

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 28 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 24 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

West Martello Tower *pk*

AND/OR COMMON

Key West Garden Club

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Monroe County Beach between
Reynolds and White Streets

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Key West

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Twelfth

STATE

Florida

CODE

12

COUNTY

Monroe

CODE

087

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

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Board of Commissioners, Monroe County

STREET & NUMBER

Monroe County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Key West

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Florida

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Monroe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Key West

STATE

Florida

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

N/A

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The West Martello Tower Ruins are situated on the Monroe County Beach between Reynolds and White Streets on the south side of the island of Key West. They consist of the remnants of a Civil War period masonry fortification designed as an outlying support for Fort Zachary Taylor. The ruins are presently occupied by the Key West Garden Club, which has created a permanent horticultural exhibit on the grounds and makes use of the interior spaces for a variety of club activities.

The original fortification included these basic structural elements: a central tower; a casemated counterscarp on the north, or landward side; and a double tier of casemate batteries on the south, or seaward side. Apparently, the latter were never completed, only one tier of casemates having been built, and no armament was installed, as the fortification was obsolete long before construction was halted in November, 1866.

This original construction was later modified. Two concrete emplacements for light coast artillery guns were constructed on the original seaward casements, which were filled and covered with earth. Portions of the central tower were demolished. In addition to these alterations, extensive destruction and deterioration of the exposed brickwork of the counterscarp has occurred.

Entrance to the ruin is through a breach in the outer wall of the counterscarp. Several of the small, vaulted casemates of the counterscarp are in regular use as display and exhibit areas. Passing through those spaces the visitor emerges into an inner "courtyard," originally part of the dry moat that surrounded the central tower. This courtyard and the sodded area covering the casemates of the south side contain a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and flowering plants, both native and exotic, some growing naturally and some cultivated, in striking contrast to the brick and concrete remnants of military construction. The late period concrete gun emplacements overlook the ruins and also offer a vantage point from which to view the shoreline and the sea approaches to Key West.

The grounds are attractive and well maintained by the Key West Garden Club. The structural ruins are in a continuing state of slow deterioration. However, the Monroe County Development Department has included stabilization of the ruins in its planning program.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1861-1945

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The West Martello Tower is one of two such defensive works constructed on the south shore of the island of Key West during the Civil War period to supplement the main fortification, Fort Zachary Taylor. These structures represent the ultimate development of design and construction concepts in this type of defensive works in the era of masonry seacoast fortification. The East Martello Tower (already listed in the National Register) has survived in essentially the form of its original construction. The West Martello Tower, however, was subsequently modified, and continued to form a part of the harbor defense installations at Key West until the end of World War II. Thus, the West Martello Tower is significant for both its unique reflection of the evolution of coastal fortifications, and its connection with events important in the history of Key West and the nation.

The construction of outlying tower fortification on the island of Key West was first suggested in the 1840's by Captain George Dutton, of the Army Corps of Engineers (Williams, p. 5). Dutton was at that time in charge of the construction of Fort Taylor, which, with Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas, was intended to be a major link in the nation's coastal defense system. Dutton recommended the construction of five outlying towers, each mounting two guns, to prevent the landing of hostile forces on the beaches east of the fort, which would threaten the security of Fort Taylor itself.

Tower fortifications had proven effective for limited defense purposes, most notably in 1794 at the Bay of Martello in Corsica, when two British warships were repulsed by such an installation mounting a single gun (Lewis, p. 42). Several similar fortifications of various design, but commonly referred to as Martello towers, were built in the United States prior to the War of 1812. But subsequent coast defense planning emphasized more elaborate structures, and Dutton's recommendation was ignored.

Construction and armament of Fort Taylor were essentially complete by early 1860. As the Civil War approached, timely action by the local military commanders secured the fort and prevented the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

17

4	20	3	80
---	----	---	----

27	1	48	40
----	---	----	----

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William N. Thurston, Chief Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION

Div. of Archives, History & Records Mgmt.

DATE

March, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

Dept. of State, The Capitol

TELEPHONE

904-488-7365

CITY OR TOWN

Tallahassee

STATE

Florida

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

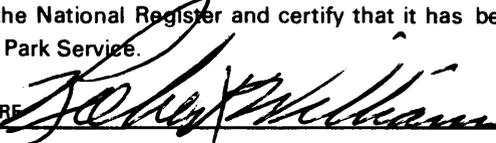
NATIONAL X

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



Robert Williams

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

4/23/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

6/24/76

Attest: Keeper of the National Register

DATE

6-23-76

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West Martello Tower

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emergence of a Confederate civil administration in Key West (Camp, pp. 31-43). But the vulnerability of the island to amphibious assault was once more recognized. In August, 1861, plans were forwarded by the War Department to Captain Edward B. Hunt, in command at Fort Taylor, for the construction of two tower fortifications on the south shore beaches (Williams, p. 10).

The towers were built approximately one and one-half and three and one-half miles from Fort Taylor. The original plans, prepared by Brigadier General Joseph G. Totten, were an elaboration and refinement of the Martello tower concept. The traditional Martello tower consisted of a simple tower mounting one or two guns, without protecting glacis, ditch, or other outwork. Totten's plan called for a masonry tower fifty-six feet square and thirty-six feet high, containing magazines, kitchen, mess room, barracks, and officers' quarters, and topped by barbette emplacements for four heavy coast defense guns. The tower was surrounded by a dry moat twenty feet wide. On the seaward side of the moat, opposite the south corner of the tower, an earth cover face twelve feet high would provide protection from naval gunfire. On the landward side, an elaborate galleried counterscarp was constructed, with four casemated gun emplacements at each end, facing the east and west corners of the tower, from which 24-pounder howitzers could sweep the tower faces and moat in the event of assault by infantry. The entire counterscarp, including the casemates, was to be covered with earth to form a glacis. The counterscarp gallery and casemates were only accessible from inside the base of the tower through a covered way. The only access to the interior of the tower was at the second floor level, by way of a drawbridge from the top of the counterscarp glacis (Williams, pp. 10-12).

A subsequent revision of the plans substantially changed the nature of the two fortifications. In order to provide greater resistance to naval attack, casemated batteries were designed to replace the earthen glacis on the seaward side. These batteries, mounting twenty-eight guns in two tiers, would be returned at each flank to join the reverse casemates of the counterscarp. A wet ditch eight feet wide and six feet deep in front of the casemates was to extend around the flanks to join the counterscarp glacis at each end (Williams, p. 13).

Construction continued throughout the Civil War years, hampered and frequently interrupted by yellow fever epidemics,

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storms, and the diversion of materials and labor to more pressing military needs. Although the masonry work was substantially complete by the end of the war, the outer works were never finished and no armament had been installed. The wartime development of rifled artillery had rendered masonry fortifications obsolete, and by November, 1866, construction on the Martello towers had been indefinitely suspended (Williams, p. 17).

As in many other areas, the obsolete masonry fortifications at Key West were subsequently modified to provide foundations for the complex coastal defense installations of the Spanish-American War and later periods. The West Martello Tower was thus partially demolished and modified to support a battery of light, rapid fire artillery. The property remained a part of the military reservation through World War II, after which it was declared surplus and subsequently sold to Monroe County.

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