



NHL Executive Summary



- Name of Property:** Fort Worden (Updated Documentation)
- City, State:** Port Townsend, Washington
- Period of Significance:** 1898–1945
- NHL Criteria:** 1, 4
- NHL Theme:** IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
3. military institutions and activities
III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
VI. Expanding Science and Technology
2. technological applications
- Previous Recognition:** 1974 National Register of Historic Places; 1976 National Historic Landmark; HABS WA-153; HAER WA-23
- National Historic Context:** Coastal Defenses of the United States, 1885–1945
- NHL Significance:**
- Fort Worden is significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with the establishment and development of the national coastal defense system put into place at the end of the nineteenth century and expanded during the World War II era. As the headquarters of the coast (later harbor) defenses of Puget Sound, Fort Worden functioned as an essential component of the national coastal fortification



system developed in response to the recommendations of the Endicott Board in its 1886 report to Congress.

- Fort Worden continued to play a significant role in seacoast defense through World War II, serving as the focal point of cooperation with allied Canadian defenses that closed the Strait of Juan de Fuca to possible assault by Japanese naval forces. No other coastal fortification in the United States shared its responsibilities for defense with another nation.
- Under Criterion 4, Fort Worden is nationally significant because it outstandingly illustrates key features of the design of coastal fortifications and installations from the late nineteenth century through World War II that are not well represented at other sites. Together, the Endicott-era fortifications and garrison and the World War II fortifications represent a unique and nationally significant collection of buildings and structures related to coastal defense.
- This update to the original nomination revises the statement of significance and expands the inventory of contributing resources to provide a more complete assessment of Fort Worden's national significance and to guide the historic district's preservation and management. The period of national significance is updated to 1898–1945 to include resources related to Fort Worden's significance during World War II.

Integrity:

- Fort Worden retains a high level of historic integrity and is one of the most intact examples of the national coast defense system put into place beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. It retains all the gun and mortar batteries essential to its function as well as examples of searchlight, fire control, and communication facilities.
- The construction materials and workmanship used in the post buildings and in the fortifications are mostly intact and unaltered. The garrison buildings remain in use, and all recent work has been carried out according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*. The concrete fortifications retain most of their steel and iron elements, with some deterioration as a result of exposure to the marine environment. The materials, carpentry, and concrete finishes accurately reflect the period in which Fort Worden was established and developed.
- Fort Worden remains unmistakably an Endicott-period military post that expanded during World War II. The design of the garrison buildings, the arrangement of barracks and officers' quarters around the central parade ground, and the fortifications themselves are key features that easily recall the period in which they were constructed and visibly reinforce the impression that the fort had a valuable role in national defense.

Owner of Property:

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (less the cemetery), United States Veterans Administration (cemetery)

Acreage of Property: 503.14

Origins of Nomination:

The original 1976 NHL nomination was prepared by the American Association of State and Local History under contract with the National Park Service. The present revision was initiated by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

High. Fort Worden as an historic place is broadly supported by the public and enjoys a wide and varied use.



Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of August 19, 2024):

Landmarks Committee Comments:

- Expand discussion of why Port Townsend struggled to recover from the Panic of 1893 and the effects of the railroad bypassing the town.
- Clarify type of lighter-than-air aircraft housed in the balloon hangar.
- Incorporate U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Legacy Resource Management guidelines on documenting historic military landscapes, as well as reports on relevant historic military buildings.
- Reconsider noncontributing status of extant World War II temporary buildings since they were used during the period of significance and are able to convey aspects of the base's history in that period despite the loss of many similar buildings at Fort Worden.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the updated documentation for Fort Worden NHL in Port Townsend, Washington, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Advisory Board Recommendation: