



# History House

## Lieutenant's Quarters No. 1

Open Weekends, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.



### Quick Facts

History House is decorated to portray life as it was for an officer and his family stationed at Fort Hancock during the World War II-era, circa 1943.

This time period was selected because it was the busiest time in the fort's history. During this period, 10,000 to 12,000 military and civilian men and women were stationed here.

The house was originally built in 1898 at a cost of \$7,125.

It is one of eighteen homes that make up Officers' Row.

It was designated House Number 1 and was built as a lieutenant's quarters by the Quartermaster Corps.

Of the eighteen homes on Officers' Row, eleven were designated for lieutenants, six for captains and one for the Commanding Officer.

The home's layout is conducive to entertaining. This was a requirement for an officer's career advancement, making the wife's role critical.

One family lived in each of the homes. A maid would have lived on the third floor only if the officer could have afforded one.

The house was originally heated by five coal burning fireplaces and a coal burning furnace. The floors are white pine and the decorative molding and woodwork throughout is a combination of oak and birch.

History House, along with the rest of Fort Hancock, was turned over by the Army to the National Park Service on January 1, 1975. In 1979, "History House" was established. Many dedicated park volunteers have transformed History House into a living museum.

### Seasonal Activities and Special Events

While History House is open every Saturday and Sunday, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., it also is the location of several special events throughout the year.

Each spring and fall, Coastal Defenses Day and Fort Hancock Day, respectively, are held at Sandy Hook. During these events, the fort comes back to life, as World War II reenactors portray army life and display period equipment and vehicles outside the house.

Each December brings the Holiday Season to Fort Hancock. During this time, History House is decorated to portray a World War II-era Christmas (see photo, right). Children's craft days, photos with Santa, and a nighttime party with live jazz music are some activities available at this time of year.

Be sure to visit our online calendar, updated quarterly, at [www.nps.gov/gate](http://www.nps.gov/gate)



# A History of History House

“History House” is one of 18 buildings making up Fort Hancock’s Officers’ Row. These stately, buff brick buildings are perhaps the most outstanding architectural feature among all the structures that make up Fort Hancock. This fort was the last of several different “generations” of fortifications built on Sandy Hook to protect New York Harbor from attack by sea. Named in honor of General Winfield Scott Hancock, the fort’s first thirty-four buildings were built at the turn of the century to shelter a garrison of officers and soldiers who manned the fort’s concrete gun batteries.

In the small United States Army of the 1890s, officers not only commanded great respect from the enlisted ranks, but each married officer rated their own large house. Each of the eighteen Georgian Revival style homes along Officers’ Row housed an officer and his family. Constructed in 1898 and 1899, the buildings numbered 1 through 8 and 16, 17 and 18 were originally designated “Lieutenant’s Quarters” and cost \$8290 each. The other numbered houses in the row were designated for Captains. (Nos. 9-11 and 13-15 cost \$12,000 each.) House 12 was the “Commanding Officer’s Quarters” and cost \$19,000 to build. A post of this size was usually commanded by a Colonel. All the houses share a similar exterior design. The difference in construction costs was due to the different floor plan of rooms in the three ranks of buildings. While most military houses face toward a parade ground, these houses face toward Sandy Hook Bay to take advantage of the scenic view.

A popular myth that has been perpetuated is that the famous architect Stanford White designed the fort buildings. However, records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, preserved in the National Archives in Washington D.C. prove that Captain Arthur Murray of the U.S. Artillery Corps was assigned to outline a plan of buildings “for an Artillery Post at Fort Hancock, New Jersey” in March 1896.

“Lieutenants Quarters No. 1,” like its neighbors fronting along Hartshorne Drive, reflects the formal Victorian-Era style of military living in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ground was broken during the spring of 1897, and Quarters 1, 2 and three were the first houses in the row to be completed in November of 1898. With many of the other buildings still under construction, the first occupant of Quarters 1 would be Captain C. W. Foster, Fort Hancock’s first Post Commander.

Ironically, the last resident would also be an army captain. The last Commanding Officer at the Highlands, New Jersey Air Defense Radar Site, Robert Causby, vacated these quarters in April 1974 when the deactivation of the post began that spring and summer.

This gracious, sturdy building is two full stories plus an attic story sitting on a raised basement with granite foundation walls. The building is L-shaped in plan with gable roofs which were originally covered with slate shingles until 1973. The yellow brick came from Clearfield, Pennsylvania, while the red bricks that make up the inner walls came from Sayreville, New Jersey. The first floor had a dining room and parlor, each with large sliding pocket doors, fronting on the main hall which has a cut oval glass paneled front door. The dining room connected to the kitchen via a butler’s pantry and was adjacent to the officer’s study. A unique feature in every dining room was a steam heated radiator with a built in warming oven for keeping food hot. All first floor rooms had pressed tin ceilings and tongue-and-groove hardwood floors. The main stair hall landing is illuminated by a palladian window with a narrow “maid’s staircase” located off and behind the landing leading into the kitchen.

The second floor contained two master bedrooms, secondary bedrooms, and a bathroom. Five ornate fireplaces, three on the first floor and two on the second, came complete with ornate

cast iron fittings and ceramic tiles. The four rooms on the third floor could be used for maid quarters, a civilian being employed by the household to take care of the cooking, laundry and house cleaning.

Family life at Fort Hancock was not much different than life in any other community. Children went to the post school, mother managed the household, and father worked for the Army. For over 75 years, officers and their families came and went from these quarters with the furnishing no doubt changing with the families and the times. Eventually, the fort became part of the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in 1975. Since 1979, Park Volunteers have helped the National Park Service maintain this structure, keep the building open to the public on weekends, further the goals of historic preservation and interpret Sandy Hook’s military heritage at “History House.”

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August 1990

Revised May 2009

