

Naval Air Station Dallas,
Water Cistern
(Naval Air Station Dallas,
Facility 63)
Enterprise Drive/Midway Loop
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3408-L

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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,
WATER CISTERN
(NAVAL AIR STATION DALLAS, FACILITY 63)

HABS No. TX-3408-L

Location: Enterprise Drive/ Midway Loop
Dallas
Dallas County
Texas

U.S.G.S. Duncanville Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
14.691140.3623685

Present Owner: United States of America
c/o Commander, Naval Reserve Force
4400 Dauphine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70146-5000
Upon closure of the base, this structure, which is owned by the Navy but is on land leased from the City of Dallas, will revert to the ownership of the City of Dallas

Present Occupant: Public Works Department

Present Use: Water storage tank

Statement of Significance: The Water Cistern was constructed in 1941 as part of the first major World War II construction program at the Naval Air Station (NAS) Dallas. Utilitarian in form and materials, it is significant as a distinctive element of the infrastructural system of the World War II era and for its role in the delivery of water throughout the base. It retains a high degree of integrity and conveys a strong sense of time and place.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: The exact date construction began is unknown, but the structure is associated with the first major building program at NAS Dallas. It was probably completed in early 1941.

2. Architect: Unknown.

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3. Original and subsequent owners: United States of America, Department of the Navy.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: General contractors were Henger Construction Company (location unknown).
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans and drawings for this structure were not located during research efforts.
6. Alterations and additions: Although it retains a high degree of integrity, and there are no discernable exterior alterations to the concrete cistern, the mechanical systems have been upgraded to provide reliably safe drinking water. They do not retain the original materials and do not appear to reflect the technology of the 1940s.

B. Historical Context:

The Water Cistern, constructed in 1941, was part of the initial construction phase of Naval Reserve Air Base (NRAB) Dallas. Funded with congressional appropriations from the National Defense Act of 1940, NRAB Dallas was one of three NRABs built in the United States at that time. As it did at identical installations in New Orleans and Atlanta, construction began at NRAB Dallas in the winter of 1940-1941.¹ The Water Cistern was constructed as an infrastructural facility for the two hangars and barracks buildings built at the base during that period.

The Water Cistern is located adjacent to the Pumphouse (Building 33), the Heating Plant (Building 34), and the Water Tower (Facility 62). The 200,000-gallon Water Cistern cost \$13,323 to construct, out of \$1,211,000 allotted for construction at NRAB Dallas in 1941. There is no other specific information about the Water Cistern during the World War II era. The purpose of the cistern was to provide a ready water supply for the entire base.²

No cosmetic alterations have been made to the Water Cistern, although the mechanical systems have been regularly upgraded to provide NAS Dallas personnel with safe drinking water. When NAS Dallas closes in 1998, following recommendations by the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, the ownership of the Water Cistern will revert to the City of Dallas, the entity that owns the land on which the cistern is located.

Notes

1. Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineers Corps, 1940-1946*, 2 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), vol. 1, p. 233.
2. Crews, Joseph M. *A Historical and Architectural Assessment of the 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.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The design of the Water Cistern is representative of utilitarian in-ground water storage facilities built in the early 1940s.
2. Condition of fabric: The Cistern is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Water Cistern has a 200,000-gallon capacity. It is a round, roofed structure that rises 6½ feet above grade and is 68 feet in diameter.
2. Foundation: The Cistern utilizes a reinforced-concrete foundation.
3. Walls: The walls are constructed of concrete. A steel ladder is attached to the north side to provide access to the roof of the Cistern. Large-gauge metal pipe extends from inside the Cistern through its roof and, over the edge of the Cistern, then connects to underground pumping equipment that is adjacent to the Cistern.
4. Structural systems, framing: The Cistern utilizes a structural system of poured-in-place concrete foundation, walls, and roof cover.
5. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The Cistern has a flat, concrete roof. Metal flashing is applied at the junction of the roof and wall.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Water Cistern is located in a flat, grassy area adjacent to the Pumphouse (Building No. 33), the Heating Plant (Building No. 34), and the Water Tower (Facility No. 62). This area of the installation contains a variety of operational support buildings devoted to the maintenance, repair, and operation of the base and the aircraft utilized in training. The hangars and runways are located to the west and Mountain Creek Lake is to the east and south. The original Hensley Field facility is located north-northwest.

2. Historic landscape design: This area of the installation is industrial in nature, and there is no attention to decorative landscaping, except for the occasional small area of grass. Ground surfaces are primarily poured concrete with asphalt streets. This treatment has created a large access area for vehicles and equipment and is in keeping with the historic character of the area. The area immediately around the structure is planted with grass.

Outbuildings: Adjacent to the Cistern are two subterranean concrete vaults that measure approximately two by three feet; they have removable metal covers. These contain a variety of pumping, purification, and measurement devices associated with the function of the Cistern.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original architectural drawings: No original plans or drawings were located at NAS Dallas for this structure.

B. Early views: One early, undated view of the Water Cistern was located. In addition to the Cistern, the photograph shows the Maintenance Hangar, the smaller Assembly and Repair Hangar, the Water Tower, the Pumphouse, the Paint and Dope Shop, the Heating Plant, and various other associated buildings. It appears to date from the late 1940s or early 1950s. Copies of this photograph, and others in the collection, can be obtained by contacting the Public Affairs Officer, NAS Dallas, Dallas, Texas. Other early views of the facility are held at the main branch of the Dallas Public Library in the NAS Dallas files.

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

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

NAS Dallas. Public Affairs office. Photograph, c. 1950.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Crews, Joseph M., *A Historical and Architectural Assessment of the 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.

Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks. *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineers Corps, 1940-1946*. 2 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), 1947, vol. 1, p. 233.

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 houses 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,

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Inc., of Houston, Texas, to oversee the preparation of the HABS 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.