

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
1 NAME

HISTORIC Fort Fisher

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Fisher

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER US. 421 (18 miles south of Wilmington) at Federal Point

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

 VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7th

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

New Hanover

CODE

129

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY--principalNAME State of North Carolina, Division of Archives and History,
Historic Sites Section

STREET & NUMBER

109 East Jones Street

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE, Registry of Deeds
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

New Hanover County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE North Carolina Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE

in progress

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Archives and History, Survey and Plans Section

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

NOTE: technical descriptions of the original appearance of the fort are taken from an article written by its commander, Colonel William Lamb; see bibliography.

The remnants of Fort Fisher, the largest earthwork fortification in the Confederacy, are located east and west of U.S. 421 on Federal Point, some 18 miles south of Wilmington, North Carolina. During the Civil War, when this peninsula was known as Confederate Point, it was about one-half mile wide at the land-face of Fort Fisher and bounded on the east by Onslow Bay (an indentation of the Atlantic Ocean), on the west by the Cape Fear River, and on the south by New Inlet. Since 1865 natural forces have made significant changes in the configuration of the peninsula, eroding the eastern shore and creating tidal marshes on the west. Further, New Inlet has gradually shifted south and is now more than two miles from its Civil War location.

When completed in 1865 under the direction of its commander, Colonel William Lamb, Fort Fisher was an L-shaped structure with land and sea (northern and eastern) faces. The land-face began about 100 feet from the river with a half bastion and extended with a heavy curtain to a full bastion on the ocean side, where it joined the sea-face. There was no moat with scarp or counterscarp, since the shifting sandy soil made its construction impossible with available material. The outer slope was 20 feet high from the berme to the top of the parapet, at an angle of 45°, and was sodded with marsh grass. The parapet was not less than 25 feet thick, with an inclination of only one foot. The revetment was 5 feet 9 inches high from the floor of the gun chambers, and these were some 12 feet or more from the interior plane. All guns were mounted in barbette, on Columbiad carriages; there were 20 guns on the face, one or two to a chamber. Between the gun chambers were heavy traverses to protect from enfilading fire; these extended out some 12 feet on the parapet, were 12 feet or more high above the parapet, and ran back some 30 feet. In each traverse was an alternate magazine or bomb-proof, the latter ventilated by an air-chamber. Passageways penetrated the traverses on the interior of the face, forming additional bomb-proofs for the relief crews for the guns.

As a defense against infantry, there was a system of underground torpedoes extending across the peninsula 500 to 600 feet north of the land-face and so arranged that the explosion of one would not affect the others. Inside the torpedoes, about 50 feet from the berme of the work and extending from the river bank to the ocean, was a palisade of sharpened logs, 9 feet high and pierced for musketry. This structure was arranged to have an enfilading fire on the center, where a redoubt guarded a sally-port from which two Napoleons could be run out as required. Another Napoleon covered the bridge at the river entrance to the fort, which spanned a deep, muddy creek and connected with a road leading to the Confederate encampment at Sugar Loaf, 7 miles to the north. There were three mortars in the rear of the land-face.

(Continued)

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1861-1865

BUILDER/ARCHITECT principal: Col. William Lamb

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Fisher was the largest earthwork fortification in the Confederacy and for four years (1861-65) played a vital role in the Southern war effort. Located at Confederate Point (now Federal Point), the fort guarded the New Inlet entrance to the Cape Fear River and kept the port of Wilmington, North Carolina, open to the blockade-runners on whom the Confederacy relied heavily to supply its armies. With the fall of Fort Morgan on Mobile Bay in August, 1864, Fort Fisher became the last important coastal fortification under Confederate control. When the fort fell to Union forces on January 15, 1865--after the heaviest naval bombardment of land fortifications known to that date--the only remaining link between the already-doomed Confederacy and the outside world was broken.

Since the end of the Civil War, Fort Fisher has experienced substantial alteration, both man-made and natural. During World War II, when the site again became an active military post, the construction of a landing strip and adjacent highway (U.S. Route 421) destroyed part of the land face (north) of the L-shaped fort. More than one hundred years of erosion by sea and wind has obliterated the corner bastion and much of the sea face (east). Since 1960 the State of North Carolina has taken over administration of the Fort Fisher site through direct purchase and lease from the Federal Government. Though erosion remains a serious problem on the sea face, portions of the land face of the fort have been cleared and opened to the public (1-5 on Sunday; 9-5 Tuesday through Saturday).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On April 24, 1861, Captain Charles P. Bolles was ordered to take command of Confederate Point, the peninsula located north of the entrance to the Cape Fear River called New Inlet. During the next two weeks, he supervised the construction of two sand batteries. On March 4 he was transferred and replaced by Captain William DeRosset. Captain DeRosset completed the earthworks and named the most southern work "Battery Bolles." After mounting two 24-pound guns DeRosset was promoted to Major and on May 29, 1861, was transferred.

During the next year, under the command of Major John J. Hedrick, additional sand batteries were constructed at Confederate Point. Captain John Wilder

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 200 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	230870	3762940	B	18	230010	3761540
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	18	227730	3761310	D	18	230200	3762940
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Frank B. Sarles, Jr., Historian, 9/22/61

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

November 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS), NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE

DATE

Landmark

Designated: 11/6/01

DATE

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

DATE

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Attest

DATE

Carole Ann... 12-12-75
Veronica... 12/12/95

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The sea-face of Fort Fisher for 100 yards from the northeast corner bastion was of the same massive character as the land-face. Next to this section was a crescent battery built of palmetto logs, tarred sandbags, and sand revetted with sod, which had been intended to mount four guns. However, the logs decayed, and the battery was converted to a hospital bomb-proof, with a heavy curtain thrown up at its rear to protect the chambers from shell fragments. Beyond the bomb-proof a series of batteries connected by an infantry curtain extended for 3/4 mile along the sea. Though these batteries had heavy traverses, they were not more than 10 or 12 feet high to the top of the parapets and were built for ricochet firing. On this line was a bomb-proof electric battery connected with a system of submarine torpedoes. Farther along, where the shipping channel ran close to the beach, was the Mound Battery, 60 feet high, with two heavy guns which had a plunging fire on the channel. This was connected to the battery north of it by a light curtain. In all the sea-face extended over a mile from the northeast corner bastion to Mound Battery (following the line of the works) and carried 24 heavy guns.

Between Mound Battery and the western edge of Confederate Point was a level sand-plain nearly a mile wide and barely 3 feet above high tide. At that edge, commanding New Inlet, was Battery Buchanan, an elliptical mound carrying four guns, two of which covered the land approach. An advanced redoubt with a 24-pounder was added after the unsuccessful attack on Fort Fisher by Union forces in December, 1864. A wharf for large steamers was located near these works. Occupied by a detachment from the Confederate navy, Battery Buchana was a citadel to which an overpowered garrison might retreat and, with proper transportation, be safely removed by night, and through which reenforcements could be landed.

Both natural and man-made forces have had a serious impact on Fort Fisher, and in general the extant portions of the installation are deteriorated or in ruins. Since 1865 erosion by wind and water has destroyed some 2,100 feet of the sea-face, the corner bastion, and about 100 feet of the adjacent land-face. Battery Buchanan is also eroded but can still be identified. The construction of U.S. 421 and an adjacent airstrip (west) during World War II eliminated another 250 to 300 feet of the land-face. At the same time some portions of the sea-face then remaining were damaged by the erection of anti-aircraft guns and Mound Battery was largely demolished so that its construction material could be reused. During the 1960's preliminary grading for a housing development (which was eventually blocked) did further damage to the sea-face. None of the support buildings within the "L" of the fort remain. The Fort Fisher Monument, a marble column topped by a bronze eagle, was erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1932 on the site of the headquarters building. A marine

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laboratory, a massive concrete and glass structure recently completed under the North Carolina Department of Administration, stands on the site of the barracks and constitutes the only significant visual intrusion in the immediate area of the fort. A ferry landing was created on the western side of Federal Point about 1962 but has minimal impact on the fort site.

Since 1960 the State of North Carolina has taken over administration of the Fort Fisher site by direct purchase and through lease from the Federal Government. In 1961 a visitor center and museum was completed on that portion of the land-face already demolished by the World War II airstrip. The State has cleared the underbrush from the six mounds and seven gun emplacements remaining west of the airstrip, seeded the mounds, reconstructed a portion of the palisade, and set up interpretive displays. Further plans, to be carried out as funding allows, include archeological investigation of the site, clearing and stabilization of the remnants west of U.S. 421 to the ocean and in the area of Mound Battery and Battery Buchanan, and additional interpretation. Although attempts to control erosion along the eastern edge of the site have thus far been unsuccessful, research on that problem is continuing.

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designed a casemate battery of railroad iron and palmetto logs and Colonel S. L. Fremont designed and erected a casemate revetted at the portholes by palmetto logs. Before Hedrick's transfer the batteries on Confederate Point were named Fort Fisher in honor of Colonel Charles F. Fisher, who had been killed at the Battle of the First Manassas while commanding the Sixth North Carolina Regiment. By the summer of 1862, Fort Fisher already had its basic shape of an "L". It consisted of a battery of land defense, a quadrilateral field work known as Fort Fisher, and four batteries of sea defense. The fort mounted only 17 guns at that time.

On July 4, 1862, Fort Fisher received a new commander--Colonel William Lamb of Norfolk, Virginia. Before the war Colonel Lamb, son of the mayor of Norfolk and a law graduate of William and Mary College, was part-owner and editor of the Southern Argus. The new commander, in his twenties, took a sharp look at the works on Confederate Point and observed that "one of the Federal frigates could have cleared it out with a few broadsides." Lamb at once commenced to build "a work of such magnitude that it could withstand the heaviest fire of any guns in the American Navy."

During the next two-and-a-half years Lamb designed and constructed the powerful new Fort Fisher, using 500 black laborers assisted by the garrison. By the end of 1864 the fort extended from the Cape Fear River half a mile across the peninsula and then south down the beach one mile. It mounted 47 heavy guns and was called the "Malakoff Tower of the South," referring to the Russian redoubt at Sebastopol, which held off the combined land and naval forces of England and France in the Crimean War. Unlike earlier forts such as Macon, Caswell, and Sumter, Fort Fisher was built of earth instead of masonry, so that it withstood naval bombardment much more easily. Its construction marked an innovation in army engineering in this country. For many years after the war, Fort Fisher was regarded as a classic of fort construction and a model was long used at West Point for classroom illustration.

The strategic value of Fort Fisher lay in its ability to protect the New Inlet access to the Cape Fear River and thus keep the port of Wilmington open to Suthern blockade-runners. Designed for speed, these side-wheeled or double screw steamers averaged nine times longer than wide and from 400 to 700 tones burthen. In the course of the Civil War, at least 100 such ships were engaged in running the blockade into the Cape Fear River, and very few were captured before making at least one round trip. The Union squadron off Wilmington reported 65 blockade-runners captured or destroyed during the war.

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Though the Union commanders recognized the importance of closing the port of Wilmington and cutting the vital Confederate supply line of provisions, clothing, and munitions, they could not take any action until late in the war because of the lack of a combined army-navy force large enough to capture Fort Fisher and occupy the lower Cape Fear area.

With the fall of Fort Morgan on Mobile Bay, the Union began full-scale planning for the liquidation of Fort Fisher. When assembled, the Federal forces included 56 warships, plus transports and landing barges, under the command of Rear Admiral David Porter, and an army unit of 6,500 infantrymen under the command of Major General Benjamin Butler. To oppose this, Colonel Lamb had 1,430 men in the Fort Fisher garrison and Major General Robert Hoke's force of 6,000 veterans from Lee's army seven miles up the river at Sugar Loaf.

On the night of December 23, the Federals began their attack by exploding the powder ship Louisiana within 200 yards of the fort. The 215 tons of powder did absolutely no damage. The Federal fleet bombarded the fort on December 24 and 25. On the afternoon of December 25, two thousand troops from Butler's command landed at Battery Anderson three miles up the coast. Advancing Federal skirmishers were halted by the fort's artillery fire and the troops rallying to the palisades. No major damage was done and General Butler decided that the fort was too strong for assault. The troops were withdrawn and the fleet sailed on December 27 to Beaufort, North Carolina. The Confederates considered that they had won a victory.

Admiral Porter returned to Fort Fisher on the night of January 12, 1865, with a fleet of 58 warships mounting 627 guns and an army force of 8,000 men under the command of Major General Alfred H. Terry. On the morning of January 13, five ironclads closed in on the fort and began a heavy bombardment of the land defense. At the same time, the Union infantry landed three miles up the beach. The shelling continued from the 13th to the 15th, answered by slow but determined fire from the fort. Meanwhile the infantry moved across the peninsula to the west and entrenched on the 14th. Light artillery was landed and emplaced. Leaving 4,700 men in these entrenchments to hold off General Braxton Bragg's 6,000 Confederates coming from Wilmington to relieve the fort, General Terry moved 3,300 men against Fisher. Bragg's men took no part in the engagement which followed.

On the afternoon of January 15, at the pre-arranged hour of three, Terry's men assaulted the land face of the fort at the river's edge, while 400 Federal marines and 1,600 sailors armed with pistol and cutlass attacked the bastion on the beach side in the face of heavy and concentrated fire from the garrison. After sustaining a heavy loss, the sailors and marines

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retreated in disorder. However, their attack on the bastion served as a decoy and enabled the Federal infantry attacking on the river side to break into the fort. Once inside, the men fought in bloody hand-to-hand combat for possession of the traverses. The firing continued until 10 p.m. when the Confederate survivors retreated to Battery Buchanan at the tip of the peninsula where they intended to make a last stand. Instead they found the guns spiked and the garrison dispersed, and were forced to surrender. The fall of Wilmington followed (February 23) and the Confederate states were effectively sealed off from the outside world.

Fort Fisher remained relatively abandoned from the end of the Civil War until the 1930's, when a local movement began to develop the site as a state or national park. However, the movement met with little success and died completely with World War II, when the fort site once more became an active military post. The construction of a landing strip and adjacent highway (U.S. 421) during the war destroyed part of the land face of the fort, and erosion by sea and wind has obliterated the corner bastion and much of the sea face.

Since 1960 the State of North Carolina has taken over administration of the Fort Fisher site through direct purchase and lease from the Federal Government. Six mounds, seven gun emplacements, and a part of the palisade fence (all in the western section of the land face) have been cleared or restored and work, including archeological investigation, is continuing on the remaining portions of the fort and on the related fortifications at Battery Buchanan. A visitor center and museum, completed in 1961, houses an extensive collection of artifacts recovered from the site and from blockade-runners sunk in the area. The restored portions of the fort and the museum are open to the public on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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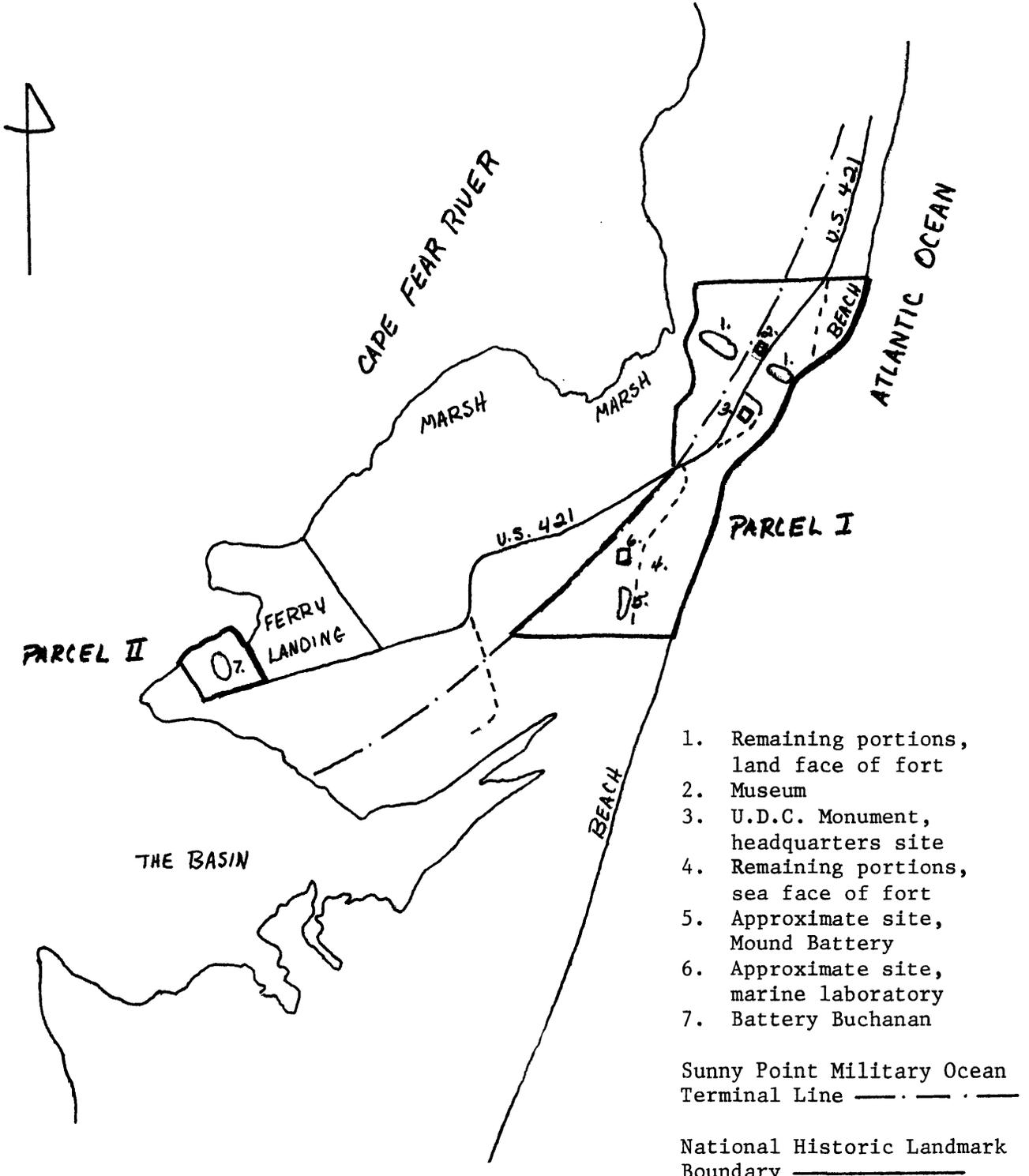
The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for Fort Fisher, vic. Wilmington, North Carolina are those of two noncontiguous parcels of land at Federal Point containing significant remains of that installation and related facilities, as revealed by archeological investigation to date. Specific lines, shown in black on the accompanying USGS map (Kure Beach, N. C. Quadrangle) and in red on the accompanying sketch map A, are defined as follows.

Parcel I: beginning at the intersection of the eastern curbline of U.S. 421 and the western line of a discontinued road leading south toward the beach along the eastern shore of Federal Point; thence, on a line due west to the original western shoreline of Federal Point (the inland edge of the present tidal marsh); thence, southerly and southwesterly along said original shoreline to a point approximately 500 feet due north of the intersection of the western curbline of U.S. 421 and the Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal reservation line; thence, due south to said intersection; thence, southwesterly along the Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal reservation line 3,000 feet to a point; thence, due east to the eastern shoreline of Federal Point; thence, northeasterly along said eastern shoreline to its intersection with a line extended due east from the intersection of the eastern curbline of U.S. 421 and the western line of the discontinued beach road; thence, due west along said extended line to the point of beginning.

Parcel II: beginning at the intersection of the northwestern curbline of U.S. 421 and the southwestern line of the property occupied by the Federal Point ferry landing; thence, southwesterly along said curbline and a line extended 150 feet beyond its terminus to a point; thence, turning at right angles and proceeding northwest in a direct line to the western shoreline of Federal Point; thence, northeasterly along said shoreline to the southwestern line of the ferry landing; thence, southeasterly along said southwestern line to the point of beginning.

NOTE: Parcel I contains the marine laboratory now being completed by the State of North Carolina on the site of barracks constructed within Fort Fisher. This structure is included in the landmark boundaries because of its location but does not contribute to the national historical significance of Fort Fisher.

FORT FISHER (sketch map A)
 Federal Point
 vic. Wilmington, North Carolina



1. Remaining portions, land face of fort
2. Museum
3. U.D.C. Monument, headquarters site
4. Remaining portions, sea face of fort
5. Approximate site, Mound Battery
6. Approximate site, marine laboratory
7. Battery Buchanan

Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal Line - - - - -

National Historic Landmark Boundary _____

sketch map prepared from
 U.S.G.S. map, 7.5 minute series,
 Kure Beach, North Carolina, 1970