

# The Lake George Examiner



Battle of Lake George soldiers honored at Memorial Day ceremony

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Four colonial soldiers, we don't know their names, are buried in Lake George's Battlefield Park. They died Sept. 8, 1755, as part of The Bloody Morning Scout, one of three military engagements collectively known as The Battle of Lake George. Their remains were uncovered nearly 280 years later along State Route 9 by a road-building crew and reinterred on a knoll overlooking Lake George.

Monday morning, Memorial Day, the [Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance](#), as it does each Memorial Day, hosted a Remembrance Ceremony at the Unknowns' Grave. Members of the Lake George American Legion Post 374 and the Lake George Volunteer Fire Department formed the Color Guard and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Ali Trowbridge of the Caldwell Presbyterian Church gave the invocation, and French and Indian War reenactors from Fort William Henry fired a musket salute.

Historian Dr. Bruce Venter, speaking at the ceremony, explained the importance of the Battle of Lake George and the courage of the unknown soldiers as the French and British Empires struggled to gain control of North America.



*Dr. Bruce Venter speaks at the Memorial Day Remembrance ceremony at the grave of the unknown soldiers in Battlefield Park.*

"Great Britain decided to defend its 13 colonies, and in 1755 they came up with a grand plan. A Grand Master Plan to eliminate the French." The first three prongs of the four-pronged plan, Venter explains, experienced only partial success. "General Braddock was severely defeated near the Monongahela River, and he was killed in that battle. The British sent another expedition to Nova Scotia where they captured two French forts ... The third element in the strategy was for William Shirley of Massachusetts to lead an expedition to capture Fort Niagara, but he was unsuccessful. He never got the campaign off the ground. So, the fourth, the final leg of this strategy, happened right here."

William Johnson came to Lake George with an army of 1,500 men. Only one was a British Regular, the rest were colonists — shopkeepers, farmers, artisans. Though they considered themselves Englishmen and subjects of King George II, they were Americans.

Johnson's army, traveling on the Military Road south of Lake George, was ambushed by an army of French regulars, trained soldiers, and they were sent running back to the shores of Lake George where they quickly threw up a stockade of "boats and trees and wagons overturned." From behind this line, the Americans drove the French back. They wounded and captured the French Commander General Dieskau.

"After being surprised, the Americans came back and showed grit and courage," says Venter. "Now the importance of this battle is that 20 years later, 1775 American colonists stood up to other regulars, Redcoat regulars, at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill ... They stood courageously against Redcoat regulars just as their forebearers had stood with courage against French regulars... and so that's why this battlefield is important today. That here we sowed the seeds for American courage in arms, and that courage has come down to create the United States of America and a military that we are sincerely appreciative of and proud of."

Lake George Councilwoman Marisa Muratori also spoke. "We, the current occupiers of this landscape, are encamped on the grounds of our nation's very beginnings... At Lake George, we literally walk on the graves of colonial war soldiers, unknowingly, who came to this far wilderness in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and we have later found them under roads such as these, and sidewalks and numerous places where holes have been dug." As Lake George grew throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to become a popular vacation destination, construction activity often opened these unmarked graves, and often, the actors involved failed to recognize what they had unearthed.

In 2016, the Town of Lake George was awarded an American Battlefield Protection Project grant to map military sites in the town. The [project was completed](#) two years later and shortly after, in February 2019, what Muratori calls, "an event of sheer synchronicity," occurred. An excavating crew, rehabilitating a property in Lake George Village, unearthed a Revolutionary War cemetery. "Those remains, most reverently recovered by a team of volunteers led by state archaeologists on Cortland Street in Lake George, will be interned here, near this very memorial, further establishing our extraordinary history and their extraordinary sacrifice ... Henceforth, unknown soldiers of Lake George will not be forgotten, dispensed with or unsung."



The Battlefield Park Alliance recently opened a [Visitor Interpretive Center](#) on Fort George Road, which runs through the park. At the Center, visitors may learn more about the history of the grounds and pick up a self-guided tour map to locate significant sites in the park.



*Reenactors from Fort William Henry fire a musket salute.*



*The Memorial Day ceremony included placing a wreath and flowers on the grave of the unknowns.*