

HISTORY of FT. HALIFAX

Both Ft. Halifax and Ft. Augusta at the Forks of the Susquehanna (now Sunbury, PA) were part of a line of forts constructed by the Pennsylvania Provincial government during the early part of the French & Indian War (1752–1763). These forts were all strategically sited along what was then the Pennsylvania frontier.

On June 5, 1756, Provincial officer Col. Wm. Clapham led 400 recruits of the Augusta Regiment north up the east side of the Susquehanna River. The Regiment had been created for the express purpose of constructing a major fortification at Sunbury (then know by its Indian name, Shamokin). They started out from Hunter's Mill at the mouth of Fishing Creek (now Fort Hunter), a few miles above Harris's Ferry (present day Harrisburg, PA). Col. Clapham's initial consignment of supplies followed upriver in 20 bateaux and two canoes. The Regiment stopped overnight at Thomas McKee's lower trading post on the east bank of the Susquehanna opposite Sherman's Creek (just downstream from the current Clarks Ferry Bridge). They arrived at the mouth of Armstrong Creek the next afternoon, and there began constructing Ft. Halifax. The new fort was to serve as a temporary depot for supplies and give overnight refuge to wagon trains and bateaux moving supplies upriver to where Fort Augusta was to be built.

Col. Clapham picked the site for Ft. Halifax due to the proximity of a vast stand of pine timber suitable to construction of a fort. Also, very near the site was a dam and water-powered saw mill erected on Armstrong Creek by early pioneer John Armstrong. Once bivouacked, soldiers immediately commenced to cut and square 200 logs, each 30- feet long, and erected a traditional-style stockade fort, 160- feet square, with four bastions and a surrounding earthwork about 10-feet high, itself surrounded by a ditch of equal depth. While construction was underway, bateaux-men were busily engaged in moving more supplies up the River past the difficult section of low-water rapids at the confluence of the Juniata River. At the same time carpenters at Harris's Ferry were constructing additional bateaux and cannon carriages. On July 11th, 1756, the Augusta Regiment continued its march upriver, leaving 30 men behind to finish construction and garrison Ft. Halifax.



Ft. Halifax continued to serve as a stop-over point for troops and supplies headed northward to aid in the construction and manning of Ft. Augusta. Late in 1757, however, the garrison at Ft. Halifax was transferred back to Ft. Hunter where they were considered better positioned for the defense of settlements south of Blue Mountain, the first mountain north of present-day Harrisburg, PA. Ft. Halifax then stood idle until the summer of 1763 when it was abandoned and dismantled.