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DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE
CULTURAL RESOURCES REPORT SR101822-1
PROJECT NO. 2213223

EVALUATION OF BUILDING 23-117, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, NEVADA NATIONAL SECURITY SITE, NYE COUNTY, NEVADA

Prepared by

Nicole Brannan
Division of Earth and Ecosystem Sciences
Desert Research Institute, Las Vegas, Nevada

October 2022

Nevada System of Higher Education

Cover Photograph: Building 23-117, facing southeast (Raytheon Services Nevada Building Photo, undated).

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Prepared for

U.S. Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Nevada Field Office, Las Vegas, Nevada

Submitted by

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October 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Field Office (NNSA/NFO) plans to update the façade of Building 23-117, Administration Building (Nevada State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO] Resource No. B15256), at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) in Nye County, Nevada. The NNSA/NFO is implementing a long-term project to modernize the town of Mercury for future mission needs. The project is considered an undertaking subject to review under Title 54 of United States Code (USC) § 306108, commonly known as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Title 54 USC § 300101, et seq., and its implementing regulations, Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR) Part 800.

In 2018, Desert Research Institute (DRI) completed an architectural survey of the town of Mercury. This effort resulted in the identification, recordation, and evaluation of the Mercury Historic District (MHD, SHPO Resource No. D230), including the identification of its contributing elements (Reno et al. 2018). The MHD was recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP, National Register) under the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Significance Criteria A and C, as defined in 36 CFR Part 60.4, as a significant concentration of buildings and structures with a direct and important association with Cold War-era nuclear testing from 1951 through 1992. It has not been evaluated under Criteria B and D to date.

As part of a larger modernization program for Mercury, the NNSA/NFO and the SHPO executed the 2018 *Programmatic Agreement between the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Field Office and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer regarding Modernization and Operational Maintenance of the Nevada National Security Site, at Mercury in Nye County, Nevada* (Mercury PA). The Mercury PA includes streamlined Section 106 procedures for undertakings in the MHD based on contributing element categories. Building 23-117 is identified in Appendix C of the Mercury PA as a Category I contributing element, indicating that it might be individually eligible for the NRHP. It is a historic property for the purposes of Section 106 compliance and subject to the stipulations of the Mercury PA.

Per Stipulation VI of the Mercury PA, when the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for an undertaking includes Category I elements, the NNSA/NFO must evaluate the Category I elements for individual NRHP eligibility under all of the SOI Significance Criteria prior to initiating any activity that may affect the elements. The purpose of this report is to evaluate Building 23-117 as a potential individually eligible historic property in fulfillment of Stipulation VI of the Mercury PA. The evaluation detailed herein concludes that Building 23-117 is not individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. Although it retains aspects of integrity and continues to contribute to the MHD, it is not individually significant under any of the SOI Significance Criteria, and as it is less than 50 years of age, it does not possess exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration G.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Martha DeMarre, Archivist at DRI, contributed to the historical research. The historic context sections herein include revised versions of earlier work by Ron Reno, Architectural Historian and Archaeologist, and Maureen King, Archaeologist at DRI.

Carrie Stewart, National Environmental Policy Act Compliance Officer for the NNSA/NFO, served as the program manager overseeing this project. Michelle Zitello and Kevin Owens of Mission Support and Test Services, Inc. (MSTS) arranged for access to the subject building to complete fieldwork and photography.

Qualifications for the preparers of this report are provided in the Preparers' Qualifications section at the end of the document.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Field Office (NNSA/NFO) proposes to modify the façade of Building 23-117 at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) in Nye County, Nevada (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) in support of their long-term project to modernize the town of Mercury. The proposal includes adding metal panels to the canopy at the entrance of Building 23-117 and adding stone veneer to the areas on the façade that are recessed. The building is a Category I contributing element to the Mercury Historic District (MHD), as defined in the *Programmatic Agreement Between the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Field Office and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding Modernization and Operational Maintenance of the Nevada National Security Site, at Mercury in Nye County, Nevada* (hereafter the Mercury PA) and Appendix C of the Mercury PA. Accordingly, Building 23-117 is considered a historic property for the purposes of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Per Stipulation VI of the Mercury PA, when the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for an undertaking includes Category I elements, the NNSA/NFO must evaluate the Category I elements for individual NRHP eligibility. The purpose of this report is to evaluate Building 23-117 for potential individual NRHP eligibility in fulfillment of Stipulation VI.

Figure 1. Project location in Mercury, Nevada National Security Site (NNSA/NFO 2017).

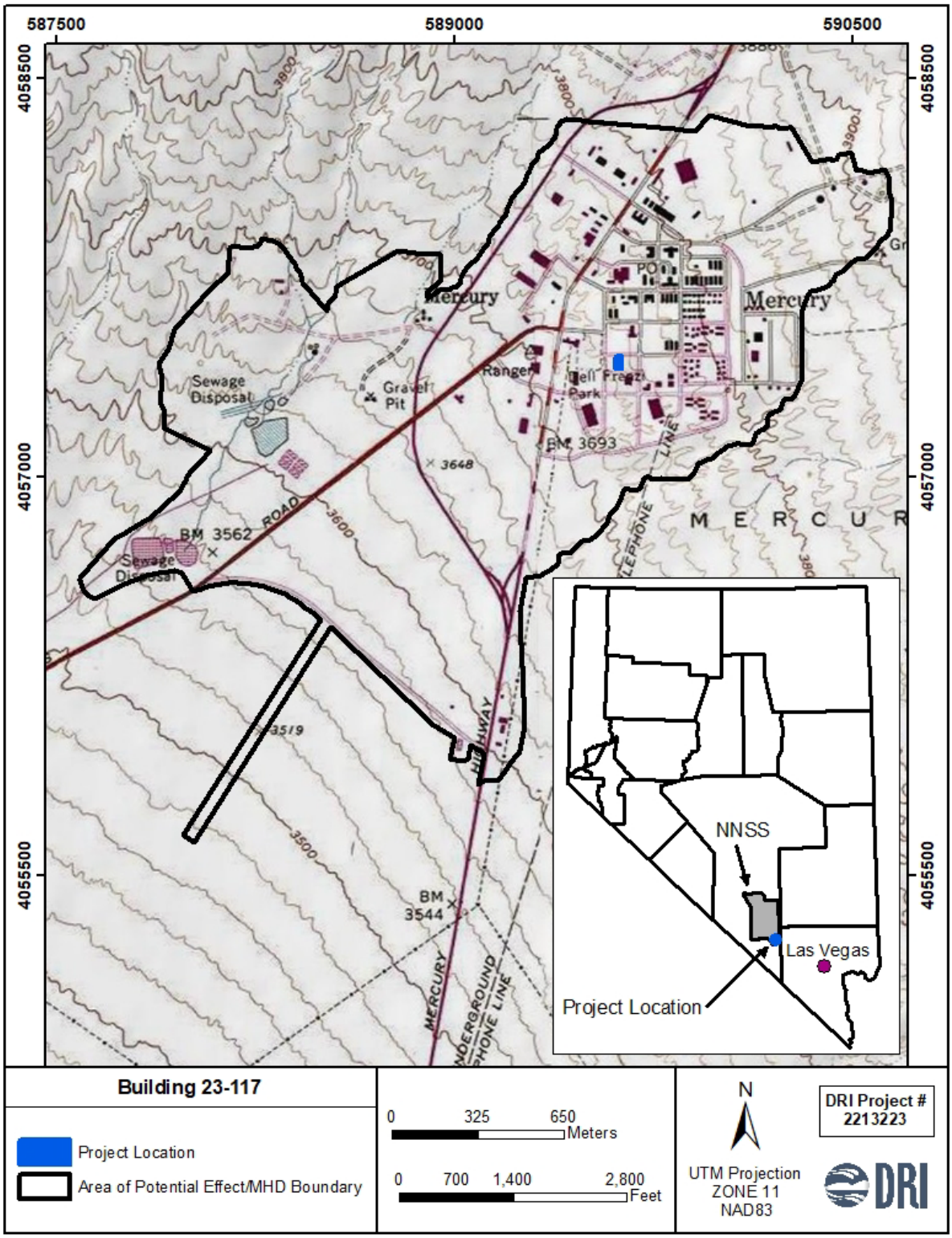

Figure 2. Area of Potential Effect.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

Objectives

The purpose of this architectural resource evaluation is to comply with the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966, as amended, for the NNSA/NFO to manage historic properties under its jurisdiction. Specifically, this report complies with the Mercury PA.

Area of Potential Effect

The NNSA/NFO delineated the APE using the metrics of Stipulation II of the Mercury PA. For indirect effects, such as visual, atmospheric, and audible effects, the boundary of the MHD is used per Stipulation II.B (Figure 2). For direct effects, such as physical demolition and equipment staging, the APE includes the footprint of Building 23-117 and a 25-foot-wide perimeter around the footprint (Figure 3). For cumulative effects and new construction (Stipulations II.C and II.D), the APE for cumulative effects is the same as for indirect effects.

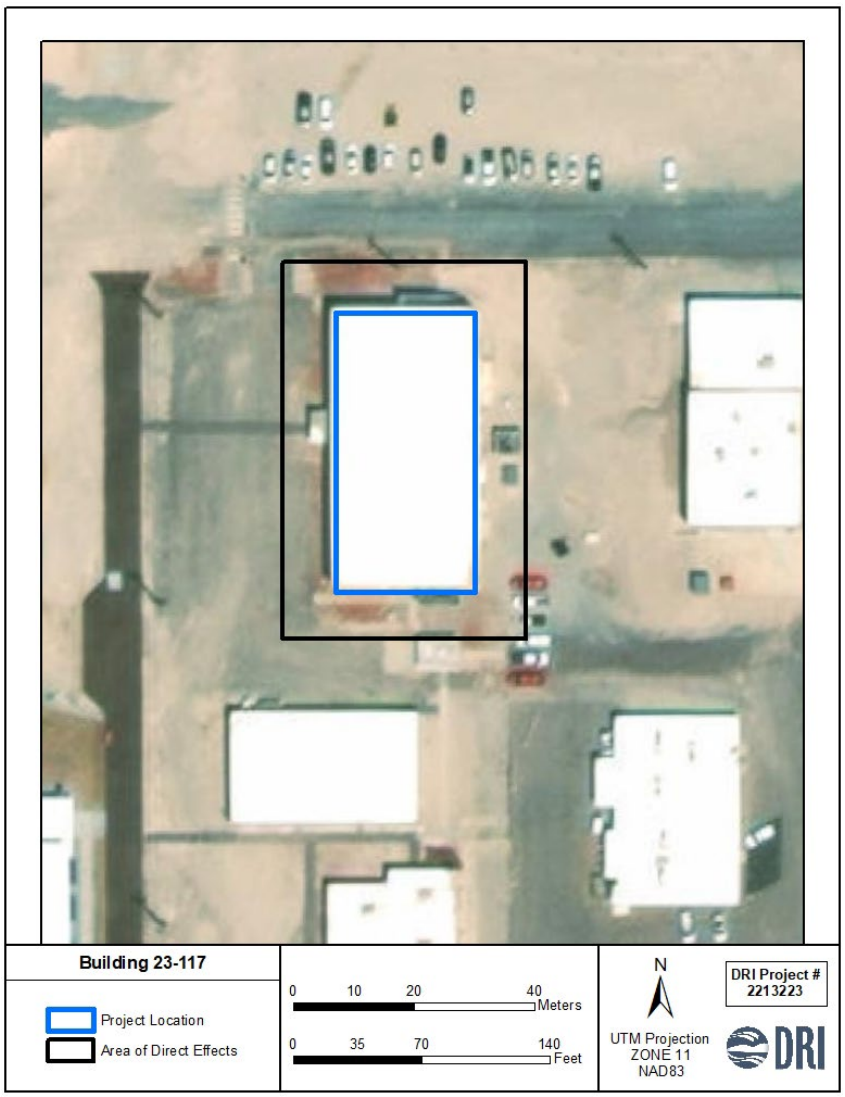

Figure 3. Direct effects area for the undertaking.

Element Category Identification

The Mercury PA identifies Building 23-117 as a Category I property. Category I properties are those that may be unique to the MHD or that have only one representative in the MHD and might be individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. Building 23-117 was the only office building in Mercury constructed with this design; therefore, it is considered a Category I property.

Methods

Research and fieldwork for this report were designed to meet the requirements of Mercury PA Stipulation VI for evaluating the Category I element within the project APE.

Buildings and major structures are identified on the NNSS by numbers or letters with their area number in the prefix. For example, the Administration Building is identified as 23-117 because it is located in Area 23. The prefix is followed by a unique identifying number or combination of letters and numbers ("117" for the subject resource). NNSS identifiers are used throughout this report because they are tied to the existing archival documentation and source materials for the NNSS extending back through the entire Cold War period.

Building 23-117 was initially surveyed and recorded on an ARA form as part of *The Architecture of Mercury – Nevada's Atomic Boom Town, An Architectural Survey of Mercury, Area 23, Nevada National Security Site, Nye County, Nevada* (Reno et al. 2018). The ARA form evaluated Building 23-117 as a potential contributing element to the MHD, not as a potential individual historic property. Therefore, research at the time was restricted to what was necessary to determine whether or not Building 23-117 contributed to the historic district. Additional research conducted for this report to properly evaluate Building 23-117 as a potential individual historic property included reviewing engineering records, historical maps, and photographs; searching newspaper archives; revisiting DOE documents related to the history and development of the NNSS; and reviewing scholarly books and articles about the NNSS and related contexts and themes. Dates of original construction and alterations recorded on the original ARA form were confirmed and updated based on primary sources, including architectural and engineering drawings, newspaper articles, DOE documents, and dated photographs.

Nicole Brannan conducted fieldwork on October 18, 2022 to update the previous description of Building 23-117 and to document the interior, which had not been included in the MHD survey. Ms. Brannan took the digital photographs and Laura O'Neill, Architectural Historian, assisted with notetaking and the photography log.

Following the research and fieldwork tasks, appropriate historic contexts were compiled to facilitate a detailed NRHP evaluation of Building 23-117 as a potential individual historic property. The property was evaluated within the identified historic contexts using the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Significance Criteria and Criteria Consideration G for properties less than 50 years of age. The physical integrity of the property was also analyzed in terms of the seven aspects defined in 36 CFR Part 60.4. *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (NPS 1997) was referenced to complete the significance evaluation and integrity analysis.

The results of the additional research and NRHP evaluation of Building 23-117 completed for the current undertaking are provided in this report. The ARA form for the building will be updated as part of mitigation for the undertaking in accordance with the Mercury PA, following consultation with the SHPO on the findings in this individual NRHP evaluation report.

III. HISTORIC CONTEXT

The following historic context presents contexts and themes related to Building 23-117 for the purpose of evaluating the property for individual NRHP eligibility. The main context identified as relevant to the evaluation and necessary for understanding the extant property is Nuclear Testing and the Development of Mercury. The work of Holmes & Narver and their role in Mercury, as well as the work of architect Fred Doriot were also identified as relevant to the evaluation of the building. Broader contexts and themes related to the MHD and nuclear testing during the Cold War period are detailed in *Architecture of Mercury* (Reno et al. 2018) and the *Draft Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Nevada National Security Site, Nye County, Nevada* (Rhode et al. 2020), respectively, and are not discussed at length herein.

Natural Setting

Building 23-117 is located in the town of Mercury, on Teapot Avenue, just east of Mercury Highway, approximately four miles from U.S. Route 95. Mercury is located on a southwest-facing bajada below the Spotted Range in the northeast corner of Mercury Valley. The center of Mercury is at an elevation of approximately 3,700 feet. Red Mountain towers over Mercury to the north, and the valley is bounded by the Specter Range to the southwest. The Spring Mountains lie to the south. To the northeast is Mercury Ridge, which separates Mercury from Frenchman Flat further to the northeast.

Nuclear Testing and the Development of Mercury

The text for this section was compiled using existing historic contexts presented in *Architecture of Mercury* (Reno et al. 2018) and *Draft Cultural Resource Management Plan* (Rhode et al. 2020). Relevant text from each document was excerpted, compiled, and adapted to suit the purposes of this report with references to Building 23-117 added as appropriate.

The continental nuclear test site, now known as the NNSS, has gone through several name changes over time, from South Site, Alternate Test Site B, Site Mercury, and Nevada Test Site (NTS) in 1950-51 to Nevada Proving Ground in 1952 and back to NTS in January 1955 (AEC 1952). Its name remained NTS for the rest of the Cold War. The facility was renamed in 2010 and is currently managed as the NNSS.

Nuclear testing has been a major and important part of the history of Nevada and the United States (Tlachac 1991a, 1991b). Much of this activity revolved around the NNSS, where most of the developments and experiments in nuclear weapons were tested both above and below ground. The consequences of these activities have been felt worldwide, played a vital role in the national defense of our country, and helped shape world politics.

In the late 1940s, prior to establishing the NNSS, both low- and high-yield nuclear tests were conducted at the Pacific Proving Grounds in the vicinity of the Marshall Islands. Transporting personnel and equipment back and forth between the test area and the scientific laboratories was expensive and time-consuming. The Armed Forces Special Weapons Project conducted a top-secret feasibility study named Project Nutmeg to find a suitable nuclear test site in the continental United States (Fehner and Gosling 2000:36). The Korean War, which began in 1950, escalated security concerns at the Pacific Proving Grounds providing further motivation for the continental search (DTRA 2002:77; Friesen 1995:4).

The ideal continental test site would have favorable and predictable weather and terrain conditions for year-round testing, the land would be under federal control, and it would have an infrastructure already in place (Lay 1950; Tlachac 1991a). Other key factors included security, remoteness from populated areas, and relative proximity to the scientific laboratories in New Mexico. The Las Vegas Bombing and

Gunnery Range in southern Nevada was selected as the place that best met these criteria (Fehner and Gosling 2006:43). The range also had large, flat terrain to conduct tests, westerly prevailing winds away from the densely populated West Coast, and natural topographic barriers to screen the test areas from public viewing. Based on the recommendations of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory (LASL, which later became the Los Alamos National Laboratory [LANL] in 1980) the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and the National Security Council, President Truman approved the new test site location on December 18, 1950.

McKee Construction Company and Reynolds Electrical & Engineering Company (REECo) were hired to begin preparing for the first tests, focusing most of their work on the ground zero area in Frenchman Flat (Campbell et al. 1983:174; Fehner and Gosling 2000:51, 64). Both companies worked as construction contractors at the LASL in New Mexico and were familiar with the proposed tasks. The Ranger nuclear test series in Frenchman Flat began on January 27, 1951, with the Able test and ended with the Fox test on February 6, 1951 (Fehner and Gosling 2000:70, 75; NNSA/NFO 2015; Ogle 1985:43-44; Titus 1986:58). As a safety measure, the primary testing area was moved north from Frenchman Flat to Yucca Flat for the next series of tests in the fall of 1951.

The town of Mercury quickly became the administrative and residential hub of the NNSS in the 1950s. Initially named Base Camp Mercury, it was planned to provide minimum facilities for two or three test series a year, with a six-week time frame for each series. Holmes & Narver and Silas Mason Company, two prominent government contractors during the Cold War, shared in the design of Mercury, which initially included barracks, a mess hall, and administrative buildings. The camp was designed to accommodate 412 persons at peak periods of use for only 18 weeks a year. By late 1951, these expectations were already obsolete because the camp overflowed with 1,100 residents (Fehner and Gosling 2000:81). In response, a $6.7 million construction project was approved to meet the needs of the growing testing program and population in Mercury (NNSA/NFO 2013). The AEC expanded the base camp, adding more barracks, a second mess hall, a recreational facility, a warehouse, offices, and laboratory space (Fehner and Gosling 2000).

In 1958, both the United States and the former Soviet Union ceased nuclear testing by self-imposed moratoria at the urging of internal and external forces (Ogle 1985:30-31). By 1961, however, both superpowers were once again conducting tests. In 1963, the United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain ratified the Limited Test Ban Treaty, sending all weapons-related tests underground and prohibiting tests in the air, at the surface, and underwater (Friesen 1995:6).

Although atmospheric testing ended, underground testing activities at the NNSS steadily expanded, and testing occurred on a year-round basis in the 1960s. In addition, the Plowshare Program and the Nuclear Rocket Development Station (NRDS) brought increased activity to the site (Fehner and Gosling 2000:83; NNSA/NFO 2013). This required additional construction to meet demands for a wide range of new facilities.

In 1962, an AEC supplemental appropriations bill provided funds to add to or replace most of the earlier temporary buildings at the site and included a $15 million request for permanent NNSS construction (NNSA/NFO 2013). By June, the AEC contracted Arthur Benedict Associates (ABA) of Los Angeles, California, to develop a long-range comprehensive master plan for the coordinated development of Mercury.

The Mercury Master Plan (ABA 1962) proposed an expansion of all facilities to create a permanent site. Facilities programmed for construction during fiscal years 1963 and 1964 were support facilities, the cafeteria and food handling areas, administrative and office buildings, laboratories, maintenance shops,

warehouses, communications, and the Civil Effects Test Organization building, resident-oriented facilities such as the dormitories, recreation hall, swimming pool, bowling alley, chapel, and health, medical, and safety building, circulation facilities like the Camp Desert Rock airstrip, U.S. 95 improvements, the Mercury Bypass, and primary and secondary streets, and utilities, a new power transmission line and sewage treatment plant.

Underground testing continued in the 1980s along with other programs such as the MX missile development and the Northern Nevada Waste Storage Investigations at Yucca Mountain. The volume of work created a need for increased infrastructure and support buildings in Mercury. This was during the last push of the American offensive in the Cold War era and Mercury was a key theater in the end of the Cold War. It was during this period, that Mercury saw the construction of its first two-story buildings, including Building 23-117 (Figure 4). The new construction in Mercury was dominated by earth-tone, split-face, concrete block masonry.

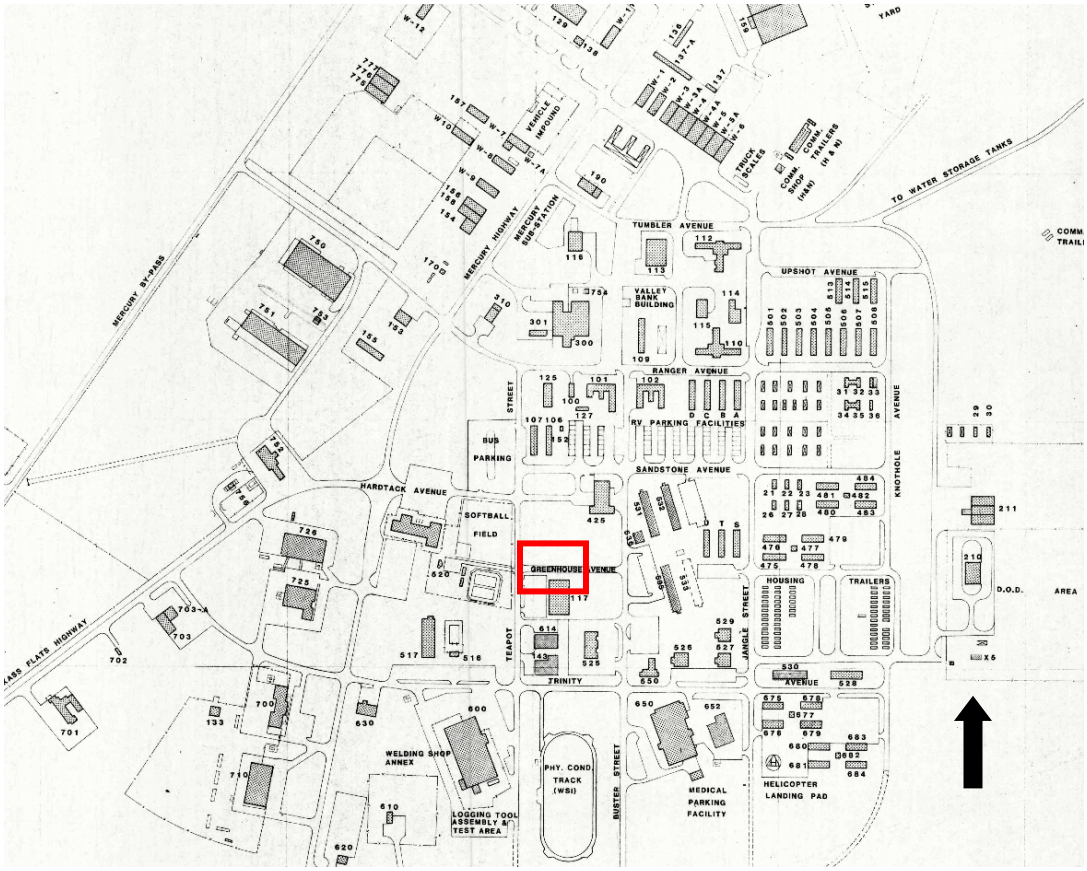

Figure 4. Map of Mercury, Nevada with Building 23-117 annotated in red (Holmes & Narver, 1986).

Underground testing on the NNSS continued at a steady pace until 1992, when the United States established a second self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing. After 1992, the DOE began conducting subcritical experiments at the NNSS to maintain the safety and reliability of the national nuclear stockpile without conducting full-scale tests. Main activities on the NNSS through the present day include subcritical experiments and other Stockpile Stewardship programs, along with planning, experimentation, and training to prevent and counter global and homeland security threats.

Designed by architect Fred Doriot of Las Vegas and constructed by Holmes & Narver, Building 23-117 was constructed in 1982 as the architect-engineer Administration Building on the NNSS. Building 23-117

fits within the 1951-1992 period of significance for the NNSS's association with the Cold War-era nuclear testing.

Holmes & Narver

Holmes & Narver was active from the initial construction of what is now the NNSS through the end of the Cold War. This work was part of Contract 20, which was the longest-running single contract ever administered by the U.S. government. James T. Holmes and D. Lee Narver started the firm in 1933 in Los Angeles to repair earthquake damage to a large number of buildings. The firm entered the realm of government-base design in 1940 with the designs of Camp Roberts and Camp Nacimiento for the Army, followed by a number of wartime military bases. Design of the nuclear test facility at Enewetak in 1947 foreshadowed its role in designing the new base camp of Mercury in 1951. The firm was extremely active during the Cold War with projects including facilities at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Douglas Aircraft, and overseas military bases.

Holmes & Narver was responsible for much of the design work during the initial construction of Mercury, most of which was utilitarian and based on designs perfected during World War II (Reno 2018). Holmes & Narver designed and engineered diverse types of buildings during this time. This included demountable buildings such as the original administration buildings, the original fire station, and recreation hall. They were also responsible for the design and engineering of warehouses, Quonset huts, the power plant, the water system, and housing throughout Mercury. By the mid-1960s, the base was expanding using the direction of the new Mercury Master Plan. During this period, a number of new architecture and engineering firms were used in addition to Holmes & Narver. Holmes & Narver during this period, designed buildings such as the records library and dormitories.

As the Cold War continued in the 1980s, Mercury remained integral to the work conducted on the NNNSS. Holmes & Narver continued to design and engineer new buildings, but much of the work they did in Mercury, as well as the rest of the NTS, was the unglamorous job of perpetually altering buildings to keep pace with changing mission requirements (Reno et al. 2018).

Although the military-related contracts were central to the work performed by Holmes & Narver, the firm also had significant civilian commissions, such as the 1958 TWA terminal at Los Angeles International Airport. Holmes & Narver ceased to exist as an independent firm in 2001. It was acquired by DMJM, which was in turn acquired by AECOM (Reno et al. 2018).

Fred Doriot, Architect

C. Frederic (Fred) Doriot was the architect of record for Building 23-117. Doriot was born in 1931 in Teaneck, NJ, eventually moving to Las Vegas and making it his home for 39 years. Doriot was a prominent architect in Las Vegas known for major remodels to several casinos including the Four Queens, the Fremont Hotel, the Tropicana, and the Hacienda. Doriot was most well-known for his redesign of the Golden Nugget in the 1970s and 1980s (*Las Vegas Review Journal* 2009). Before the remodel, the downtown area of Las Vegas had become rundown, and the Strip became the new Las Vegas hotspot. Doriot's remodel of the Golden Nugget included renovating the exterior, removing its Rococo forms, and removing the casino's large corner sign that was installed in 1957. Doriot's redesign of the exterior of the Golden Nugget clad it in gold and white, adding new corner signs and large arched windows covered with white awnings (Figure 5). The renovation was one of the first along Fremont Street and its success helped to spur other casinos to remodel their buildings (Nicoletta 2000:212).

