A History of Fort Frontenac

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TAM MARTE QUAM MINERVA

CANADA

Fort Frontenac occupies a site of national historic significance. Not only is the Fort central to the military history of Canada, it is also one of the earliest sites of permanent European habitation in Ontario. Located at a strategic crossroads of the St Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, the Fort and the ships based in its harbour, were intended to control all traffic in eastern North America.

A few years after the fort was constructed, open warfare resumed with the Iroquois and the advanced French posts at Niagara and Cataraqui came under close siege. By the spring of 1688, most of the Fort Frontenac garrison had died of scurvy and within a year, this post was abandoned. During construction in the compound in 1987, an excavation revealed twelve grave sites and it is believed that they contain the remains of some of the soldiers who died during the siege.

The fort was reoccupied in 1695 and played an important part in the subsequent French push into the interior and in their strategic efforts to establish a vast colonial empire, stretching from Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico. This expansive policy also challenged English aspirations on the continent, resulting in increased tension and wars between both colonial powers. Vessels built at Cataraqui patrolled the lake carrying supplies, trade goods and troops that raided Iroquois communities in northern New York. As early as 1741, two small ships-of-war were launched to protect this vital traffic. In an effort to threaten the French supply line, the British moved north and established Oswego as their lake post. The British then launched their own armed ships but in a quick pre-emptive strike on 27 June 1756, the French drove the British ships off the lake. This victory was quickly followed up by Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, the newly arrived commander of the French land forces, who marshaled his troops at Fort Frontenac, crossed the lake unhindered, and captured Oswego. However, Montcalm had insufficient troops to maintain a garrison at Oswego and within two years, the British reappeared on Lake Ontario. In 1758, British armies were pressing New France from the south and the east. Louisbourg fell in July, but Montcalm defeated the southern thrust from Lake George at Ticonderoga. To do so, however, he had pulled in all available troops from the western outposts.
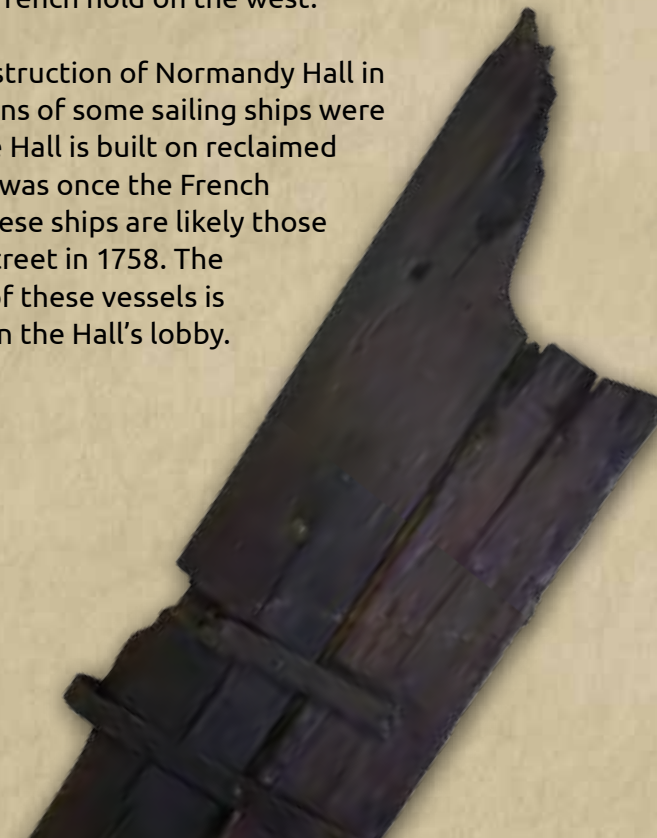
Louis de Baude, Count de Frontenac and Governor of New France, established the fort in 1673 as a commercial and military outpost in an attempt to counter the growing fur trade from the English colony in New York and gain control over the Iroquois. The first fort consisted of palisades, earthworks and log buildings. The first commandant, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de LaSalle, was to become one of Canada's great explorers and he used the fort as a base for his explorations into the interior of the continent. It was LaSalle who, in 1675, replaced the wood and earth structure with stone walls and bastions and it was during his command that the first ships on Lake Ontario were launched in Cataraqui Harbour.

Lieutenant-Colonel
John Bradstreet

Following the defeat at Ticonderoga, Lieutenant-Colonel John Bradstreet of the 60th Royal Americans, was sent with some 3,000 men to attack Fort Frontenac. He travelled up the Mohawk River, moved north past the ruins of Oswego and crossed the lake undetected in small bateaux via Wolfe Island. He landed near what is now Queen's University, and moved quickly to set up siege lines around the fort. The small garrison was caught by surprise and after some light resistance, the commandant, Capitaine Pierre-Jacques Payen, Sieur de Noyan, surrendered. Bradstreet proceeded to destroy the French ships captured in the harbour and made some ineffective efforts at demolishing the fort's stonework. Although Bradstreet did not remain in possession of the fort, the loss of Fort Frontenac severed communication between Montreal and Fort Niagara, and seriously weakened the French hold on the west.

During the construction of Normandy Hall in 1954, the remains of some sailing ships were discovered. The Hall is built on reclaimed land over what was once the French harbour, and these ships are likely those burnt by Bradstreet in 1758. The rudder of one of these vessels is now in display in the Hall's lobby.

After the capitulation of New France in 1760, the inland water routes remained as important as ever, but for a few years at least, there was no perceived threat to the line of communication and therefore no need for ships-of-war and a naval station. The outbreak of rebellion in several of the British North American colonies ended this ideal situation. Steps were taken to counter the potential rebel threat to the western posts. Supremacy on Lake Ontario had to be asserted and the construction of a naval base became a priority. The harbour at Cataraqui was reconnoitered but rejected in favour of one at Buck Island, a small island at the entrance to the St Lawrence River. Renamed Carleton Island, this new post was established as the trans shipment point for supplies moving west and as the station for the King's ships on Lake Ontario. Throughout the war, Carleton Island served as a busy depot, an assembly point for raids and as a refugee centre.

Fort Frontenac lay abandoned and remained so until war's end. A preliminary treaty of peace drawn up in 1782 set the boundary through the Great Lakes and down the St Lawrence River. Although the British had successfully fought a savage war and held the western posts of Oswegatchie (Ogdensburg), Carleton Island, Oswego, Niagara, Detroit and Michilimachinac, these posts were apparently to be turned over to the new United States by the Treaty of Paris. Realizing that the loss of these outposts would provide the Americans with access to the inland waterways, and threaten their delicate alliance with natives around the Great Lakes, the British retained control of these forts until 1797, when, by treaty, they were transferred to the United States.

