

Walking Tour of Halifax's Early Defences

The first settlers, who arrived in Halifax from England in 1749 under Governor Edward Cornwallis, erected a ring of five stockade forts surrounding the town. These forts were connected by a simple wooden palisade wall and together they protected the inhabitants against attack from local native forces.



Example of a stockade fort

Six years later, in 1755 during the Seven Years' War with France, these defences were increased with the addition of three powerful gun batteries along the waterfront of the town. Their purpose was to defend Halifax from attack by enemy ships if they gained access to the main harbor area and anchorage.

Since that time, Halifax has grown into a modern city and the original fortifications are long gone. However it is possible to visit the sites where the old forts and batteries originally stood, and to imagine the town as it was in its initial years of existence. A circular tour, the walk (— — —) begins at the waterfront and progresses clockwise around the old town perimeter, visiting the sites of the early forts and returning to the start point. The total distance is about 3 km or just under 2 miles and can be completed in about 1 hour.

Start on Lower Water Street in front of the Waterfront Warehouse. This was the original water's edge and the location of the **South Gun Battery ①**, one of three waterfront batteries built in 1755, with low ramparts of logs, square timbers and earth. The South Battery ran for 280 feet along the shore and mounted fifteen 24-pounder smooth bore cannon with an effective range of about 800 yards. Proceed 50 yards South, and turn right onto Salter Street. Follow Salter Street uphill for 200 yards to its end, and turn left onto Barrington Street.

Here, between the towering Maritime Centre on your left and the red brick St. Mary's Glebe House across Barrington Street stood **Horseman's Fort ②**, named for LtCol John Horseman of the British Army. The fort here served as the South gate of the town. Like the other four stockade forts, Horseman's Fort was 125 feet square with a small bastion at each corner, its walls formed of a vertical row of round timbers with a second row behind to fill in the gaps, and with regular spaced musket loopholes. Within each fort was a barrack accommodation for two companies of soldiers (100 men).

From Barrington Street turn right onto Spring Garden Road and proceed uphill for 200 yards, crossing Grafton Street and turning right onto Brunswick Street. Continue for 200 yards until you have the Cambridge Suites Hotel on your right. On the opposite side of Brunswick Street stands Royal Artillery (RA) Park, inside a black metal fence. Here, straddling the street and RA Park, was the location of the stockade **Cornwallis' Fort ③**

Next turn left onto Sackville Street and then right after 75 yards to take the road up Citadel Hill. The third stockade fort, **Citadel ④**, was positioned near the walls of the current fortress, close to the signal masts on your left. It would evolve over the next century to become the massive Halifax Citadel, which can be visited separately if you have the time.



