

Hamilton Field,  
Company Officers' Quarters Type B1  
(Facility Nos. 211, 215, 218, 221)  
Sunset Drive  
Novato  
Marin County  
California

HABS No. CA-2398-BG

HABS  
CAL  
21-NOVA,  
1BG-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD  
Company Officer's Quarters, Type B1  
(Facility Nos. 211, 215, 218, 221)

HABS  
CAL  
21-NOVA,  
IBG-

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**Location:** Hamilton Army Air Field  
Novato, Marin County, California  
Company Officer's Quarters, Type B1  
Facility Nos. 211 (211 Sunset Drive), 215 (215 Sunset Drive), 218 (21B  
Sunset Drive), and 221 (221 Sunset Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)  
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)  
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;  
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

**Present Owner:** U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

**Present Occupant:** Military families

**Present Use:** Residential

**Statement of Significance:**

The Type B1 Company Officers' Quarters are among the original residential units designed by the Constructing Quartermaster's Office at Hamilton Army Air Field. The quarters were equipped with all the modern amenities available at the time they were built and were architecturally unique in the military system. The buildings are significant as an example of the application of an important architectural trend (Spanish Colonial Revival) adapted to reflect California's mission heritage in a dramatic departure from traditional military architecture.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-239B-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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**PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

**A. Physical History:**

1. **Date of Erection:** COQ Type B1 houses were built simultaneously. Facility Nos. 211, 215, 218, and 222 were all completed July 31, 1933 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
2. **Architect:** Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
3. **Original Owner:** Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et. al 1993). The permanent housing area was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and remains in Navy ownership in 1995.
4. **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:** Robert E. McKee Company built Facility Nos. 211, 215, 218, and 222 for a cost of \$12,083.31 each, completing all COQ Type B1 houses.
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** Original plans for all permanent housing were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals have not been located, but copies of these plans for all permanent housing (elevations, electrical, plumbing, floor plans) are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division in San Bruno, California, and can be accessed through the U. S. Navy. Original ink plans prepared for driveway and sidewalk paving and depicting site plans of the housing areas are filed at the National Archives. Facility cards for the permanent housing, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction and floor plans, are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, in Novato, California. Early views of the permanent housing area under construction and at completion of work are contained in

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the Walt Lyons scrapbook at the Marin County Library, History Room, San Rafael, California.

6. **Alterations/Additions:** Most of the original steel sash or casement windows have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Kitchens were remodeled in 1955 and original cabinets, appliances, hardware, flooring, and lighting were replaced. In 1962 the tile countertops and backsplashes in the kitchen were removed and replaced with post-formed plastic laminate. Kitchen floor coverings were replaced with vinyl asbestos tiles. A recessed light fixture was added over the sink at this time. Some interior fixtures in the remainder of the house have been removed and replaced with modern fixtures. Porches were enclosed on some units in 1934 and others were enclosed in 1956.

**B. Historical Context:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

**PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

**A. General Statement:**

1. **Architectural Character:** The permanent housing area at Hamilton Field was planned around the existing topography to complement the architectural style chosen for the base. Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churrigueresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look.

All permanent housing is of hollow tile and stucco construction and has Mission tile roofs and reinforced concrete foundations. Steel bars were used during construction in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Houses are all equipped with laundry and storage basements, attached garages, built-in closets and cabinets, and tiled bathrooms.

2. **Condition of fabric:** All of the permanent housing is in excellent condition. The U. S. Navy has maintained the exteriors and interiors of the structures since they took

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over ownership in the mid 1970s. Navy crews have regularly made repairs, painted as necessary, and conducted routine maintenance.

**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. Overall dimensions: The Company Officers' Quarters Type B1 dwellings were constructed in an "L" plan, with a two-story mess. The front elevations feature central entryways with four-inch-square decorative ceramic tile in three patterns, cantilevered wood second story balconies, and arched living room windows. They measure 41 feet 6 inches wide by 46 feet deep. All have partially below grade basements.

