

Salve Regina University

## Digital Commons @ Salve Regina

---

Dutch Island

Islands of Narragansett Bay Interdisciplinary  
Project

---

2023

### Military Uses of Dutch Island From 1860 to 1900

Claudia Celia

Salve Regina University, [claudia.celia@salve.edu](mailto:claudia.celia@salve.edu)

Zachary Russell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/dutchisland>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Celia, Claudia and Russell, Zachary, "Military Uses of Dutch Island From 1860 to 1900" (2023). *Dutch Island*. 1.

<https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/dutchisland/1>

#### Rights Statement



In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted. URI: <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC-EDU/1.0/>

This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. In addition, no permission is required from the rights-holder(s) for educational uses. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

NARRAGANSETT BAY INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

SUMMER FIELD PROGRAM:

Military Uses of Dutch Island From 1860 to 1900

Claudia Celia ('24)  
Zachary Russell ('23)

Supervisor:  
Jeroen van den Hurk, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Cultural and Historic Preservation  
Coordinator, Noreen Stonor Drexel Cultural and Historic Preservation Program

(Final Report)

June-July 2023  
Salve Regina University

## **Introduction**

Dutch Island holds a prominent position in the history of Narragansett Bay. Comprised of approximately 110 acres, the island is located in the West Passage between Jamestown and the mainland. The island exchanged ownership multiple times throughout the past four centuries and has had various uses. The documented history begins with the Native American tribes who once inhabited Rhode Island, the Wampanoag, and Narragansett and who originally called the island Acquednessuck or Quetenis. Around 1636, Dutch explorers bought the island from the Native Americans to use as a trading post for the Dutch West India Company where they traded with the indigenous people. Later in the seventeenth century, it was bought by early English colonists and eventually, the United States Government purchased sections of the island in the nineteenth century. A lighthouse was built at the southern tip in 1827, and during the Civil War, the island housed the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment, comprised of African American troops. The expansive history of Dutch Island not only adds to the story of military fortifications but to the country's first inhabitants, the forming of the United States, and Rhode Island's role throughout the centuries. This paper will briefly discuss the early history of the island but focus on its role during the Civil War as a training camp for African American troops and its later development as Fort Greble, up until the turn of the twentieth century.

## **Early History**

The earliest accounts of Dutch Island came when the Dutch had interests in Narragansett Bay beginning in 1614 with the explorations of Captain Adrian Block. During his voyage, he came across what is now Block Island and explored Narragansett Bay, and began trading with

the Wampanoag and Narragansett.<sup>1</sup> Two years later in another Dutch voyage, Captain Hendricksen wrote about finding a certain country, a bay, and three rivers believed to be Narragansett Bay.<sup>2</sup> By 1627, negotiations with the Plymouth colonists arose over the extent of Dutch trade with the Wampanoag and Narragansett in the area, and the Dutch were asked to cease trade.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch declined and by 1636-1637 Abraham Pietersen purchased Dutch Island then called Quetenis from the Narragansett for the Dutch West India Company to support Dutch claims to the area and likely use as a trading post.<sup>4</sup> Their occupation of the island lasted until 1656 when the Dutch left the area. There are conflicting explanations as to why the Dutch left. One account stated this post had provided the first Rhode Island settlers with necessary supplies.<sup>5</sup> While another account stated the Dutch left because they were trying to overthrow the colonies and the English forced them to leave.<sup>6</sup> It can be inferred that there were growing tensions between the English colonists and Dutch since the 1620s after being asked to forgo trade with the Native Americans and the post was no longer viable to maintain. The island then reverted back to Narragansett ownership who sold it in 1658 to Benedict Arnold as part of the purchase of Conanicut Island, now Jamestown, from Cachanaquoant, a chief sachem and commander of the Narragansett for twenty pounds sterling. The deed referred to the island as Acquednessuck.<sup>7</sup> The name Quetenis is believed to be a shortened version used by the Dutch who likely dropped the first and last syllables.<sup>8</sup> The first reference to the island as Dutch Island is recorded in

---

<sup>1</sup> Howard M. Chapin, "Quetenis Island or Dutch Island," essay in Rhode Island Historical Society Collections XIX, 3rd ed., 88–91, Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Society, July 1926, 88.

<sup>2</sup> "Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island," Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1995, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Chapin, "Quetenis Island or Dutch Island," 90.

<sup>4</sup> Chapin, "Quetenis Island or Dutch Island," 90.

<sup>5</sup> "Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island," 51.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Hoffman, *A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island*, Boston, MA: National Park Service North Atlantic Regional Office, July 1980, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Hoffman, *A History of Dutch Island*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Chapin, "Quetenis Island or Dutch Island," 91.

Newport records of 1656 and Jamestown records of 1659, along with Benedict Arnold's will from 1677.<sup>9</sup> By the early eighteenth century, ownership of the island passed to a group of proprietors who used the island for pasturage, and it was divided into private lots.<sup>10</sup> The island is believed to have been fortified by this time to protect the West Passage, however, there is no physical evidence of any Revolutionary War-era fortifications.<sup>11</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, only a few owners had possession of the divided lots.<sup>12</sup> In 1825, the United States Lighthouse Service purchased a tract of land located at the southern tip of the island to build a lighthouse to guide boat traffic up the West Passage, and by 1827 the building was completed.<sup>13</sup> An 1844 report described the lighthouse as the worst constructed in the state and by 1857 the old tower and keeper's house were demolished and replaced by a 42-foot brick tower and four-room keepers house.<sup>14</sup> The cost was \$4,000 and included a fourth-order Fresnel lens with a fixed white light.<sup>15</sup> The rest of the island continued as pasturage until 1852 when it was purchased by Powell H. Carpenter who attempted to establish a fish oil works, and by 1860 had acquired all the land on Dutch Island.<sup>16</sup>

### Civil War

In late July 1863, the sale of Dutch Island was reported in the *Providence Evening Press* which stated it had been sold to the United States Government for \$21,000 for military purposes

---

<sup>9</sup> "Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island," 51. Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 4.

<sup>10</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 5.

<sup>11</sup> "From Settlement to World War II," Dutch Island Lighthouse Society, March 9, 2021, <https://dils.support/2021/03/09/from-settlement-to-world-war-ii/>.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 5.

<sup>13</sup> "Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island," 51.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 5.

<sup>15</sup> "From Settlement to World War II," Dutch Island Lighthouse Society.

<sup>16</sup> "Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island," 51. Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 5.

and fortifications would be erected at once.<sup>17</sup> By September 2 of that year, the 14<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Heavy Artillery regiment was moved to the island from Dexter Training Ground in Providence, and Camp Bailey was established.<sup>18</sup> The regiment was comprised of African American troops from around the states in the Union and Canada who went into active training.<sup>19</sup> The construction of the fortifications was under the direction of Major E. B. Hunt for the defense of the West Passage and Company A led by Captain Thomas W. Fry.<sup>20</sup> Company A were the first troops to be stationed on the island by September 5.<sup>21</sup> By September 29, Company B led by Captain Henry Simon, Company C led by Captain John Eldridge, and Company D led by Captain Joel Metcalf Jr. had arrived.<sup>22</sup> That fall, two earthwork systems were constructed, the first was a temporary earthwork located on the central southeast portion of the island, and the second was the lower battery on the southern tip of the island near the lighthouse.<sup>23</sup> Seven, 8-inch Columbiads (cannon-like guns that could fire shot or shells) and one, 32-pound gun were installed.<sup>24</sup> The southern fortification was a low, octagonal barbette battery for eleven, 10-inch center pintel Rodman guns.<sup>25</sup> This lower battery was never armed because it was susceptible to flooding due to its low setting and came to be called the “Wash Tub Battery.”<sup>26</sup> Two brick-and-granite magazines were also constructed for mounting 12, 8, or 10-inch Columbiads in the area of the gun emplacements.<sup>27</sup> In October, Major Hunt passed away and was succeeded by Captain F. E. Prime and then Lieutenant S. M. Mansfield who remained for the duration of the project until it

---

<sup>17</sup> “Sale of Dutch Island.” *Providence Evening Press*, July 30, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> “The Colored Troops,” *Providence Evening Press*, September 3, 1863.

<sup>19</sup> “Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island,” 51.

<sup>20</sup> Walter K. Schroder, *Dutch Island and Fort Greble*, Dover, NH, Arcadia Pub 1998, 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Newport Mercury*, September 5, 1863.

<sup>22</sup> “Changing Quarters,” *Providence Evening Press*, September 29, 1863.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 6.

<sup>24</sup> “Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island,” 52.

<sup>25</sup> Schroder, *Dutch Island and Fort Greble*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> “Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island,” 52.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 8.

was completed in September of 1865.<sup>28</sup> Wood-framed officers' quarters and barracks were also built for the regiment, and it was named Camp Bailey.<sup>29</sup> On November 19, Rhode Island Governor James Y. Smith visited Dutch Island and received a fifteen-gun salute, and presented the 14<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Heavy Artillery with a regimental flag.<sup>30</sup> Despite the pomp and circumstance of the event, that very winter the regiment faced an outbreak of smallpox, which took the lives of sixteen men. A monument to honor them was not erected until 1873. Their remains were eventually removed from the island in July of 1948 and reinterred at the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York.<sup>31</sup> Between December 1863 to late March 1864, the regiment left the island in stages. On December 7, the first Battalion went south to fight, the second left on January 8, 1864, and sent 160 miles north of New Orleans and by April 3, the third Battalion recovered from smallpox and joined the first Battalion.<sup>32</sup>

### **Post-Civil War**

A year after the end of the Civil War, a January edition of the *Providence Journal* newspaper published the Rhode Island governor's annual message to the Senate. The letter included the state's finances and discussed the promise by the state to compensate soldiers who enlisted and trained in the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment. The letter mentioned the difficulties of attending to the settlement of the accounts between the State and the United States and discussed the compensation owed to the soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment. It explained how each soldier had received his pay but there was dissatisfaction among the officers who requested

---

<sup>28</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 8.

<sup>29</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 8.

<sup>30</sup> "Review at Dutch Island." *Providence Evening Press*, November 19, 1863. Schroder, *Dutch Island and Fort Greble*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Schroder, *Dutch Island and Fort Greble*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 10.

advanced pay to send to their families. This was because the United States Government did not send its paymaster to provide for the wants of the officers during the time the regiment was forming. To remedy this, the wants of the soldiers were being acknowledged and soldiers such as F. W. Chace were noted as having been promised \$200 but had never received it. Another was Joseph Down who received \$125, but his transportation back home was deducted. One such petition by Calvin Read was read and referred to the Committee on Finance. He served in Company K of the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment after being recruited in Jeffersonville Indiana. Read was promised a bounty of \$300 but had only received \$50 when serving at Camp Bailey and requested the rest of his pay. More accounts state that soldiers only received a portion of their pay while others received nothing, and their petitions were brought to the Senate's attention.<sup>33</sup>

During this time (1866), plans were submitted for a new "middle" barbette battery on the island. This was designed to carry six, 15-inch Rodman guns with two service traverse magazines meant to take the place of the temporary earthworks built by the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment during the Civil War. In March plans were approved for the dismantling of the temporary works and construction of the new battery commenced in April of 1867. This work was directed by Major Houston with assistant engineer J. A. Judson. This "middle battery" faced south, southwest, and west and was a large open earthwork with interior chest-high walls faced with granite blocks. By 1869, the battery was completed with the mounting of five guns with one having been left vacant.<sup>34</sup> Around the same time between 1867 and 1868 a 52-foot by 120-foot Planting Wharf was constructed on the eastern side of the island. In later years between 1904 to

---

<sup>33</sup> James Y. Smith, "General Assembly January Session at Providence," *Providence Daily Journal*, January 11, 1866.

<sup>34</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 10-11.



1905, a tramway and cars were constructed and remodeled in 1908 which ran from the loading room to the cable tank.<sup>35</sup> On May 12, 1870, the Board of Engineers recommended the construction of another battery located at the summit of the island. The plans called for three detached barbette batteries, capable of mounting forty, 15-inch smooth-bore guns, and were approved in July of 1870. Just as construction was about to commence, a depressing carriage gun was developed in 1871 which rendered the “middle battery” obsolete, and work ceased. Modifications were made to the batteries to adapt them to receive the depressing carriage guns and work commenced on Battery “A” which was the southernmost battery. Work was overseen under the direction of Major G. K. Warren of the Army Corps of Engineers and again assistant engineer J. A. Judson in local charge. Four magazines and two platforms were completed four years later, by that time all funds for the project were exhausted and construction ceased, no guns were ever mounted. The “main barbette” battery would later be removed for the construction of Battery Hale in 1897-1898.<sup>36</sup>

### 1875-1885

There is a lull in the records of Dutch Island in the decade following the construction of the main barbette. Besides the upkeep of the fortifications, the military purpose of the island was relatively obsolete during this time. Census records from 1875 list 13 people living on the Island; a civil engineer named J. A. Judson, his wife, mother, and son; a lightkeeper named George Fife; two laborers; one gardener; one overseer; one boatman; and one soldier.<sup>37</sup> An issue of the

---

<sup>35</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 11.

