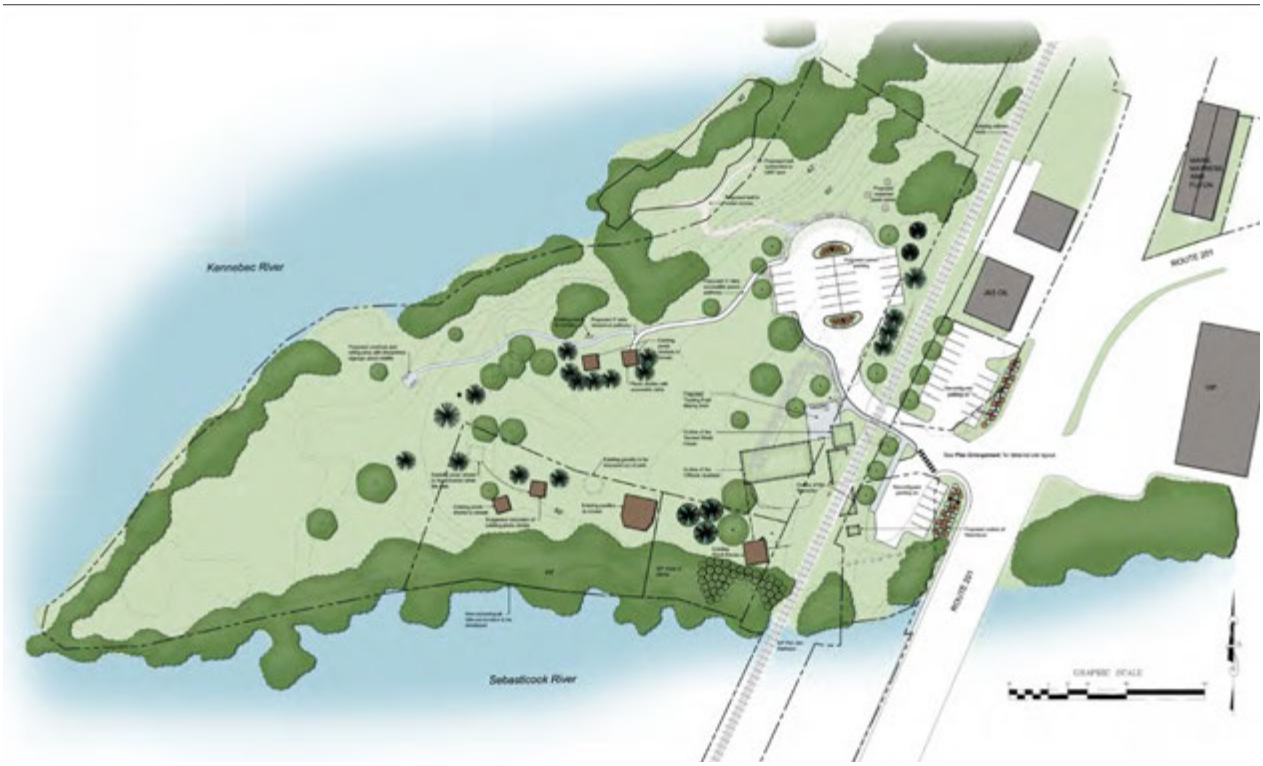
Fort Halifax Park
Concept Master Plan



prepared by

The Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee
Town of Winslow

and

Terrence J. DeWan & Associates
Landscape Architects & Planners
Yarmouth, Maine

June 2011

Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee

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Ray Caron (Town Councilor)
Carl Croce (KMT)
Dennis Dacus (Parks & Rec Director)
Karen Denis (Business Professional)
Jason Fitch (4th of July Comm.)
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Gerard Poissonnier (Friends of Ft. Halifax)
Abby Roy (High School Student)
Steve Russel (Town Councilor)

The Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee (the Committee) is pleased to present this Concept Master Plan for Fort Halifax Park. The Fort Halifax Park (the Park) holds rich historical, archaeological, and cultural treasures, as well as open spaces and picturesque river views. This plan capitalizes on the uniqueness of this site for the benefit of all.

The Park peninsula's rich history includes the fact that the site has been visited by early Pilgrim traders (from the original Pilgrim colony in Massachusetts), French traders and missionaries venturing from settlements in Quebec, English traders from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Native Americans who acquired resources of value to these 17th and 18th century settlers.

Fort Halifax was constructed in 1754 and named for the Earl of Halifax, Secretary of State of Great Britain. When the fort ceased to exist as a fort by the end of the 18th century, the site and the surviving blockhouse evolved into an urban industrial and commercial area. During the 1840's a railroad line was built on fill across the southeast corner of the former fort. When the Daughters of the American Revolution turned over ownership of the surviving blockhouse to the State of Maine in 1966, the Park peninsula was anything but a park. It consisted of intrusive structures, trash, trees, shrubs, and flood deposits. In 1968, the surviving blockhouse was designated a National Historic Landmark.

In 1974, Steve Clark, Chairman of the Winslow Conservation Commission, wrote the following in a memo to the Town Council titled "Status of Fort Halifax Park and Historical Site Project":

> *"The type park which would best be suited for this area would be a "passive" park, emphasizing the historical aspects of the old Fort site, a series of walking trails near the river's edge (constructed for flooding), a grassy glade-like appearance with landscaped trees and shrubs and generally a place where the Town's citizens may take their family and friends to enjoy the views of the confluence of the rivers, the wildlife and the history that is a part of our Town. A small boat launching area could be added on the northern part."*

Because of the town's vision for this site, the town acquired the peninsula in 1976 and 1982 using Land and Water Conservation Funds and then created a beautiful municipal park known today as Fort Halifax Park.

In the spring of 1987, a devastating flood destroyed the blockhouse; however, a substantial portion of the blockhouse was recovered and, almost immediately, an effort began to rebuild it. As a result of a concerted effort by the town, the State, and the Friends of Fort Halifax, the blockhouse was rebuilt at its original location and rededicated on October 30, 1988.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has conducted archaeological digs at the Fort Halifax site and has found evidence of Indian encampments there dating between 1,500 B.C and 500 A.D. The archaeological findings further highlight the historical significance of the Park. In 1989, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine Bureau of Parks & Recreation, the Friends of Fort Halifax, and the Town of Winslow published a "Preliminary Master Plan" for the Fort Halifax National Historic Landmark that included various on-site or off-site interpretive options.

In 2002, Terrence J. DeWan & Associates prepared a plan for the Maine Department of Transportation. The plan consisted of existing and recommended turnouts and gateway sign locations for the Kennebec-Chaudiere International Corridor. The Park was highlighted in the plan, which included recommendations for the Park.

The town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan highlights the historical significance of the Park and makes recommendations to preserve and protect the historical attributes of the Park.

In 2009, some members of the Winslow 4th of July Committee developed a proposed master plan for the Park and in 2010, the Friends of Fort Halifax developed their own proposed concept plan for the Park.

In 2010, the Winslow Town Council formed the Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee because the Council recognized the need to formally develop a Park master plan due in part to a continued interest by both the State and town residents to develop such a plan. The Council charged the Committee with creating a proposed master plan for the park that preserves and promotes all of the unique historical aspects of the Park.

This Concept Master Plan not only meets the objectives set by the Town Council, it also enhances the Park's open spaces and recreational opportunities. We look forward to working with the Town Council to finalize this Plan.

Raymond R. Caron
Town Councilor &
Committee Chairperson

June 1, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Fort Halifax Park is located on a peninsula at the confluence of the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers in Winslow, Maine. The park consists of rolling open grassy areas dotted with shade trees and picnic areas, as well as outstanding views up and down the rivers. The most dominant feature in the park is a timber blockhouse, the only remaining structure of what was once Fort Halifax. The Fort Halifax site is a National Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The other dominant feature in the park is a permanent band stand, which is used to provide outdoor concerts and entertainment.

In the spring of 2010, the Winslow Town Council formed the Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee and charged the committee with developing a Concept Master Plan for the park that preserves and promotes all of the unique historical aspects of the park. All 12 members of the committee were appointed by the Council Chair and the members represented various groups within the community.

The committee began meeting monthly in July of 2010. Community members attended the meetings as well and were allowed to provide input. The following documents, which contained recommendations for improvements at the park, were reviewed by the committee:

- Town of Winslow's Conservation Commission Report (1974)
- Ft. Halifax National Historic Landmark Preliminary Master Plan (1989)
- Maine Bureau of Parks & Recreation's Kennebec-Chaudiere Corridor Report (2002)
- Town of Winslow's Comprehensive Plan (2008)
- Winslow's 4th of July Committee's Proposed Park Plan (2009)
- Friends of Ft. Halifax Concept Plan Titled "A Confluence of Cultures" (2010)

Following the review, a spreadsheet was developed which listed the site objectives mentioned in at least one or more of the documents (see appendices). It is essential to note that all of the documents referenced above stated the importance of promoting the history of Fort Halifax at the park, which is not the case for all of the other site objectives mentioned.

The committee evaluated all of the proposed site objectives and then created its own list of objectives that the committee felt should be considered for the town's park master plan. The committee then hired Terrence J. DeWan & Associates (TJD&A), a landscape architecture firm from Yarmouth, Maine, to prepare a diagrammatic master concept plan for the entire park based on input from the committee, along with 3D modeling of the final plan.

TJD&A met on a few occasions with the committee and on one occasion representatives from the Maine Bureau of Parks & Recreation were present and provided input on the plan, which the Bureau viewed very favorably.

In the end, this Fort Halifax Concept Master Plan meets the objectives set by the Town Council and it also enhances the Park's open spaces and recreational opportunities. This plan is designed to be used as a tool to preserve and promote the park.

Fort Halifax Block House

Kennebec River

Sebasticook River

Proposed trail connection to CMP land

Proposed trail to water access

Proposed seasonal picnic tables

Existing railroad track

Proposed paved parking

Proposed 5' wide accessible paved pathway

Existing bench to remain

Proposed 5' wide stonedust pathway

Existing picnic shelters to remain

Proposed overlook and sitting area with interpretive signage about wildlife

Picnic shelter with accessible table

Proposed 'Trading Post' display area

Outline of the 'Second Block House'

Outline of the 'Officers Quarters'

Outline of the 'Barracks'

Existing gazebo to be relocated out of park

Existing picnic shelter to be relocated within the park

Existing picnic shelter to remain

Suggested relocation of existing picnic shelter

Existing pavilion to remain

Existing Block House

N/F State of Maine

New canoe/kayak take-out location to be developed

N/F Pan Am Railways

Reconfigured parking lot

Reconfigured parking lot

See **Plan Enlargement** for detailed site layout.

Proposed outline of 'Watchbox'

J&S OIL

MAINE MATTRESS AND FUTON

VIP

ROUTE 201

ROUTE 201

40'

42'

50'

50'

40'

GRAPHIC SCALE

Fort Halifax Park Concept Master Plan

WINSLOW, MAINE

MAY 2011

tjd&a

Terrence J. Deshan & Associates
Landscape Architects & Planners

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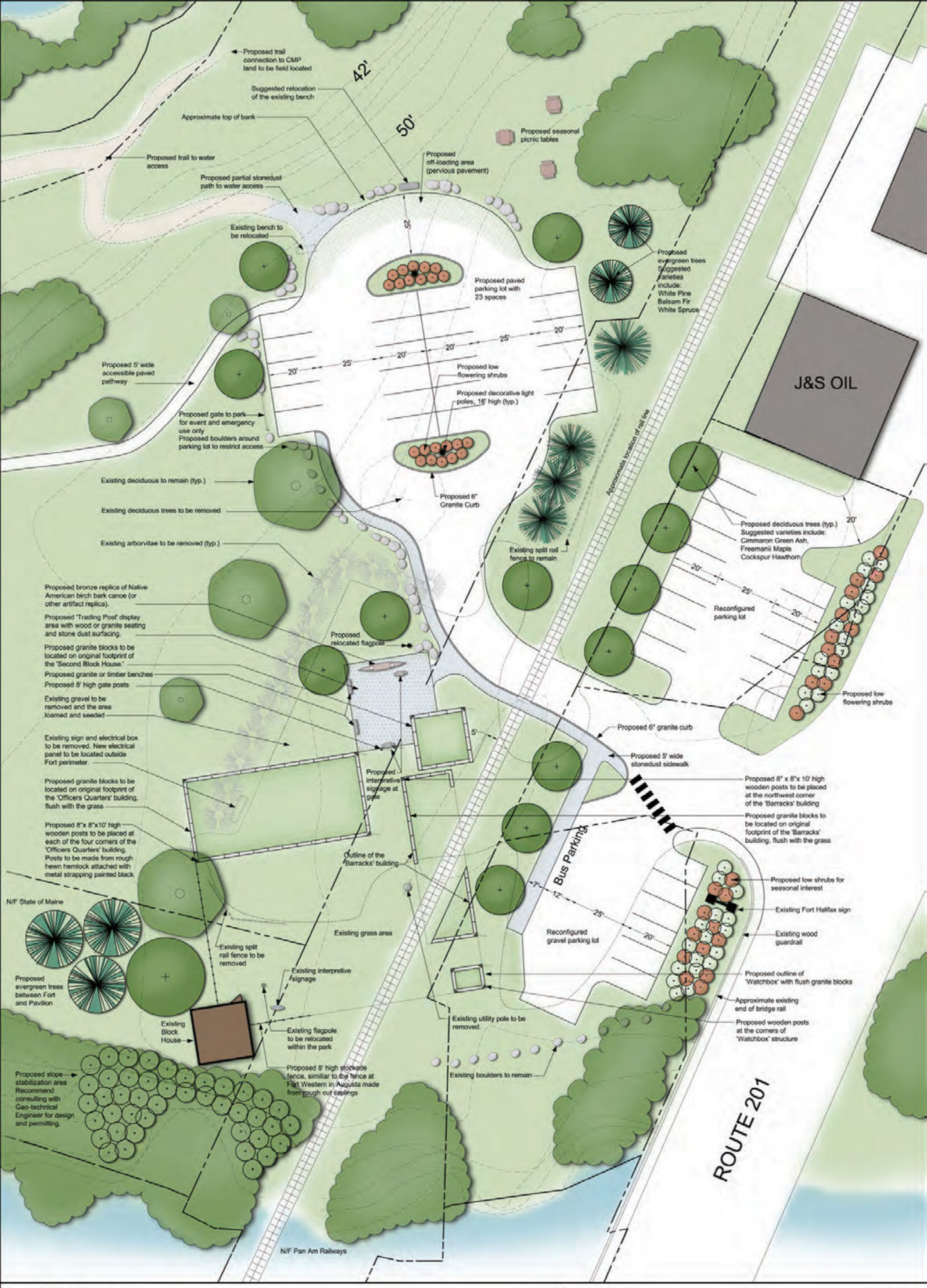
NOTE:

Locations of all existing structures and vegetation shown on the Concept Plan are approximate based on 2010 aerial photographs from Bing Maps. Property lines shown are approximate based on parcel data from Maine Office of Geographic Information Systems. Contours were digitized from an archeological survey map provided by the Town of Winslow.

