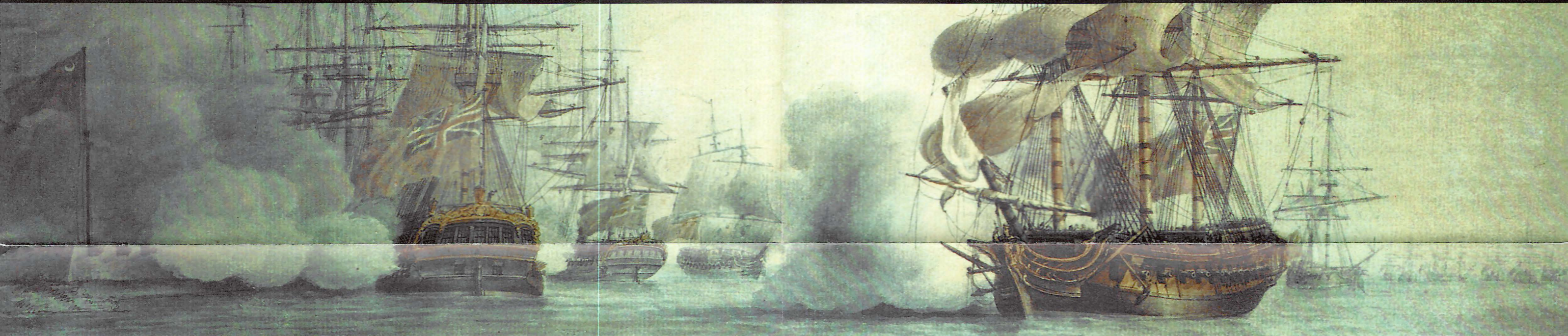


# Fort Moultrie

Fort Sumter  
National Monument

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



A View of the British Attack . . . by Nicholas Pocock, courtesy University of South Carolina

From the time of the earliest European settlements in the New World to the end of World War II, coastal fortifications guarded the harbors and shores of America. Here at Fort Moultrie the story of two centuries of seacoast defense is told through a unique plan of restoration. Five sections of the fort and two outlying areas, each mounting typical weapons, represent a different historical period in the life of the three Fort Moultries.

The first fort on Sullivan's Island was still incomplete when Admiral Sir Peter Parker and nine warships attacked it on June 28, 1776. After a 9-hour battle the ships were forced to retire. Charleston was saved from British occupation, and the fort was named in honor of its commander, William Moultrie. In 1780 the British finally captured Charleston, abandoning it only on the advent of peace. After the Revolution Fort Moultrie was neglected, and by 1791 little of it remained. Then, in 1793, war broke out between England and France. The next year Con-

gress, seeking to safeguard American shores, authorized the first system of nationwide coastal fortifications. A second Fort Moultrie, one of 20 new forts, was completed in 1798. It too suffered from neglect and was finally destroyed by a hurricane in 1804. By 1807 many of the other First System fortifications were in need of extensive repair. Congress responded by authorizing funds for a Second System, which included a third Fort Moultrie. By 1809 a new brick fort stood on Sullivan's Island.

Between 1809 and 1860 Fort Moultrie changed little. The parapet was altered and the armament modernized, but the big improvement in Charleston's defenses during this period was the construction of Fort Sumter at the entrance of the harbor. The forts ringing Charleston Harbor—Moultrie, Sumter, Johnson, and Castle Pinckney—were meant to complement each other, and ironically they received their baptism of fire as opponents. In December 1860 South Carolina seceded from the Union, and

the Federal garrison abandoned Fort Moultrie for the stronger Fort Sumter. Three and a half months later the Confederates shelled Fort Sumter into submission, plunging the Nation into Civil War. In 1863 Federal ironclads and shore batteries began a 20-month bombardment of Sumter and Moultrie, yet Charleston's defenses held. When the Confederate army evacuated the city in 1865, Fort Sumter was little more than a pile of rubble and Fort Moultrie lay hidden under the bank of sand that protected its walls from Federal shells. The new rifled cannon used during the Civil War had demolished the brick-walled fortifications.

