

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 2024

"Repose of the Fallen" - Ribbon-cutting Held for the Courtland Street Reinterment Project

By Dan Barusch

Over the last five years, hundreds of people have spent thousands of hours working to advance the project now known as "Repose of the Fallen," which is a reinterment of historical remains and Continental soldiers in the Lake George Battlefield Park. The year 2024 has certainly been a positive one for the advancement of this project, as the Courtland Street Reinterment Committee has reached numerous major milestones. While there have been plenty of advancements made in the Lake George community's effort to reinter these early American Patriots, there is still much more work to do.

In April of 2024, the New York State Adirondack Park Agency (APA) concluded the process to amend the Lake George Battlefield Park's woefully outdated Unit Management Plan (UMP). The amendment included in it the Repose of the Fallen project plaza and associated columbaria, a plan originally submitted to the State in spring 2022. This was a major achievement in the effort to pursue approval by New York State to complete the reinterment project in the preferred location on lands owned by the State, in our beautiful Battlefield Park, almost directly across the street from the Park Visitor Center and Lake George Park Commission offices.

Following the APA approval of the UMP amendment this spring, which all but solidified the State's support for the project to occur on State-owned lands, the Courtland Street Reinterment Committee



Community, State and Federal officials cut the ribbon at Hallowing Ceremony, June 14, 2024 (photo courtesy of Gillian Burdett/Lake George Examiner)

continued working diligently to plan for a "Hallowing of the Ground" ceremony, to consecrate the land on which these Patriots would have their final rest. The Hallowing event, held on Flag Day (June 14) 2024, was a huge success, drawing over 75 attendees and many local, State and even federal dignitaries, including Interim DEC Commissioner Sean Mahar, Senator

Charles Schumer's Deputy State Director **Steve Mann**, State legislators and even a Chaplain of the New York Army National Guard, who gave a most moving and motivational blessing. Of importance at the Hallowing event was the announcement from Interim Commissioner Mahar that the UMP amendment has been signed by

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NOTICE: Annual Membership Meeting, August 17

The annual membership meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will take place on Saturday, August 17, 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 membership meeting will conclude by 1 PM.

The agenda for the meeting includes the delivery of an annual report by Alliance President **John DiNuzzo** and the election of Trustees and officers. The featured guest speaker will be **Dan Barusch**, Director of Planning & Zoning for the Town and Village of Lake George. Dan, who chairs the Courtland Street Reinterment Committee, will describe what is planned at the Battlefield Park for the memorial that is to include the reburial of the remains of 44 Continental soldiers and others who died at Lake George during the summer of 1776.

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 in late July.

Those attending the annual membership meeting are asked to **RSVP no later than August 14** 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

In the heart of summer there are many reasons for celebration and optimism for devotees of Lake George Battlefield Park!

First, the five-year odyssey to reinter the remains of 44 Continental soldiers and others who died at the Fort George general hospital during the torturous summer of 1776, has concluded with an approval by New York State for our park to be their final resting place. Efforts to raise the necessary funds to design and construct a suitable memorial for these early American patriots are now underway, with the target of a Memorial Day 2026 dedication ceremony.

In June, the Battlefield Park was the site of its first archaeological exploration since 2016, under the leadership of **Professor Siobhan Hart** of the Skidmore College Anthropology Department. Our Visitor Center, now in its third year of operation, has added displays and artifacts that attract increasing numbers of appreciative guests. The Alliance's public programs and member-only events continue to "WOW" the history community by spotlighting the importance

of our region's heritage. The weekly forum that "Lake George Battlefield Moments" provides on Lake George Radio—WLGR 93.5 FM and globally via livestreaming—along with the Alliance's YouTube channel, offers connectivity to the Alliance regardless of location.

Appearance matters, and I must say how delighted we are with the long-awaited physical improvements made at the Battlefield Park so far this season by the State Department of Environmental Conservation. Walkways on the west side of the park (west of Fort George Road) have all been rebuilt, and a new connector path has been constructed between the Visitor Center and the St. Isaac Jogues statue.

We are grateful for the improvements DEC is making to the park's infrastructure, and look forward to collaborating with the Department to present to the public a site that is always maintained in a manner commensurate with its vital place in American history. ■



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Leaving No Trace at the Lake George Battlefield

To many, spending time outdoors is a defining part of summer. At the Lake George Battlefield Day Use Area, you can breathe in the fresh Adirondack air and soak up richly informative monuments and interpretive panels all at once.

As the "friends group" for one of DEC's most historic and scenic sites, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance has worked hard to preserve its history — with commemorations for the hospital and supply base established there during the early American Revolution, the military camp during the French and Indian War, the Battle of Lake George, and more. Visitors can do their part in preserving it further by keeping in mind the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace: 1) Plan Ahead and Prepare, 2) Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces, 3) Dispose of Waste Properly, 4) Leave What You Find, 5) Minimize Campfire Impacts, 6) Respect Wildlife, and 7) Be Considerate of Others.

Like how its stunning nature scenery is interwoven with fascinating history, the Principles of Leave No Trace often interweave, too. Take for example that you're enjoying the park's picnic tables and grills. Picking up afterward not only fulfills Principle 3, but also demonstrates courtesy to other people who want to enjoy the area (Principle 7) and shows respect to wildlife who face adverse health effects from consuming human food (Principle 6). These small decisions have big impacts.

Whether you're craving a picnic or hungry for knowledge, following Leave No Trace enables the Lake George Battlefield Day Use Area to continue serving as an impeccable location for both. Let it leave its impact on you, not the other way around.

Alliance Digs Again (Lightly) at the Lake George Battlefield Park

By Bruce M. Venter

Since the passing of noted archeologist and author **Dr. David Starbuck** in 2020, the Lake George Battlefield Park has gone “fallow” in terms of digging up clues about what happened there from 1755 to 1780. Starbuck’s last dig ended in 2016. The well-known professor felt that his five years of field work at the battlefield “should be viewed as just a beginning to the historical and archaeological research that can and should be conducted here at the southern end of Lake George.”¹

This hiatus ended on June 3 when **Dr. Siobhan Hart**, associate professor and chair of the Anthropology Department at Skidmore College, and her students embarked on another investigation into what this hallowed ground has to offer.

By the time this issue of the *Fort George Post* is published, Dr. Hart’s field survey will be finished. Her findings will be shared with local media outlets and published in emails to Alliance members from our president, **John DiNuzzo**, sometime after September 1. Keep a sharp eye out for them later in the Fall.

The well-credentialed professor, who holds degrees from Colgate and the University of Massachusetts, has been assisted by two Skidmore Anthropology majors, **Cerys Forster** and **Lily Whelden**. Both students have completed an Archeological Field Methods course where they learned archeological survey techniques and documentation, including survey, excavation and site mapping. Dr. Hart also was keen to have Alliance volunteers join her team to help with the investigation.

Dr. Hart used Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and a limited amount of subsurface investigation at two sites on the battlefield. Both approaches were approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the custodians of the battlefield park, and the New York State Museum. The information gleaned from this approach will be used by DEC and the Alliance to benefit site management, stewardship and public interpretation.

Ground Penetrating Radar is a non-invasive remote sensing technique. The GPR “waves” push deeper and deeper into the subsurface until they encounter a change in the properties of the ground. When there is a change in material property (e.g., if the radar waves travel from soil to a stone wall), some of the electromagnetic energy is reflected back into the antenna” of the device, said Dr. Hart. The GPR’s console will average the data and create “a 2-dimensional profile of the subsurface that can be viewed in real time as a radargram.”²

GPS is typically used to find buried walls, pits and other anomalies that are invisible to

anyone looking at the ground. Small grids are marked out on the ground to be studied. The researchers will first apply the GPS to known stone foundations to understand anomalies, then move to where they suspect to find anomalies on ground that does not evidence surface features.³

Besides the previous work done by Dr. Starbuck which generated information from regimental buttons, pottery styles and evidence of fresh meat eaten at the site, a 2018 report by Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc. recommended that non-destructive techniques could be used to collect important archeological information without requiring extensive excavation. Dr. Hart proposed to build on these earlier findings with a largely non-invasive investigation of two selected sites on the battlefield.

