

FORT BRAGG, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS' SERVICE CLUB,
GUEST HOUSE BUILDING
(Noncommissioned Officers' Service Club, Building No. 8-6811)
South of Butner Road
Fort Bragg
Cumberland County
North Carolina

HABS NC-397-B
NC-397-B

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

FORT BRAGG, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS' SERVICE CLUB, GUEST HOUSE BUILDING (Building 8-6811)

HABS No. NC-397-B

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' Guest House

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 Guest House Building served the wives and families or 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 Guest House 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 Guest House Building had a communal open area in the center portion and a series of private rooms for wives and families to temporarily reside off of the open area.

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 complex 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 small, OQ-10 building for 10 guests—designated TC-3 in the 1940s and 8-6811 today—was completed as early as October 31, 1945. Being built of concrete block reflected its expected permanent status, rather than the wood frame construction typical of WWII temporary buildings. The cost of the new building was \$14,029.70, and opened for use on February 1, 1946.¹
2. Architectural Character: The Guest House 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 Guest House 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 façades a rhythm, not typical of WWII temporary buildings.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Guest House Building is composed of one large mass measuring 96'x20' with a north-south orientation. There are small porches on the north and south facades. The entire building sits on a concrete block foundation with a concrete slab floor. The ridge height is 12' above grade on the north facade. Differences in window and door placement produce two distinct elevations for the east and the west facades, while the north and south facades are fairly similar. The large separate chimney on the west facade gives the building an asymmetric profile all around; however, the Guest House Building without the chimney is fairly symmetric.

The north elevation (Photo NC-397-B-1, Photocopy NC-397-B-15) is marked by two matching windows symmetrically placed on either side the central axis of the

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, Environmental Office).

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

The east elevation (Photo NC-397-B-2, Photocopy NC-397-B-15) is composed of an alternating series of seven single-unit windows and seven concrete block buttresses. There are no buttresses at the corners. The windows and buttresses are not spaced evenly across the east elevation.

The south elevation (Photo NC-397-B-3) is marked by two matching windows symmetrically placed on either side the central axis of the facade. This central axis runs through the middle of the porch and the door on this facade.

The west elevation (Photo NC-397-B-4) is composed of an alternating series of six single-unit windows and six concrete block buttresses. There are no buttresses at the corners. The windows and buttresses are not spaced evenly across the west elevation. There is a large freestanding chimney placed one-third of the way from the north. This chimney is 18' high.

2. Foundations: Foundation is concrete block with a concrete slab poured over compacted soil. Depth of slab is undetermined. No crawl space is extant.
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. These buttresses consist of 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 (Photo NC-397-B-9). There are seven buttresses on the east facade, and six 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 11" high surrounds the perimeter of the exterior wall. The gable ends consist of a 2"x4" wooden frame placed on top of that cap covered by 8" shiplap (Photo NC-397-B-5).
4. Structural System, Framing: The roof platform is 2"x4" rafters. A truss is created utilizing 2"x4" wooden ties for the ceiling joists and connectors. The size of the roof beam and type of roof deck could not be determined.
5. Porches, Balconies: There are two original porches attached to the Guest House Building. The porch on the north facade measures 4'-4"x5'3", and its peak is 2'-5" from the top of the posts (Photo NC-397-B-5 and NC-397-B-6). It is supported by two wooden 4"x4" posts each resting upon a 5"x5" concrete pad. This pad is 4" high from the floor. The floor consists of concrete, which is at the same grade as the Butner Road sidewalk. The sides of the porch roof structure consist of 8" shiplap. The porch ceiling is the underside of the roof underlayment. The cornice

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is 1"x6" wood butt jointed together at the corners. The roof consists of asphalt shingles.

The porch on the south facade measures 5'x5', and its peak is 2'-7" from the top of the posts. It is supported by two wooden 4"x4" posts each resting the 4' x4' concrete pad that forms the porch floor. This concrete floor pad is 10" high from the ground. A 4'x10" concrete step, 6" high sits in front of the concrete pad. The sides of the porch roof structure are pine beadboard. 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. The roof consists of asphalt shingles.

6. Chimney: The building has a large separate brick chimney off center to the left on the west facade. The chimney is 38' from the north facade and 3'-6" from the west facade. At its base, it measures 3'-6"x3'-6" (Photo NC-397-B-7 and NC-397-B-8). It retains this dimension until it reaches 9'-6" high where it chamfers down to 3'x3'. Mortar is used to chamfer and to shed water at the 9'-6" mark, but at the top of the chimney is a concrete cap 6" high. The total height of the chimney is 27'. This chimney was once connected to the furnace inside of the Guest House Building by a galvanized pipe. The vent hole in the west facade has been bricked over. A cast iron door is on the south side of the chimney near its base. The door measures 17"x14", and is 19" from the ground.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: There are currently three entrances to the building. The north facade entrance has its original door. This is a 36"x76½" door with six panes of glass over two wooden panels. The panes measure 13"x12", and the wooden panels are 12"x20½". The 41"x82½" opening is capped by a poured concrete lintel. The doorway has a 45"x84" security gate.

