



## The Newest Addition to GGNRA

Founded as an Army post more than 100 years ago, Fort Baker now begins a new chapter as the last military site to transfer to Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In 1972, legislation establishing the park included Fort Baker within park boundaries. In 1986, much of the open space surrounding the fort transferred from the Army to the National Park Service. The final transfer of property occurred on August 1, 2002; 91 acres at the heart of Fort Baker - an intact collection of over two dozen historic military buildings dating from the turn-of-the-century, surrounding the ten acre parade ground.

The 335-acre Fort Baker site is fronted by Horseshoe Cove and over a mile of relatively pristine rocky bay shoreline. The natural values of the surrounding open space and hillsides, which contain habitat for the endangered mission blue butterfly, contribute to the site's significance. With less fog and warmer temperatures than other coastal sites, Fort Baker offers quiet solitude in a spectacular setting.

## Fort Baker's Early History

The Coast Miwok inhabited the Fort Baker area prior to its exploration and settlement by Europeans. Wetlands, marshes and streams provided many resources of daily living for the indigenous peoples. The adjacent land often served as seasonal encampments or villages.

The area's recorded history began in 1775, when Juan Manuel de Ayala's vessel San Carlos entered San Francisco Bay. At the end of the Mexican War in 1848, this area, part of William Antonio Richardson's vast Rancho Sausalito, began to pass on to real estate speculators.

## The Military Years



Fort Baker is named for Edward Dickenson Baker, a former U.S. Senator from Oregon. Active in California politics in the 1850s, Baker lost his life while leading a regiment of Union troops in the Civil War. He and his wife are buried in the San Francisco National Cemetery at the Presidio.

In 1866, the United States government acquired the site and established a military reservation along the Marin Headlands to safeguard San Francisco Bay. Relatively simple earthwork batteries were constructed in the 1870s. One of these, Battery Cavallo, is a particularly fine example of seacoast fortifications of that period.

In the 1890's, Fort Baker was established, and as part of a reconstruction of coastal fortifications for major U.S. harbors, massive concrete batteries with the latest in long range guns were built along the bluffs. By 1910 the construction of the post was essentially complete; eleven new Colonial Revival-style homes, barracks and community buildings for the troops manning the batteries, were laid out in a curve around a grassy parade ground with plantings of pepper, elm and eucalyptus trees to reduce wind and dust.

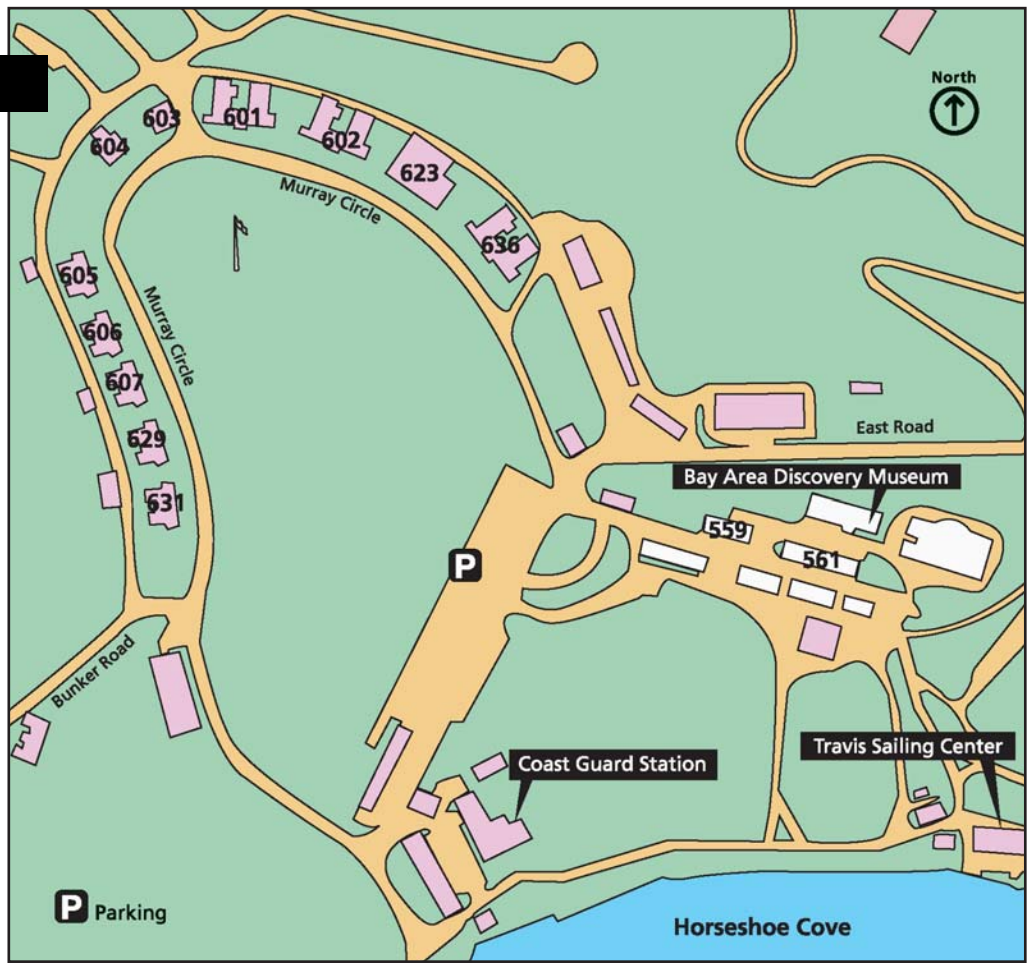
After World War I, most of the long range guns were removed, and the post reverted to caretaker status. But as world tensions increased in the 1930s, Fort Baker was reactivated as a mine depot. Over three hundred underwater mines guarded the Golden Gate during World War II, tended by the Army's "navy" of mine vessels berthed at Fort Baker, and the guns of Battery Yates were manned against surprise surface raids.

