

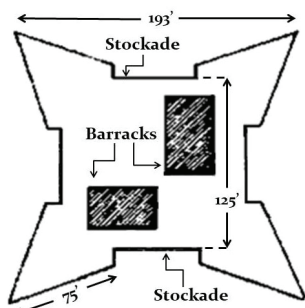


North America after 1748. (www.wikitree.com)

Acadians and Indigenous forces, encouraged and supported by France, continued to resist the British presence. In 1720 France established Fortress Louisbourg in Cape Breton to exert control over the region, the result of which was continued friction between Britain and France and heightened anxiety in Britain's American colonies. This led to British and American colonial forces capturing Louisbourg in 1745, only to see it returned to France in 1748 under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Britain therefore established Halifax the following year, in 1749 to counter the re-established French stronghold at Louisburg. That brought Britain into more direct confrontation with Acadian French in mainland Nova Scotia and France's Mi'kmaq allies, who continued to resist the British presence in Nova Scotia. British settlements in mainland Nova Scotia at Annapolis Royal and Canso had been subject to repeated attacks and sieges over the previous half-century, and there was strong opposition to British expansion in the region.

On his arrival in what was to be Halifax in 1749, Governor Edward Cornwallis' first concern was to secure the settlement from attacks



Typical Picket Fort of 1749.

Ongoing conflict in North America stretched back to the early 1600s, as Britain and France vied for supremacy in the new world. As part of the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht France had ceded control of mainland Nova Scotia to Britain, while retaining present-day Cape Breton and PEI. However,

tree barricade soon after the settlers arrived. Completed by the summer of 1750, the palisade ran from the water's edge, up today's Salter Street to Horseman's Fort at Salter and Barrington Streets. It then ran to a salient just east of the old Halifax Library on Grafton Street and then across to join the Cornwallis Fort at Royal Artillery Park today. Next it connected with the Citadel Fort roughly at the southern ravelin of the current Citadel, and then ran across to meet Fort Luttrell, about where Rainnie Drive meets Gottingen Street. The palisade then joined Grenadier Fort, now where Cogswell Tower stands and from there ran down to the waterfront near today's Harbourfront Hotel.

The forts consisted of a double row of palisades, with a square centre and a bastion at each corner to provide covering fire along the face of the forts and walls. Designed to withstand attacks from forces armed with hand weapons, they were about 200 by 200 feet overall, with musket loopholes in the walls and a barracks for two companies of soldiers (100 men). Trees and bushes were cleared for 30 feet outside the walls to offer a field of fire.

Also, in 1749 a small outpost was established by Gorham's Rangers at head of Bedford Basin which would eventually become the site of a palisaded blockhouse named Fort Sackville, near where the Scott Manor House stands today. This was intended to control the Basin and maintain land communications with the British settlement at Annapolis Royal via connecting blockhouses at Fort Edward in Windsor and Fort Vieux Logis in Grand Pré.

Next, efforts to fortify George's Island began in the summer of 1750. Although it grew into the massive, heavily armed Fort Charlotte during the 19th century, the first fort here was a basic construction; by 1751 it had 16 cannons (24- and 32-pounders) surrounded by a palisade wall. The difference between these fortifications on Georges Island and the stockade forts was that the ones on the island were intended as a defence against attacks from the sea, by French naval forces armed with powerful cannons sailing into the harbour itself. Therefore they would have consisted of thicker earth and timber walls with openings or embrasures through which cannons fired, and the cannons themselves were positioned to cover the southern part of the harbour.

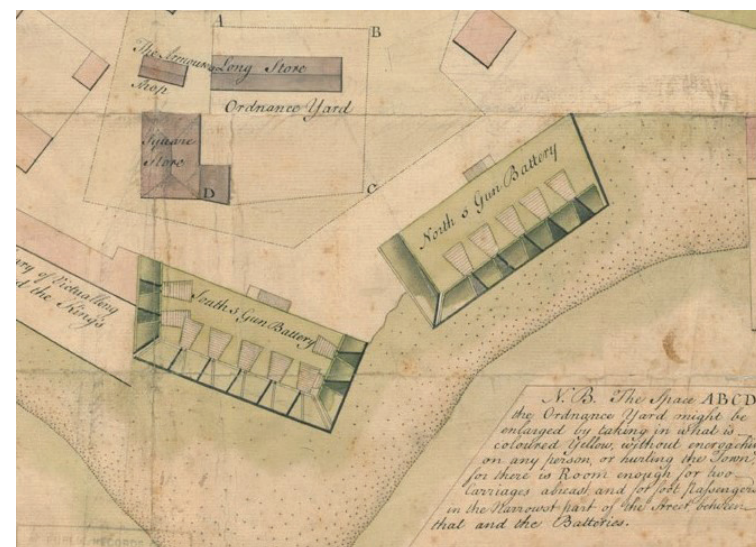
Dartmouth was settled 1750, and a small blockhouse was erected for the defence of the settlement, roughly at north-west end of today's King Street. It would have been likely something similar to the one that can be seen at Fort Edward in Windsor. The various blockhouse outposts in the local area were pre-fabricated in



Peninsular Blockhouses, Public Archives

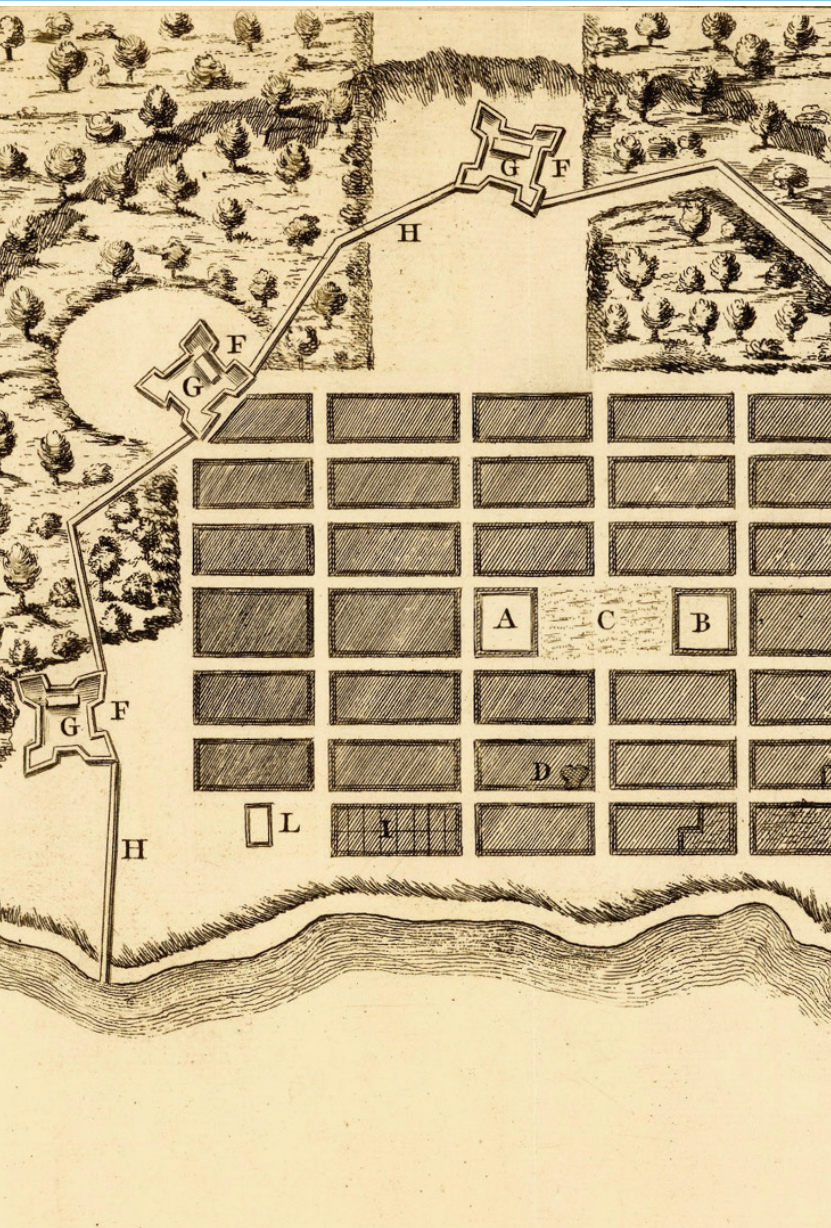
Halifax and shipped to their intended location to be erected quickly in place. In 1751 a line of pickets was added at the back of the Dartmouth settlement to further improve the defences.

In Halifax in the spring of 1751, the peninsula was laid out in 5-acre farm lots, beyond the limits of the town's ring of forts. For protection, an advanced line of three small blockhouses, connected by a patrol road was established across the narrowest part of the isthmus between Bedford Basin and the Northwest Arm. These were known as the Peninsular Blockhouses. The North blockhouse was on an elevation near the current location of the gate to Fairview Cemetery; the Middle blockhouse was on a small hill just north

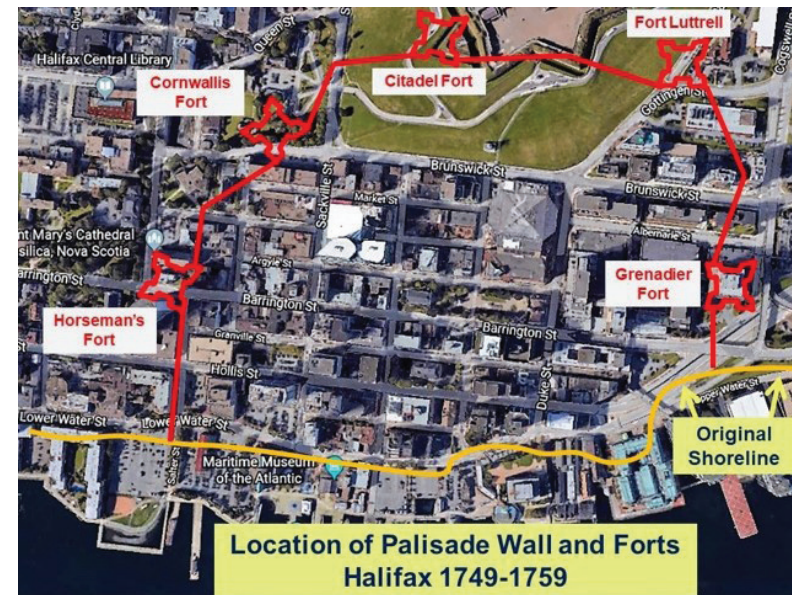


The North (Harbour) Battery. A portion of a 1766 survey plan of the Halifax Ordnance Yard by Lieutenant John Marr RE, N.S. Archives.

THE EARLY FORTIFICATIONS OF HALIFAX



By the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, and with the French defeated in North America, further work on Halifax's defences halted. They were allowed to fall into disrepair for the next 12 years until the start of the American Revolution in 1775, which ushered in a new era for Halifax and its defences. With the loss of its American Colonies Britain would transform Halifax into its main base and headquarters for the Royal Navy's North American and West Indies Squadron, with an accompanying massive effort over the next century to fortify the harbour against enemy attack.



Locations of the early forts and palisade.

of Bayer's Road near Westwood Park; and the South blockhouse was just east of the current railway bridge on Chebucto Road. Each small blockhouse was about 12 feet square, surrounded by a triangular palisade 60 feet long on the long sides and 45 feet long across the back. Each had a guard and a small cannon.

The next major European conflict of the Seven Years War (1756-63) provided the impetus for further defences - particularly ones to defend Halifax from attack from the sea. In 1754, with war on the horizon, the Eastern Battery was established on the Dartmouth shore at the site of the recent Imperial Oil Refinery to defend the eastern channel from naval attack. It was armed with 12- and 24-pounders, and would eventually grow into the powerful Fort Clarence before being buried when the refinery was constructed.

The following year, in 1755 three powerful batteries were erected along the shore within the town of Halifax to guard against attack from enemy ships gaining entry to the main harbour area. These batteries were built of logs, square timbers, stone and gravel, covered with earth and planted with grass. Standing 20 to 25 feet above the water they made a powerful defensive structure, with a total of 42 x 24-pounder cannons able to fire effectively about 800 yards into the harbour. The North Battery stood where the Harbourfront Hotel is now; the Middle Battery, also called the Governor's Battery from its proximity to the first Governor's residence, where Province House now stands, was located about where the Queen's Marque now stands; and the South Battery stood about where the Waterfront Warehouse is currently located. The shoreline at the time ran along about where Lower Water Street runs today.

The Seven Years War started the year after the waterfront batteries were constructed, in 1756 - and as a result there was much additional military infrastructure built. Shortly afterwards, in 1758 Fortress Louisbourg was taken again by the British, and the campaign moved up the St Lawrence River towards Quebec. Around this time the Peninsular Forts and the palisade surrounding the town were dismantled, as the threat from Indigenous attack diminished after French support at Louisbourg was removed. Meanwhile the threat from French naval invasion increased.

REFLECTING ON HISTORICAL EVENTS AND FIGURES

Fourth in a series of general interest folders on the early settlement and defence of Halifax and other communities.



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THE EARLY FORTIFICATIONS OF HALIFAX, authored by Tom Tulloch, MSM, CD, MDS(RMC), BA(Dal), Capt RCN (ret'd) as one of a series of general interest

folders on the early settlement and defence of Halifax by the Halifax Military Heritage Preservation Society.