DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Plans for Fort Livingston were prepared in Washington by Lieut. H. G. Wright under the direction of Chief Engineer Col. Joseph Gilbert Totten in 1841-42 and construction began at that time in accordance with these plans which called for a trapeziform shaped stronghold, surrounded by a wet ditch and with outworks on the land side. The walls were constructed of cemented shell faced with brick and trimmed with granite. The bricks were shipped from either Pensacola or Mississippi; the shells were removed from local archaeological sites.

On top of the ramparts is the terreplein where cannons were mounted. The terreplein was fronted by a parapet, a portion of which remains. Inside the ramparts, barrel vaulted chambers, or casemates, ring the court with loopholes for guns facing outward and doors with granite lintels opening to the courtyard. The original plans show that the case mates were to contain the soldiers' quarters, officers' guard room, guard room, prison, cutler's room, artillery store room, magazine, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop with a forge and a bakery with an oven. Exterior granite stairs on two sides of the court rise to the terreplein. Designs for the fort show what was probably a long ramp which formerly ascended the south wall by which armaments were raised to the terreplein. In 1849 Captain J. G. Barnard, superintending engineer, prepared a sketch of a "piazza" to line the walls of the fort facing the courtyard. It consisted of slender iron columns with foliated capitals supporting an arched arcade with a tiled shed roof. If this "piazza" was ever constructed, there are no remnants of it today.

The fort was protected on the land side by a moat or wet ditch and a counterscarp, or outer wall, which is supported by arched and counter-arched revetments to strengthen the wall against bombardment. For additional protection, the outer wall was faced with a sloping earth glacis. Within the outwork wall is a long tunnel-like covered way, or patrol path, called the counterscarp gallery, that provided protected exterior access along the complete distance of the land faces of the fort. Embrasures for small arms fire open from the interior passage way to the wet ditch. Powder magazines were also located in this counterscarp gallery. A drawbridge was designed to cross the moat from the top of the outer wall to the entrance on the north side of the fort. Having been constructed of wood, there are no remains of this bridge today.

The south face of the fort, fronting the gulf was completely demolished by the hurricane of 1915 and sand dunes now fill the court and casemates. However, the rest of the fort remains intact, as originally constructed, is sturdy and easily able to be explored. The extant structure remains as constructed following the original plans of 1841-42. Many early 19th century American coastal forts were disfigured by additions and alterations made during the Spanish American War and World War I, but no such changes have been made at Fort Livingston.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Livingston is one of the largest coastal forts in Louisiana and is Louisiana's only fort on the Gulf of Mexico. Excepting Fort Point in San Francisco, California, Fort Livingston is the westernmost of the system of brick defenses that line the east on Gulf coasts of the United States. Its architectural significance is comparable to that of all other American coastal forts of the first half of the 19th century. Of added significance is the fact that, unlike many other coastal forts, no structural changes were later made to the fort which would have destroyed the integrity of the original design.

The Mississippi Delta-region, as gateway of the Mississippi Valley, has been fortified since the earliest European occupancy of the area. The first settlement of the French on the lower Mississippi was a fortified post established in 1700 near the mouth of the river in Plaquemines Parish. Nations ruling the Valley always recognized the need for defense near the mouth of the Mississippi. The numerous confluences of the Mississippi River with other bodies of water in the Delta area necessitated the building of forts and batteries on various waterways aside from the river itself. There are few structural remnants of colonial fortifications in Louisiana.

After the Louisiana Purchase, the United States War Department began to improve the fortification of the area surrounding the mouth of the river. The War of 1812 brought about the realization of the need for coastal defense of the United States and the government stepped up its fortification program in Louisiana after the British invasion of Louisiana in 1814.

The western tip of Grande Terre Island, the location of Fort Livingston, was long considered of strategic value as it guarded Barataria Pass which gave access to Barataria Bay and Bayou Barataria, a large stream which meanders through the swamps to the close vicinity of New Orleans. The Spanish maintained a watchtower on or near the site of the present fort in the late 18th century to guard against smugglers and pirates who had long been using the Barataria route to New Orleans. Louisiana's most famous "pirate", who was actually a privateer, Jean Lafitte, established his headquarters on Grande Terre in 1805, on the western tip of the island where Fort Livingston was later constructed. Lafitte erected a martello tower for defense on a cove just behind the location of the present fort. Today there are no remains of this tower or of the various buildings he erected there.

