



## ***The French & Indian War Society Newsletter***

**March 2017**

President-Melodie Viele,

Edited by Joseph W. Zarzynski, RPA

### **Summer 2017 Archaeology Field School Returns to Rogers Island**

By Dr. David Starbuck

Rogers Island was home to hundreds of British huts, tents, barracks, hospitals and storehouses, a central part of what historians and archaeologists have termed “the Third Largest City in America” in the 1750s. It was on Rogers Island where Major Robert Rogers wrote his famed “Ranging Rules” in 1757, and these may still be read in the *Rangers Handbook* of the United States Army. Even the famous novel *The Last of the Mohicans* story opens in Fort Edward. And everywhere, underneath the dwellings of British soldiers and officers, are the artifacts and hearths of the Native Americans who lived here for thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived.

SUNY Adirondack conducted archaeological field schools on Rogers Island in the 1990s, when the island was under private ownership, and literally hundreds of students and volunteers came from across the United States and Canada to participate in the excavations. We exposed the foundations and stains from the

dwellings and dumps of the British armies that were stationed there each summer in the 1750s, and always we sought to tell the stories of real people—stories of their bravery, of the daily lives of thousands of soldiers and officers, and of the suffering endured in the hospitals here.

In the summer of 2017 we will be returning to Rogers Island for new research and excavations because much of the southern half of the island is now owned and protected by the Village and Town of Fort Edward. Since 2014 when the island entered public ownership, the board of the Rogers Island Visitors Center, which manages the island, has been planning how best to create walking trails and outdoor exhibits (and below-ground “viewing ports”) atop the historical portions of the island. For this to be most effective, new fieldwork is needed to ensure that trails and signs are placed in the most historically appropriate areas.

Classes from SUNY Adirondack will have the opportunity to archaeologically document this enormous British encampment and to study the thousands of men (and a few women) who encamped here during the French and Indian War (1754-1763).

Through excavations, mapping, remote sensing, and laboratory work, we will truly help to bring this island back to life (Fig. 1).



(Fig. 1) Photograph of an excavation at Rogers Island in the 1990s (Credit: Dr. David Starbuck).

For those who would like college credit through SUNY Adirondack, it will be possible to participate for 1, 2, or 3 college credits (by participating for 40, 80, or 120 hours), and there also will be a non-credit option through Continuing Education at SUNY Adirondack. There will be three sessions of two weeks each (July 10-21, July 24-August 4, and August 7-18), and each two-week session will consist of 10 days (Monday through Friday, 9 am-5 pm). All participants must attend for at least the two-week minimum.

To sign up for college credit, please call 518-743-2373 or go to ([registrar@sunyacc.edu](mailto:registrar@sunyacc.edu)). For the Office of Continuing Education, please call 518-743-2238. These will be the first professional excavations on Rogers Island since 1998, so this will really be an extremely significant and exciting summer! If there are any questions about the excavation, contact Dr. David Starbuck ([dstarbuck@Frontiernet.net](mailto:dstarbuck@Frontiernet.net)).

## **The Society to Host Two Reenactments to Mark 260<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Battles at Fort William Henry**

By Melodie Viele

The Society is co-hosting two reenactments this year at Lake George to mark the 260<sup>th</sup> anniversary of events that occurred at Fort William Henry in 1757.

Our first event will be held on Saturday, March 18, 2017. The fort will be garrisoned from 11 am – 4 pm to mark the 260<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vaudreuil's Raid. The raid will be reenacted at 12 noon.

In March 1757 French forces under Francois-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil launched an attack against Fort William Henry. The force of 1,600 raiders moved down the ice and arrived at the fort the night of March 18 hoping to surprise the garrison. Sentries at the fort heard a tapping noise, which turned out to be the advance troops checking the strength of the ice. The fort immediately began firing their cannon at the noise and forced the French off the ice. Over the next two days, Vaudreuil demanded that the fort surrender, but this was met with cannon and gunfire. Realizing he could not take the fort, Vaudreuil turned his attention to buildings and stores outside the fort walls, burning a sawmill, boats, firewood, and provisions. The raiders then set out for home on snowshoes. A storm, estimated to have dropped three feet of wet snow, hindered their progress north and many were reported to suffer from snow blindness in the days to follow as the spring sun shone brightly on the new snow. By the end of March, they were safely in Montreal.

The public is invited to witness the recreating of events beginning at 11 am at the Fort William Henry Museum. Admission is free, however, donations to the French & Indian War Society to support their educational work are appreciated. The public is also invited to join the participants at a dinner to be held at the Fort William Henry Hotel beginning at 5:30 pm. A pasta buffet including salad, appetizers, desert, and beverages will be served. Cost for the dinner is \$15/person. A silent auction will be held during dinner with items donated from many local businesses. Proceeds support the work of the French & Indian War Society in their effort to provide public education on this era in history.

