

❧ FORT GEORGE ADVICE ❧

The Newsletter of the Lake George Battlefield Park (Fort George) Alliance

PO BOX 26, LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK 12845

Spring/Summer 2014

The Stockaded Forts at the Battlefield Park: 1758 and 1759 ❧

By Russell P. Bellico

When visitors walk the grounds of the Battlefield Park they observe the remaining stone bastion of Fort George and often assume that this structure was the only fort built at the site. In reality, two stockaded (wood) forts were constructed in 1758 and 1759 north of the stone bastion on a hill overlooking the lake. The first stockaded/picketed fort was erected just before Major General James Abercromby's ill-fated campaign against Fort Carillon in early July 1758. (A stockaded or picketed fort typically consisted of logs planted upright around the perimeter of a fort. While simple to construct, it offered virtually no protection from an artillery barrage and could not mount cannons on ramparts.) On June 22, 1758, Private Rufus Putnam from Brookfield, Massachusetts, noted that he was "employed in building two Picket forts."¹ Putnam was referring to the stockaded fort on the hillside in today's Battlefield Park and a second one built on the northern footprint of the ruins of Fort William Henry.² Following the defeat of Abercromby's army at Carillon, provincial troops returned to the Lake George camp and began working on a number of new projects: a stockaded post and dock at the southeastern corner of the lake and a "bre[a]st work al[l] round our encampments."³ In addition, the troops "work[ed] upon the Hosp[ital] g[e]tting timber to it," "making Cab[i]ns for the wounded men in the [h]ospit[a]l," and building another fort (Fort Gage) "on the hill" to the southwest of the main camp.⁴

Without a garrisoned fort that could withstand a siege over the winter months, the new structures at Lake George were dismantled or burned in late 1758, the vessels sunk, and all the British and provincial troops withdrawn. The men

"knocked down the barracks within the Picket Fort" and buried the boards of the barracks along with the guns and rigging from the vessels.⁵ The hospital, huts, "a guard house," "Stone House," and the "great lake-house" were "destroyed and burnt," according to an eyewitness.⁶

In 1759 a fresh expedition was launched to capture the French forts on Lake Champlain as a prelude to an invasion of New France. The new British commander in chief in North America, Major General Jeffery Amherst, arrived at Lake George on June 21 and the very next morning met with his chief engineer, Colonel James Montresor, to make plans for a large stone fort with four bastions (Fort George). By early July, 1,500 men were engaged in building the fort. In addition to the large stone fort, a smaller stockaded fort was built on the site of the 1758 picketed fort. On June 28, Lieutenant Colonel William Eyre, who

had earlier supervised the construction of Fort William Henry, began erecting a "Post of Logs for 100 men at the Point," which would "serve during the time the other [stone fort] was Building."⁷ Two weeks later, Henry True, noted that by "ye water a new Redoubt [small fort] built to command ye lake."⁸ Samuel Warner from a Massachusetts' regiment described the new stockaded fort as "14 squares or turns... made of wood and stone," and observed three buildings inside the fort, which he referred to as hospitals: "one ston[e] two wood House[s]."⁹ The "Plan of the Encampment of the Army at Lake George June 1759" shows two unidentified buildings inside the stockaded fort and labels structures positioned outside of the stockade as the hospitals and barracks.¹⁰ Interestingly, the footprint of the stockade in this 1759 plan

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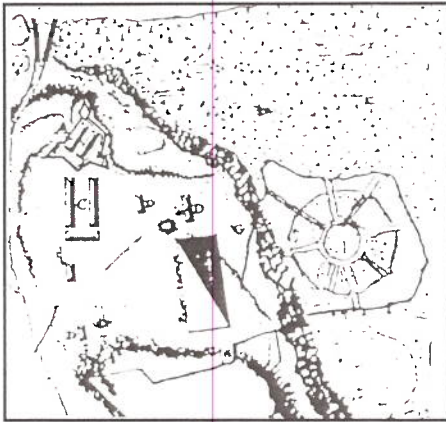


Detail of "A Map of the retrenched Camp at Lake George in 1758, showing the "Stockaded post & Hospital." (Fort Ticonderoga Museum)

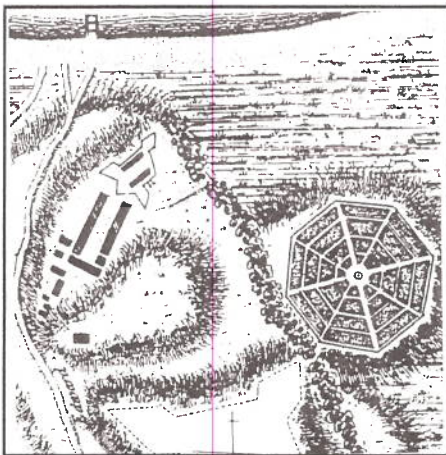
The Alliance supports the historic preservation, conservation, interpretation and associated maintenance, improvement and development of the Lake George Battlefield Park at Lake George, New York.

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Detail of the "Plan of the Encampment of the Army at Lake George June 1759," with the "Explanation: A Fort George [stockaded fort]... C Barracks D Hospitals... G Old Lines." (National Archives of Canada)



Detail of the "Plan of Part of Fort George, with the Barracks & c Erected in the Year 1759," from Mary Ann Rocque's *A Set of Plans and Forts in America, Reduced from Actual Surveys*. Although the legend has numbers identifying the buildings, they do not appear on the actual "Plan."

matches the footprint of the stockade built on the same site in 1758, shown on "A Map of the retrenched camp at Lake George in 1758."¹¹ On the other hand, the most widely used illustration, "Plan of Part of Fort George, with the Barracks & c Erected in the Year 1759," from *A Set of Plans and Forts in America, Reduced from Actual Surveys* published in London at the end of the war does not exactly match the previously-mentioned 1759 plan.¹² The configuration of the stockaded forts, barracks, and other structures in the two 1759 plans do not line up perfectly.

The unidentified buildings inside the 1759 stockaded fort were referred to as barracks in other original documents. With the seizure of the French forts on Lake Champlain and the construction of a new fort at Crown Point, on September 8, 1759, Amherst decided to "finish the Citadel Bastion" (Fort George) as "a small fort" to "hold 150 Men," which would be supplemented by "a small Garrison in the Fort by the Lake with Barracks within."¹³ A year later Colonel George Williamson, a British artillery officer, observed "a stockade square enclosing two... barracks," in addition to the stone bastion.¹⁴

A brief description in late 1759 provides another clue regarding the shape of the stockaded fort. On December 1, 1759, Captain Pierre Pouchot, a French parolee on his way back to Canada, spent the night at Fort George. He described the stockaded fort as a "square fort... constructed of horizontal timbers. On the upper part there is a fraise [pointed stakes fastened together by a strip of wood], which extends outward towards its base."¹⁵ This description matches the right-hand side of a drawing entitled "A Perspective View of Lake George" by Captain-Lieutenant Henry Skinner of the Royal Artillery Regiment, which was published in the November 1759 issue of *The Universal Magazine* in London.¹⁶ The legend labeled the right side of the image a "Stockaded Fort" and showed a picketed fence-like framework set on top of a tapered wall of six horizontal timbers.¹⁷

By 1765 the wood had substantially deteriorated; one traveler noted "a Small Stockaded Fort, tumbling down and not te[n]able."¹⁸ The site of the stockaded fort was largely forgotten until 1998 when the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation commissioned Bateaux Below, Inc., to produce the historical text for ten new interpretative signs in the Battlefield Park, including one for the site of the stockaded fort. Two years later the DEC authorized the Adirondack Community College's Archaeology Field School, under the supervision of Dr. David Starbuck, to conduct the first professional archaeological excavation in the Battlefield Park. The team's six-week long dig focused on the site of the stockaded fort. The volunteer archaeologists discovered two limestone foundations - one, measuring 17 feet in

width and 67 feet in length, is believed to be the remains of a barracks. Hundreds of artifacts were discovered at the site in 2000 and during a second dig the next year. The second excavation uncovered the remnants of eight additional foundations. Future archaeological work will shed more light on the structures that once dominated the landscape of this significant military site. ■

NOTES

1. E.C. Dawes, ed., *Journals of Gen. Rufus Putnam 1757-1760* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1886), 63.
2. Benjamin Glasier, "French and Indian War Diary of Benjamin Glasier of Ipswich, 1758-1760," *The Essex Institute Historical Collections* 86 (1950):75.
3. "A Map of the retrenched camp at Lake George in 1758," Fort Ticonderoga Thompson-Pell Research Center; Thomas Alexander, "Ens. Alexander's Diary," in *History of Northfield, Massachusetts*, by J.H. Temple and George Sheldon (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1875), 304; Archelaus Fuller, "Journal of Col. Archelaus of Middleton, Mass., in the Expedition Against Ticonderoga in 1758," *EIHC* 46 (1910): 215; Caleb Rea, "The Journal of Dr. Caleb Rea, Written During the Expedition Against Ticonderoga in 1758," *EIHC* 18 (1881): 111.
4. Lemuel Lyon, "Military Journal for 1758," in *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers, 1758-1775*, by Abraham Tomlinson (1854; reprint ed., New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 24; Glasier, "French and Indian War Diary," 78; Fuller, "Journal," 215.
5. Samuel Sewall, *The History of Woburn* (Boston: Wiggin and Lunt, 1868), 557.
6. Henry Champion, "The Journal of Colonel Henry Champion," in *Champion Genealogy*, by Francis Bacon Trowbridge (New Haven, CT: F.B. Trowbridge, 1891), 433.
7. James Montresor, "Journals of Col. James Montresor," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society* 14 (1881): 79; "Plan of Part of Fort George, with the Barracks &c Erected in the Year 1759" from Mary Ann Rocque, *A Set of Plans and Forts in America, Reduced from Actual Surveys* (London: M.A. Rocque, 1763).
8. Henry True, *Journal and Letters of Rev. Henry True* (Marion, OH: Starr Press, 1900), 18.
9. Samuel Warner, "Extracts from Samuel Warner's Journal," in *An Historical Address - Town of Wilbraham*, by Rufus P. Stebbins (Boston: George C. Rand & Avery, 1864), 210.

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10. National Archives of Canada.
11. Fort Ticonderoga Thompson-Pell Research Center.
12. National Archives of Canada.
13. Public Records Office (London) 293/2, WO 34/80, fol. 114; For descriptions of the "Stone Bastion," see Russell P. Bellico, *Empires in the Mountains: French and Indian War Campaigns and Forts in the Lake Champlain, Lake George, and Hudson River Corridor* (Fleishmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2010), 184, 205, 214, 248, 256.
14. George Williamson, "Description of Fort George, October 1760," Williamson Family Papers, National Archives of Canada, Microfilm A 573.
15. Pierre Pouchot, *Memoirs on the Late War in North America Between France and England*, trans. Michael Cardy and ed. Brian Leigh Dunnigan (Youngstown, NY: Old Fort Niagara Association, Inc., 1994), 349.
16. Henry Skinner, "Proceedings of the Army Under the Command of General Amherst for the Year 1759," *The Universal Magazine* (November 1759), 264.
17. Ibid.
18. Newton D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies* (1916; reprint ed., New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1961), 445.

