



Governors Island National Monument

New York, New York



Historic Resource Study

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	v
List of Acronyms	ix
Foreword	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Preface	xv
PART I: Governors Island in New York Harbor	
Chapter 1: Early History of Governors Island	1
Chapter 2: 1790-1815 at Governors Island	19
Chapter 3: Bureaucrats, Soldiers and Families: Development of the U.S. Army Installation at Governors Island, 1815-1860	43
Chapter 4: The Civil War and Its Aftermath at Governors Island, 1861-1878	83
PART II: Governors Island in the Wider World	
Chapter 5: Governors Island as an Administrative Center, 1878-1917	119
Chapter 6: Contested Ground: Debating Use and Control of Governors Island, 1888-1938	137
Chapter 7: Prelude, War and Afterwards: The Era of World War I at Governors Island, 1909-1920	167
Chapter 8: Governors Island, 1920s-World War II	189
Chapter 9: World War II and After at Governors Island	211
Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study	225
Bibliography	229
Index	245
Appendices:	253
Appendix A: Fort Jay Site Plan, February 1964	
Appendix B: Governors Island, Former Building Use. Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium, September 1997	

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. 1639? Manatus Map. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm068.html (accessed December 4, 2005).	5
Figure 2. First of two sheets, published by Jeffrey's and Faden in 1776, this extremely rare plan shows the city as surveyed by Bernard Ratzer a decade earlier. Parts of New Jersey and Brooklyn and all of Manhattan north to what was 59th Street appear. A fine view of New York from Governors Island extends along the bottom. A legend identifies important forts, churches, public buildings, markets and other points of interest. This map is currently published by Historic Urban Plans, Inc., Ithaca, NY, and is used by permission.	10
Figure 3. John Montrésor. Design for Governor's Island. [1766?] Manuscript, pen-and-ink. At head of title, in pencil: No. 50. Map and Geography Division, Library of Congress.....	11
Figure 4. John Montrésor. Fortification Drawing, Governors Island. Map and Geography Division, Library of Congress.	11
Figure 5. 1794 plan of original Fort Jay. Found in <i>The Governors Island Club, Governors Island, 1637-1937, Its History and Development</i> (New York: 1937), p. 25. Original source not identified.	25
Figure 6. Historic American Building Survey drawing of the sally port. Library of Congress HABS, NY,31-GOVI,1 http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer (accessed December 4, 2005).	26
Figure 7. Jonathan Williams. http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/coe.htm#6 (accessed December 5, 2005).	27
Figure 8. Jonathan Williams' Engineering Journal, October-December 1805. Williams, Jonathan mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University-Bloomington.	33
Figure 9. Drawing of Robins Reef and the rest of New York Harbor. Note the fort shape on Governors Island in the upper right-hand area. Jonathan Williams' Engineering Journal, October-December 1805. Williams, Jonathan mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University-Bloomington.	34
Figure 10. Map of Governors Island fortifications, ca. 1813. Record Group 77 - Fortification Files, Architecture and Cartographic Branch, National Archives.	39

Figure 11. Col. Henry Burbeck. Photo from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers History Web site. http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/coe.htm#5 (accessed December 5, 2005).	40
Figure 52. General Winfield Scott, Photo by Mathew Brady. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.	45
Figure 13. General Edmund P. Gaines. http://www.geocities.com/rodent70/html/sem1836.html (accessed April 24, 2006).	46
Figure 14. Building 135 is composed of the first structures built at the Arsenal in the 1830s. The officers' quarters on the left are one of the original two quarters for those in charge of this unit at Governors Island. HABS-HAER Report.....	50
Figure 15. 1839 map with some indication of the Arsenal in the upper left hand side of the drawing. HABS-HAER Report.	51
Figure 16. Building 104, with the clock replaced by a window in the tower. HABS-HAER Report.	53
Figure 17. Fort Jay barracks, Building 214. HABS-HAER Report.	58
Figure 18. Transverse drawing of Building 1. HABS-HAER Report.	62
Figure 19. Building 3 photographed in 1864 when it was still a warehouse. HABS-HAER Report.	64
Figure 20. Building 3, as adapted for housing. Note the unchanged roofline on the left end of the building. HABS-HAER Report.	65
Figure 21. Building 9 Post Hospital, 1864 Photograph. HABS-HAER Report.	67
Figure 22. 1839 hospital building, reused as officers quarters, Building 9. HABS-HAER Report.	68
Figure 23. Post hospital floor plan, second floor, no date. HABS-HAER Report.	70
Figure 24. Wooden church that was replaced by the current stone one. Photo, 1905. http://www.correctionhistory.org/civilwar/governorsisland/frame_main4.html (accessed October 27, 2006).	73
Figure 25. Dr. John McVickar, the volunteer vicar of Governors Island. Photograph found at http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/earlycc/images/mcvickar.htm ...	74

Figure 26. Governors Island, 1860. This is claimed to be the first photograph taken of the island. Photo included by courtesy of the New York Public Library in the Tercentenary Governors Island, New York program, June 13-20, 1937, MC PA Islands – Gov’s Island, Museum of the City of New York.	83
Figure 27. Shipment of Military Stores on Board the Steamship "Baltic" at New York, April 8, 1861. <i>Harper's Weekly</i> , April 20, 1861, p. 252.	89
Figure 28. Parade of United States Troops on Governor's [sic] Island. Before Embarkation. <i>Harper's Weekly</i> , May 4, 1861, p. 285.	89
Figure 29. Mathew Brady photograph from the Civil War period at Governors Island. Brady Collection, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860 – 1982 Still Pictures Branch, NARA II.	111
Figure 30. Castle Williams during the Civil War. Note the lack of a sea wall at this time. Brady Collection, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860 – 1982 Still Pictures Branch, NARA II.	113
Figure 31. Building 16, Officers' Quarters, Nolan Park. HABS-HAER Report.	121
Figure 32. Building 19, a duplex built to standard plans. HABS-HAER Report.	125
Figure 33. Building 403, Brick Row, built 1903-04 to standard plans. HABS-HAER Report.	126
Figure 34. Building 20, finished in 1902, was the last house built on Nolan Park. Originally built for one family, it was later modified to house two. HABS-HAER Report.	127
Figure 35. Building 140 is in the center of the photograph, next to the ferry slip. HABS-HAER Report.	128
Figure 36. Casemates in Castle Williams used as cells, 1880s. William H. Rideing, "Garrison Life At Governor’s Island, New York Harbor." <i>Scribners Monthly</i> 21, no. 4 (February 1881).	130
Figure 37. Prisoners in Castle Williams 1880s. William H. Rideing, "Garrison Life At Governor’s Island, New York Harbor." <i>Scribners Monthly</i> 21, no. 4 (February 1881).	130
Figure 38. 1908 map, First U.S. Army Engineers. HABS-HAER Report.	157
Figure 39. Wilbur Wright flying over Governors Island, New York 1909. Library of Congress.	158
Figure 40. Wilbur Wright taking off from the air strip at Governors Island, September 29, 1909. Wright State University Archives.	169

Figure 41. Wilbur Wright and others on Governor’s Island, New York, n.d. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress.	169
Figure 42. Ruth Law flew a salute to President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 in New York Harbor. Wilson was there to light the Statue of Liberty.	172
Figure 43. Cord Meyer, left, one of the graduates of the pilot training school at Governors Island in 1916, and J. Walter Struthers. Photo from collection of Rick Bjorklund, duplicated on the Early Birds’ web page, www.earlyaviator.com/emeyer.htm (accessed January 2, 2006).	174
Figure 44. Map of World War I facilities at Governors Island. The railroad tracks run from the dock in the southeast corner into each individual warehouse. The temporary buildings are warehouses and barracks for both black and white soldiers separately.	179
Figure 45. One of the engines and some boxcars of the Governors Island railroad, 1917. Photo from http://members.aol.com/christy623/govisletour.html (accessed October 29, 2006).	181
Figure 46. Troop ship Leviathan, the renamed Vaterland which was captured and interned in Hoboken as the United States entered World War I. This image can be found at http://www.greatships.net/leviathan.html (accessed January 2, 2006).	183
Figure 47. ARC Identifier: 533501. Commander of United States Labor Battalion and staff. Captain E.S. Jones and staff at Governor’s Is . . . , 09/16/1918. Still Picture Records LICON, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives.	186
Figure 48. Company of [African American] troops that make up labor battalion, Governor’s [<i>sic</i>] Island, New York, 1917-ca. 1919. ARC identifier: 533589, Still Picture Records LICON, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives.	187
Figure 49. General Dennis E. Nolan, the father of Army intelligence units and Commanding General at Governors Island. Photo from http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/nolan_dennis.htm (accessed October 29, 2006).	201
Figure 50. Nurses’ quarters built in the 1930s near Castle Williams. HABS-HAER Report.	205
Figure 51. “Grant and Lee, April 1865.” Segment of a 1938 mural by T. Johnson Loftin commissioned by the Federal Arts Program of the Works Progress Administration. The mural is located in entry hallway in Pershing Hall, Building 125, Governors Island National Monument. Photograph by Mike Shaver.	208

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
GSA	General Services Administration
GIPEC	Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation
HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey
HRS	Historic Resource Study
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NPS	National Park Service
VTS	Vessel Traffic Services
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WPA	Works Progress Administration

FOREWORD

Governors Island National Monument was first established by Presidential proclamation as a unit of the National Park System in 2001 in order to preserve in public ownership key defensive fortifications built to protect New York City, located just a few hundred yards away. Fort Jay and Castle Williams, erected between 1796 and 1811 as part of the First and Second American systems of coastal fortification, are among the finest examples of defensive structures in use between the Renaissance and the American Civil War.

The Monument, consisting of approximately 22 acres on the northern tip of Governors Island, comprises only a portion of the former Governors Island military post, which increasingly surrounded the forts between the late 19th and mid 20th centuries when the base served as an important command headquarters. The United States Army continuously occupied Governors Island between 1794 and 1966, after which it became the U.S. Coast Guard's largest installation for the next 30 years.

This historic resource study (HRS) was undertaken in conjunction with the initial National Park Service (NPS) planning effort for the Monument and provides baseline information. In addition to synthesizing the history of the army on Governors Island, this study pays particular attention to the role of the base in New York City history. The army post, so physically close, seemed especially attractive to political leaders in burgeoning New York between the late 19th and mid 20th centuries, and as this study documents, the city sought to regain control of the island first for a park and later for an airport. The manner in which the base was developed during this period reflected the ongoing controversy.

The study was undertaken by Jannelle Warren-Findley and Nancy Dallett, under the nationwide NPS cooperative agreement with the Organization of American Historians. Dr. Findley is co-director of Arizona State University's (ASU) Graduate Program in Public History; co-author Nancy Dallett, also associated with the ASU program, is a principal of Projects in the Public Interest, a consulting firm. We would like to give special thanks to Susan Ferentinos, the Public History Manager for the OAH, who managed the project on behalf of the organization.

Paul Weinbaum
History Program Manager
Northeast Region
May 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This historic resource study of Governors Island, New York, covers the history of this place that sits of the southern tip of Manhattan in New York Harbor from its first human habitation to 1996, when the U.S. Coast Guard vacated the installation and the General Services Administration assumed responsibility for it. Its multilayered military history reflects the more general story of the United States Army in its origins and development over nearly two centuries. That military history is traced out on Governors Island by the buildings and landscapes created to house and train soldiers and administer military programs and those changes over time as buildings, functions, and personnel changed. In addition, however, extensive examination of primary and secondary sources in a range of fields has revealed a complex story of relationships between Governors Island and the harbor, as well as the island and the City of New York. Thus this study explores webs of relationships: those of the Army on Governors Island and in New York Harbor; those of the Army there and the Army decision-makers in other places, particularly Washington, DC; those of officers and soldiers who lived and worked together in this place; and the relationships of both to the city and to the harbor region. But it returns finally to Governors Island itself and the patterns that succeeding generations of use made on that small but important cultural landscape.

Many people helped me on this final draft. Nancy Dallett wrote extensively about the draft riots of the Civil War period and attempts on the part of city and Congress to establish an airport on Governors Island. Dallett did extensive original research in depositories in New York City, and I am very grateful for her help and advice. Shannon Wright, who was composing her own archaeological context when I started my research, was generous with notes, drafts, suggestions and sources. Archivists Diane Dimkoff, former student and colleague, and Cindy Fox, who is a long-time colleague, made navigating the National Archives at College Park and downtown Washington easier than it might have been otherwise. Marvin Kabalkoff at the Archives branch in Waltham, MA, led me to Coast Guard records in a cave in Missouri. All the archivists and librarians that we worked with were extremely helpful in New York, Washington and, by e-mail, Kansas City, Lee's Summit, and other locations. Particular thanks go to Zoe Davis at the U.S. Senate Library; Melanie Bower at the Museum of the City of New York; historians and archivists at the New York City Parks Department, the New-York Historical Society, the New York City Landmarks Commission, the Municipal Archives, the New York Public Library Science and Industry Branch; and to historians Randy Mason and Andrew Dolkart. Dr. Bill Baldwin and Dr. Paul Walker of the Office of History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supported this study with bibliographies, unpublished materials, and permissions. Thomas Clark of the New York Corrections Society and Lonnie Speer, who wrote the book on Civil War prisons, both shared information and helped me find other sources. Dr. Patricia McIntosh, architect and entrepreneur, read the entire manuscript and offered suggestions. Three National Park Service reviewers and three academic reviewers engaged by the Organization of American Historians evaluated the manuscript. I am grateful for their suggestions.

I have also been aided by those who administered this project. Dr. Susan Ferentinos, who administers the NPS-Organization of American Historians' program on behalf of the OAH has worked hard to make my time productive. She also went to the Lilly

Acknowledgements

Library to check out the Jonathan Williams papers, a contribution not normally part of her work plan. Linda Neal, Superintendent of Governors Island has been helpful and supportive. Dr. Paul Weinbaum, historian for the National Park Service in Boston, has been an invaluable advisor and colleague. Some of the students in HIST 526, Historians and Preservation, in the spring of 2003 added insights and research strategies. They included Sarah Weber, Kevin Norton and Trish Blaine. Darby Moore-Doyle, archeologist, former National Park Service staffer, and public history Ph.D. student at Arizona State, was particularly helpful.

Friends, including Dr. Rebecca Hancock Welch of Arlington, VA, shared homes and meals and made the project budget stretch much further than it might have otherwise. My family supported me both at home and while I was away for extended research trips. Arizona State University gave me time off from teaching and summer money to do the research. I am grateful to them all. Errors of fact or interpretation, however, are mine alone.

Janelle Warren-Findley
Tempe, Arizona
November 6, 2006.

PREFACE

Governors Island, New York, is a 172-acre island in New York Harbor, half a mile from the southern tip of Manhattan. Its seawalls protect it from the harbor, the East River and Buttermilk Channel, which separates it from Brooklyn. Its setting appears to be modern and urban: the skyscrapers of New York appear suddenly from behind trees and outside conference room windows. The Brooklyn Bridge links Manhattan and Brooklyn just to the east. The Statue of Liberty stands to the west, across the water. The frantic pace of activity in the harbor, with water taxis scurrying, the Staten Island ferry cruising by, and ships from every nation bringing goods and taking them away again, is both similar to and contrasts with the historic community built here by the U.S. Army and the U.S. Coast Guard over the last two centuries. In fact, this now serene community itself bustled with activity from its days as a fishing camp for the local Native American tribes before European contact to World War II and the following period as the country's largest U.S. Coast Guard installation.

Yet Governors Island always stood as a separate and remote green spot in the heart of the most active and vigorous urban setting in the United States. The installation has been both military fort and headquarters. A community of families, troops, officers, civilians, prisoners and visitors from the outside developed and endured, brought to the spot by boat or, occasionally, by airplane or helicopter. The historic geography of Governors Island reflects those individual and community narratives to create a layered, changing physical picture of Governors Island during its long history.

A U.S. military post from 1800 to 1996, the island housed two forts built to defend New York during the War of 1812: Fort Jay and Castle Williams. There were a few additional buildings at that time. The space, in contrast, was covered with more than 200 buildings when vacated by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1996. A 22-acre portion of the island, including the two historic forts, was designated by President George W. Bush in 2003 as a National Historical Monument owned and managed by the U.S. National Park Service, or NPS. The NPS-controlled portion of the island will become part of the large NPS presence in New York Harbor. The remainder of the island was transferred in 2003 to the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) which is a New York State government organization.¹

¹ Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium, *Governors Island Land Use Study, Land and Facility Assessment*, September 1997, p. 1; National Park Service, "Governors Island National Monument," <http://www.nps.gov/gois/> (accessed December 22, 2005); New York State Office of Science, Technology and Academic Research, Press release, January 31, 2003, <http://www.nystar.state.ny.us/pr/03/press04-03.htm> (accessed December 22, 2005).

When NPS began to study how to manage its resources on Governors Island, a number of cultural resource studies were required to provide information for planning purposes. This historic resource study is one of those planning documents. Historic resources are human-produced sites, structures, artifacts, documents and landscapes. At present, there are many buildings on Governors Island set in a more or less designed military landscape, reflecting the last period of use after World War II. More broadly, however, one of the major aims of a historic resource study is to set the context of the place in all of its human uses. The history of the landscape and the various ways that humans have remade, utilized and changed the site shape the material culture that remains. That means that the histories of the resources at Governors Island are viewed as snapshots of time or layers of cultural cartography. History driven by material culture, although organized chronologically in this case, uses change in the island's cultural geography over time to give a frame to the military and civilian histories taking place there.

But more than human agency was involved in the shaping of Governors Island. The island's geographic location helped, in turn, to affect the ways that the site-specific history intersects with larger histories of New York Harbor, the City itself, the region and the nation. Context asks the "so what?" question: why did the material culture that we treasure come into being in the first place? What sustained it and kept it from deteriorating or disappearing in a changing cultural landscape?² What relationship to the harbor, bustling with boats and commerce, did this U.S. Army installation have? Unlike most isolated Army forts, guarding the western frontier, the installation at Governors Island lay at the foot of the city of New York, one of the world's great cities. What relationships developed between the city and the military personnel, and how did those change over time?

In addition to the answers to those questions, managers and planners need to understand what parts of the history and the cultural landscape of Governors Island are lost, due to time or weathering or replacement. How can we talk in a historic resource study about those who came before us if their buildings or camps have disappeared, or like tents and temporary buildings, were not meant to stand permanently? In the case of Governors Island, layers of historical activity occurred. As one of the nation's oldest continuously utilized military installations, but one limited in size, Governors Island

² For an examination of the cultural landscape, see Lisa Oudemool, "Draft Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Governors Island National Monument," August 23, 2002, Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service. Michael Holleran, *Boston's Changeful Times: Origins of Preservation and Planning in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) pp. 15-38 argues that change, rather than permanence, shaped American urban areas like Boston until the end of the nineteenth century. Such a statement is absolutely characteristic of Governors Island and other military sites in the United States for far longer.

served a range of functions both for the U.S. Army and for the Coast Guard. Often, many commands or schools were located on the Island at the same time, each organization bringing with it its own commanders, personnel, activities and needs. Only a few of those activities are marked with buildings or memorials that exist today.

To fill in the gaps in the material record, historians rely on relatively scarce or non-contiguous original written documents, maps, photographs and plans. Such materials explain the larger set of historical developments that allowed Governors Island to play the military and civilian roles that it did in New York Harbor, as well as in the military undertakings of the United States from 1800 on. The following study examines both material culture and documentary evidence of various sorts to tease out the many contexts within which Governors Island functioned. Those contexts will, in turn, help place where Governors Island fits in the development of the nation; the defense of New York Harbor; and a whole series of other military and military-related activities that were carried out on the island over time.

Revised Thematic Framework

In 1996, National Park Service historians and a group of other professional historians developed a revised historical thematic framework for historical studies researched for NPS use.³ “Thematic frameworks,” developed for use by NPS in the 1930s, enabled historians to categorize historic sites and structures within the overall framework of American history. The scheme divided American history up into a set of themes: military history, political history, etc. Revised from time to time, the thematic structure appeared by the early 1990s to reflect nothing of the social history approaches that gained currency as a new way of asking questions that had not been recognized as central to the narrative before the 1970s. Thus, in the early 1990s, NPS asked historians from the agency and from universities around the country to devise a new framework that would allow different questions to be asked of the material culture that NPS managed. The major categories include:

- I. Peopling Places
- II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
- III. Expressing Cultural Values
- IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

³ See National Park Service. “History in the National Park Service, Themes & Concepts,” <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/revthem.htm>, for discussion of the themes and their application to historical research and interpretation.

V. Developing the American Economy

VI. Expanding Science and Technology

VII. Transforming the Environment

VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community⁴

These categories link to each other like a series of circles. The circles, in turn, are connected by “three historical building blocks: people, time, and place.”⁵ This new analytic framework allows for asking questions about race, class and gender in the historical record. It also breaks through assumptions about historical actors in a rigidly hierarchical community like that of the American military and gives voice to a wider range of players including troops, civilians and families at posts like Governors Island and the wider community beyond the installation’s seawalls.

The use of themes as a way to organize the history of Governors Island proved to be enormously complicated. Change was a constant, as Holleran noted (see footnote 2), but some Army organizations in the same location changed more slowly than others and than the world around them. The various organizations that appeared and disappeared from the island during its two centuries of federal military control introduced and then removed some themes while endlessly repeating others. As a result of this additional layering of both change and lack of change, this study will follow a chronological organization, with some exploration of specific themes within that chronology.

The thematic approach, however, allows for a wider range of topics to be explored in the history of Governors Island than does simple chronology. One important theme included “the peopling” of the island from pre-contact times to the present. Those present on Governors Island from the beginning included native tribes and then, Europeans. Those who actually lived on Governors Island for longer than a few months in temporary housing included not only military personnel but, after the 1840s at least, some of their families, and depending on their rank, their servants. The presence of families on the island meant, in turn, that services for those non-military dependents, such as schools, attracted civilian teachers and other workers from the surrounding metropolitan area. Those outsiders commuted, first by rowboat, then later by ferry. In contrast to the movement of people from Governors Island, such as children taking the ferry to school in New York City or young men out on the town, a whole population of residents of New York commuted to the island every weekday to build buildings, wash clothes, and, at a later period, run the telephone exchange, among other activities.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Other themes are useful to this study as well. Transforming the environment from the deforestation of the island to the adding of the southern two-thirds of the current island configuration through the use of fill applies here. The buildings and the landscape reflect the theme, “Expressing Cultural Values,” as they change physically over time and new architectural and landscape designs are introduced, often reflecting the Army’s notions of how contemporary architecture could be expressed in a collective military setting. Military history is included in the thematic framework under “Shaping the Political Landscape,” but in addition, at Governors Island, the political landscape from the pre-Civil War period forward included various political relationships with New York City, as well as the American military and the civilian leadership of that military force. “The Changing Role of the United States in the World Community” can be traced at least partially by following deployments from and returns to Governors Island, of both the able-bodied and the sick and wounded from the Seminole Wars in Florida through the war in Vietnam.

Documenting the thematic history of Governors Island proved to be much more difficult than tracing chronology. That was because the records of the U.S. Army and the limited number of Coast Guard materials in the National Archives and other repositories that were reviewed for this study, like government documents generally, present information chronologically. Military records, particularly for the earlier time periods, are also scattered and incomplete. They were examined for their reporting on the material culture of Governors Island. The primary documents relating to buildings, sites, landscapes and the changes created within and outside them turned up most often in Record Group 393: Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1817 – 1940; Record Group 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774 – 1985; Record Group 74: Records of the Bureau of Ordnance, 1818 – 1967; and Record Group 77: Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1789 – 1988. These are held at the National Archives either in College Park Maryland or Washington, D.C., except for a few materials at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) branch in New York City. The records of the Coast Guard, in Record Group 26: Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, 1785 – 1992, provided general information on the period of the Coast Guard’s occupation of Governors Island. The bulk of documentary materials related to the Coast Guard at Governors Island reside today at NARA’s Central Plains Region (Lee’s Summit) in Lee’s Summit, Missouri. Because those records proved to be vast and unorganized, NPS determined that the material culture to be analyzed at Governors Island should pay only passing attention to the Coast Guard’s period there.

Documentary materials in the National Archives and other depositories also covered commands that did not consider Governors Island a central part of their histories. Those included Record Group 112: Records of the Office of the Surgeon General (Army), 1775

– 1959; or Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860 – 1982, among others. The social history uncovered for this study in such collections proved to be rich and important to the development of the island itself.

To help explain the intersections of chronology and theme, the study refers to three popular documents written between 1890 and 1951 that help to present thematic materials in chronological order and were used by the military services themselves to understand their own history. Copies of these documents can be found in official records of both the U.S. Army (RG 393) and the U.S. Coast Guard (RG 26), as well as in the Library of Congress collection and that of the New York Public Library. The sources are Blanche Wilder Bellamy, “Governor’s [sic] Island”⁶; Edmund Banks Smith, *Governors Island, Its Military History under Three Flags, 1637-1922*⁷ and A. C. M. Azoy, *Three Centuries under Three Flags: The Story of Governors Island from 1637*.⁸ Although these authors repeat some of the same material and do not formally footnote their findings, their internal references to a range of sources make them mostly reliable for an overall view of Governors Island and its varied history.

Some of the thematic material, particularly where it reflects the experiences of the families and civilians on Governors Island, was found in published materials from the time in newspapers and magazines, as well as family histories and letters. Some of that material was available in historical institutions and some, only on the Internet.

A rich historic preservation and planning literature surveyed the buildings on Governors Island. The most complete and frequently cited in the literature is the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) collection, a 50-page historical overview dating from 1965 and twenty-eight individual studies complete with historical information, photographs, drawings and historical maps. The information included in this documentation is primarily architectural in scope, but includes some strictly historical information. The HABS reports on Governors Island are held by the Library of Congress.⁹ The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission wrote an excellent

⁶ Blanche Wilder Bellamy, “Governor’s Island” in *Historic New York*, Vol 1, Being the First Series of the Half Moon Papers, ed. Maud Wilder Goodwin, Alice Carrington Royce, and Ruth Putnam, 163-181 (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1899).

⁷ Edmund Banks Smith, *Governors Island, Its Military History under Three Flags, 1637-1922* (New York: Valentines Manual Inc, 1923).

⁸ Headquarters First Army, Governors Island, New York, 1951. As late as the 1970s, Coast Guard public relations staff rewrote this document to include Coast Guard information.

⁹ Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983, Library of Congress. Because the Coast Guard authorized this study, the cutter SORREL is included in the historic building documentation. This set of materials will hereafter be referred to as HABS-HAER Report. See: “American

short history of Governors Island and the phases of building there to support an application for New York Landmark status for Governors Island in 1996.¹⁰ John Cullinane Associates prepared a report, “Buildings & Property Summary Sheets,” for the General Services Administration (GSA) in April 2000 that assessed properties within the historic district for planning purposes as GSA prepared to dispose of Governors Island.¹¹ Finally, for the history of Army buildings and construction practices, as part of the Legacy Resource Management activities undertaken by the Department of Defense in the early 1990s, the Army contracted with R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc. to produce the four-volume study *National Historic Context For Department Of Defense Installations, 1790 – 1940* in 1995.¹² Because Governors Island was owned by the U.S. Coast Guard at that time, and the Coast Guard was specifically excluded from the study,¹³ Governors Island was not surveyed. However, the island’s history of the built environment tracked very closely most of the Goodwin findings for other installations of similar age, including others in New York Harbor. Their study, with its complex, national installation-wide context, has been used to help explain the significance of the buildings at Governors Island from the perspective of the U.S. Army. These materials, all government documents, contain important material culture information that cannot be found in so specific a form in the monographic literature. Thus, this report relied heavily on what historians would call “gray literature” to explain the architectural and cultural landscape developments that generally arose from changes in the military or social uses of Governors Island.

The materials cited here help to fill in the social and cultural history of Governors Island, as well as the military and civilian stories. They also provide visual evidence of change and continuity there. In addition, selected maps, photographs and paintings help document specific activities, as well as the more general tenor of life at the installation.

Memory: Built in America, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, 1933-Present” http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/.

¹⁰ New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, June 18, 1996; Designation List 272, LP-1946. The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission will be hereafter referred to as NYCLPC Report.

¹¹ General Services Administration, “Building and Property Summary Sheets, Governor’s [sic] Island Historic District, New York, NY, April 2000. Hereafter referred to as GSA Report.

¹² R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Inc, *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790-1940*, 4 vols. (Baltimore, MD: US Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District, 1995).

¹³ Kathryn M. Kuranda, R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Frederick, Maryland, telephone call to author, March 2004.

The visual materials serve as documents rather than illustrations and provide a graphic map of the layers of history at Governors Island. Taken together, the primary sources and secondary historical materials, the “gray literature” related to material culture, the newspaper accounts, and visual documents portray Governors Island as a place evolving over time in a setting of harbor and city. Russell Shorto calls Manhattan “The Island at the Center of the World.”¹⁴ Governors Island was at neither the center of the harbor nor of the city beyond, but it was at the center of American military history for the region and the East Coast for two hundred years. Its story follows.

¹⁴ Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: the Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan & the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY HISTORY OF GOVERNORS ISLAND

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

History at Governors Island begins long before European contact. For many years before and during roughly the first two hundred years after European contact in the New York Harbor region, the NPS thematic framework categories “Transforming the Environment” and “Peopling Places”¹⁵ characterized the movement of people into, out of, and around the area. In addition, these various groups of people created social, political, and economic institutions. They thus, over time, added to additional themes such as “Expressing Cultural Values,” “Shaping the Political Landscape,” “Developing the American Economy,” and “Creating Social Institutions and Movements” to history in New York Harbor. These themes are themselves cut across and connected by the “historical building blocks”¹⁶ of people, place, and time. Reading the history of Governors Island through a frame of such themes, and applying them to this time period makes room for the inclusion of accounts from archaeology and ethnohistory as well as from more common European colonial records.

PRE-CONTACT PERIOD: THE RICH BOUNTY OF “PAGGANCK”¹⁷

The earliest human interaction with the environment now known as Governors Island most likely occurred sometime around 12,000 BP (before present). At the close of the last ice age (between 14,000 and 10,000 BP), sea water levels may have been as much as 300 feet lower than present levels as a result of various environmental and climate

¹⁵ National Park Service, *History In The National Park Service: Themes & Concepts* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1994), <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/revthem.htm> includes the discussion of both these themes.

¹⁶ Ibid. The website includes a useful discussion by Barbara Little on using the thematic framework.

¹⁷ This section is taken from Darby Moore-Doyle, “Transforming the Environment at Governors Island, New York: An Exploration of the Natural History and Cultural Landscape at Governors Island National Monument,” (mss, May 2003, copy in possession of the author).

factors, facilitating human movement through the area. As the water level fell, the Atlantic shore advanced to between 60 and 90 miles from its modern coastline.¹⁸ Deglaciation, which took about 8,000 years to complete in North America after 16,000 BP, created extensive river and stream systems, and the sea levels rose to within about 30 feet of their current levels by 5,000 BP. Plant and animal communities differed significantly during this time period, as well, and humans settled in the current greater New York Harbor area over time to harvest the rich flora, fauna, and marine life of the region. Some scholars contend that changes creating the rich Pleistocene environment helped speed the pace of human evolution and migration over the entire globe.¹⁹

As the ice sheets receded in the early Holocene (10,000-5,000 BP), the land beneath rose as the accumulated weight of the glaciers decreased. In the Canadian Hudson Bay area, the Laurentide ice sheet exerted downward pressure on the land until around 8,000 years BP. At that point, the encroaching sea water eroded the glacier's edge, and the combined forces of glacial recession and land uplift (rebound) created the familiar outline of Long Island Sound, Sandy Hook, and the islands of New York Harbor.²⁰ During their several-thousand year occupation of the region, indigenous people used Governors Island for its abundant food resources, especially its nut trees. At the time that Giovanni da Verrazano sailed into New York Harbor in 1524, the local inhabitants of the area called the island "Pagganck" ("nut trees"). Indeed, the dense forests of the island contained oak, chestnut, walnut, and hickory trees.²¹ Current archeological research has neither confirmed nor ruled out domestic agricultural use or habitation on the island during the pre-European contact period.²²

FROM THE ICE AGE TO DUTCH SETTLEMENT

As the discussion above indicates, humans began to interact with the environment of Pagganck when small, highly mobile groups of hunter-gatherers migrating into the area

¹⁸ Neil Roberts, *The Holocene: An Environmental History* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989), p. 42-46; and Louis Berger & Associates, *Phase IV Upgrade of the High-Voltage Electrical Service and Distribution System*, Prepared for the U.S. Coast Guard (East Orange, NJ: Berger & Associates, 1995), p 8.

¹⁹ Roberts, p. 45.

²⁰ This is a vast generalization of the components of deglaciation in the region, which is detailed in Roberts, p. 62.

²¹ Berger, p. 8, 14.

²² Moore-Doyle.

around 12,000 BP.²³ Archaeological evidence from the area shows a more settled population on Staten Island and at other sites around New York after the glacial recession of the Laurentide ice sheet. Dutch records from the mid-17th century (1650-1680 A.D.) recount creation myths about the development of the harbor area that were collected from local Native Americans that reflect a mythological version of the land changes.²⁴

The archaeological evidence located at Governors Island in the 1980s and 1990s revealed expected site types for this island noted for its food supplies. Shell midden deposits near the original shoreline and habitation sites that included temporary campsites to larger, semi-permanent villages showed the presence of humans who apparently fished and gathered nuts there. Explorer Giovanni da Verrazano “likely”²⁵ was the first European to see Governors Island in 1524. Explorers Henry Hudson (1609) and Adriaen Block (1614) also saw the island, but only Block noted the “Nutt island” in his log.²⁶ In 1623, one of the first ships chartered by the Dutch West Indian Company arrived in the harbor to scout, and some believe that the crew of the *Mackerel* established a fort on the island now called in Dutch, Nooten.²⁷

Historian Edmund Banks Smith quotes early documents found in London:

In 1621, the year of its establishment, the company obtained a grant or patent from the States Generall (governing council in the Netherlands) for the setting and planting a colony here and was called the New Netherlands and made one of its first settlements near the mouth of the Hudson’s River upon an island called Nutten Island.²⁸

The first shipload of colonists sent on the “Nieu Nederlandt,” captained by Cornelis Jacobsen May of Hoorn, arrived in the harbor in 1623, and colonists established small settlements, including one on what was known to the settlers as Nooten Eylandt.

²³Moore-Doyle; Kathryn Leonard, “Governors Island in Prehistoric Context: A National Park Service Thematic Approach”, (mss, May 13, 2003, in possession of the author).

²⁴ Moore-Doyle; Leonard.

²⁵NYCLPC Report, p. 6.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷I.N. Phelps Stokes, *New York Past and Present, 1524-1939* (New York: Plaitain Press, 1939), quoted in NYCLPC Report, p. 6.

²⁸ Edmund Banks Smith, *Governors Island, Its Military History Under Three Flags, 1637-1922* (New York, Valentine’s Manual, Inc., 1923), p. 9. The parentheses are in the original. Quoted in Shannon Wright, “GOIS research notes for archeology study,” (November 17, 2003, emailed copy in possession of author). Hereafter identified as “Shannon Wright’s notes.”

Michael Kammen²⁹ and others place thirty families upriver at Fort Orange (Albany), a small group on Burlington Island in the Delaware River, and another group on the Connecticut River. These outlying settlements were apparently designed to mark the edges of the area claimed by the Dutch. It was apparently fairly quickly, however, that demarcating areas to European settlement did nothing to lessen the dangers of attack by Native peoples in the various areas.³⁰

A shiplot of Walloons, French-speaking Protestants from the southern part of the Netherlands who arrived in 1624, grazed cattle on the island for several days before the cattle were moved to better pasturage in Manhattan. Those who had farmed for a year at the island then moved to Manhattan to get more room for their crops. When Willem Verhulst, the second Director of New Netherland, arrived in 1625, he gathered those settlers spread out northeast and southwest of the harbor, along the Delaware and Connecticut Rivers, and collected them at the island. Walloon engineer Cryn Fredericksen began planning streets and building Fort Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan.³¹

The first building raised on Governors Island appears to have been a trading post, although sources differ on its date; it was built either in 1621 or in 1624.³² No archaeological traces or maps have yet been found of any Dutch homes or temporary shelters, shelters for animals, or the fields farmed in the first days of settlement, before the removal of settlers to Manhattan Island. The 1639 Manatus Map, or the First Survey of Manhattan Island, shows Buttermilk Channel as a wide waterway between the island and what would later become Brooklyn. Clearly the contemporary shape of Governors Island was dictated partly by erosion on the west side, and partly by the dredging of Buttermilk Channel over time to make it navigable by larger and larger vessels³³

²⁹ Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

³¹ NYCLPC Report, p. 6-7.

³² Holly Herbster and James C. Garman. PAL, Phase 1B Archaeological Survey of the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District, 1997, p. 15; Shannon Wright's notes.

³³ The 1639 Manatus Map can be found at the Library of Congress' website. The caption for the Library of Congress website states, "This map, possibly done to encourage Dutch settlement, depicts plantations and small farms. These widely dispersed settlements are keyed by number in the lower right-hand corner to a list of land occupants. The list of references includes a grist mill, two sawmills and "Quarters of the Blacks, the Company's Slaves." Also delineated are a few roads represented by dashed lines and four Indian villages situated in what is now Brooklyn." James C. Garman and Paul A. Russo, Phase II Evaluation of Six Archeological sites in the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District, 1998, pp. 62-63, claim, however, that this map is anonymously drawn and a copy made about 1670 of an earlier map.



Figure 1. 1639? Manatus Map. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm068.html> (accessed December 4, 2005).

The Dutch West India Company's interest in North American colonies was primarily for commercial purposes, rather than settlement. The Dutch village at the mouth of the Hudson produced furs, timber and some agriculture to be used there and at other Dutch colonies. By 1625-26, to further that intent, the Dutch built a sawmill on Nutt Island to produce building materials and export commodities. It was possibly a wind-powered mill because Dutchman Cornelis Corneliszoon had patented such a device in 1593. The archaeological survey of parts of Governors Island in 1998 located the remains of the sawmill, which the archaeologists dated 1626-1648. The 1639 Manatus Map showed the sawmill on Nutten Island but in the northwest quadrant whereas the archaeological finding was located in the northeast. The Company's sawmill on Governors Island was leased in 1639 by Governor-General Keift to "three men for three years" for a rental of 500 planks that could be sold, of which half would be pine and the other half oak. Those who leased the sawmill were required to keep it in working order and to return it in good shape at the end of the arrangement. Although they may have upheld their end of the

bargain, the sawmill, which was described as being “wholly decayed and in ruin,” was finally removed or, more likely, burned in 1648.³⁴

After the Company built the sawmill on land leased from the local indigenous population, and before the sawmill was leased under the direction of the Company, the island was briefly owned by a private Dutch individual. Governor-General Wouter van Twiller, who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1633, bought Governors Island from the Lenapes. Van Twiller was the nephew of Kiliaen van Rensselaer, the patroon whose single-minded support had brought the patroonship system to New Netherlands, and whose seat, Rensselaerswyck, was the only successful estate along the Hudson at this period. The Governor General bought the island in 1637 not for the Company, but for himself personally (perhaps in imitation of his uncle upriver). Although no archaeological traces show this, some historical accounts claim that Van Twiller built a house on the island, farmed, established a tobacco plantation, and raised goats.³⁵ Van Twiller also “helped himself” to at least ten thousand acres on Long Island and two other islands in the area of the Hellgate.³⁶ Having failed in his assignment to resist the English advance into the Connecticut Valley and allegedly unfairly favoring his uncle in various mercantile undertakings, Van Twiller was recalled to the Netherlands in 1638. Apparently, his land dealings also led to his ouster.³⁷

The island was handed over to Company control in 1652, to be subdivided and settled by newcomers to the region.³⁸ In fact, however, the leaders of the colony

³⁴ Holly Herbst and James C. Garman. PAL, Phase IB Archeological Survey of the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District, 1997 p. 16; James C. Garman and Paul A. Russo, Phase II Evaluation of Six Archeological sites in the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District, 1998, pp. 62-63.

³⁵ NYCLPC Report, p 7; Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press for the New York Historical Association, Cooperstown, New York: 1986), p. 18-131; Moore-Doyle, p. 3. Russell Shorto, writing from newly-translated and, in some cases, newly discovered documents, points out that the historical Van Twiller may have been somewhat more competent and complex than archival materials have so far demonstrated. See *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan & The Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 82.

³⁶ Henri and Barbara Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land: The Story of Dutch New York* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), p. 73.

³⁷ Ibid. Russell Shorto, as noted above, gives Van Twiller more credit than do earlier historians, but he still damns with faint praise; Shorto, *The Island in the Center of the World*, pp. 81-82. It's not clear whether Van Twiller actually lived there, but Bellamy claims that when he left North America, a house frame stood on Governors Island, along with 21 goats. Bellamy, p. 144, quoted in Shannon Wright's notes.

³⁸ NYCLPC Report, p. 7.

continued to use the island and its resources for their personal profit. William Kieft, the successor to van Twiller, apparently leased the tobacco plantation for his own use. When the English took New Amsterdam from the Dutch and renamed it New York in 1664, they continued this system. Bowing, presumably, to accepted practice, the colonial Assembly of New York set Governors Island aside in 1698 as “part of the Denizen of his Majestie’s Fort at New York, for the benefit and accommodation of His Majestie’s Governours and Commanders-in-Chief for the time being.”³⁹

Formal Dutch fortifications in the period of their rule in New York Harbor appear to have included only Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan Island, roughly adjacent to Bowling Green Park. As early as 1702, the Colonial Governor, Lord Cornbury, received funds from the English Parliament to fortify the harbor. Cornbury also levied taxes on local citizens for harbor fortifications. An odd assortment of taxpayers allegedly found themselves forced to chip in: periwig wearers; unmarried men over the age of twenty-five; and slaveholders, among others. Many accounts of the early history of Governors Island say that Cornbury then built a private estate on the island with those moneys. Many historical accounts also claim that the Governors House (Building 2) was that mansion. A HABS survey in the early 1980s could find no evidence earlier than 1811-12 for that building. It should be noted, however, that more recent investigation by archeologists in the area in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, found physical evidence of older habitation.⁴⁰

Except for a brief period in 1710-11, the island continued to be a retreat for governors and refuge and preserve for birds and livestock through the first half of the eighteenth century. These preserves apparently included English pheasants, according to an act of the legislature in 1738, presumably for the Governors’ hunting pleasure.⁴¹

Not all uses of the island in this period were necessarily pleasurable. One exception involved a group of Palatines, German Protestant refugees. Queen Anne of England had recruited the Palatines to immigrate to various English colonies, including New York. Thousands of Palatines arrived in London in 1709, quickly overcrowding the already crowded capital. The English government thus determined to move them out, and decided to send them on to New York. Around 3,000 Palatines left England in eleven

³⁹Bellamy, 145.

⁴⁰ NYCLPC Report, p. 8; US Army, 1st Army. *Story of Governors Island* (Governors Island, NY, 1958), for example, maintains that Building 2 was built in 1812. No further references are given, however, and the stories have not yet been verified through either archaeological projects or historical research. See James C. Garman and Paul A. Russo. Phase II Evaluation of Six Archeological sites in the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District, 1998, pp. 60-95 for some information about artifacts dating from an earlier period.

⁴¹ US Army, 1st Army. *Story of Governors Island*, p. 2.

ships for New York in April 1710. The colonial governor in New York had asked the Board of Trade to send 600 tents with the group because the colony did not have housing for them. The survivors of the voyage, who arrived in New York City in June 1710, lived in those tents and perhaps temporary buildings on Nutt Island, while the authorities and others arranged for their work as indentured servants. Some sources suggest that the older children were removed, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and bound to householders in Manhattan. Lists of those who stayed in New York City include 12-year-old John Peter Zenger, who would later be important in the establishment of freedom of the press in the colonies. He was bound to printer William Bradford.⁴² Fourteen hundred of the refugees moved up the Hudson River as indentured servants in the fall of 1710. They felt themselves badly treated and left their assignments at Livingston Manor to move to wilderness lands in Schoharie County, New York in the winter of 1711.⁴³

The legal status of the island came into question during the period that the Palatines were quarantined there. The Crown was advised to add the island to the jurisdiction of New York City. This action was not taken, and the island did not become a legal part of New York City until 1730, under the Montgomery Charter. It was not included in the County of New York until 1788.⁴⁴

GOVERNORS ISLAND USED BY BRITISH ARMY

Troops billeted on Governors Island marked the first British military presence starting in 1755. One archeological study asserts that the first infantry school and a

⁴² The numbers of living and dead after the voyage are disputed. One source claims that 3,000 Palatines left London, 20% died en route, and 2,400 arrived in New York in 1709. http://olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/pal_engtony.shtml (accessed December 2, 2005). The Palatine Project claims that about 3,100 Palatines boarded ships in 1709, but did not set sail for New York until 1710. Of those 3,100, 475 died on the voyage, and 250 died after landing. <http://www.progenealogists.com/palproject/ny/> (accessed December 2, 2005. Kammen, p. 178, claims that about 2,800 Palatines sailed and 470 died. The names of the children apprenticed between 1710 and 1714 can be found at http://olivetreegenealogy.com/pal/pal_kids1710-14.shtml (accessed December 2, 2005).

⁴³ This information is from Cuyler Reynolds (ed.), *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs*, Vol. I, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911), pp. 326-328. It is in SCPL's Reference Collection at R 929.1 R45, found at <http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/families/hmgfm/loucks.html> (accessed 12/04/2005).

⁴⁴ NYCLPC Report, p. 8.

hospital were built on the island at this time.⁴⁵ These regiments arrived and departed as the British increased their strength in the colonies to fight what is known in the U.S. as the French and Indian War (1756-63). The French and Indian War was the last war of a series between the English and the French and their Indian allies in North America.

No records that describe the means of sheltering, feeding or clothing these soldiers have been located, but the temporary nature of many of the stays may have dictated tents or other portable shelter. The first garrison was the 51st Regiment of British Colonial Militia, commanded by the American-born Major General Sir William Pepperell. Other military groups at the island included the 22nd Regiment of Foot (light infantry), the 44th Regiment of Foot, and the 62nd Regiment of Foot, a group called the “Royal Americans.” The 62nd unit was to be a North American-recruited English force, based on Governors Island. In 1757, they were renamed the 60th Royal Regiment of Foot, and of four battalions, one was known as the “Governors Island battalion”. The “Royal Americans” were sent to the West Indies during the American Revolution, but the band stayed at Governors Island and apparently played concerts for the loyalists in New York City during the war.⁴⁶

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND GOVERNORS ISLAND

The history of fortifications on Governors Island continued into the early period of the American Revolution. Although it was referred to by some as “Torytown,” New York City’s population included both loyalists and rebels and those on the side of the rebellion were split between radicals and moderates on the issue of breaking ties with the mother country. Pre-war, political protest against the British included boycotts of British goods, the harassment of loyalists, the erection of liberty poles and even a

⁴⁵ Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium. *Governors Island Land Use Study. Land and Facility Assessment*. September 1997.

⁴⁶ US Army, 1st Army. *Story of Governors Island*, p. 3. As the history of the Society of Colonial Wars in the British Isles website describes it:

December 25th (1755) Lord Loudoun was commissioned to be the Colonel in Chief of the Royal American Regiment (62nd until 1756 then became the 60th when 50th and 51st were disbanded). In March a special Act of Parliament created 4 battalions of 1,000 men to include foreigners for service in the Americas. Swiss and German forest fighting experts, American Colonists and British Volunteers were recruited. The battalions were raised on Governors Island, New York. Although theoretically they were to be light infantry, their able officers recognised that special American conditions required innovations. Officers used Pennsylvania rifles and the men used Muskets. In forest conditions the red uniforms were changed for green or blue ones which made less conspicuous targets. The Royal Americans gradually became the First Rifle Regiment in the British Army.

<http://www.scw-bi.org.uk/indian.htm>. (accessed December 2, 2005).

dumping of tea from the ship London into New York Harbor. The Royal Governor of New York, William Tryon was popular, however, with much of the population, and many prominent New Yorkers remained loyal to the Crown.⁴⁷

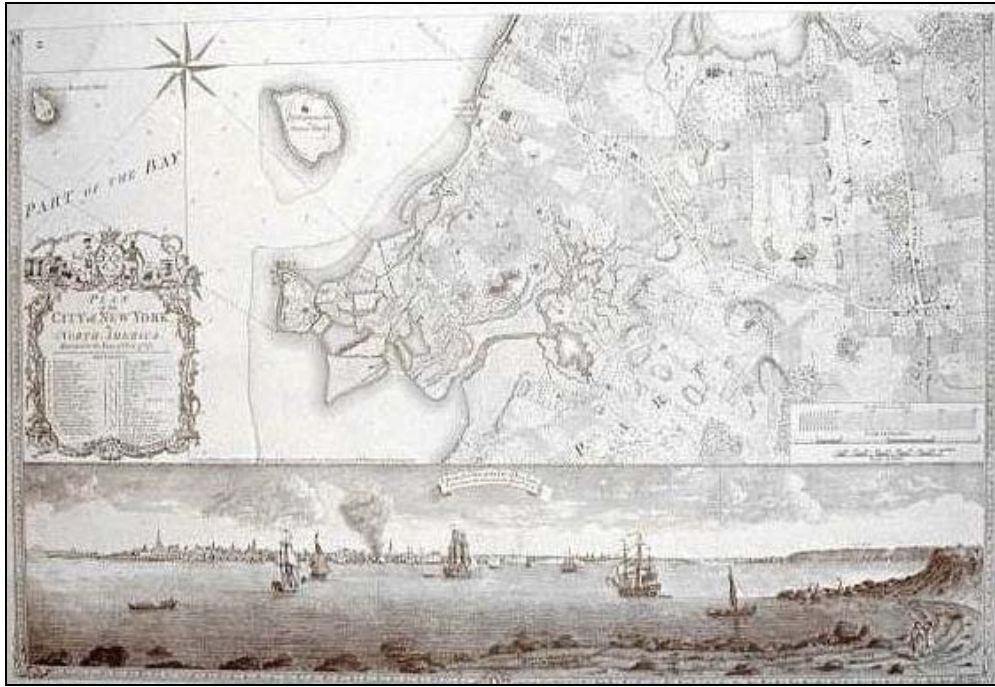


Figure 2. First of two sheets, published by Jeffrey's and Faden in 1776, this extremely rare plan shows the city as surveyed by Bernard Ratzer a decade earlier. Parts of New Jersey and Brooklyn and all of Manhattan north to what was 59th Street appear. A fine view of New York from Governors Island extends along the bottom. A legend identifies important forts, churches, public buildings, markets and other points of interest. This map is currently published by Historic Urban Plans, Inc., Ithaca, NY, and is used by permission.

The news of the skirmish at Lexington and Concord in April 1775 threw the population of the city into an agitated state. Groups of radical patriots broke into the armory and carried off weapons and some attacked prominent loyalists. Only a week later, a mob of 360 armed men forced the Customs House to close in order to prevent British trade with the colony. Several thousand rebels also signed a document called an “Association” that pledged their support to rebel ideals until the British stopped mistreating the colonists.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Jim Davis, “The Tentative Rebels: New York City During the First Year of the Revolution,” http://earlyamerica.com/review/2003_summer_fall/NYC.htm (accessed December 4, 2005).

⁴⁸ Ibid. The question of leadership of this group of radical patriots is addressed by Davis when he says, “They were directed by determined leaders such as Isaac Sears, a privateer from the French and Indian War, and John Lamb, who nursed a personal grievance against the British since the Sugar and Molasses Acts ruined his lucrative West Indian trade.” Davis cites Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *Father Knickerbocker Rebels: New York City during the Revolution* (New York:

Some thought had been given earlier by the British to the notion of building fortifications on Governors Island. The Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress holds two drawings by Royal Engineer John Montrésor that were perhaps made in 1766. One depicts a fortification in the center of Governors Island, at its highest point, and smaller batteries on all four sides at the waterline.

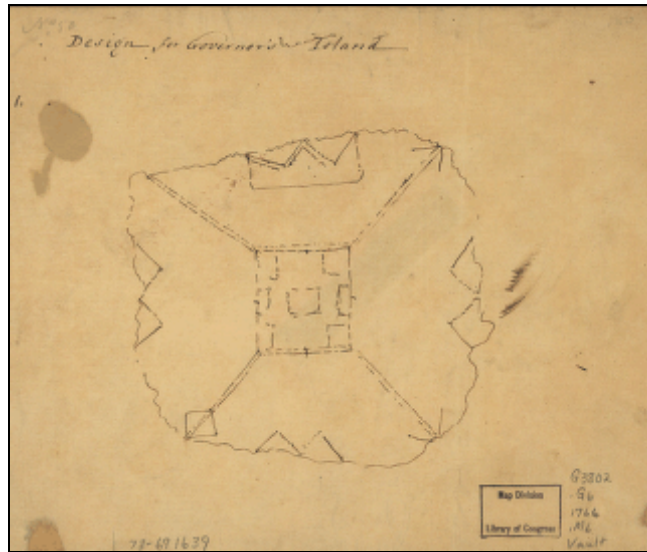


Figure 3. John Montrésor. Design for Governor's Island. [1766?] Manuscript, pen-and-ink. At head of title, in pencil: No. 50. Map and Geography Division. Library of Congress.

The other is a cut-away presumably of the moat or ditch that would surround the fortification at the center.

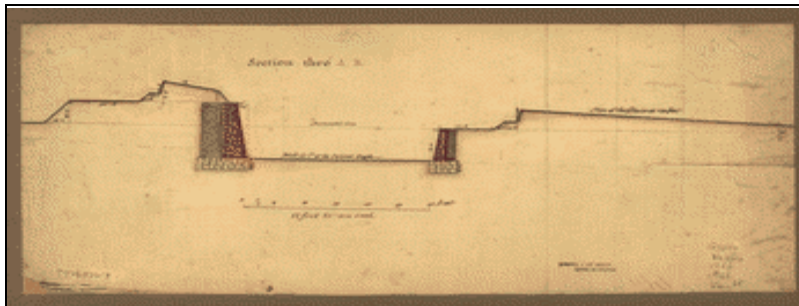


Figure 4. John Montrésor. Fortification Drawing, Governors Island. Map and Geography Division. Library of Congress.

Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 10-11. Davis also notes that "As anti-British resentment spread, moderate leaders such as Isaac Low, John Jay, and the Livingstons took a more active role, challenging the radicals for leadership." There he cites Wertenbaker, pp. 35-38.

In late 1774, an estimate for building a fortress on the island was made by the British colonial government, but the funds did not arrive and the fortress went unbuilt.⁴⁹ Like the British, the American military leadership understood that New York City and its harbor played a key role in potential offense as well as defense. Much of what happened in the American Revolution was determined by the North American landscape and New York Harbor's place in that landscape. The English wanted to establish a line from New York up the Hudson to Lake Champlain. Some British strategists believed that the bulk of the rebel support lay in the northern colonies. If those colonies could be split off from the rest, the British believed, the rebellion might collapse.⁵⁰

New York, the major seaport and commercial center of the colonies, was the important southern end of that riverine barrier. General George Washington's forces unfortunately faced an almost impossible defensive situation in New York during the summer of 1776 because New York Harbor presented an enemy fleet commander's offensive dream. New York City sat on an island, surrounded by rivers navigable for some considerable distance north and east-northeast of the city. Only one bridge connected New York to the mainland and it was at the northern end of the island, over the Harlem River. Long Island could be attacked from either Long Island Sound or the Atlantic Ocean side.⁵¹ Defending against the most important naval fleet in the world under those circumstances was nearly impossible.

Among the rebel forces, Governors Island was appealing for the same reasons that it was for the British. Benjamin Franklin apparently advised General Charles Lee to build fortifications on Governors Island early in 1776. In February 1776, General Washington sent General Lee to New York from Boston. Lee worked to counter an expected naval siege by the British from the harbor, and began the plans to fortify New York and Long Island. The rebel Committee of Safety for New York called on local male citizens to help build fortifications. White citizens worked every other day; black slaves were required to work every day.⁵² These efforts did not extend to Governors Island at this time. Lee himself was not convinced that his efforts would be carried out. "The instant I leave it," he wrote,

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ U.S. Army, Center of Military History, *American Military History* (U.S. Army, Washington, DC, 1989), pp. 61-63; Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York: the City at the Heart of the American Revolution* (New York: Walker & Company, 2002), p. 2.

⁵¹ U.S. Army, Center of Military History *American Military History*, pp. 61-63; Schecter, pp. 100-101; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, *Fortress America: The Forts that Defended America 1600 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), p. 105.

⁵² Davis, "The Tentative Rebels", p 2.

I conclude the Provincial Congress and inhabitants will relapse into their former hysterics; the men of war and Mr. Tryon, [British] will return to their old stations at the wharves, and the first regiments who arrive from England, will take quiet possession of the town and Long Island.⁵³

Charles Lee was named commander of the rebel forces in the South in March, and left New York, to be replaced by General William Alexander, or “Lord Stirling.”⁵⁴

In April, George Washington ordered Col. William Prescott’s Bunker Hill regiment and Col. John Nixon’s Fourth Massachusetts Continentals to Governors Island. On April 8, 1776, General Israel Putnam and one thousand men supported the arrival of these Continental troops by an all-out, all-night effort at building fortifications to defend against warships anchored in the harbor. A month or so later, the work was substantial enough that it would support the weight of 18-pound and 32-pound guns. The exact layout of the defense system erected by General Putnam in 1776 is unknown, but was likely at the location of the current Fort Jay, the highest point of elevation. The armament at that time included thirty small pieces, four 32-lb. guns and four 18-lb. guns.⁵⁵

It took three months of work, but in August 1776 defenses covered Governors Island almost completely, with room for more cannons. Troops to fire the guns were in place. George Washington wrote to Lt. General Lee, “In a fortnight more I think the City will be in a very respectable position of defense. Governor’s [*sic*] Island has a large and strong work erected and a regiment encamped there.”⁵⁶

The British fleet, meanwhile, had massed in the lower harbor during the summer. Governors Island’s arms fired first in July: the rebels in those fortifications fired upon the British HMS *Phoenix*; the HMS *Rose*; the schooner *Tryal* and two tenders as they moved through New York harbor as a test of the American defenses.⁵⁷ As the commandant of the H.M.S. *Phoenix* noted:

⁵³Davis, “The Tentative Rebels”, p. 2; the original is Charles Lee to George Washington, February 29, 1776 [?], Charles Lee Papers, New York Historical Society.

⁵⁴According to the NYCLPC Report, this was a false title. See p. 9.

⁵⁵US Coast Guard. Governor’s Island. Ordnance and Explosives Archives. Search Report Findings. July 1997, p. 4-1; Robert B. Roberts, *New York’s Forts in the Revolution* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), pp. 282-283.

⁵⁶NYCLPC Report, p. 9; Roberts, *New York’s Forts*, pp. 282-283; David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), pp. 117-193.

⁵⁷Schecter, *The Battle for New York*, p. 104; NYCLPC Report, p. 9.

July 1776

Friday 12th Moor'd off Staten Island. Distance from Shore about Quarter of a Mile.--

AM the Admiral made our Signal for an Officer.--

Modt Breezes and fair Wr at 2 P M Fir'd a Gun & made the Signal to Unmoor, Unmoor'd & hove into 1/3 of a Cable on the Best Bower at 3 made the Signal to Weigh, Weigh'd & Came to Sail in Co with his Majesty's Ship Rose, the Tryal Schooner with the Shuldham and Charlotta Tenders at ¾ past 3 the Battery at Red Hook upon Long Island began Firing, on our standing near Governors Island & Powlos Hook, they commenced a heavy Firing from their Batteries. At 5 past 4 being then between the last mention'd Batteries, we began Firing upon them. at ½ past 5 we passed the Batteries near the Town & at 7 Anchord in Tapan Bay abreast of Tarry Town in 7 Fam Water Distance off Shore about a mile and a Quarter; Moor'd Ship wth the Stream Anchor Tarry Town NEbE Dreadfull Hook NbW & Sneadings Ferry SbW½W In passing the Batteries Recd two Shot in our Hull & One is the Bowsprit & several through the Topsails, the Netting &ca in the Waste was Shot away which Occasioned the Loss of 3 Cotts, One Seaman and Two Marines were Wounded.--

Wednesday 17th Moor'd in Haverstraw Bay.⁵⁸

British ships that managed to survive the best defense that the rebels could muster at Governors Island and the other New York Harbor defensive sites and sailed on up the Hudson exposed a multiplicity of weaknesses to the American side. Certainly the lack of fortifications at the lower end of the harbor, known as the Narrows, to prevent the fleet from gaining a position in the upper harbor was a critical mistake.⁵⁹

The British attack on New York City, known as the Battle of Brooklyn or the Battle of Long Island, began on August 22. Major General Sir William Howe landed 32,000 British and German troops on Staten Island and Long Island in July and August 1776. The British feigned a full-scale direct assault from the southwest part of Long Island, but sent the majority of their forces on an all-night silent march miles to the east in order to outflank the Continental army. Schechter notes that this strategy was an adaptation of a classic military maneuver known as “turning the enemy’s flank...”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Extracts from the Journal of H.M.S. Phoenix, Captain Hyde Parker, Jr. taken from *Naval Documents of The American Revolution*, Volume 5: American Theatre: May 9, 1776 - July 31, 1776 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), and from Volume 6: American Theatre: Aug. 1, 1776-Oct. 31, 1776. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972). Source document: PRO, Admiralty 51/694. <http://www.revwar75.com/battles/primarydocs/phoenix.htm> (accessed December 2, 2005).

⁵⁹ Schechter., pp. 98, 104-106.

⁶⁰ Schechter, pp. 136-159. The website <http://www.britishbattles.com/long-island.htm> lists the various regiments involved on the British side and describes the battle from the British point of view (accessed December 26, 2005).

Washington, in a second critical mistake, miscalculated how the British would attack. Washington split his forces of about 20,000, leaving one part at the southern tip of Manhattan, a small contingent on Governors Island, and the rest on Brooklyn Heights at the western end of Long Island, looking out northwest over the island and the harbor. The main British force outflanked the rebels from the Jamaica Road to the East. Fortunately, between August 29 and August 30th, the thoroughly defeated Washington managed to evacuate his troops from both Governors Island and Long Island across the East River back to Manhattan.⁶¹

The retreat occurred in stages, with the troops on Governors Island covering for the boats skippered by the Massachusetts fishermen of Col. John Glover's Marblehead Regiment on the night of August 29th. As New York Tory Thomas Jones reported,

The rebels in their hurry and consternation upon abandoning Long Island left the garrison upon Nutten Island (which they had strongly fortified) consisting of 2000 men, 40 pieces of heavy cannon, military stores and provisions in abundance without the least means of quitting the island."⁶²

The British fleet fired repeatedly on Governors Island on August 30, dropping so many musket balls that they could (and perhaps still can) be found on the island into the twentieth century. Jones went on to marvel at the later unlikely escape of the garrison:

In the evening of the same day (unaccountable as it is) a detachment of the rebel army went from New York to Nutten Island with a number of boats, and carried off the troops, the stores, artillery, and provisions without the least interruption whatever, though General Howe's whole army lay within a mile...Indeed he [Howe] sent up four ships, which anchored about two miles below Nutten Island, and kept up a most tremendous fire against the rebel fortifications there. But the distance was so great it made no impression, did no injury, and might as well have been directed at the moon, as at Nutten Island, for the good it did.⁶³

The troops on Governors Island were evacuated to Manhattan on the night of August 30. Writing a few days later, a Hessian officer recalled,

The men-of-war are drawing as close to New York as possible and would come closer if the rebels had not sunk so many ships there and made the approach impossible. The

⁶¹ U.S. Army, Center of Military History, *American Military History*, p. 61-63; Bellamy, p. 164; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), pp. 35-37; Schechter, p. 136-159.

⁶² Thomas Jones, *History of New York during the Revolutionary War* (New York: The New York Times and Arno Press, 1968; orig.ed, 1879), p. 113.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

tops of the masts can be seen in the water and only rowboats can pass between them. I must add that the rebels, after having vacated everything except an island one English mile long, called Governor's [sic] Island, on which four hundred Pennsylvanians were encamped, have now embarked these men, too, in spite of a battle thrown up in front of us, and taken them to New York on small vessels under cover of a two-masted frigate. We sank only two of these boats. They carried no more than about forty men, but these perished miserably.⁶⁴

The British ultimately drove the American troops from New York City in mid-October 1776, with Washington evacuating his forces over the Kingsbridge crossing of the Harlem River onto the New York mainland. New York City remained in British control until the end of the revolution in 1783.

While in control of Governors Island, the British posted a garrison there and rebuilt the fortifications. According to Blanche Wilder Bellamy, they also left a hospital (perhaps the one built for the British soldiers in 1755) with a kitchen and a well; a captain's barracks with a kitchen, cellar, and well; a cattle barn; a lieutenant's barracks and kitchen; a summer house; a guard house; an 18-foot deep well with a pump; and a gardener's house. Bellamy also noted that in the 1840s, a child who had played on the island recalled a summer house on the west side; "Rotten Row," a set of wooden barracks; stone ruins of an "old guard house," and a well referred to as the "old well."⁶⁵ The Historic American Buildings Survey study in 1983 claimed that the British established a naval hospital on Governors Island.⁶⁶ No evidence of these buildings or wells apparently remains on the island, but more archeological investigation might find some traces.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Governors Island was assigned to the Governor of the State of New York at the end of the American Revolution. The island was used as a summer resort and a place to quarantine new arrivals from Europe. Some sources mention a racetrack found on

⁶⁴Quoted in NYCLPC Report, p. 10. The discussion is laid out in the NYCLPC Report, p. 10-11. A completely different reason for the success of the maneuver appears in the Center of Military History's account, *American Military History*, p. 65. That author claims that "According to one theory, wind and weather stopped the British warships from entering the river to prevent their escape; according to another, the Americans had placed impediments in the river that effectively barred their entrance." It seems likely that the "impediments" were strategically sunk ships in the channel. Schecter, p. 118, notes that ships were scuttled after the British ships ran the American defenses, but those impediments did not stop the *Phoenix* and the *Rose* and the other vessels from returning to join the fleet.

⁶⁵ Bellamy, p. 168-169.

⁶⁶ HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p. 2.

Governors Island after 1783.⁶⁷ Bellamy examined the papers of Governor Clinton and could not substantiate the racecourse legend. Nor, she claimed, did such a use of the island show up in the newspapers from the 1780s. By 1788, however, documents show that the New York Legislature ordered the Surveyor-General to survey the island for development. The Land Office commissioners were allowed to set aside whatever parts of the island they thought might be useful for fortifications.⁶⁸

By 1790, however, the Legislature had deeded Governors Island and other land nearby to Columbia College to help its financial situation. The college was either to rent the land and use the proceeds as its operating budget, or develop the island to support its endowment. Columbia held the island until 1794, when war alarms forced its return to the State of New York.