Figure 5. Golden Nugget Casino with the Doriot design (Nicoletta 2012).

In addition to his casino designs, Doriot also was the architect for the Valley Banks of Las Vegas that were designed in the late 1980s, a 1950s residential neighborhood in Tenafly, NJ, residential buildings in Las Vegas and surrounding states. In 1996 Doriot retired to Idaho but continued to do volunteer architectural projects until his death in 2009. (*Las Vegas Review Journal* 2009).

IV. RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

The following description includes Building 23-117 and three accessory resources. Although the MHD is included as part of the APE for the undertaking to account for potential visual effects to the district, it is not described in detail herein. This report focuses on the individual evaluation of Building 23-117. The MHD is described in detail in Reno et al. (2018).

Building 23-117, Administration Building

History and Description of Building 23-117

Building 23-117 was constructed in 1982 as the architect-engineer Administration Building[1] for Holmes & Narver in Mercury (Figure 6). The building was dedicated in April of 1983 and identified as a product of the DOE's modernization project at the NNSS during this period. It was built to house all the Mercury-based Holmes & Narver departments except for the materials testing laboratory, the engineering records library, and construction services (NTS 1983). Fred Doriot was the architect of record, and Holmes & Narver were the engineers and constructors. After Holmes & Narver's contract ended in 1990, Raytheon Services Nevada (RSN) occupied the building for the same uses. The RSN contract ended in December of

[1] The original ARA form for the building uses just "Administration Building" as the name, but historical records indicate that "architect-engineer" was also part of the name.

1995, and Bechtel Nevada became the occupants of Building 23-117. In 2006, National Security Technologies (NSTec) became the prime contractor. In 2017, Mission Support and Test Services (MSTS) became the new contractor and are the current occupants of the building which is still used for an administrative purpose today.

Figure 6. Building 23-117, circa 1990-1995 (RSN, undated).

Building 23-117 is a two-story, split-face block and textured stucco, rectangular plan building with a precast concrete frame (Figure 6). It is 150 feet x 75 feet and 23 feet in height with a flat roof. There was originally a paved parking area in front of its west elevation, but it is currently unpaved gravel. The primary elevation is the west elevation and is divided evenly into six bays. The precast structure of the building is expressed via stuccoed columns and beams, creating the six bays. All of the bays are recessed from the expressed structure. The two bays on the north and south ends of the elevation feature split-face concrete masonry blocks, From north to south, the second, fourth, and fifth bays are identical with recessed stucco panels and floor-to-ceiling windows. The third bay is similar, but contains the entryway at the ground floor and has split-face concrete masonry panels, in addition to stucco. The three identical bays contain two windows each. The windows are fixed with bronze anodized aluminum frames. On the first story the mullions area irregularly spaced vertically, dividing it into three sections. The windows on the second story have only one mullion, also not evenly spaced vertically, but placed closer to the bottom of the window.

The entryway in the third bay from the northern corner of the west elevation is recessed from the exterior wall and consists of a bronze anodized aluminum-framed, glass double door. The entry doors are framed on both sides with large windows that extend to the same height of the door, but with a thinner aluminum frame. The doors have almost moon-shaped handles with a push-button mechanism for opening. The entryway is covered by a flat canopy that extends from the exterior wall. The canopy is just over 10 feet in length and supported by two columns sheathed in the same textured stucco as the exterior of the building.

The east elevation is similar in design to the west elevation, with six equally sized bays. As on the west elevation, the two end bays are clad with split-faced concrete blocks while the middle bays are textured stucco. However, the east elevation was not designed with the same pattern of windows as the west. There are only three windows on this elevation, located in the second and third bays from the southeastern corner of the building. There is one entry door on the east elevation, located within the second bay on the first floor. It is a metal double door, with no windows. The east elevation has the only visible components of the gutter system, with scuppers and attached down spouts located on the stucco columns. On the other three elevations, the system is internal. The rest of the east elevation is bare, except for electrical panels, associated wires, conduits, and a cylindrical emergency metal ladder with protective frame providing roof access located at the southeast corner.

The north and south elevations are similar in designs. They have three equally sized bays of split-face concrete blocks, framed by the expressed columns and beams, clad in textured stucco. Both elevations have a U-shaped metal staircase, each with a large landing and metal slab entry door at the top. The north elevation also has two metal slab doors located in the middle bay at the ground level beneath the stair, and the south elevation has a single metal slab door also located in the middle bay beneath the stair.

The main entry doors on the west elevation open into a small vestibule that has an identical entry of windows and a double door into the main building (Figure 7). Directly across from the entry is a wall with decorative mirrored panels, stained wood stiles, and a planter box located at the bottom. The door to the south historically opened to the reception area. From the reception area, in the southeast corner of the room was a vestibule that had three doorways, oriented at a 45-degree angle to the otherwise orthogonal floor plan. Each doorway entered into a separate office.

To the north of the main entry, is the hall that leads to the stairs, located behind the decorative wall panels, to the second floor. The hall also continues to the east to the main corridor of the building. Along this hall are offices on the north and the restrooms on the south. The main corridor runs the entire length of the building along a north-south axis. As designed, the corridor led to offices in both directions and to some areas that were not assigned original uses, but within the next few years would also become offices.

The staircase leading to the second floor is U-shaped and open at the top. At the top of the stairs, the main circulation is a corridor that wraps around a central core of restrooms, offices, and stairwell, creating a centralized design (Figure 8). Most of the area on the second floor was not designed for specific uses originally, except for some offices in the southern end of the building. Like the first floor, most of the open space was quickly made into other offices, but also a blueprint storage room, and computer rooms by 1983 and 1984. This may be the reason no windows are located on the second floor for the northern two-thirds of the building.

Over time, offices and workstations were often reconfigured. This often occurred in areas where there were partitions or open space instead of dedicated walls. Two areas that have been modified the most are the rooms on the first and second floors which were the original storage and computer rooms. Originally this area occupied the northeast corner on the first floor, and on the second floor the rooms ran about two-thirds of the building along the eastern wall. Over time, the rooms were converted from computer rooms into more offices and workstations. It is unclear exactly when the changes were made, but one engineering drawing for electrical work from 2001 shows the second-floor room had already been modified into offices.

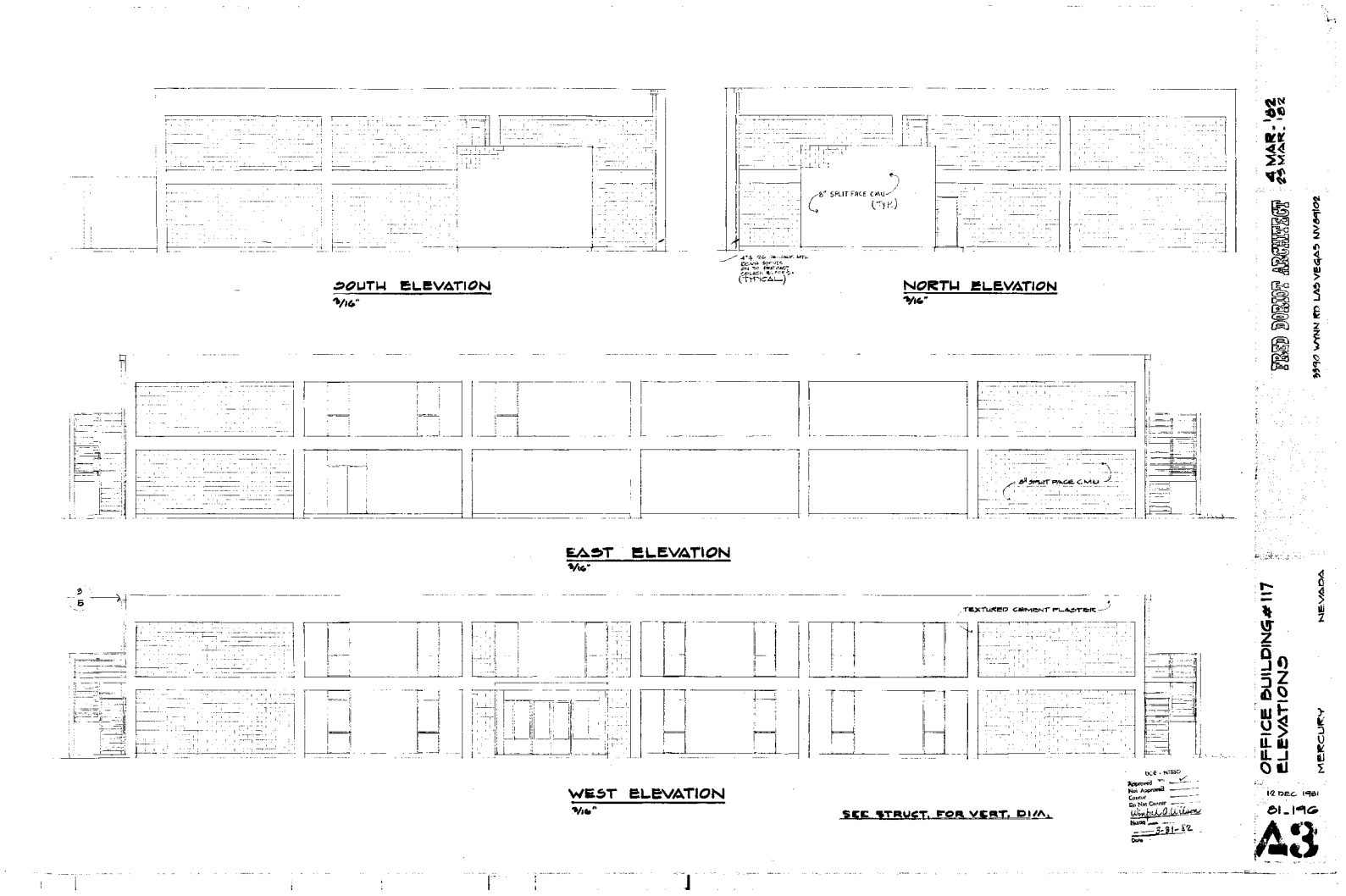

Figure 7. Elevations of Building 23-117, 1982 (Doriot 1982).

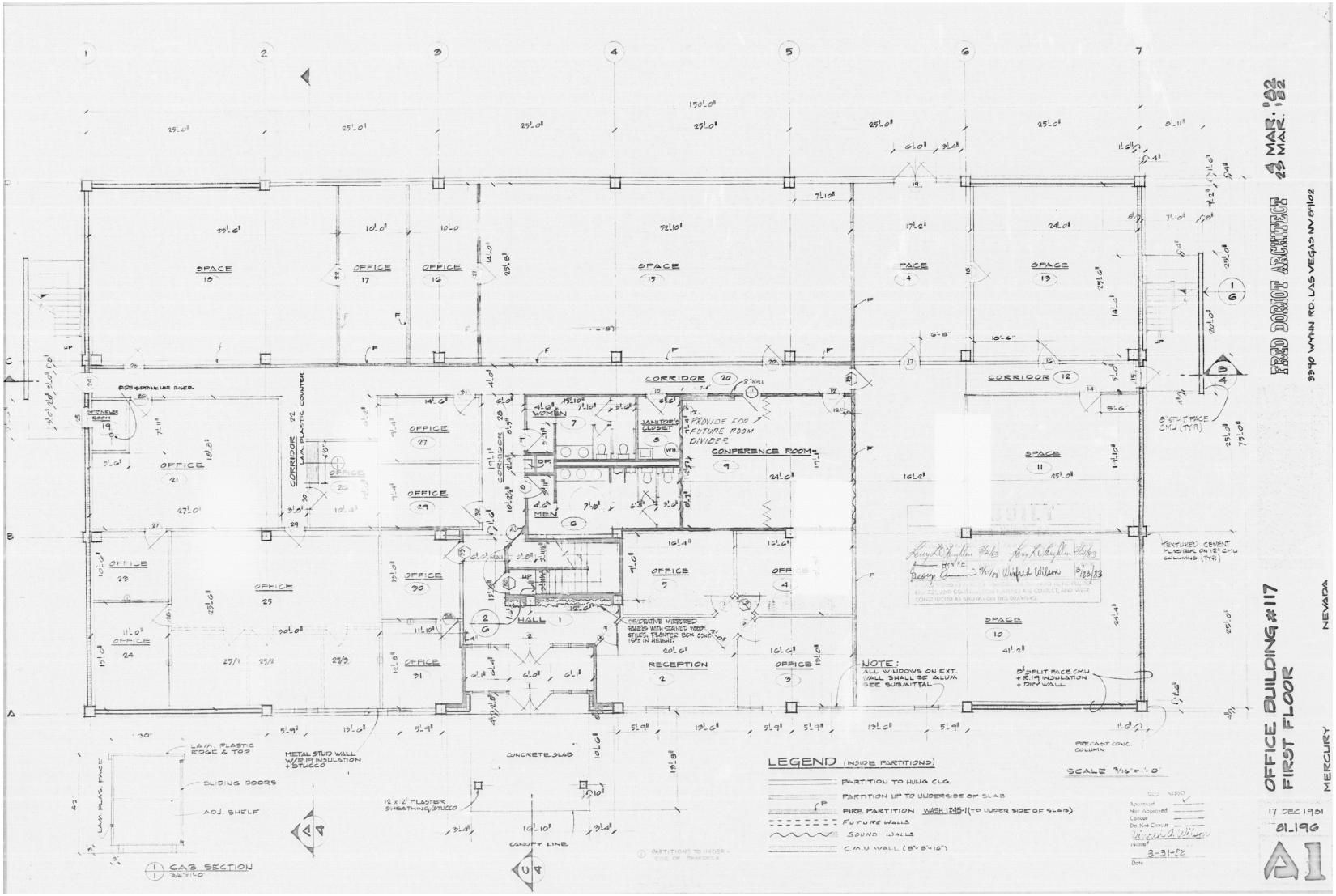

Figure 8. Original floorplan for the first floor of Building 23-117, 1982 (Doriot 1982).

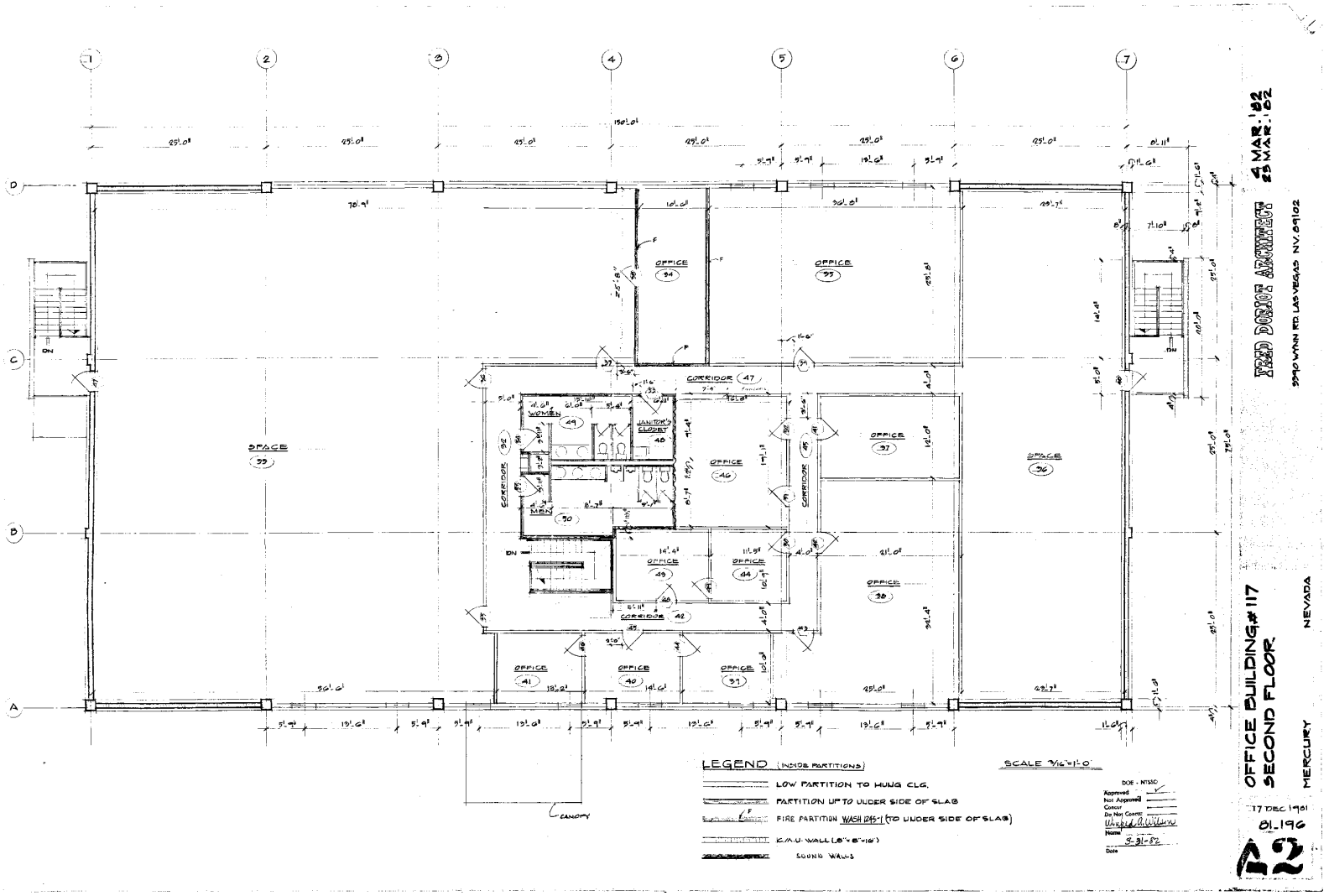

Figure 9. Original floor plan for the second story of Building 23-117, 1982 (Doriot 1982).

Building 23-117 is currently still in use as the Dan Loney NNSS Operations Center in Mercury by the contractor MSTS. On the exterior of the building, there appears to be no major changes, only small repairs or additions (Figure 10). The windows on the west elevation all have screens added to them for sun protection, but they were installed to match the size and design of the original windows. It is unknown when the screens were added, but they were present during the 2017 survey of the MHD. The most recent space management plan produced in 2022 by the NNSS management and operations contractor shows the interior configuration remains similar to previous engineering drawings. Some work areas have been reconfigured, but no major modifications have been made. All the original hallways and corridors remain in the same locations, as do the entry doors and windows. The entryway, including the vestibule remain intact (Figure 11). The wall in the entry hall with the decorative mirrors and wood stiles remains as designed, although the planter is not currently in use (Figure 12).

Figure 10. Building 23-117, west and south elevation, facing northeast (22132_4220, DRI 2022).

Figure 11. Entryway into Building 23-117 (22132_4196, DRI 2022).

Figure 12. Decorative wall in entry hall (22132_4199, DRI 2022).

Building 23-117 remains in its original location just north of Teapot Road on the east side of Mercury. When Building 23-117 was constructed, the only building in the vicinity was the Weather Service/Post Office located just to the southeast. To the north, the area was vacant and to the east was the core of the recreation services. Within the recreation area, the baseball field and tennis courts were to the west of Building 23-117, while the pool and bowling alley were across a vacant lot to the southwest. All of the recreation area has been removed including baseball fields, tennis courts, and bowling alley and pool. Directly to the west and southwest of Building 23-117 are two new buildings. The one to the southwest was constructed in 2022 and the one to the west is currently under construction as of October 2022.

After Building 23-117 was constructed, the block changed with the construction of three new buildings. In 1984 directly south of 23-117, the Photos Services Building, 23-614 was built. Followed by another Administration Building, 23-143 in 1987, located further south. In 1988 the Cable Testing and Administration Building, 23-118, was constructed directly to the west. All these buildings are still in use today and in their same location. There is a wood pergola shade structure that was constructed in between 23-117 and 23-614. Based on photo evidence the pergola was constructed sometime after 1991 and in the MHD survey, it is considered an accessory resource to Building 23-614.

Alterations Summary

Building 23-117 has not been substantially modified since its construction in 1982. There have been few changes to the exterior of the building. All doors and windows remain in their original locations and appear to be original. The building shape, size, and its roofline remain in its original configuration. The paved parking lot that was constructed off the west elevation has been removed as part of the current Mercury Modernization projects occurring in the vicinity. The interior of the building has been reorganized, but the main corridors and hallways remain. Much of what has changed on the interior is the reshuffling of partitions and occasionally walls to create new work areas and offices. The biggest modification was the changing of the computer rooms into more offices and work areas with partitions or cubicles. It is likely these areas were not needed as dedicated computer rooms as technology evolved and computers needed less space.

Accessory Resource 1

Accessory Resource (AR) 1 is a mechanical building located off the east elevation. It is a square plan building, with the same split face concrete masonry as Building 23-117, on a concrete slab. It has a flat roof with a galvanized steel hatch and rotating vent. It has one flush metal door with louver vents.

Accessory Resource 2

Accessory Resource 2 is a HVAC unit on a concrete slab to the south of AR 1.

Accessory Resource 3

Accessory Resource 3 is a gray, steel transformer on a concrete slab surrounded by three yellow pipe bollards to the north of AR 1.

V. NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATION OF BUILDING 23-117

As previously noted, Building 23-117 is a contributing element to the NRHP-eligible MHD. The following section details the evaluation of its individual eligibility for listing in the NRHP. Based on this evaluation, Building 23-117 is not recommended as individually eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Criteria Consideration G

Per *National Register Bulletin #15*, "The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the last fifty years unless they are of exceptional importance. Fifty years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance (NPS 1997: 41)." Building 23-117 is 40 years old, ten years shy of the general 50-year NRHP benchmark. Therefore, to be individually eligible for listing in the NRHP, Building 23-117 would have to be not only significant under one of the established criteria, but exceptionally so.

Secretary of Interior's Significance Criteria

Criterion A

To be significant under Criterion A, a property must be directly associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The context considered under Criterion A is development in Mercury. Building 23-117 originally housed administrative functions and office space for Holmes & Narver, a firm that had a significant role in the development of early Mercury as the sole designer of its early built environment. Mercury was necessary for the NNSS and its nuclear testing programs to be successful. It provided a place where those designing and conducting the tests could live and work. However, by the time Building 23-117 was constructed in 1982, Mercury was a fully established town, and the role of Holmes & Narver had diminished. They were no longer solely responsible for development activities on the test site, and often they were tasked with renovating existing buildings to meet the changing needs of the NNSS. There were other office and administration buildings that had a direct link to the early development of Mercury and its role serving those who worked on the NNSS. One such example that is still extant is Building 23-111. It was one of the first administration buildings in Mercury and is also one of the few remaining demountable buildings in Mercury, reflecting the town's early development. This building had a direct and important association with the development of Mercury. By contrast, Building 23-117, built well after both the initial construction of Mercury in the early 1950s and the substantial 1960s development boom following the Mercury Master Plan, reflects later infill development that occurred on an ad hoc basis to meet mission needs. It does not appear to be significant under Criterion A.

Criterion B

To be significant under Criterion B, a property must be directly associated with the productive life of a significant person. There is no evidence to suggest Building 23-117 has a direct association with any significant person. Although Building 23-117 provided needed office space for Holmes & Narver architects and engineers and their administrative needs, there is no indication that any significant person worked in Building 23-117. It is likely that any such person would have been more closely associated with locations where important testing and experimentation occurred on the NNSS. Building 23-117 does not appear to be significant under Criterion B.

Criterion C

Properties significant under Criterion C must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Building 23-117 was constructed in 1982 to serve as the architect-engineer administration building for Holmes & Narver. Its architecture does not embody the distinctive characteristics of any particular type, period, or method of construction because it does not contain enough design elements to represent a certain type, period, or method of construction. It has elements of the International Style, but they are expressed in basic ways typical of office and light industrial buildings in the late 1970s and 1980s and are not distinctive.

Building 23-117 is a Category I building in the MHD because it was the only building of its exact type constructed in the district. However, the design and construction methods are not distinctly different than other buildings built in Mercury at that time. While it was one of the first two-story buildings in Mercury, it was quickly surrounded by other two-story buildings made in a similar style and materials.

Building 23-117 was designed by architect Fred Doriot and constructed by Holmes & Narver. Doriot was recognized as a prominent architect for his work in Las Vegas, both for his casino designs and for his residential work. Many of his works are not yet 50 years of age, and it does not appear that sufficient time has passed to assess whether Doriot should be considered a master. However, even if his status as a master architect were clear in the scholarly record, Building 23-117 would not express a particular phase in the development of his work, an aspect of his work, or a theme in his craft. From the available source material, it appears that Doriot and his work are better represented by the designs still present in Las Vegas today. A major example is the Golden Nugget Casino in downtown Las Vegas that still showcases his work in 2022.

Holmes & Narver was a long-time and prolific contractor on the NNSS. The firm also worked outside of the NNSS on both government and military commissions. Some of their work was noteworthy and important; however, they are not generally recognized as a master in the fields of engineering or construction. Even if they were considered a master in one or both fields, Building 23-117, with its common construction type and execution, would be unlikely to reflect an important phase of their work.

According to *National Register Bulletin #15*, the aspect of Criterion C related to possessing high artistic value applies to properties that so fully articulate a particular concept of design that they express an aesthetic ideal (NPS 1997:20). As a simple, unadorned building designed for utility rather than ideals, Building 23-117 does not meet this aspect of Criterion C. Likewise, the artwork in the entry hall, though reflective of the building's period of construction, does not meet this aspect of Criterion C.

The last aspect of Criterion C, regarding representing a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, generally applies to historic districts. Building 23-117 is a contributor to the Mercury Historic District, but it is not a district in and of itself. Therefore, the building is not significant under this aspect of Criterion C.

For the reasons outlined above, Building 23-117 does not appear to be significant under Criterion C.

Criterion D

Properties significant under Criterion D must have the potential to yield further information about human history that can only be answered by the actual physical material of the resources. There are two requirements for a resource to be found significant under Criterion D: the property must have or have had information to contribute to our understanding of human history or prehistory, and the information must

be considered important. Building 23-117 has been subject to research on its history in the town of Mercury and its architecture, both of which are known. It is unlikely that the building could yield any more information that would be considered important. Building 23-117 does not appear to be significant under Criterion D.

Integrity Analysis

To be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a property must possess both significance and physical integrity. It does not appear that Building 23-117 possesses significance as an individual resource. However, it does still retain aspects of its integrity. Building 23-117 retains its aspect of location, as it is still in the location where it was constructed. Building 23-117 retains most of its design integrity. There have been few changes to its exterior other than minor repairs, the addition of screens to the windows on the west elevation, and the exchange of utility equipment for upkeep of the building. On the interior some spaces and offices have been modified to create new offices, or to reorganize existing workspaces. The main design of the building remains intact. Building 23-117 has had some changes in the immediate vicinity of its setting due to the removal of the recreation areas to the west and the current addition of two new buildings in 2021 and 2022. The other buildings in the immediate vicinity were either present before its construction or added during the period of significance. Further to the north and the northeast, there is more of a loss of integrity due to the removal of a number of original Mercury buildings and structures. While those buildings are not directly adjacent to Building 23-117, the setting of Mercury itself has changed and therefore diminishes the integrity of Building 23-117. The integrity of materials remains intact as little has been changed except for the necessary changes to utilities. It also retains integrity of workmanship, feeling, and association. Although the building has been modified, it still shows the workmanship of a two-story, precast concrete, split-face block, and textured stucco building, the feeling of an administration building in the town of Mercury, and its association with Cold War-era activities on the NNSS.

VI. CONCLUSION

Building 23-117 does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. Although it retains most aspects of integrity, it does not possess individual significance under any of the established Significance Criteria and it does not possess exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration G. It remains eligible for the NRHP as a contributing element to the MHD.

Following consultation with the SHPO on the findings in this NRHP evaluation report, a Finding of Effect report will be prepared, along with mitigation documentation as specified in the Mercury PA, as appropriate. The mitigation will include an ARA Update form for the building which will include the final NRHP evaluation determination.

VII. REFERENCES

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Nicole Brannan meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for Architectural History. Ms. Brannan has over 18 years working in the cultural resources field both in archaeology and historic preservation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Anthropology/ Archaeology from Mercyhurst College in Erie, PA, and a Master of Arts in Historic Preservation from Goucher College in Baltimore, MD. Ms. Brannan served as the primary author of this report and conducted all of the research, evaluations, and analyses.

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