

**GORGAS HOSPITAL, SHOPS AND BOILER HOUSE**  
**(Gorgas Hospital, Buildings 240 and 240A)**  
**Behind Kitchen and Mess Building**  
**Balboa Heights Vicinity**  
**Former Panama Canal Zone**  
**Republic of Panama**

HABS No. CZ-11-C

HABS  
CZ  
1-BALH.V  
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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING<sup>S</sup> SURVEY**  
**National Park Service**  
**Department of the Interior**  
**Intermountain Field Area**  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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For information about other structures at Gorgas Hospital, see:

HABS No. CZ-11	GORGAS HOSPITAL
HABS No. CZ-11-A	ADMINISTRATION AND CLINICS (Building 237)
HABS No. CZ-11-B	KITCHEN AND MESS (Building 238)
HABS No. CZ-11-D	ISOLATION WARD (Building 242)
HABS No. CZ-11-E	SECTIONS A AND B (Buildings 255 and 253)
HABS No. CZ-11-F	MORTUARY AND CHAPEL (Building 257)
HABS No. CZ-11-G	SECTION O (Obstetrical Building, Building 261)
HABS No. CZ-11-H	MAIN STAIRS AND PASSAGEWAYS

Location: Behind Kitchen and Mess Building, Balboa Heights, Former Panama Canal Zone, Republic of Panama

Present Owner: United States Department of Defense

Original Use: Shops, Boiler House and Bakery, The Panama Canal Company

Present Use: Medical Equipment Maintenance Building, USA MEDDAC-Panama

Significance: Constructed in 1918-19, this utilitarian reinforced concrete building housed the shops, bakery and boiler house for the permanent American hospital complex. Significant for its support role within the Canal Zone's premiere health facility, Building 240 and 240A is now designated a Medical Equipment Maintenance Building.

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A. General Statement:

1. History:

The Shops and Boiler House building (Buildings 240 and 240A) was a support structure for the permanent hospital complex built between 1915 and 1919 on the northeast slope of Ancon Hill by the United States government. It contained two 50-horsepower oil-burning boilers that supplied steam to the hospital complex buildings and also housed the hospital's carpentry and plumbing shops. Construction began in 1918 under the direction of the Building Division of The Panama Canal and the building was completed in 1919. A two story addition was constructed in 1920 that allowed the carpentry and electric shops to be moved to the new addition. The bakery, formerly outfitted in Building 238 but unsuitable for that space, was dismantled and moved to the original section of Building 240. The 1920 architectural drawings show a bakery storehouse, bakery with two ovens and an open boiler house within the one story 1918 building. The lower floor of the addition housed a carpentry and paint shop while an electrical shop and storage was located on the upper floor of the addition.

The original architectural drawings or "as-builts" for the 1918 structure date to January of that year and the statement of responsibility shows that Samuel M. Hitt, the Panama Canal Building Division architect, was responsible for its design while H. Rowe, resident engineer, was credited with the engineering components of the design. T. C. Morris, the Building Division's assistant engineer in charge of foundation work, reinforced concrete, and analyses for size and dimensions of beams, columns and floors, reviewed the plans. Hitt's design was functional and scaled to render the most space from the small site that was situated behind Building 238 and Ancon Hill. No architect is noted on the drawings for the two-story addition. The building was transferred from the Panama Canal Commission to the Department of Defense in 1977. It is currently used as a maintenance shop.

2. Architectural Character:

The Shops and Boiler House is a utilitarian, rectangular, concrete building that abuts Ancon Hill and is flanked to the north and south by stone retaining walls. It sits on a reinforced concrete foundation and is covered by a corrugated iron, gable-on-hip roof. The original building, at the north end, features the main entry accessed by a concrete dock, stairs, and ramp. The 1920

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addition lies at the opposite end of the building; a concrete stair to the rear of the building is located on the southern elevation. The historic core originally featured half concrete and wire mesh walls, sliding frame and screen doors, and an open area or pavilion along the north elevation that housed the boilers. The rear elevation was similar with concrete and wire mesh screened walls. The addition featured two sets of glass and frame paneled sliding doors (one with wheel guards) and double windows with four lights each and concrete sills; the second story front elevation contained five similar pairs of windows and a single glass and frame door.

The building's general architectural character has not changed substantially. It remains a functional building with little architectural detail. However, both the exterior and interior have been modified to suit the building's current use. The front elevation of the building has been altered; the open half of the north section walls has been infilled and the doors replaced. The first story fenestration has also been modified on the addition; window openings have been replaced with terra cotta cylinders to create vents or contain air-conditioning units. The rear elevation windows are infilled. The north elevation, which was once open, is closed with screening, glass and plywood.

The building's interior plan is generally still intact. The main entry leads into a large space divided into three rooms/work areas open to the ceiling which correspond to the 1919 plan for the historic core. Plywood partitions define work areas and office space. The addition upper floor addition is reached from this central area by a small group of steps which have been added. The addition and older building were attached in 1919 but were not connected internally. The stair leads to a landing with steps to the lower floor which appears to be used for open storage. A partitioned office area is also accessed from the landing and an open storage. All features such as ovens etc. and the chimney that was attached to the rear elevation are no longer intact.

### B. Description of the Exterior:

#### 1. Overall Dimensions:

The 1918 part of the building is rectangular, measuring 62'7.5" x 48'6.5". It contains 8,446 square feet of space. The addition added another 41'5" to the length of the building and an additional 3,780 square feet. The historic core was 11'3" in height from ceiling to floor. The lower floor in the addition measured 9'8"; the upper floor was open to the rafters.

2. Foundations:

Foundations are constructed of poured-in place reinforced concrete.

3. Walls:

Exterior walls are plywood formed poured-in place concrete. The north end of the building, in which the boiler was once housed, has been enclosed.

4. Structural System:

The structural system is a poured-in place reinforced concrete system.

5. Porches, Exterior stairs:

A concrete dock is attached to the historic core front elevation; this dock has concrete steps on the south end leading to the main entry and a ramp at the north end. A concrete staircase that bounds the southern elevation with railing provides access to the rear of the building.

6. Chimneys:

None.

7. Openings:

a. Doors:

Original double wood panel and glass sliding doors are in place on the ground floor of the addition. A single wood and glass panel door without an access stairway is located on the second story. This door never appears to have been used. Wood panel doors are still intact in the front elevation of the historic core.

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b. Windows:

Some of the original fenestration appears to be in place on the front elevation upper story. Original windows were casement types with four lights. Lower floor windows on the addition have been replaced with horizontal ceramic cylinders joined to create an air vent. Also air conditioning units have commandeered original window spaces. The area that once housed the boiler house and that has been infilled has louvered glass windows. The four windows on the rear elevation have been infilled with concrete blocks.

8. Roof:

a. Shape and Materials:

The building is covered by a hip-on-gable roof on wooden rafters which was simply extended to cover the 1920 addition. The roof material is corrugated iron.

b. Skylights, Vents

None.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

The historic core and addition were not connected originally. A doorway and door have been cut to access the upper story of the addition and a stair leads to it to the left of the main entry. The older part of the building consists of three large rooms/work areas with wood partitions. The steps to the addition lead into a wood-floored area/landing that accesses the lower floor by a wooden stair, leads to an office, and also to an open storage area. The latter is open to the ceiling. The lower floor is open for storage.

2. Stairways:

There are two interior stairs: a short stair bridging the two parts of the building and the second is located between the floors of the addition on the north wall.

3. Flooring:

The floors are concrete with heavy tile occurring in the northern wing where the boilers were once housed. Wood and concrete floors occur in the addition. The upper story has a wood floor in the landing and in the open storage area and in the lower floor south room. Concrete was used on the lower floor for the room that was originally used as a paint room.

4. Walls and Ceiling Finishes:

Interior walls are painted concrete block. Ceilings, where they are in place, are dropped and are finished with acoustical tile.

5. Openings:

Doors:

The interior doors are wood panel with glass.

Windows:

There are no interior windows nor distinctive window hardware.

6. Decorative Features and Trim:

None.

7. Hardware:

None.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating and Air Conditioning:

The building is climate controlled by six window air conditioning units.

b. Lighting:

The lighting has been updated with fluorescent lighting.

c. Plumbing Fixtures:

Not noted.

d. Conveyance System:

None.

9. Original Furnishings:

None.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation:

The building is located on a narrow site between Building 238 and Ancon Hill. Retaining walls flank the building to the north and south. It faces east. The area between Building 238 and 240 is fully paved and is vehicle accessible. A loading area exists at the north end of both buildings.

2. Historic Landscape Design:

None observed.

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3. Outbuildings:

None.

