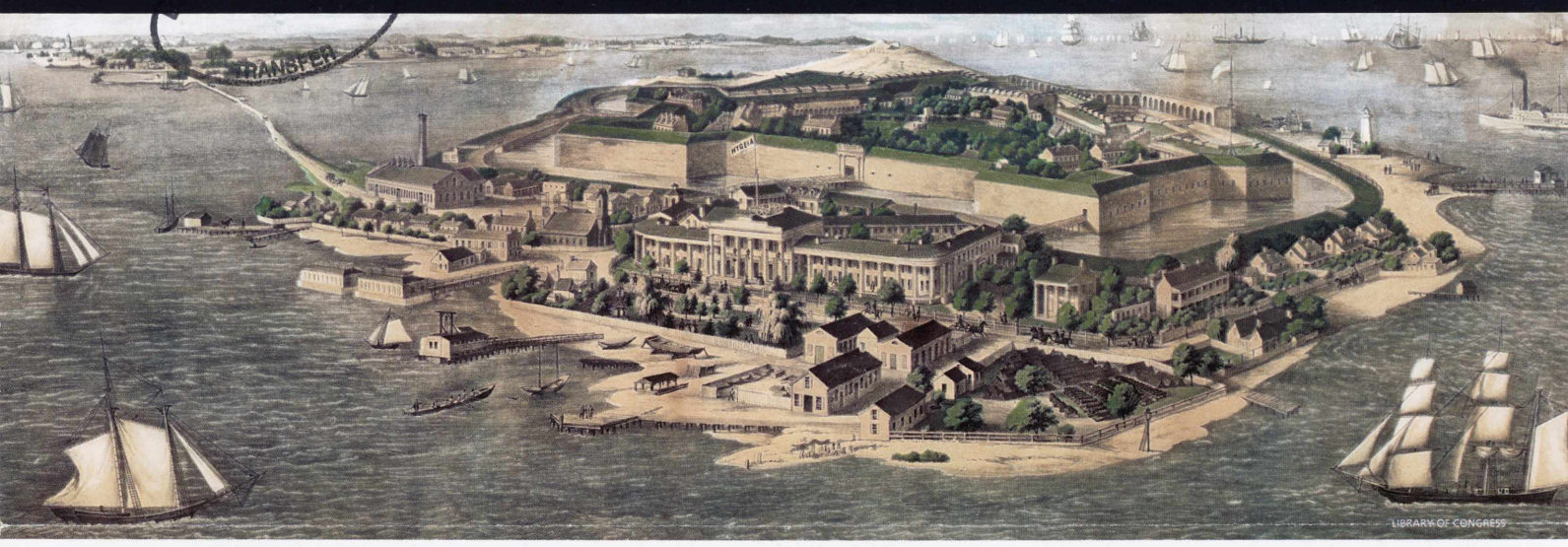
Fort Monroe

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monument
Virginia



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This 1862 lithograph of Fort Monroe showcases its strategic location for maritime defense and commerce. Built from 1819–34 and named for US President James Monroe, it remained a Union stronghold throughout the American Civil War, earning the name "Gibraltar of the Chesapeake."

Freedom's Fortress

Centuries before the arrival of European explorers, this land of rich natural resources was a critical crossroads for American Indians. English explorer Capt. John Smith and the Virginia Company recognized its strategic importance for the defense of the Chesapeake Bay, and in 1609 Fort Algernourne was built here. John Rolfe, secretary of the Virginia colony, in 1619 recalled the arrival of a Dutch man-of-war here at Point Comfort with the first "20 and odd" reported Africans brought to the English colonies.

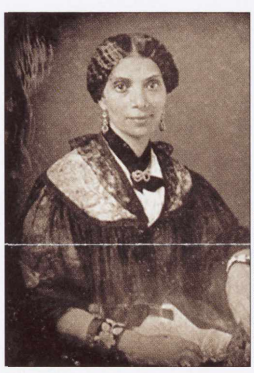
The defense of the nation and the quest for freedom converged at Fort Monroe in 1861, barely one month after the first shots of the American Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Working for the Confederate Army building gun positions, three enslaved men, today known as Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Sheppard Mallory, escaped to Fort Monroe seeking freedom with the Union Army. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act mandated these men be returned to bondage.

