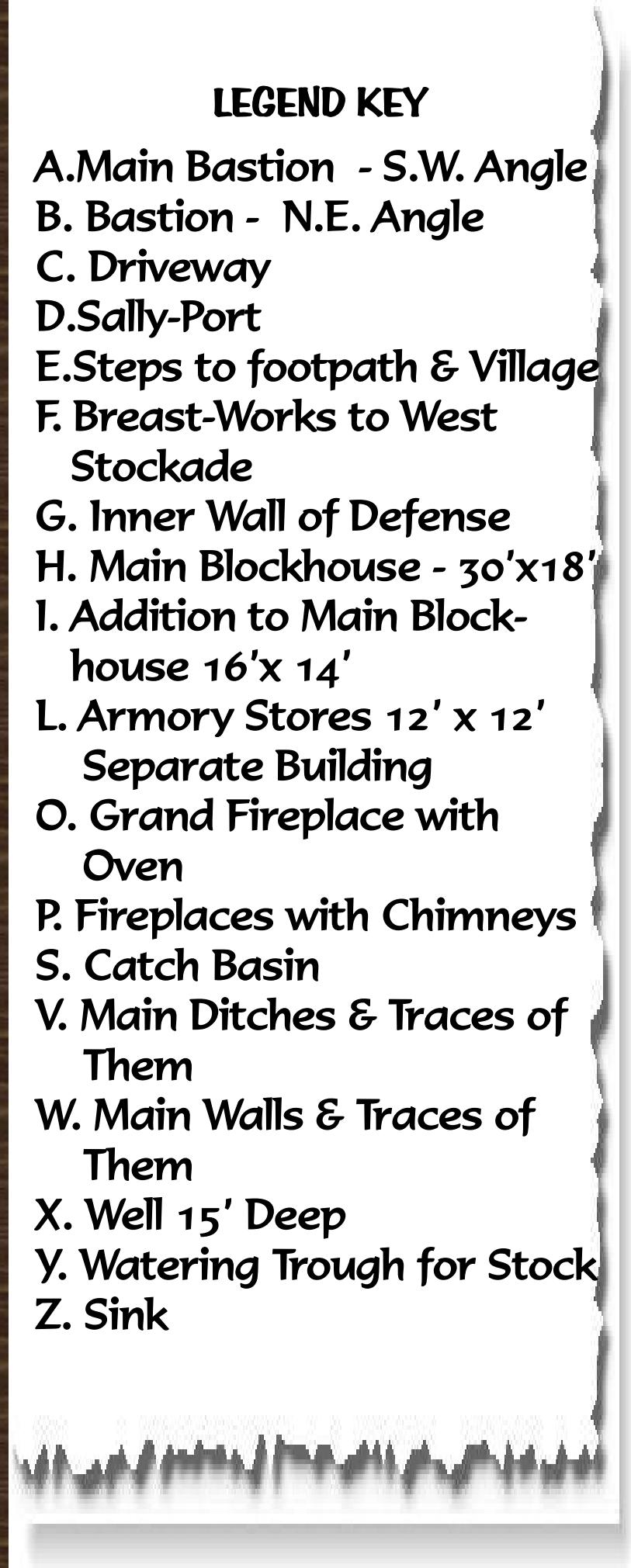


Huguenot Fort Site - Information Board

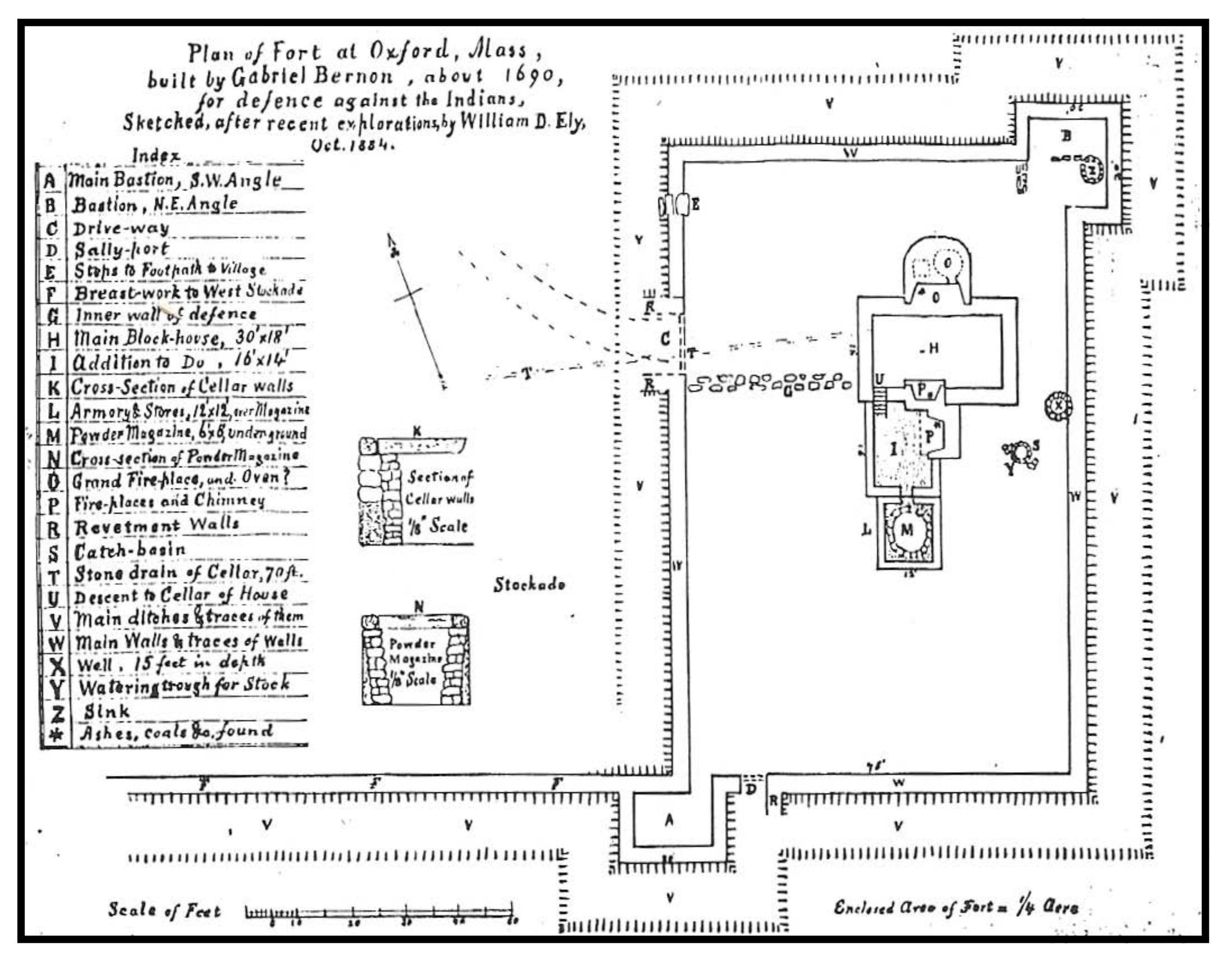
Conceptual Model of 1690 Huguenot Fort

This model located in the Oxford Public Library was fabricated in 1986 by Oxford Middle School students under the direction of now retired art teacher Paul