

Castle Clinton

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monument
New York





Castle Garden from The Battery,
1848 lithograph by Nathaniel Currier

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Witness to a Changing America

The American Revolution painfully taught New Yorkers that their city needed better protection against enemy fleets. By the War of 1812 a stout circular sandstone battery was erected just off Manhattan Island's southern tip. First called South-west Battery, and off shore then, it never fired a shot except for target practice. Nonetheless it was integral, with four other new forts, to a young nation's New York Harbor defense.

A maturing nation's thoughts turned to entertainment, and Castle Clinton—renamed in 1817 for former mayor and future governor DeWitt Clinton—became Castle Garden in 1824. It hosted public events like band concerts and fireworks and, adding a roof in the 1840s, opera and theater. By the early 1850s Castle Garden was joined to the mainland by landfill,

which created Battery Park. To serve new immigrants, the State of New York turned Castle Garden into an immigrant station—processing eight million from 1855 to 1890. One in six Americans today is descended from a person entering here.

A growing national passion for science saw Castle Garden converted into the New York City Aquarium in 1896. It first housed only nearby species but soon ship captains were collecting exotic fishes for it from around the world.

Much of Castle Garden was demolished in construction for a tunnel project in the 1940s, but Castle Clinton's basic structure stood. It became a national monument in 1946. In the 1970s it was restored. The National Park Service now cares for this grand witness of our heritage, and we invite you to join us in preserving it.

Planning Your Visit

Castle Clinton is in Battery Park at Manhattan's southern tip. It is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except December 25. View the museum exhibits near the entrance. Visit the bookstore on the parade ground.

Ticket sales for the ferry out to Liberty and Ellis islands are housed at the other kiosk nearby.

Please be careful and have a safe and enjoyable visit.

More Information
National Park Service
Manhattan Sites
26 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005
212-344-7220
www.nps.gov/cacl

Castle Clinton is one of more than 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may enjoy our heritage. To learn more about parks and park programs please visit www.nps.gov.

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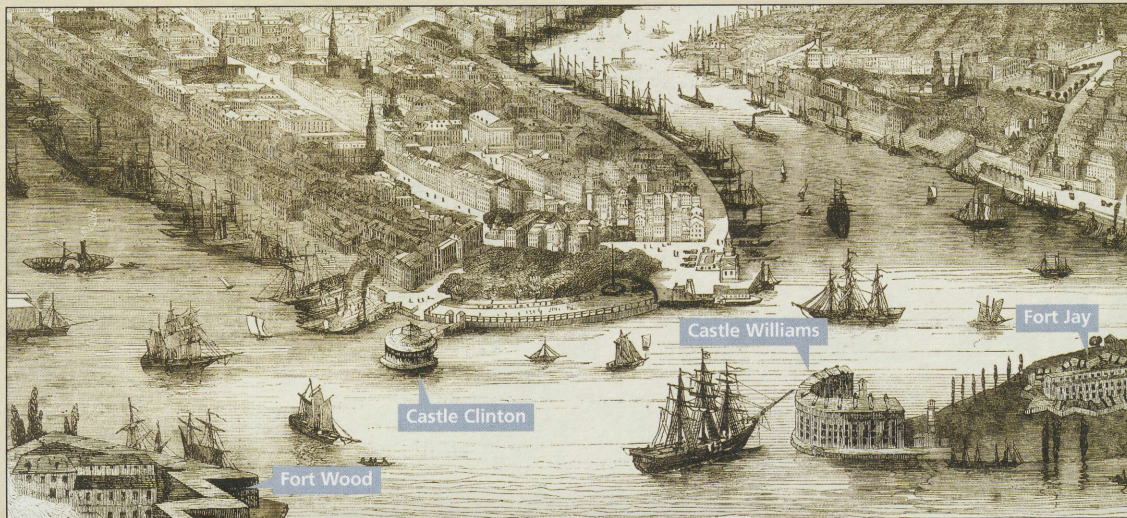
Nearly circular Castle Clinton—here Castle Garden (right), ca.1850—adapted many times to a changing national life. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Quiet Cannons, Opera Divas, Fish, and More

1811–1822

Defensive Fort

From 1807–1811 Castle Clinton (South-west Battery then) and four other forts were built to defend New York Harbor as the War of 1812 brewed. (*Not shown is Fort Gibson on Ellis Island.*) It stood off Manhattan Island where the Hudson and East rivers join. The Dutch had built a fort nearby on Manhattan Island in 1625. Changes in naval guns and in relations with European powers soon made forts like this obsolete.



1824–1854

Cultural Emporium

As New York City developed into a world metropolis, the city needed a public venue for cultural events. In 1824 Castle Clinton became the open-air Castle Garden. Revolutionary War hero the Marquis de Lafayette of France launched his triumphal return visit to America here later that year.

Presidents and other dignitaries would be honored here. Samuel F.B. Morse displayed his telegraph invention. A roof added in the 1840s made even grander events possible. Promoted by P.T. Barnum of later circus fame, the wildly popular Swedish opera diva Jenny Lind (*far right*) made her American debut here in 1850, enthralling her audience of 6,000.

ART RESOURCE: NY/PHOTOGRAPH BY ERICH LESSING
CENTER: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Marquis de Lafayette



Jenny Lind

C A S T L E G A R D E N

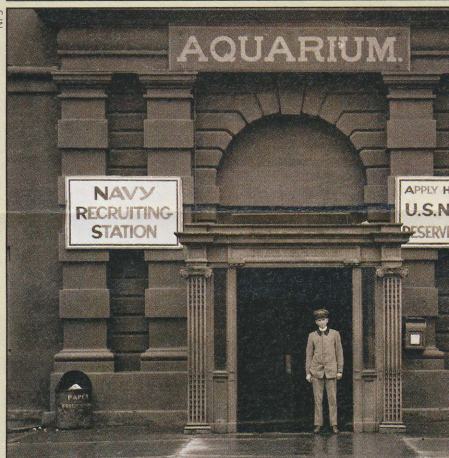
1855–1890 Immigration Center

New York State leased Castle Garden, now joined to the mainland, to protect newly arrived immigrants from predatory con artists. Two of every three U.S. immigrants from 1855 to April 1890 came in here, receiving lodging and travel information, medical attention, and honest currency exchange. In 1892 the immigration station, now a federal operation, moved to Ellis Island.



1896–1941 Aquarium

Its opening day in December 1896 saw 30,000 people pour into the New York City Aquarium to marvel at creatures from the nearby waters. Soon it featured species from around the world. Its West India harbor seal became a city character. When the aquarium closed in 1941, its sea creatures went to the Bronx Zoo and later to Coney Island.



1946–Present National Monument

Concerned citizens saved the fort from the wrecking ball and saw it authorized as a national monument in 1946. Preservationists saw its restoration get under way in 1970. Now Castle Clinton is a historic site interpreted in its own right and also hosts ticket sales for the Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island ferry.