Dr. Hart and her students looked at where Maj. Gen William Johnson’s breastworks were located during the 1755 battle at Lake George. After ambushing a reconnaissance in force sent out by Johnson on September 8 along the military road, the French commander, Baron Dieskau, attacked Johnson’s main encampment on the southern shore of Lake George.

The quick-witted Johnson assessed the impact of the disastrous ambush, now called “Bloody Morning Scout,” by ordering his troops to make a standby piling up logs and overturning wagons to form a makeshift fortification.

As Johnson’s son-in-law, Daniel Claus, described it, the breastwork “consisted of some trees cut down in a hurry at the front of the camp in some places not above a foot and a half high and which wagons were the principle (sic) shelter . . . completed a few minutes before the attack.”⁴ Dr. Hart built on the research done by Alliance member **Mark Silo**, who recently published an extensive study of Johnson’s lines.⁵ Moreover, Hartgen’s study concluded that while Johnson’s lines are fairly well-defined to the south and east of the battlefield, additional work should be undertaken to highlight the western part of Johnson’s lines.

Dr. Hart proposed “to test the wooded area on the west side of Fort George Road south of the campground access road with GPR and limited subsurface testing of identified anomalies.”⁶

The other objective of Dr. Hart’s fieldwork involved the location of the smallpox hospital. She proposed to find out if there are any “in-situ [original position or place] remains of the structures and activities associated with the 1776 smallpox hospital at Fort George and if so, what are their extent, nature, and

condition?”⁷ It is well-known to Alliance members that the Lake George smallpox hospital was the largest American facility of its kind in 1776.

According to historian and Alliance trustee, **Russ Bellico**: “Within the Lake George Battlefield Park there are the likely remains of multiple hospitals from both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War eras.”⁸ There were at least two hospitals near Fort George in 1776. It’s also possible that sick soldiers were housed in barracks due to overcrowding. Dr. Hart’s study looks to shed new light on the extent of these medical facilities at Lake George.

At the conclusion of Dr. Hart’s field work, all subsurface excavations were “photographed, lined with black plastic, backfilled, and returned to their original appearances as nearly as possible.”⁹ Dr. Hart’s team is to catalog recovered artifacts in the archeology lab at Skidmore College, then will turn over these artifacts, along with photographs and field notes, to the New York State Museum. She will also prepare a digital catalog for the NYS Museum by the end of the year.¹⁰

This initiative by the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance is truly an impressive undertaking. Hopefully, the results of Dr. Hart’s efforts will shed new light on what happened here during the 18th century. Her work will increase our knowledge and ability to interpret the events we want present and future generations to understand.

¹ *Lake George Mirror*, June 7, 2024, 10.

² Quote appears in Dr. Hart’s *Application for Authorization to Collect and Excavate Archeological or Paleontological Materials on State Lands* dated 4/11/24, 6.

³ Ibid

⁴ Claus’ quote appears in Hart’s *Application*, 4. Also cited in Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., *Analysis of Military Campaigns Associated with Fort George and Environs*, 2 vols, October 2018.

⁵ Mark Silo, “Sir William, Where Exactly Were Your Lines? : The Battle of Lake George – September 8, 1755,” *Fort George Post*, No. 11, Winter 2023.

⁶ Hart, *Application*, 4.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Russell P. Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George and Hudson River Corridor* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., 2010), 142-43.

⁹ Hart, *Application*, 6.

¹⁰ Ibid. 7.

Dr. Bruce M. Venter is a trustee of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and president of America’s History LLC, a history tour and conference company. ■

Trustee Profile: Jay Levenson 



Campgrounds adjacent to Lake George Battlefield Park. He has been a Living Historian for over 30 years portraying a mixed-blood Mohawk scout allied to the British in the French and Indian War.

While living on Long Island Jay became an active promoter of Native American issues and history. He served as a Trustee of the Southold Indian Museum, assisting and advising in the repatriation of remains. Now blissfully retired, Jay previously worked for Stony Brook University. While there, he acted as the advisor to the Native American Student Organization and was given the Chancellor's Award for Excellence as well as the Frederick R. Preston Partnership Award. Jay also received two consecutive Presidential mini-grants for Departmental Diversity Initiatives. With these he organized Native American educational programs that included performances by Grammy award winners Ty Defoe and Joanne Shenandoah.

In 2005 Jay was honored by being chosen to portray King Hendrick during the 250th Anniversary re-enactment of the Battle of Lake George. During that same period he spearheaded, along with the late **Dr. Marilyn Van Dyke** of the Warren County Historical Society and the late **Charles Vandrei** of State DEC, the restoration and rededication of the Mohawk Indian fountain in Lake George Battlefield Park that recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. He designed the plaque located on the boulder within the enclosure.

"The importance and contributions of Native Americans to the region throughout the 18th century and beyond are greatly overlooked." Jay feels it is extremely important that the Alliance and the Battlefield Park Visitor Center help to tell their stories. "After all, Native American history IS America's history!" ■



Skidmore College Archaeological Battlefield Park Exploration - June 2024

Skidmore College Professor Siobhan Hart (right) and student Lily Whelden explore remnants of the 1759 stockaded fort

Gwendolyn Craig of *Adirondack Explorer* (left) interviews Professor Hart about the project



"Repose of the Fallen" - Ribbon-cutting Held for the Courtland Street Reinterment Project

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his office, completing the process to have the project approved on State lands.

It was discussed in the Winter 2024 edition of the *Fort George Post* that the group would immediately start fundraising efforts following State approvals, and the Committee has done just that. By the time readers are digesting this article, both the *Repose of the Fallen* website (www.reposeofthefallenlg.org) and an informational / fundraising brochure will be accessible. Donations have already started to arrive, the first of which came at the Hallowing Ceremony from prominent Alliance members **Frank and Rosemary Pusateri**.

The Courtland Street Reinterment Committee is extremely excited to continue the fundraising effort to collect as much support as we can to get this important project off the ground. We remain hopeful that there will be funds set aside from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award granted to Lake George in December 2023. The Governor's office and Empire State Development staff have already told us that they were encouraged by the uniqueness of the project as it relates to Economic Development funding, the potential it has to revitalize the Battlefield Park, and the pivotal support the project has already garnered. The Town is sponsoring a submission to the DRI's Local Planning Committee for half of the project cost of \$500,000, in hopes that at least a portion of that total cost will be awarded to the project, with the rest to come from private fundraising efforts.

It is expected that once the funding is completely lined up for this project, ideally by the end of 2024 or early

2025, the construction process will commence. Construction activities will go out to public bid in early 2025, and a contractor selected for the site work and columbaria by spring 2025. Construction will commence in the summer and hopefully conclude by the time winter approaches in late 2025. With finishing touches planned for spring 2026, the Committee and its partners will then be prepared for an unveiling event on Memorial Day Weekend 2026.

The timing of the dedication will coincide with ceremonies across the United States that begin marking the Semiquincentennial of the birth of our great nation. We fully anticipate that Lake George Battlefield Park's newest memorial will further strengthen the site's reputation as a major American historic attraction.

