



## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

**RON DESANTIS**  
Governor

**CORD BYRD**  
Secretary of State

December 19, 2025

Ms. Daniela Salume  
Historic Preservation Manager  
Josephine Parker City Hall  
1300 White St.  
Key West, Florida 33040-1409

Re: West Martello Tower (MO00233), 1100 Atlantic Blvd, Key West, FL 33040

Dear Ms. Salume:

A Florida National Register Nomination Proposal for the above referenced property has been prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office. We solicit your review and recommendation concerning eligibility in accordance with the procedures established by the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (54 U.S.C. 302504), which created the basis for the participation of Certified Local Governments in the Florida National Register of Historic Places nomination process. We are updating the West Martello Tower National Register Nomination. The nomination was originally listed on June 24, 1976.

According to the Act, before properties within the jurisdiction of the certified local government may be considered by the State to be nominated for inclusion on the National Register, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall notify the owners, the applicable chief local elected official, and the local historic preservation commission. The commission, after reasonable opportunity for public comment, shall prepare a report as to whether or not such properties meets the eligibility criteria. Within sixty days of the notice from the State Historic Preservation Officer, the chief local elected official shall transmit the report of the commission and their recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Officer. If no such report and recommendation are received within sixty days, the State shall proceed with the nomination process.

If either the preservation agency or the chief local elected official supports the nomination of the property, the proposal will be scheduled for consideration by the Florida National Register Review Board. We have tentatively scheduled the nomination for the above property for consideration by the Florida National Register Review Board at their February 19, 2026 meeting.

If both the commission and the chief local elected official recommend that a property not be nominated to the National Register, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall take no further action, unless within

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thirty days of the receipt of such recommendation by the State Historic Preservation Officer an appeal is filed with the State. Any party may file an appeal with the State Historic Preservation Officer. If the State Historic Preservation Officer, after hearing the appeal, determines that the property is eligible, he shall proceed with the nomination process. The State Historic Preservation Officer shall include any reports and recommendations from any party along with the nomination submitted to the Keeper of the Register.

We look forward to your recommendation and comments regarding this property. If we can be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at Kyra.Lucas@dos.fl.gov or 850-245-6339.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kyra Lucas  
Survey & Registration Supervisor  
Bureau of Historic Preservation

KNL/hae

Enclosures

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

West Martello Tower

Name of Property

Monroe County, Florida

County and State

76000602

NR Reference Number

**State Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X additional documentation    additional documentation: name change    move    removal    other 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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

**Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this    additional documentation    additional documentation: name change    move    removal    other 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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

**National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- additional documentation accepted
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**West Martello Tower**

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**SUMMARY**

Located in Key West, Florida, the West Martello Tower was listed on the National Register on June 24, 1976, under Criterion A: Engineering and Military at the national level with a period of significance of 1861-1945. It is also counted as a contributing structure in the Key West Historic District which was listed on March 11, 1971. Also known as the West Martello Citadel, the West Martello Tower was designed to be one of two towers (the other being East Martello, which is also listed on the National Register) built to support Fort Zachary Taylor during the Civil War. Despite these plans, construction of the West Martello Tower began in 1861 and was indefinitely halted in 1866. Historic alterations were made intermittently through the end of WWII, when it was surplussed by the U.S. War Department and acquired by Monroe County to be used for recreational purposes. Alterations, both historic and non-historic, have been made including the addition of restrooms, wood lattice roofing on certain exterior spaces, and other on-site features, such as a gazebo, wooden fencing, and landscaping. These alterations occurred prior to its original listing. The purpose of this Additional Documentation is to account for the damage incurred by Hurricane Irma in 2017, and document restoration done thereafter. This Additional Documentation makes no changes to other listing criteria or boundaries.

**BACKGROUND**

The West Martello Tower was listed in the National Register on June 24, 1976, under Criterion A: Engineering and Military at the national level with a period of significance of 1861-1945. The West Martello Tower in Key West, Florida was constructed in 1862 as a satellite fort protecting the larger Fort Zachary Taylor, located 1 mile west. It was built on the site of an African cemetery where 295 Africans were buried on the beach in 1860, around where the Citadel currently lies. A Florida Heritage Landmark sign directly next to the property marks the site of this cemetery. Additional artillery batteries were constructed at the Citadel in 1904.

The West Martello Tower was in military use from 1862 to 1945. The property is noteworthy in military history for its role in the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I and II, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1945, the property was declared surplus and turned over to Monroe County for use as a part of a county park. In 1955, the Key West Garden Club moved into this structure and has since maintained the property now called The West Martello Citadel and Garden Club. Parts of the Citadel lie in ruins (as it was historically, since construction was never completed), and other parts are occupied and maintained for meetings, exhibits, and garden space. A large garden is maintained on the site in and around the property. The West Martello Citadel and Garden Club is free and open to the public every day.

**SETTING**

Located between Reynolds and White Street, the West Martello Tower resides along the Straits of Florida on the south side of Key West. Beyond the Citadel's barrier wall, the structure is surrounded by the Clarence S. Higgs Memorial Beach park. The beach became a park in 1948, shortly after the Citadel was transferred to the county, making this a historical alteration to the setting. Directly next to the structure is a Florida Heritage Landmark for the African Cemetery at Higgs Beach. A concrete sea wall

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sits to the south of the structure. Nonhistorical changes to the setting associated with the beach include tennis courts, a playground and a dog park located across Atlantic Boulevard. Though the surrounding area has suffered damage from hurricanes, and despite the nonhistorical development, the West Martello Citadel has always resided on a beach, and its setting has maintained recreational use.

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION****EXTERIOR**

The historic Citadel is located at the center of the property. Portions of the brick masonry walls and the central stairs of this structure remain from 1862 and are surrounded by a large garden and mature trees. These historic brick walls are approximately 4 to 8 feet high, 4 feet thick, and include a historic archway which served as the entry to the original Citadel structure (Photos 1 and 2). The roofline visible from the street is comprised of a series of arches, creating a wave-like design. The structure is primarily made of brick, topped with crushed limestone creating the arches (Photo 3 and 4). The historic brick walls surround the historic Citadel. A wooden fence adjoins the sections of brick walls to enclose the east and west walls (Photos 5 and 6).

Brick paving connects the Citadel and the brick exterior walls. Along the brick paving are wooden and iron benches and landscaping (Photos 7 and 8). As a garden center, ornamental plantings and various garden features were added within the ruins. By the early 1990s, new features included a wood gazebo near the southeast corner of the ruins. In 2001, a wood frame pergola called the "orchid arbor" was erected within the ruins of the Citadel along the southeast side of the stair tower ruins (Photo 9). Circa 2003, restrooms and a concrete ramp were constructed at the northwest corner of the Citadel ruins. An additional concrete ramp connects the east exterior courtyard to the front courtyard. Other features include a butterfly garden in the northwest quadrant of the site and a fountain visible from Atlantic Boulevard.

**INTERIOR**

The Citadel has an entirely brick interior with stone floors and arched entryways between rooms, some with iron gates (Photo 10). The interior of the meeting room/shed of the Citadel was built with lumber salvaged from the Jefferson Hotel on Duval Street in Key West and was then faced with a brick veneer; Later, concrete flooring was added (Photo 11). The ammunition bunker located on the south side of the property has exposed stone flooring and painted stone walls with a structural support beam in the middle of the room (Photo 12). Painted brick stairs with an iron railing descend into the western battery emplacement with painted brick walls (Photo 13).

**PRE-HURRICANE IRMA ALTERATIONS**

From 2011 through 2020, various restoration projects were undertaken at the West Martello Tower under the supervision of preservation architects, Bender & Associates, Architects, for the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners. From 2011-2014, three phases of restoration took place including repointing mortar joints; removing graffiti; replacing missing bricks; reconstructing portions

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of the exterior walls and arches; installing shoring, retaining wall, new rolled roofing and accessibility ramp; windows replaced with wood casement impact-resistant windows.

**HURRICANE IRMA AND ALTERATIONS**

When Hurricane Irma struck on September 10, 2017, the large Strangler Fig tree located at the center of the property near the Citadel fell due to hurricane winds. The entire root ball, which weighed 25 tons, came out of the ground, tearing away parts of the 1862 historic Citadel walls. The 4-foot-thick walls cracked at the base, and the entire masonry wall was sheared, moving several inches. The historic brick masonry entry archway was destroyed by the falling tree. The hurricane also damaged or destroyed significant amounts of the vegetation at the site.

Beginning in 2020, with the help of the Hurricanes Harvey-Irma-Maria Disaster Recovery Grant Program provided by the National Park Service, restorations were made to the site. These include the restoration of the masonry (patching and repointing walls and columns along the northeast portion of the Citadel and as needed; reconstruct outer wythe of brick as needed; repair and repoint masonry on Gunport 3; Remove brick from Gunport 3 to clean rust from all metal, patch and paint) and repairing existing board-formed concrete ceilings in the ammunition bunker, following the historic formwork marks. Subsequent restoration to the masonry was done in 2021, including reconstructing the historic arch that was destroyed by Hurricane Irma, patching and repointing all Citadel walls and former stair tower, and minor pointing and repairs to the south exterior walls. Existing historic bricks were recovered and reused for reconstruction where possible. Once the historic bricks had been depleted, new fabricated materials that matched historic materials were used. These new materials were visually compatible with the historic materials, sensitive to the structure's historic character.

**INTEGRITY**

Despite the hurricane damage done to the structure, the West Martello Tower maintains its integrity for continued listing in the National Register. Its character defining brick walls, arches, courtyard, and garden landscaping, and position along the water, ensure the structure continues to stand as a landmark on the island. The setting along the Straits of Florida has remained, but further development to support the beach's recreational use has impacted the setting. Despite these nonhistorical additions to the setting, these additions support the historical recreational use following the end of World War II. Furthermore, this location for the West Martello Tower was chosen by the U.S. military both for its proximity to Fort Zachary Taylor and to the water, which it maintains.

The West Martello Tower retains its integrity of design, as the structure and its character-defining features remain as they were when used as an armory. The structure remains mostly brick, retaining its historic materials. The historic additions made by the Key West Garden Club do not negatively impact character defining features. Nonhistoric additions, such as the gazebo, restrooms, and ramps, were made to support recreational use or to comply with the ADA, though they do impact the visual integrity. After the damage from Hurricane Irma, the structure's integrity was negatively impacted, losing some materials and workmanship of the structure. However, the majority of the property withstood the Hurricane. What was damaged or destroyed (such as the historic entry arch), was rebuilt with

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salvageable original bricks. Alterations and repairs done with the grant funding were made in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards and with sensitivity to the structure's character defining features, as reviewed by staff at the Florida State Division of Historic Resources.

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Property Name: West Martello Tower

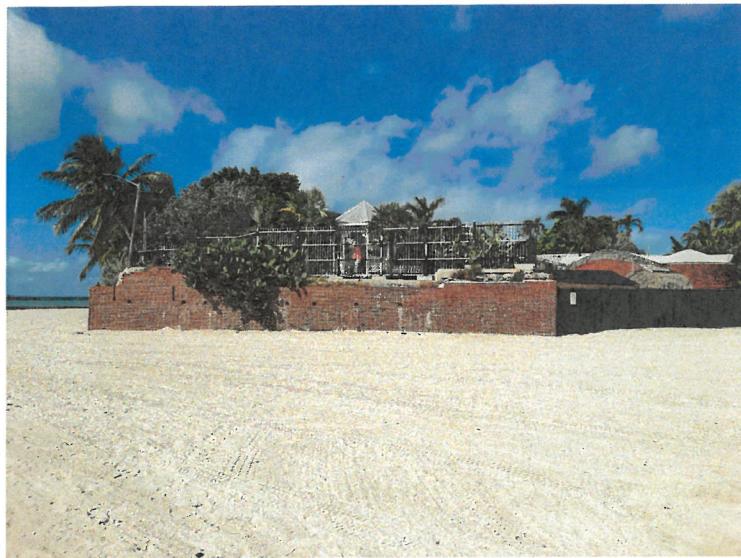
City or Vicinity: Key West County: Monroe County State: FL

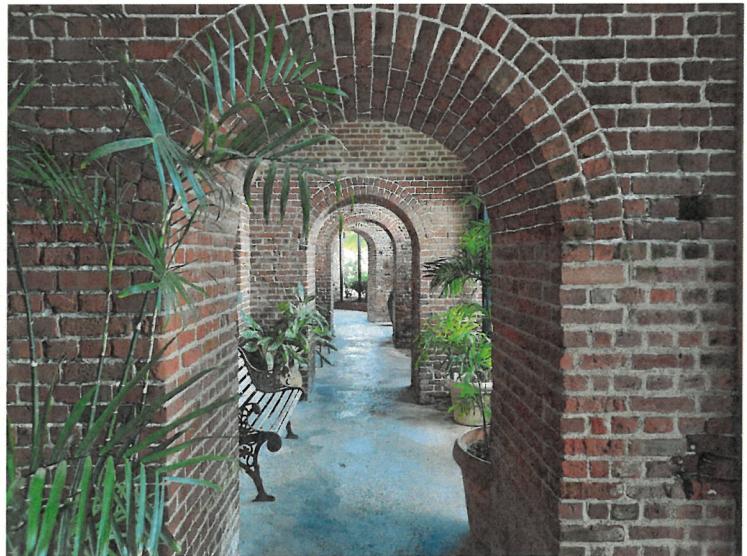
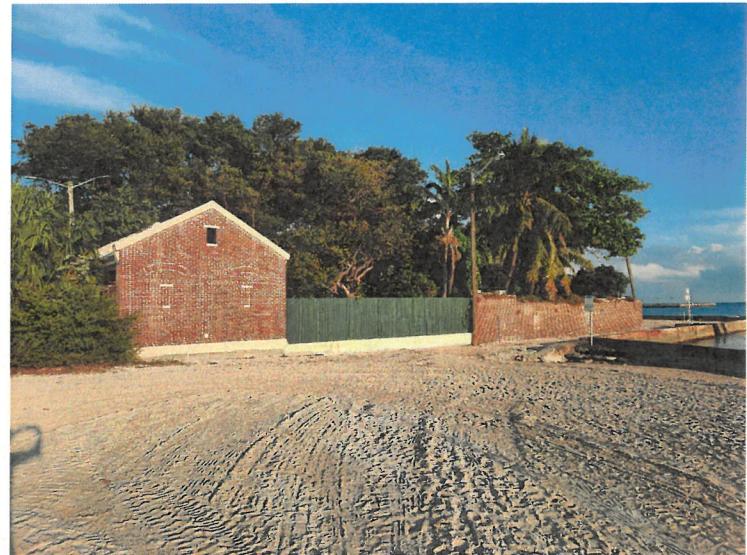
Photographer: David Salay Date Photographed: 2014, 2020, 2022

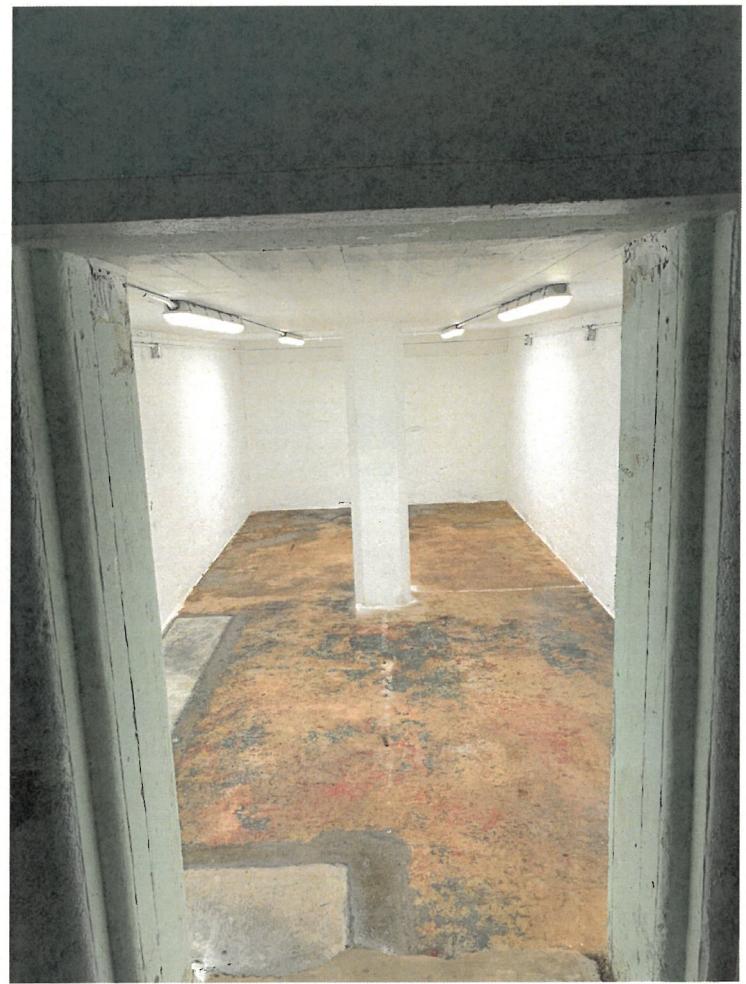
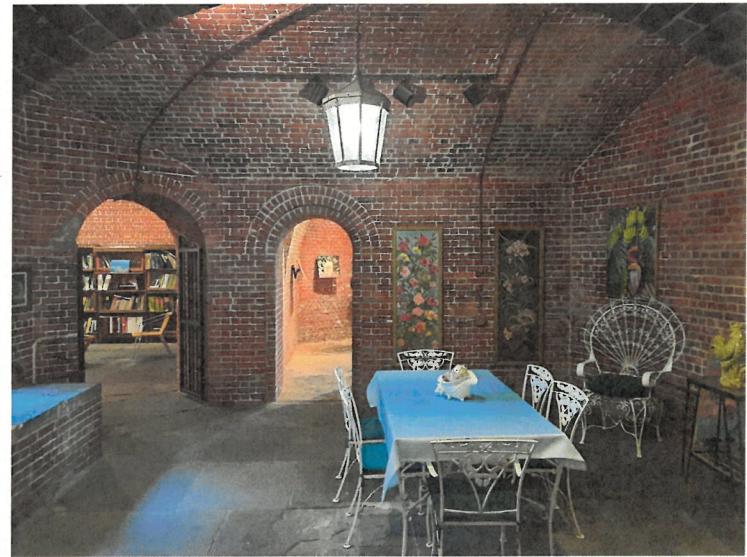
Verification that photos over a year old are a true representation of the existing building or district

**Description of photograph(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera:**

1. Photo 1: View west of the southeastern side of the Martello, 2022.
2. Photo 2: View north of the south side of the Martello, 2022.
3. Photo 3: View south of masonry repairs to the casemate west of the main entrance, 2020.
4. Photo 4: View south of the main entrance to the West Martello, January 8, 2022.
5. Photo 5: View west of the northeastern side of the Martello, 2022.
6. Photo 6: View southeast of the Martello with bathrooms at left, 2022.
7. Photo 7: View southeast of interior walls near the northeast corner of the Martello, 2022.
8. Photo 8: View northwest of archways along the northeast portion of the Martello exterior, 2022.
9. Photo 9: View northwest of the stair tower for the citadel showing repointed masonry, 2022.
10. Photo 10: View north of interior casemate walls near the northeast corner of the Martello, 2022.
11. Photo 11: View east inside the Meeting Room during 2014 rehabilitation.
12. Photo 12: View south inside ammunition bunker showing board-formed concrete repairs at ceiling, 2020.
13. Photo 13: View south of the western 1904-1906 battery emplacement, 2022.









West Martello Tower  
Photos 2014, 2020, 2022

