

ALCATRAZ, GUARDHOUSE, RENOVATING PLANT  
(Warehouse)  
(Building No. 22-A and 22-B)  
(Guardhouse, Boathouse Addition)  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
Alcatraz Island, San Francisco Bay  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County  
California

HABS CA-1792-M  
*HABS CA-1792-M*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700  
Oakland, CA 94607

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

ALCATRAZ, GUARDHOUSE, RENOVATING PLANT  
(Warehouse)  
(Building No. 22-A and 22-B)  
(Guardhouse, Boathouse Addition)

HABS No. CA- 1792-M

Location: Located on East Road, on the northeast side of Alcatraz Island;  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County, California

USGS San Francisco North Quadrangle; Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 4186805 (north), 550835 (east)

Present Owner: Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
National Park Service

Present Use: vacant

Significance: In 1918, the U.S. Army constructed this utilitarian wood frame, two-story as the “renovating plant” (dry cleaning plant.) By 1929, the army changed the building use to office, storage and temporary quarters. The building abuts the inside ell corner of the Alcatraz Guardhouse (circa 1857) and its Library addition (circa 1869.)

### Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History

1. Dates of Erection: According to the *War Department Quartermaster Corp (C.M.C.) Form 173A*, the army constructed this building addition in December 1918 as a Renovating Plant. The form indicates that the basement contained a boiler room and the first floor contained a sorting room, an office, a washing room, a dust room and a dry room. The form does not indicate any uses for the second floor. For the purposes of this report, the building addition will henceforth be called by its current name, the Boathouse Addition.

2. Architect: The architect for this building is unknown. The earliest existing floor plans for this building are dated 1929, signed by the Army Quartermaster (see Original Plans and Constructions.)
3. Original and subsequent owners: The United States Army was the original owner, from 1918 to 1933. In 1933, the War Department transferred the entire army to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons, who ran Alcatraz Island until 1963. In 1972, the United States government transferred Alcatraz Island to the National Park Service.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The original builders are unknown.
5. Original plans and construction: The earliest existing building plans for the Boathouse Addition are army Quartermaster plans, signed in 1929. (1929 "Warehouse" Plans and Sections; NARA, RG 129, Alcatraz Administration Records.)

The 1929 floor plans refer to the Boathouse Addition as Building 22-A and 22-B (identified in association with the Library building). The plans identify the first floor as "Dept. of Voc. Training" (presumably Vocational Training) and the "Signal Corp Office". The plans identify the second floor as "Temporary N.C.O. Qtrs".

The framing is identified as "2 x 4 studs wall board". On the north wall of the first floor, there is 4'6" door opening through the thick wall to the Guardhouse; on the west wall, there are two door openings through to the Library, which are 3'7" and 5'7". On the second floor, there is only one 4'7" door opening on the west wall to the Library. The windows on both the first and second floors are identified as "A" windows, with given dimensions of 2'9" x 5'9". On the first floor, there is a "w.c" (toilet) on the south end of the Vocational Training office; on the second floor, there is an 11' x 8' bathroom and a "w.c".

6. Alterations and additions: According to the *War Department Quartermaster Corp (C.M.C.) Form 173A*, the Boathouse Addition experienced fire damage in 1928. As a result, the army moved the building's renovating plant functions into a different building. This information is supported by the 1929 Quartermaster floor plans which indicate the building's new storage and office space as well as a new building number (22-A & 22-B).

During the 1990s, the National Park Service installed four contemporary wooden doors on the west and south elevations. They also cut a hole in the first floor ceiling to safely remove the steel backstop from the Library addition. At some unknown date, the partition wall on the first floor was partially removed.

## B. Historical Context

### The Development of Alcatraz as an Army Post and Penitentiary

Shortly after California became a state, the U.S. Army took possession of Alcatraz and quickly recognized that the island's rocky cliffs and nearly inaccessible shoreline offered excellent defensive features. To take the best advantage of the island, they excavated an encircling belt of open (or "barbette") gun batteries along the island's upper slopes. The only access to the batteries and barracks was via a single switchback road leading from the dock area on Alcatraz' sheltered lee side to the top of the island. In 1857, the army constructed the Guardhouse close to the dock and effectively covered the road with guns.

Alcatraz' first garrison of soldiers arrived in 1859. Once the military presence was established, the army used the Guardhouse as both a security station and a jail. Each day, several of the garrison's enlisted men conducted guard duty at designated sentry posts around the island. The guard detail also serves as a police force for the garrison, responding to incidents of violence or disorderly conduct. If necessary, the guards would put suspects under arrest and confine them in the Guardhouse's large cell called "a general prison room". Almost as soon as it was garrisoned, the Alcatraz Guardhouse was considered so secure that other western military posts began sending their most troublesome prisoners to the Island.

At the start of the Civil War, the courts began to convict civilians of anti-Union activities and sent them as federal prisoners to Alcatraz. Between 1862 and 1877, the army constructed four cellblock additions to accommodate the growing number of prisoners. In 1869, the army constructed a large brick addition on the south side of the Guardhouse and on top of the existing roadway. This new building served as a combination chapel and library for the burgeoning prison. By 1870, the army no longer relied on the Guardhouse for defense purposes and treated the building solely as a jail. By 1890s the Lower Prison had taken on its final form, which appeared more similar to a collection of barn-like structures than a prison.

The start of the Spanish-American War in 1898 fuelled another dramatic increase in the number of Alcatraz military prisoners. Realizing that the Lower Prison could no longer accommodate all the convicts, the army constructed an "Upper Prison" on the island's parade ground; they moved all the prisoners to the new facility and no longer housed any convicts in the Lower Prison building. By 1907, the War Department identified Alcatraz Island as the "Pacific Branch, U.S. Military Prison" and the island no longer played a military defensive role.

### Modifications to the Guardhouse

The army's modifications to the Guardhouse reflected the island's change in military purpose. By 1907, the Guardhouse was no longer used to house prisoners; as a result, the army removed most of the building's wood frame cellblocks. In 1915, the army officially renamed Alcatraz "Pacific Branch, U. S. Disciplinary Barracks", reflecting the army's interest in educating the prisoners and reforming them into soldiers. To support this reformist philosophy, the army constructed a Mission Revival-styled two-story concrete Schoolhouse on top of the Guardhouse in 1917.

According to the 1922 *War Department Quartermaster Corp (C.M.C.) Form 173A*, the army constructed the two-story, wooden addition (now referred to as the Boathouse Addition) on the east side of the Library addition in 1918. During the course of the Boathouse Addition's history, the army either identified the building as a separate building or as an extension of the Library. On the 1922 *War Department Quartermaster Corp (C.M.C.) Form 173A*, the army identified the Boathouse Addition as Building 78 and the Library addition as Building 22. When constructed, the Boathouse Addition was part of the Renovating Plant (a dry cleaning plant) that occupied the roadway level. The addition's first floor contained the sorting room, office, washroom, dust room and dry room. The second floor was not described on the form but was apparently considered part of the Tailor Shop in Building 22 (the Library addition).

