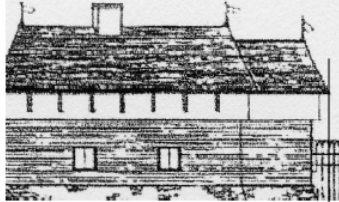


# Le Courier Frontier

The Fort La Présentation Company

P.O. Box 1749  
Ogdensburg, New York 13669



## Remembering a "Blast from the Past" DeLery's Daring Raid on Fort Bull March 27, 1756

By  
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The month of March 2006 marks the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French raid upon the British supply fort located on the west end of the Oneida Carry in what is now the city of Rome, New York. The effects of this daring winter campaign would cause the British to suffer a rather long series of unfortunate events in their effort to drive the French out of North America during the French and Indian War.

Fort Bull, in the spring of 1756, was important to the British because it contained most of the food and munitions scheduled to be delivered to the isolated post at Oswego, once the ice cleared from Wood Creek and Oneida Lake.

While the French dominated the entire Saint Lawrence Valley, with their cities at Quebec, Montreal, and Trois Rivers and controlled Lake Ontario with their Forts Frontenac (now Kingston, Ontario) and Niagara, which supported and supplied an additional string of French Forts in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, Fort Oswego represented Britain's entire effort to control the Great Lakes and secure an equitable portion of the native fur trade within that region at this time.

Not only was Oswego surrounded by French influence, but during the long North country winters it was isolated from its own supply base due to deep snows and ice; which blocked British supply lines via the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, then over the Oneida carry to Wood Creek, Oneida Lake, and down the Oswego River to Oswego.

### **Message from the President of Fort La Présentation Company**

As we usher in the New Year, many things change. One of those things is one's perspective regarding the future and the Fort's future is looking extremely bright! No longer is the Fort looking at a distant, faint, flickering light at the end of the tunnel - the clean up of our contaminated property is well underway and should be completed by year end. As our Past President Barbara O'Keefe has stated in previous letters, this is a huge milestone for a small group of individuals who engaged the nation's largest and most profitable company. Now we can claim victory in forcing Exxon Mobil to take responsibility for the contamination caused by their past activities at the site of the future Fort. To date, the Fort has received more reimbursements of clean up and contamination related costs (including attorney fees) than the state of Alaska has for the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Another thing that changes is one's goals for the future. With the clean up project likely to end during 2006, the Fort is looking forward to achieving 4 other goals as well. First the 5 remaining vacancies on the 25 members Board will be filled. Second, the Fort will position itself both organizationally and financially as the remaining 2 goals are initiated. Third, a fundraising campaign will be initiated with the goal of establishing both an operating endowment fund and a construction fund. Fourth, architectural plans will be finalized during 2006 in order to start construction in 2007.

As the Fort begins to focus its energy on achieving these goals, other things will be evolving as well. For example, our website will see many upgrades in the coming weeks. The Board of Directors & Officers listing has been updated. You will also find that our newsletter is now available as well. The website is also being translated into a French version. As time goes on, it will also be updated regularly to include near real time information on the Fort's status. Please remember to check out our website at: [www.fortlapresentation.net](http://www.fortlapresentation.net)

This is the future of the Fort and with your continued support I am confident these goals will be achieved. And this is why I am putting out a "call to arms" to our wonderful membership. We need your assistance on several committees, projects, and events in order to see these goals realized. If interested please contact Barb O'Keefe during the day or Andrew Smith during the evening at 286-8584.

**Andrew Smith,  
President**



**PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR OUR  
2006 FOUNDER'S DAY EVENT  
JULY 22-23, 2006**

At Lachine, Vaudreuil and deLery met again to select the troops and to inspect their arms. Only the best conditioned and experienced would accompany deLery, for at this season of the year the mission would test the hardiest of men. Vaudreuil had also arranged for a number of conferences with some Algonquins, some Indians from Sault Saint Louis, and from Saint Regis to solicit their help; and he had selected Chief Ouquatory and another Oneida from de La Présentation to guide de Lery on the long march through the woods to the carry.

Mild weather since the middle of January gave them hope that they could float their supplies up the Saint Lawrence; but just as they prepared to leave Lachine, a winter blast of cold wind, sleet and snow forced them to drag their loaded ice covered bateaux over and along the river. It took eleven days for them to reach Fort de La Présentation. DeLery received a warm welcome from the Présentation Indians, who eagerly accepted his strings of wampum and food. During the next five days, while the party waited for some of the Canadian Indians to arrive, the Présentation Indians danced, sang war songs and dined on two of deLery's best beeves.

Initial enthusiasm for the mission waned, however, at the rendezvous point, when everyone contemplated the added risks of making war during the winter season. Their target lay 130 miles to the south, through some of the most rugged land in the Western Adirondacks. Only the Indians knew the elusive trails around the many bogs and wide marshes and along the intricate complex of streams and lakes that led to the Portage. As they stood, gazing south, on the frozen mud outside the gate at de La Présentation, Ouquatory told deLery that it would take them eleven days to reach the carry.

DeLery's force consisted of one hundred and three Canadian Indians, including Iroquois from Sault St. Louis and St. Regis, Abenakis and Nipissings, together with two hundred and fifty-one Canadian bush fighters and regulars including men from the Queen's Regiment, Guyene Bearn, detached Navy men and eight officers from the garrison at Louisbourg. Included in this number were a surgeon, three interpreters and a priest, Father Langy.

Just as the party was about to depart de La Présentation, a war party of St. Regis Indians came in with nine English prisoners, taken near Chauagen (Oswego). From the prisoners it was learned that Oswego was out of food and hoped to soon be supplied with provisions from the fort at the west end of the carry. This was a good news, bad news situation for deLery, who knew that if he acted soon he could cut off Oswego from those supplies, but it caused the Indians to realize deLery's plan to attack a fort, something they feared to do because of the use of artillery.

DeLery, desperate to get underway, sent his regular forces to establish a camp one half league up the Oswegatchie River, near what is now Eel Weir State Park, with all the provisions of food, brandy, shot and powder. He spent the following day convincing the Indians that they would not actually be required to attack the fort, but they could plunder the wagons coming across the carry. After securing his Indians, he proceeded to the camp on the Oswegatchie River, where more bad news arrived. An Onondaga came out of the woods with a message that the English knew they were coming.

Governor William Shirley had assumed command of British forces in North America after the fall of General Braddock in the summer of 1755. He ordered the construction of two forts, one at each end of the 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile Oneida carry, in order to protect the ever increasing supplies destined for Fort Oswego, where he hoped to mount a fall campaign against Fort Niagara. The construction of Fort Williams at the Mohawk River end and Wood Creek Fort (Fort Bull) at the west end of the carry outraged the Oneidas, who had up to this time simply allowed the British to use and improve the portage. They feared reprisal from the French for allowing such a military presence on their land, and were indeed threatened of a French attack mounted on snowshoes that winter.

Now the weather in the fall of 1755, being very much like the weather in the fall of 2005, consisting of long periods of heavy rain and high winds, caused Governor Shirley to postpone his plans for an assault on Fort Niagara until the following spring. Shirley also noted the shabby conditions and the general state of disrepair at Fort Oswego and decided to leave a garrison of 700 men under the command of Colonel Mercer to winter there and make necessary repairs to the fort.

Governor Vaudreuil, the commander of the King's forces in New France, was receiving intelligence about the poor conditions being suffered by the garrison at Oswego. The information was channelled through Fort de La Présentation by Indians friendly to the French cause, who constantly traveled between the fort and Oswego throughout the winter of 1755-1756.

Fort de La Présentation, founded by Sulpician missionary Abbe Francois Picquet on the south side of the Saint Lawrence, at the mouth of the Oswegatchie River, was composed of a military fort containing a mission adjacent to a substantial Indian village. Situated on what is now Lighthouse point in the city of Ogdensburg, New York, Abbe Picquet had succeeded in getting one hundred families, mostly Onondagas and Oneidas, each with a chief to come there to live with some other Canadian Indians by the spring of 1756.

Governor Vaudreuil continued to receive favourable reports about the poor conditions of the British garrison at Oswego throughout the winter of 1755. He knew that he needed to destroy the British supply line at the Oneida Carry before the spring thaws allowed Oswego to be replenished, so that Governor Shirley's planned attack on Fort Niagara could proceed. Early in February of 1756, Vaudreuil summoned young Lieutenant Gaspard Joseph Chaussegros deLery to Montreal. DeLery, who would soon become the King's engineer for all of New France, had made numerous requests for occasions to distinguish himself in the service of the King. Vaudreuil raised deLery to the temporary rank of Captain, made him Chevalier of St. Louis and informed him of his plan to attack the portage that spring. . He then ordered deLery to proceed to Lachine where bateaux loads of supplies for the expeditions were ready to move up the river to de La Présentation, the point of rendezvous for the Indians and those troops already on there way.

A council was quickly held where intelligence revealed that the British had received word of the coming attack some days earlier from a Pr sentation Indian. Captain Williams, being rather incompetent, considered this message to be unreliable. That thought he shared with Sir William Johnson, who agreed and withdrew the thousand troops that he had brought up as far as German Flats for the defense of the carry. Through gifts of wampum, de Lery tried to convince the Oneidas that he had come for their benefit, to relieve them from the suffering caused by the English. He encouraged them to take up the hatchet against the English and to join the French at Niagara in the spring.

The group proceeded to a bend on Mohawk River (now the south end of Lake Delta) and made camp. Further questioning of the Oneidas revealed a warning to the mission by an Onondaga hunter who had been surprised in the woods by de Lery's party back on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March. The Oneidas also provided de Lery information about the defences of the two forts at the carry, and the location of food, which de Lery desperately needed, and ammunition that he hoped to destroy.

The following morning, March 26<sup>th</sup>, de Lery told his Indians of his plan to get food from the English. The Oneidas left him and crossed the Mohawk River while de Lery's men continued south on the old Oswegatchie Path used by the Indians in going to and from de La Pr sentation. Searching for a place to stash their baggage, during the coming attack, de Lery's scouts located a grove of pines near the upper waters of Wood Creek, that would serve as a base of operation for the execution of de Lery's plans. They were now just one-quarter league from the portage.

De Lery sent his scouts to check out both Fort William and Fort Bull for the purpose of verifying all of the information that he had received from the Oneidas. While his scouting parties were out, on the afternoon of March 26<sup>th</sup>, de Lery was again visited by one of the Oneidas Tarvisn. He had returned from the Oneida village to assure de Lery that all was well and that the Oneida's would mislead the British after the attack so that de Lery's party could get safely away. Late in the evening the scouting parties returned and reported that all was quiet at the two forts and on the carry.

Early in the morning of March 27, after dispatching his scouts once again, de Lery had his forces in position along the carry road approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a league from Fort Bull. His plan was to capture some of the wagons as they crossed the carry in order to obtain some food for his men. This was to be accomplished silently without shooting, so as not to alarm the garrisons of the two forts. As he had promised earlier, he called upon the Indians to complete these tasks. For a while all went well. A few wagons were captured and their drivers were taken prisoner, but as the mission progressed the Indians got careless and in their eagerness to get into the food supply of one of the wagons, they let the driver escape. The driver ran back across the carry toward Fort Williams. Fearing that Captain Williams would send out a sortie against his men, de Lery decided that it was time to attack the more vital target, Fort Bull. The Indians, who were only interested in obtaining prisoners and plunder, refused to follow. De Lery, though angered, gave them the job of guarding the prisoners and supplies and to seal the deal offered up a small ration of rum. The liberal gift of rum apparently caused some of the Indians to rethink their position and a few of them agreed to accompany de Lery to the Fort.

When de Lery's party arrived at the Fort they could see six men loading bateaux on the beach of Wood Creek. The plan was to rush into the Fort through the open gate in a surprise attack. The Indians, however, upon spotting the men on the beach burst out with a shrill war cry and took off in pursuit of them. The Fort's gate was quickly closed and Lieutenant Bull ordered his men to defend the stockade at that position. This allowed de Lery's men to set up a crossfire from loose openings in the star points mid-way on the eastern and western walls, which had been neglected in defending the gate. Some of de Lery's men began chopping down the gate with their belt axes while the rest poured a steady fire into the outnumbered defenders. It took an hour of steady chopping to breach the gate and when it fell the French soldiers charged in with fixed bayonets and cut down the few remaining defenders of the Fort including Lieutenant Bull's wife, who had hid in her husband's quarters hoping to escape detection.

De Lery then opened the powder magazine and discovered 45,000 pounds of powder stored in 100-pound kegs. He ordered the kegs of powder to be taken down to the beach, broken open, and thrown into Wood Creek. When all but sixty of the kegs had been removed, deLery noticed that the Indians had set fire to one of the buildings next to the magazine. He quickly ordered everyone to evacuate the fort. His men ran for cover, as did the few remaining prisoners who had as yet escaped death. Soon the entire structure was ablaze and moments later three distinct blasts rang out from the remaining powder left in the magazine. The blasts splintered what was left of the fort buildings as well as the stockade's posts that were catapulted across the clearing all the way to the tree line. When the blasts cleared away deLery's men ran down to the beach, broke open the barrels of food and munitions, gathered up what they could carry, and threw the rest into the creek. Their last job was to destroy the sixteen loaded bateaux tied up at the water edge. Back at the carry de Lery's Indians had already killed or captured the members of a small sortie that had been sent out by Captain Williams. On the evening of March 27<sup>th</sup> after questioning the prisoners, some from the carry, a few from Fort Bull and the rest from Captain Williams' sortie, de Lery, fearing Sir William Johnson's forces at German Flats, decided to head north at once. His plan was to backtrack along the same route that he had used on the way down.

Sir William Johnson received word of the attack on Fort Bull from Captain Williams on the morning of March 28<sup>th</sup>. It took him three days to assemble his force and arrive at the scene of the attack. By then de Lery was making camp on the Black River. After crossing Deer River, he turned west toward Niaguera Bay (Chaumont Bay) and arrived back at Fort de La Présentation after ten gruelling days of harsh wilderness travel through deep snow, slush, rain, sleet and cold.

De Lery's records show English losses to have been one hundred and five; seventy killed including those slain in Fort Bull, six who fled into the woods, and thirteen who came in the sortie from Fort Williams. He took back to Canada thirty-five prisoners and killed or captured thirty horses. His losses amounted to one French soldier and two Indians killed and four soldiers and two Indians seriously wounded. The ultimate result of De Lery's campaign at the Oneida carry was that Oswego remained in a state of chaos and disrepair until August 1756, when the French with their Indian allies under command of Montcalm successfully laid siege and reduced the three fort complex to ashes, thus temporarily ending Britain's threat to France's control of the Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence regions.

**FRENCH & INDIAN WAR  
RE-ENACTMENT  
& COLONIAL TRADE FAIR**

The Fort La Présentation Company, Inc. wishes to invite you to join us for our annual Founder's Day Weekend scheduled for July 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006. The event will be located at historic Lighthouse Point in downtown Ogdensburg, New York. This location on the banks of the St. Lawrence River is the original site where Fort de la Présentation stood.

Founder's Day Weekend is a learning experience to be enjoyed by young and old. Our event is a celebration of colonial life as it would have been in the mid-eighteen hundreds in the St. Lawrence River Valley. Please join us and feel free to talk to the re-enactors, listen to the music of the Fife & Drum, and watch colonial craftsmen at work as well as selling their wares. Witness the smoke and thunder as French, British and Native Americans forces collide in battle.

