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Battle of the Châteauguay

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2018



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BATTLE OF THE CHÂTEAUGUAY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2018.

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For more information about the management plan or about
BATTLE OF THE CHÂTEAUGUAY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

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Foreword



Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas belong to all Canadians and offer truly Canadian experiences.

These special places make up one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and cultural heritage areas in the world.

The Government is committed to preserving our natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places and contributing to the recovery of species-at-risk. At the same time, we must continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities so that more Canadians can experience Parks Canada places and learn about our environment, history and culture.

This new management plan for the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed through extensive consultation and input from various people and organizations, including Indigenous peoples, local and regional residents, visitors and the dedicated team at Parks Canada.

National parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas are a priority for the Government of Canada. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of co-operation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan.

Catherine McKenna
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and
Minister responsible for Parks Canada*

Recommendations

Recommended by:

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Executive Summary

The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site is located on the north shore of the Châteauguay River in the parish municipality of Très-Saint-Sacrement, some 50 km southwest of the Montréal Island.

The Battle of the Châteauguay took place during what is commonly known as the “War of 1812,” an armed conflict that marked Canadian–American relations in the early nineteenth century. On October 26, 1813, a clash took place between an American armed force of around 3,750 soldiers and 500 Canadian and Indigenous combatants. The victory of the Canadians and their Indigenous allies was considered a national triumph for Lower Canada. The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site commemorates the significance of this feat and the role that the combatants played in defending Canada during the conflict of 1812–1814.

In the present management plan, two key strategies are presented that aim to guide the historic site’s management for the next decade.

Key strategy No. 1: A vibrant site where everyone can discover and commemorate the significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay

This strategy aims to implement a diverse offering of exciting activities for teaching a greater number of Canadians about the historical significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay.

This approach consists in

- adapting the activity offering to better meet the needs of the site’s target audiences;
- collaborating with the Indigenous communities for better representation of their role in the War of 1812 and, more specifically, their participation in the Battle of the Châteauguay; and
- promoting the site by collaborating with regional partners and other sites commemorating the War of 1812.

Key strategy No. 2: A visitor experience centred on the battlefield

This strategy aims to change the way the national historic site is showcased to allow a larger public to access the commemorative messages and various perspectives on this event without necessarily having to visit the interpretation centre.

The strategy consists in

- enhancing communication of the commemorative messages outside the interpretation centre, and
- developing and implementing a new management approach for the interpretation centre in consultation with local and regional stakeholders and partners.

Table of Contents

Foreword	iii
Recommendations.....	v
Executive Summary.....	vii
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site	4
3.0 Planning Context	5
4.0 Vision	6
5.0 Key Strategies	6
6.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment.....	8

Maps

Map 1: Regional Setting	2
Map 2: Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site	3

1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world, and the Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Parks Canada Agency Act* requires Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for national historic sites administered by the Agency. The *Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how historic site management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

Canadians, including Indigenous peoples who were involved in the preparation of the management plan, have helped to shape the future direction of the national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site