In the 1870s Fort Moultrie was modernized using concepts learned during the war. Huge new rifles were installed, and magazines and bombproofs were built of thick concrete, then buried under tons of earth which would absorb the explosion of heavy shells. In 1885 President Grover Cleveland convened a board to study the coastal defenses of the United States in light

of the rapid improvements in weaponry. This system, called the Endicott System after the Secretary of War who headed the board, again modernized the Nation's fortifications. New batteries of concrete and steel were constructed in Fort Moultrie. Larger weapons were emplaced elsewhere on Sullivan's Island, and the old fort became just a small part of the Fort Moultrie reservation that covered much of the island.

As technology changed, harbor defense became more complex. The world wars brought the new threats of submarine and aerial attack and required new means of defense at Moultrie. Yet these armaments also became obsolete as nuclear weapons and guided missiles altered the entire concept of national defense. Today Fort Moultrie has been restored to portray the major periods of its history. A visitor to the fort moves steadily backwards in time from the World War II Harbor Entrance Control Post to the reconstructed section of the palmetto-log fort of 1776.

## Revolutionary War

In its 171-year history Fort Moultrie has defended Charleston Harbor twice. The first time, on June 28, 1776, during the Revolution-

ary War, the 30 smooth-bore cannon of the original fort drove off a British fleet mounting 200 guns. Despite its lack of use in com-

bat, the fort was maintained until 1947 to provide a ready, and inexpensive, deterrent to any prospective enemy.

## Civil War

By the 1860s seacoast weapons like this rifled and banded 32-pounder used by Confederates at Fort Moultrie stood side by

side with heavy caliber smooth-bore cannon. For nearly two years, the Charleston forts were bombarded from land and sea, and

though the masonry walls of Forts Sumter and Moultrie crumbled under the shelling, the forts were able to hold back the Union attacks.

## World War I

The technology of weaponry advanced rapidly after the Civil War. Some huge smooth-bore cannon were still in use in 1900, but by

World War I seacoast forts were mounting breechloading disappearing rifles. Upon firing, perhaps at one of the new dread-

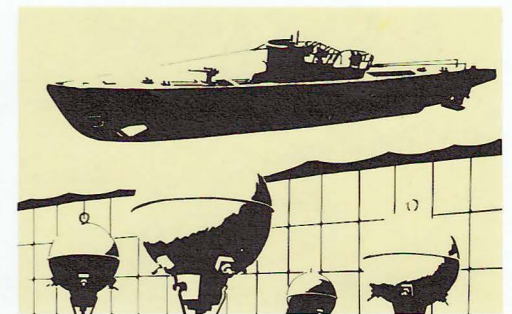
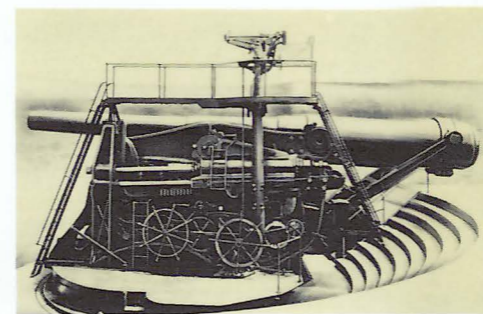
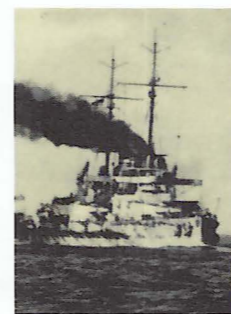
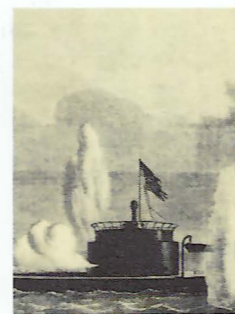
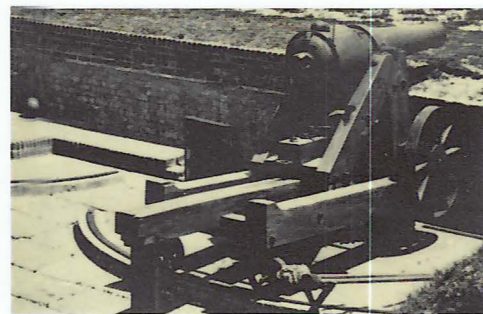
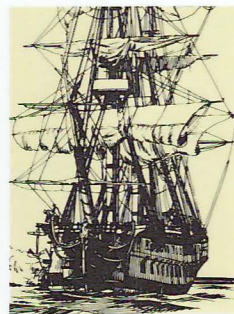
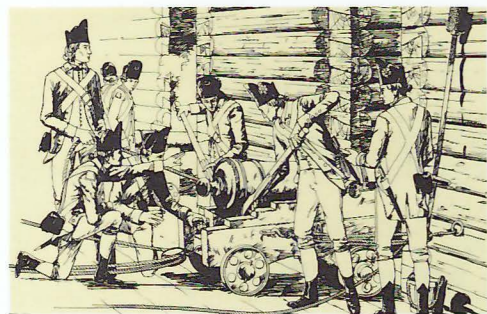
naughts, the rifle pivoted down so it could be reloaded in safety behind the protection of tons of earth and concrete.

