

Governors Island, Building #25
Governors Island
New York Harbor
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5715-7

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, BUILDING No. 25 HABS No. NY-5715-7

Location: The building is located on the north side of Nolan Park, south of Andes Road and Building #104, 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: Offices

Significance: This building was part of the original ordnance complex attached to Fort Jay when the fortifications built on Governors Island were completed in 1811. The building retained its ordnance function until the establishment of the New York Arsenal in 1833 and was still used for some ordnance storage purposes until as late as 1863. Although this building has been enlarged and remodeled many times, it contributes to the historic grouping around Nolan Park through its materials, scale, simple functional style and location, which defines the northern edge of Nolan Park.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The date of construction was probably 1811 when the Fort Jay and Castle Williams complexes were being completed as part of the fortification of the New York Harbor area. The building appears as Building "H" on Joseph Mangin's 1813 plan of the Island. (See HABS No. NY-5715-7 data page 9).
2. Architect: The building's architect is unknown but may have been Lt. Col. Jonathan Williams who was the Army's Chief Engineer in charge of constructing Fort Jay and Castle Williams at the same time.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The War Department of the United States (renamed the Department of the Army in 1947) was the owner until 1966 when the Governors Island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard.

4. Builder: The building was probably erected by local troops under the direction of Lt. Col. Jonathan Williams.
5. Original plans and construction: Joseph Mangin's map of 1813 shows a rectangular building with a gable roof. A drawing of plans of the buildings located on Governors Island published in 1839 shows a one story brick ordnance building, the dimensions of which are approximately 112' x 25'. (See HABS No. NY-5715-7 data page 10) At that time, the building had a solid north wall, with four doorways and eight windows along the south facade. The interior of the building was divided into three rooms, all with access from the outside.
6. Additions and alterations: A plan and elevation for building #25 dated 1871 (See No. 13 on HABS No. NY-5715-7 data page 11 and photograph on HABS No. NY-5715-7 data page 12) show a one-story structure with eleven openings, four doors and seven windows, in the south facade. New window openings can be seen on the north facade. The door in the west end was converted to a window. Chimneys were added and the roof and roofing system were replaced. Since the scale is not shown on the plan, the length of the structure can not be determined, yet it seems as if the height of the structure had been increased.

Sometime later in the 1870s, Building #25 underwent major modification and extension. The fact that the structure was extended shows is visible from the scale of a map dated 1879. In the 1882 inspection report, the building was described as a two-story structure. The exterior of the structure shows clear demarkation where the older structure of Flemish bond ends and the new structure of common bond begins. From the external structure it appears that the extension of the building and the addition of the second story occurred at the same time. Also at that time, the fenestration was replaced with larger six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows with granite lintels and sills. This change made the window levels higher than the doors.

Probably at this time, a two-story wood porch was added along the south facade to provide direct access to individual offices along the second story. This exterior porch was renewed during the WPA work on the island in the 1930s and the central portion was enclosed. In 1953, another section on the southwest end of the porch was enclosed.

B. Historical context:

The building was originally built as the smaller of two buildings in an ordnance storage area and a carpenter workshop complex built outside the walls on the east side of Fort Jay, between the fort and guard house. This building was located on the south side of the main road joining the fort to the wharf. After the New York Arsenal was established in 1833, it retained its use as an ordnance storage area for a long period of time since the greatest problem of the New York Arsenal was lack of sufficient storage space.

Because of its construction and simple three-room interior arrangement, this building was easily adaptable. The following uses were listed in the 1863 inspection report: post school, ordnance store room and carpenter shop. At that time the inspector complained that the brick and woodwork was very old and almost worthless. By 1867, the building was being used as a library and billiard rooms. In 1870, the third use for the building was reported; court martials were held there. During the period 1870-75, the inspectors from the Surgeon-General's Offices reported that the building was being used as ordnance storeroom, billiard room and library.

During 1878, the Headquarters of the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East was transferred from New York to Fort Columbus and General Hancock became its commander. After his arrival, Building #25 was used as the offices of the post commander. In the 1882 inspection report, the building was reported as being a two-story brick building occupied by the Military Service Institution and offices of the Post Commander and Post Adjutant on the first floor and the offices of the Inspector General, Medical Director, Judge Advocate and Chief Commissary of Subsistence on the second floor.

