

Preservation and Design Manual: Part One

Preservation & Design Standards



Developed to assist in guiding reuse of the Governors Island Historic District portion of the Island, while ensuring preservation of the historic and architectural resources that contribute to its importance.

January 28, 2003

INTRODUCTION

Governors Island is a unique resource in New York and the Nation, and, as such, should be preserved for future generations. Its history as a military installation can be seen through its buildings and development, from Fort Jay and Castle Williams to Colonel's Row and Nolan Park. The Governors Island Historic District not only captures history in its image, but illustrates an evolution of development unavailable anywhere else.

To assist in preservation and development of the Island, a *Preservation & Design Manual* has been created. The Manual consists of three parts: *Preservation & Design Standards*; *Property Summary Sheets*; and, *Design & Development Guidelines*. Combined, these constitute the *Governors Island Preservation & Design Manual*.

This document, the *Governors Island Preservation & Design Standards Brochure*, has been designed to provide a general understanding of the resources within the Governors Island Historic District, to set forth the policy and goals of the federal government in transferring the property, and to establish the Standards by which development of the historic district can take place. The purpose of the document is to assist in guiding development of the Governors Island Historic District portion of the Island, while ensuring preservation of the historic and architectural resources that contribute to its importance.

The Standards are divided into five categories of activities: Site Development, Building Treatment, New Construction & Additions, Landscapes, and Demolition. Each category contains a series of standards aimed at providing general guidance in planning, design, and construction. A separate set of *Guidelines* is provided to assist in application of the *Standards*.

Application of the Standards to individual projects within the Governors Island Historic District will be reviewed by New York City and State review agencies.

BELOW
CASTLE WILLIAMS, NAMED AFTER COLONEL JONATHAN WILLIAMS, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT, NY, SERVED AS AN ARMY PRISON FROM THE CIVIL WAR UNTIL 1966.



POLICIES & GOALS

As stipulated in the National Historic Preservation Act, it is the policy of the Federal government to promote and support preservation of our national heritage.

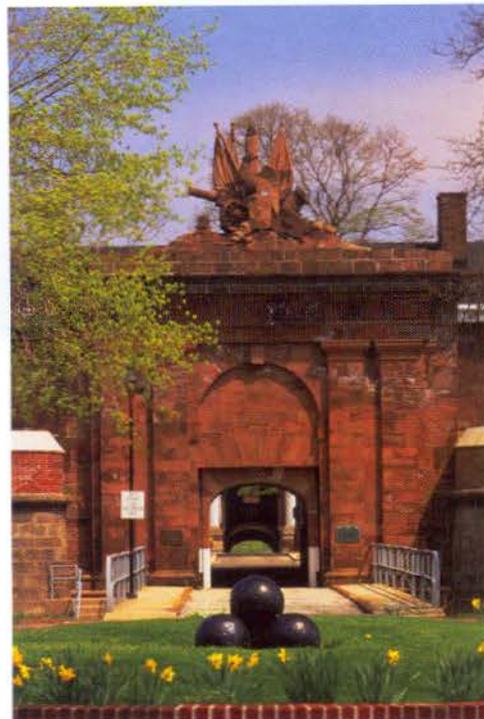
To fulfill that policy on Governors Island, the General Services Administration has established a number of goals for development of the site and treatment of its resources. It is GSA's intent to establish controls and guidance that will:

- ensure that future development of the historic district recognizes and preserves those aspects of the property that represent its historic and architectural significance;
- ensure that significant elements of the historic district are preserved and used;
- ensure that significant elements of the historic district are treated in a manner that preserves their historic and architectural integrity; and,
- ensure that public access to the Island is allowed and promoted.

