

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, MECHANICAL AND ELECTRIC
SHOPS
(Building No. 12)
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast, Holly Street,
Southeast
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-BG
HABS DC-349-BG

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SHOPS (BUILDING 12)

HABS NO. DC-349-BG

Location: Holly Street SE, Washington, D.C., on the West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital

Present Owner: General Services Administration, United States Government

Present Use: Demolished (rehabilitation of St. Elizabeths West Campus in progress)

Significance: The Mechanical and Electrical Shops (Building 12) building is significant as a context structure that contributes to the broader historic character of the St. Elizabeths West Campus. The building served as part of the support complex that allowed for the partial self-sufficiency of the campus, and was part of the continuing development and improvement of a campus-wide infrastructure to support the west campus of St. Elizabeths. The Mechanical and Electrical Shops was a significant part of the campus as it was updated to meet contemporary functional needs in the first half of the century.

The building is of interest architecturally as a unique example of an early reinforced concrete structure on the campus, and as it exemplifies the architectural design of the period for industrial buildings.

Historians: Mike Ford, Kenneth Itle, Tim Penich, and Deborah Slaton, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1920¹
2. Architect: Not known
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: St. Elizabeths Hospital (then the Government Hospital for the Insane) was placed under the control of the Department of the Interior by an act of Congress on March 3, 1855. Thus when the Mechanical and Electrical Shops building was constructed in 1920, the hospital was under the control of the Department of the Interior and remained so until 1940, when St. Elizabeths was transferred to the Federal Security Agency. The Federal Security Agency was a new government agency that oversaw federal activities in the fields of health, education, and social insurance. In 1953, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare was created. At that time several of the functions of the Federal Security Agency, including control of St. Elizabeths Hospital, were transferred to the new department.² In 1968, St. Elizabeths was transferred to the National Institute of Mental Health, an agency within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Institute wanted to demonstrate how a large

¹ 1918 *Annual Report*; 1917 construction documents; undated archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC0158SE0P002).

² *Federal Register*, accessed at <http://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/saint-elizabeth-s-hospital>, January 5, 2012.

mental hospital could be converted into a smaller, more modern facility for training, service, and research.³ In 1979, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare became the Department of Health and Human Services with the creation of the Department of Education.

The Department of Health and Human Services retained control of the hospital until 2004 when the west campus of St. Elizabeths was transferred to the General Services Administration. The structure was stabilized and mothballed by 2005. The building was demolished between August 27 and September 23, 2009, as part of the construction of a new headquarters for the United States Coast Guard on the St. Elizabeths West Campus.

From its construction until the end of its active use circa 1990s, the Mechanical and Electrical Shops served as a utilitarian support structure for the use of staff in maintaining and operating the campus.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known
5. Original plans and construction: The Mechanical and Electrical Shops building was constructed as a two-story, rectangular, steel-framed, exposed concrete structure just north of the wall surrounding Howard Hall (now demolished). The structure was defined by a series of repeating bays. Each bay included three double-hung windows on the first level and three double-hung windows on the second level. Arched transom windows were present above the second floor windows. The building was constructed using patient labor.⁴
6. Alterations and additions: After 1937 but prior to 1955, a one-story addition was constructed on the west end of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops. This addition was a concrete block structure with a flat roof and a brick chimney.⁵ The building received a new tar and gravel roof in 1942.⁶

In 1955, handrails were installed on the interior and exterior stairs. The elevator was replaced and electrical upgrades were made to the building. The building was again re-roofed in 1960.⁷ After 1945 but prior to 1964, the arched transom windows at the second floor were removed and replaced with cement board infill panels. During the same period the eight-panel entry doors were replaced with four-panel doors.⁸ Later, after 1968 but before 1983, several of the original windows were removed. The openings were partially infilled with concrete masonry units and smaller double-hung windows were installed. The entry doors were also removed and replaced with metal-framed doors. The entire structure was painted during the same period.⁹

³ 1970 *Annual Report*.

⁴ 1918 *Annual Report*; 1917 construction documents; undated archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC0158SE0P002).

⁵ Based on comparison of 1937 archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC1472SE0P068) and 1955 archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC1472SE0P002).

⁶ 1954 construction documents.

⁷ 1960 *Annual Report of the Subordinate Units*.

⁸ Based on comparison of 1945 Public Buildings Administration survey and 1964 archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC0158SE0P001).

