

Naval Air Station Kingsville, Gatehouse
(Naval Air Station Kingsville, Building 775)
738 Forrestal Street
Naval Air Station Kingsville
Kingsville Vicinity
Kleberg County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3468-C

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS OF BUILDINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NAVAL AIR STATION KINGSVILLE
BUILDING 775
(NAVAL AIR STATION KINGSVILLE, GATEHOUSE)

HABS No. TX-3468-C

Location: 738 Forrestal Street
Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas
Kingsville vicinity
Kleberg County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Ricardo, Texas., Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
14.616240.3041230

Present Owner: United States of America
Department of the Navy
c/o Chief of Naval Education and Training
250 Dallas Street
Pensacola, Florida 32508

Present Occupant: Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Building 775 is one of the thirty-three original surviving resources constructed at NAS Kingsville and it played a supportive role in the base's mission as a center for advanced pilot training during World War II. Located at the base's main gate, the building fulfilled an essential, security-related mission and served as the guard station until new facilities were constructed nearby in 1996. Building 775 is a small, utilitarian edifice with an overall massing that is residential in form and reminiscent of Ranch-style housing, just coming to national attention in 1942. As such, Building 775 is reflective of important and then-emerging trends in architectural theory, an unusual characteristic of military architecture dating from the World War II period. Building 775 has been moderately altered since its construction in 1942; however, it still retains its ability to convey a sense of time and place and survives as a tangible link to the founding and early history of NAS Kingsville.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: While construction documents are dated June 10, 1942, when construction began is unknown.
2. Architect: Robert and Company, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, and Corpus Christi, Texas.

3. Original and subsequent owners:
United States of America, Department of the Navy (1942 to present).
City of Kingsville / County of Kleberg (revocable lease) (1946 to 1951)
While the City of Kingsville / County of Kleberg subleased some of the air station to the Texas College of Arts and Industries (now Texas A & M), it is not known if this sublease included Building 775.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Brown-Bellows-Columbia, Houston, Texas
5. Original plans and construction: Reproductions of original plans for the building are available at the Public Works Department, NAS Kingsville, Texas, and at the Public Works Department, NAS Corpus Christi, Texas. (Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawing Nos. 189802 to 189808).
6. Alterations and additions: Major alterations to Building 775 include the replacement of the original guard room, sentry boxes, gate and grille spanning Forrestal Street with Building 3747, a larger sentry hut with windows providing panoramic views in 1970, and an addition, built between 1942 and 1957, which expanded the west end of the front wing. This addition replaced a small porch which sheltered a secondary entrance to the pass office. Originally constructed as a semi-permanent structure, Building 775 had asbestos siding applied over the original wood siding ca. 1960. Window air-conditioning units were installed ca. 1957 and 1958. Facility files show that between 1971 and 1982, other relatively minor repairs and alterations occurred, including minor interior reconfigurations. In 1975, this included repainting. Aluminum and plate-glass windows and new exterior doors were installed more recently.

B. Historical Context:

Building 775, which was built as the gatehouse at the base's main entrance, is representative of the kind of support facilities that contributed to the daily operation of the naval air training station. The base was established in 1942 and was part of the Navy's War Construction Program, a massive build-up of domestic bases at the outset of direct U.S. involvement and participation in World War II. Building 775 survives as a tangible link to this pivotal era in American history and to the founding of NAS Kingsville. Throughout its history, NAS Kingsville has been closely affiliated with NAS Corpus Christi, and the development of NAS Kingsville and its facilities are better understood knowing the relationship between NAS Kingsville and NAS Corpus Christi and the role both bases played as training centers for advanced fighter-pilot training during World War II.