On August 26 & 27, 2017 a major reenactment will take place at Fort William Henry and Lake George Battlefield Park to mark the 260<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the August 1757 siege and surrender of the fortification. The reenactment will feature 18<sup>th</sup> century camp life, a battle reenactment at 12 noon each day, and a colonial dinner on Saturday night. For more information or to reserve space for dinner, please call: 518-964-6648 or 518-964-6647.

**2017 Events at Fort William Henry Museum (Lake George, New York)**  
Information provided by Melodie Viele

**March 18: Vaudreuil's Raid.** Garrison 11 am-4 pm. Reenactment at 12 noon, dinner and silent auction at 5:30 pm. Open to the public (\$15/person).

**May 5-Oct. 29: Fort William Henry Museum** is open for season. 9:30 am-6 pm (last admission at

5 pm), Sutler store open from 9:30 am-6 pm (until 7 pm with evening programs).

**May 19-Oct. 29: Spirits of History Ghost Tours.** May 19-June 28: Fri. & Sat. (7:30 pm and 9 pm); June 29-Sept. 5--Evening Programming with guided tours on Weds., Sat., and Sun. nights (7:30 pm, 8 pm, 9 pm, and 9:30 pm); Sept. 6--Oct. 29, 2017--Fri. & Sat. (7:30 pm and 9 pm).

**Fri., May 19-21: Law Enforcement Weekend.** Special admission for Law Enforcement personnel and families\*

**Mon., May 29: Memorial Day Observance** at Lake George Battlefield Park at 10:30 am. Join members of the Lake George Fire Department, American Legion, Fort William Henry Museum, and Lake George Battlefield Park Fort George Alliance at the Unknown Soldiers gravesite in Battlefield Park for the ceremony and musket salute.

**Friday, June 16: "Kings Highlanders Pipe Band."** Scottish pipe and drum band will perform at Fort William Museum from 12 noon-4 pm.

**Sat./Sun., June 17 & 18: "NYS Pathways Through History."** Bring your father for free on Father's Day. Special admission rate for the weekend.

**Weds., Aug 9: "260<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Surrender of Fort William Henry."** Surrender ceremony, wreath laying at 12 noon.

**Fri.-Sun., Aug 25-27. Reenactment of "260<sup>th</sup> Siege and**

**Surrender of Fort William Henry**” at Battlefield Park, Wood Park, and Fort William Henry Museum. Set up on Fri. On Sat. and Sun., battle reenactments, skirmishes, and 18<sup>th</sup> century camp life. Dinner at fort on Sat. night. We are expecting 300+ reenactors.

**Sat., Sept. 23: Smithsonian Museum Day Live Special** living history activities for home schooled students and their parents. Special admission rate for home schoolers plus tickets from Smithsonian.com.

**Sat., Oct. 7: “Fort by Firelight.”** The enemy is about to overrun the fort! Escape with help of the fort’s soldiers as they guide you through the darkness, surrounded by musket and cannon fire to escape before it is too late! 7 pm start. Groups go each half hour with the last starting at 10:30 pm. Reservations required.

**Nov. 3-13: “Field of Flags” Veterans Appreciation Week.** A field of over 5,000 flags will grace the west lawn near the fort. The public is invited to share names of their service man or woman to be added to the field. Musket salute on Nov. 11 at 11 am.

**June 17 & 18; July 22 & 23; Aug. 12 & 13; Sept. 16 & 17, and Oct., 21 & 22: “Community Appreciation Days.”** Residents (with residency proof) of Warren, Washington, Essex, Hamilton, and Saratoga counties get free admission on these dates.

**Evening Programs:** Mon.--Movie night for kids (6:30 pm or 7 pm Towers Hall); Tues.--Surrender of Fort William Henry

(similar to “Fort by Firelight”); Weds.--Ghost Tours; Thurs.--Fort Guns by Night (8:30 pm followed by fireworks over the lake); Fri.--Family movie night (7:30 pm Towers or Fort); Sat./Sun.--Ghost Tours.

\*Field of Flags” type setup in front of fort to remember lake enforcement officers killed in the line of duty from each county of NYS.

**Specials:** Dinner or cocktails with William Johnson; Museum behind the scenes; Lecture series (for details, contact Fort William Henry Museum)



\*\*Page 1 banner photograph is of reenactors during the winter of 2009 (Credit: Mike Skelly & Melodie Viele).

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