

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 24 1974	

1. NAME

COMMON:
Waterman Tavern

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Maple Valley Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Coventry

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Kent	CODE 003
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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"/> 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 type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" 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:

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. & Mrs. Russell A. Merrifield

STREET AND NUMBER:
Maple Valley Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Coventry

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Registry of Deeds, Coventry Town House

STREET AND NUMBER:
75 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Coventry

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: **1955** Federal State County Local

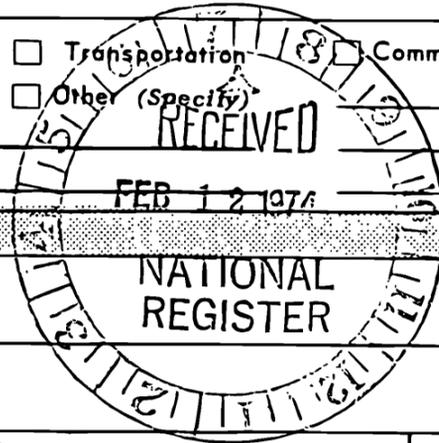
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S.E.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE: District of Columbia	CODE 11
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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7. DESCRIPTION

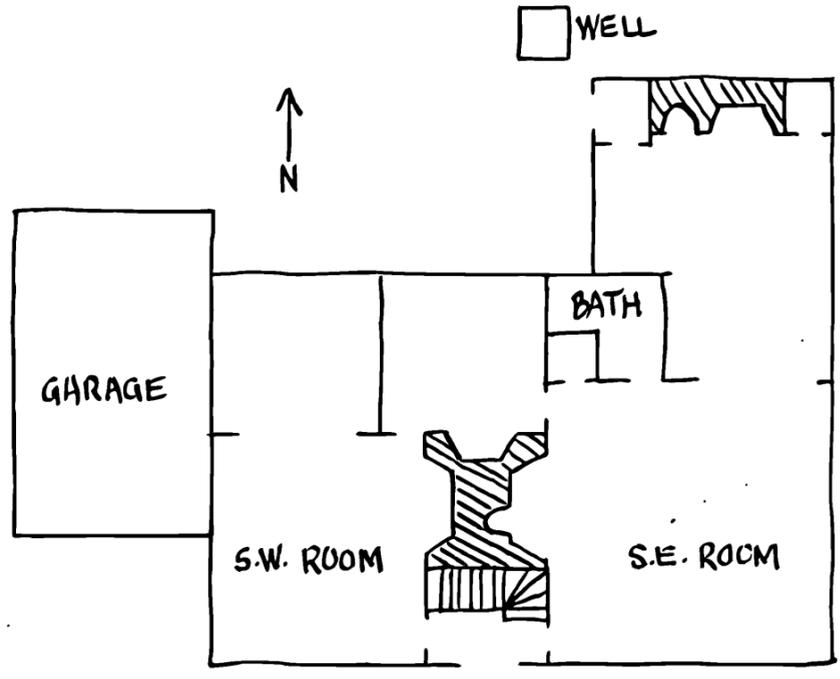
CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

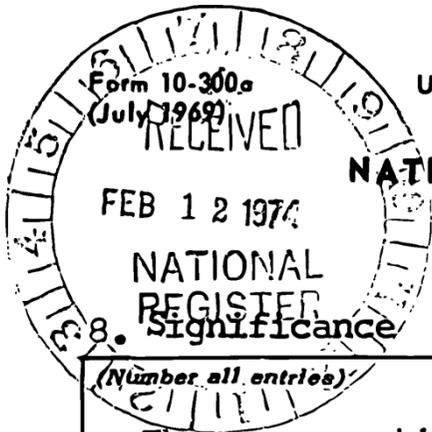
Waterman's Tavern is a two-and-a-half story, five bay wide, typical mid-eighteenth century farmhouse. It rests on a fieldstone foundation, is gable-roofed, and has a center brick chimney. The building is covered with narrow clapboards on the front or south side, wider clapboards on the rear, and shingles on the gable ends. Over the five second story windows on the facade the main cornice projects to form individual moulded cornices for each of the windows. The first story window frames are without embellishment while the side windows on all three stories are capped by splayed lintels. The windows on the rear of the tavern are extremely narrow but otherwise repeat the cornices on the facade. All of the sash has been replaced and are now: 12 over 12 on the south and west, 6 over 6 on the east, and 1 over 1 on the north. The central doorway retains its five light transom and an eight panel door backed by vertical sheathing but has otherwise been altered. On the north-east of the main section is a one-story gabled ell with a small brick chimney and a modern chimney. A garage was attached to the west gable end of the house in the mid-twentieth century.

The house originally had a five room plan to which was attached a one-room ell. The southeast room has the largest fireplace and was probably the main room in the tavern. All of the fireplaces in the house are of cut fieldstone and have stone hearths; the fireplaces in the north and southwest rooms have bolection moulding surrounding the opening, a narrow horizontal panel above the opening and above that a wide panel. The original wide floorboards remain in the three main first floor rooms, some of the hardware and interior doors date from the eighteenth century, and in the southwest room three of the beaded cornerposts are exposed.

Photographs taken of the property in the 1920's show various out-buildings still existing to the west and north of the tavern but these have since been removed. An old well remains just to the rear of the ell. The three acres on which the tavern is located are mostly wooded and border to the west on an orchard.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 24 1974

Three generations of Watermans owned this property, worked the farm, and operated the well-known tavern. After the death of Thomas Waterman in 1822 the tavern was purchased by James Waterman Gorton, who continued the business and hosted Town Meetings until 1835 when Coventry built a town-house about one-quarter mile to the east of the tavern.

On June 10, 1781 the French expeditionary army under Comte de Rochambeau left Newport, Rhode Island, where they had been encamped for almost a year, to embark upon the campaign that won the American Revolution. By marching north to Providence and then westward into Connecticut, Rochambeau planned to meet Washington's army on the Hudson and then jointly descend on Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, entrapping his army and forcing him to surrender.

After six days of preparation in Providence the French army began its westward march. Due to the difficulty of procuring forage and housing for army headquarters, the army was split into five units which left Providence on successive days. Up to thirty pioneers preceded each unit in order to clear the march route and Lazun's Legion marched nine miles to the south of the other four in order to protect the army's flank. Each of the four main units left Providence at four in the morning on their respective day, the first beginning on June 18th. As the road was poor and the troops not yet accustomed to the march routine, the first day's march was difficult for the army. The infantry of each unit arrived in Coventry at Waterman's Tavern, about fifteen miles from Providence, at eleven A.M., the wagon train at six-thirty P.M., and the tail of the artillery at eleven P.M. All left Coventry the following morning at four.

The French were well satisfied with the camp at Waterman's Tavern. The officer who wrote the army's itinerary noted, "The camp, though in the middle of a wood, is situated in a rather good position, with a brook in front of it and behind it the tavern and the main road..."

Rochambeau and his staff had their headquarters in Waterman's Tavern while the main body of the army was encamped to the south across what is now Maple Valley Road. In November of 1782, while on their triumphant return march to Boston almost a year and a half after these four days in June, the French army again camped at Waterman's Tavern.

For over eighty years Waterman's Tavern was a center of political activity in early Coventry, for over one hundred years a much frequented stop for travelers between east and west, and for a few short days in 1781 and 1782 the campground for Rochambeau's Army on its historic marches to and from Yorktown.

8. 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 type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **bet. 1744-47**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Waterman's Tavern is located in northern Coventry in an area defined in 1637 as "Seven Men's Farms". The nearly 50,000 acres comprising this area was owned by six shareholders, one of whom was Richard Waterman, but due to Indian troubles and claims by Connecticut no individual division of the land was made until the eighteenth century. On August 21, 1741 Coventry became the fourth of five townships which constitute Kent County. Three years later Richard Waterman sold his 320 acres in "Seven Men's Farms" to his son John, who then built the present house sometime before 1747, the year in which he was granted a license "to keep a public house and Retail Spirited Liquors". After the death of John Waterman his son Thomas operated the Waterman Tavern and farm and in 1754 was granted a free license by the Town Council "for the Advantage of the Town Meeting ... to do ye buisness sic of the Town". When Thomas died in 1761, his brother James became tavern keeper until his own death in 1776.

Thomas Waterman (1752-1822), son of James, became innholder at his father's death and bought out his sisters' interest in the "241 acres, dwelling house, barn, and corn house." This Thomas was perhaps the most significant owner of the Waterman tavern as he operated the tavern for forty-five years, a much greater length of time than any other Waterman, and he was innkeeper during the years when Rochambeau's army camped at the tavern. Thomas Waterman was continually appointed to the Committee to Relay Exchange and Regulate Highways and elected a Town Surveyor. An inventory of his possessions taken at his death in 1822 gives an indication of his successful business: 7 tables, 2 benches, 24 chairs, and 1 tavern sign valued at fifty cents. He is buried along with his wife and mother to the northwest of the house.

The Plainfield to Providence Pike on which Waterman's Tavern is situated was one of the principal thoroughfares in southern New England. First run in 1722, the highway has its longest extent in Coventry and was locally called "The Great North Road". Although over fifty taverns were licensed in Coventry during the mid-eighteenth, Waterman's remained during this period and into the nineteenth century one of the most popular. Only Waterman's Tavern was used regularly as the location for Council and Town Meetings, so much so that the Waterman's were occasionally granted free licenses for their service to the Town.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Anne & Rice, Howard Jr., The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army, 1972.

Records of Council and Town Meetings, Town of Coventry

Levesque, George, "Coventry: The Colonial Years, 1741-1783", Masters Thesis at Brown University, 1969.

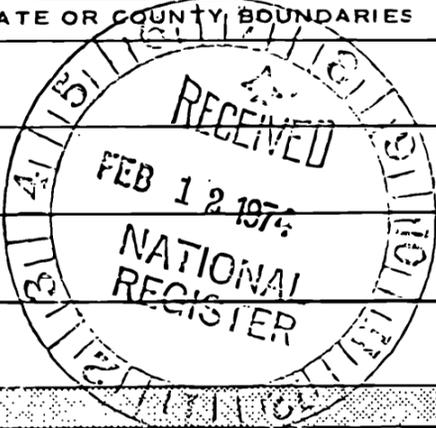
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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	0 ' "	0 ' "		41 0 43 . 9.47 .	71 0 39 36.69 .	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **3 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



17/278/00
4100

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mrs. Richard P. Sullivan, Grants Administrator

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **January 4, 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: *Richard C. Williams*
Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: February 6, 1974

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

A. K. Martensen
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/24/74

ATTEST:
Ronald M. Greenberg
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 7/22/74