

THE HALIFAX CITADEL

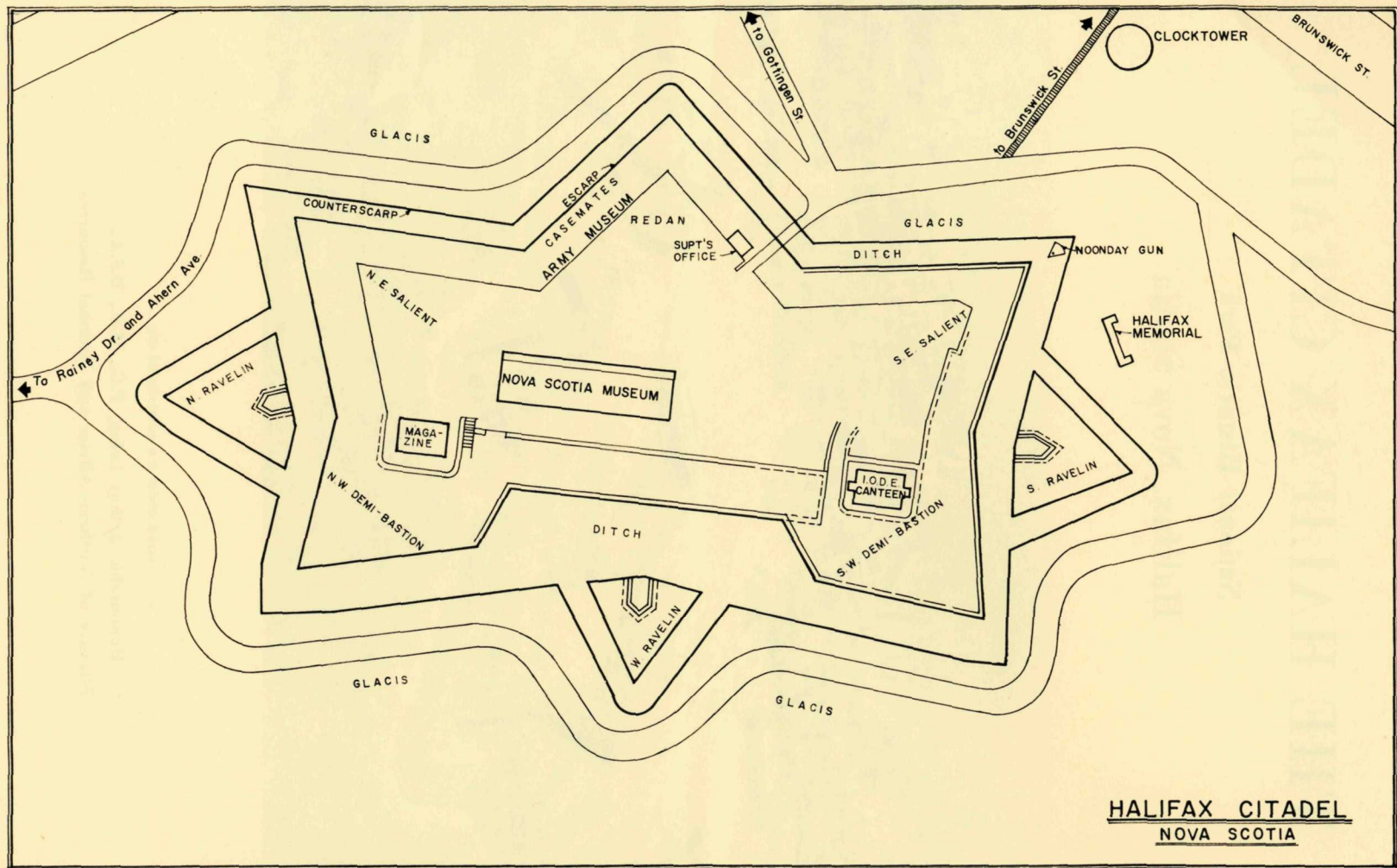
National Historic Park

Halifax, Nova Scotia



Issued under the authority of the

Honourable Arthur Laing, P.C., M.P., B.S.A.,
Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources



HALIFAX CITADEL
NOVA SCOTIA

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Halifax, Nova Scotia

Halifax was founded in 1749 to provide a base for the British Navy and Army and a springboard for attack on the French at Louisbourg and Quebec, because the final contest between France and England for possession of the North American continent was clearly approaching.

