

LEGENDARY TUNNEL OF 1862 TRACED AT FORT TOTTEN Soldier Finds Tube Running Beneath Sound

Designed in War Scheme, it may extend 2 1/2 miles to Schuyler.

As the water began to trickle into the tunnel Sgt. Maj Clay Doster threw aside his flashlight and began to dig tentatively at the wall of mud before him. The water began to come faster. He waited for a moment and then, turning on his stomach, began to wriggle back the way he had come.

He wriggled some 500 yards through a tube four feet wide and three feet deep until he came to the surface. Then he ran very fast to the Post Headquarters of the 62nd Coast Artillery Regiment at Fort Totten.

"I found the tunnel," he shouted. "The tunnel under the old fort that was supposed to go under the Sound to Fort Schuyler! It really exists!"

Dates Back to 1862

And so it was that the legendary tunnel of Fort Totten, supposed to be under the old fortifications that were begun in 1862 and never completed, was discovered.

The tunnel is about seven feet deep, with a winding staircase beginning at what is supposed to be the second level of the old fortifications and winding downward toward the Sound. How far the tunnel goes has not yet been ascertained. It is possible that it stretches the whole two and one-half miles under the Sound to Fort Schuyler. Certainly it does lead directly under water, a secret passageway designed during the Civil War to carry the Army personnel under fire from the one fort to the other.

The tunnel was the focal point of an elaborately designed fortification, part of which still stands. The entrance is opposite an old powder crypt, built of the same kind of granite blocks set in lead that are used throughout the old fort. Damp, dark passageways, dripping with stalactites, chilly on the hottest summer day, connect the crypt and tunnel with the fortifications proper.

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