

WEST VIRGINIA HISTORIC PROPERTY INVENTORY FORM

HM 0102

STREET ADDRESS

Fort Mill Ridge Rd.

Tax Parcel:

COMMON/HISTORIC NAME

☐ Common ☒ Historic ☐ Both

Fort Mill Ridge

NO. IN SURVEY

ROM-005

NO. OF BAYS

0

0

FRONT

SIDE

TOWN OR COMMUNITY

Romney

COUNTY

Hampshire

NEGATIVE NO.

NOT VISIBLE
FROM ROAD

☐**ARCHITECT/BUILDER**

4th Brigade US Army

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION**EXTERIOR BUILDING FABRIC****STORIES**

0

NAT. REGISTER LISTED ☐

STATE REGISTER LISTED ☐

DATE

ROOFING MATERIAL**STYLE (STAFF USE ONLY)**

Not Styled

PROPERTY USE OR FUNCTION

Government (Current)

Other (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



DATE 2/21/00

SITE NO.

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PRESENT OWNER

DNR

OWNER ADDRESS**GENERAL CONDITION OF PROPERTY**

Stable

ADDITIONS**IF YES, DESCRIBE**☒ Yes ☐ No**ALTERATIONS****IF YES, DESCRIBE**☐ Yes ☒ No

See continuation

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

FORT MILL (ROM 005)

Number and Nature of Outbuildings

There are no outbuildings associated with this resource.

Resource Description

The artillery at Fort Mill Ridge was housed in the small, central redoubt while the infantry was positioned in the surrounding outer ring of entrenchments. The central redoubt is a small-enclosed square earthwork (*rampart*) consisting of 40-ft. interior walls (*parapets*), the purpose of which was to fortify a position with the potential of being attacked on all sides. The Union used the south side of the fort to defend against Confederate infantry attack down the ridgeline from the south, while the east side overlooks the Mill Creek valley. On the north side is an entrance, with two artillery positions located on each of the other three sides. The parapets consisted of openings (*embrasures*) that were fashioned for the placement of cannons. Vertical logs probably lined the interior of the parapet walls, while wooden cannon platforms were laid on the earth. Sod covered the exterior of the parapets. Embrasures still remain at the southern and western parapets at Fort Mill Ridge.

The central redoubt at the fort is very well preserved in most areas with exceptions of the eroded parapets. Defending infantry could fire at the Confederates from the entrenchments, or ditches located around the central redoubt. Extensions, or *covered ways*, connected the ditch to the outer ring of entrenchments from the two southern corners of the central redoubt. The east-west line between the covered ways and the redoubts created a second line of defense from attack. Earthen mounds, or *traverses*, projected from the corners of the redoubt to provide a firing location, protection from explosions in from other parts of the ditch and protection from gunfire down the line of the ditch. There were few trees at the site of Fort Mill Ridge at the time of construction, many of which were used in the process. Preservation of the existing fort is aided by the growth of trees on and around the earthworks since the 1860's.

Historical/Cultural Significance

Fort Mill Ridge was constructed between March and June 1863, by Union Troops as a means of defending the South Branch Potomac Valley and the Mechanicsburg Gap. The

remains of the fortifications are among the best preserved of their kind from the Civil War and have been undisturbed for the past 135 years.

Many small, independent farms existed in the South Branch Potomac Valley at the time of the Civil War. During this time, the valley was part of the new state of West Virginia and was embarking as a leader in agricultural production. The significance of Romney and the South Branch Potomac Valley during the time of the Civil War was primarily due to their proximity to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O Railroad). A vital transportation link for the North, the B&O Railroad provided a method of transportation for troops and supplies from the west to the Union forces in the east. The railroad was a key interest of the Confederate Command, who attempted to cripple the industrial might of the Union by disrupting the traffic on the B&O Railroad throughout the war. The Union protected the railroad by controlling Romney and the South Branch Potomac Valley. In addition, with forces in Romney the Union could control the Northwestern Turnpike. Now US 50, the Northwest Turnpike ran through Mechanicsburg Gap, providing an important east-west mountain pass through the West Virginia mountains (Milner and Associates 1998, n.p.).

On March 16, 1863, commanding officer Col. Jacob M. Campbell ordered the shift of encampment location from Romney to the area near Mill Creek. Campbell's command included the 54th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, the 1st Virginia Volunteer Infantry, Battery E of the Virginia Light Artillery, and the vaunted Ringgold Cavalry. The encampment's strategic location between a mountain and a ridge allowed for further protection against surprise attacks, especially from the south. Campbell instructed his troops to begin construction of Fort Mill between March and June of 1863 as a means to control the valley and Mechanicsburg Gap and also as a means of protecting the encampment along Mill Creek (Jacob M Campbell Papers 1863:n. p.).

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 *eligible* because it is an outstanding example of Civil War earthworks in West Virginia. It is the understanding of the authors that a National Register

**CONTINUATION
SHEET**

nomination is in preparation by the WVDCH so a nomination has not been prepared as part of this report.

The resource meets Criterion A because it is associated with Civil War events significant on a local, regional and, arguably the national level. Fort Mill does not meet Criterion B, as research has not revealed any association with a significant individual.

The resource does embody construction of military earthworks prevalent during the Civil War era. Therefore it is not eligible under Criterion C.

Historic research indicates a potential to yield information important to history or prehistory (Criterion D). However, in light of known Civil War artifact collecting in the area, it is likely the potential for archaeological information related to the Civil War has been somewhat compromised.

The proposed realignment of US 50 *will not* have an effect on this resource because it is located on Fort Mill Ridge and is not visible from the project area, or vice versa.

Furthermore, the proposed realignment will not result in an increase in traffic, and therefore will not change the character of the landscape surrounding Fort Mill Ridge.

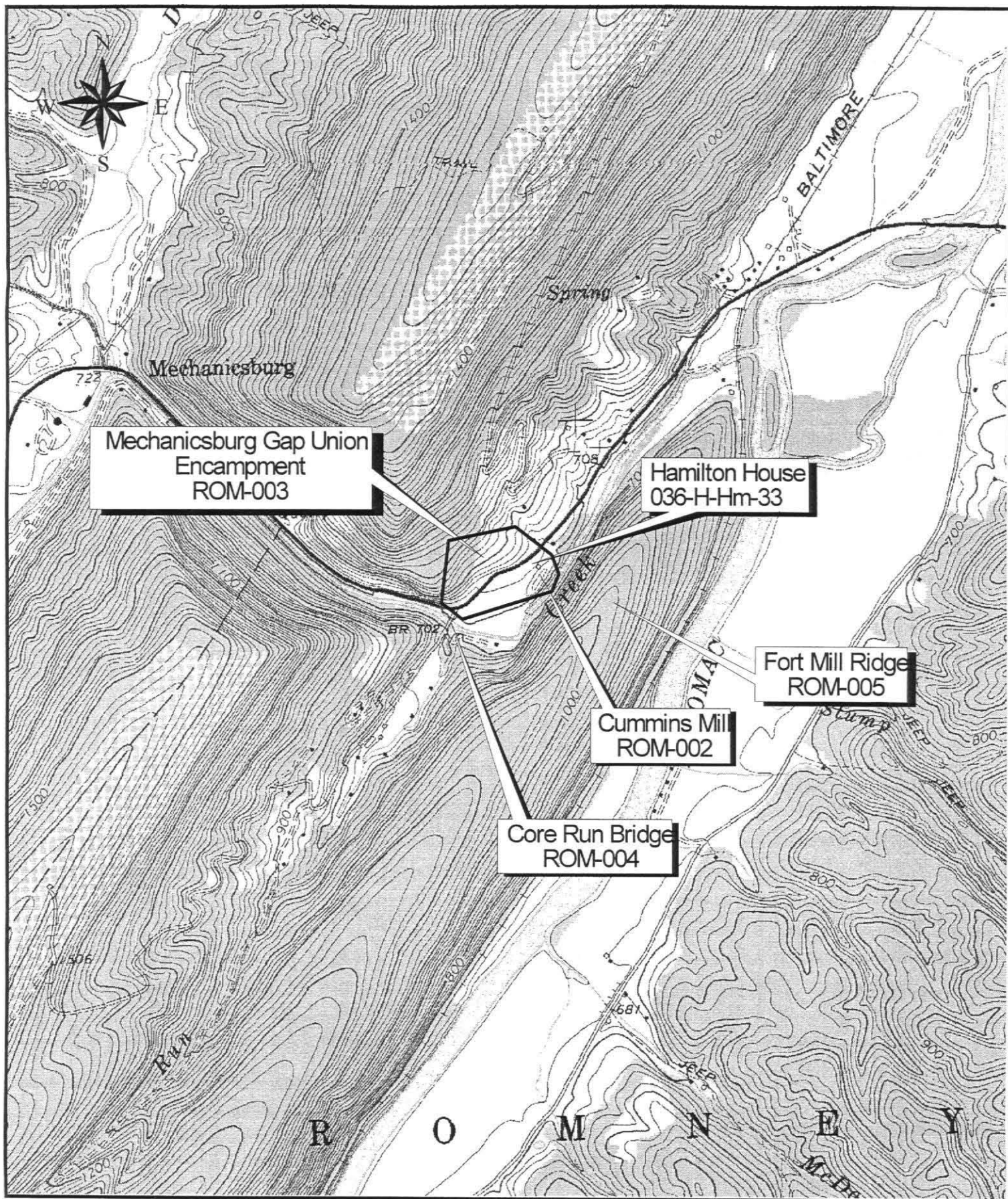
Bibliographic References

Campbell, Jacob M.

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

John Milner Associates, Inc.

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



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

100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 Feet

