

Go Back in History: The Plains of Abraham

The site of many clashes for supremacy between the French and British Empires, the Battlefields Park with the 108-acre Plains of Abraham is the scene of the 1759 Conquest, which changed the fate of North America.



The Battle

“The Plains of Abraham” is the name commonly used to designate the Battlefields Park. Located on a natural promontory along the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River, the site has been the focus of the development of Quebec City since its founding by Samuel de Champlain in 1608.

On 13 September 1759, the land was the scene of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in the French and Indian War (part of the Seven Years' War) in which the British army, under General James Wolfe, climbed the steep cliff under the city in darkness, surprising and defeating the French. Both Wolfe and the French commander Montcalm died of their wounds but the battle left control of Quebec City to the British, which would allow them to take control of Canada the following year with the surrender of Montreal despite the victory of the Chevalier de Levis over General James Murray on 28 April 1760.

With the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France consequently renounced possession of Canada, Acadia, and most of Louisiana which went to Spain although France retained control over New Orleans and the surrounding area. In 1800, following Spain's military demise at the hands of Napoleon, Louisiana was returned to France according to the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso. This cleared the way for the Louisiana Purchase by the United States in 1803, effectively ending French rule in mainland

North America.



Lungs of the City

On March 17, 1908, the law creating the National Battlefields Commission (NBC) was sanctioned to highlight and preserve this site, unique in the world by its sheer size, its geographic location, its historical role and its beauty. The Battlefields Park, which groups together the Plains of Abraham and the Des Braves Park, was developed to honour the memory of both French and British combatants

Apart from its historical past, the park is to Québec what Central Park and Hyde Park are to New York and London: a city park of outstanding value, the lungs of the city. One hundred and eight hectares of meadow and grassy knolls, decked with flowers or covered with snow, are there for residents and visitors to enjoy.



The parks are used by 4 million visitors and tourists annually for sports, relaxation, outdoor concerts, and festivals, especially during Fête nationale du Québec celebrations, the Quebec Winter Carnival, and the Quebec City Summer Festival.

Photo: Flickr.com, TR archive

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