

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

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| Inventory No: | NWB.2994 |
| Historic Name: | Newburyport Army National Guard Armory |
| Common Name: | |
| Address: | 57 Low St |
| City/Town: | Newburyport |
| Village/Neighborhood: | |
| Local No: | 82-8 |
| Year Constructed: | 1956 |
| Architect(s): | |
| Architectural Style(s): | No style |
| Use(s): | Armory |
| Significance: | Architecture; Community Planning; Military; Politics Government; Social History |
| Area(s): | |
| Designation(s): | |
| Building Materials(s): | Roof: Synthetic Other; Tar, Built-up Wall: Brick; Cast Stone; Concrete Unspecified Foundation: Poured Concrete |



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Tuesday, October 29, 2019 at 10:14 AM

2994

FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

82-8

Newburyport West

2994

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts State Archives
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

FEB 03 2003

NWB.2994

MASS. HIST. COMM

Town Newburyport

Place (*neighborhood or village*) _____

Address 57 Low Street

Newburyport, MA 01950

Historic Name Newburyport Armory

Uses: Present Armory

Original Armory

Date of Construction 1956

Source MAARNG Statewide Armories Inventory

Style/Form Modern functional

Architect/Builder Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Concrete Slab

Wall/Trim Brick/Concrete

Roof Rubberized membrane/tar

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures 3-bay garage

(1951), powder house (1822)

Major Alteration (*with dates*) Rear storage wing

reconstructed after bombing (1971)

Condition Good

Moved No Yes Date _____

Acreage 19 acres

Setting Set back from street approximately

30 feet in mixed commercial/residential/school area.



Rear 4 side elevation

Recorded by Edward Stanley

Organization Boston Affiliates, Inc.

Date (*month/day/year*) 11/22/02

RECEIVED

FEB 03 2003

MASS. HIST. COMM

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

BUILDING FORM

NWB. 2994

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Newburyport Armory is a large brick-walled, modern functional-style building located on the south side of Low Street. Located in a mixed commercial, residential and school area, the building is executed in a utilitarian style characteristic of armories constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. The building is primarily square in plan with a flat roof and metal-framed windows with cast stone sills. A rectangular, one-story administrative block, with its long axis parallel to Low Street, is joined on the rear by a square 1½-story, drill hall block with surrounding one story wings. The administrative block is characterized by a central projecting pavilion having a recessed main entrance containing four metal replacement doors with cast stone surround flanked by two windows on each side. This pavilion is flanked by lower side wings, the right wing with a raised band of four windows, the left wing with four larger ones. The east and west side elevations show the upper side wall of the drill hall with six evenly spaced triple windows lighting the interior. The projecting one-story wing flanking the drill hall on this side, as well as the rear, is windowless. The rear, south elevation of the armory contains two sets of double metal replacement doors flanking a large metal overhead door used to provide vehicular access to the drill hall. The one-story wing flanking the drill hall on the west side elevation contains a bank of twelve windows.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE *see continuation sheet*

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

The Newburyport Armory was constructed in 1956 to serve as a training, meeting, administrative and equipment storage and maintenance facility for the Massachusetts Army National Guard. The National Guard had its roots in the citizen-soldier ethos of the New England colonial volunteer militia, separate from any regular standing army. The first three regiments of militia in Massachusetts were the North, East and South Regiments, organized by a law passed in 1636. Much of the Revolutionary War army under George Washington was made up of militiamen. After the Revolutionary War, when the United States Constitution's divisions of state and federal power were being tested, militias were maintained by the states to counterbalance the potential power of the regular standing army. In 1781, the first Massachusetts militia law was enacted which organized forces into a Train Band of service-eligible men and an Alarm List of reserves. After the War of 1812, independent volunteer companies formed, primarily in Boston and surrounding areas. By the 1830s, these companies had degenerated into social groups, and the less effective of these were disbanded. In 1840,

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES *see continuation sheet*

Carrier, John S. *History of Newburyport, Mass., 1764-1905*. Newburyport, MA: published by the author, 1906.

Fogelson, Robert M. *America's Armories: Architecture, Society and Public Order*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Hollister, Susan. "Imagery and Armories: The Castles of Massachusetts Volunteer Militia." Unpublished manuscript, 1985.

Massachusetts Army National Guard. "Massachusetts Army National Guard Statewide Armories Survey." Privately printed report, 1987.

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town

NEWBURYPORT

NWB. 2994

Property Address

57 LOW ST.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

the Massachusetts General Court reorganized the state militias into the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia (MVM), composed of three divisions and six brigades. Under this act, the MVM effectively constituted Massachusetts' own armed forces under the control of the Governor, and overseen by the Adjutant General. Support and housing for individual companies was the responsibility of the host communities. Newburyport's militia units, reorganized periodically under various names (Washington Light Guard, Washington Artillery, Cushing Guard), occupied a variety of rented facilities until the passage of the Armory Act of 1888. Numerous MVM companies, including Newburyport's Cushing Guard, were among the first troops to see service in the Union forces in the Civil War. After the conflict, the state militias deteriorated, but by the 1870s support grew in Massachusetts for a reassessment of militia forces, and by the late 1880s changing forces in urban America including growing crime, civil disorder, labor unrest, and class strife culminated in greater militia support and passage of the Massachusetts Armory Act of 1888. This Act established an Armory Commission of three people charged with the acquisition of armories in cities in which two or more militias were located. It was at this time, in 1893, that a wooden armory building (demolished prior to 1950) was built on Merrimack Street in Newburyport.

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, the MVM, including the Newburyport unit, saw combat action on several fronts in both Cuba and Puerto Rico. Between the end of this conflict and 1916, the militia was called out for many state activities, and their main use was in controlling civil unrest, mainly during industrial strikes, and in assisting during major fires. In 1916, the organizational structure of the MVM changed with the nationalization of all state militias under the National Defense Act, which created the modern National Guard and the associated Massachusetts unit. This Act, along with a reorganization of MVM under the Act of 1907, clearly foreshadowed the national movement toward the consolidation and modernization of National Guard units and their integration with the regular army.

World Wars I and II saw heavy participation of the Massachusetts National Guard. During World War I, the Massachusetts units comprised the bulk of the 26th Division (the "Yankee Division"), which was composed of units from throughout New England. Major combat involvement occurred at the St. Mihiel, Meuse River and Marne fronts. World War II campaign credits of the Massachusetts National Guard include distinguished action in the Pacific (New Caledonia, Guadalcanal) and Europe (Lorraine, "Battle of the Bulge," and the Saar and Moselle regions of Germany). The Korean War saw eight Massachusetts Guard units called to active duty. After World War II, federal funding increased for the National Guard and following the Reserve Forces Act of 1955, the Guard became more fully integrated into the Army; by 1960, Guard recruits were required to complete Army basic training. Also in this period, federal and state governments began to share the cost of new armory construction at a ratio of 75 to 25 percent, respectively. This funding procedure remains in place today and has resulted in the construction of thousands of utilitarian armories. Armories constructed during the Cold War (1946-1989), such as that in Newburyport, frequently lack the architectural grandeur of those built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Very similar in design and emphasizing functional space, these armories are very symmetrical, flat- or gable-roofed rectangular buildings, usually with a raised band of windows on the sides of the drill hall to provide light to the interior. Single story administrative wings usually front or flank the drill hall. Exterior walls are of brick veneer and ornamentation is primarily limited to metal frame window fenestration.

NWB.2994

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
NEWBURYPORTProperty Address
57 LOW ST.MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

Federal funding for the construction of the Newburyport Armory was delayed by the Korean War, although an adjacent garage (MHC #___) was built in 1951 to satisfy the immediate equipment storage needs for the local Guard unit whose equipment was stored in a city highway barn and in the basement of City Hall. The Armory and associated garage were constructed on the Powder House Hill (earlier called Godfrey's Hill) lot in the "Common Pasture" section of Newburyport, land donated by the City to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for use as National Guard property only. Situated on this lot, directly to the rear of the armory is the Powder House (MHC #903), a one-story, round brick-walled building with conical roof that was built in 1822 to satisfy the ammunition storage needs of the municipality, replacing a colonial-era powder house on the Mall.

The Newburyport Armory rose to regional and national prominence with its looting and arson in 1970 by the radical Weatherman group, later known as the Weather Underground, a self-described revolutionary organization of communist men and women. A group of five men and women (William Gilday, Stanley Bond, Susan Saxe, Katherine Power and Robert Valeri) caused substantial damage to a rear wing of the armory by starting a gasoline fire in a supply room, blowing off the roof and destroying two walls. Stolen were radio sets, detonating devices, ammunition, personnel files and a pickup truck. The group was also involved several days after this incident with a bank robbery in Brighton, Massachusetts, that resulted in the shooting death of a police officer. The Weather Underground organization surfaced in the anti-war movement of the late 1960s as an offshoot of the radical Students for a Democratic Society group and was involved with a number of terrorist activities across the nation at the time. In the months prior to the Newburyport Armory incident, the Weather Underground was linked to bombings of the police headquarters and the Bank of America in New York City.

The Newburyport Armory continues to function as a Massachusetts National Guard facility and currently houses Company A of the 101st Engineer Battalion. This company is a front line unit that works with armor assets, such as tanks, as well as clears mine fields, breeches obstacles and opens up avenues in combat situations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (Continued)

- Newburyport Daily News*, August 22, 1950 (vol. 73, no. 195), p.1. "Prospects for Armory Here Called Bright."
- Newburyport Daily News*, August 31, 1950 (vol. 73, no. 203), p. A-1, A-6. "Early Powder House Preceded Present Newburyport Building."
- Newburyport Daily News*, September 1, 1955 (vol. 78, no. 204), p.1. "May Take Powder House Apart for Removal to Bartlet Mall."
- Newburyport Daily News*, December 14, 1956 (vol. 79, no. 291), p.1. "Dedicate Armory."
- Newburyport Daily News*, September 21, 1970 (vol. 93, no. 218), p.1, 12. "Print Schedule in Armory Blast."
- Newburyport Daily News*, September 29, 1970 (vol. 93, no. 225), p.1, 12. "Weary Gilday Waited for Arrest."
- Newburyport Daily News*, October 14, 1970 (vol. 93, no. 237) p.14. "5 Indicated in Armory Theft."
- PAL (Adams, Cherau and Kierstad) for Massachusetts Army National Guard. "Massachusetts Army National Guard Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan." Privately printed report, 2002.



Front and side elevation

10/2002

NWB. 2994

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Community Property Address
NEWBURYPORT 57 LOW ST.

Area(s) Form No.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

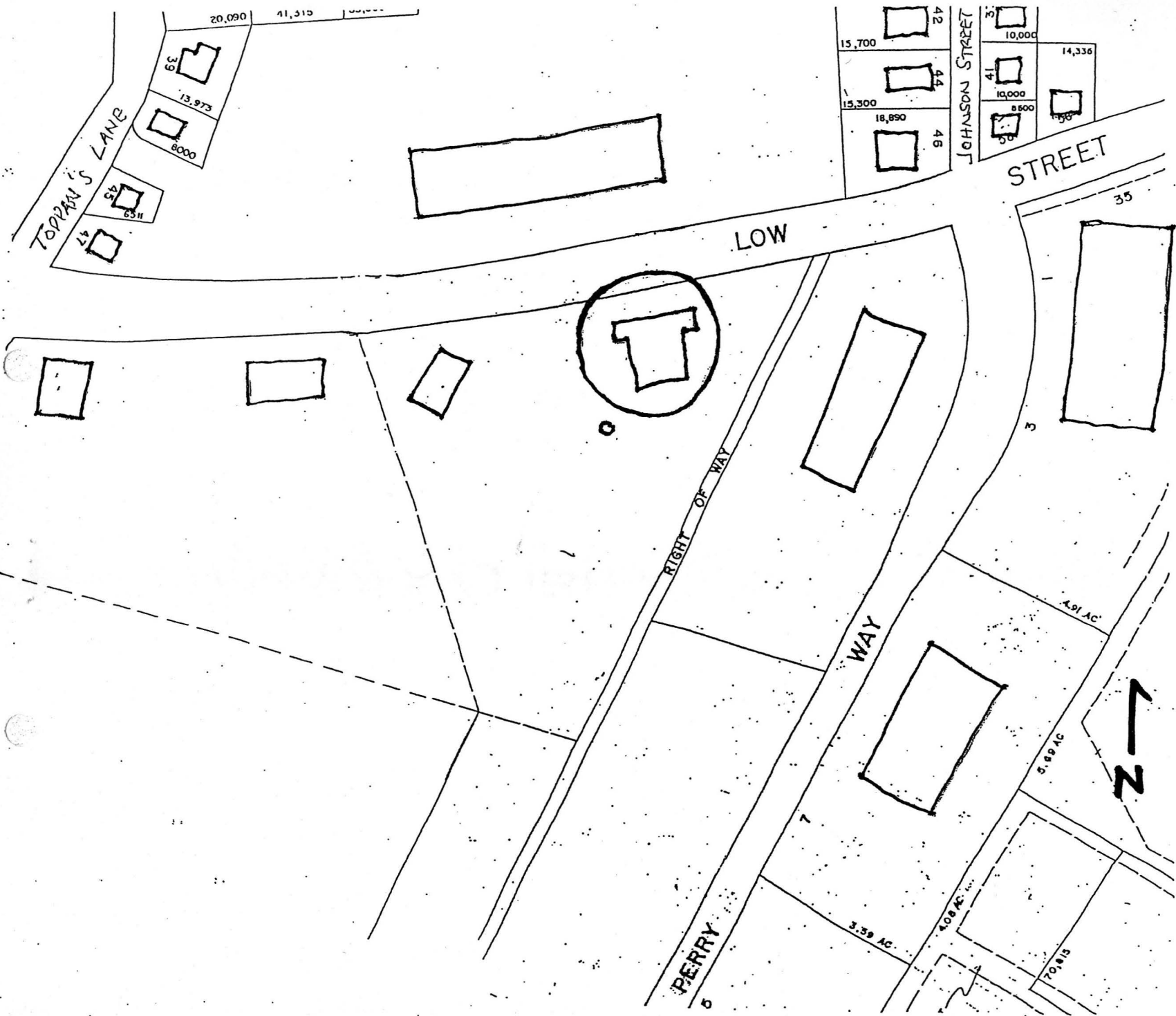
Statement of Significance by Pauline Chase-Harrell and Edward Stanley, Boston Affiliates, Inc.
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Newburyport Armory possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It appears to meet Criteria A (Military and Social History) and C (Architecture/Community Planning and Development) for National Register listing at the local level of significance. It is significant as a representative generally of the reorganization and modernization of the National Guard in the post-World War II period, and specifically of the increasing use of truck convoys as transportation to training maneuvers.

