

BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, BUILDING NO. 180
(Brooks Air Force Base, Academic Building)
2513 Kennedy Circle
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS TX-3521-M
HABS TX-3521-M

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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
BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, BUILDING 180
(BROOKS AIR FORCE BASE, ACADEMIC BUILDING)

HABS No. TX-3521-M

Location: 2513 Kennedy Circle
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

~~USGS Southton, Texas Quadrangle (7.5')~~

~~Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 14:553161.3246562~~

Google Earth Lat/Long 29.349267, -98.453747

Present Owner: Brooks Development Authority (BDA)

Present Occupant: 311th Human Systems Wing Air Force Institute for Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Risk Analysis (AFIERA)

Present Use: Administrative Offices

Significance: Building 180 (Academic Building) was the primary teaching facility at the USAFSAM campus. Located on Kennedy Circle at the north side of the complex, Building 180 housed eleven classrooms ranging in capacity from thirty-five seats to 200 seats. In addition, a large assembly hall, teaching laboratories, and a typing room supported the wide variety of students at the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM). These have included thousands of students from around the world who have come to Brooks AFB for specialized education, training, or consultation in clinical medicine, aerospace medicine, preventive medicine, occupational medicine, and related disciplines. Many of the renowned scientists instrumental in space exploration also studied, taught or lectured in Building 180. The building retains its historic integrity despite some changes in interior spaces and finishes.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1959
2. Architect: Charles H. Page, Jr. of Texas Architect-Engineer Associates
3. Original and subsequent owners: Air Force
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown

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5. Original plans and construction: Original plans are housed with BDA, 8030 Challenger Drive, Brooks City-Base, Texas.
6. Alterations and additions: Building 180 has undergone numerous minor alterations since its construction in 1959. The most far-reaching of these occurred circa 1985, when the building's asbestos ceiling tiles were removed, and the classrooms and laboratory spaces subdivided to serve as administrative office space.

B. Historical Context:

Building 180 was among the first buildings erected in 1959 as part of USAFSAM's new home at Brooks AFB. The multiple-building complex represented the base's expanding role and mission as one of the largest aerospace medical research centers in the world. With research and development goals ranging from space to warfare, USAFSAM has played a central role in the mission of the Air Force as well as the National Aeronautic and Space Administration. Though the USAFSAM campus was constructed in 1959, the history of Brooks AFB has involved multiple missions beginning with the training of Army pilots in World War I to reserve flight training during the Cold War.

Establishment of Brooks Field and Early Aviation Training, 1917-31

Established on an 873-acre tract of land in San Antonio, Texas, in November 1917, Kelly Field No. 5 grew out of the increasing wartime need for cadets and trainers. In February 1918, the airfield was officially renamed Brooks Field in honor of Cadet Sidney Johnson Brooks, Jr., a San Antonio native who died in a plane crash at Kelly Field No. 2 in 1917. The new commander of Brooks Field, Major Henry Conger Pratt, oversaw the installation's mission of preparing up to 5,000 airmen for wartime service in Europe. In addition, Brooks trained flight officers as teachers of a new British training regimen known as the Gosport System, which utilized innovative controls and speaking tubes to improve communication between instructors and cadets while in the air. The use of the Gosport system at Brooks Field convinced the War Department in October 1918, to incorporate the experimental system at Brooks Field into all Army airfields.¹

In May 1919 the Observation School at Camp Ben Wise in San Antonio, which trained cadets in the use of aerial observation, moved to Brooks Field. As one of five national balloon observation schools, Brooks Field provided surveillance along the U.S.-Mexico border utilizing the 16th Airship Company and the 4th and 5th Balloon companies. The balloon and airship program at Brooks Field, despite the initial investment of manpower and expense, proved to be a short-lived experiment for the San Antonio region. Several accidents involving explosions forced the school to close in 1922.²

The decision to remove the Balloon and Airship Observation School was part of a 1920 Army Reorganization Bill which stipulated that all flight training for the country would be centered in San Antonio air fields, including Brooks Field. By June 1922, Brooks Field was classified as the only Primary Flying School in the country as a result of the consolidation of two former flying schools in California and Florida. From 1922-31, Brooks Field earned the reputation of being one of the premier aviation training sites in the country and was responsible for developing the young Army Air Service at a crucial period of its growth.

