

July 31, 1967

Mr. Lester L. Clements,
Liverpool, N.S.

Dear Lester:

Here is a brief rundown on the history of Fort Point.

When the pioneers were laying out the town site (see Proprietors' Book, minutes of meeting held July 1, 1760) they stated that the land on and about "Fish Point" was to be used for drying fish, "except a site for a fort".

Although a few people had settled at Liverpool in the autumn of 1759, the main body arrived in the spring of 1760. They were led by Captain Sylvanus Cobb, who had been Wolfe's chief scout and pilot at the capture of Louisbourg in 1758. Hundreds of ~~French~~ cannon were lying about the ruins of the French fortress, and it is probable that Cobb brought two of them to Liverpool. Certainly there were two cannon on "Fish Point" during the 1760's, although there were no earthworks or ramparts until later. The name of the site was changed to "Point Lawrence" in honor of Governor Lawrence of Nova Scotia.

When the American Revolution became an open war in 1775, nearly all of the Liverpool townsmen were natives of New England or their children born since coming here. Most of them kept a neutral attitude, like Simeon Perkins, but there were some busy American sympathisers. The Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia at this time was a former naval officer named Arbuthnot. He was highly suspicious of the Nova Scotia Yankees, and in March 1777 he sent a warship to Liverpool and removed the two cannon from Point Lawrence. This left the town defenceless against armed ships at a time when American privateers were prowling along the coast.

From 1776 to 1778, as the war went on, the Liverpool militia had various alarms of attack, and at these times they posted a guard of militia on Point Lawrence. In May 1778 they finished leveling a platform for cannon on the Point, although they had nothing but a few "swivel guns" which were hardly bigger than a musket. Colonel Perkins wrote a petition to Halifax for better defences, and in December 1778 a company of regular infantry, the King's Orange Rangers, arrived at Liverpool and took over the defence of Point Lawrence.

In May 1779 the Lieutenant-Governor sent a battery of cannon (four 12-pounders, with gunners and ammunition). The Liverpool militia joined with the King's Orange Rangers in building earthworks on the Point, which now was known officially as Fort Lawrence.

On the night of September 12-13, 1780, six traitors of the K.O.R. betrayed Fort Lawrence to a raiding force of American privateers, who captured it with its entire garrison. The Americans then went on towards the town, with the intention of looting it, but they were met by the Liverpool militia, who captured the American commander and drove the rest back into the Fort. After some negotiations with Colonel Perkins of the Liverpool militia, the Americans abandoned the fort and its garrison and stores intact.

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When the war ended in 1783, the company of K.O.R. were withdrawn to Halifax, taking the cannon and stores with them.

In August 1793, after news of the outbreak of war with republican France, the commander of the British forces at Halifax sent to Liverpool two 12-pounder cannon, 200 muskets, and ammunition. Colonel Perkins and his militia worked to repair and enlarge Fort Lawrence. The militia now included an artillery company, and in September 1793 they received two more 12-pounders. The battery was carefully maintained and manned by the Liverpool militia throughout the French wars from 1793 to 1815. Fort Lawrence was part of the integral defence of Nova Scotia, under the supervision of the General Officer Commanding at Halifax, who supplied ammunition and instructors and sent a staff officer to inspect the fort and the militia at regular intervals.

When these wars ended with the battle of Waterloo the guns were again withdrawn to Halifax.

In the winter of 1838-1839 there was a sudden danger of war between Britain and the United States over the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. British troops were hurried to the frontier, and in Nova Scotia the various coastal forts and batteries were again armed and manned. At this time Fort Lawrence had three 18-pounder cannon, two light field guns, and a garrison of 67 officers and men of the Liverpool militia under Captain William McGill.

When the matter was settled peacefully the cannon were withdrawn to Halifax in the routine manner.

The next alarm was that of the Fenian Raids, shortly after the American Civil War, which ended in 1865. Again Fort Lawrence was armed from the Ordnance Stores at Halifax. This time the guns were a pair of 32-pounders, smoothbore muzzle-loaders, of roughly 6½ inch caliber, firing iron shot of that weight. These cannon remain on the site of Fort Lawrence to this day (July 1967)

In the year 1847 ^a land surveyor named Whitman Freeman made an exact survey and map of Fort Point, apparently for the British War Department. Until recent years the mark of the British War Department, a "broad arrow", could be seen chiselled into rocks on both sides of Fort Point, marking the landward boundary of Fort Lawrence.

Ownership of the fort site apparently remained with the British War Department until 1905, when the British government withdrew its troops and responsibilities from Nova Scotia, and ~~transferred~~ ^{passed} over to the Canadian government all the forts, buildings and lands previously held under War Department authority.

Since World War Two the Canadian Department of National Defence has turned over all these old forts and fort sites to the Parks Branch, Department of Northern Affairs.

I have been told that among the old Ordnance Survey documents remaining in Halifax there is a list of W/D properties including the site of Fort Lawrence at Liverpool. I suggest that you enquire from:-

Mr. Harry Johnson,
Dept. of Northern Affairs,
The Citadel, Halifax, N.S.

*Ministry
of A.R.*