United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Parks-East
1900 Anacostia Drive, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20020

IN REPLY REFER TO:
L30 (NCR-NACE)

July 19, 1999

Ms. Sheri M. Pruitt-Williams
Interim Director
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Second Floor
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA Application No. 16472, 4000 Benning Road, N.E.
Holy Christian Missionary Baptist Church for all People

Dear Ms. Pruitt-Williams:

National Capital Parks-East, owner of the adjoining Fort Mahan, a property on the National Register of Historic Places, respectfully urges the Board of Zoning Adjustment to deny the subject application for variances from District of Columbia zoning requirements. It is clear to us that the proposed church building, an 812-seat facility, would be quite massive and therefore far out of keeping with the adjoining park land and historic properties. The need for the requested zoning variances is directly correlated with the excessive mass of the proposed building for the steep, difficult site on which it is proposed to be built.

The applicant has not demonstrated due regard for the adjacent properties of either the National Park Service or the District of Columbia. Specifically, the applicant initiated tree clearing without benefit of a proper survey, resulting in trespass on park land and the illegal cutting of a number of park trees and District of Columbia trees, which were essential in screening the Fort Circle Trail segment which accesses the historic Fort Mahan earthworks (diagram and police report attached).

The applicant's only communication with the National Park Service has been to request that we grant written permission for the church to utilize park land for their private parking needs. We are, of course, not able to commit public land for such private purposes, but we did request that the applicant work closely with us as development plans went forward (copy of letter attached).

We have not heard from the applicant since that time. Indeed, the property was not posted when the subject variance application was made, and the applicant failed to send a

BZA
CASE No. 16472
EXHIBIT No. 21

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16472
EXHIBIT NO.21

representative to a special ANC 7-D meeting on Friday, July 9, specifically called to discuss the proposed development. As requested, National Park Service representatives did attend that meeting. There is no indication of any good-faith effort on the part of the applicant to plan or communicate with their future neighbors.

The National Park Service does not oppose the construction of houses of worship on private property. Many park properties adjoin churches, mosques, and temples, and enjoy positive neighbor relationships. But we feel strongly that any proposed development should meet a minimum standard of compatibility with its neighboring properties, and that any variances from zoning requirements be justifiable in terms of a greater good being served. Unfortunately, it is our conclusion that the proposed construction does not meet this minimum standard, and the unmitigated variances proposed would not serve a greater good, but in fact would result in significant permanent harm to the park land adjoining. Therefore, we must oppose this application

Sincerely,

John Hale
Superintendent
National Capital Parks-East

L30 (NCR-NACE)

April 12, 1999

Reverend Stephen E. Young, Sr.
Pastor
The Holy Christian Missionary Baptist Church for All People
601 50th Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20019

Dear Reverend Young:

Thank you for meeting with us on March 30 regarding issues involved in the upcoming construction of your new church on Benning Road, adjoining Fort Mahan, a historic National Park Service property. We are quite interested in working with you to assure that the new construction most compatibly addresses the needs of your congregation, the surrounding community, and the adjoining public park resources.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible for us to execute a written agreement for use of park land to fulfill the zoning requirements for adequate parking facilities for your new church. Our plans for managing the Fort Circle Parks (of which Fort Mahan is a unit) involve increasing vegetative buffers, including meadow and forest plantings, along the entire corridor. To formalize a parking agreement and permanently expand such facilities in this zone would constitute a derogation of our public park resources.

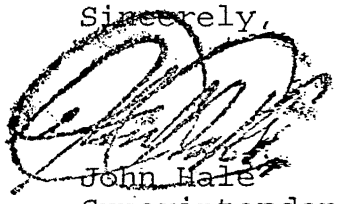
We are concerned, further, that the initial clearing of your site has not been properly planned or executed. It does not appear that a proper survey of property lines has been done. Trees on National Park Service and District of Columbia property have been cut down, and it appears that your property has been opened to unsupervised outsiders for the removal of downed timber, resulting in further trespass on park property. However, I am certain that we can resolve these difficulties and plan for the necessary restorations.

It is important that, as this project goes forward, it be carried out in the most sensitive and professional manner. Your chosen contractors should have a good working familiarity with the proper regulations, practices, and security measures necessary to complete a successful project.

We wish to be closely involved with you in this process. Fort Mahan is a scenic park property on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, it is an important asset and enhancement to the community, and should provide an equally complementary context for your new church building. If we work closely as plans go forward, we can assure that the result will be mutually compatible, harmonious facilities that become a greater asset to the surrounding community and our nation's capital.

