



Vancouver Artillery Association

Bessborough Armoury
2025 West 11th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6J 2C7

Stanley Park Fort Docent Package

This Docent Package is a resource for those volunteering to lead a tour at the Stanley Park Fort at Ferguson Point. This is a key role for passing on the history of the 15th (Vancouver) Coast Brigade, RCA to current serving Gunners and other interested visitors.

Location

The Stanley Park Battery was the first of Vancouver's Second World War coastal batteries to be ready. Although the peninsula had been reserved for the defence of the First Narrows and Burrard Inlet in the nineteenth century, this federally-owned land had been leased to the city for a nominal sum since 1887. Most people knew it only as a public park. In 1914 the point of land near Siwash Rock had been occupied by a temporary gun battery when an attack by Germany's East Asia naval squadron was considered likely. In the Second World War, the Japanese navy was regarded as the greatest threat. A concrete, two-gun battery emplacement with supporting structures on Ferguson Point was planned in February 1938, after Parliament approved the establishment of permanent coast defences in early 1937. Vancouver's role as Canada's principal Pacific Coast port and as the transcontinental railway's terminus justified this extra protection from hostile warships.

Ferguson Point is now a grassy field with a cairn commemorating the soldiers who served there during the Second World War. Two large circles in the grass, usually highlighted with a ring of daisies, can often be seen where the gun emplacements have been covered over. The Ferguson Point Tea House was the Officers' Quarters and has been substantially remodeled since that time. In addition, there are several concrete pads that indicate where the battery observation post, ammunition magazines and underground access were located.

There is no trace remaining of searchlight enclosures #7 and #8, however, one can find searchlight enclosure #6 in use today as the observation platform for Siwash Rock. At the Siwash Rock location, one can also find traces of the First World War 4 inch calibre guns.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Stanley Park Fort is situated in the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selíwíwítlh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Safety

The path to Searchlight #6 at Siwash Rock is rough in nature. Searching for the remnants of the military use of the area may require stepping off the well travelled path and one should ensure that they have stable footing. The handrails at the viewing platform are intended to prevent accidents. Please do not go beyond the safety limits in order to gain a better view of the searchlight enclosure. Access to the buried portion of the Stanley Park Fort can only be gained with permission from Vancouver Parks Board. The flooded nature of the bottom levels and the confined space nature of the structure requires specialized equipment and knowledge.

Short History

Major BDC Treatt, an instructor at the British Coast Artillery School, was sent to Canada in 1936 at the request of National Defence Headquarters to review the defence needs on the east and west coasts. The Treatt Report recommended an Ultimate Plan of coast defences. However, the weapons manufacturing in England was severely overburdened and an Interim Plan was adopted in 1937 using guns already available in Canada. The report noted that Vancouver was less vulnerable to attack than the more exposed Victoria-Esquamalt target. However, defences were still needed for Canada's major West Coast port, which was the terminus of two trans-continental railways and the centre of B.C.'s wartime industries.

The Stanley Park Fort was constructed in 1938, fired its first test rounds on 17 June 1939 and was completed November 1939. The position initially consisted of two 6-Inch Breech Loading Mark VII guns on mountings Breech Loading 6-Inch Mark 2. These were exchanged with the two 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns on Mark III Garrison Carriages at Yorke Island in June/July 1942. These guns were enclosed with the plastic armour protection in 1943. The fortress was manned by members of the 31st Heavy Battery, 15th (Vancouver) Coast Brigade, RCA, later renamed 31st Coast Battery, 15th (Vancouver) Coast Regiment, RCA.

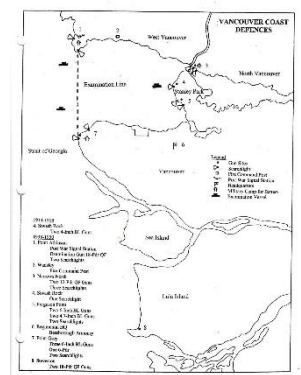
Of the more than thirty structures that were constructed at Ferguson Point between 1939 and 1945, only two, the #6 Searchlight and the Teahouse remain visible today. The underground magazines exist but are not accessible by the public due to safety concerns.