## World War II

The 1940s brought new challenges to the Nation's seacoast defenses. Airplanes and submarines joined battleships as threats to

the country's security. In response, anti-aircraft guns were added to the fort's armament and mines were laid in the harbor. In 1944 a

Harbor Entrance Control Post was built, from which all of the Charleston Harbor defenses were coordinated.



# Fort Moultrie

## Visiting the Park

Fort Moultrie is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the summer and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the winter. It is closed Christmas Day. Groups should make reservations for guided tours. Pets are not allowed inside the fort.

**Safety**  
Please watch your step and exercise reasonable caution in the fort. We ask that you use the paths and do not climb the mounds.

The fort is on west Middle Street on

Sullivan's Island. From Charleston, take U.S. 17 N (business) to Mt. Pleasant and turn right on S.C. 703. At Sullivan's Island, turn right on Middle Street. The fort is located 2 kilometers (1.5 miles)

from the intersection.  
**Administration**  
Fort Moultrie is administered as part of Fort Sumter National Monument by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

A superintendent, whose address is Drawer R, Sullivan's Island, S.C. 29482, is in immediate charge.

### Harbor Defense, 1898-1939

These two batteries were designed to protect the mine field at the entrance to Charleston Harbor and to act in conjunction with other batteries on Sullivan's Island and at Fort Sumter.

### World War II

This Harbor Entrance Control Post/Harbor Defense Command Post, completed March 7, 1944, coordinated all of the harbor defenses around Charleston.

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#### To Cannon Walk and Battery Jasper

#### Cannon Walk

The artillery pieces along this walk date from the Civil War and after, a period of rapid technological development. These pieces tell the story of the evolution of seacoast defense weaponry.

#### Battery Jasper

The battery was part of the coastal defense system that integrated heavy coastal artillery, minefields, and rapid-fire guns into an effective defense system. Battery Logan, beyond Jasper, and Batteries Bingham and McCorkle inside Fort Moultrie were also parts of this system.

### 7

#### Fort Moultrie I

Though not part of a defense system, the first Fort Moultrie represents the beginnings of harbor defense in the United States.

### 1870s Modernization

After the Civil War the fort was renovated applying the concepts learned during the war.

These two weapons represent Fort Moultrie in the period 1873 to 1898.

