| | Form 10-300 (July 1969) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM | | | | | | STATE: Rhode Isla | ind | |
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IT 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: \wedge 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. EE INSTRUCTION

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| ERIOD (Check One or More as | Appropriate) | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 🕅 18th Century | 20th Century |
| 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century | |
| PECIFIC DATE(5) (If Applicab | le and Known) 1777 | · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · | |
| REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch | eck One or More as Appropria | ite) | ···· |
| Abor iginat | 📋 Education | Political | 🗋 Urban Planning |
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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

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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 <u>coup de</u> <u>main</u> 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 coördinate 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.)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

| STATE | |
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| Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY | |
| Newport | |
| FOR NPS USE ONL | Y |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
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8. Significance.

(Number all entries)

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.

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|---|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES | | | | | | |
| Island, 1896), pp. 138-139 Holt, James W.: Fort Barton, | LtCo | ces in Rhode Island (Providence, Rhode ol. William Barton, Battle of Rhode ort Barton as a park, in Tiverton Town | | | | |
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| I II. FORM PREPARED BY | | | | | | |
| B. Christopher Bene, Surveyor- | -Resear | rcher | | | | |
| Rhode Island Historical Preser | rvatio | n Commission March 2, 1972 | | | | |
| Room 201, 265 Melrose Street | • | | | | | |
| Providence | | Rhode Island, 02907 | | | | |
| 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION | | NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION | | | | |
| As the designated State Liaison Officer for th tional Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Publ 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for in in the National Register and certify that it has evaluated according to the criteria and proced | lic Law clusion s been | I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register. Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation | | | | |
| forth by the National Park Service. The recon level of significance of this nomination is: National 🗌 State 🕅 Local | | | | | | |
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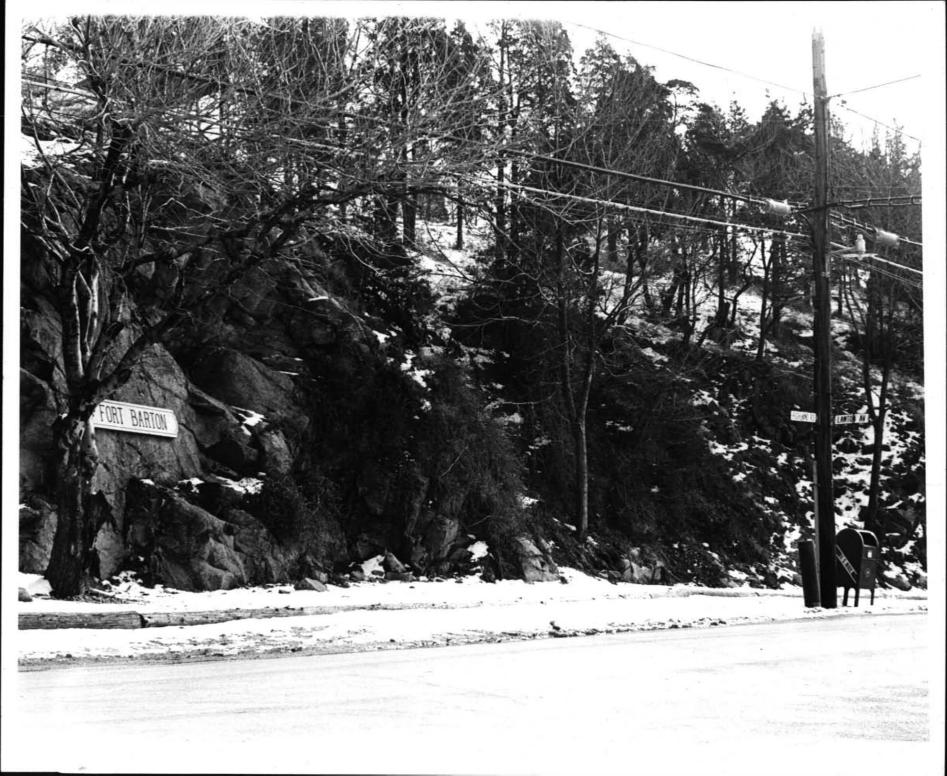
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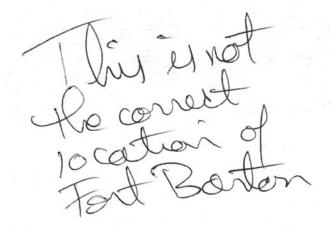
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| | UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE | 5 | STATE Rhode Island | | | | | |
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| ¹ Form 10-301 (July 1969) | UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE | | | Rhode Island | | |
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