

FORT BRAGG, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS' SERVICE CLUB
SERVICE CLUB BUILDING (Building 8-6813)
South of Butner Road
Fort Bragg
Cumberland County
North Carolina

HABS No. NC-397-A

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Southeast Region
Department of the Interior
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORT BRAGG, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS' SERVICE CLUB SERVICE CLUB BUILDING (Building 8-6813)

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Location: South of Butner Road, Fort Bragg, Cumberland County, North Carolina
USGS Spring Lake, North Carolina, United States Quadrangle,
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 17
Northing 3892400
Easting 683600

Present Owner: Department of Defense
Department of the Army
Fort Bragg

Original Use: African American Noncommissioned Officers' Service Club

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Noncommissioned Officers' Service Club at Fort Bragg is a contributing part of an eligible Fort Bragg historic district for the National Register of Historic Places. Built right after World War II (WWII) but utilizing WWII building plans for temporary buildings, the Service Club Building served the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. The Army was still segregated at this time, and the 555th or "Triple Nickles" was the African American contingent. The Service Club was at the southwestern part of the segregated African American area of Fort Bragg. The Service Club Building is also physically unique at Fort Bragg. The WWII temporary buildings plans called for wood for the construction, yet it was constructed out of concrete block with structural concrete block buttresses strengthening the walls. All other Fort Bragg WWII temporary buildings were constructed out of wood, and only one other building at Fort Bragg utilized this concrete block construction with buttresses. The Service Club Building had a lunch counter, a large open space for game playing or dancing, a library, and rooms for various support activities or storage.

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A. General Statement:

1. History: Planning began in 1945 to replace Service Club No. 5, a SER-C-M type service club with guest house with a new service club for the much smaller contingent of African American troops expected to post at Fort Bragg after WWII. The construction for these new facilities, to be located at the corner of Ord Street and Butner Road immediately adjacent to the African American theater, was approved on June 15, 1945 (Figure 7). Construction proceeded rather slowly, especially in comparison to the lightning-like pace at the beginning of WWII. The Service Club Building—designated TC-1 in the 1940s and designated 8-6813 today—was not completed until January 9, 1946. Being built of concrete block reflected its expected permanent status, rather than the wood frame construction typical of other Fort Bragg WWII temporary buildings. The cost of the new building was \$32,566.99, and opened for use on February 1, 1946.¹
2. Architectural Character: The Service Club Building retains its original appearance to an extent not usually seen with WWII temporary buildings. The extraordinary feature of the architectural character is the type of construction—concrete block. Most WWII temporary buildings were designed and subsequently constructed out of wood framing with wood siding. The Service Club Building was constructed out of concrete block with concrete block buttresses providing the structural support. These buttresses and the windows in between give the building facades a rhythm, not typical of WWII temporary buildings.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Service Club Building is composed of one large mass measuring 132'x37' with a north-south orientation. There is a 60'x10'-6" extension on the east facade that once was a screened porch, but was converted to office space at an undetermined date. The entire building sits on a concrete block foundation with a concrete slab floor. The ridge height is 18'-6" above grade on the north facade. Differences in window and door placement plus the screened porch on the east facade produce distinct elevations for all facades. The large integral chimney in the southwestern portion of the building provides for an asymmetric profile all around.

The north elevation (Photo NC-397-A-1, Photocopies NC-397-A-16 and NC-397-A-19) is marked by two matching windows symmetrically placed on either side of

¹ Major V.M. Robertson, "ASF, Fourth SvC, Office of the Chief, Athletic & Recreation Branch, Fort Bragg, North Carolina," 14 March 1946; Letter of J.W. Seabrook to Truman Gibson, December 28, 1945; Letter of G.L. Butler, Chairman, and P.E. Tilley, Secretary, Inter-Council of Civic Organizations to Truman Gibson, July 14, 1946; Letter of Colonel William H. Kendall, to Fourth Service Command, March 18, 1946; all RG 107 Records of the Secretary of War, Civilian Aide to the Secretary, Hastie-Gibson files, Entry 188, Box 241 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives II); 1948 Fort Bragg Master Plan, pp. M-24-1-4 (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: on file, Environmental Office); "Summary of Requests Approved by Headquarters Fourth Service Command For Period 1-30 November Inclusive," RG 165 Records of the General and Special Staffs, Entry 234d, Box 744 (College Park, Maryland: National Archives II); Real Property Cards for Buildings 8-6811 and 8-6813 (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: on file, PWBC).

