

Old Fort Jackson Historic Site

Please help us protect this historic site by
NOT CLIMBING on the CANNON & the BRICKWORK



WHEN DID FORT JACKSON BEGIN?

During his term of office President Thomas Jefferson authorized the construction of a national defense system of fortifications to defend the new nation. Fort Jackson was among those forts to be built. In 1808, Fort Jackson was started as a brick fortification. The fort was constructed over an old earthen battery from the Revolutionary War which had been called "Mud Fort". This was a time of international unrest and threats to our young country's independence were commonplace. War with France or Great Britain seemed likely.

Four years later the United States engaged with Great Britain again in the War of 1812. During this time local militia units, as well as Federal troops saw active duty at Fort Jackson.

Following the War of 1812, two periods of construction (1840's-1850's) continued at the fort. It was during this time period the moat, drawbridge, brick barracks, privies, rear wall, and another powder magazine were added.

WHY BUILD HERE?

This site was chosen to protect Savannah, which was an important port city. A ship traveling up the Savannah River to Savannah must pass this point. Any other location chosen along the river would enable enemy ships to simply by-pass the fort and attack the city.

WHERE DID THE FORT GET ITS NAME?

America's victory in the Revolutionary War was commemorated by naming the fortification after James Jackson. Originally from England, he joined the American cause rising to the rank of colonel. At the age of twenty five, Colonel James Jackson accepted the surrender of the British in Savannah at the close of the Revolutionary War. He later represented the State of Georgia serving as U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, and Governor. James Jackson is buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC.

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR 1861-1865

Upon the firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the American Civil war began. Fort Jackson served as the headquarters for the Savannah River defenses for the Confederacy. However, the fort was not the only protection for the city. A network of fortifications designed by General Robert E. Lee consisted of three lines of defense:

- 1) Fort James Jackson
- 2) Savannah River Squadron, which included the ironclads C.S.S. Atlanta, C.S.S. Savannah, and C.S.S. Georgia
- 3) A network of earth fortifications armed with heavy artillery and obstructions and underwater mines called "torpedoes".

Fort Jackson helped protect the city until December 20, 1864 when General William T. Sherman's army arrived in Savannah on his famous "March to the Sea". Confederate troops were forced to leave the city as Union troops moved in and occupied Fort Jackson for three months. The Confederate troops from Savannah joined other Confederate forces in North and South Carolina and continued fighting until April 26, 1865, when they laid down their arms to General Sherman's army at Durham, North Carolina.

Several different regiments garrisoned Fort Jackson during the Union occupation of Savannah. One of the more notable units stationed at the fort was the 55th Massachusetts Regiment. This regiment was one of many African American regiments which served in the Union Army.

THE COASTAL HERITAGE SOCIETY

Fort Jackson has been operated by the Coastal Heritage Society since 1976 through a lease with the State of Georgia. The CHS is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of our coastal heritage. It also operates four other local museums, the Georgia State Railroad Museum, the Savannah History Museum, PinPoint Heritage Museum and the Savannah Children's Museum.

**HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY BY BECOMING A MEMBER!
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