

LAKE GEORGE MIRROR.

“THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES”

LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK, June 21, 2024



By Anthony F. Hall

The transformation of a nondescript hillside above Lake George into a memorial to those who perished during what, arguably, was the new nation's first foreign adventure – the disastrous 1775 invasion of Quebec – began Friday, June 14 with a simple dedication ceremony.

“We have gathered here on Flag Day in the beautiful and Serene Lake George Battlefield Park, to celebrate an important milestone in our community's effort to preserve American history,” said Dan Barusch, Lake George's Director of Planning and Zoning.

In February, 2019, as Barusch reminded the audience, the remains of more than forty Continental Army soldiers were discovered at a construction site on Courtland Street in Lake George Village.

According to Chuck Vandrei, the Environmental Conservation Department's Historic Preservation Officer, who also spoke at the ceremony, the

soldiers and camp-followers who contracted smallpox during the campaign were sent to Lake George, where a hospital – the largest military cemetery in the original 13 colonies – was under construction.

“Several thousand soldiers cycled through that hospital, and as many as one thousand may have died here and were buried nearby,” said Vandrei.

WAR MEMORIAL TO BE BUILT IN STATE-OWNED PARK

The remains of forty-four of those hundreds who were buried near Courtland Street will be reinterred in the new memorial, which will honor all those who served at Lake George.

A memorial plaza will be situated within walking distance of the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center and within sight of another monument to unknown soldiers – American provincials who were fighting on behalf of the British king at the 1755 Battle of Lake George, whose remains were found



during the construction of a road near Lake George in the 1930s and were reburied in the park at that time.

Lisa Anderson, the New York State Museum curator and archaeologist who supervised the recovery of the remains in 2019, said many of those buried underneath Courtland Street were not only young men but teenaged

boys. The remains of two children between the ages of six and ten were also discovered there.

According to Anderson, the sick were cared for by women from Fort Ticonderoga, dispatched to Fort George to serve as nurses.

“There may have been women among those whose graves were destroyed,” she said. “As our work continues, we hope to be

able to tell their story: who they were, how they lived, how they died. We hope to give recognition to their place in the American Revolution, right here in Lake George.”

Additional remains were found in October, 2023 behind the Lobster Pot restaurant at the corner of Mohican and Canada

See REMEMBER Page 18



A: A ceremony dedicating state park land to a new war memorial was held June 14. B: Lake George Planning and Zoning Director Dan Barusch with an architect's rendering of the new memorial. C: Chuck Vandrei, the Environmental Conservation Department's Historic Preservation Officer, with Lisa Anderson, NYS Museum archaeologist and curator. D: U.S. Army Maj. Robert Volk, the 42nd Expeditionary Aviation Combat Brigade chaplain, New York National Guard, was among the speakers. E: (LtoR) Steve Mann, Capital Region Director for U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer; NYS Senator Dan Stec; Assemblyman Matt Simpson; and Lake George Supervisor Vinnie Crocitto; prepare to honor the dead with a toast in their memory. F: Dan Barusch, DEC interim Commissioner Sean Mahar and Senator Dan Stec prepare to cut a ceremonial ribbon at the site of the future war memorial. G: The flag carried by the Americans on the march to Quebec in 1775.

from page 5

Streets.

"There are consistencies between the burial of these skeletal remains and those found on Courtland Street in 2019, leading us to surmise that these, too, belonged to someone who died at Fort George," said Dan Barusch.

"We think the entire ground was a cemetery," he said.

The New York State Museum's Lisa Anderson said she believed the discovery of remains in Lake George Village contributed to the passage in 2023 of New York State's "Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act," which requires that remains and funerary-related artifacts found on private land – especially those belonging to Native Americans - immediately be reported to state officials.

"That law is a good start, but we still need your help," said Anderson. "If you think a grave has been disturbed, please notify the authorities. Report it to law enforcement agencies. We will take it from there."

PLAN ATTRACTS FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL SUPPORT

The plan to construct the memorial plaza in the Fort George/Battlefield Park required the support of New York State, which has owned the grounds since 1898 and whose Department of Environmental Conservation manages it as a historic site and

public park. In April, 2024, the project was approved by the Adirondack Park Agency, which must approve any alterations to state-owned lands within the Adirondack Park, as prescribed by the State Land Master Plan, which the New York State legislature approved in 1972.

"Anything we do here has to be very carefully considered, so as to preserve the historical legacy of this area," said Sean Mahar, interim Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, who was among the day's speakers. "Our goal is to make sure that we're doing it right, so we appreciate everyone's partnership and patience."

Other speakers included: Steve Mann, the Capital Region Director for U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer, who affirmed his support for the memorial during an August 28 visit to Lake George; NYS Senator Dan Stec and Assemblyman Matt Simpson, whose respective houses have passed resolutions supporting reinterment; and Town Supervisor Vinnie Crocitto and Village Mayor Ray Perry. The Boards of both the Village and the Town of Lake George have approved resolutions supporting "respectful reburials" of the remains found at the construction site inside Lake George Battlefield Park.

Writing in a letter read by Steve Mann, Senator Schumer contrasted what Lake George must have looked like in 1776

with its appearance today.

"There would have been no Minne-Ha-Ha, no 'Round the World' miniature golf, no soft ice cream stands. Yet none of these undeniable expressions of modern American life would be possible without the audacious sacrifices of these brave individuals. There's a poignant symmetry in how this project coincides with the approaching 250th anniversary of America. These soldiers will be properly laid to rest and memorialized in that important milestone anniversary year," stated Schumer.

DEDICATION KICKS OFF FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

The "Repose of the Fallen," as the memorial will be named, could cost as much as \$500,000.

Lake George Supervisor Vinnie Crocitto said he hoped a substantial portion of the costs will be funded by a \$10 million state Downtown Revitalization grant, awarded Lake George on December 27.

John DiNuzzo, president of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, said a fundraising campaign is now underway.

"We will announce a plan within a few weeks that will inform the public how it can contribute to the project, including financially. We'll need private donations, in addition to the government grants. But make no mistake, we are all committed to giving these 44 individuals the proper burial they deserve," said DiNuzzo.