

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark

and or common Cumberland Bay

2. Location

street & number Cumberland Bay and two sites in Plattsburgh _____ not for publication

city, town Plattsburgh _____ vicinity of

state New York code 036 county Clinton code 019

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: see Description

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple; see continuation sheet 4-1

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clinton County Recorder of Deeds

street & number Clinton County Courthouse

city, town Plattsburgh state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes _____ no

date 1960 federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records National Park Service (See continuation sheet 6-1)

city, town Washington state DC

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark, in the City and Town of Plattsburgh, Clinton County, New York consists of three sites, all linked to the naval and land engagements of September 11, 1814. These are: 1) the bay itself, including Crab Island, where the naval battle and its aftermath took place; 2) the Macdonough Memorial, a 135-foot limestone obelisk in front of the Plattsburgh City Hall; and 3) the site of Fort Brown, which was related to the repulse of the British land advance southward.

Plattsburgh Bay (known as Cumberland Bay by the US Geological Survey) is an arm of Lake Champlain. Although the New York-Vermont boundary is in the lake, the Bay is entirely in New York. It is enclosed by the mainland on the west (on which the city of Plattsburgh is situated, at the mouth of the Saranac River); mainland on the north; and Cumberland Head on the east, a 3 1/2 mile long peninsula which curves southeasterly into the lake. The bay is open to the south; an imaginary line drawn from the tip of Cumberland Head due west to the mainland is about 2.8 miles long, and the southern tip of Crab Island is about 2 1/4 miles south of this line.

The western shore of the bay, outside the boundary of this section of the landmark, includes Plattsburgh Air Force Base to the south and the city of Plattsburgh (1970 pop. 18,715). Proceeding clockwise along the shore, it curves northeasterly into a much less heavily developed area which includes a municipal beach and a state park. As the shoreline turns generally southeast, it contains scattered small-scale residences (seasonal and permanent) all the way to the tip of the head.

Crab Island is about 4500 feet by 750 feet, lying generally north-south, and, at its highest point, rises 25 feet above the lake. It was not visited in the course of this study. Topographic maps show one building on it.

The site of Fort Brown is within a wedge-shaped parcel of land along the Saranac River, bounded on the south by a cemetery, on the west by a sharp bend in the river and on the east by Peru Street (U.S. Route 9). The river channel and road converge at the north end of the property to define the tip of the wedge. The site is owned and maintained as an expanse of parkland by the City of Plattsburgh.

The remains of Fort Brown consist of a roughly pentagonal arrangement of grassy earthworks which represent the eroded defenses of the redoubt erected by American forces in 1814. The area within the defenses contains a number of humps and circular depressions: some of these may relate to undisturbed buried archaeological features, others may be the result of illicit excavations. On the south side of the earthworks, a particularly well-defined ditch runs east-west from Peru Street to the edge of the bluff overlooking the Saranac River. A fair indication of the original plan of Fort Brown can be obtained from a map of the Plattsburgh military reservation drawn by Rufus McIntyre in 1815 shortly after the U.S. Government expanded its base in this area. Fort Brown appears as

(see continuation sheet 7-1)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	X ___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	X ___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
X ___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1814, 1926

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The three discrete sites of the Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark illustrate and commemorate the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay and the related land engagement, which together drove the British from the Champlain Valley near the close of the War of 1812. The simultaneous double victory resulted in the immediate retreat of the British army towards Canada, which, according to one authority, "practically ended" the war.¹ Two of the landmark sites--the bay itself and the remains of Fort Brown--are directly linked to the military action. The third, the Macdonough Monument in downtown Plattsburgh, is the most visible and venerated reminder of the two battles.

As it became increasingly apparent in mid-1814 that the war was nearing a close (peace talks actually began on August 8), the British saw it to be in their interest to extend their influence as far southward as possible, in order to strengthen their hand at the bargaining table. They wanted any peace to include, among other things, access to Lake Champlain, and by holding Plattsburgh they would be able to include this in the negotiations. Accordingly, an invasion force estimated at between seven and fourteen thousand men under General George Prevost (Governor General of Canada) crossed into New York from Canada beginning on August 31. Following some running encounters with American troops, Plattsburgh proper (at that time entirely north of the Saranac River) was occupied on September 6. The force at this point consisted of 8200 officers and men, most of them seasoned veterans of Napoleonic campaigns.

The American forces under General Alexander Macomb fell back to the south side of the Saranac River and consolidated their defenses in three forts stretching across the peninsula formed by the Saranac and the Lake: Fort Brown, the westernmost (and whose remains are included in the Landmark); east of it stood Fort Moreau, the site of which is now opposite the chapel at the head of the oval within Plattsburgh Air Force Base; and Fort Scott, the easternmost, also within the Air Force Base. The sites of the latter two are marked (possibly inaccurately) by stone monuments with bronze plaques but are not included in the Landmark. Two blockhouses and a number of storehouses were also located on the peninsula. Again, the sites of these structures are excluded from the landmark.

Both sides, meanwhile, knew that naval control of Lake Champlain was necessary for military and political control of the surrounding lands. Both had been feverishly readying ships for what would be a decisive engagement, the British at Isle-Au-Noix (on the lake about ten miles into Canada), the Americans under Lt. Thomas Macdonough at Vergennes, Vermont.

(see continuation sheet 8-1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brewer, George. "A Military Sketch of Plattsburgh." In Historical Sketches of the Town of Plattsburgh 1785-1975, edited by James N. MacDonald. Plattsburgh: The Town of Plattsburgh, 1975.

(See Continuation Sheet 9-1)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property +7025

Quadrangle name Plattsburgh, NY-VT

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	2	8	3	4	0	4	9	5	0	5	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	8	6	2	8	3	4	0	4	9	4	6	0	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	8	6	2	3	5	8	0	4	9	4	6	0	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	8	6	2	2	8	8	0	4	9	5	2	1	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

1	8	6	2	5	2	1	0	4	9	5	3	4	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

1	8	6	2	2	8	0	0	4	9	4	9	2	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

1	8	6	2	2	7	0	0	4	9	5	0	4	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet 10-1)

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 Charles H. Ashton and Richard W. Hunter

organization Heritage Studies, Inc. date October 1983

street & number RD6, Box 864, Mapleton Road telephone (609) 452-1754

city or town Princeton state New Jersey

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 6/11/84

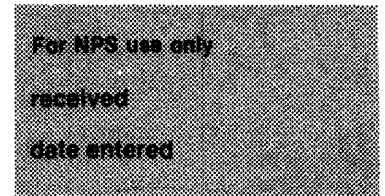
Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark, Plattsburgh, NY
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Plattsburgh Bay:

People of the State of New York (Office of General Services)
Empire State Plaza
Tower Building
Albany, NY 12242

Edward J. Troise (owner of Crab Island)
104 Saulsbury Road
Dover, DE 19901

Fort Brown:

City of Plattsburgh
City Hall
City Hall Place
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Macdonough Monument:

City of Plattsburgh
City Hall
City Hall Place
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

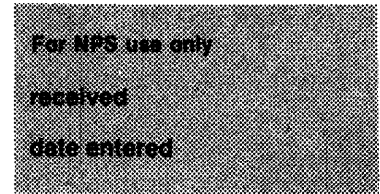
Chief Elected Official of the City of Plattsburgh:

Carlton E. Rennell, Mayor
City Hall
City Hall Place
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

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Fort Brown:
National Register of Historic Places
1978 Federal
National Park Service
Washington, DC

Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources
1974 State
Office of Parks and Recreation
Albany, NY

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an irregular, five-sided earthwork with two small structures appended to two of the parapet intersections. These might be small bastions to afford a line of fire along the parapets not fronting the river. Also shown are four structures within the fort paralleling the parapets. Around the perimeter of the parapet are shown eight features which probably represent gun emplacements.

The Macdonough Memorial is the most visible and perhaps best-known physical link with the events on the bay in 1814. Prominently sited in a park in front of City Hall, it is a 135-foot obelisk, 14 feet square at the bottom. Built of Indiana limestone, it rests on a square plinth and is topped by a triumphant bronze eagle whose outstretched wings span 22 feet. Each of the four sides of the base is dedicated to one of Macdonough's four ships. Each contains a rectangular panel, whose low relief carving illustrates the clamor of the battle; ornaments and naval items such as chains, anchors, and cannon are entwined to form the composition. However, the panels also include classical references such as depictions of Roman helmets and weaponry, which suggest the timelessness of the battle and the victory.

The smooth shaft of the obelisk is broken only by a medallion carved on each face several feet above the base. One of these, on the east (or lake) side, is a low-relief map of the battle. At ground level on the west side of the monument is a bronzed pedestrian door, interrupting the carved panel; it provides access to an iron stair which ascends the interior of the obelisk. At the top of the monument the shaft breaks into a ziggurat with six levels, surmounted by the garlanded plinth of the eagle.

