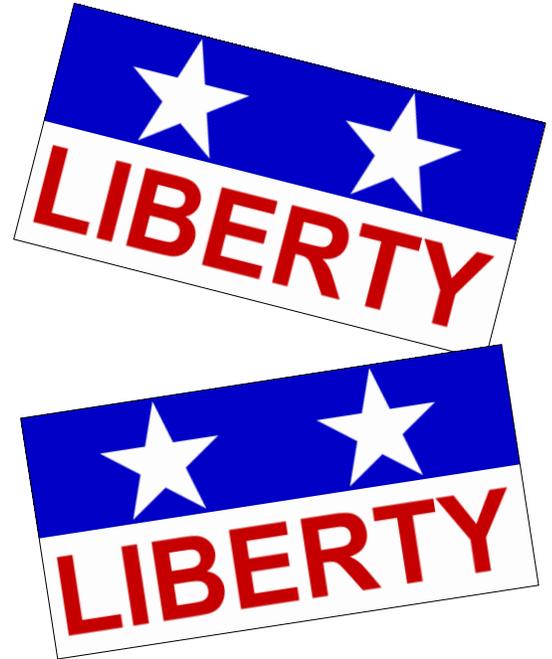


Navy Island and The Republic of Canada



Using text from the Niagara Falls Museums:

There is relatively little awareness of this small piece of land in the Niagara River, yet it is very rich in history. Navy Island is located opposite Ussher's Creek in Chippawa, at the northern tip of Grand Island, closest to the Canadian shore. The Niagara Parks Commission now leases the Island from Parks Canada.

The history of habitation begins approximately 10-12,000 years ago, with the recession of the glaciers in the area and continues up to the arrival of Europeans. The retreating glaciers revealed an island 316 acres and the largest of the islands on the Canadian side of the River. Archaeological evidence shows heavy usage of the island by Indigenous Peoples, including a burial excavated and estimated to date 3000 years ago (1000 BC).

The first European group to land on the island was the French in the early-mid 1700's; they did little with the Island but did use it for shipbuilding, as a stopping point in shipments, for logging and for grazing animals.

The British occupied the area, after Sir William Johnson won it from the French on July 25, 1759. They built their own shipyard on the island in the 1760's. It was this shipyard that gave the island its name, although it was briefly known as Die's Island, after the Master Carpenter assigned the task of building the shipyard. The shipyard was used up to the American Revolution, but does not appear to have been used after that. Navy Island was occupied during the War of 1812, but did not play a significant role in the conflict.

Canada was awarded ownership of the island by an International Boundaries Commission in 1822.

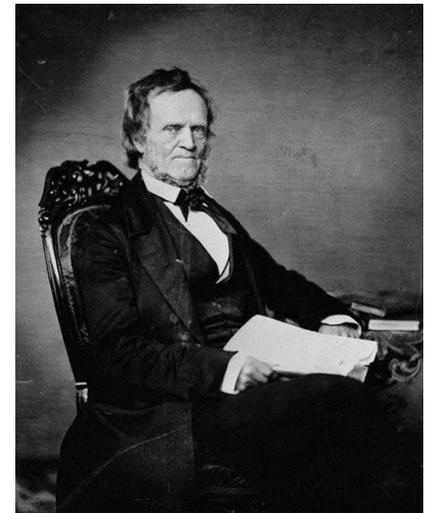
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Navy Island's next "tenant" was noted rebel and reformer, William Lyon Mackenzie, who occupied it during the civil rebellion, 1837-1838. Mackenzie established the Provisional Government of Upper Canada here.

The Republic of Canada

The Republic of Canada was a provisional government proclaimed by William Lyon Mackenzie on December 13, 1837. The government was established on Navy Island in the Niagara River in the latter days of the Upper Canada Rebellion after Mackenzie and 200 of his followers retreated from Toronto.

On December 29, Royal Navy Commander Andrew Drew and seven boatloads of Canadian militiamen crossed the Niagara River to Fort Schlosser. They captured the American supply steamer *Caroline* used by William Lyon Mackenzie and his rebels on Navy Island (see *Caroline Affair*). Drew's forces set the ship alight and sent it adrift towards Niagara Falls, resulting in the death of one American.



On January 13, 1838, Mackenzie abandoned Navy Island under heavy fire from British troops. He fled to Buffalo, New York, and was incarcerated in the U.S. for 18 months for violating neutrality laws between the United States and the British Empire.

Did you know?

Navy Island was proposed to be the new World Peace Capital and headquarters of the United Nations by an international committee in 1945 and 1946. The island was considered to be an ideal location as it lay on the boundary between two peaceful countries.

