

and live fire drills were periodic requirements.

The guns themselves required constant maintenance. However, by mid-afternoon, duties were essentially done, and soldiers actively participated in athletics (baseball being especially popular) against local civilian teams traveling as far as Hampton where the 1906 game attracted 700 spectators. The Fort also had a popular minstrel troop that put on shows throughout the local area.

The fort's personnel were active in local civilian social pursuits including dinners, dances, outings on the local waters, hunts, and fishing expeditions. Several of the men of the fort married local women, and some descendants still reside in Beaufort County.

In 1899, a private's pay was \$13 - \$18/month, a sergeant \$15 - \$20/month, a lieutenant \$116 to \$125/month, and a captain \$150/month.

Was Fort Fremont ever in combat?

No; none of the Endicott-era forts were ever in combat, but simply served as a deterrent against attack—much as nuclear deterrence did in the Cold War.

What is important about Fort Fremont?

Fort Fremont serves as a historical remnant of military defense technology at the dawn of the 20th century as the U.S. became a major world power. No forts were on this site before and none afterwards, so the Fort Fremont Historical Site provides an unspoiled snapshot of this brief period in time.

In its day, Fort Fremont represented the state-of-the-art military technology against the predominant threat of the era—seaborne attack by modern steam-driven battleships mounting modern steel breech-loading guns of large caliber (8 to 12-inch) firing shells of unprecedented size and doing so with exceptional accuracy.

Fort Fremont used the same modern guns as the battleships it was designed to oppose, combined with a sophisticated fire control system and innovative defense structures and camouflage.

The fort generated its own electrical power, had modern lighting, running water, telephone communication, and even the forerunner of the fax machine as part of the fire control system.

For 350 years, starting with the French in 1562, Europeans and their descendants built fortifications to defend the great harbor provided by Port Royal Sound.

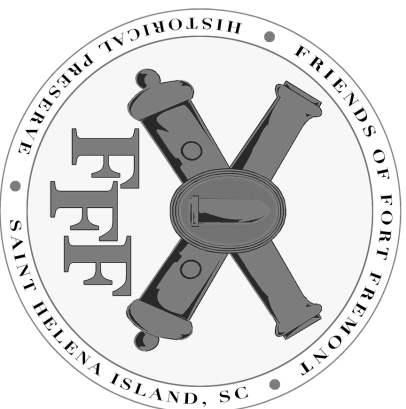
Fort Fremont was the last fort in this long local history of coastal forts and the sole remnant that we still have available to see.

How did Fort Fremont become a Park?

In 2004, Beaufort County purchased 15 acres of the original Fort property through the Rural & Critical Land Preservation Program and the Trust for Public Lands to preserve the site as an important historic landmark and public park. Fort Fremont is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Who are The Friends of Fort Fremont?

The Friends of Fort Fremont is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Fort Fremont as an educational, historical, natural, and cultural resource of the Spanish-American War era.



Friends of Fort Fremont

P. O. Box 982

Saint Helena Island, SC 29920

**FORT FREMONT
HISTORICAL SITE
&
BEACH PRESERVE**



Battery Fornace

TOUR FORT FREMONT

Travel back in time to the 1890s and the Spanish American War

Every 4th Saturday of the month

Docent-led tours start at 10:30 AM at the Saint Helena Branch Library* & last approximately 2 hours

Reservations NOT required

Learn the history, see a scale model of Fort Fremont as it stood in 1898, and travel down Land's End Road to walk through the remains of the fortifications.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

www.fortfremont.org

*6355 Jonathan Francis Senior Road
Saint Helena Island, SC 29920

Why was Fort Fremont built?

The Fort was built in response to the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898. Fort Fremont's mission was to defend Port Royal Naval Station on Parris Island.

What was so important here that needed to be defended by a fort?

Port Royal Sound is the deepest natural harbor between New York and Key West.

Port Royal Naval Station in 1898 was a critical part of the U.S. Navy's network of coaling stations for warships and had the only dry dock in the South capable of holding the modern battleships and heavy cruisers the U.S. Navy was beginning to build and deploy.

