

Final 10-1-85

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

Governors Island

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Governors Island

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

New York

CODE

061

**2 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U.S. Government: Coast Guard Support Center

STREET & NUMBER

Governors Island

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

HABS/HAER Survey

DATE

1982-1983

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Governors Island is in New York Harbor one-half mile south of Manhattan. It draws its name from its early ownership, in 1637, by the first Dutch governor of New York, Wouten Vantwiller. The Island is 172 acres in size, approximately 121 acres of which are in the historic district. The district consists of the portion of the island north of Division Road. The island was in continuous use as an Army post from the end of the 18th century to 1966 when First Army headquarters were moved to Fort Meade, Maryland under a major Army reorganization. It is now headquarters for both the Third Coast Guard District and the Atlantic Area and is the largest Coast Guard base in the world.

The historic features of the district are united by the nearly universal use of red brick exterior walls with light stone trim, an overall small scale usually not higher than two or three stories and modestly-styled, utilitarian architectural designs, simpler than their non-military counterparts of the period. The historic district is landscaped with mature trees, lawns surrounding the structures and fine parks and open space areas.

The historic district can be understood as a loosely knit collection of individual historic properties and features and several complexes of related buildings erected during various military eras. In many cases, these have been remodeled, readapted and reused in the intervening years. Changes in the island's building plan have most often reflected new directions in military missions.

The early fortifications built in the years prior to the War of 1812 occupy what were the most strategic defensive positions on the island. They are widely separated from each other and without trees which might have blocked the artilliarists' view. Fort Jay (1806-1809) was on the highest point in the center of the island from which its glacis originally sloped down to the waterfront on all sides. The four two-story brick structures (Buildings 202, 206, 210, and 214) surrounding the quadrangle within the fort were constructed in the 1830s as barracks. A century later they were converted to officers' family quarters. Castle Williams (Building 501) which was constructed between 1807 and 1811 to protect the entrance to the New York Harbor, occupied a rocky promontory as close as possible to the harbor channels. South Battery faced southeast over Buttermilk Channel and was originally on the water's edge. Today, only the red sandstone exterior walls of Building 298 remain from this early defense work. The one-story barrack located on the inland side of the Battery has been enlarged and remodeled.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input 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 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 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Governors Island historic district derives its significance largely from the island's role as a major component in the defense system of one of the country's most important harbors, New York Harbor. Defense works on the island can be dated with certainty as early as 1776. A major earthen work was constructed in the 1790s and later demolished. The present fortifications, Fort Jay, a square four bastioned fort, and Castle Williams (Building #501), a circular casemated work, erected under the Second American System of fortifications in the years preceding the War of 1812, were two of the harbors largest defense works. Both structures, are fine examples of their types and exhibit excellent design. They are among the country's best preserved fortifications from an important and innovative period of American military construction. Both structures are on the National Register of Historic Places.

The island is also significant for its role as a major Army administrative center for nearly a century. Beginning in 1878 when the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East were transferred to the island, the post served as headquarters for major Army commands until 1966. The last of these was the First United States Army, one of the country's most important field armies and the only one to fight in both WWI and WWII. The First Army was headquartered on Governors Island from 1933 to 1943 and again from 1946 to 1966. The island also served as a garrison post for various artillery and infantry units and as the site of the New York Arsenal from ca. 1833 to 1920. To accommodate these functions an increasing number of structures were built outside the fortifications throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Among those buildings are three National Register properties. Building #2 was probably constructed just prior to the War of 1812 as a guard house, Building 9 in 1839 as a hospital and Building 1 in 1843 as the Commanding Officer's quarters. A history describing the island's function as fortified site and major Army post follows.

Governors Island as a Fortified Site

Although the island's location as a strategic site for a fortification was urged by several Royal governors during the 18th century, the British appear to have done little more than garrison troops there. It was not until 1776 when

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See item 8, p. 15.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,8,3	2,4,0	4,5	0,4	9,6,0	B	1,8	5,8,3	4,0,0	4,5	0,4	5,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,8	5,8,3	0,2,0	4,5	0,4	2,6,0	D	1,8	5,8,2	6,6,0	4,5	0,4	7,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Barbara Hightower, Blanche Higgins

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record-Summer 1983

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

National Park Service

(202) 343-9603

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington,

D.C. 20013-7127

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is \_\_\_ National \_\_\_ State \_\_\_ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Throughout most of the 19th century, the main piers were downhill to the east of Fort Jay, and the roadway, now Andes Road, between the Fort and the piers was the island's major street. Logically, the island's development outside of the fortifications began in that vicinity, and many of the early structures were clustered there. By 1811-1813 a two-story brick structure built as a guard house (Building 2) occupied the prominent rise overlooking the docks and nearby were ordnance warehouses. Part of Building 25 is the only remaining structure associated with these early warehouses.

The New York Arsenal was established on the north side of the main roadway at least by 1833 and functioned as a separate reservation and command adjacent to the main docks. Over the next half century, the Arsenal constructed a group of about a dozen buildings. Although built over a period of several decades under the direction of Engineer Captain J. L. Smith, who also oversaw other island building projects, the early Arsenal buildings are architecturally distinctive as a group built with the same dark red brick walls, red sandstone cornice trim, and elliptically arched gable-end windows. Buildings 104, 105, 107, 110, 130, 135, and 140 remain from the Arsenal, which was removed from the island in 1920. Most of the remaining buildings have been considerably altered over the years.

As the Fort Jay garrison post (then called Fort Columbus) grew in the mid-19th century, substantial buildings were designed and built to house special post functions. Among these were a two-story Greek Revival hospital (Building 9) constructed in 1839, a spacious Commanding Officers' House (Building 1) dating from 1843 and next-door to it, a two story commissary/warehouse (Building 3) built in 1845. In some cases, these replaced early, very makeshift structures and were part of a general effort to improve the appearance of the post. These buildings are grouped in a row along the edge of the flat hilltop just southeast of Fort Jay facing onto an open landscaped area connected by walkways known today as Nolan Park. From 1855 through 1904, 13 sets of officers' quarters (Buildings 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20) were erected. Similarly styled, these large clapboard houses with stock 19th century sawn ornament surround a landscaped park referred to in one 19th century description as "the green." Although these have been altered and covered with cement asbestos siding, they retain their late 19th and early 20th century character.

More officers' quarters were required in the 1890s, and a fine waterfront site was chosen on the southwest side of the island for a group that was known as Regimental Row or Brick Row (Buildings 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, and 409).

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These originally faced the harbor to the southwest. Built from 1893 through 1910 according to standard Quartermaster plans, most of these seven large brick houses are similar in style and detail. Today, they are a well-preserved row of pleasant turn-of-the-century quarters with commodious interiors and open front porches overlooking a tree-shaded park.

Within the island's historic district, the final distinctive group of buildings are the 13 brick Georgian Revival structures (Buildings 12, 111, 112, 114, 301, 315, 324, 330, 333, 400, 515, 550, and 555) constructed from 1924 to 1940 to accommodate the post garrison, the 16th Infantry. These are by far the largest-scaled structures in the district and occupy the greatest amount of land area located on the north, west and south perimeters of the Historic Landmark District. They were built mostly in the 1930s, probably drawing on basic design concepts advanced in a series of Beaux Arts plans for the island prepared between 1902 and 1929. These buildings replaced a hodge-podge of inadequate World War I temporary structures which had been placed on nearly every open space on the island. Executed in a weak version of the Georgian Revival then popular for civic architecture in America and similar to buildings on other military posts, these buildings were all built of red brick with wooden trim painted white, slate roofs, and much of the same stock detailing. This building project, coupled with the road and landscaping improvements accomplished by the Works Progress Administration during the same period, did introduce a new, more orderly character to the north end of the island. As a group, these large, symmetrical, brick facades stand in regular rows across the entire center of the island and extend along the east and west shoreline in a wide U-shape, enclosing many of the older historic features. Building 125 constructed in 1934 as headquarters for the First Army is related to these Georgian Revival structures in material, scale and detail, although its detail is simpler in effect. Its location and scale, however, in the middle of the New York arsenal buildings is disruptive to that historic area.

Buildings and historic landscapes contributing to the Governors Island Historic District are described below. Building numbers are those currently used by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Nolan Park:

This pleasant, landscaped, roughly rectangular area around which key 19th century post administrative structures and officers' houses were constructed c. 1813-1905 was referred to as "the green" in 19th century literature. It appears with its present configuration of tree-shaded walks and with a central

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bandstand on a c. 1871 map of the island. The park is a well-preserved and historic feature which illustrates 19th century concern and taste regarding parkland. Furthermore, it provides the original and proper setting for a very important grouping of structures and is an essential part of this historic area.

Building #1:

Constructed in 1843 as the Commanding Officer's Quarters, this large, brick, two-story house which faces west on Nolan Park was designed by prominent New York architect Martin E. Thompson. Originally the house had the character of a country villa with some unusual exterior woodwork, scalloped trim along the roof cornice and porch columns of lattice-work. The south wing was added in 1886. The front and rear roof slopes were raised to accommodate full-height Colonial Revival porch columns between 1893 and 1918. The entire interior was remodeled by the WPA in the 1930s with some parts reinstalled. It has served as Commanding Officer's Quarters from 1843 to the present. Building #1 is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Building #2:

Built during the War of 1812 and clearly visible on an 1813 map, this two-story brick house of simple Georgian design is not the colonial governor's mansion as is often claimed. It was constructed as a guard house and is the oldest extant structure on the island outside of the fortifications. From 1824 to 1843 the building served as quarters for the commanding officer and between 1843 and into the 20th century, it housed the offices of the post commanding officer and the main guard house. At least by 1922, the building had been converted to officers' quarters, probably for the Post Commander. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Building #3:

For approximately 75 years from 1845 to 1920, this utilitarian two-story brick structure with stepped gable ends served as commissary and storehouse for the Governors Island post. The original orientation was north onto a cobbled way that led downhill to the docks. Nineteenth century plans indicate the first story was for stores and provisions and the second for clothing and issuing rooms. When converted to duplex officers' quarters in 1920-22, the house was reoriented west facing Nolan Park, front porches were added, and many door and window openings were altered.

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Buildings #4 and #5:

This pair of double quarters built for field officers between 1855 and 1857 is frame, two-and-one-half stories above a brick basement. The houses, which were originally clapboarded, were covered with asbestos shingles in the 1950s. Porches and dormers were added during the 19th century. A south addition was made to Quarters 5B between ca. 1895 and ca. 1904. Additions were made to the remaining quarters within the first several decades of the 20th century. Buildings #4 and #5 set the tone for the small-scale frame officers' quarters built around Nolan Park during the last quarter of the 19th century. They are currently used as officers' housing.

Buildings #6 and #7:

These two-and-one-half story frame duplexes were constructed as officers' quarters in 1878. The two were clapboarded and decorated with simple, stock woodwork trim and gable roofs. A single-story side addition was made to Quarters #6B between 1902 and 1921. A similar addition was made to Quarters #7A, and sun rooms were added to the rear of 7A and 7B in 1936-1937. Both buildings were covered with asbestos shingles in the 1950s. They face Nolan Park and are currently used as officers' housing.

Buildings #8 and #10:

These two-story duplex officers' quarters built on the same plan in 1878, are stylistically and historically closely related to the other Quartermaster constructed residences which surround Nolan Park. Originally clapboarded with simple Victorian vernacular woodwork, they were covered with asbestos shingles in the 1950s. The floor plan of Quarters #8B was substantially altered in 1936-1938, and the remaining quarters received sun porches over the rear kitchen entrances at the same time.

Building #9:

Constructed in 1839, this Greek Revival red brick building set on a high stone foundation has a large-scale central entrance with granite stairway and wrought iron balcony on the front facade. A similar stairway has been removed from the rear facade, but the wrought iron balcony remains. A parapeted roof was removed by 1864 because of structural problems. The rear courtyard was enclosed by auxiliary structures until sometime in the 20th century. Building #9 was originally constructed as the post hospital and served in that capacity



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until 1879 when it became the headquarters building for the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East. The building was converted from offices to four sets of officers' quarters by at least 1947. Still in use for this purpose today, the building faces Nolan Park and is a major contributor to the 19th century character of the park. Building #9 is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Building #11:

Probably built ca. 1878, this one-story frame vernacular cottage was initially occupied by the hospital steward and later as NCO quarters. Probably in the late 1930's the interior was remodeled and an addition of 10' made to the rear of the house. The building was originally clapboarded, but is now covered with asbestos shingles. It is simpler, but similar, to other officers' quarters surrounding Nolan Park.

Building #12:

This sprawling, fifteen-sectioned, multi-family officers' quarters was constructed in 1931 on a land-fill site overlooking Buttermilk Channel. Of red brick, three-and-one-half stories on a high basement of limestone, it has repeated details that are Georgian Revival in character. It is one of 13 similar structures built to accommodate the 16th Infantry.

Building #13:

The Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion is a Gothic Revival structure designed by New York architect Charles C. Haight and constructed in 1905-06. Built of light colored stone, the church has a cruciform plan and a square three-story tower. The church, which contains a collection of artwork and memorabilia associated with units that were stationed on the island, was a mission of New York's Trinity Church until 1966 when it became independent.

Buildings #14, 15, 16, 17, and 18:

These buildings are single family officers' quarters built according to the same standardized plan of the Quartermaster's Office in 1878-1879. They are simply-styled 19th century vernacular houses with central hall plans and spacious interiors. They were originally clapboarded with open front porches and decorative woodwork. Asbestos shingles were applied, and the front porches rebuilt in the 1950s. The five buildings face west on Nolan Park and are still used as officers' quarters.

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Building #19:

This cross-shaped duplex with polygonal wings and wrap-around front porches was built as officers' housing according to a standardized Quartermaster plan in 1891. It was originally clapboarded and decorated with wooden ornament, included molded panels above and below windows and porch balustrades with pierced cut-out patterns typical of late 19th century vernacular houses. Although it is the sole example of this plan on the island, the house is closely related stylistically to the others in the row facing Nolan Park. In the 1950s, it was covered with asbestos shingles, and the front porches were rebuilt.

Building #20:

Built as a large, single family officer's quarters in 1904, this house was a good example of a turn-of-the-century vernacular, residential structure with clapboarding, a wrap-around porch with Colonial Revival style trim, and a polygonal turret-roofed bay on the south. Between 1936 and 1938, the interior was gutted and refitted for two families. At the same time, the front porch was rebuilt, the south bay removed and the eaves stripped of their decorative brackets and dentils. The exterior was covered with asbestos shingles in the 1950s. Although altered, Building #20 remains in harmony with the other small-scale frame residences surrounding Nolan Park.

Building #25

In 1813 an arsenal building was located on the site of this rectangular, two-story, brick structure. Part of the 1813 building, which was one of the earliest structures built outside the fortifications, was probably incorporated into the southwest corner of Building #25. The current building is the result of several remodelings and enlargements. It has served primarily as office space but has also housed a museum, library, billiard rooms, quarters, and court martial rooms. It is currently used as offices. This building clearly defines the northern side of Nolan Park and contributes to that historic grouping in materials, scale and simple, functional style.

Building #S-40:

This rectangular one-story, gable-roofed building was built in 1918 as a temporary structure. Its frame siding, some of which is laid vertically, is covered by asbestos shingles. The building is currently being used as the Jewish Chapel.

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Building #104:

Well-preserved in basic character, this two-and-one-half story brick and stone structure, built between 1847 and 1850 as a storehouse for the New York Arsenal, was labeled on an 1880 map as the "Main Arsenal." In addition, from 1884 to 1917, it housed the museum and offices of the Military Services Institute of the United States, organized in 1878 in New York for "literary, historical and scientific purposes...to promote the military interest of the U.S." Closely related in materials, architectural style, details and scale to the other structures in this arsenal complex, it is also similar to arsenal buildings of the period on other posts, particularly in its shape and clock tower. Located on a hilltop overlooking the old main dock area, this building occupied a prominent position on the 19th century post. The building is currently used as offices.

Building #105:

This single building is comprised of two small 19th century brick structures, both constructed as offices for the New York Arsenal and connected by late 19th and 20th century additions. The north end was built in 1853 as an armory and office. The south end was built in 1860 and added onto the west with the same materials and treatment in 1882. It was used as an office and, at one time, a museum. At sometime after 1882, another addition was built to connect the two office buildings. The final additions on the east and west sides were completed in 1940. Although the structure is substantially remodeled from its original condition, it still relates to the Arsenal group in details, material and scale. The building, located to the east of Andes Road, is still used as offices.

Building #107:

This single-story brick structure with some remaining stone lintels was constructed ca. 1850 as an Arsenal storehouse. As originally constructed the building was half its present size. In the early 20th century, the eastern section and southwestern corner were added, and a new facade was constructed on the north. Many of the windows have been modified and the brick reworked, damaging the building's integrity.

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Building #110:

The last built and largest of the New York Arsenal buildings, this two-and-one-half story brick structure, built into the hillside on the north waterfront, was constructed in 1875. In 1904, it was used as a Quartermaster storehouse and depot connected to a T-shaped pier and warehouse. It is a large, gable-roofed structure with simple brick details and originally had large doorways on the north and west facades. These have been in-filled with brick.

Buildings #111 and 112:

Designed by New York City architects, Rogers and Poor, this pair of L-shaped, three-and-one-half story brick structures with simple Georgian Revival details has always been multi-family officers' quarters. They were constructed in 1934 as part of a large-scale plan to accommodate the 16th Infantry.

Building #114:

This brick structure, with a two-and-one-half story central pavilion with flanking two-story wings and Classical Revival styled entrances on the east and west, was designed by Rogers and Poor and built in 1934 as the Fort Jay Nurses' Quarters. It now serves as Bachelor Officers' Quarters.

Building #125:

Built in 1934 as the headquarters building for the First United States Army, this structure housed high-level military command activities probably second only in Army administrative importance to those in Washington. A large red brick structure in the Georgian Revival style, the building has a prominent hilltop site in the midst of much older New York Arsenal buildings. On the second story is a main hallway with WPA murals and a large, well-preserved office of the Commanding Officer.

Building #130:

This long, narrow, one-and-one-half story brick building was constructed during several periods and used for many years as repair shops and storage space. The far south end dates from 1843 when it was constructed as a shop for the New York Arsenal. That section of the present, much larger building is

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historically and architecturally associated with others in the Arsenal group. In 1971 all the additions and structures built on the north end of this 1843 section were razed and replaced with the present long addition. The building is currently used as shops and offices.

Building #135:

Built in 1839 as quarters for the Commanding Officer of the New York Arsenal with a large two-story ordnance storehouse to the rear, this building is the oldest remaining structure of the New York Arsenal. The storehouse and residence were connected by a two-story, flat-roofed structure that probably contained offices. The north and east facades are relatively unaltered with a Greek Revival style front entrance, handsome wrap-around porch of cast iron and red brick walls with granite and red sandstone trim. The single quarters were divided into two officers' quarters in the 1930s. Also in the 1930s, the fenestration pattern of the storehouse was altered. In 1977 the existing gable roof was replaced with a mansard roof. The building is currently used as offices and officers' family quarters.

Building #140:

Constructed of red brick with sandstone trim and a prominent cornice of corbeled brick painted white, this 1857-1867 building is the most notable architecturally of the Arsenal group. It originally had large, central, wooden paneled doors in each of its gable-roofed pavilions and tall, round-arched windows, now in-filled with brick and stucco in places, lined its north and south facades. It was used as a warehouse, probably oriented north toward the harbor. Currently, it houses the bank, post office, and security offices.

Fort Jay:

An enclosed second system square fortification with four bastions and a ravelin surrounded by a dry moat, this complex is one of the best preserved and largest examples of its kind in the country. First constructed as an earthen fort in the mid-1790s, it was largely rebuilt of masonry from 1806-1809. The scarp wall is of dressed granite ashlar and the parapet wall of brick. The handsome classically-styled gate is of red sandstone. Above the gateway is an impressive sandstone sculpture, a trophee d'armes with large eagle and military symbols. The glacis originally extended to the waterfront in all directions, and the character of this part of the early fortification is preserved in the open lawns of the golf course which currently surround the fort. Fort Jay is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Building #201:

Army records give 1809 the date for construction of this small one-story brick structure, which is sited behind the monumental entrance to Fort Jay atop the vault of the sallyport. The building, which was divided into two rooms entered from the west, served as a guard house. The door has been boarded, and the walls are largely obscured by vegetation.

Buildings 202, 206, 210, and 214:

These four are nearly identical buildings, which date from the 1830s and surround the quadrangle in the center of the fort. Greek Revival in character, the two-story quarters, which were originally barracks and are now officers' housing, have Doric-columned, two-tiered piazzas, brick walls with granite and sandstone trim and hipped roofs. They have been repaired and remodeled several times, but the overall character of the 19th century quadrangle is well-preserved.

Buildings #204, 207, and 213:

These small, triangular, brick, granite and sandstone structures were constructed in the 1830s when buildings inside the fort were built. Originally, there were eight small triangular structures, one at each end of the barracks buildings; these were used as storerooms, privies and shops. The others have, at various times, been incorporated into the main buildings, leaving these three.

Building #215:

The powder magazine, located underground in the north ravelin and approached by a ramp under the north quarters, appears very little-changed from its original condition. The tunnel and central court of the magazine have brick walls and flagstone floors. There are two cells flanking the tunnel, an east and west casemate flanking the court, and two powder magazine chambers in the north tip of the ravelin.

Building #S-293:

Built ca. 1871-72 as quarters, this building was probably on Quartermaster's Row, which was constructed in 1871 in this vicinity with 19 quarters for families of employees. A one-and-one-half story structure on a very high brick

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basement, it was quarters for non-commissioned officers in the late 19th century. In 1935 it was slated for demolition, but with the increase of troop strength on the island in the late 1930s, it was remodeled instead for use as a guest house. Its fabric appears similar to that of Quarters #11 and the 1870s Nolan Park houses. The building is currently used as a guest house.

Building #298 (Corbin Hall):

The original South Battery structure was erected prior to the War of 1812 and was known as Half-Moon Battery. It was an arrow-head shaped battery with a barbette tier of guns built into the hillside overlooking Buttermilk Channel to the east of the island. There was a single story barracks inside the battery. By 1863, a second story had been added, and the building was occupied by non-commissioned staff. In 1878, it was converted for use as an Officers' mess and Catholic Chapel, and, in the mid 1880s court martial rooms were located in the building. In 1904 a major remodeling project converted the building to an amusement hall and lecture room for enlisted men. In 1936-37, the WPA rebuilt the interior of Corbin Hall on the second floor as a dining hall, and, ca. 1939, the building was renovated for use as the Officers' Club. Several sections have been remodeled since, and a large lounge to the west of Corbin Hall was added in 1950.

Building #301:

This brick school building with cupola and standard Classical Revival detail has a central pavilion and several later wings which match the original section in treatment. New York City architect Eric Kibbon designed the structure as grammar school P.S. 26 in 1934. Wings were added in 1959-60.

Buildings #315 and #555:

These rectangular structures were built as multiple family housing for the post command, the 16th Infantry, in 1940. They are nearly identical and flank the enormous Building 400. Both are very similar in design and detail to the much larger Building #12 to the east. They are constructed of red brick with simple Georgian Revival detailing and are three-and-one-half stories on a high basement.

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Building #324:

Designed by May and Hillard, this structure was built in 1926 as the Fort Jay YMCA and was the first of the large brick buildings constructed between the wars. The central pavilion has a pedimented portico with full-height, wooden Doric columns, flanked by two rectangular wings. The building replaces an earlier, much smaller "Y" and houses a club, offices, and exercise rooms with an outdoor swimming pool to the rear.

Building #330:

Designed in 1936 and built 1937-39 as a War Department Theater, this structure is little-changed from the original red brick, hip-roofed structure, with small front offices and a typical, plain 1930s theater interior.

Buildings #333 and #550:

Constructed in 1932 according to plans prepared by the Office of McKim, Mead and White in 1931 for "Detachment Barracks," the buildings were used by the Army as a barracks for enlisted men. In 1946 Building 333 was used to house a WAC detachment. The two nearly identical Georgian Revival-styled buildings flank Building 400 and are very similar to it in general design features. The structures are U-shaped with two-story open galleries along the courtyard facades, stock Classical Revival details around entrances and a blind arched treatment along the ground level. Both buildings are now used as training centers.

Building #400:

By far the largest building on Governors Island and one of the largest Army buildings in the world, Building #400 named Liggett Hall by the Army, is 1,023' long with two 225' long wings at each end. The building forms three sides of a quadrangle, with two additions on the south cutting in to the quadrangle. At the time of construction it was thought to be the first building designed to house an entire regiment, a concept being promoted at that time by the Army to facilitate organization and encourage esprit de corps. Designed by the office of McKim, Mead and White and constructed from 1928 through 1930, this giant U-shaped structure has a tall central section with monumental arched sallyport oriented north-south through the building. The central block and the four corner pavilions each have a cupola. Two-story galleries line the courtyard facades, and on the north, identical, simple porticoed doorways lead into each



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section of the building. Building #400 is basically unchanged on the north facade. Two additions have been built on the south, and the galleries and first-story arcade have been partially enclosed. Building 400 is the centerpiece of the 1930s complex and forms the southwestern boundary of the historic district.

Building #403:

This single-family officer's quarters is at the southeastern end of a well-preserved row of similar structures along Hay Road. It is the only example of this particular design. Built 1904-06 according to standardized Quartermaster plans, this two-and-one-half story red brick house on a high stone foundation has simple brick details, wooden trim painted white, and a wide, wrap-around front porch, as well as interesting interior details.

Building #404:

Originally quite similar to Building #403, this structure was built 1904-05 as a duplex. It was repaired and remodeled by the WPA in the 1930s and converted to a fourplex in 1952. Although the original wrap-around front porches are now gone, the house is related in detail to building 403 and in general character to the row of duplexes to the east along Hay Road.

Buildings #405, 406, 407, 408:

Dating from 1893, 1893, 1894, and 1895 respectively, these duplex officers' quarters were built along Hay Road according to the same standard Quartermaster plans and are a well-preserved group of turn-of-the-century residences. U-shaped with dark red brick walls, high rock-faced ashlar foundations and open front porches with stock wooden posts and railings, the houses were remodeled to various extents on the interiors and exteriors by the WPA in the late 1930s.

Building #409:

Built as Bachelor Officers' Quarters ca. 1907-1910, this structure continues to serve that purpose. The T-shaped brick building has an open, double-tier front porch, and was built according to standard Quartermaster plans. Interesting individually, the BOQ building also relates well in materials, scale, and orientation to the other houses in this officers' row along Hay Road.

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Building #410:

This brick house with wide roof eaves and double central entrance is at the northwest end of the row of larger officers' residences along Hay Road. It was built as duplex officers' quarters c. 1917 and is the only example of this plan on the island.

Structure #431:

This small, brick and cast stone park bench and monument built in April 1938 as a "Monumental Setting for Bronze Plaque" is one example of the Works Progress Administration's work on the island during the 1930s. It is situated along Hay Road in front of the row of red brick officers' residences.

Structure #456:

This granite boulder with bronze propeller cast from a wooden propeller used by the Wright brothers was dedicated in 1954 in honor of pioneer aviators by the Early Birds, an organization of aviators who flew solo before December 17, 1916. The island was used as an airstrip in pioneering flights by Wilbur Wright in 1909 and Glenn Curtiss in 1910. An aviation training center was on the island before World War I. The monument is situated outside the central sallyport of Building #400 on the southwest.

Building #501 (Castle Williams):

Built 1807-1811, Castle Williams is a nearly circular red sandstone and granite second system fortification. It was the first American fort with casemated gun emplacements and served as a prototype for seacoast fortification design for decades. The exterior of the fort is well-preserved, and has three tiers each having 26 gun embrasures set in massive walls of sandstone with a total height of 40' and 7' to 8' thick. The interior has been remodeled several times for use as a military prison, and the structural wood frame was replaced with concrete. The southeast (gate) section originally had two structures on the interior, but, c. 1900, these were razed, and the materials reused in building a second story above the gate. Since its construction, Castle Williams has been an important fortification and landmark in New York Harbor. Castle Williams is on the National Register of Historic places.

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Building #515:

This building, which serves as the Post Hospital, was designed by the Office of McKim, Mead & White and constructed in 1935. It is a large, symmetrical, red brick and limestone building with two interior courtyards between the main block and the lower story rear sections. The central, front pavilion under a pedimented gable has a double stairway leading to the main entrance at the second story level, plaster Beaux Arts ornament in the stuccoed gable and simple limestone pilasters and doorway with standard Classical Revival treatment.

The following are noncontributing structures within the boundaries of the historic district:

Building #26

A 13' x 11', reinforced concrete, underground storage vault built in 1940 to house an emergency generator.

Buildings #33, 35, and 38

Red brick garages, 24' x 20', built 1934-35.

Building #39

Red brick multicar garage, 205' 8" x 22' 8", built in 1938.

Building #45:

Red brick, one-story, 9' 4" x 14' 4" transformer building built in 1933.

Building #S-46:

Wood frame covered with asbestos shingles, 40' 5" x 20' 4" garage built ca. 1942.

Building #85:

One-story, red brick, 39' x 15' 4", hip roofed storehouse built in 1932.

Building #92:

One-story, red brick, 13' 5" x 8' 6" transformer building constructed in 1942.

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Building #S-93:

One-story, frame, asbestos shingle covered, 30' 1" x 30' 4" office structure built in 1942 as sign and paint shop.

Building #S-97:

One-story, frame, asbestos shingle covered, 50' x 25' structure built in 1942 as a mason and tinsmith shop.

Building #S-103:

Two-story, asbestos shingled, frame structure, 130' x 29' 3", built in 1942 as a temporary structure, now used as the Search and Rescue School.

Building #106:

Brick, 33' x 22' 6" structure approximately 4' above grade built in 1941 as a reservoir pump house.

Building #108:

Two-story, brick, L-shaped, gable-roofed structure, 118' x 42' and 50' x 72', built in 1945 as offices for the First Army and named for George C. Marshall.

Building #109:

Brick, gable-roofed structure, 56' x 126' with 12' 6" x 10' 5" addition, built in 1918 as a warehouse and now serves as offices for the Captain of the Port.

Building #S-116:

Two-story, frame structure, 126' x 29' 6", with asbestos shingle covering constructed in 1942 as nurses' quarters and later used as a BOQ.

Building #138:

Concrete, stone and asbestos shingled structure, 69' 6" x 26' 3", with gable roof probably built on the site of 19th century workshops but primarily 20th century in fabric.

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Structures #142 and #144:

Adjacent ferry slips and associated structures built in 1947 as the main ferry slip between Manhattan and Governors Island.

Building #146:

One-story, red brick structure, 7' x 16' 6" and 7' 5" x 4' 5", built in 1934 as a transformer building.

