

FORT DEFIANCE INDIAN HOSPITAL,
NURSES' DORMITORY

HABS No. AZ-227-C

(Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, FD-35)

(Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, Community Health Service Building)

Navajo Indian Reservation

Bonito Drive

Fort Defiance

Apache County

Arizona

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P. O. Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, Nurses' Dormitory
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Location: Navajo Indian Reservation
Bonito Drive
Fort Defiance, Apache County, Arizona

UTM: Zone 12, 673499E, 3957842N

Present Owner:
Indian Health Services

Present Use:
The building is currently used to house several Indian Health Services public health programs and associated offices, and provides housing for selected public health program clients.

Significance:
The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Nurses' Dormitory, constructed in 1942, is significantly associated with construction of the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital. Although the Hospital was completed in 1938 and the original project included the Nurses' Dormitory, lack of funds delayed construction of the dormitory until 1942. The Nurses' Dormitory is significantly associated with the expansion of medical services on the Navajo reservation that occurred from 1920 until 1942. Housing for nurses and doctors was an integral part of the success of the government's medical program. Secondly, the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Nurses' Dormitory has architectural significance because it embodies the Pueblo Revival style of architecture selected by Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier to provide a physical link between government architecture and native culture.

Description:

The dormitory is a two-story, 15,583 s.f. residential/office/classroom building with a concrete foundation, a basement, sandstone exterior walls and a flat built-up roof with parapet. The building has a U-shaped first floor plan with a symmetrical front façade, and two one-story front-projecting end wings surrounding a forecourt now enclosed by a low sandstone wall. The second floor plan is rectangular. The building is a minimally detailed example of the Pueblo Revival Style, incorporating stepped massing, flat roofs with parapets, simple, rectangular window and door openings and the use of native, rough-coursed stonework. Windows are two-over-two double-hung wood, with horizontal muntins, in singles and triples. Exterior doors are typically recessed back about 16" into the stone exterior wall, so that they are roughly aligned with the wall's interior surface. Most originally had screen doors mounted nearly flush with the exterior wall surface.

The front entry, centered on the west façade, is enclosed in a small projecting vestibule wing. It is accessed from the parking area west of the building via a concrete walkway, through a low wood gate in the stone forecourt wall. A poured-in-place concrete areaway, south of the front entry porch, leads down to a door into a basement classroom. There are four additional entries, two each at the first and second floors, at the east and west ends of the central corridor. The second floor doors provide egress, via steel prefabricated fire escape stairs.

The first and second floors are arranged around a central, double-loaded corridor, with offices, classrooms or dormitory rooms along both sides. The basement features a corridor along the south side, with partitioned spaces to the north, east and west. There are two interior stairways, symmetrically placed adjacent to the end wings on the west side of the central corridor. The stairs are concrete, with hardwood handrails and period light fixtures. Most of the original hardwood flooring remains, in the dormitory rooms and offices, and original tile and plumbing fixtures can be found in some of the toilet/bath rooms. The original plaster wall and ceiling finish remains in most areas, as well as many of the original wood panel interior doors. The building has almost no decorative woodwork, aside from a chair rail along the second floor corridor, and the handrails at the stairs. A brick fireplace, with mantel, remains in the original communal living room, located off the front entry lobby on the first floor. The original lighting has been entirely replaced, except for a few historic fixtures, like those in the stairways. The mechanical and electrical systems have been extensively upgraded.