The army's 1917-1918 construction program at the Guardhouse, which resulted in the addition of the Schoolhouse and the Boathouse Addition, appears to have been a deliberate effort to transform the Guardhouse complex into an industrial area. During that time, the Guardhouse's new uses included a Tailor Shop in the Library (Chapel), a Renovating Plant in the tunnel area, and an Armory (later a Hat Shop) and a Shoe Shop in the Schoolhouse addition.

According to the 1929 Quartermaster floor plans, the army referred to the first floor of the Boathouse Addition as Building 22-B and the second floor as Building 22-A, associating the Boathouse Addition as an extension of the Library. The first and second floors of the building contained storage and non-commissioned officers (NCO) living quarters. The Boathouse Addition received its current nickname because over the years, the island's boat crews stored their nautical equipment and supplies there.

In 1933, the War Department transferred the entire island to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons for conversion into a maximum-security penitentiary for civilian felons. The Bureau of Prisons continued to use the library section (then identified as Building 22) as a gymnasium and an indoor target range. The Guardhouse and the 1917 addition schoolhouse (identified at building 77) were used as bachelor guards' dormitory until the Bureau of Prisons closed the penitentiary in March 1963.

## Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Boathouse Addition is a two-story, wood-frame rectangular structure.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in fair condition.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story, rectangular building has a footprint of 36' x 14' feet.
2. Foundations: The foundation level of the Boathouse Addition is comprised of four vertical, attenuated steel-reinforced concrete columns along the east elevation and four horizontal attenuated, steel-reinforced concrete posts supporting the flooring. There is a low horizontal concrete post that is affixed to what is probably the stone foundation of the 1869 Library addition. The Boathouse Addition's foundation is just to the south of the 1857 Guardhouse's dry moat and gunroom. In front of the Guardroom's dry moat, there is a wooden partition entrance with three concrete steps. The wooden entrance is sheathed in metal panels and is in poor condition. There are 4-light side lights on either side of the door opening. The fixed transom above the door opening has 16-lights. Approximately a quarter of the glazing is extant.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are covered in 6" wood clapboard siding. Because the Boathouse Addition was built directly onto the Guardhouse's exterior, the Boathouse Addition's only exterior walls are the south and east elevations.
4. Structural systems, framing: The exterior framing is 2' x 4' stud wall framing.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are three contemporary four-paneled wood-frame doors on the exterior of the first floor; at the west elevation, there is a double, four-paneled door and a single four-paneled door; at the south elevation, there is one single four-paneled door. The National Park Service installed these doors probably in the late 1990s. The doorframes are simple wood-frames. The door openings on the west elevation appear on the 1929 Quartermaster floor plans.

- b. Windows and shutters: On both levels of the south elevation, there are two 2'9" x 5'9" wide wood frame, double-hung windows. On the first floor of the east elevation, there are four 2'9" x 5'7" 4/4 light wood-frame, double-hung windows. On the second floor of the east elevation, there are four 2'6" x 7'0" fixed wood frame windows.

There is a louvered vent on the south elevation of the first floor and one on the east elevation of the second floor. There is a circular vent opening on the second floor, north elevation.

#### 8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The shed roof is covered in Transite and extends over the east elevation. The roof is in poor condition.

#### C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The Boathouse Addition is a rectangular building.

The Boathouse Addition's basement is not a separate, enclosed floor, but is open the elements and faces east. The basement functions as the building's foundation; three large, attenuated concrete pillars support the wood-frame addition above. Horizontal concrete posts support the wood-frame flooring above. A large boulder sits directly underneath the addition.

The first floor of the Boathouse Addition is on rectangular room, divided into two-thirds/one-thirds by a thin partition wall. There are two windows on the south elevation and four windows on the east elevation. The army constructed the west wall of the addition behind the original 1869 exterior Library arched brick openings, effectively creating an intrusion into the historic roadway space. As a result, the original brick arched openings are inside the Boathouse Addition. The first floor's footprint is wider than the footprint of the second floor because it extends west into the roadway.

The second floor of the Boathouse Addition is a rectangular room with a shower room partition at the south end of the building. There are two windows on the south elevation and five windows on the east elevation. At the west wall, there are two openings into the historic library space. There is a square opening cut into the floor of the second floor to allow for ladder access from the first floor.

2. Stairways: There are no stairways in this building. Judging from the 1929 Quartermaster floor plans, there was no access in between the floors. The army created access to the first floor from the auto passage and to the second floor from the Library addition but not between each other. The National Park Service cut a hole in the first floor ceiling to safely remove the steel backstop

from the Library addition. Currently, one must use a ladder through this hole to gain access to the second floor.

3. Flooring: The flooring is 1”x 3” tongue and groove, The planks are approximately 6 “ wide, in good condition and run west to east. It is presumed that the floorboards were never painted. On the second floor, there is an approximately a 2’ x 3’ floor opening at the west wall which allows for ladder access. Also on the second floor, near the northeast corner, there are remnants of an insulated flooring surface, such as linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The south, east and west walls are not finished on the inside; the interior walls are the exposed stud framing of the exterior walls. They are in in poor condition. In the northwest corner of the first floor, there are remnants of dry wall. The north wall is the original Guardhouse exterior brick wall; this wall is painted and in good condition.

At the north end of the first floor near the raised shower bed, there is a thin partition wall with thin, vertical wooden siding in poor condition. There is a pair of triangular framing pieces affixed to the brick north wall. The historic use for this framing element is unknown; perhaps the army used them to store or hang tools.

At the second floor north wall, the Guardhouse’s original brick wall is more visible; the common bond brick is in good condition and covered in part with white paint. Above the brick wall is a concrete or stone lintel. The second floor west wall is also brick. At the south end of the second floor, there is a thin, wooden partition wall, with baseboard, that creates the shower room. The partition wall is in poor condition.

The ceiling is open and unfinished with 2 x 10 floor joists with tongue and groove wood planking in some places.

## 5. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Because the Boathouse Addition was added onto the exterior brick east elevation of the 1869 Library addition, some elements of the original exterior walls are now inside the Boathouse Addition.

The first floor west wall of the Boathouse Addition encompasses two arched brick openings that are in good condition. At the second floor, west wall, there is one large door opening converted from a Library addition window opening.

