

## **Executive Board of Directors**

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## **2026 Events**

**Skirmish On The  
Oswegatchie -**  
American Revolution  
Saturday & Sunday  
July 18-19

**Star Party - Friday, Aug.  
14,** The association will  
host a star party at the fort  
site with Tim Abel, who  
will bring his telescope to  
allow the public to gaze at  
the planets and stars. The  
rain date is Saturday, Aug.  
15. Dr. Able holds a PhD  
in anthropology and is an  
amateur astronomer.



[www.fort1749.org](http://www.fort1749.org)

## **Hidden History-Part 2**

By Ted Como



*"Mouth of the Oswegatchie" By Eric Brunet*

*In March of 2015, Aaron J. Gore, principal investigator for the Division of Research and Collections of the New York State Museum, issued a Phase III Cultural Resource Survey Report on field work conducted at the site of Fort La Présentation in the fall of 2012. As part of the report, historical information was also developed, some of which has not been widely published.*

*This is the second of a series of articles on the fort history that Gore found. The first was published in our spring newsletter and may be found at our website, [fort1749.org](http://fort1749.org), by clicking on Newsroom, then Quarterly Newsletters.*

*QR Code to newsletters*



**Fort La Présentation**  
founder Abbe Francois Picquet was the guiding force at the fort from its beginning in 1749 to its abandonment in 1759 as British forces approached during the French and Indian War.

Picquet also was such a key figure in the war that the British offered a prize for his death in November of 1756.

That was a year after one of Picquet's toughest battles, but not against the Brits. In September of 1755, the most lethal impact on the settlement at Fort La Présentation struck. Smallpox broke out among the estimated 3,000 Native Americans at the fort and by December when the disease left, 32 men, women and children had died.

## Hidden History- contd

Just two years later, Picquet's dominance was again disrupted and once again, not by the enemy.

Late in the year, after a protracted power struggle for authority at the fort between Picquet and its sixth military commandant, Claude Nicolas Guillaume de Lormier de la Riviere, Picquet left the mission, retiring to his old post at Lac des Deux Montagnes (Lake of Two Mountains which is part of the river delta widening of the Ottawa River in Quebec.)

As a testament to his popularity and ability, however, Picquet's exile would be short-lived. He returned in the spring of 1758, shortly before Lormier was recalled and replaced by Captain Antoine Gabriel Francois Benoist. He and Picquet had worked well together in the past, the former having served as commandant at Fort de la Présentation in 1754 and 1755.

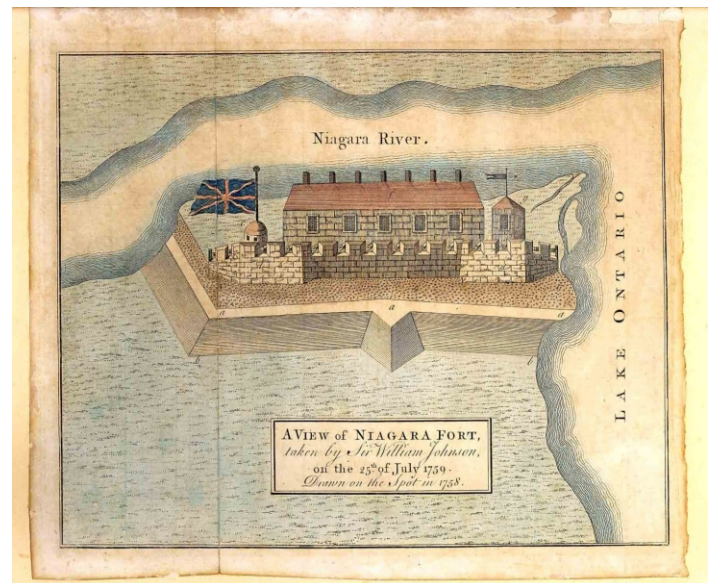
While Picquet won his personal battle at the mission fort, French forces were faring less well. By the late 1750s the tide of the war began to turn. Despite a dramatic but short-lived French victory at Fort Ticonderoga in 1758, the British captured the Champlain Valley and won victories at Louisburg, Forts Duquesne and Frontenac, and recaptured Oswego in 1758 and 1759.



Image: Parks Canada: View of Fortress Louisburg 1731

In the face of these losses the French rightly began to fear a British campaign down the St. Lawrence toward Montreal and Quebec. In April 1759 Captain Pierre Pouchot, commandant of Fort Niagara, visited La Presentation. He concluded that the fortifications were not sufficient to withstand a concerted attack and recommended abandonment of the mission fort.

The mission's fortifications had largely been constructed to withstand small arms fire and impress the Native Americans. Its location on the low, marshy ground of the peninsula, despite having practically all of its cannon facing the St. Lawrence, could be easily dominated should artillery be placed on the higher eastern bank of the Oswegatchie River (a tactic the British would use to great effect during the Battle of Ogdensburg in February 1813.) In short, Fort de la Présentation was vulnerable.



The engraving was published in the Royal Magazine in September 1759 to document the Sir William Johnson's British victory

Working in concert, Benoist and Picquet made the painful decision to abandon the fort, transferring goods of value or importance a few miles down river to Ile Aux Galops, or Ile Royale, today, Chimney Island. Fort Niagara fell to the British in July 1759 granting the British complete control of Lake Ontario. In September, Quebec fell, leaving Montreal as the only major settlement in New France in French hands. The British now controlled both ends of the St. Lawrence.

