



# Les Nouvelles du Fort

## The Fort News

### A YEAR IN REVIEW

From the remarks of Fort Association President Barbara O'Keefe at the annual dinner 29 October 2010

## Outpost on the Oswegatchie

Winter 2011

Fort La Présentation  
Association  
Box 1749  
Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
315-394-1749  
fort1749@yahoo.com  
www.fort1749.org

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Last year, 2010, was filled with lectures, parades, exhibits, symposiums, planning, publishing articles, designing a new website, networking, collaborating, and the culmination of the New York State's French and Indian War 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorations with the Battle of the 1,000 Islands, Founder's Day Weekend



The crew of the General Arnold commanded by Scott Padeni won the annual bateau race at Founder's Day Weekend.

The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration was our biggest event yet with more than 700 re-enactors and 3,000 visitors. A conservative economic impact of \$350,000 to \$500,000 was pumped into our region. We received post-event emails with a consistent theme of

**“Founder's Day 2010 was one of the most beautifully organized I have ever attended, well on par with the other 250<sup>th</sup> events at the other larger and better known sites.”** This did not just happen. Thousands of volunteer hours went into the planning and marketing. We are the only site without any paid staff to have hosted a 250<sup>th</sup> event.

The steering committee worked for three years, but couldn't do it alone. Every department in the City of Ogdensburg cooperated. Saint Lawrence County and organizations provided financial support or donated services; there were more than 100 volunteers, a work crew that prepared the property and a welcoming community. Another excerpt; **“It will be talked about for a long time as an example of how things should be done.”** We should see a spike in attendance next year. Many first timers are coming back and are spreading the word, **“everything was meticulously planned and worked out to assure a maximum amount of comfort for the re-enactors and the merchants.”**

A special thanks to the Freight House Restaurant owners, Deb Janson and Tim McCabe, and their staff. Without their help we would not have been able to host the Country Dance or provide outstanding lectures during the weekend. They did have their best weekend ever and said, **“The major events hosted by the Fort translate into enough additional business for our restaurant that we can do improvements that we otherwise could not afford. The Fort brings in the additional customer base that establishments like ours really need to move ahead.”** ►

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

Having the interpretive center for the 250<sup>th</sup> event would have been wonderful. When constructed, the center will provide a base of operations to meet our goals to recreate educational and historical ventures of interest to Ogdensburg and the St. Lawrence Valley before we reconstruct Fort de la Présentation. The center will provide a place for the organization to meet and host community events, a central location for all of our “stuff” scattered in two countries, facilities for visitors and re-enactors, perhaps a permanent home for the Greater Ogdensburg Chamber of Commerce and a place to recognize donors.

The Interpretive Center can be constructed at less cost and more quickly than re-constructing the fort. The most important advantage is the Interpretive Center will position us for our mission to build an historically accurate reconstruction of Fort de la Présentation and related structures in proximity to the original site and to oversee the operation of the site.

The Ogdensburg Boys and Girls Club honored the Fort Association and our heritage in 2010 by naming us honorary chair of the annual March EXPO. The St. Lawrence County Historical Association had a year-long exhibit at the Silas Wright Museum. The museum hosted lectures by Jack Vargo on the history of La Présentation and its role in the French and Indian War.

The Fort Association has been able to apply for grants, thanks to Fred Hanss and our Strategic Planning Committee. Fred’s writing skills have saved us thousands of dollars in grant-writing expenses.

Former Senator Aubertine arranged for us to receive an invitation to apply for an AT&T grant. We will have a traveling Discovery Center and related teaching materials to advance classroom learning. All will be housed at our Interpretive Center’s discovery area.

Interpretive panels telling our Revolutionary War story and the history of the Oswegatchie Native Village from 1749-1759 are in development, thanks to a member item from Assemblywoman Addie Russell. The panels will join the two already at the base of the Abbé Picquet monument on Lighthouse Point.

The Fort de la Présentation site should soon be listed on the Federal Register of Historic Places. The Fort Association is thankful to Senator Gillibrand and her office for moving the approval process forward. The Lighthouse Point site was placed on the State Historic Register in 2009 after being approved by the NYS Historic Preservation Board.

We worked extremely hard in 2010 to fulfill the Fort Association’s educational goal. The Heuvelton Central School District spearheaded a multidisciplinary curriculum to teach the French and Indian War and the role of the St. Lawrence Region. The district partnered with the Ogdensburg and Madrid Waddington School Districts. Teachers who did not know about our history are now teaching the next generation about our area’s rich heritage. The culminated was a Living History Day for 270 fourth and seventh graders to experience history coming to life. Our Education Chair, Julie Madlin, announced Living History Day funded for this year thanks to Heuvelton Central School District and St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES.