The Boathouse Addition contains a few wood-frame interior doors. On the first floor at the east wall, there is a four-panel screened door located behind and perpendicular to one of the brick arches. The first floor north wall contains a five-paneled wood-frame door that leads

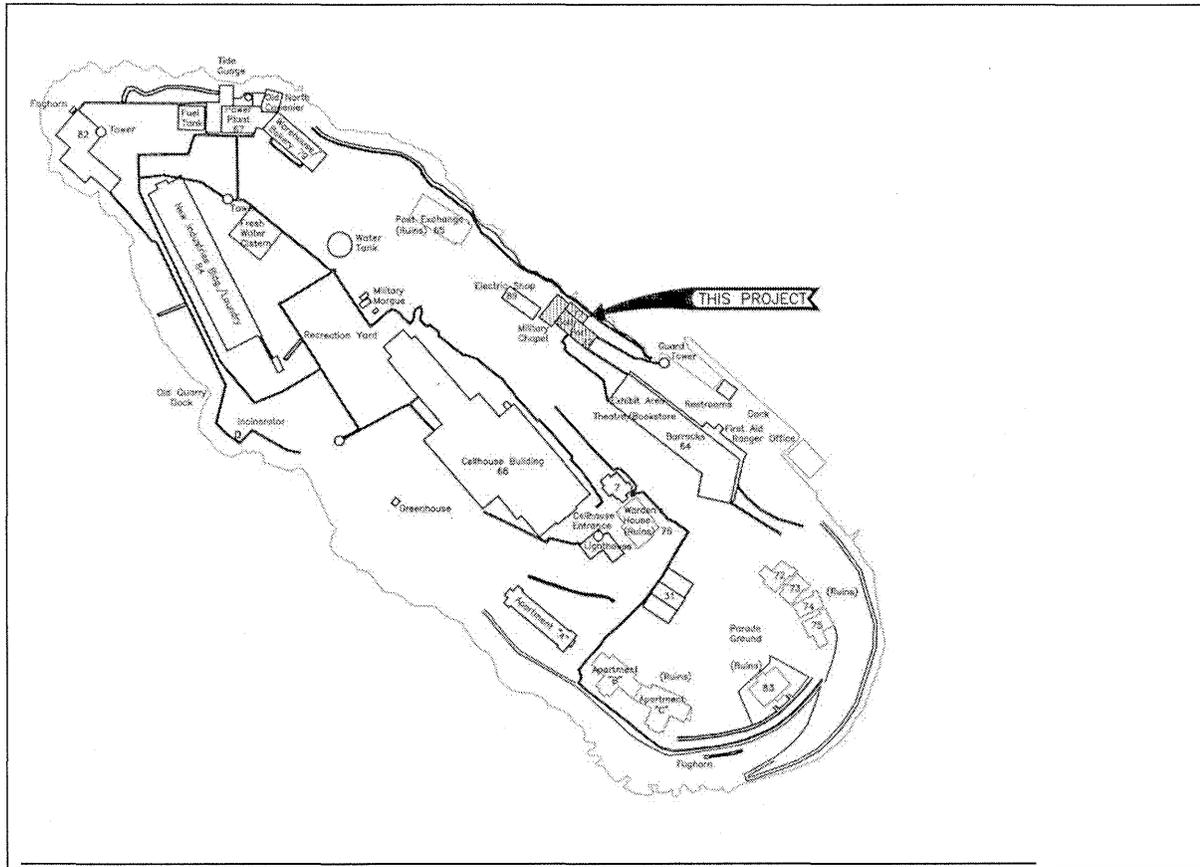
into the Guardhouse gunroom. At the second floor, a 2' 11" x 6' 2" wood-frame door leads into the shower room and a 2' 3" x 5' 10" 4-light, 2-paned wood-frame door leading into the toilet.

- b. Windows: The Boathouse Addition contains two interior windows. On the second floor of the west wall, there is an original brick Library addition window opening that has been blocked with either concrete or stone boulders. Also on the second floor of the west wall at the shower room, there is a large brick window opening into the original Library addition.
6. Hardware: There is a metal doorknob on the wooden toilet door at the second floor.
  7. Mechanical equipment
    - a. heating, air condition, ventilation: There are two metal radiators in the building; one on the north side of first floor partition wall and one on the east wall of the second floor.
    - b. lighting: The building is no longer wired for electricity and there are no lighting fixtures remaining.
    - c. plumbing: There are remnant metal pipes on both the first and second floors. On the first floor, there is a remnant shower fixture, with a raised concrete shower pad near the east elevation.

On the second floor, there is a porcelain toilet bowl with a porcelain water tank and flush handle. In the floor of the second floor shower room, there is a remnant floor drain.

#### D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The Boathouse Addition faces east and looks out directly over the San Francisco Bay (see site map). A decorative concrete fence runs along the east edge of the island. A narrow concrete staircase at the roadway level leads down at the south elevation to the exposed basement foundation. The building is not open to the public.
2. Historic Landscape design: At the Boathouse Addition's south elevation, there is vegetation on the hillside including nasturtiums, English ivy, crocosmia and New Zealand tea trees.



Alcatraz Island, San Francisco, California

### Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Architectural drawings:

Army Quartermaster floor plan, entitled "Warehouse plans and section" for Building 22, dated April 1929, *War Department Q.M.C Form No. 173A*. (see Supplemental materials.)

Lerner & Associates (1108 C Bryant Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; 415-863-5475) produced the Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (January 2002). Included in the HSR are the following architectural drawings:

- sheet 01 "Perspective view-existing condition"
- sheet 02 "Guardhouse & Boathouse - basement floor plan"
- sheet 03 "Guardhouse, Library & Boathouse - first floor plan"
- sheet 04 " Library & Boathouse -second floor plan; Schoolhouse - first floor plan"
- sheet 05 "Library attic, Schoolhouse - second floor"
- sheet 06 "Library, Boathouse & Schoolhouse - south elevation"

sheet 08 "Library, Boathouse & Schoolhouse -east elevation"  
sheet 10 "Guardhouse, Library, Boathouse & Schoolhouse -exploded view"

B. Early views:

The Park Archives and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Building 667, Presidio of San Francisco, contains many historic images of Alcatraz Island (see Park Archives Historic Records Collection, vols. 1 – 10). The first image of the Guardhouse that shows the Boathouse Addition is dated around 1925; the view is looking north and shows the south elevation of the wood-frame Boathouse addition.

C. Bibliography: The Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report was written by Lerner and Associates for the National Park Service in 2002. Copies are available at the Park Archives and Record Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Building 667, Presidio of San Francisco.

D. Supplemental material: *War Department Q.M.C Form No. 173A* available at the National Archives and Records Administration, NARA II, College Park, MD; RG 77, Entry 393, Box 2, Historical Record of Buildings. Bound copies of these forms are also available at the Park Archives and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Building 667, Presidio of San Francisco.

Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The purpose of the HABS recordation is for mitigation recording of this historic building addition that will be removed per the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the National Park Service and the California Office of Historic Preservation. The MOA contains the following stipulation:

“Prior to the demolition of the Boathouse addition, NPS shall contact the regional Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) coordinator at the Pacific West Regional Office to determine what level and kind of recordation is required for the property. Unless otherwise agreed to by HABS/HAER, the Park shall ensure that all such documentation is completed and accepted by HABS/HAER prior to demolition.

The Park shall ensure that all recordation/documentation activities are performed or directly supervised by architects, historians, photographers, and/or other professionals meeting the qualification standards in the Secretary of Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR 61, Appendix A).