<sup>36</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 13.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 13.

*Newport Mercury* in 1885 named Sergeant Lewis as the person “in charge of fortifications” on Dutch Island.<sup>38</sup>

### **Endicott Period**

Industrialization and a booming economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century put the United States on par with other world powers. As United States foreign policy became increasingly less isolationist, the modernization of military fortifications was deemed necessary to prevent foreign attacks.<sup>39</sup> In 1885, the new Secretary of War William Crowninshield Endicott convened the Board of Fortifications (now referred to as the Endicott Board) under President Grover Cleveland, with the goal of a full replacement of the existing coastal defenses.<sup>40</sup> The two decades that followed the creation of the Endicott Board are referred to as the Endicott Period regarding US coastal fortifications. This period brought about technological and military change throughout the United States and the defenses of Narragansett Bay and resulted in the construction of a mine casement and four new batteries on Dutch Island.

In 1886, the Endicott Board reported that coastal defenses were in disrepair and in need of updating, most of them containing antebellum and Civil War-era guns and canons.<sup>41</sup> The ports of Narragansett Bay were among those determined “most urgently required” for immediate protection.<sup>42</sup> The entrance to Narragansett Bay was vulnerable to attack against the modern naval technology of the day, as only the East Passage, between Conanicut and Aquidneck Islands, was

---

<sup>38</sup> *The Newport Mercury*, June 27, 1885.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Ranson, "The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses." *Military Affairs* (1967): 74

<sup>40</sup> Ranson, "The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses," 74

<sup>41</sup> George Griswold Hill, "Our Coast Defenses." *The North American Review* 186, no. 625 (1907): 554-564

<sup>42</sup> William Crowninshield Endicott, Stephen Vincent Benét, Henry L. Abbot, F. William Thomas Sampson, and Joseph Morgan. *Report of the Board on Fortifications or Other Defenses Appointed by the President of the United States Under the Provisions of the Act of Congress Approved March 3, 1885...* Vol. 49. US Government Printing Office, 1886.

fortified by Fort Adams and Fort Dumpling. The report stated that “Narragansett Bay could be completely defended by forts only at great cost; and the city of Newport is within easy range from deep water, without entering the bay.”<sup>43</sup> The Board recommended the construction of fortifications on Dutch Island as part of the Coast Defenses of Narragansett Bay, with hopes that the fort would protect the West Passage and Newport Harbor. These fortifications would later be named Fort Greble in 1898 after the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant John T. Greble, the first officer of the Regular Army killed during the Civil War.<sup>44</sup> Two other forts were ordered to protect the West Passage, Fort Getty on Beaverhead in Jamestown, and Fort Kearny in Saunderstown, across from Dutch Island. Fort Adams also received updated fortifications, and Fort Wetherill would replace Fort Dumpling. *The Providence Journal* summarized the report and the Board’s recommendations for Narragansett Bay, and stated “turrets, barbette batteries, mortar batteries, submarine mines, will form a part of the defense” and that “Six torpedo boats are recommended for service in this Bay.”<sup>45</sup> These plans, with their emphasis on multiple dispersed batteries as opposed to a single large fortification, were characteristic of the Endicott period and reflective of new military technology.

Despite the urgency of the Board's recommendations, the building of the new fortifications on Dutch Island would not commence until about a decade later. A real start on any of the Board’s recommendations country-wide would not come until 1890, and even then, the scale of operations was much less than what was originally proposed. Based on money spent,

---

<sup>43</sup> Endicott et al, *Report of the Board on Fortifications or Other Defenses Appointed by the President of the United States Under the Provisions of the Act of Congress Approved March 3, 1885...* Vol. 49

<sup>44</sup> Hoffman, “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island,” 14

<sup>45</sup> “Rhode Island Fortifications.” *The Providence Journal*, July 21, 1886

work on coastal fortifications was being completed at one-seventh of the proposed rate by 1895.<sup>46</sup>

It was finally announced in April of 1896 in the *Fall River Daily Globe* that work would begin on Dutch Island “shortly.”<sup>47</sup> Bids were opened in late November of the same year by Major Daniel W. Lockwood of the Corps of Engineers, for contract laborers to begin construction of three 10-inch rifles to be placed on disappearing gun carriages.<sup>48</sup> In March of 1897, it was announced that Richard Dudley of New York got the contract and employed an estimated 100 laborers on the island.<sup>49</sup> Newspapers document the arrival of Italian laborers from New York City to Dutch Island and their subsequent departure due to low pay.<sup>50</sup> Construction began under Major Lockwood in March of 1897 on what would later be called Battery Hale, named in honor of Captain Nathan Hale of the American Revolutionary Forces who was hanged as a spy by the British.<sup>51</sup> Battery Hale was built on top of the main barbette battery at a level of about 75 feet above mean low water. The 10-inch rifles had barrel lengths of 28’4” and were mounted on Buffington-Crozier Disappearing Carriages.<sup>52</sup> These so-called disappearing guns were placed on carriages that would lower below the casement after firing and were characteristic of the Endicott period. They allowed for quicker loading and firing of guns and provided more protection from potential enemy fire.<sup>53</sup> Battery Hale was constructed using Rosendale concrete with Portland cement facing.<sup>54</sup> This reinforced cement was another

---

<sup>46</sup> Ranson, "The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses." 77-78.

<sup>47</sup> "Work Will Shortly Commence at the Dumplings and Dutch Island." *Fall River Daily Globe*, April 24, 1896.

<sup>48</sup> "For Coast Defense." *Newport Mercury*, November 28, 1896.

<sup>49</sup> "On the Fortification of Dutch Island." *Fall River Daily Globe*, March 11, 1897.

<sup>50</sup> "Jamestown." *Newport Daily News*, March 31, 1897; "Strike of Italian Laborers." *Newport Daily News*, April 2, 1897; "Strike on Dutch Island" *Fall River Daily Globe*, May 7, 1897.

<sup>51</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 14.

<sup>52</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 14.

<sup>53</sup> William H. Dorrance, "Evolution of Major-Caliber US Coastal Defense Guns, 1888-1945." *Army History* 37 (1996) 14-20.

<sup>54</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 14

technological innovation of the Endicott period, replacing the masonry previously used in fortification construction.<sup>55</sup> A low tower that held the battery's Primary Station and Commander's Station was constructed about 400 feet from the third gun emplacement. A mine casemate was also constructed at this time, adding to a previously existing casemate thought to have been built in 1878. The casemate was a deep underground cell with winding passages, which led to submarine mine chambers below the West Passage of the bay.<sup>56</sup>

Growing tensions between the US and Spain towards the end of the decade spurred fortification efforts. The Spanish-American War was sparked after the sinking of the USS Maine in 1898 bringing with it a fear of Spanish naval fleets descending on the East Coast. This event fulfilled the long-requested increase of the artillery from five to seven regiments and accelerated the completion of fortifications along the coast.<sup>57</sup> Newspapers from the time record a feeling of unpreparedness in the case of a Spanish attack on Narragansett Bay and even false reports of a Spanish presence along the New England coast.<sup>58</sup> In May of 1898, amidst what was likely the height of public panic regarding a Spanish attack, it was announced that defenses of the New England coast would be strengthened further. Battery A of the 7<sup>th</sup> US Artillery was ordered to Dutch Island, which was described by the Boston Globe as “an old fort that has been abandoned for many years” despite the construction efforts of the previous year.<sup>59</sup> The barracks on the island were uninhabitable, leaving the garrison to sleep in tents and temporary barracks for nearly a year. The artillery was still in tents when a blizzard came in during November of 1898, resulting in blown-away tents, overturned stoves, and personal items being burned. After this incident,

---

<sup>55</sup> Dorrance, "Evolution of Major-Caliber US Coastal Defense Guns, 1888-1945," 14

<sup>56</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 15

<sup>57</sup> Ranson, "The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses," 83

<sup>58</sup> "No Immediate Prospect of More Complete Protection." *The Providence Journal*, February 22, 1898; Newport Disturbed." *The Providence Journal*, May 14, 1898

