



Fort Ontario Special Resource Study



Perspective View of Fort Ontario, 1761
Source: British Library Digital Collection

Public Meeting

October 6, 2021
6:30 pm Eastern (virtual/online)

Project website:
parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS

National Park Service Staff:

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Officer's Quarters, built 1839-1844
Source: National Park Service



European Refugees' Barrack, 1944
Source: Associated Press



The northeastern region of the United States currently includes more than 80 national park units



Goals of this Meeting and Agenda

- **Introduce** special resource studies – purpose, authorities timeline, and evaluation criteria
- **Describe** the ‘study area’ and the National Park Service's research efforts
- **Question and answer session**
- **Invite** you to share feedback – learn how you can you contribute



What is a Special Resource Study?



Source: Fort Ontario State Historic Site



Source: Fort Ontario State Historic Site



Source: Fort Ontario State Historic Site

- **Purpose:** Provide Congress with information about “resources” within a “study area,” including their eligibility to be designated as a unit of the national park system (e.g. a national park, shrine, battlefield, seashore, etc.)
- **The study does not create a new national park.**
 - that can only be done by Congress or the President.



Special Resource Study Criteria

Congressional legislation and National Park Service policy require that special resource studies use the following criteria:

1. **Contain nationally significant cultural and/or natural resources** – *this determination is closely aligned with **National Historic Landmark** criteria*
2. **Be suitable** – *represent a resource type not already adequately represented in the national park system*
3. **Be feasible** – *in terms of size and configuration for visitor use, resource protection, and efficient NPS administration at a reasonable cost*
4. **Need to be managed by the NPS** – *the National Park Service is the most effective and efficient management alternative for visitor enjoyment and resource protection.*

The 'study area' must meet all four criteria for the study to find that it can be considered eligible for consideration as a new unit of the national park system.



Source: National Park Service



Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, from National Archives



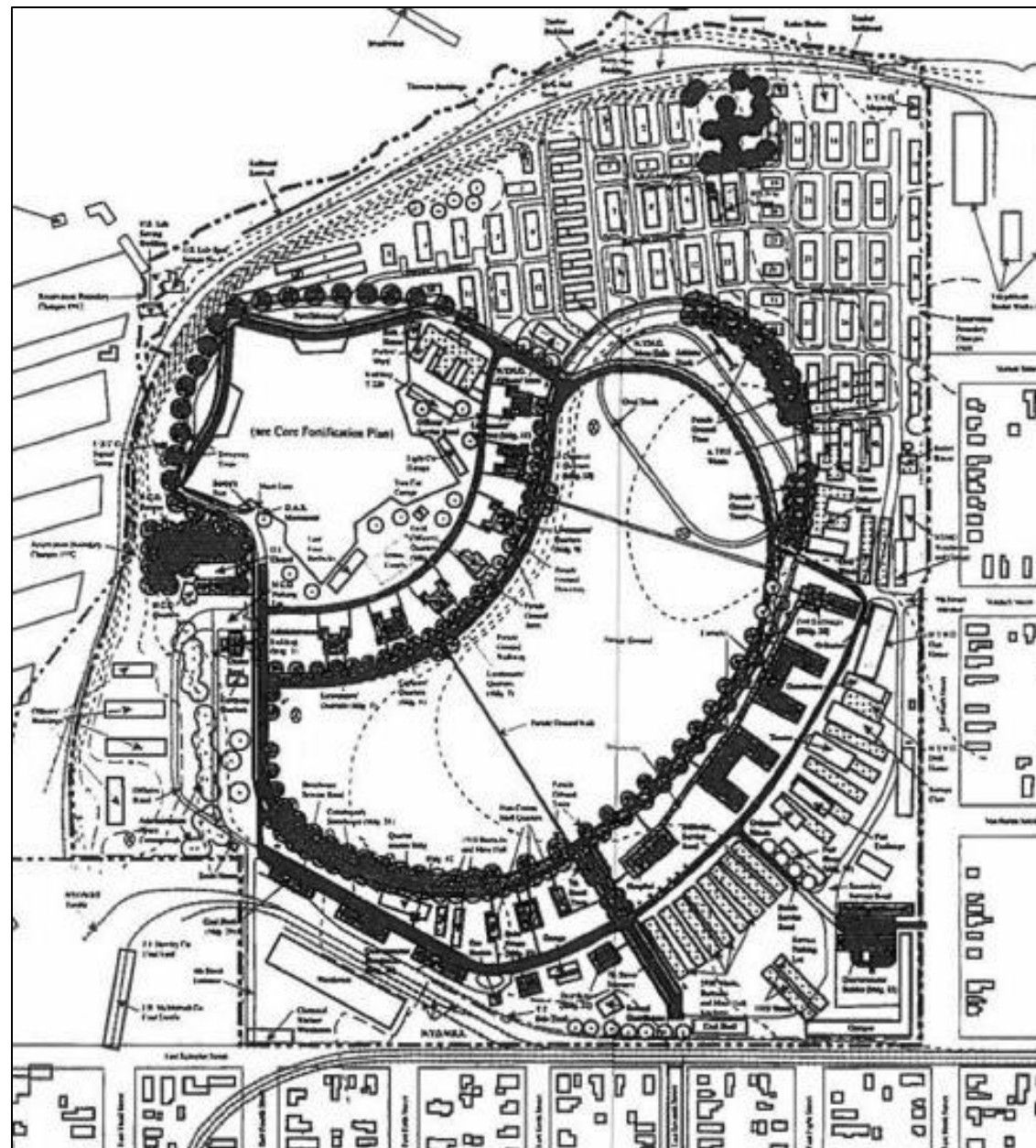
Authority for This Special Resource Study

