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## The Brick Barracks at Fort Malden

The Men's Brick Barracks at Fort Malden National Historic Park is the oldest remaining military structure in Amherstburg. It was constructed in 1819-20 to provide suitable barrack accommodation for the British regulars at the post.

Fort Malden, or Fort Amherstburg as it was officially called, was established by the British in 1797 following their withdrawal from Detroit according to the terms of Jay's Treaty. An extensive naval and military establishment was developed at Amherstburg to control the strategic water route along the Detroit River. During the early stages of the War of 1812 the fort was a key base of operations on the Western frontier. However, the defeat of the British fleet commanded by Robert Barclay at the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813 left Malden isolated from its eastern supply base. As a result, the British commander of the post, Henry Proctor decided to burn the government buildings, destroy the excess stores and withdraw into the interior. Shortly after the departure of the British, the advancing American troops took possession of the town. In the spring of 1814 they undertook some repairs to the fort but had not proceeded very far when the post was returned to the British at the conclusion of the war.

Despite the American efforts, the condition of the fort upon its re-occupation by the British was not very good. Lieutenant H. Portlock of the Royal Engineers was dispatched to Amherstburg in July 1815 to make a start at refitting the post. One of his first priorities was to arrange suitable accommodation for the troops stationed at Malden. He removed from the fort some log barracks which had been left by the Americans and began reconstructing them on the military reserve between the fort and the town. Due to the



scarcity of lumber in the area the log barracks could not be completed until late October 1815 during which time the men were forced to live in tents.<sup>1</sup>

In November of 1815 Portlock was replaced by Lieutenant J. Victor, R. E. By January the following year, Victor was able to report that the barracks had been "completely fitted up with fire places, berths, arm racks etc. for two Companies."<sup>2</sup> Though an improvement over the canvas tents, it was not a completely satisfactory arrangement for lodging the troops. Major Edward Barwick, commanding the 37th Regiment at Malden, tersely reported in July 1816 "the Berths much crowded, no circulation of air, the doors and windows all on the same side - the roof bad."<sup>3</sup>

However, the British government was reluctant to undertake any major building activity at Malden. The shortage of materials had driven the price up, requiring heavy expenditures and delays in completing any work.<sup>4</sup> Colonel E. Durnford, the commanding officer of the Royal Engineers in the Canadas, commented critically on the British propensity for being penny wise and pound foolish. In July 1818 he wrote to the military secretary, T. F. Addison.

I feel it my duty to observe from the various reports of the temporary construction and very decayed state of the Barracks where the troops are principally quartered throughout the Canadas that the heavy expenses unavoidably incurring [sic] in very frequent repairs to them is very ill bestowed and that such repairs will in a short time amount to a large proportion of the expense of new permanent buildings.<sup>5</sup>

Durnford's advice went unheeded by the authorities. Later that year he had to submit an estimate for repairs to the Barracks at Malden which were urgently required.<sup>6</sup>

The initiative for the construction of the brick barracks appears to have come directly from the Commander of the forces, the Duke of Richmond. Richmond had been appointed Governor in Chief and Commander of His Majesty's troops in British North America in 1818. In the summer of the following year, he made an extensive tour of the military posts in Upper Canada, visiting York, Niagara, Amherstburg and Drummond Island. While visiting Malden, the duke took a tour of the facilities and spoke with various officials. Lieutenant H. Wilson, the Royal Engineer at Fort Malden, took this opportunity to press upon His Excellency the necessity of replacing the old log barracks with a new building. Richmond agreed with Wilson's recommendation and instructed him to prepare the necessary plans and estimates and forward them to his military secretary, Major G. Bowles.<sup>7</sup>

During a conversation with Lieutenant Colonel I. Hawkins of the 68th Regiment, commanding at Malden, Richmond had discussed the advisability of having the work done by contract "as he thought it would be done more economically in that way than by the Engineers."<sup>8</sup> He suggested Hawkins advertise for tenders, select the most advantageous one and commence the building.

The decision to build the barracks was an ad hoc undertaking made 'on the spot' by the commander of the forces who had no fixed plan of proceeding with the work. In an effort to clarify the situation, Hawkins wrote to Richmond, "I've not yet taken any steps in the business conceiving that His Grace may have changed his plans, and I shall anxiously await your reply to know in what manner to proceed."<sup>9</sup>

While Hawkins was awaiting more definite instructions, Lieutenant Wilson proceeded to draw up the necessary plans and estimates which he forwarded to Richmond's military secretary.<sup>10</sup> The duke, however, never had an opportunity to see the plans which he had commanded Wilson to prepare. On August 28th, Richmond died suddenly after contracting hydrophobia from a rabid fox. As a result, a decision regarding the construction of the barracks was left to Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada and temporarily in command of the forces in the Canadas. Bowles conveyed the decision of Major General Maitland to Hawkins in late September.

I have the honor to acquaint you that an approved estimate amounting to £475 has been forwarded to the Engineer department of Amherstburg for the construction of a Brick Barrack to contain ninety men. And also, for the construction of a Cook House of £75, but the commencement of these works has been directed to be postponed, until orders are given by you to the Engineer department for that purpose, with the intent that you should proceed without delay to advertize for Tenders, and if on receipt, you in conjunction with the officers of the Commissariat and Barrack departments are of opinion that it will be more advantageous to accept the same, His Excellency desires that no time may be lost in the execution forwarding the accepted contract to York for approval.



Should however, the contrary be the case, you are then to direct the Engineer department to proceed in the execution of the Estimate made by Lt. Wilson.

His Excellency is of opinion that the old site within the Fort is the best which can be found.<sup>11</sup>

Acting on the instructions contained in Bowles' letter, Hawkins met with the heads of the various departments. He reported back to Maitland that they all agreed the season was too advanced for any work to begin. As an alternative, the officers of the Barrack and Commissariat Departments suggested that:

the most economical plan of procedure would be to advertise for Tenders for the supply of bricks, stone, timber and planks in the quantities set down in the Engineers' approved Estimate... to be delivered on the spot during the continuance of the shipping season by which means they will be got at a very reduced rate...those officers are further of opinion that the Buildings should be erected by the Engineer department in order that the labour of the Carpenters of the department as well as that of the two military masons and labourers may be taken advantage of.<sup>12</sup>

This proposal met with Maitland's approval. His secretary wrote back to Hawkins directing the commander to take "the necessary measures to lay in during the winter the supply of Wood and Brick necessary...and...as early as the season will permit, proceed in the construction of the said work."<sup>13</sup>

Before Hawkins went ahead and advertised for tenders, the engineer at Malden asked him to include "a supplementary Return of 70 pieces of scantling ten feet long 4½ inches by 4½ inches and six Hundred feet 1 inch pine Board," which had been inadvertently left out of the original estimate.<sup>14</sup> In early December Hawkins reviewed the tenders submitted, selecting those most advantageous for government. He then informed Bowles of his decision, noting that "when no material saving would arise to Government we gave the preference to Mr. Pastoris [sic] he having tendered for all the Articles, besides which he lives on the Spot, and possesses every means for prompt delivery of the Articles."<sup>15</sup> He added that as soon as the weather improved, construction would begin.



