

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,
MARION BRANCH, BUILDING NO. 62
(Greenhouse)
1700 East 38th Street
Marion
Grant
Indiana

HABS IN-306-U
IN-306-U

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Location: 1700 East 38th Street, Marion, Grant County, Indiana. Within the hospital complex, the Greenhouse is northeast of the old hospital, across Flower Street and to the south of Indiana Avenue. It is oriented north-to-south.

The coordinates for the Greenhouse are 40.521584 N, -85.632476 W; these were obtained in August 2011 and, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Present

Owner: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Northern Indiana Healthcare System

Present

Use: Vacant [demolished in early 2012]

Significance: Building No. 62 was the Greenhouse for the Marion Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). The NHDVS was a federal institution authorized by Congress in 1865 and charged with caring for Civil War veterans disabled by their military service. Founded in 1889, the Marion Branch was the seventh NHDVS branch and featured a picturesque campus of winding avenues and red brick Queen Anne buildings with wide porches and ornamental balustrades. By 1930 the NHDVS system had eleven branches and became part of the new Veterans Administration.

The Greenhouse was erected in several stages between 1895 and 1899, and expanded in 1905. The campus design followed the tenets of the picturesque movement including curving avenues and decorative plantings. As a utilitarian or subsidiary structure in the campus hierarchy, the Greenhouse represents the National Home's emphasis on the well-being of the veterans and the expectation that the veterans themselves would contribute to their care by working on the grounds. Branch members and civilian employees could cultivate flowers in the greenhouse and create the elaborate ornamental plantings around the campus.

The Marion Branch became part of the Veterans Administration in 1930 and the Greenhouse continued to be used to provide ornamental plants for the grounds. The Greenhouse was renovated by the VA in 1933. Since vacated during the 1970s, the Greenhouse has fallen into disrepair. It was demolished in early 2012.

Historian: Virginia B. Price, HABS, 2011.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1895; 1897; 1899-1900; 1905

Requests for a conservatory or greenhouse were made as early as 1892 in the *Annual Report* for the Marion Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. Reiterated in 1893, arguments for a greenhouse hinged on cost savings.¹ If flowers and plants could be cultivated on-site during the winter, less money would be spent at nurseries. In 1895 there was a “small glass propagating house” on the property but \$1,000 was sought during that fiscal year and the next for a greenhouse expansion. The original propagating house may have been paid for by the local post fund rather than Congressional appropriations.²

By August 1897 construction had begun on a working room and one space to propagate plants.³ Additional space for the Greenhouse was solicited in the 1898 report for the 1899 fiscal year. In September 1900 a Greenhouse addition was being constructed based on a \$3,900 bid approved in June of that year.⁴

In June 1905 there was a request for funds to build another addition to the Greenhouse. This request was approved and a \$6,000 addition completed by August 1906.⁵

¹ NHDVS Board of Managers, “Marion Branch Report,” *Annual Report of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers For the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1892*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1893), 168; “Marion Branch Report,” *NHDVS Annual Report 1893*, 150.

² Inspector-General’s Office, *Inspection Report – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1895), 25-26; NHDVS Board of Managers, “Marion Branch Report,” *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1895* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1896), 154-155. In later Branch reports, the Greenhouse is always listed as partially constructed with post fund monies. Also, the first propagating house does not appear in lists of improvements funded by appropriations.

³ NHDVS Board of Managers, “Marion Branch Report,” *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1897* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1898), 152.

⁴ NHDVS Board of Managers, “Marion Branch Report,” *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1898* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1899), 46; “Marion Branch Report,” *NHDVS Annual Report 1899*, 46; “Marion Branch Report,” *NHDVS Annual Report 1900*, 164.

⁵ NHDVS Board of Managers, “Marion Branch Report,” *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1905* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1906), 169; Inspector-General’s Office, *Inspection Report – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1906), 42.

2. Architect/Builders: Although its presence on the landscape in the late 1890s connects it temporally to the buildings designed by the architectural firm Peters and Burns, the greenhouse remains an enigma. The architect and builders have not yet been identified. It is possible some of the veterans living on the campus assisted with its construction, either as general laborers or as skilled bricklayers and carpenters.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: An auxiliary building, the Greenhouse offered shelter to a variety of plants in an intemperate environment and its work room provided space for the veterans to work with seedlings and other plants needing a gardener's attention. The act of tending to the plants year-round would provide the veterans with healthful outlets and contribute to the operation of the institution. This type of vocational activity was common at various NHDVS branches and local members took great pride in their floral displays.

4. Original plans and construction: Original plans for the Greenhouse have not been located. In 1959 schematic plans of the Greenhouse were drawn. These plans show the work room section to the east, two long greenhouses oriented south to north, and the smaller connecting greenhouse oriented west to east on the south side of the grouping. An additional long rectangular greenhouse fronted the present Greenhouse to the south, connecting to it by way of a small entry at this no longer extant building's northwest corner (Figure 1). This building appears on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps as early as January 1920, indicating that this was the form of the Greenhouse as built by the NHDVS. The Greenhouse also appears to have this same form in c. 1908 and c. 1916 photographs published in Marion Branch souvenir booklets (Figures 2 and 3).

5. Alterations and Additions: The long rectangular wing that was attached to the south side of the present Greenhouse at its entrance was demolished by 1981.

B. Historical Context: See overview historical context HABS No. IN-306 for additional information on the Marion Branch and the NHDVS.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General statement

1. Architectural character: In keeping with the other buildings on the campus, the Greenhouse with its masonry walls and conventionally pitched roofs is domestic in scale and appearance. Even the mechanical systems are unobtrusive. The corrugated glass panels of the roof system not only capture the sunlight for warming the plants but also allow natural light to filter through the structure.

2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The main block of the Greenhouse has a rectangular footprint with the longer walls facing north and south; the main entrance is in the south façade. Off the north (rear) elevation is an ell addition featuring three gable-roofed runs and the work room. A hip roof covers the main portion of the building; the work room shed also has a hip roof.

2. Foundations: The work room shed has load-bearing brick foundations and walls, while the rest of the Greenhouse has brick and concrete foundations.

3. Walls: The walls of the Greenhouse are made of brick skim coated with concrete stucco. In places where the concrete has come loose, the bricks appear to be laid in a running bond or courses of stretchers. Resting on the low masonry walls is the framework for the windows and roof paneling. The masonry walls of the work room shed also appear to be made of bricks laid in running bond, although in areas where the paint and exterior finishes have peeled away, 4:1 common bond seems also to have been used. This collectively suggests that the work room has undergone changes and repair.

4. Structural system, framing: The Greenhouse has a combination of wood and metal framing, most evident in the roof wherein the wood structure is reinforced with one to two inch diameter steel pipe supports; the work room shed has load-bearing masonry walls and a wood roof and floor frame. The floor joists are reinforced in the basement. The pulley system for the roof panels in the Greenhouse remains in-situ. It was manufactured by the National Greenhouse Co., in Pana, Illinois.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: None.

6. Chimneys: None.

7. Openings

a. Doorways and doors: Exterior doors to the Greenhouse include the double doors in the south (front) elevation, a door in the north (rear) elevation of the western two ell additions, and a door in the east elevation of the work room. The doors in the ell and work room are single doors, glazed above the lock rail and paneled below, while those of the Greenhouse proper are double doors, paneled, with companion screen doors. Generally these are hung with butt hinges and secured with modern hardware. Likely there was another door in the south elevation of the work room shed, on the west end; this opening has been bricked-in but a segmental arch suggests its presence.

b. Windows and shutters: There are six double-hung sash windows glazed with four-over-four lights set in wood frames, with wood sills, beneath a segmental arched opening in the brick walls of the work room shed. The bottom sash of the

window lighting the bathroom (the northernmost window in the east elevation) is glazed with opaque lights, as are the two bottom lights of the top sash. On the west elevation, a window well allows for a two-light window into the basement level. The walls of the ell feature ribbon windows on top of the low masonry walls; these are glazed with wire glass (Figures 4, 5, and 6).

8. Roof: The hipped roof over the work room shed is covered with asphalt shingles, while that over the Greenhouse is sheathed with corrugated glass fiber roof panels. The gable roof over each of the ell extensions also has corrugated glass fiber panels. Most of the glass panels are missing. There are galvanized metal gutters and downspouts.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The one-story Greenhouse consists of a large, rectangular room filled with concrete and wood planters; behind the front room is a passage running east-to-west. Opening from the connecting space are the entrances to the gable-roofed plant runs and the work room shed itself. In the ell, each extension featured raised planting beds. The first or main floor of the work room shed had three rooms accommodating a work space, office, and bathroom. The stair to the potting area in the basement was accessed through the bathroom.

2. Stairways: There is a quarter-turn stair leading down from the bathroom (northeast corner) of the first floor of the work room to the potting room in the basement. The steps connecting to the quarterspace landing are wood, and those from the landing to the basement are made of concrete.

3. Flooring: In the Greenhouse the flooring is (packed) dirt primarily, and paved brick in places. The flooring on the first floor of the work room shed is wood while that in the basement is made of brick.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The work room walls are painted; in the basement the brick walls have been faced with shelving.

5. Openings

- a. **Doorways and doors:** Evidence of the doors to the three north-to-south extensions of the Greenhouse remains; the wood frames are collapsing and remnants of the modern, butt hinges are present and indicate that the doors opened into the passage. The door from the passage to the potting shed slides closed; it is glazed with six lights over the lock rail and paneled below. The door from the work space to the bathroom is a paneled, wood door while that to the stairs is a wood door with a wire ½ inch mesh in lieu of glazing over the lock rail.

- b. **Windows:** In the Greenhouse, the sills have been skim coated and the surrounds are utilitarian; in the work room shed, the sash has large, Colonial Revival-era muntins and simple surrounds.

6. Decorative features and trim: None.

7. Hardware: Extant hardware is contemporary, save the pulley system manufactured by the National Greenhouse Co., and includes butt hinges, sliding bolt locks, hook and eye closures, kickplates, door pulls and knobs.

8. Mechanical equipment

- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The building is warmed by a steam-generated heating system; radiators and pipes remain in place. There are also large fans, one installed at the rear of the eastern-most ell and another in the corner of the Greenhouse.
- b. **Lighting:** At one time there was surface-mounted, incandescent lighting for the interior of the potting shed. A ceiling fixture remained in place.
- c. **Plumbing:** Although no longer operational, the building was plumbed.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. **Architectural drawings:** Original or early architectural drawings for the Marion Branch buildings have not been located. The PLIARS database preserves one 1959 plan for the Greenhouse (see Figure 1).
- B. **Early Views:** Two early views of the Greenhouse have been located – a c. 1908 view and a c. 1916 view (see Figures 2 and 3).
- C. **Selected Bibliography:**

Board of Managers – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, *Annual Reports*, various years starting in 1867; many volumes include *Proceedings* of the Board of Managers meetings.

Hubbard, Nancy J. “Marion Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Historic District,” Grant County, Indiana. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1999. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Inspector General. *Annual Report of Inspection - National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*. Washington, DC: GPO, (annual – 1894-1925).

Julin, Suzanne. “National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers – Assessment of Significance and National Historic Landmark Recommendations.” 2008. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C..

Kelly, Patrick. *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

National Military Home Indiana. Wabash, IN: Press of the Plain Dealer, c. 1908.

Rector, Matthew D. “The Early Development, Design, and Construction of the Marion Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers,” M.A. Thesis, Ball State University, 2002.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of selected buildings at the former Marion Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was undertaken in 2011 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs division of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Office of Construction and Facilities Management, Kathleen Schamel, Federal Preservation Officer. Project development was coordinated by Catherine Lavoie, Chief, HABS and by Douglas Pulak, Deputy Federal Preservation Officer, DVA. The field work was undertaken and the written histories were produced by Lisa P. Davidson and Virginia B. Price, HABS Historians. The large-format photography was undertaken by HABS Photographer Renee Bieretz; an initial photographic survey was completed by HABS Photographer James Rosenthal in 2008. Valuable assistance was provided by James A. Broyles, Project Engineer, Engineering Services, Marion Campus, VA Northern Indiana Health Care System.

PART V. ILLUSTRATIONS

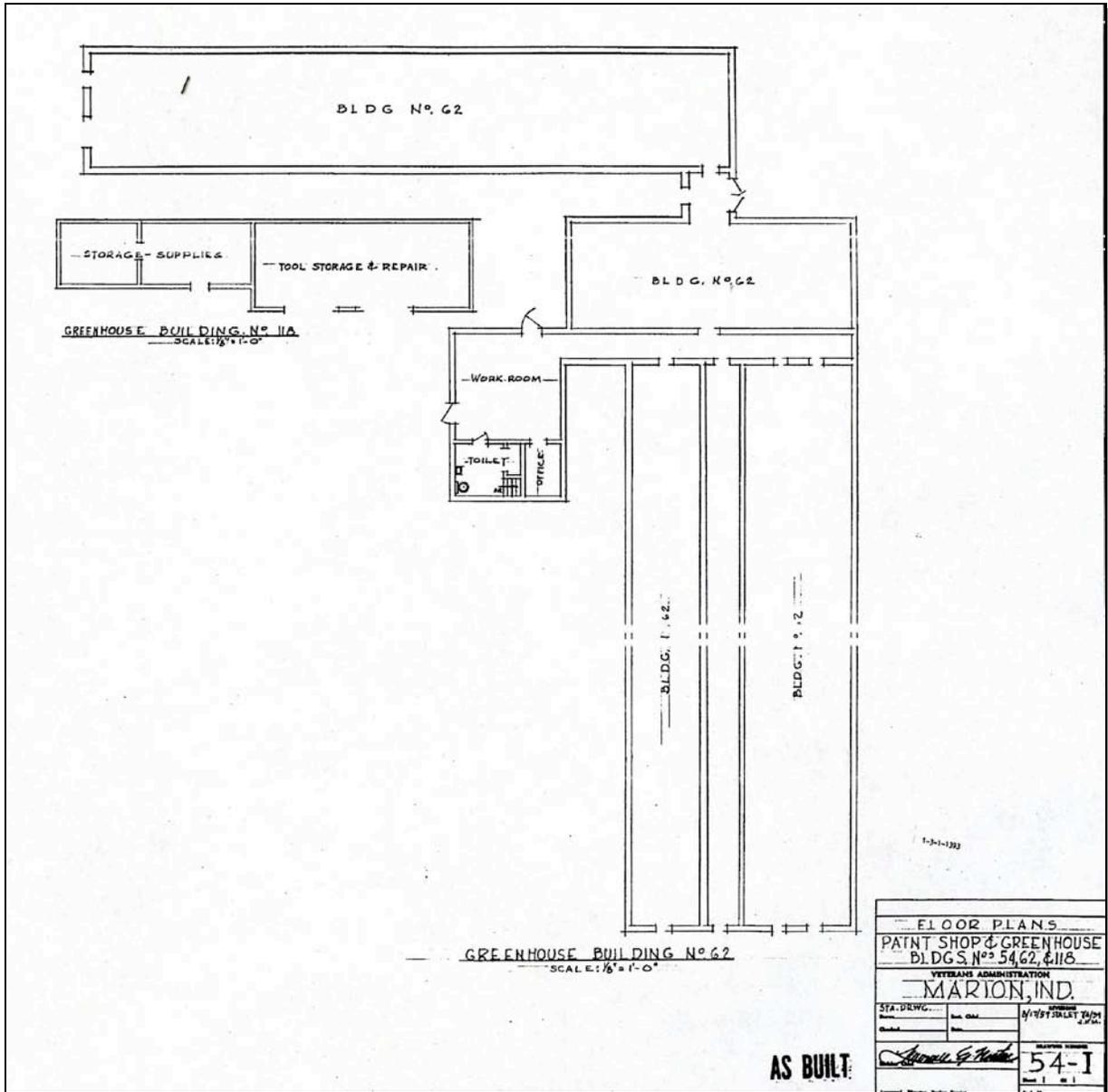


Figure 1: Plan of Building No. 62, Greenhouse, (17 August 1959)
 [Note – north is down in this view]
 Source: PLIARS database, VACO

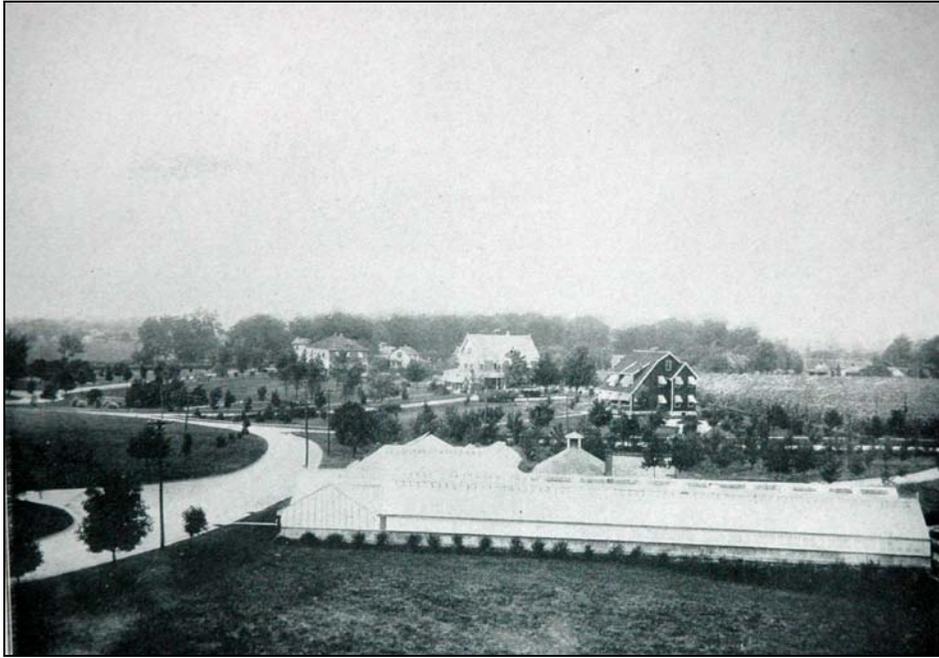


Figure 2: Greenhouse, View from South, c. 1908
Source: *National Military Home Indiana*, c. 1908, Marion VAMC files



Figure 3: Greenhouse, View from Northwest, c. 1916
Source: *Marion Branch NHDVS – National Military Home, Indiana*, c. 1916,
Marion VAMC files

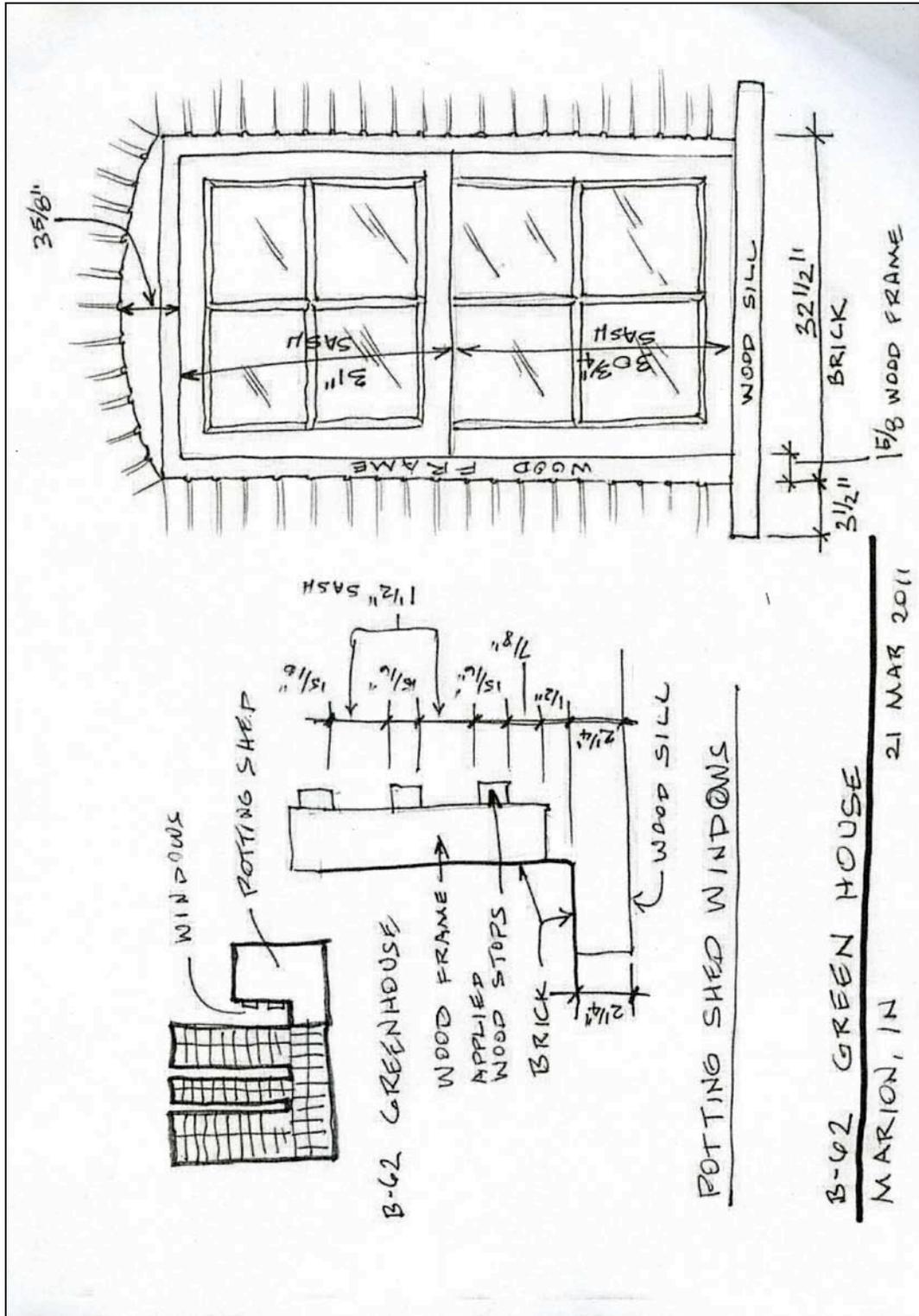


Figure 4: Detail of Work Room/Potting Shed Windows
 Source: James Broyles for Author, March 2011

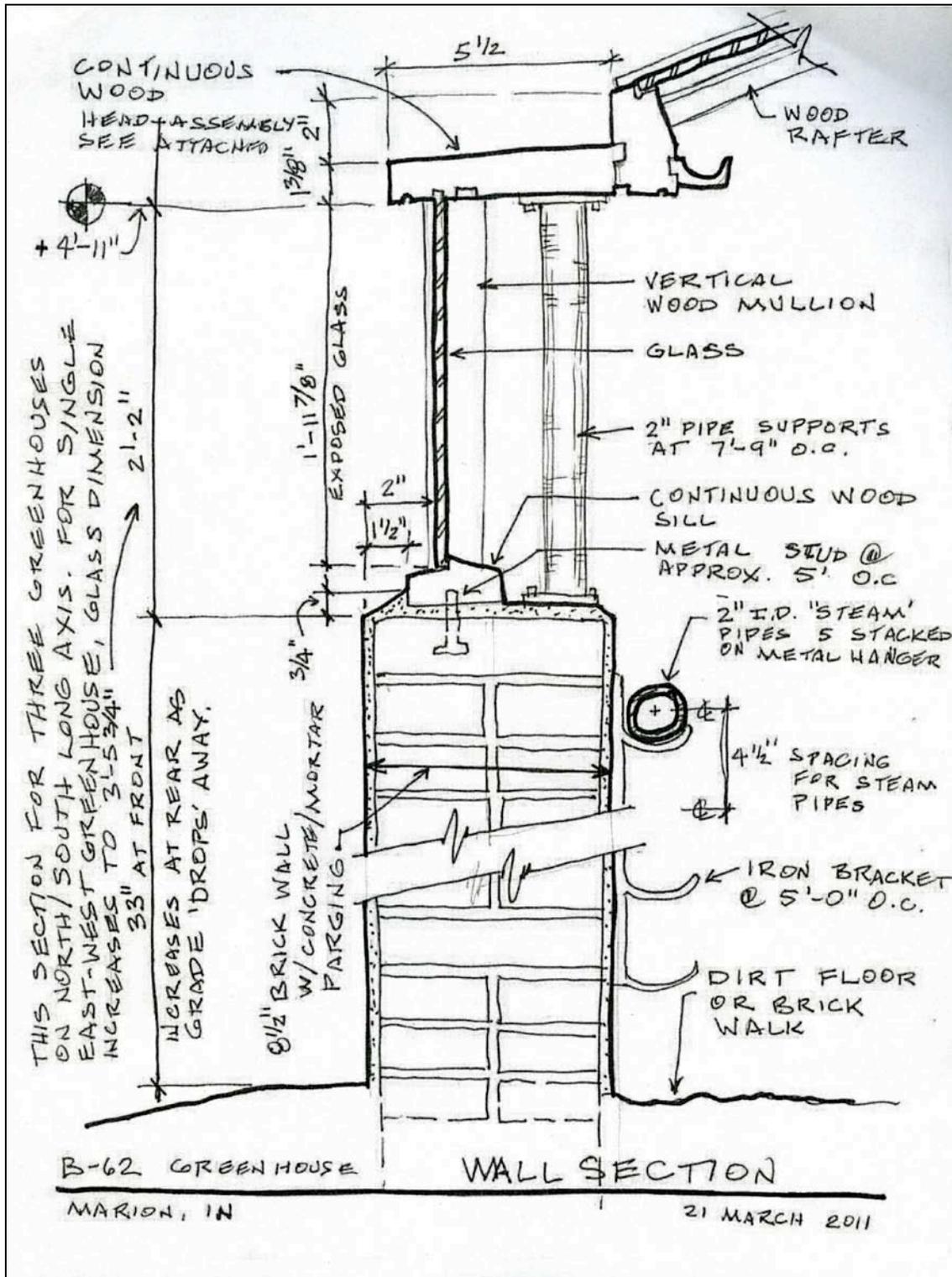


Figure 5: Wall Section of Work Room/Potting Shed
 Source: James Broyles for Author, March 2011

