

# Naval and Military Establishments tour is an experience to remember

cont'd from p.1

There's a saw pit down by the water and a blacksmith shop beside it which were probably the first things built on the site. Big fat logs are sawed into practical planks for constructing the buildings.

**Navy storehouse**  
The horses know the trail well and come to a stop when reaching the Navy storehouse. Everybody bails out and it's down to the dock to hear a sailor (costumed tour guide) talk about nearby Magazine Island where the gunpowder was stored for trick the invaders and 10 graves mark the passing of men long ago.

Turning to the naval storehouse he notes the palisade around the large red building to make the job of stealing more difficult. The boards of the storehouse came from the trees in the area, the British brought no boards with them. The bottom floor was for general storage and the upper level stored the gifts for trading with the Indians.

Inside there are chunky handcut wooden beams and thick coils of rope are heaped on the floor. Along the walls large kegs store salt beef and salt pork. And there are bales with a curious arrow marking. Our sailor says the arrow is the king's marking and getting caught with a whipping with the cat of nine tails (leather strips with nails at the ends) or a more merciful death, shooting.

The sailors are at work with their knots, fixing the twine to the pulleys and carefully mixing ropes of different thicknesses. A sailor has to know his knots and the ones in the storehouse were happy to impart their knowledge with the interested onlookers.

The quartermaster's building shows many of today's carpentry tools in a cruder version. The quartermaster was a fine carpenter himself and had several builders under his charge and he was also responsible for the two schooners and

their maintenance.

**Crude ways of medicine**  
The assistant surgeon's office was not the sort of place you liked to visit often in those days. The man didn't have much education behind him, but the assistant surgeon was eager to cure what ailed you.

A headache was thought to be a sure sign of poor blood, yes-sir-ee, what you need is some fresh blood. So, the assistant surgeon would kindly remove a pint of blood for you by making a small cut in your arm. Headache cured.

If a cold was your problem he'll fix that too. Since colds were thought to be caused by nasty germs on your tongue, a good tongue scraping with the metal scraper would leave your tongue germ-free.

Although the assistant surgeon's methods were crude, his home-office was a cut above the others. The womanly touch of his wife is seen in the hanging of curtains and the walls which are painted.

This is quite a contrast to the stark sailor's quarters but then as the sailor told the group, "sailors were considered the scum of the earth" at that time.

There's no doubt the Royal Navy had it's unsavoury types but this can be expected when men are pressed into service. The naval officers would visit the bars in towns and sometimes club a drunk on the head and when he woke up the next day he was in the Navy.

**Sailors and their ladies**  
Many sailors wanted to desert so their officers thought it would be unsafe to let them on land when they docked. Ladies used to come out to the boat to visit the sailors and the tradition of "show a leg" began. The officers would wake the sailors and get them to work but if they could show a lady's leg from their hammock the sailors were allowed an extra hour in bed.

This is really a sidelight to the Establishment in Penetanguishene because the sailors were allowed to dock since there was no

where to desert to.

Each sailor owned two hammocks and a mattress was placed inside. Even when shored up the sailors used their hammocks and not bunks. They were handy not only for sleeping in but made a convenient coffin for those who died at sea. The sailor was placed in his hammock and then it was stitched up with the last stitch going through his nose just to make sure he was really dead. Then oberboard he goes with a mighty splash.

Eight days a month each sailor would take turn being cook. This was always something to look forward to because it meant an extra ration of rum.

Despite their reputation as a rowdy bunch the sailors could get quite particular about their appearance when visiting the ladies. They had white silk socks saved for the occasion and their navy pea coat with the brass buttons was thought quite snazzy. Most had hair long enough to wear in a pony tail but for those whose locks weren't long enough there was a substitute which would fool the ladies from a distance.

The sailor's life was a lonely one and certainly not a life of comfort.

Moving up to the higher echelons of naval society the group toured the home of the clerk in charge. He spent his time taking care of rationing, maintaining the bureaucracy and paying the men. Servants looked after the clerk in charge and his position also allowed him to have a summer cook house so the heat of cooking didn't bother his family during the warm months.

**Save the womenfolk**  
At the top of the social ladder was the Commanding Officer. His home had a palisade built around it to protect his young wife and his 18-year old sister-in-law from those rambunctious sailors.

Sir Henry Bayfield is believed to have lived here. He was a surveyor of the Great Lakes and his maps are still in use today. Bayfield was also an artist and butterfly collector and his name

lives on in Barrie's Bayfield Mall and Bayfield St.

This was the Naval Establishment. It remained in Penetanguishene from 1814 to 1834 and was then abandoned because the British found it too costly

to maintain. Not one fire was shot at Americans although the threat of invasion was very real at different points in history.

In 1828 the British Army moved to the site to join the navy in defence. Captain James Keating's house has been restored

after burning to the ground in 1913.

Keating had five children in his small house and caring for them was not an easy task. The kitchen was the center of activity and the children were rarely allowed in the living room.



Drilling a motley crew

Participation is a good part of learning the art of drilling from soldier (tour history at the Establishments in Penetanguishene. These students learn the art of drilling from soldier (tour guide) Jim MacMillan. Staff photo

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## Truck stolen Saturday

Penetanguishene police are now investigating the theft sometime Saturday night of a half ton truck. The truck, a 1974 GMC belonging to Joseph Desroches of 68 Peel Street, was taken from in front of his residence some time between 11:00 p.m. Saturday and 6:00 a.m. Sunday, when it was reported missing.

## Police report

The truck is valued at \$4,000. Constable Thomas Tiffin is conducting the investigation.

**Accident**  
Charges were laid against a Toronto man Sunday afternoon as a result of an accident on Fuller Avenue at Robert Street East.

Arthur Morris was charged with following too closely, after his car collided with one driven by Larry O'Rourke, of Everton Drive in Midland.

Morris' car sustained \$500 damage, and the damage to O'Rourke's car amounted to \$1,000. The investigating officer was Constable Art Lizotte.

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Mrs. Keating gets the touring visitors to help make candles, cook soup on the fireplace and tend the garden and other domestic chores. The stop at the Keating House may also mean sketching on slates and playing games outdoors.

**Living high off the hog**

The last stop of the tour is at the army officer's quarters. The life of the officers seems much more comfortable than those of their underlings. In fact, it was such a desirable life that they used to buy their way into the army. A thousand dollars would make you a lieutenant and if you had more money to spend you could become an officer of higher rank.

The Establishments never saw any action and these made life easier for the officers who would hunt and fish to their hearts' content. They had the luxuries of tea, sugar and imported French

wine. There were four and five course meals every day plus plenty of parties and dancing if you were of the proper rank.

The building was braced for invasion even if the officers weren't. The walls are two feet thick with special outlets for firing guns. Outside were cannons which fire 10-pound muskets.

The soldiers were also

well prepared for invasion, sometimes practising their drills up to seven hours a day. The soldiers will often drill for the visitors in their smart red and white uniforms then fire their guns or charge forward with their bayonets.

For the past six years people have been able to walk through the history of the Establishments. In

earlier years (1856 to 1871) the buildings were used as a boys reform school, a private residence, a mental home then a museum during the 1950s.

A wise man once said experience is the best teacher and the experiencing of history at the Historic Naval and Military Establishments proves his words true.

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