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The system established in 1922 required all military aviators to begin their basic flying training at Brooks Field, with the graduating class moving on to the Air Service Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field. The graduating classes at Brooks later formed the basic structure of the Air Corps for decades to come. The school graduated numerous important aviators including Charles Lindbergh, Frank M. Hawks, Nathan Twining, Jimmy Doolittle, and Barney Giles. Instructors at Brooks were among the most experienced and talented aviators in the country, including Claire Chennault of the famed "Flying Tigers," Russell Maughan and Elwood Quesada.³

In addition to its celebrated graduates and instructors, Brooks Field was also the site of important advances in aviation. In April and September 1929 Brooks Field held public demonstrations of one of the earliest paratroop warfare experiments. In 1930, Colonel William C. Ocker devised a device allowing pilots to fly "blind" with the use of instruments inside the cockpit.⁴

School of Aviation Medicine (SAM), 1926-31

In 1926, SAM was relocated from Mitchell Field, New York to Brooks Field in an effort to improve pilot performance and to learn firsthand from pilots about the medical factors affecting flight. From 1926-31, flight surgeons at SAM generally acted as physicians first and teachers second; their main responsibility was to direct physical examinations to determine the condition of cadets for flying.

In 1931, SAM and the Primary Flying School moved to the newly created Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, ending Brooks Field's important aviation training mission. In the 1930s, Brooks was designated a center for observation training and housed several observation squadrons. Escalating tensions in Europe led to the establishment of an Air Corps Advanced Flying School in early 1941, which focused on training pilots in observation skills using single-engine aircraft. Because of lessons learned early in World War II, the Army Air Corps reassessed the importance of aerial observation, placing greater importance upon bombing and pursuit aircraft training. As a result, in 1943, Brooks Field began a training program for the new B-25 bomber, which greatly aided the war effort. Brooks Field became Brooks AFB in 1948 and assumed a new postwar mission as a reserve flight training center which it maintained until 1960 when all flight activities ceased.⁵

SAM: the Space Program to Vietnam, 1959-69

In 1959, SAM, now known as the School of Aerospace Medicine (SAM) was reassigned to Brooks AFB as part of a new Air Force mission to consolidate its aviation and space medicine efforts at one base. From 1959-69, Brooks AFB, as part of the Aerospace Medical Division (AMD), played a key role in providing NASA and the Air Force with innovative and important space medicine research, ensuring the success of the country's efforts in space exploration. Research at Brooks AFB utilized a range of laboratories and research facilities to perform experiments ranging from altitude and pressure experiments to space food nutritional studies. In addition to direct contributions to NASA's Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs, Brooks focused much of its space medicine efforts on the Air Force's military space program, the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL). By the mid-1960s, researchers and physicians at Brooks AFB increasingly became involved in the Vietnam War, forcing SAM and AMD to manage dual missions of space and warfare.

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The USAFSAM Campus

In 1952, with its intention to relocate the crowded facilities at Randolph AFB to Brooks AFB, the Air Force required a new master plan accommodating the new “Aeromedical Center.” Early in the planning stages, officers of the Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C., had a clear notion of the type of facility they wanted, distinguishing it from other Air Force installations: “Consideration should be given to permanence and preeminence of this facility as an academic institution . . . The quality of construction should be comparable to that of the leading medical institutions in the United States.”⁶ In designing the master plan for such an institution, officers of the Headquarters of the Air Force made an unqualified recommendation for the St. Paul, Minnesota firm of Ellerbe & Company, which already had two years experience with an earlier Brooks AFB master plan:

The Ellerbe Company, because of the design over the past twenty-five years of the varied and highly specialized diagnostic research and hospital facilities for the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota, is considered eminently qualified to continue this project.⁷

By 1954, however, Ellerbe & Company was unwilling or unable to finish work on the design of USAFSAM. Rising construction costs and the Korean War also delayed work on the project. To complete the building designs, Ellerbe & Company selected Charles H. Page, Jr. of C.H. Page & Son as a subcontractor. Graduating from the University of Texas School of Architecture in 1932, Charles H. Page, Jr. joined his father, C.H. Page, a prominent Austin architect, in 1936. The new firm specialized in the design of hospitals, schools, and military installations, including the Driscoll Children’s Hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas, Bergstrom AFB in Austin, Texas, and flight laboratories at the White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico.

Although C.H. Page and Charles H. Page, Jr. were the firm’s principals until C.H. Page’s death in 1957, the firm often collaborated with other architecture and engineering firms, using some variant of the name “Texas Architect-Engineer Associates,” as they did on the plans for the first five buildings constructed for USAFSAM, including Building 100. Architects at C.H. Page & Son were given the task of preparing a contour and building model of the entire site, later identified as ‘The Hill,’ in order to study at least three possible site plans for the school. Ellerbe’s schematic plot plans and site studies were to be used as the basis for Page’s work.

