

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 2023

Programs Boost Early Battlefield Park Alliance '23 Season

Building on a transformative 2022 season, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance kicked off 2023 with a series of highly successful programs that drew impressive crowds of organization members and the general public.

Alliance member **Michael Barrett**, a Trustee of the Albany Rural Cemetery, enthralled an audience of 110 members and guests at the Fort William Henry Conference Center on April 22 with his account of the life and heroic exploits of Philip Schuyler, whose remains are interred at Albany Rural. An extended and lively question-and-answer session concluded the program, co-sponsored by the Alliance, the Cemetery, and the French & Indian War Society at Lake George. The presentation can be viewed in its entirety by accessing the "Events" tab on the Alliance's website, www.lakegeorgebattlefield.org.

A featured article in the Winter 2023 edition of the *Fort George Post*, "Sir William, Where Exactly Were Your Lines?" by Alliance member **Mark Silo**, was the subject of "members-only" tours on April 29 and May 7. Mark pointed out a series of landmarks in the Battlefield Park and adjacent properties to support his conclusions regarding the British defensive positions during the Battle of Lake George in September 1755. More than 40 members toured the grounds with Mark, overwhelmingly validating his article's findings and generating amazement that—with a historian's guidance—so much of the key landscape during the battle can still be discerned more than 260 years later. Additional "Johnson's Lines" tours may be scheduled in late summer or fall.

The momentum from our early programs continued with the opening of the Battlefield Park Visitor Center for the season in late May, the reinstatement of free guided tours of the Battlefield Park each Saturday, and the Battlefield Park's participation in New York State's "Path through History" program on Father's Day Weekend. The solemn Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony, at the burial site in the Battlefield Park of four unknown soldiers killed during the Battle of Lake George, attracted another large crowd of those paying tribute to these early American heroes. (See separate story.)

The early 2023 season events were capped with a presentation on July 5 by **Heather Bruegl**, a historian from the

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Audience at Michael Barrett's presentation on Philip Schuyler, April 22, 2023 (Alliance photo)



Mark Silo leads the second "Johnson's Lines" tour, May 7, 2023 (Alliance photo)

NOTICE:

Annual Membership Meeting, Saturday, August 19

The annual membership meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will take place on Saturday, August 19, beginning at 11 AM in the Battlefield Park pavilion. It will be preceded by a regular meeting of the Alliance's Board of Trustees at 10 AM, which all members are welcome to attend.

The agenda for the meeting includes the delivery of an annual report by Alliance President **John DiNuzzo**, proposed changes to the Alliance's by-laws, and the election of Trustees and officers. The featured guest speaker will be **Phil Giltner** of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, a Co-chair of the State's 250th Commemoration Commission.

Lunch will be served at no cost to Alliance members and for a \$10 charge to non-members. Normal Battlefield Park vehicular entry fees will be waived for attendees by showing either their Alliance membership cards or the emailed meeting announcement distributed on July 17.

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 time with our fellow history-lovers!



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President's Welcome

By John DiNuzzo

As I'm sure every Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance member knows—from the emails you've received, the terrific media coverage bestowed on the Alliance, and the well-attended programs we've been delivering—the first several months of the 2023 season have been nothing less than spectacular for our organization!

Where to start? I guess if you believe, as I do, that the Battlefield Park Visitor Center is the cornerstone for the public's recognition of us, it's best to begin with the eye-opening additions to the VC this year under Curation Committee Chair and Alliance Trustee **Lyn Karig Hohmann**. The new artifacts with Native American and maritime themes are terrific complements to the existing displays from last year. The Adirondack Experience's donation to the Alliance of a diorama depicting Abercromby's 1758 flotilla of 15,000 soldiers heading to Ticonderoga has already proven to be an immensely popular feature in explaining the massive nature of that ultimately unsuccessful effort by the

the British against the French. And the cannon now "greeting" VC guests as they arrive—loaned to us by Fort William Henry—immediately brings each guest's attention to the breadth of our displays.

The programs we've presented so far this year by noted member-historians like **Michael Barrett** and **Mark Silo** have received rave reviews. We enjoy tremendous partnerships with entities such as Albany Rural Cemetery and the French & Indian War Society at Lake George that help us organize such informative programs. And, as you can see from our "Upcoming Events" piece below, there are more great programs to come!

Our membership growth and the wonderful feedback we're receiving attest to the Alliance's continuing maturity in preserving and promoting the magnificent history of Lake George Battlefield Park. Thank you for your great ideas and feedback—it is working! ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

***AUGUST 3, 2023 - 7:00 PM** "James Fenimore Cooper: History and Fiction in 'The Last of the Mohicans'", presentation by **Dr. Nick Junkerman**, Skidmore College. Fort William Henry Hotel & Conference Center.

***AUGUST 19, 2023 - 11:00 AM** Annual membership meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, includes elections of Trustees and officers, annual report, guest speaker **Phil Giltner** of NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. Meet at park pavilion.

SEPTEMBER 23-24 - Encampment with re-enactment of Battle of Lake George at Lake George Battlefield Park with special tours and other activities for the public. Schedule to be announced.

***OCTOBER 8 - 1:00 PM** "The Last Cannon Fired: Carleton's Raid (1780)", a presentation/tour by Alliance Trustee **Pat Niles**, part of New York State's "Path through History" weekend. Meet at Battlefield Park Visitor Center.

*Registration recommended to info@lakegeorgebattlefield.org



John "Jack" Buchanan

Historian's Corner

John "Jack" Buchanan is an independent historian. He traveled the world for 27 years as Chief Registrar of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in charge of packing, transportation, and security in transit of worldwide art movements. He was also Special Assistant to the flamboyant and controversial Director of the Museum, Thomas Hoving, who revolutionized the fine arts museum world.

Since his retirement, Jack published four books on the Revolutionary War and one on Andrew Jackson and the movement of settlers over the Appalachian Mountains into lands between the mountains and the Mississippi River during and after the Revolution. He has also written articles on the war and book reviews for the *Journal of Military History*. Jack lives on the island of Manhasset in New York City.

Please describe your current book and/or work(s)-in-progress

My recent book came out in November 2022. ***The Battle of Musgrove's Mill, 1780*** is a volume in Westholme Publishing's "Small Battles" series. After the British invasion of the South and its initial victories in Georgia and South Carolina, 1779-1780, the Carolina and Georgia backcountry rose in revolt against the invader. Over the next two years some 213 engagements were fought in South Carolina alone, most of them between Rebel and Tory militia. In almost all of those engagements, Rebel county and local militia proved superior to British-raised Tory militia. The Battle of Musgrove's Mill is a conspicuous example.

The book describes what manner of men the 200 "picked men well mounted" were, the three colonels who led them, and follows their 40-mile overnight ride to Musgrove's Mill. There they faced 264 Tories, and of those 150 were provincial regulars raised, trained, outfitted, armed, and paid in the manner of British regulars. Yet the Rebels, with two devastating volleys and a wild charge, not only defeated the Tory force but broke it and drove the enemy off the battle ridge and down the hill a mile and a half to the Enoree River ford and safety on the other side.

The overwhelming Rebel victory at Musgrove's Mill, "trifling as it may seem"

wrote a Rebel participant, had a major consequence heretofore unrecognized. It led directly to the Battle of Kings Mountain, a Rebel victory which, in the words of General Sir Henry Clinton, "unhappily proved the first link in a chain of evils that followed each other in regular succession until they at last ended in the total loss of America."

My next project will describe the Indian wars east of the Mississippi, and within that long story a shorter tale of a fascinating character, Alexander McGillivray, of Scots, Creek, and French blood, which might make a separate book. The premise of the big book is that dime novelists of the last half of the 19th century and Hollywood in the 20th century fixed in minds of people around the world that the skirmishes between U.S. cavalry and horse Indians of the Great Plains and the Southwest in the quarter century following the Civil War represent the Indian wars of history. Yet the clashes west of the Mississippi pale in significance to the 205-year struggle east of the great river. The biggest and fiercest Indian Wars were fought east of the Mississippi, from the Powhatan Wars of the early-to-mid 17th century Virginia to the Creek War of 1813-1814 in the Mississippi Territory. Full-scale battles took place east of the Mississippi. The worst defeat of an American army in an Indian war did not happen in Montana on the Little Big Horn in 1876 but in the Ohio country

with the St. Clair disaster of 1791. And the highest Indian loss in a single battle was in 1814 in the Mississippi Territory.

The skirmishes with the Indians west of the great river were colorful to be sure, deadly for many, but of little consequence in the invasion and conquest of North America by Europeans and their American descendants. After Andrew Jackson's defeat of the Redstick Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on 27 March 1814, in what is now the state of Alabama, the end for the Indians was a foregone conclusion. The fate of the plains, southwest, mountain, and west coast Indians was decided east of the great river, long before glory hound Custer's blunder on the Little Big Horn.

As a historian, what's your sense of Lake George's most important role(s) during the military conflicts of the 18th century?

If we look at an ordinary road map of New York State, therein lies the answer. The distance from where Lake Champlain leaves Canada, south to Lake George village is about 124 miles. It was the classic communications, trade, and invasion route between Canada and British America, and, after the Revolution, between British Canada and the United States. It was used by Indians, French, British, and Americans. And most of that distance can be traveled easily by water. There was only one three-to-four-mile portage, from the southern end of Lake Champlain to the northern end of Lake George. From the southern end of Lake George, it was about fifteen miles overland to the Hudson River at Fort Edward, from which Albany (forty miles to the south), the lower Hudson Valley, and, ultimately, New York City could all be accessed by water. To protect that route the French, the British, and later the Americans built forts and outposts, massed armies, marched south and north, and fought bloody battles. As a boy I pictured in my mind armies clad in white or red or blue, in the manner of the times with banners flying, going up and down those lakes.

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Historian's Corner

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Please share your experiences with visiting Lake George Battlefield Park and other historic sites in the region.

Lake George was an important part of my boyhood. I was born in 1931 in Glens Falls and spent my first eleven years in nearby Hudson Falls. On Sundays in summer my parents and brother and I went to Lake George to picnic and swim. Between Glens Falls and Lake George there was an area of wetlands visible from the road, and every time we passed it my mother would say, "That's Bloody Pond, where the Indians massacred hundreds of men, women, and children," and I grew up accepting my mother's statement as gospel . . . until I read Ian Steele's *Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the "Massacre."* The reconstruction of Fort William Henry was over three decades away.

The 1930s were simpler times. We parked in the picnic area – no entrance fee -- next to the table and fireplace my father chose. Towels covered car windows so women and girls could change into swim togs. After the men and boys changed in the cars, folks traipsed down to the beach for a swim before picnics. There were no bath houses in those days. Occasionally we would go on to Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point and other places in the Adirondacks. During WWII I did the rest of my growing up in Ohio and didn't get back to Lake George until many years later. But I can truly say that it was Lake George and the other historic sites in the area that whetted my appetite for history.

What recommendations do you have for history-lovers to get greater support for historic preservation and awareness?

Become aware of historic buildings and sites in your town, city, or area.

Visit them and learn their history. Then don't sit back and hope others are going to do the job (of preserving them) when they are endangered. And don't wait until you are shocked by the destruction of a treasured historic building or site. The latter happened in New York City in 1963 when the Pennsylvania Railroad demolished McKim, Mead & White's magnificent 1905 Penn Station. I was awed when I passed through that treasure in 1951 as a GI on my way to an overseas assignment.

Penn Station's destruction led directly to the creation in 1965 of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission. The Commission cannot save a building just by declaring it a landmark, but it can marshal public opinion and has saved many treasures. But it was too late for Penn Station. Join your local historical society and become involved in its activities. As the old and true saying goes, there is strength in numbers. ■

ABERCROMBY DIORAMA UNVEILING AT VISITOR CENTER, JULY 11

Town of Lake George officials joined with Trustees and members of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance at the Battlefield Park Visitor Center on July 11 to officially unveil the refurbished diorama depicting the 1758 departure of Abercromby and his 15,000 British troops from the headwaters of Lake George, in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) from the French. The Alliance expressed its thanks to Town leaders for grants under the Occupancy Tax that paid for the refurbishment.

Also saluted during the reception were: the Adirondack Experience, which donated the 60-year-old diorama to the Alliance; Parks & Trails New York, for a grant supporting the Alliance's first-hire; and Fort William Henry, which has loaned an 18th Century replica cannon to display at the Visitor Center.



From left: Town Comptroller Jenn Farrell; Town Director of Planning Dan Barusch; Town Board Members Nancy Stannard, Daniel Hurley, Marisa Muratori, Vincent Crocitto; Alliance President John DiNuzzo (Alliance photo)



A timepiece unveiled! (Alliance photo)

Trustee Profile: Larry Arnold



Larry Arnold was raised in the Central New York city of Oneida, where, in his early teens, he first discovered what was to become his lifelong interest in military history. Larry still has in his possession today the first two history books given to him by his parents for Christmas 1960-ish: *The Biography of U.S. Grant* and *The Biography of Kit Carson*. He was hooked and thus began his extensive involvement with all

things history. Today his book collection is in the hundreds.

Local historic sites such as Fort Stanwix, Oriskany Battlefield, and visits to nearby Oneida Indian Nation sites were favorite stomping grounds in his early years. In addition, Larry greatly enjoyed being outdoors, hunting, fishing, and camping, skills that would become useful some years later while serving in the U.S. Army. Larry is a proud Vietnam War Veteran.

Today Larry lives in Halfmoon, New York with his wife Elaine. He is the father of three adult children, Tyson, Michael and Laura--two decorated U.S. Army veterans and a successful daughter.

Larry retired in 2002 after 30 years with United Parcel Service. Starting as a delivery driver in Syracuse, New York, he took advantage of UPS's policy of "promotion from within" and entered company management. Over the years Larry managed UPS facilities in Syracuse, Cortland, Troy

(Latham), and Glens Falls, New York. Larry was later elevated to the Human Resources division as the Upstate New York Workforce Planning Manager. Larry's favorite job in management was training new drivers in UPS's safe delivery and driving skills.

He has spent the last 21 years working at the Saratoga National Historical Park as a seasonal park ranger, licensed battlefield guide and volunteer. He is past President of the Friends of Saratoga Battlefield and was the fundraising chair for the recently completed Saratoga Surrender Site project. Larry now sits on the Board of Trustees of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and the Fort Plain Museum and Historical Park, and serves with the Friends of the New York State Military Museum's advisory board. He also is an active member of the Shenendehowa Seniors Investment Club.

These activities have led to many long and enduring friendships. ■

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Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, co-sponsored by the Alliance and the French & Indian War Society at Lake George. Follow-up presentations about New York's Native peoples are being researched for future deliveries.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance's emphasis on public programming showed very positive results in getting 2023 off to a great start. There is much more planned—see "UPCOMING EVENTS" elsewhere in this issue!

Wilcox Joins Board of Trustees to Fill Vacancy

Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance member/volunteer **Bob Wilcox** of Clifton Park was appointed by the Board of Trustees on April 18 to fill a vacancy on the Board resulting from **Lindsay Doyle's** resignation.

An active volunteer on the Alliance's Program Committee and as a Battlefield Park tour guide, Bob is currently serving as Secretary on the Campaign for Saratoga 250, Inc., a non-profit group supporting Saratoga County's activities in support of the 250th anniversary of America's independence. He has long been active in regional historical,

governmental and charitable organizations.

