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Events

Because of Covid 19 Restrictions and border closures our 2021 events are being evaluated on a month to month basis.

For the most current information go to our website.



www.fort1749.org

Restoration of The Historic Van Rensselaer Peninsula Shoreline Begins

Fort de La Présentation lost a considerable amount of shoreline to flooding and erosion between spring 2017 and late 2019.

Erosion has impacted both sides of the Van Rensselaer peninsula endangering the historical aspect of the original Fort de La Présentation site.

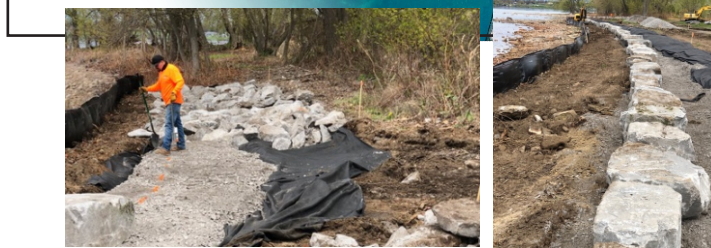
Restoration will be accomplished through the use of stone sills and toe wood/toe rock systems.

“Stone Sills”, A two-part layer of large limestone rocks, will line the shoreline and front a gradual elevating layer of soil in which native shrubs, perennials and grasses are installed.

The “toe wood/toe rock structure” began with a crew excavating the erosion site, then building a shelf on which a crisscross of logs or “toe wood” were set.

The partially submerged logs are then covered with smaller diameter logs, slash and brush. The logs and brush are secured in place with toe-rocks and covered with soil and plantings, including native grasses, collected from the surrounding area.

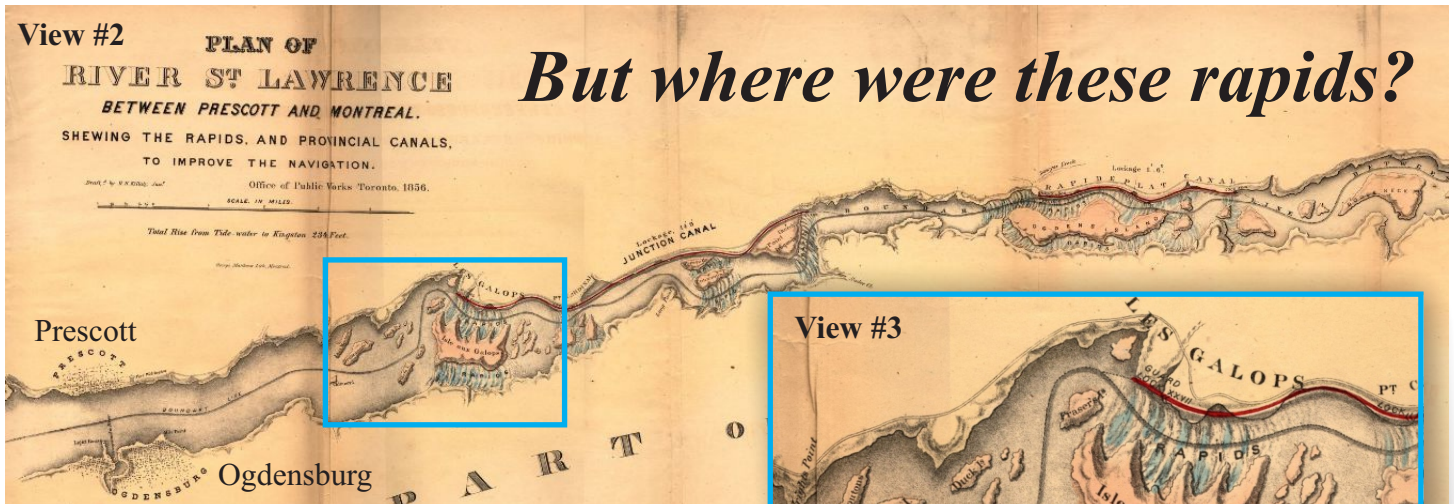
The plan not only accounts for shoreline stabilization and flood protection but also serves as an enhancement for the enjoyment of visitors.



