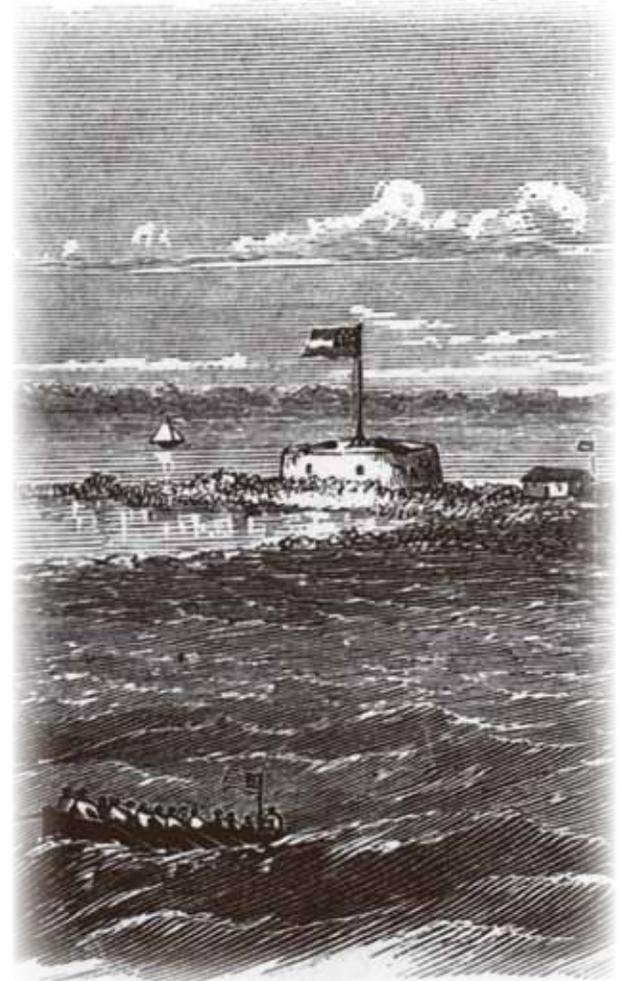


Fort Williams

GPS Coordinates:
84° 10.955' W ~ 30° 4.658' N



Fort Williams, in a drawing from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, February 22, 1862 (detail). (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail

1	Wakulla Beach: site of Wakulla Beach Hotel and West Goose Creek Seineyard	84° 15.703' W	30° 6.316' N	4	Mounds Station: site of Shell Mounds and Naval Stores	84° 9.869' W	30° 5.282' N
2	Plum Orchard: site of Port Leon	84° 8.892' W	30° 9.099' N	5	St. Marks Lighthouse: site of Lighthouse, Ft. Williams, and Spanish Hole/Shipwreck	84° 10.955' W	30° 4.658' N
3	East River: site of CCC and Salt Works	84° 8.710' W	30° 7.797' N	6	Mandalay: site of Aucilla River	83° 58.769' W	30° 6.985' N

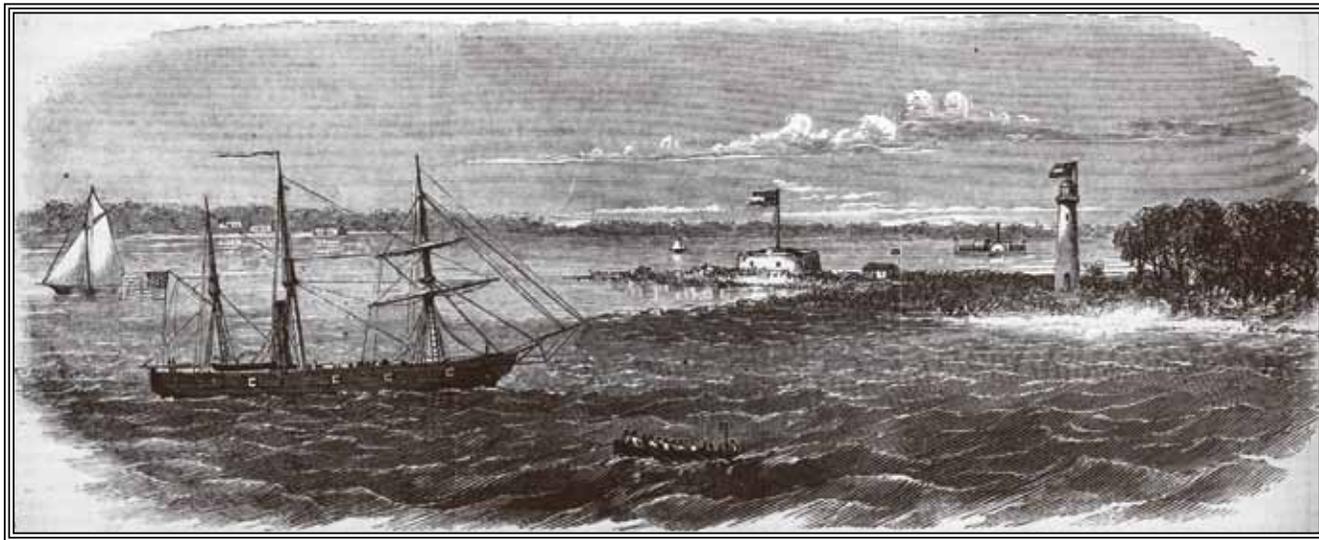


Fort Williams

Before the Civil War, Florida was thinly populated with few cities of any size. St. Marks had been the fifth largest town in Florida and a busy port. But in the decade before the war shipping business shifted to other towns. The beginning of the conflict signaled a short-lived revival for the port of St. Marks; blockade-

runners easily slipped in and out until President Lincoln authorized a blockade of southern ports – including St. Marks – on April 19, 1861.

Shortly after the blockade began, the Confederates built a fort near the St. Marks Lighthouse and named it Ft. Williams in honor of Colonel J.J. Williams, a Tallahassee planter who led the 2nd Florida Cavalry. The fort was more of a



This drawing shows the lighthouse, Ft. Williams and the three-masted U.S. gunboat Mohawk firing on the Confederate gunboat Spray. The Spray was a modern steam-powered side wheeled boat armed with three guns that carried men and supplies between St. Marks and the lighthouse. The Spray is in the background, between the fort and the lighthouse. (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

watery woods and engaged Confederate forces on March 6 at the Battle of Natural Bridge. Their goal was to capture Tallahassee, but the Union troops withdrew after the battle. Tallahassee remained the only southern capital east of the Mississippi that was never captured by Union forces.

The exact location of Fort Williams is unknown, but it is thought to be near the end of Cedar Point Trail.

These items (not shown to scale) were recovered during an archeological dig near the site of Fort Williams. They could have been left behind by Civil War soldiers or nearby residents. (Artifact photos courtesy of the Florida Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research)



Handcut button

stockade to shelter the soldiers who were guarding the salt workers and the townspeople of St. Marks.

On June 15, 1862, a party of Union Marines landed near the lighthouse. They burned the barracks and the keeper's home. The fort was not rebuilt, but it had provided a sense of safety for a few months.

On March 4, 1865, soldiers from the 2nd and 99th U.S. Colored Infantry landed near the lighthouse. They slogged north through the



Musket ball shot



Glass bottle neck



Bristol Glazed Albany slipped whiskey jug sherd

The St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., with a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, produced the signs and brochures for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail. The association is a 501(c)(3) organization that supports educational, environmental, and biological programs of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Visit www.stmarksrefuge.org for more information.

9/2010