

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
South side of Officers Row, Naval Hospital Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6206-I

HABS
PA-6206-I

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

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Location: South side of Officers Row, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

USGS Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.484810.4417130

Present Owner: United States Department of the Navy

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Building B/C, a twin or duplex dwelling constructed in 1935 to serve as living quarters for the Naval Hospital's chief medical and surgical officers, was designed and built as an element of the original hospital complex. With its fellow 1930s Naval Hospital buildings, Building B/C represents an important example of Art Deco architectural design in an institutional setting.

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 2)

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY:

1. Date of Erection: Building B/C was built in 1935.
2. Architect: Building B/C was designed by the firm of Karcher and Smith, which drafted the plans for the overall Naval Hospital Philadelphia complex in 1932.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The United States acquired the land upon which Building B/C was subsequently built on 11 March 1932 from Samuel S. Simon. The Navy has been the custodian of the property since that time.
4. Alterations and Additions: Physical evidence indicates that the kitchen in each quarters was renovated around 1976. This remaking of one room, which entailed the application of vinyl flooring and the installation of new cabinets, was evidently the only alteration of any scope undertaken on the building.

B. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Building B/C served as the Hospital's chief surgeon and chief medical officer's residence from its completion in 1935 until the Hospital's closing in 1993. The building has been unoccupied since the Hospital's closing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT:

1. Architectural Character: Building B/C, a twin or duplex residential building, is a two-story, flat-roofed, embankment-sited structure built of brick masonry. The footprint of the building's main block is rectangular, but the presence of one-story enclosed porches against the east and west walls confers an irregularity of shape to the overall structure. Due to the embankment siting, the building's full basement is revealed to the north. In overall design, including structural system, plan, and decorative detail, the two quarters represent mirror versions of each other. As a duplex, Building B/C in effect presents principal facades on both the east and west walls, each facade framing the principal entry for the respective quarters. These principal facades are designed with three evenly spaced bays with the entry in the center bay. The presence of the enclosed porch, beginning at the north end and

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 3)

extending somewhat more than halfway across the facade, however, makes the design asymmetrical. The six- and four-bay design of the building's south and north facades is symmetrical, reinforcing the architectural harmony of Building B/C with the flanking senior officers' quarters, Buildings A (HABS No. PA-6206-H) and D.

The exterior architecture of the entire original Naval Hospital Philadelphia complex of 1935 exemplifies the Art Deco architectural movement. Like the two neighboring quarters buildings (Buildings A [HABS No. PA-6206-H] and D), Building B/C repeats the cream- and buff-colored brickwork, the limestone and aluminum trim, the verticality of design elements, and the Art Deco detailing of Building 1 (HABS No. PA-6206-A) and the other larger buildings of the complex. In its interior, however, and again in a manner similar to the other small quarters, the stylistic character of Building B/C is representative of Colonial Revival, evinced in an essentially Georgian-type floor plan for each quarters, crown-molded cornices, six-over-six window sash, a Greek Revival mantelpiece, and a principal stairway with a scrolled handrail and turned balusters.

2. Condition of Fabric: The overall building is in fair condition.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

1. Overall Dimensions: The two-story main block measures approximately 56x40 feet. The enclosed porches measure about 26x14 feet. They are oriented with their long walls running parallel to the east and west walls of the main block, beginning at the north end.
2. Foundations: The foundation consists of poured concrete.
3. Structural Systems/Walls: The walls of the main block are constructed of common bond brick masonry, generally laid with an interval of one header course to every five courses of stretchers. The walls are composed mainly of cream-colored brick, but the space above each first- and second-story window opening is filled by a vertical band of buff-colored brick embellished with vertical courses of dog-tooth bricks. Limestone coping serves as the cornice treatment. This coping is recessed above the window bays, which conveys a visual impression of the main wall surface as consisting of a series of brickwork piers. On each of the four elevations, a series of five or six vertically aligned limestone panels, similar to those on neighboring quarters Buildings A (HABS No. PA-6206-H) and D, is inset at regular intervals in the cream-colored brick walling.