PUBLIC LAW 115-255, Fort Ontario Study Act (Signed October 2018)

Sec. 2.2 STUDY AREA- The term “study area” means Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York

Sec. 3 Fort Ontario Special Resource Study

(a) IN GENERAL -The Secretary shall conduct a special resource study of the study area.



Map of Fort Ontario, circa 1944

Source: Fort Ontario Cultural Landscape Report

Fort Ontario SRS Study Area

-  Fort Ontario State Historic Site
-  National Register of Historic Places Boundary

Lake Ontario

Fort Ontario
State Historic
Site

Port of Oswego Authority

Safe Haven
Museum

Mercer St

Mitchell St

E 9th St

E Van Buren St

E Schuyler St

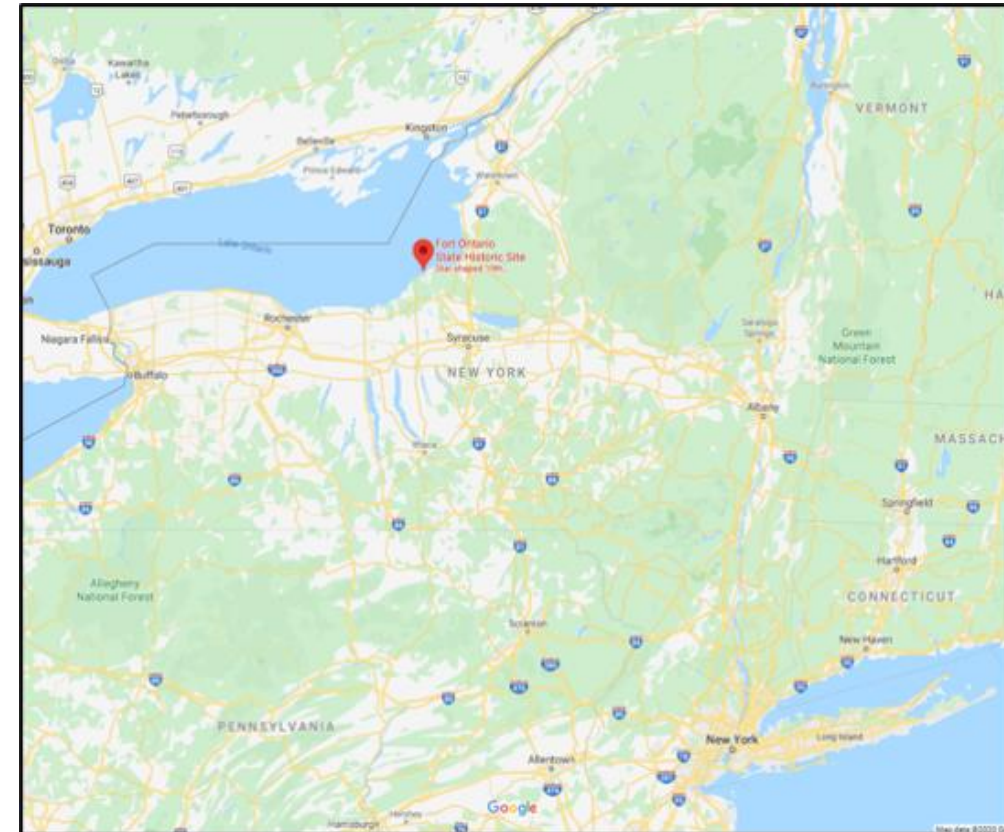
E Seneca St



