

FORT POINT

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • CALIFORNIA

CAUTION

Fort Point, constructed over 110 years ago, is a prime historical resource. As such, however, there are hazards not present in today's modern buildings. Stairs are steep and narrow. Walls are dangerous, if climbed. Therefore, we ask your cooperation while visiting the fort in making your visit safe and enjoyable. Please keep children under close control. Use caution while climbing or descending stairs. Stay on established walkways and off walls.

SPANISH PERIOD

The site of Fort Point was at one time a high, white cliff, where in 1776 Spanish Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza raised the Spanish flag and chose the site as the location for a Presidio. In 1794 an adobe brick fort, the Castillo de San Joaquin, was built on the cliff to protect the Presidio of San Francisco, which was subsequently built in a sheltered valley about one and one-half miles southeast of the location selected by Anza.

AMERICAN PERIOD

The Presidio was garrisoned in 1848 by Company M, 3rd U. S. Artillery, commanded by Captain Erasmus D. Keyes. At this time the U. S. Army placed four 32-pounder cannon and two 8-inch siege howitzers in the old Spanish fort. However, such defenses would have been little protection in the event of war with a European power. In 1853 the old fort and the hill on which it stood were leveled by U. S. Army Engineers to make way for the building of Fort Point.



Fort Point stands a brooding sentinel under the shadow of the majestic Golden Gate Bridge. It is a classic example of brick seacoast forts built to protect the harbors of the United States during the 1800's. The houses seen here quartered the Fort Point lighthouse crew during its operation.

FORT POINT CONSTRUCTED BY THE U.S. ARMY

Fort Point was constructed during the years 1853-1861 to prevent entrance of a hostile fleet into the bay of San Francisco, though none ever attempted it. The fort was designed to mount 126 cannon and house 600 soldiers. The guns were located in the arched casemate rooms on the north side of the fort. There are 30 gun rooms on each of the three floors. Each gun fired through an open gun port in the outer wall. Thirty-six gun positions were located on the top floor barbette, where the guns fired over the walls. Cannon balls ranging from 24 pounds to 128 pounds were used. The guns had a range of up to two miles.

The ground floor to the south housed the main powder magazine, jail and storerooms.

The fort's officers were quartered on the second floor. A small hospital and a kitchen were also located here.

Enlisted men were housed on the third floor. The rooms were heated by small fireplaces burning coal. Kerosene lamps provided light. Three granite spiral staircases open on the courtyard. The placement of the steps is considered an architectural and engineering achievement. A lighthouse built in 1864 tops one of the circular stairwells.

The walls of the fort average 5 to 12 feet in thickness. Cisterns located under the southeastern rooms of the fort are filled by rainwater from the roof to provide a supply of water.



The handsome arched casemates with their intricate brickwork once housed the fort guns. There are thirty "gun rooms" on each floor.

A row of 8 inch Columbiads peer into the fog from the barbette tier of Fort Point. The guns were removed around 1900. Guns of this size could fire a 65 pound cannon ball two miles.



FORT POINT 1886 – PRESENT

The fort was abandoned in 1886. The advent of the more powerful rifled cannon made brick forts such as this obsolete. The muzzle-loading cannon were removed about 1900. From 1933 to 1937 the fort was used as a base of operations during the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. During World War II the fort was garrisoned by about 100 soldiers, who manned searchlights and rapid-fire cannon mounted on top of the fort, as part of the protection for a submarine net stretched across the entrance to San Francisco Bay.

Fort Point served the Nation well. Its powerful guns and dedicated soldiers stood vigilant through the years as a deterrent to any would-be aggressor.

The fort was declared the Fort Point National Historic Site by the U. S. Congress on October 16, 1970, largely through the efforts of the Fort Point Museum Association. The National Park Service is now planning restoration of the fort.

For guided tours and information, contact the Information Center in the fort, or call 556-1693.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Point National Historic Site, established October 16, 1970, is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. A Superintendent, whose address is P. O. Box 9167, Presidio of San Francisco, California 94129, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**