

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

SUMMER 2022

It's (Finally) Here! Battlefield Park Visitor Center Opens



It took more than a century for the idea to become a reality, but the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center is now welcoming the public to view its collection of artifacts and exhibits associated with the Park's extraordinary history.

State Department of Environmental Conservation Regional Director Joe Zaleski presided at a dedication ceremony on May 25 for the Visitor Center at 75 Fort George Road, co-located with the Lake George Park Commission's new headquarters. Lyn Karig Hohmann, immediate Past President of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, and Park Commission Chair Ken Parker also expressed their delight about the new facility in remarks to the assembled crowd.

Soon after New York State began in 1898 to acquire properties that now comprise the Battlefield Park, preservationists and regional publications first floated the idea to house a facility where the site's role in early American history could be shared. Alliance Trustee his-



photos courtesy of NYS DEC

torian Russell Bellico, who has publicly advocated for an interpretive center since the 1990s, summarized his feelings: "The Visitor Center fulfills the original 125-year-old plan for the Lake George Battlefield Park by providing the public with a rich history of the park, including the Battle of Lake George, encampments, forts, shipbuilding, and hospitals, spanning the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and the American Revolution (1775-1783)."

A new era in the preservation of the magnificent Lake George Battlefield Park has begun! ■

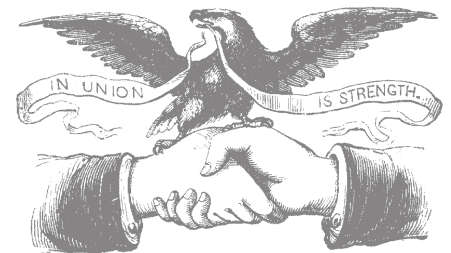
Annual Membership Meeting, Saturday, August 20

The annual membership meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will take place on Saturday, August 20, beginning at 11 AM in the Battlefield Park pavilion.

The agenda for the meeting includes the delivery of an annual report by Alliance President John DiNuzzo, and the election of Trustees and officers. The featured guest presentation will be jointly made by Warren County Historian Dr. Stan Cianfarano, an Alliance member, and Saratoga County Historian Lauren Roberts. They will share each county's plans for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

Lunch will be served at no cost to Alliance members and for a \$10 charge to nonmembers. Normal Battlefield Park vehicular entry fees will be waived for attendees by showing either their Alliance membership cards or the emailed meeting announcement distributed in late July.

Those attending the annual membership meeting are asked to **RSVP no later than August 15** to info@lakegeorgebattlefield.org. We look forward to a great turnout! ■



The Alliance supports the historic preservation, conservation, interpretation and associated maintenance, improvement and development of the Lake George Battlefield Park at Lake George, New York.



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Fort George Post is the official newsletter of the Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George) Alliance, PO Box 26, Lake George, NY 12845



President's Welcome

By John DiNuzzo

After more than 100 years of public and private discussion, the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center became a reality on May 25!

The list of those who worked to overcome the many obstacles that were faced in building and opening the new center is extensive. The Lake George Park Commission and the State Department of Environmental Conservation provided the wherewithal to make it happen. Generous institutional and individual donors stepped up to underwrite the expense of populating the Center with magnificent exhibits and the cases in which to appropriately display them. Artists and historians donated highly valued showpieces. The leadership of Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance Trustees Lyn Hohmann and Russ Bellico, and DEC's Historic Preservation Officer Chuck Vandrei in creating accurate and meaningful contents has been indispensable.

NOW, it's up to us to consistently present a memorable experience for each visitor! The results so far have been very encouraging—the number of guests we've hosted and their levels of enthusiasm have far exceeded expectations. The work of Visitor Center manager Sarah Bauer and member-volunteers Mark Silo, Peter Wuerdeman, Jane Murphy and Gary Moon has established a welcoming learning environment each day. The stage is set for the Visitor Center to be a permanent "must see" destination in the historic Lake George Region.

The Visitor Center is a game-changer for the Alliance. The Board of Trustees and I vow to further build on this milestone as part of our ongoing mission to preserve the history of Lake George Battlefield Park and promote greater awareness of its unique place in the establishment of our nation. ■



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

A DEC Day Use Area Like No Other

Every summer, thousands of people travel to Lake George to witness the natural beauty of the region. At the Lake George Battlefield Day Use Area, history blends with nature to provide an even more unique experience.

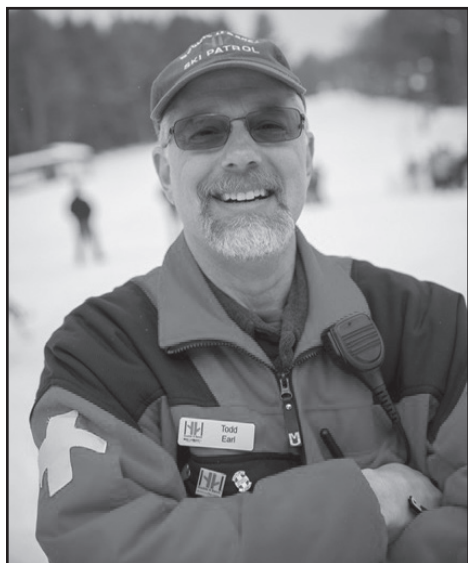
Walking the grounds of one of DEC's most historic sites, visitors journey as far back in time as 1755 to momentous periods in the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars. Statues and memorials placed throughout the day use area commemorate the many influential figures that shaped the region's history. Archaeological findings such as building foundations and various soldier campsites paint a picture of what life on Lake George was once like. Even the waters hold historic secrets hidden to the naked eye.

It can be difficult to parse through the historic record on your own, which is why DEC is thankful for our partners at the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and their newly opened visitors' interpretive center.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance has worked tirelessly since 2001 to preserve the history of Lake George through continued interpretation and education to the public. With their help, the battlefield has been added to the National Register of Historic Places, the graves of four unknown soldiers have been rehabilitated, various interpretive signage has been replaced and upgraded, and visitors can now tour the day use area with the aid of a guide brochure.

At first glance, the Lake George Battlefield Day Use Area may look like many other DEC destinations. It provides a beautiful lakeside vista, space to walk and enjoy nature, places to picnic, and pavilions to rent. Thanks to the work of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, visitors can look beyond the natural beauty to the history beneath.

Trustee Profile: Todd R. Earl



Chief of the Lake George Volunteer Fire Department, and a recipient of Volunteer of the Year awards from both the Lake George Land Conservancy and the Double H Ranch, a camp for children with serious illnesses. Todd is a member of the Adirondack 46ers and taught map and compass programs for the Adirondack Mountain Club for many years. A member of the National Ski Patrol and a Patrol Director for the Adaptive Winter Sports Program at Double H, he also currently serves as Vice President of the Caldwell-Lake George Library Board of Trustees and a Trustee of the Lake George High School Alumni Association.

In retirement, Todd is the Captain of the Lake George Association's Floating Classroom during the warmer months and he downhill skis as many days as he can in the winter! Todd lives in Lake George with his wife, Rosemarie, also a retired school guidance counselor and the Treasurer of the Alliance. Their daughter, Maggie, recently completed Aeronautical Engineering and MBA degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and works for the Lockheed-Martin Corporation in Syracuse. ■

Long-time Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance Trustee Todd R. Earl is a third generation resident of Lake George. He and his family have a long history of civic involvement and community volunteerism in the region.

Todd holds B.A. and M.S. Ed. degrees from SUNY Plattsburgh and spent his professional career as a high school guidance counselor in the Hudson Falls Central School system. He is a past

Recovery

By Tim Cordell



Sinking of the Radeau by Tim Cordell, courtesy of the Lake George Historical Association

It was a cold November day in the mid-1990s. I was assisting Bateaux Below, a non-profit organization that works to preserve shipwreck sites in Lake George. The objective was to recover a cannon port¹ from the radeau *Land Tortoise*². Our crew consisted of Joseph "Zarr" Zarzynski, Bob Benway, John Farrell, and myself. Zarr and Bob were in the dive boat, and John and I in the recovery vessel, a wooden bottom pontoon dinghy. The purpose of the recovery effort was to ensure that the cannon port would not be damaged or stolen by unauthorized divers. We wore insulated boots, so that the frigid lake temperature, seeping through the bottom of the boat, would not freeze our feet.

The dive began when the boats were positioned over the radeau. We brought along a specially constructed rig, featuring a large round yellow air bag attached to a flat cradle suspended from four ropes. The cannon port would be removed from the radeau and placed on the wooden cradle. The divers would then inflate the bag and the assembly would float to the surface, to be brought aboard the recovery boat. That was the plan...but things didn't exactly work out like that.

The November sun sets early, in late afternoon, over Lake George, and the light was fading when the lift bag bounced up 25 yards from our recovery

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ORGANIZATION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Besides the membership of individuals and families, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance is fortunate to include a number of businesses and institutions that support us. In this issue we pay tribute to one of our great partners in historic preservation.