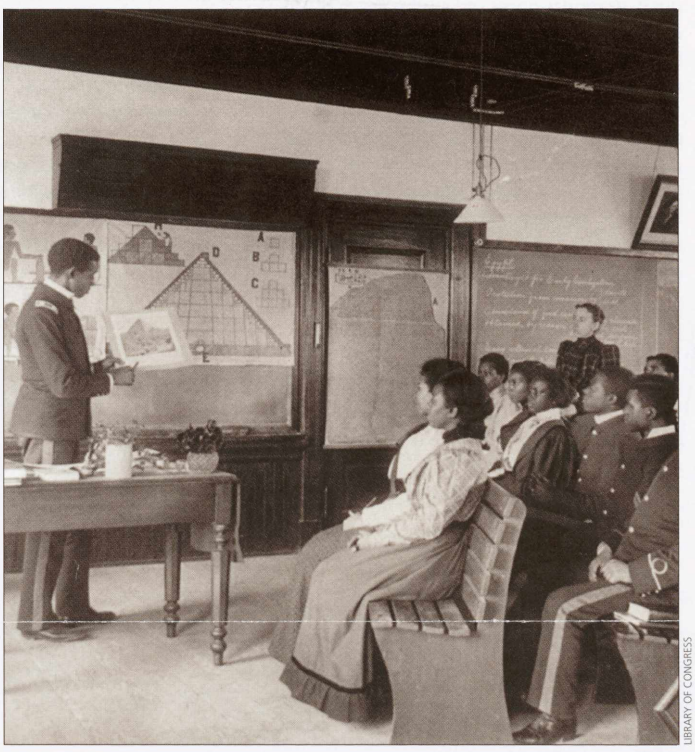
The fort's commander Major General Benjamin Butler, a lawyer by profession, reasoned Virginia had seceded and stated it was no longer part of the United States, therefore the Fugitive Slave Act did not apply. Further, because the Confederacy considered enslaved persons as property and were using enslaved men in their war effort against the United States, Butler argued these freedom seekers would be considered property and retained as "contraband of war." Soon whole communities of men, women, and children known as "Contraband Camps" formed in areas near Union forces.

Butler's landmark decision to consider these freedom seekers as "contraband" influenced thousands to seek sanctuary behind Union lines. It was a forerunner to President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, which finally abolished slavery in the United States in 1865.

Fort Monroe became known as "Freedom's Fortress" and has remained a national symbol for protection and freedom. The fort continued as a bastion of defense and training until it was deactivated in September 2011. Fort Monroe National Monument was established on November 1, 2011.

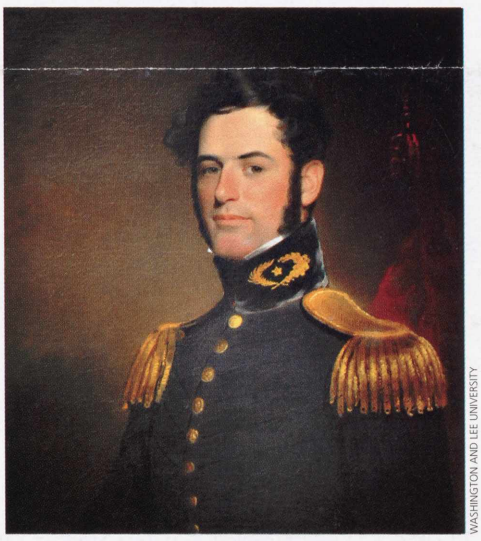

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HAMPTON UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES


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Butler *(upper left)* supported education, training, and enlistment of members of the "Contraband Camp" near Fort Monroe. Mary S. Peake *(lower left)* taught former enslaved people camped near Fort Monroe for the American Missionary Association (AMA). Hampton University, shown above in 1899, a historically black college and university, traces its existence to the AMA.


