

# Historical Sketch of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Camp.

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NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE enjoys the distinction of being not only the oldest incorporated town in the Province of Ontario, but also the site of the first permanent British settlement within its limits. By the terms of a treaty negotiated by Sir William Johnson with the Seneca Indians upon the 3rd day of April, 1764, a little more than a year after the cession of the French possessions in North America to the British Empire by the Peace of Paris, a narrow strip of land beginning at Fort Niagara and extending southward to the creek above Fort Schlosser, or Little Niagara as it was then called, "comprehending the whole carrying-place with the lands on both sides the strait, and containing a tract about fourteen miles in length and four in breadth," was transferred to the Crown, together with the right of cutting timber on their lands elsewhere, and the free use of all harbours on Lake Ontario, and of all rivers falling into it. These privileges were evidently sought for purposes of traffic and defence, rather than colonization; but during the summer of 1780, when the wars of the American Revolution were fiercely raging the world over, and Fort Niagara had become a haven of refuge for hundreds of loyalists, who had been mercilessly evicted from their former homes in New York and Pennsylvania, Sir Frederick Haldimand, who was then Governor General of Canada, determined to construct a large log barracks on the west bank of the river for the accommodation of the corps of riflemen enlisted among these refugees by Lieut.-Colonel John Butler of the Indian Department, and at the same time to encourage the settlement of their families upon the adjacent Crown Lands. During the autumn of that year this building, which is still used for military purposes and commonly known as Butler's Barracks, was completed and five or six families were settled in log houses near-by. In three years the number of settlers had increased to forty-six families, who had upwards of seven hundred acres of land under cultivation, well stocked with horses, cattle and swine. In the summer of 1784, Lieut.-Colonel Butler's corps of rangers was disbanded, and nearly five hundred able-bodied men were added to the settlement, which was extended to include the whole Niagara Peninsula by treaty with the Missisauga Indians, and liberal grants of lands were made to all officers and soldiers, as

well as to other loyalists. For nearly seven years Fort Niagara and Butler's Barracks had been the headquarters and base of operations for this renowned body of partisans, whence they had sallied forth upon their raids against the American frontier extending from Oswego on Lake Ontario to the Blue Licks in Kentucky. These operations had been attended with such unvarying success and they were so adroit in selecting the point of attack and the best line of retreat that their baffled enemies were wont to declare that it was as useless to attempt pursuit as if they had been a pack of wolves from the forest.

In 1791 Lieut.-Governor Simcoe brought with him from England the corps known as the Queen's Rangers, also mainly composed of American loyalists, specially enlisted for service in Canada, who were quartered for several years at Queenston and Niagara, but were finally disbanded about five years later, when the majority also became settlers. Niagara was designated as the capital of the new province of Upper Canada, and was soon after incorporated as a town. In 1795 a site was selected on the high ground overlooking the mouth of the river, for a small fieldwork, which was named Fort George in honor of the King. The garrison of Fort Niagara was removed to this place upon the evacuation of that post in the following year. It was occupied successively by detachments of the 5th and 24th Regiments of the Line, and when these troops were withdrawn in 1798 for service elsewhere, by a part of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Volunteers, enlisted in the Province to take their place. In September, 1802, this corps was disbanded and the 49th Regiment occupied the military posts in Upper Canada, for the next ten years, when it was succeeded by the 41st, which held them when war was declared by the United States in June 1812. Fort George was the principal garrison and headquarter station in the province during that time. It is described in an official report as an irregular fieldwork, consisting of six small bastions faced with framed timber and plank, connected by lines of palisades twelve feet in height, and surrounded by a shallow dry ditch. Its situation and construction were alike condemned by the inspecting engineer as being ill-judged and defective. Although partially commanding Fort Niagara it was itself overlooked by high ground on the opposite bank of the river near