

Take a Guided Walk

1. Begin by looking North with the white lighthouse at Fort Constitution on the left. Across the Piscataqua you will see Fort Foster in Maine, the former lifesaving station on Wood Island (it replaced the Jerry's Point station once located adjacent to Fort Stark) and Whaleback Light. Located just past Fort Constitution is the University of New Hampshire Marine Research Program considered one of the leading such centers in the world.

2. The brick building known as the Ordnance Machine Shop was built in 1910. The nearby tower was part of the first mine command. Built in 1908 it was used along with towers at Forts Foster and Constitution for triangulation in sighting mines and targets. A museum is located in the shop and is open Saturday 12-4 summers or by contacting Ft. Stark Brigade and Friends.



3. Walk up the stairs at Battery Hays. Battery Alexander Hays had two 3-inch rapid fire guns on disappearing carriages (1902) with a fire control station in between. Below were ammunition and storage facilities. The earthworks to sea served as camouflage and protection from enemy fire. To the North a large cable ran across the Piscataqua river to Fort Foster controlling the anti-submarine net that protected Portsmouth harbor.

4. Follow the path to the right and note the 1942 Harbor Entrance Command Post (HECP) built on top of Battery Kirk (1904) to resemble the superstructure of a ship as seen from sea. Painted Battleship Grey during World War II, the HECP was the communication center controlling the Harbor defense from Biddeford, ME south to Hampton, NH including Portsmouth.



Sketch of Ft. Stark 1969 by Jack Beard

5. On your left below is an earthwork wall built of rocks and mortar. More than four feet tall and over seventy five feet long, the fortification probably dates from 1842-1844.

6. Continuing, on the right is Battery David Hunter, the largest battery at Fort Stark. It mounted two 12 inch rifles (1895 models) with ranges in excess of 20 miles. The concrete structure has columned galleries with a fire control station at the south end. Large rooms for ammunition, storage and electrical generators can be seen below.

7. As you walk down the hill, look beyond the second gun emplacement and note the breakwater built in 1898 and maintained by the Corps of Engineers. The schooner, Camilla May Page, was shipwrecked just off this breakwater in 1928. To your right at low tide you may see remains of the Fort Stark pier. Looking across Little Harbor you can see the Odiorne Point State Park breakwater and perhaps the camouflaged World War II Fort Dearborn battery that held two 16-inch guns.



Jerry's Point Life Saving Station

8. The small brick Oil Storage House (1903) was built to store oil for navigation lights. You may also see a small section of a stone wall (1873-1874) that was probably part of a battery that was never completed and then destroyed as Fort Stark was built. As you look back at the fort, notice the small camouflaged one room building used as a safety officer's post during WW II.

9. After you walk through the former searchlight passageway by Battery Hunter, note that Battery William Lytle on the left resembles Battery Hays. The hydrophone cable terminal linking Fort Stark with Fort Dearborn is hidden on the west side beyond the stone wall.



10. Walk- Camilla May Page On the Rocks by the lower side of Battery Hunter with its massive 24 inch walls and Doric columns, think of the living conditions of the thirty member gun crew during World War II. Over 2200 men and women were involved in the Portsmouth Harbor Defense.

11. During World War II in the field surrounding the flag pole (refurbished in 2008) were fourteen additional structures including quartermaster supplies, battery offices, barracks, mess halls, coal shed, first mine command offices, a fire station and a sentry booth. All the buildings were under camouflage netting supported by telephone poles to hide the buildings from potential enemy aircraft. At very low tide, you might see the remains of the Jerry's point lifesaving station pier on the left. Following World War II, the Navy used Fort Stark and its Army installations for reserve training until the property was deeded to the State of New Hampshire.

Feel Free to Contact the Fort Stark Brigade and Friends:

Peter Rice (603) 430-2028 or Carol White (603) 436-0352

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Welcome to FORT STARK

Fort Stark Historic Site is located on a peninsula historically called Jerry's Point on the Southeast corner of New Castle island. It overlooks the Piscataqua River, Little Harbor and the Gulf of Maine. Fort Stark was named in honor of General John Stark, commander of the New Hampshire forces at the Battle of Bennington (1777). It is one of seven forts built to protect Portsmouth Harbor. In New Hampshire are Forts Washington, Constitution (William and Mary), and Dearborn (Odiorne Point State Park); and Forts Sullivan, McClary and Foster are in Maine.

The earliest forts were built to protect the Colonists. As Portsmouth Harbor increased in importance and the Revolutionary shipbuilding industry grew, additional fortifications became important. With the establishment of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in 1800, harbor defense became critical. At Jerry's Point there is evidence of earthworks, circa 1842, and a stonework fort in 1873. Following the Spanish American war (1898) defense of key harbors became a national priority. Fortifications such as Fort Stark were constructed on both coasts during the Endicott period (1890-1920) and included Forts Constitution, McClary and Foster. The defense concept was to mine the harbors and erect gun batteries. However, no shots were fired in anger. The final fortifications occurred during World War II when batteries were added to Fort Foster and Fort Dearborn was built. The five remaining forts are considered historic sites and are open to the public today.



The main structure seen in the park was built to resemble a war ship when viewed from the sea. This building was used as the control center for harbor defenses.

**THE BUILDING AND THE BATTERYS ARE
NOT SAFE AND ARE NOT OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC. USE CAUTION WHEN WALKING.**

07-13-2010

FORT STARK: A TREASURE RECLAIMED

THE RECLAMATION OF FORT STARK

A COMMUNITY PROBLEM

It all began back in the early spring of 2007 when some New Castle citizens learned that Fort Stark was on the Police Department's list of problem locations, a refuge for those involved in illegal activities like drug abuse and vandalism.

With State funding for all parks at a near stagnant level and local law enforcement assets pretty much at their limit, they decided that if anything was to be done, the New Castle community would have to do it.

A NEW BEGINNING

On a bright Tuesday morning in May, 2007, the first group of Fort Stark Brigade volunteers unlocked the chain at the Park's entrance and went to work with chain saws, brush cutters, rakes and shovels. The primary objective was to clean the park up so that those who were abusing it could no longer hide and the beauty of the park could be reclaimed.



In 2007, much of the park was covered by Oriental Bittersweet vines; choking many large trees and bushes.

As the work continued and the number of volunteers increased, a bigger objective came into focus - to revitalize the park and make it once again a valued asset of the New Castle and New Hampshire communities. Illegal activities including vandalism and drug abuse have been significantly reduced.



Ft. Stark Brigade at Work

THE BEAUTY PART

But of all the wonderful things that have been accomplished at Fort Stark so far, the most wonderful is the restoration of the park itself. We now can share stunning ocean vistas and beautiful walking trails.



SHIPWRECK EXHIBIT

A new exhibit was installed in the museum in the fall of 2010. It highlights 78 of the many documented shipwrecks that have occurred around the Island of New Castle since the 17th Century. The exhibit highlights some amazing rescues; a short film is included.

JOIN THE BRIGADE!

The brigade is made up of a great bunch of people that know the satisfaction of watching the Park come alive is priceless. Workdays commence in May and continue on throughout the summer on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

MUSEUM

The Machine Shop Museum, which had fallen into a state of disrepair, has been cleaned up and is once again available to the Public. It is open Saturdays from 12 Noon until 4 PM Memorial Day to Labor Day or by appointment.



COME AND ENJOY THE PARK!



**Ft. Stark is a "Carry-In; Carry-Out" Park
No Pets
No Restroom Facilities**