Photo Descriptions

1A – Pacific Coast Defences. Identifies the coastal defences at Victoria-Esquamalt, Steveston, Vancouver, Yorke Island and Prince Rupert. Shows the northern and southern approaches to Vancouver. *ArmySurveyEstablishmentRCE*

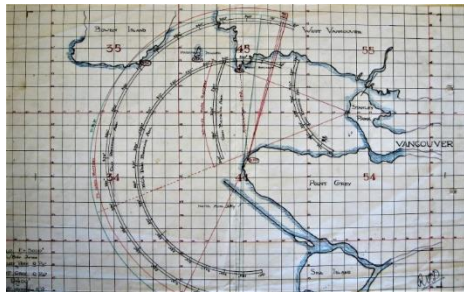
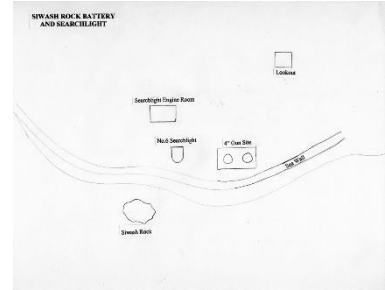
1B – Map of Vancouver Coast Defences. Highlights the installations from both World Wars including Siwash Rock - two 4-Inch BL Guns, Point Atkinson – one 18-Pdr QF examination gun, Narrows North - two 12-Pdr QF Guns, Ferguson Point - two 4.7-Inch BL Guns (replaced by two 6 inch BL Guns), Point Grey - three 6-Inch BL Guns, one 6 Pdr examination gun, Steveston - two 18-Pdr QF Guns (increased later to one 18-Pdr QF Guns and two 25 Pdrs)





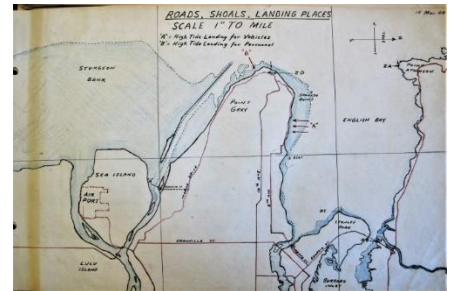
1C – Stanley Park Fort. The layout of the Fort shows the location of gun emplacements, searchlights and buildings.

1D – Siwash Rock Battery and Searchlight. Only #6 searchlight is recognizable. Remnants of bolts from the gun position can be found hidden in the underbrush.



1E – Stanley Park Fort. This map provides a view of the interlocking arcs of fire between Ferguson Point and Point Grey. Maximum ranges are also plotted.

1F – Roads Shoals and Landing Places. 15 March 1944. This map provides a listing of major city roads with potential enemy landing sites. Fort Record Book



2A – Aerial View. The photo was taken prior to the exchange of the 6" guns with Yorke Island in 1943. No 7 Searchlight can be seen at the base of the cliff on the left. 15FdMuseum

2B– Aerial View. The 4.7" guns are still in place in this photo. 15FdMuseum





2C– Aerial View. 4 November 1943. This photo shows that the 6” guns have been exchanged with the 4.7” guns from Yorke Island. The overhead, plastic armour structures are complete. Plastic armour was a mixture of bitumen and cement that was originally devised by the Royal Navy as a replacement for concrete slabs which were found to be too brittle. *15FdMuseum*

3A– World War I. Two 4” calibre guns were installed and ready on 15 August 194. They were manned by members of the Royal Canadian Volunteer Naval Reserve. *VancouverArchivesAM54-S4-: St Pk P228.1*



3B – World War I. It appears that the Navy treated their guns somewhat differently than The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery. *VancouverArchivesAM54-S4-: St Pk P288.2*

4A – 6-Inch Breech Loading Mark VII. Edward John Hughes painted this depiction of the 6” guns in 1941. He had started his service as a Gunner with 31st Battery, 15th (Vancouver) Coast Brigade in 1939 before transferring over as a war artist in 1940 and subsequently commissioned. He is the only known member of the Regiment to be awarded with the Order of Canada.



4B – 6-Inch Breech Loading Mark VII guns. A view of the 6” guns prior to the exchange for the 4.7” guns from Yorke Island.

