

U.S. COAST GUARD (USCG) FORT CROCKETT HOUSING,
ENLISTED OFFICERS' HOUSING UNIT
Fort Crockett Historic District
433, 439, 440, 441, and 442 53rd Street
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS TX-3485
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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
ENLISTED OFFICER'S HOUSING UNIT

HABS No. TX-3485

- Location: 433, 439, 440, 441, 442 53rd Street
Fort Crockett
Galveston, Galveston County, Texas
USGS Galveston Quadrangle (7.5')
- Significance: This Enlisted Officer's Housing Unit, along with other housing units, is a contributing element of the Fort Crockett Historic District which 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. Built in 1939, the Enlisted Officers' Housing Units, together with the Junior Officers' Housing Units, follow an earlier phase completed in 1909. These units combined 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: a Base Commanding Officer's dwelling, four Senior Officer Housing Units, and 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.
- These housing units are identical to four units on Sarna Court that housed the Junior Officers. Within the context of the Fort Crockett base, a 1949 map shows the units on the south side of the base, between the other base buildings and the Gulf of Mexico. Six smaller buildings located adjacent, to, and northeast of these units, may have also been a form of housing. A beach house was located south of these units.
- Built in 1939, this housing unit is a symmetrical, U-shaped, two-story duplex with a low-hipped roof. One-story projections appear on the side and rear walls. The unit exhibits characteristics of the Mediterranean style in its roof, arched entry way, and windows on the second story that are smaller than the windows on the first story. The overall massing and

style of the unit continues the same Mediterranean theme as the earlier housing units on the base.

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 United States Army Engineers. The Commanding Officer's Unit and the Senior Officers' Units were built in 1909 as part of the reconstruction of Fort Crockett. The housing units on 53rd Street were part of a later phase of construction in 1939, along with four housing units numbered 4117 through 4221 Sarna Court (Richter 1958).

A 1911 pamphlet mentions the early 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."

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. 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

"Souvenir of First Separate Brigade US Troops at Ft. Crockett".

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 US Coast Guard. It appears that the United States 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.

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. Correspondence from Comptroller of Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army Engineer District, Galveston to Commander, 8th Coast Guard District regarding transfer of real property, Fort Crockett, Texas and date of original construction of buildings. 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 Cawlfeld prepared the photographic documentation and Susan Cianci Salvatore compiled the Architectural Data Form based on information supplied by the U. S. Coast Guard.

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