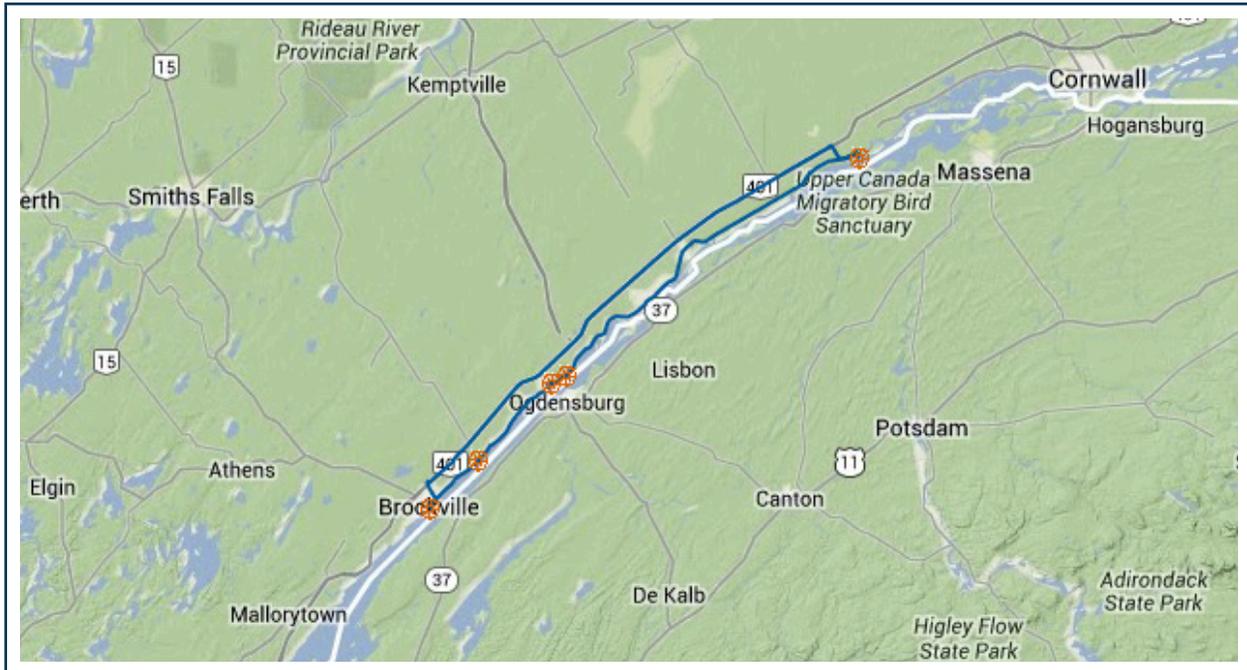




FAB EXPERIENCES

Eastern Ontario, Canada

Defining A Nation- Downriver



Even in the centuries before Europeans came to North America, the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes were natural boundaries between peoples before they became a boundary between nations. The Thousand Islands, the Garden of the Great Spirit, came to be shared by First Nations peoples, at the edge of each traditional territory.

The first settlement on the upper St. Lawrence was on the site that would become Kingston. Built in 1673, Fort Frontenac was a fortified trading post. Its strategic location controlled the north channel entrance to the river and Lake Ontario, and was a safe harbor to launch patrols and trade. In years that followed, other small settlements sprang up along the upper St. Lawrence, at the site of Maitland east of Brockville, and across the river at the site of Ogdensburg, New York.

It wasn't until after the War of Independence, when the American population that remained loyal to Britain was forced into exodus as United Empire Loyalists that this region was more broadly settled. Even then, there was an unease across the waters that impacted community growth.

Through the 18th and 19th Centuries fortifications on both sides of the St. Lawrence River, from Kingston to Prescott in Canada marked this river corridor and natural boundary as a region that would be tested by the wills and militaries of nations as they sought power over trade and lands.

This tour will take you to the various sites of military installations and conflicts in this upper part of the St. Lawrence, and Thousand Islands. No war is a cause for celebration, but the sites have a tremendous value in learning and remembering their cause and effect.

Tour from the FAB Brockville Gateway

fabbrockville.ca

1. Blockhouse Island

Lat: 44.587395
Long: -75.680851

On the upper St. Lawrence, the War of 1812 was something of an inconvenience to people on both sides of the river. In the very young communities, just a few years after it was a “howling wilderness” in one Brockvillian’s memoirs, people depended on each other for their settlement needs. Except for raids back and forth about claiming back deserters, Brockville sat that war out.

It was in defense of Brockville for the Rebellion of Upper Canada in 1837-1838, that a blockhouse was built on a small island at the young village’s waterfront. The island was formerly the site of sheds built to house cholera victims, many of whom were immigrants, in the early 1830s. The community was a hive of Loyalist settler activity, with mills at the mouth of Buell’s Creek, nearby the island. Destroyed by fire in 1860, the defense was never battle-tested. The island became a peninsula when the short distance to the mainland was filled.

Driving Directions: From Blockhouse Island, drive inland one block to King St., turn right, and drive east approx.. 8 km. to village of Maitland.

Notes:

2. Maitland

Lat: 44.634666
Long: -75.613468

With rich hardwoods forests and favourable sloping shores, this site was considered ideal by the French, controlling the region in the mid 1700s, for ship building. The last two war ships built by the French on the upper St. Lawrence were built in 1760 at what was then called Point au Baril. When the region came under British control shortly thereafter, the village site continued to be a ship building site.

Driving Directions: Drive east on Cnty. Rd. 2, 9.6 km. to Prescott; continue through downtown on King St. approx. 1.7 km. to Edward St.; turn left on Edward St.; take second street on right – Dibble St. to Fort Wellington

Notes:

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3. Fort Wellington

Lat: 44.713058
Long: -75.509558

Fort Wellington was commissioned by the government of Britain during the War of 1812 – 1814 to protect shipping and travellers at the head of the Gallop Rapids in the St. Lawrence River. A series of rapids ran downriver from Prescott, making this an important transfer point to and from ships that could sail above the rapids into Lake Ontario.

Shipping of freight and passengers on regular lake ships was impossible through these rapids, and so freight and passengers who travelled downriver to Prescott from Kingston would be “forwarded” to smaller bateaux which could travel through the rapids. Likewise, freight travelling upriver from Montreal would be unloaded from smaller bateaux and loaded onto larger lake ships for carriage upriver.

It was originally built in 1813 on land owned by Major Edward Jessup a prominent Loyalist from Connecticut who founded Prescott in 1784.

The fort has impressive earth ramparts, reinforced by rows of pointed timbers, called pickets. The massive stone blockhouse and cannons presented a solid defense – probably contributing factors to the fact that Fort Wellington was never attacked. It is preserved and interpreted today as a National Historic Site.

Driving Directions: From Prescott, follow Cnty. Rd. 2 east approx. 2 km. to Windmill Point Rd.; turn right, approx. 200 metres to Lighthouse National Historic Site.

Notes:

4. Windmill Point Lighthouse

Lat: 44.720895
Long: -75.487130

In the 1830s, after a period of rebellion in Upper Canada, it was popularly believed in the US that Canadians didn’t wish to be ruled by Britain. In November 1838, a group of Hunter Patriots decided to invade Canada and restart the rebellion. They targeted the town of Prescott and Fort Wellington, but the plan was botched when the town was forewarned, and when the invaders’ ships ran aground. They eventually regrouped at a stone windmill, downriver.

The windmill was built of thick stone and stood 18 metres high on top of a 9 metre bluff. While not meant to be a part of the invasion, it was an ideal fortification. With its height, it was a good observation point, and its thick stone walls would repel small arms and small artillery. *cont’d on next page*

Continued from previous page. On the morning of 13 November, a small force of British infantry from the 83rd Regiment and approximately 600 Canadian militiamen attacked the Hunter position. The attack failed, leaving 13 regulars and militiamen killed and 70 wounded. 18 Hunters were also killed along with many wounded.

With the arrival of British regulars and heavy artillery from Kingston, the windmill fell on November 16. Royal Navy gunboats and steamers blocked the Hunters from escaping and with casualties mounting, the would-be surrendered.

Driving Directions: Continue east 43.8 km. on Cnty. Rd 2 through the villages – a story in themselves about the development of the St. Lawrence Seaway; to entrance to Upper Canada Village; Chrysler Farm battlefield site is near the waterfront, west of main parking – follow signs.

Notes:

**5. Chrysler Farm
Upper Canada Village**

Lat: 44.941540
Long: -75.070135

The Battle of Chrysler's Farm was a turning point in the War of 1812 It was fought on November 11, 1813 on muddy fields bordering the St. Lawrence River, a few kilometers east of the post-Seaway constructed town of Morrisburg.

American war plans called for two powerful armies to converge at Montreal and cut the British lifeline into the heart of the continent. One army, 4,000 strong commanded by Wade Hampton, was to move up the Champlain Valley. The other under the command of James Wilkinson at Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario, was to descend the river with 8,000 men. The two were to meet at Montreal and choke all British settlements and garrisons west Montreal.

The British forces, however, were much smaller in number - but highly trained and motivated. They were commanded by brilliant officers, Colonel Charles-Michel d'Irumberry de Salaberry in Lower Canada and Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Wanton Morrison in Upper Canada. de Salaberry met and defeated Hampton's much larger force at the Battle of Chateaugay on October 26, forcing Hampton's American force back into U.S., to retire in disarray, ending that part of the attack on Montreal. Wilkinson's invasion down the St. Lawrence was another matter, and was one of the largest invasion forces assembled in the war. They set out in flotillas of bateaux and small gunboats. *Continued on next page*

Wilkinson was not aware of Hampton's defeat at Chateauguay until well into his invasion, downriver. His army was landed east of the Galop Rapids on the Canadian shore, preparing to shoot the Rapids du Plat and Long Sault Rapids. There was a short skirmish on November 10 against Morrison at Hoople Creek, and the following day another in an attempt to stop Anglo-Canadian army on its way to Cornwall.

Morrison's companies of the 49th and 89th Regiments of Foot, three guns and crews, the Canadian Fencibles, Canadien Voltigeurs and 30 Mohawk warriors from Tyendinaga, and Mississauga warriors from the Peterborough area took position on the fields of several settlers, with their headquarters at the farmstead of John Chrysler - and waited for the Americans to come. Wilkinson's troops, it can be said, were poorly led and trained, were suffering from the November cold, and their numbers were depleted by disease. Yet, when his 4,000 American troops attacked Morrison's corps of 1200, and despite much superior numbers, the American troops were no match for their battle-hardened British and Canadian counterparts. After some three hours of desperate fighting, the Americans were forced to withdraw, leaving 400 casualties killed, wounded and captured. They retreated to the U.S. shores. Broken and dispirited, Wilkinson's army's retreat ended the American campaign of 1813, the invasion of Canada – "a mere matter of marching".

Explore the grounds, plaques and monument, and visit too the historic site of Upper Canada Village nearby, for insight into country life the early days of Canada.

Driving Directions: The quicker return to Brockville from Upper Canada Village is west on Cnty. Rd. 2, 2.7 km.; turn right onto Upper Canada Rd.; drive north 2 km, take exit to Hwy. 401 west to Brockville, 61.3 km.

Notes:

Your Trip Notes:

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