

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Monroe (Stone Fort)

other names/site number DHR – DSS File # 114-0002-0015; Building 2 (the powder magazine), Building 20 (the Jefferson Davis Casemate and Casemate Museum), Building 21 (the Chapel Center Casemate), Building 22 (the Third Front), Building 23 (the Old Bakery Casemate), Boat Launch, Flagstaff Bastion, Main Gate and Building 48 (the Old Guard House or Sally Port), East Gate, North Gate, Postern Gate

2. Location

street & number 102 McNair Drive not for publication

city or town Fort Monroe vicinity

state Virginia code 51 county Hampton (Ind. City) code 650 zip code 23651

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
0	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE: Fortification

DEFENSE: Arms Storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE: Military Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Third System Fortification

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Stone

walls: Brick; Stone

roof: Earth; Brick

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

As originally designed, Fort Monroe was constructed as an irregular work fortification built of brick and masonry with seven fronts and five-foot thick walls that covered approximately sixty-three acres, surrounded by a wet moat of varying depth. Fort Monroe was designed as the first Third System fortress in America and its construction symbolized advances in architectural and military technology. Typical of Third System fortifications, the Fort is characterized by its impressive size, irregular plan and large bastions. The fortification houses three main ranges of casemates and three smaller sections which are built into the ramparts. These casemates typically measure 16-foot wide and were built of the scarp wall, with an embrasure opening for cannon fire centered in each room. Divided by stone interior partitions, brick barrel vaults enclose the casemates forming an earthen filled terreplein above. Construction of the permanent features of the fortification was completed by 1836 but construction of gun emplacements, repairs, and modifications continued into the 1840s.¹ Later batteries and outerworks were added outside the moat walls to modernize the Fort, however, these additional fortifications were not part of the original design by Simon Bernard.

Narrative Description

Fort Monroe is located 2.8 miles east of downtown Hampton, Virginia in the Tidewater region at the confluence of the James River and the Chesapeake Bay. The location of Fort Monroe historically has been strategic to the defense of the Chesapeake Bay. The permanent military occupation of Fort Monroe in the early nineteenth-century reflected the changing political climate, as well as advances in architectural and military technology. The federal construction of coast fortifications began in 1794. These early forts were primarily earthen and wooden structures which deteriorated rapidly, however, the growing threat of war led to modern, permanent masonry structures like Fort Monroe. Designed as the first Third System fort in America, Fort Monroe covers approximately sixty-three acres of ground. The implementation of the Third System fortification represented an important shift in defensive fortification strategy that focused on the construction of permanent forts built on the entrances to major American harbors between 1816 and 1867.² This system characterized by massive brick and stone fortifications evolved from the work of a Board of Engineers for Fortifications appointed by then President James Madison. Under the leadership of fortification expert Simon Bernard, this Third System type of seacoast defense was the most comprehensive, most uniform, and the most advanced the nation had yet to construct.³ These main defensive works were often large structures, based on a combining of the Montalembert concept, with many guns concentrated in tall thick masonry walls, and the Vauban concept, with layers of low, protected masonry walls. Fort Monroe was built as a seven front, brick and masonry fort with 10-foot thick walls and a wet moat of varying depth. The Fort was garrisoned 25 July 1823 and by 1825 the garrison was the largest in the United States.

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At Fort Monroe there are three main ranges of casemates and three smaller sections, all of which are still in use today. Casemates, such as those found at Fort Monroe, were bombproof chambers, generally built into the thickness of the ramparts, commonly used as barracks or for gun positions. Typically the casemates at Fort Monroe measure 16-foot wide and were divided by 5-foot wide stone interior partitions covered by brick barrel vaults which enclose the casemates. These casemates once housed cannons that fired through embrasures, or openings, in the scarp walls. Over time the casemates have been assigned building numbers 2, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 48. The ramparts at Fort Monroe were designed as thick walls formed from earth excavated from the ditch to protect the enclosed area from artillery fire and to elevate the defenders to a commanding position overlooking the approaches to the fortification. The presence of ramparts signal a permanent fortification.

When construction of Fort Monroe was begun in 1819, the first projects were to build the commanding officers' quarters and offices, today known as Quarters 1, and to begin the excavation of the moat. The stone for the walls was cut at a stonemason's workshop situated roughly where the present commissary, Building 181, now stands.⁴ It was then loaded on barges and then floated to the moat and delivered to the masons erecting the walls.

The outer walls, or scarps, were begun as the first phase of construction. The work started at the angle near the postern gate and proceeded counter-clockwise around the fort. Reports were filed on an almost yearly basis, detailing the progress of construction. These reports often mention the "fronts," referring to the flat areas of the wall between salients. Front 1 corresponds to Casemates 20; Front 2 responds to Casemate 21; Front 3 to Casemates 22. Fronts 4, 5, and 6 have no casemates. Building 23 is a short range of storage casemates tucked into one side of the salient between Fronts 5 and 6. Building 2 is the old powder-storage casemates built into the ramparts of the salient between Fronts 6 and 7. Front 7 is comprised of double casemates on either side of the main sally port.

Early reports show that in 1822 the foundations of the outer walls of the first three fronts were complete. By 1823, these scarps were complete all the way to the bastion between Fronts 5 and 6. These bastions are four-sided projections from the main rampart in an enceinte of a fortress, consisting of two faces and two flanks. The enciente is comprised of the walls, ramparts and parapets that form the main enclosure of a fortification. By 1824, Casemate 20 was complete except for the postern gate complex. In that year, Casemates 21 and 22 are shown as having only the foundation completed, while Building 2 is shown to have its foundations complete as well as the beginning of walls.

By 1826, work had progressed so that Casemate 20 was completed, with the earth cover of the terreplain in place with the exception of the area near the postern gate. The terreplain is made up of the banked earthen fill behind the masonry front and above the casemate vaults. The top of the rampart is then leveled off to form a gun platform. The terreplain at Fort Monroe extends unbroken along the entire circumference of the old fort and includes a pet cemetery running almost the entire terreplain. The vaults were complete for most of Casemate 21 in 1826, however, they had yet to be covered. Only the foundation marked the site of Casemate 22, but some vaults had been erected at Casemate 23. Porches were added to the front of Casemate 20 in 1827, but much of the rest of the work was not completed until 1834. The 1829 report shows that only the foundation of the main gate was in place.⁵

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All of the Casemates are of very similar construction with only minor differences. Casemate 20 is built on inverted arches, while the rest of the casemates are built upon heavy piers placed on rock rubble fill. Vaulted ceilings were constructed of brick 3-foot thick rising to a typical height of 12-foot. The ceilings were whitewashed and in some cases plastered.⁶ Generally, the walls are stone with brick arches resting on stone piers. Inner parapets and the front walls of the casemates are constructed with brick. At some point during the initial construction of the Fort, it was decided to convert at least some of the casemates into living quarters for junior officers and senior enlisted men on post. Eventually, the first three fronts were converted by sheathing the walls with wainscoting, plastering the ceilings and installing wood floors.

Building 2: Casemate for Powder Storage

Built as a powder magazine ca. 1821, this casemate is one of the original powder magazines at Fort Monroe. The foundation of the casemate is constructed using brick and stone reversed arch on rock rubble infill. The fort walls are all built on this type of foundation to help combat the ill effects of the soft sand and quicksand they needed to build upon. Three course English bond brick veneer and stone make up the walls for the structure. The casemate roof is constructed with brick arches that are covered with earth to form a terreplein and earth ramparts. Concrete coping and original gun emplacements remain on the roof. One enters the casemate from the first floor through a granite rustication surround. There are seven upper level vents with granite sills and lintels. The interior showcases the mason's artisan craft in building interlocking vaults. These vaulted rooms are virtually unchanged from the day they were built. However, in 1956 a screen section, known as a mask, was added to the structure.

In 1999 the National Park Service along with the Historic Preservation Training Center worked to preserve the exterior of Powder Magazine 2. The work consisted of selectively raking and repointing deteriorated masonry joints; relaying loose brick where applicable; replacing missing and damaged bricks to match the existing brick and reconstructing the northwest end of the stone-capped parapet wall that had become detached.

Building 20: The Jefferson Davis Casemate/Casemate Museum

Building 20 is located inside the moat and faces north. This casemate is comprised of sixteen casemates and is constructed of regular block. Built as a one story structure, the casemate runs 356-feet (sixteen bays) by 50-feet. Like Building 2, the casemate has a stone foundation, with a brick and earth roof. Flemish bond brick and stone veneer make up the wall structure. Brick is used for the arches and inner parapets, while the outer parapets are constructed with granite, olivine, sandstone and schist.

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Inside this casemate there are fourteen interior chimneys and each interior casemate is two rooms deep with a central fireplace, herringbone brick floors, granite walls and brick segmentally-vaulted ceilings. The original brick floor remains and is laid on edge in a herringbone pattern. There is a central entry into each casemate through a paneled wood door with a concrete stoop and a six-light fan light under a sandstone arch. Windows in this casemate are comprised of nine-over-nine light double-hung sash windows with sandstone sills and lintels. The division of each of the sixteen bay segments of the casemate is expressed on the facade by large, brick, segmental arches on granite supports. There is a three-course English bond brick parapet wall with concrete coping. Building 20 was constructed in 1826 as the First Front of the fort. It housed numerous artillery, both inside and on its roof until 1880, when the casemates were converted to quarters. In 1951 Casemate 2 was opened as a memorial to Jefferson Davis who was imprisoned there at the end of the Civil War facing charges of accessory to the assassination of President Lincoln. In 1955, the walls that had been erected in the 1880s to provide quarters were removed. By 1983 the Casemate Museum occupied the entire First Front with exhibits, offices and storage. Although some floors have been cemented over to protect the original building fabric and climate control has been introduced to preserve the artifacts displayed there, Building 20 has been meticulously restored to its original appearance and all aspects of its history are represented. Guns are displayed in some casemates and other casemates are in the form of quarters from the 1880s.

