



CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS



SPOTLIGHT ON A GREAT ENGINEER - PART ONE

During its early history, Fort Monroe was guided by some remarkably capable officers, including one whose contributions are largely overlooked today-Rene DeRussy. Yes, Rene DeRussy's name graces a street sign and a mostly unused softball field, but that's all. What about Battery DeRussy, you ask? That topic will be covered in Part Three of this article.

Rene Edward DeRussy was born on February 22, 1789 (some sources give 1792) to a French planter and his wife in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti). Two years later, the family fled the rebellious island and set up housekeeping at Old Point Comfort, according to some sources. This seems highly unlikely, because the only signs of civilization there were some fishermen's shacks. Still, the image of little Rene exploring every inch of a place that would later become Fort Monroe has the romantic touch of destiny. Should we print the legend?

In 1812 DeRussy graduated from West Point as a newly commissioned officer in the Corps of Engineers, which would be his military “home” for the rest of his life. During the War of 1812, he experienced his baptism of fire in the Battle of Plattsburgh, New York, and received a brevet promotion to Captain for conspicuous bravery. That conflict led to demands for improved coastal defense works, which kept him busy supervising the construction of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn and several installations along the Gulf of Mexico. From 1833 to 1838 he served as the 8th Superintendent of his alma mater, the United States Military Academy at West Point. His next stop would be Fort Monroe. [to be continued]



MUSIC BY THE BAY RHYTHM AND WAVES



POSTPONED

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SPECIAL PERFORMANCE:

*Michael
Clark Band*





CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS



IT'S THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CASEMATE MUSEUM !

What is a casemate? It is any room inside the walls of a fort. The original design and use for the casemates at Fort Monroe were to hold cannons in defense of the Hampton Roads and the Chesapeake Bay. Yet over 200 years later these rooms have served several purposes and functions. Today, front 1 (also known as Building 20) serves as the Casemate Museum.

The history of the Casemate Museum starts before its doors officially opened. On December 12, 1949, Dr. Chester Bradley addressed the Warwick Rotary Club with a speech titled "The Lower Peninsula and the American Tourist." He noted how people visited Fort Monroe to see the casemate where Jefferson Davis was imprisoned, which was closed to the public. His remarks prompted an editorial in a local newspaper and led to the deputy post commander, Colonel Paul Goode, inviting Dr. Bradley to Fort Monroe to discuss the creation of a museum.

Initially progress slowed because of the Korean Conflict, but Dr. Bradley and Col. Goode never gave up. The "Jefferson Davis Casemate Museum" officially opened after a ceremony at the parade field on June 1, 1951. It consisted of only one casemate, number two, where Jefferson Davis had been imprisoned for a few months in 1865. Casemate 2 was restored by the Army and exhibits were funded by chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Two uniformed military police opened and closed the museum daily and a museum committee developed new exhibits.

Since then, the Casemate Museum has grown at an unbelievably rapid pace. Within two years of opening, Casemates 1 and 3 were added to the museum footprint and the name of the museum was changed to the "Fort Monroe Casemate Museum." Casemate 1 opened with an exhibit on the Battle of Hampton Roads, while Casemate 3 held exhibits honoring the history and personnel of Fort Monroe. The years between 1967-1969 saw rapid expansion and growth. The museum became part of the Army Museum System and Dr. Bradley was hired as the museum's first salaried curator. Additionally, the museum's gallery space doubled with the addition of casemates 4, 5, and 6. The West Bastion exhibits, where the 32-pounder seacoast guns are displayed today, and casemates 7-9 were opened to the public as an addition to the museum from 1974-1976.

In 1977, the U.S. Army Center of Military History designated the Casemate Museum as the "Army's Coast Artillery Museum." It would become an accredited institution by the American Association of Museums in the same year. All the additions over 25 years allowed for greater interpretation of the history, but the facility was disjointed and lacked a cohesive storyline. Towards the end of 1982, the museum closed for massive renovation and expansion. 16 new exhibits were installed and the exterior of the museum landscaped before its July 1, 1983, reopening.

The Base Realignment and Closure decision in 2005 led to the deactivation of Fort Monroe and questioned the existence of a Casemate Museum. However, in 2011 the museum underwent the unprecedented process of transitioning from a U.S. Army museum to a Fort Monroe Authority museum. Continual updates to the galleries provide guests with the national significance of the land; Tsenacommacah, Point Comfort, Old Point Comfort, and Fort Monroe.

Presented by the Fort Monroe Authority

LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM



Saturday, June 13 2026
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Join the NY 99th Volunteer Infantry, Company D, and the 124th NY State Volunteers, Company B, for a living history program.

Learn from historic interpreters about the Battle of Big Bethel and military life at Fort Monroe during the Civil War.

FREE

Registration Not Required

Fort Monroe Visitor Center
30 Ingalls Road, Fort Monroe, VA

Questions?

757-690-8181

publicprograms@fortmonroe.org

www.fortmonroe.org





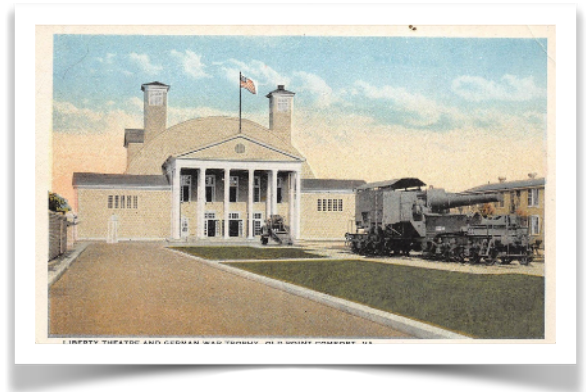
CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS



FORT MONROE GOES TO THE MOVIES (Part One)

During the early years of the 20th century, many Americans discovered a new form of entertainment called motion pictures. From 1913-1919 film programs were regularly shown at the Fort Monroe YMCA Building, but obviously a much larger facility was needed. A new structure to be called the Liberty Theater was designated for a small piece of the 25 acres of new landfill created along Mill Creek during World War I.

The new theater was scheduled to open on Feb. 21, 1920, with General John J. Pershing in attendance, but a recurrent bout of influenza postponed that event until March 7, the day on which the first Chamberlin Hotel was destroyed by fire. Although primarily a movie house, the Liberty also hosted band concerts, holiday pageants, boxing matches, and plays on Sunday nights. This was possible when theatrical road companies were able to do one-night stands at Fort Monroe between engagements in Richmond and Norfolk. In fact, the Liberty's first presentation was a stage comedy, *Tumble In*.



This theater was a large wooden structure with a circular dome and 2300 seats. It was an important social outlet, especially during the eight years when Old Point Comfort lacked a resort hotel. The Liberty was also caught up in the chaotic transition from silent to talking pictures.

By the mid-1930s, the once-proud showplace was looking a bit threadbare, so plans were made for a more modern replacement. Ground was broken in November 1937 for the Fort Monroe Theatre, though it would not open for another year. The Liberty Theater closed its doors for good on May 7, 1939, after a performance of *Petticoat Fever* by local thespians. The building was demolished in November 1939. (To be continued next month)

FORT MONROE - MAY 2026

FREE PROGRAMS

MAY 1, 8, & 29 12:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Living History Program, The Fort Monroe Canoe Project Join Living History interpreters Fallon Burner and Russell Reed to learn about tribal life in the eastern woodlands and see the progress on a dugout canoe. Located outside the Casemate Museum.
SAT MAY 2 10:00 am	Rampart Readers Children's book club and craft activity. 45 min program - Visitor Center Theater
WED MAY 6 9:30 am	Fort Friends 30 min caregiver and me program - sensory exploration and more! Visitor & Education Center Theater
FRI MAY 15 9:00 pm - 12:00 am	Night Skies: Galaxies and Star Clusters Stargazing program, no experience or equipment needed. Event is weather dependent. Takes place at the North End of Walker Airfield.
SAT MAY 16& MAY 23 12:00 pm & 12:30 pm	Common Soldier in the American Civil War Learn about Civil War soldiers & see historic weapon firing demos 30 min program located on the Parade Ground near the Lincoln Gun
FRI MAY 22 8:00 am - 11:00 am	Fort Monroe Bird Walk Fort Monroe is at a convergence of the Atlantic Flyways allowing for some excellent birding year round. Begins at the Visitor & Education Center
FRI MAY 22 & SAT MAY 23 Fort Monroe Visitor Center	After A Long Silence: The Emerging History of the American Contrabands Symposium This FREE symposium includes academic sessions, descendant talks, authors' readings & the Annual Contraband Historical Society's Annual Commemoration

For More Information on Events and Tours check out the website Events Calendar!



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fomr_interpretation@nps.gov

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www.nps.gov/fomr





CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS



FORT MONROE AND CADET COMMAND



The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) that we know today was not fully established until 1916 with the passage of the National Defense Act. It set about standardizing collegiate instruction in military training. At Fort Monroe the first camp was in 1919 with approximately 60 cadets. In May 1931, the 51st Coast Artillery Regiment was sent to Fort Monroe with a secondary mission to assist in the training of ROTC cadets. During the final camp in 1941, Fort Monroe had 370 cadets in attendance.

