

# Hidden Headquarters

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A combined Brown Bag Session by the NASA HQ History Division and the Office of Headquarters Operations.

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Also available at

<http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/oim/hqsops/>

# Hidden Headquarters

Elizabeth Suckow

Hello, I'm Liz Suckow from the Office of External Relations and am here to speak to you about the history of NASA Headquarters.

## NASA's First Headquarters



As it appeared during NASA's occupation. Located at 1520 H St NW. Now part of the US Court of Appeals for the Federal District. NASA's first headquarters was centered around the Dolly Madison House, at 1520 H St NW. The building is in Lafayette Square on the northeast corner. It now houses part of the US Court of Appeals for the Federal District. The building actually consists of three private dwellings, the Dolly Madison House, the Benjamin Tayloe House, and a third dwelling which I have been unable to identify. These three houses were conjoined in the early 1900s when the building was owned by the Cosmos Club. The complex served as the Office of the Administrator from October 1958 until November 1961 and was therefore known as the "A building." T. Keith Glennan's (the first NASA administrator) office was in the Benjamin Tayloe House (pictured between the Dolly Madison House and the ivy-covered building on the extreme right of the photograph) and from there, he regularly went to the White House to see President Eisenhower and his staff. The seven Mercury astronauts were first introduced to the public at the Dolly Madison House. In an interesting bit of historical continuity, up until 1952, while the building was owned by the Cosmos Club, several members of NASA's predecessor organization, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), including Orville Wright and Charles Lindbergh, resided in the Dolly Madison House when they were in DC for meetings of the NACA.

## NASA's First Headquarters



Front door of NASA's first Headquarters. Door plaque now located in History Division Concourse level office. This was the main entrance to the A building. The plaque visible on the left side of the photograph is still in NASA's possession and can be viewed in the Concourse level offices of the NASA History Division.

## Wilkins “T” Building



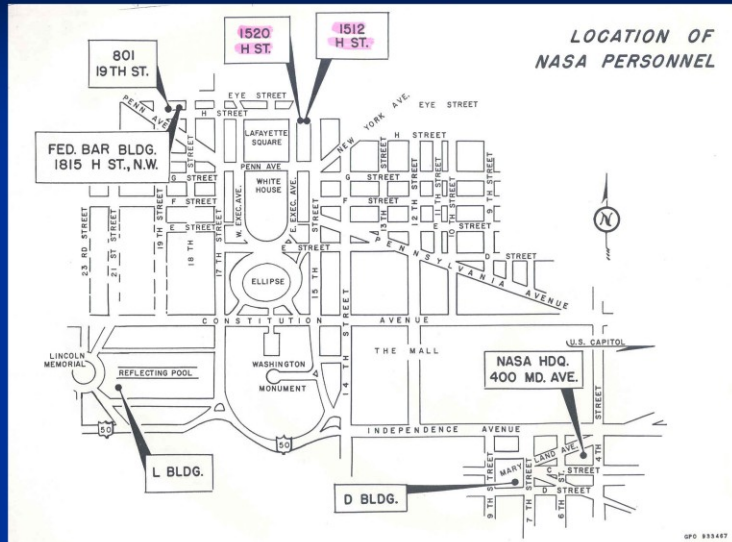
Wilkins building, also known as the “T” building as it housed the technical staff. Credit HQ. NASA’s first headquarters, however, was truly plural. Another part of the headquarters was just next door, at 1512 H St. NW, the Wilkins building, completed in 1912. It no longer stands; the building was demolished during the 1960s. The Howard T. Markey National Courts Building, which houses the Court of Claims, now occupies the site. The Wilkins building housed technical staff and was therefore known as the “T building”. The building was a holdover from the NACA, as it had served as the NACA’s last headquarters, from 1954-1958. Unlike the “A building”, it had the distinction of having a copier. So, logistically, the situation was a bit problematic.

## “L” Building



World War II (and I) “temporary” buildings as they appeared from the Washington Monument. NASA occupied the L building (top left corner near Lincoln Memorial) until the early 1960s. Not all of NASA’s first headquarters was as closely located. Some headquarters personnel worked in the “L building”, which was one of the “temporary” buildings built on the Mall during World War II. The building was originally home to part of the Navy’s Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. These temporary buildings were demolished beginning in 1970 to make way for the current green space by the Reflecting Pool. The “L building” is in the upper left corner of the photograph, near the Lincoln Memorial. NASA occupied the building until the early 1960s. There is no record of what the building was used for during NASA’s tenure.

## Locations of NASA Headquarters Personnel



By the end of the Madison House era, NASA personnel were working in a number of buildings spread out the length of the Mall and beyond the White House. This map shows the spread of NASA headquarters buildings at about 1962, when the Office of the Administrator had moved to its second location, but before the rest of the headquarters had been consolidated. Since the founding of NASA in October 1958, the staff of NASA headquarters had grown rapidly. At NASA's founding, there were less than 200 staff all together, but by May of 1959, headquarters had grown to 400 staff housed in four different buildings, and by 1962 there were over 1,600 staff in the situation shown above. NASA was not in the GSA construction schedule and so was housed wherever there was room.



## NASA's Second Headquarters



NASA's second set of Headquarters buildings: FOB-6 (middle left behind NASM), FOB-10B (directly across street from NASM), and the Reporters Building (top right beyond railroad bridge). Starting in 1961, though a NASA Headquarters building was still not on the GSA construction list, GSA attempted to consolidate NASA's headquarters into a smaller geographic area. NASA's headquarters were moved into three main buildings, Federal Office Building 6 (FOB-6) (center left of photo behind NASM), Federal Office Building 10B (FOB-10B) (building immediately behind NASM on the right), and the Reporters Building (building at upper right beyond railroad tracks). During this period, NASA Headquarters would reach its highest personnel level, with approximately 2,150 staff housed in eight buildings at the end of 1966.



## FOB-6



FOB-6. Jointly occupied by HEW and NASA, later Department of Ed. and NASA. FOB-6, located at 400 Maryland Ave. SW, was the first to be occupied. NASA took up residence there in November 1961. NASA did not have the entire building, just the top three floors. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare used the remainder of the building until 1979, when the Department of Education became independent and took over its use. The Department of Education is now the sole tenant. FOB-6 housed the Office of the Administrator, Legislative Affairs, and Public Affairs, among others. A couple notes of historical interest, a former President, Harry S. Truman, visited this portion of NASA Headquarters in 1963. Also, during the Apollo 13 mission, the audio from mission control was piped into the auditorium.

## FOB-10B



FOB-10B housed the offices of Manned Space Flight, Aeronautics and Space Technology, and Applications (as of 1974). Building under construction at top of frame is NASM. FOB-10B, located at 600 Independence Ave. SW, was occupied by NASA, as the sole tenant, beginning in 1964. It housed the Offices of Manned Space Flight (later the Office of Space Flight), Aeronautics and Space Technology, Applications, and, for a time in the 1960s, the Apollo Program Office. Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, had his office in this building when he was the Deputy Associate Administrator for Aeronautics from 1970-1971. The building just to the north under construction is the National Air and Space Museum, whose first director was the Apollo 11 command module pilot, Michael Collins. FOB-10B is now held by the Department of Education.

## Reporters Building



Reporters Building. Housed the History Office, among others. The Reporters Building, located at 300 7<sup>th</sup> St SW, was occupied by NASA beginning in 1965. It housed support offices such as the History Office, Scientific and Technical Information Office, and HQ Contracts Division, among others. The building currently houses the Farm Services Agency of the US Department of Agriculture.