Citadel Hill was always the innermost keep and chief land defence of the Halifax Fortress. Four forts were built, at different periods, on its summit.

The *first* was part of a wooden palisade around the young settlement, designed to protect the settlers from Indians. The *second* was built at the time of the American Revolution and was intended as a stronghold and base against the rebels. The *third* was built while Napoleon Bonaparte was trying to conquer the world, and this one was later repaired for the War of 1812 with the United States. Because of the latter war, Britain knew she must have a permanent fortress here as Atlantic base in time of peril, and so the *fourth*, the present one, was constructed. Not one of these forts was ever called upon to resist invasion. No shot was ever fired against them in anger. However, it is safe to say that they had served their purpose merely by existing.

The First Citadel

When the Honourable Edward Cornwallis arrived at Chebucto Harbour on June 21, 1749, accompanied by more than 2,500 settlers, one of his first thoughts was to secure the settlement from attacks by marauding Indians, ever ready to molest the British during periods of nominal peace between England and France. At the outset he had only two companies of regulars and Goreham's half-blood Rangers, but in July he was well strengthened by the 29th and 45th Regiments, which had just evacuated Louisbourg under the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

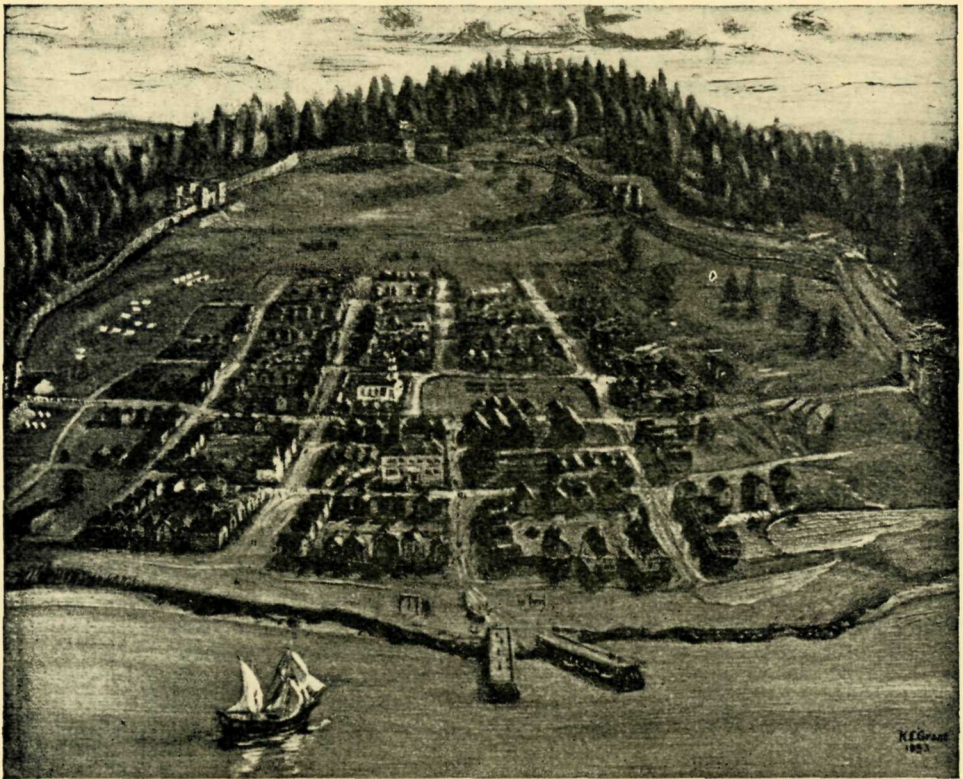
Cornwallis directed his principal engineer, John Brewse, to prepare a temporary defensive plan, in accordance with which the settlers were requested to spend a few days in throwing up a series of five stockaded forts with connecting palisades. The proposition, however, was rejected, and all that could be done was to post the troops to guard against a sudden incursion.

About the end of August, alarming intelligence was brought that the Indians were preparing to attack, and the troops were ordered to carry a line of pickets around the town. By September 11, 1749, a fort close to the top of the hill had been completed. This was the very humble antecedent of the present Citadel. It was located, not on the summit of the hill, but at a spot just east of the south ravelin¹ of the present Citadel.

On September 30, 1749, Indians attacked men cutting wood at the sawmill in Dartmouth Cove, killing four. By October 17, two of the stockaded forts about the town had been completed, and a rough barricade of felled trees, logs, and birchwood had been carried entirely around the settlement. The place now began to be secure from surprise, although the settlers had twice

refused to assist, and the work had to be done by the troops. In December, 1749, a militia force was organized. By July 10, 1750, the temporary barricade had been removed and palisades were being erected, linking the five stockaded forts. These were Horseman's Fort, 73 feet above sea-level, at Barrington Street, immediately south of Masonic Hall; Cornwallis Fort, 144 feet above sea-level, between the present Artillery Park and the South Barracks; the Citadel, 225 feet above sea-level; Fort Luttrell, 155 feet above sea-level, just west of the present Glacis Barracks; and, Grenadier Fort, 50 feet above sea-level, at the corner of Jacob Street and Poplar Grove. Owing to their form, square with a bastion² at each corner, the forts could direct an enfilading fire along the face of their own bastions and curtains³ and, as they projected beyond the line of palisades, two sides of each fort could enfilade the palisades, at the same time being reciprocally protected by oblique and enfilading fire from the palisades.

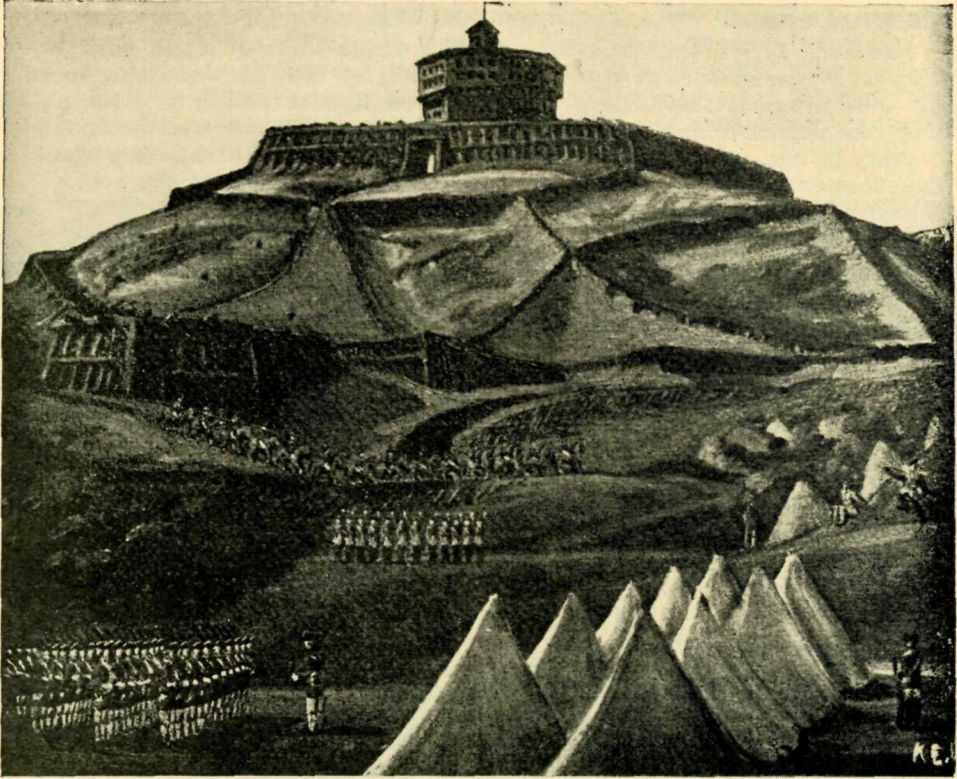
The town soon grew outside the palisades, however, and within ten years was fulfilling its destiny as a base for attack against Louisbourg and finally against Quebec. With the end of French power, the town knew peace and prospered. The next alarm was to be the outbreak of the American Revolution.