The east facade door is a 30"x80" wood solid core door in a wooden 2"x4" frame. There is a 36"x84" security gate covering this door. The 34"x83" opening is set into more recent concrete block than the rest of the building. A 79"x86" opening was blocked over with this more recent concrete block at an undetermined time. The east facade opening has no poured concrete lintel, while the blocked over opening utilized the poured concrete cap as its lintel similar to the other openings of the building.

The south facade entrance also has its original 36"x77½" door with six panes of glass over three wooden panels. The panes measure 13"x12", while the wooden panels measure 28"x7½". The 40½" x83" opening is capped by a poured concrete lintel. There is a 38"x81" security gate.

On the west facade, there is a 79"x86" opening blocked over with more recent concrete block at an undetermined time. This blocked opening would lead into the

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furnace room. It is in the same location as the other concrete blocked opening on the east facade. This blocked opening also has a poured concrete lintel.

b. Windows: All of the windows are original six over six double-hung sashes in a 35"x59" opening (Photo NC-397-B-9). The poured concrete cap that encircles the building on top of the concrete block wall forms the lintel for all of the openings. All windows have a 41"x66" metal security screen bolted to the concrete block wall. There are two windows on the north facade, seven windows on the east facade, two windows on the south facade, and six windows on the west facade.

There are two wooden louvers on the building, one over the north facade porch roof and one over the south facade porch roof (Photo NC-397-B-5). They are 52"x30" with a 1"x4" wood trim. The north facade louver has a 1"x2" sill, while the south facade louver has no sill.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, Covering: The main roof and two porch roofs are all moderate slope gables or half-gables. The main roof and screened porch utilize 2"x4" rafters with sheathing of an undetermined nature. They are covered with green three-tab asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The eaves and cornice are constructed out of 2"x8" pine fastened to the 2"x4" rafter tail ends. A 1"x8" is nailed on top of the 2"x8", while a 1"x4" is nailed to the bottom of the 1"x8" exposing only 2" of the 1"x8" board. The bottom of the rafters is covered by plywood.

On the north and south gables, a 1"x4" is nailed to the 1"x8". Aluminum flashing goes all around the eaves. There are no gutters.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: There are none.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. First Floor Plan: The floor plan is divided into three small offices accessed from a central open room. This central open room connects: to the south facade door through a short hallway and then through two offices; to the north facade door through an office. The bathrooms and furnace room are also accessed from this central open room.

2. Stairways: There are none.

3. Flooring: Asbestos 12"x12" flooring tile was used through most of the building. The only areas not to have the flooring tile are the bathrooms and the furnace

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room. In the bathrooms, the floors are painted with the paint worn off in the high traffic areas by the doors, sinks, toilets, and urinal. The furnace room floor is bare concrete. In most areas, the tile has been covered by carpet.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The inside of the concrete block walls are not covered by any structure or material (Photo NC-397-B-10 and NC-397-B-11). For the most part they are painted, with the exception of the furnace room. The interior partitions are of 2"x4" wood stud construction, covered by gypsum wallboard, and painted.

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 (Photo NC-397-B-10).

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 three original doorways one for each bathroom, and one for the furnace room. They utilize a 2"x4" framed opening. One bathroom has an original horizontal 5-panel door; the other bathroom has a solid wood door with two large panels (Photo NC-397-B-10). There are two other doors in the Guest House Building with original horizontal 5-panel doors, but these openings are not in original locations. All other doors are flush hollow-core. The swinging door for one of the bathroom stalls is painted plywood, while the other bathroom has painted boards nailed to a "Z" frame.

c. Windows: There are no interior windows.

6. Decorative Features, and Trim: The two original doorways have butted-corner 1"x4" wood casings. All other doorways, also have butted-corner 1"x4" wood casings. Window casings are also constructed out of butted-corner 1"x4" wood. Baseboards in the Guest House Building are of butted 1"x4" wood.

7. Hardware: Window locks are the only original hardware left in the Guest House Building.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation: No original HVAC equipment exists.

b. Lighting: Existing light fixtures are 3'x5' fluorescent light boxes.

c. Plumbing: The plumbing network was inaccessible and its type is unknown.

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d. Fixtures: The sinks and stools are stamped Standard® and are of the era of the building (Photo NC-397-B-13 and NC-397-B-14). The urinal is stamped Eljer® and was 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.

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.

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"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
- 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.

Date: September 30, 2001

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Date: July 2001