5A – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. Number 1 barrel was previously removed for transportation to the Point Grey Battery for trials. *FortRecordBook*



5B – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. Number 1 barrel was previously removed for transportation to the Point Grey Battery for trials. *FortRecordBook*



5C– 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. The underground magazine was covered by a screen for camouflage purposes. *FortRecordBook*



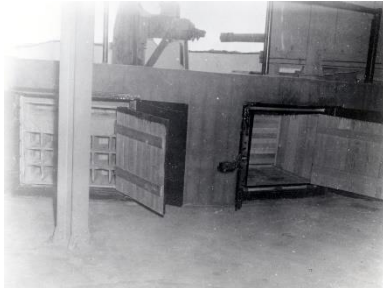
5D– 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. Number 1 barrel was previously removed for transportation to the Point Grey Battery for trials. *FortRecordBook*

5E – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. *FortRecordBook*



5F – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. *FortRecordBook*

5G – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos show the dismantling of the Fort. *FortRecordBook*



5H – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos. Ammunition recesses. This may be early in the dismantling process as the 4.7" gun barrel can still be seen. *FortRecordBook*

5I – 4.7-Inch Quick Firing Mark IV "B" Guns. 1945 photos. Ammunition recesses. This may be early in the dismantling process as the 4.7" gun barrel can still be seen. *FortRecordBook*



6A – Battery Observation Post (BOP). Circa 1945. Camouflage along the front of the BOP obscures the straight lines of the building. *FortRecordBook*

6B – Battery Observation Post (BOP). Circa 1945. Camouflage along the front of the BOP obscures the straight lines of the building. The Recreation Hut can be seen to the right of the BOP. The vehicle is believed to be a Ford GP "Jeep" 1/4 Ton 4x4 Utility Vehicle *FortRecordBook*



6C – Battery Observation Post. September 1962. The BOP was demolished in 1964. There was some media coverage the previous year regarding where the council would go in case of a nuclear attack. The BOP and generator room were noted as one such location. *15FdMuseum983.306.01*

6D – Battery Observation Post. 1945. The Depression Rangefinder Mark 2 (DRF) has been removed from its concrete mount.
FortRecordBook



6E – Battery Observation Post. 1945. The searchlight control gear has been removed. Each small table was designed to hold a system that remotely controlled #7 and #8 searchlight. *FortRecordBook*



6F – Battery Observation Post. Unknown room. The view from the window appears to indicate that it may have been in the BOP.
FortRecordBook



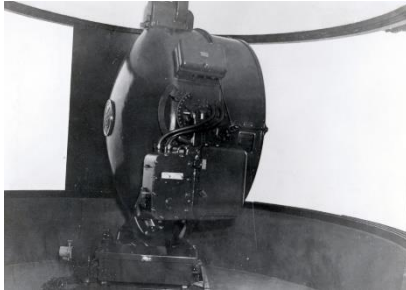
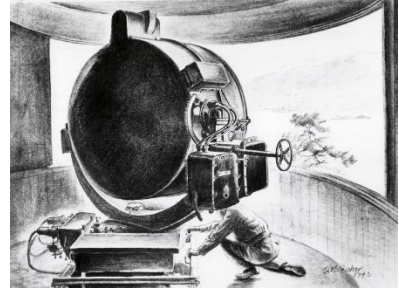
7A – Searchlight. Either #7 or #8 searchlight. They were 60 inch (152.4 cm) diameter with rhodium plated parabolic mirror, reflecting a carbon arc discharge. Peak output was 800,000,000 candela and had an effective beam visibility of 28 to 35 miles (45 to 56 km) in clear low humidity. The lights were manufactured by Canadian General Electric. *FortRecordBook*

7B – Searchlight. Either #7 or #8 searchlight. Controlled remotely from the BOP.



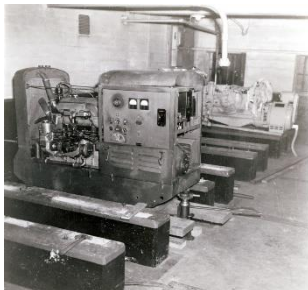
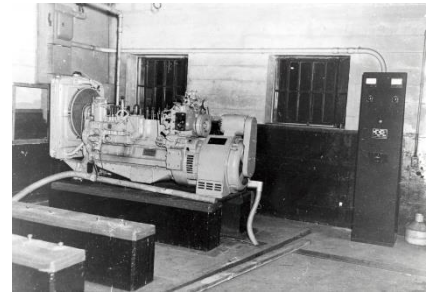
7C – Searchlight. Either #7 or #8 searchlight viewed from the top.

7D– Searchlight. 1943. Orville Fisher sketch of one of the Stanley Park searchlights (#6, #7 or #8). The vessels in front appear to match what may have been found in English Bay at that time.



