

**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION  
CENTER AND ARENA  
(U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Naval Station)  
(Facility No. 161)  
Between Center Drive and North Road near Nimitz Gate  
Pearl Harbor  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii**

**HABS No. HI-416**

HABS  
HI-416

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Oakland, California**

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA (U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Naval Station) (Facility No. 161)

HABS No. HI-416

**Location:** Bloch Recreation Center and Arena is located near Nimitz Gate, the main entry gate into the Pearl Harbor Naval Complex. The building is sited between Center Drive and North Road.

U.S.G.S. Pearl Harbor Quadrangle, Hawaii 1983  
7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) (Scale – 1:24,000)  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 4.609420.2361430

**Present Owner:** U.S. Navy

**Present Occupant:** Morale, Welfare, and Recreation program, Recreation Division

**Present Use:** Multi-function recreational center

**Significance:** This structure is significant as part of the build up of the Navy base just before WWII. It has continuously been used for similar purposes since construction, providing a much-needed multi-function recreational outlet for Navy personnel. It is one of the least altered of the pre-1945 recreation facilities at Pearl Harbor. It is associated with the history of the military providing such facilities for morale and welfare, as well as for recreation. The building also exhibits a sensitive environmental design, incorporating natural ventilation and lighting as much as possible.

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**Description:**

**General Architectural Character**

Bloch Recreation Center and Arena is comprised of two major structures; the octagonal-shaped arena structure, which has amphitheater-type seating around a multi-purpose space, and the recreation center portion. The latter is more complex, and contains several different areas.

A significant aspect of the design of this facility is the relatively small visual impact that it has on its surroundings. Although the complex contains over 10,000 square feet in floor area, the structure is not overly dominant. The arena space is approximately 15 feet below grade, so that the arena stands only as tall as a one-story building above grade. The recreation center is mainly single-story, with a relatively small two-story area.

The facility has little ornamentation and is generally typical of the functional Modern style of buildings constructed in Hawaii on military bases during WWII. Administration, housing and recreation buildings of this era typically have elements of the International Style, with flat unadorned surfaces, flat roofs, windows set flush with outer wall surface, and no decorative detailing at doors or windows. The recreation center portion of this building generally has these features, although the roofs over the former bowling alley wings are hipped and not flat. The horizontal lines in this building are emphasized with drop siding and horizontal muntins in the windows. The arena cannot be classified as any particular style; it has a unique, but utilitarian, design.

**EXTERIOR**

**1. Overall Dimensions**

**Arena:** The arena is shaped as an elongated octagon with exterior plan dimensions of approximately 210' x 175'. The highest point inside the arena is 33'-3", from the floor level to the top of the roof.

**Recreation Center:** The recreation center is sited at a tangent to the northwest side of the arena. The roofed space between the arena and recreation center is 19' wide and is called the "Entrance Terrace" on the original drawings because it is the main entry into the arena.

In plan, the recreation center looks like arms extending from an oddly shaped head. The "arms" are oriented in a NE-SW line. This section of the recreation center is made up of two rectangular one-story wings, one at either end of a central two-story space. The overall length of this section is approximately 300' and the width is 30'-8" at the one-story wings with a 40'-0" width at the two-story part. The height of the two-story part is 23'-8". The "head" above the "arms" was originally an open dance floor, whose northwest edge was a 120-degree arc in plan, with

a *lanai* (a roofed area without walls) which wrapped around three sides, in a semi-hexagonal pattern. The former dance floor measured 80'-0" from the edge of the snack bar to the outer edge of the arc. Its overall width (northeast-southwest direction) is approximately 120'.

## **2. Foundation**

The arena is built with reinforced column footings and a reinforced concrete floor. The exterior wall that surrounds the bleacher seating (except where the seats are over the shower, locker, and storage rooms) is mostly built as a retaining wall, and sits upon well-packed coral fill. The recreation center has a concrete slab foundation with grade beams at various levels for the different parts of this portion of the building.

## **3. Walls**

The walls at the arena are poured-in-place concrete; the walls at the former bowling alley wings are painted concrete masonry units (CMU); and the walls in the other parts of the recreation center are steel framed and sheathed with 1" x 12" drop siding.

## **4. Structural system, framing**

**Arena:** The arena has steel columns with steel truss roof framing. The steel trusses that span the central court area are bolted Pratt-form trusses approximately 4' in height. The steel truss roof framing over the bleachers consists of shorter height trusses with pitched top chords. The exterior of the arena is also ringed with steel X-braced rectangles that help to support the roof. These are connected to steel I-flange columns.

**Recreation Center:** The structural framing of the two-story part is mostly steel frame. The second story is supported by 12' I-flange steel beams hidden within the drop ceiling of the first floor. The roof joists or trusses are wood framed. The original open-air dance floor was initially roofed in 1944 and reroofed later. The roof now is framed with pitched I-flange steel beams (18" at one end and 12" at the other end) with 6" steel rafters supporting the corrugated galvanized metal panels above. The roof structure over the former dance floor is supported by octagonal concrete columns and exposed to the space now used as an exercise room.

## **5. Openings**

### **a. Doorways and doors**

**Arena:** The main entry to the arena is from the entrance terrace, then down a stair to a passage under the bleachers to the arena floor level. The exit level is at the top of the bleachers. The arena is secured by two large metal gates at the main entry and six sets of metal exit gates at the top of the bleachers. The main entry gates each consist of a pipe frame with 15 thin metal rods running through

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two 3" wide bars, with two additional horizontal rods and a thicker diagonal rod welded to them. The six double gates are simple in design, with ½" diameter vertical bars spaced 6" on center and held together by two horizontal bars, a horizontal metal panel, and one diagonal bar. In addition to the metal gates, there are currently sliding plywood doors at the exit closest to the recreation center, at the top level of the bleachers.

Recreation Center: Most doors at the recreation center portion are not original. There are two large wood sliding doors with metal mesh in openings at the main entry adjacent to the equipment rental room. There are various modern doors opening from the former dance floor area. The second-floor space has its original six-light door with horizontal muntins, flanked by matching sidelights.

**b. Windows and shutters**

Arena: The arena has an open feeling due to its louvered openings at both the clerestory space above the central court area and the openings on the walls around the bleachers of the arena. The glass louvers at the clerestory space are placed in the horizontal direction. The fixed wood louvers above the railing walls are positioned vertically. Originally, the walls had only wire mesh between the concrete railing and the roof, but this was replaced at some date by vertical louvers.

Recreation Center: The roofing that was added to the dance floor in 1944 was designed to be similar to the arena roof. The clerestory space between the lower and upper sections of the roof was lined with non-operable horizontal wood louvers. The upper parts of the walls are also lined with wood louvers or glass jalousies. The former bowling alley wings originally had wood windows with three horizontally stacked lights in each sash. These are labeled transom sash on the drawings, and apparently opened like hoppers. None of these remains. Many have been replaced with glass jalousies and some have been boarded up. The wing that now functions as an equipment rental space has fixed and sliding windows, and has been air-conditioned. The other wing, which is being used as a men's locker room, has also been air-conditioned. Here, the existing fixed wood-louvered openings were simply plugged from the inside. The second-floor windows were originally all wood-frame, three-over-three-light double-hung, but many of these had been replaced with glass jalousies over the years. Sometime after June 2000 most of the jalousies were removed and double-hung sashes were re-installed (Dodge 2003). Reflective tinting has also been added to some windows.

## **6. Roof**

**Arena:** The low-pitch roof over the arena is an elongated octagon (to match the floor plan). The center part of the roof, directly above the court, is elevated approximately 18" above the roof over the bleachers, creating a clerestory. The roofing material is BUR (built-up-roofing). The roofing system is laid over wood decking, which is supported by 10" I-flange steel rafters. All the original parts of the building have rectilinear copper gutters and drain pipes.

**Recreation Center:** The roof over the former dance floor area is slightly pitched and covered with corrugated galvanized metal roofing. The roofs over the former bowling alley wings are hipped, having a slope of approximately 4:12. They are roofed with asphalt shingles. The roof at the two-story portion is slightly sloped to provide runoff and is covered with composite roofing. There are parapet walls along the edges as well as an almost-flat canopy located 18 inches below the top edge of the parapet wall, above the second-floor windows. The roof soffits of the canopy and of the extended eaves in the one-story wings are plywood.

## **INTERIOR**

### **1. Floor Plans**

**Arena:** The arena is shaped as an elongated octagon with exterior plan dimensions of 220'-10 3/8" x 174'-10-1/2". The arena floor measures approximately 116' x 70'. The bleacher seating surrounds the court except at the entry corridor. The entry is located at the northwest side of the arena, along the "entrance terrace". The entrance corridor to the floor of the arena is approximately 20' wide, with toilets and locker rooms off to each side. There was a projection booth built along the upper perimeter of the bleachers on the southwest side and an elevated stage located on the northeast side. The projection booth was converted to a snack bar before 1981 and now is used for storage.

**Recreation Center:** The floor plan of the recreation center has been altered many times over the years. Currently, the first floor of the central two-story space has a passageway to the recreation area, an air-conditioned exercise room, a laundry, and small offices. The two wings, which were formerly bowling alleys, each measure 31'-0" x 96'-6" and are largely open in plan except for the small offices at the end of the recreation equipment rental space. The second floor of the central space holds several offices and two small restrooms. Two other restrooms are a half-story below the level of the first floor, at the level of the terrace between the recreation center portion and the arena portion. The fan-shaped former dance floor area is to the northwest of the two-story section. This area measures about 80' at the widest point. The height from floor level to the highest roof point is 23'-8" in this area, which allowed the creation of a two-level office space in a portion of it.

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The remainder of the former dance floor is now the main exercise room. The lanai on the northeast side is a smaller exercise room. The lanai on the west side is used for physical therapy.

## **2. Stairways and Bleachers**

**Arena:** The stepped platforms of the arena's bleacher seating are constructed of poured-in-place concrete. The depth of each seating row is 2'-7" and each steps up from the next about a foot. The bleacher seats are made of wood boards that are bolted to steel L-pieces that are imbedded in the concrete platforms. There are twelve concrete stairways radiating through the arena bleacher seating. Another wider concrete stairway under the bleacher seating is the main entrance to the floor level of the arena, and two concrete stairways from the terraces lead down to that one.

**Recreation Center:** Two narrower concrete stairways lead from the terraces to a bridging platform at the upper level of the arena. From there, another concrete stair leads to the second-floor offices. In the former dance floor area there is an added interior wooden staircase to the mezzanine offices and storage rooms. A stair to the lower-level women's bathroom has also been added. The stair that used to run inside the recreation center to the arena's entrance terrace has been blocked off and rooms built over that space.

## **3. Flooring**

**Arena:** The first floor of the arena uses the concrete slab foundation as the finished floor, except in the court area, where a wood tongue and groove floor is laid, and in the locker rooms, which have tile floors.

**Recreation Center:** The recreation center's floor uses the concrete slab foundation as the finished floor in most of its circulation spaces. The floor of the main exercise room is covered with soft vinyl interlocking pads. However, in the smaller exercise rooms and other spaces, vinyl tile, ceramic tile, or carpet is laid. The recreation center's second floor has a wood floor with vinyl tile flooring and carpet installed over it.

## **4. Wall and ceiling finish**

**Arena:** The walls of the arena are painted, poured-in-place concrete. There is no ceiling; the roof structure is exposed, showing the open trusses and rafters, and wood decking above. The locker rooms have concrete ceilings, parts of them sloped due to the bleacher seating above. The locker room walls, renovated in 1981, are finished in 4" tile.

**Recreation Center:** The walls of the recreation center currently have a variety of wall finishes. The original plywood walls have been covered with other materials. A portion of the equipment rental wing has lava rock facing and another part has corrugated metal panels on the interior. The circulation areas have painted CMU walls, while the office spaces and the interior exercise rooms are finished in vinyl paneling.

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The interior walls of the second floor are constructed with dry walls and finished with vinyl paneling. The recreation center has dropped ceilings throughout most of this portion of the building. They are primarily 2'x2' or 2'x4' suspended acoustic ceiling panels with recessed fluorescent panel lighting. In the equipment rental wing these panels are blue, with a cloud pattern. In the main exercise room there is no ceiling, just the exposed underside of the corrugated metal roofing in the central raised section and the tongue-and-groove roof underlayment in the lower (outer) section of the roof.

**5. Openings**

- a. Doorways and doors: The arena has modern wood swing doors at the restrooms. The recreation center portion of the building has almost entirely modern interior doors, of wood or glass. The only possible original interior door is a wood five-panel one with a large latch-type handle and large hinges, which could have been the original cold storage room door.
- b. Windows: There are few interior windows, except in the former refreshment stand near the main exercise room, facing the central passageway. Modern fixed windows in aluminum frames have been installed here.

**6. Decorative features and trim**

No decorative features can be found in this very utilitarian building, other than the modern cloud ceiling panels in the equipment rental room.

**7. Hardware**

The arena's basketball hoops are controlled by a steel pulley system. This appears to be original. Otherwise, very little original hardware remains.

**8. Mechanical equipment**

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Most of the spaces are naturally ventilated. The only spaces that are mechanically cooled are the office spaces and shop spaces in the recreation center. The equipment rental space is cooled by two split-unit air conditioners. The only centrally cooled space is the exercise room. The rest are cooled using small a/c units in windows.
- b. Lighting: The arena is lighted with large high-pressure sodium fixtures. Yellow incandescent bulb lighting rings the top walkway around the arena. There are some fluorescent fixtures in the locker rooms and projection room. A large amount of natural lighting is available during the day, especially if the canvas over the wood louvers is rolled up. The recreation center has dropped or ceiling-

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mounted fluorescent lighting that is integrated into the acoustical paneled ceilings. Few of the lighting fixtures appear to be original, except the caged light bulbs over each arena exit. Original thin-tube fluorescent light fixtures, some with polished chrome reflectors, were observed above the dropped ceilings of the former recreation rooms (Dodge 2003).

- c. Plumbing: All the plumbing fixtures appear to be modern replacements.
- d. Electrical: The electrical conduits of the arena and the recreation center are hidden in steel pipe that run along the ceiling of the arena or along the walls of the recreation center instead of being routed within walls.

### **SITE**

When the arena was constructed in 1941, the Hale Moku housing complex, the navy barracks complex, and the Bravo docks were located within walking distance of the Center; it was an ideal location for easy access to hundreds of Navy personnel during their off-hours. A baseball field is located northwest of the building and beyond that is Merry Loch. The view to the harbor may be the reason why the original dance floor was placed on the northwest side of the building. The view to the water is now blocked by new construction. Three bomb shelters were built near the Center in 1942. The two on the southeast side of the arena (Fac. S898 and S899) have been demolished, but the one on the southwest side (Fac. S897) remains.

**Historical Context:** For an overview history of recreational facilities at Pearl Harbor, see HABS No. HI-387.

Prior to 1929 local laws did not allow boxing in Hawaii, except on military bases. On the bases, because of U.S. statutes, boxing was staged as exhibitions only, with no admission charged and no decisions announced at fights' ends (Svinth et al. 2003: 4). Pearl Harbor had at least two venues for boxing in the 1920s and 1930s. An open-air octagonal boxing arena was built near the main gate sometime before 1921, but it was gone by 1932, according to early maps of the base (U.S. Naval Station 1921 and Fourteenth Naval District 1932). In 1924 the Commandant, Rear Admiral John McDonald closed the boxing matches to Army personnel and civilians because he blamed them for the booing and remarks concerning the contestants and referees (Fourteenth Naval District [1945]: 46-47). The roofed (but originally open-sided) movie theater on the Submarine Base (Fac. 628), constructed about 1930, was also used for boxing events, called

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smokers. At Schofield Barracks, the earliest boxing events (1915-1923) were held, typically on such holidays as New Year's and Fourth of July, at a ring set up on the parade ground, with chairs and an amphitheater of bleachers (Svinth et al. 2003: 4). An open-air boxing bowl was built in 1923, but this was roofed in 1932 to provide protection from the not-infrequent rain. This structure, now called Conroy Bowl (Building 555), is used as a sports facility and as a staging area for troop deployments (Tropic Lightning Museum 1999: 2).

### **History of Bloch Arena Development and Uses**

Bloch Recreation Center and Arena was a much-needed facility that could accommodate a large percentage of the personnel on the base that was rapidly growing in the pre-WWII period. The arena could seat 6,000 spectators. It was "the largest single addition to the recreation plant" (Warren 1941: 103) and remains the largest single recreation building at the installation. Despite the size and importance of this facility, it only merited a listing in the post-contract report of the Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases (n.d.: A-898), since it was just a small part of their overall construction work at the base in the early 1940s.

Several articles in the *Honolulu Advertiser* mention the building. While it was under construction it was described as an "arena and enlisted men's club" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1941). In a later article weekly boxing events were announced at "Bloch recreational center" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1942).

In the evening of December 6, 1941 there was a battle of the bands in Bloch Arena, with ship bands from the *USS Pennsylvania*, *USS Tennessee*, *USS Argonne*, and *USS Detroit* competing. Other typical events in the arena during the war and after were boxing and wrestling matches, basketball games, and movies. Bob Hope and other performers entertained the sailors and other personnel here during World War II. It has continued to host other major entertainers and events in the six decades since construction.

The program for this event, on the eve of the Japanese attack, shows that the building by this time was named "Bloch Recreation Center." So apparently at its 1941 opening, or soon thereafter, it was dedicated to Rear Admiral Claude C. Bloch, Commandant of the Pearl Harbor Naval Base and the Fourteenth Naval District, 1940-1942. The career of this naval officer spanned from the Spanish-American War through WWII. Kentucky born, he graduated from Annapolis in 1899, rising to Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet in 1938-1940, before heading up the

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critical positions at Pearl Harbor in the early 1940s (Kentucky Historical Society 2002).

The arena has been used for other purposes besides recreation. Ship Repair Unit personnel were billeted here when they first arrived in Hawaii on December 24, 1941, presumably due to a shortage of housing. "Mattresses were spread on the concrete altars between the seats around the bowl" (History of the Ship Repair Unit, n.d.: 3).

The uses in the recreation center portion have changed more significantly than the arena. The bowling alleys, soda fountain, and dance floor have been replaced by exercise rooms and recreational equipment rental space.

### **Physical History of Facility**

**Date(s) of erection:** The recreation center was constructed in 1941. The original drawings are dated October 17, 1940.

**Architect:** The title blocks only indicate that the plans were prepared by the Department of Public Works of the Fourteenth Naval District. The project manager was Lt. Commander M.W. Kehart. The original designer is unknown.

**Original and subsequent owners:** U.S. Navy

**Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Contractors, Pacific Naval Air Bases (CPNAB) built the facility. Herrick Iron Works of Oakland, California provided the steel for the structural framing.

**Original Plans and construction:** The name of the structure on the architectural drawings is "Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor T.H., Arena & Recreation Building." The drawings numbered Y&D no. 148738-148743, 148751 and 148752 are dated October 1940, and some additional drawings, numbered 430, 467-473, and 477, are dated in early 1941. The cost of the building was listed about 1945 as \$296,885 (U.S. Navy [1945]: 1066). The building was constructed as shown in the drawings. It retains much of its original appearance, except as noted in the description section above, or as summarized below. The post-WWII drawings are the source of most of the following history.

**Alterations and Additions:** The arena portion of the building was originally designed to function as a stage and motion picture house as well as a gymnasium. The 1941 plans show drawings of the portable stage equipment and lighting. It is not known when this use was discontinued; however, Elvis Presley performed there in 1961 so we

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know that it was still in use at this time. The "arena" portion retains more of its original design than the other parts of the building. To simplify references to the complex shape that is attached to the arena, this will be termed the "recreation center" portion. The recreation center originally had two bowling alleys, a soda fountain/refreshment stand, a canteen, a manager's office, toilets, an equipment room, and an open dance floor on the ground level. The second floor had a billiard and game room, toilets, and storage rooms. All the parts of the recreation center have been extensively remodeled.

A drawing shows that in 1949 an Enlisted Men's Mess structure, which held a dining room, galley, service area, and restrooms, was constructed abutting the exterior lanai (now enclosed) on the west side of the building. This Quonset hut structure was demolished in the early 1950s (Fourteenth Naval District 1951).

Between 1944 and 1982, several alterations were made to the building. In 1944, the curved open dance floor was roofed. The basketball court had a new floor of ohia boards installed about 1948. The arena portion and two lanai (on the northwest side of the recreation center portion of the building) were reroofed in 1949. By 1953, the two lanai and the dance floor were being used as a "beer garden," but it is not clear when these spaces were enclosed.

At some date before 1980, the original bowling alleys on the recreation center were converted to a men's weight room in the northeast wing, and equipment rental at the southwest wing. Additional interior walls were constructed inside the southwest wing, as well as a small extension on this wing, to create an office and bicycle repair shop (now used as arena ticket office). The central portion of the recreation center space had also been divided in a different configuration to contain a snack bar and refreshment area, a print shop, men's exercise room, offices sauna, men's and women's toilet, and storage rooms.

In 1981, Bloch Recreation Center and Arena was renovated. The arena was electrically upgraded, including installation of new light fixtures. In addition, the wooden bench seats were repaired or replaced, including replacement of bolts where necessary. Benches and the steel brackets holding them were removed in the area behind the fixed projection screen. In 1982, the recreation center portion of the building was enlarged to include new men's and women's shower rooms and a lounge room, in the area near the women's exercise room.

Numerous changes have also been made to the building, which are not reflected in renovation drawings. Many original wood-framed windows have been replaced or boarded up. It is most apparent along the southwestern former bowling alley space, where sliding three-light

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windows have been replaced with fixed windows. Most original doors have also been replaced. A small addition of concrete masonry units (CMU) was built on the northeastern wing to house mechanical or electrical equipment. Its flat overhanging roof makes obvious its later construction date.

**Sources:**

**Architectural Drawings**

The original and alteration drawings for this building are located on microfiche cards in the Plan Files of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Some of the early 1940s drawings for this building are filed under Y&D numbers (148738 through 148765), some are filed under 14<sup>th</sup> Naval District numbers (J-N4-159, J-N4-161 through J-N4-167, J-N4-172, J-N4-177, J-N4-183 through J-N4-186), and some use the contractors' numbers (430 through 477 and 480). There are three 1945 grading and location type drawings (OA-N4-3347, OA-N4-3348, and OA-N4-4170). There are three repair drawings from 1948 and 1949 (459448, 450449, and 475437). Drawing 584380 was prepared in 1953 for a repainting and re-roofing project. Several small repair and renovation projects were done in small areas of the facility in the 1980s (drawings 7035360 through 7035370 and 7039861 through 7039873). Painting and minor repairs to the overall facility were done in 1983 (drawings 7038900 through 7038905), as were electrical upgrades (drawings 7048073 through 7048078). Tenting and termite repairs were done in 1987 (drawings 7065146 through 7065158).

**Early Views**

A few historic photographs of Bloch Recreation Center and Arena were located. The Holiday 1941 issue of *Paradise of the Pacific* (Warren 1941: 104) had a night-time photo of the building from the dance floor side. The dance floor was still open air, unroofed, and, in this shot, empty. A very similar daytime view, undated but circa 1941, was located at the Bishop Museum Archives, in the folder "Military. U.S. Navy. Shipyard Groups." Several photos taken inside the arena in 1945 and 1951, during Bob Hope's performance and during basketball games, were found in a set of Marine Corps history binders now at Camp Smith.

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- 1941 Program / Navy Recreation / Battle of Music / 1941 / Arena / Bloch Recreation Center / December 6, 1941. Copy from National Park Service, USS Arizona Memorial files, provided by Jeffrey Dodge, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific.

### Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases

- n.d. *Technical Report and Project History, Contracts NOy-3550 and NOy-4173, Pacific Naval Air Bases, Chapter XXVI – Housing and Recreation.* Microfiche of report at library of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific.

### Dodge, Jeffrey

- 2003 Comment on draft of this report by Jeffrey Dodge, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific.

### Fourteenth Naval District

- 1932 Pearl Harbor, Oahu, T.H., Showing Developments to 30 June 1932. Map: I-N1-110. From National Archives, courtesy Earth Tech.

[1945] *Administrative History of the Fourteenth Naval District and the Hawaiian Sea Frontier.* Typescript located in the Navy Department Library's Rare Book Room in Washington, D.C. Navy Yard. Microfiche version available (uncatalogued) at library of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific.

- 1951 Pearl Harbor, Oahu, T.H., Showing Conditions on 30 June 1951. Map: I-N1-321 and Structure List: I-N1-322. Provided by Jeffrey Dodge of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific.

### History of the Ship Repair Unit

- n.d. Anonymous typescript with that title in collection of Robert F. Walden.

### Honolulu Advertiser

- 1941 "Navy Recreation Setup Here to be Expanded," *Honolulu Advertiser* May 8, 1941, p. 5, c. 1.

- 1942 "Recreation Program for Navy Listed," *Honolulu Advertiser* January 10, 1942, p. 1, c. 3.

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**Kentucky Historical Society**

- 2002 "Roadside History: A Guide to Kentucky Highway Markers," text of marker in Woodbury, Kentucky, on website [www.oriscus.com/khs](http://www.oriscus.com/khs) accessed Jan. 30, 2004.

**Navy Yard**

- 1944 Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, Showing Conditions on January 1, 1944. Drawing no. I-N1-167. From the Robert F. Walden Collection, courtesy of Nancy Walden.

**Svinth, Joseph with Curtis Narimatsu, Paul Lou, and Charles Johnston**

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Navy Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, 805 Kidder Breese,  
S.E., Washington, D.C. 20734, ph. (202) 433-4131.

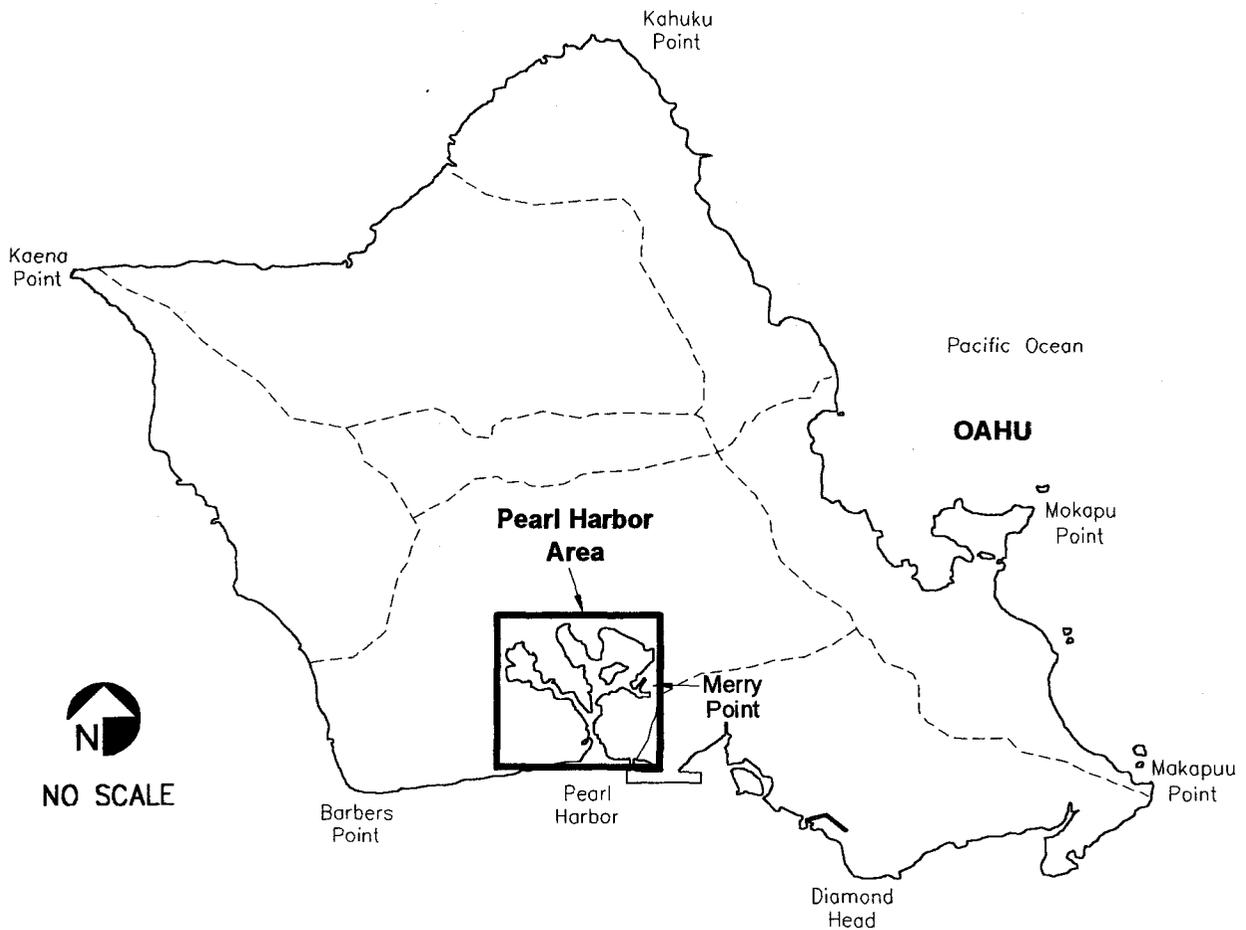
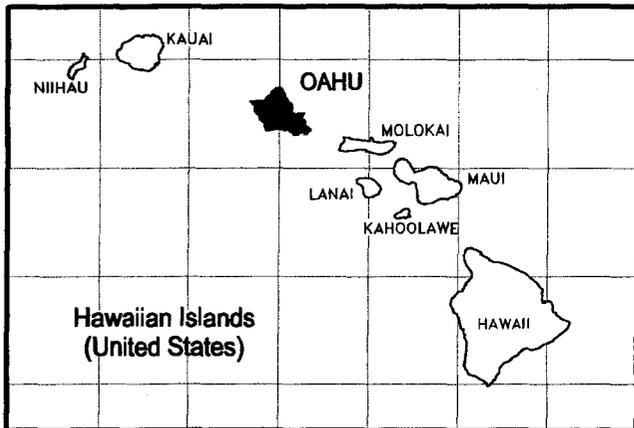
Port Hueneme NAVFAC Archives, 621 Pleasant Valley Road, Port  
Hueneme, California 93043, ph. (805) 982-5563.

**Project Information:** Commander Navy Region (COMNAVREG) Hawaii has embarked on a program of documentation of historic properties within its area of responsibility, with the goal of recording historic information about each property type and establishing its context of significance. This information will assist COMNAVREG Hawaii in the appropriate management of the property, be it routine repair and maintenance for continuing use, rehabilitation for continuing use / adaptive reuse, or demolition. At this time, specific action that may affect this facility has not been determined. This report was prepared under a Historic Preservation Services contract (N62742-97-D-3502) awarded to AMEC Earth and Environmental, the prime contractor, by the U.S. Navy, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific. The contract was funded through the Cultural Resources Program of COMNAVREG Hawaii. The photographic documentation was undertaken by David Franzen of Franzen Photography. Maps were made by Nestor Beltran of NAB Graphics. The field work and draft of this report were done between 1999 and 2000 by Lorraine Palumbo and Ann Yoklavich, Architectural Historians at Mason Architects. Ann Yoklavich finalized the report.

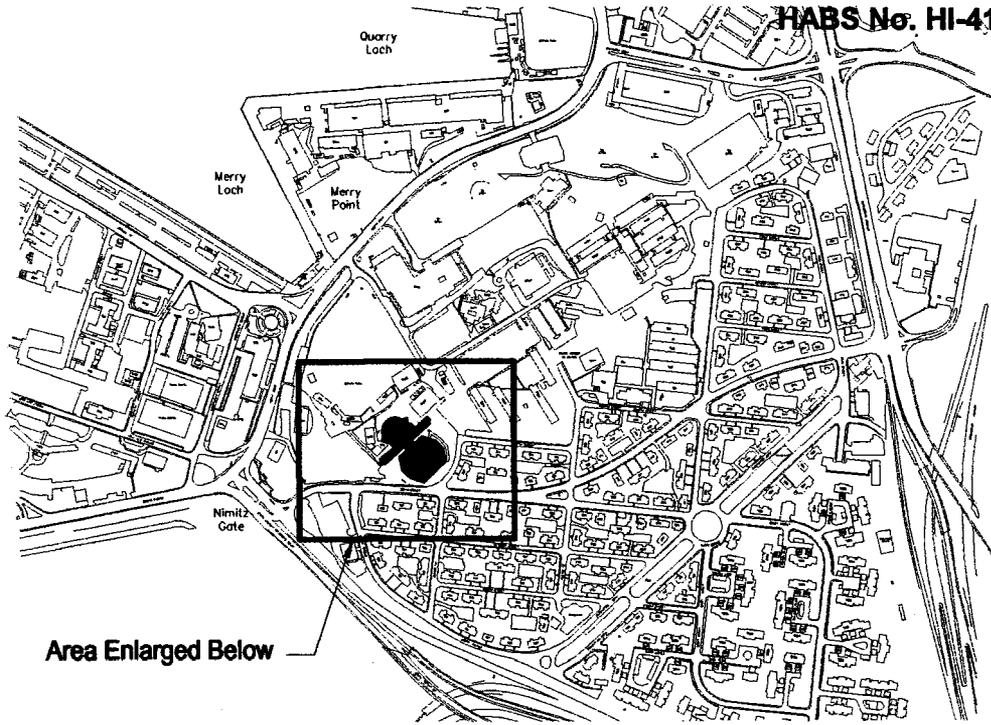
**Prepared by:** Ann Yoklavich and Lorraine Palumbo, Architectural Historians  
Mason Architects, Inc.  
119 Merchant Street, Suite 501  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Date of Final Report: February 2004

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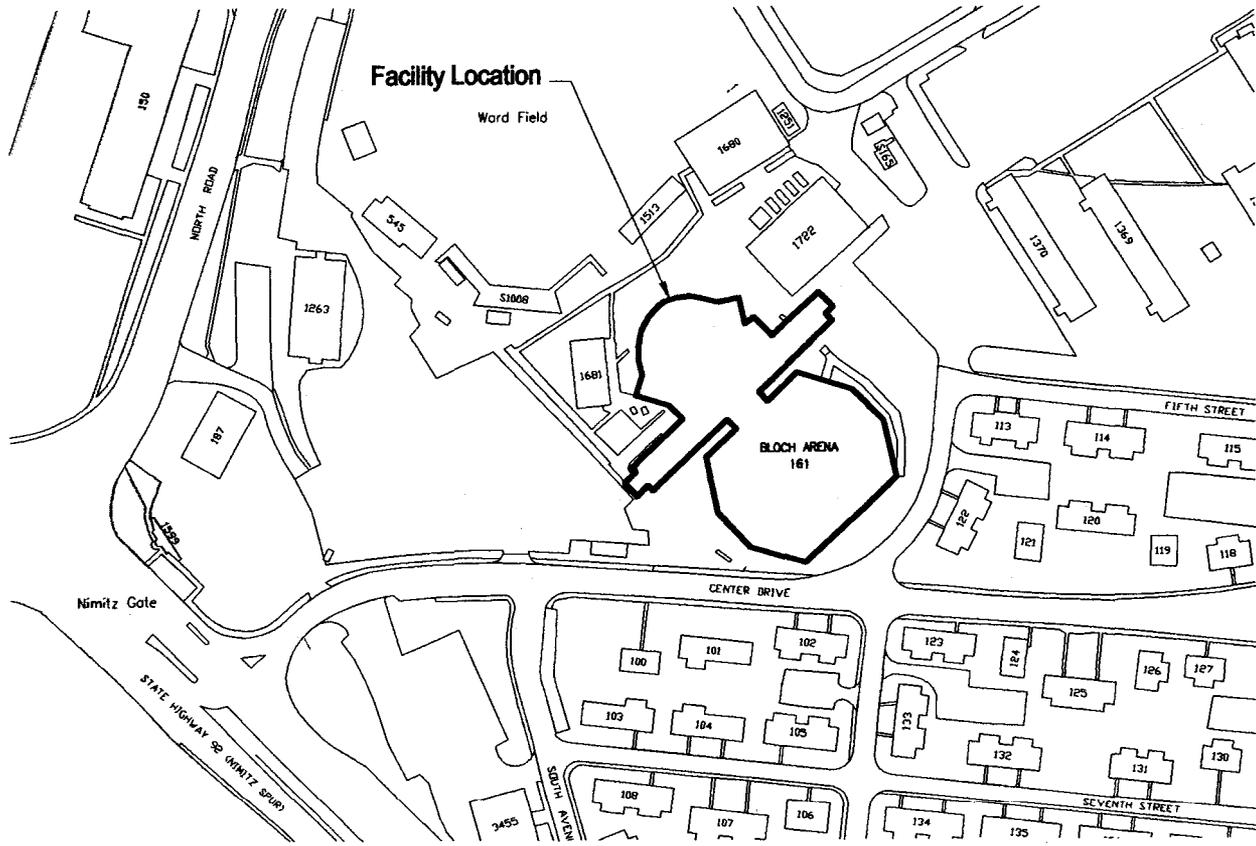


Area Enlarged Below

**Vicinity Map**



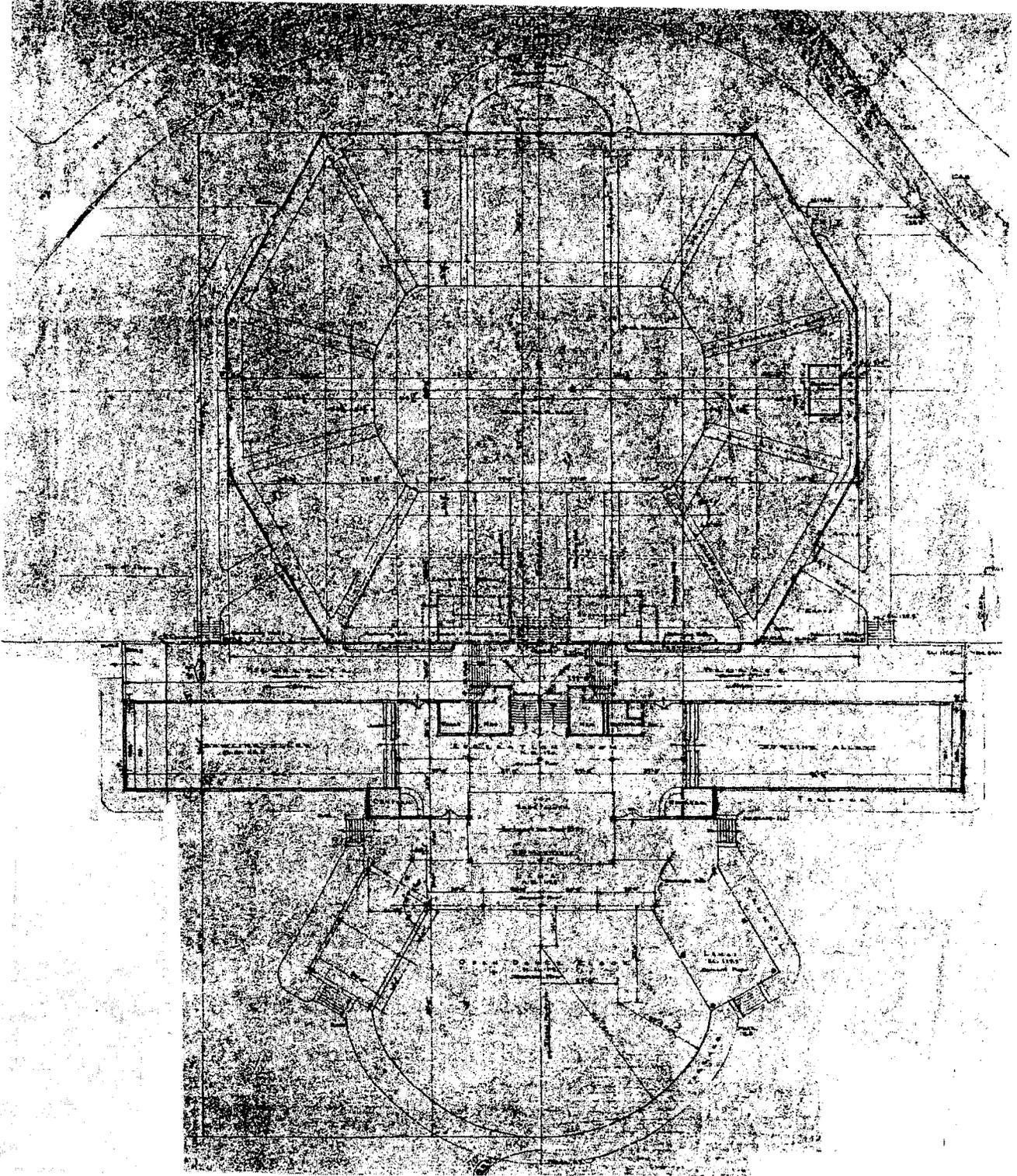
**NO SCALE**



**Site Map**

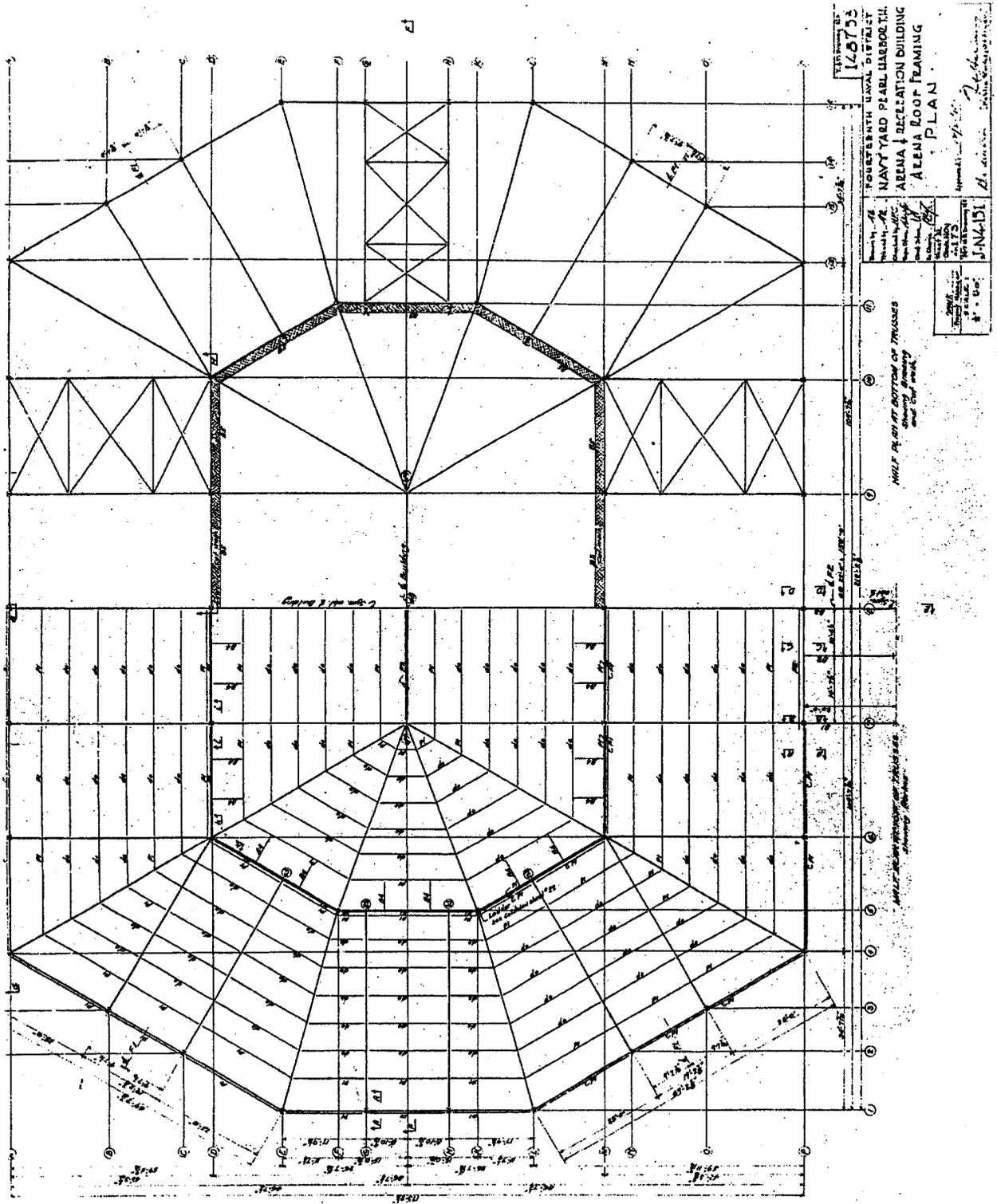
U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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1940 Ground-Floor Plan (portion of Y&D drawing no. 148738)



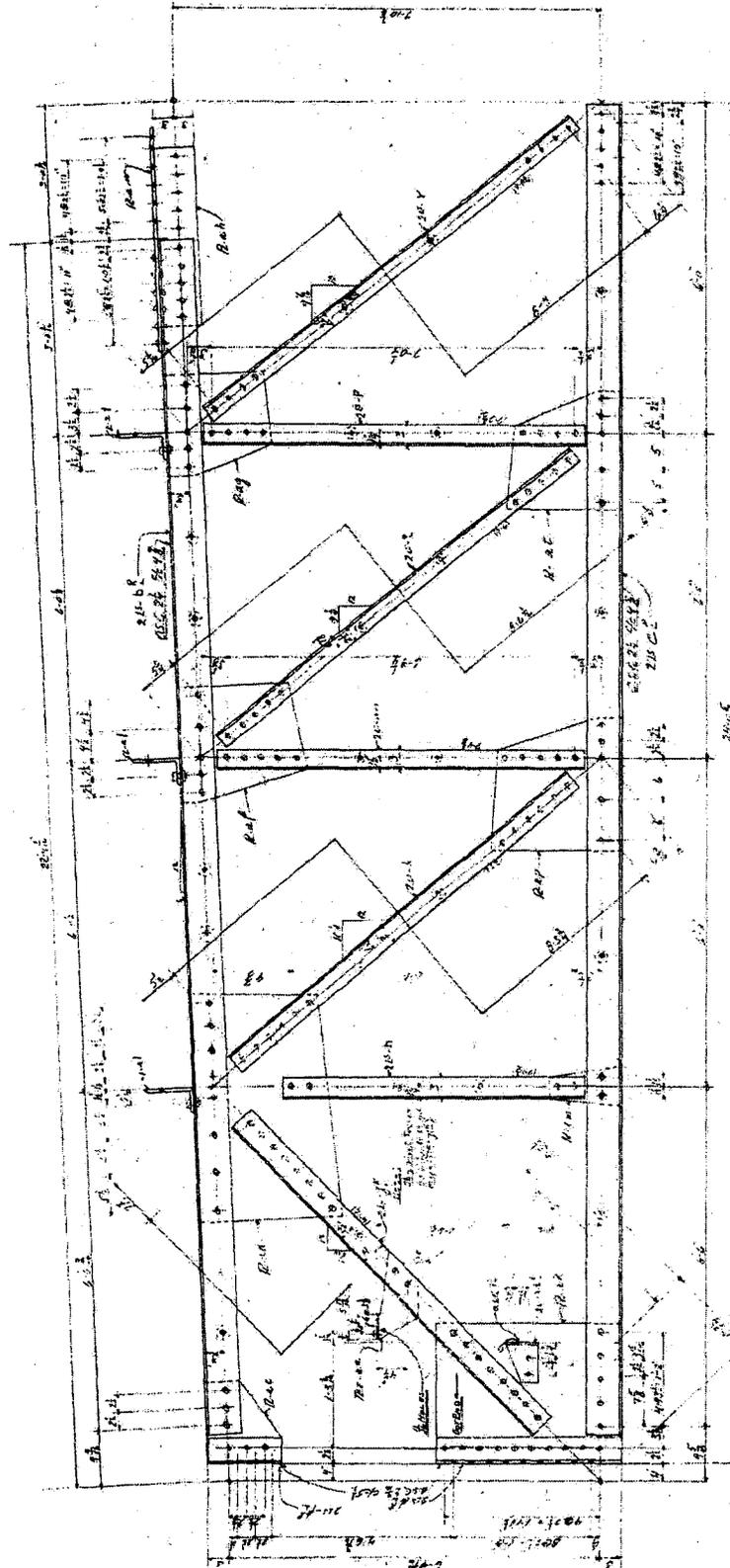
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA**  
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**1940 Arena Roof Framing Plan (portion of Y&D drawing no. 148758)**



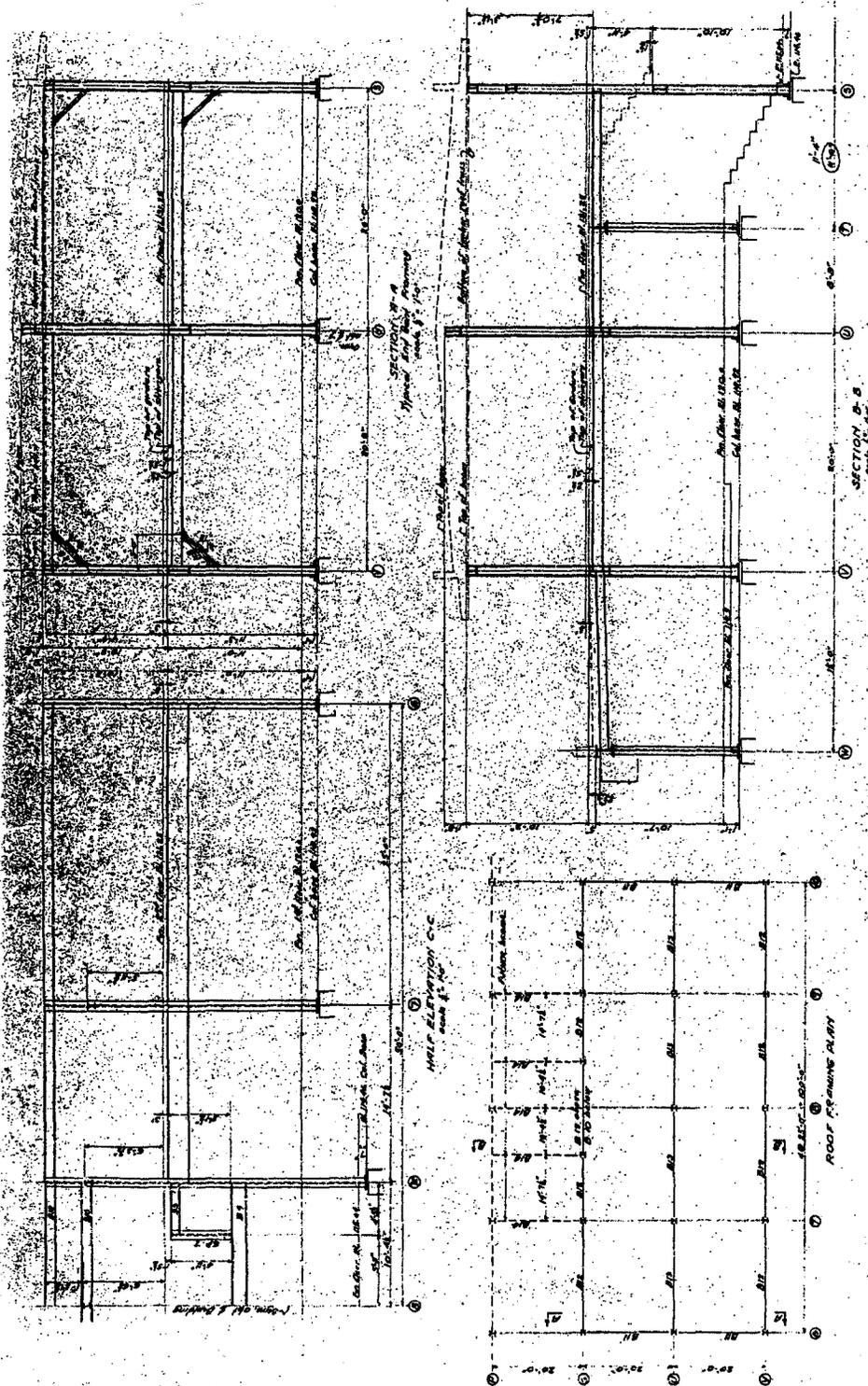
U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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1941 Arena Steel Truss Detail (portion of drawing no. 441)



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1940 Recreation Center, Section, Steel Framing (portion of Y&D drawing no. 148753)

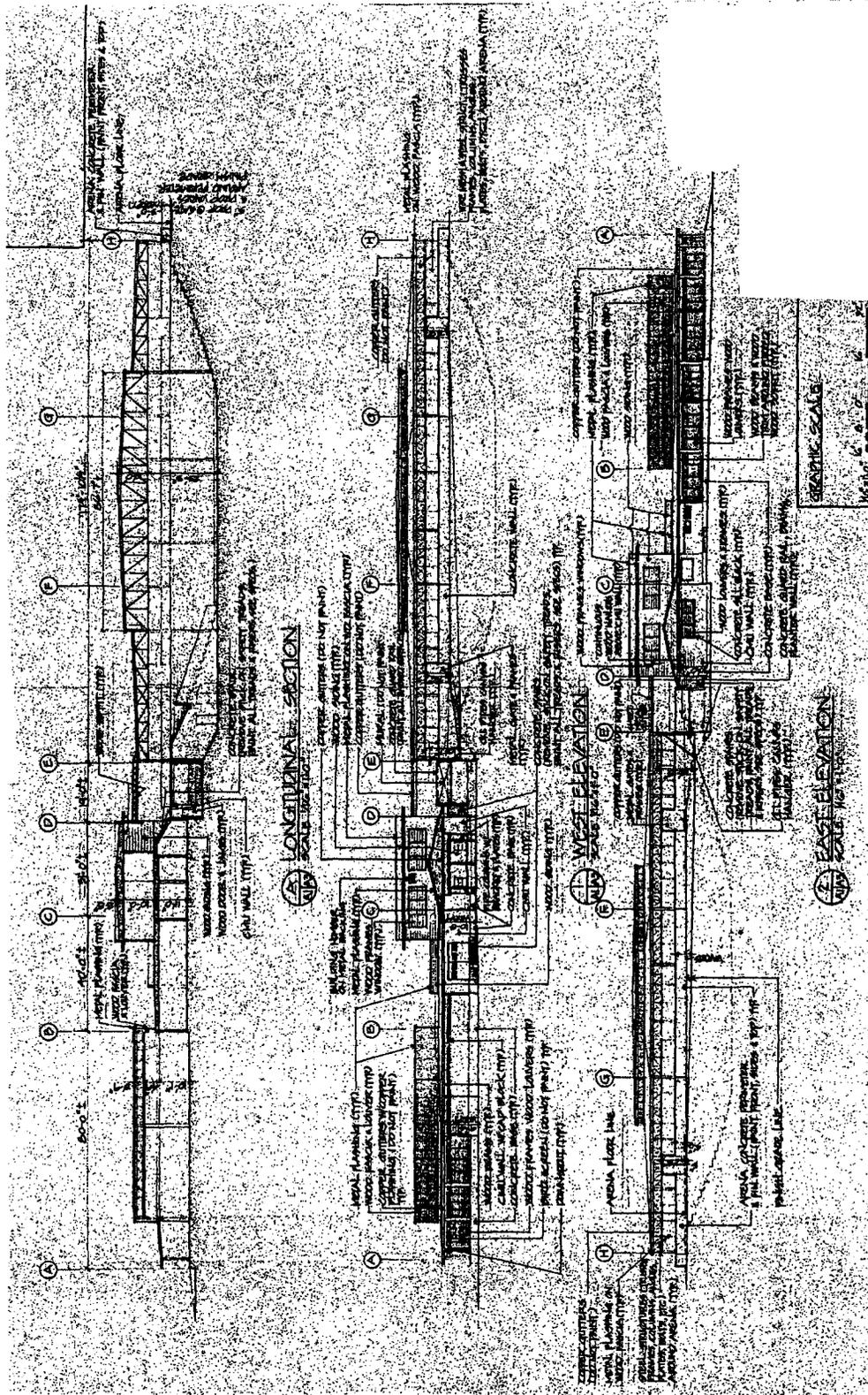






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**1983 Renovation – Section and Exterior Elevations (portion of Y&D drawing no. 7038903)**



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(Facility No. 161)  
Between Center Drive and North Road near Nimitz Gate  
Pearl Harbor  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-416

HABS  
HI-416

BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Oakland, California

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**Addendum to  
U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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(Facility No. 161)**

This report is an addendum to a 24 page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

- Location:** Between Center Drive and North Road near Nimitz Gate  
Pearl Harbor Naval Base  
City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii  
U.S.G.S. Pearl Harbor Quadrangle, Hawaii, 1983  
7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) (Scale - 1:24,000)  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 04.609420.2361430
- Significance:** See page 1 of HABS HI-416.
- Description:** See page 2 of HABS HI-416.

During the field visit for this addendum several historic features were noted. At the exterior of the northwest side of the recreation center portion of Facility 161 the original concrete slab floor of the dance floor extends out several feet past the exterior wall. Areas of this concrete slab retain a green-stained finish, including the vertical outer edge of the slab. Rectangular sections of this slab at the bases of the octagonal concrete columns do not have this green finish. These rectangular sections were new concrete work when the dance floor was roofed over in 1944. They were poured to finish the floor when the rectangular sections were cut out of the original slab to install the footings for the octagonal concrete columns that would support the new (1944) roof. The natural concrete finish of these 1944 rectangular sections of slab indicates that green-stained concrete was original to the (1941) dance floor.

Also at the same area of the northwest exterior wall of the recreation center, the octagonal concrete columns of the 1944 roofing are still extant, supporting the original 6" x 12" beams, 3" x 8" tapered rafters, and roof sheathing. The columns measure about 12" across the parallel sides of their octagonal cross section and are flat-topped with no capitals. Metal angle brackets, secured with bolts into the concrete columns, serves to secure the beams atop the columns. The columns have simple octagonal bases, about 3" high.

At the arena portion of Facility 161, the ohia wood strip flooring which was installed in 1948 is still extant. The flooring is installed with the strips running lengthwise down the length of the basketball court. The wood strip flooring outside the boundaries of the basketball court, as well as areas of the court at the free throw lane and center circle have been painted blue. The ohia strips (with a natural finish) are visible at the remaining portion of the court. Also extant are the vents at the edge of

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the wood strip flooring where the surrounding concrete floor forms an approximate 4" high curb. These narrow horizontal vents are formed at the riser of the curb by wood slats which allow airflow between the redwood sleepers under the ohia floor of the court.

**Historical Context:** See HABS No. HI-416. Refer to HABS No. HI-387 for an overview of the history of recreation facilities at Pearl Harbor.

Bloch Arena was the "largest single expenditure [\$175,000]" in the 1940 housing and recreation center expansion project of 1940 which included Hale Moku and Makalapa housing, and Richardson Recreation Center on the Aiea waterfront.<sup>1</sup> Construction on the project began in October 1940.

Original drawings indicate that the plans for Bloch Arena were prepared by the Department of Public Works of the Fourteenth Naval District. The project manager was Lt. Commander M.W. Kehart. The original designer is unknown. Construction of the facility was undertaken by Contractors, Pacific Naval Air Bases (CPNAB) and the Herrick Iron Works of Oakland, California provided the steel for the structural framing.<sup>2</sup>

Although the period of the 1930s before Bloch Arena originated saw decreasing expenditures for recreation services for the fleet, during the final years of that decade "the growth of service and civilian personnel led to the realization that more recreation facilities were needed on base."<sup>3</sup> Because of the pre-WW II build up of permanent facilities at Pearl Harbor as well as visiting ships bringing large numbers of sailors who needed recreational facilities rather than accommodations, Bloch Arena was intended for use by both groups.

According to the original seating plan, there were 6,000 seats for boxing events; 5,000 seats in the bleachers and 1,000 seats ring side (on the main floor). The boxing ring was assembled in the center of the main floor, surrounded by seating. Seating was listed as 4,000 for motion pictures; 3,000 in the bleachers and 1,000 in the reserved area on the main floor.<sup>4</sup> The motion picture screen and a portable stage were erected when needed at the northeast end of the arena.<sup>5</sup>

Bloch Arena is a uniquely designed building, a sunken amphitheater with recreation facilities in an attached section (originally a portion of which was open-air) that is flanked by two elongated wings. This design utilizes natural ventilation and lighting. There is no other facility in Hawaii that shares this same design.

Construction of Wooden Buildings During WW II

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<sup>1</sup> "Navy Starts Big Oahu Housing Project," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, November 2, 1940, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Yoklavich and Lorraine Palumbo, *HABS HI-416, U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Bloch Recreation Center and Arena*, (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 2004), 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered J-N4-167, June 25, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered J-N4-165, June 5, 1941.

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For additional information on the subject of wooden buildings at Pearl Harbor during the war, see HABS HI-416, U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Gymnasium Building No. 667.