⁹ Based on comparison of 1968 archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC0158SE0P001) and 1983 aerial photograph (DC1472SE0P010).

A major campaign of upgrades to building mechanical systems throughout the campus was implemented from 1963 through 1970.¹⁰ There is no archival information available concerning electrical and fire safety upgrades to the Mechanical and Electrical Shops in the 1960s; however, the existing physical evidence suggests that some improvements were completed in the building.

B. Historical context¹¹

During the tenure of Superintendent William White (1903–1936), construction and improvements to the west campus initiated by Superintendent Alonzo Richardson continued. White guided the hospital toward a clinical perspective on mental illness; this shift in fundamental theory required new laboratory and patient service facilities. White continued the construction plan of the west campus outlined by Richardson but extended it to include the development of the new research and patient facilities on the east and west campuses.¹²

Throughout White's superintendence, St. Elizabeths Hospital continued to grow as a clinical institution, patient hospital, and research facility. The last building campaign on the west campus spanned from the 1910s through the 1920s and included the development of a series of staff facilities, support buildings, and campus improvements to the west campus. New single-family staff residences (Buildings 15, 17, 27, 67, 76) and the Employee Cafeteria (Building 70) were constructed to address the success of the hospital as a clinical institution. The Red Cross Building (no longer extant), a collection of small comfort stations (which include Building 77), and the General Store/ Canteen were constructed to improve security and patient conditions. Development of the campus under Superintendent White also included maintenance and support buildings at the west side of the campus, including the Storage Shed (Building 11) and the Mechanical and Electrical Shops.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The original portion of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops is a two-story painted reinforced concrete structure with a raised basement. The building is rectangular in plan with the long faces to the north and south, and a one-story concrete masonry addition at the west end. The building facades are divided into bays by pilasters; each bay has an arch above the second floor windows. Exterior character-defining features of the building include the reinforced concrete structure and facades; the pilasters and arched configuration of the facade bays; and wood-framed multi-light windows and transoms. On the interior, character-defining intact original elements include the exposed structure and original windows and transoms.
2. Condition of fabric: At the time of the field survey for the Historic Structure Reports/Building Preservation Plans project in 2009, the Mechanical and Electrical Shops building was generally in fair to poor condition. Portions of the coating on the exterior walls had failed, especially near grade, exposing the buff-colored concrete. Also, the exterior concrete was cracked and spalled, particularly at window heads, exposing the reinforcing steel. Hairline cracks and some wider cracks were observed throughout the facades, generally running vertically at window spandrels.

¹⁰ 1961–1968, and 1970 *Annual Reports*.

¹¹ A context history for the entire St. Elizabeths West Campus, as well as an overview history of the Shop and Support Structures, is to be developed under separate cover as part of this HABS documentation project.

¹² *Cultural Landscape Report*, IV.7-8.