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 4)

4. Porches: There are flat-roofed, one-story enclosed porches set against the east and west facades of Building B/C, each one serving as the front porch for its respective quarters. The principal entry for each quarters is situated within the porch, which extends from the north end of the facade across two of the three bays. Three piers of brick masonry, two at the corners and one intervening, support the roof. Apart from these piers, the porch walls consist, proceeding from base to top, of brick foundation and skirting wall, tripled window sash, and a frieze of aluminum paneling under a coping of sheet metal. The aluminum panels are incised with vertical lines.
5. Chimneys: Although not visible from ground level, a single interior chimney pile carrying flues for both Building B and C penetrates the middle of the buildings' roof toward the southern elevation.
6. Openings:
 - a. Entries and Doors: The principal entries for the twin quarters are located in the respective center bays of the east and west facades and are situated within the enclosed porches. The principal entries are fitted with six-panel wooden doors. A basement-level secondary entry for each quarters is located on the north facade, toward the center of the overall building. It is fitted with a sash door with a single, long, vertical light over a wooden panel. Each of the two enclosed porches has an entry in the center of its south facade; this entry holds a sash door with 12 lights over a wooden panel. The single-bay integral basement garage for each quarters is served by a vehicle entry located beneath the porch at either end of the north facade. This vehicle entry is fitted with a four-piece folding overhead aluminum door; the second piece from the top holds four window lights.
 - b. Windows: For the first and second stories, the east and west entry facades of the main block are arranged in three bays, the south and north facades in six bays. The bays on the south facade and the four central bays on the north facade are grouped in pairs. The basement wall on the north elevation departs from the fenestration scheme of the upper building, with an arrangement of 10 bays, five per quarter, not aligned with those above them. The two basement entry bays, located in the center of the north facade, have additional windows flanking the entries. Each enclosed porch is designed with three bands of triple windows, two on the east or west elevation and one on the north, and windows flanking the porch entry on the south.

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 5)

Almost the entire window sash of the building are of the wooden six-over-six double-hung type, protected by one-over-one aluminum storm sash. The exceptions are the narrow window openings on the north basement wall and the upper stories of the east and west elevations. Narrow two-over-two wooden sash flank either side of the secondary entries, and three-light casement windows occupy the basement's other narrow window openings. The narrower window openings in the center bays of the east and west walls are fitted with four-over-four double-hung wooden sash.

7. Roof:
 - a. Shape and Covering: The flat roof is covered with a built-up asphalt surface. A copper downspout is located on the north side of each porch.
 - b. Cornice: Limestone coping serves as the cornice.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

1. Floor Plans: The overall building is divided into twin residential quarters. The principal entries for the respective quarters are located on the east and west facades of the building. In each quarters, the first floor of the main block portion is divided evenly by a center stair passage running the depth of the unit, with a toilet room at the rear of the passage under the stairway. A spacious living room occupies the entire first-floor area on the south side of the passage. The northwest quarter of the main block is occupied by the dining room, the northeast quarter by the kitchen. A stairway south of the kitchen leads upwards to the second story and down to the basement. The central passage's stairway leads only to the second floor. The openings leading into the living and dining rooms from the passage are relatively broad and are not fitted with doors.

The center stair passage occupies the same location on the second floor, with the outer end of the passage divided into a bathroom and a closet. A master bedroom suite takes up the south side of the second floor, incorporating a bathroom and a walk-in closet situated against the inner wall (east or west wall, respectively). The north side is split between two bedrooms of equal size, each fitted with a built-in closet. The full basement contains a garage with an adjoining toilet room situated beneath the porch, a maid's apartment incorporating a bathroom in the northern outer quarter of the main block area, and a storage room on the south side of the main block.

