

ADDENDUM TO:
NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS -
BATTLE MOUNTAIN SANITARIUM, PLUNGE BATH
(Hot Springs Veterans Administration Medical Center, Protestant
Chapel)
(VA Black Hills Health Care System - Hot Springs Campus, Building
No. 9)
500 North Fifth Street
Hot Springs
Fall River County
South Dakota

HABS SD-24-O
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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

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ADDENDUM TO

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS – BATTLE MOUNTAIN SANITARIUM, PLUNGE BATH (Hot Springs Veterans Administration Medical Center, Protestant Chapel) (VA Black Hills Health Care System - Hot Springs Campus, Building No. 9)

HABS No. SD-24-O

Location: 500 North 5th Street, Hot Springs, Fall River County, South Dakota

The coordinates for Building No. 9 are 43.437035 N, -103.477687 W, and they were obtained through Google Earth in December 2014 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Built between 1903 and 1907 as the original Plunge Bath for the Battle Mountain Sanitarium, Building No. 9 was later converted into a Lodge Hall and then a Protestant Chapel with maintenance shops below. The pavilion-plan hospital at Battle Mountain Sanitarium was designed by Omaha architect Thomas Rogers Kimball. The Mission Revival complex included an Administration Building, six wards, and a Mess Hall/Service Building arranged around a circular connecting corridor. Two small service wings were attached to sides of the Mess Hall building via connecting corridors. The original Plunge Bath was housed in the east wing. Battle Mountain Sanitarium was unique within the National Home system in its primary purpose as a medical facility. Veterans would travel for short term treatment of acute conditions before returning to other primarily residential NHDVS branches. They could remain at Battle Mountain only as long as their conditions showed improvement. Battle Mountain specialized in treatment of musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, and respiratory conditions, as well as skin diseases which would benefit from hydrotherapy in the mineral spring plunge pool.

Description: Building No. 9 is a Mission Revival structure with a red Spanish tile roof with decorative rafter ends and rusticated sandstone exterior foundations and walls. It is one-story high on a raised basement with three-sided bays at each of the end elevations. The roof form mirrors the three-sided end bays and includes prominent ridge tiles and galvanized metal ventilators. There is one exterior door added at grade level on the north end. The original entrance was inside the connecting corridor that attaches Building No. 9 to the Mess Hall at its side elevation. Small rectangular window openings defined by smooth dressed sandstone are located high on the wall just under the open eaves. Building No. 9 does not have any porches or chimneys.

The interior of Building No. 9 was divided into two floors during the 1930s. Originally this structure contained two thermal spring plunge baths for the

Sanitarium, with dressing rooms located in the center. The Plunge Bath interior had a high ceiling open to the exposed wood roof structure. Now the upper floor houses a Protestant Chapel, with the exposed roof structure ceiling intact. The interior walls are dressed sandstone blocks. Stained glass windows with Christian iconography are located in the Protestant Chapel. They are signed "Kansas City Art Glass Works, Designed by Paul McNeely, 1958." Offices and a water closet occupy the south section of this level. The Chapel includes wood pews and altar furnishings and a linoleum tile floor. The lower level became maintenance shops. Some remnant of the tile walls and floor of the plunge bath are visible here.

History: See overview historical context HABS No. SD-24 for additional information on the Battle Mountain Sanitarium and the NHDVS, as well as a list of individual building reports.

Building No. 9 was built between 1903 and 1907 as the original Plunge Bath for the Battle Mountain Sanitarium of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). The pavilion-plan hospital at Battle Mountain Sanitarium was designed by Omaha architect Thomas Rogers Kimball. The Mission Revival complex included an Administration Building, six wards, and a Mess Hall/Service Building arranged around a circular connecting corridor. Two small service wings were attached to the rear of the connecting corridor flanking the Mess Hall. The original Plunge Bath was housed in the east wing (Figure 1).

