

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic USS Massachusetts (BB 59)

and or common

## 2. Location

street & number Battleship Cove not for publication

city, town Fall River vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Bristol code 005

## 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee, Inc.

street & number Battleship Cove

city, town Fall River vicinity of state Massachusetts

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number 441 North Main Street

city, town Fall River state Massachusetts

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register Nomination Form has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1976  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division

city, town Washington state DC 20013-7127

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	N/A original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

USS Massachusetts (BB59) is the third of four South Dakota-class battleships laid down in the 1930s. She was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company in their Fore River Shipyard at Quincy, Massachusetts. Her keel was laid on July 20, 1939, and she was launched on September 23, 1941. USS Massachusetts was commissioned on May 12, 1942.

The design of the South Dakota class was influenced by the same limitations as the previous North Carolina class, because it too, was intended to meet the Washington Treaty limits. The chief difference was that the South Dakota class, including USS Massachusetts, was designed from the start to carry a 16-inch main battery. To accommodate the heavier armour needed for a 16-inch battery and keep the required weight under 35,000 tons, the waterline length of the South Dakota class was shortened from that of the North Carolina class while the beam remained the same. This change meant that the South Dakota class had a much fuller hull form than the North Carolina class. More powerful engines were also installed to maintain the same fast speed obtained by the North Carolina class.<sup>1</sup>

USS Massachusetts is painted grey on metal surfaces exposed to the elements with the exception of a black stack cap and black "boot topping" at the water line. Three quarters of the ship's deck is covered with teak laid on a bituminous base and bolted to the deck. Forward of main battery turret one, and aft of main battery turret three, the decks are made of steel.

USS Massachusetts was built with two explosively-driven catapults on the stern, port and starboard, for launching observation planes. These were removed and discarded during the ship's inactive period. During the summer of 1985 an outline of one of the catapults will be painted on the deck.<sup>2</sup>

Specific ship data concerning USS Massachusetts is:

Length Overall	681 feet
Maximum Beam	108 feet
Design Displacement	35,000 tons
Full Load Displacement	46,000 tons
Boilers	8-Babcock/ & Wilcox
Turbines	4 sets, General Electric
Fuel Oil Capacity	6,959 tons

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
..... prehistoric	..... archeology-prehistoric	..... community planning	..... landscape architecture	..... religion
..... 1400-1499	..... archeology-historic	..... conservation	..... law	..... science
..... 1500-1599	..... agriculture	..... economics	..... literature	..... sculpture
..... 1600-1699	..... architecture	..... education	X military	..... social/
..... 1700-1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian
..... 1800-1899	..... commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater
X 1900-	..... communications	..... industry	..... politics/government	..... transportation
		..... invention		..... other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1941-1945      **Builder/Architect** Bethlehem Steel Company  
 Quincy, Massachusetts

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

General Statement: The Role of the Battleship in World War II

The first modern battleship had its inception with the launching of HMS Dreadnought by Great Britain in 1906. HMS Dreadnought was the world's first all-big-gun, fast, heavily armoured capital ship and her launching made all the major ships in all other navies obsolete. The design features of HMS Dreadnought were rapidly copied by other navies and by 1914 the modern big gun heavily armoured battleship dominated naval warfare.

Battleships fought their first and only decisive action of World War I in the Battle of Jutland in May 1916. Although the British fleet won the day and forced the Germans to retire to the safety of their ports, the German design and construction of battleships was shown to be superior. After the Battle of Jutland, the Germans never again risked their battleships in open conflict with His Majesty's fleet but turned instead to unrestricted submarine warfare.

After the end of World War I the battleship continued to dominate naval strategy. In an effort to reduce expenditures required to fund new battleships the United States, Britain, France, Japan and Italy agreed to a moratorium on new battleship construction in 1922 at the Washington Naval Conference. As a result of this agreement, new American battleships in construction were broken up and scrapped. No new battleships were built until 1936 when USS North Carolina was authorized by the Congress.

During these years the nature of naval power was changing as a result of the perfection of the airplane and the introduction of a new capital ship utilizing this new weapon--the aircraft carrier. Supporters of air power argued that the battleship as the principal capital ship of the navy was obsolete because of the long reach of naval aircraft. This view was strengthened early in World War II when the British carried out a carrier strike on the Italian battle fleet at Taranto on November 11, 1940. Subsequent Japanese carrier strikes on the American battlefleet at Pearl Harbor and the British ships HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse confirmed the new order of naval strategy.

While the rise of the aircraft carrier forever altered naval strategy it did not totally eclipse the importance of the battleship. In both the Atlantic and the Pacific, old American battleships carried out extensive bombardments on enemy held shores while new generations of fast American battleships escorted the aircraft carriers and provided them with a dense thicket of anti-aircraft fire

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Fall River

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	9	3	2	0	0	0	0	4	6	1	9	2	6	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

B 

Zone		Easting					Northing							

C 

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D 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

N/A

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Harry A. Butowsky

organization National Park Service

date May 1985

street & number Division of History

telephone (202) 343-8168

city or town Washington

state DC 20013-7127

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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National Register of Historic Places  
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For NPS use only

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

Maximum Speed

28 knots

Armament

9 16-inch/45 caliber Mark 6 guns  
20 5-inch/38 caliber Mark 12 guns  
Various combinations of 40 mm and  
20 mm antiaircraft guns

Crew

2,300 wartime

In 1962, after USS Massachusetts was stricken from the inactive reserve list by the Navy, some 5,000 tons of equipment was removed for use on other naval vessels. USS Massachusetts is in good condition and retains much of her World War II integrity.

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 2

when necessary. Both old and new American battleships saw heavy service during the war providing cover for other ships and eventually bombarding the Japanese home islands in 1945. When the war in the Pacific ended on September 2, 1945, the surrender of the Japanese was signed on board the battleship USS Missouri anchored in Tokyo Harbor. Although replaced by the aircraft carrier as the principal capital ship of the navy the battleship saw important and useful service during World War II and contributed to the eventual American victory.

USS Massachusetts represents American battleships that fought against Japan in World War II for the following reasons:

1. USS Massachusetts is a representative of the South Dakota class of American battleships that fought against Japan in World War II. Built later than the North Carolina class, the South Dakota class represents the continued American preparation for World War II and development of a more advanced battleship design. USS Massachusetts is at Fall River, Massachusetts, not far from Quincy, Massachusetts, where she was built. She thus represents the role of Massachusetts in the support of the war effort.
2. Beginning in November 1942, USS Massachusetts saw continue action in both the European and Pacific Theaters of operations. USS Massachusetts earned 11 battle stars for her World War II service.
3. USS Massachusetts is in good condition and retains much of her World War II integrity.

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Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

1

FOOTNOTES

1. Rob Stern, U.S. Battleships in Action Part 2 (Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc., 1984). p. 21.
2. No Author, USS Massachusetts (BB59)-Physical Description (Fall River, Massachusetts: Battleship Cove, 1984), pp. 8-9.

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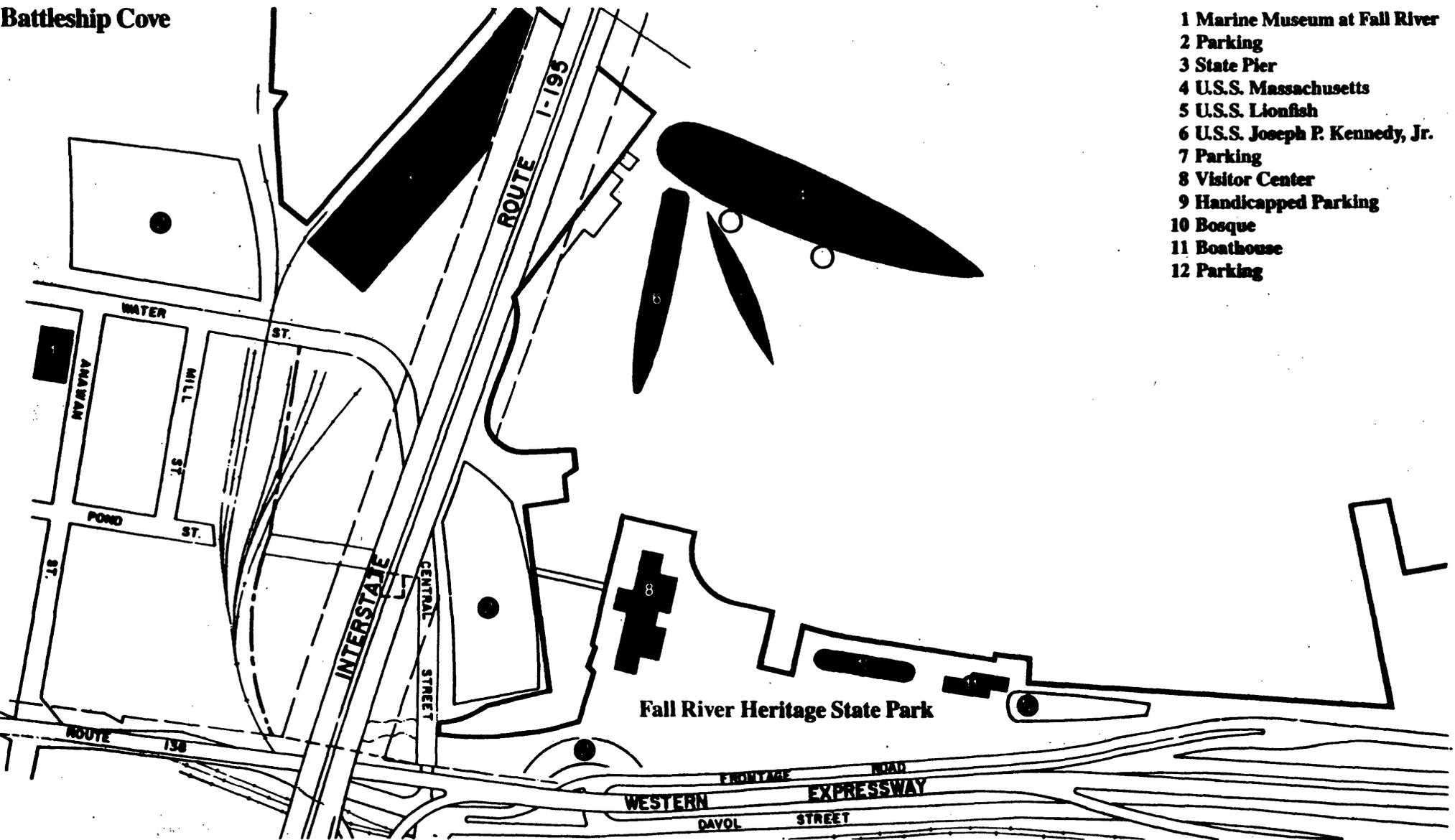
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Pater, Alan F. United States Battleships -- The History of America's Greatest Fighting Fleet. Beverly Hills, California: Monitor Book Company, 1968.

Stern, Rob. U.S. Battleships in Action Part 2. Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc. 1984.

**Battleship Cove**



- 1 Marine Museum at Fall River
- 2 Parking
- 3 State Pier
- 4 U.S.S. Massachusetts
- 5 U.S.S. Lionfish
- 6 U.S.S. Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.
- 7 Parking
- 8 Visitor Center
- 9 Handicapped Parking
- 10 Bosque
- 11 Boathouse
- 12 Parking



Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Management  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston MA 02202

Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts  
Michael S. Dukakis  
Governor