We look forward to working with you as this project moves forward. Please call me at (202) 690-5185 if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



John Hale
Superintendent
National Capital Parks-East

Rev. (1/75)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

CASE INCIDENT RECORD

1. ORGANIZATION CODE	2. ORGANIZATION (PARK) NAME	3. LOCATION CODE	4. CASE/INCIDENT NO.
1 3960	Fort Mayhan	5524	008935

5. LOCATION OF INCIDENT	6. WHEN DID IT OCCUR?	MO.	DAY	YR.	24 HOUR TIME	HRS.	MIN.	7. DAY OF WEEK
4000 Block Of Benning Rd. NE,DC		03	24	99		09	12	4

8 OFFENSE/INCIDENT CODE	9. NATURE OF INCIDENT	10. HOW REPORTED
	Damage To Gov't Property	Telephone

11. REPORTED BY	12. ADDRESS	13. PHONE
Susan Rudy/NCP East/Resource Management	1900 Anacostia Dr. SE,DC 20020	HOME / BUSINESS 690-5000

14. RECEIVED BY	15. WHEN RECEIVED: DATE	16. TIME BROADCAST	17. WHEN INVESTIGATED
Officer Richard Walls	4-1-99	0912	DATE 04-1-99 TIME 0912

18. INVESTIGATED BY	19. OFFICER/RANGER NO.	20. WHEN CLEARED	DISPOSITION
Ofc. Ocetnik	0617	DATE 4-1-99 TIME 1030	21.

	22. INVOLVED PERSONS	23. ADDRESS	24. PHONE	25. SEX	26. RACE	27. AGE	28. DATE OF BIRTH
1	Unknown						
2							
3							
4							

29. DETAILS OF INCIDENT

On 4-1-99 about 0912 Hrs. ,Ms. Sussan Rudy of NCP East-Resource Management reported that members of the"Holy Christian Missionary Baptist Church For All People" had cut trees in Fort Mayhan in the 4000 block of Benning Rd. N.E. on 3-24-99. Ms. Rudy further stated that a Park Service Tree Crew were in Fort Mayhan and observed the damage(cut trees) and either observed or learned that the members of the above church had cut the trees and placed a sign in the area"free wood". Ms. Susan Rudy stated that the tree crew indicated that there was no criminal intent as far as they knew. The church members have or the church has property that borders Fort Mayhan and thought they were clearing wood from their property which is being prepared for construction of some bldg.

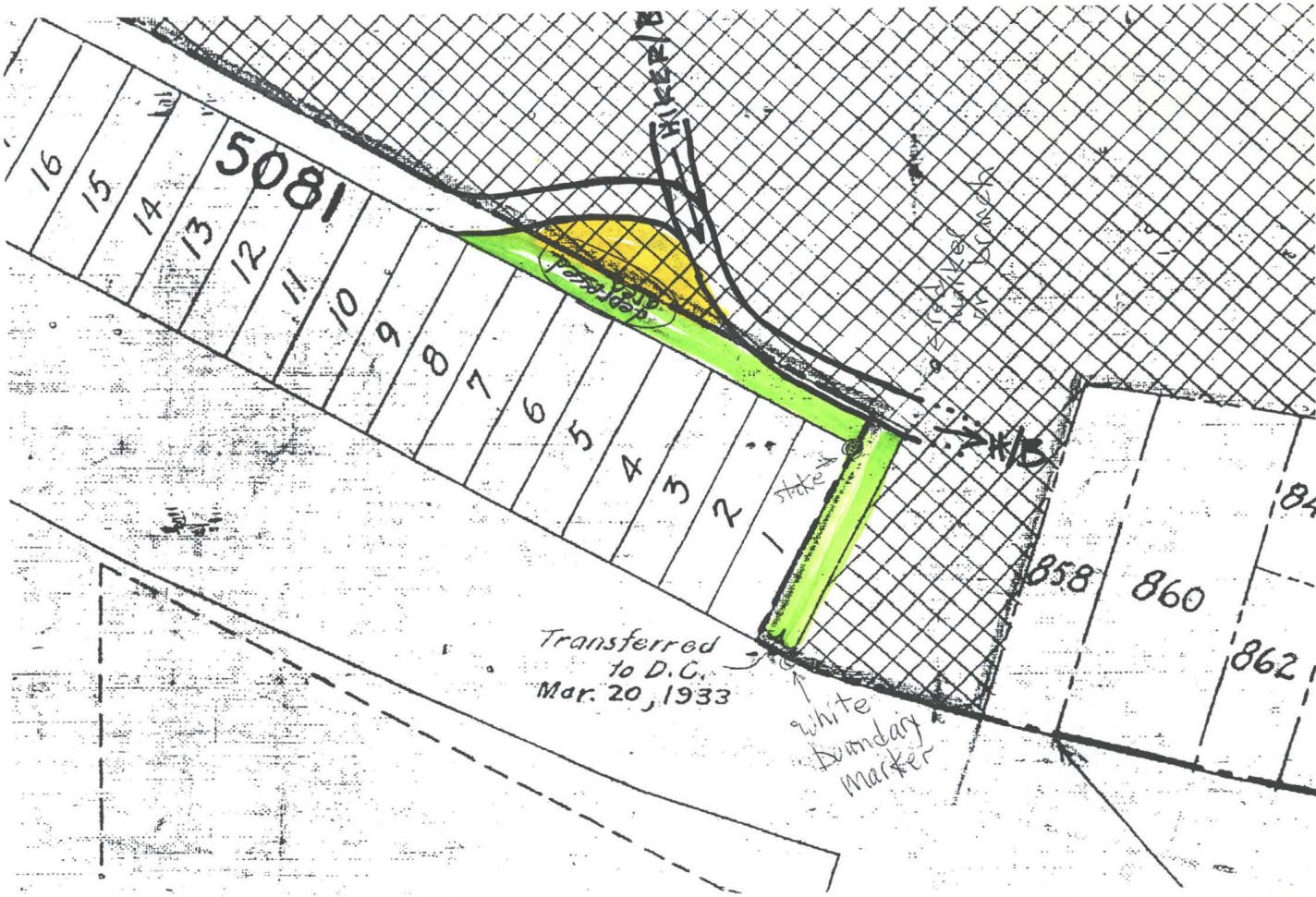
Ms. Rudy stated that Park Service will handle the tree cutting incident on 3-24-99 but wished U.S. Park Police to give attention to the area because members of the church had been using the hiker-biker trail either parking or driving their vehicles on the trail. Ms. Rudy stated the members of the church were warned, stop cutting trees, and not not to drive vehicles on the hiker-biker trail.

