

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Mass.	
COUNTY: Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Fort Independence

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
The Castle, Castle William, Castle William & Mary, Fort William

2. LOCATION

CONG. DISTRICT 9

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Castle Island (Eastern end of Gardner Way)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Boston (South)

STATE Mass.	CODE 025	COUNTY: Suffolk	CODE 025
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work In progress
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Metropolitan District Commission)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
20 Somerset Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston      STATE: Mass.      CODE: 025

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of the Treasurer

STREET AND NUMBER:  
State House

CITY OR TOWN: Boston      STATE: Mass.      CODE: 025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Inventory of the historic assets of the Commonwealth

DATE OF SURVEY: 1970       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
State House

CITY OR TOWN: Boston      STATE: Mass.      CODE: 025

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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		ENTRY NUMBER
		DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(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.

In the spring of 1634, John Winthrop visited Castle Island and decided to make it the primary defensive fortification of the colonial settlement. A major factor in Winthrop's decision was the Island's strategic location. Between Castle Island, located less than three miles east of Boston, and Governor's Island, approximately 3/4 miles north of Castle Island, lay the main ship channel into Boston Harbor. Since passage between Castle Island and the mainland to the south was impractical, and passage north of Governor's Island was impossible for ships of substantial tonnage, Castle Island was the natural location for defenses against naval attack.

The colonists set up their first battery platforms in 1634, on a small hill on the northeast section of the island. These were crude structures of wood. By 1643, these platforms were complemented by a house which served as quarters for a small garrison, as a powderhouse, and as an emplacement for guns protecting the lower batteries. A new house, or castle, was built in 1659. The location of Castle Island made it extremely vulnerable to storms from the north and east, which kept any structures, and especially those of wood, in constant need of repair. In 1673, fire destroyed the castle and a "small regular piece, 60' square or proportional" replaced it. By 1679, the fortress consisted of thirty guns; seven of these were mounted in the lower battery and twenty-three in the castle, which again served both as barracks and powderhouse.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, Castle Island received its first major overhaul. King William III, fearful of war with France, directed his engineers to oversee the fortifications of the colonies. Under the direction of Colonel William Wolfgang Romer and Capt. John Redknap, the old earth and wooden fortifications were demolished and a stone fortress was thrown up. This rectangular structure, named Fort William, was heavily bastioned, with a connecting demi-bastion at its northeast corner. At the northwest shore of the Island a wharf and a block house were built, the latter connected by a covered way to the main fortress. When Fort William was completed in 1705, it commanded over 100 guns and was considered the most impressive fort in British North America.

One major addition was made to Fort William in 1741 when a battery of twenty fourty-two pound guns was erected on the southeast flank and called "Shirley's Battery" after Governor William Shirley. Fort William was partially destroyed by General Howe's forces when they evacuated Boston in March, 1776, but was quickly repaired by the provincial forces.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the federal government considered Fort Independence (as Fort William was called after 1798) a major fortification, and called upon John Foncin to design a new stone fort. This enclosed pentagon of five bastions - designed to hold fifty guns, magazines and brick barracks - was completed by 1809.

By 1835, the fort was in "such a ruinous and dilapidated" condition that the Massachusetts Legislature petitioned Congress to repair it. Reconstruction began in 1835, and by 1851 Fort Independence was rebuilt and garrisoned. It is the nineteenth century structure, with some additional work done in 1870-71, which stands today. This one-tiered, brick and granite pentagon is partly casemated and earthen revetments top its ramparts. The Island itself underwent significant changes beginning in 1891 when a bridge and later a causeway were built connecting the Fort to the mainland. A series of filling operations increased the size of the Island and attached it to the mainland.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1634, 1705, 1741, 1809, 1851

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Except for a somewhat earlier defense set up on Fort Hill in the southern end of Boston, Castle Island is the oldest fortified site in the original Massachusetts Bay Colony. Begun in 1634 and called "the Castle" by John Winthrop, it controlled the main ship channel to Boston's inner harbor. Fire destroyed the Fort in 1673, but it was soon rebuilt. Sir Edmund Andros, Royal Governor of the Province, was imprisoned here in 1689, during the first colonial rebellion against royal authority. In the early years of the eighteenth century, a completely new, bastioned fort of masonry was built at the express direction of King William, who feared an attack on the colonies by the French fleet. The new fort was named Fort William and, with over one hundred guns, was the most impressive fortification in British North America. Governor Shirley sought refuge at this third fort during the impressment riots of 1747. The stamps of the hated Stamp Acts were stored here, and the ill-received revenue commissioners appointed under the Townsend Acts were forced to retreat to the Fort in 1767. At Samuel Adams' insistence, the British troops were quartered here after the Boston Massacre of 1770. Fort William was partially destroyed by General Howe during his evacuation of Boston in March, 1776, but was immediately repaired by colonial forces under the direction of Lt. Col. Paul Revere and put under the command of the leader of the Massachusetts militia, Major General John Hancock.

In 1798, Massachusetts ceded the island fortress to the United States, possibly because of the country's difficulties with France, and President John Adams renamed it Fort Independence. A new fort was built in the early part of the nineteenth century from a design by John Foncin, the French engineer who designed and built Fort McHenry. This fort, the fourth on the site, was garrisoned during the War of 1812 but fell into serious disrepair soon after. Reconstruction began in 1836 and was substantially completed by 1851 when the Fort was garrisoned once again. During the Civil War, several volunteer units kept watch at the Fort for Confederate ships. Oliver Wendell Holmes<sup>Jr.</sup> and Charles Francis Adams are only two of the Massachusetts notables who walked the parapets of Fort Independence before leaving for service with the Union Army. Though Fort Independence saw some activity during World Wars I and II, it was not fully garrisoned after the Spanish American War. Its 328 year military history came to an end in 1962, when the federal government ceded the area of Fort Independence back to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for use as an historic monument.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in New England. Shurtleff, Nathaniel B., ed. Boston 1854, 5 vols.

Hosmer, James Kendall, ed. Winthrop's Journal. New York, Chas. Scribners & Sons, 1908.

----- The Acts and Resolves of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, 1692-1780, Boston, 1869-1922, 21 vols.

American State Papers. Military Affairs. Class V. Vol. 1, 1794-1818.

**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	42 ° 20 ' 21 "	71 ° 00 ' 47 "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	42 ° 20 ' 21 "	71 ° 00 ' 37 "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	42 ° 20 ' 13 "	71 ° 00 ' 37 "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	42 ° 20 ' 13 "	71 ° 00 ' 47 "		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 15+ acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Richard W. Hale, Jr., Acting Chairman

ORGANIZATION: Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE: April 23, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Office of the Secretary, State House

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

STATE: Mass.

CODE: 025

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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 John F. K. [Signature]

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## Missing Core Documentation

**Property Name**

Fort Independence

**County, State**

Suffolk County,  
Massachusetts

**Reference Number**

70000921

The following Core Documentation is missing from this entry:

Nomination Form

Photographs

USGS Map

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Mass.	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Fort Independence			
AND/OR HISTORIC: The Castle, Castle William, Castle William & Mary; Fort William			
2. LOCATION			
CONG. DISTRICT 9			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Castle Island (Eastern end of Gardner Way)			
CITY OR TOWN:			
Boston (South)			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Mass.	025	Suffolk	025
3. MAP REFERENCE			
SOURCE:			
U.S.G.S. Boston, South, Mass.			
SCALE:	1:24,000		
DATE:	1956		
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Mass.	
COUNTY Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Fort Independence			
AND/OR HISTORIC: The Castle, Castle William, Castle William & Mary; Fort William			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Castle Island (Eastern end of Gardner Way)			
CITY OR TOWN:			
Boston (South)			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Mass.	025	Suffolk	025
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: Mass. Metropolitan District Commission			
DATE OF PHOTO: 1954			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Mass. Metropolitan District Commission, 20 Somerset St., Boston			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			
Aerial View		PLEASE NOTE: Met. District Comm. is making new aerial photographs in May	

CHelsea (CITY HALL) 1.7 MI.

71°00' 42°22'30"



Fort Independence/Castle Island  
 U.S.G.S. BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.  
 Scale: 1:24,000  
 1956

(HULL)

Received  
11/9/73



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Office of the Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission

John F. X. Davoren

Secretary of the Commonwealth

40 Beacon Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02108

727-8470

November 1, 1973

Ms. Sally Marusin  
Publications Branch  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
18th and C Streets, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Marusin:

Enclosed is the copy you requested of our National Register nomination for Fort Independence, Castle Island, Boston.

Foster's Block, Worcester, is no longer listed in the summary of National Register properties as published in the Federal Register. Our files indicate that the building was demolished in August of 1972.

Sincerely,

Polly M. Rettig  
Historian  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

:pmr  
Encl.

**NOTIFICATION OF GRAI I-AID ACTION**

Do Not  
Use  
This  
Space

1. STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER

2. (Reserved for use by State central information reception agency)

74070490

3. GRANTOR: a. Federal agency

Department of the Interior

b. Organizational unit

National Park Service

c. Administering office--(1) Name

Division of Grants

(2) Address—Street or P.O. Box

18th and C Streets, NW.

City

Washington

State

D.C.

Zip Code

20240

4. FEDERAL AGENCY GRANT IDENTIFIER: a. Code

25-75-00175-00

b. Title

Fort Independence Development  
*(Fort William)*

*Castle Island, So. Boston*

c. Purpose Project work will include thermal and moisture protection and the installation of doors and windows.

5. GRANTEE: a. Name

Commission  
Massachusetts Mrs. Elizabeth R. Amadon, Exec. Dir., Massachusetts Historical/

b. Address—Street or P.O. Box

40 Beacon Street

City

Boston

State

**MASS**

Zip Code

02108

6. GRANTEE TYPE (Check only the single most applicable box)

a. State  b. Inter-state  c. County  d. City  e. School district  f. Special unit  g. Community action  h. Sponsored organization  i. Other

7. APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE

Year Month Day  
75 10 28

8. ACTION DATE

Year Month Day  
75 11 10

9. EFFECTIVE STARTING DATE

Year Month Day  
75 11 10

10. ENDING DATE

Year Month Day  
78 11 09

11. TYPE OF ACTION (Check as many boxes as apply to this action)

a. New grant  b. Continuation grant  c. Supplemental grant (identify agency in item 16)  d. Change in existing grant (1) Increase in duration  (2) Decrease in duration  (3) Cancellation  (4) Increase(\$) (5) Decrease(\$)

12. AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION

a. Federal—(1) basic \$ 51,200 (2) Supplemental \$

b. State \$ 78,800\*

c. Local \$

d. Other \$

13. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (if none, clarify in item 16)

a. Program Number 15,904

b. Supplemental Program Number

14. AUTHORIZATION

a. Federal Budget Accounts 10-58-1040-0-1-405

b. Public Laws PL Title Sec. 89 665

c. U.S. Code 16 U.S.C. 470

15. FACILITY LOCATION: (For facility grant actions only)

a. City Castle Island, Boston

b. County **Suffolk**

16. REMARKS

\*Metropolitan District Commission