

Solemn motorcade carries remains of 44 Revolutionary War patriots to final resting place in Lake George

BY Corey James

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Two-hundred-and-fifty years after they died in service to a brand new nation, the remains of 44 Revolutionary War patriots are finally receiving the honors they never had.

On Wednesday, wooden caskets holding skeletal remains left the New York State Museum in Albany for a 60-mile journey to Lake George Battlefield State Park, where a new memorial called “Repose of the Fallen” will serve as their final resting place. The solemn motorcade comes seven years after the remains were accidentally uncovered at a construction site in the village of Lake George.

Archaeologists say the discovery was unlike a typical cemetery excavation. The graves had already been disturbed.

“We weren’t able to properly recover complete individuals. It was pieces, bits and pieces of people,” said Lisa Anderson, an archaeologist and curator of bioarchaeology at the New York State Museum.



Forty-four wooden caskets with Revolutionary War soldiers' remains were transported to Lake George.

Anderson said teams of archaeologists and volunteers have spent years processing the remains and preparing them to be laid to rest, often working fragment by fragment. For 15 months, volunteers sifted through a giant pile of soil in Lake George to recover the disturbed remains.

“Everybody felt like it was the right thing to do to give these soldiers the respect and dignity that they deserved after their graves had been disturbed,” Anderson said.

Researchers believe the dead are connected to a large Continental Army hospital established near the southern end of Lake George in 1776, as smallpox swept through troops retreating from the failed invasion of Canada. Many of the soldiers were young men who never made it home. Uniform buttons found with the remains suggest at least one man served in the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion, which fought in the Quebec campaign.

On Wednesday morning, four caskets, three draped in the Grand Union Flag and one with the 1st Pennsylvania Battalion flag, led the procession out of Albany. They were carried in vintage Korean War and Vietnam-era military vehicles operated by members of the NY-Penn Military Vehicle Collectors Club, escorted by New York State Police and Patriot Guard Riders.



“It is an extremely high honor to transport the remains of 44 Revolutionary War soldiers,” said Karl Remmers, president of the club. “These are our first true American heroes.”

For the Patriot Guard Riders, the mission closely matches their everyday work honoring veterans at funerals and memorials.

“Our mission is to make sure veterans have the proper burial and respect they earned, and to show they have not been forgotten,” said Jim Marshall, assistant state captain for the group in eastern New York.



As the motorcade moved north along Route 9 through the Capital Region, people lined sidewalks and gathered along the route to quietly salute and say thank you. The journey ended in Lake George Battlefield State Park, where the new memorial includes secured columbaria, seating and a plaza designed to invite reflection on the lives lost during the American Revolution.

“This isn’t about us,” said Larry Arnold, a member of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, which helped organize the project. “It’s about 44 Revolutionary War veterans who sacrificed their lives to form our nation.”

The “Repose of the Fallen” memorial will be formally dedicated on Friday, May 22, at Lake George Battlefield State Park, just days before Memorial Day, offering the public a new place to remember some of America’s first fallen.