

FORT SUMNER

NATIONAL MONUMENT, SOUTH CAROLINA

THE UNION IS DISSOLVED

trumpeted the Charleston *Mercury* headline. After decades of sectional conflict, South Carolinians responded to the election of the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, by voting unanimously in convention on December 20, 1860, to secede from the Union. Within 6 weeks five other States—Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana—followed the example. Early in February 1861 they met in Montgomery, Ala., adopted a constitution, set up a provisional government—the Confederate States of America—and elected Jefferson Davis as President. By March 2, when Texas joined the Confederacy, nearly all the forts and navy yards in the seven States had been seized by the new power. Fort Sumter, still under construction, was one of a handful that remained in Federal hands.

When South Carolina left the Union, the only post in Charleston Harbor garrisoned by United States troops was Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. There, Maj. Robert Anderson commanded two companies of the First U.S. Artillery. But 6 days after the secession ordinance, Anderson, believing Moultrie to be indefensible, transferred his 85 men to Fort Sumter, 1 mile out in the harbor. He moved "to prevent the effusion of blood" and because he was certain that "if attacked my men must have been sacrificed, and the command of the harbor lost." Safely in the fort, he reported to Washington that he had only about a 4-month supply of provisions.

Charlestonians were outraged at Anderson's move. On December 27 South Carolina volunteers occupied Fort Moultrie and Castle Pinckney, another harbor fort, and began erecting batteries elsewhere around the harbor. Regarding Anderson's move as a breach of faith, the State demanded that the U.S. Government evacuate Charleston Harbor. Though President James Buchanan was anxious to conciliate, he refused to yield to this demand. Anderson's act had found support both in Buchanan's administration and throughout the North; the question now was whether the national government would support Major Anderson.

In January Buchanan attempted a relief expedition. As the *Star of the West*, carrying 200 men and several months' provisions, entered the harbor on January 9, South Carolina shore batteries opened fire and turned back the unarmed merchant vessel. Further relief plans were now shelved, since Anderson seemed to be in no immediate need and Buchanan wished to end his term of office in peace. Yet it was apparent that eventually the garrison would have to be supplied or the fort abandoned.

Here matters stood, as the Nation awaited the incoming administration. Defensive preparations continued at the fort, and early in March Brig. Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard took command of the Confederate troops at Charleston and pushed work on additional harbor fortifications. As the weeks rolled by, Fort Sumter gradually became the focal point of tensions between North and South.

On March 4 Abraham Lincoln assumed office as President of the United States. In a firm but conciliatory address he made it clear that he would uphold the national authority. The Government would not assail anyone, but neither would it consent to a division of the Union. "The power confided to me," he said, "will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government. . . ." Lincoln plainly meant to hold Fort Sumter. Unfortunately circumstances were such that this could not be done without an overt act on his part. On the same day Lincoln took office Anderson reported that his rations would last only a few more weeks. Throughout the rest of the month indecisive counsel swirled around Lincoln, as Anderson's supplies dwindled.

By April 4 Lincoln had made up his mind. Convinced that a relief expedition was feasible, Lincoln ordered supply steamers, sailing under cover of ships of war, to depart from New York on April 6. At the same time he notified Governor Francis W. Pickens of South Carolina that an attempt would be made to resupply the fort. After debate—and some disagreement—the Confederate cabinet telegraphed Beauregard on April 10 to fire on Sumter if absolutely necessary to prevent reinforcement.

Shortly after noon on April 11 a small boat flying a white flag left Charleston for Fort Sumter. In it were three officers carrying a message from Beauregard demanding evacuation. Anderson refused, but said he would be starved out in a few days anyway. Told of Anderson's statement, the Montgomery government instructed Beauregard not to precipitate bloodshed needlessly by bombarding the fort. Would Major Anderson say when he would evacuate Sumter? In a carefully worded reply Anderson said that he would leave Sumter by noon, April 15, unless before that time he should receive either instructions from Washington or additional supplies. He expected the relief expedition before that date.

Maj. Robert Anderson, Sumter's defender, returned to the fort on April 14, 1865, to raise again the flag he had pulled down 4 years earlier.



Charlestonians watched the opening bombardment, April 12-13, 1861, from housetops in the battery section of town.

HARPER'S WEEKLY, MAY 4, 1861.