The Texas Architects-Engineer Associates completed plans for the first five buildings on the USAFSAM campus: Building 100 (Flight Medicine Laboratory); Building 125 (Research Institute); Building 130 (Research Laboratory Shops); Building 160 (Altitude Laboratory); and Building 180 (Academic Building). Plans for these structures are dated between 1956-58, and all are signed by Charles H. Page, Jr.

Building 180

Building 180 was the primary teaching facility at the USAFSAM campus. Located on Kennedy Circle at the north side of the complex, Building 180 housed eleven classrooms ranging in capacity from thirty-five seats to 200 seats. In addition, a large assembly hall, teaching laboratories, and a typing room supported the wide variety of students at USAFSAM. These have included thousands of students from around the

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world who came to Brooks AFB for specialized education, training, or consultation in clinical medicine, aerospace medicine, preventive medicine, occupational medicine, and related disciplines.

From its inception in 1917, SAM educated physicians in medical issues related to flight (called variously aviation or aerospace medicine). As aviation progressed, so did the demand for skilled flight surgeons, leading to an increase in the number of personnel instructed at SAM, and the variety of medical disciplines taught. All Air Force flight surgeons continue to take the Aerospace Medicine Primary Course today at USAFSAM, and undergraduate medical service specialists are trained as technicians to assist flight surgeons. USAFSAM's six-month program in Advanced Aerospace Medicine for Allied Medical Officers has resulted in the dispersion of Aerospace Medicine programs internationally due to the efforts of the program's graduates. Furthermore, USAFSAM boasts the oldest and largest graduate residency program in aerospace medicine in the world. In addition, short courses are taught to Department of Defense physicians on a variety of specialized topics.

With the entry of the U.S. in World War II, the need for skilled air evacuation nurses and medical technicians exploded. In 1945 the School of Air Evacuation, located at Holloman AFB in Kentucky, merged with SAM at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas. Thus, classes of around fifty nursing students per semester were added to SAM's teaching load. Today, the Aerospace Nursing Branch is responsible for training Air Force personnel as flight nurses and aeromedical evacuation technicians, and provides specialized instruction in battlefield nursing and chemical warfare casualties.⁸

Finally, USAFSAM's Division of Education provides training in aerospace physiology, bioenvironmental engineering, and environmental health. USAFSAM is the sole Air Force training institution for the majority of these disciplines, and remains the most active component of Brooks AFB. Most USAFSAM training operations were relocated from Building 180 to new facilities at the center of the base in the mid-1980s, and Building 180 became home to many base support organizations, including the administrative offices of the 311th Human Systems Wing's AFIERA.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Building 180 was built in 1959 as the Academic Building of the USAFSAM campus at Brooks AFB. Part of the original group of five buildings designed by Charles H. Page, Jr., Building 180 reflects the International Style popular in the late 1950s, with red brick exterior walls and ribbon windows framed by extruded aluminum, a flat roof, and an irregular plan. The design of Building 180 was intended to evoke the feeling of a private university rather than a typical military installation. The building is located on Kennedy Circle and is oriented towards the west, facing the other original USAFSAM buildings to reinforce the campus-like feel of the complex.
2. Condition of fabric: The building stands in good condition.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Building 180 is irregular in plan and is divided into two units, Unit A and Unit B. The overall measurement is 387'-11" x 245'-0." Unit A measures 133'-0" x 150'-0" and Unit B measures 254'-11" x 172'-0."
2. Foundation: Reinforced concrete pedestal.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are brick veneer laid in a running bond on masonry backing.
4. Structural system, framing: Building 180 has a steel-frame structural system encased in concrete.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:
 - North facade: At the main entry next to the auditorium, a 19'-6"-wide granite porch extends 4'-0" past the exterior wall. The secondary entry, in the western portion of the building, has an 18'-14"-wide granite porch with two large stone-capped planting boxes.
 - East facade: The entry adjoining the foyer of the auditorium on the east facade has a four-riser stone-capped granite stair 5'-4" wide rising to a small porch with stone balustrades.
 - West facade: At the west entry, which is aligned with the primary east-west corridor, a six-riser granite stair measures 11'-4" wide. Stone-capped balustrades flank the recessed doorway.
 - South facade: The south side of the building features a large concrete-paved terrace measuring 112'-6" x 112'-6." The terrace features a central planting area, a flight of nine steps descending to the south, and a low retaining wall capped with stone.
6. Chimneys: None

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

- North facade: The principal entry on the north facade is in Unit B, adjacent to the auditorium. It consists of paired ¼" tempered plate-glass and aluminum double-door storefront units with transoms and sidelights. The two units are joined by a single sidelight. Above the doors appears anodized-aluminum lettering identifying the building at the School of Aerospace Medicine. The secondary entry on the north facade is a simpler configuration of a double-door storefront unit of tempered plate-glass and aluminum, with a transom.
- East facade: All entries on the east facade are secondary. They include one hollow metal double door with inset lower panels and inset glazed panels in the upper portion. This door is topped by a panel of metal louvers. The adjacent entry consists of a large set of flush hollow-metal double-doors 10'-10-½" high. Another door in the east facade is a hollow metal double-door, atop a short stair, and framed by a stone surround.
- South facade: The primary entry at the terrace level of the south facade consists of paired ¼" tempered plate-glass and aluminum double-door storefront units with transoms and double-pane sidelights. The two units are joined by three sidelight panes. Secondary doorways include one glass-and-aluminum double-door storefront unit, three flush hollow metal doors, and hollow metal door with a glazed upper panel of three lights.
- West facade: The only doorway in the west facade is approached via a granite stair with stone balustrades. The opening is filled by a double-door storefront unit of aluminum and ¼" tempered plate-glass with transom and sidelights. The door is framed by a stone surround.

b. Windows and shutters: Windows are fixed plate-glass panels in extruded metal frames. Windows are grouped in a ribbon to the right of the primary storefront entry on the building's north side, in a vertical composition illuminating the stairwell on the north side of the west wing of the building, and on the south side facing onto the terrace.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat built-up roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: None. The exterior walls of Building 180 terminate in a brick parapet with limestone coping.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

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C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: Unit A of Building 180 has two floors, while Unit B has only one.

- Unit A: The first floor of Unit A contains two large classrooms, 4 smaller classrooms, a typing room, men's and women's toilets, and specialized classrooms for ophthalmologic instruction.
- Unit B: The first floor of Unit B contains the assemble hall, five classrooms, two laboratories, office space, a snack bar and lounge, and the building lobby, as well as men's and women's toilets.

b. Second Floor: The second floor of Unit A contains a large classroom, demonstration amphitheater, and assorted teaching rooms and offices. There is also a men's toilet.

2. Stairways: Unit A contains two stairways. Stair A-1 is a 180-degree return stair located at the northern extremity of the north-south corridor in Unit A, and Stair A-2, also with a 180-degree return, is located at the intersection of the two primary corridors.

3. Flooring: Asphalt tile on concrete.

4. Walls and ceiling finishes: Interior walls typically have a ¾" plaster finish, and are capped by wood cornice moldings, although in some corridors the original finish has been covered with a burlap-textured wall fabric. Typical ceilings in classrooms are of mineral acoustical tile mounted on a metal suspension system. Other ceilings are ¾" plaster over metal lath suspended from a metal suspension system. Walls in the lobby near the auditorium are finished with stained wood paneling.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Typical interior doors are 3'-0" x 6'-8" x 1-¾" wood solid-core flush doors.

b. Windows: There are no interior windows.

6. Decorative features and trim: Stained wood paneling in lobby area and aluminum-framed cork bulletin boards in the corridors.

7. Hardware: Standard commercial-grade brushed chrome finish is used throughout Building 180.

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8. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Building 180 has central air conditioning and heating.
- b. Lighting: Typical lighting in Building 180 is from recessed fluorescent fixtures.
- c. Plumbing: There are five toilet rooms in Building 180. Other plumbing fixtures include drinking fountains and sinks in laboratories and janitor's closets.
 - Unit A: Unit A is supplied with plumbing in the men's toilet on the first floor, containing six water closets with flush valves, six lavatories and seven urinals. The women's toilet on the first floor of Unit A contains four water closets with flush valves and four lavatories. The second floor of Unit A contains one men's toilet with two water closets with flush valves and two lavatories. There is no women's toilet.
 - Unit B: The men's toilet on the first floor of Unit B is identical to that in Unit A. The women's toilet in Unit B is limited to two water closets with flush valves and two lavatories. In addition, laboratories in Building 180 are supplied with running water.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Building 180 lies on the southeastern edge of Kennedy Circle, facing northwest toward Building 150. A network of sidewalks connects Building 180 to Building 150 and 155.
2. Historic landscape design: The only landscape features evident in historic documentation is the central planting area in the southern terrace, which now contains a mature Texas live oak, and the two planting boxes at the secondary entry on the North facade. The planting boxes are currently empty.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original architectural drawings: Original plans by Texas Architect-Engineer Associates, signed by Charles H. Page, Jr. and dated December 1956, are on file with the BDA, 8030 Challenger Drive, Brooks City-Base, Texas.
- B. Early views: Early aerial views of Building 180 are located at the Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.
- C. Interviews: N/A
- D. NOTES

