

MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, BASE CHAPEL  
(Freedom Chapel)  
(Building No. 611)  
350 Willow Street, Cantonment Area  
Mountain Home  
Elmore County  
Idaho

HABS No. ID-118-A

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ID  
20-MOUHO,  
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Columbia Cascades System Support Office  
909 First Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, BASE CHAPEL (Freedom Chapel)(Building 611)

HABS No. ID-118-A

Location: 350 Willow Street, Cantonment Area, Mountain Home Air Force Base,  
Mountain Home, Elmore County, Idaho

U.S.G.S. Crater Rings SE Quadrangle (7.5)  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
11.592637.4766567

Present Owner: Department of the Air Force

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Building 611 is significant as an example of the World War II 800 series mobilization-type regimental chapel that used the optional laminated arch roof system rather than the wood-framed truss system.

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**PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

**A. Physical History**

1. **Date of erection:** Building 611 was completed on August 3, 1943 (Real Property Record Form 5-47, Voucher #D-18-44. Mountain Home AFB Real Property Office).
2. **Architect:** The Architect was the Portland District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the plan was a standard regimental chapel CH-1, 800-550 M.
3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The War Department condemned the land for Mountain Home AFB in 1942. It was owned by the U.S. Army from 1943-1948, then transferred to the U.S. Air Force in 1948, with jurisdiction passing from Strategic Air Command to Tactical Air Command to the present Air Combat Command.
4. **Builder-contractor:** It is not clear which contractor built the chapel. A written history indicates that a number of contracting firms were involved in construction at the base, including J. A. Terteling and Sons, Morrison-Knudsen and Triangle Construction, Vernon Brothers, J. O. Jordan, and Mountain Home Builders.
5. **Original plans and construction:** Built in 1943 for \$17,760, this base chapel, measuring 37' x 96', was a Regimental Chapel CH-1, Building 800 series (800-550M) (Real Property Form), built as a mobilization building, designed as part of the large mobilization efforts in 1941-43 to provide sufficient Army Air Fields for the war effort.
6. **Alterations and additions:** In 1962 the chapel was extensively remodeled. Exterior alterations include the addition of two six-over-six light double-hung wood sash windows on the front (south) side. Interior alterations include the enclosure of the choir loft with plywood panels and a picture window, and the replacement of its stepped floor with a level asphalt tile floor, replacement of twelve original wood paneled doors with hollow core doors, the replacement of the original hanging light fixtures with ten pendant lamps, and the creation of a pass-through to the nave from the original cloakroom. In 1980 metal clapboard siding was installed, covering up the louvered vents in the steeple. At some time the cross was removed.

- B. **Historical Context:** The construction of the Base Chapel, Building 611, was part of a nationwide mobilization program of World War II when Army bases were established rapidly to house the millions of Americans called to serve during the war. These Army

bases consisted of temporary wood frame buildings constructed according to a standardized "800 series" design created by the Construction Division of the Army Quartermaster Corps and the Corps of Engineers. This design was used throughout the country in the successful effort to build bases efficiently and rapidly in which to house and train soldiers for combat (Kriv 1991).

Building 611, one of these standard 800 series buildings, was the single regimental chapel built at the Mountain Home Army Air Field as part of a \$13 million dollar construction effort between 1942 and 1943 to construct a bomber training base. The resultant installation, 5,760 acres, included 343 buildings, encompassing barracks, a hospital, mess halls, headquarters, administration and classroom buildings, theater, warehouses, hangars, steam plant, sewage treatment plant, munitions igloos and magazines, and a complex system of three runways, roads, a railroad spur and sidings, and a gunnery range. Several thousand workers, under contract to J. A. Terteling and Sons, Morrison-Knudsen and Triangle Construction, Vernon Brothers, J. O. Jordan, and Mountain Home Builders, enabled the base to be built in record time.

Mountain Home Army Air Base, designated in 1943 as Mountain Home Army Air Field, was used first by the 386th Bombardment Group (Heavy), followed by a number of other heavy bombardment groups using B-24 Liberator bombers. The installation planned to serve as a Boeing B-29 Superfortress training base in 1945, but was instead deactivated at the end of World War II in August of 1945 (SAIC 1991:4-1-4-7; Lewis [1994]:1-9).

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. **Architectural character:** the chapel has architectural interest as a survivor of World War II temporary mobilization construction of a standard regimental chapel. Its use of interior laminated trusses, an alternative to the usual gable roof trusses, is noteworthy.
2. **Condition of fabric:** the exterior of the chapel is in fair condition. It has been vacant since spring of 1993, and several windows in the rear ell are broken and the window trim has peeling paint. The interior condition is excellent.

### B. Description of Exterior

1. **Overall Dimensions:** Building 611 is rectangular in shape and measures 37' in width by 83'3" in length. A shed roof boiler room, measuring 14'4" in width by 19' in length is centered at the rear (north). The height of the steeple is 29' above the roof ridge. The front entrance pavilion extends 2' from the face of the front wall. A small lantern hangs above the entrance doors.

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2. **Foundations:** The chapel sits on a raised reinforced concrete foundation.
3. **Walls:** The walls are wood frame, covered with paper. Currently the walls are clad in metal clapboard siding grained to resemble wood. It is unknown at this time, but presumed that the original wood siding remains underneath the later cladding.
4. **Structural system, framing:** Building 611 uses wood frame construction. The 2" x 12" roof rafters rest on 4 laminated wood trusses. The roof sheathing is 1" x 8" tongue and groove wood.
5. **Porches:** The front porch is made of concrete, with three concrete steps and pipe railings. A smaller concrete porch, also with three steps and a pipe railing, leads to the rear entrance in the ell. The rear porch is sheltered by a shed roof.
6. **Chimneys:** A single red brick chimney with running bond rises approximately 24' from the roof of the boiler room ell.
7. **Openings:**
  - a. **Doorways and doors:** Building 611 has four exterior doors. The double hollow core doors at the front entrance are stained a light oak color, with thumb latch hardware. A single hollow core door is located at the rear entrance in the ell. A wide single hollow core door provides access at the rear to the boiler room.
  - b. **Windows:** There are four six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows on the front of the chapel: two opaque glass windows flanking the front door and two clear glass windows lighting the choir loft. On the long sides of the chapel are five large sixteen-over-sixteen-light double-hung wood sash windows with opaque glass, flanked by two six-over-six-light double-hung wood sash windows. The rear of the chapel as well as the sides of the ell have six-over-six-light double hung wood sash windows. A small window at the rear of the ell has been boarded over.
8. **Roof:**
  - a. **Shape, covering:** The gable roof is covered with green asphalt shingles.

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- b. **Cornice, eaves:** The eaves are shallow with a narrow fascia. There are no gutters.
- c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** The steeple rises to a four-sided cap with flaring eaves resting on rafters with canted ends. A truncated wood support rests on the ridge line of the entrance pavilion.

C. **Description of Interior**

1. **Floor plans:** The total square footage of Building 611 is 3,552. There are ten rooms plus two closets and one passageway. The rooms are the vestibule, a consultation room, cloakroom (with bathroom), choir loft, the nave, the sanctuary, two offices (chaplains' offices), a bathroom, and a boiler room. The passageway connects the two offices behind the sanctuary; the two closets open off this passageway.
2. **Stairways:** A two-flight L-shaped stairway leads from the cloak room to the choir balcony. The newel post and balusters are square polished wood.
3. **Flooring:** The building has wood floors that have been covered with wall to wall carpeting.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** The walls are covered with vertical beveled tongue and groove knotty pine wainscoting five feet high. All wainscoting, trim, and laminated trusses have been stained and varnished. The upper walls, of wallboard, are painted cream color. The ceiling tongue and groove wood is also painted cream color.
5. **Openings:** The double doors leading from the vestibule to the nave are hollow core, of light colored varnished wood, with a single glass light in the upper section of each. All other doors are light colored varnished hollow core with standard hardware.
6. **Decorative features and trim:** Vertical tongue and groove beveled knotty pine wainscoting five feet high covers all interior walls of the nave and sanctuary.
7. **Hardware:** The metal finish knobs and backplates on the doors date to 1955 when the chapel was renovated.
8. **Mechanical equipment:**

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- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The building was heated with a #2 Red Flash steam-boiler located in the rear ell. Ten radiators, five on each side, heat the nave and sacristy. Two former vents in the steeple were covered by the present metal siding. Air-conditioning units have been placed in two windows, one on the north side and one on the east side.
  - b. **Lighting:** The original lighting in the nave was replaced in 1955 with the present bronze-finish lamps with amber opalescent glass panes, hanging from bronze-finish chains (Drawing #MH-104-600-55).
  - c. **Plumbing:** There are two bathrooms. It is not known whether the plumbing fixtures are original.
9. **Furnishings:** The twenty varnished hardwood pews, two rostrums, two pulpit chairs, and the altar were added in 1954 (Voucher 55-5, December 17, 1954).

D. **Site:**

1. **General setting and orientation:** The chapel is set within a rectangular street grid dating from the time of construction. One other original building (Building 612) to the west of the chapel has been removed, so that the chapel stands alone on its block. It is arranged on a northeast/southwest axis, on Willow Street between Third and Fourth Avenues, facing Willow Street.
2. **Historic landscape design:** The chapel is surrounded by a lawn. On the east side of the building, two lilac bushes are located alongside the building approximately 12 and 18 feet from the south face. There is a mature ash tree offset to the south of the southeast corner of the building and an elm along the east side, approximately 20 feet from the south face. Rose bushes flank the front (south-facing) door. Three juniper bushes grow on either side of the cement walkway approaching the south face of the building. Three more juniper bushes form a triangle around the chapel's display sign, off the southwest corner of the building. The west and north sides face only lawns, although there is a mature deciduous tree approximately 35 feet west of the southwest side of the building. An asphalt parking lot lies to the east.

**PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- A. **Original Architectural Drawings:** There are no original drawings for Building 611 at Mountain Home AFB; the Real Property Form indicates that it was constructed according to the 800 series plan number 800-550M. The earliest architectural drawing at the base, #MH-104-600-01, dated April 1, 1954, was for painting the exterior. This drawing looks to be the original design, compared with a photograph of an 800-550 series CH-1 regimental chapel at Fort McCoy (Kriv 1993:331). Other drawings in the Mountain Home AFB Civil Engineering Archives include:

#MH-104-600-06: Repair Exterior Siding. Elev. & Exterior Painting. Bldg 611.  
December 21, 1955

#MH-104-600-35: Repair Roof. Bldgs 611, 601. November 4, 1958

#MH-104-600-55: Modify Chapel 611: Floor Plans & Sections; Electrical and Evap.  
Cooling. May 4, 1962. Includes door, lamp, choir balcony changes.

- B. **Bibliography**

Kriv, Arlene, ed. 1993. *World War II and the U.S. Army Mobilization Program: A History of 700 and 800 Series Cantonment Construction*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior. National Park Service. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record.

Lewis, Albert M. *From Richmond to Mountain Home. A Historical Review of the 366th Wing and its Components*. [1994]. Mountain Home Air Force Base: 366th Wing History Office.

Real Property Form 5-47. S-611.

Real Property Form 1430. Base Chapel 611.

Real Property Form 1438. Regimental Chapel CH-1.

SAIC. 1991. *Mountain Home Air Force Base. World War II Temporary Buildings. Architectural Inventory and Evaluation*. Prepared for United States Air Force, Tactical Air Command and Mountain Home Air Force Base by SAIC. Boise. Volume I Survey Report. Volume II Appendices.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

This Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation project was undertaken as a mitigative recording required by the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), dated March 7, 1996, signed by Mountain Home Air Force Base and the Idaho State Historic Preservation office. The