0 100 200 Meters
0 500 Feet 1,000 Feet

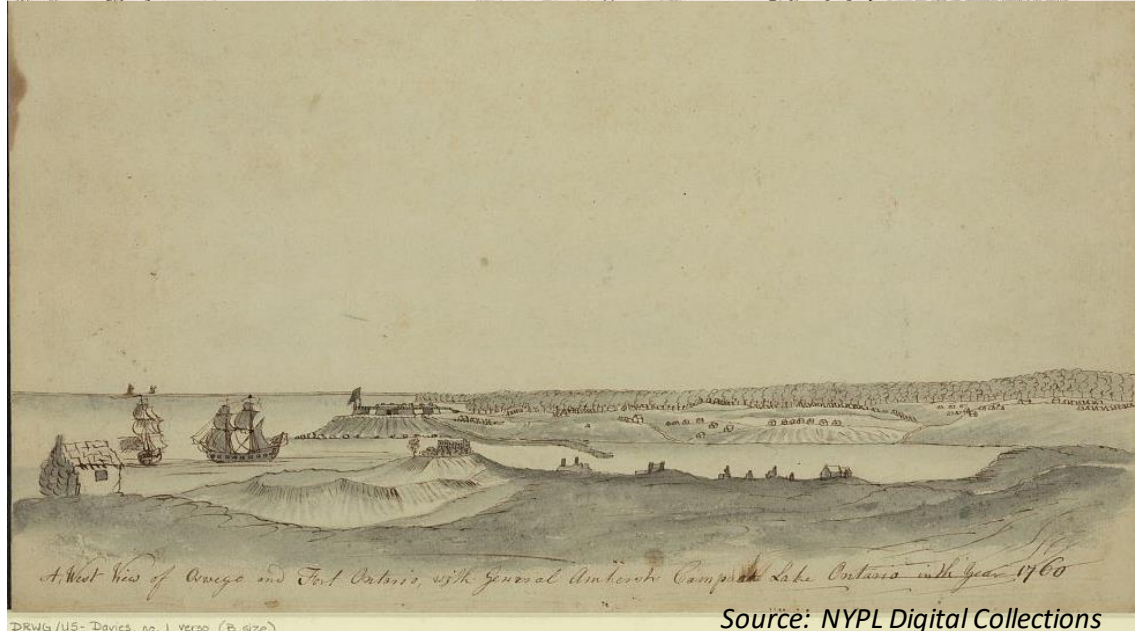


Location of the Study Area

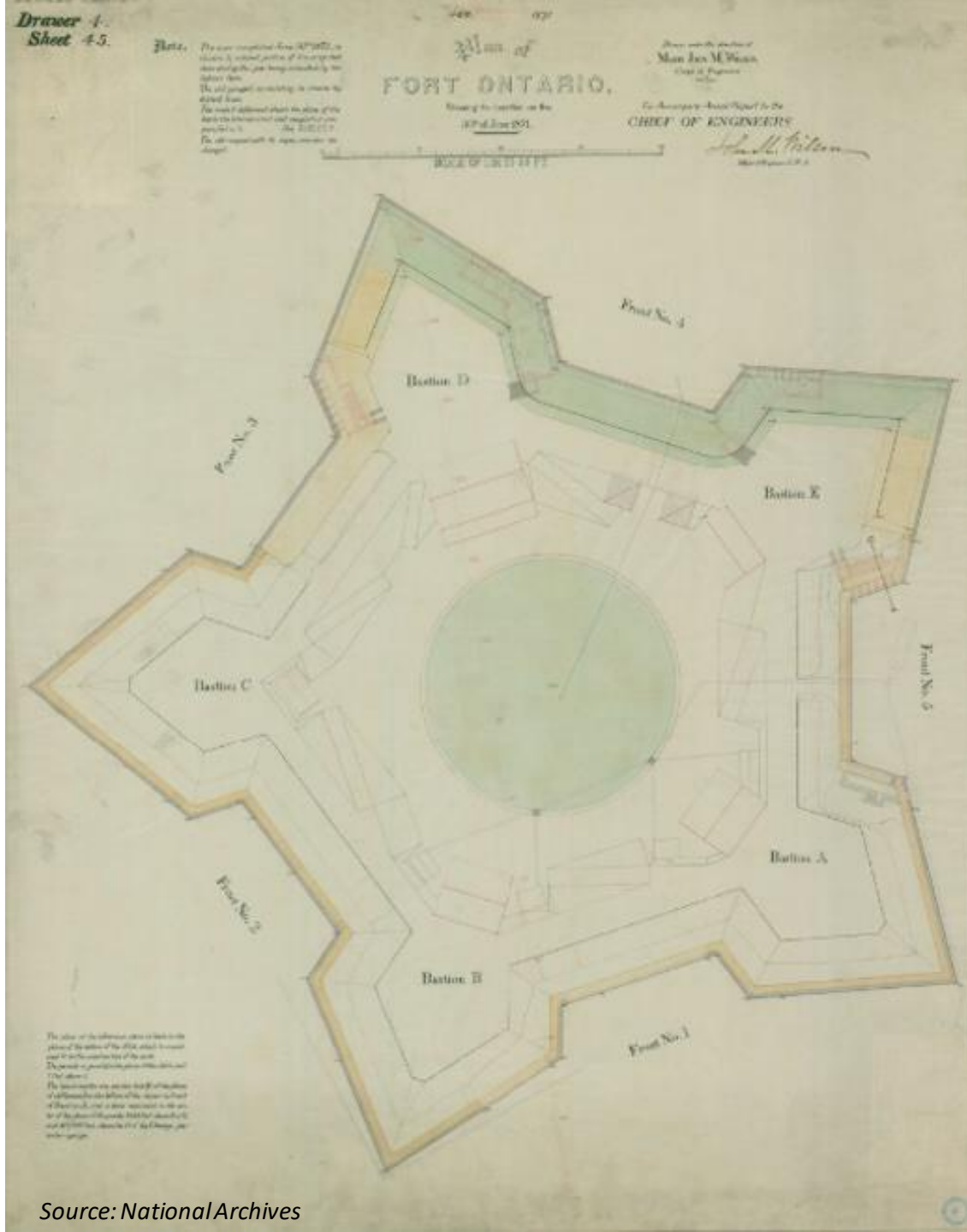




Site History



- 1755 British troops build first Fort Ontario on east bank of Oswego River
- 1756 Battle of Fort Oswego during Seven Years War between Britain and France; French destroy fort after British surrender
- 1766 Site of month-long peace conference between Six Nations and British
 - Signing of Treaty of Fort Ontario by Ottawa chieftain Pontiac and British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson
- 1770s Fort virtually abandoned by British
- 1779 Continental troops burn abandoned Fort Ontario during Revolutionary War