The Confederates rejected his answer. At 3:20 a.m., April 12, they informed Anderson that their batteries would open fire in 1 hour.

At 10 minutes past the allotted hour Capt. George S. James, commanding Fort Johnson's east mortar battery, fired the signal shell. Within moments Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, firebrand and hero of the secessionist movement, touched off a gun in the ironclad battery at Cummings Point. By daybreak a ring of fire was assailing the fort, as batteries from Johnson, Moultrie, Cummings Point, and elsewhere joined in a general bombardment.

Major Anderson withheld his fire until 7 o'clock. Though some 60 guns stood ready, most never got into action. The heaviest guns, mounted on the parapet, were left unmanned to avoid casualties. For awhile 9 or 10 casemate guns returned fire, but by noon only 6 remained in action. At no time during the battle did the guns of Fort Sumter greatly damage Confederate positions. And sheltered in Sumter's brick caverns, the Federal troops suffered only five casualties.

Throughout the night the cannonading continued. The next morning about 9 o'clock a hot shot from Fort Moultrie set fire to the officers' quarters. As the blaze spread, the Confederates intensified their fire. In early afternoon the flagstaff was shot away.

About 2 p.m. on the 13th, Col. Louis Wigfall of Texas delivered an offer of truce to Anderson, who accepted it. Later he agreed on final surrender terms with Beauregard's aides.

On Sunday, April 14, Major Anderson and his garrison marched out of the fort after saluting the flag and boarded ship for transport to New York. They had defended Sumter for 34 hours, until "the quarters were entirely burned, the main gates destroyed by fire, the gorge walls seriously injured, the magazines surrounded by flames. . . ." Civil war, so long dreaded, had now begun.



Pounded by 3,500 tons of metal, Fort Sumter was a mass of rubble and ruin by war's end. This view shows the condition of the left flank and gorge (right) in February 1865.

With Fort Sumter in Confederate hands, the port of Charleston became an irritating loophole in the Federal naval blockade of the Atlantic coast. In 2 months of 1863, 21 Confederate vessels cleared Charleston and 15 entered. Into Charleston came needed war supplies; out went cotton in payment. To close the port—and also capture Charleston—it was necessary first to seize Fort Sumter, now repaired and armed with some 95 guns. The job fell to the Navy, after an earlier Army effort had failed on James Island, and Rear Adm. Samuel F. Du Pont was ordered to take the fort.

Early on the afternoon of April 7, 1863, nine armored vessels steamed slowly into the harbor and headed for Fort Sumter. For 2½ hours the ships dueled with Confederate batteries in the forts and around the harbor. The attack only scarred and battered Sumter's walls, but the far more intense and accurate Confederate fire disabled five Federal ships, one of which, the *Keokuk*, sank the next morning.

