

Naval Air Station Dallas,
Drill Hall and Gymnasium
(Naval Air Station Dallas,
Building 15)
Navy Circle/Halsey Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3408-D

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Southwest System Support Office
Department of the Interior
Santa Fe, New Mexico

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS,
DRILL HALL AND GYMNASIUM
(NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS, BUILDING 15)

HABS No. TX-3408-D

Location: Navy Circle/Halsey Drive
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Duncanville Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
14.691260.362440

Present Owner: United States of America
c/o Commander, Naval Reserve Force
4400 Dauphine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70146-5000

Present Occupant: Morale, Welfare and Recreation Office

Present Use: Gymnasium, offices and warehouse

Statement of Significance: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium is significant for its dual functions as a training facility and a socially oriented support building. The Drill Hall portion of the building was directly associated with the Naval Air Station (NAS) Dallas mission, and the Gymnasium provided essential opportunities for active recreation important to the physical and mental health of base personnel. Built in 1943 to provide additional training and recreational space, it continues to provide recreational opportunities as a gymnasium. Undertaken in support of the base's growing pilot training mission, the building's dual functions contributed to the expanding role that aviation played in Naval operations as World War II progressed. Moreover, it is a tangible link to the Navy's presence in the Dallas-Grand Prairie area and is representative of the important role NAS Dallas played in local history. Designed by Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, with E. S. White serving as the project architect and Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR, in charge of construction, the Drill Hall and Gymnasium is a utilitarian building with a laminated-wood-arch ceiling support system that may be modeled on a prototype developed for the military by the New York City firm of Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, designers of the Empire State Building. The building resembles an aircraft hangar (popular tradition at the base refers to this building as an old hangar, a use it did not have), an appropriate reference

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considering the mission of the base. Built at the same time as installations at Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Chase Field (Beeville), Texas, and NAAS Kingsville, the Drill Hall and Gymnasium at NAS Dallas resembles surviving landplane hangars at Beeville and Kingsville. It is a distinctive example of World War II military architecture and illustrates one type of building the Navy specified. Despite significant alterations to the building, it retains its massing, form, and ability to convey a sense of time and place.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Preliminary plans approved January 23, 1943, with final plans approved June 15, 1943. The exact date that construction began is unknown.
2. Architect: Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, with E. S. White serving as the project architect.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States of America, Department of the Navy.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Lt. Commander W. M. Powell, CEC, USNR, was the officer in charge of construction. Actual contractors and materials suppliers are not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Reproductions of an incomplete set of plans for the building are available at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. The building was constructed from standardized plans developed by the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks (Y&D drawing Nos. 195-253 and 195-262). It appears to be a modification of the new 1943 drill hall design with laminated truss ceiling developed by the New York City firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, the firm that designed the Empire State Building. Navy drill halls utilizing the Shreve, Lamb and Harmon design were constructed at Great Lakes Naval Base, Illinois, and at other locations throughout the United States. Although no certain attribution can be made, the materials, laminated wood arch ceiling design, and overall mass of the barrel-vaulted portion of the building indicate that Building 15 may have been based on the Shreve, Lamb and Harmon design, which was in use in 1943, the year that Building 15 was constructed.

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Preliminary plans for the building were approved on January 23, 1943, indicating that the building was on the drawing boards in late 1942. It is not known whether the Shreve, Lamb and Harmon design was finished and available to the Bureau of Yards and Docks as early as late 1942.

6. Alterations and additions: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium was originally clad in asbestos shingles, and had a clerestory with industrial-type windows running the length of the north and south elevations. In 1964, the original asbestos was removed and the exterior refinished with cement asbestos shingles, and the clerestory windows covered with plywood sheets. In 1986, the building was resided with elastomeric stucco. The clerestory windows were covered on the outside. Inside, these windows were left exposed but the glass was painted. The original two-story wings were modified to one story, and the form of their roofing modified from shed to flat. The original, continuous wood ventilator unit, which was located on the roof and stretched virtually its entire length, also was removed. Despite the removal or covering of much of the building's original historic fabric, its rooflines, massing, and distinctive form remain largely intact, and the building retains its ability to convey a sense of time and place.

B. Historical Context:

The Drill Hall and Gymnasium was built in 1943 as part of the third and final construction phase of World War II. During this last mobilization before D-Day in 1944, Congress allotted \$2.1 million for expansion at NAS Dallas. This coincided with the former Naval Reserve Air Base (NRAB) being redesignated as an NAS on January 1, 1943. The Drill Hall and Gymnasium, valued at \$310,000, was one of 47 buildings and two underground ammunition bunkers completed at NRAB Dallas at the time of its redesignation.¹ Plans for the building, which were designed by the firm Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, based on standardized drawings developed by the Department of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, were approved on January 23, 1943.² The Drill Hall and Gymnasium may be based on a drill hall design by Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, of New York City, who also designed the Empire State Building.

Traditionally called the old hangar because of its appearance, the Drill Hall and Gymnasium was built while the mission of NAS Dallas was rapidly changing. In addition to the growth of the station's primary flight training program and aircraft acceptance depot activities, NAS Dallas received its first contingent of Women in Auxiliary Voluntary Service (WAVES) in 1943 and began to offer flight instructor training courses.³ The building's role as a training and recreational

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facility was beneficial to the growing number of personnel involved in several different activities at NAS Dallas during World War II. The building provided drill practice for various Navy units at the base and the gymnasium originally contained five basketball courts to help station personnel stay in shape.

In 1964 and later in 1986, the building's exterior was renovated. The Drill Hall and Gymnasium currently functions as a gymnasium and office building and is currently valued at \$2 million.⁴ It will cease to operate in this manner in 1998 when NAS Dallas closes as a result of recommendations made by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. No decision has been made regarding the disposal of the Drill Hall and Gymnasium or any other Navy-owned building at NAS Dallas.

Notes

1. *Dallas News*, 23 December 1942, n.p.
2. Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawing Nos. 195-253 and 195-262, Plans and Drawings, 1945-1995, Public Works Department, NAS Dallas, Texas.
3. Emme, Eugene M., Lt. (jg.), USNR, "A History of Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas," 15 October 1944. Typescript on file at the Dallas Public Library, Archives Floor.
4. Department of the Navy, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Disposal and Reuse of Naval Air Station Dallas, Texas," April 1995.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium is meritorious for its design, which uses clear-span, laminated wood arches to support the barrel-vaulted arch roof and provides a large, open, interior space for drill and athletic activities.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition, but has been heavily modified. However, the intricate truss ceiling and clerestory are intact.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium is a one-story building that measures 308 feet long, 141 feet wide, and 36 feet high. It contains 43,428 square feet. The original exterior wings were replaced in 1986 by one-story side wings that flank the entrance and run the length of the building on the north and south elevations.
2. Foundation: The building rests on a concrete-slab foundation.
3. Walls: The exterior, which was originally clad in asbestos shingle, was covered with cement asbestos shingles in 1964, and the clerestory windows were covered with plywood sheets. In 1986 the building was resided again with a coat of elastomeric stucco. Previously, wood-covered windows received an application of the new siding material. A large-scale eagle graphic is applied to the walls at each end of the building. On the east end, the word "RECREATION" is spelled out in large block letters.
4. Structural system, framing: The building utilizes a wood structural system, including a barrel-vaulted wood-frame ceiling with a laminated-wood-arch support system.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A concrete slab platform one-step high forms a partial-width integral porch area on the north and south elevations and leads to three single-entry doors. A one-story, flat-roofed overhang shelters the porches and projects beyond the exterior side walls that partially enclose the foyer that forms each porch.
6. Chimneys: None
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Although most entry locations are intact, original doors have been replaced. The main entrance is located in the center of the north elevation and consists of three glass-and-metal frame doors that lead to the interior of the building. Secondary entries flank the main entry. These are composed of one-story, partially enclosed foyers with metal-and-glass storefront-type doors set in wood surrounds. The entry to the east of the main entrance provides access to locker rooms. The entry to the west of the primary entrance provides access to the base exchange

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administrative office. The entrance on the south elevation mirrors the main entry. An additional entry with a metal door is located on the south elevation. The west elevation contains four, metal overhead doors inset in sliding steel-and-glass doors. The sliding doors on the west elevation are the only visible historic material on the exterior. The east elevation has two, metal overhead doors.

b. Windows and shutters: The original windows in the clerestory of the building extended along the length of the north and south elevations. These windows, which are metal, six-light awning windows, were covered with elastomeric stucco in 1986. Inside, the clerestory windows are still visible, although the glass has been painted. Double-hung, 1/1 metal-sash windows and a horizontal sliding window are located on the north elevation.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium has a large barrel-vaulted roof with small, one-story flat-roof wings that extend the length of the north and south sides. Roofing is a single-ply membrane. A low parapet projects above the roofline on the east and west elevations.

b. Cornice, eaves: The building has a wood cornice with metal flashing. The side wings have metal gutters and downspouts.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: The existing configuration includes a gymnasium on the east side and a storage area for the base exchange on the west side. A two-story wood-frame room located in the center of the building serves as a break room and aerobics area. It separates the two main spaces of the building. The one-story wings on the north and south sides contain locker rooms, weight rooms, and administrative areas. Small rooms for the storage of equipment and weight training have been constructed within the east end of the building. A second-floor gallery constructed of wood with wood hand rails overlooks the large interior space and extends along the north and south sides of building. The original internal configuration

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featured a large, central open space for drill and athletic activities flanked by small storage, support, and activity rooms in the two-story wings.

The base exchange administrative offices, located on the northwest side of the building, have been recently subdivided and remodeled. The laminated-wood arches are prominent in this area, extending down through the ceiling to the floor; they are encased in sheetrock. A warehouse area for the base exchange is located beneath the vaulted ceiling, and has an office area and several levels for storage. Goods are stacked on steel shelves.

2. Stairways: Original wood staircases remain near the north side of the building, providing access to second-level warehouse and gymnasium areas.
3. Flooring: Basketball courts, located on the east side of the building, have wood or linoleum finishes. Administrative areas, offices, and weight rooms have carpeting. The original flooring was pecan planking laid over the concrete slab. A hot-mix asphaltic concrete floor was laid over the pecan floors in 1964.
4. Walls and ceiling finishes: The Drill Hall has a vaulted ceiling with laminated-wood arches. Administrative offices and weight rooms in the recreation areas have wood-paneled walls. The base exchange office has recently installed sheetrock walls. The east end wall has been covered with plywood. A utility closet located in the north wing has asbestos-board walls and ceiling. The original laminated-wood-arch vaulted ceiling in the main hall is intact, but ceilings in the remainder of the building are of the dropped type consisting of particle board suspended in metal frames.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Interior doors are wood set in wood frames.
 - b. Windows: The original windows in the clerestory of the building extended along the length of the north and south elevations. These windows, which are metal, six-light awning windows, were covered with elastomeric stucco in 1986. Inside the building the glass in these windows is painted.
6. Decorative features and trim: Except for those elements described in other sections pertaining to the interior, no decorative features and trim were identified.

7. Hardware: No original hardware was identified in the building.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Portions of the building have central heating and air conditioning, but the warehouse and basketball courts do not. Space heaters are located above each basketball court.

b. Lighting: High-intensity discharge type lights, with either sodium or metal halide fixtures mounted in helmet-shaped metal shades, are suspended from the vaulted ceiling. In areas with dropped ceilings, light is provided by fluorescent tubing.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Drill Hall and Gymnasium faces north onto an adjacent parking lot. It is located in the area of the base devoted to personnel support. Administrative, residential, and dining facilities are located east of the building. To the north and northeast are retail facilities such as the base exchange, commissary, and gas station. The area surrounding the Drill Hall and Gymnasium has informal landscaping, such as tree-lined streets, shrubs, sidewalks, and lawns. To the west of the building is the industrial area of the base, which contains buildings involved in the maintenance, repair, and support of the base and the aircraft that form the basis for its mission.

2. Historic landscape design: The area immediately around the Drill Hall and Gymnasium retains its historic street patterns. Because of the utilitarian nature of the building, it is unlikely that this facility was complemented by landscaping during the war years. Existing landscaping includes a small lawn that wraps around the building, and a decorative wood fence along the sidewalk and at the entrances on the north elevation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: Reproductions of an incomplete set of original architectural drawings are on file at the Public Works Department, NAS Dallas. These drawings list Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects and Engineers, Houston, Texas, as the architects of record, and E. S. White as the architect in charge. Available plans include floor plans, elevations and interior finish schedules, and front entrance details.

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Floor plans and elevations for repairs done in 1964 also are available. No decision has been made as to where the drawings will be moved when the base closes.

B. Early views: No early views of the Drill Hall and Gymnasium were located during research.

C. Interviews: No oral interviews were undertaken to prepare this form.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Dallas, Texas. Naval Air Station Dallas. Public Works Department. Plans and Drawings, 1945-1995.

Moore, Cooper, White & Moore, Architects & Engineers, Inc. Plans and drawings, 1942.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Crews, Joseph M., *A Historical and Architectural Assessment of Dallas Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas*, 2 vols. Prepared for the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth, Texas, 1 June 1994, vol. 2.

Dallas News, 23 December 1942.

Department of the Navy, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Disposal and Reuse of Naval Air Station Dallas, Texas," April 1995.

Emme, Eugene M., Lt. (jg.), USNR. "A History of Naval Air Station, Dallas, Texas." 15 October 1944.

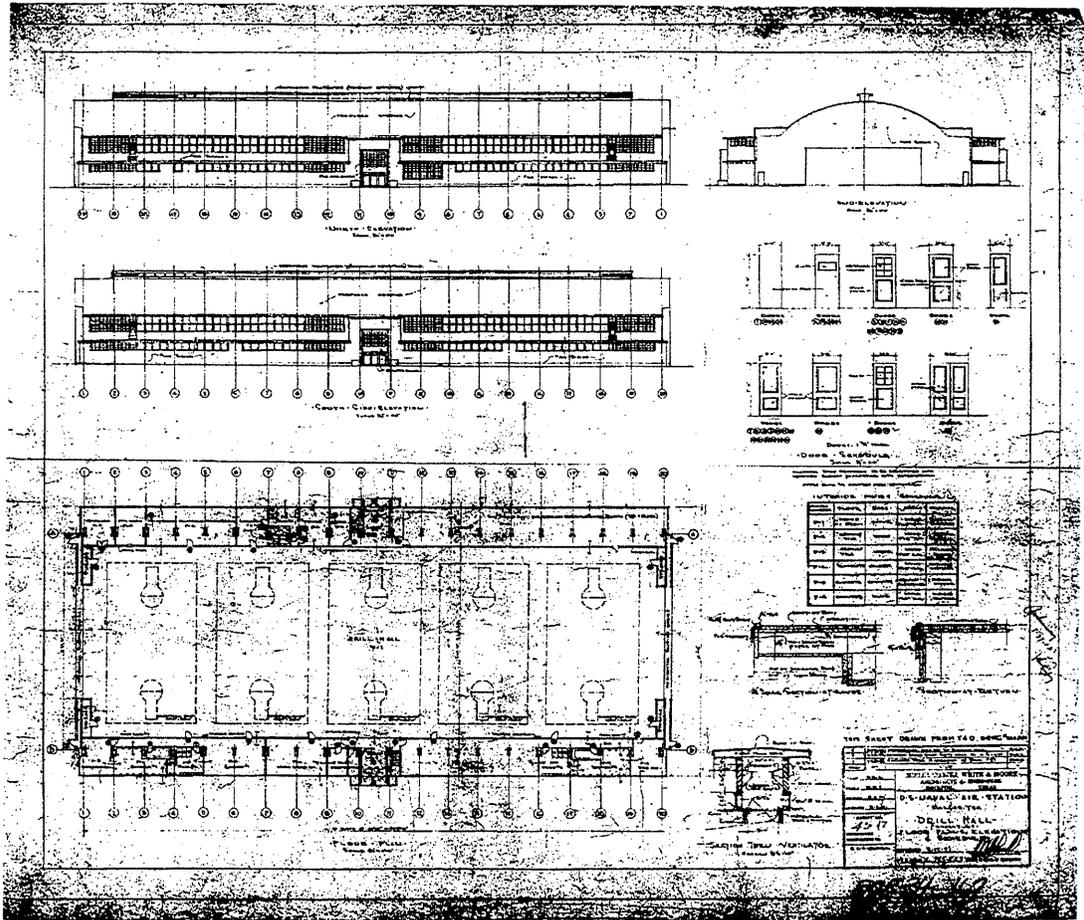
E. Likely sources not yet investigated: Information on NAS Dallas may be held in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., or in the architectural collections of the archives in Suitland, Maryland. These repositories will not be investigated for the purposes of this project.

F. Supplemental Materials: N/A

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The decision by the Defense BRAC Commission to close NAS Dallas and relocate needed activities to NAS Fort Worth (the former Carswell Air Force Base) triggered an assessment of the property's potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. The Texas Historical Commission determined 12 buildings and structures in a portion of the base built for and associated with World War II Navy activities and two single family officer's house and two adjacent lagoons built for and associated with Army Air Corps activities in the late 1920s and the 1930s to be eligible for NRHP listing. The Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, the Department of the Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation are in the process of signing a Memorandum of Agreement requiring Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level I documentation of the 14 buildings and structures and two lagoon areas. Through its Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southern Division, with offices in North Charleston, South Carolina, the Department of the Navy contracted with Turner Collie & Braden, Inc., of Houston, Texas, to oversee the preparation of the Historic American Buildings Survey recordation. Under contract with Turner Collie & Braden, Hardy•Heck•Moore & Associates, Inc. of Austin, Texas, gathered historical and architectural information and, prepared a historic context and the HABS forms. Diane Elizabeth Williams served as principal investigator and project architectural historian. David Moore served as historian, Sara Kirtland was associate historian, and Elliott K. Wright gathered information for the architectural descriptions. Craig Melde, of ArchiTexas, Dallas, Texas, supervised the preparation of the measured drawings, Craig King served as project coordinator, and Stan Solamillo was the field coordinator. Measured drawings were drafted by members of the ArchiTexas staff. Tom Eisenhower recorded the historic resources with large-format black-and-white photographs.

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