R. Dowgiert of Charlton, Ma. Mr. Dowgiert had measured the foundation of the old Fort and, after researching historic French and Canadian Forts, he and his students built the historically accurate model.

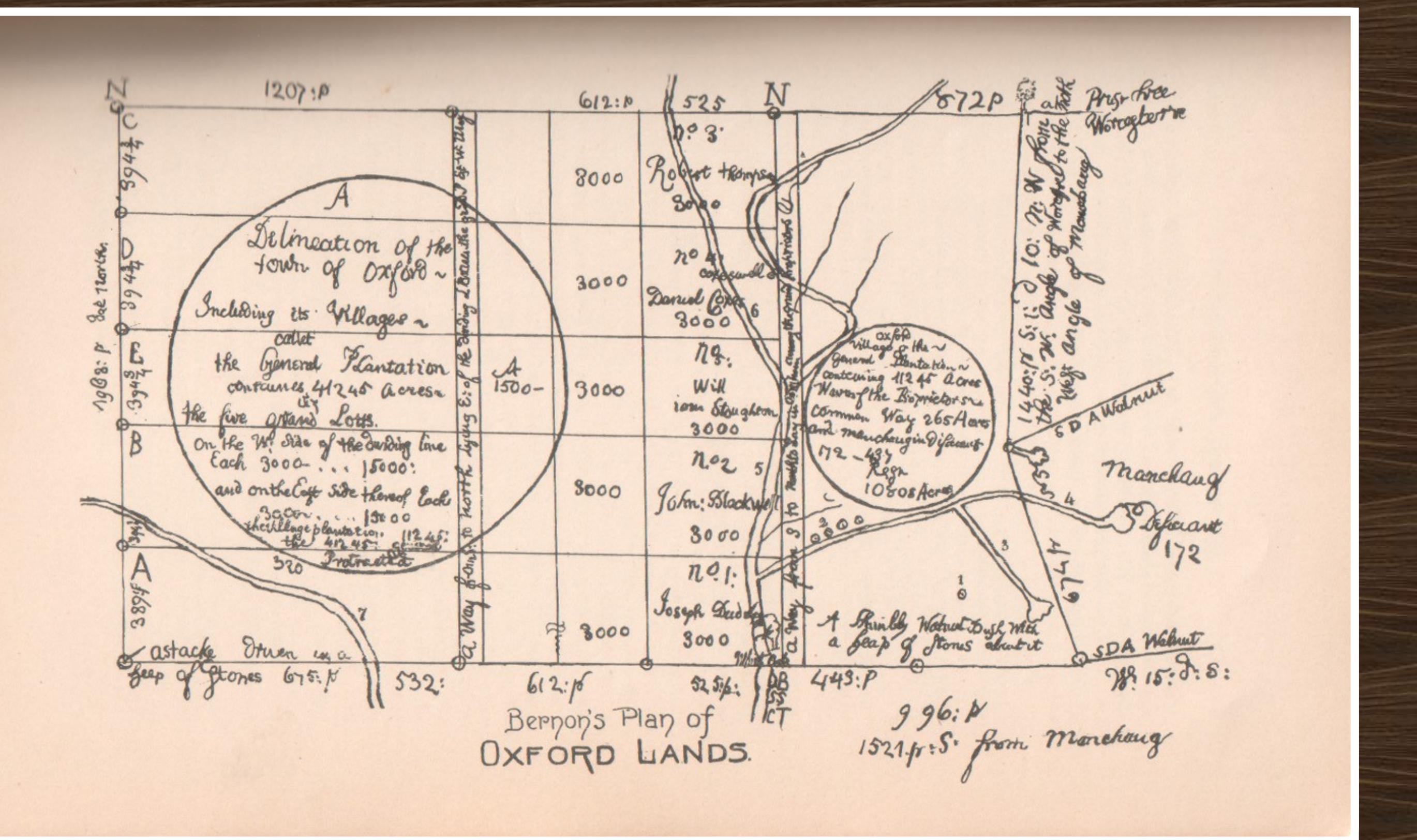
The Fort was placed on the National Register for Historic Places in July 1988.



Sketch of Fort by William D. Ely



Gabriel Bernon's Plan of Oxford



Huguenot Settlement Map



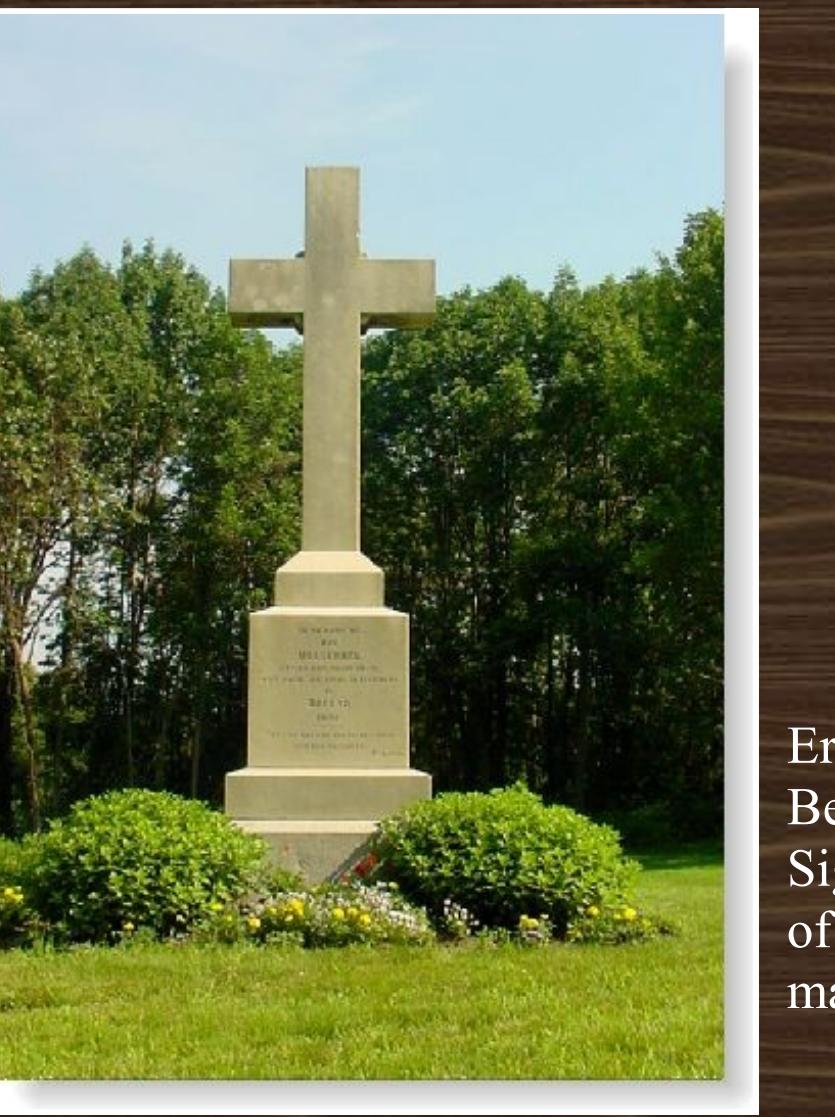
Huguenot Sites



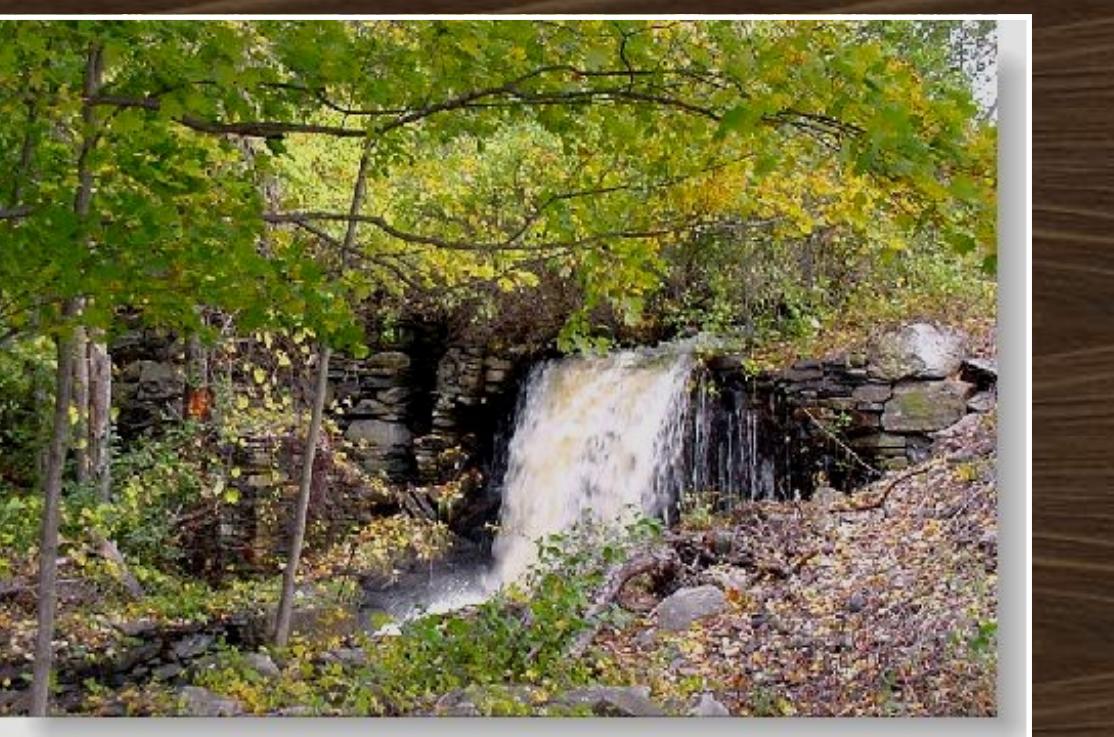
The Johnson house was situated on this site. On August 25, 1696, John Johnson (Jenson), along with three (3) of his children; Andrew, Peter, and Mary were massacred in their home. The attack was lead by Toby, a Nipmuck Indian dwelling in Woodstock. This event was a precursor of the long series of atrocities later enacted on the frontier.



Last remaining of the three (3) original Oak's said to have been used by the Huguenot's to locate the path leading to the Fort. The first of these Oak's was removed in the 1940's to make room for a Gas Station adjacent to Fairlawn Avenue. The second one was removed in the 1950's to make room for the widening of Main Street. The girth of this tree measured nearly six (6) feet at the time of it's removal.



Erected in 1884 by descendants of Gabriel Bernon, the Founder of the Colony, and Andre Sigourney, Commander of the Fort. In memory of the Huguenot's exiles for their Faith, who made the first settlement of Oxford in 1687.



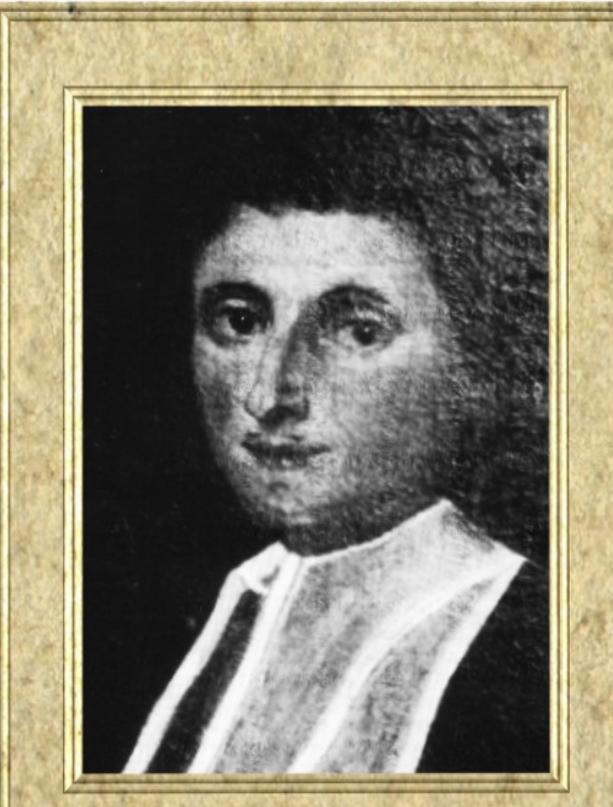
Located 1/3 of a mile from the Fort, at the end of a path with a perpendicular rocky slope. A garden and Vineyards were planted at the bottom of the slope. It was a protected area, very suitable for this type of gardening. Photo taken in 1890.



Foundation ruins of Huguenot Fort Block-House. Perimeter walls can be seen in the background. Photo taken in 1892.

Huguenot Fort Site - Information Board

Founder of the Oxford Colony



Gabriel Bernon 1644- 1736

Gabriel Bernon was a Huguenot and prominent merchant of an ancient family in La Rochelle, France, born in 1644, the son of Andre Bernon and Suzanne Guillemand. He fled that Country in 1686, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes led to his religious persecution. He arrived in Boston (via Amsterdam and London) on board the ship *Dolphin* on July 5, 1688, with the intentions of establishing a settlement at Oxford, Massachusetts; a plan that had evolved through his meeting with other refugees while in London.

