

# The Lake George Examiner



## Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance envisions area as a heritage hub

August 21, 2022 by Gillian Burdett

2022 was a milestone year for the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance with the Grand Opening of the Battlefield Park Visitors Center in May. Speaking this Saturday at the Alliance's annual meeting, Alliance President John DiNuzzo said they all knew the opening of the Visitors Center would be a game changer, and it "propels us to a new level of prominence and significance."

DiNuzzo believes that Lake George, already a popular recreation destination, will become a cultural destination as well, a heritage hub that attracts heritage tourism, and Battlefield Park plays an important part in this development. According to Saratoga County Historian Lauren Roberts, who spoke at the Alliance's meeting, heritage tourists spend more per person than any other type of tourist. Roberts says that any money invested in preserving and developing historical sites will see a positive return.



*The Visitors Center, which opened in May, has expanded the Alliance's reach.*

The small organization, which for more than two decades has been supporting historical preservation and promoting education about the park's significance in American and European history, saw an increase in membership of 35 percent over the past year. As of mid-August, nearly 1,500 people have visited the new Visitors Center and 155 have joined the one-hour Battlefield Park tours that the Alliance offers each Saturday; the Alliance's mailing list is growing as more people are becoming aware of and interested in the region's history.

Other Alliance accomplishments over the past year are the installation of new signs throughout the park and the addition of Spanish and French translations to the exhibit panels in the Visitors Center. As part of a new fundraising effort, the Alliance is offering gifts to donors. Depending on donation level, donors may receive a reproduction of a historic Battle of Lake George map, an Alliance baseball cap, a copy of "Archeology in Battlefield Park" by Dr. David Starbuck, or a set of notecards depicting Fort George as it appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.



Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance offers donor premiums, which are available at the Battlefield Park Visitors Center.



This summer, the Alliance replaced the signs throughout the park that mark significant sites and events. They plan to add QR codes so that visitors may complete a self-guided tour using a smartphone.

Another major park project is in the works. The Courtland Street Reinterment Committee, made up of Lake George Town and Village officials, NY State Museum and Department of Environmental Conservation representatives, local historians and the Battlefield Park Alliance, is seeking to reinter the remains of Continental soldiers uncovered in the Village in February 2019.

Approximately 40 sets of remains were discovered during the excavation of property on Cortland Street. Archaeologists determined that the site was a Revolutionary War-era American military cemetery, and the deceased were smallpox victims who were being treated at the smallpox hospital located in what is now Battlefield Park.

The Reinterment Committee developed a plan to build a memorial and resting place for the remains. It would be on the east side of Fort George Road across from the Visitors Center, just south of the Four Unknown Soldiers monument. The plan includes a plaza, interpretive signage, landscaping, seating and several columbarium-type structures to hold the remains of the soldiers above ground. Reinterment Committee member and past Alliance President Lyn Karig Hohmann explains that they needed to preserve the remains respectfully but also needed to make them available for future research. The above-ground structures will achieve these goals. The six reinterment structures, says Hohmann, will have room for up to 100 sets of remains, allowing for the interment of the Cortland Street soldiers along with previously found remains and any that may be discovered in the future.

The plan was submitted to the state this May, and the Committee is waiting for approval. Once approved, fundraising for the \$400,000 project can begin. The Reinterment Committee hopes to break ground on the "Repose of the Fallen" site on Memorial Day 2023. Memorial Day 2024 is set as the target date for a Reinterment Ceremony. "The 2024 ceremony," says DiNuzzo, "will be the next major milestone for the park" and will "make Lake George an even more important heritage hub."