

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL HOSPITAL, RECREATION BUILDING
(Gymnasium)
Green Street
Portsmouth
~~Portsmouth County~~
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1287-N

HABS
VA
65-PORTM
2N-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Northeast Field Area
Chesapeake/Allegheny System Support Office
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL HOSPITAL,
RECREATION BUILDING
(Gymnasium)

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HABS
VA
65-PORTAL
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Location: Green Street, Portsmouth, Virginia
UTM: 18.383500.4078220
QUAD: Norfolk South, VA; 1965 (photorevised 1986)

Significance: The Recreation Building, the primary recreational facility of the Portsmouth Naval Hospital complex, is significant as reflecting the importance of gymnasium recreation in the complex and for the U.S. Navy.

Description: The Recreation Building is a large, two-story building with a T-shaped plan, located on the west side of Green Street just northwest of the modern high-rise hospital. Built of concrete block with a buff-colored, stretcher-bond brick facing, the building features a variety of brick and cast-concrete detailing. A one-story, L-shaped addition of yellow brick wraps around the building's northeast corner and along its north elevation. Currently, the main entrance doors are located at the south end of the addition's east elevation. Aside from a single door on the north elevation and double doors on the west elevation, there are no other openings in the exterior walls of the addition. Although the door and window openings of the original entrance on the south elevation are now infilled with the same yellow brick as the addition, the building still retains its stripped-down classical, five-bay facade featuring a central pavilion with three recessed bays and four streamlined-type brick pilasters, each crowned with a concrete medallion. The west elevation of the T-shaped end pavilion at the north end of the building has raised lettering "CREDIT UNION" above an entrance door. The windows are altered, one-over-one sash and fixed, single-pane sash, with concrete lintels and sills. There are six large, recessed bays with corbeled heads on the east and west elevations, with double doors in their north and south bays. The exterior walls of the building have a simple, three-part brick fascia featuring a soldier course, surmounted at the northern and southern ends of the building by a parapet with a concrete coping, and augmented by a corbeled brick cornice at the southern end. A fly loft is located centrally on the roof of the T-shaped end pavilion.

The first story contains recreational facilities including a bowling alley, snack bar, game room, weight room, gymnasium and locker rooms, while the second floor contains primarily office space. The gymnasium, still occupying the central portion of the building, has a basketball court with a wood floor, stadium-type seating at the south end of the room above the dressing rooms, and a

suspended ceiling. The weight room is situated next to the gymnasium on the north, and has a carpeted floor, wood paneled walls with mirrors, and a suspended ceiling. A mezzanine accessible from the weight room provides space for a ping-pong table. The staircase to the second floor is located just off the entrance foyer, and features a Modern-style wood balustrade.

The Recreation Building is approached from Green Street by a short concrete driveway and concrete sidewalks. A grassy lawn adjacent to the main building entrance features several tall pine trees, and an electrical substation located immediately east of the building is surrounded by a chain-link fence and partially screened by an evergreen hedgerow. There are parking lots to the south and west of the building, and the Shower Room and Swimming Pool complex (HABS No. VA-1287-M) is to the north.

History:

The Recreation Building, designed in 1942 and completed in 1943, is still in use. The one-story addition was built in the late 1960s or early 1970s, providing expanded bowling facilities and an entrance vestibule; alterations to the original entry and locker rooms presumably occurred at the same time.

Originally, the Recreation Building had six-over-six sash windows at the first and second floors, with traceried, pivoted sash windows at the attic story on the east, north and west elevations of the T-shaped end pavilion. The front elevation (south facade) featured a double-door entrance in the center bay, with half-paneled wood doors containing six lights over single raised panels, and a rectangular, six-light transom, with a denticulated wood cornice. A cast-iron grille with Greek-style geometric tracery was located in a square opening above the entrance at the second-story level.

The original first floor featured an entrance foyer on the southern end, with restrooms, team rooms, and equipment rooms located on each side of the central entrance hall that opened directly into the gymnasium. With the closure of the south entrance, the area of the central hall now provides added space to the men's locker room at the southeast corner of the building. Separate exterior entrances also provided direct access to the gymnasium, team rooms, and T-shaped end pavilion; only the former are still extant. The northern T-shaped end pavilion contained a stage that opened onto the adjacent gymnasium, as well as dressing rooms, additional restrooms, and a bowling alley. The stage area and fly loft have been converted into the present first-floor weight room and mezzanine game room, while the original bowling alley was

significantly enlarged by the late-1960s/early-1970s addition. The second floor included stadium seating and a projection room above the entrance foyer, and a conference room, library, and offices in the T-shaped end pavilion above the first-floor dressing rooms and bowling alley. These spaces generally remain in the same use today.

The Recreation Building was designed by the Navy Department, Bureau of Yards and Docks. The property is owned by the United States Department of the Navy with caretaker responsibility assigned to the Commanding Officer, Naval Hospital, Portsmouth.

Sources:

Class 2 Property Record, Public Works Office, Facilities Management, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA.

"Proposed Recreation Building," (location plan, first and second floor plans, southeast and northeast elevations), June 19, 1942, Shelf file #551-34-100, Bureau of Yards and Docks #313353. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

"Recreation Building, Elevations," August 14, 1942, Shelf file #551-34-103, Bureau of Yards and Docks #313358. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

"Recreation Building, Miscellaneous Details," August 14, 1942, Shelf file #551-34-105, Bureau of Yards and Docks #313360. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

Williams, Coile and Blanchard, Architects and Engineers. "Recreation Building #109 - Floor Plan & Key Plan," April 7, 1951, Bureau of Yards and Docks #28424. Atlantic Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Norfolk, VA.

"U.S. Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Va., General Development Map, Existing Conditions," September 18, 1979, Bureau of Yards and Docks #15246. Public Works Office, Facilities Management, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA.

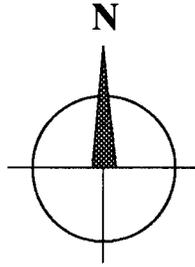
Land and Community Associates, "Recreation Building; Floor Plans (as of May 1991)," adapted from "Proposed Recreation Building," June 19, 1942 (see above).

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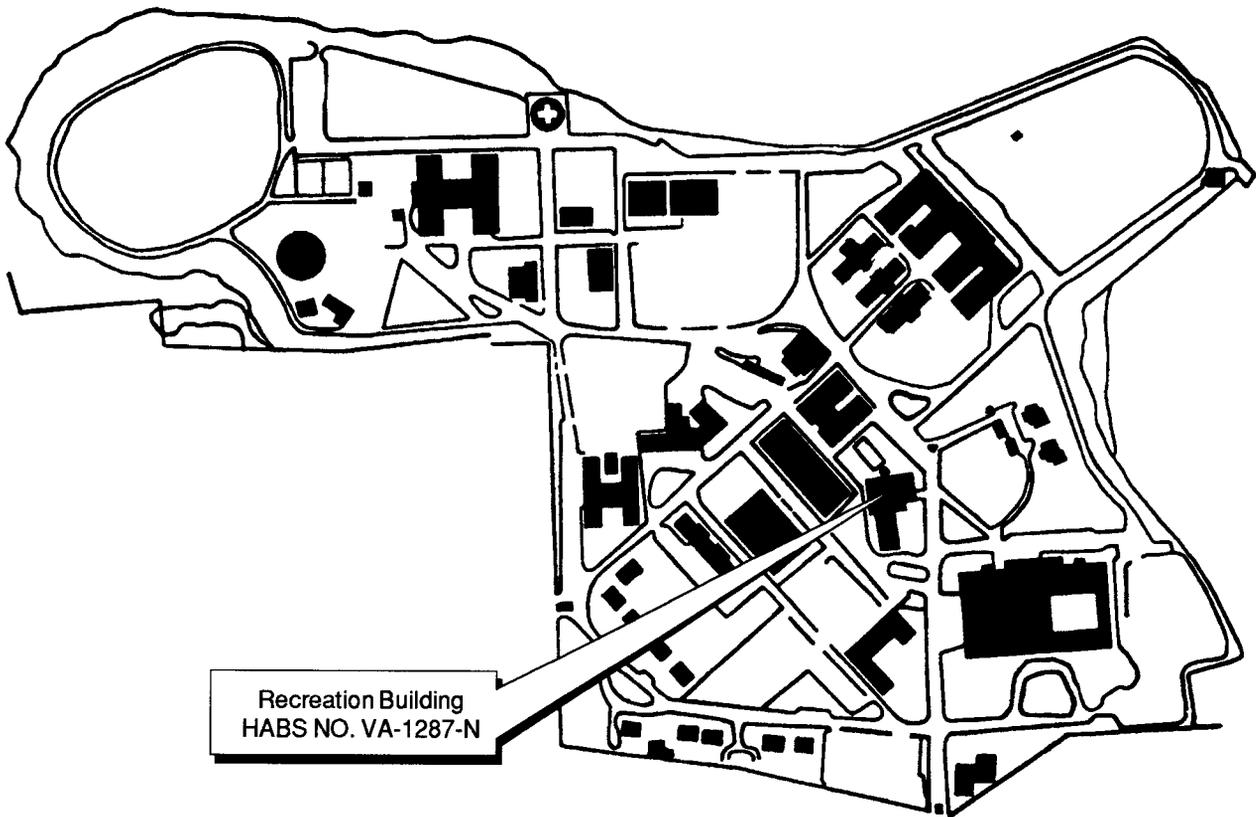
Historians: M.J. Wuellner, Frederick Schneider, Land and Community
Associates, April 1991.