Bernon's financial support made the settlement a reality for other French Huguenot families who sailed to America with him. He died on February 1, 1736 at the age of 92, in Providence, Rhode Island, and is buried in a crypt under St. John's Cathedral in that city. He was tall and slender, and stood very erect and had a courtly manner.

Bernon was also a successful merchant in Quebec, Canada where he ran the largest banking house in that city. Bernon was a writer and treasured his family papers and correspondence. The Bernon's had a legitimate claim to nobility but chose not to accept this.

In 1688, at the request of his agent in America, he came to New Oxford with his wife, three daughters and a son. He also brought with him forty persons for whom he paid passage. These people were among the best in France. Upon arrival in Boston, he and the refugees and Joseph Dudley, son of the Governor, came to Oxford by foot. He assumed the role of Capitalist or "Undertaker". The journey took three days or more accompanied by lumbering wagons of household goods and farm implements.

Bernon divided the lands according to an English custom called "turf and twig". A piece of sod and a branch from a nearby tree was delivered to each purchaser. He agreed to build a Corn or Grist Mill, a Saw Mill, and a Wash Leather Mill near what is today called Lowe's Brook, and to cover the cost of maintenance. Bernon and his family never actually lived in Oxford. He lived in Boston until the first break-up of the settlement, where he then relocated permanently to Rhode Island in 1697.

He stayed in Newport until about 1706, when he moved to Providence. He left Providence for Kingston in 1712 and lived there until 1718, then returned to Providence, where he stayed until his death in 1736.

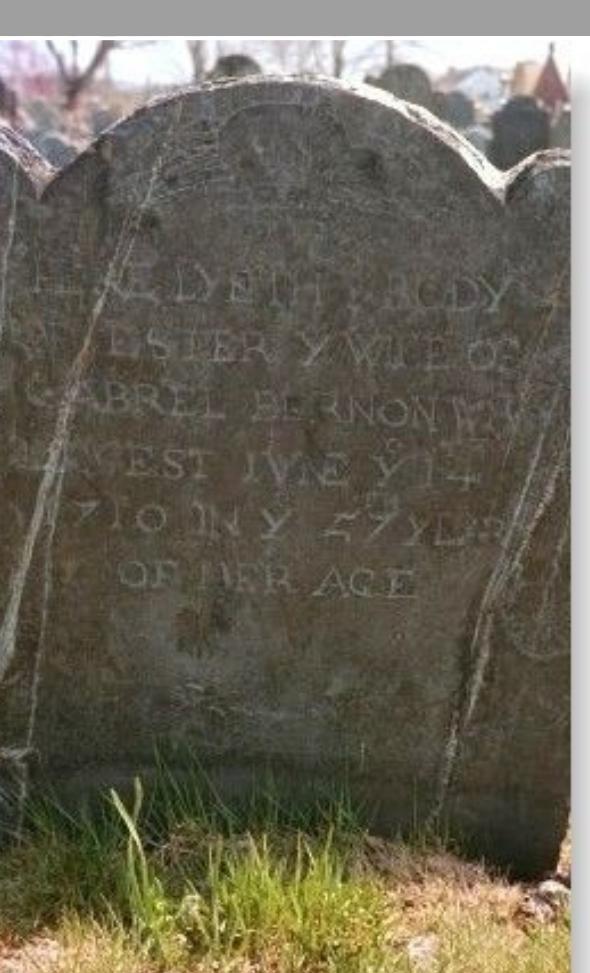
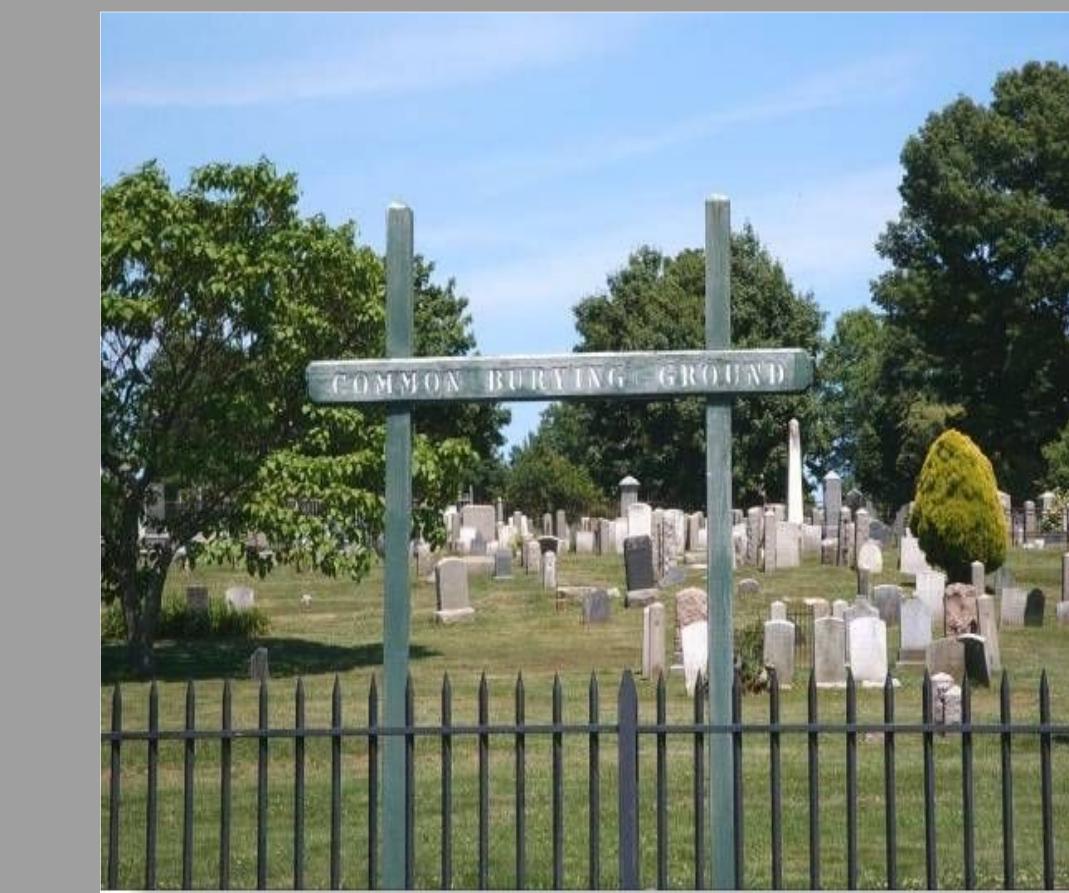
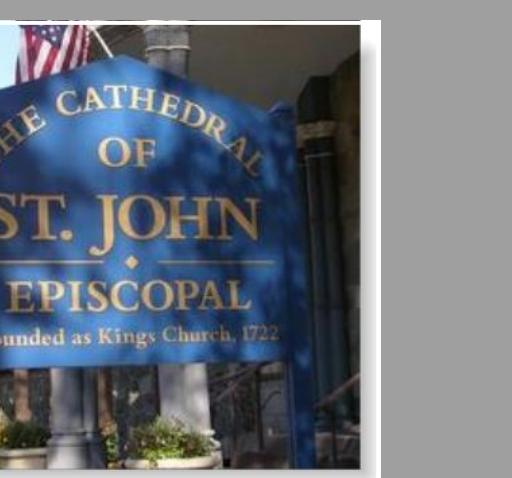
Bernon's lasting mark on the history of Rhode Island, however, is in the area of religion. Bernon had been a member of the French Church, until his departure from Massachusetts. But in Rhode Island He became a fervent and zealous member of the Church of England. He was active in establishing churches in each of the Rhode Island towns in which he lived at different times during his nearly forty-years of residency; Trinity Church in Newport, St. Paul's Church in Kingston, and St. John's Church in Providence. These were Rhode Island's earliest churches. Bernon's home was located on North Main street in Providence, almost opposite St. John's Church.

