

FORT TICONDEROGA

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Press Release

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Fort Ticonderoga and Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Build Bateau

Starting with a pile of heavy white pine, white oak planks and a variety of planes and drawknives an authentic British wooden bateau will come together on the grounds of Fort Ticonderoga this season. Two stalwarts in the preservation and re-creation of Colonial American traditions, Fort Ticonderoga and the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum have collaborated on this project. Working only with hand tools and using construction techniques that date back to the 18th century the bateau will take shape under the skilled hands of Dale Henry with help from Apprentice Brian MacDonald, Fort staff. Working at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum for nearly 20 years, Mr. Henry clearly is having fun patiently shaping and securing planks to form the 27' craft. Based on the remains of a bateau raised from the Lake floor in 1960, it is one of many he has built at the LCMM.

Bateaux were used for everything from ferrying men to hauling supplies and farm animals. They were the workhorses of the 18th century military and played pivotal roles in the battles. Nearly 1,000 bateaux left the southern end of Lake George in July of 1758 carrying 16,000 British and Provincial troops, artillery and with a month's supplies 32 miles to the portage to Lake Champlain. That assault proved to be for naught as the French troops holding Carillon (Fort Ticonderoga) were able to defeat the many times larger forces at the log breastwork across the peninsula.

"It's as near as possible to what we can gather from drawings and the remains. We know they had flat bottoms and up to seven men on sweeps." Mr. Henry says that there could have been many different ways in which the bateau's interior was configured. "Usually they would have rowed standing up and in alternate positions. This one will have seats which might have been in the one we raised but they would have been removable. The oars or sweeps average 15' in length and it was common for each man to be positioned mid-ship or even further over center to get enough leverage on the sweep."

The Mars Education Center features a new miniature model of a manned bateau in the lobby. The history of its use in the French & Indian War can be explored further in the new exhibit now open, *Face of War; Triumph and Tragedy at Ticonderoga, 1758-1759*.

The bateau is taking shape on the Fort grounds near the arched entrance to the Parade Ground. Friends of Fort Ticonderoga will have an opportunity for a hands-on building experience on August 21st. It is due to launch during the Revolutionary War Encampment September 6th and 7th. Naming rights and christening rights will be auctioned off at the Annual Officer's Dinner Fundraiser on August 9th. Guests will also vie to be members of the inaugural crew on sweeps!

Visitors can interact with the builders and learn about the specific wood working techniques every day. Mr. Henry has a wealth of knowledge about all facets of shipbuilding. Both he and Mr. MacDonald are happy to answer questions and describe their work.

Fort Ticonderoga is open daily from 9:00 to 5:00 and admission to the King's Garden, which is open 10:00 to 4:00, is included. The Fife & Drum Corps plays throughout the day and now leads a procession from the bateau building area of the Fort to the Garden everyday and performs there. On rainy days the Corps is now able to perform in the Great Room of the Mars Center. For information on the bateau project and other events at the Fort visit www.fort-ticonderoga.org.

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