⁶⁷NYCLPC Report, p. 11.

⁶⁸Bellamy, p. 169.

CHAPTER TWO

1790-1815 AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

In the period between the end of the American Revolution and lead-up to the War of 1812, Governors Island was restored to civilian use. Standard practice of the Americans at this period disbanded armies, sent volunteer troops home and adapted many military installations to different uses. Columbia University took possession of the island so that it could develop Governors Island to help fund the university. As noted in the last chapter, military buildings and landscapes remained on Governors Island at the end of the Revolutionary War, but the troops did not stay. The defensive structures built to protect the harbor crumbled slowly in weather and wind as university staff laid plans for the eighteenth century's version of suburban development.

But little more than real estate plots were outlined before European affairs forced New York State to reclaim the island for defensive purposes. After 1794, when that remilitarization occurred, the major historical themes at Governors Island developed within the overall framework of the military use and development of the place for the next two hundred years. But the historical narrative at Governors Island included much more than military plans and activities. Governors Island saw continuous "peopling of places," as military and civilian people came and went, some like the surgeon or the storekeeper staying for years while others stayed only briefly. Architectural and landscape developments occurred every time a new building was funded, an old one dismantled, or a fence line changed. The Army installations established there helped place the United States in the larger world and reflected social, economic, ethnic and political changes over long periods of time. But after 1794, all those developments occurred within the context of military use. The overriding theme for later periods is thus the presence, the uses, and the cultures of various civilian and military organizations on Governors Island.

GOVERNORS ISLAND AT THE END OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

In 1809, American writer Washington Irving, writing under the pseudonym “Diedrich Knickerbocker,” wrote of taking a walk along New York’s battery. He reminisced about the presence of Fort Amsterdam, whose mud walls had long since collapsed to the underlying earth upon which he now walked. “That same battery,” he noted, “at present, no battery,” had been seeded to provide lawns and park spaces for the leisure time use of citizens of Manhattan. He then turned to the harbor.

The capacious bay still presented the same expansive sheet of water, studded with islands, sprinkled with fishing boats, and bounded by shores of picturesque beauty. But the dark forests which once clothed these shores had been violated by the savage hand of cultivation, and their tangled mazes and impenetrable thickets had degenerated into teeming orchards and waving fields of grain. Even Governor’s [*sic*] Island, once a smiling garden, appertaining to the sovereigns of the province, was now covered with fortifications, enclosing a tremendous block house so that this once peaceful island resembled a fierce little warrior in a big cocked hat, breathing gunpowder and defiance to the world!⁷⁰

The fortified island that Irving saw in 1809 bristled with construction of contemporary fortifications and installation of weapons. At the end of the American Revolution, however, what was left of the defenses thrown up by George Washington’s forces and reinforced by the British occupiers of Manhattan, was basically war surplus, to be put to other uses in peacetime. A continuous element of the history of Governors Island, which became significant in the period after the revolution, is that of change: change in ownership; change in function; and change in uses of the landscape and buildings. As is true on most military installations, both spaces and buildings on Governors Island were used and reused, changed and adapted over time to differing demands and conditions of use. The land itself changed ownership four times in twenty years at the end of the eighteenth century.

The earliest example of change was a transfer of ownership that followed the end of the American Revolution. Columbia University, which had started its academic life in America as King’s College, was identified during the period of the British occupation of Manhattan, as a Tory institution. For most of the Revolutionary War, it was shut down and the classroom building was used as a hospital. But after the peace in 1783, a group of New Yorkers determined to reopen the college, with a name change to recognize the

⁷⁰ Washington Irving. [Diedrich Knickerbocker, pseud.], *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (London : Thomas Tegg, 1836), pp. 131-132.

new republican circumstances and a charter to authorize Columbia College as a state institution of higher learning, rather than a private school.⁷¹

In 1784, an act was presented to the New York State Legislature, which then sat in New York City, to establish a state university on the site of King's College and presumably, with the use of its buildings as part of the proposal. King's College had originated in a building next to Trinity Church. Murray Street, now immediately to the west of City Hall Park, bound the site, to the north, Church Street to the east, Barclay Street to the south and Greenwich Street to the west. King's College's acreage in the city itself was effectively increased in 1767 when the City approved the petition of the college's governors, in keeping with common practice, to develop "water lots" extending westward from their waterfront property line some 200 feet out into the Hudson. These lots were subsequently filled in and leased, effectively doubling the property owned by the College. Still later landfill made the location of the college site several blocks from the Hudson, about parallel with the contemporary northern shoreline of Battery Park City.⁷²

In 1787, another charter from the legislature reversed the original 1784 statute of governance of the university. This act returned the renamed Columbia College to private status as the college for the city of New York. The new charter did not preclude public financing because Columbia was, at that point, the only postsecondary education institution in the state. In 1790, the financing offered by the New York State Legislature included blocks of land. Governors Island was one of those properties. It was awarded to the College with the proviso that, if defense measures warranted it, the island must be returned to military use. Perhaps there was some thought to move the College to the island, since it was running out of room at its 1787 location. The island was surveyed in 1788 and roads and lots presumably for development were laid out. Bellamy claims that land sales were intended to support the college.⁷³

⁷¹ "Columbia University: A Social History, 1754-2004," <http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/cuhis3057> (accessed December 4, 2005). See also Robert A. McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University in the City of New York, 1754-2004*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁷² "Narrative #9 – Kings College Campus," <http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/kingsv1/narratives/campus.htm> (accessed December 4, 2005).

⁷³ Bellamy, p. 169; NYCLPC Report, p. 11.

FORTIFICATIONS

The agreement with Columbia was voided in 1794, however, due to threat of war with France. Instead of a suburb or campus, new fortifications were planned for the island. The United States had a small body of defensive works when it gained its independence in 1781, like those on Governors Island that dated from the 1770s. These were, however, either incomplete or in poor condition. In the 1790s and early 1800s, various hostile European actions, including a British blockade of American trade and French manipulation of American politics led to fears of outright conflict. These war scares caused Congress to appropriate money for construction of fortifications to guard key East Coast harbors. Those forts built before 1800 are considered to be part of the First American System of Fortifications.⁷⁴

Europeans designed the First System works because there was no engineering school in the United States at the time. As *American Military History* describes it, “There were also small garrisons at the important seaports, which had been fortified after 1794 by French technicians, emigres of the recent revolution.”⁷⁵ The official history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers agreed.

The next need for the services of military engineers occurred at the period of threatened European complications during the administration of Washington. On March 20, 1794, Congress authorized the President to fortify certain harbors on the coast, and there being no engineers in service he appointed temporarily several foreign born gentlemen, a number of whom had served in the war, to direct the work.⁷⁶

Secretary of War Henry Knox hired seven foreigners, all but one French, in 1794. The designer of Fort Jay was a French engineer named Charles Vincent. Vincent analyzed the various defensive points of the harbor, and noted Governors Island’s geographic advantage:

Arrived at the entrance of Sandy Hook, the hostile Ships will have yet twenty miles to run before they can annoy the City and the Vessels in the Harbor! If they should arrive at the Narrows, Governor’s [*sic*] Island will be most important because its happy

⁷⁴ See Robert S. Browning III, *Two if By Sea: the Development of American Coastal Defense Policy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983) for a discussion of the role played by defensive coastal systems in the United States from the colonial period through the 19th century.

⁷⁵ Center of Military History, *American Military History*, p. 115.

⁷⁶ Henry L. Abbot, “The Corps Of Engineers” <http://www.army.mil/CMH-pg/books/R&H/R&H-Engrs.htm> (accessed December 4, 2005).

position can secure crossing fires with the points taken on the right hand shore and also with the city, at the mouth of the East River... This point will consequently be the object of the nicest attention. It will be occupied by at least twenty pieces of the largest caliber and four mortars, the whole distributed with cautious knowledge.⁷⁷

Secretary Knox sent instructions for the work to be cheap and uncomplicated earthwork batteries, with an enclosed redoubt or two-story wooden blockhouse. The fortifications built at this period are known as the First System of Fortification, but as Philip Shiman pointed out, “system” was not an accurate description of the harbor forts: they were neither systematically built nor placed strategically. “Many were built on the ruins of older colonial or revolutionary defenses, either because the sites were good or because the land was readily available. The batteries were, as intended, largely basic structures capable of resisting a minor raid by sea or the rush of a small landing party.”⁷⁸

The State of New York, like Massachusetts and South Carolina, refused to cede to the federal government the lands on the inner harbor islands that were the locations of the proposed defensive structures. Thus, at Governors Island, Bedloe’s Island and Ellis Island local inhabitants, both military militia and civilians, worked on the construction. On April 21, 1794, fifty officers of a regiment of artillery and a brigade of militia of New York City began work on the fortification. A ferry was established between New York and Governors Island to transport the city-based volunteers who signed up to help protect their waterfront. On April 22, 1794, the New York cartmen volunteered to work on the island. The Tammany Society and the Democratic Society both signed up. A daily schedule with dates out of order in the original, shows the extent of public participation in the building of Governors Island’s 1790s defensive structures:

May 10—English republicans
May 8—Columbia College Students
May 5—Journeymen hatters
May 1—Republican ship carpenters
May 5—cordwainers of city
May 6—lawyers
May 6—St. Andrews society of the state of NY
May 7th—Peruke makers and hair dressers
May 24th—General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen

⁷⁷ Bellamy, p. 174; Philip Shiman, “The Origins of the Corps of Engineers, 1794-1817,” p. 6, (mss in possession of the author); see also Governors Island Overview, New York Harbor, New York City, New York County, NY, Historic American Buildings Survey, HABS, NY,31-GOVI,2-, Library of Congress, Prints and Photograph Division, Washington, DC www.memory.loc.gov (accessed December 5, 2005).

⁷⁸ Shiman, p. 7.

May 7th—students at law
May 9th—Patriotic grovers of this city
10th and 17th—Patriotic Schoolmasters
12th—patriotic Republican bakers, coopers, tallow chandlers, members of Provident society⁷⁹

An observer was quoted as noting,

As I was getting up in the morning, I heard drums beating and fifes playing. I ran to the window and saw a large body of people...marching two and two towards the water...It was a procession of young guardsmen going in boats to Governor's [*sic*] Island, to give the state a day's work. Fortifications are there erecting to defend the Harbor. It is a patriotic and general resolution of the inhabitants of the city, to work a day gratis, without any distinction of rank or condition, for the public advantages, on these fortifications....How noble this is! How it cherishes unanimity and love for their country!⁸⁰

The efforts of such enthusiastic citizens paid off as the island became a military post. The fifty-plus person garrison included a major, a captain, a surgeon, two first lieutenants, a cadet, three sergeants, a corporal, four musicians, five artificers who were mechanics to repair boats and artillery, and thirty-four privates.⁸¹

The workers built one four-bastioned square commanding two low batteries, but all were made out of sod.⁸² Azoy added that several earthen ramparts were built in the 1790s. There was a battery overlooking Buttermilk Channel, another on the southern rim of the island facing the lower Bay, and a third commanding the approaches from New Jersey and the Hudson River to the north. These were defensive outposts to the main Fort Jay.⁸³

⁷⁹ Shiman, p. 8; I. N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Vol. 5, pp. 1307-1308.

⁸⁰ "Mansey's Excursion to the N.S.," 1796 edition, 81, cited in "Notes on Governors Island, unpublished envelope of miscellaneous notes and clippings of William Kelby," New York Historical Society, quoted in NYCLPC Report, p. 12.

⁸¹ National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Governors Island, New York, National Historic Landmarks February, 4, 1985, p. 1.

⁸² Bellamy, quoting Secretary of War Knox, p. 174.

⁸³ A.C.M. Azoy, *Three Centuries under Three Flags: The Story of Governors Island from 1637*. (Governors Island: Headquarters, First Army, 1951), p. 35.

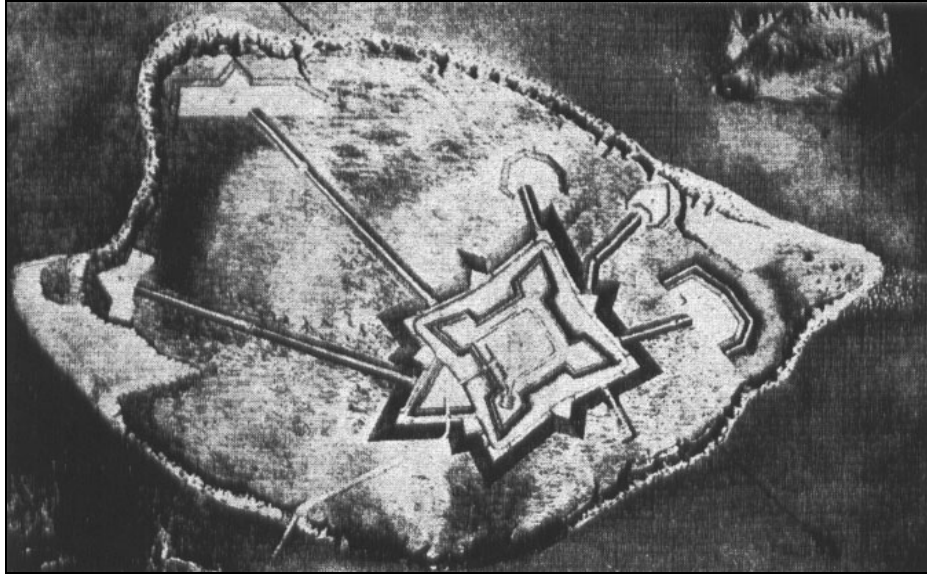


Figure 5. 1794 plan of original Fort Jay. Found in The Governors Island Club, *Governors Island, 1637-1937, Its History and Development* (New York: 1937) p. 25. Original source not identified.

By 1796, the square was partially lined with masonry, and there were two air furnaces, a large powder magazine, and barracks. This was the original Fort Jay. By 1801, a square two-story blockhouse, built of timber with a wall under it, had been completed.⁸⁴ This may have been the blockhouse that Washington Irving saw.

Construction continued into 1796; however, once the threat of attack subsided so did interest in building fortifications and the incomplete works of the First System were allowed to deteriorate. Built mostly of earth with some masonry backing and designed to hold a variety of artillery, these structures were neither uniform nor durable.⁸⁵ Subsequent construction in a few years, and erosion all but destroyed these original works. A few examples remain, including Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland; Fort Mifflin near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Fort Washington near Washington DC in Maryland.⁸⁶

Defense preparations intensified anew after February 15, 1800, when Governors Island, along with Bedloe's (Liberty) Island and Oyster (Ellis) Island, were ceded to the

⁸⁴ National Register of Historic Places Inventory, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Andrew Bennett, "Coastal Fortifications," <http://www.siteo.net/fortifications.html> (accessed December 4, 2005). Fort McHenry and Fort Washington are currently administered by the National Park Service.

⁸⁶ Mark J. Bernow. "Historic California Posts, Defenses along the Pacific Coast of the United States" <http://www.militarymuseum.org/PacHD.html> (accessed December 4, 2005).

United States.⁸⁷ Additional appropriations made in 1799, 1800, and 1801 funded, among other things, the erection of a gateway to Fort Jay. This gateway with its handsome carving still guards the entrance to the fort.⁸⁸

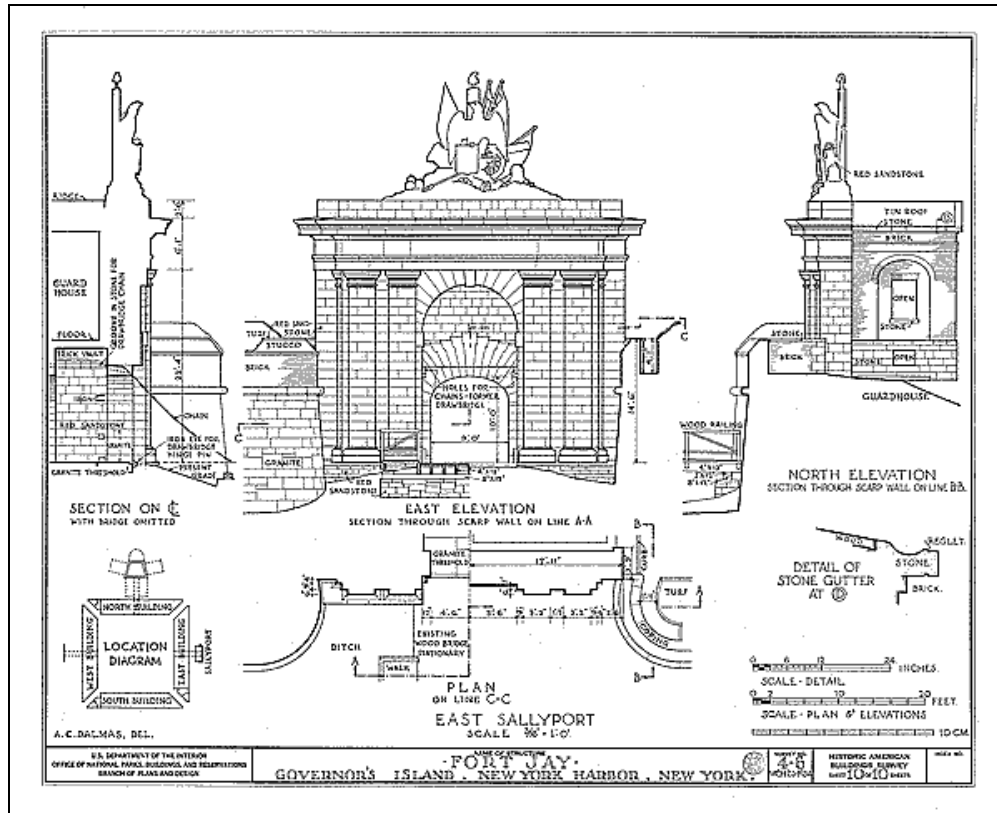


Figure 6. Historic American Building Survey drawing of the sally port. Library of Congress HABS, NY,31-GOVI,1 http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer (accessed December 4, 2005).

The Second American System of Fortifications, initiated in 1807 during Thomas Jefferson’s administration and continued through the War of 1812, included more permanent structures than the First System. It included open batteries that were earthworks faced with masonry, and also some all-masonry forts. Designs were primarily left to the engineers at each site, so there is a wide variation in what was built. Some

⁸⁷ NYCLPC Report, p. 12.

⁸⁸ There is a legend that a prisoner who was a stonecutter by trade made the carving over the gateway. One day when the prisoner stood under the gateway checking his work, the Commanding Officer’s little daughter came by and stood with him looking up at the carving. Just then, a heavy block of stone fell and would have killed the child if the prisoner had not thrown himself in the way, saving her life. He was seriously injured, but rewarded for his bravery with a pardon. Whether there were prisoners on Governors Island that early remains to be established.

examples include the all-masonry casemated Castle Williams on Governors Island and the earth and masonry Fort Wood, which serves as the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.⁸⁹

JONATHAN WILLIAMS, CORPS OF ENGINEERS



Figure 7. Jonathan Williams. <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/coe.htm#6> (accessed December 5, 2005).

One of the remarkable aspects of the history of Governors Island is that in every century, people who were among the most important and well-known Americans of their day designed and carried out some of its planning and administration. In the early nineteenth century, that person was Jonathan Williams, the engineer who designed New York's harbor forts before the War of 1812. Williams was born in 1750 to a niece of Benjamin Franklin. He spent much of his twenties and thirties (the 1770s and 1780s) in Europe, where he made profitable business contacts through Franklin and, importantly,

⁸⁹ Fort Wood and the Statue of Liberty are now administered by the National Park Service. Benjamin Levine and Isabell F. Story, *Statue Of Liberty National Monument Bedloe's Island, New York* National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 11 (Washington, DC : National Park Service, 1954), http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/hh/11/index.htm (accessed December 4, 2005).

studied military science and in particular, the building of fortifications. When he returned to Philadelphia, he became a judge in the court of common pleas in 1796.⁹⁰

But Williams, like his uncle, was a polymath in his own right. He was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society shortly after his return to the United States in 1787. His publications and scientific interests brought him to the notice of Thomas Jefferson, who appointed him major of the 2nd regiment of the newly formed artillerists and engineers in 1801. Williams was then appointed Superintendent of West Point and inspector of fortifications. He left West Point in 1803 in a dispute over control and rank. Secretary of War Henry Dearborn refused to grant Williams the right to command the Corps of Engineers, or in fact, the installation at West Point. “Indeed,” Philip Shiman commented,

as Williams discovered during a dispute with the post commander, an Engineer’s commission did not confer the right to issue orders to anyone outside of his own branch without the express authorization of the President (through the Secretary of War).⁹¹

Jefferson brought Williams back into the Corps in 1805 as a lieutenant colonel and as chief of engineers and it was in that position that Williams planned and built most of the inner-harbor forts in New York Harbor. Castle Williams was named for him.

Williams apparently detested West Point, where he continued to head the Military Academy, so he requested a reassignment to New York City and to command Castle Williams during the War of 1812. Williams had the support of the Secretary of War and the commander of the New York area. As Williams said of the matter,

Unless the Corps of Engineers be entitled according to the seniority of its officers, *to the command of any Fortification or Post* wherever they may be stationed, it never can be a respectable one, nor can the command confer Honour on the Officer who may be at the Head of it.⁹²

Unfortunately for Williams, those whom he would have commanded objected. In an early example of power struggles between the fledgling Corps of Engineers and the

⁹⁰ Introduction, “Jonathan Williams Papers, 1788-1802,” American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, <http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/mole/w/williams.htm> (accessed December 4, 2005). Williams papers are also located at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

⁹¹ Shiman, p. 39.

⁹² Quoted in Shiman, p. 40.

military forces, the junior artillery officers of the New York garrison mutinied and protested formally. As Shiman documents, their petition said “We cannot, must not view in Silence any encroachment upon our military rights or suffer the command to which we are entitled to be unjustly taken from us.”⁹³ Infuriated and frustrated in addition by his inability to get the Military Academy moved from West Point to New York City or Washington, Williams resigned his army post and became brevet brigadier-general of the New York militia. He was elected to Congress from Pennsylvania in 1814, but died before he could take his seat.⁹⁴

NEW WORKS ON GOVERNORS ISLAND

Three works were built on Governors Island as part of the new federal defense funding. Fort Columbus, the name given to the newly remade Fort Jay as a result of the public anger at John Jay over the XYZ Affair, was the first Governors Island fortification that can be identified as a product of the Second American System of Fortifications. In 1802, as the Inspector of Fortifications, Jonathan Williams asked Major Decius Wadsworth to report on the sites under his command in New York Harbor for the information of the Secretary of War. Wadsworth, who six months later would be appointed second-in-command to Williams, issued his report on February 15, 1802. He discussed Bedloe’s Island, Ellis Island, and Governors Island.⁹⁵ He was not impressed with what he found at Governors Island.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 59.

⁹⁴ Introduction, “Jonathan Williams Papers, 1788-1802.” The Army’s Bicentennial History is not very complimentary of Williams. As the history tells it, “Williams, however, faced an array of problems while serving as Superintendent. The buildings and accommodations were limited. An 1803 law authorized civilian teachers of drawing and French to complement instruction already provided in mathematics, drawing and fortifications, but funding remained uncertain. There were no standard procedures for making appointments to or graduating from the academy, so cadets ranged in age from ten to thirty-seven, most came from the Northeast, and their attendance varied from six months to six years, often with extensive intermissions. Williams repeatedly suggested moving the Military Academy to New York City or Washington, D.C., or establishing a second academy, to bring more attention and funding to the institution. In the end, wracked by cadet resistance to attending class, personal disputes and threats of violence among cadets, officers, soldiers, and civilians, and ultimately by Williams’ own resignations when not given the commands he desired, the Military Academy was barely functioning at all by 1812. Indeed, only a single cadet and a single instructor were present at that time, and only 89 cadets had graduated from West Point.” <http://www.usma.edu/bicentennial/history/1776.asp> (accessed December 5, 2005).

⁹⁵ “Description of Fort Jay & other ports in the Harbour of New York by Major Wadsworth,” 15 Feb. 1802, 4 pp., Folio, Jonathan Williams Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University,

Fort Jay is a regular square fort with Bastions. The interior[sic] Side taken on the Berms of the Parapet is about 400 feet. The flanks are open (that is perpendicular or nearly so to the Lines of Defense). The Parapet which is of timber, with the Interstices filled up with Earth is about 12 feet in thickness faced with Sodwork. The Berms of the Parapet (or the upper Berm, for it has two) is well fraised[sic]. The Counterscarp which is of Masonry is not quite finished. There is a handsome Gateway, with a *Corps de Garde* Drawbridge not yet finished, and in the opposite Curtain a Sally Port carried under the Ramparts...⁹⁶

He noted that because parts of the existing fort had not been completed, “it is not capable of any Defense in its present State.”⁹⁷

The major continued his discussion of Fort Jay by pointing out the number of soldiers and guns that could be stationed on the parapet (1000 men arranged in two ranks.) The guns, however, would take up some space, so the number might not be quite that large. There was space for 73 guns (22 of them in the detached batteries), and it took eight men to fire each cannon. Thus, Wadsworth thought it would take 1000 infantry and 584 “Artillery Men...to enable therefore Fort Jay to make an effective Defense against a Superior Force....”⁹⁸

But Wadsworth pointed out that Fort Jay could not, in its current form, house that many men. “The Barracks,” he said,

at present erected may answer very conveniently for two companies with their officers, and in a case of Necessity another company and no more might possibly be crowded into them. There is a Space remaining for the Erection of another Range of Barracks sufficient for two Companies...which is the greatest Number (that is, 5 Companies with officers) that can be provided with Quarters in Fort Jay.⁹⁹

A square, two-story blockhouse, built of timber and with “Sides perpendicular to the Capitals of the Bastions”¹⁰⁰ sat in the center of Fort Jay. Wadsworth thought the building ugly and not cannon-proof. There was, however, a well of good water under it.

Bloomington; hereafter noted as Williams, Jonathan Mss.

⁹⁶ Wadsworth Report, Williams, Jonathan Mss, p.1.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Wadsworth noted that good water could generally be found at Fort Jay at “a moderate Depth below the Surface.”¹⁰¹

The major delineated two major problems with using Fort Jay as part of the defense system of New York Harbor. The first was its proximity to higher ground on Long Island, at least two high points of which were only one mile away. With no structures that were bombproof, he pointed out, “it must be concluded that it could not resist a Moment after the Enemy should have established a Battery of Cannon or more especially a Battery of Mortars, at either of the Points above mentioned.”¹⁰² The second involved the way the original fort was constructed.

The Position of the Fort is such that the Capital of one of the Bastions prolonged extends directly up the East River, by which Means, as the saliant angles of a Fortification are known to be its weakest Parts; the Protection and Defense which Fort Jay can afford to the East River, is the least possible, it not being practicable after all the Guns shall have been mounted to bring more than two out of 51 to bear upon that Part.¹⁰³

Wadsworth disagreed with Charles Vincent’s praise for Governors Island as a good defensive site. In addition to its vulnerability to attack from high ground to the south and east, he felt it was too close to the Battery in New York City and observed that it was unlikely that an enemy ship would anchor directly between Governors Island and the edge of the city. Even if that happened, he pointed out, “yet the Distance being only about 1200 yards is too small for a direct cross Fire and the Batteries would be as liable almost to batter each other as to damage the Enemy.”¹⁰⁴

He concluded that because of these drawbacks, Governors Island would be a good choice for “Batteries to protect the Harbour and Town,” but the position of the island would “render it unwise to attempt the Erection of a Fort or any Work capable of sustaining a seige...” Governors Island would thus “very well constitute a secondary, but ought not to be made a principal Points of Defense.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Wadsworth also accounted for the detached batteries. He listed the weaponry at Fort Jay, including the batteries, as consisting of fifteen heavy cannon and two mortars. They also had field pieces on traveling carriages¹⁰⁶ that consisted of five 8-inch Howitzers, ten French four-pounders and four American three-pounders. There was also a furnace to heat shot in one of the batteries. He noted that each battery was vulnerable to attack, either from the heights or from a ship on the East River. He dismissed Bedloe's Island and Ellis Island in similar fashion as sites for anything except batteries to protect the harbor and New York City.¹⁰⁷

The evaluation did not close discussion of fortifications on the island, and in 1805, the Secretary of War asked Williams to make some measurements in New York Harbor.

...I wish you to ascertain, as precisely as possible, the width of what is called the narrows at the entrance of New York Harbour, noting the exact width, at both high and low water from shore to shore; and also the distance from Governors Island to the Island near Gibbet Island. Please to ascertain also the distance from Governors Island to the nearest point of what is called the Battery in front of the City of New York; and the width of the River between the southern part of the City and the Jersey shore at Paulus Hook.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ "traveling" carriages: These latter, which must not be confused with the "light field" carriages, are particularly worthy of note in view of the use of mobile artillery in coast defense today. The term "traveling carriage" was not applied to the carriages of any particular calibers. There were "heavy" and "light" guns for every caliber in the service. Light field carriages were used with the light guns of whatever calibers constituted the field artillery of a force in the field. The traveling carriage, less mobile and more rugged in construction, was used to transport every type of "heavy" gun, and was therefore as necessary with the heavy 48-pounder as with the heavy 24-pounder. Guns mounted on traveling car were employed as siege or garrison artillery or, in battle, as guns of position. In coast defense they were, as a rule, held in reserve, to be moved into position when and where danger threatened. "Reference Guide 15: Harbor Defense Works of the First and Second Systems," derived from the article "Early Coast Fortification," *Coast Artillery Journal* 70 (1929): 134-144. American Seacoast Defense Historical Reference pages, United States Seacoast Defenses (a brief history) The Coast Defense Study Group, Inc. <http://www.cdsg.org/reprint%20PDFs/123list.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Wadsworth Report, Williams, Jonathan Mss, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Williams, "Journal of Proceedings & Survey made of the Harbour of New York," October 2,-November 13, 1805, quoted by Williams on page 1, Williams, Jonathan Mss.

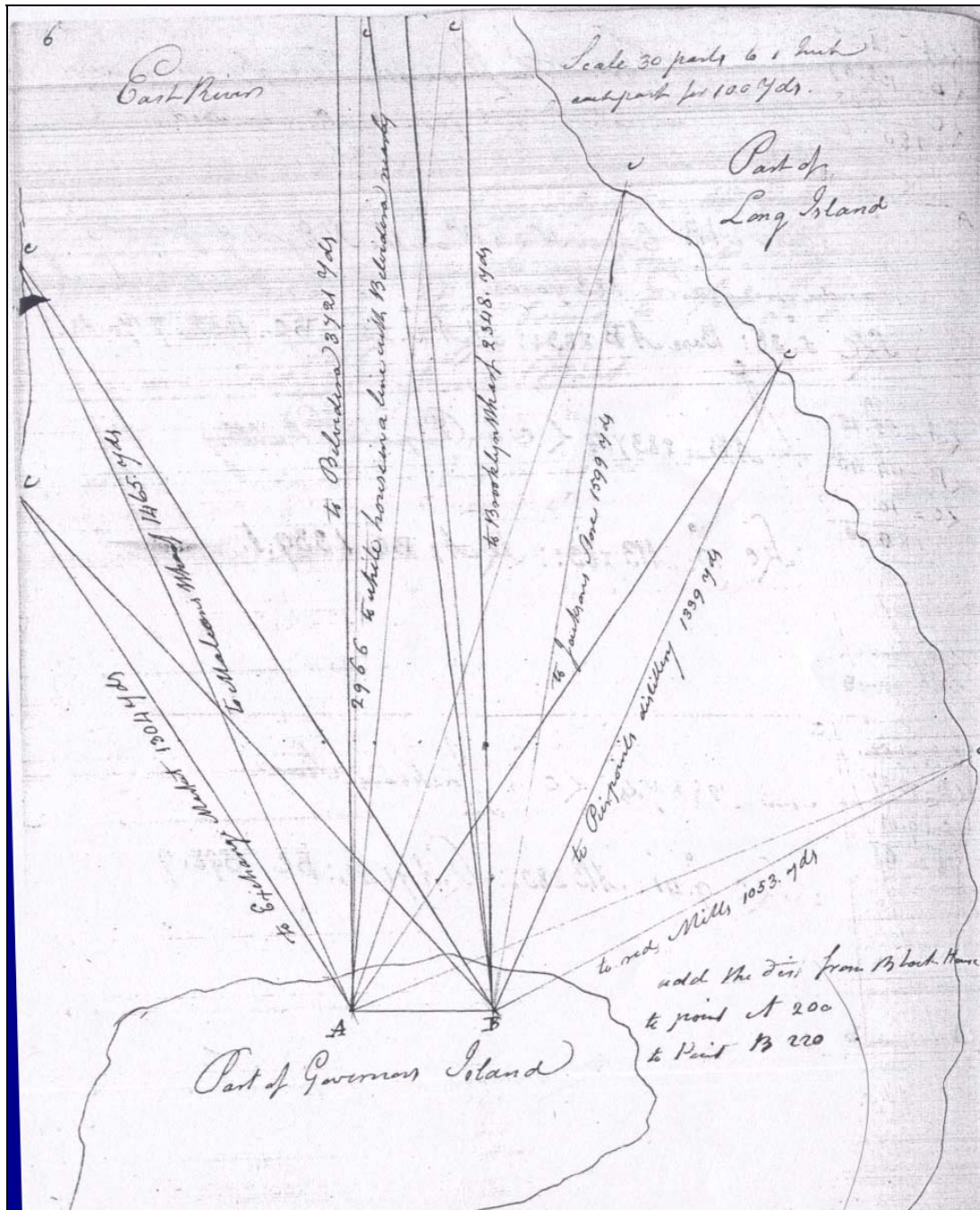


Figure 8. Jonathan Williams' Engineering Journal, October-December 1805. Williams, Jonathan mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University-Bloomington.

Williams did the work, as Figure 8 shows. His bill, rendered on December 13, 1805, was for \$198.75 and covered the cost of the boat, its crew and his assistants.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ "The United States to Jon Williams, Lt.Col. Engineers," December 13, 1805, Williams, Jonathan Mss.

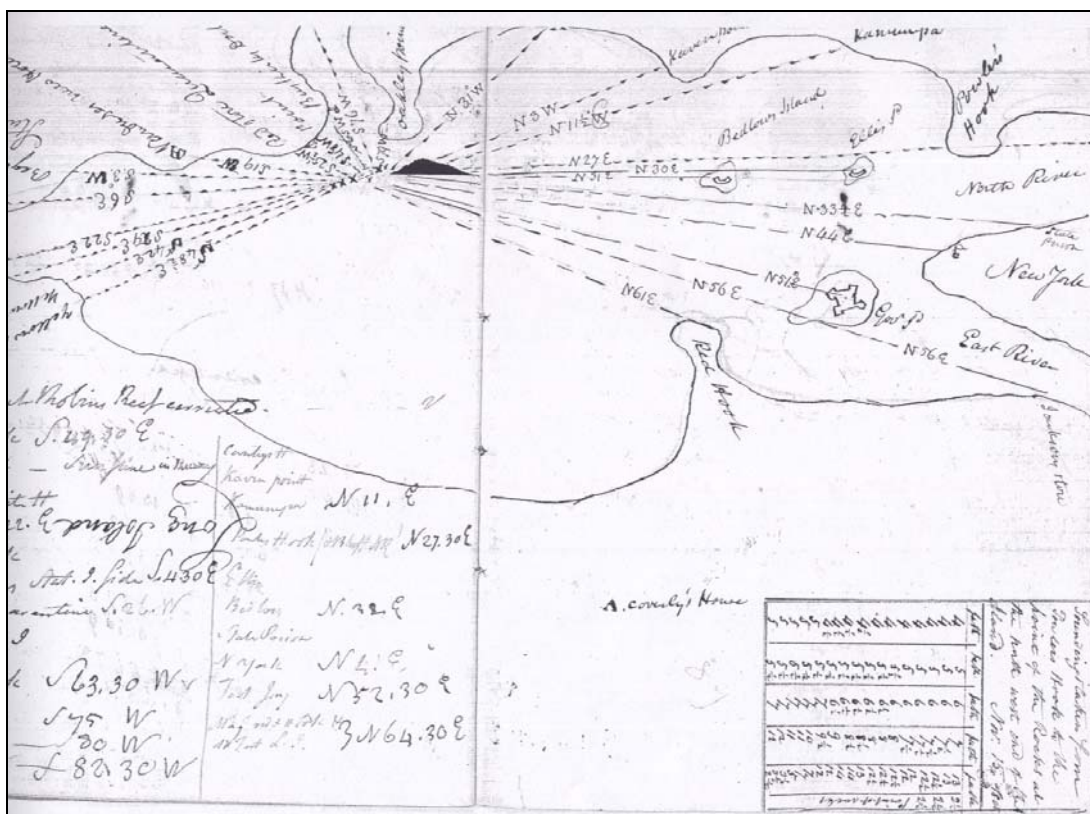


Figure 9. Drawing of Robins Reef and the rest of New York Harbor. Note the fort shape on Governors Island in the upper right-hand area. Jonathan Williams’ Engineering Journal, October-December 1805. Williams, Jonathan mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University-Bloomington.

FORT COLUMBUS

In May 1806, despite the reservations about the now renamed Fort Jay noted by Major Wadsworth, Williams, echoing the orders of the Secretary of War, instructed Richard Wiley to request proposals for “the Stone, Brick Mason-work and Labour, necessary to repair Fort Jay as completely as it is susceptible of.”¹¹⁰ The old earthen Fort Jay was rebuilt extensively in 1806.¹¹¹ “All of the works except the walled counterscarp,

¹¹⁰ Williams to Wiley, May 1806, Williams, Jonathan Mss.

¹¹¹ US Coast Guard. Governors Island. Ordnance and Explosives Archives. Search Report Findings. July 1997.

the gate, the sally port, the magazine, and two barracks were torn down and rebuilt of stronger materials.”¹¹²

Fort Columbus was an enclosed Second System square fortification with four bastions and a ravelin surrounded by a dry moat. The fort sits partially submerged at the top of a smooth grassy slope known as a glacis. The scarp walls are dressed granite ashlar surmounted by a projecting granite cordon and a brick parapet. Inside the bastion walls, the old entry gate is of red sandstone. Above the gate is a large and elaborate sandstone sculpture of an eagle with military symbols, mentioned above. The moat walls are of red sandstone with a top course of bluestone. The counterscarp walls are of brick. The quadrangle inside the walls was initially used as a parade ground, but as of some date soon after 1794, was surrounded by four barracks buildings that were used for housing. The new Fort was renamed Fort Columbus when Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay fell out of favor for conducting unsatisfactory treaty negotiations with the British. The new structure was capable of mounting 104 guns. The fort never saw military action.¹¹³

Sometime after the rebuilding, perhaps as early as 1809, new brick barracks were constructed inside Fort Columbus for troops garrisoned on the island.¹¹⁴ Those who were garrisoned there while the building went up were housed in one-story wooden barracks known as “Rotten Row,” mentioned in Chapter 1, apparently located between the former Post quartermaster’s offices and the carpenter’s shop and the #18 building on Colonels Row, as it was known in 1923. Some of these wooden barracks burned in 1856 and the rest were removed after the yellow fever epidemic in 1870.¹¹⁵

CASTLE WILLIAMS

Jonathan Williams appeared to spend a great deal of time at Fort Columbus, since much of his correspondence from 1805-1807 is dated from there. In July 1807, in response to instructions from the Secretary of War, Williams ordered materials to build a new structure at what was known as Perkin’s Point. That building needed “a solid stone basis...of an Extent that shall project beyond the present high water line, in a portion of

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ General Services Administration. Governors Island Historic District, Building and Property Summary Sheets p. 89. April 2000. Part of Governors Island Preservation and Design Manual.

¹¹⁴ GOIS briefing package, 1996. On file at Charlestown Navy Yard, Charlestown, MA; Bellamy, p. 176.

¹¹⁵ Edmund Banks Smith, *Governors Island: Its Military History under Three Flags, 1637-1922*. (New York: Valentine’s Manual Inc., 1923), p. 130.

270 degrees of a circle, upon a diameter of about 200 feet.”¹¹⁶ He instructed the military agent to

procure a large Quantity of hammered faced Stone of the largest size that can be uniformly had, not less than 10,000 ten thousand superficial feet of hammered Face will be wanting, and probably more...”¹¹⁷

Williams also ordered “Labourers to excavate a Foundation at the point near the Hospital,” which would be established as soon as the necessary survey could be made. He added that while they waited for the survey, “it will be best to bend your whole strength to the completion of Fort Columbus [rather than] that on Perkin’s Point upon which the location of the other much depends.”¹¹⁸

The building of Castle Williams thus began in 1807. The *forts circulaires* or multiple circular casemated tiers of the structure were an old European idea that had been out of fashion for two centuries, but had been resurrected by the French engineer Marc René, Marquis de Montalembert in the 1780s.¹¹⁹ In contrast to the star forts, like Fort Wood on Bedloe’s Island, and other angular forts like Fort Columbus, these round fortifications allowed a smaller area and fewer men to be exposed to fire. They also needed fewer troops to staff them. Castle Williams and Castle Clinton were built to work together, although the latter, located on the southern tip of Manhattan, never rose above the first tier.¹²⁰ Williams ordered the building of a wharf “round the Battery at New York” that would allow materials to be landed and also serve as an

Exterior reinforcement to the face of a stone basis of a casemated Battery in most respects similar to that proposed for Perkin’s Point. Another similar Battery will be plac’d at Ellis Island and for each of these it will be well to have nearly an equal Quantity of hammered stone prepared. The foundations may be the roughest, as they must also be of the largest and heaviest stones; at Ellis Island a much smaller quantity of Foundation stone will be wanted, as part of a foundation will already be found there.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Williams to Captain Whitley, Military Agent, July 27, 1807, 2 pp., Williams, Jonathan Mss.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ See Janis Langins *Conserving the Enlightenment: French Military Engineering from Vauban to the Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) for a discussion of this development; Browning, *Two If By Sea*, p. 17-18.

¹²⁰ HABS, 1983. GOIS, Castle Williams, Building 501. HABS No NY_5715-2, Library of Congress.

Williams admitted that it was difficult to say how much stone would be needed for the various structures, although he believed that “for the interior mass of the Buildings about 80 or 100,000 cubic feet of stone will not be to[sic] great a preparation for *each* casemated Battery.” He also ordered 750,000 bricks for each place “but for this purpose I cannot take ordinary Brick, and I would advise giving some additional Price to Make the Quality in proportion better.”¹²¹ The casemated battery on Ellis Island was never built.

Castle Williams was built of solid masonry on rocks that had endangered shipping because they were submerged except at low tide. The walls of the castle were 200 feet in diameter, made of hammered Newark red sandstone, and were about forty feet high, eight feet thick at the base, and seven feet thick at the top. The outer cut of the wall was laid with stones dovetailed so that no stone could be removed whole. At one time, there were two brick buildings and a well inside the castle. There were no dungeons built, although there was a zigzag underground passage connecting the Castle to Fort Jay.¹²² In 1810, the castle, called the Tower when it was being built, was named for Colonel Williams. Work finished in 1811. Williams was assigned to command it in 1812, against the opposition of the Artillery Corps, and he resigned his commission later that year because of the protests. Castle Williams’s primary use for the next hundred and fifty years was as a military prison.¹²³

SOUTH BATTERY

South Battery, or the Half-Moon Battery, was erected in 1812. The structure was shaped like an arrowhead and had 13 cannon mounted on an open parapet at its top.¹²⁴ The second story was added in 1834, perhaps as a barracks, and other additions and extensive alterations were begun in 1904. South Battery, later Building 298, was

¹²¹ Jonathan Williams to Captain Whitley, Military Agent, July 27, 1807, p. 2. Williams, Jonathan Mss.

¹²² The entrance inside Fort Jay was still open in 2005, but the passage was blocked near the hospital.

¹²³ US Army. *Story of Governors Island*, p. 8; NYCLPC Report, p. 13.

¹²⁴ NYCLPC Report, p. 13.

constructed originally to defend against those coming up Buttermilk Channel and those coming overland from Long Island through Brooklyn.¹²⁵

Money was also appropriated to construct a fort on Bedloe's (now Liberty) Island. Up to that point Bedloe's Island had served varied purposes. The City of New York acquired it in 1758 from its private owner in order to place a quarantine station there. After the American Revolution, the State of New York took over operation of the facility and, also in cooperation with the federal government, built fortifications on the island as part of the city's harbor defenses. In 1800, title to the property transferred to the federal government, which abandoned the quarantine operation and concentrated on defense. By 1811 the U.S. Government had built a new eleven-point, star-shaped structure known as Fort Wood. The fort served as a garrison, and, during the Civil War, as an ordnance depot.¹²⁶

Congress also fortified Oyster (now Ellis) Island. After much legal haggling over ownership of the island, the Federal government purchased Ellis Island from New York State in 1808. Oyster Island was approved as a site for fortifications and on it was constructed a parapet for three tiers of circular guns. That made the island part of the new harbor defense system that included Castle Clinton at the Battery, Castle Williams on Governor's Island, Fort Wood on Bedloe's Island and two earthworks forts at the entrance to New York Harbor at the Verrazano Narrows. In all, more than a dozen forts were built to defend New York Harbor at the time of the War of 1812.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ RG 77, drawings of the alterations to South Battery, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD; hereafter known as NARA II; HABS, 1983. GOIS, HalfMoon Battery. (South Battery, Corbin Hall, Officers Club, Building 298). HABS No NY-5715-11. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/ (accessed December 4, 2005).

¹²⁶ "State of Liberty. Celebrating the Immigrant: An Administrative History," http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/stli/adhi0.htm (accessed December 5, 2005).

¹²⁷ National Park Service, Castle Clinton NHS, <http://www.nps.gov/stli/serv02.htm#Ellis> (accessed December 5, 2005). National Park Service, Ellis Island National Monument History <http://www.nps.gov/stli/serv02.htm#Ellis> (accessed December 4, 2005).

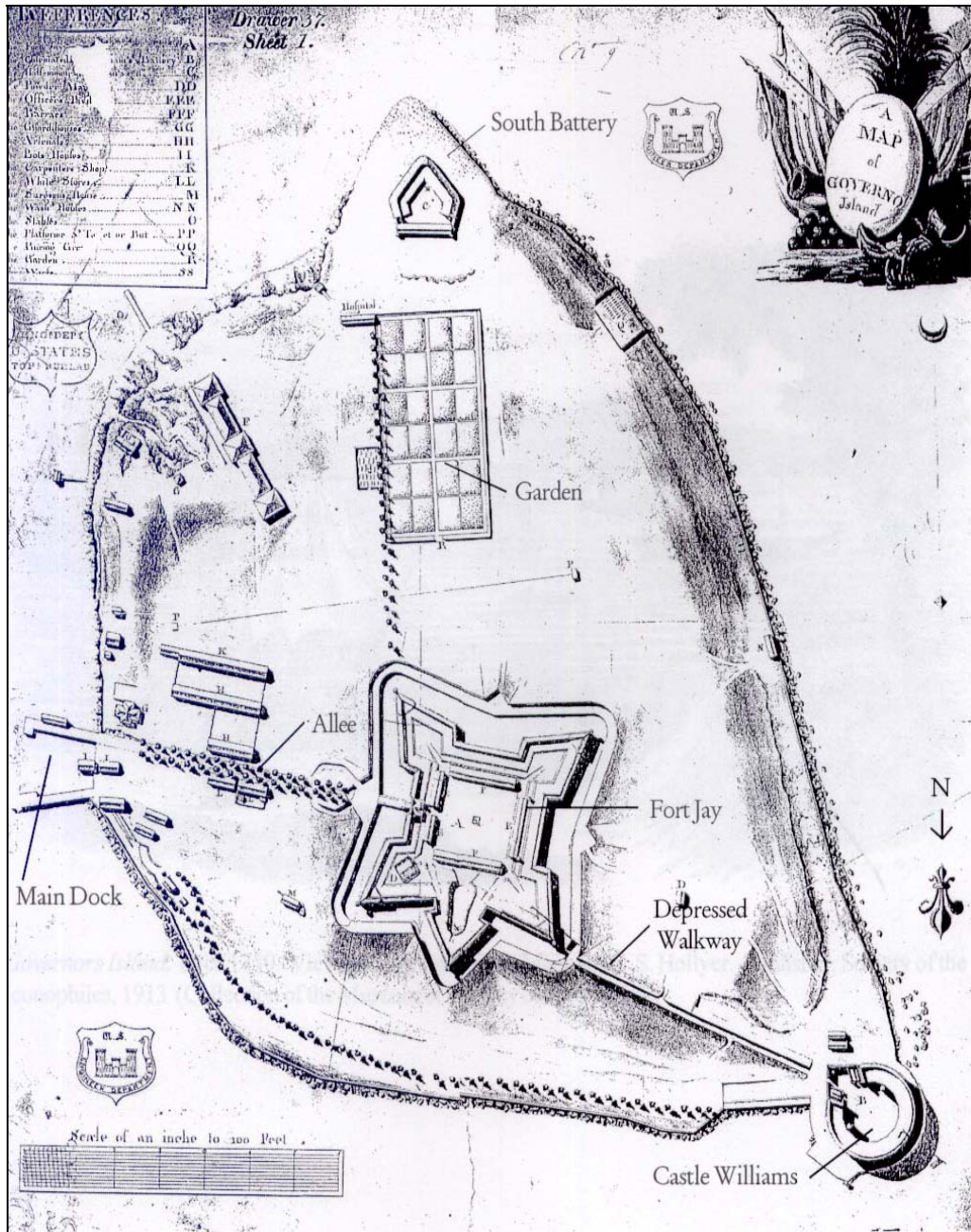


Figure 10. Map of Governors Island fortifications, ca. 1813. Record Group 77 – Fortification Files, Architecture and Cartographic Branch, National Archives.

During the War of 1812, many troops were stationed on Governors Island and nearby forts to guard against an attack from Long Island, something that was familiar from the American Revolution. Artillery training was held on the island for the militias from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonel Henry

Burbeck.¹²⁸ Burbeck was a hero of the Revolutionary War and was “Chief of the new Artillery Corps from 1802 to 1815, first as a colonel and then during the War of 1812 as a brevet brigadier general,”¹²⁹ and was doubtless better prepared to train artillery troops than anyone else in the U.S. Army at that time.



Figure 11. Col. Henry Burbeck. Photo from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers History Web site. <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/coe.htm#5> (accessed December 5, 2005).

AFTER THE WAR OF 1812

At the end of the War of 1812, although it was obviously not clear at the time, the forts on Governors Island and the other forts and fortifications in New York Harbor had seen their most important defensive moments. The British chose to blockade New York Harbor, and its navy did not attempt to sail into the harbor. It may be that the enormous bristling fortifications throughout the harbor convinced the British not to try. On the other hand, it may be that when the British did challenge Second System fortifications in a similar geographic location in Baltimore at Fort McHenry, the defenses held and cooled their urge to attack. Defeats at Plattsburg, New York, on Lake Champlain and at Baltimore, both in September 1814, led to an increased interest in peace negotiations in

¹²⁸ US Army, 1st Army. *Story of Governors Island*, p. 9.

¹²⁹ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers History Web site. <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/coe.htm#5> (accessed December 4, 2005).

Britain.¹³⁰ Thus, by the end of 1814,¹³¹ the “fierce little warrior in a big cocked hat” with formidable fortifications stood for defenses never tested.

Most scholarship awards neither side victory in the War of 1812. But offensive and defensive abilities which were also the strengths of the New York Harbor system of fortifications did aid the Americans.

If it favored neither belligerent, the war at least taught the Americans several lessons...the American soldier displayed unexpected superiority in gunnery and engineering. Artillery contributed to American successes at Chippewa, Sackett’s Harbor, Norfolk, the seige [*sic*] of Fort Erie, and New Orleans. The war also boosted the reputation of the Corps of Engineers, a branch which owed its efficiency chiefly to the Military Academy. Academy graduates completed the fortifications at Fort Erie, built Fort Meigs, planned the harbor defenses of Norfolk and New York, and directed the fortifications at Plattsburg. If larger numbers of infantrymen had been as well trained as the artillerymen and engineers, the course of the war might have been entirely different.¹³²

The forts on Governors Island—large, substantial, architecturally significant structures that they were—would never see combat. But in the “Thirty Years’ Peace”¹³³ that followed the War of 1812, the U.S. Army would change dramatically. Structures and landscapes around and within the forts on Governors Island would track that change.

¹³⁰ Center of Military History, *American Military History*, p. 143.

¹³¹ The Treaty of Ghent was signed on Christmas Eve, 1814. Andrew Jackson’s victory at New Orleans in January 1815 occurred two weeks after the peace treaty was signed. See *Ibid.*, pp. 144-146.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.146.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

CHAPTER THREE

BUREAUCRATS, SOLDIERS AND FAMILIES: DEVELOPMENT OF THE U.S. ARMY INSTALLATION AT GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1815-1860

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

Military institutions and activities, a subcategory of the general theme “Shaping the Political Landscape” in the National Park Service’s *Revised Thematic Framework*, characterizes the period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War at Governors Island. The period between 1815 and 1860 saw changes in the U.S. Army that focused on increased professionalism and bureaucratic complexity. Reflecting both professionalism and complexity, Governors Island hosted the headquarters of the Department of the East briefly, the New York Arsenal for a much longer period, and the usual garrison with its attendant hospital and service functions. Officers and troops gathered at, embarked from, and sometimes returned to Governors Island from the Seminole Wars in Florida, the Mexican War, and frontier duty in California or the Pacific Northwest. In the 1850s, the island became a recruiting station.

The structures built, and then often adapted, replaced, or reused on Governors Island during this period, reflect those developments. In addition, the families who followed the officers and troops began to shape the community and the community landscape of the island at this time. Thus, the theme of “Peopling Places” again applies to this period. “Creating Social Institutions and Movements” was reflected in the establishment of the church, and “Expressing Cultural Values” took physical shape in the building of a library and making arrangements for the education of the children who lived on Governors Island. Many of the buildings that were constructed in this period no longer stand, but are important to include in the story as a layer of history on Governors Island. Of those that still exist, many have changed in function and often have been physically adapted, and the narrative of those changes and adaptations adds layers to the history of the built environment in this place.

CHANGES IN THE U.S. ARMY

The end of the War of 1812 allowed a debate that had begun a generation before to shape the development of the American military and provide for a larger, permanent, professional federal force. At the end of the American Revolution, most of the U.S. soldiers and officers were sent home, and the army as such numbered only about 800 men and officers who spent their time primarily by guarding the western frontier.¹³⁴ The old American idea of relying on local militia forces to defend their homes prevailed, and in 1792, Congress passed a militia law that called for the enlistment of “‘every able-bodied white male citizen’ between the ages of 18 and 45.”¹³⁵

But an effective militia depended on training and the discipline to carry out complex military maneuvers, and despite Congress’s efforts and those of President George Washington, the states resisted federal oversight or involvement with their state units. As challenges developed on the frontier, Congress expanded the regular army slightly, but most fighting still relied on militia units.

In 1797, the U.S. Army was organized into regiments with four regiments of infantry, a new Corps of Artillerists and Engineers, and two companies of light dragoons. All of these soldiers were assigned to the nation’s frontiers except for the few garrisons at the important seaports like New York and Boston. These troops were the first federal inhabitants of the Fort Jay built by the civilians of New York City. In total, the entire Army numbered about 3,300 officers and men.¹³⁶ The numbers and organization rose in times of trouble, such as in 1798-99 when war with France seemed a distinct possibility. But the United States rushed to disband its troops and support units when the emergency appeared to be over.

In contrast, in 1815, instead of dismissing officers and troops wholesale, Congress created a small professional army, designed to work with the state militias in case of war. The new army would be 10,000 men strong, not including the Corps of Engineers, and the nine wartime military districts were reorganized into two divisions, the Division of the North under Major General Jacob Brown, and the Division of the South, commanded by Major General Andrew Jackson. In Florida, the First Seminole War (1817-1819) kept a reform-minded Congress from undoing these changes, but again when hostilities concluded, Congress demanded cutbacks in the regular Army. Those

¹³⁴ *American Military History*, p. 107; Weigley, pp. 139-143; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 42-44.

¹³⁵ *American Military History*, p.108.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.115.

cutbacks led to a reorganization of the Army that gave Governors Island five years of extreme importance to the U.S. Army.

GOVERNORS ISLAND AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS: DEPARTMENT OF THE EAST, 1821-1827

The creation of this small professional army in 1815 had an immediate impact in New York City, if not immediately on the harbor installations. The “West Battery,” the circular fort at the southern tip of Manhattan and one of the important defenses of New York Harbor during the War of 1812 period, was renamed Castle Clinton in honor of Gov. DeWitt Clinton. In that year it was made Headquarters, U.S. Third Military District.¹³⁷

From 1816 to 1820, Gen. Winfield Scott was in command of that district. Scott, born of a good Virginia family, stood 6 feet 5 inches tall and weighed over 200 pounds. He was brilliant, vain, and quarrelsome and loved New York society. He served through fourteen presidencies and was commanding general for the last twenty years of his career. He fought in Florida, in Mexico and for the North in the Civil War. Scott believed in professionalism and wrote manuals for training of professional soldiers. As difficult as he was, Scott was a brilliant battlefield general and more talented than most at military strategy.¹³⁸



Figure 12. General Winfield Scott, Photo by Mathew Brady. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ See John S.D. Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (New York: The Free Press, 1997) and Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

The Third Military District Headquarters, with Scott in command, was moved, probably in an economy move to house Army administrators on federal government land, from Castle Clinton to Governors Island in 1820.

But Governors Island was due, for a short while, to become even more central to the new professional Army. In legislation dated March 2, 1821, eight regiments of infantry were collapsed to seven; and four regiments of artillery replaced a more diverse set of organizations. The Northern and Southern Divisions were abolished and replaced by an Eastern and Western Department. General Scott moved from the command of the Third Military District to the command of the Division of the East. Brig. General Edmund P. Gaines was in command of the West, headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky.

General Gaines, like Scott born in Virginia, had spent most of his military career in the southern U.S. He was probably best known at this time as a hero of the battle of Fort Erie in the War of 1812, and as the man who arrested Aaron Burr.¹³⁹ He would go on to a distinguished career in the South and Southwest.

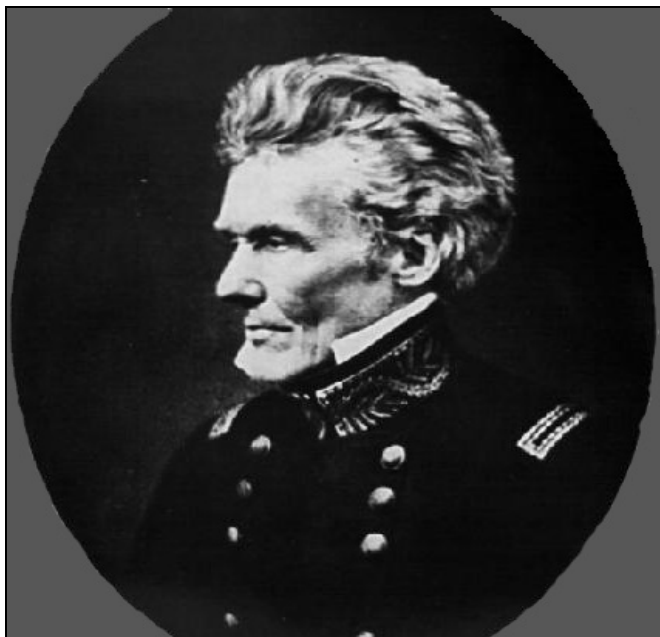


Figure 13. General Edmund P. Gaines. <http://www.geocities.com/rodent70/html/sem1836.html> (accessed April 24, 2006).

Thus the first two national commanders at Governors Island were among the most distinguished, highest-ranking officers in the young professional Army. Because the two

¹³⁹ For a good description of his service in the southwestern U.S. after 1836, see the “Handbook of Texas History Online” (University of Texas at Austin) <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/GG/fga3.html> (accessed April 24, 2006).

generals were both personally and professionally competitive¹⁴⁰ and New York City was much closer to the seat of power in Washington than was Louisville, they both wanted the New York post. Scott and Gaines finally agreed that they would exchange commands every second year. In 1823, General Gaines took over at Governors Island and Scott went west. General Scott returned in 1825, and in 1827, General Gaines returned to the Department of the East and at that point, moved the headquarters back to New York City.¹⁴¹ That transfer of administration ended the first important bureaucratic phase of history at Governors Island. It would not be a headquarters location again until after the Civil War.

Scott was extremely active in society in Manhattan; as biographer John Eisenhower points out, “As the commanding general of the Third Department, he was automatically an accepted member of New York society, a role he relished.”¹⁴² That status only grew as the Department of the East was established, and Scott and Gaines became two of the three top-ranking officers in the U.S. Army. Scott, in particular, enjoyed the luxurious dinner parties and sparkling conversations of the upper class in Manhattan. His biographers note his tendency to social climb and New York City must have given him a promising milieu in which to stand out. He began the long connection between those who held high rank in the Army at Governors Island and those of similar position in New York City.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Weigley, p. 170, notes that the shuttling between commands was due to the fact that “the two brigadiers, Scott and Gaines, would cooperate with each other only under the severest pressure....” Their dispute was originally over the question of rank, since each was commissioned brigadier on the same date. Gaines’s name was higher on the list than Scott’s, but Scott had been breveted brigadier earlier than Gaines. Their feud went on until 1849, when Gaines died. Johnson, p. 96, among others, notes that Scott challenged Gaines to a duel, which Gaines refused, in 1824. That dispute concerned their levels of pay. The competition focused most persistently on the question of which of them should succeed the Commanding General of the Army.

¹⁴⁰ Dupuy, Major R. Ernest, *Governors Island, 1637-1937, Its History and Development* (NY: The Governors Island Club, 1937), p. 38.

¹⁴² Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny*, p. 110.

¹⁴³ General Gaines apparently was less fond of cities and society than Scott. See Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, pp. 91-92. As he points out on p. 92, “Scott favored the elegance and comfort of city life, but Gaines felt more at home under canvas in the field.” Gaines was extremely scornful of Scott’s social pretensions; he was an early follower of Andrew Jackson, and took a more egalitarian stance toward those who were peers. See Johnson, 91-103 for a thorough account of their unfortunate relations.

THE NEW YORK ARSENAL, 1820S-1860

In addition to the troops posted on the Island, the 1820s saw the creation of an entirely separate military installation on the northeast coast of the island. Governors Island had housed arms and batteries from the early, rudimentary fortifications prepared by the Dutch in the 1620s. From the time of the Continental Army in 1776 to the more elaborate installations that helped prepare for the defense of New York Harbor and New York City during the War of 1812, the island was armed.

Writing the historic context for military installations, the Goodwin team noted that

Of the special purpose installations, those operated by the Ordnance Department were the most numerous. The Ordnance Department was created by an act of Congress in 1812, following the unsuccessful efforts to purchase military supplies through the Treasury Department. In 1815, Congress further refined the duties of the Department; but from 1821 to 1832, Congress consolidated the Ordnance Department with the Artillery. When the Ordnance Department was reconstituted as a separate agency in 1832, it had 14 officers and 250 enlisted men.¹⁴⁴

Two of those officers would serve at Governors Island.

The Ordnance Department controlled a number of kinds of installations, including depots, armories and arsenals. Depots stored arms. Armories made small arms while arsenals made, housed, or repaired ordnance other than small arms.¹⁴⁵ In 1832, probably as a result of the appointment of a federal Director of Ordnance, the New York Arsenal moved to Governors Island. This arsenal was a storage depot for the harbor forts, rather than a manufacturing site.

Several factors seem to have played a part in the relocation. The island provided more space than the original location in New York City. Building up of the federal reservation was probably an aim. New buildings could be built from scratch to house contemporary weaponry. Arms could be loaded directly onto ships. Finally, it was probably safer, from both accident and mobs, to house the weapons and ammunition on the island than in Manhattan.¹⁴⁶

Records from a later period explained the arsenal's original importance. At the end of the nineteenth century, as part of a discussion about how to enlarge the garrison area on Governors Island, it was recommended that the arsenal be moved to Bedloe's Island.

¹⁴⁴ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, Vol. 1 p. 39.

¹⁴⁵ Goodwin, "Manufacturing Complexes," *National Historic Context*, Vol. 2, p. 153-157. The ordnance depots could only perform minor maintenance; they were primarily storage facilities, according to Goodwin, Vol 1, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p. 8.

Both the Chief of Ordnance and the Ordnance Board of the Army protested and in so doing, explained why the Governors Island location was so valuable from the very beginning. “The necessity for an Arsenal in New York Harbor cannot properly be questioned,” wrote the Board on July 12, 1895:

It is indispensable [*sic*] for the storage of Ordnance supplies for forts in the vicinity; for small arms, and ammunition to be issued in emergencies, such as have arisen, and are likely to occur again at any time, for the safe keeping of breech mechanisms of the new high power guns, and for general repairs. Should a change be ordered, there is an immense amount of materials (about 9000 tons of projectiles alone) to be moved at great expense.

At no other place in the immediate vicinity of New York, can the Arsenal be as well guarded as at Governor's [*sic*] Island. It has there quarters, store houses, shops, etc., already built at great expense. These buildings are especially adapted to the wants of an Arsenal, but as shown by the report [of the changes] at least one of them, the largest, must be torn down, being of no value to the proposed garrison. The space occupied on the Island by the Arsenal is so distributed in a narrow strip along the shore as not to interfere with the parade or drill grounds. There is room elsewhere than on its site for new barracks.¹⁴⁷

The Chief of Ordnance agreed to the arsenal's importance at that spot. “The necessity that the United States shall have a seaboard arsenal at which sea-going vessels and expeditions can be fitted out with military supplies expeditiously in time of war is so absolute and plainly apparent that I conceive the fact need only to be stated.” He continued,

The New York Arsenal is the only such arsenal that the United States possesses. It was established in 1814 for this purpose, and its costly buildings, excellent wharf and other facilities exactly adapting it to the purpose described, have been constructed under action of Congress therefor [*sic*] from time to time as actual needs made such constructions necessary.¹⁴⁸

Starting in the 1830s, the arsenal was administered by the Ordnance Department separately from the other activities on Governors Island. It originally rose on six and a half acres, positioned so as to avoid Fort Columbus' firing range, to protect the gun yard

¹⁴⁷ The Ordnance Board, USA to The Chief of Ordnance, USA, July 12th, 1895, RG 92 Entry 89, section 84234, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁸ 8th Endorsement, Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Washington, July 16, 1895, RG 92, Entry 89, section 84234, NARA, Washington, DC. Endorsements are written on the folds of the original document at this period, so the endorsement has no separate page number or folder location. They can be identified by the name of the official whose title is signed on them, and sometimes by the number of the reply or the date.

from accidental shots. The first buildings were presumably planned by engineers from the Corps of Engineers who were building other structures on Governors Island in the 1830s. The buildings were likely built by day laborers from New York City, who commuted by boat from Manhattan and Brooklyn.¹⁴⁹

In general, as the Department of Defense’s “National Historic Context” study pointed out:

Two-story masonry buildings generally characterized nineteenth-century industrial buildings, most often brick or stone, with large window openings to allow light. Little exterior differentiation was needed for buildings housing different manufacturing processes, except for some specialized processes such as the manufacture and storage of gunpowder. Nineteenth century industrial buildings were surprisingly generic no matter what was produced inside of them.¹⁵⁰

The buildings in the arsenal at Governors Island fit this model of industrial structures. The first structures erected for the use of the Arsenal are today combined into Building 135. The officers’ quarters are at the left of the picture, and the two story masonry storage building is on the far right.



