

= Fort Bayard ( Washington , D.C. ) =

Fort Bayard was an earthwork fort constructed in 1861 northwest of Tenleytown in the District of Columbia as part of the defenses of Washington , D.C. during the American Civil War . It never faced major opposition during the conflict and was decommissioned following the surrender of Robert E. Lee 's Army of Northern Virginia . Named after Brigadier General George Dashiell Bayard , who was killed at the Battle of Fredericksburg , the site of the fort is in Boundary Park , located at the intersection of River Road and Western Avenue NW in Washington , D.C. and is maintained by the U.S. National Park Service . No trace of the fort remains , though a marker commemorating its existence has been constructed by the Park Service .

= = Pre @-@ war use = =

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War , the District of Columbia was a predominantly rural area . Though the city of Washington is today synonymous with the District of Columbia , in 1861 , Washington occupied only a portion of the District . The remaining portions of the District were considered part of Washington County , and it was in this region that most of the forts defending Washington , including Fort Bayard , were constructed . Washington County was characterized as " the rural part of the district ... occupied by farms of various sizes and the grand estates of the well @-@ to @-@ do . "

The site of Fort Bayard itself was owned by Philip J. Buckey , a farmer who made his home in the Fourth Ward of Washington County . During the construction process , he valued the land at approximately \$ 5 @,@ 000 , and continued to live in a farmhouse near the fort with his wife , four children , and two servants throughout the course of the war . In exchange for the use of his land for the site of Fort Bayard , Buckey received \$ 50 @.@ 00 per year in rent from the War Department .

Also nearby was the Shoemaker family , which owned substantial tracts of land in both the District and in Maryland . Three forts or portions of forts were built on their property : Fort Simmons , Fort Mansfield , and Battery Bailey . Despite the loss of much of their land , the Shoemaker family continued to operate a local general store and sold various sundry items to the garrison at Fort Bayard .

= = Planning and construction = =

Following the secession of Virginia and that state joining the Confederacy , Federal troops marched from Washington into the Arlington region of northern Virginia . The move was intended to forestall any attempt by Virginia militia or Confederate States Army to seize the capital city of the United States . Over the next seven weeks , forts were constructed along the banks of the Potomac River and at the approaches to each of the three major bridges ( Chain Bridge , Long Bridge , and Aqueduct Bridge ) connecting Virginia to Washington and Georgetown .

While the Potomac River forts were being built , planning and surveying was ordered for an enormous new ring of forts to protect the city . Unlike the fortifications under construction , the new forts would defend the city in all directions , not just the most direct route through Arlington . In mid @-@ July , this work was interrupted by the First Battle of Bull Run . As the Army of Northeastern Virginia marched south to Manassas , the soldiers previously assigned to construction duties marched instead to battle . In the days that followed the Union defeat at Bull Run , panicked efforts were made to defend Washington from what was perceived as an imminent Confederate attack . The makeshift trenches and earthworks that resulted were largely confined to Arlington and the direct approaches to Washington .

On July 26 , 1861 , five days after the battle , Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan was named commander of the military district of Washington and the subsequently renamed Army of the Potomac . Upon arriving in Washington , McClellan was appalled by the condition of the city 's defenses . " In no quarter were the dispositions for defense such as to offer a vigorous resistance to a respectable body of the enemy , either in the position and numbers of the troops or the number

and character of the defensive works ... not a single defensive work had been commenced on the Maryland side . There was nothing to prevent the enemy shelling the city from heights within easy range , which could be occupied by a hostile column almost without resistance . "

To remedy the situation , one of McClellan 's first orders upon taking command was to greatly expand the defenses of Washington . At all points of the compass , forts and entrenchments would be constructed in sufficient strength to slow an attack and buy time for reinforcements to arrive and bolster the city 's defenses . Brigadier General John G. Barnard , was named chief engineer of the Department of Washington , and would supervise the construction and maintenance of the forts before being named chief engineer of the armies in the field by Ulysses S. Grant in 1864 .

