

Fort Stark

STATE HISTORIC SITE

New Castle, New Hampshire

A Guided Walk

1. → Begin by looking north towards the Portsmouth Harbor 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 marine research 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.
3. → Walk up the stairs at Battery Hays. Battery Alexander Hays had two 3-inch pedestal mounted rapid fire guns with a fire control station in between. Below were ammunition and storage facilities. The earthworks on the sea side 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 Control 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 defenses from Biddeford, ME south to Cape Ann, MA including Portsmouth.
5. → On your left below is an earthwork wall built of rocks and mortar. Originally 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 guns (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.



Stop #2 - a 3 story building surrounded this First Mine Command



Stop #4 - Harbor Entrance Control Post



Between Stops #5 & 6 - location of 12-inch guns on Battery Hunter



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7.→ As you walk down the hill, look beyond the second gun emplacement and note the breakwater built in 1898 and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. The schooner, Camilla May Page, was wrecked 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.

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.

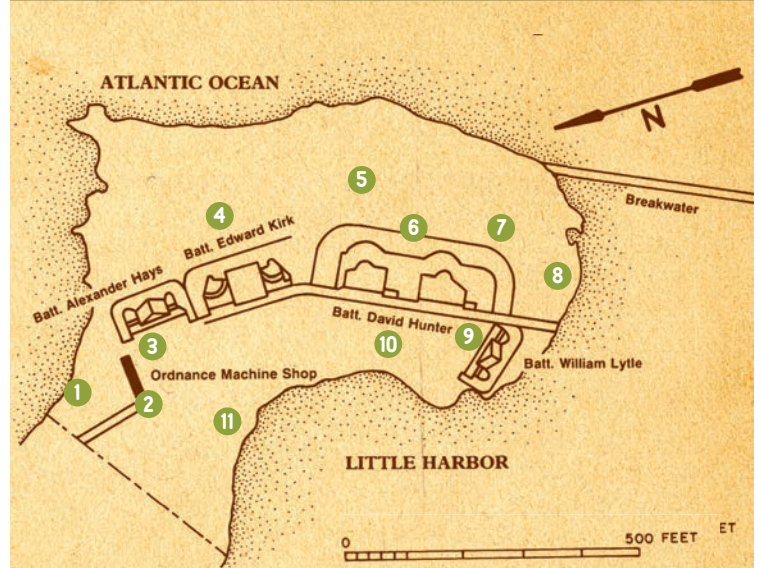
9.→ After you walk through the former searchlight passageway by Battery Hunter, note that Battery William Lytle on the left resembles Battery Hays. The hydrophone cable terminal linking Fort Stark with Fort Dearborn is hidden on the west side beyond the stone wall.

10.→ Walking by the lower side of Battery Hunter with its massive 24 inch walls and Doric columns, think of the working 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.



Stop #2 - Ordnance Machine Shop



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Stop #10 - Battery David Hunter

Fort Stark is a Carry in/Carry out Park.
Please help keep our park clean.
Pets are not permitted.

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