United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Civil War Defenses of Charleston Thematic Resources

and/or common

2. Location

Charleston County (see individual inventory forms

street & number for exact locations) N/A not for publication

city, town vicinity of congressional district

state South Carolina code 045 county Charleston code 019

3. Classification

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4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (see individual inventory forms)

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charleston County Register of Mesne Conveyance

street & number Court House Square

city, town Charleston state South Carolina 29401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina has this property been determined eligible? x no

date 1981 federal x state county local

depository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and History

city, town Columbia state South Carolina 29211
7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Civil War Defenses of Charleston Thematic Resources nomination includes eighteen fortifications which were part of a system of defensive perimeters around the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, from 1861 to 1865. The fortifications are located in the vicinity of Charleston. Three of the structures were permanent fortifications constructed in the early nineteenth century, but most of the structures were field works constructed by slaves between 1861 and 1865. Although seventy-two structures protected Charleston during the Civil War, most of the fortifications have been reduced by twentieth century development. The eighteen structures included in this nomination remain generally intact. Six of these fortifications are already listed in the National Register.

There were seventy-two major defensive positions protecting Charleston during the Civil War. Excluding Fort Sumter, Fort Moultrie, and Castle Pinckney, these batteries were constructed of earth by slaves loaned by or hired out by plantation owners. This labor practice was not unique to Charleston but was also used in neighboring states.

The field works defending Charleston varied in size from small one-gun batteries for field pieces to large positions covering several acres and mounting twenty or more heavy siege cannons. Although the more complex batteries included such details as powder magazines, bombproofs, covered ways, and sunken batteries, virtually every work followed the basic plans of the post-Napoleonic period and utilized common profile elements. These plans included a ditch which acted as an obstacle to attackers, a parapet which used the earth from the ditch for protective relief, a terreplein or gun platform, and an embrasure in the parapet for cannons to fire. More specialized profile elements occurred in many heavy batteries, and all were derived from the European practices of military engineering.

The siting of Charleston's defensive works followed the practice taught at West Point by D. H. Mahan. Natural obstacles such as impassable marshes, river bends, and the mouths of estuaries were carefully utilized to place the attacking party at a disadvantage and to protect isolated positions. Batteries were also skillfully situated in combination to provide crossing fields of fire, particularly in defense against naval attack.

Abandoned after the evacuation of Charleston in February 1865, most of the field works surrounding the city have been gradually destroyed as land has been developed. Many of the surviving works have been severely altered by the removal of sod. Fifteen of the field works have survived relatively intact and are included in this nomination.

Survey Methodology: The survey which provided the basis of this nomination was conducted by W. David Chamberlain, Historic Preservation Planner for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments. This survey was based on published works and surveys as well as period maps. Each position was field checked for location and condition. The criteria for inclusion in this nomination was the structural integrity of the field work, including both the general condition and the percentage of the original work remaining. Numerous positions have been completely destroyed, or the trace remaining is undistinguishable to the untrained eye.

The following list describes the seventy-two structures used for the defense of Charleston. Of these structures, only eighteen remain intact to a considerable degree. These eighteen structures are included in this nomination. Six of these structures are already listed in the National Register. The remainder of the structures are largely or totally destroyed. The list is included so that a context for understanding the defensive system may be attained.

CONTINUED
### 8. Significance

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#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Civil War Defenses of Charleston Thematic Resources nomination includes eighteen fortifications which were part of a system of defensive perimeters around the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, from 1861 to 1865. The fortifications are located in the vicinity of Charleston. Although three of the structures were permanent fortifications constructed in the early nineteenth century, most of the fortifications were field works constructed by slaves between 1861 and 1865. The structures included in the Civil War Defenses of Charleston Thematic Resources nomination possess military significance at the national level. The defense of the city of Charleston was of paramount importance to the Confederate cause. As the seat of secession and the site of the opening battle of the Civil War, Charleston was important both politically and strategically. Charleston was a primary port for the maintenance of vital European supplies, as well as an important railroad link between Savannah, Georgia, and Wilmington, North Carolina. These facts were realized early by both General Robert E. Lee, who stressed that the city's loss would cut the Confederacy off from the rest of the world, and General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, who regarded Charleston as the most important position on the South Carolina coast. The Federal navy held the city under blockade and seige from 1861 to 1865, making numerous powerful attempts to capture the port. The defensive works of the city repulsed these attacks until 1865 when the approach of General Sherman's army from Georgia demanded the evacuation of Charleston. The fortifications are also significant as examples of the science of military engineering as developed by the time of the Civil War.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

President Abraham Lincoln imposed a naval blockade on the ports of the Confederacy on April 19, 1861. The frigate Niagara took position off Charleston harbor on May 11, 1861, the first realization of the blockade. General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, in command of the city's defenses since the attack on Fort Sumter, had strengthened the existing harbor fortifications in anticipation of naval attack and had planned further defensive works before being called away to Virginia in May 1861. General R. S. Ripley then assumed command of the defensive positions on the South Carolina coastline.

Large-scale Federal naval action against Savannah, Port Royal, and Charleston commenced with an expedition in October and November of 1861, consisting of fifteen warships and 13,000 troops under the command of Flag Officer Samuel Francis Du Pont and Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman. This force attacked Port Royal, South Carolina, on November 7 and subdued the defenders there. Port Royal served as a base for further operations against the cities of Savannah and Charleston.

General Robert E. Lee was appointed to the command of the South Carolina coastal defenses in November 1861. Lee's responsibility from then until March 1862 resulted in the adoption of an overall plan that stressed the use of earthworks and fortified defensive positions out of the range of heavy naval batteries.
General J. C. Pemberton assumed command of the Charleston defenses from March 1862 to August 1862. Pemberton abandoned the Cole's Island fortifications at the mouth of the Stono River, which opened James Island and Morris Island to amphibious assault by the Federal forces. In June 1862 a Federal force landed on James Island and advanced against the earthworks which General Pemberton was erecting. An assault on Fort Lamar at Secessionville on June 16 was repulsed. General Beauregard was recalled to Charleston in August 1862, and he immediately strengthened and redefined the defensive perimeter. Beauregard's defenses included, in addition to the harbor and field fortifications, torpedoes, mines, harbor obstructions, and ironclad gunboats. On January 30, 1863, two Confederate gunboats, the Chicora and the Palmetto State, temporarily drove off the blockading fleet.

In January 1863 a large Federal fleet under the command of Du Pont, including the ironclad warship New Ironsides and four ironclad Monitor-class warships, was ordered to assault Charleston. This fleet made its assault on April 7, bombarding the harbor defenses and attempting to establish a land assault. Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie bore the brunt of this attack. The attack was repulsed, with heavy damage to the invading fleet.

In July 1863 a new assault under the command of Brigadier General Q. A. Gillmore and Admiral Dahlgren was launched. This assault sought to capture Fort Wagner on Morris Island. Diversionary attacks on James Island and a continuous naval bombardment against Fort Wagner and the harbor defenses were included. After a fifty-eight day assault, Fort Wagner was evacuated on September 7. Morris Island served as a base for the continuing Federal siege on Charleston. Federal batteries on Morris Island began bombing the harbor forts and the city proper.

On September 8 an amphibious assault on Fort Sumter was repulsed. The land and naval bombardment of the defensive positions continued through the year. The Confederate defenders utilized numerous tactics to stymie the assault, including torpedoes, rams, and the submarine Hunley, which on February 17, 1864, sank the Federal sloop Housatonic.

In June 1864 a new amphibious assault on the James Island defensive line was repulsed. An amphibious assault on Fort Johnson on July 2-3 was also repulsed. At the same time, a concentrated naval assault on the James Island defenses, especially Fort Pringle, was begun; this assault lasted eight days before it was terminated. The land and naval bombardment of the defenses and the city itself were intensified through the year.

On December 21, 1864, Savannah was evacuated in the face of General William T. Sherman's advancing troops. The Federal forces besieging Charleston intensified their assaults. The advance of General Sherman demanded that Charleston be evacuated, and on February 17, 1865, the Confederate defenders left the city.

Military: Both the Confederate and the Federal governments realized the strategic importance of the port of Charleston. General Beauregard organized the defense of the city to repel attack from five different routes:
1. land attack through Christ Church Parish north of Charleston.  
2. land attack from the south through St. Andrew's Parish to capture the city from the rear.  
3. combined land and naval attack through James Island.  
4. combined land and naval attack through Sullivan's Island and the harbor.  
5. combined land and naval attack through Morris Island.26

The defensive perimeter established by Beauregard followed the plans of General Lee to place the inland defenses out of range of the heavy naval batteries.27 The abandonment of Cole's Island by General Pemberton opened the Stono River to the Federal gunboats, and allowed for an amphibious attack on James Island and Morris Island.28 Beauregard recognized James Island as the key to the siege and emphasized the defenses on the island accordingly.29 The Federal assault on the city lasted from 1863 to 1865, involving nearly continuous naval bombardment. Beauregard's defenses were able to resist the Federal attack until the advance of General Sherman demanded the abandonment of the city.

Engineering: The defensive earthworks of Charleston are valuable examples of Civil War military engineering. Based on the European practice of the period, particularly the system advocated by Rogenart, defensive military engineering reached a virtual art form.30 Construction of the various types of works demanded strict consideration of a wide range of details including plan design, proper angles of fire, proper slope or profile, penetration by enemy fire, and proper relation to other works.31 The Charleston defenses range from works designed against infantry and smoothbore cannon early in the war to elaborate, heavy positions capable of defense against long range rifled artillery fired both from land and naval batteries illustrate the advances in design and construction.32 The surviving positions are generally in good condition and comprise a unique collection of national significance.
9. Major Bibliographical References
see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property ____________________________
Quadrangle name ____________________________ Quadrangle scale ____________________________
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SEE INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORMS

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORMS

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title       W. David Chamberlain
organization     Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester
date             April 1, 1982
telephone        (803) 577-6990

street & number  Old Citadel Annex

city or town      Charleston
state            South Carolina 29403

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

[X] national  [ ] state  [ ] local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

(name)

State Historic Preservation Officer

(date)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Defenses of Charleston Thematic Nomination

Footnotes


6 Gillmore, map; field observations.


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., pp. 62-64.

11 Ibid, p. 69.

12 Ibid., pp. 71-73.


14 Burton, pp. 91, 116

16 Burton, pp. 98-110.
17 Ibid., pp. 124-131.
18 Ibid., p. 135.
19 Ibid., pp. 135-149.
20 Ibid., pp. 151-189.
21 Ibid., pp. 195-196.
22 Ibid., pp. 211-250.
23 Ibid., pp. 286-289.
24 Ibid., p. 309.
25 Ibid., pp. 317-318.
26 Roman, p. 110.
27 Freeman, pp. 614, 630-631; Johnson, p. 39.
30 Mahan.
31 Ibid.
36 Q. A. Gillmore, p. 16.
38 Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 21.

Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 20.

Official Records, series 1, vol. 6, pp. 346-347, 353; Hagood, p. 84; R. S. Ripley, pp. 350-351.


Gillmore, p. 19.

Official Records, series 1, vol. 6, pp. 346-347, 353; Hagood, p. 84; R. S. Ripley, pp. 350-351; Gillmore, map; Johnson, map.


Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 20.

Simons, p. 48.

Gillmore, pp. 20-21; Simons, p. 48; Gillmore, map; Johnson, map.

Johnson, The Defense of Charleston Harbor, p. 215; Hagood, pp. 150, 171; Gillmore, map; Johnson, map.

Hagood, pp. 84, 86; R. S. Ripley, pp. 350-351.

Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 22.


Gillmore, p. 22.


Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 23.

Hagood, pp. 150, 171; Johnson, The Defenses of Charleston Harbor, p. 215; R. S. Ripley, pp. 350-351; Simons, p. 48; Gillmore, map; Johnson, map.

Simons, p. 48.


Gillmore, Supplementary Report, p. 21.

61 Johnson, map; Gillmore, map.
63 Gillmore, map; Johnson, map.
64 Gillmore, Supplementary Report, pp. 17-18.
65 Simons, p. 47.
66 Gillmore, p. 15.
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Name: Civil War Defenses of Charleston Thematic Resources
State: South Carolina

Nomination/Type of Review

11. Unnamed Battery (St. Andrew's Parish) Entered in the National Register

12. Fort Trenholm Entered in the National Register

Date/Signature
Keeper: [Signature]
Attest: [Signature]

13.
Keeper: 
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