In the Cold War years, the buildings at Fort Baker were used for training Army Reserve troops and as headquarters for the anti-aircraft missile units defending the Bay Area. With the end of the Cold War, the Army's presence at the historic post was significantly reduced. Now this former Army site will be reborn as part of a national park; the last of nine dramatic "post to park" conversions that have created much of GGNRA.



## Murray Circle Buildings

- 559 Quartermaster and Subsistence storehouse (1902 - now BADM)
- 561 Wagon shed (1903 - now BADM)
- 601 Barracks (1903)
- 602 Barracks (1902 - now NPS)
- 603 Post Headquarters (1903)
- 604 Commanding officer's quarters (1903)
- 605 Duplex captains' quarters (1902)
- 606 Duplex lieutenants' quarters (1902)
- 607 Duplex captains' quarters (1903)
- 623 Gymnasium (1904)
- 629 Duplex lieutenants' quarters (1904)
- 631 Duplex captains' quarters (1904)
- 636 Barracks (1907)



## The Future of Fort Baker

The park service is charting a future for Fort Baker that centers on preserving the post's nationally significant historic and natural features, while creating new opportunities for public learning, exchange, and enjoyment. At the heart of the proposed plan is creation of a retreat and conference center in the historic buildings surrounding the parade ground. The center will include a nonprofit component, the Fort Baker Institute, which will provide programs relating to the NPS mission of conservation, recreation, stewardship and resource protection.

Other elements of the plan are the restoration of Horseshoe Cove's beach and waterfront, interpretive signs, improved and accessible trails and a picnic area. Plans also call for the protection and enhancement of historic features, more than 40 acres of habitat enhancement and restoration, including 20 acres of habitat for the endangered mission blue butterfly, and the creation of an NPS visitor center.

## Fort Baker Park Partners

### Bay Area Discovery Museum

The museum was founded in 1987 and moved to Fort Baker in 1991. It has a national reputation for children's educational programs and has brought lively activity to the post. The museum began the first phase of an expansion program this summer, funded through private philanthropy. This work should be complete by Fall 2003. For program information call (415) 487-4398.

### Travis Sailing Center

Located on the east side of Horseshoe Cove, the Sailing Center is operated by the U.S. Air Force and offers sailing instruction and boat rentals. For information call (415) 332-2319.

### U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard at Fort Baker operates in one of the world's most challenging marine environments, providing search and rescue and other activities from Point Reyes to Pilar Point.



Illustration by Chris Grubbs