Building #148:

One-story, brick structure built in 1917 adjacent to the ferry slip as a ferry waiting room.

Building #155:

One-story, brick transformer building, 19' 1" x 10' 4", constructed in 1948.

Structure #200:

Reinforced concrete, underground reservoir constructed in 1942.

Buildings #203, 205, 208, 209, 211, 212, 217 and 218:

One-story, brick, 20' 8" x 21' 8" garages built inside Fort Jay in 1937-38 during the Works Progress Administration projects.

Structure #216:

Seventy-seven foot high tubular steel flagstaff built in the north ravelin of Fort Jay.

Structure #219:

Concrete vehicle bridge on sandstone piers constructed at the east entrance to Fort Jay in 1952 to replace an earlier bridge.

Structure #S-221:

Wooden foot bridge constructed in 1952 over the moat at the southwest bastion of Fort Jay.

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Building #S-251:

One-story, frame structure with asbestos shingle covering, 50' x 89', built ca. 1908 as a Quartermaster storehouse and shop. It now houses the library.

Building #S-253:

Two-story, gable-roofed, frame structure with asbestos shingle covering, 152' x 52', built in the early 20th century and remodeled several times.

Structure #303:

Open, gable-roofed, wood structure on a concrete platform built in 1978 as a picnic shelter.

Building #S-309:

One-story, frame structure with vinyl siding, gable roof and steeple, built ca. 1942 as a Catholic chapel.

Buildings #414 and 415:

One-story, brick garage, 21' x 11', built in 1941.

Building #506:

One-story, brick transformer building constructed in 1933.

Building #S-510:

Two-story, T-shaped, frame structure with asbestos shingle covering built ca. 1942 as a Red Cross Recreation facility and medical storehouse and now used as a medical storehouse.

Building #513:

Brick, three-story structure with three rectangular sections connected by walkways and galleries built in the 1970s as quarters.

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Building #S-517:

One-story, frame, gable-roofed structure with asbestos shingle covering, 160 x 25' 4", built ca. 1942 as a medical clinic building and now used as a dental clinic.

Building #519:

Brick, one-story structure built in 1958 as an emergency generator plant for the hospital.

Building #525:

Brick, one-story structure built in 1964 as a storehouse.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the historic district is drawn to include the entire north end of the island, bounded on the west, north, and east by the island seawall and on the south by Division Road. This area contains the original island land area plus some filled land upon which structures were built in the 1930s and 1940s. All the identified significant features and nearly all the pre-World War II buildings are within this district, comprising an historically and architecturally related environment. The district is defined and protected visually by the waterfront on three sides and by the vast brick facades of Building 400, and similar flanking structures which cut east-west across the center of the island and mark the southern edge of the architecturally cohesive, landscaped north end.



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the rebellious Americans hastily erected fortifications throughout the city that the island's long history as a fortified site began. In April of that year, several regiments numbering a thousand men landed on Governors Island and erected breastworks capable of covering them from the fire of British ships. In May, General George Washington reported to Lieutenant General Charles Lee that "Governors Island has a large and strong work erected and a Regiment encamped there."<sup>1</sup> By June, four 32-pounders and four 18-pounders had been mounted. Over the next two months, the works on the island were strengthened with the addition of more troops, cannon, military stores, and provisions.

Such efforts to protect the city were fruitless, however. On August 27, the Americans were defeated by British and Hessian troops in the Battle of Long Island. By August 30, the patriots had been evacuated from Governors Island. Within hours, the island was heavily bombarded by four British ships. Two weeks later, the American troops abandoned the city, and the British occupation began. Under the British, the ruined fortification and batteries on Governors Island were repaired, and a naval hospital was established. On December 3, 1783, the British withdrew from the island, leaving all buildings intact.

Following the cessation of war, Americans turned their attention to the formation of a viable system of government and the economic recovery necessitated by British colonial policies and almost a decade of war. New Yorkers, who returned in 1783 to find that nearly a thousand buildings had been burned during the British occupation, began the task of rebuilding their city and pursuing the lead among American seaports in maritime trade. For a decade, little attention was paid to the need for an effective coastal fortification system. As a result, the fortification works on Governors Island were neglected and fell into disrepair. The island became the site of a hotel and race track.

During the 1790s, the threat of war spurred Americans into action to develop a defense system for their coastal cities. A lengthy seacoast and the threat of naval attack from enemies across the Atlantic made such a system necessary. In March of 1794, a Congressional appropriation initiated a program which today is known as the First American System of fortification. It was designed to effectively fortify American ports. Among the most important of which was New York City.

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Governors Island was of extreme strategic importance strategically in the new defensive system that was to be developed for the protection of New York. Charles Vincent, the presidentially appointed French engineer who designed the harbor's fortifications, noted this importance in 1794.

Considering now the left hand shore, of which there is but one point occupied in the narrows, it will suggest the necessity to bestow the greatest attention in forming a solid protection on Governors Island, the happy position of which can procure crossing fires with most of the points taken on the right hand shore....<sup>2</sup>

Construction of the Governors Island fortifications was begun shortly after the federal appropriation under the supervision of a Board of Commissioners appointed by the state.<sup>3</sup> The new fort was erected in the same location as the Revolutionary War defense works but was increased in size by a third. Because of a lack of sufficient funding, the Board was compelled to call on local citizens for assistance with construction of the fort. New Yorkers, who had obviously learned the necessity of an effective defense system nearly two decades earlier, responded in large numbers. Work completed by the end of 1795 consisted of an earthen fort with walls partially lined with brick, two batteries, two shot furnaces, a large powder magazine, and a barrack for the garrison.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent appropriations totalling nearly \$92,000 over the next six years allowed for the enlargement and improvement of the structure which was named Fort Jay in honor of Congressional Secretary of Foreign Affairs, John Jay.<sup>5</sup> A map (Figure 1) dated 1801 shows the configuration of the fort and the buildings within it at the beginning of the 19th century.

Fort Jay was typical of fortifications of the First System. Urgency, occasioned by the war scare and insufficient funds resulted in the impermanent construction of earthen walls.<sup>6</sup> As a result, when the threat of war subsided, many of the coastal forts deteriorated. By 1805 little of Fort Jay was salvageable. Also like most forts of the First System, Fort Jay was designed by a French engineer. Prior to the establishment of the Military Academy at West Point, in 1802, the United States lacked qualified engineers capable of designing fortifications, thus the country depended heavily on the skills of foreign engineers during the 1790s.<sup>7</sup>

By 1805 the threat of war brought on by renewed British interference with American shipping revived the interest in coastal fortifications. In 1802 the Chesapeake Leopard incident, in which a British warship fired on an American frigate off the coast of Virginia, compelled the Federal government to initiate

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a program for what came to be known as the Second System of American fortifications. Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Williams, the Army's Chief Engineer and first superintendent of the United States Military Academy, was placed in charge of the fortification of New York Harbor. In an 1805 report to the Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, Williams stated that "there does not appear to be any force that could prevent a ship of war from attacking the city...."<sup>8</sup> He was soon pursuing a vigorous campaign of construction at sites around the inner harbor to rectify this situation. As a result, a highly effective harbor defense system protected the city from naval invasion during the War of 1812.

Williams considered the principle of harbor fortification to be twofold.<sup>9</sup> First, the enemy must be prevented from entering the harbor if possible. Second, destruction had to be assured should entry be gained. Fortifications at the Narrows were essential for adherence to the first principle, while defense works ringing the inner harbor, like those on Governors Island, were necessary for the second. Like his predecessor the French engineer Vincent, Williams recognized the strategic importance of Governors Island in such a fortification system. It was on the island that work of the new system was first begun with reconstruction of Fort Jay. More importantly, it was the site chosen by Williams for Castle Williams, a major innovation in American fortification design.

Unlike their predecessors, the defense works erected during the Second System were designed by American military engineers like Williams and were of permanent masonry construction. These differences reflected the economic and technological progress being made in this country, as well as the beginning of a commitment to a more substantial system of seacoast fortifications as a deterrent to enemy attack. Fort Jay and Castle Williams on Governors Island are significant as well-preserved examples of this important and innovative period of American defense construction. Because of their importance, each will be discussed in detail below.

When reconstruction of Fort Jay (called then Fort Columbus) began in 1806, the square four-bastioned shape and portions of the earlier fortification were retained, enlarged and improved. Because of its impermanent construction only the walled counterscarp, gate, sallyport, magazine, and two barracks of the 1790s structure were salvageable. The shape remained the same on the west, south and east sides, and an additional 14' were added to each. On the north, a ravelin or a work with two faces forming a salient angle replaced the former curtain wall. The ravelin was attached to the fortification by two retired casemated flanks. Williams indicated in an 1808 report that the north side was

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modified "expressly to take off a Line of Fire which could not avoid the city and to form two Lines commanding the East and the Entrance of the North River."<sup>10</sup> Figure 2, an 1813 map of the island, illustrates the new configuration of the fort and additions made to the interior. Figures 3-4, an 1813 drawing, further illustrate the fort and the buildings within it.

The design of the present fort had its roots in Europe. Bastions, or four sided works consisting of two faces and two flanks projecting from the rampart, were first built in Italy probably in the early 16th century. Over the next century, the bastioned fort gradually evolved with experience, changing in size, shape, proportion, and location of the bastions. Finally, in the 17th century a Frenchman, Sebastian Le Pestre Vauban, developed the principles on which bastioned fortifications were designed for the next century and a half.<sup>11</sup> Brought to America by the French and Spanish, the square four-bastioned fort became the most frequently used type in America.<sup>12</sup>

While the basic design of the fort harks back to those of First System fortifications and earlier precedents in Europe, the permanent masonry construction of the new fort was in keeping with the growing commitment to more substantial and permanent coastal fortifications initiated under the Second System. Williams' 1808 description of the fort's construction evidences this change in attitude. The revetment of the scarp wall constructed of granite ashlar with a base 8' thick rose to a height of 16' at the cordon. At that point, the wall was reduced to 6'. An additional 4' of wall forming the exterior of the sodded parapet was built of brick above the cordon. Counterforts or buttresses 5' in length set 18' apart, served as piers supporting the walls. Arches placed between the counterforts gave additional support to the parapet. The parapet, which was 10' thick, consisted of walls 3' and 2' thick joined by crosswalls. The interior spaces created by setting the crosswalls 9' from each other were filled with earth rammed very hard, rendering the parapet impenetrable. Bartizans or small round circular towers placed high on the revetment wall at the salient angles of the bastions and ravelin were used as watch stations. The fort was surrounded by a ditch about 40' in width, a banquette and covered way 20' in width, and a masonry wall 6' feet high supporting the crest of the glacis.

The fort's siting and its firepower increased its effectiveness as a major component in the New York Harbor defense system. The sodded glacis stretched to the water's edge, allowing an unobstructed view from the East River on the west to the entrance of Buttermilk Channel on the east. Although the work was situated on the highest point of the island, the structure was sunk into the ground so that the glacis covered the wall as high as the base of the parapet.

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Thus, the scarp revetment was protected, and, according to Williams, enemy shot would either pass over the parapet or be stopped by it, limiting the potential for damage to the fort. Further, the height and distance of the fort from the water placed it out of the range of musketry fired from the tops of enemy ships. When completed in 1809, Fort Columbus was capable of mounting 104 guns, making it one of the largest among the New York Harbor fortifications in artillery capability. Troops defending the fort could bring half its weight of armament at one instant against any passing ship while at the same time maintaining complete command of the East River.<sup>13</sup> The fort also contained a furnace for heating shot, a device typical of seacoast defense works. When fired, red-hot cannon balls would set their target afire.

While Fort Columbus continued the centuries old tradition of bastioned forts, Castle Williams, which was begun in 1807, served as a prototype for a new era of American coastal fortifications. Two techniques, masonry construction and more importantly the casemated gun emplacement, set Castle Williams apart from earlier American seacoast fortifications. By 1811 when it was completed, Castle Williams' design and the subsequent emplacement of 80 guns, which was later increased to 102, made this significant fortification the most formidable American seacoast defense work yet constructed.<sup>14</sup> Castle Williams is today as one of the last remaining and best preserved fortifications of its kind in the United States.

During the 1780's, the French engineer Montalembert advocated the use of forts circulaires or multiple circular casemated tiers. These, he stressed, were superior to traditional forts having angular traces, since they required less wall surface and fewer troops for defense.<sup>15</sup> Williams lived in France from 1776 to 1785 under the auspices of his great uncle, Benjamin Franklin, and gained a solid theoretical knowledge of fortifications in that country. He was obviously influenced by the work of Montalembert and in particular the Frenchman's use of casemates arranged in circular tiers. In addition to Castle Williams, the American engineer used this concept for his design of the smaller single-tiered Castle Gansevoort (1808) and Castle Clinton (1808), both part of the New York Harbor fortification system. The latter, located on the southwest tip of Manhattan to the north of Castle Williams, was to have been a twin and companion fortification to Castle Williams. Castle Clinton, however, was not completed beyond the first tier, since a hesitant Secretary of War balked at the huge sum of money required for the construction of a second large, circular, casemated fort.

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Because of the advantages inherent in its design, the new type of fortification added significantly to the effectiveness of the New York Harbor defense system. Casemate emplacement allowed heavy guns to be fired within closed spaces, thus making possible the arrangement of armament in multiple tiers rather than simply placing cannon en barbette on the top of exposed parapet walls. As a result, greater protection was afforded the guns and gunners. It also increased considerably the volume of fire attainable so that one or two forts could provide a greater concentration of firepower over a channel.<sup>16</sup>

Williams abhorred the hasty construction of coastal fortifications. In a letter to the Secretary of War dated September 13, 1807, he stated that "It is in my Opinion equally wise to throw dollars into the Sea, as to lay out the public money in such paltry things."<sup>17</sup> Instead, Williams believed in the principles of sound design and solid construction. His report to the Secretary 14 months later indicated that he put these principles into practice with the construction of Castle Williams.<sup>18</sup> It also makes clear why this defense work was considered so formidable.

The massiveness of the walls and the structural system made the Castle virtually bombproof. The walls encompassed 5/6th of a circle with an outer diameter of 210'. The remainder of the circle was enclosed with a rectangular one story structure. Red sandstone 8 1/2' thick on the first tier and 7 1/2' on the second and third tiers rose above a massive stone foundation to a height of approximately 40'. A stone parapet measured 4 1/2' thick and added an additional 3 1/2' feet in height to the structure. The sandstone blocks, each approximately two cubic feet, were laid in Flemish bond and dovetailed together in such a way that it was impossible to remove one without shattering it. The mortar used was a mixture of iron borings and cement which Williams considered to be as hard as the stones. The iron borings came from the Foxhall Foundry in Georgetown, the same foundry that supplied cannon for the New York fortifications. The walls facing the interior parade were 5' thick, and the cross walls between the interior and exterior walls were 7' thick. A series of arches and piers in the exterior walls and the cross walls added support to the structure and enabled the second tier of guns to remain operable even if the first tier was seriously damaged. The brick used for these arches was probably made in Philadelphia. Williams ordered large quantities of brick from that city because he distrusted New York brick which he considered "both too small and too ill made for such important work."<sup>19</sup> To form a sturdier base for cannon and piles of shot on the first tier, Williams extended the foundation inward 5' from the inner sides of the exterior and interior walls.

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The Castle's location on the northwest point of the island, allowing it to command the channel from the entrance of the North River southwestward to the Narrows, was enhanced by considerable firepower. The first and second tiers had 26 embrasures each. The third, although intended as quarters for the troops, was capable of mounting an additional 26 guns, while more cannon could be placed en barbette on the parapet. The total was slightly more than 100 cannon. Like Fort Columbus, the Castle was one of the largest in terms of armament among the harbor defense works.

Other design features increased the Castle's effectiveness. The apertures of the casemated embrasures through which the guns were fired were so small that cannon shot could not pass between the muzzle of the gun and the side of the embrasure. The gun carriages were constructed in such a way to allow an angle of 54° for the range of fire. At that angle, the lines of fire would cross each other at less than 20' from the exterior of the wall, making an enemy's approach to the Castle extremely difficult.<sup>20</sup>

During the War of 1812, South or Half-Moon Battery augmented the already impressive firepower afforded by Castle Williams and Fort Columbus. This small arrow-head shaped battery was constructed with red sandstone walls at the southeast tip of the island just prior to the War of 1812. Its position commanded the entrance to Buttermilk Channel, a narrow, shallow channel situated between Governors Island and Brooklyn to the east, with 13 cannon mounted en barbette on an open parapet.

Thus, Governors Island formed a formidable point for enemy ships approaching from all directions. No engagements took place during the War of 1812, dramatizing the role of these fortifications as successful deterrents.

Governors Island as a Major Military Post

The decades of peace following the War of 1812 were characterized by change in the island's function. Although appropriations were made for repairs to the island's fortifications and weaponry was updated periodically, the role of the island as a major element in the defense system for New York Harbor diminished by the end of the 19th century. Castle Williams' conversion to a military prison was indicative of this change. During the Civil War, the Castle was used as a prison for captured Confederate troops, housing as many as a thousand men at a time. Portions of the Castle continued to be used as a prison at various times during the last decades of the century. Finally by 1899, the

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casemates in all three tiers were utilized as prison cells and storerooms. Only five 15" Rodman guns remained on the parapet.<sup>21</sup> In August 1921, Castle Williams became the Eastern Branch of the United States Disciplinary Barracks and remained a prison until the Army vacated the island in 1966.

Addition of other activities is also indicative of the change in the Island's function. At least by the early 1830s, the Island had become the site of the New York Arsenal, a center for the purchase, receipt, and issue of ordnance stores. Between 1852 and 1878, the principal depot of the general recruiting service was located on the Island, and during the 19th and 20th centuries, its garrison post housed various artillery and infantry units.

Headquarters for the Military Division of the Atlantic, was established on the Island on July 1, 1878. This was a significant event in the Island's history since it marked the final transition from status as military fortification to one as an Army administrative center.<sup>22</sup> The Division was a major territorial command of the United States Army. In 1878 Army administration had been broken into three divisions, the Atlantic, Missouri, and Pacific Divisions. The Atlantic Division commanded a wide area which included the New England states, New York, New Jersey., Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The Division was broken into two units, the Departments of the East and South. The former was transferred to the Island along with the Division in 1878.

The Division and Department commanding officer from 1872 to 1886 was Major General Winfield Scott Hancock. Hancock, a graduate of West Point and a well seasoned combat officer with service in the Mexican, Seminole, and Kansas Border Wars, won Congressional recognition for his significant role in the defeat of Confederate troops in the Battle of Gettysburg. While on Governors Island, Hancock served as first president of the Military Service Institute of the United States, an organization created in 1884 for "literary, historical and scientific purposes and [for the] establishment of a museum, publication of essays, etc. to promote the military interests of the United States."<sup>23</sup> The museum was in Building 104 until 1917 when its exhibits were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution.

Under Hancock, improvements were made on the island consistent with its new status as a major command headquarters. A large Congressional appropriation was used to modernize living accommodations and to remove unsightly and unsafe structures. At Hancock's direction, the first ferry service, which was



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completely Army controlled and free to Army personnel and their families, linked the island with the city a half mile to the north. Prior to this important step, ferry service had been supplied by private individuals and not infrequently at high cost. Other improvements implemented under Hancock's command were the installation of exterior lighting and a system which brought city water to the island from Brooklyn.<sup>24</sup>

Governors Island remained the headquarters for a major command after the Army command system was restructured in 1891. The three military divisions were discontinued. Eight departments whose commanders reported directly to the major general commanding the Army were retained from the earlier system. One of these, the Department of the East, remained on the island. Under subsequent Army reorganizations, the island continued as the home for major commands--the Atlantic Division 1904-1907, the Eastern Division which replaced the Department of the East in 1911 and the Eastern Department 1913-1920. Commanders of these units included men prominent in United States military history. Among these were Major Generals Adna R. Chaffee, Henry C. Corbin, Frederick Dent Grant (the son of Ulysses S. Grant), and Leonard Wood.

Governors Island continued to play an important role as an administrative center after still another major reorganization in 1920. Pursuant to General Order 50, the six territorial departments were abolished and nine corps areas were established. The purpose of the areas was for administration, training, and tactical control. Under this reorganization, Governors Island became the headquarters for the Second Corps with responsibility for New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Puerto Rico. Again major military figures, including Generals Robert Lee Bullard, Charles P. Summerall, Hanson E. Ely, and Dennis E. Nolan, headed the new command on the island.

In 1933 the Island became the headquarters for one of America's most important field armies. The First U.S. Army constituted in 1918 in France with General John J. Pershing as commander was instrumental in the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, key battles leading to the end of World War I. Following the war, field armies were inactivated and existed on paper until they were reestablished in the early 1930s in response to General Douglas MacArthur's orders. Between 1933 and 1943 while headquartered on Governors Island, components of the First Army developed into an effective combat force under the command of Major Generals Dennis E. Nolan, Fox Conner and Hugh A. Drum. Drum was particularly well known during this period for his active leadership as Commander of the First Army in the build-up of America's military force during the crucial period between 1934 and December 7, 1941.

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Drum was in the forefront of this effort and his reputation at that time excelled those of the Chiefs-of-Staff, Generals Marshall and Craig. The build-up was accomplished largely through field manuevers which increased in the numbers of men and equipment, cost, complexity, and seriousness of purpose as the threat of a new war in Europe intensified. In 1941 the First Army was placed in command of the Eastern Theater of Operations which was replaced by the Eastern Defense Command (EDC) the following year. Under this new structure, the First's major concern became the coastal defense of the eastern United States.<sup>25</sup> In 1943 the First Army and the EDC were separated, and the EDC remained on Governors Island until the end of the war. By 1945 its jurisdiction included 40 states, the District of Columbia, and American bases on Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and Bermuda.<sup>26</sup> After separation from the EDC in 1943, First Army headquarters was transferred to Bristol, England. During the war, the First led the invasion of Normandy with British and Canadian forces; spearheaded the St. Lo Breakthrough; joined in trapping the German Seventh Army in the Falaise-Argentan Pocket; and was the first to penetrate the Siegfried Line, to cross the Rhine, and to contact the westbound Soviet Army. First Army headquarters returned to Governors Island in June 1946. Under a major reorganization of the Army in 1946 that established six Army areas, the First had jurisdiction for the New England states, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. The First remained on Governors Island until 1966 when another Army reorganization merged the First and Second U. S. Armies with new headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland.

To accommodate its growing function as a major Army post during the 19th and 20th centuries, a steadily increasing number of structures were built outside the main fortifications. A map of the island drawn in 1813 (Figure 2) shows a cluster of buildings on the east side of the island and a few scattered buildings elsewhere outside the walls of the defense works. Among these were barracks, arsenals, powder magazines, a small hospital, wharves, and guard houses. Building 2, a National Register property, constructed as a guardhouse remains from this early group of buildings. At this time, the island's function as a fortified site required little in the way of buildings such as family housing and offices that were more typical of the garrison and headquarters post the island was to become. A second map dated 1879 (Figure 5) indicates that a considerable change had taken place. In addition to its official functions, the island had by this time acquired the character of a small town complete with houses, a church, school, cemetery, and landscaped park.

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These alterations in the island's physical appearance began at least by the 1830s. In the mid 1830s, the barracks within Fort Columbus were demolished and rebuilt as impressive, two-story, colonnaded, brick and stone structures surrounding the parade ground (Buildings 202, 206, 210, and 214). Small triangular buildings used as offices and privies were constructed at each end of the four barracks.

The New York Arsenal's first structures went up in 1833, and over the next half century its boundaries were expanded and nearly a dozen buildings, including officers' quarters, storehouses, offices, a workshop, stable and engine house, were constructed.<sup>27</sup> The Arsenal, shown in Figure 6, an 1847 map, and Figure 7, a c. 1895-1904 photograph, fell under the jurisdiction of the Ordnance Department and was a separate entity from the Army post. Its separate identity was emphasized further by the consistent use of Greek Revival details on the buildings constructed before the 1860s.

In 1839, a substantial masonry hospital building (Building 9) was constructed at the southeast corner of present-day Nolan Park. In the late 1870s, the structure became the headquarters building for the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East. Building 9 is on the National Register of Historic Places. A temporary general hospital was constructed adjacent to the first in the early years of the Civil War and still a third was built in the early 1880s.

Development in the Nolan Park area continued with the construction in 1843 of a large brick house (Building 1) for the commanding officer. The house was built according to the plans of Martin E. Thompson, one of New York's leading Greek Revival architects. This building, also on the National Register of Historic Places, was enlarged with a two-story addition in 1886-1887. In 1845 a two-story brick commissary/warehouse (Building 3) was constructed north of Building 1. In the 1850s two double sets of officers' quarters were constructed facing Nolan Park. After transfer of the Division of the Atlantic headquarters to the island, more housing was added when nine sets of officers' quarters (Buildings 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18) were built in 1878. The families of enlisted men were housed in less spacious quarters constructed west of South Battery by the late 1860s.

Another group of officers' housing (Buildings 405, 406, 407, and 408) went up in the early 1890s according to standardized plans used on Army posts across the country. Buildings 403, 404, and 409 were added in the first decade of the 20th century, also according to standardized plans. Constructed of brick, this

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set of housing known as Regimental Row was more substantial and spacious than the earlier officers' housing built on the island. The construction of this type of quarters on Governors Island and elsewhere at the time was an effort on the part of the Army to improve its image and to attract capable officers.

The religious needs of the island's inhabitants were met by the construction of a small frame Gothic Revival chapel in 1846. The chapel was built under the direction of the post chaplain, Dr. John McVickar, on the south side of the island. This structure was replaced in 1905 by a larger stone church designed by New York architect Charles C. Haight.

The 20th century brought even greater change to Governors Island. These changes signified the growing importance of the Island as a major Army post. In 1880 all submerged land adjacent to the Island on the south and southwest was ceded to the Federal government by New York State. Twenty-one years later a major expansion program that lasted for more than a decade was begun in the ceded areas. A bulkhead was constructed and filled with dirt and rock from the New York subway system. This more than doubled the Island's size (Figure 8). The air field on the new land area was used by Wilbur Wright in 1909 as a runway for his historic pioneering flights up the Hudson River, the first flights over American waters; and in 1910 Glenn Curtiss landed on the southern end of the Island to end a pioneering flight from Albany. A bronze propeller cast from a wooden propeller used by the Wrights marks these significant events in the Island's history. The monument is southwest of Building 400 at the edge of the historic district. During World War I, the new land area was covered with warehouses for the temporary storage of more than \$75,000,000 worth of war materials. An eight-mile long railroad linked the warehouses with piers at the southern and northern ends of the Island. A major construction program began in the late 1920s under the direction of General Hanson E. Ely. A substantial element of this program was Building 400 designed in the Georgian Revival style by the architectural firm McKim, Mead and White. Located at the southern end of the Governors Island historic district, it was the first Army structure of its kind to completely house an entire regiment with squadrooms, dayrooms, offices, mess halls, kitchens, and other necessary facilities.<sup>28</sup> Twelve additional brick Georgian Revival structures (Buildings 12, 111, 112, 114, 301, 315, 324, 330, 333, 515, 550, and 555) were built within the historic district boundaries during the late 1920s and 1930s to replace the World War I structures which had housed the 16th Infantry since 1921. A headquarters building (Building 125) was constructed for the First Army in 1934.

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The 1930s also saw major landscaping and repair work to many of the island's older structures, much of it done by the WPA. Interiors of the buildings within Fort Jay and those surrounding Nolan Park were remodeled extensively. The walls of Fort Jay were repaired, and a new steel and concrete framing system replaced the original heavy timber framing system of Castle Williams. Landscape work was done throughout the island.

The mid-1960s brought to a close an important era in the history of Governors Island. Transfer of First Army headquarters to Fort Meade, Maryland, ended more than a century and a half of Army occupancy of the island. Nevertheless, the island continued in its role as a major command headquarters after its transfer to the United States Coast Guard in 1966. The island is now the headquarters for the Atlantic Area and the Third Coast Guard District and is the largest Coast Guard base in the world. Although no longer serving as major defense works for the protection of New York Harbor, Fort Jay and Castle Williams remain as reminders of an earlier era when the island held a position of strategic importance, as well as characterize an important and innovative period in American military construction.

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>General George Washington to Lieutenant-General Charles Lee, May 9, 1776, as cited in Edmund Banks Smith, Governor's Island: Its Military History under Three Flags, 1637-1913 (New York: Edmund Banks Smith, 1913), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Class V: Military Affairs (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), Vol. 1, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Proceedings of the Commissioners of Fortifications for the City of New York and Its Vicinity, April 2, 1794 to February 6, 1796, B.V. Sec. N.Y., Manuscripts Division, New York Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup>A.S.P., Vol 1, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>6</sup>Emanuel Raymond Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History (Annapolis, Maryland: Leeward Publications Inc., 1979), p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>8</sup>"Draft, Report of Survey of the Narrows and Harbour of New York, November 1805," Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Williams to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn as cited in Thomas M. Pitkin, editor Supplementary Material Relating to the Construction of West Battery-Castle Clinton, From the Jonathan Williams Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University (New York: Statue of Liberty National Monument, April 1963), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Jonathan Williams, "Draft of a Report to the Secretary of War Relative to the Progress and Present State of the Fortifications in the Harbour of New York," November 1808, Williams, J., Mss., Manuscripts Department, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>11</sup>Willard B. Robinson, American Forts: Architectural Form and Function (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 7-12.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>Senator Samuel L. Mitchell to Judge Ambrose Spencer, October 9, 1808 as cited in I. N. Phelps Stokes, The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909 (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1926), Vol. 5, p. 1496.

<sup>14</sup>Robinson, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-74.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Pitkin, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup>Williams, November 1808.

<sup>19</sup>Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Williams to the Secretary of War, May 13, 1807 as cited in Pitkin, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>Williams, November 1808, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>"Armament Sketch of Forts on Governors Island, New York, Drawn Under the Direction of Lt. Col. W. H. H. Benyaurd, Corps of Engineers, December 31, 1899 (18882/251), Fortification File, Drawer 250 Sheet 3-14, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, National Archives, Alexandria, Virginia.

<sup>22</sup>Third Coast Guard District, Three Centuries Under Three Flags: The Story of Governors Island from 1637 (Governors Island, New York, Third Coast Guard District, 1978) p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 46 and 49.

<sup>25</sup>Max A. Ray, The History of the First United States Army From 1918 to 1980 (Fort Meade, Maryland: First United States Army, Field Printing Plant, 1980), pp. 50-51.

<sup>26</sup>Major Kenneth L. Boggs, "The Sentinel Isle: A Brief History of Governors Island, Fort Jay, 1637-1950" (Governors Island, New York: Army Headquarters First Army, no date).

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