

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

VLR-12/15/81 NRHP-8/26/82

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

100-113  
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

FORT WARD

AND/OR COMMON

FORT WARD PARK

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

4301 West Braddock Road

N/A

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria,

N/A

VICINITY OF

8th

STATE

Virginia

22304

CODE

(no county)

COUNTY

CODE

510

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

N/A

**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Alexandria, Virginia

STREET &amp; NUMBER

301 King Street, City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

N/A

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 22314

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Circuit Court Clerk - City Hall

STREET &amp; NUMBER

301 King Street

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

Property declared eligible?

no

TITLE

FORT WARD PARK - APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL GRANT (Map Code #05-102 Revised 3/25/63)

DATE

August 1, 1962

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

City of Alexandria, Department of Planning and Community Development

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

STATE

Virginia 22314

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_ N/A

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

FORT WARD is a 35-acre Historic Park owned and operated by the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The park is comprised of three major elements. In order of importance they are:

- a) Civil War Earthen Fortifications
- b) Reproduction Period Military Buildings, and
- c) Recreational Facilities

a) The Earthen Fortifications are a well-preserved 818 yard perimeter trace of the improved (1864-1865) fortified work. Original Infantry Trenches remain within the site, as well as, an Outlying Gun Battery. An archaeological exploration was performed in the summer of 1961 which established profiles and limits of the original construction in sufficient detail to allow accurate restoration of the Northwest Bastion of this work. The restoration was based on both archaeological and historical research to ensure its accuracy. The City employed an on-site archaeologist to supervise the restoration project. (Report of Edward McM Larrabee on file at Fort Ward Museum.)

The original fort was constructed in the shape of an elongated, 5-pointed star (or 5 bastions), using the French field fortification system as espoused by General Sebastien Le Prestre Vauban. The earthwork was constructed by staking the site, building a wooden frame conforming to the shape of the finished fortification. The frame was filled with earth, creating walls with very sharp angles. The interior of these walls were lined with revetting (wooden poles) and the outside of the slopes (banks) were covered with blocks of sod to prevent erosion. The 1864-65, the fort had emplacements for 36 guns and required about 1200 men for full troop strength.

The entire fort was surrounded by a ditch (moat without water), and an abbatis (felled trees with sharpened branches) was used to line the outer edge of the ditch. A Rifle Trench extended from the North Bastion toward the fort next in line to Fort Ward (Battery Garasche). An Outlying Gun Battery was located 150 yards to the front point of the Northwest Bastion. (An authentic abbatis was used to surround the restored area and thereafter for about five years. However, once this site was established as a well-used facility, the felled trees proved to be a safety hazard and were replaced with an acceptable, low-growing hedge.)

The remainder of the site outside the restored area has secondary growth of tree cover which has been trimmed above ground to expose the original construction trace, while still protecting the ground from erosion. Clearing has been accomplished to allow full comprehension of the topographical and military significance of the site.

(see Continuation Sheet #1)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1861- 1865 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Union Army Corps of Engineers

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - See Continuation Sheet #3 for STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE paragraph

When Virginia's vote of secession became effective in April, 1861, Union forces crossed the Potomac River and seized control of Alexandria and Arlington. Unable to determine the strength of the Confederate Army after the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run), the Federal Government recognized the need for a defense system for the protection of the Capital City of Washington. Under the direction of the Corps of Engineers, the army began construction of a chain of forts known as the Defenses of Washington - which would later be recognized in military annals as one of the most formidable defense systems ever erected in the Western Hemisphere. By the end of the war in 1865, a total of 68 forts and batteries, 93 unarmed batteries, and over 30 miles of military roads had been built. Of these 68 forts and batteries, 9 were located in close proximity to Alexandria - with one water battery, Battery Rodgers, located within the City limits. These forts were frequently referred to as the defenses of Alexandria.

