Naval Air Station Kingsville
Military Highway, 6.0 miles east of
intersection of Military Highway and
U.S. Highway 77
Kingsville Vicinity
Kleberg County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3468

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NAVAL AIR STATION KINGSVILLE

HABS No. TX-3468

Location: Military Highway, 6.0 miles east of intersection of Military Highway and U.S. Highway 77
Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas
Kingsville vicinity
Kleberg County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Kingsville East, Texas, Quadrangle (7.5) and
U.S.G.S. Ricardo, Texas., Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
A 14.619480.3044410 B 14.619480.3038560
C 14.615350.3038560 D 14.615350.3044410

Present Owner: United States of America
Department of the Navy
c/o Chief of Naval Education and Training
250 Dallas Street
Pensacola, Florida 32508

Present Occupant: Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas

Present Use: Naval aviation training

Significance: Naval Air Station (NAS) Kingsville is significant for its contributions to naval aviation during the World War II and Cold War eras. It was established in 1942 as an auxiliary station in support of advanced pilot training activities at nearby NAS Corpus Christi. Construction at the station began in February 1942 and commissioning ceremonies occurred on July 4, 1942. The Navy's use of wood frame construction, considered "temporary," illustrates the Navy's need to quickly and efficiently erect essential training facilities. The buildings also are indicative of the rapid United States military mobilization after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. A few buildings are of brick construction indicating a more permanent role, or a safety requirement. The entire base served as a facility for advanced pilot training during World War II, and thirty-three historic resources survive as direct physical links to this important period in the development of naval aviation and military and political history. Soon after World War II, the Department of the Navy deemed NAS Kingsville and many other bases across the nation in excess of its needs and ordered their abandonment. The Texas Arts & Industries College subsequently established a satellite campus at the former military base and used many of its facilities for agricultural-related instruction and education. However, in 1951 the Navy exercised its option to reoccupy the base after the outbreak of war in Korea and reactivated the base as a permanent facility. NAS Kingsville resumed its role as a training center for Navy fighter pilots and continued its close affiliation with NAS Corpus Christi. The use of jet-powered aircraft in the post World War II era necessitated many improvements to existing facilities and the construction of

several new ones. Throughout the Cold War, NAS Kingsville continued to be used as a training center for Navy pilots. NAS Kingsville remains a prominent fixture in the community.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Major phases: 1942-1945, 1951-1959, 1973-1990.

2. Architect: NAS Kingsville was constructed primarily from plans developed by Robert and Company, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, and Corpus Christi, Texas, for the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks.

3. Original and subsequent owners:
United States of America, Department of the Navy (1942 to present).
City of Kingsville / County of Kleberg (revocable lease) (1946 to 1951)
Texas College of Arts and Industries, now Texas A & M University (sublease) (1946 to 1951)

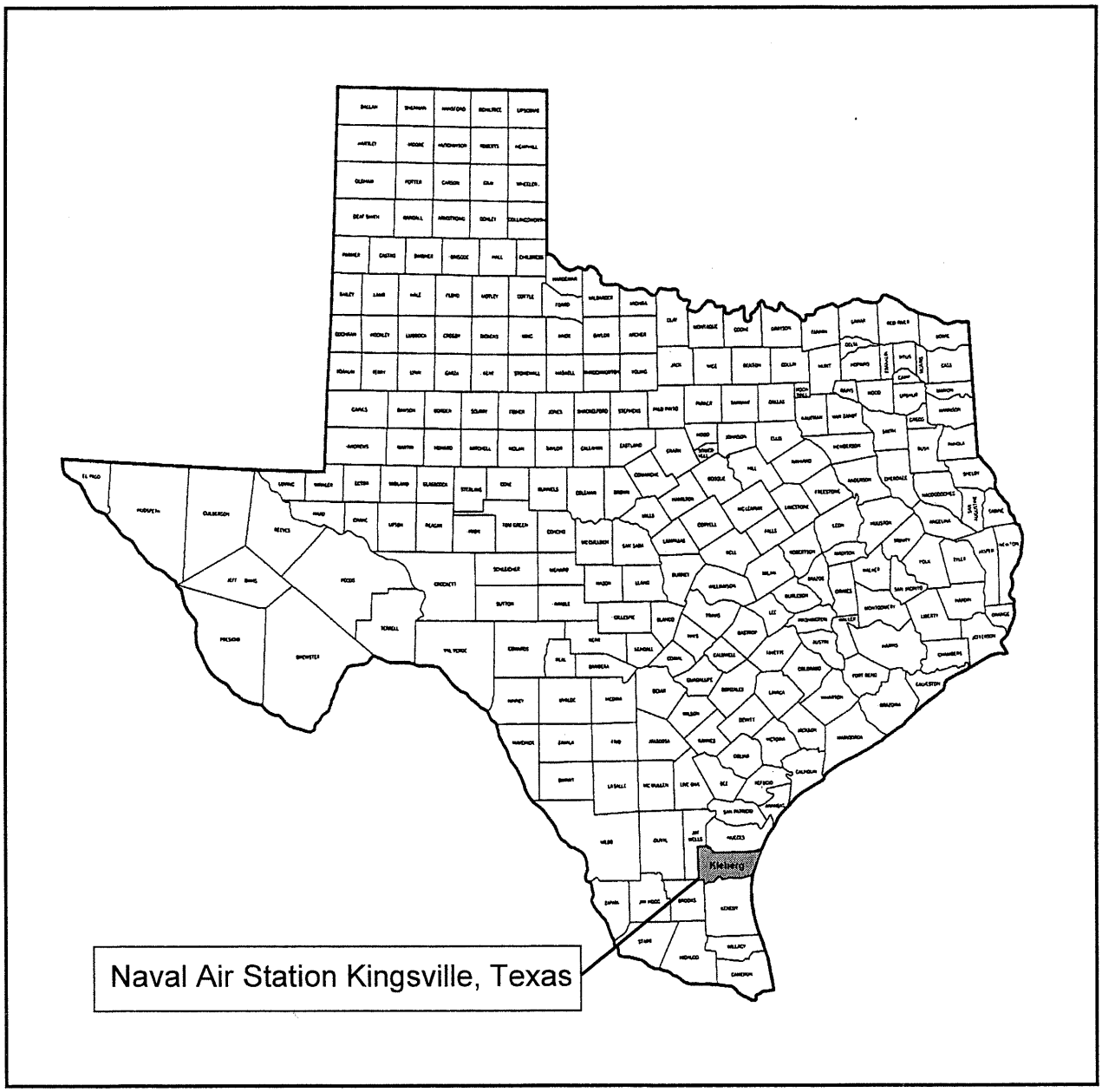
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The original general contractor for the base was Brown-Bellows-Columbia, Houston, Texas.

5. Original plans and construction: Reproductions of original plans for the building are available at the Public Works Department, NAS Kingsville, Texas, and at the Public Works Department, NAS Corpus Christi, Texas.

B. Historical Context:

Introduction
In 1942, during the Herculean efforts to train the necessary pilots for combat missions during World War II, naval officials established Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Kingsville, known only as "P-4" at the time. Part of a national network of similar air stations, "P-4" served initially as one of six auxiliary air stations and landing fields for the regional Naval Air Station (NAS) Corpus Christi. With its physical evolution and peacetime changes in mission, NAS Kingsville (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) now represents an important chapter in the Navy's efforts to combine aviation with more traditional naval responsibilities.

Early in the twentieth century the Navy signaled its commitment to the tactical use of aircraft. Shortly after establishing its initial flight school in Pensacola, Florida, in 1914, the Navy's interest in aircraft combat capabilities was heightened by the United States' participation in World War I. Naval aviation assumed a considerably more complex mission during this time, and experimentation with the role of aircraft in a modern military framework continued during the 1920s and 1930s. However, Congress waited until the late 1930s to appropriate sufficient military budgets for the construction of new naval



Texas County Map Source: Texas Department of Transportation

Figure 1

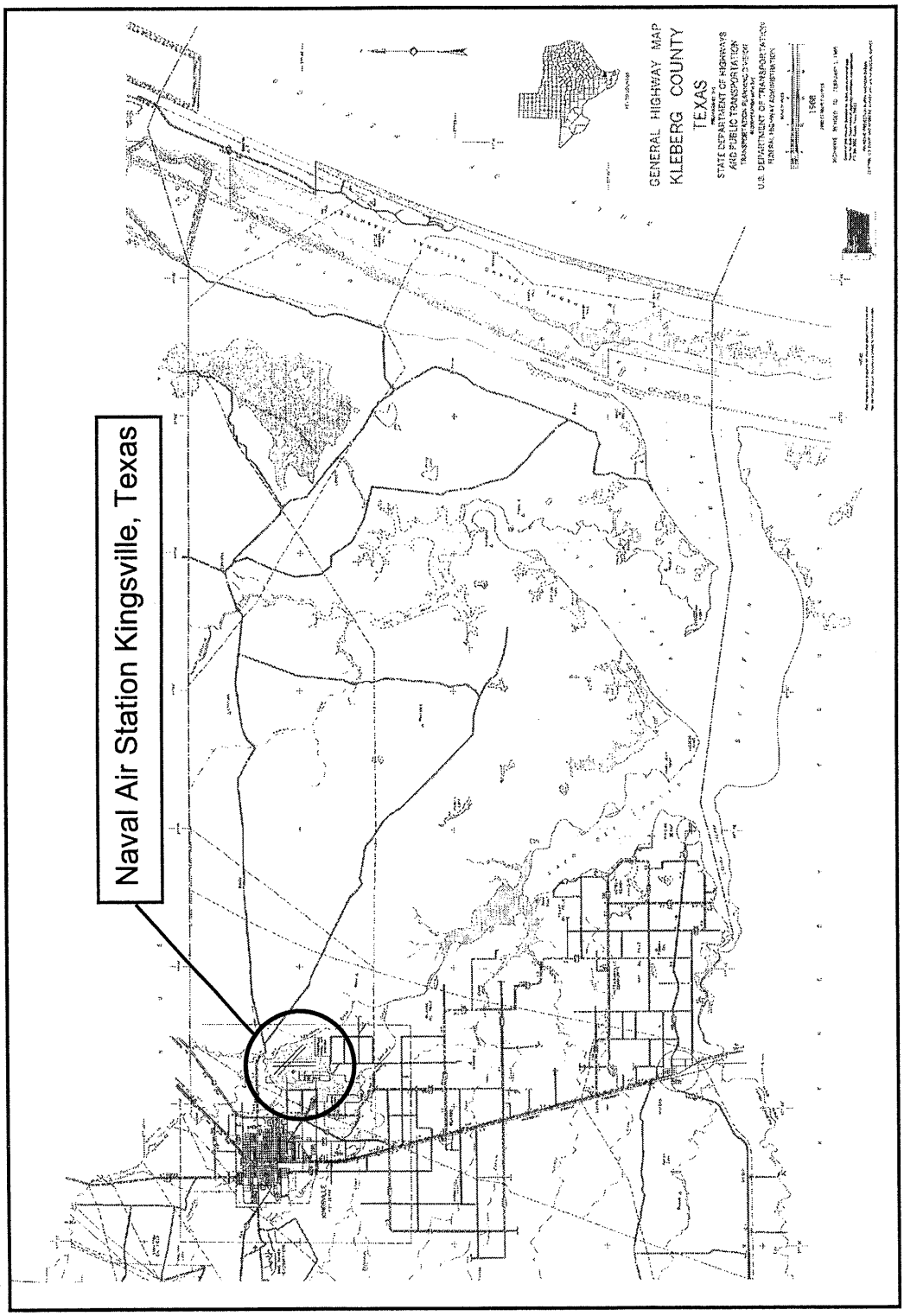
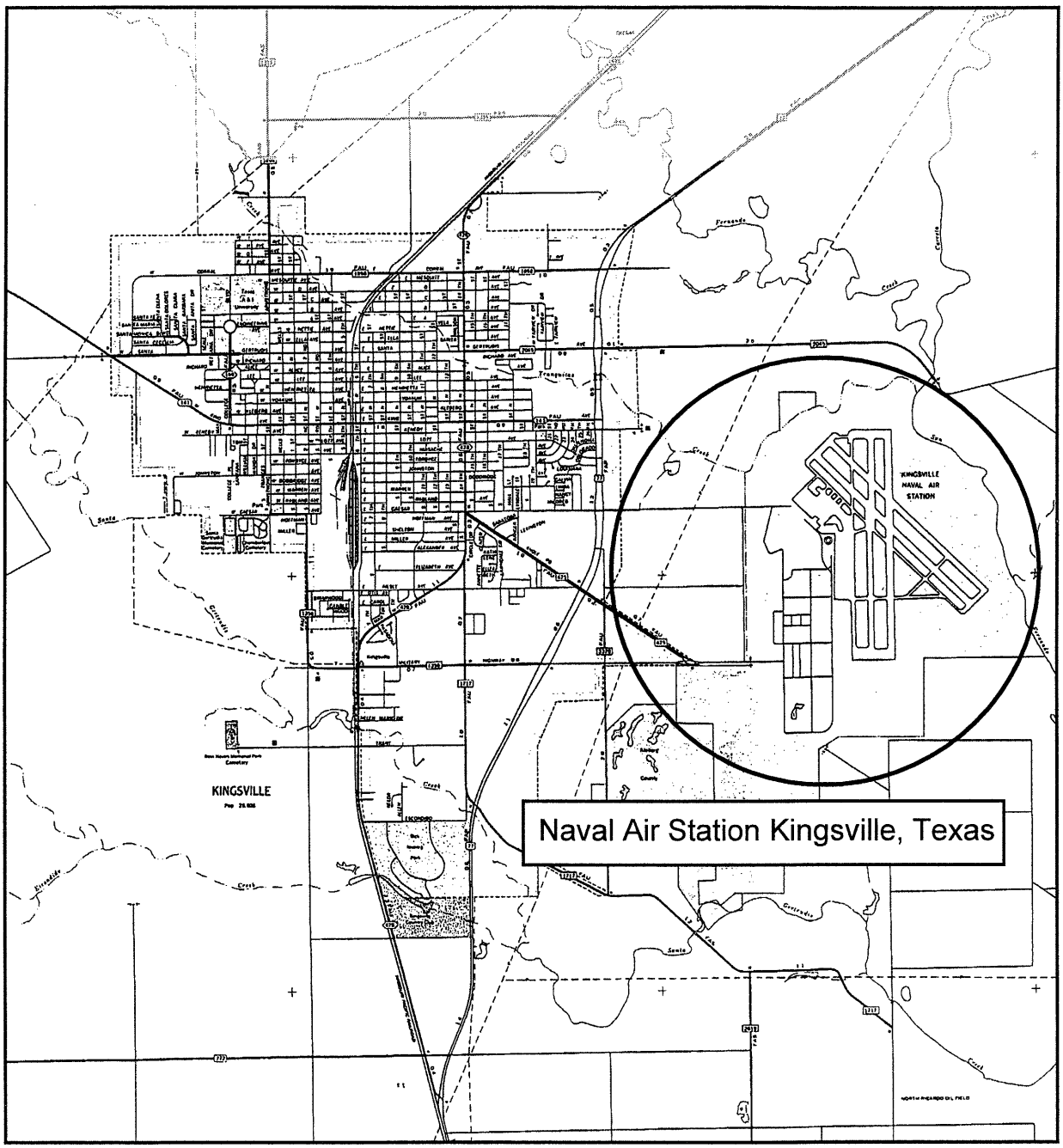
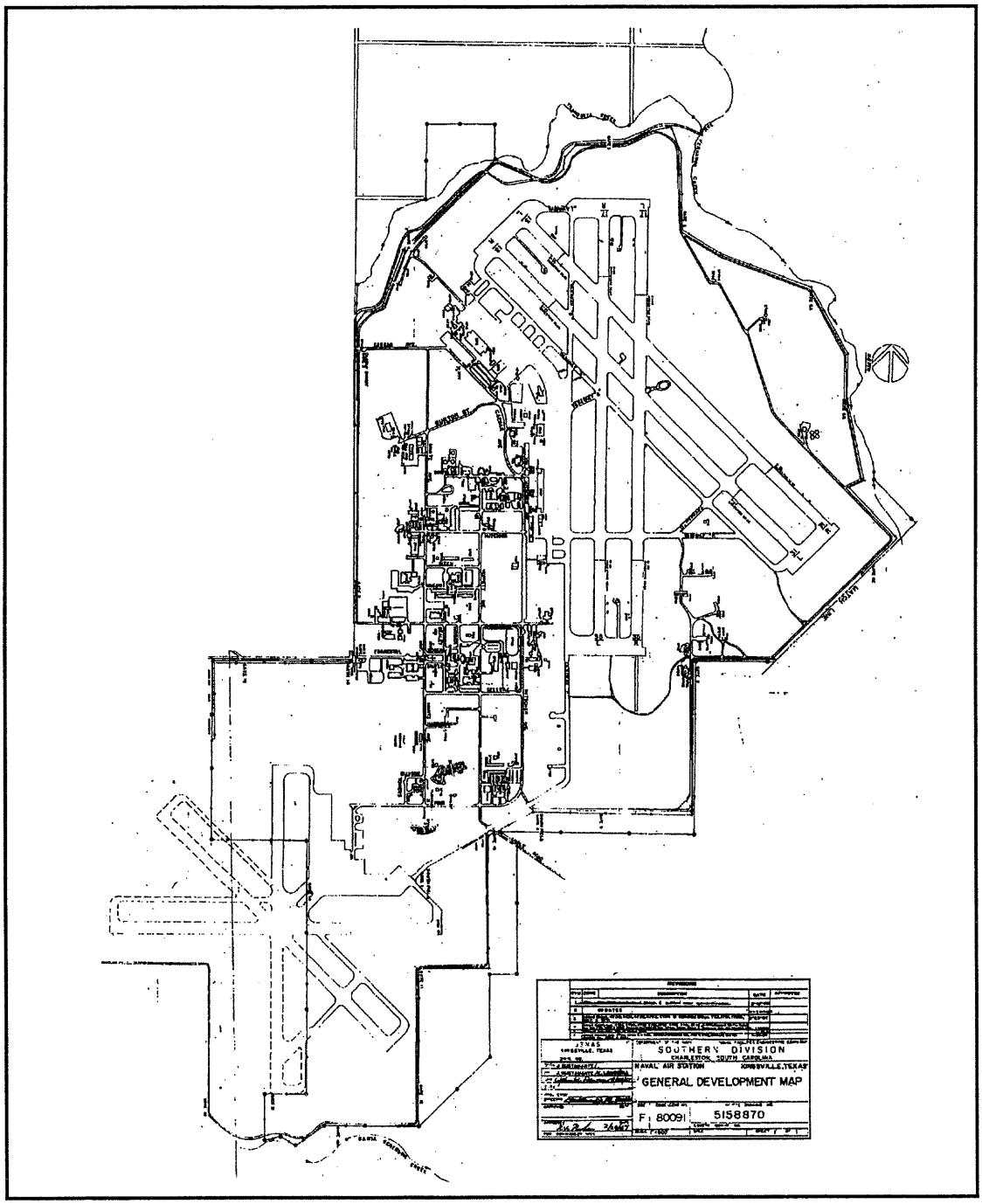

Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas
GENERAL HIGHWAY MAP
KLEBERG COUNTY
TEXAS

Figure 2



Source: Texas Department of Transportation, 1968, updated 1986

Figure 3



General Development Map, Naval Air Station Kingsville, 1987
Source: Public Works Office, Naval Air Station Kingsville

Figure 4.

bases featuring aircraft facilities. The inevitability of American involvement in the war brewing in Europe encouraged Congress to appropriate significantly larger sums of public money toward military applications. Among other uses toward which the Navy applied the funding, these larger budgets allowed for the purchase of additional aircraft and flight training equipment.

Naval officials soon recognized that the sole Navy flight school in Pensacola could not produce the number of pilots necessary for projected demands. The Navy appointed a board, under Rear Admiral A. J. Hepburn, to scout locations for new facilities. Dated December 1, 1938, the resulting Hepburn Board Report recommended two categories for air station development: "A" for early completion, and "B" for later completion.[1] One of the identified "B" sites sat on a peninsula in the Gulf of Mexico, 15 miles southeast of Corpus Christi, Texas.

The Navy soon chose the bayfront site in south Texas, known locally as Flour Bluff, as the location of a major new naval air station. Commissioned in March 1941, and completed soon thereafter, NAS Corpus Christi became the largest naval air training station in the world. During the global conflict of the 1940s, NAS Corpus Christi required six auxiliary air stations in the South Texas region to fulfill its mission, along with several less developed, though equally necessary, landing fields. Naval contractors quickly built four auxiliary air stations near Flour Bluff that shared some common facilities and administrative duties with NAS Corpus Christ. Concurrently, contractors built two other, relatively self-contained auxiliary air stations in adjacent counties, NAAS Chase Field in Bee County and "P-4" (NAAS Kingsville) in Kleberg County.

Naval officials commissioned "P-4" on July 4, 1942. When establishing the facility the Navy charged the personnel at the auxiliary air field with the express mission of training Navy pilots for combat duty. Naval and civilian staff carried out this mission in the context of a national emergency that affected every aspect of civilian and military life. Considered temporary or semipermanent construction, most facilities at NAAS Kingsville were rapidly built under tight construction schedules. The facilities accommodated the auxiliary air station's training mission, which evolved over the duration of World War II. Designed initially to educate pilots in advanced techniques such as aircraft carrier landings, the station at Kingsville also facilitated the boot camp training of thousands of raw recruits shortly after it opened in 1942. The station's training mission eventually changed to provide naval pilots with intermediate-level instruction toward the end of the war.

Once the war ended, stewardship of NAAS Kingsville reverted to a local city–county board for nearly five years under a revocable lease, during which time many of the buildings were occupied by the students and programs of Kingsville's Texas College of Arts and Industries (later the Kingsville campus of Texas A&M University). The Navy reclaimed the auxiliary air station during the Korean Conflict. Increases in congressional appropriations for military facilities during the 1950s Cold War era, and again during the 1970s and 1980s, allowed the Navy to replace many original facilities with more modern, permanent buildings. Some of the original World War II buildings remain, with minor retrofitting to accommodate the air station's evolving mission. Along with their other functions, the buildings represent important military activities during World War II and the Korean Conflict.

Early History of Naval Aviation Training

The Navy became involved with flight applications for naval combat preparedness shortly after the Wright brothers' first successful flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903. In 1910, the Navy assigned Captain Washington Chambers to follow the progress of general aviation to determine the possibility of its relevance to naval operations. Chambers' initial efforts guided the subsequent development of the naval air service. Although aircraft carrier operations eventually became a primary focus for naval pilots, civilian Eugene Ely is recognized as the first person to take off and land from the deck of a ship. Ely performed this remarkable feat in 1911, with a small Curtiss biplane. Airplane builder Glen Curtiss, with Captain Chambers' assistance, lobbied the Navy to invest in his aircraft after this demonstrated success. Interested in the possibilities of aviation at sea, the Navy sponsored Lieutenant T. Gordon Ellyson's training at the civilian Glen Curtiss Aviation Center in San Diego, California.[2] Ellyson graduated as the Navy's first pilot in 1911. The Navy purchased its first aircraft on May 8 of that same year.[3]

In September 1911, the Navy established its first air encampment at Annapolis, Maryland, near the U. S. Naval Academy. The Secretary of the Navy shortly thereafter appointed an Aeronautics Board, and charged its members with considering the future of aviation in association with naval military operations. Among the recommendations of the Board was the establishment of a center for aeronautics at Pensacola, Florida, as well as the attachment of an aircraft to every major battleship and cruiser.[4] Within months, the Navy transferred the existing aviation personnel—nine officers and twenty-seven enlisted men—to Pensacola from their encampment at Annapolis. By mid-winter, 1914, the Navy's first flight school was in operation.

Consistent with President Woodrow Wilson's interest in building up a Navy second to none, the Navy began a major campaign to include flight operations in its budgetary allocations. Congress appropriated $500 million over a three-year period to expand the Navy's flight program.[5] With the United States' entry into World War I, the Navy's flight operations grew substantially. Naval pilots featured prominently in air battles: bombing and patrol missions flown by naval aircraft accounted for nearly 800,000 miles logged. Naval aircraft dropped in excess of 120,000 pounds of bombs on enemy targets on land and water, and sank or damaged twelve submarines.[6] These contributions to modern warfare did not go unnoticed by senior Navy personnel.

As a result of such demonstrated flexibility in accomplishing military objectives, the Navy aggressively pursued strengthening and refining its air fleet. The first aerial crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by a Navy pilot was completed on May 27, 1919, and the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Langley* (technically, a converted collier) was commissioned three years later, in 1922.[7] During this time, the Navy altered its organizational structure to accommodate the growing importance of aviation in the military context. Congress authorized the new Bureau of Aeronautics (BOA) in 1921 to oversee critical aircraft improvements. The Bureau encouraged and funded such improvements as better radios and instrumentation, and the development of more accurate bombsights. The BOA also participated in the development of the turntable catapult which allowed planes to turn around while on board ship. In 1926, the Navy altered its organizational chart to include the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, and unveiled a five-year procurement program for aircraft that became the guideline for orderly expansion of the airfleet.[8]

During the 1930s, the numbers and kinds of aircraft the Navy used increased, as did the focus on pilot specialization. Aviators trained in specific aspects of air warfare, such as dive bombing, scouting, patrolling, and torpedo interception.[9] The Navy's first true aircraft carrier, the *U.S.S. Ranger*, was commissioned in 1934, followed in 1937 and 1938 by the commissioning of the *U.S.S. Yorktown* and the *U.S.S. Enterprise.* The Navy also continued its work, begun in the 1920s, with dirigibles. Although ultimately a failure, some successful trial runs were accomplished with these rigid aircraft, such as mooring onto a cruiser at sea. Five of these airships were built, and all but one came to a violent end.[10] Despite the unsuccessful time and effort spent on dirigibles, the Navy made great leaps in expanding its aviation program in the two decades following World War I. More planes, increasing numbers of trained pilots, and vastly improved technology all pointed toward a significant role for aviation in the Navy's future.

The Pensacola Naval Aeronautic Station provided all naval aviation training through the 1930s. Originally designed and built as a Navy shipyard, not as an aviation facility, many of Pensacola's facilities had seen little improvement since the initial investments Congress authorized in the early 1910s.[11] The rapid pace of aeronautic technological developments quickly outdated the Aeronautic Station's physical plant and equipment. Although Congress was sympathetic to the Navy's plans for renovating the Pensacola training center during the late 1920s, the reality of the long economic depression during the 1930s curtailed large-scale investment of tax dollars on the physical and programming improvements at the Naval Aeronautic Station.[12] By the late 1930s, however, escalating world tensions eased budgetary restrictions against upgrading and expanding the Navy's aviation training program. This expansion brought certain aspects of the Navy's aeronautics program to the Coastal Bend of Texas, starting with the largest city in the region, Corpus Christi.

Establishment of NAS Corpus Christi

A few years before the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drew the United States officially into the second World War, many Americans thought that U.S. involvement in the conflict was inevitable. By 1935, National Socialist Germany had rearmed under Adolf Hitler's leadership. On the other side of the Eurasian landmass, China surrendered to invading Japanese in July 1937. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, France and Britain declared war on the aggressors. In 1940, once the German army defeated France, previously thought to be the world's finest military power, President Roosevelt and his military leaders knew they could waste no further time in preparation for eventual American involvement in the war.[13]

In 1938, Congress approved tripling the number of naval aircraft, from 1,000 to 3,000, in the interest of national defense. To accommodate the increase in aircraft, extra air stations and service facilities were needed, along with additional Navy pilots.[14] As part of the Naval Expansion Act of 1938, President Roosevelt appointed an air station site recommendation board composed predominantly of naval officials. The Secretary of War and naval officials found themselves lobbied by Texas Congressman Richard M. Kleberg to locate a new naval air station in Corpus Christi, the largest city in his congressional district.[15] Kleberg supplied area information, and led fact-finding tours that produced sufficient details about the plentiful air space, good year-round flying weather, and abundant available acreage. These factors, in addition to the locally available aviation fuel and lubricants, the flat terrain, and suitable soils for runway construction, were enough to convince the site selection board that Corpus

Christi, or, more specifically, Flour Bluff, was a suitable location for a new aeronautics training facility.[16] With an air station at Corpus Christi in addition to the one at Pensacola, Florida, Navy officials intended for the Gulf Coast to be the safest continental U.S. shoreline.[17]

Even with the looming U.S. involvement in the European conflicts, military appropriations and planning moved at a prewar speed. Although the Navy selected the Flour Bluff site in 1938, by the time the French surrendered to Germany in 1940, construction of the new air station had yet to begin. In 1940, developments overseas caused the Navy to expand the planned size and configuration of the new air station.[18] The Naval Expansion Act of 1940 increased the Navy's fleet strength by an additional 11 percent.[19] Concurrently, Admiral Harold A. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, requested congressional allocation of funds for a "two-ocean Navy." Congress and President Roosevelt responded by allocating $4 billion to double the 1.25 million tons of existing combat fleet and to build an additional 15,000 aircraft.[20] The act also provided for initiation of construction at Corpus Christi at an increased scale, so that the new air station would equal the one at Pensacola in size. In June 1940, President Roosevelt signed the first contract under the new national defense program, with Brown & Root, Inc. of Houston as the prime contractors to begin construction of a $25 million naval air training base on the Texas Gulf Coast.[21]

Construction proceeded rapidly on what the Navy called its "University of the Air". The Navy intended for the air station to be the keystone for its strategic plans for the Texas Coastal Bend region.[22] Brown & Root formed a consortium with Columbia Construction of Oakland, California, and W.S. Bellows, also of Houston. When the air station was formally commissioned on March 12, 1941, just nine months after the groundbreaking ceremony, fully 70 percent of the large project was complete, eighteen months ahead of schedule. The entire Flour Bluff peninsula was transformed by earthmovers and heavy dredging equipment. Nearly 9,000 construction workers leveled dunes and filled channels to prepare sufficient flat, open space for the necessary runways, hangars, barracks, and administrative offices.[23] Once completed, NAS Corpus Christi stood as the largest naval air training station in the world, and was equipped to educate the increasing numbers of student pilots the Navy needed to fight in the imminent World War.

On March 20, 1941, the first student aviators arrived at the training center. They began ground school immediately and by May 5, were taking their first training flights. This class graduated November 1, and by the end of the year, NAS Corpus Christi graduated 300 new pilots every month; this number increased to 600 per month after the attack on Pearl Harbor. During the course of U.S. involvement in World War II, over 35,000 student pilots trained at NAS Corpus Christi.[24]

Not only did the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 hasten the pace of pilot training at Corpus Christi and Pensacola, it also provided the rationale for the Navy to fund a series of secondary facilities, including two main bases to serve as support stations and auxiliary landing fields. As the hub of Navy pilot training in south Texas, NAS Corpus Christi served as the main base for six other fields in a 60-mile radius. Four of the fields–Rodd, Cabaniss, Cuddihy, and Waldron–were minor auxiliary stations that bordered the main station at Flour Bluff. The other two, nearly autonomous stations, "P-4" NAAS at Kingsville, and NAAS Chase Field at Beeville, were located farther away. The smaller fields handled some training exercises but mainly served as auxiliary landing strips. In contrast, naval planners

designed and built the larger facilities at Kingsville and Beeville to accommodate several residential training squadrons.

The Navy commissioned "P-4" less than one year after the official start up of its parent field in Corpus Christi; commissioning at Chase Field occurred eleven months later in June 1943. Both fields trained aviators until the end of World War II, at which time Chase Field reverted to caretaker status in March 1946. NAAS Kingsville was decommissioned in August 1946, and leased to a Kingsville and Kleburg County city–county board.

Origin of the City of Kingsville, Texas

In the early years of the twentieth century, the town of Kingsville was carved from the vast holdings of the surrounding King Ranch. Starting in 1853, Captain Richard King created one of the largest ranching enterprises in the United States in the newly acquired territory north of the Rio Grande. Before his death in 1885, King acquired in excess of 600,000 acres of land in south Texas.[25] Much of this rangeland derived from the original twelve-league Santa Gertrudis Spanish Land Grant (Figure 5), given to José Lorenzo, José Domingo, and José Julian de la Garza by the Spanish Crown in 1808. Under the guidance of Captain King's widow, Henrietta, and his son-in-law, Robert Kleberg, the size and scope of the King Ranch continued to grow. In 1903, Henrietta King donated nearly 75,000 acres of ranch land located in Nueces County to the Kleberg Town & Improvement Company. This civic organization sold town lots and farmsteads as part of a land development plan to attract and finance the St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexican Railroad (Figure 6). Within a year of the town's founding, in 1904, the community boasted a population of 1,500 and several substantial public and commercial buildings.[26]

Mutual benefits ensued from the close association of the King Ranch with the town of Kingsville. Henrietta King soon donated funds to build a school, a Presbyterian church, and an educational institution for Mexican children. Son-in-law Robert J. Kleberg provided funds for an ice plant, water works, oil mill, and other infrastructural amenities for the new town.[27] Kingsville, in exchange, offered a rail center for the King Ranch's many agricultural products.

Kingsville soon served as a regional rail center, with general offices of the railroad, switching yards and a roundhouse. Railroad employees comprised nearly one-third of the town's population. Although ranching served as the mainstay of the local economy until the 1940s, the arrival of the railroad in 1904 opened up opportunities for truck farming in the year-round mild climate, since produce could reach urban markets more rapidly by rail. Onions and grapes were among the initial truck crops. A few years later, agricultural innovators introduced cotton to the area, and, along with a small but significant attempt at dairying, cotton became another mainstay of the local economy.

With little to commend the area other than the immense size of the surrounding King Ranch, railroad access, and the excellent climate for winter truck farming, Kingsville nonetheless attracted a sizable population, and claimed 4,000 citizens in 1912. That same year, while drilling for water on the Oscar Rosse farm near Kingsville, local resident Frank Honse found natural gas and oil, initiating Kleberg (then still part of Nueces County) County's entrance into oil and gas production.[28] The Texas Legislature created Kleberg County from a portion of Nueces County in 1913, just ten years after the founding of Kingsville, which became the county seat. The coeducational South Texas Teacher's College was

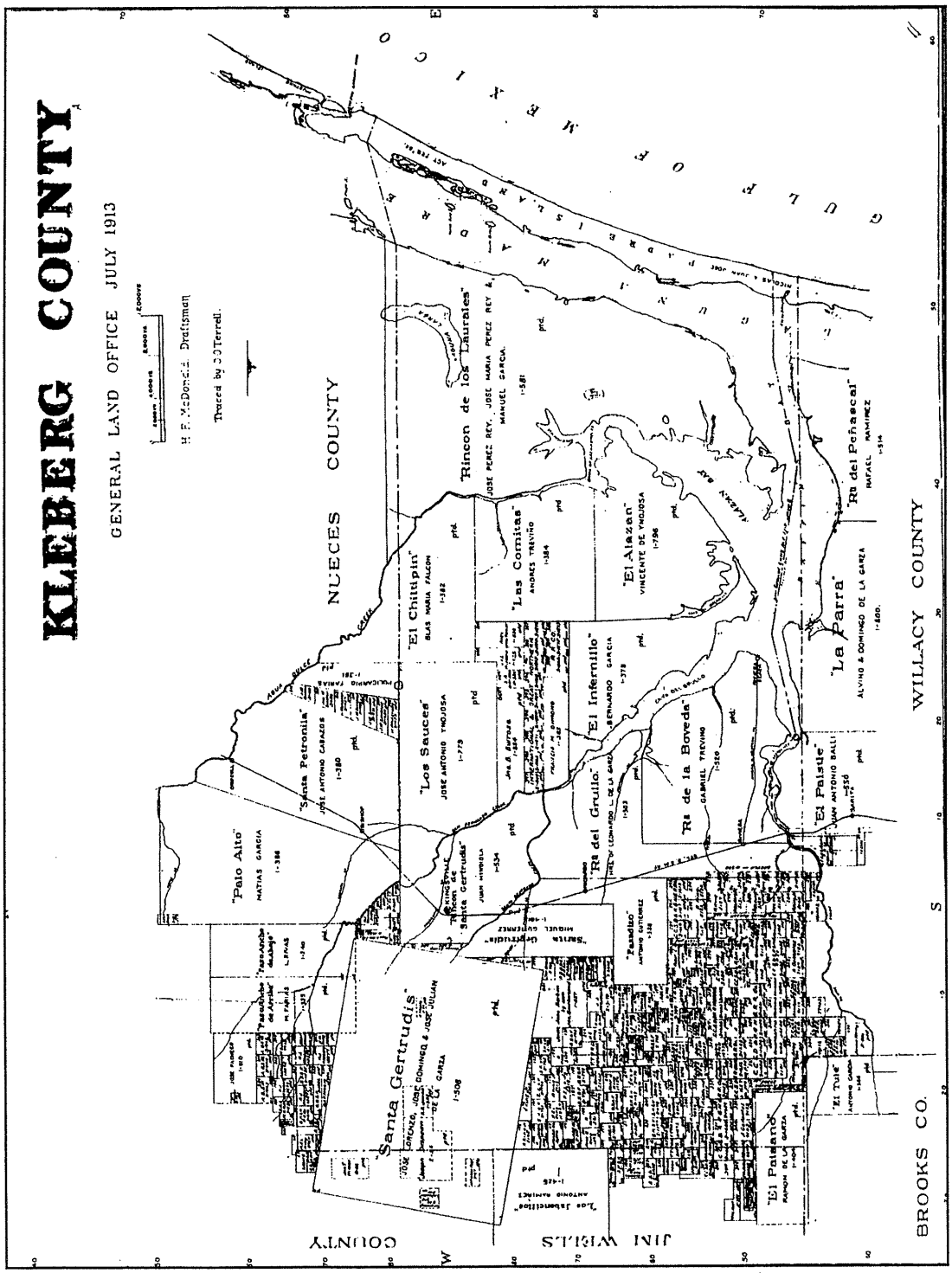


Figure 5. Early Spanish Land Grants in Kleberg County.

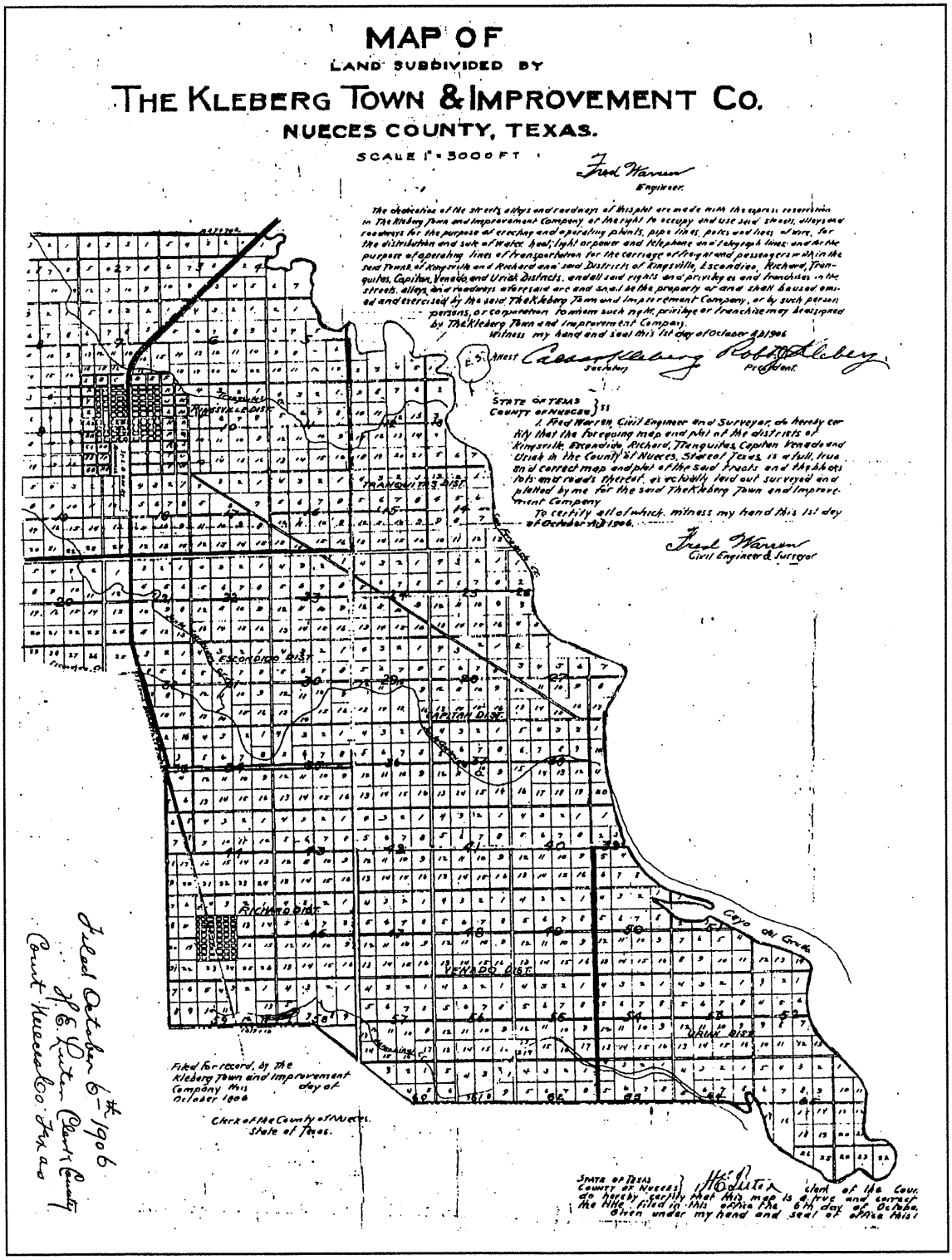


Figure 6. Land donated by Mrs. King to the Kleberg Town and Improvement Company.

founded in 1925 on the northwest edge of Kingsville. In 1929, the college expanded its offerings and became the Texas College of Arts and Industries (Texas A&I College). Small recreational resorts developed on nearby Baffin Bay, southeast of Kingsville during the 1930s. Kingsville–indeed the entire region–benefited from the election of King Ranch family's Richard M. Kleberg to Congress in 1931. Kleberg introduced legislation, such as that creating the Farm Credit Administration, benefiting his mainly rural constituents during the New Deal era. As eventual U.S. involvement in World War II became more certain, Kleberg influenced the relocation of several war-related institutions and industries to the Texas Coastal Bend area.

In 1941, local Kingsville boosters, well aware of the country's probable entrance into the wars raging in the European and Pacific theaters and anxious to diversify their economy, began lobbying military officials to locate an aviation installation in their town. Excited by the Navy's intentions to build a significant air training station in nearby Corpus Christi, the Kingsville Chamber of Commerce set out to land its own military facility. Extolling the benefits of near perfect flying conditions in a year-round mild climate, the large expanses of virtually treeless land, railroad transportation access, local availability of adequate fuel supplies, and the flat terrain, the Kingsville lobby argued a strong case. The initial package suggested by the delegation, headed by Chamber of Commerce President and business manager of the King Ranch A. L. Kleberg, to officials at Army Air Force Command at Randolph Field in San Antonio was declined. However, Army officials encouraged the Kingsville delegation to contact the Navy. Community leaders quickly convinced influential Rear Admiral Alva Bernhard, commander at NAS Corpus Christi, of Kingsville's strategic benefits. Bernhard himself put the finishing touches on their lobbying efforts. Less than two months after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor that pushed the United States headlong into World War II, the Navy announced its intentions to immediately build an auxiliary air station near Kingsville for the purpose of supporting advanced pilot training at NAS Corpus Christi.

The winter of 1942 brought many remarkable changes to Kingsville. Federal officials from various agencies visited the town, one after the other, to assess availability of housing for the hundreds of military and civilian personnel soon to flood the area, to make plans for utilities at the new air station, and to arrange for the procurement of nearly 3,000 acres of land for the new base.[29] By the end of February, the town arranged for the construction of a new school to accommodate the children of military personnel due to arrive in the area.[30] The prospect of civil service or defense-related manufacturing jobs at good wages probably interested many of the families who previously relied on agricultural subsistence work. And although wartime shortages already loomed on the horizon, Kingsville merchants presumably cheered the prospect of a larger customer base. With the nationalistic fervor sweeping through the nation's citizenry, local patriots were excited about the opportunity for direct participation in the war effort.

Perhaps the only local people disgruntled about the air training center were the seventeen landowners on the identified air station acreage. Like families throughout the nation during this time, they were given little notice of the need to vacate their homes and livelihoods on their farms so that military or industrial uses of the property could prevail. In Kleburg County, the U.S. government condemned nearly 3,000 acres of prime farmland, much of it centered in the San Fernando community, for Navy use.[31] Only one building, the substantial brick home of the B.O. Sims's family, built around 1920, survived for use as the base commander's home (Figure 7). All other buildings were removed, burned, or razed.[32] Two years

Figure 7. The B.O. Sims' Family House Retained for Use as Base Commander's Quarters

later, a suit to determine fair compensation for the former residents was still before the courts.[33] The Navy eventually compensated the landowners in excess of $200,000 for approximately 2,850 acres.[34] When the first shovel turned sod on the former King Ranch lands under the auspices of national defense in 1942, a long and close relationship between the U.S. Navy and the town of Kingsville began. This relationship continued to evolve over the next fifty years. Also begun during World War II in 1944, the Celanese Corporation produced a number of solvents and industrial chemicals in the nearby community of Bishop, six miles north of "P-4." In addition, shortly after the end of the war prospectors discovered and developed oil and gas fields in the county, providing additional jobs and tax revenue. In one decade, Kingsville changed from a quiet south Texas agricultural community into an economically diversified and strategically significant center of activity in the Texas Coastal Bend region.

World War II and the Development of Naval Auxiliary Air Station Kingsville

Once the site for the auxiliary air station was chosen from the fields outside of Kingsville, the construction firm of Brown-Bellows-Columbia began work immediately in February 1942. Roberts and Company, an architectural and engineering firm with offices in Atlanta, Georgia, and Corpus Christi, Texas, produced the plans used by the contractors. Brown-Bellows-Columbia had just completed the majority of NAS Corpus Christi to the great satisfaction of the Navy. During a three-year period, the construction contractors built both the main air station and auxiliary air fields at Kingsville and Beeville. In total, during World War II the Navy spent over $100 million on Corpus Christi, its six auxiliary fields, and a Technical Training Center at Ward Island.[35]

Within a week of notification to proceed, the local Kingsville utility, Central Power and Light, ran the required heavy transmission lines to all parts of the base from the substation north of town, a distance of more than three miles.[36] Missouri Pacific Railroad Company extended a spur line into the heart of the base almost as quickly. Site work proceeded immediately, so that roads, runways, and buildings could quickly follow. Military engineers wisely determined the dangers posed to aviation by the extremely flat terrain and indifferent drainage in an area subject to frequent thunderstorms and occasional hurricanes. Among the reasons military planners chose the site was that the Santa Gertrudis and Tranquitas creeks drained the property (water drainage in the relatively flat terrain was a critical consideration in runway construction). However, to provide additional drainage, massive ditches were excavated on the base, especially adjacent to runways (Figure 8). Both unskilled and skilled construction workers, eventually totalling 2,000, streamed into the area and immediately began working around the clock to create the auxiliary air station. Because of the shortage of housing for newcomers, local residents were especially sought for construction jobs as well as for civilian jobs on base.[37]

Planners designed two runways for "P-4," called North Field and South Field, that were separated by nearly 5,000'. Figure 9 shows an aerial view of the runway configuration. Runway-related buildings and structures clustered on the edges of each air field. To increase operational efficiency, planners placed the majority of administrative and support buildings between the two fields. By the time "P-4" was dedicated on July 4, 1942, the contractors completed fully 85 percent of the initial construction, an impressive accomplishment in less than four months. The Administration Building (Building 700) (Figure 10), the Gatehouse (Building 775), runways at North Field and South Field, and hangars and aircraft maintenance facilities (such as Buildings 760 and 771) were constructed first, with support facilities such as the fire

Figure 8. Massive Drainage Ditches at NAAS Kingsville

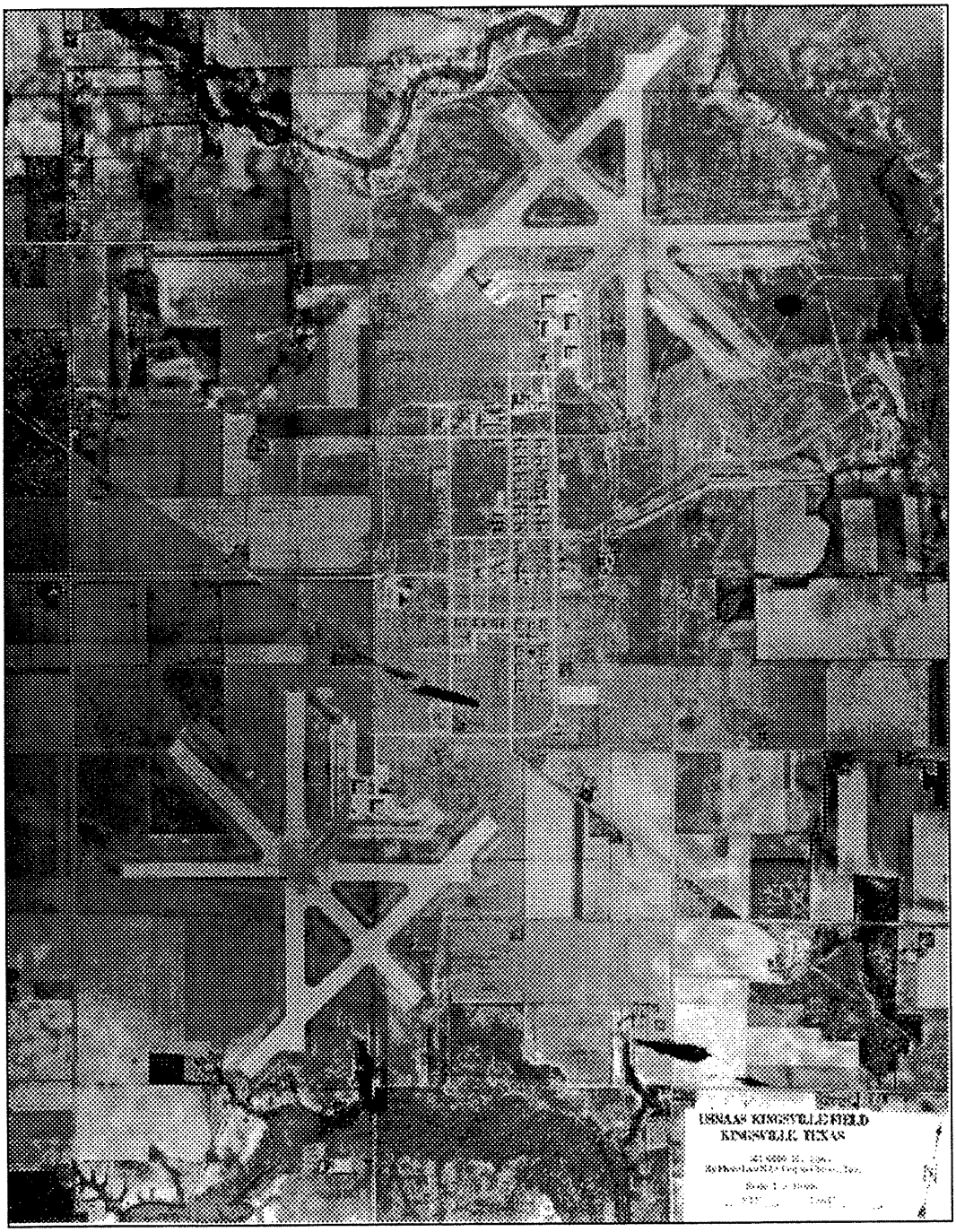


Figure 9. NAAS Kingsville Aerial Photograph, October 18, 1945 (Photo source: U.S. Navy).

Figure 10. NAAS Kingsville Administration Building, (Photo from Kingsville Record, *July 5, 1944).*

station and warehouse facilities (such as Buildings 776 and 701) built soon afterward. Work on the runways, barracks, and other support facilities continued through 1942. Security at "P-4," often referred to as "Kingsville Field," remained a concern throughout the war years. When the contractors began work on the site, the installation of security fencing quickly limited access to the air station. Subsequently, nearly all military and civilian personnel and visitors to "P-4" were funneled through the west-facing main entrance gate. The adjacent Gatehouse (Building 775) provided administrative space for the issuance of clearance papers, passes, and vehicle tags, along with offices and dormitory quarters for assigned security personnel. A small brig in the building served as a holding area during emergencies.

The Administration Building (Building 700) visually dominated the interior portion of the air station. In direct line of sight from the entrance gate, the Administration Building's central tower rose four stories above the spacious esplanade linking it with the entrance. A "T" intersection just before the esplanade directed all incoming traffic toward North Field, South Field, or points in between. To allow ready access to all sections of the base, the fire station sat two blocks east of the Administration Building, almost equidistant between North and South fields, and in close proximity to most of the dormitories. Closer to North Field, and built adjacent to the Missouri Pacific rail spur that entered the air station through the main gate, the Storehouse (Building 701) allowed for secure storage of bulky materials brought in by railcar. The main activity centers at the air station, however, focused on the runways and pilot training.

When the first cadets arrived on site, they found raw land with muddy tracks for sidewalks and tight living quarters. However, they focused on their intensive course of pilot training, and presumably paid little attention to the rest of the base beyond the runways. The cadets found themselves training in the air just one week after the formal base dedication. The elite corps of cadet pilots and the base support personnel soon shared the new air station with an emergency excess of raw recruits. In the early autumn of 1942, hundreds of boot camp recruits were transferred south from an overloaded Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois.[38] Construction workers continued building the base and runway facilities during the autumn of 1942. Concurrently, new military and civilian personnel arrived to maintain the overworked training aircraft and machinery, as well as to provide support in the overall mission of the auxiliary air station.

A small Marine Corps detachment arrived at Kingsville Field with the boot camp enlistees. Marines served as company commanders for the boot camp classes, and took charge of the fundamentals of drill, whereas Navy officers indoctrinated the recruits on naval policies. Other Marines initially assumed security and guard functions, but by July 1943, civilian guards had been hired by the Navy to perform security functions.[39] These civilian guards were mainly older men with World War I military experience or peace officer training. They relieved the air station's Marine detachment of most guard duty functions, allowing the younger Marines to be dispatched to war zones.[40]

Kingsville Field's Training Mission

Part of the Eighth Naval District headquartered in New Orleans, NAS Corpus Christi, along with its outlying auxiliary air stations at Kingsville and Chase fields, provided a variety of intermediate air training activities in the pilot training pipeline. Figure 11 shows the hierarchy of the Naval Air Training Command in 1944. Cadets arrived at Kingsville Field fresh from basic flight instruction courses in Pensacola. The training mission of the auxiliary air station was to facilitate aircraft carrier pilots in an

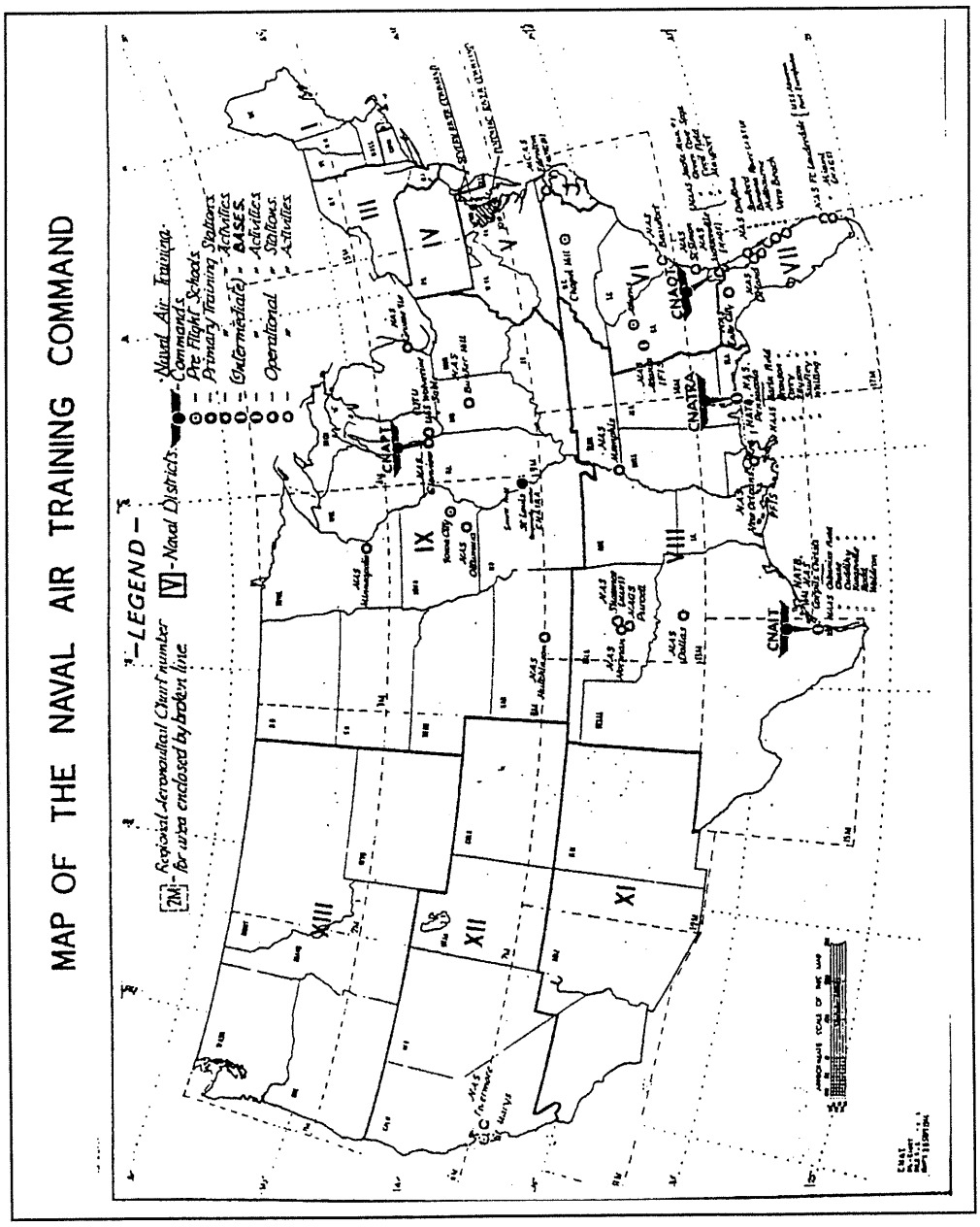


Figure 11. Naval Air Training Command, 1944 (Source: National Archives, Record Group 181).

intermediate phase of their overall education. Both North and South fields offered opportunities for training exercises.

Owing to war-time security concerns, the Navy released little information about its specific activities at Kingsville Field for the first few years after its commissioning. Local Kingsville residents could only speculate about the purpose of the thousands of training flights occurring each month; however, they were privy to select information in the local papers, mainly about the personalities involved with training programs or base command. Few military personnel throughout the country remained at one base for any length of time. The air station's first commander, Commander D. S. MacMahan, oversaw its construction and commissioning in 1942, and was relieved of duty in less than one year by Commander Troy N. Thweat. Commanders H.C. Doan and C.H.B. Morrison also served in command posts during World War II.

For the duration of World War II, the auxiliary air station at Kingsville supported four squadrons: Training Squadrons 14-A and 14-C turned out fighter pilots; Training Squadrons 15-A and 15-B produced dive bomber pilots. (Figure 12 shows cadets from Squadron 15-A in front of their training aircraft). In addition, a gunnery training program was in place by the end of 1942. The pilot training consisted of classroom sessions, requiring portions of several buildings for various classes; synthetic training, as the sessions on the land-based mockups of aircraft cockpits were termed; and intensive air training that used not only the North and South runways but also nearby landing strips beyond the boundaries of the air station. The smaller strips, intended to simulate the length of an aircraft carrier, were used by the student pilots for "touch-and-go" landings.

Primarily an enlisted men's option, gunnery training eventually consisted of five weeks training in such topics as estimation of range and speed, boresighting, operation of turrets, machine gun stripping, identification of aircraft, and life raft and parachute techniques. These activities were conducted in addition to actual range firing. Gunnery training was not limited to enlisted personnel, however. Many cadets also had a gunnery component in their pilot training.[41] Gunnery and bombing training impacted an extensive portion of the landscape surrounding the air station itself. Bombing targets were designated in a pattern that covered many square miles of the surrounding marshlands to the south and east, as well as water targets in nearby Baffin Bay and Laguna Madre. Some targets extended to Padre Island and into the Gulf of Mexico, far beyond the formal boundaries of the auxiliary air station.

Accommodating Personnel

Along with meeting the training needs of the pilot cadets and enlisted gunnery trainees, the air station facilities accommodated the subsistence, administrative, and recreational needs of the warrior students. Likewise, support and administrative personnel had similar needs for housing, meals, and recreation. By the end of the war, fifteen enlisted men's and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) barracks, nine cadet and bachelor officer's quarters (BOQs), and three mess halls had been built. To meet the air station personnel's recreational needs, a swimming pool, nine tennis and handball courts, seven softball and baseball diamonds, and a large recreation hall that housed seventeen different activities, including a theater, bowling alley, and barber shop, were eventually built. Again, for efficiency of operations, the subsistence buildings were clustered together.

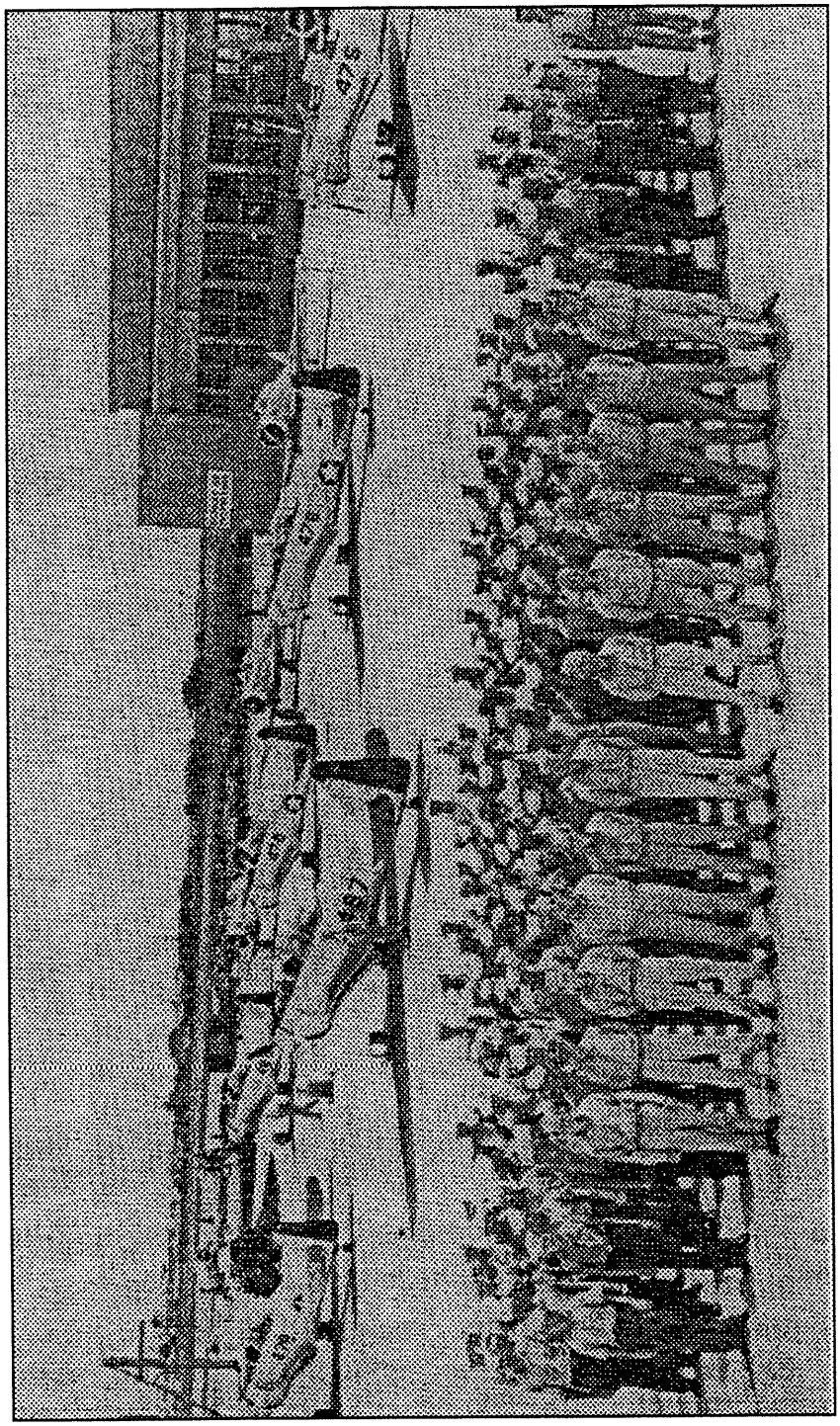


Figure 12. Training Squadron 15-A (Photo from The Alert, *July 2, 1943).*

The mess facilities associated with the cadet's quarters provided one of the few venues for African-American enlistees to serve at Kingsville Field. The cadet mess hall served up to 800 meals at one time. Meals were formal occasions, with cadets forming a company and marching into the hall in military style; cadets stood at attention until the entire company was ready to be seated. "Negro mess attendants with the rating, steward's mate, serve the tables. According to Lieutenant Fleming, the mess attendants... here are outstanding in their performance of their duty, serving the meals in snappy style."[42] The training provided at Kingsville Field prepared the attendants for steward's mate positions on the Navy's ships.

Because of the air station's remote setting and the extremes in summer temperatures, swimming pools, as well as other recreational facilities, were considered a necessity for military personnel in south Texas. Many post Depression–era south Texas communities lacked anything more than a town square or rudimentary city park. In contrast, the Navy provided its personnel at Kingsville with significant recreational opportunities. Some recreational facilities, such as the cadet's swimming pool, served multiple functions. The pool was used in pilot training exercises, as well as overall physical training, considered a critical element in a prepared military fighting force. Although the runways, hangars, and associated storage buildings dominated the landscape of NAAS Kingsville, the subsistence and recreational facilities covered substantial acreage as well.

Finding adequate local housing for civilian workers and accommodating the families of military personnel at the auxiliary air station remained an effort. Early in 1942, the Kingsville Chamber of Commerce identified and listed all available spare rooms and living accommodations. At first local developers tried repeatedly to secure restricted construction supplies to build housing for the influx of wartime workers and their families. The federal government soon designated Kingsville a "defense area," which allowed contractors ready access to building materials for defense related projects in an otherwise restrictive wartime economy. However, as the war progressed, local contractors were hesitant to build private homes in a somewhat speculative market, not knowing when the war would end and whether they would be left with dozens of half-finished, unsellable homes.

The Federal Housing Authority stepped in and, by July 1944, two years after the Navy commissioned Kingsville Field, had constructed 200 two-family dwellings in a housing area named Retama Park. The homes were available for rental by employees of the Navy, the Federal Communications Commission, railroad and oil companies, Celanese Corporation, or any other industries necessary to the war effort.[43] Despite these stopgap efforts, a housing shortage existed in Kingsville for the duration of the war. With the influx of construction workers and military and civilian personnel, population in the Kingsville area swelled from a prewar figure of less than 10,000 to more than 20,000 before the war ended.

With a war to fight and limited access to materials, the Navy spent its finite construction resources on group housing, such as the barracks for enlisted men and WAVES, and the BOQs and similar quarters for WAVES officers and nurses. Most of these residential buildings offered few amenities. The enlisted men's barracks housed up to 200 people in 17,000-square-foot buildings that offered an average of 85 square feet per person. None of the living quarters were air conditioned or free of the dust that pervaded every aspect of life near the runways in this semiarid climate. On-base housing for families of military

personnel did not become a reality until after the Korean Conflict, and even then it was of a temporary nature and for lower ranked personnel only.

Female enlisted personnel arrived at Kingsville Field in July 1943. The enlisted WAVES were assigned to synthetic training, which allowed cadets the experience of piloting an aircraft without leaving the ground by using link trainers. Many of the women assigned to training details arrived with civilian teaching experience.[44] Other WAVES worked in aircraft maintenance or in administrative capacities. The enlisted WAVES had their own barracks, whereas WAVES officers shared their dormitory building with WAVES nurses. Although many women formally joined the Navy as WAVES during World War II, local Kleberg County women served their country by working long hours on the day and night shifts at local wartime factories or by accepting civilian positions at the base. Kingsville residents strongly supported the naval base and its personnel during the war (Figure 13). Early in 1942, school children donated their coat lockers to the Navy, which was critically short of materials for accommodating personnel.[45] A local couple, Dr. and Mrs. J. V. Chandler, bestowed an off-base recreation area consisting of several barbecue pits for picnics, specifically for the use of Navy personnel and their families. Other prominent citizens provided wood, a sign, and benches for the picnic area.[46] Texas A&I College offered coursework that allowed sailors to obtain a high school diploma, start earning college credit, and generally enhance their careers.[47] Although Kingsville residents were not allowed "on board" the air station without a special pass, naval personnel quickly became a familiar sight in downtown Kingsville.

The War Ends

In the months following Japan's surrender, uncertainty surrounded the Navy's overall mission in south Texas. Understandably, the federal government could not maintain an expensive, full wartime complement of Navy bases throughout south Texas in an austere postwar economy. Shortly after the declaration of peace in 1945, rumors began circulating in Kingsville about the closure of the auxiliary air station. In August 1945, naval officials at Air Training Command in Pensacola stated that the Navy had no intention of closing the auxiliary air station in Kingsville. Yet only one month later, Navy officials announced that it would decommission the base on March 31, 1946.[48] Kingsville Mayor John Cypher and civic leaders lobbied the Navy to reconsider its action, but for strategic and political reasons, the air station was officially decommissioned on August 1, 1946, and naval personnel vacated the station by mid-September.[49]

A hopeful sign of a continued military aviation presence in the region developed when the Navy's Instrument Flight Instructor's School, previously based in Atlanta, Georgia, transferred to Corpus Christi in August 1946. In this school, instructors were taught the proper procedures for instrument flying, along with the use of radio navigational equipment. NAS Corpus Christi continued to operate on a reduced, though important, scale. However, the auxiliary air stations at Kingsville and Beeville, along with the surrounding landing fields, were phased out or put in caretaker status. During the five-year operation of the Navy's "University of the Air," more than 30,000 student aviators trained at the Corpus Christi campus and auxiliary air stations.[50] After 1946, the former Navy pilot training station in Kingsville became another kind of educational facility.

A city–county board accepted stewardship of the former auxiliary air station upon its decommissioning. Leasing the facility from the U.S. government for a nominal $1.00 per year fee, the board also

Figure 13. Kingsville's welcome to the Navy (Photo from the Kingsville Record, *July 8, 1942).*

assumed costly facilities maintenance responsibilities. Local businesses and community groups in Kingsville immediately declared an interest in facilities such as the airfields, the bakery, and the photography shop. Texas A&I College asserted its desire to obtain the lease for several of the air station's amenities, and subsequently was granted the lease from the board. The college held this option until the Navy recommissioned the auxiliary air station in 1951.

Texas College of Arts and Industries Tenure

With a student population swelled by returning veterans anxious to benefit from the G.I. Bill, Kingsville's Texas A&I College experienced a housing and classroom shortage during the winter of 1945–46. Although Texas A&I College President Edwin Newlin Jones secured both community backing and financing for a facilities expansion program at the college, the short-term classroom and housing gaps remained.[51] In July 1946, Texas A&I College Board members Dr. E. N. Jones and Frank Smith surveyed the Navy's nearby air station facilities, and declared that the college could use these facilities to enroll an additional 500 students for the fall semester of 1946.[52] The following day, a special session of the County Commissioner's Court voted approval on the lease of the air station from the federal government.[53] The ensuing commissioner's report announced that the former air station could be subleased to the local college to accommodate expanding enrollment. On August 15, 1946, a revocable lease signed by naval officials and the city–county board conferred the use of most of the former NAAS Kingsville to the college.

When Texas A&I College classes began a few weeks later, a regular shuttle bus service linked East Campus, as the former air station was named, to the main campus, some five miles distant. The barracks, officers' quarters, and mess facilities at the auxiliary air station offered a temporary solution for student and faculty subsistence needs.[54] Another barracks building offered temporary classroom space to elementary school children from the Kingsville Independent School District.[55] Local Kingsville entrepreneurs subleased recreational facilities such as the swimming pool and theater and opened these amenities to both students and local residents.[56] In addition, Gulf Coast Flying Service leased South Field and its associated buildings to accommodate a pilot training school.[57]

By September 1947, the Texas A&I College agronomy, animal husbandry, and agricultural engineering programs moved to East Campus. The Administration Building (Building 700) and shop buildings became offices, laboratories, and workshops for the agricultural programs.[58] Agricultural products instead of airplanes filled at least one hangar. Adjacent to a hangar used temporarily as a stable, the student Aggie Club built a rodeo pen.[59] For nearly four years the air station facilities served an important satellite function to the growing college.

Over the next few years, as dormitory construction progressed on the college's main campus, the East Campus housing facilities became superfluous. By January 1950, the women's dormitory on East Campus closed, followed by the closure of the dining hall in September.[60] At that time a few faculty members, some male students, and the agricultural program remained on the property. Just as Texas A&I College eliminated its housing deficit and no longer needed many of the housing facilities on East Campus, Navy officials contacted College President Ernest Poteet, indicating their intention to reopen the former auxiliary air station.

The Korean Conflict

With the Korean Conflict looming on the horizon of international affairs in late 1950, naval officials recommissioned some of the World War II-era pilot training bases in south Texas. Texas A&I College received word of the change in status of its leased facilities at the former NAAS Kingsville in December 1950, barely in time to make adjustments in student schedules and housing. The college vacated the site entirely by June 1951, two months after the recommissioning of the base on April 1, 1951. Figure 14 shows the layout of the auxiliary air station after it was returned to the Navy.

Word that the base would serve as a jet transitional training facility, with a total civilian and military payroll to eventually include 3,000 people, accompanied the announcement of NAAS Kingsville's recommissioning. Rehabilitation construction work began in March 1951, and by late June, the field was fully operational. In early August, the first twenty-six TO-1, and one TO-2, single-engine jet trainer aircraft arrived in Kingsville for the training program. One week after their arrival, the cadets of Advanced Training Unit (ATU) Three commenced their ground school program, with the first training flight initiated by the student pilots one week later.[61]

By early March 1951, the Navy announced its intentions to maintain the auxiliary air station at Kingsville as a permanent facility. This decision guided the rehabilitation of existing facilities and the planning of new construction, since construction techniques, materials, and budgets were based on the military's perception of the length of time a facility would be needed. The primarily temporary buildings at NAAS Kingsville had been built at breakneck speed in response to the wartime emergency. A permanent military facility, in contrast, required more durable facilities, using permanent construction materials. The existing buildings were soon assigned categories, which helped facilities planners determine the future growth of the base and the projected schedule for replacement.[62] Only ten years after the first commissioning of NAAS Kingsville, military planners sought to remove many of the original buildings, such as the Administration Building (Building 700), and replace them with permanent construction as funding and personnel levels permitted.

Although vacated for only five years, NAAS Kingsville required considerable retrofitting. The Administration Building and the barracks needed minor rehabilitation such as fresh coats of paint and new windows and screens. Two notable exceptions to the immediate focus of the building program were the addition of a recreation hall and the landplane hangar at North Field. During the tenure of the Texas A&I College, the large World War II-era recreation center had burned, and Navy planners requested appropriations in 1952 for its replacement, along with an additional swimming pool. In October 1952, a fire destroyed one of the landplane hangars at North Field. The hangar was scheduled for immediate replacement because of the critical role it played in the overall mission of the air station.[63]

Initially, the runways required the greatest attention. Military aircraft had changed from being propeller driven to employing jet engines during the early years of the Cold War. Jet aircraft required longer runways than either of the two available at Kingsville in 1951. North Field became the focus of jet training activity, and its runways were quickly lengthened to 8,000'-0" and widened to 200'-0" by the construction firm of Word-Texas-Dellinger Associates, of Corpus Christi and Dallas. Taxiways left unfinished at the close of World War II also were completed. Associated with the new focus on accommodating jet aircraft at North Field, the Airfield Transformer Vault (Building 2738) was built and

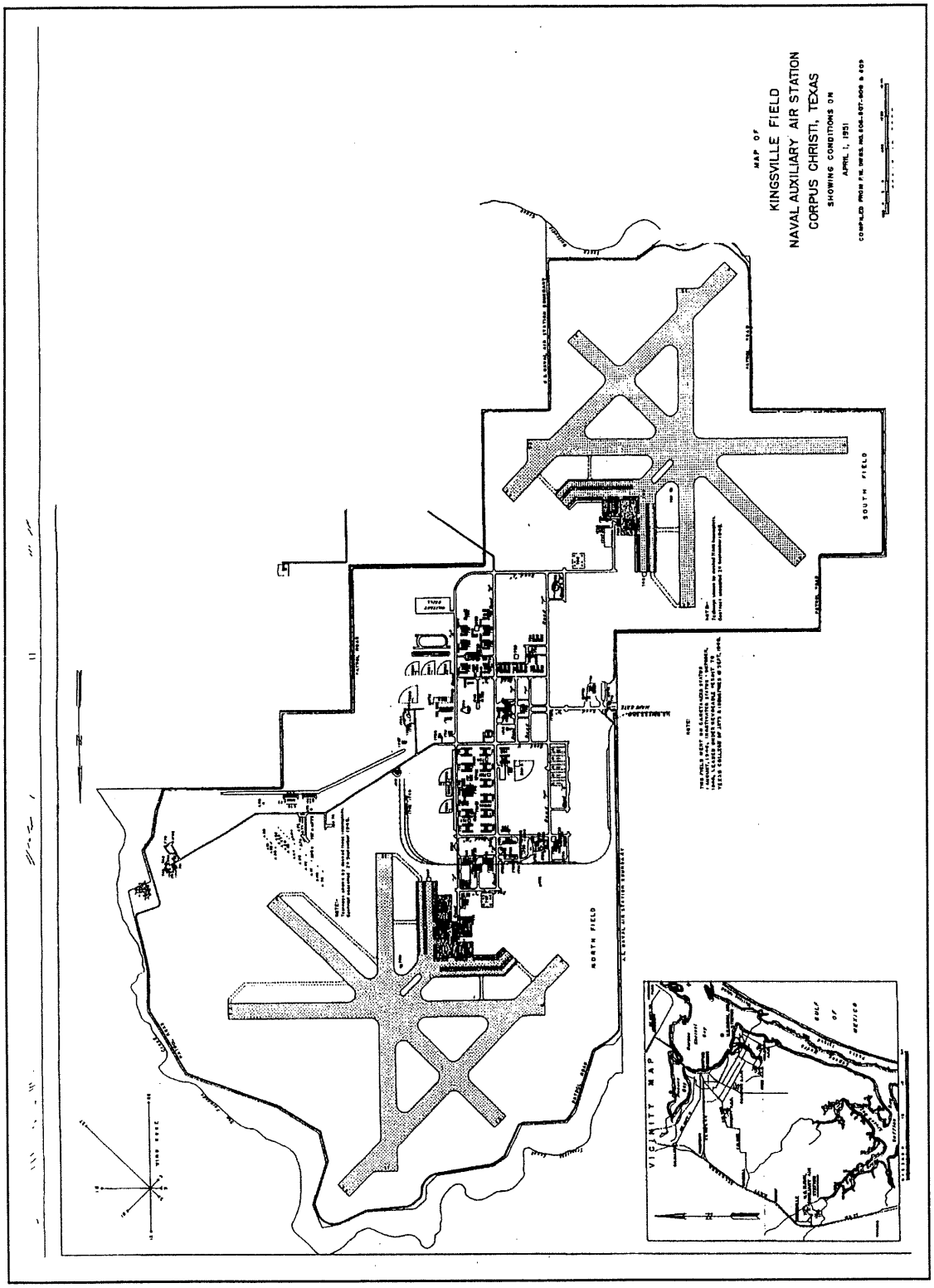


Figure 14 Layout of NAS Kingsville, 1951

connected to the local public utility, Central Power and Light, in 1953. The initial new construction and retrofit of the runways at North Field during 1951 cost more than $5 million.[64] Figure 15 shows the configuration of the new runways. The following year $1.5 million was allocated for yet another runway and associated taxiways at North Field.[65] Concurrently, the Navy announced appropriations for a heavy-duty runway, a parking apron, and a jet refueling system at the other auxiliary air station in the region, Chase Field, to be used by Kingsville-based jets as part of their landing practice.[66]

To accommodate the lengthening of North Field, NAAS Kingsville expanded beyond its World War II-era boundaries. The Navy once again found itself engaged in a lawsuit with surrounding landowners whose property was condemned and taken in the name of national defense. In addition, the Navy negotiated with property owners surrounding the base for aviation easements to ensure that no intrusions, such as water well windmills, would interfere with aircraft approaches to the runways.[67] Navy administrators at NAAS Kingsville faced another challenge. Few instructors and aircraft maintenance personnel were available to fulfill the station's aviation training mission.[68] Complicating this deficit of trained personnel, the continued housing shortage in the local area discouraged prospective military staff from moving to the area. Finally, in 1954, an off-base Navy housing area called Texas Terrace was completed and available for military personnel.[69]

During the Korean Conflict, NAAS Kingsville once again provided support to three training squadrons. The training squadrons, VT-21, VT-22, and VT-23, were each individual commands with direct responsibility to the Chief of Naval Air Advanced Training at NAS Corpus Christi. Classroom instruction for trainees consisted of coursework in electronics, instrument navigation, meteorology, aerodynamics, and leadership. The air-conditioned Academic Training Building, completed in 1954, housed fifteen basic jet instrument "Link" trainers and seven more specialized units. These synthetic trainers provided valuable instruction experience for cadets. While saving thousands of gallons of jet fuel and maintenance costs on the limited number of training aircraft available, the synthetic trainers also were more generous with a fledgling pilot's mistakes.

The actual aircraft in which cadets practiced included the two-seat TF-9J Cougar, the first-line fighter jet used during the Korean Conflict, and the single-seat AF-9J. Cadets arrived at Kingsville having completed basic pilot training. The additional classroom, trainer, and flight time required a total of eighteen months of effort before cadets gained their "wings of gold" upon graduation. In addition to naval jet instruction, NAAS Kingsville sponsored the only antisubmarine training squadron. Jet instruction occurred primarily at North Field, whereas propeller-driven aircraft and antisubmarine training took place at South Field.

The Korean Conflict ended with a cease-fire agreement in 1953. However, much of the building program associated with the reactivation of NAAS Kingsville during the Korean Conflict continued. Facilities completed by the end of the conflict included the extension of the North Field runways and its taxiways, and minor associated structures such as the tank car/truck unloading facility (Building 1763A). Many other buildings were either partially complete or had the funding allocated for their eventual completion.

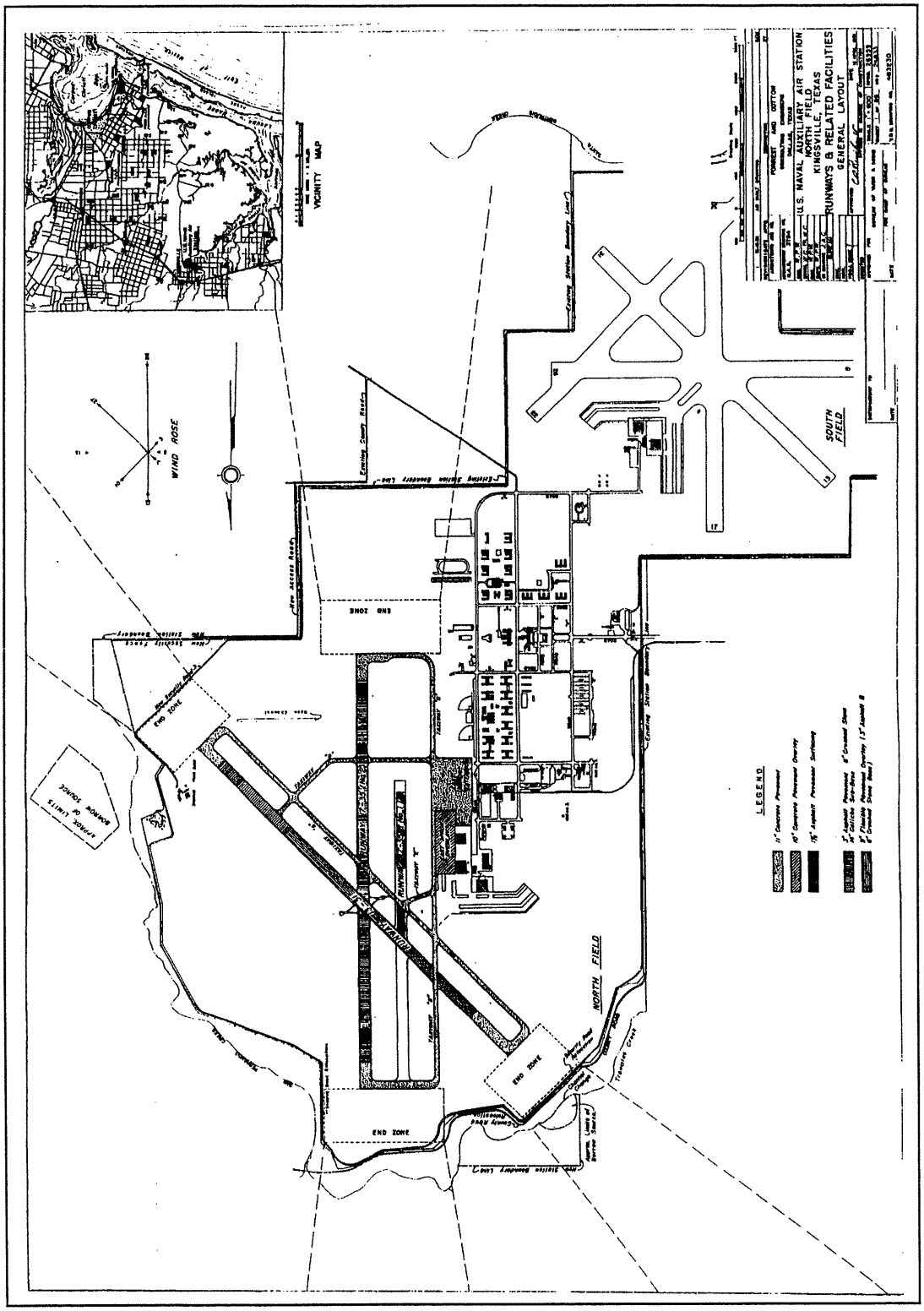


Figure 15 New Runway Extensions

The Post-Korea Era, 1953–1965

The Navy maintained a strong argument for keeping auxiliary air stations, such as those at Kingsville and in nearby Beeville, open after a cease-fire was declared in Korea in 1953. The Korean Conflict served to alert the United States to the aggressive political and military intentions of Soviet Russia and China in the Far East. After Korea, the perceived Communist threat to the world's democracies and the attendant buildup of military tensions with the Soviets provided U.S. military leaders with the rationale for developing a strong, technologically sophisticated, and permanent military force. In that context NAAS Kingsville's mission continued to focus on training such an elite force for the next forty years.

Between the end of the Korean and beginning of the Vietnam conflicts, numbers of personnel at NAAS Kingsville fluctuated with naval funding allocations and sizes of pilot training classes. Building renovation and replacement at the auxiliary air station also fluctuated with funding. By the end of the 1950s, the Navy had invested almost $17 million in major new construction at NAAS Kingsville. Funding was designated both to replace World War II-era temporary buildings and in response to new training and technology needs associated with educating advanced jet pilot students. Major buildings such as the BOQ (Building 2700) replaced uncomfortable wartime barracks. Other smaller buildings, such as the Ready Ammunition Magazines (Buildings 2730–33), supplied permanent, improved storage and security for ordnance and ammunition.

As they had during the war, women served in active duty roles at NAAS Kingsville after World War II. In early December 1951, the first of the WAVES personnel assigned to NAAS Kingsville arrived from Corpus Christi. By the end of Fiscal Year 1952, approximately seventy-five WAVES worked at the air station. Employed primarily in administrative positions, the WAVES remained in varying numbers until June 1958. At that time the WAVES assigned to NAAS Kingsville were transferred to NAS Corpus Christi to consolidate the reduced numbers at each air station for housing purposes. A scattering of WAVES officers served in administrative posts or as educators until 1971, when WAVES again arrived in significant numbers.[70]

In April 1954, the last class of student aviators trained on the F6F Hellcats, which were then phased out of the training program. At this time the primary training planes were the F9F-2 and the T-28B, with the F9F-5 Panther Jets used for training by 1955. Student pilots from all over the world came to train at Kingsville: between 1952 and 1958, cadets from France, the Netherlands, Argentina, West Germany, Italy, and Japan received their advanced training at the auxiliary air station.[71]

Although cadets had used Orange Grove Naval Auxiliary Landing Field (NALF) in an unofficial capacity for some time, the Navy finally commissioned it on October 31, 1956. The field covered 1,379 acres of land and consisted initially of a control tower, a few small buildings, and two 8,000'-0" runways. Nearly twenty miles from Kingsville and halfway between the towns of Alice and Orange Grove, NALF served as part of the system of auxiliary landing fields under the umbrella of NAS Corpus Christi. NALF Orange Grove featured prominently in student jet-training exercises.

During the 1950s, the American military relied increasingly on jet aircraft and less on propeller-driven airplanes. Education for the Navy's pilots kept pace with these technological changes. NAAS Kingsville became an all-jet training base in 1960 when Training Squadron 27 moved its S2F patrol planes to New

Iberia, Louisiana.[72] On July 4, 1960, South Field, which could not accommodate jet aircraft, was permanently closed. The Department of the Interior assumed the surplus of 533.8 acres at that time, eventually turning it over to the City of Kingsville for use as a recreation area in 1973.[73]

During much of the 1960s the pace of major construction on the base slowed. Although the replacement of World War II-era barracks continued and recreational and safety-related facilities were added, few major features associated with the pilot training program were initiated.

THE VIETNAM ERA AND BEYOND, 1965–1989

In 1968, the Navy upgraded NAAS Kingsville to an autonomous Naval Air Station. United States involvement in the Vietnam Conflict and the resulting increase in aircraft activity required a more intensive training schedule. Official fears about popular uprisings from both civil rights proponents and students protesting American involvement in Southeast Asia resulted in crowd dispersal and riot control training among many branches of the military and National Guard throughout the country. During the late 1960s, the NAS Kingsville Civil Disturbance Rifle Detachment drilled regularly at the station, as did similar units across the country.[74]

Evolving jet technology continued to shape NAS Kingsville's training mission. Skyhawk jet training aircraft arrived at NAS Kingsville to phase out the F9 Cougars in 1969. The timely appearance of the Skyhawks provided an opportunity for cadets to train on the jets that were currently in use in the fleet. Considering the heavy use of aircraft during the Vietnam Conflict, this opportunity served the students well. That same year, NAS Kingsville assumed the full responsibility for NALF Orange Grove, further emphasizing Kingsville's autonomy from NAS Corpus Christi. Kingsville's sister facility, NAS Chase Field, in Beeville, concurrently assumed oversight of NALF Goliad.[75]

During the first half of the 1970s many physical changes at NAS Kingsville occurred. Some of these changes reflected the Navy's more relaxed attitude toward its personnel, along with a renewed respect for their comfort and safety. A new and improved $1.25 million bachelor enlisted quarters building was started in January 1971. Two years later, in 1973, construction of a briefing room and fire station began at NALF Orange Grove. Along with an Aircraft Maintenance Hangar, constructed in 1974, the Navy allocated nearly $3 million for upgrading the facilities at the landing field.

After 1974, changes in the structure of the Navy's pilot training pipeline made it possible to complete the entire training process, from basic flight school to advanced jet flight training, at one location. Students no longer had to start their education at Pensacola or other training fields, transfer to Kingsville, and then complete their training elsewhere. Additions to the Academic Training Building enhanced the educational process. The addition of a new visual computer-generated image trainer attracted the interest of many influential officials who visited NAS Kingsville during that time. Completed in 1975, the addition to the Flight Training Devices Building (Building 3788) housed the new 2F101 devices for training on T-2C jets. This addition, along with a new Enlisted Men's Mess Hall, accounted for another $4 million investment by the Navy at NAS Kingsville. While these buildings were under construction, many World War II-era buildings were removed. In 1975, five World War II-era buildings were demolished, among them an enlisted men's and a former WAVES barracks, and an early North Field hangar.[76]

NAS Kingsville appointed its first base Environmental Protection/Ecology Officer in 1975. Later that year, environmental officials from the State of Texas visited the air station for the first time to review its activities and compliance with state regulations. After the mid-1970s the Navy constructed several hazardous waste storage buildings on base and increased attention to fuel storage and disposal policies.

Hurricane Allen impacted a large area of the Coastal Bend in Texas during 1980. Although NAS Kingsville sustained little damage from tropical storms in previous decades, the winds and flying debris from Allen caused major structural and water damage to several buildings. The damage sustained in the hurricane encouraged the continued removal of older buildings while cleanup and repairs extended through the following year. Groundbreaking for the Public Works Administration & Support Facility and a new child care center occurred in 1982. Also that year, the Navy's participation in national drug deterrence activities prompted the construction of a $12,000 dog house at the air station. Increased defense spending during the 1980s resulted in the construction of many new buildings at the base, including recreation facilities, riding stables, an auto hobby shop, and a recreation pavilion.[77] Figure 4 shows the configuration of the air station as of 1987.

In 1986, after several revolutions in technology, cadets trained in considerably different aircraft than their counterparts had in 1956. Advanced students in squadrons VT-21 and VT-22 trained in the TA-4J "Skyhawk," while squadron VT-23 provided basic jet training in the T2-C "Buckeye." Both training courses included aircraft carrier operations among the many other aspects of coursework.[78] An additional operations training building was constructed in 1988, along with increased office space, another maintenance hangar, and a general warehouse.

A Change in Focus for the Military, 1989–1994

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the United States' large peacetime military force came under intense scrutiny by military officials and taxpayers. Nearly forty years after the Navy had recommissioned it during the Korean Conflict, nearby NAS Chase Field was deactivated in 1983. However, the pilot education and training opportunities that the air stations at NAS Corpus Christi and NAS Kingsville offer continue to provide trained, flexible, and technologically adept military personnel.

In the last half century, NAS Kingsville has played a major part in the economic and cultural development of Kingsville and Kleberg County. Likewise, the air station has served the Naval Air Training Command well by providing the infrastructure and personnel to support Navy pilot training goals. Key events during NAS Kingsville's history include its initial commissioning as an auxiliary air station in July 1942, its decommissioning in August 1946, its recommissioning in 1951 during the Korean Conflict and its concurrent assignment as an Advanced Jet Training station, its designation as an all-jet base in 1960, and its upgrade to NAS status in 1968. Remaining buildings from the three major construction periods--1942–1945, 1951–1959, and 1973–1990–reflect the ever-changing mission of the base as a pilot training facility.

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The extant resources at NAS Kingsville include a diverse collection of temporary and permanent resources constructed between 1942 and 1990. Although they are used for a variety of purposes, these resources all support the operation of the base as a Naval air training facility. Distinctive building types include large and small hangars, runways, taxiways and aprons, barracks and other

living quarters, administrative offices, recreation buildings, warehouse and support buildings and infrastructural elements. Buildings are generally functional and utilitarian, with modest amounts of stylistic embellishment. Several of the documented buildings display nautical design references as well as influences from Ranch style residential architecture. The only building remaining on the property from its earlier use as farm and ranch land is a ca. 1920, two-story brick house . Buildings erected by the Navy during World War II are generally large-scale wood-frame, masonry, or steel-framed buildings designed to serve the large numbers of personnel and planes trained and repaired at the base.

2. Condition of fabric: The buildings at NAS Kingsville generally stand in good condition.

B. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located roughly three miles east of the City of Kingsville, Texas, NAS Kingsville occupies extremely flat terrain with an average approximate elevation of 40'-0" above sea level. The base is drained by the Tranquita and San Fernando creeks on the north and, historically, by the Santa Gertrudis creek on the south. Most buildings and structures are clustered in the center of the base, which was flanked by two airfields: one on the northeast and one on the southwest. The southwest airfield is now a golf course outside the base boundaries. A spur line of the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company once extended into the heart of the base.

2. Historic landscape design: With the construction of the airfields, massive drainage ditches were constructed at NAS Kingsville.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Reproductions of a complete set of original architectural drawings are on file at the Public Works Department, NAS Corpus Christi. These drawings list Robert and Company, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia, and Corpus Christi, Texas, as the architects of record, and H. W. Howarth as the architect in charge. Reproductions of plans for alterations, additions, and repairs drawn by Department of the Navy, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Charleston, South Carolina; Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, NAS Kingsville, Texas; Department of the Navy, NAS Kingsville, Public Works Department; Texas; Department of the Navy, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, New Orleans, Louisiana; and Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Air Advanced Training Command, Corpus Christi, Texas,; are also on file.

B. Early views: A "Welcome Aboard" brochure dating to ca. 1960 includes multiple photographs of various NAS Kingsville facilities. This brochure is available from the NAS Kingsville facility

files. The U.S. Navy maintains an archive of aerial photographs which provide an overall understanding of site development but minimal information on individual buildings.

C. Interviews: No oral interviews were undertaken to prepare this form.

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E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Information on NAS Kingsville may be held in the Federal Records Center in Fort Worth Texas. The Navy Historical Center and the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and the architectural collections of the archives in Suitland, Maryland may also contain some project-related information. These repositories will not be investigated for the purposes of this project.

F. Supplemental Materials: N/A

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was completed in compliance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and complies with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by representatives with the Department of the Navy, the Texas Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Under Contract No. N62467-94-D-1128, Delivery Order No. 00190, Southern Division Naval Facilities Engineering Command (SOUTHNAVFACENGCOM) contracted with Turner Collie & Braden (TC&B) Inc., of Houston, Texas, to oversee the preparation of the HABS recordation. As subcontractors to TC&B, Inc., Hardy·Heck·Moore & Associates, Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and, prepared a historic context and the HABS forms. All project personnel directly involved with the preparation of the HABS documentation meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. David Moore served as principal investigator. Contributors include Anne I. Malanka, historian; Diane E. Williams, architectural historian; Tina Roach, associate architectural historian; Terri L. Myers, historian; and Sara Kirtland, associate historian. Preservation architect Thomas Eisenhour recorded the buildings with large-format (4" x 5") black-and-white photographs. Mr. Eisenhour also photographed

existing measured drawings with large-format black-and-white photography and recorded information on the physical attributes of the buildings.