Figure 14. Building 135 is composed of the first structures built at the Arsenal in the 1830s. The officers’ quarters on the left are one of the original two quarters for those in charge of this unit at Governors Island. HABS-HAER Report.

¹⁴⁹ HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰ Goodwin, *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations* vol. II, p. 37.

What remains of the original buildings was the core of the New York Arsenal. The General Services Administration report on the buildings, dated 2000,¹⁵¹ noted three distinct sections set at right angles to one another. The first, dating from 1835, was one of the two original storehouses. The ordnance storehouse was originally a rectangular building, with the extant part running north-south and another running east-west. They formed two-thirds of a triangle with the shoreline, and in that way, protected the gun yard in the center of the triangle.

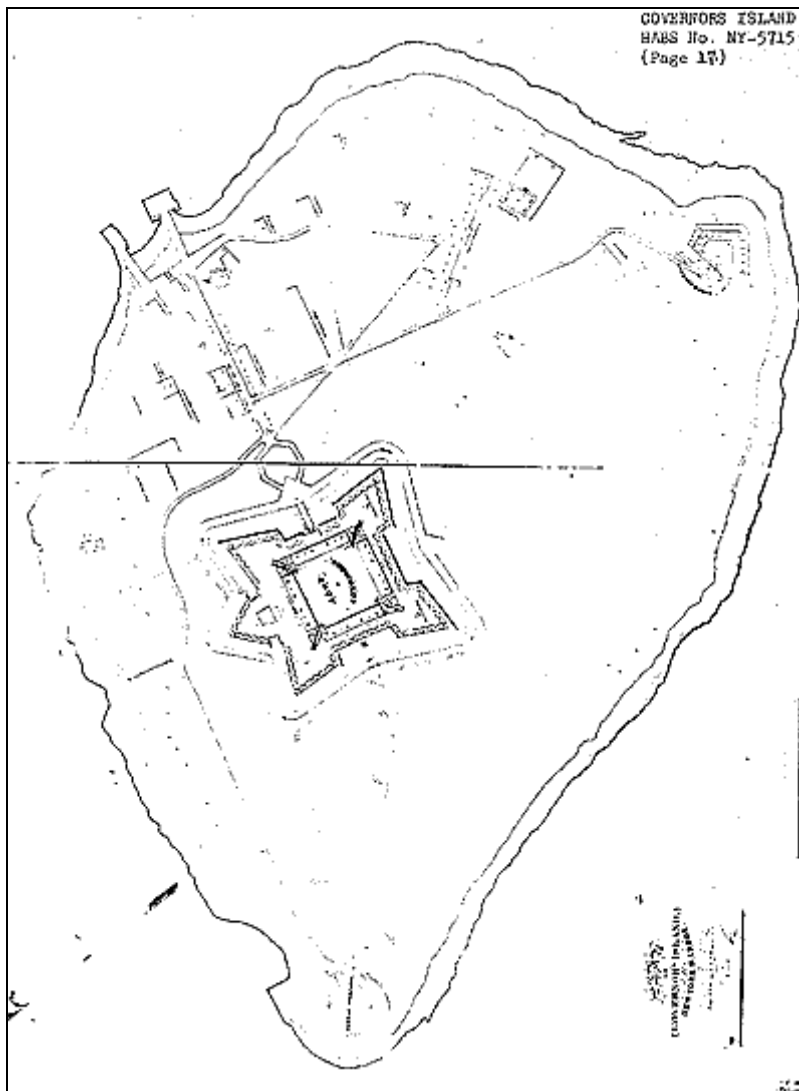


Figure 15. 1839 map with some indication of the Arsenal in the upper left hand side of the drawing. HABS-HAER Report.

¹⁵¹ HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p. 8.

The Commanding Officer's quarters are also one of two original officers' quarters, built in 1839. These quarters were originally square in plan. In 1852, the quarters of the Commanding Officer were expanded along the south side of the structure through a two-story addition, which abutted the storehouse. The buildings were used as ordnance officers quarters until the arsenal moved in 1920. Major renovations were carried out on the officers' quarters by the army in 1935, when the one remaining home was divided into two family units. The storehouse, according to the 1985 HABS-HAER report,¹⁵² was utilized as chemical warfare materials storage until it was converted in 1939 to office use.

There was no further housing built at the arsenal. Day workers from New York City and Long Island commuted to carry out the orders of the two officers who lived in these quarters. Apparently, there was little or no housing of arsenal workers in quarters controlled by other administrative units on the island itself.¹⁵³

The next buildings constructed at the arsenal were storehouses and offices built on land obtained by the arsenal from the Corps of Engineers. Building 130 was a long narrow one-story brick structure originally built in 1843 as a workshop and gradually expanded for use as storage and office space. It was masonry bearing wall construction with common bond brick walls that rest on a brick foundation. Historic additions to the building were demolished in 1971 by the Coast Guard.¹⁵⁴

By 1849, the original site of the arsenal had been expanded to include all the land lying north of the main road from the stone wharf to Fort Columbus. A new storehouse, now Building 104 and new yards for material storage closer to the wharf, were developed in 1850. The new building took a commanding site within the arsenal complex and shifted the landscape design from the original triangle that protected the gun yard from firing from Fort Columbus.¹⁵⁵

Building 104, with its clock tower, was one of the more interesting structures on Governors Island. Clock tower storage buildings are common in arsenal complexes such as the Springfield Armory, the Frankfort Arsenal, and the Rock Island Arsenal.¹⁵⁶ There is no evidence to indicate whether this building was constructed from an Ordnance Department blueprint, but the presence of the clock tower to designate this "industrial"

¹⁵² HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p. 4.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ GSA Report, p.77.

¹⁵⁵ HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island Overview, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

space certainly duplicated such construction elsewhere outside the military, as well as within the Ordnance Department.



Figure 16. Building 104, with the clock replaced by a window in the tower. HABS-HAER Report.

Sadly, the clock was replaced with a window at some point between 1930 and 1956. Signal Corps communications activities occurred in the tower and the Signal Corps may have replaced the clock. In addition, the tower may have been used as an enclosed hoist or elevator space to lift weaponry and shells to storage areas on the second floor.¹⁵⁷

During the 1850s, more buildings were constructed—a new office building in 1853 (the north end of Building 105 currently) and Building 107, another storehouse, in 1857. Building 107 was a long, single story brick masonry structure built in several sections. The building's foundation is bluestone rubble on the west and concrete on the east. The western section was built between 1856 and 1857 as a storage shed for gun carriages. This was the fourth storehouse constructed by the Ordnance Department at the arsenal.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

It burned and was rebuilt in 1904. The eastern section was added between 1908 and 1918. Building 140 was constructed between 1857 and 1867 to store ordnance.¹⁵⁸

In the period just prior to the Civil War, the seawall on the northwest side of the island was expanded somewhat and that change made room to widen the shot and shell yard located there. Another office building, now the south end of Building 105, also was added to the building stock at that time.

MILITARY PERSONNEL AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

One important theme in the history of Governors Island is the “new military history” which combines American social history with the more traditional guns and mortar history of the Department of War.¹⁵⁹ Governors Island was an installation where U.S. Army personnel lived from 1807, if not before. Because the island was an administrative post, its structures housed mostly officers and non-commissioned officers for most of its history. Officers, in particular, often brought families with them.¹⁶⁰ As a result, structures were built in the period 1815-1860 that reflected those needs.

Because it was a military base, there were key official relationships among the residents on Governors Island and between them and those civilians who came daily to work, which are not common to non-military communities. Those relationships are reflected on military bases quite clearly in the types of housing and location of housing that is built to accommodate officers and troops. It is also reflected in rank-restricted social activities, such as an officers’ club or officers’ tennis courts. Polo fields and later, golf courses, could be used at certain times by certain ranks.¹⁶¹

In terms of social history, Governors Island is distinguished from many military installations, particularly in the nineteenth century, by its location. Except for the period of the Civil War, the U.S. Army in the nineteenth century spent most of its time on the frontier. Those posts, extremely primitive and often located in areas that were both

¹⁵⁸ GSA Report, p. 3

¹⁵⁹ Edward M. Coffman wrote two incredibly detailed studies of the social history of the American Army: *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). In addition, Robin Dell Campbell’s Ph.D. dissertation from the State University of New York at Albany has been published as *Mistresses of the Transient Hearth: American Officer’s Wives and Material Culture, 1840-1880* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁶⁰ Coffman, *The Old Army*, pp. 42-103, discusses the life and work of the officers corps from 1815-1860.

¹⁶¹ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, pp. 371-373.

remote and disease-ridden, taxed the ties of family life because of isolation, discomfort and disease. Governors Island certainly saw its share of disease, and post housing in the antebellum period was not particularly fine. Getting to and from the island before steam ferries was also time-consuming, weather-dependent and, laborious. But the island was next to the largest and most sophisticated of American cities of its time and in that sense, Governors Island was a favored post for officers and, when they could get there, for their families.¹⁶²

The details of the lives of military men and their families are of recent interest to historians of women and the family. The army on the frontier in the United States has received much more attention from historians than those who stayed, however briefly, at more settled posts like Governors Island.¹⁶³ Because of that, the nineteenth and early twentieth century history of officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men and their families at the island can be found in few secondary sources.

All hierarchy on Governors Island was set by the rank of the Army member. For example, in housing assignments, a senior officer often took over the quarters of one more junior, even if the junior was living in the quarters at the time. The square footage of housing available at a post for each family depended entirely on the rank of the husband and bachelor officers of the same rank as a married officer got an identical amount of space to live in.¹⁶⁴

The housing at Governors Island, because it has been used, reused and reconfigured for so many years, proved difficult to document as to the specific rank of those who lived

¹⁶² See Campbell, *Mistresses of the Transient Hearth*, for an analysis of the letters, diaries and memoirs of thirty-seven couples who were in the Army during this period. Although there is no direct reference to Governors Island, there is discussion of life on the move and the material culture of people who were similar to some residents of Governors Island in the same period. One couple, William Warren Chapman and his wife, Helen, was stationed at Fort Columbus from 1841 to 1846, but their letters from that posting are still in private hands, Campbell, p. 134. See also *New York Times*, December, 5, 1853, p. 2.

¹⁶³ Edward M. Coffman notes that little writing emerged from posts away from the frontier. See Coffman, *The Old Army*, p. 290.

¹⁶⁴ *The Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861 with an Appendix Containing the Changes and Laws Affecting Army Regulations and Articles of War to June 25, 1863* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1863) lays out exactly how much space an officer was entitled to. Before that regulation, the system was in place, however. Dr. Joseph Russell, the post surgeon at Governors Island, was in Florida during the middle 1830s, serving in the Second Seminole War. When he returned to Governors Island in November 1838, he discovered that a Corps of Engineers major had displaced him in his normal quarters, and the space the doctor was given was not appropriate to his rank. Dr. Russell then displaced the post clerk, as was standard practice in such instances. Unlike most Army officers, however, Dr. Russell did not move and his family gave up the quarters only in 1849 upon his death.

there over time. Currently, there is little known documentation for those who lived in earlier barracks, temporary housing particularly in World War I, or U.S. Army tents. The fact that Governors Island became more important as a posting, first for the Army and then for the Coast Guard, also meant that the buildings now standing may be, in their current configurations, more spacious on an individual level than they were when they were first constructed. Where standard plans are available, it can be determined what the original design was. But without a comprehensive set of “as-builts,” it is very difficult to establish the ways in which these buildings were used before their current configuration.

Army life was difficult and nomadic for the soldiers and their families. In the Army there were no benefits for women and children whose husbands and fathers had died in service or deserted. Wives who followed their husbands often sold their household goods before moving on to the next post, and replaced them repeatedly as they arrived at new locations. Women with children traveling without their husbands were restricted socially. No provision was made for those families while the husband was off at war, either; in May 1848, Frances Webster wrote her husband who was stationed in Saltillo, Mexico, from Governors Island and said,

The Doctor (Russell) thinks I had better remain here [at Governors Island] and go to housekeeping in a set of vacant quarters. Aunt Kate [Mrs. Russell] thinks I could manage to live here without any *great* and *enormous* expense, and the Doctor says he will take the *best* care of the poor children. If I could make any calculation as to the period of your absence, I then should feel as if I could and ought to make some suitable arrangements for myself and steel myself to the *necessity* of living without you. As it is, I am constantly in hopes of your return, and do not like to make any arrangement that would interfere with my immediately going wheresoever you might deem it necessary to locate yourself.¹⁶⁵

And while officers’ wives often entertained the social elite of the community near the post, the enlisted men’s wives were more likely to do menial tasks like washing for the community in the post wash houses.¹⁶⁶

These families also lived in the civilian culture that surrounded Governors Island. That context also shaped the expectations and practices of the community. As will be

¹⁶⁵ Van R. Baker, *The Websters: Letters of an American Army Family in Peace and War, 1836-1853* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000), p. 238.

¹⁶⁶ RG 115, Signal Corps, Still Pictures Branch, NARA, College Park, Maryland. Coffman, *The Old Army*, pp. 24-25, 112-115, for example, points out that four laundresses per company could be paid, and soldiers wives sometimes got that work. Coffman also notes that the legal relationships of many of the laundresses to soldiers at the installation where they worked were vague at best. Laundresses were paid in food and bedding straw, however, which made it possible for some soldiers’ wives to move with their husbands.

seen below, the structures devoted to hospitals, religious groups and libraries made life at the post more like life outside.

HOUSING AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

The earliest permanent structures used for housing were barracks. As Goodwin's researchers observed, in general

The military constructed barracks to house units of enlisted personnel. Barracks are found on all installations where permanent military enlisted personnel resided. Barracks are located in prominent sites, generally in groups facing the parade ground or drill field. Barracks were usually one- to three-story, rectangular buildings, with the primary entrance on the wider elevation. Verandas were a common feature until the 1930s.¹⁶⁷

The barracks in Fort Jay built in the 1830s were such buildings. The Goodwin study noted that few permanent barracks were built in the early period. Permanent ones resembled the ones on Governors Island, "...two-story, rectangular, stone buildings with verandas were built. Buildings of this type were constructed for both enlisted and officer housing."¹⁶⁸

The HABS report on Building 214, however, stated clearly that three barracks buildings were included inside the first Fort Jay, built in the 1790s. Those were not demolished when the old fort was reconstructed in 1806-07. Two additional buildings were soon built inside the fort.¹⁶⁹

These structures apparently filled up a good portion of the open space inside the walls. When in the early 1830s, the Chief of Engineers recommended removing the old buildings and replacing them, he also suggested that the new buildings be constructed in a way that would open up the parade ground. Construction of these new buildings began by 1834.¹⁷⁰ An 1839 map (Figure 15 above)¹⁷¹ shows the four buildings inside the fort.

¹⁶⁷ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 315

¹⁶⁸ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 315.

¹⁶⁹ HABS-HAER Report, Building 214, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*



Figure 17. Fort Jay barracks, Building 214. HABS-HAER Report.

Buildings 202, 206, 210, and 214

Inside Fort Jay, these four structures form the interior quadrangle in the center of the fort. These four buildings were built, typically, around a parade ground, although the area was so small that it was rarely used in that fashion. Buildings 204, 207 and 213 should be considered a part of the barracks complex. They are small, triangular buildings that were built as privies, shops and storerooms. The national historic context study notes that

Army regulations issued in 1821 set minimum standards of personal cleanliness for the troops; they were required to have clean uniforms and to wash their faces and hands daily. Despite these regulations, the Army provided no appropriations to fund the construction of latrines or bathhouses. The Secretary of War routinely rejected all plans and estimates for such facilities; troops, rather than the government, were expected to pay for their personal cleanliness.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 345.

Buildings labeled wash houses were for laundry, not personal bathing. There were originally eight of these triangular buildings in the quadrangle; one on each end of the barracks buildings.¹⁷³

No separate building appears to have served as the mess hall in this early period. The Goodwin team looked at eating facilities for the pre-Civil War period, and commented,

The Army provided enlisted personnel with food rations through the mess system. Officers paid the officers mess for their own food. Officers dined in the officers mess in the bachelor officers quarters, or in the case of married senior officers, in their family quarters. The mess halls and kitchens for enlisted men were contained in the barracks. In a one-story barracks, the kitchen and mess room were located in a rear wing; in a two-story barracks, on the first floor. Food distribution generally was organized by company, with each company living and eating together.¹⁷⁴

The evidence of the eating areas clearly disappeared from these barracks buildings in subsequent remodeling. It is likely that two companies lived in each building, sleeping in dormitory fashion upstairs and eating downstairs. Officers would have lived in two rooms apiece within one of the barracks and eaten together or separately in a mess room of their own.¹⁷⁵

The barracks inside Fort Jay and the officer's quarters at the New York Arsenal were the only housing noted in the 1830s records still extant. References to "Rotten Row," a wooden barracks placed southeast of Fort Jay, indicate that it served as housing until after the Civil War.¹⁷⁶ Little evidence has been located to place troops living in Castle Williams casemates, although troops lived in similar circumstances at other coastal installations in this period, so their presence in the castle is quite likely.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ HABS-HAER Report, Building 210, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 349.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Families may have squeezed into the space but because the Army did not account for families, there is no official record to indicate their presence in these buildings at this time.

¹⁷⁶ See the previous chapter for the 1813 map. The wooden barracks are built approximately where the southeast end of Nolan Park is in 2005. Not all sources concur, however. The *New York Times* reported a fire in "a row of sheds...called "Rotten Row" on Apr. 4, 1854, p. 1. By the 1850s, of course, barracks built as early as these were reported to be might have been replaced as housing and taken on other uses. Augustus Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks of the U.S. Army* (New York: Arno Press, 1979; orig. ed 1914) lived briefly in the casemates when he returned to the Army after resigning. As a music boy, he had lived earlier in the South Battery. This document can be found on Microfiche. Louisville, Ky., Lost Cause Press, 1977. 5 sheets.

¹⁷⁷ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 371.

The troops who signed up for duty in the period between 1821 and 1860 joined a military service that was isolated from civilian society, partly because most of its effort was expended at frontier forts, far from the more settled part of the country and difficult to reach. As Weigley pointed out,

...the post-War of 1812 brought little activity so immediately purposeful to most of the Army, and most of the Army had to live largely isolated from civil life and influences...Accounts of Army life in the 1820s and especially in the 1830's and 1840's often gave impressions of restless unease and discontent, in an Army that led a hard life but felt itself little appreciated, and too often could not itself discern immediate and tangible usefulness in its activities."¹⁷⁸

Under such circumstances, and in an age of economic expansion, many preferred civilian life. The pool of recruits available for army service was often criticized by officers and civilians as of "low intelligence, loose morals, and especially their habitual drunkenness."¹⁷⁹ A vast number were immigrants. In the 1840s, fully forty-seven percent of the recruits were immigrants, about half Irish and nearly half, German. Desertions ran about twenty-five percent a year among both native and immigrant populations and in 1826, the desertion rate rose to fifty percent.

Various punishments for desertion were employed during the period. The death penalty for desertion was abolished in 1830 because courts were not assigning it. In most places, being jailed was not different from being at the installation itself and so had little effect. Restrictions on the recruitment of chaplains were relaxed to attempt to address the problem, so that a chaplain was theoretically available at every post. Pay was docked. The ration of whiskey that soldiers were entitled to was abolished in 1830. Nothing, however, worked to prevent desertions. The early prisoner population of Castle Williams was undoubtedly made up mostly of deserters who were being held so that they could be returned to their home installation.¹⁸⁰

Recruited soldiers got infantry training at Governors Island beginning in the late 1830s to prepare them for their lives in the Army. Many did not stay long enough, because of the need for troops on the frontier, to learn much. Nonetheless, they learned to handle uniforms and equipment and how to care for their quarters. Roll calls and three drill periods of 1-1 ½ hours per day left many exhausted. They often found the food limited and the housing uncomfortable. Activities like fishing or swimming or just watching the water traffic in New York Harbor filled their free hours, but probably

¹⁷⁸ Weigley, p. 167.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 167-168.

reminded them that they were not free to leave the island.¹⁸¹ Conditions at Governors Island brought complaints. One recruit, quartered there in the early 1850s lived in a tent “furnished with two straw mattresses and two blankets which he shared with two others.”¹⁸² A few years earlier, even straw would have seemed a luxury since the beds, in a barracks room shared with sixty or seventy other recruits, were bunk beds without mattresses. The food—bread, pork, and coffee in limited quantities for breakfast—hardly filled up the recruits.¹⁸³

OFFICERS’ QUARTERS

Officers at Governors Island were originally housed in the Fort Columbus barracks but the Commander had a separate dwelling. One of the early histories of Governors Island noted that a commanding general’s quarters were completed in 1843, replacing quarters believed to have been built in 1775.¹⁸⁴ The earliest officers’ quarters revealed not just the period when they were built but also something of the significance of the place where the officers lived and worked. As the Goodwin study noted,

[A]rchitectural character reflected their period of construction and the anticipated permanence and importance of the installation. Simple houses were built at frontier posts, while departmental headquarters or shipyards often received larger, more ornate senior officer housing. The evolution of officer housing illustrates the military’s adaptation of contemporary architectural trends in the military’s construction program....The earliest quarters display diversity in size and architectural detailing, depending on available funding and the rank of the resident. Installations generally included a single-family dwelling for the commanding officer and multiple-family dwellings for junior officers....¹⁸⁵

One piece of evidence for the importance of Governors Island in this period was the impressive house built for the Commanding General in 1843. When Lucien Webster was ordered to command Governors Island in 1852, the editor of his letters noted that his wife, Frances, “could anticipate life in the army’s largest quarters.”¹⁸⁶ That would have been

¹⁸¹ Coffman, *The Old Army*, pp. 156-159.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Dupuy, p. 30.

¹⁸⁵ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 371.

¹⁸⁶ Baker, p.168. In the end, Lucien’s orders were changed and he went to Texas instead. Frances Webster was very familiar with Governors Island, though, because her aunt and uncle, Katherine

Building 1 (also known as the Commanding General's Quarters, Admiral's House, Admiral's Quarters, Quarters One).

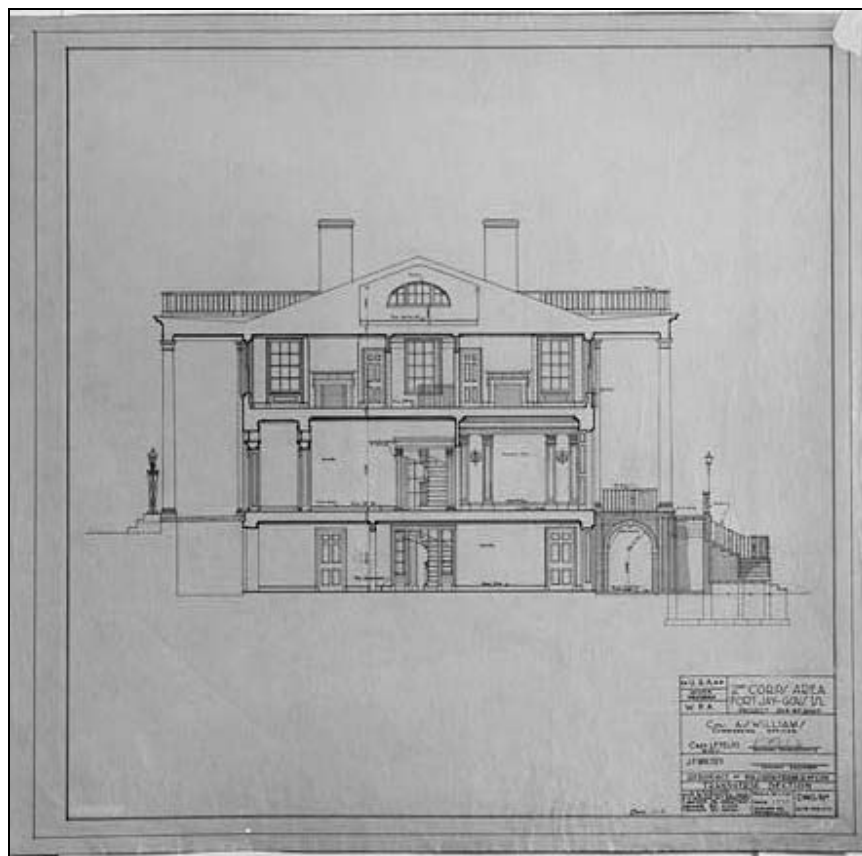


Figure 18. Transverse drawing of Building 1. HABS-HAER Report.

This is a two and one-half story house along the east perimeter of Nolan Park. Built in 1843, it was designed in Greek Revival style by New York City architect Martin E. Thompson. Thompson, a former builder turned architect in the early days of that profession's creation, was the first partner of legendary American architect Ithiel Town in 1827. That partnership lasted just a year, and Town then went on to form the partnership of Town and Andrew Jackson Davis.¹⁸⁷ Thompson apparently ran the business and worked on his own, although often in association with Town and Davis, from the 1820s forward. Town was “an acknowledged leader of the Greek Revival and

and Joseph P. Russell, lived at Governors Island from 1839 until he died in 1849. Dr. Russell was the post surgeon.

¹⁸⁷ Town and Davis were among the earliest true architectural firms in the U.S. See Mary Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 112-113.

Gothic Revival,”¹⁸⁸ and the work of the partnership must have focused on those styles. Because the house was designed by a very important civilian architect rather than by Army engineers, it seems possible that General Scott, who was still head of the Department of the East at this time although based in New York City, may have commissioned the work. It is certainly true that the structure reflected the high status of the commander of the installation at Governors Island and provided space to entertain visitors and dignitaries.

Some officers and their families were in residence at Governors Island by the early 1840s and individual houses, no longer extant, were provided for their use. The Smith and Webster families, for example, visited their kin, the post surgeon Dr. Joseph P. Russell, and his family. The published letters do not identify the specific quarters their relatives had been assigned. An archeology study from 1986, however, located Dr. Russell’s house on the side of the chapel.¹⁸⁹ The house was gone by 1857.

FOOD, CLOTHING, GOODS FOR PERSONNEL AND FAMILIES

In general, during the early days of the American Army, all of the items needed for life on the installation—uniforms, food, and similar materials—were gathered up and shipped to the posts. As the writers of the historic context study explained,

Typical supplies included subsistence, clothing, raw materials, equipment, and other general supplies. Storage facilities were generally utilitarian buildings constructed of a variety of materials, including wood, stone, brick, structural clay tile, or corrugated metal. Storage buildings usually were one- or two-story, long rectangular buildings with pitched roofs, regular openings, and little ornament. In cases where installations were planned and constructed at one time, the military generally constructed storage facilities that reflected the overall architectural character of the installation.... During the nineteenth century, the Subsistence Department and the Quartermaster Department were the two primary users of storage facilities. The Subsistence Department provided basic food rations; the Quartermaster Department issued clothing and equipment to men and provided fodder for animals.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Woods, *From Craft to Profession*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁸⁹ Baker, *The Websters*, p. 236 and *passim*. A chapel was originally on the lower slope of the meadow on axis in front of the South Battery and a cemetery was located just to the southwest along the shoreline. Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium. *Governor’s Island Land Use Study*. Land and Facility Assessment. September 1997, p. 28. By 1857, the chapel had replaced Dr. Russell’s house. Louis Berger and Associates, *Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Guest House Site, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island NY*. April 1986, p. 3-1.

¹⁹⁰ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 187.

At Governors Island, a number of different buildings have been utilized over the years as base commissaries and supply centers. Building 3, for example, would have been such a storehouse. A two-story twin rectangular “Dutch” house with brown brick walls laid in common bond on schist stone foundation, it was originally oriented to the docks where goods were loaded. This building was originally the storehouse, built in 1846, for the commissary and the quartermaster. The first story contained food and other needed consumables—stores and provisions—and the second story held clothes and room for clerks to issue uniforms. The building was converted in 1920–1922 for officer’s housing, reorienting it to Nolan Park.¹⁹¹



Figure 19. Building 3 photographed in 1864 when it was still a warehouse. HABS-HAER Report.

¹⁹¹ GSA Report, p. 13.



Figure 20. Building 3, as adapted for housing. Note the unchanged roofline on the left end of the building. HABS-HAER Report.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL ON GOVERNORS ISLAND

Medical practice and patient care changed enormously between the mid-eighteenth century, when the first hospitals admitted the sick and wounded at Governors Island, and the mid-twentieth century, when the last hospital closed. As a result, many changes to medical buildings took place during the time the military used the island. Because of extensive reuse and demolition of the early buildings, the context out of which surgeons, hospital stewards, and nurses worked will need to be established without direct physical evidence in all cases to which to tie it.

The medical officer at these early posts had multiple responsibilities. In addition to the rudimentary medical procedures available to those early practitioners, there were non-medical chores. For example,

The collection of meteorological data also remained among the duties of the Army surgeon. The observations and reports on weather and similar matters that the surgeon general required of his subordinates was becoming even more complex with time. The

physician responsible for reports from Governors Island in New York Harbor, for example, was required to use not only a barometer and thermometer but also a rain gauge, hygrometer, and wet bulb, and to record cloud formations and the direction and force of the winds. All surgeons became responsible for recording sudden changes in the wind and temperature, the moment when the barometer reached its lowest point during a storm, and even the passage of flocks of migratory birds. Although these responsibilities were no doubt an unwelcome burden to some medical officers, others apparently came to enjoy this particular aspect of their work.¹⁹²

One set of hospital records from Governors Island began on August 1, 1821. The medical building in which these records were made predated the new one built in 1839, which is discussed in some detail below. There is no information about the old hospital, and this building was not noted specifically in maps from the period. Rooms in one of the barracks might have been used instead.

According to the personnel records that are available,¹⁹³ many cases of gonorrhea were listed as causes for hospitalization. Sometimes, the disease alone—not only sexually-transmitted diseases—was listed for the patient, but sometimes extra comments were included in these early days. For example, Middlebrook, a prisoner with epilepsy had been discharged by “Sentence of C.M. [court martial]” but they “retained in Hosp. From motives of Humanity”.¹⁹⁴ Barney, who was admitted with wounds, had his records noted “Bitten by a fellow Prisoner.”¹⁹⁵ In 1829, Riley and Vanderburgh were both discharged, the one “in consequence of his arm being shot off,” the other, “his right hand and wrist being shot off.”¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately for the historical narrative, no one noted *how* these accidents occurred. The prisoners were undoubtedly deserters.

ARMY HOSPITALS

The first military hospital on Governors Island was built by the British during the French and Indian War. Included in the list of buildings left by the British when they

¹⁹² Mary C. Gillett, *The Army Medical Department 1818-1865*. (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1987), pp. 78-79. http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/civil/gillett2/amedd_1818-1865_chpt4.htm. See also Mary C. Gillett, *The Army Medical Department 1775-1818* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1981).

¹⁹³ RG 94, *Records of the Adjutant General's Office*, New York vols. 560-561 as examples, NARA College Park, Md.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, vol. 561, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 39.

evacuated Governors Island was a convalescent hospital (See Chapter 1).

The Army Historic Context study defined hospitals thus:

Military hospitals are buildings or building complexes constructed for the medical care of military personnel, civilian employees, and dependents. The size of the hospital facility is related directly to the size of the installation or to the geographical area it served...The architecture of hospitals reflected contemporary medical philosophies of medical care and often included high-style architectural ornamentation typical of the period of construction. Nineteenth-century military hospitals generally had a central block with ward wings and two-story verandas around the building....¹⁹⁷

They add that

Post hospitals were constructed at most Army forts throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...Post hospitals evolved from the early system of Army medical care. In 1818, the Army established the office of Surgeon General to oversee the medical treatment of soldiers. Though doctors were assigned to regiments or posts, the condition of medical facilities remained poor. Before the Civil War, post hospitals often were housed in a single room of an existing post building or in the damp, stone casements of coastal fortifications. Separate hospital buildings, when built, resembled the quarters or barracks buildings.¹⁹⁸



Figure 21. Building 9 Post Hospital, 1864 Photograph. HABS-HAER Report.

¹⁹⁷ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

The new hospital at Governors Island resembled an officers' quarters. Building 9 is a red-brick, two-story Greek Revival style building set on a high basement of schist stone at front and rear, and brick at the sides. The structure was built in 1839 to serve as the post hospital. According to the GSA *Building and Property Summary Sheets*, a granite band articulates the basement from the upper courses. Large patient wings had been added towards the south in 1874, but were removed later. This building forms the southern end of Nolan Park. It is also known as the Block House.



Figure 22. 1839 hospital building, reused as officers quarters, Building 9. HABS-HAER Report.

In 1878, the hospital building was converted to the headquarters building. Between 1919 and 1934, the wings were demolished. Like many of the other buildings on the island, by 1947, it had been converted into housing, making a number of apartments.¹⁹⁹

An unknown architect, probably from the Quartermaster or Engineer Department, designed the building. Local carpenters Joseph F. Donnel and John P. Angovine and

¹⁹⁹ GSA Report, p. 25.

mason Stacey Pitchers built it.²⁰⁰ The exterior of the building conformed to the plans, but the interior did not meet planned requirements, necessitating changes. Brick walls enclosed the rear courtyard. H. C. Bushnell designed those walls and the courtyard, and the same contractors as for the building built it. The courtyard was to house hospital outhouses, such as laundry, washing room, dissecting and dead room, and receiving room. Between 1870 and 1874, the one story brick building at the rear of the hospital was demolished and replaced by two frame 90' by 24' pavilions. They were constructed of demolition material recycled from a frame general hospital built to handle Civil War wounded and ill that had stood to the southeast of the post hospital since 1862.²⁰¹

The building was used as a hospital from 1839 to 1878. The first and second floors were wards, and the basement housed the offices, a kitchen, storerooms, dispensary, and stewards quarters.²⁰² There was apparently, as well, a training school for medical stewards. As the historian of Army medical undertakings discovered,

By mid-1840 twenty young men of upright moral character had been trained by an assistant surgeon, had gone through a four to five-month probationary period, and had been sent out to assist surgeons requesting their aid. In 1844 the adjutant general ruled that new orders issued by the commanding general of the Army, Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, required that stewards be taken from the line and that they remain attached to their companies. [Surgeon General] Lawson's attempts to improve the standards for hospital stewards were thereby negated, and the records of the period never again refer to the school.²⁰³

When the new hospital was finished in 1839, it filled quickly with the sick and wounded from the Florida battlefields of the Second Seminole War. "To this fine new hospital," wrote the medical historian,

the Army shipped fifty-seven invalids from Tampa, Florida, in June 1839 and either thirty-nine or forty-seven more—the sources are contradictory on this figure—from the Cedar Key hospital in 1840, by which time the hospital was presumably being used to train hospital stewards. The Cedar Key transferees arrived in such poor condition that [Post Surgeon Joseph P.]Russell immediately wrote [Surgeon General]Lawson, complaining bitterly of the decision to send these men to his facility. Removing invalids from a warm climate to a cold one during the winter was "extremely injudicious, and ill advised." Furthermore, the vessel that carried them had been very uncomfortable, the weather during the voyage "boisterous," and the men at times drenched by bilge water.

²⁰⁰ A copy of the specifications can be found in HABS-HAER Report, Data, pp. 22-34.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Gillett, p. 81.

By the time they reached Fort Columbus, "they presented a most pitiable spectacle, were generally in a very filthy and lousy condition, two of them had involuntary and unconscious discharges, and were literally wallowing in their excrement."²⁰⁴

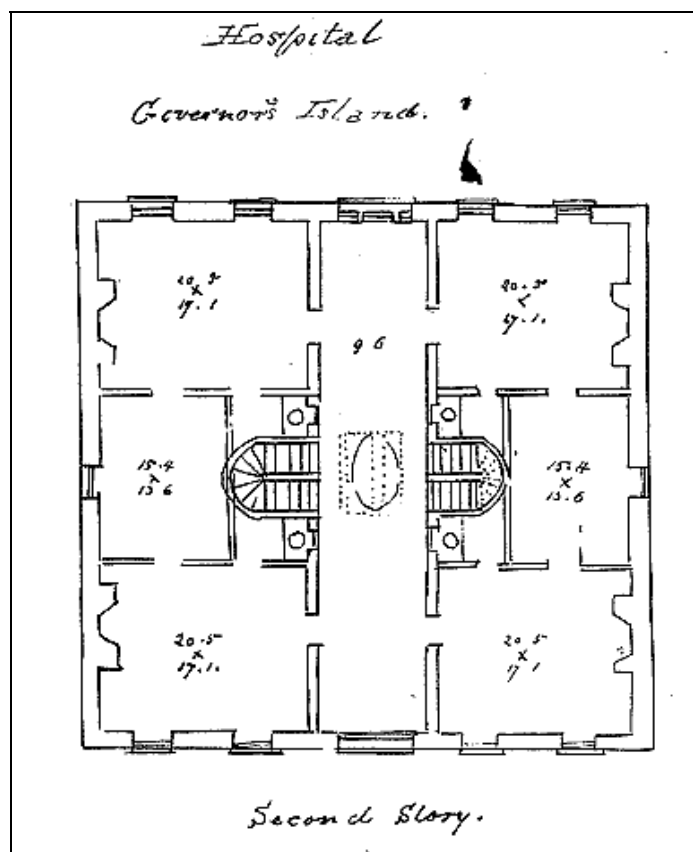


Figure 23. Post hospital floor plan, second floor, no date. HABS-HAER Report.

Russell complained that he was being sent too many men because his hospital could hold no more than fifty patients without crowding. Moreover, he believed that the

²⁰⁴ Gillett, p. 87. Gillette noted that patients also arrived from other installations in New York Harbor. As she said, p. 86:

At many of the northern posts along the Atlantic coast, damp casemates, the masonry rooms designed to contain cannon, continued to be the only shelter available for all those in the garrison, sick or well. As a result, the surgeon in the field might be preoccupied with the effects of such accommodations upon himself and his family as well as with their effects upon the soldiers. At Fort Hamilton in New York Harbor, for example, the post surgeon reported that he had spent \$4,000 of his own money to have his personal quarters modified so as "to protect my own health and make myself and family comfortable and respectable." The hospital accommodations at this post were so poor that for several years patients were periodically taken to the new Fort Columbus facility nearby, but in the summer of 1845 the Army authorized the improvement of the hospital casemates. Nevertheless, and despite the surgeon general's dislike for casemate facilities, the long-standing suggestion of the surgeon at Fort Hamilton that a separate hospital building be constructed appears to have been ignored.

change from a warm, southern climate to a cold, northern one was not good for their health. Because the patients from Florida were in such bad shape, Russell also worried that their presence on Governors Island would discourage enlistments and have a negative impact on the morale of those troops training at Governors Island to go to battle in the place from where these troops had just returned.

The wounded and invalids from Florida had more than just battle wounds. As Gillette tells it,

A continuing health problem that grew to surprising proportions at Fort Columbus after the first invalids arrived from Florida was venereal disease. In December 1836 the post surgeon reported that 10 of the 120 men newly entered on his sick list in the past quarter were suffering from gonorrhoea and 10 from syphilis (the records do not make it possible to guess how many of these patients might actually be suffering from both diseases). Two years later, the surgeon reported only 10 cases of venereal disease, but in the following June, nine days after the arrival of the 57 invalids from Tampa, the venereal disease case load figure stood at 14, this from a sick list totaling 433 for the quarter. Three months later, however, despite the fact that the total number of new cases of all kinds of diseases and wounds at that post had decreased by 67, 59 were newly recorded victims of gonorrhoea and syphilis. Russell did not suggest how many of these might have been Florida veterans who had acquired a new problem in the course of celebrating their return to civilization. The venereal disease rate slowly dropped from this high point and reached its more customary level several months later.²⁰⁵

Dr. Russell continued to care for patients at Governors Island until his death in 1849.

Finally, some of the patients who were treated at the hospital came from Governors Island itself. Cholera epidemics swept Governors Island in 1849, 1854, 1857, 1866, 1867, and 1868. Cholera's appearance may speak to the primitive level of sanitation even at Governors Island, since it was often caused by inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water. It could also be caused by eating contaminated raw shellfish. Yellow fever, caused by the bite of an infected mosquito, occurred in 1856 and 1870. The *New York Times* reported on the 1856 epidemic of yellow fever in the area and noted that

Further alarm was created yesterday by a report of the yellow fever having manifested itself among the troops on Governors Island, but an investigation of the facts of the case shows that the disease was confined to a very limited location, even there, and that it must have been communicated in the same manner in which it was introduced upon the opposite shore on Long Island, by bedding or some other infected clothing which had been cast overboard from ships in Quarantine, being washed upon the beach by the tide.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Gillett, p. 87-88.

²⁰⁶ US Army, 1st Army. *Story of Governor's Island*, p. 10; *New York Times*, August 30, 1856, p. 4.

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

Religious facilities were a luxury in the early days of the U.S. Army. Before 1838, when Congress appropriated funds to hire chaplains to help curb drunkenness and desertion, as noted above, there were no provisions for religious life within installations. Frances Webster pointed out that when she and her children came to Governors Island in the 1840s, her daughters were given the first chance in their lives to go to church.²⁰⁷ Earlier postings, in upstate New York, Florida and Louisiana, had not included a formal chapel, although services may have been held informally. At Governors Island, the chapel was built by private funding from Trinity Church in Manhattan. It was extremely rare in this early period to have religious services in a chapel, rather than in barracks or administration buildings.²⁰⁸

As the Goodwin team pointed out, when they finally began to be built in the 1860s and after, military chapels of this period were not significantly different from civilian ones.

Chapels constructed at military installations reflect a variety of architectural expressions. Gothic Revival was the predominant style on Army posts, though neoclassical chapels also were built. The design of chapels was not standardized; thus chapels were individually designed and varied among installations. They are similar in typology to university chapels and community churches of the same eras.²⁰⁹

The Chapel of Saint Cornelius on Governors Island, considered a mission church of Trinity Church in New York City, was a small wooden structure. The link to Trinity Parish, the first home of Columbia College, is also a link to the College because the first vicar of Saint Cornelius was the Rev. John McVickar, who also taught at Columbia.²¹⁰ He

²⁰⁷ Baker, p. 240.

²⁰⁸ Goodwin, *National Historic Context*, p. 245.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ “1817: The Reverend John McVickar (Columbia College 1804) joins the Columbia faculty and remains a member until his retirement in 1864. His course in political economy and another on banking are among the first courses in economics offered at an American college. His books include *Outlines of Political Economy* (1825) and *A National Bank: Its Necessity and Its Most Advisable Form* (1841). He was a frequent contender for the Columbia presidency.” http://c250.columbia.edu/c250_events/symposia/history_century_timeline.html#1787. (accessed December 4, 2005). Dr. McVickar was the son of John McVickar, a prominent merchant in New York City. He married the daughter of Dr. Samuel Bard and is buried with her in the St. James Cemetery, Hyde Park, NY, near the Bard property, which is now the Vanderbilt Mansion, part of the National Park Service’s Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site. Before his appointment to Columbia, McVickar was the vicar of St James Church. His brother married a Whitney. See <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nydutche/cems/stjames.htm> (accessed December 4, 2005).

began his duties in 1844, and went to the island every Sunday, “sitting in the stern sheets, wrapped in his military cloak, as the oarsmen pushed their way through the drift ice in the Bay...”²¹¹



Figure 24. Wooden church that was replaced by the current stone one. Photo, 1905. http://www.correctionhistory.org/civilwar/governorsisland/frame_main4.html (accessed October 27, 2006).

In April 1848, Frances Webster wrote her husband, Lucien, who was then in Vera Cruz, that she had gone to church. “The Chapel is adjoining the Doctor’s premises, and is a beautiful little Gothic edifice, quite an ornament to the island. I believe the public are indebted [*sic*] to the exertions of Dr. McVickar for the erection of this chapel.”²¹² A few days later, Frances wrote of taking her younger daughter to church, something that had not been possible at their Florida post.

Fanny has been to church the last two Sundays. The first Sunday when she saw Dr. McVickar come out in his white robes she was very much distressed, and looking at him asked if that poor man was sick, or what he wore his *night gown* for? Today however she behaved very well, having gotten fairly over her astonishment at the organ and other novelties of the place.²¹³

Dr. McVickar apparently wore military cape and hat whenever possible, which led his Columbia students to chant to him:

²¹¹ Dupuy, p. 24

²¹² Baker, p. 236.

²¹³ Ibid, p.240.

O! Johnny McVickar's a warlike man;
He's built on the preaching and fighting plan –
He's chaplain of Governors Island!²¹⁴

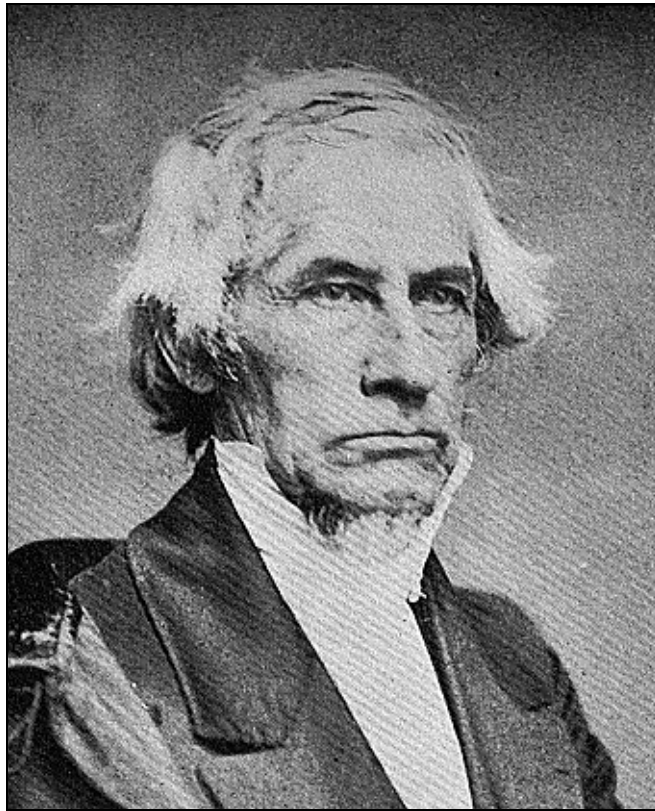


Figure 25. Dr. John McVickar, the volunteer vicar of Governors Island. Photograph found at <http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/earlycc/images/mcvickar.htm>.

The *New York Times* reported in 1853 that the church continued to see use:

The entire Command is marched to Church every Sunday morning, and upon reaching the entrance they are informed that those having scruples of conscience against taking part in the services may retire. Those who do not enter are then marched to their quarters, where the rules and articles of war are read to them.²¹⁵

Services of the Roman Catholic Church were held for many years on Governors Island. Prior to 1883, they were under the auspices of Saint Peter's Church in Barclay Street.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Dupuy, p. 25

²¹⁵ *New York Times*, December 5, 1853, p. 2.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

LIBRARIES

The earliest library that can be documented was constructed at Governors Island in 1849. The present stone chapel stands on the spot that used to be a frame building used for band quarters, and later for the post library and a residence for boat captains. In 1853, the library contained 700 volumes. The library was later moved near the Quartermaster office and stables. That was the garrison library, which burned in 1869.²¹⁷

Libraries were an important part of life on a post like Governors Island. As Robin Dell Campbell noted, officers and their families during this period very much reflected the cultural mores of the middle and upper-middle classes in American society. Many of the wives were as well-educated as female students could be in the nineteenth century, and they read for self-improvement, as well as for entertainment. Despite the limited weight of goods that Army families could move from post to post, books were quite often included in the transfer. Libraries, however, made broadening one's reading choices possible and thus were treasured by the families for that.²¹⁸

TEMPORARY RESIDENTS OF GOVERNORS ISLAND

The role of Governors Island as an army installation became more complicated in the 1840s and 1850s, and the population became increasingly unsettled. Although the period was peaceful for the most part, the Mexican War took place in the late 1840s, and the need for army troops in the Pacific west grew and expanded as a result of increased settlement and the California gold rush. Troops mustering for transportation—to Mexico to fight or to California to patrol western installations and help police the population flocking to the gold fields—often departed from Governors Island to sail around the tip of South America, to the Isthmus of Panama, or through the Gulf of Mexico. Those troops and sometimes their dependents spent time at Governors Island, the men drilling, and all waiting for transportation.

An example of such a group was the 7th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Congress had authorized the raising of 50,000 volunteers for one-year enlistments, or for the duration of the war with Mexico. The regiment was raised by Jonathan D. Stevenson, who later commanded the southern district of California, headquartered in Los Angeles. The unit, according to Brooke Nihart, was organized along legionary lines, which meant that it included infantry, cavalry and artillery. The regiment was known variously as the

²¹⁷ Smith. *Governors Island: Its Military History under Three Flags*; *New York Times*, December 5, 1853, p. 2.

²¹⁸ Campbell, pp. 3-8.

“New York Legion,” “Stevenson’s New York Volunteers,” “The California Guard,” and the “California Regiment.” The line officers were mostly West Point graduates, and the group included a chaplain, three surgeons, and a sutler who handled food and other stores. This particular unit was consciously a colonization unit, where the troops planned to settle in California, and an effort was made to attract skilled tradesmen to help in the settlement process.²¹⁹

Nihart reported that ten companies of volunteer soldiers trained all summer to learn the proper way to drill, guard and do police duty. A regimental band was formed and the City of New York presented regimental colors to the volunteer soldiers. The regiment was mustered in by the Army on August 1, 1846, at Governors Island. In September, the *Thomas H. Perkins*, *Susan Drew* and *Loo Choo* sailed for San Francisco with the first recruits aboard. Everyone became seasick on board the *Thomas H. Perkins*. The quartermaster sergeant's wife had a baby while at sea. The ship got to Rio de Janeiro in November, and to San Francisco, the following March.²²⁰ Some of the military and civilian personnel who traveled from Governors Island on those three ships would return under other circumstances. Some would stay in the western U.S.

Governors Island, thus, housed its permanent garrison and the arsenal, but it also made room for large numbers of people shipping out of New York Harbor, or shipping back. For example, in June 1852, Company H, of the fourth Regiment, U.S. Infantry, arrived at Governors Island to join other companies already there and preparing to embark for Oregon. A few days later, seventy-five troops from two companies of the fourth Regiment, U.S. Artillery, arrived at Governors Island from Charleston, SC, to be stationed on the island.²²¹

At first, the Army used temporary housing to shelter many of the officers and troops passing through Governors Island. No illustration of the layout of the temporary facilities has come to light. Families sometimes accompanied the men, but they were responsible for finding their own housing. Ulysses S. Grant, writing to his wife from the island in 1854, noted that some of the wives had arrived and taken up rooms that were not being used by troops, presumably in the Fort Columbus barracks. Grant was apparently living in a tent. Grant was not able to move his family from their Midwestern

²¹⁹ Brooke Nihart, “A New York Regiment in California, 1846-1848,” *Military Collector and Historian*. 21 (Spring 1969) quoted in Erwin N. Thompson, *Defender of the Gate: The Presidio of San Francisco, a History From 1846 To 1995* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, July 1997), p. 10.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *New York Times*, June 5, 1852, p. 4; June 9, 1852, p. 2.

home to Governors Island, so he sailed to the West Coast without them. As he said in his memoirs,

In the month of April [1852] the regiment was assembled at Governor's Island, New York Harbor, and on the 5th of July eight companies sailed for Aspinwall [in Panama]. We numbered a little over seven hundred persons, including the families of officers and soldiers. Passage was secured for us on the old steamer *Ohio*, commanded at the time by Captain Schenck, of the navy. It had not been determined, until a day or two before starting, that the 4th infantry should go by the *Ohio*; consequently, a complement of passengers had already been secured. The addition of over seven hundred to this list crowded the steamer most uncomfortably, especially for the tropics in July.²²²

Transportation from Governors Island to the West Coast was not without dangers. The worst catastrophe involved one group of troops being transferred from Governors Island, with wives and children, who sailed aboard the *San Francisco* in December 1853. The vessel carried 740 passengers including the headquarters, band and nine companies of the 3rd Regiment of Artillery, which was being transferred from Governors Island to San Francisco via the Straits of Magellan. The *New York Times* said “This Regiment is one of the finest in the service, and numbers 450 men, rank and file. It is under the command of officers of ability and experience...” and listed the names of all the officers shipping out.²²³

Two days out, off the mid-Atlantic coast of the U.S., the *San Francisco* encountered a gale. On Christmas Day, at 9 am, a large wave struck the ship. As the *New York Times* reported the accident, the

heavy sea amidships, which stripped the starboard paddle-box, carried away starboard after king post, both smoke stacks, all the upper saloon, staving the quarter deck through, and washing overboard a large number of the passengers – one hundred and fifty – including Colonel Washinton [*sic*], Major Taylor and wife, Captain Field, Lieut. Smith, two ladies – names unknown; three civilians, also unknown, and about one hundred and fifty privates....²²⁴

The ship then drifted for several days with the remaining passengers and crew. Stomach disorders broke out among the troops and seamen as a consequence of their breaking into the preserved stores of food and alcohol on board, and many died as a result. On the 28th, about one hundred of the passengers were rescued by the *Kirby*. On the 31st, the *Three Bells* arrived and lay by the disabled ship for four days. The *Antarctic*

²²² Governors Island Club, p. 30.

²²³ *New York Times*, December 5, 1853, p. 2.

²²⁴ *New York Times*, January 14, 1854, p. 1; See also *New York Times*, January 16, 1854, p. 4.

joined the *Three Bells* during that time, and by January 3, 1854, had rescued the remaining passengers. The survivors all returned to Governors Island.²²⁵

When one of the officers and survivors of that tragedy refused to return to San Francisco on a ship he considered to be even more unsafe than the *San Francisco*, he was court-marshaled at Governors Island for refusing to obey an order. He was found guilty, but his sentence was revised and lightened by the President. The ship had indeed proved not voyage-worthy and the passengers had to abandon the trip in Norfolk, Virginia.²²⁶

A RECRUITING DEPOT, 1852-1865

An important change in the military role of Governors Island took place on November 15, 1852. At that time the installation was converted from an artillery post to a recruiting depot and the troops that had been stationed on Governors Island were moved to Fort Hamilton.²²⁷ From 1852 through the Civil War, Governors Island was important as a location in which to house the officers in the recruiting service when they were not on the road, and

the principal depot of instruction for the U.S. Army recruits, who, as fast as instructed, are sent off to the different regiments on the frontiers. Graduates from the West Point Academy also generally spend some time on the Island before joining their respective regiments.²²⁸

The General Recruiting Service, established in 1825, supplemented the work of regimental recruiting parties in persuading young men to join the Army. Coffman notes that the ideal recruit was perhaps a “sturdy young farmer,” but that basically, the recruiters needed to produce troops and took “what they could find, namely laborers and newly arrived immigrants, who were concentrated in northern cities.”²²⁹

Governors Island also played an important role in the mustering of troops for various undertakings. In March 1860, for example, Army headquarters in New York City assigned the recruiting service at Fort Columbus to organize two companies of recruits

²²⁵ *New York Times*, January 16, 1854, p. 4.; Dupuy, p. 32; Coffman, *The Old Army*, p. 124.

²²⁶ Major Francis O. Wyse’s court martial and sentence are reported in *New York Times* June 12, 1854, p. 2. See also the *New York Times* for April 26; May 4; May 16; and June 7, 1854.

²²⁷ *New York Times*, November 24, 1852, p. 5,

²²⁸ *New York Times*, December 5, 1853, p. 2.

²²⁹ Coffman, *The Old Army*, 139. Coffman discusses the growth of recruiting in the Army in pp. 138-151.

to go to Oregon. In contrast to groups shipped out from Governors Island, like those on the *San Francisco* or Ulysses S. Grant's unit, these recruits were to travel overland to the West Coast.

General order number 37, dated at the headquarters of the army, New York, March 31, 1860, directed the two departments of the recruiting service to organize, at Fort Columbus and Newport Barracks, four companies of recruits—two at each post—of seventy-five men each, "for the troops serving in the department of Oregon"; the recruits to be detached to Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, April 20th next; to move from St. Louis, April 20th, by the Missouri river to Fort Benton; and thence to Fort Dalles by the route being passed over by Lieutenant Mullan of the Second artillery; arrangements for transportation beyond St. Louis to be made by the quartermaster-general; the four companies to be armed and equipped as infantry at Jefferson Barracks and supplies to be obtained at St. Louis.²³⁰

Others continued to go by sea. A detachment of about 224 troops were sent to relieve Fort Walla Walla in summer 1858. As the steamship *St. Louis* passed Governors Island,

An animated and unusual spectacle was presented. All the troops remaining on the island, by a spontaneous movement, mounted the barrack-walls, and lined the top of Fort William [*sic*], to give a parting cheer to their comrades. Groups of ladies also lined the shore, who waved their adieus; the flag on the Fort was gracefully dipped, the compliment being returned by dipping the colors on board the *St. Louis*, and the firing of guns. The cheering was kept up from the shore, and replied to from the steamer, as long as they were within hearing, and appeared to give much pleasure to the soldiers as well as to their officers, as they looked, perhaps for the last time, upon scenes which were endeared to them by so many pleasant recollections....²³¹

During an inspection of the troops in the autumn of 1860 by Col. Thomas from Army headquarters in New York City, the *New York Times* reported that, "The men, numbering about 230, were drawn up in front of the barracks, and seemed to be a fine, healthy set of fellows, nearly all being above the middle height." The baggage and equipment was also examined closely by the inspectors. These soldiers were destined to serve as additional troops for companies of the Sixth Infantry. The newspaper noted that "This forenoon they will be marched to the steamer that is to carry them to their destination...The Island will be very dull after the exit of these recruits."²³²

²³⁰ The above material is from Albert Watkins, "The Oregon Recruit Expedition" www.rootsweb.com/~neresour/OLLibrary/collections/vol7/v17p127.htm. (accessed December 4, 2005).

²³¹ *New York Times*, July 22, 1858, p. 1.

²³² *New York Times*, October 22, 1860, p. 8.

As the recruiting service built its group of field officers, housing for some of them was provided on Governors Island. Building 4, a two-and-a-half story twin rectangular Italianate Vernacular style built on wood frame construction on painted brick foundation walls, was one. It was clapboarded and built around 1857 as Field Officers' quarters. Porches and dormers were added later in the nineteenth century, and the addition dates to the turn of the twentieth century. Building 5 is apparently virtually identical to Building 4 and was built for the same purpose.²³³

The recruits apparently were not always treated well at Governors Island. The *New York Times* reported in September 1855, that

Rumors have been for some time past quite prevalent that the United States Army recruits at the station in the City were not treated as they should be—that the rations allowed them were diminished at least one-half from that allotted by Government, and that, in consequence of such treatment, it was not unfrequent [*sic*] for the men to fall to the ground while performing their daily drill, from shear[*sic*] exhaustion, induced by hunger.²³⁴

Even allowing for the standard complaints heard from new recruits and easily available to New Yorkers because of the constant contact between the city and Governors Island, the *Times* pointed out that this food rationing was particularly noticeable among the “green ones,” or new recruits, rather than the “Permanent Party,” as those who had actually been enlisted were called. The fare for the new recruits included “A single bowl of coffee and the fourteenth part of a sixpenny loaf of bread,” for breakfast. Dinner [lunch] was a bowl of bean soup and the same amount of bread, and supper duplicated breakfast.²³⁵ The newspaper urged the government to change this treatment.

PRELUDE TO WAR

By 1857, changes to the more general landscape occurred. The chapel had replaced Dr. Russell's house. The area between the cemetery and the chapel had been converted into a post garden, and a long narrow structure with an attached dwelling was located in the southwest corner of the garden. This structure, within a year, was filled by a carpenter shop, and a paint shop. South of this were the bandmaster's quarters, butler's

²³³ General Services Administration. *Governors Island Historic District, Building and Property Summary Sheets*. April 2000 p. 15-17.

²³⁴ *New York Times*, September 14, 1855, p. 4.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

quarters, and laundresses' quarters. This complex was built along the original ridge northwest of the South Battery. Substantially north of the complex of shops were a small gardener's dwelling, and a cow shed along the fence line separating the garden from the cemetery.²³⁶

The pace had definitely picked up at Governors Island. Regiments moved onto and off of the island, camping out or bedding down in quarters while they waited for their next orders or their next voyage. The 1860 census provided a glimpse of life at the United States Recruiting Station, 2nd District, First Ward, New York City. Major Theophilus H. Holmes, aged 55, appeared to be in command.²³⁷ His family, on July 3, 1860, was made up of two daughters, aged 18 and 3 ½, and four sons, aged 15, 12, 10, and 5. The children were born in North Carolina, Louisiana, the Indian Territory and New York. The family had two servants and a nurse, all from Ireland.²³⁸

Other officers also lived in Government housing. Dr. Charles Saube was the post surgeon. He and his wife had three children. All the Saubes were born in North Carolina. They had two Irish servants.²³⁹

The "Master of Bands," Charles Reham, was from Germany, as was his wife. They had two children, one born in Germany and one in New York. They had a German servant. The "Sargeant [*sic*] of Bands" was from Ireland. He and his wife had seven children with them, and two servants. The musicians were German, Irish, English, and French, along with some "music boys" who were native-born. Many of those classed as musicians had families, but the music boys appeared to be single.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Louis Berger and Associates. Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Guest House Site, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island NY. April 1986, p.3-1.

²³⁷ Lieutenant-General Theophilus Hunter Holmes (U. S. M.A. 1829) was born in Sampson County, North Carolina, in 1804, and fought in the Florida and Mexican wars. He resigned his commission of major in April, 1861, and entered the Confederate service, rising to the rank of lieutenant-general on October 10, 1862. On account of his age he saw little active service, but was placed at the head of various districts and departments throughout the Confederacy. On July 4, 1863, while in command of the District of Arkansas, Trans-Mississippi Department, he led an unsuccessful attack on Helena. He died in Fayetteville, North Carolina, June 20, 1880. <http://www.civilwarhome.com/southarmytransmississippi.htm>. (accessed December 4, 2005). Ironically, General Hunter was replaced as commander of the Trans-Mississippi West by General Edmund Kirby Smith, who was the younger brother of Frances Webster who had visited Governors Island in the 1840s.

²³⁸ Governor's [*sic*] Island, 2nd District 1st Ward, New York City, 3 July 1860, Federal Census, United States Recruiting Station, County of New York, <http://www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/Census/1860/1860.Governors>. (accessed December 4, 2005).

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Sergeant Michael Moore, from New York, had his family with him: his wife, who was also New York-born, and seven children. Sergeant Henk was from Denmark, but his much younger wife (or daughter?) was from Ireland. The vast majority of the privates were Irish, although there were privates from Holland, Scotland, Italy, France, Germany, Canada, Norway, the West Indies, and various U.S. states. Most of the privates did not appear to have wives or children with them. They probably lived in the barracks in Fort Columbus or in casemates in Castle Williams.²⁴¹

The sutler, or storekeeper, was William Kendall, aged 76, from Maine. A number of adult females apparently lived with him, two with his surname. In addition, he had a servant, from Ireland. The Kendalls were all American-born and William Kendall had been the sutler for many years.²⁴²

In contrast, the teamsters and the shoemaker were all born in Ireland. One teamster and the shoemaker also had one child. The school teacher, George H. Byron, was English and his wife, from Bermuda, and two children born in New York, accompanied him. They had an Irish servant girl. The gardener was from Wartenberg, Germany, as was his wife, but his daughter was New York-born.²⁴³

The people who are listed in the 1860 Census as inhabitants of Governors Island reflected the development of the U.S. Army in the period from 1815 to 1860, but also the building up and changing landscapes of Governors Island itself. Starting as a relatively simple military installation at the end of the War of 1812, the built environment at Governors Island tracked developments in military numbers, weapons storage and repair, and changing missions. The landscape also reflected the provision of amenities for officers and troops at the installation. Much that happened there, particularly after Governors Island became a recruiting depot, no longer can be traced on the landscape, but it can be documented through the use of local newspapers, letters, journals, and magazine articles. Thus, a narrative of daily life and the interaction between island and city can be outlined and the changes over the twenty-five year period can be explored.

²⁴¹ Ibid; Coffman, *The Old Army*, p.117, points out that Michael Moore lived on Governors Island from 1841-1869 and that his daughter married a hospital steward and was still living there in 1918.

²⁴² Governor's [*sic*] Island, 2nd District 1st Ward, New York City, 3 July 1860, Federal Census.

²⁴³ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH AT GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1861-1878



Figure 26. Governors Island, 1860. This is claimed to be the first photograph taken of the Island. Photo included by courtesy of the New York Public Library in the *Tercentenary Governors Island, New York* program, June 13-20, 1937, MC PA Islands – Gov’s Island, Museum of the City of New York.

MAJOR THEMES DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Within the context of military occupation and use of Governors Island, the most compelling theme at Governors Island during the Civil War and after it was military institutions and activities, as it was throughout the nineteenth century. But in addition, the themes of “peopling places” and immigration described many of the personnel stationed there. Areas of significance included military, Civil War, maritime, transportation, supplies, and training. Medical examination and treatment also served as an area of significance during the period.

Governors Island was an extremely busy place during the Civil War. Its strategic role was to recruit and supply Union troops. Although its name is attached to no major battles, soldiers who drilled on its grounds replaced federal troops killed and wounded in major battles like that of Bull Run, and armaments loaded at its docks went to engagements such as Port Royal, South Carolina. The wounded and those whose enlistments were up were often returned to Governors Island to be treated or mustered out. Some of the families of those deployed sought at least temporary shelter on the island. The arsenal loaded arms and ammunition into ships of every sort in as much secrecy as a small island close to a large city could manage. Used or obsolete arms were

also returned to be stored. Confederate prisoners-of-war, officers and enlisted men, were also brought to Governors Island, at first to stay there, and later, to be shipped beyond Governors Island to other prison camps, particularly Elmira, New York. Deserters from the Federal forces and political prisoners also were imprisoned there, and sometimes, executed.²⁴⁴

GOVERNORS ISLAND AS A RECRUITING DEPOT DURING THE CIVIL WAR

As late as November 1860, troops were still being dispatched from Governors Island to the western U.S. The steamship *Pacific*, for example, took 200 men to the Presidio in San Francisco to fill out rosters for various companies along the coast.²⁴⁵ But two months later, preparations for war with the southern states caused both the post and the arsenal on Governors Island to focus their efforts very differently.

During the Civil War, troops going to war were assembled on the island and units relieved from combat were returned there. At one time, seven regiments were camped on the island.²⁴⁶ As the war began, Major Holmes was in command of about 200 men described by the *New York Times* reporter as “mostly recruits, who are first-class soldiers in every way.”²⁴⁷

Many recruits arrived on the island unequipped to become soldiers. Many were Germans or of other ethnic groups, and many signed on while being plied with alcohol.²⁴⁸ As the *Times* described their state, on arrival at Governors Island,

The chances are a hundred to one that he has not a single cent to his name, and at least fifty to one that he will not realize, by the sale of his citizen's clothes to the Jews who

²⁴⁴ The literature on the history, tactics, units, etc. of the American Civil War is vast and of varied quality. For a general background, see, for example, the bibliographies noted in Ken Middleton, “Civil War Research” at <http://www.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/history/civwar/cwrghome.html>. The site includes materials related to Atlases/Maps; Bibliographies; Biographical Sources; Encyclopedias/General Histories; Diaries & Collected Papers; Military & Political Records; Newspapers; and Photographs.

²⁴⁵ *New York Times*, November 20, 1860, p. 5.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. Information on Col. Loomis, who had a varied and colorful history in the Army, can be found at Carolyn Thomas Foreman, “Gustavus Loomis Commandant Fort Gibson and Fort Townson” in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (September 1940) <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Chronicles/v018/v018p219.html> (accessed December 4, 2005)

²⁴⁷ *New York Times*, December 29, 1860, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ Eugene Converse Murdock, *Patriotism Limited, 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 110.

frequent the Island, a sufficient sum to purchase blacking, shoe-brush, clothes-brush, button-brush, chalk for polishing buttons and brasses, comb, razor and strop, (if he shave, which he is not compelled to do), towels, white gloves for dress parade, oil for his musket, (and also for his hair, if he have any weakness that way,) pocket handkerchiefs, soap for shaving and washing, (the soap allowed by Uncle Sam being given to the laundresses, in consideration of the small charge they make for washing,) and several other minor articles, all of which he must provide for himself.²⁴⁹

The recruit would repair to the sutler for those things, with credit charged to his paycheck. He would live in a tent until he had been cleared of health problems by the post surgeon, and, once issued a uniform, would then be reassigned to minimally more comfortable housing in one of the forts.²⁵⁰

Early in January 1861, about 250 men were available at Governors Island to be among the first forces moved into South Carolina if that became necessary.²⁵¹ After the steamship *Star of the West* was loaded with 250 artillerymen and marines from other installations in secret at night in the lower Harbor, instructions went out from Governors Island that all available troops should report to the island to be “mustered and critically inspected.”²⁵² None could then leave without special permission as “the order supposed to have authorized the complete equipment and preparation for the road of all the troops in garrison.”²⁵³ The *Star of the West* returned a week later from Charleston Harbor, where she was unable to land the soldiers on board. The troops were unloaded to Governors Island but were kept as a unit, separate from the soldiers assigned to the Governors Island garrison.²⁵⁴

By January 15, reinforcements had arrived at the installation and 600 troops, not including the 200 from the *Star of the West*,

are daily drilled and are being prepared for active service should they be called for. A considerable portion of them are raw recruits, but they are fast being broken in and will make efficient soldiers...They appear very observant of every movement which

²⁴⁹ *New York Times*, December 4, 1861, p. 11.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; December 12, 1861, p. 1.

²⁵¹ *New York Times*, January 8, 1861, p. 8.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *New York Times*, January 14, 1861, p. 1. The ship had difficulty in entering Charleston Harbor because the buoys and lights had been removed. Once it got to within two miles of Fort Sumter, it was fired upon. The ship sustained some damage, but no one on board was injured.

indicates an intention to draft them into active service—a feeling being prevalent in the garrison that they will, sooner or later, be required to proceed to Southern forts.²⁵⁵

Reinforcements were sent from Buffalo and Rochester as reported on January 23, and the new recruits increased the number of troops on Governors Island to 750. The next week, the situation eased slightly when 112 men from Companies D and K of the Artillery were moved to Washington, DC. Not all the recruits were pleased to be at arms; the *New York Times* reported that one soldier attempted to escape from Governors Island by walking across Buttermilk Channel on the ice, but it gave way and he drowned.²⁵⁶

Once they had prepared for possible deployment, the troops from Governors Island could move surprisingly quickly. General Winfield Scott, still in service after forty years, ordered thirty soldiers to move to Fort Delaware on February 6, 1861. The order came through after 4 p.m. and the troops were on the train south two hours later.²⁵⁷

By March 1861, the numbers of personnel on the island had doubled. The garrison at Governors Island now held over 1200 men, and the newspaper commented that “If for no other reason than the want of proper accommodation, a considerable number of troops will have to be drafted from this station soon.”²⁵⁸ The post was fortified, and at least once in this period, the troops were “kept under arms at night,”²⁵⁹ prepared to mount a defense of themselves and New York Harbor if needed. The officers lived in the barracks at Fort Columbus; the troops, in the casemates at Castle Williams and in tents. The company of music boys was housed in the South Battery. Because there were new recruits to learn the fife and drums, there was not room in the Battery for all, so the wooden ten-pin alley next to the South Battery was used as a dormitory for the boys in training. It had one stove and was infested with rats.²⁶⁰

Governors Island was in the news again for a different reason, a cultural theme, the next month. The community around New York Harbor was shocked and angered to discover that the long-time commandant of the garrison at Governors Island, Major Holmes, would resign his commission in the United States Army and join the Confederacy. As the *Times* observed,

²⁵⁵ *New York Times*, January 15, 1861, p. 1.

²⁵⁶ *New York Times*, January 23, 1861, p. 1; January 28, 1861, p. 8; January 30, 1861, p. 1.

²⁵⁷ *New York Times*, February 7, 1861, p. 4.

²⁵⁸ *New York Times*, March 20, 1861, p. 1.

²⁵⁹ *New York Times*, March 26, 1861, p. 1.

²⁶⁰ *New York Times*, September 10, 1861, p. 2; February 3, 1862, p1; February 15, 1862, p. 3.

Major Holmes hails from North Carolina, and has been in the pay of the Government for many years. He now throws up his commission at a time when his services are likely for the first time to be of material importance to the service, and when the step would be most embarrassing to the country.²⁶¹

Several lower-ranking officers also resigned to escape being sent to the South to fight for the North.²⁶²

Major Holmes' timing was apparently dictated by the fact that troops from Governors Island were being prepared for military action that month. The *New York Times* noted on April 9 that the general reaction of the public in New York City to the new excitement and activity being seen at Governors Island and other military and naval facilities throughout the harbor was relief: the federal government had finally

undertaken in earnest to vindicate the laws of the country. A calm confidence pervades the public mind, that the measures now being adopted have for their object the protection of the country and its institutions from the assaults of traitors.²⁶³

The troops may have felt the same, but they had little time to think about it because orders were received and a notice posted on April 9 for three companies of recruits, 397 men in all, to move out. The troops "crowded round it [the notice], climbed on each other's shoulders, on benches, boxes, and piles of clothing to see whether their names were on the list." Those whose names appeared began to get ready to embark.

As nearly everybody's knapsack had been packed for weeks, and everybody's cartouche-box filled with the war allowance, and everybody's everything in readiness for the road, a concentration of the different accoutrements and "conveniences" was only necessary.²⁶⁴

Stores and supplies, the ambulance and other materials were organized for departure. By 2 p.m. that day,

There were no unbelted men to be seen. Muskets standing by the wall; soldiers swaggering up and down the parade-walks, pulling on their gloves, wiping out "the nipple," or tightening the chin-strap, conversed freely on the weather, the price of vegetables, the scarcity of grass in Texas, and the quality of the soup. But no one seemed to talk of, or care about, his destination. One, indeed, went so far as to wish he

²⁶¹ *New York Times*, April 8, 1861, p. 1.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *New York Times*, April 9, 1861, p. 1.

knew whether there were any pretty girls where they were going, “wherever that was.”²⁶⁵

The troops left the island at 3 p.m. The *New York Times* reporter had failed to find out their destination. Among those who left, 160 troops went to the steamship *Baltic*, as *Harper’s Weekly* reported. The ship was readied with great speed.

The work of shipping a cargo on the *Baltic* was prosecuted with unceasing vigor during the whole of Sunday night and yesterday, until the moment of departure. The articles shipped embrace ordnance tools, muskets, foraging carts, and forge vices. A large number of gunny bags was in the list. These gunny bags possess a warlike character, inasmuch as they are used in throwing up redoubts, and are also very serviceable in protecting a boat’s crew in approaching a battery.

Among the commodities shipped was a remarkable quantity of spirituous liquors of all kinds, the labels attached to which were often times rather ludicrous, especially such as the following : “58 bottles firemen’s rum.”

During the afternoon the workmen were principally engaged in shipping provisions and ammunition on board the *Baltic*. A number of Bengalee lights were also shipped.

Toward five o’clock the steam-tugs *R. L. Mabey*, *C. P. Smith*, and *Catlin* came to the dock with 500 troops. The *R. L. Mabey* placed 160 men, from Governor’s [sic] Island, on board the *Baltic*, after which the steamship moved slowly out from the dock, the soldiers on the top deck cheering, and gaining the middle of the river, turned toward the Bay and went out to sea. She passed the Narrows at seven P.M., accompanied by the steam-tug *Yankee*, which has been chartered by the Government.²⁶⁶

Harper’s Weekly reported that the vessel sailed under sealed orders.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ *Harper’s Weekly*, April 20, 1861, p.246, <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1861/april/commander-dahlgren.htm> (accessed December 4, 2005).

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

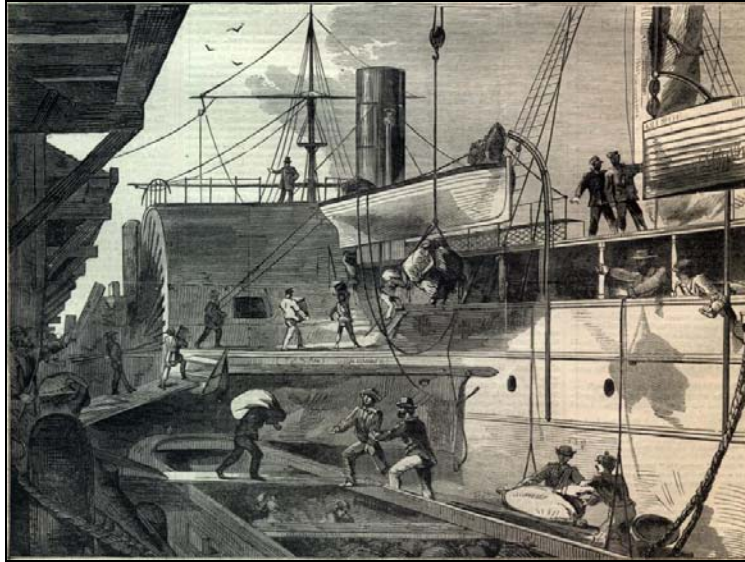


Figure 27. Shipment of Military Stores on Board the Steamship "Baltic" at New York, April 8, 1861. *Harper's Weekly*, April 20, 1861, p. 252.

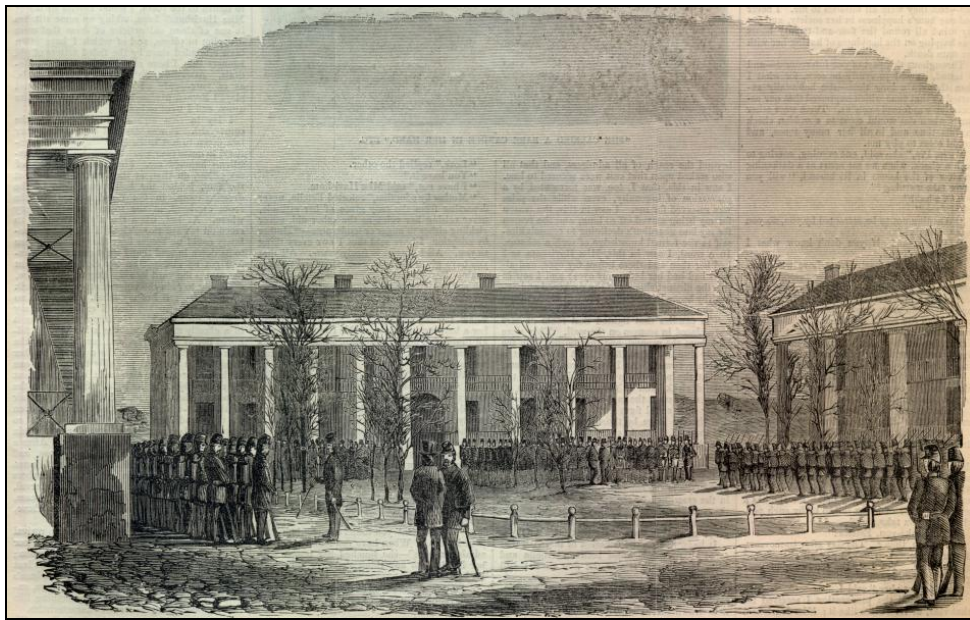


Figure 28. Parade of United States Troops on Governor's [sic] Island. Before Embarkation. *Harper's Weekly*, May 4, 1861, p. 285.

The departure of nearly 400 soldiers made Governors Island a little less crowded. Although troops continued to be moved out through the spring and summer of 1861, crowded conditions eased only briefly. In August, as discussed below, the first set of Confederate prisoners arrived at Governors Island. By September, a group of recruits from Boston arrived at the Island. "They will be put under canvas on the north side of

the Island,” the *New York Times* reported, “there not being room in the barracks.”²⁶⁸ These Boston recruits who lived in tents joined two full companies who were

drilled three times a day in company drill. Hitherto they have been drilled twice a day only. This looks as though they will shortly be required elsewhere. No orders on this subject, however, have yet been received.²⁶⁹

THE NEW YORK ARSENAL DURING THE CIVIL WAR

As was true of every other part of Governors Island and the other islands in New York Harbor, the Civil War strained every arsenal unit. By March 1861, weapons and other provisions were flowing from the arsenal’s docks. The schooner *Mary P. Hudson*, for example, sailed that month to Fort Johnson, South Carolina with cannon and provisions loaded at Governors Island. The schooner *Mary Porter* was loaded with provisions and ordnance for Fort Jefferson, Florida.

In April, a reporter from the *New York Times* visited the arsenal to try to break through the secrecy surrounding the preparations for war being undertaken in New York Harbor. He noted soldiers, clad in dark blue flannel working shirts, rolling mortar-shells one by one onto a lighter. Next to the mortar shells on the dock were

piles of the smaller but more destructive balls, with which columbiad guns are loaded. Two of these guns, weighing 15,000 pounds each, were on an adjacent wharf, at which lay a schooner, the *John N. Genin*, which arrived there yesterday, and which, it is conjectured, is to be laden with munitions of war.²⁷⁰

The reporter could get no information out of Major Thornton of the Ordnance Corps, who was in charge of the arsenal. The journalist noted, however, that “in the vicinity of the wharves were 37,000 shells, a large number of gun carriages and other war-like contrivances,” all marked to be shipped to Fort Pickens, Florida. Thornton pointed out, however, that such an obvious address might be a ruse.²⁷¹

The pace at the arsenal never let up. In September 1861, the *New York Times* noted that “The Ordnance Department is in full action, of which the crowded state of the wharf is abundant proof.”²⁷² The Chief of Ordnance remembered in 1895 that during the

²⁶⁸ *New York Times*, September 11, 1861, p. 1.

²⁶⁹ *New York Times*, September 20, 1861, p. 8.

²⁷⁰ *The New York Times*, April 6, 1861, p. 1.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *New York Times*, September 16, 1861, p. 1.

Civil War there were several instances of having to load vessels with military stores at the arsenal *in a single night*. Only the Governors Island arsenal was located on the water, but it was not easily accessible except by those who had permission to land.²⁷³

Even though vast amounts of materiel had been stored at the arsenal, the demand for armaments grew ever more intense. Sometimes, the troops were armed directly at the arsenal. For example, the 3rd Rhode Island Regiment was ordered suddenly from Fort Hamilton in September 1861. The troops boarded the steamer *Transport* and proceeded to Governors Island where they “were armed with the Minie rifle, and left for some point at present unknown.”²⁷⁴

In September 1861, the problem of space at Governors Island was remarked upon at the arsenal as well.

The Ordnance Department on Governors Island, under the able management of Major R.H.K. Whiteley, continues extremely active. There seems to be lack of space for the munitions of war constantly arriving there. Dalghrens [*sic*], Columbiads, mortars, and guns of nearly all denominations, boxes of shot and shell, gun-carriages, etc. etc, crowd the wharves, and boats of one kind or another are constantly there, either delivering or receiving cargoes of warlike stores.²⁷⁵

The next week, the newspaper observed that “The Ordnance Department is in full action, of which the crowded state of the wharf is abundant proof.”²⁷⁶

One of the most important of the early Civil War undertakings, the Port Royal expedition, was provided arms at the arsenal at Governors Island. When South Carolina seceded from the Union in April 1861, President Lincoln ordered southern ports blockaded to prevent trade and blockade-runners. Port Royal Sound, just north of Savannah, Georgia, was a deep water port defended by two forts. In October 1861, an expedition that included seventy-seven vessels and more than 12,000 soldiers sailed for Port Royal.²⁷⁷ Nine Army transports—the *Atlantic*, the *Baltic* (see figure 27, above), the *Oriental*, the *Star of the South*, the *Vanderbilt*, the *Empire City*, the *Ocean Queen*, the

²⁷³ Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Eighth Endorsement, July 16, 1895, RG 92. Entry 89, Item 84234, NARA.

²⁷⁴ *New York Times*, September 16, 1861, p. 1.

²⁷⁵ *New York Times*, September 11, 1861, p. 1.

²⁷⁶ *New York Times*, September 20, 1861, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Max Shaw, “Port Royal Expedition, 1861,” <http://www.awod.com/gallery/probono/cwchas/portry.html>; Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1994), p. 184 (accessed December 4, 2005).

Ariel, and the *Ocean Express*²⁷⁸—were loaded at Governors Island with arms to support the Army troops once they had landed. The plan to load the transports with arms at the arsenal was deliberate, according to a letter in the *New York Times*. It was

to distribute the stores among the different vessels, distinguishing those of heavy from those of light draft, and in such manner that the carriages, implements and ammunition should be put upon the same vessel as the guns to which they belonged...[Capt. McNutt] prepared all the implements at the Arsenal on Governor's Island, and had them packed in boxes, marked with the name of the vessel by which they were to be shipped, so that the guns and implements should not be separated from each other; and the stores were turned over in this way to the Agent of the Quartermaster's Department, selected to receive them.²⁷⁹

The plan was apparently foiled by the Quartermaster's office, which brought the *Ocean Express* to be loaded and, with direct orders from General T. W. Sherman, all the ordnance stores that had not already been loaded were to be shipped on her. Then, when the expedition encountered a gale off Cape Hatteras and the ships scattered, the *Ocean Express* which was being towed by the *Baltic* was among those delayed. When the fleet arrived at Port Royal on November 3, only eight vessels appeared for duty and that did not include the *Ocean Express* with the arms for the invading troops. Most vessels arrived eventually and the port was taken by the Federal forces on November 6. The Army troops were offloaded by 500 surfboats later that same day.²⁸⁰ This was the largest flotilla ever organized by American forces, but the placing of what appeared to be most of the Army's ammunition and ordnance supplies on the *Ocean Express* has been criticized repeatedly since then.

The work of the arsenal did not slacken in the least after the Port Royal expedition. In December, five schooners were tied up at the wharves, either landing or being loaded with supplies, and the stores were "piled up in every available place to the extent of hundreds of tons." Between "forty and fifty citizens" worked there, loading ships and distributing arms to the harbor forts.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ According to the list of drafts of the transports sent to Port Royal included in the *New York Times*, the *Ocean Express* was not on the original list. The 12,000 troops may have made it impossible to spread the ordnance as broadly as originally conceived of at Governors Island. Thus the troops landed at Port Royal with little more ordnance than their personal arms. See *New York Times*, November 8, 1861, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ *New York Times*, November 28, 1861, p. 6.

²⁸⁰ William C. Lowe, "Big Gun Bombardment of Port Royal," *America's Civil War Magazine*, January 2001 <http://historynet.com/acw/blportroyal/index.html> (accessed December 4, 2005).

²⁸¹ *New York Times*, December 10, 1861, p. 8; February 15, 1862, p. 3.

Because the Governors Island Arsenal was so overloaded with war materials in storage, some weapons and ammunition ended up being stored at the New York Arsenal. In 1862, the then Chief of Ordnance complained about the strictures on the space available to the Ordnance Department and argued for moving the Governors Island Arsenal somewhere with more space and room for test firings. To help with the overload of material, the New York Agency was established and used to store extra supplies.²⁸²

DRAFT RIOTS: NEW YORK CITY'S CIVIL BATTLE WITHIN THE CIVIL WAR

Introduction

In many accounts and written histories of Governors Island, the role of the island in the Draft Riots of 1863, if mentioned at all, is characterized by one event. A typical account of the event is drawn from the following:

During the draft riots the troops stationed on Governor's [*sic*] Island were guarding the Sub-Treasury on Wall Street. Their absence was seized by the rioters as a time for attacking the Island and capturing ammunition, rifles and stores. The City authorities, hearing of this movement, withdrew all ferry boats from their slips. The rioters, however, secured other boats and soon were on their way to the Island. Eighty employees of the Ordnance Department hurriedly armed themselves with muskets, trained some cannon on the invaders [*sic*] and succeeded in repulsing the attack.²⁸³

The role of Governors Island in the riots is more complicated than this simple story suggests. When the riots broke out on July 13, 1863, the Metropolitan Police were unable to contain the rioters alone. Immediately recognizing their need for help, the Metropolitans called upon all forces stationed in the New York harbor defense system to help. The strategic role of Governors Island during the Civil War was to supply and recruit Union troops, so there were usually seven regiments on the island either going to or coming from duty at any one time. The question of the extent to which the troops could be used to assist the police in this situation was not a simple one. According to some in command of the forts in the harbor, short of declaring martial law, the role of the troops during the riots could only be to protect military and government property. Others saw the need to extend this protection to municipal and private property and to protect civilian lives.

²⁸² HABS-HAER Report, Introduction, p. 9.

Over the five days of rioting, Governors Island served as a source not only for manpower and ammunition, but as a safe haven for documents and currency. The rioters were successful in suspending the draft temporarily, but by the time the draft resumed several weeks later Governors Island was supplied with enough troops to dispatch to any site in the city should it become necessary to quell civil disobedience.

Far from a simple story, and contrary to any simple assumption that harbor forts always functioned to protect against *foreign* military invasion, the draft riots show how the resources of the island were involved in a complex network of relationships to wage a civil battle on the streets of New York during the largest single incident of civil disorder in the United States. By examining the role of Governors Island in the riots of 1863 more closely, we can see an intricate weave of relationships among the city's new Metropolitan Police; the city's press; the city's government; the state government; the reticence of authorities to declare martial law ("the Beast") in the midst of the Civil War; and the use of city, state, and federal physical force to protect property, lives, and interests.

The Enrolment Act of Conscription

The Enrollment Act passed by Congress on March 3, 1863, was designed to respond to a crisis brought on by three years of Civil War fighting and loss of life, resulting in inadequate numbers of volunteers in the Union Army. The act subjected male citizens between the ages of 20 to 45 to the draft lottery. People were considered exempt from duty for three reasons: one, if there was a finding of mental or physical disability; two, if obligations to family were such that exemption was warranted; three, if a draftee could find a substitute or pay a \$300 "commutation" fee. Blacks, not legally citizens at that time, were exempt from the draft. A quota was set for each state. The \$300 commutation fee was beyond the means of everyone except the nation's very wealthy, so the measure was widely regarded as tyrannizing the poor for a rich man's war. President Lincoln was also given the power to use force in the face of opposition to the enrollment.

When the War Department put the Conscription Act into effect, New York, like all other union states, was assigned a quota to fill, was divided into districts, and a provost marshal was put in charge of enrollment drawings for each district. Horatio Seymour, New York's Governor, opposed Lincoln's new powers of conscription. He protested on two fronts. One objection was on constitutional grounds, which were playing out in courts in Pennsylvania and Illinois. The other objection was that the state's quota was too high. In anticipation of any trouble with the drawings in New York City, the strategy was to begin with drawings in the areas remote from the city, such as in Upper Manhattan, Queens, and Suffolk counties so that if there was trouble or opposition it

²⁸³ Smith, *Governors Island: Its Military History under Three Flags*, p. 82; United States Army, 1st Army, *Story of Governor's Island*, p.13.

could be confined to the periphery. New York City's first draft office operation began on Saturday, July 11, 1863.

Saturday, July 11, 1863

On Saturday, July 11, the Ninth District Draft Office, at 677 Third Avenue on the corner of 46th Street, was the first New York City district to conduct the procedure in the field. The Ninth District comprised everything above Fortieth Street, which, in 1863, was remote and distant from the lower Manhattan sections of the City that were considered "infected" with potentially riotous residents. Colonel Robert Nugent of the 69th Regiment was Provost Marshal. Captain Charles E. Jenkins was in charge of the proceedings.

In preparation, the names of all persons liable to be drafted were written on small pieces of white paper (six inches long, one inch wide), which were then rolled up and secured with India rubber bands. The rolls were placed in a box that revolved, from which a blindfolded man would draw the names. Captain Jenkins announced at the beginning of the formal proceedings: "Gentlemen: The hour has arrived at which it becomes my duty to make, on behalf of the Government, a draft from among the citizens of the Ninth Congressional District."²⁸⁴ He then read the orders from the President of the United States and from the Provost-Marshall-General. William Jones of 46th Street was the first name chosen. Throughout the day, an additional 1,200 names were pulled from the revolving box. The names were announced and recorded. The draftees were required to appear before an Examining Board within ten days, to report for duty, or to pay the \$300 commutation fee to the Commission of Internal Revenue.

The next day's papers included a full list of the names that were selected for the draft. An additional group of approximately 750 names was slated to be pulled from the barrel on the following Monday, July 13, to reach the quota for the Ninth District. The Eight District was also set to begin the process on the following Monday.²⁸⁵ 0

Over the next week a civil battle within the Civil War took place in New York City. Before detailing what happened during the draft riots and the role of Governors Island and other forts in the harbor, it is helpful to consider several of the local economic and political circumstances that gave rise to the riotous conditions.

²⁸⁴ *New York Times*, July 12, 1863, p. 6.

²⁸⁵ The entire list of names drawn from the box on July 11, including addresses, appeared in the newspapers the following day, including the *New York Times*, July 12, 1863, p. 6.

New York City and State in 1863

By 1863, New York City had a history of riots. As early as 1788, just one year after the Constitution provided for calling forth a militia, and one year prior to the birth of the U.S. Regular army, the Mayor of New York City, James Duane, summoned a troop of militia to control a protesting crowd. The Doctors' Riot, where people were protesting the use of stolen bodies from the Negro Burial Ground used by physicians and surgeons for dissection, was the first time a colonial mayor had ever ordered soldiers to open fire on a crowd. A long succession of other riots ensued over a variety of social issues, including the Spring Election Riots of 1834, the Abolition Riots of 1834 and 1835, the Flour Riot of 1837, and the Astor Place Riots of 1849 (where 22 lives were lost). One of the most recent riots had occurred in July 1857 when two factions of police organizations, the Municipals and the Metropolitans, clashed for a final time to determine who would become the ruling force. Twelve died and 37 were injured in the final brawl, which was eventually ended by the National Guard.

By 1863, protests and strikes were also common in New York City. Longshoremen, railroad workers, freight handlers, canal boat and barge workers, carpenters, piano makers, tailors, factory workers, and others organized in some 133 active union locals, repeatedly organized strikes. Police were often called to disperse strikers or to guard black workers who were used as substitutes for white strikers.

The longshoremen strike of 1863 was not exceptional, but it does point to a simmering of grievances over time and the use of troops in the harbor to help police quell potential violence. In October 1862, longshoremen staged a strike to increase their wages up from \$1.50 per day to \$1.75 and were disappointed in January 1863 when informed their wages were to be decreased from \$1.50 to \$1.12 per day. In March 1863, longshoremen working on the North River piers of the Erie Railroad and Hudson River Railroad also struck to win back part of their slashed wages. Other strikes broke out in lower Manhattan in April accompanied by demonstrations against black workers. The Metropolitan Police were called to save several blacks from lynching. In June, 3,000 workers stopped work en masse and the United States government stepped in. At that time, army transports set to sail were held up by the work stoppage. The government ordered 150 deserters from Governors Island and sixty-five convalescents from Bedloe's Island to work loading transports while a detachment of regular troops guarded the striking longshoremen with fixed bayonets supported with nearly 500 policemen patrolling the waterfront.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ Albon P. Man, Jr., "Labor Competition and the New York Draft Riots of 1863," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XXXVI, no. 4 (October 1951), pp. 398-399. His sources include *The Herald*, *Tribune*, *New York Times*, and *Daily News*.

In addition to the workplace and ethnic turmoil that divided the city, events of the Civil War, in general, and the emancipation proclamation, in particular, further divided the state and city. The war turned profits for some entrepreneurs who became major industrialists building engines for war ships, manufacturing cartridges, or supplying saddlery, knapsacks, boots, shoes, and woollens for Union troops.²⁸⁷ For most New Yorkers, though, the war had disastrous economic effects. Residents of New York City had been especially hard hit by lowered wages and sharply escalating prices during the three years of war. Unskilled workmen and independent craftsmen experienced erosions of their wages by high inflation. Food prices rose dramatically (for example, beef nearly doubled in price) and rents rose fifteen to twenty percent at the same time that currency depreciated. Between 1860 and 1863 currency depreciated by forty-three percent while wages only increased twelve percent.²⁸⁸ The “Advanced Wages Movement” unified many workers in the organized efforts to hold on to wages, including sail makers, firemen, riggers, caulkers, horse shoers, tailors, longshoremen, sugar refinery workers, and others. Many workers also feared that freed slaves would take the jobs of whites and objected to being forced to fight to defend “Mr. Lincoln’s War.”

Until 1862, President Lincoln enjoyed zealous support from the state of New York. Then Horatio Seymour became governor of New York on a platform of opposition to how the federal government was waging the Civil War. Always ready to defend the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the state, Seymour viewed President Lincoln’s conscription act as unconstitutional. He said,

It is believed by at least one-half of the people of the loyal States that the conscription act is in itself a violation of the supreme constitutional law,” and he felt the quotas set for inscription in New York were especially onerous, perhaps a punishment for previous failure of Democrats to enroll in large enough numbers.²⁸⁹

Governor Seymour gave voice to popular distrust of the enrollment, condemning the draft as “an outrage on all decency and fairness” and whose object was to “kill off Democrats and stuff the ballot-boxes with bogus soldier votes.”²⁹⁰ There was increasing

²⁸⁷ Lawrence Costello, *The New York City Labor Movement, 1861-1873*, (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University 1967), p.270.

²⁸⁸ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 31. Also see Sven Beckert, *The Making of New York City’s Bourgeoisie, 1850-1886* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995), p. 189.

²⁸⁹ “The Enrollment and the Draft,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XXXVII, (April 1889) p. 923-927.

opposition to the massive numbers of lives lost to the war and increasing resistance to a federal draft to supply more troops. A series of protests against the Conscription Act attracted large crowds at the June 3rd Peace Convention at Cooper Institute and at a Fourth of July rally, only nine days before the draft riots started.

The Civil War Draft Riots

The first day of the draft, July 11, 1863, went peacefully. At the end of the day on Saturday the superintendent of police, John A. Kennedy, forecast that all would go well when the draft resumed the following Monday. He assigned only a sergeant and twelve men to the Ninth District on July 13. He couldn't have been more wrong. In retrospect, Provost-Marshal-General James B. Fry was asked why the government took no preventative measures in anticipation of the draft resuming on Monday morning. In his treatise "New York and the Conscription of 1863," Fry explained why no large military force was assembled to preserve the public peace.

On the occasion of the first draft these questions were carefully weighed by the President and the War Department. The conclusions were that no exception in the application of the law should be made in New York, that no presumption that the State or City authorities would fail to cooperate with the Government should be admitted, that a Federal military force ought not to be assembled in New York City on the mere assumption that a law of the United States would be violently and extensively resisted, and that if it were thought best to assemble such a force there was none to be had without losing campaigns then going on or battles then impending.²⁹¹

In retrospect, it is clear that that even if the decision had been made to have a large military force on call, soldiers were not readily available. There were only arguably 400 to 800 troops in the city and a few companies of marines and sailors at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The draft was set to resume in the Ninth District office at 10:30 on Monday morning and to begin in the Eight District Office (comprising the 18th, 20th, and 21st wards). Hours before that time a large crowd of people from the city's work force gathered at the Ninth District office to protest the resumption of the draft (estimates range from 3,000 to 10,000).²⁹² Draft protesters fired guns in the air and threw stones at the building. Captain

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 928, quoting from *Daily News*.

²⁹¹ James B. Fry, *New York and the Conscription of 1863: A Chapter in the History of the Civil War* (New York: Putnam's, 1885), p. 85.

²⁹² Report of Col. James B. Fry, Provost-Marshal-General, U.S. Army, with orders, &c. July 13-16, 1863.—Draft Riots in New York City, Troy, and Boston can be found at <http://www.civilwarhome.com/fryor.htm> (accessed December 28, 2005).

Jenkins and others escaped from the building out a back door while sixty police tried to contain the crowd. The building was then set on fire, ironically, by the Black Joke Engine Company No. 33. Firemen were traditionally exempt from military service and they wanted exemption from the federal draft. On the previous Saturday, the first day of the draft, the name of the Captain of the Black Joke Engine Company had been drawn, and on Sunday some members of the engine company decided to destroy the evidence of the conscription proceedings by burning the building.

In another part of the city, Police Superintendent Kennedy, then 66-years-old, was beaten and left for dead. Thomas Acton, head of the board of police commissioners, took charge of police operations and ordered his men to crush the rioters without mercy. Rioters cut down telegraph poles on Third Avenue (over the next several days they would use broadaxes and level over sixty poles) and twelve miles of wire was rendered useless. Telegraph workers still managed to connect the police with the military and in the four days of disturbances there were 5,307 dispatches sent and received at the Metropolitan Police Central headquarters.²⁹³ The Metropolitan Detective Force supplied information to blacks threatened by the mobs, escorted people to safety, and conveyed orders to all those in command of forces at forts in the harbor.

One of the earliest telegraphs (as reported by Mr. Edward S. Sanford of the U.S. Military Telegraph Service) was an order for the Regulars from Governor's Island to go to the Third Avenue Provost-Marshal's office. Other telegraph reports indicate that The Provost-Marshal-General, James B. Fry, requested Major-General John E. Wool, Commander of the U.S. Army Department of the East and stationed on Governors Island, to furnish the force necessary to enforce the Conscription Act and to assist the Metropolitan Police to quell the riot. The Metropolitan Police had 1,452 patrolmen available for duty in New York City in 1863. The only type of riot control they were trained to use and had experience with was the club.²⁹⁴ Before forces could be supplied by Wool, Fry directed his Acting Assistant Provost-Marshal-General, Colonel Robert Nugent, to use the only force readily available to control the protesters, the Invalid Corps. A detachment of soldiers in the Invalid Corps, a regiment of wounded and disabled veterans fit only for light guard duty was quickly overwhelmed by the protestors.²⁹⁵ On the 16th of July, an investigation opened to determine whether the

²⁹³ David M. Barnes, *The Draft Riots in New York, July, 1863: The Metropolitan Police, Their Services during Riot Week, Their Honorable Record* (New York: Baker & Godwin, 1863), pp. 25-27.

²⁹⁴ Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), p. 44.

²⁹⁵ Joseph Fried, "The Draft Riots," Museum of the City of New York.

Invalid Corps had been supplied with sufficient weaponry to meet the rioters or whether they had fired blank cartridges.

While the rioters destroyed the Ninth District headquarters, they were not able to destroy Saturday's enrollment information. The enrollment information was directed to be removed to a place of safety. The safe place was Fort Columbus on Governors Island.²⁹⁶ Over the course of the ensuing riots Governors Island also became the safe deposit box for the Provost Marshall's records of the Fifth District, as well as Sub-Treasury deposits, money from the Clearing House, and bullion and notes from city banks.²⁹⁷

The mayor of the city, George Opdyke, requested aid from Major-General Wool, who could deploy troops to help the police. So many regiments were absent from the harbor on July 13 that the troops available were considered by Wool and Opdyke inadequate for the occasion. With the small force at hand they did what little they thought they could and Wool reported to Secretary of War E.M. Stanton in Washington that, while making an impression on the rioters, threats would continue if the draft was not abandoned.

Throughout the first day of protests and riots the Twenty-fourth Precinct (the Harbor Police) volunteered service. Major-General Wool ordered that military from Governors Island be brought to the city, which the Harbor Police made possible, and the troops landed at North Moore Street at 2:30 PM. During the afternoon arms and ammunition were brought from Governor's Island to the Custom House, the Sub-Treasury, and other government buildings. The Dunderberg, near Webb's shipyard was threatened with destruction, and Governor's Island troops furnished forces to defend the ram. Printing-house Square, near today's City Hall, was also defended by Governors Island troops. At midnight, arms and ammunition was conveyed from Governors Island to 400 men at Staten Island, who were able to be on hand by 4:00 AM for the second day of the violence.²⁹⁸ On Tuesday, the Twenty-fourth Precinct collected 500 troops from Riker's Island, carried an artillery company to Governor's Island for provisions, and brought the troops to the city.

General-Provost-Marshal Fry suspended the draft on Tuesday at 11:10 AM, but that did not prevent mobs, by now focusing on various forms of private property and authority, from later attacking the Armory, the Tribune building, the Eighth District

²⁹⁶ "The New York City Draft Riots," [http://www.members.tripod.com/~Chestnut morgan/draft.html](http://www.members.tripod.com/~Chestnut%20morgan/draft.html).

²⁹⁷ Cook, p. 107.

²⁹⁸ Barnes, *The Draft Riots in New York*, pp. 25-27.

draft office (which had opened and proceeded without disorder until 11:30 AM), the home of the Mayor, and the Colored Orphan Asylum. Dispatches were sent to Fort Trumbull in Connecticut, Fort Preble in Maine, and Fort Independence in Massachusetts requesting post commanders to send troops to Governors Island.²⁹⁹

By the end of the first night of protests and riots, Sanford wrote to the Secretary of War that:

As far as I can learn, the firemen and military companies sympathize too closely with the draft resistance movement to be relied upon for timely extinguishment of fires or the restoration of order. It is to be hoped that tomorrow will open upon a brighter prospect than is promised tonight.³⁰⁰

The prospects did not brighten the next day; nor the following. The original protest and violence was directed at stopping the draft and destroying the draft office, but both motivations and targets shifted over the next several days. In addition to anti-draft sentiment was added general anger against authority, Republicans, symbols of capitol, and working establishments that denied laborers an increase in wages, as evidenced by attacks on the police; well-dressed men, homes of wealthy Republicans, and Brooks Brothers (which had denied wage increases demanded by 400 striking tailors as recently as March and had been involved in a scandal of supplying shoddy uniforms to the army)³⁰¹. Anger against the potential threat of the consequences of emancipation and the resulting increase in the numbers of blacks that were expected to replace whites in New York City jobs was evidenced by attacks on individual blacks, people who harbored blacks, and the Colored Orphan Asylum. Anger against the consequences of industrialization and attacks on communication and transportation services was evidenced by attacks on the telegraph system, the street sweeping machines that put people out of work, and the railroad lines. It was not until Friday that the city was no longer a battlefield of violence.

The number of people killed is disputed. At the time Governor Seymour estimated as many as 1,000 were killed. One hundred and five deaths are fully documented. Eyewitnesses and police reports suggest forty thousand people were involved in the riots. Four hundred forty-three were arrested as suspected rioters. Only sixty-one were ever convicted.

²⁹⁹ "Military and Naval Movements, Brisk Local Movements," *New York Times*, July 14, 1863, p. 8.

³⁰⁰ Reports of Mr. Edward S. Sanford, U.S. Military Telegraph Service. July 13-16, 1863 – Draft Riots in New York City, Troy, and Boston, O.R. Series I – Volume XXVII/2 [S# 44] <http://www.civilwarhome.com/essanfordor.htm> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³⁰¹ Cook, p. 130. Also see Lawrence, chapter three footnotes.

During the week of riots there was a disagreement within the military about how much of a role the troops stationed in the harbor could and should play and a disagreement about who was to be in charge of the troops and the rank and chain of command to be followed with the Metropolitan Police. It is worth noting this disagreement: how it gets played out has an enormous effect on the way in which the police, state militias, and federal troops respond to the changing conditions of the riots.

Issuing Commands to Protect Federal Property versus Commands to Quell the Riots

Some of the initial confusion was caused by the unavailability of Superintendent of Police John A. Kennedy because of his treatment at the hands of the rioters. Thomas Acton, next in line to direct the Metropolitan Police force, was unable to even order all his forces to assemble at central office until 3:00 in the afternoon of the first day. Telegraphs from the mayor to the Secretary of War in Washington were not responded to until twenty-four hours later. The governors of New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were requested for help, but their troops were also engaged on the formal Civil War battlefields. The commander of the Brooklyn Navy Yard sent marines and three howitzers, and the supervisor of West Point and a federal commander in Newark supplied what help they could. Wool and Sandford put ads in the newspapers asking ex-soldiers and volunteers to assist.

In retrospect, it is instructive to understand the role General Wool assumed as the ranking federal general on the scene. His involvement was clear early on in the riots on Monday when, unable to resort to martial law wherein the federal government would have been responsible for commanding the action, his special orders called all detachments in the harbor to report to Major-General Charles W. Sandford (head of the New York state militia) for the protection of the city. Wool had Brevet-Brigadeer General Harvey Brown in charge of all federal forts and forces in New York Harbor (including Hamilton, Richmond, Lafayette, but excluding Fort Columbus). Brown was also to report to Sandford. Brown was based at Fort Hamilton at the start of the riots and was alarmed to find that there was not enough coordination with the Metropolitan Police, in response to which he put himself in alliance with Acton at police central. Sandford considered this a form of insubordination, complained to Wool, and Wool replaced Brown with Colonel Nugent. On Tuesday morning Brown apologized and asked to be reinstated. As Wool noted that day:

I could not place him (General Brown) in command of all, and that for efficient operations a hearty co-operation of the State and United States troops and the police

must be had for putting down the mob, protecting public and private property, and the lives of the citizens threatened.³⁰²

He went on to say that:

I regret being obliged to state that he (Brown) afterwards evinced no disposition to serve under General Sandford, but actually issued orders to troops stationed at the latter's headquarters, without any reference whatever to General Sandford, which, however, were countermanded by the latter.³⁰³

Brown requested Wool to strengthen the forces being sent to help the police with the following request:

Sir, It is reported the rioters have already commenced their work of destruction. Today there must be no child's play. Some of the troops under your command should be sent immediately to attack and stop those who have commenced their infernal rascality in Yorkville and Harlem.³⁰⁴

For the duration of the riots, Brown brought what federal and state militia force he could to aid Acton and the Metropolitans in suppressing the riots.

While Sandford's and Wool's actions were directed almost exclusively at guarding the arsenals and protecting federal property (Customs House, Assay Office, Post Office, Sub-Treasury, and other properties on Wall and Pine Street), Brown collaborated with Acton to bring any and all forces available to meet rioters at Hotchkiss' shell factory, Seward's shell factory, Jackson's shell factory, the Union Steam Works, the Atlantic Dock Elevators in Brooklyn, in transporting troops and refugees, and in facing the rioters in a myriad of ways.³⁰⁵

Regiments were not ordered back from Gettysburg until July 16 and 17. By the end of Thursday, July 16, there were an additional 4,000 soldiers in the city. On Friday morning General Wool was relieved of duty, replaced by General Dix, and General Brown was relieved of duty, succeeded by General Canby. In a mysterious analysis of events offered by General Sandford on July 25, he declared that order could have been restored in the city on Tuesday *if General Brown* hadn't withdrawn detachments.

³⁰² Reports of Maj. Gen. John Z. Wool, U. S. Army, Commanding Department of the East, with orders, &c. JULY 13-16, 1863.--Draft Riots in New York City, Troy, and Boston O.R.-- SERIES I--VOLUME XXVII/2 [S# 44]. <http://www.civilwarhome.com/woolor.htm> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Cook, pp. 67, 84-103.

Brown's invaluable service, however, was backed up by the military and by the police, as evidenced by a tribute paid to him immediately after the riots, to which he responded as follows:

Gentlemen: I beg you to accept my grateful thanks for the kind and flattering letter with which you have honored me. The only merit I can claim in the performance of the duty which has given me the high distinction of your approbation, is that of an honest singleness of purpose in seconding the very able and energetic efforts of the President of the Metropolitan Police, Mr. Acton, to whom, in my opinion, more than to any other man is due the credit of the early suppression of the riot. I never for a moment forgot that to the police was confided the conservation of the peace of the City; and that only in conjunction with the city authorities, and on their requisition, could the United States forces be lawfully and properly employed in suppressing the riot, and in restoring that peace and good order which had been so lawlessly broken. Acting in accordance with this principle, and as aids to the gallant City Police, the officers and soldiers of my command performed the most unpleasant and arduous duty, with that prompt energy and fearless patriotism which may be ever expected from the soldiers of the Republic.

The close collaboration between Brown and Acton enabled them to gather their forces strategically, to enable citizen militias and volunteers to defend quieter areas, and to localize the violence by barricading what they referred to as "infected" areas. The records of the riots and continuing analysis often cite Sandford as the major force in collaborating with the police to meet the rioters. Cook's analysis, however, raises the question as to whether Brown's ability to offer the Union Army forces to the police, including those of Governors Island, may have had a larger impact on the ability of the police to finally contain the rioters.

Precautions for the Draft to Resume

In anticipation of the draft resuming on August 19, Governors Island became one of a number of important gathering point for troops. Regiments arrived from Warrenton, Virginia, on August 2 expressly to escort conscripts. The regiments included 700 men from the Thirty-seventh Massachusetts, who went to Fort Hamilton, and 500 men from the Twentieth Indiana, who went to the Battery. Four hundred men from the Fifth Wisconsin and 300 from the First Massachusetts went to Governors Island, where they pitched tents. In total, approximately 1,900 troops were sent to the island in anticipation of their need to maintain order when the draft resumed.

The Draft Resumes on August 19

General Sandford reported what happened when the draft resumed as follows:

On the 17th of August I received requisitions from the mayor of the city and the police commissioners, in apprehension of a riot on the renewal of the draft, which was appointed to take place in this city on the 19th of August, requesting me to call out the

First Division to aid the civil authorities in preserving the peace and suppressing any tumult, riot, or insurrection during the draft. In pursuance to these requisitions, the whole division was called out, and stationed by regiments and detachments in various parts of the city, from the High Bridge to the Battery, and was kept on duty until the 5th of September, and a small detachment from each regiment until the 15th of September. In consequence of this precaution, the draft proceeded without any interruption or breach of the peace.”³⁰⁶

The draft resumed on August 19. William R. Birdsall was the first name to be drawn and conscripted. Eleven hundred names were called that day. Over the next week 10,000 troops were available to meet any potential disruptions. By August 25, the draft in New York City was completed.

PRISONERS AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

Governors Island housed several categories of prisoners during the Civil War. Federal deserters were either returned to their units from Governors Island, where they were incarcerated, or court-martialed and shot. Political prisoners, spies, or residents of northern states who had been caught trying to join the southern cause were held there. Federal soldiers whose commander surrendered to the Confederates in Texas³⁰⁷, and who had sworn oaths not to take up arms against the South, arrived in 1861. Confederate officers and troops also began to arrive in 1861. Most southerners moved through Governors Island on their way to other prisons, so Governors Island served these troops as a holding area and way-station.

³⁰⁶ Report of Maj. Gen. Charles W. Sandford, commanding First Divisions, New York State National Guard, of operations June 16-July 16 including the Draft Riots in New York City. June 3-August 1, 1863 – The Gettysburg Campaign. O.R. Series 1, Volume XXVII/2 (S#44) <http://www.civilwarhome/cwsandfordor.htm> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³⁰⁷ As *The Handbook of Texas Online* notes, While the campaign for ratification of the secession ordinance was being waged in mid-February, the Committee of Public Safety assembled by the secession convention took steps to take over federal property in the state...The committee opened negotiations with Maj. Gen. David E. Twiggs, the commander of United States troops stationed in Texas. Twiggs, an aging Georgian in poor health, was awaiting orders from the War Department. On the morning of February 16, Benjamin McCulloch,, a veteran Texas Ranger and Mexican War hero and now colonel of Texas cavalry, led at least 500 volunteers into San Antonio, where they surrounded Twiggs and his headquarters garrison. Twiggs agreed to surrender all federal property in Texas and evacuate the 2,700 Union troops scattered in frontier forts throughout the state.

See *The Handbook of Texas Online*, University of Texas, Austin, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/qdc2.html> for more information (accessed December 28, 2005).

Federal Deserters

Yankee deserters were held at the prison. For example, there was Richard Holman, of the 2nd New York Cavalry, known as the "Harris Light," in honor of New York Senator Ira Harris, who helped to raise the regiment. Before the regiment left for Washington, DC, Holman returned home to marry Georgianna Overton of Yaphank. Reverend Francis Drake conducted their wedding ceremony at the Middle Island Parsonage on September 25, 1862. By leaving his company, though, Homan was charged with desertion. When he returned, the Provost Marshal arrested Holman; Major Otto Harhaus of the 2nd New York Cavalry brought these charges. Holman was sent to prison on Governors Island, where he was confined until March. All charges were eventually dropped, however, because there was insufficient evidence to bring him to trial.³⁰⁸

Bounty jumpers were imprisoned at Governors Island. Bounty jumpers, in the words of General Dix, were

...bad men, tempted by enormous bounties [to enlist], enlist into the service for the sake of making money, with the deliberate purpose of deserting, and in which the profit is proportioned to the number of successful repetitions of the crime. By common consent these infamous men are designated by the expressive appellation of 'bounty-jumpers.' They might more properly be termed traitors and public plunderers....³⁰⁹

The most famous of their number, James Devlin, was executed there on February 3, 1865. Devlin had deserted a number of companies, including the 1st Connecticut Cavalry and the 43rd New York. But it was when he deserted his wife and three children for a girlfriend that his wife turned him in, in June 1864. Devlin, who had enlisted a third time, was caught on the recruiting ship *North Carolina*, then stationed in New York Harbor, and sentenced to die. His wife then changed her mind and went to the island to plead for his release. Tearful interviews followed, to no avail and the prisoner appeared to serve out his sentence on the afternoon of February 3. As Eugene Converse Murdock told it:

Numerous delays interrupted proceedings and it was not until nearly two o'clock that the prisoner, surrounded by some four hundred soldiers, was ordered to kneel in front of his coffin down near the beach. Mrs. Devlin's screeches and moans were heard all over the island, moving everyone except the impervious husband. The court-martial sentence was read, the prisoner was blindfolded, and the preliminaries were over. At precisely two o'clock, the captain in command shouted "Ready," "Aim," and then

³⁰⁸ *Longwood's Journey*. (Web site for the community of Longwood, New York) <http://www.longwood.k12.ny.us/history/civil/homanr.htm> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³⁰⁹ Murdock, p. 106.

flourished his sword. Ten shots exploded. Devlin's body shivered momentarily and then fell heavily forward, as Mrs. Devlin continued to sob.³¹⁰

Some of the regular soldiers at Governors Island were indicted for aiding the putting through and releasing of bounty jumpers.³¹¹

“The Texans”

These Federal troops arrived from Texas in September 1861. They were only “prisoners” because when they were Yankee soldiers captured in Texas by the Confederate army, they were required to swear not to bear arms again in the conflict before they were released. Thus they could not be returned to battle, although the Army at Governors Island, in fact, sent them back as soon as the commanders could persuade the Yankee troops to break their oaths and take up arms again. They pitched their tents on the north slope of the island, the one facing New York, between Fort Columbus and Castle Williams.³¹²

Thomas Sparrow observed of these troops that they were better looking than the local recruits from New York because “the Texans” were native-born (as opposed to the large number of Federal troops who were immigrants).³¹³ By December, the Texans were deserting. The *Times* reported that “Some are missing after every payday. It is doubtful whether the authorities care much about this.” The Texans had expected to be discharged upon their arrival at Governors Island, but that did not happen. Some of the Texans who refused to return to battle ended up doing sentry duty at West Point.³¹⁴

Political Prisoners

In September 1861, twenty-five political prisoners arrived at Governors Island from Baltimore. These men had been caught heading south with a wagon having a false bottom filled with arms. They intended to join Southern forces in Virginia. They were confined without any privileges of access to the outside or any special treatment in “the east room, first floor” of the north building inside Fort Columbus, or Building 214.³¹⁵

³¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 99-100.

³¹¹ Ibid., pp. 137-140.

³¹² Thomas Sparrow Diary, p. 132. Sparrow, Thomas Papers, 1835-1871, Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ *New York Times*, December 2, 1861, p. 1.

³¹⁵ Alonzo Bell diary (M.f.P. 48.1) Office of Archives and History, Division of Historical Resources, Archives and Records, North Carolina State Archives. Transcribed by Alex Christopher Meekins.

There were also a few executions of political prisoners, and as late as 1881, soldiers believed that the ghost of one, John Yancy Beall, haunted the top of Castle Williams at midnight.³¹⁶ John Yancy Beall, of Jefferson County, Virginia, came from a respected Virginia family and had studied for three years at the University of Virginia. Early in the war, he enlisted in a Virginia regiment, but was quickly wounded in the lungs. Released from service due to this injury, he took it upon himself to procure a commission in the Confederate Navy. He proceeded to harass shipping, cut telegraph cables, and attack the Cape Charles lighthouse. Captured, he was imprisoned at Fort McHenry and when released, he made his way to the Great Lakes, where his harassment of shipping continued. He was arrested again on December 14, 1864, for attacking railroad cars near Buffalo, New York, in an attempt to free Confederate officers being transferred from Johnson's Island to Fort Warren.³¹⁷

An extraordinary group of important people, including Senators and Congressmen, petitioned President Lincoln for Beall's release and pardon.³¹⁸ General Dix, however, assured Lincoln that Beall's execution was necessary to maintain community law and order and the sentence was carried out.³¹⁹

Prisoners of War

The Civil War brought Confederate prisoners to Castle Williams and Fort Columbus.³²⁰ The first instance of prisoners-of-war being housed at Castle Williams was in 1861, early in the Civil War. For example, Captain Thomas Sparrow organized the

Thanks to Mike Shaver for the materials from the Bell and Sparrow diaries. See also HABS-HAER Report, Building No. 214.

³¹⁶ William Rideing, "Garrison Life at Governor's Island, New York Harbor." *Scribner's Magazine*, 21, no. 4 (February 1881): 598.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* The President was uninfluenced by the visits of Richard S. Spofford, Librarian of Congress; John W. Garrett, President of Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Mr. Risley, the law partner of Browning; Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania; Gov. John Andrew of Massachusetts; George W. Grafflin; and Edward Stabler, both prominent citizens of Maryland.

³¹⁹ Oddly, enough, an urban legend, later proved to have been written by Mark M. Pomeroy of *Pomeroy's Democrat* just after war's end, followed Beall's execution. The story claimed that Beall and John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, were bosom friends from school, and that Booth had been part of the attempt to persuade the President not to execute Beall. His disappointment in Lincoln's recalcitrance led to the assassination. Others mentioned in the story disputed it and by 1911, it had been proved false.

³²⁰ Sarah Weber, "Prisons and Prison Life on Governors Island," mss produced in Graduate Program in Public History, Arizona State University, spring 2003, in possession of author.

Washington Grays, a Confederate unit, in April 1861, in Washington, North Carolina. On Wednesday, August 28, Captain Sparrow was asked and volunteered the Washington Grays to man Fort Hatteras which was under attack by the Union fleet. At the conclusion of the battle in a Union victory, the Washington Grays were taken as prisoners-of-war on August 29, 1861, and transported to Governors Island. They then were moved to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor. In February 1862, the Washington Grays were exchanged and sent back to the South where they reorganized into Company K, 10th North Carolina regiment.³²¹

Enlisted Confederate troops were housed in separate quarters from Confederate officers. While Castle Williams held the enlisted troops in two casemates on the third floor near a right hand round tower,³²² the north barracks inside Fort Columbus, Building 214, housed the officers.³²³ Thomas Sparrow made detailed notes of the domestic geography of the officers.

The officers were all marched up to the interior of Fort Columbus, which is in the interior of the island. It is a bastion built of granite surrounded with a moat fifty feet wide...Around and outside of the moat or ditch is a counter scarp or breastwork & sloping outwards from this is a glacis beautifully turfed with bluegrass.

In the interior of the work are four buildings fifty feet long each having a basement & two stories facing on a square. Each building having twelve Ionic Columns & a double piassa [*sic*]. The square is divided into four grand plots by walks crossing at eight angles in the centre, where stands a pump. Shade trees surround each plot of grass so that the place has a green & cheerful aspect. The buildings are located North, South, East & West.

Quarters.

We are assigned to part of the North building, facing southward. The upper piassa overlooks a part of the bay & the upper back windows overlook N. York City, East River, Jersey City & Brooklyn.

Lower floor.

Col. Martin & Major Andrews in a small room West end. Capt. Lucius Johnson & als. The cosy [*sic*] middle room & Lt. Col. Johnston the small East room.

Upper floor.

Commodore Barron & Coln. Bradford the west end room over Col. Martin. Next to this the middle room is occupied as follows.

Capt. Thos Sparrow, chief; Capt. J.J. Cohoon; Capt. W.A. Duke; Adj. Jno W. Pool; Ordinance J.G. Carraway; Ordinance T.H. Allen; Lieut. J.T. Lassel; Lieut. J.J.

³²¹ "The Washington Grays: Company K, 10th Regiment, North Carolina State Troops, Heavy Artillery," <http://thewashingtongrays.homestead.com> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³²² Thomas Sparrow diary, p. 115.

³²³ *Ibid.*

Whitehurst; Lieut. A.J. Thomas; Lieut. A.E. Bell; Lieut. W.W. Fatherly; Lieut. F.G. Lamb; Lieut. J.W. Hoy; Lieut. J.T. Whitehead; Lieut. Pete McWilliams, waiter boy. In the last room up stairs, east, Major Gilliam, Capt. Lamb, Capt. Sharp, Lieut. Shaw & others.

The dinning[sic] room is in the basement. There are six tables with benches. We have tin plates & cups & army rations – beef, pork, potatoes & light bread, rice & beans occasionally, coffee & sugar, bread & coffee only at night.³²⁴

The *New York Times* noted that the officers brought two slaves that belonged to one of them to Governors Island.³²⁵

The Reverend Peter Whelan, Irish-born but Savannah, Georgia-based, became one of the prisoner-chaplains. Whelan had served as a defender at Fort Pulaski until Federal troops attacked on April 10, 1862. The fort surrendered two days later, and a steamer took the entire garrison, including Whelan, to Hilton Head Island. Whelan refused to be released and, with the others, was sent by ocean-going steamer to Governors Island. He lived in the barracks in Fort Columbus, walked the ramparts of the fort each morning, said Mass and then visited the enlisted men in Castle Williams, described by his biographer as “A dank, poorly ventilated, rat-infested masonry structure ill-suited to accommodate prisoners.”³²⁶ A personal request to St. Peter’s Church in the city to provide food and clothing for the men in Castle Williams produced some supplies, and a parole was granted to Whelan to live at St. Peter’s, but he refused to go and stayed with his fellow prisoners.

One immediate effect of the presence of the Confederate soldiers was that the installation was closed to outsiders. As the *New York Times* told its readers,

If New-York Harbor were blockaded there could not well be more circumspection observed at Fort Columbus than there is now. No citizen is allowed to land unless he has official business, and then care is taken that he confines his visit to the avowed object of it. Boats are not allowed to land or to leave the Island after sundown.³²⁷

³²⁴ Thomas Sparrow diary, pp. 110-114.

³²⁵ *New York Times*, November 30, 1861, p. 1. The article points out that the slaves were left on Governors Island when the Confederate officers were moved to Fort Warren. The slaves, thinking themselves prisoners, then requested that they be allowed to take an oath of allegiance. The oath was given, and the slaves released.

³²⁶ Ed Churchill, “Fr. Peter Whelan: Serving the Blue and the Gray,” Part 1 of 2: Serving Dixie at <http://www.thewildgeese.com/pages/whelan.html> (accessed December 28, 2005).

³²⁷ *New York Times*, September 28, 1861, p. 1.

At the beginning of the war, both North and South were completely unprepared for the prospect of housing prisoners. This lack of preparation resulted in horrific conditions for POWs on both sides. After the already established jails and prisons had quickly filled beyond capacity, other structures were pressed into service including coastal fortifications.³²⁸ Governors Island was only one of several such defensive locations in the New York Harbor that the North used to house Confederate soldiers. Fort Lafayette, built on a small rock island between Staten Island and Long Island, was another such makeshift prison, as was Fort Wood on Bedloe's Island, since renovated to serve as the base for the Statue of Liberty.³²⁹ Like the other locations in New York Harbor, Castle Williams quickly became overcrowded and wracked with disease.



Figure 29. Mathew Brady photograph from the Civil War period at Governors Island. Brady Collection, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860 – 1982 Still Pictures Branch, NARA II.

The first load of prisoners, including the Washington Grays, arrived by boat in the fall of 1861. They were a disheveled group, “poorly clothed, sick from the sea voyage, and suffering from exposure.” Responding to rumors of mistreatment, the United States

³²⁸ Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997), p. 9-10.

³²⁹ Speer, p. 35, 312.

Sanitary Commission President Henry Bellows paid a visit to the island to investigate. He found that the Union officers on Governors Island had been unprepared for the sudden arrival of the POWs and did not have adequate supplies of food, medicine, and blankets. Bellows acquired the necessary supplies and ensured each man had his own bed in the “spacious” casemates. He wandered among the soldiers, giving them an opportunity to air their grievances about their treatment, but the only complaint made was that they wished they had not been brought north at all. The Union surgeon on the island reported to Bellows that the hygiene of the Confederate soldiers was exceedingly poor, and Bellows had to encourage the Confederate soldiers to go outside for fresh air. However, according to historian Ernest McKay, “Bellows left the island satisfied that the Confederates were well cared for and hoping that Union prisoners received care half as good.”³³⁰

A letter to the *New York Times* in October asked for supplies for the prisoners. As “A True American” noted,

There are six hundred prisoners in Castle William [*sic*] destitute of all the comforts of life – without change of shirts or other garments, covered with vermin, and in a loathsome condition, which they have not the means of remedying. Many of these unfortunates are men of wealth – accustomed, to say the least, to the decencies of life – are now prostrated with typhoid fever, and in want of every comfort.

Besides the prisoners in Castle William, there are many others in the fort. Twelve officers, men of education and refinement, are in one room, a number in another, and several State prisoners in the closest confinement in another room – all suffering and in want, notwithstanding the kind and gentlemanly attention of the officers who have the misfortune to be their jailors.

These gentlemen – prisoners – are separated from their homes, their wives and families, and debarred from all communication with their friends. However misguided they may have been, they are our countrymen, and as such, our hearts should not be utterly closed against them....³³¹

McKay’s history about southern POWs on Governors Island reads in stark contrast to other experiences recounted by historian Lonnie Speer. Like other Civil War prisons, instances of disease in Castle Williams were widespread. Speer quotes prisoner Andrew Norman, 7th Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers on September 30, 1861: “Today 115 of the 630 are confined by disease which threatens to prostrate us all. Four of our men

³³⁰ Ernest A. McKay, *The Civil War and New York City* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990) pp. 105-106.

³³¹ “Appeal to the Humane – The Rebel Prisoners on Governor’s Island,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1861, p. 5.

have died within the past five days and many others are dangerously ill.”³³² The men were dying of measles, typhoid fever, and pneumonia.

What of the “spacious” accommodations of which Sanitary Commission President Bellows spoke? As Dr. William J. Sloan, medical director of the Federal army, reported, they did not seem to be so spacious:

[The prisoners] are crowded into an ill-ventilated building which has always been an unhealthy one when occupied by large bodies of men. There are no conveniences for cooking except in the open air, no means of heating the lower tier of the gun rooms and no privies within the area. As the winter approaches I cannot see how these 630 men can be taken care of under the above circumstances.³³³

Sloan further recommended that at least 100 of the sickest prisoners be removed to the better facilities at Fort Wood on Bedloe’s Island.³³⁴ However, even though authorities did take Sloan’s advice and began transferring prisoners in October 1861, conditions worsened in all of New York’s harbor facilities and deaths increased. Eventually, all prisoners “confined at Fort Lafayette, Governors Island, and Fort Wood were evacuated and transferred by steamer to newly converted Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.”³³⁵ But due to the lack of effective prison space and the huge number of casualties on both sides, prisons were often filled beyond capacity. For Governors Island, that meant that authorities ignored the recommendations and began filling New York Harbor facilities again.³³⁶

³³² Speer, pp. 38-39.

³³³ Ibid, p. 39.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid, p. 30.

³³⁶ Ibid, p. 39.



Figure 30. Castle Williams during the Civil War. Note the lack of a sea wall at this time. Brady Collection, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860 – 1982 Still Pictures Branch, NARA II.

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

At some point toward the end of 1865, the pace slowed. Soldiers and officers were demobilized. Excess weapons and arms piled up at the New York Arsenal on Governors Island. General Grant steamed past Governors Island on his triumphal return to New York City, and then to West Point.

The wear and tear on the island and its structures from wartime activities was profound. Brig. Gen. Henry Davis Wallen, in 1867, recently arrived from command at the Presidio in San Francisco,³³⁷ directed that the barracks be repaired and renovated. The walks were regraded and relaid. The chapel was refurbished and a slate roof replaced the old shingle roof. The *Times* noted that “several of the old buildings on the Island have been taken down,” although the story was not specific about which ones were included. The garrison library had burned in 1866, and contributions were being collected to replace it.³³⁸

In 1870, a decision was made to build a new battery on Governors Island between Castle Williams and the South Battery. The new fortification was to be unusually large,

³³⁷ Appendix C, Erwin N. Thompson, *Defender Of The Gate: the Presidio Of San Francisco. A History From 1846 To 1995*. Historic Resource Study, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, July, 1997 (Nps-330). See <http://www.nps.gov/archive/prsf/history.hrs/thmpson/thompson.htm> (accessed May 21, 2007).

³³⁸ *New York Times*, September 23, 1867, p. 5.

with a wide and deep ditch around it, and it would house thirty-six heavy guns. In addition, Building 110 at the arsenal was ordered by the Secretary of War to be built to house the excess obsolete munitions being held at Governors Island. The *New York Times* reported that it was “plain but strongly built, the material used being red brick. It is two stories high and measures 300 feet in length by 80 in depth. It will be well-lighted and will be capable of containing a large amount of war material.”³³⁹

In 1872, a reporter from the *New York Times* visited Governors Island and wrote about the experience as part of a series being produced about the harbor defenses of New York Harbor. His tour of the island revealed the post-war geography of the place. He landed at the old pier and said,

...the visitor is shown up toward the main guard-house, a large wooden structure built on a terrace, on which are placed two brass 12-pounder guns. The building contains the guard-room, post-office and the recruiting department.”³⁴⁰

The arsenal, to his right, was filled with munitions – “formidable 8 and 10-inch columbiads, and 100-pounder Parrott rifled guns are laid along the yard on tressels.” There were guns of all sizes and ages. “Huge pyramids of shot and shell are piled around, from the enormous fifteen-inch shell, weighing 320 pounds, to the diminutive one-pound ball.” The reporter also noted that the arsenal, under the Ordnance Department, was civilian-administered and observed, “it appears incongruous to have a man in a tweed suit and smoke-stack doing the honors of the ordnance yard and magazine.”³⁴¹

The tour then proceeded to Fort Columbus. The reporter noted the “dilapidated trophy of arms” over the gate. The square inside was shady,

...where the hot rays of the noonday sun cannot penetrate the thick foliage of the trees with which it is surrounded. Buildings inclose [sic] the square, the basements being used as dining-hall, kitchens, bakery, and other offices; the second floor on each side is occupied by the permanent companies and is ornamented by a handsome verandah running along the fronts....³⁴²

³³⁹ *New York Times*, September 13, 1870, p. 8. See also HABS-HAER Report, Governors Island, New York Arsenal, Storehouse, New York Harbor near Andes Road, The HABS-HAER report is, however, much less specific about the building date, since the building does not turn up on pre-1879 maps available to the researchers of the report.

³⁴⁰ *New York Times*, September 2, 1872, p. 1.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*

Standing on the top of the fort, the reporter saw that “Looking east, South Fort is beneath us, across the parade-ground, down toward those deep green trees; between the church and the cemetery, you can see the white walls of the fort.” He also notes the cemetery, “with its drooping willows and white head-stones, the latter containing many an affecting tribute from sorrowing comrades to the memory of the poor soldier who sleeps beneath....”³⁴³

The tour continued to Castle Williams. There, the reporter said that

the guns are all withdrawn from the casemates, and the fort is now used as quarters for the recruits. The upper tier has been converted into a prison for soldiers sentenced to a period of imprisonment of not less than twelve months.

He also noted that, in contrast to other parts of the island, the area around Castle Williams was “bare of timber or any cover which would interfere with the fire of the guns of Fort Columbus or give shelter to an enemy.”³⁴⁴

The new battery, which was not yet completed but was traced on the land and some of the magazines already built, stretched from Castle Williams to the South Battery (or Fort, as it is called here). It was planned to sweep the upper bay with thirty-six fifteen-inch guns. The South Fort sat on the southeastern edge of the Island. Its rear was closed by the music corps’ barracks.³⁴⁵

From the South Battery, the reporter moved past “a row of pretty frame cottages, recently erected in the rear of the fort to replace the old “Rotten-row,” the stronghold of yellow fever.” These were the first frame buildings in the present-day Nolan Park, Buildings 4 and 5. They were next to the church. The hospital with its frame additions was situated in what is now Building 9, as noted in the previous chapter. The reporter noted that the hospital was to his right as he moved through this part of the landscape. He also noted, “Here, also, is a large hall used for theatrical entertainments, which are frequently given by the amateurs of the garrison.”³⁴⁶ That building does not turn up again in the historical record.

Finally, the tour took in “the officers’ quarters and Governor’s residence”. He described them as “...all commodious and handsome buildings—each with its flower and vegetable garden, its trellised vines and odoriferous creeping plants....”³⁴⁷ It is not

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

clear whether these officers' quarters include such structures as Quarters 16, which the HABS study reported to be built in 1878-79, or whether these are earlier structures for which we have no documentation.³⁴⁸ What *is* clear is that the landscape surrounding these structures, gardens, and other kinds of vegetation is quite different from later arrangements.

The Civil War revealed one of the key ways that Governors Island would operate from the end of the Civil War to the end of its role as a military reservation. Its officers and troops maintained simultaneously a range of diverse activities—during the Civil War, those were recruiting, arming, shipping out, and shipping back of units, prisoners, and deserters; caring for the sick and wounded and, occasionally, burying the dead. During wartime, the island's physical resources were overwhelmed. Temporary lodgings and tents were erected in all available space. Docks, particularly the arsenal's dock, had to load two or three ships at a time. Food and clothing and supplies of all sorts that accompany armies to war and that support those who return came in from supply depots all over the New York area. The *New York Times* and other local newspapers tracked developments both positive and negative at the Island, exposing its management and day-to-day operations to a high level of local interest and concern. Even though the guns of Governors Island proved unnecessary for the defense of New York City or the harbor, the island was one of many active supporting players in the war effort in the harbor and in the New York region.

In contrast, the period of the 1870s and 1880s at Governors Island proved to be pleasant, and for the most part, peaceful. As a feature writer for the *New York Times* described it in 1878,

Such a deliciously dozy old kennel as the fort at Governor's[sic] Island of a Sunday afternoon is not, as a rule, to be found outside of dreamland. Sentinels, with shining bayonets peeping over their shoulders, tramp up and down before certain doors and entrances. But even they have the regular clock-work movement of so many *fantoccini*, and only serve to help out the illusion that you must be dreaming. As you sit on the veranda, and smoke and gossip with the Sergeant, an occasional glance across the water in the direction of the Battery, which is covered with moving figures, serves to convince that you are still in the waking world. There are excavated passages, beginning nowhere in particular, and leading out to a quiet lawn where a couple of cows are grazing, and there is a brown-stone liberty-cap above the entrance to the tunnel that conducts to the interior of the fortress, which you hope the enemy's guns may demolish at the first fire, it being the most abnormally ugly liberty-cap that was ever placed above a parapet for exhibition....³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Governors Island, Quarters No. 16, HABS-HAER Report.

³⁴⁹ "The Sunset Gun. Record of an Hours Lounging at Governor's Island – the Sunset Parade," *New York Times*, July 29, 1878, p. 8.

Chapter Five

GOVERNORS ISLAND AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, 1878-1917

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

When Governors Island became the headquarters for the Department of the East for the first time since the 1820s, the nature of the activities there shifted permanently. The administrative functions of a headquarters, though they became more complex over time, tended to be the same, no matter what else was happening on the military front. Whereas in the earlier periods, the themes most central to this site were involved with people moving in and out in large numbers, those that apply henceforth primarily fall under the category of “Creating Political Institutions,” as seen in the development of the administrative structures to support a modern professional army on a world stage. Because more families resided on Governors Island from this time forward, there was constant tension about creating cultural and recreational facilities with the limited money allowed by Congress. There was always a garrison there, as well as prisoners. But the number of troops decreased as the number of officers increased, and the nature of the post changed from its earlier physical patterns to accommodate these new arrangements.

Two other themes of great importance during the period discussed below were “Transforming the Environment” and the “Changing Role of the United States in the World Community.” Governors Island changed its shape as well as its military business model in this period. New landfill transformed the island and its environmental and cultural landscapes. Many different plans were made and uses proposed for it over the next thirty years. Many of the new uses for the filled landscape at Governors Island connected directly to the new role that the United States assumed as a colonial empire and a world power at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, the various headquarters that would be established on the island in the next century or so would reflect an increasing presence on the world stage for the United States Army.

HEADQUARTERS, MILITARY DIVISION OF THE ATLANTIC AND DEPARTMENT OF THE EAST

After the Civil War, Governors Island remained a recruiting depot until 1878 when it became Headquarters, Military Division of the Atlantic and Department of the East. Congress ordered the move of the HQ to Governors Island to save the government money by posting military personnel to government-owned sites rather than renting commercial property. The headquarters moved from the corner of Greene Street and Houston in New York City into the harbor.³⁵⁰

In order to make a place for the headquarters staff, all the troops on Governors Island, “except one company of infantry, the celebrated Governor’s [*sic*] Island Brass Band, and a number of mechanics and others attached to the Quartermaster’s Department,”³⁵¹ moved to a new recruiting station at David’s Island in Long Island Sound. There, the troops lived in tents for some time because housing had not been built.

At Governors Island, the cultural landscape changed dramatically. Appropriate lodging was under construction, but until the new housing was ready, General Hancock’s staff, “amounting to thirteen officers, will do the best they can,” the *New York Times* reported in July 1878.³⁵² To replace the troops who moved out, Company A of the First Artillery, from Boston Harbor, moved in to garrison the island. Building 9, the red brick two-story Greek Revival building constructed in 1839 to serve as the Post Hospital, was refurbished and reorganized to become the Headquarters building. This involved removing the temporary wooden structures that had been added to the building to expand the hospital during the Civil War, among other changes. This structure—the Block House—forms the southern end of Nolan Park. It is pictured in Chapter 3.

The Army’s cultural resources specialists generalized about Army post development in the period of the reestablishment of the Department of the East at Governors Island. As they wrote,

Starting in the late 1870s, the Army constructed new, larger, permanent installations using a higher level of planning, construction, and design. Both military and civilian architects and planners designed buildings and plans reflective of national trends. Simplified versions of Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Queen Anne styles dominate the architecture. Plans included improved water, sewage, and heating systems, and in some cases, residential areas with curvilinear street patterns reflected

³⁵⁰ “The Troops at Governor’s [*sic*] Island,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1878, p. 8.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

new suburban design. Early attempts at standardization applied mostly to frontier posts.³⁵³

As a consequence of the administrative changes, the post received a major upgrade. New quarters were built and old buildings were removed. Such reorganization meant that housing for officers was more in demand, and housing for enlisted men was needed less. This change also created the “village” that Governors Island was particularly noted for. The Nolan Park housing—the area was called “the Green” in the nineteenth century—is a particular example of this architectural and landscape aesthetic to accommodate officers and their families.



Figure 31. Building 16, Officers' Quarters, Nolan Park. HABS-HAER Report.

Buildings 6-8, 10, and 14-18 were built for these officers. The description of all of them in the 1985 HABS-HAER report said that each building was a “two-and-a-half story T-shaped twin Victorian Vernacular style house wood frame construction on

³⁵³ US Army Environmental Center, Cultural Resources chart, <http://aec.army.mil/usaec/cultural/millatab.doc> (accessed December 28, 2005).

painted brick foundation walls with exterior clapboards.”³⁵⁴ They sat on the east side of the Green, on the Buttermilk Channel side. Building 11, a small, one-story wood frame house set on a high brick basement, was built in 1878 as quarters for the hospital steward. That house sat on the southern periphery of Nolan Park.

Another change involved transportation to the island, since ease of movement to and from the HQ required an upgraded service. Timely ferry service was established, and

the ugly little tug that formerly carried passengers at 15 cents a head has been replaced with a handsome little craft, with a neat cabin, cozily fitted up, and heated by steam, and the 15-cents fare has been abolished.”³⁵⁵

The landing site on the Manhattan end of the ferry was upgraded and enhanced utilities, including a gas line to power outdoor lighting, and city water were provided.³⁵⁶ “With these improvements carried into effect,” noted a *New York Times* reporter,

no pleasanter lounging-place of a Summer twilight can well be imagined than the pretty but ample green between the fort and the row of light villa structures that have lately been erected for officers’ quarters.³⁵⁷

By 1881, an article in *Scribners Magazine*³⁵⁸ noted that

several tasteful cottages have been built for the staff officers, and the grounds are now as carefully cultivated as when the old colonial governors smoked their after-dinner pipes and lived in agreeable ease on the pretty little island.³⁵⁹

Nannies for the children paraded along the seawall and

the children are omnipresent, and their amusements reflect the military bent given to their fancies by the surroundings. There are enough toy drums, trumpets, cocked hats and wooden cavalry-horses to stock a shop.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁴ HABS-HAER Report.

³⁵⁵ “Improving a Pleasant Resort. Benefiting Governor’s Island – The Changes Made and Intended,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1879, p. 12.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ *Scribners Magazine*, February 1881, pp. 593-602.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 602

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 599

The commander of Governors Island in this period was Major General Winfield Scott Hancock. Known as “Hancock the Superb,” he was a professional soldier and Civil War hero, and was named to command the Division of the Atlantic on November 25, 1872. The Command, which was responsible for New England, the Great Lakes region, the Middle Atlantic States and Washington was divided into two parts. The Atlantic Division commander also led the Department of the East until October 1873, when it and the Department of the Lakes were abolished and those responsibilities given to the Division of the Atlantic. Hancock’s biographer noted that the command of the Division of the Atlantic “was not, under most circumstances, an onerous one.”³⁶¹

Like Dwight Eisenhower and a number of other nineteenth and twentieth-century American Army generals, Hancock, in addition to being the Commander at Governors Island, was a contender for the U.S. presidency—for Hancock, three times between 1868 and 1880. He was actually nominated on the Democratic ticket in 1880, losing to James A. Garfield by a small margin of votes. He ran his entire campaign almost as a stealth candidate by modern standards: he continued to work at Governors Island as the ferry daily brought more and more reporters, political operatives and spoils seekers to the commandant’s house. No evidence indicated that Hancock considered resignation from active duty or taking a leave of absence. In the history of Governors Island, this period most directly linked the worlds of national politics and military service in a relationship that would be surprising at a later period. Hancock did not campaign and when he was defeated by just over 7,000 votes, continued his life and administrative duties without pause at Governors Island.³⁶²

General Hancock was as interested as General Winfield Scott, the commander he was named for, in making the Army a more social and intellectual organization. He encouraged the founding of the Governors Island Officers Club. In 1879, he directed the establishment of an Officers Mess in South Battery, presumably moving the officers out of the basement dining room inside Fort Columbus, and the music boys who had lived in the South Battery, elsewhere. Customs associated with the Officers Mess grew until 1881, when a club was formally organized with the adoption of a Constitution and Bylaws.

The Military Service Institution also was established during this period. In June 1884 it was incorporated for “literary, historical and scientific purposes and by the establishment of a museum, publishing of essays, etc., to promote the military interests of the United States.” An editorial in the *New York Times* hoped

³⁶¹ David M. Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier’s Life*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 236.

³⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 255-309.

That no man whose inflamed imagination sees monarchy and despotism in our skeleton Army will be alarmed to find that the officers of the military service have organized an association. This is the era of co-operation and associated effort, and the "Military Service Institution," which has just completed its organization, promises to be one of the most useful of its kind. The purposes of the society are the advancement of military science and professional unity by means of correspondence, debate, and the discussion and reading of papers bearing upon appropriate topics. A museum and library is to be established, a beginning in this direction being already made. The headquarters of the organization are at present located on Governor's Island, New-York Bay. The usefulness of this society ought to be very great....³⁶³

General Hancock was the first president. Major accomplishments of the institution were the publication of the *Military Service Institution Journal* and the establishment of a museum. The journal, edited by Brigadier General Theodore R. Rodenbough and later by Brigadier General James N. Allison, was a highly respected military publication. Because of the establishment of various other Service journals and increased printing costs, the publication was discontinued near the beginning of World War I.³⁶⁴

General Hancock died in Building 2, the Commandant's House, on February 9, 1886. Four days later, 114 soldiers lined up outside and carried the coffin to the government steamer, *Chester A. Arthur*. A cannon at Castle Williams fired a steady beat of once a minute as the steamer crossed through dense fog and landed at the barge office. Services were held at Trinity Church and the chaplain from the Trinity Church branch at Governors Island was one of two officiants. The church was completely full and the citizens of New York City lined the streets. After the service, the casket was returned to the barge office to begin the trip to its final destination in Norristown, Pennsylvania. The guns at Castle Williams fired again.³⁶⁵

CHANGES IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

The return of a major headquarters to Governors Island marked the final transition of the post from a harbor fortification that was a headquarters in the 1820s to an administrative center in the 1870s. That role continued as a major part of the military activities at Governors Island until the U.S. Coast Guard left the Island in 1998.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Editorial Article, *New York Times*, December 2, 1878, p. 8.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.; "Winfield Scott Hancock (1824-1886)" www.civilwarhome.com/hanbio.htm (accessed December 28, 2005).

³⁶⁵ Jordan, pp. 1-2.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, Chapter 6.

As post administrative activities expanded, more housing was built. Building 19, for example, was a duplex on the west side of the Green. The HABS-HAER Report described it as a

Two-family, two-story with attic Victorian Frame construction with wood frame on brick foundation walls. Clapboarded. Cross-shaped in plan, 1 story octagonal wings added to north and south (?) sides, and garages on west. This building forms the west side of Nolan Park. Built in 1891 as a double unit for Company Officers quarters. Additions date to 1902.



Figure 32. Building 19, a duplex built to standard plans. HABS-HAER Report.

Preservationist Kevin Norton noted that the *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form* for Governors Island recognizes a distinctive group of officers' quarters, known collectively as Regimental Row (also known as Brick Row). These sat on the south-southwest side of the island, facing the water. Built between 1893 and 1910, they are "similar in style and detail" because they were built according to a standard set of plans being used by the Army nationally, a product of its western military campaigns against Native Americans. With the conclusion of the Civil War, the Army turned its attention to the west and a policy of expansion and subjugation in which

immediate implementation was deemed essential, but also tempered by budget constraints imposed by the cost of the Civil War.³⁶⁷



Figure 33. Building 403, Brick Row, built 1903-04 to standard plans. HABS-HAER Report

The standard Quartermaster plans that emerged from this policy attempted to address speed and cost by eliminating the need for architects and engineers and achieving savings through the efficiency and replication of standardization. To this end, the Army created a set of plans for a variety of different buildings that could, theoretically, be used in any setting and adapted to local materials and, occasionally, current styles through the use of ornamentation. Of the standard designs, the duplex was the most common and, as such, can be seen at such distinct and distant locations as Governors Island and the Presidio in San Francisco. Its legacy is also lasting and reflected throughout military housing in the twentieth century.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Kevin Norton, paper for HIS 526, Historic Preservation for Historians, spring semester 2003. Graduate Program in Public History, Arizona State University. Mss. in possession of the author.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*



Figure 34. Building 20, finished in 1902, was the last house built on Nolan Park. Originally built for one family, it was later modified to house two. HABS-HAER Report.

Other buildings were adapted and reused. By 1871, the complex of shops that had served Governors Island in the 1840s and 50s had been converted to the Ordnance Sergeant's quarters. The complex was removed, however, by 1879. Building 104, which had been constructed as an ordnance storehouse for the New York arsenal in 1850, was converted to a museum in 1882, when it was loaned to the Military Service Institute.

In 1878, Building 298, which is the extensively changed and enlarged South or Half-Moon Battery, was adapted to the new social arrangements at Governors Island by becoming the Officers Mess Hall and, additionally, the Catholic Chapel. The first incinerator in the United States was built on Governors Island in 1885.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Benjamin Hershkowitz, "Analysis Of The Household Waste Exclusion For Municipal Solid Waste Incinerator Ash--42 U.S.C. § 6921(I)," Footnote 15, *New York University Environmental Law Journal*, (1993) <http://www.law.nyu.edu/journals/envtllaw/issues/vol2/1/2nyuelj84.html>. This story is repeated continuously in the popular history of Governors Island, but the information to explain why it was built on Governors Island appears to be missing (accessed December 28, 2005).

GOVERNORS ISLAND ARSENAL

In 1867, the facilities included several ordnance storehouses, an ammunition storehouse, commandants' quarters, stables and several shot and storage areas. A report from 1870 noted that Brevet Colonel T.T.S. Laidley, Lieutenant Colonel of Ordnance, was the arsenal post commander. At that time, there were two sets of quarters, both for officers; there were no quarters for troops. There was neither storehouse for quartermasters' stores nor commissary stores, so the arsenal staff used the general commissary and quartermaster of Fort Columbus for supplies and uniforms. There was no separate hospital for the arsenal. A guard-house, a light frame building twelve feet square stood there, as did a "substantial' brick stable for three yoke of oxen, and a frame octagonal wood building with four stalls accommodate [*sic*] the public oxen and private horses and cows of the officers."³⁷⁰ Fuel and forage came from New York City and water came from wells and cisterns.



Figure 35. Building 140 is in the center of the photograph, next to the ferry slip. HABS-HAER Report.

Building 110 was built into the hillside of the north waterfront between to house obsolete Civil War munitions for the New York Arsenal, reprising the original movement of arms and ammunition from New York City to the island that began in the 1820s. Building 140 was raised on the site of the old shot and shell yard to help house the

³⁷⁰ United States. Army. Quartermaster's Dept. *Description of Military Posts and Stations in 1871*. (Washington, DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1872), p. 151.

enormous numbers of obsolete weapons and ammunition that had been returned to New York from posts all over the country to be sold as surplus materials.

By the end of the 1890s, the Governors Island Arsenal held little material that was immediately useable for the work of the other forts in New York City. The arsenal's primary function was to store obsolete materials. The Army began to contemplate moving the arsenal as part of a general rethinking of functions on Governors Island. In 1901, in response to a request from Washington for a yearly budget, the commander of the arsenal told his superiors that he could not make an estimate for repairs for that year. Higher management levels in the Army wished to expand the number of troops stationed on Governors Island. According to a newspaper clipping he enclosed, the arsenal was going to lose ground and buildings in the new arrangements at Governors Island. He advised his superiors that the arsenal should perhaps begin to look for a new home.³⁷¹

CASTLE WILLIAMS AS A PRISON

After the war ended, Castle Williams continued to be used as a military prison, but at that time, mostly for minor offenders. An 1881 *Scribners Monthly* magazine article by William H. Rideing gives an idyllic account of the life of a prisoner on Governors Island. He writes:

The prisoners are not deprived of sunshine and cannot complain of austere treatment. They are employed about the grounds of the fort, and though they are guarded in deference to the military code by a soldier with loaded musket and revolver, they usually find so much fellow-feeling in him that their industry is not overtaxed.³⁷²

The author goes on to describe the unhurried, relaxed way that prisoners went about their work as if they were merely part of the congenial landscape, writing "that if the men had been more energetic they would have not harmonized as well with the peaceful scene."³⁷³ According to Rideing, the prisoners could not have asked for better accommodations. Their view of Staten Island from their cells was lovely, they all had Bibles and prayer books, and "a superabundant assortment of sensational periodicals" and time for playing cards.³⁷⁴ By the 1890s, Castle Williams was a full-fledged prison,

³⁷¹ The clipping is from *The World*, March 25, 1901.

³⁷² Rideing, p. 596.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

armed with a few obsolete guns used for firing the sunrise and sunset guns, as well as for ceremonies.

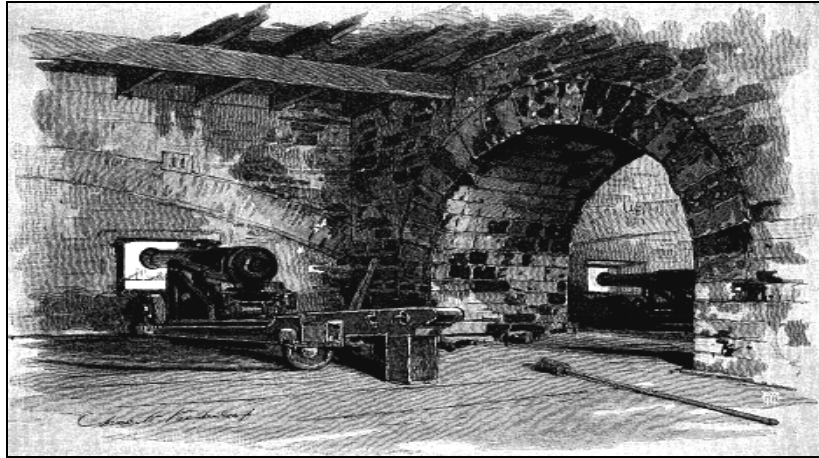


Figure 36. Casemates in Castle Williams used as cells, 1880s. William H. Rideing, "Garrison Life At Governor's Island, New York Harbor." *Scribners Monthly* 21, no. 4 (February 1881).



Figure 37. Prisoners in Castle Williams, 1880s. William H. Rideing, "Garrison Life At Governor's Island, New York Harbor." *Scribners Monthly* 21, no. 4 (February 1881).

The Spanish-American War of 1898 changed the way that Castle Williams could house and care for prisoners. Like all wars in the history of Governors Island, the Spanish-American War taxed the island to the utmost. In the autumn of 1898, the Adjutant General authorized the hire of a building in New York City that could be used by those sick and wounded who came back from the fighting. New York harbor was the first drop-off point for troop ships returning to the U.S. from Cuba and Puerto Rico. But because no suitable and affordable building surfaced in an extensive search in the city,

the commander of Governors Island recommended that Castle Williams be renovated so as to house convalescents and prisoners.³⁷⁵

In order to house both prisoners being transferred to Fort Leavenworth or back to their own commands, and the injured, Castle Williams was renovated extensively. The plan of the second tier of the building showed how domesticated the fort would become. Starting from the southwest opening in the castle walls, the plans show casemates renovated into a guardroom and a wash room. Further along and next to the wash room was a kitchen. The dining room was next to that, further along the circle.

Approximately half of the second tier was given over to casemates and open cell spaces with barred windows; these appear to have been a large open space shaped as the original gun emplacements would have been shaped and were likely the barracks for the general group of prisoners. This area was not accessed by either of the circular staircases. The final quarter of the second tier was the Post Exchange, accessed by one of the circular staircases, and with the porch running in front of it.³⁷⁶ The plans allowed for the housing of about four hundred soldiers. .

By July 1898, the prison was full. This function for Castle Williams interfered with some of its other duties. As a letter dated July 28, 1898, from post commander to the Chief of Ordnance states:

I have the honor to request that four 3.2 inch breech loading rifles be furnished this post for saluting purposes. Fort Columbus is designated as the saluting post in New York Harbor, saluting is done with twenty 32 pdrs, and eight inch Rodmans, which are old guns in Castle Williams, requiring 144 men to properly man them.

Owing to the large number of prisoners confined at this post, and the large guard to insure their safe keeping while at work, together with the same size of the garrison renders it difficult to produce the requisite number of men to return a salute to a foreign man of war in proper time.

For the above reasons, the return salute from this post has sometimes been unavoidably delayed. This delay would not occur were the breech loading guns requested be furnished to this post.³⁷⁷

Because of the press of arriving troops to be housed in the building, other functions of the castle were curtailed within the next several years, to the dismay of some, including the Keeper of the Governors Island Light. As he wrote plaintively,

³⁷⁵ RG 92, Entry 89, packet #84234, Commander, Governors Island to the Adjutant General, December 12, 1898, 3 pages, NARA I.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Press copy 3 of RG 393, entry 3, vol. 1 of 4), NARA I.

I very respectfully inform you that the place where I stored my oil and other Light-House property in one of the basements of Castle Williams, I cannot use it any longer, for the reason, that they are making alterations in the Castle and every basement is going to be occupied, consequently there will be no place to hold my property.

The bell house is so small that, I can scarcely turn round. I cannot store anything in it. I would respectfully suggest that a small house be built close to the bell house for use as [*sic*] store room. Next week when I have to remove the oil out of the Castle, I will have to leave it exposed to the weather, as there is no storage room at the post.³⁷⁸

An interesting observation in passing was that in a letter dated November 20, 1902, talking about the fog horn and light that marks the bulkhead, the author comments that the light keeper rowed over every night from Brooklyn because the Governors Island commander did not want a boat docked at the island, fearing the escape of prisoners.

Two months later, the query went through the rounds and the Secretary of the Treasury asked the Secretary of War to let the lighthouse keeper store his supplies in Castle Williams. The reply:

As the Castle is being fitted up as a model prison, I would not deem it advisable to use any part of same for storing property of any kind which would necessitate giving entry to persons not connected with the prison.

Signed Saml. R. Jones, Major and Quartermaster, USA³⁷⁹

Rideing's article about Governors Island, especially the portion on the prisoners, is somewhat idealized.³⁸⁰ The reality of life for prisoners would change during the next few decades as Progressive Era reform movements swept the country. For prisoners at Castle Williams, at least from the authorities' perspectives, prison life promised great opportunity for the betterment of its inhabitants.

During the last few decades of the nineteenth and the opening decades of the twentieth centuries, benevolent and philanthropic-minded men and women turned their attention towards curing the ills of society through new reform ideologies. Many focused on prisons and asylums in order to promote change. According to historian

³⁷⁸Thomas Bulfin, Keeper, Governors Island Light to the Light-House Inspector, January 31st, 1903, RG 77, Records of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Entry 103, letter #46170/2, NARA I.

³⁷⁹This is on an endorsement, not a letter or memo. All in 46170, *ibid*, NARA I.

³⁸⁰Sarah J. Weber wrote this section on prisons in the Progressive Era in her paper for HST 526, *Historic Preservation for Historians* in 2003. I am grateful to her for allowing me to use this material. Sarah J. Weber, "Prison Life at Governors Island," paper for HST 526, Graduate Program in Public History, Arizona State University. Mss in possession of the author.

David J. Rothman, “Progressives aimed to understand and cure crime, delinquency, and insanity through a case-by-case approach.”³⁸¹

To Progressives, the assumption that all deviants were of a single type and should be rehabilitated through a single program was absurd. Instead, they believed that in order to restore the deviant mind, one had to “understand the life history of each offender or patient and then to devise a remedy that was specific to the individual.”³⁸² Two schools of thought developed as to the best way to rehabilitate: understanding the deviant’s environment and understanding the deviant’s psyche.³⁸³ Applications of these schools of thoughts to prisons during the Progressive Era ranged from sterilization to Christianization to physical beatings.

New York State was one of the most active in the prison reform movements, or as historian Blake McKelvey called it, “the cradle for the adult reformatory.”³⁸⁴ As early as 1844, intellectuals and humanitarians within the state organized the New York Prison Association, in order to curb prison brutalities.³⁸⁵ During the Progressive Era, reformers called upon the association to “father diverse theories and programs.”³⁸⁶

Although a military, not a state or federal, prison, some of the same kinds of reforms can be seen at Castle Williams on Governors Island during the Progressive Era. Governors Island became the Atlantic Branch of the Fort Leavenworth Disciplinary Barracks in 1915, while Alcatraz Island off the coast of San Francisco was the Pacific Branch. Two reports generated from Governors Island by the Captain of the Infantry, K. T. Smith, in 1915 and 1916 suggest that Castle Williams had changed quite a bit since its Civil War days. The reports also give insight into the impact that progressive ideologies had on prisons in America. Based on the reports, the emphasis on prisoners at Governors Island was definitely reform and restoration. As Smith wrote in his 1916 report,

³⁸¹ David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. 5.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Our chief desire has been to place a sense of responsibility upon the inmates, so that they will thoroughly understand why the Government sends them here—that is, to make them better citizens or soldiers.³⁸⁷

Smith's reports are generally fiscal in nature, giving a financial statement about the costs of housing inmates. However, other information can be gleaned from these reports, particularly the authorities' perception of effective ways to reform criminals. Most of the criminals housed in Castle Williams during this early period of time had committed only minor offenses. In the 1915 report, 163 out of the 257 prisoners were interred for desertion, and most men served a year or less for their crimes.³⁸⁸

While on the island, prison authorities made efforts to make respectable men out of the prisoners. For example, prisoners went to night school to learn basic skills like reading, spelling, and arithmetic. Also, prisoners were often employed to do the teaching and by the time the next report in 1916, authorities recognized the need for a stable schoolteacher other than the inmates because of their frequent turnover.³⁸⁹ Moreover, the prisoners had access to a library room, and several women from New York City had taken special interest in donating "high-class" books.³⁹⁰

In addition to education, prison officials emphasized vocational training for each prisoner in order to provide them with a means to support themselves after they were released, for the ultimate goal in most progressive prisons was parole. Progressives hoped to be able to return prisoners to civilized society, having provided them with a means to sustain themselves. Authorities at Castle Williams were no different in this respect. Vocational work on the island included jobs such as barbers, carpenters, canners, firemen, laundrymen, painters, tailors, cooks, clerks, laborers, messengers, waiters, weavers, and librarians.³⁹¹ To ensure that inmates received employment after they left the prison, if they decided not to re-enlist, the prison set up an employment bureau to assist paroled prisoners. To the Progressives, stable employment insured that prisoners did not become a "burden or menace to the community."³⁹²

³⁸⁷ K. T. Smith, "Annual Report of the Atlantic Branch, United States Disciplinary Barracks, Governors Island, N.Y." Governors Island, NY: Office of the Commandant, 1916, p. 11.

³⁸⁸ K. T. Smith, "Annual Report of Atlantic Branch, United States Disciplinary Barracks, Governors Island, N.Y." Governors Island, NY: Office of the Commandant, 1915, p. 100.

³⁸⁹ Smith, 1916, p. 18.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Smith, 1915, p. 94.

³⁹² Smith, 1916, p. 19.

Another important part of prisoner reform was Christianity. The majority of prisoners were Catholic so a priest came to the island every week from New York City to perform religious services. While church attendance was not compulsory, all men were encouraged to attend. Smith noted in his 1915 report that the lack of a full time chaplain stationed on the island was a problem. Thus, in 1916, the island received a full time chaplain whose duties included, in part, entrance interviews, religious services, oversight of the school and library, supervision of correspondence and visits, entertainment, and biographical records.³⁹³

Other improvements that the prison authorities implemented between the 1915 and 1916 reports were the initiation of family visits to the island, the increase in correspondence, and the removal of identification numbers on the prisoners' clothing in order to "build self-respect" and so that the prisoners "may not be handicapped by a feeling of shame and inferiority."³⁹⁴ The change most indicative of progressive ideologies was in the training of the guards. Smith wrote in 1916:

In line with general progressiveness in the method of handling prisoners, our overseers and guards have been educated to a policy which, it is believed, is more fruitful of good results than the unbending harshness which was formerly pursued when handling prisoners at work. It is our experience that a prisoner who is treated as a man will be more manly; if he is led, he will follow; if driven, he will usually balk.³⁹⁵

Another example of progressive treatment of prisoners can be seen in the kind of entertainment allowed for the prisoners. Inmates formed various sports teams, such as soccer and baseball, and played against civilian teams from New York Harbor. They also put on vaudeville performances and purchased a Victrola with the income they were allowed to keep from taking in laundry.³⁹⁶ They were also provided films. Most remarkably, the prisoners produced their own weekly newspaper called *The Castle*, comprised of news articles about happenings within the barracks, poems and articles by the prisoners, and editorials by the chaplain. Authorities believed that the newspaper assisted in reforming the prisoners because "every article deals with matter which is helpful to [the] inmates and which tends to direct their ambitions toward doing their

³⁹³ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

³⁹⁶ Smith, 1915, p. 93.

duties as men and citizens.”³⁹⁷ It also allowed prisoners to gain vocational training in typesetting, printing, and editing.

It is evident from Smith’s two reports that the authorities on Governors Island intended to reform their prisoners in order to make them productive citizens or soldiers. They encouraged religion, required vocational training, and allowed entertainment. Based on the two reports, authorities made improvements to the prison within the space of only one year. Clearly, the progressive ideas of social improvement were at work in the disciplinary barracks on Governors Island.

³⁹⁷Smith, 1916, p. 19.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTESTED GROUND: DEBATING USE AND CONTROL OF GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1888-1938

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

From the point of view of the U.S. Army, Governors Island at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth was a useful installation. Placed close to a major city in an important harbor setting, the island's location made relationships between city leaders, economic achievers and military officers as easy and nearly equal as possible. In the nineteenth century, the military use and transformation of Governors Island and the other installations around New York Harbor provided the community with an armed presence and was, thus, valuable to city leaders and politicians.

But one aspect of the island's history in this period addresses a different set of themes from both earlier and later chapters. In the following pages, the themes of "Shaping the Political Landscape," "Developing the American Economy," "Transforming the Environment," and the "Changing Role of the United States in the World Community" come into play. The discussion here centers on the notion of ownership of what had become a very valuable and well-placed piece of real estate. As New York and its surrounding communities became increasingly urbanized, the search for land for recreation and economic development of various sorts became acute. The question of "best use" became pressing with a large immigrant community living in tenements, thriving businesses that now operated on a national basis, and a growing population. Commuters on the Staten Island ferries and other water-borne transportation saw the military installation regularly, but were rarely allowed to visit. Progressive-era planners desired to create a gateway to New York City that reflected the city's importance and culture and Governors Island appeared to be the perfect spot. This chapter, thus, examines Governors Island for its civilian potential rather than its military presence.

Over the period of fifty years from 1888 to 1928, no military battles were fought on Governor's Island, but an almost constant series of political skirmishes were fought over

its appropriate use.³⁹⁸ These all concerned one central question: should Governors Island be solely for and in the control of the U.S. army or were there legitimate supplementary or alternative uses dictated by the needs of the growing and changing city of New York, its immediate and watchful neighbor?

During the period 1888-1938, the military defended its right to continuous and exclusive use of Governors Island. The first of the two challenges, during the period 1880-1900, were moves to use portions of the island to accommodate an immigration processing station and then a public park. Not only were these moves defeated, but also, by 1902, the army drew up plans to double the size of the island and proffered a master plan to accommodate a larger military presence with exclusive use of the island. During the second phase, in the 1920s and 1930s, there were plans to use a portion of the island as an air terminal for New York City. Not only were these suggestions all defeated, but, by 1928, the army constructed a building large enough to accommodate an entire regiment, diagonally across where the planned landing strip would have gone. Further efforts to use the island for passenger flights in the 1930s were no more successful.

New York City, during this period, was undergoing rapid social, economic, and political change and new ideas were emerging about city parks, land use and management, preservation, transportation, and regional planning. As a consequence, the city commenced a series of challenges to the military's continued and exclusive use of Governors Island. This story of challenge and counter claim is, then, in large part, a story of a new New York City.

While most of the historic resource survey draws on military records to document changes over time, this particular chapter relies primarily on coverage by the press (specifically the *New York Times*) to document the variety of uses proposed for the island. Although the military successfully defended its right to occupy this valuable real estate in the increasingly busy harbor from 1888 to 1938, it is instructive to see the series of changing, but continuous, pressures to cede part or all of the island back to the city. As the population of the city grew and the density of lower Manhattan increased, all of the islands that ring the city were, from time to time, scrutinized for new uses. Governors Island, because of its close proximity to lower Manhattan, was eyed to serve changing needs, including immigration processing, hospitals, parks, and airports. Dreamers, politicians, city planners, and others proposed new and diverse uses for the island, but the military was able to counter these proposals by insisting the island was essential for army purposes, either to defeat foreign invasion or to quell domestic riotous behavior.

The *New York Times* coverage of Governors Island reveals that the island was considered a part of the general story of New York, and therefore day-to-day operations

³⁹⁸ Nancy Dallett wrote this chapter. Mss. in the possession of the author.

and possible future uses on the island were regularly reported. Military records reveal that while New York City might have thought it within its rights to consider municipal uses of the island, the military constantly resisted any erosion of their total control. Regardless of the size of the land requested for use by the city, the military never gave an inch and always insisted on total and exclusive use and control. In addition to the specifics of the periodic tussles over land use and access, this investigation yields information about the more subtle and changing relationships among the federal government and New York State and City regarding how they perceived the role of the military.

When Daniel Patrick Moynihan introduced legislation in Congress in the 1990s to return Governors Island to New York City, his efforts joined a long list of attempts to revise ownership and land use on Governors Island. Visitors to the new National Park and the other city-owned and operated portions of the island will be on land with a history best characterized as “contested terrain.” This chapter is the story of the changing ideas and debates about how Governors Island served the needs of the nation and the city.

GOVERNORS ISLAND AS THE SITE FOR A WORLDS FAIR, A PALACE OF SILVER, AND OTHER HAPPENINGS, BOTH IMAGINED AND REAL

Governors Island was often in the news in the 1880s and 1890s, on topics as varied as fishing conditions, proposed events on the island, social gatherings, winter weather, and military maneuverings. For instance, each spring the *New York Times* alerted anglers about runs of striped bass, blue fish, and weak fish in fishing season, as well as general alerts about icy impassable conditions in winter. Periodically, people suggested new uses for the island, such as in 1889 when it was suggested as the site for the 1892 World’s Fair and opinions ranged from, “... the very great place for the great exposition” to “... too small for the great show” (“Will Governors Island Do? It Is Discussed As A Possible Site For The World’s Fair”)³⁹⁹ and in 1895 when Robert Flaherty proposed to erect a palace made of silver bullion on the island in which a musical exhibition and festival would be held in 1900 to celebrate the opening of the twentieth century (“For A Palace Of Silver, Robert Flaherty’s Plan To Use The Bullion In The Treasury”).⁴⁰⁰

Governors Island was also in the news for special events such as the Carlisle School Indians who gave a concert on the Island (“Carlisle School Indians Here, They Inspect

³⁹⁹ *New York Times*, August 7, 1889, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁰ *New York Times*, September 28, 1895, p. 16.

the Statue of Liberty and Make a Call at Governors Island”⁴⁰¹ and for mishaps (“Lieut. Wise’s Escape, His Kite Broke As He Prepared To Ascend, An Experiment Yesterday At Governors Island With Man-Carrying Kites Which Might Have Ended Disastrously, The Lieutenant Had Just Seated Himself In The Chair When The Contrivance Broke, The Principle Involved”).⁴⁰²

The papers also covered the army activities of the island on a regular basis. Although Governors Island served as the Headquarters of the Division of the Atlantic under command of General Winfield Scott Hancock as of 1878, the days when it played a significant strategic role to combat military invasion were over and the press coverage was therefore quite routine.⁴⁰³ Coverage included the comings and goings of the Generals on the Island (“Gen. Miles to Succeed Gen. Howard”);⁴⁰⁴ attempts by prisoners to escape the island (“Eight Foiled Deserters, An Attempt to Escape from Governors Island”);⁴⁰⁵ contracts for provisions for the island, including fraudulent contracts (“Say Ryan Is a Fraud, He Gives Bogus Orders for Ham, Glass, and Coffins for Governors Island”)⁴⁰⁶ or more legitimate contracts for new mounts and rifles (“Big Army Contract To Be Let, Buffington-Crozier Mount Will Accommodate Ten-Inch Rifles, Carriage Operates By Hydraulic Power”);⁴⁰⁷ and the use of Governors Island troops to quell civil disturbances such as in the 1894 Pullman riots (“General Howard Is Prepared, In An Hour, He Says, He Could Mass Six Near-By Troops”).⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰¹ *New York Times*, April 14, 1894 p. 9.

⁴⁰² *New York Times*, October 21, 1896 p. 1.

⁴⁰³ Dupuy, *Governors Island 1637-1936*.

⁴⁰⁴ *New York Times*, February 24, 1894 p. 9.

⁴⁰⁵ *New York Times*, March 3, 1896 p. 7.

⁴⁰⁶ *New York Times*, May 22, 1893 p. 7:

“Major” Ryan, who is well known to the officials on Governors Island and the officers on the dock at the Battery, has been playing one of his old games during the past few days by ordering large supplies for the island from dealers in this city, and then obtaining small loans by way of commission ... the old man is regarded as a crank by those who know him around the Battery. His only title to any rank in the army is that he served under Gen. Scott in Mexico as a bugler. He was arrested and sent to the penitentiary some years ago for similar transactions, and the police are anxious to discover his whereabouts.

⁴⁰⁷ *New York Times*, November 24, 1894 p. 8.

⁴⁰⁸ *New York Times*, July 9, 1894 p. 3. The article quotes Gen. Howard as saying, So the strikers did not avail themselves of an opportunity to meet George M. Pullman’s representative and arbitrator. That reflects on the strikers – especially on their good faith. As for the department, we are quiet, but busy, and ready for any emergency. New York is

From time to time there were articles that extolled the significance of the one-of-a-kind resources on Governors Island and recommendations that they be made available to a larger number of New York City residents and visitors. One such occasion was reported on October 29, 1893, when a *New York Times* article introduced readers to the Military Service Institute, which was headquartered on the island and had a collection of war relics. The article went on to suggest the treasures be relocated to the New York Historical Society building at Eleventh Street and Second Avenue. According to the article, the Military Service Institute's collection should be seen by large numbers of people to, "... inculcate patriotic pride by the exhibition of trophies won by United States soldiers." New York City was deemed the proper place for exhibition of the collection because, "... here it would be viewed by thousands of visitors as one of the sights of the city, and have a chance to instill that patriotic pride without which recruits cannot be obtained for the army in times of national danger." The island museum eventually went to the Smithsonian.⁴⁰⁹

The proximity of military operations on the nearby islands to New York City was also cause for concern. An 1889 article ("An Island of Explosives, Where the Navy Stores Its Gunpowder, Big Magazines on Ellis Island in New York Bay, Precautions Against Accidental Explosives") pointed out that, "The empty shells are sent to Ellis Island from the projectile depot on Governor's [*sic*] Island, and all the loading has to be done in the shops adjoining the magazines."⁴¹⁰

In addition to concern about the dangerous military operations in proximity to large populations, there is evidence that there was a serious rethinking of how the islands

safe ... A policeman's buttons have some effect, a militiaman's uniform tells on a mob, but for a first-class incentive to run, commend me to a company of Uncle Sam's boys out for business.

⁴⁰⁹ *New York Times* October 29, 1893 p. 17. According to the article, The Military Service Institution published the *Military Service Institution Journal* every two months, which has original articles upon military matters of every kind and news of the army movement of the world. As a military publication it compares favorably with the best published and its wide usefulness is beyond question. In other countries it is accepted as the authoritative military journal of the United States, and it has done much to show that our officers have a real military talent and are well posted in all progress in military matters. General Sheridan's Horse, Winchester, along with the other Revolutionary and Civil War artifacts of the Military Service Institution were shipped to the Smithsonian in June 5, 1922, according to a *New York Times* article of June 5, 1922, p. 8 entitled "Gen. Sheridan's Horse, Winchester, Honored, Exercises at Governors Island Mark Removal of Mounted Animal to Washington."

⁴¹⁰ *New York Times*, October 20, 1889 p. 12. The opening paragraph had an alarming note: More than one hundred tons of gunpowder are stored in three magazines on a small island in the bay but two miles from New York City and within eight hundred years of the Communipaw docks at Jersey City. The island is known as Ellis Island, and is three acres and a half in size, with a rough, rocky back on all sides.

ringing the city could best serve other functions in the harbor.⁴¹¹ There was also precedence for the federal government to lease former forts in the harbor to the city when they were no longer effective military installations, such as Castle Clinton, which was leased to the city as a “place of resort” in 1824 and two years later became Castle Garden offering various performances for the public.

THE CASE FOR IMMIGRATION PROCESSING ON GOVERNORS ISLAND

In 1890, the question was raised whether Castle Garden should continue to serve as an immigration processing station and whether another island in the harbor was also suited for that purpose. The 51st Congress (First Session, House of Representatives Resolution 124 of March 14, 1890) authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to, “... take possession of a part of Governor’s Island for the establishment of an immigration depot.” It was introduced by Francis Barretto Spinola (the first Italian-American elected to Congress) and referred to the Committee on Military Affairs. The subsequent joint resolution (March 18, 1890) granted permission to the Secretary of the Treasury,

... to take possession of Fort Jay, commonly known as Fort Columbus, and fifteen acres of ground, or so much thereof as may be necessary, adjacent thereto, on Governor’s [sic] Island, for the erection of suitable buildings for the accommodation of immigrants who are now landed at Castle Garden in New York City: provided that this resolution shall not be construed to pass any title in said island or ground thus acquired, or change its character as a military reservation ...

According to Spinola’s testimony,

The purpose of the resolution is to enable the Treasury Department to comply with the law in furnishing a suitable and proper depot for the reception of immigrants arriving in the port of New York, which immigrants have heretofore been landed at Castle Garden, in the City of New York, under contract with the Government of the United States. The said contract is about to expire by its own limitation in a very short time, and this makes it necessary that the Government should at once prepare for the reception of such immigrants as it may be necessary. The committee is further of the opinion that Bedloe’s Island is not a suitable place for the erection of barracks and other accommodations for the reception of immigrants arriving at the port of New York, for the reason that Bedloe’s Island is small, containing only about 12 acres, which is largely appropriated to the Light-House Service and the State of Liberty, which, in case of fire, might be destroyed or seriously damaged, to the great regret of the whole American people,

⁴¹¹ The question of how Governors Island should best serve New York was not a new one. When New York was the Capital City, Manhattan was envisioned as a federal district with government offices, and one plan designated Governors Island for the presidential mansion. For more on this, see Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press 1999), p. 300.

and that,

The reason for the present consideration of the joint resolution grows out of a decision of the United States court, which holds that immigrants landing in the United States, at any of its ports, come directly under the discretion of the General Government. Heretofore, they have been landing at Castle Garden, but now the General Government proposes to take charge of the subject. But there is no place fixed for their reception. The joint resolution appropriates a small unoccupied portion of Governors Island to enable the Secretary of the Treasury to carry out the law as it stands. The contract between the General Government and the State of New York expires by its own limitation within six or seven weeks, and something must be done and done speedily in order to provide the accommodation necessary.⁴¹²

The *New York Times* covered the work of the Committee responsible for determining the best location in the article, "Castle Garden Business, Where Shall Immigrants Be Landed, Committees From the Senate and The House Come From Washington To Look Into The Matter."⁴¹³ The Committee heard from the Mayor of Jersey City that the people there were opposed to using Liberty Island (at that time considered part of New Jersey) for the landing of immigrants; that there was an abundance of room elsewhere; and that Ellis Island, where there was a powder magazine that for years has threatened property and lives, would better serve the purpose, as would Oyster or Governors Islands. On March 25, 1890, the committee inspected Ellis, Bedloe's, and Governors Islands. When the committee met at General Howard's quarters on Governors Island they heard from Howard that,

... it would be a pity to put the island to such a use ... it was the only place in the vicinity of New York where a large body of military could be massed in case of necessity, and that it would never do to have the jurisdiction over the island divided between the War and Treasury Departments.⁴¹⁴

A decision had to be made quickly to avoid interruption in immigration processing. Ellis Island was selected, the new hall was constructed. Nothing else happened on Resolution 124, and it wasn't until 1923 that a bill was again introduced on the subject of using a portion of the island for immigration processing.

⁴¹² 51st Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, Report No. 876.

⁴¹³ *New York Times*, March 22, 1890 p. 1.

⁴¹⁴ *New York Times*, March 25, 1890, p. 9. The article states that a declivity on the southern side of the island was the possible site for immigration processing.

In 1892, the question came up about which island was best suited for a hospital in case of an epidemic. One letter to the editor of the *New York Times* from A. B. Tappen, then the Park Commissioner, is of special interest. He reviewed the suitability of the various islands to serve as a hospital. In his letter to the editor Tappen said that,

... there was no island attached to Pelham Bay Park that is at all suitable ... Riker's Island is far better situated ... Hart's Island is already supplied with abundant barrack buildings, with water supply and good landing facilities ...

He also remarked that the U.S. government ought to cede Governors Island to New York City for sanitary and recreation purposes since, "All the military establishment there would be better off at Forts Hamilton and Wadsworth."⁴¹⁵ Clearly, various individuals and organizations that represented different interests saw the valuable real estate of Governors Island and questioned whether the island best served the military or the city. But the army had no intention of considering land use changes to suit the changing needs of the city.

CHARMING, BUT OBSOLETE

In general, the *New York Times* portrayed the forts and military activities as charming, but obsolete. Articles often posed questions about how best the island could play a role in the changing land uses needed in the harbor and the city. From time to time there were articles about how civilians could gain access to the forts and what picturesque places they were, such as the 1891 article, "Behind Our Own Parapets, Martial Sounds and Sights In The Forts Hereabout, How The Visitor May Approach The Fortifications In New York Harbor And What He May And May Not Do When He Gets There." Of Governors Island it says,

A most unwarrantable suspicion exists in some persons' minds that because there are troops and guns on Governors Island the public is in some way excluded. The same suspicions are entertained toward Fort Lafayette, Fort Tompkins, Sandy Hook, Fort Schuyler, and Willet's Point, and as a result a good many sightseers avoid these interesting places with scrupulous care. As a matter of fact, the public has quite as many rights there as anywhere.⁴¹⁶

The next year, an article entitled "They Smile At Our Forts" reported that a group of German visitors asked,

⁴¹⁵ *New York Times*, August 31, 1892 p. 5, letter to the editor.

I saw this morning a small round tower on Governors Island ... there were peep holes in it, and about 1,000 people were on its top. It stood off by itself and looked like an old-fashioned cistern. Is it at fort?

The reply was,

Well ... it has been called a fort for a good many years, and I believe there are guns in some of the holes. There are soldiers there, too[,] a full garrison, but regret to say that I fear that noble old fort would not last long if a modern gunboat of the second class once got in range.⁴¹⁷

Reports on the dilapidated states of other forts were also reported in the news (“Fort Wadsworth’s Decay, A Port That Needs Immediate Attention, Gen. Schofield Is Said To Favor The Improvement Of This Important Post Of The Country”).⁴¹⁸

Governors Island was considered somewhat an extension of the parks system for New York City residents, such as in 1888, when in the article , “Taking A Sunday Outing, Too Pleasant For People To Stay In Doors, Tempting Visitors To The Parks In Crowds And To the Nearer Suburban Resorts,” it was reported that,

... on August 8th the temperature reached 74 degrees by noon and by 2 o’clock it “seemed as if the people of New York had all resolved on a holiday ... elevated roads carried thousands every hour to Central Park ... Battery Park was a pleasant and a busy spot ... and every time the steamboat left for Bedlow’s [*sic*] Island, it was filled to its utmost capacity with visitors to the Statue of Liberty and even the Government launches that run to Governor’s Island had a fair compliment of passengers.⁴¹⁹

While Governors Island was informally open to the public, the Secretary of War forcefully resisted when legislation was introduced to formally challenge the military’s need for the entire island.

“THE LOWER PART OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK IS IN SAD NEED OF A PARK”

By the late nineteenth century, there was a clear understanding of the need for and value of parks. While Central Park in New York City was able to play an important role for city residents, it was unable to satisfy every recreational and health need, and there

⁴¹⁶ *New York Times*, June 21, 1891, p. 14.

⁴¹⁷ *New York Times*, April 27, 1893, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ *New York Times*, December 1, 1889, p. 10.

⁴¹⁹ *New York Times*, June 11, 1888, p. 5.

was a growing movement to set aside and protect park land throughout the city, especially in lower Manhattan's most densely populated areas. Hand in hand with tenement reform movements, activist groups who advocated for open space for immigrant neighbors had the benefit of extensive surveys and statistics to back up their arguments. In addition to the crowded slum conditions (it was known that an average of 3.7 people lived in tenements of approximately 285 square feet, paying in excess of twenty-five percent of the family earnings for places "where you would not stable your horses") a May 8, 1896, article summed up the disproportionate number of acres of park land in immigrant neighborhoods, stating that,

Parks are closely allied to the tenement question. They are well called the lungs of a city. In New York City 7.5 percent of the entire acreage is devoted to parks, but below Fourteenth Street, where nearly half our people live, only 2.5 percent of the acreage is devoted to parks. Where they are the most needed they are the least found."⁴²⁰

It was in this climate of saving old parks and creating new ones that legislation was put forward to secure land on Governors Island for a public park. During the period 1888 to 1898 three bills were introduced. The first two bills (October 1888 and February 1890) were to allow improvements to be made on a portion of the island by the City Parks Commission. The third bill (December 1897) was to have the entire island conveyed to New York City as a park. Based on currently available sources we do not know which individuals and/or groups were behind the legislation, but the contents of the committee on military affairs hearings expresses the sentiment carried by the leading preservationists, city park proponents, and municipal planners of the day.⁴²¹ The precedent for the bill was one presented in Boston concerning Fort Independence, which was suggested as a public park site but rejected based on continued military need.

House Resolution 176 of 1888 granted permission to the park commissioners of New York City to improve and beautify Governors Island in connection with a public park.

⁴²⁰ *New York Times*, May 8, 1886 p. 3.

⁴²¹ The bills for using a portion of the park or conveying all of the island for use as a park were introduced by four NY Representatives, Samuel Sullivan Cox, Francis Barretto Spinola, Benton McMillin, and Thomas Joseph Bradley. There is no record of the bills in the Parks Commission meeting minutes or annual reports, nor is there mention of these efforts in the annual report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. Experts on the history of New York City parks contacted for this report were unaware of these bills. It's possible that Andrew Haswell Green, New York City's foremost urban planner of the time, was behind the bill, but so far there is no evidence of his hand in these bills, although he was behind the establishment of Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Bronx Zoo, the American Museum of Natural History and Morningside and Riverside Parks, and the consolidation of New York City.

The House Report 50-3136 shows that there was a unanimous acceptance by the House Committee on Military Affairs, which was read by Mr. Spinola. It is worth quoting at length because it accurately portrays the prevailing ideas of the time about city planning and city parks:

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred House resolution 176, entitled "Joint resolution granting permission to the park commissioners of New York City to improve and beautify Governor's Island in connection with a public park, to be laid out on said island, and on land adjoining and connecting therewith," beg leave to report that they have considered the subject-matter of the resolution, and have nothing but commendation for its kindly object.

The proximity of Governor's Island to a large city like New York, in the absence of any necessity for such an island for the protection of that city, naturally attract the attention of those who desire to give such recreation to the overcrowded people of the lower part of that metropolis as such an island would afford. The island is very beautiful. It is 60 acres in extent, and within a minute's reach by steam. The old fort on the island is utterly useless for public defense.

The committee can see no reason why the advantages which nature has placed within view of the city of New York should not be utilized.

Governor's Island came into possession of the United States as a donation by an act of the Legislature of the State of New York, passed May 15, 1800. Prior to the American Revolution the island was a perquisite of the colonial governor, who was the representative of the King of England, but after the war became the property of the colony and then of the State of New York. It is therefore highly proper that the inhabitants of the city should now be allowed to ornament and beautify and enjoy it as a pleasure-ground without expense to the Government, until such time as it may be again required for war purposes.

The lower part of the city of New York is in sad need of a park.

Many encroachments have been made upon the grounds dedicated to the people. St. John's was absorbed by a railroad. The Federal public buildings have usurped the City Hall Park. The Battery, which was intended to be a safety vent – a lung – of the metropolis, is being ruined for such a purpose by railroads and by the immigration depot.

There is no real reason why the island should not be converted into a park to give health, comfort, and recreation to the many poor who are sadly in need of such a respite from the heats and discomforts of the city.

If it be said that the island is necessary as a defense in case of war, the answer is very plain and simple. The resolution is entirely consistent with military or defensive uses. There can be no possible emergency in which that island can not be used in case of need as a fortification. There is no stretch of the imagination, no scientific theory in connection with the defense of the city of New York, which would disallow the use of this island for the kindly and humanitarian purpose which the resolution proposes. The range of modern artillery, the use of modern explosives and naval armament, make it entirely useless as a point of defense for the city from an attack of the enemy. Other and more distant places have already been taken as the sites of forts and defensive stations around New York.

There is no reason why the proposition of the present resolution should not be utilized by the people for recreation and pleasure. Of course there will be a constant throng of visitors upon the island in case the joint resolution should become a law. In fact, that is the intention of the resolution. The thickly-populated parts of the city, in

finding a solace and comfort in their summer pleasures, would not be at the risk of any gun or missile which might be fired for the destruction of New York.

There can be no objection to the resolution, inasmuch as the history of the island shows incontestably that it should remain as it once was, a part of New York. But if it be in any way used for the benefit of the Federal Government in the defense of that city, the resolution reserves that privilege. Your committee therefore recommends the passage of the joint resolution.⁴²²

The House Committee unanimously passed the bill on August 8, 1888. It never made it out of committee in the Senate. In 1890, House Resolution 22, essentially a second attempt for the same bill, was referred to the House Committee on Military Affairs, but had no further action.

By the mid 1890s it was known that in addition to not setting aside enough land for parks in the southern section of the city, that area of the city had suffered enormous losses in the three major parks, Battery Park, City Hall Park, and St. John's Park. In 1882, the Manhattan Elevated Railway Company erected a railway structure in Battery Park, and while their taking and use of the land was unauthorized, the transgression was not successfully challenged and the public park was severely eroded. City Hall Park—the original colonial common—site of Revolutionary War events, and adjacent to the City Hall (erected in 1811), was reduced in size and restricted in use by commercial development. St. John's Park, which was supposed to remain an ornamental square without any building erected on it, became the site of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad freight depot, virtually eliminating public access.⁴²³

A May 1891 article in the *New York Times* on the "Battery Park Crusade," ended with a note of optimism, saying,

It is a just demand, and the crusade for rescuing the Battery Park from the Manhattan Railway Company is a righteous crusade of the people, in which their authorities, and especially those in charge of the public parks, ought to join with cheerful alacrity. Castle Garden will again resound with music; it may be that Governors Island may one day be made a pleasure ground for the people, and with the intruding railroad removed the Battery will become a resort for all sorts and conditions of people seeking rest and recreation, the fresh air of the ocean, and sounds and sights that delight the senses, no longer marred by the presence of a hideous railroad, with its noisy and smoky trains.⁴²⁴

⁴²² H.R. 176, 1888, Report of Committee on Military Affairs.

⁴²³ American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, Eighth Annual Report 1903, Protection of Public Parks, pp. 47, 74, 110. See also Randall Mason, "Historic Preservation, Public Memory, and the Making of New York City" in *Giving Preservation a History, Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, ed. Max Page and Randall Mason (New York: Routledge 2004).

⁴²⁴ *New York Times*, May 24, 1891, p. 4.

In 1897, House Resolution 5355 called for the Secretary of War to "... convey to the city of New York for the purposes of a public park, the island known as Governors Island, with the buildings thereon ..." ⁴²⁵ In spite of the two previous bills not progressing in Congress, even though they requested only a small portion of the island, the new bill suggested that the entire island be conveyed back to New York City as a park.

This legislation was based on the assumption that Governors Island simply no longer served a strategic defensive role for the army. The army, however, was eager to hold on to its prime real estate and position in the harbor. It had argued in 1895 that it, "... could not concur with the opinion that Fort Columbus has ceased to have any value as a work for the defense of the harbor of New York, and that it may properly be demolished." ⁴²⁶ By 1897, it was able to put the question of what was to become of Governors Island to rest. With a daring counter plan, the military argued four things: that nothing should be permitted to interfere with the military use, that it required new administrative headquarters, that it required enlargement, and that a preeminent architect would be retained to create a master plan.

In addition to the tactical feat of holding on to Governors Island, the physical expansion more than doubled (from 69.4 to 170.8 acres). This was achieved in a cost-effective way because fortuitously the most ambitious transportation engineering project of the city's history was taking place on Manhattan Island at the same time. With the construction of the first subway line, tons of excavated material became fill for Governors Island. The enlarged island set the stage for the next century of military use, and it remained an Army headquarters until 1966.

"NOTHING SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO INTERFERE WITH THE MILITARY... ON GOVERNORS ISLAND"

The army laid out its argument against releasing land to serve as a public park or any other use. While some proponents of change characterized the island as ineffectual as a military post, the Corps of Engineers countered in reports and letters that,

The interest of the United States will not permit the use of Governors Island for any other than military purposes ... that the exclusive use of Governors Island as it now is, is indispensable for military purposes ... and it is of the highest importance that the United States own a place for storage of war material inside the line of defense, where it

⁴²⁵ 55th Congress, 2d Session, H.R. 5355.

⁴²⁶ RG 77, Entry 103, Letter #11553, Abbot, Robert, Gillespie to Craighill, June 18, 1895. NARA I. This is the only reference discovered by this research team that calls for or responds to the idea of demolishing the forts.

will not be subject to the first attack ... Governors Island is better adapted to this purpose than any other spot in the harbor owned by the United States.

It went on to propose not only a storage role, but a defensive role against a modern mode of attack, saying:

A modern mode of attack which is now receiving the careful attention of military engineers, - namely, sudden raids directed against naval and commercial vessels, lying in the port, by a number of fast torpedo boats whose light draft enables them at high water to pass over any system of mines adapted to tidal channels, and whose speed and small size will justify taking the chances of a rush through the area on the main line swept by the fire of the high power guns.

And that,

The torpedo boat must be regarded as a new danger to shipping in such ports as lie within its limited range of action and that Governors Island occupies a commanding position, and even its present armament, properly served, would possess no little value ... when replaced by modern quick fire types ... the importance of Fort Columbus will be proportionally increased.

It concluded by stating that:

Nothing should be permitted to interfere with the military efficiency of the works on Governors Island," and that, further, "space there available for quartering troops is inadequate to receive a regiment."⁴²⁷

This rationale was used again to counter the 1897 bill. The *New York Times* responded by saying,

Better arguments than those which Gen. Miles presents might have been found, perhaps, for the retention of Governors Island and by the nation as a military post. He says that it is needed as a last defense against foreign enemies, and advises the expenditure of a lot of money in replacing the present toy fort with real fortifications. This is a rather remarkable suggestion to come from a man like Gen. Miles, who knows, of course, that all authorities on war have now agreed that invaders must be met on the frontier, and that defenses close to a great city are practically useless.⁴²⁸

Here we have direct debate of how the military regards its role to protect the city and the nation and how the city, through the press, questions its authority and ability to do so.

⁴²⁷ RG 77, Entry 103, Letter #11553, Abbot, Robert, Gillespie to Craighill, June 18, 1895, NARA I.

⁴²⁸ *New York Times*, January 31, 1898, p. 6.

PRESERVATION OF THE OLD, PLANNING FOR THE NEW: THE NEED FOR A CAPACIOUS GOVERNMENT RESERVATION

The Secretary of War, Elihu Root, had no intention of giving the island back to New York to serve as a public park. He appointed a board on July 21, 1900, to inspect Governors Island, and all the buildings on it, and to prepare and recommend a general plan for its improvement.

According to Root, the old fort was to be preserved and the ordnance buildings were to be concentrated. The question of building a seawall at low water mark was to be studied and enlarging the island by filling was to be considered. The result would provide (for every branch of the Army) a number of new buildings for storage and shipping in the harbor and to accommodate at least one battalion of troops. His board, comprising Major General John R. Brooke of the U.S. Army, Colonel George L. Gillespie of the Corps of Engineers, Colonel Amos S. Kimball, assistant quartermaster general of the U.S. Army, inspected the island and submitted a report on August 17, 1900. The board's report provided a series of recommendations that shaped subsequent action.

