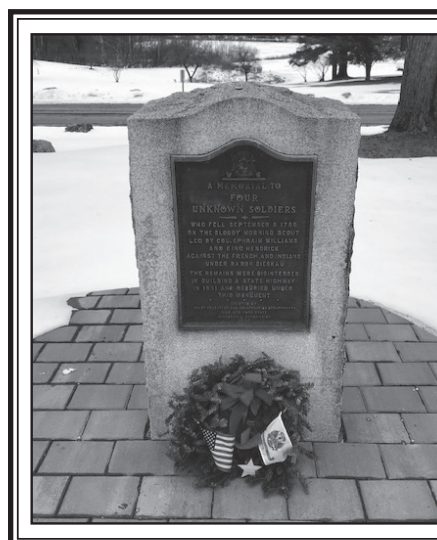


*The late David Starbuck, PhD, doing what he loved the most...working in the field.*

*Picture courtesy of the Lake George Mirror.*

David grew up in Chestertown, New York on his family’s farm that had been in the family for generations. After graduating from Chestertown Central School, he attended St. Lawrence College for two years and then completed his undergraduate degree, graduating summa cum laude, from the University of Rochester. He received his master’s degree and doctorate degree in anthropology from Yale University. He had a long academic career, and as noted above, recently retired from Plymouth State University. While he

worked in many fields in archaeology, he is best known in our area for work on the local military sites, Fort William Henry, Lake George Battlefield Park and Rogers Island, from the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. He published numerous books about his work that are likely on many of our bookshelves. But most important to his legacy are the many field schools he held that brought numerous students under the spell of archaeology. He was a generous teacher to all of us and will be greatly missed. ■



### BURIAL MONUMENT FOR UNKNOWN SOLDIERS DECORATED WITH “WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA” WREATH

*Each year thousands of military graves in cemeteries throughout the United States are decorated by a winter wreath, placed by thousands of volunteers who stop, place the wreath, and say the person’s name to ensure their service is not forgotten. For the last several years, the Alliance has participated in this program by decorating our Unknown Soldiers grave in the Park.*



*This picture shows the Lake George Park Commission building under construction after the delivery of the prefabricated first and second floors. The Visitors Interpretive Center will be on the ground floor, with doors (as shown) opening out into the park. Several members of the board have already had their first site visit and were very pleased with the space.*

## SHARE YOUR INTEREST WITH US... WRITE AN ARTICLE!

By Lyn Karig Hohmann

Each time we get ready to plan a newsletter, we look for people interested in writing articles. Sometimes it is a scramble! In anticipation of our next newsletter, I would like to invite our members and their friends to write something for us. If that task seems overwhelming, relax! With the Internet search capabilities and many wonderful resources stored on line, one can undertake to answer many questions from your desk! You will likely find other leads to information that may require a trip to a library. Is there something about the park that you find interesting and want to know more about? Likely others do also. If you write it up, we can help you prepare it for publication.

There are some simple rules for your research:

- Use original resources as much as possible.
- If you find secondary resources, remember they are likely someone's interpretation of the original resource. Find their reference and search it out yourself.
- Not everything on the Internet is true! Keep that veritable grain of salt with you when you do research!
- You are allowed to interpret the original resources yourself, but always ask yourself if what you think fits the facts.



## Fort George: As described, 1777

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Fort could not stand a Siege, being commanded, & too confined to be soon reduced by Bombardment. The Rebels before they abandon'd it had endeavour'd to destroy the defences and actually blew up the Magazine on the side near the Water, which demolish'd that Face."

(Chronicles of Lake George, Russell P. Bellico, 1st Ed., p. 185)

Even today, one can see that the fort would have been difficult to defend based upon its location and structure and would have to agree with Schuyler. The one part of the story that remains confusing is the water supply to the fort. The attached cropped plan of the fort shows a cistern (arrow) and, as noted in the caption, the diary of Lieutenant Enys, refers to a well. Excavations in the area of the supposed cistern did not reveal such a structure. Also, there is no evidence of a well within the fort itself. Further research may clarify this confusion. ■

## PLEASE NOTE:

At this time, due to COVID-19, we do not know if "I Love My Park Day," usually in early May, will still be scheduled or if we will be able to hold our community Memorial Day event. We will advise the membership by email when we receive further information.



The Fort Plain Museum and Historical Park proudly presents **Sir William Johnson and the Wars for Empire Conference**. This new conference will be held on October 15-17, 2021 and will consist of 9 speakers and a bus tour. David L. Preston, an award-winning historian of American military history and author of *Braddock's Defeat: The Battle of the Monongahela and the Road to Revolution* is the conference's Head of Faculty.

**Conference topics include:**

- **David L. Preston** – “William Johnson's Shaping of the Operational Environment in 1755”
- **Darren Bonaparte** – “Wampum: Sir William Johnson and the Haudenosaunee”
- **John Grenier** – “Robert Rogers and Sir William Johnson: A Complicated Relationship”
- **Ben Hughes** – “The Siege of Fort William Henry A Year on the Northeastern Frontier”
- **Michael G. Laramie** – “King William's War: The First Contest for North America, 1689–1697”
- **Jon-Eric Nelson** – “Connecticut Provincials at the Battle of Lake George”
- **Jon W. Parmenter** – “The End of an Atlantic Life: The Death of Sir William Johnson (1774) in Imperial Context”
- **Timothy J. Shannon** – “Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: A 20-Year Retrospective”
- **Glenn F. Williams** – “William Johnson and King George's War (1744-1748)”

The bus tour's theme will be the Battle of Lake George, 1755 and will include stops to Old Fort Johnson, the Lake George Battlefield Park, and other related sites.

All conference proceeds support museum exhibits, historic preservation and educational programs.

Please visit <https://fortplainmuseum.org/> for more information and updates. Please contact the museum at [info@fortplainmuseum.org](mailto:info@fortplainmuseum.org) with your questions.

## Courtland Street Rescue Archaeological Dig and Reburial

In early February 2019, the mechanical excavation for a new triplex revealed more than sand and stones. A great number of bones appeared in the removed dirt and evidence of grave shafts appeared in the wall of the excavated area. Work halted until authorities could examine the site. As noted in the Summer 2020 Post, one individual was identified as belonging to the First Battalion Pennsylvania troops that were in the area in 1776, allowing the identification of this site as a cemetery related to the Army Hospital for the Northern Campaign in that year. Charles Vandrei from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and Lisa Anderson from the NYS Museum became involved early in the rescue exercise and directed the over 100 volunteers who sifted tons of sand from February 2019 till November 2020 to respectfully collect the remains. The collected remains of over 40 individuals were found and are now undergoing

study at the New York State Museum. A full report on the rescue work can be found in *The Bulletin - Journal of the New York State Archaeological Association*, Number 134, 2020, pages 40 – 48.

When the cemetery was first identified, the Alliance petitioned the Town of Lake George and the Village of Lake George to ensure that these Patriots received a respectful reburial, unlike many remains that are stored in boxes in various museums. Our resolution was passed by both the Town and Village. The Courtland Street Reinternment Committee is currently working on plans for the reburial in May 2023. The location will be in LG Battlefield Park near the Unknown Soldiers. An appropriate repository is being developed as well as planning for a ceremony modeled on previous ceremonies of this type. We will keep you updated as planning progresses. ■



The pile of sand from the excavation was 25 meters long and 5 meters wide and initially started approximately where the most distance sifter is located.

## More News about the Stockaded Fort!

Yes, we are excited about the new finds related to the walls of the stockaded fort! As noted in the last Post, the outline of the fort was identified with verification based on maps and measurements from 1759, the year of its construction. (A stockaded fort was constructed in 1758, but pulled down in the fall.) The reader was referred to Russell Bellico's excellent article, *The Stockaded Forts at the Battlefield Park: 1758 and 1759 in Fort George Advice Summer 2014*. There was an additional update in the *Advice Winter 2015* regarding the bricked floor room found at the west end of the officers' barracks in the stockaded fort. Unfortunately, in neither of these articles nor the short note from the last Fort George Post

was the referenced, *Perspective View of Lake George*, shown. We are correcting that here and highlighting the area of the illustration done in 1759 that shows the stockaded fort.

Of additional interest, upon review of the field report, *Summer 2001 Excavations in the Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George)* by David Starbuck, looking for any information related to his search for the walls of the fort (presumed post holes), the following is noted (describing a trench that was dug from the corner of the northernmost barracks east): "A foundation wall was located partway down the slope, running north-south, and then the corner of a building. However, there was no clear evidence for a palisade wall."

Unfortunately, with David's passing, we were unable to ask him further details about this find which may actually represent the outer wall of the fort and the corner of the bastion in that area. We have requested access to the actual field notes that are housed at the New York State Museum to seek clarity on this find. We will update the membership when this review is completed. ■



*Need to renew and have a Friend who wants to join?*

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Yes**, I want to protect this beautiful historic site and join the Alliance.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- Sustaining Member ..... \$2,500
- Associate Member..... \$1,000
- Sponsor Member ..... \$ 500
- Paid Up for Life Member..... \$ 500
- Individual Member..... \$ 35
- Family Membership ..... \$ 50
- Student Member..... \$ 15  
(under 25 and enrolled in full time education)
- Institution Member ..... \$ 35  
(Newsletter only)
- Patron Member ..... \$ 100

Check should be made out to the Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George) Alliance and mailed to:  
Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George) Alliance: P.O. Box 26 • Lake George, NY 12845

MEMBERSHIPS ARE RENEWED APRIL 1 EACH YEAR.



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