

Step back in time... at the historic Fort Ebey State Park



Visitors can stand on the bluff at Fort Ebey State Park and let their imaginations take them back to the 1940s, when the country was in turmoil as the United States entered World War II.

Established in 1942, Fort Ebey was one of the last forts built in the Puget Sound harbor defense system. Its single fortification, Battery 248, was designed with the newest technology available, including radar to help aim the guns and camouflage to hide the battery from aerial view. Two 6-inch shielded guns were mounted at Fort Ebey in 1943.

Though the fort was manned until 1948, it was declared surplus in 1947. The system of coastal fortifications to defense U.S. harbors became obsolete after World War II.

Fort Ebey lies within the traditional territory of multiple southern Coast Salish tribes who hunted large mammals and harvested Camas bulbs, roots, nuts and berries on the land, and used the waters for fishing and shellfish harvesting. The area was homesteaded in the 1850s.

The fort was acquired by Washington State Parks in 1968 and opened to the public in 1981.



Right: An unidentified soldier stands by one of the two, six-inch guns location at Fort Ebey.

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Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission



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Washington State Parks

Your Guide to Fort Ebey's WW II Gun Battery



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Battery Henry M. Merriam

Battery 248 was officially named after Colonel Henry M. Merriam, who was the commander of Puget Sound Harbor Defense in the 1920s. However, the fort was decommissioned before the name was placed on the battery entrances.

Features of the fort

Battery 248 was positioned with a view out the Strait of Juan de Fuca toward the open ocean. Observers stationed in small concrete structures along the bluff used telescopes to target the locations of enemy vessels, then relayed the information to plotters inside the battery. Two of these observation stations (called base end stations) are still in place and can be accessed from the Bluff Trail. Radar, a new technology at the time, also was used at Fort Ebey.

Fort Ebey's barracks were located near where the park office is today. Other facilities included a barber shop, library, bowling alley and fire station. The remains of an elevated 100,000 gallon wooden water tank can be seen along the Water Tower Trail.

Tree wells

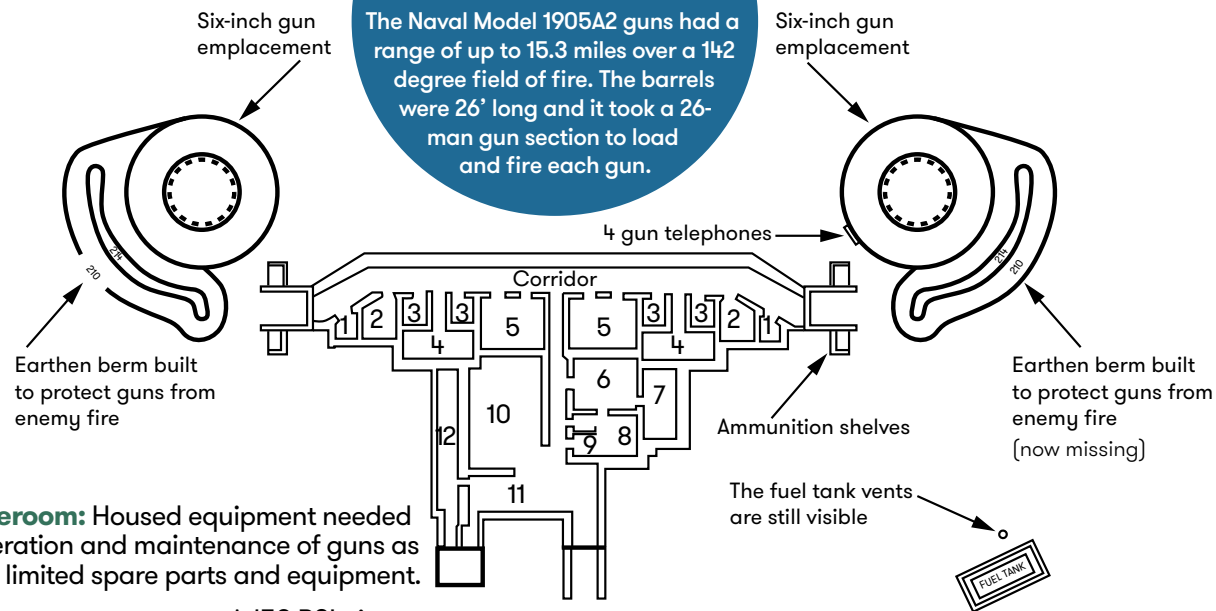
A unique feature of Battery 248 are its tree wells. When the battery was covered with dirt, brick enclosures were built around some trees to keep them alive so they could provide camouflage for the fort. Ivy and gorse also were planted for camouflage.

