

Historic Sites

It is my opinion that if Fort St. Joseph were reconstructed and re-enactments of drills of the British soldiers, the arrival of Brock's messenger from Penetanguishene, the gathering of the Indians, voyageurs and traders, the departure of Capt. Roberts and his men for Mackinaw Island were to be performed in the site of the reconstructed Fort St. Joseph, it would become one of the greatest tourist attractions in Canada, with all due respect for Upper Canada Village, Fort Henry at Kingston and the changing of the guard at Ottawa.

That is his opinion, Mr. Speaker, and I concur in it.

This fort has terrific potential. There are several needs for the future, and one is reconstruction of the blockhouse. I received tentative approval from the minister that during the next two or three years this will be commissioned and reconstruction of the blockhouse will go ahead. It seems to me that this very important site is rather remote from highway 17, and we often receive criticisms when people travel some 25 to 30 miles to see Fort St. Joseph and all they find there are ruins. With the development of the visitors' reception centre and interpretative centre, and ultimately the reconstruction of the blockhouse and palisade, the casual tourist who is only interested in history in a general way, and especially students who visit the site, will see more than just the ruins.

It seems to me that during the past year or so we have seen a very great increase in the number of visitors. Some 11,000 people visited the ruins of Fort St. Joseph in 1975 alone, and the number has been increasing over the years.

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The problem that the historians of Parks Canada have is to get an authentic design of the original fort. They have the original plans, but the supplies that were delivered for the fort at that time do not exactly jibe with the plans. They suspect from this evidence, and from the archeological dates, that the fort was probably not exactly as laid out by Her Majesty's architects in planning it. Research into the original is going on at this time and we are hoping that the reconstruction of the fort will take place in the next two or three years.

It seems to me that it is important on an historic site such as this one to continue the archeological digs. I think this is very interesting for tourists and for historians. During the past year an archaeological dig has been taking place there. Traders' huts which were just outside the fort, the ruins and the basements for them, were unearthed during that dig. There is activity going on at the fort at all times when this kind of work is taking place and when historians and other visitors visit the site. Of course it is important that the ruins be stabilized as they are unearthed.

As I indicated, there is a great deal of interest, not only from the military and historical point of view, but in the fur trade and the trading huts of the company which had a trading post there at the time of Fort Joseph in the 1800's. It seems to me as well that this side needs to be developed from the natural point of view. As I mentioned earlier, there are over 600 acres on this site. There is a terrific potential there for the development of walking paths and trails for people to view the various plants, animals, and bird life that exist on this site which was a former bird sanctuary.

The third area which I think is important for purposes of tourism is the development of swimming beaches and picnic areas.

From the few brief remarks that I have made it becomes obvious that Fort Joseph is not only a very important historic site but it has tremendous potential for teaching students about the history of Canada. I believe that when it is fully developed and staffed it can be one of the most important tourist attractions in Ontario or indeed in all Canada.

I want to express my appreciation to the Minister through his parliamentary secretary, and to the department for the initiatives that have been taken in developing Fort St. Joseph. I hope they will continue the development of this most important historic site.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak this evening on the National Historic Sites Act and amendments thereto. In general, most hon. members find agreement with that act, but as the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) mentioned earlier today, opportunities such as this to speak about national historic sites do not come very often, and it is a privilege when we have the opportunity to make some mention of them.

It is not my intention this evening to talk about that great constituency of Battle River and therefore the need to develop the national historic sites there. I am sure every member of parliament would like to visit this area some time, and I invite them to come, but there is irony in a situation which has developed there which I am sure is not the intent of the government or of the department. It results from a regulation regarding national historic sites. This is the opportunity for me to bring it to the attention of the House, and particularly to that of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development which looks after national parks and historic sites.

I am pleased that the parliamentary secretary is present, and also the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mrs. Campagnolo), because I think my comments relate to both of those ministries. The regulation which I would like to bring to their attention does not permit camping at a national historic site. Basically that is a position with which I would agree. When you have a fort, an old church or an old graveyard, obviously you do not want people going there and using that site as a camping ground. However, I would like to give a short account of the situation which took place in my home province of Alberta where there is considerable interest in whitewater canoeing and kayaking. In this sport you go out to a place where there are rapids and try out your Eskimo rolls.

I felt very privileged to be part of the Edmonton Kayakers. One of the most popular places in the province of Alberta where we went was down to Red Deer and west to Rocky Mountain House. There was a stretch from Rocky Mountain House going toward the mountains to the town of Horburg, a distance of 20 miles, that had eight descents or rapids.

In 1966 the Calgary Canoe Club, the Red Deer Canoe and Kayak Club, the Edmonton Whitewater Kayak Club, and the