

# LAKE GEORGE MIRROR.

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"THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES"

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LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK, August 30, 2024



*Russ Bellico, photographed at the Aug. 17 annual meeting of the Lake George Battlefield Alliance. Photo provided.*

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## Alliance Honors Russell Bellico

By Mirror Staff

Dr. Russell Bellico, a founding trustee of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, has announced that will retire from the board after a 23 year tenure. The Alliance honored Bellico for his service at its August 17 annual meeting, held in the state-owned park.

A historian, Bellico is the author of three authoritative books on the history of Lake George and the Champlain Valley: *Sails and Steam in the Mountains: A Maritime and Military History of Lake George and Lake Champlain*; *Chronicles of Lake George: Journeys in War and Peace*; *Chronicles of Lake Champlain: Journeys in War and Peace*; and *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George, and Hudson River Corridor*.

Bellico was also a trustee of Bateaux Below, Inc. and was a member of the underwater archaeological team that documented the 1758 Lake George radeau Land Tortoise. He is a summer resident of Hague.

"We have an organization that is full of energy, good intentions and great ideas," said Alliance trustee Todd Earl. "But there also has to be a place for knowledge, and Russ provided us with that. He always guided us in the right direction and has been a wonderful resource for us."

Bellico was among the first and most influential advocates for a Fort George/Battlefield Park Visitor Center, which opened in the new Lake George Park Commission office building in 2022.

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In response to a presentation from the Alliance's trustees and members, Bellico said, "I'm not taking credit for anything. I am just one of a group of people who have dedicated a lot of time, energy and talent to these projects. And there's a lot more to do."

In other business, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance paid tribute to: the late Lake George Town Supervisor Dennis Dickinson, who advocated for more Native American-oriented exhibits in the Visitor Center and supported public funding for the popular Abercromby flotilla diorama; the late Queensbury Town

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Councilman Harrison Freer; and Charles Vandrei, the State Department of Environmental Conservation's longtime Historic Preservation Officer who served as a key advisor to the Alliance since its 2001 inception.

Alliance President John DiNuzzo noted that over the past year, membership in the Alliance

has grown by 46%; the Alliance's sponsored and co-sponsored public programs on figures such as Benedict Arnold, George Monro, Peter Gansevoort and Henry Knox drew large and enthusiastic audiences; improvements to the Battlefield Park and the Visitor Center included new park orientation signage, new and reconstructed walkways and new exhibits such as mortar ball artifacts and a model of a bateau.

DiNuzzo also called attention to the first archeological exploration of the Battlefield Park since 2016, conducted earlier this summer under the auspices of Professor Siobhan Hart of Skidmore College.

Most notably, New York State approved the reinterment of the remains of 44 individuals from the 1776 Continental Army smallpox hospital at Fort George.

Lake George Zoning and Planning Director Dan Barusch, the newly-elected Alliance trustee who is shepherding the reinterment, discussed its progress as the annual meeting's keynote speaker.

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.

The dedication of "the Repose of the Fallen," as the memorial is to be named, is expected to take place in July, 20226 - the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and of the Lake George military hospital.

