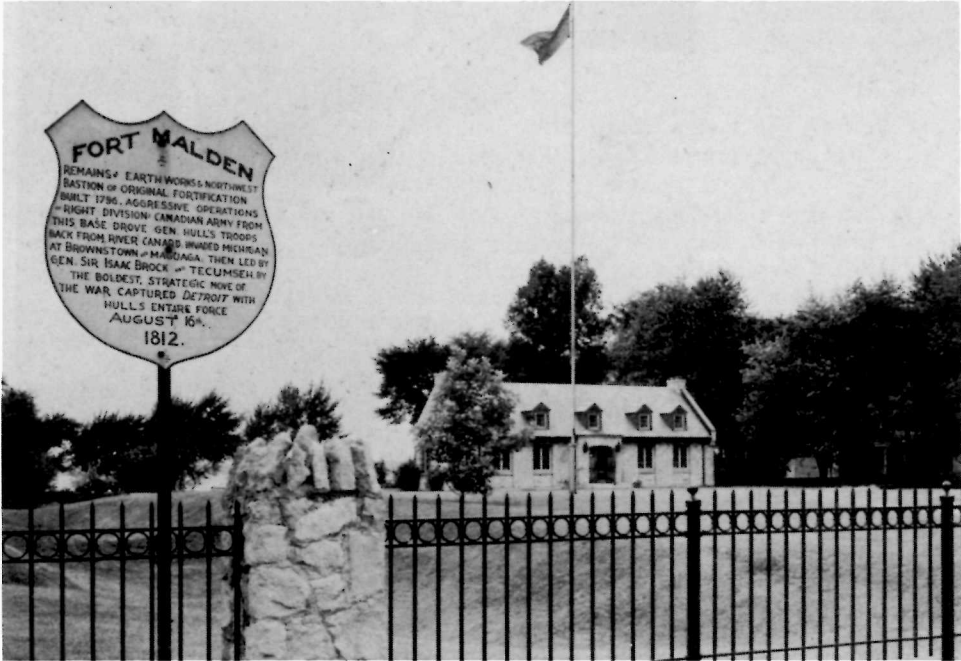


Fort Malden National Historic Park

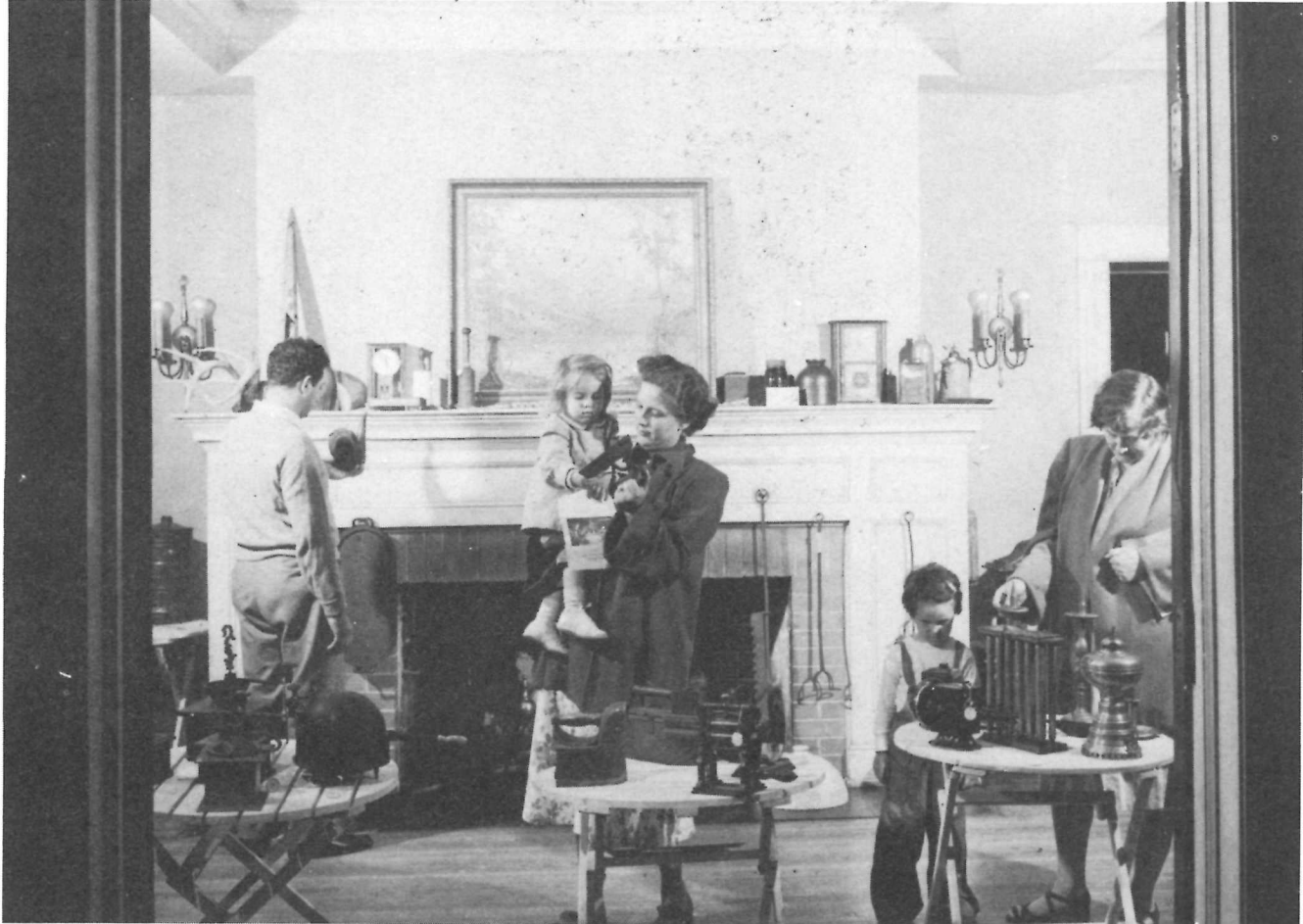
Amherstburg, Ontario
Canada



A WISE NATION PRESERVES ITS RECORDS
- - - GATHERS UP ITS MUNIMENTS - - -
DECORATES THE TOMBS OF ITS ILLUS-
TRIOUS DEAD - - - REPAIRS ITS GREAT
PUBLIC STRUCTURES AND FOSTERS NA-
TIONAL PRIDE AND LOVE OF COUNTRY
BY PERPETUAL REFERENCE TO THE
SACRIFICES AND GLORIES OF THE PAST.

. . . Joseph Howe

Issued under the authority of
THE HONOURABLE JEAN LESAGE, Minister of
Northern Affairs and National Resources



Interior of Museum, Fort Malden National Historic Park

Fort Malden National Historic Park

Amherstburg—Ontario

FORT MALDEN NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK, Amherstburg, Ontario, is situated on the east bank of the Detroit River and is easily accessible from the cities of Windsor and Detroit, distant eighteen miles to the north.

The Park contains part of the remaining earthworks of Fort Malden, and on the grounds stands a fireproof museum built in 1939. An adjoining property was purchased in 1946 to allow expansion of the Park facilities.

Fort Malden was built in 1797-99 by the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Volunteers, under Captain Hector McLean, to replace Fort Lernoult at Detroit, one of the posts evacuated by the British in 1796 as a result of the Jay Treaty. The town of Amherstburg came into existence at the same time, a portion of the Military Reserve being laid out as a townsite.

As the successor to Fort Lernoult at Detroit, which in turn had replaced the old French fort of Pontchartrain, Malden fell heir to a history going back more than two centuries.

Sanson's Map of New France, 1650, gives details of the region and it is generally believed that the information it contains was furnished by Father Brebeuf. In 1670, the French priests, Dollier de Casson and René de Bréhand de Galinee, explored the Detroit River. Nine years later the *Griffon*, built by La Salle and his men, sailed through the same waters.