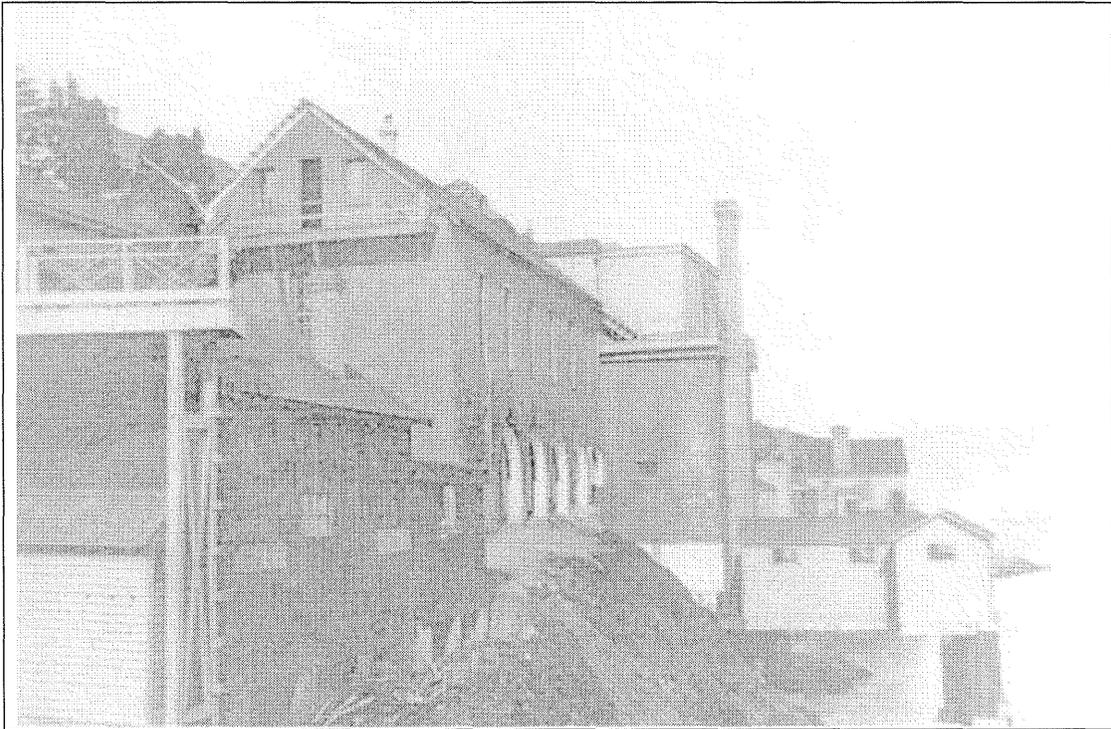
The Park will ensure that copies of all documents resulting from the documentation/recordation are transmitted to the SHPO, deposited at the San Francisco

History Room of the San Francisco Public Library, and also accessioned into the permanent archival collection of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.”

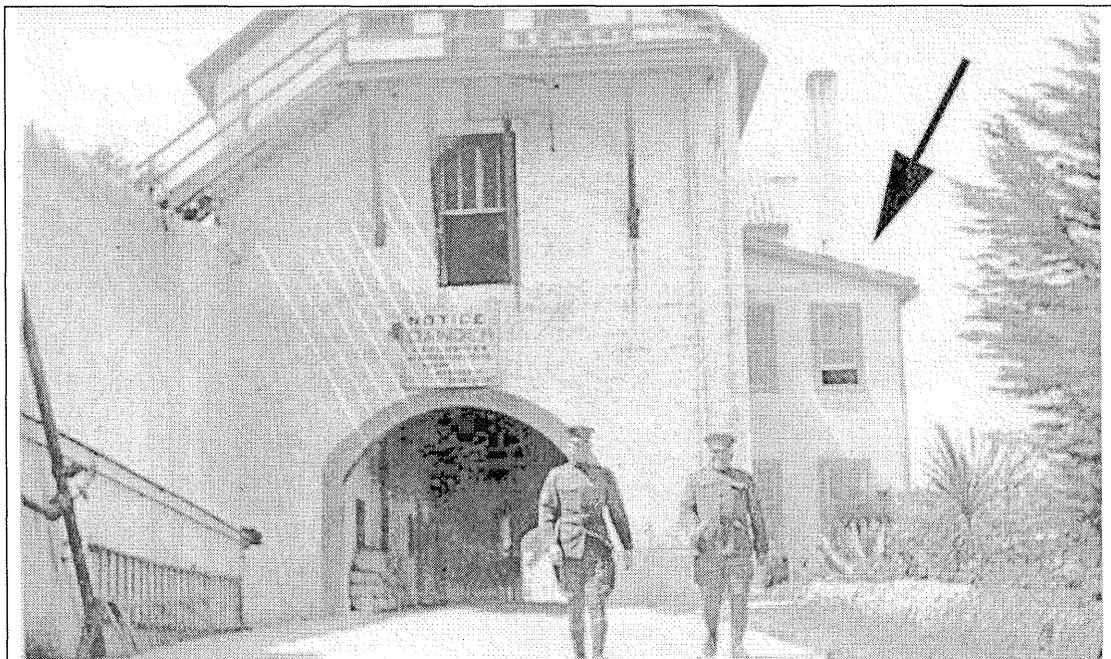
Kristin L. Baron, architectural historian, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service prepared the HABS report. Jason Hagin and John Martini provided technical and historic assistance.

HABS photography was provided by Doc Miles, 755B Portola Street, Presidio of San Francisco, CA, 94129.

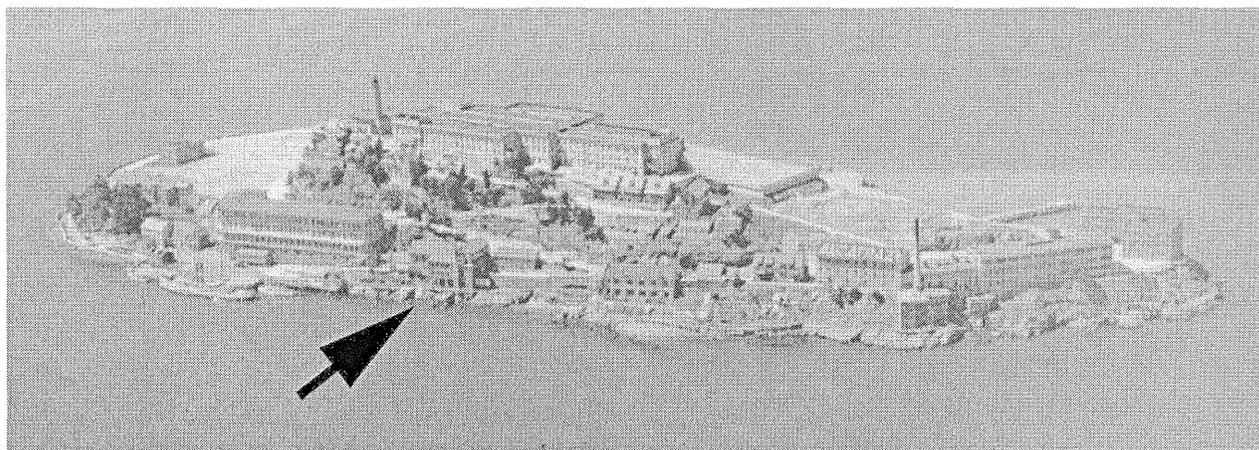
The HABS records were prepared between June and August 2013. All existing condition HABS photographs were taken between August and November 2013.



