

ARLINGTON HALL STATION
4000 Arlington Boulevard
Arlington
Arlington County
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-1270

HABS
VA
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Mid-Atlantic Region
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARLINGTON HALL STATION

HABS No. VA-1270

Location: 4000 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia

USGS Alexandria, VA Quadrangle. Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.317500.4304000

Present Owner: General Services Administration

Present Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Military Post

Significance: Arlington Hall Station is significant as the location of both Arlington Hall Junior College, a women's educational institution established in 1927, and as the headquarters of United States Army intelligence activities from 1942 to 1989.

Arlington Hall Junior College was one of the first post-secondary women's educational institutions established in the Washington, D.C. area. The school provided both liberal arts and home economics-oriented curriculum. The school's founder, Dr. William E. Martin, stressed the importance of physical activity in conjunction with education and, as a result, Arlington Hall Junior College included an active program of physical education, most notably an award-winning riding club. Arlington Hall Junior College also provided social opportunities for its students with an active schedule of dinners, teas, balls, and formal dances.

In 1942 the United States Army took over Arlington Hall Junior College and established its Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) at the former campus. The SIS had responsibility for cryptanalysis of intercepted enemy messages, development of codes and ciphers for the Army, and production of Army cipher machines. The SIS scored several significant intelligence success during World War II, including the breaking of the Japanese military and diplomatic cipher systems. This work provided crucial intelligence information to Allied leaders.

Army intelligence agencies remained at Arlington Hall Station until 1989, when they were relocated to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. At that date Arlington Hall Station was turned over to the Department of State for use as a training center.

Overview of Site

Arlington Hall Station, the former headquarters of the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) is located five miles southwest of Washington, D.C. in Arlington, Virginia. The 86.5-acre site that presently comprises Arlington Hall Station is located on the south side of Arlington Boulevard (US Route 50) between Glebe Road (State Route 120) and South George Mason Drive.

Arlington Hall Station is located on the grounds of the former Arlington Hall Junior College for Girls. The facility is entered off Arlington Boulevard, where a curved drive lined with mature trees, Seventh Street, leads to Building 1 (the Administration Building). Located on a slight rise, Building 1 is the most visually dominant building at the site. It fronts onto the main entry drive and overlooks a grove of mature oaks. The site's other buildings are generally located south and east of Building 1, towards the rear of the property. A series of streets curve through the site and provide access to the buildings.

Dr. William Martin, President of Sullins College, a private junior college for women in Bristol, Virginia, founded Arlington Hall Junior College for Girls in 1927. Martin had been instrumental in the development of Sullins into a leading women's college and in the mid-1920s became interested in developing a similar institution in the Washington, D.C. area. In 1925 Martin purchased a wooded 100-acre parcel in Arlington, Virginia for the development of a new junior college.¹ In the spring of 1926 Martin led a group of Sullins College students on a two-week trip to Washington, D.C. to attend concerts, museum exhibits, and lectures. The visiting students stayed in two cottages (Buildings 50 and 51) recently erected on Martin's newly purchased property. Later that same year Martin asked four Sullins College faculty members to assist him in forming the new college.²

Arlington Hall Junior College opened in late September 1927, although the Main Building (Building 1) remained incomplete. Some of the new students and faculty lived in one of the cottages at the north end of the property for the first week. Even after the original thirty-five students and faculty moved into the Main Building they "climbed over dirt, dust, mud, and plaster."³

¹"An Interview with Miss Frances S. Jennings Former Dean, Arlington Hall Junior College," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, B (October 1988): 26.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 27.

The new school attracted students from Sullins College, the Arlington area, and adjoining states. Daughters of government and military officials serving in Washington, D.C. also attended Arlington Hall. Most students came from the top ten percent of their high school class, although special consideration was given to students with talent in drama, art, or music.⁴

Arlington Hall's first classes produced few students who continued their education at four-year colleges or universities. As the school became more established and the size of the student body grew, the administration sought to develop a curriculum that would enable students to continue their education after graduating from Arlington Hall. By the 1930s, students could chose from a wide variety of courses. A liberal arts curriculum that included mathematics, English, psychology, and economics prepared students for admission into four-year colleges. Those who chose not to continue their education could opt for courses in home economics and secretarial studies.⁵

Physical education played an important role in Martin's educational philosophy and in the Arlington Hall curriculum. The administration encouraged students to participate in individual sports, such as horseback riding, swimming, tennis, golf, archery, badminton, and riflery, that they could continue to pursue after they left school. Students chose the sports in which they wished to participate, and could decide to limit themselves to a single sport. To encourage student participation, the school provided facilities for a variety of sports, including field hockey, tennis, shooting, golf, and riding. The school's gymnasium included an indoor swimming pool, while an indoor riding arena and a network of campus bridle paths encouraged students to improve their riding skills. The school's riding club became a major source of institutional pride and won many trophies in competition.⁶

Arlington Hall sought to provide its students' with social graces as well as with physical and intellectual development. The College hosted formal Thursday evening dinners, recitals by students, faculty, or invited guests, a Christmas Banquet, teas, and formal dances in the school's dining room, which was transformed, for these events, into a ballroom. Orientation Week for the new students included social activities with men from local colleges and universities on the school's calling list. A Winter and Spring Horse Show were highlights of the school's social, as well as sporting, calendar.⁷

⁴Ibid., 30.

⁵Ibid., 31.

⁶Arlington Hall Junior College, brochure on file at Arlington County Library, Arlington, VA.

⁷"Interview," 32-33.

The design of the Arlington Hall Junior College campus provided beautiful, bucolic surroundings for the students. The site's rolling hills were covered with groves of trees, curved drives, and pathways. Perennials such as irises and peonies were planted along flagstone paths meandering through the campus.⁸ Rustic bridges were constructed across the streams in the meadow located north of the Main Building. A large garden planted with trees, shrubs and flowers was located south of the Main Building. A walkway leading from the south entry of the Main Building to the north entry of the gymnasium passed through this garden and was interrupted by a circular pool and fountain. Stone benches were located throughout the rear garden.⁹

The initial building campaign at Arlington Hall Junior College included the erection of the Main Building (1927-28), Gymnasium (1928), and Boiler House. The early construction of the gymnasium coincided with Martin's belief in the importance of physical activity. This building, presently Building 465, and not included in this documentation, provided facilities for posture and dance classes, including ballet, modern, tap, and natural dance. The building also housed an indoor swimming pool.¹⁰

Other buildings erected at Arlington Hall by the College administration included an indoor riding arena (Building 110) erected in 1936, a rustic log cabin, known as the Tea House or Chatterbox, erected in the southeastern portion of the property ca. 1938, and the two small cottages constructed at the northern end of the site prior to 1926. The Tea House, built of logs gathered on the campus grounds, served as an informal gathering place where students could listen to the radio or celebrate birthday parties.¹¹ The building was demolished in 1942. The cottages, which are extant, housed college officials and faculty.

Arlington Hall Junior College experienced financial difficulties with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Martin sold holdings in Bristol, Virginia, the site of Sullins College, to keep Arlington Hall solvent. Throughout most of 1931 the Arlington Hall faculty received no salaries except for room and board. Banks in both Bristol and Alexandria pressed for the initiation of bankruptcy proceedings and in the spring of 1932, following graduation, the school closed. Martin returned to the presidency of Sullins

⁸Arlington Hall brochure.

⁹Historic Photograph File, U. S. Army INSCOM Historian's Office, Fort Belvoir, VA.

¹⁰Arlington Hall brochure.

¹¹"Interview," 28.

College and the Court appointed T. L. Hayworth, Comptroller of Bristol, Virginia as receiver.¹²

Meetings were held throughout the summer of 1932 in an effort to determine the fate of Arlington Hall Junior College. A Board of Directors, consisting of bankers and lawyers as well as an executive committee of local college and university deans attempted to guide Arlington Hall through bankruptcy and, if feasible, reestablish the college. After many faculty members agreed to return to their positions at the school the Board of Directors sent letters to the students' parents regarding the school's reorganization. Carrie Sutherlin, formerly the school's Academic Dean, was appointed President of the College, with Frances Jennings as Dean.¹³

During the summer of 1932, as the board of Directors sought to reorganize and save Arlington Hall, the school advertised the Main Building as a hotel for visitors to the George Washington Bicentennial celebrations. Room and board in the Main Building cost three dollars a day, and advertisements noted the school's convenient location near both Washington and the historic sites of Virginia.¹⁴

Students returned to Arlington Hall in the autumn of 1932. The faculty and Board of Directors felt confident that they could make Arlington Hall Junior College one of the best junior colleges for women in the area and laid plans for the expansion of the school and the development of new programs. During the decade following the bankruptcy reorganization, the Board of Directors constructed new facilities, raised faculty salaries, strengthened existing academic departments, and developed new departments.¹⁵ By 1935 course offerings included mathematics, Latin, English, French, psychology, sociology, economics, history, journalism, secretarial studies, art, home economics and music.¹⁶ The size of the student body grew steadily during the 1930s ultimately numbering approximately three hundred students. At the time of the College's sale to the United States Army in 1942 the school had been assured accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.¹⁷

¹²ibid., 29-30.