Fort Frontenac, located in indisputable British territory, regained strategic importance. Although spurned in 1778, Cataraqui was occupied in July 1783, when Major John Ross arrived with a small detachment relocated from Oswego and Oswegatchie and built barracks on the site of the fort's ruins. This temporary post attracted merchants from Carleton Island anxious to ensure continued enterprise on secure ground. These merchants clustered on the grounds adjacent to the garrison and began the civilian occupation of the town site. Kingston, as the new town was named, became one of thirteen designated Loyalist re-settlement areas between the Upper St. Lawrence and the Bay of Quinte, and from 1784 on, the Loyalists took up their land grants in the town and in the townships to the west.
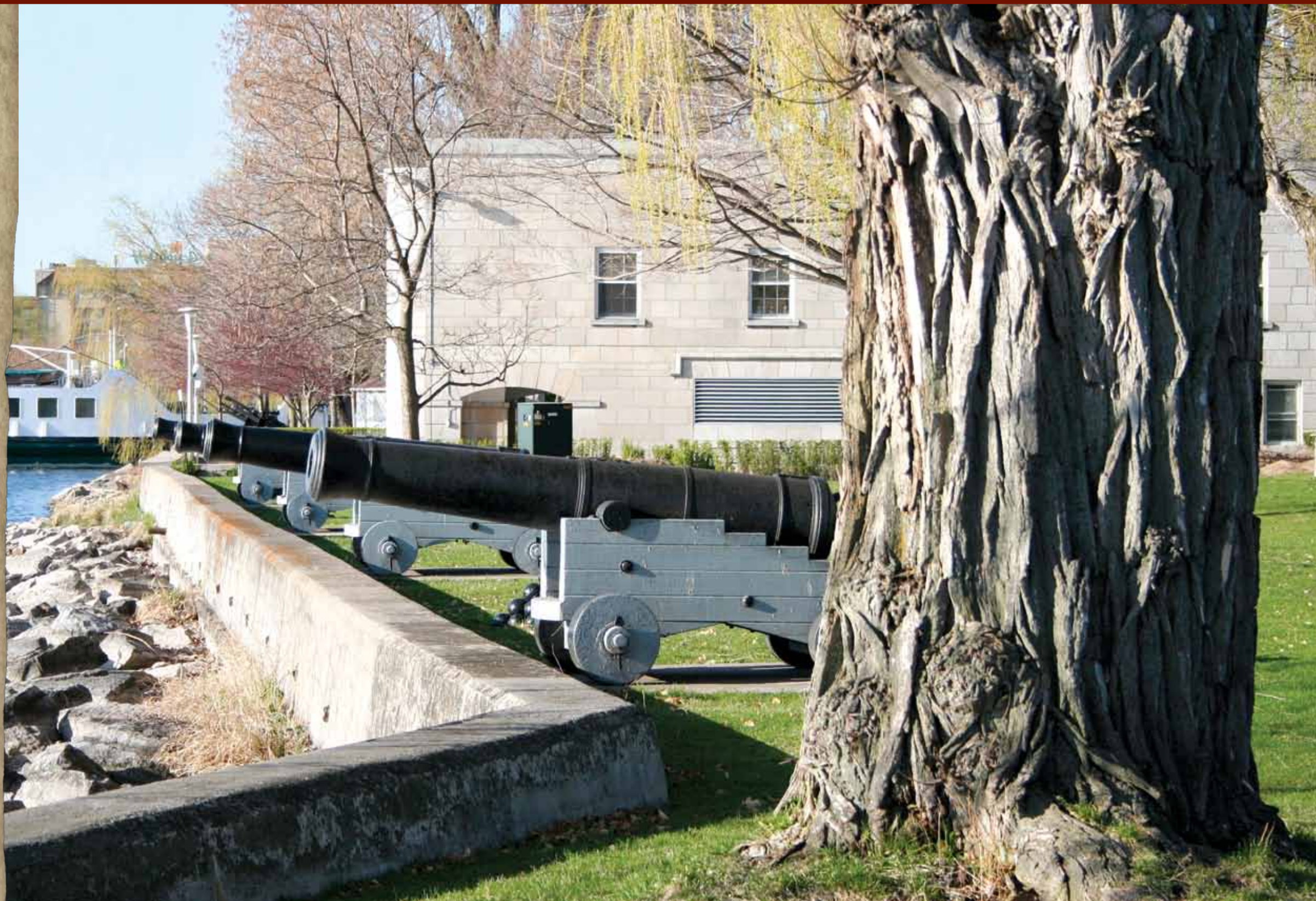
The British retained Carleton Island as sovereign territory and, until the late 1790s, occupied the other western posts in retaliation for the American failure to pay compensation to the Loyalists. The pressing strategic need for a new naval and commercial base on Lake Ontario was abated but lobbying by the civilian merchants caused the authorities to transfer the trans-shipment point from Carleton Island to Kingston. The King's dockyard and the depot of the Provincial Marine, an inland transport service, were thus transferred in 1788, but not to the town site as the merchants had hoped. The new base was set up on Point Frederick across the Cataraqui River. Major Ross' barracks covered the crossing site over the river to the dockyard and in 1789, were named the Tête-de-Pont (bridgehead) Barracks.

The early garrisons of Kingston, normally one or two companies at best, were never particularly strong in the years prior to the War of 1812. Although British regular regiments were always stationed in Canada and often occupied the barracks, the need for troops in the European War encouraged the formation of provincial units and Tête-de-Pont Barracks were occupied at times by some of the earlier Canadian regulars, the Queen's Rangers, and the Royal Canadian Volunteers.

