

2. RELEVANT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Previous Site Usage

Valuable understanding of the geotechnics of the site, and possible contaminations, can be gained from the site history.

When Europeans landed at Sydney Cove the promontory on the eastern side of the Cove was a steep sided ridge of Hawkesbury Sandstone that stepped down at its northern end to a near flat, wave cut platform, a metre or so above high tide. At the end of this platform was a small island. A reef of approximately 180m extended into the harbour, recorded as a shipping hazard.

The first structure built, by Governor Phillip, near the northern end of the promontory was a house for the aboriginal Bennelong (Bancelon¹). It was a “brick house twelve feet square”.

Construction of Fort Macquarie began in 1817 by Francis Greenway. The first part, completed in 1821 was on the island and level tidal flat.

By 1845 the island had been joined to the main promontory and Fort Macquarie had been largely completed (see Figures 1 and 2). It was constructed of sandstone blocks (see Figure 3) excavated from quarries around the northern side of the promontory (see Figure 4), thereby creating the vertical sandstone faces that exist today along the north end of Macquarie Street, and down which the Tarpeian Steeps descend to the Opera House forecourt. There were some further extensions to the fort at the time of the Crimean War.

The sea walls on the western side, sometimes called Moriarty’s Wall, were commenced in the 1860s using stone from the “Tarpeian” cliff face.

The sea walls around Farm Cove (see Figures 5 and 6) were constructed in the 1880s following complaints of sewage washing up on the foreshore from the Bennelong Drain (more properly called the Macquarie Drain). Some idea of the extent of quarrying along Bennelong Point can be gained from the 1860 photograph taken from Dawes Point (see Figure 7).

¹ Watkin Tench, A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson, 1789.

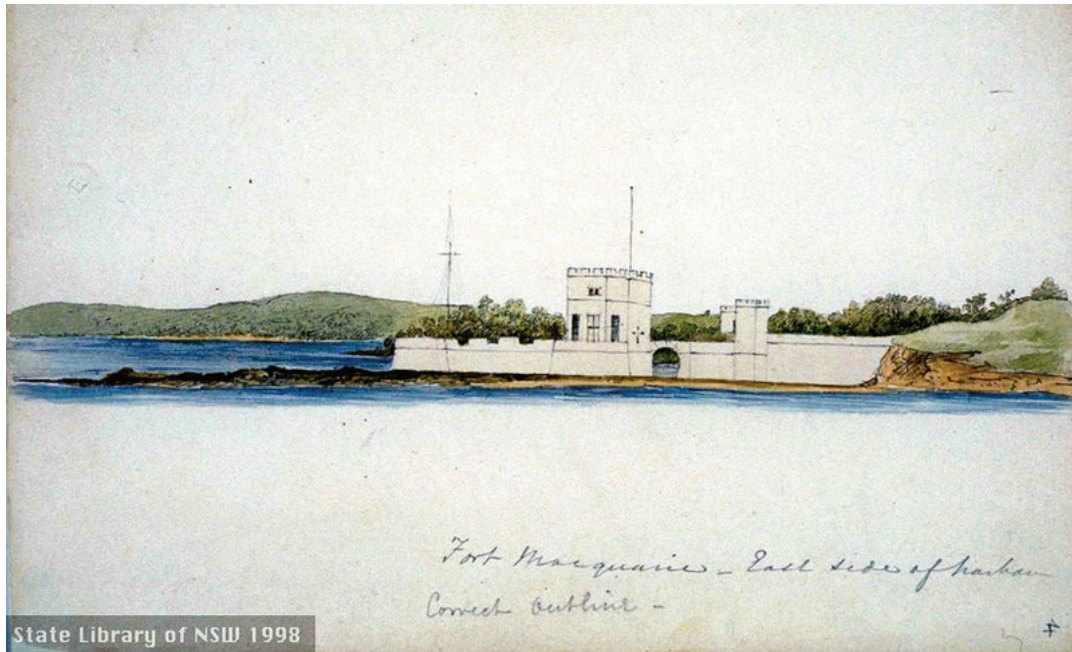


Figure 1: Fort Macquarie from Dawes Point, ~1848



Figure 2: Fort Macquarie from Lady Macquarie's Chair ~1845



Figure 3: Eastern side of Fort Macquarie ~1876



Figure 4: Western side of Fort Macquarie showing sandstone blocks being quarried from the Tarpeian Cliff ~1870