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WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

Robert E. Lee, *(above)* a 24 year-old West Point-trained engineer, was stationed here 1831–34 to oversee construction at Fort Monroe and Fort Calhoun, now Fort Wool.

A month after the "contraband decision" over 900 men, women, and children risked their lives seeking sanctuary at Fort Monroe. *(left)*



Brown Pelican
© ALAN D. WILSON



North Beach Area
FORT MONROE AUTHORITY



Mature live oaks, Parade Ground
NPS



Fort moat
NPS

Points of Interest

Building #1, Quarters No. 1: Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler occupied these quarters in 1861 where he made the pivotal "contraband decision." These were also President Lincoln's quarters during the planning of the attack on Norfolk in 1862.

Building #50: Constructed in 1834 as quarters and office space for engineers posted to Fort Monroe, the building has seen many architectural changes during its transformation to the set of three houses seen today.

Building #17, Lee's Quarters: Newlyweds Robert E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee, great-granddaughter of Martha Washington, occupied these quarters from 1831–34. The Lee's first child, George Washington "Custis" Lee, was born here in 1832.

Casemate Museum: This partner-operated museum presents the complex history of Old Point Comfort and Fort Monroe across more than four centuries. Occupying former artillery emplacements that form the fort's walls, these casemates have also served as living quarters and a holding cell for Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Chapel of the Centurion: Dedicated in 1858 in honor of the Roman centurion Cornelius and designed in the style of noted architect Richard Upjohn, this chapel features many impressive architectural details including three Tiffany stained-glass windows.

Old Point Comfort Lighthouse: This 1802 lighthouse was a British observation post during the War of 1812 and is the oldest operating lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay. The lighthouse is maintained by the US Coast Guard.

Parade Ground: This open area, surrounded by mature live oaks, including the 500-year-old "Algernourne Oak," was historically used for recreation, military exercises, and ceremonies.

Fort Monroe is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.



More Information

Fort Monroe
National Monument
41 Bernard Road
(Building #17, Lee's Quarters)
Fort Monroe, VA 23651-1001
757-722-FORT (3678)
www.nps.gov/fomr

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National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

Planning Your Visit

A New National Park

Fort Monroe National Monument is a new national park area with limited services and programs. It is a park "in progress." In the future facilities and services will be added for the public to enjoy.

The best way to explore "Freedom's Fortress" is on foot. Walk the ramparts encircling the top of the largest stone fort ever built in the United States. Discover its strategic location and importance in the defense of the Hampton Roads Harbor and the Chesapeake Bay. Look across the water to Fort Wool; see how the geography of Old Point Comfort was vital to the coastal defense strategy of the United States. The Fort Monroe peninsula has been home to thousands of military families throughout the centuries. Scenic streets and historic homes are reminders of American domestic and civic life the fort defended for almost 200 years.

Today Fort Monroe is a home and workplace just as it was during the period of active military service. Please respect the residents' privacy as you explore the fort.

For a Safe Visit

Use caution when walking the ramparts at the top of the fort. Do not venture too close to the edge and stay clear of the moat. Supervise children closely. Be alert for vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists on Fort Monroe's thoroughfares. Check the park website for firearms regulations.

Accessibility

We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the Casemate Museum, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Getting to the Park

From Richmond: I-64 East towards Norfolk/Williamsburg/Virginia Beach. Take Exit 268 (169 East Mallory St/Ft Monroe), the last exit on I-64 East before the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel.

From Virginia Beach/Norfolk: I-64 West towards Richmond, VA. Take Exit 268 (169 East Mallory St/Ft Monroe), the first exit on I-64 West after the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel.

Then, for both: Turn left at the light onto S Mallory St (0.1 miles). Turn right at the light onto E Mellen St and continue (approximately 0.6 miles) over a small bridge and causeway onto the Fort Monroe Peninsula. At the light take the left fork onto Ingalls Rd. Turn left onto Ruckman Rd at St. Mary Church and follow the signs for the Casemate Museum.