



The Halifax Citadel – Brief History and Early Garrison Regiments

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The present citadel is the fourth fortification to be built on the site. First established in 1749, as a counterbalance to the French stronghold of Louisbourg, it played a pivotal role over the next decade in the Anglo-French rivalry in the region. Various fortifications at Halifax protected settlers against raids by the French, Acadians, and Wabanaki Confederacy (primarily the Mi'kmaq), in a conflict known to some historians as Father Le Loutre's War. This so-called 'war' began shortly after Edward Cornwallis arrived on June 21, 1749, to establish Halifax, with a sloop of war and 13 transports that carried 1,176 settlers and their families.

The first fortress was a small redoubt with a flagstaff and wooden guardhouse, near the summit and just east of the south ravelin of the present Citadel. It was part of the western perimeter wall for the old city, which was protected by five stockaded forts. The others were Horsemans Fort, Cornwallis Fort, Fort Luttrell and Grenadier Fort. (Fort Charlotte - named after King George's wife Charlotte – was established on Georges Island the following year in 1750.) The city was guarded by five stockaded forts to protect against Mi'kmaq, Acadian, and French attacks and what is now The Citadel (Fort George) was the centre of a network that Cornwallis built and improved upon to protect settlements including Bedford (Fort Sackville) (1749), Dartmouth (1750), Lunenburg (1753) and Lawrencetown (1754).

2 - The first major permanent fortification appeared on the Citadel's summit during the American Revolution. The threat of attack at this time required a much larger fortification to protect the city from the Americans or the French. Built in 1776, the new fort on Citadel Hill was composed of multiple lines of overlapping earthen redans backing a large outer palisade wall. At the center was a three-story octagonal blockhouse mounting a fourteen-gun battery and accommodating 100 troops. These works required that the hill be cut down by 40 feet. The entire fortress mounted 72 guns. Citadel Hill and the associated harbour defence fortifications gave the Royal Navy its most secure and strategic base in eastern North America, from its Halifax Dockyard, commanding the Great Circle Route to western Europe. This gave Halifax the nickname "Warden of The North". The massive British military presence in Halifax and the Royal Navy's dockyard are thought to be the main reasons that Nova Scotia, the fourteenth British colony, remained loyal to the Crown throughout and after the American Revolutionary War.

#3 - The French Revolutionary Wars that began in 1793 increased the threat to Halifax. A new citadel was designed in 1794 and completed by 1800. Much of the work was inspired by Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, the fourth son of King George III and the father of Queen Victoria, who was posted to Halifax as Commander-in-Chief from 1794 to 1800. The top of the hill was leveled and lowered a further 15 feet to accommodate a larger fortress on the summit. It resembled the outline of the final Citadel, comprising four bastions surrounding a central barracks and magazine, but consisted mainly earthwork walls.

In 1800, Prince Edward commissioned the Halifax Town Clock, prior to his return to England. The Halifax Town Clock opened on 20 October 1803.

This third Citadel received hasty repairs and a new magazine during the War of 1812, in case of an American raid, but no new fortifications were constructed, because a significant British Royal Navy presence made an American siege very unlikely. By 1825 all the works except the powder magazine, were in ruins, with plans for a new fortress underway.

4 – Construction work on the present fort began in 1828 and was completed in 1856, during the Victorian Era, a 28 year project! This massive masonry-constructed fortress was designed to

repel a land-based attack by [United States](#) forces. Between 1820 and 1831 the British had constructed a similar, albeit larger, fortress in Quebec City known as the Quebec Citadel. The Halifax Citadel was designed to defend against [smoothbore](#) artillery and it became obsolete following the introduction of more powerful rifled guns in the 1860s. British forces upgraded Fort George's armaments to permit it to defend the harbour as well as land approaches, using heavier and more accurate long-range guns. The Citadel's two large ammunition magazines served as the central explosive store for all Halifax defences, making Citadel Hill, according to the historian and novelist, [Thomas Raddall](#), "like [Vesuvius](#) over Pompeii, a smiling monster with havoc in its belly". By the end of the 19th century, the role of the Citadel in the defence of Halifax Harbour evolved to become a command centre for other, more distant harbour defensive works, as well as providing barracks accommodation.

From the beginning, until the British Army left Halifax in 1906, over 60 different regiments garrisoned the Citadel and surrounding fortifications of the Halifax Defence Complex. A constant presence from beginning were units of The Royal Artillery, The Royal Engineers and the Royal Army Medical Corps.

For the purposes of this precis, the focus will be on the Regiments of Foot (Line Infantry) that were present at the Citadel between 1749 and 1760. These were:

- **1749 to 1750** – 29th (The Worcestershire Regiment); 40th (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers), 45th (The Sherwood Foresters), and 47th (The Loyal Regiment);
- **1751 to 1754** – 40th, 45th, and 47th;
- **1755** – 42nd (The Black Watch) and 47th;
- **1756** – 22nd (The Cheshire Regiment), 42nd, and 47th;
- **1757** – 1st (The Royal Scots), 17th (The Leicestershire Regiment), 22nd (The Cheshire Regiment), 35th (Royal Sussex Regiment), 40th, 42nd, 43rd (Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry), 45th, 47th, and 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders);
- **1758** – 1st, 15th (The East Yorkshire Regiment), 22nd, 28th (The Gloucester Regiment), 35th, 40th, 45th, 47th, 48th (The Northamptonshire Regiment), 60th (King's Royal Rifle Corps), and 72nd; and
- **1759 to 1760** – 48th and 60th.

These Regiments are perpetuated by present-day units, as indicated below. Also included here are the major Eastern North American actions they took part in, during that first decade of Halifax history.

1st – The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment of Foot) – perpetuated by The Royal Regiment of Scotland (fought at Louisbourg 1758);

15th – The East Yorkshire Regiment – perpetuated by The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (fought at Quebec in 1759);

17th – The Leicestershire Regiment – perpetuated by The Royal Anglian Regiment (fought at Louisbourg 1758);

22nd – The Cheshire Regiment – perpetuated by The Mercian Regiment (fought at Louisbourg 1758);

28th – The Gloucester Regiment – disbanded in 1994 (fought at Louisbourg 1758 - perpetuated by The Rifles);

29th – The Worcestershire Regiment – amalgamated with The Sherwood Foresters in 1970 - Helped establish Halifax and Dartmouth in 1749/50;

35th – Royal Sussex Regiment – perpetuated by the Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment (fought at Louisbourg 1758);

40th – Prince of Wales Volunteers – perpetuated by the Queen’s Lancashire Regiment (one of the original Regiments to garrison Halifax in 1749 – Cornwallis was Colonel of the Regiment – fought in Father La Loutre’s War in 1750);

42nd – The Black Watch (RHR) – perpetuated by the Royal Regiment of Scotland;

43rd – Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light infantry – perpetuated by the 1st Battalion, The Green Jackets (fought at Fort Anne in 1757 and at Quebec in 1759);

45th – The Sherwood Foresters – perpetuated by The Mercian Regiment (in action during the raid on Dartmouth in 1751 and fought at Louisbourg in 1758);

47th – The Loyal Regiment (Lancashire) – perpetuated by the Duke of Lancaster Regiment (fought at Louisbourg in 1758 and at Quebec in 1759);

48th – The Northhamptonshire Regiment – perpetuated by The Royal Anglian Regiment (fought at Louisbourg in 1758 and Quebec in 1759);

60th – King’s Royal Rifle Corps – perpetuated by 2nd Battalion, The Rifles (fought at Louisbourg in 1758 and Quebec in 1759); and

72nd – Duke of Albany’s Own Highlanders – became The Seaforth Highlanders – perpetuated by The Royal Regiment of Scotland (likely fought at Louisbourg in 1758).

Notwithstanding the large Royal Navy presence on the coast of North America during the 18th Century, it’s clear that the establishment of Halifax, the French and Indian Wars, as well as the buildup of forces necessary to take Fortress Louisbourg and Quebec in 1758 and 1759, resulted in a substantially increased complement of soldiers here at Halifax. Beyond this period, the Halifax Garrison consisted of an average of three to four regiments of foot (on an annual basis) up to the beginning of the 19th century.

Though never attacked in it’s 270 year history, the Halifax Citadel continued to be garrisoned by the [British Army](#) (until 1906), and afterward by the [Canadian Army](#) throughout the Great War and up to the end of the Second World War. Final closure of all military forts in Halifax took place in 1953, when the Halifax Citadel was turned over to the then Canadian Parks Service (Currently Parks Canada). Constantly undergoing conservation and preservation work, it is perhaps the best example of 19th Century “star-shaped” fortifications anywhere in the world and it is the number one tourist destination in Halifax.

End Note

The not-for-profit Army Museum Halifax Citadel was opened in 1953, in conjunction with the handover of the fortress to civilian authority. The museum’s volunteer Board of Governors is chaired by the senior Canadian Army officer in Halifax, currently the Commander of 5th Canadian Division. The institution is staffed by veterans who execute the roles of Chief Administration Officer and Chief Curator, as well as other museum professionals. We currently employ 25 Canadian Army veterans, who serve as conservation and docent volunteers.

Mission of the Army Museum Halifax Citadel – To preserve, present, and interpret the artifacts and stories of Canadian military history, with a special focus on Nova Scotia’s soldiers.

Current Museum Timeline – Exhibit space time-line begins in 1914 and ends in the present day. Pre-First World War artifacts are currently in either on-site or off-site storage facilities. The Museum is partnering with Parks Canada and will loan many of those artifacts to the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, in support of their new exhibition space project. This will facilitate the re-establishment of more 18th and 19th century elements of Halifax Garrison history, to further enhance the combined Citadel visitor experience. The new exhibit is expected to open near the end of 2019.



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