



FRIENDS OF FORT FREMONT

PRESERVING THE PAST
INSPIRING THE FUTURE

Seventh Edition 2024 Newsletter

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As it would have looked in 1899



As is seen in the Diorama.

Homeland Defense at the Turn of the 20th Century

The Control Tower was the operational brains of the Fort's defense. It contained the Staff and Advanced technology to track and fire on enemy incursions into Port Royal Sound.

The Fire Control Tower (Part 1)

The fire control tower consisted of two observation levels at the top of a steel structure. In the larger lower level were mounted two azimuth tracking sights (M1910 A1) (one is on exhibit in the History Center) and in the central upper level was a depression position finding (D.P.F.) sight. The latter sight, operated by an observer and a reader, was the basis for tracking a target vessel from a single fire control tower. The D.P.F. sight was mounted at the top of a 3 ft. diameter steel column filled with concrete that was anchored to an 8 ft. deep by 7 ft. diameter concrete base. The tower itself was on a 24 ft. square and 4 ft. deep concrete base. This was to ensure a very stable platform for the critical fire control measurements.

The 46 ft. high Fort Fremont fire control tower was also the location for the fort's Fire Commander who oversaw the fort's two batteries and at times the 10 in. gun Battery Jesup's Battery Commander. They, with their observers, sight readers, and several telephone operators occupied the tower's larger lower level. The lower level could hold held a total of about 10 personnel.

The operations in the Fire Control Tower to engage a target vessel will be covered in later issues.

The Fort Fremont diorama was created by Master Modeler, Dennis Cannady, to depict the fort as it was in 1900. The Friends raised funds by offering the community to sponsor a building. Marian and Ray Rollings sponsored the fire control tower in honor of Col. and Mrs. James Bradin, a retired artillery officer and early member of the Friends.





Over 120 guests attended the 2024 Oyster Roast



Enjoying the 2024 Oyster Roast



Everyone enjoyed the 2024 Oyster Roast



2024 Oyster Roast and a chance to win

Exciting News 2024 Events

New acquisitions including an Endicott-period Ammunition Delivery Table on loan from the City of Sullivan's Island, an original Fort Fremont Davit (Restored), a replica Projectile Truck and a replica Projectile will be installed soon. All restoration was funded by Donations. An unveiling of the new acquisitions is planned in the fall.

The 2nd Annual Harvest Festival. The success of last year and the many requests by the visitors to continue the Event has encouraged the FFF to Plan for this year. The Date will be Sun. Nov. 3. From 1 to 4 pm.

Scenes from the 1st Annual Harvest Festival—The 2nd Annual Festival will just as exciting.



BLACK MASONS TOUR FORT FRÉMONT

Robert Smalls is well known in US history, having been a hero of the Civil War and later becoming a politician; he won election as a Republican to the South Carolina Legislature and to the United States House of Representatives during the Reconstruction era. He was also a Prince Hall Mason and a member of the local Sons of Beaufort Lodge #36 (African-American Freemasons).

On December 14, 1905 former congressman Smalls asked First Lt. John O. Steger of Fort Fremont if he would permit a local delegation of black Masons to inspect the fortifications. Lt. Steger, the commanding officer of Fort Fremont and an 1898 Virginia Military Institute (VMI) graduate, replied *"It would be neither pleasant nor to the interest of the service to grant the request and your request is denied"* (Austin-American Statesman, 1905, et al.). Smalls then telegraphed Secretary of War William Howard Taft to see if he would approve his request. Taft would be elected President of the United States just three years later and in 1921 would become Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court (Wikipedia, 2024).

As soon as the matter was called to his attention, Taft promptly sent a telegraphic order stating that *"all should be admitted who desire to visit the historic fort"* (Buffalo Evening News, 1905 et al.). Taft further replied "I will not stand for any foolishness or unnecessary red tape on the part of [my] subordinates in the Army because of race or color (Buffalo Evening News, 1905 et al.). Some several hundred Black Masons accordingly descended on Fort Fremont that very afternoon and received a tour. The incident made national news. Despite Lt. John Steger's early career misjudgment in the matter, he would continue as commanding officer through September 1906 and would go on to have a long and distinguished military career.

Article & Research by Jon Bebbington

GOOD NEWS IN SUPPORT OF FFF

Congratulations to the Lady's Island Garden Club for winning a first-place award for floral decorations at the Fort Fremont Hospital Christmas tour. In keeping with our theme of Christmas 1910, the Club created arrangements throughout the house in the style of the era. The custom of the day was to decorate with evergreens, holly, ivy, and other natural items such as nuts, fruits, pinecones, feathers, antlers, and seasonal flowers. The arrangements were spectacular! Many thanks to those who worked so hard to make the house look magical, to Grayco for donating the tree, and to the FFF docents for sharing stories about the Hospital. The tour was a grand success with proceeds designated for the "Carl Project" to preserve portions of Battery Jesup at the Fort Fremont Preserve.

Join us for the

2nd Annual Harvest Festival

Sunday, Nov. 3, 2024

At Fort Fremont Park

Free Admission

For more information:

Visit www.fortfremont.org



Activities for everyone will again be available



Inez and Daughter



On March 30, 2024, friend and colleague, Inez Miller was recognized for her community service at the annual *Queen: A Tribute to Greatness* at the USCB Center for the Arts. She was one of four honorees who was presented an award for her years of selfless service to the community, not just on St Helena Island but throughout the Lowcountry and the State of South Carolina. Her service to Fort Fremont was mentioned in the presentation of her achievements. Inez has volunteered at the Fort Fremont History Center for over two years and graciously gives her time and talents during FFF special events. In addition, she works with Penn Center, Marshview Hot Meals Program, Di Gullah Ship, Healing Waters Food distribution and Zeta Amicae.

Your Donation will support the 2024-2026 Mission and Goals of FFF.

Fort Fremont has been secured and a History Center has been opened. The FFF have begun the next phase of enhancing the Fort for the Public to enjoy.

Goals for 2024: (1) Enhance Visitor experience through Artifacts & Digital Display. (2) Develop a Plan to improve Public access & safety (Carl Project)

Projects for 2024 (1) PHASE 1 of the Carl Project; (2) Additional interpretive signs

With your donation, you will receive the NEWS LETTER for one year

By email or by US Mail (Circle one)

DONATION INFORMATION

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Friends of Fort Fremont and

Mail to: P.O Box 982

Saint Helena Island, SC 29920

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