## II

The barracks were located in the north east corner of the fort parallel to the east curtain. Maitland had suggested that the site of the old barracks was the most practical, though it is difficult to determine if these instructions were carried out. It is more likely that strategic considerations influenced the decision. The fort had only two bastions in a state of repair, the northeast and the southwest. By selecting the northeast corner, the men would be closely situated to a defensible bastion. Also, the building would be as far removed as possible from the prevailing westerly wind, thereby minimizing not only the deleterious effects of weathering but also any noxious odors from the men's privy, which was located nearby.

It appears likely that military personnel carried out most, if not all, of the work involved. Two companies of the Royal Sappers and Miners remained in Canada at the end of the war and were actively employed in the construction of military works. The Fourth Company of the Fourth Battalion was stationed at Fort George for a short time, with working parties being dispatched to surrounding locations, including Amherstburg.<sup>16</sup> Quite possibly, the military masons referred to by Hawkins were part of such a detachment. In addition, the Garrison at Malden had the services of a full time master carpenter, David Kempt and a blacksmith, Theophile La Claire. Thus, as soon as the warmer weather returned construction of the barracks could commence.

The barrack measures approximately 98 feet in length 21 feet in width and stands 11 feet to the ceiling plate. The foundation is of random split rubble stone likely obtained from a local quarry. The walls are brick nogged and approximately one and a half feet thick. The original interior layout of the building consisted of three rooms divided by two partial partitions attached to a double hearth brick fireplace (Figure 1). There were three entrances to the barracks one to each room and all located on the west side. Each door had two steps leading from the barracks to the ground level. There were eight regularly placed windows on the west wall and, in the original construction, none on the east wall. This omission is all the more striking since one of the major complaints of the old log barracks was the lack of windows on both sides of the building which prevented the free circulation of air! The floor was made of joists set into the foundation on an east

west bias with wooden floor boards being nailed to them on a north south bias. The schedule of tenders refers to board and plank but does not specify the kind of wood used. Evidence of the original ceiling was located in the southwest corner of the building. It consisted of hand riven lathing nailed to the ceiling joists with a layer of plaster covering the lathing.

The roof structure of the building consisted of a pine plate set upon a levelling bed of mortar. Ceiling joists made of hewn pine were dovetailed into the plate at either end. The rafters are also of hewn pine, the east rafter being tenoned into the west rafter and secured by an oak dowel pin. The rafters are flush with the plate being of butt joint and secured with hand forged nails, likely produced in La Claire's forge. There is a king post at the north end and one at the south end both being made of hewn formed oak. The exterior of the roof consisted of planking covered with shingles, probably of cedar.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the barracks, a brick cook house was constructed directly north and parallel with the Mens Brick Barracks. Also, a wood frame privy finished with weather-boarding was built behind the barracks and parallel with the east curtain. During the latter part of 1820 Lt. Portlock, R.E. submitted a detailed report on Fort Malden in which he commented on the new buildings which had been recently erected:

These are new Buildings having been erected during the last year. They are in excellent Order and afford every comfort and accommodation for 80 men. The Barracks and kitchen are fine brick buildings. The privy is a frame building weatherboarded. The chimnies of the barracks unfortunately smoke; they should therefore be altered before the winter.<sup>18</sup>

## III.

The period following the construction of the barracks saw a variety of changes to the building. One of the most pressing needs was the repair of the faulty chimneys. Although Portlock recommended that the changes be made before he winter set in, it appears that the necessary repairs were not made until late spring or early summer of 1822. In May of that year, Durnford submitted an estimate for £35.8s.9d. which he reported as "necessary to keep the building in a habitable state."<sup>19</sup> Though no direct reference is made to the barracks, it is likely that this is the building being referred to. In October of that year the deputy barrack master general took a tour of inspection of the barracks in Upper Canada. Although he did not visit Malden, he noted in his report that the barrack master at that post, William Duff, had informed him that the barracks were in "a good and efficient state of repair", with a captain and 88 men lodged in the building.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from the discomfort to the troops caused by the faulty chimneys, there was also some damage to the interior of the barracks, though this was not repaired until the following year. In March 1823, Durnford submitted for the commander's approval an estimate sent to him from Amherstburg dated 7 February 1823 for £3.10s.3d. In commenting on the item, he noted that this expense was "reported to be essentially necessary owing to the colour of the paint having been destroyed by the chimneys' smoking."<sup>21</sup> A further request for "brushes to white-wash the barracks at Amherstburg" was submitted a few months later and approved.<sup>22</sup>

In the latter part of 1823, Colonel Durnford made a tour of inspection at Malden, sketching the government buildings at the post and describing them in some detail. With respect to the barracks he noted it was a "Framed building on stone foundations, 95 feet by 20 feet. Brick Nogged. In Good Repair." Under the category of necessary repairs, he stated that, "a virandah [sic] in front is very much wanting for which Item No. 62 in the annual Barrack Estimate of 1824 provides."<sup>23</sup> Durnford elaborated on this particular item in his estimates for the coming year which he prepared in September 1823. He set aside £36 for building the verandah in front of the barracks, observing:

This service is recommended by the Commandant as much wanted to protect the front of the build-



ing from the severity of the weather; the Bricks of which it is composed being of the very worst description.<sup>24</sup>

Almost as an afterthought, Durnford added that the proposed verandah would "prove of the greatest comfort to the Troops to screen them from the heat of the sun."<sup>25</sup> This estimate was approved by the Commander of the Forces Lord Dalhousie, and passed on to Gother Mann, Inspector General of Fortifications. In his report to the Master General and Board of Ordnance, Mann commented that "The 62nd Item is for Building a Verandah in front of the Men's Barracks, (Amherstburg) £36, which I presume is particularly requisite here on account of its Southerly situation..."<sup>26</sup>

The verandah was likely built early in the spring of 1824. Detail from an 1841 plan and a watercolour by P. Bainbridge provide some information on this addition. The porch extended approximately 8 feet from the west wall with three steps leading down to the ground level. There were eleven support posts approximately 8.5 feet long and six inches square. The posts are flush with the top step. The roof appears to be continuous with that of the barracks and covered with similar material - probably cedar shingles (Figures 2 and 3).

After this major addition to the barracks, only a series of minor maintenance operations were carried out over the next few years. In June of 1824, for example, a quantity of putty and oil was required for the repair of the barracks.<sup>27</sup> Two years later, a sum of £7.7s. was spent on further repairs though the details are not specified.<sup>28</sup> In 1827 nearly £15 were set aside for the upkeep of the building. These minor repairs probably consisted of oiling squeaky hinges, securing any loose planking, replacing any broken window panes and repainting the interior which was done for sanitary rather than aesthetic reasons.

Though minor repairs were required from time to time, the building itself remained sound. In 1825, a British Royal Commission under Sir Carmichael Smith toured British North America inspecting the various defence works throughout the colonies. Smith commented in his report on the state of Fort Malden referring in particular to the barracks. "The fort", he noted "is in ruins but there are good Barracks for about 70 men."<sup>29</sup>

The number of men which the barracks was considered capable of lodging seems to vary with each observer. The question arises, how to explain this discrepancy, especially when the allocation of barrack space was the responsibility of the barrack master who had precise regulations to follow? Possibly the observers were commenting on the number of men actually lodged in the building rather than the number who were supposed to be there. It is also possible the regulations were not being strictly applied. Whatever the case,

the building was being fully utilized as is indicated in a report by William Duff. In a signed statement, dated August 1826, the barrack master certified that, "there are no vacant Barrack Rooms or Public Buildings at this post the whole being at present required for the accommodation of the Troops".<sup>30</sup> A somewhat clearer indication of the allocation of space within the barracks is contained in a barrack return of 1830. It is not known when or if the transition from berths to bedsteads was made during this period.

