



Fort Pulaski National Monument: Administrative History

J. Faith Meader

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Fort Pulaski National Monument (NM) at Cockspur Island, Georgia, preserves a striking masonry fortification significant in American military history. Visitors to Fort Pulaski NM learn how the golden age of coastal fortification ended on April 11, 1862, when the fort failed to withstand bombardment by Union forces who attacked it during the American Civil War using newly developed rifled canon. Other interesting themes relating to Fort Pulaski include its use as a prison for captured Confederate soldiers and as the site where John Wesley, founder of American Methodism, landed on Cockspur Island in 1736. Robert E. Lee also began his military career at Fort Pulaski by helping to oversee construction of the remarkable, once state-of-the-art example of “third system” coastal architecture. Of course, Fort Pulaski has also served as a location marking important moments in local history. However, several years passed after the United States Army abandoned the military post in 1879 before efforts to preserve the fort became serious. The War Department’s announcement of the fort’s selection as a potential national monument in 1915 and the proclamation of its official monument status in 1924 began a series of restoration efforts. When Fort Pulaski NM was transferred to the National Park Service (NPS) in 1933, the labor of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) transformed the neglected fort and grounds into a place for the public to visit. Since then the 5,623-acre national monument has been carefully managed and maintained, although a temporary period of neglect beset the part between 1942 and 1948 when the site reverted to War Department management. This administrative history provides an overview of Fort Pulaski from the Colonial Period to the present with attention focused upon the origins, development, and management of the site as a unit of the national park system.

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