Notes

¹Rufus McIntyre, Untitled map of the U.S. Government Military Reservation at Plattsburgh, New York in January, 1815. Reproduced in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory -- Nomination Form for Fort Brown Site, prepared by Charles A. Florance, New York State Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Historic Preservation, April 24, 1978.

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Macdonough was ready first, so he had the luxury of choosing the site of the battle. He arrived in Cumberland Bay with four ships, ten gunboats and 820 men on September 1. The site was chosen carefully: since the lake flows northward, he knew his adversary would arrive on a north wind. By positioning himself up in the bay, the British would be forced to sail into the wind to reach him once they rounded Cumberland Head. Furthermore, Macdonough's guns (carronades) could not match those of the British in range, but at close quarters they were accurate and deadly. Cumberland Bay was thus an ideal spot for him to make a stand, since the enemy would have to approach him under adverse conditions and try to destroy him on the spot or else drive him into open water. The latter could be accomplished more readily if the British ground forces could capture the American fortifications.

Numerous delays by the British, primarily in putting the finishing touches on the Confiance (at 1200 tons the largest ship in the battle) allowed the American forces valuable preparation time. Finally, on September 11, 1814, the British fleet of four ships and 12 gunboats rounded Cumberland Head under a northerly wind.

Two of the British ships, the Chub and the Finch, were so heavily damaged in the first fifteen minutes of fighting that they surrendered. Shortly after 11:00 a.m., after more than two hours of fierce exchanges, the other two (the Linnet and the Confiance were also taken. The 280 dead and injured of both sides were sent to a makeshift hospital on Crab Island. The 97 slain seamen were buried there in common graves.

Meanwhile, the British army had been poised to cross the Saranac River, seize the American forts, and presumably add their guns to the battle on the lake. However, the assault did not get under way until about 11:00 a.m., at which time an advance party of British succeeded in driving the Americans from their positions on the south bank of Pike's Cantonment. They were within sight and firing distance of Fort Brown, waiting for the remainder of the Army to cross, when word was received that the fleet had surrendered. Since the British ground troops would not have the benefit of the lake as a supply route, further advance was pointless; a general retreat to Canada accompanied by desertions, began that same evening. Macdonough took all eight ships to Whitehall, NY; in 1825 the vessels were sold, and later sank in East Bay near the mouth of the Poultney River.

(see continuation sheet 8-2)

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The combined land and naval action at Plattsburgh had not only halted the invasion, but reversed it. As a result, the American navy was in uncontested control of the lake and British invasion (by land or water) was never a serious threat again. Peace was concluded by the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814. Macdonough, the young lieutenant who had commanded the American fleet, became a hero, honored by dinners, parades, gifts of land in New York and Albany, and a farm on Cumberland Head. Congress later voted him a medal. He died in 1825 at the age of 42.

After the conflict of 1814, the U.S. Government expanded its land holdings on the promontory for the establishment of a military reservation there. Fort Brown and the other redoubts were incorporated into this reservation. Macomb had two other redoubts constructed south of Fort Moreau after the battle, Forts Tompkins and Gaines. Throughout the 1800's and up until 1967, installations on the military reservation were periodically upgraded. The Fort Brown parcel fell into disuse while the other defensive works were leveled in the course of subsequent growth. No specific date for the abandonment of Fort Brown is known.

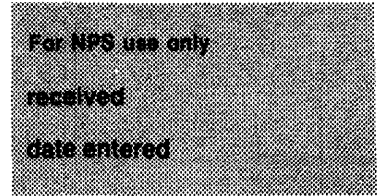
A century later the State of New York and the Federal government voted to erect the Macdonough Memorial in Plattsburgh in observance of the centennial of the battle. John Russell Pope, later the architect of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, was selected as architect. Plans were complete before World War I but construction was delayed until 1921. It was dedicated on August 18, 1926. The monument is the principal (if not the sole) object linked to the naval battle.

The Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark has the potential to yield useful archaeological information relating to the events of the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay in a number of ways. The bay itself may contain underwater archaeological data connected with the battle. Although no ships were sunk during the engagement there is a strong chance that cannon balls and other debris from the battle may lie on the lake bed. Crab Island (not examined in the course of this study) may contain archaeological evidence in the form of graves of sailors killed in the battle and the remains of the hospital that was established to tend the wounded. By far the most significant archaeological resource within the landmark is Fort Brown, the one well-preserved site connected with the events of 1814 that survives in any substantial form. The structural remains of the defenses and buildings within the redoubt may provide detailed information on the lay-out and workings of small specialized fortifications of the early 19th century. Although the exact date of abandonment is not known, occupation of the fort was evidently short-lived. Sealed archaeological deposits should exist on the site and be fairly indicative of its military usage both during and immediately after the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay. Artifacts on the site should be representative of the level of material culture on early American military installations in this area. It has also been suggested that objects of British manufacture may be recovered and that these may throw light on the purported

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"illicit" trade networks that American and British military personnel participated in at the time of the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay.

Notes

¹A.T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, 2 vols. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1905), 2: 382.

²Charles A. Florance, "Fort Brown Site," National Register of Historic Places Inventory -- Nomination Form, New York State Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Historic Preservation, April 24, 1978, item 8: 2.

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Harrington, Charles M. Dedication of the Thomas Macdonough Memorial. Plattsburgh: Plattsburgh Centenary Commission, 1926.

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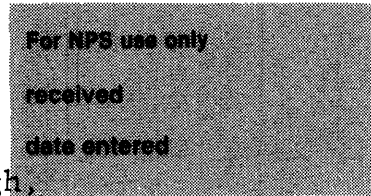
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Boundary Description

The boundaries of the three elements of the Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark are described as follows:

1. Plattsburgh Bay: Beginning at Point A, the slip of the Cumberland Head-Grand Isle Ferry on the east side of Cumberland Head; then running due south across Lake Champlain to Point B, a point due east of the mean low water mark at the southern tip of Crab Island; then running due west across Lake Champlain to Point C, at the mean low water mark of Cumberland Bay; then running generally north, northwest, northeast and southeast along the mean low water mark of Cumberland Bay (crossing the mouths of the Saranac River and Dead Creek) to Point A, the point of beginning. (Points D and E on the USGS map enclose the boundary, but do not lie on the boundary line).
2. Fort Brown: the boundary of the parcel owned by the City of Plattsburgh and identified on local tax maps as Block 1, Lot 20. (Point F).
3. Macdonough Monument: the boundary of the parcel owned by the City of Plattsburgh and identified on local tax maps as Block 7, Lot 1. (Point G).

Boundary Justification

The Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark includes three discontinuous sites; two are related directly to the military actions of September 1814, while the third (the Macdonough Memorial) is included as the primary tangible resource associated with the sea and land engagements in the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay.

Plattsburgh (or Cumberland) Bay, the scene of the naval engagement, is included for its direct relationship with the events described elsewhere in the Statement of Significance. Unlike a battlefield where the limits of an event can be identified, it would be difficult to place a boundary across a featureless body of water with the assurance that no significant elements had been omitted. Thus, the shoreline of the bay from the ferry slip on Cumberland Head to a point west of the south end of Crab Island was used as the boundary. Continuing due east, the line includes Crab Island, since it was the site of a hospital and burial ground immediately before and after the battle. A line of convenience running due south from Cumberland Head encloses this element of the landmark. Although more area may thus be enclosed than was actually occupied by the naval maneuvering, this boundary assures that the entire scene of the battle (and its aftermath) is within the landmark.

Fort Brown is included within the landmark as the principal surviving site associated with the land engagement of the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay. One of three redoubts built by American forces on the Saranac peninsula in anticipation

(see continuation sheet 10-2)

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of the British invasion southwards along the west shore of Lake Champlain, Fort Brown consists of substantial earthwork remains which appear to possess a good level of archaeological integrity. The entire site is neatly contained within a single tax parcel owned and maintained as parkland by the City of Plattsburgh.

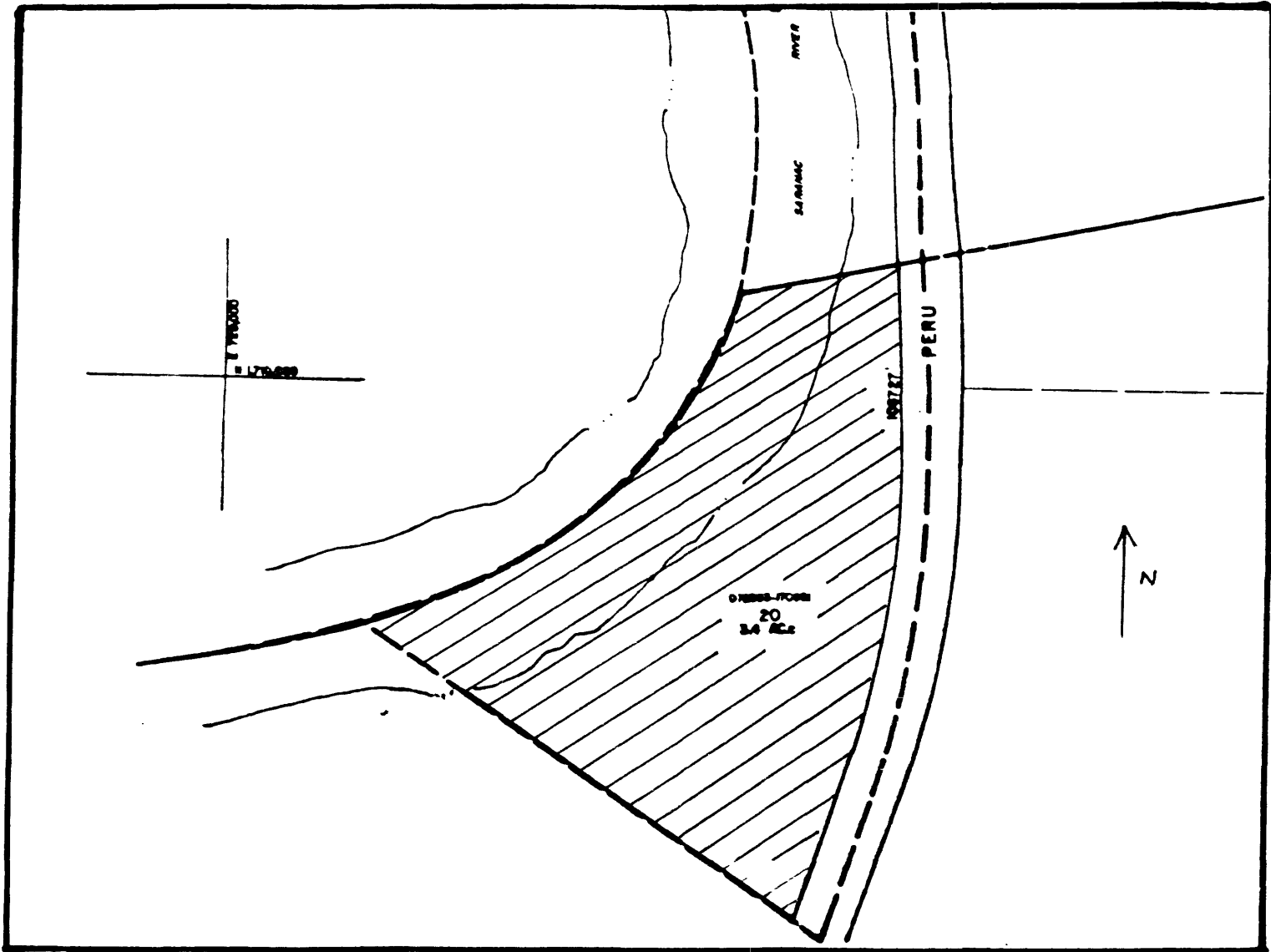
The boundary of the property associated with the third element of the landmark, the Macdonough Memorial, is the boundary of the tax parcel on which it stands. Since the monument is removed from the scene of the battle, no boundary could exist which physically links the site to the battle it commemorates. The only suitable boundary is one related directly to the monument.

Consideration was given to including other sites in the landmark such as the sites of Fort Scott, Fort Moreau, two blockhouses and a number of storehouses (all on the Saranac peninsula); the Mooers and Kent-Delord Houses; and Pike's Cantonment. All were ultimately rejected.

The sites of Fort Scott, Fort Moreau and the storehouses are now within the built-up area of Plattsburgh Air Force Base, within about 500 feet of the Chapel at the north end of the oval. These sites have been graded and planted; barely visible irregularities in the ground surface may or may not be part of their remains. The sites of the blockhouses are imprecisely known and are within an urban setting. None of these sites possesses the integrity of feeling present at Fort Brown.