In the early 1830s an outbreak of cholera had a significant influence on the normal routine of the barracks at Fort Malden. The epidemic made its first appearance in Québec City in June following the arrival of impoverished Irish immigrants.<sup>32</sup> During the summer, the disease spread along the St. Lawrence and into the Great Lakes Region. As a precautionary measure, Captain Reach, commanding 79th Regt. at Amherstburg, in January 1833 ordered "the whole of the soldiers' wives and children belonging to the Detachment...into Barracks."<sup>33</sup> A similar precautionary step was taken by Captain Cuthbert commanding 15th Regt. at Malden in September 1834 when a number of deaths were reported at Amherstburg due to the epidemic. Cuthbert informed his superior that he considered it "necessary to interdict all intercourse between the neighbourhood and [the] Post and ordered, in consequence, all the Wives and Children of the married men of his detachment into Barracks."<sup>35</sup> It is difficult to say with certainty what alterations, if any, occurred to the interior layout of the barracks as a result of the confinement of wives and children. One possible change is that the partitions were completed at this time to make three separate rooms and that six windows were added to the east wall, two per room, to provide for better cross ventilation. Physical evidence uncovered during the architectural investigation of the barracks indicates that the east windows were a later addition. They may have been added at this time.

The year 1834 was a critical year for Fort Malden in one other respect. A Select Committee on Colonial Military Expenditures was set up by the British House of Commons in 1834 as part of a concerted effort to reduce the cost of defending Britain's far flung empire. In an effort to set their own house in order before the Select Committee started wielding the broom, the Master General and Board of Ordnance had under study, a report on the subject of barrack accommodation. In May 1835 R. Byham reported to the Respective Officers at Québec the boards's decision with respect to the post at Amherstburg.

It has been decided to abandon the Barracks at Amherstburg...but as it is the only Post at the extremity of the Provinces...I am to signify the Master General and Boards desire that the buildings may be let (subject to resumption) to the best possible advantage.<sup>36</sup>

During the summer of 1836 plans were prepared for the withdrawal of the troops from Malden. On the 1st of September the British regulars marched from the fort. The only personnel left at the post was the barrack master, William Duff who lived in a private residence. Thus, after 1836 the barracks were unoccupied and would likely have fallen into private hands if the Rebellion of 1837 and the border conflict which it engendered, hadn't forced the British to reconsider their policy for the western frontier.



## IV

William Lyon Mackenzie's ill-fated assault from Montgomery's Tavern and his subsequent flight to the United States caused a general alarm all along the Canadian border. The establishment of a provisional government at Navy Island in December 1837 by Mackenzie with the active support of some 300 Americans heightened tensions between the two countries and raised the serious possibility of armed, pro-Patriot, American sympathisers attacking points all along the border. On the 26th December the magistrates for the Western District met to discuss the situation and determine what action to take for the defence of the Detroit frontier. Captain Henry Rudyerd of the Essex Volunteer Light Infantry noted in his diary the results of the magistrate's meeting. He noted, "Militia called out completed my company to 100 good men and took possession of the Fort [Malden] - from this day commenced regular duties and drills...leaving a small party to occupy the Fort I took the remainder of the Comp'y and occupied the Island of Bois Blanc."<sup>39</sup>

Although there is no direct reference to any of the militia units actually occupying the barracks during the early part of January 1838 it is almost certain that with so many men temporarily residing in the area, all available space for lodging would have been used. In late January a detachment of the 24th Regt. and two companies of the 32nd Regt. under the command of Major H.D. Townshend arrived at Fort Malden.<sup>40</sup> With the arrival of British regulars, the ad hoc arrangements for barrack accommodation gave way, as much as local circumstances would allow, to the customary barrack arrangements. One of the first steps taken by Townshend was to recall the barrack personnel into service. A Garrison Order dated 1 February 1838 directed "Mr. Duff on the half pay of the Barrack Department, and Mr. James Cousins, late Barrack Sergeant to resume their stations."<sup>41</sup> Barrack supplies were soon acquired for the troops. Early in March, an estimate of £51.15s.8d. was submitted for "Fitting up the Barracks with double berths," and £41.1s.8d. for "Making sundry articles of Barrack furniture,"<sup>42</sup> The use of "double berths" is indicative of the need to maximize all available barrack accommodation. On April 14 a further estimate of £18.7s. was submitted for barrack furniture.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from refurnishing the barracks, no changes appear to have been made to the building during the first four months

of 1838. The first indication of any work on the barracks occurred in May of that year. An estimate of £21.11s.11½d. was submitted for "barrack repairs."<sup>44</sup> No details as to the nature of these repairs is given and thus it is difficult to determine whether the work carried out resulted in any structural modification of the building. However, from the sum involved, the repairs were likely of a minor nature.

The shortage of suitable barrack accommodation was a matter of major concern to the authorities. Captain W. Baddely R.E. was dispatched to Amherstburg in March 1838 to review the defences on the Western frontier. In his report he commented specifically on the problem of barrack accommodation at Malden.

There is within the Fort a brick Barrack in good

order, but calculated to hold two Companies only, and this is at present all the barrack Accommodation

which it contains so that in the event of renewing

this Fort, Barracks must be constructed to hold

eight Companies...which I presume would be about

the strength of the Garrison.<sup>45</sup>

The question of accommodation took on greater urgency in July 1838 when the regulars at Fort Malden were replaced with four companies and the headquarters of the 34th Regt. commanded by Colonel Airey. In order to lodge this large detachment of 400 men a substantial addition to the facilities at Fort Malden was required. Early in August contracts were advertised for two wood frame barracks to hold respectively 240 and 160 men.

By September work was well underway. Ironically, the successful bidder was an American who was reported to have employed patriots on his work crews. Rudyerd noted in his diary that Captain Biscoe, the Royal Engineer supervising the work was quite concerned. "B [iscoe] in a fright - heard that there are ten Patriots employed in the works at the Garrison, that it is determined to burn down the new barrack as soon as the contractor is paid and if anything remains due to him, the sympathisers at Detroit have resolved to make it up to him."<sup>46</sup> For a short time men from the regiment assisted in carrying on the works at the fort and this provided a constant check on the Americans. However, the use of military working parties had to be abandoned when sickness and guard duty began to thin their ranks. The rate of sickness at Fort Malden was unusually high. W. Bain, the surgeon for the regiment, reported in October 1838 that of the 134 men in the "Fort Barrack" 24 were sick.<sup>47</sup> Biscoe's fears, however, proved groundless and the buildings were completed without incidents.