Bob's appointment fills the Trustee position until the Alliance's annual meeting in August, when he is eligible for election by the membership to complete the remaining two years of Lindsay Doyle's term. ■



Fort George during the Final Years of the American Revolution 1781-1783

By Russell P. Bellico

Following the destruction of Fort George in October 1780 by a British force led by Major Christopher Carleton, the fort was never garrisoned again by American troops. Although the sound of booming cannon fire from the ramparts of Fort George had ended in 1780, the fort remained a strategically advantageous bivouac area for both American and British scouting parties. The headquarters of the Northern Department of the American army was located in Saratoga. Nevertheless, the Lake Champlain – Lake George region continued to play an active military role in the final years of the war. The crystal blue waters of Lake George and its idyllic islands would witness the presence of British troops once again in 1781.

The first large-scale British presence into the lake valleys after Carleton's raid occurred early in 1781. On March 12, a British contingent, led by Captain Andrew Ross of the 31st Regiment of Foot, was sent to Fort Ticonderoga for the purpose of "reconnoitering the [region] and effecting the destruction of military stores left at Ticonderoga."¹ The detachment consisted of companies of the 31st Regiment, along with some Canadian provincial troops. The detachment "partly accomplished" their mission, hindered by weather and severe "fatigue."²

Intelligence from American spies and scouts regarding British plans in the northern sector reached George Washington's headquarters by the spring of 1781. A March 29 report suggested that "early this spring ... the British are to proceed to Fort George and take possession and fortify on Gages Hill [formerly Fort Gage] ... their boats [al]ready framed at St. Johns [St. Jean, Canada] ... to put into Lake George."³

In early October 1781, alarms were raised of a British invasion of the northern lake corridor. On October 12, Philip Schuyler received a message from Brigadier General John Stark, commander of the Northern Department, on the "arrival of the enemy on the south end of Lake George."⁴ Preparations to oppose the British advance began immediately, but after a few days it was determined that the reports were "premature."

Tensions in the Northern Department were related to continuing secret negotiations between British authorities and Ethan Allen and his brother Ira, Vermont Governor Thomas Chittenden, and others, regarding the possibility of having Vermont become a neutral entity allied with British Canada. The Continental Congress had failed to resolve Vermont's plea for statehood and Vermont leaders were adamantly against having their land split between New Hampshire and New York. But an agreement with the British to have Vermont become a Royal Province, neutral in the war and free to trade with Canada, was stalled by the Vermont commissioners. Was the procrastination by Vermonters a deliberate ploy to



*St. Johns (St. Jean, Canada) served as a base of maritime operations for the British during the American Revolution. Colonel Barry St. Leger departed from the base aboard the schooner **Maria** on October 17, 1781. (National Archives of Canada)*



Troops under the command of Colonel Barry St. Leger reached Fort Ticonderoga on October 20, 1781. (Photo by the author)

forestall British raids on their communities? Historians are still debating this question. The Continental Congress finally offered statehood to Vermont in August 1781, if it ceased annexations of contiguous townships on the borders of New York and New Hampshire, but Vermont rejected the conditions.

Meanwhile, Governor Frederick Haldimand of Canada was becoming increasingly frustrated with the Vermonters, but he was convinced that a proclamation from his office offering Vermont the status of an independent colony would result in an agreement. To move the proposal forward, Haldimand ordered an expeditionary force to Lake Champlain, which would coincide with a meeting of Vermont's General Assembly. The expedition was led by Colonel Barry St. Leger of the 34th Regiment of Foot. In 1777 St. Leger (then a lieutenant colonel) had abandoned the siege of Fort Schuyler (Fort Stanwix, Rome, NY) after learning of advancing American reinforcements. His mission in 1781 was not only to move Haldimand's overture to Vermont forward but also to "penetrat[e] Lake George to Cause as Much terror and dismay on the West" as possible.⁵ Haldimand's instructions to St. Leger specified that "Trucks [wagons] should be taken ... to facilitate the conveyance

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of ...bateaux" into Lake George.⁶ These were similar to the "Carriages resembling a Wagon without the Body" that were used in 1777 to transfer boats into Lake George.⁷

The rationale for the Lake George incursion was related to another more aggressive expedition into the Mohawk Valley, similar in strategy to Sir John Johnson's destructive raid in 1780. (See **Fort George Post**, Summer 2022.) St. Leger's move into Lake George would be a diversion, forestalling Brigadier General Stark from sending troops west. Haldimand had dispatched Major John Ross of the 34th Regiment with the Second Battalion of the King's Royal Regiment of New York, along with Captain Walter Butler, commander of the First Battalion, into western New York with more than 600 troops, consisting of regular units, loyalist militia, Butler's rangers, and some Native Americans. By October 3, Ross had collected his army at Oswego.



Brigadier General John Stark, commander of the Northern Department in 1781. (New York State Library)



Philip Schuyler in his uniform as a major general in the Continental Army (resigned commission in 1779). From *Eminent Americans* by Benson J. Lossing, 1886.

ST. LEGER EXPEDITION BEGINS

On October 17, St. Leger departed from St. Johns on the Richelieu River destined for the British fort at Point au Fer, where a large contingent of his troops had assembled two days earlier. St. Leger's force of approximately 900 men included troops from the 29th, 31st, 34th, and 44th regiments, Hanau (German) Jaegers, King's Rangers, Royalists, and some Native American allies.

Boarding the schooner *Maria* on the 17th, St. Leger sailed into Lake Champlain, anchoring at Isle La Motte, Vermont. The voyage of the troops was marked by several anchorages and the separation of the vessels. St. Leger reached Crown Point on October 18, but the vessels with the majority of the troops did not arrive until the evening of October 19, setting up camp at Bulwagga Bay. At six in the morning on October 20, battling southerly winds, the troops departed aboard the bateaux for Ticonderoga, but did not reach the fort until six in the evening. The "British Encamp'd near the Old Fort," St. Leger recorded, the Hanau Jaegers "took Possession of the old French Lines and Mount Hope," while the Royalists under Major Edward Jessup, commanding the King's Loyal

Americans, was dispatched to the "Landing Place" on northern Lake George.⁸ On October 21, Jessup supervised "the Royalists Employ'd at the Portage in Getting the Bateaux into Lake George"; two days later a total of "Ten bateaux" had been launched.⁹

Edward Jessup was no stranger to the region. After the French and Indian War, land grants (patents) in New York and elsewhere were given to former soldiers and supporters of Britain's war effort. In October 1766 Edward, his brother Ebenezer and others petitioned for "15,000 acres of land on the east side of Hudson's river ... between said river and Lake George" and petitioned for a second grant in August 1767 (Jessup Patent).¹⁰ In early November 1776 the brothers joined the British forces then at Crown Point following the Battle of Valcour Island. Edward Jessup participated in Major Christopher Carleton's expedition in 1780 that had resulted in the surrender and destruction of Fort George.



Major Edward Jessup's detachment camped on several islands in Lake George during their diversionary mission of 1781. (Photo by the author)

On October 23, St. Leger dispatched an ensign with a patrol of 12 soldiers to the eastern shore of Lake Champlain to capture an American who would be able to deliver a written proclamation to Governor Chittenden. But the assignment turned into a fiasco. About noontime, "Ens. Spencer Return'd from a Scout and brought in five Prisoners, the Rebel Sergeant - Who commanded the Party, Refusing to surrender was Shot," while "Leveling his piece [musket]" at

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the British soldiers, according to St. Leger.¹¹

Under orders from Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Robinson, the Americans had been sent on a scouting mission to Mount Independence when the squad was attacked by the British detachment, which resulted in the death of Sergeant Archelus Tupper.¹² St. Leger “thought this Gave a favorable opening” by providing the prisoners with a sympathetic letter of apology addressed to Governor Chittenden.¹³ The “Prisoners were therefore, Well Entertain’d and Sent Back” with a flag of truce, but the contents of the “open Letter” were revealed to everyone along the way, leaving Vermonters up in arms over the meaning of the letter.¹⁴ (St. Leger’s wording in his letter included “Not Meaning Hostilities Against Vermont,” “Sincerely Lament ... Shedding of blood,” and the “friendly Inclinations” of Governor Haldimand.¹⁵)



Fort George. From the *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* by Benson J. Lossing.