Dan Barusch has been the Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town and Village of Lake George since August 2015 when he was hired at age 25, the youngest individual to ever serve in that municipal position in the State's history. He chairs several committees as part of his service to the Town, including the Courtland Street Reinterment Committee, and is responsible for most of the Town's success in grants, capital projects and planning studies. He is an award-winning Urban Planner and holds a Masters in Urban and Environmental Planning and a Bachelor's Degree in Design Studies, both from Arizona State University.

PLEASE NOTE: A brochure developed in support of the "Repose of the Fallen" project is inserted in this issue of the *Fort George Post*. Please consider a donation to this most worthwhile project. ■

Visitor Center Year 3: Getting Better and Busier

The Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center opened on May 24 for its third season with additional exhibits on display and more in the works. Over 5,000 guests viewed the exhibits at the Visitor Center during its initial two seasons, and the early numbers for 2024 are running significantly higher. Admission remains free for all guests.

Two 13-inch diameter, 160 + pound intact iron mortar bombs/shells that date from the 1757 French or 1758 British campaign at new exhibits in the Visitor Center for 2024. The mortar bombs were recovered by the Adirondack Museum during the 1960s with a permit from New York State authorities, and are on loan by the State Museum.

The Visitor Center's popular model of the *Land Tortoise* radeau is being joined this year by a new representation of a bateau, developed under the guidance of Alliance Trustee **Russ Bellico**. The two models offer a rendering of their appearances when newly built in the mid-18th Century, in contrast to the worn artifacts of actual vessels that are also on display.

The summer schedule at the Visitor Center is Thursday through Monday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. It will again remain open for all of September and October on a three-day per week schedule. **Lyn Hohmann** chairs the Curation Committee that oversees the center's displays, and **Dick Carlson** serves as day-to-day manager.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance sponsors free 1-hour tours of the park's historic grounds each Saturday at 11:00 AM. The tours begin and conclude at the Visitor Center. Reservations for these tours can be made at info@lakegeorgebattlefield.org. ■

The First Siege of Fort William Henry - 19-22 March 1757

By Thomas L. Nesbitt, P.L.S.

Spring was still two months away and at least four feet of snow lay on the ground in the woods. The lakes were frozen solid, but rain and the spring sun were softening the ice.

In mid-January 1757, Captain Robert Rogers led a mixed company of rangers and volunteers from the garrisons of Forts Edward and William Henry on a raid into French-controlled territory. Somewhere between Fort Carillon at Ticonderoga and Fort St-Frédéric at Crown Point, they attacked a supply train and captured several French soldiers. Before Rogers could extract his raiding party, they were attacked by a superior French force from Carillon. Half of Rogers' men were left dead, severely wounded or captured as the rest made their escape in the dark of night toward Fort William Henry. Rogers himself was wounded and went on to Albany to recover. The rest of the survivors remained in hospitals at Forts William Henry and Edward. Lieutenant John Stark was promoted to Captain of Captain Thomas Spikeman's company of rangers after Spikeman (pronounced "Speekman") was fatally wounded in that fight and scalped while still alive by a French-allied Ottawa Indian. Stark would now also be in command of the two ranging companies in the garrison of Fort William Henry.

The British Campaign of 1756 to take Fort St-Frédéric at Crown Point had stagnated at Lake George. The primarily colonial army managed to build storehouses for supplies, over 300 bateaux, three sloops, and other gun boats, all to be used to transport the army down the lake that summer. The portage road to Fort Edward was improved and a blockhouse on the north side of Halfway Brook was built. At the end of the campaign season, with winter approaching, the British regulars were sent to winter quarters in New York, Albany, Schenectady, and the posts at Stillwater and Saratoga (now Schuylerville). The colonial regulars were sent home.

The winter garrison for Forts Edward and William Henry arrived in October of 1756 and were composed of British regulars from the 44th and 48th regiments and two companies of colonial rangers at each post. These regulars came to America in 1755 and had fought in the disaster on the Monongahela River, a few miles east of modern-day Pittsburgh. The garrison commander at Fort William Henry was Major (promoted in January 1757) William Eyre of the 44th. He had served as the only British regular in the Crown Point Campaign of 1755, commanded by Major General William Johnson. Eyre was a captain then and had charge of Johnson's artillery and logistics. He designed both Fort Edward on the Hudson River and Fort William Henry (called by the French "Fort George") at Lake George in 1755. Eyre's winter command amounted to nearly 500 men, regulars and rangers, but fully one-quarter were sick in the hospital.

The Marquis de Montcalm had arrived in Québec from France with reinforcements in May 1756. Montcalm replaced Baron Dieskau, who had been wounded and captured at Lake George in 1755. Montcalm's first command in North America was the successful taking of the British forts at Oswego on Lake Ontario in August 1756. There Montcalm witnessed the savagery (by European standards) of the eastern Woodland and Great Lakes Indians. Nearly 100 British prisoners, part of the garrison of Oswego, were slaughtered by these allies of the French. After destroying the three British forts, Montcalm returned to Montreal. His Indian allies went home with their trophies. The Canadians returned to their farms to harvest much needed food, and the petrified British (under the command of Major General Daniel Webb) abandoned and destroyed their forts in the Mohawk valley west of German Flatts. This French victory caused the British expedition to Crown Point to languish on the defensive at Lake George.

In January 1757, Montcalm

suggested to the Governor of New France (Canada), Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, Marquis de Vaudreuil, that a force of 800 carefully chosen and well-equipped men might surprise and destroy Fort William Henry in the depth of winter, thereby pushing the British completely off the lake. Vaudreuil made Montcalm's proposal his own plan and placed his brother, François-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil (governor of Trois Rivières), in command of 1,650 French regulars, colony troops, Canadians and Indians. They left St-Jean sur Richelieu in late February. The trip up Lake Champlain was hampered by snow squalls, a brief thaw and rain. Arriving at Fort Carillon early in March, Rigaud's force was further delayed waiting for enough food to sustain themselves to Fort William Henry and back. Finally by the 15th of March, under a new moon, Rigaud's army was able to resume its trek, with the addition of some 300 scaling ladders built for them at Carillon. By the night of the 18th of March, they were approaching Fort William Henry, having traveled over 150 miles on snowshoes and ice skates, sleeping on the snow and ice, each day dragging sleds with food, spare clothes and equipment.

The French planned to surprise the British garrison at Fort William Henry during the dark of the new moon (borne out during the interrogation of a French prisoner). The scaling ladders would help them get over the walls to overpower the sentries and then the garrison. In order to ensure their safety on the ice, and especially as they traveled the last ten miles in the dark, each of the five French columns had a man some distance in front with a lantern and a hatchet to test the thickness of the ice. Between three and four o'clock in the morning of Saturday 19 March, sentries at Fort William Henry reported hearing chopping sounds some distance down the lake. Flickers of light could be seen in the darkness as well. The garrison rose to the alarm and was quickly able to repel the first attempt of the French

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Historian's Corner

Glenn F. Williams, Ph.D. is a retired Army officer who entered public history as a second career. He recently retired from federal civilian service as a Senior Historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, DC. His previous positions include service as Historian for the National Museum of the U.S. Army, the Army Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, and the American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Park Service, Curator / Historian of the USS Constellation Museum, and Assistant Curator of the Baltimore Civil War Museum – President Street Station. Glenn is the author of several books, including *Year of the Hangman: George Washington's Campaign Against the Iroquois* (Westholme 2005), recipient of the Thomas J. Fleming Award for the Outstanding Revolutionary War Book of 2005 and named one of "The 100 Best American Revolution Books of All

Time" by the *Journal of the American Revolution*. For his book, *Dunmore's War: The Last Conflict of America's Colonial Era* (Westholme 2017), Glenn received the Shelby Cullom Davis Award of the Ohio Society of Colonial Wars and the Judge Robert K. Woltz Award of the French and Indian War Foundation. He holds a BA in History from Loyola University of Maryland, and MA in History and Certificate in Public History from University of Maryland Baltimore County. Glenn's Ph.D. in History was bestowed by the University of Maryland, College Park.

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

I am currently juggling a few books and other projects in various stages of completion.

Before retiring from my position as a Senior Historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), Fort McNair, DC, where I worked from 2004 to 2022, I developed the basis of the service's plan to commemorate the 250th "Birthday" of the U.S. Army's June 14, 1775 establishment, the semiquincentennial of the July 4, 1776 Declaration of American Independence, and the 250th anniversary of the April 1775–November 1783 Revolutionary War. As part of the plan, CMH will publish a series of thirteen commemorative pamphlets (65–85 pages each) on the major campaigns of the conflict. Although originally tasked to write only one, I was subsequently asked to write two—*Opening Shots in the Colonies, 1775–1776* and *The War on the Revolutionary Frontier, 1775–1783*—and co-author a third—*Northern Campaigns, 1778–1780*. I completed all my drafts after I retired. Scheduled for release at the end of 2024, individual copies may be downloaded free in PDF format from the CMH website at www.history.army.mil or purchased in hardcopy from the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) bookstore.

I am currently writing a narrative history of the January 2, 1777, battle of Assunpink Creek—sometime also called the Second Battle of Trenton or Battle of Mill Hill—for Westholme Publishing's "Small Battles of the Revolutionary War" series. When completed, I plan to start researching and writing a new treatment

of the August 6, 1777 Battle of Oriskany.

Other than researching and authoring books, there are several other projects that keep me busy. Publishers—and some authors—send me manuscripts to review for historical and military accuracy before proceeding with revision and publication. I enjoy visiting museums, battlefields, and other historic sites, and attending conferences on the military history of the 18th century, as well as presenting lectures at conferences and public programs for history interest organizations. In addition, I am frequently asked to provide services as a "subject matter expert," "script consultant," and "adviser" to film-makers producing audio-visual treatments for museums, documentaries, docudramas—occasionally appearing as a "talking head"—and period films. As a retired U.S. Army officer, I am particularly proud of my role advising the production of the two recent history-based Army commercials for the new "Be All You Can Be" recruiting campaign: "Overcoming Obstacles" and "Pushing Tomorrow." I was fortunate to collaborate with the eminent historian **Ed Lengel** on a biography of Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, which is currently "on hold" with University of Virginia Press. Finally, I facilitate "staff ride" training exercises for military leaders and tours for civilian groups several times a year.

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

As a specialist in 18th century military

history, I can never learn enough about the important roles Lake George and environs played in the Seven Years' War and American War of Independence. Whether as the scene of a significant military engagement, base of operations, or logistics center, the area holds so much to offer. Although not recent, an example of a manuscript I reviewed for military history accuracy that may interest members of the Lake George Battlefield Alliance was Ben Hughes' *The Siege of Fort William Henry: A Year on the Northeastern Frontier* (Westholme Publishing, 2011). The draft I wrote for the commemorative pamphlet *War on the Revolutionary Frontier, 1775–1783* included British Major Christopher Carleton's Raids of 1778 and 1780 (which the editors will hopefully not cut).

As previously mentioned, I also facilitate "staff ride" training exercises for military leaders and cadets. I will be facilitating one on the Battles of Saratoga for senior leaders of the Massachusetts National Guard in September (which I do every year). The evening before going out on the battlefield, I give the participants an overview briefing on the entire campaign, which includes a description of the Pawlet Expedition with the actions at Skenesborough, Ticonderoga and on Lake George, as well as their significance to the outcome of the campaign.

Please share your experiences with visiting Lake George Battlefield Park and other historic sites in the region (e.g., Fort William Henry, Fort Ticonderoga, Crown Point, Rogers Island, Saratoga National Historical Park).

From 2001 to 2004 I worked as the historian of the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP). My interest in the Seven Years' War was further piqued after reading Fred Anderson's terrific book *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766*. The ABPP awarded a historic preservation grant for a local organization to research extant features and develop preservation and interpretive plans for William Johnson's 1755 Fort Edward–Lake George Military Road, the skirmishes of Bloody Pond and Bloody Morning Scout, and the Battle of Lake George. Reviewing the report as the ABPP historian, I was fascinated by military operations at the lake during that period. Unfortunately, I was not able to make a site visit before leaving the ABPP to take a position at CMH in 2004. As a senior historian, however, my CMH supervisors approved my request to attend the 2005 War College of the Seven Years' War conference

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Historian's Corner

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at Fort Ticonderoga for “professional development.” To make the most of my visit, I arrived a day early, and visited Fort Edward, Rogers Island, Fort William Henry, and Lake George Battlefield on the way to Fort Ticonderoga. On the last day of the conference, I had enough time to visit Crown Point before driving to Albany Airport.

I found visiting the Lake George Battlefield particularly rewarding. *Year of the Hangman: George Washington's Campaign Against the Iroquois* (Westholme Publishing, 2005) had just been released, and several personalities associated with the 1755 campaign were also in my book. Not long afterward, the French and Indian War Society invited me to return to Lake George for longer, more relaxed visits in two consecutive years to present lectures at the Fort William Henry Conference Center. Every morning of our stays at the Fort William Henry Hotel I took detailed personal “walking tours” of the Lake George Battlefield and the ruins of Fort George—stopping to read every wayside exhibit and interpretive plaque, as well as visit Fort William Henry and other points of interest in the area. I have since visited several more times. As a retired U.S. Army Ranger, Rogers Island will always hold a special interest and significance for me.

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

Whether a professional or avocational historian, or knowledgeable person with an interest in history, no experience can beat visits to museums and historic sites. Historic sites, especially battlefields, have the added attraction of providing visitors a “sense of place” at locations where significant historical events occurred. In his 1903 book *Clio, A Muse and Other Essays Literary and Pedestrian*, noted British historian George Macaulay Trevelyan wrote (on page 238), “Battlefield hunting, a sport which ... is one of the joys that history can afford every walker and cyclist, and even to the man in the motor, if he can stir himself to get to see the country.”

Museums collect, interpret, and exhibit artifacts. Artifacts, although objects, are primary sources of information. Similarly, battlefields not only include such objects, but are themselves artifacts and primary sources of information. Museums, as well as battlefields and other historic sites,

are repositories of non-written historic records. Battlefields and other historic sites, similar to museums, are places of learning which educate visitors either formally or informally about the past. The battlefield is also a unique place where any visitor can research, experiment, test hypotheses, seek alternative conclusions or correct previously accepted interpretations of the historical record. One may also use a battlefield to apply lessons of the past to gain insights on solving the problems of the present or future. Battlefields also offer places of recreation, and destinations for leisure activities with the added benefit of passive learning. The battlefield may also be called a type of museum. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a museum is “a building” used for storing and exhibiting objects of historical, scientific, or cultural interest.” A reader may be tempted to exclude the battlefield from the definition. At first glance, battlefields may merely appear to be landscape, albeit having historical significance. Despite their outdoor nature, battlefields fit the requirements and definitions, and not merely the spirit, of what we traditionally assign to the museum.