Ofc. Ocetnik (Car 512) made a check of the area during the second relief and observed no illegal activity.

30. QUANTITY	31. PROPERTY STOLEN OR DAMAGED	32. ESTIMATED VALUE	RECOVERED 33. DATE	RECOVERED 34. VALUE
35. PROPERTY CODE OF HIGHEST VALUE		36. TOTAL	37. TOTAL	
		.00		.00

INVESTIGATED BY (Signature and Date)
Richard Walls #467 4-1-99

APPROVED BY (Signature and Date)
Lt Michael E Gantt 4/14/99


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Hilltop
Hilltop
Stake
Transferred
to D.C.
Mar. 20, 1933
White
Boundary
Marker
858
860
862


6/28/1999


6/28/1999


Port Circle Park
7/2/1999


Fort
Mahan
Earthworks of Fort Mahan are visible; follow path to the top of the hill
Civil War Defenses of Washington
1861-1865
During the Civil War, Washington's forts overlooked farm land.
7/2/1999

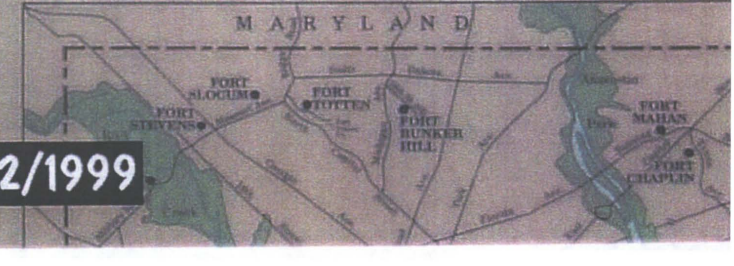
Fort Mahan

Earthworks of Fort Mahan are visible; follow path to the top of the hill.

Civil War Defenses of Washington

1861-1865





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MR. LINCOLN'S FORTS

A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington

Touring The Forts East Of The Anacostia

THE Anacostia River (or Eastern Branch of the Potomac) divided Washington's system of fortifications into two distinct and virtually autonomous sectors north of the Potomac. General Barnard and his engineers regarded the forts "across the Eastern Branch" as the least satisfactory in the system. Yet, this was the least threatened sector, and the Anacostia River itself represented a reasonable barrier to assault on the city from the east, or what is termed southern Maryland. The upper reaches of the Anacostia Valley were marshy and would channel any attacker under the guns of Fort Lincoln, Battery Jameson, and Fort Mahan. One-quarter to one-half mile east of the Anacostia rose a six-mile-long, 300-foot-high ridge. It dropped off to a plateau on the south and into the valley of Oxon Run. Various points along the ridge overlooked the Navy Yard, the Washington Arsenal at Greenleaf Point, and the Capitol Hill section of the city. A vast cavalry depot sprang up at the southern end of the ridge in the flatlands of Giesboro Point beside the Potomac. Roads converged upon opposite ends of the ridge to cross the Anacostia at Uniontown and Benning's road bridges. Therefore, distinct defensive problems faced Barnard and the engineers. If southern Maryland lay far from Confederate armies, it remained a festering hotbed of secessionist spirit throughout the war. The Lincoln government could not neglect the Anacostia sector of forts because of possible guerrilla or partisan enemy activity.

Barnard and the Army engineers regarded the sixteen forts and batteries which they erected east of the Anacostia as isolated works. They "really guarded against . . . dashes of cavalry against the bridges, or the temporary occupation of the heights by artillery," noted Barnard in his report. Erected diligently by the soldiers, they often worked day and night with 100 men per relief (as Stuart O. Lincoln wrote his brother just before Christmas 1861 from an encampment at Camp Lesley above the Navy Yard). One volunteer in the 17th Maine complained about the boring work of drill and fortification improvements at Fort Carroll since his unit had not enlisted to make gabions, but to save the Union. "Many of the boys became quite proficient in basket making," he admitted. Probably most of the soldiers in this sector agreed, although one member of the 9th New York Heavy Artillery felt the experience east of the Anacostia was worth it. He felt the superb views of the city from the forts on the ridge (a view still present at Fort Stanton for example) could not be equaled elsewhere.

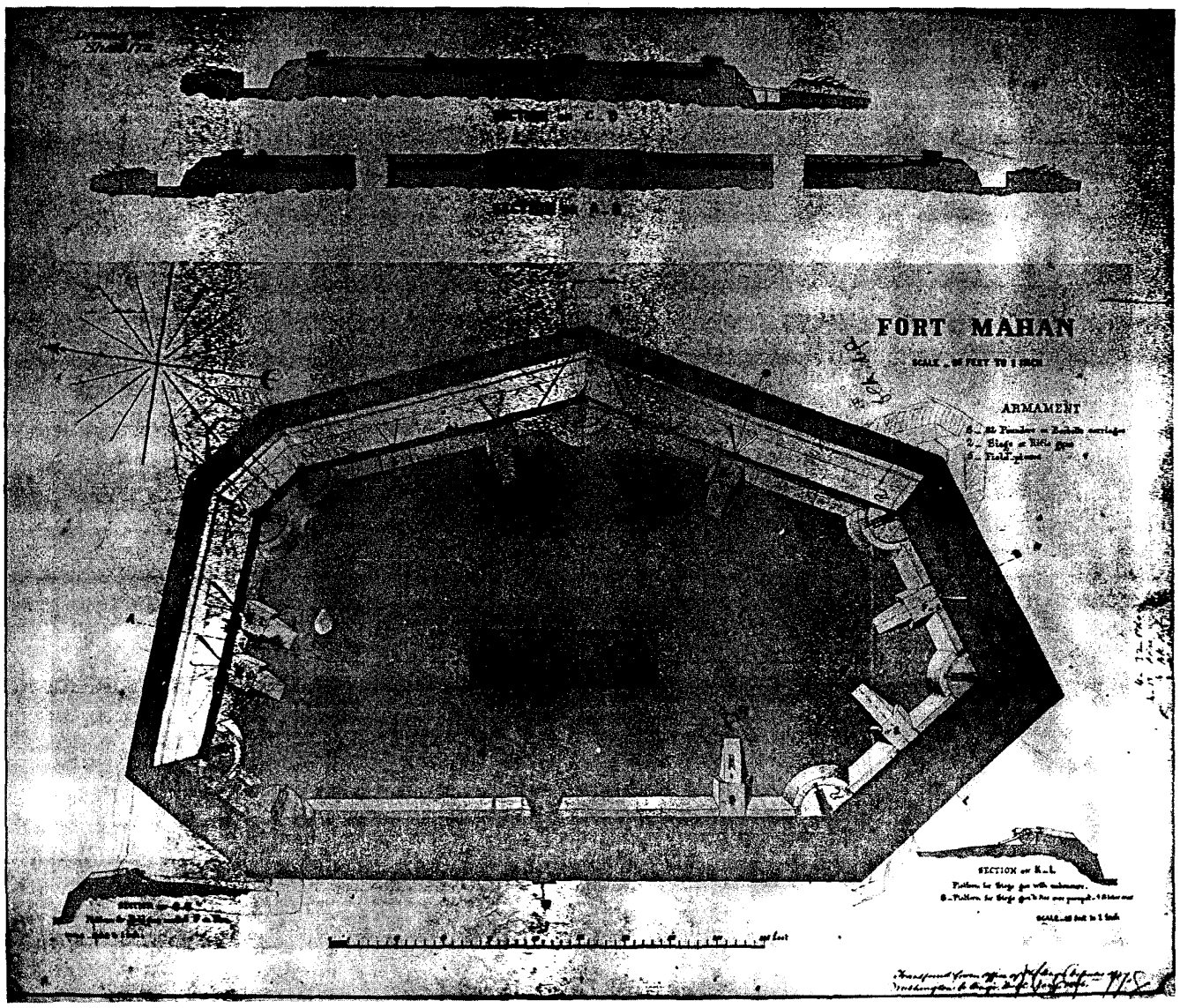
Picket details from the eastern fronts went out by night to raid chicken coops and civilian gardens. Runaway slaves came into the lines daily with fresh produce and soon attached themselves as servants to the officers (or were hustled off to Contraband camps in the city). Service east of the Anacostia was a mixed bag. The regimental historian of the 88th Pennsylania Volunteers suggested the essential truth of it all. His unit spent its tour guarding nine miles of forts east of the river but saw nothing of any enemy save rabbits, crows, and mud!

Today, some of the best-preserved examples of individual forts in the defense system may be found in parks in this section of Washington. They are all but forgotten by both students of the war as well as local citizens.

GUARDING THE APPROACHES TO BENNING'S BRIDGE

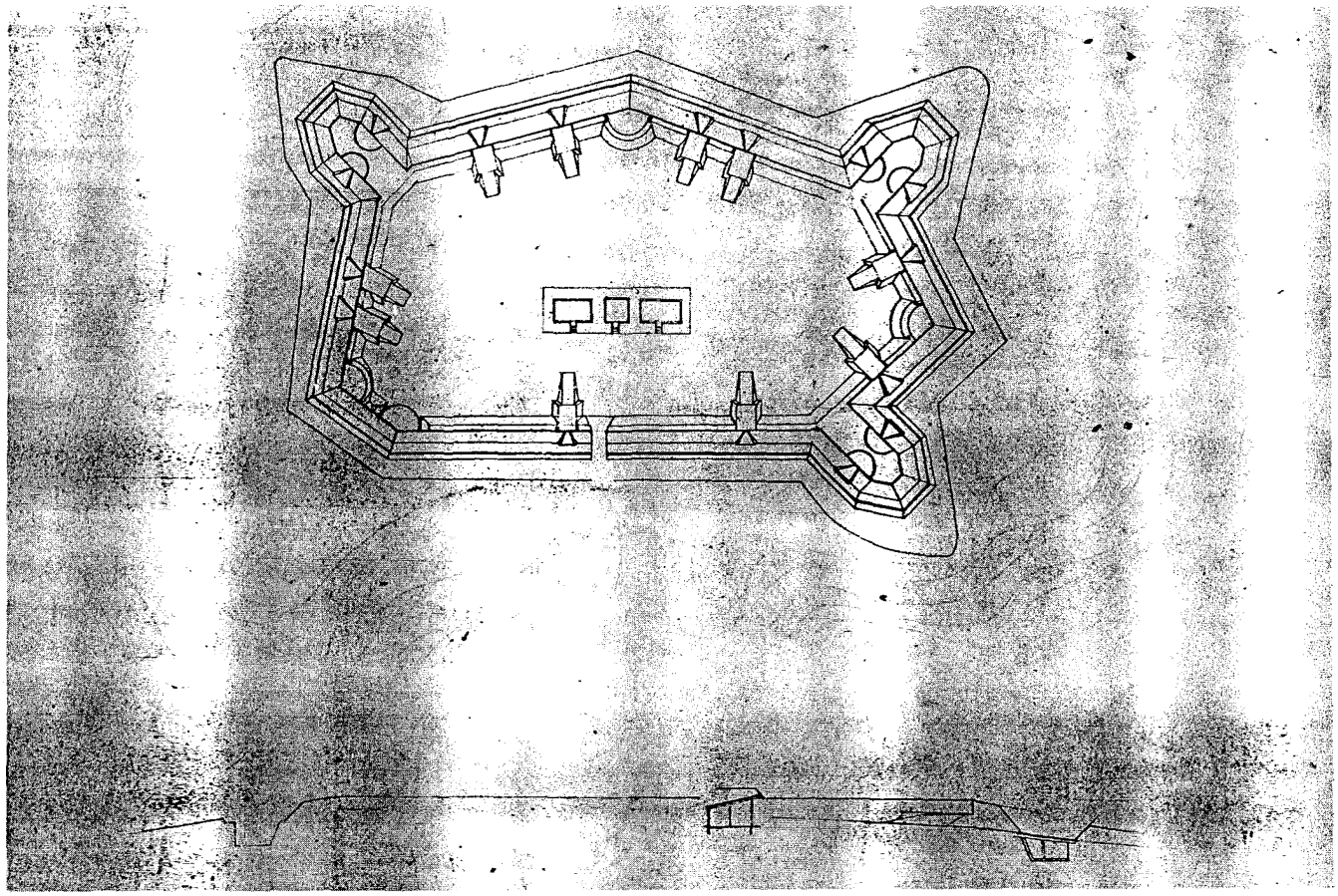
Fort Mahan, Fort Chaplin, "Fort of Circular Form," and "Fort On Kennedy's Hill"

