

**HICKAM FIELD, HICKAM HISTORIC HOUSING**  
**(Hickam Air Force Base, Officers' & Non-Commissioned**  
**Officers' Housing)**  
**Honolulu**  
**Honolulu County**  
**Hawaii**

**HABS No. HI-164-AP**

**HABS**  
**HI-164-AP**

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Buildings Survey**  
**National Park Service**  
**Department of the Interior**  
**San Francisco, California**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**HICKAM FIELD, HICKAM HISTORIC HOUSING  
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**Location:** Hickam Air Force Base  
City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii  
U.S.G.S. Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Quadrangle 1999 (7.5 minute series)  
Bounded by Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1) 04.607700.2360560 | 2) 04.608860.2360780 |
| 3) 04.609040.2360590 | 4) 04.608520.2360470 |
| 5) 04.608280.2360220 | 6) 04.608180.2360330 |
| 7) 04.607160.2359310 | 8) 04.607000.2359500 |
| 9) 04.607110.2359910 |                      |

**Significance:** Hickam Historic Housing contains officers' and non-commissioned officers' housing which was constructed as part of the early development of Hickam Air Force Base as the Army Air Corps expanded its operations in Hawaii before World War II. The housing was planned in the mid 1930s as a design departure from established forms of Army post construction, with buildings that deferred to Hawaiian forms and a building and street layout and lush landscaping that is suggestive of principals of the Garden City urban design movement. Hickam Historic Housing is one of the few areas in Hawaii where a residential neighborhood from the late 1930s and early 1940s remains relatively unaltered.

**Description:** The Hickam Historic Housing is an in area within the Hickam Historic District which contains single-family, duplex, and apartment housing units that were built before World War II. The boundaries of Hickam Historic Housing roughly correspond to Julian and Porter Avenues and Eighteenth Street on the north, Fox Boulevard, and Cornet Avenue on the east, Eleventh Street, Signer Boulevard, Travis Avenue, and First Street on the south, and Worthington and Julian Avenues on the west. The buildings are concrete masonry construction, with single and double-pitch hip roofs. They are built with features of Hawaiian regional design which adapt them well to the local climate. There are about 344 residence buildings, both single and multi-family, in the Hickam Historic Housing area.

A dominant feature in the housing area is the profusion of mature monkeypod trees which line many of the streets and give a shady character to the houses, which are set back from the streets. In many areas these monkeypod trees form a canopy over the streets, and this, combined with the setback of the houses creates a wide shaded expanse of street and yard between the houses. There are extensive and varied plantings between the buildings themselves; monkeypod, milo, African tulip, ficus, norfolk pine, silk oak, and other trees along with coco, date,

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royal, and other palms serve to screen the houses from one another and to shade the neighborhood.

The typical width of the streets is about 35' curb to curb and setback varies with typical distances of 25' to about 50'. Median strips planted with date palms are used in the center of Fox and Signer Boulevards, two streets which run the length of the area near its edge; and also at Mills and Boquet Boulevards, which are radial streets extending out from Atterbury Circle to the north and west edges. These median-divided streets are also lined with large monkeypods which form a partial canopy over the streets, extending in places to above the edges of the approximately 30' wide median. Traffic circles are used where these median-divided streets intersect, at Signer and Boquet and at Signer and Mills boulevards. Another traffic circle is used at the west termination of Boquet Boulevard, at Monthan Street.

One exception to the shaded character of the area is the center of the wide mall which extends from Scott Circle to the water tower (Freedom Tower) at Manzelman Circle. This area of the mall, between Eighth and Ninth streets, is only planted with a lawn, it has no trees or other plantings. Moving outward from the center of the mall toward the houses at its edges, a row of royal palms is planted near the outer curb of each street. Closer to the houses are large ficus trees which shade both sides of the mall and the houses. These houses, fronting Eighth and Ninth Streets, have an unusually deep set back, about 165' from the street, which combines with the approximately 150' wide mall and the two streets to produce a wide distance from building to building across the mall.

The spacing of the houses and apartments also contributes to the overall feeling of shaded spaciousness. Although in some areas the buildings are set near one another along the street, they are sometimes placed with a large rear area at the interior of the block which separates them from their neighbors, sometimes by as much as 150'. At most blocks this interior area has service roads which have open and carport-protected parking areas and garbage collection sites for the residences. In other blocks which do not have large rear yards, the buildings are often placed in a staggered pattern to avoid setting them in rows along the street. Where buildings are staggered like this, some are set with a group of three or four facing a common quadrangle, with one walkway leading from the street which branches to reach each building. In cases of this type of grouping some buildings are oriented so that they present their sides to the street, their front entries and front facades are oriented perpendicular to it.

A staggered placement of buildings is also evident with the larger multi-unit apartments, particularly the ones along Signer Boulevard. Here, the large buildings are set in pairs, two to a block on alternating sides of the street. Their U-shaped plans are oriented with the courtyards facing the street which provides a feeling of additional set back.

Winding streets were cited by Hickam's early designer, H. B. Nurse, as a device used to accent the informal character of the area (Nurse 1938,

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10). These are found primarily at the west end of the area where the houses are set more densely and are placed in staggered patterns. The shoreline of Pearl Harbor comes nearest the neighborhood at its western section. Although the shoreline here is about 200' to 300' from the Julian Avenue boundary of the area, the neighborhood has very little relationship to the water. For a short time just after the Hickam Historic Housing was built, this strip of land, between Julian Avenue and the waterfront, appears to have been planted as a park (NARA 1939; and NARA 1941). During World War II a destroyer escort wharf and a timber wharf were constructed by the Navy along this stretch of waterfront from Hickam School to Bishop Point, effectively cutting off the neighborhood from the water. Although the wharfs have been removed, trees and shrubs along with a row of non-historic houses just outside the Historic Housing area (across Julian Avenue), serve to screen the water from the neighborhood. Currently, once inside the neighborhood, all connection with the water is lost among the houses and mature landscaping. An exception to this is the area of relatively open park located near Building 656, at the intersection of Julian Avenue and Monthan Street. Here, Pearl Harbor is visible through plantings of palms, milo, and monkeypod trees.

**Historical Context:** Hickam Field was developed when the Army Air Corps outgrew its Ford Island location. The planning for the layout of Hickam Field was done by Captain Howard B. Nurse in July and August of 1935 when he arrived on the site to assume the duties of Constructing Quartermaster for building the base (Nurse 1938, 9). Nurse's layout, which "[laid] down the broad lines of design which were to govern future construction" (Hunt ca. 1940, 9) is evocative of the Garden City Movement. This urban planning movement, popularized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, based the design of townships on the principal that each should be an independent garden city in the country, limited in size and including public parks and private gardens, and surrounded by a greenbelt (Stricklin 2000, 1). A Garden City consisted of balanced areas of residences, arable land, industry, and cultural establishments (Tse 2002). These attributes are found in Hickam's separation of flight runways, industrial areas, and housing neighborhoods (Hunt 1940, 42). Nurse's extensive landscaping, his placement of the homes, and his use of broad malls and parkways and winding shaded streets also suggest tenets of Garden City design. He planned the base to avoid "follow[ing] the lines of a citadel" and used "streets [that] curve and wind in an easy, carefree manner." Although casually laid out, his street plan "contains organic unity, as well as direct arteries of circulation leading to various focal points" (Nurse 1938, 10).

Housing construction during the initial development of Hickam Field was done in two phases. The first was begun in late 1937 and included thirty-nine quarters for officers and forty-two quarters for non-commissioned officers (*Honolulu Star Bulletin* 1937, 1). The housing construction of this phase was completed by early 1939 and the second phase was begun

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later the same year. When the second phase was completed in 1941, two hundred sixty-five buildings for officers and for non-commissioned officers housing had been erected. Captain Howard B. Nurse supervised part of the first phase of construction, until July 18, 1938, when he was re-assigned to duty on the mainland. He was relieved at Hickam Field by Captain John A. Hunt, who oversaw the remainder of the housing construction there (Hunt 1940, 43).

Officers' housing was planned for the south side of the mall and non-commissioned officers' housing for the north side with the wide lawn separating the ranks. The first phase of housing construction was centered on the mall, with buildings built primarily on the two blocks to the north and the two blocks to the south of it (between Sixth and Eleventh Streets). Phase two construction expanded the neighborhood from Worthington and Julian Avenues to Eighteenth Street. Several differences are apparent between the phases in the layout of houses and the design of the neighborhood. Phase one houses all face the street and have attached garages. Phase two houses were often placed around quadrangles and have separate carports along the service roads at the interior of the blocks.

The relationship of the neighborhood to the water was more evident during the decades immediately after construction, before plantings matured and thickened. Captain Nurse made note of the fact that the original design of the neighborhood gave its homes either a mountain or harbor view. "Every home is not only being so placed as to avail itself of the prevailing trade winds, but also the mountain scenery or marine view" (Nurse 1938, 10). As trees grew tall and lush, and later construction of housing *makai* of Julian Avenue was added, both views were severely compromised. Most of the neighborhood now has little relation to either.

Part of Nurse's plan for Hickam's residential neighborhood included extensive planting to change the former area of brush and sugar cane to a lush, tropical setting. Just before he left for the mainland Nurse reported that:

Landscaping in keeping with Hawaiian sub-tropical growth, is keeping pace with the construction. Over 300,000 trees and shrubs have already been propagated at little cost. Had this work been delayed until completion of construction and the necessary trees of proper growth purchased in the open market, it would have resulted in the expenditure of several hundred thousands of dollars. As it is, we have 175 varieties of trees and shrubs with 41 varieties of palms alone. Many of these have been set out along the streets and boulevards and by the time Hickam Field reaches completion, they will have matured into well developed young trees. Endeavoring to get away from a stereotyped form of building, it is also hoped to develop individually in the grounds and landscaping as well, so that when completed Hickam Field...will be...a source of pride (Nurse 1938, 10).

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Nurse's plan for landscaping was an early and integral part of his design for the base, as evidenced by his actions initiating a plant nursery very shortly after his plans for the base had been approved by the Quartermaster Department Commander. "The year 1936 saw the gradual taking shape of the future post. Early in the year a large nursery had been established, capable of producing all the trees, plants, and shrubs that would be needed for the entire development. Several hundred of the thousands of trees eventually to be required had been set out before that year ended" (Hunt 1940, 42). The layout of the individual houses was done with the same deliberate care by Nurse. In addition to attempting to give each an initial view of the mountains or harbor. He stated, "The homes will be in keeping with the Hawaiian atmosphere and traditions, rather than being set 'four square,' and each a replica of the other, as were the buildings of our earlier Army Posts." He intended Hickam Field to be "not only a credit to our Government but a source of pride to the good people of fair Hawaii" (Nurse 1938, 10).

**Sources:**

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\_\_\_\_\_. ca. 1944. Photo # 342FH – 3A-40789/ 63408A.C.

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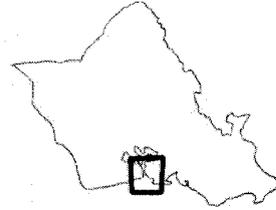
U.S. Army Museum Hawaii. 1938. Aerial photo # 1445. Ft. DeRussy Archives, Hawaii. 6 September.

**Project Information:** This report was prepared as part of a project to privatize all military housing under the control of the 15 Airlift Wing. Approximately 656 of the 1332 base housing units to be privatized are within the Hickam Historic District. Because the units within the historic district will be altered, a representative unit of each type was selected for preservation; to be restored as part of the Programmatic Agreement (August 2000) for Hickam's Historic District. This report documents the buildings before their restoration. The photographic documentation was undertaken by David Franzen, photographer. Dee Ruzicka, Architectural Historian at Mason Architects, Inc., wrote the written documentation and conducted field work (November 2005 – February 2006) and research for this report.