In 1948, the Selective Service Act passed and growth in ROTC commissioning continued. By 1953, ROTC was the largest source of Army officers. The ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964 improved training but did not provide adequate command and control. ROTC programs struggled to meet the Army's needs during the Vietnam War. In the 1973 post-Vietnam Army reorganization the Army placed ROTC under the newly formed Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) at Fort Monroe and split ROTC into four regions, each with their own leadership chain resulting in little to no uniformity or standardization in training.

TRADOC established a new command - U.S. Army Cadet Command on April 15, 1986, with a ceremony in Continental Park at Fort Monroe on May 2nd (see photo). For the first time in its history, ROTC had a strong command and control structure and standardized training throughout the program. Cadet Command brought together 300 college-level ROTC units and 800 Junior ROTC programs. The way cadets were recruited, selected, and trained emphasized the importance of quality in training the individual. ROTC officers produced by Cadet Command were fully prepared and capable, as proven during the Persian Gulf War.



For 40 years Cadet Command has been at the forefront of commissioning officers into the Army. Today, it continues to commission the largest number of active and reserve officers into the Army.



Contraband

After A Long Silence

The Emerging History of American Contrabands

A Symposium at Fort Monroe

May 22 & 23, 2026

Join us for the Contraband Historical Society's
first-of-its-kind national symposium.

Across two days, sessions will integrate descendant knowledge, public history practice, and emerging scholarship to illuminate the names, lives, communities, and military service of **hundreds of thousands of self-emancipated people.**

This **FREE** event will also feature authors' readings, the stories of Contrabands who became U.S.C.T. soldiers, and the launch of the **Contraband Digital Archive**, culminating in the Annual Commemoration of the 1861 Contraband Decision.

For More Information about this **FREE** Event

Visit: <https://bit.ly/4jXxvAR> • contrabandhistoricalsociety.com
or email contrabandsymposium@gmail.com





CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS



MEET THE NEW FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Casemate Museum Foundation recently held elections of Officers for the 2026-2028 term. All of the Officers were elected unanimously by the Board of Directors. All four have extensive leadership experience and in museum oversight.



**Charles
Cureton
President**

Charlie is a museum professional and has extensive experience in leadership roles overseeing Army museums. He is a former Director of Army Museums overseeing more than 60 museums worldwide and was a key player in the design and development of the National Museum of the United States Army.



**David
Johnson
Vice President**

Dave is a museum professional who worked at the Casemate Museum for many years as an Army civilian employee. He is the co-author of the book *Fort Monroe, Images of America* and a past president of the Fort Monroe Historical Society.



**Nancy
Omalley
Treasurer**

Nancy has held the Treasurer's position for many years. She has been a Casemate museum volunteer and tour guide for many years. She has a wealth of experience leading large and small teams developing training products for the Army.



**Margaret
Seitz
Secretary**

Margaret Seitz has been the Foundation Secretary for many years. She is a volunteer at the Hampton Library, the Library gift shop and her church. She is a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel and has been a member of the Board Director for many years.

THE TOM MIX SAGA, PART 2

In October 1902, 1st Sergeant Tom Mix deserted from his post at Fort Hancock, New Jersey, to save his marriage to Grace Allin of Norfolk. However, her father objected to having a felon for a son-in-law and managed to have the union annulled. Fortunately for Tom, the U.S. Army never made any serious attempt to arrest him at that time and later forgot about his offense. Tom was free to add four more wives to his biography,

After several years of drifting around the Southwest, he finally found his true calling in Southern California. In 1909 he began working in the film industry as a stunt rider and then as an actor. By the early 1920s he was a highly paid star with the Fox Film Corporation. Unlike his Western rival William S. Hart, Tom wasn't interested in authenticity—his movies sometimes made use of airplanes and automobiles. His famous horse Tony often received equal billing.

In 1933 Tom allowed the use of his name in a children's radio program, *The Tom Mix Straight Shooters*, although he never appeared on the show. In fact, each episode ended with the announcement that “Tom Mix is impersonated.” Two years later, in his mid-fifties, he made his final film, a low-budget serial entitled *The Miracle Rider*.