Building 21: The Chapel Center Casemate

The construction of this casemate is similar to buildings 20, 22 and 23 and is located on the Second Front. This casemate is comprised of fourteen interior casemates and two magazines. The walls are constructed with brick and stone using Flemish bond brick veneer. There is a central entry into some of the casemates through glazed, paneled wooden doors with a concrete stoop and four light fanlights. Windows are nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows with sandstone sills and lintels. Individual casemates are expressed on the facade by large, brick segmental arches on granite supports. From the interior, each casemate is connected to the next by an interior segmental-arched passage. There are sixteen central chimneys on the interior. Concrete and wall-to-wall carpeting covers the original brick floor and wood paneling covers most of the original granite walls. Plaster covers most of the arched-arched brick ceilings.

Constructed in 1827 to house numerous artillery, this second front of the fort, Building 21, is now used as the Chapel Center. Similar to Buildings 20, 22, and 23, this casemate has been more substantially altered. It was converted into Non-Commissioned Office (NCO) housing in the 1880s and maps of the fort show colonnaded porches stretching the entire width of the front of the building. Renovation and conversion to office space was begun after World War II and completed ca. 1958. The porches were removed at this time. In the 1960s Building 21 became the Education Center until ca. 1978 when it moved into another building. Shortly after this period the Chapel Center moved into Building 21 from Building 20. The wood paneling was added to cover walls painted with high-lead content paint.

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Building 22: The Third Front

Similar to Buildings 20, 21 and 23, the Third Front is a rectangular block structure comprised of fourteen casemates flanked by two magazines. This structure has the same stone foundation and brick and earth roof. The walls are brick and stone with Flemish bond veneer. There is a central entry into each of the fourteen casemates through a glazed, paneled wood door with a concrete stoop and six-light fanlight under a sandstone arch. Windows for Building 22 are nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows with sandstone sills and lintels. Like Buildings 20, 21, and 23, each casemate is expressed on the exterior façade by a large, brick segmental arch on granite supports.

Constructed in 1829 to house numerous artillery, this third front of the fort is now used for storage. In ca. 1880 the casemates became NCO quarters and maps from 1887 show the addition of porches to the casemate façades. After World War II the casemates were remodeled as office space and this conversion was completed by ca. 1958. The porches were removed at this time. In 1978 Building 22 was condemned because of damp rot and the electrical wiring was stripped. Since that time Building 22 has been used for storage.

Building 23: The Old Bakery Casemate

Similar to Buildings 20, 21 and 23, the Old Bakery Casemate is rectangular block structure comprised of seven casemates and measures 150-feet (seven bays) by 52-feet. The structure has a stone foundation and stone walls with a Flemish bond brick infill. The roof is brick and earth. There is central entry into each of the seven vaulted casemates through a metal door with a concrete stoop and brick jack arch. The gun emplacements remain on the roof.

Built originally in 1823 to house gun emplacements and storage, Building 23 was rebuilt twice during the 1830s to repair damage incurred from settlement. Building 23 still has settlement issues and cracks are visible in its masonry, however they are said to be inactive. The name "Old Bakery Casemate" comes from its proximity to the Old Bakery. There was never a bakery in this casemate. Building #23 is still used for storage, having never been wired for electricity or fitted with plumbing. Building 23 remains essentially unchanged from its 1823 designed and its 1830 reconstructions.

Main Gate and Building 48: The Old Guard House or Sally Port

This section of the fort is comprised of four casemates and sally port. This structure is two stories and measures 72-feet (five bays) and 38-feet. There is a stone and concrete foundation and the walls are masonry with Flemish bond brick infill. The roof is brick, earth and concrete. On the first floor, a central entry into each casemate is gained through glazed paneled wood door with a sandstone stoop and painted masonry lintel. Windows in this structure are four-over-floor-light double-hung sash windows with painted masonry sills and lintels. On the second floor each casemate has three bricked-in window openings. Painted masonry piers with a granite parapet wall with concrete coping separate casemates. The sally port of the fort occupies the entire central bay and one casemate has been altered to accommodate pedestrian passage.

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Constructed in 1823 as the Main Gate, guardhouse, and stockade casemate. Building 48 currently is used as a bridge for vehicle and pedestrian traffic inside fort walls and for storage. In 1937, one casemate was altered to accommodate the pedestrian passage. Porches that once adorned the exterior of the casemates were removed between 1945 and 1948. The heavily rusticated moat façade of Building 48 has been the symbol of Fort Monroe since its construction in 1823. This Main Gate is one of the most prominent and most identifiable features of the fort. The gate stands as a triumphal arch with incised voussoirs and a paneled parapet that echoes the three-bay plastered façade. A bronze shield marks the keystone. At the gate's vaulted interior, which was once rendered in stucco with arched recesses. Historically these recesses served as sentry posts. The small pedestrian passage, an alteration to the historic configuration, penetrates the fort wall immediately north of the Main Gate. A secondary vaulted entry into the adjacent casemate opens from the pedestrian passage. The steel entry door is surrounded by quoined rustications. A majority of the windows on this structure have been infilled with brick or have been boarded with plywood.

The Boat Launch

The Boat Launch is the opening in the fort counterscarp where boats are launched into the moat. The sloped granite retaining walls were once coped with sandstone. Originally the boat launch was designed as a sluice and connected to Mill Creek through an extension of the moat around Battery Bomford, an early twentieth century coastal battery.

The Flagstaff Bastion

This bastion casemate includes vaulted casemates and a number of gun emplacements. Each three-bay casemate is defined by a deep brick segmental arch supported by flush granite piers. Within the bays a modern wood and glass infill system has been installed in recent decades. The surrounding brick is laid in Flemish bond. The interior is defined by granite walls and brick vaults. The masonry walls within this building are the typical 5-foot thick walls of solid masonry, progressed by embrasure openings that measure 3-foot by 5-foot with an 18-inch arched brick lintel. The room to room openings between the interior casemates are typically 9-foot wide and 6-foot 6-inches tall, with arched brick lintels.⁷ The ceilings were whitewashed and in some cases plastered during the period in which the casemate was used as the Officer's Club. Another feature of this casemate is the long arcade of arched openings extending from room to room along the southwest bastion.

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The East Gate

The East Gate presents a simple jack-arched opening and parapet on the scarp wall side, and a segmental arched opening defined by brick soldier courses and a narrow brick parapet on the parade wall. The interior is vaulted and rendered with stucco. At the parade face, setted and curving granite retaining walls announce the opening.

The North Gate

The North Gate is a heavily used feature of the fort. The gate presents a simple jack-arched opening and parapet on the scarp wall side, and a segmental arched opening defined by brick soldier courses on the parade wall. The interior is vaulted and the vault was rendered with stucco. Some historic iron hardware remains fixed to the gate's interior walls. At the parade face, setted and curving granite retaining walls announce the opening.

The Postern Gate

The Postern Gate carries pedestrian traffic from the headquarters area to the Casemate Museum. The gate is made up of a simple, brick segmental-arched opening on the scarp wall side, and a deep segmental arched opening defined by brick soldier courses on the parade wall. A granite relieving arch meets the gate opening at its peak on the parade wall. The interior is vaulted, rendered with stucco and has been whitewashed.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Military

Period of Significance

1819- 1840 (Engineering)

1819-1951 (Military)

Significant Dates

1819 (Start of Construction)

1836 (Completion Date)

1951 (Casemate Museum)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon Bernard

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance corresponds to the time in which the Fort Monroe stone fortification served a significant defensive purpose in protecting the Hampton Roads area. The time period between 1819 to 1840 represents the beginning and completion of Fort Monroe's Stone Fort as a nationally important engineering work. The period between 1819 and 1951 represents the period of time in which Fort Monroe was considered essential for its defense of the Chesapeake and the coast.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Fort Monroe's stone fortification walls are significant nationally under Criteria A and C, in the areas of engineering and military history. The construction of Fort Monroe represents technological advances in coastal defense and at the time of construction was the largest stone fort ever built in the United States and the first Third System fortification. Because of its strategic location, the military history of Fort Monroe is significant at the national level for its association with famous events, especially those during the Civil War and the imprisonment of figures important in our national history such as Chief Black Hawk and Jefferson Davis.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Engineering

The land on which Fort Monroe is constructed has a long history of settlement and the construction of early fortifications. On April 28, 1607, a group from a convoy of English settlers led by Captain Christopher Newport sailed into what they termed "Cape Comfort" before settling at Jamestown. The "Cape" shortly became the "Point," and when a different strip of land on Mobjack Bay became New Point Comfort, the first point of land became known as "Old Point Comfort".⁸ In 1609, to protect the entrance to settlements along the James River, the British built Algernourne Fort (Fort Algernon) at Old Point Comfort. It was an earthwork structure with boards "10 hands high".⁹ This small earthen work fortification burnt three years later in 1612. In the early eighteenth century other fortifications would be constructed out of brick and lime on the same site. The largest Fort constructed during this early period was Fort George, built to guard against French invasion. Fort George was destroyed by a hurricane in 1749. The Revolutionary War brought about a new interest in coastal fortification by both sides. Sir Henry Clinton, commander of the King's forces in America, urged the establishment of a defensive position and a naval rendezvous at Old Point Comfort. However, the land which Fort Monroe now occupies was deemed unacceptable due to its lack of potable water. Other concerns for the location included accessing material for construction of the defenses which would have to be brought from a distance, the site was so low that attacking ships would have the advantage of plunging fire, and that the armament present with the British forces could not effectively close the channel to provide a safe anchorage for ships.¹⁰ Because of these concerns Yorktown was chosen. The strategic importance of Old Point Comfort's location would quickly be realized. While the siege of Yorktown was underway, the French West Indian fleet took station in the Chesapeake Bay preventing any British fleet from entering. This American victory at Yorktown obligated the nation to understand the importance of erecting a permanent fort at the Old Point Comfort location.

Despite the war in Europe, which on occasion appeared to threaten the American coast, the refusal of Congress to devise a national defense policy thwarted the construction of coastal forts by the national government.¹¹ On April 9, 1789, Secretary of War James McHenry requested \$30,000 for establishing fortification at Old Point Comfort and Fort Nelson in Norfolk. Additionally, in 1791 President George Washington urged the construction of coastal fortifications. Even though they were often former British fortifications, forts erected during this period were often crudely constructed. These early forts were mostly characterized by unsupported earth and in rare circumstances revetments of timber and stone. For the most part, the funding waned on these projects and very little work was completed. The majority of the forts constructed during this period deteriorated before they were useful or ever needed for their defensive purposes.

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Between 1807 and 1808 new concerns over a possible war with Great Britain prompted President Thomas Jefferson to renew fortification programs. The fortification system constructed during this campaign is recognized as the Second System. These seacoast fortifications were most notably characterized by the construction of all-masonry forts and mounting guns in multiple tiers of casemates which allowed for high concentrations of intense fire. These brick and stone forts were supplemented by an array of barbette batteries at other locations along the eastern seaboard and Gulf Coast.¹² Many of the Second System forts were radically redesigned by later defensive construction so that little remains of their original works and only five remaining Second System forts are existence today.

In 1816, following the War of 1812, Congress appropriated over \$800,000 for an ambitious seacoast defensive system, which was known as the Third System. This Third System was planned to protect America's important port cities and the nation's capital from future invasion.¹³ A Board of Engineers for Fortifications, appointed by President James Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe, visited potential sites and prepared plans for the new forts. Within this Third System, forts proposed to be built were divided into three classes. Fort Monroe was part of the First Class of fortifications. These fortifications were considered to be the highest priority for construction, and the points most vulnerable to attack.¹⁴ This group of forts consisted of sixteen forts and the repair of Fort. St. Philip for the defense of New Orleans, Hampton Roads, and Mobile Bay.

In 1817, General Simon Bernard, a French-trained military engineer and former aide to Napoleon Bonaparte, was appointed to plan the new system of fortifications. Bernard's design for Fort Monroe called for a brick, granite, and earthen casemated fortification. Designed as a bastioned work with seven fronts, holding 380 gun-mounts and a compliment of over 2600 men in time of war, 600 men during peacetime, the Fort was deemed close to being impregnable from land and sea.¹⁵ Bernard envisioned Fort Monroe as the "headquarters" for the entire coastal fortification system.¹⁶ Fort Monroe was one of the first of the third series within the Third System forts and was typical of its period in its impressive size, irregular plan, and large bastions.¹⁷ The Third System fortification, unlike the previous fortification efforts, considered the entire coastline. The design of the Third System integrated three concepts, structural durability, concentrated armament, and tremendous firepower into the fortification design.¹⁸ Later, Third System forts were smaller and based on a hexagon design which greatly reduced, or, eliminated bastions altogether.¹⁹

Construction of Fort Monroe's masonry walls began in 1819. Building of the Fort was supervised by the Engineer Department of the Army, and Major Charles Gratiot supervised the initial construction of Fort Monroe. Major Gratiot would later be appointed the Army's chief engineer. The actual work of construction began in March 1819 by Bolitha Laws, a contractor. Captain Frederick Lewis and Lieutenants Delafield, Maurice, and Blaney were also employed in the preparations for the work, the two former continuing on duty as assistants to Major Gratiot after construction began.²⁰ The estimated cost of Fort Monroe was \$816,814.96.²¹ The labor force used to construct Fort Monroe included a large number of enslaved persons hired out by the owners of local plantations.

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Fort Monroe was designed to concentrate the greatest possible fire power in the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Fronts. The First, Second, and Third Fronts were casemated, providing the barbette tier a doubling of fire power.²² Because of the exposed position of the fourth front and the need to consider land defense, the fourth front was solid and only had a barbette tier of armament. This was a design unique to Fort Monroe. This front, facing the entrance to the channel, was not casemated. Instead, a water battery was built across the moat and worked with the main fort in providing two tiers of seacoast cannon to bear on the channel. With this design Bernard was able to greatly increase the number of guns bearing on the channel. Being outside the moat, the length of the water battery was also much greater than the length of the main work walls.²³ Unfortunately, only a small portion of this once formidable battery remains. The Fifth Front directly covered the only land approach down the beach and supported the outerworks. The outerworks were typical of outerworks of the fortifications of the period and were designed purely for the protection of the land front of the fort. They consisted of a covered way and a redan, raised above the general level of the ground for protection of the scarp walls and provide a better field of fire.²⁴ The Sixth and Seventh Front were both constructed of solid masonry and respectedly defended Mill Creek, which ran behind the fort, and guarded an anchorage in the roadstead beyond the channel.

