

# Fort Macon

A solitary fortress with limited access to people and almost complete isolation describes where I grew up. To explain, I've lived my entire life in Fort Macon State Park. My dad is the park superintendent, requiring our family to live within the park's boundaries. We had no "neighbors" in the conventional sense. The US Coast Guard Station is our only "neighbor" because its base is outside the park gate. Much of my childhood, in hindsight, I took for granted. I have three older brothers, who were and continue to be "my people." We had friends in school but just had each other at home. Fort Macon was, literally, our front and back yards; a quick walk down a dirt road behind our house leads to the sound where we fished, pulled nets, and swam; just to the left of this dirt road is the marsh; here we renamed all the little "islands," and lost countless rubber boots in the mud trekking through, tirelessly, getting lost in the solitude.

Of course, Fort Macon immediately came to mind when I read the essay topic. The Fort, itself, strikes a very personal cord with me. From an early age, conversations with my Dad were sprinkled with historic snapshots of the Fort's history, along with innumerable private, behind the scene "tours"...my brothers and I were allowed to try on soldier uniforms, sleep in the restored officer quarters and cook in the Fort kitchen.

After the War of 1812 the United States Government built a chain of forts along our coast line to protect against foreign attack. One of these forts was Fort Macon built on the point of Bogue Banks, North Carolina to protect the entrance of Beaufort Harbor. The fort was manned by the United States Army. The fort was used in three wars; Spanish American War, Civil War and WWII. The fort also served as a federal prison during the reconstruction period. During the Spanish American War the 3rd North Carolina Volunteers occupied the fort. The first regiment made up of all black officers and soldiers in United States History. Even though black Americans had always served this country it was very unpopular by many white citizens to place them in an officer role. During the Civil War the union used rifle artillery to retake the fort. This was the second time in history the rifled cannons were used against a brick or stone fort. Fort Macon was used for the third time to defend our country during WWII against the German U-boats, which sunk or torpedoed 105 ships along the North Carolina Coast during the war belonging to the United States and its allies. I have been fortunate to scuba dive some of these wrecks to see the aftermath first hand to know that many brave men gave their lives to ensure the freedoms we have today.

In 1924, the State of North Carolina purchased the fort and 389 acres of the military installation to make it North Carolina second State Park. Currently the NC Department of Environment and Culture Resources manages the upkeep and restoration of the historical structure.

It is very important to save historic structures like Fort Macon so that we remember those brave men and women who came before us and the sacrifices they made for what we have now. History is important to learn from so hopefully we will not make the same mistakes again.

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