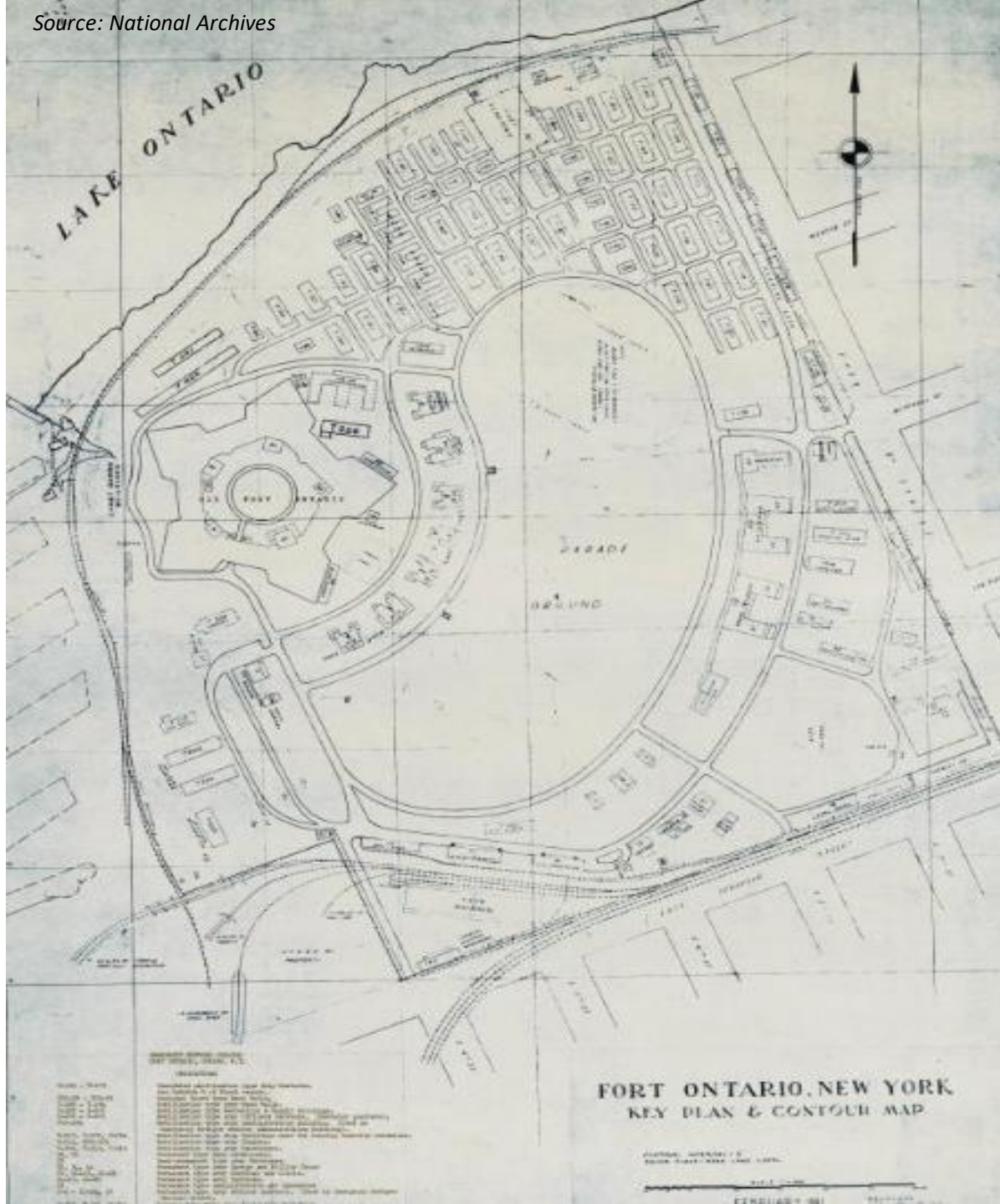


Site History

- 1783 Treaty of Paris ends Revolutionary War and cedes territory south of Great Lakes to United States
- 1803 U.S. troops withdrawn from fort
- 1814 British naval bombardment during War of 1812
- 1838 Fort Ontario reactivated by US Army to protect against potential hostilities along northern border
- 1839-1844 American construction of third Fort Ontario



Site History



- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1903-1905 | Military reservation at Fort Ontario expanded to serve as battalion training center |
| 1917-1921 | Operated as Army General Hospital #5 during World War I |
| 1940 | Selected as site of World War II anti-aircraft artillery unit and Army training center; including "Harlem Hellfighters" Regiment of NY Army National Guard |
| 1944-1946 | Operated as Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter |
| 1946 | Military reservation deactivated and transferred to the State of New York |
| 1949 | Creation of Fort Ontario State Historic Site |



Fort Ontario Special Resource Study
Working Source List- September 2021
NPS Contact: Hilary Retseck, hilary_retseck@nps.gov

Books

- Breitman, Richard and Alan Kraut
1987 *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Erbeling, Rebecca
2018 *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Effort to Save the Jews of Europe*. New York: Doubleday.
- Feingold, Henry
1970 *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers.
- Friedman, Saul
1973 *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Towards Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State.
- Gurock, Jeffery S. ed.
1998 *America, American Jews, and the Holocaust*. New York: Routledge.
- Lossing, Benson J.
1855 *The Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*. Volume I. Franklin Square, NY: Harper Brothers.
- Lowenstein, Sharon.
1986 *Token Refuge: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Shelter at Oswego, 1944-1946*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Marks, Edward B., Jr.
1975 *Token Shipment: The Story of America's War Refugee Shelter*. U.S. Department of Interior, War Relocation Authority. New York: AMS Press, Reprint of 1946. ed.
- Reed, George A. and Carol.
2000 *Images of America: Fort Ontario, Guardian of the North*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing.
- Roberts, Robert B.
1988 *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.
- Stember, Sol
1974 *The Bicentennial Guide to the American Revolution: The War in the North*. Volume I. New York, NY: Saturday Review Press, E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc.



Research and Sources

The National Park Service's special resource study team has compiled a bibliography of sources about the history of Fort Ontario.

