

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
Mississippi

COUNTY:
Harrison

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
716,281,0007	6/3/71

1. NAME

COMMON:
Fort Massachusetts

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Ship Island *Gulfport vic. 5*

CITY OR TOWN:
Gulf of Mexico

STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **28** COUNTY: **Harrison** CODE: **047**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☒ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☒ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☐ Occupied ☒ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress
Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No			

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Agricultural ☐ Commercial ☐ Educational ☐ Entertainment	☐ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☐ Museum	☒ Park ☐ Private Residence ☐ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____	☐ Comments _____ _____ _____
--	--	---	---	--

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Joe Graham Post No. 119**
Mississippi Department of the American Legion

STREET AND NUMBER:
U. S. Highway 90

CITY OR TOWN: **Gulfport** STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **39501** **28**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Office of the Chancery Clerk, Harrison County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
101 East Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Biloxi** STATE: **Mississippi** CODE: **39530** **28**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

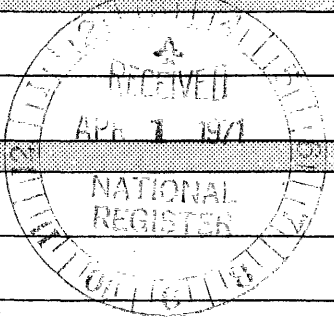
TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Mississippi**

COUNTY: **Harrison**

ENTRY NUMBER: **716,281,0007**

DATE: **6/3/71**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	☒ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☐ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

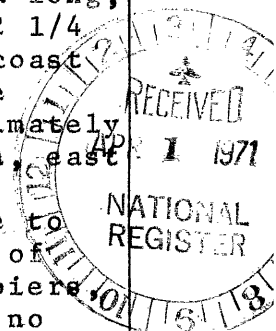
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Massachusetts is located on Ship Island, a long, narrow sand bar (7 1/2 to 8 1/2 miles long; 1/3 mile to 2 1/4 miles wide) in the Gulf of Mexico, twelve miles off the coast of Harrison County, Mississippi. The brick and cut stone fortification is in the shape of the letter D and approximately 180 feet in length, north to south, and 115 feet in width, east to west. A 60-foot span on the straight (east) side is recessed 7 1/2 feet and centered with the single entrance to the interior of the fort. The opening features a series of concentric arches, the outermost of which is faced with piers, keystone, and corbeled cornice. The original drawbridge no longer exists, although portions of the tackle remain.

The walls of the fort have a footing of eleven feet, a height of twenty feet, and a width of five feet, narrowing to three feet at the casemates (all dimensions are approximations). Archways extending eighteen feet from the inside wall protect the twenty-three casemate platforms within and support the fourteen barbette platforms behind the bastions above. Although Fort Massachusetts was designed for a complement of thirty-seven guns, only seventeen were installed (1872-73). Thirteen 10-inch Rodmans were mounted in the casemates, but missing sockets in the carriages prevented their being fired. The only firepower was provided by two 100-pound rifled Parrotts and two 15-inch smooth-bore Rodmans en barbette on the east rampart, their western exposure shielded by an earthen parapet. With the exception of one Rodman still in place, the artillery was detonated and removed for scrap iron during World War I.

Access to the ramparts is provided by two circular, enclosed stairways, one within the archways on the east side and the other abutting the crescent approximately midpoint. The water supply of the fort was collected atop the east rampart in two cisterns, each measuring thirteen feet by twenty-one feet and enclosed by stone conduits. Within the archways underneath were two dungeon cells, one on each side of the entrance passage. Approached through the double doors of outer cells, the dungeons were sealed except for ventilation shafts which pierce the rampart. A "hotshot" furnace for heating projectiles to ignite attacking wooden ships stands in the south angle of the parade.

The quality of craftsmanship with which Fort Massachusetts was constructed is expressed throughout in such details as the precisely fitted voussoirs and spandrels of the arches and the featheredge balance of the stone winders in the staircases. As with other masonry fortifications of the period, however, its obsolescence was inherent, for under



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☐ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century |
| ☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☒ 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) ca. 1859-1863

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| ☐ Aboriginal | ☐ Education | ☐ Political | ☐ Urban Planning |
| ☐ Prehistoric | ☒ Engineering | ☐ Religion/Philosophy | ☐ Other (Specify) _____ |
| ☐ Historic | ☐ Industry | ☐ Science | _____ |
| ☐ Agriculture | ☐ Invention | ☐ Sculpture | _____ |
| ☐ Architecture | ☐ Landscape | ☐ Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| ☐ Art | ☐ Architecture | ☐ Theater | _____ |
| ☐ Commerce | ☐ Literature | ☐ Transportation | _____ |
| ☐ Communications | ☒ Military | | |
| ☐ Conservation | ☐ Music | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The history of Ship Island, site of Fort Massachusetts, began in 1699, when it served as a base of operations for establishing Fort de Maurepas, first French capital of the lower Mississippi Valley, at present-day Ocean Springs. On February 10th of that year, Pierre Lemoyne^{Siey} d'Iberville anchored his expedition on the north side of the island, first called Surgeres in honor of one of his captains. It later became known as Isle aux Vaisseaux - Ship Island - because of the excellent anchorage it afforded, and warehouses, barracks, and a magazine were constructed. The strategic value of Ship Island to the French diminished after 1722, when the capital of the colony was moved to New Orleans. At the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, England controlled the island as part of the province of West Florida, which was ceded to Spain by the Treaty of Paris twenty years later. Although the United States annexed the province in 1810, Ship Island was occupied by the British army on its way to defeat at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815.

An executive order issued August 30, 1847, by President James K. Polk declared Ship Island a U. S. military reservation. Nine years later, Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War in Franklin Pierce's cabinet, authorized the building of a fort on the western end of the island, which site commanded the only deep-water channel from the Gulf of Mexico into the Mississippi Sound. The objective was the protection of the port of New Orleans during a time of politically tense relations between the United States and Spain concerning Cuba. Plans were drawn up by a three-man board of Army engineers and the walls had risen to a height of six feet by the eve of the Civil War. The site was occupied by an armed band of seceded Mississippians on January 20, 1861, and the Confederacy officially garrisoned the fort the following July in a vain attempt to foil blockading operations by Federal warships in the gulf. Chief among these was the USS Massachusetts, for which the fort was subsequently named. After the Confederate War Department ordered evacuation in September, Union forces resumed construction of the fort. The island served as a

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Caraway, Margaret Roe, "The Story of Ship Island, 1699-1941."
The Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. IV, April, 1942,
 pp. 76-83.
Harper's Weekly, January 4, 1862, pp. 2, 4.
 Interview with Mr. Herman Williams, Caretaker, Fort Massachu-
 setts, Ship Island, Mississippi, March 6, 1971.
 Interviews with Mr. M. James Stevens, Gulfport, Mississippi,
 March 6 and 8, 1971.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE			
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	30° 12' 46"	88° 58' 40"	0		
NE	30° 12' 46"	88° 58' 10"	0		
SE	30° 12' 26"	88° 58' 10"			
SW	30° 12' 26"	88° 58' 40"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 85 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Dawn Maddox, Historian

ORGANIZATION Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History
 Division of Historic Sites and Archaeology

DATE March 25, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:
 120 North State Street

CITY OR TOWN: Jackson

STATE Mississippi 39205

CODE 28

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the Na-
 tional 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

R. A. McLemore

Title Director, Miss. Dept. of
 Archives and History

Date March 25, 1971

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

JUN 21 1971

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of the National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

(Continuation Sheet) APR 1 1971

STATE Mississippi	
COUNTY Harrison	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 246,28,0007	DATE 6/2/71

(Number all entries)

7.

attack the fabric would have exploded into missiles more deadly to its defenders than the bombardment itself.

Fort Massachusetts was originally located in the center of the western end of Ship Island, but after more than a century of erosion it is almost entirely surrounded by water. Following Hurricane Betsy in 1965, a protective sea wall was thrown up from fifty to eighty feet from its base to deflect the force of wind and storm waves. The fort survived Hurricane Camille in 1969 relatively undamaged, although Ship Island itself was cut into three sections.

8.

staging area for the occupation of New Orleans by Major General Benjamin F. Butler and as a coaling and repair station for ships of Admiral David Farragut operating against Confederate forts guarding the mouth of the Mississippi River. From October, 1864, to the end of the Civil War, Fort Massachusetts housed Confederate prisoners and it continued to be used as a federal prison until 1870, when it ceased to be a military reservation.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the United States and Mississippi intermittently maintained quarantine stations on Ship Island to cope with the threat of yellow fever brought by incoming vessels.

In 1885 the rounded brick lighthouse constructed east of the fort in 1853 was replaced by the Treasury Department with a 75-foot wooden pyramidal tower on concrete piers. The buildings of the quarantine stations no longer exist and the lighthouse is in a deteriorated condition.

In 1933 Public Law 73-60 transferred ownership of Fort Massachusetts to Joe Graham Post No. 119 of the Mississippi Department of the American Legion, with the proviso that the post maintain it as a public recreation park. Ship Island thereafter became a tourist attraction serviced by excursion boats from the mainland. On January 9, 1971, the island, with its fort, was designated a component of the projected Gulf Islands National Seashore, 20,000 acres of surf and islands off the coasts of Florida and Mississippi authorized for development by the Department of the Interior.

9.

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. (Washington, D. C., 1894-1922), Series I, Vol. 16, 582, 678-79, 805-06; Series I, Vol. 18, 15.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Mississippi	
COUNTY	
Harrison	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71.6128.0007	6/2/71

(Number all entries)

9.

Penicaut, Jean, "Annals of Louisiana from 1698 to 1722." The Alabama Historical Quarterly, Vol. V, Fall, 1943, pp. 260-355.

"Ship Island, Its Legends and Traditions." Jackson Clarion-Ledger, July 18, 1915, Section 2, p. 9.

Stevens, M. James, Collection. Gulfport, Mississippi.

Subject Files, "Fort Massachusetts," "Gulf Islands National Seashore," and "Ship Island." Collections, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. (Washington, D. C., 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. 6, p. 712; Series II, Vol. 7, pp. 1259-60; Series III, Vol. 1, p. 51.

Weinert, Richard P., "The Neglected Key to the Gulf Coast." The Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXI, November, 1969, pp. 269-301.





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE

Mississippi

COUNTY

Harrison

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

71-6128-0007

6/21/71

1. NAME

COMMON: Fort Massachusetts

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Ship Island

CITY OR TOWN:

Gulf of Mexico

STATE:

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY:

Harrison

CODE

047

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Chauncey T. Hinman

DATE OF PHOTO: ca. 1960

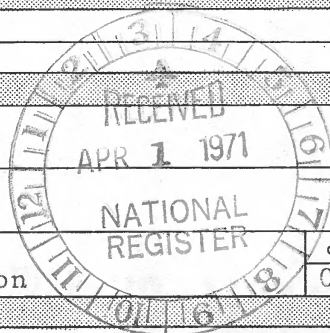
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Hinman Advertisers

4505 Kendall Avenue, Gulfport, Mississippi 39503

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

South angle, looking southeast: "hotshot" furnace, archways, rampart, and barbette platforms.



(GULFPORT SOUTH)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

89°00'
30°15'

308000m.E.

U.S.G.S. 7.5'
Ship Island Quadrangle
1950
1:24000

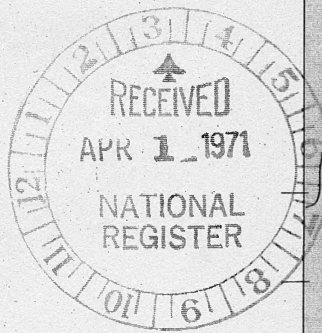
3347000m.N.

GULFPORT
CHANNEL

Light

Light

M I S S I S S I P P I



HARBOR

SHIP ISLAND

12'30" SE Spit

SHIP ISLAND PASS

Daybeacon

West Point

Old Fort Massachusetts

Ship Island Lighthouse

Light

EAST

CH.