During the War of 1812, Kingston became the naval headquarters for Upper Canada. It also served as a logistical and command centre. Hasty defense works and batteries were thrown up about the town in 1812 and over the next two years, these would be replaced by more permanent works. Beginning in 1812, fortifications were also erected on Point Henry. Tête-de-Pont Barracks became part of an extended military complex at the east end of the town. Troops moving to and from the western battlefields passed through the barracks and here too, troops were assembled for amphibious attacks on Sacket's Harbor and Oswego. For much of 1813, the commander-in-chief of British North America, Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost, coordinated campaigns further to the west from Kingston. Men and money flowed into the town and the impetus given by these infusions would see Kingston boom for the next thirty years. In 1813, the Royal Navy replaced the Provincial Marine. The growing scale of the naval war on Lake Ontario brought the expansion of the naval base on Point Frederick, which, in 1814, was elevated in status to a Royal Navy dockyard. When the war ended in February 1815, the largest naval force ever assembled on the Great Lakes was operating from the dockyard.
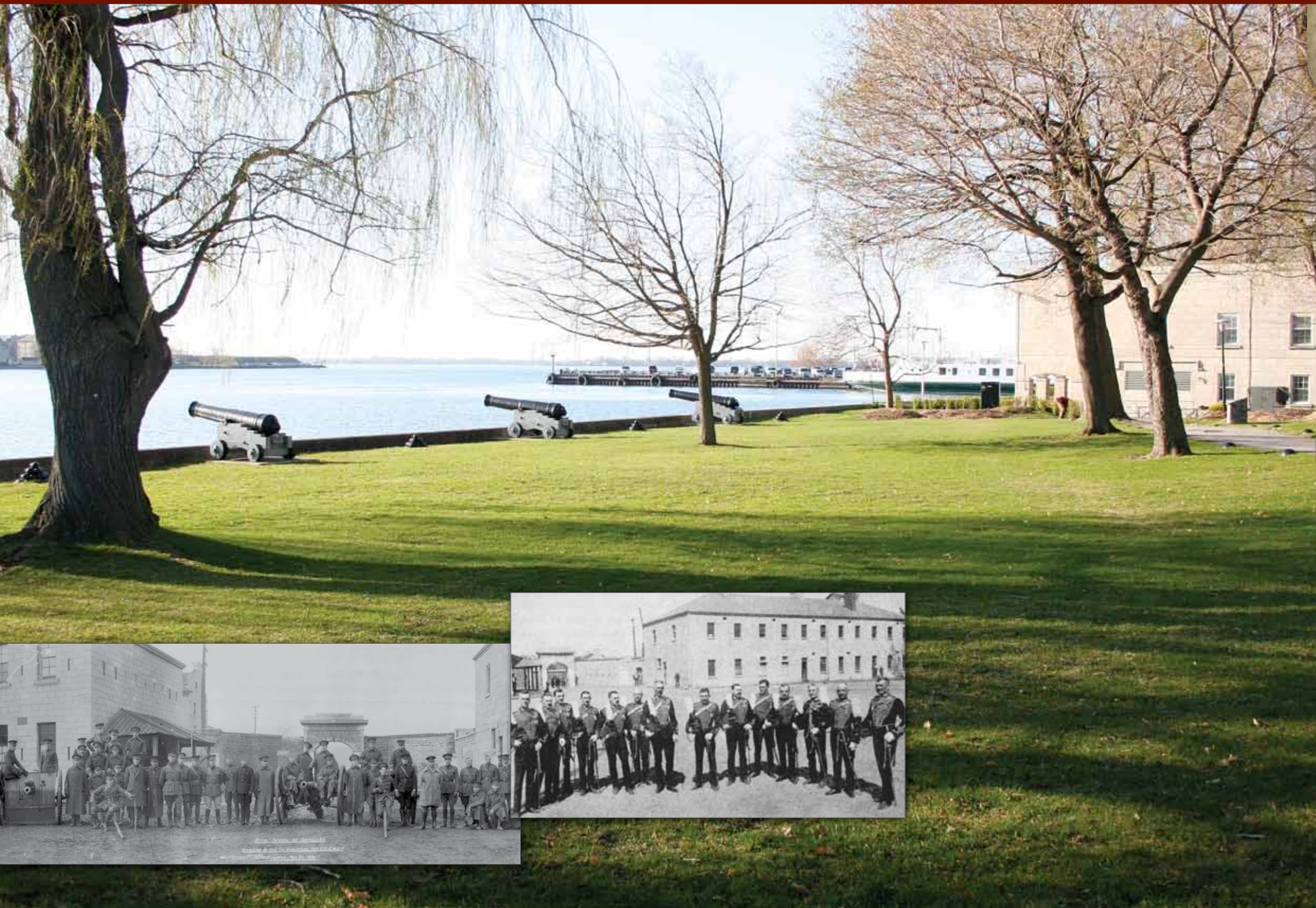
Following the war, British strategy for the defense of North America was changed to rely on fortifications and improvements to inland communication. During the period 1821–1824, the barracks were improved by the construction of stone buildings. The outer wall the officers' mess, two barrack blocks, and what is now the central heating plant all date from this period. With the new construction came the removal of most of the remaining French fortress. A tower, which stood in the south-east bastion of the old fort, and which appears in several old drawings of the fort, was removed in 1832. Part of this tower's foundation and bastion are now exposed in a sunken garden in the centre of the compound.

