

MOBILE SEARCHLIGHT STORAGE BUILDING
(Fort Baker Building #FB691)
Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Forts Baker, Barry, and Cronkhite
691 Center Road
Sausalito Vicinity
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2796

HABS
CA 2796

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND INTERPRETIVE DATA
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC WEST REGION
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

Mobile Searchlight Storage Building
(Fort Baker Building #FB691)

HABS No. CA-2796

- Location: West end of center Road at Murray Circle. Fort Baker, Sausalito, Marin County, California
- Present Owner: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service
- Present Use: Storage
- Significance: Constructed in 1943, Building #691 was originally known as the Mobile Searchlight Building and is significant for its role in supporting coastal defense activities that occurred at Fort Baker, Barry and Cronkhite Military Reservations during World War II.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Dates of Erection: Ca. 1943. Building #691 was built as a mobile searchlight storage building during the Second World War at a time of swift wartime mobilization.
2. Architect: U.S. Army
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The U. S. Army owned Building #691 from 1943 to July, 2002 when the property of Fort Baker was officially transferred to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service.
4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: The original builders and contractors for this building are not known. Consistent with many military installation structures built during wartime to fill an immediate need, the building did not have Quartermaster Form authorizing its construction.
5. Original Plans and Construction: No plans or records of construction have been located.

6. Alterations and Additions: The cellular design of this 16-bay structure indicates it may have been built using a plan for a smaller building, which was then repeated to create the building of the dimension required.

B. Historical Context

Fort Baker is an Endicott era military site (1897-1916) and is significant as the first U.S. Army artillery post north of the Golden Gate straits. Many of the buildings at Fort Baker date to the period of 1902 to 1918 as the site performed an important role in the nation's coastal fortification system. A second wave of construction came to Fort Baker during World War II, concentrated near the Horseshoe Cove Waterfront Area. The Mobile Searchlight Storage Building #691 was built at the end of this second wave of construction at Fort Baker in an effort to meet wartime needs. Located on the southwest corner of the Parade Grounds of the cantonment, Building #691 was situated on Center Road and in proximity to the flat, open space at the core of Ft. Baker so mobile searchlights could be quickly be deployed as needed during air raids. In the post-WW II era the building was used for storage and in 1952 was designated as the Unit Garage.

In anticipation of World War II wartime needs and to update seacoast defenses, construction of various temporary structures including barracks, warehouses and hospital buildings took place in Horseshoe Cove and waterfront area at Fort Baker. Stabilization of Horseshoe Cove with breakwaters and bulkheads was necessary as Fort. Baker's role as a defensive post increased. Concurrent with this stabilization effort of Horseshoe Cove, construction of utilitarian buildings at Ft. Baker was concentrated near the waterfront area also. Marine-related structures such as the Maintenance Building #665 and Motor Repair Shop #689 near the Boat Repair Shop #679 were built in 1942 along with smaller storage and shed structures. One of the more prominent buildings built during this era was the Mine Depot #407 located to the northwest of the subject building. The Mine Depot's affiliated buildings such as the Mine Cable Tank Building #670 were constructed at the west end of Horseshoe Cove. The boom of new construction from 1941 to 1942 came to a close in 1943 with the construction of Building #691 and Building #67, a prefabricated metal building as the last coastal defense related buildings erected at Ft. Baker.

Generally searchlights were used during World War II for anti-aircraft defense, lighting the sky in order to spot enemy planes. As a semi-permanent coastal fortification, Fort Baker most likely used mobile searchlights to illuminate the sea surface and surrounding coastal areas. Particularly after hearing of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, San Francisco Bay Area's coastal fortifications went on full alert, preparing for invasion by increasing their harbor defense to include anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and radars. The decision at Fort Baker to provide a storage facility to house its mobile searchlights demonstrated that the initial fear of invasion manifested itself into a more proactive commitment to defend the Golden Gate.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The building is a long, rectangular steel framed sixteen (16) bay structure that is utilitarian in nature with no decorative features except light fixtures above every other door opening and ventilators breaking up the gable roof mass.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in poor condition with flaking lead paint, missing glazing and windows, and vegetation encroaching walls and foundations.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The building is a one-story, 161'-2"x 24'-6" feet rectangular shaped structure that stands 15'-0" tall at the gable peak and is approximately 5000 square feet.
2. Foundations: The building rests on a concrete pad. There is a sloping concrete/asphalt ramp that extends the length of the front east elevation onto Center Road.
3. Walls: The walls are corrugated metal siding.
4. Structural Systems/Framing: The building is constructed with a steel frame and truss system exposed on the interior.
5. Porches Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: There are no porches on this building.

6. Chimneys: There are no chimneys on this building.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The building has sixteen door openings that dominate the east elevation. Five door openings still have the original double swing metal-clad doors with 4-light wired –glass upper portion. The remaining eleven openings have been replaced with roll-up metal overhead doors.
 - b. Windows and shutters: On the north elevation there are three 9-light, steel sash, fixed windows with wire glass evenly spaced across the façade. The west elevation is punctuated by eight 9-light steel sash, fixed windows with wired glass?
 - c. There are no openings at the south elevation.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, Covering: The building has a gable roof covered with corrugated metal matching the siding.
 - b. Cornice, Eaves: The building has minimal exposed eaves. Light Fixtures with metal cages are located under the eaves at the east elevation. Gutters and downspouts are located at the west elevation eave.
 - c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: The building has eight metal ventilators located at the gable ridge across the longitudinal axis of the roof for natural ventilation.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: Building #691 is a long rectangular building divided only by newer wood partitions at the two north bays of the building creating three office areas.
2. Stairways: There are no stairways in this building.
3. Flooring: There is a 4" concrete floor slab with 8"h x 6"d concrete baseboard running the perimeter of the building. The office areas have remnant asbestos tile on the floor.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls and ceilings are corrugated metal with steel framing and trusses exposed. The three individual partitioned spaces are created with painted vertical, butt joint wood board siding, plywood and wood sheathing for walls and ceilings.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doors and Doorways: Three wood interior doors provide access to the office areas at the north end of the building. One is a wood, Dutch door with the upper portion missing accessing the northwest space. The other two doors are three panel 4-light above wood doors opening in to the other two spaces.
 - b. Windows: There is a wood 4-light sash window with metal mesh screen on the west interior partition. One interior wood sash 6-light window with muntins is also located on the west interior wall blocked by plywood in the smallest space in the southeast corner.
6. Decorative Features and Trim: The building is a utilitarian structure and there are no decorative features or trim.
7. Hardware: The original exposed hinges are extant on the exterior the five pair of metal-clad swing doors along with metal pulls and bolt holders. No hardware remains on the interior doors or window, but there is evidence of a door closer remaining on the adjacent interior wall.
8. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating, Air Condition, Ventilation: The building contains two gas heaters in the two larger partitioned spaces and eight ventilators located on the roof for air circulation.
 - b. Lighting: The building was wired for electricity with bare bulbs and exposed conduit running the length of the building at the bottom of the steel truss. The electricity is no longer in service.
 - c. Plumbing: There is no plumbing in this building.

9. Original Furnishings: There are no original furnishings remaining in the building.

D. Site

1. General Setting and Orientation: Building #691 is situated on the southwest corner of the Parade Ground directly accessing Center Road where it intersects lower Murray Circle.
2. Historic Landscape Design: The character of the building's landscape is utilitarian and industrial. Overgrown trees and vegetation surround the building.
3. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings associated with this structure.

Part III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The purpose of the HABS recordation is for mitigation recording of historic buildings that are removed as part of the implementation of the Fort Baker Plan. Under the Fort Baker Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, removal of Building #691 was accepted as part of a site-wide rehabilitation plan. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the National Park Service and the California Office of Historic Preservation contains the following stipulation:

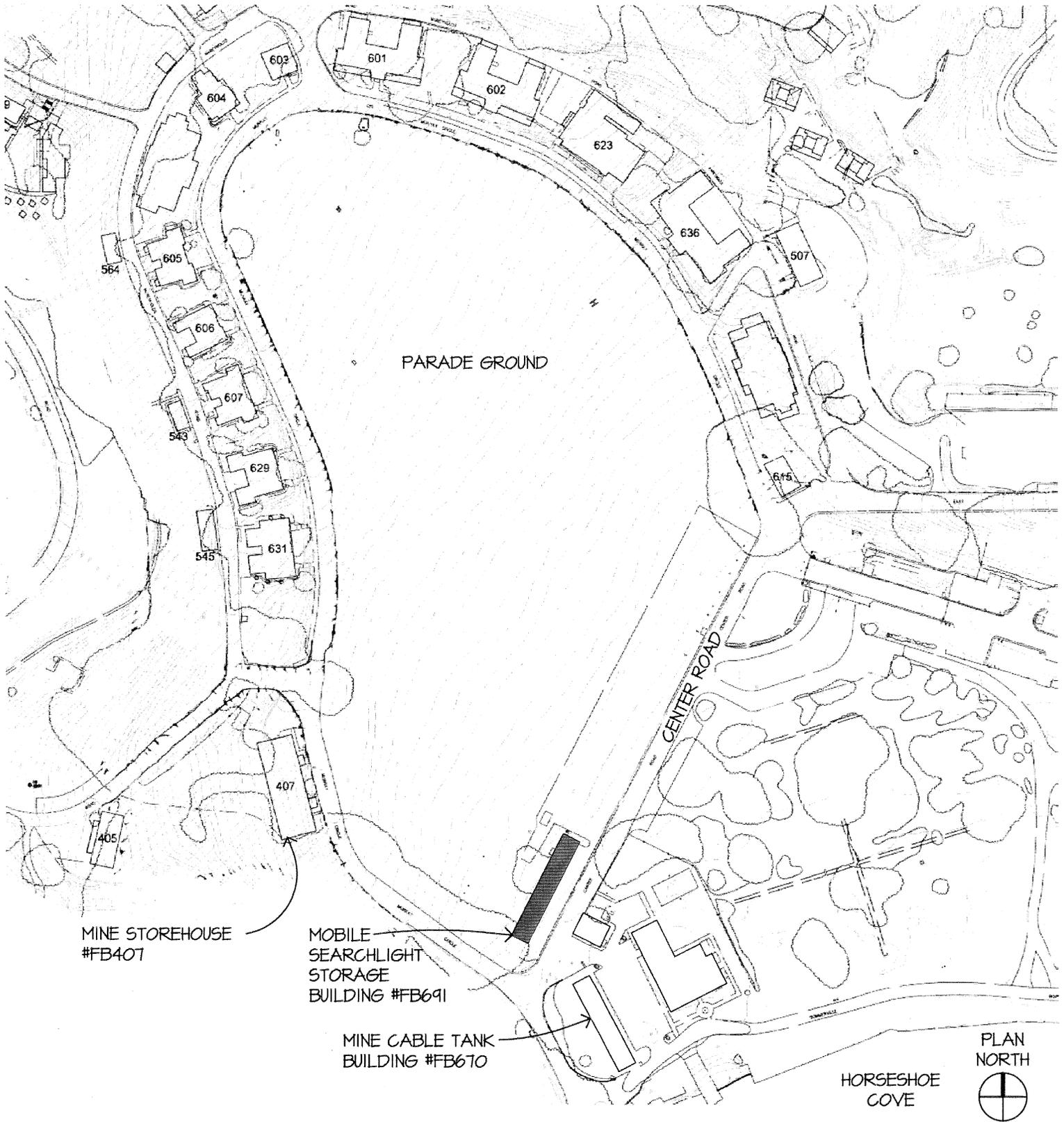
1. Prior to the demolition of any or all of the buildings listed in the List of Buildings Proposed for Demolition or other Adverse Effect attached hereto as Appendix B, NPS shall contact the Regional HABS/HAER Coordinator at the Pacific West Regional Office, NPS....to determine what level and kind of recordation is requires for properties.

The HABS report and photography was prepared by Architectural Resources Group under the project management of Joanne Wilkins, Historical Architect, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service.

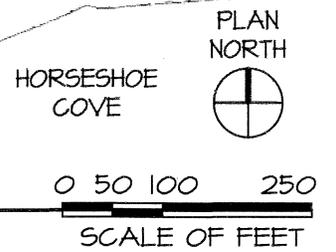
The HABS records were prepared between May 2007 and August 2007. All existing condition photographs were taken in May 2007.

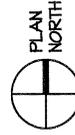
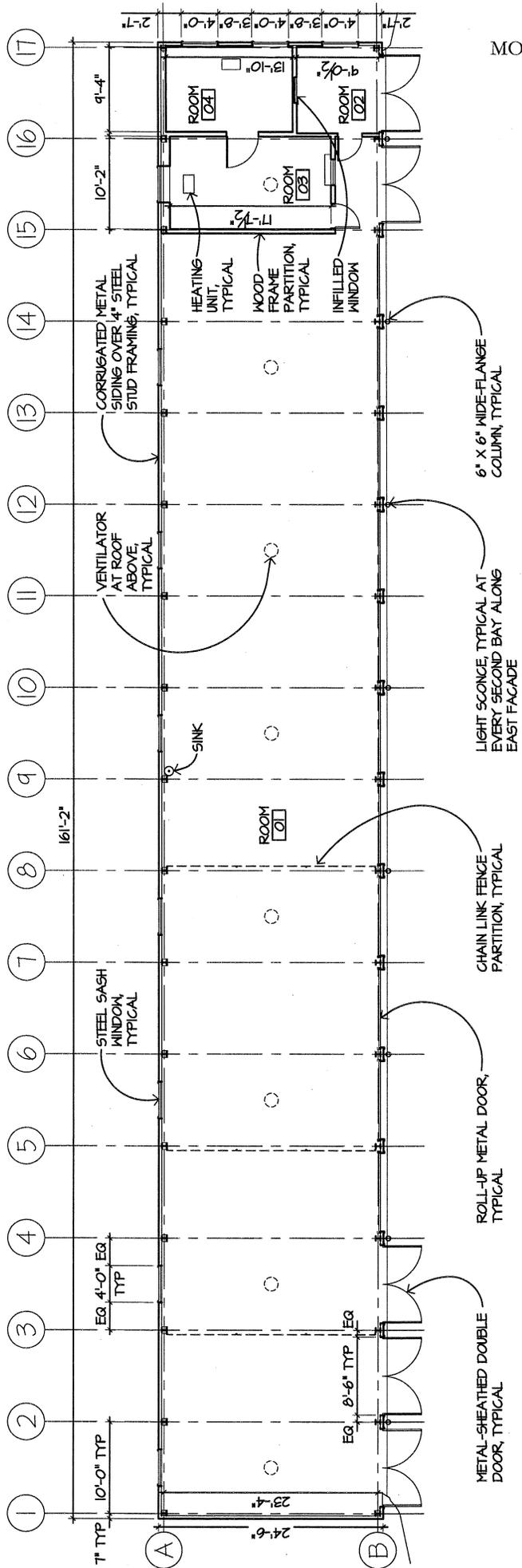
Part IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: No historic drawings of the building were located.
- B. Historic Views: No individual historic photographs of Building #691 were located. An aerial photograph taken in 1962 shows Building #691 with the east elevation and site location on the Parade Ground Center Road evident.
- C. Interviews: Conversation with John Martini, Military Historian, 7 May, 2007.
- D. Bibliography:
 - Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Baker, Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Fort Baker, Barry and Cronkhite Historic District, Marin County, California, July 2005.
 - Fort Baker Historic Building Reports, Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Vol II, 2002.
 - Historical Photographic Images, Basic Information Maps (BIMS) and Site Plans, Park Archive and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- E. Historians: Sara Lardinois, Katherine Petrin and Anny Su, Architectural Resources Group, May 2007.



ITE PLAN





FLOOR PLAN