

Fort Point Trail Management Plan

St. George Conservation Commission

January 2013

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1. Introduction

The Historic Fort Point Trail is a collaboration between the St. George Conservation Commission and the St. George Historical Society. Volunteers with the guidance and assistance of the Georges River Land Trust maintain the trail.

This plan serves to: 1. Provide a brief history of the property, 2. Document the pre-existing agreement with prior property owner James Skoglund relative to the town's property at Fort Point, 3. Document the current conditions of the Fort Point Trail and property and 4. Establish a policy for use and future development.

2. History

The Story of Fort Point

At the end of the trail, past an old cabin, lie the Historic Fort Point ruins and a picnic area over- looking the St. George River.

The fort was built in 1809 as part of a regional effort by the Jefferson Administration to protect American shipping lanes from attacks by the French and British during the Napoleonic Wars. It was also used to prevent locals from trading with the British or French during the time of Jefferson's Embargo.

The fort consisted of a crescent-shaped rampart, a barracks where soldiers were stationed, a blockhouse, and a powder house. The rampart was constructed from sod to absorb cannonball impacts. The building structures have since decayed, but the foundation holes from the block- house and barracks remain.

Joseph Robinson, from whom the property had been purchased, retained the right to run a ferry service to the western shore of what is now Cushing from the fort wharf. This wharf was carried out to sea with the ice in the 1880s.

Also in the late 1800s, treasure hunters dug deep pits near the fort, looking for

buried pirate treasure.

In the 1920s, Governor Baxter bought the fort property from the US Government, and it was made into a state park, but the property remained without land access.

In 2006, the Town of St. George purchased the land between the point and the spring in order to procure public access to this historic landmark and its scenic views of the St. George River.

Trail Description & History

The attached map delineates the Town of St George Fort Point property, State property and surrounding properties. The trail head is located just off Route 131 near Wiley's Corner. Parking for the Fort Point Trail is located near to the spring above Wileys Corner.

The trail begins to the left of the trailhead kiosk, winding its way through an open field of goldenrod, steplebush, and sensitive ferns bordered by an alder thicket.

Entering a wooded ravine to cross a small stream over a rustic wooded footbridge, a mixed evergreen/deciduous canopy dominates. In the spring, trout lilies bloom in abundance here, whilst other northern woodland flowers such as bunchberry, Canada mayflower and starflower can also be found.

Crossing a stone wall, old apple trees descended from the abandoned Robinson orchard can be seen, and the remains of a foundation and are also evidenced by piles of rocks amongst the bushes. This foundation once supported a frame house, which was built by Joseph Robinson at the end of the Revolution, and surviving until it was torn down in the 1870s. The house was part of a larger farm which supported wood harvesting and cattle, but has since been abandoned and left to re-vegetate, as were many farms on the peninsula.

Descending gently from this point, mature maple, ash, cherry, and white birch dominate the canopy from here where the trail opens into field once more, with black- berry bushes and ferns growing underneath. A wooded boardwalk was installed in 2011 with the volunteer efforts of the Tanglewood 4-H Camp Leadership campers to traverse wet sections of the trail.

The fort remnants are to the left and in the center of the small peninsula on the State Park Property, where an earthen mound is visible.

3. Pre-existing Agreement

From the town's agreement with James Skoglund: re: town property on Map 235, Lot 7 (previously Map 22, Lot 14). Between Route #131 and the St. George River.

“The Grantee (the town) agrees to preserve the historical sites on the property and maintain the undeveloped portion of the property in its natural state, while allowing for minimal development to promote the enjoyment of the property by the public”

Attachment A Provides the summary of discussions between James G. Skoglund and the Town of St. George concerning the acquisition of the property from Skoglund by the Town and serves to clarify the above quoted phrase from the deed.

4. Current Conditions

- a. A low-impact walking trail designed exclusively as a footpath has been built from Route #131 to the River. It follows a path stipulated by the grantor. The path is known as the Fort Point Trail.
- b. The St. George Conservation Commission using the minimally invasive maintenance techniques of the Georges River Land Trust Stewardship and Trails Committee maintains Fort Point Trail.
- c. A small parking area has been established near the spring.

5. Use and Future Development

- a. The Fort Point Trail property is designated as a Conservation Focus Area by the St. George Conservation Commission.
- b. Maintenance of this trail is the responsibility of St. George Conservation Commission. Invasive woody species will be removed to the extent practicable including: Tatarian Honeysuckle, Barberry, Norway Maple and Multiflora Rose.
- c. Appropriate and consistent signage along the entire trail to be installed according to GRLT Stewardship and Trails Committee specifications and St George Conservation Commission, and with approval of St. George Historical Society.
- d. The Fort Point Trail will link to a proposed longer footpath known as the Jones Brook Trail and connecting Fort Point with the St. George Town Forest on Kinney Woods Road.
- e. If ever a road becomes necessary for occasional maintenance, it should be located at the traditional access path off from Spring Lane where the Lane bends to the North.

- f. It is Important to maintain good relationships with adjacent property owners. The adjacent properties are designated on the map with official town map and lot numbers.
- g. Richard Paulson has generously allowed access across his property to the park for State personnel and handicapped persons. It is desirable to have an understanding (if only a handshake) with Mr. Paulson regarding how handicapped persons may gain access to the park.
- h. The Fort Point Trail property is not appropriate as a boat launch site. The Town recognizes that boating and the associated vehicular activity would destroy what remains of the tranquility of the property and of Fort Point.
- i. Recognizing the above and in consideration of historical uses and importance of the site and the park, future acquisition by the town of adjacent property having access to Fort Point is desirable when/if property should become available. The objective is to restore the site to its earlier tranquility and to promote the enjoyment of the property by the public.

**Summary of Discussions between James G. Skoglund and the Town of St George
Concerning the acquisition of Skoglund property by the Town**

This document serves as a summary of discussions between James G. Skoglund and the Town of St George concerning the acquisition of property from Skoglund by the Town, said property being located between Route 131 and the St. George River, and identified in the Assessors' records as Map 22, Lot 14. More particularly, this document serves to provide a better clarification and understanding of the following phrase within the deed:

"The Grantee agrees to preserve the historical sites on the property and maintain the undeveloped portion of the property in its natural state, while allowing for minimal development to promote the enjoyment of the property by the public."

- 1) The Town recognizes that the property has a cellar hole and surroundings associated with the 18th century homestead of the Robinson family. It is the Town's intent to provide appropriate protection of this area, as identified by the Historical Society, to ensure the preservation of the site.
- 2) Skoglund has expressed his interest to exclude vehicular traffic on the property. The Town has expressed the concern that such an exclusion would not allow a small parking area proposed by the Town, as well as vehicular access across the property by the State and others to maintain the State Park at the river.
- 3) The Town plans a small parking area and a low impact walking trail from Route 131 to the St. George River to provide for public access.
- 4) Skoglund realizes that many people would like access to the landing to put boats overboard. Skoglund believes that this traffic and activity, as well as the inevitable cars and trucks that would drive down, would destroy what remains of the tranquility of the property and of Fort Point. If it should ever become necessary to put a road in for occasional maintenance, the road should be put in close to the path formerly used by Skoglund. Arrangements should be made with the owner(s) of Spring Lane for access.
- 5) Skoglund does not object to a small parking area near the spring, and applauds the walking path.

James G. Skoglund

Dated January 2006

Board of Selectmen