

Fort David A. Russell, Artillery Barracks
(Fort David A. Russell, Building 224)
Randall Avenue between 6th and 5th Streets
Cheyenne
Laramie County
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-148

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Fort David A. Russell, Artillery Barracks

HABS No. WY-148

(Building No 279)

General Information

Site Location: Randall Avenue between 6th and 5th Streets
Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming
USGS quadrangle: Cheyenne North, WY (7½ Minute Series, 1994)
UTM coordinates: 13.511689.4555560.

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Defense.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Vacant.

Present Condition: Fair.

Significance: The Artillery Barracks were constructed in 1903-04 to house some 120 enlisted men for the Army's Artillery Corps. Identical with the barracks building immediately west, this was one of many large-scale buildings built as part of an extensive construction program at Fort David A. Russell around the turn of the century. The Artillery Barracks are a typically configured masonry building, one of a long series of brick and frame enlisted men's dormitories situated along Randall Avenue. With its red brick walls, white trim, and symmetrical facade with full-width colonnade and front pediment, the building typifies the modified Colonial Revival architectural style widely used by the Army's Quartermaster General's office.

Historical Information

Physical History:

Date of erection: 1903-04.

Architect: Quartermaster General's Office, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C.

Original and subsequent owners: This building was situated on land that has historically been owned by the United States of America as part of the Fort David A. Russell military reservation. It was located within the boundaries of both the National Historic District established in 1969 and the National Historic Landmark District established in 1974.

Builder, contractor: M.P. Keefe, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Original plans and construction: One deteriorated plan drawing of the building's first floor is on file in the F.E. Warren Air Force Base archives. Although produced by the Quartermaster General's Office, the drawing's title block is missing, making it impossible to determine its date and delineator.

Alterations and additions:

The Artillery Barracks have undergone relatively minor changes that have impacted the building's architectural character somewhat, particularly its interior spaces and finishes. Completed in November 1904, the building has since undergone periodical maintenance and/or replacement of its exterior elements (i.e., painting wood trim, replacing slate roof shingles with asphalt). The most serious alteration to the front involves the remodeling of two double-leaf and one single-leaf doorways on the first floor into windows. Additionally, wood latticework has been added over the original front porch piers. Other than these modifications, the front and sides appear essentially unaltered. The building's south rear has been more extensively altered, with the replacement of the covered veranda in the central part with an open concrete stoop. Additionally, several of the window and door openings in the rear U-shape have been modified or bricked in, primarily on the west leg. The interior was altered extensively around 1960, involving the subdivision of the open, dormitory-type spaces into numerous individual apartments along narrow hallways. During this process, virtually all of the interior finishes were removed or obscured by new finishes. The partitions have more recently been removed—re-opening the building's original open spaces and revealing some of the original ceiling and wall finishes—in preparation for another interior reconstruction.

Historical context:

Established in 1867 to provide military protection for the Union Pacific Railroad, Fort David A. Russell continued to function and expand as a military post long after the threat of Indian depredations had declined in the late 1870s. The Department of War declared it a permanent post in 1885, sparking construction of the first permanent brick buildings. These were followed in subsequent years by a growing array of substantial brick and frame structures designed to house the officers, enlisted men, and their livestock, ordnance and equipment. In 1902 the garrison at Fort D.A. Russell was expanded to include twelve companies of infantry and one battery of field artillery. In 1905 the fort was again increased to brigade size. The post's population soon burgeoned, necessitating construction of expanded facilities to accommodate the increased troops. This intensive construction program continued until 1913, with the peak construction occurring between 1908 and 1910. At its conclusion, some 150 new structures of varying sizes, functions and materials had been built at Fort D.A. Russell. Entailing many of the post's most prominent buildings and parade grounds, it virtually transformed the fort's architectural and landscape character.

Among the buildings constructed during the 1902-1913 program were these artillery barracks. Situated along a row of brick enlisted men's quarters built in 1904-1912, the building housed 120 men (later reduced to 112) in open-bay dormitory spaces. This structure was one of two side-by-side artillery barracks built in 1903-1904 by Cheyenne contractor-and mayor-M.P. Keefe. Keefe completed Building 223 in April 1904; he completed Building 224 in November for a cost of \$46,267.96. Occupied soon thereafter, this building initially housed troops from the Thirteenth Battery of Field Artillery. The barracks subsequently housed infantry troops and more recently functioned as enlisted women's quarters. It is presently undergoing rehabilitation as a dormitory.

