

It is amazing that so much of American History took place in our City of Ogdensburg on the St. Lawrence River in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1749, Fort de la Presentation was a mission built by Abbe Francois Piquet where the Oswegatchie River and St. Lawrence River meet. He wanted to convert the Iroquois Confederacy to Catholicism and to have them side with France as they prepared for war with the British. I visit the fort yearly for the re-enactors battle, even though you know the outcome it is still exciting to watch. The people who volunteer their time put so much into making everything you see so real, like you are actually there back in time. The costumes, uniforms, Indians makeup, boats in the water, and camp set up are something everyone should see. I have read there is going to be a demonstration baker with fresh baked bread this year. There are always young adults and children walking through the fort. It makes me wonder what it would be like to be young during this time in history.

The fort was square, 150 ft. on each side, and was about 30 ft. away from the riverbank. The Indian village was nearby west of the riverbank. The fort was a year round community and not just a military post. Families lived there, including the French military and their wives and children. Abbe Francois Piquet implemented two conditions to live at the fort; 1<sup>st</sup> was to never bring intoxicating liquors to the mission and 2<sup>nd</sup> as Christians to live with their spouse until death. There were many marriages and baptisms that took place. Most families were large with many children. Everyone was a hard worker and to be self reliant it took the whole family to help.

The men and boys often hunted for birds, deer or fish for food. The boys would learn how to use a gun at a young age for hunting and self defense. Father Picquet taught them European methods of farming and raising livestock. They had to be prepared for the cold winters. They would also plant and harvest food. Boys would cut trees for fire wood.

The women and girls had different roles. One thing they did was sew. They would have to stitch their family close and quilts. Sometimes they would even open shops to sell their creations. To carry this on they would teach the young girls to sew at a very young age. They used wool to sew, which they sheared from sheep. The girls also had to do house work and plant gardens. Girls learned to make candles and soap with their mothers.

Children, boys and girls had to get up early and do chores every morning. Some chores involved cleaning, gardening, feeding the animals, milking cows, getting eggs from the chickens, and fetching water. The animals at the fort consisted of cows, horses, pigs and chickens. Older children watched younger ones. Parents taught their children at a young age to be eager workers because **laziness was a sin**, work always had to be done. They had new jobs for different seasons. In the spring they could pluck geese for making pillows and mattresses. In the summer they harvested fruits and vegetables. The whole family would butcher and smoke farm animals for meat in the fall. In the winter, since they were inside by the fire keeping warm girls would spin wool for sewing and making new clothes and linens.

Even though they did a lot of chores children found some time for fun. They would play hubhub, draughts (checkers), naughts and horses (tic, tac, toe), hid (hide and seek), and hop frog (leap frog). Children would go to school if they could. They used a quill pen and black ink. They would practice reading from the bible. They were taught math, reading, religion laws and good manners. If there were no schools, parents would teach at home what they could. In colonial times if children came from a rich family they would have private tutors for education.

Adults and children did not take baths everyday; they took one once a week. They would have to share the bath water. Many houses had one room with a fire place for heat and cooking.

When Boys reached fourteen they could become an apprentice. This meant they would live with someone until they mastered the job and could go and make there own shop. The jobs that required this was a blacksmith, cooper, miller, cobbler, silversmith, pewterer, tinsmith, merchants, or town crier. Boys also served in military conflicts as "powder monkeys" carrying powder from the magazines (buildings with gun powder) to guns on ships or in forts.

Living back then would have been hard work. They didn't get any free time like kids do today. Boys and girls at a very young age began pitching in and helping their families. The one thing that shocked me was that if you were lazy it would be considered a sin. I would have to admit, I enjoy being a bit lazy at times, but never thought of it as a sin. I'am also not in favor of bathing once a week, these people worked so hard they must have worked up a sweat. It makes me appreciate what we have today and that we have time for education, sports, and friends.