

Naval Air Station Dallas,
Recreation Building
(Naval Air Station Dallas,
Building 12)
Halsey Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3408-C

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,
RECREATION BUILDING
(NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS, BUILDING 12)

HABS No. TX-3408-C

Location: Halsey Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Duncanville Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
14.691355.3623965

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

Present Occupant: Personnel Support Detachment and various support services offices

Present Use: Support services offices and auditorium

Statement of Significance: The Recreation Building is significant for its role as a socially oriented, multiuse support building that provided essential opportunities for active and passive recreation and spiritual guidance as well as access to a variety of services necessary to everyday life at Naval Air Station (NAS) Dallas. Built in 1942 as the social center of the base, it continues to provide recreational opportunities in the auditorium portion of the building and office space for various base-related services. Undertaken during the rapid mobilization efforts of 1942, the building's support functions contributed to the expanding role that aviation played in Naval operations. Moreover, 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, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, with E. S. White serving as the project architect and Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR, in charge of construction, the Recreation Building incorporates elements of then popular Classical Revival architectural styling. 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, 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 an incomplete set of plans for the building are available at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. This building was constructed from plans based on standardized architectural plans (No. 194-947) developed by the Department of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks.
6. Alterations and additions: The Recreation Building originally was finished with asbestos shingling and had double-hung wood-sash windows with 6/6 lights. The original exterior cladding was removed in 1987 and the building resurfaced with elastomeric stucco. Original wood windows were replaced with double-hung, 6/6 metal-sash windows, probably at about that same time, although the exact date is unknown. Wood columns that originally supported the portico have been covered with the same stucco material used on the building. The wood-column bases have been replaced with red brick piers. Original exterior doors were varied, but the majority were wood with fixed-pane lights placed above wood panels or were five-panel wood doors. Original exterior doors have been largely replaced with wood or metal types. Most importantly, the three sets of double, wood-panel and fixed-pane glass doors at the main entry that originally were topped by a five-light fixed-pane transom have been replaced with wood doors containing eight lights that alternate with raised wood panels. The transoms have been removed and the new, taller doors sized to fill the enlarged space. Inside, alterations include refurbishing of the interior wall surfaces throughout the building. Wall-mounted acoustic panels and fixed seats were installed in the

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auditorium in 1972. Interior asbestos was removed in 1990. Despite the removal or covering of much of the building's original historic fabric, its roof lines, massing, and form remain intact, and the building retains its ability to convey a sense of time and place.

B. Historical Context:

In 1942, as part of the United States' increased emphasis on the war effort, Congress approved a second phase of military funding to be used for construction at various military installations around the country. Appropriations that totalled \$3.9 million were given to Naval Reserve Air Base (NRAB) Dallas to expand the base further. One of several buildings slated for construction in 1942 was a recreation building. The building was designed by the firm Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, of Houston, Texas, with E.S. White as the project architect. Plans for the building, which were based on standardized plans developed by the Department of Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, were approved on August 7, 1942, and construction, which was probably completed in late autumn of 1942, was supervised by Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR.¹ When it was completed, the total value of the Recreation Building was \$186,000.²

The Recreation Building is significant to the operation of NAS Dallas because it provided social activities and entertainment for the growing number of men and women assigned to the station. With more than 1,000 people at the station every month, this support facility was a necessary addition because it provided personnel with recreational opportunities during their off-duty hours and offered activities in which large numbers of people could participate. The building included a ship's store, auditorium for movies and stage performances, gymnasium, tap room, barber shop, pool room, bowling alley, cobbler shop, tailors, and restaurant. It also contained a Red Cross office and a chaplain's office. Toward the end of the war, the Recreation Building had a beauty shop for Women in Auxiliary Voluntary Service (WAVES) assigned to NAS Dallas.³ During World War II, NAS Dallas hosted two very successful war bond shows in the Recreation Building, starring Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Groucho Marx, Claudette Colbert, Red Skelton, Louis Armstrong, Frankie Masters, Ozzie Nelson, and Harriet Hilliard. The Recreation Building also was the site of many band concerts, USO Camp Shows, and informal dances, which both WAVES and male personnel attended.⁴

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Several alterations were made to the building after World War II. In June 1951, while construction of the Chief Petty Officers Club was underway on the top floor, pin-up murals were painted, including a four foot by eight foot painting of a cowgirl.⁵ Wood paneling has since been installed and the murals may still survive underneath. In 1972, acoustic panels and fixed seats were installed in the auditorium. Exterior renovations were completed in 1987 and asbestos was removed from the interior walls in 1990. Today, the building is used as an auditorium and for service facilities offices. It is valued at \$35 million.⁶ In 1998, all activities will cease at the Recreation Building when NAS Dallas is shut down as a result of recommendations by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. No decision has been made regarding the disposal of the Recreation Building or any other Navy-owned building at NAS Dallas.

Notes

1. Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawing No. 194-947, 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 Civil Engineer Corps, Fort Worth, Texas, 1 June 1994, vol. 2. n.p.
3. *Sky Ranger*, 20 August 1943, n.p.
4. *Sky Ranger*, March 1942, n.p.; 5 October 1943, n.p.; 15 March 1944, n.p.
5. *Sky Ranger*, 2 June 1951, n.p.
6. Department of the Navy, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Disposal and Reuse of Naval Air Station Dallas, Texas," April 1995.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Recreation Building at NAS Dallas is architecturally meritorious for its E-plan and Classical Revival styling, which is most notably expressed in its nearly monumental size and two-story projecting portico. These elements create an imposing, formal edifice that identifies the building as an important component of the base.

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2. Condition of fabric: The Recreation Building is in fair condition. Although the original form of the building remains, renovations have resulted in the removal or covering of almost all original material. Original concrete staircases and some foundation material is still visible.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Recreation Building measures 314 feet wide, 192 feet deep, and 39 feet high. It contains 43,300 square feet. It is a two-story building with a central projecting portico flanked by two two-story extensions, which step down to two one-story extensions. These components form the central block of the building. Three wings project from the rear of the building's main block. The center wing is wider than the east or west wings and contains an auditorium.

2. Foundation: The building rests on a foundation constructed of concrete piers with terra-cotta and concrete-block in-fill.

3. Walls: The original asbestos shingle exterior of the building was replaced in 1987 with elastomeric stucco. Metal corners, which probably belong to the surface on which the stucco was applied, are exposed at the corners of walls and sills.

4. Structural system, framing: The Recreation Building utilizes a wood-frame structural system. The auditorium utilizes large wood-framing members.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Located in the center of the building's front elevation is a projecting three-bay, pedimented portico that rises almost the full height of the building. Finished with a wood ceiling, concrete floor and steps, stucco columns with brick-pier bases, and stucco pilasters, it is the focal point of the building. A concrete handicapped ramp provides access to the building through the center bay. A number of secondary entries are located in the main building block and in the east, center, and west. All are treated in much the same way, with concrete steps and a stoop, a shed or hipped roofed porch cover, and metal hand rails.

A secondary entrance consisting of concrete steps and stoop, a metal handrail, and a wood awning over double doors is located on the front elevation east of the main entrance. The east side of the main building block has concrete steps, a metal hand rail, and a wood shed awning. Between the center wing and the east

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wing, on the south side of the main block, are stairs with steel stringers and checker plates leading to a second-floor entrance and concrete steps and stoops that delineate a first-floor entrance. Between the west wing and the center wing, on the south side of the main block, are stairs with steel stringers and checker plates leading to a second-floor entrance and concrete steps that lead to a basement entrance below ground level.

The east wing has a shed addition on the south side with concrete steps and a metal handrail. On the east side of the east wing are concrete steps with a metal hand rail. The south elevation of the east wing has a reinforced-concrete and concrete-block shed addition attached to a loading dock. In the southeast ell of the east wing is a concrete loading dock with concrete stairs, metal hand rails, and a wood shed awning.

On the east and west side of the center wing are secondary entrances composed of concrete steps and stoops with metal hand rails and wood shed awnings. On the south side of the center wing is a staircase of steel stringers and checker plates mounted on concrete pads. A one-story addition in the southeast ell of the center wing has a concrete stoop, concrete steps, and metal railing. In an ell on the west side of the center wing is a concrete dock with concrete stairs, metal hand rails, and a shallowly pitched hipped awning.

A small entry on the west side of the west wing has metal hand railings, concrete steps, and a stoop. At the southwest corner of the west wing is a concrete porch with concrete steps and metal hand rails. On the south side of the west wing are concrete steps that lead below ground level to a basement; in an ell on the west wing is a concrete dock with metal hand rails and posts.

All components of the porches and entryways are original except for the hand rails and the treatment of the columns at the main entrance. Hand rails, now metal, originally were wood. The portico columns also were constructed of wood, set on a wood base.

6. Chimneys: Metal vents are located on the roof of all the building's wings. These do not appear to be original. An interior brick chimney is found near the south elevation of the main building block between the west wing and the center wing.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance has three sets of double wood doors with eight lights per door. These are replacement doors installed in openings enlarged by the removal of the original transoms. An entrance on the east side of the main building block has double metal doors. A secondary entrance east of the main entry on the primary elevation has double doors. At the northwest ell of the east wing and the main building block is an entry with metal doors pierced with narrow vertical lights. The south elevation of the east wing has a concrete-block shed with a wood door. Between the center wing and the east wing, on the south side of the main block, are single wood doors located on the first and second floors. Between the west wing and the center wing, on the south side of the main block, is a wood door on the second floor. Twin metal doors, below ground level, provide access to the basement. In the southwest ell of the center wing are paired wood doors that enter the rear of the main block and the west side of the center rear wing.

The shed addition on the south side of the east wing has a metal door with a vertical light. On the east side of the east wing is a metal door with a vertical light. In the southeast ell of the east wing are double metal doors.

On the east and west side of the center rear wing are double wood doors. On the south side of the center rear wing is a second-floor double doorway that has been covered with plywood. On either side of this doorway, which has a steel staircase, are single wood doors that have had their stairs removed.

In the southwest ell of the west wing and the main building block are a wood door and a metal door. On the west side of the west wing are double glass-and-metal frame doors. At the west corner of the west wing is a wood door with a vertical light and a wood door frame. At basement level on the south side of the west rear wing is a metal door with wood frame that provides entry to the basement.

Most original exterior doors have been replaced. In some cases, the original size or configuration has been modified through the enclosure of transoms.

b. Windows and shutters: The Recreation Building has 6/6, double-hung, metal-sash windows with faux muntins set in wood surrounds. The three center bays of the main block have paired, 6/6, metal-sash windows.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The central portion of the main building block has a front gabled roof. Hipped roofs shelter the one- and two-story extensions that flank the projection central portion of the main building block. Roofing material is composition shingle. Aluminum roof ventilators were added in 1995.

b. Cornice, eaves: The pedimented gable of the portico has a wood cornice, stucco frieze, and wood architrave. The building has wood cornices and eaves and metal gutters and downspouts. Gable ends have vertical-slat vents.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement: A small basement room, which contains a boiler, is located in the south portion of the main building block between the west wing and the center wing.

b. First and second floors: The plan of the main building block is organized around hallways that run the length of the building on both floors. Offices are accessed off the hallway. The center wing encloses auditorium space that rises the full two stories of the building. The auditorium contains permanent seats installed in 1972. Two offices are located behind the seating area in an area partitioned with wood-frame walls. A projection room is located in the main block overlooking the auditorium.

2. Stairways: Two staircases to the second floor of the main block are located on the east and west side of the entrance lobby. These stairs are carpeted and have wood hand rails.

3. Flooring: The basement has a concrete floor. The main lobby and most offices are carpeted. Hallways have linoleum floors. The auditorium has wood floors,

except for the seating area, which is finished with linoleum. The offices in the auditorium are carpeted.

4. Walls and ceiling finishes: The basement has reinforced-concrete walls and a sheetrock ceiling. Hallways have wood paneling and offices have sheetrock walls. Wall-mounted acoustic panels were installed in the auditorium in 1972. Asbestos was removed throughout the building in 1990. The ceilings are finished with dropped particle board tiles suspended in metal frames.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Most interior doors are hollow-core wood set in wood door frames. Several glass-and-metal doors set in wood frames may be found throughout the building.

b. Windows: Metal-frame windows in the main building block have wood surrounds. Windows in the wings are finished with wood surrounds or have no surrounds.

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 interior hardware was identified.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Original cast-iron steam radiators are located in the main lobby, auditorium, and west rear hall. The name "Dunham Bush Inc." is found on the radiators. Window air conditioning units are located on the front and rear elevations of the building. Between the center and the west wings at the rear of the building is a central air conditioning unit on a concrete pad.

b. Lighting: Nonoriginal fluorescent lighting inset in the suspended ceiling is found throughout the building.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Recreation Building faces north and is located in the area of the base devoted to personnel support. Dining facilities are

to the east, the Administration Building is directly to the north, and buildings to the northwest provide personnel services. This area of the base has informal landscaping, such as tree-lined roads, shrubs, sidewalks, and lawns. Mountain Creek Lake is located south of the building. The immediate setting of the Recreation Building includes a historic street pattern and landscaping composed largely of lawn and trees. The area behind the building and to the west is paved for automobile parking. A large "Service Building 12" sign is located on the front lawn with a directory of services found in the building.

2. Historic landscape design: There is no distinct historic landscape associated with the Recreation Building other than the street pattern in the immediate area and the lawn in front of the building. Street and curbing materials were replaced in early 1993. 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 and Gymnasium flanks this axis on the west. A traffic circle in front of the Administration Building, which is directly north of the Recreation Building, forms two "T" intersections just north of the northwest and northeast sides of the Recreation Building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Reproductions of an incomplete set of original architectural drawings are on file at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. These 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 plans include elevations of the north (primary) south, east, and west facades of the building. No decision has been made as to where the drawings will be moved when the base closes.

B. Early views: No early views of the Recreation Building were located during research.

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

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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

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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 the Dallas Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas*, 2 vols. Prepared for the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Civil Engineer Corps, Fort Worth, Texas, 1 June 1994, vol. 2.

Department of the Navy, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Disposal and Reuse of Naval Air Station Dallas, Texas," April 1995.

Sky Ranger, March 1942-2 June 1951.

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.

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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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