

FORT RODMAN MILITARY RESERVATION,
ENLISTED MEN'S BARRACKS
(Fort Rodman Military Reservation, Building T-11)
Center of the complex
New Bedford
Bristol County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1256-P

HABS
MASS
3-NEBED,
27P-

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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- Location:** Center of the complex
Fort Rodman Military Reservation
New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts
- USGS Quadrangle: New Bedford, South
UTM Coordinates: 19.341145.4606375
- Significance:** The Enlisted Men's Barracks is a good examples of a World War II "temporary" building constructed according to standardized plans. Ten Enlisted Men's Barracks were constructed at Fort Rodman; three best examples (Buildings T-2, T-3 , T-11) were selected for documentation.
- Description:** The Enlisted Men's Barracks (Building T-11) was three-by-eight bays, two stories high, and had a gabled roof; the exterior was finished with wood drop siding -- a type of tongue-and-groove boards laid horizontally -- and the rood with asphalt shingles. The roof eaves continued across the gable ends and all barracks originally had a second continuous eave, called an aqua media, over the first floor windows. The foundation sill was set on concrete piers capped with a metal termite shield; these footings were masked with a continuous wooden "skirt". Windows were double-hung eight-over-eight wood sash.
- The front of the barracks building was in a gable end and was distinguished by doors on the first and second floors. The original doors had five horizontal panels; these were apparently replaced by doors with a four-panel light at the top and three horizontal panels underneath. The second floor opened onto a small wood balcony with a railing and provided access to a fire ladder hung on the side of the building.
- The last two bays on the first floor on the left-hand side were occupied by a double door with three small square openings above it. The largest opening, the one next to the rear corner, was probably related to the bathrooms, which were also at the rear of the building. The rear gable end had high first floor windows, again probably for bathrooms, and on the right side of the building there was a pair of doors in the seventh bay.
- Building T-11 has wide clapboards below the line of the first floor windows. The building still has wood skirts and visible termite shields, and wood balconies. The original wood ladders have been replaced with metal ones. T-11 has been renovated with four-pane three-panel doors and metal combination screen/storm windows and handicap ramps.
- History:** The Enlisted Men's Barracks were all built according to standardized

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plans 700-1165 to 700-1172, part of the "700 Series" of buildings that the Army erected at the beginning of World War II. The design of the 700 Series barracks was developed in the 1930s and was determined by various exigencies of the times. By August 1939 it had been decided that two-story barracks would be more economical to build than one-story prefabs, and the emergency created by the beginning of World War II in Europe determined that these would be temporary wooden structures rather than "semi-permanent" steel buildings.

Because the United States was not at war, the hundreds of thousands of troops mobilized in 1940 and 1941 had to be housed indefinitely in this country. This need for more substantial housing was a major factor in determining barracks design as was the public expectation of what constituted acceptable housing for "our boys." The rising standard of living between the two wars created a demand of barracks with indoor plumbing, central heating, and electric lighting. Finally, the actual construction plans had to meet the criteria of speed, simplicity, conservation of materials, flexibility, and safety.

The resulting 700 Series barracks building was designed for 63 men. The first floor had a dormitory for 23 men, two rooms each for two non-commissioned officers, a heater room, and shower and toilet rooms. The second floor had a dormitory for 30 men and two rooms for non-commissioned officers, one for two men and one for four.

Most 700 Series barracks had aqua medias, which were designed to keep the cots from getting wet when the windows were open during rain and to protect the wood siding from excessive weathering and rotting. The windows were screened, and, in colder climates, extra insulation, a vestibule, and storm windows were provided. Although it was intended to leave the exterior unpainted, the painter's lobby convinced the army otherwise and, in November 1940, it was ordered that all buildings be painted "a standard ivory...with doors of warm gray."

The ubiquitous "temporary" barracks buildings were designed to last 5 to 20 years but today, 50 years later, at least 3000 are still standing on Army property. Additional examples of barracks buildings still stand on non-Army property (such as Fort Rodman).

Source: Architectural Inventory Form, on file at Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA.

Historian: Nancy Seasholes, Boston University Office of Public Archaeology, 1989.