

Governors Island, New York Arsenal
Building #109
Governors Island
New York Harbor
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5715-6F

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK ARSENAL, BUILDING NO. 109 HABS No. NY-5715-6F

Location: The building is located north of Andes Road near the ferry slip, south of Building #140 on Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: United States Coast Guard

Present Occupant: United States Coast Guard

Present Use: Offices for Captain of the Port

Significance: This building was built in 1918 as part of the response of the New York Arsenal to World War I. It was originally a wood-frame structure, but now has brick walls.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The present building was constructed in 1918. A photograph of that date shows it.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The War Department of the United States (after 1947, the Department of the Army) was the owner until 1966 when the island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard.
4. Builder: The original building was probably constructed by civilian laborers under the direction of the Commanding Officer of the New York Arsenal. The brick version was done under the auspices of the Quartermaster General.
5. Original plans and construction: Building #109 was constructed as part of the war effort in 1918. It was originally a wood frame structure as shown in a 1918 photograph. This photograph shows it as a rectangular building with a double gable roof.

6. Additions and alterations: In 1945, the master plan for Governors Island proposed that this building be demolished. However, during the late 1940s, it was built in brick.

Since 1982, a new rusticated entrance door has been added on the west end.

B. Historical context:

This structure was built on the grounds of the New York Arsenal in 1918. It was the last building constructed before the Ordnance Department turned the arsenal over to the Second Corps Area in 1920. Although the Ordnance Department had for years defended the arsenal as a valuable storage depot, the storage capacity on the island proved more useful to the Quartermaster Corps rather than to the Ordnance Department during World War I. While the Quartermaster Corps constructed numerous warehouses on the island, the Ordnance Department constructed only one.

After the Ordnance Department closed the arsenal in 1920, the Second Corps Area used the structure as the post commissary during the 1930s and 1940s. Since the 1950s, it has been used as offices.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is an example of a simple, functional style of army architecture.
2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the building seems excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is a rectangular brick building, 56' x 126' with an offset located along the south side 12'6" x 10'3". It is a one-story structure with a partial basement.

2. Foundations: The foundation is brick on concrete with a brick, all stretcher water table and an extended brick wall along the north side.
 3. Walls: The walls are brick, all stretcher bond with brick quoins at the corners. Along the sides and ends of the structure are external brick elements in the form of diamonds or lozenges.
 4. Structural systems, framing: The walls are load-bearing masonry. A row of lolly columns along the length of the center of the structure that support the wood truss roofs, according to the Army record drawings of the 1950s.
 5. Porches: There is an open concrete porch on the east end and an open brick entry porch with brick steps on the west end.
 6. Chimneys: Interior brick chimney located along the north side in the west end.
7. Openings
- a. Doorways and doors: The doors are mainly wood paneled with glass lights. The entranceway on the west facade has a heavily rusticated wood frame that is stained a light color.
 - b. Windows: The windows are two-over-two light double-hung sash with flat brick arches and brick lug sills. There are semi-circular windows in each gable end (now bricked in).
8. Roof:
- a. Shape, covering: The roof is an asphalt shingled double gable roof. There are metal vents in the roof.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There is a simple molded wood cornice and brick denticulation along the eave line in the gable.
- C. Description of Interior: The interior of this structure has been modified as necessary.
1. Floor plans: The building is basically a central hall arrangement with groups of offices along either side.

2. Stairways: None
3. Flooring: The floor covering is linoleum over an asphalt tile floor.
4. Wall and Ceiling finish: The walls are finished with plywood paneling. The ceilings are of acoustical tiles.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doors are modern wood paneled with glass lights.
 - b. Windows: The windows are set in simple wood frames.
6. Decorative features and trim: None visible
7. Hardware: The hardware is modern.
8. Mechanical equipment: Heating is provided by a boiler system.
9. Original furnishings: None

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: This building faces west towards the ferry slip. It is set back from the roadway which allows for some landscaping. Along the south side is a road bed and to the north is a road bed. To the east is a small parking lot shared with Building #108.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps and Architectural Drawings:

US Army Record Drawing, 1950s, located in Facilities Engineers, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York. (Copy located in HABS No. NY-5715-6F Field Records).

B. Views

Photograph of Governors Island, ca. 1918, Governors Island Museum, Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York.

Photographs from the Work Projects Administration, 1938, in possession of the Special Services Division, New York Support Center, Building #110.

C. Bibliography:

Primary and unpublished sources:

US Army Real Property Records, located in Facilities Engineers, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York.

Secondary and published sources:

Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York. A Master Plan and Program for Future Development by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1945.

D. Supplemental Information

See HABS No. NY-5715-6F pages 6 and 7.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) at the request of the United States Coast Guard, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, New York, who funded the project. It is an addition to work accomplished during the summers of 1982 and 1983. This entailed an historic structures inventory, a National Historic Landmark District nomination and documentation of five properties which was completed in 1984. A three-volume report and inventory cards containing the results of the historic structures inventory were transmitted to the Library of Congress as field records under HABS No. NY-5715. The National Historic Landmark District nomination was submitted and acted upon favorably by the National Park System Advisory Board in October of 1984. This project is to document a select list of structures including the New York Arsenal.

Sally Kress Tompkins, Deputy Chief of HABS/HAER, was project manager. Jet Lowe, HAER staff photographer, completed the large format photography. Jay Silberman, Environmental Specialist, District Planning Office, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, served as manager and coordinator of the project for the U.S. Coast Guard. Katherine Grandine was project historian.



Photograph taken in 1938 showing WPA work on Governors Island.
Building #109 is at the right of the photograph.

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Photograph taken in 1938 showing WPA work on Governors Island.
Building #109 is in upper left corner.

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