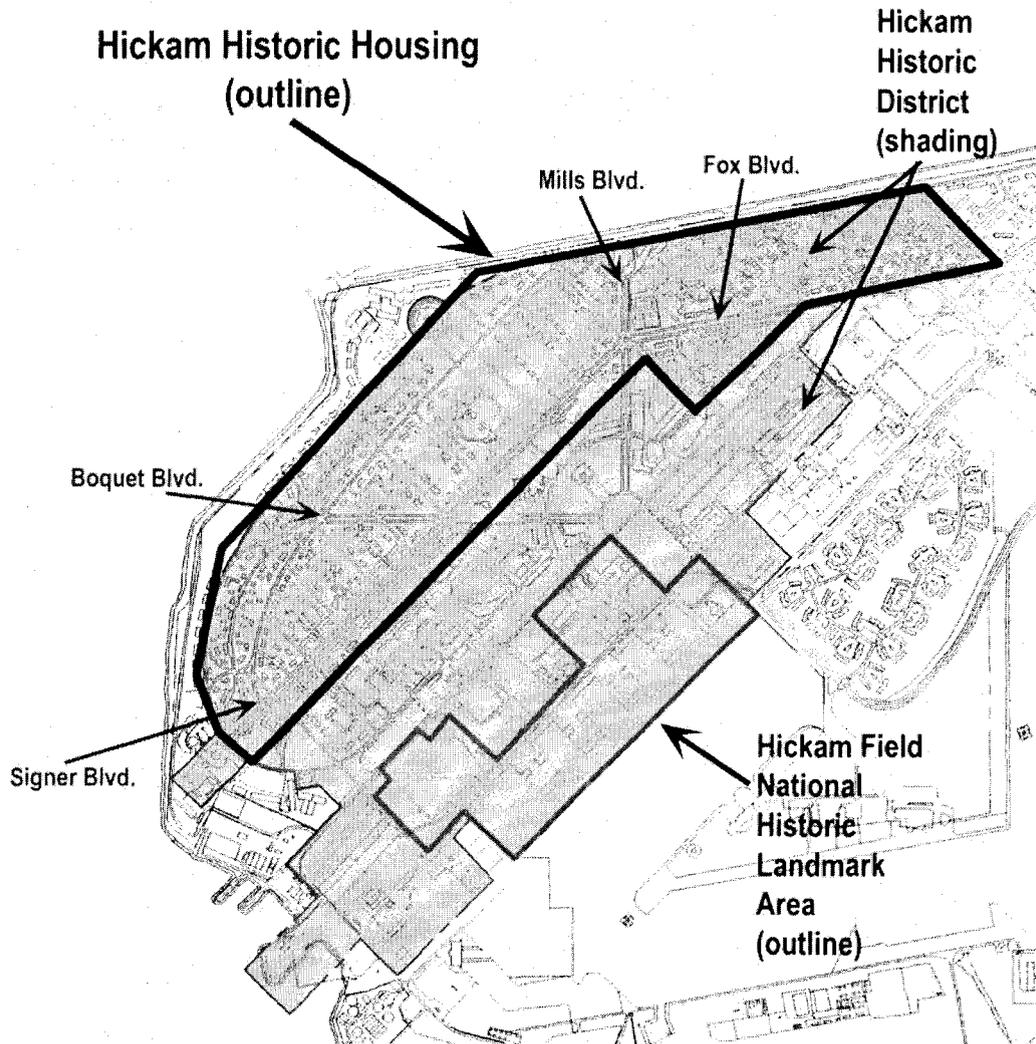
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Date of Report: April 2007

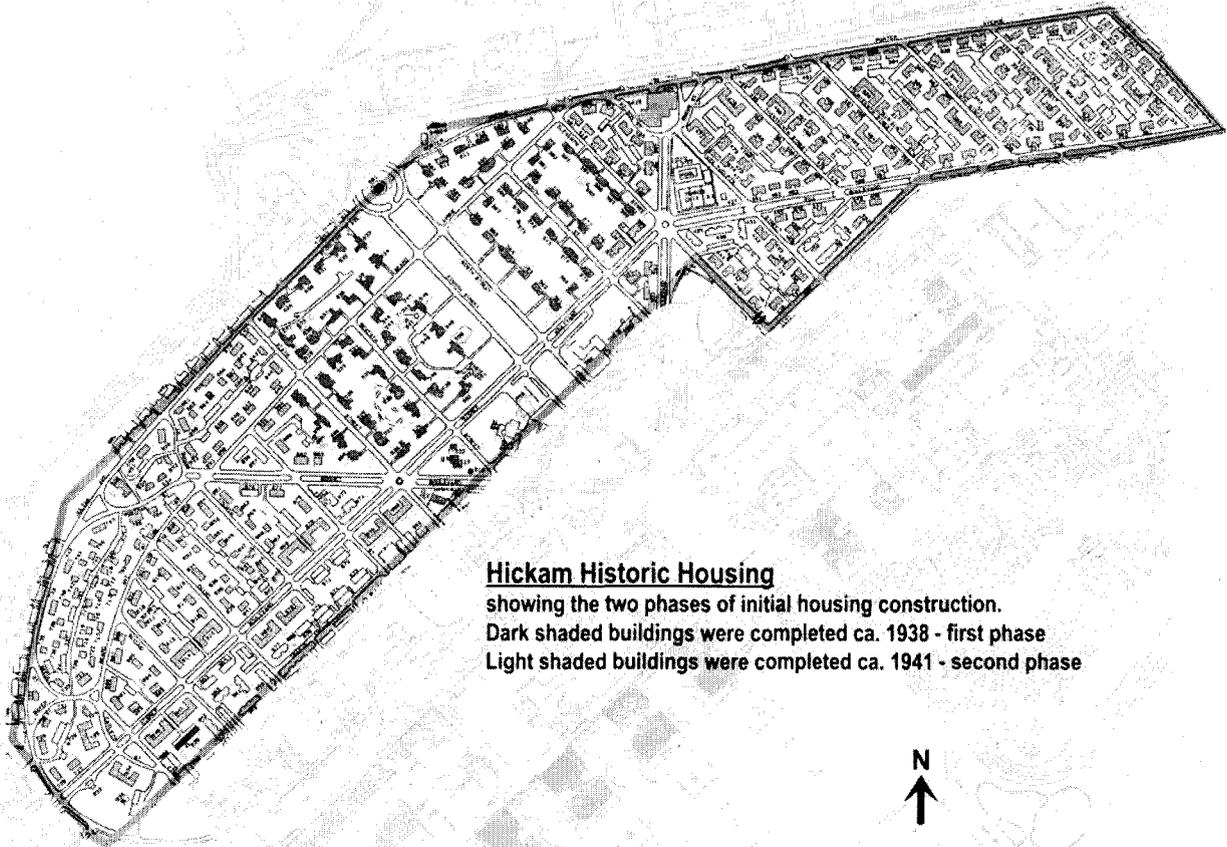
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Project area - see below



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**Hickam Historic Housing**  
showing the two phases of initial housing construction.  
Dark shaded buildings were completed ca. 1938 - first phase  
Light shaded buildings were completed ca. 1941 - second phase



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Historic photo dated January 6, 1937 showing the plant nursery during the early phase of construction at Hickam Field. The water tower will be built just out of view on the right. Note the Pearl Harbor coal dock at the top left. View facing north. NARA 1937, # 342 FH - 3B-18906/ 38224A.C.



