

Former Air Force Base
RCAF No. 5 Clinton

The Village of Yanastra welcomes you to explore its rich past and emerging future through an innovative Heritage Walking Tour.

... your *Huron East Heritage Adventure* begins here!

YOU ARE
HERE!



Please note that due to health and safety regulations, these walking tours do not provide access to the industrial buildings and properties

VANASTRA HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

Welcome to the former Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) No. 5 Clinton! As a former top-secret air force base and military installation, Vanastra is quite a unique community. The initial air base was established in 1941 by the Royal Air Force with the purchase of a 100-acre farm. The base was used to train and supply over 7,000 radar technicians and support staff for American, British and Canadian forces; radar, being a technology that was key to winning the Second World War.



After the war, the base grew as radar became even more important with the nuclear threat during the Cold War. At its peak, the base grew to 250 acres with an on-site population of over 2,000 people. The base was shut down in 1972 and evolved into the community of Vanastra as the old military buildings were converted to residential and industrial uses.



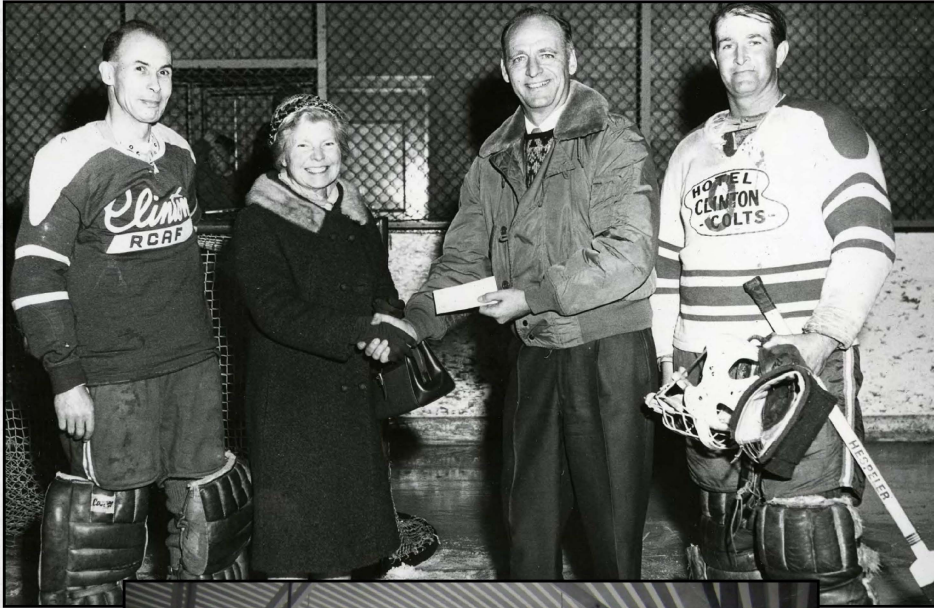
Vanastra Recreation Centre - 26 Toronto Blvd

You are standing in front of the former Protestant Chapel, which was acquired by an enthusiastic citizens' group after the base closed in 1971. With support from the community, it was converted into the Vanastra Recreation Centre, which houses a heated indoor pool, fully equipped fitness facility and community hall. It is also home to the Vanastra Early Childhood Learning Centre.



1 Home of the Thunderbolts - 7th Ave at end of Toronto Blvd

Home of the "Clinton Thunderbolts-The Champs of 1962," the arena saw Air Force as well as civilian teams face-off at center ice providing fast-paced entertainment for fans of the game. The 23,000 sq. ft. ice skating arena, officially opened on March 4, 1961, included seating for 500 spectators, dressing rooms, offices and storage areas. Its ice surface was comparable to that of Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens. Sadly, after the phase-out of CFB Clinton, the arena burned to the ground due to the spontaneous combustion of the hay stored within it.