Fort Fremont was part of the Endicott Era fort system built from 1890 to WWI which provided then state-of-the-art coastal defense against new battleships and heavy cruisers of the era.

When was Fort Fremont built?

Fort Fremont was authorized on 6 April 1898, six weeks after the USS Maine sank in Havana, Cuba, and two and a half weeks before war was formally declared.

Temporary batteries were in place and submarine mines were deployed in the Beaufort River during the Spanish-American War.

The concrete batteries we see today and supporting administration and barracks buildings that no longer exist were built 1898-1899.

The U.S. Army occupied the Fort from 1898 through 1911.

Why was Fort Fremont abandoned?

Port Royal Naval Station was moved to Charleston, SC, and in 1909, a new dry dock was opened there to replace the one on Parris Island. Fort Fremont's mission to protect the Naval Station and dry dock no longer existed.

Who was stationed at Fort Fremont?

During the Spanish-American War (1898), the temporary batteries were manned successively by Navy personnel, 2nd NC Volunteer Infantry, and a detachment of the Heavy Battery, SC Volunteers. The submarine mines were under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers.

From 1899 to 1907, the Fort was manned by Coast Artillery Companies.

How big was a Coast Artillery Company?

In 1906, it consisted of 109 enlisted men and three officers. The commanding officer was a Captain.

What were the defenses of Fort Fremont?

Battery Jesup

The large concrete battery included three 10-inch guns mounted on disappearing carriages which could defend against large capital warships (battleships & heavy cruisers).

- Maximum range: 8 miles (would reach almost 1/2-way across Hilton Head)
- Projectile weight: 510 to 617 lb, depending on projectile type.
- Rate of fire: 1 round per minute.

The disappearing carriage used a large lead weight in a circular hole under the gun (visible today at Battery Jesup) to control gun position.

After loading the gun, the azimuth and elevation as determined by the plot room and fire control tower were entered, then the weight was released pulling the gun up to fire over the concrete parapet.

The recoil when the gun fired forced the gun back behind the parapet and simultaneously lifted the weight. The weight was locked into place, the gun reloaded, and a new azimuth and elevation could be reset for a new target or to correct the previous shot.

The gun was then ready to have the weight released to fire again—all of this took one minute. The disappearing carriage allowed the gun to be only exposed to counterfire for a matter of seconds.

The disappearing carriage would be made obsolete with the development of effective military aircraft in WWI.

Target range, bearing, and course were determined by measurements using essentially specialized surveying equipment in a fire control tower (foundation still visible on Triangle Road) that were relayed by phone to a plot room below gun pit three (southernmost gun) where the calculations were made to determine a firing solution for each gun.

Submarine Mines

Electrically detonated mines were to be deployed in the Beaufort River to prevent enemy ships from running past Fort Fremont.

The Army had plans to allow mining the East Coast in 3 days if necessary.

The mines for Fort Fremont were stored at the arsenal in Augusta.

Battery Fornace

The small concrete battery had two 4.72-inch guns mounted on pedestals rather than disappearing carriages which shot directly over the parapet and were intended to prevent small boats from clearing the minefield.

- Maximum range: 6.3 miles
- Projectile weight: 45 lb
- Rate of fire: 6 rounds per minute

What happened to the guns?

In 1918, two 10-inch guns went to France for WWI, and one went to Sandy Hook Proving Ground, NJ where it was eventually scrapped. The 4.72-inch guns remained until 1920 when they were sent to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD. In 1926, one was donated to Confluence, PA; both guns were eventually scrapped.

What was at Fort Fremont?

The fort consisted of 170 acres. The two concrete batteries are only a portion of the original fort. To the north (toward Beaufort), the rest of the fort consisted of barracks, mess hall, PX, officer and NCO quarters, administrative and engineering buildings, hospital, and stables.

Today only the brick hospital survives as a private residence. Fort Fremont was a small military village and is recreated in the Diorama located at the Saint Helena Branch Library.

What was life at Fort Fremont like?

Coast Artillery was generally considered good duty, compared to other Army branches such as infantry, cavalry, or field artillery. Training was constant in order to maintain proficiency with the complex guns and firing systems, calisthenics were daily except Saturday and the training, inspection by higher headquarters