The two additional barrack buildings provided some relief for the pressing problem of accommodation. Yet, a barrack return for 1841 indicates that over 700 men were lodged at Amherstburg.<sup>48</sup> The presence of so many men at Malden was due to the heightened tensions between Britain and the United States

in 1840-41 and the very real threat of war between the two countries. To meet this contingency, the British military authorities were considering the construction of a massive pentagonal redoubt at Amherstburg. This proposal had serious implications for the existing structures at Fort Malden. In the spring of 1840, Colonel Oldfield, the Commanding Royal Engineer, observed, "with the idea of a permanent arrangement on the frontier [Detroit] I do not feel satisfied in recommending fresh expenditure beyond fair wear."<sup>49</sup> Thus, the only expenses incurred were for minor repairs to maintain the buildings and furnishings in a habitable state.

The Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 brought an easing of tension along the Canadian-American border and the British no longer felt the need to expend large sums of money for Canadian defence installations. The work proposed for Amherstburg was cancelled and the regiments withdrawn from Fort Malden. The troops were replaced by a detachment of the Royal Canadian Rifles, a regiment composed of seasoned veterans. This regiment took possession of the fort in 1842 bringing to a close a critically important period in the fort's history.

control of the property in the province. In 1858 the government decided to use the fort complex as a branch operation of the Lunatic Asylum. This decision brought to an end the military phase of the post.



V

The detachment of Royal Canadian Rifles based at Fort Malden consisted of approximately 200 rank and file plus officers. These men could easily be accommodated in the two new frame barracks. The change at Malden thus necessitated a re-evaluation of building use by the various departments. Of particular importance to the brick barracks were the changes in the medical department. Hospital accommodation at Fort Malden was provided by an old log building located on the military reserve. In addition to this structure, the medical department had the use of a hired building in Amherstburg. A three storey brick building was rented from a Mr. Sloan in November 1839 on a three year lease.

In 1842 the medical department was faced with two important problems. Their lease on the hired building was about to expire. Also the barrack department had received permission to convert the old hospital building into a barrack store. No supporting documentation was located to indicate how these questions were resolved. However, it appears most likely that sometime in the latter part of 1842 the brick barracks was converted into a hospital. It seems logical that the authorities, given the reduced number of men at the post and the availability of the brick barracks would simply let the lease run out on the hired building and move the patients to quarters within the fort.

No detailed information regarding the actual conversion of the building was located. However, few changes would have been required. A plan of Fort Malden dated 1848 clearly shows the barracks labelled as a hospital but provides no detail on any interior alterations which may have occurred (Figure 4). The plan does show an addition to the exterior of the south-east corner of the building which is labelled Hospital Kitchen. This addition was built sometime between 1842 and 1848. The old brick cook house located north of the barracks was not suitably positioned to serve as a kitchen for the hospital. Food prepared in the cook house would have to be brought around to the front of the building - cumbersome system especially in winter. In addition, the cook house was in a state of disrepair. In 1853 it was recommended that "the old brick building in Fort Malden, formerly a hospital kitchen," be removed and the scrap material sold.<sup>50</sup>

The wing attachment to the hospital was made of brick. It measured approximately 16 feet by 18 feet and was the same height as the main building. Architectural evidence indicates that there were two windows in the original structure one on the north and one on the south wall. A doorway on the north wall provided access to the main building through a new doorway cut into the east wall of the hospital. The vents on the east and south wall are built in the style of loopholes for musket fire and are original to the wing's construction. Due to its strategic location, the wing provided a clear sweep of the regimental magazine which may have prompted the Royal Engineer to add this feature to a hospital kitchen. The cooking apparatus consisted of a central brick fireplace with attached "boilers" on either side. The "boilers" were designed to hold the large iron cauldrons used to cook the various stews and broths which formed the mainstay of a soldiers' diet.

Little additional information on the hospital phase of the brick barracks was located. A barrack return of 1851 noted that the hospital building at Amherstburg was calculated to contain at least 22 men. The actual demand for beds was quite low. In July 1850 the commanding officer at Fort Malden, Captain Cox, informed the military secretary, "our Hospital [has been] empty for some time past."<sup>51</sup> By the middle of the century the British military authorities were improving the dietary and recreational conditions at the various posts which helped to reduce the incidence of illness.

Little additional information remains on the hospital building during this period. In 1851 the British government implemented a plan to settle pensioned soldiers in Upper Canada. In July of that year some 120 pensioners together with their wives and children arrived at Amherstburg. Two to three acre lots had been laid out on the military reserve north of the fort for the pensioners and each provided with a cottage. In the latter part of 1851, the detachment of the Royal Canadian Rifles was withdrawn from Amherstburg and the pensioners took over the garrison duties at the fort. In June 1857 Major R. Donaldson, the Commanding Staff Officer at Amherstburg reported that £20 would be "sufficient to defray the expense of the necessary repairs for the year ending 31 of March 1858."<sup>52</sup> Included in Donaldson's report was a crude plan of the fort which provides some detail regarding the hospital. The barrack is listed on the legend as, "Hospital and Surgery - one storey - brick," indicating that the building was still used by the pensioners as a hospital. More important, Donaldson's plan, though it mistakenly omits the wing attachment, shows two additional partitions which have been added to the interior of the building. These may have been added at the time the building was converted into a hospital.

In 1855 the Province of Canada, by the Vestry Act, assumed control of ordnance property in the province. In 1859 the government decided to use the fort complex as a branch operation of the Toronto Lunatic Asylum. This decision brought to an end the military phase of the post.

## VI

Dr. Andrew Fisher was appointed as the superintendent of the Fort Malden Lunatic Asylum, as it was officially known. He was instructed to carry out any necessary repairs and alterations to make the buildings suitable for the reception of patients. On 14 July 1859, Fisher, accompanied by 20 of "the most industrious and quiet male patients" departed from Toronto to carry out these orders.<sup>53</sup> There are no specific references to repairs to the brick hospital building. However, Fisher did mention the general repairs carried out at the fort. "All the lathing and plastering, drainage and inside painting and a large portion of the mason work have been performed by the keepers."<sup>54</sup> A plan of the site prepared by the supervising architect Kivers Tully, indicates that the brick hospital was designated as a kitchen, office and storage area (Figure 5). It is doubtful that any major structural changes to the interior of the building were necessary. The state of the building when it was acquired by the superintendent would adequately serve his purpose.

Important changes, however, were made to the exterior of the building. Tully recommended that the porch on the west wall be closed in and converted into an enclosed passage way to the large frame barracks on either side. In a letter to Fisher he pointed out that, "in order to connect the Buildings set apart for the patients - a covered passage 130 feet in length and 8 feet in width had to be constructed."<sup>55</sup> Also, the doorway from the wing attachment was enclosed. Tully's plan also shows a door situated in the middle of the east wall (Figure 5). The door was likely added to give easier access for the asylum personnel to the yard in rear of the building.

