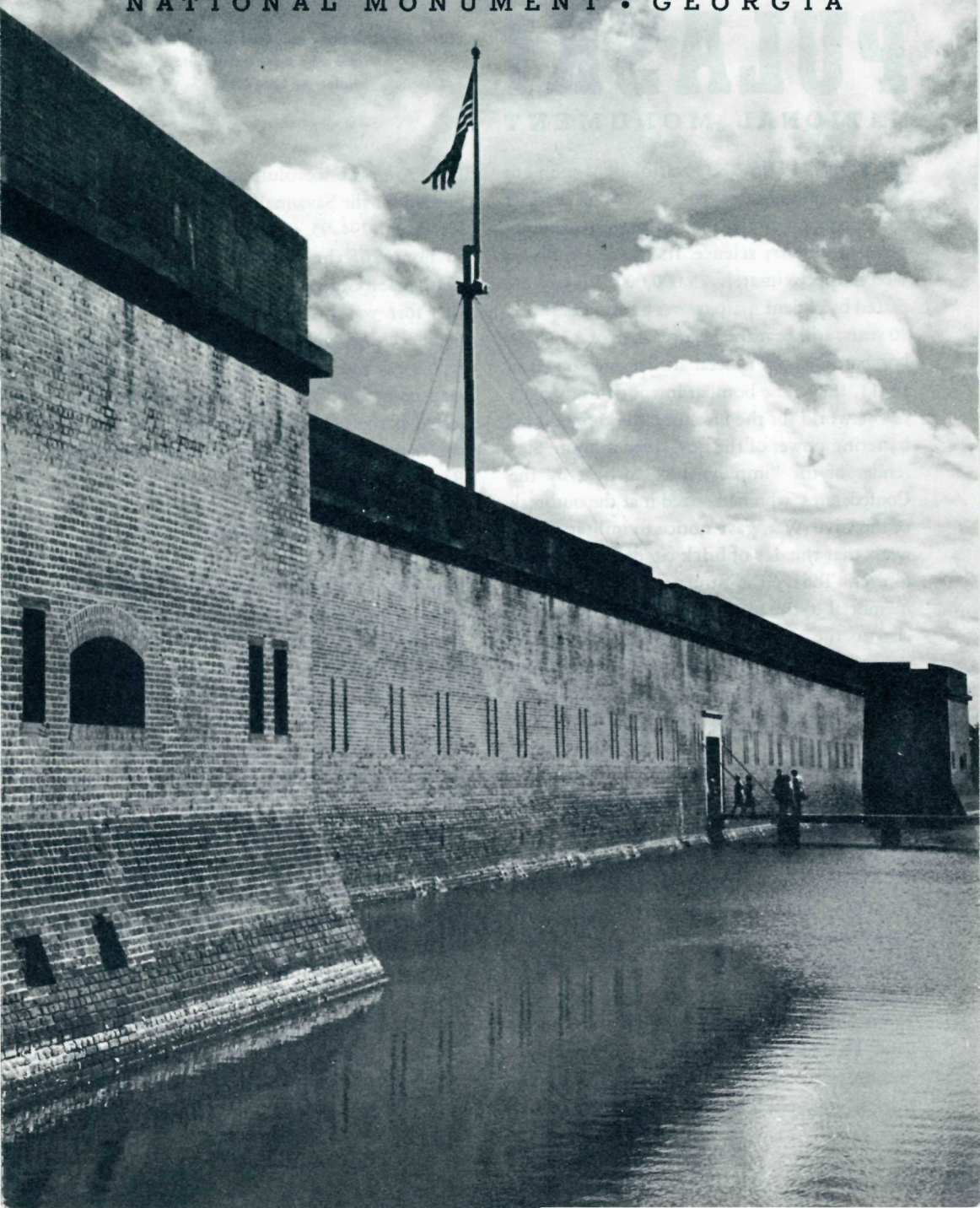


# FORT PULASKI

NATIONAL MONUMENT • GEORGIA



# FORT PULASKI

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

FORT PULASKI National Monument commemorates the end of a distinct chapter in the ever-changing development of military science. Its massive walls, in which approximately 25,000,000 bricks were placed by patient masons over a period of nearly 20 years, still bear the historic scars of a 30-hour bombardment by Federal artillerymen on April 10–11, 1862. The bombardment demonstrated to the world for the first time the tremendous battering power of the new rifled cannon. Surrender of the “impregnable” fortress by the Confederates, who had seized it at the outbreak of the Civil War, gave notice to military engineers that the day of brick citadels had passed forever. Today, the structure is not only a memorial to the fortitude of its defenders, but also to the valor of Count Casimir Pulaski, Polish friend of America during the Revolution, who fell at the Siege of Savannah in 1779 and whose name the fort bears.

### *Cockspur Island*

LYING at the mouth of the Savannah River, Cockspur Island has played a significant role in the economic development and military defense of coastal Georgia. In the past two centuries, three forts have been built on this small marsh island. Fort George, a palisaded log blockhouse and earthen fortification, was begun in 1761 by the Colonial Government to defend the harbor of Savannah and enforce customs and quarantine laws. This early fortification, partially destroyed by storms, was dismantled in 1776 by the Americans upon the approach of the British

fleet. After the Revolution, new defenses were needed for the Savannah River, and the United States, in 1794–95, erected Fort Greene, named in honor of the Revolutionary hero, Gen. Nathanael Greene. Unfortunately, the life of this fort was brief and tragic, for the great equinoctial gale of 1804 completely demolished its battery and barracks. A quarter of a century elapsed before Cockspur Island was again selected as the site of a fortification to command the South Atlantic coast and the Savannah River valley.

### *Building of Fort Pulaski*

THE War of 1812 had shown the great weakness of American coastal defenses. In 1816, Congress created a military Board of Engineers for Seacoast Fortifications which undertook to devise a new scheme of national defense to consist largely of the erection of new brick fortifications along our exposed coast lines. As a part of this plan, Cockspur Island was chosen as the site of a new fort in the early 1820's.

Brig. Gen. Simon Bernard, famed military engineer of Napoleon, who was associated with the new fortifications board from 1816 to 1831, developed preliminary plans for the Cockspur fort in 1827, and work was begun 2 years later under the direction of Maj. Samuel Babcock. Robert E. Lee's first appointment after his graduation from West Point, in 1829, was to Cockspur Island, where he assisted with the early work on the fort until 1831. Early in 1831, Lt. J. K. F. Mansfield replaced Major Babcock

in command at Cockspur Island. Under Mansfield's supervision, Bernard's plans for the fort were revised, and the structure was built largely during the 14 years of his administration. In 1833, the new fort was named Pulaski in honor of Count Casimir Pulaski.

Construction continued at Fort Pulaski more or less continuously from 1829 to 1847. It was an enormous project. Lumber, lime, lead, iron, and other building supplies were bought both in the North and South in large quantities for the project. Nearly a million dollars was spent on Fort Pulaski, but in one respect it was never finished. Its armament was to include about 140 cannon, but at the beginning of the Civil War only 20 cannon had been mounted, and even these were not in a serviceable condition.

### *Siege and Surrender of Fort Pulaski*

DURING the tumultuous days that immediately preceded the outbreak of the Civil War, Fort Pulaski had not been garrisoned by the United States. To prevent Federal troops from occupying it, Governor Brown, of Georgia, ordered

it seized on January 3, 1861. Georgia seceded from the Union on January 19, and on March 20 the fort was transferred to the Government of the Confederacy.

