



VISITING THE PARK

Fort Ward Park includes an expansive 45-acres, located just minutes from downtown Alexandria. The Park is accessible daily, 9:00 a.m. to sunset.

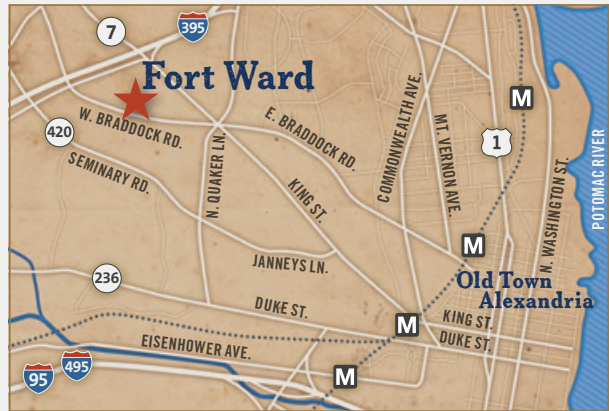
MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday Noon – 5:00 p.m.

Monday Closed

Closed: New Year’s Day, Christmas Day, and Thanksgiving Day



FORT WARD MUSEUM AND HISTORIC SITE

4301 W. Braddock Rd.
Alexandria, VA 22304

Museum group tours:
Call 703.746.4848

Picnic reservations:
Call 703.746.5414



FORT WARD MUSEUM AND HISTORIC SITE

BASTIONS of FREEDOM

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA



BASTIONS of FREEDOM



AS PART OF THE DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON,

Fort Ward protected the nation’s capital during the Civil War (1861–1865), and the vital seaport of Alexandria. After the war, a group of formerly enslaved African Americans bought land here and established a community known as “The Fort.” Despite facing social and legal inequalities, the residents of “The Fort” built homes, churches and a school, and created a strong community that survived for nearly a century. Their legacy reflects enduring ideas of freedom.



EXPERIENCE FORT WARD

This brochure provides information on significant sites throughout Fort Ward Park and will help acquaint you with features, people, and events that make this a special place. Please use the map to guide your exploration of the Museum and Park. As you tour this site, consider the complex history of Fort Ward.

Cover: Mollie Nelson, courtesy of Dorothy Hall Smith; Seminary School Students, 1932, courtesy of Elizabeth H. Douglas; 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery at Fort Ward, c. 1863, Fort Ward Museum.

Above, top: James and Beatrice Jackson with unidentified couple, c. 1930s, courtesy of Dorothy Hall Smith.

THE HISTORY OF FORT WARD



THE DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON

In May of 1861, Federal troops crossed the Potomac River and began building fortifications on the heights overlooking the Union capital. The construction rapidly increased after early Confederate victories at Manassas (Bull Run). By the end of the Civil War, 164 earthwork forts and batteries surrounded Washington, D.C., making it the most heavily fortified city in the western hemisphere. As the fifth largest fort in this formidable defense system, Fort Ward was considered to be a model of military design and engineering for the time period.

COMMANDER JAMES HARMON WARD, Fort Ward's namesake, was the first Union naval officer killed after the outbreak of the Civil War. An authority on tactics and gunnery, Ward helped establish the U.S. Naval Academy. In recognition of his contributions to the Union war effort, the newly constructed Fort Ward was named in his honor.



Cdr. James H. Ward, Fort Ward Museum collection.

"THE FORT" COMMUNITY

Following the Civil War, African American families began to purchase land at the abandoned Fort Ward. The first residents of "The Fort" and nearby "Seminary" community (located around the Virginia Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School) were probably a mixture of individuals already living in the area and migrants from other parts of Virginia, notably Fauquier County. The 1870 U.S. Census records four family names at Fort Ward: the Pages, the Shorts, the Perkins, and the McKnights. A decade later, the number of names grew to twenty. These families, many of which were connected by marriage and kinship, created a thriving neighborhood in the early 20th century.

