

ALCATRAZ POST EXCHANGE

ABBREVIATED HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

ABBREVIATED HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT
ALCATRAZ POST EXCHANGE BUILDING

ALCATRAZ ISLAND
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

DRAFT

October 31, 2001

Prepared by:
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TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER
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INTRODUCTION

This Abbreviated Historic Structures Report was prepared for the National Park Service by the firm of Lerner & Associates, Architects. The work was performed under a contract between Lerner & Associates and the Golden Gate National Park Association (GGNPA), a designated National Park Service cooperating association operating under the NPS Cooperating Associations Policies, Standards and Guidelines, NPS-32. A percentage of the profits from the interpretive services and book sales provided by the Association to visitors is used to fund projects that provide specifically for the interpretation of Alcatraz Island. The Architectural Historian was John Martini and the Structural Engineer was Sven Thomasen of the firm Wiss, Janney, Elstner and Associates.

Alcatraz Island was designated a National Historic Landmark on January 17, 1986 after having first been entered onto the National Register of Historic Places on June 23, 1976. It has been in the National Park Service since the creation of Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972 and has been open to the public for tours since October of 1973. The island remains one of the most popular tourist destinations in the National Park Service system, attracting more than 1.2 million visitors annually.

The Alcatraz Post Exchange building is a contributing structure to the National Historic Landmark District. The 1980 *General Management Plan* states that historic preservation will be the primary concern on Alcatraz Island, and states that all the military fortifications should be preserved, if feasible.

The Abbreviated Historic Structure Report will describe the building's developmental history, outline the history of the building's modifications, describe and assess the physical condition of the building's components, identify the features that define the building's historic character, and make preliminary recommendations for conservation and stabilization. Future studies, beyond the scope of this report, will then use this information to inform full treatment and reuse plans. This report was produced primarily through the compilation and interpretation of existing information and through the visual inspection of existing physical conditions without destructive testing. Field records are the property of the Architectural firm that produced this document under contract to the Golden Gate National Park Association. There were no samples taken that should be catalogued and accessioned into the park's permanent museum collection. The Abbreviated Historic Structure Report itself serves as an adequate record of the inspection, study and analysis performed by the investigators.

BUILDING INVENTORY

POST EXCHANGE BUILDING [OFFICER'S CLUB]

BUILDING NUMBER:	65
NAME:	Post Exchange; Soldiers Club; Club House; Employees' Recreation Center; Recreation Hall, Social Hall and Officers Club
USE:	Historic use first as Post exchange, mercantile and recreation use, including Post Office, Barber Shop, Restrooms, Lunch Counter, Kitchen, a small Apartment, an Office, Gymnasium, and 2 bowling alleys
PLAN TYPE:	Two story steel reinforced concrete building with a rectangular plan and gabled roof in the Mission Revival Style
PREVIOUS BUILDING NUMBERS	Unknown
O.Q.M.G. PLAN NO.	None

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Historical Background and Context

The Alcatraz “Officers Club” was originally constructed as the island’s Post Exchange (PX) building. Post Exchanges were a standard fixture on Army posts during the 20th century and served as convenience stores, lunch counters, and informal recreation centers for soldiers. They were a direct outgrowth of the 19th century Sutlers and Post Traders who had operated similar commercial ventures on army posts.

The Alcatraz PX was first authorized in 1909 when the War Department granted an appropriation of \$7,500 for its construction. Alcatraz’ commanding officer initially declined the money, claiming there was no room for another building on the island. Work apparently began that same year, though, when space was found near the site of Lower Prison. The building was completed in 1910 at a total cost of \$6,648.

Throughout the army’s remaining years on the island, the Post Exchange operated in the same manner as PXs at other military bases around the country by providing an array of minimally priced

services to soldiers stationed at the Disciplinary Barracks. The First Floor housed a small lunch counter, barbershop, and sales area for convenience items such as toiletries, candy, stationary, postcards, etc, and the Basement served as a combination bowling alley and gymnasium. At some point, a Post Office was also constructed on the First Floor. During the 1920s and early 1930s, eight military prisoners were detailed to the PX each day to assist in its operations.

When the War Department transferred Alcatraz to the Department of Justice in 1933, the PX and its furnishings were transferred to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) along with the rest of the structures on the island. The prison staff referred to the building as a “Social Hall” or “Recreation Center”, and it became the center of much of the social life of the island. (A 1936 census recorded 52 families on the island with a population of 126 women and children.) Penitentiary records reveal that family members bore much of the center’s operating and maintenance expenses out of their own pockets.

Security was always an issue on Alcatraz, and the social hall sat outside the cyclone fence-enclosed security area at the south end of the island. As a protection to women and children, the building was only opened to family members after all prisoners were locked in their cells and accounted for. As an additional security measure, the

Post Office and small convenience store in the old PX were moved the Bldg. 64 apartment house.

During the BOP years, the main floor of the social hall was mainly used for group events such as parties, dinners, plays, bingo games, movie screenings, etc. The downstairs area housed the two bowling alleys and two pool tables, and was a favorite hangout for island teenagers.

The social hall also served as the monthly meeting place for the Alcatraz Women's Club and the Alcatraz Officer's Club. The name of the latter group was eventually transferred to the building itself, and the social hall came to be known in later years as the "Officers Club". (During the island's years as a Disciplinary Barracks the actual Officers Club was located on the second floor of Bldg. 64.)

The social hall underwent extensive interior renovations in 1959 that included installation of wood paneling, suspended acoustical ceilings, recessed lighting, linoleum floors, and new bowling alleys.

In 1963 the social hall was closed when the penitentiary shut down and all personnel and families were transferred from the island. The hall and the rest of the island were transferred to the care of the General Services Administration (GSA).

On the night of June 3, 1970, a mysterious fire broke out in that PX that totally gutted its interior. That same night, five other buildings burned down under similar circumstances. The GSA blamed the fires on Native American activists who were occupying the island at the time as a political statement. The occupiers blamed the fires on government provocateurs who, they claimed, had come to the island to discredit the Indian movement. The exact cause of the fire still remains unknown.

Chronology of Development and Use / Significant Events:

1910

- Post Exchange completed at cost of \$6,448. Lower story left open – building was built over top the old 1870s mess hall building for Lower Prison

1911

- Lower Prison mess hall demolished

1914-1925

- Northern portion of porch enclosed to create Post Office

c1915

- Lower story enclosed to create a gymnasium

1925

- Photo records show the building as Soldier's Club

1929

- Quartermaster plans prepared for structure. First Floor contains Post Office, Barber Shop, Restrooms, Exchange [store], Lunch Counter, Kitchen, Storeroom, Living Quarters for a Sergeant, and a room for the PX officer
- Basement contains Gymnasium, two bowling alleys, and Restroom

1930

- Eight military prisoners assigned daily to "Post Exchange Detail." Duty roster includes two janitors, two cooks, two pinsetters, and two barbers

ca.1930

- Interior First Floor Remodeled. Actions included removing interior stairs to Basement Level, removing kitchen and pantry at north end of building, and removing Barber Shop and PX Officer's Apartment at south end of building

1934

- Building transferred to Bureau of Prisons. Same uses as noted in 1929

1938

- Bowling alleys reconditioned

1941

- \$150 authorized for repair of bowling alleys

1946

- \$175 authorized for four sets of bowling pins and repairs to bowling alleys, stage constructed at north end of main room on First Floor

ca. 1946

- Projection booth for 35mm movie projectors constructed at south end of main room on First Floor

1949

- \$500 authorized for refinishing bowling alleys. Warden declines funding until such time as it can be combined with the purchase and installation of pin-setting machines

1950

- Members of "Alcatraz Officers Club" volunteer their time to paint and 'rearrange' social hall. Unspecified changes made to kitchen and other interior areas

1958

- March. \$2,500 allocated to renovate building. Only work item mentioned is refinishing the floors

1958

- May. Work reported near completion. Volunteer efforts being led by island's Medical Technical Assistant, who was an accomplished carpenter. Building contains two bowling alleys, card room, counter for food service, and two billiard tables

1958

- July. Work completed. Total cost of renovations: \$2,977.06

1959

- August. Specifications prepared for new roof: "Remove all old tar and gravel from roof areas including old tile roof on the auditorium section. Install a four ply hot mopped roof on the porch section which is a flat roof" to include using 15 lb roofing felt topped with roof gravel. "Asbestos shingles are to be replace the tile on the gable roof, using heavy butts; 30 lb roofing felt to be laid beneath the shingles. All gables are to be flashed with metal step flashings." Total cost: \$2,217.00
- Reference made to "new pin setting machines"

1959

- October. Warden submits 'master plan' for remodeling club. No specific details provided for renovation except increasing number of bathrooms from one to two. List of materials prepared including wood paneling, acoustical tile, recessed lights, sheetrock, 17 doors, asphalt tile, cement blocks, 350 CFM heater, and miscellaneous plumbing and sheet metal materials. Total amount requested: \$5,592.67 [Unclear how much money was approved or degree of work completed]

- Current activities at building enumerated: monthly potluck lunches and bingo parties; employee retirement and transfer parties; monthly Correctional Officers' meetings; annual Christmas parties; bi-monthly movie screenings; other events

1961

- 15-20 employees volunteering their time "to completely re-do the interior of our Employees Club House." Work actions listed: patching and painting walls and ceilings; repairing some windows; repairing, sanding and refinishing all the floors; redecorating kitchen area

1962

- Public address system installed in Social Hall. Described as a Bogen MX-30 amplifier with nine ceiling mounted speakers

1963

- Social Hall used for storing excess furniture following penitentiary closing. Lengthy inventory includes items probably used in club such as piano, fireplace screen, barber chair, etc.

1970

- Building burns in an unexplained fire during Native American occupation

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION/CONDITION ASSESSMENT

System of Evaluation

The condition of interior and exterior materials, fixtures, features and assemblies consists of a three-part valuation system from good to poor condition. This system allows for a general assessment of the conditions of materials. No destructive testing or laboratory analysis of the materials was performed and no rigorous analysis of the structural systems was undertaken. The objective is to assess the existing condition of materials and finishes that make up the Post Exchange building in regard to its present and its future usage and to indicate the amount of effort required for material stabilization,

replacement and/or restoration. The following evaluation system was employed:

Good Condition: Item requires minor, if any, repair such as minor repointing of brickwork, scraping paint, patching small holes and cracks, etc., but is essentially intact.

Fair Condition: Item requires considerable amount of repair and/or minor replacement such as repointing of large areas of brickwork, repairs including some replacement, rebuilding walls, replacing fixtures and features, etc.

Poor Condition: Item has lost most of its physical integrity and requires major repair and/or replacement.

General Description

The Post Exchange, Building 65, is a ruin. The building is a concrete structural shell, with remains of structural, plumbing and mechanical systems destroyed by fire and overgrown with vegetation. A 1914 photo shows the building with an open Basement and exterior First Floor porch. The 1929 Quartermaster's plans show the uses of building during the Disciplinary Barracks Era (1915-1934).

The two-story structure, with a Basement and a First Floor, has a 38x104 feet footprint. The foundation is spread concrete footings and the Basement has a concrete slab on grade. The west side Basement wall is red brick construction and is part of the original defensive wall, while the other building walls are of reinforced concrete. The south end of First Floor, between the east and west walls, has a concrete slab with an entrance stair on the west side. The main portion of the First Floor, with transverse (east to west) 10x16 inch wood beams at 16 feet on centers supporting 2x12 inch wood joists at 12-inch centers running in the longitudinal direction, had a layered of wood floor likely composed of a tongue and groove "lower floor" and "upper floor." The roof was framed by wood trusses running in the transverse direction. 2x6 inch wood rafters supported the plaster ceiling while 2x8 rafters at 24 inch spacing supported the terra cotta tiled roof.

North Wall

Poured-in-place concrete wall with horizontal form board marks. The wall has one opening at the attic level, three at the First Floor and three at the Basement level. Portions of the concrete sills are in evidence at the exterior wall face but the openings are all without any remnants of the steel sash. The exterior and the interior wall faces are in fair to good condition with only minor deterioration of the concrete surface. Some spalling and corrosion of reinforcing steel is in evidence around the window openings. Both wall faces have a minor amount of biological and organic growth. Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters are visible and 10 foot long partly burned remnants of two rafters over the attic are still attached to the wall.

Inner South Wall

Poured-in-place concrete wall with horizontal form board marks. The wall has one opening at the attic level and three at both the Basement and at the First Floor level. The openings are all without any remnants of steel sash. Both faces of the wall are in fair to good condition with only minor deterioration of the concrete surface. Some spalling and corrosion of embedded steel is in evidence around the window openings. Both wall faces have a minor amount of biological and organic growth. Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters are visible at the roof ridge level, at mid-height of the attic, at the First Floor and ceiling levels, (horizontal rows) at the

north elevation of the wall, and 10 foot long partly burned remnants of two rafters over the attic are still attached to the wall. At the north elevation, a row of slots at the First Floor ceiling level and remnants of several steel joist anchors are in evidence. The Inner South wall is connected to a concrete slab with an entrance stair on the First Floor level

Outer South Wall

Poured-in-place concrete wall with horizontal form board marks from the Basement to the First Floor ceiling level. The wall has three openings at both the Basement and at the First Floor levels. The openings are all without any remnants of the steel sash. Both faces of the wall are in fair to good condition with only minor deterioration of the concrete surface. Some spalling and corrosion of reinforcing steel is in evidence around the window openings. Both wall faces have a minor amount of biological and organic growth. Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters are seen at the First Floor ceiling level (horizontal rows) and at the north elevation of the wall. At the north elevation, a row of slots at the First Floor ceiling level and remnants of several steel joist anchors are in evidence. The Outer South wall is connected to a concrete slab with an entrance stair on the First Floor level.

East Wall

Poured-in-place concrete wall with horizontal form board marks from the Basement to the First Floor ceiling level. The wall has seven openings at both the Basement and at the First Floor level. Some openings at the First Floor level still have remnants of steel sash, and more remnants of steel sash can be seen in the Basement. Both faces of the wall are in fair to good condition with only minor deterioration of the concrete surface, but spalling and corrosion of embedded steel is in evidence around the window openings. Both wall faces have a minor amount of biological and organic growth. Slots for the seating of wood trusses and rafters are seen at the First Floor and at the First Floor ceiling level at the west (inside) elevation of the wall. Two concrete chimneys are made an integral part of the wall.

West Wall

Poured-in-place concrete wall with horizontal form board marks at the First Floor level. The wall at this level has eight window openings and one door opening. The openings have now been protected with removable wire mesh screen inserts. Both faces of the concrete wall are in fair to good condition with only minor deterioration of the concrete surface, but spalling of concrete and corrosion of reinforcing steel is in evidence around the window openings. Both wall faces have a minor amount of biological and organic growth. Slots for the seating of wood trusses and rafters are

seen at the First Floor ceiling level at the east (inside) elevation of the wall. At the Basement, the west wall is the brick defensive wall. The construction is red clay brick laid up with a header every seventh course. The brick is in good condition with some minor organic growth near the top of the wall and some small areas of efflorescence. The mortar joints are narrow and the mortar is in fair to good condition. Slots for the First Floor framing beams are located at the column lines and some remnants of steel anchors for the floor diaphragm are in evidence.

Interior Concrete Columns

Five 24x24 inch concrete columns are located along the centerline of the structure, starting at the footings and terminating at the First Floor level. These columns supported the 10x16 inch transverse First Floor beams. The columns are in good condition.

First Floor Concrete Slab

The portion of the First Floor slab between the Inner and Outer south walls is a concrete slab that also forms a stair at the west side. This slab was the main entrance to the building. The top surface of the slab is in good to fair condition. The slab soffit has deteriorated from years of environmental exposure. Large portions of the concrete have spalled and the steel reinforcing is exposed and partly corroded.

Basement Floor Concrete Slab

The Basement slab is a 4-inch concrete slab on grade. The slab is in fair to poor condition with extensive organic growth.

Exterior Stair and Walk

A concrete stair descends from the road down to the exterior Basement entrance on the south side. An exterior walk, framed with a railing, continues from the bottom of the stair around the corner and along the east side of the building. Both the stair and the concrete walk are deteriorated, the concrete is cracked and spalling, reinforcing steel is exposed and corroding and some of the concrete stair steps are missing.

EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

System of Evaluation

The objective of evaluating the architectural significance of the Post Exchange building is to rank the exterior envelope and interior spaces of the building and the elements, features, and uses that define them so as to inform a plan for stabilization, replacement, removal, and/or restoration of the building. The ranking is based on how important those elements, features, and uses are in defining the architectural character of the building, now a ruin, also given that a

Period of Historical Significance has not been established. Factors considered in the evaluation include:

- 1) Historical importance of the various spaces, elements, uses, or features in defining the building
- 2) Quality and condition of materials and workmanship and
- 3) Uniqueness of the design and rare features.

The following evaluation system of defining the level of significance was employed:

Major Architectural Significance: Item contributes the most to the architectural character of the building. The design, materials, and workmanship of these items are generally of a high quality and in good condition. They are often unique volumes, elements or features, have age value and are usually highly contributing to the historic character of the building.

Minor Architectural Significance: Item contributes to a lesser extent to the architectural character of the building. The design, materials, and workmanship of these items are generally standard and the items are in good to fair condition. They are often undistinguished and common volumes, elements or features, do not have age value and usually contribute to a lesser extent or detract from the historic character of the building.

Elements and Features

North Wall Exterior/Interior: Major Architectural Significance

- Louver opening at the attic level
- 3 wall openings at the First Floor Level
- 3 wall openings at the Basement level.
- Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters
- About 10 feet long partly burned remnants of the two rafters over the attic

Inner South Wall Exterior/Interior: Major Architectural Significance

- Louver opening at the attic level
- 3 wall openings at the First Floor Level
- 3 wall openings at the Basement level.
- Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters
- About 10 feet long partly burned remnants of the two rafters over the attic
- Row of slots (north elevation) at the First Floor ceiling level and remnants of several steel joist anchors
- Concrete slab with an entrance stair on the First Floor level

Outer South Wall Exterior/Interior: Major Architectural Significance

- Louver opening at the attic level
- 3 wall openings at the First Floor Level
- 3 wall openings at the Basement level.
- Slots for the seating of wood joists and rafters
- About 10 feet long partly burned remnants of the two rafters over the attic

- Row of slots (north elevation) at the First Floor ceiling level and remnants of several steel joist anchors
- Concrete slab with an entrance stair on the First Floor level

East Wall Exterior/Interior: Major Architectural Significance

- 7 wall openings at the First Floor Level some with remnants of steel sash
- 7 wall openings at the Basement level some with remnants of steel sash
- Slots for the seating of wood trusses and rafters
- Two concrete chimneys

West Wall Exterior/Interior: Major Architectural Significance

- 10 wall openings at the First Floor Level with wire mesh
- Slots for the seating of wood trusses and rafters
- Slots for the First Floor framing beams and remnants of steel anchors

Interior Concrete Columns: Major Architectural Significance

First Floor Exterior Concrete Slab: Major Architectural Significance

Basement Interior Floor Slab: Major Architectural Significance

Exterior Stair and Walkway: Major Architectural Significance

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSERVATION AND STABILIZATION

Whether the structure some day is restored or rehabilitated for an adaptive reuse or left as a ruin, it is important to retain as much as possible of the original historical fabric through a stabilization program.

To serve both of these objectives it is recommended to rehabilitate some physical features of the ruins in order to slow down the ongoing environmental deterioration and to stabilize and improve the structural stability of the ruins to mitigate any damage from high wind and seismic forces. These two parts of the recommendations should be designed with the objective of fitting into future plans for the adaptive reuse of the structure, while at the same time stabilizing and making secure this public site as long as it remains a ruin.

The details of the recommendations include:

General:

- Clean up the site and remove debris and organic growth, which is presently deteriorating the concrete

Historical Artifacts:

- Collect and secure historical artifacts present at the site including window frames, plumbing fixtures, electrical panels,

and other objects that may be hidden by the vegetation but revealed during any work on the site.

Defensive Wall:

- Remove organic growth from the historic brick defensive wall. Secure loose bricks and repoint joints

Concrete Walls, Slabs and Columns:

- Patch selected concrete spalls, clean and protect exposed reinforcing steel and metal inserts, such as original joist anchors

Concrete Stair and Walk:

- Repair defective stair and walk. Replace missing steps and repair railing

Structural Stabilization:

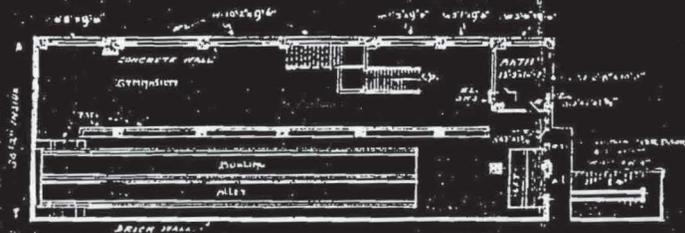
- Install steel framing to improve the stability of the ruins. The framing, constructed of steel sections, should be designed to be completely incorporated into the rebuilt building. The steel should be painted in a color that indicates it is not part of the original construction and it should be detailed for exterior exposure

APPENDIX A: DRAWINGS

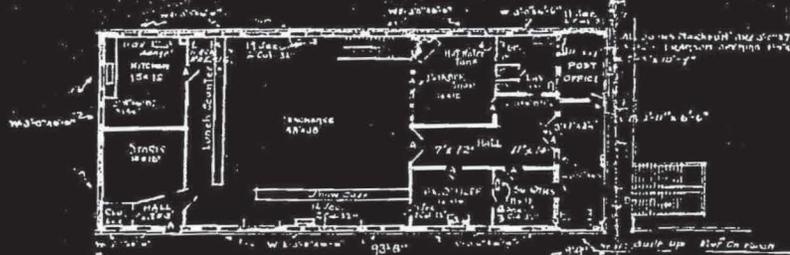
Building No. 65.
Post Exchange, Gymnasium
& Bowling Alley.