2. Foundation: Foundations are reinforced concrete and measure two feet wide at the base and one foot wide above the basement floor.

3. Walls: Exterior walls are 12-inch hollow tile bricks. The tile bricks are coated with cementitious stucco rendered with a smooth face. Exterior detailing consists of projecting cast concrete window sills, cast concrete pilasters and dentils on the rear porch, terra cotta tile vents, and decorative four-inch-square ceramic tiles surrounding the primary entrance.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural support is provided by reinforced walls incorporating continuous reinforced concrete tie beams around each floor with wood-framed, load-bearing interior walls. Roof systems consist of terra cotta Mission tile laid on wood rafters.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The primary entrance to each dwelling is accessed via a concrete stoop recessed beneath the second story "Monterey" style balcony; each has a 12-inch square red quarry tile floor with quarry tile treads and concrete risers. The cantilevered second story balconies have a Mission-tile shed roof supported by square posts and brackets. Concrete porches with L-shaped exterior stairways provide access to the rear hallways on one side elevation. The porches have Mission tile shed roofs, supported by "Monterey" style carved wood braces and wrought iron railings.

6. Chimneys: A rectangular stucco-clad brick chimney is located on the exterior living room wall of each building. Cast iron cleanout doors and frames are at the base of the chimneys.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: Primary entrance doors are accessed by the front stoops; secondary doors are at the side elevations and on the rear center walls. The primary door is solid core oak and has numerous deeply recessed panels in a

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geometric pattern. Secondary exterior doors are solid core wood with four lights originally made with wire plate glass over three recessed panels. Wood French doors provide access to the second story balcony. Garage doors are the overhead segmented type with one row of lights above two rows of three recessed panels, and replaced original hinged swing doors.

b. **Windows/shutters:** Original windows were screened multi-paned metal casement and double-hung sash; replacement windows are metal and glass, with multi-lights. The living room window on the front elevation has an arched opening with tiled sill. Porches have been enclosed with the installation of jalousie windows. A roman brick grille with a steel sash behind it is located on the second story front facade.

**8. Roof:**

a. **Shape/covering:** The houses have end-gabled roofs clad in terra cotta Mission tiles and have metal gutters, downspouts, and scuppers. A cast concrete splash block is located under each downspout.

b. **Cornice/eaves:** Eaves on the gable end walls consist of a single row of Mission tiles. The roofs have Mission tile ridges.

**C. Description of Interior:**

**1. Floor Plans:**

a. **Basement:** Basements are accessed by exterior garage doors and interior stairways from the kitchen hallways. Each floor plan is divided into a garage, boiler room, and storage room. An unexcavated crawl space is present under the front porch.

b. **First Floor:** The primary access to the homes is through a central hall, with a living room and porch on one side and dining room, kitchen, pantry, and maid's room and bath on the other.

c. **Second Floor:** Rooms on the second floor include a master bedroom with bathroom, and two smaller bedrooms and a bathroom.

**2. Stairways:** The COQ Type B1 housing units are served by an interior stairway from the first floor hallway to the second floor and another from the kitchen area to the basement. The primary staircases consist of oak treads and risers with wooden banisters and alternating square and twisted wrought iron balustrades. The newel posts and handrails are oak. The basement stairways are wood with non-skid treads. They have two-inch round wood handrail on the interior staircase walls.

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3. **Flooring:** Flooring in the hallways, living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms is red oak. The porches have 12-inch square red quarry tile floors. Flooring in the kitchens is Douglas fir covered with vinyl or asphalt tile added after 1961. The kitchen and pantry floor originally was covered with linoleum. The basement and garage have concrete floors, smooth finished. Flooring in the bathrooms is one- by one-inch, one- by two-inch, or one-inch hexagonal ceramic tile in a variety of color schemes (lavender/purple, sea green/olive green, cream/black). All bathrooms have marble thresholds.

4. **Wall/ceiling finish:** All rooms on the first and second floors have painted plaster walls and ceilings. Basement walls are painted concrete or tile. Bathroom walls are partially covered with four-inch ceramic tile, with baseboards and trim in a contrasting color.

5. **Openings:**

a. **Doorways/doors:** Archways provide access from the central hallways to the living rooms and dining rooms, from the pantry to the kitchen, and from the central hall upstairs to the bedrooms. A recessed niche in the master bedroom is also defined by an arched entry. French doors access the enclosed porches from the living rooms. All other doors are solid core wood with two or three recessed plywood panels.

6. **Decorative features/trim:** Door casings and baseboards are wood and simple in design. Picture moldings are located at the cornice level. Each home has a living room fireplace constructed of cast concrete with pilasters and brackets supporting a mantel and a sloped chimney breast with a central niche with a wood self and an outlet for an electric clock. Hearths are six-inch square red quarry tile.

7. **Hardware:** The door hardware consists of a nickel-plated decorative circular knob and escutcheon made by Corbin Company. The front door and French doors have hammered metal thumbblatch handles. The built-in cabinets in all rooms but the kitchen and pantry have porcelain or glass knobs. The original electric plates are plastic and are extant in most of the units. Metal "Dixie" brand bells connected to the electric front doorbells are located in the kitchens.

8. **Mechanical equipment:**

a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** Steam radiators are located in each room and provide heating. They were made by American Radiator or Crane Radiator Companies. Steam is generated by cast iron boilers located in the basement made by Ideal Gas Boiler Company or Bryant Tubular Gas Boiler

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Company, Cleveland, Ohio. Some boilers have valves made in Germany in the early 1930s that are stamped with a swastika.

- b. **Kitchen Appliances:** No original kitchen appliances were noted.
  - c. **Ventilation:** Ventilation for the attics is through round Mission tile vents and half tile vents in the gable ends and in the basement by screened cast concrete grilles.
  - d. **Lighting:** Houses have knob and tube wiring and circuit breaker boxes. The original lighting in the first floor hallways consists of a hanging wrought iron circular fixture with a canopy and chain. A decorative wrought iron wall sconce is mounted near the front entrance on the exterior porch. Lighting in the living rooms included two sconces with candle lights and consisted of a shield decorated with a knight and castle. Dining room lighting included a wrought iron "Monterey" style fixture with five arms with candle lights, and four triangular shaped wrought iron wall sconces with candle lights. Porch light fixtures were eight-sided wrought iron sconces, some with rooster finials and eight-sided frosted glass. Hallway lighting consisted of a cast-metal canopy with six points. Bedroom fixtures consist of wall sconces with candle lights on arms and surface mounted canopies with pointed pan glass. Fixtures in the maids' rooms were decorative cast metal with double sockets and candle lights. Original bathroom lights were ceramic Art Deco fixtures mounted above the medicine cabinets. Not all lighting fixtures are axtant in every unit.
  - e. **Plumbing:** An "Alberene Stone" double wash sink is located in each basement. The maid's bathroom on the first floor contains a "Welling" flush valve toilet, a "Tepeco" wall-mounted sink, and an anameled cast iron tub. Bathroom accessories in the maid's room are of nickel-plated brass. Bathrooms on the second floor featura "Tepeco" pedestal sinks (Trenton Pottery Co.), "Standard" flush valve toilets, "Crane" tubs with a porcelain fixtures, and the original ceramic toothbrush and glass holders, soap dishes, toilet paper holders, and plastic-covered wood towel racks. The original mirrored metal medicine cabinets are located above the sinks. Some units have replacement sinks or faucets, but appear to be in original condition otherwise.
9. **Original Furnishings:** Original furnishings are built-in and include wood bookcases flanking the living room arched window. Telephone niches, with wooden shelves and doors, are located in the first floor hallways. Other built-ins include linen closets by the bathrooms, dressing room cabinets and drawers, and a china cabinet in the dining rooms. The pantries feature solid-core wooden cabinets and doors with recessed panels. Built-in pull-down "Berklea" ironing boards, with two recessed wood panel doors, are

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located in the kitchens. Kitchen cabinets are wood, with Mission-style hammered metal hinges and latches and were added in 1955, replacing original recessed panel cabinets. Original kitchens had tile counters and backsplashes; these have been replaced with formica tops.

**D. Site:**

1. **General site orientation:** The primary facades of the Company Officers' Quarters Type B1 face easterly toward Sunset Drive and San Pablo Bay. Located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on the crest of a rolling hill, they are surrounded by other officers' quarters of like design.

2. **Historic landscape design:** Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

In the housing areas the homes sit in well-landscaped grounds with lawns, mature oak and palm trees, shrubs, and flowers. Upright accent trees frame the doors and corners of many buildings. There are no fences; each yard flows into the next and the plantings, stone retaining walls, street light standards, and curved roads lined with palms and other trees provide a cohesive feel to the area. Concrete sidewalks provide separation from the curving streets and connect the houses. The diversity, density, and uniqueness of landscape plantings increased according to military rank of individuals living in the houses; thus landscaping in the NCO area is primarily functional, while that of the base commander is dense and heavily wooded, providing more privacy.

Landscaping in the Company Officers' permanent housing area include barrier, foundation, accent, and street plantings. Barrier plantings create an illusory separation between houses in lieu of fences. Nurse used blackwood acacia, Modesto ash, Canary Island pine, and Lombardy poplar for barrier plantings here, as in the NCO area. The Company Officers' private space was also delimited with California bigtree, silver poplar, coast redwood, white ironbark, black locust, Monterey pine, California fan palm, and Mexican fan palm. Compared to the NCO area the density and diversity of the plantings increased noticeably as one moved uphill.

Foundation plantings were originally designed to hide foundations and tend to soften the transition between the ground and the buildings. These are fundamental design plants and a wide variety were used for this purpose, including Japanese

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boxwoods, California privet, myrtle, little-leafed myrtle, mock orange, laurel cherry, red clusterberry, and shiny-leaf privet. Exclusive to the Company Officers' housing area were Chinese photinia, strawberry tree, and citrus cultivars. During the primary occupation at Hamilton foundation shrubs were kept pruned and boxed-shaped, reflecting the preferred look of the day. Most of these plantings have become quite large and overgrown and appear as accent plants.

Accent plants serve to set off entranceways, driveway corners, highlight a building front, or provide individuality. Nurse planned these plants as upright accents to contrast with the foundation plantings. In the front and back of the residences New Zealand dracaena, Italian cypress, and Oriental arborvitae are prominent. The most striking difference between this housing area and the NCO area is the incorporation of accent plantings between houses. Several species were incorporated in this manner and not used elsewhere on base, although their use is generally limited to a single tree between houses. While the list of plants used for this purpose is long, representative species, include magnolia, avocado, cherry, weeping cypress, California peppertree, deodar cedar, and Norway spruce. The open space in the center of traffic circles in this area (North and South Circle) were planted with large and striking conifers, most prominently atlas cedar, deodar cedar, cost redwood, cypress, incense cedar, and California bigtree. Many of these were transported to base as mature trees, as per Nurses' orders.

In addition to the plantings around the Company Officers' housing, the outer margin of Perimeter Road (which rings the residential area) is bordered with a planting of northern California black walnut and Canary Island date palm. Occasional Canary Island pine and other upright conifers were added to the rears of the houses along the outer margins of the base.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

**A. Architectural Drawings:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**B. Historic Maps and Views:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**C. Interviews:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

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**D. Bibliography:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California.* Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.* Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

**E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**F. Supplemental Material:**

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility Nos. 211, 215, 218, 221, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

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As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been preparad in order to meet thosa stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Dascrptions wara chacked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embalished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was axtracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