Since that time, the structure has remained in use as administrative offices. In 1904, it housed offices of the Chief of Quartermaster, the Inspector General, the Chief Surgeon and a few other offices. During World War I, it served as the depot Quartermaster Building. During World War II, the structure served as the signal office for chemical warfare.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a two-story, rectangular brick building which, although heavily modified, still contributes to the historic grouping around Nolan Park by its materials, scale, and simple style. It clearly defines the north edge of the park.
2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the fabric appears to be poor. The brickwork has been patched and repointed many times.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is a rectangular brick building, 180' X 30', 20 bays along the south facade. The structure has two stories plus a basement.
2. Foundations: The foundation is brick, with concrete over the high basement foundation along the north facade. Along the north facade the foundation walls are 2 feet thick.
3. Walls: The western end of the building is mostly Flemish bond along the first story with many patches consisting of all stretcher bond and some common bond. The second story and eastern end of the structure is common bond (5 stretcher rows to 1 header row). Along the south facade, the exterior line where the two brick types join is approximately 65 feet from the eastern end. Walls at the first story level are approximately 14 inches thick.
4. Structural systems, framing: The exterior walls are load bearing masonry walls.
5. Porches: There is a two story, wood-framed porch, 17 bays, which is open on the first story and enclosed on the second story, supported by square chamfered wood posts, 9 1/2 inches square. The second story is enclosed with horizontally grooved boarding between the posts. There are single and double six-over-six light double hung sash windows at the second story level. This porch runs along the south facade facing onto Nolan Park. Along the west end of the building is an exterior metal stairway.
6. Chimneys: There is an interior brick chimney.

7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Along the south facade are five doorways on the first story level with irregular spacing. The doors are wood panel doors (some with glass lights). Three doors have two-pane transoms. All doors have stone lintels and sills. Along the basement level of the north side are modern wood doors or metal doors.
- b. Windows: For the most part, windows are double-hung sash with six-over-six lights. These windows have granite lintels and sills. Only one in the west end does not. There are other windows with twelve-over-twelve lights which have no lintels. There is one four light swing sash.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is a asphalt hipped roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a boxed wood cornice at the eave line.

C. Description of Interior: The interior of this structure has been extensively modified as necessary.

1. Floor plans: The original floor plans suggest that there was no interior hall. All access to the building was directly from the outside into individual rooms. The current floor plans still retain vestiges of this arrangement. On the first floor, the large offices on either end of the building have direct access to the outside. There is a narrow interior hall created along the south side which provides access to other rooms.

Along the second floor, the enclosed porch serves as the hallway to provide access to the interior spaces.

2. Stairways: There are two interior stairs. The central stair is wood framed with wood newel posts and wood railings. There is a modern stair built in 1952 in the east end of the structure.
3. Flooring: The floors are covered with linoleum or carpets.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior wall finish is plaster over brick. Most interior walls are gypsum board partition walls. Other offices have plywood paneling.

The ceilings are plastered over.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doors along the exterior porch on the second story are wood panel with glass lights. These have wide sills and wood frames.
 - b. Windows: The windows are wood framed with wide wood sills.
6. Decorative features and trim: None visible.
7. Hardware: Some of the doors have old knobs and keyhole locks.
8. Mechanical equipment: The building is heated by a boiler and radiator system. Air conditioning is by individual window units.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces south onto Nolan Park, a landscaped open space crisscrossed by brick sidewalks and surrounded by small-scale 19th and early 20th century houses. On the north side is located Andes Road, historically the principal road from Fort Jay to the wharf.

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. Joseph Mangin, 1813.
Fortification File, Fort Jay, Drawer 37, sheet 1.

Map of Governor's Island, N.Y. Harbor, surveyed under the direction of Capt. J.G. Barnard, U.S. Engineer, 1839. Fortification File, Fort Jay, Drawer 37, sheet 15.

Sheet No. 8. Details of Buildings on Governor's Island. December 1839. Drawer 37, sheet 20.

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

Plans for Buildings #3 and #13. Unknown delineator, 1871. Miscellaneous Forts File, Fort Jay, New York, #35. Key is sketched Plan of Governor's Island, New York Harbor, Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 95, dated 1871 and redrawn maps in the same file.

Sketch illustrating the proposed introduction of water supply and drainage for Fort Columbus, Governor's Island, New York Harbour. Dated March 21, 1877. Miscellaneous Forts File, Fort Columbus.

Map of Governor's Island, New York Harbor. Surveyed by 1st Lieut. Eugene Griffin, Corps Engineer, and Frederick N. Owen, Assistant Engineer, 1879. Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 63.

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

U.S. Army Record Drawings, floor plan, 1950. (Copy in HABS No. NY-5715-7 Field Records).

B. Views

Photo, 1884-1900, published in Governors Island Guide, U.S. Coast Guard, 1978 Revision.

Photographs in Records of the War Department, Record Group 165, Fortification File, Still Pictures Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.:

165WW-531F-3 A.U. Committee Public Information, A. M. Simons, Photographer, 1918.

Photograph 165-C-1903.

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 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915.

Inspection report made on public Buildings, Officers and Troop Quarters at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor on the 31st day of October 1863 by 1st Lieut. James L. Casey 5th Infantry, Acting Assistant Quartermaster, U.S. Army Box 191, Fort Columbus.

Office of the Post Quartermaster, Fort Columbus to the Quartermaster General, U.S. Army, April 8, 1882. Box 191, Fort Columbus.

Office of the Post Quartermaster to the Quartermaster General, U.S. Army, April 30, 1885. Box 345, Governors Island.

Office of Post Quartermaster to Quartermaster General, U.S. Army, April 2, 1886. Box 345, Governors Island.

2. Secondary and published sources:

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

U.S. Surgeon General's Office. A Report on Barracks and Hospitals with Descriptions of Military Posts. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870. pp. 24-31.

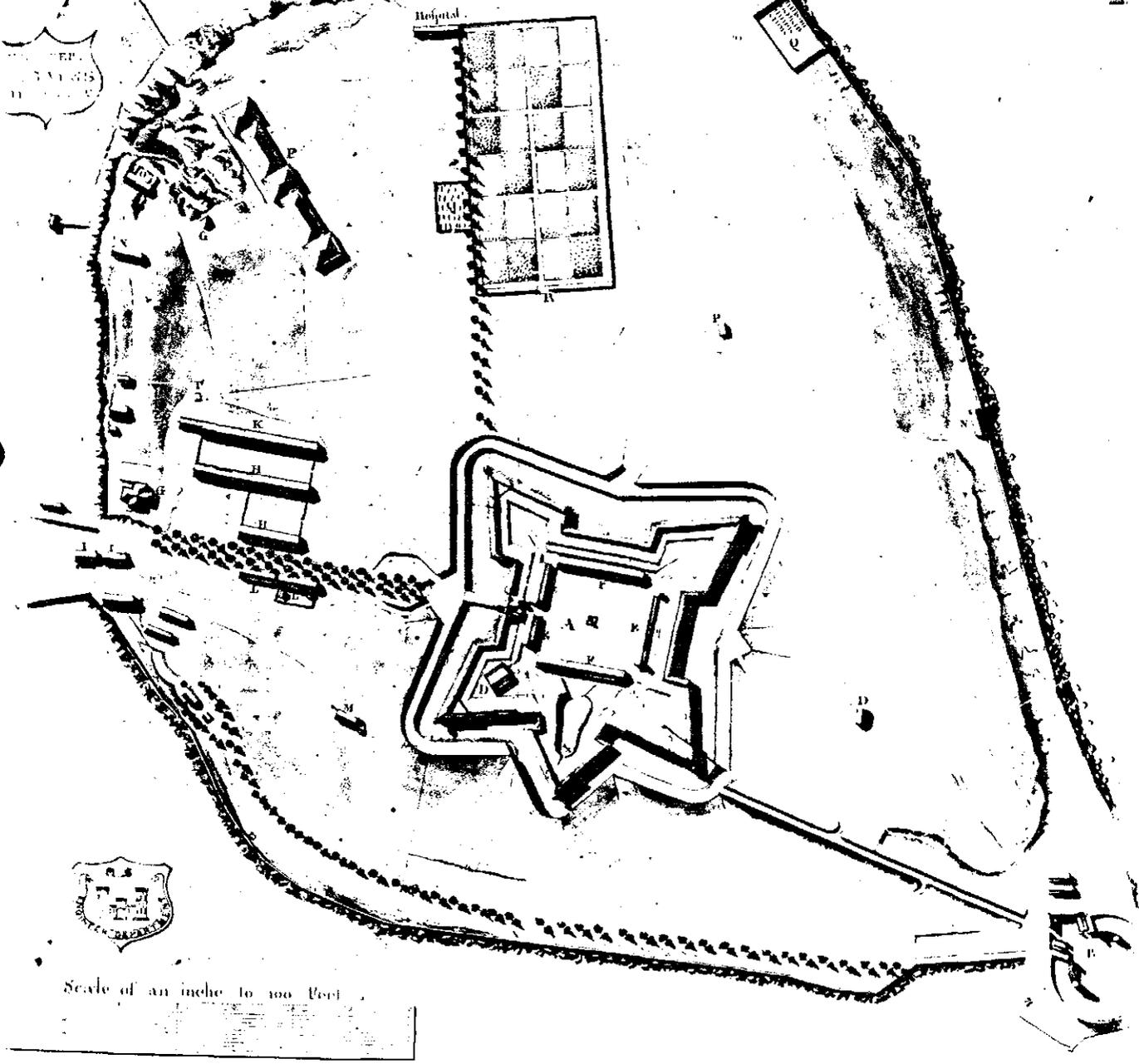
. A Report on the Hygiene of the United States Army, With Descriptions of Military Posts. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875, pp. 15-20.

1.

REFERENCES.

Drawer 37.
Sheet 1.

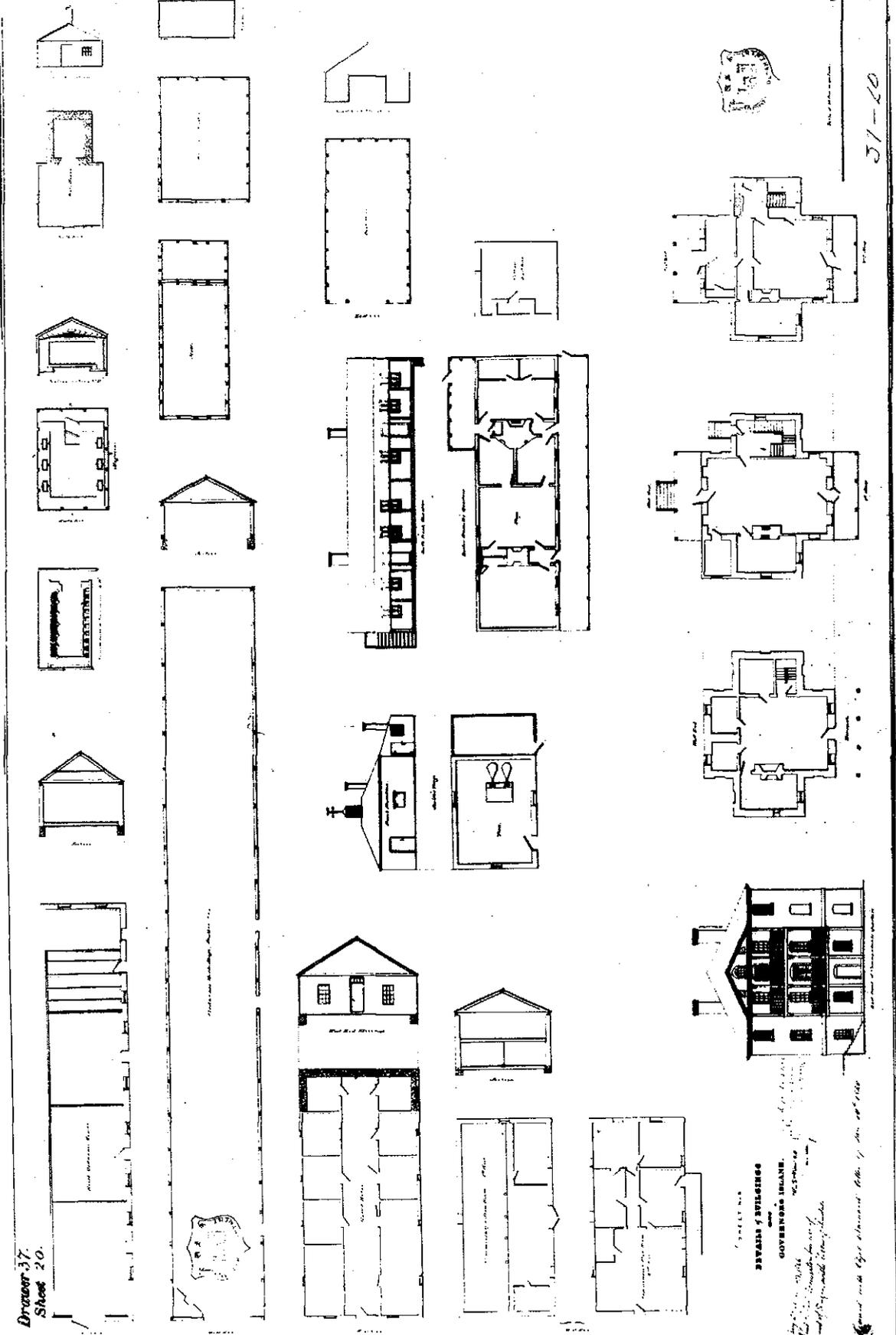
Fort Jay	A
Cornet's Battery	B
Half moon	C
Parade Yard	DD
Officers Quarters	EEE
Stores	FFF
Magazine	GG
Artillery	HH
Engine House	II
Carriage Shop	JJ
Water Pipes	KK
Gravel House	LL
Wood House	NN
Stables	OO
Hutment Store	PP
Parade Ground	QQ
Church	RR
Walls	SS



Photocopy of a Map of Governors Island

National Archives, Architecture and Cartographic Branch
Record Group 77-Fortification File, Drawer 37, sheet 1

Drawn by Joseph L. Mangin, 1813



Drawer 37
Sheet 20

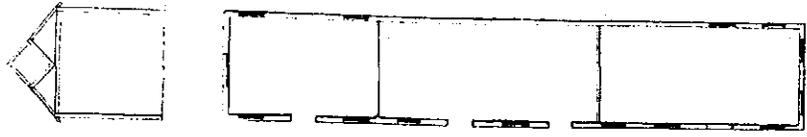
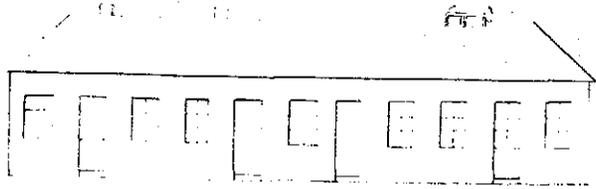
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DEWAIN'S BUILDINGS
GOVERNORS ISLAND