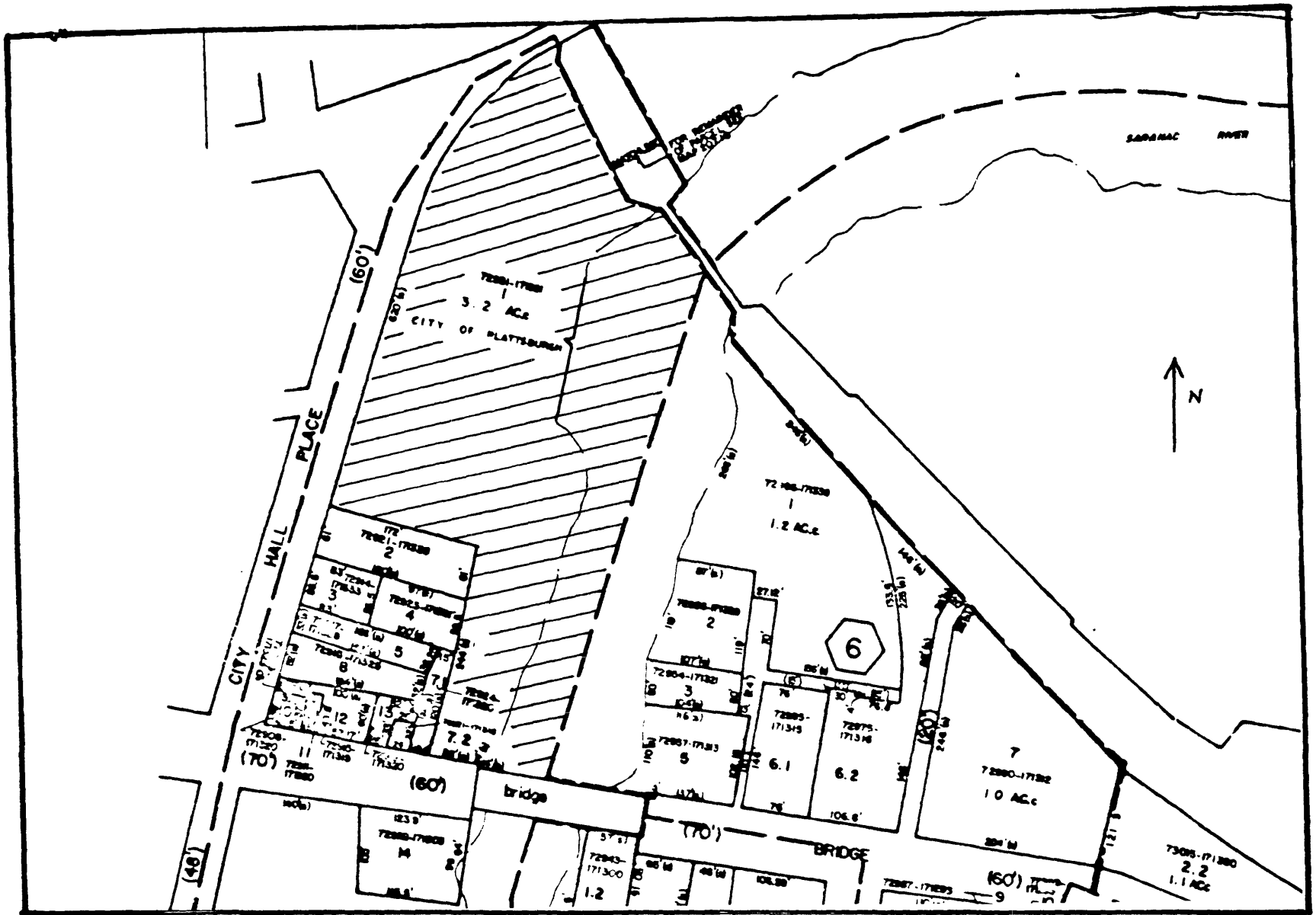
The Mooers and Kent-Delord houses both served as headquarters at the time of the British occupation. Neither was as directly related to the military engagements as were the bay and Fort Brown. Both, however, are of local interest and are recognized as such; the Kent-Delord house is on the National Register and the Mooers house, bearing a marble plaque, contains a cannonball which lodged in the front hall during the battle.

Pike's Cantonment, on the south bank of the Saranac River, was the site of the British land assault on the morning of September 11, 1814. Today the area is a rather steep hillside, apparently the result of filling. A residential street parallels the river at the top of the slope. These developments have deprived it of sufficient integrity to warrant inclusion in the landmark.



PLATTSBURGH BAY NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK, PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK

FORT BROWN BOUNDARY, BLOCK 1, LOT 20, 3.4 ACRES (SHADED AREA)



PLATTSBURGH BAY NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK, PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK
 MACDONOUGH MONUMENT BOUNDARY, BLOCK 7, LOT 1, 3.2 ACRES (SHADED AREA)