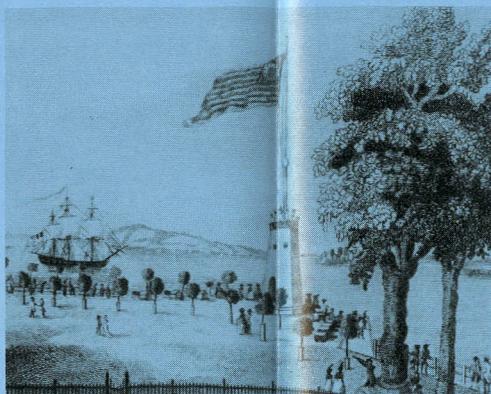


**castle clinton**

Many New Yorkers can remember spending pleasant afternoons visiting the Aquarium, watching the incredible fish glide effortlessly through the almost invisible water. Now, as if by magic, someone has pulled the plug and taken off the lid, for the water, fish, and roof have vanished. Of course, such a transformation did not take place in the twinkling of an eye; it is the result of a dogged fight for preservation and a lengthy restoration process that has only now borne fruit.

In 1941 the doors of the Aquarium shut for good. The plans for the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel were firm and the Aquarium stood in the way. It was an old structure that seemed to have outlived

its usefulness. Powerful voices called for its demolition. A group of citizens, intrigued by the structure's history and unwilling to believe that simply because it was old, it was useless, fought to save the building. Gaining the ally of time when the United States entered World War II, they saw their efforts rewarded when Congress declared the historic structure Castle Clinton National Monument August 12, 1946. The new tunnel would be



*View of the BATTERY and HARBOUR of NEW YORK, and the AMBUSCADE FRIGATE*

completed and the old fortress would remain. But before the building had received congressional protection, the wrecker's ball had already removed the upper story, roof, and other additions that had been added in its middle years. What was left when the National Park Service took over was the basic structure that had begun life back in the early 19th century. In the summer of 1975, after much restoration work, Castle Clinton reopened the doors that had been shut for 34 years.

Today where fish once swam lazily, where anxious immigrants awaited entry into the land of their choice, where audiences cheered a favorite performer, and where lookouts squinted as they searched for a British invasion fleet that never came, you can learn the remarkable history of this unpretentious fortress. You can attend a concert, small community festival, a fair, or just sit on one of the benches in Battery Park, eating lunch and daydreaming about Castle Clinton in all its various manifestations. Or you can just people-watch. It's that kind of place. Enjoy it, the view, and your daydreams.



A lantern of this type, with wooden sides, pierced tin top, and tin hanging ring, was used to light the passageways and the officers' quarters.

### Building a Fort

Castle Clinton is a product of the Napoleonic era. The conflict between France and Great Britain plus the English policy of seizing American ships and impressing American seamen into the British Navy produced months of tension. The climax came on June 22, 1807, with the British attack upon the American frigate *Chesapeake*. In New York, mass meetings denounced the attack. At the same time, a great "fortification fever" swept the city, for New York, except for Fort Columbus on Governors Island, was virtually defenseless.

In short order five new forts were built: Fort Wood on Bedloes Island, Fort Gibson on Ellis Island, three-tiered Castle Williams on Governors Island, the South-west Battery

**"The waters of our bay, the Narrows, the Hudson and interesting landscapes are in full view, with all the bustle of our floating commerce . . ."**

Vista from the walkway atop Castle Clinton as described in the *New York Gazette and General Advertiser*, July 3, 1824



The scene on this punch bowl commemorates Lafayette's landing at Castle Clinton in August 1824. About to begin his 68th year, Lafayette spent the next 13 months traveling the length and breadth of the country. In his travels, he was made an honorary citizen of various states, and given keys to innumerable cities. The bowl may have been made by the American Pottery Co., in Jersey City, N.J., around 1824.

New-York Historical Society

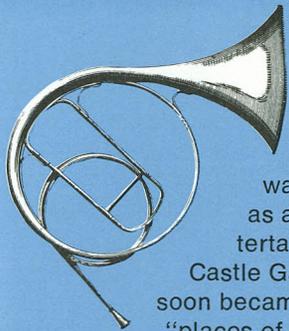
at the tip of Manhattan Island, and the North Battery at the foot of Hubert Street.

Circular in shape, the South-west Battery stood in about 7.7 meters (35 feet) of water, 61 meters (200 feet) from shore. A timber causeway with drawbridge connected the new fort to Manhattan. The South-west Battery had 28 guns on one tier. Inside the rounded ends of the rear wall, on the land side, were the magazines. Quarters for the officers were at each side of the passageway to the causeway. No barracks for the enlisted men existed.

The South-west Battery was completed in 1811 and fired its first salute on Evacuation Day, November 25, the 28th anniversary of the departure of the British from New York at the close of the American Revolution. Throughout the War of 1812 the fort stood ready, but its guns fired at nothing more dangerous than a harmless hulk moored in the river for target practice.

At the end of the war, the fort became the headquarters for the Third Military District and was named Castle Clinton in honor of DeWitt Clinton, a former mayor of New York City and later governor of New York State. In 1821 the district headquarters were moved to Governors Island and Castle Clinton was closed down. Two years later, Castle Clinton was ceded to New York City.

The added story and roof sheltered and protected the crowds who went to Castle Garden for entertainment. This unusual view from the water was painted about 1850.



## Show Business Comes to Castle Clinton

In June 1824, Castle Clinton

was leased by the city as a place of public entertainment. Opened as Castle Garden on July 3, it soon became one of the favored "places of resort" in New York.

