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## Rick Atkinson to headline Knox weekend in Lake George

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LAKE GEORGE – [EDITOR'S NOTE: Alex Portal is a member of the Commission for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution Warren County, N.Y.]

On Dec. 12, 2025, 250 years nearly to the day from when it actually happened, a boat carrying (replica) cannon will land on the southern shore of Lake George, and Henry Knox (reenactor) will step off and initiate one of the most ambitious commemorations yet of America's 250th anniversary.



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From left, Dr. Jennifer Burns, Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Studies at SUNY Albany; documentary filmmakers Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein; and author Rick Atkinson during a panel discussion about the American Revolution in Albany in September.

“I think the Henry Knox story is fantastic,” said Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Rick Atkinson in an interview with The Post-Star Wednesday. “He’s proof positive that among George Washington’s remarkable skills, and he had a number of them, was a great eye for subordinate talent. He sees this 25-year-old, overweight Boston bookseller and somehow intuits this guy’s going to be the father of American artillery.”

Atkinson will headline the kick-off of a massive weekend of events following the Knox trail from Lake George, through Washington and Saratoga counties, and into Albany.

Atkinson worked as a military correspondent at The Washington Post for many years before delving fully into the world of historical writing. To date, he’s written nine books, all of which have been on the topic of military history. His newest book, “The Fate of the Day,” is the second in a trilogy about the American Revolution.

“I’ve written about war my entire professional life, my feeling is it’s a vital part of understanding the history of the country,” he said.

The first two books in Atkinson’s Revolutionary War trilogy each took about six years to complete. The third is still in the works, he said, but will pick up right where “The Fate of the Day,” ends in the early summer of 1780.

“Things look pretty grim for the home team,” Atkinson teased of the book. “This book will cover that campaign in the south and the totally improbable, miraculous triumph at Yorktown that is going to lead to the end of the war... part of it just dickering over peace terms. But part of it shooting.”

Several of Atkinson’s books have been adapted for younger readers as well. It was recently announced that his Revolutionary War trilogy will be adapted into a series of graphic novels published by Ten Speed Graphic.

“It’s not the comic books that I read as a kid,” he said. “It’s more sophisticated than that and I think that will potentially broaden the audience.”

Atkinson will spend part of his day Friday speaking with students at Lake George High School about his experience in journalism and historical writing.

“The strictures of the profession of journalism — accuracy, speed, credibility, storytelling — all of those things fit hand-in-glove with narrative history writing,” he said.

Increasing the audience for his books isn’t just about selling more copies. For Atkinson, knowing the full, true account of America’s history is an important part of being a citizen.

“It’s our collective story, whether your family came here 300 years ago or 10 years ago,” he said.

Atkinson refers to the American Revolution in part as our “creation myth,” with its larger-than-life heroic figures overcoming insurmountable odds against an unconquerable foe. However, while there certainly is a place for myth in storytelling, Atkinson said the true story of America with its flawed characters, hindsight revealing missteps, and flat-out lucky breaks can prove to be much more compelling and inspiring.

“[They] are really quite inspirational even at times when they are disappointing, because they all have feet of clay like everybody,” he said of our forefathers. “The true story as we’ve come to understand it, as we’ve dug it out of the historical record is really fascinating in part because it required people to overcome their own defects and deficiencies, their own shortcomings.”

Atkinson said being able to view America’s founding and the generation who inspired it through unfettered eyes is vital for understanding their motives and driving principals.

“It’s something that we ought to study to understand why they were willing to risk as much as they were willing to risk, and what it is that they thought they were creating,” he explained. “What were they thinking when they bequeathed us this republic and this continent?”

He also said that studying history can be reassuring, particularly during times of national turmoil.

“It can tell us that we’ve been through worse before. That should be reassuring that we’ve got some native strength in our body politic,” he said. “Things have been grimmer, and we will get through this period as we’ve gotten through others.”

After visiting with the students at Lake George High School, the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance will host a special ticketed reception with Atkinson at the Holiday Inn Resort, where guests can meet and discuss the author’s works. There will be a free public Q&A with Atkinson at 7 p.m. at Lake George High School with period music played by a quintet from the Glens Falls Symphony.

Atkinson said he’s looking forward to commemorating the semiquincentennial of Henry Knox’s “Noble Train of Artillery” where it picked up in Lake George.

“It’s a fantastic story and I know the people around Lake George are proud of their role and proud of the fact that a good portion of the story of the revolution takes place in and around Lake George, Upstate New York, and Mohawk River Valley,” he said. “I know they take their history seriously.”

## Follow the Knox trail Dec. 12-14

At 3 p.m. on Dec. 12, a Henry Knox reenactor will land by boat on the shore near Lake George Battlefield Park, bringing with him a replica cannon carried on a recreated sled constructed by students from WSWHE BOCES. "Knox" and his replica artillery will be transported by horse and cart to the ruins of Fort George, where the historical Knox stayed and planned the next leg of his journey. The reenactor will speak to the crowd about Knox's perilous journey to the south end of Lake George from Fort Ticonderoga.

At 4:30 p.m. Pulitzer Prize winning historian Rick Atkinson will be featured during a special reception at the Holiday Inn Resort. Atkinson was recently in the area with co-directors Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein promoting the PBS docuseries "The American Revolution," which premiered on Nov. 16. Signed copies of Atkinson's latest book, "The Fate of the Day," the second in his Revolutionary War trilogy, are available with purchase of a ticket. Local historians and history buffs of all levels will have the opportunity to mix and mingle while discussing the pivotal role Lake George played in the Revolution.

While the reception is a paid event with limited capacity, there will be a free public Q&A with Atkinson at 7 p.m. at Lake George High School with period music played by a quintet from the Glens Falls Symphony.

The festivities continue at 9 a.m. on Dec. 13 at Fort Edward High School where Washington County officials will gather with the replica artillery and invite the public to march along the old military road (Route 4) to the Old Fort House Museum, where the Washington County leg of the Knox commemoration will

conclude with a wreath laying ceremony at 10:30 a.m.

At 1 p.m., representatives from Washington County will hand-off a ceremonial linstock and the replicas to their counterparts in Saratoga County on the Dix Bridge near one of the locations Knox and his Noble Train crossed the Hudson River. From there, the procession will march to Fort Hardy Park along the Old Champlain Canal Tow Path.

From 1 to 4 p.m. Fort Hardy Park will host a Knox festival, with living history demonstrations, draft animal rides, food, and other fun family activities. The Fort Hardy Park Visitors Center will be open and heating stations will be available for outdoor events. Once the "Noble Train" procession arrives, there will be an artillery demonstration to cap the day.

At 10 a.m. on Dec. 14, Saratoga will hand things over to Albany County on Peebles Island in Cohoes and the procession will continue to the Van Schaick Mansion where from 10:30 a.m. to noon there will be guest speakers, refreshments, and guided tours of the Revolutionary War site.

Beginning at 2 p.m. the Schuyler Mansion in Albany will host historical reenactments and an open house showcasing its new exhibit, "Tyrants, Tariffs, and Treachery: 1755. The Revolution Begins."

The commemoration will continue in January 2026, when representatives from New York will gather in Rensselaer County to make the hand-off of the replica artillery and linstock to representatives from Massachusetts, where the historical societies in that state will take up the Noble Train, culminating in a massive celebration at Dorchester Heights on March 17, 2026.