

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Fort Monroe National Monument  
Virginia**

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**Foundation Document – Part 1**

**Draft**



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## MISSION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The NPS core values are a framework in which the National Park Service accomplishes its mission. They express the manner in which, both individually and collectively, the National Park Service pursues its mission. The NPS core values are:

- **Shared stewardship:** We share a commitment to resource stewardship with the global preservation community.
- **Excellence:** We strive continually to learn and improve so that we may achieve the highest ideals of public service.
- **Integrity:** We deal honestly and fairly with the public and one another.
- **Tradition:** We are proud of it; we learn from it; we are not bound by it.
- **Respect:** We embrace each other's differences so that we may enrich the well-being of everyone.

The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior. While numerous national park system units were created prior to 1916, it was not until August 25, 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act formally establishing the National Park Service.

The national park system continues to grow and comprises 401 park units covering more than 84 million acres, with units in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These units include, but are not limited to, national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. The variety and diversity of park units throughout the nation require a strong commitment to resource stewardship and management to ensure both the protection and enjoyment of these resources for future generations.

**[The Arrowhead – this will be a sidebar in the graphic document.]**

The arrowhead was authorized as the official National Park Service emblem by the Secretary of the Interior on July 20, 1951. The sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife, the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values.

## INTRODUCTION

Every unit of the national park system will have a foundation document to provide basic guidance for planning and management decisions. The core components of this foundation document include the history of the establishment of the monument, a description of the park, a historical overview, as well as the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, other important resources and values, and interpretive themes. This foundation document also includes special mandates and administrative commitments, an assessment of planning and data needs that identifies planning issues, planning products to be developed, and the associated studies and data required for park planning. Along with the core components, the assessment provides a focus for park planning activities and establishes a baseline from which planning documents are developed.

A primary benefit of developing a foundation document is the opportunity to integrate and coordinate all kinds and levels of planning from a single, shared understanding of what is most important about the park. The process of developing a foundation document begins with gathering and integrating information about the park. Next, this information is refined and focused to determine the most important attributes of the park. The process of preparing a foundation document aids park managers, staff, and the public in identifying and clearly stating in one document the essential information that is necessary for park management to consider when determining future planning efforts, outlining key planning issues, and protecting resources and values that are integral to park purpose and identity.

While not included in this document, a park atlas is also part of a foundation project. The atlas is a series of maps compiled from available geographic information system (GIS) data on natural and cultural resources, visitor use patterns, facilities, and other topics. It serves as a GIS-based support tool for planning and park operations. The atlas is published as a (hard copy) paper product and as geospatial data for use in a web mapping environment. The park atlas for Fort Monroe National Monument will be made available online at: <http://insideparkatlas.nps.gov/>.

## **PART 1: CORE COMPONENTS**

The core components of this foundation document include a history of the establishment of the monument, a description of the park, a historical overview, as well as the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, other important resources and values, and interpretive themes. These components are core because they typically do not change over time. Core components are expected to inform future planning and management efforts.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

Created by presidential proclamation on November 1, 2011, Fort Monroe National Monument is one of the newest additions to the national park system. Fort Monroe was the third oldest U.S. Army post in continuous active service until its closure in September 2011. Old Point Comfort, the peninsula upon which Fort Monroe National Monument sits, is managed cooperatively by the National Park Service, the Commonwealth of Virginia through the Fort Monroe Authority, and the City of Hampton. Upon final land transfer from the Army, the national monument will be approximately 325 acres. As of January 2014, land transfer to the National Park Service from the Army or Commonwealth of Virginia had not been completed. A partial reversion of 313 acres to the Commonwealth of Virginia took place on March 29, 2013. The land that reverted back to the Commonwealth of Virginia included all of the acreage within the park boundary minus lands to be directly transferred from the Army.

In 2005, the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended that Fort Monroe cease to be used as an Army installation, resulting in the closure of Fort Monroe in 2011. Because of earlier agreements, much of Fort Monroe's 565 acres will revert to the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 1960, the majority of the peninsula was designated a national historic landmark district and subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 1966 upon passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. The City of Hampton, Virginia, and the Virginia General Assembly established the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority in 2007 to determine the need for municipal services for the area and to develop a reuse plan for the area. A programmatic agreement pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act was signed by the U.S. Army, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority, and the National Park Service in 2009, committing them to preparing a historic preservation manual and design standards to govern restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and preservation of historic facilities and compatible new development consistent with the character of the historic district and landmark. The Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority was succeeded by the Fort Monroe Authority (FMA) in March 2011.