Jean Lafitte is an historic figure who has been cloaked in romance and mystery, but who, nonetheless, was an heroic American patriot. Without substantial aid in men and arms given General Andrew Jackson by Lafitte at the Battle of New Orleans in 1814-15, the British might have won the battle and the entire Mississippi Valley might have been lost to the United States. Although the Treaty of Ghent had been signed on the eve of the Battle of New Orleans, it provided for the status quo ante bellum which the British interpreted to mean that the Louisiana Territory did not belong to the United States before the war. There is no site in Louisiana more closely associated with the privateer patriot Jean Lafitte than that of his former headquarters on Grande Terre Island, at the present location of Fort Livingston. Coincidentally, the fort was named after Edward Livingston, Secretary of State in Andrew Jackson's cabinet, who had been one of Jean Lafitte's attorneys in Louisiana and interceded for him on many occasions in his various clashes with government authorities.

The remainder of Grande Terre Island not occupied by the military reservation created for the construction of Fort Livingston supported sugar plantations in the 19th century. The need for a fort on this site was recognized before the British invasion of Louisiana. Probably due to the impending threat of that invasion, Barthelemy Lafon drew, on May 31, 1813, a plan for a projected battery proposed by Lieutenant Colonel George T. Ross for the western tip of Grande Terre, site of the present fort. At the time that the drawing was made, Lafitte and his privateers were occupying the island. In September of the following year the same Colonel Ross, along with Commander Daniel T. Patterson, attacked and destroyed the privateer's headquarters on Grande Terre. Barthelemy Lafon, an engineer who was an official government cartographer, was also one of Lafitte's captains and was among those captured in the raid. The projected battery was to be square in plan and was to be fronted by a seven foot high parapet with a pointed bastion. It was designed to mount seven guns.

In 1817, Patterson, the other officer who led the raid on Grande Terre, made another proposal for a fort to be erected on the island, on the same site on the western tip. According to a drawing in the National Archives, the ground plan of this projected fort was the same as those of Forts Pike and Macomb, constructed shortly thereafter on the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Passes

east of New Orleans. Triangular in shape, it was to have had a rounded curtain wall facing Barataria Pass and three pointed bastions on the land side. When the property was surveyed by the War Department in 1833, in preparation for the purchase of the land and construction of the present fort, the projected plan shown was still of the same design. Since Grande Terre now possesses only three trees, an interesting detail of this surveyor's drawing is that of an oblong "wood", probably an oak ridge, on the site of the fort. An oak ridge would have indicated elevated ground and this was probably the reason that this site was selected for the fort. The 126.16 acre tract of land, comprising the western tip of the island, was purchased by the United States Government on January 10, 1834 from Etienne de Gruy and his wife Marie Lare Verloin de Gruy. Jurisdiction was ceded to the United States by an act of the state legislature approved March 10, 1834 and by the deed of the governor of the state dated May 14, 1834.

The work of preparing the site for construction began immediately after the acquisition of the property. However, on July 11, 1834, after only the temporary quarters for the engineer and superintendent had been constructed, operations at Grande Terre were suspended "in consequence of the want of an officer of engineers to take the immediate direction of the operations". It was not until 1840 when Captain J. G. Barnard was put in charge of construction as superintending engineer that work resumed. Lieutenant P. G. T. Beauregard, later to become the Confederate general of Civil War fame, assisted Barnard for a time. During this and the following year, temporary buildings for the workers were erected: an overseer's quarters, laborers ' quarters, kitchens, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, wheelbarrow shed, stable and hay house, lime shed, and master mason's quarters. These were described by Barnard as being the "rudest" structures to limit their cost, although the engineer's, overseer's and master mason's quarters were designed with galleries and 1842 plans for the officers' quarters show that the interior was to be finished with decorative millwork on the doors, windows and fireplace mantels. Numerous hurricanes have swept all remains of the buildings from the island. A wharf was also built in 1840 to provide for the delivery of building material. An 1800 foot railway was constructed from the wharf to the site of the fort for the transportation of the materials.

Construction of the actual fort probably began in 1841 or 1842 when plans for the fort, which had been prepared in Washington under the direction of the Chief Engineer, Colonel Joseph Gilbert Totten, were sent to Captain Barnard. Totten was an eminent figure in the history of the Corps of Engineers. In the War of 1812, Totten, a native of New York, an early graduate of West Point, and then a captain, was chief engineer to General Izard at Plattsburg, where he directed fortifications which stopped the advance of Prevost's great army.

By 1843 the walls of the counterscarp and the curtain walls of the ramparts had been raised, but the fort was not completed for two decades. The withholding of government appropriations and the difficulty of procuring building materials caused the work to advance slowly. It was necessary to stockpile materials as they could be obtained and work became seasonal when supplies were sufficient.

While the fort was under construction, much of the engineer' s concern, as expressed in numerous letters and drawings sent to Washington, dealt with the receding and eroding shoreline in front of the fort. Jetties were constructed in 1853 in an attempt to halt the process, however they were of no avail. Between May of 1840 and March of 1854, there was a shoreline loss of 237 feet in front of the fort and by 1886 the shoreline was within ten feet of the ramparts. Today the surf pounds against the walls of the fort.

