

FORT RODMAN MILITARY RESERVATION, POST EXCHANGE
(Fort Rodman Military Reservation, Building P-28)
In the southwestern portion of site, east of Battery Craig
New Bedford
Bristol County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1256-J

HABS
MASS
3-NEBED,
27J-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

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- Location:** In the southwestern portion of site, east of Battery Craig
Fort Rodman Military Reservation
New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts
- USGS Quadrangle: New Bedford, South
UTM Coordinates: 19.341255.4606180
- Present Owner:** City of New Bedford
Municipal Building
133 William Street
New Bedford, 02740
- Occupant:** Classrooms/Camp Kennedy Summer Camp
- Significance:** The Post Exchange retains its integrity of location, design and materials and workmanship. It was built during the Taft period of coastal fortifications and reflects the growth of Fort Rodman at that time. The building is typical of one of its type constructed according to a standardized plan. It is somewhat typical for an Endicott-Taft Period New England coastal fort in that it is constructed of frame rather than brick.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1906
2. Architect: Quartermaster General's Office
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Army - City of New Bedford/Camp Kennedy
4. Builder: United States Army
5. Original Plans: Constructed from Standard Plan No. 176, filed in the National Archives. Records of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Record Group 77. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. P.I. NM-19, E-411 - Standard Fort Plans, Plan No. 176.
6. Alterations and Additions: Rear porches 1941-45, Handicap ramp ca.1977

B. Historical Context

The Post Exchange building was completed in 1906 as part of the second phase of development during the Endicott-Taft period; a post exchange was apparently provided for the larger Army installations (Eastman 1988:12). Like most of the buildings erected at Fort Rodman in this period, the Post Exchange was constructed according to a standardized plan produced by the Quartermaster General's Office, in this case Plan No. 176. This Post Exchange is typical of such buildings except for its frame construction, for most contemporary buildings erected at New England coastal forts were of brick.

The plans give a good indication of the original use of this building, although the layout of Fort Rodman Post Exchange may differ from that on the standardized plan because the front entrances of the building at Fort Rodman were in the wings while the entrance specified on the plan was in the left-hand bay of the facade. In any case, the rooms include an office, reading room, store, lunch room, kitchen, billiard room, several storerooms, and in the left wing and rear ell, a bowling alley.

This building continued to be designated a Post Exchange through the 1930s; in 1941 it was described as "regimental headquarters" and in 1945 as the "NCO club" (1941 and 1945 maps). In 1959 the building was still being used as an officers club; today it serves as classrooms for special needs students.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. **Architectural Character:** The Post Exchange (P-28) at Fort Rodman is a good example of a building of this type constructed by the Army according to a standardized plan at the beginning of the 20th century.
2. **Condition of Fabric:** The building retains many of its original features and is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior/Interior

The present building is one-story, nine-by four bays with a four-by-two bay hip-roofed rear ell. The main building also has a hip roof covered with slate, a rear chimney, a hip-roofed dormer at the front, scalloped brackets under the eaves, the exterior sided with clapboards, and an ashlar foundation. On the facade, the center five bays are recessed, forming a U-shaped entry with a covered porch; the porch is supported by chamfered porch posts with a molding at the top. There is a door in the center front and two others, one in each wing; that in the east wing has transom lights. There is a triple window on the front of the left wing; otherwise, the windows are six-over-six double-hung wood sash with plain surrounds. The rear elevation is irregular because of the addition of several porches; the one on the left (east) has wood drop siding (a form of tongue-and-groove boards used during World War II) and a shed roof; that on the right (west) is finished with clapboards and has a flat roof.

A comparison of the present building with the original plans and the completion photograph indicate that there have been a number of alterations. The center entrance door is an addition; the original entrances were those on the two wings, and the door with the transom lights in the east wing is probable original. The porches and sheds at the rear are clearly additions, and one of the original four sets of paired windows on the west side has been replaced by a double door. The recently added handicap ramp on the east and south sides obscures the ashlar foundation to some extent. Despite these changes, the building retains many of its original features and finishes.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Drawings

National Archives. Records of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Record Group 77. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

E.393 - Completion Reports. Box 222 - Fort Rodman, Mass.

P.I. NM-19, E.411 - Standard Fort Plans, Plan No. 176

Historical Information

Seasholes, Nancy

Office of Public Archeology - Boston University

Architectural Inventory of the Fort Rodman Military Reservation in New Bedford, MA
Office of Public Archeology Report of Investigations No. 72

Site Plans

Post Engineer's Office

1945 Fort Rodman: Water System. Map on file at U.S.

Quartermaster's Corps

1941 Fort Rodman: Sewer Systems and Drainage. Map on file at the U.S. Army Base,
Fort Rodman, New Bedford, MA.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The City of New Bedford entered into a consent decree with the Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the Conservation Law Foundation in 1986 to construct a secondary wastewater treatment facility as a result of the city's violation of the Clean Water Act. The Project includes a new secondary wastewater treatment plant at Fort Rodman, decommissioning and demolition of the existing primary plant, improvements to historic Fort Taber and development of Taber Park, and rehabilitation of the existing 60-inch outfall. The majority of buildings comprising the Fort Rodman Military Reservation will be demolished; several will be retained or relocated and renovated for community purposes. Following completion of the plant, the existing primary plant will be demolished and the Fort Rodman site will be restored, including significant mitigation in the form of Taber Park. Taber Park will be a community recreational park, around the site's existing national register-listed fort and batteries. The park will provide an appropriate setting for the historical resources of Fort Taber and the batteries, as well as recreation opportunities such as picnic areas, multipurpose playfields, and trails and paths. The Memorandum of Agreement for the Project was developed between the City of New Bedford, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the National Park Service, the Department of the Army, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. EPA, as enforcer of the Clean Water Act, is the primary agency for ensuring NHPA compliance. The US Army Corps of Engineers is also involved as a holder of property restrictions on the site. The National Park Service is involved due to property restrictions.

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Prepared by: Elizabeth Beardsley, based on studies and documentation performed by Donald G. Jones and Nancy C. Seasholes, Office of Public Archaeology, Boston University (historical and archaeological research and analysis) and Martin Stupich (photography).

Title: Engineer
Affiliation: Camp Dresser & McKee Inc.
Date: 1992

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