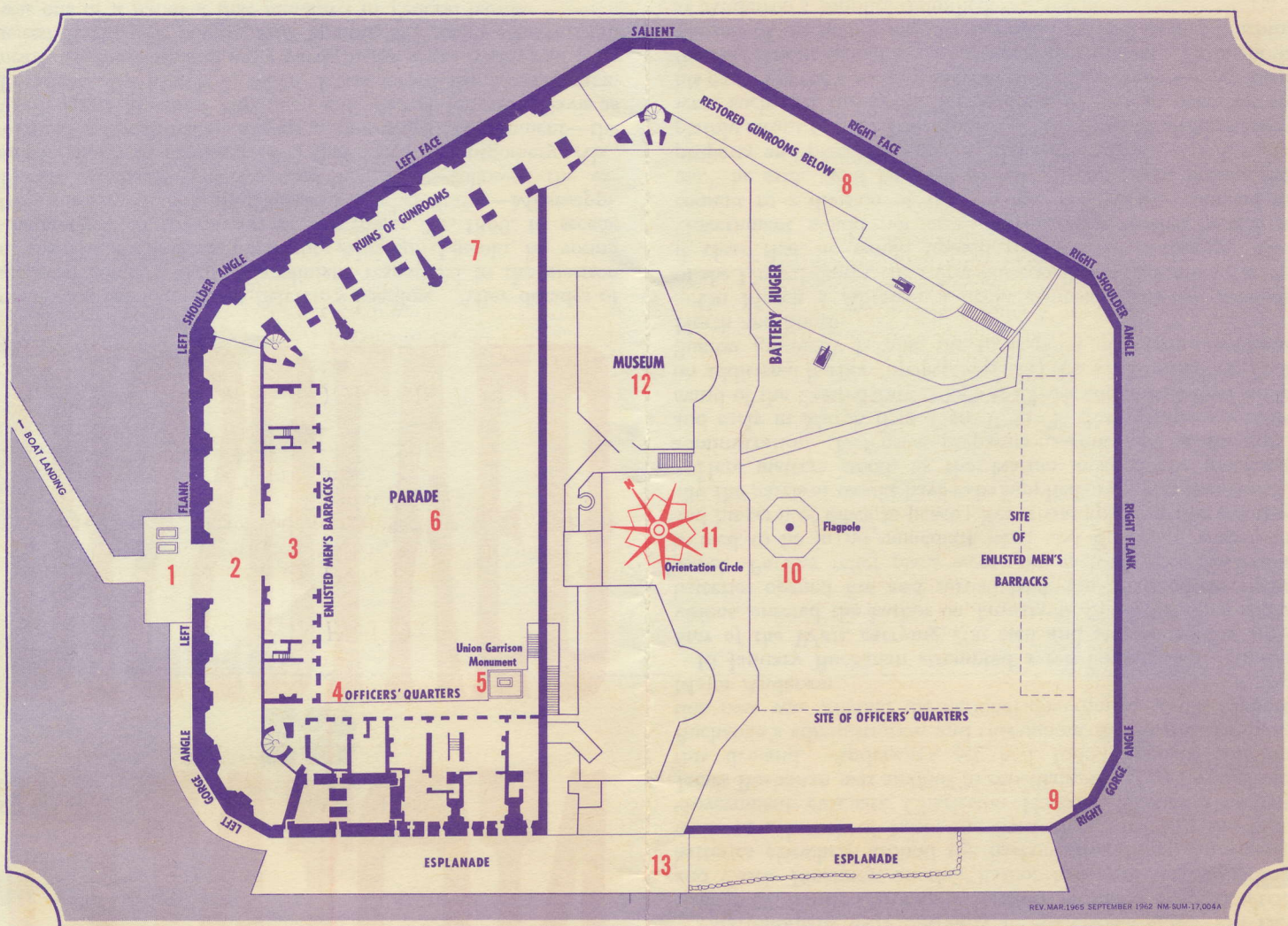
When the ironclads failed, Federal strategy changed. The new plan was to combine land and sea operations to seize nearby Morris Island and from there to demolish Fort Sumter. At a position secured by the U.S. Army on Morris Island, Union forces began to place rifled cannon powerful enough to breach the walls of Sumter.

Meanwhile, laborers in the fort worked day and night with bales of cotton and sand to buttress the walls facing the Federal guns.

A few rounds were fired on August 12, then 5 days later the Federal bombardment began in earnest. Though the fort was reduced to ruins, the garrison refused to surrender. Confederate guns at Fort Moultrie and other points now took up the defense of Sumter. Another Federal assault on September 9 also fell short; this time the attackers lost 5 boats and 124 men. Except for one 10-day period of heavy firing, the bombardment continued intermittently until the end of December.

Again in the summer of 1864 the Federals tried to take Fort Sumter, but this too failed. Desultory fire against the fort continued through January 1865. For 22 months Fort Sumter had withstood Federal siege and bombardment, and at the end it was stronger defensively than ever. Big Federal guns had hurled 7 million pounds of metal at it, yet the Confederate casualties during this period had been only 52 killed and 267 wounded.

Gen. William T. Sherman's troops advancing north from Savannah, however, caused the Confederate troops to be withdrawn, and Fort Sumter was evacuated on February 17, 1865.



REV. MAR. 1965 SEPTEMBER 1962 NM-SUM-17,004A

A TRIP THROUGH FORT SUMTER

For those who wish to inspect Fort Sumter at their own pace, this text, keyed to the map above, describes a short tour of both ruins and exhibits.

1. *Left-flank exterior.* The wall here is about half its original height. This 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 identical in appearance. This pattern was followed on all walls except the gorge.

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

4. *Officers' quarters.* Three stories high, this building extended the entire length of the gorge. In it were lodging for officers, administrative offices, storerooms, the jail, and powder magazines. For an unknown reason, the small arms magazine in this corner exploded on December 11, 1863, killing 11 and wounding 41 Confederates. The explosion also tilted the arch over the entrance to the magazine.

