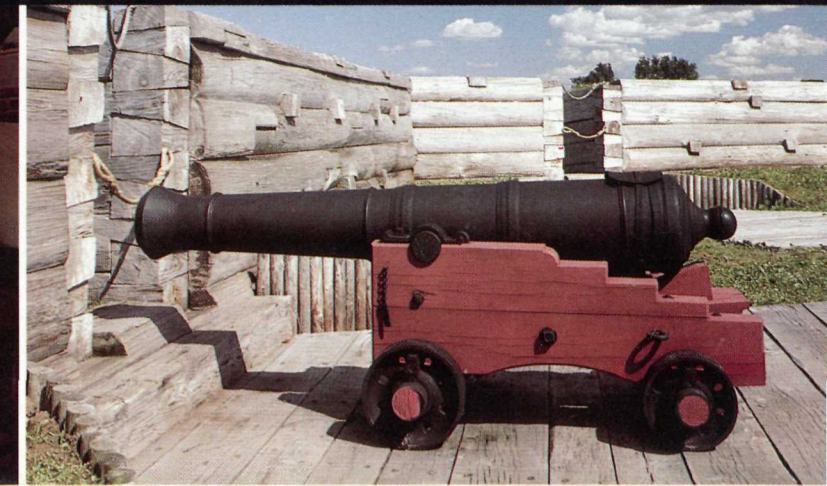
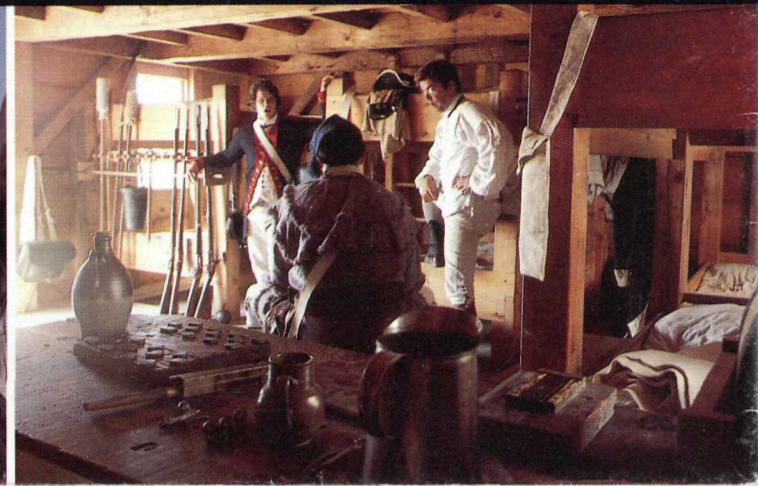


Fort Stanwix

Fort Stanwix
National Monument
New York

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Defender of the Mohawk Valley

The modern city of Rome, N.Y., lies astride an ancient water route linking the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean. Except for the short portage across nearly level ground between the Mohawk River east of the city and Wood Creek to the west, a traveler in colonial times could journey by water all the way from New York City to Canada and back again. Indians waded the portage for centuries, calling it the *De-O-Wain-Sta*. The English called it the Oneida Carry and it became a funnel for commerce, settlement, and military activity.

The British built Fort Stanwix here in 1758 to replace three smaller forts which protected the portage during the early years of the French and Indian War. Named for its builder, Brig. Gen. John Stanwix, the fort never saw action and was abandoned after the British conquest of Canada in 1763. It continued to serve, however, as a center for Indian affairs, and it was here in 1768 that the Iroquois signed the Boundary Line Treaty that cleared the way for major westward expansion.

After the Revolution began in the spring of 1775, patriot leaders realized the need to defend the Mohawk Valley against British incursions. But not

until mid-1776 did the Americans begin to rebuild the then-ruinous Fort Stanwix. When Col. Peter Gansevoort took command in the spring of 1777, there were already rumors of a two-pronged British invasion—one southward from Canada by an army under Gen. John Burgoyne, the other eastward down the Mohawk Valley by a smaller force under Gen. Barry St. Leger—scheduled for the coming summer. Gansevoort doubled the efforts of his garrison, consisting of less than a thousand New York and Massachusetts infantry, to make the fort defensible.