Many of the wooden buildings constructed at Pearl Harbor during the war were built under wartime directives to conserve vital materials. Bloch Arena was designed before there was any "general recognition of great need for economy in the use of critical materials."<sup>6</sup> The first directives regarding conservation of critical materials were issued early in 1941.<sup>7</sup>

The rapid construction of facilities that was needed to support the war effort was made possible only through the careful allocation of material resources, including wood building materials. Wartime industrial mobilization is characterized by the prudent distribution of the raw materials necessary to produce the facilities and equipment for the war effort. To cope with the scarcities of materials over the course of WW II the government managed the allocation of resources through entities such as the Office of Production Management, the Supply, Priorities, and Allocations Board (SPAB), and the War Production board. Priority systems were developed for the use of materials within the military, and civilian rationing was also instituted. These departments helped manage material shortages that fluctuated in response to supply and demand and the level of construction taking place.

At the beginning of the war, steel and steel plate were considered the most critical materials since they were needed for ships. Substitutions were made to at this time to conserve steel in buildings. Wood trusses were used in place of steel for framing roofs of mid-sized structures and steel trusses were reserved for large warehouses and hangars. Other military substitutions made in architectural designs included, wood doors for steel doors, wood for steel framing, brick or concrete smokestacks for steel stacks, wood or concrete for steel water tanks, and the use of concrete or asbestos-cement pipe for steel. Wood was also utilized to substitute for steel in roof ventilators and manhole covers.

Dimensional lumber was the most well-understood building material at the time, as well as the least expensive for framing and cladding. Logically, it was the military's choice for expedited construction. Contrary to earlier expectations, by the summer of 1942, the list of critical materials included lumber. The use of timber construction had expanded as the war had progressed, and the production of timber had fallen. The decrease in production was due to inadequate logging manpower and shortages in fuel, tires, and equipment.

As early as 1940 the Bureau of yards and Docks realized that permanent construction was not the best choice for many wartime buildings. Temporary and semi-permanent forms of construction were adopted as

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<sup>6</sup> Contractor's Pacific Naval Air Bases, "Technical Report and Project History, Contracts NOy-3550 and NOy-4173, Pacific Naval Air Bases," n.d. microfiche of report at library of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific, A-1037.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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necessary solutions to contend with the deficiencies in materials and resources. Temporary construction took less time and money to complete, two vital resources during the war. It also generally used less total building materials.

Permanent construction was reserved for uses that could not be accommodated in temporary buildings. These included industrial facilities for medical, research and development uses which required specialized or sterile laboratory conditions, storage for volatile supplies such as ammunition, storage for perishable supplies such as food, and fortifications.

The War Production Board outlined new priorities for all construction. It stipulated that one condition for a construction project to receive approval is that it be of the simplest design and that it be constructed cheaply and temporarily using materials easily obtained.

The military adopted specific measures to conserve wood, including using narrower joists and simpler framing in wood construction. Concrete floors were often substituted for wood floors in one story buildings such as warehouses and administration buildings. The Navy used a timber-efficient barracks building that utilized a flat roof, and banded windows. It had interior finishes of Masonite and exterior cladding of asbestos cement board to conserve wood.

Despite the redesigns and other wood conservation efforts, the lumber shortage did not cease. In August 1942, the Navy found it impossible to have a lumber order filled due to the Army's purchasing monopolization of the market. Only after an appeal to the Army by the Chief of the Naval Engineering Corps was the lumber finally acquired. This situation led to a joint Army-Navy request to lumber magnate Frederick K. Weyerhaeuser to analyze the situation. He recommended consolidating all lumber purchasing into a single organization, which resulted in the Materials and Equipment Section becoming the central agency for purchasing lumber for both the Army and the Navy. Even with this streamlining of the purchase process, the lumber shortage persisted through the war.

Elvis' 1961 Benefit Performance for the USS *Arizona* Memorial

On March 25, 1961 Elvis performed a benefit concert at Bloch arena for the USS *Arizona* Memorial Fund. All receipts, \$54,678.73, were donated to the construction of the Arizona Memorial. The concert accounted for more than ten percent of the \$515,728 cost of constructing the memorial.<sup>8</sup> Appearing along with Elvis were; Minnie Pearl, The Jordanaires, and D.J. Fontana and Scotty Moore, two members of Elvis' original backing band. Sterling Mossman, a local Hawaiian comedian, also served as master of ceremonies and performed. The event was the "biggest single gate in the history of show business in Hawaii."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Pearl Harbor Memorial Fund, *Elvis Concert*, 2005, available from [www.pearlharbormemorial.com/site/pp.asp](http://www.pearlharbormemorial.com/site/pp.asp) accessed on January 23, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> "Presley Show Brings in \$52,000," *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 26, 1961, 1.

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A crowd of 3,000 fans greeted Elvis when he arrived at Honolulu International Airport on the afternoon of the show<sup>10</sup> and 4,800 attended the concert<sup>11</sup>. Tickets for the event ranged in price from \$5 and \$10 for general admission, to \$100.

This Bloch Arena performance was Elvis' last live concert until June 27, 1968 when he recorded two shows in front of a live audience at NBC's Burbank studios<sup>12</sup>. These shows, often called "The Burbank Sessions," were the source of tape used for portions of a broadcast aired on December 3, 1968 which is commonly referred to as Elvis' 1968 comeback special.

The day after the concert at Bloch Arena, filming began on Oahu for the motion picture "Blue Hawaii" starring Elvis and Joan Blackman.<sup>13</sup>

#### Alterations and Additions

In 1944 a two level roof was added over the dance floor.<sup>14</sup> The upper main portion of the roof was constructed about 19' above the dance floor, supported by concrete columns, trusses, and 3" x 10" purlins. The lower portion of the roof was a shed roof at the perimeter of the dance floor, sloping from about 10' high to a height of about 8'-6" at the eaves. This section was constructed of 3" x 8" rafters on 4'-0" centers. The vertical area (clerestory) between the shed roof section and the 19' high roof over the dance floor was filled with fixed horizontal louvers of 1" x 6" slats. The two levels of dance floor roof, along with the rest of the roofs of Building 161, were re-roofed in 1975. In 1981 the shed roof section at the perimeter of the dance floor was re-roofed.

In 1949 a 40' x 100' Quonset with two additional shed roof sections for an enlisted men's mess was added at the west side of the lanai.<sup>15</sup> One shed roof section, at the west end of the Quonset, contained three walk-in refrigeration units, a dry store room and a men's and a women's toilet. This section was partially concealed (on the north and west sides) by a bamboo fence. The second shed roof section was built on the south long side of the Quonset and contained a dishwashing room and a small boiler room. A new concrete slab lanai was added at the north long side of the Quonset. Access to the dining room was through sliding doors from this lanai. The interior of the Quonset had a 52' x 40' dining room with men's and women's washrooms and a beer and liquor storage room at its east end. At the west end was a galley, where the two shed roof sections were added.

At the arena portion of the building, the original wood floor was replaced with ohia wood flooring in 1948. The new ohia floor covered the entire

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<sup>10</sup> "3,000 Fans Give Wild Aloha to Elvis," *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 26, 1961, 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Presley Show," *Honolulu Advertiser*.

<sup>12</sup> Elvis Australia, *An in-depth look at the Elvis : '68 Comeback Special*," 2004, available from [www.elvis.com.au/presley/elvis\\_68\\_comeback\\_special.shtml](http://www.elvis.com.au/presley/elvis_68_comeback_special.shtml) accessed on January 26, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> "Elvis, Co-Stars Begin Shooting Blue Hawaii," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, March 27, 1961, 1-B.

<sup>14</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered J-N4-183, February 22, 1944.

<sup>15</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered J-N4-196, December 5, 1949.

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main floor of the arena, about 7,570 square feet. It was constructed of 2" x 4" redwood sleepers with 8" tongue and groove redwood subflooring, laid diagonally. Over this was laid 2¼" x ¾" tongue and groove ohia flooring, laid lengthwise along the long dimension of the arena floor.<sup>16</sup> Ohia (varieties of the species *Metrosideros*, family Myrtaceae) is a large endemic Hawaiian tree, which can often grow to 80' in height and is found in a wide range of habitats on the major Hawaiian Islands. It produces dense dark wood which was used for flooring in Hawaii and on the mainland since at least 1912.<sup>17</sup>

On the second floor of the recreation center, the billiard room was reconfigured in 1952. A partition was added in the center of the room to divide the space into a lounge and reading room on the west end and a billiard room on the east end. The design was done by Lemmon & Freeth Architects of Honolulu.<sup>18</sup> By 1981 the second floor had been altered into a suite of six offices.<sup>19</sup>

Roll-up fabric sunscreens have been added to the exterior of the arena. These are each about 10' wide and roll down about 7'-6" to cover the vertical louvers of the exterior walls. They are each independently operated manually from inside the arena.

**Sources:**

Early Views:

Historic photographs of the interior of Bloch Arena in 1944 were located at the Hawaii State Archives, Admiral Furlong Collection call # PPFUR, box 3, folder 16 "Warbonds." Photographs in this collection were created by a U.S. federal agency (U.S. Navy) and are considered in the public domain. A nighttime photo of the open air dance floor that was also created by the U.S. Navy, and considered in the public domain, appears in the December 1941 issue of *Paradise of the Pacific* magazine.

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"An in-depth look at the Elvis: '68 Comeback Special." Website [www.elvis.com.au/presley/elvis\\_68\\_comeback\\_special.shtml](http://www.elvis.com.au/presley/elvis_68_comeback_special.shtml) accessed on 26 January 2007.

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<sup>16</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered 459448, July 30, 1948.

<sup>17</sup> "Hawaiian Ohia Making Name With Coast Builders," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, August 25, 1912, 5.

<sup>18</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered 551471, May 28, 1952.

<sup>19</sup> (NAVFAC) Pacific Division: Plan files drawing numbered 7035362, July 29, 1981.

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Yoklavich, Ann.

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*HABS No. HI-387, U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Recreational Facilities. National Park Service, 2004.*

Yoklavich, Ann, and Lorraine Palumbo.

*HABS No. HI-416 U.S. Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Bloch Recreation Center and Arena. National Park Service, 2004.*

**Project Information:** This addendum was prepared in advance of the demolition of the wooden portions of Building 161, to fulfill anticipated mitigation measures under a future MOA between Commander, Navy Region Hawaii (CNRH) and the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer. CNRH and other Navy activities in Hawaii are required under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, to initiate measures to make appropriate records of historic properties that would be substantially altered or demolished as a result of Navy action. Mitigation for demolition or extensive alteration under Section 106 sometimes requires amending and adding photographs to existing HABS reports according to National Park Service guidance. Large-format photographs for this addendum were taken in July 2008 by David Franzen of Franzen Photography, Inc and the written portions were researched and prepared by Dee Ruzicka of Mason Architects, Inc. Honolulu, HI.

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Date of Report: February 2009



