



## ABOUT

- •Fort Bourtange is a star fort in the Netherlands. Completed in 1593, it was intended to protect the border with Germany during the Dutch Revolt. Bourtange has, at various points in history, served as a fortress, a village, and a hybrid of the two.
- \*Like most star forts, the walls of Fort Bourtange are reinforced earthworks, which are low and sloped, but virtually immune to destruction by cannonfire. Outside the center of the fort are several ravelins (triangular outer bastions) and a crownwork (the three-pointed bastion at the top of the map). Outside of these defences was a moat, an outer wall, and another moat. Passing through the fort requires crossing the moats in six places, three of which are protected by drawbridges.
- •There are several sizes available for this map, the largest of which includes all of the inner and outer moats and a large amount of space outside the fort. This version is very large and is recommended for DMs who intend to hold a large-scale battle at the fort. For those who only need the fort itself, a smaller version is also included. Unfurnished versions of both are also available.

## NOTES

- •The top of the map is the side facing the border and is, therefore, the focus of the fort's defenses.
- •Fort Bourtange was constructed on a sandbar in the middle of a marsh. Parts of the surrounding terrain-- particularly those toward the top of the map-- are still marshy ground.
- •The fort has two mills for grinding grain: a small windmill and a horse mill. The horse mill is powered by hitching horses to a rotating wheel, which turns a grindstone. The gears shown in the center of the horse mill are near the ceiling, with space for the horses to walk in circles beneath it.
- The watch posts at the fort's five outer points are wooden shelters for sentries.
- •The peat barn stores the fort's supply of heating and cooking fuel, which was peat rather than wood. If you're not familiar with peat, the simplest way to describe it would be "flammable swamp dirt."

- \*The walls of the fort are about 15' (5m) high.
- •The two drawbridges connected to the center of the fort have wooden gates near their outer ends.
- The storage bunkers built into one of the inner walls contain most of the fort's reserves of food, ammunition and other supplies.
- •The cannon ports in the walls allowed the garrison to fire artillery-- usually loaded with grapeshot-- at attacking forces.
- •The provost was responsible for maintaining order among the garrison, similar to military police today.
- \*Lots of photos of Fort Bourtange are available online, which may help you to better understand it if there's anything you find confusing.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DEFENCES

Fort Bourtange was assaulted several times over the centuries, never successfully. To explain why, I'll describe what attempting to take this fort would involve.

An approaching army would begin their assault on marshy ground. Not quite water, but not quite dry land, every step would be through mud. It would be slow and strenuous marching in an area that provides no cover from the garrison's musket fire.

Eventually, the attackers would reach the moat and wade across, trying to keep their gunpowder dry. They'd climb the steep wall from which the garrison was firing, only to find them gone. Now the garrison is firing from behind another, higher wall, which is protected by an even larger moat. This new wall has cannon ports in it, from which the garrison can fire canister shot. These are essentially 10kg shotgun shells, which kill a dozen soldiers at a time.

Most of the attackers will not make it across this second moat. Those who do will be soaking wet and exhausted. In that state, they must climb out of the water onto the edge of a steep, earthen wall and climb to the top, where they will face soldiers with dry clothes, dry gunpowder and working muskets. These soldiers are not exhausted from walking through a swamp and wading across two moats. They hold the high ground and will have little trouble fighting off the few attackers who make it far enough to reach them. There are hundreds of them who must be killed in order to take the fort.

In short, Fort Bourtange was a deathtrap. A successful assault wasn't an impossible task, but it didn't have to be. It only had to come with a price too steep for anyone to pay it.





