

FORT TICONDEROGA

BUILDING A GINGERBREAD SOLDIERS' HUT



Historical Background:

In the summer of 1776 soldiers of the Continental Army prepared to defend the United States' northern frontier at Ticonderoga. Soldiers labored to construct earthen walls for cannon batteries and firing lines through a long, rainy summer, all the while living in linen tents. Following the completion of fortifications atop Liberty Hill--½ mile west of Fort Ticonderoga--in September of 1776, soldiers of the 4th Pennsylvania Battalion received orders from their Colonel, Anthony Wayne, to build more suitable shelter. With their cannon batteries and entrenchments completed, "*[t]he Cols next wish is to see the officers and soldiers as comfortably accommodated with regard to their encampments and lodgings as the nature of the campaign will admit, and therefore requests the Captains of each company previous to any other business to see that completed as soon as possible.*" The 4th Pennsylvania Battalion built simple wooden huts, along with their entire brigade of soldiers atop the historic hill they defended. These soldiers used wooden boards, cut from the army's sawmill on the LaChute River, 1 mile away. Through September, row upon row of soldiers huts, roved and covered in these boards, appeared behind the fortifications of Liberty Hill, as soldiers waited into the fall for the impending British attack on Ticonderoga.

Prepare for winter at Ticonderoga by building your own gingerbread soldiers' hut! You can use a gingerbread kit or bake your own!

What you'll need for a 4th Pennsylvania Battalion gingerbread hut:

- Gingerbread: Two peaked walls, two rectangular side walls, two roof slabs
- Icing
- Frosting
- Caramel squares
- Pretzel sticks
- Graham crackers
- Coconut
- Candy of your choice

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Directions:

1. Choose a foundation – a cookie sheet, plate, or sturdy piece of cardboard will work. Spread frosting on your foundation to create an adhesive base for the walls.
*Soldiers dug the foundations of their huts two feet into the ground and laid pine boards to keep themselves dry.
2. Use the icing to attach the peaked walls to the rectangular side walls. Use the frosting to cover the walls with graham crackers laid horizontally.
*The army's sawmill provided wooden planks that were 8 inches wide by 10 feet long for the walls of the huts.
3. Once dry, use the icing to attach the roof slabs to the top. Use the frosting to lay the graham crackers horizontally across the roof.
*In order to prevent the roof from leaking, each wooden board was laid horizontally and overlapped the board below it.
4. Stack caramel squares with a thin layer of frosting in between each layer to form a chimney at the back of your hut.
*Earthen chimneys built out of layers of sod allowed soldiers to build fires to heat their huts.
5. Use the icing to attach pretzel sticks to the front of your hut to make a door.
*Hut doors were approximately 3 feet wide and 5 ½ feet tall.
6. Decorate your hut! Sprinkle some coconut to add a snow effect.

For more information on soldiers' huts at Ticonderoga, visit:

<https://www.fortticonderoga.org/news/lodging-as-the-nature-of-the-campaign-will-admit/>