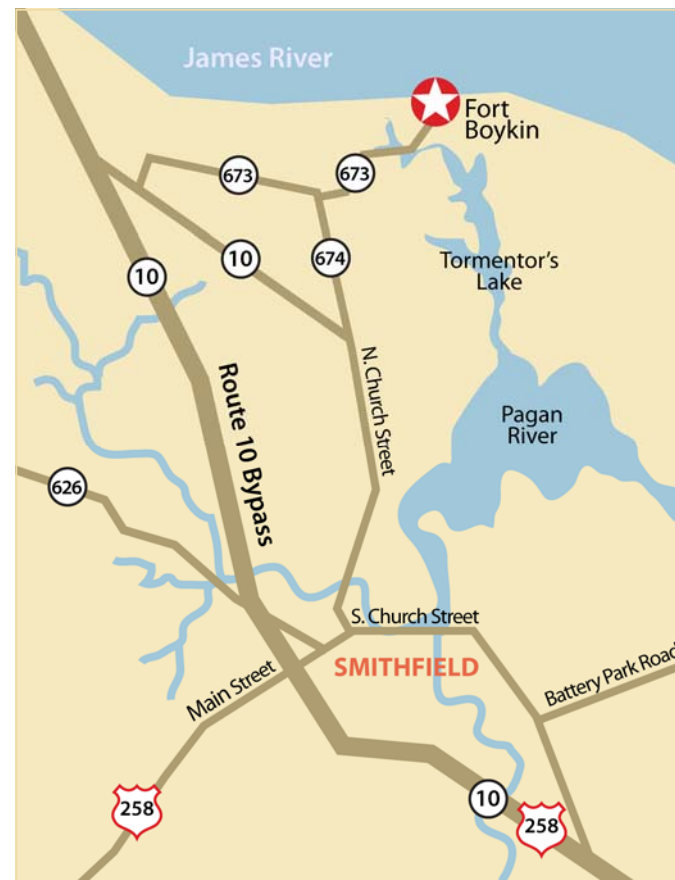




*"Where sky and leafage interlace
So close, the heaven of blue is seen
Inwoven with a heaven of green."
Sidney Lanier, 1874*



Fort Boykin has been a part of American history since 1623 when a fort known as "the Castle" was constructed to protect the Jamestown colonists from Native Americans and raiding Spaniards. Atop a bluff overlooking the James River, the site's commanding view makes it a keen observation point.



Fort Boykin is located along the James River in Isle of Wight County. From Main Street in downtown Smithfield, turn left on North Church Street/Route 10 for 2 miles. Bear right on Blount's Corner Road for 1.2 miles, and then turn right on Morgart's Beach Road for one mile. Portions of the road are unpaved.

Open daily from 8 a.m. until dusk.

HISTORIC
Fort Boykin

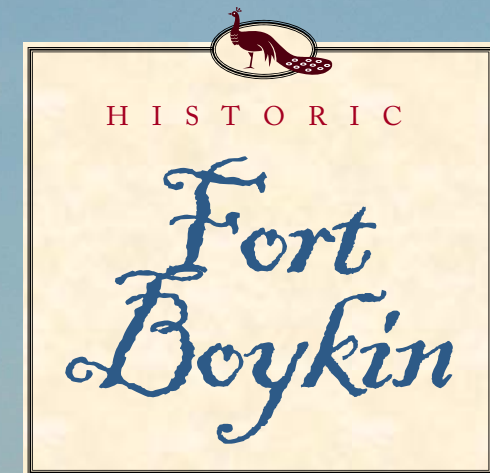
7410 Fort Boykin Trail, Smithfield, Virginia 23430

Fort Boykin is operated by

Isle of Wight County Historic Resources Division, Department of Tourism
(757) 357-0115

Smithfield & Isle of Wight Convention & Visitors Bureau
(757) 357-5182 or 1-800-365-9339 VisitSmithfieldIsleOfWight.com.

Photos by Brett England



REVOLUTIONARY WAR

During the Revolutionary War, Fort Boykin was instrumental in the defense of the James River and the likes of the legendary British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton and his cavalry. Fort Boykin was named during the Revolutionary War after Maj. Francis Boykin, a local merchant who served on Gen. George Washington's staff.