## Getting it all together

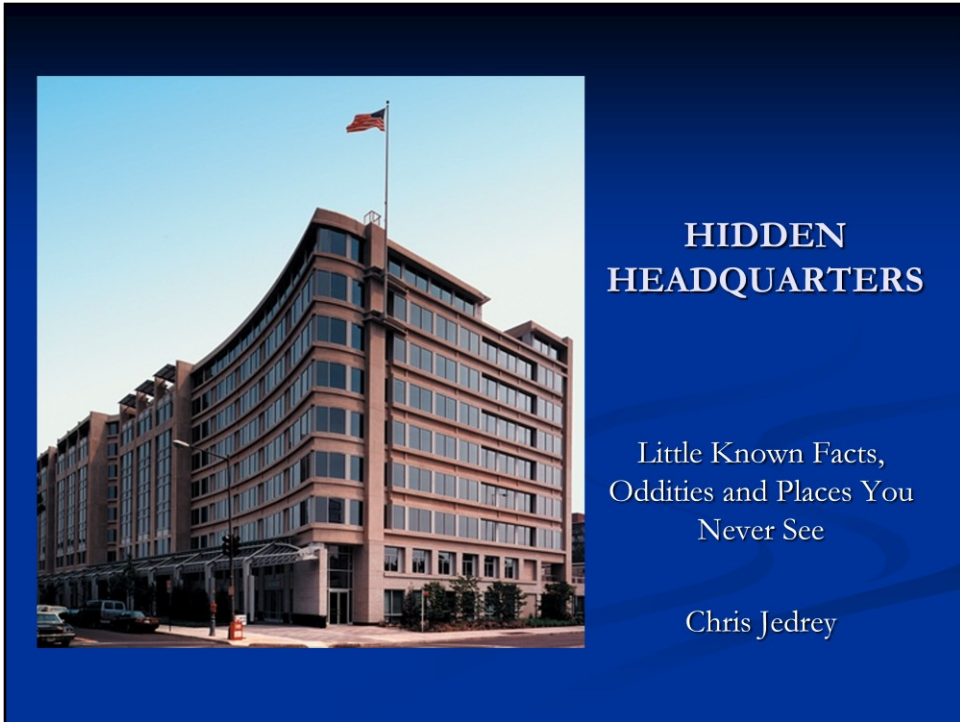


And that brings us up to the present. NASA's current headquarters on E St. SW. Over the years NASA headquarters continued to seek space elsewhere. By 1988, Headquarters had approximately 1,500 personnel in its three main buildings as well as in offices in L'Enfant Plaza North and East, and in a Space Station Program Office in Reston, VA. As early as 1966, NASA Headquarters had requested GSA to consolidate NASA into a single building. In 1987, NASA and GSA signed an agreement to consolidate headquarters into a single, new building. Construction began in the summer of 1990, and the first employees moved into our current building in 1992. The move took place in stages and was completed in 1995. During the move, from 1993-1995, at least 170 HQ personnel were temporarily housed next door, at 250 E St. SW, sharing with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

## NASA History Division Contact Info

- Located in CO72 and 2Q39
- Phone number x0384
- On the Web at <http://history.nasa.gov/>
- Email [histinfo@hq.nasa.gov](mailto:histinfo@hq.nasa.gov)

If you would like more information on this or any other historical topic, please feel free to contact us...



The Building:

NASA Headquarters is built on a very wet parcel of ground and for this reason the building sets on a six foot thick concrete slab.

The building has 551, 907 square feet of rentable space and is 555 feet long. The building is as long as the Washington Monument is tall (the Monument is 555' 5 ½ "high).

The building has six staircases, seventeen elevators and six terraces.

Now – we'll go from the bottom of the building and work our way up.



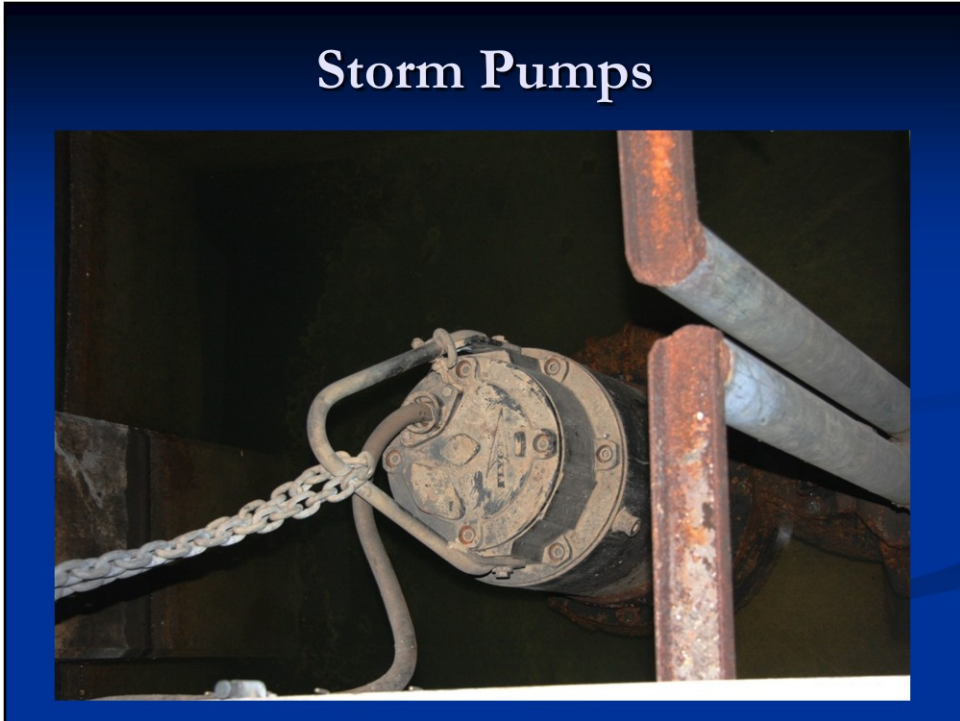
# Parking Garage



Parking Garage:

Has three levels and probably more speed bumps than folks would like!

## Storm Pumps



### Storm Pumps:

Though the P3 parking level is 8 feet below the water level, these three pumps keep the building dry during stormy periods and are bigger than a four drawer filing cabinet!

# UPS – Uninterruptible Power Supply



## “UPS”

The Uninterruptible Power Supply is designed to provide power to vital building systems in the event of a power interruption. These massive batteries and switch gear are part of that system. When power is lost to the building, sensors detect this condition and transfer certain key circuits to the UPS System. These batteries can provide up to 14 hours of service for these key circuits.

# Electrical Switch Gear



Electrical Switch Gear:

Headquarters, like all modern office buildings, consumes massive amounts of electricity. These switch gears are part of the system that keeps the power flowing in an orderly manner to our offices and workstations.

# WITS Room



WITS Room:

This is the room in building where all the telephone lines enter the building and begin their journey to our many communications areas.

# Corridors



Corridors:

Do you need a little exercise? The average distance around a floor is 836 feet. The shortest corridor is 642 feet and the longest (the Concourse) is 1,082 feet long.

If you walked all the corridors you would cover 7,251 feet which is 1.4 miles.



# Terraces



## Terraces:

There are six terraces in the building including one on the Second Floor. This terrace was originally designed to house the Day Care Center Playground. While the Center was deleted when the building was constructed, the terrace was constructed and even has its own elevator which was to have transported the children from the Day Care Center on the First Floor to the playground on the Second.

There are five other terraces in the building. Three on the Ninth Floor and two on the roof, one on the east and one on the west end. The roof terraces are open to employees during the duty day but are closed overnight and on weekends and holidays.

## Textured Walls



### Textured Wall:

Have you ever wondered why one of the hallway walls has a rough texture? This wall was designed to serve as a guide to the nearest exit during a building emergency. The rough texture serves both those who are visually impaired and will provide guidance in the event of an emergency that has low or no visibility.

# Expansion Joint



## Expansion Joint:

Have you ever noticed there is a split in the building between the “O” and “P” sections of the floors? This gap (covered by an aluminum plate on the floor), is called an “expansion joint” and is designed into the structure to allow the building to expand and contract with the weather without causing any harm to the facility. You may have noticed that’s where carpet tiles seem to “pop up”.

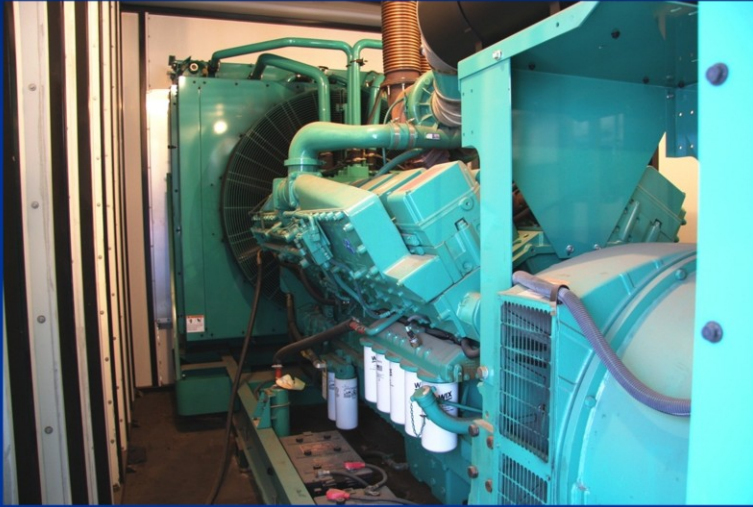
# Fire Pumps



Fire Pumps:

In the event of a fire, these pumps stand ready to provide water to the sprinklers and stand pipes throughout the facility.