Soon the Confederates undertook to prepare Fort Pulaski for the inevitable battle which was to be waged for its possession. Located about a mile from the nearest high land on Tybee Island, it was then believed that the fort could never be taken. One high military authority even said: “You might as well cannonade the Rocky Mountains as Fort Pulaski.” Early in November 1861, Gen. Robert E. Lee, then in command of the Confederate defenses on the southeastern coast, arrived at Fort Pulaski for a brief inspection of its preparations for defense. It is related that at that time, while referring to possible Federal batteries on Tybee Island, he observed to the fort's commandant, Col. Charles H. Olmstead: “Colonel, they will make it very warm for you with shells from that point but they cannot breach at that distance.” About 800 yards was then universally accepted in military circles as the distance from which a brick fortification could be breached with ordinary cannon. This belief was soon to be shattered

when the real test of Fort Pulaski's strength came early in 1862.

While cannon and munitions were being brought by the Confederates to Cockspur Island in the fall of 1861, a large Federal military and naval force was moving southward by sea, capturing and blockading ports along the Atlantic coast as it came. From a base on Hilton Head Island, S. C., about 15 miles from Cockspur, the Federal attack on Fort Pulaski was planned.

Federal batteries of the new rifled cannon, together with regular cannon, were set up on Tybee Island, opposite the fort, early in 1862. Early on the morning of April 10, when the Federal forces were all in readiness, the Union commander, Maj. Gen. David Hunter, sent a communication to Colonel Olmstead demanding the unconditional surrender of Fort Pulaski. To this Colonel Olmstead replied without hesitancy: “I am here to defend the Fort, not to surrender it.” The Federals immediately began a 30-hour bombardment, during which the southeastern angle and wall of Fort Pulaski were successfully breached, forcing the 25-year-old Colonel Olmstead to surrender about 2 p. m. on April 11. The supposedly impregnable fortress had fallen, and with it were captured 385 officers and men, 48 cannon, and a large quantity of supplies.

Thus, Savannah, one of the principal seaports in the South, was cut off from all foreign trade. Since the fort was never relinquished by the Federals, it was an effective unit in the blockade that was eventually to throttle the economic life of the South. Its casemates also served as a military and political prison in 1864–65.

The siege of Fort Pulaski, moreover, was a landmark in military history. The breaching of the fort's massive brick walls by projectiles from rifled cannon demonstrated for the first time that the old type of brick and masonry fortifications could not withstand the fire of modern guns.

In 1880, Fort Pulaski was abandoned as an active post, and while temporary defense meas-



*The Arches.* Photo by O. Gregg Wilson.

ures were taken within the structure and on the island during the Spanish-American War no occasion arose to use these defenses against the enemy.

### *The National Monument*

FORT PULASKI National Monument consists of Federal lands on McQueens and Cockspur Islands. The fort lies on Cockspur Island, surrounded by marsh and woods where an array of birds and semitropical plants are found.

### *Wesley Memorial*

THE memorial stands on approximately the site where John Wesley knelt to give thanks for a safe crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. On coming to America as a missionary to the Indians, Wesley landed on Cockspur Island, then called Peeper Island, on February 6, 1736. To commemorate this event, the Georgia Society, Colonial Dames of America, erected the memorial cross.

*Aerial view of Fort Pulaski.*





The Ramparts. Photo by O. Gregg Wilson.

### How to Reach the Monument

FORT PULASKI is 17 miles east of Savannah by way of U.S. 80. The entrance to the monument is on McQueens Island at U.S. 80. Transportation can be arranged with private companies in Savannah.

### About Your Visit

You can visit the monument from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. except on Christmas Day. Those who plan to visit in a group can make advance arrangements with the superintendent for special service. A small fee is charged for entrance to the fort unless you hold a Federal Recreation Area Entrance Permit. Fees are not charged for persons under 16 years and groups from educational institutions and those in charge of such groups, regardless of age.

### Administration

FORT PULASKI National Monument, established on Oct. 15, 1924, and containing 5,364 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 98, Savannah Beach, Ga., 31328, is in immediate charge of the park.

### America's Natural Resources

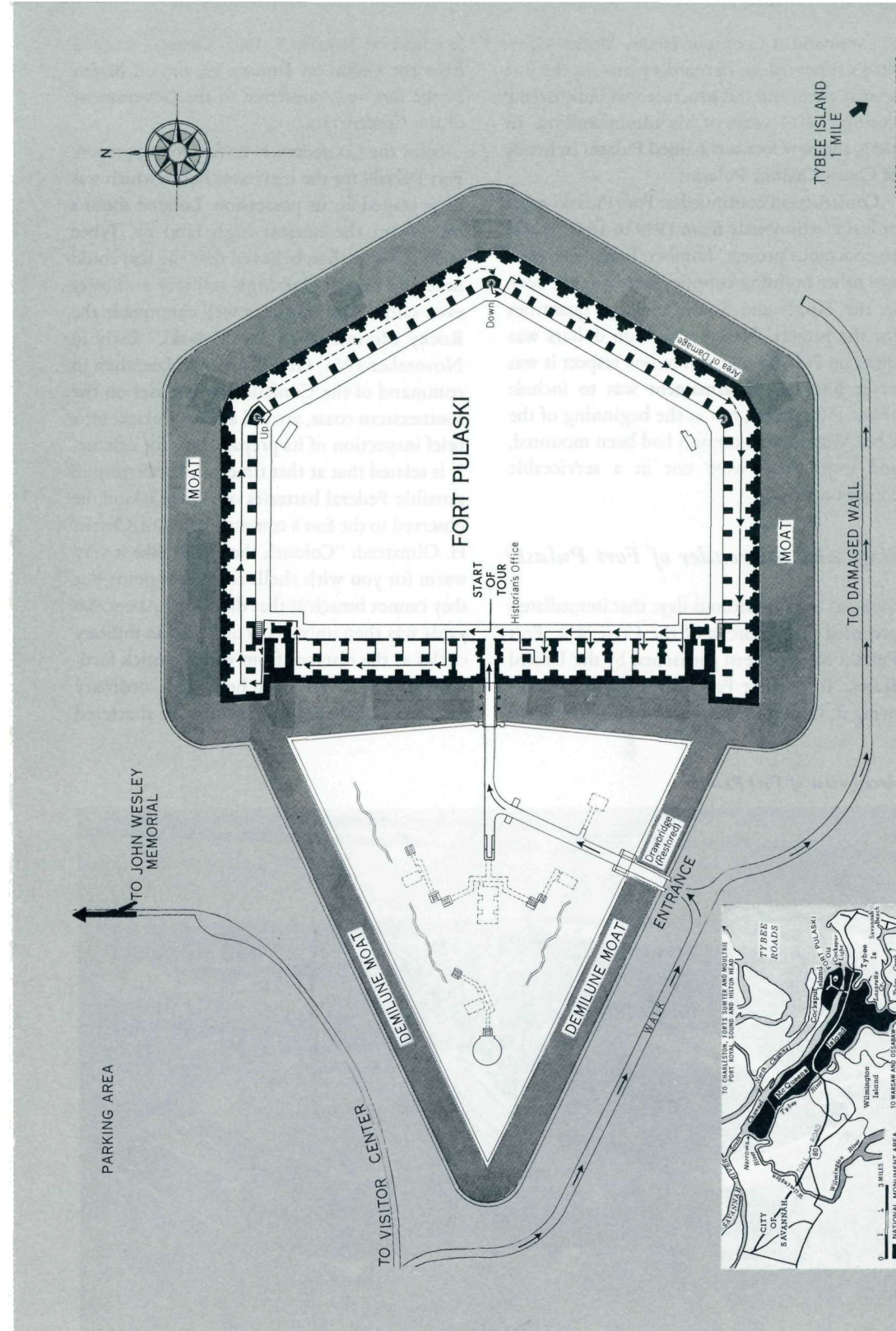
CREATED in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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