

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL
701 St. Louis Avenue
Excelsior Springs
Clay County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1931

HABS

MO

24-EXPR1,

1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Great Plains Support Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-2571

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITALHABS
MO
24-EXPRI,
1-

Location: 701 St. Louis Avenue; Excelsior Springs, Missouri

Period of Construction: 1921-1957 (numerous buildings and alterations)

Present Owner: United States Department of Labor

Present Occupant: Job Corps

Present Use: Job Corps Center, used for vocational and educational training of people aged 16 through 25 years; residency of students on-site.

Significance: The Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital is significant for its association with the federal government's efforts to provide medical services to wounded and disabled veterans. The Excelsior Springs hospital represents the period from the inception of the Veterans Administration after the first World War, through its changing functions during latter military efforts, through the closing of the Excelsior Springs complex in 1965 after consolidation within the bureau.

Historian: Deon K. Wolfenbarger, Three Gables Preservation, 1997

I. Historical Information

A. Physical History/Site Chronology

The first building constructed on what would eventually become the Veterans Administration Hospital complex was the residence of Colonel E. L. Morse. Built in 1896, the architect for the two-story brick residence is unknown. In 1921, under the supervision of Colonel Morse, the roof was raised and a third floor added to his former residence, in order to prepare the building for occupancy as a hospital for treating wounded veterans. That same year, a west wing was constructed, along with the boiler house and a small shop building. The grounds were cleared, sewer and steam lines laid, and cinder roads were laid out over a small portion of the property. These plans were drawn up by the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks under the direction of the Public Health Service, the lessee of the site.

Work was halted when a new agency, the Veterans Bureau, was charged with the responsibility of providing health care for veterans. The old plans were destroyed, but new plans were again prepared by the Bureau of Yards and Docks in 1922 when the property was sold to the Veterans Bureau. Construction began again in 1923. A south wing was completed in 1924 for the main hospital building for the kitchen, mess hall, attendants' dormitories and dressing rooms. Four cottages at the southern boundary were also acquired for personnel quarters. Kitchens and baths were added to three of the four cottages on the five and one-half acres of additional land which had been purchased to the south, and the fourth was demolished.¹ Additionally, a three car garage was built.²

A bill authorizing appropriation of funds to increase the bed capacity to 300 was passed in 1928, requiring not only an addition to the main hospital, but additional buildings and land as well. Two acres were purchased in 1929, and another one-half acre in 1930. Construction began on the following projects on December 29, 1929.

Alterations to Building 5 (main hospital building): Addition to south wing; installation of new vacuum return piping system; installation of elevator no. 2 and dumbwaiter in kitchen. Contractors: Murch Brothers Construction Company, St. Louis, Missouri; Millner Elevator Company, Kansas City, Missouri (elevator).
Construction of Buildings 12, 13, and 14. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹Tom Collins, telephone interview, 3 June 1996. Three cottages, probably these mentioned here, were later moved from the ground to Crescent Lake in Excelsior Springs. They are extant and are used as single-family residences.

²"History of the VA Hospital," Unpublished manuscript, 31 December 1950, 26. This was possibly Building No. 6, "Garage and Warehouse."

Erection of flag pole. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company.
Construction of corridor between buildings 5 and 13. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company.
Addition to the Boiler House. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company.
Outside service systems. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company.
All roads, walks, drainage and grading. Contractor: Murch Brothers Construction Company.
Construction of 75,000 gallon water tank and tower. Contractor: Chicago Bridge and Iron Works, Chicago, Illinois.
Installation of Zeolite water softening system. Contractor: Paige and Jones Chemical Company, Hammond, Indiana.³

Subsequent site work, year of construction or contract, and contractor (if known), are as follows:

1930	Platform scale. Howe Scale Company.
1930	Buildings 23 and 24 -- Officers' Duplex Quarters. Morley Construction Company, Kansas City, Missouri.
1931	Building 17 -- Sixteen-car garage. Built by Purchase and Hire labor.
1937-38	Building 28 -- Shops (extant)
1938	Building 26 -- Garbage incinerator
1939	Building 37 -- Scale house
1940	Building 12 -- North addition (extant)
1945	Building 35 -- Barracks ⁴
1946	Building 40 -- Bus shelter (either extant but greatly altered, or replaced)
1947	Building 32 -- 2-car garage (replaced by different building)
1947	Building 33 -- Animal house (replaced by different building)
1947	Building 36 -- Quonset
1954	Building 38 -- Transformer station

³"Historical Facts: Veterans Administration Hospital," unpublished manuscript, in "VA Hospital file," Excelsior Springs Historical Museum, Excelsior Springs, Missouri. 3-4.

⁴Tom Collins, telephone interview, 3 June 1996. The barracks built during World War II were originally intended for German prisoners of war. However, the local population "just wouldn't have it," and the building was used for storage during later years.

1956-57

Building 39 -- Water tank and tower⁵ (extant)

B. Historical Context of the Complex

Local context: "Excelsior Springs -- Missouri's National Health Resort"

Residents of many communities often suffer from "boosterism" when talking about their town. However, residents of Excelsior Springs were not exaggerating when they historically described the town's role as a national health resort. The development of Excelsior Springs is inexorably linked with the discovery of its mineral waters and their use for medicinal purposes. As a booklet published during the 1930 Golden Jubilee celebration of the town noted:

We are, first of all, a HEALTH RESORT. Just that. Not a commercial or manufacturing center, mining town, or national airport -- no, those things are purely secondary to an industry devoted to the mineral water cure.⁶

The healing properties of the mineral waters were first "discovered" in 1880 when a farmer noted that the rust iron waters from a nearby spring cured his daughter's scrofula. Quick to recognize the possibilities associated with such a valuable resource, the owner of the property on which the first spring was discovered platted a 40-acre townsite by September 1st of that year. Within another year, over two hundred houses were built in the Fishing River valley and on the hillsides surrounding the original spring. Hundreds of other visitors were forced to camp in tents or covered wagons. Other springs were discovered, wells were dug, and the promotion of the city began in earnest. For the next eight decades, visitors swarmed to Excelsior Springs seeking cures for a variety of their ailments.

The fame of the city as a health resort was sealed with the recognition of the waters at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. There were four types of waters discovered in Excelsior Springs -- Saline Sulphur, Iron-Manganese, Lithia and Neutral Waters (calcium), and Soda - and twenty separate mineral springs. Adding to Excelsior Springs' unique position in mineral water history was the fact that it had two of the six known iron-manganese springs in the world, and the only two known commercially in the United States (in 1930).

⁵"History of the VA Hospital," 5. A 1959 aerial photograph shows both water towers standing next to each other.

⁶*Excelsior Springs: America's Haven of Health*, (Excelsior Springs, Missouri: Excelsior Springs Chamber of Commerce, 1930), foreword.

Numerous boarding houses, hotels, and clinics were constructed to accommodate the influx of visitors to the community. The construction of rail lines made the city more accessible and it began to be increasingly used as a convention center as well. The mineral waters of the city were not only prescribed for internal use by the many physicians and clinics in the town, but were used in baths as a part of most medical regimes. Most of the major hotels and clinics had bath departments. There were also numerous other bath houses in the city, most of which were located downtown. As noted in the 1930 Golden Jubilee celebration booklet:

It has been fully recognized that bathing is one of the most valuable curative agents employed in the modern watering place. The action of the waters is exerted on all the emunctories of the body, external and internal. Here, the tub, vapor, showers, sprays, local hot packs, electric light (dry heat) and massage each plays its part in hastening elimination, allaying local inflammation and easing pain.⁷

To the local citizenry, locating a veterans hospital in Excelsior Springs was a natural choice and served to seal the community's reputation as a national health resort. The golden jubilee booklet devotes a chapter to "A New Era" in Excelsior Springs, discussing recent enterprises which were "the result of intelligent planning and persistent fighting for a town meriting consideration and recognition."⁸ Of the numerous construction projects that were undertaken at this period, the "dominating" program was the veterans' bureau hospital project. Not only was this project important in confirming the city's role as a national health resort, but the construction expenditures helped alleviate some of the economic woes of the Great Depression.

The Push for a VA Hospital: the Colonel E.L. Morse Years, 1896-1921

Colonel E. L. Morse, a prominent businessman and early promoter of Excelsior Springs, owned a large mansion on Beacon Hill in Excelsior Springs. Depending upon varying reports, he either unloaded his house and property to the federal government for use as a veterans hospital at an outrageous price, or he had to be talked into the lease and eventual sale. Morse and his second wife, Harriet, constructed their house in 1896. Newspaper descriptions of the two-story brick mansion noted that it faced northeast and had a porch, which extended across the front and the east side about half the length of the house. The parlor contained two fireplaces, one of mahogany and one of cherry. This latter fireplace is still extant, and was preserved as a part of the hospital by a special request of Mrs. Morse.

⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

In 1910, an addition was constructed which added a ballroom and enlarged the dining room on the first floor, and added two additional bedrooms above.

In May 1920, the Public Health Service approached Colonel Morse in order to lease his home for a hospital. Their first attempts were not successful. After Morse was called to Washington, D.C., in 1921 for negotiations, he agreed not only to lease his property, but to purchase additional lands and lease them as well. Under terms of the agreement, Morse was to alter and construct an addition to the house at his own expense, in accordance to plans approved by the Public Health Service.

When he returned to Excelsior Springs after completing negotiations for the property, Colonel Morse and his family were greeted by a welcoming demonstration for "cheerfully surrendering their home in the interest of the up-building of Excelsior Springs."⁹ Responding with a speech which primarily served as a rebuttal to those who doubted his altruistic efforts, Colonel Morse declared that:

I have always been obsessed with the idea that it would be a great thing for the Government to become interested in this health resort and to establish a hospital or an institution that would help us in our struggles to make this the greatest health resort on the American continent. It means much to every one and all of us. More than nine hundred thousand dollars will be spent among our people annually. It will bring people here from all parts of the United States for treatment and our mineral waters and baths will speed to recovery those who are afflicted. It is my firm conviction that more people will be cured here and in shorter time, than in any other institution of the like character in the United States -- and this will be done by the waters which will supplement and aid the work of those in charge of the hospital -- all of which will add fame and honor to our place as a health resort.¹⁰

The Veterans Hospital Years: 1921-1963

At the end of World War I, realizing that the returning wounded and disabled veterans from that war would require additional hospital space, the federal government organized the Public Health Service for the purpose of assisting veterans. When possible, that agency was aided by the American Legion, but efforts to hospitalize veterans was hampered by the fact that the Public Health Service did not have authority to purchase lands. Instead, the agency depended upon the ability to lease suitable properties. Excelsior Springs, a city nationally

⁹"History of the VA Hospital," 3.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 4-5.

known as a health resort, was one of the communities that attracted the notice of the Public Health Service. In addition to its reputation as a health resort, Excelsior Springs was also relatively close to a Kansas City, a major midwestern metropolitan area. There was also a suitable site in Excelsior Springs--the Morse residence. The large mansion was deemed adaptable for hospital purposes, and its location overlooking the downtown with adjoining vacant land was considered ideal.

After negotiations were complete for the leasing of the Morse residence and grounds, plans for the hospital were drawn up by the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks upon direction of the Public Health Service. In addition to the enlargement of the Morse residence, which was to be the main building, the plans for the complex included seven buildings: a boiler house; garage; receiving and surgical section; dietetic and recreation building; two officer's duplex buildings; and a nurses' home. The dietetic and recreational section and the receiving and surgical section were each planned as separate buildings joined to the main building by enclosed corridors. Four cottages were already on the "reservation;" Cottage No. 1 was upgraded to livable condition, but was planned for demolition at a later date.

Work on the complex began in May 1921 under the supervision of Colonel Morse, and in April 1922, the Acting Surgeon General of the Public Health Service declared the premises "ready for occupancy." Work was progressing towards completion of the plans, but in spite of this, the agency did not begin leasing the grounds at this time. This was due to the fact that the Veterans Bureau was formed during this period and veterans' hospitalization was no longer a responsibility of the Public Health Service. Work was then stopped at the Excelsior Springs site, the plans were destroyed, and it was reported that the project was to be discontinued. After a storm of protest by groups such as the American Legion, Missouri Senator James A. Reed was pressed to investigate. Through the efforts of Senator Reed, the many benefits of continuing with the Excelsior Springs site were advanced. First, considerable effort and expense had already gone into the project. Second, there were nearly unlimited opportunities for expansion, due to the size of the grounds. The newly charged board of the Veterans Bureau thus reconsidered the Excelsior Springs project and decided to purchase the site outright. The purchase price was \$116,000, plus \$66,000 for alterations already made. The purchase was officially recorded on July 26, 1922.

Upon sale of the property, it was found that the work on the hospital site was unfinished. The Bureau of Yards and Docks prepared new plans to complete the facilities. A south wing was added for the kitchen, mess hall, attendants' dormitories and dressing rooms. Four cottages at the southern boundary were also acquired for personnel quarters. The estimated cost for carrying out these plans, together with new sewer and steam lines, roads, and equipment for a 150-bed hospital was \$200,000.00. Work could not begin immediately, however, as there were no funds available in the recently-formed Veterans Bureau.

Even after the sale of the property, the Excelsior Springs site was still the subject of many newspaper articles and editorials. Several reports decrying the waste and allegations which covered a variety of controversial issues were prevalent during this period. It was the opinion of some that the fact that a kitchen and mess hall were not provided for in the original plans was proof that the government did not really intend to use the hospital when the project was first launched. Others felt that the site selection was politically influenced. This view was particularly prevalent among army officers who preferred that veterans hospitals be located at army posts, such as Fort Leavenworth.¹¹ Shortly after construction began again in 1923, an investigation of the Veterans Bureau was called for by the Hearst newspapers. The Excelsior Springs site became embroiled in a political controversy led by foes of Colonel Morse who charged that the price paid for the home and land was exorbitant; the property, situated on a barren rocky cliff, was too isolated and inaccessible for its purpose; and that the administration had used favoritism in selecting the site. Although the investigation which eventually exonerated Colonel Morse slowed down the progress of construction, work continued throughout the proceedings. One worthwhile result of the investigation is the inventory which was published.¹² An appraisal of the property in 1923 related some of the features extant at that time:

- Main building -- 126,243 cubic feet
- Porches -- 52,000 cubic feet
- 18 lots
- 1,100 feet of "granitoid" sidewalk
- 800 feet of curbing
- 564' driveway with curbing on each side
- 400' sidewalk and steps from house to road
- Pressed brick garage building
- Grading, "shrubbery and other outside improvements"¹³

The exterior of the south wing of the main building was completed in August 1924. Kitchens and baths were added to three of the four cottages on the five and one-half acres of additional land which had been purchased to the south, and the fourth was demolished. Additionally, a three car garage was built.

Rumors were circulating that the hospital would either be a tubercular or neuropsychiatric hospital, but official word in October 1924 was that it was to be "General Medical and Surgical." A dedication ceremony for the 125-bed hospital was held on Armistice Day,

¹¹"Government Waste is Typified in Excelsior Springs Project," *Kansas City Times*, 17 January 1923.

¹²Due to the later destruction of records, this would prove valuable for research purposes.

¹³"History of the VA Hospital," 20.

November 11, 1924. A bill authorizing appropriation of funds to increase the bed capacity to 300 was passed in 1928. Such a large increase in capacity required additional buildings, not just an increase in size to the main hospital. Plans drawn up for that purpose showed that additional land was thus required. Two acres were purchased in 1929, and another one-half acre in 1930. The hospital closed for these alterations and was evacuated in the fall of 1929. Construction began numerous projects on December 29, 1929, including alterations to Building 5 and the construction of Buildings 12, 13, and 14.

Alterations to Building 5 (main hospital building): Addition to south wing; installation of new vacuum return piping system; installation of elevator no. 2 and dumbwaiter in kitchen.

Construction of Buildings 12, 13, and 14

Erection of flag pole

Construction of corridor between buildings 5 and 13.

Addition to the boiler house

Outside service systems

All roads, walks, drainage and grading

Construction of 75,000 gallon water tank and tower

Installation of Zeolite water softening system

The hospital re-opened on August 30, 1930 with an official bed capacity of 290 beds, but the first patient was not admitted until January 5, 1931. In addition to the functional buildings constructed for the increased medical duties of the complex, this site expansion included a large amount of landscape work. A special "Veterans' Hospital Edition" of the local newspaper, *The Daily Standard*, recorded that "an elaborate installation of shrubbery" was included with this phase of construction.¹⁴ A description of the complex at this time noted that grounds on the rolling northeast slope of Beacon Hill were covered with a,

natural growth of oak, walnut, elm and other valuable trees. The landscaping has been undergoing a steady program of improvement and it is now supervised by a full-time gardener. Lawns have been improved through the efforts of the utility crew under the charge of the foreman. Every effort is being bent toward making the Government reservation an outstanding project from the landscaping point of view and future years will rapidly show the results of the efforts directed toward that objective.¹⁵

¹⁴"Pay Tribute to Veterans and Facility," *Daily Standard*, 11 November 1934, Veterans' Hospital Edition, 3.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

Extensive construction work continued at the Veterans Hospital complex during the early 1930s, which greatly helped sustain the economy of Excelsior Springs during the Depression. Other projects on the reservation at this time included a Howe platform scale (1930, south of building 6), Buildings 23 and 24 (1930, Officer's duplex quarters, extant), and Building 17 (1931, a sixteen-car personnel garage later replaced by a different building). Over the next twenty years, nine buildings and two structures were built at the VA Hospital reservation.

Most of the medical services at the hospital during the first decade of its operation were surgical. From its opening through November 1, 1934, approximately 12,000 patients received treatment. At this time, there were nearly 80 institutions in the United States devoted to the care of ex-service men and women. In February 1941, the hospital's classification was changed from "General Medical and Surgical" to "Tuberculosis." In April of that year, the Regional Office of the Veterans Administration moved to the hospital at Excelsior Springs, where it remained until January 1944.

In the 1950s, the Veterans Administration reassessed their hospitals, and in 1956 decided that the hospital in Excelsior Springs was obsolete. In September 1958, the Excelsior Springs station was consolidated with the VA Hospital Center in Wadsworth, Kansas, and placed under one management. New patients had a choice of which hospital they would go to, but most were steered towards Wadsworth. The Excelsior Springs VA Hospital was eventually closed on July 31, 1963. Its closing followed a pattern established by the Veterans Administration a decade earlier. In 1954, there were twenty-one tuberculosis hospitals under the administration of the VA, with a capacity of 17,000 beds. By 1963, there were only seven hospitals with 7,000 beds.

In 1965, the VA hospital was "mothballed" and the maintenance crew was transferred to other institutions by the end of May. A newspaper article from that year noted that a variety of proposed uses were being considered for the site, either a school for girls, a junior college, or a Job Corps training center.¹⁶ Just before its closing, a new roof on a building, a fireproof metal ceiling, a new sprinkler system, a 200,000 gallon water tower, and two boiler units were installed on the premises.