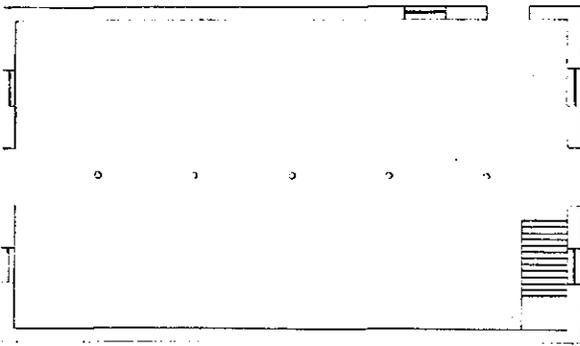
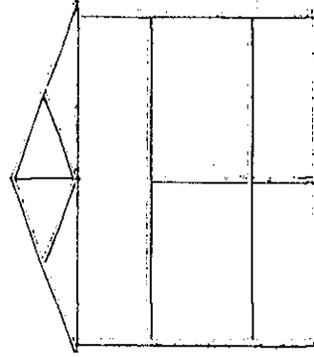
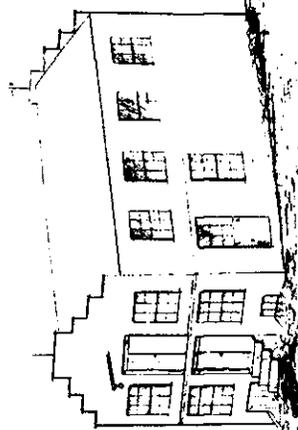
Photocopy of Plans of Details of various Buildings on Governors Island
National Archives, Architecture and Cartographic File
Record Group 77-Fortifications File
Fort Columbus, Governors Island, N.Y., Drawer 37, sheet 20
Drawn by William S. Walter, December 1839

Buildin
#25

V. 3



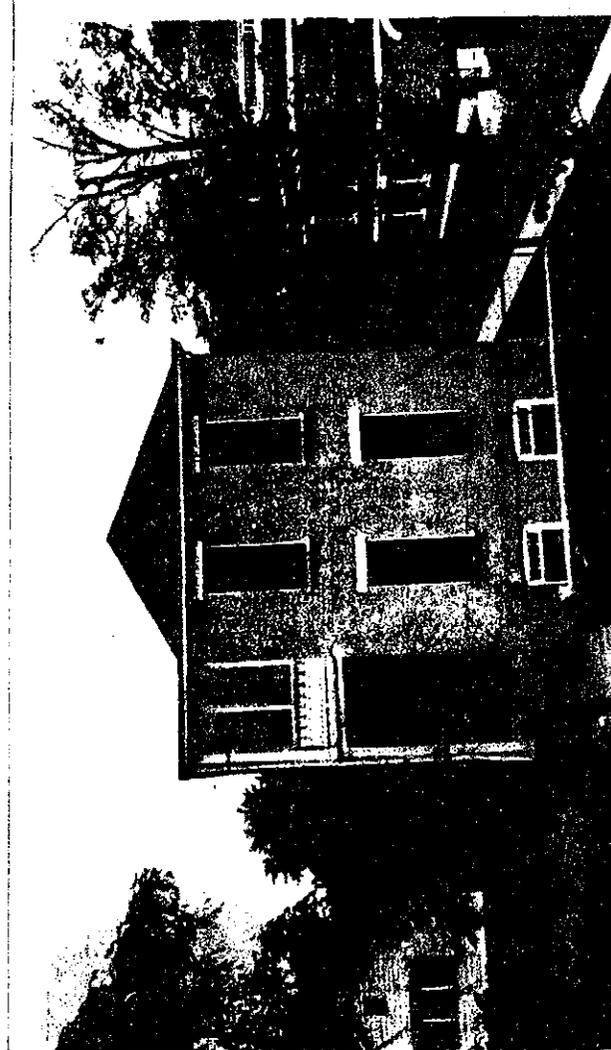
V. 2



Photocopy of Plans for Building #3 and #25
 National Archives, Architecture and Cartographic Branch
 Record Group 77-Miscellaneous Forts File
 Fort Jay, New York, #35
 Plan of Quartermaster and Commissary Storehouse
 Unknown Delineator, 1871



Copy of photography in Records of the War Department, Record Group 165, Fortification File, Still Pictures Branch, National Archives, negative 165-C-1903 BUILDING #25, probably taken 1870s



