

## A Seneca Encounter with LaSalle 2009

By Michael Galban

This Fall we will once again recreate the year 1669 when a small group of Frenchmen led by the famous LaSalle journey to the heart of Seneca country seeking fortune and knowledge. On September 26 & 27 people from as far away as Minnesota and Wisconsin will converge on our site to present the most historically accurate reenactment of LaSalle's famous visit that has ever been attempted.

For the past 2 years researchers and reenactors have been discussing this period of French colonial presence in North America on internet message boards and over the phone. Images and documents can be shared and sent instantly making a very effective method of community study. The discussions range from firearms and clothing to religion and French social class systems. The researchers have compiled hundreds of documents and images pertaining to the appearance of 17<sup>th</sup> century. The French colonial reenactors have been busy developing accurate patterns for coats, breeches, vests and hats. Never before has this era of French colonial presence been recreated in such detail. It will be, in itself, a historic event.

The main scenario will focus on the well-documented first meeting between the LaSalle party and the Seneca leaders. The meeting would prove to be peaceful and positive for the time period. French-Iroquois relations during the 17<sup>th</sup> century were not always on friendly terms and any attempt at peacemaking was important.

With the details of the LaSalle journey were so well-documented by the priest Galinée, we can almost recreate the entire French group's numbers. Most reenactments have to rely on 'representative' numbers, which can limit the experience, but with the original French presence at Ganondagan being only 10 men, it is within our grasp. We have 5 men coming in from the Midwest, two French re-enactors from Chambly, Quebec, (descendants of the French colony of New France), a member of the Furriers guild of Beverwyck to act as the "Dutch interpreter," a local reenactor and myself as a French-Native metis rounds out the true numbers of the original LaSalle expedition. I feel a sense of historic karma when we can bring the descendants of the same people who were here in 1669, both Seneca and French, together in a peaceful way over 300 years later. I hope that you make the time this fall to be an eyewitness to this most interesting time period.

The Living History Event, "A French Encounter with LaSalle" will take place on Saturday and Sunday September 26-27, 2009 from 10 AM to 4 PM at Ganondagan State Historic Site, 1488 State Rte. 444 in Victor, NY. In addition to the reenactment, there will be demonstrations of Native American and early Colonial arts, tours of Ganondagan's bark longhouse, hands-on activities and food and seldom-seen period arts & crafts will be available for purchase. Admission is \$5 for Adults, \$3 for Friends of Ganondagan Members and Senior Citizens and Free for Children 5 years and under.