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¹ Martha Freeman, "Appendix L: Historic Context: Brooks Air Force Base, An American Flying Field, 1917-1946." in *Brooks Air Force Base – Historic Preservation Plan* by D.E. Peter, M.B. Cliff, J. Freeman and K.L. Kane. Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, Texas, L-3.

² Brooks Air Force Base, *The First Seventy-Five Years*, (n.p., 1992).

³ Brooks Air Force Base, *Commemorative Program, Pride in the Past, Faith in the Future – Brooks Air Force Base, 1917-1992*, (San Antonio Press, 1992), p. 9.

⁴ Freeman, "Historic Context," L-23.

⁵ *Commemorative Program*, 1992.

⁶ Department of the Air Force, HQ, Washington DC to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, (June 5, 1952), Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

⁷ Department of the Air Force HQ to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, Revision of "Advance Planning FY53" Document. Various Minor Changes, (June 12, 1952), Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

⁸ Edward B. Alcott, *Aerospace Medical Division: Twenty-Five Years of Excellence, 1961-1986*, (Brooks Air Force Base, History Office, 1986), pp. 80-82.

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1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Brooks Air Force Base, *Commemorative Program, Pride in the Past, Faith in the Future, Brooks Air Force Base, 1917-1992*. San Antonio Press, 1992.

Brooks Air Force Base, *The First Seventy-Five Years*. N.p., 1992. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

"Department of the Air Force HQ, Washington DC to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army." June 5, 1952. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

"Department of the Air Force HQ to Chief of Engineers, Department of the Army, Revision of 'Advance Planning FY53' Document. Various Minor Changes." June 12, 1952. Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Alcott, Edward B. *Aerospace Medical Division: Twenty-Five Years of Excellence, 1961-1986*. N.p., 1986. Courtesy of the Museum (Hangar 9), Brooks Air Force Base, Texas.

Freeman, Martha. "Appendix L: Historic Context: Brooks Air Force Base, An American Flying Field, 1917-46." Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, Texas, 1995.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: The archives at the Edward H. White II Museum of Aerospace Medicine in Hangar 9 at Brooks City-Base contain a wealth of documentation that merits further exploration.

F. Supplemental Materials:

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFB	Air Force Base
AFRL	Air Force Research Laboratory
AMC	Aerospace Medical Center
AMD	Aerospace Medical Division
AMRL	Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory
ARL	Aeromedical Research Laboratory
BDA	Brooks Development Authority
BHF	Brooks Heritage Foundation
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
DOD	Department of Defense
HSD	Human Systems Division
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MISS	Man in Space Soonest
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOL	Manned Orbiting Laboratory
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NPS	National Park Service
SACS	San Antonio Conservation Society
SAM	School of Aviation (Aerospace) Medicine
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USAFSAM	U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine
WAC	Womens Air Corps

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Federal Agency:

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Air Force
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- B. Project Causing Adverse Effect: The Brooks City-Base project is a cooperative partnership between the Air Force and the non-federal community in which the physical assets of the former Brooks AFB have been transferred from the Air Force to BDA, a local municipality under Texas statute, the BD. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, and its enabling regulations 36 CFR 800, the transfer of Federal property is an adverse effect that must be mitigated via a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the lead federal agency, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and other consulting parties invited to participate in the consultation.

In consultation with the Texas SHPO, the Air Force determined that seventeen buildings at Brooks City-Base were eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Air Force developed an MOA in consultation with the Texas SHPO, City of San Antonio and BDA to mitigate the adverse impact that transfer would have on the seventeen historic properties at the former Brooks AFB. The MOA was also signed by two concurring parties, the San Antonio Conservation Society (SACS) and the Brooks Heritage Foundation (BHF). The MOA stipulated multiple measures, including preparation of a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level II documentation report. The Air Force, through the 311th Human Systems Wing, hired Earth Tech, Inc. to oversee the preparation of HABS documentation. Under contract to Earth Tech, HHM Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and prepared a historic context and the HABS forms.

The following individuals contributed to this report:

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