

# Military Facilities

Even with its close proximity to Washington, D.C., the presence of military facilities in Prince George's County has been inconsistent. Some of the earliest facilities were constructed prior to or in conjunction with the War of 1812. Fort Washington, one such facility on the Potomac River southeast of Washington, D.C., was occupied by the military until after World War II. Facilities were also constructed during the Civil War, when two of the Washington, D.C., ring forts were placed in the county, and thousands of soldiers were housed or bivouacked here. The military presence in the county declined after the war, only to increase again when Fort Washington was used during the Spanish-American War and World War I. The military presence again increased and became permanent during World War II, with the establishment of what is now Joint Base Andrews Naval Air Facility-Washington. Most of these facilities continue to be under federal control, including Fort Washington, the Civil War ring forts, and Joint Base Andrews Naval Air Facility-Washington. However, other military facilities, such as Civil War encampments or defensive positions, may be present on private, local, or state government property.

## Pre-Civil War Facilities

One pre-Civil War military facility, Fort Washington situated along the Potomac River, continued in use into the postbellum period (Nickels and Korzan 1985 and Owens 1973 in MIHP PG:80-16) (Figure 15). Fort Washington began as an enclosed masonry fort that was constructed between 1809 and 1824 along the Potomac River near Oxon Hill. Currently, the fort consists of a number of batteries, barracks, offices, and magazines that were constructed during the early 1820s and again from the period between the 1890s

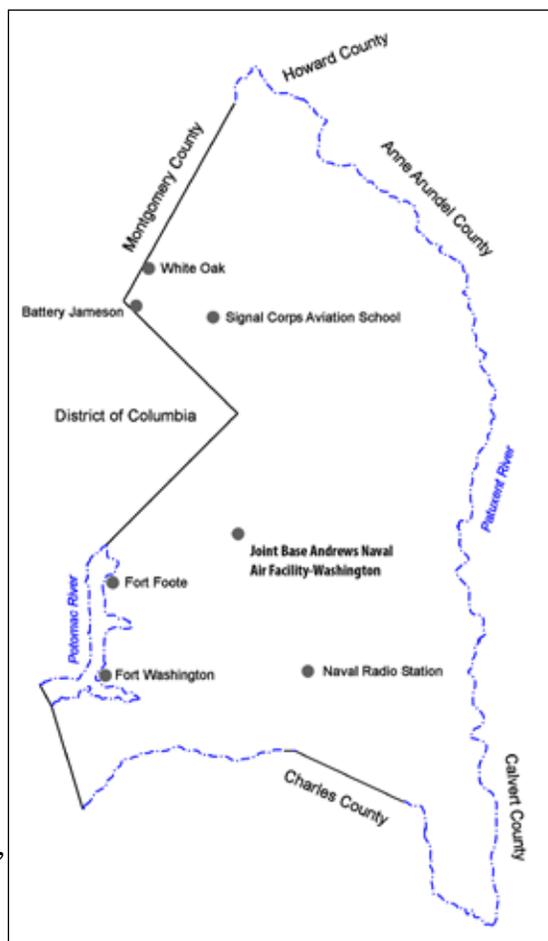


Figure 15: Military sites discussed in text.

and 1920s, as well as the masonry fort itself. The structures were, and are, located both within and outside of the masonry fort. The NRHP nomination form for this property indicates that archeological deposits associated with a number of now-razed structures are likely present within the park (Nickels and Korzan 1985). Troops were stationed at Fort Washington during the Civil War, although the importance of the fort was diminished when construction of Fort Foote, a ring fort to the south, was completed in 1863. However, troops were not withdrawn from Fort Washington, and the fort was not decommissioned until 1872. Subsequently, Fort Washington was used as the headquarters for the defense of the Potomac during both the Spanish-American War and World War I. It was transferred to the US National Park Service in 1946 and has been developed as a historical park since then.



*View of Fort Washington.*

#### *Related Pre-Civil War Properties*

The following property types could be associated with Fort Washington:

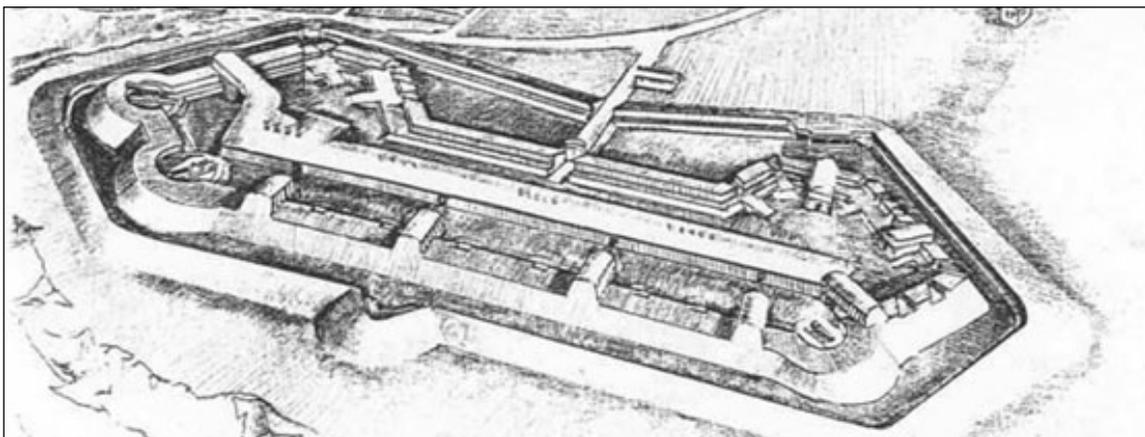
- Barracks
- Offices
- Batteries
- Magazines
- Subsurface structural remains
- Middens
- Bivouac areas

### **Civil War Facilities**

Although located virtually on the front line between the Union North and Confederate South, Prince George's County saw remarkably little military action during the Civil War. With the secession of Virginia and the commencement of hostilities, federal troops crossed into Maryland to defend Washington, D.C. As part of this process, federal troops were encamped near Bladensburg and in defensive positions along the B&O Railroad in 1861 (Duncan 1974; Virta 1991). Eventually, two of the Washington, D.C., ring forts were constructed in the county to defend the capital from Confederate attack. As it became apparent in 1861 that a quick victory over Confederate forces would not be achieved, it was soon realized that the poorly defended capital city was in a precarious position.

Forts and batteries were constructed to encompass the city, and by 1865, 68 forts and additional batteries had been put in place. Fort Foote was constructed along the Potomac River in the southern part of the county while Fort Lincoln was constructed near Bladensburg (Figure 15). The only military action to take place in the county occurred in 1864, when Confederate General Jubal Early conducted a raid on the B&O Railroad. Early's cavalry camped at the Maryland Agricultural College (now the University of Maryland) and destroyed track and telegraph lines in the Beltsville vicinity (Benson et al. 2003:81–82; Virta 1991).

The two Civil War-related facilities in the county, Fort Foote and Battery Jameson (part of Fort Lincoln), continued into use for a short time during the postbellum period. Fort Foote is the southernmost of the ring forts and was constructed on a bluff that overlooks the Potomac River approximately six miles south of Washington, D.C. Constructed in 1863, Fort Foote was primarily designed to thwart attacks along the Potomac River. According to Kirkconnell (in TCGC 1992:35), the fort had a perimeter of 472 yards and two 15-inch mounted Rodman guns, four 200-lb. rifled Parrott guns, and six 30-lb. Parrott guns (Figure 16). Fewer than 200 men were garrisoned at the fort during the war. Fort Foote was also the only ring fort that continued to be used as a fortification after the Civil War, and it was retained as a fortification to defend Washington, D.C., from attack along the Potomac River until 1878. Dillon (1976 in MIHP PG:80-6) described Fort Foote as a sprawling complex consisting of barracks, storehouses, magazines, earthworks, and parade grounds. Currently, the earthworks, gun mounts, and a concrete magazine remain, as do foundations of barracks and storehouses. The structures, earthworks, and parade grounds are described as being present across the entire area that is now a park.



*Figure 16: Detail of Fort Foote  
(from U.S. National Park Service 2006, image in public domain).*

Fort Lincoln was constructed in 1861 at Eastern Avenue and east of Bladensburg Road within Washington, D.C. However, an associated battery, Battery Jameson, is located to the north in Prince George's County and is now located within the Fort Lincoln Cemetery (MIHP PG:68-15). Battery Jameson was constructed in 1862 and consists of a pair of earthen battery remains. The MIHP documentation for this structure (MIHP PG:68-15A) indicates that the surrounding area was also used as a staging area for Union armies during the Civil War. Although an update for the MIHP form suggests that Battery Jameson is not eligible for listing in the NRHP (MIHP PG:68-15), it does not appear that a formal archeological investigation of the resource was conducted. Given that this property contains Battery Jameson and could contain subsurface remains associated with the staging of Union troops during the Civil War, and that it was the location of the Battle of Bladensburg during the War of 1812, the presence and significance of any potential archeological resources associated with this facility should be considered as not having been evaluated.

Other Civil War troop encampments are likely to be present across much of the county near Washington, D.C. Warren H. Cudworth, a Union soldier stationed in the county, wrote the following (Prince George's County History 2007):

*The march [from Bladensburg] commenced ... and continued, without opposition, through a semi-hostile country until night, when soldiers bivouacked in an oak-grove, not far from the quaint old town of Marlborough....*

Information is also available on an encampment that was located near a church on what is now Andrews Air Force Base (GlobalSecurity.org 2006). In 1862 troops under the command of General Joe Hooker camped along the Potomac River, perhaps partly in Prince George's County, to thwart a Confederate attack (Kirkconnell in TCGC 1992:86), and Union troops likely traversed the county on their way to

Fredericksburg in December 1862 (Kirkconnell in TCGC 1992:87). One New Hampshire soldier is quoted as describing an encampment, perhaps near Piscataway (Kirkconnell in TCGC 1992:87):

*Our brigade bivouacs at 6pm on the south side of a large hill, 4,000 men on a few acres, and very crowded together. The roads are magnificent, the country rich, with pigs, chickens, and other small fruits in plenty.*

The University of Maryland reports that 6,000 Union troops under the command of General Ambrose Burnside camped on the grounds of the college in 1864 and that 400 Confederate troops camped on the grounds on July 11, 1864, during a raid (University of Maryland 2007). Kirkconnell (in TCGC 1992:87) speculates that a camp site is near the Edelen/Bailey house near Parker's Market. Although Kirkconnell does not identify the location of the Edelen/Bailey house, structures belonging to both an Edelen and a Parker are located near Piscataway.

Other encampments are likely associated with routine patrols and may even be associated with the manhunt for John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, in 1865, as a massive search was conducted in Maryland, including Prince George's County, in the week following the murder. Such encampments tend to be extremely difficult to find using typical archeological investigative techniques. With similar resources being much more common in Virginia, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources has begun to request metal-detection surveys of suspected locations of battles, skirmishes, and encampments, whether these be long-term camps or shorter, temporary encampments.

#### *Related Civil War Properties*

- Fort Foote
- Battery Jameson
- Bladensburg encampment
- Fort Washington
- Temporary encampments
- Defensive positions
- Camp- and fort-related midden and other deposits
- Bivouacs

### **World War I Facilities**

In contrast to the Civil War, relatively few facilities connected to World War I appear to be present in Prince George's County. Just prior to World War I, the US Army leased 160 acres of land near College Park and established the Signal Corps Aviation School in 1909. This facility became the first military airfield in the United States. Although the training school closed prior to World War I, it proved influential in many aspects of American air combat during World War I. This facility is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8. And as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Fort Washington was used during the war as headquarters of the defense of the Potomac.

Although more than 36,000 men from Maryland were inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States and the Maryland National Guard during World War I, Prince George's County contributed only 851 of that number (Maryland War Records Commission 1933). National Guard units were sent to Camp McClellan in Alabama and regular army units were organized at Camp Meade (Maryland War Records Commission 1933). Many of the Fifth Maryland Regiment, which included men from Prince George's County, trained at a site near Laurel prior to assembly at the regimental headquarters in Baltimore

(Balkoski 1991). The training camp, known as Camp Laurel, was run by the Army Corps of Engineers between 1918 and 1919 as an overflow facility of Fort Meade. Camp Laurel was a training camp and mobilization center that was located at the Laurel Racetrack in Anne Arundel County (North American Forts.com 2007).

#### *Related World War I Facilities*

- Fort Washington Barracks
- Offices
- Batteries
- Magazines
- Subsurface structural remains
- Middens
- Bivouac areas

## **World War II Facilities**

Several large-scale military facilities were constructed in Prince George's County just prior to or during World War II. The foremost facility associated with World War II is Andrews Air Force Base, located to the southeast of Washington, D.C., (Figure 15). The establishment of Andrews Air Force Base, as well as the nearby Suitland Federal Center, and the consequent construction of the Suitland Parkway to provide access to these two facilities, also had the effect of encouraging the suburbanization of those portions of the county to the south and east of Washington, D.C.

The base, conceived of in 1942, has grown to a facility that covers 4,320 acres and is home to more than 26,000 military and civilian workers and their families (Andrews Air Force Base 2007; GlobalSecurity.org 2006; US National Park Service 1993). With the United States entry into World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ordered the Secretary of War to acquire the land and construct a military airfield. Originally known as Camp Springs Army Air Field, the facility became operational in May 1943, with the mission of training fighter pilots for overseas combat duty. It was renamed Andrews Field in 1945 in honor of Lt. General Frank Andrews and was later renamed Andrews Air Force Base in 1947. Andrews has served as headquarters for Continental Air Command, Strategic Air Command, the Military Air Transport Service, and the Air Research and Development Command. The base is perhaps most well-known for the transportation of senior government and military leaders, including the president. Currently the base contains runways, taxiways, and hangars for aircraft, and office space, housing, and services for its military and civilian workforce.

