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DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES

Established 1880

Lake George's Battlefield Park Visitor Center Opens for Season

By Mirror Staff

For more than 25 years, historian Russ Bellico and the leaders of the Lake George Battlefield Alliance, including the late archaeologist David Starbuck, argued that grounds as historically rich and as hallowed as the head of Lake George deserve a visitors' interpretive center.

They, along with the rest of us, residents and visitors alike, now have one.

Last summer, a ceremonial ribbon was cut, formally opening a

new Environmental Conservation Department facility in Lake George, one housing both the headquarters of the Lake George Park Commission and a Battlefield Park Visitor Center.

Speaking at the Visitor Center in August, Russ Bellico said, "Our goal is to rekindle the interest in Fort George and in the site of the 1755 Battle of Lake George that was once ubiquitous. Throughout the 19th century, this site was a stop on the Great Northern Tour, which drew visitors from as far away as Great Britain to explore the scenes of

the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Even Teddy Roosevelt played among the Fort George ruins as a child.”

In recent years, too many people have known of Fort George “only as a picnic area,” said Bellico.

Visitor Center Open to Public Weekends

The Visitors Center “which attracted an unexpectedly large number of guests during its inaugural season,” according to Alliance president John DiNuzzo, reopens May 26 and will be open Friday through Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm and on Monday, May 29 for the Memorial Day holiday. After July 4, the Visitor Center will be open five days a week.

The Visitor Center’s exhibits include a wide array of artifacts uncovered by archaeological digs in the Park, on loan from the New York State Museum.

According to John DiNuzzo, the center also features especially created models that illustrate the sloops, bateaux and radeaux that were rowed or sailed by British and American soldiers here, as well as the forts themselves. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, wrecks of the British-built boats – some of which were deliberately scuttled in 1758 to protect them



The Battle of Lake George Monument, portraying King Hendrick and William Johnson, erected in the park in 1903.

from the French – were occasionally found and dismembered by scavengers, who sold the fragments as souvenirs. Some of these are on display as well.

Dr. Bruce Venter, the author of “The Battle of Hubbardton: The Rear

Guard Action that Saved America” who serves on the board of trustees of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance says one artifact on display is a compass that might possibly have belonged to British Major Christopher Carleton, whose raiders seized the fort in 1780.

Also on display: a mannequin dressed in the uniform of the Continental Army's First Pennsylvania Battalion.

The remains of men who served with that battalion were among those unearthed at a construction site in Lake George Village in February, 2019. The identification was made with the help of buttons from a uniform in which the soldier was buried.

In the summer of 1776, Fort George became a hospital, converted to care for colonial troops who had contracted smallpox during the unsuccessful siege of Quebec. By August of that year, roughly 2,000 patients were being treated at the new hospital, with twenty to thirty dying every day. The graves discovered in Lake George Village are among the hundreds dug to bury those who died from smallpox and other diseases at the hospital.

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation is expected to authorize the burial of the remains in Fort George Park, officials say. According to the Albany Times Union, US Senator Chuck Schumer announced May 22 that he has written to U.S. Army Secretary Christine E. Wormuth

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asking for the Army's financial and other support for the burial of the soldiers.

New Exhibits for 2023

Several new exhibits have been planned for 2023, according to John DiNuzzo. They include: sections of a 1758 British bateau on loan from the New York State Museum; a replica of a cannon used by British forces during 18th century military engagements, on loan Fort William Henry; and a diorama depicting Abercromby's 16,000-troop flotilla that departed the head of Lake George in 1758 for Carillon, which has been donated by Adirondack Experience, formerly known as the Adirondack Museum.

According to DiNuzzo, the State Museum has also agreed to loan artifacts of the Indigenous peoples

uncovered at the Battlefield Park during archaeological investigations led by the late Dr. David Starbuck.

The new displays, some of which won't be ready until later in the summer, will help the Visitors Center "tell the stories of all the peoples who lived, fought and died in this park, which has always been our goal," said Lyn Karig Hohmann, a Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance Trustee who heads the organization's Curation Committee.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center is located at 75 Fort George Road, on the lower level of the Lake George Park Commission's headquarters. Its free, 1-hour tours of Fort George and Battlefield Park will resume May 27 and take place every Saturday at 11 am.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will also be resuming its free 1-hour guided tours of the Park's history, each Saturday at 11 am beginning May 27.