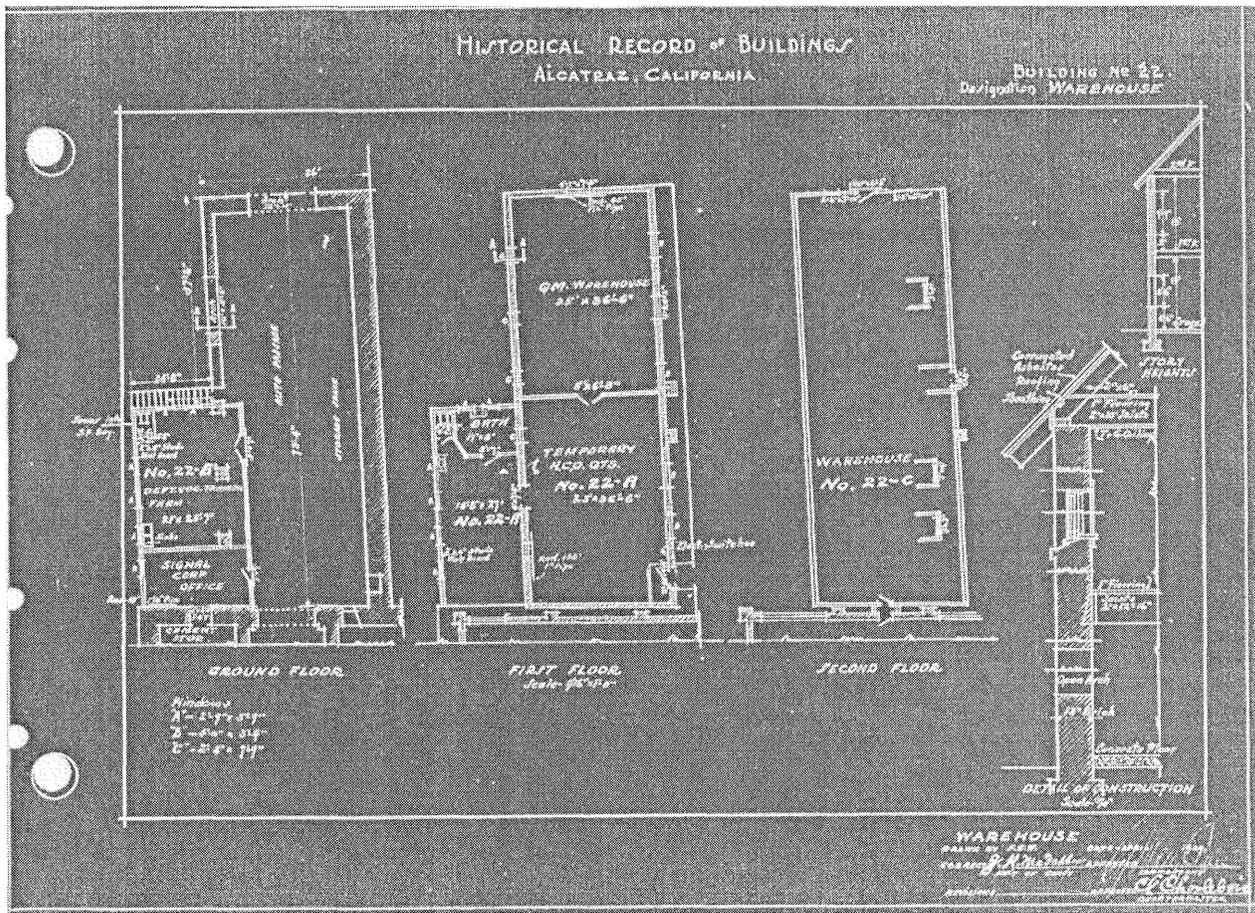
View of the Guardhouse looking northwest, before the army constructed the Boathouse Addition, circa 1915. (Photo courtesy of the Park Archives and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area)



View of the Guardhouse looking north, with the Boathouse Addition on the right-hand side, circa 1925. (Photo courtesy of the Park Archives and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area)



View of the Guardhouse looking north, with the Boathouse Addition on the right-hand side; circa 1925. (Photo courtesy of the Park Archives and Records Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area)



National Archives and Records Administration, NARA II, College Park, MD; RG 77, Entry 393, Box 2, Historical Record of Buildings