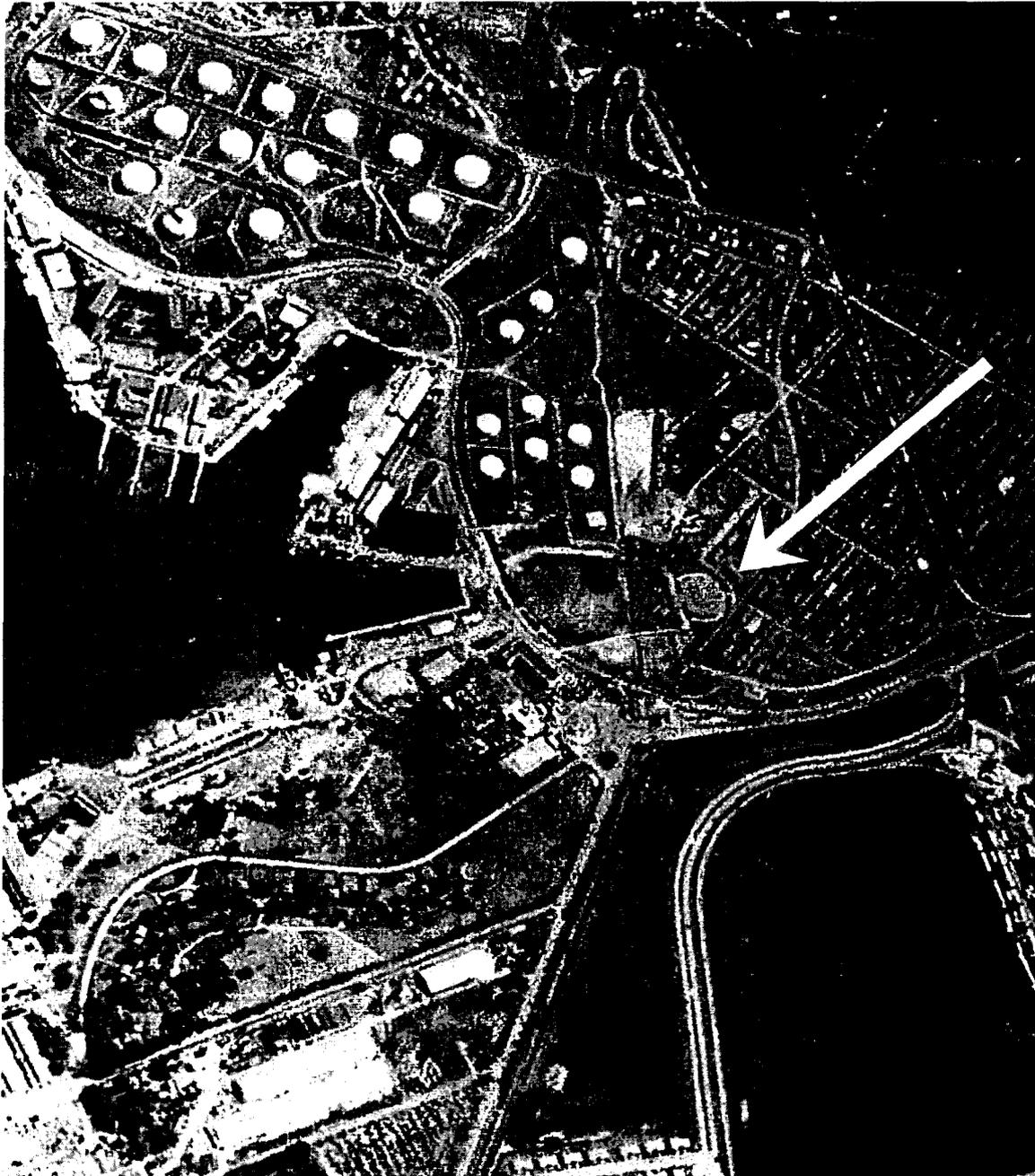
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
(U.S Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, Naval Station)  
(Building No. 161)  
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**Portion of photograph dated February 13, 1941 showing construction of Bloch Arena.  
NARA 71 CA 171 D, February 13, 1941.**



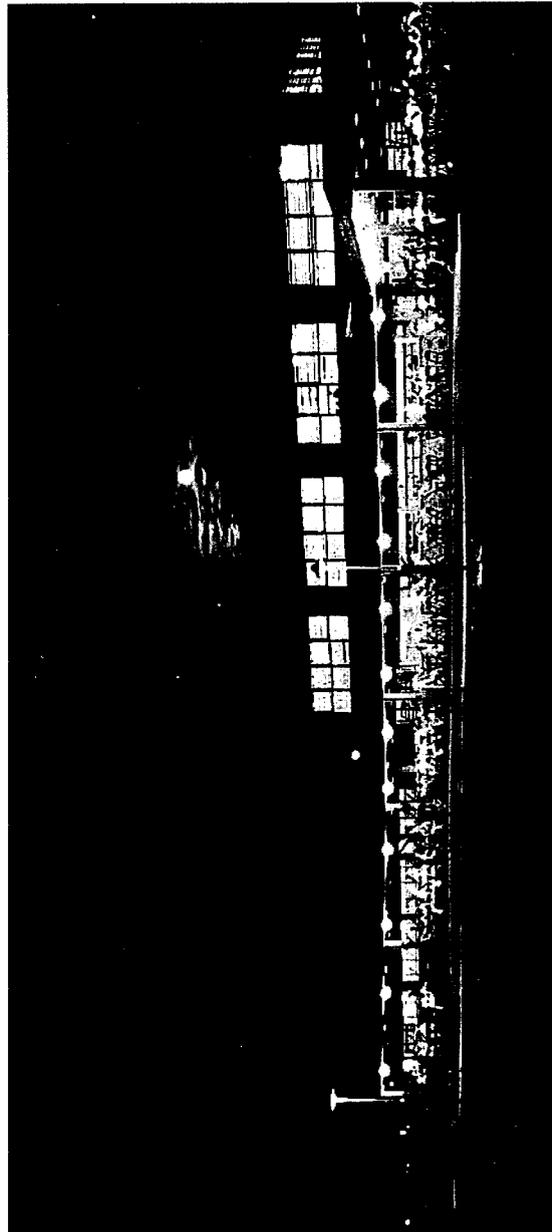
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA**  
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Portion of photograph dated October 30, 1941 showing Bloch Arena (added arrow). Note the open air portion of the building at the left (north). NARA RG-71-CB Box 101 folder (Operating Base) aerial view AN 41,153. October 30, 1941.



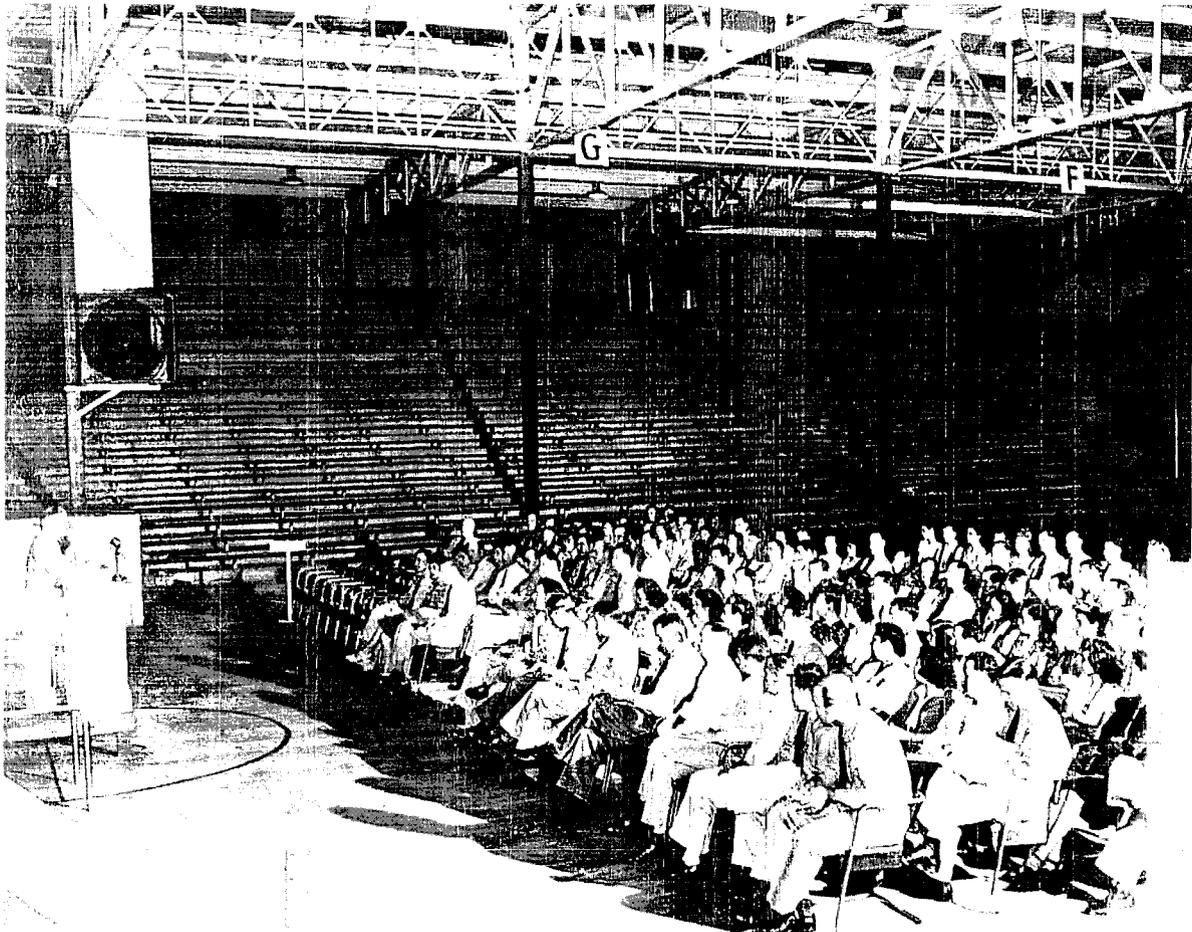
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA**  
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The open air portion of Bloch Arena is seen in this nighttime view of the building. U.S. Navy photo in *Paradise of the Pacific* magazine, December 1941, p. 103.



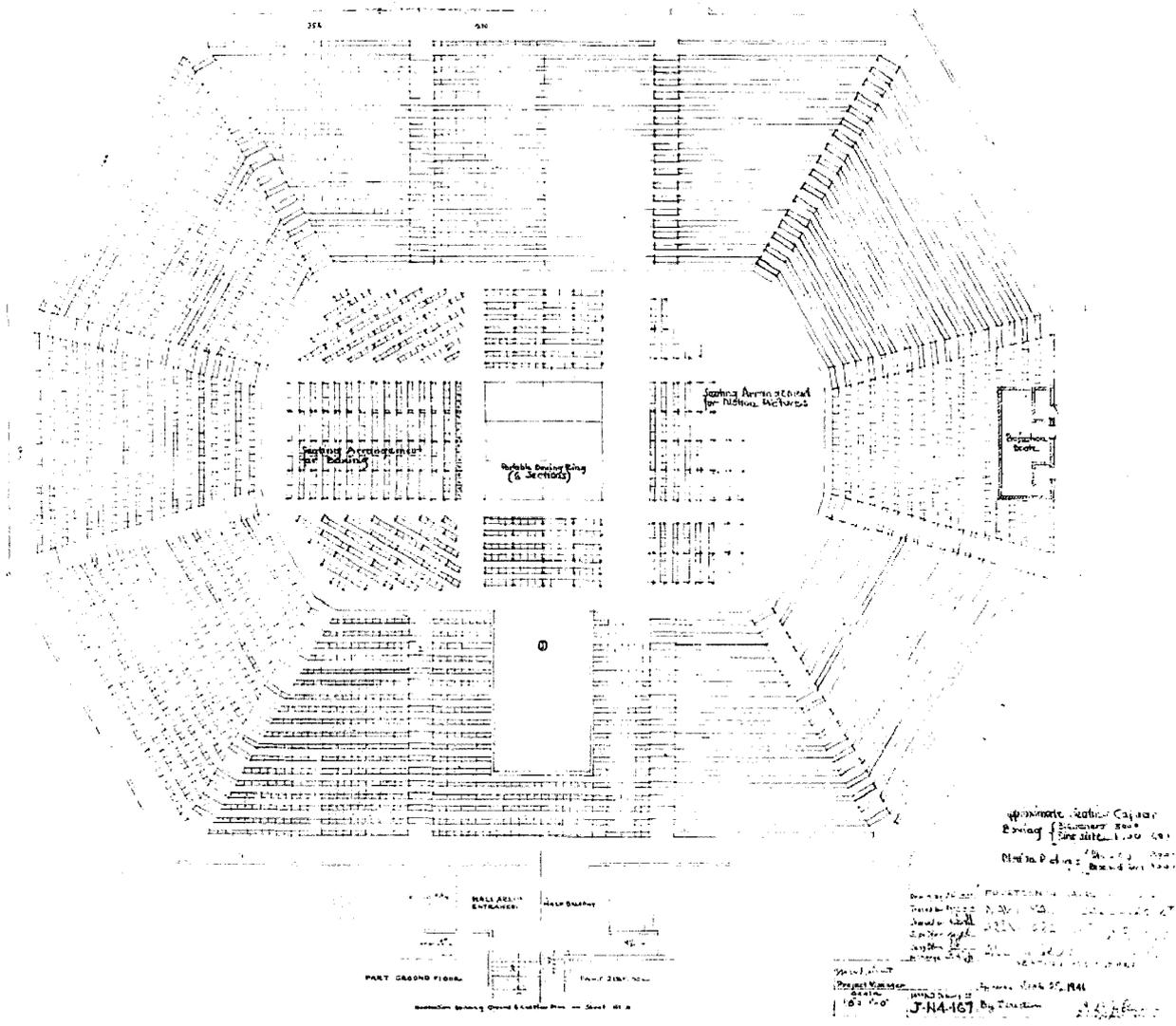
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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**Photograph dated 1944 showing a Warbond rally at Bloch Arena (Building 161). Admiral William Furlong is at the microphone on the left. From Hawaii State Archives, Admiral Furlong Collection, call # PPFUR 3-16.**



