

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ORDNANCE REPAIR SHOP

(Building 46)

(Building 9)

Location: The Ordnance Repair Shop is located in Hero Road and is part of the Post Area of Fort Tilden, a historic army base commissioned in 1917 as part of the harbor defenses of New York. It was transferred in 1974 to the National Park Service (NPS) as part of Gateway National Recreation Area (GATE). Fort Tilden is part of the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area and is located on the eastern end of the Rockaway Peninsula barrier beach within the New York City borough of Queens. Fort Tilden is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the south, Rockaway Beach Boulevard on the north, Beach 169th Street to the east, and Beach 193rd Street to west. The coordinates for this property, representative of the approximate center of the building, are latitude 40°33'47"N and longitude 73°53'09"W. These coordinates were obtained in June 2024 using Google Earth (WGS84); there is no restriction to the public for its use.

Significance: Fort Tilden was established as part of the coastal defenses of southern New York. It became a permanent post in 1917 and together with Fort Wadsworth in New York and Fort Hancock in New Jersey, it served the New York City area as part of its outer network of defenses. The site was divided in three sections, the fortification, the post, and the wharf area and it was active from World War I until the Cold War.

The Ordnance Repair Shop, also known as Building 46 and later Building 9, was built in the post area of Fort Tilden in the 1940s just as the United States Army prepared to enter World War II. This utilitarian building was part of a series of temporary structures built around the parade ground area and in the post's western area. This improvement effort was part of a nation-wide campaign to equip Army installations with more permanent buildings capable of better withstanding threats. Both local history and climate conditions were considered in this revamping effort, and each military installation's design was customized to fit into the area's architectural traditions. East coast installations all the way down to Virginia were designed in a Colonial Revival style that can still be appreciated at Fort Tilden. This style was characterized by the use of traditional red brick, gabled roofs, and classical detailing. (Selvek 153)

Description: The Ordnance Repair Shop was built as part of the Army's effort to build more permanent and better equipped military installations. Rather than using the traditional red brick, gabled roofs, and classical detailing associated with the Colonial Revival Style being used at Fort Tilden, the Shop was built out of steel frame. It was part of a newly built industrial complex that also included several wood-frame warehouses. This support area was located at the

western end of the post somewhat distant from the heart of the recently built permanent structures at Fort Tilden.

The Ordnance Repair Shop was built as a locomotives repair workshop. It is a two-story steel-frame symmetrical building with an A-B-A composition. The central bay had a high gabled roof with two side symmetrical side bays with shed roofs. Large industrial openings characterize each façade, which include steel-framed windows and overhead rolling doors. Walls and roof were all clad with corrugated cement asbestos siding. Historically, there were two metal ventilators, but only one remains after the 2023 fire. The east façade includes a single-story concrete shed along with a freestanding brick chimney. A boiler room and compressor were later added. The building was converted to a Nike missile repair shop in 1955 and a motor pool for the U.S. Army before being transferred to the NPS in 1974.

History: Fort Tilden's location made it difficult to transport materials from the dock to the interior of the post. By 1920 the Army Corp of Engineers decided that "a small standard gauge railroad was (to be) constructed, connecting the dock on Jamaica Bay, coal pockets and large warehouses within the western reservation. The railroad could then distribute the supplies that were left on the dock after the boats were unloaded." (Torres 11) The Ordnance Repair Shop was built as a repair workshop for the locomotives that serviced the Fort and was later used as a warehouse.

The building has been used over the years for temporary exhibits. In 2014 MoMA PS1 and the Rockaway Artist Alliance celebrated the reopening of Fort Tilden after Hurricane Sandy with a show entitled Rockaway! The exhibition included solo projects by Janet Cardiff, Adrian Villar Rojas, and Patti Smith who conceived the show along with MoMA PS1's director, Klaus Biesenbach. But for the most part, the Ordnance Repair Shop has laid vacant for decades. The building's deteriorating condition was worsened by a two-alarm fire on June 9, 2023. The fire destroyed the remaining windows, most of the corrugated metal panels, and compromised the steel-frame structure.

Sources: Selvek, Christina and John Auwaerter. Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Tilden. 2nd ed., Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, 2013.

Torres, Louis. Historic Structure Report, Historical Data Section, Gateway, Fort Tilden. Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1980.

<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3730> accessed on June 24, 2024.

Historian(s): Nadya Nenadich, Historic Architect, Gateway National Recreation Area, NPS. June 2024

Project

Information: This report is part of the requested documentation by the New York State Historic Office as part of the demolition process of Ordnance Repair Shop. The building is scheduled

for demolition in the summer of 2024. The concrete foundation will be left in place, allowing for ongoing interpretation of the former structure.

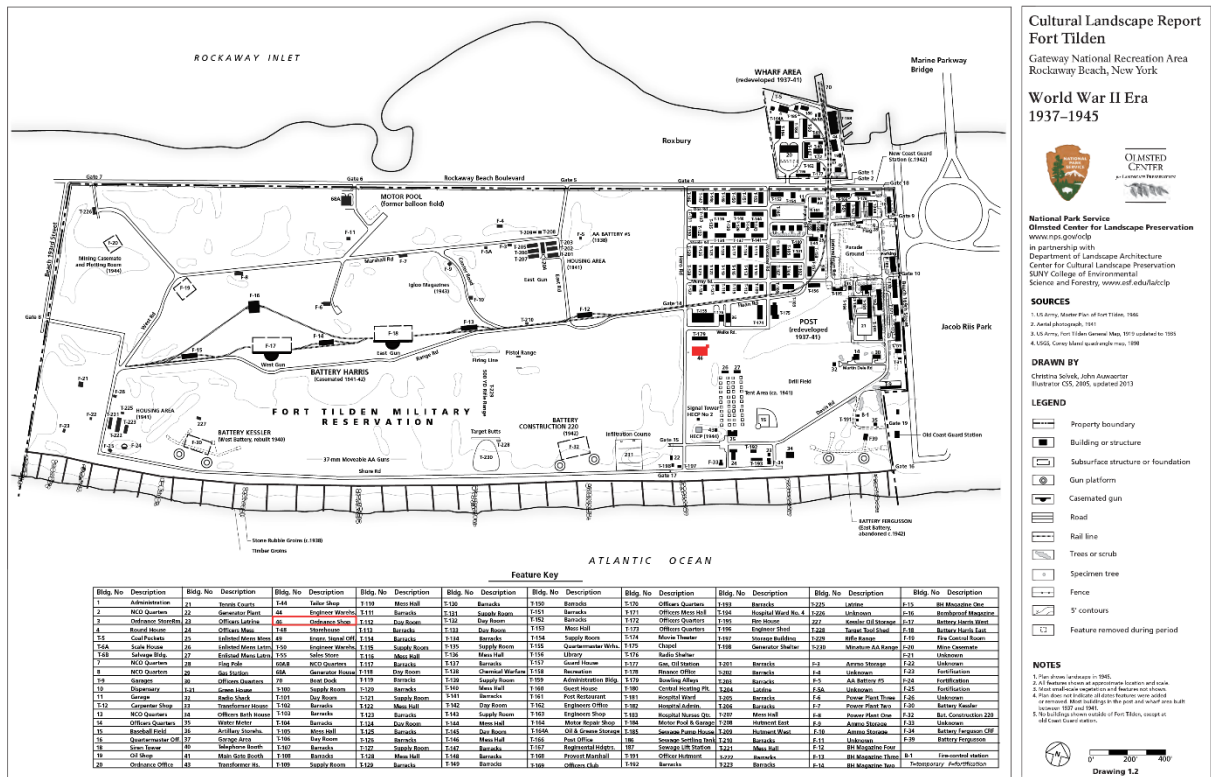
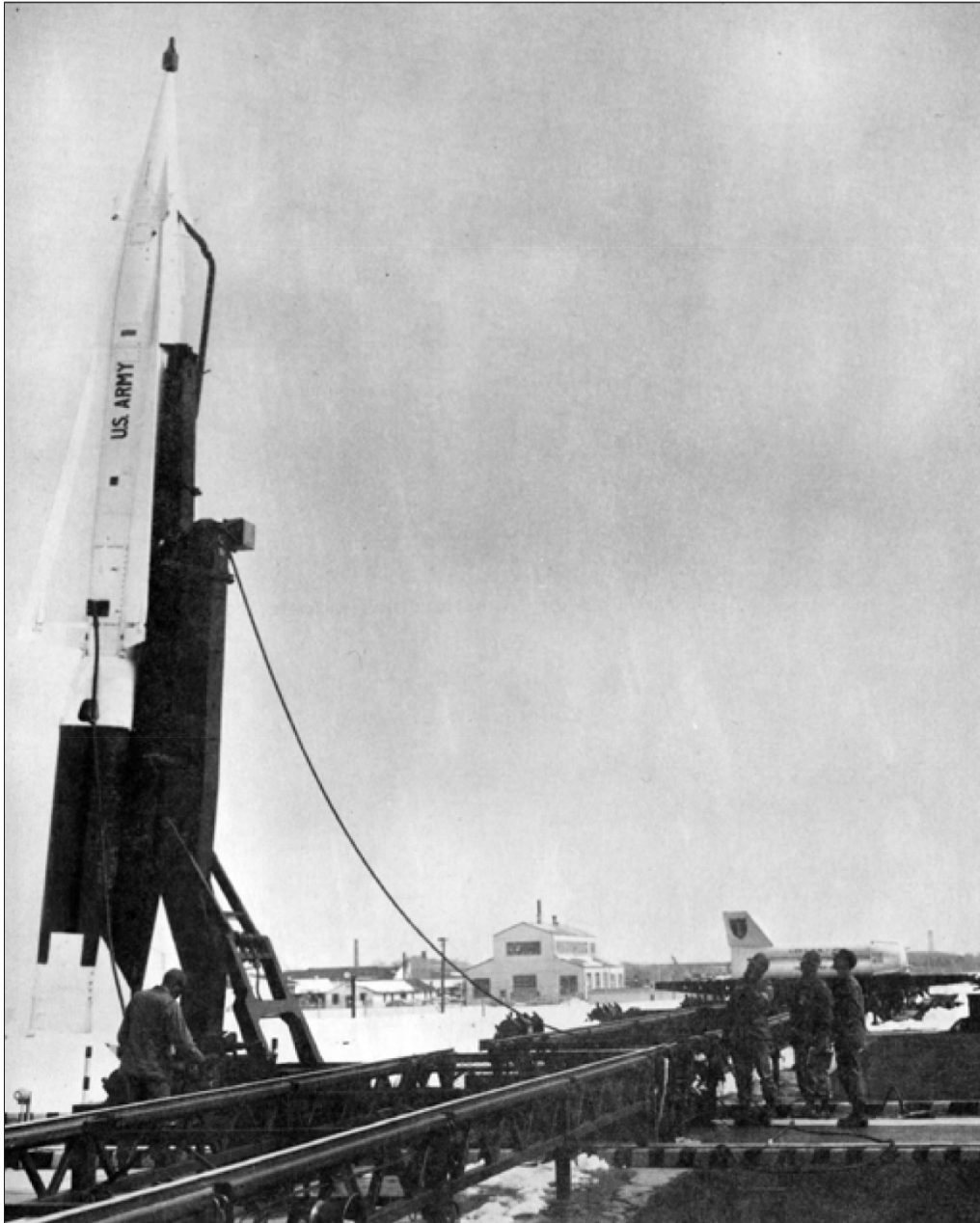


Diagram / Map of Fort Tilden, World War II Era (1937-1945)

Source: Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Tilden. 2nd ed., Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, 2013.



A picture containing Nike Hercules missile in launch position, on eve of being decommissioned, looking east towards the post. The Ordnance Repair Shop (Building 46, later 9) and the bowling alley (Building T-179, later T-8) are in the background.1967.

Source: Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Tilden. 2nd ed., Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, 2013.



A picture containing The Ordnance Repair Shop building, 2005.

Source: Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Tilden. 2nd ed., Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service, 2013.