Aside from this most notable World War II establishment, many offices and facilities were placed in Prince George's County during the war, and a few of the better documented are mentioned here. Just prior to the War in 1938, a Naval Radio Station was established near Cheltenham (MIHP PG:81A-20) (Figure 15). The facility was operated to intercept diplomatic communications. Housing was constructed at the 559-acre facility in 1941. Between 1938 and 1945, at the end of World War II, 44 buildings had been constructed at this facility. After 1945, an additional 58 buildings were constructed. By 1953, it was renamed the Naval Communications Station and administrative support was added (MIHP PG:81A-20). A listing of the structures at Naval Communications Station can be found in MIHP PG:81A-20. Also during this period a naval ordnance laboratory was constructed at White Oak in Silver Spring, a training school in Takoma Park, a hydrographic office in Suitland, and offices associated with ERCO in Riverdale, among other facilities (Ibiblio.org 2007). Many of these facilities were eliminated after the war, although others, such as the Cheltenham and White Oak facilities, continued in use. White Oak, constructed in 1944 as the Naval Ordnance Laboratory (and only partially located in Prince George's County), was designed to analyze, conduct research, design, develop, and test weapons systems for the Navy's Surface Forces. During the Cold War, it became the largest facility of its kind (Smaldone 1977).

One rather interesting quasi-military facility located in Prince George's County during World War II was the Civilian Public Service Camp situated at the Bowie Fish and Wild Life Camp No. 34, approximately 5.5 miles east of Laurel. Known as Camp #132, it was established by order of the Selective Service System in May 1942 to serve as a camp for conscientious objectors. The camp is described as a state training school run by the American Friends Service Committee and housed 60 individuals (Gingerich 1953). Little additional information was found about this facility. A prisoner of war farm labor camp was also present in the Laurel area (MAES 1948).

#### *Related World War II Facilities*

- Joint Base Andrews Naval Air Facility-Washington
- US Naval Radio Station
- Naval Ordnance Laboratory
- Various temporary offices
- Camp #132

## **Research Questions and Topics**

It is more difficult to identify relevant research questions that can be addressed by archeological investigations of military properties, especially those post-1900 properties, than for the previous chapters on agriculture and industry and services. In part, this is due to the fact that many of the resources, associated with World War II, for instance, are still in use today. Trash disposal changed greatly during the early 1900s, eliminating one important source of information from the archeologist's purview. Many of the later military resources likely consist of structural remains and the cultural landscape formed by the spatial distribution of the remains, although post-World War II demolition can be quite efficient, even removing most traces of structural remains. Many of these issues are less likely to impact the Civil War and pre-twentieth-century military resources. Hardesty and Little (2000) provide guidance on the significance of Civil War-era military sites, and many of their research questions are applicable here.

### ***Forts and Earthworks***

- How does the built environment compare with engineering designs?
- If structures are not similar to designs, why were they changed or built?
- Is the built environment typical of other forts and earthworks of the period?
- How were the physical remains constructed? What materials were used?
- What infrastructure was installed, for instance, to improve drainage in wet areas?
- Can we determine the firing directions of artillery?
- Where were the encampments for soldiers assigned to the fort or earthworks?
- What were the living conditions like? What was everyday life like?
- Can associated artifacts be used to identify the units stationed at the site?
- Is there a difference between the material remains associated with African-American troops and those of white troops?
- How does the landscape of forts and earthworks change through time and especially between wars?

### ***Encampments***

- How were troops sheltered? What is the size and dimensions of shelters?
- Can refuse and trash pits be used to reveal the everyday life in encampments? What were the day to day activities?

- Were foodstuffs issued by the military or scavenged from the nearby countryside?
- Does the archeological evidence differ from written accounts about camp life, and if so, how?
- Are burials present due to the high rates of mortality associated with diseases, or were the remains removed to cemeteries?
- Can the ammunition reveal the types of weapons used and the units located in the encampments?
- Are there differences in material culture or food remains between units from different states or regions?
- Did troops receive medical care at encampments? If so, were special facilities created?
- What type of medical attention was administered? How does this reveal information on aspects of nineteenth-century medical treatment in general?

### ***Data Requirements***

**Archeological:** Features with depositional integrity and a wide variety of identifiable associations, inclusive of structural remains; deposits with sufficient quantity and variety of materials to support statistically valid analyses; features such as foundations indicating spatial organization or sheet refuse indicative of activity areas; specialized activity areas such as may be found at forts and encampments

**Primary Documentary Sources:** Military records; newspapers; personal papers; oral histories; photographs; maps; plan maps; construction engineering maps, etc.

**Contextual Sources:** Military history; contract reports on similar property type; relevant historical and anthropological literature; oral history

**Artifacts:** A range of artifacts attributable to modified South (1977) categories from identifiable contexts (feature or midden); an adequate quantity of distinctive artifacts to support interpretations

**Ecofacts:** Faunal analysis: wild versus domestic species; preference in species or meat cuts; floral analysis: botanical remains (seeds, pits, pollen, kernels) indicative of diet

