



*One of America's Byways*

## **French & Indian War Fact Sheet 2009**

The Great Lakes Seaway Trail is 518 miles of byway along Lake Erie, the Niagara River,

Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River, one of America's Byways and a National Recreation Trail. The region played a key role in the French & Indian War. This fact sheet was written by

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Twenty years before American colonists declared their independence from Great Britain, another great conflict was fought between 1754 and 1763 for control of North America.

Popularly known as the French & Indian War, the struggle began as a contest for the

Ohio River Valley and quickly developed into a multinational struggle fought throughout North America and in Europe, Asia and on the high seas.

The war pitted Britain and her American colonists along the Atlantic seaboard against the French and their colonists in Canada, the Great Lakes Basin and Louisiana. Native peoples supported both sides, but early in the war France had the upper hand in recruiting Native warriors to her cause. ***The Great Lake Seaway Trail region was the vital transportation and communication link between France and her colonies.*** The struggle for control of this area was essential to the overall strategy for dominion of North America.

Besides determining that England, not France, would control the American interior, the war had other far-reaching consequences. Many future leaders of America's revolutionary cause received their early military training in this conflict. American attitudes about Native peoples also hardened during the war's long years of violent border warfare.

A national commemoration of the war between 2005 and 2010 will include French and Indian War reenactments and public education programs. Seaway Trail, Inc. Executive Director Teresa Mitchell is a member of the NY-PA French and Indian War Commission. Among the efforts Seaway Trail, Inc. is undertaking to promote the French and Indian War commemoration are the publication of a brochure and guidebook, and installation of 30 interpretive panels to help travelers find their way to sites significant to the war. Among those significant Seaway Trail sites are:

### **• Ogdensburg, NY – Fort de La Presentation**

In 1749, a fortified mission is erected by Abbe Francois Picquet extending French influence over the western nationals of the Iroquois. Plans are currently being developed to reconstruct the fort.

### **• Ogdensburg, NY – Chimney Island**

Fort Levis, the Battle of Fort Levis 1760 - During the final campaign of the French and Indian War, the French fortify Chimney Island to delay a British advance down the St. Lawrence River toward Montreal.

- **Niaoure Bay – Black River Bay, Sackets Harbor, Henderson Harbor**

Advanced staging area for the Marquis de Montcalm's attack on the British forts at Oswego in August 1756

July 5, 1756: Captain Coulon de Villiers and about 600 men establish camp here as a base for the harassment of Oswego and interception of British supplies destined for Oswego. July 27: Francois-Pierre Rigaud de Vaudrieul, brother of New France's governor, arrives with reinforcements, bringing the number of soldiers in the French camp to 1,200.

August 6: Marquis de Montcalm arrives with the first division of the main French Army. By the 8<sup>th</sup>, the army's second division arrives (Montcalm's force totaled about 3,000 men and plenty of artillery). August 9: Rigaud marches off through the woods to protect a landing site east of Oswego. The rest of Montcalm's forces travel by bateau. After a brief siege, Oswego surrenders.

- **Oswego, NY – Fort Oswego, Fort Ontario and Fort George.**

1727: British fur trading post established. 1755: Fort Ontario constructed and first British battle fleet built on Great Lakes. 1756: French forces under Montcalm besiege, capture and destroy all forts. 1758: Colonel John Bradstreet uses Oswego as an advanced base to stage successful attack on French Fort Frontenac (Kingston, Ontario, Canada). 1759: British reoccupy and refortify Oswego and fight off French attack protecting the rear of General Prideaux's expedition to capture Fort Niagara. 1760: British forces gather at Oswego to descend St. Lawrence River and capture Montreal. Today, Fort Ontario is a State Historic Site, a 19<sup>th</sup> century successor to the French and Indian War fort, interpreting military life during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Exhibits trace the fort's history from the French and Indian War to World War II. Special French and Indian War event planned for August 2006.

- **Fulton, NY – DeVallier's Raid**

1756: Coulon de Villiers, the French officer who accepted George Washington's surrender at Fort Necessity two years earlier, and French raiding party attack boatmen and soldiers under John Bradstreet. The raiders inflict heavy casualties but Bradstreet successfully repels the attack.

- **Sodus Bay, NY – Bay of the Cayugas**

July 1, 1759: Gen. John Prideaux's army camps here on way to besiege Fort Niagara.

- **Rochester, NY – Irondequoit Bay**

Site of French and British trading posts prior to war-1759: Prideaux camps here.

- **Braddock's Bay, NY**

July 4, 1759: General Prideaux's army camps here on the way to Niagara.

- **Lakeside, NY – Johnson's Creek**

July 5, 1759: General Prideaux's army camps here on the way to Niagara.

- **Four Mile Creek, NY – Le Petit Marais**

July 6, 1759: General Prideaux's army lands here to besiege Niagara.

- **Youngstown, NY – Fort Niagara**

Known as "The Key to the Continent," Fort Niagara was first erected by the French in 1726. The fort was expanded 1755-57 to prepare for British attack. Fort was besieged in 1759 and surrendered to British. Old Fort Niagara contains original 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings; historic site interprets the fort's history from the French era through the Civil War using exhibits and programs. Period rooms in the 1726 French Castle interpret soldier life during the French era.

- **Youngstown, NY – Battle of La Belle Famille**

The Battle of La Belle Famille was fought July 24, 1759 between some 464 British soldiers, their Iroquois allies and about 800 French soldiers and 30 native allies. British troops in a short but bloody battle stopped French efforts to relieve the besieged Fort Niagara.

- **Lewiston, NY – The Lower Landing**

Native Americans and French and British soldiers left the Niagara River here to begin the difficult portage around Niagara Falls. Important French expeditions to the Ohio Valley pass this way: 1749 – Celoron, 1753 – Marin goes to Erie, PA to build Fort de la Presque Isle, 1754 – Contrecoeur builds Fort Duquesne at Pittsburgh, 1755 – Beaujeu/Dumas defeat General Braddock near Pittsburgh. Today, Lewiston is home to ArtPark with interpretive pedestal labels.

- **Niagara Falls, NY – Devils Hole State Park**

In September 1763, a British force is ambushed and defeated by Seneca warriors during Pontiac's War.

- **Niagara Falls, NY – The Falls**

The Falls of Niagara were a tourist attraction even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Visitors to Niagara Reservation State Park today experience much the same thrill as visitors to this natural wonder before and during the French and Indian War. A cruise on the Maid of the Mist and a visit to the Cave of the Winds allow visitors to experience The Falls from the perspective of those 18<sup>th</sup> century travelers who ventured to the bottom of the gorge.

- **Niagara Falls, NY – The Upper Landing**

1751: French erect Fort du Portage to help divert fur trade from the English at Oswego. 1759: Fort burned and garrison withdraws to Fort Niagara. 1760: British establish a stockade above The Falls. 1763: Fort rebuilt and named Fort Schlosser. Find interpretive pedestal labels on Goat Island.

- **Barcelona/Mayville, NY – The Chautauqua Portage**

This important portage connected the waters of the Great Lakes with the Ohio River drainage, making the route extremely important in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 1749: Captain Celoron de Blainville passes the portage in his effort to sail down the Ohio burying lead plates to reclaim the Ohio Valley drainage for France. The French continue to use this route even after they decide in 1753 that the Erie, PA, to Waterford, PA, portage will be the main route to the Ohio.

- **Erie, PA – Fort de la Presque Isle, Seaway Trail Pennsylvania**

1753: Fort established to protect the new portage road to the Ohio. 1759: French muster forces to relieve the siege of Fort Niagara, burn fort. 1760: British construct Fort Presque Isle. 1763: Fort Presque Isle destroyed during Pontiac's War. Historic markers and monument overlook Fort's original site. Nearby Erie County Historical Society contains a painting of the French fort's destruction as well as archaeological remains.

- **Waterford, PA – Fort Sur la Riviere aux Boeufs**

1753: Washington arrives at French Headquarters to deliver demand that French evacuate Ohio Valley. 1759: French abandon and burn fort. 1760: British erect Fort Le Boeuf. 1763: British fort attacked and burned during Pontiac's War. Fort La Boeuf Museum offers exhibits and programs on the fur trade and French and Indian War.

For more info:

[www.seawaytrail.com](http://www.seawaytrail.com)

[www.nycampgrounds.com](http://www.nycampgrounds.com)

[www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com)

If you find this information of use, please cite Seaway Trail, Inc. or Great Lakes Seaway Drive as source. Media interested in photos & interviews, contact:

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