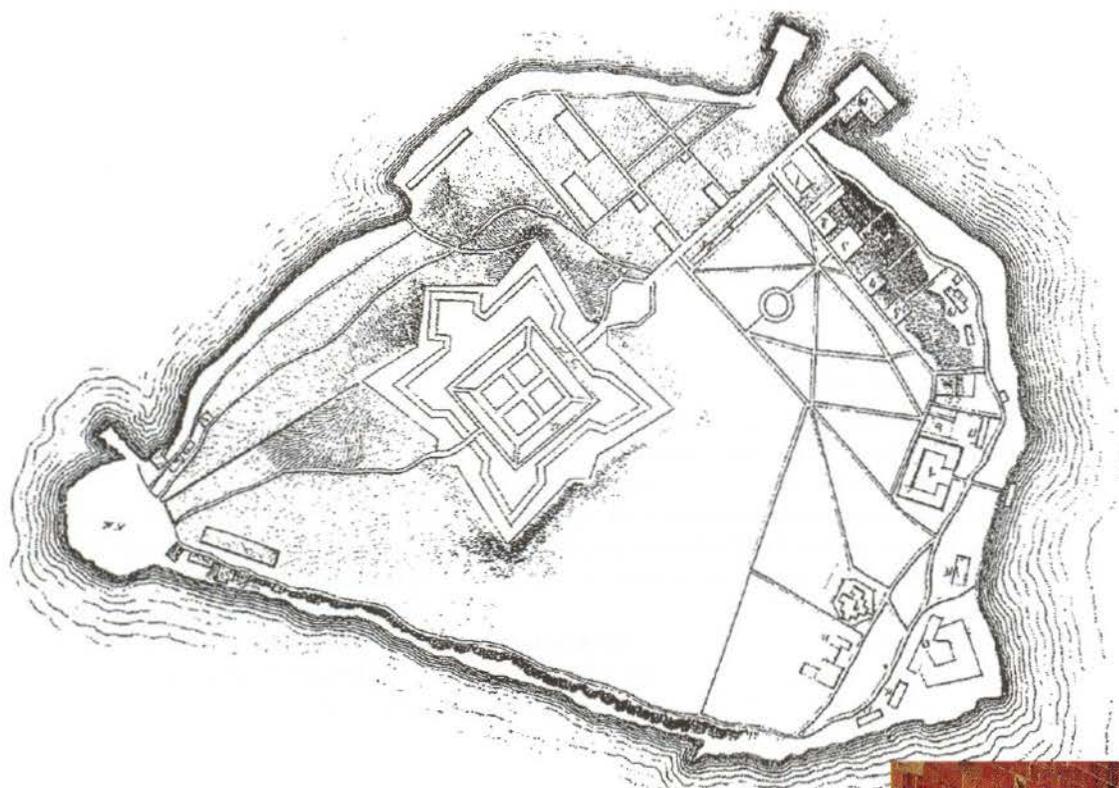


RIGHT
FORT JAY, CONSTRUCTED BETWEEN
1794 AND 1801, SERVED AS THE
PRIMARY FORTIFICATION ON
GOVERNORS ISLAND PROTECTING
NEW YORK HARBOR.

BELOW
ENTRANCE TO FORT JAY

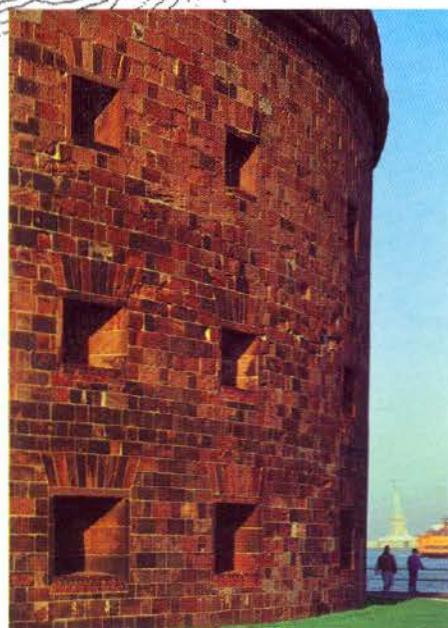


HISTORIC MAP OF GOVERNORS ISLAND



ABOVE
1876 MAP DEVELOPED UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF
MAJOR JOHN G. BARNARD

RIGHT
CASTLE WILLIAMS



HISTORY OF GOVERNORS ISLAND

1623
Dutch occupation of Island

1664
British occupation of Island

1755-1763
*French & Indian War
Royal American Regiment
stationed on Island*

1793
*Yellow fever outbreak,
used as pasture, race track,
quarantine station*

1794
*Design of Bastion Square
by Charles Vincent*

1807
Castle Williams constructed

1811
South Battery erected

1821
*First army division
headquartered on Island*

1833
*New York Arsenal moved to
reservation on Island*

1852
*Recruiting station, prison
for confederate soldiers*

Fourteen years after Henry Hudson sailed into New York Harbor, Governors Island was occupied by the Dutch in 1623 as a secure staging area for the construction of the permanent settlement on Manhattan. Early attempts to establish a saw mill and a tobacco plantation failed and by 1639, the Island was used as grazing land.

The Island was a private game preserve first for the Dutch governors and then for the British Governors when they took possession in 1664. During the French and Indian War (1755-1763), members of the Royal American Regiment were stationed on the Island to protect the harbor against the French Navy, the first formal use of the Island for defensive purposes.

Although the British considered constructing fortifications during the years leading up to the American Revolution, it was Continental troops who ultimately erected the first fortifications on the Island, relatively crude earthworks in the approximate location of Fort Jay. The British quickly took control of the Fort, using it as a hospital for the remainder of the war.

In the absence of hostilities after the Revolutionary War, Governors Island became officially a part of New York County and was used as pasture land, a race track, and a quarantine station during the Yellow Fever outbreak of 1793. An agreement was reached to allow Columbia College to subdivide the Island into lots and streets, but amid growing tensions with France in 1794, Congress allocated \$150,000 to commission Charles Vincent, a French engineer, to oversee the design and construction of a bastion square with two low batteries placed at the central high point of the Island. Constructed in part with voluntary labor inspired by patriotism and organized from various guilds and societies, the open earthwork was known as Fort Jay, after John Jay, Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

As a part of the new republic's ambitious and ongoing campaign to strengthen its coastal defense, the fortifications built on the Island in 1807 to protect New York Harbor were the first masonry fortifications in the United States. Fort Jay was demolished and rebuilt in the same location to be larger and have the configuration that we see today. Its name was changed to Fort Columbus due to the unpopularity of John Jay's overtures towards Great Britain. Castle Williams, a solid masonry structure, three stories high with casemates protecting 102 guns, was constructed between 1807 and 1811 on what were then submerged rocks connected to the Island by a spit of land. When constructed, Castle Williams was a prototype for coastal fortifications and one of the most formidable of the American forts. Today, it is one of the last remaining and best preserved early fortifications in the country. Finally, just prior to the War of 1812, the South Battery was erected to provide protection to the entrance to Buttermilk Channel. At least partly due to its deterrent effect, New York Harbor was never attacked and the effectiveness of the fortifications was never tested.

The First Army Division moved its headquarters to the island in 1821, resulting in the construction of barracks, a post commander's quarters and a hospital. In 1833 the New York Arsenal moved to a separate 6.5 acre reservation on the Island.

In 1852 the Island's primary function changed to that of recruiting station. During the Civil War, Castle Williams was converted to hold 1,500 Confederate prisoners and continued to serve as a detention center until 1966. Following the Civil War, cholera and yellow fever epidemics plagued the Island. The resulting demolition of all buildings where outbreaks occurred created the central green that is now the golf course.

During the late nineteenth Century, Governors Island became the headquarters of the Military Division of the Atlantic and Department of the East. Major General Winfield Scott Hancock oversaw the creation of a military village with attractive and spacious Officers Quarters on Nolan Park and Colonel's Row.

Between 1902 and 1912, the Island's land mass was increased by more than 100 acres using fill from the excavation of the New York City Subway system. Using the expanded area, in 1909, Wilbur Wright made the first flight over American waters when he took off from Governors Island, circled the Statue of Liberty and flew up the Hudson River.

Soon after expansion, the prominent architectural firm of McKim, Meade, and White developed a master plan for the redevelopment of the entire Island that called for leveling everything but the fortifications in order to create a grand, axial alignment according to Beaux Arts design principles.

Early construction on the new part of the Island, however, was temporary, providing more than 80 hastily built structures and 8 miles of railroad serving as depot and embarkation point for the World War I effort. During the late twenties and early thirties, a comprehensive plan to beautify the Island resulted in the demolition of the temporary structures and the construction of a number of impressive brick buildings in the Neo-Georgian style, strengthening the cohesive military campus quality to the Island. Among them, Building #400 was the longest military building in the world, intended to house an entire regiment under one roof.

The First Army headquarters moved to the Island in 1933. During World War II, the Island again served as a depot and troop staging area, serving as the Army's headquarters from the conclusion of the war until 1962.

In 1966, the Army transferred ownership of the Island to the Coast Guard who undertook to develop the southern part of the Island, and in 1986 to preserve many of the historic structures within the historic district. Within recent memory, President Ronald Reagan used Governors Island as a location for summit meetings with foreign heads of state, including Francois Mitterand of France in 1986 and Mikhail Gorbachev of Russia in 1988.

The Coast Guard moved its operations from the Island in 1997, at which point ultimate responsibility for the operation and eventual transfer of the Island was turned over to the General Services Administration.

1902-1912

Governors Island land mass increased with fill from New York subway excavation

1908

Wilbur Wright takes off from Governor's Island for first flight over American waters

1933

First Army headquartered on Island

1966

Army transfers ownership of Island to U.S. Coast Guard

1986

Ronald Reagan meets with Francois Mitterand

1988

Ronald Reagan meets with Mikhail Gorbachev

1997

Coast Guard moves from Island. Responsibility for Island transferred to GSA



LEFT

BUILDING #400, CONSTRUCTED DURING THE LATE 1920s WAS THE LONGEST MILITARY BUILDING IN THE WORLD. THIS BUILDING SEPARATES THE HISTORIC DISTRICT FROM NON-HISTORIC PORTION OF THE ISLAND.

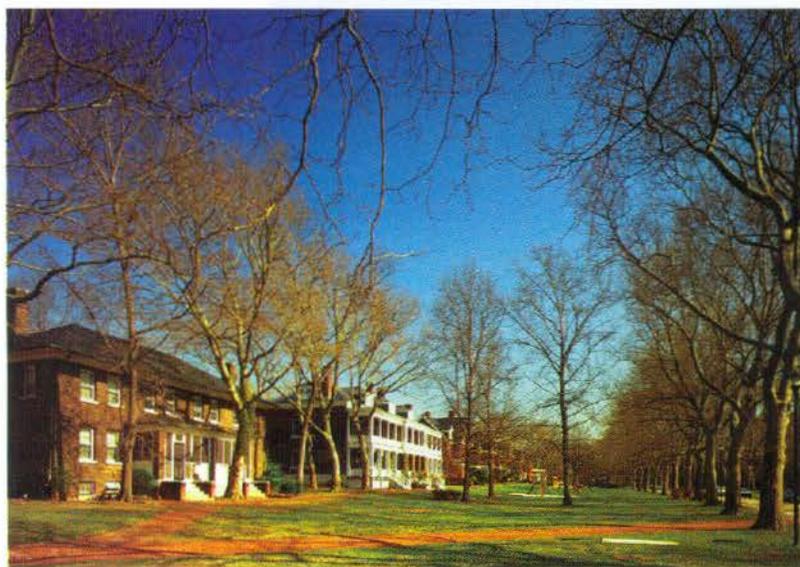
RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Governors Island comprises 172 acres of land in Upper New York Bay, one-half mile off the southern tip of Manhattan. Approximately 121 acres of the north half of the Island were designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1985. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the area as a Historic District in 1996. Within the Governors Island Historic District there are 102 buildings, 75 of which have been determined as contributing to the historic significance of the Island.

Architectural styles on the Island range from early fortification to Colonial Revival, with a liberal distribution of nondescript utilitarian structures. The earliest fortifications were constructed using red sandstone, with a majority of the other buildings within the historic district constructed of red brick. The use of red brick, with light stone trim, serves to unite the historic features within the historic district, as does the overall small scale, usually not higher than two or three stories tall.

As expressed in the National Historic Landmark designation for the property, The historic district is a loosely knit collection of individual historic properties and features, and several complexes of related buildings erected during various military eras. The early fortifications, Castle Williams, Fort Jay, and the South Battery, occupy what were the most strategic defensive positions on the Island.

BELOW
THE TREE LINED STREETS OF
COLONEL'S ROW.



Castle Williams was constructed on the north point of the Island, located to protect the entrance to New York Harbor. Fort Jay was placed at the highest point of land on the Island, affording an unobstructed view on all sides to the waterfront. And, South Battery was situated at the southeast corner of the Island, facing Buttermilk Channel. As the Island's function shifted from a fortification to an Arsenal, and later a military base, buildings and structures were added to accommodate new needs and uses. A grouping of Arsenal structures were constructed on the north side of the Island, and garrison functions were located along the flat hilltop southeast of Fort Jay. These buildings established the eastern edge of an open space later named Nolan Park. In the last half of the 19th century additional residential units were erected around this open space, fully enclosing the park.

In the last part of the 19th century, the southwest portion of the Island was the site of new Officer's Housing, which originally faced the harbor. These are large, red brick structures constructed using standardized Army Quartermaster plans. The last large grouping are 13 Georgian Revival buildings constructed between 1924–1940 to accommodate the 16th Infantry. They extend across the full width of the Island along the southern edge, and extend up the east to west shorelines in a wide U-shape.