Before the upper ranks of the American army were aware of the letter controversy, their chief concern was the mere presence of the British troops at Ticonderoga. On October 26, Brigadier General Roger Enos, a veteran of the French and Indian War and in command of the Vermont militia in 1781, wrote to Brigadier General Stark, headquartered in Saratoga, that Captain Abraham Salisbury had returned from a



Romanticized image of George Washington at Halfway Brook on the military road to Fort George during his 1783 inspection tour. Painting by J.L.G. Ferris, Glens Falls Insurance Co. 1908 calendar. (Author’s collection)

scout of Mount Independence and had observed the British at Fort Ticonderoga “repairing the fortifications,” including covering “the long barracks ... nearly two hundred cattle were employed in drawing cannons ... from their boats.”¹⁶ (St. Leger’s journal, however, doesn’t provide much corroborating evidence for all of the American observations.)

A week after Enos’s letter, Philip Schuyler informed George Washington that “the Enemy are refortifying Tyconderoga” and reported that the body of the slain Vermont sergeant had been interred by the British “with military honors” and that the other American captured during the skirmish had been provided “with some presents and what liquor and provisions” that could be carried back.¹⁷

THE LAST SKIRMISH AT FORT GEORGE

American scouts failed to detect a British incursion into Lake George on October 24. At eleven o’clock at night on the 24th, “Major Jessup’s Detachment of about 300 left the [northern] Landing Place”; the expeditionary force consisted of “205 Rangers, 60 men of the English Light Infantry and Lieutenant [Albrecht] von Horn with 40 Jaegers.”¹⁸ Hindered by a strong southerly wind,

the detachment only “sailed ... three English miles, land [ing] on a small island” and remained there for “two days” before proceeding to “three or four” more islands.¹⁹ Jessup’s orders were “to Move only by night, making Short Stag-es [movements] and leaving Extensive fires in ... [the] rear.”²⁰ St. Leger suggested that the goal of the Lake George operation was to “keep [the Americans] in suspense [to] Prevent Their Sending Any Detachment ... Westward,” which would “convince [Stark] to remain in great Strength at Saratoga.”²¹ Jessup was to stay on the lake, island hopping until November 1. His mission also involved intelligence gathering. On October 30 a messenger from Jessup, who was “Encamped on Twelve Mile Island,” returned to Ticonderoga with an intelligence report, disclosing that the Americans had 3,000 troops in Saratoga, 1,000 in Castleton, Vermont, 500 in Skenesborough, and two companies at Fort Edward.²² Jessup subsequently reported to St. Leger that he had sent out a “Scout ... consisting of twelve men who fell in With a Rebel one of a Corporal and two [others] Who refused to Surrender, and firing on Ours, Kill’d ... a Volunteer of the Royalists, the [American] Corporal and one man were Shot dead,” and a third American was wounded and taken prisoner.²³

There are two slightly different reports of the skirmish with some additional details of the incident. Lieutenant Colonel Carl Adolf von Creutzburg, the commander of the Hanau Jaegers, had remained in Ticonderoga during the Lake George expedition. Von Creutzburg recounted that Lieutenant von Horn returned from Lake George on November 1 with a report that his detachment “had captured several rebels who had undertaken a patrol to Fort George” and that “two other rebels had been shot.”²⁴ Von Creutzburg subsequently received additional information that Jessup had “dispatched a captain and 12 Rangers to land in the region of Fort George to secure any

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In 1783 Major General Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, inspector general of the Continental Army, met with George Washington in today's Battlefield Park. (New York State Historical Association)

possible prisoners," and "met three rebels hunting [scouting]."²⁵ The Americans refused to surrender and threatened to fire on the British party "whereupon eight Rangers fired upon these three men. Two were immediately killed, the third was wounded and escaped," while a fourth American was captured and revealed that the Americans were not aware of the British presence at Lake George.²⁶

Apparently, units of the British regimental companies on the Lake George expedition had camped on different islands and had divergent experiences. In a regimental history of the 29th Regiment of Foot, Hugh Edward Everard noted that a "Light Company of the 29th, with some Royalists was sent to Diamond Island, on Lake George, but not meeting with any of the enemy, they were ordered to rejoin the main body."²⁷ The 1781 skirmish was the last battle engagement at Fort George.

THE LAST BATTLE OF THE REVOLUTION

While at Lake George, Jessup had sent several reconnaissance patrols west to learn of the progress of Major John Ross's expedition. While the scouts failed to make contact with Ross, Jessup

was told that "Stark absolutely refused" to send strong reinforcements to the west, and that Ross's detachment was "Moving Rapidly in the direction of Schenectady, burning and destroying Everything before them."²⁸ However, Jessup's scouts did not learn of Ross's subsequent retreat. On October 24 Colonel Marinus Willett at Fort Rensselaer (Fort Plain) was apprised of Ross's advance and began a pursuit of the British column with little more than 400-500 American militia troops. Ross made a stand in the fields north of Johnson Hall (Johnstown) and after two encounters with the Americans on October 25, on the following morning fled from the battlefield. The Battle of Johnstown, the last important battle of the American Revolution, resulted in the capture of 50 British soldiers and an indeterminable number of deaths. During the retreat Captain Walter Butler was killed by an Oneida warrior allied with the Americans.²⁹ St. Leger would not learn of the fate of the Ross expedition until November 5.

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

The actions taken by St. Leger, as well as the Americans, were often influenced by inaccurate intelligence, which prolonged the British occupation. For a time, St. Leger had misleading information on Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis, who surrendered his army at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781. On October 28, St. Leger had intelligence that the Americans "acknowledg'd that, Lord Cornwallis's position was strong" and that George Washington "had been Mortally Wounded" and "his Forces Cut to Pieces."³⁰ Incomplete American intelligence led Brigadier General Stark to conclude that the British "intend a permanent post at Ticonderoga," thus he concentrated his forces around Saratoga in preparation for a British

advance from the north.³¹ Reports in American newspapers suggested that St. Leger "advanced ... [with] about 2500 men through Lake Champlain to Lake George," but was deterred by a "formidable body of continental troops as well as militia assembled" in the area.³²

Before the end of October, St. Leger had decided to leave Ticonderoga and move his troops north to Chimney Point. On October 27, 1781, St. Leger wrote to Haldimand that "as I find our present Position Alarms, and Agitates the Vermonters Extremely, I Mean on the Return of Maj Jessup [from Lake George] to Move to Chimney Point."³³ Even before Jessup's return, St. Leger had ordered the extra bateaux and some of the baggage at the northern Lake George landing to be brought back to the Ticonderoga landing on Lake Champlain. Jessup was ordered to return on the night of October 31, but northerly winds delayed his return until the morning of November 1. By five o'clock that day all of the bateaux and troops had been withdrawn from Lake George. To cover the withdrawal, St. Leger had sent Major James Rogers (older brother of Robert Rogers) with his King's Rangers to the mountainsides in the Lake George Narrows and dispatched other units to positions south of the northern landing site. Due to strong northeast winds and heavy rain on November 2, St. Leger's main force did not leave Ticonderoga until one in the morning, arriving at Chimney Point at daybreak on November 3; other troops and vessels reached Chimney Point later. St. Leger lingered with his force at Chimney Point for a week, hoping "to Procure a communication With Vermont."³⁴ But the controversy over St. Leger's letter to Governor Chittenden and the news about Yorktown doomed any further negotiations with Vermont.

On November 7, while at Chimney Point, St. Leger received an American

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flag of truce from Major General William Alexander (Earl of Stirling), who had recently been sent to New York from Washington's headquarters to take temporary command of the Northern Department "during the emergency" of the British incursion.³⁵ While the flag of truce was ostensibly for a proposed exchange of British prisoners for two American prisoners, St. Leger "Suspect [ed] that this Flag Was sent ... to [observe] our operations," so he kept the Americans at a distance."³⁶ The letter from Stirling was also to apprise St. Leger of the capture of Cornwallis and his army, which St. Leger had learned of a few days earlier. On November 10, with the end of the navigation season approaching and the failure of the Vermont negotiations, as well as the impact of the surrender of Cornwallis, the British expeditionary force began their departure for Canada. St. Leger arrived at St. Johns on November 16.

The 1781 operation had been a considerable undertaking, involving many of the vessels from the 1776 and 1777 campaigns: the schooners **Carleton** and **Maria**, the ship **Royal George**, two vessels taken from the Americans—cutter **Lee** and galley **Trumbull**, and a number of gunboats and bateaux—all under the command of Royal Navy captain William Chambers.

St. Leger's 1781 expedition and the conduct of Vermont's leaders remained a concern to American authorities. On December 21, 1781, Brigadier General Stark, once again in command of the Northern Department, reported the details of the St. Leger and Ross operations to George Washington. Stark suggested that the actions of the Vermonters "have been very mysterious," which "convinced me that they were not friendly to the United States."³⁷

1782: A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY

In November 1781 Philip Schuyler wrote to George Washington, proposing a new campaign for 1782 against British forces in Canada. Subsequently, Washington considered an invasion plan via the Lake George – Lake Champlain corridor, if such an operation was needed, but the expedition never occurred.³⁸ Haldimand later learned of the American plans, but by then British policy had taken a defensive posture. Nevertheless, rumors of a British expedition through Lake Champlain persisted in the United States. In October 1782 Jacob Bayley, a Vermont native who held a commission as a brigadier general in the New York militia, informed Governor George Clinton of New York that he "had intelligence ... from St. Johns that the enemy w[as] moving in force up Lake Champlain ... [and] by way of Oswego ... to destroy Albany and Establish Vermont [as a Royal Province]."³⁹ On October 22, the *Independent Gazette* (Philadelphia) printed an erroneous story "that Europeans, Canadians, Tories and Indians had marched for Lake Champlain to embark for Ticonderoga ... [and] for Albany."⁴⁰ In the meantime, peace terms were being finalized. In November 1782, the peace commissioners in Paris agreed to a preliminary treaty. On February 4, 1783, Great Britain proclaimed the cessation of hostilities, followed by the Americans on April 11. The final treaty was signed on September 3, 1783.

Vermont's admission to statehood remained in limbo for nearly another decade. When new objections in Congress blocked Vermont's bid for admission, Ethan Allen resumed his negotiations with Governor Haldimand. In June 1782 Allen wrote to Haldimand that he "shall do anything in my power to render the State a British Province."⁴¹ It was not until 1791 that Vermont was admitted to the Union as the first new state.

1783: GEORGE WASHINGTON AT FORT GEORGE

Two years after the British surrender at Yorktown and with the cessation of hostilities, a semblance of tranquility enveloped the lake valleys.

In the spring of 1782 George Washington established his headquarters in Newburgh at the Hasbrouck House, overlooking the Hudson River. In July 1783 Washington decided to make an inspection tour of the "Northern and Western Posts" in New York, where "important Military" events had occurred during the war.⁴² On July 15, Washington wrote to Philip Schuyler that he had sent Lieutenant Henry Dimler, the assistant quarter master general, to make arrangements for "some light Boats [bateaux] ... [to be] transported to Lake George."⁴³ Washington departed from Newburgh on July 18 for his trip to the sites on the northern frontier. In addition to a complement of troops, the entourage included Governor George Clinton, two field officers, and an Italian nobleman. On a tour of America, Count Francesco dal Verme had a number of letters of introduction, including ones from Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. Washington did not write much about the excursion except for his list of expenses, but fortunately Count dal Verme would write an interesting account of the journey.

On July 19 Washington's party lodged at Philip Schuyler's "magnificent" home in Albany, offering a "panoramic view" of the river valley.⁴⁴ In addition to a fine dinner, Schuyler provided three-and-a-half gallons of liquor to his guests, purchased from James Caldwell, an Albany merchant and future settler of Caldwell (Lake George Village).⁴⁵ Among the guests were two of Schuyler's daughters – one, Elizabeth, was the wife of Alexander Hamilton, then serving in the Continental Congress.

Traveling by horseback, the next day the party observed "the place where

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General [John] Burgoyne first engaged the American forces” and spent the night at Schuyler’s home in present – day Schuylerville.⁴⁶ On July 21 the group met “more than two hundred” repatriated prisoners, returning from captivity in Canada, as they made their way through Saratoga.⁴⁷ Later that day Washington’s party “arrived in the evening at Fort George, now dismantled,” where “fishing provided our supper, and we extended our mattresses in a house of only one room.”⁴⁸ The accompanying soldiers, mainly from a Rhode Island battalion stationed at Saratoga, erected their tents in today’s Lake George Battlefield Park.

The following day (July 22) dal Verme recorded that the horses were left with 30 soldiers at Fort George. Washington and his party viewed Fort George and the remnants of Fort William Henry, but dal Verme didn’t offer any details – whether this occurred before departing for Ticonderoga or on the return leg. Washington’s entourage departed northward for Ticonderoga aboard three bateaux that had been transported overland from Fort Edward: “We, thirty-nine persons in all, got into three boats, each of which carried six armed soldiers who did the rowing.”⁴⁹ They had brought provisions of biscuit, beverages, and one live sheep. However, their main staple – fish—was caught while underway for their dinner that day. Washington and his detachment reached the northern end of the lake at eight in the evening and slept in tents for the night, eating fish once again for breakfast.

During the day of July 23, while two bateaux were being carried to Lake Champlain, the party visited the “remains” of Fort Ticonderoga, then traveled north by boat to Crown Point “where some fortifications are still standing,” eating lunch in a “hut.”⁵⁰ After lunch the detachment embarked

southward, “pitch [ing] our tents by the lakeside, but the mosquitoes would not let us sleep.”⁵¹ On the 24th they arrived back at the Lake George portage and pitched their tents again, having both a breakfast and dinner of fish, while waiting for the boats to be transferred back to Lake George.

In his journal of the trek, dal Verme commented more about the wildlife that he observed than the forts, describing a nine-foot-long rattlesnake killed at Fort Ticonderoga, a large black bear at Crown Point, another bear and her two cubs that snatched their live sheep at the northern Lake George portage, and the “incessant screaming of panthers” during the last night at the portage.⁵²

Washington’s party departed from the portage at three in the morning of July 25, landing at one o’clock in the afternoon on an island, 18 miles from their embarkation. Their steady diet of fish continued on the island. “Our catch of fish,” according to dal Verme, “was so plentiful that we kept only the best,” including perch, pike, and red trout.⁵³ The group arrived at Fort George after dark to find “bowers [rustic temporary shelters] lighted by torches of dry wood”; the structures had been constructed by the soldiers who had remained at the site of Fort George.⁵⁴ On the fort grounds, Washington met with Major General Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who was being dispatched by Washington, in accordance with Article VII of the provisional peace treaty, to meet with Governor Haldimand in order to facilitate the surrender of the British-held frontier posts. However, when Steuben arrived in Canada, Haldimand maintained that he did not have the authority to relinquish the posts until receiving further instructions from home.