FORT WARD was the fifth largest of the 68 forts, with a perimeter of 818 yards and 36 gun emplacements. A Rifle Trench extended from its North Bastion toward the next fortification in line, Battery Garasche. An Outlying Gun Battery was located 150 yards to the front point of the Northwest Bastion. Fort Ward, located approximately 4 miles west of Alexandria, had the distinction of having been built at the highest elevation above sea level of any of the forts in the defenses of Alexandria.

The objective of this fortification, together with Fort Worth to the South East was to guard the approaches to Alexandria via routes from the West (State Route 236 - Little River Turnpike) and Northwest (State Route 7- Leesburg Turnpike). Fort Ward was considered by the Chief Engineer of the system, Major General John G. Barnard, to be one of the "major works in the defenses of Alexandria and after its reconstruction, one of the largest forts constituting the defenses of Washington." (Report on the Defenses of Washington by Maj. Gen. John G. Barnard, 1871, p37)

In 1864, the fort underwent extensive renovation to correct, and improve early design deficiencies. The perimeter of the fort was enlarged from 540 to 818 yards and the number of gun positions increased from 24 to 36. The fort required about 1200 men - primarily Infantry and Artillery - for full troop strength. It is conceivable however, that due to pressing manpower needs elsewhere, this figure was actually achieved only for brief periods.

(see Continuation Sheet #1)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Barnard, Bvt. Maj. Gen, J.G. (USA), Defenses of Washington (Report of), 1871.  
 Cooling, Benjamin F., Symbol, Sword and Shield, Defending Washington During the Civil War, 1975.  
 McClure, Stanley, (USNPS) The Defenses of Washington, 1861-1865, 1961.  
 Wills, Mary Alice, The Confederate Blockade of Washington, D.C., 1861-62, 1975.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 35 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Alexandria, Virginia, DC, Maryland

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A 18	3176110	430011510	B 18	317720	42995410
C 18	3173210	42997210	D 18	3173210	43000610
E			F		
G			H		

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Fort Ward is located east of I-395, between Seminary Road and State Route 7. It is bounded on the South by West Braddock Road, and on the North by North (see continuation sheet 3) Van Dorn Street. (Approximately 4 miles west of the center of Alexandria)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A		N/A	
N/A		N/A	

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Wanda S. Dowell, Curator

March 30, 1981

ORGANIZATION

Fort Ward Museum, City of Alexandria, Virginia

DATE

703-838-4848

STREET & NUMBER

4301 West Braddock Road,

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Alexandria,

STATE

Virginia 22304

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

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

*H. Bryan Mitchell*

TITLE H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 16 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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FORT WARD, Alexandria, Va

CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

b) The three Reproduction Military Buildings are secondary in importance but include a Headquarters Building (the original of which was located in Alexandria during the Civil War), used as the Museum; a single unit furnished Bachelor Officers' Hut, used for exhibit purposes, and a copy of the Headquarters Building of the hospital located near Alexandria (known as "Camp Misery") which is used as a Park Maintenance and Restroom Complex. The building exteriors have been reproduced in keeping with the 1865 drawings of typical structures in the Defenses of Washington. The exterior form and details are those of simple military, Victorian-influenced, board and batten buildings, expressive of the period and complimentary to the historical experience and total park environment.

c) The Park which surrounds the fortified works and reproduction buildings is on the perimeter, at a lower vertical elevation, and is sufficiently separated horizontally to be complimentary without degradation of the historical significance. Public picnic areas are provided outside the historic area as well as a rustic amphitheatre for summer evening concerts. The entire <sup>35</sup>-acre tract has been enhanced by carefully located planting beds containing over 60 varieties of azaleas and camellias. This adaptive use is mutually supportive of the fort, and is indicative of the City's total commitment to the preservation of the site.

The preservation of the forts within the Defenses of Washington and incorporation into the Greater Washington Park System was suggested by Frederick L. Omstead in his report to the Senate Park Commission's General Plan of Washington as early as 1902, indicating that the historical importance of this system of forts was recognized even at that date.

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FORT WARD, Alexandria, Va.

CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

When the war ended in April, 1865, Fort Ward was selected as one of 20 forts to be retained as a permanent defense system for Washington, D.C. At that time, the fort was put into top condition and a large Ceremonial Entrance Gate was erected in place of the common sally port. The gate was a commemoration to the Corps of Engineers who were responsible for the construction and the Artillery who primarily manned the fort. The Corps of Engineers insignia was emplaced on top of the center arch, with cannon balls emplaced on the top of each column.

The fortification was not destined, however, to survive long after the end of hostilities, for the "Account of Auction Sales of Property of the Defenses of Washington," listed the November 30 sales of the wood from the abatis, gun platforms, revetting, etc., as sold to the salvage firms of E.C. Morrison and Bodfish Mills in Alexandria for the total sum of \$988. The idea of a permanent fortification system was abandoned in January, 1866.

During the Civil War Centennial, the City of Alexandria restored the Northwest Bastion of the fort to its 1864-65 condition, complete with re-production armament taken from the 1865 table of armament. The City, also as a part of this project, cleared the underbrush from the entire site, providing public access to 99% of the perimeter of the site. This accessibility has been maintained and improved since the site was officially opened in May, 1964. Other elements of the unrestored portion of the fort are identified by descriptive markers. The Outlying Gun Battery and Rifle Trench are visible in their natural, unrestored condition and are also identified by appropriately placed descriptive markers. The Ceremonial Entrance Gate was faithfully reconstructed from the original plans, by the Corps of Engineers at Fort Belvoir, Virginia and is emplaced in its original position along the rear wall of the fort.

FORT WARD is the only one of the remaining fortifications to have an active museum to interpret the fort. The museum maintains an extensive collection of Civil War military memorabilia as well as items of social significance of the period; an exhibit area with at least two major exhibits each year; a 2000-volume Civil War Research Library and, an ongoing Living History and Museum Education program used in the interpretation of the site.

During the Centennial, the City of Alexandria was cited by the National Civil War Centennial Commission for outstanding achievement. There were only six cities in the Country which received this citation. Further, the restoration project at Fort Ward was such a major achievement as to be instrumental in the City being selected as an All American City in 1964 - the year Fort Ward was officially opened to the public.

(see Continuation Sheet #3)

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FORT WARD, Alexandria, Va.

CONTINUATION SHEET

3

ITEM NUMBER

8, 10 PAGE 3

The City of Alexandria was also commended by an award from the Council on Abandoned Military Posts (CAMP) for its major contribution in the preservation and interpretation of this historical site.

