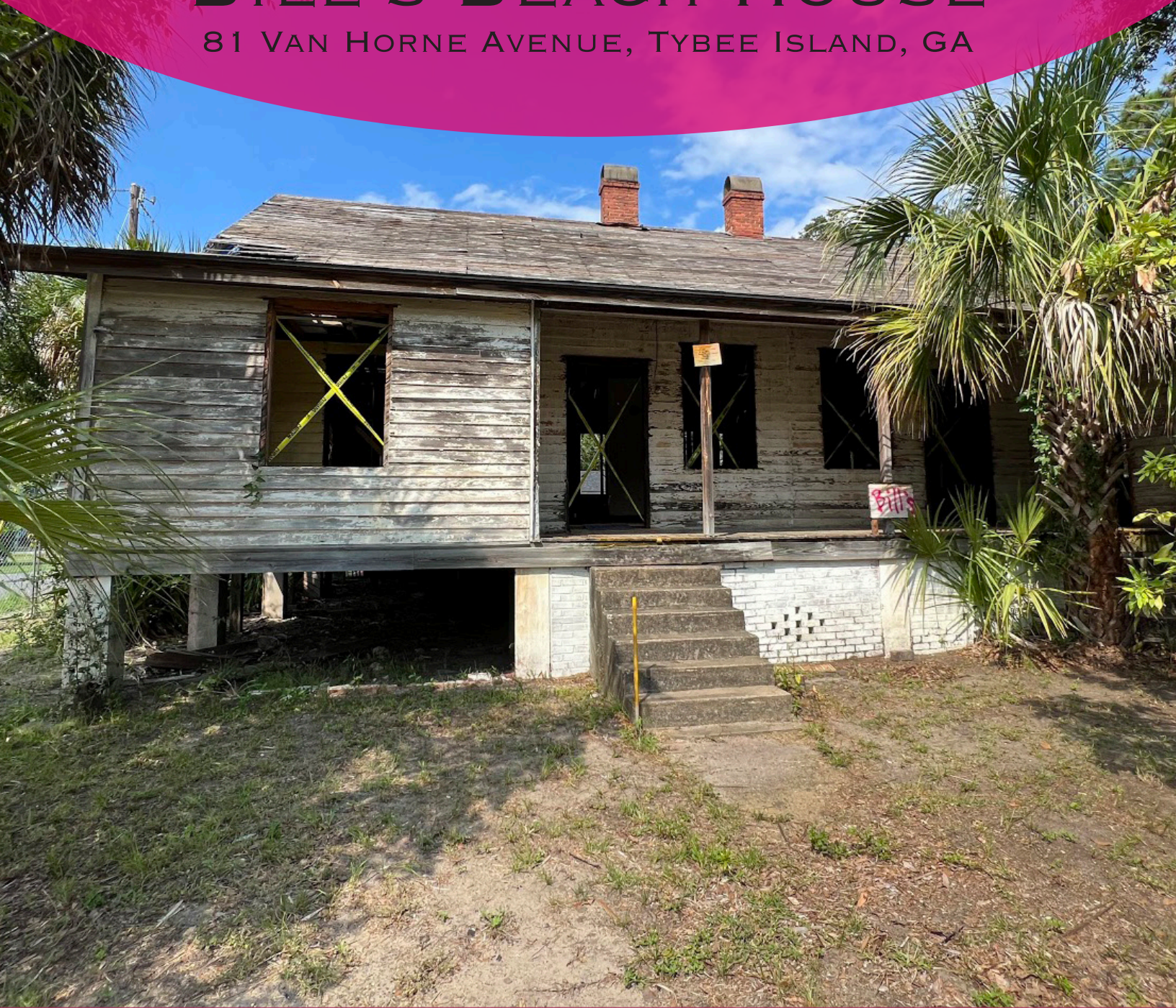


# A HISTORY OF BILL'S BEACH HOUSE

81 VAN HORNE AVENUE, TYBEE ISLAND, GA



PREPARED BY ETHOS PRESERVATION  
FOR RE: PURPOSE SAVANNAH, SEPTEMBER 2022

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# INTRODUCTION

Bill's Beach House, 81 Van Horne Avenue, Tybee Island, GA, was a wood framed vernacular military duplex cottage with two central chimneys. The exterior was simplistic and practical, featuring wooden siding. Two types of windows were present, 6 over 6 square lites and 2 over 2 lites, double hung. Placed atop tall concrete piers, the house sat at the intersection of Van Horne Avenue and Meddin Drive, facing Van Horne Avenue.