On Ile Royale, a significantly more defensible location, Pouchot built a fortification named Fort Levis in a last ditch attempt to slow or stop a British advance down the St. Lawrence River against Montreal. To his credit the fortification was formidable. On July 14 of 1760 Pouchot ordered a detachment to the site of Fort de la Présentation, not to garrison but rather to scavenge usable boards and ironwork. What remained was to be destroyed so as to deny shelter to British should they occupy the peninsula.

## Hidden History- contd



1760 Painting by British officer Thomas Davies, showing Fort Ontario. Note upper left corner showing two French gun boats on the horizon

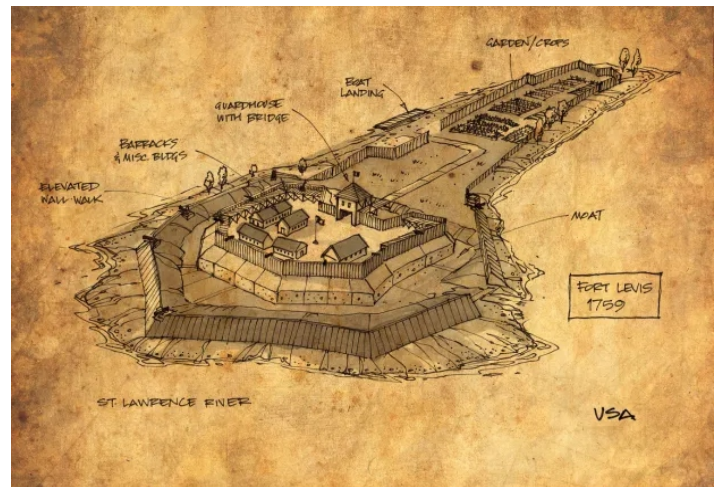
By the summer of 1760 General Jeffery Amherst had entered the St. Lawrence River and was steadily advancing down river at the head of a roughly 15,000-man army. After a brief battle with the French gunboat Outaouaise, British soldiers under Amherst's command arrived to occupy the abandoned Fort de la Presentation, which they renamed Fort Oswegatchie, on Aug. 16, 1760. The condition of the fortifications was not ideal but not entirely hopeless. A provincial soldier with Amherst's army, Colonel Nathan Whiting said

*"the enemy had some time since deserted this place had taken the roofs off the houses but not entirely destroyed them and had hurt the fort but a little though it never was much strength being stockade only and a blockhouse at each angle of the square."*



This watercolor shows Fort La Presentation exactly as it was on Aug. 16, 1760, when six British row galleys attacked the French ship L'Outaouaise (the Ottawa) near the fort. It was painted by Thomas Davies, who occupied one of the galleys during the battle.

Another soldier on the scene, Captain Hervey, noted it was an "old fort made against small arms only." In addition, two sawmills left by the French were to be found on the banks of the Oswegatchie. There was little time wasted. Preparations for an assault on Fort Levis began almost at once. After a day and a half of regrouping and repairing and refitting the damaged Outaouaise, rechristened the Williamson, Amherst and his forces reembarked and set off to lay siege to Fort Levis. Two Connecticut Provincial Regiments were left to garrison Fort Oswegatchie.



A concept sketch of how the fort would have looked on Isle Royale in 1759. Now called Chimney Island in the St Lawrence river



### "La Présentation Sunset"

By Eric Brunet

24 x 36" Prints on canvas available for \$175 plus tax and postage from:  
[Fort1749@yahoo.com](mailto:Fort1749@yahoo.com)

[Oburghistormuseum@gmail.com](mailto:Oburghistormuseum@gmail.com)

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Forsyth's members at the plaque dedication at DePeyster are, from left, John Miller, Tim Cryderman, Hunter Crary, Dallas Robinson and Josh Bennett.

## Honor Guards & Cruise Lines

By Dallas Robinson

The Fort la Presentation Association, partnering with Forsyth's Rifles reenactors, has had a very busy spring season and is looking forward to continuing activities through the fall, including this year's **Skirmish on the Oswegatchie** July 18 and 19 at the fort site.

Beginning May 2, the Association and Forsyth Rifles hosted a new program developed by St. Lawrence County Historian Nancy LaFaver and the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce entitled Open Door to History. The program encourages participants to reach out and explore historic buildings, museums and other localities of historical importance in the county. The Remington Art Museum and Ogdensburg History Museum are also participating.

The Association is also bringing many new visitors to Ogdensburg. It was approached by American Cruise Line which was developing a new cruise along the St. Lawrence River. It asked if the Association was interested in group tours stopping at Ogdensburg to tour the fort site as well as the Remington and history museum.

The first cruise was May 26, followed by tours June 4 and 9. They included open fire cooking demonstrations, candle making and colonial lighting displays, rifle drills, butter making, woodworking and artillery displays. Crystal Tyo portrayed a spinster, an individual who produced thread and material from wool or flax to make cloth. The cruises will return in September and during Fall and forward to 2027.

The Forsyth's Rifles honor guard was also in attendance for the dedication of the Pomeroy Plaque in Depeyster honoring five Revolutionary War veterans buried at the East Road Cemetery. More information on the Skirmish event will be posted on the fort's web site at [Fort1749.org](http://Fort1749.org) closer to the event.