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 6)

2. Stairways: The central passage's stairway leading from the first floor to the second floor is of the dogleg type, with an open stringer and a molded handrail supported by turned balusters and newels, the handrail scrolling at the base. The stairway off the kitchen is of the boxed variety and features a pipe handrail in Building B and a wooden handrail in Building C. The kitchen's flight to the second story joins the central passage's stairway at the dogleg's landing.
3. Flooring: Oak boards compose the flooring on the first and second floors; the basement and enclosed porch floors consist of poured concrete. The floor in the kitchen is covered with a vinyl surface.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls and ceilings are finished with plaster coated with paint throughout the first and second floors of the main block, except for the kitchen, where the plaster walls are covered with wallpaper. In the basement the walls are finished with plaster. A wall of structural tile serves as a partition between the garage and the remainder of the basement.
5. Openings: The doorway and window architraves throughout the first and second floors are trimmed with relatively simple curving moldings. The doors fitted to the interior doorways are wooden and of simple two-panel design, except for a doorway directly connecting the kitchen and dining room, which has six lights over a panel.
6. Decorative Features and Trim: In all of the first- and second-floor rooms, including the porches, the walls are trimmed with wooden baseboard and cornice molding. The most elaborate cornice work is found on the first floor in the stair passage, living room, and dining room, where crown molding has been lined with additional molding applied to the ceiling. The interior porch cornice bears simpler crown molding. The cornice trim on the second floor is limited to a simple quarter-round molding.

A fireplace is located in the living room; the chimney breast projects from the center of the room's inner wall (east or west wall, respectively). The wooden Greek Revival mantelpiece is decorated with triglyphs, and the hearth is composed of brick. A set of wooden built-in bookshelves is set to the north side of the chimney breast. A hanging china cupboard with a 10-light door is fitted to the dining room wall.

The kitchen was renovated around 1976, at which time modern, built-in, suspended cabinets were installed.

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 7)

7. Mechanical Equipment: The heating system operated via radiators concealed within the walls of the main block, with the heat diffusing to the rooms through metal grates installed in the wall surface. The enclosed porches are equipped with freestanding radiators. Most of the electrical system's fixtures have been removed. Exposed pipes for the plumbing are suspended from the basement ceiling.

D. SITE:

Building B/C is the center building in a row of three quarters for senior officers that extends eastward from the front plaza of the hospital complex. Like its fellows, Building B/C is separated by a strip of front lawn from the public thoroughfare of Pattison Avenue, with direct access to the street by a cement front walkway leading from the south end of the enclosed porch. The original perimeter fence of wrought-iron bars, fixed in a base of poured concrete, is accompanied on its interior side by a later chain-link security fence. The lawns around Building B/C are shaded by mature hardwood and evergreen trees, and shrubbery lines the building on every side. Brief driveways serving the building's two rear basement garages connect with Officers Row, an internal roadway on the Naval Hospital property. A stepped concrete walkway with a metal handrail leads from Pattison Avenue down the steep embankment to Officers Row.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: Bureau of Yards and Docks Nos. 115400 through 115641 (1932). On file at the Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- B. Cultural Resource Documentation: U.S. Department of the Navy, Northern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Cultural Resources Survey Form, Building B/C, Naval Hospital Philadelphia. Prepared by John Milner Associates, Inc., West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1993.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

