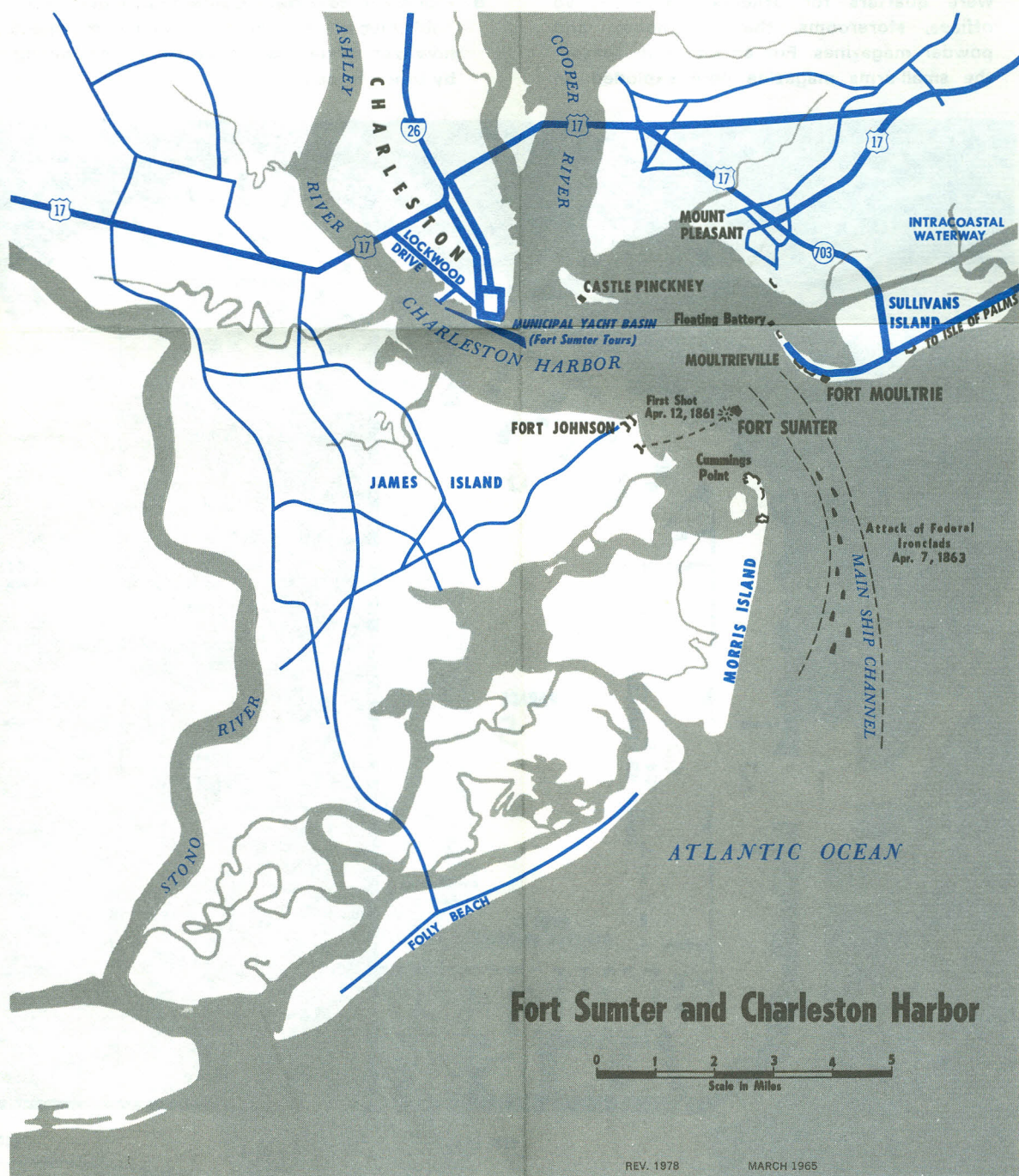# Fort Sumter

NATIONAL MONUMENT • SOUTH CAROLINA

Fort Sumter was one of a series of coastal fortifications built by the United States after the War of 1812. The five-sided fort, erected on a shoal and named for South Carolina's Revolutionary War patriot Thomas Sumter, was started in 1829 and essentially completed by 1860. Though no guns were in place, the 5-foot-thick brick walls towered above the main ship channel into Charleston Harbor. Four sides were designed for three tiers of guns; the gorge mounted guns only on the third tier. Piercing the center of the gorge was a sally port which opened onto a quay and a wharf. Although the fort was designed for an armament of 135 guns and a garrison of 650 men, by April 1861 only 60 cannon were mounted and 85 men defended the place.