Apart from exterior alterations, improvements to the drainage system were made in the area immediately south of the building. Following his initial inspection of the site, Tully had complained that "there was little or no provision for the purposes of drainage and no arrangements for the supplying of water."<sup>56</sup> However, by the end of November 1859 Fisher was able to report that "two ash pits [had] been built" with all the "drainage" work being successfully completed by the patients.<sup>57</sup> A report by the Board of Inspectors which was responsible for supervising asylums and jails, commented favourably on this part of the work. The report stated, "an effecient system of drainage was effected by laying a main



sewer of 12 inch draining tile from the principal buildings to the River, with smaller branch drains of the same material running into the main sewer."<sup>58</sup>

The board recommended that the shingles be whitewashed as a fire prevention measure which Fisher accordingly carried out.<sup>59</sup>

After the initial repairs and alterations, no further structural changes appear to have taken place with respect to the brick building while it was operated by the Province of Canada. Following passage of the British North America Act, control over asylums became the responsibility of the provinces. Thus, the newly created Province of Ontario took control of the Malden Lunatic Asylum. J. W. Langmuir, the Provincial Inspector, visited Amherstburg to inspect the site. He was very critical of the conditions at Malden. He reported, "Part of the buildings and nearly all the features were in a very dilapidated state...the water pipes leading to the different wards were choked up and completely useless."<sup>60</sup> Dr. H. Landor was installed as the new superintendent and quickly set about improving facilities at Malden. In October 1868 he informed Langmuir, "the yards at the back of the female wards, and the kitchen have been paved in with the old bricks, which have long remained in the garden of the Asylum. They have been grouted in with liquid lime, and make a firm, cleanly [sic] yard."<sup>61</sup>

Only one major structural change appears to have been made to the old brick barrack building. The alteration concerns the installation of new cooking equipment and the construction of a new chimney in the small brick kitchen attached to the southeast side of the building. In April 1869 Landor wrote to the provincial authorities, regarding improvements to the cooking facilities in the wing addition.

Mr. Borrowman's tender is for the supply of a

boiler capable of holding one barrel with [iron?]

attached such as can be seen at any iron mongers

store. This kind of boiler requires little or no

brick work. Ryan's tender for [brick work?] is to

rebuild the other boiler works. We have two

boilers one is cracked and worn out, to be replaced

by Borrowman's tender. The other requires new brick

work to be done by Ryan's tender.<sup>62</sup>

The two tenders appear to have been submitted in response to an advertisement by the asylum steward for repair work to the equipment in the kitchen. J. Ryan submitted a tender in April 1869 in which he proposed "taking down both furnaces in Cooking Kitchen and Building and setting one Boiler in good and workmanlike manner for the sum of Eleven Dollars."<sup>63</sup> Tullys plan

of 1859 shows two structures on the west wall of the wing which may be the "furnaces" referred to by Ryan (Figure 5). It is not clear whether this work was actually carried out. New quarters were being prepared at London and the government may have been unwilling to spend money at a site they were soon abandoning. In 1870 the patients were transferred to London. Having performed useful service as a military post and mental institution, Malden was once again left vacant.

## VII

Although the patients had been removed in 1870 it was not until April 1874 that the Mowat ministry passed an Order in Council surrendering control of the property to the federal government.<sup>64</sup> After checking with the Militia Department, the minister for the Department of the Interior recommended the property be sold at a public auction.<sup>65</sup> A. Wilkinson, P.L.S. was sent to Amherstburg to survey the property in preparation for the public auction. Early in November 1875 the following notice appeared in local newspapers

On Tuesday, the 23rd November will be offered at

Public Auction...a number of Villa and Building

Lots laid off on the above reserve...The lots and

buildings thereon will be sold together.<sup>66</sup>

According to Wilkinson's plan, Lot 4 on the west side of Laird Avenue contained the old brick barrack building (Figure 6). The auction of these lots proved a great financial success for the government. Speculators bid the price of land up with the expectation that the proposed railway development for Amherstburg would greatly increase land values in the area. Lot 4 was purchased by Dr. Andrew Borrowman of Amherstburg for \$3,400.<sup>67</sup> As late as 1881 Borrowman still owed \$2,680. on the property.<sup>68</sup> Many of the purchasers were in a similar situation. The failure of the railway boom to materialize resulted in declining mortgage instead of a quick profit. During the 1880s the purchasers put pressure on the government to revalue the land in light of the declining market. Lot 4 was re-evaluated at a lower rate and he was able to pay off the outstanding debt on the property.

Shortly after clearing the mortgage Andrew sold Lot 4 to the firm of J. R. Parke and J. William Borrowman.<sup>69</sup> Parke and Borrowman operated a lumber firm in Amherstburg. At the sale of 1875 they had purchased Lot 5 immediately north of the fort. Thus, the purchase of Andrew's lot represented an expansion of their operations. In 1896 the firm was dissolved. J. Parke carried on the business until his death in 1904 when his widow, Mary Parke, took control. Following her death in 1912 operations at the mill were gradually reduced. In September 1918 the property was acquired by F. A. Hough. The old brick barrack building appears to have been left vacant, during



this period, being used mainly for storing lumber. The brick lined yard in rear of the building provided a good location for a lumber pile (Figure 7 and 8). An insurance map of the fort dated 1901 shows the porch and the enclosed walkway on the north wall of the kitchen as still intact but the enclosed walkway to the two frame barracks has been removed. Sometime after this date the small wooden enclosure leading from the door of the kitchen to the main building was removed.

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13 Ibid., Vol. 1235, pp. 25-26, Bowles to Hawkins, 19 November 1819.

14 Ibid., Vol. 404, pp. 183-185, Hawkins to Bowles, 24 November 1819.

#### VIII

15 Ibid., Vol. 404, pp. 187-190, Hawkins to Bowles, 7 December 1819.

16 T. W. Connolly, The History of the Corps of Royal

Several important structural alterations were made to the barracks during the period it was owned by Hough. An insurance plan dated 1926 provides some clues. The porch on the west wall has been removed. This alteration was part of a major change initiated by Hough to convert the barracks into a private residence. Because the building had sat empty for several years many repairs were needed. New flooring, wiring, plumbing were all installed. In addition, a fireplace and chimney were added to the west wall and a garage built into the south western part (Figure 9).

In 1946 the Hough property was acquired by the federal government. The old brick barracks was not immediately put to use. Then in 1954 the park custodian moved into the building. Additional repairs and renovations were made to the building to accommodate the custodian and his family.

In the summer of 1876 the federal government commenced work on restoring the brick barracks to the period of the Rebellion and subsequent border trouble with the United States. After a comprehensive restoration program, the building was opened to the public in 1978 (Figure 10).