This illustration should not be used as a basis for construction drawings. The actual location of Fort Halifax should be verified by the Maine Department of Conservation. A topographic and boundary survey should be completed to develop construction drawings for the parking lot and other improvements as shown. No design review or permissions were sought by TJD&A from the Pam Am Railways company for proposed improvements within their Right-of-Way.



Plan Enlargement

Fort Halifax Park Concept Master Plan

WINSLOW, MAINE
MAY 2011

tjd&a

Terrence J. DeWan & Associates
Landscape Architects & Planners

GRAPHIC SCALE

GOALS AND PLAN DESCRIPTION

Goals

- *Preserve and promote all of the unique historical aspects of the park.*
- *Display the location of Fort Halifax's original footprint.*
- *Encourage the park to be used as an outdoor classroom.*
- *Improve recreational opportunities in the park.*
- *Maintain the open spaces within the park.*

Description

Entrance. In order to preserve and promote the historical aspects of the Fort, the access drive and parking lot need to be moved away from the Fort resources. The Concept Master Plan shows the vehicular and pedestrian entrance to the park realigned directly across from the Route 201 access point. The new paved 20' wide access drive will cross the railroad at a perpendicular angle and then curve to the north.

Relocation of Parking. A new parking lot has been proposed away from the archeological fort resources, north of the existing gravel parking area. The paved parking area will accommodate 23 cars. The end loop of the parking lot will also serve as a drop off area for carry-in boat users. The drop off area could be designed with a pervious grass pave system.

Reconfiguring adjacent parking lots. The plan shows the adjacent parking lots, between Route 201 and the park, reconfigured for efficient parking while allowing room for landscaping. A bus parking location has been shown in the southern reconfigured parking lot. A sidewalk will be located along the bus parking area connecting to the sidewalk into the park.

Pedestrian Access. A new 5' wide stonedust sidewalk will connect the sidewalk along Route 201 to the park. A cross walk will provide a designated location for pedestrians to safely cross. The new sidewalk will be separated from the paved access drive with a vertical granite curb.

Outlining the Original Fort. In an effort to educate visitors about the full extent of Fort Halifax, the footprint of the original buildings will be outlined on the ground using granite blocks installed flush with the grass. By walking on the blocks, visitors will get a sense of the buildings sizes and relationship to each other. To further the understanding of the scale of the buildings as viewed across the park landscape, the committee proposes to articulate some of the building corners with 10' high wood posts, made from rough hewn hemlock and attached with period looking black strapping.

Fencing. Two segments of 8' high stockade style fencing will extend from the existing Block House to give visitors a sense of the Fort's enclosure. The fence will be similar to the Fort Western fence in Augusta.

Trading Post Display Area. A gathering area is proposed outside of the proposed fort outline in the general area of the historic Trading Post. This stone dust surfaced area would serve as a welcome space for visitors and school groups with seating (rustic wood or granite benches), interpretive signage, and display areas for artifact replicas.

Interpretive Opportunities. The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands has installed an interpretive panel on state land near the existing Block House. The committee suggested locating two new panels in the Trading Post display area. One of the panels would describe the Native American history, located adjacent to an artifact replica such as a bronze life-size birch bark canoe. The other panel would be located near the historic gate location of the Fort and describe the Trading Post history. A wildlife themed interpretative panel sited closer to the confluences of the rivers, would describe native flora and fauna of the riparian ecosystem.

Lighting and Utilities. The only additional lighting proposed would be located in the parking lot, within the landscaped islands. The proposed 16' high decorative light fixtures would be the same or similar to those newly installed in Winslow. The Plan recommends all utility service within the park be buried and the existing utility pole near the Block House be removed.

Landscaping. The Concept Master Plan proposes to remove the evergreen arborvitae hedge due to its proximity to the Fort outline and new park access. Deciduous trees would be planted west of the new parking lot to buffer views of parked cars. Additional deciduous trees would be planted on the east side of the rail lines to buffer views of the surrounding commercial buildings without affecting views of the Block House from Route 201. A few evergreen trees, planted near the existing pine trees on the east side of the proposed parking lot will further buffer views of the commercial buildings. Three evergreen trees are shown on the plan between the existing Block House and pavilion giving some visual separation between the structures. Low shrubs would provide seasonal interest within the parking lot and along Route 201. Native shrubs should be considered for slope stabilization on the bank behind the Block House.

Boulders. Several clusters of boulders are shown along the edge of the new access drive and sidewalk. These boulders will reduce unwanted vehicular access into the park as well as provide ample seating during events.

Gate. One gate will be located off the new parking lot to provide access into the park for events and emergency access. The exact location of this gate will need to be reviewed when the parking lot is constructed.

Accessibility. The Park currently has one accessible picnic shelter located on the northern side of the open lawn area. The plan connects the shelter to the parking area with a 5' wide by 180' long paved path for handicap accessibility.

Pathways. An additional pathway would extend from the accessible path to an overlook area on the north side of the park. The overlook, located above the normal flood water level, would feature a bench and an interpretive panel about wildlife.

