National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2013

Fort Mahan

National Capital Parks-East - Fort Circle Park-East

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Inventory Unit Summary & Site Plan

Inventory Summary

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information:

Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI), a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the national park system, is one of the most ambitious initiatives of the National Park Service (NPS) Park Cultural Landscapes Program. The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all landscapes having historical significance that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources through a public planning process and in which the NPS has or plans to acquire any legal interest. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into a national database. In addition, for landscapes that are not currently listed on the National Register and/or do not have adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Keeper of the National Register.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures, assists the NPS in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2006), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that respond to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two GPRA goals are associated with the CLI: bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (Goal 1a7) and increasing the number of CLI records that have complete, accurate, and reliable information (Goal 1b2B).

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries and archives and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance of the existing landscape. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in context of the site's overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features, and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape's overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit. Unlike cultural landscape reports, the CLI does not provide management recommendations or

treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape.

Inventory Unit Description:

Fort Mahan, Reservation 475, is an approximately 38.25 acre park located in northeast Washington, DC, approximately 3.5 miles northeast of the United States Capitol and 3 miles south of Bladensburg, Maryland. Fort Mahan is a component landscape of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Fort Mahan is bordered on the west by Minnesota Avenue NE, on the south by Benning Road NE, on the east by 42nd Street NE, and on the north by Grant Street NE.

Fort Mahan is listed on the National Register as part of the 1974 Civil War Fort Sites nomination and the 1977 Defenses of Washington revision of the 1974 nomination. The National Register lists Fort Mahan's period of significance as 1861-1865. The fort is listed on the National Register for its military significance. This CLI argues that Fort Mahan is eligible under National Register Criteria A, C, and D, and recommends expanding the period of significance to include the years 1901 to 1941. Expanding the period of significance will recognize Fort Mahan's role in the development of parks and recreation in Washington, DC, as well as the Civilian Conservation Corps' involvement in landscape beautification and restoration projects at the site from 1933 to 1941.

Fort Mahan was one of the 68 forts built as a defensive ring around Washington at the start of the Civil War. It was sited and designed to protect the Benning Road Bridge over the Anacostia River, as well as the Navy Yard and the Federal Arsenal nearby. By December of 1861, the fort was authorized to host garrisoned soldiers, although the majority of them stayed in the tent city near the outerworks. Fort Mahan did not have permanent barracks until 1862, when a storm damaged the tents and necessitated the construction of sturdier housing for the fort's soldiers and laborers. By 1865, the buildings at Fort Mahan included a guardhouse, an officers' quarters, and several other frame and log structures within the earthworks.

Fort Mahan was modified several times over the war, as engineers addressed vulnerabilities in the views available from the hilltop earthworks. General Jubal Early's attack on Fort Stevens in July of 1864 instilled new urgency in the efforts to address Fort Mahan's design flaws, although the fort never saw direct action. Three bastionets were added to the irregularly-shaped fortification, and by the end of the war, the perimeter of the nine-sided fort was 354 yards long. In addition, a ring of abatis and 400 yards of rifle pits served as a buffer and a link to the other forts in the eastern sector of defenses. The threat of other Confederate attacks also prompted the removal of the remaining pre-war buildings on the crest of the hill, since they could potentially conceal snipers.

Perhaps because of—these alterations, Fort Mahan and the other defenses east of the Anacostia River were never subject to a Confederate attack. Their usefulness as a deterrent was clear, however, as General Early attested after the war. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the site reverted to Mary Manning and her family, who had owned the farm before the war. The fort itself continued to deteriorate as the Mannings rebuilt their structures on the site and repurposed the land for agricultural use again. Beginning in the last several years of the nineteenth century, small-scale mining and extraction processes evidently took place on the site, and continued into the early twentieth century under other (private) owners.

In 1901, the McMillan Plan spurred efforts to preserve Fort Mahan as part of a circle of green spaces around the city. This ring of parks would be established on the former sites of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, as part of the City Beautiful movement's re-envisioning of the District of Columbia. Fort Mahan was, by this time, surrounded by emerging suburban development, and the site itself featured several buildings (including the Smothers School for Negroes) around its periphery, which was defined by several new streets.

The District's efforts to acquire the land stalled until the late 1920s, when the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (NCPPC) began to purchase land on the Fort Mahan site. On June 22, 1928, the NCPPC acquired the largest portion of land for the park, and most of the rest of the land was purchased by 1933. (The park did not reach its current boundaries until the early 1940s.)

The creation of the park at Fort Mahan corresponded with the formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression, and in 1935, a CCC camp was established to serve Fort Mahan and other nearby park sites. The CCC projects at Fort Mahan, conducted between 1935 and 1941, included forest protection, the infill of borrow pits, channeling of a spring, grading of the hill, and the construction of a picnic area (likely on the cleared hilltop) and a quarter-mile gravel road on the east side of the site. Annual reports for the District of Columbia also indicate that there were two playing fields on the site by 1940—probably on the hilltop and perhaps on the grassy area closer to the roads.

Today, Fort Mahan is situated in the midst of a largely residential neighborhood of Benning in northeast DC. Its Civil War earthworks are largely demolished or deteriorated, although some fragments remain visible. The landscape retains most of the vegetation pattern and the features from its twentieth century conversion to a park, with a cleared hilltop, overgrown hillsides, and a grassy periphery near the streets.

This CLI finds that Fort Mahan retains integrity from the twentieth century period of significance (1901 to 1941), and retains limited integrity from the Civil War-era period of significance (1861 to 1865). Fort Mahan displays the seven aspects that determine integrity as defined by the National Register of Historic Places (location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association) through the retention of landscape characteristics and features.

Site Plan

Site Plan

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Fort Mahan
Property Level:	Component Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	600081
Parent Landscape:	600078

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	National Capital Parks-East - Fort Circle Park-East -NACE
Park Organization Code:	3561
Subunit/District Name Alpha Code:	National Capital Parks-East - Fort Circle Park-East - NACE
Park Administrative Unit:	National Capital Parks-East

Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

This Cultural Landscape Inventory was researched and written by Margaret (Molly) Lester, Research Associate, University of Pennsylvania. Primary and secondary source material from within the National Park Service and local repositories was utilized to complete the inventory and is listed in the bibliography. Research and editorial assistance was provided by Martha Temkin, Cultural Resource Specialist, National Capital Region, National Park Service; Maureen Joseph, Regional Historical Landscape Architect, National Capital Region, National Park Service; Julie Kutruff, Eastern District Manager, National Capital Parks-East, National Park Service; Randall F. Mason, Associate Professor and Chair, Historic Preservation, University of Pennsylvania; and Aaron Wunsch, Assistant Professor, Historic Preservation, University of Pennsylvania.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: Yes

Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: 08/02/2013

National Register Concurrence: Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

Date of Concurrence Determination: 07/30/2013

National Register Concurrence Narrative:

The State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia concurred with the findings of the Fort Mahan Cultural Landscape Inventory on 7/30/2013 in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It should be noted that the "National Register Eligibility Concurrence Date" refers to this Section 110 Concurrence, and not the date of listing on the National Register.

Concurrence Graphic Information:

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

June 27, 2013
Memorandum:

To: Regional Landscape Architect, National Capital Region

From: Superintendent, National Capital Parks - East

Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Fort Mahan Cultural Landscape Inventory

I, Gopaul Noojibail, Acting Superintendent of National Capital Parks - East, concur with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Fort Mahan, including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must be Preserved and Maintained

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory for Fort Mahan is hereby approved and accepted.

Superintendent, National Capital Parks – East — 8/2/13 Date

Concurrence memo signed by the Park Superintendent on 8/2/2013

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

Memorandum

To: Cultural Landscapes Inventory Coordinator, National Capital Region

From: State Historic Preservation Officer, District of Columbia

Subject: Statement of Concurrence, Fort Mahan Cultural Landscape CLI

I, David Maloney, District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer, concur with the findings of the Fort Mahan Cultural Landscape CLI as per Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, submitted on June 26, 2013.

David Maloney
District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer

30 July 2013
Date

Concurrence memo signed by the DC SHPO on 7/30/2013.

Geographic Information & Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

Fort Mahan, Reservation 475, is an approximately 38.25 acre park located in northeast Washington, DC, approximately 3.5 miles northeast of the United States Capitol and 3 miles south of Bladensburg, Maryland. Fort Mahan is bordered on the west by Minnesota Avenue NE, on the south by Benning Road NE, on the east by 42nd Street NE, and on the north by Grant Street NE.

State and County:

State: DC

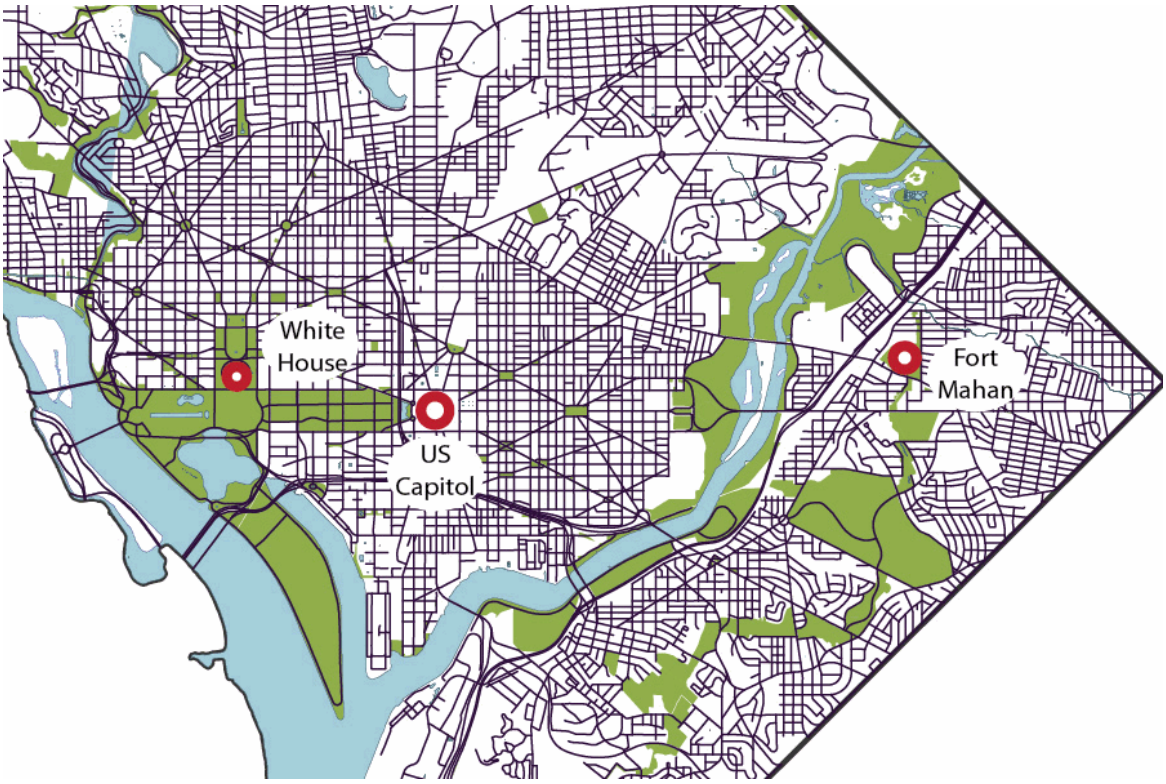
County: District of Columbia

Size (Acres): 38.25

Boundary UTMS:

Source:	USGS Map 1:100,000
Type of Point:	Point
Datum:	NAD 83
UTM Zone:	18
UTM Easting:	331,527
UTM Northing:	4,306,696
Source:	USGS Map 1:100,000
Type of Point:	Point
Datum:	NAD 83
UTM Zone:	18
UTM Easting:	331,536
UTM Northing:	4,307,118
Source:	USGS Map 1:100,000
Type of Point:	Point
Datum:	NAD 83
UTM Zone:	18
UTM Easting:	331,233
UTM Northing:	4,307,147
Source:	USGS Map 1:100,000
Type of Point:	Point
Datum:	NAD 83
UTM Zone:	18
UTM Easting:	331,064
UTM Northing:	4,306,951

Location Map:



Location Map: Fort Mahan is located approximately 3.5 miles northeast of the United States Capitol and three miles south of Bladensburg, Maryland.

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 07/30/2013

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

Fort Mahan is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its military significance and its association with the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The fort was one of sixty-eight defensive forts constructed during the war to protect the nation's capital. Fort Mahan is one of nineteen forts surrounding Washington acquired by the National Park Service and listed as a group on the National Register.

The Management Category Date is the date the CLI was first approved by the park superintendent.

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Public Access:

Type of Access: Unrestricted

Explanatory Narrative:

Park closes at dusk.

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Description:

The school site and playing fields north of the CLI project boundaries, as well as the land along Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road adjacent to the CLI's boundaries was originally part of Fort Mahan.

National Register Information

Existing National Register Status

National Register Landscape Documentation:

Entered Inadequately Documented

National Register Explanatory Narrative:

Fort Mahan was listed on the National Register as part of the 1974 Civil War Fort Sites nomination and the 1977 Defenses of Washington revision of the earlier nomination. Fort Mahan was listed for its military significance and the nomination provides 1861 to 1865 as its Period of Significance.

This CLI proposes expanding the Period of Significance to include the years 1901 to 1941, during which the site was acquired by the District of Columbia and converted to public parkland under the direction of the McMillan Plan. This CLI also proposes that the Fort Mahan cultural landscapeis eligible for the National Register under Criterion A and D. The Statement of Significance provides a detailed discussion of how the site meets the National Register criteria.

Though the National Register discusses the fort's role in the defense of Washington, it does not adequately document or describe Fort Mahan's landscape characteristics and features.

Existing NRIS Information:

Other Names:	780043399 Circle Forts
Primary Certification Date:	07/15/1974
Other Names:	78003439 CW Fort Sites
Primary Certification Date:	09/13/1978

National Register Eligibility

National Register Concurrence:	Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination
Contributing/Individual:	Contributing
National Register Classification:	Site
Significance Level:	National
Significance Criteria:	A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history
Significance Criteria:	C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values
Significance Criteria:	D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history

Period of Significance:

Time Period:	CE 1861 - 1865
Historic Context Theme:	Shaping the Political Landscape
Subtheme:	The Civil War
Facet:	Battles In The North And South
Time Period:	CE 1901 - 1941
Historic Context Theme:	Expressing Cultural Values
Subtheme:	Landscape Architecture
Facet:	The City Beautiful Movement

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category:	Military
Area of Significance Category:	Landscape Architecture

Statement of Significance:

Periods of Significance: 1861-1865, 1901-1941

Fort Mahan is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the 1974 Civil War Fort Sites nomination and the 1977 Defenses of Washington revision of the 1974 nomination.

The National Register lists the period of significance as 1861 to 1865. This CLI recommends that an additional period of significance be added to include the years 1901 to 1941. This time period includes the site's acquisition and conversion to public parkland under the direction of the McMillan Plan. It also encompasses the years that the Civilian Conservation Corps was involved in landscape beautification and restoration projects on the site.

This CLI proposes that the fort cultural landscape is eligible under three of the National Register's standards for evaluating the significance of properties. Under Criterion A: Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The Fort Mahan cultural landscape is associated with several significant events in American history, including the Civil War, the National Capital Planning Commission, the creation of Fort Drive, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. The cultural landscape is also significant under Criterion C: Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, as an example of the Civil War-era earthworks, as well as its significance in typifying the work completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the National Capital Region. Under Criterion D: Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history, the Fort Mahan cultural landscape has the

potential to yield information related to the site's pre-colonial settlement, as well as its Civil War construction and use, and the later mining extraction and suburban development on the site.

The Fort Mahan cultural landscape is eligible under Criterion A for its association with the Civil War. Fort Mahan was part of a ring of fortifications built around Washington at the start of the Civil War. It was among the first of the forts to be built east of the Anacostia River, with construction underway by October of 1861. Cognizant of earlier attacks on Washington City from the east side of the Anacostia River, Union Army engineers designed Fort Mahan to protect the Benning Road bridge, as well as the Navy Yard and the Federal Arsenal. They positioned the fort at the crest of Benning Hill, located on the north side of Benning Road just east of the Benning Road Bridge. From this vantage point, Union soldiers could protect the city's periphery from Confederate forces approaching from the Southern state of Virginia or the Southern sympathizer state of Maryland. While Fort Mahan itself did not see direct military action during the war, it—as well as the other Defenses of Washington—had a deterrent effect on the Confederate Army's plans. Whereas in the War of 1812, the British Army crossed the Benning Road bridge and gained access to the capital city, Fort Mahan's presence in the Civil War averted any similar attack from the South, dissuading any direct engagement with Confederate troops. The fort cultural landscape is therefore significant not only for its place in the overall system of the Defenses of Washington, but for its individual significance as a military stronghold.

Under Criterion A, the Fort Mahan cultural landscape is also eligible as part of the development of parks in Washington and for its significance in association with Fort Drive, the parkway designed to connect the Civil War forts around the city. With the publication of the McMillan Plan in 1902, the Senate Park Commission called for the acquisition of the former fort sites around DC and the creation of a public greenway that would link all of them together. The idea languished for two decades, but beginning in 1919, Fort Mahan and the other defenses of Washington drew renewed interest and efforts on the part of the newly-created National Capital Parks Commission (NCPC). Charged with creating and improving the city's park facilities, NCPC began to purchase land on and around the site of Fort Mahan in 1927, and continued to acquire tracts of land on the hill until the early 1930s, when the site opened fully to the public as a park.

Finally, the Fort Mahan cultural landscape is eligible under Criterion A based on its association with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) from 1935 to 1941. Although other forts (including Fort Stevens) saw more intensive reconstruction efforts under the CCC, Fort Mahan was characteristic of those sites where CCC was actively involved in forest protection, landscape restoration, and construction of picnic areas and public amenities. Under the supervision of the National Park Service, the CCC created a picnic grove on the site's hillside, and CCC laborers also filled a borrow pit, channeled a spring, cleared undergrowth and trash, and graded the hill site. These CCC initiatives had a physical impact on the site, including many interventions that can still be read in the landscape today.

Under Criterion D: Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. the Fort Mahan cultural landscape could potentially reveal archaeological information related to prehistory or related to history for its role in the Civil War. In the centuries before being settled by English colonists, the site of Fort Mahan and its surrounding area was settled by the Nacotchtank

people of the Algonquin Indian tribe. The site also has the potential to yield archaeological evidence of its industrialization and development after the Civil War, including the presence of a public school for African-American children on the southeastern corner of the site. This school, labeled as the "Smothers School for Negroes" is evident on early-twentieth century maps, was gone by the 1920's. While this primary school is no longer present today, it could present archaeological evidence related to early public education centers for African-American children. Archaeological investigation of the Fort Mahan may yield information on the site's pre-colonial history, as well as the fort's construction and occupation during the Civil War, the area's postwar black settlement, and the site's inhabitants and development since the war.

Chronology & Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type: Historic Site

Current and Historic Use/Function:

Primary Historic Function: Fortification-Other

Primary Current Use: Outdoor Recreation

Current and Historic Names:

Name	Type of Name
Fort Mahan	Both Current And Historic

Ethnographic Study Conducted: No Survey Conducted

Chronology:

Year	Event	Annotation
CE 1608	Explored	Captain John Smith is first English settler to explore and map the Potomac River and its Eastern Branch
CE 1612	Platted	Captain John Smith publishes General Historie of Virginia, which maps his explorations along the Potomac River and its Eastern Branch (later named the Anacostia River).
CE 1703	Colonized	The land grant of Beall`s Adventure to Colonel Ninian Beall includes hundreds of acres along the east side of the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River).

CE 1790	Established	Pierre L`Enfant lays out the new federal city of the District of Columbia, sited between the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, and includes the land east of the Anacostia as a buffer for military defense purposes.
	Purchased/Sold	Around the same time that the region was subsumed into the new District of Columbia (c. 1790), William Benning purchases 330 acres of Beall`s Adventure and builds a house soon after on the ridge northeast of the river (and northeast of the future site of Fort Mahan).
CE 1814	Military Operation	The British Army marches through Benning`s land and attacks the District of Columbia by crossing over the wooden bridge over the Anacostia River west of Benning`s property.
CE 1823	Purchased/Sold	William Benning purchases the extant wooden bridge that crosses the Anacostia River and connects his land on the east bank with the city on the west bank.
	Built	William Benning rebuilds the bridge across the Anacostia River.
CE 1850	Land Transfer	At some point in the decades before Boschke`s map was published in 1861, Wilford (sometimes listed as William) Manning inherits or purchases the Benning Hill site. Date listed is approximate.
CE 1861	Engineered	Three units of infantry and military engineers make a reconnaissance mission around the District of Columbia on May 23, 1861, to scout locations for fortifications around the capital city.
	Land Transfer	William Manning flees south at the start of the war, leaving the property in the care of his wife Mary. The Union Army requisitions Benning Hill from Mary Manning as a site for a fort in the Defenses of Washington.
	Moved	Mary Manning`s house is moved to the edge of property to allow her to continue to live on site as the fort is built.
	Built	Construction of Fort Mahan.
	Inhabited	By December 1861, Fort Mahan is authorized to host 531 infantry and 216 artillerymen in tents near the earthworks.

CE 1862	Built	Permanent barracks are constructed at Fort Mahan after a February 1862 storm knocked down most of the tents along the eastern line of forts.
CE 1862 - 1863	Built	Construction of bastionets at fort.
CE 1864	Expanded	Repair and enlargement of rifle pits at fort.
	Built	Construction of new battery at fort.
	Altered	Some woods and orchards are felled in the neighborhood of Fort Mahan.
	Demolished	The house, barns, and other buildings near the counterscarp at Fort Mahan are removed.
	Established	The daughter of an officer in the 9th New York Heavy Artillery (garrisoned at the fort from March to May of 1864) establishes a school for the fort`s soldiers, which was held in the mess hall.
	Built	A wood-frame building is constructed on the site of Fort Mahan. This building is converted to use as the Smothers School building in the decade after the war.
CE 1865	Planted	Sodding of the parapet slopes at the fort.
	Military Operation	The Union Army announces the immediate dismantling of all but eleven forts in the Defenses of Washington. The army retains control of Fort Mahan for several more months.
	Abandoned	Army announces the closure of Fort Mahan.
	Purchased/Sold	The abatis around the fort are purchased by Mary M. Manning.
CE 1865 - 1901	Eroded	Fort Mahan deteriorates on Benning Hill.

CE 1870	Built	A building is constructed on the site at the corner of Benning and Eastern Branch Roads c. 1870. This shop was likely overseen by David May, Mary Manning`s brother, who is listed in the 1870 United States Census as a merchant.
CE 1874	Expanded	The Smothers School building is either expanded or replaced with another wood frame structure.
CE 1880	Demolished	Remaining Civil War-era structures on the site are demolished c. 1880.
CE 1888 - 1910	Mined	Area maps indicate new use of the hillsides to the east and west of the outerworks for mining purposes. Start and end dates are approximate, based on maps and newspaper accounts.
CE 1886	Built	Smothers School annex is constructed on southeast corner of the site, directly behind the original Smothers School building.
CE 1900	Land Transfer	Mary Manning dies c. 1900, and her land is transferred to her oldest daughter, Helen Manning Havenner.
CE 1901	Built	A house is constructed on the site of the old fort c. 1901. The former powder magazine is used as a cellar.
	Designed	The McMillan Plan calls for the design of a new Fort Drive connecting all the former fort sites in a green parkway around the city.
CE 1903 - 1913	Demolished	The Havenner house is demolished on the site sometime between 1903 and 1913, according to maps of the area.
CE 1909	Purchased/Sold	Joseph Swift purchases 116 acres of land in the area c. 1909, including the site of Fort Mahan.
CE 1923	Demolished	Smothers School demolished c. 1923 when a new school is constructed at 44th Street NE and Benning Road.
CE 1926 - 1940	Purchased/Sold	The National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (NCPPC) purchases land for Fort Mahan Park (1926 to c. 1940), with most land acquired between 1926 and 1933. The largest single acquisition was completed on June 22,1928.

CE 1930	Established	President Herbert Hoover signs the Capper-Cramton Act on May 29, which authorizes appropriations for an expanded parkway to be known as George Washington Memorial Parkway. This act led to the implementation of the 1901-1902 McMillan Plan.
CE 1933	Abandoned	The NCPPC negotiates with the DC Commissioners c. 1933 for the closure (and possible removal) of the roads through the new park at Fort Mahan.
CE 1935	Established	A Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp is established at the National Arboretum, with laborers tasked with projects at Fort Mahan and other public sites in the area.
CE 1935 - 1940	Built	CCC laborers complete several projects on the site, including work in forest protection and filling borrow pits from other projects. CCC employees also construct an access road and a picnic area on the site.
CE 1940	Established	A football field and a baseball diamond are established at Fort Mahan c. 1940, likely on the site of the CCC picnic area.
CE 1951	Established	The District of Columbia`s Board of Education authorizes the construction of Carter G. Woodson Junior High School on the parcel of land adjacent to the park site on its northwest edge.
CE 1956	Built	Carter G. Woodson Junior High School building is completed.
CE 1968 - 1971	Built	In response to the 1968 publication of the Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, a hiker-biker trail is established through the eastern section of fort parks, including Forts Mahan, Chaplin, Dupont, Davis, and Stanton. It is designated a national recreation trail in 1971.

Physical History:

1612-1790

PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY AND SETTLEMENT (1612-1790)

Native Americans lived, hunted, and fished on the banks of the Anacostia River and the future site of Fort Mahan for 3,000 years before Captain John Smith included the region on his 1612 map and in his "General Historie of Virginia" (Burr 1920: 167). Smith's accounts of his exploratory voyages detail his encounters with the Nacotchtank people, who were part of the Algonquin Indian tribe, and his travels up the Potomac River and its Eastern Branch (later named the Anacostia River) on June 16, 1608 (Hutchinson 1977: 3). Both the tribe's name and that of the "Anacostia" River are derivations of the Indian word Anaquashatanik, which means "a town of traders"—a reference to the Nacotchtanks' settled, agricultural lifestyle on the riverbanks. The riverbanks were marshy, allowing for crops of wild rice and other edible plants, while the nearby slopes and ridges—culminating in the ring of hills where Fort Mahan and the other Defenses of Washington were placed—were forested habitats for abundant game (Lapp 2006: 1). As they had for several centuries before John Smith's travels through the region, the Nacotchtanks farmed this fertile land east of the Anacostia and lived in houses built of branches and animal skins. They quickly became a favored trading village for the English Settlers of Virginia, appearing on Smith's oldest map, which was published in 1612 and became the basis for many later navigational charts of the Anacostia River and the Chesapeake Bay (Burr 1920: 167).

The name of the tribe, and of their river and land along the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, slowly morphed in the early decades of the seventeenth century, from Nacotchtank to "Nacostines" and then "Anacostines," as a priest called them in his reports to Rome in 1634. By the middle of the seventeenth century, English settlers used the word "Anacostia" to refer to both the Eastern Branch of the Potomac River, and to the region east of the river. The Nacotchtank people, meanwhile, were gone from the area by the later decades of the century, having died out (due to disease and warfare) or migrated to the west and north, leaving their villages on the riverbanks to the colonists who soon supplanted their settlements east of the Anacostia (Hutchinson 1977: 4).

The land around Fort Mahan, including the hill on which the fort was later built, was eventually conveyed to English settlers as part of a 1632 land grant from King Charles I to George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, and then to Calvert's oldest son, Cecil, after George Calvert's death. The English continued to expand their settlements at the junction of the Potomac River and its Eastern Branch (the Anacostia River), and around 1700, the land along the eastern bank of the Anacostia, encompassing the hill and site of Fort Mahan, was issued to Ninian Beall as part of the tracts known as "Fife" and "Beall's Adventure" (Deanwood History Committee 2008: 7).

Beall was a landmark figure in the establishment of the colony of Maryland and later, his property (deeded to a long line of his descendants) figured prominently in the founding of Prince George's County and the concession of land for the new District of Columbia. Born c. 1625 in

Scotland, he fought with the Scottish Royalists against Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar, Scotland (Benedetto, Donovan, and Du Vall 2003: 30). When Cromwell's forces conquered the Royalists in 1652, thousands of the defeated Scots were imprisoned or deported to the West Indies and America. Among the captured was Colonel Ninian Beall, who was sentenced to indentured servitude for Richard Hall in the Province of Maryland (Reno 2008: 98-9). After his release in 1658—the same year that Cromwell died and Charles II was restored to the throne—Beall was named commander of the colonial forces in Maryland and began to purchase large swaths of land in the province, including his purchase in 1703 of the land around Fort Mahan immediately east of the Anacostia River (Benedetto, Donovan, and Du Vall 2003: 30; Deanwood History Committee 2008: 7). By the time of his death in 1717, Beall was a famous figure in Maryland, renowned for his public offices and his battles with Indian tribes (Lapp 2006: 2). He had also amassed over 25,000 acres along the Potomac River, including the future sites of Georgetown on the west side of the Anacostia River, and Fort Mahan on the east side. Beall was both a property owner and a farmer, and Fort Mahan's site and the surrounding landscape was likely used for crops and livestock throughout the eighteenth century (Deanwood History Committee 2008: 7).

During these same decades, the Eastern Branch Road was established between the towns of Bladensburg (northeast of Fort Mahan) and Alexandria (southwest of the fort site). When the boundaries of Maryland and Virginia were established at the end of the eighteenth century, this road was the link (through the District of Columbia) between Washington, DC's neighboring states. For much of the 1700s, however, the road was simply a rutted backwoods path between farms, running north-south parallel to the Eastern Branch of the Potomac River (from which it took its name) along the western edge of Fort Mahan's hilltop site (Lapp 2006: 2). (It followed the same approximate route of the Anacostia Freeway/295 today.)

1790-1830

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEDERAL CITY (1790-1830)
Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tract of "Beall's Adventure" along the Anacostia passed through various descendants of Beall before being parceled into smaller tracts and sold to other speculators. When Pierre L'Enfant laid out a design for the new capital city in 1790, the area east of the river, including the site of Fort Mahan, was ceded by the state of Maryland and included within the boundaries of the District of Columbia (Beauchamp, rev. Williams 2006). Foreshadowing the construction of the forts 70 years later, the decision to include the land around Fort Mahan and east of the Anacostia River within the boundaries was one of military deterrence. Then-Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson recommended the areas across each river be annexed to serve as a buffer for the city in the event of an attack on the new capital (Cantwell 1973-1974: 334).

By this time, the Anacostia River (still often referred to as the "Eastern Branch") was a navigable commercial waterway for the District of Columbia and the mid-Atlantic states, although sediment settling and erosion of the riverbanks had calmed the river's flow from earlier centuries (Webb and Vooldridge 1892: 91). The land adjacent and east of the river's banks was left largely untouched in the years after the founding of the capital, as land-planning efforts for the federal city concentrated on the plateau between the Potomac and Anacostia

Rivers (Lapp 2006: 3). The area around Fort Mahan therefore continued as agricultural land, remaining largely farmed and forested into the nineteenth century.

Around the same time that the region was subsumed into the new Federal City, farmer and slaveowner William Benning purchased 330 acres of Beall's Adventure in the area around Fort Mahan. He built a house soon after on a ridge northeast of the river (and northeast of the project area), and then in 1823, he bought and rebuilt a wooden bridge that traversed the Anacostia River and offered access to the rest of the District of Columbia. That bridge, and the road that leads to it on the east side of the river, retains Benning's name to this day, although Benning's nephew sold the farm after his uncle's death. Both the bridge and the road that took Benning's name served as an important route out of the capital city to the surrounding states (Overbeck and Chatmon 2010: 259).

1812-1860

PRE-CIVIL WAR HISTORY (1812-1860)

Even as the District of Columbia grew and landowners such as Benning established settlements and towns nearby, the capital and the country remained politically fragile. The advent of the nineteenth century brought with it new threats from old enemies, as the menace of war with England never receded completely. Within just twenty years of the establishment of the capital, the deliberate openness and sense of ease in L'Enfant's plan became the city's liability during the War of 1812. Unprotected by any peripheral defenses, and left exposed by a country that thought the need for such protection had passed, the District quickly fell into the hands of the British Army.

As the British advanced on the city from the northeast in 1814, the United States Navy burned a bridge downstream (south of Benning Road) in an effort to thwart an attack after the Battle of Bladensburg. The British were not deterred, however, merely moving upstream to cross the river at the Benning Road Bridge (Overbeck and Chatmon 2010: 259). As Washington burned in August of 1814, remnants of buildings and urban fabric that were once proud symbols of the new republic stood as reminders of the destruction caused by an invading imperial army, and the Benning Road Bridge was a sharp reminder of the capital's vulnerable periphery.

1861-1861

FORTIFICATION OF THE FEDERAL CITY (1861)

When war loomed again nearly fifty years later, the federal government was all too conscious of Washington's defenseless borders. As civil war approached, the atmosphere in Washington was one of apprehension and uncertainty. John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in 1859 had heightened tensions in the border states, as Southern states feared a slave insurrection and Northern states—as well as the federal capital—rushed to strengthen their militias. (Before 1860, most of the regular army was posted further west, where conflicts with the Native Americans demanded the greatest military concentration.) (Billings 1960/1962: 123-4) The looming threat was so great that President Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, was

conducted under military guard. Seven states had already seceded from the Union by this time, and Confederates were already positioned across the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia (one of the secessionist states), preparing for an attack on the capital (Miller 1976: 3).

Unlike the War of 1812, the threat to the capital this time was internal, rather than external, and the Union leaders wanted to reinforce Washington, DC, as both a symbolic and strategic center for the nation. Military officers had learned from the combat losses of 1812, and city officials wished to avoid the demoralizing psychological damage of that war as well. Washington, DC could no longer go unprotected, and Union leaders sought to capitalize on its open space for a tactical, and not simply a ceremonial, purpose (McCormick 1967: 3).

The District's geographic location in the middle of the Eastern Seaboard was an asset in the early years of the Republic. The city was carved out of the territory of its neighboring states, establishing the federal capital as the geographic and governmental center of the new nation. In the wake of the Battle of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, however, Washington, DC's position became a liability. The federal city was surrounded by the southern state of Virginia (which seceded on April 17 of that year) and the southern sympathizer state of Maryland, with just Fort Washington (twelve miles south of the city) as protection. Fort Washington had been built between 1814 and 1824 to replace Fort Warburton. This earlier fort, constructed in 1808, had not prevented the British Navy from sailing up the Potomac and taking control of the city of Alexandria. While initially and effective replacement for Warburton, by the mid- 19th century Fort Washington was outdated. It was a distant and ineffective buttress for the federal city, with few armaments and even fewer troops stationed there. Designed to protect more against naval attacks than land armies, it was even more isolated and precariously located than the rest of the District of Columbia. In its position along the Potomac River, the fort was on the border with Maryland and was separated by less than a mile of water from Virginia (McClure 1957: 1). It could do little to protect the city from attacks over land (Cooling 1971/1972: 315).

As of January 1861, the only regular troops stationed near Washington were a few hundred Marines and enlisted men stationed at the Washington Arsenal at the branch of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers (Miller 1976: 3). When President Lincoln called for volunteer soldiers on April 15, 1861, for military offensives, his Union commanders quickly began to put in place a system of military defenses to protect the Union capital from surrounding threats (McCormick 1967: 2). On May 23, 1861, three infantry units accompanied military engineers on a reconnaissance mission around the capital city as they scouted locations for a ring of fortifications around the capital city (Miller 1976: 4).

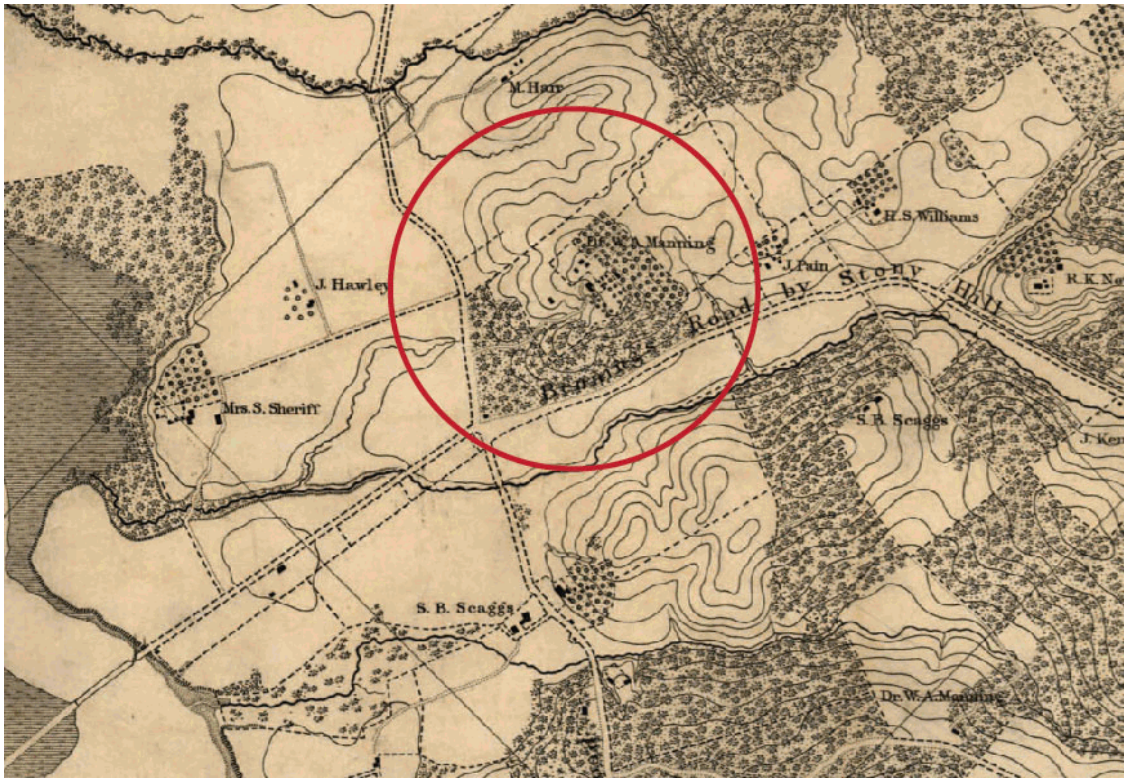
The story of Fort Mahan's own antebellum landowners brings these tenuous boundaries into sharp relief. As part of Beall's Adventure, the site had a long history of links with both the colony, and then state, of Maryland and with the District of Columbia. Its proximity to the federal capital and the Southern sympathizing state was evident in the conflicting loyalties of its landowners as the war broke out.

By 1861, local surveyors' maps ascribed the land on the ridge along Benning Road, including the hill that would soon host Fort Mahan, to Dr. W. (Wilford, sometimes named as William) A.

Manning. The son of a slaveowner (who was listed in newspaper accounts as "Major Manning"), Dr. Manning lived on the estate until the outbreak of war in 1861. After the first shots on Fort Sumter and the declaration of Secession, Dr. Manning fled south, leaving his wife Mary behind on their plantation (The Washington Herald [TWH], March 26, 1911). Mary Manning, who was herself a native of Vermont, remained on the land (which was at times referred to as "Prospect Hill" or "Sheridan Heights" in various accounts). That same year, as war broke out and the Union Army scouted positions for its planned ring of forts around the city, Manning also gave birth to a daughter (Ninth Census of the United States 1870: 725B).

At this time, the land around Fort Mahan was largely agricultural, with few roads separating the property of landowners east of the Anacostia River. The 1861 Boschke map of the area (which was based on surveys conducted from 1856 to 1859) documents the presence of "Benning Road by Stony Branch" running east-west from the capital, over the Anacostia River via the Benning Bridge, and along the southern border of the Mannings' property before turning south toward Prince George's County, Maryland (Boschke 1861). The main north-south road on the east banks of the Anacostia River at this time was the old Eastern Branch Road, which had been improved and expanded by this time beyond the rutted path of the early eighteenth century. At the intersection of these two main thoroughfares east of the Anacostia was the hill where Fort Mahan was built soon after the map was published.

Both the crest of the hill and its northern side were clear-cut in the years before the war, with a plot of agricultural crops on the eastern slopes of the hill. In contrast, the western and southern sides of the ridge—sloping down towards the intersection of Benning and Eastern Branch Roads at the southwestern corner of the Manning property—were covered with trees and low growth. A few structures were located on the Mannings' acreage at this time, including the main house at the crest of the hill and several smaller buildings nearby to the north. A small plot of plantings directly south of the house, was likely an orchard or garden. The buildings on the hilltop were accessed by a small road from Eastern Branch Road that was cut into a swale on the western side of the mount. Another structure was located on the west side of the hill, somewhat removed from the rest of the buildings on the site, and served perhaps as a barn or other storage structure for the farm.



1861: Boschke map of the District of Columbia, with future hilltop site of Fort Mahan highlighted. (LoC, Geography and Map Division)

1861-1865

CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)

The topography and views of the Manning farm held clear strategic advantages as war approached, and the Union Army's military officials quickly identified Prospect Hill as an ideal fortification site to defend Benning Bridge. In general, the defenses east of the Anacostia River were troublesome ones for the Union Army's engineers, since the peripheral ridge east of the city was very narrow and often took a convoluted course. The hill that later encompassed Fort Mahan, meanwhile, was an isolated peak (standing 160 feet above sea level) in the ridge—necessary to the defense of the city, but difficult to position and to link with the other forts. Nevertheless, the defenses of the Eastern Branch were critical—perhaps none more so than Fort Mahan—since they had clear views and aim toward military strongholds including the Benning Bridge, the Federal Arsenal, and the Navy Yard. The Anacostia River was an inadequate buffer for the city's eastern edge, therefore, since an unguarded ridge would offer a prime post for the Confederate troops to fire on, and eventually attack, the capital (McCormick 1967: 24-5).

The engineers' plan for the ring of defenses around Washington, including Fort Mahan,

reversed the city's siting from one of low-lying vulnerability to one of buffered impregnability. Where Washington had been defenseless and exposed in the War of 1812, its army officers now looked to capitalize on the ring of hills around the city, which formed a strategically-elevated shield several hundred feet above the rest of the city. (Indeed, some historians refer to the Defenses of Washington as the city's shield during the war, and the Army of the Potomac as its sword.) (Cooling and Owen 2010: 1) Once cleared of trees and undergrowth according to the engineers' plans, these ridges would host a circle of fortifications—linked by rifle trenches—that could command views not only to other neighboring defenses and the city, but to any military threats that might approach from Maryland, Virginia, or the river.

Working swiftly in the early months of 1861, the Army bought, seized, and confiscated the agricultural land for 68 military posts and battlements around the edge of the city. By the end of 1861, a 37-mile ring of battlements, trenches, rifle pits, and military roads encircled the capital on land that was, until recently, private farmland (McClure 1957: 1). (The transformations in the landscape were executed so quickly that the army's map of the line of defenses, published late in 1861, simply superimposed the designs for the fortifications on the Boschke map, printed just a few months earlier, with no effort to map the new topographical patterns of the now fully-cleared ridges.) The move was an emphatic signal to both the area landowners and the South's commanders that federal power would supersede individuals' property rights in the fight to protect and preserve the Union.

Acutely aware of the damage that the British Army had inflicted on the city in their march across the Benning Bridge, the Army confiscated the Mannings' land early in the process of fortifying the city's periphery. General John Gross Barnard noted the topographical advantages of the Manning farm and Fort Mahan in his Report on the Defenses of Washington: "Fort Mahan may be considered an advanced tête-de-pont [a military work on the enemy's side of a bridge] to Benning's Bridge, and commands the valley of the Eastern Branch as far as Bladensburg, as well as the immediate approaches to the bridge. It is situated upon an isolated hill...As long as this work is held, an enemy cannot bring artillery to bear upon the bridge nor move in force along the road which leads from Bladensburg to the Navy Yard Bridge. Between this road and that leading along the summit of the highlands southeast of the Anacostia, the ground is very much cut up, at right angles to the direction of the roads, by wooded ravines. Hence this work exercises a powerful influence in preventing an enemy, coming from the direction of Bladensburg, from reaching the margins of the Anacostia opposite Washington" (Barnard 1871: 28). With its view towards the northwest and its protective position on the eastern edge of the city, Fort Mahan was a critical stronghold in the arc of forts east of the Anacostia River.

Mary Manning was not entirely cooperative with the Union Army's authority, challenging its requisition of her land for the construction of the fort. Although her husband had fled south by this point, Mary refused to leave the land altogether. Instead, she demanded that the officers move her house to the edge of the property, where she remained for the duration of the war, despite the presence of the fort nearby (The Eastern Star [TES], November 7, 1891). This house was likely relocated northeast of the fort's outerworks, where the 1878 G. M. Hopkins

map shows a structure on the hillside, removed from the other buildings on the site but ascribed specifically to Mary Manning (Hopkins 1878).

Most of the forts in the defenses of Washington were named for the troops that constructed them, or for military strategists and officers in the Union Army. Fort Mahan was named for Dennis Hart Mahan, a professor at West Point Military Academy whose writings were foundational texts for the Union Army's tactics and strategy (http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/historyculture/dennis-hart-mahan.htm; Dennis Hart Mahan, National Park Service). It was his 1836 Complete Treatise on Field Fortification, a set of detailed specifications for fort sites, that served as the basis for the design of the defenses of Washington.

The design for Fort Mahan called for an irregularly-shaped nine-sided perimeter of 354 yards around the hill. It continued to be modified and altered over the course of the war, as the army's engineers addressed visibility issues with the fort's steep ridge and its view of the approaching roads. Almost immediately after the fort's completion in December 1861, army officials raised issues with the fort's position on the actual crest (the highest point, which may or may not have the best visibility), rather than the military crest (the point on the hill with the broadest views), of the hill. This misplacement of the fort, and the absence of flanks, obstructed views of some of the roads that the fort was designed to protect (Barnard 1871: 56). To mitigate the problem, the fort's garrisoned soldiers and laborers dug an additional 400 yards of rifle pits. These bastionets on three angles of the western exterior slopes of the ditches—towards Eastern Branch Road and the Anacostia—allowed for reverse and covering fire on the slopes below Fort Mahan (Cooling and Owen 2010: 212).

By December of 1861, Fort Mahan was authorized to host 531 infantry and 216 artillerymen, although its "tent city" rarely housed that many soldiers and laborers. Mahan did not have permanent barracks until a storm in February 1862 knocked down the tents along the eastern line of forts and required the construction of more durable housing at Fort Mahan and other sites (Cooling and Owen 2010: 212). By the end of the war, the fort's structures included a guardhouse, an officers' quarters and about twelve other frame and log edifices, all located within the earthworks. For access to the fort, the site's engineers retained the road noted on the 1861 Boschke map, which sloped up the hillside on the western side of Mary Manning's property.

The initial improvements to Mahan's design were not sufficient, and the fort required constant maintenance and refinements throughout the war. This perpetual need for labor at the site could not always be met by the soldiers garrisoned there and by the fall of 1863, the fort's commanding officers had requested additional men. On September 3, 1863, the commander of the Third Brigade appealed to Lt. Col. Haskin to inform Brig. Gen. J. G. Barnard that he could not meet the request for 300 more men at the site, saying that the existing garrisons could not accommodate the increase in numbers. The next year, Brigadier General G.A. DeRussy issued a similar response to requests for laborers, writing that he was "unable to furnish the detail of 15 carpenters as requested" (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part I, Chapter IV).

By this time, the alterations to Fort Mahan were regarded as crucial, necessitated not just by military theory and strategy but by the actual threat introduced by General Jubal Early's July 1864 attack on Fort Stevens. In that battle, Gen. Early led a raid into Maryland and fired on Fort Stevens—and on President Abraham Lincoln, who was at the fort during the battle—before being rebuffed by the Union Army and their defenses (Kaufmann and Kaufmann 2004: 285).

The threat of similar attacks prompted the Army to remove any superfluous structures at fort sites that could conceal sharpshooters or obstruct views of approaching soldiers. A memorandum issued to Colonel Haskins in June 1863 noted the potential threat posed by structures on the site at Fort Mahan, declaring that "a few days' notice ought to be given, and the buildings removed." A year later, and just a week after Early's attack on Fort Stevens, the Mannings' house, barns, and other buildings near the counterscarp were demolished (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part I, Chapter VI). (Mary Manning's claim of damages from the Union Army in 1864 was likely in response to this loss of property. It is not clear whether the buildings removed from the fort included the house that Manning lived in on the edge of the property.) (Cooling and Owen 2010: 213) That same year, some woods and orchards near the site were felled, and a new battery was constructed for the fort (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part I Appendix F). In addition, a system of abatis supplemented the fort's bastionets and rifle trenches, and by the later years of the war, Barnard noted that "the road and space between fort and river were pretty well barred to hostile columns" (Barnard 1871: 56-7). These modifications bolstered the strategic position of Fort Mahan, maintaining its importance as one of the most militarily significant defenses east of the Anacostia.

Once again, demands for maintenance and improvements at the fort were too much for the garrisoned troops to accomplish. An advertisement placed in newspapers on October 20, 1864, announced that 100 laborers, "and a few carpenters and choppers" were "wanted immediately" for the forts across the Eastern Branch (The Daily National Republican [TDNR], October 22, 1864). The notice called for workhands to report to Mr. John Collins, the superintendent at Camp Franklin—a labor camp about a quarter-mile from Fort Mahan (Cooling and Owen 2010: 213).

The presence of so many soldiers and laborers spurred certain leisure activities at Fort Mahan during the long periods of time when the men had little to do besides maintaining the forts. At least one local resident was arrested for selling liquor to the garrison at Fort Mahan, while the daughter of one officer in the 9th New York Heavy Artillery (garrisoned at the fort from March to May of 1864) organized a school for the fort's soldiers, who each paid 50 cents for their lessons (Cooling and Owen 2010: 212-3). These lessons were possibly hosted in a small one-story structure on the southeastern corner of the site (at the bottom of the hill): a later report of the District of Columbia Board of Education noted the use of a one-story, two-room frame building (measuring 25' by 50') that was built on the site in 1864 (Board of Education of the District of Columbia 1911: 258-9).

Although it precipitated fear of another attack on Washington, General Early's raid on Fort Stevens was the last real threat to the capital city before the end of the war in 1865. Few of the

fortifications had seen real combat, but the Defenses of Washington had a clear deterrent effect throughout the war. As a newspaper article noted in 1884:

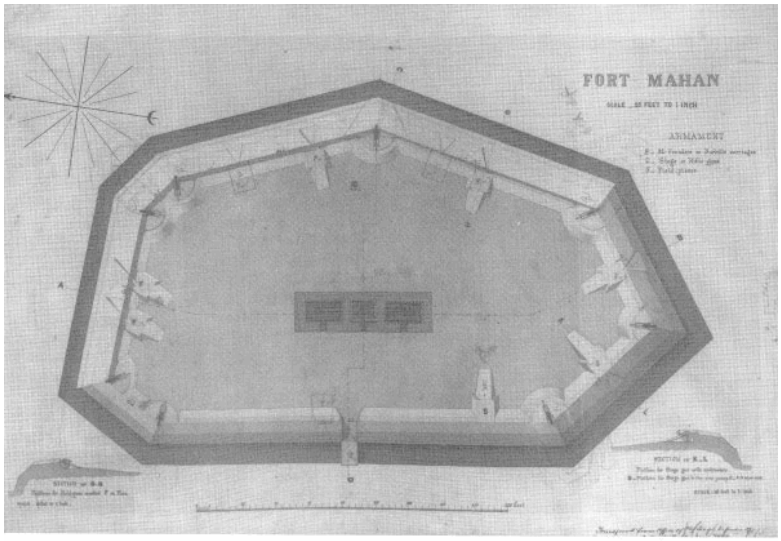
"That the garrison of Washington was never called upon to withstand a siege is no argument against the precautions taken to insure the possession of the National Capital against any possible contingency, and that, through the darkest hours of the struggle for existence, the National Government could remain in security within sight of the debatable ground trodden by hostile soldiers is no slight testimonial to the wisdom that planned and the engineering skill that executed this important work." (The National Tribune [TNT], August 14, 1884).

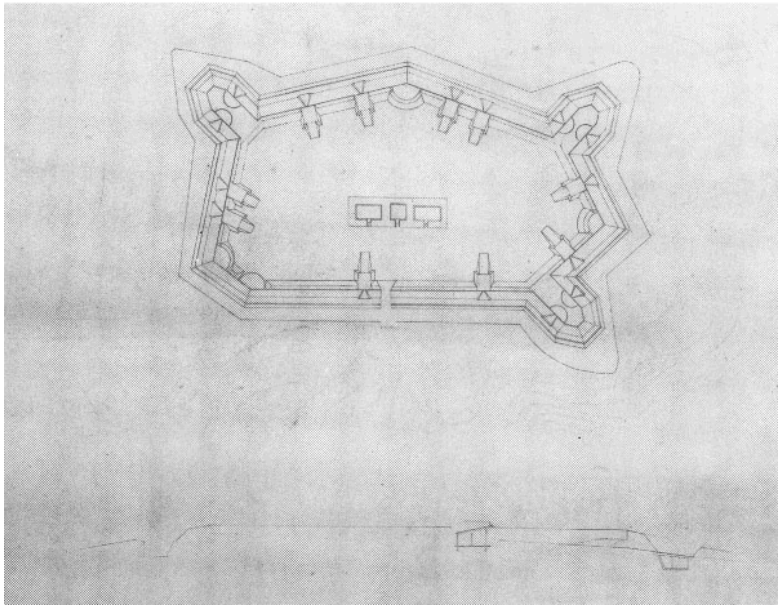
For four years, the ring of hills around the District of Columbia served as a topographical, psychological, strategic, and militaristic buffer to nearly all Confederate attacks on the capital.

By the time of Lee's surrender in April 1865, the defenses' circumferential system comprised 68 enclosed forts (with perimeters totaling 13 miles); 93 unarmed batteries; 1,421 gun emplacements; 20 miles of rifle trenches; and 30 miles of military roads—all constructed in just four years (Cooling 1971/1972: 330-2). Nearly as quickly as they had been erected, however, they were dismantled or abandoned, and their sites were sold or ceded to their original owners. The Union Army did retain eleven sites, including Mahan, as a precautionary military measure, while all other forts, batteries, and block-houses were dismantled immediately upon the issuance of an order from the Headquarters of the Department of Washington on June 23, 1865 (TDNR, June 24, 1865).

This did not stop Mary Manning, however, from beginning to stake her claim on her land again (in the absence of her husband, who apparently never returned after the war) (TWH, March 26, 1911). Having claimed and won damages from the Army in 1864, she purchased the abatis around the fort for $31.00 at auction in 1865 (Cooling and Owen 2010: 213). This was perhaps the same auction that announced in local newspapers the November 25, 1865, sale of "Fourteen Frame and Log Buildings [at Fort Mahan]; also, the Timber, Lumber, &c., inside Fort, and the Abattis [sic] around it" (TDNR, November 29, 1865).

Modified 1865 map of the Defenses of Washington, distinguished by their current ownership and management status. (National Park Service)





Engineer drawings of Fort Mahan: original (top) and reshaped (bottom) (National Archives, as printed in Mr. Lincoln's Forts)

Comparison of the 1861 Boschke map (left) with the 1861 Lines of Defense map (right), developed by Major General John G. Barnar. (Boschke LoC; Lines of Defense, Historic Map Works Rare Historic Maps Collection)

1865-1875

SETTLEMENT AROUND THE FORT (1865-1875)

In the years during and after the war, the Civil War Defenses of Washington had not only a strategic and symbolic role in the Union's victory and survival, but also a more tangible impact on the growth and settlement of the city and its landscape. The abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia in 1862—predating Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation—prompted a mass migration of slaves to the city (McFadden-Resper and Williams 2005: 4). By 1863, thousands of former slaves had settled in the District, and by the war's end, the city's black population had nearly doubled from 18,000 in 1860 to 31,500 in 1865 (Hutchinson 1977: 69-70). This influx of escaped slaves from the South often gravitated toward the land around the forts, which they saw as protection for both the capital city and for themselves. On the run from enslavement and their former masters, many of them sought refuge near the soldiers' encampments, which at times provoked hostility with the white soldiers.

In response to the mounting tensions around the forts between the escaped slaves and the city's Union troops (and neighboring residents), a new federal policy in August of 1861

classified the freed slaves as “contraband” of the war. Under the “contraband” law, escaped slaves could earn their official emancipation if they worked for the Union army—including helping to construct and maintain the city’s fortifications (http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/historyculture/living-contraband-former-slaves-in-the-capital-during-and-after-the-civil-war.htm; Living Contraband, National Park Service). Their contributions significant to the construction, maintenance, and success of the capital’s defense system.

Fort Mahan was likely built and repaired in part by contraband hands, who responded to advertisements such as the 1864 posting for help “wanted immediately” (TDNR, October 22, 1864). In addition to finding employment at the fort, they also benefited from the clear-cutting of the landscape around Fort Mahan (and the other defenses), since the rampant tree removal offered an abundant supply of building materials for their new settlements, including the area immediately north of the fort.

Just as they sometimes clashed with the forts’ garrisoned soldiers, however, contraband men and women were not always well received by local residents. In the church adjacent to Fort Mahan (to the south across Benning Road, on the property of Selby Scaggs), they were locked out of their church building by Scaggs, who was himself a white minister and a slaveowner before the war. In response, the freedmen and women constructed a church to the north of the fort on the land of John Dean, which had been cleared to offer an unobstructed view from Fort Mahan (Overbeck and Chatmon 2010: 261).

The contraband settlements laid the foundations for subsequent African American neighborhoods in the city, including the Deanwood and Benning neighborhoods around Fort Mahan. These settlement patterns were evident in the demographics of the city’s development, leaving an imprint of the forts’ physical forms as well as their social impact in Washington. At Fort Mahan, the imprint of contraband settlement was evident for decades after the fort’s construction, in the presence of institutions such as the Smothers Elementary School for Negroes and the day camps for African-American children that operated on the fort site in the twentieth century.

1875-1890

LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1875-1890)

By 1878, Mary Manning’s name still appeared on area maps as the owner of the land north of Bennings Road on the east side of the Anacostia River (Hopkins 1878). Maps in 1880 and 1884 listed her as well, with an adjacent parcel assigned to a John Manning by 1884 (Boschke 1880). (It is unclear what relation John Manning was to Mary. He was likely her son, but census records have limited information on the residents in this area of the District of Columbia.)

Some of these late-nineteenth century maps included the locations—or even the outlines—of the fort, which remained evident on the site even as the fort’s topographical imprint began to deteriorate in the last few decades of the century. The site itself was still entirely clear-cut into the 1880s, with no trees or vegetation represented on the crest or slopes of the hill (Lydecker and Greene 1884). The 1878 and 1879 G. M. Hopkins maps indicate that several buildings still

stood on the hilltop, indicating that some of the fort's wartime structures likely remained in place for several years after the war. Subsequent maps (in 1888 and 1895) delineate the fort on the hilltop, charting the presence of the outerworks without specifying whether or not any structures remained within the fort itself.

By 1878, G. M. Hopkins and Company's map of the area around Fort Mahan plotted the presence of new structures on the site, which joined the existing building on the western slope of the old fort. The new buildings, constructed in the twenty years after the war, included two structures along the western edge bordering Eastern Branch Road (now Anacostia Road), and two along the southern perimeter of the site, bordering Benning Road. One of these latter buildings was the Smothers School which, given its construction in 1864, perhaps used the same building as the school that the army officer's daughter had established during the war to educate Fort Mahan's soldiers.

The Smothers School building was constructed in 1864, and (according to a 1911 report to the District of Columbia's Board of Education) was either replaced or added to in 1874. The school was small, measuring just 25 feet by 50 feet, with one room used for cooking and carpentry and the other used as a classroom (Board of Education of the District of Columbia 1911: 258-9). The building hosted two teachers and students in grades 4 through 8. When its two-room annex was constructed in 1886, it also served grades 1 through 3. Both the Smothers School and its Annex were modest wood-frame structures, built at a cost of $3,135 and $1,000 respectively and heated by stoves. Neither building featured modern plumbing, such as water closets (even as late as 1911, when the report was issued) (Board of Education of the District of Columbia 1911: 81-2). The school was named for Henry Smothers, an African-American educator who in 1821 started a school for free black children behind his house at 14th and H Streets, NW (Barnard 1870: 199). (The Benning Road school on the site of Fort Mahan was likely named in tribute to Smothers, as there is no evidence of any direct connection.)

Maps from the end of the 1870s also note the presence of a store on the site, at the southwest corner of the hill where Benning Road and Eastern Branch Road meet. The shop was most likely overseen by Mary Manning's brother, David May, who lived on the Manning farm at Fort Mahan with Mary, their mother Jerusha May, and Mary's daughter Helen in the years after the war. David May listed himself in the 1870 United States Census as a merchant, while Mary Manning identified her occupation as "Keeping House." With the exception of David May's store, most other residents at the time listed agrarian occupations such as "wood chopper" and "garden labor." Most of the women living near the Manning farm in 1870 listed their occupations in the Census as "Keeping House," as Mary Manning did. This reinforces the likelihood that the landscape around Fort Mahan was still a cleared, agricultural one at this time, even as other structures and development began to encroach (Ninth Census of the United States 1870: 725B).

David May's store was evidently one of several in the Benning area by this time, and by 1878, there were significantly more buildings in general along Benning Road east of the Anacostia. The surrounding farms and landscape remained largely agricultural, but the completion of the Alexandria Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1874 spurred further expansion and

development east of the Anacostia River. (Efforts to construct such a connection between Maryland and Virginia had been ongoing since the 1850s, although they were interrupted by the secession of Virginia and the Civil War.) This branch of the railroad ran parallel to Eastern Branch Road, immediately west of Fort Mahan, cutting a path through the agrarian landscape to the trade areas south of the Potomac River (Browning 1936: i-2).

Two years later, in 1880, the Manning land was still cultivated as crops, even as the area around Fort Mahan continued to see increased development and construction along main thoroughfares such as Benning Road. Most residents in the immediate vicinity of Fort Mahan registered such occupations as "farmer," "laborer," and "gardener," as well as several neighbors who were listed as "keeping house." (By this time, the roles of Mary Manning and her brother had reversed, with Mary now listing herself as a farmer while her older brother was evidently paralyzed.) (Tenth Census of the United States 1880: 139D)

Contemporary maps reinforce this pattern of use and development surrounding Fort Mahan. Lydecker and Greenee's 1884 Topographical Map of the District of Columbia and a Portion of VA charted the swath of land belonging to Mary Manning and her neighbors as a deforested, sparsely developed area. What few settlements existed by this date, including the Smothers School, continued to be concentrated along Bennings Road and Anacostia Road (formerly Eastern Branch Road). The rest of the landscape, including Fort Mahan's hill, was clearcut; the only substantial stand of forest was located northeast of the fort (Lydecker and Greene 1884).

In the latter decades of the late nineteenth century, as Fort Mahan and the other defenses reverted to private ownership and began to disappear after the troops left in 1865, they assumed a degree of curiosity and even mystique for the country. Several newspapers published stories about the defenses and their role in the war, with headlines such as "Roadside Sketches" and "Scenes that Thrill" paired with suggested itineraries for visiting the surviving forts (TES, November 7, 1891). A 1911 article even explicitly described the site of Fort Mahan as "one of the most historically romantic spots in the District of Columbia" (TWH, March 26, 1911).

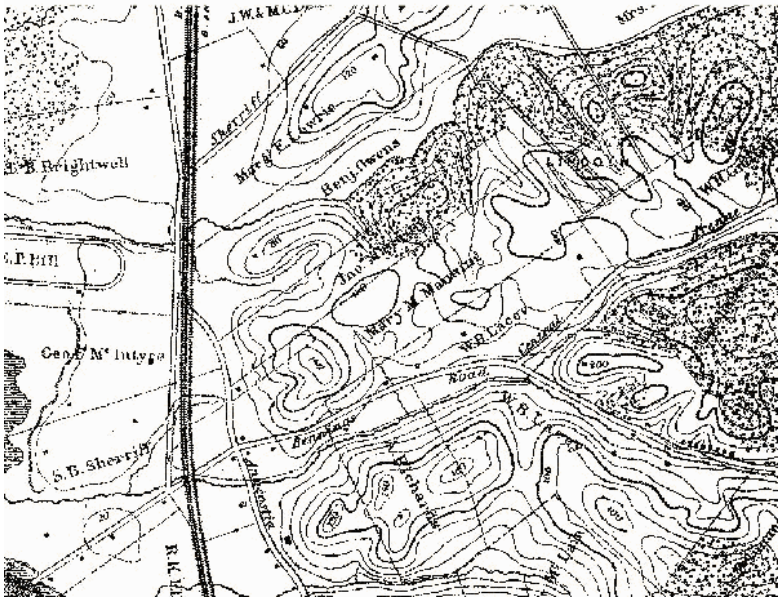
In spite of the public interest and the romanticization of the defenses, Fort Mahan and the other sites in the system continued to languish and deteriorate. In their descriptions of the forts in the late nineteenth century, military reports and newspapers chart the gradual loss of the Civil War landscape's original form and fabric due to natural growth or outright demolition. The first major report on Fort Mahan (and the other forts) was that of John G. Barnard, who published his Report on the Defenses of Washington in 1871. His report, however, emphasized the strategic significance of the site without commenting on the condition of the fort in the years immediately after the war. There were clearly no efforts at this point to preserve and maintain physical fabric of Fort Mahan, as both the federal army and the Manning family assented to the landscape's return to agricultural use.