HISTORICAL RECORD OF BUILDINGS ALCATRAZ, CALIFORNIA

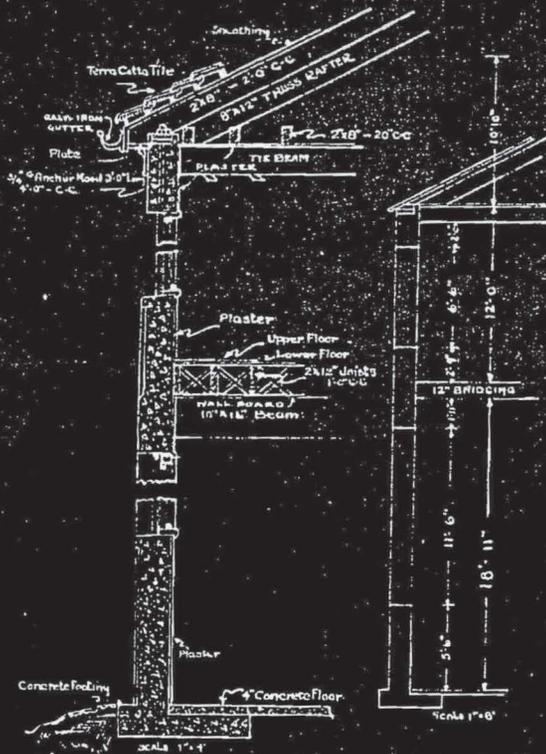
BUILDING No 65
Designation of Bldg. Post Exchange.



BASEMENT PLAN
SCALE - 1" = 24"



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE - 1" = 24"



POST EXCHANGE BLDG. 65

BASEMENT - FIRST FLOOR PLANS

Scale 1/4" = 1 foot

CORRECTED BY H. McFadden

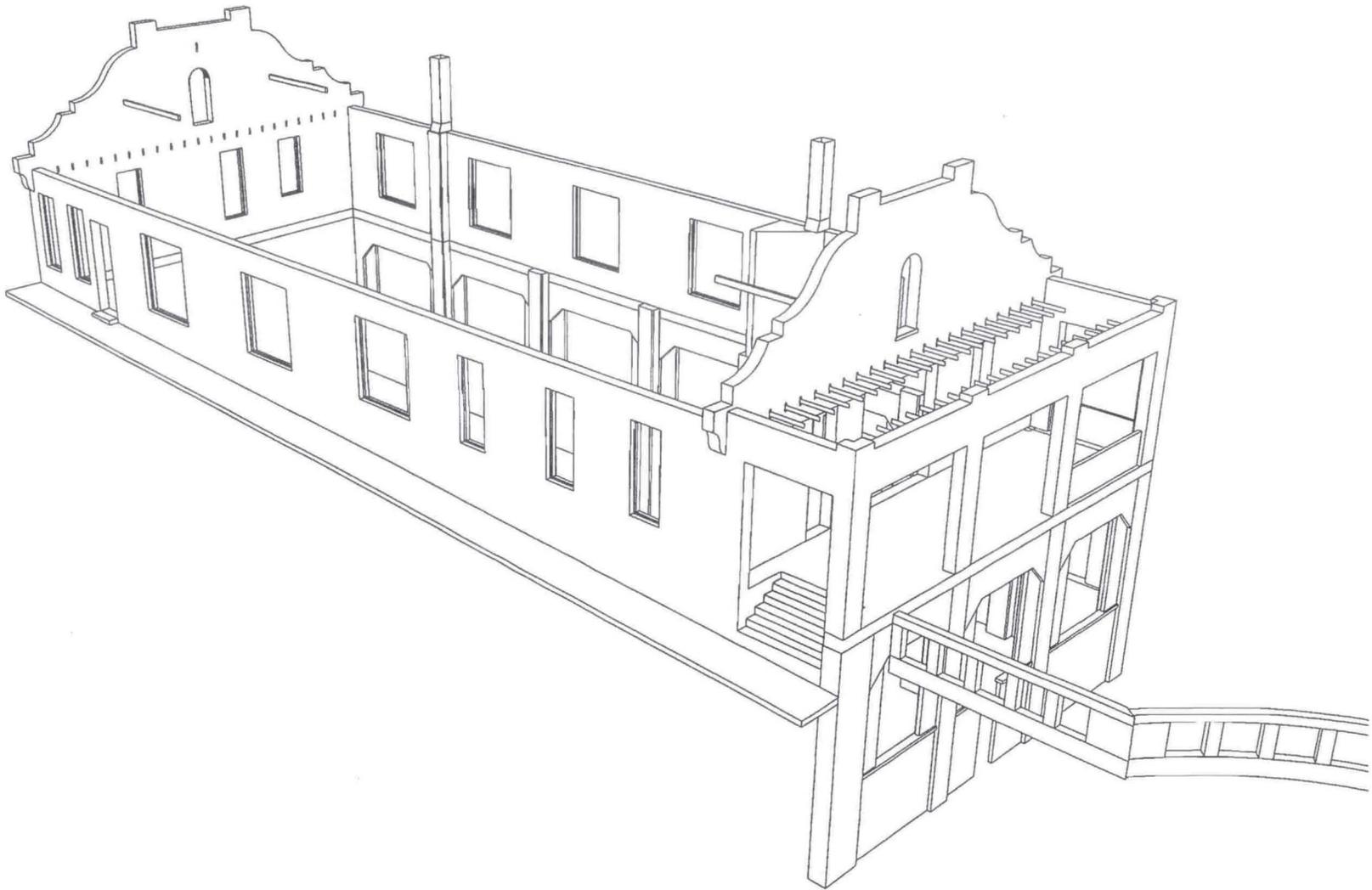
REVISIONS:

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ALCATRAZ OFFICER'S CLUB BUILDING - PERSPECTIVE VIEW
EXISTING CONDITIONS

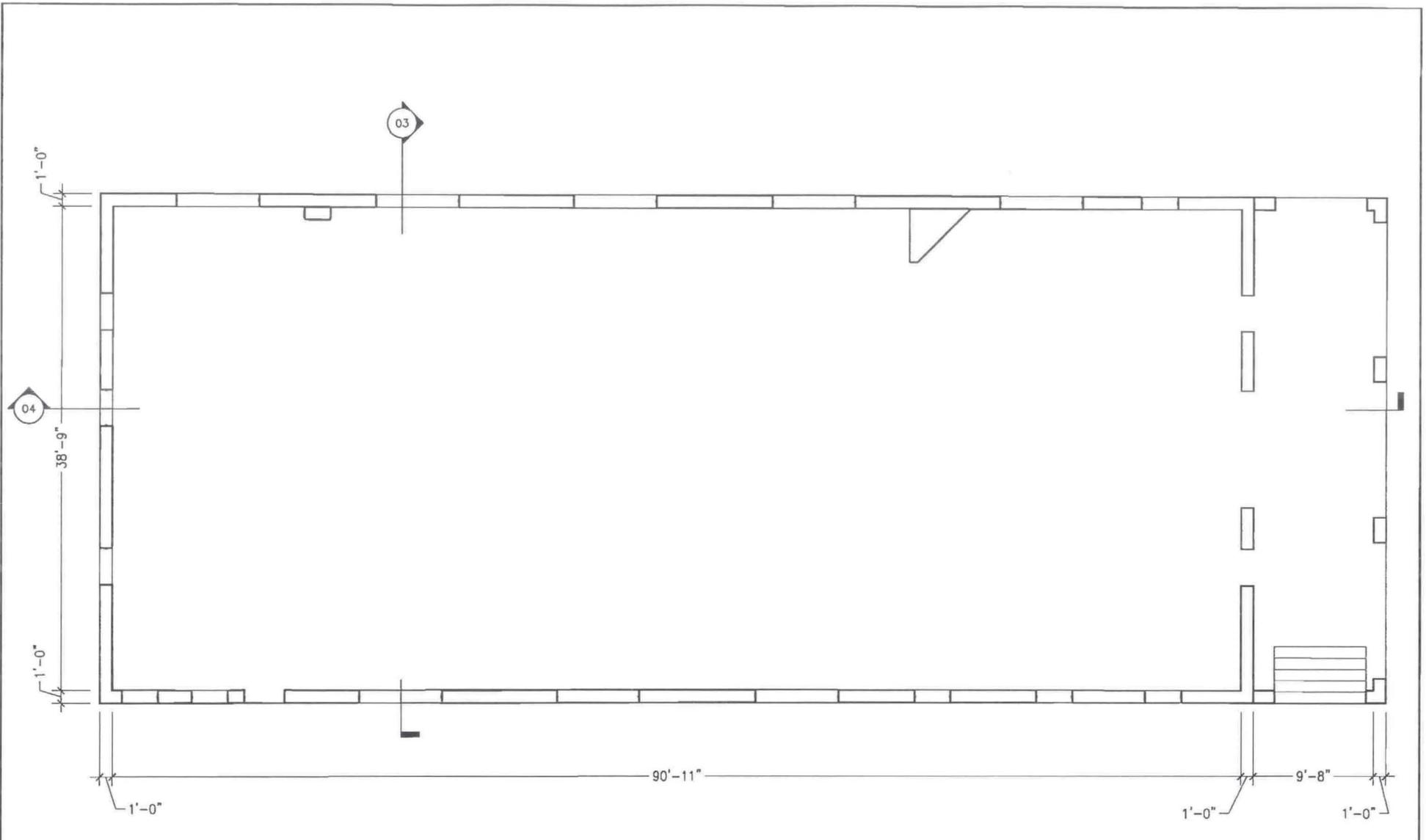
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**ALCATRAZ POST EXCHANGE BUILDING
ABBREVIATED HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT**

**GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN - EXISTING CONDITIONS



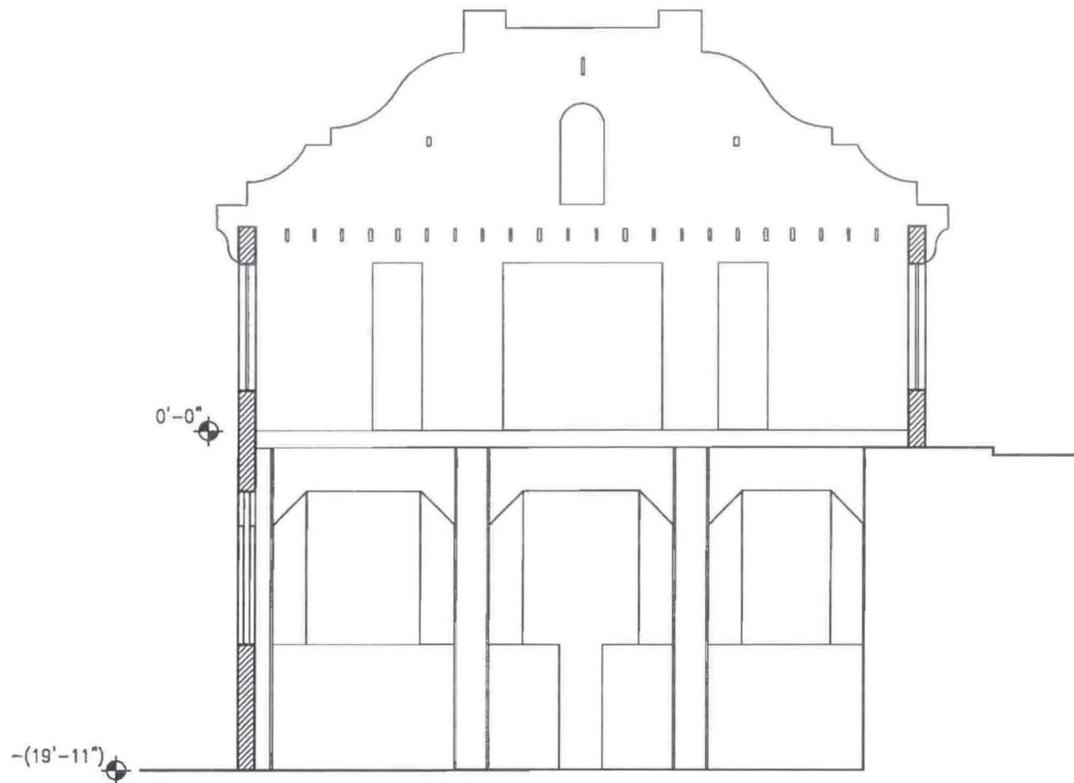
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BUILDING SECTION LOOKING NORTH - EXISTING CONDITIONS



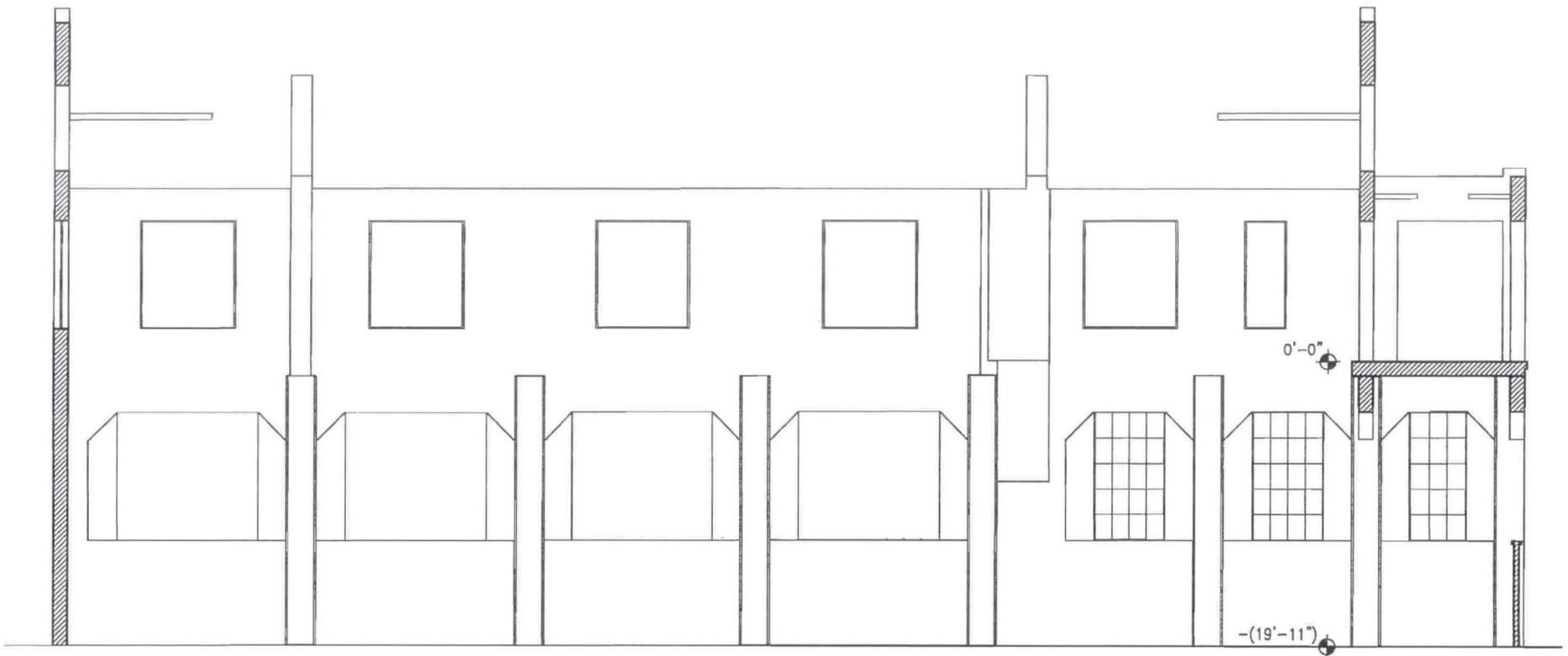
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BUILDING SECTION LOOKING EAST - EXISTING CONDITIONS



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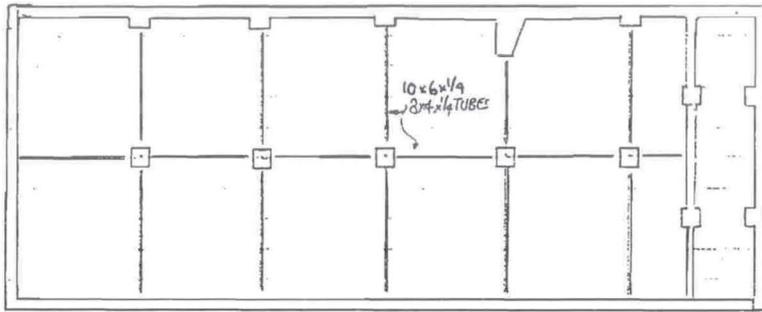
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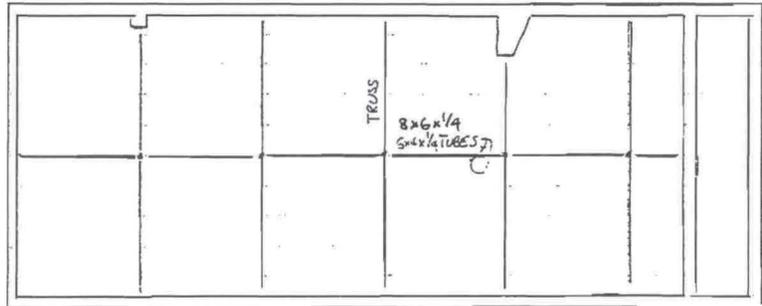
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		CHECKED BY	PROJ. NUMBER
ALCATRAZ ISLAND - OFFICER'S CLUB SEISMIC STABILIZATION		DATE 07/07/01	

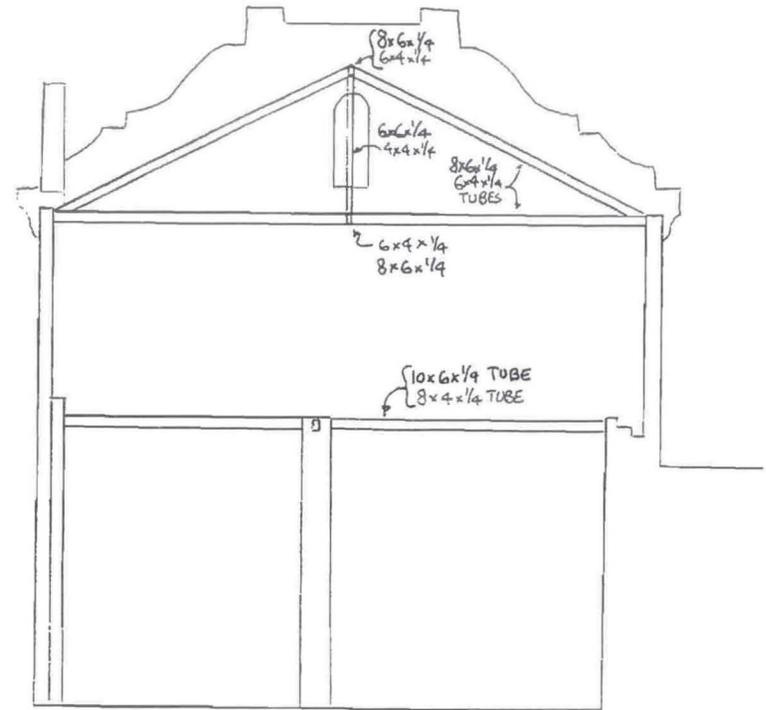
SCHEME B



FIRST FLOOR



ROOF



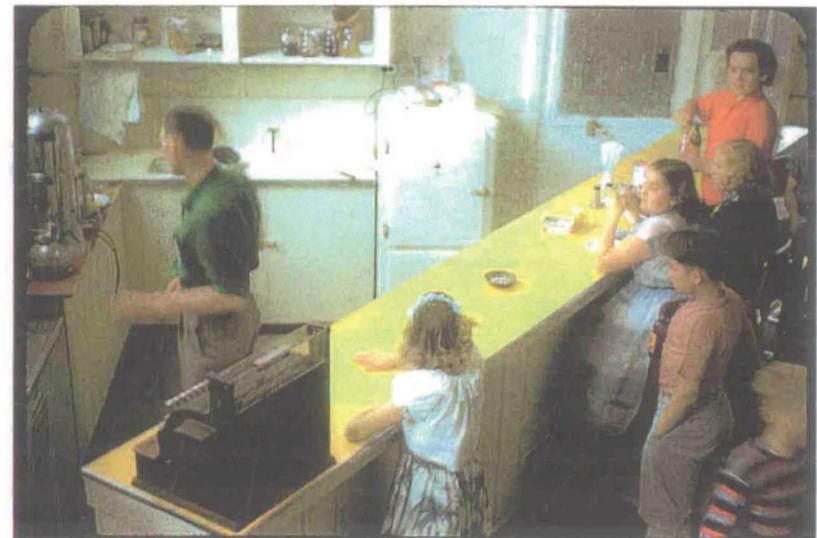
APPENDIX B: PHOTOS



Social Hall-First Floor Recreation Space ca.1954
View looking northeast toward stage
Photo Credit:



Social Hall-First Floor Recreation Space ca.1954
View looking south toward front entrance
Photo Credit:



Social Hall-Basement Lunch Counter ca.1954
Photo Credit:

Alcatraz Post Exchange Building Physical History Report



1986 HABS Interior looking



1986 HABS North elevation



1986 HABS south elevation



2001 South elevation 2



2001 South elevation



Interior detail



Interior east wall 2



Interior east wall



Interior vegetation



Interior view looking north 2



Interior view looking north



Interior west wall 2



Interior west wall



Looking East at north wall



North wall



Parapet detail



Porch roof supports



South stair



South stairs



South wall detail



South Wall



Underside of porch floor



View lookin west



West Door detail



West foundation detail

APPENDIX C: BIBLIOGRAPHY**Publications:**

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