

DRAFT [2012-09-22]

Civil War Resources – Fort Ward Park

SIGNIFICANCE OF FORT WARD'S CIVIL WAR RESOURCES

- ❖ Fort Ward is the best-preserved fort in the Defenses of Washington.
- ❖ Fort Ward is the only site in the Defenses of Washington to feature an authentic restoration.
- ❖ Fort Ward has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and achieved recognition by the American Association of Museums.
- ❖ Additional preserved Civil War resources in the park, such as the remains of the rifle trench and the gun battery, as well as archaeological finds, give important context to the fort.
- ❖ The Fort Ward Museum interprets the historical site with collections, public programs, and reference materials.

1. Civil War Earthworks

Description of Original Purpose, Use and Form

Fort Ward was the fifth largest of the extensive network of Union forts that comprised the Defenses of Washington, and was regarded by General John G. Barnard, who planned, designed, and oversaw their construction, as “one of the most important of the defenses of Alexandria.” Constructed in early September of 1861, on land owned by Phillip Hooff (Fairfax Deed Book H3:173), the fort was enlarged in 1864-1865 to reflect a star design based on mid-nineteenth century ideals of military engineering. The Northwest and Southwest bastions faced the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike and Little River Turnpike approaches to Alexandria, respectively, while the south, east and north bastions provided coverage from the lateral and rear directions. The fort’s final design included two interior bombproofs that provided shelter, storage and a secondary line of defense, five powder magazines and filling rooms, and a well. A ditch, abatis and man-made glacis surrounded the fort as defensive obstacles. The fort was connected to Battery

Garesché to the north and Fort Worth to the south via rifle trench line. An outlying gun battery located to the northwest was constructed in late 1862, which was connected to the fort by a covered way.

Establishment of the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site

The preservation of the forts within the Defenses of Washington and their incorporation into the Greater Washington Park System was suggested as early as 1902 by the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed many well-known urban parks, including Central Park and Prospect Park in New York City, indicating that the historical importance of this system of forts was recognized even at that date.

With the upcoming Civil War centennial, interest in preserving Fort Ward intensified. Detailed plans were drawn up, and land for the park was acquired by the City of Alexandria. The Northwest Bastion was restored to its 1864-65 condition, including reproduction armament taken from the 1865 table of armament. Un-restored elements were identified by descriptive markers.

In 1962, Fort Ward opened as a park; Fort Ward Historic Park and Museum was officially opened on May 30, 1964. The restoration project was such a major achievement that it was instrumental in the selection of Alexandria as an All-American City in 1964. Alexandria was one of only six cities recognized by the Civil War Centennial Commission for an outstanding Civil War Centennial project. The City of Alexandria also received an award from the Council on Abandoned Military Posts for its major contribution to the preservation and interpretation of Fort Ward.

Fort Ward Park was established as an *historic* park. The 1982 application for the listing of Fort Ward on the National Register of Historic Places states:

"Fort Ward is a 35-acre Historic Park owned and operated by the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The park is comprised of three major elements. In order of importance they are:

- a) Civil War Earthen Fortifications
- b) Reproduction Period Military Buildings
- c) Recreational Facilities"

Since then, additional archaeological findings have proven to be another significant component of the park's Civil War resources.

Description of Resource at Present

The extant earthwork walls and preserved features of about 95% of the fort's 818-yard 1864 plan are identifiable, with intact remains ranging from well defined to traces of the original structures.

To the right of the fort's reconstructed gate, the remains of the **rear wall leading to the East bastion** are visible.

The walls of the **East bastion** are prominently preserved, and the bastion's *terre plein* and traces of the location of the gun platforms are discernible, as is the ditch and counterscarp surrounding the bastion. A barberry hedge was planted around this bastion and a contiguous extent of the fort's perimeter in the 1980s to prevent the public from climbing on the earthwork walls. The **rear wall between the East and North bastions** is well defined, with much of the original ditch and counterscarp extant. A bridge entrance into the fort is installed near the North bastion through a section of the fort wall.

The **North bastion** is clearly defined and the impression of the ditch and counterscarp is visible. Beyond the reconstructed Northwest bastion, the **front wall of the fort leading to the Southwest bastion** is preserved, covered by a profusion of mature trees, saplings and invasive plant growth. The impression of the ditch and counterscarp is discernible. A stairway leads into the fort along this wall from the areas where the Jackson Cemetery and Picnic Area 4 are located.

The **Southwest bastion**, which projected toward Little River Turnpike, was the site of the fort's 100-pounder Parrott Rifle, and is identified by an interpretive marker.

Distinguishing features of this bastion are minimal due to the effects of erosion and the intersection of the park road. An eroded mound of earth adjacent to the park road marks the remains of the bastion's powder magazine.

Extant remains of the **South bastion** are evident between the park road and West Braddock Road, and on the Episcopal High School property across West Braddock Road. Approximately one half of this bastion was lost when West Braddock Road was re-routed through the area.

Earthwork remains of the two bombproof shelters that were situated inside the fort are extant. **Bombproof #1** is a stable elongated mound of earth with a number of mature trees growing out of the feature. **Bombproof #2** is well defined, with the depression of the floor evident, and mature trees and saplings growing out of the feature. A slight indentation in the ground between the two bombproofs might indicate the site of the **fort's flagstaff**.

Beyond the fort are the preserved earthen remains of several outlying features. The remains of a **six-gun battery** are discernible in the wooded area to the back of Picnic Area 3 along the northwest perimeter of the park. An interpretive marker near the picnic area parking lot identifies this feature. The gun battery was connected to the fort by a **covered way**, the trace of which can be faintly identified in the terrain to the inside of the park road aligned to the Northwest bastion. About 454 feet of a **rifle trench** that led to Battery Garesché is preserved and identified by an interpretive marker across from the North bastion beyond the park road. Surrounding an extensive area of the fort, from the East bastion to just beyond the Northwest bastion, the raised remains of the man-made **glacis** are also evident.

Historic Photographs, drawings, maps [to be included in the final report?]

--1862 Engineer drawing of the Fort, National Archives

--1864 Engineer drawing of the Fort, NA

- 1865 Engineer drawing of the Fort Ward Gate, NA
- Plan of Quartermaster Property, October 12, 1865, Fort Ward, NA
- Sector maps identifying Fort Ward's location in relation to neighboring forts, NA
- 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery in Southwest bastion of the Fort with 100-pounder Parrott Rifle, 1862
- Barracks at Fort Ward with Braddock Lane in foreground, NA

Evaluation of Integrity of Resource

The extant remains of the historic fort reflect a high level of integrity, with approximately 95% of the original earthen walls intact and in generally good condition. Since the 1980s, efforts have been made to assess the earthwork remains and implement measures to preserve them. A Historic Site Preservation and Maintenance Plan for the fort was developed in 1985 by former Museum Director Wanda Dowell. The Plan assessed the condition and seasonal maintenance needs of the extant earthwork walls of the fort and the restored Northwest bastion at that time, and cited recommendations for addressing preservation needs. This was intended to be a dynamic plan, to reflect changes over time.

In 1991, landscape preservation specialists evaluated the condition of the fort and made recommendations for continued preservation care as part of an Institute of Museum Services-Conservation Assessment Program (IMS-CAP) survey. This survey led to a five-year plan, begun in 1993, which implemented several erosion control conservation projects aimed at stabilizing the earthwork walls in selected areas of the fort.

Since 2001, several significant preservation assessments and projects have focused on the restored Northwest bastion. However, a thorough, up-to-date evaluation and long-range preservation plan for the fort's earthwork remains have not been made. A general

description of the integrity and condition of the fort's extant features, with some key concerns to be addressed, is outlined below:

Rear wall between Fort's gate and East bastion: This section of the fort wall is intact, but varies in height, with lower elevation closer to the gate. Erosion from the effects of weather, foot traffic on the earthwork wall, and improper mowing has impacted on the preservation of this feature. The higher section of the wall near the stairway has experienced ground cover problems, though efforts in recent years to establish turf have been somewhat successful.

East bastion: The bastion is prominent and clearly defined, although erosion and the increased presence of invasive plant growth, especially on the exterior wall, need to be assessed. In the mid-1980s, a major erosion project was implemented to stabilize and repair severe damage to the exterior of the bastion wall. A barberry hedge was planted around this bastion and most of the fort to minimize public climbing on the earthen walls. A drainage problem in this area was corrected in 2005, which included removing a wooden foot bridge over a washed out section of the bastion wall, installing a drainage pipe to direct water to the ditch, and restoration of the earthwork wall.

Rear wall between East and North bastions: The wall, ditch and counterscarp are extant. A number of mature trees are growing out of the earthen wall. Erosion has impacted this area, especially along the outer wall, due to sparse ground cover. Ground cover planted along this wall since the 1980s has had mixed success due to lack of sunlight from tree foliage and maintenance of the plants. In recent years, vinca has been planted and done well in some areas and poorly in others. An assessment of the use of vinca and the impact of other invasive species on this feature needs to be conducted.

North bastion: The bastion is intact and well preserved, including the surrounding ditch and counterscarp. Minimal sunlight from the extensive tree coverage has made the survival of ground cover problematic on parts of the wall surface. There is evidence of erosion from foot paths worn on the exterior of the bastion wall, and patches of bare earth in the ditch and near the viewing platform, where light and soil conditions have prevented

the growth of ground cover. Erosion concerns and ground cover in this area need to be assessed.

Front wall from the Northwest bastion to the Southwest bastion: The wall is well preserved and defined, although erosion of the counterscarp has diminished the ditch's profile. The wall is covered by mature trees and has become severely overgrown with invasive plant material such as honeysuckle, Virginia Creeper and poison ivy, as well as saplings, volunteer trees and fallen tree limbs. There is evidence of several foot paths worn into the fort wall near the Northwest bastion; efforts to stem erosion on these paths by planting vinca as ground cover have been minimally successful. Although several erosion control projects have been implemented along this wall in the last 15 years, budget reductions impacting Park maintenance operations has allowed trees and invasive growth to take over this feature.

Southwest bastion: Distinguishing features of this bastion are minimal due to the effects of erosion and the intersection of the park road. The bastion's powder magazine is identifiable by a large mound of earth that has experienced erosion problems due to water run-off, poor soil and foot traffic. Recent efforts to establish ground cover over this feature have been minimally successful. A visitor foot bridge installed over a washed out section of the bastion wall was removed in 2006 and the earthen wall restored with water drainage improvements.

South bastion: Extant remains of approximately half of this bastion are visible. The fort wall facing Braddock Road has become overgrown with invasive plants and volunteer trees.

Bombproofs: The earthen remains of both bombproofs are preserved. The profile of the floor of bombproof #2 is clearly visible, due to the process of shoveling the earth back from the interior when the fort was dismantled. Both bombproofs have been impacted by the effects of weather erosion, loss of ground cover, and storms that have uprooted trees from the earthen remains. Bombproof #1 has also been affected by the detrimental effects of foot traffic and improper mowing procedures. The number of trees

and invasive growth on Bombproof #2 has inhibited turf growth. Attempts to clear some of the invasive growth and establish turf cover in sections of the south end of the bombproof are being monitored.

Rifle Trench: The embankment and profile is preserved, but severe erosion stemming from poor soil, water run-off and lack of sunlight from extensive tree coverage has impacted on this feature and needs to be assessed.

Outlying Battery and Covered Way: The trace of the covered way that connected the outlying battery to the fort is barely discernible in the landscape to the northwest of the fort. The remains of the battery are preserved in the heavily wooded area to the rear of picnic area 5 along the northwest perimeter of the park.

Threats to Integrity of Resource

The integrity of the extant earthen remains of Fort Ward is threatened by a number of detrimental factors, some in combination with each other. Erosion remains the critical threat to the stability and preservation of the fort. This is due to the natural effects of weather, poor soil quality and lack of sunlight in some areas which prevent the growth of healthy ground cover, uprooted trees which disturb earthen remains, and foot traffic on the wall surfaces. Additionally, invasive animal tunneling in the fort walls is a threat, as well as the impact of improper mowing and maintenance procedures. Elimination of City funding for erosion control and seasonal turf treatment of the earthwork walls would significantly diminish preservation of the resource.

Recommended Treatment of Resource

A detailed professional assessment of the condition of the earthwork remains of the fort must be conducted which would form the basis for a long-range preservation treatment plan. Initial recommendations for preservation care would include:

- Implementation of appropriate seasonal mowing procedures for City and contract crews as specified by guidelines recommended by professional turf specialists and the National Park Service's preservation standards for earthwork historic sites.
[This has been done.]
- Continuation of annual cyclical turf maintenance treatment of the fort walls involving seeding, fertilizing, liming, aerating and weed control in specified areas of the fort by landscape specialists. A fall and spring program of turf treatment was implemented in selected areas of the fort beginning in 2005 through City CIP erosion control funding.
- Identification and assessment of invasive plant species that are infiltrating the fort walls by City horticulturalists, with recommendations for removal, treatment and alternative ground cover options.
- Working with landscape turf specialists and City horticulturalists, conduct a soil and ground cover assessment of the fort walls to create an action plan for establishing healthy ground cover in problematic areas.
- Working with City arborists and horticultural specialists, remove selected trees and saplings from fort walls to promote ground cover growth and prevention of damaged trees being uprooted during storms and pulling soil from historic features.
- Implement specialized erosion and turf treatment for specific areas of deterioration.

2. **Reconstructed Civil War Earthworks**

Description of Original Purpose, Use and Form

The **Northwest bastion** was a prominent element of Fort Ward's plan, positioned to guard the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike looking towards Bailey's Crossroads. The

bastion was excavated and accurately reconstructed in the early 1960s by the City of Alexandria as a Civil War Centennial project. [See Edward Mc. Larrabee's *Archaeological Report on Fort Ward* and William D. Hershey's *Historical Report*.] The reconstruction of this bastion to its 1864 condition makes Fort Ward the only site in the Defenses of Washington that currently offers such a complete and authentic restoration to the public. The Northwest bastion is the highlight of tours and the setting for living history programs that interpret fort construction, artillery and army life in the defense system.

Description of Resource at Present

The Northwest bastion is completely and accurately restored, although maintenance and replacement of deteriorated wooden elements, appropriate mowing procedures, and erosion concerns are on-going preservation issues. Currently, all features of the bastion are intact. Reconstructed elements include: the bastion's earthwork walls, ditch and counterscarp; wooden revetment; banquettes; doors to the gunpowder magazine and filling room; and six gun platforms with replicas of a 6-pounder gun, two 24-pounder howitzers, and three 4.5 inch Rodman guns. A viewing platform is situated to the exterior of the bastion, at the junction with the North bastion.

Historic photographs, drawings, maps [to be included in final report?]

--1864 engineer plan of Fort Ward includes the Northwest bastion, NA

--Plans from the early 1960s detailing design of the bastion for reconstruction, Museum collection

--Contemporary photographs of the reconstructed bastion, Museum collection

Evaluation of Integrity of Resource

The earthwork walls of the reconstructed Northwest bastion are completely intact and in good condition, although erosion, water infiltration and animal tunneling have impacted on selected areas and need to be more thoroughly assessed and monitored. The parapet of the wall, especially at the point of the bastion, shows marked effects of erosion and slumping of the profile, and holes from animal tunneling can be seen in the exterior wall.

Since the 1980s, the Northwest bastion has been evaluated by conservation specialists and engineers for different preservation projects, including a 1991 IMS-CAP survey, a 1994 IMS-CAP grant, and a professional engineer survey in 2001 to assess and correct a fissure in the exterior of the bastion wall. Findings from the 2001 survey, coupled with assessments by City engineers and drainage specialists, led to the installation of an improved drainage system in 2003 to help stabilize the bastion's wall surface.

In recent years, several major efforts have been made to preserve the integrity of the structure, including: implementation of a seasonal turf maintenance program beginning in 2005; repair of a slope slump in the north face of the exterior wall in 2007 caused by severe storm water infiltration; and contracted mowing of the walls according to specified requirements. The benefits of the seasonal turf maintenance program and appropriate mowing using a contract landscape/turf management firm are especially evident in the interior of the bastion.

Reconstructed elements of the Northwest bastion are currently in good condition, although repair and replacement of wooden features of the bastion are an on-going preservation concern. Three of the bastion's six wooden gun carriages were replaced with wood-grain cast aluminum models in 2008 and 2012 to reduce maintenance and replacement costs, and this is a projected goal for two other wooden carriages, leaving the 6-pounder carriage as the only wooden model. Gun platforms were replaced in 2009, and doors to the filling room and magazine in 2010. The revetment shows signs of deterioration and will require replacement of wooden posts in some areas, slated for 2014-2015.

Threats to Integrity of Resource

The detrimental effects of erosion, poor water drainage, insufficient turf management (including inappropriate mowing procedures) of the earthwork walls, animal tunneling, and deterioration of reconstructed wooden elements of the bastion are the primary threats to the integrity of the structure. Deferred maintenance due to budget reductions will also diminish the integrity of the bastion.

Recommended Treatment of Resource

Initial recommendations for treatment, pending a more thorough condition and long-range treatment report, would be:

- Assessment of the condition and stability of the bastion walls by soil, landscape and animal control specialists, with recommendations for treatment.
- Continuation of seasonal turf management treatment of the bastion, including seeding, fertilization, liming, aerating and weed and pest control, to establish healthy ground cover and prevent/reverse the effects of erosion.
- Implementation of appropriate mowing procedures according to recommended guidelines by professional landscape specialists and the NPS's preservation standards for care of historic earthwork sites. [This has been done.]
- Repair or replacement of deteriorated wooden elements of the bastion to maintain the well cared for authenticity of this feature and for public safety purposes.

3. Civil War Building Foundations

Description of Original Purpose, Use and Form

Evidence of the **Civil War barracks** at Fort Ward was discovered by Alexandria Archaeology during a 1991 excavation to mark 30 years of archaeology in Alexandria. The fort's Quartermaster Property Plan shows three soldier barracks in the general vicinity of the present-day Museum and Officers' Hut. These buildings were board and batten rectangular structures, measuring 90 x 18 feet, that were supported by posts. Visual documentation of these structures can be seen in the photograph of the barracks taken from Braddock Lane.

Description of Resource at Present

Three large post holes with cobble foundations were identified about one foot below ground level during the 1991 excavation. Aligned about four feet apart, the holes probably held timber posts that supported a barrack building. The total depth of the post holes measured about 2.5 feet below ground surface. The holes and cobble foundations were documented by Alexandria Archaeology and preserved underground. A brick feature, possibly a foundation for a stove, was also discovered.

Historic photographs, drawings, maps [to be included in final report?]

--Quartermaster Property Plan for Fort Ward, NA

--Photograph of Fort Ward Barracks from Braddock Lane, NA

Evaluation of Integrity of Resource

Archaeologists back-filled the post holes to preserve them, and left the brick feature in place.

Threats to Integrity of Resource

Invasive underground digging operations, and aboveground turf maintenance activities could threaten this archaeological feature. The installation of an irrigation system in the area of this resource by RPCA in 2008 is a potential threat that needs to be monitored.

Recommended Treatment of Resource

Preventive preservation measures should be taken, such as advising RPCA managers, crews and contractors about the existence of this underground archaeological feature.

4. Wells, Privies and Roads

Description of Original Purpose, Use and Form

A brick-curbed well was located in the interior of the fort in the area between the two bombproofs. The exact location of this well has yet to be determined. A privy was located in the vicinity of the parking lot at the entrance to Fort Ward Park, near the Park road.

Description of Resource at Present

The well and the privy are potential archaeological resources that have not been excavated to date. Alexandria Archaeology performed some shovel tests in the area of the privy with no results. A wooden replica of the well superstructure is located near the site of the original well for interpretive purposes.

Historic photographs, drawings, maps [to be included in final report?]

--1864 Engineer plan of the fort shows location of well, NA

Evaluation of Integrity of Resource

Not known

Threats to Integrity of Resource

Invasive underground digging operations and aboveground maintenance activities could threaten these features.

Recommended Treatment of Resource

Preventive preservation measures should be taken such as advising RPCA managers, crews and contractors about the existence of these potential archaeological features.

5. Archaeological Sites and Buried Artifacts

Description of Original Purpose, Use and Form

Paragraph here that explains that archaeological resources are located within the park boundaries, etc. The map of Civil War archaeology resources should suffice here for the moment.

Description of Resource at Present

Describe areas in the park where archaeological resources pertaining to the Civil War have been identified.

Over 125 artifacts deposited at the site during the Civil War have been identified during the course of a formal metal detector survey. A systematic shovel testing survey also indicated the locations of Civil War-related activity. From an archaeological perspective, the park can be divided into five archaeological zones:

1. The interior of the fort
2. The battery in the northwest corner of the park and the trench line leading to it from the northwest bastion
3. West of fort
4. East of fort and rifle trench (inside fort)
5. North of fort between battery and rifle trench. See map.

Historic photographs, drawings, maps

See map.

Evaluation of Integrity of Resource

[I will have to write up a brief overview of the integrity of each of the 5 Civil War archaeology zones. –G.F.]

Threats to Integrity of Resource

Invasive underground digging operations and above-ground maintenance activities could threaten these features.

Recommended Treatment of Resource

Preventive preservation measures should be taken such as advising RPCA managers, crews and contractors about the existence of these potential archaeological features. As well, any below ground disturbances—construction, landscaping, tree planting, etc.—would need to be vetted by Alexandria Archaeology, possibly leading to a formal preservation plan.

SUMMARY - HISTORIC SITE ISSUES

❖ **Ensure ongoing funding to accomplish preservation and maintenance goals.**

This includes erosion control and seasonal turf treatment funding allocated to Fort Ward Museum through OHA, and funds for contract mowing of the historic area allocated to Fort Ward Museum through RPCA. **There is currently no designated funding for routine seasonal grounds maintenance of the historic fort, a budgeting issue which should be addressed.** Other services, such as the weekend Fort Ward Park manager, are also funded by RPCA. If RPCA and OHA CIP funding is cut, Fort Ward maintenance and operations could be significantly affected.

- ❖ Enforce the provisions of the memorandum of understanding between RPCA and OHA.
- ❖ Ensure that park activities overseen by RPCA (e.g., issuance of permits for large gatherings in Fort Ward Park) are coordinated with Fort Ward Historic Site staff.
- ❖ Ongoing tree maintenance is necessary to prevent tree damage to earthwork walls, which has been significant.
- ❖ Ensure regular and ongoing repair and prevention of erosion of earthwork walls.
- ❖ Repair of the effects of archaeological investigations must be an integral part of such investigations.
- ❖ Invasive species have had a significant negative effect on the fort walls. A cooperative assessment of invasive species prevention with RPCA is necessary.

- ❖ Upgrading of historic site accessibility to comply with ADA provisions is necessary.
- ❖ Assess the effect of changes in maintenance activities, such as the no-mow policy, on use of the various Fort Ward Park facilities.
- ❖ **Appropriate balancing of the multiple layers of cultural resources within Fort Ward Park present significant challenges to be addressed.**

3. Recreational Use; Issues and Recommendations **Ripley Forbes and Robert Moir¹**

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader input and recommendations for the continued use of Fort Ward Park as a major facility for passive recreational usage.² This usage is intended to have minimal negative impact on the historic importance and natural environment of the Park. It is also intended to offer transformative suggestions for possible changes in the recreation policies, usages rules and maintenance standards in light of growing awareness and respect for the historic and cultural significance of the Park.

Background

Since it's opening in 1964, more people come to the Park on a daily basis for passive recreational use than any other recreational reason. The Park has served as the major passive recreation venue for residents of the west end of the City of Alexandria. The Park hosts numerous walkers, joggers, picnickers, sledders, dog walkers and playground users.

In 2008 the City of Alexandria's RPCA, roughly counted 63,617 people using the Park for walking or picnicking during the picnic rental season (April through October). In 2009, this number fell to 54,949 people due in part to needed administration decisions that reduced the number of picnic rental areas from 11 to 7 and excessive gatherings that adversely impacted Park resources were prohibited. Through end of August, the Park has recorded 43,885 passive recreational users with a further decrease in picnic areas to 5.



Photo: G. Eugster.

A recent count conducted during the weekend of September 3rd (Friday) through 5th (Sunday), 2010 provided a count of 1,606 passive recreational users broken down as follows:

¹ Ripley Forbes and Robert Moir serve on the Park and Recreation Commission representing Planning District 2.

² The separate nature of the active recreation side of the park (the tennis courts and rectangular artificial-turfed field) are not discussed here because it is the feeling of the Advisory Committee that because of their separate entrance and parking facility as well as the fact that they are fenced off from the Park proper, its usage has no impact on the Park.

Walkers:	Friday	389
	Saturday	433
	Sunday	403
Playground users:	Saturday	30
	Sunday	63
Picnickers:	Saturday	148 ³
	Sunday	110

It is assumed that the number of walkers decreases during the non-picnic season (November through March) but easily exceeds 100 people on average per day.

In a community that is becoming more and more urbanized, it is incumbent upon the City to provide and preserve land for a multitude of public uses. The competition for use of these facilities will only get more intense in the future. Additionally, the growing appreciation for the historic and cultural nature of this Park needs to be reflected in how Park resources and Park administration support the needs of citizens who value the Park as a site for passive recreation, relaxation and unstructured physical activity. Historic, cultural and recreational activities can mutually co-exist but reforms may be needed.

Current Situation

A recent poll of users of the Park noted the following problems are perceived to exist: (a) noisy picnics; (b) picnickers abuse of alcohol; (c) inappropriately large picnic groups; (d) excess trash; (e) safety of walkers; (f) lack of a nature walk; (g) lack of signage for the dog park; and, (h) large festivals not associated with the historic nature of the park. *(Need attachment)*

In response to these concerns and recognition of the increasing use of the facility, RPCA has introduced several changes to mitigate future potential damage to the historic nature and natural environment of the Park and the surrounding community.

Foremost is the introduction of a resident park manager. His job is to not only oversee the daily operation of the Park, but to provide an increase in security for the facility. This has been accomplished by: (a) decreasing the number of picnic areas; (b) more stringent issuance of permits (limitation to the size and length of picnics); (c) provision of rangers on weekends; (d) construction of a ranger booth for permit check in; (e) limiting the number of vehicles on the roadway; and, (f) moving the city maintenance facility.

In addition, the RPCA has limited the number of permits for the pavilion areas, limited the number of picnicker per permit, limited the decibel levels of amplified music, eliminated certain inflatable recreational devices and limited alcohol use. Also, the limiting of the number

³ Numbers for picnickers includes those with and without reservations.

of vehicles with permission to enter the Park has increased the safety for walkers and picnickers.

Increased signage has directed users of the Park to appropriate areas and usages. Simple measures such as keeping cars off the grass as well as directing picnickers and pedestrians off historic sites and off designated wild growth areas have all helped to mitigate damage to nature and decreased storm surface run-off. However, these efforts are not enough.

Recommendations

1. Creation of a natural walkway for nature walks. We recommend that a nature walk be created around the periphery of the Park. This walk way should be constructed of a semi-impervious material. Signage and rest areas (benches) should indicate important historic and natural features of the Park. The stops on this walk should include: (a) Oakland Baptist Cemetery; (b) the monument to the City's first arborist; (c) the bridge; (d) native species of bushes, trees and flowers; (e) areas containing potential unmarked gravesites; (f) home sites; (g) presently unmarked Fort Ward Civil War ramparts; and, (h) areas of known Native American habitation.
2. Removal of the concrete from the run-off gulley by the monument to the arborist memorial and the impervious material surrounding the monument itself.
3. Removal of the playground to an area that is accessible to people with disabilities. Its present location is in the direct path of run-off and removal and replacement with a more natural surface will decrease run-off leaving the Park.
4. Improvements to the roadway loop. The road surface is starting to deteriorate and needs replacement in several areas. Several citizens recommend a curb to keep cars off the grass. We disagree, as the curbs will only serve to increase the amount of imperviousness of the road surface. Park Rangers need to continue to ensure that Park patrons do not park inappropriately.
5. The dog park. Signage for the current dog park is poor. Serious consideration should be given to removing the dog park, but continue to allow well behaved dogs in the park when they are on leash. If the dog park is to be retained, it needs to be identified with signage in the park, the dimensions of the dog park need to be well defined and the dimensions of the current dog park reduced to move it farther away from the historic rifle battery. Signage alerting parents and children to the location should be made prominent because the area is not fenced and children play in the vicinity. We strongly oppose any fencing of this area and would prefer the area be returned to the park as a site for passive recreation.
6. There are major restoration needs in the Park due to years of deferred maintenance and weather damage. The city needs to commit resources or accept volunteer assistance to

clear deadfall from wooded areas. Additionally the erosion of the grassy areas leading to the current playground site as well as multiple picnic areas should be addressed to restore the natural character of the park. Installation of water breaks, perhaps using the large deadfall and installation of wood chips would help restore these areas until a long-term solution to the dispersal of rain water can be addressed.

7. Consideration should be given to restoring the gate between the Park's athletic field and the passive area of the Park. This would ease access to the public restrooms and allow visitors to move more easily between the passive and active sections of the Park.
8. Strengthen picnic procedures by prohibiting consumption of alcoholic beverages and the use of amplified music in the Park. There should be no authority for the granting of individual exceptions relating to picnic reservations. The only area of the Park where amplified music should be permitted is in the amphitheater where summer concerts are held. The consumption of alcohol and amplified music are not integral to the goal of maintaining a passive recreation resource. For the safety and enjoyment of those who value the Park for its tranquility and respect its significant cultural origins, these additional protections should be considered.

Chapter 3

AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES AND BURIAL SITES

It is a well established fact that the Anglo Saxon race has for decades been insensitive to the legacy and heritage of its African American citizenry as evidenced through the destruction and desecration of many of its post civil war cemeteries. These are places which are to be honored and respected as they are the resting place of our ancestors, our heritage. Putting the Oakland Baptist church cemetery aside for a minute, we'll look at other Black cemeteries lost in our immediate area. Right down on Washington Street in Alexandria, there's the Freedman's cemetery, established in 1861 for African American soldiers who fought in the Civil War and freed slaves who could not be buried in white cemeteries, with roughly 1700 burials. Until recently, for decades, a service station, an office building, and part of a highway sat on top of it. Then in Arlington, on Johnsons Hill, the Sheraton Hotel sits atop an African American burial ground. I understand those remains were relocated to the Coleman Cemetery, and, of course, a road sits atop a black burial ground at the Virginia Commonwealth University. These are just a small few of the African American cemeteries which have been horribly desecrated, disrespected, dishonored and disavowed largely by or with the sanctioning of city officials, generally through eminent domain.

Immediately after the civil war ended, our Seminary and Ft Ward ancestors not only needed a place to live, but they also needed a place to bury their dead. Lacking a formal cemetery or burial ground designated for them, they had to improvise. The most logical place for them was on their own property. I know for a fact that there were more burial places for the Seminary community than those on the Oakland and Jackson cemetery properties. I know for a fact that there were graves where today the Seminary homes are located in the King, Quaker, Woods and Bishop Lane area. So, naturally with the more than 22 acres of land at the Fort owned by the Adams and Jackson families, as well as other families, there would be plenty of graves on individual property, and most logically the formal burial ground/cemetery for the members of the Oakland Baptist Church. The known fact that African Americans buried their dead on their own property, the realignment of the cemetery, and oral testimony are the drivers of the church and community's assertion that there are more uncovered graves in the park. These sacred places must be located and honored.

Fort Ward is a historic museum and park to commemorate the Civil War. What could be more relevant to that commemoration than the history of the very people the war was fought to free; the people who actually lived at the park. With the addition of literature on this African American community as well as a USCT display on exhibit in the museum, and locating and preserving the lost graves, the park would benefit through increased tourism as Alexandrians and out of town visitors sought out the park. This literature and exhibit would enhance the civil war experience for our elementary, middle and high school students. The Parks immediate neighbors would no longer be disturbed by loud music from those individuals using the cemetery and maintenance yard for purposes other than what they were intended for. And finally, casual and recreational visitors to the park would know which areas were open to their use, whether its dog walking, jogging, or picnicking, and which areas were historic and/or sacred ground.

We anticipate City management for the graves at Fort Ward to consist of the following aspects.

1. Complete research, inventory and written record of graves within the park.

- a.. Continue and complete research to identify the location of all of the existing graves within the park. As soon as possible, and before the development and approval of the management plan, conduct the following tasks with the money that Council approved. 1) Oral history interviews of 25-30 descendant family members with first-hand information about the people who lived, worked, worshiped and are buried at Fort Ward Historic Park; 2) Oral history interviews with past and current city employees who have first-hand information about graves within the park; and 3) More detailed research related to various official city correspondence which identifies family graves and burial areas.

We understood that this work was funded by the Mayor and City Council and is to be completed as part of this effort. This information remains central to decisions to be made as part of the Advisory Group's management plan.

Devise a permanent solution to eliminate water runoff in the Park and more specifically the Oakland cemetery realizing that the laying of unsightly hay bales is only a temporary measure.

- b. All of this information should be spatially displayed on a base map and incorporated into the development of the management plan.

2. Short-term Actions for Graves and Cemeteries in the Park.

- a. As work continues status reports on the research, identification and preservation of graves and cemeteries in the park should be posted on a regular basis to inform the public of the work.

- b. Areas that are still being investigated should be enclosed with a temporary fence.

- c. Debris, including damaged picnic tables, signs, trees, unused fencing, etc. should be removed from those areas of the park within view of any existing graves and cemeteries.

3. Possible elements of the management plan.

- a. Removal of the fences and remaining illegal structures, and structural remains, from the maintenance yard.

- b. Create a contemplative, walking path, perhaps called the "We Are Still Here Trail", with commemorative benches, connecting all of the known, and to be identified, family graves. At the start of the path there should be an interpretive kiosk with fixed information and brochures about what is on the path. Along the path, at each of the family graves there should be interpretive signs recognizing the family(s) and giving the park visitor insight about the area.

The path should be ADA compliant and of a surface that is permeable (perhaps a surface similar to the one at Huntley Meadows Park).

- d. Each of the graves should be recognized with some type of marker. Family graves should be fenced. The selection of markers and graves should be done in cooperation with the descendant family members and city officials or their designees.
- e. Copies of the “We Are Still Here Trail” brochure should be made available to park visitors in the Fort Ward Museum.
- f. The Office of Historic Alexandria and the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities should develop and agree on routine park maintenance standards, including grass cutting, tree and leaf removal, invasive plant management, and soil erosion control, for park cemeteries and grave areas.
- g. Either 1) transfer the ownership of all of the family grave areas and cemeteries to an organization to be identified by the Oakland Baptist Church and the Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, Inc.; or 2) place a conservation/preservation easement on the grave and cemetery areas to perpetually restrict the use of these areas to graves and cemeteries.
- h. Create a memorial area to recognize the Fort Ward African American community, park graves and Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. The area should include a memorial stone with a bronze plaque, a sculpture and a modest gathering area. The gathering area could be a place for silent meditation or information family and church events. Possible locations include the plateau where the Shorts Family lived (Map # 9, including the McKnight and Robinson Family Grave); the homesite of Sgt. Young’s Family and the Adams, Clarke and other graves (Map #12, 13, including the Old Grave Yard, graves in the nursery area and the most recent expansion of the maintenance yard); or the level area between the Old Grave Yard and Braddock Road (Map # 11 through 18).
- i. All of these actions need to be coordinated, and integrated, with the ideas being developed for park interpretation once they are completed.

Submitted by: Lena Rainey and Frances Terrell, October 8, 2012

Citizen Management Plan for Fort Ward Historical Park and Museum

CHAPTER 4

By Adrienne Washington, Frances Terrell and Jim Walpole

African American Structures and Other Resources:

Consideration of historical resources including location of roads and paths, African American structures, schools, landscaping, and artifacts (with the exception of graves and burial sites)

INTRODUCTION

This is an opportunity for the city to show its diverse citizenry, particularly its students of all and especially African Americans, that even during and immediately following slavery, their ancestors played an instrumental and vital part in the history and development of the United States and the City of Alexandria, and even in this most trying time lived productive, viable, independent lives entrenched in strong faith and a culture that embraced hard work, family unity and community togetherness.

OVERVIEW

In preparing the Fort Ward Management Plan, it is essential to be familiar with the location of historical resources in the park area including roads and paths (many of which have changed since 1865), African American structures, schools, churches, barns and outbuildings, landscaping, and artifacts (with the exception of unmarked and undiscovered graves and burial sites). Other chapters in the Plan will address items such as Civil War resources, African-American cemeteries and burial sites and Native American presence.

It has been over 145 years since the United States decommissioned Fort Ward. At that time the approximately 40 acres were owned by Mr. Hoof and there was litigation (Hooe v. Hoof) to resolve proper title to the land. By 1872 encumbrances to the property title were resolved. The land was then purchased or rented by African-Americans, some of whom may have worked at the nearby Virginia Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School – which slaves from Mt. Vernon helped to construct and where African Americans worked as cooks, drivers, laborers, washwomen, nursemaids and domestics during the period the seminary was converted to a military hospital—as well as worked at the Fort when it was an active military post, worked as servants in large homes nearby, or had relatives or friends in the area and Alexandria, which was inundated with an influx of African Americans, free, contraband and enslaved. The exact dates when African Americans first arrived and settled

in the community has not yet been documented, but there is oral history and other evidence, such as the 1909 Bailey v. Bailey divorce case, to suggest their presence before and during the Civil War, particularly in the contraband camps which had been noted in diaries and letters as surrounding the schools. Originally, about five or six families lived on the Fort property, and there is some information where the homes may have been located. (Title and deed information is available upon request through the Office of Historic Alexandria). As time went on, some of the owners devised portions of their land to their heirs, and other properties within the former Fort were purchased by others. The African Americans thrived as a self-contained community (called “the Fort”), they donated land and resources for a school, maintained an Episcopal chapel, and they established the Oakland Baptist Church and Cemetery which was a cohesive force for “the Fort” and the neighboring “Seminary” community. One family, the Jacksons, also established a cemetery on their property for family, friends and neighbors, as did the Craven family. “Burying our people in the yard,” as George Craven said, was a custom with African Americans during this period. Families erected residences with solid foundations built for permanency, as evidenced by the latest archeological excavations conducted by the city’s archeologists and the Otterly Group. Also uncovered were paths and roads, in particular Schoolhouse Road, built by Fort inhabitants bordered with bricks, the remnants of which can still be seen today. It was a self-sustaining community which shared the produce from gardens and farms, including one pig farm, owned by John Peters, on the west end of the park. Mrs. Jessie Randall was noted for her garden of geraniums and the women were noted for having tea parties, as is evidenced by the discovering of fine tea sets located by the city archeologists. By the late 1940s there were approximately 50 members living in the thriving community at the Fort.

Subsequently after 88 years of homeownership, the Fort families were forced to sell their properties or were subjected to eminent domain proceedings beginning in the late 1950s through the early 1960s when the City of Alexandria began to purchase and redevelop the property for use as a historic park and museum for the bicentennial. Several families were unsuccessful in their legal bids to stay on their land and those who were able, were relocated into the larger Seminary community. Even though there have been archeological digs in recent years that discovered unmarked graves that were lost in the relocation of the families, to date it is still unknown how many graves remain uncovered (which is the subject of another chapter.) The Oakland Baptist Church remains vibrant today and descendants of the former Fort community continue to live in the area and be active members in the church and engaged in civic endeavors with the city. The Oakland Baptist Cemetery, the only privately-owned land in the park today, has been desecrated over the years due in part to storm water runoff as a result of poor management practices of city agencies. The families have established the Ft. Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, Inc. to restore and preserve their history under the theme of “We’re Still Here,” which was used in the brochures they produced with city officials which are now distributed in the Ft. Ward Museum and other historic places.

It is now the responsibility of Alexandria citizens to maintain, manage, interpret and preserve the park as an undiminished resource for Alexandria residents and visitors starting immediately and in the future. In planning future use of the Park, it is necessary to identify the significant prior activities and uses, such as dwellings, schools, churches, barns, public roads or streets, privies and wells, landscaping, etc. Over the last 20 years, a substantial amount of information has been developed from public records such as wills, tax records, property records, City directories, and census records. Also, US geological survey maps and aerial photos as early as 1927 have provided helpful data. Archaeologists have uncovered a wealth of information about the community, and substantially more archaeological work is ongoing. For over 20 years oral histories of some of the former residents and their relatives have been obtained, as well as photographs and entries in family Bibles. Taken together this information helps provide an understanding of the lives of the families who occupied the Fort possibly as enslaved people, contraband, members of the US Colored Troops, and as free people (some of the first African Americans to vote) during the Reconstruction period, and for the next 100 years.

From this wealth of information, one can begin to understand where the historical resources are located thus gaining an appreciation of the community. The sites of many structures have been located. These are set out in the maps provided by the city's archeology department which also displayed numerous artifacts discovered in the most recent excavations (which were provide to the committee by that agency) The ongoing archaeological work is anticipated to identify many new resources, including structures similar to the housing foundations of the Craven and Ashby homes. One archeologist noted, during the tour conducted for this committee, that the substantial nature of the structures belie the former city narrative that the homes were shanties and homes without privies which was used to justify some of the condemnations. When this work is completed, a determination can be made as to the priority of various sites, structures, artifacts and areas (This is to be separate and apart from any burial sites). The determination will be the basis for making the resource available to the public by means of literature, additional signage, medallions, and sites on a walking tour, reconstructed areas, museum exhibits, and other public programs. Once the location of the burial sites within the park is complete, this Committee, along with the public and the City, can determine how best to preserve and interpret the graves and related information to the public. The specific Management Plan for the use of the park then will depend on the information obtained in the future.



CURRENT STRUCTURES:

Cemeteries (OBC, Old Grave Yard, and Jackson Family) and gravesites (Adams/Clarke, McKnight/ Robinson, etc.)

Foundations of houses, including the Craven, Ashby, Shorts, Adams, McKnight, Jackson, Javins, and Peters households.

Foundation of the 1889 school/church/Sgt. Residence

Shorts Lane and Schoolhouse Road, including brick borders and row of cedar trees

Wells and privies found by archeologists near the museum

Residential family vegetable and flower gardens

Additional commemorative signage (currently six)

African American artifacts from archeological digs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. First and foremost, locating and honoring ALL of the lost graves is imperative and an essential part of the African American historic resources of the park which pay tribute to the African American forebearers who paved the way for the descendants here today.

2. Unrelated to the burial sites, it would seem that any remnants of foundations of structures should at a minimum be designated on a Fort map for tourists under the theme of the “We’re Still Here” Trail. To the extent possible without affecting the burial sites, a walking tour of the structures, including signage, would provide a meaningful experience for visitors.

3. It should also be considered that at least one structure (e.g. the school/church) could be reconstructed on the site based on archaeological findings, oral histories and any available photographs. At a minimum the foundation outline of the school/church structure should be cleared and made evident to visitors and be marked with proper signage (one sign has already been placed that could be used at this location). Or, a model of the school house and St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church with detailed specificity on both could be erected. Families affiliated with the church should be noted and signage or literature could explain how and when the structures were built and were carried over to join with Meade Memorial Episcopal Church and later to establish the Oakland Baptist Church and cemetery. As for the establishment of the historic significance of the schoolhouse, it could be explained, again through literature or signage, how its African American attendance outgrew the original facility and created the need for a larger school which lead to the creation of the first Rosenwald School in the Seminary community which is now the site of T.C. Williams High School on property once owned by Fort residents William and Burnie Terrell.

4. All areas of the Ft. Ward Park where African American families lived should be recognized, highlighted and commemorated. Do not restrict their presence only to the east side of the park when there were clearly families and community members living throughout or across the entire park establishing their community soon after the Civil War and beginning homeownership in the 1870s when they could legally purchase land.

5. In the museum itself, which we hope to see expanded with another wing or floor, a section should be designated for the African American experience in the Civil War and subsequently at Ft. Ward to display artifacts, photographs, Bibles, etc. To commemorate the African American presence in the Civil War, including that of at least two Fort family ancestors who were members of the USCT, a statute or mannequin of a USCT, who is decently clad and period relevant, should be placed in the museum to emphasize their contribution and

work ethic, as well as that of the contrabands, undoubtedly working at the Episcopal/Seminary Hospital during the war.

6. Include African American history, from before during and after the Civil War, in park and museum interpretive tours.

7. Having the Oakland Baptist Church placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

5. Cultural Resources – The Museum, its' Collections and Programs

by Ellen Stanton and Janice Magnuson¹

Introduction

Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site serves a unique historic and cultural function in the West End of Alexandria. The restored Civil War fort opened to the public in 1964 as part of the Civil War Centennial as an example of the type of fort that protected the approaches to Washington DC during the war. Without the reconstruction of Fort Ward this site would have become a housing development. As the best example of a preserved fort defending the capital, Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site serves as an orientation point for scholars, citizens and tourists who wish to learn more about the Defenses of Washington and the Civil War history of Alexandria. The museum's Civil War collection includes about 2,500 objects and the library comprises nearly 3,000 books, periodicals and archival material. In recognition of the professional museum practices implemented by the staff, Fort Ward has been accredited by the American Association of Museums, recognition achieved by few museums.

A. Fort Ward Museum

Description: The Museum building, originally intended as a visitors center to orient the public to the historic site and the Defenses of Washington for the Centennial of the American Civil War in 1963-64, is patterned after a Union army headquarters building and houses a research library and exhibits of a broad collection of Civil War artifacts including objects related to Alexandria's Civil War history. The building's architecture is that of a typical 19th-century board and batten style designed for a military headquarters. No documentation has been found to indicate that such a building stood at Fort Ward; however, structures of this type were commonly used at other forts in the Defenses of Washington. Over time the use of the building has evolved from a Visitor's Center to a Museum that has a combination research library and meeting room located on the second floor. The Library/meeting room has a limited capacity of 40 persons.

In addition to the Museum there is a small "Officers Hut" and a Park restroom with a storage area that are both in the style of that of the Museum.

Museum Building at Fort Ward



¹ Ellen Stanton is the former Chair of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC). Janice Magnuson serves on the Alexandria Archaeology Commission.

Museum Collections

Description: Fort Ward Museum features a collection of over 2,000 objects from the Civil War period, primarily of Union origin, in conjunction with the Federal history of the site. Also included are a smaller number of Confederate objects, most pertaining to the war in Virginia, and items which interpret life in the South during wartime. The permanent collection is diverse, with holdings that include: military equipment related to the infantry, artillery, cavalry and navy; edged and shoulder weapons; flags; musical instruments; medical equipment; uniforms and clothing accessories; cooking and mess equipment; artwork, primarily period prints of both Union and Confederate significance; documents; photographs; and artifacts excavated at Fort Ward.

Thematic exhibitions explore different facets of Civil War military and civilian life, especially those related to the Defenses of Washington, the life of the Union soldier and local history focusing on wartime Alexandria. A mural depicting the location of the forts around Washington and an overview exhibit on Fort Ward's history and restoration, which includes a model of the stronghold as it once looked, introduce visitors to the site. A 12-minute video entitled *Fort Ward and the Defenses of Washington: Silent Guardians of the Capital City* may be viewed on the main exhibit floor. The video features period photographs and illustrations, footage of the historic fort and commentary by the authors of *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*.

Permanent Exhibits

- **The Common Soldier**

The typical Union foot-soldier carried with him all of the equipment necessary to fight and survive. In this exhibit, objects from the Museum's permanent collection illustrate the daily life of the typical Union soldier. Among the equipment displayed are examples of Springfield and Enfield rifle-muskets, cartridge and cap boxes, a knapsack, mess utensils, and a variety of personal objects used for leisure-time activities. Of special interest is a protective vest called body armor.

- **The Art of the Artilleryman**

Many artillery regiments were stationed in the Defenses of Washington. A well-drilled artillery crew could fire a typical Civil War cannon two to three times a minute. In this exhibit, discover the tools and equipment used by artillerymen to aim, load and fire a cannon. *Brochure available.*

- **Medical Care for the Civil War Soldier**

At the beginning of the Civil War, neither side was prepared to care for the vast numbers of sick and wounded. Three out of four Civil War soldiers died of disease rather than from battle wounds. A broad selection of medical tools, equipment and images is featured illustrating treatment practices of the time, the importance of the ambulance corps, the vital efforts of women such as Dorothea Dix and Clara Barton in nursing the troops, and the role of Alexandria as a major hospital center for the Union Army. *Brochure available.*

C. Museum Programs

Description: Programs by the Museum staff include lectures, events and Civil War themed “camps” for young people

Recent lectures such as "A Visual Tour of Civil War Alexandria: allow the public to see what Alexandria looked like during the Civil War through the eyes of photographers who documented it. The lecture uses 3-D images and rare photographs, including many that have never been published, to provide a view of Alexandria not seen anywhere else.

Alexandria's place in Civil War history is truly unique. During the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, to help tell the story of the City's Civil War past, the Office of Historic Alexandria is holding many special events and exhibitions.



Civil War Re-enactors at Fort Ward Park

Camps such as the annual Kid's Civil War Camp, is a week of fun and learning for children ages 8-12. The camp introduces young people to life during the Civil War and activities include drilling, craft projects, Civil War food and music, visits by re-enactors, 19th-century games, lessons on Civil War flags and setting up Civil War tents.

Alexandria, surrounding jurisdictions and the National Park Service have joined forces to include Fort Ward on a Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail as part of Civil War Sesquicentennial commemorations.

