In a turn around of service, the NYC Fire Department has restored security at Fort Totten’s main gate. A spokesman for the FDNY stated that “Light Duty” NYC Firefighters as well as private security guards will man the gate around the clock but noted that could change. The return of front gate security marked the end of a three month lapse after the FDNY abruptly ended service with little warning in February of this year. In an agreement reached in 1999, the FDNY is responsible for security at the front gate and many speculate that is why they are back.

Local residents and civic groups were quite vocal about their displeasure and staged a protest rally at the front gate in early March. Residents demanded that security be reestablished at the gate to prevent potential vandalism to the historic buildings in the park and surrounding neighborhood. It was noted that parts of the original fort had been marked with graffiti during the lapse. People were urged to call the city’s 311 hotline to register a complaint (which many did). Thankfully, no injuries were reported as a result of the security lapse.

A number of elected officials were at the protest rally. The Friends of Fort Totten Parks, BTCA were instrumental in helping plan the protest and thankful for all the support by local residents and elected officials. Dorothy Lewandowski (Queens Parks Commissioner) was also happy to see security established back at the front gate for the busier summer months.

A Soldier’s Daring Escape
Picked the Lock of Fort Totten Guard House and Knocked Down Opposing Sentry.

Another soldier escaped from the guardhouse at Fort Totten, Willets Point, Queens, yesterday morning. Only a week ago Private Monfort of the Eighty-seventh Company Coast Artillery picked the lock of the guardhouse and escaped. Yesterday morning about 2 o’clock John Linden of the One Hundred and First Company followed his example and succeeded in getting away.

Linden, after getting out of the guardhouse, was challenged by the sentry on post. He attacked the sentry and knocked him down, and then took away his gun. He retreated in the direction of the shore, keeping the gun leveled at the sentry. When he got away a good distance he turned and ran.

then the sentry gave the alarm and a squad of men was turned out to try to effect the man’s capture, but found no trace of him. It is thought he boarded some passing vessel. The sentry has been placed under arrest.

Major Conrad Murray, who is in command at the fort, is much wrought up over this second escape and is making a rigid investigation.

Halloween Festival at Fort Totten

Saturday 10/24 12 noon- 4 pm
(rain date Sunday 10/25)

A full day of FREE family fun. Games, rides, crafts, sack races, costume contests, pumpkin patches, goodie bags you name it—it’s happening! Everyone is encouraged to wear a costume! Even the dogs wear them!

Nighttime Haunted Lantern Tours

Friday 10/30 & Saturday 10/31 6.30 - 8.30 pm

Join the Park Urban Rangers and Friends of Fort Totten Parks Volunteers as they mix history with Halloween on a spooky lantern tour of the historic Water Battery at Fort Totten. Not recommended for small children as it really is spooky.

Fort on Haunted Hill

West Nile Virus activity* detected recently in the following
Queens zip codes:  11101, 11356, 11357, 11360, 11365, 11379, 11413 and 11415

Neighborhoods:  Bay Terrace, Blissville, Cambria Heights, College Point, Kew Gardens, Laurelton, Middle Village, Pomonok, West Maspeth and Whitestone

Now is the time for New Yorkers – especially people over 50 – to take personal precautions to prevent mosquito bites:

- Use repellents that contain DEET, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, IR3535, or Picaridin and ALWAYS follow label instructions.
- If outside from dusk to dawn, wear protective clothing. If possible, such as loose-fitting pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks.
- Make sure that your doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Fix or replace screens that have tears or holes.

Reduce mosquito exposure around your home:

- Eliminate any standing water that collects on your property.
- Remind or help neighbors to eliminate standing water on their properties.
- Call 311 to report standing water.

For more information about West Nile virus, call 311, or go to www.nyc.gov/health.

INFORMATIONAL TOUCH SCREEN KIOSK AT FORT TOTTEN PARK VISITORS CENTER

This past spring, with grant assistance by State Senator Frank Padavan, the Friends of Fort Totten Parks donated an Information Kiosk to the Fort Totten Park Visitors Center. The kiosk was created by IKS Technologies and is their E2 model. It is a full touch 19 inch LCD screen with an amplified speaker system and a Fort Totten Parks home page. From the home page, you can select to view 5 different videos on Fort Totten: The Fort Totten Story, It's My Park: Fort Totten, Coastal Artillery in Action, Cities of the Underworld, and Fort Totten: The Face of Freedom. Within the near future, the NYC Parks website will also be available on the home page.
The peregrine falcon is a bird of prey. Adults have blue-gray wings, dark brown backs, a buff colored underside and white faces with a black tear stripe on their cheeks. They have a hooked beaks and strong talons. Their name comes from the Latin word peregrinus, which means “to wander”. They are commonly referred to as the Duck Hawk. Peregrine falcons are the fastest flying birds in the world – they are able to dive at 200 mph.

**Peregrine Falcon**

*Falco peregrinus*

The peregrine falcon is a bird of prey. Adults have blue-gray wings, dark brown backs, a buff colored underside and white faces with a black tear stripe on their cheeks. They have a hooked beaks and strong talons. Their name comes from the Latin word peregrinus, which means “to wander”. They are commonly referred to as the Duck Hawk. Peregrine falcons are the fastest flying birds in the world – they are able to dive at 200 mph.
**Officers of the Friends of Fort Totten Parks**

Co-President    Joe Branzetti  
Co-President    Al Evans  
1st Vice President    Gary Forster  
2nd Vice President    Phil Konigsberg  
Treasurer    Lu Kernahan  
Corresponding Secretary    Phil Konigsberg  
Secretary    Sylvia Johnson

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**OUR FLAG**

**Sons in Service Flag**

The “Sons in Service” flag, “Blue Star Banner”, or as presently known as the “Service Flag” dates back to World War I. Designed by Captain Robert L. Queisser (a member of the US ARMY 5th Ohio Infantry) in 1917 to honor his two sons serving in France.

The US Congress chartered the “Blue Mothers of America” as a Veterans service organization, and in 1967 the Department of Defense issued a directive (ratified by an Act of Congress) that authorized the Service Flag to be used as a method of honoring immediate family members serving in the US Armed Forces.

It’s a way for families to let it be known they have a family member serving their country in the military.

The flag is comprised of a blue star centered in a field of white, surrounded by a red border for an active member of the service. The star is covered or replaced with a gold star if the family member was killed in action.

If a family had multiple members serving, additional stars were set in the field of white.

The flag could be flown in a window at home and is often seen nowadays in the window of a passing vehicle.

In speaking of the service flag Woodrow Wilson was quoted as saying, “The world should know of those who give so much for liberty. The dearest thing in all the world to a father and mother—their children.”
The Commanding Officer’s House, 422 Weaver Avenue, is a 12,587 square foot, three story brick building overlooking the historic Parade Grounds at Fort Totten. A beautiful structure reminiscent of Gone With the Wind’s Tara, this building was originally designed as a single family dwelling. It was constructed in 1909 at a cost of $25,402 and designated as the Commanding General’s quarters. Set in a landscape of mature trees, shrubs and lawn, the building features brick in a Flemish bond pattern with brick quoins and a 2 ½ story, front-gable portico which extends from the façade of the building supported by four fluted columns (two on each side).

There are only two others in the United States of similar “southern style” columnar fashion. One is located at Fort Monroe, Virginia and the other at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. The enclosed front sun porch is not original and is exclusive to this Fort Totten home. The living room, dining room and master bedroom have three of the four remaining and ornate fireplaces. The original large hearth in the reception hall has been removed. The fourth remaining fireplace can be found in the impressive wooden paneled library that also features its own entrance. Another feature that can still be found in this home is the center balcony located over the double door entrance. This balcony served the resident commander a perfect panorama of the Parade Grounds as he reviewed his troops.

Building 422 served as the Commanding Officer’s home until the base closed. It was then occupied on an interim basis by the Professional Design Center. The building now serves as the New York City Parks Department’s Northeast Queens headquarters.
MANY FRIENDS OF FORT TOTTEN AS WELL AS THOSE WHO SERVED AT THE FORT ALONG WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE HEARD VARIOUS AND WILD STORIES OF A TUNNEL CONNECTING FT. TOTTEN TO FT. SCHUYLER OVER THE DECADES. THIS TUNNEL WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN USED FOR A VARIETY OF USES FROM AN ESCAPE TUNNEL TO SMUGGLING ALCOHOL DURING PROHIBITION TIMES! DEAD END CORRIDORS, FLOODED DOWNWARD SLOPING HALLWAYS AND WALLED UP CHAMBERS FUELED THIS MYTH FOR YEARS. EVEN OUR OWN CO-PRESIDENT JOE BRANZETTI WAS TOLD A STORY RECENTLY WHILE DELIVERING THE SPRING NEWSLETTER TO LOCAL RESIDENTS. HE WAS TOLD OF A SECRET SOCIETY THAT KNOWS OF THE TUNNEL AND ENTRANCE TO THE SECRET CLUB INVOLVED EATING BBQ’D BATS! EVEN THE HISTORY CHANNEL WAS INTERESTED ENOUGH TO SPECULATE ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE TUNNEL AS WELL, AND PRODUCED A PROGRAM OUTLINING THE “FACTS.” FACT IS—IT PROVED LITTLE.

TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO PROVE THERE WAS IN FACT A TUNNEL THAT CONNECTED THE TWO FORTS. THE DEPT OF PARKS HAS BEEN STEADFAST IN THEIR POSITION OVER THE YEARS THAT NO CREDIBLE EVIDENCE INDICATES THERE EVER WAS OR IS A TUNNEL CONNECTING THE TWO FAMOUS FARMS.

IN RESEARCHING THE SUBJECT I CAME UPON A RATIONAL EXPLANATION BY A FORMER GRADUATE OF FT. SCHUYLER WHO TELLS A VERY BELIEVABLE STORY. BRENDAN THOMSON (CLASS OF 1991) IS QUOTED AS STATING THE FOLLOWING,

“Perhaps I can clear up a little of the mystery concerning the Fort Schuyler/Fort Totten “tunnel.” I am a graduate of the SUNY Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, and one might say I have an inside knowledge of the fort. The tunnel in question was actually part of the Endicott fortification period (1890 - 1910) which included in its defense scheme, electric torpedoes. The modern day terminology is underwater minefield. Don’t worry, they’re no longer there! A section of Fort Schuyler’s southwest casement was designated as the control station for the underwater mine field that stretched across to Fort Totten. This casement was fitted with either large batteries or generators for the electric firing of the mines. The cables that serviced these mines were protected via an underground tunnel that stretched from the interior of Fort Schuyler to the seawall. At the seawall, the cables were routed underwater to the minefield. The tunnel only existed to protect the cables and terminated at the seawall. The southwest casement was additionally strengthened due to a study that fire from City Island (taken over by hypothetical enemy and fortified with large rifled cannon) could breach the Fort’s walls and render the minefield useless. Adjacent casements were filled with sand and concrete to guard against this bombardment. The college has since emptied one of these casements for use as a classroom space. The corner of the fort is still cemented-in, however, as well as a “blister” on the side of the fort that also afforded protection. There are documents in the Fort’s library that show a plan and profile view of the mining casement and its tunnel.

I have found reference to the fact that the entrance to this tunnel was covered over during the conversion of the Fort to SUNY Maritime College. The entrance to this tunnel was covered over by a concrete slab, upon which now sits a large transformer. There is a new service tunnel from the boiler plant exterior to the fort that supplies the steam for heating. This is of concrete construction though and dates back only a few decades and should not be confused with the older tunnel.”

BASICALLY, (ACCORDING TO MR. THOMSON) THERE WAS A PARTIAL SERVICE TUNNEL USED TO SUPPLY AND/OR PROTECT ELECTRICAL POWER LINES TO A STRING OF UNDERWATER FLOATING MINES OFF FT. SCHUYLER, BUT NOT A TUNNEL CONNECTING THE TWO FARMS. UNDERWATER MINES WERE DEVELOPED AT FT. TOTTEN AND WERE A KEY PART IN THE DEFENSE OF THE EAST RIVER APPROACH INTO NEW YORK HARBOR. ONE CAN EASILY ASSUME THAT FT. TOTTEN HAD A SIMILAR TUNNEL TO SERVICE ANY FLOATING MINES LOCATED CLOSER TO THEIR SHORES. THUS THE TUNNEL STORY (LEAST TO MY OPINION) IS LAID TO REST.

SOURCE: Ft. Schuyler Maritime Alumni Association
Legendary Tunnel of 1862 Traced at Fort Totten
SOLDIER FINDS TUBE RUNNING BENEATH SOUND Designed in War Scheme, it may extend 2 ½ miles to Schuyler.

As the water began to trickle into the tunnel Sgt. Maj. Clay Doster threw aside his flashlight and began to dig tentatively at the wall of mud before him. The water began to come faster. He waited for a moment and then, turning on his stomach, began to wriggle back the way he had come.

He wriggled some 500 yards through a tube four feet wide and three feet deep until he came to the surface. Then he ran very fast to the Post Headquarters of the 62nd Coast Artillery Regiment and Fort Totten.

“I found the tunnel,” he shouted. “The tunnel under the old fort was supposed to go under the Sound to Fort Schuyler! It really exists!”

DATES BACK TO 1862
And so it was the Legendary Tunnel of Fort Totten, supposed to be under the old fortifications that were begun in 1862 and never completed, was discovered.

The tunnel is about seven feet deep, with a winding staircase beginning at what is supposed to be the second level of the old fortifications and winding downward toward the Sound. How far the tunnel goes has not yet been ascertained. It is possible that it stretches the whole two and one-half miles under the Sound to Fort Schuyler. Certainly it does lead directly under water, a secret passageway designed during the Civil War to carry the Army personnel under fire from one fort to the other.

The tunnel was the focal point of an elaborately designed fortification, part of which still stands. The entrance is opposite an old powder crypt, built of the same kind of granite blocks set in lead that are used throughout the old fort. Damp, dark passageways, dripping with stalactites, chilly on the hottest summer day, connect the crypt and tunnel with the fortifications proper.
Thanks to a grant from Assemblywoman Ann-Margaret Carozza, The Friends Of Fort Totten Parks were able to acquire and then present to the Parks Department Visitor Center a scale model of the famous “Rodman Gun” once used at Fort Totten.

Named after its inventor Thomas J Rodman (pictured right), this cannon became the work horse of the US Military between 1861 and 1871. These tremendous cannons were the primary cannon of choice along our coasts for over 30 years and weighed in at 25 tons each! The cannons were built in 8, 10, 13, 15 & 20 inch bore (the width of the cannon ball they could fire).

Although never fired in anger, the Rodman cannon was test fired at Sandy Hook, New Jersey. It was reported that a 130 pound sack of black powder used in the cannon could fire a 440 pound cannon shell over 3.5 miles. At 1,000 yards, the cannon shot could pierce 10 inches of iron. No warship of the time could handle such an onslaught of firepower.

As stated in an annual report by The Chief of Engineers in his 1877 annual report, “Our largest guns, of which we have any number, is a 15 inch smooth bore. We have about 325 of them for our entire coast of 12,600 miles.”

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Friends of Fort Totten Parks Donor
Please join us in shaping the future of Fort Totten Parks by making a donation.

Name ___________________________ Date ____________
Address ___________________________________________
City __________________ State __________ Zip __________
E-mail ____________________________________________
(For notices, updates and events — We do not share your E-mail with third parties)

Please make checks payable and mail to: Friends of Fort Totten Parks, P.O. Box 604984, Bayside, NY 11360
☐$5 ☐$10 ☐$25 ☐Other __________

Are you interested in volunteering with our group? ☐Yes ☐No
(We welcome your suggestions under separate note or via e-mail, FriendsofFortTottenParks@Yahoo.com)

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

9/5    Crafty Totten Kids   10 am-11:30 am
      Free Arts and Crafts at the Chapel.

9/12   Back to School Festival   12 noon-4 pm
      A free afternoon of fun in the park including
      arts & crafts, projects games and other fun
      activities. Location — Little Neck Bay Park

10/5   Annual Meeting   7pm
      Friends of Fort Totten Parks
      at the Chapel on the Base

10/24  Fort on Haunted Hill   12 noon-4 pm
      Halloween Festival (rain date 10/25)
      @ Fort Totten Parade Grounds
      Join us for a free day of spooky family fun.
      Games, rides, craft projects, costume contest, inflatables hay rides, a pumpkin
      patch and goodie bags.

10/25  Totten Trot Race   9 am
      Location — Bayside Historical Society

10/30  Nighttime Haunted   6:30 pm-8:30 pm

10/31  Lantern Tours
      Join the Urban Park Rangers and FOFTP
      volunteers as they mix history with
      Halloween on a spooky lantern tour of the
      historic Water Battery at Fort Totten.

11/14  Crafty Totten Kids   10:30 am-12 noon
      Free Arts and Crafts at the Chapel.

11/7    Adult Acrylic Class 9:30 am-11 am

11/14    Join us for free acrylic painting classes at
      the chapel basement instructed by local
      artists. Register online @ our website.

12/5    This single class spans 4 Saturdays.
      Scale Version of Famous Rodman Cannon
      Donated to Fort Totten Visitor’s Center