

BROOKLYN NAVY | YARD

Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation Archives

Guide to the Building 77

1929 – 1964

SC/1_1

Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation Archives
Building 77, 141 Flushing Avenue, Suite 801, Brooklyn, NY 11205

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Title

Building 77

PART OF

Building 77

1929 – 1964

Call Number

SC/1_1

Scope And Content

Building History: Building 77 was constructed during World War II as a sixteen-story office and storage structure that would house the Yard's headquarters and several other critical spaces including blueprint rooms, a library, a model shop, a photographic laboratory, administrative and supply departments, the Public Works Design Branch, and the Naval Intelligence Office. The building, designed by George T. Basset of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, was estimated to cost \$4 million and was completed by the summer of 1941. The contract was awarded to the Turner Construction Company, the same firm that had astounded the navy with its quick construction of Building 3 (to which Building 77 would later be connected by bridges at the third and eleventh stories) during World War I.

The construction of this monolithic structure was a technical feat for the time. In 1941, the New York Times marveled at the record speed at which the building had been raised. According to the newspaper, it took navy yard workmen forty-eight working days to erect the reinforced-concrete structure. After the foundations were completed on June 9, 1941, the building rose at a rate of one floor every three days. Yet as the building was being heralded by the media, the exact purpose of the structure remained remarkably vague. The building's exceptional weight required that the foundations be drilled down 150 feet into rock with thirty-inch steel-pipe caissons filled with concrete and structural steel. Visually, the building offered an unusual sight—a windowless base of eleven stories topped by five stories of offices. The windowless floors had walls that were twenty-five-inches thick at the base, enclosing twenty-one acres of heavy-duty floor space. It is presumed that these floors were used as ammunition storage, keeping the yard's ordnance safe and sound below the "nerve center" of the yard.

Building Use History: 1942: Commandant's Office, Planning & Estimating Division; Design Division; Production Department, Comptroller Department, Supply Department, Public Works, Telephone Exchange, Cafeteria, M.E.O. Department, Combat Division, Navy Audit, Sub-Station 22. 2012: Warehouse. 2017: Multi-tenant manufacturing/office space.

Building Description Note: This sixteen-story and penthouse flat-roofed storehouse has concrete foundations on concrete and wood piles and a reinforced-concrete frame. The building is vertically organized into a one-story base, a ten-story concrete shaft with blank concrete walls, capped by seven fenestrated stories. On the ground story, the east and west elevations have concrete loading platforms with two elevator doors, topped by cantilevered concrete canopies. Historically, railroad siding paralleled these platforms. The north and south elevations each have centered entrances with wood-and-glass single-leaf doors covered by a concrete cantilevered canopy, flanked by two 14-foot wide, 15-foot high bay doors with metal roll down gates. The lower eleven stories contain unfinished warehouse space. The nine bays on the north and south elevations, and seventeen bays on the east and west elevations, are separated by flush concrete piers. On the north and south elevations these floors are topped by four fenestrated stories (former office space) with multi-light steel windows in groups of four. The east and west elevations are organized into three fenestrated sections: a central nine-bay section with setbacks above the thirteenth and sixteenth stories flanked by two two-bay sections with no setbacks. These three sections are separated by two bays—one blank and the other with punched single windows—that contain stairwells and elevators and rise to the fifteenth and sixteenth story. The building terminates with a flat roof and a tall radio antennae. As part of a multi-million restoration

project, the building underwent a gut renovation, including strengthening the core and shell, and adding windows to each floor.

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