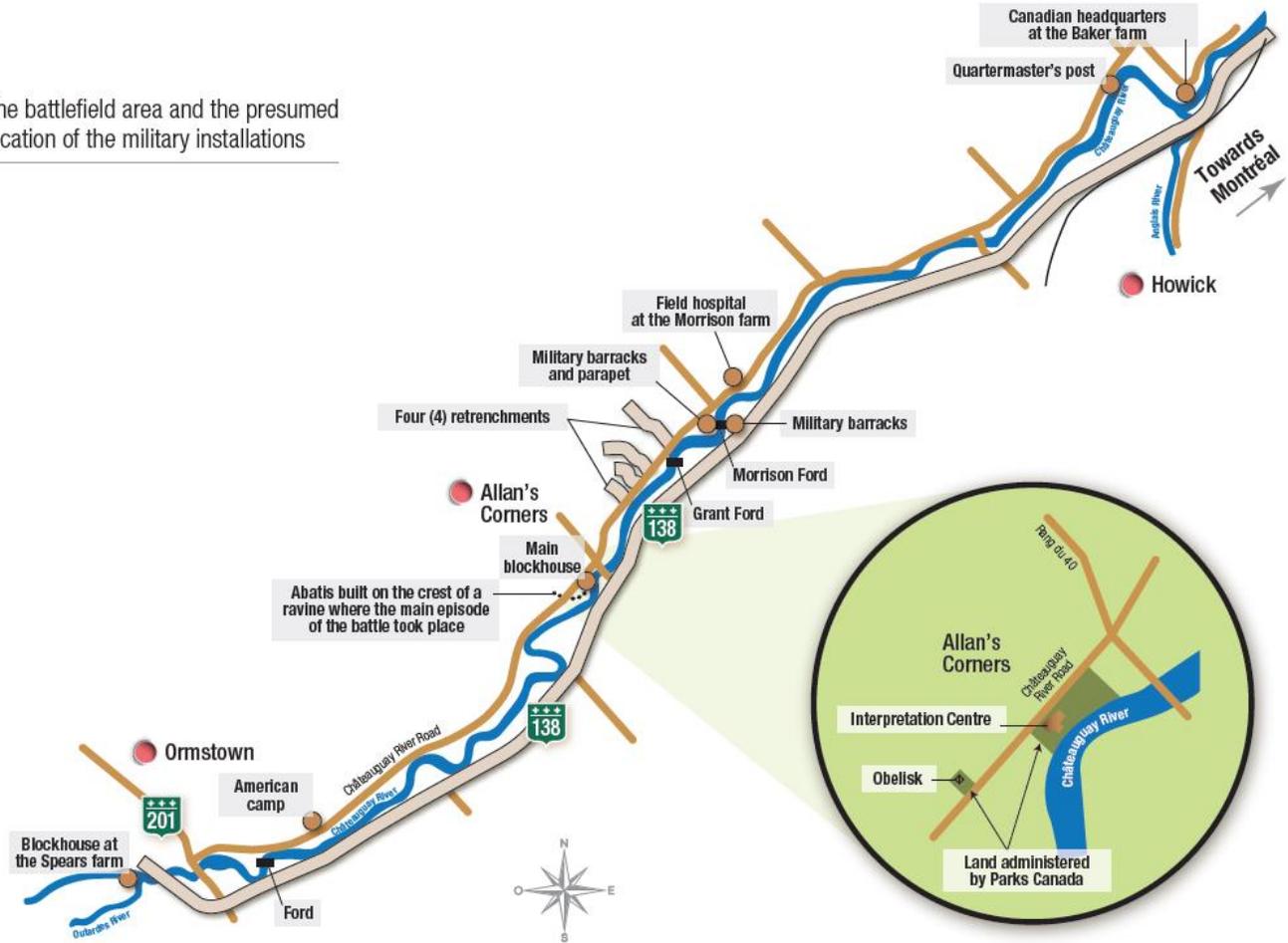
LOCATION



Map 2: Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site



The battlefield area and the presumed location of the military installations



2.0 Significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site

The Battle of the Châteauguay took place during what is commonly known as the “War of 1812,” an armed conflict that marked Canadian–American relations in the early nineteenth century. In the summer of 1813, the United States organized a military expedition against Lower Canada to capture Montréal and cut supply routes to Upper Canada. The northern American army was split into two divisions. The first division, commanded by James Wilkinson, was to march out from Lake Ontario and approach Montréal from the upper Saint Lawrence Valley. The second, led by Wade Hampton, was to follow the Châteauguay River and meet with Wilkinson’s division on Île Perrot. From there, they would begin their joint assault on Montréal. The strategy proved ineffective, however, as Hampton and his troops were intercepted on their way to Montréal by some 300 Canadian and native defenders commanded by Charles-Michel de Salaberry. Other fighters, 1,500 militiamen and 200 natives, were standing nearby in reinforcements. The confrontation took place on October 26, 1813, along the banks of the Châteauguay River near Allan’s Corners. The Canadian and Indigenous victory was considered a national triumph for Lower Canada, and Salaberry became the symbol of the French Canadians’ military value and loyalty.

Today, few remnants of the battle remain publicly accessible, save a collection of objects on exhibition in the interpretation centre and features of the landscape that existed when the battle took place, such as the Châteauguay River.

Celebrations of the battle’s significance began in 1895 with the erection of a stone obelisk. The area was designated a national historic site in 1920 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) for the following reasons: *“The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site of Canada commemorates the significance of this battle, occurring on October 26, 1813, and the role that the combatants played in defending Canada against the United States during the War of 1812–1814.”*

In November 1964, the HSMBC recommended that the Government proceed with the acquisition of a site for commemorating and interpreting the battle. The land, purchased in 1968 by the Châteauguay Valley Historical Society, is located near the heart of the battlefield and covers 1.56 hectares, less than 1% of the original 202-hectare battle site, which spanned close to 15 km (see Map 2).

The site managed by Parks Canada is divided into two sections. The first is a rest area for visitors and includes an interpretation centre built in 1978, a nineteenth-century log cabin unrelated to the battle, and a parking lot. The second is a small plot of land (24 m x 48 m) located about 300 m west of the interpretation centre and featuring a stone obelisk erected in 1895 to commemorate the battle.

Public exhibitions and films about the battle presented in the interpretation centre highlight the site’s national historical significance. A lookout point and scale model give visitors an idea of the scope of the battlefield and help them better understand the different stages of the confrontation. Outside, an HSMBC commemorative plaque and the obelisk solemnize the event. Lastly, a circuit lined with interpretation panels allows visitors to explore a part of the battlefield by car or bicycle.

3.0 Planning Context

The national historic site opened its doors to the public in 1978. To date, conservation and development efforts have been carried out according to the previous management plan, in effect since 2007. Most of the management measures set out in this plan were implemented. The most notable projects from recent years have involved the visitor experience. In 2008, a circuit (archaeotour) was created in partnership with Archéo-Québec and the owners of the neighbouring properties to allow visitors to explore the battlefield by car or bike and learn from interpretation panels how the confrontation unfolded. In 2012, the interpretation centre's exhibitions were updated to allow visitors to explore the site autonomously. A year later, several large-scale events were held on the site commemorating the battle and the bicentenary of the "War of 1812." Lastly, the site periodically hosts activities organized by third parties and partners.

Since 2014, the site is available for self-guided experiences: seven days a week from June 23 to September 3 and on weekends and holidays from September 4 to October 1. In 2016, the site welcomed 3,024 visitors, and a year later, during the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, this number climbed to 4,213.

The national historic site contributes to its environment. Its visibility comes from its participation in activities and events organized by partners and regional institutions on the battlefield or in the surrounding area ("Battle of the Châteauguay Cross Country Run," historical reenactments, the Ormstown Fair, and more). In 2017, the national historic site became one of the region's welcome points as part of an agreement signed with the Centre local de développement (CLD) du Haut-Saint-Laurent.

Several issues were raised during the management plan's development, including the following:

- **The national historic site's low visitor numbers:** In 2014 and 2015, the national historic site saw visitor numbers drop by more than 57% since the 2011 reference year (3,613 visitors in 2011, compared to 1,542 in 2015). In 2016, the numbers went up to 3,024 visitors. Then, in 2017, visitor numbers reached 4,213 thanks to the free Parks Canada Discovery Pass. However, this growth remains fragile. The national historic site is not an obvious tourist attraction due to its removed location, its themes addressing a limited audience, and the low population of its surrounding area. In addition, few traces of the battle remain visible on the designated site.
- **Relevance of the interpretation centre:** The imposing interpretation centre was designed in 1978 to welcome up to 18,000 visitors annually. Its relevance nowadays is being called into question, however. The centre no longer seems to be the best solution for the national historic site's success, commemorative quality, or visitor experience. The national significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay is largely experienced along the self-guided archaeotour circuit outside the land administered by Parks Canada. Furthermore, the battle is memorialized outside with the commemorative plaque and the obelisk. Lastly, the building is open three months per year, requires over \$600,000 in recapitalization investments, and incurs exorbitant annual heating costs.

4.0 Vision

In 2028...

