

ALLEN PARK VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL, BUILDING NO. 10
(Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital, Boiler House)
Southfield Expressway & Outer Drive
Allen Park
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-427-E

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

**ALLEN PARK VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL
BUILDING 10
(Boiler House)**

HABS No. MI-427-E

- Location:** Southfield Expressway and Outer Drive
Allen Park, Wayne County, Michigan
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420
- Present Use:** Vacant.
- Significance:** Building 10, the Boiler House, was the first structure completed at the Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital in 1938. Before the hospital could be opened, the complex first needed power and heat, which the Boiler House provided. Coal, the initial source of power for the hospital complex, was delivered via rail and was burned in the boilers to provide steam for the complex. A smokestack that was adjacent to the Boiler House no longer exists.
- While the Boiler House is constructed with a red brick façade, it does not exhibit the Georgian Revival details common to the other original buildings at Allen Park. The stripped-down appearance and oversize metal multi-pane windows are more in keeping with its function as an industrial building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Date of Erection:** 1938.
- B. Architect:** Anonymous Veterans Administration Construction Division staff architect.
- C. Original and Subsequent Owners, Occupants, Uses:** The building is part of a Veterans Hospital complex constructed for and owned by the United States Government from 1939 to the present. Building 10 has continually served as a boiler house since its construction.
- D. Original Plans and Construction:** The original drawings (showing the first and second floor plans) are dated November 5, 1937. The Veterans Administrations' Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Director of Construction, and Chief of the Technical Division signed the drawing. The building's original appearance has been altered due the construction of two additions at unknown dates.
- E. Alterations and Additions:** Two additions were constructed to provide additional mechanical space, loading docks, and truck access to the building.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

- 1. Architectural Character:** Building 10, the Boiler House, is an industrial structure. It has been altered repeatedly over time, through the addition of two new building sections.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** The building is in good condition and appears to be structurally sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

- 1. Overall Dimensions:** The overall dimensions of the building measure 84'-0" x 68'-6". The original portion of the building was rectangular, 3 ½ stories, with the long sides oriented towards the north and south. The first addition was added to the center portion of the north façade, and is three stories in height at its rear and 1½-stories in height at its front. The final addition is located on the east half of the south wall, and projects out to the south. It is 2½-stories tall.
- 2. Foundations:** The foundation consists of a poured concrete slab.

3. **Walls:** The walls are faced with common bond red brick, and have a brick belt course around the original portion of the building at the bottom of the top half story. The walls are capped with concrete, and portions of the north, east, south, and west walls feature a tall, plain concrete trim at their base.
4. **Structural System, Framing:** The building is a steel frame structure.
5. **Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads:** There are no porches, stoops, balconies, or bulkheads.
6. **Chimneys:** There are three smokestacks. The largest, which appears to be designed to carry steam, is attached to the exterior of the boiler house's east wall, and continues up approximately 25' past the edge of the roof. The tops of two additional stacks protrude above the roof from the interior of the west section of the building. The three smokestacks appear to be made of cast iron.
7. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and Doors:** There are three entrances to the building. The first is located approximately two-thirds of the way across the north wall of the north addition. The second is located near the northeast corner of the original portion of the boiler house. The third entryway is located near the corner formed by the intersection of the original structure and the south addition. The first entryway features a pair of doors; the other two each have a single door. All of the doors are metal with a small, square single-pane window. There are also three large loading dock entrances in the south addition; one near the southeast corner of the south wall and two in its west wall. All contain large, metal overhead doors.
 - b. **Windows and Shutters:** The windows, with the exception of the six-light transom above the first entrance, all have metal frames with ten to sixteen panes and are fixed at the top and bottom. The top six panes in the center of each window form an awning window. They are typical of industrial windows of this period and are original. Brick in-fill on the north single-story wall of the north addition indicates two ten-pane windows have been removed. Some of the windows in the original section of the boiler house are stacked two and three stories high.
8. **Roof:**
 - a. **Shape, Covering:** The building has a flat roof.

- b. **Cornice, Eaves:** There is no cornice or eave decoration.
- c. **Dormers, Cupolas, Towers:** There are no dormers, cupolas, or towers present.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. **Basement:** The basement was inaccessible due to an unsound staircase and animal infestation.
 - b. **First Floor:** The building is an open plan structure with a locker room and office. The building contains the boiler, water softener tanks, and pumps for the entire facility. It has three main spaces: the boiler room, the pump room, and the softener tank room. An addition on the south façade contains a loading dock. The entire facility is a double-height space, except for the pump room. Metal grating is located above some of the equipment and access is provided to these areas by steel ladders.
 - c. **Second Floor:** The second floor is located above the pump room in the southwestern corner of the building. The floor contains two storage rooms and a large tank. The tank is associated with the pump room equipment below.
2. **Stairways:** The stairways to the second level and down to the basement are both open string steel stairs with tubular steel railings and checkered plate steel treads.
3. **Flooring:** The flooring is 12" terra cotta tiles with steel grating around the access to the basement level. Checkered plate steel, with holes to allow the individual pieces to be removed, covers a drainage channel that runs through the building.
4. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** The interior is unfinished, exposing the brick masonry structure of the building as well as the mechanical, electrical, and ventilation systems. The interior walls that form the office on the first floor are of drywall. All other interior walls are exposed brick masonry. The entire interior is painted white except for the storage room in the southwest corner of the second floor, which has been painted a light blue-green color. The wood roof trusses and roof deck are visible from the interior of the building. The office and locker room have drop ceilings with acoustical tiles.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors:** The doors are of steel construction set within steel frames. The exterior doors have a single window in the upper portion of the door. The loading dock doors are of steel in a steel frame.
- b. Windows:** The window frames are of steel and have no decorative features. The individual sashes pivot. Wire glass is used on the lower levels for security while the windows higher up in the wall have standard clear window glass. The large expanse of glass along the walls allows for the maximum amount of natural sunlight possible to enter the building.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: There are no decorative features or trim.

7. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation:** No mechanical system for the heating or cooling of this building was identified. The equipment in Building 10 serves other buildings at Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital.
 - b. Lighting:** The building is lit by a combination of fluorescent and steel pendant light fixtures suspended in a random pattern from pipes, steel grating, and the ceiling.
 - c. Plumbing:** The building has a standard porcelain toilet and sink.
- 8. Machinery:** The boiler room contains the machinery in use in 1996, when the facility closed. The boiler room contains four boilers and a control panel manufactured by Westinghouse. The pump room has one tank above on the second floor and contains pipes that run down into the lower level where there is more equipment. The softener tank room contains two tanks. The entire building contains a mixture of steel, cast iron, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipes in a variety of dimensions.

D. Site:

- 1. General Setting and Orientation:** The Boiler House is located on the eastern edge of the complex. It faces Building 12, the Garage, to its north. Building 13, the Engineering Shops, are immediately to its west, Snow Road to its east.
- 2. Historic Landscape Design:** None.

3. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This complex was recorded by URS Corporation, Gaithersburg, Maryland, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, from January to March of 2002. Architectural Historians Amy Barnes, Anne Brockett, and Caleb Christopher completed the fieldwork for this project in January 2002. The photographer was Andrew Baugnet and the Historian was E. Madeleine Scheerer. The project was reviewed by Fred Holycross and Mark R. Edwards.

As stipulated in the deed in which Henry and Clara Ford donated the land on which the Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital is located, when the property ceases to be used as a veterans hospital, the land is to revert in ownership to the Ford family heirs. Since inpatient and outpatient veteran medical service is now provided at the John D. Dingell Veterans Administration Hospital in Detroit, which opened in 1996, and the Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital ceased all operations in 2002, the land is to be turned over to the Ford Motor Land Development Corporation (FMLDC) in compliance with the original deed. A Congressional appropriation of \$14 million, to be disbursed to the FMLDC over a seven-year period beginning in 2002, was designated for the demolition of the Allen Park Veterans Administration Hospital complex.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Collections:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Architectural Drawings Collection. Allen Park Medical Center. John D. Dingell Medical Center Collection. Detroit, Michigan.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Architectural Drawings Collection. Allen Park Medical Center. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Collection. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Information and Media Section Collection. Allen Park Medical Center. John D. Dingell Medical Center Audio Visual Collection. Detroit, Michigan.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Office of Facilities Management Collection. Allen Park Medical Center. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Collection. Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Photograph Collection. Allen Park Medical Center.
John D. Dingell Medical Center Audio Visual Collection. Detroit, Michigan.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Photograph Collection. Allen Park Medical Center.
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Collection. Washington, D.C.

B. References:

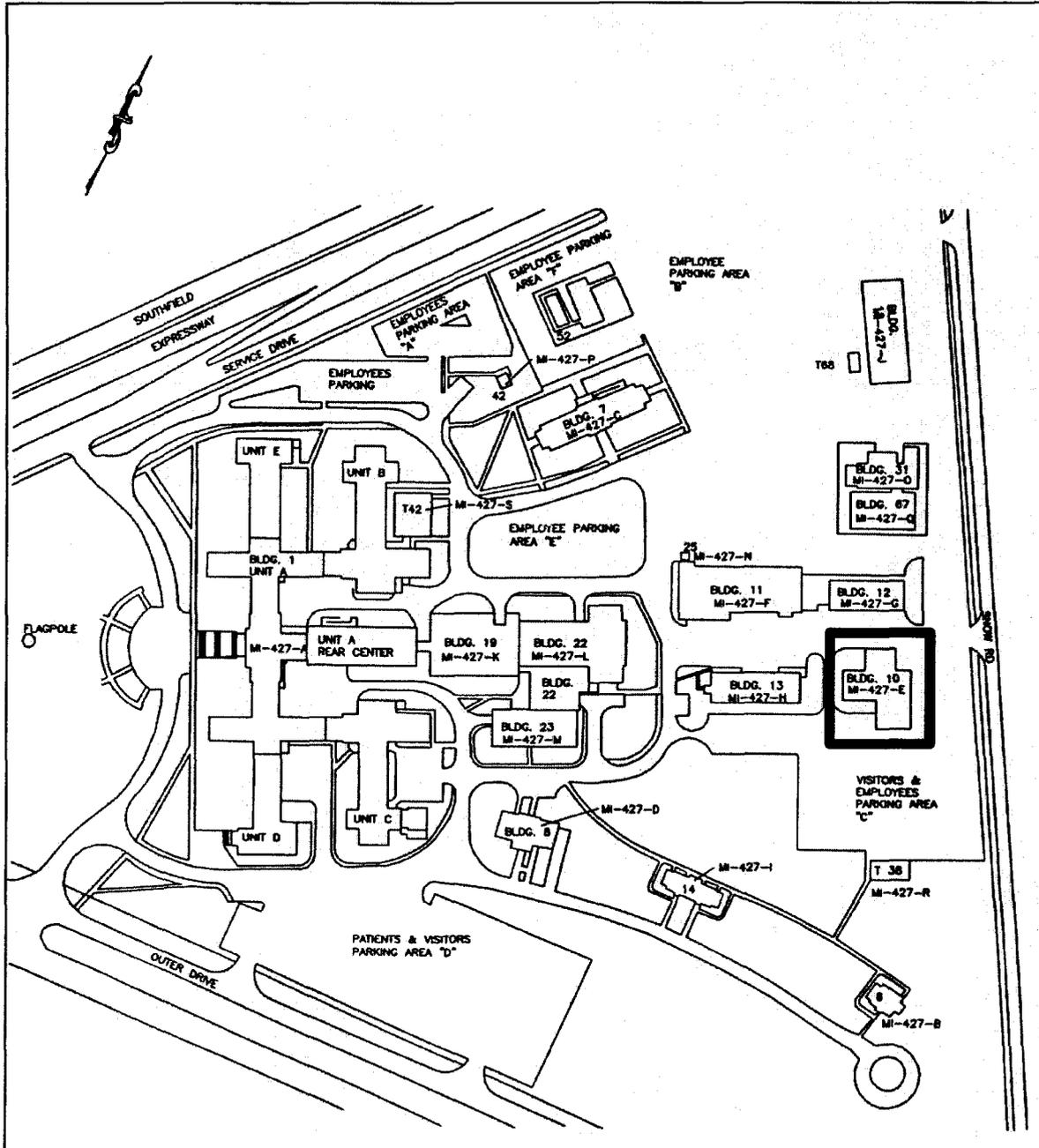
Ching, Francis D. K. *Building Construction Illustrated*, 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1997.

Hoke, John Ray, Jr. *Architectural Graphic Standards*, 9th ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

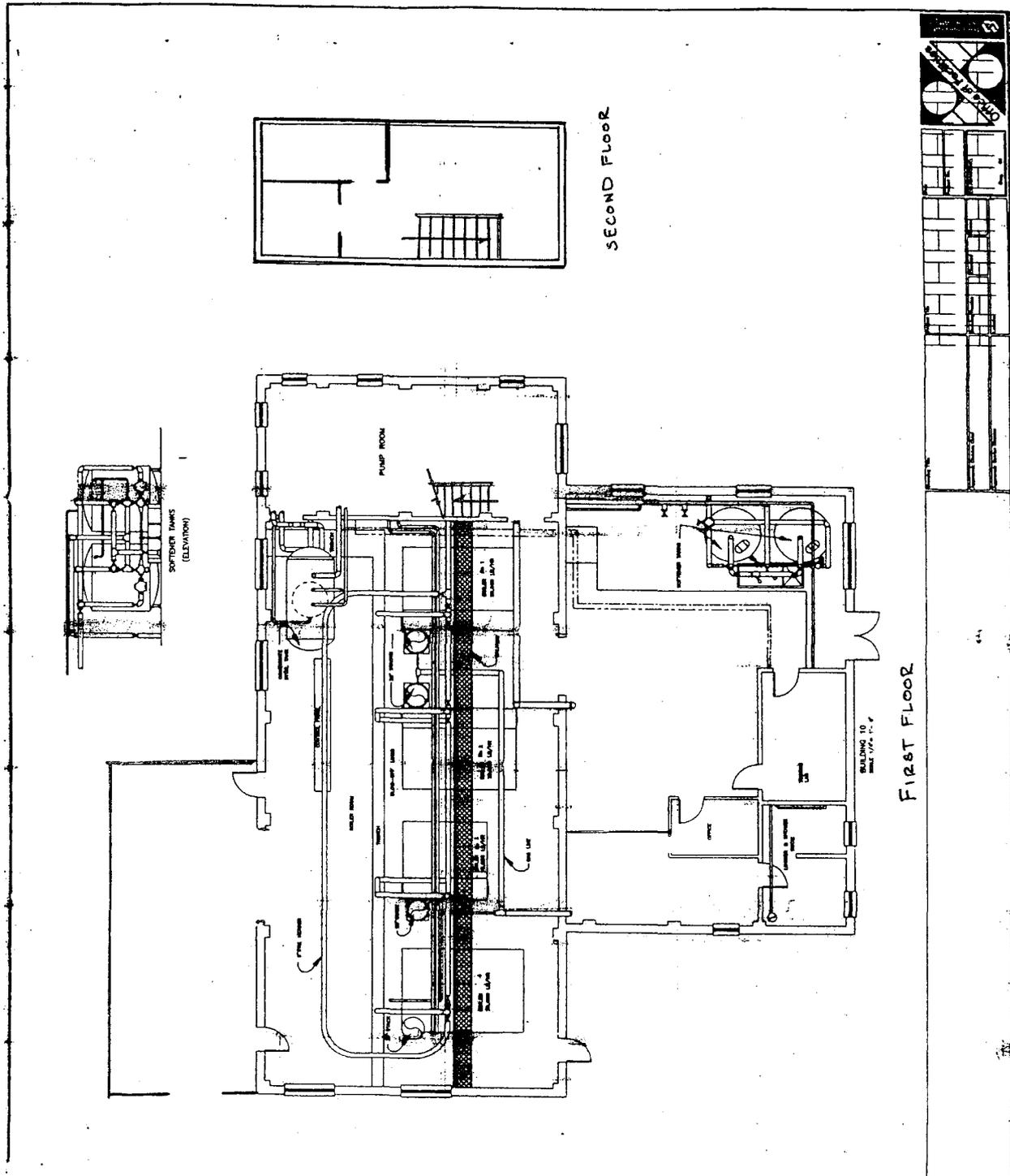
Mollenhoff, Gjore J. and Karen R. Tupek. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Allen Park Veterans Administration Medical Center," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1980.

Site Plan



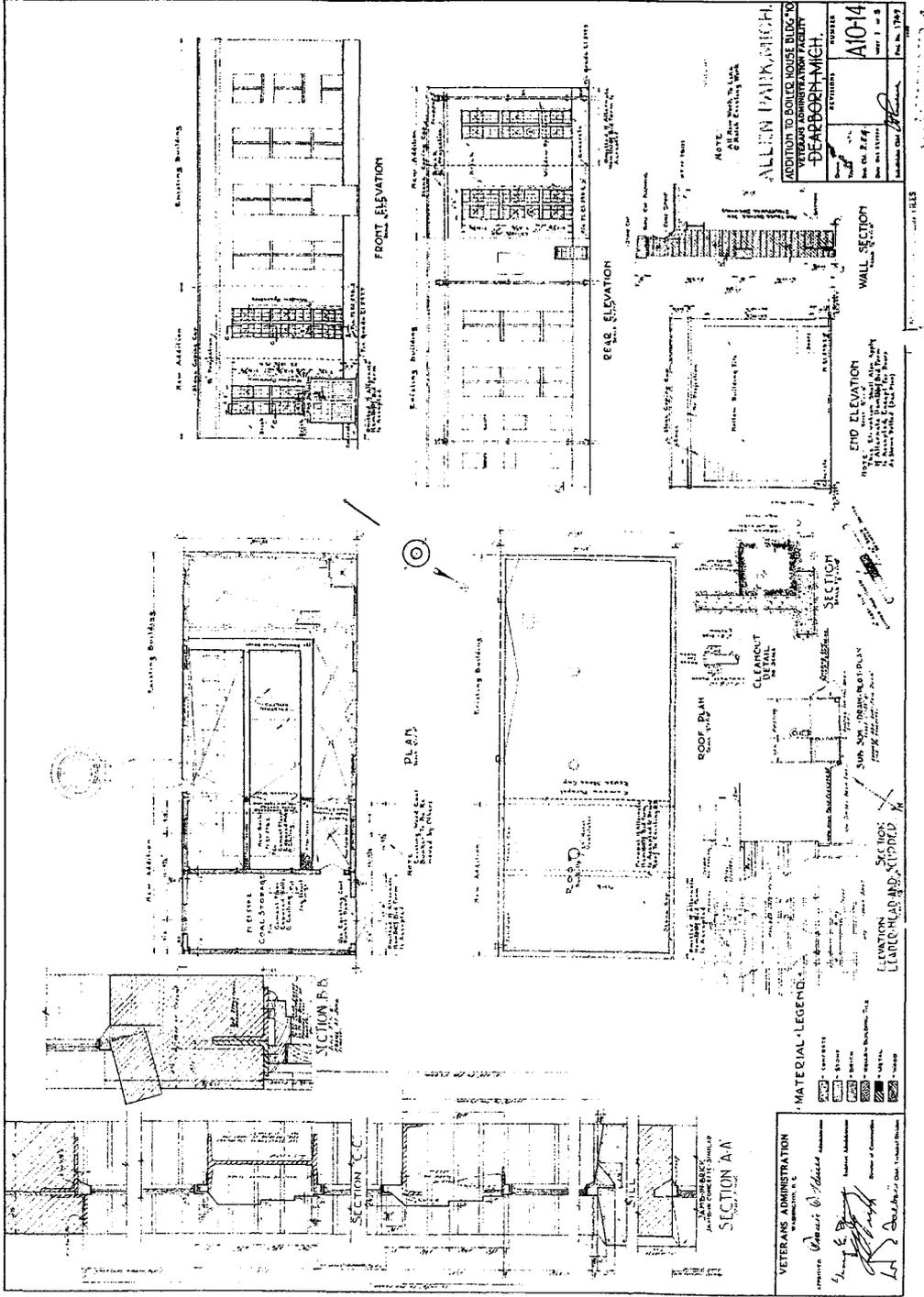
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Reduced Copy of Current Plan, February 2002



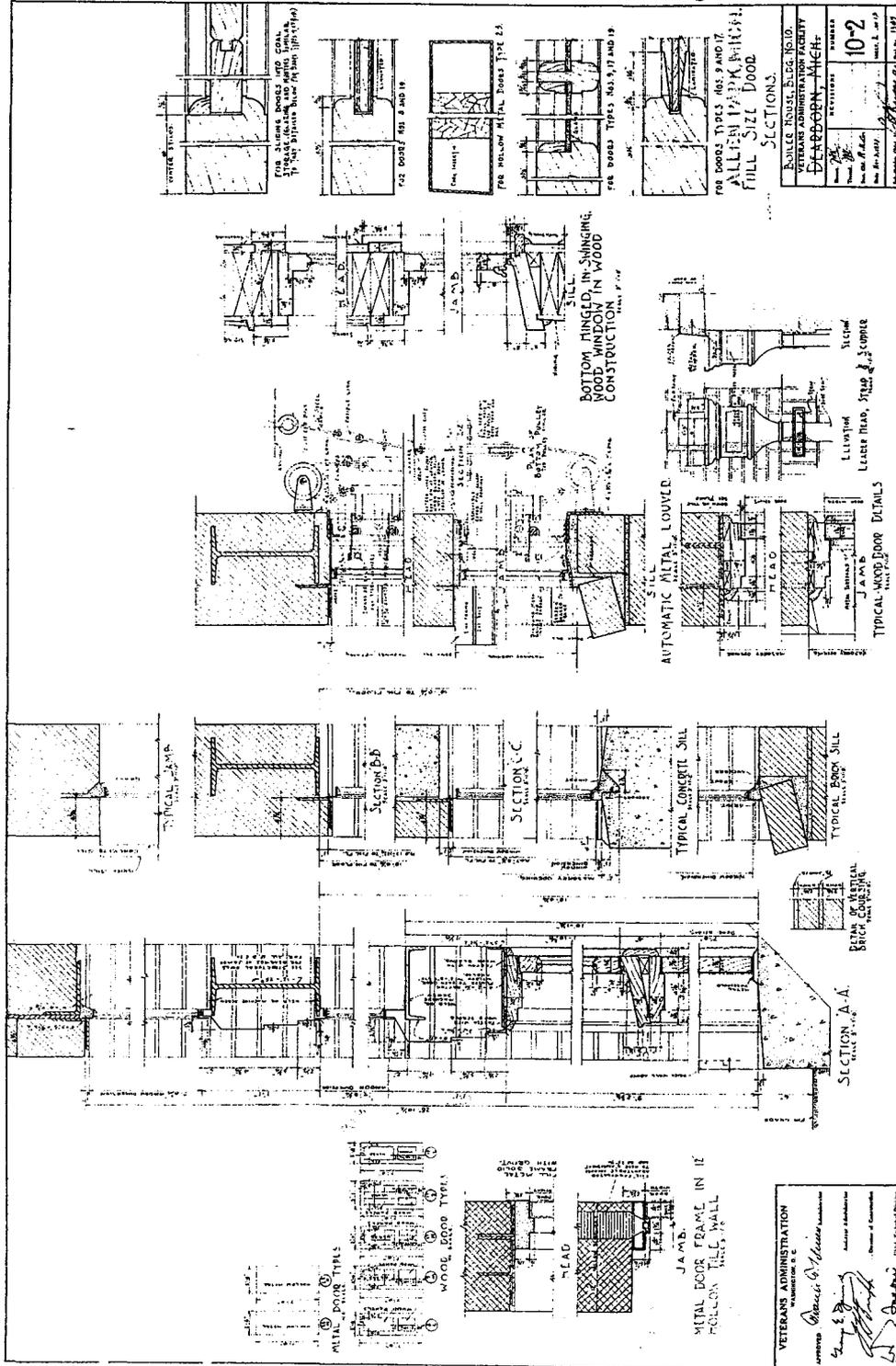
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Reduced Copy of Historic Plan, dated October 27, 1939. On file at the John D. Dingell
 Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Detroit, Michigan



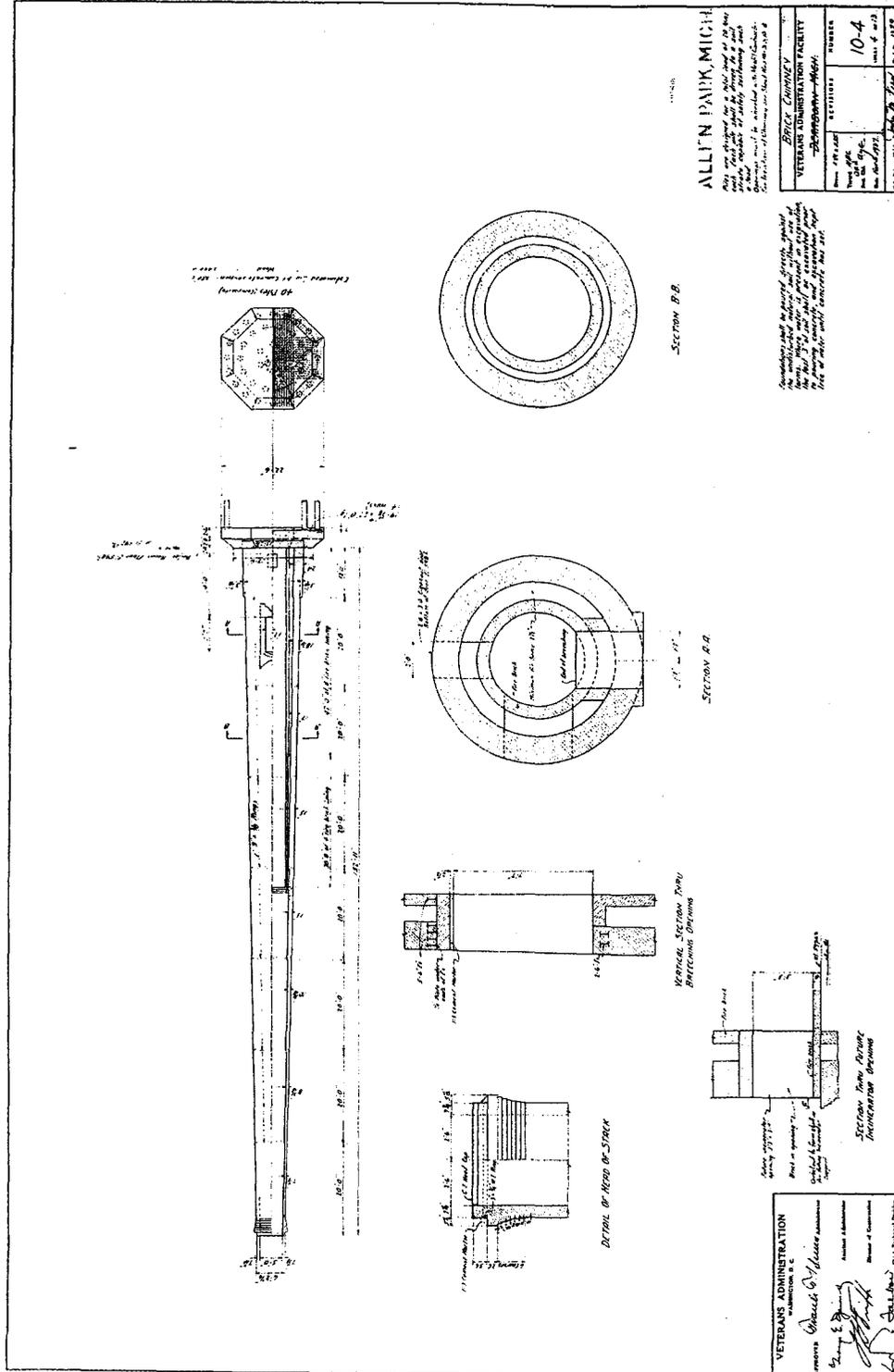
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ALLEN PARK, MICH.
 BRICK CHIMNEY
 VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FACILITY
 HABS No. MI-427-E
 10-4
 DATE: 10/27/39
 DRAWN BY: J. H. [Signature]
 CHECKED BY: J. H. [Signature]

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
 APPROVED: Charles W. [Signature]
 SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE
 [Signature]
 DIVISION OF CONSTRUCTION
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