NAS Corpus Christi was established following passage and enactment of the Naval Expansion Act of 1938. Reflecting growing U.S. concerns of widespread military build-up and increased tensions in Europe, the bill called for the construction of additional naval bases throughout the country. One provision of the bill called for the establishment of a new naval air station, which ultimately became NAS Corpus Christi. Navy officials selected a large parcel of land just outside Corpus Christi, Texas, as the station, and groundbreaking ceremonies occurred on June 29, 1940. The base was officially

commissioned on March 12, 1941. The Atlanta, Georgia-based architectural and engineering firm of Robert and Company, Inc., provided architectural plans for most facilities at the base, and Brown-Bellows-Columbia served as general contractors. Upon completion, NAS Corpus Christi was the Navy's largest air training station.¹

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the Navy embarked on an ambitious plan to further develop and improve its network of domestic bases and targeted NAS Corpus Christi for rapid expansion. This effort resulted in the construction of many new buildings at NAS Corpus Christi and also led to the establishment of six auxiliary fields within a 60-mile radius of the base. Of the six sites, the auxiliary fields at Kingsville and at Beeville (Chase Field) featured sufficient support facilities and improvements to operate semi-autonomously.²

The new base at Kingsville was initially called "P-4," but was soon renamed Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Kingsville. Encompassing a large tract of land just east of the city of Kingsville, the base supported the advanced fighter pilot training mission of nearby NAS Corpus Christi. The Navy retained Robert and Company, Inc., the architects of NAS Corpus Christi, to provide plans and specifications for NAS Kingsville facilities.³ The firm also served as architects of NAAS Chase Field in Beeville.⁴

Robert and Company was founded in 1917 by Lawrence Wood Robert, Jr., and it remains a vibrant architectural concern based in Atlanta. The firm's earliest commissions were principally involved with large-scale and highly technical designs, such as water treatment plants and textile mills, for municipalities and private manufacturing concerns. Mr. Robert became a big promoter of industrial development in the southeastern U.S. and was well known in the business community. Active in politics, he served as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in charge of Public Works in the Roosevelt Administration from 1933 to 1936.⁵ In subsequent years, the firm's practice grew at a phenomenal rate, and in the late 1930s and early 1940s Robert and Company received a number of military-related commissions—most notably NAS Corpus Christi—that necessitated the opening of branch offices across the nation. At its peak, the branch office in Corpus Christi, Texas, employed over 175 persons and was featured in *Life Magazine*. In 1943, the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks commended for the firm for "outstanding services," and noted "their devotion and unswerving fidelity to the tasks in hand when preparing plans and specifications for Naval Air Station Facilities and Landing Field in furtherance of the Navy War Construction Program."⁶

In its design for Building 775, Robert and Company deviated somewhat from the strictly utilitarian appearance that characterized most other contemporaneous facilities at NAS Kingsville. At first glance, the building presents a residential-like character. Stylistically, Building 775 is mildly suggestive of Ranch-style housing, which was a new and innovative architectural trend at the time. This architectural expression later attained widespread popularity in the residential construction of post World War II America.

The general contractor for the base and Building 775 was Brown-Bellows-Columbia, a consortium that included Brown & Root of Houston; W. S. Bellows, also of Houston; and Columbia Construction of Oakland, California. This same consortium served as the general contractor of NAS Corpus Christi and

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NAS Chase Field. Brown & Root, the lead firm in the consortium, was a thriving construction firm in Texas during the second quarter of the twentieth century and successfully completed numerous federally funded projects prior to its work at NAS Corpus Christi and NAS Kingsville. Among their more notable projects were the series of dams built for the Lower Colorado River Authority in the 1930s.⁷

NAS Kingsville was established southeast of the city of Kingsville, and Angle Road and an ancillary access road linked NAS Kingsville with the host community. The main gate stood on the station's west boundary and along the access road that extended to the base. Building 775 stood just within the base's confines and secured access into and out of the military compound. Building 775 was somewhat isolated from other facilities. Building 700, the Administration Building, was the nearest facility and it stood at the terminus of the boulevard that lead from the main gate. Because it fulfilled an important role to the security of the base, Building 775 was among the first group of facilities completed at NAS Kingsville; others were the runways, the administration building, the hangars and aircraft maintenance facilities. Building 775, which stood at the only vehicular entrance into the base, was used by personnel who issued clearance papers, passes and vehicular tags. The building also contained a small brig, as well as offices and dormitory quarters for security personnel.

Building 775 remained NAS Kingsville's gatehouse for the remainder of World War II; however, it and other base facilities were abandoned after the war when the Navy closed NAS Kingsville and other surplus bases. Decommissioning ceremonies took place on August 1, 1946, and the Department of the Navy subsequently leased the base and all improvements to a local governmental board, comprised of the City of Kingsville and the County of Kleberg, for a nominal \$1.00 yearly fee with a provision enabling the Navy to reoccupy the base for national security reasons. The locally based Texas College of Arts & Industries (now Texas A&M University at Kingsville) subleased the complex and established a satellite campus. The fate of Building 775 during the period in which the college occupied the base remains undocumented, but other facilities, such as Building 700, were rehabilitated and converted into education-related uses.

Texas College of Arts & Industries occupied the former military base for the remainder of the 1940s, but North Korea's invasion of South Korea in the summer of 1950 and the United States' subsequent involvement in the conflict proved to be pivotal events in the history of Kingsville and the former naval air station. Navy officials reactivated many of the previously closed World War II-era bases, and NAS Kingsville was among those reopened.⁸

NAS Kingsville was officially recommissioned as a "permanent" station on April 1, 1951; however, Texas College of Arts & Industries continued to use facilities at the base until the end of the spring semester.⁹ When NAS Kingsville reopened, Building 775 was designated a warehouse facility and it has continued to be used in that capacity to the present time.

Building 775 has been modified only slightly since its construction in 1942. The original wood siding has been covered over with asbestos siding, and the wood-sash windows have been replaced with anodized aluminum-sash or large plate-glass picture windows. Although a small, flat-roofed addition was built on the west side, and the rear of the building, formerly the guard dormitory, has been converted

into an office space, the building's original form and massing are largely intact. The building retains its salient features and its historic form and most important physical attributes are largely intact. Although not directly associated with the primary mission of NAS Kingsville as a naval air station, Building 775 played a supportive role in the base's operation and survives as a good illustration of World War II military architecture.

NOTES

1. David Moore et al., "Historic Resources Survey & Assessments, NAS Chase Field, Beeville, Texas," (Austin, Tx.: Hardy•Heck•Moore, [1992]), p. 33.
2. Ibid., p. 35-36.
3. Diane Williams et al., "Historic Resources Survey and Assessments, Naval Air Station Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas," (Austin, Tx.: Hardy•Heck•Moore & Associates, Inc., [1995]), p. 67-68.
4. Moore et al., "Historic Resources Survey & Assessments, NAS Chase Field, Beeville, Texas," p. 33.
5. Mary Goldsmith, "Lawrence Wood Robert, Jr., Founder of Robert and Company." Paper presented for AH690D, Seminar in Atlanta Architecture, Atlanta, Ga., Spring 1991, p. 3.
6. Robert and Company, Architects-Engineers-Managers, *The Organization and Activities of Robert and Company, Architects-Engineers-Managers Washington, Atlanta, New York: 1917-1944*, (Atlanta, Ga.: Promotional brochure by the firm, c. 1945), n.p.
7. Tamara Scott, National Register of Historic Places Application, Brown Building, National Register Division, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Tx.
8. Williams et al., "Historic Resources Survey and Assessments, Naval Air Station Kingsville," p. 78.
9. Ibid.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Building 775 is a small, utilitarian building, categorized as an Operational Support Facility. Its overall massing and form are residential and reminiscent of Ranch-style housing, just coming to national attention in 1942. The T-plan, gabled-roof building accommodates a shed-roofed porch on its front (north) face and a shed roofed addition on the west side.
2. Condition of fabric: The building stands in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Building 775 measures 76'-0" in length, 60'-0" in width, and 11'-0" height. It contains 2,787 square feet. The front wing is almost 23'-wide while the rear wing is 28'-0"-wide. The west addition expanded the building's length from 63' ½".
2. Foundation: The building rests on a poured concrete pier and beam foundation.
3. Walls: Exterior walls have cement-asbestos siding applied over the original wood siding which is specified as pattern number 117, with the occasional use of 1 x 4 center-matched boards.
4. Structural system, framing: Building 775 is a one-story, wood-frame building.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The front, which faces north, has a partial width, three-bay porch supported by square wood posts. The floor of the porch is a poured concrete slab. An addition now covers a second stoop that originally extended off the west facade. Original drawings at NAS Kingsville show this stoop as having a concrete slab floor and a flat-roof, shaded on the west side by a louvered grille made of vertical 2 x 8 wood studs, similar to the grille that once connected Building 775 with the former gate, guard room and sentry boxes spanning Forrestal Street. Secondary entrances have been added from the Pass Office (originally the Guard Dormitory) to the west and to the south. The south entrance, which leads to a recently-constructed guard-dog kennel, has a louvered grille as described above.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The primary entrance, set within the porch, includes a single flush door with vision panel flanked by two fixed-glass windows to the east and three to the west. Additional egresses on the rear (south) and west sides utilize single metal doors with vision panels, similar to the front door. These doors date to between 1971 and 1990.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are anodized aluminum frame windows with one-over-one lights within the original wood openings. Original windows were double-hung wood sash with six-over-six lights. Three windows on the main (north) side and one on the west side have been replaced with plate-glass picture windows. One of the two fixed-glass windows to the east of the main entrance on the north side appears to be an addition. One window on the north side, another on the east side and three on the west side, all shown on the original plans, are no longer extant.

8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The building has a gabled composition shingle roof. The front porch and the west addition both have shed composition shingle roofs.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: In the overhanging eaves are exposed rafter tails.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. First floor: The main entrance, located on the north side, leads to a reception area. Immediately to the east of the entrance, a counter-height wall with a glass panel above separates the reception area from the guard office. Further east are offices, toilet facilities, and a small brig. A large room at the rear of the building, which originally served as the guard dormitory, has been converted into office space. Exterior doors lead from this space to a visitor parking lot to the west and to the guard dog kennel to the south. The west addition provides additional office space.
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: Floors typically are covered with carpet or vinyl composition tile.
4. Walls and ceiling finishes: Walls are generally painted gypsum board, and the ceilings consist of suspended acoustic tiles.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Interior doors are typically flush wood with glazed panel. A two-panel door was observed at the closet in the office identified on the plans as Sergeant of the Guard. Other doors specified as paneled on the plans have been replaced with flush wood doors. The door to the brig is a jail-cell type of welded steel bars and plates.
 - b. Windows: All original six-over-six, wood-sash, double-hung windows have been replaced with aluminum sash hung or single-pane, fixed-glass units. The internal window which looks from an office into the lobby is a single fixed-pane with a bank-teller cut out.
6. Decorative features and trim: The interior is simple and has no features that could be described as decorative. A simple wood shape is used for trim and base.

7. Hardware: Exterior doors have either modern pull handles or locksets and deadbolts. Interior doors are typically equipped with a pair of butt hinges and a latchset.
8. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Several one-ton air conditioning units penetrate the exterior walls and were added sequentially in 1957 and 1958.
 - b. Lighting: Typically light fixtures are 2'-0" x 4'-0" four-lamp troffers integrated into the suspended ceiling system.
 - c. Plumbing: Original drawings show five lavatories. It is unknown whether original fixtures remain in place.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Building 775 is located at the main (west) entrance to NAS Kingsville. Built on level terrain, the building has a paved parking lot to the east, west and south, with a grass lawn directly behind the building. A guard dog kennel is located to the southwest. The front faces north onto Forrestal Street. Originally, wooden gates and screens visually and physically tied the Gatehouse with the adjacent sentry hut, located in the middle of Forrestal Street; they were demolished and replaced by Building 3747, a larger sentry hut, in 1970.
2. Historic landscape design: Grassy fields continue to surround Building 775.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original architectural drawings: Reproductions of a complete set of original architectural drawings are on file at the Public Works Department, NAS Corpus Christi. These drawings list Robert and Company, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia and Corpus Christi, Texas, as the architects of record, and H. W. Howarth as the architect in charge. Available drawings include the original framing plans and structural details, floor plans and elevations, interior wall, ceiling, window, and door schedules, and plumbing, heating and electrical plans and details.
- B. Early views: A "Welcome Aboard" brochure dating to ca. 1960 includes a photograph showing Building 775 with the original gates, sentry huts and guard rooms, in addition to its relationship with Building 700 and the Esplanade. This brochure is available from the NAS Kingsville facility files. The U.S. Navy maintains an archive of aerial photographs which provide an overall understanding of site development but minimal information on individual buildings.
- C. Interviews: No oral interviews were undertaken to prepare this form.

D Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Corpus Christi, Texas. NAS Corpus Christi. Public Works Office. Archives. Maps, plans, architectural drawings, and aerial photographs.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Atlanta, Georgia. Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division. Robert and Company File. Goldsmith, Mary, "Lawrence Wood Robert, Jr., Founder of Robert and Company." Paper presented for AH690D, Seminar in Atlanta Architecture, Atlanta, Ga., Spring 1991.

Austin, Texas. Texas Historical Commission. National Register Division. Tamara Scott, National Register of Historic Places Application, Brown Building, no date.

The Flying K (NAS Kingsville, Texas), 13 January 1953.

Moore, David et al. "Historic Resources Survey & Assessments, Naval Air Station Chase Field, Beeville, Texas." Austin, Tx: Hardy•Heck•Moore, 1992.

Robert and Company, Architects-Engineers-Managers. *The Organization and Activities of Robert and Company, Architects-Engineers-Managers Washington, Atlanta, New York: 1917-1944*. Atlanta, Ga.: Promotional brochure by the firm, c. 1945.

Williams, Diane et al. "Historic Resources Survey and Assessments, Naval Air Station Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas." Austin, Tx.: Hardy•Heck•Moore & Associates, Inc., 1995.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Information on NAS Kingsville may be held in the Federal Records Center in Fort Worth, Texas. The Navy Historical Center and the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and the architectural collections of the archives in Suitland, Maryland, may also contain some project-related information. These repositories will not be investigated for the purposes of this project.