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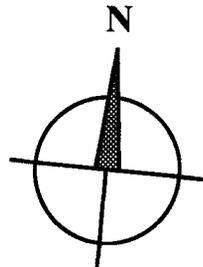
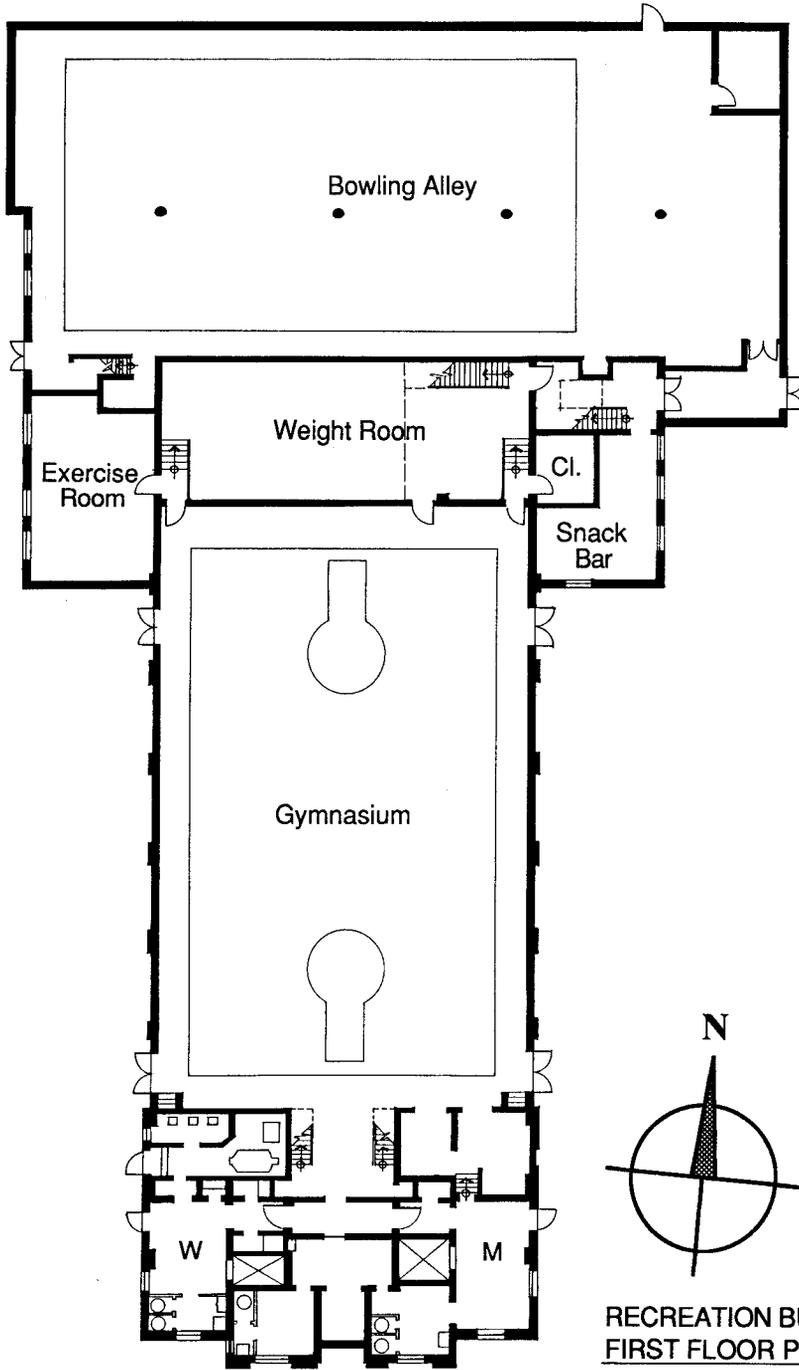


NAVAL HOSPITAL Portsmouth, Virginia

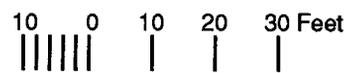


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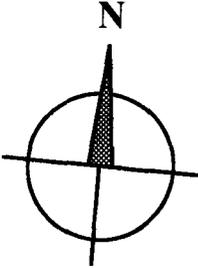
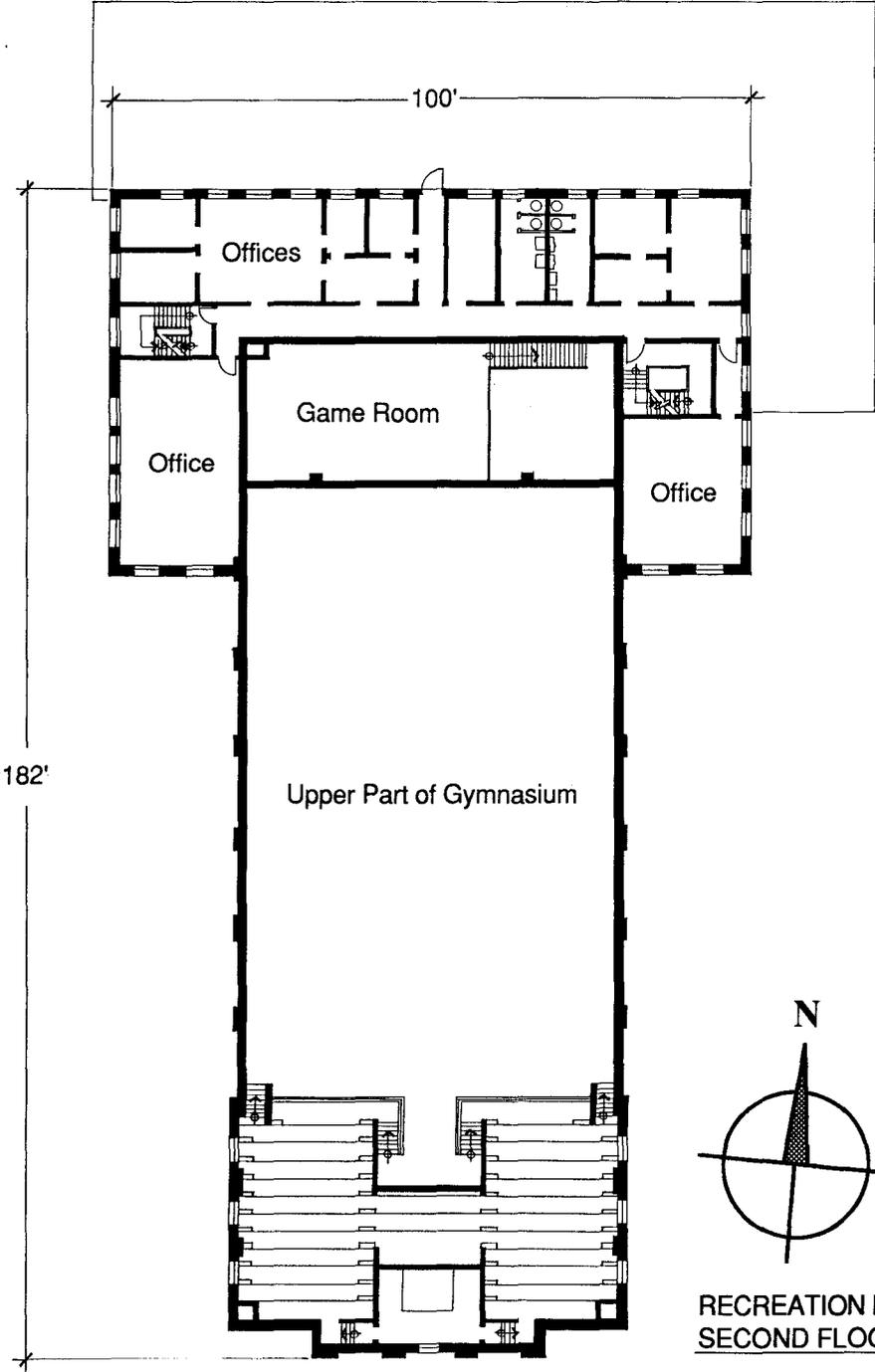


RECREATION BUILDING
FIRST FLOOR PLAN (as of MAY 1991)

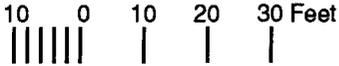


Scale: 1" = 30 feet

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RECREATION BUILDING
SECOND FLOOR PLAN (as of MAY 1991)



Scale: 1" = 30 feet