From 2005 through 2011 individual and organized citizens of Hampton Roads called for the National Park Service to be involved in the establishment of Fort Monroe, both in preservation and interpretation of the historic fort. In 2008 the NPS Northeast Regional Park Planning and Special Studies Office completed a reconnaissance study and outlined the findings to Congress in 2010. On November 1, 2011, President Barack Obama declared Fort Monroe National Monument, a 325.21-acre unit of the National Park Service through a presidential proclamation. Fort Monroe National Monument is unit number 396 of a system that, as of April 2013, included 401 units.

Before the NPS Fort Monroe National Monument was established, the Fort Monroe Authority prepared a master plan for the areas of Fort Monroe managed by the Commonwealth.

Subsequently, the National Park Service has been an active participant in development of the master plan, regularly attending FMA planning groups and public meetings. The Fort Monroe master plan was approved by the FMA board and forwarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia on October 24, 2013, where it was approved by the governor on December 11, 2013.

Every effort has been made to use FMA master plan terminology for area or zone names throughout this NPS foundation document because this language is consistently used in public meetings.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

The peninsula known as Old Point Comfort, which contains Fort Monroe National Monument, is in southeastern Virginia approximately 2.8 miles east of the downtown area of the City of Hampton. The gateway communities of historic Phoebus and Buckroe are adjacent to the Fort Monroe peninsula. The monument is located in the Hampton Roads metropolitan area containing a large military presence along with the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Yorktown, Newport News, and Williamsburg. As part of the regional heritage tourism of southeastern Virginia, Fort Monroe may be considered a new component of what can now be called the “historic diamond,” which in addition to Fort Monroe comprises three other important historic sites that attract visitors to the region: Jamestown and Yorktown in Colonial National Historical Park, and Colonial Williamsburg. In addition it is an anchor point in the lower Bay for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, the nation’s first national water trail.

Fort Monroe was built near the strategic point where the James and York rivers meet the Chesapeake Bay. The site is almost surrounded by bodies of water including the Chesapeake Bay, Hampton Roads, and Mill Creek. At the heart of the monument is the 63-acre moated masonry and earthen fortress, completed by the U.S. Army in the 1830s on the site of a succession of fortifications dating back to the 1600s. Over time the Army expanded and improved the military campus to include areas inside and outside of the moated fort. As the Army’s need for new facilities grew, dredged fill was deposited along the shoreline to increase the size of the peninsula. The current campus includes areas outside the moated fort that used dredged fill deposited along the shoreline to increase the land mass for military uses.

Fort Monroe is home to diverse natural resources and recreational opportunities. Mill Creek, a 53-acre saltmarsh cordgrass community separating the point from the main land, is considered an ecologically productive wetland of the highest quality. Southern live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) are the most characteristic tree within the historic monument. The largest southern live oak, known as the Algernourne Oak, is nearly 500 years old, and shares lineage with the “Emancipation Oak” at Hampton University. Sandy beaches stretch along the eastern and southern shore. A seawall provides a place where the public can walk, jog, bike, or sit and enjoy the maritime views and sounds. The north beach area offers residents and visitors opportunities to experience less developed coastal landscapes. Fort Monroe also provides opportunities for swimming, motor and nonmotorized boating, and fishing from piers. On land, the national monument offers recreational vehicle (RV) camping, recreational playing fields, walking trails, and birding opportunities.

The fort also contains the Casemate Museum, which will not transfer to the National Park Service, but is operated by the park partner, the Fort Monroe Authority. There are numerous historic resources within the park boundary and the national historic landmark district. Old Point Comfort Lighthouse is one such feature. Also contributing to the cultural landscape and viewshed is Continental Park at the terminus of Ingalls Road on the Chesapeake Bay. The bandstand began



hosting cultural activities, concerts, ceremonies, and celebrations in 1934 and continues today with programming along the Chesapeake Bay authorized by the Fort Monroe Authority.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Hampton, Virginia, and Old Point Comfort, on which Fort Monroe is located, are rich in prehistory and more than 400 years of recorded settlement. A summary of major historical events is provided below.

### **Prior to 1607**

Archeological evidence demonstrates that American Indians used the Chesapeake Bay region for no less than 10,000 years before the arrival of Europeans. Archeologists have recovered hickory nuts, butternuts, acorns, amaranth, and chenopod from regional sites associated with this time period. The subsistence strategy of the Early Archaic groups (8000 to 6000 BC) took advantage of new types of plants and animals entering the region following changes in climate. The Middle Archaic peoples (6000 to 2500 BC) used a very similar survival strategy, with the possible inclusion of shellfish as an additional food source. By the Late Archaic period (2500 to 1200 BC) some groups specialized in using estuarine and riparian plants and animals that were essential parts of the bay's ecosystem.

During the Woodland Period (1200 BC to European contact) pottery and agriculture began to play a prominent role the peninsula's American Indian cultures. What is now known as Old Point Comfort was a critical crossroads for American Indian trade and meeting as a result of the productive ecosystems. It was these people who would encounter the European explorers in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. In the Hampton area and on the peninsula, Spanish explorers and English settlers encountered the Kecoughtan, a subtribe of the Powhatan that belonged to the Algonquian linguistic stock.

### **1607–1800**

This period was dominated by exploration and settlement of Hampton Roads and the James River region by European explorers, construction of early fortifications, and the introduction of the first enslaved Africans to Great Britain's North American colonies. On April 28, 1607, a group from a convoy of English settlers led by Captain Christopher Newport sailed into what they termed "Cape Comfort" and landed on the point, before moving on to settle at Jamestown. Among those aboard was Captain John Smith, who explored the Chesapeake Bay in his famous voyages of 1607–1609, and who became Jamestown Council's third president.

In 1609, the British built Algernourne Fort (Fort Algernon) at Old Point Comfort to protect the entrance to settlements along the James River. Fort Algernon burned in 1612. Other fortifications were built on this strategic site to guard various interests. The strongest, Fort George, constructed in the 1730s to guard against French and Spanish invasions, was destroyed by a hurricane in 1749.

Historians now conclude the first traffic in slaves in Great Britain's North American colonies actually took place at Old Point Comfort in 1619.<sup>1</sup> With the arrival of these Africans in the Virginia

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1. In 1619, Virginia Colony secretary John Rolfe wrote "In the latter end of August, a Dutch man of War. . . arrived at Point Comfort" noting that the commander delivered "20 and odd negroes" who were traded for provisions and

Colony began an incremental evolution in the institutions of North American, slavery from contractual, indentured servitude to inherited and perpetual enslavement distinguished by race. By the beginning of the 18th century the enslavement of Africans and their descendants had largely supplanted indentured servitude of Europeans or enslavement of American Indians. Numerous laws in Virginia subsequently codified differential treatment of the enslaved and indentured servants based on race. The injustice of slavery was a critical contributing factor in the American Civil War.

## **1800–1829**

In 1802, a 54-foot-tall permanent lighthouse was built on Old Point Comfort, replacing a navigational light erected in 1775. It is the oldest existing lighthouse in continuous operation on the Chesapeake Bay and is the oldest structure at Fort Monroe. The lighthouse continues to serve as a beacon welcoming the U.S. Navy and mariners to the Hampton Harbor and is operated by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The absence of American coastal fortifications, following the destruction of Fort George, enabled the British fleet to sail with impunity up the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Bay area, both a commercial hub and the seat of the U.S. national government, was a British target during the War of 1812. In June of 1813, the British burned Hampton and shortly after moved against Washington, D.C. The vulnerability of the nation's capital revealed the significance of coastal defense and led to the construction of a series of fortifications along the eastern seaboard and Gulf coast known as the Third System of fortifications. The strategic location of Old Point Comfort became the site of the largest Third System fortification. The new fortress would be named after President James Monroe, a Virginian.

In 1817, General Simon Bernard, a French-trained military engineer and former aide to Napoleon Bonaparte, planned the design for Fort Monroe, calling for a brick, granite, and earthen casemated fortification. The fort's 2,394-yard perimeter encompassed 63 acres, and its ramparts, casemates, and gate were enclosed by a wet moat. Designed as a bastioned work with seven fronts, holding 380 gun mounts and a complement of more than 2,600 men in time of war, the fort was deemed close to impregnable from land and sea. Bernard envisioned Fort Monroe as the "headquarters" for the entire coastal fortifications system. A water battery designed to contain 40 casemated, or fortified compartments for guns, was constructed as part of the outer works to protect the fort from direct attack.

Construction of Fort Monroe began in 1819 and proceeded over the course of more than a decade. The labor force used to construct Fort Monroe included military convicts and a large number of enslaved persons hired out by the owners of local plantations. In 1824, Fort Monroe became the location of the Army's Artillery School of Practice, the predecessor to combat training schools seen today.

## **1830–1860**

In 1831 Second Lieutenant Robert E. Lee arrived to assist in supervising the construction of the fort's moat and a nearby fort, Fort Wool. By 1834, Fort Monroe was the fifth largest arsenal in the country. Besides the fort itself, the extant antebellum buildings are the most historically significant

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other supplies. These "20 and odd negroes" were noted to be originally from Angola, and they would become either servants or chattel slaves.

structures and the most architecturally significant. These buildings demonstrate living conditions at Fort Monroe in its earliest years and the use of the fort as a significant defensive structure and artillery training center.

The antebellum period also marked the emergence of Old Point Comfort's resort industry, thus establishing recreational use of the military location. While the construction of Fort Monroe continued, the Army granted permission to private investors to erect the Hygeia Hotel. Built in 1822, the hotel was initially used to house workers constructing the fort, but later became a popular resort attracting many prominent persons of the era including Henry Clay and President John Tyler. The Hygeia was the first of a number of hotels at Old Point Comfort to be built in the same area, making it a prime resort destination. The resort and fort were served by steamships and later the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway once the 1889 track route was accepted by the post commander.

In the early 1830s, a band of members of the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo nations, led by Black Hawk, fought a bloody, but unsuccessful war after being forcibly removed from tribal lands in Illinois. After the conclusion of the Battle at Bad Axe River in southwestern Wisconsin, Black Hawk and other captured tribal leaders were transported east and imprisoned for a few weeks at Fort Monroe until June 1833. During their captivity at the fort, the prisoners sat for portraits. Jefferson Davis, who would become the President of the Confederate States of America, was a member of the guards escorting Black Hawk to Fort Monroe, where Davis was eventually imprisoned after the Civil War. These images, together with an autobiographical account that Black Hawk later dictated through an interpreter to a reporter, crafted representations of American Indians for a decidedly ambivalent American public.

## **1861–1865**

The Civil War is the most significant period in Fort Monroe's history. The fort remained a Union stronghold throughout the Civil War. Fort Monroe served as both a staging area for major Union campaigns and a place of hope for the enslaved seeking refuge behind Union lines. The fort also served a critical role in the blockade of Southern ports from Virginia to the Carolinas. Fort Monroe sheltered and supplied Union ships participating in the blockade. In 1862 during the Peninsula Campaign, President Lincoln and his secretaries of war and treasury came to Fort Monroe to direct Union strategy while residing in Quarters 1.

Fort Monroe played a key strategic role as General Ulysses S. Grant marched from Cold Harbor to what became the campaign of Petersburg (June 9, 1864, until March 25, 1865). The fort's control of the approaches to Hampton Roads was critical in guaranteeing naval support and supplies for Grant's Army at Petersburg. Later, the fort played an important supply role for the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, which ultimately led to the Confederate withdrawal from Richmond and Lee's surrender in Appomattox, Virginia.

After the fall of the Confederacy, President Jefferson Davis was captured on May 10, 1865 in Georgia and transferred to Fort Monroe on May 19. He remained imprisoned at the fort for two years, first in a casemate and then in Carroll Hall. Davis was released on bail in May 1867, a year after his indictment. Davis was never tried.

On May 23, 1861, as Virginia seceded from the Union three self-emancipating men, considered escaped slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, arrived and sought asylum at Fort Monroe. While there are no eyewitness or definitive records on the names of the men, known to us today as Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Shepard Mallory, the return of the men was demanded as they were the property of Confederate Colonel Charles Mallory of Virginia. The Fugitive Slave Act

required the return of enslaved persons to their owners. Fort Monroe's new commanding officer, Major General Benjamin Butler, interviewed the men in Quarters 1 and learned they had been contracted to work on Confederate fortifications.

Butler rationalized that Virginia had seceded from the Union, and was therefore a foreign country and no longer protected by the U.S. Constitution. Based on the argument that the men were "property" Butler retained the men as "contraband of war." Other commanders of armies fighting the Confederates also made declarations freeing the slaves. Lincoln reversed every one of them—the war was not about freeing the slaves, it was about restoring the Union. Slave laws consequently remained the law of the land. What Butler did in declaring escaped slaves as *contraband* was to give the North a legally acceptable term.

When word spread of Butler's Contraband Decision, many more enslaved persons arrived at Fort Monroe seeking freedom and refuge. By October of the same year 900 of the freedom seekers resided in contraband camps surrounding Fort Monroe. Two camps developed in Hampton, the "Grand Contraband Camp"—Camp Hamilton, a military camp—and a nearby refugee camp in today's Phoebus, known as Slabtown. The U.S. government supported Butler's decision and advised that any enslaved person accepted at Fort Monroe could be put to work for Union purposes. Similar actions were replicated at other Union camps. The Contraband Decision led to the First Confiscation Act of 1861, allowing the retention of enslaved persons used against the Union as contraband. This Act was followed by the Second Confiscation Act in 1862, which further solidified military power to grant freedom to enslaved persons seeking liberty. The Militia Act (1862) and the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) also affected the number of contraband, as enslaved persons within Confederate territories sought their way behind Union lines. A year after the Emancipation Proclamation, the volume of able-bodied men heavily influenced the recruitment efforts led by the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Troops. Two regiments of U.S. Colored Cavalry and a battery of U.S. Colored Light Artillery were raised at Fort Monroe. These units served in the Army of the James. Through advocates such as Frederick Douglass, fair treatment if captured, equal wages, and pensions for service were eventually acquired for United States Colored Troops.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, more than 10,000 slaves had sought refuge at Fort Monroe. Butler's Contraband Decision, regardless that it was a strategic military determination, placed Fort Monroe as a starting point on the pathway to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the passage of the 13th Amendment.