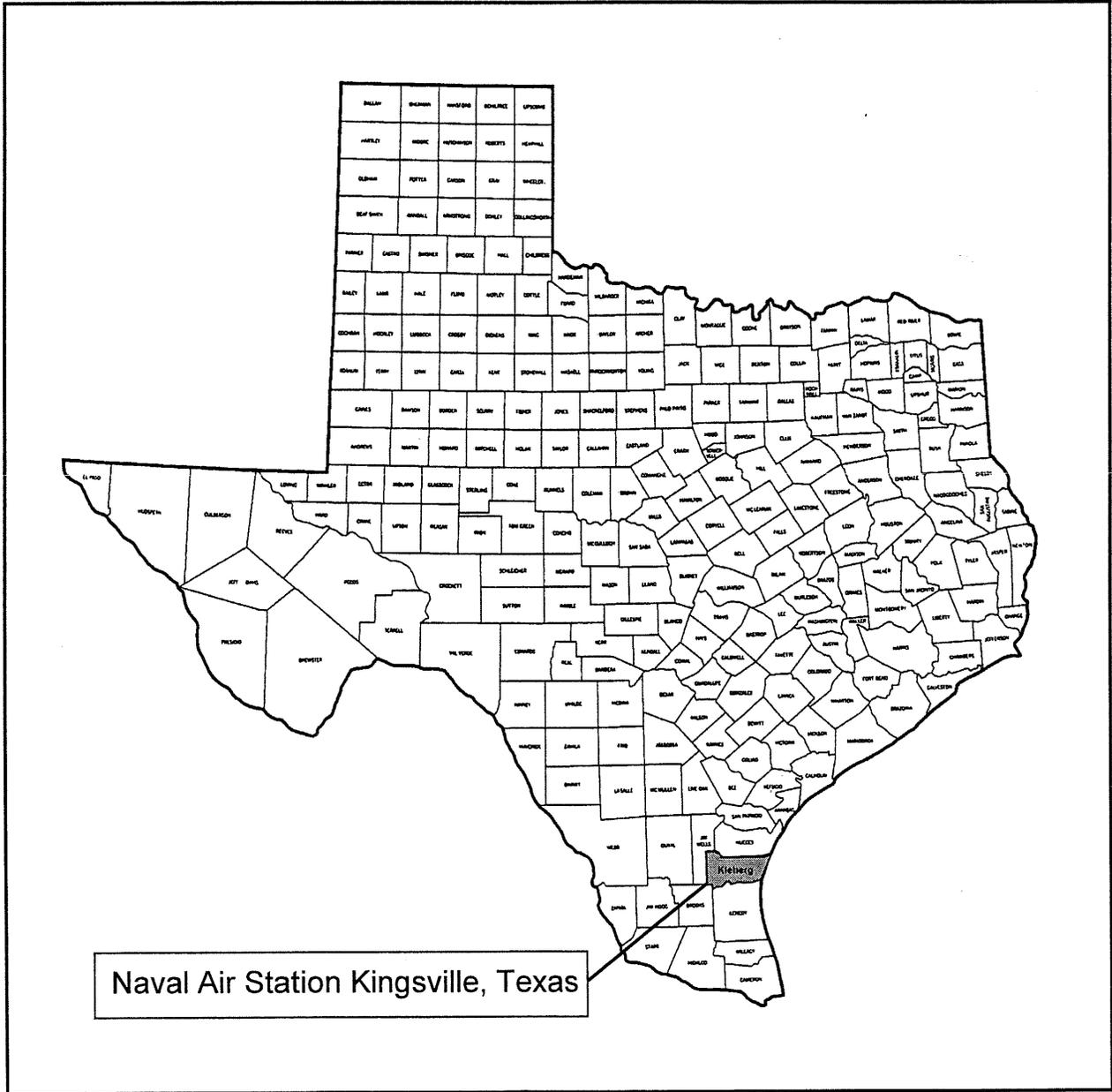
F. Supplemental Materials: N/A

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

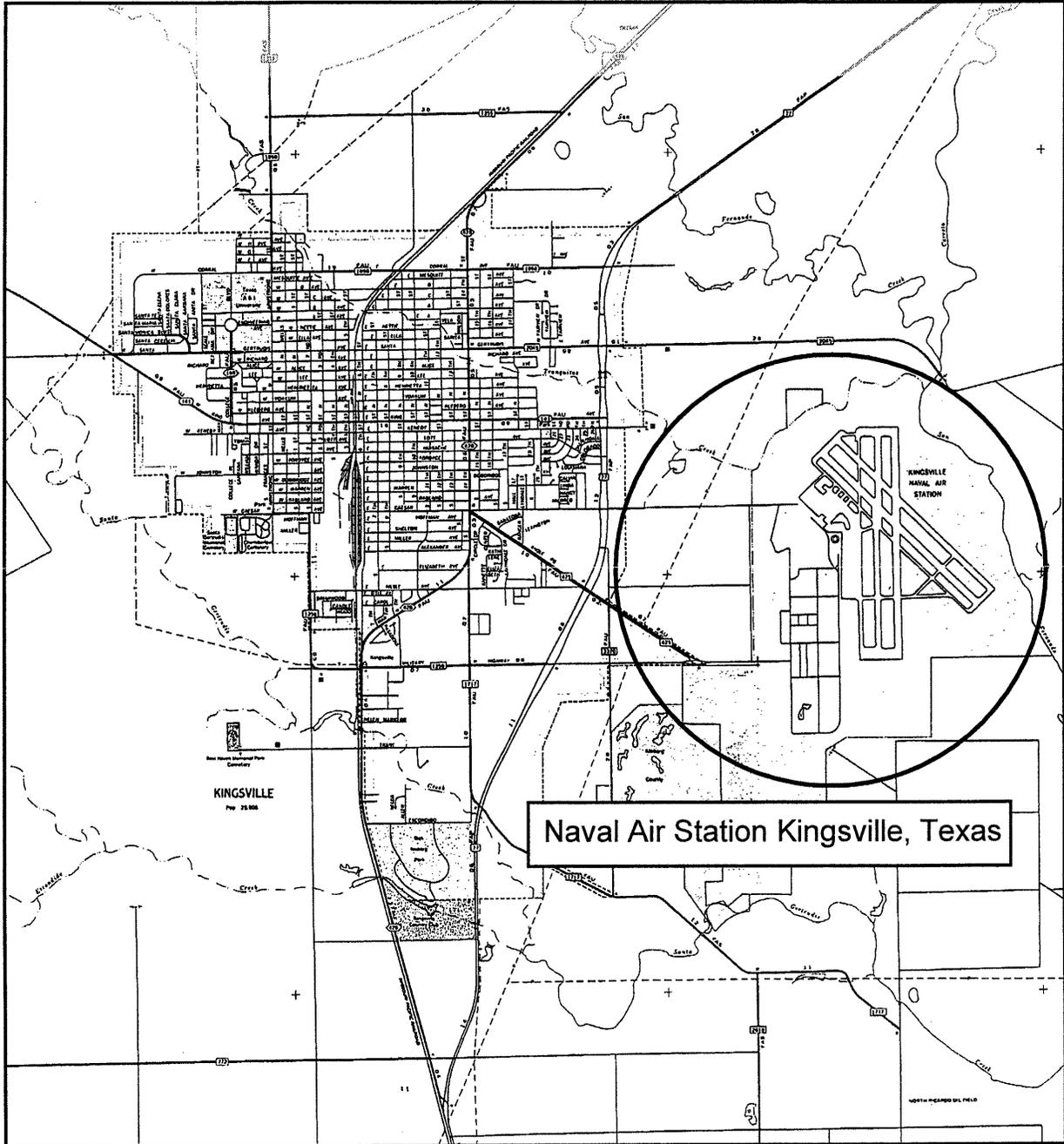
This documentation was completed in compliance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and complies with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by representatives with the Department of the Navy, the Texas Historic

Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Under Contract No. N62467-94-D-1128, Delivery Order No. 00190, Southern Division Naval Facilities Engineering Command (SOUTHNAVFACENGCOM) contracted with Turner Collie & Braden (TC&B) Inc., of Houston, Texas, to oversee the preparation of the HABS recordation. As subcontractors to TC&B, Inc., Hardy-Heck-Moore & Associates, Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and, prepared a historic context and the HABS forms. All project personnel directly involved with the preparation of the HABS documentation meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. David Moore served as principal investigator. Contributors include Anne I. Malanka, historian; Diane E. Williams, architectural historian; Tina Roach, associate architectural historian; Terri L. Myers, historian; and Sara Kirtland, associate historian. Preservation architect Thomas Eisenhour recorded the buildings with large-format (4" x 5") black-and-white photographs. Mr. Eisenhour also photographed existing measured drawings with large-format black-and-white photography and recorded information on the physical attributes of the buildings.

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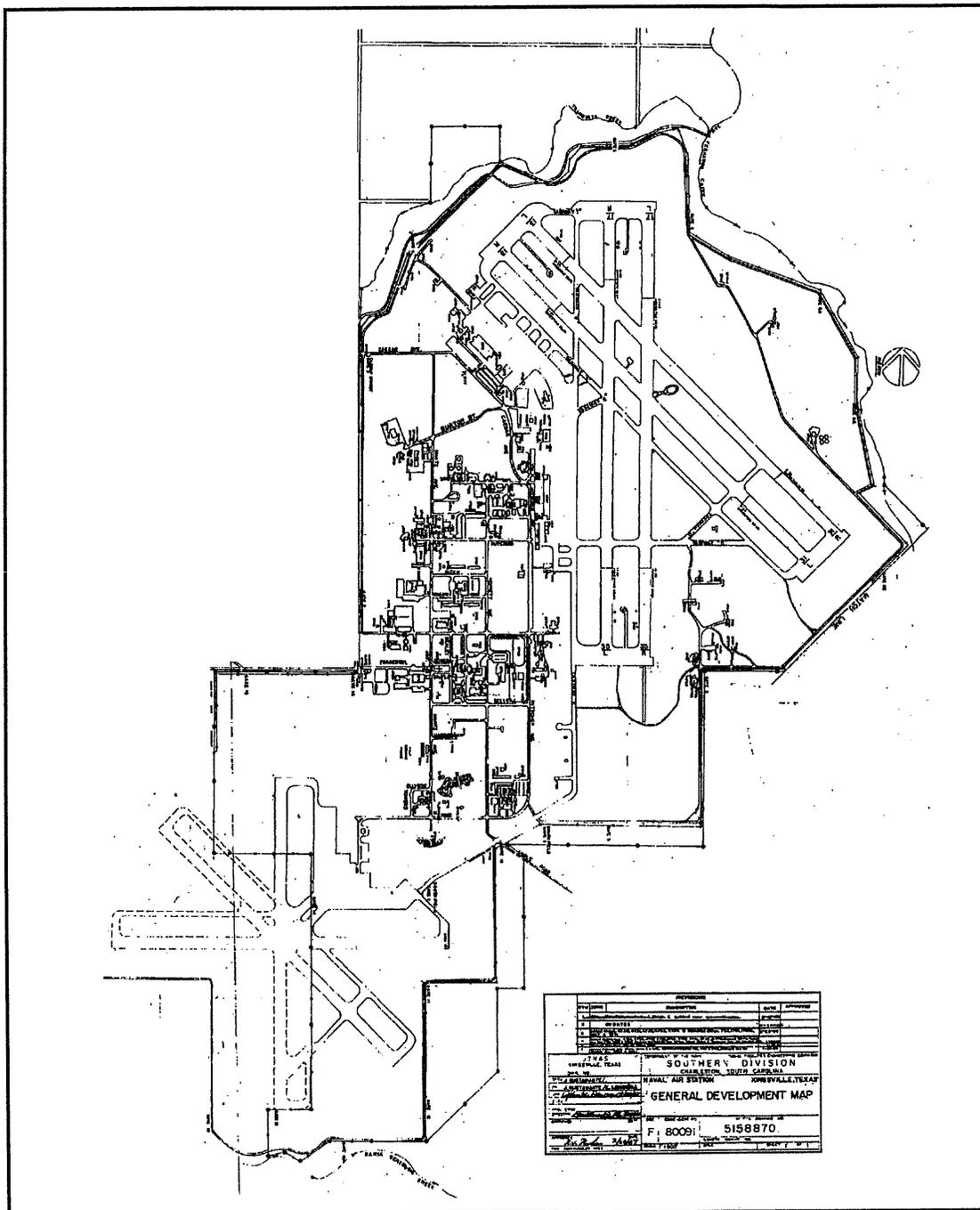


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Source: Texas Department of Transportation, 1968, updated 1986

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General Development Map, Naval Air Station Kingsville, 1987
 Source: Public Works Office, Naval Air Station Kingsville