Bernon also is the ancestor of Rhode Island's oldest families, including Allen's, Crawford's, Dorr's, Coddington's, and Whipple's. He was twice married, first to Esther Le Roy, whom he married in France in 1673, and who died in Newport in 1710; then to Mary Harris, whom he married in 1712. Each marriage produced one son in addition to several daughters; however, neither son survived to have children, so all of Bernon's descendants are through his female children.

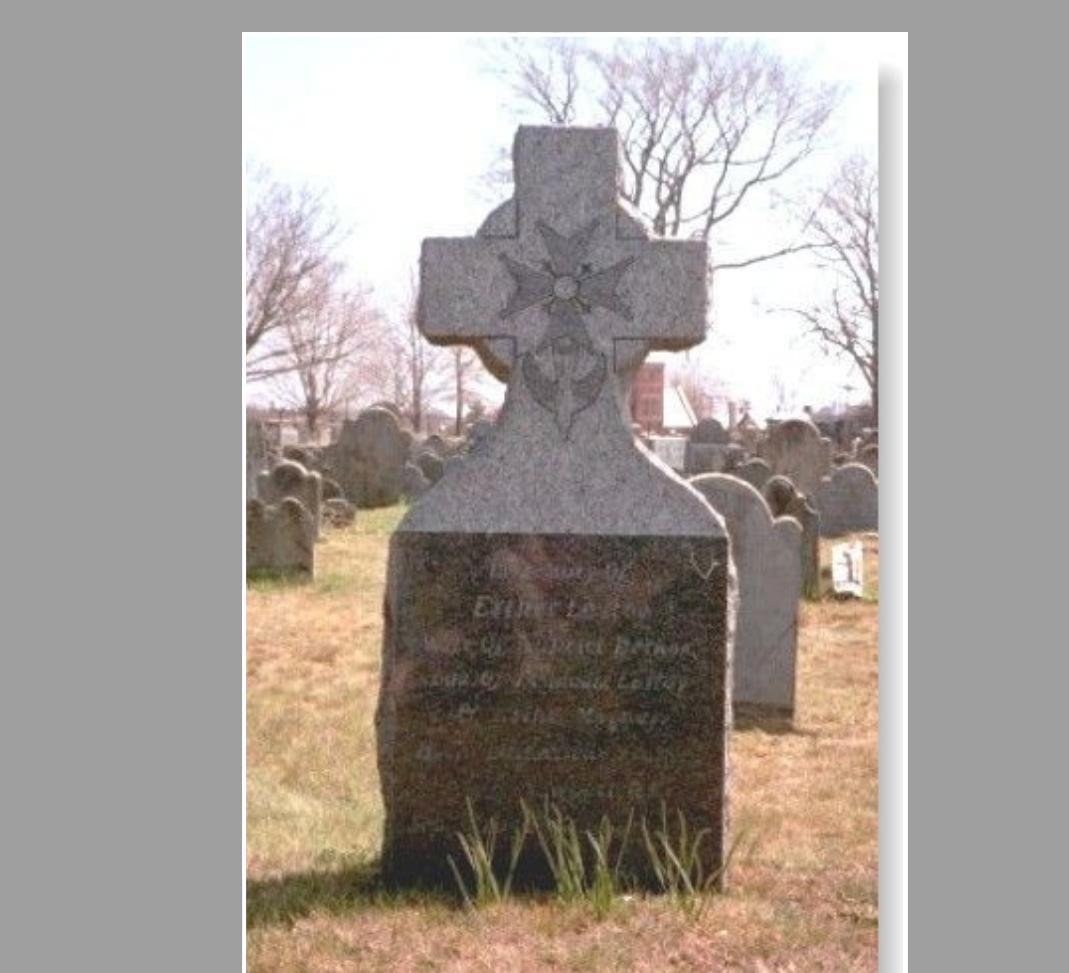
Gabriel Bernon Related Sites Providence, Rhode Island



