

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Signal Hill
other names/site number: Wilcoxon Signal Station; 44PW138

2. Location

street & number: Signal Hill Road and Blooms Road
city, town: Manassas
state: Virginia code: VA county: Prince William code: 152
zip code: 22111 not for publication
 vicinity

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<u>0</u>
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Civil War Properties, Prince William County, VA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.

 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.

 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Defense: military facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Landscape: forest

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions): N/A

Material (enter categories from instructions):

foundation:

walls: earth

roof:

other:

Describe present and historic physical appearance. See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally statewide locallyApplicable National Register Criteria A B C DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Military
Communication

Period of Significance:

1861-1865

Significant Dates:

1861-1863

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. See continuation sheet

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number: 7 Page: 1

Property Type: 1st and 2nd Battle of Manassas

Summary Description

Signal Hill, or Wilcoxon Signal Station, is located on Signal Hill Road and Manassas Drive approximately one mile east of the old Manassas Junction, a part of the present-day city of Manassas, Virginia. Situated on the highest ridge in the Manassas area, the site is composed of a fortification that served as a signaling station during the Civil War. Used by the Confederate forces in the First Battle of Manassas, and Union forces afterwards, the fortification originally covered the ridge top and consisted of seven artillery emplacements and a series of rifle pits. Site integrity is high, but the construction of one house has cut between the northeast bastion and the eastern bastion and another house has destroyed the southwest bastion. Metal detecting has been used on the hill, yet the earthen fortification has suffered little overall disturbance.

Description

The site of Signal Hill is situated in the Piedmont Lowlands or Triassic Basin physiographic region^{^--} an area that has a low relief or gently rolling topography. Topographically, the 375-foot summit, itself, is the highest hill in the vicinity and overlooks the surrounding area in all directions. Geologically, the lowland region is composed of Triassic sandstones that underlie outcroppings of Precambrian micaceous schists, quartzes, and quartzites. Approximately one-half mile to the west is the Russia Branch of Bull Run; Bull Run proper is about a mile and a half to the east. Both are second-order streams. At an elevation of 220 feet, Russia Branch is 1 to 2 feet deep and 15 to 20 feet wide. The hill contains three terraces that slope down and cover a distance of approximately one-half mile to the western edge of Russia Branch. Both north and east, Bull Run is approximately 50-60 feet wide and averages 6-8 feet deep. The forest on Signal Hill is essentially a climax oak-hickory association, with southern red oak, white oak, and hickory at lower elevations, and joined by a chestnut association at higher elevations. Today, the hill is covered with species of oak, tulip poplar, and cedar, with an understory of poison ivy, greenbrier, and Virginia creeper.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number: 7 Page: 2

The site itself is located on Signal Hill, a hilltop that has an elevation of 370-375 feet at its crest with a lower promontory of approximately 355 feet on its north end (Figure 1). The hilltop is oriented approximately 15 degrees east of north. The over-all dimensions of the site are 1,200 feet north-south and 400 feet east-west across the highest point. The site consists of seven artillery emplacements and a series of rifle pits or trenches at approximately 340 feet in elevation. The trenches are not continuous, but have a level or "gate" at the north end on both the east and west sides. These are adjacent to the saddle between the crest of the hill and the small northern promontory. Hanson (1961: 32) reports that the fort "shows interval embrasures for 16 guns; whether all were ever occupied is unknown." Today, six out of seven bastions or artillery emplacements exist. These emplacements are symmetrical and well preserved, with well-formed parapets and embrasures for field pieces. A trench approximately three feet in depth runs along the exterior of the site; the depth of the gun emplacements is approximately five feet (McGarry 1983: 52). No evidence of huts or other features dating to the Civil War are visible.

Construction activities associated with a residential building has eliminated a part of the fort between the northeastern and eastern artillery emplacements, and the southwest bastion. Relic hunters are aware of the site and, accordingly, the trenches that surround the fortification have been subject to metal detecting. There has been little disturbance, however, to the actual fort.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 1

Summary Significance Statement

Signal Hill is of major significance because of its function as a communication center during the First and Second Battles of Manassas. The site was not engulfed in actual combat during battle, but served as the headquarters for a series of signaling stations in the Bull Run/Manassas area. Signals from this particular station were of major importance to the outcome of the First Battle of Manassas. The nature, geographic location, and the lack of disturbance to the fortification, itself, are all important elements of its historical significance. Over the years, Signal Hill has been well preserved through the actions of various owners. Signal Hill is of major significance on the local, state, and national level.

Historical Background

Signal Hill derives its primary historical significance from its use as a fortified signaling station during the Civil War. From the hilltop, one can see for miles in any direction. For this reason, a Confederate Army signal station was built on the crest of this particular hill and an extensive defensive earthen fortification was constructed around the base. To the west, the site commands a view of the town of Manassas and the Bull Run Mountains. To the east, it overlooks Bull Run and Fairfax County, and to the northeast, the site overlooks Stone Bridge which crosses Bull Run. When aided by the removal of trees, the latter two directions (east and northeast), proved strategically significant in the early part of the Civil War.

Before the First Battle of Manassas, Confederate forces erected "several signal stations behind the Bull Run defense line," to transmit semaphore or wigwag signals (Hanson 1961: 28). Under the command of Captain Edwin Porter Alexander, Signal Hill served as the base station and headquarters for this type of communication. Prior to the Civil War, the then Lieutenant Alexander was the student of Surgeon A. J. Myer at West Point. Myer had invented the semaphore signaling system in 1856 in response to the need for transmitting military information, other than by mounted horseman. As the Civil War commenced, Alexander joined the Confederacy and was appointed captain and chief signal officer to General Beauregard's army. During the First Battle of Manassas, Captain Alexander, from his position on Signal Hill, instituted the first use of the semaphore signaling system in warfare.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 2

Alexander later described how the signal station came to be located on Signal Hill:

So on my arrival at Manassas, July 2, there was really more time to install the signals than I expected, for "rumors of the foe's advance" now swelled upon almost every breeze. I had brought with me from Richmond all necessary equipment and I had only to select men and train them. I soon made acquaintances and got the names of some intelligent privates, who might later be promoted. I had these detailed and put upon a course of instruction and practice. Meanwhile I procured a horse, and between times began an exploration of the country to find what facilities it offered for lines of signals.

The topography was far from favorable. One line of battle had been chosen behind the stream of Bull Run, about three miles north of Manassas, and the course of the stream was generally wooded and bordered with small fields and pastures, giving few open stretches. I was not sanguine of rendering any valuable service, but fortunately had time to examine the country, and, as will be seen, the line was found which disclosed the enemy's attack in time to defeat it.

About a mile east of Manassas, on the farm of a Mr. Wilcoxon, was a high rocky point having a good outlook over a valley to the north and west. I made this point a central station, and by a little clearing here and there got two straight six-mile ranges. One was northwest to a bluff over Bull Run valley on our extreme left, near the house of Van Ness, just above the Stone Bridge by which the Warrenton Turnpike crossed Bull Run. The other was north, to Centreville, about three miles beyond the Run, opposite our centre. A third station was found near the house of McLean, opposite our right centre, and a fourth near our headquarters at Centreville. This was the utmost the topography permitted, and the men were encamped at the stations and set to practising by day and night (Alexander 1977: 15-16).

On July 18 Union forces advanced into Centreville and eliminated the fourth observation tower (Klein 1971: 33).

... [Pett]

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Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 3

[on Signal Hill]

A biographer of Edward Porter Alexander described the significance of the use to which the signal station was put during the First Battle of Manassas:

On the night of the 20th, Porter decided to camp by the tower ~~near the Van Pelt house~~. Shortly before six the next morning he was roused by artillery fire from across the stone bridge. Hoping to get into the fight, Porter remained with Beauregard until about eight, when the general ordered him to go to the central tower and report any enemy troop movements. He obeyed with obvious reluctance, seeing little hope for action atop a tower. Some of his best men had been on the platform for three hours looking for enemy troops and had seen nothing. Porter relieved them, took out his powerful glass, and settled down to watch.

Half an hour passed uneventfully. Then, about 8:45, turning to check the Van Pelt tower, Porter noted a faint glimmer in the distance. The sun was low in the sky behind; could the glimmer be sunlight reflecting off some metallic object? He followed it carefully and discovered it to be a brass cannon and some muskets with fixed bayonets moving behind the drab backdrop of a fence. Porter had discovered the key to Federal tactics for the day; a large column of troops swinging northwest to turn the Confederate left. At that moment the head of the column had reached Sudley Springs, eight miles from Porter's tower and less than two miles from the Confederate position commanded by Colonel Nathan Evans.

Realizing the danger, Porter immediately signalled the Van Pelt tower: "Look out on your left; you are turned." From there a courier took the message to Evans, who received similar news from a picket about the same time. While Evans hurriedly deployed his meager forces to meet the threat, Porter sent a dispatch to Beauregard:

"I see a body of troops crossing Bull Run about two miles above the Stone Bridge. The head of the column is in the woods on this side. The rear of the column is in the woods on the other side. About a half mile of its length is visible in the open ground between. I can see both infantry and artillery."

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The message caused a change in Confederate plans. Originally Beauregard had planned to turn the Union left; now the report that his own left was threatened caused him to hesitate. The troops of Bee, Jackson, and Hampton were hurried to reinforce Evans, and Johnston urged Beauregard to abandon his plan and shift most of his troops to the left. While the generals debated the course the Confederate on the left bought valuable time with their plucky resistance. (Klein 1971: 33-34).

Accordingly, Colonel Evans, who had his headquarters on Van Pelt's Hill-Stone Bridge, turned and swatted the attack, making the use of the wigwag system pivotal to the Confederate's winning of the battle. "In his report Beauregard praised both Porter and his signal system" (Klein 1971: 35). As Richard Hoffman, the Superintendent of the Manassas National Battlefield Park, remarked:

Had it not been for the alert work of an officer stationed at Signal Hill, the Union flanking attack may not have been discovered and the outcome of the battle would almost certainly have been different (c.f., Satterthwaite 1973: 9).

Later in the war, Alexander proved indispensable to the Confederate plight, serving in ordnance, signals, engineering, reconnoitering, and eventually acting as ~~head of the secret service~~ (Klein 1971: 37).

Longstreet's chief of artillery.

Signal Hill is of major significance to the Civil War era. After the war, ownership of the hill passed from Josiah Wilcoxon to David J. Arrington, of Manassas. Recognizing its important role in the First Battle of Manassas, Mr. Arrington took great pains to keep the hill and the earthworks preserved. Following his death, the site was bought by a Mr. Roseberry, who also recognized its significance and, accordingly, showed it the same protection as Mr. Arrington. In 1972 the city of Manassas began to acquire the site for a park. Although there have been studies of the site and in the general area (Satterthwaite 1973; McGarry 1983a, 1983b), the site has not been accorded the recognition and preservation by the city that its significance warrants.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
 preliminary determination of individual listing
(36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National
Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey #
 recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record #

Primary location of additional data:
 State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Specify repository: DHL
221 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: 5.9 acres

UTM References:

A /18/ /2.88.080/ /42.91.820/
Zone Easting Northing
C /18/ / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

B /18/ / / / /
Zone Easting Northing
D /18/ / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries encompass the intact fortifications and signal station of Signal Hill.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: L. Daniel Myers, Consultant Archaeologist
organization: Prince William County, Planning Office
street & number: 339 Fairhaven Road
city or town: Dunkirk

date: August 1988
telephone: (301) 257-3264
state: MD zip code: 20754

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number: 9 Page: 1

Alexander, E. P.

1977 Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative. no city: Morningside Bookshop.

Hanson, J. M.

1961 Bull Run Remembers.... Manassas: National Capital Publishers, Inc.

Klein, M.

1971 Edward Porter Alexander. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

McGarry, T. E.

1983a The Phase I Survey of the Proposed Park Development in the Signal Hill and Union Mill Tracts, City of Manassas Park, Prince William County, Virginia.

1983b Development Concepts for Signal Hill and Union Mills Tracts. For the City of Manassas Park, Prince William County, Virginia.

Satterthwaite, A.

1973 A Proposal for Signal Hill Park. A Report Prepared for the Town of Manassas Park, VA.

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Section number: 10 Page: 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

Figure 1 (1" = 160') shows the bounds of the Signal Hill site (44PW138). Signal Hill is immediately east of Blooms Drive, as the road is known locally. (The road is labeled as Manassas Drive on some street maps). Except in the south-southwest portion of the site and that segment between the northeast and east bastions, the boundary line, which encircles Signal Hill, corresponds to the 335-foot contour interval. The south-southwestern boundary line deviate from the 335-foot contour interval to follow the property line dividing the City of Manassas Park's property from private property. Between the northeast and east bastion, the boundary line roughly corresponds to the 340-foot contour and is immediately west of the modern house and about 50 feet behind the garage.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JUL 05 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Signal Hill
other names/site number: Wilcoxon Signal Station; 44PW138

2. Location

street & number: Signal Hill Road and Blooms Road
city, town: Manassas
state: Virginia code: VA county: Prince William code: 152
N/A not for publication
X vicinity
zip code: 22111

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Civil War Properties, Prince William County, VA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

A. Bryan Mitchell
Signature of certifying official
Director, Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks
State or Federal agency and bureau
June 16, 1989
Date

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
___ See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)

John J. Knevel
Signature of the Keeper
8/8/89
Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Defense: military facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Landscape: forest

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions): N/A

Material (enter categories from instructions):

foundation:
walls: earthroof:
other:

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

[X] nationally [] statewide [] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [X] A [] B [] C [] D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [] A [] B [] C [] D [] E [] F [] G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Military
Communication

Period of Significance:

1861-1865

Significant Dates:

1861-1863

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number: 7 Page: 1

Property Type: 1st and 2nd Battle of Manassas

Summary Description

Signal Hill, or Wilcoxon Signal Station, is located on Signal Hill Road and Manassas Drive approximately one mile east of the old Manassas Junction, a part of the present-day city of Manassas, Virginia. Situated on the highest ridge in the Manassas area, the site is composed of a fortification that served as a signaling station during the Civil War. Used by the Confederate forces in the First Battle of Manassas, and Union forces afterwards, the fortification originally covered the ridge top and consisted of seven artillery emplacements and a series of rifle-pits. Site integrity is high, but the construction of one house has cut between the northeast bastion and the eastern bastion and another house has destroyed the southwest bastion. Metal detecting has been used on the hill, yet the earthen fortification has suffered little overall disturbance.

Description

The site of Signal Hill is situated in the Piedmont Lowlands or Triassic Basin physiographic region--an area that has a low relief or gently rolling topography. Topographically, the 375-foot summit, itself, is the highest hill in the vicinity and overlooks the surrounding area in all directions. Geologically, the lowland region is composed of Triassic sandstones that underlie outcroppings of Precambrian micaceous schists, quartzes, and quartzites. Approximately one-half mile to the west is the Russia Branch of Bull Run; Bull Run proper is about a mile and a half to the east. Both are second-order streams. At an elevation of 220 feet, Russia Branch is 1 to 2 feet deep and 15 to 20 feet wide. The hill contains three terraces that slope down and cover a distance of approximately one-half mile to the western edge of Russia Branch. Both north and east, Bull Run is approximately 50-60 feet wide and averages 6-8 feet deep. The forest on Signal Hill is essentially a climax oak-hickory association, with southern red oak, white oak, and hickory at lower elevations, and joined by a chestnut association at higher elevations. Today, the hill is covered with species of oak, tulip poplar, and cedar, with an understory of poison ivy, greenbrier, and Virginia creeper.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number: 7 Page: 2

The site itself is located on Signal Hill, a hilltop that has an elevation of 370-375 feet at its crest with a lower promontory of approximately 355 feet on its north end (Figure 1). The hilltop is oriented approximately 15 degrees east of north. The over-all dimensions of the site are 1,200 feet north-south and 400 feet east-west across the highest point. The site consists of seven artillery emplacements and a series of rifle-pits or trenches at approximately 340 feet in elevation. The trenches are not continuous, but have a level or "gate" at the north end on both the east and west sides. These are adjacent to the saddle between the crest of the hill and the small northern promontory. Hanson (1961: 32) reports that the fort "shows interval embrasures for 16 guns; whether all were ever occupied is unknown." Today, six out of seven bastions or artillery emplacements exist. These emplacements are symmetrical and well preserved, with well-formed parapets and embrasures for field pieces. A trench approximately three feet in depth runs along the exterior of the site; the depth of the gun emplacements is approximately five feet (McGarry 1983: 52). No evidence of huts or other features dating to the Civil War are visible.

Construction activities associated with a residential building has eliminated a part of the fort between the northeastern and eastern artillery emplacements, and the southwest bastion. Relic hunters are aware of the site and, accordingly, the trenches that surround the fortification have been subject to metal detecting. There has been little disturbance, however, to the actual fort.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 1

Summary Significance Statement

Signal Hill is of major significance because of its function as a communication center during the First and Second Battles of Manassas. The site was not engulfed in actual combat during battle, but served as the headquarters for a series of signaling stations in the Bull Run/Manassas area. Signals from this particular station were of major importance to the outcome of the First Battle of Manassas. The nature, geographic location, and the lack of disturbance to the fortification, itself, are all important elements of its historical significance. Over the years, Signal Hill has been well preserved through the actions of various owners. Signal Hill is of major significance on the local, state, and national level.

Historical Background

Signal Hill derives its primary historical significance from its use as a fortified signaling station during the Civil War. From the hilltop, one can see for miles in any direction. For this reason, a Confederate Army signal station was built on the crest of this particular hill and an extensive defensive earthen fortification was constructed around the base. To the west, the site commands a view of the town of Manassas and the Bull Run Mountains. To the east, it overlooks Bull Run and Fairfax County, and to the northeast, the site overlooks Stone Bridge which crosses Bull Run. When aided by the removal of trees, the latter two directions (east and northeast), proved strategically significant in the early part of the Civil War.

Before the First Battle of Manassas, Confederate forces erected "several signal stations behind the Bull Run defense line," to transmit semaphore or wigwag signals (Hanson 1961: 28). Under the command of Captain Edwin Porter Alexander, Signal Hill served as the base station and headquarters for this type of communication. Prior to the Civil War, the then Lieutenant Alexander was the student of Surgeon A. J. Myer at West Point. Myer had invented the semaphore signaling system in 1856 in response to the need for transmitting military information, other than by mounted horseman. As the Civil War commenced, Alexander joined the Confederacy and was appointed captain and chief signal officer to General Beauregard's army. During the First Battle of Manassas, Captain Alexander, from his position on Signal Hill, instituted the first use of the semaphore signaling system in warfare.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 2

Alexander later described how the signal station came to be located on Signal Hill:

So on my arrival at Manassas, July 2, there was really more time to install the signals than I expected, for "rumors of the foe's advance" now swelled upon almost every breeze. I had brought with me from Richmond all necessary equipment and I had only to select men and train them. I soon made acquaintances and got the names of some intelligent privates, who might later be promoted. I had these detailed and put upon a course of instruction and practice. Meanwhile I procured a horse, and between times began an exploration of the country to find what facilities it offered for lines of signals.

The topography was far from favorable. One line of battle had been chosen behind the stream of Bull Run, about three miles north of Manassas, and the course of the stream was generally wooded and bordered with small fields and pastures, giving few open stretches. I was not sanguine of rendering any valuable service, but fortunately had time to examine the country, and, as will be seen, the line was found which disclosed the enemy's attack in time to defeat it.

About a mile east of Manassas, on the farm of a Mr. Wilcoxon, was a high rocky point having a good outlook over a valley to the north and west. I made this point a central station, and by a little clearing here and there got two straight six-mile ranges. One was northwest to a bluff over Bull Run valley on our extreme left, near the house of Van Ness [Pelt], just above the Stone Bridge by which the Warrenton Turnpike crossed Bull Run. The other was north, to Centreville, about three miles beyond the Run, opposite our centre. A third station was found near the house of McLean, opposite our right centre, and a fourth near our headquarters at Centreville. This was the utmost the topography permitted, and the men were encamped at the stations and set to practising by day and night (Alexander 1977: 15-16).

On July 18 Union forces advanced into Centreville and eliminated the fourth observation tower (Klein 1971: 33).

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section number: 8 Page: 3

A biographer of Edward Porter Alexander described the significance of the use to which the signal station was put during the First Battle of Manassas:

On the night of the 20th, Porter decided to camp by the tower Shortly before six the next morning he was roused by artillery fire from across the stone bridge. Hoping to get into the fight, Porter remained with Beauregard until about eight, when the general ordered him to go to the central tower [on Signal Hill] and report any enemy troop movements. He obeyed with obvious reluctance, seeing little hope for action atop a tower. Some of his best men had been on the platform for three hours looking for enemy troops and had seen nothing. Porter relieved them, took out his powerful glass, and settled down to watch.

Half an hour passed uneventfully. Then, about 8:45, turning to check the Van Pelt tower, Porter noted a faint glimmer in the distance. The sun was low in the sky behind; could the glimmer be sunlight reflecting off some metallic object? He followed it carefully and discovered it to be a brass cannon and some muskets with fixed bayonets moving behind the drab backdrop of a fence. Porter had discovered the key to Federal tactics for the day; a large column of troops swinging northwest to turn the Confederate left. At that moment the head of the column had reached Sudley Springs, eight miles from Porter's tower and less than two miles from the Confederate position commanded by Colonel Nathan Evans.

Realizing the danger, Porter immediately signalled the Van Pelt tower: "Look out on your left; you are turned." From there a courier took the message to Evans, who received similar news from a picket about the same time. While Evans hurriedly deployed his meager forces to meet the threat, Porter sent a dispatch to Beauregard:

I see a body of troops crossing Bull Run about two miles above the Stone Bridge. The head of the column is in the woods on this side. The rear of the column is in the woods on the other side. About a half mile of its length is visible in the open ground between. I can see both infantry and artillery.

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The message caused a change in Confederate plans. Originally Beauregard had planned to turn the Union left; now the report that his own left was threatened caused him to hesitate. The troops of Bee, Jackson, and Hampton were hurried to reinforce Evans, and Johnston urged Beauregard to abandon his plan and shift most of his troops to the left. While the generals debated the course the Confederate on the left bought valuable time with their plucky resistance. (Klein 1971: 33-34).

Accordingly, Colonel Evans, who had his headquarters on Van Pelt's Hill-Stone Bridge, turned and swatted the attack, making the use of the wigwag system pivotal to the Confederate's winning of the battle. "In his report Beauregard praised both Porter and his signal system" (Klein 1971: 35). As Richard Hoffman, the Superintendent of the Manassas National Battlefield Park, remarked:

Had it not been for the alert work of an officer stationed at Signal Hill, the Union flanking attack may not have been discovered and the outcome of the battle would almost certainly have been different (c.f., Satterthwaite 1973: 9).

Later in the war, Alexander proved indispensable to the Confederate plight, serving in ordnance, signals, engineering, reconnoitering, and eventually acting as Longstreet's chief of artillery (Klein 1971: 37).

Signal Hill is of major significance to the Civil War era. After the war, ownership of the hill passed from Josiah Wilcoxon to David J. Arrington, of Manassas. Recognizing its important role in the First Battle of Manassas, Mr. Arrington took great pains to keep the hill and the earthworks preserved. Following his death, the site was bought by a Mr. Roseberry, who also recognized its significance and, accordingly, showed it the same protection as Mr. Arrington. In 1972 the city of Manassas began to acquire the site for a park. Although there have been studies of the site and in the general area (Satterthwaite 1973; McGarry 1983a, 1983b), the site has not been accorded the recognition and preservation by the city that its significance warrants.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
 preliminary determination of individual listing
(36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National
Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey #
 recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record #

Primary location of additional data:
 State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Specify repository: DHL
221 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: 5.9 acres

UTM References:

A /18/ /2.88.080/ /42.91.820/
Zone Easting Northing
C // / // /
Zone Easting Northing

B // / // /
Zone Easting Northing
D // / // /
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries encompass the intact fortifications and signal station of Signal Hill.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: L. Daniel Myers, Consultant Archaeologist
organization: Prince William County, Planning Office
street & number: 339 Fairhaven Road
city or town: Dunkirk

date: May 1989
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Alexander, E. P.

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1961 Bull Run Remembers.... Manassas: National Capital Publishers, Inc.

Klein, M.

1971 Edward Porter Alexander. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

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1983a The Phase I Survey of the Proposed Park Development in the Signal Hill and Union Mill Tracts, City of Manassas Park, Prince William County, Virginia.

1983b Development Concepts for Signal Hill and Union Mills Tracts. For the City of Manassas Park, Prince William County, Virginia.

Satterthwaite, A.

1973 A Proposal for Signal Hill Park. A Report Prepared for the Town of Manassas Park, VA.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Figure 1 (1" = 160') shows the bounds of the Signal Hill site (44PW138). Signal Hill is immediately east of Blooms Drive, as the road is known locally. (The road is labeled as Manassas Drive on some street maps). Except in the south-southwest portion of the site and that segment between the northeast and east bastions, the boundary line, which encircles Signal Hill, corresponds to the 335-foot contour interval. The south-southwestern boundary line deviate from the 335-foot contour interval to follow the property line dividing the City of Manassas Park's property from private property. Between the northeast and east bastion, the boundary line roughly corresponds to the 340-foot contour and is immediately west of the modern house and about 50 feet behind the garage.

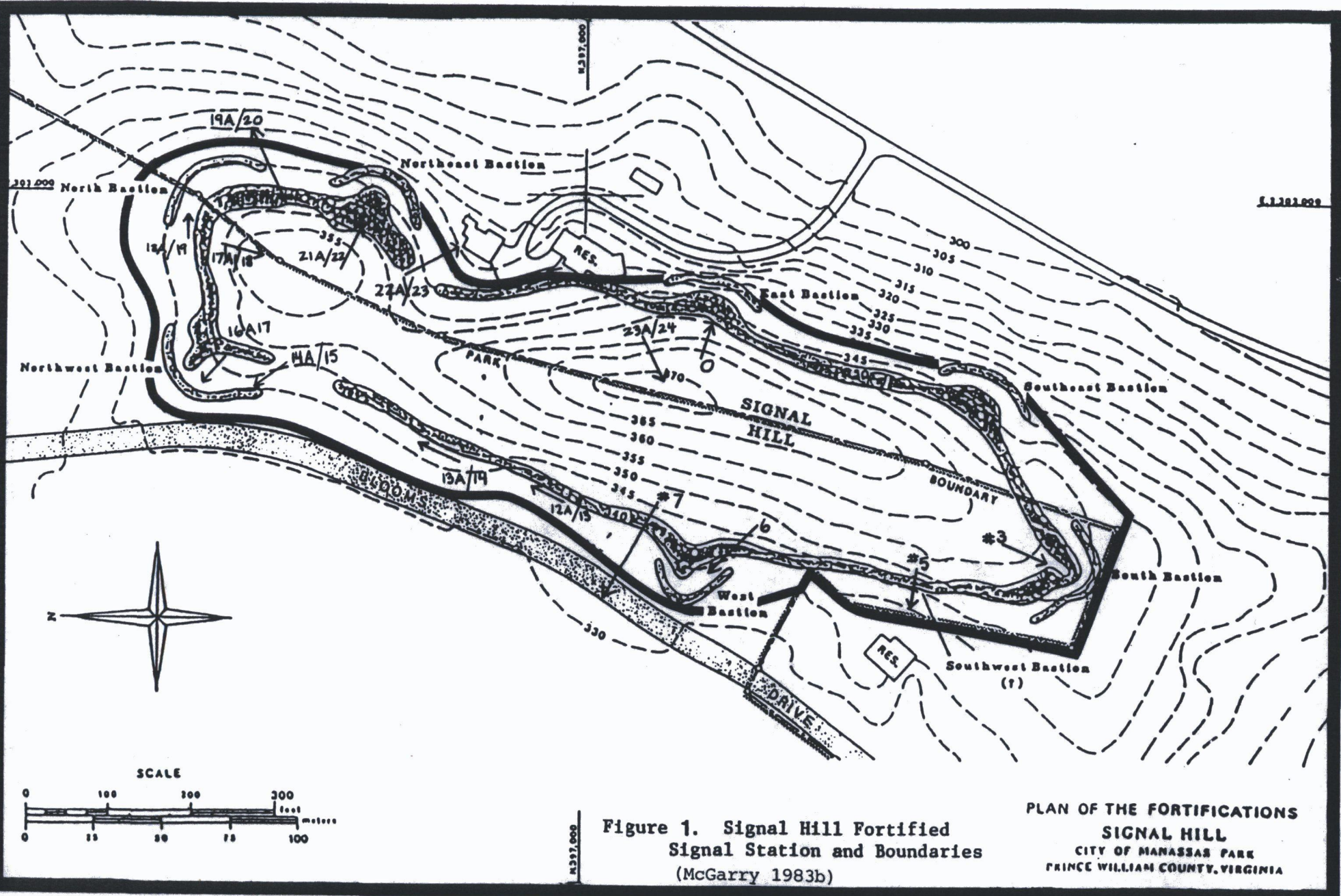


Figure 1. Signal Hill Fortified Signal Station and Boundaries (McGarry 1983b)

PLAN OF THE FORTIFICATIONS
SIGNAL HILL
 CITY OF MANASSAS PARK
 PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

SIGNAL HILL FORTIFICATION

H

7/5/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Civil War Properties in Prince William County MPS

VIRGINIA

COVER	Substantive Review	Date Listed
34 F 1. Cockpit Point	DOE/OWNER OBJECTION	8/2/89 - 8/8/89
S-11-2 2. Brentsville Courthouse and Jail	Substantive Review	8/18/89
S-11 F 3. Freestone Point Confederate Battery	Substantive Review	8/18/89
S-11 F 4. Greenwich Presbyterian Church and Cemetery	Substantive Review	8/18/89 -
S-11 F 5. Mayfield Fortification	Substantive Review	8/18/89 -
6. Mitchell's Ford Entrenchments	Substantive Review	8/18/89 -
7. Orange and Alexandria Railroad Bridge Piers	Substantive Review	8/18/89 -
8. Signal Hill	Substantive Review	8/18/89 -
9. Louisiana Brigade Winter Camp	Substantive Review	11/10/89
10. Brentsville Historic District	Substantive Review	12/21/90
11. Bristoe Battlefield	DOE/OWNER OBJECTION	2/13/91

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Signal Hill
NAME:

MULTIPLE Civil War Properties in Prince William County MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: VIRGINIA, Prince William

DATE RECEIVED: 7/05/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/19/89
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/04/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/19/89
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 89001062

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8/8/89 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER Kay A
DISCIPLINE Archaeology
DATE 8/8/89

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



22A/23
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL

Corner of garage near NE bastion

→ SE

#22A/23

Neg. #9436

1 of 16



#18A/19 Signal Hill
Roll 2 Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL

Outer fortification on north side
→ E

#18A/19

Neg. # 9436

2 of 10



111A
Roll 3

Signal Hill

Manassas, VA

J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

Southeast location

→ SW

111A

Neg. # 9437

3 of 16



#7/7A Signal Hill.

Roll 3 Manassas, VA

J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

View from west side of Signal Hill towards the west

→ W

#7/7A

Neg. # 9437

4 of 16



23A/24 Signal Hill
Roll 2 Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

Top of highest (south) knoll

→ WSW

#23A/24

Neg. # 943C

5 of 16



#6/6A
Roll 13

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL
West Bastion
→ NW

#6/6A

Neg. # 9437

6 of 16



5/5A
Roll 3

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA

J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

Corner of house on southwest side

→ SW

#5/5A

Neg. # 9437

7 of 16



12A/13
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL
Outer fortification

→ NE

#12A/13

Neg. # 9436

8 of 14



14A/15 Signal Hill
Roll 2 Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL
Northwest basin

→ NW

#14A/15

Neg. # 9436

9 of 16



16A/17
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

Northwest bastion

→ NW

16A/17

Neg. # 9436

10 of 16



#21/22
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL
Northeast Bastion
→ ESE

#21A/22

Neg. # 9436

11 of 16



#17A/18
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL
Top of north Knoll
→ S

#17A/18
Neg. # 9436

12 of 16



19A/20
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL

View to northeast from NE side of Signal Hill

→ NE

#19A/20

Neg. # 9436

13 of 16



0/0A
Roll 3

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL
East Gaston

→ NE

#0/0A

Neg. #9437

14 of 14



#3/3A
Roll 13

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA

J. Townsend 6-88

VA-DHL
South Lashin

→ S

#3/3A

Neg. #9437

15 of 16



13A 114
Roll 2

Signal Hill
Manassas, VA
J. Townsend 6-88
VA-DHL
Outer fortification

→ NE

13A 114

Neg. # 9436

16 of 16

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number

64500679