Warren County Historical Society

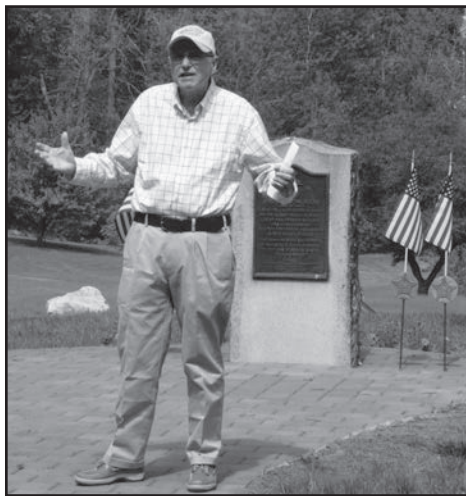
The Warren County Historical Society is located at 50 Gurney Lane, Queensbury. The organization's mission is to preserve and promote the history and heritage of Warren County, NY and its environs by supporting research and preservation efforts and encouraging public participation. The Society is a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization, chartered in 1997 by the New York State Education Department and is staffed by volunteers who work under the direction of the Executive Director. The WCHS offers a museum and exhibits, historical programs, a resource center, book and gift shop, historical and genealogical research services, archives and collections, a student internship program, and historic preservation advocacy. A major expansion is underway to create the Joseph Warren Center for History and Leadership on site. The WCHS is funded by memberships, Warren County, the Town of Queensbury, various grants, donations, and fundraisers. Open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 4pm, Fridays 10am to 4pm, and Saturdays 11am to 2pm. Call 518-743-0734 for more info. or visit the website www.wcnyhs.org or the Facebook page.

Memorial Day Remembrance of Unknown Provincial Soldiers

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance paid its annual Memorial Day tribute to the four unknown Provincial soldiers whose burial site in the Park is among our most frequently visited. The soldiers were killed in the Battle of Lake George on September 8, 1755 and reinterred here in 1935.

This year's commemoration on May 30 featured moving presentations by Pastor Ali Trowbridge of Caldwell Presbyterian Church, Bruce Venter of

the Alliance, and Lake George Town Councilwoman Marisa Muratori. A wreath-laying by the Lake George American Legion Post, a Lake George Volunteer Fire Department honor guard, and a salute using replica 18th century muskets provided by Fort William Henry Museum staff, all added to the respectful remembrance ceremony. ■



Recovery

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craft. The lake had a fairly large chop by then, and we had to maneuver a bit to be in position to grab the top ring of the bag. John guided the dinghy; my role would be to secure the bag and lift the whole assembly into the boat.

After a few tries, I still could not grab the ring, so I attempted to gather the cradle into my arms. The air bag started to rapidly deflate and began to sink. John Farrell never swore, but he did that day! He immediately moved to the front of the dinghy and we worked together to secure the bag and cradle.

When the divers surfaced, John and I gave them a thumbs up. I don't think Zarr ever knew how close we were to losing that priceless artifact! ■

Tim Cordell, an Alliance member who volunteers as co-Editor of this newsletter, is an artist living in Queensbury, NY.

¹An opening in the side of the hull of a ship, above the waterline, which allows the muzzle of artillery pieces mounted on the gun deck to fire outside

² The *Land Tortoise* was a military transport ship built for service on Lake George, New York during the French and Indian War.

Clean-up, Tours Jump-start Early Season Activities

While the energies for much of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance's spring were rightfully spent on readying and managing our new Visitor Center, several other initiatives provided opportunities for members to show their commitment to the Park.

More than 20 Alliance volunteers braved a morning chill on May 7 to assist the State Department of Environmental Conservation in cleaning the Battlefield Park after a winter (and early spring) of damaging weather. As a result, Park grounds were in pristine condition for the May 25 Visitor Center opening.

The popular free one-hour guided tours of the Battlefield Park were reinstated on May 28. These are occurring every Saturday from Memorial Day Weekend through Columbus/Indigenous Peoples Day Weekend. Tours were also added for Sunday, June 19 and Sunday, October 9 as part of the Park's participation in I LOVE NY "Path Through History" events.

Upcoming events are listed elsewhere in this edition of the **Fort George Post** and on the Alliance's website. Don't miss out! ■

New PTNY Grant Supports Visitor Center Management

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance has been awarded a \$7,500 grant by Parks & Trails New York to assist in the management of the new Park Visitor Center. Jonathan Duda, PTNY Grants Coordinator, announced the award at the Visitor Center's grand opening on May 25 and presented a ceremonial check to Alliance President John DiNuzzo.

The new grant will underwrite, along with a donation by Alliance member Lorna Hainesworth, the contracted position of Visitor Center Coordinator to ensure programs and day-to-day operations run smoothly. This is the third grant received by the Alliance in the past two years, all of which are promoting Battlefield Park awareness and operational needs.

My Favorite History

This edition of the *Fort George Post* presents a new regular feature through which Alliance members share their most memorable history experiences. The inaugural lists of favorites are furnished by *Kathy and Mark Silo of Pottersville, NY and Loudonville, NY.*



Kathy Silo

Lake George Battlefield Park

My favorite historic spot in Lake George Battlefield Park is the rebuilt wall of old Fort George. I am a person who likes visuals to explain history. As this reconstruction sits at the original site, it helps me understand why the fort was placed where it is.

Other Favorite Historic Sites:

1. **The Lorraine Motel in Memphis Tennessee**, site of the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This incredibly preserved site is entered through a very well done National Civil Rights Museum that prepares the visitor for the “room where it happened.” Even the boarding house across the street, from which the shot was fired, is preserved and open to view.
2. **George Washington’s Headquarters, Newburgh, New York**. For those of us interested in the “stuff” as well as the “story”, this is a must-see. Furniture, ephemera, office supplies – it’s still there!
3. **UDT/SEAL Museum, Fort Pierce, Florida**. This museum is located at the beach where America’s first Underwater Demolition Teams of Navy frogmen, which later became the Navy SEALs, did their training during World War II.

Favorite History Books:

1. **John Adams** by David McCullough. A very thorough study of the man, his politics, his time, and his family life.
2. **Founding Mothers** by Cokie Roberts. While even those with minor interest in history know of many famous “fathers”, so few of us know anything about their wives, mothers and sisters. Many important men had advice and behind-the-scenes support from the females in their lives.
3. **The 115th New York Infantry in the Civil War** by Mark Silo. Yeah, a dull title but a good story about a regiment recruited mostly in the Mohawk Valley and Saratoga. I will admit that I’m prejudiced, but it is a good read.

Mark Silo

Lake George Battlefield Park

My favorite historic spot in Lake George Battlefield Park is the west side of the colonial military road, and about 25 yards down the paved path, to the area of the Winifred S. LaRose monument. This spot offers as open a vista north over Lake George as is still available in the park. During the colonial era vegetation had been cleared and this view was available just about anywhere in what is now the park, but today trees obstruct the view. When I gaze over the lake from this point I let my imagination conjure some of the movements that crowded the lake during the 18th century: the huge 17,000 man army of General Abercrombie moving against Fort Carillon in 1758; the frequent excursions of Rogers’s Rangers and other scouts; Montcalm and his fleet coming to lay siege to Fort William Henry in 1757; the Henry Knox expedition in late 1775 that brought the artillery seized at Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point to Washington’s army besieging

Boston; and the fleet of boats carrying the cargo for the 1777 Burgoyne expedition while his army marched via South Bay and Wood Creek to their fate at Saratoga.

And during much of the Revolutionary War troops and supplies moved often between Fort George and Fort Ticonderoga. They would have used the Military Road near this point, utilized the dock at the foot of the road, and camped on these grounds as British and Provincial troops did throughout the French and Indian War and the Revolution.

Other Favorite Historic Sites:

1. **Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site, Illinois**. This is a faithful and very evocative reproduction of the village that Lincoln moved to when he first left his family home.
2. **Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana**. No modern development has encroached on this valley where a fleeing band of the Nez Perce tribe camped in August 1877 and were attacked as they slept by the United States Cavalry.
3. **Edmund Pettis Bridge, Selma, Alabama**. The iconic structure associated with the “Bloody Sunday” civil rights march of March 1965.

Favorite History Books:

1. **Champlain’s Dream** by David Hackett Fischer. A detailed biography of Samuel de Champlain that shows that he was much more than the discoverer of Lake Champlain and offers a primer on early Canadian history which is typically unfamiliar to Americans.
2. **One Minute to Midnight** by Michael Dobbs. A detailed telling of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The author conducted interviews with American, Russian, and Cuban individuals who were directly involved, and wrote a gripping story of the episode.
3. **Hellhound on His Trail** by Hampton Sides. Story of the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee in April 1968, and the months-long international manhunt for his assassin, James Earl Ray.

A Proposal for the Respectful Reinterment of the Courtland Street Burial Site Remains in the Lake George Battlefield State Park

By Dan Barusch

In February of 2019, during the excavation of a construction site on Courtland Street in Lake George, a series of human remains were found, both in the excavated soil and the adjacent undisturbed earth. Local officials were notified and quickly sought the assistance of a core team of archaeologists to help define and understand the findings. Following a weeklong collaborative effort among local, state and private entities, more than a dozen sets of human remains were safely and respectfully recovered from the remaining undisturbed earth, each set being carefully removed from its distinguished yet disturbed grave shafts.

For a period of two years following the initial discovery, scores of volunteers lent countless hours to assist in the proper recovery of the remains that were still within the excavated stockpile, amounting to a total of 35-40 sets of remains. Since the recovery effort's completion, staff at the New York State Museum have been carefully analyzing and cataloguing the remains, and several public presentations have been made and a scholarly journal article published on the discovery. Scientific analyses point to the location being the site of a cemetery associated with the smallpox hospital established in 1776 by the Continental Army at Fort George. These findings are considered one of modern history's most important archaeological discoveries in Lake George.

The Courtland Street Reinterment Committee was established by the Town and Village of Lake George in March 2019 to ensure a respectful reinterment of the remains found at the project site to appropriately commemorate these early American Patriots. The Committee

includes members from the governing Boards and staffs of both the Town and Village, the New York State Museum and the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, the Lake George and Warren County Historians, the Lake George Historical Association, and the Warren County Historical Society. The Committee has developed a Reinterment Proposal and Report, and has assisted with an initial design of a final resting place for the remains of these soldiers in Lake George Battlefield Park. The passion and dedication of Committee members have produced a truly reverent proposal that will pay homage to the sacrifices made by those who fought to establish an independent United States.

The proposed design includes reinterment structures for the remains, educational and interpretive signage, walking and seating plaza space, and memorial tributes. The structures will be sized to fit all remains from the Courtland Street site, as well as other remains of 18th century soldiers that may be discovered at Lake George in the future. It is expected that the construction of the project will be low-impact and will fit within the natural and historic character of the Battlefield Park.

The anticipated project cost is roughly \$400,000, which includes construction at the reburial site as well as ceremonial events to honor the deceased. It is expected that the majority of that money will be generated by fundraising efforts sponsored by the Committee, along with grants or other funding streams already being researched. The Committee is confident that the needed funds will be secured due to the importance and significance of the

project and the strong support it has already garnered. A "groundbreaking"-style event is planned for Memorial Day 2023 to formally kick off the project and bring it to the attention of the general public. The dedication of the completed reburial site is targeted as a major public event for Memorial Day 2024, to include tributes by military and civilian officials and a large ceremonial procession to honor these Patriots.

The project proposal developed by the Committee was recently submitted to the State of New York for its approval to rebury the Continental soldiers in Lake George Battlefield Park. Committee members and supporters, led by the Town and Village of Lake George, remain committed to ensuring this project is completed as respectfully and environmentally sound as possible. They fully expect that this project, including the memorial plaza and the associated reinterment structures, will become a nationally renowned heritage tourism site and inspire a groundswell of interest in the early history of the United States as the nation approaches its 250th birthday in 2026. ■

Dan Barusch has been the Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town and Village of Lake George since August 2015 when he was hired at age 25, the youngest individual to ever serve in that municipal position in the State's history. He chairs several committees as part of his duties for the Town and is responsible for most of the Town's recent success in grants, capital projects and planning studies. He is an award-winning Urban Planner and holds a Master's in Urban and Environmental Planning and a Bachelor's degree in Design Studies, both from Arizona State University.

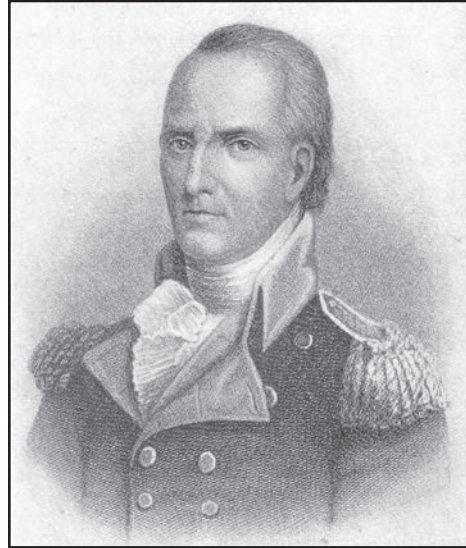
British Incursions into the Lake Valleys: Fort George 1778-1780

By Russell P. Bellico

Following the surrender of the British army under Lieutenant General John Burgoyne in 1777 at Saratoga, the Lake Champlain – Lake George – Hudson River corridor did not remain peaceful. The tranquil setting of the waterways of the region were once again engulfed in bloodshed. Raids by British troops, Tories (Loyalists), and their Native American allies devastated local communities in New York and Vermont in the ensuing years.

With the continuing threat of raids on the northern frontier, Major Generals Philip Schuyler and Horatio Gates considered a new military offensive into Canada. But plans to invade Canada were dropped by the Continental Congress on March 13, 1778. Two weeks later, it resolved “that the fortifications and works at Ticonderoga and Mount Independence be demolished.”¹ This was a reversal of their orders of December 2, 1777, which directed Gates to send an engineer to Fort Ticonderoga to reconstruct “such Parts of the Works” possible during the winter with the assistance of militia units.² There is no evidence that any American troops were engaged in either the reconstruction or demolition of the fortifications in this period.

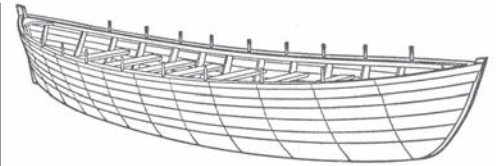
Raids against Vermont settlements in March and July revealed the urgent need for more American troops in the Northern Department. In April Schuyler advised Generals Abraham Ten Broeck and Thomas Conway, as well as George Washington, that Continental regulars and militia should be assigned to the northern forts, including Fort George. However, there is no definitive evidence that troops were stationed at Fort George in 1778. The list of garrisoned forts in 1778 submitted by the commander of the Northern Department, Brigadier General John Stark, did not include Fort George, and Colonel Seth Warner’s Vermont Continentals were listed as



John Stark, brigadier general in the Continental Army, was stationed at Albany as the commander of the Northern Department in 1778. (Travel Magazine, July 1909)

stationed at Albany, Saratoga, and Fort Edward.³ (Warner was only with his regiment for short periods of time during 1778, being listed as ill on muster rolls from November 1777 to February 1779.⁴) Private Ephraim Crocker, assigned to Fort Edward during 1778, was “employed in Scouting ... and sent to Lake George and Skenesborough [Whitehall],” but he never mentioned Fort George.⁵ (However, George Fowler, reminiscing decades later, suggested that three men from Fort Edward were sent to Fort George each day to check on the “little garrison,” but the year of this service is not clear.⁶)

Still under the belief that an American invasion of Canada was planned, the new governor of Quebec, General Frederick Haldimand, organized a pre-emptive strike into the Champlain Valley during the fall of 1778. On October 24, 1778, Major Christopher Carleton (nephew of the previous governor, Sir Guy Carleton) departed from Isle-Aux-Noix with 354 British and German troops and 100 warriors of the Canadian Seven Nations aboard



Colonial Bateau

Bateaux were used to transport the British raiding party to South Bay in 1780. (author’s collection)

a small fleet of vessels (schooners *Carleton* and *Maria*, cutter *Lee*, at least two gunboats, and bateaux) with orders “to destroy all the supplies, provisions, and animals which the rebels may have assembled on the shores of Lake Champlain, to take prisoner all the inhabitants ... to destroy all the boats ... sawmills and grist mills.”⁷ Carleton sent his raiders deep into Vermont, penetrating Otter Creek as far east as Middlebury. In three weeks his troops assaulted and burned settlements along the bays, creeks, and shores of Lake Champlain. The destruction included 47 houses, 48 barns, 103 stacks of wheat and hay, a blockhouse, sawmill, and gristmill. Forty prisoners from both sides of the lake were taken to St. Jean and later imprisoned in Quebec.

Carleton’s scouts reported that 300 American troops were in Rutland, Vermont, and 200 of Colonel Seth Warner’s troops were stationed at Fort Edward, but no troops were reported at Fort George.⁸ Some of the raiders had traveled as far south as Skenesborough. On November 18, seven Vermont soldiers and an officer, stationed in Dorset, were paid for marching to Skenesborough to transport families that had been “burnt out.”⁹

FORT GEORGE -- 1779

Assaults along the frontier continued into 1779, and American offensive operations commenced in western New York. In 1779 Fort George was garrisoned by troops from Colonel Seth Warner’s Vermont Continental regiment. The soldiers at the fort, the northernmost American garrison in the corridor, engaged in scouting forays to the north, sometimes augmented by troops stationed at Fort Edward. During the late spring, Private Ephraim Crocker,

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posted at Fort Edward, boarded one of the bateaux at Fort George with a large scouting party and reconnoitered as far north as Crown Point.¹⁰

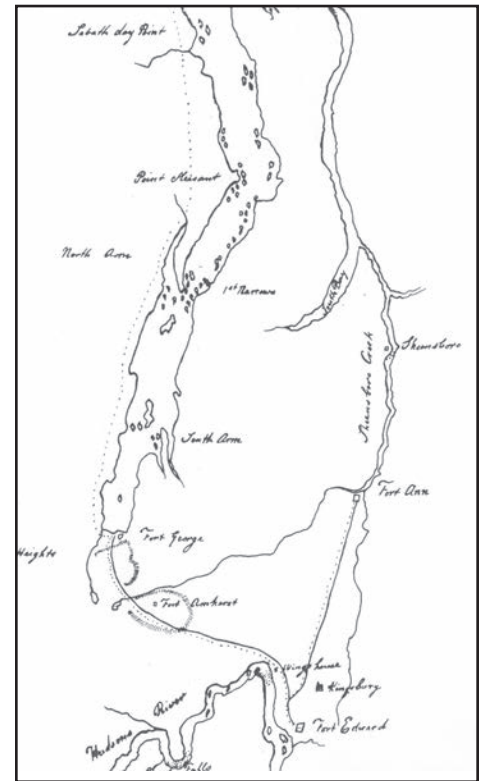
There is some question regarding possible new construction at Fort George in 1779. On May 3, William Collins, a deserter from the American ranks, informed the British that the Americans had repaired Fort George and had “built some barracks near the water side.”¹¹ In 1820 Judge James Kent (justice of the peace) wrote that in 1795 he had “lodged at a dismal old house which had been a military barrack on the shore below Fort George.”¹² Thirty years later Peletiah Richards mentioned a structure near the lake that he had observed in 1800 called “the long-house,” which had been an “old hospital of the Revolutionary War; a framed building, and was kept as a hotel by John Verner,” located “near the barracks of old Fort George at the foot of the hill and near the shore of the lake.”¹³ In 1819 the tavern was still present and ten years later, historian Jared Sparks observed “a foundation ... of a very large warehouse” from the Revolutionary War on the shore, east of West Brook.¹⁴

The most dramatic military action in 1779, involving the Fort George garrison, occurred in July on Fourteen Mile Island. Several slightly different versions were written at the time of the incident. On July 13, Major Wright Hopkins, the commander at Fort George, sent a scouting party under Lieutenant Michael Dunning to the northern end of the lake. The next day, Hopkins, accompanied by “several of his officers and soldiers, with some ladies, set sail (for their pleasure) in a boat ... to meet the scout, and return with them to the garrison”; however, after rendezvousing with Dunning’s party, they encountered a stiff wind and landed for the night on Fourteen Mile Island, sleeping under partially overturned bateaux.¹⁵ Another contemporary version (July 20) suggested that the Hopkins party “left Fort George to gather Huckleberries [blueberries] on Fourteen Mile Island.”¹⁶ A third version written from

Montreal on July 22 disclosed that the Americans had been discovered accidentally by a scouting party on foot composed of 25 Mohawks and several British white men, probably Tories. By chance, the Mohawk party stumbled on an old bateau and at daybreak made their way to the island. In this version, they supposedly called to the Americans “four times to surrender,” but an officer (Hopkins) raised “his pistol” and was killed in the ensuing onslaught.¹⁷ Nine Americans were listed as dead, including two women, but “one private who was scalped, and left for dead” survived; eight were taken prisoner, including Lieutenant Michael Dunning and “a boy 9 years old,” whose mother had been killed.¹⁸ Another woman, who “had both thighs broke[n], and a little boy shot through his leg,” were left on the island, along with another child unhurt.¹⁹ The following day a scouting party was dispatched from Fort George, but the survivors on the island were not discovered until the next morning (July 17).

Another attack near Fort George occurred in the fall of 1779, but this incident has less documentation. In this account, written decades later, Colonel Seth Warner and two officers were traveling to Fort George from Fort Edward when they were ambushed near Bloody Pond by Native Americans. The two officers were killed, but Warner escaped despite wounds to his arm and his horse being shot.²⁰

As a result of continuing raids on the frontier in western New York by Tories and warriors of the Six Nations, George Washington early in 1779 had ordered the destruction of Iroquois settlements. An expedition, led by Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General James Clinton (brother of the governor of New York), had its origin in the earlier cancelled plan for the invasion of Canada. The initial offensive in April by American troops from Fort Stanwix destroyed an Onondaga settlement, but the major component of the campaign along the Pennsylvania – western New York frontier did not end until September. Sullivan reported the destruction of 40 villages. However, the



Map drawn from John Eny's 1780 Manuscript map, showing the route of the British army. (Adirondack Museum/Syracuse University Press)

campaign did not end the Iroquois and Tory attacks; the raiders renewed their assaults the following year.

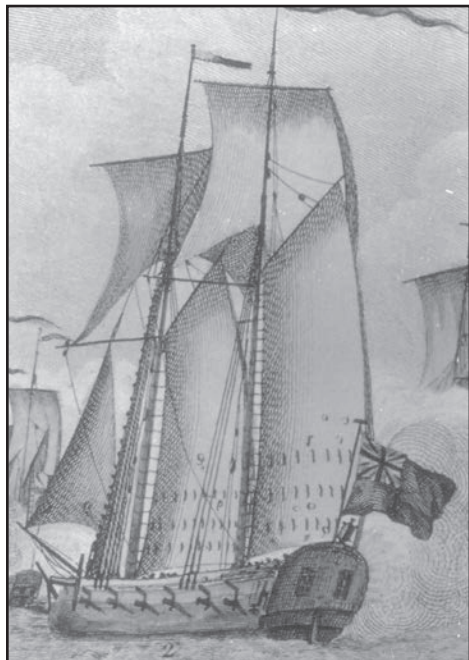
1780: FLAMES IN THE VALLEY

More aggressive British, Tory (Loyalist), and Native American raids occurred in 1780. On March 21 “a party of Indians came to Skenesborough, and burnt [Loyalist Philip] Skene’s house, barn, and store house...they burnt houses, murdered persons, and captured sixteen [inhabitants].”²¹ Sixteen-year-old Private James Rogers from Salem, New York, garrisoned in Skene’s confiscated two-story stone house, was among the Americans captured. Rogers later recalled that the “enemy consisted of one hundred and thirty Canadian Indians, two Canadian Frenchmen [serving as] officers, and a Tory.”²² He was released in a 1782 prisoner exchange.

In May 1780 Sir John Johnson (Lieutenant Colonel, King’s Royal Regiment of New York) led a raiding party of more than 500 troops, Tories, and Mohawks to the Johnstown, New York region. (Fourteen-year-old John

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The British schooner Carleton was employed in transporting troops on Lake Champlain during the 1778 and 1780 expeditions. Detail of a 1776 British engraving. (University of Vermont)

had accompanied his father William as a “volunteer” during the Battle of Lake George in 1755.) Johnson’s party “burn[ed] all the houses except those of the Tories ... about 33 houses and ... cattle were killed in the field, and 60 or 70 sheep burnt in a barn. Eleven persons were killed,” according to a newspaper account, but subsequent estimates suggest that 120 buildings were destroyed.²³ After the destruction, Johnson proceeded to Johnson Hall, the former family homestead, and “dug up his [silver] plate[s],” buried in two barrels in the basement.²⁴ Taking 27 prisoners (about half were later released), Johnson’s detachment swiftly headed back to their boats left at present-day Bulwagga Bay (Crown Point).

In response to the raid, newspapers reported that “the Governor has collected a body of militia to intercept their way to Lake Champlain.”²⁵ Reacting to intelligence, Governor George Clinton, a Brigadier General in the Continental Army (and later the vice-president of the United States from 1808 to 1812), quickly assembled troops to intercept Johnson’s retreat to Lake Champlain.

One division of Americans followed Johnson’s march from Johnstown and another, led by Clinton, moved north on the Hudson River – Lake George route. Clinton also called on Vermont militia to join in the pursuit of Johnson’s marauders. At the end of May, Clinton and his detachment reached Fort George, but insufficient bateaux on the lake hampered his movement north. Colonel Robert Van Rensselaer with more than 600 militiamen was the first to reach Crown Point but arrived “the day after” Johnson had departed, according to New York assemblyman John Taylor in a letter to Major General Philip Schuyler.²⁶

During the fall of 1780, the British launched their largest expedition against military and civilian targets in the corridor since John Burgoyne’s 1777 invasion. Embarking from St. Jean, Canada, on September 28, Major Christopher Carleton led an army composed of four British regiments with detachments of the King’s Rangers, Jaegers (German riflemen), Loyalists, and warriors of the Seven Nations, including Kahnawake, Kanehsatake, and Akwesasne. (Most of the warriors joined Carleton several days later.) The British force of nearly 1,000 men, aboard a fleet of eight vessels and 26 bateaux, landed at “West Bay” (Bulwagga Bay) at two o’clock on the morning of October 7.

At daybreak a detachment of nearly 200 rangers, Loyalists, and Iroquois, led by Captain John Munro, began marching on a route to the southwest with plans to join Sir John Johnson, who was slated to target Saratoga, Schenectady, and the Schoharie Valley. Due to a delay in the departure of Johnson’s army, the two divisions never made the connection. Munro’s party plundered and burned houses in Ballston. Munro was familiar with the region, having once been a merchant/trader in the Albany and Schenectady area. He was receptive to the raid, partially in retribution for the harsh treatment of his family and other local Loyalist families.

Meanwhile, a separate detachment consisting of Loyalists and warriors of

the Canadian Seven Nations, headed by Lieutenant Richard Houghton of the 53rd Regiment, traveled along the Onion River (Winooski River) to raid settlements nearly as far east as the Connecticut River. The assailants succeeded in burning much of Tunbridge, Randolph, and Royalton, Vermont.

