

U.S. COAST GUARD (USCG) FORT CROCKETT HOUSING,
COMMANDING OFFICER'S UNIT
Fort Crockett Historic District
4409 Sarna Court
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS TX-3476
HABS TX-3476

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHWEST SYSTEM SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
PO Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
COMMANDING OFFICER'S UNIT

HABS No. TX-3476

Location: 4409 Sarna Court
Fort Crockett
Galveston, Galveston County, Texas

USGS Galveston Quadrangle (7.5')

Significance: The Commanding Officer's Unit is part of the Fort Crockett Housing Units which are a contributing element of the Fort Crockett Historic District. The district is significant for its role as a coastal defense installation and training center of the Texas and Gulf coasts from 1897 to World War II. The Base Commanding Officer's unit, built in 1910, represents structures remaining from the Fort's 1909 building program. These housing units possess a unified identity by virtue of their scale, form, massing, materials, and relationship to each other. Along with the remaining structures and batteries, these units retain a sense of the overall importance of Fort Crockett and its significance in the history of Galveston and the Texas Coast.

Description: The housing complex consists of fourteen buildings: the Commanding Officer's Unit, four Senior Officer Housing Units, four Junior Officer Units, and five Enlisted Units. As originally constructed, the buildings met the functional requirements of the Army, the climatic setting, and are in character with many of the other facilities at Fort Crockett. The Commanding Officer's Unit was built in 1910 (Magee, 1990). A 1949 map of the base places the Commanding Officer's Unit at the eastern-most end of the base (Post Engineer Office, 1949).

The Commanding Officer's Unit is a rectangular shaped, two-story structure with a hipped roof, reinforced concrete exterior walls, and wood frame similar in form to its original configuration. It's Mediterranean influence is characterized by its low-pitched hip roof, widely overhanging eaves, and windows that are smaller on the second story than windows on the first story. The primary entrance features a French door, multi-pane side lights, and a four-light flat transom. Windows are one-over-one light. Modifications include replacement of the original clay tile roof with composition shingles, addition of a one-story enclosed porch at the north side of the structure, removal of the second floor porches along the west and south sides (leaving a two-story portico), and enclosure of the first floor porch on the east side. The original wood windows have been replaced with aluminum windows and the interiors of the units have been significantly remodeled, most recently in October 1986.

Historical Context: Late 19th century to 1914: Fort Crockett was established in 1897, by authorization of the United States Government for a coastal artillery installation. The first troops were stationed at the fort in 1899. In 1900 most of the original fortifications were badly damaged by a storm and reconstruction of the fort was undertaken by the US Army Engineers. The Commanding Officer's Unit and the Senior Officers' Units were built in 1910 as part of the reconstruction of Fort Crockett.

A 1911 pamphlet mentions the housing units and some of their amenities

“With very few exceptions the buildings are of reinforced concrete construction and absolutely fireproof... The buildings have all been constructed to meet the requirements of the climate. Wide galleries have been provided and to a large extent the mission style of architecture has been carried out. The buildings all overlook the Gulf of Mexico...and there is not to be found in any part of the country a more pleasant spot for the location of Uncle Sam's fighters.”¹

No garrison was assigned to Fort Crockett until 1911, when it became the mobilization center for 4,000 troops during the Mexican border troubles. In 1912, the 5th Infantry Brigade arrived and remained until 1914, when they were ordered to Vera Cruz, Mexico, returning in November 1914.

World War I to 1939. Fort Crockett served as an assembly point for troops being sent overseas in World War I to France and as training grounds for heavy artillery troops for the expeditionary forces, while the Coast Artillery forces and their gun emplacements were ready for immediate action if necessary. After the war, the Third Attack Group from Kelly Field was stationed at the fort in 1926 and an airstrip was built in 1927. Between 1927 and 1935 the fort was used to train coast artillery, anti-aircraft units and air corps.

World War II to present. The year 1940 saw more men assigned to the fort for coastal defense training. The fort was also used as a German prisoner of war camp during World War II, housing approximately 650 prisoners. Following the war in 1947, all harbor defenses were dismantled and shortly thereafter the fort was reopened for use as a Fourth Army recreation center. In 1954, Fort Crockett was declared surplus and transferred to the General Services Administration for disposal. Many of the buildings have since been demolished for parking lots, hotels, retail centers, condominiums and apartments. The remaining facilities are now used by Galveston College, Texas A & M University at Galveston, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Coast

¹ “Souvenir of First Separate Brigade US Troops at Ft. Crockett”.