St. John's Cathedral
where Gabriel Bernon
is entombed



Original Headstone of
Gabriel Bernon's first
wife, Ester Le Roy



Current Headstone of
Gabriel Bernon's first
wife, Ester Le Roy

A Town Is Formed

Early in the 1680's, interest began to generate to develop a town in the area west of Natick in the south central part of the Commonwealth that would be suitable for a settlement. A Mr. Hugh Campbell, a Scotch merchant of Boston petitioned the court for land for a colony. At about the same time, Joseph Dudley and William Stoughton also were desirous of obtaining land for a settlement. A claim was made for all lands west of the Blackstone River to the southern land of Massachusetts to a point northerly of the Springfield Road then running southwesterly until it joined the southern line of Massachusetts.

Associated with Dudley and Stoughton was Robert Thompson of London, England, Dr. Daniel Cox and John Blackwell, both of London and Thomas Freak of Hannington, Wiltshire, as proprietors. A stipulation in the acquisition of this land being that within four years thirty families and an orthodox minister settle in the area. An extension of this stipulation was granted at the end of the four years when no group large enough seemed to be willing to take up the opportunity.

In 1686, Robert Thompson met *Gabriel Bernon* and learned that he was seeking an area where his countrymen, who had fled their native France because of the Edict of Nantes, were desirous of a place to live. Their main concern was to settle in a place that would allow them freedom of worship. New Oxford, as it was to be so-named, at that time included the larger part of Charlton, one-fourth of Auburn, one-fifth of Dudley and several square miles of the northeast portion of Southbridge as well as the easterly area now known as Webster.

Joseph Dudley's assessment that the area was capable of a good settlement probably was based on the idea of the meadows already established along with the plains, ponds, brooks and rivers. Meadows were a necessity as they provided hay for animal feed and other uses by the settlers. The French River with tributary brooks and streams provided a good source for fishing and hunting. There were open areas on the plains as customarily in November of each year, the Indians burnt over areas to keep them free of underwood and brush. It appeared then that this area was ready for settling.

The first seventy-five years of the settling of the Town of Oxford originally known as Manchaug, embraced three different cultures. The Indians were known to be here about 1656 when the Missionary, John Elliott and his partner Daniel Gookin visited in the praying towns. Thirty years later, in 1686, the Huguenots walked here from Boston under the guidance of their leader Isaac Bertrand DuTuffeau. The Huguenot's that arrived were not peasant's, but were acknowledged to be the best Agriculturist, Wine Growers, Merchant's, and Manufacturer's in France. There were 30 families consisting of 52 people. At the time of their first departure (10 years), due to Indian insurrection, there were 80 people in the group, and near their Meetinghouse/Church was a Cemetery that held 20 bodies. In 1699, 8 to 10 families made a second attempt to re-settle, failing after only four years, with the village being completely abandoned in 1704.

The English colonist made their way here in 1713 and established what has become a permanent settlement.

HUGUENOT SETTLEMENT

The settlement consisted of a Main Fort situated at the upper most level. Below the fort was Bondet Hill that overlooked the Church, cemetery and lower Fort. Below this were the dwellings situated near the upper banks of the river "Lowe's Brook", and near here were the plantations and Orchards.

The upper Fort dimensions were 75' by 105'. It consisted of an inner wall of stone 4' thick with stockade fencing atop. There also was a moat dug between the inner fence and the outer stockade fencing. Within the confines was the main block house 30' x 18', an additional smaller block house 16' x 14', and a magazine building 12' x 12'. Within the cellar was a well, and drainage stones. There also was a well situated between the inner wall and the Main Block House.

Andrew Sigourney was the Constable in charge of the Fort. He was 49 when he arrived in Oxford. He died in Boston, MA. April 16, 1727 at the age of 89.

