

- Gross Square Feet: 13,922
- Number of Floors Above Ground: 3
- Building Height: 45.7 feet
- Status: Occupied Intermittently
- Current Use: Meeting and Event Space

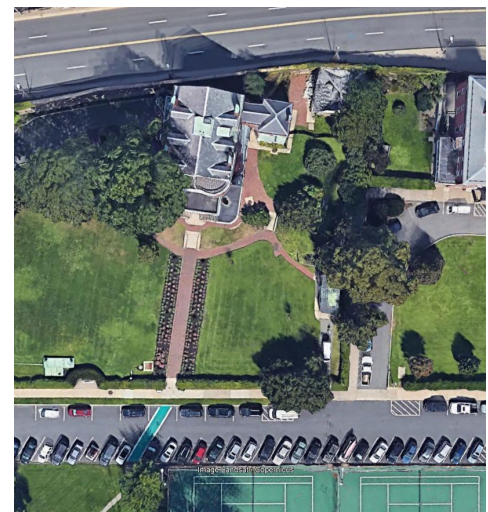
Significance: Quarters G, the Commandant's House, is significant as the oldest extant structure in the Navy Yard; as the home of Commandants of the Navy Yard and of the First Naval District from its completion to 1976; as the venue for the reception of numerous distinguished visitors to the Navy Yard; and as an example of federal architecture as modified through the years to accommodate changing tastes and requirements.



Building Description

Occupying a prominent area on the highest point of the Navy Yard at its northern boundary, the Commandant's House is the oldest extant structure in the yard. The house was likely designed by George Hadfield (1763-1826), an English architect working in Washington, D.C., probably best known for being the designer of Arlington House in Arlington, Va.

The house was completed in the summer of 1805. It was two stories in height over a raised basement. The house was considered poorly built and major alterations began in 1825 with triple windows in the bowed south façade changed to single windows. Intersecting conical roofs were altered when the third floor was extended, and an attic story added in 1849. In 1911, a driveway from Second Avenue rose along the western boundary of the Commandant's House grounds leading to a looped turnaround at the northwest corner. The driveway was paved in granite cobbles and covered with asphalt as late as 1952. The WPA began major construction on the south façade in 1936 that raised brick piers to support an enclosed south-facing sun porch with covered porches on east and west sides. In 1938, the WPA returned to construct a two-story kitchen wing at the northeast corner of the house. Importantly, after their construction in 1936, new concrete stairs to the yard below were followed in 1940 by replacement of the fence and gate that fronted the main house entrance with a new section of full-height stone boundary wall and lowering to half-height of the curved walls that formed the original entrance courtyard at 107 Chelsea Street. After



completion of this work, the north entrance became almost useless. This shifted the main entrance to basement level on the west side, a location that was first proposed in 1914. In 1952, the west entrance was enclosed in a brick vestibule on the northwest corner adjacent to the driveway. In November 1945 a reorganization of the naval shore establishment separated the posts of Navy Yard Commandant and Commandant of the First Naval District. As the senior officer, the District Commandant continued to reside in the house. The Shipyard Commander would be housed in Quarters L in the Lower Quarters (Building 266). This use would continue until the departure of Rear Adm. Roy D. Snyder, Jr., in September 1976.

In 1942, the Navy Yard awarded contracts for construction of two very large underground tanks at the south edge of the Commandant's House Grounds. An oil tank measured 75'x111' with an 18' height but was filled with sand in 1994. A water tank for fire-fighting was 75'x75' with a nearby neighbor in the Parade Ground of the Marine Barracks. These cisterns remain in use.

A year later, the National Park Service opened the house as a historic house museum. It also allowed it to be used as a function space. Between the fall of 1985 and the spring of 2003, the New England Museum Association occupied the former steward's quarters in the kitchen wing of the house. In 1987 the Park revised its General Management Plan for the Navy Yard to change the usage of the house to function space only. By the early 2000s requests for use of the house by private individuals and organizations had grown to a level where the Park decided to turn over the management to a private firm in March 2005.

Character-defining Elements

Exterior

- 19th century brick exterior walls with bowed bays facing south.
- WPA porches, brick kitchen addition, and concrete stair
- Oriel/bay windows flanking original north entrance
- Windows and doors
- Vestigial curving granite walls at north entrance
- Sloping roof profiles with dormers and chimneys

Interior

- Interior room layout around stair lobbies on all floors although accessibility may require loss of integrity and original use types in northwest corner study and bedrooms
- Rooms as individual spaces with patterned wood floors and distinctive millwork at door and window surrounds, baseboards, and cornice moldings
- Curving, winding staircase from basement to attic
- Visible field stone and brick foundation walls in basement

Integrity/Intactness

The building incorporates successive periods of major change in section, elevations, and types of porches while remaining architecturally coherent within. First floor rooms are especially strong interiors although decorative alterations inherited from recent decades, including new brass chandeliers and murals detract from the integrity of the original. Many radiator surrounds are inconsistent with the interior design of the main rooms.

Building Envelope Condition

Generally, the Commandant's House is in good condition although areas of brick masonry require repointing. Windows are typically in fair condition, especially the dual DHSS windows of the main

rooms. A porthole window in the main stair and a number of attic windows are single-glazed and somewhat deteriorated. Porches and kitchen addition are in good condition. Portions of the WPA concrete stair at the south elevation are starting to deteriorate and restoration will be challenging technically and aesthetically. The steel fire escape and porch railings appear to be sound. Main roof and porch roofs require direct inspection with lift access.

Building Interior Condition

The basement entry is exposed brickwork with a lobby that continues to include toilets and mechanical rooms. The first floor is a dramatic contrast with plaster, elaborate moldings, and elaborate fireplace surrounds. The original north entrance vestibule is lost as part of a natural sequence of arrival, but the interconnected rooms of the first floor are spacious and full of natural light. The second floor is also tall with spacious rooms and large windows, but with wall finishes that are inconsistent with the original interior architecture. The attic floor is less elaborate with sloping ceilings that create garret rooms.

Structural Assessment

- The building's foundation likely comprises timber piles, and the ground floor is slab-on-grade in good condition and with minor cracking.
- Floor construction is assumed to be wood, ceilings and hardwood flooring is covering the floor construction. There are leakage stains on the ceilings and carpet in a couple of areas, but overall it is in good condition.
- The wooden stairs are in good condition.
- The building's roofing material is slate and EPDM membrane and is new.
- The roof construction consists of wood 3"x12" beams at 16" on-center. Most of the beams are in good shape, but one has a longitudinal crack.
- The building has brick exterior walls in good condition.
- The interior walls are brick or stud walls good condition except several diagonal cracks were observed.

Mechanical System

Heating Systems

- There is no independent heating system. The building is served by hot water that is delivered via piping routed through underground trenches from Building "I."
- Cast-iron radiators located in all occupied spaces on all floors except basement toilet rooms, wall-mounted panel radiators are located in basement toilet rooms.
- Hot water unit heaters are located in the basement utility room and the attic.

Cooling Systems

- There is decentralized cooling in this building; window AC units are located in Living/Dining rooms on the first floor.

HVAC Systems

- Ventilation is from the attic inline fan that draws air from stairwell and discharges through wall louver.

Electrical Systems

- Two branch panelboards serve the building, one is a 100 AMP 12-circuit recessed cabinet, and the other is also a 100 AMP but a 16-circuit, both in fair condition.
- Eight historic chandeliers provide interior lighting with 15 historic wall sconces and 12 direct/indirect 1x4 pendants in the basement. All of the lighting fixtures are in good condition.
- Exterior lighting consists of four canopy-mounted lights in good condition.
- There is no emergency generator for the building.
- There is no uninterrupted power supply for the building.
- The electrical distribution system is a 225 AMP, 42-circuit Cutler Hammer in good condition.

Fire Protection Systems

- The building has a fire alarm system including fire lighting, pull stations, and smoke detectors in good condition.

Plumbing Systems

- There are six restrooms in the building.

Telecommunications System

- Tel/DATA service exists within this building.
- PA communications were not observed.

Security Systems

- IDS is utilized in the kitchen and rear foyer entrance.
- The exterior doors are key locked.

Building Floor Plans