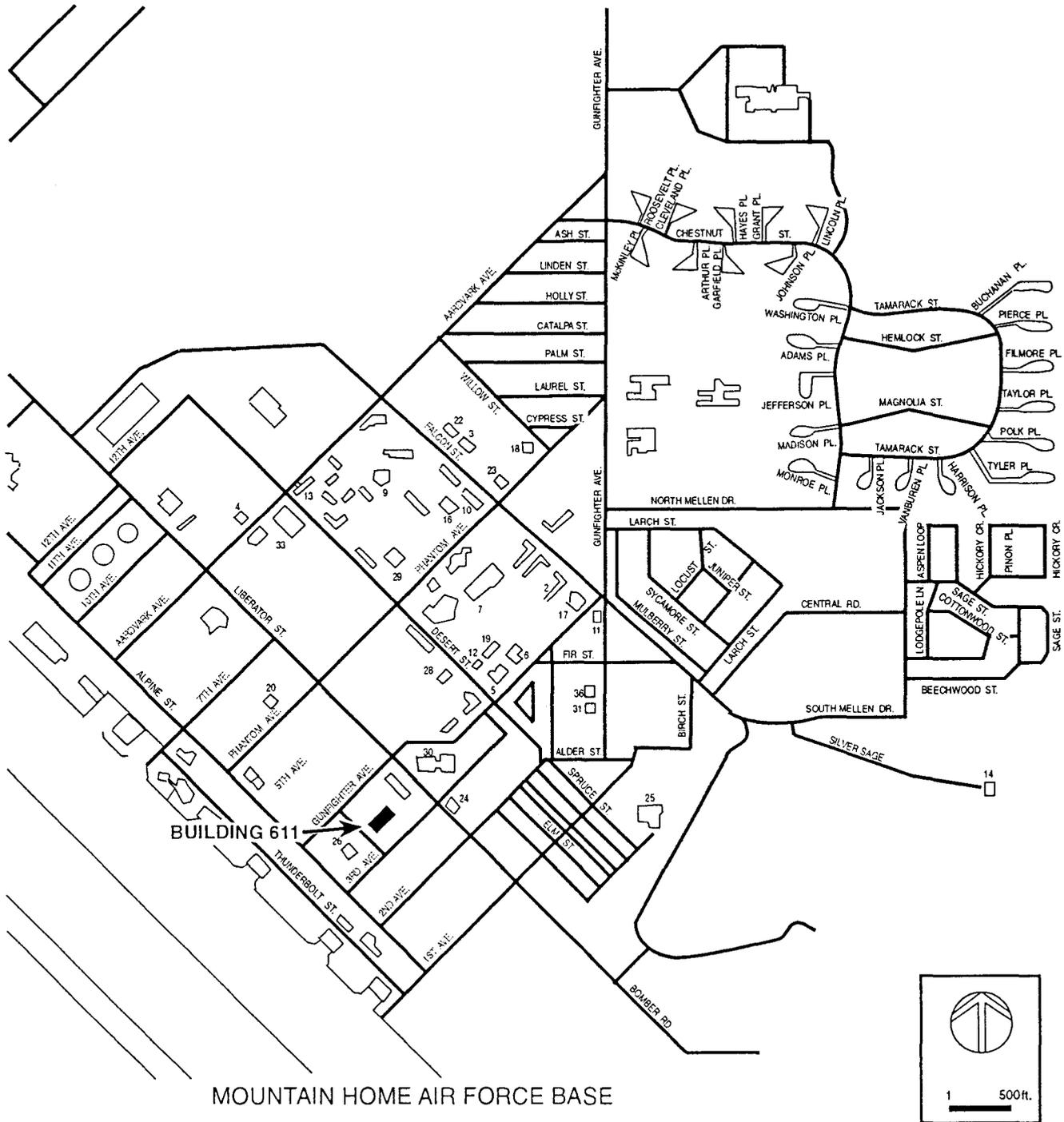
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MOA is necessary because the Air Force plans to dispose of the chapel, either by moving or demolishing it. The MOA contains three stipulations:

- 1) MHAFB shall attempt to find a new site and a new owner for the chapel, in a manner consistent with Air Force regulations.
- 2) Prior to its removal and relocation or demolition, the MHAFB chapel will be subject to photographic documentation in accordance with HABS Level II requirements, consisting of major elevations and details of the interior. Additional documentation shall include a scaled floor plan reflecting modifications, archival reproduction of as-built drawings and historic photographs that may be available, and documentation on an Architectural Data Outline narrative form by a qualified architectural historian.
- 3) If a new owner cannot be found, the chapel shall remain the property of MHAFB and may be disposed of or demolished based upon project requirements, provided the requirements of stipulation 2 above have been completed.