Throughout the first half of the 19th Century, Kingston was the key to all defense planning for Upper Canada. The Rideau Canal was built to provide secure communication between Montreal and Kingston, Fort Henry was built to defend the dockyard, while the troops in garrison at Tête-de-Pont were a key element in the defensive plan. Between the 1830s and 1871, several threats of war with the United States led to improvements to the fortifications, which also included the construction of six Martello Towers and the Market Battery. Many Imperial battalions were in garrison in Kingston over the years, but one of particular interest was the Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment. Raised for service in Canada, this battalion was formed in 1841 of veterans from regular regiments. During the 1840s and 1850s, improvements were also made to the militia, introducing the modern concept of the citizen-soldier to Canada.

OFFICERS "B" BATTERY RCA
(BEFORE LEAVING FOR N.W. REBELLION)

After Confederation, relations improved somewhat with the United States, and, in 1871, the signing of the Treaty of Washington allowed the British government to withdraw its garrison from all points west of Halifax. The Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment was offered to the new Canadian government but was later disbanded after the government refused to accept the expense of maintaining a regular battalion. The Royal Canadian Rifles paraded for the last time in Tête-de-Pont Barracks on 1 April 1870. A year later in 1871, the last Imperial unit, a battery of Royal Garrison Artillery, departed from central Kingston's Artillery Park.
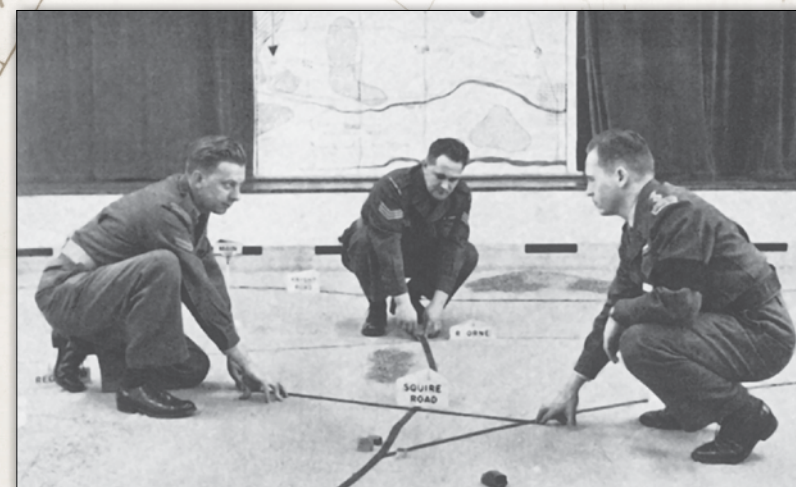
To maintain the forts and armaments transferred to the Dominion government, two batteries of regular artillery were activated. One was stationed at Quebec and the other at Kingston's Tête-de-Pont Barracks. This set the tone for the Kingston battery, and in 1905, it was designated as the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (RCHA). In 1929, the proposed widening of Ontario Street, brought a change to the appearance of Fort Frontenac. The front gate, which originally opened outward, projecting 16 feet onto the street, was dismantled and re-erected 'turned inside out,' protruding into the fort as it appears today. Tête-de-Pont Barracks would remain the home of the 1st Regiment RCHA until December 1939 when they marched out to the gate to fight in Europe.

