

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
MAR 7 1973	

1. NAME

COMMON:
Fort Barton

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Lawton and Highland Avenues

CITY OR TOWN:
Tiverton

STATE: Rhode Island, 02878 CODE: 44 COUNTY: Newport CODE: 005

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)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Town of Tiverton

STREET AND NUMBER:
343 Highland Road

CITY OR TOWN: Tiverton STATE: Rhode Island, 02878 CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Tiverton Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
343 Highland Road

CITY OR TOWN: Tiverton STATE: Rhode Island, 02878 CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Not so represented

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

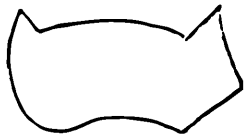
STATE:
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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Barton, so named after Colonel William Barton, is a Revolutionary War earthwork built on a high granite hill overlooking the Sakonnet River, Aquidneck Island, and Narragansett Bay. In 1777 the Massachusetts General Assembly agreed to aid the State of Rhode Island in building a fortification above Howland's Ferry to be called Tiverton Heights Fort. Judging from its configuration today, it was probably built in this shape:  Its maximum dimensions were about 150 feet by 100 feet. It held seven guns--18- and 24-pounders--which were probably placed at the corners. Stones were piled on both the inside and outside surfaces of the embankments, and a layer of soil applied over the stone. The stones prevented cannonballs from penetrating, and the soil facing protected personnel from any stones that shattered under an impact. The troops probably pitched their tents to the rear of the fort. A hewn granite stone, found at the rear of the fort, was perhaps part of a small arsenal structure. The land slopes sharply down behind the fort, making difficult any rear attack by a hostile party, although cannons could have been set up on the hill across the stream.

Today the original three-acre site of Fort Barton (as well as several acres of adjoining land) is owned by the Town of Tiverton and is a public park. A serpentine path leads up the hill from the northwest, and various overlooks have been marked by stones. The mounds of earth that were the fort are still remarkably well defined despite their long and severe exposure to the elements. The main, western, embankment is the most prominent; and inside the fort, the land is dug out deeply in places. Fortunately, Fort Barton has not had to be "restored;" its character as a strategic defense is still entirely palpable. The hill on which it is built has been steepened along its west face to aid in building Highland Avenue. The Tiverton Conservation Commission in 1970 erected a lookout tower within the fort as a part of their project of making Fort Barton an historic park.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. 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) 1777

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input 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 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

When the British captured Newport, on Aquidneck Island, in 1776, it was well understood by the Continentals that the English might attempt to enlarge their sphere of occupation in the direction of either Providence or Boston. The shortest water distance between the Island of Aquidneck and the mainland (and therefore the most logical point for troop crossing) was at Howland's Ferry, Tiverton. The Massachusetts General Assembly agreed to aid the State of Rhode Island in quickly erecting fortifications on commanding ground overlooking this narrow strait, thus establishing a vital defense at this key site.

In July, 1777, Lieutenant-Colonel William Barton and four men picked from the "Tiverton Heights Fort" consummated one of the most daring exploits in the records of the American military. Through contacts on Aquidneck, Barton had learned that the commanding general of the British Newport garrison was spending much of his summer at the house of a Mr. Overing, about halfway down the island, in what is now Portsmouth. The raiders broke into the house and took captive the bewildered general, Richard Prescott. The success of Barton's coup de main tremendously boosted American morale, low at this particular time in the war, and consequently the fort at Tiverton was renamed "Fort Barton."

In the spring of 1778, General George Washington selected General John Sullivan to assume command of Fort Barton and to direct staging operations for a new invasion of Aquidneck (two attempts in the previous autumn had failed). The Marquis de Lafayette was to coordinate the participation of the French fleet and landing force, and a grand plan of strike by land and sea was formulated. On August 9, 1778, the Battle of Rhode Island began with the crossing at Howland's Ferry of 11,000 Continental line troops and militia--one of the greatest massings of Continental soldiers during the entire war. Several unforeseen forces plagued the campaign, however--including a severe storm that greatly damaged the French fleet; and the British line held. At the end of August, most of the Continental troops departed the area, leaving only a small force to man Fort Barton.

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Field, Edward: Revolutionary Defences in Rhode Island (Providence, Rhode Island, 1896), pp. 138-139.
 Holt, James W.: Fort Barton, Lt. Col. William Barton, Battle of Rhode Island, in program dedicating Fort Barton as a park, in Tiverton Town Hall, Tiverton, Rhode Island.

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	° ' "	° ' "		41° 37' 46.34"N	71° 12' 36.79"W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than ten 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:
B. Christopher Bene, Surveyor-Researcher

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission DATE: March 2, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
Room 201, 265 Melrose Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02907 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 Frederick C. Williamson

Title State Liaison Officer

Date August 22, 1972

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

Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 3/7/73

ATTEST: [Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 3.2.73

197315890/1610800

DTM Post

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER MAR 7 1973	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance.

In August, 1970, through the efforts of the Tiverton Conservation Commission and others, the Town of Tiverton acquired the land on which Fort Barton is built, as well as lands adjoining it. Today the site serves as a place where one can examine an important and well-preserved American Revolutionary artifact, and also as a place where the public can enjoy natural beauty and scenic views.