Carleton’s main force, aboard bateaux and at least one gunboat, moved stealthily southward on Lake Champlain, landing on the shore of South Bay on October 9 at two in the morning. Carleton sent 100 men with a captain and two lieutenants back to Ticonderoga with all the vessels to wait for his return by a different route. A detachment of 30 men and one lieutenant was also dispatched to Ticonderoga with orders to haul two bateaux into Lake George in order to transport two small mortars (short-barrel, high-angle siege artillery) to the south end of the lake for an anticipated siege of Fort George.²⁷

Just after daylight on October 10, Carleton’s main body of troops reached the blockhouse and adjacent sawmill on Wood Creek near Fort Anne. (The original Fort Anne was constructed during Queen Anne’s War.) They arrived undetected and found the blockhouse deserted. This seems surprising given that the fort’s commander, Captain Adiel Sherwood, while dining with Colonel Henry Livingston at Fort Edward the evening before, had received a report that “some hunters ... had given him Notice” of British bateaux on the lake near South Bay.²⁸ Upon reaching Fort Anne, Carleton immediately sent a flag of truce to Sherwood who agreed to surrender “provided the British troops should take possession of it before any

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Johnson Hall. (Photo by the author)

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Savages were permitted to approach it.”²⁹

According to Lieutenant John Enys, an eyewitness serving in the British 29th Regiment, the fort was little “more than a wooden house [barracks]” surrounded with log pickets, and the garrison had only three or four days’ provisions and not more than “four Rounds of A[m]-munition” per man.³⁰ A week after the surrender, Sherwood wrote that “without the least hope of relief” and “after consulting my officers and some of my most sensible men, [I] agreed to capitulation.”³¹ Sherwood was among the 75 prisoners taken to Canada, but all of the women and children were allowed to return home. The fort was burned, and Carleton sent a detachment of rangers and Loyalists southward where they destroyed houses, barns, and mills in Kingsbury, Queensbury, Fort Edward, and Fort Miller. Schuyler later reported that the “panic that has seized the people is incredible,” perhaps made worse by inaccurate newspaper accounts that reported that British artillery had breached the log walls of Fort Anne with “every shot” until “two thirds” of the men were killed and that all the “women and children [had been taken] prisoners.”³²

Although the commander of Fort Edward, Colonel Henry Livingston, had received information on October 9 that British forces were near Fort Anne and another communication the next day that the fort’s garrison had surrendered, he did not send a message to the officer in charge of Fort George, Captain John Chipman from Salisbury, Connecticut, in Colonel Seth Warner’s Continental Regiment. Captain Chipman later maintained that he “was totally in the Dark with respect to the Enemy’s Incursion” at Fort Anne and the destruction in the communities to the south.³³ However, Chipman had prior information from his scouts, who had observed “two Sail of the Enemy’s Vessels at Anchor at Crown Point”; as a result he had dispatched another reconnaissance party in a bateau to the northern end of Lake George, where they scrutinized the British detachment

with mortars loaded on two bateaux.³⁴ Finding their retreat cut off on the lake, the American scouting party escaped overland, but could not reach the fort in time to warn the garrison.

Early on the morning of October 11, after the Loyalist and ranger detachments returned from their destruction in the south, Carleton’s reunited army began its march to Fort George. In a letter written two and a half weeks later, Colonel Seth Warner suggested that the Fort George garrison had “been two days without provisions,” which caused Captain Chipman to send “an express to Fort Edward for supplies” on October 11, but “about four miles from Fort George [the messenger] was fired upon by a party of the enemy ... about thirty or forty.”³⁵ Believing the enemy to be only “a small Party of Savages near Bloody Pond,” Chipman ordered a detachment of 48 men under Caption Thomas Sill from Hartland, Connecticut, to investigate the report “keeping sufficient advanced and flank Guards ... to prevent being surrounded,” but return to the fort if “you find a large Party ... except [if] they be Savages only ... immediately attack.”³⁶ Sill “unfortunately t[oo]k a Rout[e] different from his Orders,” according to Chipman, and the American detachment “passed the Enemy .. and on his Return [to the fort] fell upon their Rear ... [and was] surrounded.”³⁷

Lieutenant Enys provided some details of the engagement from the British perspective: an advance party had observed Sill’s detachment leave the fort, prompting the warriors of the Canadian Seven Nations to drop their packs and pursue them. Initially, the warriors were unsuccessful, but shortly thereafter, a British “flanking party” discovered them, whereupon the warriors “supported by a party of royalists and fifty Men of the 34th Regt ... surrounded and defeated” the Americans.³⁸ Sill’s men were vanquished in a brief, but bloody engagement, leaving 27 American dead (sources range from 18 to 27 killed) and 8 captured; 13 fled into the wilderness; the British loss was only two killed.³⁹

Following the battle, the British



The sawmill and blockhouse on Wood Creek, observed by the British raiders in 1780, which they subsequently destroyed. (National Archives of Canada)

forces regrouped on cleared land on the former site of Fort Gage, where Carleton could observe Fort George for the first time. The garrison at the fort could see the British on the hill and fired the fort’s six-pound cannon three times, but to no effect.

Carleton sent a flag of truce to the fort, offering Chipman agreeable terms of capitulation, similar to those accepted by the garrison at Fort Anne. With a depleted garrison and little ammunition, Chipman agreed to the articles of capitulation: the Americans would surrender as prisoners of war, no one in the fort would be killed, no warriors would enter the fort until the British troops took possession, and the women and children, as well as one ensign and his young family, would be permitted to return home.⁴⁰

Following the surrender, Lieutenant Enys described Fort George as “Stone with a thick earth parapet [on top of the rampart] and good Bomb proofs [casemates] for the Garrison,” but the walls had been burned and were in bad shape; only one of the two six-pound cannons was mounted with “but 16 or 18 Ro[un]ds” for it and only “a few rounds for their Small arms, with not more than 3 or 4 days’ provisions.”⁴¹

Carleton ordered his men to raise all the fort’s bateaux, which had been sunk in the shallow water along the shore to keep the seams from leaking. The next morning, the bateaux were loaded with supplies, the wounded, and family members who had accompanied

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Carleton's army. Lieutenant Robert McFarlane arrived in the morning with his detachment aboard the two bateaux carrying the siege mortars; the two captured six-pound cannons from the fort were placed aboard the bateaux for the return trip. As the fort burned, the rest of the army and "about forty" prisoners from Fort George, who were forced to carry the packs containing the warriors' plunder, marched north along a rough trail on the west side of the lake called "Rogers's Road."⁴² Chipman was the only captive transported from Fort George to Ticonderoga aboard a bateau. He was paroled in October with the promise of a future exchange of a British prisoner.

In the meantime, several hundred militiamen from eastern New York marched to Fort Edward, then to Fort George, only to find the fort burned. Private Austin Wells, a 39-year-old American militiaman from Cambridge, New York, arrived at the site of the battle to "bury the dead" and discovered "twenty-two slaughtered and mangled men. All had their skulls knocked in, their throats cut and their scalps taken."⁴³ Recognizing the bodies of two friends, one militia officer "cried like a child."⁴⁴ Wells concluded that much of the fighting had occurred "with clubbed muskets" because he observed "fragments of these, split and shivered ... laying around with the bodies."⁴⁵ He also saw the body of the Black drummer, who had been scalped and exhibited six to eight spear wounds in his back and his hands tied. At the fort, Wells noticed the six-pound cannon on a half-burned platform, but Lieutenant Enys later wrote that Carleton's men had loaded the cannon on a bateau.

Private George Fowler, also from Cambridge, viewed "the beams and other timbers of the fort ... still burning when we arrived" and had seen 12 men "scalped and shockingly mangled. ... [a] most horrid sight," which turned him "faint and sick."⁴⁶ Similarly, militiaman John Nielson from Saratoga recounted that he had "helped to bury the men that w[ere] mas[s]acred at Gates hil[l]," who had been "tom[a]-

hawked and scalped."⁴⁷ The location of the engagement has most often been associated with Bloody Pond or "between Bloody Pond and Gages Hill," but when eyewitness Enys revisited the area in 1787, he only noted passing "a small Pond to the left of our Road called the Bloody Pond, on account of Some action... near it in the french war."⁴⁸

A controversy arose over a scalping soon after the incident. Although Carleton denied the story that one of Sill's men "had been Scalped" alive, Lieutenant Enys, as well as several American officers, corroborated the account.⁴⁹ The man, who also suffered a broken arm from a musket ball and three deep tomahawk gashes to the back of his head, later died aboard one of the British vessels on Lake Champlain. He had deserted the British army several years earlier and had joined the American side.

The engagement resulted in the most deaths and casualties incurred during the Carleton and Munro raids. Writing to George Washington on October 30, 1780, Colonel Seth Warner blamed Colonel Livingston at Fort Edward for the disaster because he had "received information of the presence of the enemy. Had he given this information to Capt. Chipman he would not have sent out the detachment from the fort and might have saved it."⁵⁰

On October 15, Carleton's army, after traveling along the west side of Lake George, reunited with the troops aboard the bateaux at Ticonderoga. They moved to Crown Point the next day and, on the 18th, sailed about ten miles north, anchoring in "Mill Bay" (present-day Cole Bay). On the same day, many of the Seven Nations warriors and Loyalists departed for Canada. On October 24, the British fleet returned to Bulwagga Bay to pick up Munro's detachment, following their destructive raid on Ballston, where they had burned "eight or ten houses, and carried off about 30 prisoners," according to a newspaper report.⁵¹ Due to negotiations between the British and Ethan Allen, Carleton was ordered to remain on Lake Champlain and did not depart for Canada until November 12.