In general, the interior was in fair to poor condition. Deterioration included delamination of floor tiles, peeling of painted finishes, and corrosion of metal components. Spalled concrete surfaces existed on the bottom of the floor slabs at isolated locations, exposing the underlying steel reinforcing.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 50'-0" by 204'-0", rectangular building, 33'-0" to the top of the parapet.
2. Foundations: The building has a cast-in-place concrete foundation.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are load-bearing reinforced concrete. All exposed concrete is covered with a white coating that was first applied sometime after the 1960s. The reinforced concrete walls are articulated with square engaged columns from grade to the coping, an offset above the basement level, and projecting sills. The painted concrete masonry walls of the one-story west addition have rectangular window openings with cast concrete sills and heads.
4. Structural system, framing: The building has a concrete and steel structure, with reinforced concrete floors and roof structures supported by exterior walls and interior columns. The concrete walls have a series of arched openings around the building perimeter that are filled in with concrete masonry. The floor and roof slabs bear on steel framing supported by interior columns and the exterior walls. The concrete floors are cast around the steel beams and are reinforced with expanded steel diamond mesh.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: At the east elevation main entrance, concrete stairs lead from grade to a concrete porch at the center bay. The north elevation has a loading dock with a metal canopy at the center bay. There is a second, smaller loading dock at the westernmost bay on the north elevation, with a steel beam for lifting equipment. Grade along the south elevation is nearly level with the basement floor, and there are two concrete masonry vestibule additions with exterior doors leading to the basement.
6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney at the north wall of the west one-story addition.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The exterior entrance doors are non-original hollow-core metal doors in metal frames. At the east elevation main entrance, the original door opening has been reduced in size with concrete masonry.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Where present, the original basement windows are wood three-light inward-swinging awning sash. The original first floor window is a group of three wood six-over-six double-hung windows. The original second floor window is a group of three wood six-over-six double-hung windows. At partially infilled window openings, there are generally wood one-over-one double-hung windows. At the one-story west addition there are wood sixteen-over-sixteen double-hung windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main roof is a flat roof covered with built-up membrane roofing. The west one-story addition has a shallow slope shed roof with a metal coping and a continuous gutter along the west edge.
- b. Cornice, eaves: None present.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None present.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior of the building includes both industrial-style shop and work room spaces, and more finished office and break room spaces. At the center of the building, two parallel reinforced concrete walls separate the east half of the building from the west half and define a middle portion, equal in width to the center bay of the north and south facades, which contains the stairwell and elevator. The main entrance at the east elevation leads to a central corridor, which in turn leads to a series of offices and related spaces at the east half of the first floor. Beyond the stairwell, the west half of the first floor contains the shop area, which has an open plan partitioned by metal screening. The shop connects to the interior of the addition, which is also an industrial-style shop space. The east half of the second floor contains various storerooms with built-in wood and metal shelving. The west half of the second floor contains open plan office spaces subdivided by gypsum board partitions.
2. Stairways: There is a single stairwell at the center of the building. The stairs are concrete, with a steel pipe handrail.
3. Flooring: Throughout the first floor offices and the second floor, the flooring is vinyl asbestos tile. The shop area floors are concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Throughout the interior, the structural concrete walls and columns are exposed and painted. In individual offices, wall finishes include painted plaster, wood paneling, and painted exposed concrete. Partitions are constructed of concrete masonry or wood. Ceilings throughout the building are the painted, exposed underside of steel and concrete floor and roof framing. A few spaces have suspended acoustical tile ceilings.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Interior doors include newer flat-panel doors and older four-panel doors with glazing.
 - b. Windows: Original double-hung six-over-six wood windows remain on the first and second floor. The original basement windows that remain are comprised of a three-light wood inward swinging sash. Double-hung sixteen-over-sixteen wood windows are present at the west addition. At areas where the original windows were removed on the first and second floor, newer one-over-one double-hung windows are present.
6. Decorative features and trim: Some offices have built-in wood casework.

7. Hardware: Original interior door hardware consists of simple brass-plated mortised hinges and locksets, with round knobs and bevel-edged plain rectangular backplates with keyholes. Deadbolts and other hardware have been added to some doors.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Throughout the interior, mechanical piping and ductwork is exposed. Radiator piping is located along the exterior walls.
- b. Lighting: Electrical conduit is exposed throughout the building. There are suspended fluorescent light fixtures at the ceilings.
- c. Plumbing: Water supply and waste piping is iron, with all runs exposed to the interior.

D. Site

1. Historic landscape design: Documentation of the landscape of the west campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital can be found in Historic American Landscape Survey documentation submittal DC-11.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: Copies of architectural drawings are included in the attached Supplemental Material. The archival drawing documentation is in the collection of the General Services Administration.
- B. Early Views: Copies of selected early and historical views of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops are included in the attached Supplemental Material. The original photographs and other archival photographic documentation are in the collection of the General Services Administration, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, or the St. Elizabeths Hospital Health Sciences Library archives on the St. Elizabeths East Campus.
- C. Interviews: No oral history interviews were performed for this documentation project.
- D. Selected Sources:

Building Preservation Plan: Mechanical and Electrical Shops (Building 12), St. Elizabeths West Campus, Washington, D.C. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, March 12, 2010.

Centennial Papers: St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1855–1955. Winfred Overholser, ed. Washington, D.C.: Centennial Commission, St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1956.

Condition & Reuse Assessment: St. Elizabeths West Campus (draft). Oehrlein & Associates Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration, January 4, 2006.

Correspondence and Promotional Literature Relating Primarily to the Selection of Hospital Sites by the Federal Board of Hospitalization. 1928–1943. Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

Correspondence and Other Records Relating to Administrative Matters, 1909–1929. Records of the Office of the Superintendent, (1855–1967). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

D'Amore, Arcangelo R. T., ed. *William Alanson White: The Washington Years.* Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976.

The DHS Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths: Final Master Plan. Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates. Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration. November 10, 2008.

