

Historic Fort St. Clair

Fort St. Clair was a regular and militia troops fort under General James Wilkinson, who built the supply post and defensive fortification in March 1792 in preparation for General “Mad Anthony” Wayne’s campaign against the Indians of the Northwest Territory, following disastrous expeditions in 1790 and 1791.

Built near a “fine spring gushing out of the bank,” the 120-foot square palisade fort had a four-sided bastion at each corner. Future U.S. president William Henry Harrison served in the detachment which built the fort.

On November 6, 1792, Miami Chief Little Turtle and approximately 200 warriors attacked a force of Kentucky militia under Major John Adair camped outside the fort. Six Kentuckians and an unknown number of Native Americans died in the skirmish. The fallen soldiers were buried 50 paces west of the fort, beneath, the “Whispering Oak.”

In 1921, the first Preble County Historical Society (1921-1935) was organized to plan a park at the site of Fort Saint Clair, to reclaim historical lands, and offer a chance to the young people of Preble County to acquaint them with early local history. A monument was erected at the site of the old fort bearing a bronze tablet, commemorating the historic battle on the 130th anniversary on Nov. 6, 1922.

In 1923, the State of Ohio, in cooperation with the Historical Society, established Fort St. Clair State Memorial on 77 acres which included the original site of the fort.

In 1933, 12 additional acres were acquired by the Society and deeded to the state. The additional acreage, on the park’s west side, makes up the nature preserve which is forested by large beech, sugar maple and slippery elm trees with a profusion of wood undergrowth and woodland flowers. The historical area lies to the south.

The major point of historical significance is the site of the fort. To the west of the fort site is a small fenced enclosure, inside which are the graves of the six men who fell in the battle on Nov. 6, 1792. A large white oak tree stands by the graveyard and legend has it that when the wind rustles through the leaves of the tree, one can hear the story of the events that it witnessed. The tree, called “The Whispering Oak,” was designated a Bicentennial Tree by the National Arborists’ Association and the International Society of Arboriculture in February 1976.

The recreation area lies in the northern section, separated from the historical area by Garrison Branch creek and a steep bank. Shelter houses, picnic tables, playground equipment, and restrooms are available in the area.

In 1992, The Ohio Historical Society deeded Fort Saint Clair Park to the City of Eaton and, thus, it is no longer a state memorial.

The park is situated on Eaton’s west side at the intersection of Ohio 122 and Camden Road. It is open April-October during daylight hours. Picnic shelters and cabins can be reserved for use by calling the City of Eaton office at 937-456-4125.

The park also includes memorials to other war eras, including a monument to the Civil War, WWII and the Korean War.

Miss Preble

As of September 2017, an area just outside Fort St. Clair is the home of an M4A3 Sherman Tank affectionately known as “Miss Preble.” The tank was originally given to the city in 1957 as a gift to honor veterans of WWII and those serving in the Korean War. It was on display in front of the National Guard Armory located on Main Street. Over the years it became a symbol of Preble County pride and honored all area veterans. The tank was taken by the Ohio National Guard in 2012 upon the closure of the former Eaton Armory, but it was brought home with the help of Preble County Heritage, a group of area residents whose goal was to save and bring the tank back to Eaton.

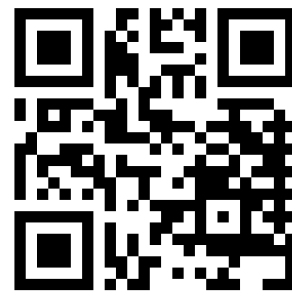


Whispering Christmas at Fort St. Clair

The Whispering Christmas Committee decorates the park with millions of holiday lights each winter. The park is open December 1-31, from 6-9:30 p.m. each day, for viewing the beautiful light spectacular. There is no admission charge, but donations are welcome to help maintain the lights.



Interested in renting a cabin at the Fort for your event?



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Fort St. Clair

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