The bibliography can be found on the project website here: parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS under the '**Document List**' tab.



The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the launch of a special resource study (SRS) of Fort Ontario located in Oswego, New York. Over its almost two centuries of military service, Fort Ontario evolved from a wood and earth fortification built in 1755 to defend the British during the French and Indian War into a large-scale, 20th-century military installation through World War II. The fort hosted an unusual use for a domestic military facility during World War II—a shelter considered a ‘Safe Haven’ for almost 1,000 European war refugees from August 1944 to February 1946. After the war, the fort was transferred to the state of New York. The core fortification area has been open to the public as a state historic site since 1949.

The Fort Ontario Study Act (Public Law 115-255) directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Fort Ontario military reservation in Oswego, New York. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the site’s national significance and determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Fort Ontario as a unit of the national park system.

The National Park Service will evaluate the property using congressionally established criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct

NPS management. Based on the analysis, the National Park Service will determine whether the site meets the criteria for inclusion in the national park system and will prepare the study for the Secretary of the Interior. The study findings along with any recommendations will then be submitted to Congress.

Civic engagement and public outreach are crucial to informing the study. The National Park Service will engage the public in discussions regarding the proud military history of Fort Ontario from 1755 to 1946. Discussions of the unique history associated with the fort’s use as a shelter for European war refugees during the World War II era will also be included.

The health and safety of the public and NPS employees is a priority, and the National Park Service is working with federal, state, and local authorities to take appropriate measures to minimize potential spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Therefore, an online ‘virtual’ public meeting will be held fall 2021 to receive the public’s ideas and opinions about the study and the site. We hope you will take time to let us know your thoughts and ideas through the NPS study website. More information and project updates can be found at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS>.

