

Fort Ethan Allen



First constructed in 1893, Fort Ethan Allen is an excellent, intact example of US Army forts built around the turn of the century. Located near the Central Vermont railroad, its intended purpose was to be able to quickly deploy its troops to the canal system in Canada in order to prevent the British from sending gunboats into the industrial heartland of the Great Lakes. Cavalry troops were the first to be stationed there. Additional facilities were built from 1904 to 1906 to accommodate artillery units.

From 1933 to 1938, during the Great Depression, the Fort served as the headquarters for the Vermont Civilian

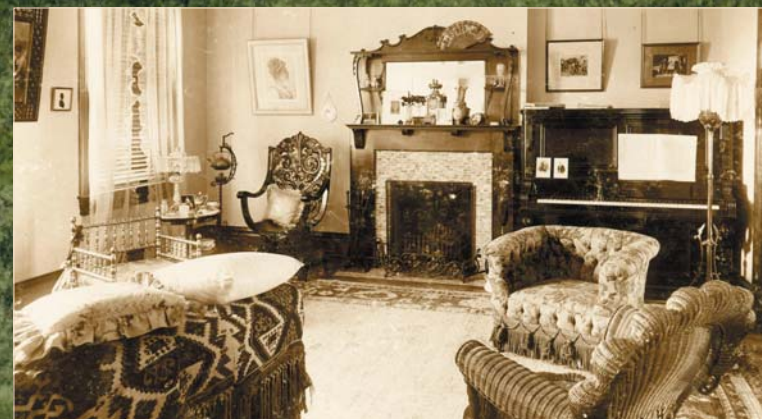
Conservation Corps (CCC) whose members helped to build roads, bridges, and dams, as well as string miles of telephone lines. During World War II National Guard units trained here prior to deployment but in 1944 the Fort was declared inactive. Activity resumed at the Fort beginning in 1951 with the arrival of a Vermont Air National Guard interceptor squadron but by 1962 military use had ceased. Nearby Camp Johnson obtained about 781 acres for the Vermont National Guard. Most of the remaining 400 acres and associated buildings are now owned by St. Michael's College, the University of Vermont, and the Town of Colchester and are used for housing and a variety of public services.



The advent of motorized vehicles and tanks during and after World War I led many of the Fort's stables to be converted to garages. The large parade ground was the site of concerts, cannon firings and troop reviews, tennis tournaments, baseball and football games and polo and horse shows. Today, the Town of Colchester, in partnership with the Town of Essex, manages it as a community park.



During World War I the Fort was designated as one of fifteen officer training camps in the country. Among the trainees were ROTC cadets from Norwich, Harvard, Yale and the University of Massachusetts. At one time there were more than 8,000 men stationed here.



The officers and their families lived in spacious, high-ceilinged, duplex homes. Built-in cupboards, door and window frames, and dust moldings were made of rich dark wood. Each duplex had its own housekeeper who lived in a third-floor apartment, sometimes with her children.



When not on duty, the men of the Fort found many ways to pass their time. Athletics, gardening, drinking, and courting the local ladies were among the more popular.