

MAYWOOD PARK RACETRACK
OFFICE BUILDING

Maywood Park Racetrack
8600 W. North Avenue
Melrose Park
Cook County
Illinois

HABS IL-1244

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED & INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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MAYWOOD PARK RACETRACK OFFICE BUILDING HABS No. IL-1244

Location: The Office Building is situated within the Maywood Park Racetrack, which is located at 8600 W. North Avenue in Melrose Park, Illinois. The property is part of the North Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 2, Township 39 North, Range 12 East of the Third Principal Meridian in Cook County (Proviso Township). It is bounded by North Avenue on the north; residential subdivisions on the south; First Avenue on the east; commercial development on the west, and is bisected by Fifth Avenue.

USGS Quadrangle: Proviso.

Present Owner: Maywood Realty Company LLC.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Office Building was built in 1946 as the clubhouse for the Maywood Park Racetrack. It is one of only two extant buildings on the site dating to the facility's establishment, which underwent a major decade-long renovation during the 1960s and 1970s, which included the construction of a massive new Grandstand/Clubhouse Building and the replacement of all original wood outbuildings with modern concrete structures, including new stables and motel-like dormitories. The Maywood Park Racetrack operated from 1946 to 2015 and served as one of the premier half-mile Standardbred racetracks in the United States for much of its history. It represented an era when harness racing was one of the most popular spectator sports in the nation.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of construction: 1946.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Contractor/Builders: Unknown.
4. Original and subsequent owners: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report

5. Alterations and additions: The second story south wing that features a strip of offices overlooking the racetrack was added at an unknown date prior to the 1970s. It is not shown in display advertisements for Maywood Park showing historic photos of this building. All fenestration and doors are non-original. The interior plan of this building has been extensively altered with non-original partition walls and its original configuration is unknown. The flooring, ceiling, and wall finishes are non-original.

- B. Historical Context: The Office Building was constructed in 1946 as the clubhouse for the Maywood Park Racetrack, located next to the original grandstand. Both buildings can be seen in display advertisements for the newly established facility published in issues of *The Horseman and Fairworld* journal from the 1940s. The building originally included a large betting room with mutuel counters and a dining room. The current Grandstand and Clubhouse Building was completed in 1965 and when William “Billy” Johnston assumed primary ownership of the Maywood Park facility in the mid-1970s, the Office Building had been vacant for a number of years. Under the Johnston family’s ownership, the Office Building’s dining room was converted to a locker room for drivers, and the remainder of the second floor was used as offices for their operation of both Maywood Park and Balmoral Park Racetracks. The large central room on this floor was filled with cubicles for administrative staff, while the strip of rooms overlooking the racetrack served as offices and a conference room for the Johnson family. The first floor of this two-story building served as offices for Inter-Track Partners, which operated the on-site betting parlors for Maywood, Sportsman’s, Hawthorne, and Balmoral Racetracks starting in the 1990s. The building’s one-story east wing was used as offices for the Racing Industry Charitable Foundation.¹

Historical context for the overall Maywood Park Racetrack is included in the Maywood Park Racetrack Report and features the following contextual essays:

1. Overview of Harness Racing in the U.S. and the Chicago Region
2. Establishment of Cook County Fairgrounds on the site in 1930s.
3. History of Maywood Park Racetrack: 1946 to 1965.
4. Post-1965 History of Maywood Park Racetrack.
5. Original Owner Arthur T. Galt Sr.
6. Architect Lionel K. Levy.

¹ Information on this building’s use was obtained from interviews with Tony Simone, Executive Director, Illinois Harness Horsemen’s Association, on February 12, 2019 and with William Johnston, former owner of Maywood Park Racetrack, on February 20, 2019.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: The Office Building is a two-story flat-roofed edifice with brick walls covered with shotcrete and a variety of non-original fenestration. It has a one-story east wing that faces north as well as a one-story south wing that projects at the second floor level and faces south toward the racetrack. The south side of this building is adjacent to sloping, built-up land that obscures its first story. Therefore, only the second story of this edifice is visible from the racetrack. The interior plan of this building has been extensively altered with non-original partition walls and its original configuration is unknown. The flooring, ceiling, and wall finishes are non-original.
- B. Description of Exterior:
1. Over-all dimensions: The building has a total length of approximately 223'-0" (east-west). The first floor has a width of approximately 55'-0" (north-south). The second floor has a width of approximately 78'-0".
 2. Foundations: Poured concrete.
 3. Walls: Brick covered with shotcrete.
 4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The north elevation has two glass doors in metal frames: one opening onto the first floor of the two-story building and the other opening onto its east wing. The second floor of the east elevation has one glass door in a metal frame that opens onto the roof of the one-story wing. The second floor of the south elevation has a series of seven doors, six opening onto an office and one opening onto the drivers' lounge. Each door is metal with six glass panes in its upper portion.
 - b. Windows: The building has a variety of fenestration, none of which is original. These include multi-paned metal windows on both floors of the north elevation arranged in pairs and in groups, and paired, sliding glass aluminum windows on the east wing of this elevation. The second floor of the south elevation has a series of multi-paned metal windows.
 5. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Curved, built-up roof.
- C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor has a myriad of large and small offices and storage spaces. The second floor has one large room flanked by offices on the south side and has a locker room at its northwest corner. The drivers lounge is situated in its southwest corner.
2. Stairways: Stairways in the building are concrete with metal pipe railings.
3. Flooring: Flooring in offices throughout the building is finished in either wall-to-wall carpeting or linoleum tiles. Other spaces have ceramic tile flooring (locker room, bathrooms), or quarry tile flooring (shower room, drivers' lounge).
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Partition walls are concrete block or gypsum board. Some walls in the east wing are finished with knotty pine. Bathroom walls are finished with glazed ceramic tiles. Ceilings throughout the building are finished with suspended acoustical tile systems, except in the large main second floor space, which has plaster ceilings with metal trusses and exposed ductwork.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Typical interior doors are hollow metal with metal doorways.
6. Hardware: Exterior and interior doors have standard hinges and knobs. Double-hung windows have standard sash locks.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Gas forced air.
 - b. Lighting: Most spaces throughout the building have fluorescent light panels or can lights incorporated within suspending ceiling systems. The large main room on the second floor has hanging ceiling light fixtures.
 - c. Plumbing: There is a second floor shower room as well as bathrooms on the first and second floors with toilets and sinks.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Office Building is located on the north side of the racetrack, between Stable Building 7e and the Grandstand/Clubhouse.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: No architectural drawings were found for this building
- B. Maps: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- C. Interviews: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- D. Bibliography: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- F. Sketch Plan: A floor plan of this building is attached to this Outline Report
- G. Supplemental Material: The following materials are attached to this report:

Figure 1: Office Building Site Location Plan, 2019, drawn by Lucas Howser, MARS.

Figure 2: Sketch floor plans of the Office Building.

Figure 3: North elevation looking southwest.

Figure 4: Close-up view of two-story main block's north elevation.

Figure 5: South elevation looking northwest.

Figure 6: South elevation looking northeast.

Figure 7: First floor of main office block.

Figure 8: First floor of main office block.

Figure 9: Second floor space with trussed ceiling.

Figure 10: Second story drivers lounge overlooking racetrack.

Figure 11: Drivers' locker room.

PART IV. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH:

- A. Research Strategy: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- B. Actual Research Process: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- C. Archives and Repositories Used: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report
- D. Project Team: See Maywood Park Racetrack Report

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This HABS documentation project was undertaken to mitigate the adverse effects of a proposed commercial project by Maywood Realty Company LLC on cultural resources within the 55-acre project area. The terms of the mitigation were agreed upon and executed to ensure compliance with the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420).

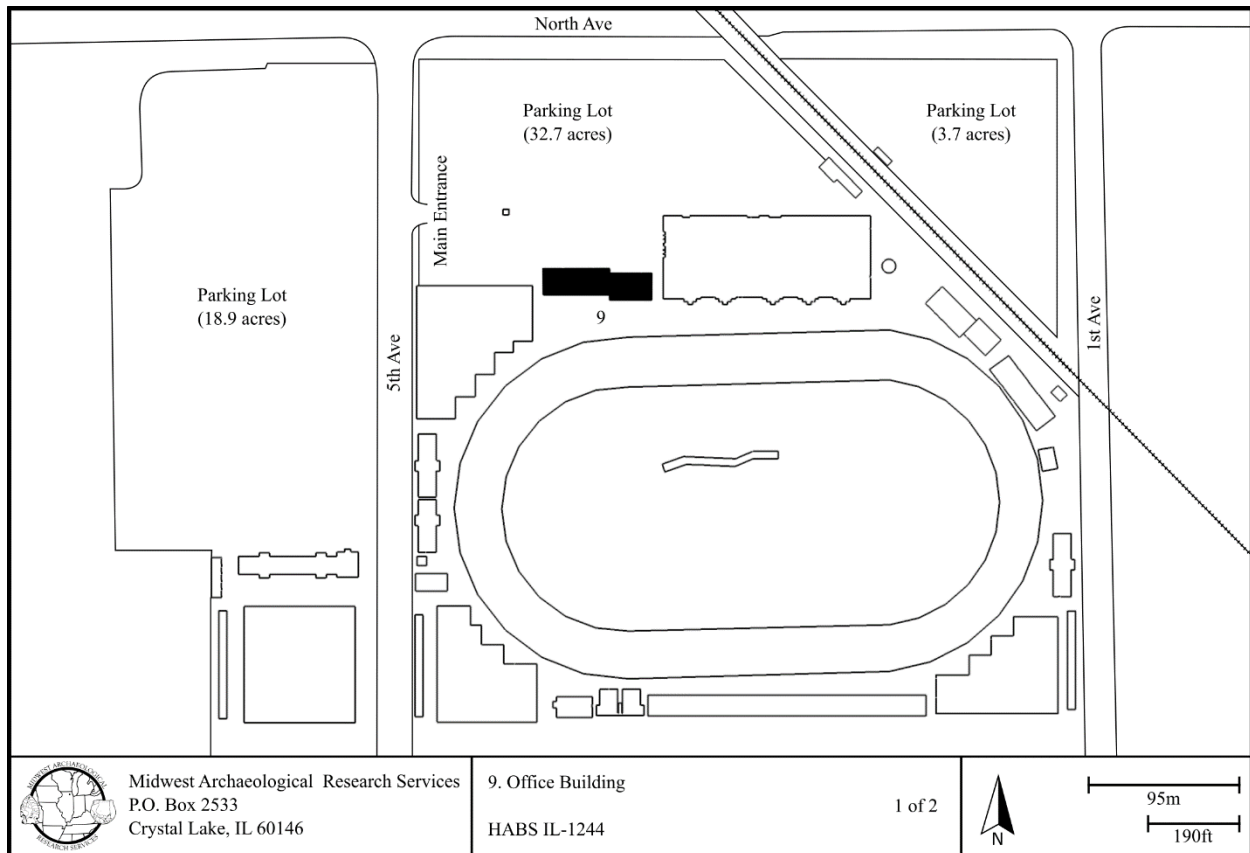


Figure 1: Office Building Site Location Plan, 2019, drawn by Lucas Howser, MARS.

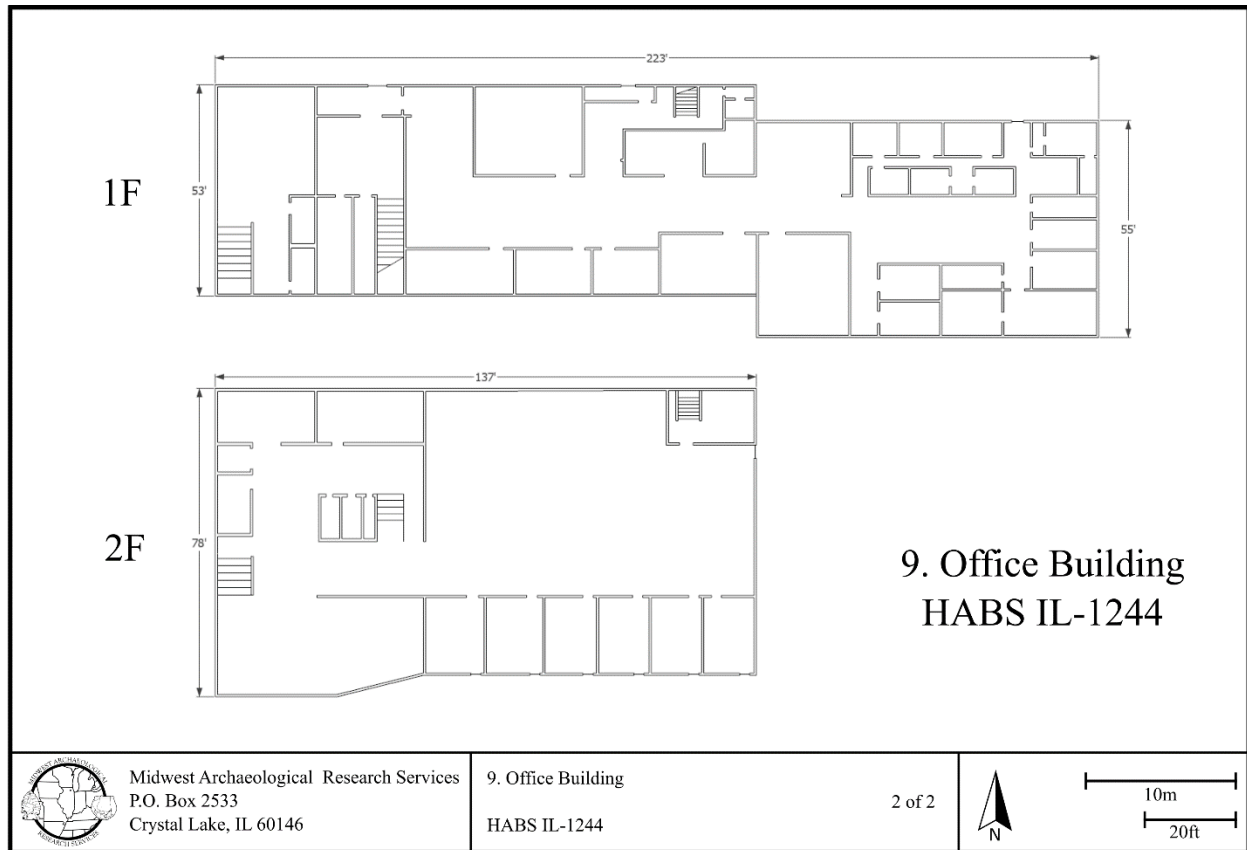


Figure 2: Sketch floor plans of the Office Building.



Figure 3: North elevation looking southwest.



Figure 4: Close-up view of two-story main block's north elevation.



Figure 5: South elevation looking northwest.



Figure 6: South elevation looking northeast.



Figure 7: First floor of main office block.



Figure 8: First floor of main office block.



Figure 9: Second floor space with trussed ceiling.



Figure 10: Second story drivers lounge overlooking racetrack.



Figure 11: Drivers' locker room.