

MCCHORD AIR FORCE BASE, LANHAM HOUSING
3-BEDROOM DUPLEX TYPE
(McChord Air Force Base, Building Nos.
619, 625, 630, 631, 643, 644, 648,
657-659, 663, 664)
Tacoma vicinity
Pierce County
Washington

HABS No. WA-~~223~~-B
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HABS
WASH
27-TACO.VI
IB

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Columbia Cascades Support Office
National Park Service
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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McCHORD AIR FORCE BASE
LANHAM HOUSING 3-BEDROOM DUPLEX TYPE
(Building Numbers 619, 625, 630, 631, 643, 644, 648, 657, 658, 659, 663, 664)

HABS NO. WA-²³⁰~~223~~-B

Location: These buildings are located south of Sixth Street, east of "A" Street and northwest of the curved length of "D" Street at McChord Air Force Base (Tacoma vicinity), Pierce County, Washington. These are twelve of fifty Lanham Housing duplex units built within this neighborhood. See **Figure 1**.

USGS Quadrangle Tacoma South, Washington; 7.5 minute series, 1951, edited in 1994. These buildings are bounded by the following UTM Coordinates:

Zone:	Northing	Easting:
10	5219795	538470
10	5219795	538820
10	5219500	538470
10	5219525	538580
10	5219600	538700
10	5219720	538800

Present Owner: U.S. Department of the Air Force

Original Use: Non-commissioned officer housing, 3 bed room duplex Lanham Housing.

Present Use: Vacant. These structures are scheduled for demolition.

Significance: These building are significant as relatively unmodified representatives of twelve 3-bedroom duplex Lanham Housing units at McChord Air Force Base. There are also thirty-eight identical 2-bedroom duplex houses, making a total of fifty Lanham Housing duplex units and providing housing for one hundred families.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Construction of these buildings was completed in stages between 1939 and 1957.¹
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The site accommodated British and sheep farming dating back to the 1830s, and military maneuvers and market agricultural activity since the 1890s. A county airport, Tacoma Field, was established on the site in 1929-1930 with a hanger and a 1,000' runway (the runway was later incorporated into the taxiways of McChord Field). Between 1937 and 1939, land acquisitions were made for the War Department from private holdings and northern portions of the Fort Lewis military reservation for the new Air Corps field. Included was Tacoma Field which was transferred to the War Department by warranty deed from Pierce County in 1938. Since then, the U.S. Department of the Air Force, the successor to the War Department, has held title.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: No information was found.
5. Original Plans and Construction: These buildings were built from plans prepared by the Federal Works Agency using Lanham Act funds.² The original cost of the building was \$5,600.³
6. Alterations and additions: In 1951, new 60 amp panels were installed in each unit.⁴ Utility sheds were added in 1951 and the shed roofs were incorporated into the rise of the original roofs. The original roofing was asbestos shingles, replacement asbestos shingles were installed at an unknown date.⁵ When the utility sheds were added, new 1'-4" by 1'-4" chimneys was built with concrete masonry units to a height of 16'-0". These were located where the east wall of the utility addition meets the rear elevation of the main buildings.⁶ At the same time, existing chimney stacks were removed that vented the original oil-fired steam furnace located in the kitchens. Also in 1951, these furnaces and hot air ducts were removed, and oil-fired hot air heaters with fans installed in the rear additions with new ductwork throughout.⁷ In 1957, heating was changed to hot water baseboard heat. In 1955, additional outlets were added in the kitchens and bathrooms of all units.⁸ In 1957, new 100 amp circuit breaker panels were installed in addition to the existing ones to serve the electric clothes dryers in

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the utility additions.⁹ The electrical services were increased at an unknown date to 200 amps per unit. The exterior doors were repainted in 1959.¹⁰ In 1980, underground fuel oil tanks were removed, natural gas pipelines were installed with new gas-fired boilers and water pumps with hot water baseboard radiators.¹¹ New gutters, downspouts and splash blocks were installed in 1983.¹² In 1984, all sewer laterals were replaced.¹³ The eaves soffits were replaced in 1970.¹⁴ Also in 1970, new light fixtures, outlets and switches were installed throughout all buildings.¹⁵ Doors and hardware were also replaced in 1970 and pre-cast concrete entry steps were installed at the exterior doors of all units, replacing wood framed steps with shed roofs.¹⁶ The building was repainted in 1972.¹⁷ The kitchens were remodeled in 1991.¹⁸

The 12 three-bedroom Lanham housing units at McChord Air Force Base have undergone regular maintenance and have often been repaired as a group. A summary of this work is shown in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1.
SUMMARY OF MAJOR REPAIRS TO
THREE-BEDROOM LANHAM HOUSING UNITS

Task	Building Numbers	Drawing Number	Date
New furnace, rear addition, chimney, hot water heater, ductwork, new electrical panel			
New electrical outlets in kitchen & bath	All buildings	McD-6-1106	1955
Improve electrical service for clothes dryers	All buildings	McD 711-1457	1957
Paint exterior doors	All buildings	McD-711-1763	1959
New concrete steps at entries, replace eaves soffits, repair chimneys, replace doors & hardware, new vinyl flooring	All buildings	McD 711-2778	1970
New light fixtures, outlets, switches	All buildings	McD 711-2778	1970
Repaint exterior	All buildings	McD 711-3128 McD 711-3128	1972
Replace heating system	All buildings	McD 711-5292	1980
New gutters, downspouts & splashblocks	All buildings	McD 711-4515	1983
Renovate kitchens and bathrooms	All buildings	McD 711-4459 & 1983 4592	
Repaint buildings	All buildings	McD 711-4517	1983
Replace sewer laterals	All buildings	McD 832-4577	1984
Replace boilers w/natural gas, new baseboard heat, remove buried fuel oil tank		McD-711-5186	1990
Renovate kitchens, paint interiors	All buildings	McD 711-5361	1991

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B. Historical Context:

In 1918, the Air Corps was housed in temporary buildings and used gravel or sod runways. By the mid-1940s, the Air Corps infrastructure had developed to include permanent buildings and paved runways.¹⁹

The construction of Lanham Housing was part of a large housing project constructed for Non-Commissioned Officer (N.C.O.) family housing purposes. The earliest site and utility installation drawings and aerial photographs of McChord Field indicate that the sites for these buildings were an integral part of the original design of the post. Built as part of the National Defense Housing Program, this housing project was funded and constructed by an entirely separate governmental authority than the remainder of the base: the Federal Works Agency using Lanham Act funds.²⁰

Lanham Act funds were used in order to provide housing for N.C.O. families, military civilian employees and industrial defense workers. It appears that these projects were most commonly undertaken by private contractors or local public agencies and constructed at civilian sites rather than at military reservations or fields.²¹

These buildings are 12 identical 3-bedroom duplex units Lanham F.H.A. buildings at McChord Air Force Base (see **Table 2**). Building activities at McChord started in 1938 and, by 1940, the base was ready to house a combat group.²²

TABLE 2.
3-BEDROOM DUPLEX UNITS,
LANHAM HOUSING, MCCHORD FIELD

BUILDING NO.	BUILDING NO.
619	648
625	657
630	658
631	659
643	663
644	664

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: These 12 buildings are well maintained examples of typical three-bedroom duplex Lanham family housing units. Their rectangular plan and is divided laterally by a common wall and defined by an entrance to

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each family unit at the ends of the buildings. This plan is offset by a utility shed added to the center of the rear elevation. The architectural design is minimal with no decorative ornament. The low roof pitch with close rakes and overhanging eaves are indicative of the Minimal Traditional and Ranch Style domestic designs which were an outgrowth of the depression years and became dominant residential styles during the post-war era.

2. Condition of fabric: The overall condition is sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: These buildings have a rectangular plan measuring 67'-8" long by 23'-10" wide. They rise 10'-7" to the top of the plate and 14'-6" to the ridge.²³ The utility shed addition at the rear of the building measures 12'-4" by 13'-3".²⁴
2. Foundations: These buildings have a concrete perimeter foundation on footings, with a single row of concrete piers with footings on 8'-0" centers along the building's long axis. The utility shed is built on a 3" concrete slab.²⁵
3. Walls: The exteriors were sheathed with gray-white asbestos cement panels 1'-0" wide and 6'-0" long.
4. Structural System: The exterior walls were framed with 2" by 4" studs on 16" centers. The roof is supported by simple timber trusses.
5. Chimneys: These buildings were built with two brick chimneys rising 2'-0" above the ridge line. These were located in large kitchen closets where the furnace was located.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: On each end there are entry doors placed slightly to the left of center. The front elevation has no doors. The rear elevations have no doors. There is a wood door in both ends of the utility additions. These wood doors have a 2/2 window above three panels.
 - b. Windows: Windows are metal sash 1/1 double hung windows throughout with two exceptions. There are two standard windows on both ends. On the street-facing side are six paired standard windows, corresponding to the living room and two front bedrooms in each unit. On the rear

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elevation, facing the alleys, are four windows in each unit. These are, from left to right: a small standard window in the kitchen, a small casement window in the bathroom, another casement window in a walk-in closet, and a single standard window in the rear bedroom. The last window was modified from a pair of double hung windows to a single window at an unknown date. This pattern repeats, in reverse order, for the second unit. The window sizes and locations are generally unchanged from their original construction, however the windows have been changed from double hung 6/6 wood sash to 1/1 metal sash at an unknown date. The utility addition has three standard windows separated by two central mullions on the east elevation.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The buildings have a simple gable roof with slightly overhanging eaves. They are covered with 3-tab asbestos shingles
- b. Eaves: The gable ends have small overhanging eaves but shelter over the windows and doors is provided at the ends of the buildings by a narrow apron roof.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: None
- b. First floor: These buildings, as constructed, have 1,643 square feet of space.²⁶ The first floor contains two 3-bedroom apartment units with mirrored floor plans. The units are separated by a party wall dividing the building's rectangular plan into two spaces each 55'-10" by 23'-10". The street side of each unit contains two bedrooms and a living room, the alley side has a bedroom and kitchen with a bathroom and storage closet between.

An addition, constructed in 1951, contains 163 square feet of space.²⁷
Access is from the exterior.

- c. Second floor: There is no second floor.
- d. Attic: None.

2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: The flooring throughout the first floor is wood except in the kitchen area which is sheet vinyl.
4. Wall and ceiling finishes: The walls and ceilings are gypsum board covered with paint.
5. Openings: Five plain wood doors are found in the interior, these do not date from the original construction.
6. Decorative trim: None.
7. Hardware: No original door or window hardware survive.
8. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating: The buildings are heated with hot water baseboard heaters. The boilers, located in the utility room, are gas-fired with hot water pumps.
 - b. Ventilation: The crawl space under the roof is cross-ventilated through two small roof dormers on either side of the roof. The crawl space under the floor is cross-ventilated on all four sides through openings in the foundation wall.
 - c. Lighting: All original electrical equipment and fixtures have been removed.
 - d. Plumbing: No original fixtures remain. The buildings are served by two 3/4" water lines and two 4" sewer lines.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Both a 1938 planning grid and a 1939 layout plan (see **Figures 2** and **3**) for McChord Field show a network of curvilinear roads east of the central axis formed by East and West Central Avenue, and bounded on the east by a loop road called Outer Drive.²⁸ The east loop of Outer Drive was to contain officer housing and a long, central green space called "The Parkway". Many of these buildings were not built, nor was The Parkway.

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West of the Central Avenues and bounded by Sixth and "A" (both wide, major streets) and "E" streets, the curved "C" and "D" streets were built. From the corner of Sixth and "A", Washington Boulevard extends to the southeast dividing the lengths of the curved streets nearly in half. This area, chosen for construction of the Lanham houses, is defined by curved two-lane streets, at least one large tree near each house, open lawns and sidewalks. In 1953, an additional ninety new trees (Leland Cyprus) were planted in the Lanham housing area, generally in groups of three to the rear of the houses.²⁹ In 1993, the Lanham housing area was further defined by construction of a 4'-0" high black metal fence, replacing a 4' high cyclone fence constructed at an unknown date, along "A" Street from the corner of 6th and "A" to the alley behind Lanham Building No. 619. The fence is composed of 7'-0" modules, each made of 2"x2" square tube posts, 1/4" square bars set on 6" centers with top and bottom styles of 1 1/4" square bars.³⁰

Originally constructed for N.C.O. housing, the Lanham houses helped establish a physical separation between officers, N.C.O.s and enlisted personnel. At an unknown date, alleys were built behind the houses. These unobtrusive, asphalt, 1-lane roads were also laid out in curves that echo the curves of "C", "D" and "E" streets. They were repaved in 1969 and again after 1984.³¹

2. Historical landscape design: Building 644 was included in a designed landscape to improve the operating efficiency of McChord Field by concentrating work spaces near the flight line with support facilities in close proximity. Administrative and housing areas were also grouped and located further away from the main work area of McChord Field, the flight line.

Within the layout of McChord Field, the following design features are reminiscent of the City Beautiful movement: curvilinear streets, open green spaces, and the intentional concentration of and clear separation between residential, work, and recreation areas. Also, primary secondary roads define these areas which are further defined within individual areas by the use of secondary roads. The post was designed to exist as an independent, military community: it was a product of the newly-emerging field of city planning.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- A. Architectural Drawings: Copies of the plans showing elevations, floor plans and sections for these buildings are currently filed in Building 308 at McChord AFB. These are not construction plans; these documents were not found.

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B. Bibliography:

I. Primary and unpublished sources:

- a. Federal Housing Administration Housing, 3 Bed Room Plan, Side Elevation and Section, File 210-127, November 8, 1948, sheet 2 of 2.
- b. Real property record AF Form 1430 and AF Form 1438 on file at McChord Air Force Base, Washington

2. Secondary and published sources:

Anon., *Condensed History of McChord Air Force Base*, Unpublished MS, Base Library, McChord Air Force Base, N.D.

Anon., *History, Quartermaster Section, McChord Field, Wash.*, "15 March 1940 to 6 December 1941", and "7 December 1941 to 31 December 1942", Unpublished MS, Base Library, McChord Air Force Base, N.D.

"As Built" drawings as noted, file drawer labeled "Lanham Housing", Building 308, McChord AFB, Washington.

Brown, Jerold E., *Where Eagles Land*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1990

Craven, Wesley Frank and James Lee Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume 6, Men and Planes*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1935.

Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings, *Historic Resources Inventory and Evaluation, McChord Air Force Base, Pierce County Washington*, USACE Seattle District, Seattle, Washington, 1997.

Fine, Lenore and Jesse A. Remington, *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States* (volume in the series, *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services*). Office of the Chief Military History, United States Army, Washington, DC, 1972.

Mueller, Robert, *Air Force Bases, Volume I - Active Air Force Bases Within the United States of America on 17 September 1982*, Office of Air Force

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History, U.S. Air Force Historical Research Center, U.S. Air Force,
Washington, DC, 1989.

C. Likely sources not yet investigated:

1. Documentary: Information on the firm charged with the construction Building 644 may be available. Information may be available in the National Archives on the Federal Housing Administration and the Federal Works Agency, agencies that produced the plans for the Army Air Force.
2. Oral history: Interviews could be conducted with personnel involved with the construction of Building 644 at McChord Air Force Base and military records could be searched for personnel who may have lived in the building.

D. Supplemental Materials:

Prepared by: Paul W. Chattey
Architectural Historian
Technical Center of Expertise for Historic Preservation
Seattle District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

September, 1997

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of these buildings at McChord Air Force Base was undertaken in 1997 by the Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, Paul W. Chattey, project manager. The project funded by the 62 CES/CEV, McChord Air Force Base, Mr. Michael J. Grenko Chief, Environmental Management. Large format photography was completed by Rod Slemmons, Crux Photography, Seattle, Washington.

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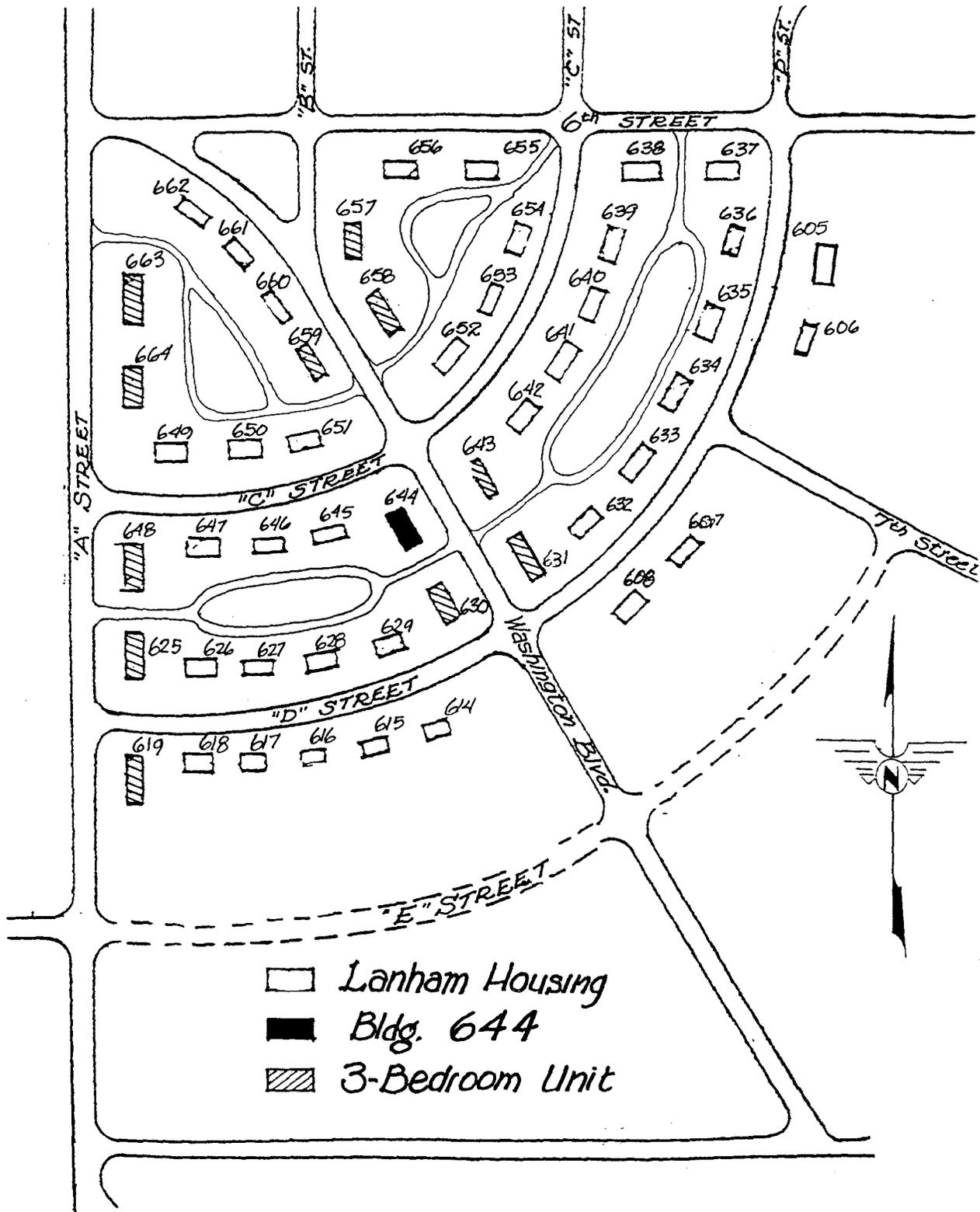


Figure 1. Building 644 is shown as a black rectangle. (Map copied from part of File No. McD-J-1364, Motor Pool Development, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, February 3, 1956, sheet 1 of 1.)

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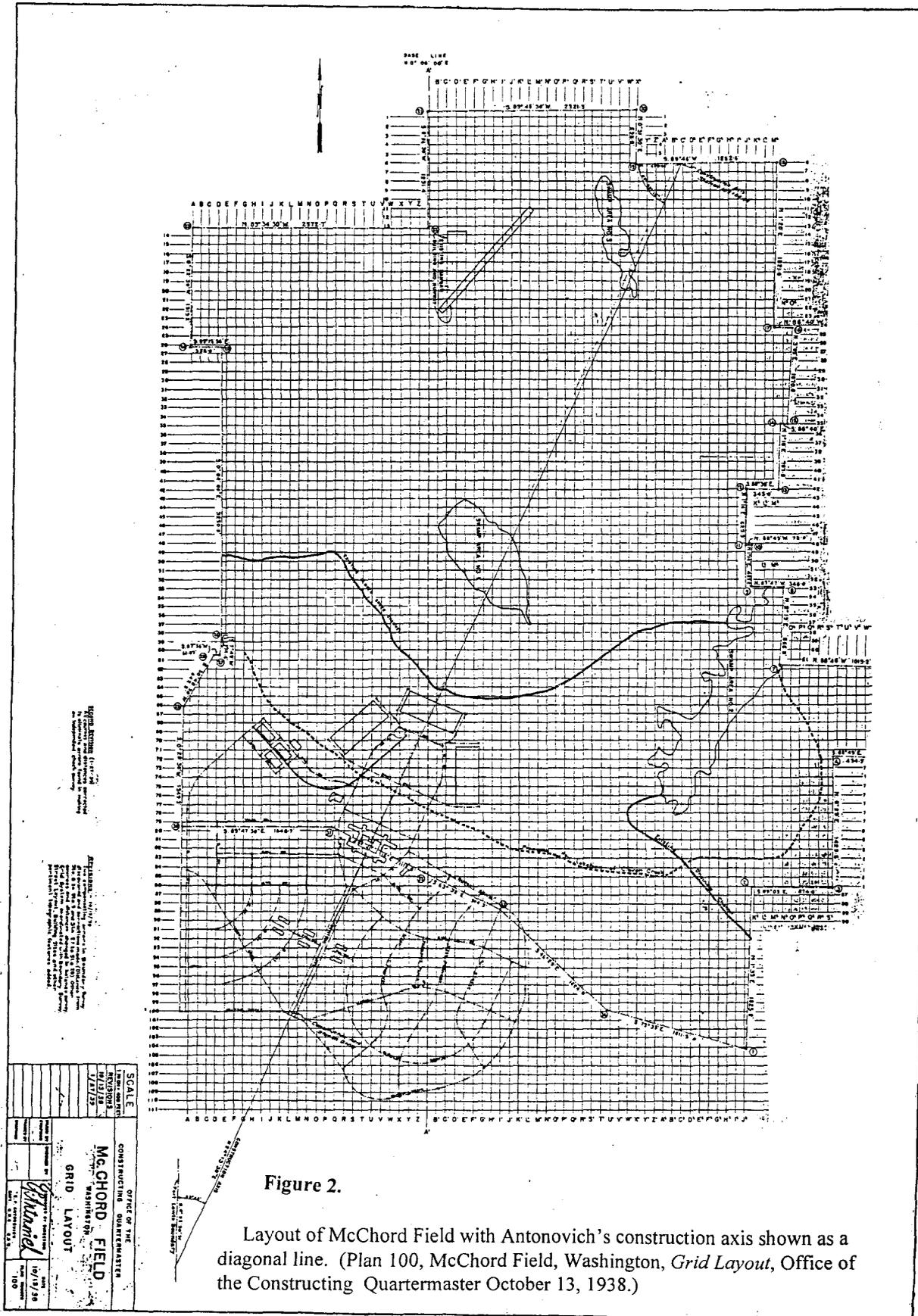
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Figure 3. Bilateral symmetry of McChord Field shown with the axis being East and West Central Avenues. (Plan No. 6888-141, McChord Field, Washington, *Water Distribution System, Layout Plan*, Construction Division, Office of the Quartermaster General, June 9, 1939.)

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NOTES

- ¹ Real Property Accountable Records - Buildings (AF Form 1430), McChord Air Force Base, Washington.
- ² Drawing records that postdate actual construction on file at McChord AFB refer to these houses as "F.H.A. Plan 10" and "F.H.A. Plan 11"
- ³ Real Property Records, McChord AFB.
- ⁴ File Number 635A-2, *Heating and Rehabilitation, Revision of F.H.A. Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 27, 1951. File Number 635A-2, *Heating and Rehabilitation, Revision of F.H.A. Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 27, 1951.
- ⁵ Real Property Accountable Record - Buildings (AF Form 1430) April 1, 1957, McChord Air Force Base, Washington.
- ⁶ File Number 635 A-1 & 635 A-2, *Heating and Rehab. Revision of F.H.A. Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 27, 1951.
- ⁷ File Number McD 635A-2, *Heating and Rehabilitation, Revision of FHA Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 27, 1951.
- ⁸ File Number McD G-1106, *Electrical Outlets, NCO Quarters FHA*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, January 13, 1955, sheet 1 of 1.
- ⁹ File Number McD 711-1457, *Modernize Electrical Service, 50 Units*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 1966, April 15, 1957, sheet 1.
- ¹⁰ File Number McD 711-1763, *Repair Family Housing-Airman*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, August 10, 1959.
- ¹¹ File Number McD 711-5292, *Replace Heating System, Lanham MFH*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, July 20, 1980, sheets 1-5.
- ¹² File Number McD 711-4515, *New Gutters*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, June 30, 1983, sheets 1 and 2 of 2.
- ¹³ File Number McD 832-4577, *Replace Sewer Laterals*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, June 15, 1984, sheet 1.
- ¹⁴ File Number McD 711-2377, *Family Housing Lanham* drawing, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 1966, sheets 1-7.
- ¹⁵ File Number 711-2778, *Maintain F/H Lanham*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, September 25, 1970, sheets 5 of 5.
- ¹⁶ File Number McD 711-3 File Number McD 711-2778, *Maintenance Family Housing*, Lanham, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 1966, sheets 1-5.
- ¹⁷ File Number McD 711-3128, *Maintenance Family Housing*, Lanham, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 1966, sheets 1.
- ¹⁸ File Number McD 711-5361, *Renovate Kitchen*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 1966, sheet 1.
- ¹⁹ Goodwin, R. Christopher and Associates, *National Historic Context for Department of Defense Installations, 1790-1940, Volume 1*, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, August 1995, 81.
- ²⁰ Brown, Jerold E. *Where Eagles Land*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1990, 121. It was not uncommon at this time to use relief funds for military construction for the coming national emergency. Just two years earlier, in 1939, half of the 37,000 civilians employed on Air Corps projects were either Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Public Works Administration (PWA), or Works Project Authority (WPA) workers and 10 percent of the \$100 million available for construction at Air Corps posts was relief money.
- ²¹ See "War Housing" *Architectural Forum*, 76 (May 1942) 261-348.
- ²² *Public Law 263*, 74 Congress, I Session, 49 Stat. 594, August 12, 1935.
- ²³ File Number 210-127, *F.H.A. Housing, 3 Bed Room Plan, Side Elevation and Section*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, November 8, 1948, Sheet 2 of 2.
- ²⁴ Plan No: 210-127, *F.H.A. Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, November 5, 1948, sheet 1 of 2.

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²⁵ File Number 635-A-2, *Heating & Rehab Revision of F.H.A. Housing*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, March 27, 1951.

²⁶ Real Property Accountable Record - Buildings (AF Form 1430) April 1, 1957, McChord Air Force Base, Washington.

²⁷ Real Property Accountable Record - Buildings (AF Form 1430) April 1, 1957, McChord Air Force Base, Washington.

²⁸ Plan 100 (October 13, 1938) and Plan No. 6888-141 (June 9, 1939).

²⁹ File Number McD 711-5577, *Replace L.H. Boundary Landscape Plan*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, January 15, 1953, sheet 1.

³⁰ File Number McD 711-5577, *Replace L.H. Boundary Fence*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, January 15, 1993.

³¹ File Numbers 851-2661, *New Double Bituminous Surface over Existing*, and McD 852-4601, *Pave Parking*, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, September 11, 1969 and N.D.