

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

KENNEBEC ARSENAL

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **KENNEBEC ARSENAL**

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Arsenal Street

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Augusta

Vicinity: N/A

State: ME

County: Kennebec

Code: 011

Zip Code: 04330

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private:

Public-Local:

Public-State: X

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s):

District: X

Site:

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

 9

 5

 14

Noncontributing

 5 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

 5 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 14

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility 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. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Defense

Sub: Arms Storage/Military Facility

Current: Vacant/Not In Use

Sub: Domestic Institutional Housing

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY /Greek Revival
MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY /Gothic Revival

Materials:

- Foundation: Stone/Granite
- Walls: Stone/Granite
- Roof: Stone/Slate
- Other: Asphalt
- Metal/Cast Iron
- Brick
- Wood

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Kennebec Arsenal occupies an approximately 41 acre site on the east bank of the Kennebec River. The site extends from the bank of the river and rises east up a gradually sloping terrain to a point along the western edge of Eastern Avenue, the principal north-south road on this side of the river. The gently undulating terrain starts at approximately a point approximately 45 feet above sea level to an elevation of about 185 feet at the eastern boundary. Historic photographs document efforts to modify the slope by creating an earth terrace in the hillside between the Arsenal Building and the Wharf. To the south of the arsenal grounds is the Augusta Mental Health Institute, a complex of buildings whose main structure occupies a high point of land overlooking the Arsenal and the river. On the north side of the Kennebec Arsenal is a residential neighborhood with houses mostly dating from the nineteenth century. Beyond this neighborhood are a modern hospital and a high bridge built in the 1950s spanning the river.

The fourteen contributing buildings and structures on the site are interspersed with open landscape features which provide a clear delineation between the buildings and help define their historic relationships. Approximately two hundred and ten feet from the Wharf and Retaining Wall on the bank of the river are a row of three buildings. In the center is the Arsenal Building, historically and architecturally the principal structure in the complex. It is flanked on either end by identical residential buildings, Officer's Quarters Two and Three. On the opposite side of this group is a parade ground. At the south end of the parade ground is the Barracks, which also faces the river but is set back from the plane of the arsenal row. The earliest views documenting the parade ground date from the 1870s. Photographs and an 1879 birds-eye view show Elm trees planted on the perimeter of the parade ground, which are now gone and partially replaced by maples. The earliest record of attempts to plant trees on the grounds was in August, 1831 when Captain Charles Mellon, the commander of the post, requested funds to plant 300 trees at unspecified locations. South of the Barracks and Officer's Quarters Three is a small wood dwelling and garage constructed in the mid-twentieth century. A large asphalt parking lot has also been constructed in this vicinity. On the east side of the parade ground is an access road which bisects the Arsenal from the residential neighborhood on the north to the mental health hospital property on the south. The north half of this road dates from as early as 1875 but was probably in existence by 1838 when the gate was built. The south half dates from about 1905 when the arsenal property became part of the campus of the mental hospital. At the north end of this access road is the main Gate and Fence to the Arsenal where the Office Building is located. On the hill directly above the east side of the access road and overlooking the parade ground is the Commandant's Quarters. A curved drive which branches off from the access road extends up the hill past the Commandant's Quarters, which has a short driveway. Behind the Commandant's Quarters is a small brick Storage Building, the only contributing property which is not built of stone. Beyond this structure is the Stone Retaining Wall for the reservoir which is no longer extant.

The curved drive, which was also in existence by 1875, continues up the hill to the center of the complex where there is a large granite office building that was built for the hospital in 1907-09 and is not a contributing building in this nomination. Between that building and the Commandant's Quarters is the site of the reservoir for the arsenal. Portions of a granite retaining wall which created a terraced embankment for the reservoir are still extant. Continuing up the hill, in the southeast quadrant of the property, are the Small Magazine and the Large Magazine.

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These structures are separated from each other by approximately three hundred feet. Approximately two hundred feet west of the Small Magazine is the site of the laboratories for the manufacture of ammunition. South of the magazines are two single family non-contributing dwellings constructed for hospital staff in the 1950s.

The road which originally led to the two magazines and continued up the hill to Eastern Avenue no longer exists. Near Eastern Avenue are the original sites of the Armory and the Carriage Maker's Shops, both of which were moved in 1877 and later demolished. Just beyond the sites of those structures and not included in this nomination are two buildings fronting Eastern Avenue. One is a state police barracks constructed in the 1980s and the other is an earlier wood frame office that houses a bureau of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

INVENTORY LIST: CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES**1. Office**

The Office (also known as the Gate House) is a small L-shaped one story building constructed of ashlar granite with an asphalt shingle roof. In the center of the main section of the roof is a brick chimney. The principal facade, facing west, is four bays wide. A center pavilion of two bays provides a shallow projection from the plane of that facade. This pavilion has a gable roof with a raking cornice terminating in splayed ends. The foundation includes a water table and a basement above grade on the west side. Designed in the Gothic Revival style, the Office has pointed arched windows and doors. Within the arches are wood panels fabricated with Gothic style tracery. The window sash are aluminum with one over one lights. There are two doorways on the west facade. One is boarded over and the other has a wood and glass paneled door. On the rear of the building at the southeast corner where the ell intersects the main block is an L-shaped addition constructed of wood with vertical metal siding. This addition has a door and wood sash with six over six lights. The only major interior feature is an original Greek Revival mantel and cast iron fire grate in the principal room of the Office.

In June, 1837, Captain Ripley proposed to his superiors that a stone stable be demolished and the masonry used to construct an office at the entrance to the arsenal. This was to be the last major structure for the facility and provided a gate house for the main entrance. Construction of the Office occurred in 1837-38 under the direction of Charles Keene, a local architect-builder. No plans survive for this building but it is likely that Keene was the architect as he had designed two Gothic style churches in Maine at the same time. As originally built, the Office featured an L-shaped porch with Tuscan columns in the rear southeast corner of the building.

The porch with Tuscan columns was removed after 1947 and was replaced with the present wood frame additions that occupy the same footprint as the porch. The granite steps to the porch entrance now lead to the back door to the addition. On the principal facade there was originally only a single entrance, located on the north side nearest to the gate. Sometime prior to 1947 a second doorway was cut out of a window on the south side of that facade. Other alterations to the exterior include the removal of the granite cornice and the pointed arched louvered shutters.

2. Gate and Fence (2 contributing structures)

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On the north, south and east boundaries of the property are sections of the original granite and cast iron fence. Originally this fence extended all along the north, east and south boundary lines. While only a portion of the iron fence itself survives on the north boundary, large sections of granite footings are still in place on all three sides. The surviving fence extends from the river about 1,000 feet and consists of eight foot cast iron pickets mounted in a granite footing. The square spear-tipped pickets are set at an oblique angle. Each section of fence is joined by posts which are the principal ornamental feature of the fence. These posts are cast in the form of four clustered Gothic columns capped by a fleur-de-lyes. At the base of the columns are lions paws that provide additional bracing where they are mounted in the granite blocks. The patterns for the iron fence are believed to have been supplied by the Watervliet Arsenal in New York in 1837. The fence was manufactured by the Ulster Iron Company of New York in that year. At the entrance to the Arsenal are two granite posts eight feet high, part of an original group of four (the two inner, smaller ones are gone). The two surviving posts consist of a plinth, a paneled shaft and a capital with a cannon ball on top. This stylized interpretation of a Greek Revival style post was designed by Charles Keene, a local architect-builder, in 1838.

3. Officer's Quarters Two

This granite structure consists of a two story center section with flanking one story wings which project forward from the main block of the house on the east elevation. These wings are linked by a one story porch in the center of the east elevation of the house. There is a granite water course, a belt course and a moulded cornice on the building. The roofs of the main block, wings and porches are hipped with asphalt shingles. There are four brick chimneys with corbeled caps rising from the two story section of the house. On the west elevation is a one story wood frame wing with vinyl siding, a shed roof, and concrete block foundation.

The windows in the main block and flanking wings are wood, six over six double hung sash. Historic photographs show wood blinds for the windows. In the basement are single fixed wood sash with six lights. The non-historic west wing has a variety of window patterns, including multi-pane and plate glass. Constructed as a double house, Officer's Quarters Two has two doors with transom lights off the east porch. The porch has granite foundation posts and four wood Tuscan columns. Between each pair of columns on either side of the porch steps are cast iron balustrades. The balustrades are a Greek Revival style design derived from *The Builder's Guide* by Asher Benjamin.

The interior of the house contains original woodwork in the main rooms. This consists of Greek Revival style baseboard mouldings and window and door trim. The windows have paneled wood shutters. The walls and ceilings have been replaced with sheetrock and the fireplaces closed off and the mantelpieces removed.

Original drawings for the Officer's Quarters, dated November 10, 1827, called for an almost square two story building with a hip roof and no wings. The four bay facade in the drawing showed a single off-center doorway. It is assumed that this structure was built following this design by 1831 when the first phase of construction for the arsenal was completed. In 1833 Captain James Ripley converted the residence into a two family dwelling, adding two wings and a porch. A verandah was also added on the west facade overlooking the river. This had the same

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style columns and iron balustrade as the east porch. Officer's Quarters Two was completely gutted in a fire in August, 1834, but was immediately rebuilt.

The verandah on the west facade was removed for the one story wing in the 1970s. On the east side a fire escape and a small gable roof over the porch entrance were added.

4. Arsenal Building

This structure is two-and-one-half stories high, 120 feet by 37, constructed of granite and has a slate roof. The roof is pitched in the form of a gable and includes shallow gable roof pavilions on the east and west elevations. Mounted on the ridge of the main roof are two large pressed metal ventilators that are ornamented with dome-shaped tops. The east and west facades of the building are nine bays wide with three bays in each center pavilion. The narrow north and south gable ends of the building are two bays wide. Constructed on ashlar blocks, the exterior walls are relieved by a water table and belt courses marking each floor of the building. At each outer corner of the building the stone is built out from the plane of the wall to suggest pilasters. These pilasters rise the full height of the building and terminate just below splayed gable ends at the eaves of the roof.

Extending across the entire west elevation is a one story glazed wood verandah supported on granite posts. Between wood Tuscan columns are banks of three six over six double hung sash set above wood paneling. The first, second and third floor windows of the building are also wood double hung sash with six over six lights. In the basement windows are single six pane fixed sash. All of these windows have wire screens on the exterior. In each gable end is a lunette with multi-pane lights. The main entrance to the building is on the southeast corner of the east pavilion. In the face of this pavilion wall is a date block, carved with "1828." At the south side of this pavilion is an entrance portico which is granite and includes a single Tuscan column supporting lintels that carry a low pitched hip roof. The east lintel bears the dates 1828 and 1905, signifying the original date of construction and the date of the remodeling. The entrance itself is a paneled wood double door. On the north and south gable ends are steel fire escapes. On the south elevation is a basement entrance entered through a small granite structure with a shed roof.

The interior of the building has an open plan for the first, second and third floors. There are concrete floors over-laid with hardwood planks and stone walls finished with wire lath and plaster. Iron staircases are located in both the east and west pavilions. The basement, which contained the dining room and kitchen when the building was converted for hospital use, is partitioned into rooms. In the attic are wood trusses.

Plans for the Arsenal Building are dated April 21, 1828. The cornerstone was laid in June, 1828, and it is assumed the building was substantially completed in that year. No major changes were made to the structure until 1905. In that year the architectural firm of Coombs & Gibbs of Lewiston, Maine, was hired to remodel the structure for use as a mental hospital ward. At that time the wood verandah was added on the west facade along with the new entrance and the staircase pavilion on the east facade. The interior of the Arsenal Building was completely gutted

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for new fire-proof floors, walls and ceilings. The sash were replaced, as was the slate roof. Roof ventilators, fire escapes and wire screens were added as well.

No written or photographic record of the original interior has come to light. The original plans show an open floor plan with a single row of ten Greek Revival style columns supporting floor beams which ran perpendicular to the ridge of the roof. In the basement the first floor beams are shown on the 1828 plans as having a masonry support. The roof is supported on king post trusses and, according to an 1834 report to the Ordinance Department, was originally covered with slate. A brick chimney was added in 1905 but has since been removed. A photograph made around 1875 shows that the original entrance on the east facade was a single doorway located in the center of that facade. The original windows in the building had twelve lights in each sash.

5. Officer's Quarters Three

This granite structure, built identical to Officer's Quarters Two, consists of a two story center section with flanking one story wings which project forward from the main block of the house on the east elevation. These wings are linked by a one story porch in the center of the east elevation of house. There is a granite water course, a belt course and a moulded cornice on the building. The roofs of the main block, wings and porches are hipped with asphalt shingles. There are four brick chimneys with corbeled caps rising from the two story section of the house. On the west elevation is a one story verandah supported on granite blocks. This verandah originally had wood columns and iron balustrades identical to the east porch. In about 1905 paneled wood balustrades replaced the iron balustrades on both the porch and verandah. The wood columns and railing on the verandah were replaced with metal Tuscan columns and wood railing with square balusters in the 1970s. The wood paneled balustrade on the east porch was replaced with historic iron railing that was probably taken from the verandah that was removed from Quarters Two at that time.

The windows in the main block and flanking wings are wood, six over six double hung sash. Historic photographs show wood blinds for the windows. In the basement are single fixed wood sash with six lights. Constructed as a double house identical to Quarters Two, Quarters Three has two doors with transom lights off the east porch. The porch has granite foundation posts and four wood Tuscan columns. Between each pair of columns on either side of the porch steps are cast iron balustrades. The balustrades are a Greek Revival style design derived from *The Builder's Guide* by Asher Benjamin.

Additional doorways have been cut out of windows on this building. One door located in the south facade of the south wing was added by 1947. A door was added to the east facade of the north wing after 1947. A one story wood frame wing with a concrete block foundation and metal siding was added to the west facade of the north wing in the 1970s. Two small gables were added over the porch entrance and north wing entrance on the east facade, probably in the 1970s.

The interior of the building was completely remodeled in the early twentieth century. Like Quarters Two, this building was originally built about 1830-31 as a single family dwelling and enlarged and converted into a two family house in 1833-34. According to the nineteenth century maps, however, its use was not identical. The earliest map, dated 1838, indicates it was used as a

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storehouse. The next map, dated 1851, identifies its use as Officer's Quarters Three, but in 1875 it was called a "Single Men's Quarters." This difference in use probably reflected a lack of junior grade officer's stationed at the post at a given time.

6. Retaining Wall and Wharf (2 contributing structures)

On the bank of the river are a granite retaining wall and the remains of a stone wharf. The earliest recorded reference to the wharf is a letter from the post commander dated August, 1831, requesting funds to make repairs necessitated by ice damage incurred in the previous spring. It was illustrated in a woodcut view made for a magazine in 1853, and is clearly visible in a photograph made in 1858. Photographs taken in the 1870s clearly show the wall and wharf, and a photograph dating from 1905 records the configuration of the wharf at the time the post was decommissioned. As spring flooding was a common occurrence on the Kennebec River the retaining wall and wharf were probably repaired on several occasions. Now obscured by foliage and erosion of the bank, the condition of the wall and wharf has not been closely examined. As shown in nineteenth-century views, the wall was about ten to twelve feet high with a recessed section in the middle for the wharf. With steps leading down from the bank above, the wharf extended out into the river. The wall itself extends the full length of the Arsenal property. At each end the wall formed a stone post and turned into the bank to prevent access where the iron fence ended.

7. Barracks

The Barracks is a long rectangular building that is two stories high with a gable roof. Constructed of ashlar granite, the building is eight bays wide and has two separate entrances on both the east and west facades. The exterior has no ornamentation except for the stone belt course and water table extending around each elevation. The gable ends of the building have raking cornices which terminate in splayed coping stone. The windows are six over six double hung sash and originally were only on the east and west facades. The two gable ends were built without windows or doors but the north facade has had two windows added in the past thirty years. Other additions include small pedimented porticos over the doors and two steel fire escapes mounted on the east facade. No historic finishes survive in the interior of the building.

Original plans for the Barracks are dated May 4, 1829. This building was added in the initial expansion of the arsenal and is presumed to have been completed in 1831. As originally designed there were four rooms on the ground floor (no plan survives for the second floor). Each room had a fireplace, there being a central chimney for the two center rooms and exterior chimneys for the two outer rooms. According to these plans a double staircase was located perpendicular to two of the entrances on one side of the building. In August, 1865, the Barracks was gutted by fire. No record has come to light regarding the appearance of the interior when it was rebuilt. Within the past thirty years the interior was completely remodeled and the chimneys removed. At the same time the fire escapes and entrance porticos were added, as were the additional windows in the north wall.

8. Commandant's Quarters - Quarters One

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This building is almost square in plan, is two stories high and has a hip roof. Constructed of ashlar granite, the primary facade (south) is three bays wide and the side elevations are two bays. There is a granite water table, a belt course and a cornice moulded in a cyma recta profile to hold a built-in gutter. The roof has asphalt shingles and four brick chimneys with corbeled caps. Extending across the west elevation is a one story Greek Revival style verandah. Designed in the Doric order, this verandah has wood columns supporting an entablature which is archaeologically correct in its detailing. The railing is cast iron in an identical Asher Benjamin pattern that is found on Quarters Two and Three. The verandah is open beneath the wood floors and supported on granite blocks encased in paneled wood. On the south facade a pedimented portico, also in the Doric order, is located over the main entrance. The portico has granite steps and a segmental arched doorway. The door itself is non-historic. On either side of the door are sidelights, but the lunette is covered and its condition is not known. An iron fire escape extends over the porch on the south facade. The windows are wood with multi-pane lights and are mostly six over six. A few sash have been replaced with four over four lights. Off the verandah on the west side are French doors and transoms. Historic photographs document that there were blinds for the windows.

On the east side of the building is a wood frame wing with vinyl siding. This early twentieth century garage replaced an historic wood frame kitchen wing that was approximately the same size and location. It is a one-and-one-half story gable roof structure with a one story connector to the house. Originally built with flush board siding, the garage featured a pedimented gable end and wood six over six sash matching the house. Within the last thirty years the garage was remodeled as an extension of living space for the house. The garage doors on the south elevation were replaced and small six over six sash added to the new exterior wall. The building was sheathed with vinyl siding.

The interior of the house retains its original floor plan and original woodwork in the double parlors, as well as woodwork from the circa 1905 remodeling. The double parlors off the verandah have door and window trim and two fireplaces with simple Greek Revival style mantel pieces. The moulding profiles in the two rooms are different, however, and may reflect original 1830 woodwork in one room and the later Greek Revival woodwork in the other. The main staircase, which is perpendicular to the main hall as shown on the original plans, was replaced in a circa 1905 remodeling. The staircase has turned balusters and an ornamental window landing between floor levels. The bedrooms on the second floor also contain circa 1905 woodwork, including pressed metal ceilings.

Original drawings for this building date from March, 1829. They show a simple Federal style structure with a symmetrical three bay facade which included a doorway in the center bay with sidelights and a lunette. The side elevations were not represented in the drawings but the floor plans called for two windows on the west and north sides and one window and an exterior entrance for the basement on the east facade. This basement entrance led to the kitchen and servant's quarters. Captain Ripley extensively remodeled the house between 1833-38. A kitchen wing added to the east facade was constructed of wood and painted to imitate granite. The Greek Revival style verandah and portico were also added, as were the French doors for the parlors. A photograph of the south facade made about 1875 also shows what appeared to have been a glazed bay or conservatory off the kitchen wing facade.

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Interior finishes continued to be modernized in the mid-twentieth century and the kitchen wing was replaced by a garage which, in turn, was remodeled for residential use.

9. Storage Building

Located behind the Commandant's Quarters is a small brick building of unknown origin. This structure is one story with a gable roof that features wide over-hanging eaves. The eaves are ornamented with Gothic style verge board. The soffits of the eaves are ventilated with openings cut in a variety of floral patterns. On the south end of the building beneath one gable end is a single wood door set in a shallow ogee arch. A single blind window on the west side of the building as the same arch.

Although no documentation has been found to establish when this building was built or its original use, it appears to date from the early to mid-nineteenth century. Its location set away from the house suggests that it was used for storage of a flammable material, such as kerosene.

10. Reservoir Retaining Wall

The reservoir may have been constructed as early as 1834. A letter from Captain James Ripley, the camp commander, to the Ordinance Department in Washington indicates that he was under orders to build a reservoir. This reservoir, which was 100 feet in diameter, was historically important as it provided the post with a source of fresh water. It was later stocked with trout. A granite engine house for fire apparatus was located adjacent to the reservoir. This late nineteenth century addition to the post is no longer extant. On the west edge of the reservoir site is a granite retaining wall that was apparently built to provide a level terrace for the reservoir. At the north end of the wall is the site of a stable that was constructed between 1838 and 1851.

11., 12. Large and Small Magazines

The two powder magazines are rectangular structures constructed of ashlar granite with asphalt shingle roofs. Like the Arsenal Building and the Barracks, the magazines have gable roofs in which raking cornices terminate in splayed ends. The roof eaves extend down beyond the gable ends to form a wide over-hang with returns. The entrance to the Large Magazine is on the east facade. This elevation has a single iron door on one side flanked by a short semi-circular aperture with an iron shutter. Extending along the side walls are narrow ventilation slits. The Small Magazine has a single door in the east facade and the ventilation slits in the side walls. The interior of the Large Magazine originally consisted of two brick barrel vaulted ceilings supported on masonry posts. It has been reported that one of the vaults is gone. The roof itself is supported on timber trusses. The interior of the Small Magazine was not examined but is said to be an open space beneath the roof trusses.

Drawings for a single small powder magazine with a hip roof and quoins were prepared in November, 1827. These plans were not employed when, in 1829, the decision had been made to construct a larger arsenal complex in Maine. The plans for the Large Magazine are dated May 20, 1829. The Small Magazine is the same basic design and no plans have survived. These structures were not listed in Captain Charles Mellon's inventory of the facility made in April, 1832. In this report he lists the various structures that were built and their distance from the

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river. Reports from its successor, Captain Ripley, also fail to mention the construction of the powder magazines. However, both magazines are shown on the earliest map of Augusta, printed in 1838. The construction of the magazines, therefore, are presumed to have taken place between 1832 and 1838, the period when Captain Ripley made extensive improvements to the Kennebec Arsenal. The Large Magazine had a capacity for 660 barrels of powder, while the small one could store 254 barrels.

Non-Contributing Buildings

The arsenal property contains five non-contributing structures. The first is a granite office building constructed in 1907-09 for a maximum security ward of the mental hospital. In 1983-84 an addition was made when the building was converted for office use. The four non-historic structures consist of three dwellings and a garage. On the east side of the Barracks are a two story wood frame house and garage which appear to date from the 1930s or 1940s. On the hill above the two magazines are two one story wood frame houses constructed in the 1950s. These buildings were erected for hospital staff.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: Criterion 1, 5

NHL Theme(s): III: Expressing Cultural Values
 5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

VIII: Changing role of the United States in the world community
 1. international relations

Areas of Significance: Architecture; Military

Period(s) of Significance: 1828-1901

Significant Dates: 1828-1838

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder:

Historic Contexts: V. Political and Military Affairs, 1783-1860
 F. Post-War Nationalism, 1816-1828
 G. Jacksonian Democracy, 1828-1844
 K. The Army and Navy

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**SUMMARY**

The Kennebec Arsenal is the most intact early nineteenth century munitions depot in the United States. Built between 1828-1838, the complex of eight granite buildings occupies a commanding location on the east bank of the Kennebec River. The buildings comprise a largely intact and cohesive collection of granite buildings designed in the Greek and Gothic Revival styles. The nominated property retains much of the open space which historically defined the relationship between the buildings and the grounds of the forty acre site. The Kennebec Arsenal was constructed during a period when a number of munitions depots were being established on the exposed frontiers of the young republic following the War of 1812. The size of this facility was directly related to the Northeast Boundary Controversy, a border dispute which lasted from 1820-1842 and almost led to a third war with Great Britain. The property is nationally significant as the best surviving example of an early nineteenth century military complex of this type, and for its role in the Northeast Boundary controversy with Britain. The property is eligible for National Historic Landmark listing under criteria 1 and 5.

Criterion 1--Kennebec Arsenal and the Northern Border Dispute

Theme VIII: Changing Role of The United States in The World Community

The need for a United States arsenal in central Maine became a priority following the disastrous events of the War of 1812. During that conflict the country suffered the loss of major cities, such as Washington and Detroit, and attacks on other towns, such as Baltimore and New Orleans. It was clear that the vast coastline of the country was highly vulnerable to attack from sea-borne enemies. In Maine, Eastport, Machias and Castine were all subject to incursions by the British, who met little resistance. Maine's vulnerability was compounded by her long land border with Canada, whose exact boundary had not been established following the War for Independence. While still a province of Massachusetts the residents of Maine could not rely upon the legislature in Boston to provide sufficient attention to their needs. It was not until Maine became a state in 1820 that the vulnerability of its border began to be addressed in a serious fashion.

One of the first acts of the new state was to establish a boundary commission, but early in 1821 Governor King reported to the legislature that the problem would not be quickly resolved. The concern was not simply to establish a defensible border with New Brunswick. Thousands of acres of valuable timber land were at stake as land agents from both sides of the border made claims on the lumber harvest during the early 1820s. In his January 1827 inaugural address, Governor Enoch Lincoln took a strong stand on the need for a settlement of the border dispute. At the same time in Washington, on January 16, Congress passed a bill to establish an arsenal at Augusta, whose central location on the Kennebec River was strategically a logical site for such a facility. Augusta was also chosen as the location for the state capitol a month later, also due to its central location.

On March 3, 1827, President John Quincy Adams signed the bill authorizing the establishment of an arsenal at Augusta. That summer, as Major George Talcott was sent to Augusta to survey

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land for a possible site, an American citizen was arrested in the lands contested by Maine and New Brunswick. John Baker was ultimately put on trial for trespassing on Crown Lands in September, which caused considerable controversy in the region. At that time Lieutenant John Hills, United States Army, arrived in Augusta to purchase thirty acres on behalf of the United States government. On September 21, public notices in local newspapers requested bids from suppliers of granite and lumber for the construction of "an arsenal and other public buildings." The notice requested that proposals be supplied in terms of price per foot for the stone of courses ten to sixteen inches in height and walls two to three feet thick. Prices in lumber were to be given in linear feet. The site selected on the east bank was on the opposite side of the river from the central business district and the locations planned for the new state capitol building and the county courthouse. The land purchased for the arsenal was also on a gradual slope which made it easily accessible by water, the principal means of transportation. Local newspapers in Maine reflected the common fears of vulnerability felt by citizens of the state. At the time the land was purchased for an arsenal the *Kennebec Journal* (Augusta) commented that:

Any one who will glance at a map of Maine must perceive at once the importance of having an U.S. Arsenal in this state. There is none nearer than Watertown (Mass.) Maine has a long stretch of frontier adjoining British possessions, and a great extent of sea coast, with innumerable bays and inlets without any natural obstructions to the landing of an enemy. In the event of war with any maritime power (but more particularly England) her exposed situation would point her out as the most vulnerable portion of the Union¹

In his second inaugural address in January, 1828, Governor Lincoln requested that the legislature authorize funds to construct fortifications on Maine's frontier. At the same time in Washington the "Joint Select Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives in Relation to the Northeast Boundary" offered its support to President Adams and Governor Lincoln regarding Maine's claims in the controversy. This was followed by a demand by President Adams that the British release John Baker. Baker was ultimately set free but the incident highlighted the seriousness of the issue as neither side appeared willing to surrender their land claims. It was at this time that Colonel George Bomford of the Ordinance Department requested that the original appropriation of \$15,000 for an arsenal be increased by \$30,000. In his report Colonel Bomford stated that, "a part of the country so much exposed, and liable to become the seat of war, requires that an arsenal upon a scale adequate to furnish military supplies for its defense should be established."² The larger arsenal would also have facilities for the manufacture of ammunition. Rather than acting primarily as a storage depot dependent upon the arsenal at Watertown, Massachusetts, the Augusta arsenal was to have the capacity to act independently if Maine were cut off from southern New England. While preparations for a larger arsenal were underway, Secretary of War James Barbour ordered four companies of United States infantry to be stationed at Houlton Plantation on the border with New Brunswick. Funds were also provided to construct a military road from the mouth of the Mattawamkeag River to Mars Hill.

¹Cited in *The Chronicle* (Gardiner, Maine), September 21, 1827, page 3.

²James W. North, *History of Augusta*, Maine. Augusta, Maine: Clapp & North, 1870, page 482.

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On June 14, 1828, the cornerstone of the arsenal building was laid under the supervision of Lieutenant Hills. The use of granite in the construction was economical due to the local availability of the stone, which was also being used for the state capitol and the county courthouse. Two weeks later the first units of United States Army arrived at Houlton Plantation from their post at Sacketts Harbor in New York. The building, which was begun in Augusta in the summer of 1828, was significantly larger than what had been designed in Washington in the previous year. Lieutenant Julius A. d'Lagnel had prepared plans for an arsenal building at Augusta in November, 1827, which was a two story structure with a hip roof, five bays wide. Lt. d'Lagnel's new drawings, dated April 21, 1828, were for a three story structure with a gable roof, nine bays wide on its long elevation. The building was sited close to the river, where wharves were built for the loading and unloading of supplies. The storage capacity for the arsenal was 2,640 boxes of rifles on the first floor, 2,376 boxes on the second floor, and 2,112 boxes on the third floor.

The original 1827 plans for the arsenal included officer's quarters designed by Lt. d'Lagnel. These structures were also to be built of granite. Although the Arsenal Building was considerably enlarged, no additional structures were authorized in 1828. On March 27, 1829 Congress made an additional appropriation of \$45,000 to construct more buildings for the Augusta arsenal. In the spring of 1829 the United States Army Ordinance Department prepared plans for a commandant's quarters, a barracks, a wheelwrights shop, an armory, and large and small magazines. Plans for all of these structures survive, although only the one for the large magazine, which is a more detailed rendering, is signed. Like the Arsenal Building and the two officer's quarters the plans for the large magazine were by Lt. d'Lagnel. Most of these buildings were erected under the supervision of Lt. Hills, who remained in Augusta until May, 1831, when he was assigned to establish an arsenal at Chattahoochee, Florida.

While these buildings were under construction, Secretary of State Martin Van Buren was making conciliatory gestures toward the British government. Tensions among the local population remained high, however, and in March 1831, the state legislature incorporated the Town of Madawaska, which included disputed territory. In 1832 an arbitration decision by the King of Netherlands was rejected by the United States and a military road was built between Bangor and Houlton Plantation. In May of that year the Kennebec Arsenal came under the command of Captain James W. Ripley. Captain Ripley shortly thereafter began a number of improvements to the Kennebec Arsenal which made it conform in appearance to a modern military post with buildings exhibiting the current architectural fashions. Under Captain Ripley's command the two officer's quarters and the commandant's residence were enlarged with new wings and porches, all in the Greek Revival style. The two magazines and munitions laboratories were also constructed at this time. These improvements culminated in the construction of an "office" building at the post entrance with a cast iron and granite perimeter fence on the north, south and east boundaries of the property. None of these improvements derived from a major appropriation by the Congress but Captain Ripley was resourceful in securing approval for expenditures. For example, the extensive improvements to the commandant's quarters occurred over a five year period. The Office was built using stone from a demolished stable, and the new stable was erected of wood, as were the laboratories and carpenter's shop. For the fence and gate Captain Ripley initially obtained an elaborate design from architect Richard Upjohn, then in Boston. In the end he secured the pattern for a simple picket fence from the foundry at the Watervliet Arsenal in New York.

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During 1837-38 there occurred a rebellion against British rule in lower Canada and British troops from New Brunswick were sent there by crossing the disputed border with Maine. The response in Maine, some of whose citizens participated in the rebellion, was outrage over a perceived violation of United States sovereignty. In February, 1839, Governor Kent obtained authorization from the state legislature to appoint a civil posse that was charged to arrest citizens of New Brunswick who were in the disputed territory harvesting lumber for Canadian businesses. In response Sir John Harvey, Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, mobilized units of the New Brunswick militia. Governor Kent responded to that action by mobilizing the Maine militia. In March Major General Isaac Hodsdon, commander of the Maine militia, established the headquarters of the "Army of the Aroostook" at the newly completed Ft. Fairfield. Congress supported this aggressive stance by appropriating \$10,000,000 for the purpose of calling up 50,000 volunteers.

President Van Buren, who was presiding over a national economic crisis, was more inclined to find a peaceful solution. He sent Major General Winfield Scott, who was on friendly terms with Sir John Harvey, to Maine in an effort to avert war. General Scott visited Augusta in March, 1839, where he wrote letters to Lieutenant-Governor Harvey that resulted in an agreement in which both sides pulled troops back from the disputed territory. The efforts of General Scott and Sir John Harvey prevented a confrontation that could have led to war. While engaged in this important mission General Scott and Governor Fairfield dined with Captain Ripley in his newly remodeled commandant's quarters at the Kennebec Arsenal.

It was during this period that Ft. Kent was constructed along the St. John River. The complex, built in 1839, originally consisted of a blockhouse, twenty-three feet square with a three foot over-hang at the second floor level, a small one story barracks, a magazine built into the ground and a guard-post to accommodate one man. Only the blockhouse itself still stands, intact except for dormers removed in 1926 during a mistaken restoration in which they were assumed not to be original. The Ft. Kent Blockhouse, the only fortification surviving from the Northeast Boundary Controversy, was designated a National Historic Landmark on November 7, 1973.

A final resolution of the boundary controversy did not occur until 1842. Secretary of State Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton negotiated the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in Washington. Ashburton's residence at the time was the house at 1525 H Street, now the St. John's Church Parish House on Lafayette Square. Lord Ashburton rented the house for ten months in 1842. Constructed for Mathew St. Clair Clarke in 1836, the house was one of the most substantial Greek Revival style dwellings in Washington. Clarke's house was substantially remodeled in the Italianate style in 1854 by Thomas U. Walter, and a mansard roof was added in 1877. Only portions of the interior, such as the double parlor with its Greek Revival finishes, survive as recognizable from Lord Ashburton's occupancy. The parish house was designated a National Historic Landmark on November 7, 1973 for its association with the negotiations leading to the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

Under Captain Ripley an additional ten acres had been purchased on the north side of the property in 1836. No further additions were made to the property and the Kennebec Arsenal reached its maximum size by the resolution of the Northeast Boundary Controversy. Captain Ripley was promoted to major in 1841 and assigned to command the arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts, which he transformed into one of the major arsenals in the country for the

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manufacture of small arms. During the Mexican War and the Civil War ammunition was fabricated at the Kennebec Arsenal, and during the same period major coastal fortifications were completed in Maine in Portland Harbor and on the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers. Fort Knox, a massive granite structure located on the Penobscot River below Bangor, was begun in 1843-44, while Fort Gorges in Portland Harbor was begun in 1858 and Fort Popham at the mouth of the Kennebec River in 1862. All of these complexes, and Fort McClary, a wood and brick complex in Kittery built in 1844, are listed in the National Register. These forts were virtually obsolete in the face of modern naval gunnery by the time they were completed, however. Similarly, there ceased to be a threat of hostility on the Canadian border, and Augusta's relatively remote location discouraged the expansion of the post as a major manufacturing center for weapons.

Only minor changes were made at the Kennebec Arsenal during the last five decades of its use by the federal government. Between the years 1851 and 1875 a stone engine house for fire equipment was constructed near the reservoir. In 1877 the Carriage Shop and Armory on the east end of the arsenal grounds were dismantled and rebuilt closer to the river. In the same year the three small wooden laboratories were replaced by an iron and wood frame laboratory. This prefabricated structure was sheathed in wood and is said to have been exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. The Kennebec Arsenal was finally closed by the government in 1901. Four years later the property was transferred to the State of Maine for use by the Maine State Hospital. This mental hospital had been constructed on the south side of the arsenal beginning in 1836. In acquiring the arsenal property the hospital added only one new structure, the maximum security building, but demolished several of the smaller frame structures. The engine house, stable, laboratory, armory and carriage shop were razed, and the reservoir filled. The principal structures, many of which were converted for use by the hospital, survive substantially intact. Many of the substantial changes occurred on the interior, although the original floor plans are intact in all of the buildings except the barracks. In particular, the open floor plan of the arsenal building survives, although all of the historic finishes were removed in a 1905 remodeling.

Criterion 5--The Arsenal as Landmark District**Theme III: Expressing Cultural Values**

Several architects and builders are associated with the early period of construction of the Kennebec Arsenal. Lieutenant Julius d'Lagnel (1799-1840) prepared drawings for the buildings constructed in the first phase of construction from 1828-1831. His design for the Arsenal Building and the Large Magazine were built substantially as drawn. The designs for the Officer's Quarters and Commandant's Quarters are also presumed to have been built as designed, but were remodeled shortly after completion.

The construction activity under Captain Ripley's tenure largely shaped the architectural character of the Kennebec Arsenal. As the plans were not prepared in Washington (where Ripley returned d'Lagnel's drawings in 1833), no drawings for this work survive in the National Archives. It is possible that Ripley himself designed the work, or that he was aided by two local architect-builders, Charles Keene and John D. Lord. Charles Keene (1794-1870) is documented in account books at the National Archives as the head carpenter for much of the work. He was also hired to prepare plans for the granite gate posts. Keene's abilities as an architect are documented

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in the design of two Universalist churches he built in the area. John D. Lord (1797-1888) is not known to have had any connection with the arsenal. He did design the original section of the granite insane asylum on the adjoining property, begun in 1836. In 1840 Lord moved to Springfield, Massachusetts where he served as the principal architect under James Ripley when major improvements were made to the arsenal there.

As completed in 1838, the Kennebec Arsenal consisted entirely of granite structures, except for a few minor buildings no longer standing. The designs for the buildings reflect a combination of standard treatments typical of military arsenals (the Arsenal Building, the Barracks, and the Large and Small Magazines), and more fashionable treatments of current architectural fashions (the Commandants Quarters, Quarters Two and Three, and the Office) which reflected the social and cultural values of army officers in command of important military facilities.

The Kennebec Arsenal is believed to be the only surviving complex of pre-1840 structures of this type in the country. A preliminary survey of surviving pre-Civil War arsenal buildings includes large complexes, such as the armories at Springfield and Watertown, Massachusetts. However, these armories were centers of weapon manufacturing and developed into large industrial complexes. The Kennebec Arsenal only manufactured ammunition and consequently retains its character as a small-scale frontier post. Other armory structures of this period which survive include several individual buildings around the country.

The United States Congress authorized the establishment of several munitions depots in 1815. This was a direct result of the poor defensive capabilities of the United States in the War of 1812. According to one source the following arsenals were established in the nineteenth century: Kennebec Arsenal, Augusta, Maine; Springfield Arsenal, Springfield, Massachusetts; Watertown Arsenal, Watertown, Massachusetts; Champlain Arsenal, Vergennes, Vermont; Watervliet Arsenal, West Troy, New York; New York Arsenal, New York City; Rome Arsenal, Rome, New York; Allegheny Arsenal, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Frankford Arsenal, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pikesville Arsenal, Pikesville, Maryland; Washington Arsenal, Washington, D.C.; Fort Monroe Arsenal, Old Point Comfort, Virginia; Charleston Arsenal, Charleston, South Carolina; Augusta Arsenal, Augusta, Georgia; Mount Vernon Arsenal, Mount Vernon, Alabama; Baton Rouge Arsenal, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; San Antonio Arsenal, San Antonio, Texas; Columbus Arsenal, Columbus, Ohio; Detroit Arsenal, Dearborn, Michigan; Indianapolis Arsenal, Indianapolis, Indiana; Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois; St. Louis Arsenal, St. Louis, Missouri; Leavenworth Arsenal, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Fort Union Arsenal, Fort Union, New Mexico; Benicia Arsenal, Benicia, California; Vancouver Arsenal, Vancouver, Washington; and Columbia Arsenal, Columbia, Tennessee.³ At least one other arsenal was left off this list: the Mount Vernon Arsenal in Chattahoochee, Florida.

Several of these arsenals developed as important complexes for the manufacture of weapons, ammunition and equipment in the nineteenth century. The Springfield Arsenal produced small arms, the Watervliet Arsenal artillery, the Frankford Arsenal manufactured small arms ammunition, tools and gauges, and the Rock Island Arsenal was responsible for field gun carriages and miscellaneous equipment for artillery, cavalry and infantry. All of these sites are

³*Kennebec Journal* (Augusta), November 19, 1998.

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listed in the National Register and all but Frankford are National Historic Landmarks. Other complexes, such as Watertown, developed important industrial facilities in the early twentieth century. While several of these complexes contain important structure built prior to 1860, their history and development were quite different from the Kennebec Arsenal which never became a manufacturing facility. For example, the Watervliet Arsenal in Watervliet, New York, contains forty-eight buildings and structures which contribute to its district. Among these are only eight which date from the same period of the second quarter of the nineteenth century as the Kennebec Arsenal. However, these eight buildings do illustrate the austere Greek Revival style designs produced by officers of the United States Army. Except for one structure, these buildings all date from the 1840s after the Kennebec Arsenal was completed.

Several National Register sites have been identified as having structures of a similar age and scale as the Kennebec Arsenal. The Champlain Arsenal in Vergennes, Vermont, was established in 1828 and, like the Kennebec Arsenal was close to the Canadian Border. Now part of the Weeks School National Register Historic District, the former arsenal building survives. This structure appears to have been designed in a fashion similar to the 1827 drawings of the first small scale structure proposed for Maine. The Vermont building is a two story structure with a hip roof. Its principal facade is five bays wide with an entrance in the center below a stone tablet for the construction date. This arsenal building was constructed of a rough quarry faced stone. There were originally several other structures in the arsenal, including officer's quarters, a magazine, gun house, stable and armory shops.

In Mobile, Alabama, is the Mount Vernon Arsenal, also established in 1828. This appears to be the most complete ante-bellum complex in the country other than the Kennebec Arsenal. The National Register property includes twelve structures, now part of the Searcy State Hospital which were built at the same time as the Kennebec Arsenal. These include a three story, nine bay wide arsenal building, an officer's quarters, barracks, armorers shop, office, laboratory and guardhouse, all constructed of brick. As originally built all of these structures except the arsenal itself were designed in a style characteristic of a tropical climate with large open verandahs and steeply pitched hip roofs. The plans for the arsenal building, however, were clearly based upon the same concepts used for the drawings of the Arsenal Building in Augusta, Maine. The principal difference is that the Mobile building had a hip roof with a balustrade rather than a gable roof, and that there was a polygonal stair tower on one side. Although the Mobile arsenal still retains a large number of original structures, the complex does not possess the same degree of architectural integrity as the Kennebec Arsenal. Many of the Mount Vernon buildings have undergone major alterations and there have been numerous structures built on the grounds after the facility became a hospital.

There is a second Mount Vernon Arsenal site in Chattahoochee, Florida, begun in 1831. Construction of this depot was supervised by Lieutenant Hills after he completed the initial work at the Kennebec Arsenal. Although originally similar in size to the Maine post the Florida facility contains only one surviving structure, an officer's quarters. The building is a brick structure with granite sill, lintels and water table obtained from Maine quarries.

The arsenal in Little Rock, Arkansas, was established in 1830. The National Register nomination does not document the extent of the original complex and only the arsenal building itself remains. Based upon the size of this structure, it appears that the Little Rock arsenal was

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smaller than the one in Maine but larger than the one in Vergennes, Vermont. It is a brick building, two stories high with a gable roof. The principal elevation is seven bays wide. Its design includes features of at least two arsenal designs. The pitched roof and gable end treatment is identical to the Kennebec Arsenal, as is the use of a water table, belt course and pilaster-like projections in the brick at each corner of the building. Like the Mobile arsenal, there is a polygonal stair tower in the center of one long elevation rather than a gable end pavilion. Later in the nineteenth century wooden verandahs and staircases were added to the Little Rock Arsenal.

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is an arsenal which was established in the period 1819-23. The only surviving building, however, was constructed in 1838. This is a brick powder magazine designed almost identical to the large magazine in the Kennebec Arsenal. The National Register nomination records that originally there was an arsenal building, and that the property had an earlier history as a post for the stationing of infantry units.

The Augusta Arsenal in Georgia was established in 1826. Several brick residential buildings survive as part of Augusta College. These buildings are located in the Summerville Historic District.

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of the Ordinance Department; Monthly Returns of the Ordinance Department and of Civilian Employees; Summary Statements of Work Performed, 1831-1842.

Record Group 77, Miscellaneous Forts File. The group contains the original architectural plans for the Kennebec Arsenal, dated 1827-29.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 41 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	19	438370	4906290
2.	19	439020	4906180
3.	19	438960	4905820
4.	19	438310	4905940

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached map, "Kennebec Arsenal, Augusta Maine"

Boundary Justification:

With the exception of an area at the northeast corner of the map, the boundary encompasses the entire parcel of land that is historically associated with the Kennebec Arsenal. The area at the northeast corner, although developed to some extent in the nineteenth century by the federal government, has been substantially redeveloped in the second half of the twentieth century by the State of Maine and the City of Augusta for a variety of purposes. Therefore, it has been excluded from the NHL.

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