



ALL FIRED UP FOR LOYALIST DAYS IN PRESCOTT

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

After a short hiatus, Prescott Loyalist Days is back.

Every great event takes an enormous amount of planning and the Loyalist Days Committee have been working hard for almost a year to make sure their event is right on target.

The event will take place at Fort Wellington National Historical Park from

Thursday, August 17 to Sunday, August 20 to coincide with Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation. The event is supported by the municipal council, as well as funding from the Ontario 150 Community Celebration Program, Celebrate Ontario 2017 and the Great Waterway Partnership program.

Re-enactors from far and wide will be coming to Prescott to participate in the battles at Fort Wellington. The hosting unit of the festival will be the King's Royal Regiment of New York which is an infantry unit of the British Brigade.

Loyalist Days Parade in 2010. The soldiers taking aim and gun salute.

The four-day festival will see lots of other activities throughout the town for everyone. Children young and old are certain to find some activity that will peak their interest. Family fun night, an adult dance at the Leo Boivin Community Centre, daytime activities for kids and seniors and an outdoor inter-denominational church service are just some of the events planned this year. No event would be complete without a parade and Loyalist Days is no exception. A Military March will make its way from Kelly's Beach to Fort Wellington through RiverWalk District on Saturday morning. Granting of land lots at Kelly's Beach in Centennial Park will be re-enacted before the parade. The main fireworks will take place on Friday evening. There will be an evening cannonade on Saturday.

Loyalist Days began as a 1-day military pageant in 1969 and by the 1990's had grown to a 10-day event with the military pageant being the flagship of the event. In 1993, Prescott Loyalist Days celebrated twenty-five years. Admission to most

Re-enactment soldiers with Cannon on Fort Wellington grounds (date unknown)

of the events was a \$2.00 Loyalist Days button. These buttons were sold at various locations throughout Prescott. Another big attraction was the antique car show. Back in 1993 over 200 cars were on display on the Fort Wellington grounds. There was a variety of entertainment at the Leo Boivin Community Centre every night during the festival.

This event attracted thousands of people to Prescott every year. It was an annual mid-summer event that focussed around Fort Wellington and the re-enactment of the battle of 1812. Many re-enactors from all over would come to help recreate the battle between the Loyalist Canadian Troops and the United States of America military. These battles took place at the waterfront and they used cavalry and artillery to perform in the mock battles. During this event, the public also got a chance to interact with the re-enactors and see what their temporary living arrangement in the camp areas were really like. Weapons and artifacts were displayed in tents and there were also rifle demonstrations. Historical artisans such as hatters, shoemakers, and blacksmiths demonstrated and discussed their skills from the past. Spectators would bring their lawn chairs and blankets and position themselves on the hill of the Fort Wellington to enjoy the battle.

Re-enactors would journey down main street where the store owners would have historical displays in their windows. Guided tours of Prescott by horse and buggy also took place.

Loyalist Days ran until the mid-1990's. However in 2008, the festival came back to life. This new Loyalist Days saw local businesses and organizations playing a bigger role in the festival. Groups such as the Business Improvement Association, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Rotary Club, the Prescott Youth Centre and the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival all got involved with the hosting and sponsoring of the events. Although it was only 3-days long, the festival was filled with numerous activities. Besides the re-enactments there was a dance, pancake breakfast, a barbeque, church service, as well as sonnets performed by the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival. A fireworks display sponsored by Hands Fireworks



Town Crier at a Loyalist Days Parade in 2010.

at the waterfront at dusk capped off the community event.

Over the years, the organizers have tried to come up with new ideas for the festival. The 1812 Barracks Dinner was a new event that was introduced in 2011. This dinner that was located inside the walls of Fort Wellington recreated not only the atmosphere, but also the menu from 1812. Guests were encouraged to dress in period costumes. The event was very well received.

The Moonlight Movies were introduced in 2010. This event was also inside the walls of the fort underneath the stars and was enjoyed by young and young at heart. The movie was shown on a 40' tall inflatable movie screen.

Whether you remember the battles, the sidewalk sales, casino nights, the Loyalist Queen and mini miss contest, or the fireworks, there is one thing for sure, the event brings people in the community together. New acquaintances are made, old friendships are renewed and everyone who attends learns a little bit more about the town's history. **LH**

If you would like more information on Loyalist Days or if you would like to volunteer, contact info@prescott.ca or telephone the Town of Prescott @ 613-925-2812. www.prescott.ca