It recommended:

To accommodate four full companies (one battalion) of the present strength, the four buildings should each be raised one story. This will not mar the appearance of the post, and when completed, with certain other necessary changes in the buildings, will furnish all required accommodations for one battalion.

The buildings on the island were described as:

... erected at different times, to meet varying emergencies, and the final result is an aggregation of poor structures which are objectionable in many ways ... they are old frame buildings, only slightly raised above soil, inconvenient, insanitary, and inflammable.

While nothing in the report up to page eight was unexpected, the language concerning the need to enlarge the island is especially noteworthy. The board believed that:

The great national importance of New York Harbor makes it extremely desirable that there should be a capacious Government reservation convenient to the City and adapted to every military requirement, provided it can be obtained within a reasonable cost. Fortunately, Governors Island is well suited for such a purpose, since a low shoal forming part of, and projecting from, its southern border, and lying between the two navigable channels of the Upper Harbor, may be easily raised to any desired height and utilized for Government purposes.⁴²⁹

The report argued that not only should the military not cede the island back to New York, but also that it needed New York to cede to the government additional land under water so that an enlargement could proceed. The original land of Governors Island was donated to the United States government by an act of legislature of New York State on February 15, 1800.⁴³⁰ As of 1900, as a result of erosion, the island contained an area of 69.4 acres surrounded by sea-walls, built at or near low water mark. The extension proposed by the Secretary of War, based on his board's study, would add an additional 101.4 acres (eighty-two acres was originally proposed, followed by an additional request for 19.4 acres), for a total of 170. In his request to the legislature, and to counter questions of need, Root made it clear that he considered that the deed by which the lands under water at Governors Island were granted in May 1880 now must be extended somewhat to the south. Root also renewed the argument that the transfer of lands under water was of military importance:

To maintain a more respectable garrison and to provide for interior defense by establishing batteries of rapid fire guns – a matter of very great importance because as the defenses of the Harbor are now arranged, if a fast little boat were to get up through the Narrows with rapid fire guns, she would have the City of New York at her mercy.⁴³¹

In December, Root wrote to the Governor of New York State about the need for the state to cede jurisdiction to the United States of the land under water south of Governors Island. He enclosed a bill, which he requested be put into the hands of a Senator and an Assemblyman who, "... will make efficient sponsors for them and will keep a lookout for them," since he supposed, "the bill would go through as a matter of course."⁴³² As of January 29, 1901, there was still wrangling over the future of the island between those who wanted it to become a public park and those who wanted the state to cede the land under water to the government. By March 1901, the Secretary of War managed to secure passage of legislation authorizing the conveyance of the land under water and to cede jurisdiction to the government. Once the legislation was passed, he began laying the groundwork for an appropriation to begin enlarging the island.

At the turn of the century, Root effectively silenced efforts to gain control of the island for the City of New York for a generation, and his board report also confirmed the need to address the military ineffectiveness of the batteries of Fort Columbus and Castle

⁴²⁹ RG77, Entry #37078/9, NARA I.

⁴³⁰ Title to lands covered with water was also ceded to the United States government by an act of the State Legislature in 1880.

⁴³¹ Letter from Elihu Root, Secretary of War to Governor, December 28, 1900.

⁴³² RG 77, #37078/33, Root to Governor, December 28, 1900, NARA I.

Williams. The Secretary of War not only wanted the buildings proposed for the enlarged island to be erected on plans prepared by competent architects, but he also wanted the architects to be Charles F. McKim of the firm McKim, Mead & White. In a letter to Messrs. McKim, Mead & White of June 29, 1901, Elihu Root requested the firm get involved in the extensive changes proposed for Governors Island because,

... the island is so conspicuous an object in the harbor of New York that I am very desirous to have the changes made in good taste, and to have them render the island an object which will contribute to the beauty of the harbor instead of marring it. The two old structures on the island, Castle William [*sic*] and the old fort, are to be preserved, and it seems desirable that the new structures should be in harmony with them. For all this we need of course an architect, and I should be very glad if you would act in that capacity.⁴³³

At the time, McKim, Mead and White was one of the most influential architectural firms in the country. Its clients included Madison Square Garden in 1887, the Boston Public Library in 1887, and the Columbia University Plan in 1893, and the firm secured an international reputation for their designs of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. In 1900, they were planning renovations to the White House, as well as New York's Pennsylvania Station. McKim, Mead and White's 1902 plans for Governors Island called for elimination of nearly all existing structures, only sparing Castle Williams, Fort Jay, and the South Battery from demolition. The Beaux-Arts planning principles called for a new parade ground, loop roads, and a single building large enough to accommodate an entire regiment.

By January 1901, the army's plans for Governors Island were made available to the press. *The Brooklyn Eagle* informed the public of the details of the proposed enlargement and that the cost of filling the island would be nominal because, "The contractors will be glad to avail themselves of a dumping ground which would obviate the necessity for a long towage to sea of dredged material." It went on to say that "... \$1,595,000 on improvements will make that point the most important military post on the Atlantic coast."⁴³⁴

DREDGE, FILL, RIP-RAP

On March 3, 1901, \$260,000 was appropriated toward the enlargement of Governors Island and for construction of storehouses and other buildings. An additional grant of land under water was requested by the legislature of the State of New York, which led to

⁴³³ RG 77, #37078/86. Elihu Root, Secretary of War, to Messrs. McKim, Mead & White, NARA I.

⁴³⁴ *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 6, 1901.

an increased amount available for enlargement of \$162,259.90.

Over the next several years a rip-rap bulkhead was built on each side of the proposed island extension, for a total of 4,760 feet. The bulkhead was built to a height of two feet above mean low water. On the southwest side of the enclosure it was built to twelve feet wide on the top. On the northwest side, where the exposure was greater, it was built to fifteen feet wide on the top.

At that time a rip rap wall to retain sand filling was considered experimental. The experiment paid off, not only in the construction of the rip rap wall for the island, but for future construction elsewhere. According to the construction records, the technique,

... had not been tried in this vicinity, if anywhere, and doubts were expressed as to whether the embankment would not run through the wall. The officer in charge was not unduly tied down to precedent, and with his approval sanctioned by the Chief of Engineers, the decision was changed to provide a rip rap foundation with masonry wall on top. The plan was successful and has since been adopted, even to the extent of copying the specifications, by the New York Dock Department of Rikers Island and at the new Brooklyn Shore Drive.⁴³⁵

There were cost overruns and schedule delays in construction throughout the enlargement process. On December 24, 1902, the New York Filling Company was awarded a contract to enclose an area of about eighty-two acres on the shoal south of the island by building a rip-rap foundation upon which a seawall would be constructed. They were also contracted to fill the enclosed area. By April the next year, the contract was in progress and 1,340 linear feet of foundation on the Buttermilk Channel side of the enlargement had been built and 1,440 linear feet were in different stages of completion. From 1902 to 1906, they laid 2,031,663 cubic yards of first and second class material, including 1,501,032 cubic yards of first class material (comprising sand, stone, brick, ashes, hard earth, and clay) and 530,631 cubic yards of second class material (comprising all of the above plus mud). There were disagreements over whether they were to dump the material or actually place the material and, while the New York Filling Company managed to get paid for their work, it was not completed in accordance with the contract. Seven years of legal wrangling followed, ending only in June 1911 when the Department of Justice concluded that the New York Filling Company, "... was organized simply for the purpose of taking (this) contract; that the money received from the Government was distributed among its stockholders, and that its assets are such that a judgment against it would be of no real value."⁴³⁶ In the mean time, the government

⁴³⁵ RG77 dated November 20, 1912, G.I. 1, 263 at National Archives New York, NARA I.

⁴³⁶ RG 77, Entry 103, #45400, Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of War, June 21, 1911, NARA I.

entered into other contracts for material and labor with Henry Steers, Inc., to complete the work left undone by the New York Filling Company.

While there were cost overruns and schedule delays in construction and enlargement, the project was able to keep the cost of filling for the enlarged area under control due to the building of the Rapid Transit Subway in New York City. Construction of the Rapid Transit Subway, the first in New York City, officially began on March 24, 1900, and was completed late October 1904. During the height of construction, over 7,770 men were employed.⁴³⁷ While thousands of men worked below ground to create what would remain invisible to the public, McKim, Mead & White created an attractive, above ground architecture to house coal burning furnaces to power the subways. The façade of the powerhouse, a colossal brick and terra-cotta structure on the Hudson River at 59th Street, was a classical temple that paid homage to modern industry.⁴³⁸

The large quantities of stone excavated had to be disposed of.⁴³⁹ Colonels W.L. Marshall and S.W. Roessler of the Corps of Engineers anticipated needing 4,787,000 cubic yards of fill behind a 7,219 foot long seawall at Governors Island.⁴⁴⁰ When contractors were able to offer excavation material from subway construction, the federal government was pleased to benefit from the availability. When the proposals were reviewed to determine who would be the contractor for the rip-rap bulkhead at Governors Island the lowest bid received was thirty-five cents, the next bid being forty-seven cents. The prices represented

⁴³⁷ Historic American Engineering Record, Interborough Rapid Transit Subway HAER NY-122, pp. 3, 265.

⁴³⁸ Clifton Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How they Transformed New York* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp. 85, 94.

⁴³⁹ There was nothing new in either the need to use fill to increase land or recycling building materials in New York City. See Burrows and Wallace, p. 110. They write that over 200 years before, the wood in the city wall built by the Dutch to keep out the English was removed in 1694 for use as firewood, and in 1699 the stones from it were incorporated into the foundation for the new City Hall. In 1686, a landfill project began along the East River adjacent to the Town Dock. The Common Council began selling “water lots” and later required the purchasers to fill in their lots. At the end of the 1700s the municipal corporation extended the shore around Manhattan’s southern tip, filling lots with rubbish, earth, and cinder.

⁴⁴⁰ Azoy, *Three Centuries Three Flags*.

... only the cost of delivering and placing the stone. It is quarried in the Subway Rapid Transit Excavations and must be removed. This condition will last only while rock is being excavated in large quantities – probably a year longer.”⁴⁴¹

Contractors for the bulkhead at Governors Island delivered and placed the stones at a cost of thirty-five cents per ton. The Corps of Engineers was pleased to be able to report on the savings to the federal government by using excavation materials from the subway line. In a January 8, 1903, report it was noted that,

In effect, the United States pays nothing for the stone and only a fair price for placing them in position. Under other conditions this work would probably have cost \$40,000 more. The contract for filling costs the United States little more than half as much as the Pennsylvania Railroad pays for similar work. The natural conditions are more favorable at Governors Island and everything has been done to take advantage of this.

The *New York Times* posed the question in a headline “What Has Become of All the Dirt Taken from the Subway.” The answer reveals how various building projects around the New York Harbor benefited from recycling gneiss excavated for the subway, including filling the bay between Bedloe’s Island and the Jersey shore. While people were aware of the remarkable feat of American engineering of the subway,

... few knew of the men who have been moving the dirt and stone with wagon, derrick, viaduct, tug , and scow from under the feet of New York. Uncle Sam himself has used many hundred thousand cubic yards of subway stone and dirt in his Herculean labor of increasing the size of Governors Island from sixty acres to a hundred and fifty-two acres. This means that the foundation has been laid for an addition, one-half mile in diameter, to the historic island, extending out into Buttermilk Channel and to the southwest.⁴⁴²

The availability of excavation material made the enlargement economically viable, but its aftermath had its share of problems. The foundation of the enlargement settled about four feet, which was expected, but in several sections the sand fill dried out and blew about, sometimes on the slopes of the old island, sometimes into Buttermilk Channel. The fill was graded, covered with earth, and seeded, but only 23 of the outer acres were built of cellar dirt with enough clay to prevent drift. With the new seawalls there was a need for lights and fog signals, which, over the first few years were not enough to prevent three vessels from colliding with the sea wall.

⁴⁴¹ RG 77, page 24, Corps of Engineers to Brig. Gen. G.L. Gillespie, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., June 18,1902, NARA I.

⁴⁴² *New York Times*, November 27, 1904.

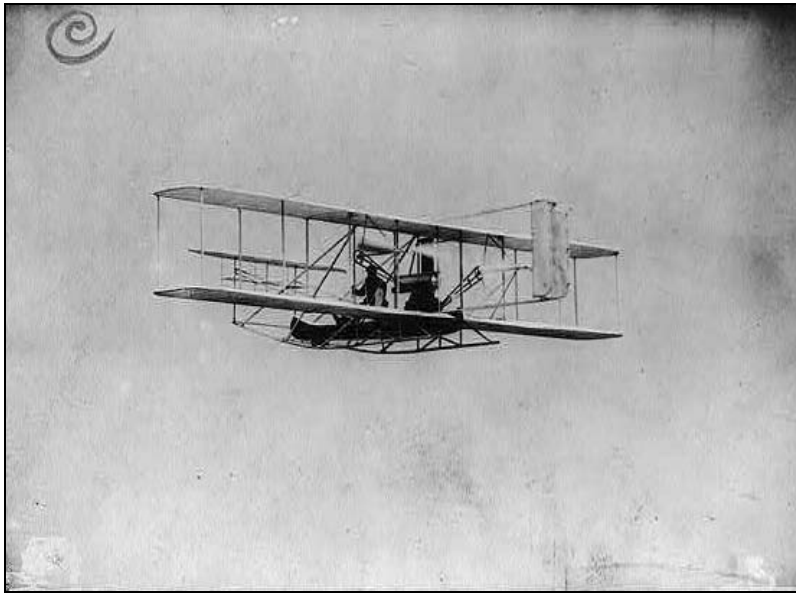


Figure 39. Wilbur Wright flying over Governors Island, New York 1909. Library of Congress.

This period of excitement over aerial exhibitions gave way to rapid and intense construction on the island to accommodate World War I activities (See Chapter 7). When the war ended and the city reverted to peace time pursuits, Governors Island was again in the public imagination for how it could be reused to serve public needs, and the *Times* covered each idea, no matter how unlikely. “Labor Calls for New City Reforms, Want Blackwell’s and Governors Islands Turned Into Summer Resorts,”⁴⁴³ is one example. In addition, the successful enlargement of the island was also referred to when new schemes were announced to enlarge Manhattan by filling as much as six miles of the Harbor in “Assured of Fund To Extend Manhattan, Nothing In Way of Project If War Department Consents Says T.K. Thompson.”⁴⁴⁴

In the early 1920s there was another proposal to conduct immigration processing on Governors,⁴⁴⁵ as well as a revived interest in having the islands that ring Manhattan serve the public as parks (“East River Islands Viewed as Possible Parks, Randall, Ward’s and

⁴⁴³ *New York Times*, February 9, 1918, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁴ *New York Times*, October 23, 1921 p. 27. The article referred to the ease with which Governors Island was enlarged and suggested that enlarging the city by six square miles by filling portions of the harbor was well within the city’s technical and financial capabilities.

⁴⁴⁵ In December 1923 Representative Solomon Bloom offered the proposal that the government immigration station on Ellis Island move to suitable new buildings on Governors Island, presumably in response to tougher immigration laws that restricted the large number of immigrants who came through Ellis Island.

Blackwell's Islands Nearer the Centre of Population Than Central Park – Now Used by Institutions That Could Be Placed Elsewhere.”⁴⁴⁶ But by far the biggest debate that raged from 1924 through 1936 was over using Governors Island for landing fields for mail and air passengers, and during that time the military had to respond to a quick succession of congressional bills that challenged their exclusive and continuous use.

New York was not alone in debating how and where to locate aviation facilities. Congressional committees on air services warned of the weak air force of the country and the need to create aviation as an instrument of peace. This awareness of the need to develop a civilian aviation industry gave fuel to efforts to locate an airport for New York City on Governors Island.

In 1923, a regional planning committee of the Merchants' Association offered another new plan for Governors Island. Supported by funds provided by Mrs. Margaret Olivia Sage via the Russell Sage Foundation for city planning, the Merchants' Association studied the regional transportation system of rails and roads and found the city and the nation would fall behind unless a system of air fields were established. After several years of study Governors Island was deemed the most advantageous site for the new aero field. Because of the expansion of the island to 170 acres, it was the largest available open space in close proximity to the city. Years of research had suggested that the travel time to and from an air terminal was more important than the travel time in the air and that it was vital to site landing fields where the largest number of passengers could quickly get to their nearby destinations. This time there was plenty of support, both financial and political, for using the island for a municipal purpose. The army had also become attached to the new enlarged and improved Governors Island, which now included the polo field, which figured prominently in the social life of the island. The debate over whether the army would have to forfeit land on Governors Island for a municipal landing field raged for fifteen years (from 1923 to 1938).

The first *New York Times* article to cover the proposal was extremely enthusiastic. In “An Airfield on Governors Island,” it was reported that,

The proposal of the Merchants' Association that a flying field be established on Governors Island for commercial aviation brings to mind the first essays of the Wright brothers in this part of the world – success that fairly rocked the city with excitement. Governors Island was their aero field. There they kept their magical machine, and from its sandy plain they made their flights, but only in the lightest of airs. ... There was a time when America lagged behind Europe in aviation ... in New York there will be no fair start until an easily accessible aero field is provided.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ *New York Times*, June 15, 1924, p. xx3. The island is described as, “worthless defensively and has more historic than military value.”

⁴⁴⁷ *New York Times*, April 12, 1923 pg. 18.

Long Island was proclaimed too far off, New Jersey was New Jersey, and Governors Island's advantages were extolled.

The Merchants' Association report argued that New York was the key city of a nation-wide system of airways. Members represented the financial and commercial interests of the city, the transportation and shipping companies, the bankers, and the merchants and aeronautical industry. The association gathered information from London, Paris, and Berlin on weather, wireless facilities, repair depots, and safeguards and handicaps. When the association first petitioned the War Department to release land for an air field, they pointed to the excavated rock and silt that came from New York City to enlarge the island, arguing that the city therefore rightfully owned the land. They also brought up the question of whether the military post was truly serving a defensive purpose and, if not, whether it should be returned to New York.

The association got its first dose of the power of the military to deny land use changes on Governors Island when General Robert Lee Bullard responded to the proposal. He let it be known that the military had to stay on the island to respond in case of riots or disasters, referring, presumably, to the recent explosion at the sub treasury building on September 16, 1922, to which the island responded.

Not only was Governors Island required for defensive purposes, but the army planned to clear the lower part of the island of the temporary buildings constructed during World War I, create a polo field, and construct an administration building facing the Battery ("Airport Or Army On Governors Island? Plans and Counter-Plans for the Better Use of an Ancient Harbor Ornament").⁴⁴⁸

In April 1926, Brigadier General Fox Conner, Assistant Chief of Staff, commented to the Senate Military Committee on the army's new building plan and the need for \$110 million to complete a housing program for the army. Conner revealed that the army had appraised both Governors Island of New York and the Presidio of San Francisco and had determined that Governors Island would bring \$25 million and the Presidio \$26 million if sold. When Representative Fiorella LaGuardia proposed a resolution on April 27, 1926, he seized upon General Conner's comment that Governors Island was to be sold and pointed out that New York had originally ceded the tract to the government for military purposes and that when those uses ceased it should be returned to the city. Since the island had very little strategic value according to General Conner, and the

⁴⁴⁸ *New York Times*, April 13, 1924, p. SM12. Other instances when the Governors Island troops were called to quell disturbances in New York were in March 1864, when troops were sent to Cold Spring, New York, in response to a strike at the West Point Foundry, and again on August 3, 1864, when "rebels" imprisoned in Federal barracks in Elmira, New York, were causing disturbances. See *New York Times*, March 15, 1864, p. 8 and August 3, 1864, p. 2.

contract was not limited by time but by occupancy, then it stood to reason that the city should take over the island (“LaGuardia Seeks Return of Governors Island Under State Act Preventing Federal Sale.”)⁴⁴⁹

Secretary of War Davis countered that there were plans to increase the garrison at Governors Island and that it was absolutely essential that the filled portion of the island be reserved for training. He further argued that the island was unsatisfactory as a landing field due to its size, prevailing winds, and proximity to a large population, effectively blocking LaGuardia’s and the Merchants’ Association’s suggestions. In June 1926, the *Times* reported with more than a note of derision that Governors Island, “Drowns Away Again,” and that

once more it has settled down to its usual air of calm detachment from the growth of a great city. Two proposals this Spring to change its status have been officially and effectively blocked, and the peace that soldiers know has returned to the army post – a placid spot where men drill, army mules graze and salutes are fired.”⁴⁵⁰

For a while it looked as though the army had prevented any incursion by the city. When Building 400 was constructed where the City envisioned the landing strip, some might have thought that was the last the army would hear about needing the island as a landing field. The potential sites for an air terminal were so limited, however, that after continuous searching for other sites the proponents of a landing field on Governors Island simply refocused their energy, built up their evidence, and eventually launched additional rounds of legislation. In May 1928, when the Regional Planning Association released its vision of New York City in the year 1965, supported by a \$1,000,000 Russell Sage study that called on 150 experts, Governors Island figured prominently in the ring of sixteen new airports that would be needed to serve the city.⁴⁵¹

THE JAMES LINE

When the army built the McKim, Meade and White Regimental Barracks it was the subject of argument over where the building should be sited. Those in favor of a landing field on the island insisted that, if built at all, the barracks should be built on the side of the island facing Buttermilk Channel as near to the shore as possible, leaving room for a future landing field. The army disagreed and sited it in such a way that it was diagonally positioned across what would have been the landing field. When LaGuardia learned of

⁴⁴⁹ *New York Times*, April 27, 1926 p. 2.

⁴⁵⁰ *New York Times*, June 6, 1926, p. SM13.

⁴⁵¹ *New York Times*, May 28, 1929, p. 1.

this situation he garnered the support of Congressman James, and, in 1930, a line was demarcated fifty feet in front of the new building, the so-called “James Line.” While Congress did authorize the fiscal year 1931 building program on Governors Island, it prohibited any new construction on the fill of Governors Island southwest of a line connecting the southwest ends of the two wings to Building 400.⁴⁵² Congress then instructed the army that it was not to build below the so-called James line. The polo field established south of the James Line became the major use of the fill area and became the subject of contention in the 1930s debates over the air terminal. By 1934 the army was complaining that the restrictions against building south of the Regimental Barracks was creating a problem in that the land north of the barracks was congested and there was “absolutely no room for construction of garages for which plans are submitted,” and that “... it is urgently requested that every effort be made to have this restriction removed.”⁴⁵³ Transportation links for air passengers to get quickly from the landing fields to their destinations in the city were to be provided by Governors Island access to the proposed Brooklyn-Battery tunnel.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to recount in its entirety the legislative bills and committee hearings on the subject of creating landing fields on Governors Island, but it’s instructive to note that a total of eleven bills were introduced to Congress on the proposal, all of which failed to pass. The congressional hearings of 1936 sum up twenty years of arguments for and against a landing field on Governors Island. The testimony of March 5 and June 5, 15, and 16, 1936, revealed the following diverse information:

- Flyers of the highest reputation, including Clarence Chamberlain, Roger Williams, Frank Hawks, Casey Jones, and Amelia Earhart all supported the feasibility of the use of Governors Island as a landing field;
- The West-Side highway was going to be extended through a tunnel to Brooklyn with an exit at Governors Island, which would enable plane passengers to get quickly to their destinations;
- No hangars, repair shops or mechanical shops were to be erected on Governors Island, it was to simply be a field for the landing of mail and passengers;
- The mayor and others believed that the police force could protect the city and that the soldiers on the island were not necessary;
- The army argued that since Wall Street or New York was considered the nerve center of the United States because that was where most of the nation’s finances were transacted, Governors Island should serve an air force rather than

⁴⁵² GOIS NARA 3.10.04, letter from Talbott to Adjutant General, June 16, 1931.

⁴⁵³ RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985.

- passenger flights so that the air force could be right nearby and rise up to meet the enemy;
- Another seventy acres would need to be added to the island to accommodate the runways of up to 3,000 feet;
 - A pneumatic tube system would be installed so that the island could accommodate air mail service and deliver the mail to Manhattan quicker than it could be delivered from Newark, New Jersey;
 - Air currents, air pockets, and air visibility were all debated, with those opposed saying it was the poorest sight imaginable because of prevailing winds, fog, etc., while those in favor (including the Pilots Association) saying Governors Island offered the best conditions;
 - Transoceanic airline service was anticipated for the future and just as the ports served the ocean liners, Governors Island would serve the flying ships;
 - Berlin “took over” the military field and drill ground at Templehof so there was a precedent to take over military land for a civilian flying field;
 - 700 leading businessmen from the Board of Trade unanimously supported the air terminal;
 - the 1922 Merchants’ Association study was the first to recommend the site;
 - the 1927 Hoover Committee Report was the second to recommend the site;
 - the eight-year survey by the New York Regional Planning Association was the third major study that concluded that Governors Island was essential as an airport;
 - The Port Authority wanted to protect the navigation and water-borne commerce of the New York Harbor and wanted to amend the bills to ensure that the Secretary of War controlled the location, extent, and character of the landing facilities;
 - The military objected to narrowing Buttermilk Channel and the harbor and any shipping lanes around Governors Island, declared the cost of enlarging the island exorbitant, and declared even the increased size of the island inadequate for landing fields;
 - The U.S. Army deemed the island inadequate to meet future aviation development and enumerated an additional eighteen reasons why the island was not adaptable;
 - Interference with the greatest port in the world was sighted as a major reason to deny the legislation, and it was considered a “crime against the transportation requirements of the harbor” to enlarge the island to accommodate a flying field; and

- The War Department planned to build the following structures below the James Line, if approved, and claimed there would not be adequate space for landing fields: noncommissioned officers' apartment, offices and quarters, quartermaster supply warehouse, quarters for officers, corps area headquarters building; radio station, fire stations, and guardhouse.⁴⁵⁴

Mayor LaGuardia's testimony on June 15, 1936, was spirited, reiterating that he would never compromise the resources of the New York Harbor, that he was certain the military could find another polo field, and that there was no real military purpose for Governors Island (and even so, he was not asking for the entire island, only a portion). The bill passed the House, but died in committee in the Senate.

A bill was reintroduced in January 1937, but within several months it was finally too late to argue for Governors Island to accommodate an air field. In the twenty-five years that Governors Island had been debated as an air terminal the aviation industry had grown and changed to such an extent that new safety standards came in to effect that required 4,000 foot runways and other conditions that Governors Island could not meet. No amount of enlargement or reconfiguring could enable Governors Island to comply with the new standards. The other municipal airports would have to serve the city in the future, one of which, in Queens, became named for LaGuardia in spite of the fact that it was miles from where he wanted the "grand central of air transportation" to be located.

The legislative battles for the military to relinquish land for civilian flights ended abruptly at that point. As if to underscore their win, in June 1937 the army declared Governors Island a refuge for another formed of winged flight: the island became a bird-life sanctuary for an intended twenty species, complete with bird baths, feeding racks, trees and shrubs planted for shelter, with support from the Works Progress Administration.⁴⁵⁵

The political debate over this contested ground is worthy of contemplation as it reveals questions about differing perspectives on the role of the military, the rights of the

⁴⁵⁴ Testimony on behalf of the bill was offered by, for instance: Theodore A. Peyser, Representative from State of New York; Commissioner of Docks, City of New York; James M. Mead, Representative from State of New York; Deputy Comptroller, City of New York; President of the Air Line Pilots Association; Aviators' Post, American Legion; Transcontinental & Western Airlines; Institute of Aeronautical Science; New York City Board of Trade; Industrial Bureau, Merchants' Association of New York; Brooklyn Young Men's Chamber of Commerce; New York Real Estate Board; Regional Plan Association of New York; and the magazine *Aero Digest*.

Testimony against the bill was offered by, for instance, the United States Army; Chief of Engineers of United States Army; Rivers, Harbors, and Piers Committee of the Maritime Association of the Port of New York; Chief of Air Corps, United States Army; Construction Branch, Quartermaster General's Office; Air Corps, United States Army; and the New York City Towboat Exchange.

⁴⁵⁵ "Bird-Bath Building Latest Task for Army; Governors Island Is to Become a Refuge," *New York Times*, June 27, 1937, p. 32.

military, and how a military installation close to a city had to respond to changing land use needs. In this case, the City of New York was no match for the power behind the Secretary of War, and the military never gave an inch of ground.

It is ironic that the transfer of land from the federal government to the city began again in the mid 1990s when then President Bill Clinton offered the island to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. At that time New York had an opportunity to imagine the use of a considerable amount of open space, complete with waterfront access and architecturally important and interesting buildings, and all in close proximity to Manhattan. New uses again came up for suggestion and debate. What could not be anticipated at that time was that several years later New York City would be the target of international terrorism, resulting in vulnerability and the question of how best federal resources could protect the harbor and the city. In a post 9-11 world, all these issues will be added to the mix of debating the continuing story of the island and how Governors Island can be conceived of and managed as a place for the public.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRELUDE, WAR AND AFTERWARDS: THE ERA OF WORLD WAR I AT GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1909-1920

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

The military role that Governors Island played in the run up to World War I and the war itself resembled in some ways the role that the island played in the Civil War. Troops gathered there to be sent elsewhere, primarily to stateside training camps; material was shipped from storage on the island; prisoners were housed at Castle Williams; and the wounded occasionally recovered in the post hospital. But because transportation methods, economic systems and political perspectives had changed dramatically in the just over half-century that separated the two conflicts, the story of World War I on Governors Island was very different from earlier efforts. The shift to a major headquarters made regional bureaucratic work a significant part of the Army's efforts there. Many generals and other high-ranking or potentially high-ranking younger officers passed through the island on their way to Europe. The development of aircraft, the reorganization of the Army, the first organized attempts at intelligence gathering, and the disputes over the need to prepare for war all affected how officers and troops stationed on Governors Island experienced the Great War.

Moreover, because the commanding general of Governors Island during much of the period was a particularly controversial figure, the island figured far more in the political news of the day before the outbreak of World War I than might otherwise have been expected. The bucolic administrative center of the late nineteenth century gave way to a staff that worked day and night at high speed to organize troops and supplies to engage first with Mexico and then with Germany.

FLIGHT AT GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1909-1917

The new land created at Governors Island, discussed in the last chapter, offered space for new activities. It was not really surprising that city and federal officials would covet Governors Island for a city airport after World War I; Governors Island became the favorite landing spot for pilots in the new flying machines from 1909 until the new

area was covered with warehouses to supply men and materiel to the troops abroad in 1917-18. The early flyers were civilians; many connected to the Aero Club of America, but as war approached, their concerns about the military preparedness of the Army air forces added to the discussion of how to train flying personnel for war.

Not war, but rather, celebration was on the minds of New Yorkers when the first flights were made from Governors Island. The year 1909 was the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson's trip up the old North River to Albany and the 100th anniversary of Robert Fulton's steamboat trip from New York City to Albany. New York planned a huge celebration, which included a gathering of naval vessels and demonstration flights from Governors Island. As historian John Sanford observed,

The Hudson-Fulton Flights took place as part of a much larger celebration. The Celebration was a two week festival which including military, historical, and children's parades, a meeting of American, French, British, and German battleships in the Hudson River, fireworks, floats, speechifying, and the exterior illumination of dozens of public buildings with the wonder of electricity. The Hudson-Fulton Celebration was a recognition of the 300th anniversary (1609) of Henry Hudson's navigation up the Hudson River in search of the North West Passage. It was also named in recognition of Robert Fulton and his paddle wheel steamer known as the Clermont, which in 1807 successfully traveled from New York to Albany, inaugurating the age of travel by steamship.

Part of the Festival included the arrival in New York Harbor of full-size replicas of Hudson's Half Moon caravelle, and Fulton's Clermont. In fact, at one point while maneuvering on the Hudson near Grant's Tomb (about 120th street and Riverside Drive), the Half Moon actually rammed the Clermont. The Hudson-Fulton festivities were therefore oriented to the Hudson River, and also celebrated transportation as key elements. It was almost inevitable that someone would decide to try to attract an aeronautical exhibit for the Celebration. "The climax of three centuries of progress should be marked by the navigation of the river - or part of it - by airships."⁴⁵⁵

Wilbur Wright and Glen Curtiss, both pioneers of aviation, agreed to participate in the demonstration flights.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ John Sanford, "The First Aerial Canoe: Wilbur Wright and the Hudson-Fulton Flights," Symposium Papers, Wright State University, September 28, 2001; <http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/symposium/sanford.html> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Richard Stimson. WrightStories.com, <http://www.wrightstories.com/flights.html> (accessed January 2, 2006). An excellent list of photographs of the Wright preparations and flight on and from Governors Island can be found at http://www.centennialofflight.gov/wbh/loc_wb_pdf/pdf_files/1909-GI.pdf. Another collection with many photographic images of Governors Island is found in Box 19, files 1 and 2, Photographic Collections, Wright State University Archives, http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/wright_brothers/wbguide/part3/series_1_16.html (accessed January 2, 2006).



Figure 40. Wilbur Wright taking off from the air strip at Governors Island, September 29, 1909. Wright State University Archives.



Figure 41. Wilbur Wright and others on Governor's Island, New York, n.d. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

The Hudson-Fulton Committee established a landing strip on the newly filled part of Governors Island. The flights were scheduled to begin on September 27, but bad weather prevented flying that day. Bad weather did not, however, prevent an unfriendly meeting between Wilbur Wright and Glen Curtiss on Governors Island, where both

went to examine their aircraft housed in separate wooden hangers that had been constructed for the occasion.⁴⁵⁷

Curtiss spent the night of September 28 on Governors Island, and flew briefly the next day observed only by a friend and an Army officer. Wright flew later that morning, circling Governors Island twice and circling the Statue of Liberty once. According to John Sanford, these were the first flights over American waters.⁴⁵⁸ As he also observed,

Two hangars had been built at opposite ends of the field, one for Curtiss and one for Wright. Some three hundred reporters were kept away from the airmen by a rope barrier guarded by soldiers under the command of Major General Leonard Wood, commandant of the Island. One reporter, Earl Findlay of the New York Tribune, attempted to jump the barrier and interview Wright, and was wrestled to the ground before being escorted off the Island in disgrace. Findlay would later be the editor of the journal, U.S. Air Services.⁴⁵⁹

Curtiss left on October 2, after days of bad weather, for another scheduled exhibition. The weather cleared two days later, and Wright flew past Grant's Tomb on October 4, in a flight seen by an estimated one million people in the harbor and along the Battery and west side of Manhattan. He landed at Governors Island again, with the intention of flying further after lunch, but a mechanical malfunction in the afternoon ended the flight demonstrations before he could take off again.⁴⁶⁰

The next year, Curtiss flew from Albany to Governors Island to win the *New York World* prize of \$10,000 for a flight from New York to Albany. He decided that the prevailing winds made the route from Albany to Governors Island more achievable.

When he headed south down the river, automobiles raced him on Riverside Drive but could not keep up. People turned out along the populous southern shores of the Hudson, whistles blew, bells rang, bedlam seized the entire area. He circled the Statue of Liberty and landed at Governors Island, welcomed by Major General Frederick D. Grant, the son of Ulysses S. Grant. Curtiss carried a letter from the mayor of Albany to the mayor of New York City, which, when delivered, represented the first air mail delivery in the U.S.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ Sanford, "The First Aerial Canoe". The Wrights were suing Curtiss for patent infringement which led to bad feelings between the parties.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. The Centennial of Flight Commission list of photographs, p. 107, makes the same claim.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Sanford, "The First Aerial Canoe".

⁴⁶¹ William Wraga, "The Hudson River Flight," The Curtiss-Wright Corporation History, <http://www.curtisswright.com/history/1910.asp>. See also Seth Shulman, "The Flight that Tamed the Skies" *Technology Review*, (September 2002) <http://www.technologyreview.com/articles/02/09/shulman10902.asp?p=1>. General Frederick Dent Grant served as Commander of the

The Curtiss flight, Shulman noted, opened the possibilities of long-distance flight in the United States. Governors Island continued to be a part of that new development. More notable flights landed on the new airstrip. Six years later, with a larger airplane, Victor Carlstrom rode a tail wind to a new American long-distance non-stop flight record. On November 3, 1916, Carlstrom arrived at Governors Island considerably sooner than had been expected. As the *New York Times* described it,

“Here he comes!”

The shout brought the half a hundred persons within hearing to attention. Up the walks of Governors Island, from the hangar, from the further corners of the field, they ran – all looking into the air and taking up the shout. In a moment, the whir of Carlstrom’s engine made a more emphatic announcement of his coming than the shouting. General Wood and the other officers hurried from their quarters to the field.⁴⁶²

Carlstrom brought mail from Chicago to New York to show again that mail delivered by airplane was feasible.

Ruth Bancroft Law (Oliver) was one of the most famous of the women who flew in the early days. Law learned to fly in 1912 and bought an airplane from Orville Wright. She was very successful as a stunt flyer. When Carlstrom broke the long-distance non-stop record, Law announced that she, in turn, would break his record.

She flew in her small, old “pusher” airplane⁴⁶³ because Glen Curtiss had refused to sell her a larger one due to doubts about a woman’s ability to handle it. She left Chicago on November 19 after sleeping outside to prepare herself for the cold she would encounter in the open cockpit. She flew from Chicago to Hornell, New York, non-stop for a record 590 miles and then flew an additional ninety miles to Binghamton, New York, where she spent the night. The morning of November 20, she left Binghamton in heavy fog and nearly ran out of gas as she approached Governors Island. The *New York Times* lauded her success.

Department of the East at Governors Island in 1904-8 and again in the department from July 25, 1910, to July 1, 1911; and the eastern division, which embraced the Department of the East and the Department of the Gulf from its establishment on July 1, 1911, until he died on April 12, 1912. See “Obituary of Frederick Dent Grant,” in *Report of the Sixth Reunion of the Grant Family Association at the Breevort House, Manhattan, New York City, February 27, 1914*, ed. Frank Grant and Elihu Grant, 26-29 (Westfield, MA.: n. p., 1914). <http://www.lib.siu.edu/projects/usgrant/fdg-obit.html> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁶² *New York Times*, November 4, 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁶³ A “pusher” airplane had the propellers at the rear of the aircraft, pushing it through the air. See Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training, 1907-1945* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), p. 24.

A hundred and twenty pounds of pluck called Ruth Law glided her little old 100 horse power “pusher” aeroplane down on a swift wind out of a mixture of fog and Jersey smoke yesterday morning and landed on Governors Island, winner of the American non-stop cross-country aviation record, and breaker of all world’s records of women fliers.

Uncle Sam’s band down on the island was playing its best tune, and the sun peeped out to glint a thousand welcomes from the rifles and swords on parade, as the girl made a graceful turn and stopped in front of Major General Leonard Wood, who was waiting to shake her hand. As his aides helped her from her seat, the General said: “Little girl, you beat them all.”⁴⁶⁴

She was back, taking off from and landing at Governors Island again the next month to fly as part of the celebration as President Woodrow Wilson lit the Statue of Liberty.⁴⁶⁵



Figure 42. Ruth Law flew a salute to President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 in New York Harbor. Wilson was there to light the Statue of Liberty.

These flights in 1916 utilized the airstrip that had been created by earlier flyers. As early as 1911, the U.S. Signal Corps, at that time the flying arm of the Army, planned to construct aerodromes at a number of government installations, including Governors Island.⁴⁶⁶ The Army also added five new airplanes to its fleet of one aircraft. As Cameron

⁴⁶⁴ *New York Times*, November 21, 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁵ *New York Times*, December 3, 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁶ *New York Times*, March 30, 1911, p. 12. In addition to Governors Island, General Allen planned to build airports at Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, West Point, and “somewhere near Washington City,” probably the College Park, MD site.

notes, however, even with the new planes, the Aeronautical Division of the Signal Corps “had almost no competent pilots, no clear criteria by which to judge candidates, and no means at hand to train them within the Army.”⁴⁶⁷

It was undoubtedly a coincidence that Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, who ended up as commander of all the Army Air Forces in World War II, was just back from the Philippines and stationed on Governors Island in 1909 when he saw the Wright and Curtiss flights and equipment.⁴⁶⁸ Arnold graduated from West Point in 1907, but his grades kept him from his preferred billet in the cavalry. He went into the infantry instead, and it was as an infantry officer that he arrived on Governors Island. Exactly how he became one of the first Army pilot trainees is not entirely clear. Arnold himself claimed that the letter came “out of the blue.” But others note that his incessant attempts to get out of the infantry had, by 1911, caught the attention of those looking for recruits.⁴⁶⁹ Arnold left Governors Island in 1911, bound for Dayton and training in the Wright brothers’ shop.

The Army did not build an aerodrome on Governors Island, most likely because the flyers and their trainers found very soon that training in northern climates with snow, rain and fog was not productive. But aviators and those who hoped to become aviators continued to press for training and facilities. As General Leonard Wood noted in his diary in 1911, when Wood was Chief of Staff of the Army, he had been contacted about training pilots. “Young Thomas Ryan called relative to the organization of a National Aeroplane Reserve, to be known as the Aero Reserve Corps,” Wood wrote. “He says there are hundreds of youngsters with means who would like to go into it....” Wood offered full cooperation at the time, but nothing further developed.⁴⁷⁰

The need to train civilian pilots, clearly, did not dissipate. The Aero Club of America wrote the Secretary of War in May 1915 to request that a squadron of eight airplanes be stationed at Governors Island to act as a defensive force for New York City.⁴⁷¹ The next

⁴⁶⁷ Cameron, p.29.

⁴⁶⁸ “Air Force Link” <http://www.af.mil/bios/bio.asp?bioID=4551>. (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁶⁹ Quoted in Cameron, p. 30; see the account in the Maxwell Air Force “Air Chronicles,” where they explain that

After a tour in the Philippines, he reapplied to the cavalry, but was again refused. Largely out of a desire to escape from the infantry, Arnold then applied for the Signal Corps and became one of America’s first military pilots.

<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/arnold.html> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁷⁰ Wood, quoted in Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood: A Biography* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 2:112.

⁴⁷¹ *New York Times*, May 28, 1915; Cameron, p. 43.

year, a group of Wall Street tycoons raised a fund to support a “Citizen’s Air Corps.”⁴⁷² As the group told the *New York Times*,

The members of the syndicate realized several months ago that, while it takes almost a year to make a soldier...men of the proper caliber can be made into aviators in a few months and in exceptional cases in six weeks. Observers, who are as important for military purposes as aviators, can be trained in a few weeks. It is the plan of the syndicate to make Governors Island into the first training camp, on account of its proximity to the lower end of the city and the ease with which it may be reached by the citizen aviators. As the work grows, other camps will probably be established, so that by the end of the year the 3000 aviators needed to defend this country in case of war will begin to receive their licenses.⁴⁷³



Figure 43. Cord Meyer, left, one of the graduates of the pilot training school at Governors Island in 1916, and J. Walter Struthers. Photo from collection of Rick Bjorklund, duplicated on the Early Birds’ web page, www.earlyaviator.com/emeyer.htm (accessed January 2, 2006).

From May 1916 to March 1917, an aviation-training center operated at Governors Island.⁴⁷⁴ With the approval of Major General Leonard Wood, Commander of the

⁴⁷² *New York Times*, April 29, 1916.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Paul Freeman, “Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields: New York, Brooklyn,” Revised 7/18/04, http://www.airfields-freeman.com/NY/Airfields_NY_NY_Brooklyn.htm (accessed January 2, 2006).

Department of the East on Governors Island, a group of civilians established the flying school to promote the development of military aviation.⁴⁷⁵

In these early days of flight, accidents were common. Luckily, only one major accident marred the record of the school at Governors Island. On September 8, 1916, two of the Governors Island Aviation School members were spiraling above Governors Island when the tail of the biplane began to spin and dropped the aircraft 800 feet to the ground. J. Walter Struthers (pictured above with Cord Meyer in (Figure 43) of New York and Charles D. Wiman of Moline, Illinois, were found under the wreckage. Struthers died of his injuries on November 13.⁴⁷⁶ A memorial in honor of these early flights was erected on the south side of Liggett Hall on December 17, 1954 by the “Early Birds”, an organization of “those who flew solo before December 17, 1916”.

MAJOR GENERAL LEONARD WOOD AND HIS TOURS AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

Governors Island housed the headquarters of the Department of the East, the Army’s eastern seaboard command, and thus saw many distinguished commanders. General Leonard Wood would rank among both the most talented and the most controversial on the list of those officers. He was not a West Pointer. Rather, he was a graduate of Harvard Medical School and a contract surgeon in his early days in the Army. His last medical position in the service was as President William McKinley’s personal physician. Then he went to Fort Whipple in Prescott, Arizona, to fight Apaches. He fought with the First Volunteer Cavalry, the “Rough Riders,” during the Cuban War with his friend, Theodore Roosevelt. Wood served as the military governor of Cuba from 1900 to 1902. He held several posts in the Philippines between 1902 and 1908, when he arrived at Governors Island. He was named chief of staff of the Army in spring 1911 and served until his term expired and he returned to Governors Island in 1914. He was politically exiled, according to some, and sent off to head a newly established headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1917. He ran for President in 1920, but was defeated before the convention; and then returned to the Philippines as Governor General. He died during surgery for a brain tumor in 1927.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ *New York Times*, September 9, 1916, p. 17; November 14, 1916, p. 11.

⁴⁷⁷ “Major General Leonard Wood 1860-1927,” <http://www.wood.army.mil/MGLEonardwood.htm> (accessed January 2, 2006).

General Wood was important to the history of Governors Island because he kept it in the news from the time he arrived until he was moved to South Carolina in 1917. General Wood took command of Governors Island for his first tour on November 10, 1908. His first biographer waxed lyrical about the location, saying, that from Wood's point of view, the new posting was mostly wonderful:

His department was the most important in the army, embracing the eastern seaboard from Maine to Georgia, incidentally and rather oddly including Porto Rico and Panama. It held a peculiar significance, moreover, inasmuch as its headquarters lay within the bounds of that city which was the nation's economic and intellectual capital. From his quarters beside the dingy anachronism which was Fort Jay he looked upon the topless towers of Illium. In all his romantic career, no setting quite so romantic had ever enfolded him. Majestic bridges swung across a great river on one side; majestic ships steamed up a greater river on the other. Between, rose the city, at dawn and dusk kindled to beauty and hung with mystery like some city of the Apocalypse, rising upward with enchanted grace, curiously tender in its loveliness for all its concrete and steel. The thousand lights, the passing to and fro of ferries, the crawling of illuminated worms over distant bridges, made the watcher on his island aware, really for the first time in his life, of an urban world. Not far away across olive-drab waters, Ellis Island spoke to him. By night and by day, the Statue of Liberty, guarding and giving light, was a part of his life.

But Governors Island was tame....⁴⁷⁸

Bureaucratic work bored Wood. The general, however, would make certain that the quiet, bureaucratic world he found there would be quickly shaken up. As a historian of the Army notes, "Because he was the kind of man he was, Leonard Wood would have infuriated much of the Army if he had done no more than urge that infantrymen go on carrying rifles."⁴⁷⁹

Wood and his family traveled west when they left the Philippines and returned to the United States. He stopped in France, Germany, and England on his way home. In each of the European countries, he observed army drills and talked to military planners about the characteristics which a twentieth-century army should embrace. Back in the United States, as the commander of the Department of the East, he began soon to speak publicly about issues that his European sojourn had underlined for him. Those included the lack of preparedness for war in the United States; the weakness of the National Guard; the lack of training for young people who might someday have to defend the nation. To address the lack of preparedness in the Department of the East, Wood held maneuvers in the field during the summer of 1909, and was immediately told by his superiors in

⁴⁷⁸ Hagedorn, pp. 83-84.

⁴⁷⁹ Weigley, p.327.

Washington to stop such activities because they made the citizenry concerned when there was no need for public worry.⁴⁸⁰

Despite instructions to avoid large training efforts, Wood planned for further exercises. In 1910, however, he became the ranking general in the Army, and President William Howard Taft appointed him Chief of Staff. He left Governors Island (but not for good) and moved to Washington. In his new position, Wood worked to implement the Progressive changes in the organization of the U.S. Army that Elihu Root and Theodore Roosevelt had championed in the first years of the century: particularly the concept of the General Staff, with a Chief of Staff at its head to advise the President through the Secretary of War. As a close friend of Roosevelt's and a staunch believer in the new approaches, Wood could do no less, but the entrenched bureaucracy of the Army resisted change.⁴⁸¹

Wood served out his four-year term as chief of staff, but during his time in office, the Republican hold on the executive branch was broken by the election of Woodrow Wilson as President. The neutrality and pacifism espoused by Wilson and his Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan discouraged any preparation for war among U.S. forces. Although it was seen as politically risky, Wood began to speak out in support of preparedness, and from then until he was passed over as Allied Commander, he agitated constantly and in public to push the armed services to prepare for war.

But Wood did more than speak. The notion that he is most remembered for is the "Plattsburg idea."⁴⁸² In thinking about how to encourage preparedness for war in a country that was being told not to worry, Wood as chief of staff had instituted summer camps for college students to which they paid their own way and received training from Army personnel. Writing to college presidents, Wood explained,

The objects of these camps is not in any way one of military aggrandizement, but a means of meeting a vital need confronting a peaceful, unmilitary, though warlike nation, to preserve that desired peace and prosperity by the best know precaution, viz.: a more thorough preparation and equipment to resist any effort to break such peace.⁴⁸³

In 1915, back at Governors Island, he planned a summer camp for businessmen and professionals at Plattsburg, New York. As one historian described them,

⁴⁸⁰ Hagedorn, pp.86-100.

⁴⁸¹ Weigley, pp. 326-349.

⁴⁸² Some sources refer to it as the "Pittsburg idea" but that is a misreading of the historical record.

⁴⁸³ Quoted in Weigley, p. 131.

Hundreds of distinguished and not-so-distinguished public and private leaders in their thirties and forties, including the 36-year-old mayor of New York City, John Purroy Mitchel, volunteered for a summer camp at Plattsburg Barracks in upstate New York. Two Roosevelts also attended, Quentin and Theodore Jr., as did Julius Ochs Adler, general manager of the New York Times and nephew of Adolph Ochs, the newspaper's publisher. Adler's pro-national defense attitude would favorably influence the Times coverage of defense issues for years to come.

This Plattsburg camp was in addition to the camps for college men, which continued in 1915. The four-week training at Plattsburg (despite what today's atlases and ZIP Code books show, that is the way the city's name was then spelled) was officially known as the Business Men's Camp but was branded early and irrevocably by the press as the "Tired Businessmen's Camp."

Although the camp's extensive publicity, particularly in the New York newspapers, concentrated on the lighter side, it sharpened the nation's new awareness of the preparedness movement. One of the nation's most vocal and distinguished proponents of military readiness took to his "bully pulpit" to express his enthusiastic support of summer military training for young men. Theodore Roosevelt said: "The military tent, where boys sleep side by side, will rank next to the public school among the great agents of democracy."⁴⁸⁴

Such summer training for students and men of stature guaranteed Wood a cadre of supporters who were elite and influential. Camps were held elsewhere as well the next summer, but Plattsburg came to stand for the notion of a citizen's responsibility to be ready to serve in time of war.⁴⁸⁵

In addition to making speeches, writing articles and planning summer camps for civilian training, Wood found himself moving National Guard forces from the Eastern Division to the Mexican Border, where a small war had broken out between Mexican rivals and the regular U.S. Army. Both in 1911 and again in 1916, the United States' woeful lack of preparation for any sort of military undertaking characterized the response to the Mexican crises.⁴⁸⁶ As *American Military History* noted, however, the Mexican actions allowed the "intensive" training of both National Guard and Regular Army troops and officers just before the United States entered the European War.⁴⁸⁷

Leonard Wood was a military activist in an administration that did not welcome military discussions. Even more, he was quite publicly close to Republican leaders like

⁴⁸⁴ Donald M. Kington, "The Plattsburg Movement and its Legacy," *Relevance*, 6:4 (Autumn 1997), <http://www.worldwar1.com/tgws/rel011.htm> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁸⁵ Weigley, pp. 326-349. The Army's Military History Institute produced an excellent bibliography on the "Plattsburg Movement;" see http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/academic/history/marshall/military/mil_hist_inst/t/trng7.asc (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁸⁶ Millet and Maslowski, pp. 336-337.

⁴⁸⁷ *American Military History*, pp. 354-357; see also Millet and Maslowski, *For the Common Good*, pp. 336-337.

Theodore Roosevelt during a Democratic administration. His ability to attract the attention of the press and his nonstop criticism of the Wilson administration's military policy won no friends. In February 1917, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany. A month later, Wood was removed from command at Governors Island. Then he was passed over as commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in favor of General John J. Pershing.⁴⁸⁸

GOVERNORS ISLAND AT WAR, 1917-1918

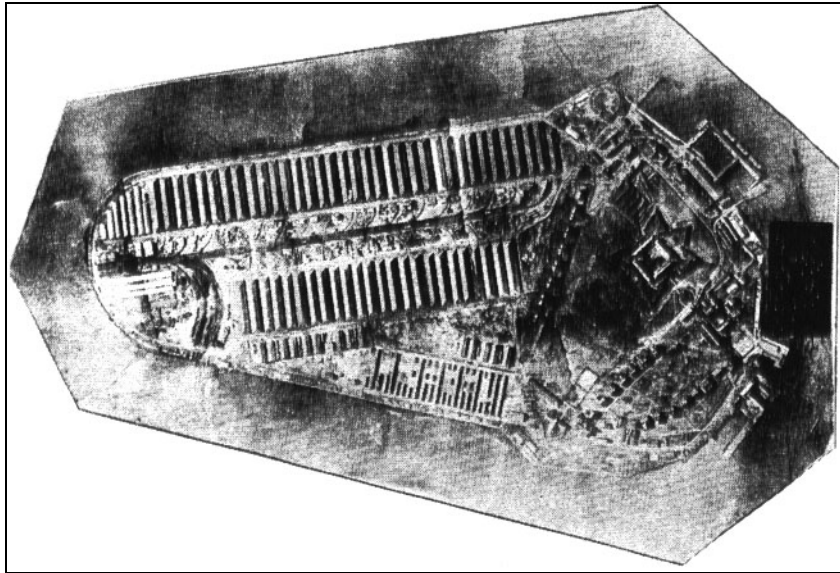


Figure 44. Map of World War I facilities at Governors Island. The railroad tracks run from the dock in the southeast corner into each individual warehouse. The temporary buildings are warehouses and barracks for both black and white soldiers separately.

The filled section of Governors Island was built up initially as a Usable Installation landscape during World War I, rather than a City Beautiful design. The beaux-arts landscape envisioned for Governors Island by Elihu Root and the McKim, Mead and White architects did not, in fact, shape the way the filled area of Governors Island was used in its first decade of existence. The map of World War I Governors Island shows clearly how thorough the use of the new landfill area became as troops, officers, African-American labor battalions and tons of material and supplies moved into the temporary wooden buildings erected there. The Governors Island railroad had six engines to keep goods moving into and out of those wooden warehouses twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week as the war began.

⁴⁸⁸ Hagedorn, pp. 204-223; *American Military History*, p. 373, points out as do most other sources that there were five generals who outranked Pershing when he was chosen commander.

In 1914, World War I began in Europe. In the same year, the Eastern Department Headquarters at Governors Island served as administrative headquarters for the New England States. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi also reported there, as did the post of Fort Logan H. Roots, in Arkansas. The staff at Governors Island also oversaw the Coast Defenses of New Orleans and Galveston, the Panama Canal Zone, and the island of Puerto Rico and its islands and keys.

The personnel stationed at Governors Island that year included Company D of the Engineers; the 11th Cavalry; the 10th Infantry; the Porto Rico Regiment of Infantry; Field Hospital and Ambulance Co. No. 6; First Division (First Brigade); North Atlantic Coast Artillery District; and the South Atlantic Coast Artillery. The Army's First Division was also headquartered at Governors Island. That Division's troops included the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Field Artillery; the 2nd Cavalry; and the 1st Battalion of Engineers, except for Company D.⁴⁸⁹ The New York Arsenal still operated on the northeast coast of the island.

By the time of American entry into World War I in 1917, the landscape of Governors Island had undergone vast change. Named one of many embarkation points in New York Harbor, Governors Island sent the recruits mostly to training camps rather than to Europe. Because of its docks, Governors Island also became one of the shipping points that Elihu Root had originally envisioned. Unlike the preparations for the Spanish-American War, where supplies sent to Tampa, Florida, rotted in unloaded rail cars and troops milled in confusion and lack of direction, Governors Island was to be no Tampa. Seventy World War I temporary buildings, barracks and warehouses, were built on the filled land, with "a covered floor area in excess of thirty million feet."⁴⁹⁰ War materiel was kept on the island in those warehouses. More than a million dollars' worth of material was shipped from the island daily, according to the history written by the Governors Island Club in 1937.

The Governors Island railroad, with six locomotives and more than eight miles worth of track going from one end of the fill to the other, with multiple sidings to the various warehouses, helped to move so much freight. More roads were added as well. More administrative groups were stationed there during World War I: the Quartermaster Corps, Ordnance and Military Intelligence Departments, and the War

⁴⁸⁹ Dupuy, p. 6.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

Risk Insurance Agency were among them. The Effects Bureau, which returned dead soldiers' possessions to their families, was also on Governors Island.⁴⁹¹

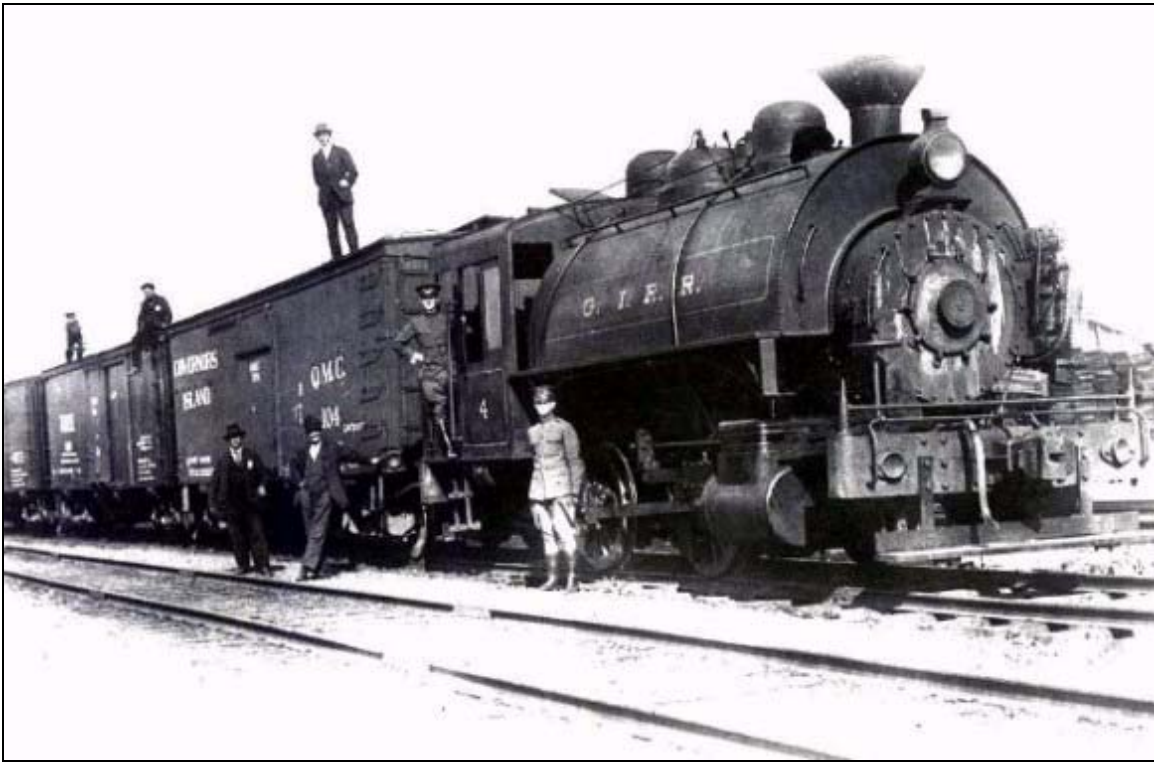


Figure 45. One of the engines and some boxcars of the Governors Island railroad, 1917. Photo from <http://members.aol.com/christy623/govisletour.html> (accessed October 29, 2006).

THE 22ND INFANTRY AT GOVERNORS ISLAND BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR I

Relatively few men embarked directly from Governors Island and few stayed there to receive training, but the staggering investment in materiel demanded some kind of troop protection. Without recruits to do that job, others needed to be brought in to provide protection for Governors Island and, more generally, for New York Harbor. In April 1917, the *New York Times* headlined the news of new arrivals at Governors Island. “Regiment of Regulars Comes to Guard City,” the paper announced. “Hardened Men from the Border Go to Governors Island After Six Years in Tents.”⁴⁹² For the first time since the Spanish American War in 1898, Governors Island would house an entire

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² *New York Times*, April 2, 1917, p. 6.

regiment of 1,000 men, to replace the 200 Coast Artillery troops from whom they took over.

Colonel John Charles Fremont Tillson commanded the 22nd Infantry Regiment from 1916 to 1920. The 22nd was a storied unit: they fought in the War of 1812 and in the Indian Wars in the 1880s. They were the first regiment to land in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, and some elements of the unit fought in the Philippines.⁴⁹³

In 1917, with mobilization underway, Tillson took the regiment from Camp Harry Jones, Arizona, to Governors Island. As commander of the 22nd Infantry, he also became commander of Fort Jay. As the *Times* reported,

The Twenty-Second slipped into New York quietly, and few persons except those who happened to see the men de-training at Jersey City about noon knew of its arrival. The men were taken directly to Governors Island on ferryboats, the first section arriving there about 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon....⁴⁹⁴

If the United States were to enter the European conflict, the Army needed more manpower. The draft was instituted in 1917, when it became apparent the United States would inevitably enter the World War. Draft resisters were brought to Governors Island, among other places, where it would be decided if they would serve in the military or serve sentences of incarceration at Castle Williams or elsewhere.

As the history of the 22nd Infantry Regiment told it, because those troops were assigned to Governors Island, one of Colonel Tillson's jobs was to interview those who had not responded to the draft order and to decide whether they were really draft dodgers and if so, to hold them as prisoners in Castle Williams.

Colonel Tillson...had charge of "slackers", men who failed to comply with the draft law. In the opinion of competent observers, he handled a difficult problem with tact and common sense. Scores of men who came before him, sullen and defiant, a few hours later left Governors' [sic] Island for Camp Upton [a training camp] as anxious to get into the service as they previously had been to avoid it. More than 95 per cent of the slackers he interviewed later got ready enthusiastically and faithfully at Camp Upton to 'go over the top'. At times he had to use as many as three interpreters to get to the bottom of the case of some unfortunate who had American citizenship papers but could not understand a single word printed on those documents. His experience in China, where he had to communicate with Chinese through interpreters, then stood him in good stead."⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ "History Notes," 22nd Infantry website, http://www.22ndinfantry.org/history_notes.htm (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁹⁴ *New York Times*, April 2, 1917, p. 6.

⁴⁹⁵ "The Twenty-Second Infantry During the World War, 1916-1918," <http://122infantry.org/history/hoboken.htm> (accessed January 2, 2006; Tillson's obituary, *New York Times*, December 17, 1941, p. 27.

The port of New York was designated the port of embarkation for the U.S. troops expected to be sent overseas to the war in Europe. The 22nd Infantry Regiment stayed at Governors Island, rather than being sent overseas. They guarded Governors Island, and the docks at Hoboken, New Jersey, against possible acts of sabotage or espionage. As commandant of Fort Jay, Colonel Tillson was also given the job of protecting the railroads leading into New York City.

On April 6, 1917, at 3 a.m. war was declared. At one minute past 3 a.m., Colonel Tillson sent detachments of the 22nd Infantry on revenue cutters to the docks in Hoboken, where they took possession of all ships of the North German Lloyd and Hamburg American Lines. Altogether they seized sixteen German ships, including the *Vaterland*, then the largest ship in the world, and took their crews into custody. Other ports received instructions to seize German ships simultaneously and twenty-nine all together were secured, all but two of those in New York City and its harbor. By this action, the 22nd Infantry participated in the first act of belligerence by the United States against Germany in World War I. The regiment remained under Colonel Tillson's command at Governors Island throughout the war.⁴⁹⁶



Figure 46. Troop ship *Leviathan*, the renamed *Vaterland* which was captured and interned in Hoboken as the United States entered World War I. This image can be found at <http://www.greatships.net/leviathan.html> (accessed January 2, 2006).

All of the seized vessels were pressed into American service, to be used as cargo ships and troop carriers, adding immensely to the movement of men and material across the

⁴⁹⁶ *New York Times*, April 7, 1917, p. 6.

Atlantic to the war zone. After refitting and renovation, the *Vaterland*, one of the German ships seized by the 22nd Infantry at Hoboken, became the *USS Leviathan*, and was used to ferry troops to and from the European theatre of operations. From 1914-1921 this was the largest ship of any kind afloat. She was 950 feet long and 100 feet wide, displacing 54,000 tons. During the war the *Leviathan* made nineteen round trips across the Atlantic, carrying ten percent of all American troops ferried. In March of 1919, she brought home 14,416 troops on one run, setting a world record for the most people ever sailing on a single ship. After the war the *Leviathan* once again was refitted, and became a passenger liner from the year 1921 to 1934. She was scrapped in 1938.⁴⁹⁷

In addition to housing those who guarded the railroads and ports and those who were determined to be draft dodgers, Governors Island served as an induction center for candidates for officers' commissions. The officer-candidates reported to the Quartermaster General's office at Governors Island and then were shipped to one of the training camps near New York City.⁴⁹⁸

GENERAL PERSHING'S DEPARTURE FROM GOVERNORS ISLAND

One role Governors Island played in World War I remained secret for many years after the conflict. For approximately six weeks after war was declared, absolute secrecy was maintained as to the whereabouts of General John J. (Black Jack) Pershing, who had been named commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF). He was called to Washington from the Mexican border and given an office in the capital city. Then he, along with about 150 other officers, disappeared and the press was asked to observe a blackout about military movements.⁴⁹⁹

On May 28, 1917, they briefly reappeared. Pershing and his staff, dressed in civilian clothes and with luggage marked with minimal identification, assembled on Governors Island. New York Harbor was covered with a dense fog that morning, and the *Baltic*, a White Star Line passenger ship, moved through it from her mooring in Brooklyn to the lower harbor area. As the *New York Times* reported ten years later, "For three hours a small Governors Island ferryboat plied between the island and the liner anchored down the bay. The liner was camouflaged like a cubists' dream...."⁵⁰⁰

⁵⁰⁰ The Naval Historical Center has a number of pictures of the ship. See <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-l/id1326-c.htm> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁴⁹⁸ *New York Times*, May 13, 1917, p. 18; June 18, 1917, p. 4 as examples.