GROUND BREAKING – The Fort LaPresentation Association breaks ground for the shoreline project.

First row from left are Judith Ryan, Jennifer Stevenson, Nicole Kennedy (Ogdensburg city councilor), Gabby Kennedy, Dan Skamperle, James Reagan (St. Lawrence County legislator), William Sheridan, (chairman of the St. Lawrence County Legislature), and Barbara O'Keefe, (president of the Fort La Presentation Association.) Second row from left are Andrew Kennedy, Kevin Wells (representing Sen. Patty Ritchie), Andy Rymph, Ruth Doyle, (St. Lawrence County administrator), Tim Cryderman, Mark Spaulding, and Buddy Fiocco.

Photo by Margaret Murphy



"Plan of River St. Lawrence Between Prescott and Montreal Shewing the Rapids, and Provincial Canals, to Improve the Navigation."

From: **Maritime History of The Great Lakes**
www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/

In Abbe Piquet's letter to the Commander General of Canada, the Count de la Galissoniere he suggested his new mission be located at the head of the rapids on the St Lawrence and could become a ship building center.

Between Ogdensburg and Montreal there were approximately fifteen (15) sets of rapids. The St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959 virtually eliminated rapids on the waterway. The Seaway was preceded by several other canals and attempts to get around the rapids. But where were these rapids?

The above 1856 map from the St Lawrence is from the collection of The Maritime History of the Great Lakes, <http://www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/>

The top image, View #1, shows the entire length of the river from Ogdensburg/ Prescott to Montreal. View #2 is an enlargement showing more detail. In View #3 you are able to see much more detail and even individual "crayon" strokes created by the cartographer.

This map, on the website, is interactive and you can scroll and zoom in to see incredible details of all the rapids, canals, roads and villages.

We have no images from the 1700's of the rapids but the images below and the diary excerpt following may gives us some idea of what a journey might have been like.

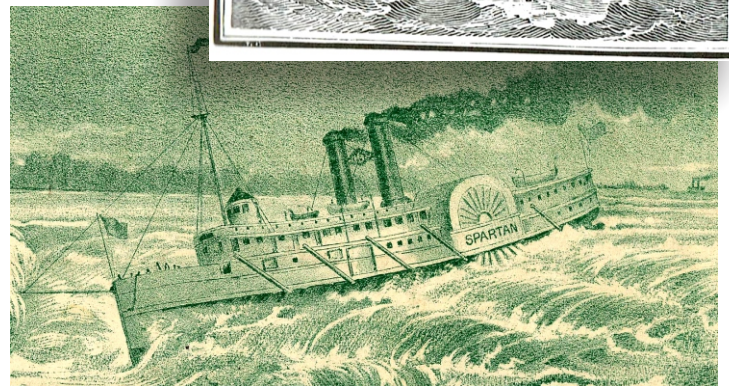


Image from a sheet music cover for The New and Revised Edition of "Racing Down the Rapids" by composer Frank W. Lawrence, with an engraving of the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company steamboat SPARTAN in the Lachine Rapids of the Saint Lawrence River on the cover. From: **Maritime History of The Great Lakes**
www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/

Diary of a Young Girl Riding Down the Rapids 1822

Diary of a Young Girl on The Erie Canal in 1822
ROCHESTER HISTORY Vol. LXII Fall 2000 No. 4
Edited by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck-City Historian

Note: In 1822 a young girl and some friends made the journey from New York city, up the Hudson river, to Albany, across the state on the Erie Canal, down the St Lawrence river to Montreal, down the Richelieu river to Lakes Champlain and George back to Albany. This is an excerpt documenting their trip through the rapids.