Twenty years after Barnard's report was published, an 1891 newspaper travelogue of the forts noted that "old Fort Mahan" was grass-covered, suggesting that the original fort remained largely intact on Mary Manning's land (TES, November 7, 1891). This is in keeping with the

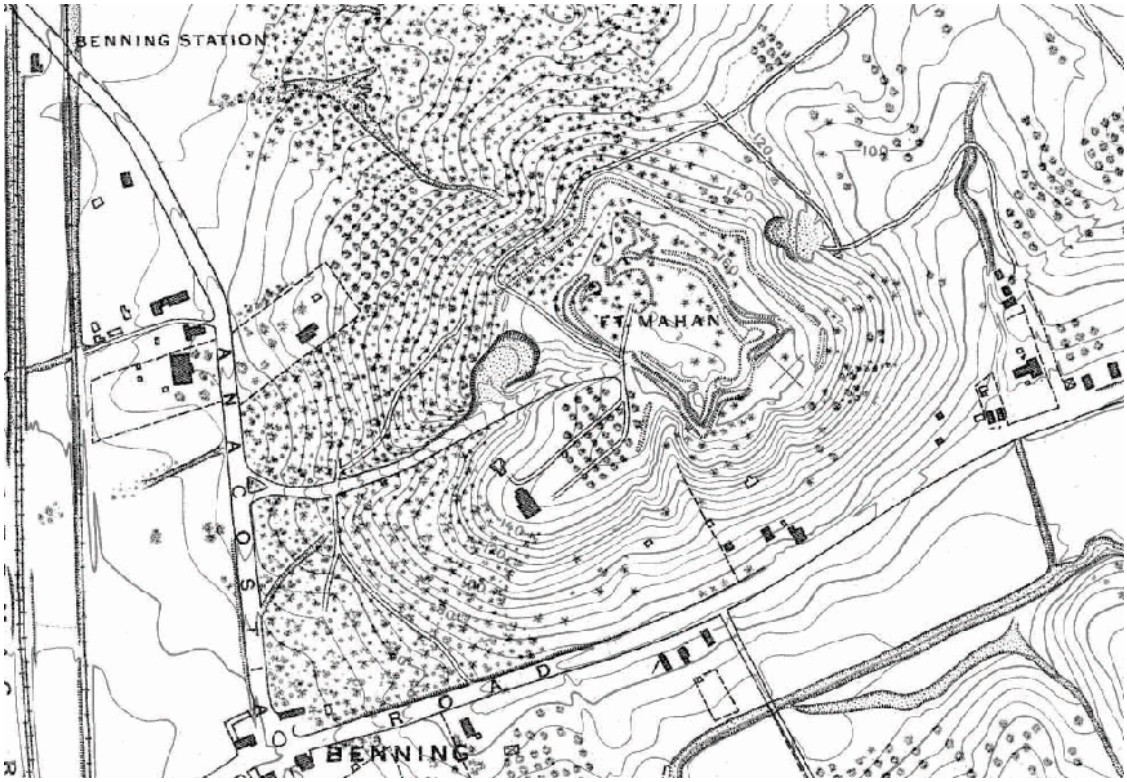
1892 Map of the District of Columbia and Vicinity, which included Fort Mahan's footprint in its mapping of the "present condition" of the Defenses of Washington (Averill 1892). Indeed, eight years later, another newspaper noted that the fort was "still well preserved" (The Omaha Daily Bee, July 19, 1899). This likely only referred to the outerworks, bastionets, and other topographical imprints of the earthworks, however. After 1879, maps of Fort Mahan and its surrounding area offer no indication of buildings (other than the main house) on the hilltop at the fort. The few remaining "permanent structures" at the fort were presumably demolished circa 1880.

Contemporary maps indicate, however, that by the late 1880's, the hillsides immediately outside the confines of the fort were increasingly altered and redeveloped. By 1888, topographic maps of the ridge indicated that, while the slope to the south of the outerworks was sparsely planted and relatively undeveloped, the area to the southwest of the fort featured domestic-scale agriculture, two structures, and access roads from the middle of the fort site. Moreover, surveyors noted the use of the hillsides to the west and east of the fort for mining purposes (United States Coast and Geodetic Survey 1888). It is unclear at what scale this mining was conducted, or who was overseeing this excavation of the site, however, since the hill was still occupied during this time by Mary Manning (now listed as a widow in city directories) and her brother David May, as well as her daughter Helen (who married Charles Havenner in 1885) (Ninth Census of the United States 1870: 725B; Tenth Census of the United States 1880: 139D; Washington, D.C. City Directory 1890).

When Mary Manning died c. 1900, the property that encompassed Fort Mahan transferred to her oldest daughter, Mrs. Helen Manning Havenner (TWH, March 26, 1911). Soon after, newspaper accounts reported that Havenner demolished the fort in order to build a house. (It is unclear what remained of the fort to be demolished. These descriptions perhaps refer to the razing of the remaining structures on the hilltop and limited grading of various topographical features within the confines of the fort. The outerworks evidently survived in place.) By 1901, newspapers noted that "a house now occupies the centre of what remained of the fort, and the old powder magazine is used as a cellar." (This did not deter the report from calling Mahan "one of the best-known of the fortifications," describing the site as "one of the most picturesque spots in the vicinity of Washington.") (The Evening Times, Washington [TETW], August 9, 1901) A map of the city published that same year included the footprint of the fort's outerworks only, with no indication of any surviving fort features within the perimeter of the site (Langdon 1901). A 1911 article reiterated these changes on the property, calling it "the former site of the old Fort Mahan" (TWH, March 26, 1911).



1879 G. M. Hopkins map (top) and 1884 Lydecker and Greene map of the Manning property. (LoC, Geography & Map Division; NOAA Historical Map and Chart Collection)



1888 topographical map, indicating traces of the fort's outerworks. (NOAA Historical Map and Chart Collection)

1890-1900

PRESERVATION OF THE FORTS (1890-1900)

The Defenses of Washington were not just of interest to visitors to the capital city. Indeed, the Defenses of Washington had been the subject of a steady stream of local interest and newspaper articles since practically the day they were dismantled, even as they (picturesquely) deteriorated. The travelogues and other press coverage that began soon after the war had continued to the start of the twentieth century. By then, several of the former defenses shared a trajectory of deterioration and demolition, but the ring of sites around the city still generated interest from public officials and local residents with a growing concern for the forts' preservation.

As the only fort in the defenses of Washington to see major military action during the war, Fort Stevens was the most prominent target for the early preservation movement. Beginning in the 1890s, patriotic organizations concentrated their efforts on preserving Fort Stevens—together with Forts Reno and DeRussy—and recreating a battlefield park in what was by then a suburban community. In the ensuing decade, public interest in the preservation of the forts expanded to include the full ring of defenses around the city, including Fort Mahan and the

other garrisons east of the Anacostia. Together, the fortifications became a prime focus of the city beautification efforts introduced a few years later under the McMillan Plan.

1900-1905

TWENTIETH CENTURY (1900-1905)

By 1900, Fort Mahan's landscape was inscribed with a combination of its military, agricultural, and increasingly urbanized features. The fort's outerworks continued appear on area maps, and a 1901 newspaper article noted the lingering presence of the old rifle pits, earthworks, and gullies (TETW, August 9, 1901). The hilltop was still largely unbuilt, with the exception of the structures along Benning road at the southeast corner of the site. The surrounding roads began to encroach on the site, however, as city plans laid out a street grid along the north and east edges of the property (which was now significantly smaller than just five years earlier) (Langdon 1901). Changing demographics in the 1900 federal census support the evidence of physical changes in the landscape, with a distinct shift away from land-based occupations toward a more professional class of residents. Helen Havenner's husband Charles identified himself as a broker, while other neighbors along Benning Road and in the area were now attorneys, clerks, printers, machinists, and conductors. There were still some laborers along Benning and Kenilworth Roads, including a bricklayer and a carpenter. Nevertheless, the shift in Fort Mahan's demographic context between 1890 and 1900 was significant—and evident in its landscape (Twelfth Census of the United States 1900: 4A).

By 1903, when G. W. Baist published its map of the area around Fort Mahan (and the larger city), the site was now fully bound on its southern, western, and northern edges by roads and development. (The eastern edge remained ambiguous, as its new combination of 42nd Street and Floral Avenue aligned only somewhat with the area street grid.) The property of Thomas Ward cut a skewed, rectangular swatch across the northern border of the Manning/Havenner property, abutting the now-subdivided parcels of the rest of the northern portion of the site. Those parcels (only a few of which featured buildings) were separated by "F" and "G" Streets, whose insertion in the landscape immediately north of the hill indicated the implementation of the 1901 maps' projected street grid.

The center of the Fort Mahan site itself remained largely clear. This was perhaps a result of the lingering irregular landscape on the hill, where the combination of the steep hill and the topographical remnants of the fort's earthworks made construction and development difficult. With the exception of the few buildings on F and G Streets, the only structures on the hill were the frame buildings in the southeastern corner of the site, along Benning Road, and the frame Manning/Havenner house on the hill's crest that was built in the previous decade. The Bennings Post Office was also located in the southwestern corner of the property, at the intersection of Anacostia and Bennings Roads (perhaps in the same building that previously served as David May's store) (Baist 1903). The Smothers Public School still stood on the southeast corner of the site, now joined by a second wood frame building (measuring the same 25 feet by 50 feet as the primary building) that was constructed in 1886. On the lot behind the Smothers School, an African Methodist Episcopal Church had been built by this time (perhaps reinforcing the demographic impact of contraband settlement during and after the war).

THE MCMILLAN PLAN AND FORT CIRCLE DRIVE (1901)

During this time of demographic change near Fort Mahan (which corresponded to similar development on and near other forts sites), the Defenses of Washington remained a source of curiosity and interest for the District of Columbia. Indeed, as was evident in the late nineteenth century, they had been the subject of a steady stream of newspaper articles since practically the day they were dismantled. The travelogues and other press coverage that began soon after the war continued into the twentieth century, generating concern from the public and from public officials.

In 1901, as part of the McMillan Plan that redesigned much of downtown Washington, city officials began to consider the restoration and preservation of the forts—with a new use as parks. Named after Senator James McMillan of Michigan, the McMillan plan was spearheaded by the United States Senate Park Commission, which was founded in 1900 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the relocation of the national capital from Philadelphia to Washington (Robinson and Associates 2004: 48). With roots in the City Beautiful Movement, the McMillan Plan sought to realize sections of the city's original L'Enfant plan that had never been implemented and to reorient the city with an infrastructure of green spaces (http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/lenfant.htm; The L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, National Park Service).

As part of that effort to renew the city's overlooked and undervalued areas, the plan included in its objectives a proposal to create a 28-mile parkway connecting the Civil War forts of DC as a string of public parkland. It promoted the forts not only for their history, but as a network of civic green space that would benefit the growing city:

"It is necessary to mention the chain of forts which occupied the higher summits...The views from these points are impressive in proportion to their commanding military positions, and they are well worth acquirement as future local parks, in addition to any claim their historical and military interest may afford." (Moore 1901: 111).

As part of the plan, the fort sites would once again transition from private use to public ownership—with due process of sale and purchase this time. The Fort Drive plan also signaled a remarkable shift in the sites' significance from one of wartime necessity—and protection of the federal capital from its own citizens—to one of peacetime public benefit. This narrative was not lost on proponents of the plan, as the Washington Post made evident in a 1931 article about "when Washington was fort-girdled": "Thus the defenses which stood in protection of Washington will be preserved to us and a far lovelier purpose than that for which they were originally constructed" (Salamanca, The Washington Post [TWP], January 25, 1931).

The plan took special note of Fort Mahan and the other forts east of the Anacostia River, highlighting their views of the capital city:

"In the section east of the Anacostia a similar chain of hilltop forts marks the points of most commanding view. With the Anacostia and the hills of Virginia in the distance, these are the most beautiful of the broad views to be had in the District. Forts Mahan, Chaplin, Sedgwick, Du Pont, Davis, Baker, Stanton, Greble, and Battery Ricketts can be linked together readily by means of the permanent system of highways with a few modifications and some widening into a drive comparable in beauty with that along the Potomac Palisades, but utterly different in character." (Moore 1901: 112)

Although they had not seen direct military action during the war, these forts were singled out as intact representations of the defenses' topographical position and strategic role in the conflict. With their commanding views of the city, its peripheral ridges, and the neighboring states, Fort Mahan and the other forts east of the Anacostia were prime sites for the city's historical infrastructure and recreational investment.

By 1903, the site was fully bound on its southern, western, and northern edges by roads and development, while the center of hill remained largely clear. (LoC, Geography & Map Division)

1900-1920

MINING AND EXTRACTION FROM THE SITE (1900-1920)

The publication of the McMillan Plan in 1901 was met with much fanfare, but implementation of the proposal—particularly the concept of a Fort Drive—proved long and difficult. In the meantime, Fort Mahan continued to change hands and context, as it left the ownership of the Manning/Havenner family for the first time in over fifty years. In 1909, the 116 acres of

Benning Hill that included Fort Mahan were purchased by Joseph Swift, a mining industrialist from Wilmington, Delaware (Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910: 14A). In fact, a 1911 article noted the site's former use as a fort and highlighted its new use as a key location for the new industry of hydraulic mining of sand. These processes were possibly conducted in the same areas of the site—to the west and east of the original outerworks—that were denoted as mining use on surveyors' maps as early as 1888. The headline noted the presence of a "Big Hydraulic Ram Now Eating Heart Out of Benning Hill," with a subtitle that noted that the "western mining process is washing down six hundred tons of earth each day." The site's production plant—which the article claimed was the only hydraulic or placer mining plant east of the Rockies—began in April 1910 to extract "fine assorted sands and gravels, used for "all building purposes." With a potential 30-year supply of materials, Benning Hill—and Fort Mahan—now served as a hub of production and industry (TWH, March 26, 1911).

As the fort had during the war, the extraction process capitalized on the site's steep slope and its topographical features. Water was pumped from the creek nearby and used at high pressure to excavate the materials from the hill. A system of separators on the site then sifted the minerals into eleven grades, while the runoff water was redirected back to the creek. The production and supply of these sands and gravels was a novelty in the city, where materials had long been dredged from the Potomac River. The plant, the article noted, was "unique not only for Washington, but for the greater part of this country," and was "well worth a visit by all who are interested in the development of natural resources" (TWH, March 26, 1911).

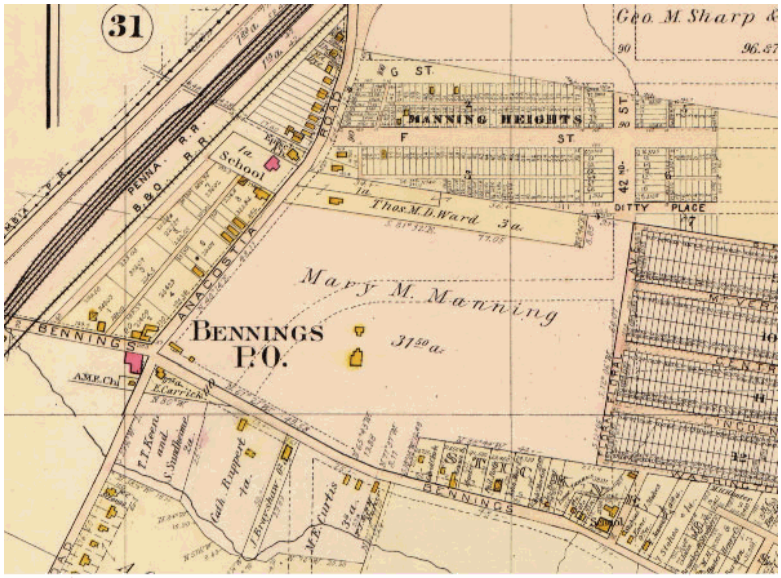
Swift's mining processes on the Fort Mahan site, however, seem to have benefitted from the site's topography (and transportation networks) rather than have much of an impact on it. Maps of the area in the ensuing years indicate little change to the terrain, and by this point, the hill was so tightly bound by other development that Swift's operations cannot have been very expansive on the landscape (United States Coast and Geodetic Survey 1914). The only discernible change to the hill was the demolition of the Havenner house on the hilltop (leaving the crest free of structures), but it is unclear whether this occurred as part of Swift's mining operations or under a previous owner. (The 1903 G. W. Baist map of the site is the last known indication of the house on the site. The 1913 Baist map shows no house on the site, but it is unclear when in the intervening decade the house was demolished (or whether anyone owned the site between the Havenner and Swift eras.) (United States Coast and Geodetic Survey 1914) In any event, Swift sold the land by 1919, when the Baist map attributed the property to Jay Gates (Baist 1919).

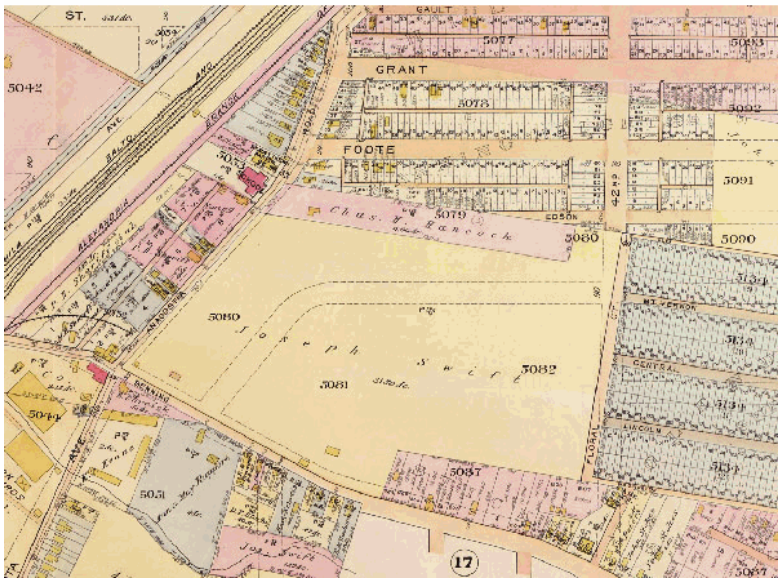
That same year, efforts to convert Fort Mahan to a park, as part of a green belt of forts around the city, took a step forward with the introduction of a bill that authorized the acquisition of land at Fort Mahan and nineteen other defenses of Washington sites. The bill took over a year to pass in the Senate, but its failure in the House of Representatives temporarily stymied the progress of the Fort Drive and Fort Mahan Park. Over the next several years, similar bills were proposed, but they all failed until 1925. On March 3 of that year, the National Capital Parks Commission (NCPC, which was created in 1924) received its first authorization and appropriation for the purchase of land related to the Civil War Defenses of Washington. A year later, on April 30, 1926, Congress replaced NCPC with the larger and more empowered

National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC), which continued to push for further funding for the Fort Drive plan, even as Fort Mahan and the other defenses continued to face changes in ownership and development (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part II, Chapter III).

The next significant changes on Fort Mahan's site were the demolition of the Smothers School (and its Annex) c. 1923 and the insertion of additional streets by 1927. By the 1920s, the school buildings were insufficiently equipped for modern needs, and offered inadequate classroom space and play-yards for the school's 96 students. (These issues were noted as early as 1911—if not earlier—when a report to the Board of Education of the District Columbia deemed the ventilation and water-closets of the building "poor" and cited the lack of playrooms and outdoor space.) (United States Coast and Geodetic Survey 1914) The construction of a new Smothers Elementary School two blocks away in 1923 (at 44th Street NE and Benning Road, where it still stands today) precipitated the demolition of the old wood frame building on the Fort Mahan site (House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations 1928: 563). By 1927, the southeast corner of the Fort Mahan site was vacant (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company 1927).

By this time, "F" and "G" Streets had been renamed Foote and Grant Streets, and the eastern perimeter was now somewhat more regularized as 42nd Street (interrupted only by the buildings in the southeastern corner of the site, which forced the road to jog to the east). Three new streets, however, now cut through the property (which was by this point under the ownership of the Benning Development Company). 39th Place ran parallel to Minnesota Avenue (the former Anacostia Road) within the site's western half, before terminating in the same irregularly-placed property that had once belonged to Thomas Ward and was now owned by Charles Hancock. A short stretch of Edson Street ran east-west parallel to (and south of) Foote Street, beginning with Hancock's land before crossing 42nd Street and extending further east. Finally, the new Eads Street also ran east-west, south of Edson Street. (The path of 39th Place and Eads Street echoes the route of a street that had been projected on maps of the site since as early as 1901.) The addition of all three roads allowed for further subdivision of the property, but evidently it did not result in any further construction or physical impact on the site, other than the introduction of the streets themselves (Baist 1927).





The 1903 Baist map (top) is the last known indication of a house on the crest of the site. By the time the 1913 Baist map (bottom) was surveyed, the house was removed. (LoC, Geography & Map Division)

1920-1933

FORT MAHAN PARK (1920-1933)

Even as the site of Fort Mahan was altered with these streets and approaching development in the late 1920s, the NCPPC continued to pursue funding for the acquisition of the property as parkland. In its 1927 Annual Report, the NCPPC articulated its vision that "the purchase of this fort, originally constructed to protect the Benning Bridge, will supply a local park for the people

of northeast section east of the Anacostia River and provide extensive views over the city, the Anacostia meadows, and surroundings country" (Annual Report, National Capital Park and Planning Commission 1927: 31). Its virtues as a park, therefore, corresponded almost exactly with its tactical assets as a military post; its public benefit now, however, was recreational, rather than strategic.

Almost concurrently with the publication of that Annual Report, the NCPPC began to finally purchase land on the Fort Mahan site, beginning with a small parcel on the east side and several of the subdivided parcels between Edson and Foote Streets. On June 22, 1928, the NCPPC purchased the largest segment of land at Fort Mahan, which included the crest of the hill at the center of the site (the main section of the site that had been clear of structures since the early twentieth century.) Their purchase encompassed the parcels along 39th Place and Eads Street, but it remained separated from the land between Edson and Foote Streets by the tract owned by Charles Harrison. By 1933, in a quick succession of over a dozen land purchases, the NCPCC acquired much of the rest of the Fort Mahan site. (The park was not a complete and contiguous whole until the early 1940s.) Nearly all of the purchased parcels were unimproved, and what structures stood on the newly-acquired land were demolished soon after. Around that same time, the NCPPC negotiated with the DC Commissioners for the closure of the roads through the site, including Foote, Edson, and Eads Streets and 39th Place, as well as several alleys behind the former subdivided parcels (Reservation 475 Records). It is unclear to what degree the roads were physically removed, however, as opposed to simply abandoned.

The rest of the landscape retained the complexion of its late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century states. It remained principally clear around the edges of the site, which were its lowest points topographically, where structures had sprung up and then been razed. Some structures existed and survived along Benning Road between 39th Place and Minnesota Avenue, since that area was not subsumed into the park, even after 39th Place was closed. The hillsides of the fort had seen some growth since the war, particularly on the western and northern edges of the site. This reforestation likely protected the remaining outerworks and rifle pits of the old fort, shielding them among the other gullies and mounds in the topography. The crest of the hill, meanwhile, had been largely clear since the war, with the exception of the Manning/Havenner house and auxiliary structures. With the demolition of those buildings in the early twentieth century, the hilltop had remained vacant of any subsequent construction.

Even before the park was a contiguous whole, Fort Mahan was a clear fulfillment of the McMillan Plan's vision for the individual defense park sites. (The same cannot be said for the larger Fort Drive effort, which saw only fitful progress and finally died after the completion of a few segments in the 1940s.) The demolition of the structures purchased in the late 1920s and early 1930s left the site once again almost entirely vacant, and proposals such as the one for a radio station in 1930 met with opposition as they were deemed "inconsistent with the park use of the area" (National Capital Park and Planning Commission 1930: 75). After nearly seventy years of private use and the prospect of significant development, Fort Mahan was once again a federally owned and managed site. Indeed, the creation of the park at Fort Mahan coincided with, and benefitted from, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which served as a labor force for the improvement and maintenance of

the newly-composed park landscape.

1933-1941

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) (1933-1941)

Though never fully realized, the Fort Circle Drive initiative paved the way for other preservation initiatives and public investment in the forts, most notably with the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) at the height of the Great Depression in 1933. Across the country, millions of young men found employment at the CCC camps, where they lived and worked in exchange for uniforms, shelter, food, and a stipend. In general, CCC enrollees worked with the Department of the Interior of the Department of Agriculture, with projects that included the construction and maintenance of roads or picnic areas, the creation of athletic fields or cabin camps, and—in the case of the Civil War Defenses of Washington—the repair or reconstruction of the Civil War-era forts (National Capital Park and Planning Commission 1930: 75). Of the many fort sites in the DC metropolitan area where the CCC worked, their role was most evident at Fort Stevens, where they reconstructed many of the original features of the fort that General Jubal Early attacked in 1864. They were also involved in projects at several other forts, though, including Mahan, Bunker Hill, and Dupont, which hosted one of the longest-running CCC camps in the DC area.

At Mahan, the CCC projects focused on forest protection and filling in borrow pits that had been dug for other tasks in the area. They also channeled a spring, cleared undergrowth and trash, and graded the hill site. Their new construction included the completion of a quarter-mile gravel road—likely on the site's east side, beginning at the intersection of 42nd and Eads Streets, where the access road is today—as well as fifteen picnic tables and benches. The Corps' narrative reports did not indicate where the picnic area was placed, but historians for the Historic American Buildings Survey speculate that the open area at the crest of the hill was likely the original picnic grounds (Davidson 2004: 102). (Indeed, siting the picnic area here would capitalize on what is presumed to have been a largely clear hilltop, based on the development patterns already discussed.)

Despite the CCC's regular reports on its activities at Fort Mahan, there are few records of the landscape's condition by the time the camp left around 1940. Photographs in the CCC's periodic narrative reports, however, indicate that the southern hillside adjacent to Benning Road looked then much as it does today. As part of their forest protection responsibilities, the Corps' workers cleared undergrowth and brush on the slope, leaving the scattered mature trees that still stand today. Progressing up the hill, the crest seems by this time to have been ringed with denser tree stands and undergrowth. A photograph of the site's existing "pitted areas" cannot be definitively placed, but was likely taken from high on the hill's western side, looking west toward the borrow pits and gullies on that portion of the former fort site (Civilian Conservation Corps 1935).

By 1940, District of Columbia records inventoried both a baseball diamond and a football field at Fort Mahan (WPA Writers' Project in the District of Columbia 1940: 18-20). (The report was compiled by the Works Progress Administration's Writers' Project—another New Deal

program created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.) The report does not locate the fields on the site, but the topography of the landscape suggests that at least one of the fields abutted or replaced the cleared picnic area on the hilltop. Given the goalpost that stands on the south end of the hilltop today, it is likely that at a minimum, the football field was located here by 1940. It is less clear where the baseball diamond was on the site, if not on the crest of the hill; the only other area of the park that is fairly level is the southeastern corner, which was cleared of structures by this time. In any case, sufficient picnicking facilities evidently survived along with the sporting areas, since Congress cited the presence of both at Fort Mahan when it denied the construction of a slaughterhouse near the site in 1940.) (House of Representatives Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds1940: 10)

1935 (top-bottom): CCC workers "removing undesirable undergrowth and burning brush"; "after undesirable materials were removed"; and "view of pitted areas"; likely taken from the hill's western side-shows borrow pits and gullies. (NARA, College Park, MD

1941-1970

MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY (1941-1970)

After the CCC's projects in the park ended, Fort Mahan saw few major changes to its landscape during the 1940s. The NCPPC continued to acquire the remaining fragments of land along the park's perimeter, and by 1949, the interior roads (39th Place, Eads Street, and Edson

Street) had deteriorated into mere paths. (Aerial photographs offer evidence of this decay, but it is unclear how early in the preceding decades the roads were gone. The last known indication of streets was on the 1927 Sanborn and Baist maps.) The houses on Benning Road (along the park's southwestern boundary) and Minnesota Avenue still stood, adjacent to the park but still privately owned. Foote Street still cut across the northern section of the park, and there was significant development by this point between Foote and Grant Streets. The rest of the park was wooded, and the hilltop remained clear of trees and growth—with the football field almost certainly intact (United States Geological Survey 1949).

The District's 1951 authorization to build a school on the northwest corner of Fort Mahan (at the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Foote Street) introduced the last major changes to the site in the twentieth century (Reservation 475 Records). By the time Carter G. Woodson Junior High School (now the Friendship Collegiate Academy Charter School) was dedicated in 1956, the complex had consumed a significant portion of the park's northwestern corner (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company 1960). This included the encroachment on the former Foote Street, which was entirely closed by 1979. (It was replaced by playing fields and other open space for the high school, and by several houses that were built on the south side of Grant Street.) (United States Geological Survey 1979; United States Geological Survey 1988)

In the late 1960s, the National Park Service looked both forward and back in its management plans for Fort Mahan Park. It developed schematic designs in 1967 that called for dramatic recreational additions to the site, including the creation of an amphitheater on the east side of the site, although these new projects were never implemented. A year later, NPS also commissioned an archaeological report on the surviving earthworks at Forts Mahan, Davis, and Dupont.

Archaeologist J. Glenn Little, II's report noted the limited remains of the Fort Mahan's earthworks by this time, assigning the majority of the fort's demolition to the years of CCC involvement at the site (Little 1968: 2). (This was obviously a misattribution of sorts, since we have seen that most of the loss of physical fabric predated the Civilian Conservation Corps.) Little's investigation concluded that the only remaining features of the original fort were the eroded rifle trenches on the northern and eastern sides of the site and bastionets on the southeast and southwest portions of the hill (Little 1968: 2).

1970-2013

CURRENT (1970-Present)

Aerial photographs of the last twenty years indicate few changes to the landscape of Fort Mahan. Other than the increased forestation of the park's western slopes, the site's growth patterns and circulation paths remained unchanged. Since the construction of the school in 1956, the latter half of the twentieth century (and the beginning of the twenty-first) have ushered in few alterations to the fabric of the nineteenth century fort.

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

INTRODUCTION

Landscape Characteristics and Features

Landscape characteristics identified for Fort Mahan are topography, spatial organization, land use, buildings and structures, circulation, vegetation, views and vistas, and small scale features.

The site for Fort Mahan was selected for its topography. Its position 160 feet above sea level provided an elevated vantage of the surrounding landscape, including several strategic sites that Fort Mahan was designed to protect. The topography remains the same as it was throughout the historic period, and has a high degree of integrity.

The spatial organization of Fort Mahan dates to the later part of the historic period, when the site was converted to a park and the CCC implemented various forest protection and beautification projects on the site. There have been minor additions to the landscape in the form of wayfinding and interpretive signs since the later period of significance, but the site retains its historic spatial organization and has a high degree of integrity.

The land use at Fort Mahan has not changed since the later part of the period of significance. The site remains a park, and is used for education and interpretation. As it has since the CCC era of involvement at the site, the park serves a public function and is open for general recreational use. Land use at Fort Mahan retains partial integrity.

There are no auxiliary buildings from the periods of significance on the site today, but portions of Fort Mahan's earthworks remain intact. The site retains partial integrity of buildings and structures due to these surviving features from the Civil War-era period of significance, including the extant bastionets and outerworks.

Fort Mahan's Civil War circulation pattern, including its military access road from Anacostia Road (now Minnesota Avenue) does not exist on the site today. The current paths, however, are consistent with the location of footpaths and trails that were in place during—and as a result of—the CCC's work on the site. The gravel road on the northeastern corner of the site, which begins at 42nd Street NE and extends up the east side of the hill to the cleared area on the hilltop—was constructed by CCC laborers during the second period of significance and the site retains integrity of circulation

There was limited vegetation at Fort Mahan during the Civil War, in keeping with the site's strategic design and use. The current vegetation pattern is not, therefore, consistent with the nineteenth century period of significance, but the mature trees and cleared, grassy areas (around the edge of the site and on the hilltop) do correspond to the CCC-era period of significance, and their projects on the site. Fort Mahan's vegetation retains a high degree of integrity from the twentieth century period of significance.

The views from Fort Mahan during the Civil War extended to the countryside surrounding the fort—in particular, towards the west and the south. These views remained intact for several years after the war, but the redevelopment of the site and surrounding area in the twentieth century affected the views from the landscape at Fort Mahan. Moreover, the most significant aspect of the fort's original views—that is, its view towards Benning Road Bridge—is obstructed today by later growth on the site. Present day views retain no integrity from the period of significance.

A limited number of Fort Mahan's small scale features date to the later period of significance. None of the site's Civil War-era small scale features survive. Those that are likely from the twentieth century period of significance include the football uprights, the pole (which is either a flagpole or the remnant of a second football upright), and the light posts on the crest of the hill. Many other small scale features from the CCC era of significance, including the baseball diamond and the picnic tables and benches, are no longer extant. Most of the non-contributing small scale features (including wayfinding, regulatory, and interpretive signage) have been installed since the historic period. The small scale features retain some integrity.

The Seven Aspects of Integrity

1. The location aspect of integrity involves the place where the landscape was constructed. During the Civil War, Fort Mahan occupied a larger area than the present day park. Over the course of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, its boundaries were whittled down by the construction of new streets and development in the surrounding area. During the later period of significance, when Fort Mahan was reacquired as parkland and the CCC was involved in projects on the site, the boundaries of the park were established in their current locations and the historic earthworks and other contributing landscape features remain in their historic locations.

2. Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape or historic property. Portions of the Civil War-era design of the site survive intact, including the southwest and southeast bastions and fragments of the engineers' design for the outerworks. In addition, Fort Mahan retains the layout established by the CCC during the later period of significance. This includes the circulation and vegetation patterns that were implemented by the CCC. Fort Mahan retains integrity of design.

3. Setting is the physical environment of a cultural landscape or historic property. During the Civil War, Fort Mahan's setting was rural, occupied by only a few local landowners and a small number of businesses (including one on the site of Fort Mahan itself). During the later period of significance, the site's setting was marked by urban, densely populated residential neighborhoods. Its immediate context was comprised of single-family homes and schools. Currently, Fort Mahan is still a park and historic site within an urban community, with single-family homes and schools as its immediate neighbors. The park's cultural landscape retains the essential integrity of setting for the 20th century period of significance.

4. Materials are the physical elements of a particular period, including construction materials, paving, plants, and other landscape features. The earthen outerworks, bastionets, and advanced battery, as well as the gravel CCC access road, all retain integrity of materials. There has been some loss of vegetative material and soil, but this does not detract from the overall integrity of materials on the site.

5. Workmanship includes the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular period. The earthen forms of Fort Mahan's surviving Civil War-era features offer evidence of nineteenth-century military workmanship. These features have deteriorated since their original construction, but they still demonstrate the craft and skills of the site's wartime laborers. Fort Mahan retains partial integrity of workmanship.

6. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. Because portions of the site's Civil War-era layout, design, and features are extant today, historic feeling from the nineteenth century period of significance is preserved. Moreover, Fort Mahan remains a park in the midst of an urban neighborhood, with the vegetation, circulation pattern, and CCC features that contribute to and maintain the integrity of feeling from the CCC era. Fort Mahan retains a high degree of integrity for the periods of significance.

7. Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. Fort Mahan is associated with the Civil War, the beautification of urban sites as parks, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Links to these historic events and movements are still evident at the park. Fragments of the earthworks are still visible on the site and accessible for visitors to explore. Waysides and interpretive programs provide visitors with information on the historic significance of the site (particularly with its earlier period of significance, during the Civil War), but do not discuss the CCC's role in the creation of the park site. Several park features, including a few small scale features and the circulation pattern, date to the CCC's involvement at the site during the later period of significance. The cultural landscape reflects the links to the historic periods and retains a high integrity of association for the periods of significance.

CONCLUSIONS

After evaluating the landscape features and characteristics within the context of the seven aspects of integrity established by the National Register, this CLI finds that Fort Mahan retains partial integrity from its periods of significance (1861-1865 and 1901-1941). While there have been some changes to the landscape and several features have deteriorated, the overall historic integrity of the property is high.

Aspects of Integrity: Location

Design

Setting

Materials

Workmanship

Feeling

Association

Landscape Characteristic:

Topography

HISTORIC
The site's elevation was the primary consideration when army officials scouted locations for Fort Mahan in 1861. Its position at 160 feet above sea level, together with its views toward Benning Bridge to the west and the Federal Arsenal and the Navy Yard to the southwest, was a critical characteristic for the fort throughout its early period of significance. Refer to Buildings and Structures section for description of how the earthwork features manipulated the ground plane.

EXISTING
Fort Mahan's elevation has not changed significantly since the period of significance. The earthworks are degraded and now ruins.

EVALUATION
Fort Mahan's elevation and earthworks contribute to the historic character of the site and has a high degree of integrity.

Spatial Organization

HISTORIC
Fort Mahan's elevation, together with its views toward Eastern Branch Road and the Benning Road Bridge, was the organizing principle for the arrangement of the site. Engineers designed the fort's earthworks to take advantage of the crest of the hill, which was detached from the rest of the ridge east of the Anacostia River. The fort saw frequent modifications throughout the war, as engineers corrected issues with the fort's arrangement through the construction of bastionets (in the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of the fort), additional rifle trenches, and abatis around the periphery.

The entrance to the fort was on the western side, facing the District of Columbia and the bridge that the fort was designed to protect. A few buildings (including an officers' quarters and barracks) were located within the fort, but most of the supporting structures were located east, to the rear of the fort, a quarter mile away at Camp Franklin (Cooling and Owen 2010: 213).

This left the most fortified sides of the fort—its northern and southern edges—to face the countryside of Maryland, which posed a close threat as a southern sympathizer state.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the fort saw new use as a site for mining of sand and gravel for building materials. The extraction and hauling processes took advantage of the fort's access road on the western half of the site, which branched off of Anacostia Road. The hilltop remained largely clear (other than a house built on the western side of the hill after the war), while the development was concentrated along the edges of the site—particularly along Benning Road and at the intersection with Anacostia Road.

As the park was purchased by the District of Columbia in the 1920s and 1930s, the site was gradually cleared of most of the structures around its edges. It preserved the clear-cut hilltop of the Civil War era, and retained the surviving earthworks.

EXISTING
The spatial organization from the Civil War period of significance is no longer extant, but Fort Mahan's spatial organization has not changed since the CCC-era period.

EVALUATION
Fort Mahan's spatial organization retains a high degree of integrity from the later period of significance (1925 to 1941) and contributes to the historic character of the site.

Land Use

HISTORIC
Fort Mahan's distinct periods of significance (1861-1865, and 1901-1940) represent several different uses of the landscape throughout its history, including as a military installation, as agricultural land, and as a place for recreation and interpretation.

Built in 1861 as one of the peripheral Defenses of Washington, Fort Mahan maintained its military use until it was abandoned and sold after the war ended in 1865. For several decades, the fort deteriorated and was largely dismantled as the land transitioned back to agricultural use and limited development. Several houses, as well as a school, were built on the land in the early twentieth century, and limited mining and extraction processes seem to have been located there as well for a short time.

The movement to create a park at Fort Mahan (and the other Defenses of Washington) began with the publication of the McMillan Plan in 1901. It did not gain traction, however, until 1925, when the National Capital Parks Commission (NCPC) was first authorized to purchase land at Fort Mahan and the other Defenses of Washington sites for use as parkland for the District of Columbia. All land was acquired by the early 1940s. Beginning with the first purchase of land at Fort Mahan in 1926-7, the buildings and structures around the edges of the site were demolished. The crest of the hill, which had been largely clear since the war, remained primarily empty, even as a picnic grounds and then playing fields were installed there before and during the later period of significance. The CCC was involved in various maintenance and beautification projects around the site, including the infill of borrow pits and the construction of

the picnic grounds on the site (likely on the crest of the hill, according to the Historic American Buildings Survey).

EXISTING
The picnic grounds are no longer present on the site. If the CCC did indeed construct them on the crest of the hill, they were replaced soon after (and during the later period of significance) by the playing fields that are on the hilltop today. The crest of the hill, as well as the rest of the site, continues to be used today as public parkland, with limited wayfinding elements and signs designed to serve an educational purpose on the site. Other uses of the landscape include dog walking and athletic gatherings.

EVALUATION
The Civil War military aspect of land use at Fort Mahan ended with the abandonment and sale of the fort in 1865. Its use has not changed, however, since the second period of significance, when it was converted to public urban parkland. The ongoing use of Fort Mahan as a setting for community gatherings and trail-walking contributes to the historic character of land use.

Circulation

HISTORIC
At the time of its construction in 1861, Fort Mahan was bounded and accessed by Eastern Branch Road, running north-south on the western edge of the site, and Benning Road, running east-west along the southern border of the hill. A major thoroughfare, Eastern Branch Road was the link between the District of Columbia's neighboring states, extending from Bladensburg, Maryland (northeast of Fort Mahan) to Alexandria, Virginia (southwest of the site). "Benning Road by Stony Branch" (as it was referred to on the Boschke map) began west of the Anacostia at the capital, running east over the Benning Road Bridge and along the southern border of Fort Mahan before turning south toward Prince George's County, Maryland. The proximity of both Eastern Branch Road and Benning Road were key factors in the military engineers' decision to place a fort on this particular hilltop, since the site's encompassing routes of circulation were crucial to the defense of the capital.

According to J. G. Barnard's map of the fort site (drawn using the Boschke map, published in 1861), the main military access road to the fort's hilltop was from Eastern Branch Road, north of the intersection with Benning Road (Barnard 1861). This road survived into the late nineteenth century, with maps from 1888 and 1895 that suggest it still offered the main access to the buildings (and surviving earthworks) on the crest of the hill.

By the early twentieth century, new roads had encroached on the site, including the addition of 42nd Street along most of the eastern edge, and F and G Streets on the northern portion of the site. Eastern Branch Road was known as Anacostia Road by this time, and the access road that once started there and extended to the hilltop was no longer included on maps. Instead, an informal road (perhaps a dirt or other unpaved road) evidently began on Bennings Road, near the intersection with Anacostia Road at the southwestern corner of the site, and curved up the hill and toward the east, ending in the new 42nd Street NE. These new streets spurred increased development (and sub-development) in the first few decades of the twentieth

century, before the site was acquired by the District of Columbia and converted to a park. They lie outside the boundaries of the National Park Service site today, but have had a clear impact on the historic development and current use of the site.

By 1927, when the District made its first major land purchases of the fort site, F and G Streets had been renamed Foote and Grante Streets, and the eastern perimeter of 42nd Street was somewhat more integrated into the surrounding street grid. (The remaining buildings in the southeastern corner of the site forced the road to jog to the east before intersecting with Benning Road.) Three new streets, however, also cut through the property at this time: 39th Place ran parallel to Minnesota Avenue (the former Anacostia Road) within the site's western half; Edson Street ran east-west parallel to (and south of) Foote Street; and Eads Street now ran east-west, south of Edson Street. The roads were closed soon after the site's conversion to parkland, however, and by 1945 (soon after the end of the second period of significance), the only roads included on maps were the site's boundary streets of 42nd Street NE, Benning Road, Minnesota Avenue, and Grant Street.

Various pedestrian trails cut through the site by 1941, the end of the second period of significance, in addition to the gravel road that the CCC likely constructed on the eastern portion of the site, stemming from 42nd Street NE. Aerial photographs from 1927 note the presence of footpaths around the site, and later maps from 1945 and 1949 suggest that there was by this time an unpaved pedestrian trail that encircled the hilltop, within the trees (Aerial Photography, National Capital Parks and Planning Commission 1927; United States Coast and Geodetic Survey 1945; United States Air Force 1949).

EXISTING
Fort Mahan has a series of trails around the site today, including an unpaved pedestrian trail running in a circle through the trees around the hilltop. (It appears to be in the same location as the trail shown on aerial photographs and maps from the 1920's to 1940's.) Visitors can reach the crest of the hill, and the cleared area on the hilltop, using the gravel access road on the eastern half of the site (which likely dates to the CCC period of significance). Several social trails branch off the circular pedestrian trail, one to the north and another to the south. These climb the hillside, ending in the cleared area at the top. (The southern trail features a small section of cement path, just a few feet long, at the top of the hill.) There is a third social trail on the western half of the site, with another short fragment of cement paving at the top of the hill, but its path does not reach all the way down to the circular trail.

The circular trail is connected to the non-historic CWDW Hiker-Biker Trail via a short spur that runs through the northeastern corner of the site and parallel to 42nd Street
Another social trail cuts diagonally across the site from Benning Road to 42nd Street, near the intersection of those two streets.

A narrow paved road begins at Minnesota Avenue and cuts into the southern portion of the historic fort site, parallel to Benning Road. This road is private; allowing access to the driveway

for the houses located along Benning Road and is outside the project area and park. The area between it and Benning Road was historically part of the fort site.

EVALUATION
The Civil War circulation patterns at Fort Mahan are no longer extant. Some of the existing trails on the site, however, appear to follow similar paths that were in place during—and as a result of—the CCC's work on the site. The gravel road leading from 42nd Street to the top of the hill was probably installed by the CCC's laborers. Fort Mahan retains some integrity of circulation.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Circular Pedestrian Trail (unpaved)

Feature Identification Number: 164431

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Access Road (graveled)

Feature Identification Number: 164433

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Social Trails

Feature Identification Number: 164439

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Trail leading to CWDW Hiker-BIker Trail

Feature Identification Number: 164441

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

1927 aerial photographs of the site note the presence of footpaths around the site. The gravel road on the eastern half of the site was not yet in place, suggesting it dates to the CCC era. (NARA, College Park, MD)

Today, visitors reach the hilltop via the gravel road on the eastern side of the site. Beginning at 42nd St, it intersects with a social trail (top). There is a metal gate halfway up the slope (bottom). (NPS CLP 2012)

Extant trails include both dirt (left, center) and paved (right). (NPS CLP 2012)

Vegetation

HISTORIC

Although no known photographs exist of Fort Mahan during the Civil War, the army's general treatment of the defenses of Washington (as well as period maps) indicate that the hilltop was cleared of all trees beginning in 1861. This included the removal of large tree stands on the southern and western slopes of the site, enabling views toward Eastern Branch Road and the Benning Road Bridge. Army soldiers also removed the Mannings' hilltop vegetable garden to build the fort; in 1864, they also cleared trees and orchards near the site, in response to General Jubal Early's attack on Fort Stevens (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part I, Chapter VI).

According to late nineteenth century maps, the site remained clear of trees and most growth for several decades after the war. It was cultivated as crops, even as the area around Fort Mahan saw increased development and construction along the main roads. As of 1884, the only substantial stand of trees was located northeast of the fort (Lydecker and Green 1884). A few years later, an 1891 newspaper article about the defenses of Washington described Fort Mahan as grass-covered (The Evening Star, November 7, 1891).

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the site of Fort Mahan was mined for sand and gravel, which was processed and used for building materials. This industrialized (albeit small-scale) use of the site had an impact on the vegetation patterns of the former fort, since it evidently kept

the hilltop clear of most trees. Maps of the area from the 1890s suggest that, while some brush and undergrowth had returned on the western and northern slopes of the hill, the crest and the eastern half of the site remained largely clear.

In the early twentieth century, as limited development encroached on the site along Anacostia and Benning Roads, trees and herbaceous plants increased on the fort site's hillsides. By the 1927, when the District of Columbia began to reacquire the land, aerial photographs showed the presence of mature trees throughout the site, and particularly on its western half. The crest was still cleared, and was left grassy by the CCC during its reforestation projects on the site. This cleared hilltop was likely the area where they installed a picnic grove, as well as possibly at least one playing field.

