

Historic statues at Lake George Battlefield Park to receive restoration in 2025

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LAKE GEORGE — The iconic statues at Lake George Battlefield Park, including the monument of St. Isaac Jogues, believed to be the first European to lay eyes on "The Queen of American Lakes," are set to get some much-needed restoration in 2025.

"These sculptures are between 85 and 122 years old," said John DiNuzzo, president of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, during Tuesday's Lake George Park Commission meeting. "They're magnificent works of art and history."

St. Isaac Jogues, the newest of the park's three statues, will be the first to undergo repairs, starting with the cross in his left hand, which has been bent—likely the result of a fallen tree limb over the decades.

Eagle-eyed observers will notice several fingers either missing or malformed on the statue. This represents the torture Jogues endured during his first attempt to minister to the Native Americans of the Mohawk Valley.

In 1642, Jogues and two French companions were taken captive by members of the Iroquois Nation, which was at war with France. His hands were mutilated so he wouldn't be able to take up weapons against his captors. He was able to escape on a Dutch ship back to France, but returned to New York to finish his ministry in 1646.

It was then that he came upon the shores of what is now Lake George. He christened it, "Lac du St. Sacrement," or "Lake of the Blessed Sacrament."

Unfortunately that same year, Jogues was again captured, tortured, and this time killed along with two other Jesuit missionaries in what is now the hamlet of Auriesville.

"So the original sculpture (dedicated in 1939) depicted him with the mutilated hands," DiNuzzo explained. "Restoration will do likewise."

The statue's restoration is estimated at \$16,980.

On Tuesday, the commission approved \$9,540 in funding, with the remaining \$7,440 to come from private donations.

The park's oldest statue, installed in 1903, honors the British victory at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. The monument depicts British General William Johnson and Mohawk Valley Chief King Hendrick. Restoration plans include refabricating two long-missing metal tomahawks.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation will help renovate the Mohawk Warrior statue, dedicated in 1921. The fountain mechanism, which flows water from the warrior's hand to a man-made pond will be repaired, and a new water churn will be installed prevent stagnation in the summer. Welders will also recreate missing arrows for the warrior's quiver.

Over time, the bronze statues have become tarnished with an uneven patina. All three statues will be cleaned and restored to a consistent hue, DiNuzzo said.

Renovations for the Johnson/Hendrick monument are estimated at \$18,370, while the groundwork for the Mohawk Warrior project will cost around \$9,100. Funding for these two statues will come primarily from Native American art-focused private foundations.

Renowned sculptor Dan George, a Lake George native with international experience in large-scale art installations, has volunteered to manage the entire restoration project pro bono.

George generously offered to advise and oversee the work, DiNuzzo said.

The restoration comes at an ideal time, as the park is undergoing major improvements, including new paved walking paths and signage. In 2026, during the nation's 250th anniversary celebrations, the park will unveil a reinterment memorial for the remains of 44 18th-century soldiers recently discovered throughout the village.

"These sculpture beautifications and renovations, I think will be a terrific facelift for the whole park as we dedicate the reinterment of soldiers in 2026," DiNuzzo said.



ALEX PORTAL PHOTOS, APORTAL@POSTSTAR.COM

Missing arrows on the Mohawk warrior statue.



St. Isaac Jogues Statue in Lake George.



Mohawk Warrior in Lake George.



The missing tomahawks.