A HISTORY OF
FORT KNOX
STATE PARK

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"MAINE FORTS"

BY
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Price 25 Cents
Fort Knox
MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF FORT KNOX
FORT KNOX

Fort Knox is in Waldo County in the town of Prospect which lies on the Penobscot River opposite the town of Bucksport where the famous old school, Bucksport Seminary, is located. Frankfort bounds it on the north, Stockton on the south and Searsport on the west. It is about six miles in length, east and west, and three miles in width.

Prospect is fourteen miles northeast of Belfast. It was incorporated February 24, 1794. The name was suggested by its beautiful views. As incorporated, it was about seventeen miles in length from north to south. In 1845 a large portion of the town on the west and southwest was set off to Searsport; and in 1857 Stockton was formed from the southern portion of the remaining territory.

The first inhabitants, some of whom had been soldiers in the French and Indian wars, settled near Fort Pownall on Fort Point. John Odom, who built the Early first mill on the Penobscot River, settled at History Sandy Point about three miles above the fort. Other early inhabitants were a Mr. Clifford, Mr. Treat, two or three named Colson, and Charles Curtis, from whom Curtis Point has its name.

The first notable event in the history of this region was the construction of a small fortification called Fort Pownall on the spot now known as Fort Point in Fort 1758. Stockton now embraces this locality. The Pownall fortification was garrisoned with one hundred men but on the downfall of the French power in the north, the number was reduced to a mere guard. At the opening of the Revolution, the fort was in charge of Colonel Goldthwait, who was superintendent of the
valuable traffic with the Indians of this place. In March, 1775, Captain Mowatt, notorious for his cruel bombardment and burning of Falmouth (Portland) a few months later, sailed up the river and transferred to his vessel all the heavy guns and the ammunition. It was destroyed by Commodore Saltonstall in 1779. The fort was named for Thomas Pownall, one of the best colonial governors of Massachusetts, who selected the site and directed the building of the fort.

The present site of Fort Knox was selected as a fortification at the time of the controversy between Great Britain and the United States over the Origin of Northeastern Boundary. When Maine became a member of the federal union, March 15, 1820, she took the place of Massachusetts in the boundary dispute. William King, first governor of Maine, lost no time in calling the attention of the legislature to this boundary question.

By the treaty of 1783, one-half of the St. John River was given to Maine. After the War of 1812, the British claimed the whole of the upper part of the vast valley of the St. John. They demanded all the land above the forty-sixth degree of north latitude, which included about one-third of what was supposed to be the territory of Maine.

By the convention between the United States and Great Britain, at London, September 29, 1827, it was agreed, through the plenipotentiaries of the two nations, that points of difference between the commissioners appointed according to the fifth article of the treaty of Ghent, should be referred to some friendly sovereign or state. They finally made a choice of William, King of the Netherlands, as arbiter of questions submitted under that treaty.
When his decision was presented neither side was satisfied.

From 1832 to 1842 the decision was waived by both the interested parties. During these years there had been frequent collisions on the frontier. In 1838 Governor Kent of Maine took measures to increase the efficiency of the militia and General Wool was sent to inspect the fortifications on the Penobscot, the St. Croix and the Kennebec. The line which Maine claimed by the treaty of 1783 was again surveyed. The territory in dispute became the prey of plunderers. Soon there was a conflict between the British lumbermen and the American officers.

Governor Harvey of New Brunswick issued a proclamation declaring that British territory had been invaded and ordering out a thousand of the militia. This aroused the indignation of the people of Maine. The legislature passed a resolve for the protection of the public lands and appropriated eight hundred thousand dollars for that purpose. A draft was also ordered for ten thousand three hundred and forty-three men from the militia to be ready for immediate action. Within a week ten thousand American troops were either in Aroostook County or on the march there.

Congress passed a bill authorizing the President of the United States to raise fifty thousand troops for the support of Maine, and appropriating ten million dollars to meet the expense, should the governor of New Brunswick fulfill his threat of maintaining exclusive jurisdiction over the territory in dispute. On the fifth of March, 1839, General Scott with his staff reached Augusta. He took quarters at the Augusta House and entered into correspondence with both Governor Harvey of New Brunswick and Governor Fairfield of Maine, endeavoring to act the part of peacemaker.
While this dispute was going on there was great excitement along the Penobscot for fear the British might invade Maine by way of the river. At a public meeting the following resolutions were adopted by the people of Prospect, May 4, 1840:

Whereas, the Constitution of the United States imposes upon the General Government the obligation of protecting the lives and property of the citizens thereof from foreign invasion, and upon the citizens the reciprocal duty of obedience and support; and whereas, this obligation extends to all important and national exigencies, as well those of great and impending danger, as those of actual invasion: And whereas, the history of all nations, and especially that of our own country, has shown that a strong, uniform, and permanent state of national defence is both the surest protection against the event of war, and the most humane mode of mitigating its calamities; and whereas, the dilatory measures, hypocritical assurances, and warlike preparations, of Great Britain in relation to our northeast boundary, but ill comport with the idea of an amicable adjustment of this "vexed question": And whereas, the valley of the Penobscot River, embracing a territory of several hundred miles in extent, and a population of about two hundred thousand, though capable of being put into a state of defence at a trifling expense, and naturally exposed to and likely to receive the first attacks of a foreign foe, is utterly defenceless. Therefore,

Resolved, unanimously, That, while we hold ourselves in readiness at all times to sustain the integrity of our state and the honor of the Union at the expense of our property and lives if need be, we call upon the General Government to afford us that protection against foreign invasion which the Constitution contemplates and enjoins.

Resolved, That the delay of Great Britain in effecting a settlement of the Northeast boundary question, is but another development of the policy that has governed the British cabinet for centuries. To wit: First to make every treaty as indefinite as possible; then to set up a claim to territory, from the ambiguity or uncertainty of the treaty; then to negotiate upon the subject for the longest possible periods; and, finally to throw the sword into the balance, and dictate right by might.

Resolved, That it is the duty of Congress forthwith to make an appropriation to be immediately applied in fortifying the Penobscot river and bay.

Resolved, That should the prospect of war with Great Britain prove fallacious, the duty of Congress to put the country into a state of defence will still be obligatory, and ought to be discharged.

Resolved, That should war come in the present unprepared state of the country, the blood of our defenceless citizens will be upon the
authors of that miserable economy that will have invited foreign insolence and aggression.

Voted, That the above resolutions should be signed by the chairman and secretary, and copies forwarded to our representatives and senators in Congress assembled, and also published in the Belfast Journal. Similar resolutions were also passed by the town of Frankfort.

At this time General Wool made a report on the fortifications of Maine. He recommended the establishment of a post in the vicinity of Moose River on the Canada road, fourteen miles from the Canada line, with an advanced post on the height of land which divides Canada from Maine; also a depot and concentration camp for the militia on the upper Kennebec and another depot at the foot of Moosehead Lake. The force at Houlton should be increased to five companies of infantry and one of artillery. At Calais he would place eight companies of infantry and two of artillery; at Eastport, two of infantry and one of artillery. At Bangor or vicinity, he would establish an arsenal, and fortifications at the entrance of the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers. Governor Kent informed General Wool that in twenty days he could muster at the Forks of the Kennebec, 12,000 militia, at Mattawamkeag 10,000 and at Calais 8,000. The enrolled militia in the state was 41,000.

The war however was avoided, General Scott having made satisfactory adjustment of the difficulties.