July 18th: Prescott, a handsome village opposite Ogdensburg. Fort Wellington, a large fortification at this place. After a great deal of difficulty we succeeded in procuring a small Canada boat of 8 feet in breadth and 30 or 40 in length—twas fitted up in very rough style. A slight frame work erected and an old sail thrown over it by way of awning. A board put up for a table in the center and rough benches formed along the side. Our provisions were taken on board with us and on 7 A.M.

July 19th: we set sail accompanied by Mr. M. There was a small square sail raised and we had three Canada boatmen as wild and savage looking as we could desire.

We were delighted with the commencement of our journey. There was so much of novelty and wild adventure in it. Passed the Gallook Rapids 7 miles from Ogdensburg, 2 miles in 28 minutes. The boat rocked very much and the waters curled and foamed like the breakers of the ocean on a calm day. 11 miles further, rapids [illegible] 3 miles in 14 minutes. While passing the Long Saulte Rapids were overtaken by a thunderstorm that made the scene more awful. Landed at the foot of the rapids 44 miles from Ogdensburg at a miserable tavern. I was handed a glass filled of, I supposed with this beverage, but upon examination found it did not reach the bottom by about inch owing to the thick coating of dirt with which the glass was encrusted.

*I was handed a glass filled of,
I supposed, with this beverage...*

Took boat at past three and passing Charcoal Cocoon and St. Regis, an Indian village whose tall spire we saw in the distance—entered Lake St. Frances 6 P.M. and reached Kirktown in its north bank at 9 P.M. in a heavy shower. The landing very poor. Scrambled up a steep, muddy bank and walked some distance in the darkness to a miserable tavern where we were glad to seek the kitchen fire. They gave us a tolerable supper, but our accommodations for the night were poor enough.



Junction of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers.

July 20th: at 3 A.M. set sail in our little boat went 16 miles to breakfast to a plain, but neat tavern on the border of the lake. Lake St. Francis 36 miles in length and 7 in width. Very little current here. Our men obliged to row for several miles. Reached the narrows at the extremity of the lake at past 12 at noonday when fearing the approach of a thunderstorm we resolved to put in shore—but we were not able to accomplish it.

*Our boatmen for the moment lost
the management of the vessel...*

The wind sprung up suddenly. The thunder roared tremendously, the rain fell in torrents and to complete the scene a sudden gust of wind took the side of the boat. The awning acting as a sail, the vessel leaned on her side til I was level with the water. Our boatmen for the moment lost the management of the vessel, but after some difficulty succeeded in running her on a little marshy island where we waited cold and drenched til the storm abated.

Our boat was flat bottomed without keel, drew but 5 or 6 inches of water. Our savage Canadians, unmoved by all we could say, were determined during the storm to proceed through the rapids at which we were just at the commencement and it was with the utmost difficulty that we could control them. We were obliged to pass through a part of these rapids, which are call Coteau du Lac, to reach the tavern on the bank of the river where we bade adieu to the boat.



Diary of a Young Girl
The Erie Canal in 1822

https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v62_2000/v62i4.pdf

https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v62_2000/v62i3.pdf

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Ceremony For Brigadier General Thomas Benedict Local Hero From War Of 1812

Members of Forsyth's Rifles and the Fort La Presentation Association, and officials of the Town of DeKalb and guests recently paid homage to a local hero of the War of 1812.

Brigadier General Thomas Benedict was the commander of the local militia and the northern frontier. Militia supplies were in a sorry state of repair when Benedict took command and he used his own funds as well as loans from local businessmen to contract repairs and purchase camp supplies.

He marched the militia to Ogdensburg to provide protection for the town from English forces stationed across the St. Lawrence River at Prescott, Ontario. In October of 1812 he organized a defense of Ogdensburg from a flotilla of boats from the Canadian shore and with over 1,000 men on the shores of the St. Lawrence, repulsed the raid.

He died at the age of 45 and was laid to rest in the Old DeKalb Cemetery on County Route 17.



His stone is weathered from time and the elements. During the remembrance ceremony a War of 1812 grave marker with an inscription, as well as a Masonic grave marker, were placed on his grave.