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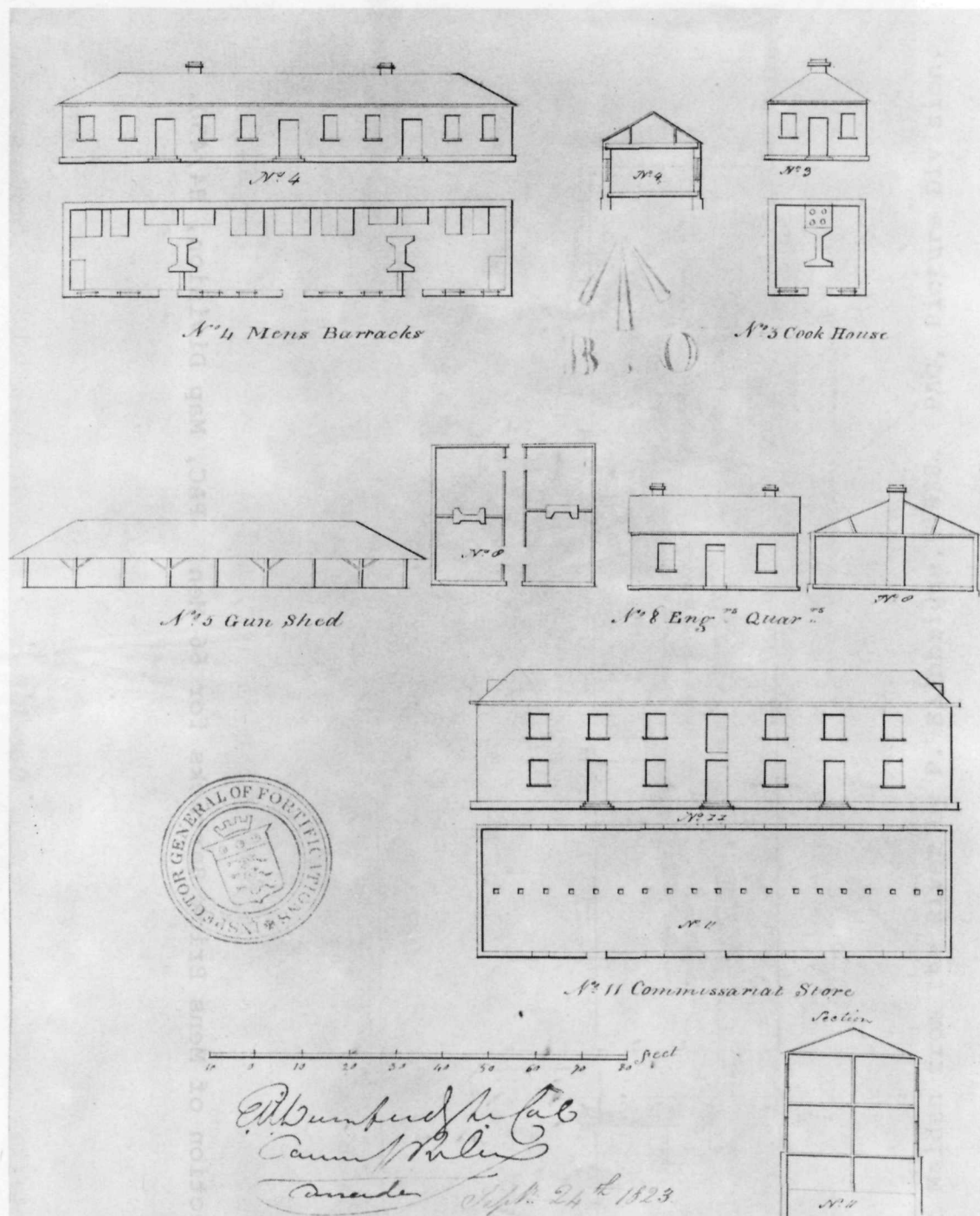
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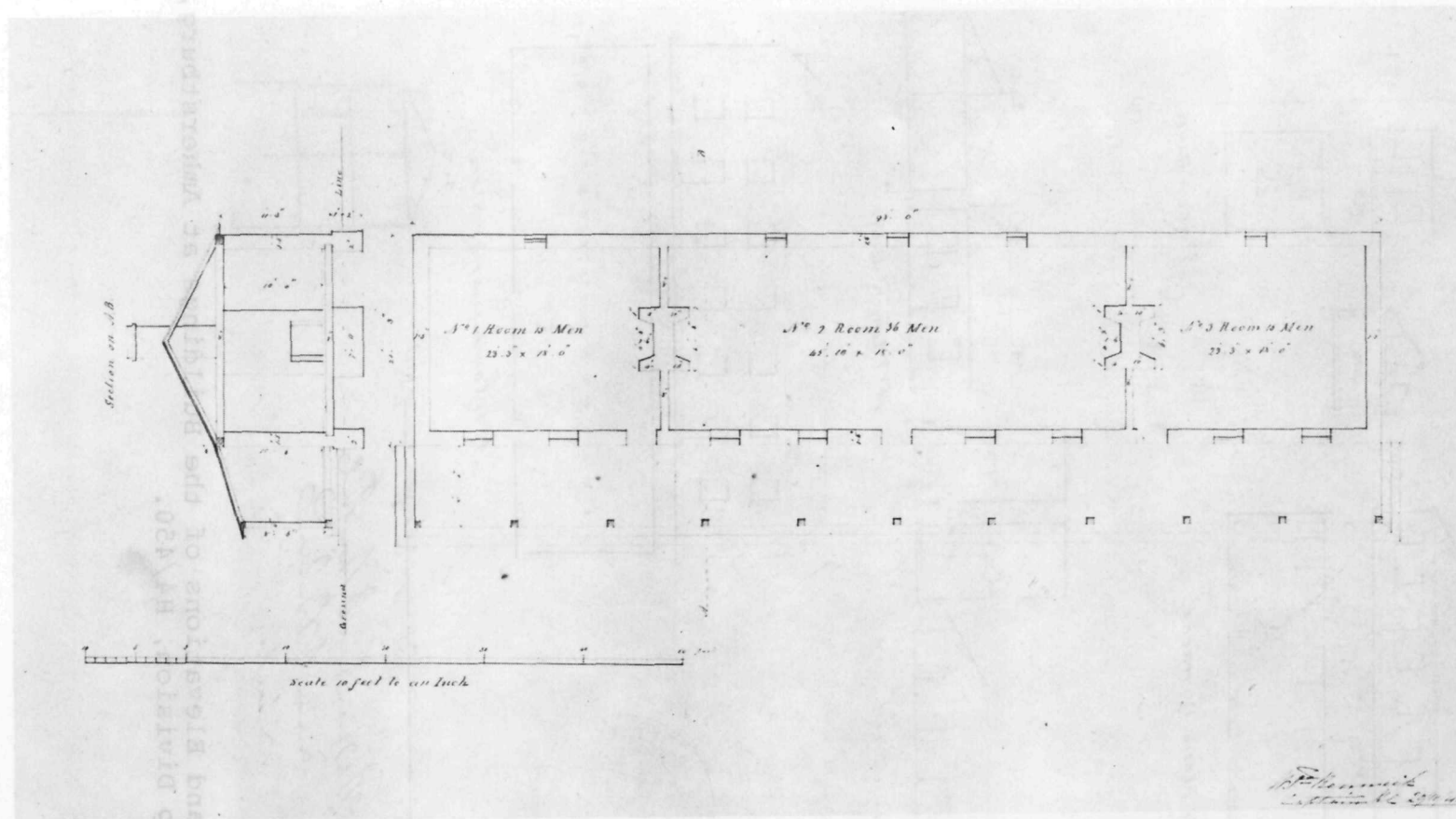


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Dennis Carter- Edwards  
Parks Canada  
Ontario Region