A newspaper described the interior as a "fanciful garden, tastefully ornamented with shrubs and flowers." In time, a great fountain was installed. The Garden was the setting for band concerts, fireworks, an occasional balloon ascension, and demonstrations of the latest scientific achievements. The gunrooms, decorated with marble busts and painted panoramas, became a promenade and, from boxes seating eight people, a place from which to watch the show. A more popular promenade was the top of the Garden wall, where awnings covered a 4.2-meter (14-foot) walkway. The officers' quarters became a bar selling choice liquors, confections, and ices.

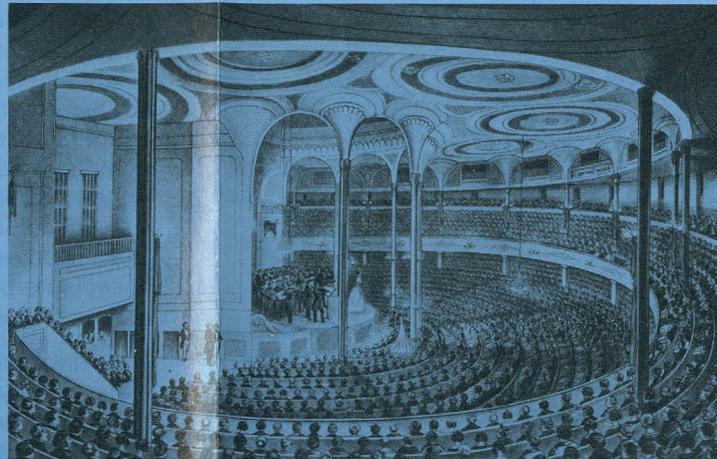


From the start, Castle Garden witnessed extraordinary events. Within a month after its opening, the Marquis de Lafayette landed here at the start of a year-long triumphal tour of America. In the years that followed, many other prominent people were honored at the Garden: Presidents Andrew Jackson, John Tyler, and James K. Polk, Vice President Richard M. Johnson, Sen. Henry Clay, and the great Hungarian patriot Louis Kossuth.

In the 1840s, Castle Garden was roofed over and more serious entertainment was added to the fare. The Garden for the first time presented opera, in concert form. The 1845 season opened with *Semiramide* and *The Barber of Seville*. The Garden cellars continued to be filled, according to one newspaper, "with the most delicious fluids so that the audience may be at once regaled with the choicest Italian music, and the most inspiring mint juleps."

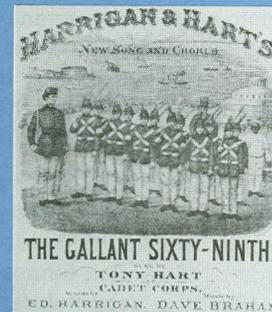
A memorable event occurred September 11, 1850, when P. T. Barnum presented the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, in her American debut. More than 6,000 people paid at least \$3 a seat. At the close of her performance, the audience broke into a "tempest of cheers."

Castle Garden had served as a theater for more than a quarter century when its doors closed. It was not the end for the structure, just the end of an era.



Several years before his partnership with James Ives, Nathaniel Currier produced this lithograph of Jenny Lind's debut. A banner in the upper balcony, invisible in this reproduction, says "Welcome Sweet Warbler."

Castle Garden can be seen to the right on the cover of this sheet music from 1874. Toward the left is Castle Williams on Governors Island.





### A Landing Place for Immigrants

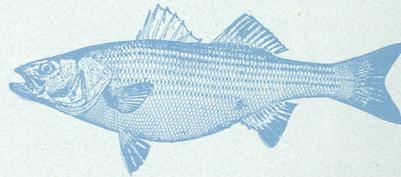
On August 3, 1855, Castle Garden, under lease to the State of New York, was opened as an immigrant landing depot. Only a short time before Castle Garden had been joined to the mainland by fill and fenced off from the rest of the Battery. For the first time, the bewildered immigrants were protected from the unsavory characters who had roamed the open wharves at will to take advantage of gullible newcomers. Here generally reliable information about boarding houses, travel routes, and fares could be obtained. Needed medical attention and an honest currency exchange were provided as well as a chance for employment. Between 1855 and 1889, more than eight million immigrants—two out of every three persons immigrating to the United States in this period—passed through the Garden.

After 1882 as the number of immigrants gradually increased, more buildings were erected outside the Garden. Brick walls replaced the wooden fences. Then, on April 18, 1890, the last immigrants went through Castle Garden. With control shifted to the U.S. Superintendent of Immigration, the Barge Office became a temporary landing depot, pending the opening of the newer, more commodious center on Ellis Island on January 1, 1892.

### The Aquarium

Castle Clinton was once again altered, this time to become the New York City Aquarium. When the Aquarium opened its doors on December 10, 1896, some 30,000 people poured in to see the specimens that came from the waters around New York. As the Aquarium became more popular and developed admiring friends, ship captains and yachtsmen based in New York began to collect interesting and more exotic fish from around the world for the Aquarium.

Thus the collection grew in number and variety. Many of the aquatic creatures became quite well known with the crowds. A West India harbor seal that swam effort-



lessly around her tank seemed to take particular delight in the audiences that she attracted and gleefully sprayed with a mouthful of water.

Once the Aquarium became a part of New Yorkers' lives, a favorite pastime on April Fool's Day was to leave a message for a fellow worker that said: "Mr. Fish called. Please call him back. Whitehall 4-1560." The number was that of the Aquarium.

For the millions of visitors the fun came to an end in 1941 when the doors were closed for good. The fish were taken to Coney Island.

### We're Joining the Metric World

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

### Castle Clinton National Monument

The site, which is located at the tip of Manhattan Island in New York City, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is 26 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving

the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR**