

U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION, ASSEMBLY HALL
(Building No. 1750)
Radford Boulevard
Pensacola
Escambia County
Florida

HABS FL-404
FL-404

HABS
FL-404

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION, ASSEMBLY HALL
(U.S. Naval Air Station, Building No. 1750)

HABS No. FL-404

- Location: Radford Boulevard at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida.
- Building No. 1750 is located on the Fort Barrancas, FL USGS quad map. UTM Coordinates are Zone 16; Easting 471805; Northing 3357165.
- Present Owner: United States Government, Department of the Navy, Naval Air Station Pensacola.
- Present Occupant: Maintenance Department, NAS Pensacola.
- Present Use: Maintenance Storage Facility, to be demolished in 1998.
- Significance: Building No. 1750 is a contributing building in the proposed Fort Barrancas Cantonment Historic District which has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Building No. 1750 was constructed in 1929 during improvements to the Fort Barrancas cantonment. The building was designed to serve as an Assembly Hall for officers and enlisted personnel. It was built with a raised stage and housed activities such as dances, club meetings, indoor games and other recreational activities. It continued to be used as a recreational facility into the 1960s and for a period housed a local chapter of the Boy Scouts. During the mid-1970s the building was remodeled to serve as a storage facility for the NAS Pensacola Maintenance Department. Although altered, the building retains its overall form and is included as a contributing building within the proposed Fort Barrancas Cantonment Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

- 1. Date of construction:** Building No. 1750 was completed in 1929.
- 2. Architect:** The building was designed by the Army's Quartermaster Corps which was responsible for overall Army building construction and design.
- 3. Original and subsequent owners:** United States Government, Department of the Army. Later transferred to the Department of the Navy.
- 4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Unknown. No records have been located which identifies the original builder or contractor.
- 5. Original plans and construction:** The building's original floor plan and Construction Completion Report is on file with the Facilities Management Office at NAS Pensacola. Photographic copies of this floor plan accompanies this documentation. No other large scale original floor plans are known to exist at NAS Pensacola.
- 6. Alterations and additions:** The building was remodeled during World War II through the enclosure of the porch on the north facade. The building was again remodeled in the mid-1970s through the enclosure of the porch on the south facade and on the primary (east) facade. Numerous original windows and doors have been replaced throughout the building. On the interior, some sections have been subdivided for office space but the overall open floor arrangement of the building has been retained. On the north facade is a ca. 1975 plywood and metal attached storage shed.

B. Historical Context

Fort Barrancas was constructed between 1839 and 1844 as part of the defenses for the Pensacola harbor. Over the next several decades, a number of support buildings and structures were built outside the walls of the brick fort. During the 1870s, the Army began a nationwide construction program to improve living conditions and upgrade buildings. The Fort Barrancas cantonment was expanded during these years and new officers' housing was constructed along with a parade ground and other facilities. New coastal artillery emplacements were erected in the 1890s and the cantonment housed and supported personnel responsible for the maintenance of fixed and movable artillery for land and coast defense.

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In 1924, the Fort Barrancas cantonment became the headquarters of the 13th Coast Artillery Regiment. As part of overall improvements to Army posts, new construction began at the Fort Barrancas cantonment in 1927. Among the buildings erected over the next few years was Building No. 1750, an Assembly Hall. The building was completed at a cost of \$5,171 and was originally designated as Building 95. The building was designed with a capacity of 300 persons. This Assembly Hall was built with large open floor space, a stage on the west wall, a storage area, kitchen, and ladies and men's restrooms. Building No. 1750 served as an Assembly Hall and recreation facility through the 1930s and World War II.

In 1947, the coastal defense functions of the Army ceased and the Fort Barrancas cantonment was incorporated into NAS Pensacola. Building No. 1750 continued to be used as a recreational facility into the 1970s. A local Boy Scout troop and other organizations used the building as a meeting hall during these years. Around 1975, the building was converted into a storage facility for the Maintenance Department. An area to the south of the building was paved for a parking lot and a large storage shed was constructed. Building No. 1750 was altered through the enclosure of its porch areas and addition of several partition walls for interior offices. Despite these alterations, the building retains sufficient integrity of design to be included as a contributing building within the proposed Fort Barrancas Historic District.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Building No. 1750 was completed in 1929 and is a one-story frame building constructed in a rectangular plan. The building was originally designed with a large open porch on the east facade and on sections of the north and south facades. This porch was ten feet in height and had a solid wood railing and square wood support columns. This porch area was enclosed in the 1940s and 1970s with wood panels and added windows and doors. The original wood shiplap siding was covered at some point during the 1940s or 1950s with the existing exterior of asbestos shingles. The interior of the building was designed with large open floor space, a stage on the west wall, and small bathrooms and closets.

2. Condition of fabric: The building is in fair condition with several areas where the wood sills have deteriorated and the foundation has settled. The exterior asbestos shingle surface is also cracked in many places.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Building No. 1750 was constructed in a rectangular plan and measures 36' in width and 68' in length. The building is approximately 26' in height and has an overall volume of 3,614 square feet. The building was originally built with 2,604 square feet and the existing square footage reflects the porch enclosures for additional storage space.

2. Foundations: Building No. 1750 has a poured concrete pier foundation.

3. Walls: Building No. 1750 has an exterior wall surface of asbestos shingles added in the late 1940s or 1950s. These asbestos shingles were placed over the original shiplap wood siding exterior.

4. Structural: Building No. 1750 is of balloon frame construction with a wood floor resting on a poured concrete pier foundation.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Building No. 1750 was originally constructed with open shed roof porches on the north, east, and south elevations. These porches displayed square wood support columns and solid wood railings. Some of the original wood columns remain with knee brace brackets. It appears that a section of the north elevation porch was enclosed with windows and wood siding during the 1940s. The east and south elevation porches were enclosed in the 1970s with wood panels and wire mesh.

6. Chimneys: Building No. 1750 was not built with either an interior wall or exterior wall chimney system. The building's heating system utilizes metal roof vents which were added in 1942.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The building presently has three exterior doorways. The main entrance on the east elevation has a ca. 1975 solid wood double doors. On the south elevation is an entrance with original double doors of three-panel wood design. The upper panel in these doors originally contained glass lights. These glass panels have been removed and replaced with plywood. Although no longer operable, an original five-panel wood door exists on the west elevation. Other original doorways which opened onto the porch areas have been removed or now open onto interior storage areas.

b. Windows: The building presently has thirty-three windows. Original windows which remain in the building are rectangular, two-over-two, double-hung sash design. Another series of original windows are on the west elevation behind the stage area, and are five

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vertical-light wood hopper design. During the 1940s a section of the porch on the north elevation was enclosed with wood panels and twenty-light fixed windows. On other sections of the enclosed porch on the north and south elevations are ca. 1975 six-over-six double hung sash and fixed single-light windows. All of the existing windows have simple wood surrounds devoid of decorative elements.

8. Roof: Building No. 1750 has a gable on hipped roof of composition shingles. At the roofline are four metal vents added in 1942. Below the eaves are a series of rectangular louvered vent windows which were originally operable for ventilation. These vent openings are now covered with plywood panels.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: Building No. 1750 was originally designed in a rectangular plan with a large central room measuring 35' in width and 58' in length. At the west end of the building was a raised stage area flanked by a kitchen and storage area. At the northwest corner of the building was a ladies toilet and a small men's latrine was along the south elevation wall. In the 1940s and 1970s the original porch areas were enclosed for additional storage space and new office spaces were added along the south wall. The stage area remains intact as does the ladies bathroom and original kitchen areas.

2. Stairways: There are no stairways on the interior of Building No. 1750. Two wood steps lead from the main floor to the stage area.

3. Flooring: The interior of Building No. 1750 has a wood floor covered with ca. 1975 linoleum panels.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Walls in the building are of fiber board or pressboard dating from the 1940s. Building No. 1750 has an exposed wood truss ceiling system in the main section of the building. The added office areas and remodeled bathrooms have dropped acoustical tile ceilings.

5. Openings:

a. Doorway and doors: The interior doors of Building No. 1750 reflect the remodeling of the 1970s. Original doors leading to the bathrooms and kitchen have been removed and replaced with paneled wood doors. Solid wood doors lead to the office spaces added in the 1970s.

b. Windows: There are no interior windows in the building. Windows which open onto the exterior have plain, undecorated surrounds.

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6. Decorative features and trim: No decorative features or trim are visible within the interior.

7. Hardware: Building No. 1750 lacks any significant hardware features.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Heat is provided by individual units also suspended from the ceiling. These heaters were added in 1991 and are vented through the roof. Air conditioning is supplied for office areas through individual window and wall units.

b. Lighting: Building No. 1750 displays florescent light fixtures suspended from the ceiling.

c. Plumbing and electrical: The plumbing was reconfigured in the 1970s for the upgrading of the original ladies toilet into the main bathroom. The electrical wiring in the building was upgraded in 1982.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Building No. 1750 is located within the Fort Barrancas cantonment area, north of Radford Boulevard and west of Slemmer Avenue. The building is sited just south of a row of historic officers' housing. The building is reached by an unpaved driveway. The building is oriented with its primary facade facing east. To the south of the building is a paved parking area and open-air storage shed which were added to the site in the 1970s. A chain link fence encloses this parking area and storage shed.

2. Historic landscape design: No significant landscape features are associated with Building No. 1750. To the north of the building is a concrete drainage ditch. There are no associated sidewalks or walkways. Adjacent to the building are a number of shade trees of pine and other species.

3. Outbuildings: There are no historic outbuildings associated with Building No. 1750. Directly to the south across a paved parking area is an open-air storage shed which was erected ca. 1975.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings

An original scaled plan of Building No. 1750 is located on file with the Facilities Management Office at NAS Pensacola. This plan is associated with the original Construction Completion Report for the property and is within a large bound volume of similar reports. No other original architectural drawings of Building No. 1750 are on file at NAS Pensacola.

B. Early Views

The Construction Completion Report from 1929 includes a photograph of Building No. 1750 showing its east and south elevations. This photograph is within a bound volume of other Construction Completion Reports on file at NAS Pensacola. A copy of this photograph accompanies this documentation. No other early views of the building have been located at NAS Pensacola.

C. Interviews

Personal interviews concerning the historic use of Building No. 1750 were conducted on April 9, 1998 with Dan Gregory of the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office. Mr. Gregory provided information on the known historical documentation available for the building.

D. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Construction Completion Report, Building 95 (now Building No. 1750). Report on file with the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office, 1929.

"Fort Barrancas National Register Historic District." National Register nomination on file with the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office, 1997.

Historic Sites and Property Survey of the Pensacola Naval Air Station. Report prepared by Historic Property Associates, St. Augustine, Florida, 1986.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Coletta, Paolo E. ed. *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Domestic.* Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985.

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E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

More detailed floor plans of this building may be on file at the Military Archives at Suitland, Maryland. A site visit would be required to ascertain the existence of any floor plans. No other sources are known which would yield any additional significant information.

F. Supplemental Material

Building No. 1750 is also documented through real estate records, a site plan, and blueprints detailing the 1982 electrical rewiring. These materials are on file at the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office. Copies of the site plan and the 1982 floor plan accompany this documentation.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Project Status

Building No. 1750 is presently occupied as a storage facility for the NAS Pensacola Maintenance Department. Consolidation within this department will result in their vacating Building No. 1750 in the near future. Building No. 1750 is in fair condition with sagging foundation piers and deteriorated wood sills. Due to the lack of need for the facility, its physical condition, and rehabilitation costs, Building No. 1750 is proposed for demolition. In correspondence dated March 23, 1998, the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service required HABS Standards Level II documentation for this building prior to demolition.

B. Research Strategy

In 1986, Building No. 1750 was inventoried as part of an overall installation architectural and historical survey. This inventory was completed by Historic Property Associates of St. Augustine, Florida. Building No. 1750 was identified as a contributing property to the proposed Fort Barrancas Historic District. To complete recordation of the building, Thomason and Associates, Preservation Planners, conducted additional architectural and historical research and documentation of the building in April of 1998.

C. Actual Research Process

Thomason and Associates met with representatives of the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office to review all known historical and architectural documentation of Building No. 1750. This information included the "*Florida Master Site File, Site Inventory Form*" completed in 1986. All existing real estate cards and blueprints related

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to Building 1750 were reviewed and copied. An original Construction Completion Report for the building dating from 1929 was located and copies of an original photograph and floor plan were made. Architectural descriptions and photography were completed on both the exterior and interior of the building in 1998.

D. Archives and Repositories Used

The 1986 survey of the installation by Historic Property Associates included review of all historical materials on file with the NAS Pensacola History Office. This information was made available during the 1998 recordation. Additional documentation of the building took place at the blueprint and real estate files of the NAS Pensacola Facilities Management Office.

E. Research Staff

- 1. Primary Preparer:** Philip Thomason, Thomason and Associates, Preservation Planners, Nashville, Tennessee.
- 2. Photographer:** James Quine, Photographer, St. Augustine, Florida.

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