

**Spring 2021**

## **History of Macaulay Point and Fort Macaulay**

by Jack Bates, Class of 1958

Macaulay Point is located in the Township of Esquimalt and is named after Donald Macaulay, a Hudson's Bay Company employee who lived on and worked this portion of the original Viewfield Farm. He accidentally drowned in Esquimalt Harbour in 1868.



*Left Gun Emplacement*

Within Macaulay Point Park lies FORT MACAULAY, a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Coast Defence designed Artillery fortification. This Historic Fort Zone contains concrete gun and range-finding emplacements, brick and concrete accessory buildings, an entrance gate, and an internal ring roadway with an access tunnel



*Command Post*

leading to a "KEEP" and Command Post at the highest elevation, including segments of the fortress perimeter defensive trench, all of it dating back to 1895. This permanent fortress, designed by the Royal Artillery and built by the Royal Engineers, replaced a temporary three-gun battery built earlier on Macaulay Point.

In 1878, prior to construction of these structures that exist today, three temporary, seven-inch muzzle loading gun emplacements were built on 2.97 acres at the Point of Macaulay. The land was purchased by the Dominion of Canada Militia Department from the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the Hudson's Bay Company. Three other similar gun sites in the Victoria - Esquimalt Coast Defence system were built at the same time, all intending to protect Victoria and Esquimalt harbours at that time, including the naval base, from a possible



*Accessory Buildings*



seaborne attack by the Russian navy. They were Brother's Island, Victoria Point and Finlayson Point, each manned by the local volunteer Militia. These four original gun sites had either been abandoned or demolished by 1894 coinciding with the building of FORT MACAULAY and FORT RODD HILL gun batteries, which mounted modern 6-inch breech loading guns.

FORT MACAULAY remained the only Victoria - Esquimalt artillery component that functioned continuously from 1878 until 1956 when it was eventually abandoned. Prior to and during World War One and World War Two, it was manned by the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Artillery from Victoria, and served as a training centre for coastal and anti - aircraft defence between the two wars and post-World War Two.

Prominent military persons associated with FORT MACAULAY were General Sir Arthur Currie, Major- General George R. Pearkes VC, General A. McNaughton and Colonel J.A. Hall. Numerous Militia and Regular Force units were also associated with Work Point Barracks and Macaulay Plains over the years.



Macaulay Point Battery - 1878

After the fortress was abandoned as a coast defence and anti - aircraft artillery battery, it continued to be used for training by Work Point Barracks garrison units until 1985 when the Township of Esquimalt tenured a 99 - year lease from the Department of National Defence, for "recreational use and historic interest." The park includes Buxton Green built in 1983, the Esquimalt Anglers Association being a driving entity in the development of the Green, the Park, Fleming Beach access and the many pathways.

In 2017, for CANADA 150, three interpretive sign boards were placed on the site to provide information and photographs portraying the history of the fortress. FRIENDS OF FORT MACAULAY groups and the Township of Esquimalt Parks and Public Works departments, continue to maintain the fortress and park areas in co-operation with the DND. In conjunction with the Esquimalt Archives, the Victoria - Esquimalt Military Re-enactors Association, the Work Point Barracks PPCLI Cadet Corps, the Greater Victoria Military Museums Group, and the Esquimalt Lions Club, historical interpretive events have been held on the fortress grounds annually in May since 2014. FORT MACAULAY is also included in the Township of Esquimalt's walking tours.



Panoramic View Southernly from the Command Post

Following up with associated family history, all of which is a source of motivation, my maternal grandfather and great uncle were members of the Royal Engineers who came to Esquimalt in 1894 to demolish the temporary gun sites and build the permanent ones you see today at FORT MACAULAY. My father was stationed at Work Point Barracks for 18 years prior to World War two and we lived just outside the barracks while attending Lampson Street and Esquimalt High Schools, engaging with many military families, some still to this day. Personally, I spent time in the Army Cadets and Reserves at Work Point Barracks and then enlisted in the Regular Force.

My sister Marilyn and I “adopted” FORT MACAULAY and for the past ten years have devoted ourselves to enhancing the presentation and promoting its historical aspects by hosting the annual event and offering guided tours of the fortress. This has been very successful with the involvement of other Esquimalt High School graduates, particularly my classmate Ellis Meads, residents of Esquimalt and our cousin Mike Phillips. Our group is aptly named “The FORT MACAULAY FIELD FORCE.” See [www.workpoint.opcmh.ca](http://www.workpoint.opcmh.ca) for more on local military history.

FORT MACAULAY is located within your Esquimalt neighborhood. Enjoy fresh air, sea breezes, stunning views towards Victoria and Esquimalt harbours and across the Strait at the Olympic Mountains, while experiencing a focus on our local military history. Parking is available in the Esquimalt Anglers lot at the foot of Lampson Street... Enjoy!

### 78 Years of Active Service

**In 1878** the original Victoria - Esquimalt Coast Defence Fortification System was made up of four batteries that protected the entrance to Victoria and Esquimalt. They included Fort Macaulay, Finlayson Point, Victoria Point, and Brother's Island.



**The Coastal Defence** Fortification System evolved locally by adding numerous artillery batteries and searchlight sites from Church Hill (near Sooke) to Gonzales Hill (on Oak Bay), including Fort Rodd Hill and eventually right up the west coast. Coastal defences protected the west coast until after the second world war.

Fort Macaulay was the longest serving component of the Victoria - Esquimalt Coast Defence Fortification System, being continuously manned from 1878 until being declared obsolete in 1956. This photo below shows the BC Brigade of the Garrison Artillery circa 1886.

**A three-gun** temporary earthworks and wooden platform battery was erected at this location in 1878 in response to the British - Russian crisis in the Balkans. The original 1878 battery was constructed on the shoreline of Macaulay Point to protect Victoria and Esquimalt harbours and was manned by local militia units and "C" Battery - Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.

Fort Macaulay was in active use from 1878 through 1956. It was a coastal defence battery and also used for military training. The soldiers from the 5th BC Regiment Canadian Artillery at right are training on the Maxim Machine gun in 1895.



### Welcome to Historic Fort Macaulay

Fort Macaulay is unique in that it retained its original character within Work Point Barracks until it became an integral part of Esquimalt's Macaulay Point Park. The Township has leased the land for the park from the Department of National Defence since 1985. In 2013 Fort Macaulay was placed on the Township of Esquimalt's Heritage List.



Remnants of some of the old buildings are located around Macaulay Point Park. Use the map in this brochure to guide your walk back in time.

For more information about Historic Fort Macaulay visit the Esquimalt Municipal Archives located at 1149A Esquimalt Road, Esquimalt, BC, or visit us online at [esquimalt.ca/archives](http://esquimalt.ca/archives)

For more information on Esquimalt Parks, visit [esquimalt.ca/parks](http://esquimalt.ca/parks)

Also visit [workpoint.opcmh.ca](http://workpoint.opcmh.ca) for historic information on Fort Macaulay.

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### 1878 to 1956

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**Take a step back in time as you explore the history and beauty of Fort Macaulay**

Graphics by Edley Signs, Esquimalt BC