River Access. The loop on the water side of the new parking lot would serve as a drop-off area for carry-in canoes and kayaks. A short path would lead from the edge of the drop-off, down the slope to the river access location. A secondary path would continue from this location northward into the adjacent Central Maine Power land. The plan shows a new canoe/kayak take-out on the Sebastiscook River. The current informal take-out area below the Block House needs to be stabilized to prevent further erosion and to protect the Block House. A geo-technical engineer would determine the best way to stabilize the slope.

Maintain Open Space. No additional structures, besides the pathways, are proposed west of the fort and new parking lot. The Committee recommends moving the existing gazebo out of the park to another location within the Town. One picnic shelter location could be relocated within the park as shown on the plan.

Important Recommendations

- ***Interpretation***. *Use interactive objects and displays to serve as focal points and educational features. The Fort itself serves as a strong focal point, but additional objects could strengthen the educational goals of the park.*

- ***Sustainable Design.*** *Use green design strategies when practical to reduce infrastructure costs and serve as valuable learning opportunities.*

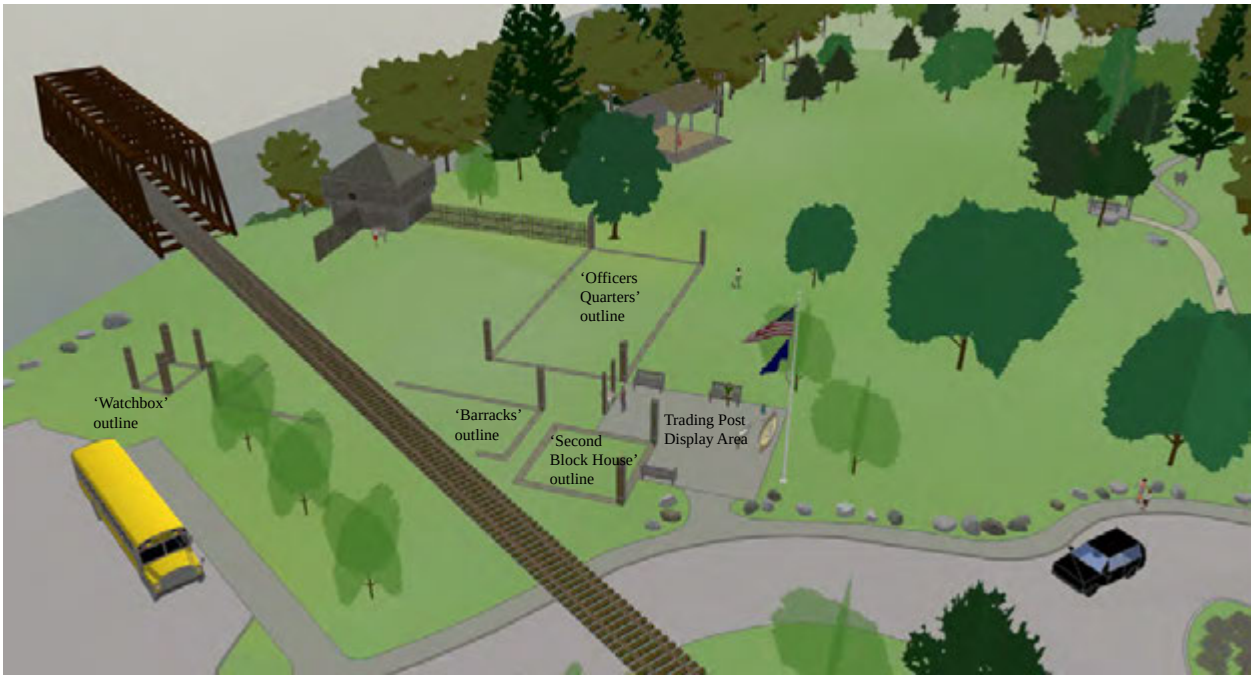
- ***Archaeological Preservation***. *Consult with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the State Department of Conservation (Bureau of Parks and Lands) prior to any future work within the park that could be harmful to undiscovered archaeological artifacts.*

- ***Rail line.*** *Contact the Pam Am Railways for permission to relocate access drive and develop interpretive fort outline within right-of-way.*

- ***Surveys.*** *Have a topographical and boundary survey done to allow for more accurate design and planning.*

- ***Utility Lines.*** *Relocate overhead powerlines underground with buried conduit.*

- ***Shoreline Conditions***. *Work with a soil and erosion control specialist to address shoreline erosion. Consider bioengineering techniques to protect the river bank and establish a more productive and attractive riparian habitat.*



Aerial views of the proposed Concept Master Plan from the Sketchup Model

Aerial views of the proposed Concept Master Plan from the Sketchup Model

'BEFORE' Views

The Block House adjacent to the railroad trestle bridge. The flagpole would be relocated within the park.

View looking across railroad tracks to the Block House with pavilion in the background. The utility poles on the right would be removed.

View of the existing parking area, arborvitae trees to be removed and the pavilion behind.

'AFTER' Model Views

Model view showing the proposed 8' high stockade fence segments on the original fence footprint.

Model view showing the proposed 8' high stockade fence segments, 10' wood posts on corners of Fort buildings, and proposed tree planting to screen the pavilion.