Oliver Wendell Holmes father had visited Oxford and traced the lines of the Fort in 1819.

Twenty-one of our U.S. Presidents were descendants of French Huguenots

NAMES OF THE HUGUENOT FAMILIES THAT MADE A SETTLEMENT AT NEW OXFORD									
Benjamin Faneuil *	M. Allard	Jean Boudoin*	M. Bourdille (Bourdillon)	— Montel	L. Dupeux				
Jean Jansen	Capt. Jermon (Germain)	Capt. de Paix Cazeneau	Charles Germain	Pierre Canton					
Isaac Bertrand Du Tuffeau*	Ober Germon (Germain)	Rev. Daniel Bondet*	Pierre Jermon (Germain)	Jean Machet					
Francois Bureau, l'aine	Elie Boudinot	Daniel Johnnot	Andre Sigournais, Sr.*	Jean Papineaux					
Andre Sigournais, Jr.	Daniel Allen	Jean Mallet *	Gabriel Du Pont	Jacques Du Pont					
Guillaume Barbut	Thomas Mousset	Jean Germon	— Baudrit	Jean Dupeux					
— Montier	— Connilly	— Mourgue	— Thibard	— Mallet					
— Cante	— Bouteau	— Bouteau	— Daniel Johnnot	Rene Grignon					
Jean Martin, Wife Anne, two children, Jean & Francoise, born in Oxford	Elie Dupeux, Wife Elizabeth, & 4 children	Rev. Jacques (James) Laborie*	Elie Dupeux, Wife Elizabeth, & 4 children						
* Benjamin Faneuil - Descendant responsible for Faneuil Hall in Boston	* Jean Boudoin - Descendant founded Bowdoin College in Maine								
* Isaac Bertrand Du Tuffeau - Magistrate of the first settlement	* Rev. Daniel Bondet - Pastor of first Huguenot settlement								
* Andre Sigournais, Sr. - Commander of the Fort	* Jean Mallet - Anc. (Amien) Elder in the French Church								
* Rev. Jacques (James) Laborie - Pastor of second Huguenot settlement									

Additional Information

Andre Segourne: Bore the name of a locality in the province of Poitou, was Constable of New Oxford. He was a distiller, moved to Boston after the break-up of the settlement, he and his family became wealthy leading citizens.

Isaac Bertrand du Truffeau: Was the village Magistrate, as well as Bernon's agent. He came from an important family in Poitiers and, while in New Oxford, was married to Demoiselle Rochefoucauld, a lady said to be descended from one of the most noble families in France.

Benjamin Faneuil: Came from a prominent merchant family in La Rochelle. His brother Andre, who was married to Bernon's sister, became one of the wealthiest merchants in Boston and built the famous Faneuil Hall as a market house. Francois Bureau belonged to a noble family of La Rochelle, his brother, Thomas Bureau, was one of the principal French merchants of London. Francois' daughter married Benjamin Faneuil.

The Baudouin family: Was one of the most important and ancient families of La Rochelle, and they possessed numerous seigneuries in the vicinity.

Jean Baudoin: Of New Oxford, was the brother of James Baudoin of Boston, a distinguished merchant and member of the Colonial Council for several years. James left the largest estate that had ever been possessed by one person in the province; his son, James Bowdoin, became Governor of Massachusetts, and gave his name to Bowdoin College.

Elie Boudinot: Had been a wealthy merchant in Marans, France.

Captain Charles Germain: Was from a Catholic family of high position, being the younger brother of Count Germaine.

René Grignon: Partner of Jean Papineau in the Chamoiserie, (wash leather mill), was also a silver and goldsmith. A silver porringer that he made in 1692 is in the Yale University Collection. Earlier, Grignon had been a member of the Narragansett settlement in Rhode Island, which lasted from 1686 to 1691. From there, he went to New Oxford, where he remained until it was abandoned in 1696. During 1696-1699 he was elder of the French church in Boston. After New Oxford was again abandoned in 1704, he became master of a sailing vessel, and then settled in Norwich, Connecticut, where he was a successful jeweler and merchant until his death in 1715. He contributed a bell to the town of Norwich said to have been the bell from the Huguenot Colony in New Oxford ?

Jean Papineau: Was a junior partner in the "Chamoiserie" with Rene Grignon. This wash-leather factory processed furs and skins and then shipped them to hat and glove factories in Providence and Boston.

The two Ministers at New Oxford also deserve mention, since they were, perhaps, the most important leaders of the community

Rev. Daniel Bondet: The first pastor, descended from a noble French family, educated at Geneva, and able to preach in French, English, and Indian. Bondet served the New Oxford community from 1687 to 1695. Later he became pastor of the French church in New Rochelle, New York from about 1697 until his death in 1722.

Jacques Laborie of Cardaillac: Became the second pastor when New Oxford was re-established in 1699. He had completed the study of theology in Geneva in 1688, was ordained in Zurich, then went to London where he officiated at several French churches for about ten years. In 1698 he came to America. While serving at New Oxford he also served as missionary to the Indians. After the abandonment of New Oxford in 1704, he was for two years pastor at the French church in New York City. After that he practiced medicine and surgery, settling in Fairfield, Connecticut where he died about 1731.