

LAKE GEORGE MIRROR.

"THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES"

LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK, July 25, 2025

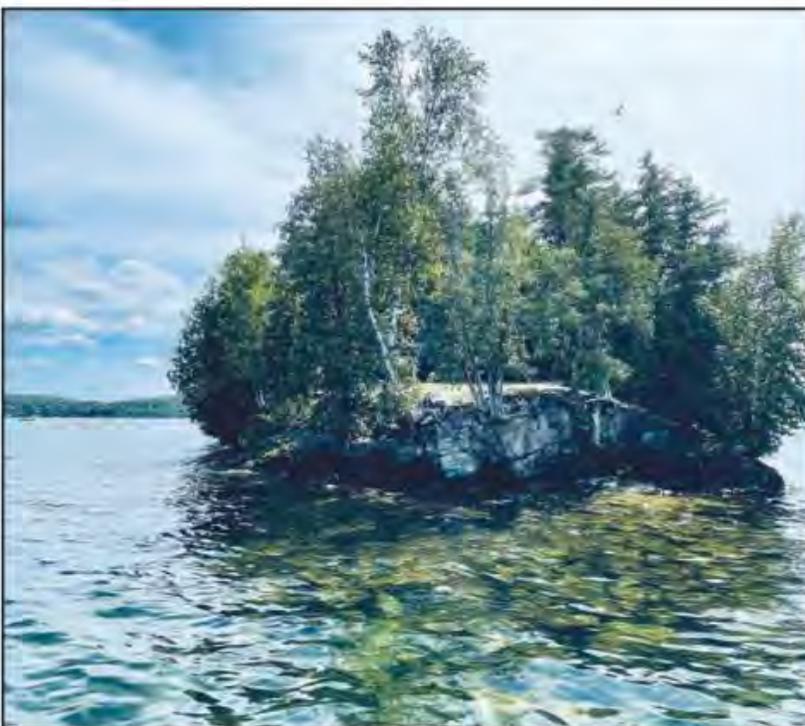
Topic of Bruce Venter's August 6 Talk:

THE 1777 BATTLE OF DIAMOND ISLAND

By Mirror Staff

Had General John Burgoyne sailed up Lake George to Fort George after seizing Fort Ticonderoga, it is not clear that his army would have fared any better at Saratoga than it did by pursuing the Americans overland to Fort Edward.

As C. Northcote Parkinson, (the British historian who became unexpectedly famous for a novel, 'Horatio Hornblower') wrote in his 1934 biography of Edward Pellew, Viscount Exmouth, a naval officer attached to Burgoyne's army, "On September 18, the fatal blow was struck. An American force surprised a part of the (British) flotilla, at the (foot) of Lake George. Communications with Canada were now cut; with that force in his rear, the English general knew



A placid Diamond Island today.

that the end would come in a few weeks...."

As historian Russell Bellico explains, Parkinson refers here to Colonel John Brown's raid, when Brown captured 150 boats at the northern Lake George landing including, according to Brown himself, "50 bateaux above the falls, 17-gun boats and an armed sloop."

"The destruction of the British gunboats and bateaux... compromised Burgoyne's fragile supply lines and negatively impacted a potential route of retreat through Lake George for his army," said Bellico.

John Brown was no stranger to Fort Ticonderoga, having helped Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold to engineer the first capture of Ticonderoga in 1775.

The raid on the fort on September 18, 1777 began with a pre-dawn attack on a British outpost at the foot of Lake George, which caught the garrison that occupied the lands surrounding the LaChute River thoroughly by surprise.

Rushing down from Lake George, Brown's men captured 330 British prisoners (including twelve officers) and freed 118 American Prisoners of war, as well as seizing the vessels.

At roughly the same time, Russ Bellico notes, Captain Ebenezer Allen and 40 Vermont State Rangers climbed Mount Defiance, overwhelmed a British unit stationed there and began firing cannon balls at the British.

After four days of fighting, and upon the arrival of German re-enforcements, the Americans withdrew toward Lake George, leaving the fort in British hands but destroying supplies, livestock and boats along the way.

At the foot of the lake, Brown and his men boarded twenty boats, three of which were armed, and sailed toward Diamond Island, where Burgoyne had reportedly stashed supplies, baggage, artillery and, the Americans believed, gold.

After spending the night at Sabbath Day Point, writes Bellico, "The Americans rowed 'as far as 12 Mile Island [perhaps Dome Island],' landing in the evening."

The Battle of Diamond Island,

the only naval engagement on Lake George during the War of Independence, took place on September 24.

According to Bellico, the island was fortified with six cannons and two gunboats and guarded by two companies of

the 47th Regiment under Captain Thomas Aubrey, along with 90 German troops.

At nine o'clock on the morning of September 24, Brown "advanced with 3 armed Boats in front" and directed troops in 17 bateaux "to wing to the Right [west] and left [east] of [Diamond] Island to attempt a landing."

Bellico continues, "Lemuel Roberts, attached to the Vermont Rangers, wrote that the armed vessels were deployed 'to cover the landing of the party on one side, while the bateaux were sent round to attempt a landing... on the other part of the island.'

"Forewarned by a sutler, Captain Aubrey's troops were ready behind newly-constructed breastworks. The booming

cannons from the island batteries dashed Brown's hopes of victory. With longer-range artillery, more skilled gunners in a stationary position, and the protection of the breastworks, Aubrey's forces overwhelmed Brown's little navy in less than two hours. The sloop, hit between 'wind and water,' had to be towed away and with 'one of the Gun Boats also being Wounded and many other Boats shattered to Pieces,' Brown retreated," writes Bellico.

In what is now Warner Bay, Brown burned his boats, sunk the cannon and with his remaining forces, made his way to Skenesborough, or what is known today as Whitehall.

On Wednesday, August 6, historian Bruce M. Venter will

See DIAMOND ISLAND Page 21

The 1777 Battle of Diamond Island

from page 19

discuss in detail the Battle of Diamond Island and his efforts to commemorate the event.

"The Battle of Diamond Island & Signs That Explain It" will be presented at 7 pm at the Fort William Henry Conference Center in Lake George. The event, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance.

Venter is the author of "The Battle of Hubbardton: The Rear Guard that Saved America," which was selected by the editors of the "Journal of the American Revolution" as one the "100 Best Books on the American Revolution" and was extensively cited by Pulitzer Prize winning author Rick Atkinson in his new book, "The Fate of the Day," which, in part, treats the Saratoga campaign.

Venter is president of

America's History LLC, a history tour and conference company known nationally for its annual conference on the American Revolution. He serves as a commissioner on the Saratoga County 250th Commission; as a trustee of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance where he does weekly podcasts with Alliance president, John Di Nuzzo; and on the board of the Fort Plain Museum and Historical Park.