



University of  
New Haven

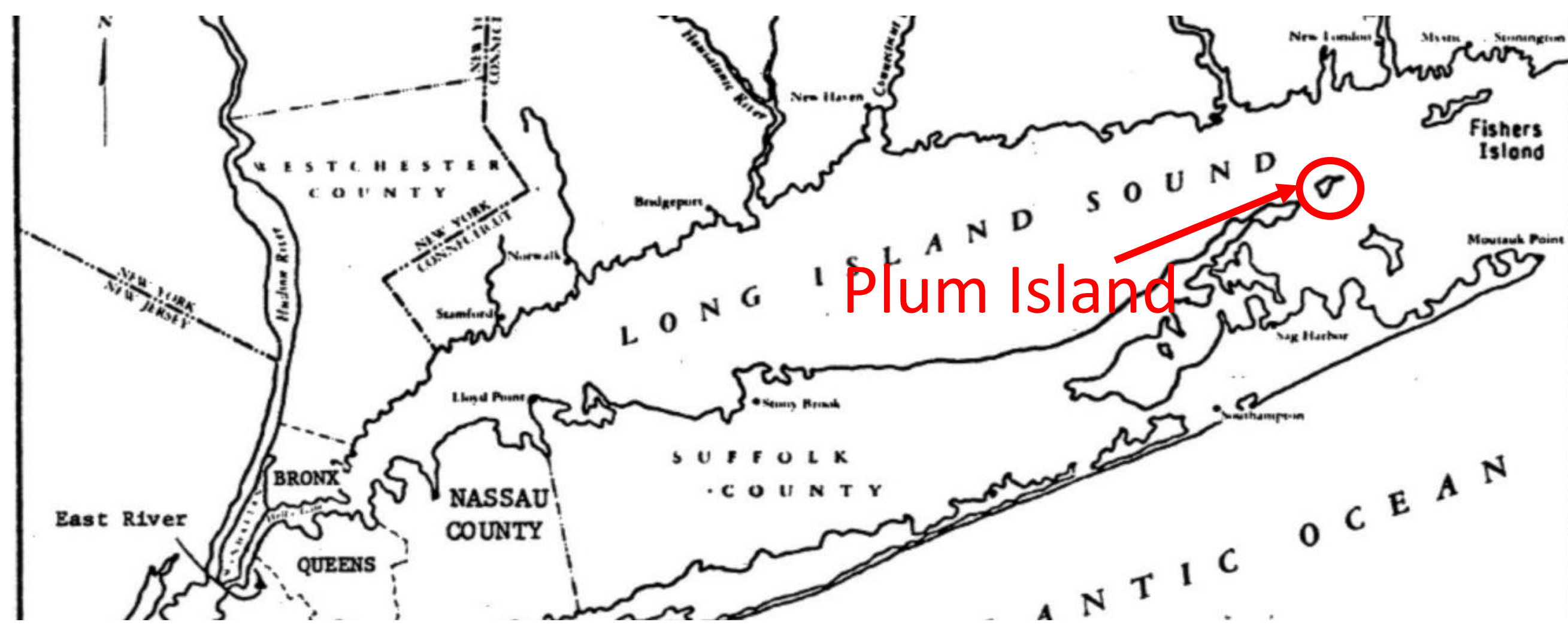
# A Historical Investigation into the Purpose and Uses of Fort Terry on Plum Island, New York in the Spanish American War (1898-1902)

Vincent M Madar

Mentors: Dr. Paulette Pepin & Dr. April Yoder

## Research Question

What were the intended purposes and uses of Fort Terry when the US Government fortified Plum Island in the 1890s?



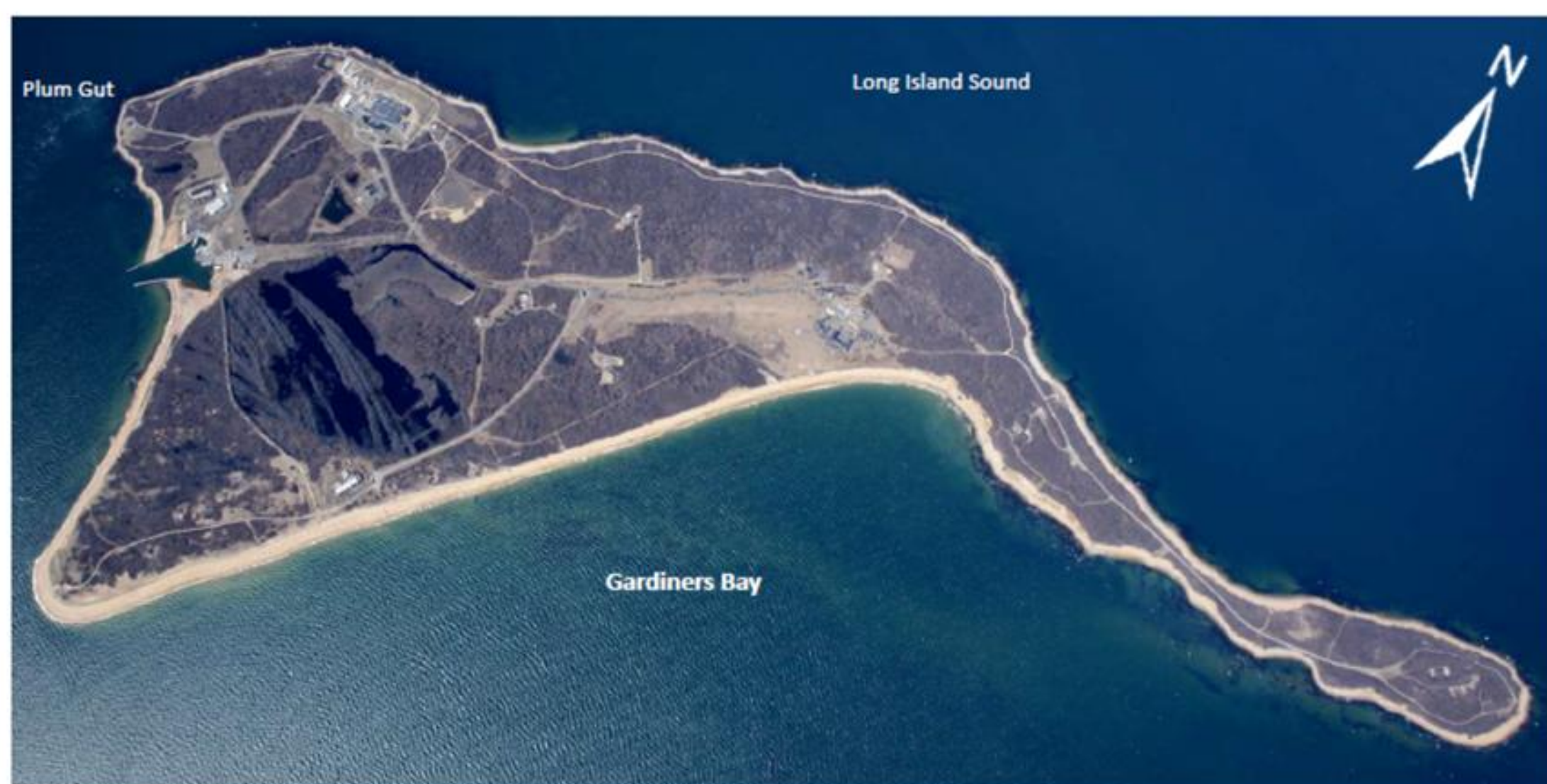
## Plum Island Location & Size

Location:

- ❖ 105 Miles East of New York City
- ❖ 1.5 Miles East of Orient Point, Long Island
- ❖ 12 Miles South of Old Saybrook, Ct

Size:

- ❖ 3 Miles Wide
- ❖ 840 Acres (or the size of Central Park in NYC)



## Methods

1. Analyze government records, newspaper articles, historical surveys, maps, timelines, etc.
2. Observe the remaining Fort Terry structures on Plum Island



Left: A number of the initial Fort Terry structures.

## Timeline (1880s-1900s)

**1884** – Wealthy investors headed by Abram Hewitt purchased the island for \$28,000 possibly intending to build a resort.

**1897** – The US Government purchased 150 acres Hewitt, the sole owner now, and initiated construction of Fort Terry over the next couple of months.

**1901** – Government purchases rest of the island for \$64,700 and expanded the construction of Fort Terry.

## Conclusions

Why Fort Terry was Built:

- ❖ Part of the Long Island Sound Fortification Project
- ❖ Strategic Value in protecting Gardiner's Bay, Plum Gut & major ports in the Sound

What Fort Terry was Used for:

- ❖ Training & Practice Locations
- ❖ Quarantine Location for Soldiers with Yellow Fever (Aug. 1899)

## Importance of Research

The decision to fortify Plum Island has major current implications:

- ❖ The government now owns a relatively undeveloped, prime piece of real estate in the Sound that has great environmental value causing controversy over trying to sell it to the highest bidder.

Right: Surveyors study the future site of Fort Terry.



## Acknowledgements

- ❖ I would like to thank:
  - ❖ The SURF Donors and Staff who make this research possible
  - ❖ My mentors, Drs. Pepin & Yoder
  - ❖ Jason Golden & Meghan Jackson of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center