CLARA SHORTS ADAMS, the daughter of one of the first landowners to settle "The Fort," was an important force in the community who helped found the Oakland Baptist Church, and donated land to establish a school for African American children. Her descendants still live in Alexandria.



Clara Adams and child (possibly Charles McKnight), courtesy of Adrienne Terrell Washington and Charles McKnight.

THE END OF "THE FORT"

As early as the 1950s, the City of Alexandria sought to purchase land from the owners and residents of "The Fort" in order to restore the Civil War fort and establish Fort Ward Park. Some residents sold their properties and relocated. For those who refused to sell, the City condemned the properties claiming they were unsanitary, unsafe, or "substandard," reasons which the owners strongly opposed. The City eventually displaced the last residents and demolished their homes. Yet the former residents and descendants of "The Fort," some of whom still live nearby, continue to hold dear the memory of the community as a symbol of endurance and freedom.



James Jackson (top, right) with possibly Simon Reed and Wallace Wanzer, courtesy of Dorothy Hall Smith; Ashby House (bottom), c. 1955, courtesy of Barbara Ashby Gordon and Donald Rankin.

RESTORING FORT WARD

In 1961, the City of Alexandria began archaeological fieldwork on Fort Ward which uncovered valuable information on the construction of the fort, and led to the authentic reconstruction of the fort's Northwest bastion as a Civil War Centennial project. The fort, Museum, and historic Park opened to the public on May 30, 1964. Since then, continued



archaeological investigations and research have revealed more information on

the site's Civil War past, as well as the discovery of homestead foundations, grave sites, and artifacts that have helped shed light on the lives of the residents of "The Fort" community.



Photos: Fort Ward Museum and Alexandria Archaeology.



FORT WARD

MUSEUM AND HISTORIC SITE

FORT WARD offers a historical experience unique to the City of Alexandria. The Museum and the Park landscape provide a window to engage with the history of a Union fort and a post-Civil War African American community.

In order to complete a full tour of the Museum and the grounds, plan at least an hour and a half for your visit. To further your Fort Ward experience, visit alexandriava.gov/FortWard and access additional information on the history of Fort Ward.

Please help preserve Fort Ward by observing all Park rules.



THINGS TO DO AT FORT WARD

* COMING SOON

1 ORIENTATION STATIONS

Begin your visit by stopping at one of the two Orientation Stations. Learn more about Fort Ward's story and familiarize yourself with the layout of the site. Restrooms are located near both Orientation Stations.