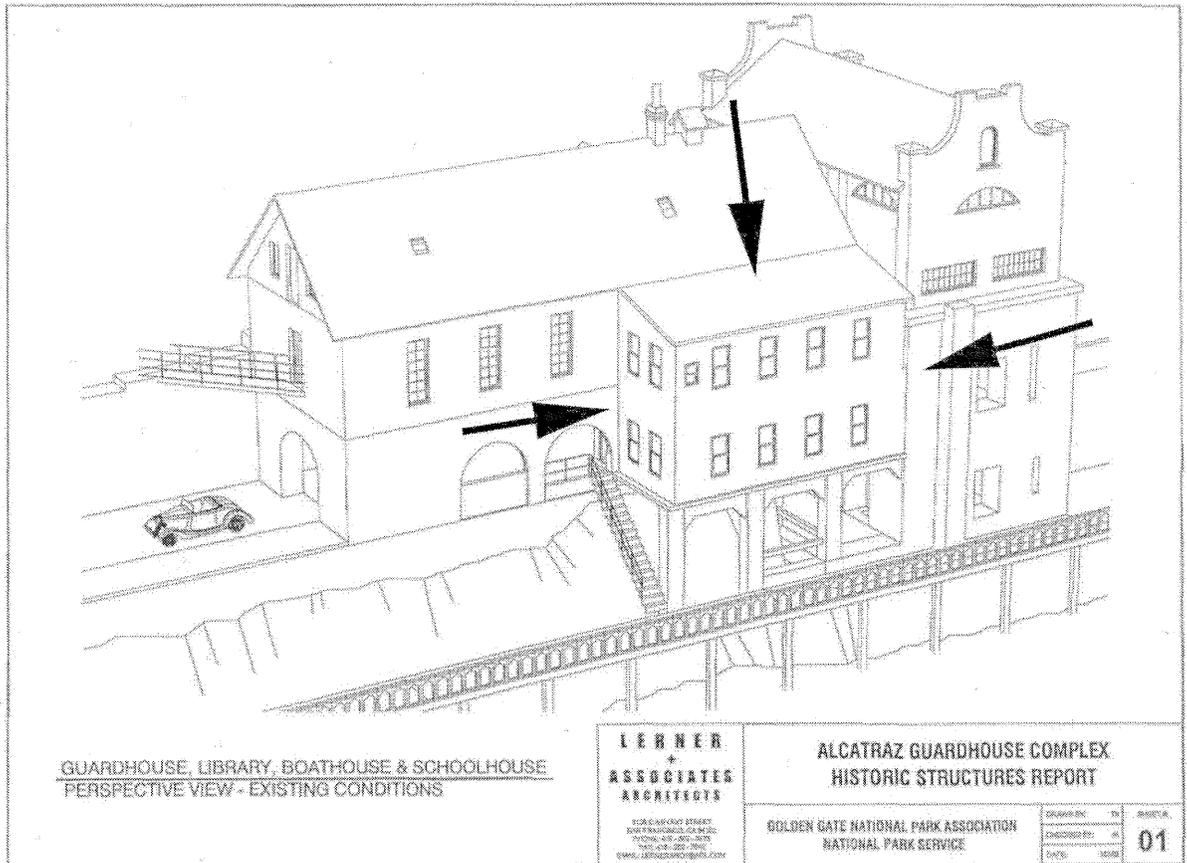
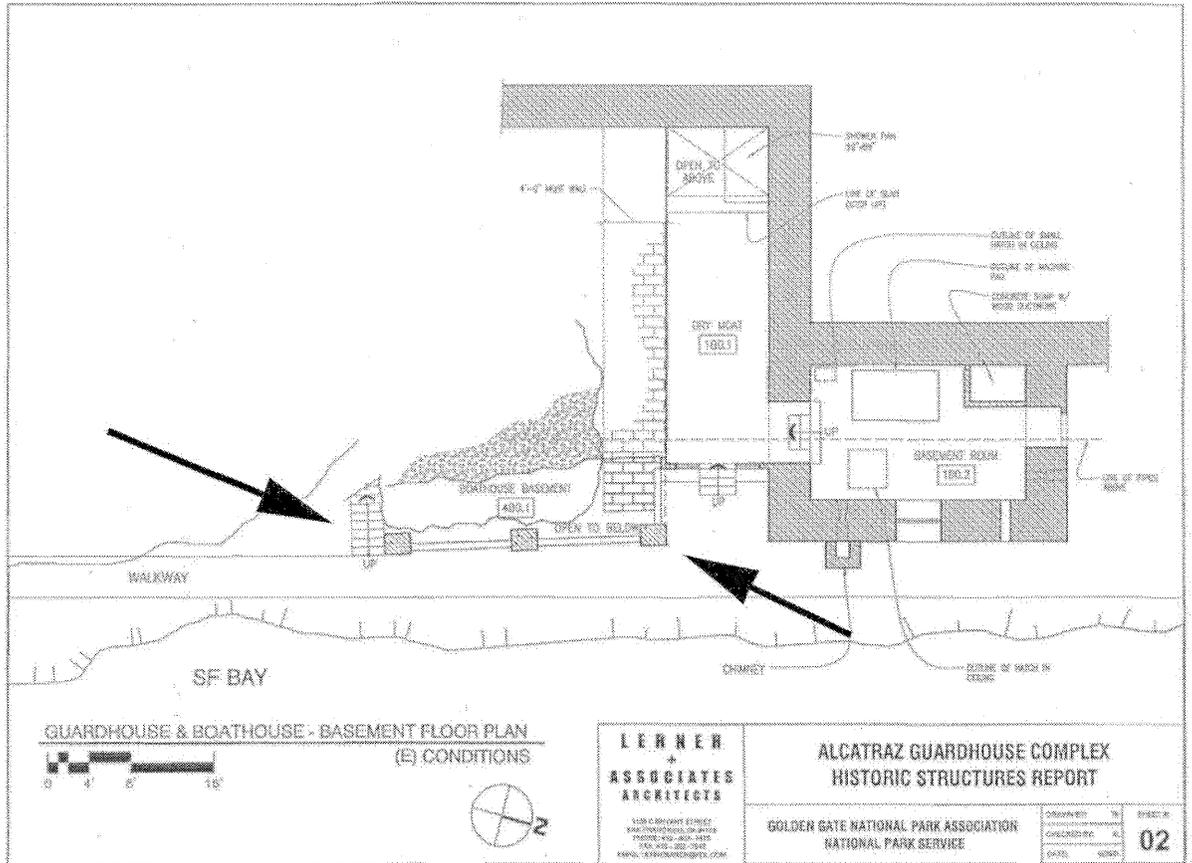
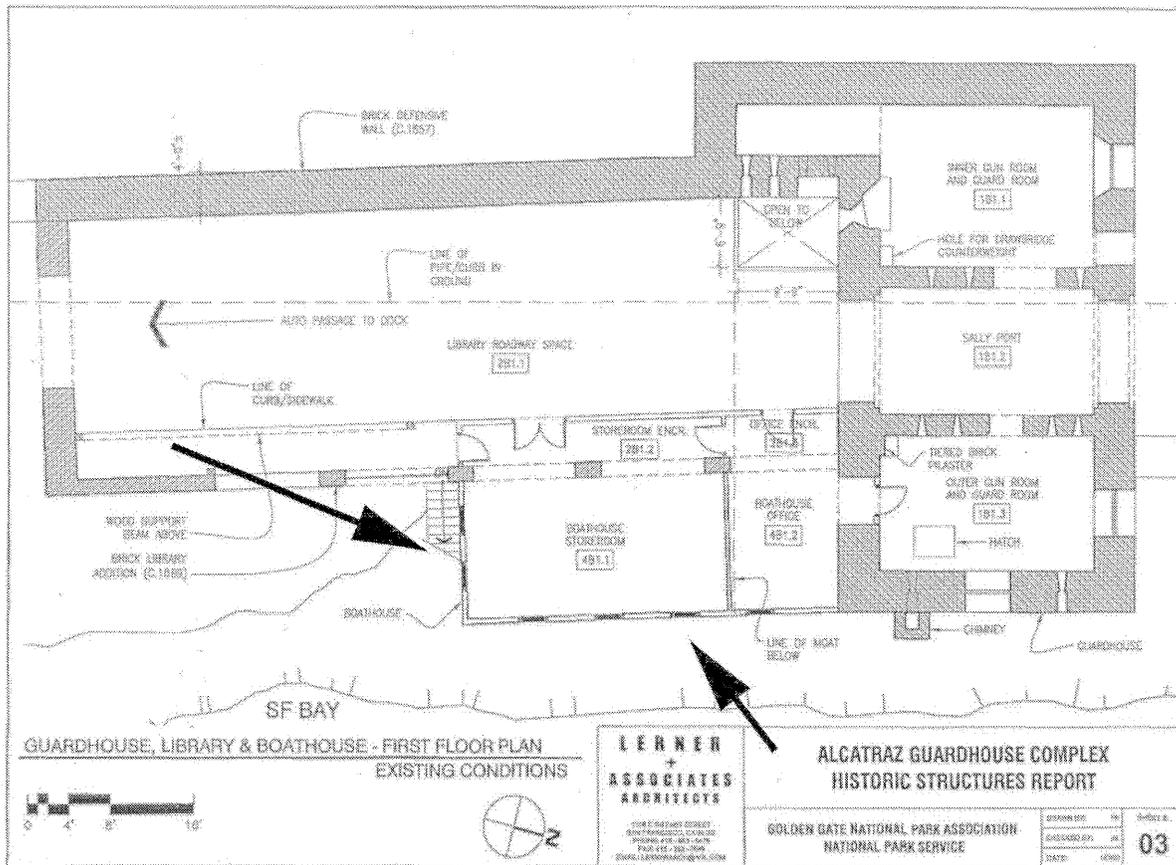


