

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED **OCT 10 1979**

DATE ENTERED

APR 11 1980

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Miller Army Air Field Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

Miller Field

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

New Dorp Lane

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New Dorp, Staten Island

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

36

Richmond

85

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*

National Park Service, North Atlantic Region

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Boston

VICINITY OF

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Richmond County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

St. George

New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Tony P. Wren and Richard E. Greenwood prepared survey reports that were used  
in preparation of the National Register Forms

DATE

9/31/76 and 6/28/76

FEDERAL

STATE

COUNTY

LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS NAR

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                          |  | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD      | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR      | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED               |   |   |

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Miller Field, a 180-acre former Army air base established in 1919-1921, originally had 38 structures, including two double hangars which were the most important buildings. The flying field itself was originally an 80-acre area centered on a sod runway which ran diagonally across the Field. (See Site Plan of Field). In 1973, when Miller Field was acquired by the National Park Service as part of the Gateway NRA, about 24 buildings and structures remained on the site. All the buildings were in deteriorated conditions at the time of acquisition, especially the two hangars. The condition of the landplane hangar (Building 33) in particular had reached such a state of deterioration that renovation was no longer practical. This hangar was demolished in 1976 and the site converted to a paved and fenced playfield. Playing fields--baseball, softball, tennis, soccer, football, and basketball--have been laid out over part of the old airfield. The former residential buildings that remain have been renovated and are used for park purposes; they do not meet the National Register criteria.

The existing double seaplane hangar, constructed in 1920, is the most important structure at Miller Field due to its direct association with early aviation history. Two other minor structures are associated with the harbor defenses of New York and the navigational history of the area.

#### 1. Seaplane Hangar (No. HS 38)

This double seaplane hangar (Monitor Type) was constructed by Smith, Hansen and MacIsaac and Rangely Construction Company, both of New York. It was built as part of what was called the Hangar Group of Buildings which included an airplane hangar (Building 33 demolished in 1976), an aero repair shop, a dope house, a boiler house, an aero storehouse, a motor test house, an armorers house, a pier and boat house, a gasoline pumping system, a water supply system and sewer system. Of these buildings only Hangar #38 remains.

Hangar #38 is a steel frame structure with stuccoed walls. It originally consisted of two bays, side by side, each measuring 110x160 ft. with full width lift doors on the northeast end. It has a gambrel roof supported by open steel trusses and covered with tarred concrete slabs. At the peak of the roof there is a gable-roofed monitor. The gable ends, above the steel and glass windows and doors, are stuccoed as well. When it was built, the area in front of the hangar, paved with concrete, connected with a concrete ramp 400 feet long and 40 feet wide. The ramp led directly into the water extending out about 100 feet beyond mean low tide. This concrete ramp is no longer extant.

In 1935-1939, several additions were built by the WPA. The two-story west wing, flat-roofed, was built of steel and concrete, as was the boiler room. This wing extends halfway along the southern side of the hangar. On the eastern side is a similar wing, one story high, with a slightly pitched roof on steel beams, which extends around to the southern side as well. Both wings have a larger number of steel frame windows, most of which are broken. Other minor additions and floor plan remodeling were done at a later date. Of these additions the largest was the parachute drying tower in the

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD                                    |   | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING      | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC    | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION            | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                   |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE            | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS               | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                 |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699        | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE           | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY    | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN       |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                    | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING             | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                   |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE               | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT  | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |  |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS         | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY                | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)           |  |  |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION               |   |  |  |  |

SPECIFIC DATES 1919-1921

BUILDER/ARCHITECT U.S. Army

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Seaplane Hangar No. 38 and the Elm Tree Light lies in their direct association with early aviation history, the history of air coast defenses of New York, and the lighthouse service.

Miller Army Airfield was established shortly before World War One as part of a system of aerial coast defense stations supplementing existing coast defenses.

Among these early examples of military aviation facilities, the Seaplane Hangar at Miller Airfield appears to be of an unique type of design. A recent survey of contemporary seaplane hangars showed that although several early hangars with varying degrees of alterations could be found along the Eastern Seaboard, a hangar located at Crissy Field, San Francisco most closely resembled Seaplane Hangar #38 at Miller Army Airfield. Other examples of seaplane hangars can be found in Philadelphia, PA, Maryland and Pensacola, Florida.

The site also represents the early experimental years in aviation history. In 1923, one of the first of a series of tests made at Miller Field by private aircraft manufacturers was conducted by the Remington-Burnelli aircraft. Bellanca Aircraft Corporation utilized the hangars at Miller Field during the summer of 1928. In the spring of the following year, the American Aeronautical Corporation assembled and tested two Italian seaplanes, one SS-55 twin hulled Savoia-Marchetti flying boat and one S-62 Savoia-Marchetti flying boat.

