

Primary Battery File

National Archives, Washington D.C.

Record Group 77

Correspondence of the Chief of Engineers

Entry 103

File, Fort, Battery:

24968

Ft. Taylor

Btty Gardiner

Subject:

United States Engineer Office.

Key West, Fla., March 24, 1898.

Brig. Gen. John M. Wilson,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.,
Washington, D. C.

General:-

In reply to Department letter of March 19, 1898, I have the honor to say that in the report of the Board of Engineers dated December 27, 1897, modifying the project for the Artillery Defense of Key West, it is stated that "a strong rapid fire armament should be provided to replace the reverse fire of the gun lift over the north-west passage", which reverse fire was done away with when the project was modified by the substitution of two 12-inch guns on disappearing carriages, for two 12-inch guns on lifts.

There are two possible locations from which this rapid fire armament could bring the fire desired, viz., Fort Taylor and the North Battery. The one in Fort Taylor would not be practicable until the modifications proposed for that work are carried out. As to the location at the North Battery attention is invited to my letter of March 19th, in which it is recommended that three 8-inch converted rifles

be mounted at the North Battery.

The only fire that at present can be brought to bear on the southern channels is that of the guns in Fort Taylor. So far as distant defense is concerned these guns may be neglected. They would however, be effective at short range against counterminers and unarmored vessels.

One objection to locating the 8-inch converted rifles in positions from which they would overlook the southern channels was that being barbette guns and slow firing, they could not be served against a serious attack made on them from a distance. The same objection would not hold in the case of 4.7-inch R. F. guns on balance pillar or other mounts that afforded the means of withdrawing the guns from a fire to which ^{they} could not successfully reply.

I should therefore recommend that the two R. F. guns in question be mounted on the right flank of the ^{gun} battery now constructing. The following disadvantages attach to this location-

1. It is close to a battery of high power guns, (mimeograph No. 16 p. 4 last paragraph). The attending danger to magazines could be obviated by supplying additional cover.

2. The R. F. guns cannot be served while the flank 10-inch gun

is firing to the east of Fort Taylor, i. e. up the North-west channel.

Following are the advantages of the location:-

1. It covers all the southern channels of approach, except the southern part of the south-east channel.
2. It brings a close fire on the narrowest part of the main channel
3. One gun will fire in the direction of the North-west channel (except when the 10-inch gun on the right flank of the high power battery is being fired in that direction.)
4. If the mount permits of all-around fire; these guns will furnish a strong defense against a land attack on the high power battery, as they will sweep the angle between a line drawn to the left flank of the high power battery and one drawn northerly tangent to the shore line.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

C. A. McKinstry

1st. Lieut., Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

WAR DEPARTMENT
MAR 30 1898

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Key West, Fla.
Mar. 24, 1898

McKinstry,
Lieut. R. A.

In reply to E. D. Letter
Mar. 19, 1898, which reports
rel. to artillery defense of
Key West.

1st Indorsement.

Office Chief of Engineers,
U. S. Army.

March 30, 1898.

Respectfully returned to Lieutenant McKinstry, who is informed that the drawings for the 4.72" rapid-fire gun mounts which are expected daily have not yet arrived from abroad, but it is believed that the guns will have ship mounts and will not be withdrawable. It is inferred from Lieutenant McKinstry's arguments that in this case he will prefer to mount them at or near the North Battery. To save the time that would necessarily be occupied in the return of this paper and its subsequent reference to the Board of Engineers as contemplated by the project, Lieutenant McKinstry is authorized to definitely select a location for these guns which he deems best under the circumstances. Drawings of the mount and other necessary information will be sent as soon as possible. To be returned.

By command of Brig. Gen. Wilson:

Captain, Corps of Engineers.

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2d. Indorsement.

U. S. Engineer Office,
Key West, Fla.,

April 4, 1898.

Respectfully returned to the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

[Signature]
1st. Lt., Corps of Engrs.

RECORDED IN OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS APR 9 1898

Subject:

P. O. Drawer 521.

United States Engineer Office.

Key West, Fla., April 1, 1898,

Brig. Gen. John M. Wilson,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army,
Washington, D. C.

General:-

I have the honor to state that immediately upon receipt of Department letter of March 19, 1898, subject, Mounting of two 4.7-inch R. F. guns, I began making efforts to secure concrete materials. Concrete materials will also be required for the platforms for 8-inch converted rifles soon to be begun. So far I have been unable to make any arrangements whatever for obtaining broken stone.

On top of the land front of Martello Tower No. 2, are about 10,000 bricks which were probably left over in the construction of the work and were placed in their present position to assist in draining the roof when the sand cover should have been placed. On the reservation are about 15,000 or 20,000 bricks presumably left over from the construction of Fort Taylor. All of these bricks have been exposed to the weather for thirty years or more and few if any are fit for use as bricks. I would therefore ask authority to break up these bricks and

to use them in making concrete needed in constructions for the defense of this place.

I would state furthermore that in my opinion a certain part of the land front of Martello Tower No. 2, could advantageously be pulled down and that this action would be in the direction of the changes in this tower recommended by the Board of Engineers in its report of April 3, 1894.

Inviting attention to the accompanying tracing, the part referred to lies between the letters "A" and "B", and consists of the outer wall, the roof and the upper part of the rear wall between "A" and "B"

The heaviest fire that could by any possibility be brought against this portion of the land front, would be that of field guns or corresponding guns landed from ships. Any provision made for resisting such fire, or for emplacements for the machine guns and musketry fire recommended by the Board, would necessarily involve either the covering with sand or the demolition of the parts I now propose to tear down, The rear wall ought I think to be left standing to reference 12, to form a parapet wall, in front of which sand could be placed and behind it a banquette for musketry and emplacements for machine guns.

I would therefore ask authority to tear down between the points indicated on the tracing, the front wall, the roof and that part of the rear wall which stands above reference 12, and to use the bricks so obtained in any constructions that may be directed for the defense of this place; this work of demolition to begin with the roof and front wall and to be carried on only so fast as will supply the bricks immediately required.

As I have as yet no means of making blue prints, I would ask that two blue prints of the accompanying tracing be sent me for the files of this office.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,



1st. Lieut., Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

(1 inclosure, tracing in sep. package.)

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Key West, Fla.
April 1, 1898

McKinstry,
Hamm, Q. Co.

States that so far he has
been unable to make any
arrangements for obtaining
above for copies for 47 r.p. &
s' awarded rifles. Reg. arr. to
check up & use certain brick
on top of sand printed in
March 1892, & so will obtain
certain part of sand from of
some other & use brick so obtained
in exercise conformity with
reg. & blue prints.

1 inclo. (to McKinstry)

File
K

1st Indorsement.

Office Chief of Engineers,
U. S. Army,

April 7, 1898.

Respectfully returned approved.
The two blue prints requested
are sent in separate package.
This paper to be returned.

By command of Brig. Gen. Wilson:

[Signature]
Captain, Corps of Engineers,

24968

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2 blue prints of inclo. 4
in sep. roll.

Rudolph S. Gandy, Chief of Engrs., Key West, Fla., April 13, 1898.

2d. Indorsement.
U. S. Engineer Office,
Key West, Fla.,
April 13, 1898.

Respectfully returned to the
Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

[Signature]
1st. Lt., Corps of Engrs.

RECD. OFFICE CHIEF OF ENGRS. APR 13 1898