

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER, RECREATION
BUILDING
(Chapel)
(Building No. 63)
200 East Beach Boulevard
Gulfport
Harrison County
Mississippi

HABS MS-269-Q
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHAPEL

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, GULFPORT MEDICAL CENTER
(Building No.63)

HABS No. MS-269-Q

Location: East Beach Blvd, Gulfport, Harrison County, MS

Significance: The Gulfport Medical Center, originally referred to as Gulfport Veterans Neuropsychiatric Hospital, was established in 1923. It is among the earliest Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals designed from a modern prototype plan and health care delivery philosophy. Building 63, built in 1931, is one several buildings added to the original hospital complex.

Description: Building 63 was originally named the Recreation Building. Located at the south of the hospital grounds, adjacent to the main gate, Building 63 faces due east, opposite Building 64. A one story building containing 8,845 square feet, its style can be termed Spanish Mission, expressed in the parapet top, portico, round arched windows, quatrefoil window, wrought iron railings, and "balcony" on front facade. Constructed of reinforced concrete and hollow block, the original exterior wall finish was stucco, with door and window trim of cast concrete, and tile roof. Original plans show an auditorium with stage, to be used for motion pictures, patient's parties, and dancing. In 1961 the auditorium received an altar, communion rail, and pews. A bible study room and chaplains offices replaced the billiard, library and reading rooms. A bell tower was added, and the building was renamed Chapel.

Exterior walls are currently covered in Dryvit cladding. The original divided light wood sashes have been replaced with anodized aluminum insulated windows.

History: In 1921 the newly established Veterans Bureau had initiated a massive construction campaign to produce prototype buildings that would promote the latest practices in medicine and psychiatry. With campus-like sites on the outskirts of towns, the fifty properties derived from this prototype, built in the 1920's, 30's and early 40's, constituted the "Architectural Set." Building 63 is a typical example of this coherent design philosophy within the Veterans Bureau. The VA vacated the Gulfport Medical Center in 2005, just prior to Hurricane Katrina, which heavily damaged the site.

Sources: Original construction and subsequent alteration drawings, Gulfport Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Kathleen Schamel, Historic Preservation web pages, Office of Construction and Facilities Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, <http://www.va.gov/facmgt/historic/>

Historian: Joseph E.B. Elliott, contract photographer and historian, 2008.

