Theme 5a4

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Florida
COUNTY: Franklin
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Fort Gadsden Historic Memorial

AND/OR HISTORIC: Negro Fort and/or British Fort

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Six miles southwest of Sumatra

CITY OR TOWN: Sumatra

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 2nd

STATE: Florida — CODE: 12

COUNTY: Franklin — CODE: 037

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building ☒ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☒ Public ☐ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☐ Occupied ☒ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☒ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources

STREET AND NUMBER: Larson Building

CITY OR TOWN: Tallahassee

STATE: Florida — CODE: 12

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund

STREET AND NUMBER: Elliott Building

CITY OR TOWN: Tallahassee

STATE: Florida — CODE: 12

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Florida Historic Sites Survey 1940 AND National Register of Historic Places

DATE OF SURVEY: 1940 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Division of Archives, History and Records Management

STREET AND NUMBER: Department of State, The Capitol

CITY OR TOWN: Tallahassee

STATE: Florida — CODE: 12

STATE: Florida
COUNTY: Franklin
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☒ Ruins ☐ Unexposed	
	(Check One) ☐ Altered ☒ Unaltered	(Check One) ☐ Moved ☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following information was compiled by the staff of Mr. Robert Williams, State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida. We are grateful to them for its use here.

The Negro Fort and Fort Gadsden were both situated on the east bank at Prospect Bluff occupying a position which controlled water-borne traffic into the interior on the Apalachicola River.

The magazine area of the Negro Fort was located about 500 feet from the river bank and consisted of an octagonal earthwork holding the principal magazine. This was surrounded by an extensive rectangular enclosure covering about seven acres with bastions on the eastern corners having parapets 15 feet high and 18 feet thick.

Fort Gadsden, built on the same site within the bounds of the old fortification, was located right on the water's edge. An aide to General Andrew Jackson reported to his superior in August of 1818 that Fort Gadsden was "a temporary work, hastily erected, and of perishable materials, without constant repair, it could not last more than four or five years." Today, only the earthen outlines of both structures are visible.

In 1961, the Florida Board of Parks obtained the 78 acres for development. Today, facilities include a picnic area with pavilion, picnic tables, grills and restrooms.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 15th Century
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 17th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [x] 19th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* July 27, 1816

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic

- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape Architecture
- [ ] Literature
- [x] Military
- [ ] Music
- [x] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [x] Other *(Specify)* Afro-Am. History

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The friendly relationship between blacks and Seminoles of the American Southeast was a major source of antagonism and conflict for white slaveowners in the area during the early 1800s. White feelings of resentment against the Seminoles for harboring runaway slaves, and their fears of red and black men working in concert against them, were exacerbated into the outbreak of the First Seminole War of 1817-1818 and the cession of Florida to the United States by Spain in 1821.

Runaway slaves from the plantations of Georgia and the Carolinas sought and received refuge among the Seminoles in Spanish Florida. In return for the protection of the Indians, the blacks tilled the land and cultivated crops, paying one-third of their produce to the Indians at the end of each season. The remaining two-thirds, the ex-slaves kept for themselves. The blacks often developed their own communities along side Seminole ones. The Seminoles found them welcome neighbors because they proved to be extremely able fighters against the whites and their knowledge of the white men's languages — English, French, and Spanish — enabled them to act as interpreters and intelligence agents for the entire community. Therefore, because of their numerical strength and the invaluable services they performed, the blacks were important to the well-being of Seminole villages.

Whites, on the other hand, saw the strength of blacks and Seminoles just south of America's borders as a constant menace and threat to the institution of slavery. The result was sporadic but violent fighting along the Georgia border by American colonists against the Seminoles in an effort to try and retrieve runaway slaves. For the most part, the slaveholders were forced to carry on their own battles without the physical support of the federal government. Although the government supported the colonists position, the Monroe administration was too busy with the War of 1812, and with efforts to peacefully acquire Florida from Spain, to be willing to risk arousing Spanish and Indian antagonism on the southern frontier. Accordingly, it was during this period that the number of runaways began to markedly increase, and it was not until the conclusion of the War of 1812 that the "problem" of runaway blacks and hostile Seminoles could be given the government's full attention.

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Towards the conclusion of the War of 1812, in May 1814, the British warship, Orpheus, was anchored at the mouth of the Apalachicola River and Major Edward Nicholls was placed in command of an expedition charged with the recruitment of Indians and blacks to assist the British fight. (Blacks were offered the opportunity to immigrate to the West Indies at the war's end if they wished.) In carrying out these orders, Nicholls built a strong fort in the fall of 1814 on Prospect Bluff, on the eastern bank of the Apalachicola, fifteen miles from its mouth. Calling it British Post, the British used it as a headquarters for their negotiations with blacks and Indians. In 1815 when the British withdrew from the area, the fort, including its artillery and military supplies, was given to the many blacks and a few Indians who had moved into it, seeking the protection it offered and cultivating successful and profitable plantations around it. The fortification became known as Negro Fort and it served as a "beacon light to restless and rebellious slaves."

In the spring of 1816, in response to the unabated furor of southerners who viewed Negro Fort as a symbol of the imminent dissolution of slavery, Major General Andrew Jackson, the U. S. Army Commander for the southwestern military district, was directed by Secretary of War William Crawford of Georgia, to order General Edmund Pendleton Gaines, who commanded the southern frontier, to build a fort on the west bank of the Flint River in Georgia, a few miles from the Florida border. The fort, called Fort Scott and actually built by Lieutenant Duncan Clinch, had a dual purpose. One was to protect and to guard the American border between Georgia and Florida, and the other was to destroy Negro Fort. Negro Fort's strategic position on the Apalachicola offered a constant threat to supply vessels on their way upriver to Fort Scott (as well as the threat it posed to the institution of slavery). In July 1816 the order went out from Major General Jackson to, "Blow it [the fort] up! Return the Negroes to their rightful owners." On July 27, 1816, an Army regiment with some Creek sympathizers under the command of Lieutenant Clinch, began to fire upon Negro Fort. In the insuing warfare, a shell hit an open magazine within the fort. The resulting explosion destroyed the fort, killing approximately 300 men, women, and children. The few survivors were taken prisoner and turned over to Georgia slaveholders who justified their title to them by saying that their ancestors had owned the ancestors of the prisoners. In 1818 Jackson led troops down the east bank of the Apalachicola and, surprised to see how strategically located Negro Fort had been, ordered Lieutenant James Gadsden to build a new fort (which became known as Fort Gadsden) upon the old site. American forces were garrisoned in the fort until Florida was ceded to the United States.

Negro Fort is of national significance because its destruction precipitated the outbreak of the First Seminole War, 1817-1818, and the subsequent cession of Florida to the United States in 1821. As the historian Kenneth Porter outlines its impact, the First Seminole War was the end result of early nineteenth century expansionist trends: expansion at the expense of the Indians; expansion at the expense of Spain; and the extension and safeguarding of

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slavery. This "savage and negro war" as Andrew Jackson himself called it, was devised to destroy black towns in Florida and thereby deprive slaves of bordering states of a refuge, while at the same time bringing the entire Florida province under American rule. Negro Fort is also important because it is symbolic of a forgotten aspect of American history — the cooperation and friendship that often existed between blacks and Indians.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES PARTIAL LISTI

Berry, Mary Francis. Black Resistance/White Law. New York: Meredith Corp., 1971.

Mahon, John K. History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1967.

Porter, Kenneth W. The Negro on the American Frontier. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971.

U. S. House of Representative. Document 119 . . . Relating to the Destruction of Negro Fort. 15th Congress, 2nd session, February - March, 1819.

U. S. Senate. Document Number 172 . . . Relating to the Destruction of Negro Fort. 15th Congress, 2nd session, February - March, 1819.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	29°	56'	29"	85°	00'	45"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3.3 acres (approximately)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director, Afro-American Bicentennial Corp.

ORGANIZATION: 1420 N Street, N. W., Suite 101

DATE: December 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: Washington, D. C. 20005

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

_____
Keeper of The National Register

Date _____