Like museums, battlefields provide visitors with a feeling of connection to the past. Professors Roy Rosenweig and David Thelen surveyed 1,453 individual Americans about their museum experiences and reported their findings in the book, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. They found (on pages 19-21) that 57% of their respondents had visited a history museum within the previous twelve months and said the experience gave them a close association with the past. People rated visiting museums—and we can include historic sites—higher for their feeling connected to the past than celebrating a commemorative holiday, reading a book, viewing a movie or television program about the past, or studying history in school. When asked to rate the trustworthiness of museums—and historic sites—almost 80% of respondents ranked them as the most trustworthy sources of information about the past. After they learn from books, movies, television, and conversations with older relatives about their memories, or even eyewitnesses to historic events, people want to approach history on their own terms. The authors wrote (on pages 89-90) that visiting museums enabled visitors to get close to experiencing history where they can see the ambiguities, multiple perspectives, and transformative potential of places and events in a place where the

past meets the present. Rosenweig and Thelen concluded (on page 105) that museums gave their “visitors a sense of immediacy – of personal participation –... associated with eyewitnesses ... and encouraged an interaction with primary sources that reminded respondents of independent research.” Due to their location and settings, all the positive attributes Thelen and Rosenweig applied to museums hold equally true for historic battlefields. Battlefields are not only historic places, but when properly interpreted, they are museums in their own right.

Getting involved with historic preservation activities is a means of ensuring historic sites, including battlefields, remain important to the continued learning about our nation's past. Protecting the places where historic events occurred, and/or which hold historical, architectural, or cultural significance, must remain available for future generations to study, learn from, and enjoy. A battlefield is a unique historic site because it is a place where something significant happened, and nowhere else. ■

Follow the Alliance from Wherever You Are!



You don't need to be at Lake George to stay current with Battlefield Park Alliance activities. Here are three ways to access what we're doing—and what we've done!

“**Lake George Battlefield Moments**” airs each Saturday at 9:45 AM Eastern Time on 93.5 FM Lake George Radio. You can listen to the station anywhere in the world online at <https://www.lakegeorgeradio.com/player> or by downloading their app on your iPhone.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@LakeGeorgeBattlefield>) where you can find recordings of “Lake George Battlefield Moments” audio programs along with videos of past public events the Alliance has sponsored.

Facebook on which Alliance news is shared and members post their reactions to our programs.

You can tune into what we're doing 24/7!

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 **John J. Tichy Jr.** of East Lyme, CT.

My favorite historic spot in **Lake George Battlefield Park** is walking the path to the remnants of Fort George. From that location, and the many other land features, you can begin to understand how those engaged in battle there used the lay of the land to plan any attack or defense. Of course, it also helps if you understand how much the land changed over the years since the time Fort William Henry and Fort George were built. For that you need to read **Mark Silo's** "Sir William, Where Exactly Were Your Lines" article in the Winter 2023 edition of the *Fort George Post*. Better still, I was lucky enough to have a guided tour of the area by Mark, who did a tremendous job researching the subject.

One of my interests is following the evolution of battlefield tactics. Seeing the terrain of this region makes one appreciate the tactical difficulties faced by both defender and aggressor. I believe the French & Indian War set the stage for the changing of tactics by American rebels in the Revolution, as learned from the battles fought here. By the time of the Revolution these lessons, necessitated by both terrain and circumstances, were applied and led to our independence.

Other Favorite Historic Sites:

1. Forts William Henry, Ticonderoga and Crown Point

I have to put these forts together as one favorite due to their close locations at opposite ends of Lake George and the southern tip of Lake Champlain, plus each site had involvement in the French & Indian War and with the other two sites. You really need to visit each as it helps one visualize the events that took place in the area from the 1750s through the American Revolution. Each site has a museum dedicated to helping visitors appreciate what actually happened at each fort. Of these sites, my wife and I spent the most years at Fort



Susan and John J. Tichy Jr.

Ticonderoga, providing the Fort with photos of most of the events held there, as well as providing displays for the museum and framed copies of artwork for their use. There is a large collection of artifacts displayed in the fort museum as well as at the Thompson-Pell Research Center, which houses a massive collection of documents and artifacts available to view for research purposes. Fort Ticonderoga continues to expand its role in providing visitors a well-rounded experience of what life was like in the 1750s as well as in the years after the Pell family acquired the site and restored the fort, constructing the Pell Pavilion and acquiring historic collections.

2. The Fort at No. 4

The Fort at No. 4 is a reconstruction of one of the four original settlements that were built along the upper Connecticut River Valley. Fort No. 4 was a stockade collection of homes and a meeting hall situated where the Black River comes into the Connecticut River at Charlestown, NH. The families that lived here farmed the land and used the river for transporting necessary goods to sell what they farmed. At the time it was built, it was the northernmost settlement of the English colonies. It lies at a crossroad of rivers and land routes making it a strategic location open to attacks from those disputing

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UPCOMING EVENTS

*AUG. 8, 2024 - 7:00 PM

"Lt. Col. George Munro: The Last Commander of Fort William Henry", presentation by historian **George A. Bray III**. Fort William Henry Conference Center, Lake George.

AUG. 14, 2024 - 5:30 PM

"Lake George Battlefield Park History... and Future", presentation by Alliance Trustees **Margy Mannix** and **John DiNuzzo**. Lake George Land Conservancy, Bolton Landing.

*AUG. 17, 2024 - 11:00 AM

Annual membership meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, includes elections of Trustees and officers; annual report; guest speaker **Dan Barusch**, Chair of the Courtland Street Reinterment Project.

*SEP. 28, 2024 - 10:00 AM

Members-only tour of Saratoga battlefield by Alliance Trustee and licensed Park guide **Larry Arnold**. Meet at Saratoga National Historical Park, Stillwater.

OCT 12-13, 2024 - 9:30 AM

"Harvest Moon Faire" demonstrations of 18th Century crafts, Colonial and Native re-enactors, tour of William Johnson's lines during the Battle of Lake George by Alliance member-historian **Mark Silo**. Fort William Henry and Lake George Battlefield Park.

JAN 12, 2025 - 2:00 PM

"The Colonial Wars in Lake George", presentation by Alliance member-historian **Mark Silo** and President **John DiNuzzo**. Town of Colonie Library, Loudonville.

*Registration recommended to info@lakegeorgebattlefield.org

My Favorite History

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their being there, namely the French and the native Indians. Each of the reconstructed houses has the family name on it along with items authentic to the period. A blacksmith shop is just outside the fortification and a large hall with a tower is at one end. Simulated skirmishes are held on a field along the river. During the French & Indian War, the fort served as a staging area for rangers and militia to carry out operations to the north. Once the Crown Point Road was constructed in 1760, it linked Fort No. 4 to Chimney Point, across from Crown Point. Robert Rogers and his Rangers returned here in 1759 after his raid against the Abenaki in the village of St. Francis.

3. Lexington and Concord

We make the trip to Lexington and Concord every few years. How could you not visit this area as what happened here is the reason we are America? The Lexington Visitors Center is the best stop for first-timers or those taking a guided tour. We always start at the Lexington Battle Green, where 77 militia faced the British troops and the “shot heard round the world” was fired. It’s a short walk to the Buckman Tavern, where the militia waited for the English. From there we travel to the Minuteman National Park in Concord, stopping at the Visitor Center which features a 27-minute film depicting the events that transpired on that day in April 1775. Next, we travel to the North Bridge Visitor Center and take the short walk to the bridge where

the British troops and rebels exchanged fire. Crossing the bridge puts you on the Battle Road Trail, where a monument to fallen British soldiers was placed. Of course there are also several museums along the way which cover the full range of American history.

Favorite History Books:

1. *Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero*, by James Kirby Martin, 1997

2. *Benedict Arnold’s Navy*, by James L. Nelson, 2006

3. *My Story: Being the Memoirs of Benedict Arnold*, by F. J. Stimson, 1917 (reprinted from the Clements Library of America History, University of Michigan) ■

91st Military Police Battalion Visits Lake George Battlefield Park

By 2LT Anthony V. Donatelli, US Army

The 91st Military Police Battalion from Fort Drum, New York embarked on a staff ride to Lake George Battlefield Park on April 11.

A staff ride is a historical study of a campaign or battle that envisions a systematic preliminary study, an extensive visit to a campaign site, and an opportunity to integrate lessons derived from each.