SUBJECT: *165 W-501F-3*
NUMBER: *A.U.*

COMMITTEE PUBLIC INFORMATION

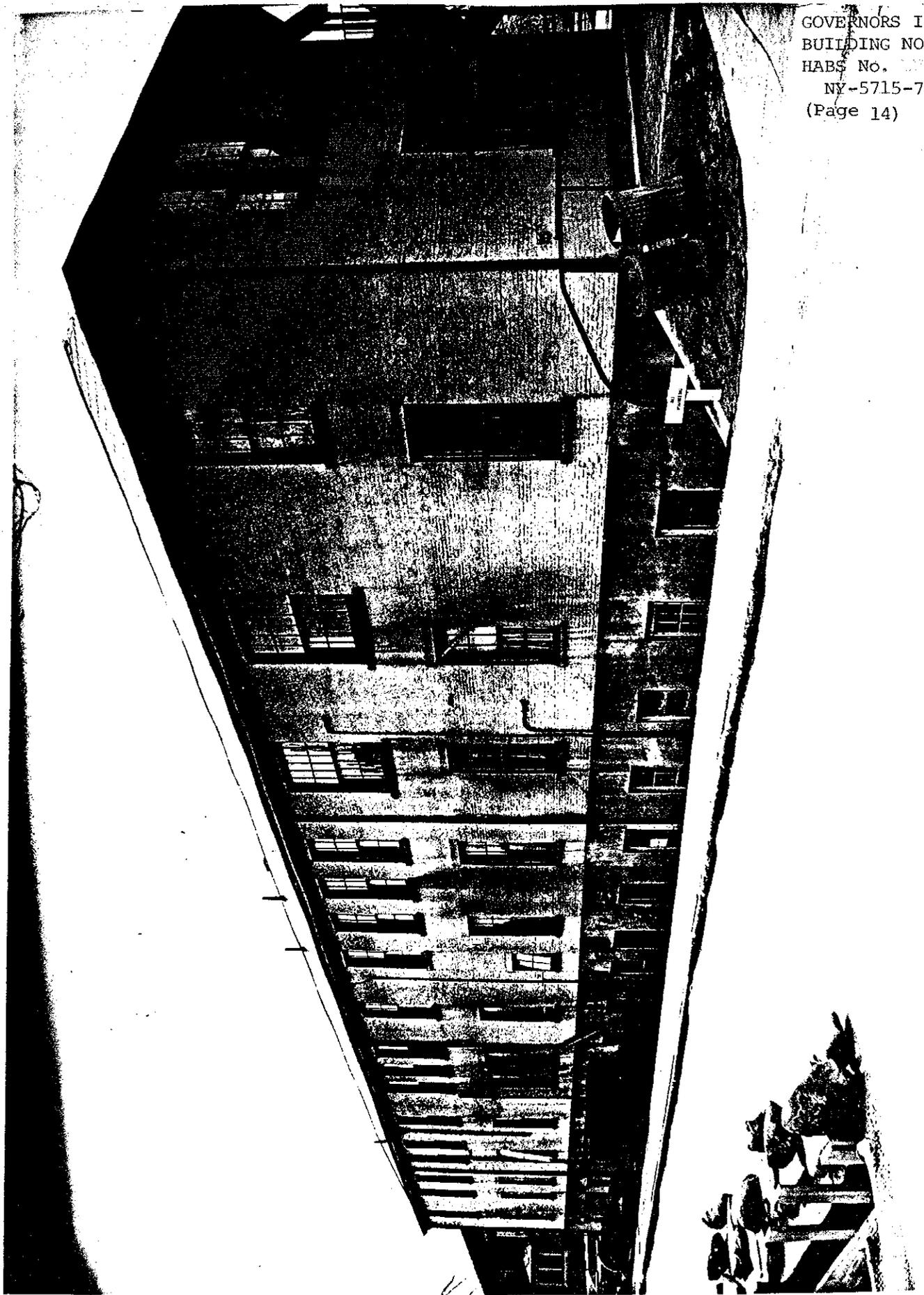
A. M. SIMONS.
PHOTOGRAPHER

REC'D 7-29-18 TAKEN

DESCRIPTION:

DEPOT QUARTERMASTER BUILDING,
PORT JAY, NEW YORK.

GOVERNORS ISLAND
BUILDING NO. 25
HABS No. -
NY-5715-7
(Page 14)



Text printed on back of photograph:
(9907) - 107013 Building 15 (Building 25), Ft. Jay, N.Y., Mar. 20, 1934.
Negative received from 2nd C.A.

Photograph of Building #25, 1934.



Building #25

Photograph dated March 1938 showing completed WPA work on Building #25.

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.