In 1825, Fort Monroe's garrison was the largest in the United States, with one-third of the artillery troops and approximately one-tenth of the entire U.S. Army within its walls. By 1836, Fort Monroe's construction was considered fully complete. At the time of completion no other fort in the United States was of comparable size. It was also generally believed at the time that no fort in Europe not enclosing a town was larger. The only fortification in North America comparable was the French fort at Louisbourg in Canada, which did enclose a small town.²⁵

The sizes of Third System forts varied dramatically. Forts Monroe, Adams, and Pickens were designed to hold relatively large, permanent garrisons. These "headquarters" forts had many functions other than defense that were implemented within the enceinte and required a large area to carry out these activities.²⁶ Fort Monroe, as constructed, was the largest fort in the Western Hemisphere and guarded the mouth of the Chesapeake, and helped protect the roadstead which controlled the entrance to the James River and the principal city of Richmond, the Elizabeth River, and the Nansemond River. At the beginning of the Third System, two powerful forts were designed to protect this crucial area, Fort Monroe and Fort Calhoun, later known as Fort Wool. Fort Calhoun sat on the southern side of the channel, a short distance from Fort Monroe, on an artificial island created solely for the Fort. These two Third System forts were designed to mount some 600 guns to control the area.²⁷ Fort Calhoun was the first "tower fort" of the Third System and was designed to consist of three levels of casemates, with an additional barbette tier of guns, arranged in a long, bent rectangle with rounded corners. Its perimeter was to measure only 381 yards.²⁸ Unfortunately, due to the settlement of the man made island, Fort Calhoun never achieved its planned magnificence although it was still able to provide significant defensive capabilities throughout its active years.

While Fort Monroe was the largest of the forts constructed, many other forts shared similarities in design. The forts of the Third System were the last closed forts in the United States. Their complex geometric shapes were the accumulation of fortification knowledge spanning at least two centuries.²⁹ Defense drove the overall shape of the fortifications and the position of the fort, in relation to the channel it was to defend, was also a major design consideration. Several Third System forts, including Fort Monroe, were built using the concept of a pentagon, the classic shape of the French School. Although these polygons were often truncated according to the desired size of the fort and the number of channels it needed to defend, Fort Monroe was designed and constructed as a six-sided, irregular work. However, many of the early Third Systems were constructed using a five-sided plan, with a single gorge wall connecting the two secondary seacoast fronts.³⁰

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One of the forts following the five-sided plan is Fort Delaware, located on Pea Patch Island, and was designed as an irregular five-sided work that could be described as a skewed pentagon shape. Like Fort Monroe, the angles of the walls were defined to bring the maximum number of cannon to bear on the two channels leading up the Delaware River. A granite scarp wall surrounded the all-brick ramparts and interior. A moat surrounded the perimeter of the fort and at the center of the long Gorge wall was the sally port, opening to a drawbridge over the moat.³¹ Fort Morgan, constructed to protect the Mobile Bay, was a high priority Third System fort. Like Fort Monroe, its geographic location made its defense critical. It was designed as a regular pentagon, with bastions at each corner. Unlike Fort Monroe's moat, Fort Morgan utilizes a dry ditch that surrounds the fort as a defense design. The ditch was designed as part of the considerable land defenses which is characteristic of early Third System forts. In addition to the defenses of the ditch, the fort mounted heavy cannons on the barbette tier of the main entry of the fort to aid in defending land sieges.

The breach in Fort Pulaski, Savannah, Georgia, began the demise of the construction of Third System fortifications. Victim to the progress of artillery technology, the development of the large Rodman cannon and the Parrott Gun overpowered the unprotected masonry walls.³² It was believed that the exposed masonry was no longer safe with the presence of rifled artillery, and therefore, masonry works were rendered obsolete. Many of these Third System forts, Fort Monroe included, were modernized to accept the heavier, more technologically advanced armament. The end of Congressional appropriations, after the shores were declared secure following the end of the Civil War in May of 1865, signals the end of the period of Third System forts.³³

President Grover Cleveland convened a board under Secretary of War William Endicott to plan new coastal defenses in 1885. The Endicott Board's recommendations would lead to a large-scale modernization program of harbor and coastal defenses in the United States. The Board supported the construction of well-dispersed, open top, reinforced concreted emplacements that were further protected by sloped earthworks. In 1891 construction began at Fort Monroe on detached batteries of concrete protected with earthen parapets in response to the Endicott Board recommendations. The addition of the batteries maintained the strategic importance of Fort Monroe in defense of the Chesapeake Bay. Batteries at Fort Monroe constructed during this period include: Battery Anderson, Battery Ruggles, Battery DeRussy, Battery Parrott, Battery Humphreys, Battery Eustis, Battery Church, Battery Bonford, Battery N.E. Bastion, Battery Barber, Battery Parapet, Battery Montgomery, Battery Gatewood, and Battery Irwin. Many of these batteries were either destroyed early in the twentieth century or exist today in varying conditions.

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Military

The permanent military occupation of Fort Monroe early in the nineteenth century reflects the changing political climate, as well as advances in military technology. The underlying rationale for the Fort, until modern times, has been the political and military view that seacoast defenses were an integral part of the national defense policy and a primary deterrent to warfare.³⁴ While defense from outsiders was the Fort's primary purpose, casemates were easily converted to prison cells to keep those locked within from escaping. In 1833, after the conclusion of the Battle at Bad Axe River in southwest Wisconsin, Chief Black Hawk and other tribal leaders were transported east. These tribe leaders were imprisoned for a short period at Fort Monroe. In his last days of imprisonment, Chief Black Hawk related his life story to a government interpreter. This story was edited by a reporter and became known as the first Native American autobiography in the United States.³⁵ The War Department went to great lengths to insure that Black Hawk and his companions were comfortable and officers in charge of the prisoners were directed that they have access to the entire fort and its environs.³⁶ President Andrew Jackson decided to release Black Hawk and his companions after they had been at Fort Monroe for about a month.

Having been constructed before the development of railroads, which allowed troops to move quickly from one area to another, Fort Monroe was designed as a large work designed to withstand an extended siege. An 1861 *Illustrated London News* article writes, "An officer from Fort Monroe says that there are now 1300 men in the fort, that the guns are in good order, and everything is as desirable as it should be for an order successfully to withstand a six months' seige".³⁷ In 1861, Fort Monroe played a decisive role in the Civil War. The powerful batteries of Fort Monroe closed Hampton Roads and the James River to shipping that was vital to the Confederate war effort. The Fort operated as a staging area and supply base for Union assaults. It also had an influx of personnel and activities, due to Fort Monroe's position as critical outpost for the Union Army in the South. One of four forts located within the seceding Southern states to be held by the Union when the war began, Fort Monroe contributed more than any other pre-war coastal defense fortification to the Union victory.³⁸

On April 20, 1861 the Union Navy burned and evacuated the Norfolk Navy Yard, destroying nine ships in the process, leaving only Fort Monroe as the last stronghold of the United States in Tidewater Virginia. The occupation of Norfolk gave the Confederacy its only major shipyard and thousands of heavy guns, but they held it for only one year. Confederate Brigadier General Walter Gwynn, who commanded the Confederate defenses around Norfolk, erected batteries at Sewell's Point, both to protect Norfolk and to control Hampton Roads. The Union dispatched a fleet to Hampton Roads to enforce the blockade, and on May 18–19, 1861, Federal gunboats based at Fort Monroe exchanged fire with the Confederate batteries at Sewell's Point. The little-known Battle of Sewell's Point resulted in little damage to either side. Several land operations against Confederate forces also were mounted from the Fort, notably the Battle of Big Bethel in June 1861.

In 1862 Fort Monroe served as base for General George B. McClellan's Peninsula Campaign against the Confederate capital of Richmond. On March 17, 1862, George McClellan began transporting his men to Fort Monroe. In all, over 121,500 soldiers flowed into area camps via the Fort.³⁹ On April 4, 1862 the federal troops at Fort Monroe began their movement towards Richmond.

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On March 8, 1862, thousands of spectators stood on the ramparts of Fort Monroe to watch the momentous battle between the *USS Monitor* and the *CSS Virginia* (formerly the *USS Merrimack*), the first battle in history between ironclad vessels. The day before the *CSS Virginia* had attacked U.S. ships in Hampton Roads. A Report of Major-General Wool, U.S. Army wrote from Fort Monroe:

The *Merrimack* came down from Norfolk to-day, and about 2 o'clock attacked the *Cumberland* and *Congress*. She sunk the *Cumberland* and the *Congress* surrendered. The *Minnesota* is aground and attached by the *Jamestown*, *Yorktown*, and *Merrimack*. The *St. Lawrence* just arrived and is going to assist. The *Minnesota* is aground. Probably both will be taken. That is the opinion of Captain Marston and his officers. The *Roanoke* is under our guns. It is thought the *Merrimack*, *Jamestown*' and *Yorktown* will pass the fort to-night.⁴⁰

Later that day, at 8:30 P.M. he wrote to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, from Fort Monroe:

No firing for the last two hours. Newport News camp is uninjured. We are towing transports out to sea to keep clear if the *Merrimack* comes down to the fort. *Minnesota* and *St. Lawrence* still aground. The tide will not float them for three hours.⁴¹

The next day, March 9, 1862, the well-known ironclad Battle of Hampton Roads took place off Sewell's Point between the *CSS Virginia* and the *USS Monitor* and marked a critical change in naval warfare. The Confederate ironclad carried more guns than the Union *Monitor*, but it was slow, and often prone to engine trouble. The Union prototype was faster and more maneuverable, but lacked the Confederate vessel's "brutish size" and power.⁴² In a letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, U.S. Navy, reporting the condition of affairs in Hampton Roads.

Written from Fort Monroe, Flag-Officer Goldsborough wrote to the Headquarters Department of Virginia:

DEAR COMMODORE: After a four-hours, the *Monitor* has driven the *Merrimack* away from the *Minnesota*, which is aground off Newport News, and did not come off at high water to-day, though she was moved and headed downstream. Lieutenant Worden, who commanded the *Monitor*, and fought her, is injured in both eyes, so as not to be able to see. Wise takes him up to Washington, and I think you had better bring back Jeffers to handle the *Monitor*. She is yet uninjured, and my impression is that the *Merrimack* is very little hurt, though I can not say. She retired under the fair headway. I think it of the utmost importance that you should return at the earliest moment. We do not want any of your tugs; there are enough here.⁴³

Neither ironclad seriously damaged the other in their one day of fighting. The *USS Monitor* and the guns of Fort Monroe had blocked the *Virginia* from entering the Chesapeake Bay from Hampton Roads and prevented the *Virginia* from attacking the Union's wooden ships. The spectators who stood on the ramparts of Fort Monroe were witness to the birth of a new age of naval warfare.

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As the Civil War began, soldiers sentenced to “hard labor” began to appear at numerous fortification sites. The most dramatic example of this trend is the Third System fort on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at Fort Monroe, charged with conspiracy in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Davis, leader of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, served as the president of the Confederate States of America for its entire history, 1861 to 1865. Captured May 10, 1865, Davis was charged with treason, and on May 19, 1865 began his imprisonment in Building 20’s Casemate 2, which was specifically prepared to be his cell. He was imprisoned without trial for nearly two years after the conclusion of the Civil War. On May 20, the day after his sentence at Fort Monroe began, orders from Washington came in and Davis’ guards shackled him in leg irons. The news of this humiliating treatment evoked an outpouring of sympathy from the South and North, and the chains were removed five days later. While imprisoned at Fort Monroe, Davis was under constant watch and a light was kept burning in his cell twenty-four hours a day. Under these conditions, his health deteriorated rapidly and some believed that it was the government’s intention for him to die in prison. In late July, Davis’s jailer, General Nelson Miles, received permission for the prisoner to be allowed to walk in the open air. With these improved conditions Davis’s health gradually improved until, on October 2, 1865, he left the damp and dingy casemate and was given more healthful quarters.

During World War I and World War II Fort Monroe stood guard and successfully protected Hampton Roads and the important military and civilian resources located inland. While Fort Monroe served as headquarters for an imposing number of armaments, they were all made obsolete by the development of the long-range bomber and aircraft carrier. In 1943, the Harbor Entrance Control Station was constructed to be used as a Military Affiliated Radio Station (MARS) signal station. In 1925, the US Army Signal Corps was formed by the Army Amateur Radio System (AARS) to develop a pool of trained radio operators. AARS operated until December 7, 1941. Following the end of World War II, MARS was created by action of the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force. Fort Monroe MARS signal station is sited on top of the fort barbette in the forth bastion and commands a wide view of the Chesapeake Bay. This station was designed by the architectural firm of Beddow, Gerber, and Wharples in the International Style and stands as one of the few architect-designed buildings on the post.⁴⁴

In 1951, the Casemate Museum, located in Building 20, opened its doors to the public to showcase the cell that held the Confederate President Jefferson Davis after the Civil War. A large portion of the Museum was restored to exemplify the typical living quarters as they once were for both prisoners of the casemates and soldiers housed within their walls. Former inhabitants described the quarters as unbearably damp with lingering odious stenches.⁴⁵ The Casemate museum preserves the quarters as they were; two bare rooms, without facilities for cooking, washing, storage or sanitary needs. Today, visitors to Fort Monroe continue to honor the history of Fort Monroe by paying a visit to the Museum and learning about the Fort’s illustrious past.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # HABS VA,28-HAMP,2A
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): #114-0002-0015

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 63 Acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>383542</u> Easting	<u>4096295</u> Northing	3	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>383632</u> Easting	<u>4095906</u> Northing
2	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>383478</u> Easting	<u>4095930</u> Northing	4	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>383790</u> Easting	<u>4095988</u> Northing

Please see continuation sheet for attional UTM References

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

See attached scaled map

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The proposed boundaries form the core of the land associated with the stone fort since the nineteenth Century, and encompass all known buildings, structures, and sites associated with the nomination elements.

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UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

5 18N 383777 4096318
Zone Easting Northing

6 18N 383845 4096360
Zone Easting Northing

7 18N 383558 4095835
Zone Easting Northing

8 18N 383420 4096120
Zone Easting Northing

9 18N 383920 4096079
Zone Easting Northing

10 18N 383619 4096348
Zone Easting Northing

11 18N 383410 4095936
Zone Easting Northing

- #1- Building 2 (the powder casemate)
- #2- Building 20 (the Jefferson Davis Casemate and Casemate Museum)
- #3- Building 21 (the Chapel Center Casemate)
- #4- Building 22 (the Third Front)
- #5- Building 23 (the Old Bakery Casemate)
- #6- Boat Launch
- #7- Flagstaff Bastion
- #8- Main Gate and Building 48 (the Old Guard House or Sally Port)
- #9- East Gate
- #10- North Gate
- #11- Postern Gate

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katherine D. Klepper

Organization J.M. Waller, Inc.

date March 22, 2010

street & number 318 Cornog Lane, Building 28

telephone 757-788-5947

city or town Fort Monroe

state _____

zip code _____

e-mail katherine.klepper@us.army.mil

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Property: Fort Monroe Stone Fort
Locality: Fort Monroe, Hampton, Virginia
Photographer: Katherine Klepper
Date Photographed: March 2009

Photo 1: Building 20
Photo 2: Building 21
Photo 3: Flagstaff Bastion
Photo 4: Main Gate

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Fort Monroe Directorate of Public Works
street & number 318 Cornog Lane, Building 28 telephone 757-788-5947
city or town Fort Monroe state Va zip code 23651

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Endnotes

-
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