EXISTING

Fort Mahan's landscape is grassy around the periphery (particularly on the eastern and southern sides of the site) and at the crest of the hill. The hillsides surrounding the crest, including the surviving earthworks at the south end of the crest, are covered with a thick growth of mature trees and low brush, including multiflora rose (Rosa multiflora), honeysuckle (Lonicera periclymenum), and blackberry bushes (Rubus fruticosus). The trees around the periphery of the grassy area, and close to the earthworks, consist largely of willow oaks (Quercus phellos), with lesser numbers of red, chestnut, and white oaks (Quercus rubra, Quercus prinus, and Quercus alba).

The site features a few mature plantings in clearings near points of access, including the footpaths at the southeast corner of the site and the CCC-era gravel road on the west side of the site. In the southeast corner of the site, near the intersection of Benning Road and 42nd Street NE, the specimen plantings include London plane (Plantanus x acerifolia), willow oak (Quercus phellos), and catalpa trees (Catalpa speciosa). There are also a few volunteer paper mulberry trees (Broussonetia papyriferia) on the southern edge of the site, between the hiker-biker trail and Benning Road.

The grassy area near the CCC gravel road also features several mature plantings, including a Virginia pine, a sweetgum tree, and a large tulip poplar tree (Liriodendron tulipifera)–all south of the road, near the hiker-biker trail—as well as a few volunteer paper mulberry trees. An Allegheny serviceberry tree (Amelanchier laevis) was also planted in this area in 2011.

EVALUATION

The vegetation pattern is not consistent with the Civil War period of significance at the site, since the fort was cleared of all growth and trees by the end of the war. However, current vegetation patterns, including the mature trees on the site, do correspond to the twentieth

century period of significance. The site retains a high degree of integrity from the later period of significance.

Contributing Vegetation
Though their precise age has not been determined, many of the mature trees, including the large willow oak (Quercus phellos) andtulip poplar trees (Liriodendron tulipifera) dispersed around the grassy areas at the bottom and top of the site, likely date to—or pre-date—the CCC era. These vegetative features are contributing.

Aerial photographs indicate that the area at the top of the hill was already cleared of trees and grassy by the time the CCC began to work on the site, and their reforestation projects maintained the crest as a grassy area. They likely also installed a picnic grove (which does not survive) and at least one playing field (which probably corresponds to the existing football field) in the cleared grassy area on the hilltop. The cleared hilltop is therefore a contributing feature of the site's vegetation, given the correlation between the growth patterns of the CCC period of significance and those of the current landscape.

Non-Contributing Vegetation
Most of the other purposefully planted or volunteer mature trees on the site including the Allegheny serviceberry tree, are non-contributing features. In addition, the paper mulberry trees in the southeast corner of the site are likely volunteers and also non-contributing.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Open grassy area at the crest of the fort

Feature Identification Number: 164443

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Willow oak, southeast corner of the site

Feature Identification Number: 164445

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Tulip poplars, near CCC-era road

Feature Identification Number: 164447

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Other mature trees and brush vegetation

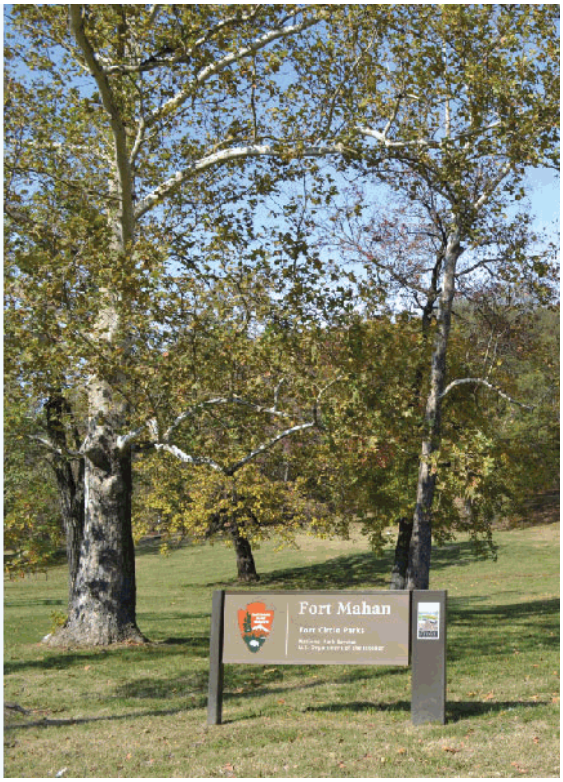
Feature Identification Number: 164449

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Fort Mahan's current landscape is grassy around the periphery, particularly on the eastern and southern sides of the site (top), and at the crest of the hill (bottom). (NPS CLP 2012)

The hillsides surrounding the crest are covered with a thick growth of mature trees and low brush. (NPS CLP 2012)



The site features a few specimen plantings, including a Virginia pine near the CCC-era gravel road (left) and London plane, willow oak and catalpa trees near footpaths at the SE corner of the site (right). (NPS CLP 2012)

Buildings and Structures

HISTORIC

The Civil War-era buildings at Fort Mahan included fourteen frame and log buildings (according to the notice for their auction in 1865), which included a guard house, at least two barracks, an officers' quarters, a mess hall, a stable, and some sheds. Of these frame buildings, only one barrack and the officers' quarters were within the confines of the earthworks. The other buildings were located elsewhere on the site—possibly along Benning Road, where at least one wood frame structure was noted in 1864 (Board of Education of the District of Columbia 1911: 258-9). That same year, several of the other buildings on the site were removed, in response to the threat of attacks like that of General Jubal Early on Fort Stevens in July 1864. A week after Early's attack, the Mannings' house, barns, and other buildings near the counterscarp of Fort Mahan were removed (CEHP Incorporated 1998: Part I, Chapter VI).

By the end of the war, the earthworks at Fort Mahan had a 354-yard perimeter. The original footprint of the fort was modified over the course of the war, with three bastionets inserted into the fort's design to create an irregularly-shaped, nine-sided fortification. Outside the earthworks, a ring of abatis and an additional 400 yards of rifle pits served as a buffer on the west side of the fort, facing the Anacostia River.

When the fort closed in 1865, Mary Manning reclaimed possession of her land and of the remaining buildings on the site (The Washington Herald, March 26, 1911; The Daily National Republican, November 29, 1865; Cooling and Owen 2010: 213). According to maps of the site from 1878 and 1879, some of the fort's structures still stood on the crest of the hill, while others survived on the periphery of Manning's land. By the early twentieth century, however, newspaper reports and insurance maps indicate that the buildings on the hilltop were no longer standing. It is unclear when exactly these structures were removed, but they are no longer extant.

Most of the other buildings around the edges of the site were removed in the 1920s, as the District of Columbia purchased the land to convert the site to a park. The removal of these buildings, including those along Benning Road and at the intersection of Benning and 42nd Street NE, occurred during the site's later period of significance. These buildings were completely removed by the time the CCC began work on the site in 1935, during the later period of significance.

Remnants of the earthworks survived into the twentieth century and were left largely intact and unaltered by the CCC between 1935 and 1941. These traces included: the southwest and southeast bastionets of the fort; the rifle trenches west of the southwest bastionet; as well as the outerworks on the north and west sides of the site. The advanced battery also remained intact on the southeast corner of the fort. All other elements of the fort were destroyed sometime before the CCC's involvement on the site.

EXISTING

Fragments of the earthworks remain partially intact at Fort Mahan today, including the southwest and southeast bastionets of the fort, the outerworks on the north and west sides of the site, and the advanced battery on the southeast corner of the fort. Since the period of significance, erosion and weathering have affected these features. Although two of the bastionets are clearly visible, most of the surviving earthworks are covered in heavy vegetation, which obscures their forms.

No auxiliary buildings or structures are extant within the boundaries of the site today.

EVALUATION

Although none of the buildings associated with Fort Mahan's periods of significance exist on the site today, this feature does have partial integrity due to the surviving Civil War era earthwork fragments. Despite the forces of weathering and erosion that have affected these features, they retain their original location and forms.

The demolition of the other auxiliary buildings on the site is consistent with Fort Mahan's twentieth century period of significance, when the hill was cleared of structures in order to convert the landscape to a park. No buildings or structures remain extant dating to the CCC period of significance.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Southwest bastionet

Feature Identification Number: 164451

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Southeast bastionet

Feature Identification Number: 164453

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Outerworks (on the north and west sides of the site)

Feature Identification Number: 164455

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Advanced battery

Feature Identification Number: 164457

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Fragments of the earthworks remain partially intact today, including the some of the original bastionets. Views from inside the bastionets, looking out. (NPS CLP 2013)

Views and Vistas

HISTORIC
At the time of its construction in 1861, Fort Mahan was surrounded by farms and, more distantly, small villages. The site was only a mile from Benning Road, to the west, which it was designed to protect. At 160 feet above sea level, it also had a view to the Federal Arsenal and the Navy Yard, six miles to the southwest. The fort's vantages depended on the absence of trees on the hilltop, which was accomplished with the Union Army order to cut down trees within two miles of each of the Defenses of Washington (Barnard 1871: 2). The fort's hill was further cleared in 1864, when General Jubal Early's attack on Fort Stevens prompted Army officials to order further site clearance at Mahan, including the removal of the Manning's house, barns, and other buildings at the counterscarp. Later that year, some woods and orchards near the site were felled as well. These orders were a direct response to the battle at Fort Stevens, where snipers ensconced in nearby trees had shot at President Lincoln and soldiers at the fort. By removing most of the remaining buildings and trees on the site of Fort Mahan in 1864, army officials hoped to remove the possibility of similar attacks by improving the fort's vantage points (CEHP Incorporated 1998: 153; Cooling and Owen 2010: 213).

Later maps of the site indicate no trees on the hillsides of Fort Mahan, where in 1861 there had been significant growth, suggesting that the site retained many of its views several decades after its early period of significance (Lydecker and Greene 1884; Boschke 1861).

EXISTING
The views of the Civil war period are almost entirely gone today, cut off by twentieth century development in the surrounding area. The most significant aspect of the Civil War views from Fort Mahan—the vantage toward the Benning Road Bridge—is interrupted by the trees and growth on the site itself, which obstruct any view from the crest of the hill toward the extant (albeit replaced) bridge.

The later period of significance, during the CCC's involvement with the site, saw increased development in the area, which is somewhat consistent with the site's context today. This development was concentrated on the western edge and the northwestern corner of the site, as it is today, but the views of the larger area were still significantly less developed than those from Fort Mahan today. The hillsides were increasingly regrown with trees—for the first time since before the Civil War—which also obstructed the views from the crest of the fort site.

EVALUATION
The views from Fort Mahan have been altered by changes in both the surrounding area and within the site's own landscape. Surrounding development has affected the views available from the site, shifting the context from its historically-agricultural setting to the modern developed context that exists today. Moreover, changes in Fort Mahan's own vegetation and growth have had a marked impact on the views available from the site, interrupting the view toward the most significant aspect of the site's Civil War history—the Benning Road Bridge.

Fort Mahan's views retain no historic integrity.

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

The site's original views toward the Benning Road bridge are obstructed today by growth and development on and around the hill. (NPS CLP 2012)

Small Scale Features

HISTORIC
The research to date has not determined what, if any, small scale features existed at Fort Mahan by the end of the Civil War era period of significance. The abatis of the fort, which were constructed as an additional line of defense in 1864, were purchased by Mary Manning in 1865 (before the fort was completely abandoned and sold by the army). This barricade of abatis, constructed around the fort in 1864, consisted of trees that were felled, sharpened into spikes, and positioned facing outward toward any attackers. Manning likely removed the abatis before, or soon after, the close of the war.

With the exception of the abatis around the fort, little evidence is available about other small-scale features of the Civil War-era Fort Mahan. A typical fort in the ring of defenses around Washington included features such as a flagpole, a well, or fencing. Fort Mahan's original engineer's drawing does include a well on the west side of the fort, but the reshaped drawing (completed after the fort was modified and the bastionets were added) does not specify whether the well remained intact.

During the site's second period of significance, the CCC installed a picnic area of fifteen picnic tables and benches in the park. The Corps' narrative reports did not indicate where the picnic area was placed, but historians for the Historic American Buildings Survey speculate that the open area at the crest of the hill was likely the original picnic grounds (Davidson 2004: 102).

The site also included a baseball diamond and a football field by 1940, when District of Columbia records inventoried the playing fields at the site (WPA Writers' Project in the District of Columbia 1940: 18-20). The report does not locate the fields on the site, or indicate what features (i.e. fences; benches; bases) were installed, but the topography of the landscape suggests that at least one of the fields abutted or replaced the cleared picnic area on the hilltop. The presence of a football upright on the hilltop today, at one end of the cleared area, is consistent with this placement of the playing field, although it is not clear whether the upright is original to the period of significance. It is not clear where the baseball diamond was located on the site, although it was perhaps placed in the southeastern corner of the park, which is the only other area of the site with relatively flat topography.

Whatever the arrangement of the playing fields and the picnic area, both were intact on the site as of 1940, when Congress cited the presence of both in testimony about construction projects in the area (House of Representatives Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds 1940:10).

EXISTING
No small-scale features (including the well or the abatis) from the Civil War period of significance survive on the site today.

A set of football uprights and a pole (which is either a flagpole or the remnants of a second football upright) stand on the hilltop today in the cleared area, and may date to the CCC period of significance. Further research is needed.

The other existing small scale features, including the waysides, instructional and identifying signs, and the gate were added after both periods of significance and are therefore non-contributing.

EVALUATION

This feature retains no integrity from the periods of significance, since the existing small-scale features either have no context in the current landscape or date to the years after the twentieth century period of significance.

UNDETERMINED
Football Uprights
A football end post is located at the northern end of the hilltop within the cleared area, near the west end of the gravel road from 42nd street NE.

Pole
A pole, which is either a flagpole or the remnant of a second football upright, exists on the southern end of the hilltop, at the edge of the cleared area.

Lights
A post, mounted with stadium-type lighting, stands on the southeast corner of the hilltop's cleared area. A second post, which likely also included lights, remains in place in the southwest corner of the field on the crest of the hill.

NON-CONTRIBUTING
Wayside
A wayside with an overview of the site's history is located along the footpath on the southern edge of the park, near the southeast corner of the site. In addition, a signpost with interpretive information about the park and its context is placed along the gravel road in the northeast corner of the park, near 42nd Street NE. This signpost was installed c. 2011 by Groundwork Anacostia, a partner of NPS, rather than by NPS itself.

Signage
Regulatory signs are located in the southeastern corner of the park and along the hiker-biker trail, which encircles the hill at the edge of the trees. The signs are concentrated on the trail's southern and eastern sections, with no signs on the northern and western edges.

Gate
A gate is placed on the gravel road that begins at 42nd Street NE, halfway up the slope of the hill and at the eastern edge of the ring of trees and growth around the site. The gate is as wide as the gravel road. It is not connected to any fence.

Utility Box
A large utility box was installed c. 2011 in the southeastern corner of the site, attached to a telephone pole next to the sidewalk along Benning Road.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: NPS Wayside

Feature Identification Number: 164459

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: NPS Signage

Feature Identification Number: 164461

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Metal Gate

Feature Identification Number: 164463

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Utility Box

Feature Identification Number: 164465

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Football uprights

Feature Identification Number: 164467

Type of Feature Contribution: Undetermined

Feature: Pole (Flagpole or football upright)

Feature Identification Number: 164469

Type of Feature Contribution: Undetermined

Feature: Lights (mounted on a pole)

Feature Identification Number: 164471

Type of Feature Contribution: Undetermined

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Several of the extant small-scale features on the site correspond to the use of the hilltop as a football field, which may date to or postdate the CCC era. They include football uprights (top) and a light pole (bottom). (NPS CLP 2012)

Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 08/02/2013

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Condition Assessment Date refers to the date the park superintendent concurred with the findings of this CLI. This determination takes into account both the landscape and the buildings situated therein. In order to maintain the condition of the property to 'good' the park should complete the following:
The erosion issues should be addressed.
Vegetation removal should be considered following best practices for historic earthworks.

Impacts

Type of Impact: Erosion

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: Evidence of damage caused by erosion is noticeable on the parapet and magazine.

Type of Impact: Vegetation/Invasive Plants

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: The dense trees, undergrowth, and bushes on the hillsides of the park preclude visitors from seeing and understanding the remaining Civil War-era topography, including the surviving bastionets. (This growth is an effective management tool that helps to prevent erosion of the historic earthworks, but some vegetation removal should be considered following best practices for the preservation of historic earthworks.)

Treatment

Treatment

Approved Treatment: Undetermined

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