



The Great Island gem releases new views

Volunteer reclamation shines new light on Fort Stark

Story by Bill Drew, Photos by Bill Drew (BD) and Jim Cerny (JC)

In the article on Fort Stark in the [September issue](#) of *Rye Reflections*, there is a brief history of the geographical area, factors leading up to the current situation, and a citizens approach to addressing challenges.

Efforts have begun with this abandoned, neglected, N.H. State Park, situated along the New Hampshire shoreline, to reclaim it for recreational use. With lots of volunteer effort this summer, the polishing of various facets of this jewel has yielded outstanding views of the adjacent territory. The elimination of some of the floral overgrowth and barriers has allowed the light to shine in. The work has just begun but it shows what can be achieved when citizens work together.

NEW VIEWS

Beginning a visual tour, we start by looking north toward Maine.



In the foreground is the northeastern tip of New Castle Island with Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse, and Pepperell Cove with Kittery Point, Maine, in the background.



Moving clockwise to the northeast, there is Wood Island with a former U.S.Coast Guard station, long ago abandoned, with Gerrish Island, Maine, in the background.



Looking seaward to the east, there is [Whaleback Lighthouse](#) and the entrance to the Piscataqua River.



Moving around to the southeast and south, Odiorne Point comes into view over the rock breakwater that protects Little Harbor.



Finally, looking west, into Little Harbor, we see the pleasure boats at the marina with the towers of the Hotel Wentworth visible at the top of the hill at the right.

MANUAL LABOR CONTINUES – New views are being unfurled:

Moving off of the parade ground onto the slopes toward the ocean, the manual effort of vine removal and bush and tree trimming continues. The north side of the slope leading to the oceanside ridge has now been trimmed.



Jane Page, Gary Bashline, and Curt Gillespie work the slope in picking up leftover bits of brush. (BD)

On a recent extremely hot day, Jenny Rosenson said that, Peter (Rice) had the volunteers, informally known at the Fort Stark Brigade, "attacking the ridge."



Carol White and Dave McGuckin knock down the barriers to improve the view. (BD)

The path along the ridge has heavy undergrowth and absolutely no horizon in sight. The Brigade has its sights on it now. The top of the white tower of the HECF building can be seen through the trees at the right.



All sorts of plant and bird life is observed and identified (BD)

VISITORS

With the word getting out that Fort Stark is a place to visit and observe, a greater number of individuals, from many backgrounds, have participated in and taken advantage of this wonderful recreational facility including: fishing, sunbathing, scuba diving, taking pictures, kayaking, and just enjoying nature at the water's edge.

Visitors from the young, to the young at heart have shown up.



Mothers, out for a ride with the family, are seen (BD)



The Crosbys; Irene, Harold, and Phyllis, Wild Rose Lane residents, check in on what's going on down at the point (JC)

From old time connections with the past, to new experiences for a pair of New Castle visitors:



Barry Lavigne II, and wife Ann-Marie. They formerly lived in New Castle and came back from their home in Epping to see the changes (BD)



Bart and Joyce Derrick, of Ocean View Delaware, have been staying at the Wentworth Hotel. They were directed to observe the "goings-on" at Fort Stark (BD)

CELEBRATION TIME

To cap off the efforts of the summer, in the middle of September a community picnic was held. It gave the opportunity for many to see the work that has been accomplished and a chance to discuss the future.

Commissioner George Bald, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development, NH State Representative David Borden, and Brian Warburton, Seacoast Area Director of the NH State Parks attended. They were immediately put to work. David Borden supplied the cider press and apples. George Bald immediately went to work crushing apples for the first run of cider.



Commissioner George Bald (JC)



Representative David Borden (JC)

The result of their efforts was a cider toast to the accomplishments that have been made and the future of Fort Stark.



From left to right: unknown, Brian Warburton, Seacoast Area Director, NH State Parks, George Bald, David Borden, Donna Cerny, Nancy Borden, and foreground, unknown (JC)

The FUTURE

A different kind of view is being nurtured, as an appreciation of what Fort Stark has to offer becomes clearer. Initially, some individuals had a very dim view of the value of the efforts at Fort Stark. They said no constructive effort could be accomplished without the input of a significant amount of funds.

They have been shown what volunteer manpower can accomplish. Another issue put forth is the extreme liability problem with respect to dangers that are present at the site. This issue has been faced and dealt with at many other State Park sites. It will not be a deterrent to move ahead with future plans.

With the opening of vistas on the peninsula, a whole host of outside support has been offered. The is getting the word out that there are changes being made at Fort Stark. It's instilling a curiosity in people for what is really happening here and could happen here in the future.

An NPR (National Public Radio) [segment on Fort Stark](#) was prepared by Roger Wood, for NPR in late September. Presentations have been made, both publicly via newspapers and audience events, and privately to the NH State Parks Department and local town government. People, with ties to the Island of New Castle, have volunteered legal support and Web site assistance in



Brigade leader, Peter Rice, pointing out the future to Roger Wood, interviewer for National Public Radio (JC)

support of the efforts of the newly formed group, the Friends of Fort Stark.

The driving force to bring things together is the *will* to get results.

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