THE FIRST CITADEL—1749-1759

The stockade highest up the hill was the first Citadel. The hill was cut down 32 feet in the course of two hundred years, so the present Citadel is nearly on the site of the first one.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, the late Lieut. Commander K. E. Grant, R.C.N.



THE SECOND CITADEL — 1761-1783

Built on the summit of the original hill, the elongated earthworks extended far down the hill. Hessian soldiers are seen drilling below the Cavalry. British Regulars lower left. Goreham's Rangers, with Indians, right.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, the late Lieut. Commander K. E. Grant, R.C.N.

The Second Citadel

In 1761, Major-General Bastide began the construction of a new Citadel to replace the small original fort erected twelve years before, and now obsolete. This was a system of much elongated, irregular, polygonal fieldworks of earth and sod, possibly revetted⁴ with timbers or fascines⁵, but the work was stopped in July, 1762.

The American Revolution ushered in a period of marked activity on the Halifax defences, which had been allowed to fall into ruins. Bastide's fortifications on Citadel Hill were considerably enlarged, repaired and strengthened by Captain William Spry, C.R.E., probably from about 1776. They now became a maze-like system of rambling polygonal earthworks, revetted with fascines⁵ and mounting many guns. A large central octagonal wooden tower, or block-house, enclosed by a square redoubt, was erected on the highest ground to serve as a keep for the work, and as a barracks for 100 men.

Many garrisons passed through the town during these troublesome years, on their way to and from Boston, and towards the end of the war it was overrun with Loyalists. The Peace of 1783-4 brought all activity to a standstill, where it remained for about a decade.

Danger loomed again with Napoleon's rapid rise to power across the ocean. Many people feared that he might come to invade Nova Scotia and use it as a base to reconquer Canada. Once again Halifax looked to her defences and found them in a sad state of repair.

The Third Citadel

On June 28, 1794, Prince Edward, afterwards Duke of Kent, and father of Queen Victoria, became commander-in-chief at Halifax, remaining in this post until August, 1800. His prestige enabled him to obtain large sums of money for defensive and other military purposes, and although at the time not 27 years of age, he undertook the military improvement of his command so wholeheartedly that occasionally he acted even in advance of the receipt of authority from England.

By far the most important of all the Prince's defensive projects was the entire reconstruction of the Citadel on a wholly new, simpler, and better plan. It was the third fortification placed on the commanding hill above the town, and by General Orders of October 20, 1798, was named Fort George in honour of his father, George III.

On May 19, 1795, Prince Edward forwarded to the Secretary of State for War, plans, profiles and estimates prepared by his chief engineer, Captain Straton, for a new "Field Work for Citadel Hill to contain 1,000 men with log bomb-proofs for 650 men, a magazine for powder to contain 1,200 barrels, and one for provisions to contain all kinds of species for three months". The estimated cost was £9,339. During the summer the work was commenced but due to a shortage of labour and materials it was not until the spring of