⁴⁹⁹ *New York Times*, May 29, 1927, p. E6; June 12, 1927, p. SM6.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Pershing was nearly lost when he was required to transfer from the ferryboat to a tug mid-harbor by leaping from the one to the other. Just as he jumped, a wave hit the boats, throwing them out of alignment. Unhurt, Pershing sprawled on the deck.⁵⁰¹ The *Baltic* sailed for France at 5 p.m., just as the fog began to lift.

“POWER OF PLACE”: THE “LOST” HISTORY OF GOVERNORS ISLAND DURING WORLD WAR I

The historic structures and objects that remain on Governors Island today obviously do not represent uninterrupted continuity with the island’s past. Often, what is missing is just as significant as what remains.⁵⁰² Governors Island has its missing past from World War I, part of which is related to housing. The *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form* for Governors Island states that the last distinctive group of buildings, thirteen Greek revival structures to house the 16th Infantry, “replaced a hodge-podge of inadequate World War I temporary structures which had been placed on nearly every open space on the island”⁵⁰³. Yet this hodge-podge of inadequate structures is also historically significant because it represents the influence that catastrophic world events had on military housing: in times of emergencies, anything would do.

In addition to world upheaval, the temporary World War I housing on Governors Island also represented the military segregation and discrimination that existed within the United States Army.⁵⁰⁴ Because of the tremendous amount of material to move and load onto ships for the European theater, one of the black United States Labor Battalions, commanded by Captain E.S. Jones, was stationed on Governors Island during World War I. Comprising over twenty percent of the Army prior to 1917,⁵⁰⁵ black Americans viewed their established military role as a foot in the door and participation in

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Norton, HIST 526 paper.; Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

⁵⁰³ National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form. Governors Island, Governors Island, listed 1985-02-4.

⁵⁰⁴ The Cultural Resources Research Center at the U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratories (USACERL). “Historic Context for the African American Military Experience,” <https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/Legacy/AAME/aame3.html#Labor%20Battalions%20Overseas> (accessed January 3, 2006).

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. The Army’s report says that of 75,000 troops at the beginning of World War I, 20,000 were African American.

the war as both a duty and an opportunity to prove their mettle, patriotism, and right to equal treatment. Unfortunately, their recruitment was intentionally avoided, impeded, or, as in the case of the Marines, nonexistent. Although the United States government addressed growing discord on the part of black Americans with superficial efforts at appeasement and offering limited opportunities for combat and professional roles, the overwhelming majority, over eighty percent, of African American soldiers served in labor battalions constructing and maintaining military facilities, handling freight, and supporting white troops in a number of capacities.

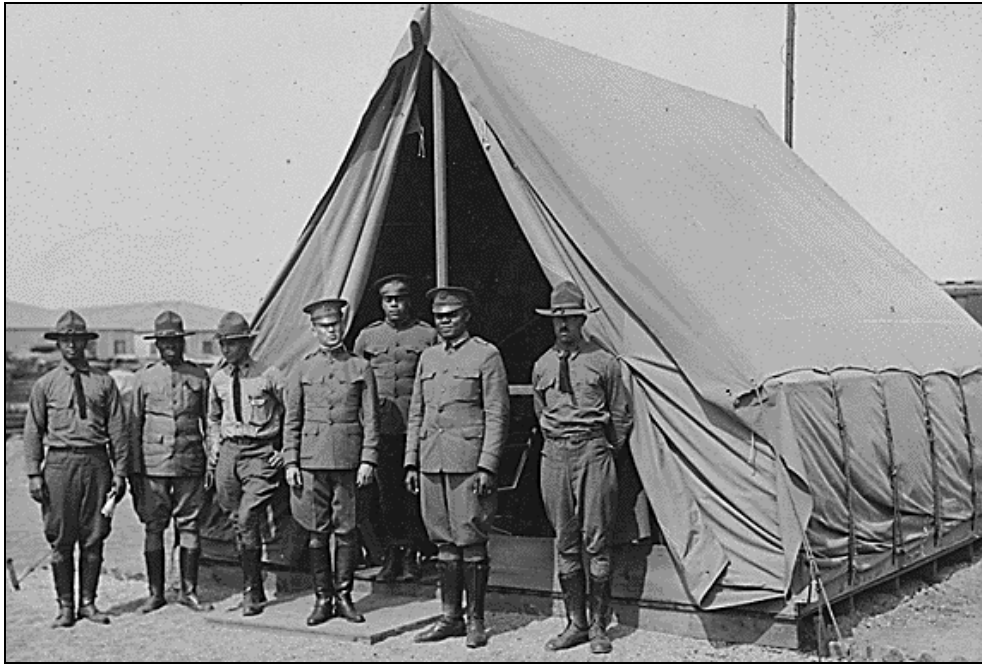


Figure 47. ARC Identifier: 533501. *Commander of United States Labor Battalion and staff. Captain E.S. Jones and staff at Governor's Is . . . , 09/16/1918.* Still Picture Records LICON, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives.

As the Army's *Historic Context of the African-American Military Experience* pointed out,

Military leaders believed that this large laboring class of African Americans did not have the physical, mental, or moral character necessary to withstand combat. Consequently, the Army assigned them to labor battalions, constructing wharves, docks, railroads, and warehouses. They also loaded and unloaded freight, felled trees, repaired roads, and buried soldiers killed in action. Of the 200,000 African American soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), over 160,000 (or 80 percent) served in this capacity...In fact, blacks comprised more than one-third of all labor troops, although they formed less than 10 percent of the expeditionary force.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

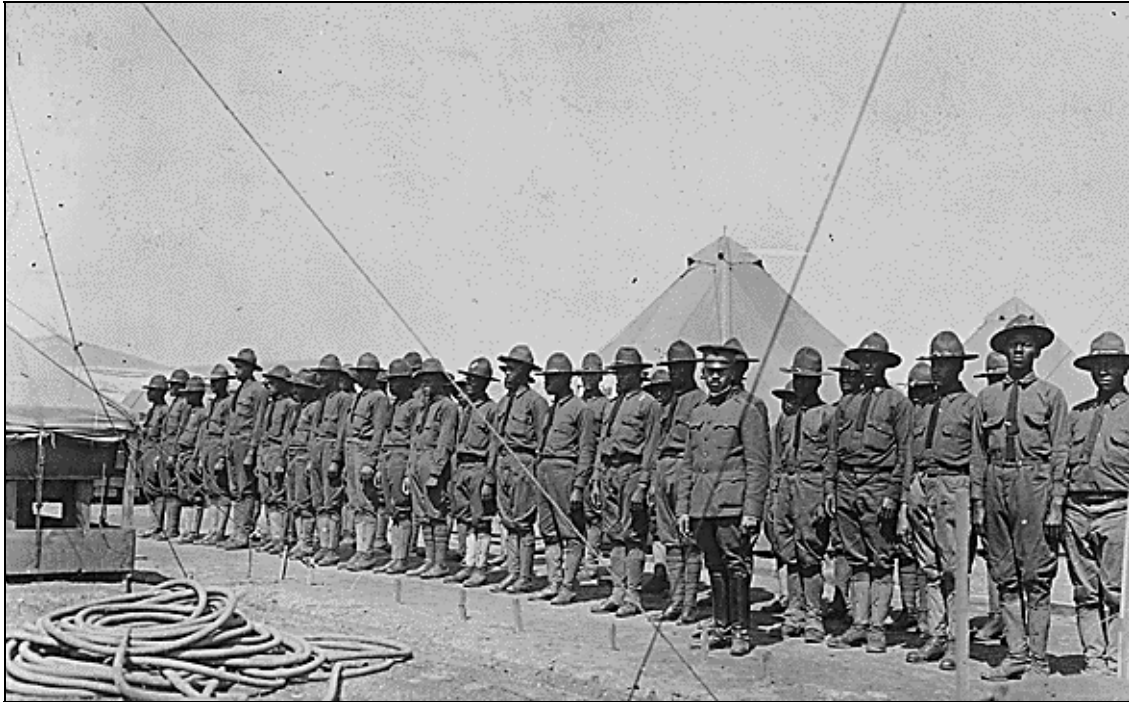


Figure 48. Company of [African American] troops that make up labor battalion, Governor's [sic] Island, New York, 1917-ca. 1919. ARC identifier: 533589, Still Picture Records LICON, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives.

Labor shortages, the perception that blacks were not smart enough to fight, white fears of blacks trained to use firearms, and the priority of whites for combat all contributed to the regimentation of blacks in labor battalions. As one African American leader noted,

As indicating the general attitude of some Army officers in carrying out the instructions of the War Department, there may be mentioned the particular attitude of certain officers in charge of units of the so-called Labor Battalions. The pressure from colored people throughout the country and from other sources as well became so strong that the War Department found it necessary to issue a certain memorandum changing the former decision (which called for white sergeants) to a decision which required that the non-commissioned officers in the Reserve Labor Battalions should be "all white or all colored" instead of "white." The effect of this immediately was to eliminate in many camps the colored men who were serving as non-commissioned officers and to substitute white men, no matter how unfitted such white non-commissioned officers were for the duties required of them. No element contributed to more unrest among the colored men who were drafted than this organization of Reserve Labor Battalions.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁷ Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro In The World War* (S.I: author, 1919) <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/comment/Scott/SCh08.htm> (accessed January 3, 2006).

The labor battalion on Governors Island served during World War I, but no information has surfaced as to where they went when the war was over.

THE END OF WORLD WAR I

The end of World War I found Governors Island covered with temporary wooden buildings, a complex system of train tracks, and exhausted personnel. In the wider world of the war and the aftermath of the conflict, by June 30, 1919, 2,608,218 enlisted troops and 128,436 officers had received discharges from the United States military.⁵⁰⁸

The moment looked bright on the national level to implement finally the Progressive-period reforms that recommended that a professional army be maintained at a level larger than traditional in American history. Well-trained National Guard troops and the military Reserves, all civilians, but ready to serve if the United States needed to muster forces again, would back up those professional soldiers.⁵⁰⁹

The National Defense Act of 1916 was amended on June 4, 1920, to allow for direct responsibility for all those levels of personnel. The United States was divided into nine corps areas, each headed by a major general. To each was assigned a division of the Regular Army and a division, each, of National Guard and Organized Reserve troops from their areas.⁵¹⁰ The old departments, like the Department of the East, which had been at Governors Island since the 1870s, were eliminated in July 1920, and the corps areas were organized in their place. The Second Corps Area retained the old Department of the East's headquarters at Governors Island, and was responsible for the states of New York, New Jersey and Delaware, plus Puerto Rico. The Second Corps headquarters remained at Governors Island for the next fifteen years.

⁵⁰⁸ Weigley, p. 396.

⁵⁰⁹ Center of Military History, *American Military History*, pp. 405-409.

⁵¹⁰ RG160 "Second Service Command, History" mss. p. 1, NARA II.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1920S-WORLD WAR II

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

After World War I, Governors Island saw its military mission and its various activities shift. The arsenal moved in 1920 to New Jersey to be consolidated with the Picatinny Arsenal. The themes that characterized the shaping of the U.S. Army during the interwar years included limited funding, slow growth, administrative reforms, installation design improvements, New Deal construction, and training “civilian components.”⁵¹⁰ In addition, as noted earlier, the Army had to fight off an attempted land grab on the part of New York City, which wanted to use the island for an airport.

At Governors Island, new organizations arrived. Attempts to build new facilities through the 1920s finally saw success in the 1930s as badly-needed permanent buildings replaced the remainders of the temporary structures built during the Great War. Efforts were made to provide social, cultural, recreational and educational activities. Despite the dilapidated buildings, Governors Island began to resemble a country club with golf and polo as particular attractions.

Because the island remained a headquarters location, it continued to serve an important role through World War II, but its active roles were no longer assigned to it. Castle Williams lost its Disciplinary Barracks status before World War II and thenceforth housed mostly prisoners who had committed minor infractions, like those who missed the last ferry back to Governors Island at night after a leave.

GOVERNORS ISLAND IN THE 1920S

They might well have renamed Governors Island “Officers Island” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The total staff for the Second Corps Area consisted of thirty-six officers and fourteen staff in its initial organization. In November 1920, however, the medical staff was enlarged and later three additional officers were added “for Animal Transport, Salvage and Motor Transport, respectively. The Animal

⁵¹⁰ Goodwin study chart of types of installations, historical developments and design themes, <http://aec.army.mil/usace/cultural/millatab.doc> (accessed January 2, 2006).

Transport Officer later dropped out of the picture, presumably because animal transportation itself was doing so.”⁵¹¹ By 1930, about fifty officers worked for the headquarters.

The 22nd Regiment of Infantry, of German ship fame, was still stationed at Governors Island, with their commander serving as Post Commander. In July 1922, the 16th Infantry arrived to stay and immediately needed housing, garaging for cars and motorized equipment, a school, a hospital, and recreational facilities. Troops from those two units served as the personnel for some of the new administrative departments on the island. Because of budget cuts, there were few civilians employed on the island at this time, particularly once the arsenal moved to New Jersey.⁵¹²

HEADQUARTERS, SECOND CORPS

In the beginning of this period, Second Corps apparently used a World War I temporary wooden building for its headquarters. Building 109, built on a rectangular plan, is now a one-story tall utilitarian brick office and storage building that rests on a raised stone basement. Originally constructed in wood, it was rebuilt in brick in 1945. During the 1930s and 1940s, after the new administration building was built, it was used as the post commissary.

The role of being the headquarters and representing the Army near New York City was a demanding one. As the Second Service Command history notes, speaking of the commanding officer,

Not the least important of the functions of a military commander stationed at his country's largest center of commerce, finance, industry and cultural life, was to maintain the best cooperative relations with the influential elements within that metropolis...⁵¹³

The Military Intelligence Division also maintained close ties to the city, but for different reasons:

The task of G-2, the Military Intelligence Division of the General Staff, was always particularly onerous. At a time when there was only one commissioned officer in G-2, he was compelled to spend most of his time in New York City doing work formerly done from Washington -- keeping up contacts with forty-three heads of big business

⁵¹¹ RG 160, “Second Services Command history,” pp. 2-3, NARA II.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid., p. 11.

interests in New York City, which had foreign representatives, and making friends among thirty-six metropolitan newspapers and periodicals, with a view to obtaining editorial support for current military policy. Also the task of compilation and maintenance of a Situation Monograph; the securing of geographic information; the maintenance of liaison with the Department of Justice, Municipal Police, and other civilian authorities concerned with the problems presented by the very large foreign and unassimilated element in New York City. In addition, G-2 passed on the desirability of military participation in public ceremonies, although the Chief of Staff made the final decision.⁵¹⁴

In December 1922, the Army considered moving the 2nd Corps headquarters to the Army Building in New York City because of the expense of ferry service.⁵¹⁵

In the end, rather than move the headquarters, the Army decided to build on the slowly cleared south section of the island. By fall of 1924, major construction was being anticipated for Governors Island. Roads, a powder magazine, a guard house, a band barracks and regular barracks as well as battalion barracks were all needed. Barracks were important because they could house troops and the buildings that the soldiers occupied in 1924 could then be remade to house officers and their families. These structures were all requested, but most were refused from Washington because of the limited budget for fiscal 1925. The rationale for building the battalion barracks was “men are now quartered in frame cantonment barracks, which are rapidly deteriorating, and do not suitably provide for the comfort of the occupants.”⁵¹⁶ The planned building would be

of reinforced concrete construction, with tar and gravel roof, 3 stories and basement, 348 feet front, 50 feet deep, with two rear wings 44x33 feet each and with 10 foot porch in rear of main building. Heated by steam. Pile foundations. Location on file at present site of Warehouses B-10, B-11, B-12 and B-13. It would have a capacity of 600 men.⁵¹⁷

Although this building is not as large as the later Liggett Hall, a building big enough to house 600 people is no small place.

The planners at Governors Island also planned to take World War I warehouses B-2, B-3, B-5, B-6, B-7, and B-8 and convert them to six barracks for companies that were then housed in temporary cantonment barracks. The six warehouses were 600 x 348 feet with corrugated steel walls and roof. The band barracks was to be in the east end of

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence, Geographic File, 1922-1935. Requisition, 3/9/23; NARA II.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

warehouse B-4. These buildings were among the few World War I temps left by 1923-24. Most had already been pulled down, and a good part of the railroad line, ripped up.⁵¹⁸

In October 1924, the plans for the three new four-company barracks buildings for \$900,000 for fiscal year 1926 were rejected because of the Army's limited housing budget. An illustration of how creative island officers became in order to respond to the housing needs was laid out:

These estimates contemplate salvaging two of the fourteen cantonment barracks in order to obtain necessary material for repairs, the use of post and prison labor exclusively, with the exception of two carpenters to direct the work and do such work as requires skilled labor. The proposed work will accomplish a repair that will make these twelve buildings safe and weathertight for a period of approximately three years with minor repairs.⁵¹⁹

Even stables got pressed into use. In 1926, the highest priority at Governors Island was the conversion of Building 20, one of the stable buildings, into three sets of Warrant Officer's quarters. The building was described as

Building #20 at Fort Jay is a permanent brick building with slate and tin roof, constructed in 1896 at a cost of \$5872.00. It was originally used as a stable building, but has not been used for this purpose for some time, as animals have been provided for in the warehouse section of the Island. It is desired to convert this building into quarters for 3 sets of warrant officers by using wooden partitions and wall board throughout. A large amount of salvaged material will also be used. At present there are 36 warrant officers and 24 field clerks at Fort Jay, with accommodations for 25 warrant officers and field clerks. Commutation of quarters is paid those for whom quarters are not available⁵²⁰

This request was turned down because it was more expensive than housing them off-base. By July 20, 1926, however, the conversion was going forward. Some buildings did get built. The Army built a new powder magazine at Governors Island because the old one was in bad repair and too close to important buildings.⁵²¹

The lack of housing for officers made commuting necessary; by 1929, plans were made to convert Building 36 from one set of quarters to two and the planning document points out

⁵¹⁸ RG 92, Geographic File, Entry 333.35, NARA II.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ RG 92, Geographic File, From A.C. Dalton, in 625 Fort Jay. NARA II.

⁵²¹ RG 92, Geographic File, Entry 633, NARA II.

the existing shortage of officers' quarters at this station necessitates that provision be made whenever possible to accommodate officers, as it is realized that it will be several years until relief will be afforded through new construction as embodied in the War Dept Housing Plan...Officers now on a commutation of quarters status would prefer quarters on Governors Island in preference to the inconvenience of having to live at a considerable distance from their station...⁵²²

Education

Building 23, formerly the carpenter's shop was converted to a school. There were reportedly 116 children, from four to sixteen years of age, living on the island. There was no public school on the island, though there was a small private school attended by thirteen children. Others went by ferry to school in New York City.⁵²³

By March 19, 1929, administrators at Governors Island already needed more room for schoolchildren, and they wrote to Washington for permission to build an addition to Building 23. "At present," they noted, "the living room of Warrant Officer's Quarters No. 13-A is being utilized as a classroom and it is desired to build this extension so as to permit the occupant of Building 13-A to have full use of his quarters...."⁵²⁴

Sports and Recreation

Polo-playing by Army men probably started with the emergence of the sport at West Point toward the end of the nineteenth century.⁵²⁵ Polo came to America, as Donna Morris noted,

In 1876, James Gordon Bennett, publisher of *The New York Herald* and one of the most colorful adventurers of his time, attended a match at Hurlingham. Bennett quickly became enthralled with the game and introduced the sport to the United States.

Private clubs flourished on the East Coast from New York to South Carolina. Harvard formed a polo team in the 1880s, as did Yale, thus extending their rivalry to the polo field. Polo caused such a furor in the East that devotees of the game formed the United States Polo Association (USPA) in 1890 to regulate matches and handicap players.

Early in this century, Gen. John J. Pershing persuaded the U.S. Army to include polo as part of its training of cavalrymen. By the 1930s, polo was an Olympic sport, wildly popular with wealthy spectators and amateur players. Crowds in excess of 30,000 regularly attended international matches at the Meadow Brook Polo Club on Long Island. Scions of industry such as John Hay Whitney and W. Averell Harriman played

⁵²² RG 92, Geographic File, Entry 625, NARA II.

⁵²³ RG 92, Geographic File, Entries 600.4 and 631, NARA II.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Janice W. Herring, Register Editor, "The [West Point] Class of 1900," <http://usmalibrary2.usma.edu/1900/1900bios.htm> (accessed October 29, 2006).

the game, as did Hollywood royalty such as Louis B. Mayer, Walt Disney and Will Rogers.⁵²⁶

Polo arrived at Governors Island in the 1920s. Major General Robert L. Bullard was a supporter of the game and believed it to be useful for soldiers. As he said in an interview:

If the soldier were never again to mount a horse in war (and we know he will) polo would still be for him the most valuable game and indeed one of the most valuable kinds of instruction that we know. It brings into play every quality that contributes to make a good soldier -- strength, endurance, daring, dash, skill and bravery, team play, quickness of decision and action. It develops all of the qualities, and as all of those qualities are needed in every kind of a soldier, polo is equally valuable to the mounted and the dismounted man, the artilleryman, the infantryman, as well as the cavalryman -- every soldier who at any time comes in contact with the enemy, or with any other form of danger and military action....⁵²⁷

Despite a fire at the stables that killed General Bullard's polo pony and twenty-eight other polo ponies, officers' chargers and nine Army mules in January, the polo field was constructed in the summer of 1925. The Governors Island team, "almost in the shadow of New York's downtown skyscrapers," won its first game on its new field on September 21.⁵²⁸

Polo continued to be an important sport, as it was in the Army at large, at Governors Island until World War II. The games were open to the public, sometimes allowing visitors to bring their cars over on the ferry, other times permitting them to walk to the field from the ferry terminal. The charge for the games was 50¢.⁵²⁹

Golf was another recreational activity enjoyed on the island. The origins of the Governors Island Golf Club may lie in Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood's orders in 1910 that all officers must keep themselves fit. Golf was one of the sports noted by officers responding to the departmental order issued by Major General Frederick Dent Grant, the commanding officer of the Department of the East in 1910.⁵³⁰ By 1924, when

⁵²⁶ Donna Morris , "The Sport of Kings: Born 2,000 Years Ago on the High Plains of Asia, Polo Thrives Today at Exclusive Clubs Around the World," *Cigar Aficionado* (Spring 1996), http://www.cigaraficionado.com/Cigar/CA_Archives/CA_Show_Article/0,2322,652,00.html (accessed October 29, 2006).

⁵²⁷ *New York Times*, April 29, 1923, p. S4.

⁵²⁸ *New York Times*, January 8, 1925, p. 23; September 21, 1925, p. 25.

⁵²⁹ *New York Times*, June 26, 1927, p. S7; July 15, 1927, p. 11, as examples.

⁵³⁰ *New York Times*, October 24, 1910, p. 12.

the City of New York began to covet Governors Island for a municipal flying field, they pointed out that the golf course and the brick houses in Colonel's Row would have to be demolished. They added,

The golf course is used only by the fifty-one officers on duty at Governors Island. And the course is not particularly good, with the fort forming a hazard for wayward shots. They say that Fort Jay is where young West Pointers are taught to swear. Climbing down into the sizzling hot and empty moat in search of an elusive ball on a summer afternoon is trying on any soldiers' nerves, though only the officers carry golf clubs.

The 1,150 enlisted men are kept off that part of the reservation....⁵³¹

The next year, the *New York Times* published a story entitled "Fort Jay Golf Offers Weird Hazards: Governors Island Links a Fretful Maze of Moats, Windows, Canteens and Other Distracting Visions." It described the 1,878-yard course, with nine holes and a par of thirty. On the first hole, the player teed off away from the Commanding General's house and shot into the moat at Fort Jay. The second and third holes were played near Colonel's Row. The fourth went by buildings marked as "canteens," where a later player was advised to aim for the "A" in "CAFETERIA" and shoot over the top of the building. The area between the sally port and the canteens was covered with wire netting to protect passersby. The fifth hole required a billiard shot: "hit the wall of the fort and let it carrom over to the green."⁵³² The last holes led away from buildings. The "Ground Rules" of the Governors Island Golf Club include "A ball lodging within the fort is out of bounds," and "The area within the cafeteria (canteen) buildings and the tennis court will be played as a water hazard."⁵³³ By 1927, the course was being used for tournament play and the public was invited to see the matches.⁵³⁴

In June 1926, a revocable license was issued for the YMCA to erect a new building to replace the old one at Fort Jay. May and Hillard were the architects.⁵³⁵ The old one was built in 1900 and an annex was built in 1918. These were wooden buildings near Castle Williams. Buildings like this were built to give social and cultural amenities to service personnel. The license had to be awarded because the YMCA actually funded the

⁵³¹ *New York Times*, April 13, 1924, p. SM12.

⁵³² *New York Times*, July 5, 1925, p. SM17.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁴ *New York Times*, June 28, 1927, p. 23

⁵³⁵ For an excellent history of the YMCA's building program, see Paula Rachel Lupkin, "YMCA Architecture: Building Character in the American City, 1869-1930," PhD. Diss., University of

building of the structure after the Army gave them permission. In 1927, the Army planned to use the old “Y” buildings for a Post Exchange and the YMCA was happy to give them to them.

Building 324, the replacement, is a rectangular neo-Georgian-style structure with a two-story central section flanked by one-story wings. It is made of red brick facing in Flemish bond. A limestone beltcourse bearing the date 1926 marks the foundation. A panel above doors reads “Army YMCA”. The building houses a club, offices, and exercise rooms with an outdoor swimming pool, which had to be built above ground because the island’s water line was so high. The historic context study for the Department of Defense notes that such buildings served troops during the interwar years, but few new buildings were located for the study. Building 324, had it been considered, would have been among them. Apparently a similar YMCA was built at Fort Totten in 1926.⁵³⁶ The building was opened on April 12, 1927 after a farewell service and the playing of “Taps” for the old wooden structure.⁵³⁷

NEW PLANS FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND

All of the buildings discussed above were either funded by outside sources or were modifications or adaptations of buildings already on the post. As noted earlier, a discussion was beginning that would have an enormous impact on building on Governors Island in the late 1920s and 1930s. Congressional delegations visited and were horrified at the conditions.

When they visited the wooden troop barracks and the old wooden buildings used for officers’ quarters, Congressman Kriess said he was amazed to find living conditions so bad. He said he would recommend to Congress that permanent buildings be erected and living conditions improved.

“I should like to see Governors Island made one of the approach spots to New York City,” he declared, “a place of attractiveness instead of a dump. From what one sees from the water side, it is a dump. The military position here is a permanent one and has been since the first days of the island. The buildings, therefore, should be permanent stone structures instead of wooden shacks.”⁵³⁸

Pennsylvania, 1997, at <http://wwwlib.umi.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/dissertations/cart?add=9814882&track=pq&dlnow=1> (accessed September 17, 2006).

⁵³⁶ RG 92, Geographic File, 1922-1935, NARA II; Goodwin, Chapter 7.

⁵³⁷ *New York Times*, April 13, 1927, p. 25.

⁵³⁸ *New York Times*, March 6, 1927, p. 22.

The beginnings of discussion and search for strategies to make the space work for the military is revealed in a 1927 memo from the Army Chief of Staff in Washington.⁵³⁹

1. The Secretary of War desires a complete study be made of the utilization of Governors Island in connection with the construction of the new barracks provided for in the Deficiency Bill.
2. The subject should embrace especially the removal of the disciplinary barracks from Governors Island to some other place. Fort Schuyler has been suggested and consideration might be given to the Curtiss Air Factory on Long Island City, although the latter possesses grave objections. Consideration should also be given to the removal of the present coal landing and coal storage location. In this connection it is believed that oil fuel should be used for the new barracks and that oil should be substituted for coal as far as possible in all heating on Governors Island on account of the contracted area and the dirt that results from the storage of large quantities of coal.
3. Should the disciplinary barracks be removed, it is barely possible that Castle Williams might be available for fuel storage.
4. Consideration should also be given to the location of a Corps Area hospital with a view to having the smallest practicable hospitalization at Governors Island unless the Corps Area hospital should be located there. There are advantages in favor of having the Corps Area Hospital at Governors Island.
5. The ultimate plan of construction might well provide that the buildings between Castle Williams and the star-fort and the waterfront facing the City should all be removed and not replaced.⁵⁴⁰

Despite the General's efforts, plans for creating a new post on Governors Island got sidetracked for the next several years. Castle Williams continued to serve as the Disciplinary Barracks almost until World War II. Administrators tried to find work for the inmates, and investigated hiring prisoners to work in the laundry as was done at Fort Leavenworth.⁵⁴¹

A fire destroyed the building in which vocational education was carried out at the prison, and the Disciplinary Barracks attempted to take over the pier that jutted north toward Manhattan just outside of Castle Williams. Although the location would have been much the most convenient place, the request was turned down for reasons having to do with the infantry's love of polo, of being mounted, and the expectation that the entire installation would be rebuilt:

⁵³⁹ RG 92, Geographic File, Memo from General Summerall, Chief of Staff, April 25, 1927, NARA II.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ RG 92, Geographic File, November 20, 1925: Subject Personnel, NARA II.

1. This headquarters recognizes the situation existing at the Atlantic Branch, USDB, for a building intended for vocational training due to the destruction of their work-shop by the fire of January 5, 1927, but in this connection attention is invited to the following:

(a) Pier AB is used exclusively for the storage of hay and straw for animals at this station and due to its isolated position and the fact that it is constantly under guard twenty-four hours per day, a possibility of fire is reduced to a minimum.

(b) This station serves sixty-six (66) horses and one hundred forty-five (145) mules with a quarterly consumption of approximately 300,000 lbs of hay and 125,000 lbs of straw.

(c) In addition to the quarterly consumption of hay and straw that will arrive at this station for the first quarter, FY 1928, a sixty (60) day excess has been set aside, and it is expected that hay and straw will be stored in this building to capacity on or about July 1, 1927. Pier AB is not heated, not lighted and extends from the shoreline into deep water, and this headquarters questions whether or not same would be suitable for the purpose intended by the D.B.

(d) The present system of handling forage at this station requires barges to tie up to this pier where same are unloaded, the contents weighed and the forage stored. Issues are made semi-monthly and it can be considered that Pier AB acts as a distributing point for forage at this station.

(e) There is no other building available under the jurisdiction of this headquarters capable of being utilized for this purpose and if this headquarters was required to unload hay and straw at any other pier under its jurisdiction it would require additional handling, i.e., unload the forage from the barge, haul it to a warehouse, and distribute from that point, thereby doubling the work involved in the distribution of the forage. In addition, this headquarters desires to point out that the unloading of forage at or near a warehouse occupying other supplies is absolutely prohibited by existing regulations on account of the fire hazard.

2. In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that Pier AB be not diverted to the use of the Atlantic Branch, USDB unless a suitable building for the storage of forage for use of this post be constructed of a capacity large enough to hold at least a three months supply as set forth in the preceding paragraph. A suitable building could be made by utilizing Warehouse 30, at the expense of approximately \$8000.00, by completely renewing the siding and roofing thereof to make it watertight. Such procedure, however, in view of the contemplated reconstruction of this Post is not believed to be advisable at this time.⁵⁴²

The Disciplinary Barracks found another location for its training. Fires threatened the entire post at least twice in 1927 and burned smaller sections from the time the wooden barracks were built in 1917 until the last was removed or rebuilt in brick in the 1940s.⁵⁴³

There was a Station Hospital at Fort Jay in 1926, and as early as 1924, the Corps Area Quartermaster suggested to the Quartermaster at Governors Island that any new hospital

⁵⁴² RG 92, Geographic File, From Edw. Croft, Commanding officer, 16th Infantry to Commanding General, Fort Jay, May 6, 1927, NARA II.

⁵⁴³ *New York Times*, October 3, 1927, p. 25.

be made part of “the projected plan for a new post on Governors Island, which plan, I understand, is being worked up in the Office of the Quartermaster General.”⁵⁴⁴ The larger hospital was included in General Summerall’s memo of 1927, and as will be discussed below, was constructed on the original part of the island in the 1930s.

There was every reason to want to change the delivery of, if not the use of, coal as the primary fuel for the installation as General Summerall suggested. The railroad line stayed in place at the southeast end of the island when the bulk of it was torn out because that was where coal was delivered to the installation. In fall 1928, a response to suggestions like General Summerall’s pointed out that estimated savings could not be made because dismantling the current system of delivery would not work. The process appears unworkable and dangerous:

The present method of receiving and handling coal shipments at this station involves the maintenance and operation of a 65-ton locomotive, a coal trestle, engine house, 1.25 miles of side tracks, a steam crane with clamshell bucket and two coal docks. These docks, used alternatively, are stationary at the shore end, the outer ends being supported on pontoons. Coal arrives in cars on railroad ferries which ride from three to six feet below the deck of the dock. In order to connect dock and ferry so that cars can be transferred to the storage yard, the dock must be depressed to the level of the ferry and pinned in that position. The only means of accomplishing this operation is by running the locomotive onto the end of the dock, thus sinking the dock. This operation is fraught with danger. Twice during the present month the loss of the locomotive was narrowly averted when unforeseen mishaps occurred. On one such occasion, the pontoon began to leak seriously and quickly depressed the dock to such an angle that the locomotive was unable to back to land under its own power...⁵⁴⁵

But the reply from the Quartermaster showed no panic:

While it is believed that the present method of running a locomotive out to the pontoon bridge in order to depress it to the deck of the railroad ferries is considered unsafe, it is believed that no change from the present plan should be made until after an extensive study has been made of existing conditions, the feasibility of the proposed plan, and the amount of saving definitely determined.”⁵⁴⁶

By the mid-1930s, almost all the traces of the tracks and the coal train had disappeared.

⁵⁴⁴ RG 92, Geographic File, A memo to the QM, 2nd Corps Area, Governors Island from the Corps Area QM, June 2, 1924, NARA II.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

NEW BUILDINGS ON GOVERNORS ISLAND

Though the firm of McKim, Mead, and White prepared a design for Governors Island buildings as early as 1902, only a few of those planned buildings were actually constructed. By the time the final 1928 design was prepared, each of the principals had died, White in 1906, McKim in 1909, and Mead in 1928, and the building of some of the Governors Island structures was overseen by Lawrence Grant White, Stanford's son. The original overall landscape plan would have destroyed most of the buildings extant in 1902.⁵⁴⁷

Instead of the older buildings, the McKim, Mead and White design originally envisioned buildings that would house thirty-three different types of use around the outer edge of the expanded island. The large central section would remain open. The filled part of the island, completely covered with temporary buildings during World War I, would be knit seamlessly through architecture and landscape design, to the original part of the island in this new scheme.

The first building constructed according to the plan was Building 400 or Liggett Hall, originally called Building 100. The structure was to be the first permanent building to be built on the filled area and it crossed the island in a straight configuration rather than in a standard, three-sided barracks formation. The office of McKim, Mead, and White designed and oversaw its construction.

By far the largest building on Governors Island and one of the largest Army buildings in the world, its construction lasted from 1928 through 1930. The building, which formed three sides of a shallow quadrangle, with two additions on the south cutting into the quadrangle, measured 1,023 feet long with each of the two additions at 225 feet each. Thought to be the first building designed to house an entire regiment, the Army believed it would facilitate organization and foster *esprit de corps*, and as noted above, also thought it would interfere with plans to construct an airport on the site. On the map below, Building 100 forms a giant cummerbund across the middle of the island.

Building 400 is the centerpiece of the 1930s complex. It housed the 16th Infantry Regiment.⁵⁴⁸ The completion of Liggett Hall in 1930 made possible the conversion of the separate barracks units in Fort Jay to officers' quarters.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ RG 77, 1902 map, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Branch, NARA II.

⁵⁴⁸ *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form*. National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. Item number 7, page 13. In the older numbering scheme, it was Building 100; in the more recent, it is designated Building 400.

⁵⁴⁹ Construction history and photos can be found in RG 393, NARA II.

The completion of the building also caused consternation outside of the Army because it cut off the possibility of making Governors Island an airport for New York City. As a result of Congressional action, when the Army reorganized again, there was no possibility of building new housing on the filled area of the island. The irony of all that open space lying clear when housing and recreational facilities were so desperately needed for the forces stationed at Governors Island cannot have been lost on the installation commanders.

SECOND CORPS AREA, FIRST ARMY

General Douglas MacArthur, the Chief of Staff of the Army, ordered an Army-wide reorganization again in August 1932. The changes came about partly because of the Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931, partly to change over to mechanized transportation mobile warfare, and to enhance training.⁵⁵⁰

Four field armies were created as inactive units of the Regular Army. First Army was assigned First, Second and Third Corps Areas. In September of the following year First Army was activated more or less as a paper army, commanded by the senior commander of the First, Second and Third Corps Areas. At that time the Commander of the Second Corps Area, General Dennis E. Nolan for whom Nolan Park was named, was located on Governors Island. Nolan was the senior officer so First Army was also located on Governors Island under his command.

As activities increased, from the training of National Guard and Reserve officers and enlisted men to the running of CCC camps throughout the northeast, building needs expanded on the island. As the historic handbook for military quarters notes of the buildings at installations at this time:

The housing developed during this period was compact and efficient. As installations grew in size and complexity, increased numbers of quarters and support facilities were required. Multi-family housing became more common. Houses were clustered in residential loops as picturesque, curving streets drawn from "Garden City" concepts of suburban planning influenced installation planning. The military sought to develop architectural designs that utilized local building materials, that were responsive to local climactic conditions, and that reflected regional stylistic traditions.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰ Center of Military History, *American Military History*, p. 416; RG 160, "Second Services Command History," passim, NARA II.

⁵⁵⁵ Goodwin and Associates, Legacy Resource Management Program, *Historic Military Quarters Handbook* <http://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/Quarters/three.html> (accessed October 29, 2006).



Figure 49. General Dennis E. Nolan, the father of Army intelligence units and Commanding General at Governors Island. Photo from http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/nolan_dennis.htm (accessed October 29, 2006).

Officers Quarters

In August 1931, the plans for Buildings 111-112, the officers' quarters for the officers of the 16th Infantry were ready. The architects were Rogers and Poor. Robert Perry Rogers graduated from Harvard University and served in the Navy during World War I in an Atlantic transport unit. He studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, receiving a diploma in 1920. His early training began as a draftsman in Bertram Goodhue's office in New York. Alfred Easton Poor (1899-1988) also attended Harvard, as well as the University of Pennsylvania, receiving degrees in architecture from both. His interests included historic American architecture, and in 1932 he published *Colonial Architecture of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket*, still considered a standard work on the topic.⁵⁵² Rogers began his collaboration with Poor in the late 1920s, and together they won the competition for the design of the Wright Memorial at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. As a member of the firm and individually, he designed many residences and public buildings. These included an office building for Little and Brown Publishers and a private studio on East 78th Street.

⁵⁵² Wright Brothers National Memorial, North Carolina, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "The Memorial Tower," http://www.nps.gov/wrbr/indepth/mem_tower.htm (accessed October 29, 2006).

The architects made several trips to the island and consulted closely with the Army representatives as they drew the plans, and the Quartermaster's Office was pleased: "[I]t is believed," they wrote,

that the architects have caught the idea of what is desired. The plans look good to this office both in elevation and floor layout, together with storerooms, garages and accommodations for maids..."⁵⁵³

The building was a three-and-a-half story brick on reinforced concrete frame, L-shaped residential structure, built in the Neo-Georgian style. The limestone base supported brick walls in Flemish bond. It had limestone keystones. It sloped down to the north. It was finished in 1934 and was intended as family housing for officers of the 16th infantry.

Once the restrictions on building on the landfill were lifted, other structures to house officers of the 16th Infantry Regiment could be constructed. Building 555, for instance, was built in the 1938-40 period. It was a 3.5-story rectangular shaped Neo-Georgian style building made of red brick in common bond. It was part of the original McKim, Mead and White plans, but could not be built until funding was available as the military enlarged during the pre-World War II period.

In addition to new officer's housing, in the pre-war period the WPA reported extensive renovations of existing housing. For example, on July 7, 1936, a report of WPA works details work on Buildings 1-9 and many other residential buildings. They did extensive reconstruction or renovation, including replacing trim and cornices and rebuilding porches and replacing wooden steps with cement. In November 1936, Building 51 was renovated. All the front porches were removed and rebuilt; and exterior stairs were added to the second floor entrances. They even did partial reconstructions. For example, the WPA gutted and rebuilt Building 6, quarters 11. In 1939, the WPA reported that it had gutted and rebuilt Buildings 52, 53 54 and Building 65, quarters 7.

Because the Army was becoming motorized in the 1930s, one of the additional building items needed at Governors Island was space to store motor vehicles. In 1931, eight-nine automobiles were registered there. Officers owned thirty-seven; Warrant Officers, seventeen; enlisted men, thirty-three; and two belonged to civilians.⁵⁵⁴ In order to produce shelter quickly, stables were often converted to house horseless carriages. For example, Building B-16 was converted from a stable to a shed to house the motor equipment of the 16th infantry in 1933.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ RG 92, Geographic File, To the Quartermaster General, Washington, DC from John D. Kilpatrick, Major, QM Corps, NARA II.

⁵⁵⁴ RG 92, Geographic File, To QMG from Naylor, Chief of Staff, March 7, 1931, NARA II.

Other structures that catered to the officers at Governors Island included Building 298, which was rehabilitated to serve as the Officers Club in 1939. A part of the multiple generations of building on top of the remains of the South Battery, aka Half Moon Battery, the WPA rebuilt the 2nd floor as the Corbin Dining Hall between 1936 and 1937.⁵⁵⁶

Enlisted Housing

The “Detachment Barracks,” Buildings 333 and 550, were built according to plans prepared by the office of McKim, Mead, and White in 1931. They were used by the Army for enlisted men. The two nearly identical Georgian Revival style buildings flank Building 400 and are very similar to it in general design features.⁵⁵⁷ Each is a three-story neo-Georgian style structure arranged in a U-shaped plan and constructed of brick on a sandstone/concrete foundation. A limestone beltcourse separates the first and second stories. Building 333 was constructed in 1932. Building 550 was built by the Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General between 1938 and 1940, intended to be paired with 333. It served as barracks for 375 soldiers of the 1st Army. In 1943, when the 1st Army moved to Bristol, England, the 2nd Service command converted part to office space. In 1946, it housed a WAC detachment.

The construction of Building 333 illustrated some of the difficulties that were experienced because it was constructed during the Depression. During the building of the first Detachment Barracks, the contractor went bankrupt. The State of New York’s insurance unit tried to finish it, but in the end, after ninety-one percent completion, the insurers had to give up and the contract had to be rebid. The Quartermaster General decided to leave the cupolas off to save money and time. There were also strikes of painters and carpenters and other unions throughout New York City that affected the work on the building.⁵⁵⁸

The building was finally completed on April 13, 1933. Many of the subcontractors did not get paid, and companies that were also going belly up held the surety on the contract. In August 1933, the contractor attempted to explain what had happened and why the work was not done on time. As he said, there was a strike of the limestone workers at the quarries and at the stone yards over the scale to be paid in New York. Around May 1, 1932, there was almost a complete work stoppage while the Building Trades Council and the Contractors Association of New York City argued over revised

⁵⁵⁵ RG 77, Completion Reports, Fort Jay Book 4, 1933, NARA II.

⁵⁵⁶ GSA Report.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 13

⁵⁵⁸ RG 92, Geographic File, Detachment Barracks Book 1, NARA II.

wages to be paid to the building industry. The Bank Holiday, when President Franklin Roosevelt closed the banks to prevent a financial panic, started on March 5, 1933, and it also unsettled business.⁵⁵⁹ It is clear that while those of the construction industry who secured government contracts during the Depression were very glad to have them, their ability to actually carry out the work was often circumscribed by Depression-related developments. An interesting study of Governors Island could focus on the Depression period to see how much the local and national economic crisis affected what was built and who built it.

A New School

A building that served the children of all ranks was Building 301, a one-story neo-Georgian style with a modified L plan. The reddish brown brick facing was laid in Flemish bond on a brick foundation. This school building was built in 1934 when the army base expanded to accommodate the 16th Regiment. The architect, Eric Kibbon, practiced in New York City in the 1930s. A large public school was built later to the south in 1970, and this structure became a daycare center and craft shop.⁵⁶⁰

New Medical Buildings

Nurses who came to work at the new hospital on Governors Island had attractive housing provided for them. Building 114, a rectangular plan two-story brick neo-Georgian style building, was, like Buildings 111-112, designed by architects Rogers and Poor and built in 1934.

The building was adjacent to Castle Williams. This new structure was intended to be a “home” for the nurses employed by the new hospital. A well-built bakery and “two unimportant buildings” were knocked down to make room for it. It was state-of-the-art for the time:

The building provides housing for seventeen (later changed to 16) nurses and five maids. In the first story in addition to five bedrooms and three bathrooms for nurses and a sitting room for the head nurse, there is a reception room, living room, dining room, kitchen and pantry. In the second story are twelve bedrooms and six bathrooms for nurses. The attic contains five maids’ rooms. The basement has storerooms, a laundry and a garage.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ RG 92, Geographic File, Detachment Barracks, Book 1, Memo from Kilpatrick, August 5, 1933, NARA II.

⁵⁶⁰ GSA Report.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.



Figure 50. Nurses' quarters built in the 1930s near Castle Williams. HABS-HAER Report.

In addition to the nurses' quarters, the post also got a new hospital. Building 515 was designed by the Office of McKim, Mead, and White, and constructed in 1935. Immediately to the north of Liggett Hall, it is a large, symmetrical, red brick and limestone building with two interior courtyards.⁵⁶² This building has a central four-story section with three story wings. Like much of the rest of the Army's architecture on the East Coast and at Governors Island, it was neo-Georgian in style. The walls are of red brick in common bond, and there are limestone belt courses and windowsills. The new hospital was built as part of the McKim, Mead and White design. Originally built as the Post Hospital, it was subsequently converted for use as Enlisted Bachelors Housing.

Headquarters Building

As the Second Corps continued to add officers into the 1930s, they needed more office space. Thus, Building 125 was constructed in 1934. It was a large-scale rectangular plan neo-Georgian style with a reinforced concrete structural system and Flemish bond brick veneer. It was three stores high with two large chimneys. The south facade has a limestone doorway. A stone beltcourse separates the first and second stories.

Architect Lorimer Rich, who graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Syracuse University in 1914, designed the building. From 1921 to 1922, Rich studied at the American Academy in Rome. He worked in the office of Charles A. Platt in New York City from 1919 to 1921. Rich then went on to work for the firm of McKim, Mead

⁵⁶² Ibid. p. 16.

and White from 1922 to 1928. After 1928, he practiced alone. He designed dozens of federal buildings, but his most famous work is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery.⁵⁶³ In 1954, the headquarters building at Governors Island was rededicated as a federal memorial, Pershing Hall to honor General John J. Pershing, First Commander of the US Army in 1918.

Because the Headquarters Building was built while construction was forbidden south of the Regimental Barracks, it ended up being squeezed into the cluster of buildings that had housed the New York Arsenal. The site was chosen, and then moved slightly to accommodate Signal Corps communications from the tower nearby. Two of the old dwelling structures would have to be removed. Rich aided in the site selection, and the Quartermaster reported,

While the site for the building is approximately the same, it will be noted that this building has been designed with two fronts facing north and with a southern facade and entrance toward Headquarters Park, upon which axis the building has been placed. The location as recommended by this office faced to the northeast, approximately parallel to the sea wall, instead of at a 45 degree angle to it. In either location only two of the existing buildings will have to be removed to provide for the new construction. The Signal Corps Building will be free from interference...In the opinion of the architects and landscape men of the Quartermaster General's office, the site as recommended by Mr. Rich is superior to that originally selected in that a delightful setting is provided from the Headquarters Park and a much larger park toward the sea wall side, and in addition, the Sally Port of the old Fort Jay will be opened up to view from the harbor....⁵⁶⁴

On January 16, 1934, Lorimer Rich suggested to the Quartermaster General that muralists from the Public Works of Art Committee of the Civil Works Administration, a relief project, be assigned to decorate the new building. On January 23, 1934, he suggested the following:

It has been my thought that we might be able to use the services of the CWA mural painters in two locations in the new Administration Building in Fort Jay. First there is the large space in the office of the Commanding General. This space is approximately 6 feet high and 12 feet long and it seems to me that it would be an admirable place to paint a decorative map of the Second Corps Area. This map might be developed so that it would include in addition to the map proper some representation of the old fort or a view of Governors Island in the early days. I think that the artist assigned to this project would probably submit several schemes or suggestions for this.

⁵⁶³ Lorimer Rich, Alumni Papers, Syracuse University Archives, <http://archives.syr.edu/arch/alumni/lrich.htm> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁵⁶⁴ RG 92, Geographic File, J.L. DeWitt, Quartermaster General to Commanding General, Second Corps Area, Governors Island, October 13, 1933, 631 Fort Jay (Headquarters and Administration Bldg.), NARA II.

Second, there is the hall directly outside of the Commanding Generals[sic] office where I believe that there is an excellent opportunity to do some mural work. I would suggest here that the spaces between the wainscot and the cornice be utilized for a series of decorations depicting the uniforms and equipment of men of the service at various times. For instance a group might be depicted showing a general officer, a private and a scout or cavalryman of the Revolutionary period, then in the next space a somewhat similar group showing the uniforms and accessories of the period of the War of 1812 and so on around the hall. Such a series would be both interesting and decorative and it seems to me quite appropriate for such a location. This work should be done in fairly low key so that it will keep its place properly on the wall. Both of these decorations should I believe be done in a somewhat conservative fashion and in harmony with the building.....⁵⁶⁵

In June of 1940, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, through their President General, Mrs. Bolling, objected to the mural in the administration building because Lee was depicted as offering his sword to Grant and side arms were specifically excluded from the surrender. Mrs. Bolling came to the island to inspect the mural, and the person who took her on the tour commented,

Mrs. Bolling's attitude and manner were altogether non-antagonistic and free of any bitterness and she seemed to be very appreciative of the consideration we had shown her. She gave me the distinct impression, however, in a very polite way that she was determined to have the change made in the mural.

The Daughters wanted the offering of the sword changed to the offering of a piece of paper.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ Lorimer Rich Papers.

⁵⁶⁶ RG 92, Geographic File, Folder 007, 1940-41566, NARA II.



Figure 51. “Grant and Lee, April 1865.” Segment of a 1938 mural by T. Johnson Loftin commissioned by the Federal Arts Program of the Works Progress Administration. The mural is located in entry hallway in Pershing Hall, Building 125, Governors Island National Monument. Photograph by Mike Shaver.

By 1940, however, the officers and troops at Governors Island had more to worry about than mural repainting. War in Europe and in Asia occupied the thoughts of military planners and administrators. Those stationed on Governors Island began to get ready for whatever might come.

CHAPTER NINE

WORLD WAR II AND AFTER AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

THEMATIC INTRODUCTION

Military affairs and World War II shaped the major themes of Governors Island's history in the late 1930s and the first half of the next decade. As the headquarters of the Second Corps Area and, after 1932, the on-paper version of the First Army,⁵⁶⁷ Governors Island played a role in pre-war planning. In addition, the island sat in the middle of defense preparations for the East Coast of the United States from 1938 to the outbreak of combat. The Second Corps Area, with its initial responsibilities for three states and Puerto Rico, expanded dramatically, so that by the early 1940s, the Commanding General at Governors Island, Lt. General Hugh A. Drum, was responsible for the defense of virtually the entire eastern seaboard. Drum's duties ranged from reminding citizens to turn their sea-facing lights off to protect American shipping to planning training and defense efforts for naval and air units, as well as troops on the ground. Drum also commanded the First Army, although when First Army was activated, he was not chosen to lead them in battle overseas.

World War II was, among other things, an air and ocean war. During the First World War, Governors Island was the site of docks, ammunitions and the loading of troop ships. It was also a major center for aviation activities in the years preceding World War I. But because the technology and size of all those undertakings had changed and grown in the intervening decades, Governors Island was limited in space for loading materiel and soldiers onto troop ships during World War II. It did continue to serve as a recruiting and processing station for the early period, until that function, too, was removed to a more accessible spot in New York City.

⁵⁶⁷ In the period after World War I, plans were laid for units the size of an Army, but they were not staffed beyond the top levels until called to action for World War II. Thus, they were referred to as paper armies.

GOVERNORS ISLAND IN THE PRE-WAR PERIOD

As war loomed on the horizon, in June 1939, Governors Island continued as the administrative headquarters for First Army, the Second Corps Area and the 16th Infantry. Those who commanded the units stationed on the island included nine-two officers, nine of whom were single. Also at the installation were ninety-six non-commissioned officers, with ten of those stationed there on temporary duty; and 1,924 enlisted men. Castle Williams held 400 prisoners. Seventy animals were stabled there, and there were 138 government-owned vehicles and sixty-four private cars. Sixteen nurses cared for patients in 170 hospital beds in the new post hospital.⁵⁶⁸

By June 30, 1941, the war buildup on the island was apparent. One hundred and seventy-two T-buildings (temporary buildings) had been built, echoing the throwing up of temporary structures during World War I. Building T-223 housed sixty-three African-American inductees. Some of those tempos were built south of Castle Williams, and included a prison guards' barracks and a recreation building for the hospital.⁵⁶⁹ As observers from the Staten Island ferry, quoted by the *New York Times* observed, Governors Island in the 1930s had developed a "country club" look with large, substantial barracks and the polo field. By October 1941, the observers felt reassured that Governors Island had returned to its main focus.

In the last year, scores of frame barracks and storehouses, without architectural pretensions, have sprung up to destroy the country-club atmosphere. Hundreds of soldiers make up the garrison, dozens of Army cars and trucks race along the roadway at the seawall; now and then there is the rat-tat of machine guns; the ferry in the Battery is crowded with vehicles and men in uniform. The harbor's ferry voyagers are satisfied that Governors Island is doing its part in building the new Army.⁵⁷⁰

Those stationed on the island in 1941 included the same number of married officers as in 1939, but the space for bachelor quarters had more than doubled, to 134 spaces. There were 142 NCOs and 3,121 enlisted men, or just about 2,000 more than two years earlier. There were 500 prisoner spaces and forty-seven nurses. Nine animals had been added to the stables, although their primary use at this point was either ceremonial or for

⁵⁶⁸ RG 92, Geographic File, Record of Equipment and Condition of Buildings, Fort Jay, 1939-1941, NARA II.

⁵⁶⁹ RG 77, Construction Completion Reports, 1917-1943 Fort Jay Completion Reports, NARA II.

⁵⁷⁰ "The Harbor Mirrors the War," *New York Times*, October 12, 1941, p. SM8.

polo. The number of privately owned cars was the same as in 1939, but the government's fleet had increased to 168 vehicles.⁵⁷¹

The change in numbers at Governors Island, and the building of temporary buildings for shelter and storage resembled the preparations made at the island for World War I. Judging from the maps of the period, the building effort was not as extensive as World War I and there was nothing similar to the elaborate track system set up to move goods from the barracks to loading docks. The activities undertaken were quite different. Soldiers did not embark to Europe from Governors Island, but moved from the processing center to stateside training camps. Fewer docks reflected a diminished supply function. In fact, in addition to its large defensive role, the staff at Governors Island processed recruits. Joe Louis signed in there. Winthrop Rockefeller passed through on his way from one camp to another. Harry Hopkins' son, though underage, received his first assignment at Governors Island.⁵⁷²

President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a Limited Emergency on September 8, 1939, and an Unlimited Emergency on May 27, 1941. By then, Germany had moved through Europe, Japan was moving in Asia and the United States began the "lend-lease" program. Local recruiting sped up; it had increased after 1936, but the president specified that he wanted the military to be 227,000 persons strong, and recruiting intensified in response to that demand. However, Governors Island was the least successful of any recruiting area, and, as the headquarters of 2nd Corps, was at the bottom of the list of recruiting results despite their efforts to escape that fate.⁵⁷³ Army Day in New York City was celebrated with a parade. Officers drove cars with stickers that said, "Defend Your Country. Enlist Now." The results were not as productive as hoped, and the historian of the Second Service Command wrote, "Apparently, recruiting appeals which were exceptionally successful in the south aroused less public interest in the metropolitan northeast."⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ RG 92, Geographic File, Record of Equipment and Condition of Buildings, Fort Jay, 1939-1941, NARA II.

⁵⁷² *New York Times* January 25, 1941, p.8 (Rockefeller); June 1, 1941, p. 38; June 2, 1941, p. 10; June 3, 1941, p. 12; June 4, 1941, p. 15; September 17, 1941, p. 7 (Robert Hopkins); January 11, 1942, p. S1 (Louis).

⁵⁷³ RG 160, "Second Services Command History," p. 44, NARA II.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45.

HEADQUARTERS, EASTERN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

Two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the Eastern Theater of Operations was established with headquarters on Governors Island. It was placed under the command of Lieutenant General Drum.

As the “Second Services Command History” noted,

To meet the situation in the United States the areas contiguous to the east and west coasts were organized into the Eastern and Western Defense Commands respectively and placed under the command of Lt. Gen. Hugh A. Drum and Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt. Integrated into this command set-up was the operational control of interceptor aircraft assigned to protect our coast lines. In addition, General DeWitt retained control over the Alaskan Defense Command and General Drum over the United States troops in Newfoundland and Bermuda.⁵⁷⁵

This assignment made General Drum and General DeWitt major players in wartime preparations. General DeWitt, of course, was in charge of the infamous Japanese removal effort. The Eastern Theater of Operations was re-designated the “Eastern Defense Command” on March 20, 1942. Supervision by a joint headquarters continued until September 9, 1943, when the commands—Second Services and First Army—were separated prior to First Army’s embarkation for overseas.⁵⁷⁶

The primary mission of the Eastern Defense Command was the protection of the eastern United States. Originally sixteen Atlantic seaboard states and the District of Columbia were included in the Eastern Defense Command. By 1945, however, it had been enlarged to include forty states, the District of Columbia and U.S. Army bases at Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland and Bermuda. Close liaison was maintained with adjacent military commands in Mexico and Canada.⁵⁷⁷

The protection of the domestic scene, and particularly manufacturing sites, became pressing as the war began. In New York City, especially, the needs of the Metropolitan Military District grew quickly.

Because of the close interrelation among the defense activities concerned, state lines were ignored in this district and not only New York City, but the nearby industrial

⁵⁷⁵ Center for Military History, “Biennial Reports of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941, to June 30, 1943 to the Secretary of War, 1996” <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/COS-Biennial/COS-Biennial-2.html> (accessed January 2, 2006).

⁵⁷⁶ RG 160, “Second Services Command History,” p. 45, NARA II.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

centers of northern New Jersey – Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Passaic, and Paterson – were included. As a result, it contained most of the important facilities of the Army Base within the Port of New York, and that base, by mid-1941, was handling a volume of tonnage comparable to that handled in 1917-18. Moreover, large shipments of lend-lease property poured through the district, to heighten a significance already earned through its huge concentration of manufacturing, rail and shipping facilities, tunnels and bridges.⁵⁷⁸

As noted here, the Metropolitan Military District included all of the New York City military installations and New Jersey’s docks and supply sources. The high-level administrators at Governors Island oversaw all of this activity, even though the role of the island itself as a direct player and as a place to train troops and store and load ammunitions and supplies diminished considerably. The size of the facility was one factor; another was the reliance on the ferry to get to and from the island. The most central factor, however, was the ability on the part of the American military to think of the New York-New Jersey harbor area as “a base” rather than limiting it to any one of the local installations. Officers at Governors Islands became the brains of the overall organization. Domestic protection, including the use of brownouts or blackouts in “the City that never sleeps,” also fell to the instigation and design of administrators of the Eastern Defense Command at Governors Island.

HEADQUARTERS, SECOND SERVICE COMMAND

On July 22, 1942, the Corps Areas from the 1930s were re-designated “Service Commands,” with the Second Service Command Headquarters continuing to work from Governors Island. Second Service Command included New York, New Jersey and Delaware. In addition to its primary mission of furnishing supplies and services to the Army Ground Forces and Army Air Forces, the Second Service Command was also responsible for quelling internal disorder from strikes and sabotage.

During World War II, with the expansion of the roles of Headquarters, Second Service Command and Headquarters, Eastern Defense Command–First Army, the size and importance of the Army administrative organization on Governors Island grew. There was another addition to the island’s activities when the chief reception center for inductees was set up there, replacing smaller units which had been scattered throughout New York City. Headquarters, Second Service Command and Headquarters, Eastern Defense Command operated the administrative centers at Governors Island throughout

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

the war. Headquarters, First Army continued to be administered from Governors Island until it was called to combat in Europe.⁵⁷⁹

Governors Island was, in other words, the center of management action and those stationed on Governors Island coordinated all the activities of all the Commands. Troops were housed not at Governors Island for the most part, but at Fort Dix, Camp Upton, and Fort Niagara. In October 1942, the biggest single month, the Command produced nearly 87,000 troops. But on Governors Island, officers sat at desks and made decisions that helped this vast army get food, uniforms, training and transportation. As the Command historian noted,

The overwhelming pressure of expansion struck with particular force at a division charged with recruiting, processing, classifying and assigning the Army's recruits in a command charged with the nation's heaviest induction rate.⁵⁸⁰

Governors Island could handle 200 inductees a day, even if that size group crowded the facilities. But the larger numbers needed stretched beyond the island's capacity, and the induction center was moved to the Grand Central Palace in October 1942.⁵⁸¹ The move proved fortunate because the numbers rose dramatically after Pearl Harbor. In November 1941, New York provided 906 recruits; in December 1941, however, New York produced 5,455 recruits, and though the numbers fell off somewhat after that, they were still much higher than had been true before the Japanese surprise attack on the American fleet in the Pacific.⁵⁸²

As General Marshall noted in 1943, the Army Service Commands, of which the Second Service Command was one, worked to "provide an Army of ever growing millions with all its multiplicity of needs, from induction through transportation to battle

⁵⁷⁹ The official website for First Army notes the following about its activities during World War II: On D-Day, June 6, 1944, with Gen. Omar N. Bradley commanding, First Army troops landed on Omaha and Utah beaches in Normandy.

First Army established an impressive record of "FIRSTs" in World War II:

- * First on beaches of Normandy
- * First out of Normandy beachhead
- * First into Paris
- * First to break Siegfried Line
- * First to cross the Rhine
- * First to meet the Russians.

After World War II, First U.S. Army headquarters was on Governor's Island, NY. See <http://www.first.army.mil/history.htm> (accessed August 9, 2006).

⁵⁸⁰ RG 160, "Second Services Command History," p 219, NARA II.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

zones on five continents,” and he believed that so much activity “made [the service commands] the biggest big business of all time.”⁵⁸³

LIFE AS A WORKER ON GOVERNORS ISLAND IN WORLD WAR II

The first two years of World War II proved frantic for those at Governors Island who were supplying the troops in the European theater. But in 1943 and 1944, something of a retrenchment occurred for the administrative staffs, allowing them to work fewer hours than twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Second Service Command historian commented of the workers on Governors Island:

Yet, this phase of retrenchment was less drastic than in some other Service Commands, because, due to geographical position, the trend of the war produced here an inflow which to an extent balanced the exodus toward zones of combat. Casualties flowed in for reception at general hospitals and redistribution to inland hospitals. Salvage from the battlefronts poured out of returning freighters for segregation and disposal by Service Command facilities. Prisoners had to be housed, guarded and put to work. Then, the rising tempo of overseas shipments swelled the motor maintenance load of the Service Command. Finally, as an extraneous factor, the army placed under the Service Command an Eastern Branch of the United States Disciplinary Barracks. (That Branch was not, however, located on Governors Island. The prison at Castle Williams continued to hold garrison prisoners.)⁵⁸⁴

Directing the placing of all those incoming wounded and imprisoned troops, as well as disposing of the detritus of war kept staff busy organizing and coordinating arrivals and shipments. Interestingly, for an island that had long held prisoners, there were no prisoners-of-war housed on Governors Island. Italian prisoners of war apparently worked at Fort Jay, but did not live there.⁵⁸⁵

In late 1943 and early 1944, the departure of large numbers of troops from various locations within the Eastern Defense Command radius for war zones meant that space opened up at Governors Island. When First Army was deployed and the facilities of the Eastern Defense Command on Governors Island contracted, office space remained for use by Service Command Headquarters. Consequently, around the turn of the year, the A.S.T. Division, the Reclassification Board, the Exclusion Hearing Board and certain

⁵⁸² Ibid, p. 47.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 315-316.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 335.

elements of the new Security and Intelligence Division were moved from lower Manhattan to the island.⁵⁸⁶ On July 19, 1944, the Women's Army Corps (WAC) Recruiting Unit, Second Service Command, was organized at 50 Broadway, New York City, with 130 officers and 392 enlisted personnel and Fort Jay was assigned as the designated supply point.⁵⁸⁷

As the outflow from the area lessened slightly, morale officers and others began to make plans for returning soldiers and patients at the hospital. In January 1944, eight military personnel, one WAC first lieutenant, plus one Lt. Colonel and three Captains and sixteen civilians joined the Governors Island Athletic and Recreation Branch and the new Morale Services Division. A building on Governors Island was designated the "Hostess House," and the hostess at Governors Island in 1944 was Mrs. Emma J. Stuart. The Morale Division was particularly interested in getting more hostesses and a group of librarians.

There is quite a lot of pressure to obtain librarians because they are needed to help provide occupational materials to returning veterans and hospitalized troops. The librarians and hostesses are used to help with those groups. Librarians have been made responsible for "Separation, Classification and Counseling Services," as well as hospital library services including book therapy.⁵⁸⁸

Librarians, in fact, played a central role in the readjustment of returning servicemen to civilian life. The Library Branch of the Special Services Division was charged with furnishing library materials to facilitate this transition and establishing Occupational Libraries in separation centers and hospitals. The librarians were told:

The coordination of the activities of separation, classification and counseling officers and librarians within your service command in connection with making occupational materials available to separates will contribute to the success of this program...it is desired that service command librarians and post librarians render technical assistance to separation classification and counseling officers at service command headquarters, separation centers and hospitals, in order that maximum use of occupational materials will be made by military personnel being separated from the service.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 219.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.; *New York Times*, August 19, 1944, p. 19.

⁵⁸⁸ RG 160, 353.8 Report on Activities of Special Service Office, Volume 1, 1945, NARA II.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

They emphasized all sorts of activities, including arts and crafts and theater productions, but the librarians played a particular and very central role, as did the library, in the Second Service Command's efforts to smooth the return of the soldiers from the war.

AFTER WORLD WAR II

Headquarters, First Army

When peace was restored, the Army was reorganized again. The mission of the Eastern Defense Command was transferred to First Army, then at Fort Bragg, and on March 1, 1946, the Eastern Defense Command was discontinued. On June 11, 1946 the Zone of the Interior was reorganized into six Army Areas. First Army was assigned the area of the First and Second Service Commands. Headquarters, First Army was moved to Fort Jay and on June 11, 1946, the Army Commander assumed command of the Second Service Command. A few weeks later on July 1, the Second Service Command was discontinued. After that, until the Army left the island in 1966, the principal organization stationed on Governors Island was Headquarters, First Army.⁵⁹⁰

After the war, Governors Island continued to be an important military center. Much of the island's activity was associated with the operations of Headquarters, First Army. The peacetime missions of the Army Headquarters included not only administration of the Army Area and planning maneuvers and summer training for reservists and others at Camp Drum, but also cooperation in special emergency relief projects. One project involved the program of aid to refugees fleeing from Hungary during the 1956 Revolution. "Project Mercy" was set up by this country to aid the refugees, and the Army's share of the program, provision of logistical support, was planned initially by Headquarters, First Army. Camp Kilmer was activated and run as a Refugee Reception Center from November 21, 1956, to May 9, 1957. During that period almost 32,000 refugees were processed at the camp. Special commendation was given to personnel from Headquarters, First Army who served on the planning staffs and at the Refugee Reception Center.⁵⁹¹

In 1966, the Army elected to leave Governors Island and consolidate First Army and other units at Fort Meade, Maryland. The Army left for budget reasons, but so far little discussion of what it meant to give up an island that generations of Army supporters had fought to retain and enjoy has emerged from this study. The expense of maintaining landscapes and structures of such age certainly figured into the decision, as did the

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

limited room for training and exercises, but further investigation will be required to say definitively what the pressures to abandon the island might have been. The Vietnam War had begun and the financial needs of that conflict on the other side of the world from Governors Island may have forced the issue. More research will be required to definitively answer the question of why the Army left.

In conclusion, the Governors Island that generations of Army troops and officers and their families knew was a small spot of land in New York Harbor that, almost from the beginning of its history, provided a serene haven for military families and bachelor officers and troops. Even though it was often short of housing, its advantages of geographic position and physical isolation made it a coveted assignment for most who went there. The nearness to the most sophisticated urban area in the United States allowed those who wanted to take advantage of theater, museums, and amusements of all sorts the possibility to do so easily. As the importance of the Regular professional army increased, and during wartime, the military activities took on increased importance although it never involved active combat. Governors Island was unique in geography, in defense activities and actions, and in terms of the people who lived, worked and played on the island comprises an important part of that thematic history.

THE COAST GUARD AT GOVERNORS ISLAND, 1966-1996

The thirty years during which the U.S. Coast Guard operated out of Governors Island were somewhat different from the Army's years in residence. By consolidating all its New York-based activities and some out-of-town training courses, the Coast Guard organized the largest Coast Guard base in the world on the island. The small town that Coast Guard families moved into was like few other installations owned by their Service—most do not even provide for housing for the married officers. Coast Guard sailors had plied the waters of the New York Harbor since Governors Island became a military base and the boats and buoys lined up at docks and along the seawall attested to a different relationship between the island's workers and the harbor.

The Army turned Governors Island over to the U.S. Coast Guard on June 30, 1966. The ceremonies began at the Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion with the organist playing the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers." Flags were exchanged and then a Rodman gun on top of the Fort Jay parapet was fired as a sign that the Army should lower its flag for the last time on the island. The story is that, unfortunately, the firing of the gun shattered most of the windows in Fort Jay and a number of windows in Building

110 and the hot gun wadding landed in the bone-dry moat which set the grass on fire. The fire department responded, and the ceremonies went on.⁵⁹²

The mission changed when the Army left and the Coast Guard arrived; fewer cannons and more anchors would symbolize the installation. The Coast Guard base at St. George on Staten Island transferred its operation there in 1968. Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) New York operated from the island and the VTS system of monitoring harbor traffic was first used on Governors Island. Importantly different from the Army presence, the cutter *Gallatin* homeported on the Island. It became the first U.S. military ship with women assigned permanently. Twelve enlisted women and two officers reported in fall 1977, making the Coast Guard the first US military service to assign women on an unrestricted basis. In 1973, the forces saved sixty-four crewmen when the container ship *Sea Witch* rammed the Belgian tanker *Esso Brussels* just north of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and caused a huge explosion. In 1993, a Chinese-alien smuggling ship, the *Golden Venture*, grounded off Rockaway Beach and nearly 300 Chinese nationals were pulled from the frigid surf by Coast Guard crewmen. That accident occurred in the severe winter of 1993-94 when Coast Guard icebreaking efforts were necessary to keep the harbor and the Hudson River open for months. On a more formal diplomatic front, Group New York provided around-the-clock security in the East River during the United Nations' 50th anniversary celebrations in 1995.⁵⁹³

Important people visited that same year, including King Harald and Queen Sonja of Norway, who toured the island.⁵⁹⁴ Ronald Reagan relit the lamp at the Statue of Liberty in 1986 from Governors Island, and held talks with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Admiral's House. The United Nations sponsored talks to restore an elected government to Haiti and the agreement signed there in 1993 is called the Governors Island Accord.⁵⁹⁵

The Coast Guard used many of the Army facilities, but began to alter and reconstruct the landscape to suit its needs virtually as soon as the transfer of ownership was made. Building 400 or Liggett Hall was immediately reorganized as barracks and classrooms for the Training Center schools that moved from Groton, Connecticut in 1967. The school taught basic and advanced skill such as telephone technician, store keeping, electronics, damage control, search and rescue and aids to navigation. The

⁵⁹² Azoy and Miller, *Three Centuries under Three Flags*, Rev. ed. (Governors Island: Public Affairs Office, U.S. Coast Guard, 1996), pp. 53-54.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid, 58-60.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

school stayed on Governors Island until 1987.⁵⁹⁶ The Coast Guard built a new wing in 1967 to provide student barracks and house about 150 administrative staff. The new section was designed by Roberts and Schaefer, Inc of New York City to complement the style of the existing buildings.⁵⁹⁷

The Office of the Commander, Atlantic Area took over space in Pershing Hall, Building 215. Building 877, a high-rise apartment building, was built in 1972. A new school, P.S. 26, was constructed in 1972. Coast Guard names like Chincontague, Half Moon and Triton were added to streets named by the Army. Fog Horn Alley, an old wooden single-story apartment complex, possibly part of the Capehart Housing identified on the Governors Island map of 1964 was torn down before the 1986 relighting of the Statue of Liberty's torch. Liberty Village, a three-story complex, was built on the site for junior officers and their families.

For Coast Guard families, a small town with playgrounds, tennis courts, sports fields, picnic areas and ice-skating in the winter was a real change from their usual housing situations. Instead of traveling miles to do shopping and personal business, Governors Island in 1966 had a large commissary, a post exchange (like a department and electronics store), a bank, library, churches, gas station, bowling alley, golf course, swimming pools and an elementary school.⁵⁹⁸ One change that occurred when the Coast Guard took over the island was that apparently no hospital continued there, at least at the beginning. "The small size of the Guard had other impacts," remembered one family member:

One was that there was no hospital on the Island. We had a clinic, but if we needed serious medical treatment, we were supposed to go to the Public Health Service hospital on Staten Island. When my sister had appendicitis, we elected to drive to West Point. My father, as district engineer, was overseeing the construction of a new hospital there. Consequently, he knew the hospital commander quite well. He and his chief of surgery met us on the old hospital's front steps when we arrived.⁵⁹⁹

Building 140, a highly ornamented one-story Romanesque Revival building made of masonry bearing wall construction with brick walls was used by the Coast Guard for the island bank, post office, and security offices. The building, which is decorated with

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ RG 26, Folder Governors Island, 1 of 4, TraCen press release, 2/9/68, NARA I.

⁵⁹⁸ Azoy and Miller, p. 56-57.

⁵⁹⁹ Governors Island Brats Page, <http://www.angelfire.com/ny5/governorsisland/#> (accessed January 2, 2006).

panels that contain War Department and Army seals on the west elevation and a star on the north elevation, was constructed between 1857 and 1867 to store ordnance. After the Civil War, it housed obsolete munitions for the New York Arsenal. After the arsenal closed, the Army took over and used it for storage until they left the island. Building 140 is just one example of extensive reuse and adaptation of the properties and landscape of Governors Island by the Coast Guard. Its decoration allows some of that history to be read.

The Coast Guard left the island in a money-saving move in 1996, which ended centuries of federal military use. In some ways a more immediately appropriate military service because of its immediate ties to sea-going vessels and the harbor, the Coast Guard nominated the historic district for landmark status in the 1980s. Although their time on the island was considerably shorter than that of the U.S. Army, the Coast Guard's efforts to mark those historic places completed the preservation process that Elihu Root had begun nearly a century before.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The narratives that can be traced through a study of the built environment over time at Governors Island include both civilian and military use, although the military installation's uses of the island are far more lengthy and extensive than those of historic civilian populations. The kinds of uses varied in the first period from food gathering to recreation; ground disturbance on the original island probably will prevent the archeological study of possible military use or other domestic activities in the pre-contact period. After the arrival of the Dutch, uses varied until the end of the eighteenth century when the potential for war with France or England that occurred between 1812 and 1815 required the construction of permanent military defenses on the island. The defensive effectiveness of Governors Island armed simply with temporary works had been confirmed during the early days of the American Revolution, but was never directly tested again. The two forts served for most of their two centuries as either an enclosed housing area (Fort Jay) or a building that housed troops and prisoners (Castle Williams). Salutes were regularly fired from Castle Williams, which was a regular task performed at Governors Island.

Military use of Governors Island lasted for about two hundred years. The period of U.S. Army occupation (1792-1966) reflected changes and developments in the U.S. Army over that entire period, and the thirty years of U.S. Coast Guard control (1966-1996) allowed for the building of the largest Coast Guard installation in the country. Because Coast Guard installations rarely included housing and other services for a resident population, service at Governors Island for Coast Guard sailors and their families represented a break from older traditions of living in the local communities where they were based.

Maps and photographs help to explore the ways that people have used the island at various times and for various purposes. These visual documents, combined with the material culture of the buildings, shape a cultural landscape study of the area that uses information from written sources and these other materials to situate the many varied roles and relationships of people and institutions on this small area of land. Layers of history are produced graphically from the layering of maps and changing photographs linked to written documents—government reports, diary entries, newspaper accounts, census records, military history publications of all sorts. These layers tell more than a standard military or local history story because they allow for the tracing of policy changes in institutions and cultural changes in populations, as well as more general change over time. Because the built environment in this study directs the narrative,

chronology is less solely controlling than in more traditional histories, and a balance among elements of time and buildings and policy must be located to cover such history adequately.

To help untangle the numerous and often competing stories that made up the history of Governors Island, this study used the 1996 National Park Service's thematic framework. The framework, designed to help cultural resource managers from a number of fields make decisions about the significance of structures, sites, landscapes and material culture, cuts traditional, chronological history narratives differently, to expose the multiple versions layered on the landscape. The World War I temporary buildings, with their unacknowledged African American presence, were a perfect example of silenced or unrecognized history that could be integrated into the larger story if the researcher knew what questions to ask. The thematic framework proved difficult to use because of its inflexible categories, but it was also very effective when it led to new ways of seeing the development of the island.

Further efforts to explore the histories of Governors Island have plenty of material and topics with which to work. The island has a history of its own, plus its history as a part of the harbor and its separate history as a part of urban New York. Topics such as its role in relation to the other defensive installations in the harbor or the social, economic, religious, and political interactions between Manhattan and the residents of Governors Island are only briefly sketched here. The environmental changes from the time of deforestation might be mapped and studied. The history of the U.S. Coast Guard's thirty-year occupation of the island needs to be told as soon as the records are processed and a guide to them produced by the National Archives staff in Lee's Summit, Missouri. NPS decided that the Coast Guard work was beyond the scope of this study. The history of various activities, particularly sports, that reveal the relationships between Governors Island and other military installations, such as baseball or polo matches, could be investigated. Family papers and diaries could be combed for information about the daily lives of families in residence. More information about medical practice, documented in government records from a very early period, could be gleaned as could further understanding of the prisons and prisoners that Governors Island housed over the centuries. The role of the arsenal and, in a later period, of the Chemical Warfare Office, might be clarified through further research.

In broader terms, there are questions for which the history of Governors Island could serve to provide a portal to wider studies. An investigation of the papers of the commanding officers stationed there could produce a detailed calendar of issues and events that occurred during individual commands. The various units stationed there could be researched and their service at Governors Island put into the larger context of

their unit history. The specialized schools, from music training to bakers and cook instruction, might be examined.

Larger cultural questions also remain to be explored. One example might be the fact that Governors Island was of particular interest and focus when Secretary of War Elihu Root wanted to upgrade its appearance and engaged eminent architects to make plans. What relationship, if any, did Root's parallel activities working to get Congress to give the military services the wherewithal to save historical battlefields have on his thoughts about Governors Island? Did he have a "historic preservation perspective" that could be brought to bear here? How did Root come to shape such military landscapes as Fort McNair in Washington, DC, and how did he get it done as he did not get done something very similar at Governors Island? Why did Elihu Root, of all government officials at the time, end up being the person who tried to impose City Beautiful patterns on what was, in essence, a frontier Army? Similar large questions abound and await other researchers.

In the end, Governors Island proved to be a small, but revealing study site. The tangling of so many skeins of American history in a geographically limited area provides researchers, managers, and the visitor with a capsule account of elements of the American past. The stories and the documents still to be uncovered will add to that tapestry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The documentary materials listed below make up a bibliography from which to develop the various histories of Governors Island. Primary materials, surveyed and examined selectively, appear first. They are organized by level of importance to this study. The secondary materials include a number of categories of materials. One is written works and gray literature related specifically to Governors Island. Another is the chronology of North American history as it works out on Governors Island and its associated geography. A third is military history of the United States. A fourth is architectural history and the history of historic preservation in this country. Finally, thematic materials related to the context of the various periods of activity on the island are noted.

PRIMARY SOURCES

National Archives and Records Administration

RG 26, Records of the United States Coast Guard, 1785-1988.

RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1789-1996.

RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774-1985.

RG 98, Records of United States Army Commands, 1784-1822.

RG 111, Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860-1982.

RG 112, Records of the Office of the Surgeon General (Army), 1775-1987.

RG 156, Records of the Chief of Ordnance, 1797-1969.

RG 160, Records of Headquarters Army Service Forces, 1939-1946.

RG 175, Records of the Chemical Warfare Service, 1917-1963.

RG 177, Records of the Chiefs of Arms, 1878-1943.

RG 338, Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter), 1917-1993.

RG 393, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1817-1940.

RG 394, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1920-1942.

RG 407, Records of the Adjutant General's Office [Disciplinary Barracks], 1905-1981.

New York Historical Society

Charles Lee Papers.

NY State Commissioners of Fortification. *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Fortification for the City of NY and its Vicinity, 1794 Apr. 2-1796 Feb. 6.*

Minute Books of meetings of the NY Com. of Fort, 1794-1796.

Mckim, Mead, and White Architectural Record Collection. Department of Prints, Photographs & Architectural Collections.

"Notes on Governors Island, unpublished envelope of miscellaneous notes and clippings of William Kelby".

"Governors Island, Manhattan, NY" By Randel, John. Pub: Unknown (1820). 2 maps on 1 sheet; ms., col; sheet 59 x 85 cm. The island is shown at each of 2 different scales. Pen and ink (black and color), pencil on wove finish paper. Split into 2 fragments.

(Fort Jay, Manhattan, NY) By: Randel, John. 1 map: ms.: sheet 34 x 41 cm. Pen and ink, pencil on wove finish paper.

"The Southern Extension of NYC" By: Ruge, H. Arnold

Published: Unknown (1903)

5 map profiles on 1 sheet: ms., col; 16 x 72 cm or smaller, sheet 50 x 72 cm. Planning maps showing a proposed bridge across the East River from Brooklyn to Governors Island and another across the Hudson from that island to New Jersey. Also shows fill from Manhattan to Governors Island. Shows depths on profiles and soundings.

Library of Congress

Governors Island. Hearings, Seventy-fourth Congress, 2nd Session, March 5, 1936. 1936 United States Department of the Interior.

House Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union. Committee on Military Affairs, Bills and Resolutions, House of Representatives, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, Read and Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union. Mr. Fish, from the Committee on Military Affairs, reported the following bill, February 4, 1845: A Bill Providing for the erection of a building on Governor's island, in the harbor of New York (H.R. 582). American Memory Collection: A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates.

Montrésor, John, 1736-1799. Design for Governor's Island. [1766?] map, on sheet 19 x 23 cm.

National Park Service. HABS/HAER. Nomination form and associated notes, drawings, photographs for Governors Island National Historic Landmark designation (1985). Notes, drawings, photographs and other materials can be found at www.loc.gov/habs/ny/governors.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Military Affairs. For the erection of an airport on 774-1875. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html>.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Military Affairs. [from old catalog] Governors Island as a landing field ... Report. 1936.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Military Affairs. [from old catalog] Increase flying field area of Governors Island, N.Y. ... Report. 1931.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Military Affairs. Subcommittee no. 1 Various bills for construction and acquisition of land : hearings before subcommittee no. 1, Committee on military affairs, House of representatives, Seventy-first Congress, 3rd Session. January 27, February 13, 18, 1931.

New York Public Library, Science, Industry and Business Library

SBF United States, Military Affairs Committee (Senate 74:2) hearings. United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs. Landing field on Governors Island, New York. Hearings before the Committee on military affairs, United States Senate, Seventy-fourth Congress, 2nd session on H.R. 12009, an act to authorize the enlargement of Governors Island and consenting to the use of a portion thereof as a landing field for the city of New York and its environs. June 5, 15, and 16, 1936. Washington, DC : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936.

SBF United States, Military Affairs Committee (House, 71:3) hearings. United States, Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, Subcommittee no. 1. Various bills for construction and acquisition of land: hearings before subcommittee no. 1, Committee on military affairs, House of Representatives, Seventy-first Congress, 3rd Session, January 27, February 13, 1931.

SBF (United States, Bergdoll (Grover Cleveland), Select Committee to Investigate Escape of General Prisoner, Hearings).

United States, Congress, House, Select Committee to Investigate Escape of General Prisoner Grover Cleveland Bergdoll from United States Disciplinary Barracks at Governors Island, N.Y.: Hearings before Select Committee under House Resolution 12, Sixty-seventh Congress, 1st Session, 1921.

MFY Dennis Collection 91-F194. Stereoscopic views of New York harbor, 1958-1915.

Grand Army of the Republic, Lafayette Post No. 140 (New York, NY). Proceedings of Lafayette Post no. 140, Dept. of New York, Grand Army of the Republic, in memory

of Senior Vice-Commander Samuel N. Benjamin ... whose death occurred at Governor's Island, New York Harbor, on the fifteenth day of May 1886.

Commerce and Industry Association of New York City, City Transit Committee, *The City Transit Problem*, 1923.

Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, New York: C.W. Sweet, 1868-1888-1897, 1923-1926, 1930-1935.

New York City Municipal Archive

City Parks Department Annual Reports, 1885 – 1900.

American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society Annual Reports, 1903-1925.

Museum of the City of New York

2nd Annual Report of the Regional Planning Association, May 1931.

3rd Annual Report of the Regional Planning Association, November 1932.

Picture Collection

Colorado Historical Society

Johnson, Tom Loftin. *A Collection of Letters and Papers of Tom Loftin Johnson*. Denver, Colorado: Colorado Historical Society, Stephen H. Hart Library, 1966.

Cornell University Library

Charles Downing Lay Papers, 1898-1956. Collection Number: 4477, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections.

Lilly Library, Indiana University

Williams, Jonathan mss, 1738-1869.

Charlestown Navy Yard

GOIS Briefing Package, 1996.

Newspapers

New York Times, 1855-1996.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Military History of Governors Island

Abbot, Henry L., Brevet Brigadier-General, U. S. Army, Colonel, Corps of Engineers, "The Corps of Engineers," Center for Military History, <http://www.army.mil/CMH-pg/books/R&H/R&H-Engrs.htm>.

- Azoy, A.C.M. *Three Centuries under Three Flags: The Story of Governors Island from 1637*. Governors Island, NY: Headquarters First Army, 1951.
- Azoy, A.C.M. , and Kevin Miller. *Three Centuries under Three Flags*. Governors Island, NY: U.S. Coast Guard, Atlantic Area Public Affairs Office, 1996. Revised edition with the last two chapters added by Coast Guard writer Kevin Miller.
- Baker, Van R. *The Websters: Letters of an American Army Family in Peace and War, 1836-1853*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000.
- Bellamy, Blanche Wilder. "Governor's [sic] Island" in *Historic New York: Being the First Series of the Half Moon papers*. vol. 2 Edited by Maud Wilder Goodwin, Alice Carrington Royce, Ruth Putnam. New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1899.
- Berhow, Mark A. *American Seacoast Defenses, a Reference Guide*. Bel Air, MD: CDSG Press, 1999.
- Billings, John Shaw. *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals, with Descriptions of Military Posts*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870.
- Birkhimer, William E. *Historical Sketch of the Organization, Administration, Materiel and Tactics of the Artillery, United States Army*. New York; Greenwood Press, 1968. Reprint, Washington, DC: J.J. Chapman, 1884.
- Boggs, Kenneth L. *The Sentinel Island: A Brief History of Governors Island, Fort Jay, 1637-1950*. Governors Island, NY: Headquarters, First Army, 1950.
- Brice, Martin Hubert. *Forts and Fortresses: From the Hillforts of Prehistory to Modern Times, the Definitive Visual Account of the Science of Fortification*. London: Chancellor Press, 1999.
- . *Stronghold: A History of Military Architecture*. London: Batsford, 1984.
- Center of Military History. *American Military History*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989.
- Clary, David A. *Fortress America: The Corps of Engineers, Hampton Roads, and United States Coastal Defense*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990.
- Dolman, Joseph. "New York Harbor's Deserted Island," *Preservation*, January-February 1998, 16-17.
- Dupuy, Major R. Ernest. *Governor's Island: Its History and Development, 1637-1937*. New York: The Governors Island Club, 1937.
- Eisenhower, John S.D. *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott*. New York: Free Press, 1997.

- Floyd, Dale E., comp. *Defending America's Coasts, 1775-1950: A Bibliography*. 2nd. ed. Alexandria, VA : U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1997.
- Fogelson, Robert M. *America's Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Gillett, Mary R. *The Army Medical Department 1818-1865*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1987.
- “Guide to Army posts in the US”. *Army Times*, 1966.
- Gurney, Gene. *The United States Coast Guard: A Pictorial History*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1973.
- Hagedorn, Hermann. *Leonard Wood: A Biography*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931.
- Hogg, Ian V. *Fortress: A History of Military Defense*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.
- . *The History of Fortification*. London: Orbis, 1981.
- Hughes, Quentin. *Military Architecture*. London: Evelyn, 1974.
- Jacobs, James Ripley. *The Beginning of the United States Army, 1783-1812*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- Joes, Anthony James. *Guerrilla Conflict before the Cold War*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.
- Johnson, Timothy D. *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory*. Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1998.
- Jordan, David M. *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier's Life*. Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Killigrew, John W. *The Impact of the Great Depression on the Army*. New York: Garland Press, 1979.
- Klawonn, Marion J. *Cradle of the Corps: A History of the New York District, U.S. Corps of Engineers, 1775-1975*. New York: Department of Defense, Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, 1977.
- Lewis, Emanuel Raymond. *Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970.
- Mahan, Capt. A. T. *Sea Power in Its Relations to the War of 1812*. vol. II. London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, Ltd., 1903.

- Millett, Allan R. and Peter Maslowski. *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. New York: Free Press, 1994.
- Quimby, Robert S. *The U.S. Army in the War of 1812: An Operational and Command Study*. 2 vols. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997.
- R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, Inc, *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790-1940*, 4 vols. (Baltimore, MD: US Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District, 1995).
- Reinders, Robert. "Militia and Public Order in Nineteenth Century America." *Journal of American Studies* (April 1977): 87-91.
- Rideing, William. "Garrison Life at Governor's Island, New York Harbor." *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (February 1881), 593-602.
- Roberts, Robert B. *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States*. New York: Macmillian, 1988.
- . *New York's Forts in the Revolution*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980.
- Robinson, Willard B. *American Forts: Architectural Form and Function*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977.
- Scheina, Robert L. *Coast Guard History*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989.
- Smith, Edmund Banks. *Governors Island: Its Military History under Three Flags, 1637-1922*. New York: Valentine's Manual Inc, 1923.
- United States. Army. *Histories of Army Posts*. Governors Island, NY: U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau, 1924. Reprinted from *Recruiting News*.
- United States. Coast Guard. *Search Report Findings. Governors Island. Ordnance and Explosives Archives*. July 1997.
- United States. Congress. House Committee on Military Affairs. *Permanent Fortifications and Sea Coast Defences Report*. No. 86. 37th Cong, 2nd sess, GPO, 1862.
- United States. General Services Administration. *Governors Island Historic District, Building and Property Summary Sheets. April 2000. Part of Governors Island Preservation and Design Manual*.
- United States. General Services Administration. Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium. *Governors Island Land Use Study. Land and Facility Assessment*. New York, NY: General Services Administration, 1997.

United States. Inspector General's Office. *Outline Descriptions of the Posts and Stations of Troops*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872.

United States. Quartermaster Corps. *Outline Descriptions of Military Posts and Reservations in the United States and Alaska*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904.

United States. War Department. *Secretary of War Reports, 1794-1920*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921.

———. *Sites for Military Posts*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902.

United States. War Department. Surgeon General's Office. *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870.

———. *A Report on the Hygiene of the United States Army*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1875.

Wade, Arthur P. "A Military Offspring of the American Philosophical Society," *Military Affairs* 38 (October 1974): 103-7.

Weaver, John R. *A Legacy in Brick and Stone: American Coastal Defense Forts of the Third System 1816-1867*. Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 2001.

Weigley, Russell F. *History of the United States Army*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

Winslow, Eben Eveleth. *Notes on Seacoast Fortification Construction*. Occasional Papers No. 61, Engineering School, United States Army. Bel Air, MD: CDSG Press, 1994. Reprint, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920.

Military Prisons

Antrim, Earl. *Civil War Prisons and Their Covers*. New York: The Collectors Club, 1961.

McKay, Ernest A. *The Civil War and New York City*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Speer, Lonnie R. *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997.

Prisons

American Correctional Association, *The American Prison: From the Beginning, A Pictorial History*. College Park, MD: American Correctional Association, 1983.

Bentham, Jeremy. *The Panopticon Writings*. London & New York: Verso, 1995.

Combe, George. *Notes on the United States of North America: During a Phrenological Visit in 1838- 9-40*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1841.

- Crawford, William. *Report on the Penitentiaries of the United States*. Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1969. Reprint, London: s.n., 1835.
- Eggleston, Norman E. and Stanley L. Brodsky, eds. *The Military Prison; Theory, Research, and Practice*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Hanway, Jonas. *Solitude in Imprisonment*. London: Printed for J. Bew, 1776.
- Jackson-Retondo, Elaine. "Manufacturing Moral Reform: Images and Realities of a Nineteenth-century American Prison," in *People, Power, Places: Proceedings from Annual Meetings of the Vernacular Architecture Forum Held in Lawrence, Kansas, 1996, and Portland, Oregon, 1997*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.
- Johnston, Norman Bruce. *Forms of Constraint: A History of Prison Architecture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- . *The Human Cage: A Brief History of Prison Architecture*. New York: Published for the American Foundation, Institute of Corrections, 1973.
- Lewis, Orlando F. *The Development of American Prisons and Prison Customs, 1776-1845*. New York: Prison Association of New York, 1922.
- Lewis, W. David. *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of the Penitentiary in New York, 1796-1848*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965.
- Spens, Iona, ed. *Architecture of Incarceration*. London: Academy Editions; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Thomas, John R., "History of Prison Architecture," *American Architect and Building News*, (November 7, 1991).
- Tomlinson, Heather, "Design and Reform: The Separate System in the Nineteenth-century English Prison," in Anthony D. King, ed., *Buildings and Society*. London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.
- United Nations Social Defence Research Institute. *Prison Architecture: An International Survey of Representative Closed Institutions and Analysis of Current Trends in Prison Design*. London: Architectural Press, 1975.
- White, Anthony G. *Prison Architecture: A Selected Bibliography*. Monticell, IL: Vance Bibliographies, 1982.

Civic Unrest and Military Response

Higham, Robin, ed. *Bayonets in the Streets: The Use of Troops in Civil Disturbances*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1969.

Weinbaum, Paul. *Mobs and Demagogues: The New York Response to Collective Violence in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979.

Military Life

Bachman, Jerald G., John D. Blair, and David R. Segal. *The All-Volunteer Force: A Study of Ideology in the Military*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1977.

Campbell, Robin Dell. *Mistresses of the Transient Hearth: American Army Officers' Wives and Material Culture, 1840-1880*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Coffman, Edward M. *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

———. *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898 - 1941*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

Foner, Jack D. *The United States Soldier between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1898*. New York: Humanities Press, 1970.

Hargrove, Marion. *See Here, Private Hargrove*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1942.

Harral, Brooks J, and Oretta D. Swartz. *Service Etiquette: The Guide to Correct Usage on Official and Unofficial Occasions for Men and Women in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force*. 2nd ed. Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1963.

Ingraham, Larry H. *The Boys in The Barracks: Observations on American Military Life*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984.

Janowitz, Morris. *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960.

Lenney, John Joseph. *Rankers: The Odyssey of the Enlisted Regular Soldier of America and Britain*. New York: Greenberg Publisher, 1950.

Moskos Jr., Charles C. *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today's Military*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970.

Simmons, Anna. *The Company They Keep: Life Inside the U.S. Army Special Forces*. New York: Free Press, 1997.

- The Standard Directory of Newsletters*. New York: Oxbridge Publishing Co., 1972. Lists several military newsletters.
- Stern, Philip Van Doren, ed. *Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies*. New York: Gramercy, 2003. Reprint, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961.
- Stone, Bonnie Domrose and Betty Sowers Alt. *Uncle Sam's Brides: The World of Military Wives*. New York: Walker and Company, 1990.
- Tauber, Peter. *The Sunshine Soldiers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.
- Wiley, Bell Irvin. *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971.
- Williams, David. *Johnny Reb's War: Battlefield and Homefront*. Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2000.
- General Architecture and Historic Preservation***
- American Architecture and Building News*. February 2, 1878, October 26, 1878 April 11, 1891, and January 14, 1893
- "Architectural Aberrations," *Architectural Record*. August 1911.
- Architecture and Building*. April 7, 14, 21, and 28, 1894.
- Coles, William A., ed. *Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969.
- Conn, Steven and Max Page, eds. *Building the Nation: Americans Write About Their Architecture, Their Cities and Their Landscape*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- Early, James. *Romanticism and American Architecture*. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1965)
- Freeman, Edward A., "Choice in Architectural Styles," *Architectural Record*, April-June 1892.
- Gilmartin, Gregory F. *Shaping the City: New York and the Municipal Art Society*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1995.
- Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, June 24, 1854.
- Hamlin, Talbot. *Greek Revival Architecture in America*. New York: Dover, 1964. Reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1944.
- Haynes, Wesley, "Issac G. Perry: Architect, Builder and Craftsman" (masters thesis, Columbia University, 1983).

- Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. *The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966.
- Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, and William Seale. *Temples of Democracy: The State Capitols of the U.S.A.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.
- Hoffmann, Donald. *The Architecture of John Wellborn Root*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- Hosmer, Charles B. Jr. *The Presence of the Past: A History of the Historic Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.
- Maass, John, *The Gingerbread Age: A View of Victorian America*. New York: Rinehart, 1957.
- Mason, Randall. *Shaping New York's Memory: Environmental Reform and Civic Memory, 1898-1925*. (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1999).
- Page, Max. *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan 1900-1940*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Page, Max and Randall Mason, eds. *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Pierson, William H., Jr. *American Buildings and Their Architects*. Vol. 2, *Technology and the Picturesque: The Corporate and Early Gothic Styles*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.
- Schuyler, Montgomery, "A Critique (with Illustrations) of Adler & Sullivan, D.H. Burham & Co. [and] Henry Ives Cobb," *Architectural Record*, February 1896.
- Taylor, William R. *Pursuit of Gotham: Culture and Commerce in New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- McKim, Mead and White**
- Doumato, Lamia. *Stanford White: McKim, Mead, & White*. Monticello, IL: Vance Bibliographies, 1980.
- McKim, Mead, & White. *The Architecture of McKim, Mead & White in Photographs, Plans, and Elevations*. New York: Dover Publications, 1990.
- . *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1875-1915 with an Essay by Leland Roth*. New York: Arno Press, 1977.
- . *Recent Work by the Partners of McKim, Mead & White, Architects*. New York: s.n., 1952.

Reilly, C.H. *McKim, Mead and White*. New York: B. Blom, 1972.

Roth, Leland Martin. *The Architecture of McKim, Mead and White, 1870-1920: A Building List*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1978.

———. *McKim, Mead and White, Architects*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

———. *The Urban Architecture of McKim, Mead and White: 1870-1910*. (PhD diss., Yale University, 1973.

Sturgis, Russell. *The Works of McKim, Mead and White*. New York: Da Capo, 1977.

White, Samuel G. *The Houses of McKim, Mead and White*. New York: Rizzoli, 1998.

Wilson, Richard Guy. *McKim, Mead and White, Architects*. New York: Rizzoli, 1983.

Wodehouse, Lawrence. *White of McKim, Mead and White*. New York: Garland, 1988.

Housing

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. "Capehart Wherry Era Military Housing." <http://www.achp.gov/army-capehartwherry.html>.

Clary, David A. *These Relics of Barbarism: A History of Furniture in Barracks and Guardhouses of the United States Army, 1800-1880*. Harpers Ferry, WV: The Center, 1985.

Fine, Lenore and Jesse Remington. *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1972.

Kriv, Arlene R., ed. *World War II and the U.S. Army Mobilization Program: A History of 700 and 800 Series Cantonment Construction*. Washington, DC: Legacy Resources Management Program, U.S. Department of Defense, 1992.

Mason, Joseph B. *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Co., 1982.

R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates. "Historic Military Quarters Handbook." Legacy Resource Management Program. <https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/Quarters/quarters.html>.

Rose, Alice. *Military Construction in the United States under the Direction of the Quartermaster Corps and the Corps of Engineers*. Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Box VII-24: Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Mss.

European Contact and Historic Archaeology

Bolton, Reginald Pelham. *Indian Life of Long Ago in the City of New York*. Port Washington, NY: I.J. Friedman, 1934.

Ceci, Lynn. *The Effect of European Contact and Trade on the Settlement Pattern of Indians in Coastal New York, 1524-1665*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1990.

Kraft, Herbert C. ed. *The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Lower Hudson Valley and Neighboring Regions: Essays in Honor of Louis A Brennan*. Occasional Publications in Northeastern Anthropology, No. 11. Bethlehem, CT: Archaeological Services, 1991.

Levine, Gaynell Stone and Nancy Bonvillain eds. *Languages and Lore of the Long Island Indians*. Readings in Long Island Archaeology and Ethnohistory. Vol. IV. Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishing, 1980.

Ruttenber, E.M. *History of the Indian Tribes of Hudson's River*. Empire State Historical Publications Series, No. 95. Port Washington, NY: I.J. Friedman Division, Kennikat Press, 1971. Reprint, Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1872.

Skinner, Alanson. *Exploration of Aboriginal Sites at Throgs Neck and Clasons Point, New York City*. Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation. Vol.V,No.4, New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1919.

Trelease, Allen W. *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960.

Truex, James, ed. *The Second Coastal Archaeology Reader: 1900 to the Present*. Readings in Long Island Archaeology and Ethnohistory. Vol. V. Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishing, 1982.

Archaeological/ CRM Reports: Governors Island

Garman, James C. and Paul A. Russo. *Phase II Evaluation of Six Archaeological Sites in the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District*. Rhode Island: Public Archaeology Laboratory, 1998.

Garman, James C. and Holly Herbster. *Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment of the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District*. Rhode Island: Public Archaeology Laboratory, 1996.

Garman, James C. and Holly Herbster. *Phase IB Archaeological Survey of the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District*. Rhode Island: Public Archaeology Laboratory, 1997.

Louis Berger & Associates. *Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Guest House Site Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, NY*. East Orange, NJ: Cultural Resource Group, Louis Berger & Associates, 1986.

Louis Berger & Associates. *Phase IB Archaeological Survey a Proposed Utility Trench Governors Island, NY*. East Orange, NJ: Cultural Resource Group, Louis Berger & Associates, 1987.

Louis Berger & Associates. *Phase IV Upgrade of the High Voltage Electrical Service and Distribution System. US Coast Guard Support Center. Governors Island. NY. Emergency Data Recovery and Archaeological Testing and Archaeological Monitoring.* East Orange, NJ: Cultural Resource Group, Louis Berger & Associates, 1995.

Early Histories of Governors Island

Bonomi, Patricia. *The Lord Cornbury Scandal.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Buttenweiser, Ann. *Manhattan Water-Bound.* New York: New York University Press, 1987.

Callaghan, E.B. *The Documentary History of the State of NY.* Vol. III. Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Co, 1850.

Condon, Thomas. *NY Beginnings: The Commercial Origins of New Netherlands.* New York: New York University Press, 1968.

Donck, Adriaen van der. *A Description of the New Netherlands.* Ed. by Thomas F. O'Donnell. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1968. Reprint of first English translation by Jeremiah Johnson, published in the Collections of the New-York, 2nd Series, Vol. 1 (1841).

Flick, Alexander, ed. *History of the State of New York.* Vol. I. New York: Columbia University Press, 1933.

Gehring, Charles T., trans. "March 21, 1651 Letter from the Directors at Amsterdam to Director General Petrus Stuyvesant" in *Correspondence 1647-1653.* New Netherland Documents Series, ed. Charles T. Gehring, 9:104-114. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001.

Goebel, Julius and T. Raymond Naughton. *Law Enforcement in Colonial New York: A Study in Criminal Procedure.* New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1944.

Goodwin, Maud Wilder. *Dutch and the English on the Hudson: A Chronicle of Colonial New York.* Vol. 7. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1919.

Greenberg, Douglas. *Crime and Law Enforcement in the Colony of New York, 1691-1776.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976.

Jackson, Kenneth L., ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York City.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.

Jameson, J. Franklin. *Narratives of New Netherlands, 1609-1664.* New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1909.

- Jaray, Cornell, ed. *Historic Chronicles of New Amsterdam, Colonial New York, and Early Long Island*. Empire State Historical Publication Series. No.35-36. Port Washington, NY: I.J. Friedman, 1968.
- Kammen, Michael. *Colonial New York: A History*. New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1975.
- MacKay, Donald. *The Building of Manhattan*. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Shorto, Russell. *The Island at the Center of the World*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- Stiles, Henry R. *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and City of Brooklyn from 1683 to 1884*. New York: W.W. Munsell, 1884.
- Stokes, I.N. Phelps. *Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*. 6 vols. New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-1928.
- . *New York Past and Present, 1524-1939*. New York: Plantin Press, 1939.
- Van der Zee, Henri and Barbara van der Zee. *A Sweet and Alien Land: The Story of Dutch New York*. New York: Viking Press, 1978.
- Williams, Sherman. *Stories from Early New York History*. New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1906.

INDEX

- 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 180
11th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 180
16th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 185, 190,
202-203, 205, 212
1st Connecticut Cavalry Regiment, 105
1st U.S. Artillery Regiment, 120
1st U.S. Battalion of Engineers, 180
22nd Regiment of Foot (British), 9
22nd U.S. Infantry Regiment, 181-183,
190
2nd New York Cavalry Regiment, 106
2nd U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 180
2nd U.S. Corps, 188, 189, 190-196
3rd Rhode Island Regiment, 91
3rd U.S. Artillery Regiment, 77
3rd U.S. Field Artillery, 2nd Battalion,
180
43rd New York Regiment, 105
44th Regiment of Foot (British), 9
4th U.S. Artillery Regiment, 76
4th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 76
51st Regiment (British Colonial Militia),
9
60th royal Regiment of Foot (British), 9
62nd Regiment of Foot (British), 9, 9n
7th New York Infantry Regiment, 75-76
A.S.T. Division, 217
Abolition Riots (1834-35), 96
Acton, Thomas, 99, 102, 103-104
Admiral's House. *See* Building 1
Admiral's Quarters. *See* Building 1
Advanced Wages Movement, 97
Alexander, William, 13
Allison, James N., 124
American Revolution. *See* Revolutionary
War
Andrew, John, 108n
Angovine, John P., 68
Antarctic, 77-78
Ariel, 91-92
Arnold, Henry H., 173, 173n
Assembly of New York, 7
Astor Place Riot (1849), 96
Atlantic, 91-92
Baltic (passenger ship), 184-185
Baltic (steamship), 88, 89, 91-92
Bard, Samuel, 72n
Barney (patient at Governors Island
hospital), 66
Battery Park, 148
Battery Park City, 21
Battle of Brooklyn, 14
Battle of Long Island, 14
Beall, John Yancy, 108
Bedloe's Island. *See* Liberty Island
Bellows, Henry, 111-113
Birdsall, William R., 105
Black Joke Engine Company, 99
Block House. *See* Building 9
Block, Adriaen, 3
Bloom, Solomon, 158n
Bolling, Mrs. (President General of
United Daughters of the
Confederacy), 208
Booth, John Wilkes, 108n
Bowling Green Park, 7
Bradford, William, 8
Bradley, Thomas Joseph, 146n
Brick Row. *See* Regimental Row
Brooke, John R., 151
Brooklyn, xv, 4, 38
Brooklyn Bridge, xv
Brooklyn Eagle, The, 153
Brooklyn Heights, 15
Brown, General, 103
Brown, Harvey, 102-104
Brown, Jacob, 44
Bryan, William Jennings, 177
Building 1 (Admiral's House, Admiral's
Quarters, Quarters One), 62-63,
203, 221
Building 2 (Commandant's House,
Governor's House), 7, 7n, 124,
203
Building 3, 64, 64, 65, 203
Building 4, 80, 116, 203
Building 5, 80, 116, 203
Building 6, 121, 203

- Building 7, 121, 203
 Building 8, 121, 203
 Building 9 (Block House, Post Hospital),
 67, 68-70, 70, 116, 120, 121, 203
 Building 10, 121
 Building 11, 121
 Building 13, 193
 Building 14, 121
 Building 15, 121
 Building 16, 121, 121
 Building 17, 121
 Building 18, 35, 121
 Building 19, 125, 125
 Building 20, 127, 192
 Building 23, 193
 Building 36, 192-193
 Building 51, 203
 Building 52, 203
 Building 53, 203
 Building 54, 203
 Building 65, 203
 Building 100. *See* Liggett Hall
 Building 104, 52-53, 53, 127
 Building 105, 53, 54
 Building 107, 53
 Building 109, 190
 Building 110, 115, 128, 128, 220-221
 Building 111, 202, 205
 Building 112, 202, 205
 Building 114, 205
 Building 125 (Pershing Hall), 206-207,
 222
 Building 130, 52
 Building 135, 50, 50
 Building 140, 54, 128, 222, 223
 Building 202, 58
 Building 206, 58
 Building 207, 58
 Building 214, 57-58, 58, 107, 109
 Building 298 (Officers' Mess Hall,
 Officers' Club). *See* South
 Battery
 Building 301, 205
 Building 324, 195
 Building 333, 204
 Building 400. *See* Liggett Hall
 Building 403, 126
 Building 515, 206
 Building 550, 204-205
 Building 555, 203
 Building 877, 222
 Building B-16, 203
 Building T-223, 212
 Bulfin, Thomas, 131-132, 132*n*
 Bullard, Robert Lee, 160, 194
 Burbeck, Henry, 39-40, 40
 Burlington Island, 4
 Bush, George W., xv
 Bushnell, H.C., 69
 Buttermilk Channel, xv, 4, 24, 38, 86,
 154, 156, 162, 163
 Byron, George H., 82
C.P. Smith, 88
 California Guard. *See* 7th New York
 Infantry Regiment
 California Regiment. *See* 7th New York
 Infantry Regiment
 Capehart Housing, 222
 Carlisle School Indians, 139
 Carlstrom, Victor, 171
 Castle Clinton, 36, 38, 45, 142
 Castle Garden, 142, 143
 Castle Williams, xv, 27-28, 35-37, 38, 58,
 60, 79, 82, 86, 106, 108, 109-111,
 114, 114, 116, 124, 129-130, 130,
 132-136, 152-153, 167, 182, 189,
 197, 205, 212, 217, 225
 Catholic Chapel. *See* Building 298
Catlin, 88
 Chapel of Saint Cornelius, 72, 220
 Chapman, Helen, 55*n*
 Chapman, William Warren, 55*n*
Charlotta, 14
 Chemical Warfare Office, 226
Chester A. Arthur, 124
 Civil Works Administration, Public
 Works of Art Committee, 207
 Clinton, Bill, 165
 Clinton, DeWitt, 17, 45
 Colonel's Row, 194
 Columbia College, 17, 21-22, 74
 Columbia University, 19, 20-21, 153
 Commandant's House. *See* Building 2
 Commanding General's Quarters. *See*
 Building, 62, 62
 Commanding Officer's Quarters, 52

- Committee of Safety for New York, 12
 Connecticut River, 4
 Connecticut Valley, 6
 Conner, Fox, 160
 Corbin Dining Hall, 204
 Cornbury, Lord, 7
 Corneliszoon, Cornelis, 5
 Cox, Samuel Sullivan, 146*n*
 Curtiss, Glen, 157, 168-170, 170, 171, 173
 David's Island, 120
 Davis, Andrew Jackson, 62
 Dearborn, Henry, 28
 Delaware River, 4
 Democratic Society, 23
 Department of the East, 46, 47, 63, 119-120, 123, 175, 176, 180
 Department of the Lakes, 123
 Department of the West, 46
 Detachment Barracks, 204
 Devlin, James, 106-107
 DeWitt, John L., 214
 Disciplinary Barracks, 197-198, 217
 Division of the Atlantic, 120-123, 140
 Division of the North, 44, 46
 Division of the South, 44, 46
 Dix, General, 103, 106, 108
 Doctor's Riot (1788), 96
 Donnel, Joseph F., 68
 Draft Riots of 1863, 93-105
 Drake, Francis, 106
 Drum, Hugh A., 211, 214
 Duane, James, 96
 Dutch West Indian Company, 3, 5-6
 East River, xv, 31, 32
 Eastern Defense Command, 214-216, 217, 219
 Eastern Theater of Operations. *See* Eastern Defense Command
 Effects Bureau, 181
 Ellis Island, 23, 25-26, 29, 32, 36, 37, 38, 141, 141*n*, 143, 158*n*
 Empire City (ship), 91-92
 Enrollment Act of Conscription, 93, 98, 99
Esso Brussels, 221
 Exclusion Hearing Board, 217
 Field Hospital and Ambulance Company, No. 6, 180
 First American System of Fortifications, 22-23, 25, 26
 First Army, 211-212, 214, 215-216, 216, 219
 Flaherty, Robert, 139
 Flour Riot (1837), 96
 Fog Horn Alley, 222
 Fort Amsterdam, 4, 7, 20
 Fort Columbus, 29, 34-36, 49, 52, 55*n*, 61, 70*n*, 70, 71, 78, 82, 100, 102, 106, 108, 109-110, 115-116, 123, 131, 142, 149, 152
 Fort Delaware, 86
 Fort Hamilton, 70*n*, 102, 104, 144
 Fort Jay, xv, 13, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30-32, 34, 37, 44, 57, 58, 153, 182, 194, 217, 219, 225
 Fort Lafayette, 102, 111, 113
 Fort Leavenworth Disciplinary Barracks, Atlantic Branch 133
 Fort McHenry, 25, 40, 108
 Fort Mifflen, 25
 Fort Orange, 4
 Fort Richmond, 102
 Fort Wadsworth, 144, 145
 Fort Warren, 108
 Fort Washington, 25
 Fort Wood, 26, 27, 36, 38, 111, 113
 Fourth Massachusetts Continentals, 13
 Frankfort Arsenal, 52
 Franklin, Benjamin, 12, 27
 Fredericksen, Cryn, 4
 French and Indian War, 9, 10*n*
 Fry, James B., 98, 99, 100
 Fulton, Robert, 168
 Gaines, Edmund P., 46, 46-47, 47*n*
Gallatin, 221
 Garfield, James A., 123
 Garrett, John W., 108*n*
 Gibbet Island, 32
 Gillespie, George L., 151
 Glover, John, 15
Golden Venture, 221
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 221
 Governor's House. *See* Building 2
 Governors Island: aeronautic uses and proposals, 138, 157-165, 167-175;

- African American troops on, 185-187, 186, 187, 226; as bird-life sanctuary, 164; British rule, 7-12, 66; civilian presence on, 50, 52, 54, 110, 190; European contact, 1, 3-4; expansion of, 149, 152-157, 158*n*, 159; fortifications: 9, 11-12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22-26, 29, 30-32, 35-37, 39, 41, 114-115; housing, 56-63, 76; as immigration processing station, 138, 142-144, 158; library facilities, 75, 114, 218; medical facilities, 16, 65-71, 144, 198-199, 205-206, 206, 212, 222; military personnel and families, 54-57, 59*n*, 119; as National Historical Monument, xv-xvi; prisoners housed on, 89, 105-113, 129-136, 212, 217; public park proposals, 145-146, 151; Public Works Administration murals, 207-208; religious structures, 72-74, 80, 114, 127, 135; schools, 193, 205, 222; sports and recreation, 54, 135, 159, 160, 162, 193-196, 222
- Governors Island Accord, 221
- Governors Island Arsenal, 128-129
- Governors Island Athletic and Recreation Branch, 218
- Governors Island Aviation School, 175
- Governors Island Brass Band, 120
- Governors Island Officers Club, 123
- Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, xv
- Grafflin, George W., 108*n*
- Grant, Frederick Dent, 170, 170*n*-171*n*, 194
- Grant, Ulysses S., 76-77, 79, 114
- HMS *Phoenix*, 13-14, 16*n*
- HMS *Rose*, 13-14, 16*n*
- Half-Moon Battery. *See* South Battery
- Hancock, Winfield Scott, 120, 123-124, 140
- Harbor Police (New York), 100
- Harhaus, Otto, 106
- Harlem River, 12, 16
- Harris Light Regiment. *See* 2nd New York Calvary Regiment
- Harris, Ira, 106
- Haverstraw Bay, 14
- Hellgate, 6
- Henk, Sergeant, 82
- Holman, Richard, 106
- Holmes, Theophilus Hunter, 81, 81*n*, 84, 86-87
- Hopkins, Harry, 213
- Howard, General, 143
- Howe, William, 14, 15
- Hudson River, 6, 8, 12, 21, 24, 168
- Hudson, Henry, 3, 168
- Invalid Corps (New York), 99
- Irving, Washington, 20
- Jackson, Andrew, 44, 47*n*
- James Line, 161-165
- James, Congressman, 162
- Jay, John, 11*n*, 29, 35
- Jefferson, Thomas, 26, 28
- Jenkins, Charles E., 94, 98-99
- John N. Genin*, 90
- Johnson's Island, 108
- Jones, E.S., 185
- Jones, Samuel R., 132
- Jones, Thomas, 15
- Jones, William, 94
- Keift, William, 5, 7
- Kendall, William, 82
- Kennedy, John A., 98, 99, 102
- Kibbon, Eric, 205
- Kimball, Arnos, 151
- King Harald (Norwegian monarch), 221
- King's College (Columbia University), 20-21
- Kirby*, 77
- Knickerbocker, Diedrich [pseud.]. *See* Washington Irving, 20
- Knox, Henry, 22-23
- LaGuardia, Fiorella, 157, 160-162, 164
- Laidley, T.T.S., 128
- Lake Champlain, 12
- Lamb, John, 10*n*
- Law, Ruth Bancroft, 171-172, 172
- Lawson (Surgeon General), 69
- Lee, Charles, 12-13
- Lenapes, 6
- Liberty Island, 2, 25-26, 29, 32, 36, 38,

- 48, 96, 111, 113, 142, 143, 145, 156
- Liberty Village, 222
- Liggett Hall, 161-162, 175, 191, 200-201, 204, 206, 221
- Lincoln, Abraham, 93, 97, 108, 108*n*
- Livingston Manor, 8
- Long Island, 6, 14-15, 38, 39, 111, 120
- Long Island Sound, 12
- Loo Choo*, 76
- Loomis, Gustavus, 84
- Lord Stirling. *See* Alexander, William
- Loudoun, Lord, 9*n*
- Louis, Joe, 213
- Low, Isaac, 11*n*
- Mackerel*, 3
- Manatus Map, 4, 4*n*, 5, 5
- Manhattan Island, xv, xxii, 4, 7, 15, 138, 142, 149
- Marblehead Regiment, 15
- Marshall, W.L., 155
- Mary P. Hudson*, 90
- Mary Porter*, 90
- May, Cornelis Jacobsen, 3
- McCulloch, Benjamin, 105
- McKim, Charles F., 153
- McKim, Mead & White, 153, 155, 157, 179, 200, 204, 206, 207
- McKim, Meade and White Regimental Barracks, 161-162
- McMillin, Benton, 146*n*
- McNutt, Captain, 92
- McVickar, John (merchant), 72*n*
- McVickar, John (reverend), 72*n*, 72-74, 74
- Merchant's Association, 159-160, 161, 163
- Metropolitan Military District, 214-215
- Metropolitan Police (New York), 93, 96, 99, 102, 103-104
- Meyer, Cord, 174*n*, 175
- Middlebrooks (patient at Governors Island), 66
- Military Intelligence Department, 180, 190
- Military Service Institution, 123-124, 127, 141, 141*n*
- Military Service Institution Journal*, 124, 141*n*
- Montgomery Charter, 8
- Montresor, John, 11, 11
- Moore, Michael, 82, 82*n*
- Morale Services Division, 218
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 139, 165
- Municipal Police (New York), 96
- National Defense Act (1916), 188
- National Park Service, xv-xvi, xvii
- Native Americans, xv, xviii, 1, 2-3, 4, 6, 9
- New Amsterdam, 6, 7
- New Netherlands, 3, 4
- New York (city), 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 32, 93-94, 96-98, 137-139, 142, 144, 146*n*, 149, 152, 214-215
- New York (colony), 7
- New York (county), 8
- New York (state), 19, 96-98, 133, 139, 143
- New York Arsenal, 48-51, 51, 52-54, 58, 90-93, 114, 180, 207, 223
- New York Filling Company, 154-155
- New York Harbor, xv, xvi, xvii, 1, 2, 7, 10, 12, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 38, 40-41, 45, 48, 60, 86, 90, 102, 110, 111, 137, 151, 163, 164, 180
- New York Historical Society, 141
- New York Legion. *See* 7th New York Infantry Regiment
- Nieu Nederlandt, 3
- Nixon, John, 13
- Nolan Park, 59*n*, 62, 63, 68, 116, 120-121, 201
- Nolan, Dennis E., 201, 202
- Nooten, 3
- Nooten Eylandt, 3
- Norman, Andrew, 112-113
- North Atlantic Coast Artillery District, 180
- North Carolina*, 105
- Nugent, Robert, 94, 99
- Nutt Island, 3
- Nutten Island, 3, 5, 8, 15
- Ocean Express*, 91-92, 92*n*
- Ocean Queen*, 91-92
- Officers' Club. *See* Building 298
- Officers' Mess Hall. *See* Building 298
- Oliver, Ruth Bancroft Law. *See* Law,

- Ruth Bancroft
 Opdyke, George, 100
 Ordnance Department, 48, 49, 52-53,
 90-91, 93, 115, 180
 Ordnance Sergeant's Quarters, 127
Oriental, 91-92
 Overton, Georgianna, 106
 Oyster Island. *See* Ellis Island
Pacific, 84
 Pagganck (Governors Island), 2
 Palantines, 7-8, 8*n*
 Paulus Hook. *See* Powlos Hook
 Pepperell, William, 9
 Perkin's Point, 35-36
 Pershing Hall, *See* Building 125
 Pershing, John J., 184-185, 193, 207
 Picatinny Arsenal, 189
 Pitchers, Stacey, 69
 Plattsburg Idea, 177-178
 Pomeroy, Mark M., 108*n*
Pomeroy's Democrat, 108*n*
 Poor, Alfred Easton, 202-203
 Port Royal, South Carolina, 91-92, 92*n*
 Porto Rico Regiment of Infantry, 180
 Post Hospital. *See* Building 9
 Powlos Hook, 14
 Prescott, William, 13
 Pullman Riots (1894), 140, 140*n*
 Putnam, Israel, 13
 Quarters 16, 117
 Quarters One. *See* Building 1
 Queen Anne (English monarch), 7
 Queen Sonja (Norwegian monarch), 221
R.L. Mabey, 88
 Rapid Transit Subway, 155, 156
 Reagan, Ronald, 221
 Reclassification Board, 217
 Red Hook, 14
 Regimental Row (Brick Row), 125
 Reham, Charles, 81
 René, Marc, Marquis de Montalembert,
 36
 Rensselaerswyck, 6
 Revolutionary War, 9-10, 12-16, 19-20
 Rich, Lorimer, 206-207
 Rideing, William H., 128-129
 Riley (patient at Governors Island
 hospital), 66
 Risley, Mr. (attorney), 108*n*
 Robins Reef, 34
 Rock Island Arsenal, 52
 Rockefeller, Winthrop, 213
 Rodenbough, Theodore R., 124
 Roessler, S. W., 155
 Rogers and Poor, 202-203, 205
 Rogers, Robert Perry, 202-203
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 213
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 177, 179
 Root, Elihu, 151-152, 153, 177, 179, 223,
 227
 Rotten Row, 16, 35, 58, 59*n*, 116
 Royal Americans. *See* 62nd Regiment of
 Foot, 9
 Russell Sage Foundation, 159, 161
 Russell, Joseph, 55*n*, 56, 61*n*, 63, 63*n*, 69-
 71, 80
 Russell, Kate, 56, 61*n*
 Ryan, "Major", 140, 140*n*
 Sage, Margaret Olivia, 159
San Francisco, 77-78, 79
 Sandford, Charles W., 101, 102-105
 Sandford, Edward S., 99
 Sandy Hook, 23
 Saube, Charles, 81
 Schoharie County (New York), 8
 Scott, Winfield, 45, 45-47, 47*n*, 63, 69,
 86, 123
Sea Witch, 221
 Sears, Isaac, 10*n*
 Second American System of
 Fortifications, 26, 29, 35, 40
 Second Corps Area, 201, 211-212
 Second Service Command, 215-219
 Security and Intelligence Division, 218
 Seminole Wars, xviii, 43, 44, 55*n*, 69
 Seymour, Horatio, 93, 97, 101
 Sherman, T. W., 92
Shuldham, 14
 Signal Corps, 53
 Sloan, William J., 113
 Smith Family, 63
 Smith, Edmund Kirby, 81*n*
 Smith, K. T., 133-136
 South Atlantic Coast Artillery, 180
 South Battery (Officers' Mess Hall,
 Officers' Club), 37-38, 59*n*, 63*n*,

- 80, 86, 114, 116, 123, 1127, 153, 204
- Spanish-American War, 130-131
- Sparrow, Thomas, 106, 108-110
- Spinola, Francis Barretto, 142, 146*n*, 147
- Spofford, Richard S., 108*n*
- Spring Election Riots (1834), 96
- Springfield Armory, 52
- St. Louis*, 79
- Stabler, Edward, 108*n*
- Stanton, E.M., 100
- Star of the South*, 91-92
- Star of the West*, 85
- Staten Island, xv, 3, 14, 111, 129, 137
- Statue of Liberty, xv, 26, 27, 111, 142, 170, 172, 221
- Steven's New York Volunteers. *See* 7th New York Infantry Regiment
- Stevens, Thaddeus, 108*n*
- Stevenson, Jonathan D., 75
- Struthers, J. Walter, 174*n*, 175
- Stuart, Emma J., 218
- Summerall, General, 199
- Susan Drew*, 76
- Tammany Society, 23
- Tapan Bay, 14
- Tappen, A. B., 144
- Tarry Town, 14
- The Castle*, 135
- Third Military District, 45-46
- Thomas H. Perkins*, 76
- Thomas, Colonel, 79
- Thompson, Martin E., 62
- Thornton, Major, 90
- Three Bells*, 77-78
- Tillson, John Charles Fremont, 182-183
- Torytown (New York City), 9
- Town, Ithiel, 62-63
- Transport*, 91
- Tryal*, 13-14
- Twiggs, David E., 105
- Tyron, William, 10, 13
- U.S. First Division, 180
- United Daughters of the Confederacy, 208
- United States Coast Guard, xv, xvii, xxi, 124, 220-223, 225
- United States Corps of Artillerists and Engineers, 44
- United States Corps of Engineers, 28, 44, 50, 149-150, 155-156, 180
- United States Congress, House of Representatives, Resolution 134, 142, 143
- United States Congress, House of Representatives, Resolution 176, 146-148
- United States Congress, House of Representatives, Resolution 22, 148
- United States Congress, House of Representatives, Resolution 5355, 149
- United States Military Academy, 28, 29, 29*n*
- United States Quartermaster Corps, 180
- United States Signal Corps, 172-173, 207
- USS *Leviathan*, 183, 183-184
- Van Rensselaer, Kiliaen, 6
- Van Twiller, Wouter, 6, 6*n*
- Vanderbilt*, 91-92
- Vanderburgh (patient at Governors Island hospital), 66
- Vaterland*. *See* USS *Leviathan*
- Verhulst, Willem, 4
- Verrazano Narrows, 14, 22, 38, 221
- Verrazano, Giovanni da, 2, 3
- Vessel Traffic Services, 221
- Vincent, Charles, 22-23, 31
- Wadsworth, Decius, 29-32, 34
- Wallen, Henry Davis, 114
- Walloons, 4
- War of 1812, xv, 19, 26, 28, 38-41
- War Risk Insurance Agency, 180-181
- Washington Grays, 109, 111
- Washington, George, 12, 13, 15, 20, 44
- Webster, Fanny, 73
- Webster, Frances, 56, 61, 61*n*, 63, 72, 73, 81*n*
- Webster, Lucien, 61, 61*n*, 63, 73
- West Battery. *See* Castle Clinton
- West Indies, 9
- West Point. *See* United States Military Academy
- Whelan, Peter, 110
- White, Lawrence Grant, 200

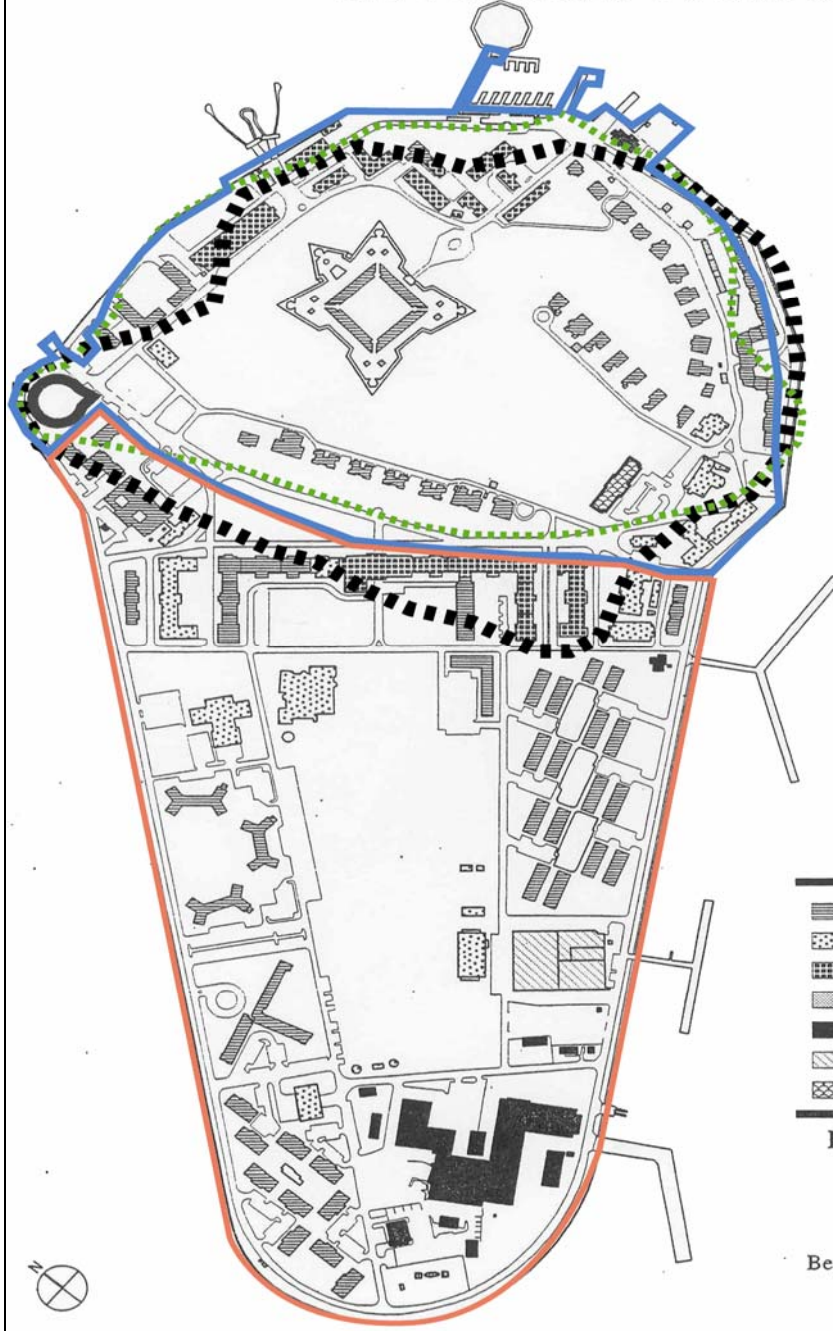
Whiteley, R.H.K., 91
Wiley, Richard, 34
Williams, Jonathan, 27, 27-37
Wilson, Woodrow, 172, 177
Wiman, Charles D., 175
Women's Army Corps, 218
Wood, Leonard, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175-
179, 194
Wool, John E., 99, 100, 102-103
World's Fair (1892), 139
Wright, Orville, 171
Wright, Wilbur, 157, 158, 168-170, 169,
170*n*, 173
XYZ Affair, 29
Zenger, John Peter, 8

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Fort Jay Site Plan, February 1964

Appendix B: Governors Island, Former Building Use. Beyer Blinder Belle
Consortium, September 1997

Governors Island



Legend

- 1907-1909 Fill
- 1879
- 1813
- Approximate Boundary of "Notten Island" 1766

BASE MAP

- Residential
- Community Facilities
- Administrative Offices
- Parking Structures
- Storage/Industrial/MEP
- Retail
- Motel

Former Building Use



Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium
10 September 1997
Exhibit 1-2