

LAKE GEORGE MIRROR.

"THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES"

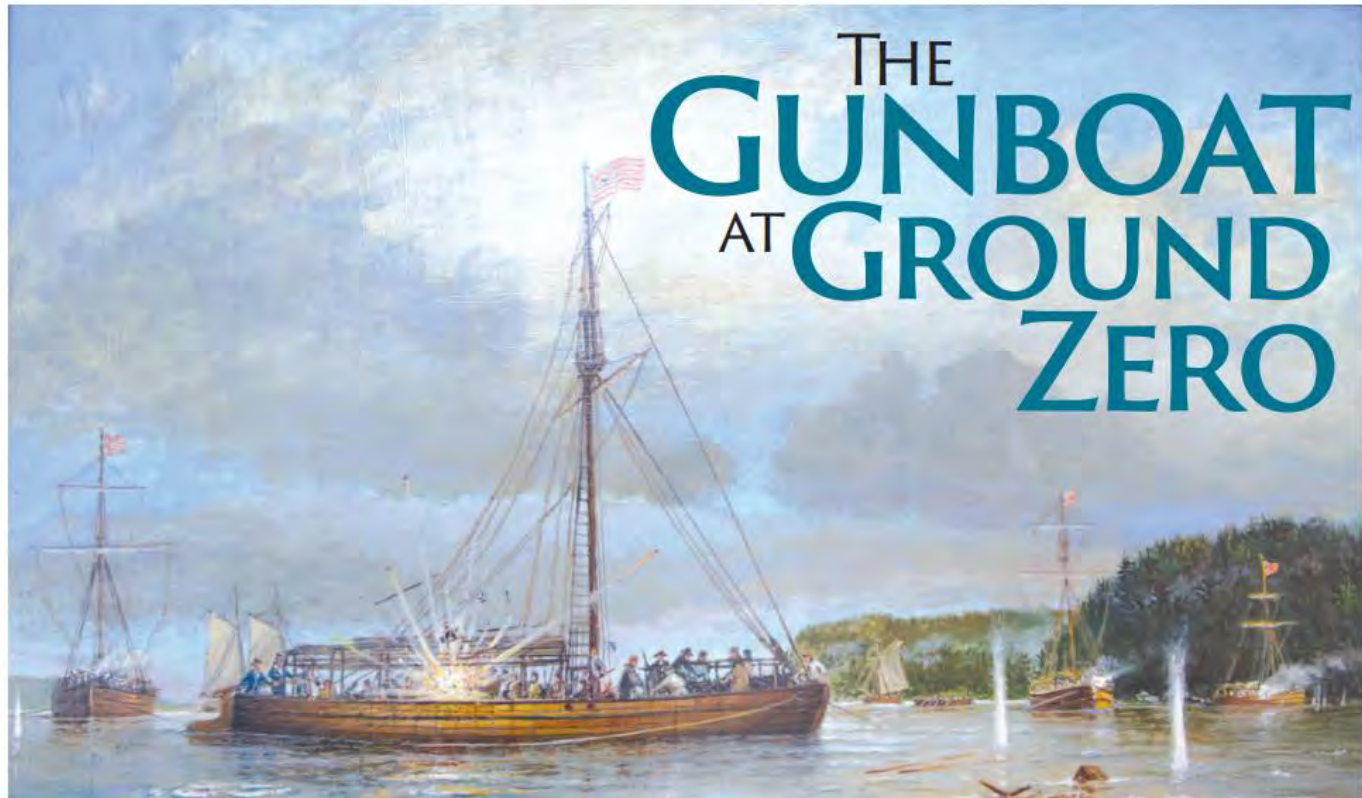
LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK, July 17, 2026

By Mirror Staff

A Revolutionary War-era gunboat discovered beneath the World Trade Center site after nearly two centuries underground has become one of New York's most significant archaeological preservation projects, thanks in large part to years of research led by New York State Museum Curator of Historical Archaeology Dr. Michael Lucas.

Lucas will discuss the vessel's discovery, identification and preservation during the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance's annual meeting Aug. 15 at the Fort William Henry Conference Center in Lake George.

The nearly 50-foot-long wooden vessel was uncovered in July 2010 during excavations for the World Trade Center's Vehicular Security Center in lower Manhattan. Archaeologists recovered more than 600 wooden timbers and approximately 2,000 artifacts, including musket balls, ceramic wares and military items, but the ship's identity remained



CURATOR OF RECOVERED REVOLUTIONARY WAR VESSEL TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT LG BATTLEFIELD PARK ALLIANCE'S ANNUAL MEETING



A: The vessel was seized by British forces before eventually being abandoned and incorporated into landfill used to expand Manhattan's shoreline during the 1790s. B: Michael Lucas of the New York State Museum undertakes the final cleaning of a timber in preparation for reassembly at the Museum, 2025. Credit: New York State Museum. C: The Revolutionary War ship is on display in Exhibition Hall at the New York State Museum in Albany as part of the museum's America 250 programming. The New York State Museum is located at 222 Madison Ave., Albany, N.Y. Photos courtesy NYS Museum.

uncertain for years.

Lucas directed the historical and archaeological investigation that ultimately identified the vessel as a rare American-built Revolutionary War gunboat, probably constructed near Philadelphia in the early 1770s. By combining archaeological evidence with archival research, he and fellow researchers concluded the vessel likely served during the Revolutionary War before being captured and used by British forces.

Among the key pieces of evidence was a pewter button from the British Army's 52nd Regiment of Foot, discovered among the ship's remains, along with canister shot, musket balls and other military artifacts. Researchers believe the button supports the theory that the vessel was seized by British forces before eventually being abandoned and incorporated into landfill used to expand Manhattan's shoreline during the 1790s.

Lucas also coordinated the museum's long-running collaboration with the Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation at Texas A&M University, where the recovered timbers underwent a 14-year conservation process. Each timber was digitally scanned, stabilized through years of treatment with polyethylene glycol, then freeze-

dried before being returned to New York in 2025.

When the conserved timbers returned to Albany, Lucas oversaw their preparation for exhibition at the New York State Museum, working alongside

Texas A&M conservator Dr. Peter Fix as museum staff, volunteers and conservation specialists reconstructed the vessel in full public view. The reconstruction became the centerpiece of the museum's exhibition, "The

The Gunboat at Ground Zero

from page 5

contemplate the mysteries around this ship," Lucas told *The Associated Press* in 2025. "Because like anything from the past, we have pieces of information. We don't have the whole story."

Researchers believe the vessel was one of a small fleet of shallow-draft gunboats hurriedly built to defend Philadelphia early in the Revolutionary War. Evidence suggests it later may have traveled to warmer waters, possibly the Caribbean, before ending its service in New York. The oxygen-poor soil beneath Manhattan preserved the timbers

for more than 200 years after the vessel was buried beneath landfill that eventually became part of the World Trade Center site.

The New York State Museum describes the gunboat as one of the few identified, scientifically studied and preserved American-built Revolutionary War vessels in New York state. Museum officials say the project demonstrates how archaeology, historical scholarship and advanced conservation techniques can recover and preserve nationally significant artifacts that otherwise might have been lost.

The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance presentation is open to the public. For information, visit lakegeorgebattlefield.org.

Gunboat at Ground Zero: A Revolutionary War Mystery," part of New York's commemoration of the nation's 250th anniversary.

Beyond directing research, Lucas has served as the project's principal public interpreter,

leading gallery tours, lectures and media interviews explaining both the archaeological techniques used to identify the vessel and the historical mysteries that remain.

"The public can come and

See GUNBOAT Page 22