



## PAULIST FATHERS

ST. MARY'S OF THE LAKE

LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK 12845

THE HARBOR ISLANDS MASSACRE, 1757

-Tom Stransky, June 1978

(From sources on the French-Indian War and on Lake George)

During the French and Indian War, which began in 1755 although not declared until 1756, English military plans called for the capture of Crown Point on Lake Champlain, via Ticonderoga. In 1755, the French, under Baron Dieskau, had begun to build a fort at Ticonderoga, and at the same time to attack the English south of Lake George, at Carrying-Place on the Hudson, near Fort Edward. General William Johnson, British Commander, came to meet Dieskau. Upon arriving at Lac du Sacrament, Johnson changed its name to Lake George (in honor of King George II). Johnson won the battle (Sept. 8), and began to construct Fort William Henry, at the southwest end of the Lake.

In 1756 summer, the south shore resembled a small shipyard of newly built armed sloops, bateaux, longboats and whaleboats -- all in preparation for an armada trek up the lake the next year. In mid-March '57, the French and their Indian allies came down the lake, failed to take the fort, but did destroy a large portion of the new English fleet.

The French, now under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm, then drew up plans for a hard blow against Forts William Henry and Edward as a prelude to an attack on Albany. By mid-summer '57, he had assembled at Ticonderoga a large fleet and an army of 8,000 (French Regulars, Canadian recruit, and 2,000 Indians from close to 40 tribes).

The British were aware of Montcalm's plans. In July '57, Colonel John Parker led a scouting party up the lake, through the Narrows and along the safer west side toward Sabbath Day Point. As a base to thwart off such ~~XXX~~ expeditions, a large force of Indians were using the Harbor Islands, the last large and centrally located cluster before the open space north of Sabbath Day Point. The Indians could easily conceal their canoes from southern eyes in Moonlight Bay and the lagoons west or east of the gap between Hewitt and Hecker. Close to the west side of the islands the English were suddenly pounced upon from quick Indian canoes and ambushed from the islands' shores. 131 English were killed, 100 escaped, the others were captured and taken to the Islands. There most were tortured and killed, and their remains are now part of the island soil or of the surrounding nearby lake bed. Three British soldiers were cooked and eaten by the Indians. The few who had managed to escape the Islands returned to Fort William Henry and there related the bloody story -- and so it has been recorded in the military minutes.

Shortly afterwards, on August 2, Montcalm arrived from Ticonderoga with his fleet at Northwest Bay, and there rendezvoused with a land force. By the early morning of August 4, the armada disembarked in the cove on the southwest side, near Tea Island. On the 5th, Montcalm opened fire. Four days later the British raised the white flag. The fort was then quickly destroyed; the smoke from the razed timber pyre could be seen at Fort Edward, 14 miles away. The French army embarked and returned up the lake.

The next summer, July '58, Major General James Abercrombie left the south end for Fort Ticonderoga with 16,000 men in more than a thousand boats and canoes. Two were "bateaux" -- propelled by oar and sail, and mounted with

cannon, "floating batteries". One of the two on this trip sank at the base of Black Mountain, near the island southwest of the Mother Bunch; the island is today named Floating Battery. Upon arrival at Ticonderoga, the British were defeated with great loss.