South of Division Road, outside of the historic district, there are numerous contemporary buildings, none of which are historic or architecturally significant.

Within the historic district there are a number of historic and prehistoric archeological sites known to be sensitive. To a great extent these are focused at the original Island edges, and in the area of Fort Jay.

In addition, there are landscape features associated with historic development of the Island that contribute to its importance, such as Nolan Park, the Glacis surrounding Fort Jay, memorials, and landscaping within the historic district and along the Island's boundary roads.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE?

The character and history of the Island is important to recognize and to save. This can be accomplished by preserving the historically significant buildings, structures, landscapes, and open spaces in the historic district, and by allowing new development on the Island to occur in a manner that complements the historically significant elements. To be successful, preservation efforts and development cannot view the Island as a series of individual, independent components, but must focus on the connections between the buildings and their site, open spaces and landscaping, vistas and the quality of life created through the combination of its parts.

Although the present Governors Island has been created through change and expansion over many years, it retains elements of its original and primary purpose in the configuration and placement of buildings and circulation patterns. These are important parts of the historic district which should be retained. They include the parameter roadway around the Island, the tree-lined streets, the relationship between residential buildings and roadway, and the enclosure of park and open space by buildings and landscaping. The campus setting created through these elements provides an a unique living environment that should be maintained.

Even though more than half of the Island has been designated a National Historic Landmark and a New York City Historic District, not all of the buildings on the Island are historically significant. None of the structures south of Division Road are important to save. Likewise, a number of buildings within the Governors Island Historic District have been identified as non-contributing to the district. This designation means that their demolition would not hurt the historic qualities of the district. In fact, in some situations, removal of non-contributing buildings can result in restoration of historically important views and open space.



ABOVE
NOLAN PARK WITH THE
SPIRE OF ST. CORNELIUS IN
BACKGROUND.

In addition, some buildings have unique interior spaces, detailing, or art work that merits recognition and preservation. Specifically, a series of wall murals executed in the 1930s through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) found in building #125, classical architectural wood detailing found in the public spaces of that building and South Battery; and detailing throughout the Admiral's House. Other buildings in the historic district may contain isolated elements and details that are of interest, but do not represent a historic or architectural significant feature requiring preservation.

The landscapes within the Governors Island Historic District have historically been used to define edges of roadways, edges of open spaces, and edges of property. Even though it was not part of the earliest development of the Island, landscaping has achieved significance through its association with later construction and uses of the site. The species and patterns of the historic plantings are important to preserve. It is also important to avoid intrusions into the landscaping and landscaped areas through the introduction of inappropriate lighting, communications and security systems, signage, trash disposal systems, materials, and plant species.

PROPERTIES WITHIN THE GOVERNORS ISLAND HISTORIC DISTRICT

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Each of the buildings and sites within the historic district have been classified based on their individual historic and architectural significance.

■ CATEGORY 1

Properties are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or have been designated as individual landmarks by New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and contribute to the significance of the Governors Island Historic District.

■ CATEGORY 2

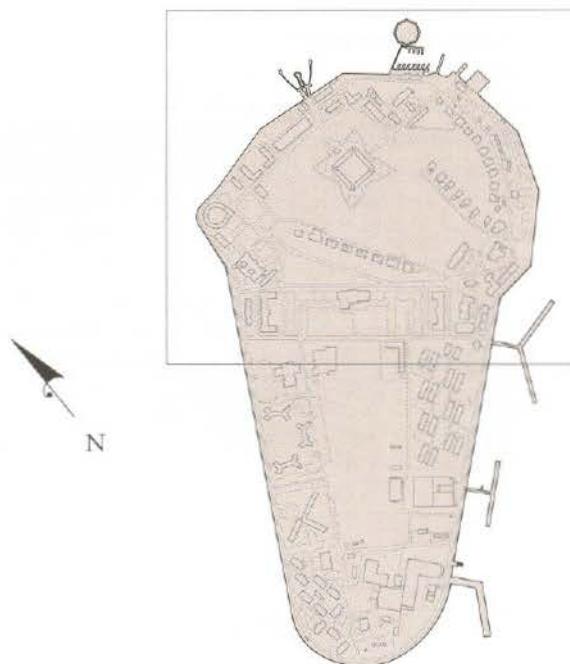
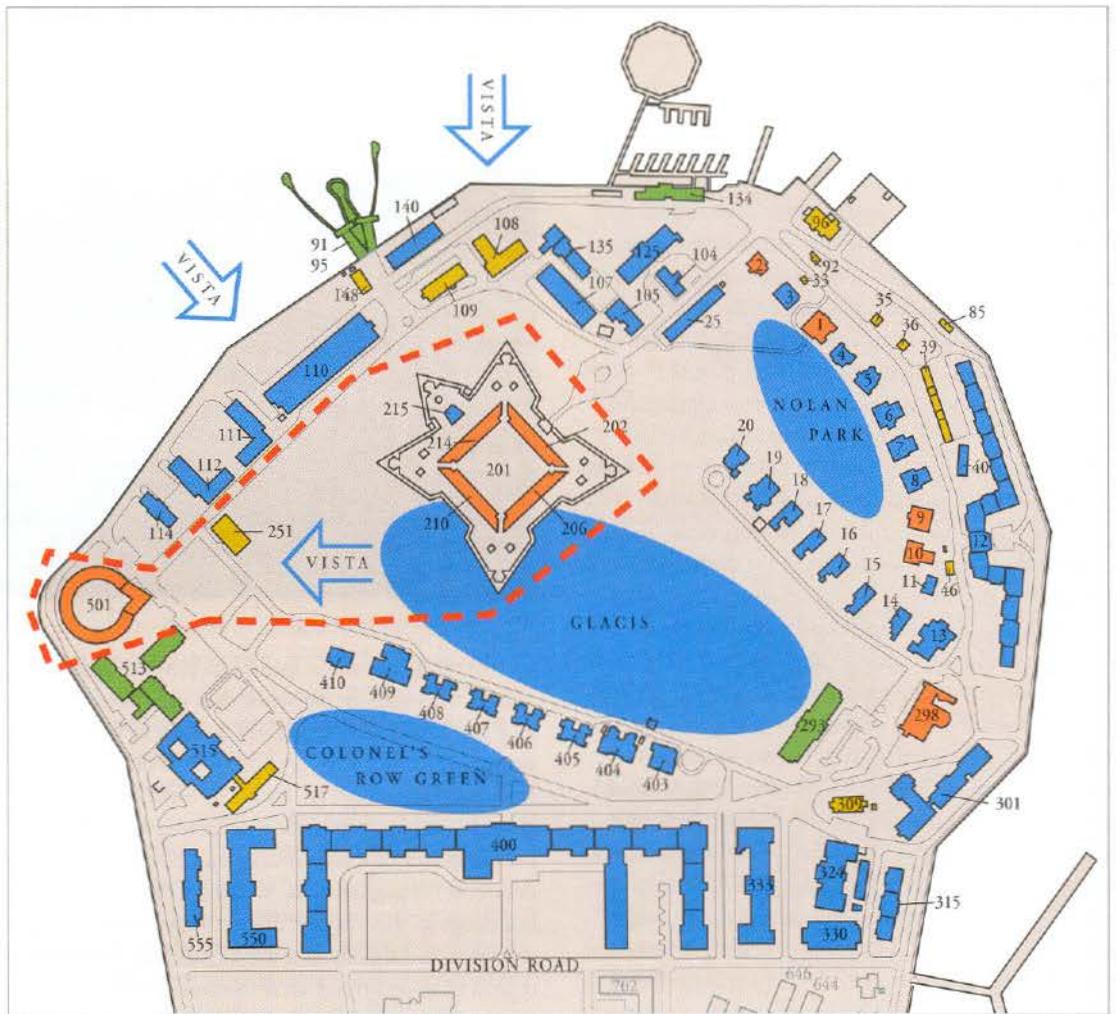
Properties are contributing resources within the National Historic Landmark and the NYC LPC Governors Island Historic District.

■ CATEGORY 3

Properties are non-contributing elements within the National Historic Landmark and the NYC LPC Governors Island Historic District.

■ CATEGORY 4

Properties are intrusions into the Governors Island Historic District.



PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION

1	Admiral's House	c.1843/1930	155	Transformer Vault	
2	Governor's House	c.1813/1930	201	Fort Jay Guard House	1806-09
3	The Dutch House	c.1846/1920	202	Ft. Jay Family Housing	1834-36
4	Field Officer's Quarters	c.1857	203	Garage	1935-38
5	Field Officer's Quarters	c.1857	204	Triangle	1834-36
6	Company Officer's Qtrs.	1879	205	Garage	1835-38
7	Company Officer's Qtrs.	1878	206	Ft. Jay Family Housing	1834-36
8	Company Officer's Qtrs.	1878	207	Triangle	1834-36
9	Block House	1878	208	Garage	1935-38
10	Company Officer's Qtrs.	1878	209	Garage	1935-38
11	Steward's Quarters	1878/1930	210	Ft. Jay Family Housing	1834-36
12	Officers' Housing	1931	211	Garage	1935-38
13	Chapel of St. Cornelius	1905	212	Garage	1935-38
14	Company Officers' Qtrs.	1879	213	Triangle	1834-36
15	Company Officers' Qtrs.	1879	214	Ft. Jay Family Housing	1834-36
16	Company Officers' Qtrs.	1879	215	Ft. Jay Magazine	1806-09
17	Company Officers' Qtrs.	1878	217	Garage	1935-38
18	Company Officers' Qtrs.	1879	218	Garage	1935-38
19	Company Officer's Qtrs.	1891	251	Tampa Library	1908
20	Officer's Qtrs.	1902/1936	293	Motel/Guesthouse	1986-97
25	Ordinance Storehouse	1811/1936	298	South Battery	1840-78/1936
33	Garage	1934	301	School	1943/1959
35	Garage	1934	309	Catholic Chapel	1942
36	Garage	1934	315	Family Housing	1938-40
39	Garage	1934	324	YMCA	1926
40	Jewish Chapel	1918	330	Theater	1937-39
45	Transformer Building	1934	333	Detachment Barracks	1932
46	Garage	c.1942	400	Liggett Hall	1928
85	Store House	1878	403	Officer's Housing	1904-06
91	Omaha Dock		404	Officer's Housing	1929
92	Transformer Building	1942	405	Officer's Housing	1893
95	Omaha Dock		406	Officer's Housing	1893
96	Group Engineering	1986	407	Officer's Housing	1894
104	Ordinance Storehouse	1853/1940	408	Officer's Housing	1895
105	Armory	1879	409	BOQ	1910
106	Reservoir Pumpouse	1941	410	Officer's Housing	1917
107	Storehouse	1833/1904	414	Garage	1941
108	Marshall Hall	1945	415	Garage	1938
109	Administrative Offices	1918/1945	456	Monument	1807-11
110	Storage Depot	1870-79	501	Castle Williams	1805
111	Family Housing	1934	513	Enlisted Quarters	1970/1993
112	Family Housing	1934	515	Post Hospital	1935/1980
114	Nurses' Quarters	1934	517	Medical Clinic	c.1942
125	Pershing Hall	1934	518	Biohazard Storage	
130	Workshop	1834/1971	519	Emergency Generator	1956
134	Station New York	1986	525	Storehouse	1964
135	Commander's Quarters	1839/1977	550	Barracks	1938-40
140	Storehouse	1857-67	555	Family Housing	1938-40
142	Soissons Dock	1947		Nolan Park	c. 1860
144	Soissons Dock	1947		Glacis	1806-09
146	Generator Building			Colonel's Row Green	1893
147	Mechanical Equipment			Vistas	
148	Ferry Waiting Building	1917			

KEY

- CATEGORY 1
- CATEGORY 2
- CATEGORY 3
- CATEGORY 4

SITE DEVELOPMENT



ABOVE
THE INDIANA BUFF LIMESTONE WALLS OF
ST. CORNELIUS CHAPEL, A CRUCIFORM
STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH GOTHIC DESIGN.

As originally developed, the natural configuration of Governors Island was a feature that enhanced its use as a defensive fort, with the glacis surrounding Fort Jay allowing unincumbered views and control of New York Harbor. As the need for this type of defense diminished, the glacis became less important, allowing the introduction of structures around the Island's edge. The current development is a reflection of the changes of use and expansion of the Island over the past centuries. Preservation of the historically significant components of the Governors Island Historic District is an important element in retaining the character and history of the property. The following are standards for site development within the historic district. Detailed guidance in applying these standards can be found in the *Design & Development Guidelines*.

