

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maine	
COUNTY: Aroostook	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: **Fort Kent State Memorial**

AND/OR HISTORIC: **Fort Kent**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Fort Kent (vicinity)**

STATE Maine	CODE	COUNTY: Aroostook	CODE
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP :	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) State Memorial

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **State of Maine**

STREET AND NUMBER: **State House**

CITY OR TOWN: **Augusta** STATE: **Maine** CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Aroostook County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Houlton** STATE: **Maine** CODE

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **National Register of Historic Places**

DATE OF SURVEY: **October 1969** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Mr. James Mundy, Director, Maine Historical Perservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: **31 Western Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Augusta** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **04330**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Maine	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
COUNTY: Aroostook		
FOR NPS USE ONLY		

Dec., 1842

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 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

Fort Kent blockhouse, built in 1838-1840, for defense against British intrusion during the bloodless Aroostook War, is located at the confluence of the Fish and St. John Rivers in Fort Kent, Maine. Standing on a slight eminence, it commands a view of the nearby St. John.

The blockhouse, a two-story structure with walls of hand-hewn cedar timber, some squaring over 19 inches, was set on a shale rock foundation about 1-1/2 feet off the ground to protect the lower timbers from ground rot. The base is 23-feet 5-inches square while the second story has an overhang of approximately 15 inches on each side. A four-sided steeply-pitched roof comes to a point at the top. Four original dormer windows, one on each side of the roof, were replaced when the roof was resingled in 1926. A pen and ink sketch of Fort Kent made in December 1842 confirms the fact that the dormer windows were on the original structure.

An entrance door, facing west, has four rifle ports on either side of it, with twelve on the other walls of the first floor. Above on the top floor, two original doors, about 24" x 30" have been replaced with windows and frames of the same dimension on the east and west sides. Rifle ports on this floor number eleven on the east and west sides, and fifteen on the two remaining sides. Cannon ports, one each on the south and north sides, about 12" x 15" are on the first floor.

Except for the aforementioned changes, the present exterior of the blockhouse is representative of the original Fort Kent facade. The interior's structural members are intact. However, changes have been made to walls and floors to accommodate the needs of a small museum and meeting room. Original floors have been disturbed to allow for installation of a furnace and heat ducts, and a toilet facility.

An interior staircase has been reconstructed, as have hinges on the door.

A circular gravel driveway, flagpoles, and interpretive signs, are to the immediate south of the blockhouse.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

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/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Kent is the only extant fortification of the Aroostook "War" of 1838-39 which was the conflict that climaxed the Northeast border disputes with Great Britain following the War of 1812. These disputes, diplomatic historian Alfred Flagg Bemis has said, "constituted one of the gravest and most inveterate diplomatic issues of the United States in the generation following the War of 1812. As rival factions of settlers pushed up from the coast of New Brunswick and Maine, the diplomatic dispute was widened by politics, personalities and economic interests. When the Province of New Brunswick began granting land titles and claiming jurisdiction within the State of Maine, the Governor of Maine ordered out the militia, began to eject Canadians and erected a series of fortifications of which Fort Kent is one. Congress authorized the President to call out the militia, enroll 50,000 volunteers, and voted a credit of \$10,000,000. General Winfield Scott negotiated a stand-in-place arrangement until the Webster-Ashburton negotiations culminated in a peaceful and permanent solution.

History

Fort Kent was constructed in the years 1838-40 as a result of the northeast boundary controversy between the United States and Great Britain. The controversy which began at the Treaty of Paris in 1783 was finally resolved by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty signed in Washington in 1842. In the intervening years, however, a combination of ill feeling remaining from two wars with Britain, trespassing by both sides onto disputed territory, an awareness of the Aroostook Valley's timber and land resources, greed, chicanery, and political maneuvering led to the bloodless Aroostook War of 1838-39 and a possible explosive diplomatic issue on the northeast frontier.

Fort Kent blockhouse, named in honor of the Governor of Maine, was built by members of the Maine militia under Captain Nye sent to prevent Canadian lumbermen from trespassing onto claimed State territory. When in 1839 a Maine land agent was captured and taken prisoner to New Brunswick, the situation became serious enough to warrant the summoning of Federal troops to the area. Congress authorized the the President to raise 50,000 troops and appropriated \$10,000,000 to meet expenses if war came.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Briggs, John, Material Compiled, (Under cover March 23, 1973), Augusta, Maine.

Hatch, Louis Clinton, History of Maine, Vol. 1, Chap. 10.

Mallett, Bartlett W., "Warranty Deed," November 18, 1891, Aroostook, Maine

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 ' "		47 ° 15 ' 9 "	68 ° 35' 27 "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **2 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:
Ben Levy, Senior Historian and Paul Ghioto, Assistant

ORGANIZATION **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **4/13/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE **D.C.** CODE

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 _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

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

(Continuation Sheet)

ST	Maine
COUNTY	Aroostook
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (1) Fort Kent, Maine

As a preventive measure against such a possibility, Major General Winfield Scott was sent to Maine in March 1839 with full powers as a mediator between the State of Maine and the Province of New Brunswick and succeeded in his mission. Governor Fairfield of Maine and Sir John Harvey of New Brunswick agreed to the terms laid down by Scott, and Fairfield recalled the militia from the Aroostook.

Since the border controversy was still a sensitive and dangerous issue, a force of U.S. soldiers commanded by Captain John Winder relieved the Maine militia at Fort Kent, commanded by Captain Stover Rines, in the fall of 1839. Under Winder's direction a barracks, officers quarters, and other buildings were erected in addition to the blockhouse's completion in 1840.

The signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in Washington in 1842 settled forever the boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick and the necessity of Fort Kent was diminished.

In 1843 Fort Kent was placed in charge of a local agent and the soldiers were withdrawn. It became again the property of the State of Maine in late 1857 but was quickly sold to Mary Page in 1858 for the sum of \$250.00.

Bartlett W. Mallett acquired the property in 1887. In November 1891 Bartlett sold the property, including the blockhouse, to the State of Maine with the intention that it be preserved as a historic monument and not conveyed to any person, party, society or institution with an opposite purpose in mind.

For nearly 68 years Fort Kent was neglected by the State until local interest on Fort Kent was focused in 1959. Since this time Maine's Department of Parks and Recreation has preserved the site and blockhouse as a State memorial.

The fact that war was avoided and peaceful settlement achieved provides an excellent example of how nations, if wise and forbearing, can settle their differences. Responsibility for the settlement rests mainly with General Winfield Scott and Sir John Harvey.

Though the bloodless Aroostook War has been derided, scoffed at, and labeled as a huge international joke, it is yet an incident in international history, in the history of the nation, and of the State of Maine that is of supreme importance and interest. Three thousand miles of unfortified borderland between the United States and Canada attest to this importance.