General Correspondence and Other Records of the Federal Board of St. Elizabeths Hospital. Records of the Office of the Superintendent, (1855–1967), Record Group 418.

Historic Preservation Report: St. Elizabeths West Campus, John Milner Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration. December 7, 2005.

Maps and Plans of the Government Hospital for the Insane (St. Elizabeths Hospital), 05/27/1839–12/14/1938. Department of the Interior, St. Elizabeths Hospital (1916–06/30/1940). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital. Entry 20, Records of the Superintendent, Annual Report of the Subordinate Units, 1919–1966.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 42, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Records of the Secretary of the Interior.

Photographs of Structures at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., 1968. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Public Health Service, Health Services and Mental Health Administration, National Institute of Mental Health, Saint Elizabeths Hospital, Office of the Superintendent (04/01/1968–07/01/1973). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

St. Elizabeths Hospital Historic Resources Management Plan. Devroux & Purnell Architects-Planners, PC, with Betty Bird, Historian, and Rhodeside & Harwell Inc., Landscape Architects. Prepared for the D.C. Office of Business and Economic Development and the Office of the Assistant City Administrator for Economic Development, Washington, D.C., September 1993.

St. Elizabeths West Campus: Cultural Landscape Report. Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, and Robinson & Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration. April 2009.

St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines. Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates. Inc., Architectural and Historical Research. Prepared for the General Services Administration. November 10, 2008.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Extensive research on the history of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops has been performed for this and other studies, as documented in the publications and other sources listed above.

F. Supplemental Material:

1. GSA archives, image 1472SE0P129.
2. National Archives at College Park, Record Group 418.
3. GSA archives, image DC0158SE0P002.
4. National Archives at College Park, Record Group 418-P-333.
5. GSA database, image DC0158SE0P004.
6. GSA database, image DC0158SE0P003.
7. GSA database, image DC0158SE0P001.
8. GSA database, image DC0158SE0P010.
9. GSA database, image DC0158SE0P006.
10. GSA archives, image DC0158SE0104.
11. GSA archives, image DC0158SE0105.
12. GSA archives, image DC0158SE0111.

PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

This historical narrative was prepared by WJE in conjunction with Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC, who prepared the measured drawings, and Leslie Schwartz Photography, who prepared the photographic documentation. The HABS documentation was completed for the General Services Administration.

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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

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Washington, D.C.

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Figure 1. Aerial view from the north of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops. Source: GSA archives, image DC1472SE0P129.

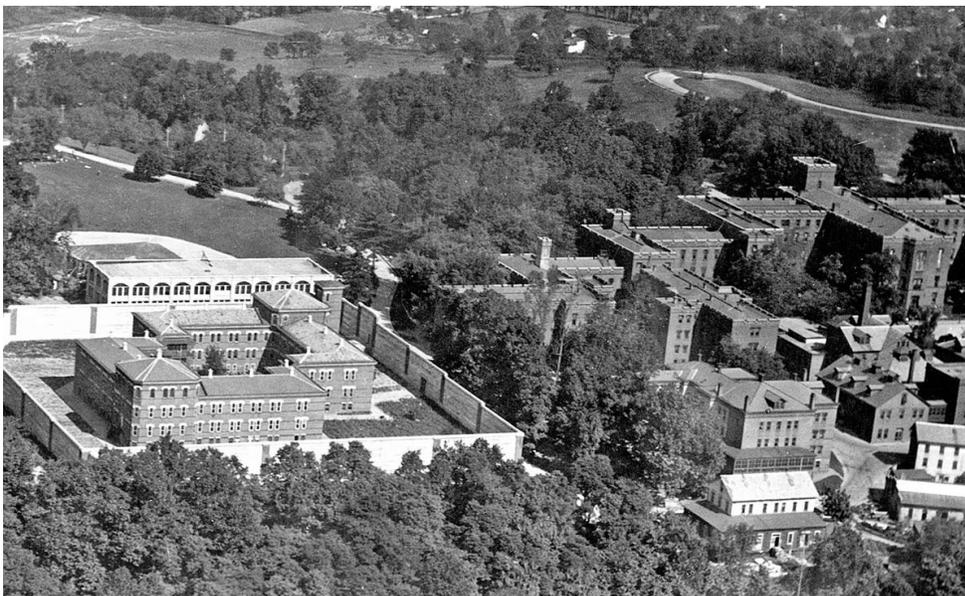


Figure 2. Aerial view of the Center Group and Howard Hall, 1922. The Mechanical and Electrical Shops is visible at back left. Source: National Archives at College Park, Record Group 418.

