

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Fort Halifax Blockhouse

AND/OR COMMON

Fort Halifax Blockhouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

North bank of Sebasticook River just west of U.S. 201

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Winslow

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

VICINITY OF

STATE
Maine

CODE
023

COUNTY
Kennebec

CODE
011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of Maine, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

STREET & NUMBER

State House

CITY, TOWN

Augusta

STATE

Maine

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kennebec County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Augusta

STATE

Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey (Maine-55)

DATE

1936-37

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE* pending
 MOVED DATE _____
archeological study

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fort Halifax Blockhouse stands on the northern bank of the Sebasticook River about 1/8 mile east of its junction with the Kennebec River at Winslow, Maine. Modern development has had a substantial impact on the setting of the historic structure. Immediately to the east are the right-of-way of the Maine Central Railroad and U.S. Route 201. An abandoned warehouse, a railroad spur, and the remains of a commercial access road are located immediately to the north. The land to the west is now overgrown but the foundations of various commercial structures are still visible there.

The original plan for Fort Halifax called for the construction of a four-pointed star enclosing a central blockhouse and four barracks, one opposite each corner of the main structure; a second blockhouse and palisade were to be erected on the hill overlooking the fort. As actually built, the fort was square in shape and two additional palisaded blockhouses were set on the adjacent hill. At the southeast corner of the square was a 2-story log sentry box with a hipped roof. Most of the eastern side consisted of a row of 1-story barracks, 80 feet long and 20 feet deep, with a shed roof. The northwestern corner and more than half of the northern side were defined by the "fort house" containing officers' quarters, store-rooms, and the armory. This building, measuring 40 by 80 feet, was 2 stories high with the second overhanging on the front (south) elevation; at the ridge of its dormered, gabled roof was a balustraded platform for sentries. At the northeastern and southwestern corners of the fort were 2-story hip-roofed log blockhouses. Spaces between the various buildings were filled by a log palisade, broken on the west by two gates.

Of the original components of Fort Halifax, only one blockhouse, assumed to be that at the southwestern corner, now survives. Constructed of hewn logs with dove-tailed and pegged joints, it is approximately 20 feet square at the foundation and 27 feet square on the overhanging second story. The first floor walls are broken by a doorway and windows on the north and another window on the west; there are rifle ports in all four second floor walls and larger openings for cannon on the south, east, and north. The eastern and northern openings are positioned to provide enfilading fire along the palisade, which abutted the blockhouse at the center of those walls. The doorway in the east wall of the second floor probably gave access to a walkway along the palisade between the blockhouse and the sentry box to the east. Slots in the floor of the overhang allowed troops in the blockhouse to fire directly down on attackers.

Though the blockhouse was repaired after it was acquired by the Fort Halifax Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution in 1924, and further work--including installation of a new roof and replacement of sills--has been done by the State of Maine, it is estimated that 85-90% of the material in the structure is original. The pitted and weathered condition of the exterior walls reflects their age. While the structure appears to be essentially sound, lower timbers rest directly on the ground and appear to be deteriorating because of moisture; these timbers may require repair or replacement in the near future.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1754

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Major Gen. John Winslow; Captain William Lithgow

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This structure, located in Winslow, Maine, is the oldest extant wooden blockhouse in the United States; it was erected as part of Fort Halifax, established in 1754, and is now the only surviving element of that complex. In addition, the blockhouse is an excellent example of its architectural type; built of hewn logs with dove-tailed and pegged joints, the structure is approximately 20 feet square at the foundation and 2 stories high with overhanging second story and hipped roof.

Use of Fort Halifax as a military post appears to have ended in 1766. The Fort Halifax Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution acquired the surviving blockhouse in 1924 and maintained it until 1965 when it was given to the State of Maine. Now operated as a museum, the structure is open to the public during the summer months from ten to five daily.

Historical Background

Fort Halifax--named in honor of the Earle of Halifax, the British Secretary of State--was begun in the summer of 1754 and substantially completed by the end of the following year. The site, just east of the confluence of the Sebasticook and Kennebec Rivers, was selected at the order of Royal Governor William Shirley. Major General John Winslow drew the original plans for the fort and directed initial construction; Winslow's successor at the fort, Captain William Lithgow, modified the plan and supervised final construction. Isaac Ilsley of Falmouth (now Portland) and Gershom Flagg were the chief carpenters.

Winslow's original plan called for a central blockhouse and four barracks surrounded by a palisade in the shape of a four-pointed star; a second blockhouse and palisade were to be erected on higher ground to the northeast of the main fortification. As completed by Lithgow, the fort was square in shape with blockhouses at the northeast and southwest corners, a sentry box at the southeast corner, barracks along the eastern side, and a large building known as the "fort house" (containing officers' quarters, storerooms, and the armory) at the northwest corner. Spaces between the various buildings were filled with palisades, then known as close pickets. Two additional blockhouses with palisades were located on the adjacent hill.

Fort Halifax was built as part of the colonial defenses during the French and Indian War (1754-63), but there is no evidence that it was ever the object of a direct attack. However, members of the garrison were involved in skirmishes with Indians in the surrounding area. Though some sources suggest that the fort ceased to function as an active military post as early as 1763, muster records indicate that it was garrisoned at least until October 1766.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Dunnack, Henry E. Maine Forts (Augusta, Me., 1924).
Fisher, Carleton E. History of Fort Halifax (Winthrop, Me., 1972).
Morrison, Hugh. Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).
Works Progress Administration, American Guide Series. Maine--A Guide to "Down East" (Boston, 1937).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	4,4,9	9,7,5	4,9	3,1	2,5,0	B							
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING								
C							D							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for the Fort Halifax Blockhouse are those of the property as owned by the State of Maine, Bureau of Parks and Recreation (identified as parcel 4 on the accompanying tax map). The property was conveyed to the State of Maine by the Fort Halifax Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, in a quit-claim deed dated January 19, 1965, which defines the boundaries as follows:

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, Historian DATE 10/20/67

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

1-31-76

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street NW.

202/523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington

District of Columbia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1/23/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

William Lebovich

1/15/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The blockhouse is generally assumed to stand on its original site. Though it has recently been suggested that the structure may have been moved during the building of the adjacent railroad in the 1840's, no direct evidence has yet been found to support that theory. The Maine Bureau of Parks and Recreation, which administers the property, hopes in the near future to resolve any questions regarding the site of the blockhouse (and the original lines of the full fort complex) through archeological investigation.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

After that time, the fort and surrounding land passed to private owners. The individual structures were allowed to deteriorate and eventually all of them except one blockhouse were demolished. In 1924 the Fort Halifax Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution acquired and repaired the surviving blockhouse. In 1966 the structure was conveyed to the State of Maine's Bureau of Parks and Recreation, which now maintains it as an historic site.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Boundaries

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 2

Southerly by the Sebesticook River; easterly by the westerly line of the location of the Maine Central Railroad Company; northerly by a line parallel with the north side of the old block house, and twenty (20) feet distant therefrom, measuring on a line drawn at right angles with said northerly side; westerly by a line parallel with the westerly side of said block house and twenty (20) feet distant therefrom measuring on a line drawn at right angles with said westerly side.