Prior to the outbreak of war , the Great Falls Turnpike , also known as River Road , was an important traffic artery for trade entering the District of Columbia from western Maryland and beyond . It connected the village of Tenleytown with the city of Washington , and roughly paralleled the Potomac River before turning northward . Due to its strategic position along the river , which formed the border between the Confederate state of Virginia and the Union state of Maryland , it had great military value and was a likely route for an attacking army , as would be proved three years after the outbreak of war during the Battle of Fort Stevens .

To prevent a Confederate force from advancing on Washington along the Potomac , several forts were constructed on hills near the river . To guard River Road , which was the most direct route into the city , U.S. Army engineers built a small , round fort at the point where River Road crossed into the district of Columbia . With a perimeter of only 123 yards and mounting only six guns , it was located forward of Fort Reno , the largest fort protecting the Tenleytown area . Details of the actual construction process are scarce , though a letter from a member of the Ninth New York Heavy Artillery regiment to the Democratic Press newspaper indicates that the fort was at least partially built with labor from that regiment .

In April 1863 , the fort was named in honor of the recently deceased Brigadier General George Dashiell Bayard , who had been killed on December 13 , 1862 , at the Battle of Fredericksburg . At the time of its dedication , the fort was roughly complete . Round in shape and surrounded by trenches and abatis , the fort 's guns faced north , overlooking River Road . A service road crossed the trenches in the southern half of the fort , connecting with River Road behind the fort . Rifle pits extended northeast to Fort Reno and southwest to Fort Simmons . A small battery of guns , named Battery Bayard , was an outwork of the fort and covered a blind spot in the ravine to the northwest of the fort .

= = Wartime use = =

In accordance to a plan laid out in an October 1861 report by General John G. Barnard , " rear line " forts were to receive one man per yard of fort perimeter when fully garrisoned . Front @-@ line forts were to receive two men per yard , when needed . However , most forts were not kept fully garrisoned at all times . Due to its location north of the Potomac River , Fort Bayard was considered a rear @-@ line fort . If the fort needed to be fully garrisoned due to an impending attack , the difference in the actual garrison and the plan would be made good from Washington 's 25 @,@ 000 @-@ man reserve force . As General Barnard would say in a December 24 , 1862 report , " It is seldom necessary to keep these infantry supports attached to the works . "

However , this plan only applied to men manning the walls of the fort , not the artillerymen who would be serving the fort 's guns . To man the guns of Fort Greble and those of Washington 's other forts , Barnard designated three crews for each gun . These crews would be permanently located at the fort , unlike the men assigned to the walls of the fort .

This plan was affected by the needs of the war . As the fighting dragged on and casualties mounted , the various commanders of the Army of the Potomac repeatedly raided the Washington garrison for trained artillerymen and infantry replacements . By 1864 , Washington had been stripped to a total less than half that of Barnard 's 1861 recommendation .

A May 1864 report by General Albion P. Howe , inspector of artillery for the Union Army , found Fort Bayard 's garrison to consist of only a single company from the Seventh New York Heavy Artillery

regiment . One hundred and thirty @-@ seven men of various ranks manned two 12 @-@ pound field howitzers and four 20 @-@ pound Parrott rifles . In addition , Howe found the fort 's single magazine to be " dry and in good order , " and the ammunition supply as " full and servicable . " As to the garrison of the fort , Howe was less complimentary . After examining the garrison company 's drill in artillery and infantry tactics , he reported the artillery drill as " ordinary ; needs improving , " the infantry drill as " very indifferent ; needs much improving , " and discipline at the fort overall was " indifferent . "

Artillerymen and infantry from New Hampshire , Pennsylvania , Ohio , and New York were stationed at the fort at various times during the war . Following General Howe 's unfavorable review of the Seventh New York , the garrison was replaced by a company of men from the 163rd Ohio Infantry .

