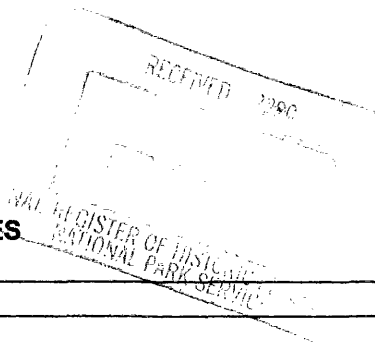


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NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: East Sixth Street USO Building  
other names/site number:

**2. Location**

street & number: 305 East Sixth Street  
city or town: Hattiesburg  
state: Mississippi code: MS county: Forrest code: 035 zip code: 39401

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally X statewide \_\_\_ locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth H. P. Paul  
Signature of certifying official

FEBRUARY 23, 2004  
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register,  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson H. Beall  
Date of Action  
4/6/04

**5. Classification**

---

**Ownership of Property:**  
Public – local

**Number of Resources within Property:**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

**Category of Property:**  
Building

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings sites structures objects
1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions:**  
Social: civic

**Current Functions:**  
Recreation and culture: museum

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification(s):**  
No style

**Materials:**  
foundation: concrete block  
roof: asphalt  
walls: wood  
other

**Narrative Description:**

See Continuation Sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

Military  
Ethnic heritage - black

**Period of Significance**

1942-1946

**Significant Dates**

1942

**Criteria Considerations:**

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person(s)**

**Cultural Affiliation(s)**

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance:** See continuation sheets.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** See continuation sheet.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: 0.5 acre

UTM References:	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Easting</i>	<i>Northing</i>
	16	281850	3468900

**Verbal Boundary Description**                      See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification:**                      See continuation sheet.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title:	Gene and Linda Ford, Architectural Historians			date:	June 2001
organization:	private consultants			telephone:	(205) 556-5388
street & number:	26 Cherokee Hills			zip code:	35404
city or town:	Tuscaloosa	state:	Alabama		

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner(s)**

name:	City of Hattiesburg		
street & number:	P. O. Box 1898		
city or town:	Hattiesburg	state:	Mississippi
		zip code:	39401

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## VII. Narrative Description

The East Sixth Street USO club is located approximately four blocks from the Hub City Historic District in downtown Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The USO is a little more than a block removed from Mobile Street, the major north/south-oriented traffic artery that connects the historic Mobile Street African American commercial district with downtown Hattiesburg.

Envisioned as a recreational center with various services offered to the African American men and women serving at Camp Shelby, the East Sixth Street USO successfully fulfilled this vision between 1942 and 1946. The historic club now contains an African American Military History Museum. Today the facility is called the N. R. Burger Center after Professor N. R. Burger who was the principal of Eureka High School.

No standardized plans seem to exist for USO clubs of the forties. Private citizens with their own funds, or help from civic organizations, cities or federal grants constructed the clubs on an individual basis. USO clubs were housed in commercial buildings, churches, residences, and any other donated facilities. A new building, specifically for the purpose of housing an African American USO, was a luxury. World War II was a time of few available building materials since most resources were allocated for the Allied cause in the European and Pacific theaters. Hattiesburg's construction escalated at this time. There was no building moratorium since Camp Shelby was reactivated in the fall of 1940 and thousands of construction workers and other skilled laborers rushed to fill positions for reopening the camp. Construction materials and laborers were available in Hattiesburg.

The East Sixth Street USO was built in early 1942 and opened for use on March 22, 1942. It is a T-shaped, wood frame building with front gable roof of asphalt shingles. The interior includes an auditorium, stage, lobby, men and women's bathroom, dressing rooms and meeting rooms. It has no specific style and is quite simple in its presentation.

A central brick chimney with a concrete cap and two, flanking louvered ventilators accentuate the façade on the north end of the edifice. Two wood panel doors with 1/1 panels, centrally located open into the lobby. The doors appear to be original to the building and perhaps served as an entrance and exit way. A covered vestibule encompasses the doorways. A band of windows pierce the northern façade. The windows are difficult to distinguish behind dense

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metal screens. From the interior of the building they can be identified as three horizontal bands hung over three horizontal bands. At the east end of the northern façade is another wood door.

To the west side of the USO is another band of windows with the same thick metal screens. There is one, off center, wood door that penetrates the crossing T on the west side. The south end is simple and highlighted only by the gable ends of the roof with two louvered ventilators. Moving onto the east side of the building there are renovations underway.

The Master plan of the City of Hattiesburg and Albert and Associates Architects, Phase I denotes the addition of a ramp to access the stage and dressing rooms. That work is being carried out presently. There is a steel casement window on the east side and an off center, wood door.

Phase III of the Master plan includes the restoration of the original wood siding. The siding is now aluminum and the building rests on a concrete block foundation.

Stepping through the wood panel door on the North façade one enters the central lobby. At present there are two meeting rooms with wood doors that are immediately met as one enters the building. The meeting rooms cover an historic fireplace indicated by the exterior, central brick chimney. Phase II includes intentions to remove the later addition meeting rooms and restore the fireplace. The rooms are approximately 9X12' and are echoed by an open space with no front wall to the East. This space has only a wooden divider with cubbyholes that acts as a wall and it is approximately the size of the meeting rooms. There is one more storage room to the East with the same dimensions. The entrance lobby stretches some 42 feet from East to West. The walls are sheetrock, the floors linoleum tile and the three doors are hollow wood doors. These materials are used throughout the building.

Moving clockwise the lobby stretches southward for another twenty feet. An office on the north wall measures approximately 8x15' with no other distinctions. Next comes the women's and men's toilets that are back-to-back measuring the same approximately 9 1/2X11' each. The stall doors are wooden. Finally there is an office and two storage rooms measuring 9x10', 9x5', and 5x11' respectively.

From the lobby a set of double leaf, solid wood doors lead into the historically intact auditorium. The room measures some 34x55 feet and has a high ceiling of sheets of plywood with suspended wooden truss work that weaves a support system across the ceiling. A series of industrial light

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fixtures in spherical form float among the trusses. These large circles of light and metal are dim when first lit and gradually turn the shadows of the ceiling into bright light. Somewhere between the dark and light on the floor below appear the ghosts of black soldiers and female volunteers who gracefully circle the room.

The auditorium has little other ornamentation besides wide, wood baseboards that trim the walls. At the south end of the space is the focal point of the room, the USO club stage. The stage is raised some three feet from the floor and is approximately 20x22'; accentuated by wide, wood baseboards and a double row of wood trim at the stage lip. Phase II of the city's Master plan is to replace the historic stage curtain. Historic photographs indicate a series of four curtains and valances crossing the expanse of the stage. On the west and east ends of the stage are dressing rooms. The west end dressing room is approximately 10x12' and the east end dressing room is approximately 12x12'. The west end dressing room includes a 2x4' toilet and storage space of approximately the same size.

The cross of the T on the East side of the edifice contains a series of storage rooms and offices. A few original wood panel doors hang over closet spaces. Built in wood shelves fill the walls in the storage room on the outer east side of the building. The space measures about 5x6' and opens into a 8x6' and then 7x10' storage room. Two offices are on the outer East walls that connect to one another. The southernmost measures 12x9 and the northernmost measures 14x10'.

### VIII. Significance

#### Military and Ethnic Heritage

The East Sixth Street USO is recommended for listing in the NRHP based on criterion A in the areas of Military and Ethnic Heritage. The East Sixth Street USO is important as an offshoot of the military and therefore a vignette of the participation of African Americans in World War II. Camp Shelby was selected as a locale for African American troops' training. Nearing the war's end in 1944 there were some 701,678 black males in the Army, 9.6% of the entire Army. At this point in history, it was the largest African American contingency in any United States War. Blacks served in the Civil War, Spanish American War, Indian Wars and World War I in smaller numbers.

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Throughout the war most of these African Americans served in segregated units with few exceptions to the rule. A few experimental units paired blacks with whites in combat. When the white soldiers were polled they responded that the black soldiers performed "very well." Many of the white troops were surprised at the African Americans reactions in battle situations. These experiments were the beginnings of integration in the Army. It took years to finish this task.

Along with the issue of combat integration was the recreational facilities integration issue. Integration of recreational facilities on military bases was proposed in an Army order of March 1943. This integration was quite early for a government entity. Most integration efforts took place a full ten to twenty years later. Even though minor the integration attempt did begin to incubate the Civil Rights Movement that was to come to fruition in the sixties. These integration attempts were accompanied by protest, unrest and all the elements that made up the future Civil Rights Movement.

The East Sixth Street USO represents significant achievements in an African American community to participate in the war effort between 1942-1946. Many of the black soldiers stationed at Camp Shelby benefited from the Mobile Street commercial district that had developed front the inception of the city of Hattiesburg. With African American-run theaters, restaurants, and dance halls for entertainment, and hotels and boarding house accommodations, the black soldiers were provided with necessities and more. The community went a step further by offering a comfortable setting with lounges, counseling services, showering and shaving amenities for African American military personnel. The organization also hosted dances, bands, and even weddings for the soldiers.

Citizens living around the club contributed their energy and time at the facility. Combining community efforts with the USO to sponsor War Bond Rallies, raising money for the war effort; Red Cross blood drives, to make blood available for emergency situations; and health programs to inform and help African Americans in the neighborhood remain healthy.

This inclusion of African Americans as an integral part of World War II was important. Blacks had been excluded in the war industry prior to Executive Order 8802 of 1941. Later African Americans were segregated within all branches of the military. Limitations seemed to perpetually loom over the role of African Americans throughout the war. Full involvement of the African Americans as a group, although in a segregated context, was vital to their self-image as Americans during this tumultuous period.



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### **Historic Summary**

Miss Iva E. Sandifer, USO employee and lifetime resident on New Orleans Street, said that Mobile Street was comparable to Beale Street, in Memphis, Tennessee, or Bourbon Street in New Orleans. The implication being that Mobile Street was a bustling area filled with people, commerce, and all types of activities in its heyday. This zenith came in the forties during World War II when the street was filled with throngs of soldiers. Iola Williams, another local resident, said it seemed as if there were thousands of soldiers walking up and down Mobile Street.

These men were stationed at Camp Shelby where they trained, ate and slept. The enlisted men lived at the East Sixth Street USO. "It was just like walking into your living room," said Sandifer, "entertaining a lot of people, getting out card tables, and putting up ping-pong tables, and you had a man to help you." Young women were there to entertain the enlisted men, yet the men entertained and brought solace to the females as well. A symbiotic bond was formed at the East Sixth Street USO between the soldiers and the community in the Mobile Street area.

On December 8, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke to the American people over the radio. In this historic speech Roosevelt said, "the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." World War II had begun for the United States and FDR stated, "we shall not settle for less than total victory." On this day Hattiesburg, Mississippi was humming with activity and had been since 1940 when Camp Shelby was reactivated in anticipation of the conflict at hand.

Camp Shelby filled with enlisted men in 1941. Many of these men were African Americans and their role in World War II has been de-emphasized in the history of the struggle. When the war began there were 99,206 African Americans who enlisted or were drafted into the Army. One year after Pearl Harbor the number of blacks had risen to 399,454, 7.4% of the total army and 7.95% of all enlisted troops (MacGregor, 1985). Housing these black troops was a problem for the Department of Defense. "Finding suitable camps for training Negro troops was to vex the War Department and Negro soldiers-throughout the war. Purely military considerations played but a small part in determining the location of Negro troops in the early period of mobilization. The main considerations were: availability of housing and facilities on the post concerned; proportions of white and Negro troops at the post; proximity to civilian centers of Negro population with good recreational facilities that could absorb sizable numbers of Negroes on pass; and the attitude of the nearby citizen community to the presence of Negro troops," (Lee, 1963).

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In 1940 the African American population in Forrest County was 10,935. The area around Mobile Street was a thriving African American community only a few miles away from Camp Shelby. This was a tremendous plus for blacks stationed on the base. Soldiers had access to groceries, service stations, restaurants, doctor and dentist's offices, hotels and boarding houses all operated for and by African Americans.

What the enlisted men did lack in Hattiesburg however was one central location that could be considered home. Housing at Camp Shelby was inadequate and some 14,000 soldiers lived in tents. The men needed a home-away-from-home and this was the official duty of the United Service Organization.

The USO is a private, non-profit, organization whose purpose is to aid United States servicemen and women with on-leave recreational and educational services ([www.pbs.org/memorial](http://www.pbs.org/memorial), 2003). Franklin Roosevelt who combined six different organizations in order to provide better services for the large numbers pouring into the armed forces created the USO in 1941. The six combined civilian organizations were the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Boards.

Since the USO is a non-profit organization this sometimes prohibited funds for building any new edifice. There were no standardized plans for USO clubs. Hence USO clubs were housed in churches, museums, storefronts, barns, mansions, railroad sleeping cars, and yacht clubs across the United States ([www.pbs.org/memorial](http://www.pbs.org/memorial), 2003). There was also a time restraint caused by growing needs of men entering the armed forces daily. By 1944 there were approximately 3,000 clubs for the USO with a little over 300 for African Americans ([www.uso.org/pubs/PF](http://www.uso.org/pubs/PF)). This statistic reveals that only 10% of the facilities were for blacks in the service. The USO on Sixth Street in Hattiesburg is seemingly an exceptional club due to the fact that it was constructed specifically to house the African American USO with the support of the black and whites in Hattiesburg (*Souvenir Program*, 1946).

Information is scarce on the subject of World War II African American USOs. Ms. Williams spoke to the World USO and asked for records on other facilities. They responded that they had none. Information obtained online on individual USOs indicates Hastings, Nebraska had an African American USO built with federal grant monies ([www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org), 2003).

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Many other USOs were housed in extant buildings such as San Marco, Texas where “a wee, unassuming building that, at its dawn in the 1870s, was home to the first Hays County Jail...was later a recreational facility and USO building for area black servicemen”(Messer, 2003).

At Selfridge Air Force Base in Mount Clemens, the 92<sup>nd</sup> Squadron and 332<sup>nd</sup> Bomber Squad were provided a building obtained by Envoy Carroll of the Salvation Army on Cherry Street ([www.macomb.lib.mi.us/mountclemens](http://www.macomb.lib.mi.us/mountclemens), 2003). In Portland, Oregon, the Williams Avenue Branch of the YWCA turned over their building for the use of African American soldiers ([www.womhist.binhamton.edu.portywca](http://www.womhist.binhamton.edu.portywca), 2003). Sioux Falls, South Dakota had a need that was provided for by prominent black families who created a USO club for African American soldiers in the basement of St. John’s Baptist Church at 320 N. Minnesota Avenue (State Historical Society Celebrates Black History Month, Sioux Falls Hosted Black USO, 2003). The Chicago Servicemen’s Center #3 for black soldiers was opened in the old Bacon’s Casino (Jazz Institute of Chicago, 2003).

Perhaps the racial composition of Hattiesburg with its substantial African American community made the difference in the USO facility. In Sioux Falls there were 200 African Americans stationed at the Sioux Falls Army Air Base in 1942. The city was segregated and predominantly white. Restaurants, barbershops, and hotels were not easily accessible for black soldiers (State Historical Society Celebrates Black History Month, Sioux Falls Hosted Black USO, 2003). At the Hastings Ammunition Depot in Hastings, Nebraska, conditions were worse; “We had a lot of black boys in Hastings at the time in the military...we had not had black people (among us). A lot of people did not like to see the black people around,” said Hastings native, Lorena Smith. Recreation was a problem and the undignified and insufficient answer was to force blacks to travel for hours in converted cattle trucks in search of entertainment ([www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org), 2003).

The African American community of Hattiesburg supported the USO, as did whites in Hattiesburg. The Hon. Frank M. Tatum, Chairman of the Committee of Management, supervised construction along with the Hon. M. Shelby Pickett, and other interested whites. The East Sixth Street USO club was opened on March 22, 1942, to the meet the needs of the African American troops and neighborhood.

An Advisory Committee led by David W. White was gathered from the Mobile Street area to expedite the new USO’s progress. Garnett Jones acted as Building Chairman. Polk City Directories indicate that Jones ran the Star Theater in the thirties, a filling station at 424 Mobile

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Street (ca. 1929-41), and had a home at 422 Mobile Street (Polk City Directories of Hattiesburg, 1929, 1932, and 1941). E. W. Hall, Program Chairman and Secretary, Collins Clark, Grounds Chairman and Gaither Hardaway, who lived at 705 Mobile Street in 1941, Snack Bar Chairman served on the Committee. Chaplain C. H. Pierson served as the Camp Representative (Souvenir Program, 1946).

The first director, Edwin W. Merrick, was in charge of a variety of competent staff that had college degrees from such institutions as Talladega College, Jackson College and Tuskegee Institute. Several directors served after Merrick and included persons with experience and training in both teaching and coaching (*Souvenir Program*, 1946).

Across the country and overseas, after 1943, USOs were organized and run almost solely by volunteers. At the East Sixth Street USO, 344 local citizens volunteered and worked some 40,261 hours between 1942 and 1946 (*Souvenir Program*, 1946). As at many of the clubs, the volunteers were largely women. The leaders of the females at the Hattiesburg facility were Cora Jones and Iva Sandifer. Sandifer lived in a bungalow at 511 New Orleans Street. The house was across the street from Eureka School where she attended and later taught school. Sandifer left Hattiesburg for Tuskegee Institute to attend college and received her B.A. in English.

Upon returning home Sandifer began her teaching career at Eureka and finished thirty-one years later at Hattiesburg High School. When the USO opened in 1942 Sandifer was transferred from the school to the USO. There the city continued to pay her salary while Sandifer supervised the female volunteers at the USO. Both Sandifer and Jones prided themselves on the exemplary females that they chose to work at the club (Sandifer, 1994). Many of the girls were members of local Girl's Clubs and their jobs included acting as hostesses at dances, weddings and other functions (*Souvenir Program*, 1946).

Services available at the USO club were a Writing Room, Library, Comfortable Lounges, Dark Room Equipment, Counseling Service, Showers, Shaving, Snack Bar, Music Room, Mail Service, Information Service, Distribution of Religious Literature, Home Hospitality, Room Registry, and Sewing Service. From 1942-46 the USO provided counseling for 2,543 persons, provided 29,974 individual services, distributed 35,787 pieces of literature, and some 386,676 attended group activities.

The African American neighborhood was fully involved with the East Sixth Street USO including thirteen African American Baptist congregations and one A.M.E congregation sponsoring

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programs at the USO. Also nearly 10,000 referrals for rooms and housing in the Black community were offered to soldiers attending the USO.

Other community contributions included the Hattiesburg Children's Choir who performed at the club along with the USO Chorus and Octet. Soldiers leaving for the front by train were provided food during their long wait on the railroad platform by various local organizations in conjunction with the USO (*Souvenir Program*, 1946).

The East Sixth Street USO was also a community center offering War Bond, Red Cross and War Fund drives, and the annual Negro Health Week Programs. Dances and weddings were all a part of the club's business. Photographs from the wedding of First Sergeant and Mrs. William Brown are included in the *Souvenir Program* of 1946. Both the Junior and Senior Proms for Eureka High School were held at the USO as well.

The primary purpose of the East Sixth Street USO was to provide a facility for recreation, relaxation and socialization for African American troops stationed at Camp Shelby. Such companies as the 153<sup>rd</sup> Chemical Decon Company and 316<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Ammunition Company received the benefits of the club. Secondary to this function was the reality that the center provided a way for other African Americans to participate in the war effort who were not in the military. Tertiary to these points is the idea that the USO was a component of World War II that planted the seed for the Civil Rights Movement.

The story of World War II has been minimized concerning its effects on the Civil Rights Movement. Opinions on segregation began to change during the war. The USO was one of the few groups to try and incorporate African Americans in all aspects of its organization. A few shows and clubs were integrated but most were not due to Jim Crow laws and the military's stance on segregation. Some three hundred clubs were opened for black soldiers with African American staffs, volunteers and entertainers (*The Skylighters Canteen*, 2003).

Nationally racial guidelines did not change quickly. Expectations for this evolution of policies began with FDR's New Deal of the depression era. During a time of economic depression, the New Deal represented hope to a nation. Little of this promise ever materialized for African Americans. In 1932 sociologist, Kelly Miller, dubbed African Americans as "the surplus man, the last to be hired and the first to be hired." In Mississippi where over one half of the population

(8-86)

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was African American, less than 9% of blacks received any relief under the New Deal as opposed to 14% of whites (Cashman, 1989).

Yet blacks' status began to transform in the presidential election of 1936 when their political influence was responsible for the re-election of Franklin Roosevelt. Seventy-six percent of African Americans in the North voted for FDR. This high percentage gave Roosevelt a decisive victory (Cashman, 1989). Black leaders decided to take this new influence further with a planned protest march in 1941.

A march was threatened by some one thousand African Americans in protest of discrimination in the defense industry. Roosevelt was startled into a response for fear of adverse effects on his war plans. FDR realized that the United States needed to be united in the war effort and responded to the pressure of a likely division with Executive Order 8802. This Order stated that discrimination due to race, creed, color, or national origin was to cease to exist in the war industry (Cashman, 1989). The march also was to protest segregation in the military. This protest garnered little response and no changes.

Throughout World War II the military forces remained segregated with a few exceptions to this rule. Black soldiers generally served in all black divisions. Racial separation was kept intact until the Army released an order on March 10, 1943 stating that recreational facilities were to be integrated including theaters and post exchanges. This order only applied to federal military reservations and not to civilian locations. Soldiers were to respect local customs and ordinances when off base (MacGregor, 1985). The USO was an off-base form of recreation and therefore it remained segregated with attempts to maintain the separate but equal idea.

This separation was all too clear to African Americans. Manpower shortages in 1944 forced Army officials to forsake their attempt to balance combat and service units for blacks. For the next two years most African Americans worked in service units such as the 153<sup>rd</sup> Chemical Decon Company and 316<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Ammunition Company stationed at Camp Shelby. Many blacks resented this policy and sought to enter into combat. Segregation of troops at the local level was clear to the African American community in Hattiesburg. Perhaps this separation helped prompt citizens such as Iva Sandifer to join the NAACP and to serve as its local secretary. Surely the club patrons inspired the notion that blacks were Americans who trained, served, and sacrificed just as white Americans did. Whether in combat or service units the men were called upon to leave families and jobs to take care of the United States and indeed the

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world during wartime. Apparent were the similarities between black and white citizens. The disparity in rights and treatment became even more apparent due to the war.

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*State Historical Society Celebrates. Black History Month, Sioux Falls Hosted Black USO,*

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#### Verbal Boundary Description.

The boundaries of the East Sixth Street USO are recorded on an accompanying map. The scale is at 1 inch = 100 feet.

#### Boundary Justification

The property boundaries are defined by the legal property description of 2-29G-3-517-9,10,11. This legal description is per the Forrest County, Mississippi Map 29G.

#### Photograph Log

The following information is the same for each photograph:

Name of Photographer:  
Gene A. Ford

Date of Photograph:  
September 12, 2003

Location of Original Negatives:  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Historic Preservation Division

Photograph 1. East Sixth Street USO, North façade, looking south.

Photograph 2. East Sixth Street USO, Northwest side looking southeast.

Photograph 3. East Sixth Street USO, West side, looking east.



East Sixth Street USO  
Name of Property

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Photograph 4. East Sixth Street USO, South end, looking north.

Photograph 5. East Sixth Street USO, Northeast side, looking southwest.

Photograph 6. Detail of wood panel doors on North façade of East Sixth Street USO, looking south.

Photograph 7. Interior of USO, lobby on North end of building, looking west.

Photograph 8. Interior of USO, lobby on North end.

Photograph 9. USO Auditorium, looking south.

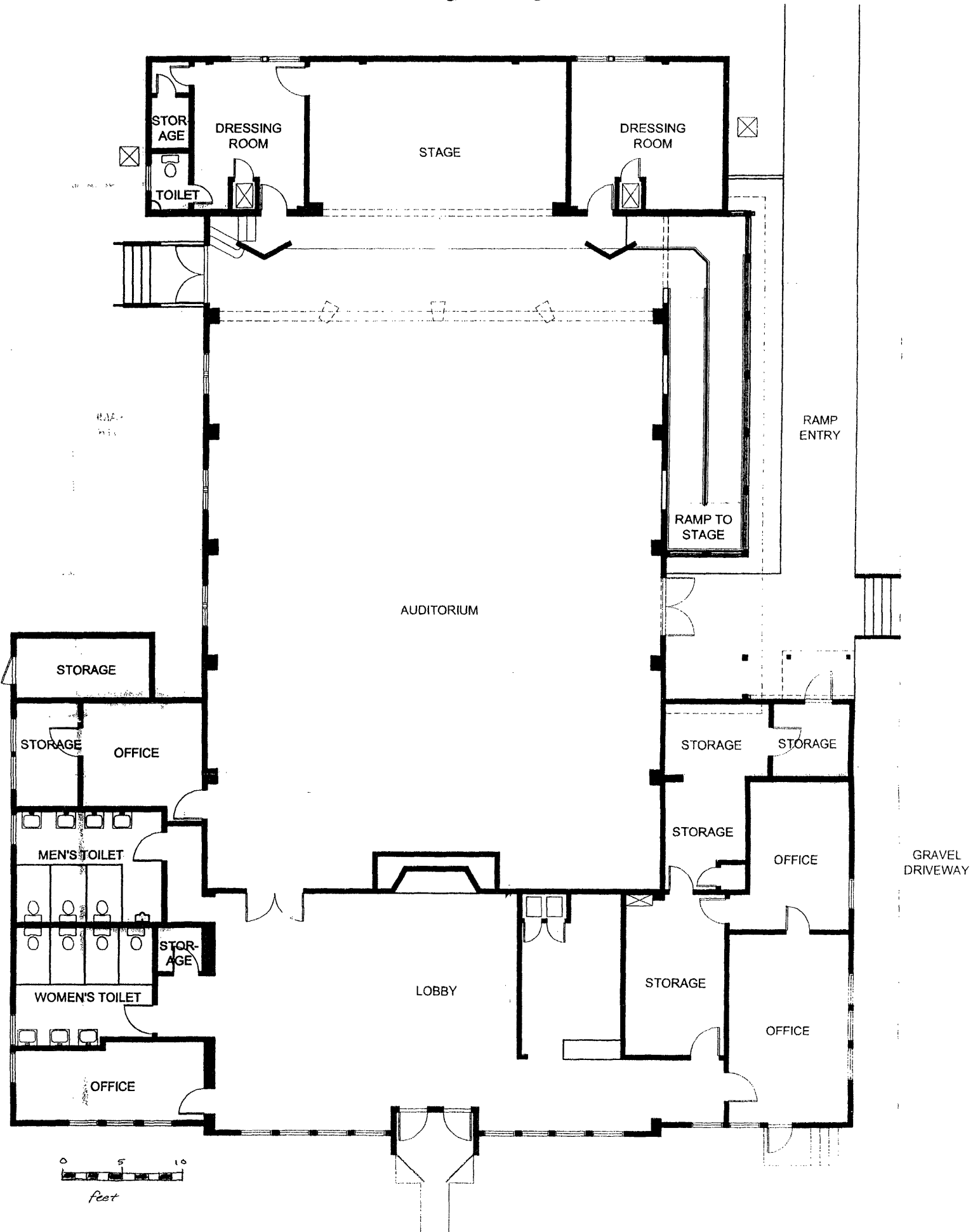
Photograph 10. Auditorium, looking north.

Photograph 11. Detail of stage, looking southwest.

Photograph 12. Interior shelving.

Photograph 13. Interior door on east side of building, looking east.

East Sixth Street USO Building, Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi



East Sixth Street USO Building, Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi  
1949 update to 1931 Sanborn map, page 29