Model view showing the proposed outline of the Fort buildings and 10' high posts on the corners.

'BEFORE' Views

View looking across existing parking lot area.

View looking across existing parking lot area towards parking area adjacent to J&S Oil Building.

View looking across existing parking lot area towards Route 201 and commercial buildings.

'AFTER' Model Views

Model view showing the proposed outline of the fort buildings and 10' high posts on either side of the rail lines.

Model view showing the proposed outline of the Trading Post display area, outline of the fort buildings and 10' high posts. The flag pole would be relocated to this area. New trees would buffer view of J&S Oil Building

Model view showing the proposed landscaping which will buffer views of commercial buildings.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing park sign and entrance off Route 201. Shrub plantings are recommended under the sign and on the sloped area. A new car and bus parking area will be developed in the grass/gravel area.

View from the end of the existing sidewalk at the entrance looking toward the Block House, utility pole and gravel parking area to be removed.

The existing arborvitae hedge and parking area will be removed.

Facilities such as portable restrooms should be relocated near proposed parking lot and away from the historic resources.

View of the eroding slope behind the Block House. The slope should be stabilized to stop erosion, improve riparian habitat, and protect the historic resources.

Deciduous and evergreen trees are proposed between the pavilion and block house.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The gazebo should be relocated to another site within the Town.

Seasonal picnic area north of the new parking lot location, adjacent to the Central Maine Power land.

An accessible paved path will link the parking lot to this picnic shelter.

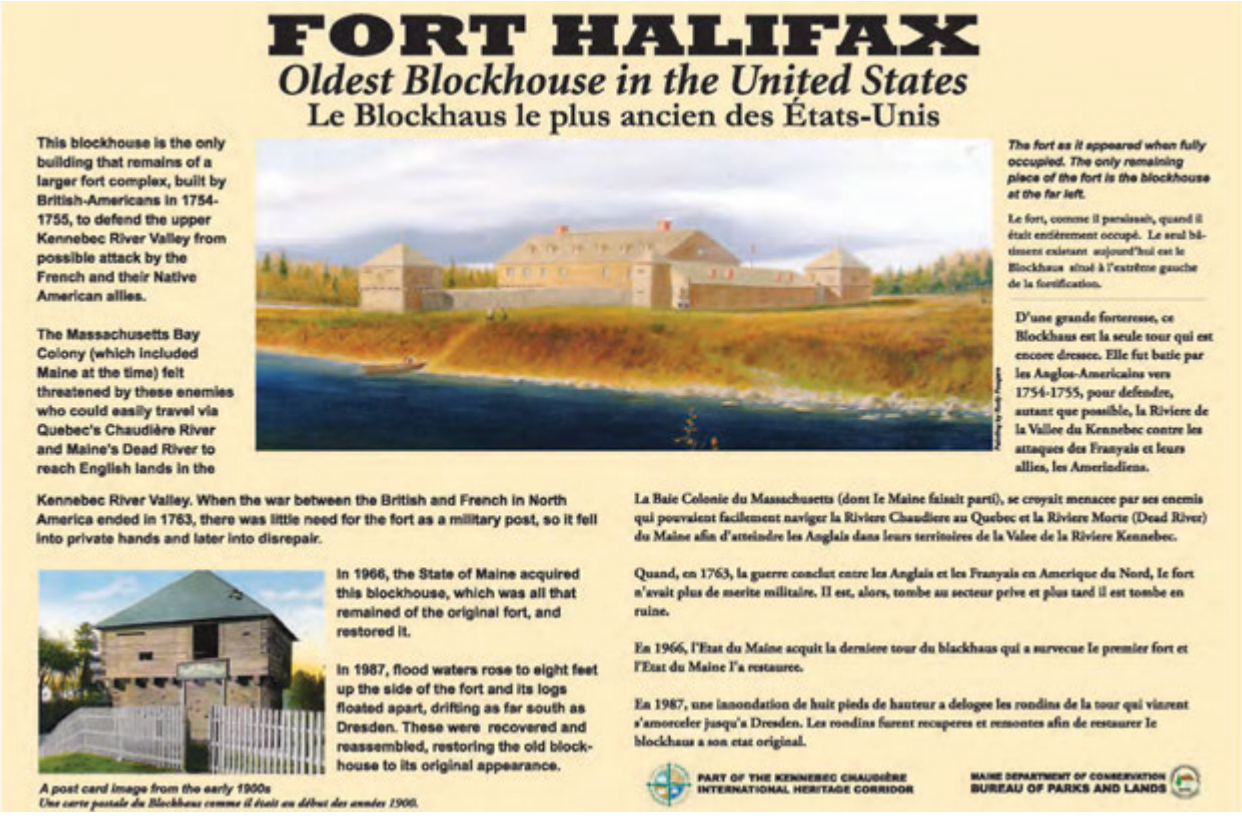
View looking toward proposed parking lot and seasonal picnic area.

View of the water access location on the Kennebec River.

View of proposed parking lot (on right) and area of new path to the water.

