



WEST VIRGINIA HISTORIC PROPERTY INVENTORY FORM

HM-0100

STREET ADDRESS

US 50

Tax Parcel:

COMMON/HISTORIC NAME

☒ Common ☒ Historic ☐ Both

Mechanicsburg Gap Encampment

NO. IN SURVEY

ROM-003

NO. OF BAYS

FRONT

SIDE

TOWN OR COMMUNITY

Romney

COUNTY

Hampshire

NEGATIVE NO.

NOT VISIBLE
FROM ROAD

☐**ARCHITECT/BUILDER**

4th Brigade US Army

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

1863

EXTERIOR BUILDING FABRIC**STORIES****DATE**

NAT. REGISTER LISTED

STATE REGISTER LISTED

ROOFING MATERIAL**STYLE (STAFF USE ONLY)****PROPERTY USE OR FUNCTION**

(Current)

Encampment (Historic)

TYPE OF FOUNDATION**QUADRANGLE NAME**

Romney

SURVEY ORGANIZATION

Michael Baker Jr., Inc.
5088 West Washington
Second Floor
Charleston, WV 25313

PART OF WHAT SURVEY

Romney Core Run Road



DATE 03/23/1999

SITE NO.

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PRESENT OWNER

DNR, Davis, Corbin

OWNER ADDRESS**GENERAL CONDITION OF PROPERTY****ADDITIONS**

IF YES, DESCRIBE

☒ Yes ☐ No**ALTERATIONS**

IF YES, DESCRIBE

☐ Yes ☒ No See continuation sheet**NO. AND NATURE OF OUTBUILDINGS**

See continuation sheet

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY (ORIGINAL AND PRESENT)

See continuation sheet

HISTORIC/CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

See continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

FORM PREPARED BY

Cultural Resources Section

DATE

2/21/00

ADDRESS

Michael Baker, Jr., Inc. 550E
West Washington Second
Floor Charleston, WV
25313

MECHANICSBURG GAP UNION ENCAMPMENT (ROM-003)

Number and Nature of Outbuildings

There are no outbuildings associated with this resource.

Resource Description

Components of the encampment are the campsite, the Northwestern Turnpike, Yankee Spring and the Trenches.

This area was used as a campsite for Union forces in the spring and fall of 1863. A lithograph of the site illustrates the camp layout. Two regiments of infantry were camped west of the Northwest Turnpike. The enlisted men were housed in circular Sibley tents, which are shown "stockaded" in the lithograph. The wall tents of the company officers were located to the rear of the enlisted men's tents (Billings 1887:73). The color area was directly west of the road. Brigade officers were probably quartered in the Hamilton House. Metal detection to the north of the house located officers' equipment (Wolford 1999 personal communication).

Three tents, one Sibley and two large hospital tents were located east of the encampment. These could have been the infirmary, which was located away from the main camp. Yankee Spring (Wolford 1999 personal communication) is located on the east bank of Mill Creek. Here Union soldiers constructed a dry-laid stone lining for the spring.

The fort was located on the hill directly east of the encampment. This consisted of an egg-shaped outer perimeter of entrenchments. Inside this was the central redoubt. This stronghold was square and about 40 feet long on each side. At the corners were traverses, projecting earthen walls which protected the redoubt (John Milner Associates, Inc. 1998:np). There were two passageways or covered ways between the fort and the outer perimeter.

From the lithograph it seems likely that the three sections of artillery had their camps outside of the fort. Joshua Winters mentioned digging rifle pits for the fort; these were located on the eastern side of Fort Mill Ridge.

Historical/Cultural Significance

Historic research indicates that the 4th Brigade moved to the camp in March, 1863 and that fort was constructed between March and June of 1863. Colonel Jacob Campbell, brigade commander, recorded in his diary for March 16, 1863: "move the forces from Romney to east end of Mechanicsburg Gap" (Jacob M Campbell Papers 1863:n. p.).

Construction on this battery began immediately. In his diary Private Joshua Winters, Company G, 1st West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, recorded his picket and fatigue duty at the battery. March 24, Tuesday: "i was on gard at the battery tonight." April 4, Saturday: "i was on furtigue today on the mountain." May 28, Thursday: "i was on furtigue today a diggin rifell pits." In a letter to his sister dated 6 June 1863 he wrote: "i guess they ar about dun with the fort and the intrenchments, then our deuty wont bee so heavy" (Swiger 1991:61, 62-63, 68, 69).

In the lithograph of the site, the 1st infantry regiment was still designated Virginia Volunteers. This was changed to West Virginia after statehood was proclaimed on June 20, 1863. The site was abandoned for the month of July 1863, then reclaimed and occupied until November 1863.

At the beginning of the Civil War, both sides considered western Virginia very important territory. The north believed it was the "back door" to Richmond; the south wanted to control the area and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Both sides considered Romney a strategic town. The camp was occupied for eight months during 1863. The north believed it was necessary to hold Romney to protect the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, their main east-west transportation route, from Confederate raids. In the last two years of the war, the Confederates did not try to occupy territory in West Virginia, but raided the area for food and supplies.

National Register Eligibility Assessment

The resource was evaluated under the Criteria for Evaluation for the National Register of Historic Places. It was found to be *not eligible* because of loss of integrity. There have been changes in the setting in the last 130 years. Fort Mill Ridge is now heavily wooded, and several modern houses have been constructed in the encampment area.

Bibliographic References

Billings, J. D.

1887 *Hardtack & Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life*. George M. Smith & Company, Boston. Reprinted 1993 University of Nebraska Press, London and Lincoln.

Campbell, Jacob M.

1796 (1861-1865) 1888 Jacob M. Campbell Papers. Colson Library, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia.

Gray, L.

1863 Camps of the 4th Brigade 1st Division 8th Army Corps near Romney, Virginia. Krebs & Bro, Lithographers, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

John Milner Associates, Inc.

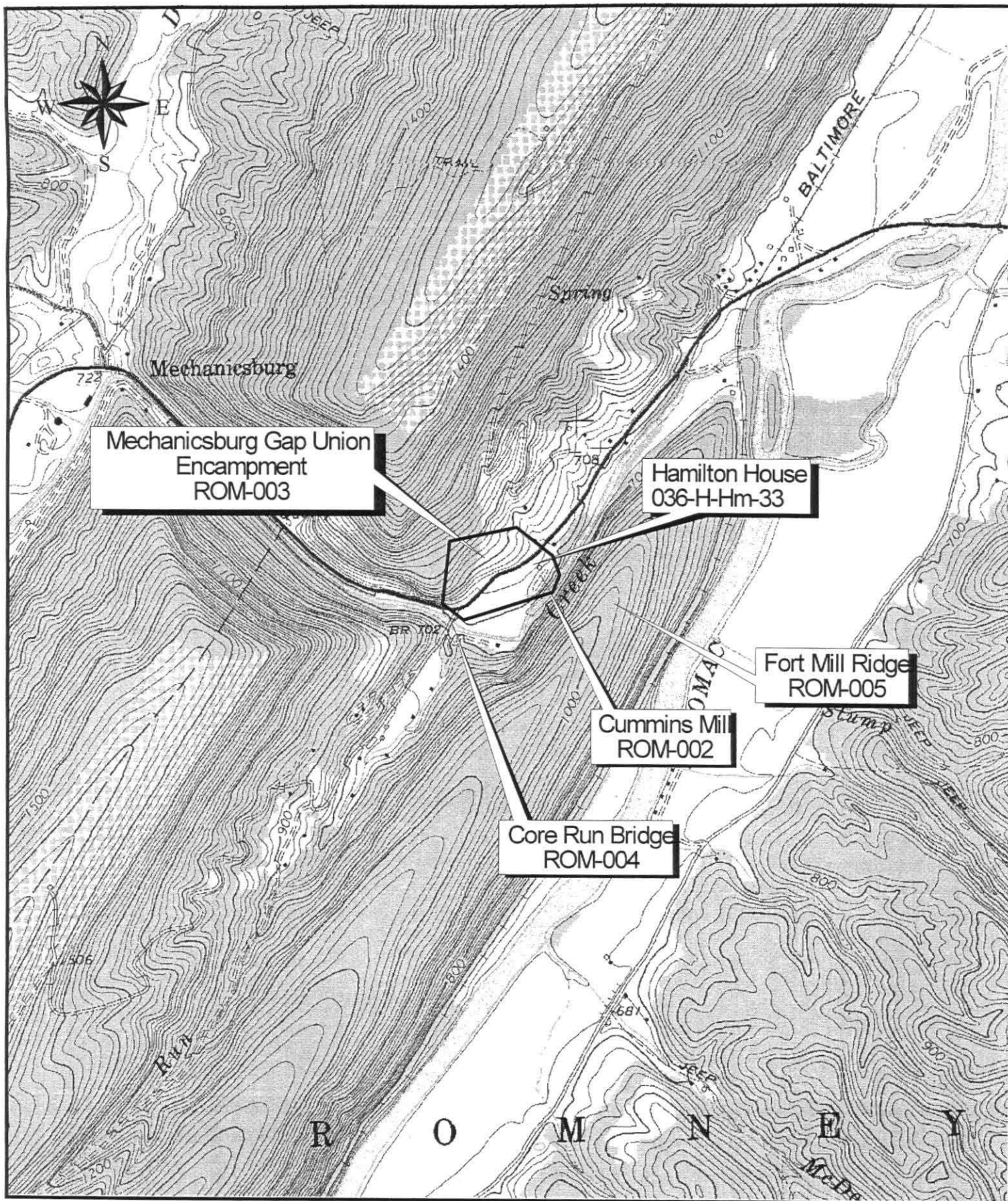
1998 Wayside Signage for Fort Mill Ridge Hampshire County, West Virginia. On file, Hampshire County Planning Commission, Romney, West Virginia.

Swiger, E., editor

1991 *Civil War Letters and Diary of Joshua Winters: A Private in the Union Army Company G, First West Virginia Volunteer Infantry*. McClain Printing Company, Parsons, West Virginia.

Wolford, R.

1999 Personal communication.



**Location of Historic Resources in the
US 50 Project Area near Romney, WV**

100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 Feet