5. *Garrison Monument.* The U.S. Government erected this

monument in 1932 in memory of the Union defenders during the opening bombardment of the Civil War.

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

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

8. *Right face.* These eleven 100-pound Parrott guns were used against Fort Sumter by Union forces on Morris Island. They were brought to the fort after the war.

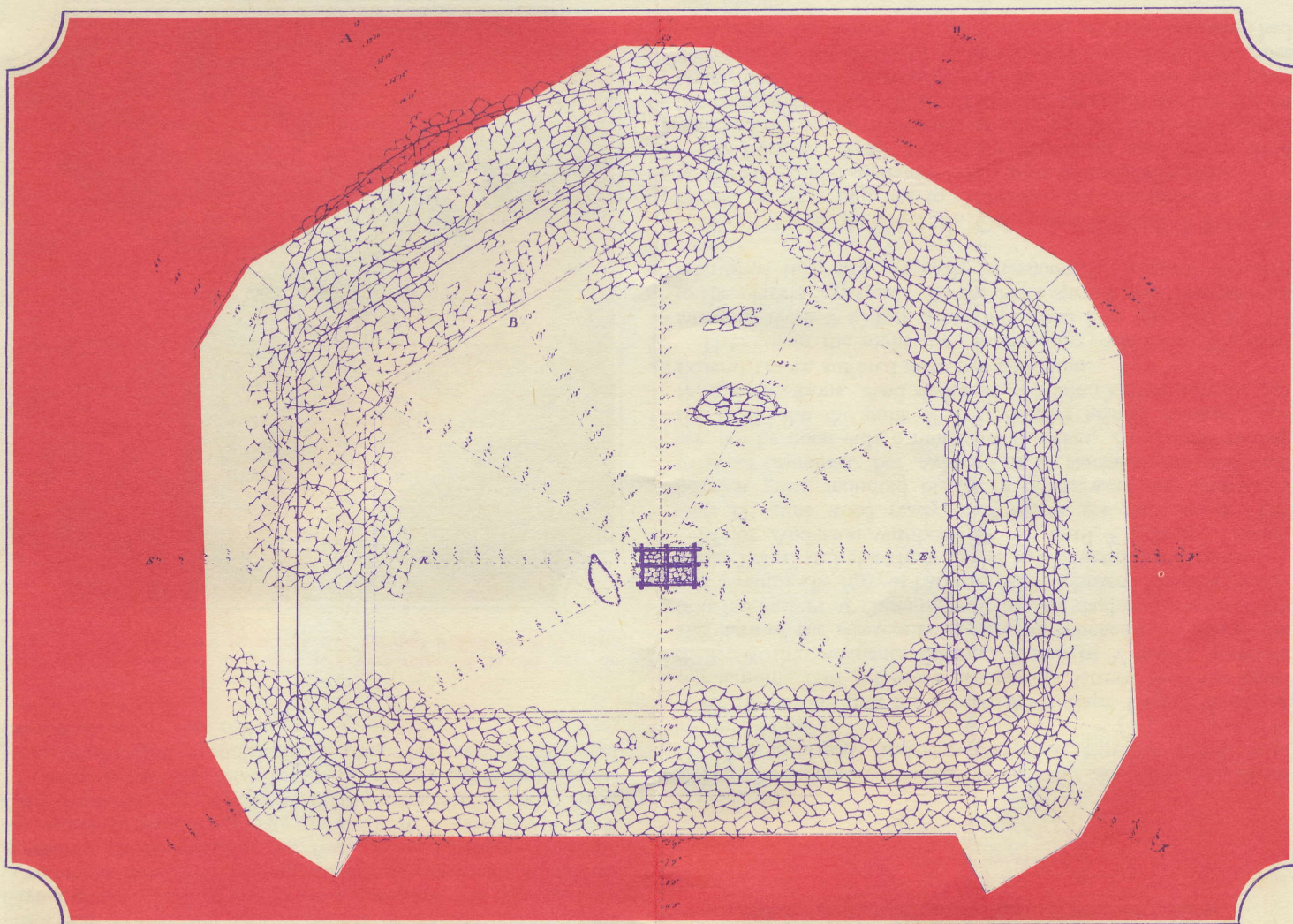
9. *Right-gorge angle.* From a gun in the first tier casemates, Capt. Abner Doubleday, of baseball fame, fired the first shot from Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.