Guard. It appears that the U.S. Coast Guard acquired the housing units from the Department of the Army on two separate occasions. In 1958, the U.S. Coast Guard acquired ten units on Sarna Court and all of the units on 53rd Street, and in 1966 acquired seven additional units of family housing which most likely consisted of the remaining three duplexes and the Commanding Officer's unit on Sarna Court. (Richter 1958, Department of the Army 1966).

Sources:

Department of the Army. Real Estate Disposal Report No. 222, January 31, 1966. Report notes four buildings of 1911 construction containing seven units of family housing.

Magee, Gregory H. Correspondence from Commander, USCG to Mr. James W. Steel, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission. n.d., response requested by February 1, 1990.

Post Engineer Office. Master Plan, Fort Crockett, Galveston, Texas: General Organized Recreation Areas. April 1949.

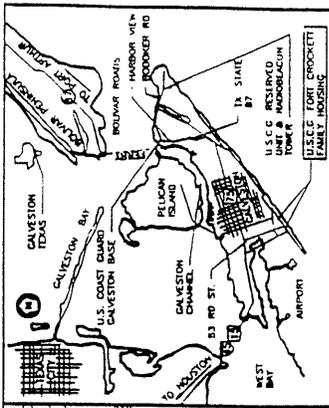
Ray Bailey Architects, Inc. and Walter P. Moore and Associates, Inc. Structure Investigation Report: Fort Crockett Senior Officers Housing (USCG) 4301-4409 Sarna Court, Galveston Texas. Prepared for the USCG Civil Engineering Unit, Miami, Florida, May 11, 1993. Source of historic background of Fort Crockett included in this form.

Richter, H. L. Comptroller, U.S. Army Engineer District, Galveston. Memorandum regarding transfer and date of construction of Fort Crockett housing units, October 13, 1958.

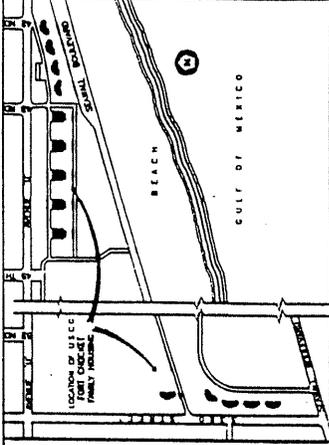
Project information: This project is a mitigative recording required by a Memorandum of Agreement executed by the U.S. Coast Guard, the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, the General Services Administration, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. An historic preservation covenant conveys with the property regarding the preservation, maintenance, and development of the properties.

Woodward-Clyde Federal Services completed mitigation documentation for this project between July and September 1997. Nicole Cawlfild prepared the photographic documentation and Susan Cianci Salvatore compiled the Architectural Data Form based on information supplied by the U.S. Coast Guard.

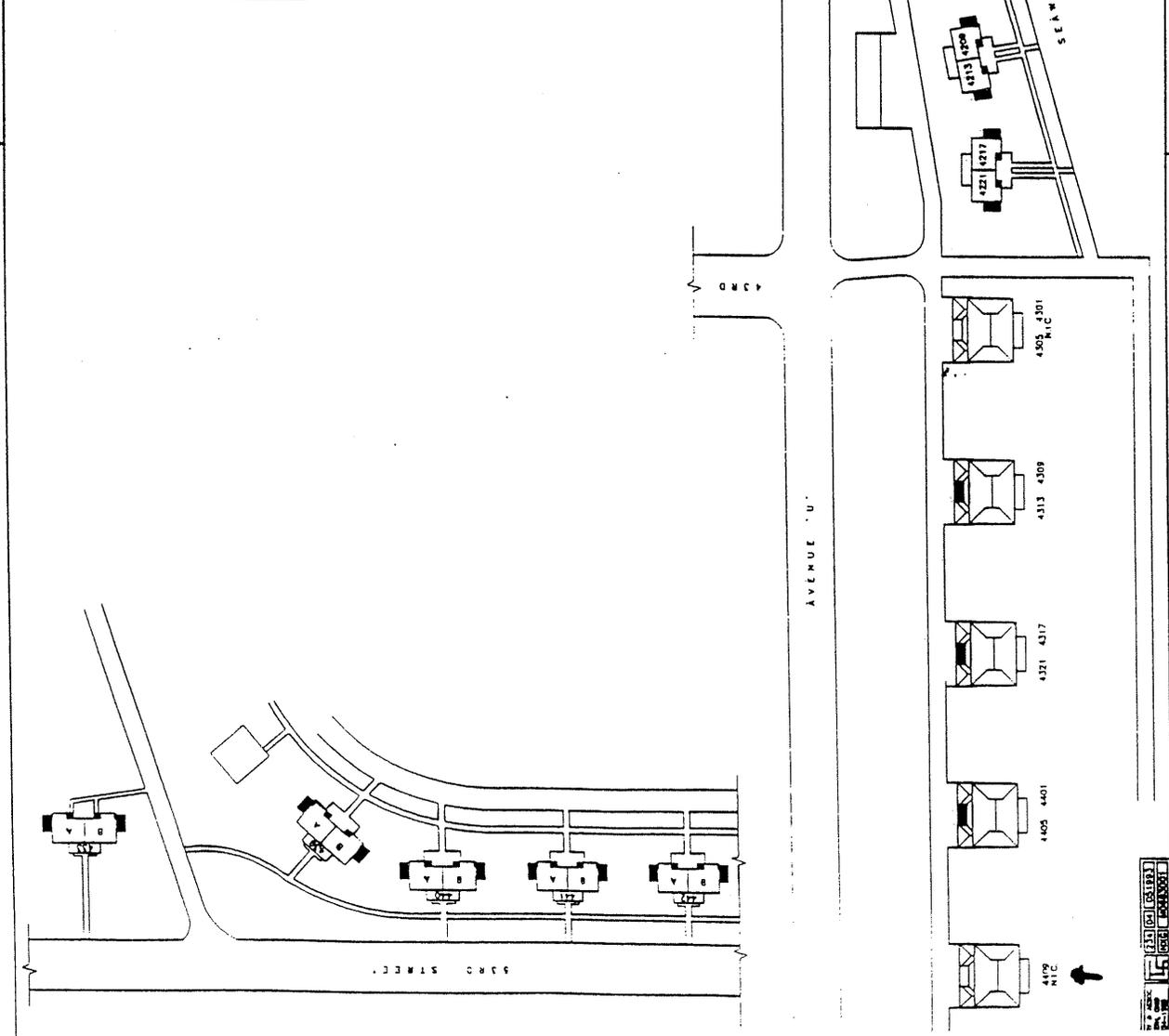
COMMANDING OFFICER'S HOUSING UNIT
 HABS No. TX-3476
 SITE PLAN
 (Page 4)



VICINITY MAP
 SCALE: NONE



LOCATION MAP
 SCALE: NONE



LOCATION PLAN

REV.	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION
1	10/11/71	NTC	U.S. COAST GUARD
2	11/11/71	NTC	MIAMI, FL
3	12/11/71	NTC	CIVIL ENGINEERING UNIT
4	01/11/72	NTC	ROOF REPLACEMENT
5	02/11/72	NTC	FORT CROCKETT HOUSING
6	03/11/72	NTC	TEX
7	04/11/72	NTC	CIVIL
8	05/11/72	NTC	VICINITY & LOCATION MAPS
9	06/11/72	NTC	APPROVED
10	07/11/72	NTC	DATE
11	08/11/72	NTC	DESIGNED BY: [Name]
12	09/11/72	NTC	CHECKED BY: [Name]
13	10/11/72	NTC	REVIEWED BY: [Name]
14	11/11/72	NTC	PROJECT ENGINEER: [Name]
15	12/11/72	NTC	ARCHITECT: [Name]
16	01/11/73	NTC	REVISIONS: [Name]
17	02/11/73	NTC	TECHNICAL ENGINEER: [Name]
18	03/11/73	NTC	CONTRACTOR: [Name]
19	04/11/73	NTC	OWNER: [Name]
20	05/11/73	NTC	DATE

P/N 08-0663

M0110-D

SCALE: AS SHOWN

SHEET 1 OF 2



SCALE: 1" = 80'-0"

COMMANDING OFFICER'S HOUSING UNIT

HABS No. TX-3476

PHOTO KEY

(Page 5)