Project Newsletter



The National Park Service’s Fort Ontario special resource study team has also created a four-page newsletter summarizing the project and the special resource study process.

It can also be downloaded from the project website here: parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS under the ‘**Document List**’ tab.

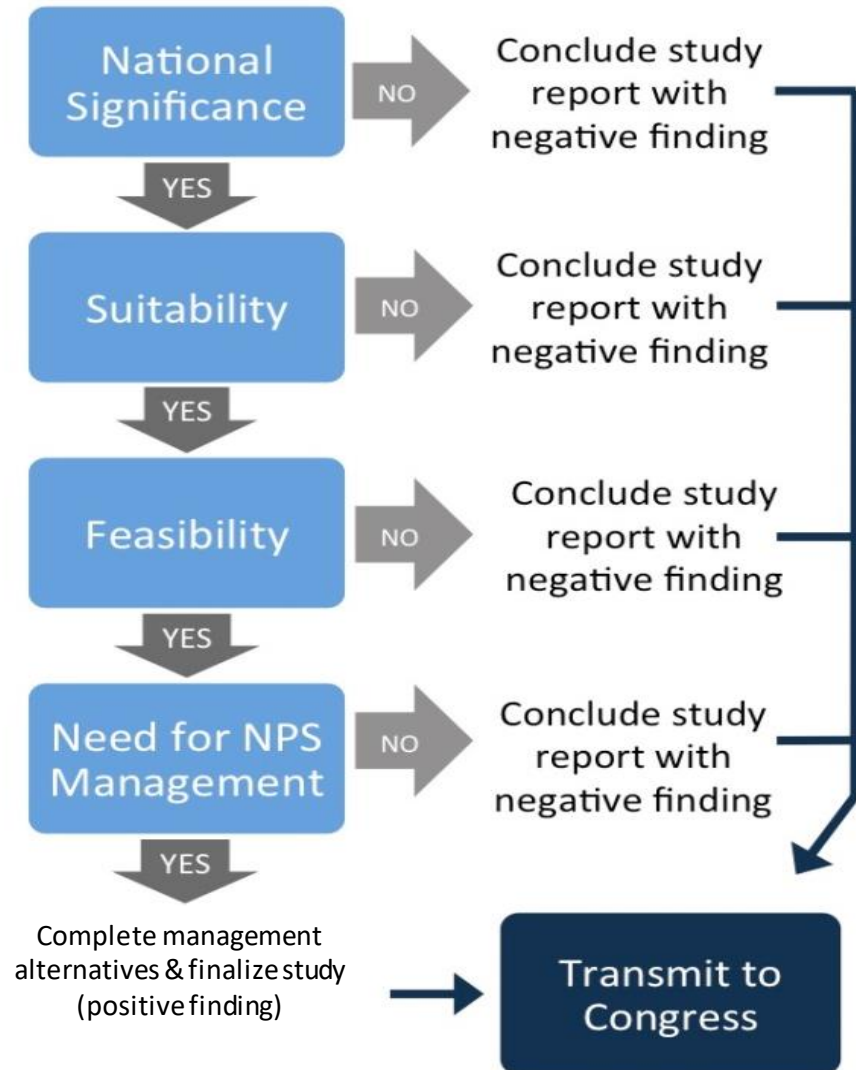
Study Timeline



Time Frame	Task
October 2018 – Summer 2019	Authorizing legislation signed; initiate study
September 2019	NPS orientation visit to Fort Ontario
February 2020	NPS research visit to Oswego
Spring 2020 – Spring 2021	Data Gathering (public comment phase postponed due to COVID-19)
June-November 2021	Introductory briefings with state, city, and county government agencies, Friends of Fort Ontario, Save Haven community, and other stakeholders
September 1- November 1, 2021	Public Outreach - WE ARE HERE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 1: Public comment period opens • September 15: Virtual public meeting • October 6: Virtual public meeting • November 1: Public comment period closes
Winter 2022	Analysis of the four (4) study criteria and preparation of the study
Summer 2022	NPS Agency Review of Study Findings
Fall-Winter 2022	Revise Study Based on NPS Agency Review
2023	Finalize Study Findings and submit for Secretary of the Interior's Recommendation to Congress



SRS Completion Pathways



Study Process

During the study process, the study area must meet all four SRS criteria to demonstrate an overall positive finding.

*Only **Congress** or the **President** has the authority to designate a new National Park Service unit.*



Criterion 1 - National Significance

- Contains **nationally significant natural and/or cultural resources**
- For cultural resources, **National Historic Landmark criteria** are applied to determine whether a site is nationally significant





Criterion 2- Suitability

- Represents a natural or cultural resource that is **not already adequately represented** in the national park system
- or*
- Is **not comparably represented and protected** for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity





Criterion 3 - Feasibility

- **Sufficient size and appropriate configuration** to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment
- Capable of **efficient administration** by the National Park Service at a **reasonable cost**
- Other important **feasibility factors** include:
 - Landownership
 - Acquisition costs
 - Life-cycle maintenance costs
 - Access
 - Threats to the resource
 - Staff / development requirements
 - Level of public support for a new potential park unit





Criterion 4 - Need for NPS Management



United States Supreme Court, Washington DC

- **Requires direct National Park Service management** that is clearly superior to other management approaches



We want to learn more about...