The military was unprepared for the resulting humanitarian crisis. Conditions at camps were deplorable with insufficient food and water, rampant disease, and inadequate housing and healthcare. The Fort Monroe camps quickly expanded outside the fort as the first and largest concentrated contraband camp in the United States, providing aid to more than 10,000 freedom seekers at the close of the war. The growth of the camps placed the contraband community between the fort and Confederate lines. In 1865 Harriet Tubman was recruited as the matron of the "contraband and colored" hospital at Fort Monroe to address needs of freemen and United States Colored Troops. Due to poor conditions and a lack of funds Tubman only remained four months before returning to Auburn, New York.

## **1866–1916**

The Civil War was followed by a period of reconstruction and community building. Individuals who made up the contraband community around Fort Monroe during the Civil War created a free African American community and began to settle there. Former contraband camp members began

to build homes for their families, created and found jobs, started religious establishments, and worked to educate their children.

Mary Peake, a free woman of color, was recruited by the American Missionary Association to teach the growing community of contraband and freedmen living in Hampton following the May 1861 Contraband Decision. In September 1861, she began teaching 20 students under a southern live oak tree located on the grounds of what later became Hampton University. Using government funds, Major General Butler founded the Butler School for Negro Children in 1863, to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and housekeeping. In 1868, Brigadier General Samuel Armstrong obtained funding to establish Hampton Normal and Agricultural School, adjacent to the Butler School, establishing concepts of “norms” or standards in education and training in literacy, housekeeping, and general trades for the newly freed. Today Hampton University, one of the 106 historically black colleges and universities established to serve African American communities, is a renowned academic research institution with unique ties to Fort Monroe.

This period also marked significant renovation and expansion of facilities and construction at Fort Monroe. The fort was reinstituted as the Army’s Artillery School of Practice in 1867. President Grover Cleveland convened a special board in 1885 focused on modernizing coastal defenses. This board was led by Secretary of War William Endicott. From 1891 to 1906, the Army constructed six detached batteries of concrete with earthen parapets. These Endicott batteries were constructed to protect artillery guns from naval fire received from ships on the bay. Meanwhile, a new hotel, The Chamberlin, was built from 1890 to 1896, continuing the resort tradition of the previous Hygeia hotels.

In 1907, the Army created the Coast Artillery School at Fort Monroe to train all coastal defense officers and soldiers from throughout the United States. The establishment of the school resulted in the majority of nonresidential structures present at Fort Monroe today.

## **1917–1945**

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, coastal fortifications with Endicott batteries were still important, their armament matching or exceeding that of naval ships of the time. Aircraft were still land-based and had a limited range and payload. Fort Monroe mounted anti-aircraft guns and placed a submarine net to Fort Wool. The submarine net remained in place until 1918.

The Coast Artillery Corps was established as a separate branch in 1907. The Coast Artillery School developed from the Artillery School, which had been at Fort Monroe since the 19th century, and was one of several training centers. As a result, the number of officer candidates significantly increased and the fort reached a capacity of nearly 71,000 by early 1918. Fort Monroe also began holding Reserve Officer Training Corps camps from 1919 through 1941. The fort was headquarters for both the 3rd Coast Artillery District and the Coast Artillery Board. Training at the Coast Artillery School focused on big guns of the coast artillery between World War I and World War II, but there was an additional mission of training anti-aircraft artillery techniques.

In 1920, the Chamberlin Hotel burned to the ground and a new Chamberlin Hotel was built on its site in 1928. The largest building at Fort Monroe, the hotel remained a popular tourist attraction well into the 20th century.

During the 1930s and 1940s, construction was undertaken at Fort Monroe with funding from the Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration. Additional land was created by infilling the Mill Creek shoreline and other areas of the peninsula. In 1945 Fort Monroe was the

processing center for reassignment of personnel returning from overseas into harbor defenses. This influx brought construction of temporary barracks, mess halls, classrooms, and supply buildings. An airfield was also added to the fort.

## **1946 to the Present**

In 1946, the Coast Artillery School moved from Fort Monroe to Fort Winfield Scott at the Presidio in San Francisco. After World War II, the Army Field Forces were established at Fort Monroe and in 1955 Fort Monroe became the headquarters for the Continental Army Command. After reorganization in 1973, the Army established the headquarters of the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, a function the fort fulfilled until its closure in 2011.

In 1953, the Wherry housing units were constructed at the sites of Endicott era batteries, Montgomery and Eustis. The complex contained 53 buildings comprising 206 housing units. As the result of Hurricane Isabel damage sustained in 2003, all but one of the Wherry housing units were razed by 2013.

At the same time as the modern civil rights movement was gaining momentum in the 1950s, the United Daughters of the Confederacy spearheaded an effort to memorialize Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, at Fort Monroe though it was a Union stronghold throughout the Civil War. As a result, a decorative gate was installed on the fort ramparts as a memorial to Davis' two-year imprisonment at Fort Monroe after the war. The cell where Jefferson Davis was confined for four months became a key piece of the Casemate Museum that opened on June 1, 1951, as the result of the efforts by Dr. Chester Bradley and the Post Commander. Since then, the museum exhibits expanded to depict the history of Old Point Comfort, and presents the history of an important military installation, Fort Monroe, that has been involved in the defense of the United States throughout many wars and organizational changes to our national defense, including the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps. The museum also highlights Major General Benjamin Butler's Contraband of War decision. Collectively, the exhibits, structure, and memorial illustrate Fort Monroe's role as both a catalyst and measure of American social and political consciousness. In 2011, the museum began transitioning from Army management to the Fort Monroe Authority, which has been managing the museum since 2013.

## **PARK PURPOSE**

The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Fort Monroe National Monument was drafted through an analysis of its presidential proclamation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The park was established when the presidential proclamation was signed by President Obama on November 1, 2011 (see appendix A for presidential proclamation). The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.

*The purpose of Fort Monroe National Monument is to preserve, protect, and provide for the appropriate public use of the historical, natural, and recreational resources of Old Point Comfort, strategically located at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and to interpret its storied history in the European colonization of our nation, exploration of the bay, slavery in America and the struggle for freedom, and the defense of our nation.*

## PARK SIGNIFICANCE

Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of Fort Monroe National Monument, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.

The following significance statements have been identified for Fort Monroe National Monument. (Please note that the sequence of the statements does not reflect the level of significance.)

1. Old Point Comfort peninsula, located at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in the Hampton Roads area at the confluence of the York and James rivers, is shaped by deep-water channel currents that not only sustain rich estuarine life, but also create natural anchorage points. These became strategic cultural, political, trade, and defensive crossroads of American Indian, European, American, and African peoples for more than four centuries.
2. Old Point Comfort links two pivotal events in the troubling history of human servitude, commerce, and slavery in America. The first enslaved Africans in England's colonies in America were brought to this peninsula on a ship flying the Dutch flag in 1619, beginning a long ignoble period of slavery in the colonies. Two hundred forty-two years later, this was the site of self-emancipation and the 1861 Contraband Decision that propelled thousands of Africans and their descendants toward self-liberation and that set in motion the dismantling of the institution of slavery.
3. Fort Monroe, the largest fully moated masonry and earthen fort in the United States, was constructed in the aftermath of the War of 1812 as the first and largest of the coastal defense fortifications in the Third System (1816–1860). It represents four centuries of evolving military strategies, technologies, and leadership doctrines that have contributed to our national defense, beginning with the site's colonial predecessors and extending through the modern era of airborne weapons systems.
4. Fort Monroe, a vital Union stronghold within the Confederate states, was the site of key strategic war planning that included President Lincoln; a supply command from which major Union operations were launched that aided in ending the American Civil War; and the location of Confederate President Jefferson Davis's imprisonment following the war.
5. Just days after Virginia's secession from the Union in May of 1861, Fort Monroe's new commanding officer responded to requests for asylum from three self-emancipating slaves by issuing the Contraband Decision using the notion of slaves as property to ensure they would not be returned to owners. The Contraband Decision played a pivotal and groundbreaking role by providing legal and military precedents for the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), and ultimately for the liberation of four million enslaved people and the abolition of the institution of slavery by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1865). That decision has proven key to the slow but steady rise of equality and civil rights in our nation.
6. Following the groundbreaking Contraband Decision at Fort Monroe, hundreds of thousands of enslaved African Americans sought freedom and sanctuary with the Union Army, spawning a humanitarian crisis, and permanently changing communities throughout the nation. Within weeks of the decision, hundreds had arrived at Fort Monroe, and by the

end of the Civil War, more than 10,000 freedom-seeking African Americans sought refuge within area contraband camps.

7. Fort Monroe, as the site of numerous far-reaching events, generates the desire for reminiscence and commemoration on the part of descendants of people associated with the site's history and has become an arena for public discourse and discussion as well as divergent public memories related to the impacts of colonization on American Indians, slavery, the American Civil War, liberty, and civil rights.
8. Fort Monroe National Monument provides one of the only public access points along the lower Chesapeake Bay in proximity to a large urban population. The fort's natural resources, sandy public beaches, numerous historic trails, and diverse open spaces offer rare opportunities for water- and land-based recreation, including water access points and interpretation along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

## FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES AND VALUES

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are closely related to a park's purpose and are more specific than significance statements.