D. Recommendations

The Ad Hoc Committee has an opportunity to make recommendations regarding the museum, collections and programs that long have been neglected. The museum (a 4,200 square foot building) is almost 50 years old and has not been updated or expanded resulting in out-dated aesthetics; lack of ADA accessibility to restrooms and the second floor;

difficulties with environmental control; and inadequate space for exhibits and interpretation, programs, library materials, storage, meetings, offices, and the museum shop.

The recent archaeological discoveries at Fort Ward impact the museum in many ways. First, the very limited space within the museum constrains the addition of artifacts and interpretation of the African-American community that lived at "The Fort" following the Civil War and of the Native Americans who used the site. Second, the current parking area behind the museum probably contains beneath the surface a multitude of Civil War artifacts and evidence of the barracks that existed on this location. Where would an addition to the museum be located?

In order to maintain this high standard the following are suggested for consideration:

□ **Fort Ward Museum**

- Increase staffing: Two full time staff members are not adequate to manage a site such as Fort Ward. The twenty hour per week Museum Technician should be full time to assist in managing, maintaining and operating the Museum and outdoor historic site. A full-time position avoids constant replacement/retraining as employees move to other employment opportunities.
- Consider a two story addition to the museum: An addition has been suggested for many years, notably in the 2000 Long Range Plan written by citizens and the Office of Historic Alexandria. Expanded exhibit and program space allows the Museum to accommodate larger audiences and generate revenue, improve ADA accessibility to the facility, expand and update the museum shop as a revenue-generating component of the Museum's function, improve environmental conditions for staff work areas and storage of historic collections, and re-design the collection storage area in a new building plan to better comply with current trends related to the insurability of historic collections in a museum environment
- Possible additional out buildings to support programming as well as storage and other selected operations: In the 1998 American Alliance of Museums accreditation report the site reviewers noted that expanding the Museum would provide a significant opportunity to move beyond the limitations of one small building
 - Barracks
 - Stable
 - Forge

□ **Museum Themes and/or Programs**

- Expand collaboration with other jurisdictions and agencies that manage Defense of Washington site to better promote the defense system and Fort Ward as a center for interpretation and programming
- The African-American community- their lives, contributions and connections within the larger community of Alexandria
- Civil War living history
- Period Music
- Photography/Art of the war both professional and by soldiers

- Civil War Uniforms
- Guided Tours
- Medical Care during the Civil War
- Role of citizens and women during the Civil War
- Lectures

□ **Museum Collections**

- More and appropriate space for exhibits and storage
- Improved environmental control
- Update exhibit space to reflect 21st Century practice

The interpretive focus has changed from being centered on Fort Ward to looking at the role of the fort within the context of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Because Fort Ward is the only site with a museum and is the best preserved, this change has resulted in increased collaboration with other agencies and offers new and exciting opportunities. The possibilities for expanding interpretation and programming to include the African-American community, Native American presence, and artifacts found through recent archaeology are impeded by the limitations of the museum.

Chapter 7:

Environmental Resources of Fort Ward: Issues, Assessment and Recommendations for Management

Scope of environment resources section

The goal of this section is to define existing conditions of the environment resources within boundaries of Fort Ward, identify issues that have not been resolved, and provide general recommendations for management of these resources of Fort Ward Park.

Definition of Fort Ward environmental resources

Fort Ward is rich not just in cultural and historical resources but also in natural resources. Fort Ward being surrounded by an urbanized environment could be considered a sort of refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city. Fort Ward environmental resources include all of the living environment of flora and fauna, as well as non-living components of the soils and watershed within the park.

Who are the primary Stakeholders of Environmental Resources in Fort Ward?

- Taxpayers of Alexandria
- Descendents of the previous African American community and other residents of Fort Ward
- Baptist cemetery managers
- Adjacent property owners and schools
- Civil War enthusiasts (local and out of the area)
- Picnickers and users of playground (especially for special events, evenings, and on weekends)
- Runners, walkers and dog walkers and trainers (daily or weekly)
- City staff involved directly in management of Fort Ward (especially OHA and Parks & Recreation staff)
- Wildlife and plant enthusiasts
- Four Mile Run, Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watershed residents
- **Dog owners**

History of environmental resources in Fort Ward

Fort Ward Park has seen many changes in use and management of its environmental resources over the past one hundred and fifty years. During the Fort development, trees were removed for wood products and to provide good views from the fort. After the Fort was no longer actively used and as people settled on the land surrounding the fort, homes were built, gardens and trees were planted, and other plants and trees filled in the area naturally. After the park was created in the 1960's, some trees were planted and as well as there is evidence of residual trees in Fort Ward from the former residents. In other areas, natural succession of trees and plants is obvious where the use of the land is less intensive. What makes Fort Ward unique is the blending of natural and native species and ornamental, planted species.

Who are the primary Stakeholders of Environmental Resources in Fort Ward?

- Picnickers and users of playground (especially for special events, evenings, and on weekends)
- Runners, walkers and dog walkers and trainers (daily or weekly)
- Adjacent property owners and schools
- City staff involved directly in management of Fort Ward (especially OHA and Parks & Recreation staff)
- Wildlife and plant enthusiasts
- Civil War enthusiasts (local and out of the area)
- Descendents of the previous African American Fort Ward community and other former residents of Fort Ward
- Oakland Baptist cemetery managers
- Taxpayers of Alexandria
- Four Mile Run, Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watershed residents

What are some of the environmental resources values in Fort Ward?

- Forested buffer for neighborhood homes
- Habitat for birds, squirrels, bats, other wildlife and insects
- Protection of Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Pleasing landscape
- Shade for park users
- Decreased noise volume from I-395 and local road traffic
- Protection of historic artifacts with vegetative ground cover
- The landscape of Fort Ward presents opportunities for public education on horticulture (care of plants, including trees), arboriculture (study of care of trees), and dendrology (tree species identification and study)

Assessment of environmental resources of Fort Ward

Vegetation

Trees: According to the 2002 Fort Ward tree inventory, native and introduced tree species include tulip poplars, white and red oaks, Virginia pine, maples, cherry, hickory, sassafras, ash, black locust and as well as some attractive ornamental varieties of trees such as ornamental cherry, crepe myrtle, camellias, bald cypress, ginkgo, and true cedar. This tree diversity provides a rich habitat for squirrels, birds and various butterflies and insect species. Recently a tree inventory was completed which would be an excellent resource to complement recommendations in this chapter. The 2002 inventory was mapped used an old mapping system and has not been successfully translated into GPS. A possible resurvey would be helpful to re-establish a better baseline of the trees.

(Tree inventory summary to be inserted)

The Fort Ward Arboretum consists of a number of trees planted primarily on the south end of the park adjacent to Braddock and near the Museum. This variety of trees demonstrates some trees that are durable and a good option to overplanted species in the area.

In addition much of the park is covered by grass and turf, as well as some flower beds with azaleas and other cultivated plants. Some have been managed as “no-mow” areas to slow erosion and protect areas that are critical historical sites. How the turf is managed does affect tree health as well as the erosion of the park soils.

Turf: The condition of the grassy areas (turf) vary widely throughout the park. Areas of turf within the fort and adjacent to the museum has been well maintained, but many areas through the park are showing signs of neglect. When soils are compacted by excessive driving of maintenance vehicles, or loss of topsoil and organic matter, the turf barely grows.

Animals (more specifics later)

Soils and geologic characteristics (more to be added later or by contractor)

Hydrology (more to be added or by contractor)

What are some threats to management of environmental resources?

Not considered a high priority at this time

Compacted, urbanized and loss of nutrients in soils

Disturbance created during location of cultural and historical artifacts

Some heavy recreation use

Budget **constraints**

Extreme weather events (not controllable)

Invasive species

No new plantings

Storm sewer plan – how this could impact environmental resources of the park

Conflicts with other Fort Ward management objectives (see above)

1. Because of the extensive archaeological research through much of the park, there are so many features in the park that will require some level of protection. Graves, Civil War relicts and relicts from former homes and residents are scattered through much of the park and this makes management of vegetation challenging.

Conflicts arise when these studies suspend active management of the vegetation, especially the trees. Soils have been disturbed around roots of the trees, lack of replanting, lack of removal of tree stumps, and funds not allotted for care of trees.

2. Conflict with heavy recreation use in picnic grounds, around playground. In these sites, soils are heavily compacted causing unhealthy conditions for tree roots. Some of these picnic sites could be shifted to new locations to allow the vegetated areas to be restored to a healthier state.

