

To Whom It May Concern:

Most anything related to the town of Edgecomb, Maine includes Fort Edgecomb. It's our "thing." Google "Edgecomb" and you'll get a picture of the fort. Paw through municipal documentation and you'll find its outline wherever you look. It's the favicon of our town website, the seal of our Fire Department, and the symbol of our historical society. The fort and its grounds are seared into the hearts of every member of town, and it's a cherished location to all of us. This site is the closest thing our little town has to a park: its upkeep is an extremely important and constant topic of debate. Unfortunately, like many such sites in the state, it has fallen into disrepair. Of particular concern are the stone steps leading to the water from the fort, which are now loose and pose a safety risk to those who aren't so sure of foot (this describes a large portion of the visitors.) Please see some attached photos showing the state of the facilities.

In November 2023, we had a meeting with the State to discuss the ailing stairs and other maintenance and improvements to the park, including new informational kiosks to replace the faded ones that are currently in place. There has been no progress or news since then, though time and the elements have continued to have their way with the stairs. We are extremely hopeful that LD762 will pass, and that some of the funding will trickle down to our old weathered old blockhouse. It's a beautiful building on a beautiful peninsula, and has a rich history. While it never saw much attention during wartime, the Fort is most definitely worthy of our attention now.

Best,

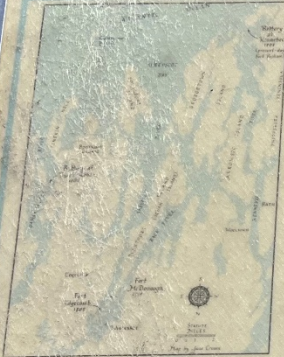
Forrest Carver

Edgecomb Historical Society





The War of 1812 at Fort Edgcomb



Fort Edgcomb was one of four batteries, or forts, built by the U.S. in this area. All had waterfront earthworks that protected four cannon emplacements. The map, which looks south from Fort Edgcomb, shows two of the other batteries, one at the mouth of the Penobscot River and one on an island in the Danverscote River. Another was on the St. George River in Thomaston. In 1809, Capt. John Binney took command of Fort Edgcomb. He also had charge of the other three batteries. His funds were so limited that he could not even purchase a horse for transportation to these distant posts.

In 1814, widespread concern about the British Navy led local militias to build additional batteries in order to strengthen this area's defenses. One such battery was Fort Mifflin, a rough across from Fort Edgcomb on Westport Island.

The War of 1812 grew out of several actions by Great Britain that were hostile to American shipping and trade. The war tested America's small navy and coastal defenses. Attacks occurred all along the east coast, including Washington D.C., where the British burned the capital building and the President's home in 1814.

At the war's beginning, Fort Edgcomb saw little activity, except from May through August, 1812. There, nearly fifty prisoners of war, captured from three British ships by American privateers, were retained at the fort.

In 1814, Maine's coast became a focus for England's powerful navy. After the sieges of Eastport and Castine, the British occupied the District of Maine as far south as the Penobscot River.

Reports reached Wiscasset that it was the next target and alarm spread throughout the area in September, 1814. Local militia units marched to Wiscasset to strengthen defenses, and Fort Edgcomb became a center of activity. One militia member described the scene: "Saturday, government rations were distributed, salt beef, hard bread, coffee without milk or sugar, and a pint of whiskey. The day was spent parading the streets of the town [Wiscasset] to allay the alarm, though perhaps half the guns would not discharge if ordered to fire."

Moses Davis, who lived next to Fort Edgcomb, also described the sense of alarm beginning September 20, 1814: "Tuesday 20...soldiers coming & going constantly, everybody seems to be in alarm. Moses sent over to Winthrop Dodge's a load of goods to get them out of

the way of the British. Wednesday 21...took 9 o'clock to get in order to send boats away for the rest of the evening, packed up six to seven barrels of beef and coming all this while.

British ships did not sail to Wiscasset as feared. After five months, the British returned home. On February 14, 1814, James Barry wrote of his duty. "News came of peace between Britain and America, which made a great rejoicing and firing cannon at Wiscasset and at the fort."

The Civil War at Fort Edgcomb

In 1816, the fort's garrison was transferred to Boston and the cannons were removed.

All lay quiet here until the Civil War's summer of 1864, when the Confederate cruiser Tallahassee headed north to raid the Quaker commercial fishing fleet. The Tallahassee destroyed or captured numerous vessels on its voyage, including fishing boats from nearby Southport and Boothbay. Rumors hit Wiscasset that the Tallahassee's captain planned a raid on the town.

Fort Edgcomb buzzed with activity once again and volunteers came to arm it. With the original

cannon no longer available, the militia raised money to purchase new cannons to be used at the fort.

Wiscasset prepared for the day's fight for about a month and the Tallahassee was out of Maine waters. With these threats gone, Fort Edgcomb lay quiet once again.



Tallahassee August 18, 1864
The Tallahassee pictured in the neutral port of Halifax, Nova Scotia, after its coastal raid. Courtesy of Maritime Museum of the Atlantic

"Everybody seems to be in alarm"

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