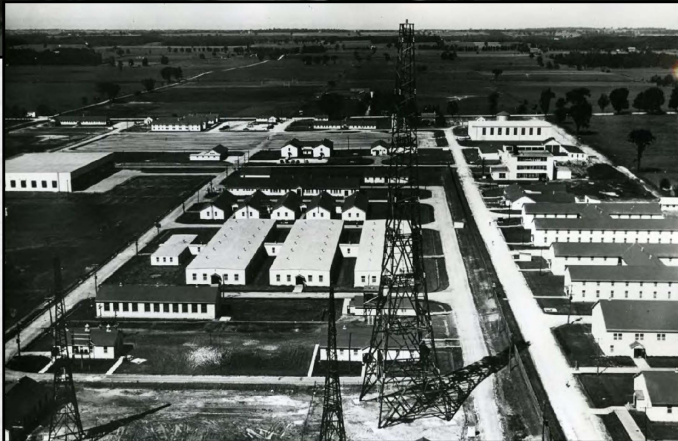
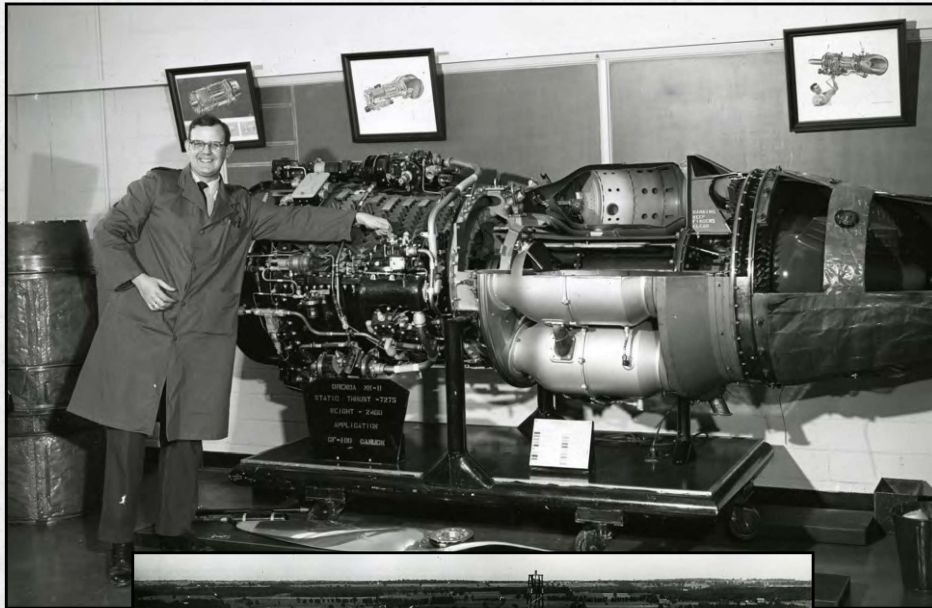
2 Mess Hall - Other Ranks (Junior Ranks) - 79 7th Ave.

From a central kitchen, food service staff prepared and served up to 3,000 meals a day in its many-windowed dining wings for servicemen stationed at the Clinton Base. Mess Dinners were official occasions requiring formal uniform (mess kit) with strict adherence to tradition and customs; the most important on April 1st each year to mark the 1924 founding of the RCAF. A special Christmas dinner was also held annually at which Officers served non-commissioned members a full holiday feast, and the youngest member of the Wing became Wing Commander for the day.



3 Radar & Communications School - Applied Training - 25 Winnipeg Rd.

Applied Training was housed in three large Qyanset-type buildings connected by passageways and an adjoining entrance/administrative area. Under the supervision of skilled instructors, Radar and Telecommunication Operators as well as Radar and Telecommunication Technicians diligently put to practical use all the theory they had learned, in preparation for postings in the field or at other Canadian Forces installations. The Technician knew and understood what was going on inside the black boxes and the Operator used the system of black boxes.



4 Radar & Communications School - 36 Winnipeg Rd.

The 150,000 square foot Radar & Communications School located on Winnipeg Street was built in 1952-53 at a cost of \$2.5 million dollars (\$20 million today). It had its own power generators, and housed electronic equipment, then valued at \$5 million dollars, in its 80 classrooms and laboratories. During its first year, the school graduated 2,000 students and within four years, 6,500 Canadians & 2,325 Americans graduated from its courses. Following the war, the world-class training centre at RCAF/CFB Clinton was designated a peacetime Signals School.



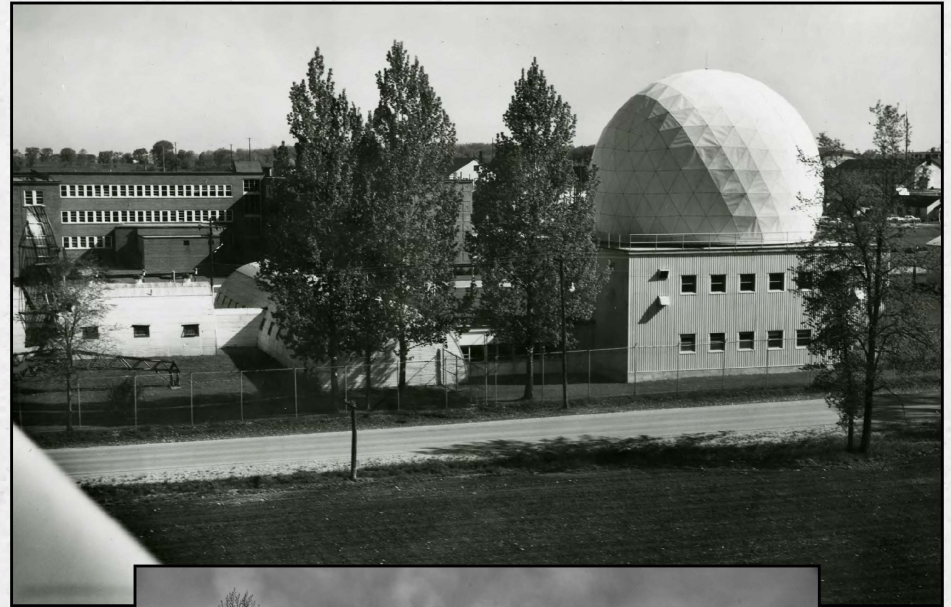
5 CFB Clinton-Vanastra Curling Club - 39 1st Ave.