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Figure 3. View from the north of the Mechanical and Electrical Shops, circa 1930s. Source: GSA archives, image DC0158SE0P002.



Figure 4. The Mechanical and Electrical Shops form the backdrop for a baseball game, May 3, 1938. Source: National Archives at College Park, Record Group 418-P-333.

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Figure 5. The east end of the building, 1964. Source: GSA database, image DC0158SE0P004.



Figure 6. View from the south, 1964. Source: GSA database, image DC0158SE0P003.

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Figure 7. View from the northeast, 1968. Source: GSA database, image DC0158SE0P001.



Figure 8. View from the northeast, 2003. Source: GSA database, image DC0158SE0P010.

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Figure 9. View from the southwest, 2003. Source: GSA database, image DC0158SE0P006.

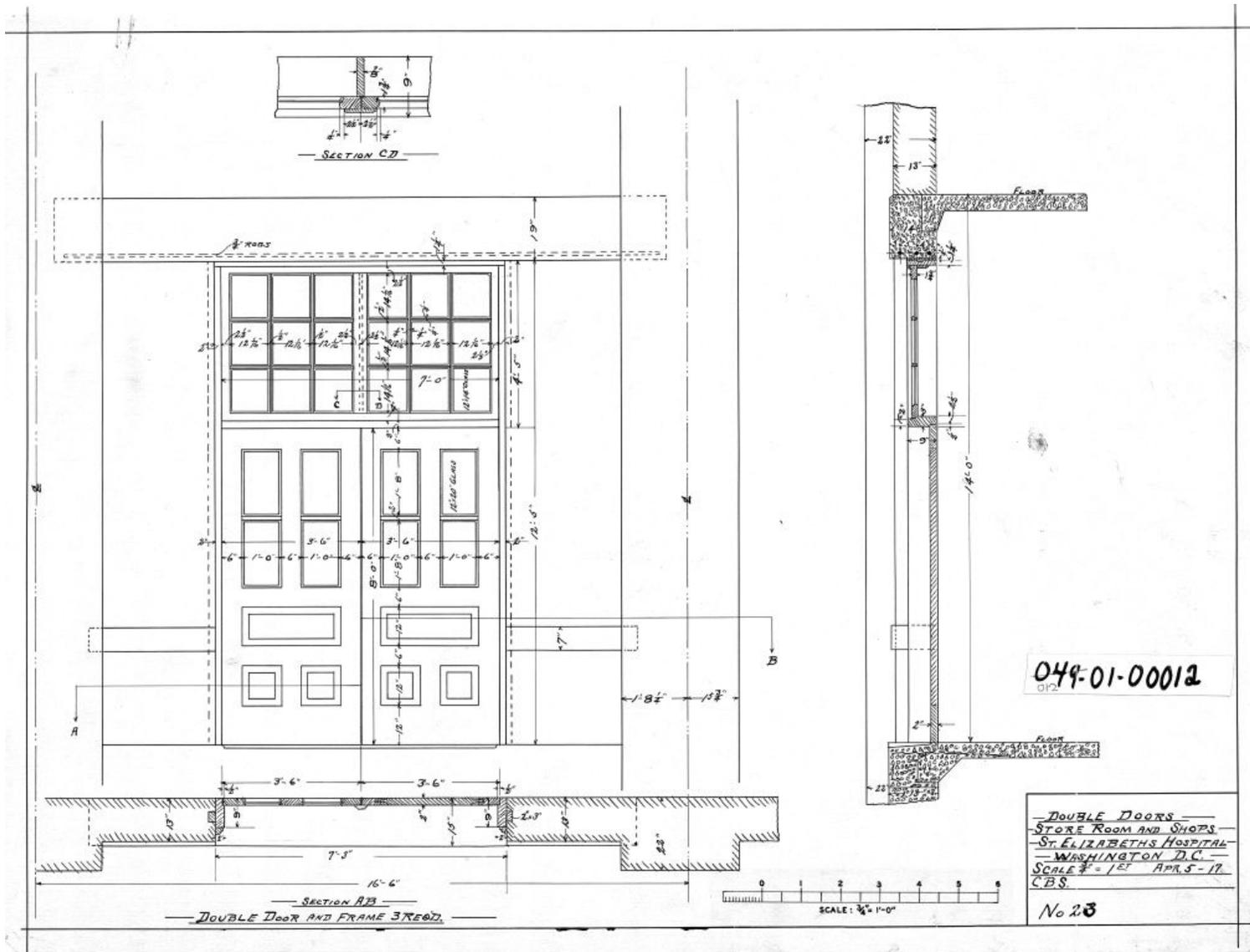


Figure 11. Original exterior door drawing. Source: GSA archives, image DC0158SE0105.

