



# Fort Prospect, 14 Headquarters Hill



Prospect Camp and Fort Prospect photographed in the 1990s for *Bermuda Forts 1612-1957* by Dr Edward Harris.

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*This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.*

It is a well-known fact that Bermuda has an abundance of forts. The earliest ones were built in the East End during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and are protected by UNESCO World Heritage status. Dotted along the South Shore were smaller forts and redoubts and for the most part they have disappeared. The last wave of fort building began after the passing of the Bermuda Defence Act 1865 which gave permission for the British War Department to compulsorily purchase private lands that were “required to be taken absolutely for the Construction of Works”. Several hundred acres of land were purchased solely for the building of Fort Prospect, Fort Langton, Fort Hamilton and Prospect Camp.



Built by 1870, Fort Prospect is the largest of the three forts that made up the Prospect Hill Position. Langton and Hamilton followed. Sadly, the three were said to be obsolete almost before they were completed and by the end of the century not one of them was regarded as an effective defence.



**The entrance to Fort Prospect in the 1980s.**  
***Bermuda Forts 1612-1957.***

An alternative use for Fort Prospect was found in 1912 when the Royal Engineers built a 100 ft long and 22 ft deep tank with a total capacity of one million gallons. The increased demand for fresh water was anticipated by businessmen SS Spurling and HW Watlington whose Fresh Water Experiment Resolve 1924 aimed to obtain fresh water skimmed from Devonshire Marsh which, after purification, would be pumped into another reservoir to be built in the fort. This motion was defeated in a vote of 22 to 7 the following year.

The Army Garrison left Prospect in 1957 and the Bermuda Crown Lands Corporation took over ownership of the lands formerly belonging to the War Department and the Admiralty. This coincided with the need to relocate the prison from Parliament Street and it was suggested that Fort Prospect might make a suitable location capable of housing 100



prisoners. By the following year the fort was deemed unsuitable and the Casements prison plan was revived. The House of Assembly then approved a recommendation for a second million-gallon tank at Fort Prospect. The water stored there would be used for emergency purposes but would also be piped direct to the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital.

Fast forward to 1965 when it was predicted that a reservoir with a two-million-gallon capacity would have to be established at Fort Prospect to supply the City of Hamilton with drinking water. A distillation plant started in 1964 had insufficient storage for the water it produced. A severe drought occurred in May 1966. The distillation plant had difficulty keeping up with the demand for fresh water. Interesting to note that while the 1912 tank was in good condition the one built in 1959 had continual leakage problems and several times had to be emptied and repaired. In 1967 tenders were invited for the construction of a third million-gallon storage tank. The last revamp of the tanks appears to have been in 1996.

Despite its current use as a water storage facility Fort Prospect is still an important fortification and has been granted Historical Monument status by the Development and Planning Act 1974, Part V, Section 30. Fort Hamilton, also a Historical Monument, has been maintained by the Corporation of Hamilton and is open to the public; however Fort Langton was demolished in 1987 to make way for the new bus garage.

So, yes, we have lots of forts but like historic buildings they are built assets that are rare and unique to Bermuda. They were constructed of local stone and were built by Bermudians of all classes and races. They are part of our heritage.

To paraphrase a recent visitor from Europe: Bermuda contains an amazing array of fortifications from 1612 to the 1940s, unique for such a small country.



Can we not find a better use for Fort Prospect than storing derelict cars?



**Sources:** *Bermuda Forts 1612-1957*, Dr Edward Harris; *Bermuda Journey*, William Zuill; *The Royal Gazette*, 2 & 21 Dec 1924, 24 Jan & 26 Feb 1925; 23 May 1957; 4 & 6 Jun 1957; 20 Mar 1958; 13 Nov 1965; 2 Feb, 16 Apr & 10 May 1966, 25 Nov 1967; 19 Dec 1996.