

which stood on or near the land now occupied by the Star of the Sea Hall.

Fort Townshend, which was begun in 1773 was finished in 1779. As there was no regular line of streets laid down, there was much irregularity in building. Governor Edwards ordered that the lower road (now Water Street) and the upper road (now Duckworth Street) be kept twelve feet wide. The width of Water Street does not appear to have been kept to that gauge for as late as 1823 a cart could barely pass along the street near where now stands Garland's bookstore.

A notable event took place in 1786, viz.: The arrival in St. John's, for service on the naval station, of Prince William Henry (afterwards William IV.) as Captain of H.M.S. Pegasus.

The inhabitants of St. John's were kept in a state of vigilant watchfulness during the year 1780 as a large French fleet and transports had sailed from France, the destination of which was supposed to be Newfoundland, but which afterwards arrived in the United States. After the American War the Home Government commenced the repairing and improving of the defences of St. John's. Signal Hill was fortified, barracks were erected, and the first block house or Signal House was built there. The guns for the fortifications were parbuckled up the face of the cliff at Crow's Nest and Queen's Battery. Three furnaces for heating shot were formed, viz.: at Fort Fredrick on the Southside near Pancake rock, Fort William, and at Chain Rock Battery. A corps of volunteers was raised by Col. Skinner called the Newfoundland Fusileers, and so

many were the troops that sufficient accommodation was not found for them in existing barracks. In 1796 the garrison was ordered under cover, and the barracks at Fort Townshend and William were repaired and enlarged and the new barracks at Signal Hill finished. The Block House was so far completed that six guns were mounted on the lower floor, and a system of signals was arranged whereby the presence of an enemy's fleet might be made known. The first Block House was stationed on the northern eminence of Signal Hill; the south point being occupied by a large platform of wood called the Duke of York's Battery on which was mounted eight 24-pounder guns four 18-inch pounder carronades and two 10-inch mortars. A large chain had been fastened at Chain Rock and laid across the Narrows to a great capstan which stood at Pancake, preparatory to being stretched across the Narrows when an enemy might appear. These preparations for defence had been scarcely completed when on the 1st September 1796, the signal was made from the Block House for an enemy's fleet to the southward. The signal consisted of a blue pennant hoist at the mast-head over the French flag.

The enemy proved to be the French Admiral—Ridley—who had under his command seven sail of the line, two frigates and some smaller vessels. The signal of alarm and defiance was at once made from Signal Hill and at all the forts. Quite a number of vessels were in port, but only two ships of war—the Governor's ship and a frigate. The Governor, Admiral Sir James Wallace, immediately proclaimed martial law and ordered all men in the town fit