81 Van Horne was located on Tybee Island, Georgia within the Fort Village development. Fort Village was developed for the United States Military as a part of Fort Screven, which was active until 1945.

Information on the house has been found under multiple addresses:

“81 A & B Vanhorn, Fort Screven”

“M-D-5, Chatham County”

“37 Van Horn”

(Van Horn may also be spelt as “Vanhorn,” “Van Horne,” “Vanhorne”)

The structure was built in March of 1911 by Algernon Blair under the direction of Army Corps. of Engineers. The house retained historic integrity through the years with only minor alterations. After sitting vacant for a number of years, the house was deconstructed by Re:Purpose Savannah in 2022 at the direction of the owner.

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Areas of opportunity for further research:

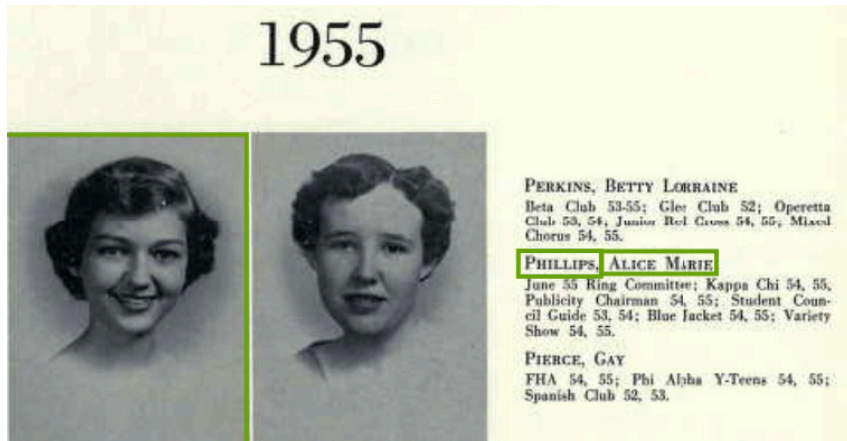
Ethos Preservation recommends looking into military records, working to identify past residents under alternative versions of the address, and locating deed records after Fort Screven became inactive in 1945.

# CHAIN OF TITLE

## 1940 United States Military Fort Screven Base

### 81A Phillips Family (Resident)

Charles H. Phillip, born in Kentucky, Soldier at Fort Screven Base; Marie Phillips, Wife; Alice Marie Phillips, Daughter (also found under "Abie"); Charles Phillip Jr., Son, (unknown if Charles Jr. lived at this residence.)



Alice Marie Phillips on left, around age 16, in highschool yearbook. Obtained from Ancestry.com.

### 81B Payne Family (Resident)

The Payne family might have lived at the residence since 1930. They are shown to have lived at Fort Screven since then but no street or number is found on sources.

Thomas H. Payne, born circa 1891 in Indiana; Soldier at Fort Screven Base; Emma M. Payne, Wife; Thomas H. Payne Jr., Son; William G. Payne, Son; Mary P. Payne, Daughter; Kathryn A. Payne, Daughter.



Thomas H. Payne Jr. obituary. Obtained from Legacy.com.

# CHAIN OF TITLE

## 1946

The City of Savannah Beach (Known today as the City of Tybee Island)  
Fort Screven Military Base was deactivated and sold by the Federal Government.

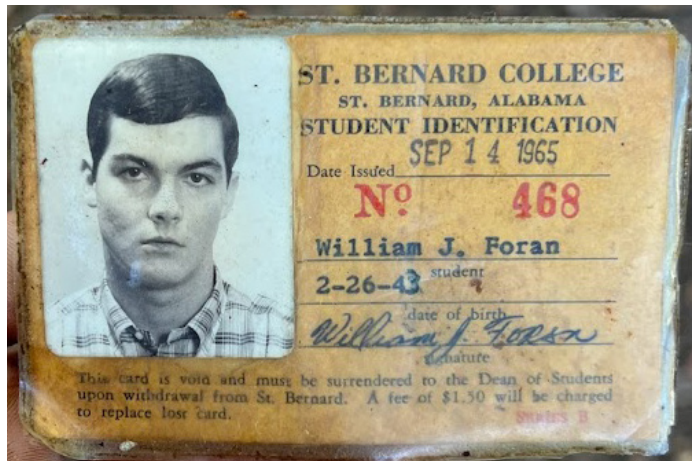
### Robinson Realty Company (Fort Screven Development Company)

Robinson Realty Company purchased the majority of Fort Screven from the City of Savannah Beach.

**1976 Sale recorded on property record card, no owner information.**

## 1983 - Present

William J Foran Jr., born 1947, Shown to reside at 37 Van Horne in 1987 which is likely to be 81 Van Horne.



ID was found in house during deconstruction.

**\*The Historic Resource Survey completed in 2017 by Quatrefoil Historic Preservation Consulting notes a past owner informed the surveyors that a Sergeant Grace was a resident at 81 Van Horne while Fort Screven was active. Further research is needed to confirm this.**

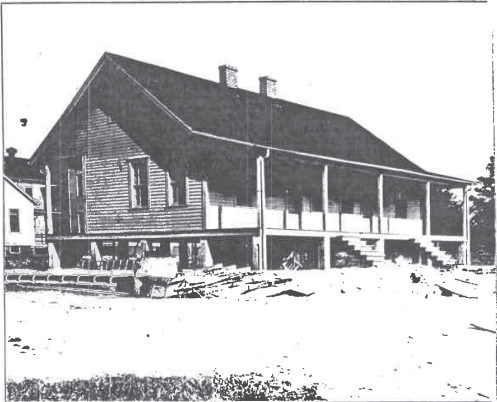
# STRUCTURE TIMELINE

Construction on 81 Van Horne was completed on March 14, 1911 for a total cost of \$4,063.00. At the time of deconstruction, the building's form and features were largely intact. The Quarter Master Corps building records of non-tactical buildings documented alterations to the structure until 1924.

Place: Fort Screven, Ga. Designation of Building: No. 0. Quarters Qrs. Capacity: 2 Employees  
 Total Cost: \$ 4,063.00 Date Completed: March 14, 1911  
 Material: Walls: Frame Foundations: Concrete  
 Roof: Shingle Floors: Wood How heated, Stoves: Electricity How lighted: Mineral oil  
 Provided with: Water connections: Yes Sewer connections: Yes  
 Water Closets No. 2 Urinals No. 0 Wash Sinks No. 2 Wash Basins No. 2 Laundry Tubs No. 0 Baths: Shower No. 2 Tubs No. 0 Screens: Yes Storm Sash: \_\_\_\_\_ Storm Doors: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Window Shades: Yes Wall Lockers No. \_\_\_\_\_ Refrigerators No. 2  
 Total floor area above basement sq. ft. 1150 Dimensions, Main Building: 51'2" x 30' Wings: \_\_\_\_\_ Each and every room arranged by floors:

1st Floor: 2r, 12'1"x14'; 2r, 14'2"x12'1"; 2r, 8'x5'6"; 2r, 5'6"x3'6".

Q. M. G. O. Plan No. 271, Building No. 81



Repairs.

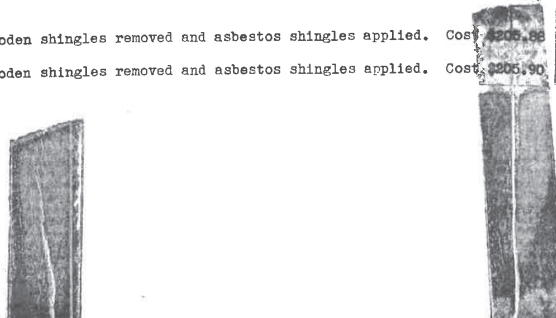
Expenditure	Amount
Expended to date	\$ _____
Yr. ending 3-1-09	\$ _____
3-1-10	\$ _____
3-1-11	\$ <u>None</u>
3-1-12	\$ <u>2.20</u>
3-1-13	\$ <u>75.00</u>
3-1-14	\$ <u>None</u>
3-1-15	\$ <u>14.50</u>
3-1-16	\$ <u>179.00</u>
3-1-17	\$ _____
3-1-18	\$ <u>19.68</u>
3-1-19	\$ <u>137.00</u>
3-1-20	\$ _____
6-30-21	\$ <u>94.83</u>
3-1-22	\$ _____
3-1-23	\$ _____
3-1-24	\$ _____

ADDITIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

Below enter chronologically all modifications, additions, introduction of water, sewer, electric light, etc., since March 1st, 1905; also installations of screens, storm sash and doors, window shades, wall lockers, and refrigerators. For officers' quarters state below articles of Heavy Furniture installed:

To Mch. 1, 1912: installed electric light system. Cost \$ 178.60  
" " " " " 2 Refrigerators.