Soldiers within the unit were tasked with researching various topics surrounding the French & Indian War to gain insights into military strategy and tactics from the past that could be applied to challenges seen by the Army today.

The unit was oriented to the battlefield and the Lake George Battlefield Park Visitor Center by **John DiNuzzo**, President of the Alliance, assisted by **Andrew Menzie**, Director of Historic Interpretation at Fort William Henry, Alliance Trustees **Peter Wuerdeman** and **Pat Niles**, and historian **Mark Silo**, author of the study of William Johnson’s lines during the Battle of Lake George which informed several parts of the tour and discussion.

“I am nothing but grateful for being able to work with John and the rest of his team at the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance. Despite never hosting a staff ride for any military units prior to our arrival, all the historians with their vast amount of knowledge were able to help guide our discussions effortlessly and assist in expanding upon thoughts and ideas that soldiers from our unit had surrounding the events that took place during the French & Indian War. The 91st Military Police Battalion is proud to support the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and looks forward to working together again in 2025 when the unit conducts another staff ride at the Saratoga Battlefield” said **2LT Anthony Donatelli**.

The staff ride provided an invaluable opportunity for the soldiers from the 91st Military Police Battalion to connect with history, honor the sacrifices of those who came before them, and gather lessons that could inform their own military operations and leadership practices in future large-scale combat operations. ■



CPT Scott A. Coleman (left) and SFC Jonas C. Enriquez, 91st MP BN S3 CUOPS, in LGBP Visitor Center (US Army photo)



LTC Richard T. Sposito (right) makes a point during Staff Ride field activities as John DiNuzzo of the Alliance (center) and CSM Joseph W. Grimsey look on (US Army photo)

The First Siege of Fort William Henry - 19-22 March 1757

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to set fire to the sloops beached in front of the fort. Cannon fire from the walls convinced the French to withdraw, for the time being.

As the black night drifted into the gray of early morning, Eyre dispatched some men to determine if any damage had been done to the bateaux and sloops frozen into the shore of the lake near the fort. They returned with a couple of scaling ladders, hatchets, knives and fire-starting implements. Although no significant damage had been done, Eyre knew that this was more than just a scouting party annoying his winter command.

Rigaud withdrew his army beyond cannon range. Between five and six o'clock in the morning, he displayed his men across the ice in the vicinity of Sloop (probably Diamond) Island. Eyre now knew the French were intent on more than just raiding his post for prisoners and information.

Rigaud divided his army in two, sending them to both sides of the lake. Within an hour, they had surrounded the fort and engaged in continuous musket fire until dark. Eyre turned out his garrison, manning the ramparts and cannons, and keeping the French away from the nearby storehouses and boats for 14 hours. Several attempts were made by the French to set fires and indeed some of the bateaux did burn. The French appeared to withdraw after dark, but sentries could see a fire in the woods a couple of miles down the lake on the east side. The British sustained only five or six slightly wounded men this first day of the siege; French casualties at this point were unknown to the British.

Well into the night, several French parties reappeared and successfully set fire to a sloop, the bateaux, piles of lumber for an unfinished sloop, and piles of firewood. By two in the morning, the night was so well lit up from the firelight, the garrison could resume firing their cannon with deadly effect. The French could be seen dragging off their wounded and some dead, who

were "buried" under the ice of the lake. Fortunately for Major Eyre's garrison, a wind came up during the night, which kept the flames from spreading to the fort.

Early in the morning of March 20, Rigaud again displayed his army across the lake, in view of the fort, but out of cannon range. At ten o'clock, he dispatched an officer and a small party under their red flag of truce, to demand the surrender of the fort. Major Eyre responded with an officer and a like number of men under their white flag of truce. The French officer delivered Rigaud's written demand. Before this parley began, Eyre sent out another party of men to extinguish the fires and assess the damage. Eyre rejected the French demand and, while this brief truce was in place (until both escorts returned to their respective sides), he ordered sandbags placed on the walls for further protection and swivel guns (small bore cannon) installed on the ramparts. Eyre continued to travel the walls of the fort, animating his men as Rigaud's force once again surrounded the fort. Eyre dispatched two rangers to Fort Edward with a report to date of the French attack.

Firing from the French continued all day on the 20th, until ten in the evening. At times the British described the French gunfire as being like hail. Rigaud's men had been issued sixty rounds apiece, amounting to ninety-nine thousand rounds. During the third night of their siege, the French succeeded in setting fire to a second sloop, but again the firelight allowed the British garrison to find their targets better. The fortified enclosure south of the fort, where the ranger huts were, was also set on fire. Fortunately for the British, an early morning snowstorm put out much of the fire. Major Eyre, in the meantime, had the roof shingles on the nearby storehouses removed to minimize the danger of the fort catching fire.

The snowstorm lasted during the 21st and 22d, reducing the French activity

during the daytime. On the night of the 22d, the hospital and a large storehouse were burned, as was another stockpile of wood, in spite of the cannon and musket fire from the fort.

By the morning of the 23d, the French were gone. Eyre dispatched small parties to investigate the damage. They captured three Frenchmen, one of whom soon died from his wounds. After interrogation, Eyre learned they had burned their scaling ladders before returning to Carillon and that many had suffered frostbite. He also learned that even though each Frenchman and Indian was issued twelve days rations of food, the Indians consumed more than their portion.

Major Eyre and his winter garrison were relieved a few weeks later by companies from the 35th Regiment. Because of the stout and unexpected defense of Fort William Henry and because of being in the cold for nearly thirty days, the French were forced to return to Carillon and Canada. While this attack did not have its planned result, the raid by Rigaud did succeed in destroying most of the 1756 lake fleet and storehouses full of provisions the garrison would have used until the 1757 campaign season began in May. It was only a minor setback for the British, but it reinforced the French effort in keeping the British on the defensive.

Thomas L. Nesbitt, P.L.S., was raised in the greater Lake George Region and worked at Fort William Henry in the 1970s during summer breaks from college. He served as Secretary of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance during its early years, and as Secretary of the New York State French and Indian War 250th Anniversary Commemoration Commission. Tom is the author of "Native Americans & Colonial Rivalries: First Settlers to 1774" in Warren County (New York): Its People & Their History over Time. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from SUNY Oneonta and has been a licensed Land Surveyor since 1992.

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The First Siege of Fort William Henry - 19-22 March 1757

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So, Where Do All Those Alliance Members Live?

We're very proud of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance's incredible membership growth in recent years. As of July 1, the organization counts 225 active members—a nice jump from the figure of just one year ago (146) and a quantum leap over our total in July 2019 (46). We're thrilled by this trend, and vow to do our best to maintain our success by delivering attractive and fun history programs.

The question is often posed, “Where do Alliance members live?” Rather than continue to guess the answer, we took a hard look at our membership data to learn the facts. The Alliance Board of Trustees will review the residential information as we plan future initiatives locally and virtually. We think you'll find the geography as interesting as we do:

- Our home base of Warren County accounts for 46% of the Alliance's membership, followed by the counties of Saratoga (8%) and Albany (5%). Of New York State's 58 counties,

we have members in 19 of them.

- Within Warren County, the town of Lake George accounts for 42% of the local members, with Queensbury close behind at 34%. (VERY interesting given the historic Colonial-era connections of the two towns, with the Battle of Lake George, Carlton's Raid, and other skirmishes in common.) Glens Falls provides 12% of the county's membership total.

- Alliance members reside in 17 different states and the District of Columbia. While nearly 77% of those belonging to the Alliance live in New York, our neighbors in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania significantly contribute in both memberships and participation in our programs—again, aligning with the historic connections among those states during 18th Century conflicts.