10. *Flagpole Monument.* This monument, honoring Major Anderson and the men of his command, was erected by Eba Anderson Lawton, his daughter, in 1928.

11. *Orientation circle.* This model of the fort is oriented exactly with the fort.

12. *Museum.* Exhibits here graphically relate the entire history of Fort Sumter.

13. *Esplanade.* A 25½-foot-wide promenade lined the full length of the gorge exterior, and a 171-foot wharf extended out from the sally port. This was the original entrance to the fort.

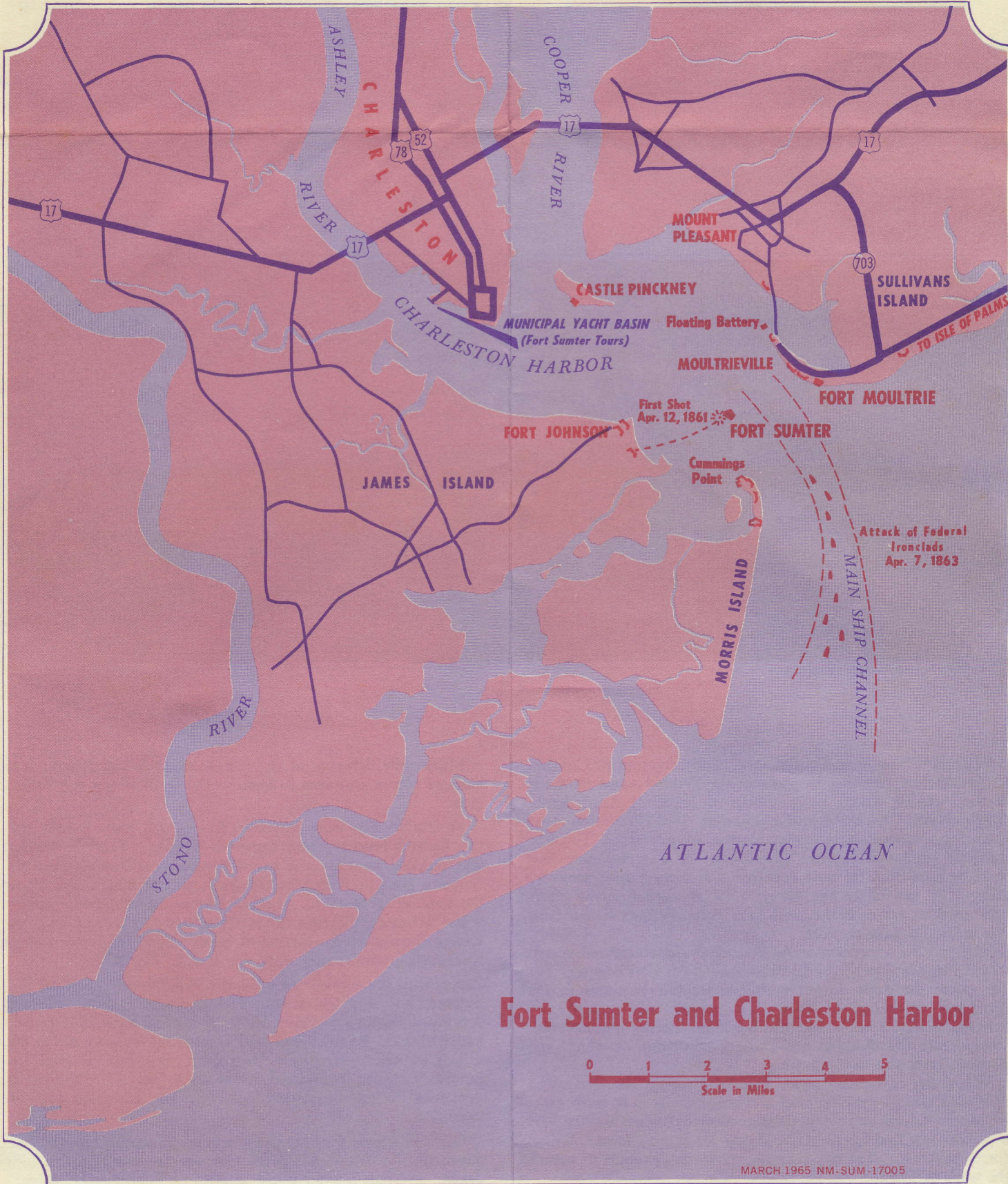


Four years after construction started, the fort's rock foundation rose only a few feet above low water. The opening at left admitted supply ships.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE FORT

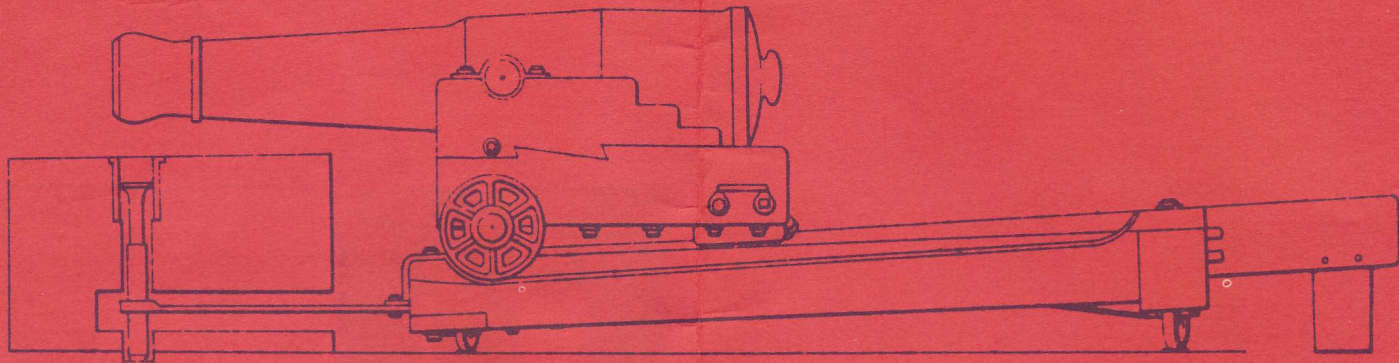
Fort Sumter was one of a series of coastal fortifications built by the United States after the War of 1812. The five-sided fort, erected on a shoal and bearing the name of the South Carolina Revolutionary War patriot Thomas Sumter, was started in 1829 and essentially completed by 1860. Though no guns were in place, the 5-foot-thick brick walls towered 48.8 feet above

low water to command the main ship channel into Charleston Harbor. Four sides, 170 to 190 feet long, were designed for three tiers of guns; the gorge, mainly officers' quarters, mounted guns only on the third tier. Enlisted men's barracks paralleled the gunrooms on the two flanks. A sally port pierced the center of the gorge, opening onto a quay and a wharf. The fort was designed for an armament of 135 guns and a garrison of 650 men. But by April 1861 only 60 cannon were ready.



Fort Sumter and Charleston Harbor





THE MONUMENT TODAY

The National Monument consists of Fort Sumter, on a shoal at the entrance to Charleston Harbor, and Fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island. Today both forts reflect many changes that have taken place since 1865. Spanish-American War gun emplacements dominate both structures.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Each day from the Municipal Marina at the foot of Calhoun Street in Charleston a boat operated by Fort Sumter Harbor Tours departs for Fort Sumter. Organized groups can request special trips at reduced rates. Private boats are welcome daily at the fort between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Fort Moultrie is also open daily. Special services are available to organized groups at both forts.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Sumter National Monument, established on April 28, 1948, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this monument is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the natural, historical, and recreational resources of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 428, Sullivan's Island, S.C. 29482, is in immediate charge of the monument.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Reprint 1967

GPO : 1967 O-245-313

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402 - Price 10 cents

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.

Within minutes some 43 guns and mortars opened up, and for 34 hours they pounded the stout masonry fort with shot and shell. Then the Federal commander, Major Robert Anderson, agreed to evacuate. On April 14 he and his small garrison departed with full honors of war. The next day President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 militia, and the shadow of civil war fell darkly across the land.

Two years later the fort, now a Confederate stronghold, became the scene of a stubborn defense. From April 1863 to February 1865 its garrison withstood repeated bombardments and attacks by Federal land and sea forces.

Fort Sumter was evacuated only when a Federal army cut off Charleston from the rear. At the end, buttressed with sand and cotton as well as its own fallen masonry, the fort was stronger than ever. And it had become a symbol of resistance and courage for the entire South.