

7/2/73

PH0024317

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE:	Kentucky	
COUNTY:	Hickman	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
	MAY 9 1973	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON: Columbus-Belmont Battlefield State Park

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: On U.S. 80

CITY OR TOWN: Columbus

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
<u>Kentucky</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>Hickman</u>	<u>105</u>

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Kentucky Department of Parks

STREET AND NUMBER: Capital Plaza Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Frankfort STATE: Kentucky CODE: 21

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Hickman County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Clinton STATE: Kentucky CODE: 21

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

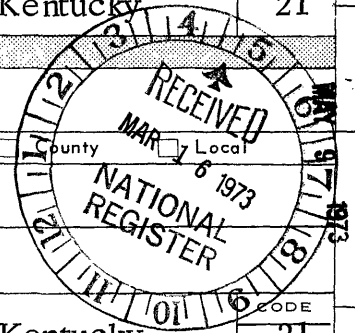
TITLE OF SURVEY: Survey Of Historic Sites In Kentucky

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: 401 Wapping Street

CITY OR TOWN: Frankfort STATE: Kentucky CODE: 21



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

High bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River and heavy fortifications during the Civil War earned Columbus, Kentucky the sobriquet "Gibraltar of the West." The most unusual feature of the fortification was a huge anchor and chain. The chain, originally a mile in length and composed of links weighing 15 pounds each, was joined to an anchor, 16 feet in length with 9 foot flukes, weighing 6 tons. Anchored on the Columbus bluffs, the chain was stretched across the Mississippi River and fastened to a capstan on the opposite side. The chain was designed to stop northern steamers that were using the river, but unfortunately when it was raised to the proper height it snapped beneath its own weight.

Virtually impregnable, this strategic location boasted a massive defense system. On top of the bluff where the state park is now located a system of trenches two miles in length meandered over the hills. In addition to the trenches there was a row of rifle pits fortified with six pound guns and manned by batteries of infantry. Four redoubts were built anticipating an attack by land. Three of the redoubts were on the bluff; the fourth was at the foot of the hill in the town of Columbus. About 140 heavy guns, mostly 32 and 64 pounders were placed in position on the bluffs to protect the fortifications from attack by either land or water. Beyond the main fortifications on the bluff, a dry moat, originally excavated to a depth of eight feet served as an obstacle to approaching infantry and also furnished dirt for the parapet constructed behind it. The parapets in the main fortification were seven feet in height.

On this defense system, trenches and earthworks have been preserved and a redoubt has been reconstructed. The anchor and a section of the huge chain are prominently displayed. A farm house which served as a hospital during the Civil War has been converted to a museum. It contains many artifacts of the War between the States, maps, and a huge oil painting of the chain and the bluff from which it was stretched. Prehistoric Indian artifacts and earthworks are also on display.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

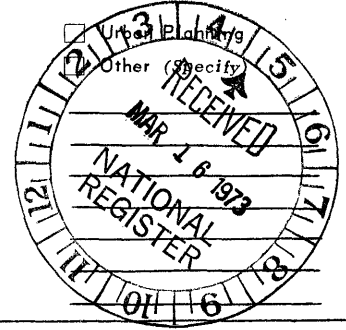
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1861 - 1870**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

After the Capitol in Washington was burned in 1814, Columbus was under consideration as the capital of the United States. Calling this location the center of the United States, real estate promoters launched a campaign to make Columbus the capital; going so far as to hire engineers to draft detailed plans for the city. The promoters failed in their venture but the town retained the name Columbus.

During the Civil War Confederate General Leonidas Polk envisioned this area as the keystone in the defense of the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers. Implementing this idea the Confederates made this one the most heavily fortified positions during the War. The high bluffs overlooking the river made this a strong defensive position. The Confederates occupied it on September 3, 1861 and through the fall and winter of 1861-62, a garrison of 12,000 to 19,000 men labored incessantly on the earthworks and defenses. One hundred forty guns were placed in position. A huge chain a mile in length was firmly anchored on the bluffs and stretched across the river on rafts. The chain was to prevent Union steamers from using the river; but unfortunately it snapped beneath its own weight. A floating battery, several river steamers converted into gunboats and underwater mines completed the armaments. This Civil War stronghold, known as the "Gibraltar of the West," was the northernmost fortified position occupied by the Confederate forces on the Mississippi River.

In November, 1861, while the fortifications were still under construction, the Battle of Belmont (the town directly across the river from Columbus) was fought. This was the first major battle of the Western Campaign and ended all serious efforts to take Columbus by direct assault. The commanding Union general of the west reported that the position could not be taken without a terrible loss of life. Since they could not win control of the Mississippi River at this time, the Union troops advanced down the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers. Although these were more arduous routes, they were less heavily fortified. Capturing Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February, 1862, they continued down the river, thus gaining access to the South. Due to this surrounding action by the Union, the (See Continuation Sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Hickman County Gazette: 100th Anniversary Edition.
Volume XLIV, April 30, 1953. Section 6, page 5.

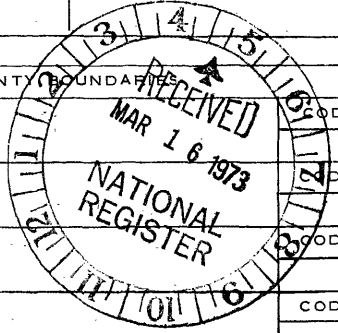
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	36°	46'	23"	89°	06'	36"			
NE	36°	46'	08"	89°	06'	06"			
SE	36°	45'	34"	89°	06'	28"			
SW	36°	45'	48"	89°	07'	02"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **156 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



UTM
 NW 16/311590/4071550
 NE 16/312440/4071100
 SE 16/312850/4070640
 SW 16/311000/4070500

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Mrs. Lou Delle McIntosh, Curator**

ORGANIZATION: **Kentucky Department of Parks** DATE: **Jan. 31, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Capital Plaza Office Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Frankfort** STATE: **Kentucky** CODE: **21**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Mrs. Smeow Willis

Title State Liaison Officer

Date March 13, 1973

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert W. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 5/9/73

ATTEST: [Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date 5 7 73

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Kentucky	
COUNTY Fayette	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 9 1973

(Number all entries)

#8 Statement of Significance

Confederates decided to evacuate the Columbus fortifications, and sent most of the guns down the river.

Columbus was occupied by the Union forces on March 3, 1862, who used it as a supply base and garrison during the remainder of the war. This occupation marked the first successful step in the long Western Campaign which ended at Vicksburg and Port Rudson and resulted in reopening of the Mississippi and the severing of the Confederacy.

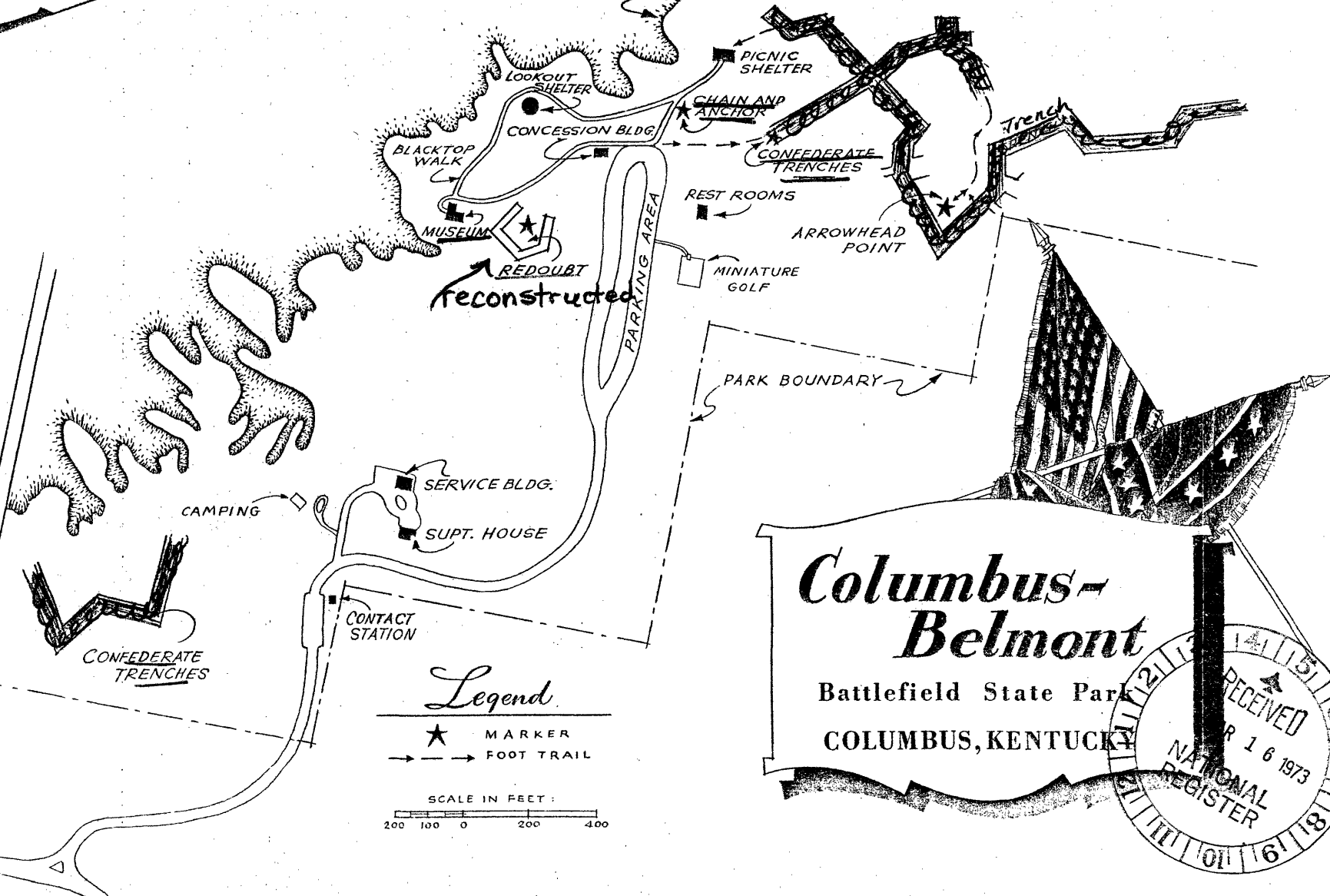
The mighty chain, forgotten in its uselessness, did not come to light again for over 60 years, when the gnawing river current caused the bluff to crumble and reveal the end of the chain. Further excavations unearthed the anchor. The letters "U.S. and WNY" on an occasional link were the only clues to the origin of the chain and anchor which are now on display at the park.



MISSISSIPPI RIVER

SHORE LINE

BLUFF LINE



Columbus- Belmont

Battlefield State Park
COLUMBUS, KENTUCKY

