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"THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES"

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Lake George's Battlefield Park Visitor Center Open 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.

Since 2022, those hallowed grounds, along with the rest of us, residents and visitors alike, have had one.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center opened for its third season on May 24.

The Visitor Center "attracted an unexpectedly large number of guests during its first two seasons" – 5,000, in fact, according to Alliance president John DiNuzzo,

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

According to John DiNuzzo, the center also features models of two forts and two vessels, the 1758 radeau Land Tortoise, and the 1756 sloop Earl of Loudoun. Display cases contain artifacts from Native Americans, the French and Indian War and the

American Revolution.

Other exhibits include a replica of a cannon that would have been used to defend Fort William Henry during the Marquis de Montcalm's 1757 siege; fragments of a 1758 bateau raised from the lake bed in the 1960s; and a relic of the more recent past, a mid-1950s diorama depicting the departure of 16,000 men and 1,000 boats from the head of Lake George, at the time the largest force ever assembled in North America, bound for Ticonderoga and a disastrous defeat under the command of British General James Abercromby.

The diorama depicting General Abercromby's 1758 expedition to Ticonderoga could be seen at the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake, NY, when that museum first opened to the public in 1957.

Placed in storage in the mid-1960s, the diorama required an extensive restoration before it could be displayed at the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center.

"It's really well done," said Bruce Venter, a historian of northern New York's 18th century military history and a trustee of the Lake George Battlefield Alliance. "It provides viewers with a clear sense of the

numbers of troops and boats that were involved in the Abercromby campaign."

Each piece in the diorama would have been made by hand, with scrupulous attention to historic detail, probably by craftsmen trained at the New York State Museum, said DiNuzzo.

The wharf that is portrayed in the diorama, from which the flotilla is departing, was constructed by Abercromby's army in 1758. A state historic marker, almost if not quite visible from the Visitor Center, directs visitors to its exact location.

The Adirondack Museum (since renamed Adirondack Experience) has also transferred two iron mortar from the French and Indian War discovered on a flat-bottomed, Lake George shipwreck to the Visitor Center.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center is open weekends 10 am to 4 pm until the beginning of July, when it will be open five days a week. The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance offers free, one-hour tours of Fort George/Lake George Battlefield every Saturday at 11 am. The tours begin and conclude at the Visitor Center. Reservations for these tours can be made at info@lakegeorgebattlefield.org