The primary purpose of these complete and incomplete forts was to guard the approach to Washington from southern Maryland via the Benning's (Road) Bridge. A small stockaded *tete-a-pont* and earthwork also guarded the immediate entry to the bridge itself.



Fort Mahan (original) — Engineer Drawing *National Archives*

Fort Mahan



Fort Mahan (expanded) — Engineer Drawing *National Archives*

Location: *From Fort Lincoln Cemetery, turn left back onto Bladensburg Road (U.S. Route 1), south into Washington. Go approximately two miles (9 traffic lights), left onto 17th Street, NE; six traffic lights to Benning Road, NE; left across Anacostia River, railroad, and past Minnesota Avenue (traffic light) to Fort Mahan park on left at 42d Street and Benning Road; turn left at 42d Street (9th traffic light) and go to top of hill; park car and use service road into fort.*

Visible Remains:

Despite National Park Service maintenance, a modern playground has effectively destroyed much of Fort Mahan although some earthworks can be found north and south and east on hilltop; no interpretive markers.

Description:

Fort Mahan bore the name of West Point professor Dennis Hart Mahan (father of the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan), whose teaching helped prepare a generation of officers for the Civil War.

- This work underwent considerable modification during the war. As finally modified, it was an irregular nine-sided fortification with a perimeter of 354 yards. The steep hillsides demanded additional rifle-pits as well as a battery west of the main work to cover the open ground toward Benning's Bridge, called Battery Mahan.

- In addition to the additional 400 yards of rifle-pits, various "bastionets" were projected from three angles of the counterscarp to provide reverse and covering fire for these exterior slopes. Early's raid promoted further engineering refinements including the laying of abatis and additional rifle-pits toward the river to prevent flanking movements.

- The armament of this work likewise underwent changes and aptly illustrated the type of evolution and

experimentation carried on in the defense system. The 1862 plans called for eight 32-pdr. seacoast guns *(en barbette)*, plus seven empty platforms. Still another early return listed eight 32-pdrs., two 24-pdr. field howitzers, three 10-pdr. Parrotts, and two empty platforms. On January 1, 1863, the listing noted eight 32-pdrs., three 12-pdr. field and two 6-pdr. field guns, one 30-pdr. Parrott, one 8-inch siege howitzer, one 10-inch and one 24-pdr. Coehorn mortar. Late in 1864, Fort Mahan's armament listed two 8-inch siege howitzers *(en embrasure)*, four 32-pdr. seacoast guns *(en barbette)*, four 24-pdr. field howitzers *(en embrasure)*, three 12-pdr. howitzers *(en embrasure)*, plus the 10-inch and 24-pdr. Coehorn mortars. In the summer of 1865, following abandonment of other forts, this work found its seacoast guns replaced by field guns, since Fort Mahan was one of eleven forts in the system scheduled for retention. Battery Mahan had four vacant platforms.

- Fort Mahan was constructed on the property of Dr. William Manning and commanded the junction of Benning's Road and Eastern Branch Road (now Minnesota Avenue, NE). Engineers pronounced that the work "commands the valley of the Eastern Branch as far as Bladensburg." Barnard contended that the fort exercised "a powerful influence in preventing an enemy, coming from the direction of Bladensburg from reaching the margins of the Anacostia opposite Washington." Since it was a relatively isolated work, he felt that it could hold out for a few days without external aid from other friendly forces.