In recognition of the historic traditions of Tête-de-Pont Barracks, the complex was officially renamed Fort Frontenac in 1939. With the departure of 1 RCHA on active service, the fort became a personnel depot, and after the war, it became the home for the Canadian Army Command and Staff College and the newly created National Defence College in 1947. Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds laid the cornerstone for Normandy Hall in 1954, when he was then Chief of the General Staff. The National Defence College closed in 1995 and since then, the fort gained and lost several elements of the Land Force Doctrine and Training System as lodger units.

Fort Frontenac, in its different configurations, has witnessed over three hundred years of Canadian military history. Troops have mustered within its walls for service in every Canadian campaign from the Iroquois Wars to the war in Afghanistan, and since 1947, the Fort has been the centre of professional education for army officers.

FORT FRONTENAC ARMY STAFF COLLEGE

Fort Frontenac – Army Staff College History 1945 to Present

Prior to Canada's involvement in the Anglo-Boer War few Canadian officers received staff training: those that did were trained in Britain at the Staff College in Camberley, UK.

The Anglo-Boer War brought considerable changes to the training and structure of the permanent militia and highlighted the need for staff officers to be better trained. A cadre of the permanent militia was sent to Britain to be educated as staff officers, and to develop a course that would be taught in Canada. The first militia command and staff course graduated in 1905 with courses continuing until 1940. Permanent force officers continued to be trained at Camberley, with at least one officer receiving this training at Quetta in India. Nonetheless, by 1939, less than 100 officers had received this training.

With the rapid increase in the size of the army during the Second World War, there was an urgent need for staff trained officers. The staff college at Camberley could not accommodate enough Canadian officers, and the militia command and staff course could not keep up with the demand. As a result the decision was made by Canada to run its own army staff course.

The first staff course to be organized by the Canadian Army during the war was conducted at Fort Manor in England in 1941. In Canada, twelve serials of the junior war staff courses were also conducted at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) between 1941 and 1946.

In 1946 the Canadian Army Command and Staff College was made a regular establishment of the army, and conducted its first course at RMCC; the following year the College moved to its present location at Fort Frontenac.

While the Canadian Army Command and Staff College has undergone several name changes, and while the curriculum has evolved throughout the years, it continues to prepare officers for command and staff positions throughout the Canadian Forces.

In 1868 the owl resting on crossed swords and surmounted by a crown together with the motto "*Tam Marte Quam Minerva*" was adopted as the crest of the British Army Staff College, Camberley. Minerva is the goddess of war and wisdom in Roman mythology and her favourite bird is the owl. The design of the crest is attributed to the joint efforts of Captain (later Major-General) J.N. Crealock, a student at the College, and Brevet Major (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) AS Jones, VC, the Adjutant at the time. Crealock was a gifted amateur artist, and seeing that the college did not possess a crest, he offered to design one.

There are various translations of the motto, but one of the best seems to be that given by Field-Marshal Earl Wavell who, in January 1948, during the delivery of the Haldane Memorial Lecture translated the motto as "By fighting as much as by writing" or "By kill as much as by skill." He stated that the quote was a reminder that operation orders do not win battles without the valor and endurance of the soldiers who carry them out. In 1956 the senior Classics master at Wellington College, Berkshire, whose opinion was sought on this matter, stated that the Latin expression as used in the motto was an accurate Latin phraseology. Given the syntactic layout, he put forth the following version, "With understanding and with force of arms" or "Practical as well as theoretical soldiering here"; this version is analogous to Lord Wavell's.

In 1946, a Canadian adaptation of the British Army Staff College crest was drawn up. The adaptation is very similar, except that a band is carried across the base with the word "CANADA" on it. On 23 April 1946 the staff college at Camberley acknowledged the Canadian adaptation, and a few weeks later the approval was supported by the military members of the Army Council. On 30 May 1946 the British War Office was consulted, and it offered no objection regarding the Canadian adaptation used by the Canadian Army Command and Staff College. In February 1977, the present form of the college crest with a snowy owl was officially authorized as the crest of the Canadian Army Command and Staff College. It was felt that the Canadian snowy owl was a fitting emblem, and the British horned owl was therefore replaced.

APO BEAT