The Job Corps Center Years: 1965-1996

A new use for the former Veterans Administration Hospital complex was found by the end of 1965. Approximately \$375,000.00 was spent initially spent to rehabilitate the former VA hospital as a women's job corps center. A newspaper reported in late 1965 that the center would be able to train 385 women to be "employable, self-confident individuals who will

¹⁶"VA Hospital Goes Into Moth Balls," *Kansas City Times*, 1 April 1965.

make good mothers and good housewives.”¹⁷ Operations were expected to begin in late January or early February of 1966, with an expected staff of 140 persons. Most of “rehabilitation” work was clearing, painting, moving walls, installing new electrical fixtures and purchasing educational equipment. Five women’s Job Corps centers were operating in 1965, training 13,000 women from ages 16-21. The nearest center at that time was in Omaha, Nebraska.

Today the Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center trains both young men and women between the ages of 16 to 25 years who qualify for eligibility. Vocation programs include business clerical, health occupations, culinary arts, welding, painting, carpentry, cement masonry, apartment/building maintenance (HBI), and advanced training programs in transportation communications and a college program.

Since becoming a Job Corps Center, numerous private companies have sub-contracted with the Department of Labor for the management of the reservation. Many records have been lost during the change from one management agency to another. From the record of construction during the VA Hospital years, it is apparent that many historic buildings have been demolished, and several new buildings have been constructed in their place. Some of the newer buildings at the Job Corps Center, such as the Culinary Arts Building, were constructed by Job Corps students.

¹⁷“Push VA Hospital Change to Job Corps Center,” *Kansas City Star*, 7 November 1965.

II. Architectural Information

A. Exterior Descriptions of Buildings/Structures

There are twenty-two buildings (including one under construction) and three structures on the complex, as well as an interior road system. Each building has been assigned an on-site number, and in some cases, a name. The numbers have remained constant from the time of the Veterans Administration years, but the names have often changed. Numbers to buildings have been reassigned, too, as older buildings have been demolished and newer ones constructed in their place. Of the twenty-two buildings, nine were determined to be at least 50 years old in a previous survey.¹⁸ All of the structures are less than 50 years old. The buildings range in size from the small gate house (Building #3) and storage units to the very large former main hospital building (Building #5).

Building #3 (the non-historic Gate House) is a small stucco building with hip roof. It is located in the center of a narrow radius circle drive, and has entry doors on both sides of the building by each drive. Immediately south of the Gate House is Building #40 (Security offices; post-1946 construction). This one story rectangular building has a low-pitched gabled hip roof and is constructed of concrete block. It has a variety of window types, from one-over-one double-hung windows to rectangular windows with glass block panes.

Across the main drive to the east are a group of three connected historic buildings. Building #5, the Veterans Bureau Hospital (now Humphrey Hall), is the largest. This L-shaped stucco building with flat roof was originally the Colonel E.L. Morse residence, a two-story brick home constructed in 1896. In 1921, a third story was added to the house and a west wing constructed. A south wing was built in 1929-30. The present building is three stories tall on the north end, and four stories on the southeast. Verandah porches with large square stucco posts extend three stories in height and wrap around the north end of the building. The double-hung windows are tall and narrow, varying from one-over-one to twelve-over-twelve; some are covered, and many are altered. Portions of the exterior of Building #5 are in poor condition.

Building #12 is connected to the west end of Building #5, forming another "ell" with the wing extending to the north. This masonry building with stucco exterior is set into the north hillside, and is one story in height on the south, and two stories on the north. A slightly projecting entry bay on the southwest end has a gabled hip portico. The original portion of this building was constructed in 1929; a later addition on the north is post-1938.

¹⁸Deon Wolfenbarger, "Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center: Historic/Architectural Survey," 3 June 1996.

Set within the southwest ell of Building #5 is Building #13, Armstrong Social Hall. It is connected to the south wing of the former hospital by a two-story walkway. This Neo-Classical Revival masonry building has a stucco exterior and basic rectangular floor plan with projecting blocks. Also set in a hillside, it is two and one-half stories in height on the east, and one story on the west. The north facade has a full height two-story porch set on a raised stone basement foundation. The flat roof porch has an entablature supported by four simple Doric columns. Other classically inspired features include: the multi-paned double-hung windows, with accentuated surrounds featuring keystones; the projecting gable roof with end returns featuring a wide cornice band below; corner quoins; and accentuated entry doors with either round fanlights or pediments above.

Building #17, located south of Building #40, is separated from it by a long, narrow parking area located on the west side of the main drive. It serves as the business and clerical offices. This non-historic one-story building has a flat roof and brick veneer exterior. South of this building is Roosevelt Hall, Building #14. Originally constructed as nurses' quarters in 1929-30, this two-story Classical Revival building is set on a high foundation of coursed ashlar, dressed-face stone. The upper walls are covered with stucco. The hip roof has dormers and a classical cornice band beneath the slightly projecting eaves. The symmetrical facade features a slightly projecting central bay with gable roof. Other classically-inspired elements include the multi-pane double-hung windows and end porches with Doric columns.

At the southwest corner of the main drive are Buildings #23 and #24, originally constructed in 1930-31 as officers' duplex quarters. These identical two-story Colonial Revival stucco buildings have Adamesque detailing, found in the accentuated pedimented entry doors, multi-paned windows, steeply pitched gable roofs with stepped-end parapets, and modillions on narrow cornice bands.

Several non-historic buildings are located at the south and southeastern portions of the complex. Buildings #32 (Arts/Crafts), #2 (Education), #8 (Gymnasium), #36 (Female dormitory), #41 (storage), #33 (Health Occupation), #11 and #15 (storage sheds), #6 (Vocational Building Trades), and #16 (Culinary Arts) are all non-historic. They are all wood frame buildings except for #6, which is concrete block.

Building #28 (Building and Apartment Maintenance) was constructed in 1937-38. The one-story concrete block building with flat roof is one story in height on the west, and two stories on the east. It has double metal entry doors with ramp and stair access. The 6/3 metal frame windows are pivoted.

Building #7, originally the boiler house is composed of multiple additions constructed over the years and is presently connected to Building #10 (Vocational Trades Storage). The

oldest portion of the building was constructed in 1921, and has hollow clay tile walls and gable roofs. Additional sections are constructed of concrete block or are covered with artificial siding. There is a tall, cylindrical brick boiler stack.

B. Cultural Landscape

The Veterans Administration Hospital in Excelsior Springs, Missouri is a twenty-five acre site located between St. Louis Avenue and Kansas City Avenue/Lake Mauer Road south of Leavenworth Avenue. Only one entrance to the site, from St. Louis Avenue south of Sycamore, is open. The complex is situated on a hill overlooking the Fishing River valley and the downtown. A high chain link fence surrounds the vast majority of the long, narrow site, although a low limestone retaining wall with quarry-faced ashlar work and dressed stone coping forms the boundary on the northwest end of the property.

The main vehicular entry is located between the Gate House (Building No. 3) and Building No. 40. A parking area is located on the east side of the latter building, and on the east side of the main drive at the north end. The main drive continues south, running parallel to St. Louis Avenue, until it reaches the lower one-third of the property. The drive then circles around and extends north past the former hospital building and exits past the Gate House. A large green space is encircled by the main drive. It has rolling topography covered with grassed lawns and dotted with mature deciduous trees. Within the southern portion of this green space are non-historic wood gazebos and a pavilion. The athletic fields are located in the southernmost corner of the complex, and feature a small dug-out. Adjacent is a non-historic metal water tower.

Although no historic site plans have been found, historic photographs located in the Excelsior Springs Museum reveal that the vehicular system appears to retain its integrity from the period of occupation by the Veterans Hospital Administration. The existing mature deciduous shade trees also probably date from this period. However, photo postcards and aerial views show a much denser concentration of plant material than is presently on site, both in shade trees and shrub vegetation. These historic views also reveal the location of buildings which have been demolished. Most of the present non-historic buildings have been constructed on the site of the demolished buildings, leaving the central open space intact from its period of historic significance.

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