

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NHL

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC United States Naval Asylum

AND/OR COMMON United States Naval Home

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Grays Ferry Avenue at 24th Street

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Philadelphia

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME United States Department of the Navy, Rear Admiral Clyde J. Van Arsdall, Jr., Governor of the Naval Home

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE Department of Records
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall, Broad and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE (See Continuation Sheet)

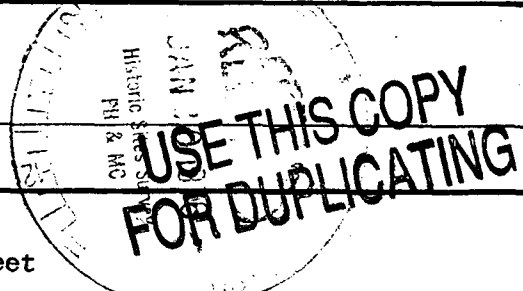
DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE



7 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1965, Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded the major building on the site.

The Main Building (Biddle Hall)

The front parallels Grays Ferry Avenue and is 385 feet in length with a central portion 142 feet wide by 135 feet deep. The plan is symmetrical with an octastyle portico with two lateral dormitory wings and a domed rear chapel (56 feet square). There are verandas or piazzas on the wings' back and front designed to allow the maximum light and air into the structure. Two staircases flank the central interior hall which extends from the main entrance to the chapel area in the rear. A series of four rooms each immediately flank the main entrance, lateral passages lead through the dormitory wings to end pavillions (later sitting rooms) and rear privies. Flanking the chapel are four rooms: two infirmaries, one apothecary and one surgeon's office. The basement plans were similar with kitchen and dining facilities.

The alterations include: 1833 marble facade added on Schuylkill elevation, 1842 division of the building into the northern half (Asylum and Naval school), the southern wing into a hospital. This partition was removed in 1844. In 1848 the ceiling and windows were altered (Gilchrist gives 1870 as the date). In 1868, the new hospital outbuilding was added by John McArthur, Jr.

The floors are of brick and the construction fireproof. The master mason was John Struthers who had worked with Strickland on the Second Bank and the Merchants Exchange. Materials included granite ashlar foundations, gray marble walls and a brick kitchen wing. The portico, columns and graceful stairway are all of Pennsylvania Marble. The rear verandas are supported by 88 cast iron columns on granite piers. The roof is hipped and the cornices and eaves are also marble.

The interior rooms are individual cubicles, seven by nine feet, each with a window--one of the problems in restoration--two of these cells joined together do not meet State codes for space.

Biddle Hall is surrounded by a granite wall with a cast iron fence on Gray Ferry Avenue--brick fences on the other sides.

Governor's Residence

Also designed by Strickland in 1844, the structure which matches the Surgeon's house has a symmetrical front (east) with a two-story veranda.

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Greek Revival in style, they have ample interior spaces with fine details. There is a central corridor with a double parlor on the south and a sitting room and dining room on the north. There is a two room kitchen section at the north rear. On the second floor are bedrooms reached by the central stair. Some of the kitchen facilities have been modernized and a bath to the front central room on the second floor. There is a cellar with crawl space--there is also space under the hipped roof. This structure is approximately 99.4 feet deep by 47 feet wide and 29.2 feet from ground to cornice. The foundations are coursed granite ashlar and the walls are of concrete faced brick.

Surgeons Residence

Very similar in construction and proportions to the Governor's residence, this matching structure is situated to the South of the main building with its central axis running southeast to northwest towards Grays Ferry Avenue. It differs only in its later alterations: the main stairway was enclosed when the residence was converted to a two-family dwelling, bath rooms were added to the first and second floors and the kitchen was modernized in the 1960's. Both houses have handsome ornamented cast iron with naval motifs; ropes, anchors and dolphins.

These two small residences are very simple in basic design, but extremely gracious.

The entire complex is not only one of Strickland's outstanding statements in the Greek Revival style but it represented the most advanced architectural thinking using new materials (cast iron) then thought to be virtually fireproof.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input 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 1827-33, 1844

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William Strickland (1788-1854)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The commission to design the Naval Asylum came to William Strickland in 1826 because of his great success; the Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia (1818-1824) which had established his reputation as one of the leading architects of the Nation. The Naval home was not a Parthenon but a Greek facade wedded to a structure that had to be utilitarian, to serve as a home and hospital for retired seamen. This complex also served as the first formal Naval Training School until 1845 when Annapolis became its permanent home. This complex was one of Strickland's outstanding commissions and it remains of one the most important of Philadelphia's masterpieces.

Originally a small house belonging to the Pembertons stood on this tract. "The Plantation" was deeded to the Abbott family who sold the house and a 24 acre lot to the United States Navy in 1826 for \$16,000. The design was begun in 1826 by William Strickland who was supervising architect for the Federal Government at that time and for which he was paid a retainer of \$12,000 per year. The original drawings are in the National Archives along with the contracts and correspondence and indicate that William Strickland's younger brother, George, had also submitted drawings. To appease him, George was appointed Clerk of the Works at a salary of \$600 per annum. Strickland's connections with the structure ended in 1829, but the building was not finished until 1833. He began making required alterations to the building in 1842 "at the request of the Secretary of the Navy who wanted the building divided into two parts, one for a hospital and the other for the retired seamen's asylum. Later, in 1844, he was commissioned to design and superintend the construction of two houses on the grounds of the Naval Home, one for the Governor and the other for the Medical Officer. These houses are still in use and in good repair."¹

The Naval Home has been compared with the New Orleans Mint (Talbot Hamlin, p. 70) but has been described as the more imaginative of the two buildings. They both use the Ionic order on the eight columned portico. The chief merit of this hospital lies "in the bold way in which this

¹Gilchrist, Agnes Addison. William Strickland, Architect and Engineer, 1788-1844, Da Capo Press, New York 1969, p. 14.

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powerful central block is combined with the ward wings and in the tall slim porches which line them. Here the problem has controlled: the desire for outside balconies off every ward, (a prophetic use of open-air hospital bed space, which held true for the naval hospitals both of Mills and Strickland, but was forgotten in much private hospital work until very recently) has been the governing element in the design, and Strickland has succeeded in merging into one integrated whole the monumentality of the central entrance motif and the functional delicacy and openness of the wings."²

In the 1870's the roof was raised and dormer windows added for more space. John McArthur, Jr., the architect of Philadelphia's City Hall, designed an addition of a small, more modern hospital facility to the complex. This structure is not well maintained today.

By September of 1976, the United States Navy will remove its personnel to a new facility in Gulfport, Mississippi and the property will become GSA Surplus. The buildings are 140 years old but the skylights are in place, the great domed chapel is in good repair and with different railings the great, unsupported stone staircase could be dramatic again.

²Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America, Dover Press, N. Y. 1944, p. 70.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	4 8 4 5 9 0	4 4 2 1 4 1 0	B	1 8	4 8 4 2 3 0	4 4 2 1 1 5 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1 8	4 8 3 9 3 0	4 1 2 1 3 5 0	D	1 8	4 8 4 0 9 0	4 1 2 1 4 9 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

July 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE _____

LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

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 ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The Casket, 1832, contains a complete description of the construction.

Gilchrist, Agnes A. William Strickland, Philadelphia, 1950.

Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America, Dover Publications, New York 1950.

Philadelphia Historical Commission files, containing brief of title, photos, insurance surveys and other data.

National Archives, Washington, D.C., Records of the Department of the Navy, Office of Naval Records and Library.

Shippen, Edward "An Account of the Origins of the U.S. Naval Asylum, Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine, VII, No. 2 (1883).

Stockton, Charles H. Origin, History, Laws and Regulations of the U.S. Naval Asylum, Philadelphia. Washington, 1884.

Tatum, George B. Penn's Great Town. Philadelphia, 1963.

White, Theo B. et al. Philadelphia Architecture in the Nineteenth Century, Philadelphia, 1953.

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Board of Revision of Taxes, Tax Assessors Books. code number 05-4-0559

Starting at 24th Street and Bainbridge Street, 57 feet south along 24 Street to Gray's Ferry Avenue then southwest along Gray's Ferry Avenue, 1,295 feet, then northwest 1,010 feet to Schuylkill Avenue then northeast along Schuylkill Avenue 791 feet to Bainbridge Street, then east on Bainbridge Street 1,362 feet to 24th Street.

PHILADELPHIA

United States Naval Asylum
Philadelphia
USGS Philadelphia Quadrangle, Pa.-N.J.

UTM
A 18.484590.4421410
B 13.484230.4421150
C 18.483930.4121350
D 18.484090.4121490