Architectural Information

- Architectural character:** The Fort D.A. Russell Artillery Barracks are a symmetrically massed, classically detailed structure, reflective of their army quartermaster origins. This building is, like the other enlisted men's quarters along Randall Avenue, a relatively large-scale brick structure with Colonial Revival massing and detailing. The building has undergone only minor exterior alterations and appears today much as it did when it was opened late in 1904.
- Condition of fabric:** Exterior: excellent; interior: poor (undergoing rehabilitation).
- Description of Exterior:**
- Overall dimensions: Main section: 140'0" x 38'0"; rear wings: 38'0" x 42'0". The building is massed as a two-story main section over a raised basement, appended on the south by two, two-story rear wings, forming a symmetrical U-shape.
- Foundations: Sandstone ashlar perimeter walls.
- Walls: Common red brick laid in running bond, with corbeled brick string-course between first and second stories.
- Structural system: Brick masonry bearing walls and cast iron columns with wood frame floor, ceiling and roof systems.
- Porches, stoops: Full-width, two-story front porch along front wall. The 10-foot-wide porch features 16 regularly spaced bays of Tuscan columns, steel pipe handrails, open-tread stairs and latticework in front of the supporting piers. The shallowly pitched porch roof features boxed cornices with

molded friezes. A full-width, single-story porch with a shed roof is attached to the rear of the east wing. This is detailed like the front porch, with boxed cornices, pipe handrails and four Tuscan columns. The original covered porch along the rear wall of the main section has been replaced with an open concrete stoop.

Doorways and doors: Double-leaf doorways are centered on the projecting central front bays on both first and second floors. These feature modern doors, segmental-arch heads and concrete lug sills. One double-leaf door is centered on the rear wall of the main section. This, like the front doors, features a segmental-arch head, modern doors and concrete sill.

Windows and shutters: All exterior walls on both floors contain evenly spaced, two-over-two, double-hung windows with segmental-arch heads and concrete lug sills. The north front contains twelve window bays; the sides of the main section, two; the sides of the east and west wings, four and three, respectively; the rear of the east and west wings, two and three, respectively; and the rear of the main section, six bays. Two smaller two-over-two, double-hung windows are centered in the gable of each rear wing, and a modified Palladian window is centered in the front dormer. None of the windows have shutters.

Roof: A moderately pitched, side-gabled roof with a central, gabled dormer covers the main section. Similarly pitched gables cover the rear wings. The main, wing and dormer roof cornices are boxed, with molded friezes and returns on the gable ends. Originally sheathed with slate shingles, the roof now features three-tab asphalt shingle sheathing. These roofs are punctuated by brick chimneys (two interior and one exterior end chimneys on the main roof, one exterior end chimney on the east wing) and painted steel attic ventilators (two on the main roof section, one of each of the rear wings).

Description of Interior:

Floor plans: The building's main doorway on the first floor entered the Main Hall, behind which the main stairway, a closet and the tailor shop were situated. West from the Main Hall, entered through a double-leaf doorway, was the Day Room, which was adjoined by storerooms. Behind this in the west wing, was an open-plan dormitory area, where 24 beds were arranged in pairs around the columns and storage lockers lined the outside walls. East of the Main Hall was the Mess Room, featuring five long tables spaced between the columns. The Kitchen,

Pantry and Cook's Quarters were situated behind this in the east wing. The Second Floor consisted of open-plan dormitories, which, like the first floor, featured beds in the middle of the spaces and storage lockers along the walls. These spaces were subdivided into a series of small apartments around 1960. Almost all of these more recent interior partitions have since been removed, pending the building's interior rehabilitation. This has left what is essentially an open shell.

- Stairways:** One half-turn, wood stairway between first and second floors is situated along the west wall of the Main Hall. This stair features plain-board treads, risers, stringers and handrails. Although configured generally like the original stairway, this appears to be a complete replacement. Another small half-turn stairway in the east wing has been removed.
- Flooring:** Primarily wood strip flooring with vinyl-asbestos tile sheathing.
- Wall and ceiling finish:** First floor interior walls have largely been stripped of their plaster—and later sheetrock—finish, revealing the underlying brick walls and furring strips. First floor ceilings are primarily sheathed with painted pressed metal panels, featuring coved panels at wall edges and structural beams. Second floor walls and ceilings are painted plaster or sheetrock.
- Doorways and doors:** Interior doorways have virtually all been removed, pending the building's interior rehabilitation.
- Windows:** Interior window casings and finish sills have been removed from virtually all windows, pending the building's interior rehabilitation.
- Decorative features and trim:** Cast iron columns with Tuscan capitals on both floors.
- Hardware:** Interior doorways featured mortised locksets and hinges, now all removed. Windows feature metal sash locks.
- Mechanical equipment:** The building has always been served by electricity and plumbing. The original heating system consisted of a coal-fired boiler in the basement (which was replaced in 1937) that fed hot-water radiators. Mechanical systems have all been gutted, pending the building's interior rehabilitation.

Description of Site:

The Artillery Barracks are situated along Randall Avenue, one of a long series of enlisted men's barracks built around the turn of the century. Although these barracks display a diversity of configurations, they all share similar characteristics of scale, materials, height, setback and landscaping. The Artillery Barracks are situated in a grassed lawn, with mature deciduous and coniferous plantings.

Sources of Information

Architectural drawings:

The Artillery Barracks were built from OQMG Plan Number 150. A badly deteriorated copy of the first floor plan is presently kept at the F.E. Warren Air Force Base archives. It is reproduced as HABS Photo No. WY-148-21.

Bibliography:

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Project Information

This report was prepared by Clayton B. Fraser, Principal of Fraser-design, under contract with the Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the National Park Service, in behalf of the U.S. Air Force. The interior of the Artillery Barracks Scale House was recorded photographically by Clayton Fraser in June 1996; the exterior was photographed in January 1997. For an overview history of Fort David A. Russell, see HABS No. WY-117.