

Forts Mott, Delaware and DuPont form a three-fort defense system across the Delaware River. All three are now state parks, Fort Delaware and Fort DuPont under Delaware's Division of Parks and Recreation, and Fort Mott under the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry.



The War Department began building Fort Mott in the 1870s. Named for Major General Gershom Mott, the fort was not completed until 1897.

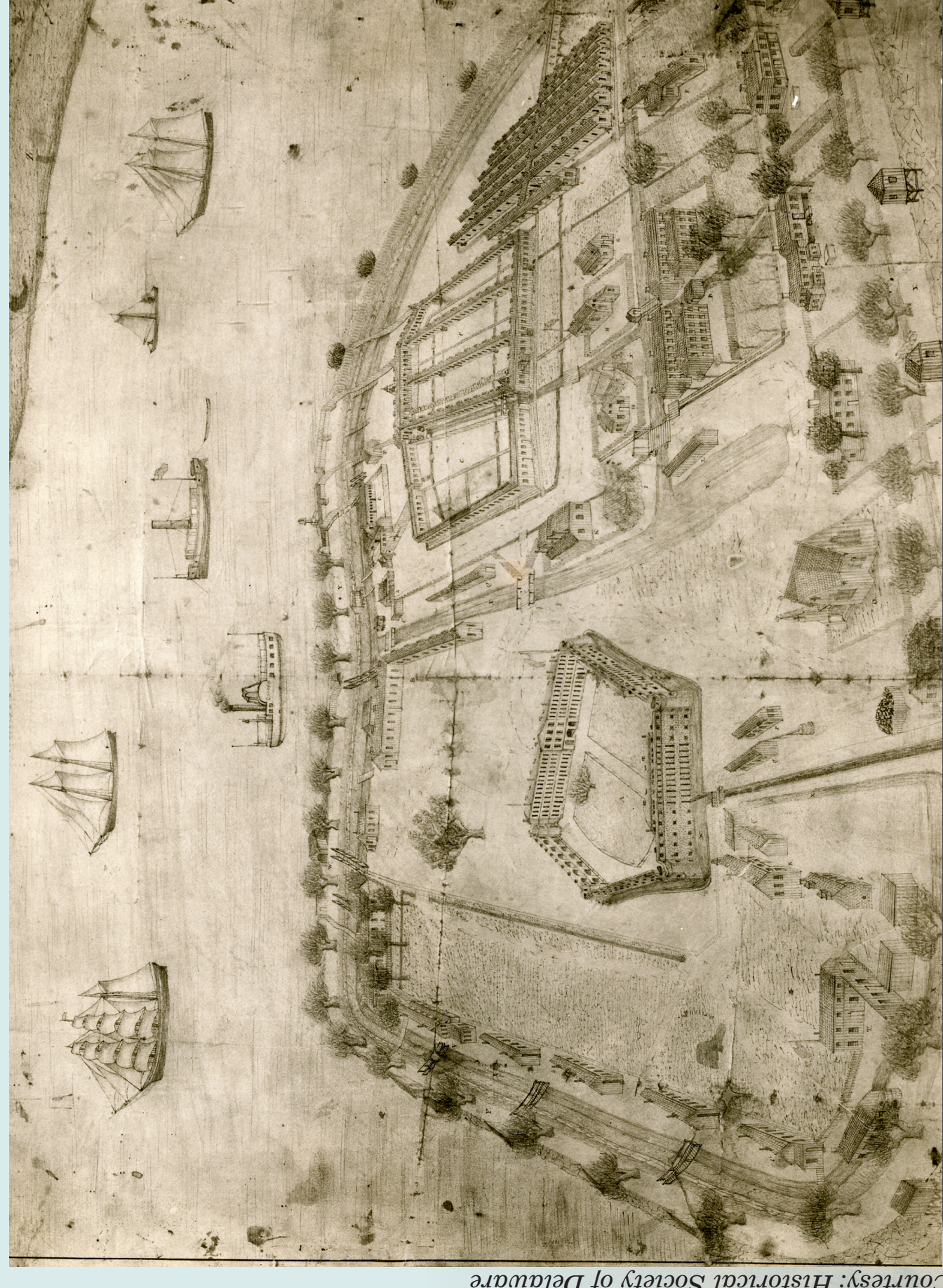
The War Department established a gun battery in 1863 on the site that would later be named for Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont. The initial fortifications consisted of a ten-gun auxiliary battery and during the Civil War was referred to as Ten Gun Battery. Most of the fort's buildings were constructed between 1898 and 1901. It was headquarters for the harbor defense of the Delaware River during World War I and World War II, and held nearly 3,000 German prisoners of war during World War II.

Map: MORTAR & INK

The British attack on Lewes, Delaware, during the War of 1812 demonstrated the need for forts to protect the Delaware River and the ports of Wilmington and Philadelphia. The War Department recognized Pea Patch Island's strategic location and built two defensive structures there between 1813 and 1827, the second of which burned in 1831.

The present Fort Delaware, completed in 1859, just two years before the Civil War began, was a thoroughly modern defensive structure. Because the weak Confederate navy posed no real threat to the cities along the Delaware and because the Union needed a facility to hold prisoners, the War Department converted the fort into a prisoner of war camp. Beginning in 1862, captured Confederate soldiers, political prisoners and federal convicts were imprisoned on the island. Following the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1863), there were between 11,000 and 12,000 prisoners on Pea Patch Island; over the course of the war, the island had held 33,000 prisoners in all.

In 1945 the federal government declared the island and the fort "surplus." In 1951, the island and fort became state property and the second state park in Delaware.



Courtesy: Historical Society of Delaware

This pencil sketch of Fort Delaware was drawn by Max Neugas, a Confederate soldier imprisoned there about 1864. A thirty-foot-wide moat surrounds the brick and stone pentagon-shaped fort. The fort's armaments were state of the art at the time of construction and its thirty-two-foot high walls measuring seven to thirty feet thick, are formidable.

During the Civil War, many structures were erected outside the fortified walls including officers' and civilians' quarters, a church, various commercial buildings, workshops, and wooden barracks that housed the thousands of Confederate prisoners.



Painting: Fort Delaware, Delaware, 1870 to 1875, by Seth Eastman, Courtesy of Collection of United States Senate

COASTAL DEFENSE FORTS



Sources: Delaware Historical Society; *Federal Writers' Project—Delaware*; Historic American Engineering Record; Carol E. Hoffecker, *Delaware—A Bicentennial History*; John A. Munroe, *History of Delaware*; National Park Service; New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry; State of Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation