

*Gateway #1*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**  
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

RECEIVED 2280

APR 24 2002

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Floyd Bennett Field Historic District

AND/OR COMMON  
Floyd Bennett Field

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Flatbush Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New York

VICINITY OF

11

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

36

Kings

47

**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

ND

MILITARY

OTHER

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If applicable)

National Park Service, North Atlantic Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Boston

VICINITY OF

Mass

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Kings County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Flatbush Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

New York

New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

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

DATE

9/31/75 & 6/28/76

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

North Atlantic Region

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Boston

Mass

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

Floyd Bennett Field Historic District, located within the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, retains the layout and surface appearance of the 1931-1941 airport. The efforts of its planners to follow the 1928 Department of Commerce guidelines for airport construction are readily apparent. As directed, not only are the hangars and support buildings arranged linearly to one side of the runways, they are also easily accessible from a major highway, Flatbush Avenue, which passes directly behind them.

Floyd Bennett Field, the first municipal airport of the City of New York, was constructed between 1928-1931. Following the opening of Idlewild Airport in 1939, Bennett Field was closed to commercial use and eventually conveyed to the U.S. Navy in 1941. The airport was renamed the Naval Air Station, New York or the Brooklyn Naval Air Station, New York and it was enlarged from 387 acres to 1,238 acres. The Navy continued to operate the field for thirty years. In 1971 it became a Naval Air Reserve Training Detachment where ground crews received technical training. With the establishment of Gateway National Recreation Area, Floyd Bennett Field was acquired by the National Park Service.

The historic structures dating from the 1928-1931 period and the 1936-1938 period, include eight hangars with attached service wings, the administration building, the garage, two pump houses, an electrical vault, a transformer building, and a pump station. With the exception of the steel framed hangars, these buildings are all constructed of brick. There are a small number of later and less significant buildings, constructed during the Navy occupation of the field, in this area. These later buildings are concrete block, wood frame or concrete and corrugated metal structures. (see enclosed Site plans). The most significant structures are the hangars, the administration building, the taxiway, and the runways. *pictures illustrate bldgs - particularly admin. bldg.*

### 1. Hangar Complex (No. HS 3,4,5,6)

The first and most important buildings to be erected at the field were the complex of four pairs of hangars built between 1929 and 1931. The basically identical hangars are of steel frame construction with steel trussed arched roofs with wooden decks. Each hangar has a concrete slab floor and is supported by forty-five foot long precast concrete piles which were sunk into the ground. The inside dimensions of each hangar are one hundred and twenty feet by one hundred and forty feet. Large glass and aluminum alloy doors which have an overhead clearance of twenty-two feet enclose the north and south ends of each hangar. The interiors are open to the roof and have no dividing partitions. The hangars are arranged inside by side pairs which face another pair across a composition block apron. There are two such pairs to the north of the administration building and two to the south. Attached to the exterior side of each hangar is a two story service wing, constructed of buff colored brick, which measures twenty feet by one hundred and twenty feet. These flat roofed wings contain office and maintenance space. Banks of steel framed windows run the length of these wings and there are steel framed doors in the north and south ends. Before the WPA work, 1936-1938, each hangar was a separate structure, but during the second period of construction, central service wings, constructed of the same brick and along the same lines as the side wings, were erected between the paired hangars, creating one continuous structure

# SIGNIFICANCE

CODE	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

1928-31

BUILDER ARCHITECT

New York City Department of Docks

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Floyd Bennett Field on Barren Island, Jamaica Bay, is significant in the evolution of aviation history and municipal airport construction. The Field was the first municipal airport in New York City. Constructed between 1928 and 1931 by the City Department of Docks, the airport was designed to attract the increasing volume of air traffic directly to New York City, rather than to Newark Airport where the vast majority of New York bound flights terminated. In 1933, Floyd Bennett Field was the second busiest airport in the country, with 51,828 landings and takeoffs, but only a minor percentage of this activity consisted of the mail, freight and commercial passengers which generated revenue. Following the opening of Idlewild Airport in 1939, Bennett Field was closed to commercial use and conveyed to the U.S. Navy in 1941. Although the Navy enlarged the Field after conveyance in 1941, the original complex of steel frame and brick hangars and support buildings has not been substantially altered. The layout and construction followed the guidelines indicated in the Construction of Airports by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Floyd Bennett Field thus retains architectural design and historic cohesion of an early municipal airport.

Floyd Bennett Field is historically significant also for its association with individuals significant in early aviation. Due to its unusually long runways and fair weather conditions, Bennett Field became noted as a prime airport for the experimental fliers who sought to establish speed and distance records. For example, in 1933, Wiley Post broke his previous record for an around the world flight landing at Floyd Bennett seven days, eighteen hours and forty-nine minutes after he took off from there on July 15. Several women's transcontinental speed records began or ended at Bennett Field. In 1938, Howard Hughes with a crew of four made an around-the world flight starting and finishing at Bennett Field. This flight, which covered 14,791 miles in three days, nineteen hours, eight minutes and ten seconds, was made to collect navigational data.

Shortly after Hughes's flight, Douglas Corrigan embarked from Bennett Field supposedly on a flight to California. However, Corrigan flew instead to Ireland, thus fulfilling his wish to make a transAtlantic flight. For this apparent lack of orientation, Corrigan lost his experimental license and earned the nickname "Wrong-Way." Interest in these records reflected public enthusiasm about aviation and contributed to improving technical aspects and piloting skills.

Most municipal airports have been modernized. Floyd Bennett Field thus presents an unusual value because it retains much of its original structures and setting which tell the story of the early years of aviation. Nearby Miller Army Air Field, which retains structures dating from immediately after World War One, gives an indication of how a military air field appeared thus allowing a comparative study between non-commercial and commercial airfields.

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Abernathy, Charles, Final Report of the Works Progress Administration for the City of New York (New York, W.P.A., 1943).

Department of Commerce, Construction of Airports (Washington, GPO, 1928).

National Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce, Aircraft Yearbook for 1932 (n.p., 1932).

New York City, Department of Docks, Sixty First Annual Report (New York, 1932).

Wrenn, Tony, General History of the Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point and Staten Island Units Gateway National Recreation Area, NY, NY. (n.p. 1975)

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 328.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1,8 | 5 | 9,4 | 44 | 0 | 4,4 | 9,4 | 3,2 | 0 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | 1,8 | 5 | 9,4 | 73 | 0 | 4,4 | 9,3 | 2,60 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | 1,8 | 5 | 9,3 | 61 | 0 | 4,4 | 9,2 | 0,4 | 0 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | 1,8 | 5 | 9,2 | 61 | 20 | 4,4 | 9,4 | 0,60 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

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

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

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Survey Historian; Ricardo Torres, NAR

ORGANIZATION

North Atlantic Region

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

DATE

6/30/76, 4/78

TELEPHONE

617-223-3778

STATE

MA

## CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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out of two hangars. These two story wings were built to house machine shops and other maintenance facilities. The four hangar pairs have some Art Deco ornamentation in concrete panels on the central wings and in stamped metal on the hangar gables. The hangar gables bear winged medallions with the initials "NYC". The central wings have varying ornamentation; some have geometrically decorated concrete panels, as well as winged emblems with crossed propellers, while others have no decoration whatsoever. With the exception of some minor alterations, such as bricked in windows and removed hoods, the hangars are basically unchanged. Only Hangars 3 and 4 are presently occupied. These two are in use by the New York City Police Department.

2. Administration Building (No. HS 1)

The administration building, constructed in 1931, is a red and black brick building, two stories high and constructed in a neoGeorgian style. It has white stone quoins, water table and entablature. The structure, which also rests on sunken concrete pilings, has a partially raised basement. The eastern facade, which faces the runway, is dominated by a semi-octagonal projecting bay, three stories tall and topped with the steel framed and glass enclosed control booth. There is a small deck, enclosed with aluminum railing surrounding the control booth. On either side of the projecting bay, at the first story level, there is an observation deck, enclosed by balustrades and reached by a granite stairway. Outside entryways to the basement pass below these decks. "Naval Air Station" and "Floyd Bennett Field" are spelled out in bronze letters across the entablature on the east facade. The west facade, which faces the original entrance to the field from Flatbush Avenue, is composed of a central projection, flanked by symmetrical sections. This central projection houses a recessed full portico supported by Ionic columns. There are three doorways under the portico, and over the central door is the Naval Air Station clock. In the center of the cornice of the portico is a polychrome winged globe. As originally designed, the administration building housed a restaurant, cafeteria, a post office, dormitories, lounge, weather bureau and a Department of Commerce office. The building underwent repairs and alterations during the WPA work and was then adapted for use by the Navy. Today the building is unoccupied and in need of general rehabilitation. The interior is generally plain, with occasional ornamentation such as marble panelling. A nonsignificant frame addition attached to the northern end of the building during the Navy occupancy is scheduled to be removed by the Park Service.

3. Runways and Taxiway (No. HS 7)

In 1929-31, following the creation of the 387 acre area, two reinforced concrete runways were laid. Both runways were one hundred feet wide; one was 4200' long and oriented on a northeast - southwest axis and the other was 3,110' long and oriented on a north-northwest - south-southwest axis. The runways, located to the east of the building complex, formed a T, with the intersection slightly south of the administration building site.

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A concrete taxiway was also constructed at this time. It was parallel to the shorter of the runways and located to the west of it and east of the hangars. Two more runways were constructed by the WPA in 1937 to 1938. The shorter of these runways was laid on an approximately north - south axis, extending 4000' feet north from its intersection with the southern end of the earlier, 3,110' runway. The longer of the new runways extended southeast for 5,500' from the northern terminus of the 3,100' runway. The rest of the airfield was planted with grass, to prevent drifting. With the expansion of the airfield and its continuing maintenance by the Navy, the original runways have been extended, widened and presumably resurfaced. Except for the newer northern-most runway presently at Bennett Field, which runs from east to west, the modern runways have followed the general layout of the originals. The best preserved runway, in terms of scale, is the longer of the first two runways (labelled as "f" on the enclosed site plan) hence the historic runway pattern is an integral part of the current runway system.

There are additional historic structures of less importance that relate to the use of Floyd Bennett Field during the historic period (1931-1941):

The garage and maintenance shop (#26), constructed circa 1931, is a one story, rectangular buff brick building similar in silhouette to the hangar complexes. It consists of a central core of offices flanked on either side by shops, which are reached through overhead metal doors. There is a small, stuccoed attachment on the southwest corner of the garage. The building has a flat, steel reinforced roof and concrete flooring. It is in fair condition and is not presently occupied. It is located in the southwest corner of the airport, below the hangars, just east of Flatbush Avenue.

To the east of the garage and shops are two other small buff brick buildings, one story tall and rectangular in shape. The western structure is a pump house (#30) and contains operating pumping machinery and tanks. The other, smaller building houses electrical equipment (#57). Its brickwork is not in good condition and requires some patching.

The fire pump house (#29) and the gasoline pump station (#176), are located to the west of the administration building. The fire pump house is a partially sunken, single story buff brick building with a sheet copper-covered, concrete hip roof. There is a wide concrete cornice which is imprinted with "Pump House" on the north facade. There is a small stuccoed attachment on the west end of the building. The structure houses pumping machinery which is presently in use. To the west of this building is the gasoline pump station, which is also a single story, rectangular buff brick building. It has a flat concrete roof and concrete flooring. The building is not occupied, is missing its door and its underground tanks have been filled with sand.

The transformer building (#120) is located to the north of the hangars, along the taxiway. It is a single story, roughly L-shaped building, constructed of buff brick with white stone trim. The flat roof and the floor are concrete. The building has steel framed windows and doors. It is still used to house transformer facilities.

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Within the original boundaries of the municipal airport there are several structures built after 1941 which are intrusions. Some of these were constructed in the main complex of buildings, while other more recent ones are located on the eastern side of the field on what was open flying field during the 1931-1941 period. None of these more recent buildings contribute to the historic significance of the district. The intrusive buildings within the main building complex include: Hangars 9 and 10, wood frame attached hangars built by the Navy circa 1942; Structures 44, 45, 266, 238, small single-story concrete block buildings used as storehouses; Structure 265, the Blue Nose hangar, a large, steel frame building with concrete foundations and corrugated siding; Structure 265A, a small shed; Structure 171, the wood frame addition to the administration building; Structures 48 and 50, single-story wood frame buildings which formerly housed the Navy training facilities and a garage and shop, respectively; Structures 126 and 236, small single-story sheds used for storage.

The above intrusions are indicated unshaded on the enclosed sketch map of "Floyd Bennett Field Historic District".

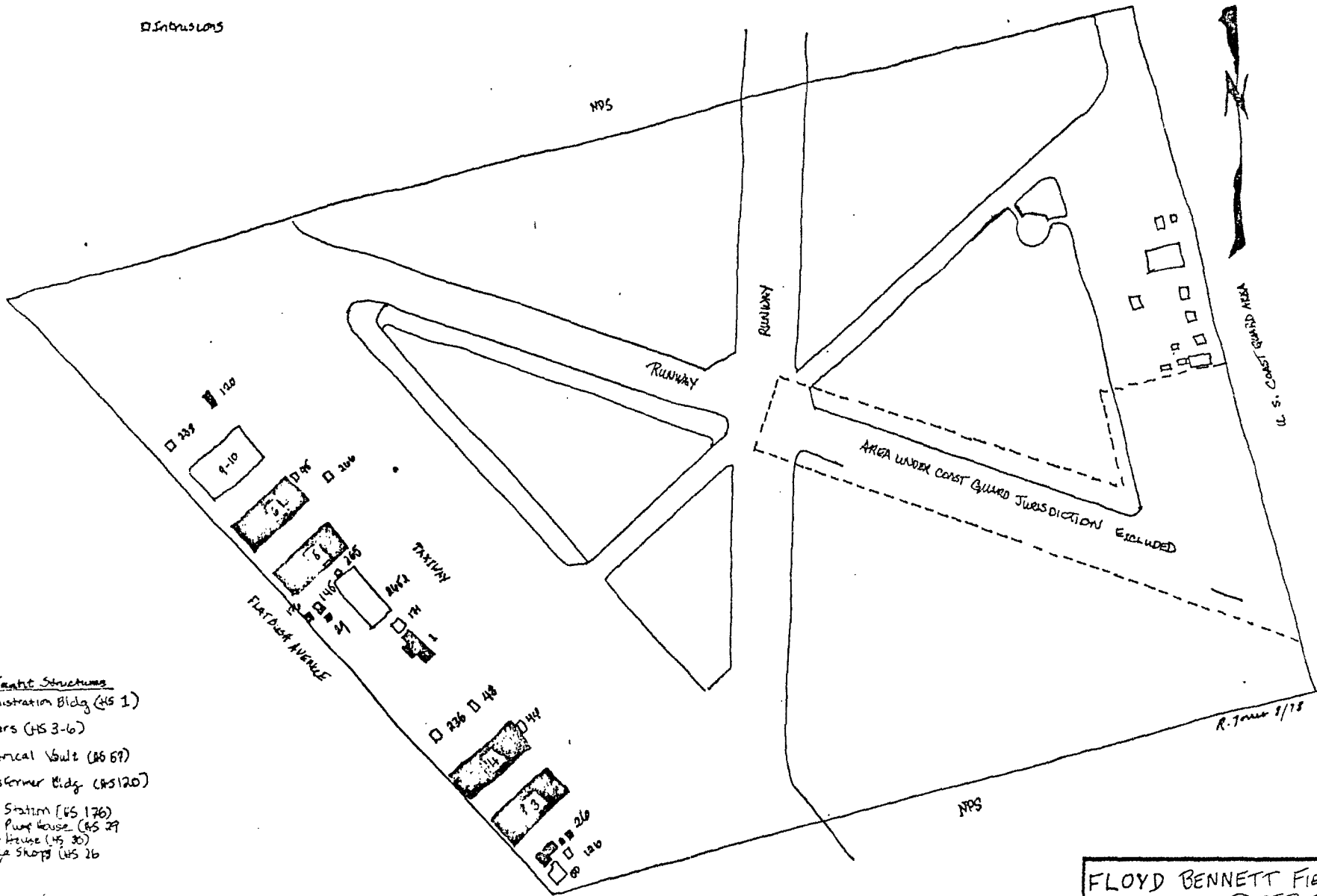
As can be seen in a comparison between the 1940 site plan and the current map, the majority of formerly unsurfaced land around the runways has been surfaced with runways, taxiways, aprons and roads. However, this land has remained open, otherwise, and the post 1941 developments do not constitute a major intrusion.

A portion of the runway, shown with dotted lines on the sketch map of Floyd Bennett Field Historic District, is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard and has been excluded from the nomination acreage, although historically it is part of the proposed historic district. The Coast Guard runway tract is used as a landing strip and does not intrude into the historic district.

The lower part of Floyd Bennett Field covers a land area previously known as Barren Island which has had an ample history of occupation by prehistoric and historic settlers. It is believed that a Canarsie Indian Village, Enquendito, once was located in close proximity to the present Park Headquarters. During the nineteenth century, a small village grew on Barren Island because of a large fertilizer and glue factory. By the mid 1880's, 500 workers and families associated with the factory lived in the area now occupied by part of Floyd Bennett Field. The district contains, therefore, potentially significant archeological deposits.

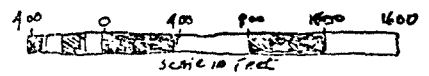
■ Significant Structures

□ Intrusions



R. Turner 8/18

- Significant Structures  
Administration Bldg (HS 1)  
Hangars (HS 3-6)  
Electrical Vault (HS 67)  
Transformer Bldg (HS 120)  
Pump Station (HS 176)  
Fire Pump House (HS 29)  
Pump House (HS 35)  
Storage Sheds (HS 26)



FLOYD BENNETT FIELD DISTRICT	
SCALE	APPROVED BY
DATE	



FLOYD BENNETT FIELD HISTORIC  
DISTRICT  
GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA  
JAMAICA BAY

UTM References

A	18 594 440	44 94 320
B	18 594 730	44 93 260
C	18 593 600	44 92 040
D	18 592 620	44 94 060