WAR OF 1812

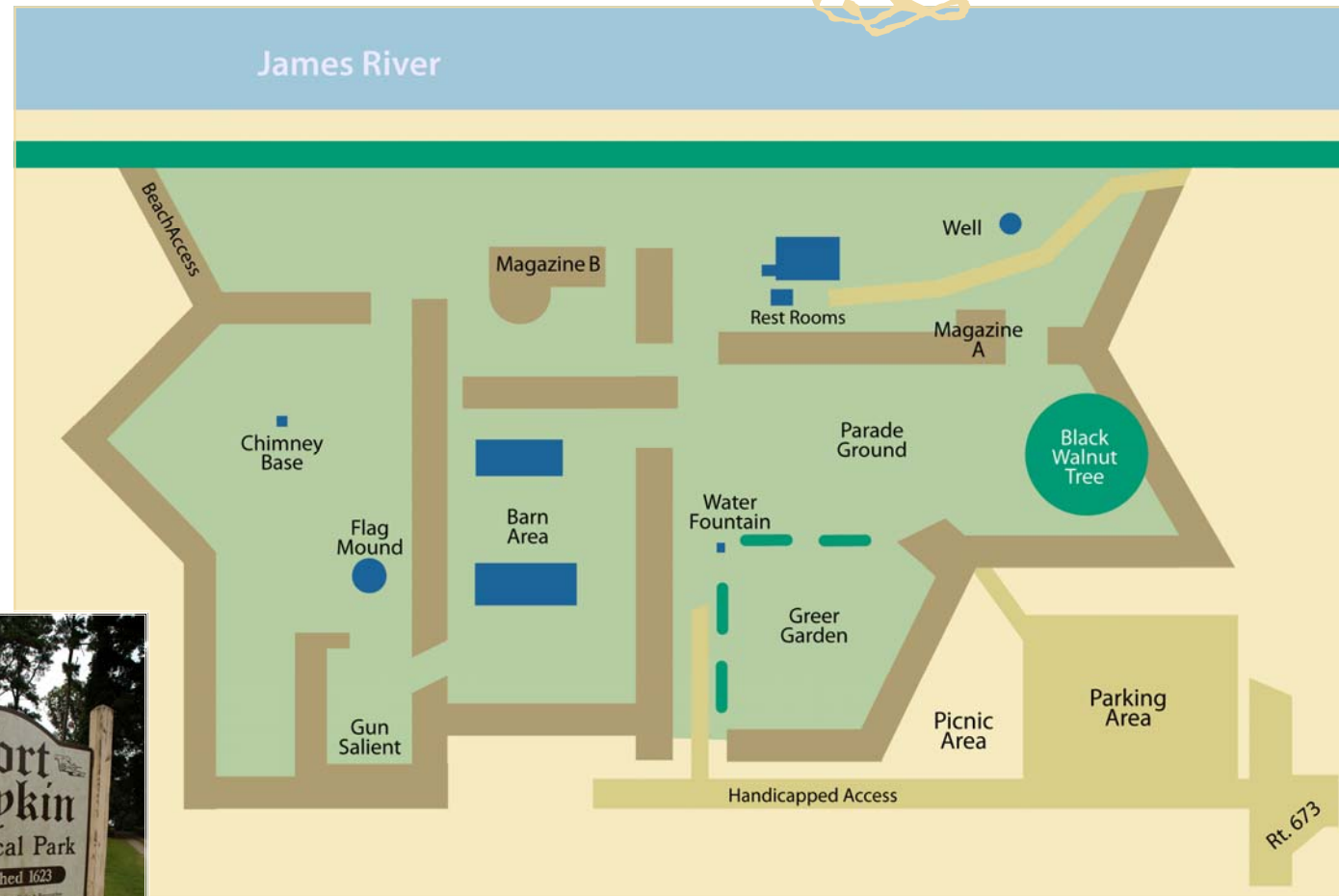
During the War of 1812, Fort Boykin was rebuilt into the shape of an irregular seven-pointed star. The British attempted only one landing at Fort Boykin; however, they were beaten by the local militia under the command of Capt. David Dick and Capt. Charles Wrenn.

CIVIL WAR

Between June 1861 and May 1862, the Confederate Army rebuilt the fort as a part of their defensive system. It was one in a series of earthworks designed to prevent inland invasion by the Union, whose buildup at the mouth of the James River posed a severe threat to Richmond, the Confederate capital. Commander of the Virginia forces Robert E. Lee ordered Col. Andrew Talcott of the Virginia Engineers to redesign Fort Boykin, and the fort was then constructed under the supervision of Lt. Catesby ap Roger Jones of the Virginia Navy. During this time,



The Castle on the James



- *The Black Walnut tree at Fort Boykin is believed to be the second largest in the state and over 200 years old. It is listed with the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project.*
- *Built in 1861, the magazines were destroyed by a Union landing party.*
- *The well on the property is believed to have been built before 1860.*
- *There is a secluded river beach at Fort Boykin for your enjoyment.*

SIDNEY LANIER



The musician and poet Sidney Lanier, who courted Virginia Hankins of Bacon's Castle in Surry, was stationed at Fort Boykin while serving in the Confederate signal corps. While at Fort Boykin, he wrote *Beautiful Ladies* and began his novel *Tiger Lilies*.

the 3rd and 9th Virginia Regiments moved into the area, camping at a site to the rear of the earthworks. A March 12, 1862, account of Richmond's defenses, Capt. A.L. Rives of the Confederate Army reported that 10 guns were mounted at Fort Boykin. Similar defensive works were also in place at such sites as Fort Huger, Mulberry Island, Jamestown Island and Drewry's Bluff; however, the Confederate military strategy failed to take into account the potential damage that could be inflicted on these forms by ironclad vessels. A new age of naval warfare had dawned. On May 8, 1862, three Union gunboats, one of which was the ironclad USS *Galena*, moved within firing range of Fort Boykin. The *Galena's* guns, which had a longer range than those of Fort Boykin, overwhelmed the Confederates within an hour – causing the Confederates to abandon the fort.

FORT BOYKIN TODAY

Today, Fort Boykin remains essentially intact and constitutes a well-preserved example of military architecture of the Civil War era.

Fort Boykin is listed on the following:

- National Register of Historic Places
- Virginia Landmarks Register
- Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail
- Cornell eBird System
- Virginia Civil War Trails
- Captain John Smith's Trail: Lower Oyster Loop
- Black Walnut Tree is listed on the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project
- Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail

