

Canada

OLD FORT AND NAVAL FEAT ARE RECALLED

Two Bronze Plaques Dedi-
cated at Ft. Erie — Brig.
Gen. Cruikshank Speaks.

FT. ERIE, Ont., Sept. 11.—On the grounds of the Old Fort at Ft. Erie, which overlooks Lake Erie and which is almost opposite the site of old Ft. Porter in Buffalo, two bronze plaques—one commemorating the history of the Old Fort and the other the daring capture of two American warships by the British during the War of 1812—were unveiled Sunday.

Upon a proposal of Brig. Gen. E. A. Cruikshank, LL. D., F. R. S. C., F. R. Hist. of Ottawa, chairman of the Historic Sites and Monuments board of Canada, this spring, the two bronze tablets depicting the history and outstanding events of Ft. Erie have been set in the remaining ramparts of the fort for a permanent memorial. The dedication ceremony, arranged under the auspices of the corporation of the town of Ft. Erie and the Welland County Historical society, brought together patriotic organizations and representatives of historical societies in fitting tribute.

Taking part in the services were members of the Canadian Legion, Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, Boy Scouts, Girls Guides, the Ft. Erie Firemen, the Canadian Legion band under Dr. G. K. Roberts, and the Frontier Pipe band under Pipe Major Kenneth Miller.

Miss Vahey Unveils Tablets.

Following the opening prayer by the Rev. William Burt, rector of St. Paul's Anglican church, Ft. Erie, Miss Carrie Vahey, regent of the Colonel Kirby chapter, I. O. D. E., unveiled the tablets. Then Louis Blake Duff, Welland, who acted as chairman, introduced the speakers, who included Brig.-Gen. Cruikshank, Mayor William J. Hawley, Ft. Erie; George H. Pettit, M. P., Welland; W. G. Willson, M. L. A., Ridgeway; Mark Vaughan, M. L. A., Welland; George H. Smith, Ft. Colborne, president of the Welland County Historical society, and John H. Jackson, superintendent of the Queen Victoria Niagara Falls parks.

In his dedicatory address, Brig. Gen. Cruikshank gave a detailed history of the Old Fort. About 170 years ago, the British forces at Ft. Niagara prepared to send help to Ft. Detroit to quell the Indian uprisings. Three ships were built at Navy Island, but owing to the difficulty in going up the river, a base was established at the head of Lake Erie, which became known as Ft. Erie.

Kept as Trading Post.

When peace was made with the Indians, Ft. Erie was kept on as a trading post and became a base for shipping to the upper lakes. In the spring of 1779, the ice rose and damaged the fort so that a new one had to be built, but this suffered a similar fate in 1783. The fort was dismantled and rebuilt on higher ground, the present site. This fort was garrisoned and kept as a trading post, but the fortifications were not completed when the War of 1812 broke out.

When word was received that the British had been defeated at Ft. Niagara in May, 1813, and were retreating to Hamilton, Ft. Erie was blown up and evacuated. However, the British reoccupied it in December, 1813, but relinquished it to the Americans in July, 1814, who made it a strong point for an entrenched camp. Following the battle of Lundy's Lane, the Americans retreated to Ft. Erie, where they were unsuccessfully besieged by the British in August and September of 1814, but on Nov. 5, of that year the Americans evacuated Ft. Erie.

Capt. Dobbs Is Honored.

On the other plaque is the following inscription:

"Commemorating the enterprise, skill, and undaunted courage of Captain Alexander Dobbs and 70 officers and men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in capturing the United States ships of war, Ohio and Somers, in Lake Erie off this place on the night of Aug. 12 and 13, 1814."

During the siege of Ft. Erie, the British forces were menaced with gun fire from the American ships. With improvised craft, Captain Dobbs and his gallant men maneuvered around the American ships, boarded and captured them. Their daring and skill in this feat has been commended by American historians.

Among the interesting features of his address, Brig. Gen. Cruikshank mentioned that the great Pontiac, leader of the Indian uprisings, visited Ft. Erie about 1766. He also related about the United Empire Loyalists and the Quakers becoming the first settlers in this district and mentioned the names of some of the families—names still common in the local citizenry. He also recalled coming to the Old Fort himself some 70 years ago to see the late King Edward VII, then the Prince of Wales, who was touring Canada.