**Tentative Activities Include**

- Return from the Raid at Fort Bull**
- Rally of the troops and Native Americans for the attack on Fort Oswego**
- The Landing of the De La Sarre Regiment -- Land & Sea Battle**
- Fur Trade Scenario -- Native American Program**
- Open Fire Cooking -- Candle Making**
- Blacksmithing -- Tinsmithing**
- Broom Making -- Log Hewing**
- Meet the Authors -- Fife & Drum**
- Kids Muster -- Sutlers & Tradesmen**
- Sunday Church Service**
- and more**
- Saturday Only - Historic Boat Tours on the scenic St. Lawrence River**

Photos from previous Founder's Day events may be viewed on our website: [www.fortlapresentation.net](http://www.fortlapresentation.net)  
St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce (toll free 877-228-7810) & Ogdensburg Chamber of Commerce (315-393-3620) may be contacted for current information.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS  
EVENT ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO INTO THE  
BUILDING FUND TO ASSIST IN BUILDING A  
REPLICA OF FORT de la PRÉSENTATION**

**Author Speaks on Long Forgotten Raid**

**Bob Bearor** a nationally known author, who travels the U.S. and Canada, spoke at the Ogdensburg Library in March. He spoke on deLery's raid on Fort Bull in the Rome, New York area.

**Mr. Bearor's** presentation is scheduled to be televised on **March 22nd** and **25<sup>th</sup>** at **Twelve Noon** and **7 PM** on the Ogdensburg cable access channel.

**We believe you would find this a very interesting program.**

**YOU CAN BE  
A PART OF THIS  
EXCITING TIME IN HISTORY**

If you have a special skill or interest to assist us with some of our functions and activities please contact us to volunteer your services. We welcome your support and assistance in the following areas:

- Founder's Day 2006 Committee
- Founder's Day Weekend
  1. Registration Table
  2. Raffle Table
  3. Site Preparation
  4. Brushing/Mowing/Weed Eating
  5. Narrator for Boat Tour
  6. Signage
- Clerical
- Annual Dinner
- Public Relations
- Fund Raising

Any bit of time you feel you would like to contribute would benefit our endeavor.

**Contact people:**

Barb O'Keefe  
P.O. Box 1749, Ogdensburg, NY 13669  
Tim Cryderman – (315) 322-5519  
Marsha Hough – (315) 393-3201

**THANK YOU**

**BECOME PART OF  
LIVING HISTORY  
ANNUAL Membership Categories  
"PER INDIVIDUAL"  
Please check category desired**

1 <sup>st</sup> Sergeant	\$25.00
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2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant	\$100.00
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Captain	\$300.00
Major	\$500.00
Colonel	\$1,000.00
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Major General	\$10,000.00

**SPECIAL STUDENT MEMBERSHIP  
Please check category desired**

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*Le Courier Frontier*

Our newsletter publication(s) will be sent to all donors of \$25.00 or more each year of donation.

**We hope you will join us**

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**Send your 2006 tax deductible  
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Your donation may be deducted as a  
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advisor.**



*New and renewed Membership ~ January-March 2006*

***Director Renewals:***

Laura Ashley, Donald Hooper, Marsha Hough, Judy Lesperance, John Miller, Jr, Barbara O'Keefe, Judith Ryan, Andrew Smith, Vic Suthren, Claude Villeneuve, and Sue Watson

***Member Renewals:***

Jim & Shirley McNally, Robert & Elizabeth Leroux, Lake St Lawrence Boat Tours, Pauline Amo, and Wayne Izzo

***New Members:***

Norfolk Lions Club, Thomas Hannan, Susan McLean, Harry Needham, Hooper & Van House CPA's, Re George M Phillips, Dixie Lee Fried Chicken, and St Lawrence Federal Credit Union

<p><b>The Fort La Présentation Company, Inc.</b> <b>P.O. Box 1749</b> <b>Ogdensburg, New York 13669</b></p>

