



# Foundation Document Overview

## Fort Sumter National Monument

South Carolina



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*FORT SUMTER NATIONAL MONUMENT commemorates historical events in and around Charleston Harbor by preserving, protecting, and interpreting 171 years of coastal defense and the site where the first shots of the American Civil War were fired.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Fort Sumter National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Fort Sumter National Monument preserves the sites of both Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie in Charleston Harbor. Together these sites preserve elements of all major periods of American seacoast defense and bear witness to a continuum of American history from the battle of Sullivan's Island in the American Revolution through U-boat surveillance operations during World War II.
- The assemblage of cannons at both Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie comprise the most comprehensive collection of historic coastal artillery found in the United States.
- The Battle of Sullivan's Island, which took place on the site that would become Fort Moultrie, was the first decisive victory for colonial forces over the British Royal Navy during the American Revolution, postponing the capture of Charleston for four years and emboldening the patriots to continue the fight for independence.
- Fort Sumter National Monument interprets the former sites of Gadsden's Wharf and quarantine stations on Sullivan's Island, where approximately 40% of all enslaved Africans transported to America disembarked, providing important connections between the history of the slave trade and the experiences of enslaved people in America.



## Significance

- Fort Sumter National Monument protects the site where the first shots of the American Civil War fell on April 12, 1861, initiating one of the most critical and defining periods in the nation's history.
- Because of its strategic location and its role as a symbol of secession, Fort Sumter became the most heavily bombarded location of the entire American Civil War, eventually being reduced to ruins.
- The museum collection at Fort Sumter National Monument includes four unique flags: the 33-star Fort Sumter Storm and Garrison flags, the Palmetto Guard Flag of the Palmetto Guard (a South Carolina militia unit), and the 35-star US "Colorado" flag. The Storm flag flew during the initial bombardment of Fort Sumter and was lowered during the fort's evacuation. The same flag was raised again four years later as a powerful symbol of the conclusion of the American Civil War and the reunion of the nation.
- Built in 1962, the Charleston Light, more commonly known as the Sullivan's Island Lighthouse, was the last lighthouse constructed in the United States to serve as a navigational aid for ships. The lighthouse and the US Coast Guard District on Sullivan's Island illustrate the evolution of events and uses important in US maritime history from 1895–1962.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Fort Sumter**
- **Fort Moultrie**
- **Cultural Landscape of Fort Moultrie Military Reservation**
- **US Coast Guard Historic District on Sullivan's Island**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Connections to Charleston**
- **Views and Vistas**
- **Solemnity of Site**

Fort Sumter National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Marked Gravesites**
- **Maritime Forest**
- **Submerged Lands and Shoals**



# Description

Fort Sumter National Monument is located in and around the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. It consists of four geographically separate areas: (1) Fort Sumter, an island fort situated at the entrance of Charleston Harbor; (2) Fort Moultrie, located 1 mile northeast of the entrance of the harbor on Sullivan's Island; (3) the US Coast Guard Historic District on Sullivan's Island; and (4) Liberty Square, a downtown Charleston location that is home to the park's primary visitor center and tour boat facility.

Fort Sumter was still under construction when South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. Over the next few months the fort quickly became the focal point of political and military events that resulted in the opening bombardment of the American Civil War, earning Fort Sumter a significant place in American history. Following its active military use, Fort Sumter was eventually transferred from the War Department to the National Park Service by joint resolution on April 28, 1948. The National Park Service later accepted jurisdiction of Fort Moultrie in 1960 under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Fort Moultrie is situated on Sullivan's Island about one mile northeast of Fort Sumter. It is the site of the first major patriot victory during the American Revolution and is representative of more than 170 years of American coastal defense.

Liberty Square in downtown Charleston is another key part of Fort Sumter National Monument. Once the site of Gadsden's Wharf, one of the largest industrial, maritime, and slave ports in America, Liberty Square has changed significantly over the years. Liberty Square connects the National Park Service with the City of Charleston and provides a space to interact with the public. Fort Sumter National Monument also manages the US Coast Guard Historic District on Sullivan's Island near Fort Moultrie. This historic district represents the evolution of US maritime history from 1895 to 1962, including buildings for the early United States Life-Saving Service era to the modern US Coast Guard. The one-acre site includes the historic boathouse, life-saving quarters, and the iconic the Charleston Light, more commonly known as the Sullivan's Island Lighthouse.

Today Fort Sumter National Monument encompasses 196.9 acres and four separate sites throughout Charleston Harbor. The National Park Service owns 166.9 acres in fee simple, and holds a scenic easement on 30 acres adjacent to Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. More than just one moment in time, Fort Sumter National Monument strives to protect and share the legacy of America's coastal defenses within the context of historic Charleston harbor.