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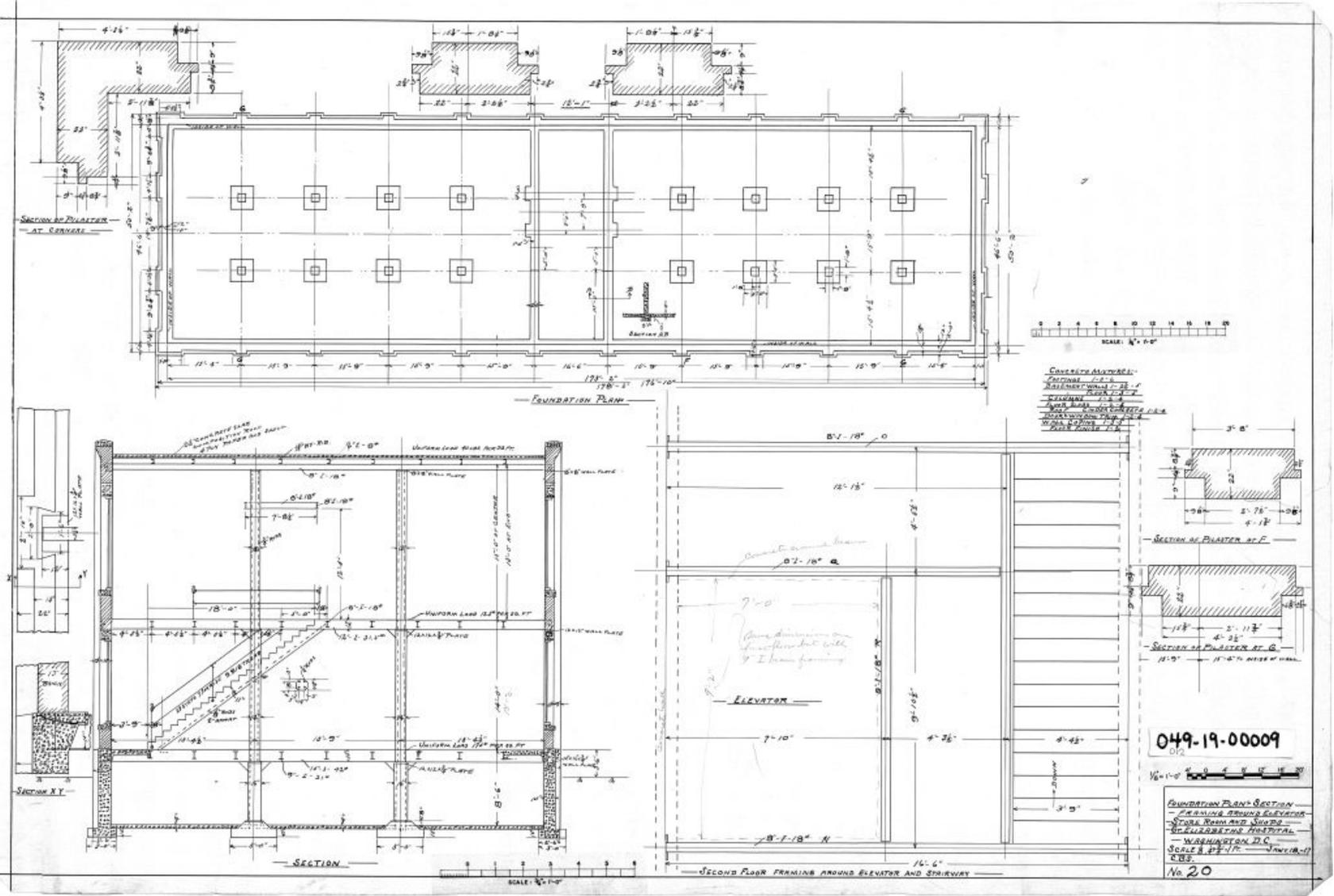


Figure 12. Original structural drawing. Source: GSA archives, image DC0158SE0111.