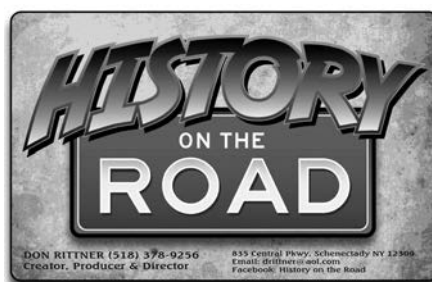
Bientôt le Québec? ■

Alliance to Be Featured in "History on the Road" Series

Later this year, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will be the subject of an episode of *History on the Road*, a TV adventure show created by award-winning filmmaker and author **Don Rittner** and his co-host **Justyna Kostek**, director of the NYC *Just More Theatre* Production Company.

Last fall the pair filmed eight episodes in Warren County, including one that focused on the Battle of Lake George during a September re-enactment in the Battlefield Park. HOTR's cameramen were embedded in the simulated battle and interviews were conducted with the organizers, including Alliance member **John-Eric Nelson** and Alliance Trustees **Bruce Venter** and **John DiNuzzo**.

The episode will appear on YouTube this fall. In the meantime, you can view previous episodes of the series at <https://www.youtube.com/@historyontheroad>. Contact drittner@aol.com for more info about *History on the Road*. ■



"I Walked Over the Grave of Some Unfortunate Victim": The Perceptions of Robert R. Livingston at Lake George 250 Years Ago

By Bruce M. Venter

Invariably, when I embark on a research project, I end up finding items with no relevance to what I'm looking for but interesting finds, nonetheless. In this case, while perusing *The Selected Papers of John Jay* for information about the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, I found a small nugget with relevance to the Lake George Battlefield Park area. I thought it would interest Alliance members as well. It was a letter written in late 1775 which, as you'll see, hits a chord for us today.

John Jay was a founding father from New York who was famous during the War for Independence; and afterwards as the young nation matured. Most notably, Jay served as an American negotiator in France which resulted in the Treaty of Paris in 1783, guaranteeing independence for the thirteen colonies from Great Britain.

Jay was also the first chief justice of the U. S. Supreme Court and the second governor of New York State. In addition to these accomplishments, Jay served as an ambassador to Spain, was a co-author of the *Federalist Papers*, and headed the New York Committee to Detect and Defeat Conspiracies. This latter duty involved dealing with Loyalist activities during the Revolutionary War. At King's College (later Columbia University), he developed a long-time friendship with Robert R. Livingston, a wealthy member of the Hudson River Valley's landed aristocracy. During the war Jay was also a staunch supporter of Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler, likewise a man of his own social class. With all his accomplishments, it is not surprising that Jay would accumulate a voluminous amount of personal and official correspondence.¹

But how do Jay's papers tie into the Lake George Battlefield?

In February 2019, "during the

evacuation of a construction site on Courtland Street in Lake George, a series of human remains were found, both in the excavated soil and the adjacent undisturbed earth," according to **Dan Barusch**, the Town and Village of Lake George's Director of Planning and Zoning.² Subsequently, the remains of about 44 individuals were verified by New York State Museum staff. Key to this discovery was a uniform button identifying one of the individuals buried on Courtland Street as belonging to the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion. In June 2024 a ceremony was held at the Lake George Battlefield Park initiating a project to reinter the uncovered bones in an appropriate sepulcher honoring these Continental soldiers and other unidentified individuals found in Lake George Village.

It's a solid hypothesis that the human remains discovered by chance on Courtland Street probably died of smallpox because during the Canadian campaign of 1775-76 thousands of American troops were afflicted with the disease. Many hundreds died. In fact, the southern end of Lake George was known during the Revolutionary War as having the largest smallpox hospital in the rebellious colonies.

But smallpox was not the only reason for death at Lake George. Several hundred English provincials, French soldiers, Native allies on both sides, and Canadians died in the 1755 Battle of Lake George. Surely more men died during the construction of Fort William Henry in 1756. Deaths attributed to the French siege and "massacre" at Fort William Henry are well-documented.³ The army encampments of Maj. Gen. James Abercromby in 1758 and Maj. Gen. Jeffery Amherst in 1759 also contributed corpses in the area of the current-day Battlefield Park. In

addition to the smallpox deaths during the Revolution, men would have died of other diseases such as dysentery or from lingering battle wounds and amputations. Finally, Maj. Christopher Carleton's attack on Fort George in 1780 added to the list of casualties. The entire area encompassing what we know as the Lake George Battlefield Park and beyond was the final resting place of men, women and even children, laying in unmarked graves.

This phenomenon was not missed by our Patriot forebears. Here is where a letter written on November 27, 1775 by Robert R. Livingston to his friend, John Jay, provides an impactful reminder for us today.

Like Jay, Robert R. Livingston was a founding father, a wealthy lawyer and later minister to France in the early national period. Livingston served on the committee selected by the Continental Congress to write the Declaration of Independence. Called back to New York, he did not sign the famous document, but sent his cousin, Philip Livingston, to sign it in his stead. His legal expertise is reflected in his appointment in 1777 to the title of "The Chancellor," the highest judicial office in New York State. His pedigree intertwined with the most prominent families in New York, including the Schuylers, Van Rensselaers and Beekmans. Livingston's sister Janet married a former British Army officer named Richard Montgomery before the Revolution. Perhaps his most memorable act was when Livingston administered the first presidential oath of office to George Washington in 1789.⁴

In the early months of the Canadian campaign, it was no secret that General Schuyler was not a well man. His maladies have been variously described

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"I Walked Over the Grave of Some Unfortunate Victim": The Perceptions of...

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as having the "gout" or the "bloody flux." In truth, Schuyler had suffered from rheumatoid arthritis since he was a teenager. The stress of command seems to have exacerbated his condition. As Schuyler himself explained it, he was suffering from a "bilious fever & violent rheumatic Pains." His physical condition made it impossible for him to stay with the Northern army as Canada was invaded. Field command of the army devolved to Schuyler's second-in-command, Brig. Gen. Richard Montgomery - Livingston's brother-in-law - as Americans marched toward Montreal. Meanwhile, Schuyler himself retreated back to Fort Ticonderoga where he could nurse his health and support Montgomery's army by acting as a quartermaster based on his penchant for logistics and administration.⁵

In early November, Schuyler petitioned the Continental Congress for help. The general reasoned that Montgomery could lead the army, Schuyler himself could funnel supplies down the lakes, and a Congressional committee would identify what supplies and payrolls were needed by the army. At first Schuyler's pleading was rebuffed, but eventually Congress responded by creating a committee of three delegates to investigate the army in Canada. Congress appointed Robert R. Livingston of New York, John Langon of New Hampshire and Robert Treat Paine of Massachusetts to help Schuyler.⁶

This Congressional committee made its way north from Philadelphia, arriving at Fort George the last week of November 1775. The day after he got to Lake George, Robert R. Livingston penned a letter dated November 27, on his 29th birthday, to his good friend John Jay. His letter initially complained about the weather, especially how cold it was at the lake. Livingston and his companions looked forward to getting to Fort Ticonderoga, meeting with Schuyler and sleeping on "hemlock beds."⁷

But before embarking on his sail

north to Fort Ticonderoga, Livingston decided to explore the surrounding grounds near Fort George. Livingston recounted to Jay that "This morning & part of yesterday I employed in going over the ground where the French received the first check from Sir Wm Johnson, & this afternoon I went to see the remains of Fort William Henry, & the French lines part of which are still vissable (sic)." It was Livingston's opinion that "No fort could have been more unfortunately scituated (sic) as it is commanded by almost all the ground about it, yet it appears that the defence must have been pretty gallant: since the approaches were begun at a distance yet they held out till they got within twenty yards of the fort," adding that "every gun, but one of which were dismantled."⁸

But the most poignant observation made by Livingston was that he "**could hardly stir a step with[out] imagining that I walked over the grave of some unfortunate victim to the ambition of princes.**"⁹ This comment still rings true today. How many skeletal bones still remain to be found in Lake George Village, on the Lake George battlefield, or on the grounds near Fort William Henry? The Lake George area is truly hallowed ground. It is worthy to contemplate how many more unknowns lie beneath a few feet of dirt. As we trod around modern-day Lake George, New York, it's worth thinking about those individuals who camped, fought and died during the 18th century as we approach the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation.

¹ Most of John Jay's papers are held by Columbia University.

² Dan Barusch, "A Proposal for the Respectful Reinterment of the Courtland Street Burial Site Remains in the Lake George Battlefield Park," *Fort George Post*, No. 6, Summer 2022.

³ Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the "Massacre,"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 129-148; Russell P. Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George, and Hudson River Corridor,* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., 2010), 97-130.

⁴ Elizabeth M. Nuxoll, ed. *The Selected Papers of John Jay*, v. 1, 1760-1779 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 756.

⁵ Don R. Gerlach, *Proud Patriot: Philip Schuyler and the War of Independence, 1775-1783,* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 60, 65-67, 77.

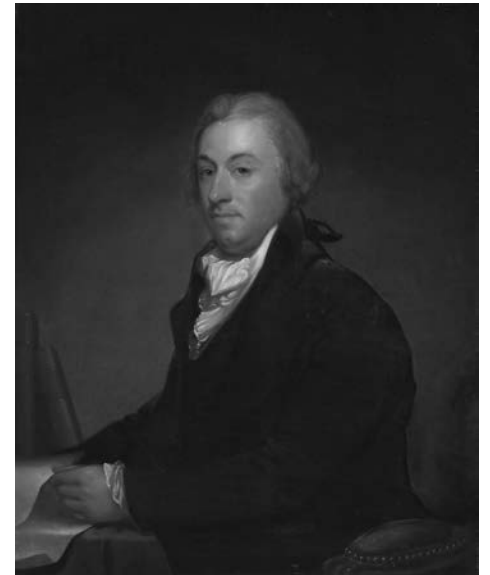
⁶ *Ibid.* 79-81.

⁷ Nuxoll, ed. *The Selected Papers of John Jay*, 160.

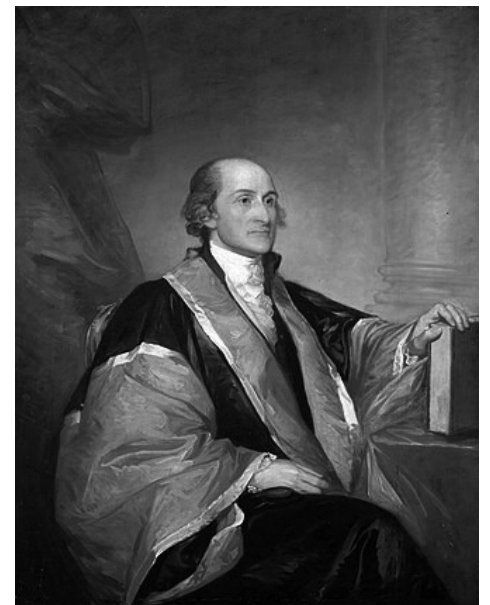
⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Dr. Bruce M. Venter is a trustee of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance and president of America's History LLC, a history tour and conference company. ■



Robert R. Livingston



John Jay

First Half of 2024 Delivers Big Programs for Alliance Members



Phillip Hamilton, January 13, 2024

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance jump-started 2024 with several popular programs which—along with the approval to reinter 44 Continental Army soldiers’ and others’ remains as well as the resumption of archaeological investigations in the park after an eight-year gap (both featured elsewhere in this issue)—generated exciting history-related activities for the Alliance’s rapidly growing membership.

Our first 2024 program was co-sponsored by the Alliance and the Warren County Commission for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. It featured Alliance member **Phillip Hamilton**, probably America’s foremost authority on Henry Knox, discussing the letters between Knox and his wife throughout the Revolution. Held on a slushy and chilly January 13 at the Lake George Junior-Senior High School auditorium, a crowd of approximately 100 history diehards was captivated by the often poignant, occasionally harsh letters between the young newlyweds.

Following an appearance in the spring of 2023 to discuss the life of Philip Schuyler, Albany Rural Cemetery Vice President and Alliance member **Michael P. Barrett** returned to Lake George on April 27 to highlight the exploits of another American Revolution hero interred at Albany Rural, Peter Gansevoort. The Holiday Inn Resort Lake George hosted the event, which brought to light many facts about the man who commanded Fort George in 1776 and successfully defended Fort Stanwix against a British siege during the watershed year of 1777.

The Alliance was honored to host retired **US Army Brigadier General F. David Sheppard** as its keynote speaker at the annual Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony on May 27. Speaking adjacent to the burial site in the Battlefield Park of four unknown provincial soldiers killed during the Battle of Lake George in 1755, General Sheppard connected their sacrifices with those of modern troops, including many beside whom he fought during the Vietnam War.

Two final events, held exclusively for Alliance members, were the “Floating History” tours of Lake George held on June 27-28. Those who were able to secure seats for these sold-out tours were enthralled by historian-members **Bruce Venter** and **John-Eric Nelson**, who pointed out key locations on the lake and ashore that were used by French, British, and American Continental forces during the region’s intense conflicts during the period of 1755-1780. Additional “Floating” tours are being planned for later this year to allow those who weren’t able to attend in June a second opportunity to enjoy the Queen of American Lakes’ beauty and history together.

MORE TO COME! Check out our “UPCOMING EVENTS” elsewhere in this issue! ■



Michael P. Barrett, April 27, 2024



Brig. General (ret.) F. David Sheppard, May 27, 2024



“Floating History Tour” - Bruce Venter on Diamond Island, June 18, 2024

Thanking the Businesses & Institutions That Support Our History

The recent growth of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance has occurred through a variety of factors—the Battlefield Park Visitor Center, exciting programs that have fostered greater participation in preserving and promoting our history, the expanded Fort George Post newsletter, and many others. Through it all, our business and institutional partners have contributed ideas and resources—many of them in-kind, out of the limelight—to help get our important message to the history community.

We'd like to share their names and web addresses with you and encourage you to thank them too, as customers, whenever you're in need of their products and services.

- Holiday Inn Resort Lake George www.holidayinnlakegeorge.com
- Carpenter Claydon Advisors www.ccawealth.com
- Fort William Henry Hotel www.fortwilliamhenry.com
- Adirondack Resorts Press www.lakegeorgemirror.com
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- Glens Falls National Bank www.gfnational.com
- Lake George RV Park www.lakegeorgervpark.com
- McEnaney's Lincoln Log Colony www.lincolnlogcolony.com
- Town of Lake George www.lakegeorgetown.org
- Village of Lake George www.villageoflakegeorge.us
- Lake George Central School District www.lkgeorge.org
- Skidmore College History Department www.skidmore.edu
- Warren County Historical Society www.wcnys.org

Need to renew or have a friend who wants to join?

Join online at www.lakegeorgebattlefield.org/join-support or complete and return this form.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to protect this beautiful historic site and join the Alliance.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ - _____

Email: _____

- Sustaining..... \$2,500
- Associate..... \$1,000
- Lifetime..... \$ 750
- Business \$ 150
- Patron..... \$ 100
- Family (2+ same household)..... \$ 50
- Individual..... \$ 35
- NFP/Educational..... \$ 35
- Senior (65+) \$ 25
- Student (under 25/full time)..... \$ 15

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.