Halifax town with stockade forts and palisade - 1750

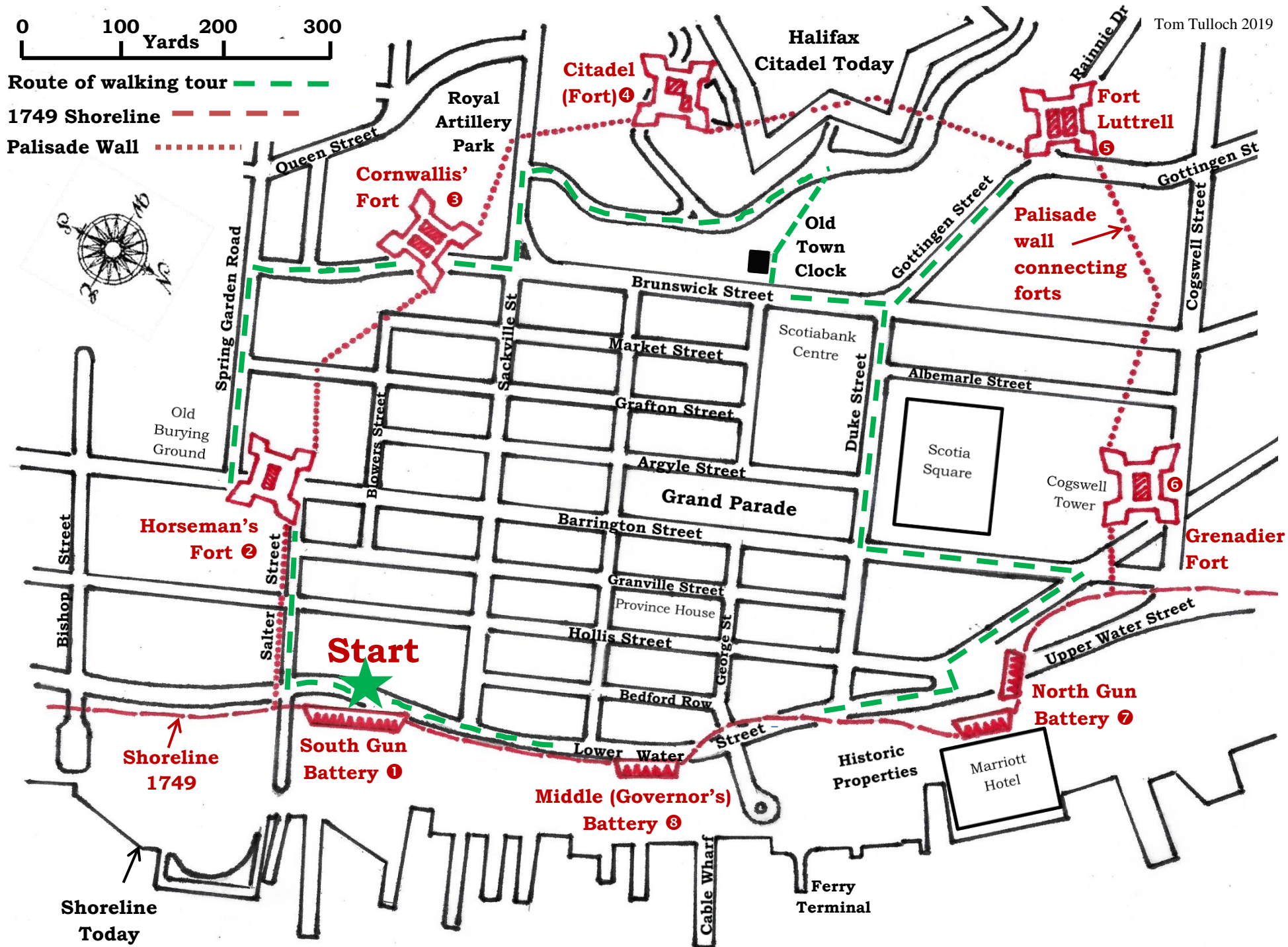
From the flagstaff at the Citadel gate, take the path and steps that lead you down past the Old Town Clock to rejoin Brunswick Street. Continue left along Brunswick Street past the Scotiabank Centre and turn left up Gottingen Street. Walk uphill for 250 yards to the intersection at Rainnie Drive. Here, straddling the road near the brown brick building was where **Fort Luttrell ⑤** stood, named for Major Hungerford Luttrell of the 45th Regiment.

Next retrace your steps back down Gottingen to Brunswick Street, but then continue downhill on Duke Street for 250 yards before turning left on Barrington Street. Proceed along Barrington for 250 yards, past Halifax Transit/ Scotia Square. The Cogswell Tower on your left marks the location of the fifth and last stockade fort, **Grenadier Fort ⑥**, which had the town's North gate adjacent to it.

Next cross Barrington Street and head downhill towards the harbour, following the sign "To Hollis Street." Pass under the elevated walkway and cross the street towards the Marriott Hotel. The open area in front of the hotel was once His Majesty's Ordnance Yard, housing an armourer's workshop and various storerooms. With the shoreline in 1749 about where Water Street now runs, the small promontory where the Marriott now stands was the location of the L-shaped **North Gun Battery ⑦**, one of three waterfront batteries built in 1755. One wall, 130 feet long with five 24-pounders faced north; the other rampart with nine guns faced northeast.

Next follow Upper Water Street (to your right as you face the Marriott Hotel) for 350 yards, running parallel to the waterfront. Pass the entrance to Historic Properties, the Law Courts and the bus terminal on your left. Just after you cross George Street, on the left (harbour) side of Upper Water Street was where **Middle Gun Battery ⑧** stood. This battery housed ten 24-pounders facing the harbor, with another two on its south flank and three on its north flank to enfilade the shore. It was also known as **Governor's Battery** because of its proximity to the original Governor's residence, which stood 100 yards inland, on Hollis Street where Province House now stands.

From here continue along Upper Water Street (which becomes Lower Water Street) for about 400 yards to return to the starting point of the walk, in front of the Waterfront Warehouse.



Halifax's Early Defences 1749-1755

to learn more about Halifax's military heritage visit the **Halifax Military Heritage Preservation Society** at: <https://hmhps.ca/index/lasso>