Since the first rock was thrown in the 1950's, the Curling Club has been well-used. Four ice sheets, locker rooms, social areas and the accoutrement's of the game made for a good time to be had by all. In 1981 with a provincial grant available for recreational facilities and through fundraising by members, the club was rebuilt, updating and guaranteeing its structural longevity. A new ladies change room was added in 2001-2002-form and function needed the addition of a few decor touches and more space.



6 The Radome - 40 1st Ave.

The building and dome were built to the specifications of Air Defence Command in 1960 to house a state-of-the-art radar antennae and its corresponding electronics. RADAR—an acronym of RADIO Detection And Ranging utilizes pulses of radio energy which show up on a radar set as a single line (the time base). When reflected from a target, a radio echo is sent to the receiver, and a vertical 'blip' appears on the time base line. From this, distance, speed and location are determined. During the war, operators also learned they could identify weather systems with radar—a surprise even to scientists.



7 Stone Pillars & Parade Grounds - 2nd St.

Designated an historic site in 1984, these pillars and gates stand in mute but powerful testament to Canadian ingenuity, capability, and international diplomacy. The fieldstone pillars and wrought iron gates on Highway 4 mark the original entrance to the Royal Canadian Air Force/ Canadian Forces Base Clinton established in 1941, site of the first Radar & Communications School in North America - second worldwide to the only other training establishment located in England as of the late 1930's. They also mark the entrance to the former Parade Grounds that currently store road salt used to maintain local roads during the winter months.



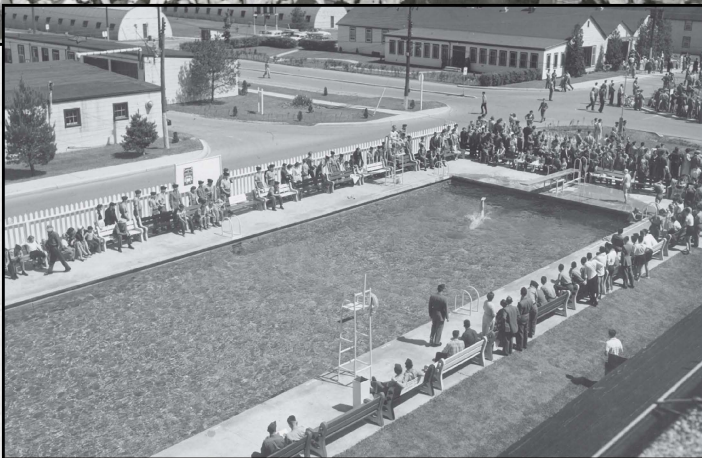
8 The Tyndall Farm & The Silo - Corner of 2nd St. and 5th Ave

In the midst of spring plowing, Norman Tyndall's life changed irrevocably in 1941. Four officers arrived at his home and within 48 hours, his 100-acre farm was purchased to become the future RCAF No. 5 Clinton base. Within 14 weeks of purchase, the first trainees arrived at the top-secret base to begin their Radar & Communications training. The first (RAF) Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Adrian Cocks, felt the farm's silo should remain as a 'mark of distinction' and as a result, it became affectionately called "Cocks' Folly".



9 Recreation Centre & Pool - 13 5th Ave

Built in 1941 as one of the Base's original buildings, the drill hall and physical training facility evolved into a very busy recreation and sports Centre. With the adjacent Olympic-standard swimming pool constructed in 1955, the "Rec" Centre, as it was known, was an important part of social life and exercise at CFB Clinton. Its large gymnasium, eight-lane bowling alley, exercise rooms, classrooms and ancillary areas comprised 35,000 square feet of space that facilitated countless hours of leisure time activities for base personnel and their families.



10 The Officers' Mess Hall - 3 7th Ave

As with others on the Base, the Officers' Mess was a place of camaraderie, special events, dining, socializing and also for entertaining distinguished guests. Originally this 15,400 sq. ft. building, now a retail enterprise and formerly the Red Maple Inn, contained two lounges, two bars, a television room, a dining room that could accommodate 200, kitchens and washrooms, all spread over four levels within two storeys. To the north just behind the building, the hillock that once surrounded the Officers' Mess pool can still be seen. A nearby outdoor patio added to the enjoyment of a summer's evening for those visiting the Mess.

A highlight at the Officers' Mess, as well as at other messes, was the family dinners held each month. Entire families gathered to enjoy a meal and the get-together. And those attending events at a Mess "dressed"—women donned evening wear and the enlisted men their mess kit (a more formal uniform). Local dignitaries, such as the Town of Clinton mayor, lawyers, physicians, bankers, and their wives were Associate Members of the Officers' Mess and were often invited there. It was a place of respite, a place where the responsibilities of command could be left at the door—along with headgear as none were worn by RCAF personnel once inside. The Officers' Mess was a private enclave amidst the busyness of the largest base in Canada.