3 MUSEUM EXHIBITS

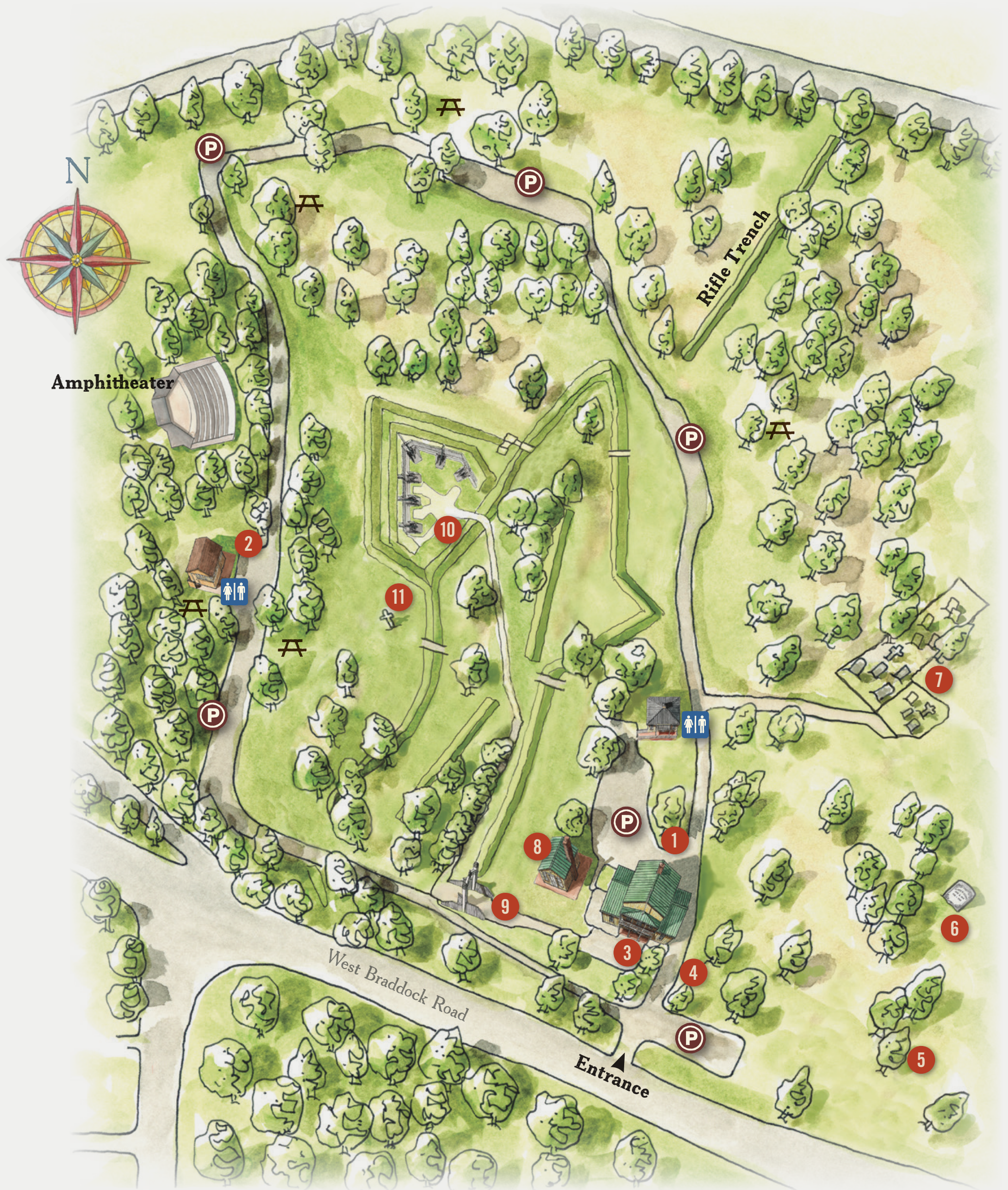
Discover the story of Fort Ward's significance to the Defenses of Washington, and experience exhibits, an orientation film and historical objects that interpret the Civil War soldiers and African American Fort Community residents who occupied this place.

4 HISTORIC WAYSIDES

As you explore the Park, learn about the people, structures, and events of Fort Ward through interpretive panels. Take a moment to stop, read, and discover!

5 SCHOOL HOUSE LANE

Several cedar trees survive which lined a path that led to a one-room school house for African American children.



SITE MAP/KEY



Parking



Restrooms



Paths



Picnic Areas

6 CLARA ADAMS GRAVE SITE

Visit the burial site of Clara Adams (1865–1952), a matriarch of “The Fort” community.

7 OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH CEMETERY & OLD GRAVE YARD

Members of “The Fort” community are among the burials in these cemeteries. Oakland Baptist is a private cemetery, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

8 OFFICERS' HUT

Take a peek into the lives and home of Civil War-era officers. Explore this reproduction quarters, in which military officers would have lived and overseen their troops.

9 FORT WARD GATE

Enter the fort like the soldiers did through this reconstruction of the gate that was located on this site.

10 NORTHWEST BASTION

Visit the Northwest bastion, authentically reconstructed to its 1864 condition, and view the fort's original preserved earthwork walls. Can you imagine what the entire fort would have looked like during the Civil War?

11 JACKSON CEMETERY

This burial ground was established on the slope (glacis) of the Civil War fort on land purchased in 1884 by “Fort” community resident James F. Jackson.