In relation to Criterion A, its construction in 1956 was made possible by the increased federal funding for armory facilities which reflected the increased integration of the National Guard into the national defense structure in this period, when US military forces were being reorganized to meet the changing needs of the emerging Cold War. In relation to Criterion C, its functional modern design is typical of Cold War era armory facilities in general, and more specifically of the spate of National Guard garages and armories constructed in Massachusetts in the 1950s; and its siting on open land at the periphery of the old city is characteristic of post-war trends in community planning.

In relation to Consideration G, the fact that registration requirements for resources associated with the Cold War context have not yet been defined make the eligibility of the Newburyport Armory difficult to evaluate at this time. The construction associations discussed above would suggest that in the normal course of events the Armory would become eligible at the local level of significance in 2006. In addition, however, its direct association, through its bombing and looting by Katherine Power, Susan Saxe and others in 1970, with nationally significant events and personages in the anti-war and revolutionary movements of the Vietnam War era may make it eligible at the local, regional or national level under Criteria A and B when those requirements are defined.

NWB. 2994





NWB. 2994 02

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

March 13, 2003 William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Ms. Susan T. Goodfellow
Massachusetts National Guard Environmental and Readiness Center
Building 1204, West Inner Road
Camp Edwards, MA 02542-5003

**RE: Hingham Armory and Garage, Hingham; MHC#32433
Methuen Armory and Garage, Methuen; MHC#32434
New Bedford Armory, New Bedford; MHC#32435
Barnstable Armory, Hyannis; MHC#32436
→ Newburyport Armory, Garage and Powderhouse, Newburyport; MHC#32437**

Dear Ms. Goodfellow:

Staff at the Massachusetts Historical Commission have received the updated inventory forms you submitted for the above referenced properties. The MHC understands that the Massachusetts Army National Guard (MAARNG) is planning future construction projects at its facilities in Hingham, Methuen, New Bedford, Hyannis and Newburyport, and as part of the planning process, is seeking National Register eligibility opinions for the above referenced properties. The MHC's National Register evaluation team evaluated the properties at a recent meeting and have the following comments.

The MHC concurs with your opinion that the properties meet the criteria of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A & C on the local and/or state level and for the Barnstable Armory and the Newburyport Armory, with Criteria Consideration G on the local, state and/or national levels.

The MHC looks forward to receiving and reviewing the upcoming projects related to the above referenced buildings.

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR 800) and M. G. L. Chapter 9, Section 26-27C, as amended by Chapter 254 of the Acts of 1988 (950 CMR 71.00). Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brona Simon
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: Hingham Historical Commission
Methuen Historical Commission
New Bedford Historical Commission
Barnstable Historical Commission
Newburyport Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
(617) 727-8470 • Fax: (617) 727-5128
www.state.ma.us/sec/mhc