

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER,
BUILDING 1
(Hospital Building)
Old State Route 13 West
Marion
Williamson County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1155-A

HABS
ILL,
100-MAR,
1-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80255

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MARION, ILLINOIS VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER
BUILDING 1

(Hospital Building)

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PART 1: PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Old State Road 13 West (South Main Street at Seventh) on the west edge of Marion, Illinois

Quad: Marion Illinois

UTM: Building 1: 16/327622/4176830
Building 2: 16/327622/4176790
Building 8: 16/327762/4177005
Building 13: 16/327761/4176741

Date of Construction: 1940-1942 (Modified in 1971-1973 & 1978)

Present Owner: United States Veterans Administration
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Present Use: Veterans Administration Medical Center

Significance: A typical example of Veterans Administration neuro-psychiatric hospital construction using the "Architectural Set" of drawings for a campus complex setting, the Marion, Illinois VA Medical Center is significant because of its rare use of Egyptian Revival architectural decoration.

Historian: Robert A. Ryan
Dennett, Muessig, Ryan & Associates, Ltd.
February 1989

PART 2: HISTORY OF THE MARION, ILLINOIS VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
MEDICAL CENTER

See HABS No. IL-1155 for general historical
information.

PART 3: DESCRIPTION OF THE MARION, ILLINOIS VETERANS
ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER, BUILDING 1

Building 1; The Hospital

The main hospital is located at the end of the long entry drive. Designed with formal axial symmetry, Building 1 has a wide H-shaped plan, with a 234 foot front (north) facade and 140 foot east and west wings. Three stories high, plus exposed basement, the wings extend forward eighty feet from the hospital building's four story main aisles, framing an entry plaza and a set of monumental stairs (see HABS IL-1155A-1). "On either side of the central tower are six vertical strips of windows topped with a plain frieze and lotus leaf ornamented cornice. The wings are articulated with vertical strips of windows also, and topped with the continuous third story plain frieze and moulding"³² (See HABS IL-1155A-3 & 6). The walls of the hospital building are brick covered with stucco, and the decorative architectural trim is executed in polychrome architectural terra cotta.

The granite stairs lead to a five-story entry tower topped by a tall, pyramid-shaped, metal roof. The first three stories of the central tower have three pairs of vertical window strips flanked by engaged columns topped with lotus leaf motif capitals. The columns support a plain frieze and a lotus leaf ornamented cornice. Sitting on either end of the cornice are two massive sculptural terra cotta eagles (see HABS IL-1155A-2 & 5). The fourth and fifth stories have three strips of single windows, separated by pilasters with polychrome terra cotta lotus leaf capitals. Above the pilaster capitals is another lotus leaf cornice.

The original plans for the hospital included extensive continuation of the polychrome architectural detailing Egyptian style for the principal public rooms. Some of that treatment has been removed in succeeding renovations of the facility, but the rectangular main lobby is a riot of gaudy colors and unusual decor (see HABS IL-1155A-10). Four lotus leaf topped engaged columns are evenly spaced on the room's south wall, mirroring four pilasters on the north wall (see HABS IL-1155A-10, 11 & 13). The plaster cornice and soffits are painted with a lotus leaf pattern that extends into the hall beyond. The walls are painted plaster with brown marble wainscotting. The linoleum tile floor contains a central caduceus flanked by a pyramid and a sphinx as inlaid decoration. A dedication plaque on the east wall is surrounded by a tabernacle frame of red, green, yellow, and black pilasters and cornice (see HABS IL-1155A-12). Original brass heating grates can still be seen in the north wall wainscot. To the south of the main lobby, the cornice and soffit decoration continue into the elevator lobby (see HABS IL-1155A-14). But here, the level of decorative treatment declines, and the original elaborate stencil trim of the elevators has been lost to utilitarian renovation.

³²Mollenhof & Tupek, *National Register Nomination Form*, p. 4.