APPENDICES

- Vision Comparison Chart
- Archaeological Background
- Reference images
- Comprehensive Plan considerations

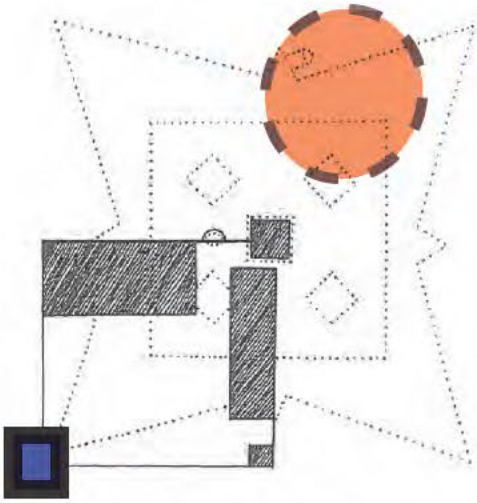


Existing interpretive panel created by the Bureau of Parks and Lands sited near the Block House.

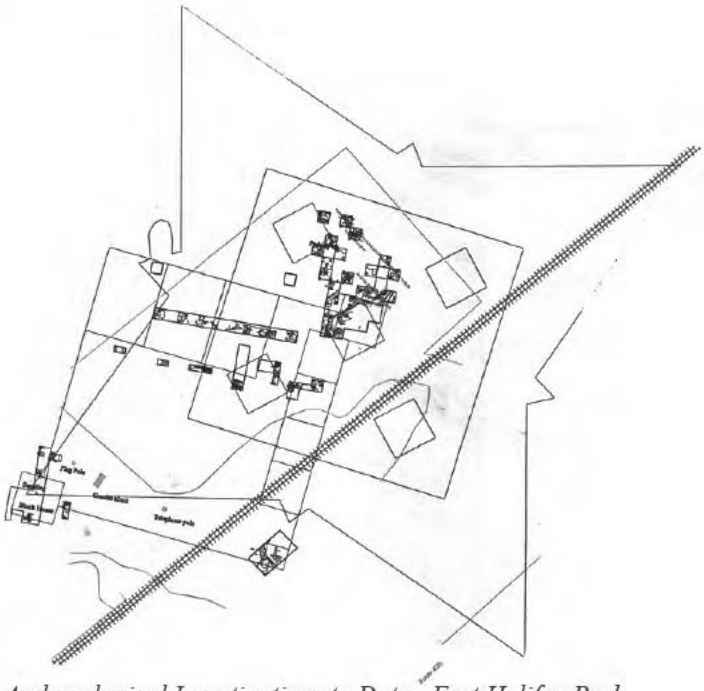
Fort Halifax Park
Vision Comparison Table

Site Objectives	Conservation Commission - 1974	Preliminary Master Plan - 1989	DeWan Report - 2002	Comprehensive Plan - 2008	July 4th Committee - 2009	Friends of Fort Halifax - 2010	Fort Halifax Park Planning Committee - 2011
Fort Halifax (History)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boat Access	X		X		X	X	X
Interpretive Objects		X	X		X	X	X
Open Space (Park & Picnic)	X		X		X	X	X
Views of the Rivers	X		X		X	X	X
Education				X	X	X	X
Land Scaping Enhancement	X		X			X	X
Parking Lot			X		X	X	X
Prehistoric & Historic		X		X		X	X
Walking Trails	X		X		X		X
Lighting			X		X		X
On-site Museum		X			X		
River Bank Stabilization					X	X	X
Gazebo Sound Booth					X		X
Off-site Museum		X					
River Boat Tours					X		
Welcome Center/Museum					X		
Wildlife	X						
Playground							

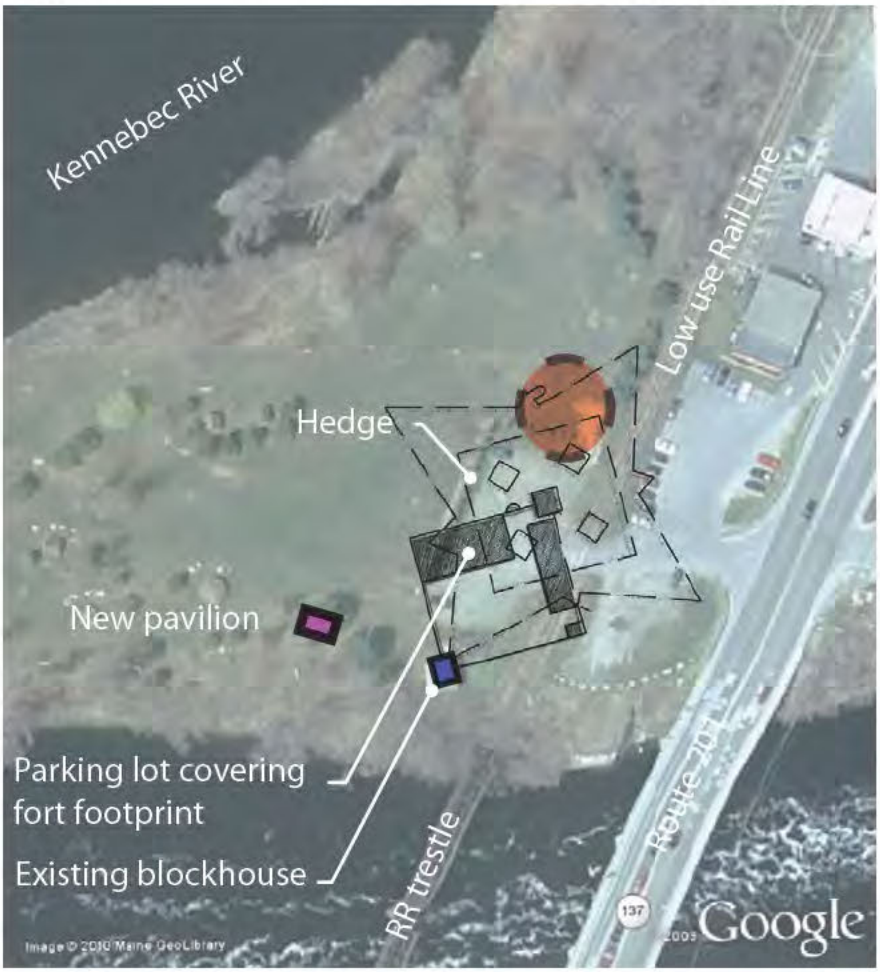
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND



General Winslow's original plan is indicated by the dotted lines. The fort as completed by General Lithgow is shown in solid lines and blocks, with the existing blockhouse accented at lower left. A trading post, which predates the fort, is indicated by the red circle.



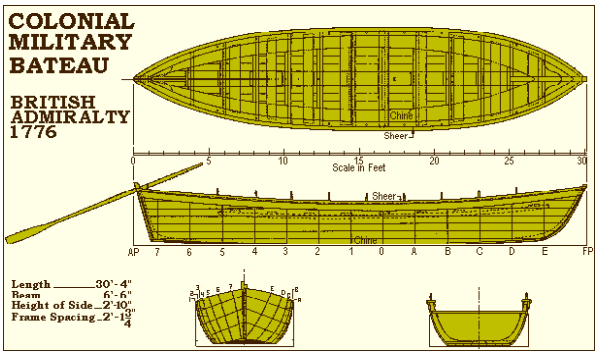
Archaeological Investigations to Date - Fort Halifax Park
Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 2010



Overlay of the Fort Halifax boundaries on an existing conditions aerial. Existing parking lots and rail lines are located on the historic resource.

REFERENCE IMAGES

(some images from Friends of Fort Halifax Report, 2010)



Boats with historic relevance could be the inspiration for interactive displays to serve as focal points in strategic areas in the park.

Period stockade fencing, from Fort Western in Augusta.

Outline of Fort Pitt at Point State Park in Pittsburgh, PA. A simple and cost effective way to depict the historic Fort location.

Slope stabilization can integrate stone and plant material to address erosion while maintaining a natural appearance.

Interpretive signage can educate visitors about the layered history present at Fort Halifax Park.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REFERENCES

The Friends of Fort Halifax Report from 2010 included the following relevant sections from the Town of Winslow's most recent Comprehensive Plan that related to Fort Halifax Park.

Page I

"The tiny patch of land at the confluence of the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers has always been appealing to humans. For centuries prior to European arrival, as Native Americans used the two rivers for transportation highways and fisheries, Winslow became a stopping place and campsite."

"A wealth of historic and archaeological resources potentially reside in Winslow."

"John Winslow… came to America in 1621. He… was one of the four purchasers of the Plymouth Patent (first European settler to purchase land surrounding the confluence of the Kennebec and Sebasticook Rivers, including lands now known as Winslow."

Page II

"Prehistoric archaeology refers to that time period prior to written recordings. Cultural knowledge is only discovered through examination of artifacts and landscape analysis. As we discover more artifacts, though, our picture of the culture is enhanced. It is doubly important, therefore, to identify and preserve as many prehistoric archaeological resources as possible."

"The Maine Historic Preservation Commission is aware of 39 prehistoric archaeological resources in Winslow. Of these, two are located at Fort Halifax Park."

Page III

"Fort Halifax… listed… on the National Register of Historic Places."

Page V

"All properties listed in the National Register must meet the criteria established by the National Park Service. This criteria is applied nationwide, seeking to ensure that… they retain their historic designs, materials, workmanship, and sense of time and place."

Page VI

"The entire fort site, not just the blockhouse, is listed on the Register, and archaeological survey work has documented numerous artifacts."

Page VII

"There is precious little education on-site, and most people visiting would be unable to understand that the Fort was actually much larger than the blockhouse."

"…re-arrange access and parking to allow for better archaeology and educational work."

Page XI

"The town should improve its efforts to protect the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community."

"Fort Halifax is the symbol of the Town, and should therefore be singled out for individual attention and resources in preservation and education."

"The Town should require all development proposals… to obtain advice from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission."

Page XII

"The Town should appropriate $5,000 annually… for historic and archaeological programs…"

"In addition… the Town should appropriate $5,000 annually… to assist with development of Fort Halifax as an educational site."

"The Implementation Committee should meet with the Friends of Fort Halifax to discuss prioritizing projects and the potential for collaboration for enhancing the site."