We hosted our second successful War of 1812 symposium; recognized experts presenting on various themes. We showed foresight in launching the symposium before the bicentennial. Planning for the third conference, April 29-30, 2011, is under way. The St. Lawrence War of 1812 Bicentennial Alliance based in Brockville, Ontario has included this side of the St. Lawrence River in their event planning. ►

The Fort La Présentation Association has been invited to join the St. Lawrence International Partnership to provide us with another opportunity to collaborate with other tourist attractions on both sides of the St. Lawrence River, including Fort Wellington in Prescott. The Fort has graciously fired their big guns for us for the last two Founder’s Day Weekends. Parks Canada and Fort Wellington have representatives on the Founder Day Weekend Committee. The Town of Prescott hosted re-enactors and their bateaux during Founder’s Day Weekend.

Our supporters in Canada have established the Canadian Friends of Fort de la Présentation. The Friend’s board of directors has established bylaws and applied for charity status from the Canada Revenue Agency, so Canadian donors to our project can receive tax receipts.

We have redesigned our website [www.fort1749.org](http://www.fort1749.org) to better tell our story and to position ourselves for funding opportunities. AT&T checked us out on-line before they invited us to apply for their grant. Thanks to Cape Air, we now have a sponsor for the website.

The NYS French and Indian War 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Commission has wound down, but commissioners will be working with us on the Bicentennial of the War of 1812, and we will meet new friends and colleagues on that journey. ◀

## AT&T GRANTS \$10,000 FOR SCHOOL OUTREACH

A grant of \$10,000 was awarded to the Fort La Présentation Association by the telecom giant AT&T to develop and implement a five-year educational outreach project to elementary schools in the St. Lawrence Valley region.

The curriculum-based Hands-On-History project will provide reproduction 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>- century heritage items, interpretive materials and lesson plans which will intrigue students and help teachers meet state and national standards for history and social studies.

Hands-On-History will run as the name suggests. Students will be able to handle, hold or try on the clothes, tools and other gear which will help them explore the history of Fort de la Présentation under the flags of France, Great Britain and the United States from 1749 to 1813.

We are very grateful to AT&T for the generous funding. The donation significantly maximizes the Fort Association’s modest financial and in-kind resources to allow us to reach a major goal of our educational strategy.

Our thanks also go to our long-time supporter, former State Senator Darrel Aubertine who drew the attention of AT&T to our plans to enrich our children’s learning.

The Fort Association’s contribution is \$4,700. The Fort Association board is committing \$300 annually in year’s two to five. The \$1,200 investment is to maintain printed materials and replace lost or damaged items.

In-kind services worth \$3,500—volunteered by museum, history and education professionals affiliated with the Fort Association—will help develop evaluation criteria, meet curricular goals and promote the new education opportunity to schools.

By autumn 2011, Hands-on-History should be available to teachers. We look forward to students experiencing their local history and discovering a first-hand connection to early days in the St. Lawrence Valley region. ◀

## TWO COMMANDANTS

When large-scale hostilities against the Anglo-Americans began in 1755, **Captain Claude-Nicolas de Lorimier de La Rivière** was made commandant of Fort La Présentation. Although his command was small, between 20 and 30 men, Lorimier was involved in sensitive operations. In 1756 he expedited the passage of the force under Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry that destroyed Fort Bull (Rome, N.Y.) with its supplies. In the reconnaissance force that kept up pressure on Oswego during the spring and summer of 1756, he likely commanded the left column's rearguard.

Information affecting the security of Canada's western empire often arrived first at La Présentation, where Lorimier would make initial evaluation and response, and transmit it to higher authority. Sharing authority with Abbé Picquet was uncomfortable. In 1757, serious jurisdictional disputes estranged the two men; Picquet was withdrawn. Altercations, wrote Montcalm, had been detrimental to the Kings service . . . the best thing to do would be to have neither commandant nor garrison. That would not be the case.



In 1754, the seasoned veteran **Lieutenant Antoine-Gabriel -François Benoist** was briefly posted to command Fort de La Présentation. Other duties soon took him away. Following the destruction of strategic Fort Frontenac (Kingston, Ont.) in August 1758, Benoist was ordered to reoccupy Fort Niagara (Youngstown, N.Y.) in the autumn of 1758 to make the site more secure. However, the fort was too badly damaged for a garrison to be stationed there for the winter. Benoist was ordered to fall back to La Présentation to replace Claude-Nicolas de Lorimier de La Rivière as commander in 1758.

La Présentation was strategic in the defense of the colony. Benoist assumed his new duties in November 1758 and took charge at Pointe-au-Baril (Maitland, Ont.), where construction of ships for transport and defense on Lake Ontario was under way, supervised by Louis-Pierre Poulin de Courval Cressé. Because Benoist feared a British attack the following spring, Governor Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil sent out the military engineer Pierre Pouchot. Pouchot assumed temporary command of both posts and then sailed for Fort Niagara at the end of April. In the summer of 1759 Benoist took part in the attack led by Louis de La Corne, the Chevalier de La Corne, against Chouaguen (Oswego, NY). A gunshot wound in his thigh ended his participation in the Seven Years' War. ◀

Information drawn from [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com).