In the year 1842, Lord Ashburton came to Washington as the British ambassador. He was authorized to make a new treaty for the settlement of the boundary question. An extra session of the legislature of Maine was called. Commissioners were appointed to confer with Lord Ashburton and Secretary Webster upon this subject and the troublesome question was soon settled. England greatly
needed a portion of this territory that there might be free communication between New Brunswick and Canada. Maine surrendered a considerable tract, and in compensation the United States received a territory of much greater value, on the borders of Lake Champlain and Lake Superior. The national government paid Maine one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the surrender. The state also received two hundred thousand dollars as reimbursement for the expense she had incurred in defending the integrity of American territory. The Senate of the United States ratified the Ashburton treaty August 20, 1842. By this treaty, arrangements were made for the final settlement of boundaries between the different states and the British possessions in North America.

Among the forts built at this time (1844) was Fort Knox, constructed on the west side of the Penobscot River, in the town of Prospect. The majestic beauty of this fortification overlooking the river makes this fort one of the wonder spots of the world.

The land on which the fortifications are built consists of one hundred and twenty-four and five-tenths (124.5) acres, which includes ninety (90) acres of woodland.

The fort is constructed of granite from Mount Waldo near by. It was begun in 1846 and was never entirely completed. Beginning with 1846 there were several large appropriations and continual work. From the year 1852 until 1856 there were two appropriations, one for $25,000 and the other for $2,000. The remaining appropriations followed in close order: For the year ending June, 1857, $50,000; for the year ending June, 1861, $20,000; for the year ending June, 1862, $50,000; for the year ending June, 1863, $100,000; for the year ending June, 1864, $150,000.
In reply to a letter addressed to the War Department the Adjutant General, Major General Robert C. Davis, sent the following information:

"In a description, written in 1870 by the Ordnance Sergeant, U. S. A., In Charge, the following is stated:

Quarters.—The officers' quarters in main Fort Knox works are unfinished, and built of brick and granite—bomb-proof. They are divided into two separate buildings, two rooms in each building; each room measures 50 by 20 feet. In addition to the above there is a frame building outside of main works, built for Officers' quarters, measuring 40 by 20 feet, containing five small rooms—temporary.

The men's quarters in main works are bomb-proof, built of brick and granite, and are divided into eight compartments, each one measuring about 30 by 15, and now used as magazines. There is also one building for men's quarters outside of main works, frame measuring 100 by 20 feet; temporary.

Store-houses.—There are two store-houses inside of main works, one of which is used for the implements appertaining to the ordnance at the post; measures 50 by 15 feet; capacity 6,750 cubic feet; condition leaky. The above store-houses are bomb-proof and built of brick and granite.

Hospital, guard-house, etc.—There are nine old frame buildings occupied at present by the Engineer Department as blacksmith-shop, carpenter-shop, implement houses, office, etc.; also one large barn, measuring about 75 by 25 feet; frame building, in good condition. There is also one unfinished frame building, intended for a kitchen, but now stored with wood belonging to the quartermaster's department.

Fuel, forage, and water.—Fuel is obtained by purchase;
A NORTHEASTERN BOUNDARY MAP

Published March, 1843. Drawn from surveys made by authority of Congress.

A.A, the line as claimed by the United States.

B.B, the line settled upon by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

C.C, the line as claimed by Great Britain.
delivered at the post. Forage can be obtained by pur- chase at the post. There are two springs of water in main works, beside several cisterns.

Communication.—Between the post and nearest town is by steam ferry-boat.

Description of country, etc.—The country in the immediate vicinity of the fort is mountainous. The soil is generally of a brownish clay, and produces grass, oats, barley, and potatoes. The quantity of timber is light, being of second growth, consisting principally of pine, beech, birch, and hemlock. About thirty acres of the reservation are under wood, and would yield, if cut, about three hundred cords. Grass and water good. Climate is cold, subject to fogs so prevalent on the Atlantic coast. Average temperature about 50°. Health of locality good.”