On October 12, 1940, after visiting friends in Tucson, Tom drove north in his prized 1937 Cord Phaeton (see photo) at excessive speeds. Near Florence, Arizona, he made a wrong turn and came upon a bridge undergoing repairs. He hit the brakes and lost control of the convertible, which left the highway and turned over. It is believed that a heavy metal suitcase stowed

in the back seat flew forward, smashing into the back of his head and possibly breaking his neck. He was sixty years old. Ironically, the radio program that bore his name continued to be broadcast until 1951.

March 15, 2026



CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS

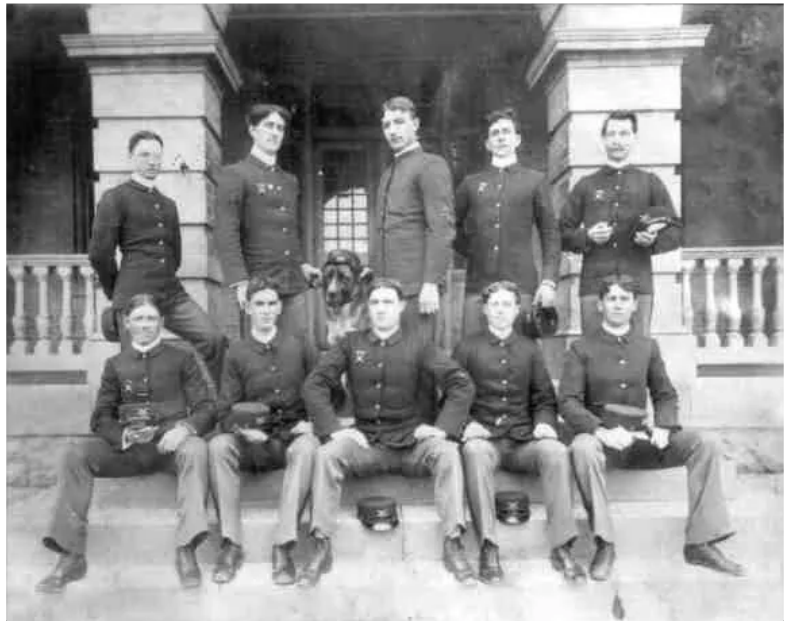


A MOVIE STAR STATIONED AT FORT MONROE?

Most silent film actors are now long forgotten, but cowboy star Tom Mix is one of the rare exceptions. Even people who have never seen any of his films recognize the name, but how many of them know that Mix spent part of his Army enlistment at Fort Monroe?

Thomas Hezikiah Mix was born on January 6, 1880, in Mix Run, Pennsylvania, a considerable distance from the Wild West. However, his love of horses developed from an early age, so his riding and roping skills (unlike most “facts” in his official studio biography) were genuine.

In April 1898 Mix enlisted in the U.S. Army, no doubt anxious to fight in the War with Spain. That conflict ended rather abruptly and, contrary to some accounts, the young soldier was never involved in any combat situations overseas. On April 13, 1899, 1st Sergeant Tom Mix arrived at Fort Monroe to join the newly created Battery O, 4th Artillery Regiment. On June 24, 1900, he and his unit were transferred to Fort Hancock, New Jersey. Tom reenlisted in April 1901 with the 48th Company, Coast Artillery Corps (see group photo, 1st Sgt. Mix front and center).



Tom found himself back at Fort Monroe in 1902 for summer training with the 48th Company. During that stay, he began a whirlwind courtship with a Norfolk girl, Grace Allin, and married her on July 18, 1902. For reasons unknown, Grace remained in Norfolk after Tom returned to Fort Hancock but let him know that long-distance marriage did not suit her. On October 20, 1902, Tom left his duty station on a five-day furlough and never returned. What happened? (To be continued)

FORT MONROE - MARCH 2026

FREE PROGRAMS & TOURS

FRIDAYS 12:00 pm	Shoulder to Shoulder: Women's History Month Tour 1-hour guided walking tour. Starts inside the Visitor & Education Center.
SAT MAR 7 10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Living History Program, The Battle of Hampton Roads Enjoy a chance to engage with living historians who portray a company of Union soldiers who were stationed at Fort Monroe during the Civil War. Located outside the Casemate Museum.
FRI MAR 20 7:30 pm - 10:30 pm	Night Skies: Galaxies and Star Clusters Stargazing program, no experience or equipment needed. Event is weather dependent. Takes place at the North End of Walker Airfield.
SAT MAR 21 11:00 am	Tree Tour of Fort Monroe-Whirligigs and Cauliflory: Eccentric Spring Flowers 45 minute walk exploring the variety of trees inside the fort. The tour will start at the entrance to the Casemate Museum.
FRI MAR 27 8:00 am - 10:00 am	Fort Monroe Bird Walk Fort Monroe is at a convergence of the Atlantic Flyways allowing for some excellent birding year round. Begins at the Visitor & Education Center
SAT MAR 28 9:00 am - 5:00 pm	Garrison Life Living History program including Black Powder Firing, Infantry and Cavalry demonstrations. Located on Fort Monroe Parade Ground.
SUN MAR 29 9:00 am - 3:00 pm	