- Fort Mahan's authorized garrison numbered 531 infantry and 216 artillerymen. Seldom at that strength, among the units stationed there were the following:

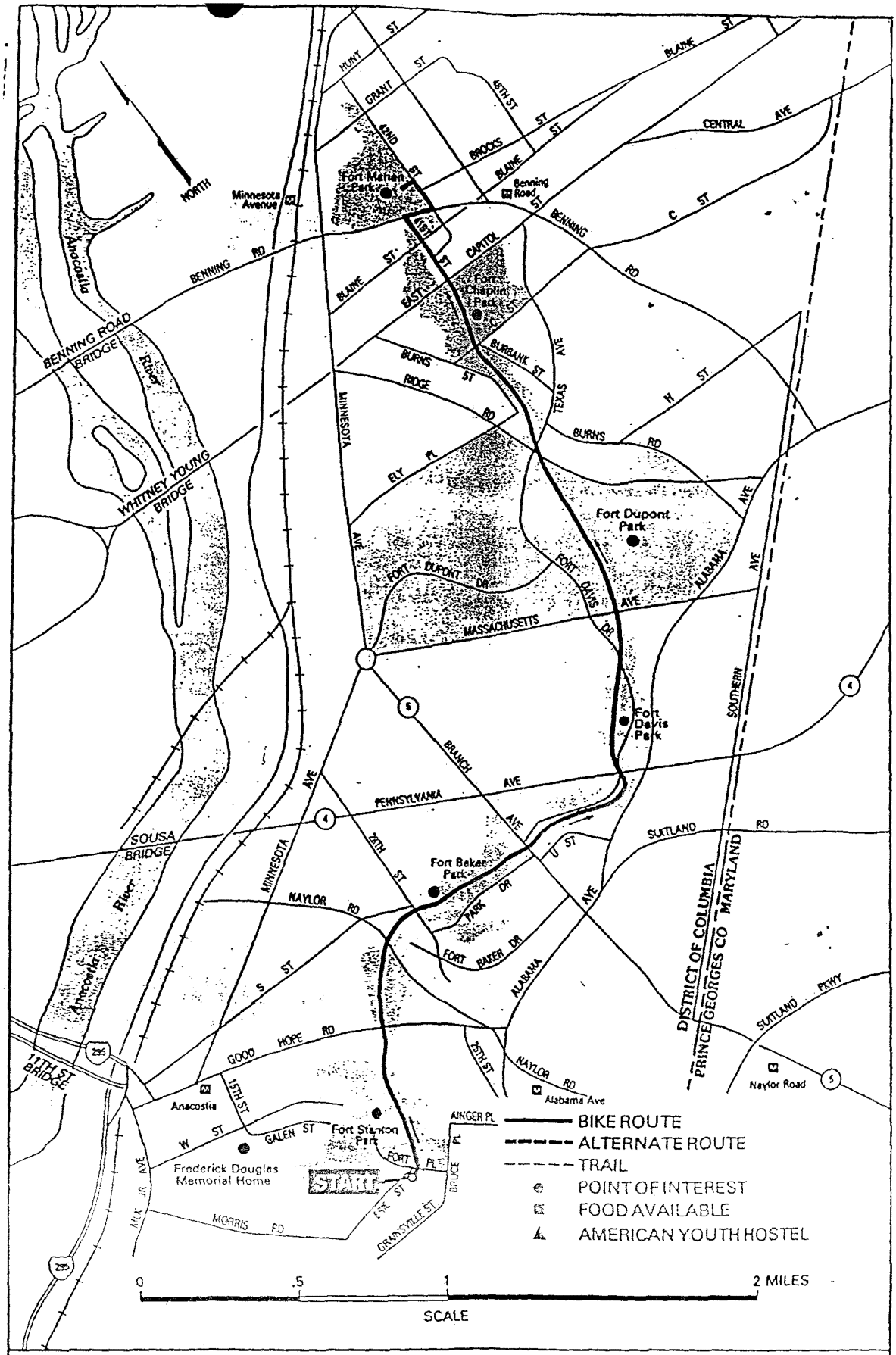
Regiment	Unit	Dates
99th Pa. Vol. Inf.	—	Feb. 19-May 20, 1862
112th Pa. Vol. Inf.	Co. K	May 20-Sept. 12, 1862
17th Maine Vol. Inf.	Co. H?	Aug. 24-Oct. 7, 1862
19th Maine Vol. Inf.	C & G	Aug. 30-Sept. 27, 1862
19th Maine Vol. Inf.	F	Sept. 12-Sept. 30, 1862
10th NY Heavy Art.	E	Sept. 27, 1862 Mar. 24, 1864
9th NY Heavy Art.	B	March 26-May 10, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	6th Co. Mass Vol. HA	May 7-11, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	11th Co., Mass. Vol. HA	May 11-Sept. 29, 1864
Knap's (Knapp's) Ind Art Battalion (Pa.)	C	May 31-June, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	17th Co. Mass. Vol. HA	Sept. 17-29, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	10th Co. Mass. Vol. HA (detach)	Sept. 28-Oct. 14, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	7th Co. Mass. Vol. HA	Oct. 14-22, 1864; Dec. 1, 1864-June 18, 1865
Veteran Reserves	—	Nov. 6, 1864-Nov. 16, 1864
3d Mass. Heavy Art.	9th Co. Mass. Vol. HA (detach)	Nov. 17-Dec. 1, 1864
2d Conn. Heavy Art.	B	June 6-29, 1865
	D	June 6-27, 1865
1st Maine Heavy Art.	A	June 27-Aug. 24, 1865

- Fort Mahan was the site of numerous additional outbuildings for the garrison and laborers in the area. A guardhouse, two barracks, at least one officers' quarters, a mess house, stable, and possibly some sheds — some twelve frame and log structures — could be found here, with an officers' quarters and barracks located within the earthworks. About one-quarter mile to the rear lay Camp Franklin, an extensive labor camp for workers at the forts east of the Anacostia. Permanent structures included a superintendent's office, cookhouse, mess room, carpenters shop, blacksmith's shop, and stables, as well as a vast "tent city" for laborers. In December 1861, seventy-five pounds of codfish, seventy-five pounds of fresh beef, a barrel of salt beef, a barrel of salt pork, a sack of corn, and two sacks of potatoes were sent to Fort Mahan to feed both laborers and soldiers billeted there.

- A gale in February 1862 blew down all the tents along the eastern lines necessitating erection of permanent barracks at places like Fort Mahan. That the permanent barracks spawned dens of vice was reflected in the arrest on one occasion in 1864 of Jefferson Vantray for selling liquor from his home to the nearby garrison at Fort Mahan.

- More praiseworthy was Sergeant Ebenezar Page's daughter, who, while visiting her father in the 9th New York Heavy Artillery, established a school for the soldiers in the Fort Mahan mess hall, charging 50 cents a pupil.

- When eventually abandoned, Fort Mahan reverted to Mary M. Manning. She had claimed damages in 1864, and the next year purchased the abatis around the fort for $31.00 at auction.



71. FORT CIRCLE TRAIL

District of Columbia

INTS OF INTEREST: Frederick Douglass Memorial Home near start; **acostia Museum (202-357-2700) near start; Fort Stanton near start; Fort ker at 0.5 miles; Fort Davis at 2.0 miles; Fort Dupont at 2.6 miles; Fort aplin at 3.7 miles; and Fort Mahan at 4.2 miles.**

OD: Available along the route near major crossroads.

PS: *ADC's Washington Area Bike Map.*

LES DIRECTIONS & COMMENTS

0.0 From the Anacostia Museum, cross Fort Place SE and follow path up hill to a **left** onto the **TRAIL.** Continue down steep hill, over bridge. **Left** at fork.

0.5 Cross Good Hope Road SE. Enter Fort Baker Park.

0.9 Cross Naylor Road SE.

1.1 **Jog left** on **28TH STREET SE.** (Off-road path along road on west side.)

1.6 **Left** along **PARK DRIVE SE** for one block. Cross Branch Avenue SE.

2.0 Cross Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Enter Fort Davis Park.

2.5 Cross Fort Davis Drive SE. Path is asphalt here.

2.6 Cross Massachusetts Avenue SE. Enter Fort Dupont Park. **Bear left** at fork. (Go right here for side trip to Fort Dupont.) **Two left turns** approaching Ridge Road SE to remain on **TRAIL.**

3.3 **Diagonal left** over Ridge Road SE and Fort Davis Drive SE (Texas Avenue SE).

3.7 **Jog right** at C Street SE. Trail starts before Burbank Street SE. *Caution: trail may be hard to find; overgrown vegetation and no sign on west side.* Enter Fort Chaplin.

3.9 **Diagonal left** at East Capitol Street. Continue to climb hill on diagonal.

4.1 **Straight** on **ASPHALT PATH** for approximately 30 feet, then **right** onto **GRAVEL PATH** again. Straight on **41ST STREET NE** to end.

4.2 Cross Benning Road NE. Enter Fort Mahan Park. Go up **UNMARKED EMBANKMENT** to asphalt path. **Right** on **PATH,** which curves to the left to parallel 42nd Street NE.

4.6 Trail **ends** at **42ND STREET NE** and **GRAND STREET NE.** (Go left on Grand Street NE to the Minnesota Avenue Metro station.)