In October Sir John Johnson's army of nearly 900 men, consisting of Loyalists, regulars, rangers, and members of the Six Nations (Iroquois Confederation), including Mohawk, Cayuga, and Tuscarora warriors, pushed into the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, leaving a path of devastation in its wake. On October 19, Johnson defeated American troops at Stone Arabia (north of the Mohawk River and west of Johnstown). On the morning of October 19, Colonel John Brown, who had led the raids against British-held Ticonderoga and Diamond Island in 1777, was killed leading his detachment from Fort Paris (one of two American forts at Stone Arabia). Thirty men from his detachment were also killed, and Brown's "scalp was entirely removed," and "he was stripped of all his clothing," except his shirt.⁵²

In the meantime, American militiamen under newly-promoted Brigadier General Robert Van Rensselaer were not far away. Governor George Clinton (Brigadier General, Continental Army) departed from Albany to join the pursuit of Johnson's army, taking charge of the operation on October 21. By then the American force amounted to approximately 1,500 troops. The Americans were involved in two battles (Stone Arabia and Klock's Field) and several skirmishes but were unable to stop Johnson's army. Clinton ordered the destruction of Johnson's bateaux at Lake Onondaga; however, on October 25, the British force found the vessels intact and escaped, returning to Oswego the next day.⁵³

On October 26, 1780, Clinton informed Major General Philip Schuyler that "the pursuit of Sir John" had not been a "complete success," but did result in "about 40 prisoners, and the enemy ha[d] lost their luggage and artillery."⁵⁴ Newspapers reported that American forces had recovered "nearly all the prisoners" taken by Johnson and captured "about 40 of the enemy," but a more detailed analysis found that Johnson returned to Canada with 64 prisoners.⁵⁵ The American "Return of Ordnance and Stores," abandoned by

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Johnson's army was not very impressive – a three-pound brass cannon (spiked/damaged), along with 43 cannonballs, 10 canister shot, and assorted implements.⁵⁶ In the end, Johnson had inflicted significant damage and escaped capture. Estimates of the total damage caused by the 1780 British raids range as high as 700 buildings and barns burned and 330 people killed or captured.⁵⁷

On November 12, 1780, George Washington informed Colonel Seth Warner that his Continental Regiment would be dissolved on January 1, 1781. Although his regiment's performance at Fort George would appear to be the reason for the action, other factors may have been involved, including the illicit sale of military supplies by his regimental paymaster, the controversy over Ethan Allen's dealings between Vermont and the British, and Warner's failing health.

By the end of 1780 there were no American troops garrisoned north of Saratoga. Fort George was never garrisoned again, and thereafter Fort Edward was not occupied by troops on a consistent basis. ■

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¹ Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), Volume 10, 1778 January 1-May 1, 287.

² *Ibid.*, 987; see also 863.

³ Don R. Gerlach, *Proud Patriot---Philip Schuyler and The War of Independence, 1775-1783* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 351; Caleb Stark, *Memoir and Official Correspondence of Gen. John Stark* (Concord, NH: Edson C. Eastman, 1877), 217, see also 153, 161.

⁴ James E. Petersen, *Seth Warner* (Middlebury, VT: Dunmore House, 2001), 157, 159; Daniel Chipman, *Memoir of Colonel Seth Warner* (Middlebury, VT: I.W. Clark, 1848), 74-75.

⁵ William H. Hill, *Old Fort Edward Before 1800* (1929; reprint ed., Mililani, HI: The Sleeper Co., 1994), 345.

⁶ Winston Adler, ed., *Their Own Voices: Oral Accounts of Early Settlers in Washington County, New York* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1983), 99.

⁷ Ida H. Washington and Paul A. Washington, *Carleton's Raid* (Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1977), vii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, "Carleton's Journal," 88, see also 85.

⁹ John Ellsworth Goodrich, ed. and comp., *The State of Vermont: Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1783* (Rutland, VT: The Tuttle Co., 1904), 797.

¹⁰ Hill, *Old Fort Edward*, 345.

¹¹ B.F. DeCosta, *Notes on the History of Fort George During the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods* (New York: J. Sabin & Sons, 1871), "Additions," 3.

¹² George P. Fisher, *Life of Benjamin Silliman* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1866), Volume 1, 293.

¹³ A.M. Holden, *A History of the Town of Queensbury* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1874), 48.

¹⁴ Jared Sparks, "Plans & Descriptions of Gates's Camp, Ticonderoga, Crown Point, St. Johns and Other Places," 1830, MS 128, 3a, 4, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; For more information on Sparks' observations, see Russell P. Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George, and Hudson River Corridor* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2010), 268-75.

¹⁵ *Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer*, 3 August 1779.

¹⁶ Goodrich, *Rolls of Soldiers*, 836; DeCosta, *Fort George*, "Additions," 5; See also Adler, *Their Own Voices*, 95.

¹⁷ DeCosta, *Fort George*, "Additions," 4.

¹⁸ DeCosta, *Fort George*, "Additions," 4-5; *Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer*, 3 August 1779; Goodrich, *Rolls of Soldiers*, 836, see also 107-111; Adler, *Their Own Voices*, 95-96.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Peterson, *Seth Warner*, 153-54; Another source states that the incident occurred in 1780. Charles A. Jellison, *Ethan Allen, Frontier Rebel* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 266.

²¹ *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 21 April 1780; Hill, *Old Fort Edward*, 333; "The Invasion of Northern New York 1780," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum* 7 (July 1946): 4.

²² Adler, *Their Own Voices*, 93; Although Rogers did not mention Andrew P. Skene (son of Philip), Andrew was reportedly part of the raiding party. Doris Begor Morton, *Philip Skene of Skenesborough* (2nd ed. Granville, NY: Ms. Cellaneous Enterprises, 1995), 30, 71.

²³ *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 16 June 1780; Gavin K Watt, *The Burning of the Valleys: Daring Raids from Canada Against the New York Frontier in the Fall of 1780* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 79.

²⁴ *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 16 June 1780; Holden, *History of Queensbury*, 475.

²⁵ *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 16 June 1780.

²⁶ Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 80; See also Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 418; Holden, *History of Queensbury*, 475; Archibald M. Howe, *Colonel John Brown* (Boston: W.B. Clarke Company, 1908), 16.

²⁷ Elizabeth Cometti, ed., *The American Journals of Lt. John Enys* (Syracuse, NY: The Syracuse University Press, 1976), 40; Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 98.

²⁸ Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 44; Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 100; Hill, *Old Fort Edward*, 337.

²⁹ Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; See also Adler, *Their Own Voices*, 101; Sherwood suggested that the men had ten rounds each. Franklin B. Hough, *The Northern Invasion of October 1780*; (New York: Frank B. Hough, 1866), 100.

³¹ Hough, *Northern Invasion*, 100.

³² *Ibid.*, 124; *Connecticut Gazette and Universal Intelligencer*, 31 October 1780; *Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer*, 24 October 1780. The story also appeared in New York newspapers. Subsequent newspaper accounts were more accurate. *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 6 November 1780.

³³ DeCosta, *Fort George*, 50.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Chipman, *Memoir of Seth Warner*, 76.

³⁶ DeCosta, *Fort George*, 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 45.

³⁹ The numbers vary. Cometti, *Journal of Enys*, 51; DeCosta, *Fort George*, 53; Chipman, *Memoir of Seth Warner*, 77; Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 104; Half of the men killed were from Connecticut. Clifford Mullen, "The Battle of Lake George 11 October 1780," *Fort George Advice* (Fall 2006): 7.

⁴⁰ DeCosta, *Fort George*, 52.

⁴¹ Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 46-47.

⁴² Hough, *Northern Invasion*, 100; Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 47.

⁴³ Adler, *Their Own Voices*, 101.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴⁷ *Analysis of Military Campaigns Associated with Fort George and Environs* (Rensselaer, NY: Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., 2018), *Resource Inventory Form*, Volume 2, 3.

⁴⁸ Hough, *Northern Invasion*, 122; Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 178.

⁴⁹ Cometti, *Journals of Enys*, 45; DeCosta, *Fort George*, 53; Although Private Thomas Latham was believed to be the scalping victim who later died, Latham was recorded as receiving payment for his services in 1781. Goodrich, *Rolls of Soldiers*, 674, 679.

⁵⁰ Chipman, *Memoir of Seth Warner*, 77

⁵¹ *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 6 November 1780; See also Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County* (1878; reprint ed., Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1979), 71.

⁵² Howe, *Colonel John Brown*, 17-18.

⁵³ Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 218-23, 230-33, 236, 238.

⁵⁴ Hough, *Northern Invasion*, 125; *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 6 November 1780.

⁵⁵ *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 14 November 1780; Watt, *Burning of the Valleys*, 238, see also 357-58.

⁵⁶ Hough, *Northern Invasion*, 121; *Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 14 November 1780.

⁵⁷ Don R. Gerlach, "The British Invasion of 1780 and 'A Character ... Debased Beyond Description,'" *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum* 14 (Summer 1984): 311.

Blood and Chocolate: Half-Way Brook's Little Known Story—Part II

By Bruce M. Venter

The dramatic “massacre” at Fort William Henry on August 10, 1757, has been told in 18th century newspaper accounts, witness diaries, by historians, movie makers and, of course, the famed novelist, James Fenimore Cooper. Occurring a year later, the Half-Way Brook massacre has been overshadowed by the carnage at Lake George. But the events of July 28, 1758 were every bit as horrendous, bloody and gut-wrenching. This story, however, has been largely overlooked by commentators who have dwelled on the more famous slaughter at the southern shore of the lake.

The gruesome casualties sustained near Half-Way Brook by a wagon train making its way from Fort Edward to Lake George in the summer of 1758 rival, perhaps even exceed, numbers tallied for Fort William Henry. In fact, the murders and atrocities committed in 1758 demonstrate a need to raise awareness of this incident.¹ It was here that today's serene, babbling brook skirting Hovey Pond Park earned the nickname from Maj. Robert Rogers: Bloody Brook.

Military events started early at Half-Way Brook in 1758. A large contingent of Rogers' Rangers and volunteers camped along the stream on March 10. They were on their way to a stunning defeat at the hands of French partisans and their Indian allies along Trout Brook not far from Fort Carillon [Ticonderoga]. Although Robert Rogers would gain enduring fame for his faux escape by “sliding” down “Rogers' Rock,” his “every man for himself” tactic left many of his rangers dead and scalped on the battlefield.

The following June, George Viscount Howe, second in command of British Maj. Gen. James Abercromby's 15,000 man army, would also camp on the south bank of Half-Way Brook. Abercromby had been tasked with eliminating the French from Forts Carillon and St.

Frederic [Crown Point]. Howe's 3,000-man advance force lingered two days at the brook, then advanced to Lake George. It would be Lord Howe's last look at the creek. He would be killed in the initial fighting at Ticonderoga. His body would later cross Half-Way Brook in a wagon escorted by Maj. Philip Schuyler on its way to burial in Albany. Abercromby's army would be soundly defeated on July 8 by Marquis de Montcalm and retreat back to the southern shore of Lake George.²

Montcalm failed to follow up his stunning victory over Abercromby's devastated army for good reasons, despite the urging of Canada's governor, Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil.³ Montcalm did not, however, let English soldiers off scot-free. The French army commander decided to launch several raids, using Canadian and Indian reinforcements, to keep his enemy off balance. This strategy kept the French forts on Lake Champlain safe for another year. Two of these raids would hit the military road between Fort Edward and Lake George near Half-Way Brook with devastating effect.

Less than two weeks after Abercromby's Fort Carillon debacle, some 500 Canadians and Indians under Captain Jacques-Francois Courtemanche ambushed a small Provincial column returning to Fort Edward after escorting a wagon train to Lake George. Courtemanche's orders were “to annoy and intercept the English [supply] trains.”⁴

On July 20, a “pritty (sic) warm” day, the French captain missed the convoy, but ended up butchering most of the returning column. One diarist reported that in the early morning hours, the French fired on the Provincials within two miles of Half-Way Brook. Another account puts the English colonists within a thousand feet of the Half-Way Brook stockade when “the Indians shouted and fired on them and killed



Original stone used for Half-Way Brook historical marker, Glen Street and Glenwood Avenue, Queensbury, NY.

eight of them [in] the first shot.” Next, the Indians flung their tomahawks at the two remaining soldiers, killing one as the other man made it to the stockade on the run. Troops from Col. Ebenezer Nichols's Massachusetts regiment stationed at the Half-Way Brook immediately responded to the musket fire by sallying out of the palisaded fort. Desultory firing lasted about an hour before Nichols's command was overwhelmed by the enemy's advantage in numbers. The Bay State men fled back to their post. The Indians decided to break off the attack, carrying their dead and wounded with them. Later, English bodies were found scalped with their throats cut.⁵

Apparently, Courtemanche thought more mayhem was necessary. A later French report blamed “the impatience of the Indians [that] prevented this detachment [from] destroying a party of 300 English which had taken refuge in a stockade inclosure (sic) lately erected to serve as a depot on the Fort Edward road.”⁶ English reports suggested a positive twist on the fighting by claiming that there was reason to believe a great number of the enemy had been killed

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by observing “the Poles cut and hew’d for Biers.” Strewn around the battle site were quantities of peas, pork and Indian meal as well as poles, packs and blankets left behind as the Canadians and Indians made their escape to South Bay on Lake Champlain.⁷

Complete casualty counts of this action are elusive, but the English lost approximately six officers, three non-coms and eight privates killed, two men wounded with seven to ten prisoners carried off to Canada. One diarist credits the Canadians and Indians with killing 18 men and murdering “some poor Women that were there.” Four more men were found scalped the day following Courtemanche’s raid. French reports claimed 24 scalps were taken, perhaps as many as 40, along with ten prisoners.⁸ Between the men killed in the initial ambush of the returning column and the Provincials who went to their rescue from the stockade, the most conservative percentage of Provincials killed in this raid far exceeded the percentage of persons killed in the Fort William Henry massacre.⁹

But the worst was yet to come at Half-Way Brook. Eight days later, a marauding force of some 400 to 500 Canadians and Indians managed to hit the *petite guerre* jackpot. Led by Luc de la Corne (or La Corne Saint-Luc), a “Colonial Captain” and one of Canada’s richest merchants, this raid would be a classic example of the type of guerilla warfare advocated by Governor Vaudreuil.¹⁰ St. Luc’s timing was perfect.

On the morning of July 28, the French ambushed a British wagon train shortly after it left the Half-Way Brook stockade on its way to Abercromby’s army at Lake George. It was a convoy of 44 carts drawn mostly by two to three yoke of oxen each, carrying flour, pork, wine, rum and chocolate among other items for the army, including the commanding general’s sheet music. The English supply train consisted of about 190 people which included teamsters, sutlers, a 40-man soldier escort and 30 women headed to the lake as nurses. St. Luc concealed his command in the thick bushes and swampy plains that

bordered the brook and the military road.¹¹ As the wagon column stretched from the Half-Way Brook blockhouse to a familiar landmark known as Blind Rock,¹² it was an easy target for St. Luc to spring his well-laid trap.

As the supply carts creaked along at a leisurely, unsuspecting pace, St. Luc executed his ambush plan perfectly. Musket fire from both sides of the military road decimated the convoy’s escort guard. Teamsters were also hit. One woman jumped from a wagon, saving herself by running back down the road to the stockade. Unidentified heroes also emerged from the slaughter. A Connecticut Provincial captain later recorded in his journal that “one little child, a girl ran back in the path like a quail, a waggoner (sic) who cut his horse’s ropes and cleared him from ye wagon rode back ye path, took her by ye hand, caught (sic) her up before him and saved her.”¹³

Meanwhile, according to an 1822 reminiscence, after getting supplies at Lake George, Israel Putnam’s Connecticut ranger company had camped the previous night “at the flats near the southern spur of the French mountain.”¹⁴ Upon hearing musket fire to the south the next day, Putnam’s men rolled up their blankets and moved out to the sound of the guns about four miles away. But they were too late to fight the French. The rangers found about 150 slaughtered oxen, the “mangled remains of the soldiers, women and teamsters” and broken up carts. The convoy’s contents had been plundered and for the most part destroyed. “A large number of boxes of chocolate which of heat of the summer sun, mingled with the pools and rivulets of blood forming a sickening and revolting spectacle,” one of Putnam’s men remembered years later.¹⁵

Putnam’s command unsuccessfully pursued the raiders, then returned to the scene of the ambush where they found a Provincial company from Fort Edward digging a trench for the dead. “The corpses of twelve females were mingled with the dead bodies of the soldiery.” The rangers continued to search the surrounding area where they found the body of a woman that had

been “exposed to the most barbarous indignities and mutilations, and fastened in an upright position to a sapling which had been bent over for the purpose,” an image seared in one ranger’s mind for nearly 65 years. Other women were found “Killed in a barbarous manner striping them naked and cutting them after a cruel manner.”¹⁶ More mutilated bodies were later found—all of them scalped. A Massachusetts Provincial told his diary that the party of civilians and soldiers near Half-Way Brook had been “prodigiously and unhumanly (sic) butchered.”¹⁷

St. Luc reported to Montcalm that his detachment took 111 scalps and 80 prisoners. He claimed to have killed all the oxen (240) and split open all the rum barrels. His casualties were one Iroquois killed and three wounded. A letter sent to the French War Department basically confirmed St. Luc’s earlier report, adding that 84 prisoners were taken which included 12 “women or girls” as well as teamsters, sutlers, traders and children. The military commander of the convoy was a lieutenant who also was taken prisoner.¹⁸

Meanwhile, besides the human toll and the material loss of valuable provisions and alcohol so dear to a soldier’s heart, the Half-Way Brook raiders apparently disappointed Abercromby’s rank and file at the lake who were expecting a payday. St. Luc’s command also made off a payroll thought to be worth some two thousand pounds sterling. A few days after the attack, the cash grabbed by the French was estimated to be 15,000 pounds sterling. Moreover, a Provincial colonel named Hart was under arrest for refusing to come to the convoy’s aid from Fort Edward.¹⁹

British reaction to the Half-Way Brook massacre was quick. As a result of the massacre, by August 1, the Half-Way Brook stockade garrison was increased to 800 men. In addition, Maj. Robert Rogers was immediately dispatched with 700 men, including Putnam’s ranger company and some regulars, to intercept the raiders. Rogers’ objective was to cut the French force off

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above South Bay on Lake Champlain by rowing north on Lake George, then hiking across the mountains to get in front of St. Luc. Rogers failed to catch the Canadians and Indians, who made it safely back to Fort Carillon despite their excessive consumption of spirits.

Ordered to return to Fort Edward by Col. William Haviland, Rogers ran into another raiding party under the Canadian partisan Captain Joseph Marin. It was a standup fight near the decaying ruins of Fort Anne before the French side gave up the fight on August 8. French casualties were staggering. Rogers' losses included the capture of the intrepid Israel Putnam who was nearly killed by Marin's Indians. Rogers, however, was happy to lead his men to Fort Edward and celebrate his victory after the two wagon train catastrophes near Half-Way Brook the previous month. "Rogers' defeat of Marin's party effectively put an end to the French attempts to dislodge Abercromby's army by incessant raiding," according to artist/historian Gary Zaboly. The British army would decamp Lake George in the fall of 1758 to spend the winter at Fort Edward.²⁰

The following year, the Half-Way Brook post would be strengthened and enlarged to accommodate the increased garrison of 800 men. It would be named Fort Amherst in honor of the new British commander-in-chief, Jeffery Amherst and situated on the north side of Half-Way Brook. The post would be augmented with "redoubts, rifle pits, earthworks, and a palisade of hewn timbers."²¹

For too long, the Fort William Henry "massacre" has dominated our perception of the brutal nature of 18th century wilderness warfare. The casualty percentages associated with the Half-Way Brook ambushes in July 1758 rival and actually exceed those determined by author Ian Steele for the Fort William Henry massacre. The first attack on July 20, shows that 90% of the English column was killed, while the relief force that sallied out from the Half-Way Brook stockade suffered at least a 13% loss in killed. The second attack by St. Luc

on July 28 resulted in 74% to 77% in deaths for the English convoy.²² In both instances, the percentages determined by Steele pale when compared with the slaughter in July 1758. In addition, both French and English primary sources allow the analysis of killed in action to be fairly accurate.²³ The conclusion, therefore, stands up that Half-Way Brook should no longer be overshadowed by the comparably less sanguine massacre at Fort William Henry, notwithstanding the books, movies and novel that have created a legendary bloodbath.

Military activities near Half-Way Brook would continue into 1759 and later during the American Revolution, but that is a story for a future issue of the *Fort George Post*. ■

A Half-Way Brook "Ripley's Believe It or Not" Story*

Rescuers dispatched to the Half-Way Brook massacre site on July 28 found a highly unusual sight. According to a reminiscence of the event, an ox was found "regularly scalped." The animal was still alive so it was driven to the British camp at Lake George. By careful nursing, the wound healed. In the fall, the ox was driven to Col. Philipus Schuyler's farm near Albany [Schuyler Flatts in Menands]. It was then shipped to England in 1759 where it became an instant "curiosity" and known as the "scalped ox." A diarist also mentioned this story claiming, St. Luc's men were "so wanton in their barbarities, that they scalped an ox."

*Holden, *Halfway Brook in History*, p. 13; Gary Zaboly, ed. *A Royal Artillery Officer with Amherst: The Journal of Captain-Lieutenant Henry Skinner, 1 May-28 July, 1759*, Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, Vol. XV, No. 5, 1993, p. 380. Philipus Schuyler was General Philip Schuyler's uncle.

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NOTES:

- ¹ Ian Steele has meticulously calculated the human cost of the British capitulation at Fort William Henry. His conclusion is that the "soldiers and civilians killed in the 'massacre at Fort William Henry' numbered at least 69 (2.8 percent), but could not possibly have exceeded 184 (7.5 percent) people." Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the "Massacre"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 144. Russell Bellico contends the number killed in the massacre could be higher because "by the end of 1757 over 300 soldiers who had survived the siege were still missing" and "this number does not include an unknown number of civilian losses." Russell P. Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George and Hudson River Corridor* (Fleishmanns, NY: The Purple Mountain Press, 2010), p. 128. Even adding 300 more lives to Steele's total, the percentage of killed at the Fort William Henry massacre would be approximately 20%.
- ² James Austin Holden, "The Half-Way Brook in History" *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association*, v. 6, 1906, p. 6-7. Holden's article was also published as a separate booklet; the pages referenced herein are from the booklet. James Holden was New York's state historian in the early 20th century.
- ³ For Montcalm's rationale see Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains*, p.167.
- ⁴ E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1858), Vol. X, p. 848.
- ⁵ F. M. Ray, ed. *The Journal of Dr. Caleb Rea* (Salem, MA, 1881), p. 34-35; "Diary of Abel Spicer" reprinted in Russell P. Bellico, *Chronicles of Lake George: Journeys in War and Peace* (Fleishmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1995), p. 104. It appears from several sources that Nichols had between 100 and 200 men at Half-Way Brook.
- ⁶ O'Callaghan, Vol. X, p. 818.
- ⁷ *Boston Evening-Post*, August 7, 1758.
- ⁸ Samuel Thompson *Diary* published in Samuel Sewall, *The History of Woburn, Middlesex County, Mass.* (Boston: Wiggan and Lunt, Publishers, 1868), p. 550-551; James Henderson's *Journal* published in *The First Half Century of the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1893-1943*, Publication No. 11 (Boston: 1944), p. 197-198; Franklin B. Hough, trans. and ed., *Pierre Pouchot, Memoir Upon the Late War in North America between the French and English, 1755=1760* (Roxbury, MA: W. Elliott Woodward, 1866), Vol. I, p. 122-123.
- ⁹ Twenty-four scalps reported taken from an estimated force of 210 would yield a casualty rate of 11.4% versus Steele's calculation of 2.8% to 7.4%, albeit the whole numbers at Fort William Henry were greater.
- ¹⁰ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. In the small world of the 18th century, St. Luc would also command British general John Burgoyne's Native Allies contingent during the 1777 campaign to capture Albany.

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- ¹¹ Holton, Half-Way Brook in History, p. 12. Swampy areas can still be seen in the area around Route 9 and Quaker Road. See also a Boston newspaper account reprinted in Arman Francis Lucier, French and Indian War Notices Abstracted from Colonial Newspapers, (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc. 2007), vol. 3, p. 128-129.
- ¹² Blind Rock is marked today by a New York State historic marker at the corner of Route 9 and Montray Road across from the Walmart in Queensbury. Several diarists claim the attack took place between Fort Edward and Half-Way Brook, but the account used here, albeit a reminiscence, is from a Connecticut ranger who claimed to be on the scene on July 28.
- ¹³ Henry Champion, The Journal of Colonel Henry Champion for Colchester to Ticonderoga, published in The Champion Genealogy: History of the Descendants of Henry Champion of Saybrook and Lyme, Connecticut by Francis Bacon Trowbridge (New Haven: 1891), p. 422.
- ¹⁴ This location was probably where the Lake George outlet stores are today.

- ¹⁵ Holton, Half-Way Brook in History, p. 12.
- ¹⁶ James Henderson's Journal, p. 198-199.
- ¹⁷ Holton, Half-Way Brook in History, p. 13. Joseph Nichols Diary quoted in Fred Anderson, A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers & Society in the Seven Years' War (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984) p. 204.
- ¹⁸ O'Callaghan, Vol. X, p. 850, 818.
- ¹⁹ Anderson, p. 204; Dr. Caleb Rea Journal, p. 41.
- ²⁰ Timothy J. Todish and Gary S. Zaboly, The Annotated and Illustrated Journals of Major Robert Rogers (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2002) p. 130-147.
- ²¹ A. W. Holden, History of the Town of Queensbury, New York (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1874) p. 302.
- ²² Todish and Zaboly, p.130. Rogers claimed in his journal that 116 people were killed on July 28.
- ²³ St. Luc reported taking 111 scalps; Rogers said there were 116 killed.



UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 20, 2022 – 11:00 AM
Annual membership meeting and election of Trustees and Officers

OCTOBER 8, 2022 – 11:00 AM*
I LOVE NY "Path through History" guided tour of Battlefield Park

OCTOBER 9, 2022 – 1:00 PM*
I LOVE NY "Path through History" guided tour of Battlefield Park

**Guided tours of the Battlefield Park are also being conducted each Saturday through October 8, beginning at 11 AM.*



Need to renew or 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
- Patron Member \$ 100
- Family Membership \$ 50
- Institution Member \$ 35
(Newsletter only)
- Individual Member..... \$ 35
- Student Member \$ 15
(under 25 and enrolled in full-time education)

Check should be made out to the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and mailed to:

**Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance
P.O. Box 26
Lake George, NY 12845**

MEMBERSHIPS ARE RENEWED APRIL 1 EACH YEAR.