



Work of a Master? Addressing Evaluation of Routine or Prosaic Architecture by Famous Architects on Military Facilities

Project # 15-779

Background:

Installations under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense (DoD) contain a wide variety of buildings designed by architects who have been considered “masters” for the purposes of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). While some of these buildings are large and impressive structures with obvious architectural merit, a far larger number of unremarkable, unadorned structures (warehouses, hangars, residential units, medical facilities, shop and storage complexes, or MWR units) were also designed by master architects. A dearth of guidance on this issue has led to confusion and project delays. In recent years, evaluations of such architect-designed buildings have been questioned by Section 106 State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewers for their lack of consideration as the work a master under NRHP Criterion C; in some instances, concurrence of evaluations have been delayed or challenged because a simple or prosaic building was designed by an architect considered a master by the reviewer. The resulting consultation can cause project delays that might affect a facility’s mission.

Objective:

The goal of this document was to aide military cultural resources managers in compliance with Section 106 and Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 for properties that could be considered important works of master architects. Guidance on completing evaluations under the work of a master aspect is very limited. This document is intended to help fill that void.

Summary of Approach:

This document outlines the challenges of evaluating military buildings under the work of a master standard of NRHP Criterion C and details research and analysis approaches to meet the challenges. This project collected case studies of naval buildings designed by prolific or master architects from Naval Facilities Engineering Command regions around the nation and used the research and analysis approaches to assess their eligibility to be listed in the NRHP under Criterion C as important works of master architects.

Benefit:

This project provides guidance for cultural resources managers and consultant historians when evaluating military facilities under the work of a master standard of NRHP Criterion C. This is useful because many historic building evaluations on military facilities under Section 106 and Section 110 of NHPA do not specifically address the work of a master standard. It will also be helpful for SHPO reviewers by providing a benchmark to assess evaluations under the work of a master standard and help avoid instances where SHPO reviewers and military cultural resources managers disagree on the adequacy of such evaluation. This should save time and costs by ensuring more evaluations are completed to NHPA requirements and SHPO reviewer satisfaction.

Accomplishments:

The guidance document produced for this project accomplishes a number of important goals meant to assist cultural resources managers and consultant historians evaluate military facilities under the work of a master standard of NRHP Criterion C. The document provides tips and instructions on researching master architects with the intention of evaluating them under work of a master standard. It also details guidelines for performing the evaluation, including paths for meeting the unique challenges posed by this aspect of the NRHP criteria. Case studies included in the document serve as examples of how such evaluations can be satisfactorily completed. The document also includes several reference tools for practitioners, including an annotated list of standard sources for performing such evaluations, a reference checklist to help track the progress of evaluations to ensure satisfactory completion, and guidance on consulting with SHPO reviewers.

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