Guns on the bluff

Fort Ebey's main armament was two six-inch guns. The guns could fire a projectile weighing 108 pounds at moving targets up to 15 miles away every 12 seconds. Battery 248 was never fired against an enemy target, but the soldiers had plenty of practice. In fact, in 1944, Battery C, 14th Coast Artillery Corps won an international competition by scoring 22 hits in 18 rounds (certain hits counted twice) on a target towed at 14,000 yards, simulating a destroyer. As then Commanding Officer Major Samuel Kelley said, "These were fantastic guns."

The End

After the war, Fort Ebey's guns were cut up and melted down for scrap. Changing methods of warfare, including long-range bombing, missile technology and the lack of any foreseeable naval threat, made the coastal forts obsolete. The Coast Artillery Corps was disbanded in 1950. Fort Ebey was used by the Army Corps of Engineers from 1946 to 1948, and then by the Navy for a short period. The property was acquired by the state of Washington in 1968 and developed as a state park in 1981.



1. Storeroom: Housed equipment needed for operation and maintenance of guns as well as limited spare parts and equipment.

2. Air compressor room: A 150 PSI air compressor was used to blow debris out of the gun barrel after firing. This made swabbing the barrel unnecessary and greatly decreased reloading times.

3. Shell room: These rooms could store up to 100 high explosive (HE) projectiles that weighed 90 pounds each.

4. Shell room: Up to 400 armor-piercing (AP) projectiles weighing 108 pounds each could be stored in these rooms. Non-explosive cast iron target practice shells, dummy projectiles for loading practice and sub-caliber fire training rounds also were stored here.

5. Powder room: Sealed metal canisters containing one 32-pound HE or 37-pound AP powder charge apiece were stored here. Temperature and humidity were monitored in these rooms, as they could affect powder ignition.

6. Plotting room: This "brain center" of the fort communicated with the observation stations, radar tower and guns. During visual operations, information about location of targets was called in from base end stations and transferred to the plotting board. Range and direction determination equipment were used to pinpoint target location, then firing information was sent to the gun crews. When the guns were being fired using radar (radar ops), this room served as the Battery Commander Station.

7. Spotting room: After the guns were fired, spotters in the base end stations watched for the splash or explosion of projectile impact, then called in corrections to the spotting room, where the spotting board was used to make adjustments for the next shot. The fire control switchboard, radio communications center and a primitive computer also were located here.

8. Latrine: Restroom and shower.

9. Chemical warfare service room: This room, along with the plotting and spotting rooms and latrine, were gas proofed to protect the occupants in case of chemical attack. The pressurized air was filtered by carbon scrubbers located here. There also was an air conditioning unit in this room.

10. Power room: Three 125 KVA 440v diesel generator sets with distribution panels, motor generators and associated equipment occupied this room. Just one generator could actually power the entire battery. The big machines made this a crowded – and loud – space.

11. Water cooler room: Contained evaporative coolers for the diesel engines.

12. Muffler gallery: Mufflers for the diesels ran the length of the gallery supported by overhead brackets and vented outside. An exhaust fan and small hot water boiler shared this space.