# Generator



## Generator:

This massive motor serves as the back-up generator to the UPS System. Should the loss of power drain the batteries past a certain point? The generator can take over and power the key systems and recharge the batteries. The generator can provide up to 18 hours of service with its in-house fuel supply and even longer periods of power if refueling is available.

# HVAC Tower



HVAC Tower:

These heat exchangers remove the heat from the building and along with the pumps shown in the next picture pump cool water throughout the facility to keep us warm in the winter and cool in the summer.



## Elevator Hoist Room



### Elevator Hoist Room:

Up, down, up, down, 24 hours a day, seven days a week through thousands of trips a day, the elevators carry us to and from our offices, meetings etc. This is the elevator control room and houses the hoists that actually move the elevators up and down.

# Saunas



## Saunas:

Feeling tired, stressed out? Need a little relaxation? Relax in one of the two saunas at NASA Headquarters. The Fitness Center has a sauna in both the Women's and the Men's areas of the center.

# Communications Closet



Communications Closet:

The Communications Closet is the room on each floor that houses the phone lines and other communications items – there is one on each floor.

## NISN (NASA Integrated Service Network)



### NISN:

The NASA Integrated Service Network room is the area that provides all the Wide Area Network Communications for the building. It is the “Internet Connection” for NASA Headquarters.

# NHCC (NASA HQ Communications Center)



NHCC:

NASA Headquarters Computer Center is the area responsible for handling all our shared drive services. (yes, that second picture is where your “shared stuff” is!)

# Printing Area



Printing Area:

Do you have printing needs? The HQ Printing Plant can provide a wide variety of tasks within it sleek, modern facility.



# TV Studio



TV Studio:

Did you know NASA has its own TV Studio and produces a large number of interviews and other events for its location?

# NASA TV Hub



NASA TV Hub:

From this HUB, NASA TV now goes out around the country, around the world and yes, even on occasion out of this world.

# Library



## Library:

Did you know the Headquarters Library houses over 25,000 books; 115 journal subscriptions; has a video collection of over 200 items; offers over 60 bibliographies (a bibliography is a listing of the holdings a library has either in the library or electronically on a particular subject matter); operates 30 news alerts on space and project management (a news alert is an automatic program that once a week searches for articles etc on a preselected key word and notifies one when there is a hit); did you know the library can borrow a book for you from ANY library in the United States?

And best of all, did you know this is all FREE and cost your organization nothing?

## Fun Fact – A Tree and a Bridge



### Fun Facts:

Did you know NASA HQ once had an evergreen tree on the roof? The tree was placed at the highest point of the building when the base construction of the top floor was completed. This event is known as the Topping Out Ceremony. The evergreen tree symbolizes good health and good luck to the building occupants. The event was held at lunch time and all the construction crews, the supervisors, the government representatives etc. drank a toast and had a brief lunch.

As a part of the ceremony, a building girder is painted white and all the people who have had anything to do with the building from the architect to the construction crew to the government people signed this girder. In the case of our building, the girder is a part of the Auditorium.

Alas though, you can not see it as it was covered over when the Auditorium received its final finishes during construction.

# The Bridge



Bridge:

Do you know NASA Headquarters has a bridge inside it?

The bridge is the part of the 2nd Floor corridor that connects the west end of the 2nd Floor with the 2nd Floor West Elevator Lobby. The bridge was created because the West Lobby and the Auditorium are both two stories tall. The only way to cross this area is with a “bridge”.

## Credit Union



Credit Union: Hit the lottery? Need a place to stash your cash? The NASA Credit Union has been providing services to us since the day it opened and still is the best place in town for all your financial needs.



# Receiving and Inspection



Inspection

# Freight Elevator



Day Care Freight Elevator

## Health Unit



Health Unit: Feeling bad? Need an ergonomic assessment? Need nutritional information or just want to take advantage of the yearly physical offered to HQ civil servants? Contact the Health Unit at 358-2600 for more information.

## Fitness Center



Fitness Center: Home of the HQ's Saunas, and a great place to get a good workout at a reasonable price (free + your own towel).

## Columbia Cafe



Columbia Café: This quiet eatery (named in honor of the Space Shuttle Columbia), with its 9th Floor panoramic view of the buildings across the street, is now open for your morning, Noon and early afternoon dining pleasure.

## Administrator's Suite



Finally, where does it all begin?

No matter for what part of NASA or for the Space Program in general, it all starts here in the northwest corner of the Ninth Floor for that is where the Administrator's personal office is located.