During the Civil War there were several companies in training at Fort Knox and at least one regiment was stationed here during the Spanish War. A recent visitor to this fortification was Mr. Harris Walter Reynolds, (Boston Transcript, Saturday, October 6, 1923) who describes the fort as follows:

There is no limit for appreciation and thrill in walking through the rifle galleries and parade ground and casements, parapets, moats and a score of other fascinating features. “Phlegmatic souls who know neither victory nor defeat” as Teddy would have it, can gather little from such visits, but those fortunate enough to be possessed of sentiment a-plenty may obtain no end of inspiration and pleasure in browsing about the fort.

That the person who drafted the plans for Fort Knox was assisted by able engineers is evidenced by examination of the masonry. My eyes were, indeed, opened to a realization of what fine masonry is—when I saw virtually all the pointing in as perfect condition as the day it was put there over fifty years ago. Great white beautiful slabs of granite placed edge on edge with the exactest precision and care. And the brick work was the same.
GUN EMLACEMENTS ON THE WALLS OF FORT KNOX, 1924
BUCKSPORT, AND VERONA ISLAND, ACROSS THE RIVER
The finest pieces of workmanship in the whole structure are the spiral staircases in which a complete circular column is formed by the several treads and risers, which are of solid pieces of granite. Of the many guns placed at Knox during the Civil War only a few remain; the others have been given as souvenirs to different parks, armories and other organizations.

Near both the north and south shore batteries may still be seen the brick ovens where the forty-two pound cannon balls were heated. It's very delightful along the shore where the cedar trees have grown up and hidden the guns. Nature has a kindly way of protecting objects when they become embarrassed by disuse.

The year 1795 is a memorable epoch in the history of Maine, made so in consequence of the resignation of Major General Henry Knox, as Secretary of General War under Washington, and his removal to Thomaston. In the first days of the Revolution, Knox with the rank of Colonel, had command of the artillery of the American army. During the continuance of the war the corps of artillery was principally employed with the main body of the army, near
the person of Washington, and was relied on as an essential auxiliary in the most important battles. As a mark of Washington’s appreciation of his services, Knox was selected to receive the sword of Cornwallis when that commander with his army was forced to surrender at Yorktown. After this battle his merits were duly acknowledged by Washington and rewarded by Congress with a commission of Major General—a grade second only to that of Commander-in-Chief. On the conclusion of peace he was intrusted with the difficult and delicate commission of disbanding the American Army at West Point.

General Knox married Lucy Flucker, granddaughter of General Waldo and one of the heirs of the Waldo estate. Fort Knox was named for this distinguished general and first Secretary of War for the United States of America.

On October 12, 1923, Dwight F. Davis, assistant Secretary of War, notified Governor Baxter of Maine that Fort Knox was for sale. Following is his letter:

My dear Governor:

The Congress of the United States by legislation approved March 4, 1923 (Public No. 501, 67th Congress), has authorized the Secretary of War to dispose of military reservations including that known as Fort Knox, opposite the town of Bucksport on the Penobscot River, Maine. The reservation contains 124.47 acres of land with improvements thereon consisting of the old brick and granite fortification and a few out buildings.

The Fort Knox reservation has been duly appraised in accordance with the provisions of the above quoted legislation, in four parcels, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tract No.</th>
<th>Acres of land, more or less (shown on photostat)</th>
<th>Improvements thereon consisting of Old Fort and brick storehouse</th>
<th>Improvements thereon</th>
<th>150 Cords of mixed timber thereon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 Acres</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 Acres</td>
<td>26.16 acres</td>
<td>650.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35 Acres</td>
<td>36.15 acres</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

October 12, 1923.
Tract No. 4—60 Acres of land, more or less (shown on photostat as 60.4 acres), 60.00
350 Cords of mixed timber thereon, 875.00
Total 2,121.00

You are hereby notified that the appraisal of the foregoing property, both as a whole and in parcels, with the improvements thereon, has been approved by me on October 2, 1923, in the amount of $2,121.00. While the legislation in question provides that the state or the county or municipality in which the property is located shall be entitled to a period of six months from the date of approval of said appraisal in which to exercise the option contained in the above quoted Section 3 of the Act of March 4, 1923, I shall deem it a favor to be advised of the decision of the state, county or municipality in this matter if such can be reached before the expiration of the time provided by law. It is presumed in this connection that if the state does not desire the property you will take the matter up with the county or municipality.