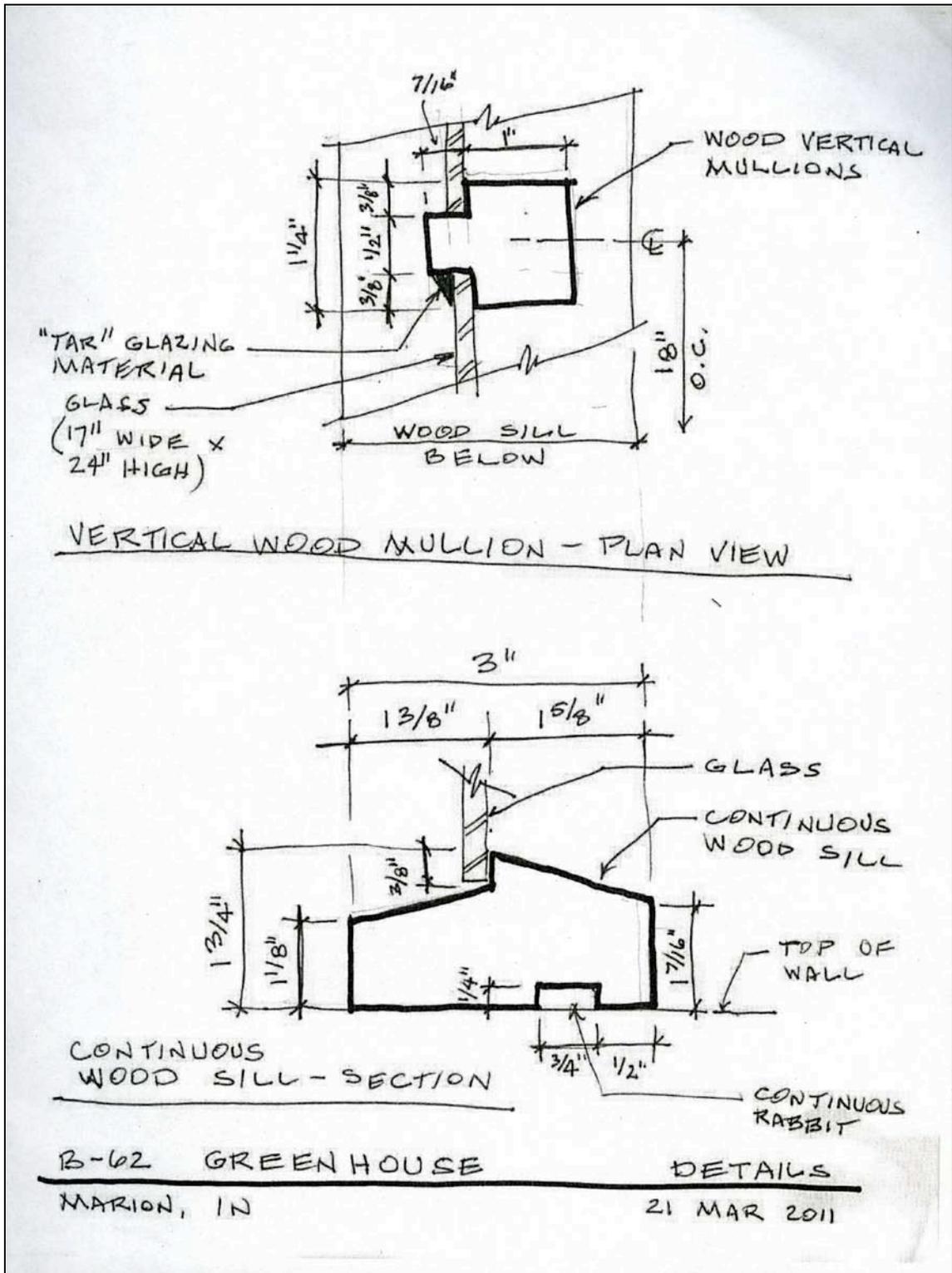


Figure 6: Details of Work Room/Potting Shed Windows
 Source: James Broyles for Author, March 2011