

WILSON ESTATE, BUILDING 15A
9100 Rockville Pike
Bethesda
Montgomery County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1105-D

HABS
MD
16-BETH,
20-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILSON ESTATE, BUILDING 15A

HABS No. MD-1105-D

HABS
MD
76-BETH
AD

Location: 9100 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland

USGS Kensington, Maryland Quadrangle

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.317800.4319075

Significance: This small residence was originally a neighboring house, dating from the 1920s, owned by Henriette Laura McCormack-Goodhurt. It was purchased by Helen W. Wilson in 1930 for use as a guest house by friends and family visiting the Wilson estate. Following her husband's death, she donated the house along with 14.43 acres to the NIH in May of 1938. NIH, which labeled the building 15A, used the house as the living quarters before eventually adapting it for use as office space. Building 15A, used only a short time as a secondary building to the Wilson estate, was a significant portion of the 1938 donation to NIH dedicated to the development of the Cancer Institute.

Description: Building 15A is a one-and-one-half-story, end-gabled, wood-frame, stuccoed dwelling set on a sloping site northwest of the main buildings of the Wilson Estate. Its exterior dimensions are 30' x 31'. Utilizing materials and detailing common throughout the estate, the building follows a typical, modest house form common in the 1920s and 1930s. Building 15A is built on a rectangular plan, with the ridge of the gable on an east-west axis. A small open porch, located on the northern portion of the west facade, was later enclosed with casement windows. An extension of the northern portion of the east end gable created a shallow, L-shaped plan. The building has a grey slate roof, copper downspouts and gutters, and a stone foundation. All original wood windows have been replaced with metal one-over-one sash of slightly wider dimensions. Windows on the main portion are flanked by wooden shutters of a recent period. In addition to the replacement windows, the house appears to have been recently resided and stuccoed, with loss of window surrounds and depth of reveal in the process.

The front facade, which features the main entry under a small shed-roofed porch, faces north. It is approached from West Drive via a stone footpath. The rear or south facade is composed of two bays in the main portion of the house, each featuring a shuttered metal-sash window at the ground-floor level, and a shed dormer with shuttered, metal-sash windows in each of the two dormers above. A large rectangular chimney with a north-south axis is centered between the dormers. A poured concrete stairwell with metal handrail leads to an excavated basement level that runs along the facade below the westernmost bay.

The eastern gable-end facade features a gable extension on the northern two bays, housing an enclosed sleeping porch that was originally open. The western gable-end facade features a one-story flat-roofed porch on the northern bay that has been enclosed with glass to create a sun room. It is accessible by a single-entry wood door in the center of the southern facade, flanked by a large, fixed, single-light window on either side. The porch features sliding, single-light wooden windows, with retractable cloth awning

running the entire length of the eaves.

A simple gabled garage that appears to be contemporaneous with the house sits at the back corner of the property on an east-west axis. The garage is constructed of materials and massing that appear to carry on the design motifs associated with the overall property.

History:

The origin and historical use of this dwelling during the Wilson's ownership of the building between 1930 and 1938 has not been confirmed. Oral history sources suggest that Helen W. Wilson bought the cottage from a neighbor and friend. The house formed a part of the deed transaction, dated October 13, 1930, from Henriette Laura McCormack-Goodhurt that included the Langley Park tract and part of the Parker family land (Montgomery County Deeds, Liber 522, folio 94). Wilson may have purchased it with the intent to include it in the parcel she later donated to NIH. Just three days following Luke Wilson's death in 1937, Helen Wilson began preparations to deed to NIH a 14.43-acre parcel; this parcel, which included Building 15A, was transferred to the government on October 1, 1938. The building has served as living quarters and office space for NIH since that time.

Building 15A is a modest design typical of houses built in the 1920s and 1930s, with less craftsmanship utilized in the Lodge and the Flat. Its location away from the main house and auxiliary buildings suggest that, if it was utilized by the Wilsons, it housed staff or served as a private cottage for guests. After it was donated to NIH, it underwent significant alterations, including the enlargement of the second floor by connecting two dormers on the north facade, new stucco siding, enclosure of open porches on the east and west facades. The house once served as the residence of the Director of the Office of Engineering Services, according to the 1986 NIH Almanac. It was later converted into offices by NIH. Building 15A will be retained by NIH for use as offices; as part of the Wilson Estate, it was included in the documentation of the property, some buildings of which will be demolished in conjunction with the planned expansion of the Clinical Center.

Sources:

Interview with Dorothy Pugh, recalling her 1987 interview with Ruth Ferguson Wilson, conducted by Tory L. Taylor, Robinson & Associates, Inc., June 12, 1991.

National Institutes of Health. *NIH Almanac*. NIH Publication #86-5, Division of Public Information. September 1986.

Historians:

Paul K. Williams, Heather P. Ewing, Architectural Historians
Judith H. Robinson, Principal, Robinson & Associates, Inc.
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Building 15A, southwest view, late 1950s. Source: NIH Division of Space and Facility Management, Deed and Land Records, Building Maintenance Records.