St. Leger's army, totaling some 1,700 men, more than half of whom were Indians, marched eastward from Oswego on July 26. By the end of the month they were approaching Wood Creek. The siege of Fort Stanwix officially began on August 3, after Gansevoort "rejected with disdain" the British demand for surrender. Four days before, learning of the British advance, Gen. Nicholas Herkimer ordered his Tryon County militia to muster at Fort Dayton near German Flatts on the Mohawk River about 81 kilometers (50 miles) east of Fort Stanwix. On August 4 some 900 men marched westward to reinforce Gansevoort. Two days later, a detachment from St. Leger's army ambushed the Americans at Oriskany and, in

one of the most desperate and bloody battles of the Revolution, forced them to retreat after inflicting severe casualties. Herkimer, wounded in the leg, died several days later.

In the meantime, Gansevoort had sent a detachment of soldiers under Lt. Col. Marinus Willett, his second in command, to create a diversion on the militia's behalf. Coming upon British and Indian encampments, Willett's men carried away an assortment of kettles, clothing, muskets, spears, tomahawks, regimental colors, and papers belonging to the British officers, including St. Leger. From prisoners taken at the camps, Gansevoort learned for the first time of the battle at Oriskany and the size and strength of the enemy besieging Fort Stanwix.

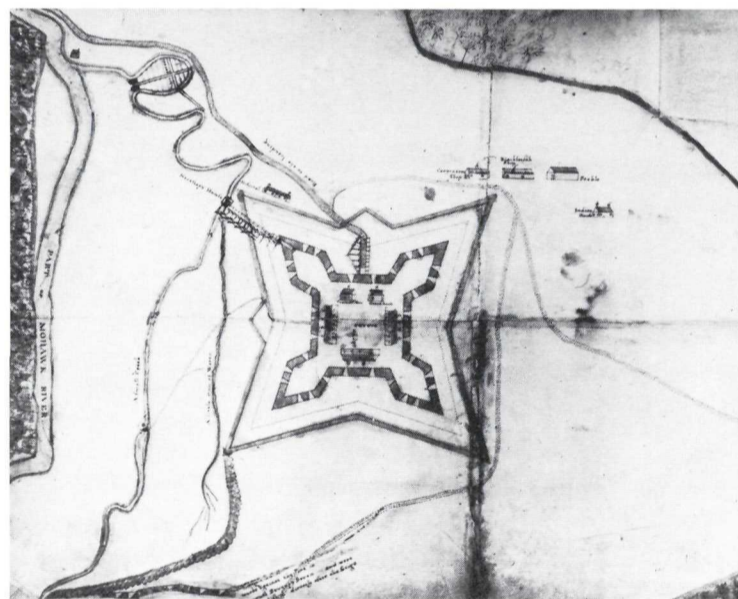
Even before word of Herkimer's battle reached American headquarters at Albany, Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold had been detached from the patriot army awaiting Burgoyne on the Hudson and ordered to march west to the relief of Fort Stanwix. Rumors filtered into St. Leger's camp that the Americans were coming in overwhelming numbers. This, coupled with the deaths of several chiefs at Oriskany and the loss of their

possessions after Willett's raid, caused the Indians to desert. St. Leger, finding Fort Stanwix more difficult to capture than he had expected, was forced to lift the siege on August 22 and withdraw to Canada. Two months later, surrounded and cut off, General Burgoyne surrendered his army at Saratoga. This action, considered to be a turning point of the Revolution, led to the formal French, Dutch, and Spanish alliances that helped to gain American independence.

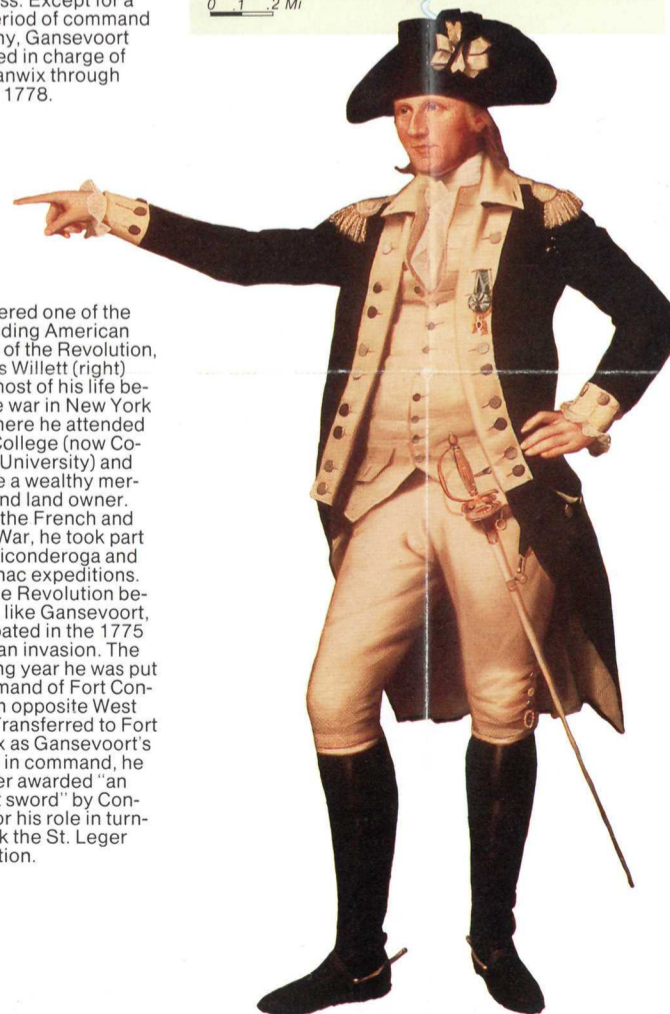
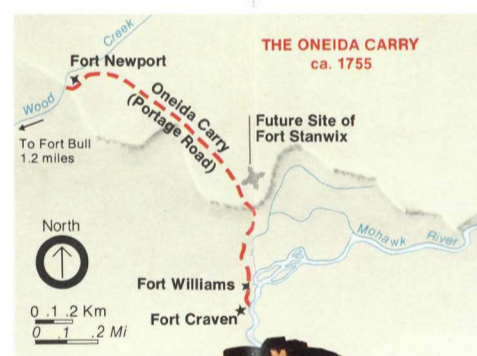
Fort Stanwix was garrisoned until 1781, but played no further active part in the war. In October 1784 American and Iroquois representatives met here to negotiate the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which set terms for a separate peace with the Indians and forced the Iroquois Confederacy (except the Oneida and Tuscarora tribes which had supported the Americans) to cede large parts of their lands to the United States. A decade later, the State of New York erected a blockhouse for housing military supplies on the parade of the fort. The blockhouse disappeared sometime after 1815 and the old fort itself was leveled by 1830. With this the history of Fort Stanwix came to a close.

"The Fort That Never Surrendered"

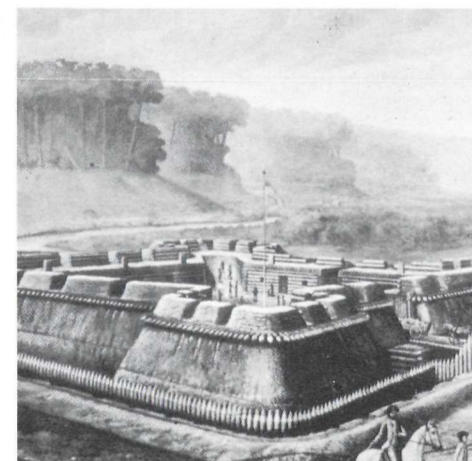
General St. Leger, whose army besieged the place for nearly three weeks, called Fort Stanwix "a respectable Fortress strongly garrisoned... and demanding a train of Artillery we were not masters of for its speedy subjection." Its strength is suggested in the sketch map at right, showing the fort and its environs after the siege, probably 1778. The map was drawn by an unknown artist and presented to Colonel Gansevoort, in whose Albany home it hung for many years.



Prior to his coming to bolster the defenses of the Mohawk Valley, Peter Gansevoort (far right), the 28-year-old, Albany-born commander of Fort Stanwix, had taken part in the 1775 invasion of Canada under Gen. Richard Montgomery and, since March 1776, had been in charge of Fort George, New York. His vigorous defense of Fort Stanwix won him the well-deserved thanks of Congress. Except for a brief period of command at Albany, Gansevoort remained in charge of Fort Stanwix through most of 1778.

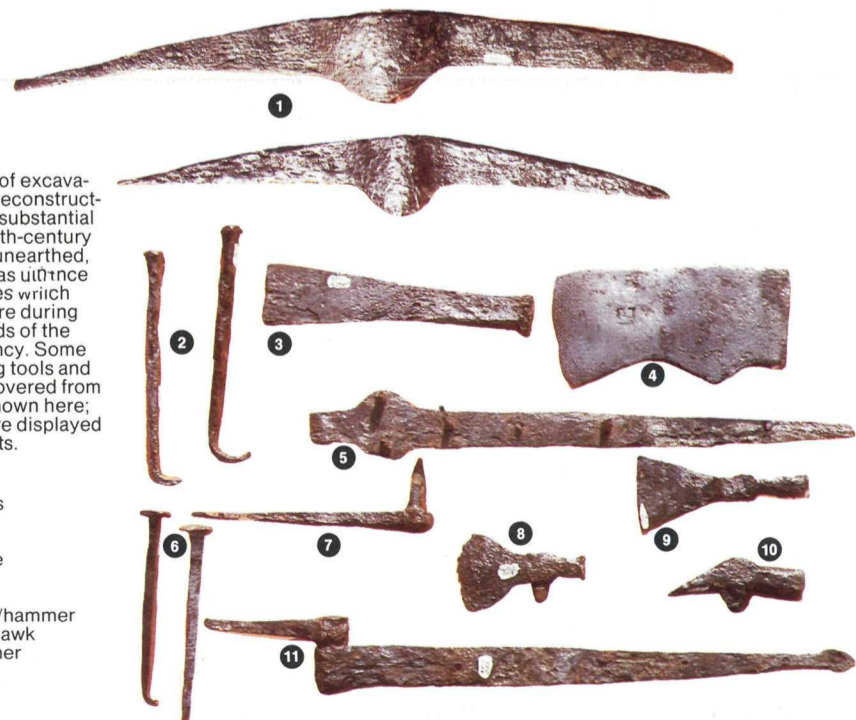


Considered one of the outstanding American leaders of the Revolution, Marinus Willett (right) spent most of his life before the war in New York City, where he attended Kings College (now Columbia University) and became a wealthy merchant and land owner. During the French and Indian War, he took part in the Ticonderoga and Frontenac expeditions. After the Revolution began he, like Gansevoort, participated in the 1775 Canadian invasion. The following year he was put in command of Fort Constitution opposite West Point. Transferred to Fort Stanwix as Gansevoort's second in command, he was later awarded "an elegant sword" by Congress for his role in turning back the St. Leger Expedition.



Fort Stanwix as it appeared August 6, 1777, as interpreted by artist Peter Hugunine in 1897. This view is from an engraving owned by the Fort Stanwix Historical Society, Rome, New York.

In the course of excavations prior to reconstructing the fort, a substantial quantity of 18th-century artifacts was unearthed, artifacts upon which the activities which took place here during various periods of the fort's occupancy. Some of the building tools and hardware recovered from the site are shown here; other items are displayed in park exhibits.