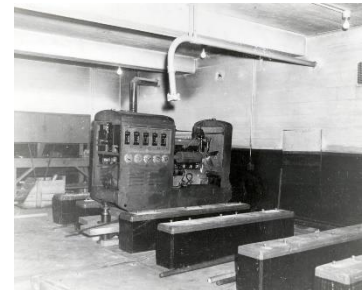
7E – Battery Observation Post. 60 inch (152.4 cm) diameter searchlight with rhodium plated parabolic mirror, reflecting a carbon arc discharge. Peak output was 800,000,000 candela and had an effective beam visibility of 28 to 35 miles (45 to 56 km) in clear low humidity. The lights were manufactured by Canadian General Electric.

8A – Generator Room. 1945. Gardner type 4 L.W. generators. *Fort Record Book*



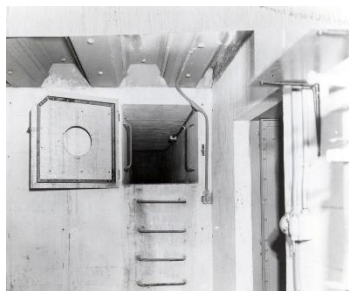
8B – Generator Room. 1945. The generator room during the removal process. Some generators may have remained as the City Council considered the remnants of the Stanley Park fort as a nuclear fallout shelter for the city councillors. *Fort Record Book*

8C – Generator Room. 1945. Several Gardner type 4 L.W. generators have already been removed. *Fort Record Book*



9A – Underground Rooms. 1945. Portion of the gun emplacement. Unknown area Door is labelled No.5. *Fort Record Book*

9B – Underground Rooms. 1945. Unknown room. Appears to be the workshop. Regulations details the rules for lighting in magazines and laboratories. *Fort Record Book*



9C – Underground Rooms. 1945. Possibly emergency escape. *Fort Record Book*

9D – Underground Rooms. 1945. Possibly the ammunition magazine as the ceiling light appears similar to the regulations for lighting shown earlier. *Fort Record Book*



9E - Underground Rooms. 1945. Appears to be same room as 9D. Possibly ammunition magazine. *Fort Record Book*

9F - Underground Rooms. 1945. Appears to be same room as 9D and 9E. possibly ammunition magazine. *Fort Record Book*.



9G - Underground Rooms. 1945. Appears to be a hallway between the two gun emplacements. Note the heavy steel doors. *Fort Record Book*.

9H– Underground Rooms. 1945. Unknown room. *Fort Record Book.*



9I – Underground Rooms. 2003. The only known venture into the buried portion of the fort. Video by GVTV available on Vancouvergunners.ca *15FDMuseum.*

9J – Underground Rooms. 2003. The staircase leading down to deeper levels of the ammunition magazine. *15FDMuseum.*



9K – Underground Rooms. 2003. Hallway with ammunition recesses. This may be the same hallway as 9G. The shadow is from our former curator, HLCol Vic Stevenson. *15FDMuseum.*

9L – Underground Rooms. 2003. The staircase leading down to the deeper, flooded levels of the ammunition magazine. The Fort Record books states, “During periods of extreme wet weather the magazine floors failed to keep out water seepage until 1-foot drains were cut in the floor and an electric pump was installed.” Could this be the result of removing the pump in 1945? *15FDMuseum.*



10A – Fort Area. 1945 View looking towards the north gate with No. 2 gun, guardhouse and sentry box visible. *15FDMuseum*

10B – Fort Area. The guardhouse and sentry box at the north gate.
15FdMuseum



10C – Fort Area. A close up view of the guardhouse shows the extent of the camouflage material placed on the buildings. *15FdMuseum*

10D – Fort Area. The ventilation shafts to the ammunition magazines can be seen in the foreground with the power house immediately to the rear. The Officers Quarters are to the left. *15FdMuseum*



10E – Fort Area. View of the south gate with garage and recreation hut. *15FdMuseum*

11A – Defensive Works. Fort defensive work. It is not known where this covered trench was located in the Fort area. *15FdMuseum*





12A – Camp Area. Looking North. Guard House with 3 Other Ranks Quarters behind. *15FdMuseum*

12B – Camp Area. Looking South. Navy Degaussing station in the corner with Salvation Army Hut to the left and 3 Other Ranks Quarters with Guard House to the right. *15FdMuseum*