Illustration showing northeast view of Alcatraz Guardhouse, with Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 01 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002)  
Lerner & Associates

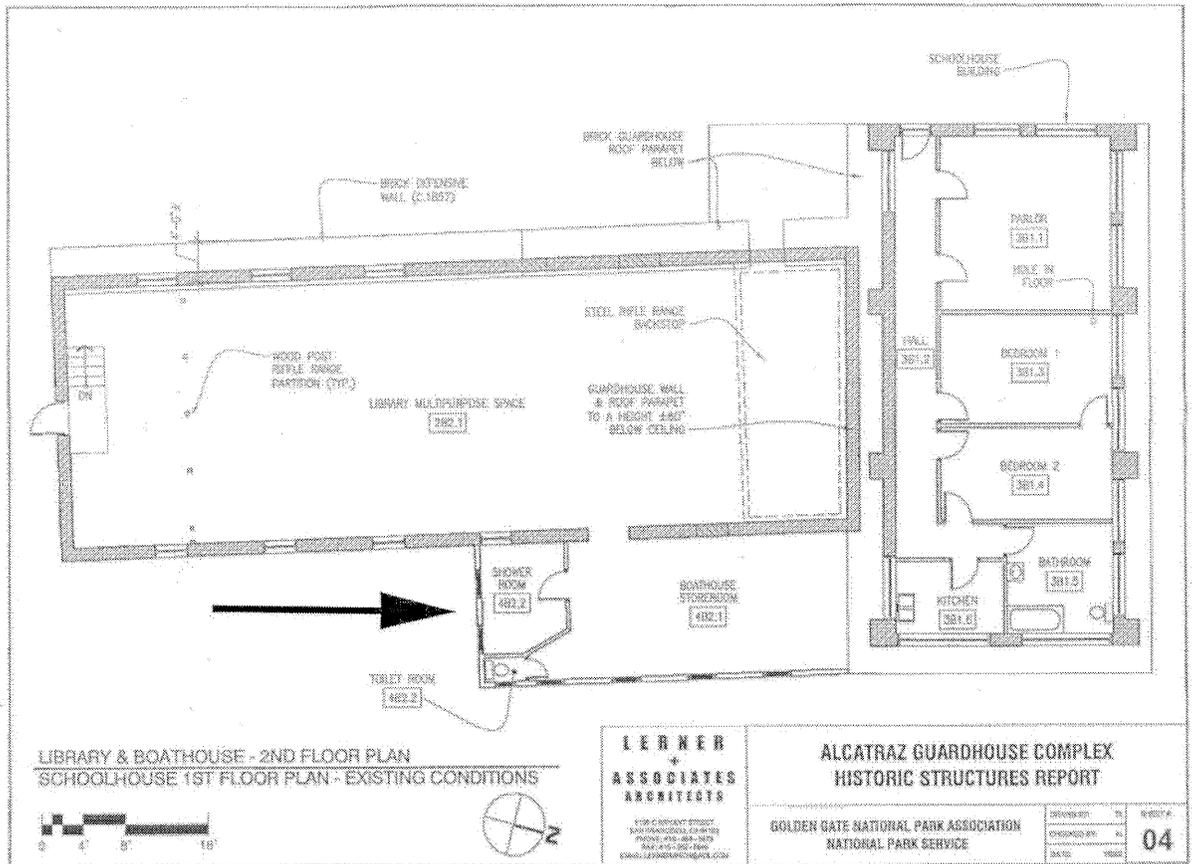
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Basement floor plan of Guardhouse, with Boathouse Addition basement highlighted;  
Sheet 02 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates

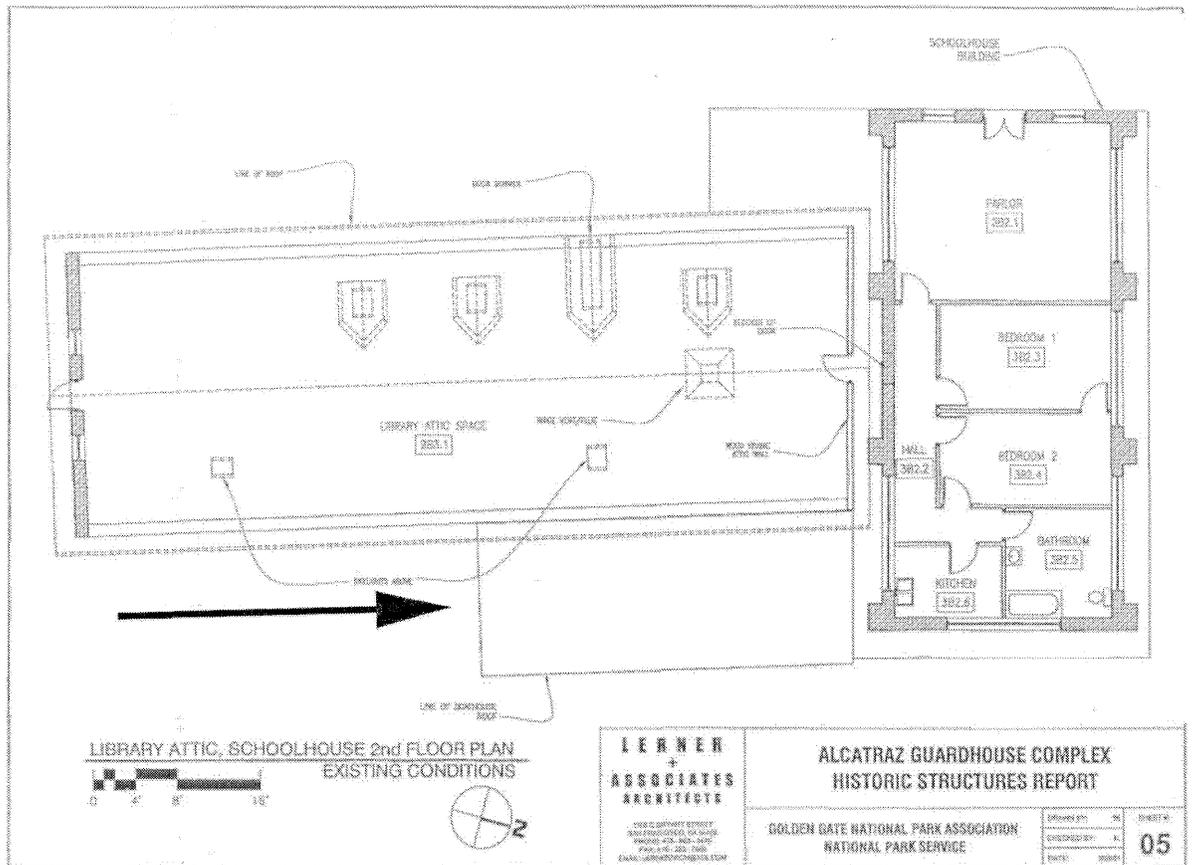


First floor of Guardhouse with Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 03 Alcatraz  
Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates

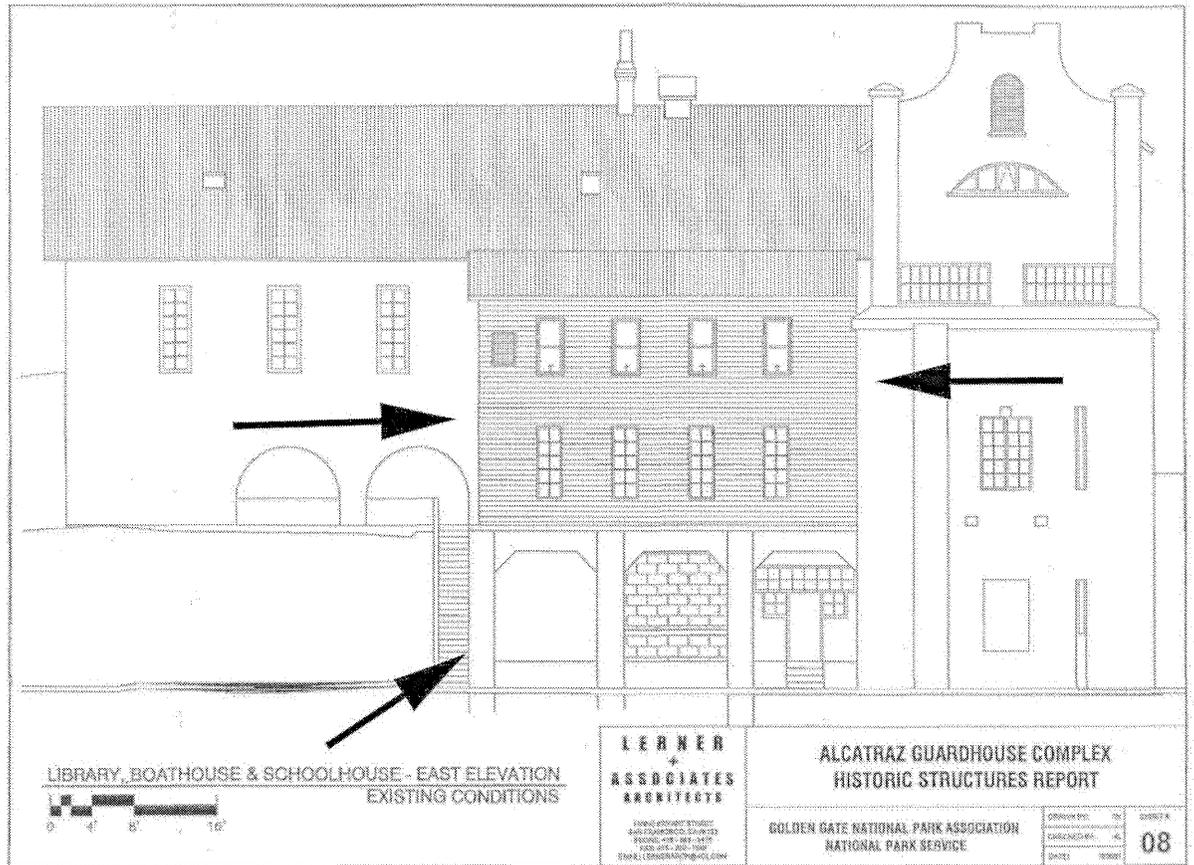


Second floor of Guardhouse with Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 04 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates

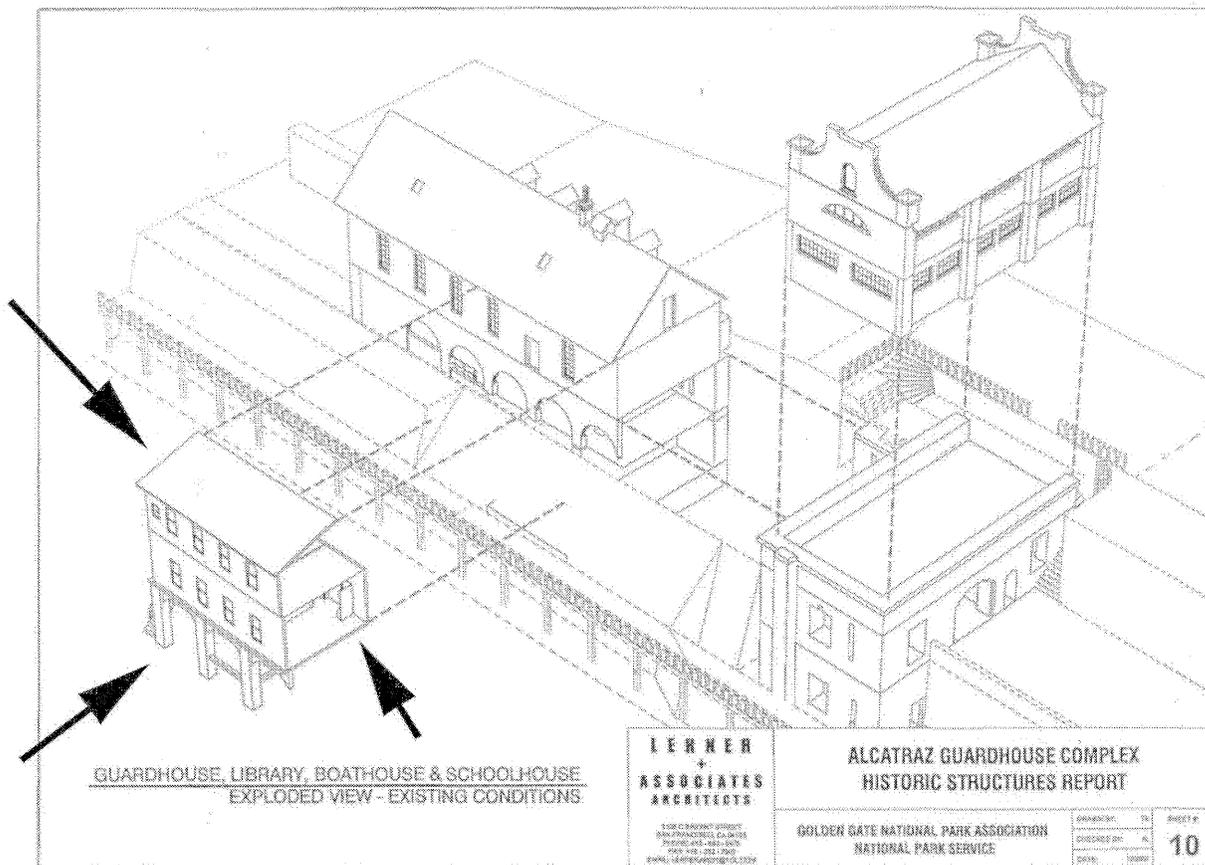
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Roofline of Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 05 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates



East elevation of Guardhouse, with Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 08 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates



Exploded view of Guardhouse with Boathouse Addition highlighted; Sheet 10 Alcatraz Guardhouse Complex Historic Structure Report (2002) Lerner & Associates