¹³ibid., 30.

¹⁴Historic Photograph File.

¹⁵"Interview," 33.

¹⁶The Senior Class, *The Spinning Wheel 1935* (Arlington, VA: Arlington Hall, 1935), 17.

¹⁷"Interview," 30-31.

During the 1920s and 1930s, while Martin developed Arlington Hall Junior College, the United States Army refined and improved its intelligence apparatus. By 1942 the Signal Intelligence Service functioned as the Army's principal intelligence agency. The SIS evolved out of the Military Intelligence Section of the War Department's General Staff, first organized in 1917 at the time of the United States' entry into World War I. Major Ralph Van Deman organized the Military Intelligence Section and established a Cipher Bureau, known as MI-8, within the Section to provide expertise in cryptanalysis and code compilation.¹⁸

After World War I, MI-8 continued as a covert cryptanalytic agency funded by both the State and War Departments. The Army's Signal Corps retained responsibility for Army code and cipher compilation. During the 1920s, MI-8 managed to break Japan's diplomatic code, an accomplishment that strengthened the United States' negotiating position at the Washington Peace Conference.¹⁹

MI-8 was discontinued in 1929 after the War Department determined that the operation did not meet its future requirements and Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson decided that cryptanalysis of foreign diplomatic communications was unethical. As a result, the Intelligence Service came under the control of the Signal Corps.²⁰

William F. Friedman headed MI-8's successor organization, the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS). Friedman had received cryptologic training at a private institution and served as a cryptologic officer with the American Expeditionary Force in France during World War I. Friedman guided the SIS to some of the most significant intelligence triumphs in the history of the United States.²¹

By the time the United States entered World War II, Friedman and his group had developed new electromechanical cipher machines that provided unprecedented security for American communications and, perhaps more significantly, had enabled Friedman's staff to break PURPLE cipher system used to transmit the most secret Japanese diplomatic messages.²²

¹⁸History Office, ODCSOPS, *Arlington Hall Station and Military Intelligence* (n.d.), 13.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 14.

²²Ibid.

When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, the need for signal intelligence (SIGINT) and communications security (COMSEC) operations increased dramatically. As a result the SIS greatly expanded its operations, quickly outgrowing its cramped quarters in the Munitions Building, located on Constitution Avenue between 19th and 21st Streets in Washington.²³

In April 1942, the Army issued a directive calling for an investigation of possible new sites for the SIS located within one and one half hours of Washington. Plans to move the SIS offices from the Munitions Building to the newly constructed Pentagon had been canceled because the Service's rapid wartime expansion had already outstripped the space assigned to it in the new building. Wartime concern over the possibility of bombing raids and sabotage complicated the selection of a new site.²⁴

The selection of the Arlington Hall Junior College site as SIS's headquarters came quite by chance. A group of SIS officers noticed the Arlington Hall campus when returning to Washington from the Service's monitoring station at Vint Hill Farms in Warrenton, Virginia. An initial inspection of the school's grounds and facilities convinced the officers that the site suited their needs. Soon after this initial inspection the Director of the Army Communications Service and the Chief of the SIS inspected the site and recommended its purchase by the War Department.²⁵

The Army approached the Arlington Hall Junior College Board of Directors about purchasing the property, but the Board declined their offer. The Army then attempted to obtain the property without condemnation under the War Powers Act. The War Department appraised the property at \$600,000, but the College's Board of Directors valued the site at \$840,000. Since an agreement upon a sales price could not be reached, the Army filed a Declaration to Take in Federal District Court in June 1942. The Court acted on the suit immediately, granting a Right of Entry to the Army and setting the purchase price at \$650,000, which paid off the school's mortgage.²⁶ The Board of Directors considered relocating Arlington Hall Junior College to another site in the Arlington area, but, in the midst of World War II, failed to obtain the necessary funds.²⁷

²³Ibid.

²⁴*History of the Signal Security Agency* (n.d.), 121-122. Part of a largely classified, ten-volume history of the Signal Security Agency held by the U.S. Army INSCOM Historian's Office, Fort Belvoir, VA.

²⁵Ibid., 122.

²⁶Ibid., 123.

²⁷"Interview," 34.

In July 1942, immediately following its acquisition of the site, the Army began to transfer SIS operations to Arlington Hall. The move from the Munitions Building to the new headquarters was complete by August 24, 1942. The Army made only essential alterations to the College buildings to accommodate the SIS, including unspecified minor remodelling in the College's Main Building, which was redesignated as the Headquarters Building (Building 1), and conversion of the Riding Arena (Building 110) into a supply warehouse.²⁸

The need for additional facilities at Arlington Hall Station became apparent immediately following the SIS's move to the new facility. The heavy equipment used by the Tabulating Machine Unit strained the structural system of the Headquarters Building. Individual operating units were crowded into converted dormitory rooms and classrooms. A unit known as B-II-a-3, which consisted of thirteen people and their associated desks, filing cabinets, and equipment, was squeezed into two former dormitory rooms and their shared bath.²⁹

During the latter part of July 1942, prior to the completion of the SIS's move to Arlington Hall, a series of meetings were held to plan a building campaign to accommodate the increasing number of military and civilian employees at the facility. John McShain, Inc., of Philadelphia, was chosen as the contractor for the new buildings.³⁰ McShain's firm had extensive experience in the construction of buildings for the federal government. During the time that the new buildings were erected at Arlington Hall Station McShain's firm also completed work on the Pentagon.³¹

McShain's firm began work on Operations Building A, presently known as A Building or Building 401, in September 1942. Simultaneously with the construction of the Operations Building work began on the erection of thirteen barracks for enlisted men. These thirteen temporary wood structures (presently buildings in the "300" series at the post) were located northeast of the Operations Building. By November 1, 1942 some of these barracks were ready for occupancy by members of the 2nd Signal Service Battalion. Other

²⁸*History of the Signal Security Agency*, 124-126, 127, 139.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 127-128.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 128-129.

³¹J. McShain, 90, Phila. Developer," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 September 1989.

buildings erected as part of this construction effort included a dispensary, a mess hall, and a post exchange.³²

Before Operations Building A was completed, the War Department finalized plans to expand the number of civilians workers at Arlington Hall Station to more than 3,600. Realizing that these new employees could not all be accommodated in the Headquarters Building or the new Operations Building, plans were made to erect a second operations building, similar, but not identical, to A Building. John McShain Inc. received the contract for the new work, and broke ground for Operations Building B on December 4, 1942. Employees began to move into the new facility less than ninety days later, on March 3, 1943. Operations Building B was complete, and fully occupied by May 1, 1943, less than five months after the start of construction.³³

In July 1943, the SIS was redesignated the Signal Security Agency (SSA). During World War II the SSA controlled a network of intercept stations located throughout the world through its 2nd Signal Service Battalion. Intercepted messages were relayed back to the SSA facility at Vint Hill Farms, near Arlington Hall. The civilian and military workers at Arlington Hall Station then attempted to decode the intercepted messages. During the course of World War II, the SIS and SSA enjoyed considerable success in cracking enemy codes and ciphers, particularly the Japanese military and diplomatic cipher systems. The information gleaned from the intercepted messages provided the Army with vital intelligence regarding enemy plans and intentions.³⁴

In addition to its code-breaking activities, the SSA also assumed responsibility for the security of Army communications during World War II. This work entailed the development of ciphers and cipher machines that were used throughout the various theaters of operation.³⁵

In June 1943 550 enlisted women (WACs) were assigned to Arlington Hall Station. These women were quartered in the thirteen existing enlisted men's barracks (300 series), which were altered for their use. In addition, a Beauty Shop was provided for the WACS. Alteration of the barracks buildings began in early August and was completed by October 10, 1943.³⁶

³²Ibid., 130.

³³Ibid., 131.

³⁴*Arlington Hall Station and Military Intelligence*, 14.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶*History of the Signal Security Agency*, 133.