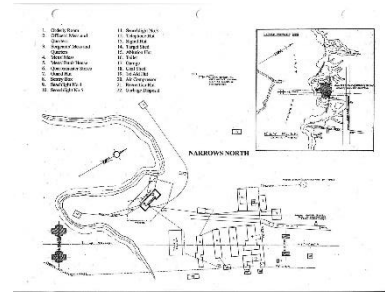
13A – Ferguson Point. 19 Oct 1966. The Colonel Commandant Major General Albert Bruce Matthews unveils the plaque commemorating the World War II batteries. RSM WO I Pat Smith. *15FdMuseum985.59.12*

13B – Ferguson Point. 19 Oct 1966. The Colonel Commandant Major General Albert Bruce Matthews admires the new plaque. *15FdMuseum985.59.10*



13C – Ferguson Point. 19 Oct 1966. Personnel at the unveiling included WOII Ray Guttridge, Brigadier Theo Dumoulin, Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Frederick Blyth, Major General Albert Bruce Matthews, Sergeant Ruth Thompson and RSM WO I Pat Smith. *15FdMuseum985.59.11*

14A – Narrows North. The layout of the Fort shows the location of gun emplacements, searchlights and buildings. *15FdMuseum*



14B – Narrows North. The concrete Fort with two 12 pdr guns. They were intended as close defence against Destroyers, Motor Torpedo Boats or small craft. *15FdMuseum*

14C – Narrows North. The concrete Fort prior to the installation of the two 12 pounders. *15FdMuseum*



14D – Narrows North The Battery Observation Post atop the concrete Fort. *15FdMuseum*

14E – Narrows North. 6 Oct 1939. The 12 pdrs are moved from their temporary location at the mouth of the Capilano River to the top of the concrete Gantry. *15FdMuseum*





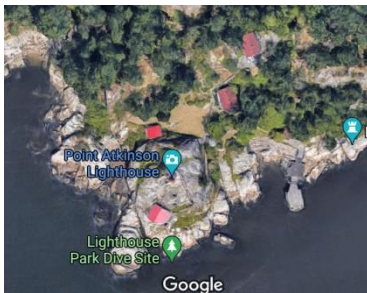
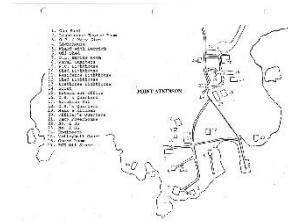
14F – Narrows North. 6 Oct 1939. A 12 pdr is hoisted into position. *15FdMuseum*

14G – Narrows North. 2021 A view of the site now occupied by the Lions Gate Wastewater Plant. Note the bridge towers and compare with 14A the Fort site map.



14H – Narrows North. 2021. The location of the Camp area today.

15A – Point Atkinson. The layout of Point Atkinson showing the Gun Shed, #1 and #2 Searchlights and the Camp Buildings. The Gun shed was to house the 18 pdr QF field gun used in an examination role. *5FdMuseum*



15B – Point Atkinson. 2021. #2 searchlight emplacements can be seen by the castle icon and the 18 Pdr location is slightly to the right of the Dive Site tree symbol. All that remains is the concrete pedestal that the gun was embedded in. *15FdMuseum*

15B – Point Atkinson. #2 searchlight emplacement. There is no trace of the #1 searchlight emplacement.



Photo Collection

The laminated photo collection is a work in progress. The intent is to provide a guide to lead tours through the former artillery position and to provide an opportunity to see the site as it looked to the

soldiers that served there in the past. Each photo page has a short description on the reverse with room to add additional notes as required.

Conclusion

Stanley Park Fort was placed in maintenance 1 September 1944 and closed as a defence area September 1945.

The Fort is valued for its natural, historical, engineering and social/cultural values, in particular for its role in national defence. The cairn indicating that Ferguson Point was the site of a coast defence manned during World War II is an important reminder of that fact. Additional social use of the Tea House should be emphasized in the Regiment's social calendar. It needs to be used more often by the Regiment in order to increase the historical knowledge of those that currently serve and also as a reminder to other visitors of the role that the members of the unit performed during the war. Many of those members volunteered for overseas service and never returned.

Would you like to support our team?

Contact the Vancouver Artillery Association president – Leon Jensen president.vcrgunners@gmail.com