Source: National Park Service

Lots of things.

We need the public's help.



Source: National Park Service



We want to learn more about...



Source: National Park Service

1. How do you feel about Fort Ontario potentially becoming a **national park unit**?



Source: National Park Service



We want to learn more about...



2. Are there **additional stories and historic resources** at the Fort Ontario site that the NPS special resource study team should know about?





We want to learn more about...



3. Are you aware of **documents** (letters, diary entries, photographs, newspaper articles, etc.) not publicly available that relate to the Fort Ontario site?





We want to learn more about...



Source: National Park Service

4. Do you have any **other comments**, concerns, or suggestions for this study?



Source: National Park Service



We want to learn more about...



Source: National Park Service



Source: National Park Service

1. How do you feel about Fort Ontario potentially becoming a **national park unit**?
2. Are there **additional stories and historic resources** at the Fort Ontario site that the NPS special resource study team should know about?
3. Are you aware of **documents** (letters, diary entries, photographs, newspaper articles, etc.) not publicly available that relate to the Fort Ontario site?
4. Do you have any **other comments**, concerns, or suggestions for this study?



Frequently Asked Questions - Special Resource Studies



Source: National Park Service

- Findings?
- Possible study outcomes?
- Other designations?
- Role of public involvement?



Source: National Park Service

How should the study affect decisions being made about the building?

The National Park Service recommends that the City and the community not change whatever plans it might have for the study area's resources.

We recommend that all parties continue to make the best decisions for the property and community possible without regard to the potential for a new national park unit. These studies take several years to conduct, the outcome is uncertain, and whether a new national park unit will ever be created is entirely unknown.





Ways to Submit Feedback

1. Enter comments directly on the **project website** through November 1 here:

parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS

- On the left menu, click either “Open for Comment” or “Document List”
- Click on “Fort Ontario SRS – Public Comment Questions” to enter comments.

2. Send written comments by mailing a **letter** to:

National Park Service, Denver Service Center – Planning
c/o Hilary Retseck
12795 West Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

3. Send an email to, or leave a voicemail for, the Project Manager Hilary Retseck at hilary_retseck@nps.gov or 303-969-2425



Ways to Submit Feedback

Using the project website: parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS

The screenshot shows the National Park Service website for the Fort Ontario Special Resource Study. The header includes the National Park Service logo and the text "(PEPC) Planning, Environment & Public Comment". The navigation bar contains links: Find a Park, Discover History, Explore Nature, Get Involved, Working With Communities, Teachers, Kids, and About Us. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: PEPC Home, Documents by Park, Policy/Guidance, Park Planning, and Search Documents.

The main content area is titled "Fort Ontario Special Resource Study" and includes a sub-header "Denver Service Center » Fort Ontario Special Resource Study » Document List". A red arrow points to the "Open For Comment (1)" link in the left sidebar. Below this link, a comment period is listed: "A comment period for this project closes Nov 01, 2021 61 Days, 8 Hours, 28 Min."

The main content area also includes a section titled "WHAT IS A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY" and a section titled "PROJECT BACKGROUND".

WHAT IS A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

New national park units are typically added to the National Park Service (NPS) by an Act of Congress. However, before Congress decides to create a new park or add land to an existing park, it needs to know whether the area meets established criteria for designation as a national park unit. This evaluation is conducted through a special resource study.

The purpose of this special resource study is to gather information about Fort Ontario through historical research and public input, and then to report these findings to Congress. The special resource study will evaluate the potential for inclusion of Fort Ontario in the national park system based upon whether it meets established criteria for significance, suitability, feasibility, and the need for NPS management. Applying these criteria consistently helps the National Park Service weigh the relative merits of potential park units and to ensure that only those most deserving of designation are included within the national park system. The special resource study may also weigh other management options.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Congress passed Public Law 115-255, the Fort Ontario Study Act, on October 9, 2018, which directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York. Based on this legislated directive, the National Park Service has initiated the process of analyzing Fort Ontario for its potential as a new unit of the national park system. We invite you to participate in this process.

STAYING ENGAGED

We welcome your participation throughout this process. This website will be updated regularly with information to keep you informed, as well as request feedback as needed. We hope you will continue to be



Ways to Submit Feedback

Using the project website: parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS

The screenshot displays the National Park Service website interface. At the top, the 'National Park Service' logo and the text '(PEPC) Planning, Environment & Public Comment' are visible. Below this is a navigation bar with links: 'Find a Park', 'Discover History', 'Explore Nature', 'Get Involved', 'Working With Communities', 'Teachers', 'Kids', and 'About Us'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'PEPC Home', 'Documents by Park', 'Policy/Guidance', 'Park Planning', and 'Search Documents'. The main content area is titled 'Documents Open For Comment' and shows the path 'Denver Service Center » Fort Ontario Special Resource Study'. It states that documents are currently open for comment and provides a link to 'Fort Ontario SRS- Public Comment Questions', which is circled in red. A sidebar on the left lists 'PROJECT LINKS' such as 'Project Home', 'Plan Process', 'Meeting Notices', 'Links', 'Document List', and 'Open For Comment (1)'. At the bottom, the 'nps.gov' logo and the slogan 'EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™' are present, along with a footer containing links to 'U.S. Department of the Interior', 'NPS Home', 'Accessibility', 'Privacy Policy', 'FOIA', 'Notices', 'Disclaimer', and 'USA.Gov'.



Ways to Submit Feedback

Using the project website: parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS

National Park Service (PEPC) Planning, Environment & Public Comment

[Find a Park](#) [Discover History](#) [Explore Nature](#) [Get Involved](#) [Working With Communities](#) [Teachers](#) [Kids](#) [About Us](#)

[PEPC Home](#) [Documents by Park](#) [Policy/Guidance](#) [Park Planning](#) [Search Documents](#)

PROJECT LINKS

- Project Home
- Plan Process
- Meeting Notices
- Links
- Document List
- Open For Comment (1)
- Comment Now »**

Comment period closes **Nov 01, 2021**
at 11:59 PM Mountain Time in 61 Days, 8 Hours, 28 Min.

Fort Ontario SRS- Public Comment Questions

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the launch of a special resource study (SRS) of Fort Ontario located in Oswego, New York. Civic engagement and public outreach are crucial to informing the study.

We encourage you to learn more about the SRS process and share your ideas during this SRS process. The comment period will be open from September 1, 2021, to November 1, 2021. Please send your thoughts, comments, and information in any of the following ways:

Comment Now » Comment Period: 09/01/2021 - 11/01/2021
Comment period closes **Nov 01, 2021 at 11:59 PM Mountain Time in: 61 Days, 8 Hours, 28 Min.**

Topic Questions Instructions:
In your comments, we are particularly interested to hear your thoughts and ideas about the four topic questions.

Please send your thoughts, comments, and information through this project website (preferred method) or by mail.

National Park Service, Denver Service Center-Planning Division
Project Manager-Hilary Retseck
12795 West Alameda Parkway
PO Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Topic Questions:

1. How do you feel about the potential for Fort Ontario to become a national park system unit?
2. Are there additional stories and historic resources at the Fort Ontario site about which the NPS study team should know?



To learn more and follow the study process, visit the project website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/FortOntarioSRS>

Thank you for your interest in this study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



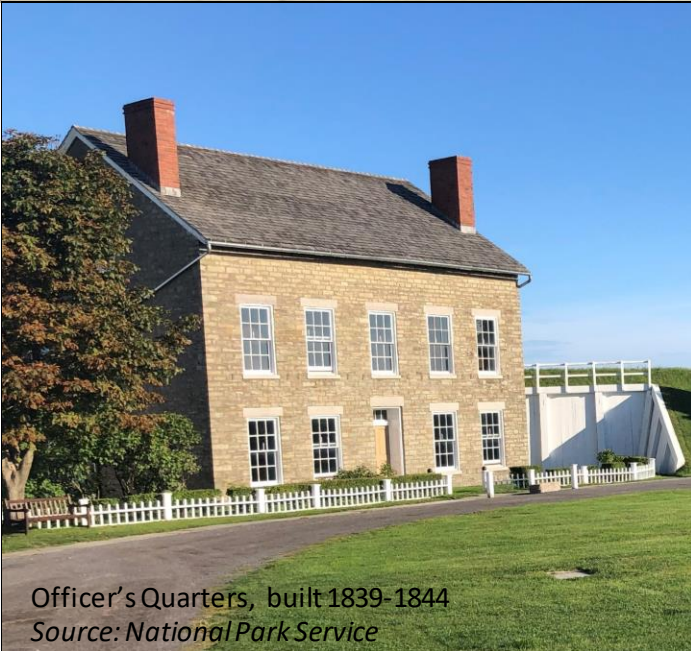
Questions?

Thank you!



Perspective View of Fort Ontario, 1761

Source: British Library Digital Collection



Officer's Quarters, built 1839-1844

Source: National Park Service



European Refugees' Barrack, 1944

Source: Associated Press

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