

United States Helium Production Plant No. 1, Office and Laboratory
(Building No. 1)
(Federal Aviation Administration Southwest Regional Office)
4400 Blue Mound Road
Fort Worth
Tarrant County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3487-A

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

UNITED STATES HELIUM PRODUCTION PLANT NO.1
OFFICE AND LABORATORY, (BUILDING NO. 1)

HABS No. TX-3487-A

LOCATION: 4400 Blue Mound Road, Ft. Worth, Tarrant County, Texas

USGS: Haltom City Quadrangle

UTM COORDINATES: 14.655290.3632720

ARCHITECT, BUILDER: United States Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks

PRESENT OWNER: Federal Aviation Administration

PRESENT USE: Vacant

SIGNIFICANCE: Building 1 is significant for its association with the United States Strategic Materials Program following World War I. It was the original office and laboratory where experimental processes were tested and where natural gas was assayed to determine its helium content. Building 1 retains its integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Specification Number 3800, "Argon Production Plant at North Fort Worth, Texas," was created by the Navy Department, and released on February 15, 1919. It contained specifications for Building 1:

The office and laboratory building will be two stories in height and shall have concrete foundations and steps; wood framing, doors, sash, floors and trim; plaster and stucco work, tile roofing, hardware, painting and glazing, sheet metal work, heating, plumbing and lighting installation.

In 1921, the Bureau of Yards and Docks of the Navy Department published a book that included a detailed description of the buildings at the United States Helium Plant No. 1 after they were constructed (Navy Department 1921:444-445). Building 1, the Office and Laboratory building, was described to have been occupied jointly, by the Government and representatives of the Linde Company. The two-story frame stucco building had a concrete foundation and steps. It was 62' long, 40' wide, and 26' high from the ground to the ceiling of the second floor. Much smaller than it appears today, the first floor of Building 1 initially provided two offices, a laboratory, and one toilet. The second floor contained eight office rooms and one toilet (Navy Department 1921:445).

In the 1940s, the role and responsibilities of the regional office of the Civil Aeronautics Administration grew. With growth came the need to further centralize operations by moving other offices to the former Helium Plant. This influx of personnel required the creation of more office space, and in ca. 1944, Building 1 received a 75' addition, extending to the east, and nearly doubling it in size. A second addition, in the late 1940s, extended the building to the south by 36', and joined it to Building 2 by a second-story passageway.

More recent alterations to the building include a brick and tile flat-roofed open-entry pavilion that was added to the west elevation in the 1960s, as well as massive alterations to the building interior, including plywood wall paneling, carpeting, and acoustical dropped ceilings.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

Record Group 71, Entry 649. Bureau of Yards and Docks, Facility Blueprints. On microfilm file, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

B. HISTORIC VIEWS

Record Group 72, Entry 162, Boxes 1, 16, 25. Bureau of Aeronautics, Helium Plant Material, 1919-1930. On file, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

C. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1994

Federal Aviation Administration, Southwest Region. *Reminiscences on the Reservation: A History of the FAA Southwest Regional Office*. FAA, Fort Worth.

1976

Federal Aviation Administration, Southwest Region. *Recollections and Reflections*. Public Affairs Office, FAA, Fort Worth.

1989

Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County. *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey, Volumes I-IV*. Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, Texas.

1921

Navy Department, Bureau of Yards and Docks. *Activities of the U.S. Bureau of Yards and Docks, World War 1917-1918*. Government Printing Office.

Record Group 70, Entry 11. Bureau of Mines, General Records, Correspondence, Reports. On file, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 71. Bureau of Yards and Docks, General Correspondence, Shore Establishments, 1918-1925. On file, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 71, Entry 649. Bureau of Yards and Docks, Facility Blueprints. On microfilm file, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Record Group 72, Entry 62. Bureau of Aeronautics, General Correspondence, 1925-1942. On file, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 72, Entry 162. Bureau of Aeronautics, Helium Plant Material, 1919-1930. On file, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 80, General Records of the Navy, Secretary of the Navy Correspondence, 1916-1926

D. LIKELY SOURCES NOT YET INVESTIGATED

There are a number of repositories and facilities, both in the state of Texas as well as elsewhere, that have the potential to contain records or information pertaining to the former United States Helium Production Plant located at 4400 Blue Mound Road, in North Fort Worth, Texas. In addition to the following list, the potential for oral history accounts is a promising avenue for further research. The two FAA publications listed in the bibliography above were very useful in preparation of this document, and they contain several accounts from local residents employed at the former Helium Plant, many of which could be pursued as further leads. The following is a list for continuation of, or augmentation to, the results of the research presented in this document. The following list is arranged in no particular order, and should not be considered conclusive.

Various archived/microfilmed newspapers/periodicals in the collections of various state public libraries, particularly in Amarillo, Texas, and Wichita Falls, Texas.

Various files and collections at Texas Universities

Federal Aviation Administration Records Facility, Cincinnati, Ohio

City of Fort Worth Planning Department - Historic Building Permits

Navy Historical Foundation

Department of the Interior Library

National Science Foundation

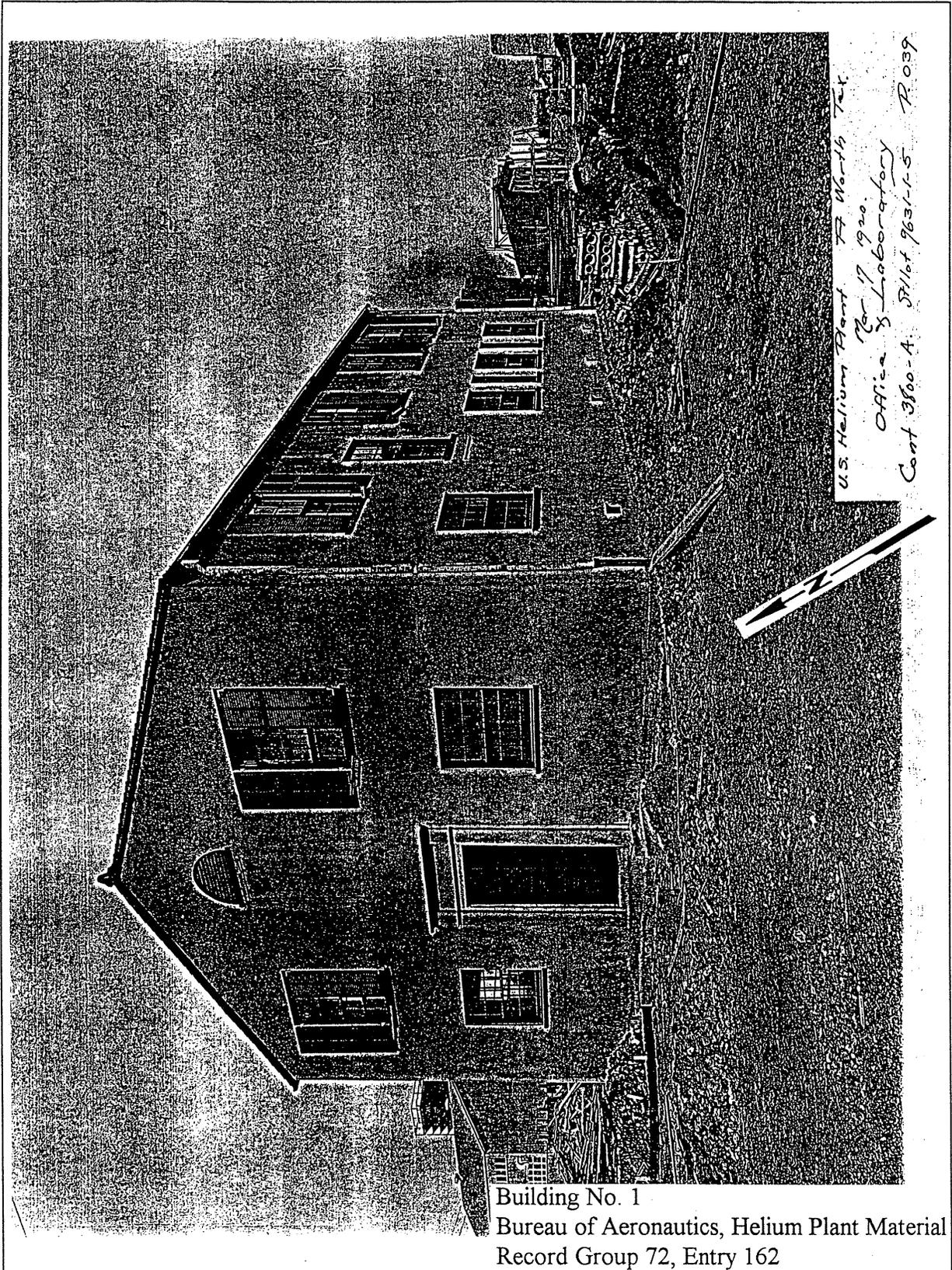
Records of the Lone Star Gas Company

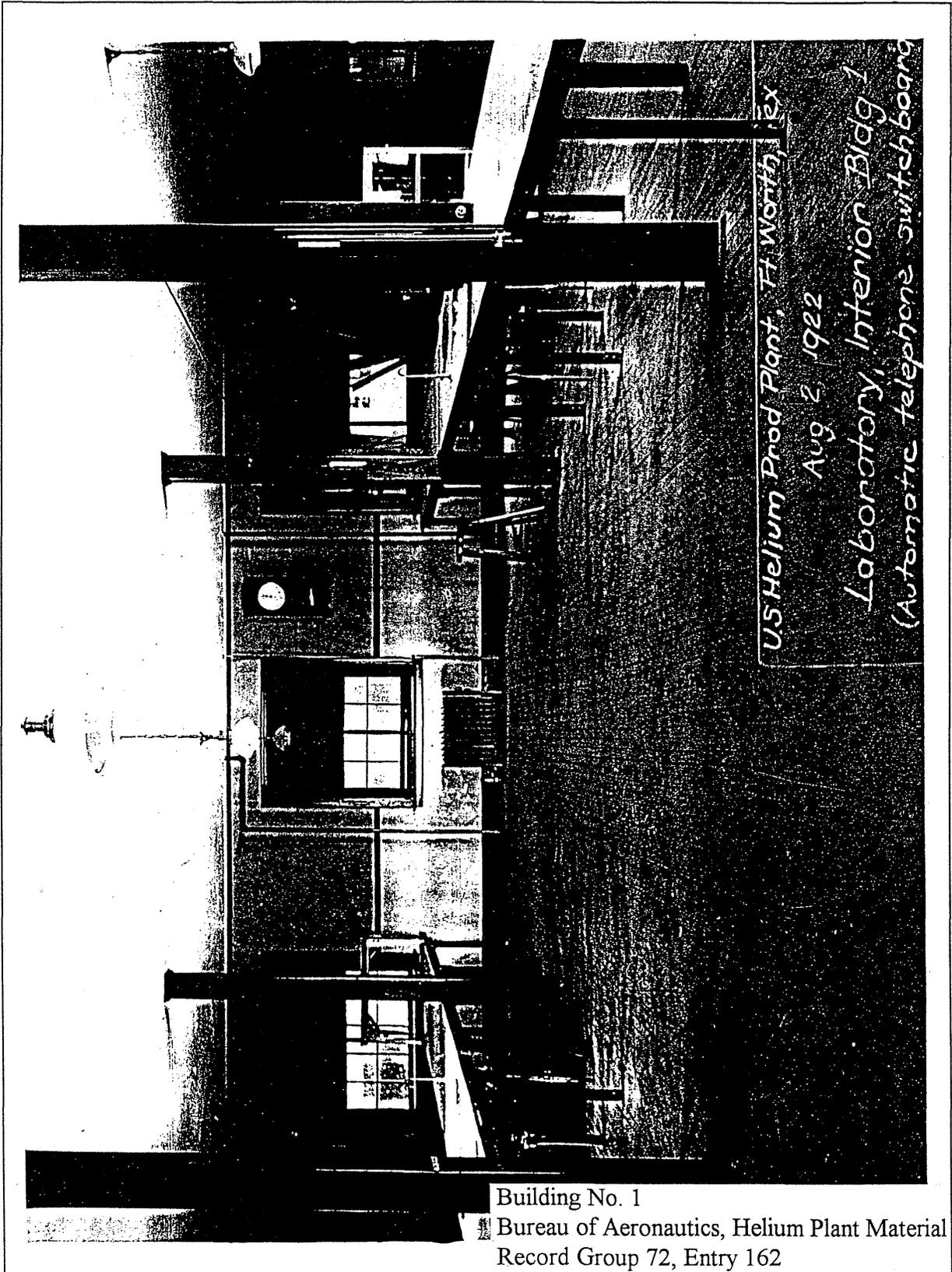
Records of the Linde Company, New York

Records of the Air Reduction Company, New York

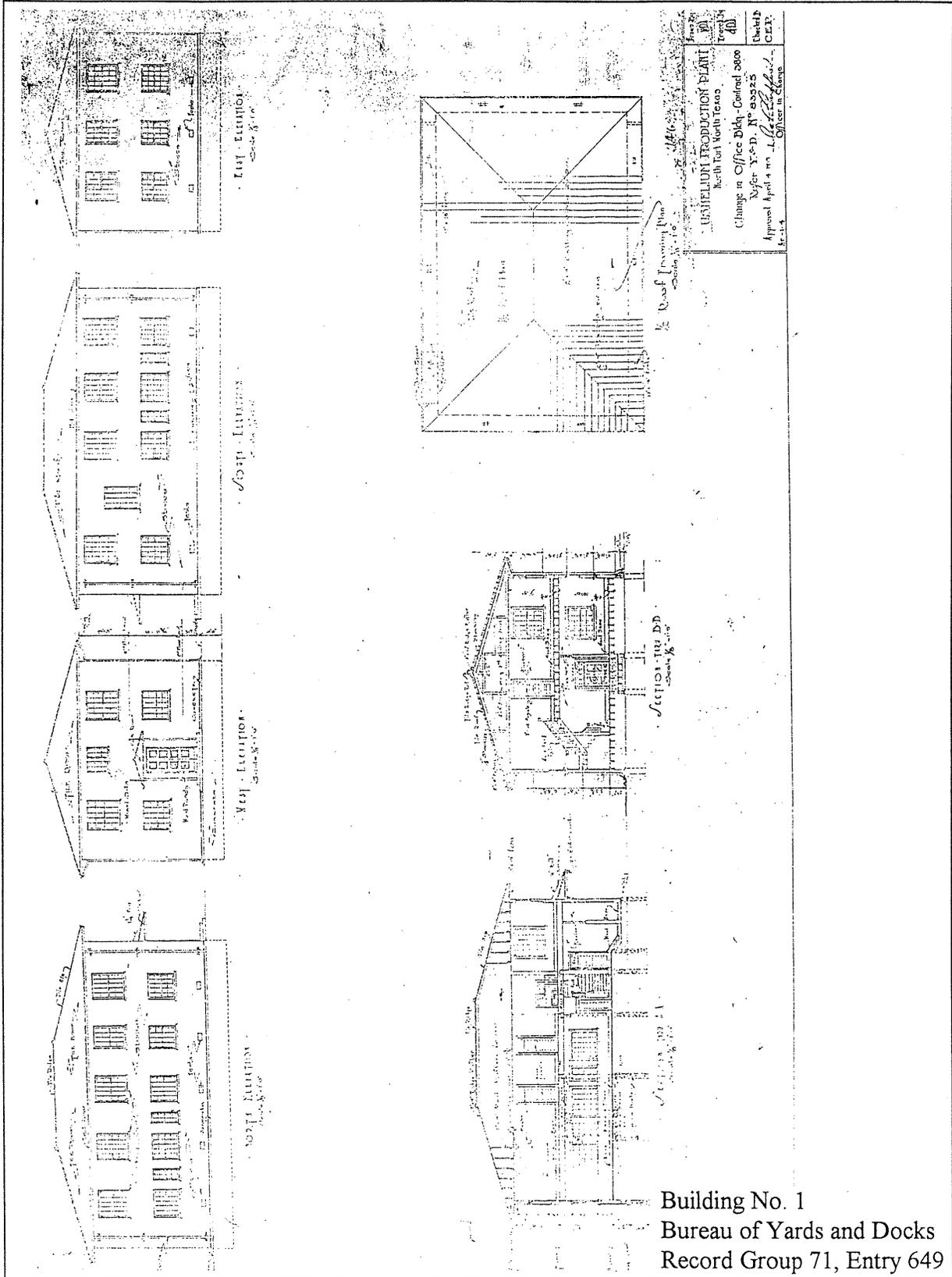
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GRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

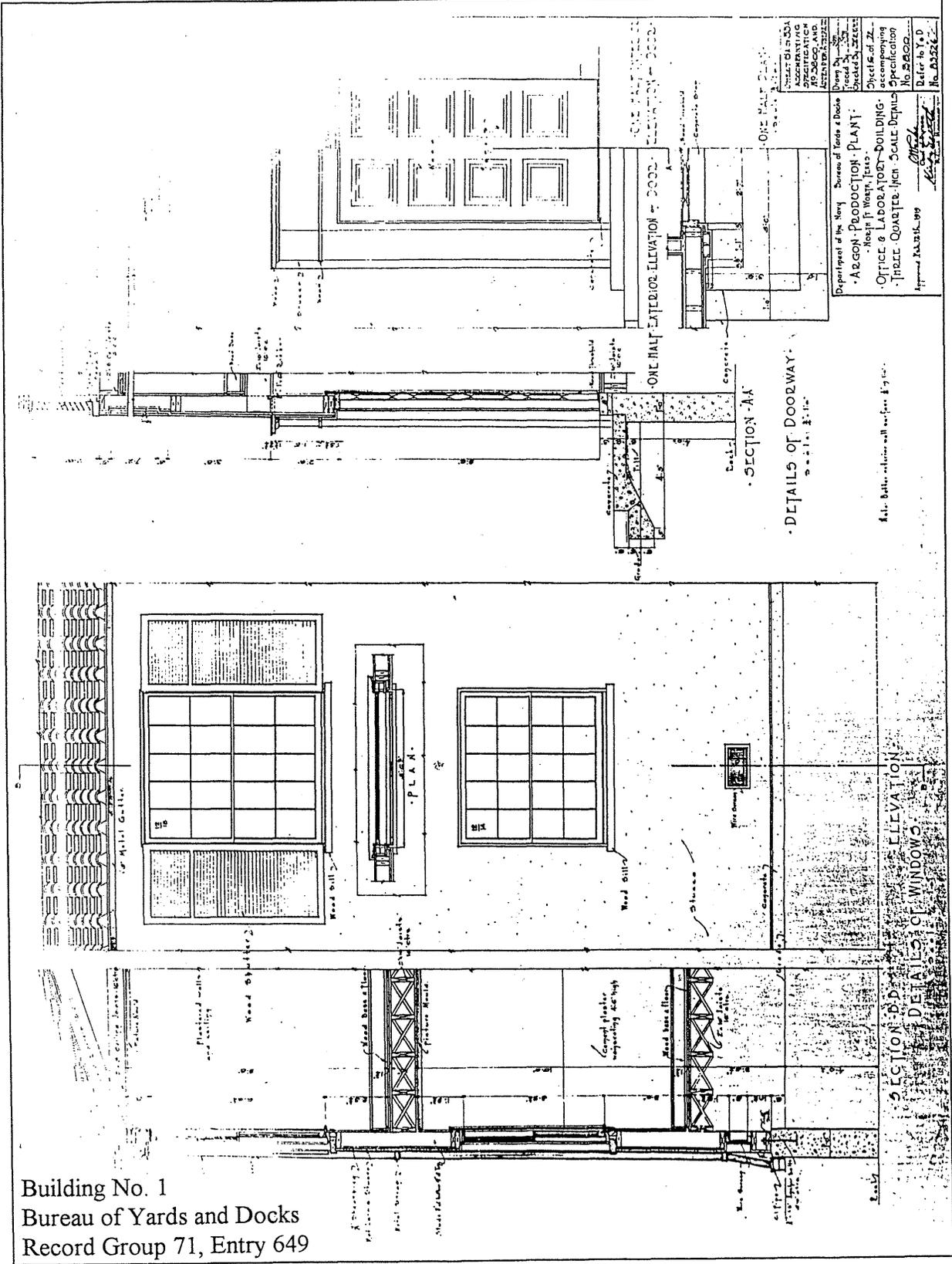




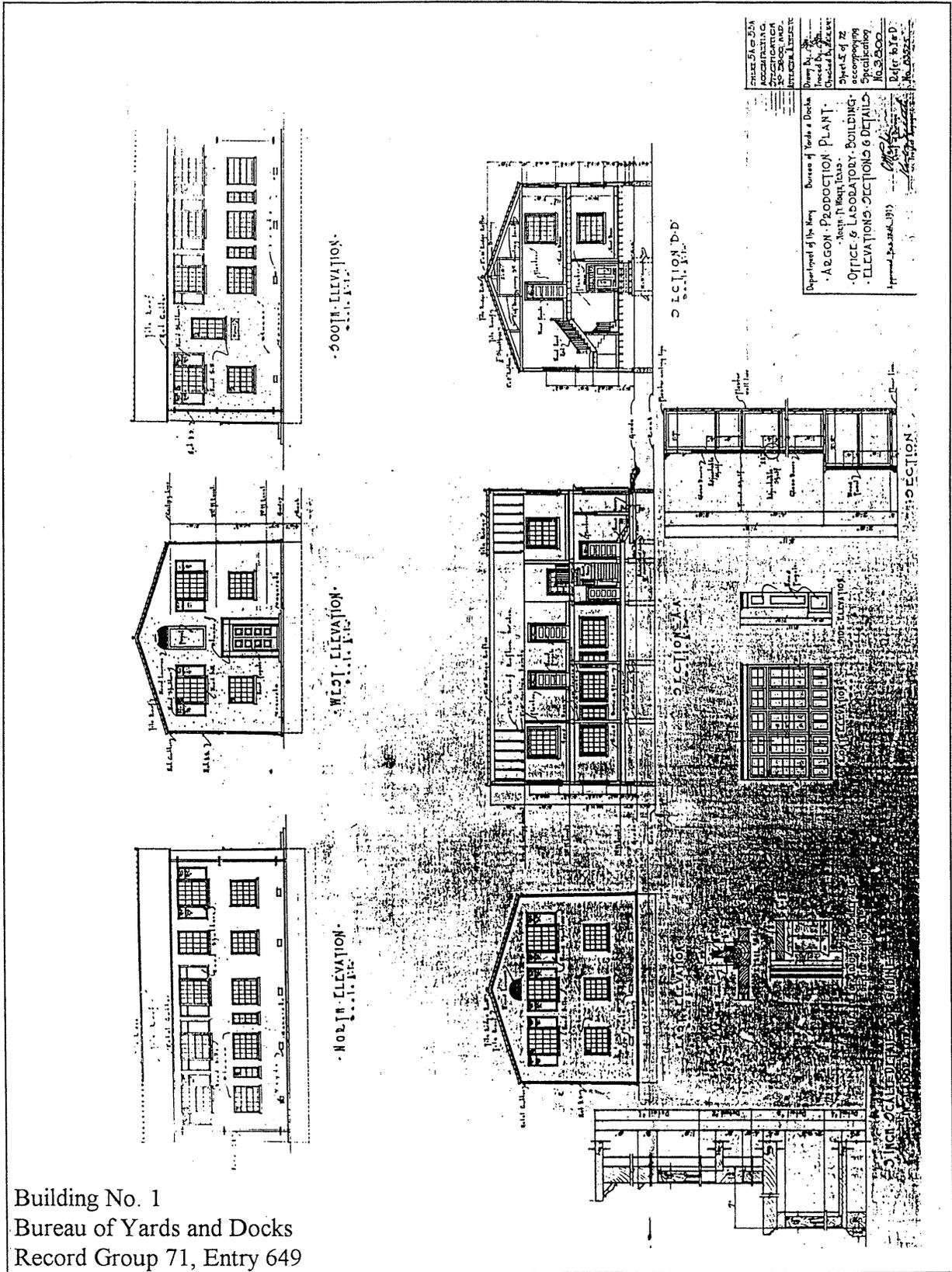
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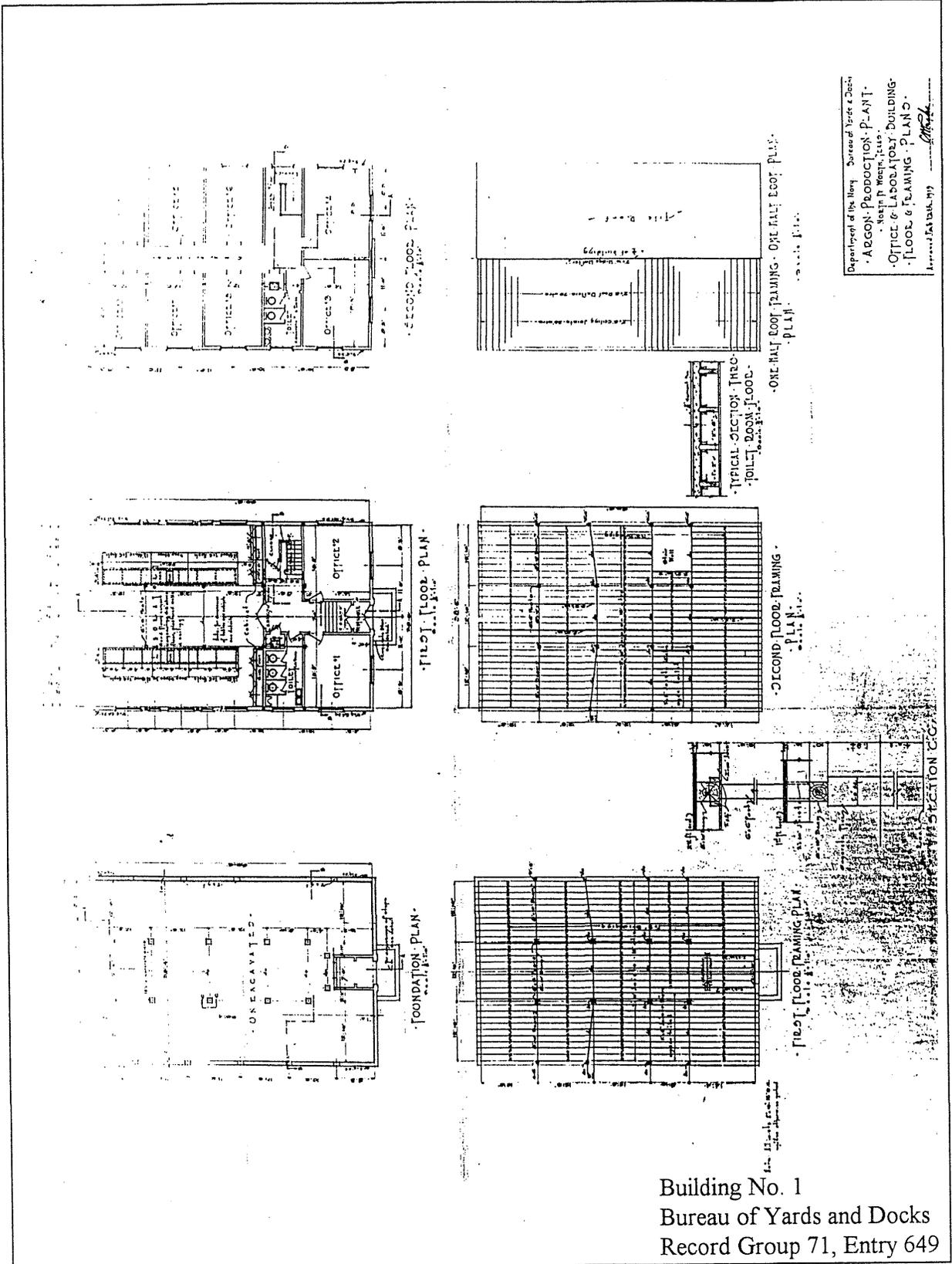


Building No. 1
 Bureau of Yards and Docks
 Record Group 71, Entry 649



DRAWN BY: J. W. B. / 5/23
 ARCHITECT: BUREAU OF YARDS & DOCKS / 5/23
 CHECKED BY: J. W. B. / 5/23
 APPROVED BY: J. W. B. / 5/23
 DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY / BUREAU OF YARDS & DOCKS
 ARAGON - PRODUCTION PLANT
 OFFICE & LABORATORY BUILDING
 ELEVATIONS, SECTIONS & DETAILS
 No. 3, 800
 Refer to: P. 10

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