#### = = = Battle of Fort Stevens = = =

During the course of the war , Fort Bayard came under attack only once . During the Battle of Fort Stevens in July 1864 , Confederate general Jubal Early launched a 25 @, @ 000 @-@ man raid into Maryland with the hope of drawing off some of General Ulysses S. Grant 's troops , who were pressing hard against the Army of Northern Virginia in the Siege of Petersburg . The raid hoped to attack Washington , thereby distracting Grant and potentially allowing the Confederate forces time to rest and regroup . On the morning of July 11 , Confederate cavalry and infantry under the command of Brigadier General John McCausland advanced towards Washington with the goal of capturing Fort Reno , which defended the village of Tenleytown . Though they drove back the skirmish line in front of Fort Bayard , the Confederate cavalry were met with a heavy barrage of cannon fire from Bayard and its supporting forts . Discouraged by the resistance , McCausland 's brigade moved to join up with the rest of Early 's force , which was grouping for an assault on Fort Stevens .

Throughout the day , additional reinforcements arrived at the fort , but no further Confederate attack took place . During the remainder of the war , Fort Bayard did not fire a shot in anger .

#### = = Postwar use = =

After the surrender of Robert E. Lee 's Army of Northern Virginia on April 9 , 1865 , the primary reason for manned defenses protecting Washington ceased to exist . Initial recommendations by Col. Barton S. Alexander , chief engineer of the Washington defenses , were to divide the defenses into three classes : those that should be kept active ( first @-@ class ) , those that should be mothballed and kept in a reserve state ( second @-@ class ) , and those that should be abandoned entirely ( third @-@ class ) . Owing to its position north of the Potomac River and to the small size of the fort , Fort Bayard fell into the third @-@ class category , and was abandoned a few months after the end of the war .

#### = = = Fort Bayard Park = = =

The abandoned fort remained in a constantly deteriorating condition until 1919 , when the Commissioners of the District of Columbia pushed Congress to pass a bill that would consolidate the sites of the aging forts into a " Fort Circle " system of parks that would ring the growing city of Washington . As envisioned by the Commissioners , the Fort Circle would be a green ring of parks outside the city , owned by the government , and connected by a " Fort Drive " road in order to allow Washington 's citizens to easily escape the confines of the capital . However , the bill allowing for the purchase of the former forts , which had been turned back over to private ownership after the war , failed to pass both the House of Representatives and Senate .

Despite that failure , in 1925 a similar bill passed both the House and Senate , which allowed for the creation of the National Capital Parks Commission ( NCPK ) to oversee the construction of a Fort Circle of parks similar to that proposed in 1919 . The duty of purchasing land and constructing the fort parks changed hands several times throughout the 1920s and 1930s , eventually culminating with the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service taking control of the project in the

1940s . By the time the site of Fort Bayard was purchased in 1926 , the remains of the fort had been demolished and homes were being built on the site .

Budget cuts and the interruption of World War II repeatedly postponed the Fort Circle Park plan , but it was the growth of the city of Washington itself that eventually killed the plan . By 1963 , when President John F. Kennedy began pushing Congress to finally build the Fort Circle Drive , many in Washington and the National Park Service were openly questioning whether the plan had outgrown its usefulness . After all , by this time , Washington had grown past the ring of forts that had protected it a century earlier , and city surface roads already connected the parks , albeit not in as linear a route as envisioned . The plan to link Fort Bayard Park with other fort parks via a grand drive was quietly dropped in the years that followed .

Today , the park is bordered by Western Avenue , River Road , and Fessenden , 46th and 47th Streets , NW in Washington , D.C. It contains one softball field and one soccer field , and is maintained year @-@ round by the U.S. National Park Service . In 1999 , neighborhood residents established Friends of Fort Bayard Park , Inc . , a non @-@ profit 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) corporation with the goal of assisting the National Park Service in maintaining Fort Bayard Park . To this end , the organization hosts an annual cleanup of the park , and holds fundraisers in order to build improvements at the park .