Monthly Reoccurring Programs

FRIDAYS IN MARCH 12:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Living History + the Fort Monroe Canoe Project Join Living History interpreters Fallon Burner and Russell Reed to learn about tribal life in the eastern woodlands and see the progress on a dugout canoe. Located outside the Casemate Museum.
WED MARCH 25 & THURS MARCH 26 11:00 am	Gibraltar of the Chesapeake and the Building of a Nation 45-minute guided walking tour. Learn about the role of the "Gibraltar of the Chesapeake" in local and national defense. Starts outside the Casemate Museum.
THURS MARCH 26 1:00 pm	Finding "Freedom's Fortress" 1-hr guided walking tour. Learn why Fort Monroe is called "Freedom's Fortress." Starts outside the Casemate Museum.
WED MARCH 25 1:00 pm	From the Ground Up 1-hr guided walking tour. Learn about some of the individually listed buildings on the National Register. Starts outside the Casemate Museum.

For More Information on Events and Tours check out the website Events Calendar!



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FORT MONROE TROOPS IN TEXAS??

After ruling Mexico since 1876, President Porfirio Diaz announced that he would not run for another term in 1910 but then changed his mind and imprisoned his main rival, Francisco Madero, who called for an armed insurrection to oust Diaz. When clashes occurred between his supporters and the Federales near the U.S. border, President William Howard Taft authorized sending reinforcements to Texas.

At Fort Monroe the 6th, 35th, 41st, 69th, and 73rd Companies, Coast Artillery Corps, were ordered to participate in this action. On March 11, 1911, they assembled at the Old Point Comfort wharf (see photo) and boarded the Army troop transport Kilpatrick for a voyage around the Florida Keys and across the Gulf of Mexico to Galveston. From there they moved to nearby Fort Crockett, a Coast Artillery installation, and set up a tent camp.



These companies now formed the bulk of the 2nd Provisional Regiment, which would function as an infantry unit if needed at or across the border with Mexico (which was a considerable distance away). Therefore, these heavy artillery gunners would spend most of their time training to become foot soldiers. The weather was not always cooperative and often turned their campground into a muddy field.

Fortunately, tensions in Mexico eased dramatically after Diaz resigned and was replaced by an interim government. The Fort Monroe companies were released from this temporary duty and departed from Galveston on board the transport Sumner. They arrived at Old Point Comfort on July 10, 1911, having completed their mission without firing a shot.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE CASEMATE MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

MANAGED BY THE CASEMATE MUSEUM FOUNDATION

STAFFED BY A VOLUNTEER MANAGER AND THREE SALES ASSOCIATES

SELLING UNIQUE ITEMS RELATED TO FORT MONROE'S HISTORY

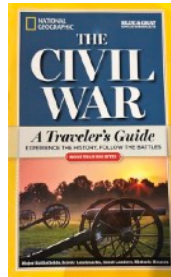
PROFITS SUPPORT THE CASEMATE MUSEUM

2025 SALES REVENUE EXCEEDED \$53,000



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CIVIL WAR REPLICAS:
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35 DIFFERENT HISTORICAL TYPES
SOLD OVER 1,700 IN 2025

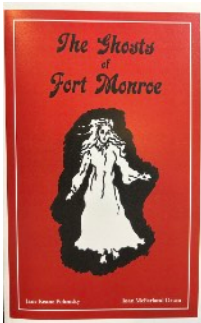
CHILDRENS:

COLORING BOOKS
COMIC BOOKS
GAMES
PUZZLES



BOOKS:

59 DIFFERENT BOOKS
CIVIL WAR BOOKS
COOKBOOKS
GHOST STORIES



JEWELRY:

CHARMS
EARRINGS
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ANKLETS



**PAMUNKEY INDIAN
CRAFTS**

Gift Shop Seasonal Schedule

Hours: 10:00AM-4:00PM

February: Weekends only

March: Friday-Saturday-Sunday

April-May: 4 days per week

June-September: 6 days per week

October-November: 3 days per week

December: Weekends only

January: Closed

Check Website for Up-to-Date Information

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Part Time Gift Shop Sales Associate

Join two current Sales Associates to complete the team. Work 1-4 days per week depending on the season. January off.

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