On July 26 Washington and his entourage left for Fort Edward and then

for Schuyler’s home in Schuylerville, observing sites of destruction from the 1777 battle. The next day, after visiting the nearby mineral springs, Washington met with ambassadors from the Oneida and Tuscarora Nations (most of whose warriors had supported the Americans during the war), approving their request for powder, ammunition, and rum. Thereafter, the party visited Old Fort Johnson, Fort Rensselaer, Fort Herkimer, Fort Dayton, Fort Schuyler (Fort Stanwix), and Otsego Lake.

On August 3 Washington returned to Schenectady, where he was “honored here by many Indians, around two hundred in all from the two nations allied with the Americans.”⁵⁵ The next day he set off by boat for his headquarters in Newburgh.

The tour by Washington was not in reality a matter of leisure – it was an evaluation of the feasibility of strengthening military posts, especially on the western frontier. From his headquarters in Newburgh on August 6, Washington wrote to the president of Congress that his tour was “to facilitate . . . the operations which will be necessary for occupying the Posts which are ceded by the Treaty of Peace,” and therefore he began preparations “for supplying all the Garrisons on the Western Waters.” Washington also ordered Colonel Marinus Willett “to repair the Roads, remove the obstructions in the [Mohawk] River,” and construct buildings for “Ordnance and Stores.”⁵⁶ In addition, Washington informed the superintendent of finance that as a result of his “Tour to the Northward,” the quartermaster general would be receiving orders “to prepare Bateaux and other means of Transportation to the Upper Posts, of the Cannon, Stores and Provisions” needed in “Maintaining them.”⁵⁷

With the end of the war, the plan of maintaining fortifications on the northern frontier ended. Settlements expanded in the Champlain Valley and

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the forts became convenient sources of building materials. However, four settlers, who received a one-year lease for the land at Fort George in 1783, had to agree to a stipulation that no "Bricks, Timber of Stones ... be removed" or fortifications "taken down."⁵⁸ A new era of peace at Lake George had begun.

Fort George, as well as the other forts in the region, served as the first line of defense on the frontier against the British. Many Americans made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives at these outposts. In his circular letter of June 18, 1783, written at his Newburgh headquarters, George Washington admonished his fellow countrymen to recognize the "meritorious class of veterans" of the war "who have shed their blood, or lost their limbs, in the service of their country."⁵⁹ Those sacrifices resulted in the independence of the American colonies, becoming the first modern democracy in the world. ■

Alliance Trustee Dr. Russell P. Bellico is the author of *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George, and Hudson River Corridor* (2010), and other works on North American military and maritime history.

NOTES:

¹ Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the Thirty-First, or the Huntingdonshire Regiment of Foot* (London: Parker, Furnivall & Parker, 1850), 42.

² Ibid.

³ B.F. DeCosta, *Notes on the History of Fort George During the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods* (New York: J. Sabin & Sons, 1871), 57.

⁴ Caleb Stark, *Memoir and Official Correspondence of Gen. John Stark* (Concord, NH: Edison C. Eastman, 1877), 271; *Boston Gazette*, 29 October 1781; See also *The Connecticut Courant and Weekly Intelligencer*, 23 October 1781.

⁵ Haldimand Papers, "Letter of Instructions," H-1453, image 826, fol. 153, Canadian Research Knowledge Network, heritage.canadiana.ca.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Horatio Rogers, ed., *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books: A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777*, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, *Roy. Art.* (1884; reprint ed., Boston: Gregg Press, 1972), 96. The carriages came in two sizes, the smaller version for bateaux. Ibid.

⁸ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal of Proceedings on the Expedition - 1781," H-1453, image 854, fol. 181. German troops were also stationed on Sugarloaf Hill (Mt. Defiance). Ibid., image 855, fol. 182.

⁹ Ibid., H-1453, images 855-56, fols. 182-83.

¹⁰ [E. B. O'Callaghan], comp., *Calendar of N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts: Indorsed Land Papers 1643-1863; (1864; reprint ed., Harrison, NY: Harbor Hill Books, 1987), 415, 449.*

¹¹ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 856, fol. 183; "Letter," H-1453, image 832, fol. 159.

¹² 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), 795.

¹³ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 856, fol. 183.

¹⁴ Ibid., images 856-57, fols. 183-84.

¹⁵ Haldimand Papers, H-1453, image 834, fol. 161. *Stark, Memoir*, 282.

¹⁷ Philip Schuyler to George Washington, November 2, 1781, MS (1999.1134), Fort Ticonderoga Thompson-Pell Research Center.

¹⁸ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 857, fol. 184, see also image 829, fol. 156; Carl Adolf Christoph von Creutzburg, "Relation of the secret expedition under the command of Colonel St. Leger on September ninth, 1781," *Journal of the Hesse-Hanau Jaeger Corp 1777-82*, Fiche O, No. 276, 37, Lidgerwood Collection, Morristown National Historical Park, NJ. (There are several slightly different spellings of von Creutzburg's name.)

¹⁹ Creutzburg, "expedition," 39-40.

²⁰ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 857, fol. 184.

²¹ Ibid., H-1453, image 829, fol. 156; image 838, fol. 165; image 857, fol. 184.

²² Ibid., "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 864, fol. 191.

²³ Ibid., images 867-68, fols. 194-95.

²⁴ Creutzburg, "expedition," 39.

²⁵ Ibid., 40.

²⁶ Ibid.; See also Mark Edward Lender, *Fort Ticonderoga, The Last Campaigns* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2022), 168; Gavin K. Watt, *A dirty trifling, piece of business: The Revolutionary War as Waged from Canada in 1781* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), Volume 1, 386.

²⁷ Major H. Everard, *History of Thos Farrington's Regiment Subsequently Designated the 29th Worcestershire Foot 1694-1891* (Worcester, UK: Littlebury & Company; The Worcester Press, 1891), 96.

²⁸ Haldimand Papers, H-1453, images 844-45, fols. 171-72.

²⁹ Larry Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett: Defender of the Northern Frontier* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, LTD, 2000), 64-70; See also *The Connecticut Courant and Weekly Intelligencer*, 6 November 1781; *The Connecticut Gazette and Universal Intelligencer*, 7 December 1781.

³⁰ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 863, fol. 190.

³¹ Stark, *Memoir*, 283.

³² *Boston Gazette*, 31 December 1781; See also *The Connecticut Gazette and Universal Intelligencer*, 7 December 1781.

³³ Haldimand Papers, H-1453, image 838, fol. 165.

³⁴ Ibid., "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 872, fol. 199.

³⁵ Stark, *Memoir*, 280.

³⁶ Haldimand Papers, "Minutes and Journal," H-1453, image 876, fol. 203.

³⁷ Stark, *Memoir*, 304-5.

³⁸ Don R. Gerlach, *Proud Patriot--Philip Schuyler and the War of Independence 1775-1783* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 469; Lender, *Fort Ticonderoga*, 174.

³⁹ DeCosta, *Fort George*, 60-61.

⁴⁰ *The Independent Gazette* (Philadelphia), 22 October 1782. (Research assistance from Joseph W. Zarzynski)

⁴¹ Charles A. Jellison, *Ethan Allen, Frontier Rebel* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 285.

⁴² John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), 84.

⁴³ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Cometti, trans. and ed., *Seeing America and Its Great Men: The Journal and Letters of Count Francesco dal Verme 1783-1784* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 13.

⁴⁵ Gerlach, *Proud Patriot*, 51.

⁴⁶ Cometti, *Seeing America*, 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13; Matthew B.P. Keagle, "Between War and Peace," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum 17* (2021): 56-58; At the same time, British prisoners were released by the Americans, including 5,826 troops sent from Philadelphia to New York City. *The Independent Gazette* (Philadelphia), 20 September 1783. (Research assistance from Joseph W. Zarzynski)

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13; Washington's list of expenses included "Fort George going and returning." George Washington, "Expense Account of Washington," *New York History 13* (April 1932): 180.

⁴⁹ Cometti, *Seeing America*, 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 84-86.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁸ *New York in the Revolution as Colony and State: A Compilation of Documents and Records from the Office of the State Comptroller* (Albany, 1901), 47-48; DeCosta, *Fort George*, 61-62; [O'Callaghan], *Calendar of N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts*, 656.

⁵⁹ *The Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer*, 18 July 1783.



The Last Cannon Fired from the Walls of Fort George

By Pat Niles

Editor's Note: This is an abridged version of the full article on this subject prepared by the author. The full article can be accessed through the "Resources" tab at the Alliance's website, www.lakegeorgebattlefield.org

RAID ON FORT GEORGE

On the morning of October 11, 1780 British Major Christopher Carleton's troops began their trek north from Wing's Falls (modern-day Glens Falls) toward Fort George, setting fires as they went up the Military Road. En route they encountered Fort Amherst, a vestige of the French & Indian War that had been rebuilt in 1777 by the Germans under Burgoyne and later occupied by the Americans. The fort was burned to keep the Americans from using it in the future.¹

When Carleton's force got within a mile and a half of Fort George, Carleton halted his men. A scout was sent out and returned reporting that 50 of the enemy were along the road. In the ensuing battle, the Continental forces incurred 26 killed and seven prisoners taken. Losses in the British 34th Regiment were minimal: one private killed, and one sergeant and one private wounded. Royalists had one killed or missing and one wounded. The Indians had suffered one fatality and five wounded.²

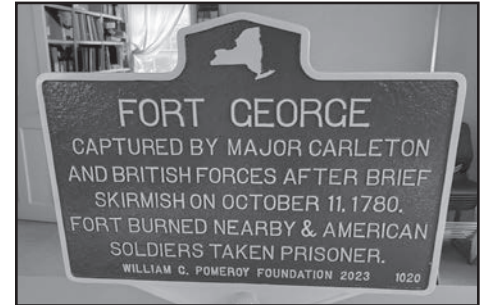
Carleton's troops went to the top of Gage's Heights, about a mile southwest of Fort George, and with a clear vantage point they saw the fort for the first time. Shortly afterward, Fort George began firing its six-pounder cannon at Carleton's men without effect. Carleton ordered the men to shelter in a small hollow. Once Carleton's force had established its position, Carleton ordered Lieutenants Kirkland and Johnson to offer terms of surrender to Fort George.³

It was not long before the American's at Fort George accepted Carleton's terms. The British 34th Regiment took up a position outside the walls of Fort George. On entering the fort, Carleton's men found only one captain, two ensigns, five corporals, one drummer,

and 36 privates. Carleton ordered his men to look for sunken bateaux; the party found thirteen, raised them, and bailed them out for the return trip to Canada. Several Royalist families came to Fort George and asked to go to Canada, which Carleton granted.

Once the enemy was removed from the fort, the Indians were allowed to take booty.⁴ The Indian plunder of the fort went quickly as the Americans had very little in the way of supplies. The lone garrison wagon was used by an American officer to return home under parole, and the excess baggage was sent back on that wagon as well. It was discovered that the Americans had only 16-18 rounds apiece. The fort's walls were very thick but, having been burned so many times previously, were weak. The well inside the fort was polluted from garbage and other debris being thrown into it. The fort had a thick parapet, good bombproofing, and three six-pounder cannons. There was not enough room for both the 34th and 53rd Regiments to stay in the fort, so the American prisoners were placed inside with the two regiments guarding them.⁵

On the next morning, Major Carleton sent a message to Captain John Munro telling him of his position. Lt. McFarland's 53rd Regiment arrived; two captured six-pounders were loaded into McFarland's bateaux, and the third damaged six-pounder had the trunnions knocked off and driven down the barrel. The wounded were put into the better bateaux and the rest of the bateaux were used by Royalist families going to Canada. The fort and the rest of the buildings were burned or destroyed. By 9:00 AM, the bateaux pushed off for their trip back to Canada. The American commander of Fort George, Captain John Chipman, was also put onto a



Historical marker to be installed at Lake George Battlefield Park

bateau to meet with Governor General Frederick Haldimand to seek a prisoner exchange. Once the bateaux were launched, the troops marched off on the west side of Lake George. It was several days' march to Fort Ticonderoga, where bateaux were waiting to take them back to Canada.

AFTERMATH

The aftermath of Carleton's Raid on Fort George was reported by two young militia soldiers, George Fowler and Austin Wells, once Carleton's forces had fled. Upon the arrival of their companies at the battle area, the bodies of Continental soldiers from Fort George were found between Bloody Pond, two miles south of the lake, and the Fort Gage Heights. The American militia found 22 or 23 bodies, facing up with throats cut, stock torn from their necks and placed upon their chests, and silver buckles taken from their shoes. The deceased had been scalped and lay where they fell in battle, their bodies by this time mangled, bloated and black with mortification. A hole was dug beside where they lay, and they were placed in it and covered up in a shallow mass grave.⁶

The militiamen continued to Fort George, where they found the fort still smoldering from its burning. The British dead had been buried or taken away. Inside the charred

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The Last Cannon Fired from the Walls of Fort George

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fort was a platform which had a six-pounder cannon on a turned-over carriage with a burned wheel. A few barrels of ball cartridges left there were divided among the soldiers.⁷

The initial reaction to the loss of Fort George was expressed by New York Governor George Clinton, in a letter to General Washington:

The little post and garrison of Fort Ann appeared to me to have been surrendered through treachery or cowardice. Capt. Chipman, the commanding officer of Fort George, having on the first alarm sent out his whole garrison (supposing the enemy to consist of only abt. 30 Indians and Tories), except 14 men obtained a very honorable capitulation, before he could be induced to surrender.⁸

Captain Chipman sent a letter of explanation of the battle to the **Connecticut Gazette**, February 16, 1781, as reported in DeCosta's **History of Fort George**. In the letter Chipman explained that two ships had been seen in the northern part of Lake George. Captain Sherwood at Fort Anne had been informed of the enemy's ships and sent word to Colonel Livingston at Fort Edward. Livingston did not notify Chipman of this. Livingston was informed on October 10 by men fleeing Fort Anne of Carleton's attack and the burning of Kingsbury, immediately north of Fort Edward. A scout dispatched by Chipman found Carleton's party, but was prevented from reaching Chipman as he tried to return with this report. When on October 11 a supply party sent out by Chipman returned after spotting Indians near Bloody Pond, Chipman reacted by sending out a force to clear the Military Road so provisions from Fort Edward could pass through.⁹

Captain Chipman dispatched Captain John Sill with 48 men and officers with orders to attack any Indians they encountered, but to return to the fort if there was a large party of the enemy. Sill had taken a route that originally missed

Carleton's primary troops, but had bumped into the enemy's rear forces on his return. Sill decided to attack. Sill had actually run into a smaller party of Indians, and Carleton, on becoming aware of the battle, sent out regulars and loyalists, which gave his forces an overwhelming numerical advantage. As the fort had but one working six-pounder and 15 muskets, a capitulation by the Americans was soon agreed upon.¹⁰

Carleton's Raid was a great success for the British with the destruction of Forts Anne and George, along with the burning of most homes, farms, mills, and the slaughter of livestock, from Fort Anne to Saratoga. The lack of communication to Fort George caused the loss of that garrison. The insufficient number of trained soldiers and a lack of supplies and ammunition lost Fort Anne. After these events, Fort George ceased to exist as a military installation.

Due to the Americans' lack of defenses in the Lake Champlain-Lake George Region, Fort George could no longer be maintained. The final cannon shot fired by Chipman's soldiers was the last one fired from the walls of Fort George. And Fort George, conceived with great ambition more than 20 years earlier

by the revered British General Jeffery Amherst, was not used again as a fort during the Revolution or in later conflicts. ■

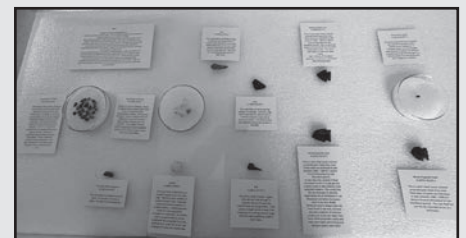
Alliance Board member Pat Niles is currently the Vice-President of the Washington County Historical Society, Co-chair of the Washington County Historic Preservation Committee, and Co-Chair for the Washington County 250th Committee. He retired after 30 years from Salem Central School as a history teacher and head football coach. He is a Licensed Guide at the Saratoga Battlefield and the President of Adirondack Hudson Military Expeditions, a historic guide service in the Adirondack Hudson corridor.

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- ² HP Carleton to Powell Letter, 21,793, B-133, H-1453; Enys Journal, pp.45 - 46.
- ³ HP Carleton to Powell Letter, 21,793, B-133, H-1453; Enys Journal, pp.45 - 46.
- ⁴ HP Carleton to Powell Letter, 21,793, B-133, H-1453; Enys Journal, pp.45 - 46.
- ⁵ HP Carleton to Powell Letter, 21,793, B-133, H-1453; Enys Journal, p.46.
- ⁶ Adler, Winston, *In Their Own Voices: Oral Accounts of Early Settlers in Washington County, New York*, Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1983, pp. 99 -103.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 100-103.
- ⁸ DeCosta, B.E, *History of Fort George: During the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*, J. Sabin and Sons: New York, p.49.
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- ¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 51.

NEW VISITOR CENTER ADDITIONS



18th century replica cannon
(courtesy of Fort William Henry)



Native American artifacts
(courtesy of NY State Museum)



1758 bateau sections
(courtesy of NY State Museum)

My Favorite History

In each edition of the **Fort George Post** we present this feature, through which Alliance members share their most memorable history experiences. This list is furnished by **Peter Wuerdeman** of Queensbury, NY.



Peter Wuerdeman,
Lake George Triathlon, 2006

My favorite historic spot in **Lake George Battlefield Park** is on top of Fort George's remaining southwest bastion wall. One of my earliest memories as a child is standing up there, looking down at the park, with my father by my side. We would have family picnics there and then go to the recently opened Million Dollar Beach to swim. In later years when my daughters were in elementary school, they would sometimes have their end-of-school-year-picnic at the pavilion and then cross Fort George Road to play games in the field.

Other Favorite Historic Sites:

1. **Wiawaka Bateaux Cluster, Lake George.** I have been lucky enough to dive down and see the remains of the seven bateaux from the sunken fleet of 1758. Bateaux Below, Inc. did a great job documenting and preserving this site for future generations.
2. **Crazy Horse Memorial, Crazy Horse, South Dakota.** I visited here in 1982 when the memorial was not much more than a mountain and a dream. One month earlier, designer and sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski had passed away. He had committed to making this monument his life mission. "By carving Crazy Horse, if I can give back to the Indians some of

his pride and create a means to keep alive his culture and heritage, my life will have been worthwhile." His family has carried on his legacy and continues to do so to this day. <https://crazyhorsememorial.org/story/the-history>

3. **Dry Tortugas National Park, Florida.** Located 70 miles west of Key West in the Gulf of Mexico is Fort Jefferson and several Dry Tortugas Islands. Fort Jefferson was built after the war of 1812 to protect the southern coastline of the US and the lifeline of commerce to and from the Mississippi River. Constructed with over 16,000,000 handmade bricks, it is the largest "all masonry" fort in the United States. During the Civil War, the Union army used it as a prison. The Tortugas were also a favorite fishing spot for Ernest Hemingway. <https://www.nps.gov/drto/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

Favorite History Books:

1. **Sails and Steam in the Mountains** by Russell P. Bellico (1992). All of Russell Bellico's books are great, but this one really connects all the dots, especially with the maritime history of Lake George and Lake Champlain.
2. **Benedict Arnold's Navy** by James L. Nelson (2006). This book is about the Battle of Valcour Island and how important it was to the outcome of the American Revolution. Benedict Arnold's name is synonymous with treason, yet few men did more to prevent America's defeat in 1776.
3. **White Devil** by Stephen Brumwell (2004). The true story of Robert Rogers and his Rangers' 1759 attack on the Abenaki Indian village of St. Francis. This was revenge for the massacre after the surrender of Fort William Henry. During this brutal attack, Rogers and the Rangers showed no mercy, and none was shown to them as they were pursued on their nightmarish journey home.

A Memorable Memorial Day Tribute

Approximately 80 members of the public joined the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and a group of local dignitaries in paying homage to the four unknown soldiers killed during the Battle of Lake George, at their burial site in the Park on Memorial Day, May 29.

Assemblyman **Matt Simpson** of Horicon, who represents Lake George and a large swath of the North Country that includes numerous historic sites, provided a keynote presentation which reminded attendees that the four "unknowns" foreshadowed the millions of American heroes whose sacrifices have given us an unparalleled position in world history. His inspiring words were followed by tributes to the soldiers from Alliance member-historian **Mark Silo** and **Pastor Ali Trowbridge** of Caldwell Presbyterian Church.

The program included wreath-laying and salutes from the Lake George American Legion, the Lake George Fire Department, and reenactors under the direction of Fort William Henry. The playing of "Taps" by Lake George Central School District Music teacher **Amy Baker** concluded the remembrance ceremony. ■



Assemblyman Simpson, Mark Silo,
Amy Baker

PTNY Provides "First-hire" Grant to Alliance! 

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance received official notification on May 24 that its application to fund the organization's first employee under Parks & Trails New York's Professional Development Grant program has been approved, in the amount of \$50,000 over a two-year period. The Alliance will contribute an additional \$10,000 over the course of the grant.

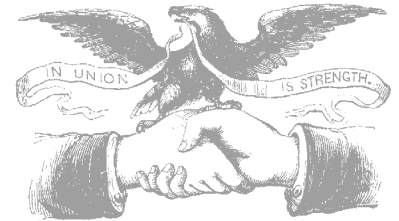
The grant is one of 28 awards totaling \$1.8 million (the highest amount awarded in the Park and Trail Partnership Grant program's eight-year history) for organizations dedicated to the stewardship and promotion of New York's state parks and historic sites, trails, and public

lands. In a news release, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director **Paul Steely White** said, "These grants are like rich organic fertilizer for growing the grassroots movement to improve New York's parks, trails, historic sites, and public lands." This is the fourth grant provided to the Alliance through PTNY.

Alliance President **John DiNuzzo** thanked Parks and Trails New York for its "creativity" in supporting non-profit friends groups. Noting that, over its 22-year history, his organization has completely depended on the dedication of volunteers, DiNuzzo pointed out that "This grant will permit the Alliance's volunteers to continue to focus on

historic preservation and public awareness with our Visitor Center as the hub, while a paid professional coordinates marketing and revenue-generating activities that align with our goals."

Many Battlefield Park Visitor Center guests have already met the Alliance's Member Services Manager, **Dick Carlson**, whose talents have been engaged through this new grant. ■



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.