Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74) NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK Theme: War of 1812

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
PLATTSBURGH (CUMBERLAND) BAY

AND/OR COMMON
Cumberland Bay

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Cumberland Bay, east of Plattsburgh _NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Plattsburgh _X VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
30

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	36	Clinton	19

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
_DISTRICT	_PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	_AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	_PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	_PARK
_STRUCTURE	X BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	_EDUCATIONAL	_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
X SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	_ENTERTAINMENT	_RELIGIOUS
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	_GOVERNMENT	_SCIENTIFIC
	_BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
		_NO	X MILITARY	X OTHER: Bay

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
City of Plattsburgh (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Plattsburgh _ VICINITY OF

STATE
New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Clinton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Plattsburgh

STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None

DATE

_FEDERAL _STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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Owners:

The Kent-Delord House, Inc. (The Kent-Delord House)
17 Cumberland Avenue
Plattsburgh, New York

The Plattsburgh Air Force Base (Fort Brown)
U.S. Route 9
Plattsburgh, New York

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Plattsburgh (Cumberland) Bay is formed by the peninsula of Cumberland Head on the north and east and by the mainland on the west, where is situated the town of Plattsburgh. The Bay's open end, facing south, is about one and one half miles wide. Near the mainland or Plattsburgh side of the Bay is Crab Island. Much of the beach area on Cumberland Head is open and affords a good view of the scene of the naval action. A good all-weather road encircles Cumberland Head peninsula, at the tip of which is a dock for the ferry which links the New York and Vermont shores of Lake Champlain. Cumberland Head is a residential area, although much of it is relatively undeveloped. On Cumberland Head, the State of New York maintains a camping and beach area, fronting on Plattsburgh Bay. The town of Plattsburgh, opposite Cumberland Head, has grown over most of the scenes of the indecisive land fighting.

Two remaining landmarks of the battle on the land are Fort Brown and the Kent-Delord House. Fort Brown which was an earthwork fort erected by the Americans on the south bank of the Saranac is presently the only remaining fortification. It is located alongside U.S. 9, to the west of the Plattsburgh Air Force Base. The configurations of the earth show the general outline of the fort, which has eroded somewhat.

The Kent-Delord House, located on the north bank of the Saranac River at its outlet, is believed to be the oldest house in Plattsburgh, and served as a British officer's quarters, during the battle. It is now used as a historic house museum. Built in 1797, it is a two story, clapboarded frame structure. On the bayfront overlooking the scene of the naval action is the Macdonough Memorial, an obelisk of Indiana limestone 135 feet high. The Memorial is decorated with reliefs of symbolic naval scenes and lists the names of the American ships which won the decisive battle of Plattsburgh.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES September 11, 1814 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The naval battle of Plattsburgh, September 11, 1814, halted a major British thrust into the United States along the traditional invasion route of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. The American victory resulted in the destruction of the British fleet on Lake Champlain and compelled a strong invading army of veteran troops to withdraw to Canada. The battle gave American forces complete control of strategic Lake Champlain and denied to the British the strong foothold on American soil on the basis of which his Majesty's ministers hoped to negotiate the cession of United States territory along the Canadian frontier. The naval historian Alfred T. Mahan described the Battle of Plattsburgh as one which "more nearly than any other incident of the War of 1812, merits the epithet 'decisive'."[1]

Plattsburgh Bay is formed by the peninsula of Cumberland Head and the western shore of Lake Champlain, at Plattsburgh, New York. Although the modern city of Plattsburgh has overgrown the scenes of the land action, the bay itself retains its historic appearance.

HISTORY

In the summer of 1814 the war had reached its lowest ebb for the Americans. Two years of war had failed to bring about the conquest of Canada promised by the Congressional War Hawks, and American maritime rights had not been secured by warfare on the seas. On the contrary, the poorly-trained and ill-equipped United States forces had been hard put to defend their own frontier against a numerically inferior force of the enemy, and American warships and commerce had been driven from the ocean. The British blockade grew ever tighter and New England's commerce lay in ruins, with the eastern seaboard at the mercy of enemy raiders. In August of that dark summer, the most humiliating blow of all had fallen when the British captured and burned much of the Nation's capital.

Now, in September, 1814, another deadly threat was developing in the north, where, in the previous year, naval superiority on Lake Champlain had passed from American to British hands. Making the most of their newly-won superiority on the Lake, the British raided at will along its shores, including a strike on the village of Plattsburgh on July 30, 1813, which destroyed the public buildings there. Following this successful blow the British commenced the building of a strong war fleet on Champlain, while the American commander on the Lake, Captain

(continued)

1. Alfred T. Mahan. Sea Power in Its Relationship to the War of 1812, 2 vols. (London, 1905), II, p. 381.

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Thomas Macdonough, countered by beginning construction of a flotilla capable of challenging the enemy's hold. By the end of May 1814, Macdonough had ready for action the corvette Saratoga, schooner Ticonderoga, sloop Preble and 10 small gunboats.