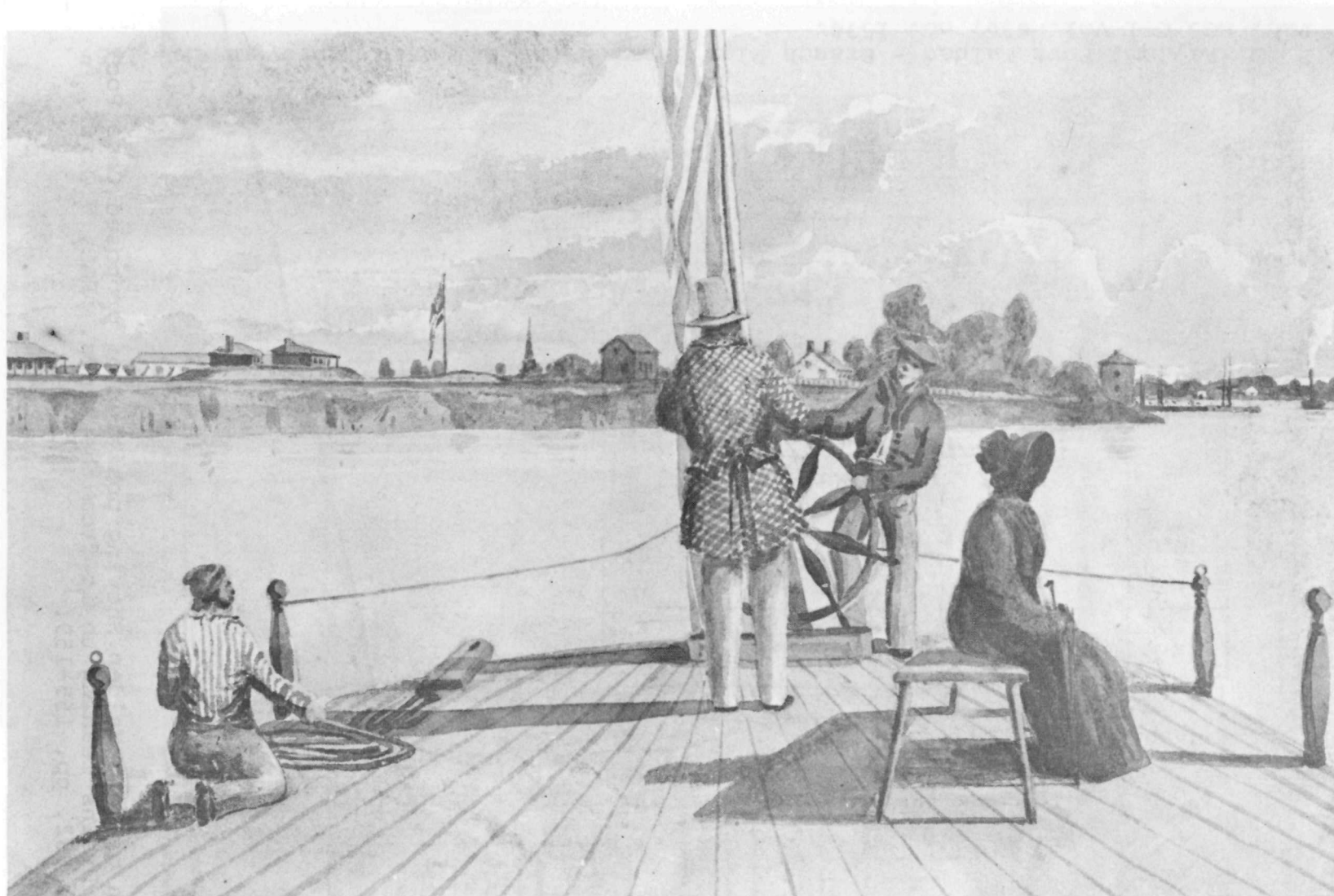


1 Plan Sections and Elevations of the Buildings at Amherstburg, 1823. PAC, Map Division, H4/450.

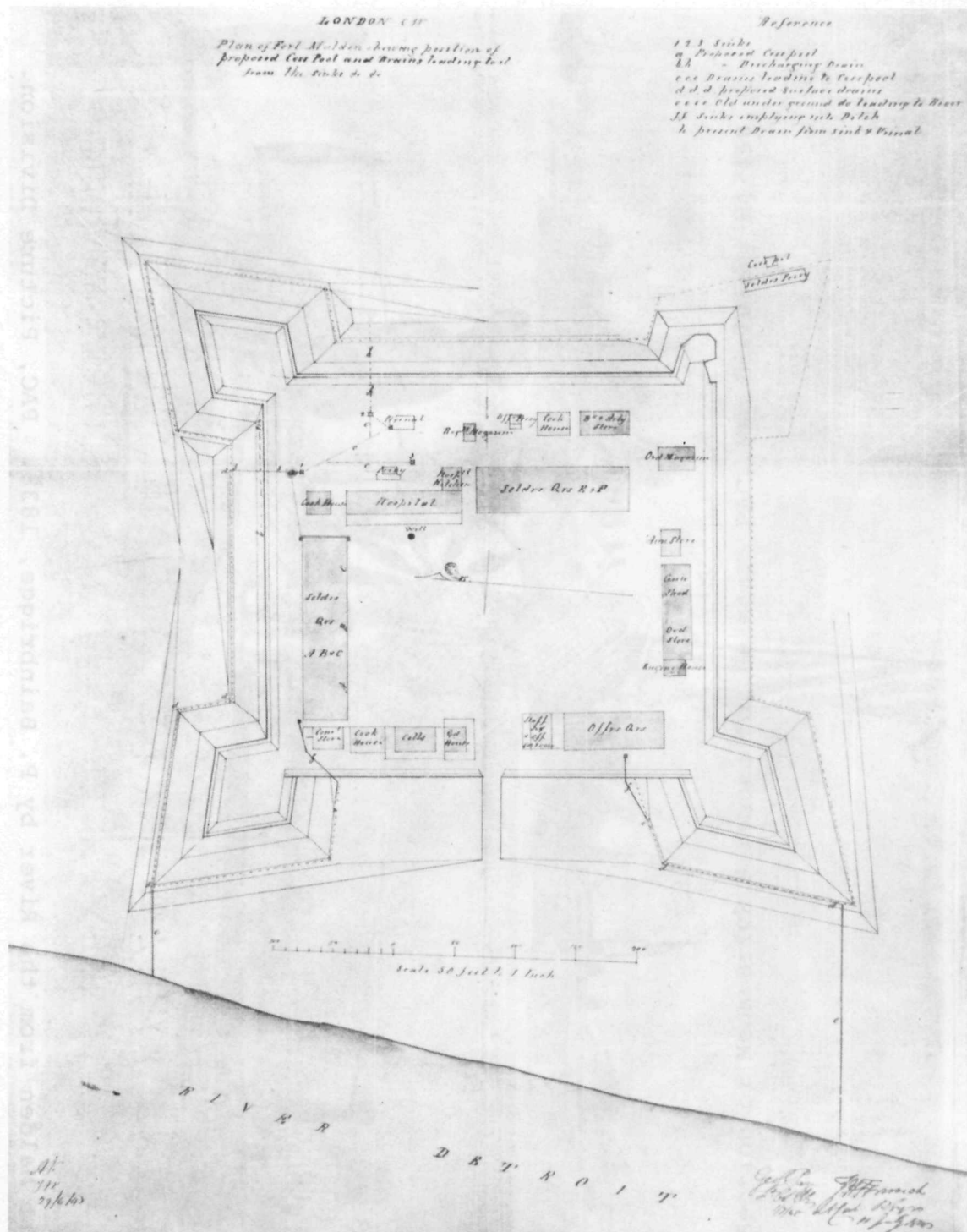


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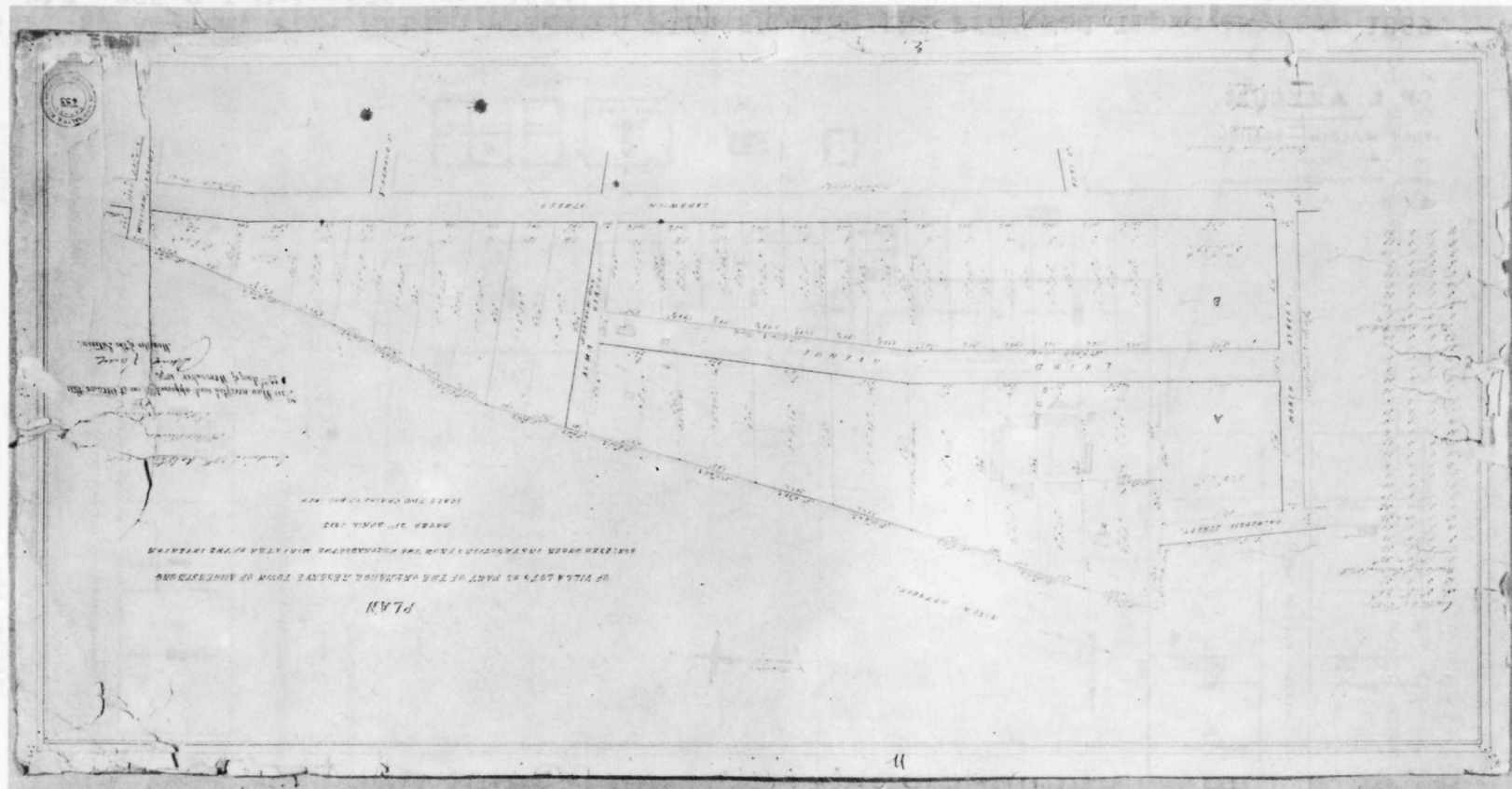


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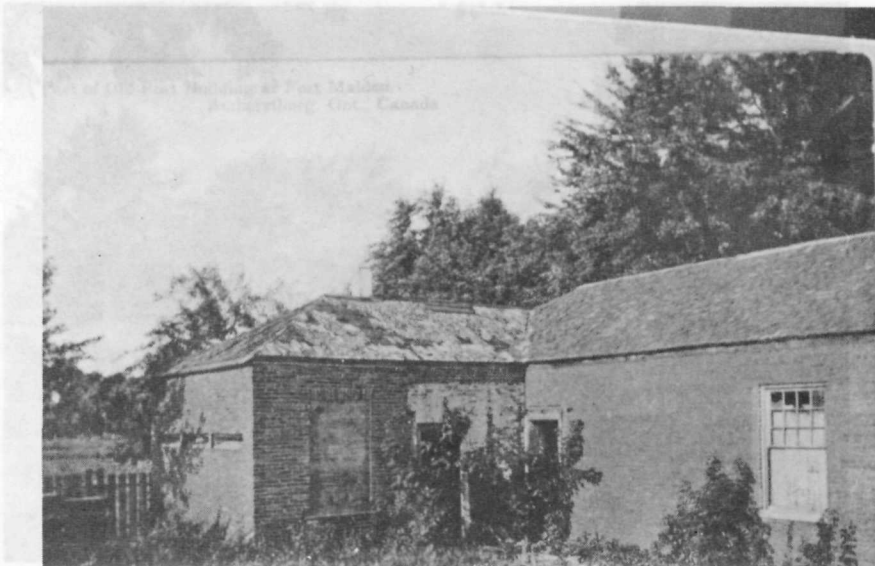


6 Plan of Villa Lots on Part of the Ordnance Reserve Town of Amherstburg...1875. PAC, Map Division, Canada Land Survey, no. 61571.





7 Undated photograph of the East side of the Barracks, Fort Malden National Historic Park.



8 Part of Old Fort Building at Fort Malden, Fort Malden National Historic Park.

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Developed by Parks Canada under authority  
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Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs  
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9 Undated photograph of the West side of the Barracks, Fort Malden National Historic Park.



10 View of the West side of the Barracks after Restoration, 1978. Fort Malden National Historic Park.

# RESEARCH BULLETIN

No. 100

October, 1978

## The Brick Barracks at Fort Malden

The Men's Barracks at Fort Malden National Historic Park is the oldest remaining military structure in Amherstburg. It was constructed in 1819-20 to provide suitable barrack accommodation for the British regulars at the post.

Fort Malden, or Fort Amherstburg as it was officially called, was established by the British in 1797 following their withdrawal from Detroit according to the terms of Jay's Treaty. An extensive naval and military establishment was developed at Amherstburg to control the strategic water route along the Detroit River. During the early stages of the War of 1812 the fort was a key base of operations on the Western frontier. However, the defeat of the British fleet commanded by Robert Barclay at the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813 left Malden isolated from its eastern supply base. As a result, the British commander of the post, Henry Procter decided to burn the government buildings, destroy the excess stores and withdraw into the interior. Shortly after the departure of the British, the advancing American troops took possession of the town. In the spring of 1814 they undertook some repairs to the fort but had not proceeded very far when the post was returned to the British at the conclusion of the war.

Despite the American efforts, the condition of the fort upon its re-occupation by the British was not very good. Lieutenant B. Portlock of the Royal Engineers was dispatched to Amherstburg in July 1813 to make a start at refitting them as best he could. One of his first priorities was to arrange suitable accommodation for the troops stationed at Malden. He removed from the fort some log barracks which had been left by the Americans and began reconstructing them on the military reserve between the fort and the town. Due to these

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