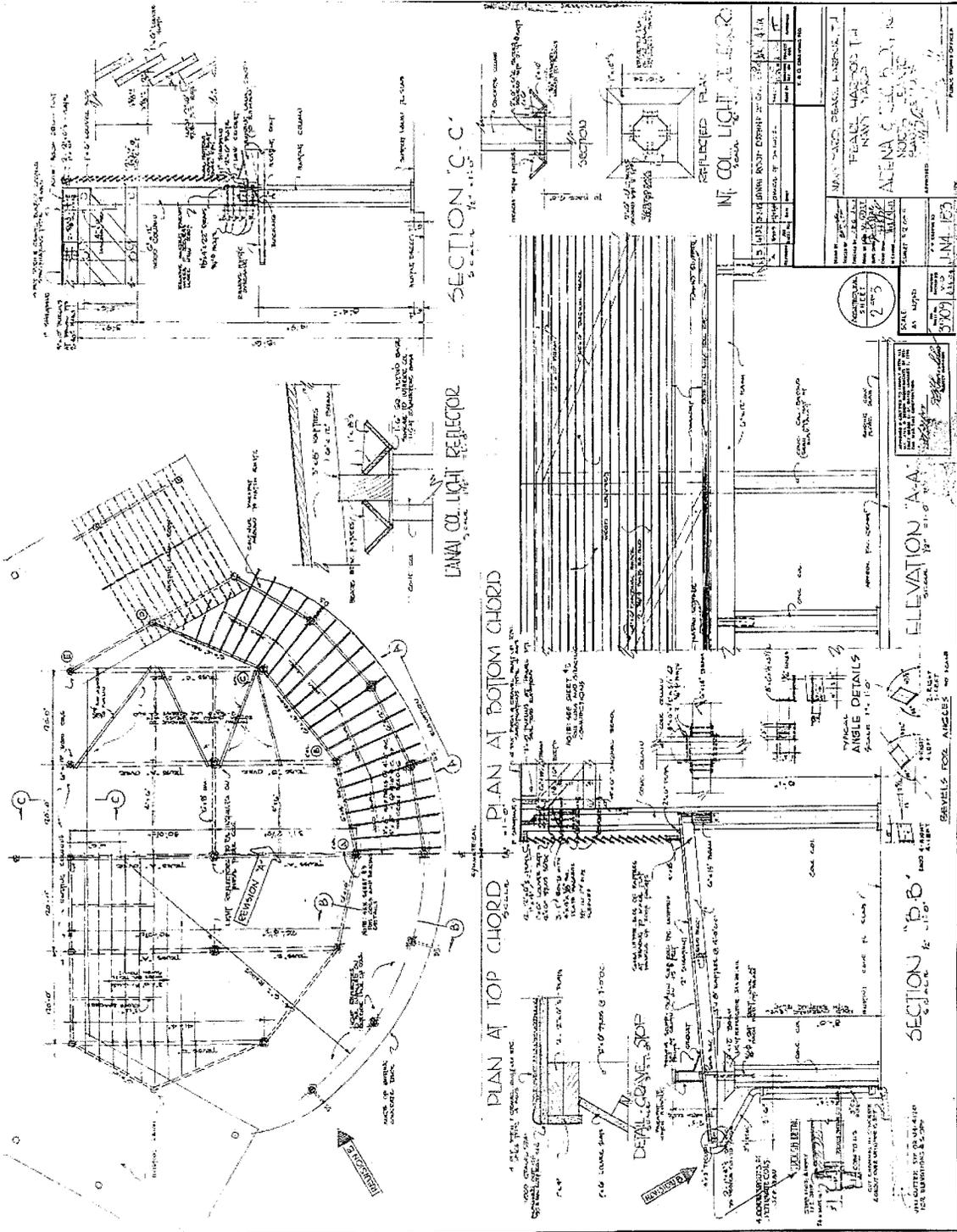
**U.S. NAVAL BASE, PEARL HARBOR, BLOCH RECREATION CENTER AND ARENA  
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Portion of drawing dated June 25, 1941 showing the seating plan for the arena. Note the position of the "portable boxing ring (6 sections)" in the center of the main floor and the seating arrangements, on left of the ring is seating for boxing events and on the right of the ring is the seating for motion pictures. The projection booth is at the right edge of the arena. From NAVFAC Plan Files drwg J-N4-167.



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**Drawing dated February 22, 1944 showing the addition of a roof over the dance floor at Facility 161. From NAVFAC Plan Files drwg J-N4-183.**

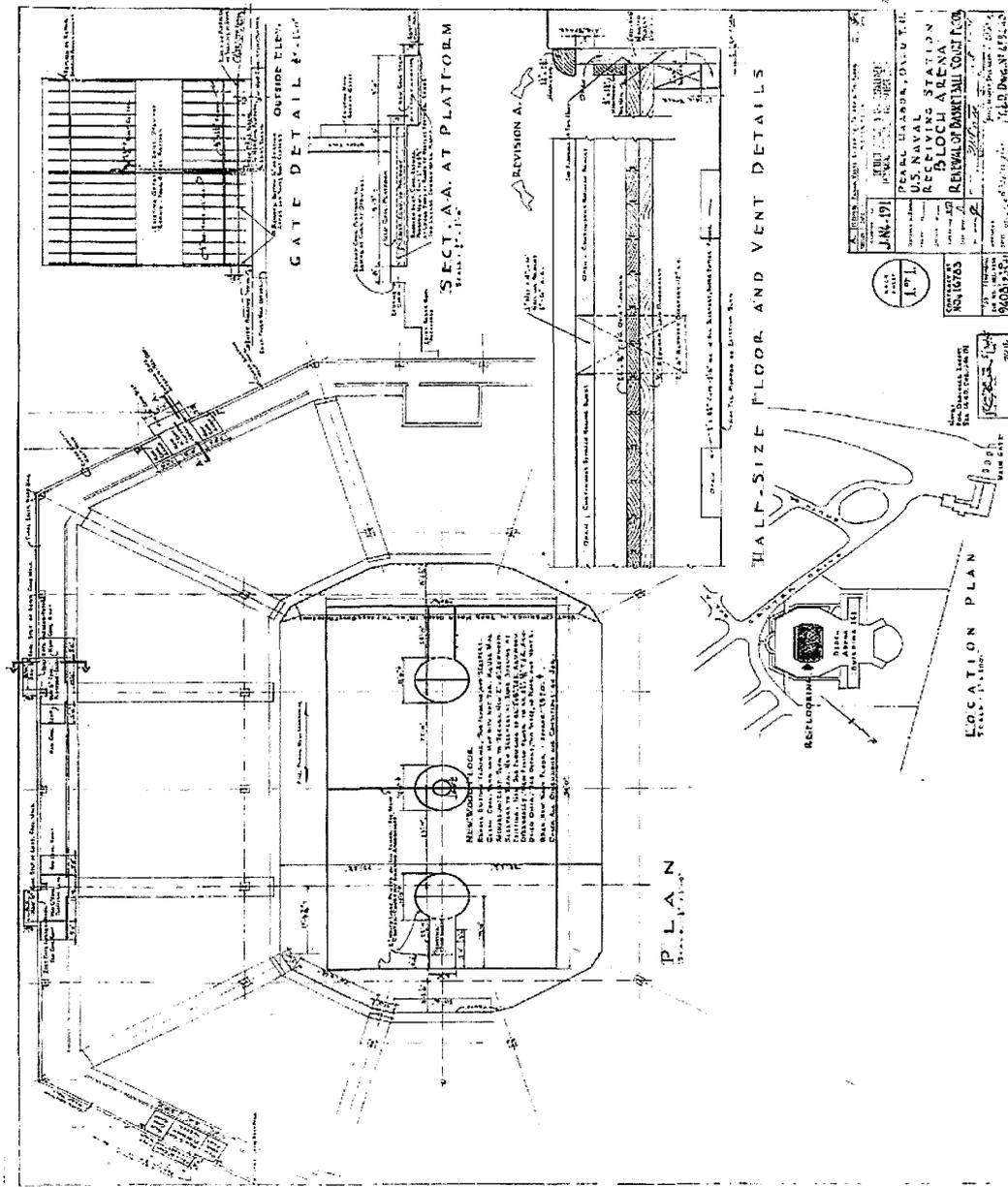


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Drawing dated July 30, 1948 showing the installation of ohia wood strip flooring at the area of Facility 161. From NAVFAC Plan Files drwg J-N4-191. Text at center reads:

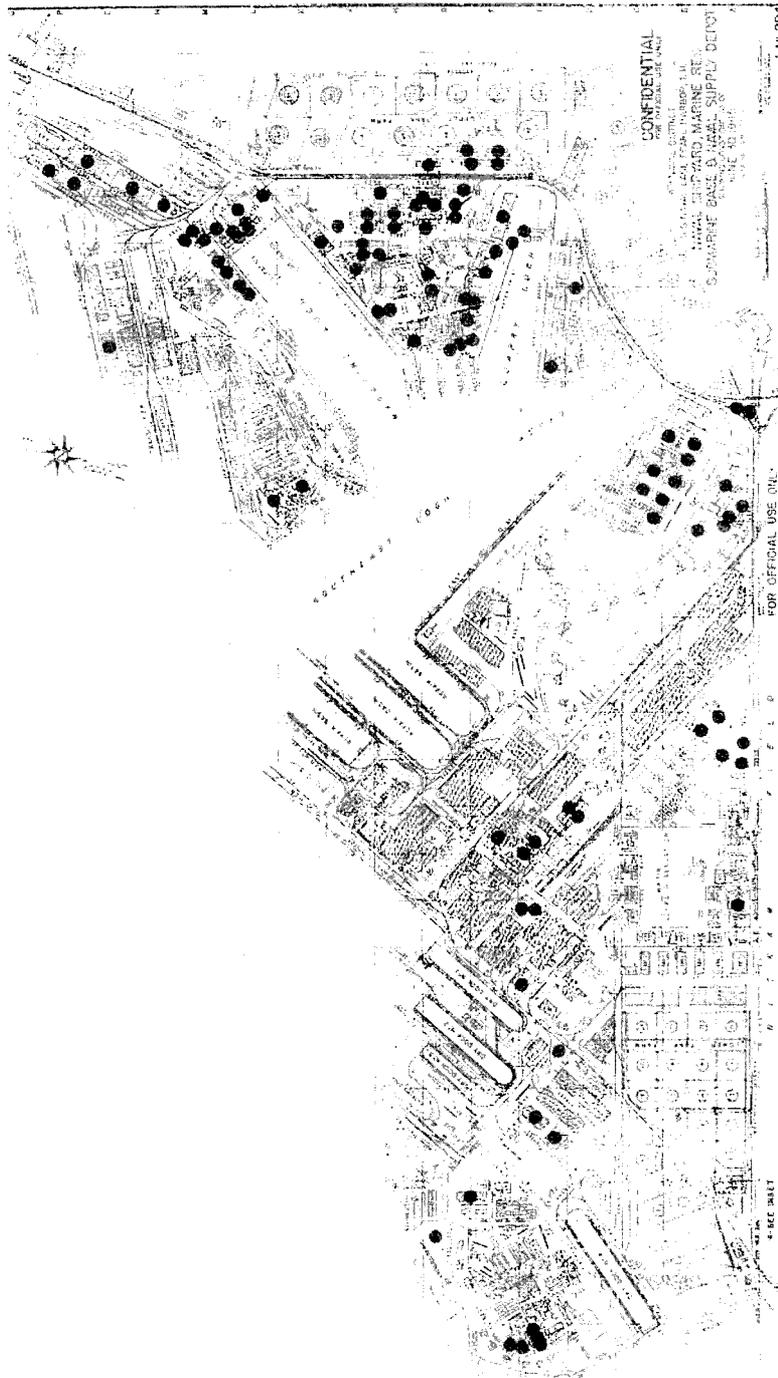
**New Wood Floor**

Remove existing flooring, sub flooring, and sleepers. Clean conc. slab and mop with hot tar. Reuse wire anchors in exist. slab to secure new 2" x 4" redwood sleepers to slab. New sleepers at same spacing as existing. New sub flooring to be 1" x 8" T&G redwood diagonally. New finish floor to be 2 1/4" x 25/32" T&G kiln-dried ohia.



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**Map showing Pearl Harbor buildings as of June 30, 1945. The buildings with added dot highlights were of wooden construction, built during WW II. Compare this map with the map on the next page that shows the base as of June 30, 1941 to see the extent of construction during the war.**



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Map showing Pearl Harbor as of June 30, 1941. Compare with 1945 map on the previous page to see the extent of wooden construction during the war.

