

For immediate release  
June 15, 2008

Marci Hall 518 585-2121 x21  
[mhall@fort-ticonderoga.org](mailto:mhall@fort-ticonderoga.org)

## **French & Indian War Reenactment Biggest Ever at Fort Ticonderoga**

Confidence reigned as the largest army ever assembled on North American soil set off from the southern end of Lake George July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1758. Their goal: to capture the unmanned Fort Carillon from the French just 35 miles away. Under command of General James Abercromby a combined force of British soldiers which included the Scottish Highlanders, Roger's Rangers, Mohawk allies and thousands of militia recruits from as far away as New Jersey readied for the campaign.

Assembling the army had been a long and arduous task that involved hauling nearly 1,000 bateaux and larger whaleboats along with tons of provisions from the Hudson River and Fort Edward; a feat that took months to accomplish. But all was ready to avenge the rout suffered by the British at Fort William Henry the year before and the enemy was the same: the Marquis de Montcalm.

Lake George flows north and falls steeply down the La Chute River into Lake Champlain. Above the bay into which it flows sat Fort Carillon commanding a view north and south up this strategic 'water highway' and a musket-shot from the Vermont shore. In addition, Mount Defiance across the bay offered an unmatched point from which to observe the traffic in the area. Command of this fortification and the northward passage to the St. Lawrence were the keys to dominance in 'New France' and it was hotly contested.

This was the French & Indian War or the Seven Year's War, whose counterpart raged across Europe during the same years. The British had succeeded in recapturing Fort William Henry and ultimately planned continue pressing northward to Montreal. Carillon was just one of many important forts in the contested region that extended out to the Great Lakes.

The British assault took an ominous turn during the first night of their arrival at Lake George's outlet. Rather than portaging many bateaux and provisions around the steep falls of the La Chute, Roger's Rangers set out to scout the area. It was during a surprise encounter with French scouts that the competent and inspiring second in command, Brigadier General Augustus, Lord Howe was cut down in a woodland skirmish near the falls. His death was a great shock and setback for the army as Abercromby was not considered a strong and motivating leader.

This first unplanned encounter alerted the French to the oncoming attack. Montcalm rallied the 3,500 able bodied who began building a defensive line that would span the westward approach to the Fort, across the heights that ran out the peninsula. They quickly assembled a seven foot high log wall that was disguised with tree branches, an *abatis*, and sat in wait for the onslaught. This log breastwork proved to be the British undoing as lack of leadership, faulty intelligence, and a supreme confidence sent wave after wave of

soldiers into the maze of fallen trees to fall at the impenetrable wall. In less than six hours the bloodiest battle ever to have been fought on North American soil was over. More than 2,000 lay dead and one regiment, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders, Black Watch, lost 60% of their men. The battle described with many superlatives left Carillon in the hands of the Marquis de Montcalm.

Today at Fort Ticonderoga one can see the replica of a cross Montcalm had erected to celebrate this victory. Directly across the roadway stands the Scottish Cairn in memory of the fallen Black Watch. Throughout the woods lay buried the remains of the brave soldiers and settlers who tried to establish this area as part of the British colonies.

On these hallowed grounds the biggest commemoration ever mounted since its opening 100 years ago will take place at Fort Ticonderoga. **The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the French & Indian War Commemoration** has been designated the Signature Event for Summer 2008 by I Love NY Tourism. Beginning June 24<sup>th</sup> and continuing through July 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a series of history making events to entertain, enlighten, and educate all who attend. Celebrations, memorials, reenactments and new facilities will all help to underscore these momentous events that shaped our country.

### **Celebrations and Memorials Continue**

The culmination of nine years of historic and innovative design will be shown off in the Deborah Clarke Mars Education Center as the 250<sup>th</sup> Commemoration begins with a performance by Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal, acclaimed French-Canadian boys' choir. The show is at 1:30 the 24<sup>th</sup> of June which is, appropriately, Saint Jean Baptist Day, the patron saint of Quebec. The Mars Center is reincarnation of the French *magasin du Roi* where the provision, including the armory, were kept. It was blown up in 1759 by its own troops as they retreated from the advancing British. The Mars Center will be officially dedicated in a ceremony July 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm which also heralds the opening of, "Face of War, Tragedy and Triumph at Ticonderoga, 1758-1759". The first new exhibit at the Fort in many years, "Face of War", will delve into the three very different histories of this war-torn era from French, Indian and British perspectives.

On June 26<sup>th</sup> the Fort welcomes American Theatre Company actors as they perform an entertaining conversation that might have occurred between General George Washington and Colonel Henry Knox. The gentlemen will compare and contrast their war tactics and experiences on the Fort Parade Ground at 1:00pm.

A skirmish at the falls in Ticonderoga Village on Friday night the 27<sup>th</sup> will reenact the death of Lord Howe. Watch as 200 British march down the Portage Road and encounter waiting French scouts. The reenactment begins at 5:30.

The Grand Encampment opens to visitors at 9:00 on Friday morning the 27<sup>th</sup> with military villages set up on the Fort grounds. The chores associated with camp life, demonstrations of battle preparations, stories, music and more can be experienced in the British, French and the Indian camps. Reenactors - men, women and children, are

genuinely interested in sharing their enthusiasm for the history and their hobby. On Saturday and Sunday at 2:00pm the Battle of Carillon reenactments will take place on the north field. The new French Lines will astound visitors and leave no question as to the brilliance of this defense. The Battles should last about an hour and a half. There is a full day of family programs in both the Fort and the King's Garden to enjoy in addition to the reenactment.

With Ethan Allen's capture in 1775, Fort Ticonderoga became the first victory of the American Revolution. Readings of the Declaration of Independence throughout the day highlight July 4<sup>th</sup> at the Fort with performances by the Fife & Drum Corps.

Saturday July 5<sup>th</sup> will be the first observance of the Annual Day of Scots and Military History; a separate day created for remembrances and memorials to the fallen Black Watch soldiers and to all who have served and fought for America. Historically combined in a single day with the Montcalm victory, Fort Ticonderoga takes an important step in recognizing soldiers of all wars with a solemn procession lead by officers and enlisted men from Scotland, England, Canada, and the U.S., all of whom have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. All members of the military, retired and active are invited to join with St. Andrews Societies, Clan representatives and members of the Society of Colonial Wars in the Procession. It begins on the Parade Ground at 1:30 and proceeds to the Scottish Cairn for the ceremonies. The public is asked to join in this memorial.

To culminate the historic weeks of events is the French Victory Celebration that takes place on July 8<sup>th</sup>. A procession from the Parade Grounds to the Montcalm Cross will take place at 1:30 and programs highlighting French heritage and culture will be ongoing inside the Fort.

The Log House Restaurant and Gift Shop will be open for home-made breakfast and lunches throughout the events. Picnics are welcome; Fort Ticonderoga is a carry in – carry-out facility. Admission to Fort Ticonderoga will be through the lower entrance from Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup> and on the days of processions. There is no additional charge for parking or for performances inside the Fort. Adult admission is \$15, senior rate is \$13.50 and children from 7 through 12 are \$7.00. Local residents are admitted free of charge as are children 6 and younger. Additional information can be found at the new site [www.fort-ticonderoga.org](http://www.fort-ticonderoga.org) or by calling (518) 585-2821 weekdays.