#81-A  
 4-28-38 Wooden shingles removed and asbestos shingles applied. Cost \$205.90  
 #81-B  
 4-28-38 Wooden shingles removed and asbestos shingles applied. Cost \$205.90

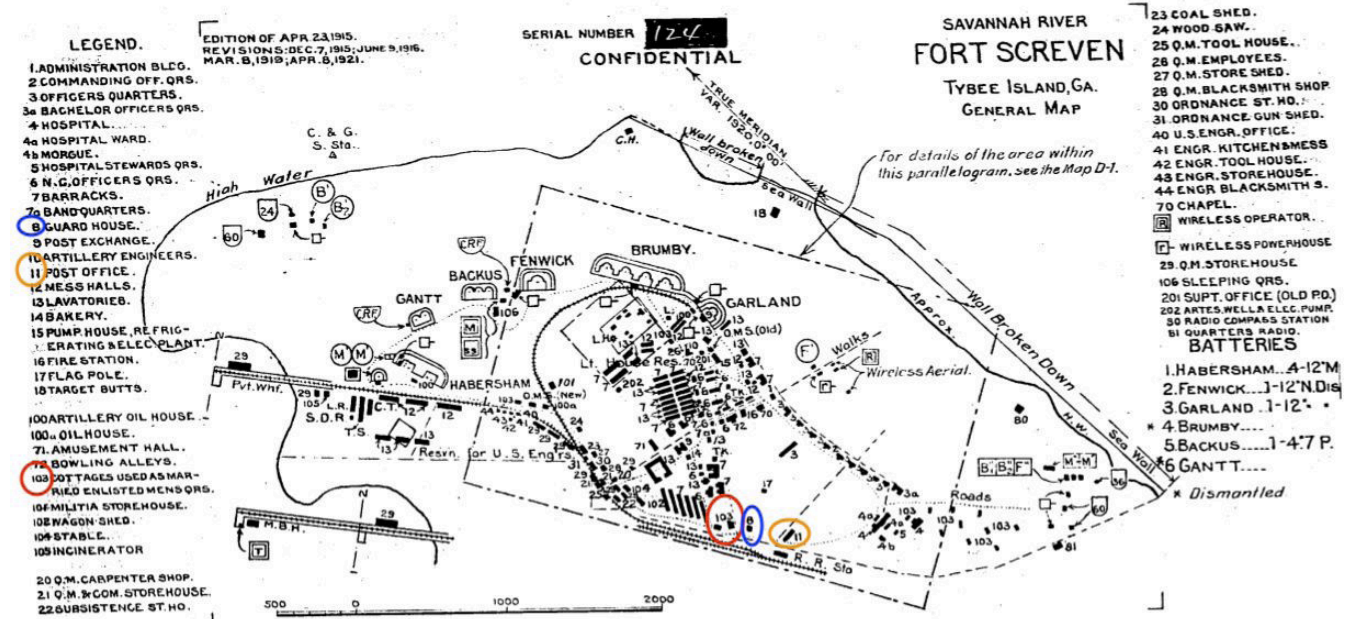


"The Quarter Master Corps building records," Scan from Sarah Jones of Tybee Island Historical Society

From 1900 to 1945, the Army Corp of Engineers was tasked with planning the Fort Village area at Fort Screven. Algernon Blair was awarded the contract to build out part of Fort Village, which included 81 Van Horne.

# STRUCTURE TIMELINE

The house was built as a duplex residence for NCO (Non Commissioned Officers) and transitioned into married enlisted men's quarters by the 1920s. Around the time of the transition to married enlisted men's quarters, is likely when the rear porches were enclosed to add additional interior living space.



Fort Screven Plan Circa 1921 (Tybee Island HRS Phase II, Quatrefoil Historic Preservation Consulting)

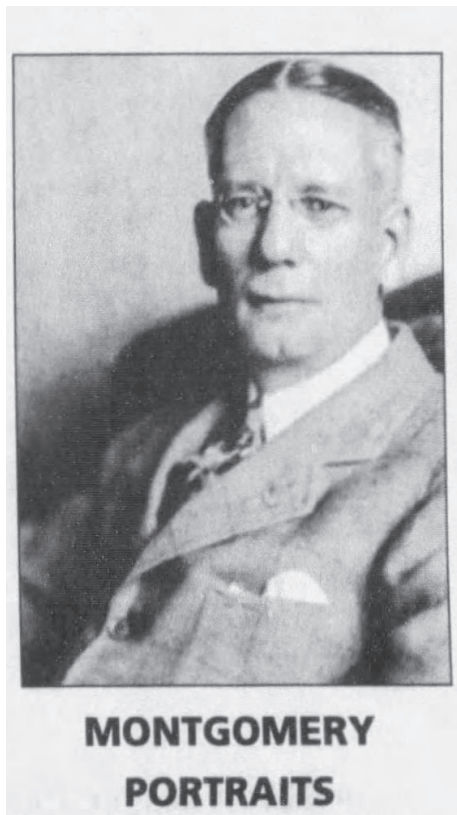


# ALGERNON BLAIR - BUILDER

Algernon Blair was based out of Montgomery, Alabama and is known for completing government buildings, courthouses, post offices, and military buildings in the south. Algernon Blair acted as both a general contractor and architect at times.

A few of the most notable buildings attributed to Blair include:

- Fort Screven Bakery, Fort Screven, Tybee Island, GA
- Mobile Launcher Platforms at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Launch Complex 39, Cape Canaveral, Brevard County, FL
- U.S. Naval Air Station, Equipment Shops & Offices, 206 South Avenue, Pensacola, Escambia County, FL
- Alabama S.P. United States Post Office and Courthouse, Montgomery, Alabama
- Austin United States Courthouse, Austin, Texas (on National Register)



The Montgomery Advertiser, 2011

## Algernon Blair Is Dead At 78

MONTGOMERY (AP) — One of the nation's better known contractors, Algernon Blair, 78, of Montgomery died in a Boston hospital yesterday. He had been in ill health for sometime.

A native of Brooklyn, N. Y., Blair here more than 40 years. He started out in a rough tool house here and expanded his business into a nationwide enterprise.

At one time his firm employed as many as 6,000 workers.

The Montgomery contractor made a specialty of government contracts.

He built post offices in more than 200 cities, hospitals, defense plants and housing units.

His firm built structures which cost more than \$63,000,000 during the last war.

Reproduction of German rocket installations and coast defense at Eglin Field, Fla., in 1944 was one of his most secret wartime jobs.

The sprawling Veterans Hospital group at Northport, Long Island, was one of his pre-war projects.

One of the larger contracts he got was the \$13,876,390 Coosa River ordnance plant at Talladega, Ala., in 1940.

Survivors include Blair's widow, two daughters, Mrs. Grady Pannell and Mrs. C. F. Voltz, Montgomery, and a son, A. Farnell Blair, Atlanta.

The funeral plans are incomplete.

Findagrave.com



Marking on back surface of lumber found during deconstruction.

# PHOTOS OF INTEREST



Red circle denotes 81 Van Horne in photo (1936.) Obtained from Tybeelndamericanlegion.org.



# PHOTOS OF INTEREST



Google Street View 2007



Google Street View 2013

## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Buildings by Blair  
found across land

By Jeff Benton

Algernon Blair (1873-1952) was born in Brooklyn to English parents who immigrated to the United States in 1863. The family was in Macon, Ga. by 1880.

There, Alexander Blair worked as an architect. Algernon worked as his father's business manager, but his interest was not in design, but in construction.

In 1897, Alexander Blair died, and 24-year-old Algernon took his first contracting job.

His first Montgomery contract was for the Standard Club (1902) on Montgomery Street. The Standard Club was followed by two large wholesale grocery warehouses: Winter-Loeb and Schloss and Kahn, both of which still stand on Tallapoosa Street.

Blair brought his wife, Carolyne (Carrie) Livingstone Singleton, and their three children to Montgomery. Soon they were settled at Restmore, their new house on the northwest corner of Felder Avenue and Gilmer Street.

In 1905, Carrie Blair died, leaving Blair with three young children. His mother and his older sister mothered the children until Blair married Adele Blue in 1908.

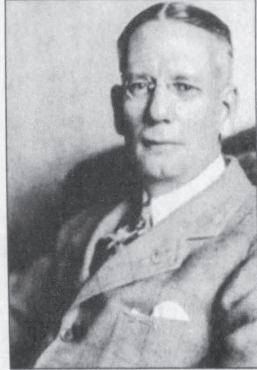
The construction company — Algernon Blair, Contractor — began to grow. In 1907, he secured his first government contract, alterations to the old federal building on Dexter Avenue. The following year, he built a new post office in Dalton, Ga., the first of more than 200 post offices that the King of the Post Offices would build during his career.

At this time, he was instrumental in forming a new Episcopal parish. Blair personally went to Boston to secure the services of the country's finest ecclesiastical architect; Ralph Adams Cram accepted the commission. The nave of the Church of the Ascension was erected in 1910, followed by the transept and chancel and finally the tower — now appropriately named the Blair Tower — in 1927.

During World War I, government contracts — including the large Camp Sheridan complex in north Montgomery — allowed Algernon Blair to prosper even more.

After the war, Blair continued to secure government contracts: for post offices, of course, but also for veterans' hospitals (including Montgomery's and Tuskegee's), Public Health Service hospitals, schools (including today's Baldwin Junior High School and Sidney Lanier High School).

In Montgomery, he also built



**MONTGOMERY  
PORTRAITS**

the federal building, the city hall, the Greystone Hotel (today's Hampton Inn and Suites) and the First National Bank (today's Regions Bank), where the entire 12th floor was occupied by Algernon Blair, Contractor. His construction projects spread over two-thirds of the country, and at its largest, employed over 6,000 workers.

At the beginning of World War II, Algernon Blair was as major national government contractor. He built military housing units, including 424 at Maxwell Field. During the war, he also built armament plants, training camps, airfields and navy bases, hospitals, and prisoner of war camps.

Not surprisingly, in 1944 Blair was ordered to marshal all of his available workers at Eglin Field, Fla. There, in less than 12 days, they constructed bunkers like those built by the Nazis on the French coast. Bombing runs against these bunkers determined how best to take out the Nazi fortifications when the Allies invaded Nazi-occupied France on D-Day.

Blair's boundless energy extended beyond his business and church interests. He served as chairman of the Alabama Relief Administration and on the boards of the Alabama Power Co., Alabama State Chamber of Commerce, First National Bank of Montgomery, Huntington College, Tuskegee Institute, and the YMCA. He was a Freemason and a director of Rotary International.

Remarkably, Blair had time to play bridge and especially dominos; he even headed the Montgomery Domino Club.

*Jeff Benton is a Montgomery historian. Photograph courtesy of Alabama Department of Archives and History.*

The Montgomery Advertiser, 2011



# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

**Category:** RESIDENTIAL

**Type 9 c-1:** Family Housing: Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) Housing

**Description:**

The military constructed family housing to serve married officers and non-commissioned officers. By the mid-twentieth century, the Army had developed a family housing program for non-commissioned officers, while the Navy discouraged enlisted personnel and even petty officers from marrying. Army family housing is stratified according to rank. Non-commissioned officers family housing was located in separate areas on Army posts apart from the officers housing area and the parade ground. The housing generally was designed as simpler versions of the predominant architecture of an installation.

**Evolution:**

The Army provided few quarters for family housing before the Civil War. Permanent barracks and officer housing was constructed at installations, such as coastal fortifications, armament factories, education facilities, and some western posts, intended for use over several years. Non-commissioned officers typically were assigned single rooms within the enlisted men's barracks. Detached houses for non-commissioned officers and their families were not constructed until the second half of the nineteenth century. While the Army tolerated NCO marriages before 1940, it actively discouraged and even prohibited enlisted men from marrying until World War II.

NCO family housing was first provided for specific senior NCOs. The earliest examples included houses for the commissary sergeant, the ordnance sergeant, or the quartermaster sergeant. Early NCO quarters were constructed cheaply of available materials, such as the one-story, frame housing at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. Other examples were constructed as simpler versions of the installation officer housing. In 1888, Congress approved budget allowances for the construction of hospital stewards quarters. Before this time, hospital stewards had lived in a room in the hospital building.<sup>15</sup> After 1888, hospital stewards quarters were a typical component of hospital complexes on Army posts.

The Army made no systematic effort to provide standardized housing for noncommissioned officers before the 1880s. Plans for NCO housing were not included in the proposed 1860 regulations or in the 1872 proposed Quartermaster plans. The families of enlisted men found housing through a variety of expedients. The soldiers' wives who were employed as laundresses lived in a row of shacks. Other families divided unused barracks buildings into housing areas. As officer housing was improved, enlisted men and their families moved into abandoned officer quarters.<sup>16</sup>

Context Study of the United States Quartermaster General Standardized Plans, pg. 269-270

# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The Army began to include permanent housing for senior NCOs at the larger consolidated installations constructed starting in the 1880s through the turn-of-the-century. The Quartermaster Department also began to develop standardized plans for NCO housing at this time. The Quartermaster Department built both detached single-family and duplex NCO housing. Duplexes were the most common housing type for NCOs between 1890 and World War I. Most installations during this era had no more than approximately half a dozen houses for NCOs and their families. NCO housing was located next to the area where the resident NCO worked. For example, the hospital steward's house was built next to the hospital. NCO housing was also constructed in distinct NCO housing areas, usually a few hundred feet behind the barracks. NCO housing in barracks areas typically consisted of a row of three to five houses. Unlike the barracks and officers quarters, NCO housing was not located around the parade ground.

During the 1920s, the Army suffered from a severe nationwide housing shortage. After a Congressional investigation into the living conditions at dilapidated World War I mobilization camps, Congress enacted Public Law 45 in 1926, which allowed the Army to dispose of unneeded property and to use the funds to improve the posts it retained. The initial funds were directed specifically for the construction of hospitals, barracks, and NCO housing. During this period of inter-war construction, the Army built more NCO family housing than ever before in its history.

The installation construction funded by this new program incorporated the ideas of city planning through the organization of the component parts of the installation into distinct hierarchical areas within an overall plan. A planner with the Planning Branch of the Quartermaster Corps compared the NCO housing area to the “office worker area” of a city.<sup>17</sup> NCO family housing areas now constituted entire neighborhoods within increasingly large and complex installation plans. The Construction Service of the Quartermaster Corps developed standardized plans for NCO family housing that were comparable to small civilian suburban cottages and bungalows of the same era. The plans followed regional architectural styles, particularly the Spanish Colonial and Georgian Colonial Revival. The Army generally constructed the Georgian Colonial Revival from the Mid-Atlantic north to New England and west to the Northwest; the Spanish Colonial style housing was constructed in the hotter climates of the Southeast and Southwest. Two-story duplex NCO quarters remained popular, and one-story single-family cottages were introduced.

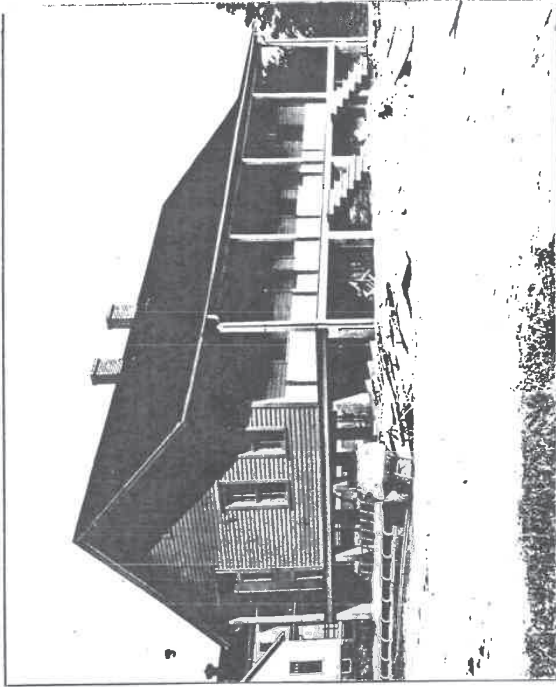
Context Study of the United States Quartermaster General Standardized Plans, pg. 269-270



# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Q. M. G. O. Plan No. **271**, Building No. **81**

Place: **Fort, Screven, Ga.**, Designation of  
 Building: **N.C.O. Quarters**, Capacity: **2 Employees**  
 Total Cost: \$ **4,063.00**, Date Completed: **March 14, 1911.**  
 Material: Walls: **Frame**, Foundations: **Concrete**  
 Roof: **Shingle**, Floors: **Wood** How heated,  
 Stoves (.....sq. ft. rad.) How lighted: **Electricity**  
 Provided with: Water connections: **Yes**, Sewer connections: **Yes**  
 Water Closets No. **2**, Urinals No. **0**, Wash Sinks No. **2**, Wash  
 Basins No. **2**, Laundry Tubs No. **0**, Baths: Shower No. **2**  
 Tubs No. **0**, Screens: **Yes**, Storm Sash....., Storm Doors.....  
 Window Shades **Yes**, Wall Lockers No. ...., Refrigerators No. **2**  
 Total floor area above basement sq. ft. **1,150**, Dimensions, Main  
 Building: **51'2" x 30'**, Wings....., Each  
 and every room arranged by floors:



**1st Floor: 23, 12'11"x14'; 23, 14'2"x12'11"; 2r, 8'x5'6";  
 2r, 5'6"x3'6"**

**ADDITIONS AND INSTALLATIONS**

Below enter chronologically all modifications, additions, introduction of water, sewer, electric light,  
 etc., since March 1st, 1905; also installations of screens, storm sash and doors, window shades, wall  
 lockers, and refrigerators. For officers' quarters state below articles of Heavy Furniture installed:  
 To **Feb. 1, 1912: installed electric light system. Cost \$ 178.60**  
 " " " " " **2 Refrigerators.**

#81-A  
 4-28-38 Wooden shingles removed and asbestos shingles applied. Cost \$205.98  
 #81-B  
 4-28-38 Wooden shingles removed and asbestos shingles applied. Cost \$205.90

**Repairs.**

Expended to date	Yr. ending	3-1-09	3-1-10	3-1-11	3-1-12	3-1-13	3-1-14	3-1-15	3-1-16	3-1-17	3-1-18	3-1-19	3-1-20	3-1-21	3-1-22	3-1-23	3-1-24
\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
				None	2.20	75.81	None	1.85	179.00		19.68	137.00		94.83			



"The Quarter Master Corps building records," Scan from Sarah Jones of Tybee Island Historical Society.



# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

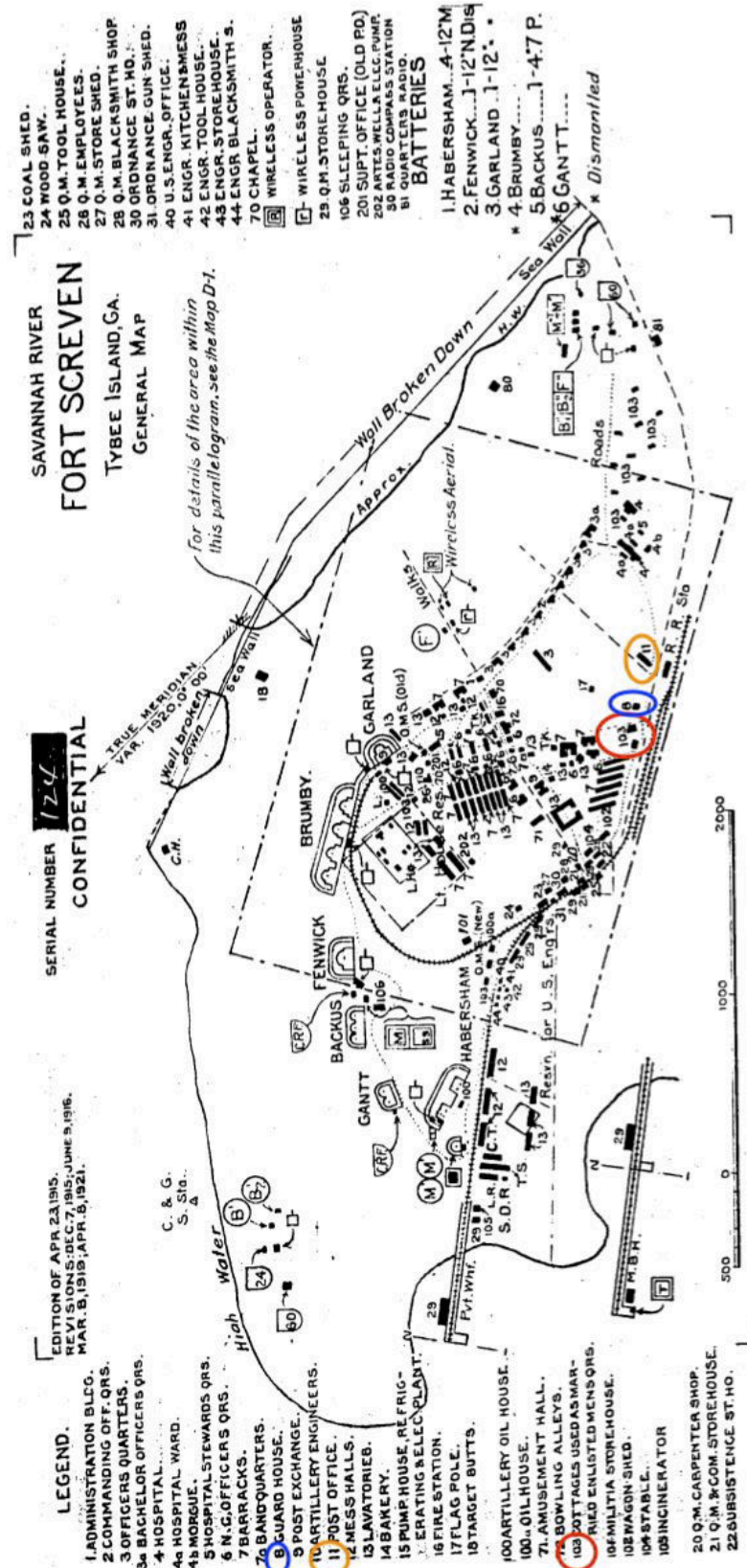


Record Group 77: Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1789 - 1999





# SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Fort Screven Plan Circa 1921 (Tybee Island HRS Phase II, Quatrefoil Historic Preservation Consulting)



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