The British plan of operations called for a full-scale invasion down the western shore of Lake Champlain by a force of regulars numbering more than 11,000 men, the strongest army put into the field thus far in the war. These veterans were to descend on Plattsburgh under command of Canadian Governor General Prevost, while the fleet covered the left flank of the advance as it moved up the Lake toward the American position. Defending the base at Plattsburgh was a small force of perhaps 1,500 Americans, backed up by Macdonough's hastily-built fleet.

The British advance by land steadily drove the Americans back on Plattsburgh, until they retreated through the village and took position on the south bank of the Saranac River. Here they stood off probing attacks by the enemy, while the British commander posted his vastly superior forces and brought up provisions. It was Prevost's intention to stake the outcome of the battle on a joint attack by his army and the supporting fleet. The brig Eagle having joined him, Macdonough had four ships and 10 gunboats to oppose the British squadron of four ships and 12 gunboats. Despite the British advantage in long-range guns, the two fleets were so evenly matched that neither side could claim an appreciable advantage beyond the margin which skill and leadership--and luck--might provide. The only potential advantage possessed by the British was in the Confiance (Confidence), the largest vessel on the Lake. This advantage was minimized by the fact that to utilize her superior strength the Confiance needed sea room to maneuver and Macdonough's anchorage in Plattsburgh Bay did not afford such room. Macdonough had chosen his position well, in the confined waters of the bay between the peninsula known as Cumberland Head and the mainland on which lay the village of Plattsburgh. On the morning of September 11, 1814, the British fleet drove in toward the waiting Americans.

Curiously, both fleets lay at anchor throughout much of the ensuing action, trading deadly blows at point-blank range. Macdonough wisely had chosen to fight a defensive battle and by keeping his vessels at anchor in the calm waters of the Bay he could put every man to the guns. At close quarters the anchored fleets thundered at each other, a ship on one side or the other occasionally falling out of action to drift helplessly, or to shift position to

bring additional guns into play. For almost two and one half hours the fight continued without slackening. The British commander was killed by a gun which was hurled from its carriage, and Macdonough was twice knocked unconscious by flying splinters and concussion of the guns. Finally, by maneuvering his flagship Saratoga to bring into action her previously unengaged side, Macdonough forced the battered Confiance to strike. The last of the British ships surrendered a few minutes later, although the gunboats managed to escape. The Americans were in no condition to pursue these remnants of British naval strength on Lake Champlain.

When the naval battle opened, the British ground forces had resumed their attack on the American lines along the Saranac River, but with the virtual annihilation of his supporting fleet Prevost quickly withdrew to Canada, leaving behind a vast store of supplies for the elated Americans. With the ignominious failure of the Champlain invasion, the British hope of securing the northern lakes and winning a cession of American territory fronting on Canada had disappeared.

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Beginning at the junction of the north bank of the Saranac River with the west shore of Cumberland Bay, proceed due east to the east shore of Cumberland Bay, thence proceed south along said shore to the southernmost point of Cumberland Head, thence south-southwest in a straight line to the northernmost point of the twelve foot depth contour around Crab Island, thence proceed generally south and west along said contour to a point due west of the southernmost point of Crab Island, thence proceed due west to the west shore of the bay and continue north along said shore to the point of origin. These boundaries enclose the site of the actual naval engagement at Plattsburgh. The landmark elements of the land battle constitute non-contiguous portions of the landmark and are bounded thusly: The Kent-Delord House is bounded by the dimensions of its lot at #17 Cumberland Road, approximately 150' x 200'; Fort Brown is bounded on the east by the west curb of Route 9 from its intersection with the cemetery boundary just south of the fort, north to its intersection of the 150' contour, just north of the fort. The boundary then extends west from the intersection point of the said curb and the 150' contour, to the east bank of the Saranac River, thence south along said bank and the indicated property line of the Air Force Base, to the point where the Air Force Base boundary turns southeast toward Route 9. The boundary proceeds south along said property line to the point of origin, on the west curb of Route 9.

These boundaries enclose the remaining evidence of the land battle of Plattsburgh, while excluding post-historic intrusions.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Carroll Alden and Allan Westcott. The United States Navy, A History (Phila., 1943].
C.S. Forester. The Age of Fighting Sail: The Story of the Naval War of 1812 (N.Y., 1956).
Alfred T. Mahan. Sea Power and its Relationship to the War of 1812, 2 vols., (London,1905).
E.B. Potter, ed. The United States and World Sea Power (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1955).
Charles E. Shedd. "Plattsburgh Bay," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, 11/5/59.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2270 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	628000	4951000
B	18	628000	4945000
C	18	623000	4945000
D	18	622530	4951000

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE
1/9/76

STREET & NUMBER
1100 L Street

TELEPHONE
202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

((NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS))

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)