

Fort Erie: from History of the Niagara Peninsula  
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Fort Erie is situated at the south east corner of Bertie Township where the Niagara River leaves Lake Erie. It is at the Canadian end of the Peace Bridge and thus is only about two miles from the foot of Main St. in Buffalo. It is also at the eastern end of the Garrison Rd., that old historic highway which is the main thoroughfare to Port Colborne about twenty miles up the Lake.

About 1750 the French built a stockade and established a trading post at this point. Within the next ten or fifteen years, the struggle for the possession of the North American continent had occurred and at its close the old French post was destroyed and abandoned.

In 1764 Capt. Montresor was commissioned by the British to ascend the Niagara and establish a trading post for the British. He selected the exact spot where the old Fort now stands probably a mile above where the end of the Peace Bridge is. Here he built a stockade which his superior officer Col. Bradstreet named as Fort Erie. The site was a strategic one as later events proved.

The earliest route from the Niagara into the interior by land followed Portage Road to Chippawa and then the trail along the margin of the River to Fort Erie, which in the early days is frequently spoken of as the "Garrison". Owing to the nearness of the Fort to the American soil and to the fact that the river can be crossed there with comparative safety, the Americans looked upon it as the logical place to make an attack, and the British as a desirable place to defend.

As time went on a few settlers came in. Most of these took land on the River or Lake front, and not too far from the Fort for obvious reasons. In the early years of the nineteenth century when trouble seemed to be brewing, the British strengthened the Fort and the Garrison. When the war of 1812 broke out these improvements had not been completed although at that time it had been occupied by a British garrison for nearly fifty years. As a matter of fact in 1764 Sir Wm. Johnson had obtained from the Seneca Indians by Treaty, a strip of land four miles wide on each side of the River from near the Falls to Lake Erie; and ever since that date a Garrison had been at Fort Erie to protect vessels carrying supplies to settlers farther west, and which usually came back loaded with furs.

In 1781 the survey of the Township and accordingly of the site of Fort Erie was begun. In the same year Jane Warren, daughter of an officer at the Fort, was born. She is said to have been the first white child born in Fort Erie.

By 1784 there were about ten families on the land near the Fort. Soon after a ferry system was established. The Canadian landing place was about two miles below the Fort, and the American landing was at Black Rock. The Ferry was conducted by a British boat that could carry five horses at one time.

In 1795 the Duc. De. la Rochefaucauld-Liancourt who visited the district, says that the Fort consisted of a few log houses surrounded by tottering palisades and without ramparts. Near by were four large buildings, made of hewn logs and used as storehouses and dwellings for workmen. Twenty voyageurs were busy loading and unloading the vessels and the cargoes were transferred to Chippawa in batteaux, manned by five men each. The Garrison consisted of the fifth foot in charge of Capt. Pratt. The soldiers cultivated a plot of ground around the Fort. The "Chippawa" a British schooner came in while Duc was there, and another vessel was at the dock. Near by was a tavern and a few houses.

In 1807 there was a village of about 25 houses around the Fort. The first meeting on municipal purposes of which any record survives, was held in 1808 in the house of Andrew Miller. Other names mentioned in

these early records are: Baxter, Buck, Douglas, Hanins, Hirrot, Hershey Haun, Harper, Hibbard, Nigh, Karr, Learn, Sherk, Pound, Wilson, Warrenm Wintemute, Winger, Platow, Senn, Trout, Page, and Zavitz. Most of these had come in from Pennsylvania after the war of American Independence.

Fort Erie was the scene of much fighting during the war of 1812-1814, and did not recover for several years. Then again in 1866 the village was practically destroyed, and the country laid waste. Since that time the villgge enjoyed quite a growth but never became very large

The comletion of the Peace Bridge in 1927 has opened a new avenue od development and Fort Erie is now rapidly on the road to cityhood. The Fort is now in ruins, but the grounds are beautifully kept by the Parks Commission.

In 1857 Fort Erie wa s incorporated as a Village. It ahd an area of 900 acresand extended for nearly two miles and a half along the Riverfront. At thzt time it had a population of about 900. It contained ten stores, four taverns, a machine shop, four churches, and a large dri l- shed used as headquarters for the 44th Battalion.

In 1930 the population is 2,400 and its boundaries reach to Bridge burgon the North. The combined villages making one industrial centre, have a chemical plant, a steel plant, and an Air Chute plant. As it is a railroad centre many railraod men find employment here. Fort Erie has good churches and a good high School, situated in the boundaries of Bridgeburg. It has a large artificial ice Arena capable of seating 6,500 It also has a n Air-port.

Mention should be made of Dr,William Douglas who pased away in 1929. He was a native son, and a man full of philanthropic spirit. He lived his life with the purpose of doing all the good possible to his fellow men and when he died he bequeathed to the village \$300.000and a site for a hospital. This Hospital will soon be completed and will stand as a perminent monument to the kindly donor..