



An American Tour: 139

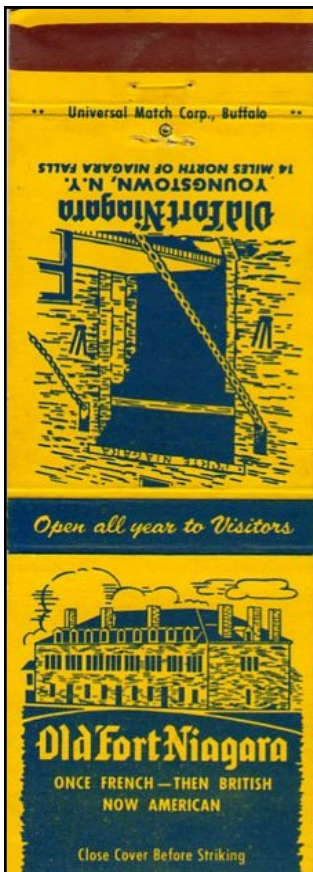


Youngstown, NY's *Old Fort Niagara*

Fort Niagara is a fortification originally built to protect the interests of New France in North America. It is located near Youngstown, New York, on the eastern bank of the Niagara River at its mouth, on Lake Ontario. René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle built the first structure, called Fort Conti, in 1678.

The name "Old Fort Niagara" which is associated with the fort today does not refer to its age but to distinguish the colonial-era fortress from its more modern namesake. The post-Civil War era saw the building of "New Fort Niagara" outside the original walls of the fort. Following the Civil War, the military abandoned the use of masonry forts (masonry fared poorly under bombardment), for the style of military camp we now know. The newer Fort Niagara contained a thousand-yard rifle range, access to rail lines, and access to the industrial areas of Niagara Falls and Buffalo.

Fort Niagara trained troops for the Spanish–American War and World War I, and during World War II served as an induction center and later a POW camp for 1,200 German soldiers captured in North Africa. After WW II, the fort provided temporary housing for returning veterans. During the Korean War, the fort was a headquarters for anti-aircraft artillery and later Nike missiles.



The U.S. Army officially deactivated Fort Niagara in 1963. Military presence on the site continues with the United States Coast Guard still operating at "The Bottoms", making Fort Niagara one of the longest continuously run military bases in the United States, 1726–present day. In 1931, a license between Old Fort Niagara Association and the U.S. War Department established rights to preserve and operate the fort. In 1949, Congress transferred Father Millet Cross National Monument (a small memorial at Fort Niagara) to New York. In 1960 the fort was among the first sites designated as National Historic Landmarks.

