

The Lake George Examiner

Battlefield Park Alliance marks year of growth, new programs at Annual Meeting

August 21, 2023 by Gillian Burdett

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, which formed in 2001 as a friends group dedicated to the support and historic preservation, conservation, and interpretation of the historic site, held its annual membership meeting on Saturday, August 19, at the Battlefield Park pavilion.

Alliance President John DiNuzzo gave the Annual Trustees' Report noting that membership has grown 78 percent over the past year, and the number of visitors to the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitors Center, which opened in May 2022, is running higher than last year's numbers.

DiNuzzo attributed the organization's growth to new programs, which included a series of well-attended presentations on local history, and media attention on the Visitors Center, which added new exhibits in 2023. "By all accounts," says DiNuzzo, "we have provided, or are providing, a museum-quality experience," and novices, bona fide historians and those in the tourism community have been "wowed" by the Alliance's work.

Member Mark Silo announced that the Battlefield Park Electronic Tour is now live with QR codes posted at Park monuments so that visitors can access videos explaining the historical significance of 11 sites throughout the park. The virtual tour, which is narrated by historian and former Alliance president Dr. Lyn Karig Hohmann and DEC archaeologist Charles Vandrei, may be viewed at the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance YouTube channel.

Within the next two weeks, DiNuzzo says, orientation panels will be installed outside the Visitors Center entrance to provide information for visitors that come to the park when the center is closed. The two panels will display a map of the

park and a narrative, with illustrations, of the park's history. Content for the panels was developed by Alliance Trustee Russell P. Bellico, Ed. D.

Upcoming events in Battlefield Park include a September 21 presentation on the Battle of Lake George, the Fort William Henry French & Indian War Battle Reenactment and Encampment, which will be held September 22-24, a September 23 tour of Sir William Johnson's battle lines led by Mark Silo, and on October 8, a presentation and dedication of a historical marker telling the story of 1780 The Carlton Raid in which Fort George was captured and destroyed. On January 13, 2024, in partnership with the Warren County Commission for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution, the Alliance will present a program on Henry Knox's letters to his wife Lucy.

DiNuzzo concluded his report to the trustees by saying, "As I said last year, and as I've said many times, to the point of people probably getting tired of hearing it, I don't see why this region can't be a mini-Gettysburg. I think between this Battlefield Park, and the surrounding places like Fort William Henry, Fort Ti, Saratoga Battlefield, Roger's Island, and many others, this should be a regional set of attractions on par with anything in the United States."

He stressed the need to work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to better maintain the park's monuments and infrastructure, particularly as plans are in the works to reinter the remains of Revolutionary War soldiers uncovered during a 2019 construction project on Cortland Street in Lake George Village. The plans include a plaza surrounding a columbarium that will hold the remains.

In May 2022, The Cortland Street Reinterment Committee submitted a proposal, with renderings and site plans, to the DEC and is awaiting approval. New York Senator Charles Schumer has endorsed the project and has called on the U.S. Army Secretary to endorse and help finance the project. DiNuzzo believes other monuments and memorials in the park will need to be enhanced to be consistent in presentation with the new plaza.

Following the membership meeting, Phil Giltner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation discussed the status of plans to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Giltner says that

although the state legislature passed a bill to create the New York State 250th Commemoration Commission in 2021, the Commission has not yet been formed.

Other states have moved forward on this issue with Massachusetts leading the way as the Commonwealth is already into its celebrations with the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. New York has created a guide to planning commemoration events and Giltner noted that much of the planning so far has been at the county level.

Following Giltner's presentation, John Berry, Queensbury Town Historian and Chair of the Warren County NY Commission for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution listed some of the events planned for Warren County, which include the Henry Knox presentation, a colonial dinner offered in cooperation with the SUNY Adirondack Culinary program, and a new letterboxing challenge to highlight Revolutionary War sites.

Pat Niles of the Washington County 250th Committee also spoke. The Washington County committee has a five-year plan that includes commemorating Knox's Trail, the capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold and the capture of Skenesborough.



Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance President John DiNuzzo reports to Alliance trustees and members at the Annual membership meeting.



Visitors to Lake George Battlefield Park may scan QR codes posted at sites in the park to open videos explaining the significance of each stop on the Virtual Tour.



Phil Giltner of the NY State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation discusses American Revolution 250th Anniversary commemorations.