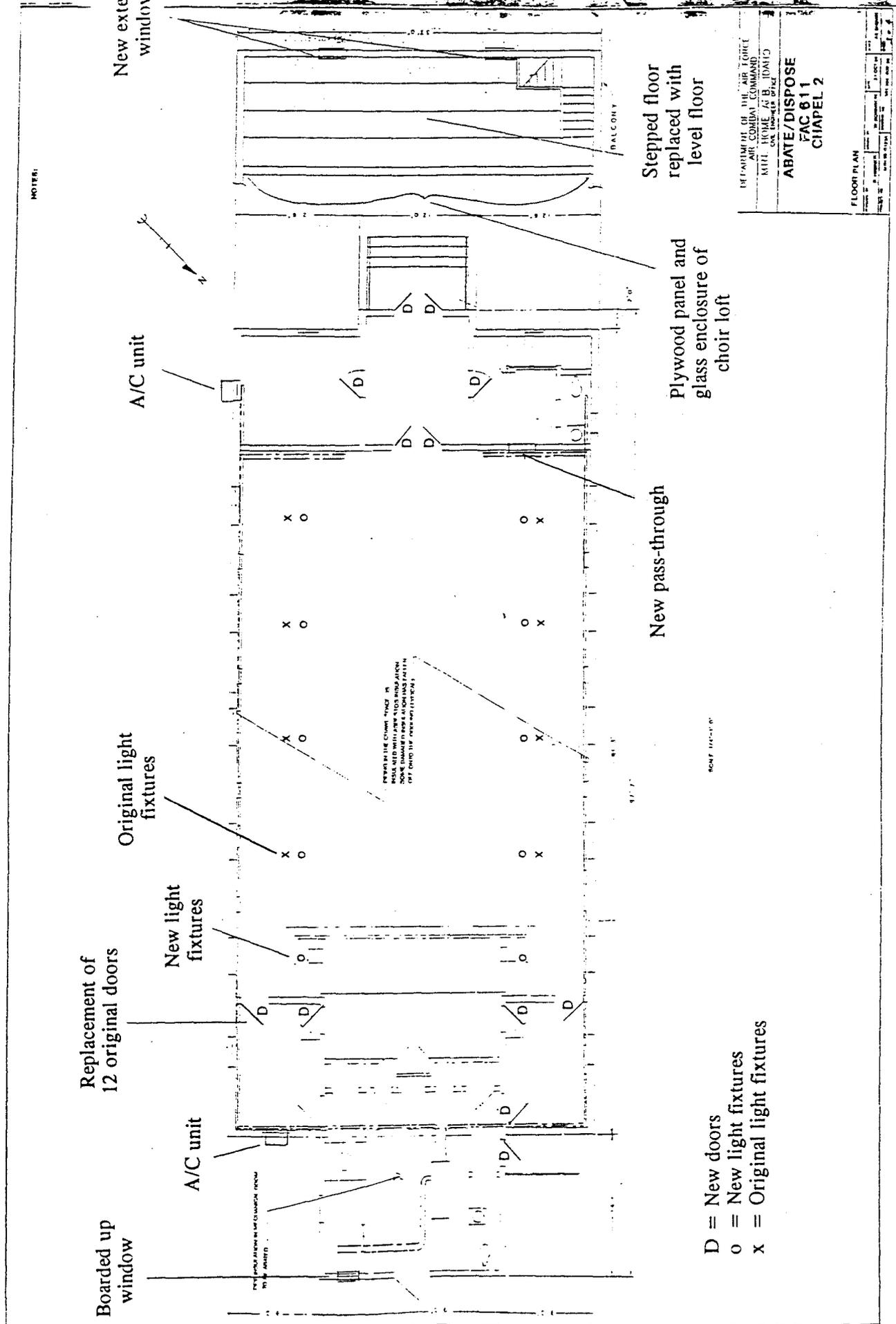
This HABS documentation satisfies the requirements of stipulation 2 of the MOA. Donald W. Watts, preservation planner at the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Robert M. Dews, Natural and Cultural Resource Manager, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Stephanie Toothman of the Seattle National Park Service office, and Teresa Rudolph, of the SAIC office in Boise, Idaho, were involved in determining the scope of the recordation documentation. The documentation was prepared by Alexandra C. Cole, SAIC, Santa Barbara, architectural historian, December 1995. Large-format photography was done by F. Brent Smith of Boise, Idaho.

This report meets the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation, specifically Standard II.2.b. that requires large format (4" x 5") photographs to be archivally processed, with the negatives on safety film, the prints on fiber-based rather than resin-coated paper, and the pictures as black and white rather than color. Additionally it meets Standard III.2.c. that requires the finished report to be submitted on archival bond paper.



**VICINITY MAP MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, BASE CHAPEL**  
**(Building 611, Freedom Chapel)**  
**350 Willow Street, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Mountain Home, Idaho**  
Courtesy Mountain Home Air Force Base

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE AIR COMBAT COMMAND MOUNTAIN HOME AFB, IDAHO 3040 10TH AVENUE, STE 100	
ABATE/DISPOSE	FAC 611 CHAPEL 2
FLOOR PLAN	

FLOOR PLAN SHOWING MODIFICATIONS TO  
MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, BASE CHAPEL  
(BUILDING 611, FREEDOM CHAPEL)