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the central axis of the facade. This central axis runs through the middle of the porch and the door on this facade.

The east elevation (Photo NC-397-A-2, Photocopies NC-397-A-16 and NC-397-A-19) is composed of an alternating series of single-unit and double-unit windows and concrete block buttresses. There are no buttresses at the corners. Centered on the east elevation is the former screened porch. The windows and buttresses are not spread evenly across the east elevation; however, there is a central axis running through the middle of the east facade double doors.

The south elevation (Photo NC-397-A-3, Photocopies NC-397-A-16 and NC-397-A-19) is asymmetric with two windows and a door not aligned with the central axis. A large integral chimney dominates the left of this elevation. This chimney is 36' high from the finished grade at the north entrance.

The west elevation (Photo NC-397-A-4, Photocopies NC-397-A-16 and NC-397-A-19) is composed of an alternating series of single-unit and double-unit windows and concrete block buttresses. There are no buttresses at the corners. The windows and buttresses are not spread evenly across the west elevation. A large integral chimney dominates the right of this elevation.

2. Foundations: The foundation is concrete block with a 6" concrete slab poured over compacted soil. No crawl space is extant.

The former screened porch has a concrete block foundation with a concrete slab of undetermined depth poured over compacted soil. This slab is 1½" lower than the concrete slab of the main building.

3. Wall Construction: The perimeter walls are constructed out of 16"x7¾"x4" concrete block. The exterior side of the concrete block has a "pebbled" pattern. The mortar joints are typically ½" wide. The weight of the walls is supported by a system of 16"x7¾"x4" concrete block buttresses (Photo NC-397-A-9). These buttresses consist of an alternating pattern of two blocks side-by-side with their short end facing out, then one block set on top of them with its long side facing out. The two blocks side-by-side connect the buttress to the wall system. The top of the buttress is a small concrete slab placed at an angle to facilitate shedding rainwater. There are six buttresses on the east facade, and ten buttresses on the west facade. The north and south facades do not have buttresses. At the top of the concrete block wall, a formed concrete cap 7" high surrounds the perimeter of the exterior wall. The gable ends consist of concrete block placed on top of that cap, with each end block cut at the appropriate angle.
4. Structural System, Framing: The roof platform is 2"x8" rafters, 3' on center. A truss is created utilizing 2"x6" wooden ties for the ceiling joists and connectors. The size of the roof beam and type of roof deck could not be determined.

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5. Porches, Balconies: The north porch is original to the building, and the east porch is a later addition. The north porch measures 8'-4"x5'-3" and is 2'-8" high at its peak. It is supported by two 4"x4" wood posts, with each set upon a 5"x5" concrete footing extending 1" above the concrete pad (Photo NC-397-A-5, Photocopies NC-397-A-14). The floor consists of concrete, which is at the same grade as the Butner Road sidewalk. The sides of the porch roof are 8" shiplap. The porch ceiling is plywood. The roof consists of asphalt shingles. The cornice is a combination of three 2"x4" slightly overlaying each other.

The east porch, a later addition to what was once the screened porch, measures 12'x4'-10", and its peak is 1'-6" high. It is supported by two 4"x4" wooden posts, with each directly set on the 12'x4' concrete platform, which serves as both the floor of the porch and a step to the interior floor level. The concrete platform is 5½" high. The porch ceiling is the underside of the roof underlayment. The 2"x4" roof rafters are revealed and extend to the front edge of the roof. These 2"x4" rafters rest upon two joined 2"x6" forming a beam, which in turn rests upon the 4"x4" posts. The roof consists of asphalt shingles.

6. Chimney: The building has one integral brick chimney off center to the left of the south facade. At its base within the furnace room, it measures 3'-6"x3'-6" (Photo NC-397-A-3, Photocopies NC-397-A-14). It retains this dimension until it reaches 20' high. From 20' to its maximum height of 36', it measures 3'x3'. Mortar is used to chamfer and to shed water at the 20' mark and at the top of the chimney.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: There are three entrances to the building. The north facade originally had double wooden doors. They have been replaced by a single wooden solid core door 36"x77½". The rest of the original 5'5"x6'11" openings have been filled in by 2"x4" frame with plywood sheathing. A poured concrete lintel caps this opening.

The east facade originally had double wooden doors on the inside wall of the screened porch. This is currently a 4'-10"x6'-11" open archway. The porch had double wooden screen doors. When the screened porch was converted into office space, these were replaced with two 2'-5"x6'-11" commercial anodized aluminum doors with a 21"x70" glass opening in each. The lintel of the 6'x7'-5" opening consists of two 2"x6" joined together.

The south facade has a single door, solid steel with a 1'x1' safety glass window. The 41"x83" opening has a poured concrete lintel, spanning the opening. The door has a steel frame (Photo NC-397-A-7).

On the west facade, there is an entrance to the furnace room. It is a 65"x79" opening with a poured concrete lintel. The doors consist of varied width pine

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nailed to a "Z" frame. The two doors measure 32"x74". A 67"x80 metal security gate with two doors provides security to the furnace room.

b. Windows: The windows are primarily one over one double-hung sashes in anodized aluminum units. These window units replaced the original six over six wood double-hung units. The windows are placed in either a single unit arrangement or a double unit arrangement (Photo NC-397-A-9, Photocopies NC-397-A-19). Single units are in a 3'x5' opening, while double window units are in a 5'-11"x5' opening. Both types of openings have a poured concrete lintel spanning the opening. Several windows have been boarded over with plywood and painted to match the paint on the concrete block wall: these are the single window for the furnace room on the south facade and the third window on the east facade from the north. Two 2'-2"x4'-11" bathroom windows on the west facade have also been boarded over with plywood, and both of these former window openings have louvered vents (Photo NC-397-A-8). The third bathroom window on the west facade has not been boarded over, but the sash and glass panes have been painted over to match the paint on the concrete block wall. The original window sashes for the bathrooms were four over four wooden sashes.

The former screened porch windows were originally 2'-7"x4'-7". The framing for these windows consisted of a 2"x4" base and 4"x4" uprights. These windows were originally screened (Photocopies NC-397-A-16). The twelve windows on the north part of the former screened porch have been boarded over with plywood, and the screens removed when the screened porch was converted to office space at an undetermined time. The windows on the south portion of the former screened porch were removed and replaced with a more recent concrete block wall with three 3'x5' window openings and windows that match the rest of the single window units on the building.

There are two wooden louvered openings on each gable of the building. The north louvered opening measures 32"x52" and has a poured concrete lintel. The south louvered opening also measures 32"x52" and has a poured concrete lintel. There is a metal 12"x12" louvered opening 9" to the right of the larger louvered opening on the south facade. On the west facade, there is a 25"x24" wooden louvered opening next to the 10th buttress. A 12"x12" metal louver is in the southern bathroom window opening that is boarded over, and a 21"x19" wooden louver is in the other boarded over bathroom opening.

The south window on the east facade has a 45"x66" security grate, as does the east window on the south facade. No other windows have security grates.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, Covering: The main roof, old screened porch roof, north facade porch roof, and east facade porch roof are all moderate slope gables or half-gables. The main roof and screened porch utilize 2"x8" rafters with sheathing of an

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undetermined nature. They are covered with green three-tab asphalt shingles. The north facade porch system utilizes 2"x4" rafters with plywood sheathing, and is also covered with green three-tab asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The eaves and cornice are constructed out of 1"x12" pine fastened to the 2"x8" rafter tail ends. A 2"x4" is fastened to the top of the 1"x12", while a 1"x4" is nailed to the top of the 2"x4". The cornice extends all the way around the building facades, including the former screened porch. The bottom of the rafters is covered by plywood. There are no gutters (Photo NC-397-A-6).

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: There are none, although venting towers are shown in building plans.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. First Floor Plan: The floor plan is divided into many small offices accessed from a central hallway (Photocopies NC-397-A-17 and NC-397-A-18). This central hallway connects: directly to the south facade door; to the north facade door through an office; and to the main east facade doors through a foyer. This foyer (originally part of the screened porch) has a built in reception counter with a desk behind it, and is open to the central hallway through an archway where the original entrance doors once were located. The bathrooms are accessed from this central hallway. The furnace room in the southwestern part of the plan is only accessible from the outside.

