

History

In 1942, the US Navy recognized Nantucket's Low Beach area in Siasconset as a strategic location for monitoring Atlantic shipping and submarine traffic during World War II. In response to this need, the Navy built a top-secret radio navigation system that used low-frequency radio signals from a network of land-based transmitters to help ships and aircraft determine their location. This system was known as LORAN (LONG RANGE Navigation). The Low Beach station, one of seventy-two covering one-third of the globe, became a hub for training, testing, and operations, with over 1,500 personnel from the US Coast Guard, US Army, and US Navy receiving operational training throughout the war.



Figure 1- Low Beach abt. 1944

In 1985, The U.S. Coast Guard upgraded and automated the Low Beach LORAN Station which greatly reduced the number of personnel needed to maintain the equipment. The Coast Guard offered the buildings on the south side of Low Beach Road to the Nantucket Police Department for housing for its seasonal and full-time officers. The Coast Guard and the Town executed a no-

cost, long-term lease for the housing needs of police employees. The Police Department was able to step immediately into the facility as the Coast Guard personnel exited in 1985.



Figure 2- 1985 Photo showing barracks building on the left and generator/garage building on the right.

From 1985 to 2018, the Town continually occupied the two buildings under this long-term lease. During this period, under the terms of the lease, the Coast Guard took no responsibility for maintenance. However, in addition to routine maintenance, the Town invested approximately \$320, 000 in the following capital repairs:

1999 – Renovation of generator/garage space to create a separate seasonal housing space for up to eight (8) female seasonal officers.

2000 – Renovation of existing toilet room in the men’s dorm.

2000 – Replacement of the roof membranes for both buildings.

Multi-Year Capital Project

The Town took full ownership and secured title to the property from the Coast Guard in 2018. Shortly thereafter, the Town undertook an extensive evaluation of the facilities. The buildings were in continual use for almost 70 years and needed interior and exterior repairs. SMRT Architects & Engineers was hired to perform a study of the facility and provide recommendations for improvements. Based upon the SMRT study, a capital request for funding repairs was made in 2019. At the 2019 Annual Town Meeting \$950,000 was appropriated for fiscal year 2020.

The SMRT study proposed major interior and exterior renovations of the men's and women's dormitories. The exterior work involved building envelopes being improved as well as the replacement of all doors and windows. Interior work included the replacement of the majority of all mechanical and electrical systems. The scope of the proposed work, which included extensive work on both buildings, would render the facility uninhabitable during construction. Since the seasonal housing needs of the Department were a priority, a phasing plan was developed so that the facility would remain open during the summer season.

PHASE I

The first phase was the men's dormitory exterior improvements which included replacing all of the windows and doors, weather-tight sealing all building penetrations, applying pressure treated furring strips to the exterior concrete block walls, placing 2" rigid insulation on the exterior walls between furring strips, applying exterior grade 5/8" plywood over the rigid insulation fastened to the walls, and finishing the exterior with White Cedar shingles.

This phase of the project was completed June, 2021. JJ Cardosi was the contractor, and the cost was \$988,000.00. The excess cost was funded in Article 10 of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting.



Figure 3- Completed Phase I

PHASE I-A

The SMRT study identified areas in the buildings which contained asbestos and lead paint which required removal. Supplemental funding was approved for this abatement work. Included in this were funds for a complete building assessment as well as all bidding documents to perform the work. This design work included the sanitary sewer connection for both buildings to the municipal sewer system. For fiscal year 2022, \$500,000 was appropriated at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting for the architectural study, engineering and renovation work.

The asbestos and lead paint abatement phase was placed out to bid in September 2022 and was completed in December. R. Mullen was the contractor and the cost was \$99,500.

The asbestos abatement required the removal of all of the existing floor tiles in the buildings. Resinous flooring was installed in place of the removed asbestos tile. This installation was completed in February, 2023. R. Mullen was the contractor and the cost was \$156,400.

The asbestos abatement and lead paint abatement required the removal of walls and ceiling surfaces which required repair. Dormitory rooms and hallway walls required repair and repainting. This was completed in February, 2023. Drizos Contracting LLC. was the contractor and the cost was \$198,000.

To complete the necessary repairs and improvements identified in the SMRT study, additional capital funding was sought for the work. At the Annual Town Meeting in 2023, \$4,500,000.00 was approved. This Town Meeting approval received a subsequent favorable debt exclusion vote at the 2023 annual town election.



Figure 4- Asbestos floor tiles removed

PHASE II

This phase involved exterior improvements to the women's dormitory including replacing all of the windows and doors, weather-tight sealing all building penetrations, applying pressure treated furring strips to the exterior concrete block walls, placing 2" rigid insulation on the exterior walls between furring strips, applying exterior grade 5/8" plywood over the rigid insulation fastened to the walls, finishing the exterior with white cedar shingles, and modifying exterior walls on the small garage building for future conversion to living space.

This phase of the project was completed in June, 2024. JJ Cardosi was the contractor and the cost \$922,350.



Figure 5- Women's Dormitory exterior improvements

PHASE III

This phase involved interior improvements to the women's dormitory. These improvements included the conversion of an existing garage on the north end of the building into an apartment (vestibule, bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, utility closet, etc.); renovations to the existing women's communal single bathroom/shower room by increasing from a single toilet and shower to two ADA code compliant toilets, sinks and showers; converting an existing large dorm room into two double occupancy bedrooms; upgrading the electrical system; replacement of the hot water boiler; replacement of the propane fired HVAC system with an upgraded energy

efficient heat pump system; new ceiling tile throughout the women's dormitory; and, new LED lighting throughout the women's dormitory.

Men's dormitory interior improvements included: converting an underutilized recreation room into an apartment (bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, utility room, etc.). This included new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, ceiling tile installation, wall construction, door installation, and the replacement of the oil-fired HVAC system with an upgraded energy efficient heat pump system.

This project was substantially completed in June, 2025. JJ Cardosi was the contractor and the cost was \$2,274,700.



Figure 6- Men's Dormitory new apartment.

PHASE IIIA

This phase involved the replacement of 11,775 square feet of flat membrane roofing assemblies on the two dormitory buildings. The roofs, more than 25 years old, had developed leaks and required replacement. Triumph Roofing was the contractor and the cost was \$374,250 and final payment on the project was made in October 2025.

FUTURE WORK

Future phases (phase IV and V) are under review and subject to available funding.

Proposed PHASE IV

This phase involves interior improvements to the men's dormitory including renovations to the existing men's communal bathroom/shower room by reconfiguration of existing toilets and showers to code compliant toilets, sinks and showers, replacement of sub-surface sanitary and potable water piping systems, upgrade to code compliant electrical distribution system, renovation of existing kitchen and dining area, replacement of propane fired HVAC system with an upgraded energy efficient heat pump system, new ceiling tile throughout the men's dormitory, new LED lighting throughout the men's dormitory, security cameras in common areas, card reader access on interior and exterior doors, and an upgraded fire alarm system throughout including areas recently renovated in Phase III.

If funded, the planned project completion date is June, 2028. The estimated cost is \$5.4 million.

Proposed PHASE V

This phase involves site utility improvements including replacement and upgrade of existing site electrical service to include the men's and women's dormitory buildings and connection of existing on-site septic systems to municipal sewer and installation of a new on-site lift station pump.