

Governors Island, Brick Row
(Officers' Quarters, Building #403, #404, #405,
#406, #407, #408, #409)

Located along Clayton and Hay Roads

Governors Island

New York Harbor

New York City

New York County

New York

HABS No. NY-5715-12

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, BRICK ROW

HABS No. NY-5715-12

(Officers' Quarters, Building #403, #404, #405, #406, #407, #408, #409)

Location: Brick Row is a group of brick houses located along Clayton and Hay Road on Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner and Occupant: United States Coast Guard

Present Use: Officers' housing

Significance: The row of housing was constructed over a period of time from 1892 to 1910. The brick houses were built after Quartermaster standardized plans and represents a pleasant group of buildings along what was originally the southwestern shore of the island.

BRICK ROW - QUARTERS 403-409

PHYSICAL HISTORY:

Development of Brick Row began early in 1892. Using standardized Quartermaster plans for DOUBLE SET OFFICER'S QUARTERS, construction on Buildings 405, 406, 407, and 408 was begun (see Plate 1). Army real estate records give the dates of construction as 1893, 1893, 1894, and 1895, respectively. The drawings from the Quartermaster General Office are dated March 1893, possibly the date of general issue, after which the plans were available to all Army posts. On May 22, 1893, William Russell was named contractor.

Though all four buildings were to be alike, variations did occur, and Building 407 was the only building to follow the plans exactly (see Plate 2). Buildings 405 and 406 seemed to vary only in the detailing of the porch and the shape of the masonry openings of the windows of the front stairs (see Plates 3 and 4). As designed and built, these buildings had a narrow, awkward back staircase to the attic. Apparently the difficulties of this design were finally realized, since the back stairs of Building 408 were made wider. Difference in Building 408 also appear in the design of the attic dormer windows and again in the details of the porch. Garages were added to the quarters in 1931. During the WPA project in 1936-38, several of the interiors were refurbished: bathrooms were installed in the front dressing room of each sets of quarters; older bathrooms were upgraded; some of the door and window trim was replaced; and numerous other changes were made. At the same time, Quarters 407B was completely remodeled so that the existing plan and architectural details no longer represent the standardized Quartermaster design. In 1953, the kitchens and pantries were remodeled. At about the same time, the reception hall seat and molded panels were removed from one of the stair walls so that the closet door could be relocated to this spot.

Building 404 was the next building planned, and it was built, as a double set of quarters between 1902-1904 (see Plate 5). It, too, was built to standard Quartermaster plans and specifications, though it was much larger than Buildings 405-408. During the WPA project, there was some remodeling of the interiors and, according to Army real estate records, the building was converted to four sets of quarters in 1952. There are no existing plans for the work done during these periods, nor of the quarters as they existed prior to the conversion. There are several buildings of the same design at Fort Totten, New York, but they have been altered also. By comparing the original layout of Quarters 403 and Quarters 405-408 with the remaining original fabric of Quarters 404, one can speculate on the original floor plan of Quarters 404. Since these layouts were from standardized Quartermaster plans, there would naturally be similarities, both in plan and details. Further study of standard Quartermaster plans would provide data concerning the original plans for this building type.

Army real estate records indicate that Quarters 403 was built in 1905-06 (see Plate 6). The building appears, however, on a 1904 map and on a drawing traced in 1934 from originals dated March 1904 (possibly the date of general issue) (on file at the Facilities Engineering Division office). Also built to standard Quartermaster plans and specifications, Quarters 403 was a single family residence. This quarters was also renovated in 1936-38, and the kitchen was remodeled in 1953.

Building 409 was designed as a Bachelor Officer's Quarters, again to standardized plans. Plans on file at the Facilities Engineering Division office are dated Quartermaster General's Office, August 1905, again possibly the date of general issue. Army real estate records place the date of construction as 1910. In 1955, the interiors were completely remodeled and most of the original details removed. At some point, brick porch columns replaced the original square, paneled wooden columns.

Quarters 410 was not part of this study.