

Governors Island, New York Arsenal
Storehouse (Building #140)
Governors Island
New York Harbor
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5715-6E

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PHOTOGRAPHS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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(page 1)

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK ARSENAL, STOREHOUSE
(Building #140)

HABS No. NY-5715-6E

Location: The building is located east of the ferry slip, north of Carder Road and Building #109, Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: United States Coast Guard

Present Occupant: United States Coast Guard

Present Use: Security, U.S. Post Office, bank, credit union

Significance: This building was built as a store house for the New York Arsenal in the 1875 to store the large accumulation of obsolete ordnance that had been stored in the arsenal pending sale.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The present building was constructed in 1875 and first appears in its present configuration on a map of the island dated 1879.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building was owned by the War Department of the United States (renamed the Department of the Army in 1847) until 1966 when the Governors Island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard.
4. Builder: The building was probably constructed by civilian laborers under the direction of the Commanding Officer of the New York Arsenal.
5. Original plans and construction: An 1881 view of the structure shows the building as rectangular with a projecting cross gable and porch along the north facade. The cost of this structure was originally estimated as \$20,000 in a 1908 report on the New York Arsenal.

6. Additions and alterations: In 1938, the porch along the north facade was demolished during construction work performed under the Work Projects Administration. (See HABS No. NY-5715-6E data pages 8-10).

A 1938 picture taken at that time shows that the arched opening in the west end of the structure had two tiers of wood paneled shed doors. Also on the west gable end were projecting decorative star-like elements.

By 1944, the door in the west gable end had been altered to double wood paneled doors with an applied wood treatment consisting of a fanlight and sidelights. Also by this date, the recessed decorative panels with the seals of the United States and the War Department had been installed, replacing the previous decorative elements.

In 1950-52, the building was renovated. The door to the partial basement was cut through on the east end.

In 1971, the east end of the structure received a new set of modern aluminum doors and the upper portion of the gable arch was bricked in and stuccoed over.

The Coast Guard decal was added on the west end in 1971.

B. Historical context:

After the New York Arsenal was established by the Ordnance Department in 1833, a major problem was lack of sufficient storage space for ordnance. Expansion possibilities were limited because growth could not interfere with the firing capabilities of Fort Columbus. The first expansion of the arsenal occurred in 1849 when the Arsenal's boundaries were extended to Andes Road. In 1853, a triangular strip of land was annexed along the western boundary of the arsenal. In 1860, the completion of the extension of the sea wall at the northwest corner of the arsenal was recommended in the inspection report. The new construction provided space for a new storage facility for shot and shell and became the site for the present Building #140.

The first structure constructed on the site appeared on a 1867 map as a large U-shaped structure composed of a storehouse and a shed for shot and shell. These were probably temporary structures since their demolition was not considered a major removal in a 1908 history of the arsenal.

The present Building #140 replaced this earlier structure in 1875 according to the same 1908. It first appears on a map dated 1879 and is visible in a print dated 1881 and in historical photographs of the island. It was constructed as a storehouse for the accumulation of obsolete ordnance waiting to be sold.

After the Second Corps Area took possession of the arsenal buildings in 1920, this building continued to be used as a warehouse. During the 1940s it served as clothing and equipage storage. In 1951, the structure was renovated for use as a telephone exchange. In 1966, the building housed the post office, the guard watch, the district armory and was a storage facility for small arms. In 1966, the bank replaced the armory.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is an example of a simple, functional style of army architecture that relates to the other buildings of the New York Arsenal in its scale, materials, and history.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in excellent condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The structure is a brick rectangular structure 153'-3" (13 bays) x 50' (3-bay ends) with a projecting central cross gable 38'7" x 15' on the north side. The building is one-and-a-half stories tall with a partial basement.
2. Foundations: The foundation is brick, 1'-9" thick, with a brownstone water table.
3. Walls: The walls are brick consisting of brick pillars in common bond (6 stretcher rows to 1 header row) with brownstone capitals. Between the pillars is an recessed all stretcher bond brick sheathing. The ends are all stretcher bond walls, 1' thick. In the cross gable facing north is a projecting decorative star-like element. In the west end are circular recessed panels with relief seals of the War Department and the U.S. Army. In the east end, the decorative elements have been replaced by louvers.