Popular flying heroes also visited and used Miller Field. For example, in 1926 a training session for eight Army Air Service pilots who were preparing for a good will Pan-American flight through North, Central and South America. As well, one of the planes to be used, a Looning Amphibian, was tested at the field.

Famed Arctic pilot Floyd Bennett arrived at Miller Field in the spring of 1928 to prepare for an emergency flight to rescue downed fliers on Greenly Island, Canada. Bennett and his party left Miller Field April 19. During the flight Bennett contracted pneumonia and died in a hospital in Quebec later that month.

The Elm Tree Light, in operation throughout the 19th and part of the 20th century, took the place of the Elm Tree, a large tree standing at the foot of New Dorp Lane that served as a mark in the late 18th century for sailing vessels going from New York Middletown and Brunswick. Although the light station was abandoned in 1924, the

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American Guide Series, New York City Guide (New York, Random House, 1939)  
 Dorothy Smith, Staten Island - Gateway to New York (Phila., Chilton Book Co., 1970)  
 Tony Wrenn, "General History of the Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point and Staten Island Units, Gateway National Recreation Area, New York, NY", (n.p., 1975).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ~~180~~ 3.05  
 UTM REFERENCES *adjusted 4/10/80 by NPS*  
 A | 1 8 | 5 7 6 5 6 0 | 4 4 9 0 5 6 0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C | 1 8 | 5 7 6 6 4 0 | 4 4 9 0 3 2 0

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

B | 1 8 | 5 7 6 2 6 0 | 4 4 9 0 8 0 0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D | 1 8 | 5 7 5 3 0 0 | 4 4 9 1 2 6 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Richard E. Greenwood; Ricardo Torres-Reyes  
 ORGANIZATION: National Park Service, NAR  
 STREET & NUMBER: 15 State Street  
 CITY OR TOWN: Boston  
 DATE: 6/28/76; 4/77  
 TELEPHONE: 617-223-3778  
 STATE: MA

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

See SAHO signature on YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_\_\_  
*Acceptance of nomination 4/10/79*

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE: *Asst. Dir., Cultural Resources* DATE: *10/3/79*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Bruce Van Dyke* DATE: *April 11, 1980*  
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *Lynn A. Beebe* DATE: *April 10, 1980*  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE two

south wing adjacent to the boiler room. The other are small sheds attached to the outside of the east and south wings. The northern sides of the hangars are occupied by steel and glass doors that are not original. The interior of the hangars are open space, divided by a common center wall. The total area of the building is now 55,660 sq. ft.

The building is in a general state of deterioration, but the structural steel trusses, beams, and columns are basically in sound condition. The roofing over the hangar bays has disintegrated in sections over large areas. Some of the steel has rusted due to roof leaks; however, this is minor except for two columns which would require restoration or possibly replacement. The roofing on the wings has major leaks.

Virtually all the window glass is broken and most of the steel sash is rusting. Interior finishes in the wing additions are deteriorated.

2. The Elm Tree Light (No. HS 1)

This octagonal concrete beacon tower, standing in the immediate vicinity of the hangar, was constructed by the Coast Guard in 1939 to replace an earlier wooden tower. It is built in three sections which decrease in diameter from bottom to top. The beacon was mounted on the flat roof, which is enclosed by an iron railing. On the east face of the tower, just below the top deck, there is a small iron balcony, and above this, a circular aperture in the tower. The entrance to the tower in the south face is closed by a steel door. The structure is not presently in use. The lighthouse keeper's residence was located to the south of the tower. It was demolished subsequent to the construction of Miller Field.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE TWO

lighthouse remained on its site to the rear of the hangars at Miller Field. The Elm Tree Light, therefore, is a significant part of the historic setting for the district and indicates a two hundred year long history of continued land use at its site.

The field was well located for harbor defense purposes as it was centrally situated between Fort Wadsworth and Fort Hamilton on either side of the Narrows, Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook, and Fort Tilden on the Rockaway Peninsula.

Several potential significant historical archeological sites are located within the boundaries of the Miller Army Air Field Historic District. A Dutch settlement, Niealve Dorp, ca 1600 was located near the present site of the airfield. In 1843, William Vanderbilt built a country estate on a parcel of land located within the present boundaries. In 1936-37 the Vanderbilt Mansion, water tower and barns were razed to allow for expansion of the landing field to the west.

Pre-Historic archeological sites within Miller Army Airfield Historic District have not yet been identified but only documentary research has been done.

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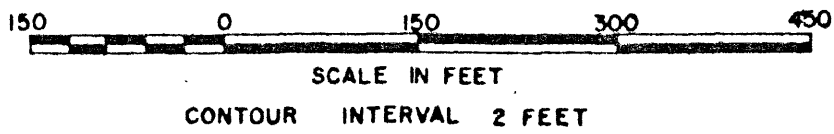
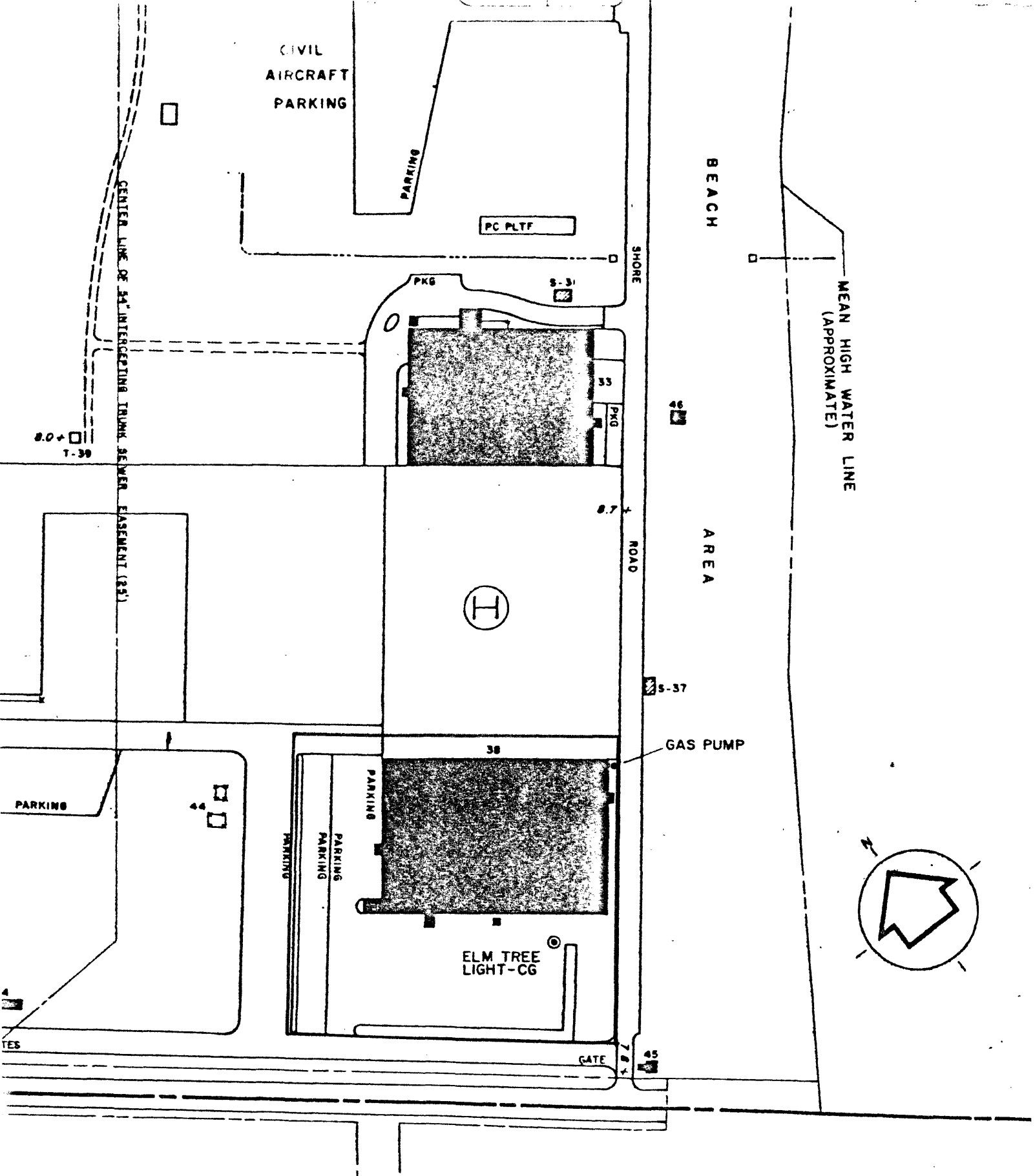
|                  |             |
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CONTINUATION SHEET Miller Army Air Field ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

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Because the runway system is no longer distinguishable due to the passage of time and to the existence of numerous playing fields along its full extent, the area nominated is limited solely to seaplane hangar No. 38 and the Elm Tree Light and their immediate surroundings.

The nominated acreage is thus 3.05 rather than 180.



**MILLER ARMY AIR FIELD**  
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

MAR 26 1980





*Miller Army Air Field Hist. Dist*  
Elm Tree Light

Miller Field, Staten Island Unit  
Gateway National Recreation Area  
R. Greenwood

3/76

*Richmond Co*

Neg. #7 NARO

OCT 10 1979

*1 of 2*

APR 11 1980



Miller Army Air Field Hist. Dist,  
Seaplane Hangar #38

Miller Field, Staten Island Unit  
Gateway National Recreation Area

R. Greenwood

3/76

Neg. #7 NARO

*Richmond Co.*

OCT 10 1979

2 of 2

APR 11 1980