History:

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection:

1942

2. Architect:

Not Known. Kammer and Tiller (1991) attributed the design to an adaptation from generic plans provided by the architects from the firm of Mayers, Murray, and Phillips.¹ However, this architectural firm did not work on Public Works Administration (PWA) Federal Project No. 560 (FP-560) of which this building was originally a part. It is more likely that the building was designed by architect Hans R. Stamm who prepared the plans and specifications for the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital (HABS AZ-227) with which the Nurses' Dormitory is associated.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

The Fort Defiance Nurses' Dormitory was originally owned by the Office of Indian Affairs, known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) after 1947. The building remained

¹ David Kammer and Veronica E. Tiller, Historic Indian Health Service buildings on the Navajo Reservation, Albuquerque: Weller Architects, 1991, p. 54.

under the jurisdiction of the BIA, Navajo Area Office, until Congress transferred Native American health services to the Public Health Service (PHS), part of the Department of Health Education and Welfare, in 1955. It remained under the control of the PHS under the Division of Indian Health until 1970 when the Indian Health Service (IHS) was created. When new employee housing was available during the 1960s, the Fort Defiance Nurses' Dormitory was converted to an office building. Today it is known as the Community Health Service Building.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:
Not Known.

5. Original plans and construction:

The Dormitory has retained its original exterior appearance, except for the loss of some window screens, and accumulated weather damage to original wood window sash and sandstone masonry. The original floor plan has been minimally altered, and only in the non-public areas: offices and dorm rooms.

6. Alterations and additions:

There have been no additions to the Dormitory, and no exterior alterations of note. A low sandstone wall, approximately 4' high, built to match the stonework of the building, was added to enclose the front courtyard space. It was added soon after the building was completed. A concrete ramp was added to the front entry for handicap accessibility, in the 1990s. The interior has been reconfigured to accommodate new uses, but the entries, lobby, central corridors, stairs and shared bath/toilet rooms appear much as they did originally. The mechanical and electrical systems, and lighting, have been modernized incrementally over the decades.

B. Historical Context

The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Nurses' Dormitory is a part of the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital complex (HABS AZ-227) and readers are directed to that record for historic context information on the complex itself.

The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Nurses' Dormitory is a significant example of medical employee housing on the Navajo Indian Reservation. A historic context for housing associated with medical personnel is described under the historic context information for the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage and readers are directed to record HABS AZ-227-A for that information.

New quarters for nurses were included in the six-year building plan announced by Dr. W. W. Peter when he took over as medical director for the Navajo Service in 1935. In a letter to Dr. Peter dated August 31, 1935, junior physician H.E. Scoles noted that existing conditions were difficult: "the approach of fall, with the on-coming cold weather brings to point the matter of quarters for our attendants of the hospital . . . these

quarters are very crude, unsanitary, and of flimsy construction, providing no protection against summer heat or winter cold."²

As plans for the base hospital moved forward, provisions were made for a separate nurses' home in conjunction with the project. The plans for the hospital and nurses' home were completed by November of 1936. Unfortunately, there were not enough funds provided in the final appropriation for a separate building. On February 2, 1937, Assistant Commissioner S.M. Dodd summarized the situation: "Pursuant to your recent detail to this Office, the question of providing quarters in connection with the Fort Defiance hospital, F.P. 560, Navajo Agency, was discussed. At that time, the sketches of the proposed nurses' home, that were prepared at the outset of the program but later abandoned because of lack of funds, were reviewed. This plan, of course, is entirely too elaborate to be undertaken at this time."³

As had become the custom with regard to employee housing, Superintendent E. R. Fryer began to look for existing buildings in which to house the nurses for the new hospital. One of the reasons that a more elaborate residence for nurses was dropped from the plans was that the new hospital required more electrical power than was available locally. A decision was made to link up with a new electrical power plant being constructed at Window Rock. This required the construction of a new transmission line at a cost of \$8,000. For the nurses, supervising construction engineer Roy H. Bradley instead recommend a standard apartment building, plan 4-H, with a cost not to exceed twenty thousand dollars. Superintendent Fryer and Dr. Peter concurred with this recommendation on February 8, 1937.⁴

This small 6-room apartment building was not sufficient for the large numbers of nursing staff needed for the new hospital. Even as plans were being made to dedicate the new hospital, Superintendent Fryer was preparing a justification for a nurses' home at Fort Defiance. In a memo dated May 10, 1938, Fryer observed: "The new nurses home is needed now . . . Present and future needs justify a 50-bed nurses home, although only a 40-bed nurses home was listed in PWA projects prepared May 5, 1938."⁵

Time continued to pass without a solution to the housing shortage for nurses. In a letter dated May 12, 1939, Dr. Peter summarized the situation:

We desire to point out that when F.P. 560 was first announced, the appropriation was \$500,000. With the coming of the New England floods,

² H.E. Scoles to W.W. Peter, August 31, 1935, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Area Office, Central Classified Files, 1924-1954, box 142, National Archives, Riverside, California (NARA – Riverside).

