

Fort Point's Past

A Sustained Native American Presence

Beginning approximately 500 to 1,000 B.C., the Penobscot River valley was occupied by Native Americans (ancestors of the historic Etchemins and modern-day Penobscots) whose lifestyles depended upon climate change, geography, and the seasonal availability of food. Some of these groups may have specialized in the resources of the coast, occupying various sites either year-round or repeatedly throughout the year, while others moved seasonally from interior lands to the coast.

Pivotal English Outpost - Fort Pownall

France and England had been in conflict for more than one hundred years over possession of North American lands when, in 1758, Massachusetts Governor Thomas Pownall wrote that a fort at the Penobscot River was of utmost importance for the English. Such a fort would, wrote Pownall, allow the English to possess "fine country" and "the finest bay in North America," as well as keep the French and their Indian allies well inland.

In May 1759, Gov. Pownall brought 400 men here to build Fort Pownall, a fort with an exceptional design for its time and place. The fort's large central blockhouse had four bastions and was surrounded by a palisade, ditch, and large earthen bank, all shaped like a four-point star. Soon after Fort Pownall was built, Quebec fell to the English, thus ending France's foothold in North America. Though Fort Pownall did not fulfill its military purposes, its presence encouraged later English settlement of the Penobscot region and the fort served as a center for trade.

Tensions ran high here on the eve of the American Revolution. With the approval of the Loyalist then in charge of Fort Pownall, British sailors came ashore one night in March 1775 and secretly removed the fort's guns to keep them out of rebel hands. In return, American rebels burned the blockhouse and filled in the moat to prevent the British occupation of the fort.

Fort Point Light - An Early River Beacon

Established in 1836 to aid the growing number of ships navigating the Penobscot between Bangor and Castine,

Fort Point Light Station was built as the first river light in Maine. In 1857, the present tower and keeper's house replaced the original granite structures. The light station's fixed white light, a fourth-order Fresnel lens with a 250-watt halogen bulb, is 88 feet above sea level and visible for more than 10 miles. The fog signal, a 1,200 pound, cast iron bell suspended on a pyramidal tower built in 1890, is still visible today.

For more than 120 years, civilian keepers, employed by the U.S. Lighthouse Establishment, tended this light station before the Coast Guard assumed operational duties in 1957. Today, with its automated light and fog signal, the light station is operated by Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands as an historic site.

Luxury Resort - The Fort Point Hotel

Fort Point began to draw tourists in 1872 with the construction of the Fort Point Hotel. The hotel could accommodate up to 200 guests, most of whom were wealthy elite from Boston and New York City who arrived by steamboat. With its posh clientele and state-of-the-art amenities such as running water, gas lights, stables, bowling alley, and two dance pavilions, the Fort Point Hotel was built in hopes that the Fort Point area would grow to rival Bar Harbor. Unfortunately, the hotel failed. After four owners and as many names, burned in May of 1898 just before its seasonal opening.



Fort Point State Park



207 Lighthouse Rd.
Stockton Springs, Maine 04981

Open from 9:00am to sunset,
Memorial Day through Labor Day.
An entry fee is charged.

In season phone: (207) 567-3356
Off season phone: (207) 941-4014



www.parksandlands.com

About the Park

Located about three miles off U.S. Route 1 in Stockton Springs, Fort Point State Park occupies a long peninsula with panoramic views of the Penobscot River and Penobscot Bay. On its 120 acres, the park features more than a mile of rocky shore, a tidal sandbar and a diverse habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Opened in 1974, the park also includes Fort Pownall State Historic Site and the Fort Point Light Station. With waterfront picnic sites and charcoal grills, a pier and floats for fishing and boating, and access to a scenic bicycling loop, Fort Point State Park is a popular destination.

Enjoying Fort Point

Just a short walk from the parking lot, visitors can relax at riverside picnic sites and fuel up for hiking, sightseeing, bicycling, fishing or paddling. Gentle trails lead hikers through field and forest to rocky shores and historic sites. Interpretive signs describe Fort Point's history as a military, maritime, and tourist center. Using the roads, bicyclists leave the parking lot to ride to the lighthouse or to begin the seven-mile loop around Cape Jellison. Winter visitors go cross-country skiing on the park's hiking trails and closed roads.

Wildlife watchers look for deer, foxes, snowshoe hares, porcupines, owls, and even moose on land, as well as wading birds, sea ducks, shore birds, and loons at the shore. Extending 200 feet into the river, the pier provides an excellent vantage point for spotting a seal or porpoise in the water or an osprey or bald eagle overhead. The pier and tidal sandbar are popular with anglers fishing for salmon, mackerel and striped bass. With its seasonal floats, the pier allows visitors to launch a kayak or canoe for a paddling excursion or to dock when arriving by powerboat, sailboat or windjammer.



Keeping Safe

Please use caution around the pier and the sandbar, where rough seas and very strong tidal and river currents can be dangerous. For your protection, please do not leave food unattended or valuables in your vehicle. Please bring drinking water, as there is no running water in the park.

- Intoxicating beverages are strictly prohibited.
- Fires are allowed only in the Park's charcoal grills and must be attended at all times. Fires are prohibited on the beaches.
- Pets must be on a leash under the physical control of the pet handler and must not be left unattended. Pet owners must immediately clean up any fecal deposits left by their pets.
- Picnicking is on a carry-in, carry-out basis; visitors must carry out all their refuse.
- Camping is prohibited in this day-use park.

A complete list of park rules is posted at various locations throughout the park. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at (207) 941-4014.

In the Area

Among the many places to visit in the area are other state parks and historic sites, including Fort Knox State Historic Site, Holbrook Island Sanctuary, and Camden Hills, Moose Point, and Swan Lake State Parks.

Also, within an hour's drive of Fort Point, visitors will find accommodations, restaurants, art galleries, a museum, a theater, a farmer's market, bicycle and kayak rentals, and craft, antique, and gift shops.

Local Points of Interest & Business Information:

Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce

P. O. Box 58 Belfast, ME 04915

(207) 338-5900

E-mail: info@belfastmaine.org

www.belfastmaine.org