4. Structural systems, framing: The structure is built of brick with the brick pillars supporting the roof.
5. Porches: On the east end is a later open concrete porch with concrete steps and metal railing. There are also concrete steps descending into the basement. The basement opening is covered by an awning. There is a concrete ramp along the north side.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are one-and-a-half story archways in the east, west, and north gable ends. These have brownstone keystones and imposts. These archways are now filled in to frame modern metal and glass doors. Originally these openings had two tiers of paneled wood shed doors. On the west facade is an applied wood door treatment consisting of a wooden fanlight, two sets of double wooden pilasters framing four-light sidelights. On the north facade is a modern metal door. In the east facade are two modern metal and glass doors. Hardware for the original shed doors is still intact.
 - b. Windows: The windows are mainly nine-over-six-light double-hung sash in arched brick frames. The brick arches have brownstone imposts, keystones and sills. In the east and west ends, the windows are paired. In the north projecting gable are decorative doubled small arches above the windows. The metal hardware for the shutters is still extant.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is an asphalt shingle gable roof.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There are wide roof eaves with exposed rafter ends. There is a wooden raking cornice in the gable ends with wood dentils. Along the north and south facades is brick corbelling and at the corners are paired brick drip pendants.

- C. Description of Interior: The interior of the storehouse has been modified as needed.
1. Floor plans: The floor plan is generally a central corridor running east and west with offices opening off to the right and the left. There is a jog near the cross gable to the north which serves as a storage area.
 2. Stairways: There is a set of concrete steps located near the north cross gable.
 3. Flooring: The present floor covering is linoleum tile.
 4. Wall and Ceiling finish: The walls are mainly gypsum board with some concrete block walls. Some walls are covered in plywood paneling. The ceilings are acoustical tile drop ceilings.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All interior doors are modern wood paneled and glass.
 - b. Windows: The windows have simple wood frames.
 6. Decorative features and trim: None visible.
 7. Hardware: The hardware is modern.
 8. Mechanical equipment: The building is heated by a boiler system.
 9. Original furnishings: None.
- D. Site
1. General setting and orientation: The most important facade for Building #140 was originally the north facade. It faces Manhattan and is one of the first buildings visible from the ferry. The north facade is now an out-of-site storage area. The primary use of the structure is through the west end.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps and architectural drawings:

The following documents are in the Cartographic and Architectural Branch of the National Archives, Record Group 77, Maps and Plans of the Office of the Chief of Engineers.

Map of Governor's Island. Surveyed by Major John G. Barnard, Corps of Engineers, 1867. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 55.

Map of Governor's Island. Surveyed by 1st Lieut. Eugene Graffin, Corps of Engineers and Frederick N. Owens Assistant Engineer, 1879. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 63.

Map showing location of Water, Drain and Sewer Pipes on Governors Island. Office of the Post Quartermaster, Fort Columbus, 1879. Traced Nov. 1884. Miscellaneous Forts File, Series A, Fort Columbus.

Governors Island, 1902. Blueprint File, Governors Island, Map #10.

The following plans were available on microfiche from District Engineering, Governors Island, New York, New York:

Rehabilitation of Existing Telephone Exchange, 1951

- Architectural plans
- Architectural details
- Structural plans and details
- Electrical plans and details
- Heating and air conditioning
- Plumbing
- Miscellaneous mechanical details
- Partial floor plan

The following map and plans were available from Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York:

Rehabilitation of Existing Telephone Exchange, 1951

- Architectural plans
- Architectural details

Plans for the West Facade, 1944

Plans for the West Facade, 1951

Fort Jay, Governors Island, N.Y., drawn by Lt. L.H. Rogers, S-3, 16th Infantry, Nov. 26, 1934.

B. Views

View of Governors Island, print dated 1881 from Beard, John. Blue Water Views of Old New York. Barre, Massachusetts: Schrimshaw Press, 1971.

Photograph of New York Harbor, ca. 1880. The New York Historical Society.

View of Nolan Park and New York Arsenal, ca. 1909. Museum of the City of New York, Photo Library Department.

Photograph of Governors Island, ca. 1918, Governors Island Museum.

Works Program Administration photographs, Special Services, New York Support Center, Building #110, Governors Island, New York, New York.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

The following sources are located in the Navy and Old Army Branch of the National Archives, Record Group 156, Ordnance Department, Box 1003.

Inspection report of New York Arsenal, October 12, 1953, by R.S. Baker, Lt. Colonel Ordnance and Inspector.

Reports of Inspections of Rome Arsenal, Watervliet and New York Arsenal by S. Churchill, Inspector General, 14 January 1854.

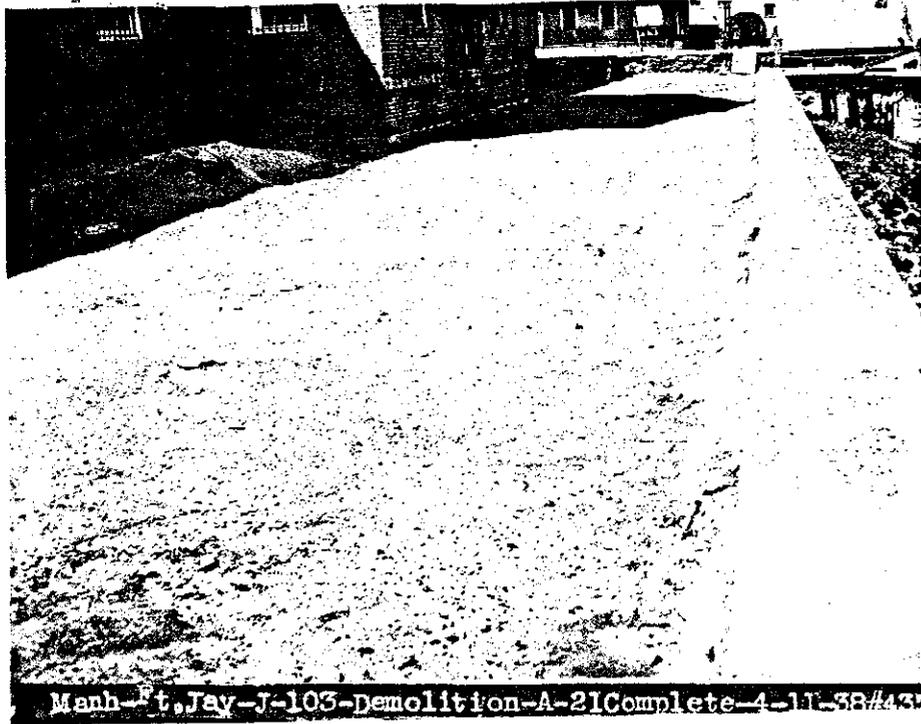
Inspection report of New York Arsenal, June 4, 1860, by Jas.W. Ripley, Lt. Colonel Ordnance and Inspector of Armories and Arsenals.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Benet, Stephen V. Ed. A Collection of Annual Reports and Other Important Papers, Relating to the Ordnance Department, 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1879-1890, p. 660.

Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York. A Master Plan and Program for Future Development by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1945.

National Archives, Navy and Old Army Branch. "New York Arsenal, Governors' Island". Report on History of New York Arsenal prepared for Chief of Ordnance, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., October 15, 1908.



Building #140

Manh-Ft.Jay-J-103-Demolition-A-21Complete-4-11-38/#437



Fort Jay

Manh-Ft.Jay-J-88-Moat Walk insideCurves-4-11-38-#444

Top photograph taken April 1938 shows the ground and seawall north of Building #140 where the porch addition was demolished. (xerox copy)



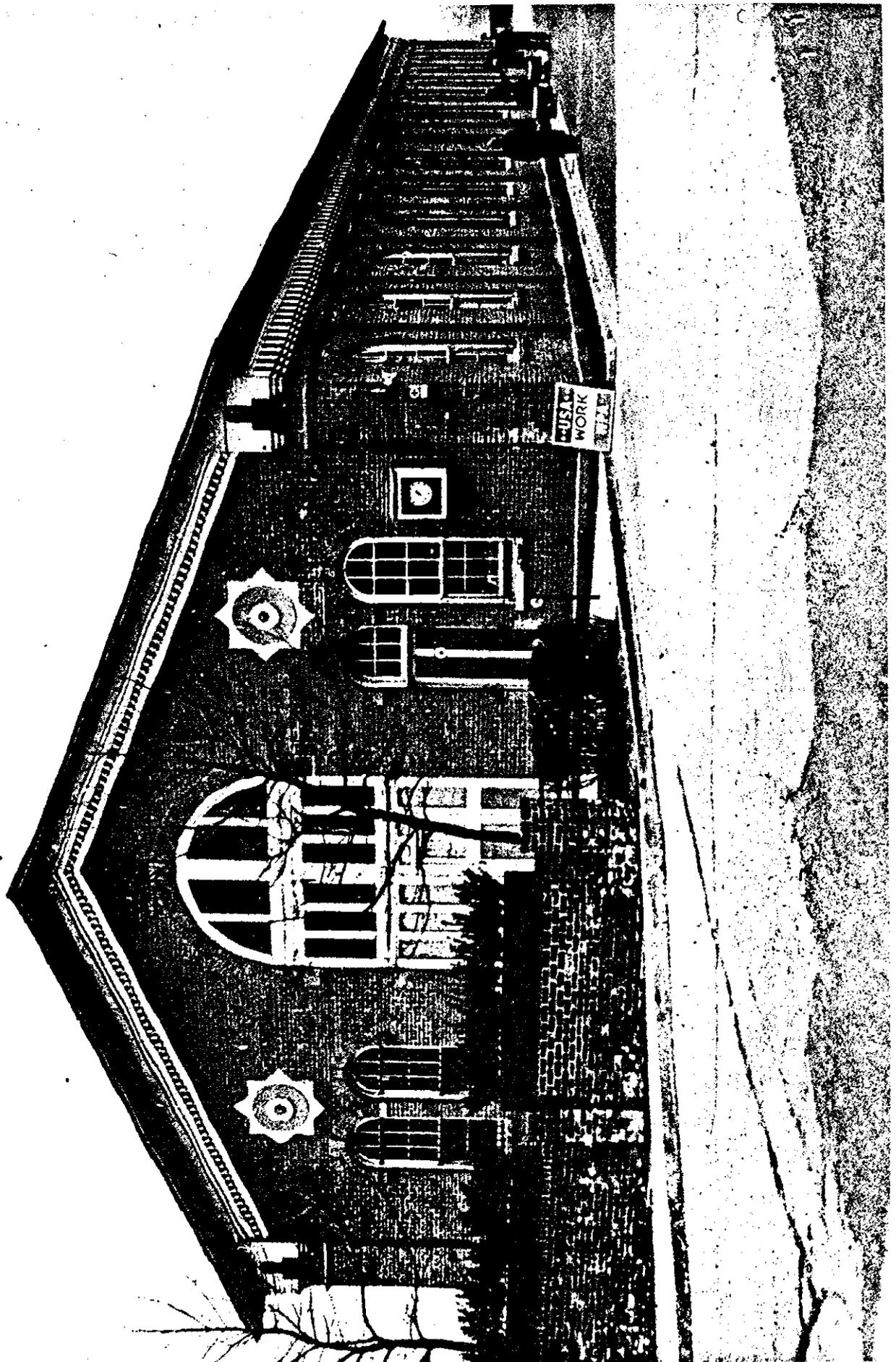
X-wing



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Photograph taken August 1938 showing landscaping and the north facade of Building #140. (xerox copy)



Xerox copy of enlarged photocopy of west facade of Building #140 taken in 1938.



Reproduction of Photograph of New York Harbor
The New York Historical Society, N.Y., N.Y.
View of Harbor from State Street, over Battery Park
and Governors Island and Castle Williams
Unknown Photographer, ca. 1880

GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK ARSENAL
STOREHOUSE

HABS No. NY-5715-6E

(Page 12)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) at the request of the United States Coast Guard, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, New York, who funded the project. It is an addition to work accomplished during the summers of 1982 and 1983. This entailed an historic structures inventory, a National Historic Landmark District nomination and documentation of five properties which was completed in 1984. A three-volume report and inventory cards containing the results of the historic structures inventory were transmitted to the Library of Congress as field records under HABS No. NY-5715. The National Historic Landmark District nomination was submitted and acted upon favorably by the National Park System Advisory Board in October of 1984. This project is to document a select list of structures including the New York Arsenal.

Sally Kress Tompkins, Deputy Chief of HABS/HAER, was project manager. Jet Lowe, HAER staff photographer, completed the large format photography. Jay Silberman, Environmental Specialist, District Planning Office, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, served as manager and coordinator of the project for the U.S. Coast Guard. Katherine Grandine was project historian.