In the next few years the region was visited by various coureurs-de-bois, among whom tradition had it were Jean Parent and Jacques Morand. When Cadillac stepped ashore to found his colony on the Detroit River in 1701, it is said these two hunters were there to greet him.

The settlement founded by Cadillac grew very slowly, but by 1760 there were fronting on the Detroit River several miles of long ribbon-like farms. Fort Pontchartrain gave protection to the inhabitants, many of whom had themselves been soldiers stationed at the Fort.

In 1763, France surrendered Canada to the British, Major Rogers of the Royal American Regiment being the officer selected to accept the cession of the French posts at Detroit and Michilimacinae.

The French farmers and traders accepted the situation with good grace, but the Indians under the leadership of Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, resisted the sovereignty of the new rulers and instituted sieges of the various frontier posts. The siege of Detroit was noteworthy for its length, but eventually Pontiac's forces withdrew, not, however, before the British suffered severe losses in the Battle of Bloody Run, a few miles east of Fort Pontchartrain.

The colony along the Detroit continued to prosper under British rule and the lives of the French settlers remained undisturbed. During the American Revolution most of the inhabitants remained loyal to the British cause, and from Detroit raids were made against the Continentals in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.

Some years before the British evacuation of Detroit, the Indians, inhabiting the territory in what is now the State of Ohio, were opposing the influx of American settlers, and several pitched battles took place.

Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, became the leaders in the opposition to the American infiltration of the Indians' hunting grounds. Despite the organization of a vast confederacy by Tecumseh, among both near and distant tribes, the Indians were gradually ousted from their lands, but Tecumseh maintained the struggle until it merged into the larger conflict of the War of 1812-14.

When war came, Major-General Isaac Brock reinforced Fort Malden with regulars and militia from the east, and on his arrival at Fort Malden consulted with Colonel Procter, commander at Fort Malden, and with Tecumseh. Here, Brock developed the plans which resulted in the capture of Detroit in August, 1812.

At the same time in the Navy Yard near Fort Malden, ships were being built as reinforcements for the British squadron on the Great Lakes above Niagara. Fort Malden was stripped of heavy guns to arm these vessels. The principal ship launched at this period was the *Detroit*, which became the flagship of Commander Barclay. In the meantime, the Americans under the leadership of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry were adding to their naval strength by building a fleet of ships at Erie, Pennsylvania.

By late summer, 1813, the opposing squadrons were in action, and on September 10, the decisive Battle of Lake Erie was fought near West Sister Island, at the western end of Lake Erie. The conclusion of the action found the British defeated and this opened the way for a successful invasion of Canada.

Major-General Harrison commanded the American forces concentrated in Ohio near the shores of Lake Erie, and as soon as the British fleet was defeated, he made plans for invading Canada in force.

General Procter, the British commander, feeling convinced that no effective resistance could be offered to Harrison's forces, resolved upon a retreat in order to join the British Army at the Centre, then at Burlington, at the head of Lake Ontario.

Before retiring, the British burnt the public buildings at Fort Malden and Detroit, but American cavalry landed near the mouth of the Detroit River and pursued the retreating column. Near the present site of Thamesville, Ontario, an action was fought with a rear guard of British and Indians, who, on October 5, 1813, at Moraviantown were dispersed and defeated. In this action the great Tecumseh met his death.

During the American occupation of Fort Malden and surrounding territory the countryside was not disturbed, apart from minor foraging raids to the east along the Thames valley and the north shore of Lake Erie. The Americans rehabilitated Fort Malden, but no further hostilities occurred in the vicinity. The Treaty of Ghent brought the war to a close, and on July 1, 1815, Fort Malden was restored to the British.

The conclusion of the War inaugurated a long unbroken era of peaceful relations with the United States, and Fort Malden became less important. In 1851, the Imperial troops were withdrawn and in their place former soldiers known as "enrolled pensioners" stood guard until 1859, when the fort was converted for civil use.