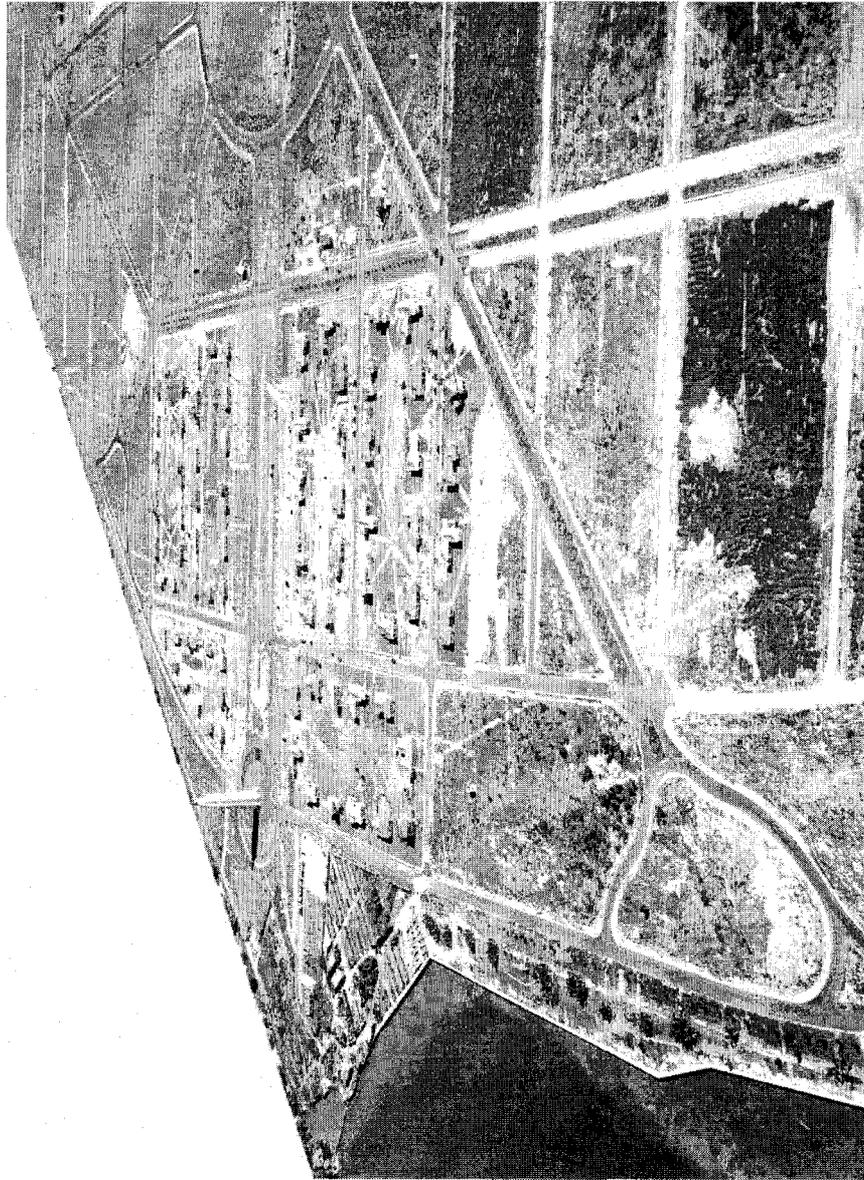
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Portion of historic photo dated July 21, 1937 showing the nursery at Hickam Field near the water tower which is under construction. View facing northeast. The upper left of the photo has been cropped by censors to obliterate areas of the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. NARA 1937, # 342FH - 3B-18882/ (no neg #).



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Portion of historic photo dated January 25, 1939 showing construction of the first phase of officers' and NCO housing at Hickam Field. Note the planting of small trees in the median of Fox, Signer, Mills and Boquet Boulevards, and along Eight and Ninth Streets at the mall. View facing northeast. The upper left of the photo has been censored. NARA 1939, # 342 FH - 3B-18864/.



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Historic photo dated ca. 1944 showing the royal palms and monkeypod trees planted along the Eighth Street side of the mall. Note the extensive planting among the houses. View facing southeast. NARA ca. 1944, # 342FH – 3A-40789/ 63408A.C.