The enlisted men who vacated the new WACs barracks were housed in six newly constructed theater-of-operations-type barracks located northwest of Headquarters Building near the main entry to the site. Latrine and supply buildings were erected as part of this construction project. These barracks, which, like all theater-of-operations-type construction, lacked central heating, were completed by October 1943.³⁷

In January 1944 a directive ordered an increase in the size of the Arlington Hall Station staff. An additional 700 enlisted women, 200 officers, and 2,275 civilian employees were assigned to the facility. In anticipation of this increase, plans were prepared for the construction of thirteen centrally-heated, mobilization-type barracks, a fourteen-bed dispensary, a 620-seat auditorium and theater, a troop administration building, a new motor repair shop, a new mess hall, a new post exchange building, a new Post Engineer Office and Shop, a recreation building, a 9,000-square-foot warehouse, and additional cafeteria facilities. No new office space was required since most of the new personnel were to be assigned to graveyard or swing shifts.³⁸

These new buildings, located in the northeastern portion of the site and, for the most part, presently numbered in the "500" series, constituted the first semi-permanent military construction at Arlington Hall Station. The Army's Service Command recommended the new buildings be unheated theater-of-operations-type buildings, constructed of frame and sided with tar paper and battens. The Chief of Staff's office, however, approved construction of centrally heated mobilization-type barracks.³⁹ This decision, combined with the decision to construct the buildings in concrete block instead of wood, suggests that the Army had decided to create a more permanent presence at Arlington Hall Station. All previous military construction at the facility, including the two massive Operations Buildings, was temporary wood frame construction designed to be erected quickly and intended to last only five to twenty years.

Work on the new series of barracks and support buildings began on April 4, 1944. Less than six weeks later the two contractors responsible for the construction effort had completed approximately half of the project. By July 15, 1944, little more than ninety days from the project's start, the work was virtually complete. The Post Theater opened on August 12, 1944 and began

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 133-134.

³⁹Ibid., 134.

showings movies on a daily basis. In August 1944 a drill field was graded and seeded for ceremonies, retreat parades, and recreational use.⁴⁰

By the end of World War II approximately 8,000 civilian and military employees worked at Arlington Hall Station on twenty-four-hour, six-day-a-week schedule. Within a few months of the war's end the civilian work force at Arlington Hall Station was reduced by half. The SSA was discontinued and was replaced by the Army Security Agency (ASA), which was under the control of the Director of Intelligence of the War Department General Staff. Unlike the SIS and the SSA the ASA exercised direct control over all of the Army's SIGINT and COMSEC operations.⁴¹

During the late 1940s a variety of administrative changes occurred at Arlington Hall Station. Various security operations associated with the newly established United States Air Force were headquartered at the facility during this period. Activity at Arlington Hall Station increased during the Korean War, and the size of the work force at the facility increased.⁴²

In 1952 the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) transferred its responsibilities related to cyrptology to the National Security Agency (NSA). In 1955 the NSA began vacating its facilities at Arlington Hall Station, and by 1958 both A and B Buildings stood empty. A variety of intelligence and intelligence-related support operations quickly moved into the two buildings.⁴³

During the 1960s and 1970s Arlington Hall Station provided operational facilities for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), the successor to the ASA. The DIA began to vacate the facility in 1984,⁴⁴ and INSCOM is currently (1989) completing its relocation to a new facility at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Many of the activities conducted at Arlington Hall Station since 1942 are considered secret. Documents related to World War II-era construction programs or operations remain classified and were unavailable for use in this report. The location of various activities, the function of some buildings or portions of buildings, and the activities of many of the agencies headquartered at the facility are not known. Activities during World War II

⁴⁰Ibid., 135, 139-140.

⁴¹*Arlington Hall Station and Military Intelligence*, 3.

⁴²Ibid., 3-4.

⁴³Ibid., 4-5.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 5-6.

clearly included the analysis of intercepted enemy transmissions, the development of codes and ciphers for use by the Army, and the production of cipher machines. For the period following World War II even less information is available. Arlington Hall clearly continued to play a major role in the provision of signal intelligence and communications security for the United States Army. Beyond that broad generalization virtually no information is available to the general public.

Despite the strict security that cloaks much of the history of Arlington Hall Station since its acquisition by the federal government in 1942, it is clear that the facility has functioned as an exceptionally significant element of the United States' intelligence network. During World War II, the cryptologic successes enjoyed by the Army's SIS and its successor the SSA, both headquartered at Arlington Hall Station, most notably the breaking of the Japanese military and diplomatic ciphers, provided crucial intelligence that dramatically affected the outcome of the war.

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Project Information

This documentation was undertaken in September 1989 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the General Services Administration, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of the subject buildings at Arlington Hall Station.