3. Methods used by park maintenance staff has contributed to compaction of the soil, scarring of tree roots, damage to smaller trees by weedwhackers, and poorly pruned branches. Removal of all leaves, driving over grass and trees roots to remove trash continues to impact health of vegetation. Grass is not fertilized or rarely reseeded so many areas are now bare and exhibit sheet erosion. Loss of top soil and humus increases velocity of run-off. The height of mowing blades could be raised to leave grass longer and this would protect some of the roots. Park maintenance staff should be aware and follow appropriate practices to keep the landscape healthy and sustainable.

What are some opportunities to interpret and improve environmental resources?

Signage and interpretive media (such as printed, online, cell phone tours)
General tours and educational focus (schools, youth groups)

Volunteer Opportunities

Weeding, pruning, and replanting flower beds
Sow seed and straw to restore grass
Picking up litter
Light pruning by knowledgeable arborists or horticulturists
Update of 2002 tree inventory
Assist with interpretive and educational materials

Opportunities for “Greening” the park:

Recycle wood from cut trees to portable sawmills
Use of durable options for signs, park tables, and benches

Specific Environmental Resources Issues

1. Issues: decline in tree health and forest canopy

A. Current situation: Accelerated tree failure (22 large trees failed in 2010 storms), stressed and dying trees, signs of extensive decay, broken branches, disease and insect damage, leaning trees. There were 600 trees inventoried in the park ten years ago, and it is estimated that between 100 to 200 of these trees are gone – some died and were removed, many others split apart in storms due to excessive decay and weak branches caused by poor or lack of pruning when trees were young. An additional 100 to 200 trees are weakened and may die or fail in the next 5 years. In general, none of the trees that died or failed have been replaced.

Signs of tree decline:

1. compacted soils due to heavy recreation, park vehicles especially in recreation sites including picnic areas and playground
2. lack of pruning to promote healthy branching or after storm damage
3. many trees in Fort Ward are typically short lived species such as black locust and black cherry
4. weedwhacker and other physical injuries to trunks and roots
5. root decay from exposed and damaged roots
6. overmature trees – some trees are approaching their peak of growth, and are no longer healthy
7. lack of supplemental water
8. removal of natural litter layer of leaves has robbed soil of nutrients that help retain moisture and add nutrients for absorption
9. continued soil erosion over the roots has removed fine soil and nutrients

Tree risk increases during these weather events:

1. heavy snow and/or ice build-up on branches – damages most evergreen species or deciduous trees without dominant vertical stems
2. heavy rain then strong winds – tends to cause wind-throw of the entire tree (including the root ball), may be exacerbated in compacted soils causing shallow roots, and certain species are more susceptible
3. Strong winds but dry soils can trigger breakage of branches or decayed trunks especially where there is included bark (caused by tight forks), storm of May 29th, 2012 is an example of this kind of damage.

Other threats to trees:

1. physical damage to roots or the stems, trunks
2. disease and insect threats
3. invasive species – such as Emerald ash borer

Interim measures taken – trees that failed in summer of 2010 windstorm have been removed, trees along Baptist Cemetery fence have also been removed, these trees have not been replaced. Trees from storms in 2011 and 2012 have been and are presently being removed. No apparent plans for replanting these trees at this time.

Recommended actions: Conduct annual tree risk exam of trees that are adjacent to picnic areas, roads, and locations where people gather. Set up regular pruning cycle to remove dead and broken branches, especially in heavily used areas of park. Use sound arboricultural practices to maintain and increase tree vigor. Give guidance to city for an appropriate budget for tree care.

B. Current situation: Minimal tree plantings, neglect of arboretum, no master plan for planting, historic trees are not documented. An updated list of desirable tree species for the park could be prepared. As part of an integrated map of the park, new locations for tree replacements could be incorporated. Areas could be prioritized for plantings.

Interim measures taken: A tree inventory was completed in 2002 and was been shared with the City of Alexandria. This inventory used an older mapping system that has not been successfully converted to GPS yet. Information collected on trees included species, diameter at 3 ½ feet above the ground, and a general description of the condition of the tree, as well as the ATM coordinates.

Recommended action: Use the recent tree inventory to assess existing canopy and identify areas with greatest need to increase canopy. The park could be divided into “zones” to help identify priority areas. Work closely with city OHA employees to identify locations to avoid planting where they may be grave sites, cultural resources and artifacts. Ahead of planting contact OHA to do a survey in the proposed planting locations. Promote replacement of trees that have been removed or have failed over the last decade. Make a list of acceptable trees to plant which are durable and would be long-lived and need minimal care after establishment. Create a planting plan for park and develop a recommended tree replacement list. Start a program to plant memorial trees in honor of previous residents of Fort Ward. Schedule maintenance of new trees including: watering, mulching, and pruning as needed. Increase volunteer and educational opportunities for the public to increase ownership of Fort Ward trees.

2. Issues: stormwater drainage, loss of topsoil and compaction of soils

A. Current situation: Picnic and recreation sites on the northern and eastern sections of the park have clay soils that have been heavily compacted by recreational use and maintenance vehicles. These compacted soils cause extensive run-off and are damaging to tree roots and vigor of all plants.

Interim measures taken: last summer some straw was laid down over grass seed along damaged turf on the edge of road (north end)

Recommended actions: Limit use of park maintenance vehicles in these areas already affected especially when soils are wet. Aerate and/or add soil amendments. Do not remove all of the leaves in the fall, leave some in place to add nutrients to soil and slow erosion. Restore bare areas by using hay/mulch and grass seed, use temporary fences to keep people and vehicles of any sort off these areas. Consider moving picnic areas away from historically important areas and restore these areas by bringing in top soil, seed in grass, cover with straw and restrict use of these areas.

B. Current situation: Extensive sheet erosion as well as evidence of gully erosion in drainages. Top soil is being lost through much of the park.

Interim measure taken: Some park areas were designated “no mow”/natural areas to alleviate some erosive problems and to save money on turf management. After one summer of not mowing some areas, it appears this has been beneficial in some area to slow flow of stormwater as well as save on mowing costs. However, some areas have now become very weedy, and some invasive species are becoming established. These areas should be continually assessed. Some areas might be appropriate for long term “no mow” – others should be mowed on occasion to keep for park aesthetics and to keep weeds from seeding and spreading. Over time, some of the “no mow” areas could encourage pests or become a fire hazard as tall grasses dry.

Recommended action: Review areas that are currently not mown, and moderate the location of these areas as needed. Monitor and treat invasive plants before they become more widespread. Apply other mitigation techniques including mulching with straw and reseeding areas that have sheet erosion. Monitor and reseed areas that will be excavated for archaeological surveys. Plant rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run- off, especially on eastern side of park. Some hardscape areas such as picnic table pads could be replaced with pervious pavers to decrease run-off.

C. Current situation: stormwater is not retained in the park for irrigation

Interim measures taken: none known

Recommended actions: possible capture of stormwater in cisterns or rain barrels for flower beds, newly planted trees, plant a rain gardens to help capture and minimize damaging run- offs on eastern side of park. These could be a part of the storm-water mitigation funds obligated for the park.

3. Issue: undocumented use of park by birds and some wildlife

A. Current situation: no existing survey of types of birds in park

Recommended actions: Do a survey to assess birds in the park. Plant existing flower beds areas in species conducive to attracting songbirds, native bees and butterflies. This might be an excellent volunteer project for a garden club, youth group or local school.

4. Other issues identified at public meetings that relate to care of natural resources:

A. **Current situation:** no organized community service group or volunteers help with picking up litter, cleaning flower beds, or help plant trees

Recommended actions: To strengthen pride and ownership of Fort Ward grounds, plan for opportunities for the public to volunteer and help take care of Fort Ward, tree planting, taking care of flower bed, pick up litter, pull invasive plants, plant butterfly garden.

Conclusions:

The cost to the park will increase if there is a no vegetative management plan. As additional storms threaten damaged, decaying trees costs of removals will increase. As additional trees fail, more of the historical and recreational facilities will continue to be threatened. The park over time will become a drier, hotter park and lose more function to retain storm water. It is much cheaper to take care of young trees, than to remove mature dead and damaged trees.

Turf should also be taken care of. Loss of turf contributes to sheet and gully erosion, and loss of additional top soil. In matter areas of turf there is a minimum of organic matter as leaves are vacuumed up in the fall. This contributes to loss of nutrients and compaction of the soil. Aeration of the soil will help the turf as well as some reseeding, top dressing with straw or other water holding medium, then some occasional fertilizer.