### Fort Moultrie II

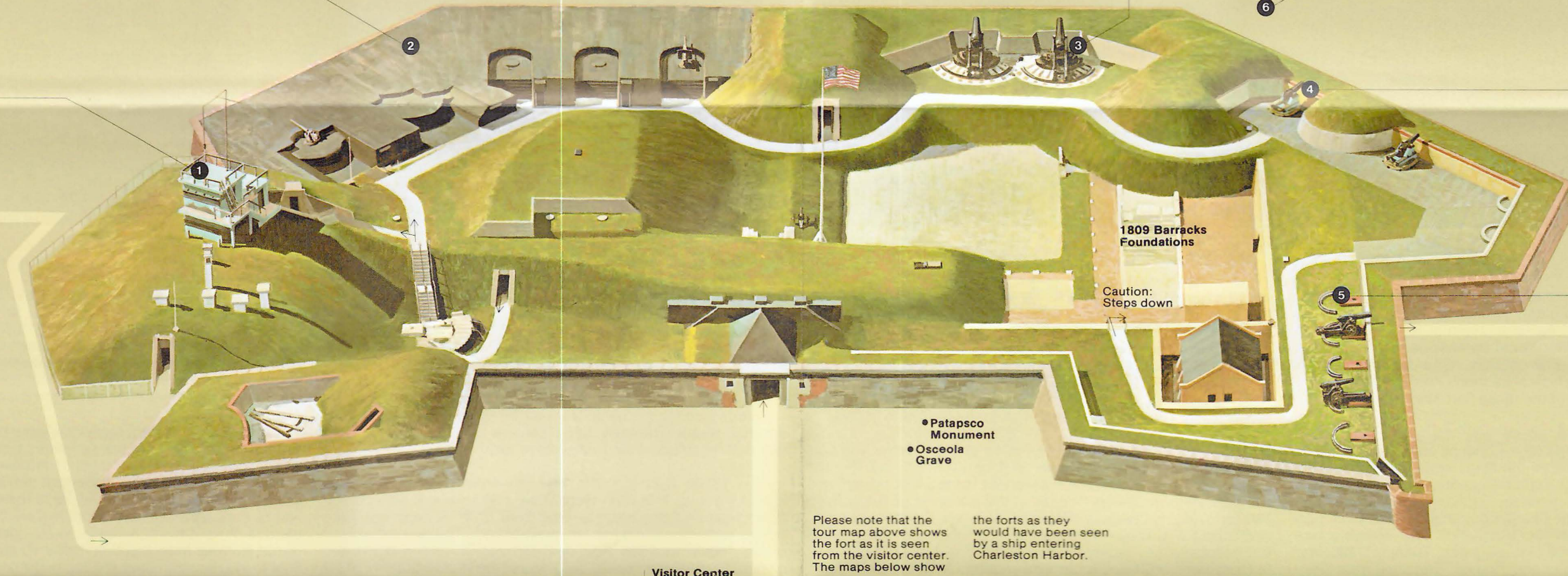
Constructed in response to disagreements with France, the second Fort Moultrie had a brief life. Though short-lived, the fort was important as a part of the first system of United States seacoast defense.

### Civil War

During this period there was great technological change in coastal defense weapons. The Confederates made many alterations in the fort and its armament to cope with these changes.

### Fort Moultrie III

For more than half a century, from 1809 to 1860, Fort Moultrie changed little, except to replace old smooth-bore cannon with new. This section represents the third fort from its construction to the eve of the Civil War.



Please note that the tour map above shows the fort as it is seen from the visitor center. The maps below show

the forts as they would have been seen by a ship entering Charleston Harbor.

## Harbor Defense

Fort Moultrie was well situated to guard Charleston Harbor. Because of shoals at the harbor entrance, ships were forced to enter

the harbor from the south and sail toward the fort on Sullivan's Island (dotted line). In this position they could not fire on the

fort until they turned into the harbor. In the mid-19th century Fort Sumter added its firepower to keep ships out of the harbor.

## Moultrie I

The first fort on Sullivan's Island was hastily built in 1776 to protect Charleston from an attack by the British. The fort was

constructed by raising two palmetto-log walls 16 feet apart and filling the space between with sand. The spongy palmetto and yielding

sand readily absorbed shot and shell from the British ships and protected the American defenders.

## Moultrie II

In 1794 Charleston became one of 16 ports to receive the new defenses of the First American System of Fortifications. The

second Fort Moultrie, part of this system, was a five-sided structure with earth and timber walls 17 feet high. The fort was

completed in 1798, but soon fell into ruin from a lack of upkeep. A hurricane in 1804 destroyed the fort.

For 138 years the third Fort Moultrie has undergone modification. The fort's walls have often been covered with sand to

protect them from shells, and the interior of the fort filled with earth and concrete to mount new weapons. Over this period arma-

ment has changed from smooth-bore cannon to disappearing rifles to anti-aircraft and anti-submarine weapons.