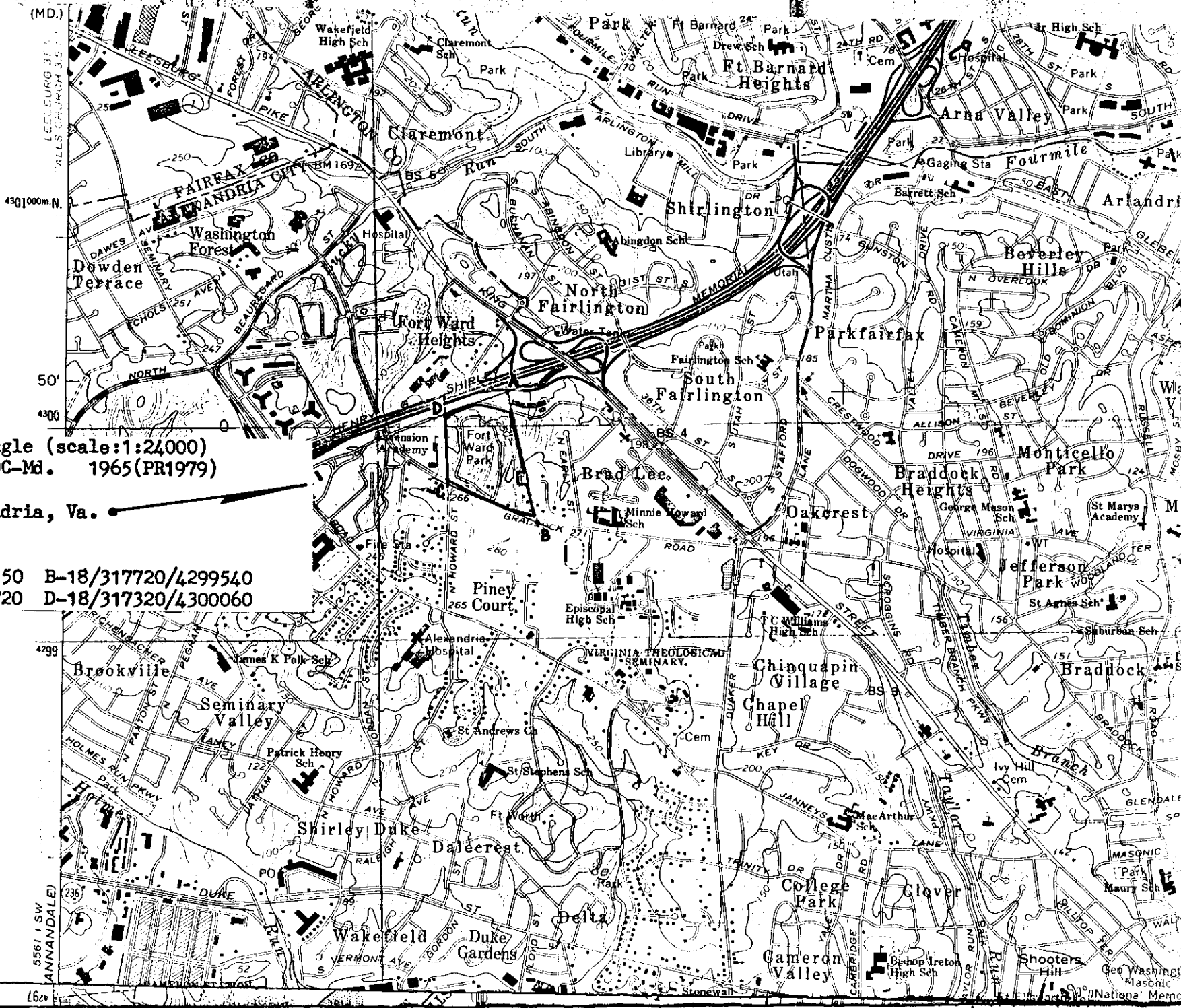
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Ward formed one of the strongest links in a chain of sixty-eight forts and batteries erected between 1861-65 by the Union Army Corps of Engineers for the protection of the Nation's capital. Guarding the approaches to Alexandria from the west and northwest on an elevated site four miles west of the city, the star-shaped earthenwork fortification was the fifth largest fort in the system, with a perimeter of 818 yards, holding thirty-six gun emplacements and troops numbering as many as 1,200 men. Although Fort Ward was selected as one of twenty forts to be retained as a permanent defense of Washington, the idea of a permanent system was abandoned in 1866, and the fort fell into a state of neglect for almost a century. During the Civil War Centennial, the City of Alexandria with the assistance of a professional archaeologist restored the northwest bastion of the fort to its original condition and cleared the perimeter as well as the outlying gun battery and rifle trench. With public investigation of the topographical and military significance of the site thus assured, Fort Ward today serves as a 35-acre historic park and museum owned and operated by the City of Alexandria.


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATE- Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on N side of W. Braddock Rd. about 1100' SE of intersection with N. Van Dorn St.; thence extending about 910' N to S side of N. Van Dorn ; thence following said side about 1110' E; thence about 1600' SE to N side of W. Braddock (excluding and following W lines of cemetery); thence about 1520' NW along N side of W. Braddock to point of origin.

Justification: The bounds have been drawn to encompass the present 35-acre Historic Park consisting of the earthen fortifications, the reproduction military buildings, and the park.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)  
 Alexandria, Va.-DC-Md. 1965(PR1979)

FORT WARD, Alexandria, Va.   
 UTM References:

- A-18/317610/4300150    B-18/317720/4299540
- C-18/317320/4299720    D-18/317320/4300060

