

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Rhode Island
COUNTY:	Providence
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	MAY 8 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:	Mount Vernon Tavern
AND/OR HISTORIC:	"Bank House Tavern"

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Plainfield Pike, <sup>(R.I. 14)</sup> <del>three tenths of one mile east of its junction with Howard Hill Road</del>			
CITY OR TOWN: Foster <i>vic.</i>		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: #2: Robert O. Tiernan	
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE: 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Comments _____ RECEIVED APR 11 1974

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:	Mr. and Mrs. James L. McPhee
STREET AND NUMBER:	Plainfield Pike
CITY OR TOWN:	Foster
STATE:	Rhode Island
CODE:	44

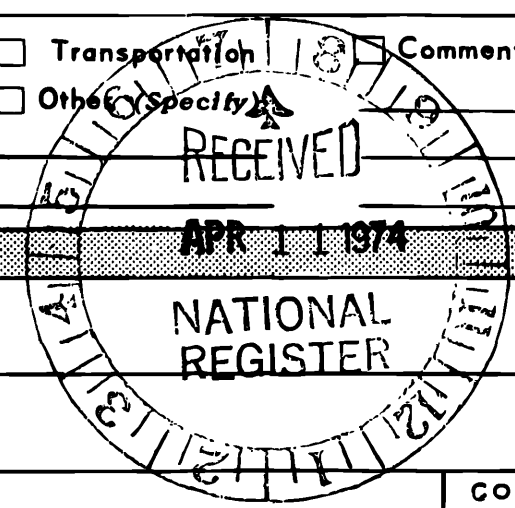
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:	Foster Town Clerk's Office
STREET AND NUMBER:	Killingly Road
CITY OR TOWN:	Foster Center, Foster
STATE:	Rhode Island
CODE:	44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:	Statewide Survey
DATE OF SURVEY:	1969 and 1973 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:	Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
STREET AND NUMBER:	John Brown House, 52 Power Street
CITY OR TOWN:	Providence
STATE:	Rhode Island
CODE:	44

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_  
ENTRY NUMBER: 8  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mount Vernon Tavern as it stands today is a gable-roofed two-and-a-half-story clapboarded house with a one-and-a-half-story ell to the west. It is set back only slightly from Plainfield Pike, on which it long served as a coachstop and tavern, and is surrounded by fields and those young woodlands which signify earlier cleared fields.

The oldest part of the house, a wing to the north with a "walk-in" fireplace, may have dated from 1740 but was demolished in the late 1800's. The extant main part of the house was built about 1760 and has the symmetrical five-bay front fenestration, central doorway, center chimney, and five-room plan typical of many mid-eighteenth century residences. Also characteristic of this period are the corner quoins and the flat cornice with second-story splayed window lintels framed into it.

The unusual architectural feature of the house is the very fine front doorway, probably added by Pardon Holden after he bought the house in 1814. The double door is flanked by fluted Ionic pilasters and capped by a handsome fanlight, delineated by wooden muntins and topped with a carved wooden keystone. In front of the doorway is a delicate portico with slender tapering, Doric columns and denticulated pediment cornice, a treatment of surprising sophistication for such a rural location.

Most likely Holden was also responsible for the very simple wing to the west of the house which served as his general store until 1831 and the Mount Vernon Post Office from 1828 to 1864.

Notable features of the Tavern's interior include the three-run front staircase with scrolled riser ends and closed string course, the simple but well-proportioned mantels of the two downstairs chambers, and the generous fireplace of the keeping room. The whip rack in the back staircase hall and the built-in bar and trap door in the southwest "taproom" are evidences of the house's faithful service as a tavern. Upstairs in the southwest chamber is the built-in cupboard on whose shelves the Mount Vernon Bank is said to have kept its specie when it first opened in 1823. Downstairs in the ell is the Dutch-door over which Mount Vernon's mail was passed for thirty-odd years. All of these features are vivid reminders of Mount Vernon's varied and vital history. Despite minor modern alterations, the house retains much of the aura it must have had in Holden's time, when the quiet little village of Mount Vernon was alive with new enterprises by day and the Pike brought new visitors and old friends to the taproom by night.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal                | <input type="checkbox"/> Education           | <input type="checkbox"/> Political      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric               | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering         | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy                                  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture               | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention           | <input type="checkbox"/> Science        | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                       | Architecture                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-  | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature          | itarian                                 | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military            | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation              | <input type="checkbox"/> Music               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mount Vernon Tavern is a landmark significant both for its surprising architectural refinement and its many and varied historic associations. Built by a member of the Clark family, early proprietors in southern Foster according to a 1734 plat map, the house was one of a dozen or so in Foster that were raised along the Providence-Norwich Road in the mid-eighteenth century.

The Road, later and presently called Plainfield Pike, was well-travelled as early as 1706 when residents of the area petitioned the General Assembly to make it a legal highway. The Assembly granted the petition in 1711, and by 1714 the way had been laid out from Providence through Foster to central Connecticut by way of Plainfield. The Pike quickly became a mail and stage coach route and an impetus to settlement along its course. It was along Plainfield Pike that Rochambeau marched his troops five thousand strong on their way from Newport to the battle of Yorktown in 1782.

The old homestead remained in the Clark family until 1802. After several changes of ownership the house and surrounding hundred-acre farm were bought by Pardon Holden. Thus began the liveliest period in the house's long history. Holden was an intelligent, capable, enterprising, and civic-minded individual who immediately turned the house into the Mount Vernon Tavern. It was probably Holden who built the handsome front portico and the one-and-a-half story ell to the west of the house which served as a general store and the village's first post office, after 1828. And it must have been Holden who installed the bar and wine cellar, respectively in and beneath the southwest chamber of the main dwelling house.

The Tavern quickly became popular as a center of local social activity and as a stagecoach stop. "Squire Holden," as he was known, dispensed not only rum but also various forms of social amusement: turkey shoots for Christmas, rabbit hunts in winter, games and contests in summer, and dancing every evening.

As the Tavern flourished so did the little hamlet of Mount Vernon. By 1823 Holden saw, and personally felt, the need for a local place of monetary exchange. He and sixty-six other local men petitioned

See continuation sheet 1

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

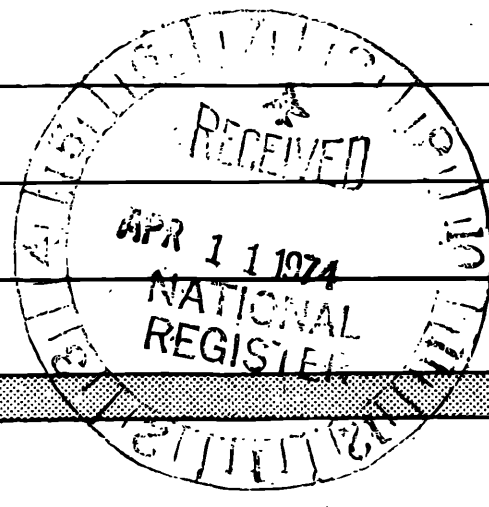
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 43 ' 50.92"	71° 42 ' 51.11"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than one acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



WPM  
19/27/2010  
4630060  
3D

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Ancelin V. Lynch**

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission**      DATE: **March, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **52 Power Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence**      STATE: **Rhode Island**      CODE: **44**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National       State       Local

Name: *Frederick Williams*  
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: APR 1 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*W. B. Mortensen*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/8/74

ATTEST:

*W. J. [Signature]*  
 Keeper of the National Register

Date: 5-7-74

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(Continuation Sheet) --1

STATE	Rhode Island	
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(Number all entries)

6. Existing Surveys:

HABS (RI-38)  
1958 Federal Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C.

8. Significance cont.

the General Assembly in June of that year for a state bank charter. The charter was granted in October, 1823, and the Mount Vernon Bank opened its doors the same month in the upstairs front west chamber of Holden's Tavern. In 1825 Holden bought a nearby stone building from his western neighbor, Dr. Thomas O. H. Carpenter, and leased it to the Bank. The Bank operated in this building until its removal to Providence in 1853. Holden served as the second President of the Bank from 1828 till his death in 1831.

In 1823 Pardon Holden had also concerned himself with the development of a new industry in Foster, that of manufacturing cast iron plows. He and his partner Daniel Wood set up their forge to the northwest of the Tavern and there turned out some of the first plows cast in Rhode Island. This partnership was the beginning of what later became B. I. F. Industries in Providence.

Eleven years after Holden's death, in 1842, the Holden family sold the farm to the Frys, who discontinued the Tavern but continued to operate the general store. For some period of time George Fry operated a printing press in the southeast downstairs chamber of the house. Just what manner of things he printed remains unclear. George Fry sold the house in 1888 and it has been used as a private residence ever since. Restoration work was begun in the 1940's and is being continued by the present owners.



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(Continuation Sheet) - 2

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER MAY 8 1974	DATE

(Number all entries)

9. Bibliography

Agnew, Dorothy: "Foster's 1810 Inn Restored," Providence Sunday Journal (Providence, September 2, 1947).

Bevan, Ralph: "A Few Notes about Mount Vernon." Manuscript owned by Mr. and Mrs. James McPhee.

Budlong, Rachel Knight: "Recollections of Mount Vernon Bank," Rhode Island Historical Society Collections (Providence), v. 15, pp. 98-99.

Cady, J. H.: "Bank House Tavern," Historic American Buildings Survey RI#38 (1958).

Downing, Antoinette Forester: Early Homes of Rhode Island (Virginia, 1937), p.338.

Fry, Richard: "Excerpts from Letters of Mr. Richard Fry to His Niece Mrs. Abbie Underwood" (1947, 1948). Manuscripts owned by Mr. and Mrs. James McPhee.

"Mount Vernon Inn," The Hinterlander (Rhode Island, October, 1961), vol 5, #3.

"Mount Vernon's Gray Past," Providence Sunday Journal (Providence, December 6, 1891).

Perry, Charles M.: "Mount Vernon in Foster, R. I.," Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society Proceedings (Rhode Island, November, 1957), v. 2, #4.

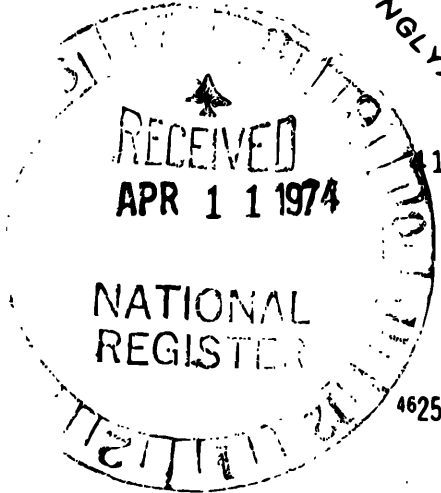
Walker, Cyrus: The History of Scituate, R.I. from the Acquisition of the Territory in 1659, to the Close of the Nineteenth Century (Scituate, c. 1900). Handwritten manuscript in Town Clerk's Office, North Scituate.



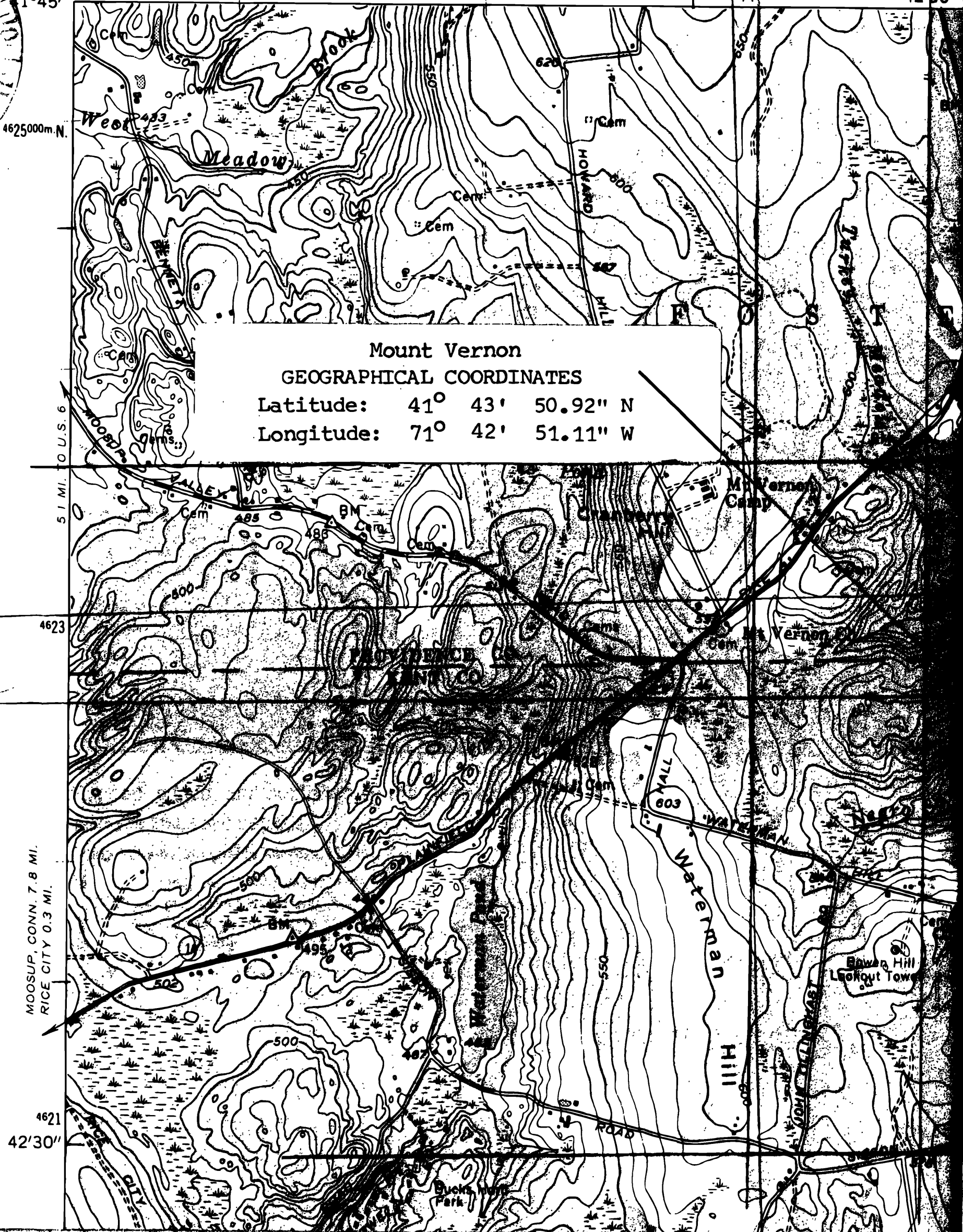


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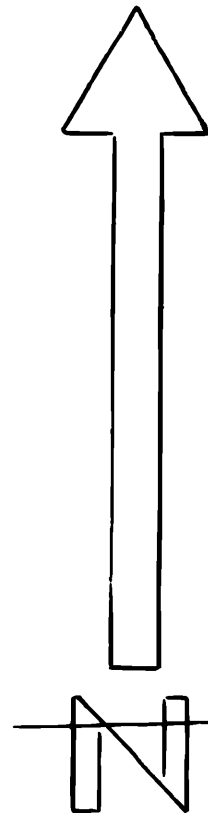
UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



71°45' 272000m.E. 273 274 42'30"



Mount Vernon  
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES  
Latitude: 41° 43' 50.92" N  
Longitude: 71° 42' 51.11" W



MOOSUP, CONN. 7.8 MI.  
RICE CITY 0.3 MI.

4621  
42'30"

CH  
CL