At 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, a mortar shell from Fort Johnson arched across the sky and exploded almost directly over Fort Sumter. Its quick flash signaled other Confederate batteries ringing Charleston Harbor, and within minutes 43 guns and mortars opened fire. For 34 hours the stout masonry fort was pounded with shot and shell. Then, on April 14, Maj. Robert Anderson, commanding Sumter's garrison, agreed to evacuate, departing with full honors of war. The next day President Lincoln called out 75,000 militia and the shadow of war fell across the land.

For nearly 4 years Fort Sumter remained a Confederate stronghold, despite frequent Union attempts to capture both it and Fort Moultrie directly across the channel. From April 1863, when Federal ironclads first tried to force the harbor, until February 1865, when the approach of Sherman's army forced the evacuation of Charleston, the garrisons of both Sumter and Moultrie withstood repeated bombardments and attacks. At the end, buttressed with sand and cotton as well as its own fallen masonry, Fort Sumter was stronger than ever.

Fort Sumter and Charleston Harbor

Scale in Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5

A WALKING TOUR OF FORT SUMTER

Use the following guide with the accompanying plan of the fort. Remember that relics are not to be removed or disturbed, and, please, no pets inside the fort.

1. **Sally port.** The wall here is about half its original height. The sally port, built after the Civil War, replaced a gun embrasure.

2. **Left flank casemates.** The first tier of casemates (gunrooms) was surmounted by a second tier. This pattern was followed on all walls except the gorge.

3. **Enlisted men's barracks.** Paralleling the left flank casemates, a three-story building here had a messhall on the first floor and sleeping quarters on the upper floor. On the right flank was another enlisted men's barracks.

4. **Officers' quarters.** A three-story building extended the entire length of the gorge. In it were quarters for officers, administrative offices, storerooms, the guardhouse, and powder magazines. For an unknown reason, the small-arms magazine here exploded on December 11, 1863, killing 11 and wounding 41 Confederates. The explosion also tilted the arch over the magazine's entrance.

5. **Parade.** When Battery Huger was built in 1899, the remainder of the parade was filled with sand. The National Park Service removed 20 feet of fill in this area in 1959.

6. **Left face.** The left face casemates were destroyed by the reverse fire of Union guns on Morris Island, 1863-65. Several projectiles still protrude from the wall. Outside the casemate ruins are two 15-inch Rodman guns, an 8-inch Columbiad, and a 10-inch mortar.

7. **Right face.** Union forces on Morris Island fired these eleven 100-pounder Parrott guns against Fort Sumter. After the war, the Army moved them here.

8. **Right gorge angle.** From a gun in the first tier casemates, Capt. Abner Doubleday began the return fire from Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.

9. **Mountain howitzer.** Confederates used light field pieces like this 12-pounder mountain howitzer, to defend against a surprise landing by Union forces.
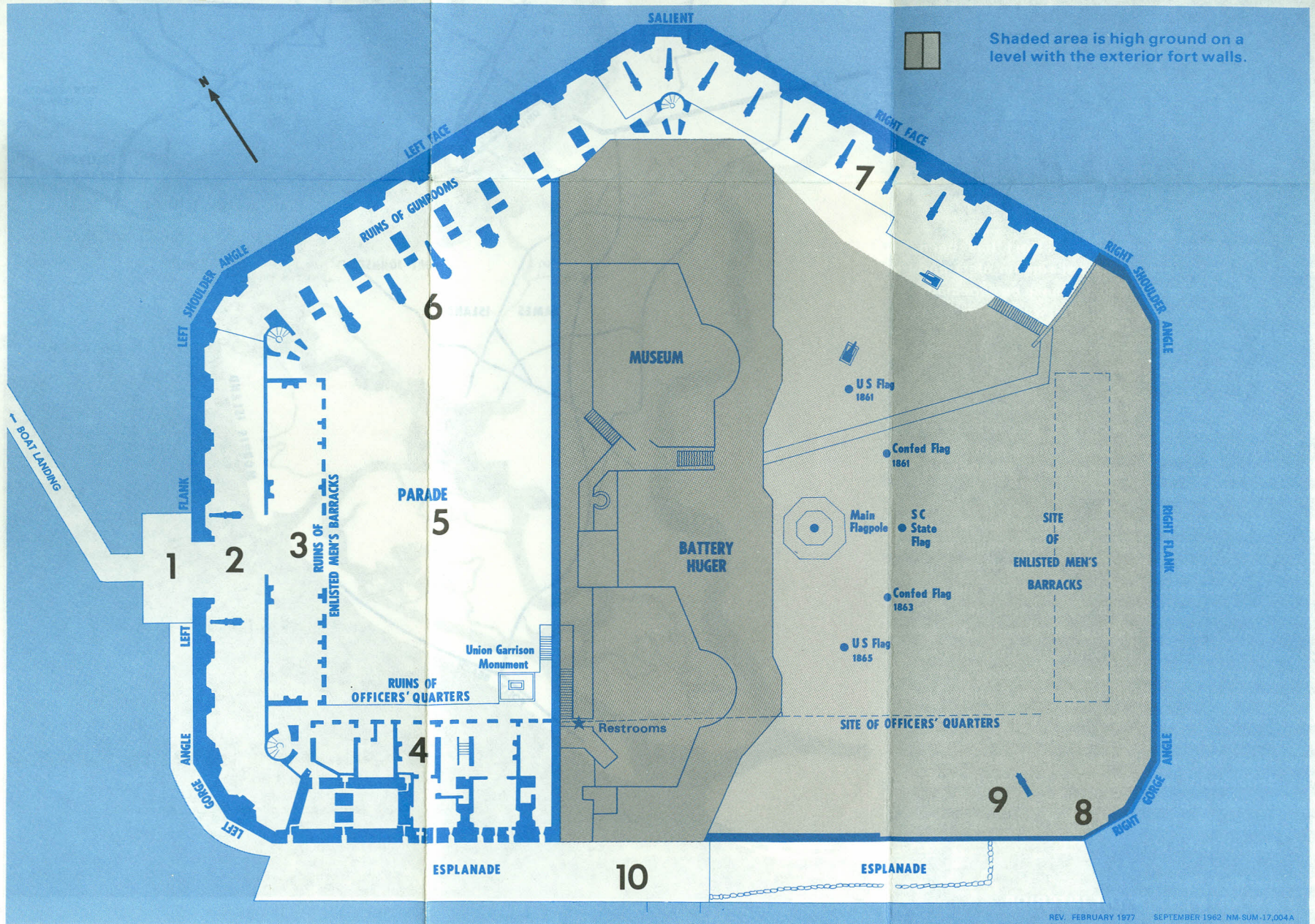
10. **Esplanade.** A 25½-foot-wide promenade ran the full length of the gorge exterior, and a 171-foot wharf extended from the sally port. This was the fort's original entrance.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Fort Sumter National Monument is located in Charleston Harbor and can be reached only by boat. The fort is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. between June 15 and Labor Day. At other times of the year the hours vary and can be ascertained by calling (803) 883-3123. The fort is closed December 25.

Tour boats operated by a National Park Service concessionaire leave from the City Marina on Lockwood Drive, just south of U.S. 17 in Charleston. For boat schedules, call (803) 722-1691 or write Fort Sumter Tours, Inc., P.O. Box 59, Charleston, SC 29402.

Another unit administered by Fort Sumter National Monument is Fort Moultrie. It is located on Sullivan's Island and can be reached by automobile. Take S.C. 703 from U.S. 17 in Mt. Pleasant and follow the signs to the visitor center on Middle Street.

SALIENT

N

RIGHT FACE

LEFT FACE

7

RUINS OF GUNROOMS

LEFT SHOULDER ANGLE

RIGHT SHOULDER ANGLE

6

MUSEUM

U S Flag
1861

BOAT LANDING

FLANK

RUINS OF ENLISTED MEN'S BARRACKS

PARADE

5

Confed Flag
1861

RIGHT FLANK

Main
Flagpole

S C
State
Flag

SITE
OF
ENLISTED MEN'S
BARRACKS

1   2   3

LEFT

BATTERY
HUGER

Confed Flag
1863

Union Garrison
Monument

RUINS OF
OFFICERS' QUARTERS

U S Flag
1865

LEFT GORGE ANGLE

4

★ Restrooms

SITE OF OFFICERS' QUARTERS

RIGHT GORGE ANGLE

9   8

ESPLANADE

10

ESPLANADE

Have a safe visit. While every effort has been made for your safety, you must remain alert and cautious in all areas of the fort. Please be especially careful on uneven surfaces, stairways, and near the chain barriers.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Sumter National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 1214 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, SC 29482 is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR