United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fort Mitchel

Other names/site number: Fort Gillmore, Battery Mitchel/38BU1167

Name of related multiple property listing:

          N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 65 Skull Creek Drive

City or town: Hilton Head   State: SC   County: Beaufort

Not For Publication: ☐   Vicinity: ☐

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:

___**national**   **X statewide**   ___**local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X A   **__B**   **X C**   **__D**

_____

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

_____

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.)

Private:	[x]
Public – Local	[ ]
Public – State	[ ]
Public – Federal	[ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	[ ]
District	[ ]
Site	[x]
Structure	[ ]

Object   ☐

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____1_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____1_____	_____0_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____N/A_____

_____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Defense/fortification

_____

_____

_____

_____

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture/Outdoor recreation

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

___N/A_____

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: _____Earth_____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Fort Mitchel (38BU1167), a Civil War earthwork fortification sits on a 3.27 acre site at 65 Skull Creek Drive in a mixed-use area of Hilton Head Plantation on northwest Hilton Head Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina. The fort was constructed beginning in late November 1861 by the Department of the South, United States Army, and was part of the Federal defenses of Hilton Head Island. Intended to protect the Skull Creek approaches to the coaling station and ship maintenance facilities at Seabrook Landing, about a mile to the northeast, it was built in a redan or lunette design on a bluff about 15 feet above Skull Creek. Although there has been some slight to moderate erosion of the ramparts in the past 150 years, overall the fort is in excellent condition and has maintained its historic integrity, especially when compared to other Civil War field fortifications in the South Carolina low country.

Plan and Characteristics of Fort Mitchel

The placement of Fort Mitchel was determined by general strategic and tactical considerations, which in turn dictated its specific design, a practice standard in the layout and construction of semi-permanent field fortifications during the Civil War, which were situated and intended to defend (sometimes described as "anchored upon") man-made structures or natural features, in this case Skull Creek.[1]

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[1] *Fort Howell*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. April, 2011. p. 4.

Fort Mitchel is a classic example of a seacoast earthworks gun battery of the Civil War era. The earthen walls were typically built atop logs, probably palmetto, which were readily available and long known for their resistance to splintering when hit by exploding shells.[2] The earth and sand piled upon the logs were excavated from the moat that surrounded the walls.[3] The cannon were typically mounted on wooden platforms and protected by sandbags, forming embrasures through which they could be fired. Fort Mitchel was designed for possibly five and as many as six cannon: three likely directed downstream toward the approaches from Savannah; one pointed directly across Skull Creek toward Pinckney Island, where there was occasional Confederate activity; and one or two directed toward Port Royal Sound. The overall design of the fortification is a half-moon shape called either a redan or lunette. It is open at the rear.[4]

The configuration and approximate size of the fort, as it exists today, is a circular segment with a radius of roughly 250 feet. The surrounding dry moat runs for approximately 400 feet and encloses an area of about 25,000 square feet, a little more than half an acre. Concrete pathways run on top of the ramparts, which stand 5 to 8 feet above ground level and two observation decks stand midway around the ramparts. A pathway incorporating a wooden bridge runs between the observation decks and across the moat.

Three great earthen mounds or traverses, which could be used as lookout stations for observing activity up or down Skull Creek or on neighboring Pinckney Island, were built primarily to protect the soldiers working at the gun emplacements. These mounds protected them from enfilading or flanking fire; that is, fire from either their extreme right or left, areas upon which they were unable to bring their guns to bear. Also, since Civil War-era cannon were prone to explode, these mounds also protected the soldiers working in different parts of the fort from the explosion of one of their own cannon.

On the inside of the fort a sunken rectangular area was excavated to accommodate a shelter. The shelter would have been of framed wood, about eight to ten feet high, with a flat roof of heavy timbers. Three sides of the shelter would have been backfilled with earth; the fourth side at the rear would have been left open. The top would also have been covered with earth. The purpose of the shelter was to provide a storage space, protected from enemy shelling, for powder, shells, food, and other necessities. It also provided a place for gun crews on break to rest. The shelter no longer exists, having succumbed to the elements long ago.[5]

Fort Mitchel permanently exhibits two Civil War-vintage cannon representative of those utilized in the 1860s. The two smooth-bore 24 pound howitzers are typical of those used in similar facilities and would have been considered "heavy' guns. One gun exhibited was made in 1864 by the Seyfert, McManus Foundry in Reading, Pennsylvania; the other was made in 1861 at the Bellona Foundry in Richmond, Virginia.

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[2] The value of palmetto logs in fortifications is commonly illustrated by their role in the Battle of Sullivan's Island during the American Revolution. http://www.sciway.net/sc-photos/charleston-county/fort-moultrie.html. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016 .

[3] Robert Carse. *Department of the South: Hilton Head Island and the Civil War*. (Columbia: The State Printing Company, 1961) pp. 27-28.

[4] Dennis H. Mahon, *A Treatise on Field Fortification*. 4th ed. (Richmond: West & Johnson, 1862), pp. 11-15.

[5] *Ibid*. Chap. VIII.

Current Condition, Ownership, and Use

The entrance to the site is on the west side of Skull Creek Drive and is shared with a popular Hilton Head restaurant, the Old Fort Pub, which takes its name from Fort Mitchel. A parking lot, also shared with the restaurant, is adjacent to the site. The Fort Mitchel site includes several paved walking trails, totaling more than 1000 feet, through the fort and is open to the public during daylight hours. The Heritage Library Foundation, the current owner, has erected ten interpretive signs at appropriate points within the fort site, explaining the facility structure and providing relevant historical context, and has located an information kiosk at the entrance to the fort and a bench on the ramparts.   Although there has been some slight to moderate erosion of the ramparts in the past 150 years, overall the fort is in excellent condition, especially when compared to other Civil War field fortifications in the South Carolina lowcountry.

Fort Mitchel was not disturbed by the development of the surrounding Hilton Head Plantation, instead it was salvaged from obscurity in weeds and vines when the adjacent Old Fort Pub was built in 1973. There are numerous mature trees on the site today, but undergrowth is kept under control. Fort Mitchel was viewed at the time as a means of promoting the new restaurant and walkways were built, probably sometime in the 1970s, so that visitors to the restaurant could enjoy the fort without damaging the integrity of the remains. Today the Heritage Library Foundation estimates that more than 5000 individuals visit Fort Mitchel each year, many through guided tours conducted by the Library. Initially, the Fort Mitchel site was donated by the Hilton Head Plantation developer to the Hilton Head Historical Society, but when that society ceased operations, Fort Mitchel was turned over to the Heritage Library Foundation on August 26, 2006.[6]

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[6] Beaufort County Assessor, *Property Max database*, Property ID R510 003 000 0070 0000. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. http://www.bcgov.net/departments/Real-Property-Services/assessor/index.phpty

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.)

| x | 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.

| x | 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.)

| | 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.)

_____
_____Military_____
_____Engineering_____
_____
_____

Period of Significance

_____1862-1864_____

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Gillmore, Quincy Adams

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Fort Mitchel, a Civil War earthwork fortification constructed on Skull Creek on the west side of Hilton Head Island, opposite Pinckney Island, by the United States Army in 1861-1862 is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance under Criterion A in the Area of Significance for Military History for its role in the Federal occupation and defense of Hilton Head Island and as a rare example of a large semi-permanent Federal field fortification in the South Carolina low country. Fort Mitchel is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance under Criterion C in the Area of Significance for Engineering, as a sophisticated and particularly intact example of a large semi-permanent field fortification established by the Union Army on the southeastern coast. The fort retains an exceptional degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It is open to the public under the stewardship of its owner, the Heritage Library Foundation of Hilton Head Island, SC.

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

Military Significance

Fort Mitchel (also called Battery Mitchel and Fort Gillmore) played a significant role in the military campaigns waged in the southeastern coastal areas during the Civil War. Although this site did not experience military action, its presence figured prominently in the strategy and tactics adopted by both Confederate and Union forces in the region. Today, it serves as a vital representation and reminder of a sector of conflict that is not well known to the general public.

Fort Mitchel is a coastal battery position located on a bluff overlooking a bend in Skull Creek, about a mile below its entrance into Port Royal Sound. The battery was constructed on Hilton Head Island in 1861-62, as part of the outer defenses for the headquarters of the Federal Department of the South and the Union Army X Corps.

The Department of the South had been created in the spring of 1862, not long after the Federal occupation of Beaufort, Port Royal, St. Helena Island, Hilton Head Island, and the other South Carolina and Georgia sea islands in November 1861, with its headquarters on Hilton Head Island. The commanding general of the Department of the South in 1861 and 1862 was Thomas W. Sherman.[7]

The United States Army established the Department of the South, with its headquarters on Hilton Head Island, and from there directed its operations against Charleston and other strategic points in the coastal region of South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida from late 1861 to early 1865.[8] Hilton Head Island proved to be an excellent location for the headquarters of the Department of the South, and a large administrative complex had been constructed in the northeast quadrant of the island by the spring and summer of 1862.

The Union forces were concerned about their defensive posture, deep in enemy territory, from the beginning of their occupation. On November 8, the day following the Battle of Port Royal Sound which preceded the landing on Hilton Head Island of some 13,000 Federal troops, Captain Quincy A. Gillmore, Chief Engineer for the Expeditionary Corps, conducted a reconnaissance of the north end of the island. His principal objective was to proceed across the island to Seabrook on Skull Creek, a distance of six miles, and locate suitable positions for batteries to control the inland water communications by way of Skull Creek between Savannah and Charleston.

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[7] Tables of Organizations of the South Carolina Expeditional Corps, September-October 1861, and the Department of the South, March 1862-June 1865, in Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of Rebellion: Compiled and Arranged from Official Records of the Federal and Confederate Armies, Reports of the Adjutant Generals of the Several States, the Army Registers and Other Reliable Documents and Sources* (Des Moines: Dyer Publishing Company, 1908: reprint ed., Dayton, Ohio: The National Historical Society, in cooperation with The Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1979), pp. 362-374; John H. Eicher and David J. Eicher, *Civil War High Commands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 845.
[8] Dyer, *Compendium*. pp. 362-374; Eicher and Eicher, *Civil War High Commands*. p. 845.

Skull Creek was navigable and served as the connecting link between the two Sounds, Calibogue and Port Royal. This passage had for centuries provided travelers between Savannah and Charleston with a safe route behind the barrier islands. Skull Creek, today a link in the Intracoastal Waterway, enters Port Royal Sound from southwestward about four miles above Hilton Head. It divides Hilton Head Island from the much smaller Pinckney Island on the west and the mainland just beyond. Seabrook Landing, on the south side of Skull Creek, lies approximately one mile northeast of Fort Mitchel.

Upon reaching Seabrook Gillmore selected "an excellent position for a battery, elevated some 12 or 15 feet above the level of the river, to sweep and control the Skull Creek channel." His partial report reads as follows:

> The river at that point is about one-fourth of a mile inside, and is skirted on the farther side by a marsh, which enlarges the distance between the firm ground on the opposite shore to half a mile or a little more. I caused soundings to be taken across the stream at half tide, ending two fathoms at the end of Seabrook wharf, three fathoms a short distance out, and a good 5-fathom anchorage in the middle of the stream. A battery of five or six heavy guns at Seabrook would be quite sufficient to close this inland water passage between Charleston amid Savannah, but to secure it against a coup de main I would recommend an enclosed work of strong relief and of sufficient capacity for 1,000 men, with guns on the gorge and with suitable flanking arrangements, should be commenced immediately. It should mount fifteen guns, at least, of all calibers.[9]

Skull Creek had considerable strategic significance for the Union forces. During the Battle of Port Royal Sound, the Confederate gunboat *Savannah,* in company with *Resolute*, *Sampson* and *Lady Davis*, had harassed the Union fleet. *Savannah, Resolute* and *Sampson* eventually retired to Savannah using the Skull Creek route,[10] however *CSS Lady Davis* together with a second schooner, *Huntress*, and several smaller craft were scuttled in Skull Creek on November 6, 1861 to prevent Federal forces from pursuing the main fleet.[11] Although it subsequently proved ineffective, this action demonstrated the viability of Skull Creek not only as a passage to Savannah for Federal forces but as a route that would allow future Confederate attacks on Union shipping in Port Royal Sound. Thus, a means of controlling Skull Creek was deemed essential for Union security in the Hilton Head area and construction of a fortification was a high priority.

Over the ensuing year and a half, a force of Federal troops, working to Gillmore's specifications constructed a battery position for five or possibly six field guns in what was an open cotton field atop the bluff below the main Seabrook Plantation complex further downstream toward Port Royal Sound, where the Union Navy constructed a coaling station and ship repair facilities.[12]

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[9] Capt. Q. A. Gillmore, *Reconnaissance on Hilton Head Island, SC.* (8 Nov. 1861) in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* Series I, vol. VI. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), pp. 30-31..

[10] *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.* Department of the Navy. Naval History and Heritage Command. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. www.history.navy.mil.

[11] W. Craig Gaines, *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008). p. 150.

[12] Gillmore's initial recommendation of a design aimed at defending against a land attack ('coup de main") was evidently rejected.

The work details were primarily staffed from the 3[d] New Hampshire infantry regiment, with various companies assigned to duty there one week at a time.[13] These construction details continued until February 1863 when the New Hampshire troops were relieved by the 115th New York regiment.[14] This unit finished construction at Fort Mitchel in early April 1863. The 3[d] Rhode Island Heavy Artillery also probably contributed to the construction work and later garrisoned and helped conduct battery operations.[15] [16] These troops were likely assisted by freed slaves or "contrabands" as they were termed at the time.

Fort Mitchel was armed with very heavy rifled cannon. Early in November 1862, an Army general requested a spare 100-pounder Navy Parrott gun that he had learned of, to be placed in "the casemated battery now constructing on Skull Creek".[17] Since Fort Mitchel was the only battery under construction on Skull Creek, (although not casemated) this was clearly intended for that site. The general's request was granted, but there is no record of where the gun was eventually located. On February 26, 1863, a soldier in the New York 115th Regiment wrote to his family that "rifle cannon of the largest caliber" had been mounted in the yet unfinished Fort Mitchel.[18] We do not know how many cannon were mounted there initially, but a pencil sketch of the Atlantic Coast from Savannah to Charleston in (apparently) 1864 appears to indicate an armament of three cannon at that time.[19] By 1864, however, Fort Mitchel was nearing the end of its useful life and cannon initially mounted there might by then have been diverted to more urgent uses.

As the war continued, the strategic value of Fort Mitchel declined dramatically, as did that of other coastal fortifications everywhere. This decline was due in large part to the introduction of ironclad war ships, which were much less vulnerable to cannon fire than were wooden vessels, by both sides. In particular, ironclads began to be constructed in Savannah for use against occupying Union forces. The first of these ironclads was the *CSS Atlanta*, converted from the blockade runner *Fingal* in 1862. The Confederate Navy attempted to use the Atlanta to attack the Federal base at Port Royal during the winter of 1863, but was unable to break through the Union blockade of Savannah. The *Atlanta* was finally captured in June 1863 as it attempted to sortie into the Atlantic, but in the same month the Confederates added the *CSS Savannah* to the squadron in Savannah. The *CSS Savannah* (not to be confused with the gunboat *Savannah*

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[13] Eldredge, E. *The Third New Hampshire and All About It*. (Boston: E.B. Stillings and Co., 1898). In January 1863 the regimental detail was fixed at one officer and 27 men. p. 248.

[14] Charles Kline. *Civil War Letters*, 1862-1864 (43/73). South Carolina Historical Society. p.16. Private Kline mentions Capt. Joseph Walker of the 1 N.G. Engineers Volunteers (note: this is likely a misprint of 1st N.Y. Engineers.) as being in charge of fort construction for the past year. p. 8.

[15] Frederic Denison, *Shot and Shell: the Third Rhode Island heavy artillery regiment in the rebellion, 1861-1865*. (Providence: J.A. & R.A. Reid, 1879). p.51 "The men of our command were relied on for handling the heavy guns."

[16] Stone, Edwin Winchester, *Rhode Island in the Rebellion*. (Providence: G.H. Whitney, 1864). p. 297.

[17] Communications between Brigadier-General J. M. Brannan and Rear-Admiral S. F. DuPont. *Official records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. Series I - Volume 13: South Atlantic Blockading Squadron (May 14, 1862 - April 7,1863)*. (Washington: Gov't Printing Office, 1901). p. 435.

[18] Charles Kline. *Civil War Letters*, 1862-1864 (43/73). South Carolina Historical Society. p. 11.

[19] *Pencil Sketch of the Atlantic Coast from Charleston, South Carolina, to Savannah, Georgia*. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. G3912.C6 1864 .P4. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3912c.cws00128.

which took part in the Battle of Port Royal Sound) was an ironclad ram built from the keel up and more maneuverable and with less draft than the *Atlanta*.[20]

Federal officers feared that one of the ironclads could use Skull Creek as a passage to Port Royal Sound and that the guns of Fort Mitchel would be useless to stop it nor would previously scuttled Confederate vessels serve as effective obstructions.[21] Thus, in the winter of 1863, the Hilton Head garrison sunk additional vessels in the channel and emplaced pilings across Skull Creek from Hilton Head to Pinckney Island.[22] The pilings, however, evidently hampered Union pickets from patrolling and were partially removed by the Hilton Head commandant. This lead to the following missive sent by Commander William Reynolds, senior naval officer at Port Royal, to Rear Admiral John Dahlgren in December 1863.

> Sir: After the *Chippewa's* expedition up Skull Creek the other day, I sent Lieutenant-Commander Harris on short to see Colonel Barton, commandant at Hilton Head, about the removal of the piles which had been driven across Skull Creek last winter to prevent an attack upon this bay from Savannah; and Colonel Barton said that he had opened a passageway for his picket boats to pass through; that there were still some sunken schooners in the way; that the obstructions could not be passed at night, and that in the daytime the attempt would hardly be made; that Fort Michel commands these obstructions, for which purpose it was erected; that the ram *Savannah*, to get into Skull Creek, would have to pass directly under the guns of Fort Pulaski.
>
> All this may be very well, but this remains – that the passageway through Skull Creek, which it was deemed expedient to close against the *Atlanta*, is now partially open to the *Savannah*.[23]

The CSS *Savannah* never ventured out of the Savannah River and was burned by the Confederates on December 21, 1864 when the city of Savannah was threatened by the approach of General William T. Sherman.[24] Fort Mitchel, as it was renamed in 1863, can be seen as offering little value to the defense of Union assets after 1862 and was ordered dismantled in June 1864.[25]

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[20]William N. Still, Jr. *Iron Afloat: The Story of the Confederate Armorclads.* Reprint of the 1971 ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985). pp. 130-135.

[21] *CSS Savannah Threat: An Open Passageway from Savannah to Port Royal?* To the Sound of Guns: Civil War Artillery, Battlefields and Historical Markers. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016 https://markerhunter.wordpress.com/2013/12/07/css-savannah-threat.

[22]Charles Kline. *Civil War Letters*, 1862-1864. (43/73) South Carolina Historical Society. p. 8. Private Kline reported that 900 piling were to be driven across Skull Creek. The pilings were almost certainly emplaced using the steam pile driver requisitioned in November 1861 for construction of the wharf at Fort Welles. Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives for the First Session of the Forty-seventh Congress 1881-1882. Chapter XV. *Correspondence etc. – Union, Coasts of S.C., Ga., and Middle and East Florida*. pp. 186-187.

[23] Commander William Reynolds to Rear Admiral John Dahlgren. December 7, 1863. *South Atlantic Blockading Squadron*. pp. 171-172.

[24] Still, *Iron Afloat: The Story of the Confederate Armorclads* p.135.

[25] Chief Engineer Chas. R. Suter to Commanding General, Department of the South, 8 June 1864. *War of the Rebellion. Series I, Vol. XXXV, Part II – Correspondence, Etc.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891). pp. 117-119.

Site Characteristics

Fort Mitchel is unique in its design and in its current condition. Although there are numerous other earthen fortifications up and down the coast, virtually all of these were built by the Confederate military and designed for heavy seacoast weapons to guard against naval attack. Fort Mitchel, on the other hand, is a Federal installation. Although it is sited to guard against an amphibious attack, it was designed to mount field or seige cannon, rather than seacoast weapons. Fort Mitchel is also in the best state of preservation of any comparable site and is currently visited by several thousand tourists each year. It is thus a distinctive and unusual work for the Low Country. It is also distinctive in its association with two well-known generals.

Generals Gillmore and Mitchel

Fort Mitchel is associated with two well-known Union generals of the Civil War. The first is Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore, who in his obituary was proclaimed by the New York Times to be "the greatest artillerist and one of the greatest engineers in the War of the Rebellion"[26]. While the Times statement is probably arguable, Gillmore was certainly an innovative artillerist and Fort Mitchel can be seen as one of Gillmore's few construction projects, possibly the first and only military structure designed solely by him, although the full extent of his involvement is unrecorded.

Quincy Adams Gillmore entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1845. He graduated in 1849, first in a class of 43 members.[27] He was appointed to the Corps of Engineers and was promoted to first lieutenant in 1856. From 1849 until 1852, he was engaged in constructing and maintaining fortifications at Hampton Roads in coastal Virginia. There is no record of his actual duties at Hampton Roads, but it is doubtful he had the opportunity to design any free-standing military structure at that long established facility. For the next four years, he was instructor of Practical Military Engineering at West Point, where he developed his career-long interest in artillery innovation.[28] Beginning in 1856, Gillmore served as a purchasing agent for the Army in New York City. He was promoted to captain in 1861.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in early 1861, Gillmore became Chief Engineer for the Expeditionary Corps that invaded Hilton Head Island in 1861. Under his direction, the army constructed two earthen forts on Hilton Head—Fort Mitchel and Fort Holbrook, a former Confederate gun site located in the Spanish Wells area. In April 1862, he was given command of the forces that caused the surrender of Fort Pulaski, Georgia. This victory closed Savannah as a Confederate blockade running port and marked the first time rifled artillery was used against masonry forts. This operation was anticipated to take several weeks, but Gillmore's artillery

[26] "General Gillmore's Death" *The New York Times*. April 8, 1888.
[27] *Official Register of Officers and Cadets*. United States Military Academy. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016.
https://books.google.com/books?id=csQ3AQAAIAAJ&pg=RA1-PA78&lpg=RA1-
PA78&dq=quincy+gilmore&source=bl&ots=T3f9ckj7Ct&sig=Vhvk2vKaotyaYY67IW596FHWaXI&hl=en&sa=X
&ved=0CCEQ6AEwATgeahUKEwjZqJ_ao5zIAhVHkQ0KHTpFBb4#v=onepage&q=quincy%20gilmore&f=false
[28] Whitelaw Reid. *Ohio in the War: Her Statesmen, Her Generals and Soldiers*. Vol. I*: History of the State During the War and Her Generals*. (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin, 1868). P. 620.

bombardment led to the surrender of the Fort within 30 hours. As a result of this victory, Gillmore was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General of Volunteers.[29]

After a tour of duty in Kentucky, Gillmore returned to Hilton Head as the Commander of the Department of the South in June 1863 and immediately began preparations to attack Charleston. After two unsuccessful attempts to capture Fort Wagner on Morris Island near Charleston, Gillmore employed siege operations using innovative technology such as the Requa gun and calcium flood light to blind opponents during trenching efforts. He also implanted a massive Parrott rifle, nicknamed the "Swamp Angel," which fired 200-pound shots into the city of Charleston itself. Despite the swampy ground Union troops were able to work their way toward Fort Wagner while Gillmore's artillery pounded Fort Sumter. On September 7 Gillmore's forces finally captured Fort Wagner. Gillmore's use of powerful artillery and trenches against the Charleston forts presaged the arrival of modern warfare.[30]

The second general of interest is Major General Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel, who took command of the Department of the South on 17 September 1862, preceding Gillmore's command. He immediately proposed establishing a freedmen's village a suitable distance northwest of department headquarters on Hilton Head where ex-slaves could build their own houses, form their own government, and establish their own public schools. This village was named Mitchelville.[31]

Mitchel, already ill when he took command of the Department of the South, died of yellow fever in Beaufort on 30 October, 1862, six weeks after his arrival on Hilton Head Island. Fort Gillmore was subsequently renamed Fort Mitchel in memory of the General, who had made a lasting impact in a very short period of time.

Design Considerations

Fort Gillmore, as it was initially called, is a classic example of a seacoast earthworks gun battery of the Civil War era. The earthen walls were built atop logs, probably palmetto, which were readily available and long known for their resistance to splintering when hit by exploding shells. The moat well above the level of Skull Creek was the result of the earth thrown up to cover the logs. The cannon would have been mounted on wooden platforms and surrounded by sandbags, forming embrasures through which they could be fired. The design of the fortification is a half-moon shape called a *redan* or a *lunette*, open at the rear.

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[29]Adam J. Lewis. *The Civil War Experiences of General Quincy Adams Gillmore: The Challenges of Transitioning from the Tactical to the Operational Level of Command*. (Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2011). pp 11-49.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Michael Trinkley, ed., *Indian and Freedmen Occupation at the Fish Haul Site (38BU805), Beaufort County, South Carolina*, Research Series No. 7 (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., 1986); Christopher Espenshade and Ramona Grunden, *Contraband, Refugee, Freedman: Archaeological Investigations of the Western Fringe of Mitchelville, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina* (Atlanta: Brockington and Associates, Inc., 1990); Our Port Royal Correspondence. The Expedition to St John's. Popularity of the Emancipation Proclamation in the Army. A Skirmish. Educating the Blacks for Freedom, &c., *The New York Times*, 8 October 1862.

The lunette designation is somewhat ambiguous. The word itself is derived from the French for "little moon" and curvilinear revetments used for artillery, such as seen at Fort Mitchel, at some point (likely pre-Napoleonic) came to be called lunettes.[32] However, the lunette fortification described by West Point's Dennis Hart Mahan and other leading nineteenth century military engineers was much different. The Mahan lunette was a variation on the simple redan design of a two or three-faced entrenchment open to the rear. The lunette variation added two trench lines to protect each flank of the redan. The design was totally linear with preprescribed angles between the lines.[33] Thus, Fort Mitchel can be described either as a more traditional lunette or alternatively as a nineteenth century redan with curvilinear faces.

The configuration and approximate size of the fort, as it exists today, is a circular segment (or half-moon) with a diameter of roughly 250 feet. The surrounding dry moat runs for approximately 400 feet and encloses an area of about 25,000 square feet, a little more than half an acre. Pathways run on top of the ramparts, which stand 5 to 8 feet above ground level and two observation decks stand midway around the ramparts. A pathway incorporating a wooden bridge runs between the observation decks and across the moat.

Three traverses, or earthen mounds, which could be used as lookout stations for observing activity up or down Skull Creek or on neighboring Pinckney Island, were built primarily to protect the soldiers working at the gun emplacements. These mounds protected them from enfilading or flanking fire; that is, fire from either their extreme right or left, from areas on which they were unable to bring their guns to bear. Also, since Civil War-era cannon were prone to explode, these mounds also protected the soldiers working in different parts of the fort from the explosion of one of their own cannon.

On the inside of the fort a sunken rectangular area was excavated to accommodate a shelter. The shelter would have been of framed wood, about eight to ten feet high, with a flat roof of heavy timbers. Three sides of the shelter would have been backfilled with earth; the fourth side at the rear would have been left open. The top would also have been covered with earth. The purpose of the shelter was to provide a storage space, protected from enemy shelling, for powder, shells, food, and other necessities. It also provided a place for gunners on break to rest. The shelter no longer exists, having succumbed to the elements long ago.

It should be noted that a 100-pound Parrott gun, as mentioned previously, was extremely large and would have required special engineering attention if mounted at Fort Mitchel. Each gun of this size weighed five tons and required a crew of 17 to service it.[34] This would have meant that gun platforms would have been built to extremely stringent structural standards and a platform would have been expansive in area to permit a large crew. Ramps to the platform would have needed a low gradient to permit these very large guns to be rolled up to the platform. Space requirements would have severely limited the number of guns of this size that could be mounted at Fort Mitchel.

[32] Craig Swain. Fortification Friday: Plans for Simple "Intrenchments" – Part 1, Open Works. *To the Sound of Guns.* Posted 30 October 2015. Accessed 15 November 2016. https//: markerhunter.wordpress.com/2015/10/30/fort-fri-simple-intrench-pt-1. Jeff Shaara. Jeff Shaara's Civil War Battlegrounds: Discovering America's Hallowed Ground. (New York: Random House. 2006). p. 189.
[33] Dennis Hart Mahan. *A Treatise on Field Fortifications* (Richmond: West & Johnson, 1862). p. 12.
[34] *Parrott Rifle*. Wikipedia. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parrott_rifle.

One unanswered question is the role of Quincy A. Gillmore in the actual design of the battery. It is clear that Captain Gillmore chose the site for Fort Michel (see "Military Significance" section) and it is also clear that as Chief Engineering Officer of the Expeditionary Force, Gillmore would, at minimum, have approved the fort design. Since construction was underway at least by December 6, 1861, the fort design was very likely undertaken and finalized during November. There is no record of Gillmore's activities between his reconnaissance of Skull Creek and other areas of Hilton Head Island in early November and his landing on Tybee Island on November 29 (the beginning of his siege of Fort Pulaski), but he could certainly have had the time and opportunity to design the fort himself.

Several facts, however, might cast some doubt on his active involvement. First, although trained military engineers were very scarce at the beginning of the Civil War, Gillmore was by no means the only engineer present on Hilton Head Island at that time.[35] Five companies of the 1st New York Engineers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Edward W. Serrell had arrived on the steamer *Star of the South* as part of the Expeditionary Corps.[36] There were almost certainly individuals in the 1st New York capable of fort design – a task that any busy Chief Engineer would normally delegate. In addition, Gillmore had not shown interest previously in fortification engineering and had little experience in that area. As pointed out earlier, Gillmore was dedicated to the study of artillery technology and had only one previous assignment dealing with fortification engineering: his time at Hampton Roads. Hampton Roads, however, was an established facility and it is likely his duties there were more concerned with maintenance and non-military facilities than military design.[37]

Finally, the "little-moon" design of Fort Mitchel was not what would be expected of a West Point graduate of that era who would have been strongly influenced by the teachings of Dennis Hart Mahan. Mahon was a professor of engineering at West Point between 1824 and 1871. He was extremely influential with regard to military fortifications and strategy and indoctrinated many of the Civil War commanders on both sides through his required military engineering course.[38] Gillmore, who graduated first in his class in 1849, almost certainly learned about fortification from Mahan and later became a teaching colleague.[39] From his writings, it is clear that Mahan thought about fortifications in terms of straight lines, while the design for Fort Mitchel involved a curvilinear form. Thus, while Gillmore certainly had a very important role in the establishment of Fort Mitchel, there is no evidence that he actually created the design.

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[35] Earl J. Hess. *Field Armies & Fortifications in the Civil War, The Eastern Campaigns, 1861 – 1864*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005). pp.11-12.
[36] *Union and Confederate Engineer Operations in the Civil War*. Accessed 15 November 2016. http://essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com.
[37] *Seacoast Forts of Hampton Roads*. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. http://www.northamericanforts.com/East/Virginia/Hampton_Roads/harbor.htm. Fort Monroe was completed in 1836, well before Gillmore's arrival; Fort Wool was begun in 1826, but construction was terminated after a short period due to settlement; Fort Norfolk was purchased in 1849, but was used strictly for storage.
[38] *Dennis Hart Mahan*. Wikipedia. Accessed 7 Nov. 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Hart_Mahan.
[39] Reid. *Ohio in the War*. P. 621. Mahan personally wrote to President Lincoln to recommend Gillmore's appointment as a general officer.

Whoever was responsible for the design, Fort Mitchel remains a unique facility. Although there are numerous Civil War field fortifications with varying degrees of integrity and preservation in the lowcountry, the vast majority of them are Confederate earthworks constructed for the defense of Charleston, Charleston Harbor, and the neighboring sea islands.[40] Conversely, there are relatively few extant Federal field fortifications in the low country, most of them earthworks on Hilton Head Island and its environs constructed to defend Union forces concentrated there. Moreover, few, if any, Federal field fortifications in South Carolina are as well-preserved and well-maintained as Fort Mitchel or are designed in the lunette "little moon" fashion.[41]

Significant extant Federal fortifications on Hilton Head Island, in varying degrees of integrity and preservation, include the following, none of which are as well preserved as Fort Mitchel.[42]

- Fort Welles (38BU1154 / Port Royal Plantation), on the northeastern shore of Hilton Head Island guarding the entrance to Port Royal Sound. Built in 1861-62, it replaced a Confederate earthwork built in 1861 and named for Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker (1817-1884). Abandoned by the Confederates after the Battle of Port Royal Sound on 7 November 1861, Fort Walker was occupied by the Federals, who constructed a completely new earthwork which they named for United States Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles (1802-1878).

- Fort Sherman (38BU1156 / Port Royal Plantation), on Port Royal Sound, was a large bastion constructed in 1864, and was intended to supplement an 1862 line of defenses running from northeast to southwest. It was named for Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman (1813-1879), the first commander of what would later become the Department of the South, November 1861-March 1862.

- Battery Holbrook (38BU1164 / Spanish Wells Plantation), near Braddock's Point, just south of Calibogue Sound on the southwestern shore of Hilton Head Island. It was constructed in 1864 and named for 1st Lieutenant Henry Holbrook of the 3rd Rhode Island Volunteer Artillery (1833-1863), who was killed on Morris Island, 21 August 1863.

- Fort Howell (38BU79 /1151) on Beach City Road on Hilton Head Island in close proximity to the historic location of Mitchelville, and the Fish Haul Archaeological Site. The fort was constructed by the 32nd U.S. Colored Infantry from Pennsylvania in the fall of 1864, with the purpose of protecting the adjacent freedmen's village of Mitchelville, and of adding to the Union troops' defense of the northern portion of Hilton Head Island.

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[40] Michael Trinkley and Sarah Fick. *A Survey of Civil War Fortifications in Charleston, Beaufort, Berkeley, Hampton, and Jasper Counties, South Carolina*, Research Series 59. (Columbia: Chicora Foundation Inc., 2000). Table 4.
[41] Michael Trinkley. *Archaeological Survey of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina*. Research Series 9. (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., 1987). pp. 70-71.
[42] *Fort Howell*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. April, 2011. pp. 19-20.

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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   #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

__X_ State Historic Preservation Office
_____ Other State agency
_____ Federal agency
_____ Local government
_____ University
_____ Other
      Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

 Acreage of Property _____3.27_____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: Longitude:

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927   or   ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting :   Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of Fort Mitchel, the nominated property, is delineated by the solid black line on the accompanying Beaufort County Plat Map, around Parcel X-1 (1.06 acre) and adjoining Parcel F-1 (2.21 acre), both owned by the Heritage Library Foundation.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property, owned by the Heritage Library Foundation, includes the historic earthwork fortification (on 3.17 acres) and no noncontributing resources.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: _____Barrett J. Riordan, Ph.D._____

organization: _____Heritage Library Foundation_____

street & number: ____852 William Hilton Parkway_____

city or town: ___Hilton Head Island_____ state: ___SC___ zip code:__29928___

e-mail _____briordan12@hargray.com_____

telephone: _____843-837-9294_____

date:_____14 December 2016_____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
 Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Fort Mitchel

City or Vicinity: Hilton Head Island

County: Beaufort

State: South Carolina

Photographer: Carol Clemens, Heritage Library Foundation

Date Photographed: 26 March 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Entrance from sidewalk.
2.   Moat from southern end.
3. Fort interior from southern rampart looking north.
4. Skull Creek from mid-rampart looking west.
5. Southern rampart from fort interior looking south.
6. Wooden bridge from south observation deck.
7. Skull Creek looking southwest from south observation deck.
8. Northern moat from wooden bridge.
9. South observation deck from west end of wooden bridge.
10. Moat south from creek-side footpath.
11. South observation deck from creek-side footpath.
12. Skull Creek looking west from creek-side footpath.
13. Fort interior from creek-side footpath.
14. Southern rampart from entrance looking northwest.
15. Fort interior looking southwest.