

The Sherlock Holmes of Fort Zachary Taylor*

Celebrating 50 years of Howard England's Legacy at Fort Zachary Taylor



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Proud Supporters of Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park

* Title of 1984 article by Marita Adair Hidalgo

Celebrating 50 Years

- **2018 marked several notable milestones in Key West History.**
 - 50 years since Howard England began his research on Fort Taylor in July 1968.
 - 50 years since he began his first excavations on the Fort in December 1968.
 - 50 years since he began the process of working to recognize a world-famous historical landmark.

The Beginning



Fort Jefferson

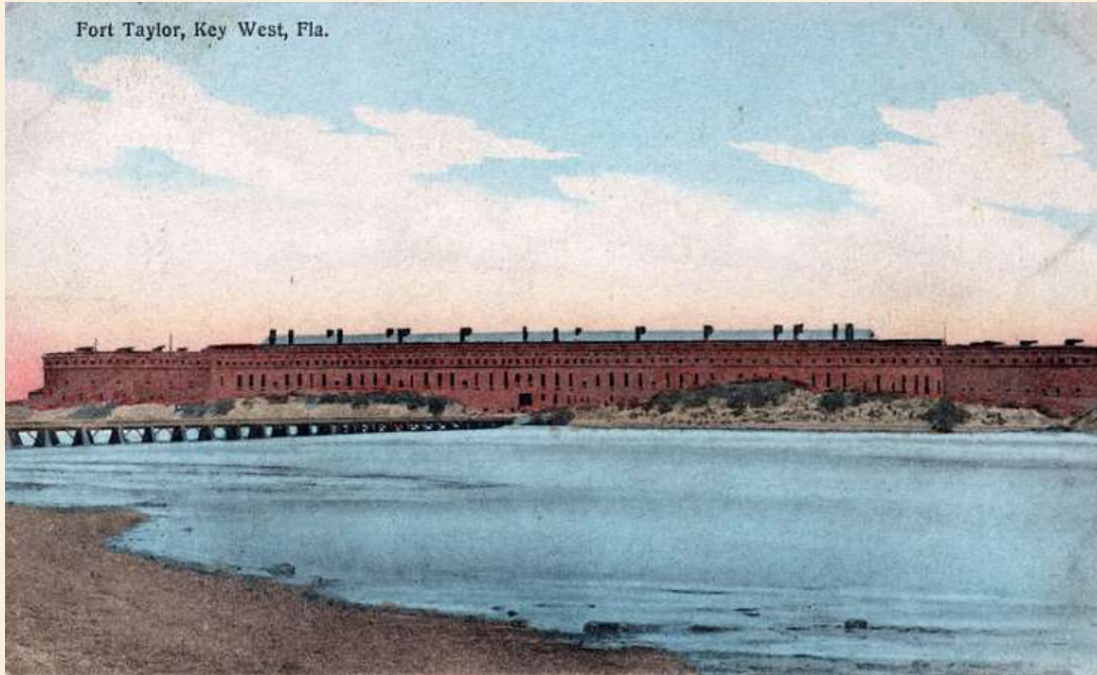
- Based on a question from the Miami Herald's "Action Line," an investigation into the historical value of Fort Taylor began in July 1968.
- Fort Jefferson had been a National Monument for over 35 years.
- But what about Fort Taylor the question asked?

The Beginning



- In July 1968, Howard England was the Naval Base Architect and Base Historian.
- He was named one of a three-member team to investigate the history and value of Fort Taylor.
- Other members were:
 - Ida Barron
 - Francis Delaney
- But first they had to find the real Fort Taylor.

The Beginning



- Research revealed that this is what Fort looked like in the 1880s.
- But the structure looked much different in 1968.
- What had happened to this magnificent structure?

The Beginning

1968



- In 1968, what we now know as Fort Taylor had been called Battery Osceola for almost 70 years.
- And Battery Osceola in 1968 was a dirty, cluttered junk yard!
- Was there anything of historical value still there?

The Beginning

- The committee returned its report in September:
 - They reported that there was definitely something in the literature that indicated promise at “Battery Osceola.”
 - Ames Williams’ 1956 *Tequesta* article “*Stronghold of the Straits*” revealed that the Fort had been radically altered in 1898.
- Howard England requested permission to further explore the ruins.
- The Navy said that he could, “As long as it didn’t cost anything!”

The Early Days



- Here is where Howard England began his search – December 21, 1968.
- Where he began to dig was in what had been Room 69 on the second level of the Fort, right above Room 13.

- Here is a closeup of the original day's excavation.



The Early Days



- This is what was partially uncovered beginning that day in December 1968.
- First thought to be a Civil War gun from the round shape of one of the wheels that was first uncovered, it had its own story to tell.
- But that wasn't all – hidden below the gun carriage still upside down was a great surprise.

The Early Days



- Below the gun carriage was a hole that had been chopped out of the floor of the second story.
- The hole led down into the gun room (Room 13) below but was filled with sand and rubble all the way to the second floor level.
- Howard England would spend the next two years digging out Room 13.

The Early Days



- Each Saturday for two years, Howard England was helped by volunteers.
- They came from all walks of life – young and old alike.
- But all were curious about what was hidden at Fort Taylor.

The Early Days



- In early 1970, Howard England went back to the spot up top on the South Face where his probing had first struck metal.
- This was the first of a pair of 10-inch Columbiads from the Barbette Level of the Fort.

Hard Work



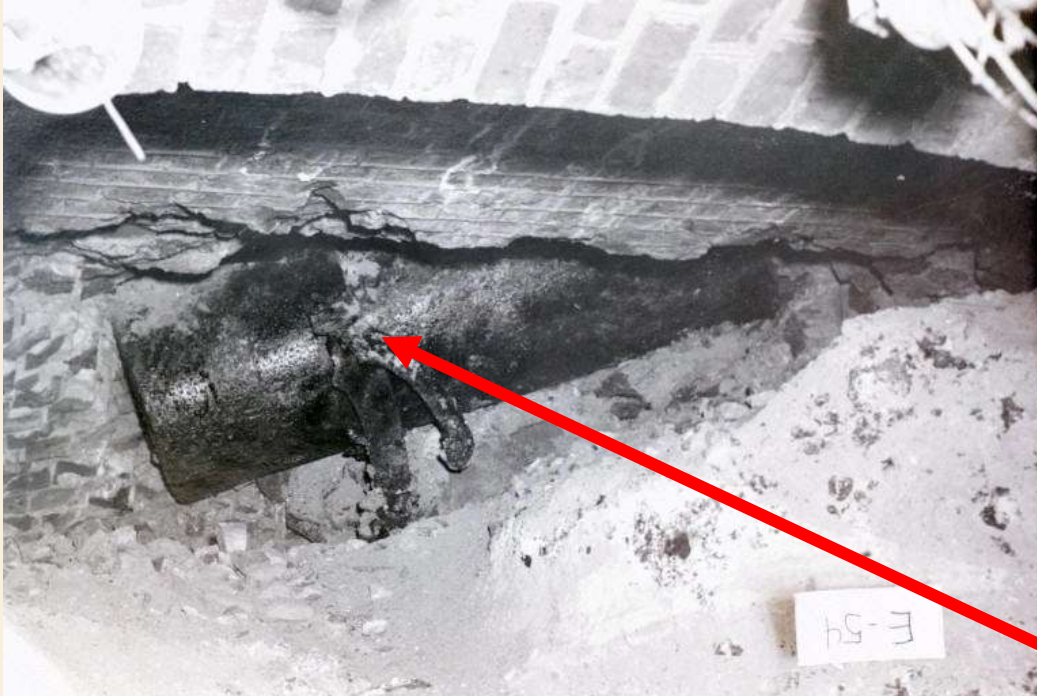
- Work also continued in Room 13.
- This was the method that was used to excavate the gun rooms – shovels, five-gallon paint buckets, and roller rails.
- And all of it was in humidity approaching 100% all the time.

Hard Work



- One of the most significant finds in Room 14 was the 1861 Dr. Normandy's Patent Distillation Apparatus (a Desalination Plant).
- It made 7,000 gallons of fresh water from sea water per day.
- Here is the condenser part of the system once it was fully excavated.

Hard Work



- While clearing Room 14, Howard England discovered this object protruding from the overhead arches.
- The muzzle showed that it was a rifled cannon – not a smooth-bore cannon.
- Note the broken band around the muzzle.

Hard Work



- Excavated from above, this is the rest of the gun – a 300-pound Parrott Rifle.
- It was one of two listed on the Barbette Tier of the Fort in the 1873 gun inventory – right above where it apparently was dropped in 1898.

Hard Work



- Here is the same gun a number of years later in remarkable condition.
- It is a very rare 300-lb. Parrott Rifle (wt. 35,000 lbs.), one of three known to have been at Fort Taylor.
- When the gun was cleaned, the original lathe marks in the cast iron were still visible.

Hard Work



- Continuing his work in Room 13, Howard England had a feeling that there would be at least one large gun there.
- Here is the first sighting of Wendell Gardiner's "*Big Annie*," a 10-inch Rodman cannon from 1863.

Hard Work



- Later excavation and a heavy rainfall showed that there were two 10-inch Rodmans in Room 13.
- Note how they were carefully placed in the room and then buried.

Hard Work



- Both guns had been removed from their chassis and were on their carriages.
- One gun was from Room 13 and the other one relocated.
- These are the reason that Howard England was called ***“Mr. Rodman.”***

Hard Work



- The mystery of where many of the guns were buried in 1898 was solved in 1970 when a Rodman was discovered entombed in the concrete of Battery Osceola.
- Eventually, 8 Rodmans, a rare 8-inch Columbiad, and a second 300-lb. Parrott were excavated.

Hard Work



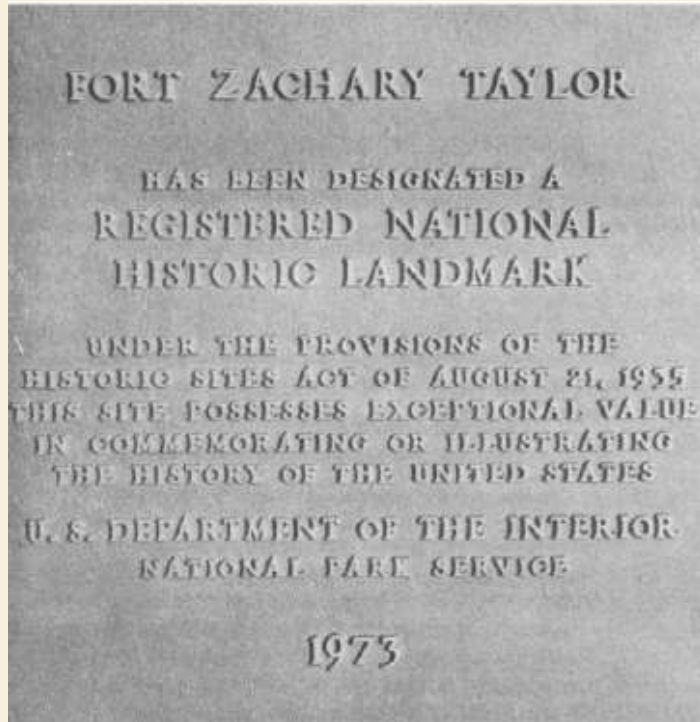
- A number of additional guns were only partially excavated.
- They can be viewed from the top of Battery Osceola even today.
- The 1976 moratorium on excavations stopped the work and left it mostly unfinished.

National Honors

Before the first junk was removed from the Fort, its historic value was beginning to be appreciated:

- The Fort was named a National Historic Site in March 1971.
- Moves were underway to clear out the junk and make the property available to be a park.
- Legislation had also been submitted to make the Fort into a National Monument under the National Park Service was still U.S. Navy property.
- In October 1973, the Fort was added to the Register of National Landmarks – a token of its inestimable value.

National Honors



- In October 1973, it was also designated as a National Historic Landmark – one of only a handful in the State of Florida at that time.
- Howard England and Ida Barron made sure that there was an appropriate ceremony which included an unveiling of the bronze marker currently displayed in the Sally Port.

National Honors



- The only live firing of a Civil War cannon at Fort Taylor since the Civil War.
- Done to celebrate the 1973 award of Fort Taylor's National Landmark status.

The Other Heroes



- Ida Woodward Barron – the unsung heroine of Fort Taylor.
- She helped the Fort achieve National Historic Site and National Landmark status – all while it was still filled with junk.
- Much of the photographic archives on Fort Taylor came from her personal efforts and those of official Naval photographers.

The Other Heroes



- Another unsung hero of Fort Taylor was Congressman Dante Fascell (center).
- He sponsored the legislation that led to the Fort achieving National Historic Site and National Historic Landmark status.
- He worked closely with Ida Barron and Howard England to help position Fort Taylor to become the magnificent public venue it is today.
- He was tireless in his legislative efforts to get national recognition for the Fort.

More Hard Work



- The magnitude of work to uncover Fort Taylor was simply enormous.
- Howard England and his volunteer “Sand Hogs” moved some 50,000 cubic yards of rubble and fill.
- It took several years to completely remove the remaining rubble from the South Face.

More Hard Work



- As the guns were discovered, they were cleaned, painted, and eventually moved to be displayed on the top of the North Face.
- Several were mounted on chassis and carriages like their original design.

More Hard Work



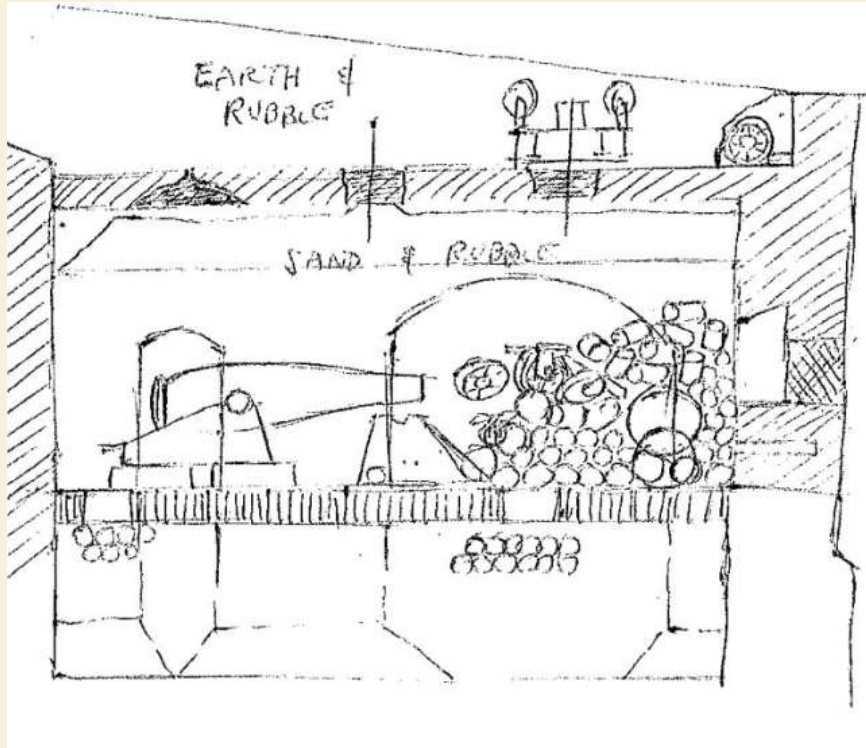
- Once all the sand and rubble were removed, the true “treasure” of the Fort was revealed.
- Here is Room 23 with most of the sand and rubble removed.
- The armaments included both cannon balls and Parrott Bolts along with another 10-inch Rodman cannon.

More Hard Work



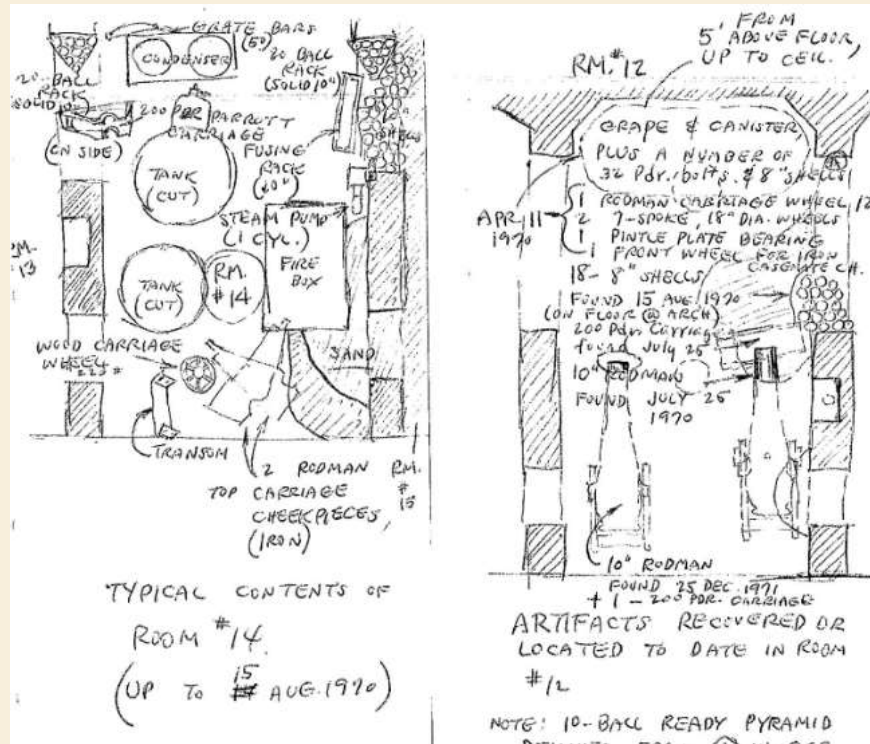
- Another view of the same room completely cleaned up.
- Note the black paint stains on the walls from where cannon balls and Parrott bolts were stacked in 1898.

Documenting Discoveries



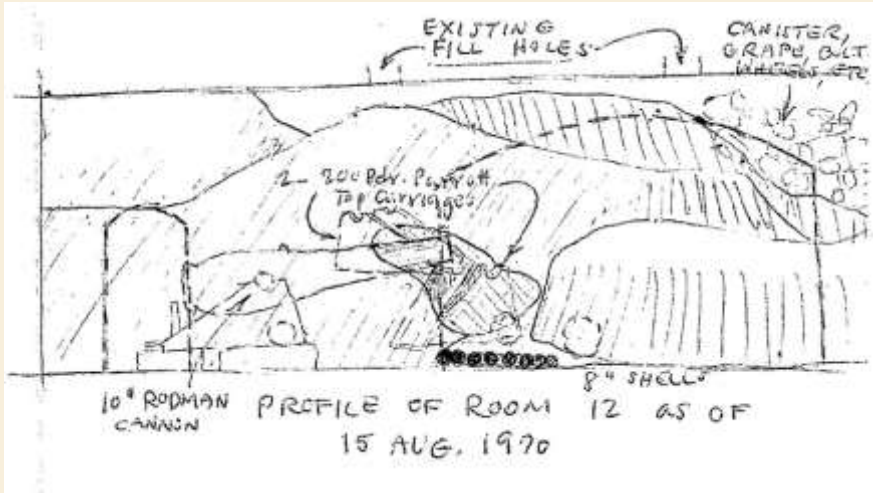
- Howard England's legacy also includes the documentation he left behind.
- Here is an elevation sketch of what was found in Room 13.
- Note the upside- down carriage above the Room just as it was found in December 1968.

Documenting Discoveries



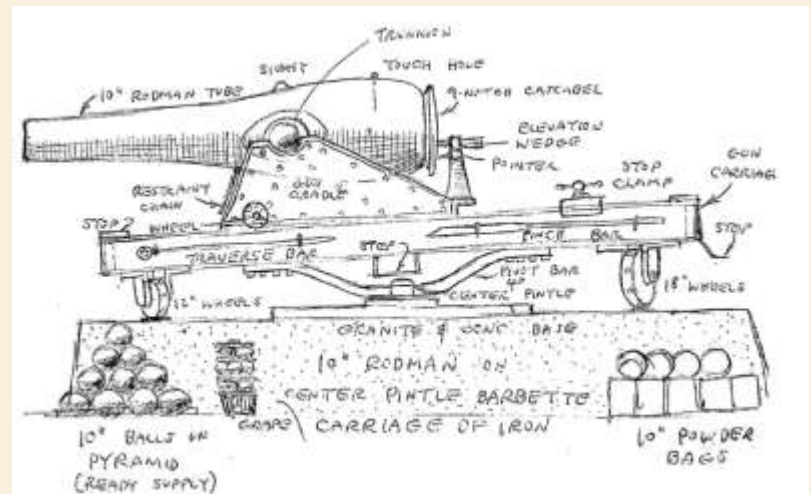
- Although not a trained archeologist, Howard England brought his eye for details and dimensions to his volunteer work.
- Note the Plan Views of Rooms 13 and 14 showing where artifacts were found.

Documenting Discoveries

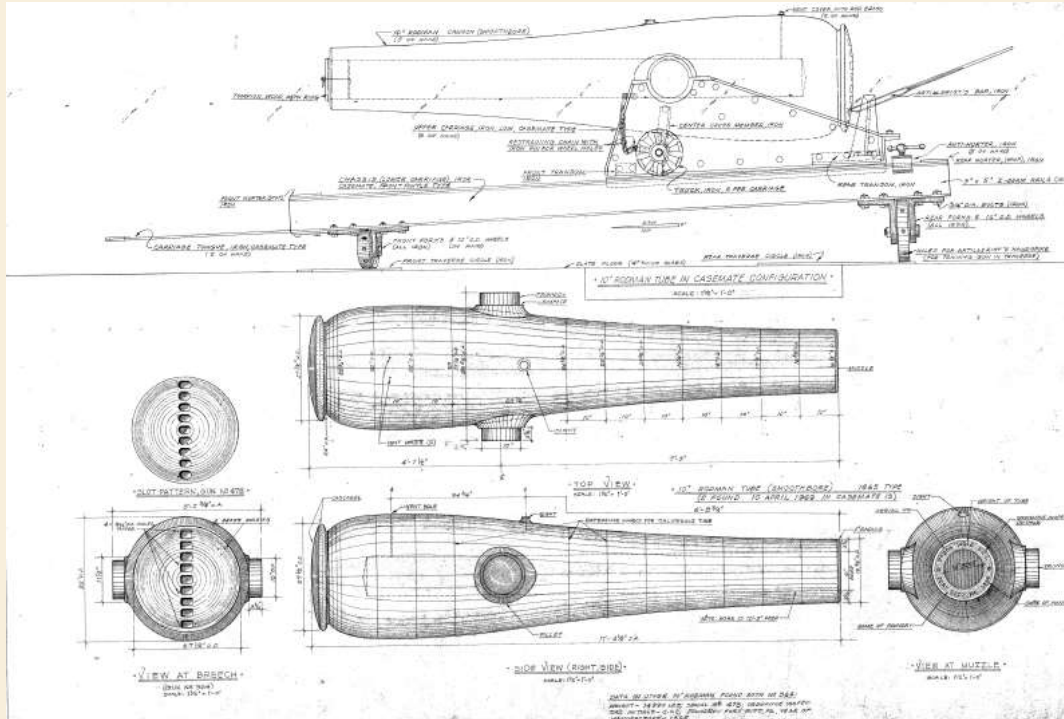


- An elevation sketch of what was found in Room 12.
- Note the types of artifacts and the types of fill used.

- Howard England could also integrate individual pieces into their original shapes and configurations.
- Like completing a 10,000-piece jig saw puzzle with no idea of what it should look like.



Documenting Discoveries



- Not only did he sketch artifacts, he also drew them up in detailed plans.
- This is the drawing of the first 10-inch Rodman gun tube along with its chassis and carriage.
- All told, he left over 280 detailed drawings of his findings.

State Park Status



- The first major step to Fort Taylor becoming a state park occurred on October 15, 1976.
- Mr. Harmon Shields, left, receives the Certificate of Transfer from Mr. John Crutcher, U.S. Dept. of the Interior.
- This transaction provide a 99-year lease on the former Navy Property for the purpose of establishing a state park.

State Park Status



- On November 15, 1976, Howard England became an hourly employee of the State Park Service.
- One of his first official tasks was the mounting of the sign designating the Fort and its surrounding property as a State Historic Site.
- He is shown with Ranger Lee Crabb who worked for him from 1976 to 1978.

Historic Restoration



- The largest restoration that Howard England undertook was that of a Model 1905, 3-inch Field Gun that had originally served at Fort Taylor.
- He rebuilt the gun in 1976 including two new wood-spoked wheels.

- President Harry S. Truman is shown in 1947 with the gun Howard England restored.
- This connection was only discovered in 2016 due to a tip from Bob Wolz at the Truman Little Whitehouse Museum.



Historic Restoration



- Another restoration effort at Fort Taylor was this re-mounted Rodman cannon in Casemate 43.
- Cannon is an original Civil War gun excavated by Howard England.
- Chassis and carriage were built from modern steel versus the original wrought iron of the Civil War.

Building a Museum

- As Howard England dug each artifact with loving care, he sketched it, drew it up in engineering drawings, and eventually constructed a scale model of each gun and apparatus.
- From 1976 when excavations were halted, until 1984 when he retired, he built over 20 scale models which he displayed in the southernmost room of the Barrack.
- From 1985, when the Park opened, until 1996, this museum was called:

The Howard England Museum of Coast Artillery

Building a Museum



- Here is one view of the scope of models, artifacts, and photographs built by and collected by Howard England.
- He built over 20 individual models including models of guns no longer at Fort Taylor.
- Here is a photo of the Museum that he left behind when he retired in 1984.

Building a Museum



- To give visitors an idea how big Fort Taylor was, Howard England built a scale model of the Fort from bed rock to the Barbette level.
- This was important since the Fort was reduced from three stories to one story which gives no idea of its original size.
- Many have called this model, a Civil War Dollhouse.

Building a Museum



- Another view of models in the original Howard England Museum.
- Each model was encased in its own glass case to keep out dust and some humidity.
- The models were moved to the Sally Port in 2003 and later moved to Tallahassee in 2008 to protect them until a permanent, climate-controlled environment could be provided at the Fort.

Retirement Honors



- Howard England was appointed a Park Ranger in October 1978.
- In March 1983, he received the first-ever Florida Park Service Distinguished Service Award and medal.
- He served for almost six years until he retired in August 1984.
- He received a number of honors and recognitions for his years of hard work.
- There was even an overture from the County Commission to name the new Park – Howard England State Park.

Howard England's Legacy

2018



- All the years of hard work eventually revealed the treasure that is unique to Key West.
- What had been a dirty and cluttered junk yard in 1968, formally opened to the public in July 1985.
- The Park is one of the premier state parks in the 175-park system today.
- Its Fort, beach, and environmental attractions are priceless.

Howard England's Legacy



- Here is the jewel of Howard England's legacy all bright and shiny and open to tens of thousands of visitors each year.
- It truly fulfills the vision that he first laid out in 1972 when he wrote the first Interpretation Plan for what was hoped would be a National Monument or Park.

Howard England's Legacy

The Sherlock Holmes of Fort Zachary Taylor

New Beginnings

In July 1968, **Howard England** was tasked to evaluate the value of Fort Taylor which was then the Navy's junkyard. The first excavations in December 1968 quickly revealed buried Civil War armaments.

For eight years, Howard England labored tirelessly with his volunteer "sand hogs," often working many hours alone. All told, he excavated over 50,000 cubic yards (equivalent to filling approximately 3,300 semi trailer trucks) of fill and rubble and uncovered 20 large guns along with their carriages and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

Fort Taylor's First Park Ranger

In 1972, Howard England became the curator of the Fort. He was also the only individual ever entrusted with the care of a National Landmark. From 1979 to 1984, he served as the first Park Ranger assigned to Fort Taylor.

He documented each major discovery and built some 16 detailed museum models of each type of weapon uncovered. Because of the number of guns he discovered, he became known as "Mr. Rodman."

In 1983, he received the first Park Service Distinguished Service Medal. His tenacious work pursuing his dream led to the 1985 opening of the Park. In 2000, he was named a "Great Floridian" recognizing his tireless work at Fort Taylor.

Dedication

When asked why he devoted so much time and effort to his one-man crusade, he simply responded, "Someone had to do it."

This panel was made possible through a generous gift from the family and friends of Howard England in partnership with the Friends of Fort Taylor.

Howard S. England 1914 - 1999

FRIENDS OF FORT TAYLOR FLORIDA

- In 2014, the England family and the Florida Park Service celebrated Howard England's 100th birthday.
- The England family donated the first wayside marker at the Fort to celebrate his achievements and legacy.
- The "Sherlock Holmes" marker is one of 11 markers at the Fort that explain the historic features of the Fort, its soldiers, and its armaments.

Howard England's Legacy

- Howard England's legacy in Key West is all about his tireless, 16½–year quest to showcase the unique history of Fort Taylor as the Stronghold of the Straits, the Gibraltar of the Blockade in the Civil War.
- His legacy is measured not in gold or silver, but in:
 - Civil War Cannons
 - Artifacts
 - Restoration
 - History
 - Recreation
- He never asked for anything for himself – he simply loved doing what he did!
- When asked over the years, why he worked so hard at the Fort, he would answer very simply, “Someone had to do it, and I wanted to.”
- He truly deserved to be named one of the Great Floridians of 2000!

1970 Discovery



Edward L. England with piece of narrow gage rail he uncovered from the line that ran from Fort Taylor to outlying Batteries

- Photo of Edward England with first-ever railroad track discovered at Fort Taylor in 1970.

Photo: Rob O'Neal

Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park Today



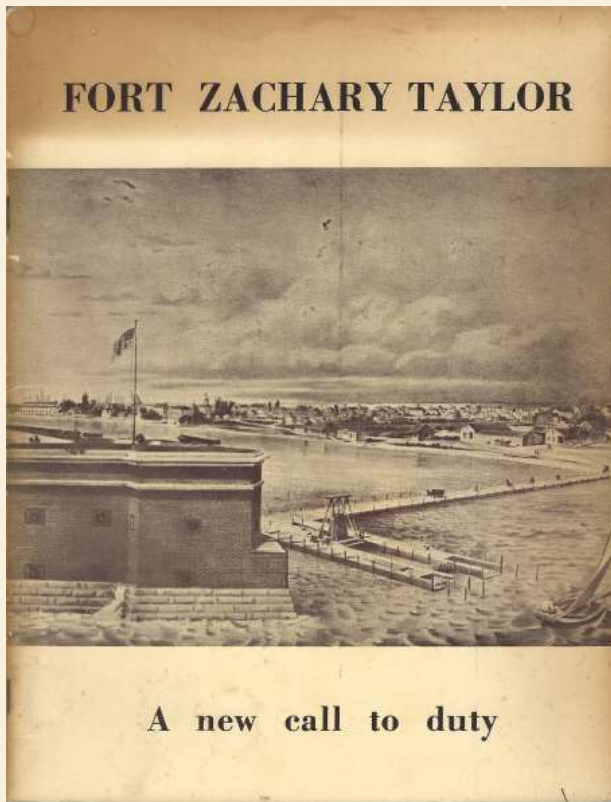
Photo: Rob O'Neal

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Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park Archives
England Family Archives
The Truman Presidential Library
Rob O'Neal, The Key West Citizen

The Rest of the Story

The Rest of the Story



- In 1977, Howard England published the first-ever history of Fort Taylor, A New Call to Duty.
- It covered the history of Fort Taylor from its advance planning in the 1820s to its construction from 1846 to 1866.
- It also covered his re-discovery work from 1968 to 1976 – 8 ½ years of incredibly hard work.
- From 1990 to 2013 it was out of print.

The Rest of the Story

Fort Zachary Taylor



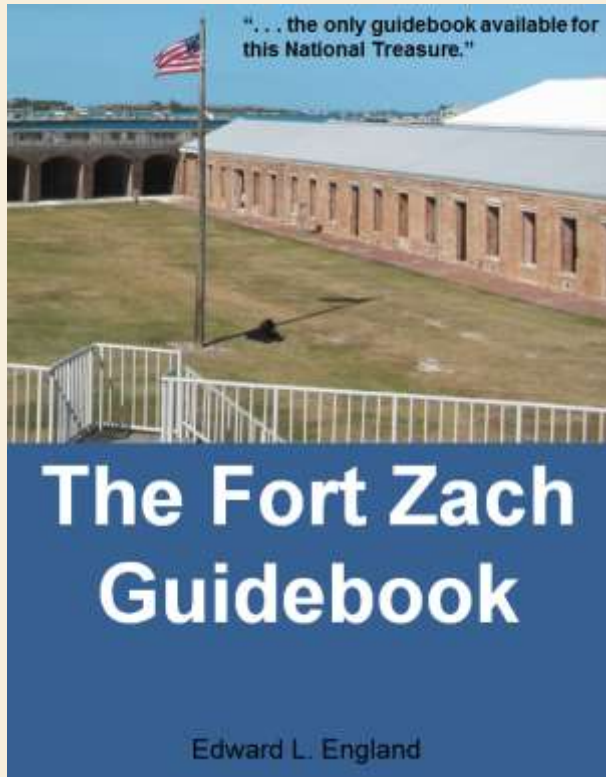
“A Sleeping Giant Awakens”

Howard S. England
in Collaboration with Ida W. Barron

Third Edition – 2015
Revised and Expanded

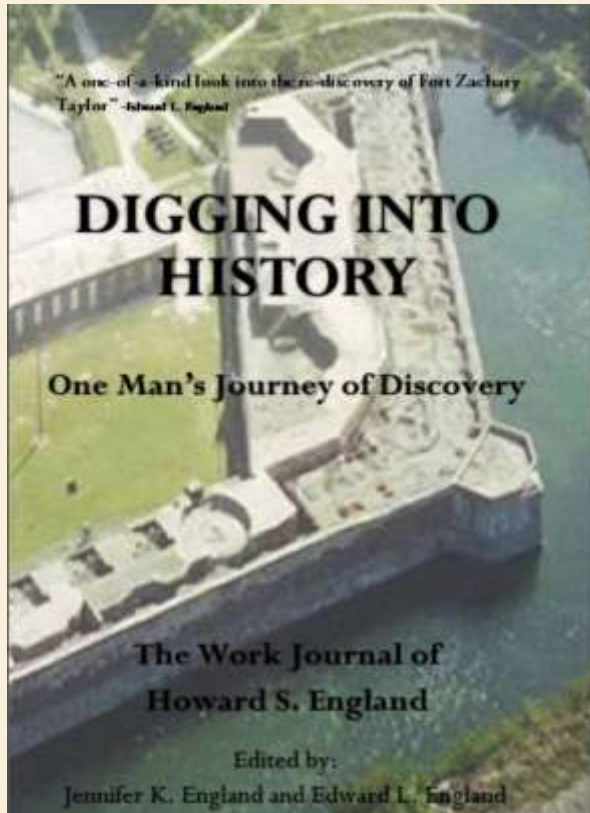
- Howard England’s original book is now in its Third Edition and is available from England Historical Enterprises LLC.
- With a detailed direction diagram, glossary, and index, I believe it is the book that Howard England wished he could have published in 1977.
- We are proud to offer copies of this work for sale at the end of this presentation.

The Rest of the Story



- The Fort Zach Guidebook is the first-ever guidebook to Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park.
- It covers not only the Park, its history, and its attractions, but also covers a number of nearby historic attractions.
- We are proud to also offer copies of this work for sale at the end of this presentation.

The Rest of the Story



- Digging Into History: One Man's Journey of Discovery was published in 2014.
- It covers all the daily journal documentation compiled by Howard England during his 16½ effort at Fort Taylor.
- We are proud to also offer copies of this work for sale at the end of this presentation.