2. Stairways: None.

3. Flooring: Asbestos 12"x12" flooring tile was used throughout the building. In most areas, the tile has been covered by carpet.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The inside of the concrete block walls are covered by gypsum wallboard or wood pressboard paneling that is glued to the concrete block (Photograph NC-397-A-10). The interior of the furnace room is plain unpainted concrete block. The interior of the former screened porch is painted concrete block (Photograph NC-397-A-12). The interior partitions are of 2"x4" wood stud construction, covered by gypsum wallboard, and either painted or covered with wood pressboard paneling. The bathroom wall structure is the only original walls extant; however, the original gypsum wallboard has been covered by gypsum wallboard glued to it at an undetermined date (Photograph NC-397-A-11).

The ceilings originally were gypsum wallboard with 12"x12" acoustic tiles glued to the wallboard. At an undetermined date, a suspended ceiling was placed below the original ceiling (Photograph NC-397-A-10).

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5. Openings:
 - a. Openings: No original openings are left. The more recent office space walls use a 2"x4" framed opening.
 - b. Doorways and Doors: There are two original doorways one for each bathroom (Photograph NC-397-A-11). They utilize a 2"x4" framed opening. One bathroom has an original horizontal 5-panel door; another horizontal 5-panel door is used to block the inside of the south facade window in the furnace room. All other doors are flush hollow-core. The swinging doors for the bathroom stalls are painted plywood.
 - c. Windows: There are no interior windows.
6. Decorative Features, and Trim: The two original doorways have butted-corner 1"x4" wood casing. The more recent office space doorways have mitered-corner ranch-style casing. The primary hallway has a 36" wainscot constructed out of pressboard paneling. The wainscot is capped by 1½" molding (Photograph NC-397-A-10). Both bathrooms have an original 48" high wainscot made out of 1"x3" pine nailed to the wall. Window casings are also constructed out of mitered-corner ranch-style casings.
7. Hardware: The only original hardware for the Service Club Building is the 1½"x1" metal hangers for the original screens on the window header of the former screened porch. All other hardware is from when the building was converted to offices.
8. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation: No original HVAC equipment exists.
 - b. Lighting: No original light fixtures exist. Existing light fixtures are 3'x5' fluorescent light boxes.
 - c. Plumbing: The plumbing network was inaccessible and its type is unknown.
 - d. Fixtures: The sinks and stools are stamped Standard[®] and are of the era of the building. The urinals are stamped Eljer[®] and were placed in the bathroom at an undetermined date. No dates were stamped on any of the plumbing fixtures.
9. Original Furnishings: There are no original furnishings.

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D. Sources of Information:

1. Architectural Drawings: Existing drawings, "Mobilization Buildings, Service Club for Enlisted Men, Type Ser-B-M," by War Department, Office of the Chief of Engineers—Construction Division, Washington, DC.

Original drawings utilized for documentation are located at: Archives, Artifact Curation Facility (Building 3-1333), Cultural Resources Program, Environmental and Natural Resources Division, Public Works Business Center, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

2. Historic Views: None

3. Interviews: None

4. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Cox, Lt. Colonel M. R., 17th Field Artillery Public Relations Officer, "Fort Bragg, North Carolina." Fort Bragg: on file Throckmorton Library, 1941.

RG 107 Records of the Secretary of War, Civilian Aid to the Secretary, Judge Hastie and Truman Gibson Files.

RG 159, Records of the Office of the Inspector General (Army).

RG 160 Records of the Headquarters, Army Service Forces.

RG 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs.

RG 319 Records of the Army Staff, Army Command Reports.

RG 337 Records of the Headquarters Army Ground Forces.

RG 407 Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

Seckert, Colonel Donald A., Typewritten manuscript, 504th Airborne, Post-War Files, 1946-1957. Fort Bragg: 82nd Airborne Museum, n.d.

"Special Military Map," North Carolina, Camp Bragg, 1919, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Bragg: on file, PWBC.

82nd Airborne Annuals for 1952. Fort Bragg: 82nd Airborne Museum.

- b. Secondary and published sources: None

5. Likely sources not yet investigated: None

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6. Supplemental material: None

E. Project Information:

The Cultural Resources Program in the Public Works Business Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina sponsored this project. The project was completed at the Land and Heritage Conservation Branch of the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) part of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). The project historian was Steven D. Smith of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), with assistance from Kristen LaBrie. Adam Smith (CERL) produced the architectural description section of the report. Martin Stupich produced the large-format photographs contained in the report. Documentation was coordinated with the Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Program through preservation planner Brian M. Lione. Robert P. Anzuoni, Director of the 82nd Airborne Museum and Donna Barr Tabor, historian at the XVIII Airborne Corps historian's office, assisted with the documentation.

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