The only interruption of the tranquillity of the border during this long period was the outbreak of the Patriot insurrection in 1837, when the local militia were called out to augment the detachment of Regulars then stationed at Fort Malden.

The capture of Fort Malden was one of the objects the Patriots hoped to attain, and in January, 1838, an attempt to this end was made by means of an invasion based on Detroit. The invaders seized two vessels and carried a company of Patriots and their sympathizers to Stony Island, distant about one mile from Fort Malden.

The first stage of the attack was the occupation of Bois Blanc Island near the fort and opposite Amherstburg. The British pickets on the island were forced to withdraw. The second stage was the bombardment of Fort Malden and the town of Amherstburg from the decks of the schooner *Anne*. The bombardment was maintained at intervals for two days.

There was no large ordinance mounted at Fort Malden at that period and, consequently, no effective reply could be made to the attack of the *Anne*. However, on the evening of the second day of the bombardment a rifleman shot the helmsman of the *Anne*, and before he was replaced the ship ran aground. Members of the militia were picketed directly opposite the point where the *Anne* stranded and they waded out, climbed aboard and overpowered the crew.

A later attempt at invasion was made when the Patriots crossed on the ice of Lake Erie and seized Pelee Island. Pelee is the largest island in Lake Erie and is situated some 10 miles offshore and about 30 miles from Fort Malden.

When news of the occupation of Pelee Island reached Fort Malden, arrangements were made to drive off the invaders. Teams and sleighs carried the regulars and militia to the island over the frozen lake. The main action was fought on the ice of Lake Erie, some distance from the shore, and the Patriots were routed with considerable loss to themselves. Of those who went out from Fort Malden, three were killed or died of wounds.

The final assault of the Patriot forces along the frontier took place in December, 1838. This was an invasion in considerable force crossing the border from Detroit. At first the Patriots met with success as they drove in the pickets and burnt the barracks at Windsor, but reinforcements were sent from Fort Malden, and by nightfall the Patriots were dispersed.

Among the defenders of the Canadian frontier during the Patriot invasion were several scores of Negroes. Many had been slaves in the Southern States who had made their escape and found their way to freedom in the British province. Josiah Henson, thought by some to be the prototype of "Uncle Tom" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic, headed a coloured company at Fort Malden. Another company did outpost duty along the shore of Lake Erie.

Some of the Loyalists, who settled near Fort Malden, had brought slaves with them from Virginia. But the largest influx of Negroes came some decades later, after the enforcement of the "Black Acts" in Ohio, and the federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Shortly before the Civil War the Negro population had increased in Upper Canada to thirty thousand, mainly near the Detroit and Niagara frontiers.

Negro settlements grew up in the vicinity of Fort Malden, at points called Gesto, New Canaan, Haiti, Marble Village, Gilgal, Mount Pleasant, and Central Grove. Some of these were formed under the auspices of philanthropists, who established schools and churches for the Negroes. After the Civil War a return movement to the United States commenced, and the settlements so hopefully begun failed through lack of numbers, and of those near Fort Malden little now remains but the memory of the names.

Amherstburg, despite its growth in population and business activity, still retains much of its historic flavour. In the older section of the town, narrow streets with houses fronting directly on the sidewalk, remind a visitor of Old Quebec. Within the little Anglican church may be seen a timbered roof beautifully fashioned by army engineers stationed at this Canadian Garrison post during the opening years of the nineteenth century. All about the church are the gravestones of earlier residents of the place, some of them recording the names of soldiers whose service to their country long years ago closed at this distant post. A quaint old monument near by records the names of those who fell in the battle on the ice off Pelee Island. Below the town are several homes which were erected early in the last century. In contrast to these are the more modern homes which look out upon the beautiful river, and always by day one may see the long ships passing, while by night their deep-throated whistles, signalling as they meet, tell of the mighty commerce which is carried on these inland waters.

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Old Fort Residence



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