Fundamental resources and values help focus planning and management efforts on what is truly significant about the park. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the ability of the park to achieve its purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Fort Monroe National Monument:

- **Fort Monroe landscapes, buildings, structures, and features managed by the National Park Service.** Fort Monroe's cultural landscapes, buildings, structures, and features that are managed by the National Park Service include the sandy beaches and coastal woods of the North Beach area, along with the moated fort structure, the casemates, the building techniques and materials of the fort itself, individual buildings within the fort (buildings 1, 50, and 17), the Parade Ground, the Lincoln Gun, and southern live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*), including the nearly 500 year old Algernourne Oak near Building 1, which has stood as witness through the recorded history of Fort Monroe and its predecessors. These resources are key contributing elements of the Fort Monroe National Historic Landmark District, and are the physical embodiment of Fort Monroe's national significance. These resources are fee-managed by the National Park Service or in partnership under a preservation easement with the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- **Fort Monroe archeological sites.** Fort Monroe has been recorded as one large archeological site and issued one site number by the state. This archeological site includes 11 "loci," which have been determined to be national register-eligible, based upon their integrity and information potential for research areas including pre-contact period, early



colonial life and settlement, military encampments, and the presence of enslaved persons during the colonial era and Civil War.

- **Old Point Comfort shoreline.** Old Point Comfort was shaped by water, and its strategic location relies heavily on its surrounding waterways. Mill Creek lies to the north and west and is characterized by marsh lands on the Atlantic flyway. The area managed by the National Park Service provides landscape elements characteristic of the earliest human occupation of this area. Old Point Comfort's shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay is characterized by sea walls, boardwalks, and jetties, and to the northeast by several miles of sandy beaches, salt marsh, and coastal woods. The shoreline allows public recreational access to water, outdoor recreation areas, and enjoyment of natural resources, such as estuarine vegetation and wildlife native to the Chesapeake Bay region, as well as providing protection for diverse cultural resources.
- **Views associated with Fort Monroe.** Views to and from, as well as within, Fort Monroe have been identified as significant historic views. These vistas reinforce the historic visual and natural character of the peninsula. The North Beach area adjacent to Mill Creek is an indigenous cultural landscape, a conservation construct used in the comprehensive management plan for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.
- **The Contraband Decision, the path to the 13th Amendment, and human rights at Fort Monroe.** Fort Monroe's importance as the site where the groundbreaking Contraband Decision took place is an essential element of the park. The Contraband Decision had legal and political ramifications that impacted American history, and paved the road to the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery.
- **Fort Monroe and the celebration of self-emancipation, freedom, and liberty.** The national monument is where African American self-emancipation launched the historic contraband movement as three enslaved freedom seekers made a courageous journey to Union-held Fort Monroe. Thousands of African Americans who joined them withstood conditions of deprivation in the struggle for freedom and civil liberties and many served with the United States Colored Troops. Fort Monroe is a place where evolving and sometimes conflicting memory of the Civil War and human rights continues to be relevant.
- **Old Point Comfort as a strategic location for defense.** For more than 400 years, the peninsula served as a strategic defensive location for many communities and nations. As such it became known as the Gibraltar of the Chesapeake. Fort Monroe was an active military installation managed by the U.S. Army until 2011. The physical environment of Fort Monroe is an ideal setting for the exploration of issues of national defense, strategic alliances, and collective action to ensure the security and well-being of society.

## OTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCES AND VALUES

Fort Monroe National Monument contains other resources and values that are not fundamental to the purpose of the park and may be unrelated to its significance, but are important to consider in planning processes. These are referred to as "other important resources and values" (OIRV). These resources and values have been selected because they are important in the operation and management of the park and warrant special consideration in park planning.

The following other important resources and values have been identified for Fort Monroe National Monument:

- **Fort Monroe National Historic Landmark District.** Since 1960, Fort Monroe has been designated a national historic landmark district, which acknowledges the national significance of all contributing resources within the district boundary. The Fort Monroe National Historic Landmark District nomination identifies contributing buildings, structures, landscapes, and features, including some that will not be managed by the National Park Service. The landmark includes 189 contributing resources: 144 historic buildings, 3 historic structures, 9 historic landscape features, and 1 historic object.
- **Endicott gun batteries.** As a part of a series of concrete batteries strategically built along the Atlantic and Pacific shorelines, the Fort Monroe Endicott gun batteries were constructed between 1891 and 1901 to defend Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake Bay. They illustrate the changing defensive military technology of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Of the six Endicott gun batteries extant at Fort Monroe, batteries DeRussy, Church, and Anderson-Ruggles are managed by the National Park Service. This period of coastal defense represents an era following Fort Monroe's primary period of significance, 1819–1867.
- **Casemate Museum and the museum collections.** The U.S. Army established the Casemate Museum on June 1, 1951, within Fort Monroe's casemate interiors to display the cell where Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at the conclusion of the Civil War. Since then, the museum has expanded to depict the history of Old Point Comfort, Fort Monroe, and the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps. The museum interprets Major General Benjamin Butler's Contraband Decision, which earned the fort the name Freedom's Fortress. The museum, within the NPS easement, is owned and operated by the Commonwealth of Virginia. A significant number of artifacts are on temporary loan from the U.S. Army. The National Park Service collaborates with the museum in research, education, and interpretation, and provides technical assistance in resource management.
- **Old Point Comfort Lighthouse.** The Old Point Comfort Lighthouse, built in 1802 and lit in 1803, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. It is the oldest extant structure at Fort Monroe and the oldest lighthouse still in operation on the Chesapeake Bay. The lighthouse, within the NPS easement, is operated by the U.S. Coast Guard. The National Park Service will provide education and interpretation of this site.
- **Military traditions.** Fort Monroe, as a defensive location for hundreds of years, has seen the evolution of American military traditions such as flag raising, military ceremonies, parades, and concerts; display of war trophies or military equipment; the establishment of a museum; as well as the social and recreational cultures that develop in a close-knit mission-oriented community within an installation not generally open to the public.
- **Maritime sights and sounds.** Set in the midst of the world's largest naval station and the commercial maritime transportation hub of Norfolk, Virginia, Fort Monroe National Monument offers opportunities to enjoy the ever-changing sights and sounds of this maritime setting, major shipping channel, and Old Point Comfort recreational marina. Visitors may view the sunrise and sunset across the water in varying weather conditions, observe sailboats, listen to foghorns, and witness fishing traditions. The strong presence of

the military today evokes the important historic water-based role of the area. The significance of this location is represented by Fort Wool, Fort Monroe's companion fort, located just across the Chesapeake Bay. Visitors can view the location of the "Battle of the Ironclads," the USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia* (Merrimack) as witnesses did historically from the terreplein of Fort Monroe.

- **Fostering connections through our shared heritage.** The complex history of Fort Monroe signifies a legacy of freedom, hope, and courage. Connections to Old Point Comfort began with habitation by American Indians and explorations of the Chesapeake Bay by European explorers in 1607. Fort Monroe and the strategic military decisions made here forever changed the physical and political landscape of the United States, including the gateway communities of Phoebus, Hampton, and Greater Hampton Roads. The pivotal 1861 Contraband Decision transformed the status of enslaved persons throughout this country and greatly altered the development of African American communities. This decision influenced legislation and the establishment of institutions providing basic needs, self-help, and education to African Americans that continue to impact American life today.

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are an organizational tool. They provide the conceptual framework for visitor experience planning and programming. Interpretive themes are derived from and capture the essence of park purpose, park significance, resources, and values. They can help to explain why a park story is relevant to people who may be unconnected to an event, time, or place. Themes go beyond a description of an event or process; they reflect the context and effects of those events or processes in order to foster opportunities to experience and consider the meanings, concepts, and values represented by park resources.

While themes are important as a framework to help guide interpretation and management decisions, they serve to focus and develop visitor experience, services, and programming.

Broad themes, theme statements, and concept bullets have been developed for Fort Monroe. Under these broad themes are many topics that can be addressed or stories that can be told under a variety of conceptual frameworks. The following interpretive themes have been identified for Fort Monroe National Monument:

- Located at the confluence of the James River, York River, and the Chesapeake Bay, the peninsula earned the name "Old Point Comfort" due to the abundance of natural resources. Gathered by American Indians, fortified by early Europeans, and labored by enslaved African Americans and their descendants, this natural and cultural crossroads gave rise to the "Hampton Road's" agricultural and maritime history.
- Constructed as the first and largest of the Third System of fortifications in defense of the early republic and the Chesapeake Bay, Fort Monroe occupies a strategic location as the site of two centuries of military operations. The historic fort served as the physical and symbolic bulwark for shaping, defining, and projecting American social, political, and economic interests into the 21st century.
- Issued in support of the vision and persistence of African American freedom seekers at Fort Monroe, the 1861 Contraband Decision set in motion a process of emancipation through

practice, policy, and law that ultimately destroyed the institution of slavery in the United States and expanded the legal definitions for basic human rights.

- The Contraband Decision challenged ideals of freedom and equality as freedom seekers and their supporters sought to overcome the horrors of slavery and reconstructed American society during and following the Civil War. The struggle to be self-supporting and the educational demands of the African American community set the stage for black leadership and the quest for equal rights in the 20th century.