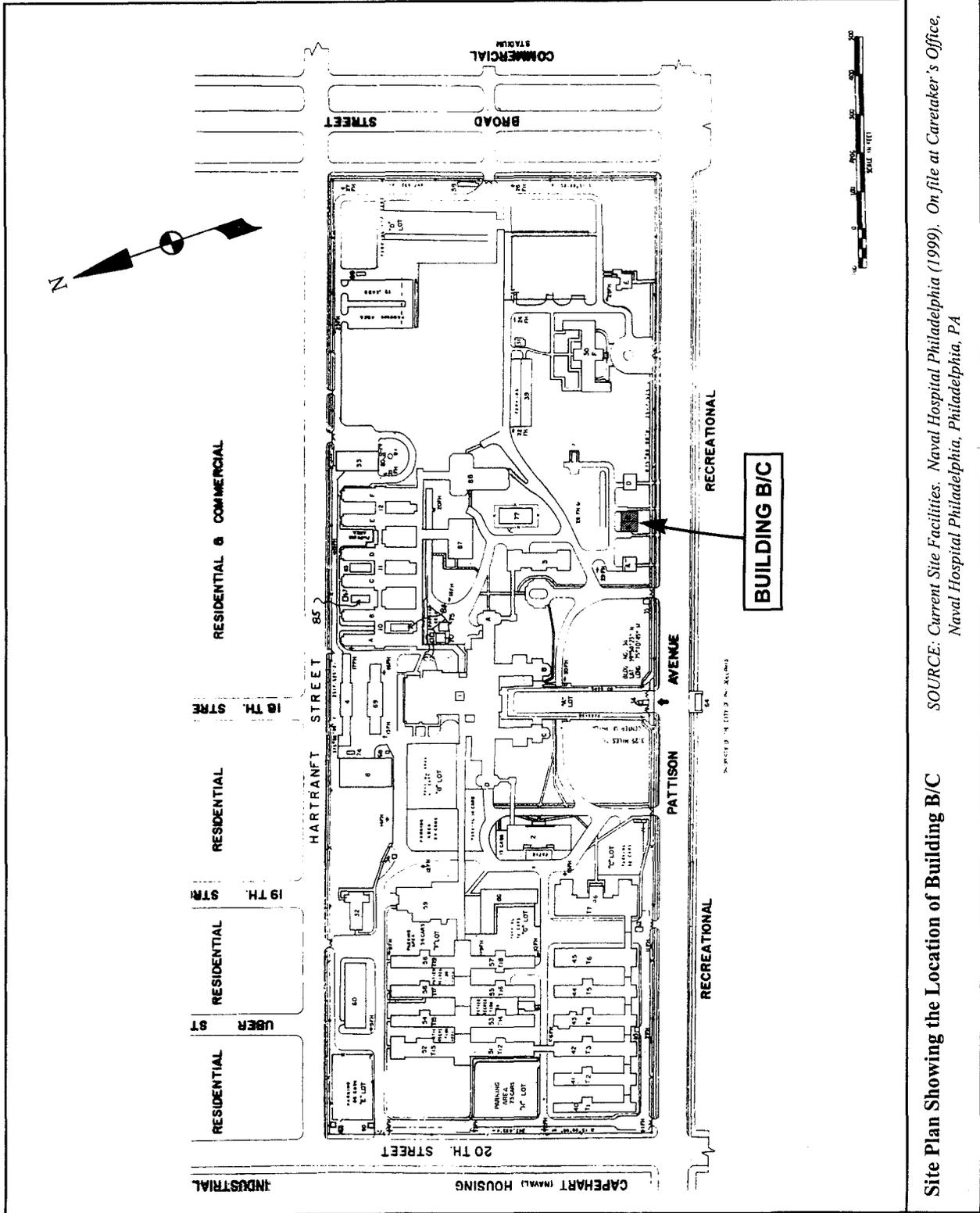
In 1990 the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended that Naval Hospital Philadelphia be closed. Several earlier studies conducted during the 1970s and 1980s had concluded that construction of a new hospital would be more efficient than fitting modern medical facilities and equipment into the existing building. In 1993 the Navy closed Naval Hospital Philadelphia and began studying reuse options for the site, including the disposal of the property. In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Navy's Northern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NORTHNAVFAC), undertook an architectural

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICERS' QUARTERS
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
HABS No. PA-6206-I
(Page 8)

and historical study of the Hospital property in order to evaluate its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, NORTHNAVFAC determined the Hospital eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district under Criterion A, for its association with naval medical facilities during World War II. Naval Hospital Philadelphia served as a center for all naval patients with residences east of the Rocky Mountains who required amputation, orthopedic, or prosthetic services, and as a treatment center for hearing- and vision-impaired veterans of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. NORTHNAVFAC also determined the original 1930s core of the Hospital as eligible under National Register Criterion C, as an architecturally coherent complex of Art Deco-style buildings. As a result of these findings, the Navy undertook this documentation of Building B/C and eight related buildings within the historic district, as well as a compilation of the historical narrative overview of the facility, prior to the Hospital's final disposition.

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Date: September 1999

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA,
 MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OFFICER'S QUARTERS
 (Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building B/C)
 HABS No. PA-6206-I
 (Page 9)



SOURCE: Current Site Facilities. Naval Hospital Philadelphia (1999). On file at Caretaker's Office, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Site Plan Showing the Location of Building B/C