<sup>59</sup> "Defenses of New England Coast Still Further Strengthened by Orders of the War Department." Boston Globe, May 11, 1898.

some men left the island to be quartered at Fort Adams. According to *Newport Daily News*, the new barracks were completed by February of 1899, and Battery A threw a ball to celebrate.<sup>60</sup>

The construction of three more batteries followed the arrival of Battery A to Dutch Island. Construction of Battery Mitchell commenced under Major Lockwood in May of 1898. The battery was situated northwest of Battery Hale and included an emplacement and magazine for one 6-inch Quick Firing Armstrong Gun. The Artillery took charge of this battery in February 1899. In 1903, the battery was named in honor of Captain David B. Mitchell, 15<sup>th</sup> US Infantry, who was killed in action on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1900, at Laguna Province, on Luzon, one of the Philippine Islands.<sup>61</sup>

Battery Sedgewick was begun in September 1898 and completed in November 1900. This battery was also made of Rosendale concrete with Portland cement facing and was transferred to the Artillery in January of 1901. Eight 12-inch mortars, Model 1890 MI, were mounted on 1896 carriages in two firing pits, with four mortars in a pit. Four mortars, two from each pit, were eventually removed, allowing for more working room to load the mortars and an increased rate of fire.<sup>62</sup> Battery Sedgewick was located on the northwest side of Dutch Island and was named in honor of Major General John Sedgewick, US Volunteers, who commanded the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, Army of the Potomac and was killed in the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia in 1864.<sup>63</sup>

Battery Ogden was completed in October of 1900 and built over the left flank and middle section of the earlier "Middle Battery." It mounted two 3-inch 15-pound Rapid Fire Guns with Balanced Pillar Mounts. The battery was named in honor of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant

---

<sup>60</sup> "Battery A's Ball." *Newport Daily News*, February 22, 1899.

<sup>61</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 16.

<sup>63</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 16.

Frederick C. Ogden, 1<sup>st</sup> US Calvary, who was killed in 1864 in the battle of Trevilian Station, Virginia.<sup>64</sup>

Additions to the various batteries and mines continued into the twentieth century. New reconnaissance and fire control technology lead to the creation of a three-story brick and concrete tower in 1902, just north of Battery Mitchell.<sup>65</sup> The tower housed a unified fire control system that could transmit firing instructions through a telephone system, replacing the function of the individual fire control stations that some batteries had. In July of 1903 Battery Mitchell was rebuilt for the emplacement of three 6-inch rifles mounted on disappearing carriages and was turned back over to the Artillery in January of 1906.<sup>66</sup> These were the last of the Endicott era constructions.

### **Twentieth Century and the Taft Board**

Reconstructions and additions made to Fort Greble after 1906 can be attributed to the National Defense Board (Taft Board) convened by President Theodore Roosevelt to revise the Endicott Board report.<sup>67</sup> The Taft Board recommended technical improvements to the Endicott defenses, including searchlights, electrification for lighting, and new communication systems.<sup>68</sup> In 1907, following these recommendations, Fort Greble's mine system was expanded. A mine commander's station was constructed east of Battery Ogden in August of 1907 under Lieutenant Colonels J. H. Willard and J. C. Sanford, Army Corps of Engineers. The commander's station

---

<sup>64</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 16.

<sup>65</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 17.

<sup>66</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 18.

<sup>67</sup> "Modern U.S. Harbor Defense Construction 1886-191 the Endicott and Taft Boards." Coast Defense Study Group, April 1, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> "Modern U.S. Harbor Defense Construction 1886-191 the Endicott and Taft Boards." Coast Defense Study Group; Hill, George Griswold. "Our Coast Defenses." *The North American Review* 186, no. 625 (1907): 554-564.

complex included two separate stations each with observing, plotting, and telephone rooms. The station was followed by a new mine casement in 1908 east of Battery Sedgwick. Searchlights capable of illuminating the bay and the underwater minefields (which included 76 mines at this time) were also installed.<sup>69</sup>