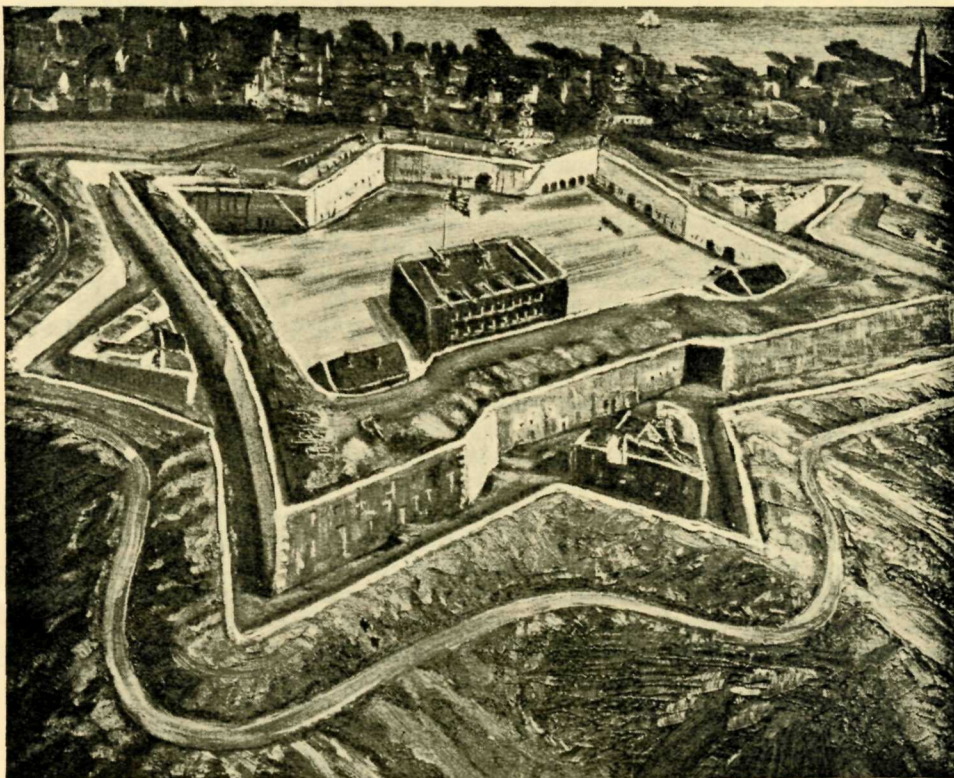


THE THIRD CITADEL — 1794-1815
(Fort George)

The Duke of Kent's fort, with the hill cut down 15 feet. Note visual telegraph system which the Duke devised and by which he could send messages, by relay, for over a hundred miles.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, the late Lieut. Commander K. E. Grant, R.C.N.

1796 that much progress was made. On August 15, 1796, the Prince reported the arrival of stalwart "Maroon negroes" from Jamaica, and that some of them were employed on the "new works on Citadel Hill". These people constructed one of the bastions, known thereafter as the "Maroon Bastion", and later demolished when the present Citadel was constructed. Work continued and was finally completed in the autumn of 1798.



THE FOURTH CITADEL — 1828-

The present Fort, with the hill cut down a further 17 feet. These works are approximately 225 feet above sea-level. The Cavalier building visible in the centre was later roofed over. The Town Clock is visible just beyond the ramparts.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, the late Lieut. Commander K. E. Grant, R.C.N.

As a preliminary to the building of the new fort, the old works had been levelled, the top of the hill cut down 15 feet, and on this flat base an elongated symmetrical earthwork with four bastions but without ravelins was thrown up, the escarp⁶ revetment being in some parts of fascines, and in other of planks. It was much smaller, but more regular, than the work it superseded, and it was planted firmly on top of the hill instead of running far down the glacis⁷ like its predecessors. The length, as before, was northwest and southwest, in conformity with the contour of the ground.

During the War of 1812-14, the Citadel was temporarily repaired and otherwise patched up, and a stone bomb-proof magazine built there, but by 1825 all the works, on which some £300,000 had been expended, except the magazine, were "wholly extinct".

Because of this War, Britain knew she must guard Halifax well. While engaged in her great struggle with Napoleon, Halifax had been her trump card on this side of the ocean. Should she ever be engaged in another European War of magnitude, who knew what might happen on the Western Atlantic? Britain resolved to make the Halifax Fortress stronger than ever. Now the city's defences extended out to the mouth of the harbour, but most of them (the Citadel in particular) were obsolete and in poor repair. Large sums were spent on the outer defences and a great part of it set aside for a modern Fort on the hill which would be truly impregnable.

The Fourth (present) Citadel

On December 20, 1825, Colonel Gustavus Nicholls, C.R.E. on the recommendations of Colonel James Carmichael Smith and a committee of engineers who were in Nova Scotia inspecting the fortifications with a view to further construction, if necessary, forwarded to General Mann, Inspector General of Fortifications, his designs and estimates for "re-erecting in masonry the former fort on Citadel Hill at a cost of £115,999 16s 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d". He suggested that the bricks be sent out from England as ballast in any transport ship, "as the bricks here are of very inferior quality".

Not until July 15, 1828, did the Board of Ordnance approve the plans and estimates, and £15,000 was then granted by Parliament to begin the work. Nicholls lost no time. Preliminary work was begun before October 7 by excavating for the ditch of the western ravelin, the lowest part of the western front. Only £627 was spent in 1828.

By May, 1829, work had begun in earnest and £11,453 was spent that year. On June 9, detachments of the Royal Staff Corps and of the Royal Sappers and Miners arrived from England to assist in the work. Operations continued under various contractors for nearly 30 years. All the granite work was done by Royal Sappers and Miners, the work on buildings partly by civilian labour under contract. The remains of the old earth and timber parapets of Prince Edward's Fort George were demolished and the top of the hill cut down and levelled to a height of 225 feet above sea-level. The material year by year excavated from the ditches, interior and elsewhere, was carefully spread outside to form the beautifully symmetrical glacis which we now see, every foot of which could be swept by gun and musketry fire from the ramparts. Tens of thousands of tons of choice squared granite and quarry-faced ironstone were brought from the King's Quarries, northeast of Purcell's Cove on the Northwest Arm, and used in the high revetments of the escarp and counterscarp⁸, the interior retaining walls, the buildings and other parts of the work.

Unexpected difficulties were very soon encountered, mostly as a result of the escarp revetments having been planned much too thin to stand up when loaded with the ramparts⁹, particularly when subject to severe winter climate, and their foundations too shallow. After 1832, much of the earlier work had to be rebuilt at a great extra expense.

In September, 1831, Nicholls proposed an important change from his original trace¹⁰, to increase accommodation for men and stores. This was that the proposed ravelin on the harbour front be replaced by a redan¹¹ with strong casemates¹², and *couvre porte*¹³. The redan was accordingly begun a few years later, and when completed contained 16 upper and 12 lower casemates.

The strong casemated Cavalier¹⁴ Barracks is a prominent feature of the interior of the fort. It was practically complete in 1831, although an additional casemate, for cookhouses and cells, was added at each end at some time prior to 1843. It is constructed of dark grey ironstone masonry, and measures 205 by 50 feet, 33 feet 8 inches to the top of the stone parapet; the west wall is 6 feet

thick at the base, and the east wall about 3 feet. On the top were mounted, en barbette¹⁵, seven 24-pounder guns on traversing platforms, five of which faced west so they could be brought to bear over the capitals¹⁶ of the west ravelin and northwest and southwest demi-bastions. Later a parapet with a pitched roof and clock replaced the battery.

Originally it was proposed to construct two smaller cavaliers, facing north and south, but instead casemates were constructed in the ramparts of the north and south fronts. There are altogether about 100 casemates, including casemates of defence, 28 in the Redan, 58 in the Northeast Salient, the ends of the west curtain and elsewhere, and the remainder, in pairs, flanking the ditches of the ravelins and redan.

On November 9, 1833, the Royal Staff Corps left for England, but the work at the fort had only begun. Large sums were still to be spent annually, the largest being £15,887 in 1842.

Nicholls had hoped to utilize the magazine built in 1812, but the cutting down of the hill had left this building 10 feet too high, so, soon after 1835 it was demolished and the two bomb-proof magazines of granite, each 68 feet by 41 feet, with a combined capacity of 3,920 barrels of gunpowder, were constructed. These still exist, but the one in the northwest bastion was later used as the basement of the red brick building which now surmounts it.

The three large underground rain-water tanks for the supply of the garrison were constructed between 1849 and 1854 beneath the east side of the parade ground. Two of these had attached filters; the third was a reserve supply. Altogether they had a capacity of 195,019 gallons. There is also a well 160 feet deep and of 18,850 gallons capacity in No. 18 casemate, north front, and another of 11,016 gallons in the guard-room at the gate.

Six narrow passages or sally-ports pass beneath the ramparts to furnish access to the bomb-proof guard-houses in the three ravelins and to the loop-holed galleries in the counterscarp.

The final trace of the fort is one having demi-bastions at the northwest and southwest corners with a curtain between, and plain salients at the northeast and southeast corners, with the redan between, the impressive gate with its drawbridge being at the southern end of the redan. There are three ravelins, one opposite the western curtain, and the other two opposite the north and south re-entrant angles. At the gorge of each ravelin is a casemated defensible guard-house through which access is gained from the ditch below.

On its completion the Citadel occupied a most enviable position among the more powerful of Great Britain's colonial defences. Such, however, was the progress of gunnery, and its consequent effect upon the design of fortifications, that this fine fortress did not for many years enjoy the unqualified admiration and approval of military engineers. The application of rifling¹⁷ to artillery in 1859 presaged the final passing of the time-honoured bastion and later polygonal systems of defence, and with its large scale application in 1870-1 their "death-knell" was positively sounded. Simplicity of trace is observable in all fortifications since then. By 1870 the Citadel was virtually obsolete, although not until about 1886 was this grudgingly admitted. It was garrisoned by British troops until February, 1906, when Canada assumed responsibility for its own defences, thus ending an Imperial occupation of almost 157 years.

From 1906 until 1914 the Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery maintained a guard at the Citadel, which, with the outbreak of World War I, was immediately increased. The Citadel's chief role during this war was as a detention camp for suspicious aliens and prisoners of war brought into port by the Navy, among them a group of German naval prisoners taken in the Falkland Islands Battle, and the Russian Bolshevik, Leon Trotsky.

During World War II it was put to use once more as a signal post, radio station, and as a site for anti-aircraft guns and searchlights.

On May 16, 1951, the Citadel was transferred to the Federal Department of Resources and Development, and was created a National Historic Park on July 5, 1956.

The Old Town Clock

Prince Edward, who made his headquarters at the Citadel as commander-in-chief of British forces until 1800, had a fixation about punctuality and also had an unusual fondness for clocks and other small mechanical devices, particularly those that produced pleasant sounds. He was struck by the lack of a large clock that would inform both the soldiers and the citizenry of the time and instructed his engineer to draw up plans for a garrison clock. These plans were approved in 1801 and on June 10, 1803, the London-made clock arrived at Halifax. It was installed on October 20, 1803. It is unusual for its three-bell peal, one bell for the quarter-hour, one for the half, and one for the hour.

The Natural and Historic Resources Branch dismantled the original clock tower and reconstructed a replica, complete in every detail, on the original location. During the reconstruction the cornerstone bearing the inscription "clock erected by Duke of Kent, 1803. This cornerstone laid by the Prince of Wales in 1919" was recovered. To protect the historic structure, visitors are not allowed to enter the clock tower.

The Natural and Historic Resources Branch also has been restoring the Halifax Citadel for many years with the ultimate objective of restoring it to the appearance it had in 1855-60.

There are two museums in the Citadel, one a military museum, the other a Provincial Museum, which is operated by the Historical Branch of the Nova Scotia Museum.

On July 31, 1955, the Halifax Memorial was unveiled by His Excellency Governor-General Vincent Massey. This impressive memorial, located on the southeast glacis, was erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission to commemorate the Canadian soldiers, sailors and merchant seamen who perished in World Wars I and II, and have no known grave but the sea.

The Fort is guarded night and day by Commissionaire Security Guards, all of whom are war veterans with years of service in Army or Navy. They are probably the most photographed men in Halifax, and their uniforms and medals give the atmosphere of the Victorian days when the Fort was in its glory under the Imperial authorities.

DEFINITIONS

¹ ravelin: outwork consisting of two faces which form a salient angle constructed beyond the main ditch and in front of the curtain.

² bastion: a projecting part of a fortification consisting of an earthwork in the form of an irregular pentagon, having its base in the main line or at an angle of the fortification.

³ curtain: the part of the wall that connects two bastions, towers, gates, etc.

⁴ revet: to face an embankment with masonry or other material, hence, revetment.

⁵ fascine: a long cylindrical faggot of brushwood firmly bound together.

⁶ escarp: steep bank or wall immediately in front of and below the ramparts, generally the insides of the ditch.

⁷ glacis: the parapet of the counterscarp extended in a long slope to meet the natural surface of the ground so that every part of it shall be swept by fire from the ramparts.

⁸ counterscarp: the outer wall or slope of the ditch.

⁹ rampart: mound of earth raised for the defence of a place capable of resisting cannon shot, wide enough on top for passage of troops and guns.

¹⁰ trace: ground plan of the work.

¹¹ redan: simple form of field work having a salient angle and open at the rear.

¹² casemate: a bomb-proof vaulted chamber with embrasures for guns.

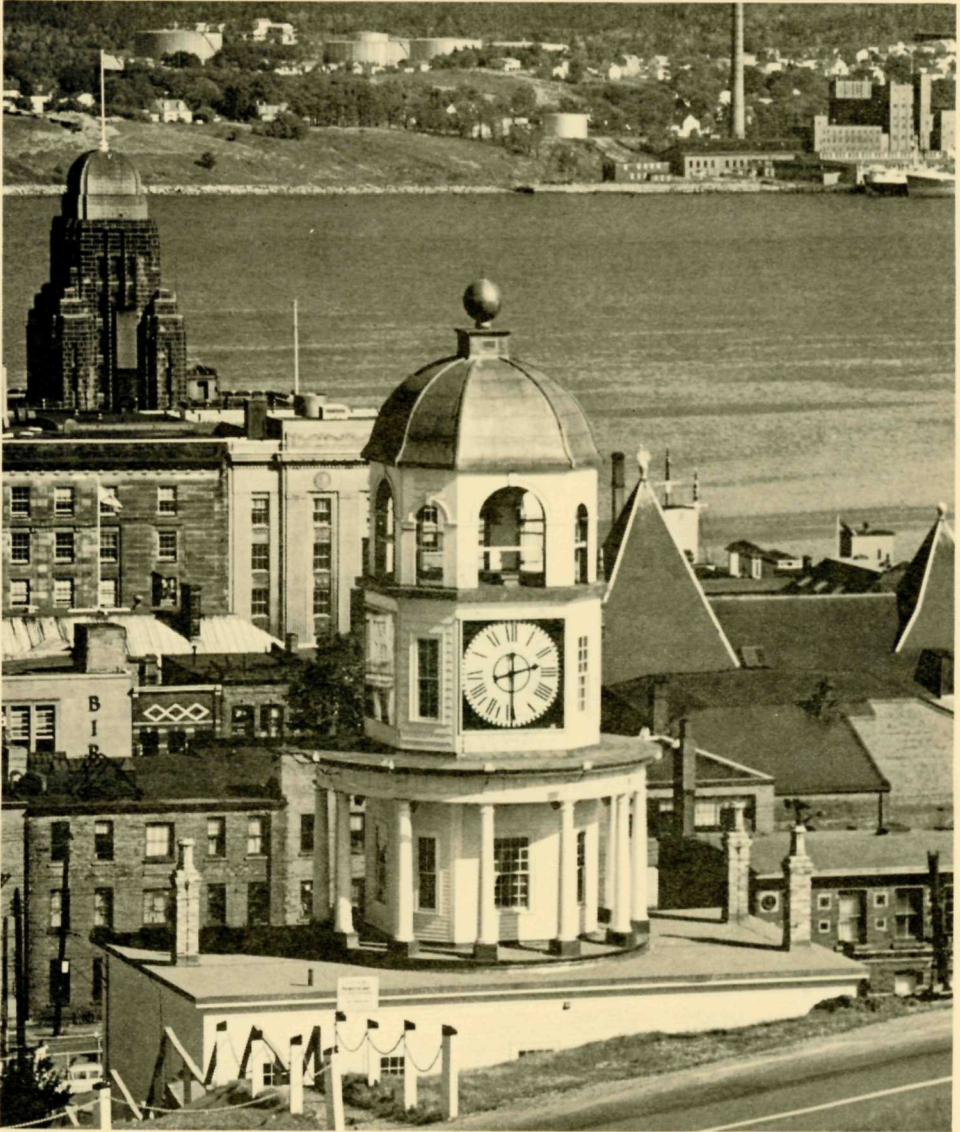
¹³ couvre porte: covered gate-way.

¹⁴ cavalier: a work raised higher than the rest of the works to command all adjacent works and surrounding country.

¹⁵ en barbette: on a platform on which guns are mounted to fire over the parapet.

¹⁶ capital: an imaginary line bisecting the salient angle of a work.

¹⁷ rifling: spiral grooving in the barrel of a gun.



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