

Naval Air Station Dallas, Gatehouse
(Naval Air Station Dallas, Building 1)
Navy Circle/Navy Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3408-A

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Southwest System Support Office
Department of the Interior
Santa Fe, New Mexico

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS,
GATEHOUSE
(NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS, BUILDING 1)

HABS NO. TX-3408-A

Location: Navy Circle/Navy Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Duncanville Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
14.691355.3624110

Present Owner: United States of America
c/o Commander, Naval Reserve Force
4400 Dauphine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70146-5000

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: None

Statement of Significance: The Gatehouse is significant for the role it played in ensuring the security of the Naval Air Station (NAS) during World War II, a function that was essential to the success of the air station's training mission. Located at the original entrance to the base, it was the first point of contact for those entering the base and is important as the location where civilian space was separated from military space. Built in 1942, it served as the only security facility on the base until the first brig was constructed in 1943. Undertaken during the rapid mobilization efforts of 1942, the Gatehouse contributed to the expanding role that aviation played in Naval operations. Furthermore, it is a tangible link to the Navy's presence in the Dallas-Grand Prairie area and is representative of the important role NAS Dallas played in local history. Designed by Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, with E. S. White serving as the project architect and Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR, in charge of construction, the Gatehouse is a small building reflective of then popular Art Moderne architectural styling. Its curved massing and projecting canopies recall the forms of ships and planes, and thus herald the base's function. It is a distinctive example of World War II military architecture and illustrates one type of building the Navy specified during the rapid U.S. military mobilization in the early months of World War II. Despite significant alterations to the

building, it retains its massing and form and its ability to convey a sense of time and place.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Original architectural plans were approved August 7, 1942. The exact date that construction began is unknown.
2. Architect: Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, with E. S. White serving as the project architect.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States of America, Department of the Navy.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR, was the officer in charge of construction. Actual contractors and materials suppliers are not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Reproductions of original plans for the building are available at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. This building was constructed from standardized plans developed by the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks (Y&D drawing No. 194-977).
6. Alterations and additions: The exterior of the building was substantially modified in 1979 when the Gatehouse was converted for use as a bank (credit union). At that time many of the original windows were removed and the openings enclosed; other original window openings were reduced in size and replacement windows installed. Metal-frame solar screens were placed over the windows, and the exterior was resurfaced with rough textured stucco. Interior changes included the reconfiguration of the interior to accommodate the new commercial use. New drywall partitions created new office spaces, and new heating, ventilating, and plumbing systems were installed. Elastomeric stucco was applied in 1988. Despite the removal or covering of much of the building's original historic fabric, its rooflines, distinctive massing, and canopies remain intact, and the building retains its ability to convey a sense of time and place.

B. Historical Context:

Perhaps the most unique building at NAS Dallas, the Gatehouse was built in 1942 as part of the second federal construction initiative to take place at military installations around the country during World War II. During this period of fast mobilization and large military expenditures, Congress appropriated \$3.9 million so that the Navy might expand their facilities at then Naval Reserve Air Base (NRAB) Dallas. At the time the Gatehouse was built at NRAB Dallas, the base was relatively small, consisting of two hangars and several other buildings that supported the base's dual mission as a primary training facility for pilots and ground crew personnel, and as an aircraft acceptance depot for North American Aviation, Inc. in Grand Prairie. Unlike most other buildings at the base that were utilitarian in form and without many embellishments, the Gatehouse was a cylindrical, streamlined, Art Moderne building. It was representative of one of the most ambitious and innovative architectural styles used by the military in World War II. The building was designed by Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, of Houston, Texas, based on standardized drawings developed by the Department of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks.¹ Plans for the building were approved on August 7, 1942, and the project architect was E.S. White. The Gatehouse cost \$10,411 dollars to construct; the work was supervised by Lt. Commander W.M. Powell, CEC, USNR. Construction was probably completed in late fall of 1942.²

The Gatehouse was the first building at NRAB Dallas to serve the base's security needs. Completed at the end of 1942 when the base was in full mobilization and secrecy of operations was of tantamount importance, the Gatehouse functioned as a check point at the entrance of the base. When the cylindrical building was first erected, it had one design flaw: Its double canopies did not have sufficient height for trucks to pass underneath. The first truck to pass through tore off one canopy of the Gatehouse. However, the building was not altered to accommodate large trucks. Instead, a large chainlink gate was installed in the fence on the west side of the Gatehouse to permit the passage of supply trucks.³ During World War II, personnel assigned to the Gatehouse authorized people and materials to enter and leave the station. The Gatehouse also functioned as the only security facility at NRAB Dallas until a brig was built in 1943 when the base was redesignated an NAS.

During the 1960s, the position of NAS Dallas's main gate was relocated several hundred yards north so that the perimeter of the station encompassed and protected additional growth at the installation.⁴ The Gatehouse continued to

function as a security check point until 1979 when the building was modified and used as a credit union. The credit union was later moved to the Drill Hall and Gymnasium. Many interior and exterior changes were made to the Gatehouse, including the application of stucco to the exterior of the building in 1979 and elastomeric stucco in 1988. The Gatehouse is currently vacant. As the result of recommendations made by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), the base is slated for closure in 1998. No decision has yet been reached by the Navy regarding the disposition of this building after base closure.

Notes

1. Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawing No. 194 -977, Plans and Drawings 1945-1995, Public Works Department, NAS Dallas, Texas.
2. Crews, Joseph M., *A Historical and Architectural Assessment of the Dallas Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas*, 2 vols. Prepared for the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth, Texas, 1 June 1994, vol. 2. N.C.
3. *Sky Ranger*, 17 May 1946, n.p.
4. Crews, *Historical and Architectural Assessment of the Dallas Naval Air Station*, vol. 2, n.p.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Gatehouse at NAS Dallas is architecturally meritorious for its Art Moderne styling, which is most notably expressed in its cylindrical massing and the projecting elliptical roof form of the two porte cocheres. The rounded forms and smooth wall surfaces of the building are reminiscent of elements seen on ships. In plan, the building, with its porte cocheres, recalls the front of an airplane with the single engine propeller in motion. Such references were appropriate symbols for the building, which marked the entry to a Naval aviation facility, and the Art Moderne form aptly chosen since that style used transportation and technology as design themes. It is a stylistic "companion" to the Art Moderne Administration Building (Building 2).

2. Condition of fabric: Overall, the Gatehouse is in good condition, although alterations to the building have removed or covered the majority of the original historic material.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is 19 feet high and has a diameter of 27 feet. It is two stories high and contains 1,202 square feet.

2. Foundation: A concrete-slab foundation supports the building.

3. Walls: Originally clad in asbestos shingles, the exterior was resurfaced with a rough textured stucco in 1979. Raised bands encircle the building at roofline, center, and base. The center band is wider than those at the roofline and base of building. The current exterior surface, elastomeric stucco, was applied in 1988.

4. Structural system, framing: This building utilizes a wood-frame structural system.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Porte cocheres flank the building on the east and west sides. These are composed of a flat-roofed elliptical canopy that bisects the building between the first and second floors. The porte cocheres are supported by steel poles set in concrete islands adjacent to the building. Their form and materials appear original to the building. A metal ladder on the roof of the east porte cochere leads to the roof of the building.

6. Chimneys: None

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Entrances are located on east and west sides of the building. Although the openings appear original in size, shape, and placement, the original doors have been removed. The existing doors are thought to date to the remodeling of the building for use as a bank in 1979. The east entrance has a concrete sill, aluminum door frame with glass-and-aluminum frame door. On the west side, the entrance has a concrete sill, wood-and-aluminum door frame, and a metal door.

b. Windows and shutters: Fenestration patterns are regular with equidistant spacing on all elevations and floors. However, the building

originally contained a nearly continuous ribbon-like band of windows on each floor. Windows on the first floor were slightly taller than those on the second. Both floors utilized wood-sash, four light, double-hung, check rail windows. This pattern has been altered by the enclosure of the majority of these openings. Others have been reduced in size, and smaller, nonoriginal windows have been installed. Four windows on the first floor of the north side are original double-hung, wood-sash, four light, check rail windows. Two windows remain on the north side of the second floor; one is original. The replacement window is a 1/1, double-hung, wood-sash type with a metal-and-wood frame. The south side of the building has three windows on the first floor; two occupy openings with modified dimensions. The replacement windows are 1/1 double-hung, wood-sash type set in vinyl-and-wood frames. Three windows are located on the second floor of the south side; two are original double-hung, wood-sash, four light, check rail windows. The opening for the third window has been modified and contains a replacement window. Metal-frame solar screens were installed over the windows in 1979.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The building and the porte cocheres have a flat roof with built-up tar and gravel covering.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The rooflines of the building and porte cocheres are finished with metal flashing.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: This floor originally served as the sentry room and contained a lavatory, gear room, and a wall heater. A circular staircase, positioned in the center of the room, provides access to the second floor. The first floor was reconfigured in 1979 with drywall partitions when the building was converted to a bank, but the stairway was left in place.
- b. Second floor: The original floor plan included two bedrooms separated by a bathroom and a large, open space accessed by the central circular stairway, with a hatchway adjacent. The space currently contains two

rooms, one on the east side and one on the west side. A bathroom is located south of the stairwell and there is a utility room on the north side.

2. Stairways: The stairway is constructed of wood and utilizes a wood pole and wood risers. The stairway is partially enclosed with wood paneling.

3. Flooring: The first and second floors and stair treads are carpeted. A small area finished with wood parquet is located at the east door.

4. Wall and ceiling finishes: The original wall finishes included gypsum board, plywood, and asbestos board. These materials are intact under the drywall, which was installed in 1979. Original ceilings were finished with gypsum board. Currently, first floor ceilings are dropped and composed of particle board suspended in metal frames. Upstairs walls in the room on the west side of the building are finished with unpainted wood shelving. Ceilings are sheetrock in the east room and asbestos board in the west room.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Existing doors are hollow-wood type set in wood frames. Original doors were wood-panel type with glazing or louvered wood vents.

b. Windows: The windows have wide, flat wood frames. Low wood chair-rails wrap around the interior and serve as window sills. Wood baseboards are found in the rooms.

6. Decorative features and trim: Except for those elements described in other sections pertaining to the interior, no decorative features and trim were identified.

7. Hardware: No original hardware was identified.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Central heating and air conditioning were installed in 1979.

b. Lighting: The building has fluorescent lighting throughout. Fixtures are inset in the dropped ceiling.

c. Plumbing: Original plumbing has been replaced in the bathroom.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Gatehouse is located at what was once the main entrance to NAS Dallas. It faces north and is flanked by roads leading into and out of base. During the 1960s the base entrance was moved further to the north and a new gatehouse was built. Several buildings were constructed within the newly acquired area between the original gatehouse and the new one. These include a gas station to the northeast, the Navy Exchange and a fast food restaurant to the northwest, and the main gate to the north. Beyond the main gate is an industrial area. The Gatehouse is sited directly north of the Administration Building. Instead of being at the edge of the base, the Gatehouse is now located among several buildings and no longer controls access to the base. The axial view from the Gatehouse to the north out of the base, however, has been preserved. The Gatehouse is located in the area of the base devoted to personnel support. It is slightly south and east of the original Hensley Field area. Quarters are located to the east, administrative buildings to the south, and buildings to the northwest and southwest provide personnel services. This area of the base has informal landscaping, such as tree-lined roads, shrubs, sidewalks, and lawns. The immediate setting of the Gatehouse has been altered with the relocation of the main gate and the construction of new buildings in the immediate vicinity. The north side of the building has crushed rock ground cover and is planted with white crape myrtles, nandina, and boxwood. An esplanade and turn-around on the north side of the building features magenta crape myrtles and a concrete-brick retaining wall. The south side has a small lawn with crape myrtles, boxwood, and a flagpole. Automobiles can be directed beneath the porte cochere on the east or west side of the building. This drive-through area has been separated from the main flow of traffic by small concrete islands and is no longer in use.

2. Historic landscape design: The street pattern in the immediate area is the primary design element that remains from the 1940s. The main axial approach to the base has been preserved, and the Gatehouse, Administration Building, and Recreation Building lie along this line. The Drill Hall flanks it on the west. A traffic circle, in place by 1949, moves vehicles around the sides of the Administration Building to the Gatehouse. Although the precise location of trees planted near the main gate in October 1946 in honor of NAS Dallas World War II dead is unknown, the trees that form the semicircle in front of the Administration Building may be those planted in what was called the Circle of Remembrance. Historic photographs of the Gatehouse do not show any trees, although surviving

reports place the trees near the main gate. Although the historic circulation patterns have survived, street and curbing materials were replaced in early 1993.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Reproductions of an incomplete set of original architectural drawing are on file at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. The drawings list Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, as the architects of record, and E. S. White as the architect in charge. Available drawings include the original floor plans, elevations, and window and door schedules. Plans of changes undertaken in 1979 also are on file in the Public Works Department. This drawing was prepared by personnel at NAS Dallas. A third drawing, which is undated, shows the building after the 1979 alterations were completed. No decision has been made as to where the drawings will be moved when the base closes.

B. Early views: The Public Affairs Office at NAS Dallas maintains a small collection of historic photographs of the base. Many are aerial photographs that provide an overall understanding of site development but provide minimal information on individual buildings. Other photographs include those taken of buildings in the late 1940s within their immediate context. The earliest known photograph of the Gatehouse was taken on June 5, 1949. Copies of this photograph, and others in the collection, can be obtained by contacting the Public Affairs Officer, NAS Dallas, Dallas, Texas. Other early views are held at the main branch of the Dallas Public Library in the NAS Dallas files.

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

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects & Engineers, Inc. Plans and drawings, 1942.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Crews, Joseph M. *A Historical and Architectural Assessment of Dallas Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas*, 2 vols. Prepared for the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth, Texas, 1 June 1994, vol. 2.

Dallas, Texas. Naval Air Station Dallas. Public Works Department. Plans and Drawings, 1945-1995.

Sky Ranger, 17 May 1946.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Information on NAS Dallas may be held in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., or in the architectural collections of the archives in Suitland, Maryland. These repositories will not be investigated for the purposes of this project.

F. Supplemental Materials: N/A

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The decision by the Defense BRAC Commission to close NAS Dallas and relocate needed activities to NAS Fort Worth (the former Carswell Air Force Base) triggered an assessment of the property's potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. The Texas Historical Commission determined 12 buildings and structures in a portion of the base built for and associated with World War II Navy activities and two single family officer's house and two adjacent lagoons built for and associated with Army Air Corps activities in the late 1920s and the 1930s to be eligible for NRHP listing. The Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, the Department of the Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation are in the process of signing a Memorandum of Agreement requiring Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level I documentation of the 14 buildings and structures and two lagoon areas. Through its Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southern Division, with offices in North Charleston, South Carolina, the Department of the Navy contracted with Turner Collie & Braden, Inc., of Houston, Texas, to oversee the preparation of the HABS recordation. Under contract with Turner Collie & Braden, Hardy•Heck•Moore & Associates, Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and, prepared a historic context and the HABS forms. Diane Elizabeth Williams served as principal investigator and project architectural historian. David Moore served as historian, Sara Kirtland was associate historian, and Elliott K. Wright gathered information for the architectural descriptions. Craig Melde, of ArchiTexas, Dallas, Texas, supervised the preparation of the measured drawings, Craig King served as project coordinator, and Stan Solamillo was the field coordinator. Measured drawings were drafted by members of the ArchiTexas staff. Tom Eisenhower recorded the historic resources with large-format black-and-white photographs.

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