³ W.W. Peter to L.W. White and Hans Stamm, October 21, 1935; S.M. Dodd toe Roy H. Bradley, February 2, 1947, box 142, NARA – Riverside.

⁴ E.R. Fryer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 5, 1937; Roy H. Bradley to commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 8, 1937, box 142, NARA – Riverside.

⁵ E.R. Fryer, "Justification for Nurses' Home, Fort Defiance, Arizona," May 10, 1938, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phoenix Area Office, Correspondence of the Superintendent of Construction, 1933-1940, Box 61, NARA – Riverside.

according to information from the Washington Office, the sum had to be decreased to \$450,000 to meet our share of the national emergency. This meant that we lost the laboratory building which later was combined in the hospital. We lost also the \$100,000 designated for a nurses' home. The Navajo Medical Center, at last report, had 154 employees. In other words, what happened was that the new hospital building was constructed without providing additional quarters facilities for the enlarged staff with the exception of one 4-H apartment building.⁶

In 1938 Superintendent Fryer recommended that the nurses' home be constructed at the earliest possible date. A recommendation for a building to house 40 nurses was forward to the Indian Office for inclusion in the 1940 Indian appropriations act. This was a two story stone building with full basement and auditorium that was estimated to cost \$105,000.00. Funds were received, and the building was completed in 1942.⁷

Sources:

Published Sources:

Government Publications:

Kammer, David and Veronica E. Tiller

1991 Historic Indian Health Service buildings on the Navajo Reservation, Albuquerque: Weller Architects.

White Oak Environmental Alliance

1998 Navajo Area Indian Health Service Historic Buildings Inventory Forms: Fort Defiance / Window Rock Service Units. Window Rock: Navajo Area Indian Health Service Facility Management Office.

Unpublished Sources:

Archival Collections:

For their 1991 report, David Kammer and Veronica E. Tiller conducted extensive research at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Because that research was already reflected in the report excerpted here, that research was not duplicated for this report. Collections utilized by Kammer and Tiller included the following:

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Public Works Administration Files, 1908-1939, Window Rock Agency, Arizona, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁶ W.W. Peter to E.R. Fryer, May 12, 1939, Box 61, NARA – Riverside.

⁷ "Quarters Recommended in 1938," Box 61, NARA – Riverside.

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, 1908-1959, Navajo Agencies, New Mexico and Arizona, the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Inspection Reports, Navajo Agency, 1900-1945, National Archives, Washington, D.C

Records of the Indian Health Service 1940-1990 Navajo Area Office, Indian Health Service, Office of Facility Management, Window Rock, Arizona.

Additional primary research was conducted at the Southwest Regional Branch of the National Archives, now located at Perris near Riverside, California. Locations for specific documents cited in this report are as follows:

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Area Office, Central Classified Files, 1924-1954, National Archives, Riverside, California.

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phoenix Area Office, Correspondence of the Superintendent of Construction, 1933-1940, National Archives, Riverside, California.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

F. Supplemental Material: Sketch plans are attached.

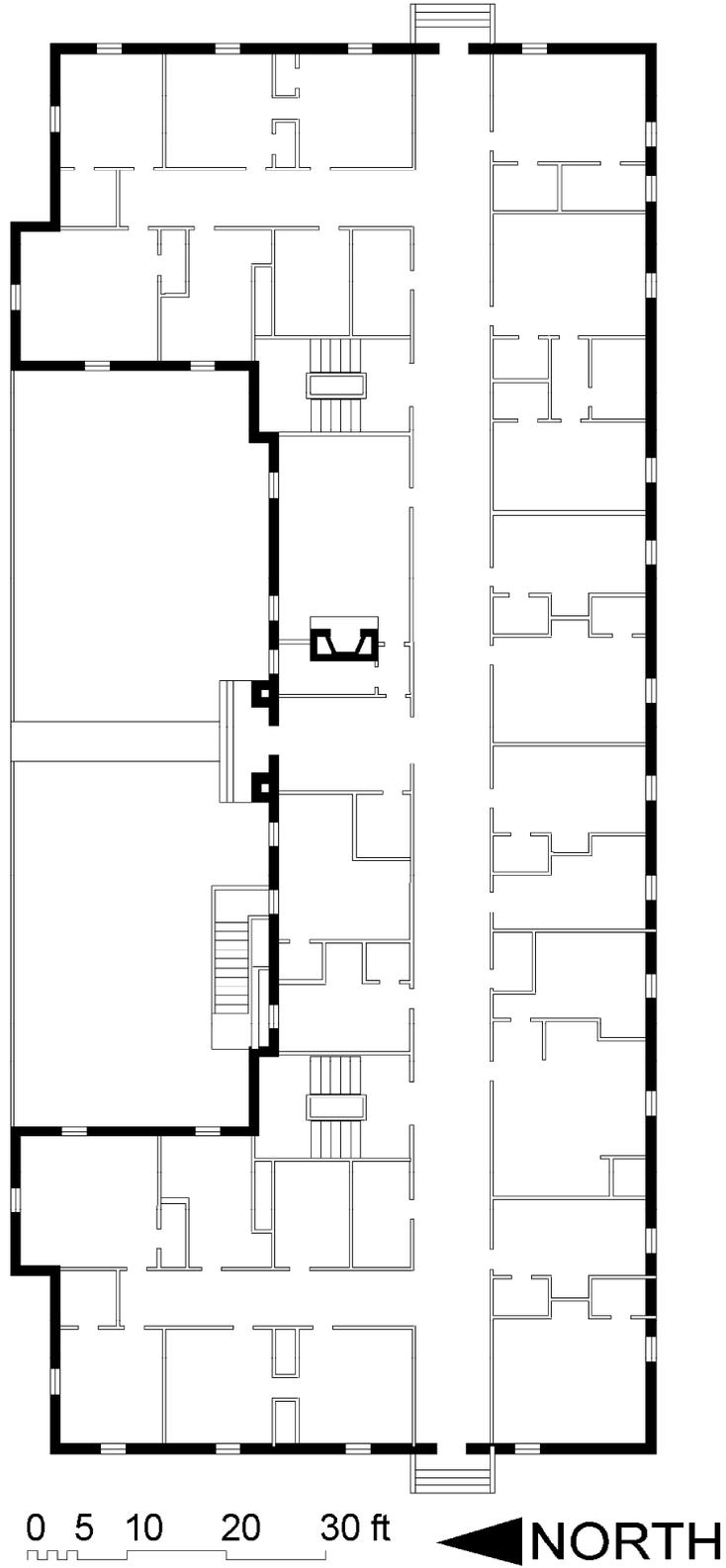
Historian(s):

Robert G. Graham, Architect, Motley Design Group LLC
Douglas Kupel, PhD, Consulting Historian
Donna Reiner, PhD, Consulting Research Historian
Report Date: October 2010

Project Information:

This HABS report was prepared for the owners of the structure, the Indian Health Services, to fulfill mitigation requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, prior to the planned demolition of the structure in 2010. Motley Design Group LLC was the primary contractor, and was responsible for all photography and final document preparation. Douglas Kupel and Donna Reiner, working as a team, provided historic research and Dr. Kupel wrote Part 1: Historical Information.

First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