The Battle of the Châteauguay National Historic Site is a place of discovery, learning, and commemoration that highlights a significant chapter of the country's military history and defence. It recounts the ups and downs of the conflict and tells the story of the Canadians, Indigenous people, and Americans that fought on the battlefield, while situating the battle's significance in the context of the War of 1812.

The importance of this event for Canada is shared with the public through various means, both on and off the territory administered by Parks Canada.

The surrounding communities promote the site by using it to hold activities. Collaboration with various partners and stakeholders allow the site to offer a selection of joint regional tourism options.

The national historic site is well positioned within the region's tourism industry and the selection of historic sites commemorating the War of 1812.

5.0 Key Strategies

KEY STRATEGY NO. 1: A VIBRANT SITE WHERE EVERYONE CAN DISCOVER AND COMMEMORATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF THE CHÂTEAUGUAY

Thanks to a dynamic and diversified offer of activities and the historic site's participation within the regional tourism network and the network of sites commemorating the War of 1812, a wider range of Canadians will be able to discover and commemorate the significance of the Battle of the Châteauguay and of the people and communities that took part in the battle.

Objective 1.1: Implement a varied selection of activities tailored to the needs of the site's target audiences (school groups, servicewomen and servicemen, tourism professionals).

- **Target:** Launch three new or updated activities aimed at the site's target audiences by 2028.

Objective 1.2 : Work together with indigenous communities, linked to the site, in order to honor and showcase their culture and to present their contributions to the history.

- **Target :** By 2020, build a relationship with the Indigenous communities linked to the site.
- **Target :** By 2025, hold activities or events at the site in collaboration with the Indigenous communities linked to the site.

Objective 1.3: Increase the site's success by working in concert with partners.

- **Target:** Participate annually in two activities organized jointly with partners.
- **Target:** Participate annually in a joint initiative with other sites commemorating the War of 1812.

KEY STRATEGY NO. 2: A VISITOR EXPERIENCE CENTRED ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Nowadays, the interpretation centre appears to be less essential than before for learning about the Battle of the Châteauguay. It seems more appropriate to facilitate access to the commemorative messages and various perspectives on this event outside the centre, allowing a greater number of visitors to discover the significance of the battle. Moreover, maintaining the interpretation centre constitutes a major challenge for Parks Canada. Consequently, this strategy aims to improve the visiting options outside the interpretation centre and reassess its management approach.

Objective 2.1: Improve the presentation of the various elements of the site's history outside the interpretation centre.

- **Target:** Improve the interpretation program outside the interpretation centre by 2024.
- **Target:** Keep the obelisk and commemorative plaque in good condition for solemnizing the battle until 2028.

Objective 2.2: Implement a new management approach for the interpretation centre in concert with local and regional stakeholders and partners.

- **Target:** Design a new management approach for the interpretation centre in concert with local and regional stakeholders and partners by 2022.
- **Target:** Implement a new management approach for the interpretation centre by 2028.

7.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impacts of management actions on ecosystems and on cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, requires a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of all plans and policies submitted to the federal Cabinet or to a Minister for approval deemed to have important positive or negative environmental effects.

A strategic environmental assessment was undertaken on this management plan, and the management direction found within has been adjusted to respond to findings. This assessment has been submitted to participants in the consultations related to the development of this management plan. The concerns raised were taken into account. The following presents the environmental assessment.

The strategies set out in the management plan will allow Canadians to gain a broader understanding and appreciation of the historic site, strengthen the site's ties with the community, and preserve its heritage resources.

Implementing measures for attaining the objectives set out in this management plan should help to improve the site's visibility, thereby drawing in more visitors and continuing the site's efforts to commemorate the Battle of the Châteauguay. Impact assessments will evaluate the potential negative effects of the individually proposed projects on the site and its valuable features, including any species at risk and their critical habitats, and help minimize these impacts on the cultural and natural resources, the visitor experience, and the relationships with different partners.

It is impossible to determine whether the management plan will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy's goals, but, considering Parks Canada's mandate, it is unlikely that it will hinder their progress. No significant negative environmental impacts are expected following the implementation of the management plan.