- 1 All site development work within the Governors Island Historic District will be designed and executed in a manner that preserves the character and historically significant features of the district, including landscaping, open space, site features, vistas, streets, driveways, walks, and building siting patterns;
- 2 All site development work will be designed and executed to avoid known or potential archeological resources;
- 3 All new utility distribution systems, such as electric, and telephone and cable service, will be located below ground and, to the extent possible, new or upgraded utility service will utilize existing trenches, and avoid additional excavations;
- 4 Large scale communication equipment, such as satellite dishes, telephone relays, radar, antenna, and other similar equipment and installations, will be located outside of the boundaries of the Governors Island Historic District, south of Division Road;
- 5 Existing unit masonry streets, driveways, and walks within the Governors Island Historic District, and seawall north of Division Road, will be preserved in-place, and, where necessary, repaired.
- 6 All site or building lighting within the Governors Island Historic District will be appropriately scaled lighting compatible with the area in which it is installed.

BUILDING TREATMENT

The history of development of Governors Island is illustrated through its buildings and structures. Many of those properties are historically and architecturally important as individual buildings, or as components of larger groupings of structures. In either case, they should be treated in a manner that ensures their preservation and continued use. Following are treatment standards for those properties. Detailed guidelines for application of these standards can be found in the *Design & Development Guidelines*.

- 1 All work carried out on historic buildings and structures will comply with applicable building codes and permitting requirements of the City and State of New York;
- 2 All work on historic buildings and structures will be undertaken in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines detailed in the *Governors Island Preservation & Design Manual*;
- 3 Minimum work will be undertaken on a historic building, structure, or site to meet use and code requirements;
- 4 All work will be designed and executed in a manner that minimizes damage to, or removal of, character defining elements or original fabric of the building, structure, or its setting; and,
- 5 All work will be executed in a manner that minimizes damage to historically significant landscapes or site features associated with the building or structure.

NEW CONSTRUCTION & ADDITIONS

The greatest opportunity for new construction on Governors Island is south of Division Road, outside of the boundaries of the Governors Island Historic District. However, some sites are available for development within the historic district, both for above and below ground construction. Great care must be taken when designing and executing new work to ensure that the character and fabric of the historic district is not damaged or distorted. The following standards have been developed to assist in addressing these issues. Detailed guidance in applying these standards can be found in the *Design & Development Guidelines*.

- 1 All new construction within the Governors Island Historic District will be designed to be compatible with, but not duplicate existing structures, and will not attempt to create "historic" buildings;
- 2 All new construction within the Governors Island Historic District will be designed to preserve the character and significant features of the Island, including vistas and view sheds;
- 3 New construction within the Governors Island Historic District will use materials consistent with their setting and environment; and,
- 4 New construction, including construction staging, will be undertaken in a manner that avoids damage to existing buildings, structures, landscapes, and landscape features.

LANDSCAPING

Landscaping has been used on Governors Island to place emphasis on the patterns created by walkways, open spaces, buildings, and recreational areas, and to enhance the quality of the living environment. Within the Governors Island Historic District it is vital to recognize and preserve landscape elements and patterns that are historically and aesthetically important in defining the character of the resource. Following are standards for landscaping and landscape treatment. Detailed guidance in applying these standards can be found in the *Design & Development Guidelines*.

- 1 To the extent possible, existing, significant landscape features and patterns will be preserved, such as tree-lined streets, driveways, and walks, open spaces, and the glacis surrounding Fort Jay;
- 2 New landscaping will be designed and executed in a manner that preserves the character and fabric of the Governors Island Historic District, and will use similar plant materials in similar situations;
- 3 New landscaping will be designed to be unobtrusive; and,
- 4 No property enclosure fencing will be installed within the boundaries of the Governors Island Historic District.

DEMOLITION

Historically significant (Category 1 and 2) buildings, structures, open spaces, landscapes, and landscape features will be retained, protected, and reused. All new development will be designed to support use of existing resources.

- 1 Demolition of buildings and structures within the Governors Island Historic District that are not significant (Category 3 and 4) will be undertaken in a manner that avoids damage to historic or archeological resources; and,
- 2 Demolition activities on historic properties, such as removal of previous additions, or removal of non-contributing interiors, will be undertaken in a manner that avoids, to the extent possible, removal or damage to original building fabric.

BELOW
THE STately COLUMNS OF THE
ADMIRAL'S HOUSE PRESIDING
OVER NOLAN PARK



RIGHT
AERIAL VIEW OF
GOVERNORS ISLAND,
BUTTERMILK CHANNEL
LOWER RIGHT



COVER PHOTO
THE TRANQUIL LANDSCAPE
OF NOLAN PARK.

The Governors Island Preservation & Design Standards have been developed by the General Services Administration in consultation with New York City Planning Department, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and National Trust for Historic Preservation.



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