- 1 Picks
- 2 Gate spikes
- 3 Chisel
- 4 Ax
- 5 Strap hinge
- 6 Nails
- 7 Pintle
- 8 Tomahawk/hammer
- 9 Pipe tomahawk
- 10 Claw hammer
- 11 Pintle with strap hinge

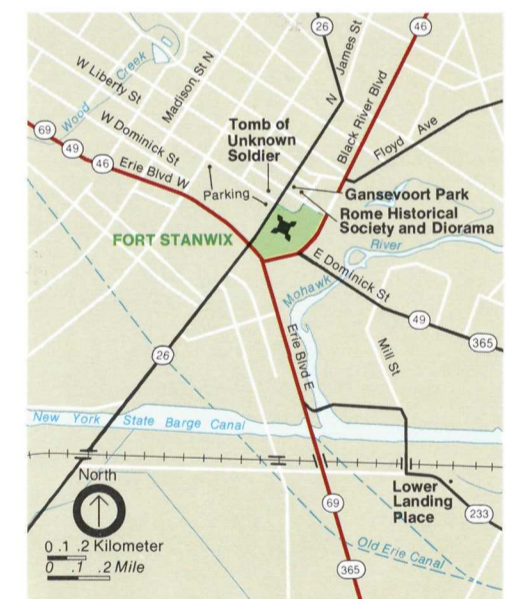
The Fort Today

Fort Stanwix, has been almost completely reconstructed to its 1777 appearance. It is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., April 1 to December 31, except Thanksgiving and Christmas days.

The National Park Service provides various programs, tours, and other interpretive activities to help you understand the significance of the events associated with the siege. The recommended first stop is the visitor center located in the West Barracks at the door marked GREGG.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, visitors are asked to step back to the year 1778 (one year after the siege) and "experience" life as it might have been for American patriots at this lonely outpost. Other times of the year, the park is on a modified tour and living-history schedule.

Organized groups wanting tours of the fort should write to the Superintendent, Fort Stanwix National Monument, 112 East Park Street, Rome, NY 13440, or call (315) 336-2090 to make reservations.



Fort Stanwix

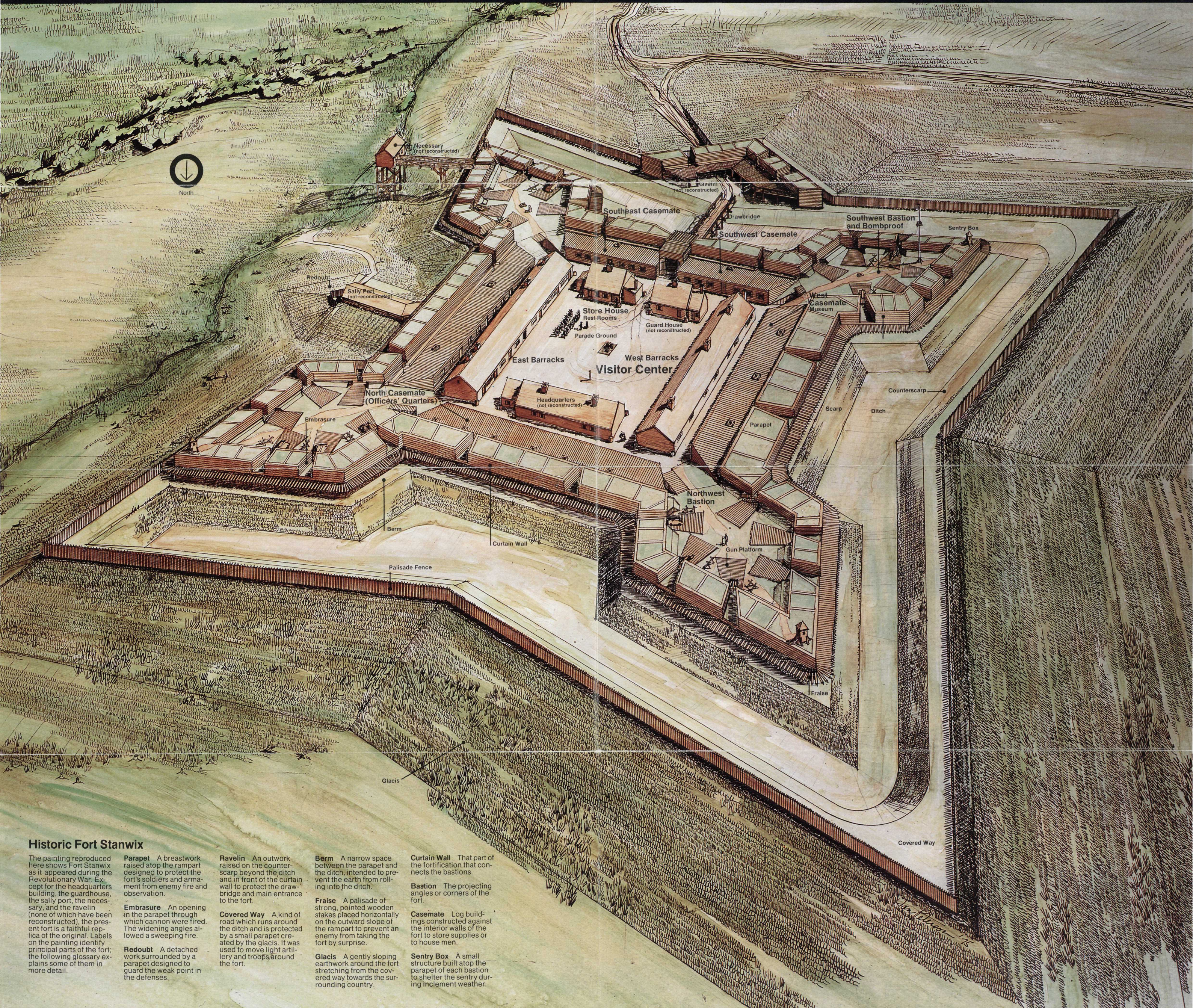
Things You Should Know

Because the fort is an accurate reconstruction, there are hazards that require your alertness. Please keep children off the walls and out of the fireplaces, and follow the instructions during weapon-firing demonstrations.

The park is accessible to the handicapped and many programs are accessible to the visually handicapped. Staff is available to provide assistance. Please call the superintendent for information.

Information on overnight accommodations, restaurants, or other attractions in the Utica-Rome area is obtainable at the visitor center. Picnicking facilities are not available at the fort. Pets must be leashed at all times.

The non-profit Eastern National Park & Monument Association sells books, postcards, and living history items at the store. Do not smoke inside the buildings.



Historic Fort Stanwix

The painting reproduced here shows Fort Stanwix as it appeared during the Revolutionary War. Except for the headquarters building, the guardhouse, the sally port, the necessary, and the ravelin (none of which have been reconstructed), the present fort is a faithful replica of the original. Labels on the painting identify principal parts of the fort; the following glossary explains some of them in more detail.

Parapet A breastwork raised atop the rampart designed to protect the fort's soldiers and armament from enemy fire and observation.

Embrasure An opening in the parapet through which cannon were fired. The widening angles allowed a sweeping fire.

Redoubt A detached work surrounded by a parapet designed to guard the weak point in the defenses.

Ravelin An outwork raised on the counterscarp beyond the ditch and in front of the curtain wall to protect the drawbridge and main entrance to the fort.

Covered Way A kind of road which runs around the ditch and is protected by a small parapet created by the glacis. It was used to move light artillery and troops around the fort.

Berm A narrow space between the parapet and the ditch, intended to prevent the earth from rolling into the ditch.

Fraise A palisade of strong, pointed wooden stakes placed horizontally on the outward slope of the rampart to prevent an enemy from taking the fort by surprise.

Glacis A gently sloping earthwork around the fort stretching from the covered way towards the surrounding country.

Curtain Wall That part of the fortification that connects the bastions.

Bastion The projecting angles or corners of the fort.

Casemate Log buildings constructed against the interior walls of the fort to store supplies or to house men.

Sentry Box A small structure built atop the parapet of each bastion to shelter the sentry during inclement weather.