Fort Livingston never saw military action. At the advent of the Civil War, the fort was still incomplete. According to the Daily Delta of January 13, 1861, the fort had been "standing several years in an unfinished condition, awaiting its final settlement". The newspaper noted that the work required to complete the fort included "the grading of the parapets, laying the gun platforms, completing inside quarters, drawbridge and magazine; grading glacis, raising floor of counterscarp

gallery, and completing works for the security of the site". Nonetheless, in the same month, Confederate troops took possession of the fort. Commanded by General Lovell, four companies, totaling 300 men, occupied the fort, with 15 guns, including a rifled 32-pounder, an eight-inch columbiad, seven 24-pounders, four 12-pounders and two howitzers. However, the Confederates evacuated the fort upon the seizure of New Orleans by Federal forces a year later.

Fort Livingston was abandoned after the Civil War. Although the War Department retained an interest in the fort and the Board of Engineers in Washington proposed modifications for the structure in 1870, all guns on the fort were dismounted in April of 1872 and the property was returned to the state of Louisiana in 1923.

With its massive proportions, Fort Livingston, like the other large coastal forts, may be valued as an example of American monumental architecture of the first half of the 19th century. Like other coastal forts, the structure is a testimony of the sudden development of scientific engineering in the United States with the establishment of the Corps of Engineers at the time of the War of 1812, a military service which owed its efficiency to the military school at West Point, established in 1802. The most advanced principles of science and experimentation with these principles no doubt largely accounts for the variances in each individual structure. Therefore, each member of the entire body of American coastal forts is of value as a part of the record of American development of the bastioned system with outer defenses which began in early 16th century Europe with the designs of Albrecht Durer and Leonardo da Vinci after the introduction of gun powder and ended with the invention of the rifled cannon at the time of the Civil War. Like other coastal forts, Fort Livingston is also of interest as an example of the fine craftsmanship in brick work of the 19th century. The precision in the alignment and hand-shaping of the bricks, especially in the arches and vaults, is aesthetically pleasing. This and the aesthetic effect of the spatial relationships of the architectural design of Fort Livingston makes the structure, along with other coastal forts, of artistic as well as scientific and historic value.

In keeping with the experimental nature of the designs of American coastal defenses of the 19th century, the ground plan of Fort Livingston differs from its counterparts, being trapezoidal with outer walls flanking the two land faces of the fort. Of other such American forts, only Fort Barrancas at Pensacola, Florida, constructed about the same time Fort Livingston was begun (1833-44) resembles Fort Livingston in its general plan. In variance with many early 19th century coastal forts in America, both forts have demibastions, or half bastions, as they extend in only one direction. Both merely project their salient point toward the sea, in what may be one of the ultimate simplifications of the complex European fortifications designed by Vauban and Van Coehoorn in the 17th century, the general principles of which were employed for the design of American forts in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Structural and design differences between Fort Barrancas, now a National Park Service property, and Fort Livingston, such as the numerous differing employments of the arch and the barrel vault, the differing relationships of the casemates, the differing shapes of the gun embrasures and loopholes and the presence of arched and counterarched revetments in Fort Livingston afford interesting comparisons for the student of American military architecture of the 19th century, attest to the imaginative inventiveness of army engineers of the period and endow both forts with equal importance as national architectural treasures. Of particular interest is the counterscarp gallery or tunnel-like passageways within the outer walls of both forts, a rare feature in 19th century American fortification design. These galleries provided protected access along the two inland facing walls of both forts. Magazines were located within them and the walls facing the wet ditch at Fort Livingston and the dry ditch at Fort Barrancas were punctured with loopholes for small arms fire. Most American forts of the first half of the 19th century possessed "covered ways" behind the parapet of the glacis on top of the outer wall as patrol paths for riflemen. The riflemen were protected by the parapet of the glacis but were otherwise not "covered".

Fort Livingston is the only fort in Louisiana whose interior walls and ramparts are constructed of cemented clam shells and it is perhaps the only one in the United States so constructed. The interior of the walls of other large 19th century coastal forts in Louisiana are packed with earth. A local plantation owner, Andrew Hodge, was engaged by army engineers to remove these clam shells (Rangia cuneata) from Indian (ancient) mounds and middens in coastal Louisiana and transport them to the construction site. Indian pottery can be seen imbedded in the walls. There are also some extremely large oyster shells in the walls which the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission considers of scientific interest in their studies of marine life. The shells cemented to form the core of the walls should not be confused with the hewn "tabby" of which Spanish Fort San Marcos in St. Augustine, Florida, is constructed; however, like "tabby", cemented shell was an excellent building material for a fortification as cannon balls would be absorbed in the walls, rather than shattering them.

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