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 defend 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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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.