Any information or data which may be of assistance to you in this respect will be gladly furnished upon request.

Sincerely yours,

Dwight F. Davis,
The Assistant Secretary of War.

The State at once sent the required sum to the War Department.

Some time before the government decided to sell the old forts, they had been abandoned and their guns distributed by gift or sale. The guns at The Guns at Fort Knox were sold by the salvage officer at Portland Harbor. The purchaser was Mr. Thomas Burke of Boston who afterward sold them to Mr. Isadore Gordon of Rockland, Maine.

After the state purchased the property, negotiations were opened with Mr. Gordon for the sale of the guns and carriages, and finally an agreement was reached by which the state paid two thousand dollars for the equipment.
THIS DEED, made this 4th day of December, 1923, between the United States of America, by John W. Weeks, Secretary of War, acting under the authority of the Act of Congress, approved March 4, 1923, (42 Stat., 1450), party of the first part, and Fort Knox the State of Maine, party of the second part, WITNESSETH:

That the United States of America, party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of Two Thousand One Hundred Twenty-one Dollars ($2,121.00) lawful money of the United States, to it in hand paid, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, has remised, released and forever quitclaimed and does by these presents, remise, re-
lease and forever quitclaim unto the party of the second part, all right, title and interest of the party of the first part in and to the following described tract or parcel of land with all improvements thereon, situate on the west bank of the Penobscot River, opposite the Town of Bucksport, in the County of Waldo, State of Maine, more particularly described as follows:

All of the land known as Fort Knox, Maine, containing approximately 124.5 acres, exclusive of roads, as shown on the map designated as "Plan of the Public Grounds at the Narrows of the Penobscot River, drawn by A. W. Tinkham, July 4, 1844," attached hereto and made a part thereof, being all of the land conveyed to the United States of America by the following deeds:

Deed dated September 4, 1843, from John Pierce, recorded in Volume 46, page 338 of the Deed Records of Waldo County.


Deed dated September 25, 1843, from William French, recorded in Volume 46, page 509 of the Deed Records of Waldo County.

Deed dated December 16, 1843, from Daniel H. Harriman, recorded in Volume 46, page 536, of the Deed Records of Waldo County.

Deed dated March 23, 1844, from William French, recorded in Volume 50, page 178, of the Deed Records of Waldo County.

Deed dated March 23, 1844, from John Lee, recorded in Volume 50, page 180, of the Deed Records of Waldo County.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above described premises unto the party of the second part forever for use for public purposes only. It is expressly understood that upon cessation of such use the title and right of possession to the property hereinbefore described shall revert to the United States without notice, demand, or action brought.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, John W. Weeks, Secretary of War of the United States of America, have caused the name of the party of the first part and the seal of the War Department of the United States of America, to be hereto affixed the day and year first above written.

(Seal)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
By John W. Weeks
Secretary of War.

Recorded in Waldo County Registry of Deeds, Book 351, Page 406.
June 9, 1924.

For and in behalf of the State of Maine, I hereby acknowledge to have received from the Commanding Officer, Portland Harbor, Fort Williams, Maine, the following described tract or parcel of land with all improvements thereon, situate in the town of Prospect, County of Knox (formerly Lincoln County), State of Maine, being all of the land known as Fort Knox, conveyed to the United States of America by deed dated the 4th day of December, 1923.

STATE OF MAINE
By Percival P. Baxter
Governor of Maine.

The Fort is situated in the Town of Prospect on Route 174, one-quarter mile above the Waldo-Hancock County Bridge where U. S. Route 1 crosses the Penobscot River. The Supervisor will be pleased to show visitors over the old fortification.