## COMBINED OPERATIONS ON LAKE ONTARIO DURING THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

Dr. Peter Macleod of the Canadian War Museum delivered an address on combined operations to the Canadian Nautical Research Society in Ottawa, 16 November, 1988.

MacLeod began his remarks noting, prior to the 1750s, warfare between the French and British colonies had been confined to coastal areas and the Lake Champlain corridor, the most direct route between the British and French colonies. Armies in the interior were small and mostly non-professional – large expeditionary forces arrived in 1711 under Walker, and 1746 under d'Anville, but both operated only on the coast, and withdrew without ever contacting the enemy. Military operations were sporadic, and inland navies non-existent

But during the Seven Years' war, the intensity of conflict escalated to unprecedented heights, tens of thousands of European regulars crossed the Atlantic, major annual campaigns became the norm. That war broke out when the French chose to oppose Anglo-American expansion towards the Ohio valley in the mid-eighteenth century, they opened a new front deep in the interior of North America. This led to the emergence of something new in North American military history, the use of small inland navies to control key nodes of the riverine transportation network that linked new France and British North America. It quickly became apparent that, in the struggle for control of the lakes of North America, shipbuilding was more important than fighting, since numerical and qualitative superiority generally proved to be decisive.

This was particularly apparent during the first example of this lacustrine maritime conflict, when, in 1756, a French army commanded by Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, Marquis de Montcalm, crossed Lake Ontario to besiege and capture the British outpost of Oswego. The absence of actual naval engagements during this campaign demonstrate in sharp relief the essential elements of logistics and construction, in a campaign that was won by the French in the shipyard and along their lines of communication before the Montcalm's army ever came in sight of the walls of Oswego.

Dr. MacLeod's speaking notes are available online at [www3.sympatico.ca/donald.macleod2/nautical.html](http://www3.sympatico.ca/donald.macleod2/nautical.html). ◀

## LIVING HISTORY DAY RETURNS

Living History Day returns to Lighthouse Point Friday, May 20 to wrap up the year-long project for 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and special education students from the Heuvelton, Ogdensburg and Madrid-Waddington School districts who studied the French and Indian War and Fort de la Présentation.

Eighteenth-century re-enactors and heritage interpreters will demonstrate many traditional activities including, open-hearth cooking, life in the navy and army, colonial clothing, sports, tinsmithing and Indian traditions.

Throughout the day students will see, touch and taste some of what was everyday life for their ancestors. They will experience the action and color of history that happened in their own backyard.

This year we hope to introduce the students to the ancestor of baseball, the game of cricket.

For information, please contact Julie Madlin at 315-344-2414 or [jmadlin@heuvelton.k12.ny.us](mailto:jmadlin@heuvelton.k12.ny.us). ◀

Fort La Présentation Association  
P.O. Box 1749  
Ogdensburg, NY 13669

**PRESORT  
STANDARD**  
Ogdensburg, NY  
13669  
PERMIT NO. 509

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

## **THIRD ANNUAL WAR OF 1812 SYMPOSIUM**

Aspects of the War of 1812 from Lake Ontario to Lake Champlain and their wider impacts will be topics at the third annual War of 1812 symposium April 29-30 in Ogdensburg, NY, sponsored by the Fort La Présentation Association since 2009.

As in previous years, the symposium will be held at the Freight House Restaurant on Market Street, opposite Lighthouse Point, the site of War of 1812 Fort Presentation.

The five 2011 seminars by authoritative Canadian and American speakers are: Ogdensburg and Prescott during the War of 1812, Paul Fortier; American supply efforts on Lake Ontario, Richard Palmer; “Colonel Louis” and the Native American role in the War of 1812, Darren Bonaparte; The war on the St. Lawrence River, Victor Suthren; and Excavation of American Graves at the 1812 Burlington Cantonment, Kate Kenny. The post-dinner address by Patrick Wilder is the Battle of Sackets Harbor.

The symposium was established in advance of the war’s 2012 bicentennial to help develop a broader public understanding of the War of 1812, so important to the evolution of Canada and the United States. The annual symposium continues to be a vibrant forum of scholars from both sides of the boarder presenting informative seminars to a keen audience of academics, history buffs and re-enactors.

The cost of the symposium is \$100 for the Saturday seminars and after-dinner speaker, including a light continental breakfast, a buffet lunch and a sit-down dinner. The Friday evening meet-and-greet with period entertainment by Celtic harpist Sue Croft and hors d’oeuvres is \$10.

The symposium and dinner fee for Fort La Présentation Association members is \$90, and they will pay \$10 for the meet-and-greet.

Other pricing options are available: \$80 for the Saturday seminars without dinner; and \$35 for the dinner with speaker.

Seminar details and registration instructions are on the Fort La Présentation Association web page, [www.fort1749.org](http://www.fort1749.org).