Dutch Island's final period of military relevancy was during World War I as a part of the Harbor Defenses of Narragansett Bay. Fourteen companies were transferred from the Rhode Island National Guard to the Harbor Defenses of Narragansett Bay in the North Atlantic Coast Artillery District. Troops were stationed in the barracks of Dutch Island along the northern coast.<sup>70</sup> More research is necessary to determine what life was like on Dutch Island during World War I and the inter-war period.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has provided an overview of the military purposes of Dutch Island from circa 1860 to around 1900. Having begun documenting the island's history beginning in the early seventeenth century up through the Civil War to the turn of the nineteenth century set the framework for future research on the island. This was accomplished by discussing the island's early inhabitants consisting of the Wampanoag and Narragansett tribes, the Dutch and English settlers, the 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment during the Civil War, and the construction of Fort Greble and its importance to the coastal defenses of Narragansett Bay. All these periods in history help tell the story of Rhode Island throughout the past four centuries and its role in the early establishment of the United States. This research will hopefully set the groundwork for the continuation of studying and documenting Dutch Island up to the present day. For the future, it is

---

<sup>69</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 19.

<sup>70</sup> Hoffman, "A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island," 19.



recommended that further research is done to establish Fort Greble's role during World War I, determine why military activity stopped on Dutch Island, and record the history of the island up to the present day. It would also be beneficial to determine possible uses for the island and its future role in Narragansett Bay.

## Bibliography

- “Battery A’s Ball.” *Newport Daily News*, February 22, 1899.
- “Changing Quarters.” *Providence Evening Press*, September 29, 1863.
- Chapin, Howard M. “Quetenis Island or Dutch Island.” Essay In Rhode Island Historical Society Collections XIX, 3rd ed., 88–91. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Society, July 1926.
- “Defenses of New England Coast Still Further Strengthened by Orders of the War Department.” *Boston Globe*, May 11, 1898.
- Dorrance, William H. "Evolution of Major-Caliber US Coastal Defense Guns, 1888-1945." *Army History* 37 (1996) 14-20.
- Endicott, William Crowninshield, Stephen Vincent Benét, Henry L. Abbot, F. William Thomas Sampson, and Joseph Morgan. *Report of the Board on Fortifications or Other Defenses Appointed by the President of the United States Under the Provisions of the Act of Congress Approved March 3, 1885...* Vol. 49. US Government Printing Office, 1886.
- “For Coast Defense.” *Newport Mercury*, November 28, 1896.
- “From Settlement to World War II.” Dutch Island Lighthouse Society, March 9, 2021. <https://dils.support/2021/03/09/from-settlement-to-world-war-ii/>.
- Hill, George Griswold. "Our Coast DefencesDefenses." *The North American Review* 186, no. 625 (1907): 554-564
- “Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island.” Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1995.
- Hoffman, Tom. “A History of Dutch Island Narragansett Bay Rhode Island.” Boston, MA: National Park Service North Atlantic Regional Office, July 1980.
- “Jamestown.” *Newport Daily News*, March 31, 1897
- “Modern U.S. Harbor Defense Construction 1886-191 the Endicott and Taft Boards.” Coast Defense Study Group, April 1, 2021. <https://cdsg.org/modern-u-s-harbor-defense-construction-1886-191-the-endicott-and-taft-boards/>.
- Newport Mercury*. September 5, 1863.
- “No Immediate Prospect of More Complete Protection.” *The Providence Journal*, February 22, 1898

“Newport Disturbed.” *The Providence Journal*, May 14, 1898

“On the Fortification of Dutch Island.” *Fall River Daily Globe*, March 11, 1897.

Ranson, Edward. “The Endicott Board of 1885-86 and the Coast Defenses.” *Military Affairs*, 1967

“Review at Dutch Island.” *Providence Evening Press*, November 19, 1863.

“Rhode Island Fortifications.” *The Providence Journal*, July 21, 1886

“The Colored Troops.” *Providence Evening Press*. September 3, 1863.

“Sale of Dutch Island.” *Providence Evening Press*. July 30, 1863.

Schroder, Walter K. “Defenses of Narragansett Bay in World War II.” Providence, RI: Rhode Island Publications Society, 1983.

Schroder, Walter K. *Dutch Island and Fort Greble*. Dover, NH. Arcadia Pub. 1998.

Smith, James Y. “General Assembly January Session at Providence,” *Providence Daily Journal*, January 11, 1866.

“Strike of Italian Laborers.” *Newport Daily News*, April 2, 1897

“Strike on Dutch Island” *Fall River Daily Globe*, May 7, 1897

“Work Will Shortly Commence at the Dumplings and Dutch Island.” *Fall River Daily Globe*, April 24, 1896.