

U.S. Naval Academy, Melville Hall, Building 116
Parker Road
Annapolis
Anne Arundel County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-329-10

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND
DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE

Melville Hall, Building #116
U.S. Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland

HABS No. MD-329-10

I. Documentation for Buildings

A. Historic Name

The building was known as Melville Hall or Building #116 since its construction. There are no other names which have been used. It was named after Rear Admiral George Wallace Melville, USN, the Chief of the Bureau of Engineering during the period of the Spanish-American War. Admiral Melville was a prominent naval engineer and the sole survivor of the Jeanette Polar Expedition.

B. Location

Melville Hall is located along Parker Road. It is an extension of Griffin Hall, Building #110, which is at the intersection of Parker and Decatur Roads. Melville Hall is located within the United State Naval Academy, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland 21402. The Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates are: 18.371040.4315900.

C. Present Owner and Occupant

United States Government

D. Present Use

Melville Hall is vacant and unused. Throughout its active life the building was used as classroom and laboratory space for the steam and electrical engineering departments of the Naval Academy.

E. Significance

Melville Hall, built in 1937 along the line of Griffin Hall in the direction of Dorsey Creek copies the scale and materials of the earlier buildings of the Isherwood Complex in a rudimentary way that lacks their architectural detailing. Melville utilizes the same grey brick, granite, quoins, and copper cornice with cast iron ancons as the other buildings. It is the same two and a half story height as other buildings of the complex. Nonetheless it lacks the sculptured features and projecting entrances of the other buildings.

Melville is poorly sited in reference to the Beaux Arts plan for the Academy by Flagg. To carry out the symmetry of this plan it should have been placed to the northeast of Isherwood as the mirror image of Griffin. Unfortunately the curve of shoreline prevented such a siting, and Melville was placed further along Decatur Road as an extension of Griffin. This arrangement obscured much of the water view of Dorsey Creek from Warden Field.

Like the other buildings in the complex Melville's significance is associated with the technological education of American naval officers. However, no significant research or technological discoveries are known to have occurred in the building.

II. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1937. Records of the real estate department of the U.S. Naval Academy Public Works Office established this date as does a bronze plaque of the building.
2. Architects: Bureau of Yards & Docks, Department of the Navy.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Government.
4. Building, Contractor, Supplier: Built by J. Henry Miller, Baltimore, Maryland.
5. Original Plans: Public Works archives of the U.S. Naval Academy in Halligan Hall. Flat files: #15861, plans on the first second, and third floors. Medium: ink on linen.
6. Alterations and Additions: A review of the Public Works plan files indicates that equipment for an Environmental Laboratory was installed in 1952.

B. Historical Context

Melville Hall's construction was necessitated by the increasing complexity of the subject matter of the Department of Marine Engineering at the Naval Academy. Melville was built to accommodate an Internal Combustion Engine Laboratory with several working engines and a Heat Laboratory.

III. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: Melville is similar in materials, scale and massing to Griffin but lacks the more exuberant architectural detailing and sculptural elements of both Griffin and Isherwood. Melville is almost certainly the last building to be built at the Academy which maintains the basic look of the Flagg architecture. Although it has been suggested that this building should be labeled an adaptation of the Renaissance Revival style rather than Beaux Arts it is perhaps more realistic to regard it merely as an in-house knock off of Griffin Hall, the differences being accounted for by economy and the decline of architectural rendering and craftsmanship over the intervening twenty years.

2. Condition of Fabric: The basic masonry shell is in excellent condition. The interior is in good shape as well but suffers from an accumulation of bird droppings.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: 56' X 258'; two and one half stories tall.

2. Foundations: Granite slab on combination of poured concrete footing and driven piles.

3. Walls: Masonry walls 1' 0" to 2' 2" thick, glazed grey brick laid in English bond.

4. Structural System, Framing: A standard steel frame structure with one-way concrete joists and tile filler floors.

5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: N/A

6. Chimneys: N/A

7. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors: Plain openings, double and single paneled wood doors with transoms.

b. Windows and Shutters: Fifteen-over-fifteen light double hung sash and windows at the first and second stories; first story windows also have ten-light transoms; casement windows with three lights at third story level.

8. Roof

a. Shape, covering: Pyramidal, slate.

b. Cornice, eaves: granite, molded cornice with concave cymatium.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: skylights flush with plane of roof. Air vents.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans

Refer to plans referenced in IV A, and detailed in "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

a. **First Floor:** The 56' x 258' rectangle is roughly divided into an open half to the Griffin side which is the Model Room and a series of smaller rooms along a central corridor in the outer half. The smaller rooms house such functions as shops and lectures rooms. Circulation and toilets are provided in the projection on the northeastern side of the building.

b. **Second Floor:** A central corridor runs almost the entire length of the rectangle. "Section rooms" or class rooms (approximately twenty) are located along both sides, and two are situated at each end. Again, the northeastern projection is a service and circulation area.

c. **Third Floor:** This floor is one open space which was utilized for drafting. The skylights provide excellent natural light. The northeastern service projection continues to the third floor.

2. **Stairway:** Simple iron vertical balusters with wood handrails. Quarter turn with landing staircases.

3. **Flooring:** tile filler floors.

4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** painted plaster; terra cotta block.

5. **Openings:**

a. **Doorways and doors.** Wood carved doors.

b. **Windows:** See III.B.7.b.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** N/A

7. **Hardware:** Blackboards.

8. **Mechanical Equipment:** See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix A - Survey of Existing Plumbing, Electrical, HVAC Systems by Shooshanian Associates Consulting Engineers."

D. Site

1. **General setting and orientation:** The long rectangle of Melville is oriented northwest-southeast. The southeastern end is attached to Building 104C, the Deferrization Plant and then to Griffin Hall by an enclosed passageway at the third floor level. Melville projects away from the more densely built up core of the Isherwood Complex and is closest to Dorsey Creek. It forms a continuous line of building with Griffin Hall along Warden Field.

2. Historic landscape design: N/A.

3. Outbuildings: N/A.

IV. Sources of Information

A. Original Architectural Drawings

Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawings #122 192, 123985, 124351, 123961, 124348 in Naval Academy Public Works Archives. See Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

B. Early Views: N/A

C. Interviews

See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

D. Bibliography

See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

E. Likely Source not Investigated: N/A

F. Supplemental Material :

Naval Academy Real Property Inventory Card 2-00539.

V. Project Description

Demolition to clear a site for a new multipurpose assembly facility.

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