

ILMHS website revision – please post

## Isle La Motte Historical Society

established 1925

The 3 building campus, located ~ 5 miles from the Isle La Motte bridge along Main Street at the corner of Quarry Road, is comprised of circa 1843 Stone Schoolhouse Museum, early 1990 Dube Blacksmith Shop and the Frances Ford Slab-lob cabin. In 2016, the Society is presenting its 5<sup>th</sup> Hidden Treasures exhibit on “Batiste: The Bard of Isle La Motte” exhibit in the Frances Ford Slab-Log. The buildings are

**Open Saturdays during July and August**

**1:00 - 4:00 pm, or by appointment**

### **ILM Historical Society 2016 Program Schedule**

*All events are free and open to the public*

**Friday, July 15, 7:00 pm - Annual Meeting** at Fisk Farm. Speaker: Educator and musician, Mark Greenberg, “Kitchen Tunks and Parlor Songs.” Mr. Greenberg will discuss collecting oral histories in Vermont; he will show how earlier music survived in the twentieth century and how it was affected by social and technological developments.

**Wednesday, September 7 – Joint Social** with: Alburg, North Hero, Grand Isle, South Hero, Franklin County Historical Society, Swanton, Chazy – N.Y, and Champlain/Rouses Point Historical Societies; the Lake Champlain Basin Program, The Isle La Motte Preservation Trust, C.I.D.E.R., and the Samuel de Champlain History Center. Wine and cheese at Stone School House at 5:00 pm, followed by a pot luck supper at St. Anne’s Shrine cafeteria at 6:30 pm.

**Saturday, September 17 – Teddy Roosevelt Day** sponsored by The Isle La Motte Preservation Trust and The Isle La Motte Community Organization.

### **Ideas for Exhibits**

The Historical Society is developing ideas for future exhibits about Isle La Motte. We welcome your thoughts about exhibits and suggestions for items you might be willing to donate or lend to contribute to this effort. Contact Barbara at [twoducks76@hotmail.com](mailto:twoducks76@hotmail.com)

## Artifact Donations

Photos, letters, or documents pertaining to Isle La Motte schools, quarries, families, churches, houses, transportation, etc., or tools and artifacts can be donated to the Society. We have charitable status. Please contact Gloria McEwen at [802-928-3077](tel:802-928-3077) or [802-985-0787](tel:802-985-0787), or [gloilm@yahoo.com](mailto:gloilm@yahoo.com).

## Interested in History

Please get involved with the Society. There are many opportunities to help with our work from being a docent, help with curating and designing our revolving exhibits. Please contact: Barbara at [twoducks76@hotmail.com](mailto:twoducks76@hotmail.com)

## A Brief History of Isle la Motte

Isle La Motte is the northern most inhabited island in Lake Champlain. During pre-European time it was likely a gathering place for Native American Nations that utilized the Lake.

In 1609, Isle La Motte was the first landing place of Samuel de Champlain. In 1968, the State of Vermont donated a statue of the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain that is prominently displayed at the site. The monument was sculpted by F.L. Weber for the Montreal 1968 Expo.

In 1664, the Island's world-famous Isle La Motte Black Limestone Reef Complex began to be quarried for lime burning to make 'quicklime'. The likely major use of this quicklime on Isle La Motte was to make cement for construction. This quarrying activity likely ceased in the early 1670s.

Vermont's First European Settlement, Fort Ste Anne, was built on the northwest shore of Isle La Motte in 1666 by French soldiers under the command of Captain Sieur de La Motte of the Carignan. The fortress itself was a simple structure measuring about 144' x 96' with double log palisade 15' high and four log bastions. Fort Ste. Anne was the staging area for several military expeditions by the French against the British and the Mohawks. In September 1666, about 600 veteran troops of the Carignan-Salieres regt., together with an equal number of volunteers, (or *habitans*) met here with approximately 100 Huron warriors, prior to marching against Iroquois villages. About three hundred bateaux and bark canoes set off from the Fort on this expedition. Fort Ste. Anne was undoubtedly a fearsome place to be stationed. Situated in the deepest reaches of an impenetrable wilderness, accessible only by water, subject to fierce winds and deep snows, the few hardy souls who resided there likely suffered terribly from both the elements, disease, isolation and loneliness. The fort was abandoned in 1671. All traces of the wooden fort were obliterated by the mid-1800s. **The summer of 2016 will be the 350 anniversary of the establishment of Fort Ste. Anne.**

During the American Revolution Northern Campaign Invasion of Canada in 1775, General Richard Montgomery troops camped on the Island as did forces from General John

Burgoyne's invasion army in 1777. In the days preceding the Battle of Valcour, Benedict Arnold's fleet anchored off the shore.

The Town of Isle La Motte was chartered in 1779. It was primarily a farming community.

The quarry business began again in 1788 to provide furnishing building stone from at least 3 sites located south of the Town center along the shore (1 on the west shore and 2 on the east). (good photo on [http://www.fiskfarm.com/fiskfarm/Historic\\_Fisk\\_Farm.html](http://www.fiskfarm.com/fiskfarm/Historic_Fisk_Farm.html)) There are many 'test pits' visible from the road side or when walking in Isle La Motte's mixed tree forests. During their operation the quarries were one of the main employers in the Town and all 7 stone buildings are composed of this rock. The quarry blocks were marketed as "Fisk black" or "Fisk gray," and now can be purchased under the name commercially sold as "French gray" or "Champlain black". Most of the quarrying operations stopped in the mid-1960s. When you visit the Historic Society Campus look at the outside walls of the Stone Schoolhouse and count how many of the 480 million year old fossilized creatures you can see.

In 1802 the town's name was changed from Isle La Motte to Vineyard. The official records give no indication of the rationale behind the change. Generally speaking, throughout the United States, the name Vineyard has been used in places that either had large numbers of grapes vines (true on Isle La Motte as you can see from the 2 established vineyards on the Island) or the community wanted to be known as grape growing areas. Whatever the reason, the change was not a permanent one and in 1830 the name was changed back to Isle La Motte.

During the War of 1812, the British Capt. Daniel Pring erected a battery of three long 18-pdr guns on the west shore of the Island to protect Chazy Landing, NY on the opposite shore. The British Captain George Downie fleet anchored offshore the west side of the island prior to sailing to their defeat by the American's at Cumberland Bay on September 11, 1814.

It was here on Isle la Motte, at the Fisk Farm, in September 1901 that Vice President Theodore Roosevelt heard the news that President McKinley had been assassinated. Roosevelt, staying with the prominent Fisk family, was guest at a Vermont Fish and Game League dinner.

The Champlain Tercentenary Celebrations occurred in 1909 at the site of the old Fort Ste. Anne. A large Indian 'pageants' was staged, and visiting dignitaries from near and far came to celebrate the great French explorer who gave his name to the lake.

References:

<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/states/vt/vermont-photos03b.html>

[http://www.historiclakes.org/explore/ste\\_anne.htm](http://www.historiclakes.org/explore/ste_anne.htm)

<http://www.historiclakes.org/tercentenary/tercentenary6.htm>

<http://dec.vermont.gov/geological-survey/resources-energy/minres/marble>