Battle Mountain Sanitarium was unique within the National Home system in its primary purpose as a medical facility. Veterans would travel for short term treatment of acute conditions before returning to other primarily residential NHDVS branches. They could remain at Battle Mountain only as long as their conditions showed improvement. Battle Mountain specialized in treatment of musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, and respiratory conditions, as well as skin diseases which would benefit from hydrotherapy in the mineral spring plunge pool. The *Hot Springs Weekly Star* noted when the Sanitarium opened that "the medicinal hot water is furnished from Mammoth spring to all parts of the building. Two fine plunge baths are supplied with hot and cold water."¹ Another early newspaper article included veteran Thomas Mays' description of the Plunge Bath:

The supply of hot water is ample, varying from 76 to 96 degrees, and is very clear and pure. A popular and attractive feature of the sanitarium is what is called the 'plunge bath' in a pool of sparkling water, say fifty feet long by 35 wide, built in the circles with the other structures and equipped with every convenience, ropes dropping from the ceiling like a gymnasium where one can exercise if they so desire, steps leading to the water, or a

¹ "Million Dollar Sanitarium for Veterans," *Hot Springs Weekly Star*, 17 May 1907, 3.

springboard for a sudden plunge, etc. It sure does brighten one up when they are able to stand this manner of bathing."²

The benefits of hydrotherapy inspired the construction of Battle Mountain Sanitarium and remained an important part of the treatment regimen here for several decades (Figure 2).

In 1930, NHDVS was reorganized into a new Veterans Administration. The NHDVS was no longer an autonomous agency; now their primarily domiciliary services were just one of many offered by the Veterans Administration. At this time the tuberculosis hospital built by the Veterans Bureau in 1925-26 began to be used for general medical care. The original hospital now functioned as a 548-bed domiciliary, while the 1920s hospital was a 255-bed medical/surgical facility. With the wards serving as dormitory-style living quarters for veterans, this original portion of the Battle Mountain Sanitarium was now a residential facility like the other NHDVS branches. By the mid-1930s the Plunge Bath in Building No. 9 was discontinued and the space divided into maintenance shops below and a "Lodge Hall" above for the use of resident veterans (Figure 3).

By the late 1950s, the Lodge Hall on the upper floor was converted into a Protestant Chapel (Figures 4 and 5). Prior to this time, the auditorium in Building No. 11 (added 1914) was used as the chapel for all religious services.³ Before construction of Building No. 11 a room in one of the wards was used as a makeshift chapel.⁴ At the same time that Building No. 9 was converted, the upper level of the other service wing, Building No. 10, became the Catholic Chapel. Offices for the respective clergy were provided at the south end of each building. Stained glass windows were added to both sanctuaries in 1958.

Sources: *Celebrating a Century of Caring for America's Heroes - VAMC Hot Springs, South Dakota, 1907-2007*, (2007) [100th Anniversary booklet].

Elks National Service Commission and Hot Springs Lodge, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Pictorial Portrayal of the Hot Springs Veterans Administration Center on the Occasion of its Fiftieth Anniversary*. May 1957.

Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, Ph.D., HABS Staff Historian

² "Great National Sanitarium," *Hot Springs Weekly Star*, 31 January 1908.

³ NHDVS Board of Managers, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1914* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1915), 223.

⁴ Inspector-General's Office, *Inspection Report – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1913), 49.

Project

Information: Documentation of Building No. 9 at the Battle Mountain Sanitarium of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was undertaken in 2013-14 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs division of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Office of Construction and Facilities Management, Kathleen Schamel, Federal Preservation Officer. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine Lavoie, Chief, HABS; and by Douglas Pulak, Deputy Federal Preservation Officer, DVA. The field work was undertaken and the measured drawings were produced by Project Supervisor Mark Schara, AIA, HABS Architect, HABS Architects Paul Davidson, Daniel De Sousa, and Ryan Pierce, Jobie Hill (University of Oregon) and Emma Greenberg (Louisiana State University). The historical reports were written by HABS Historian Lisa P. Davidson. The large format photography was undertaken in 2008 by HABS Photographer James W. Rosenthal and in 2013 by HABS Contract Photography Renee Bieretz. Vital assistance was provided by Dena Sanford at the Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, and by Patrick Lyke, Douglas Sprinkle, and other VA staff members at the Hot Springs Campus.

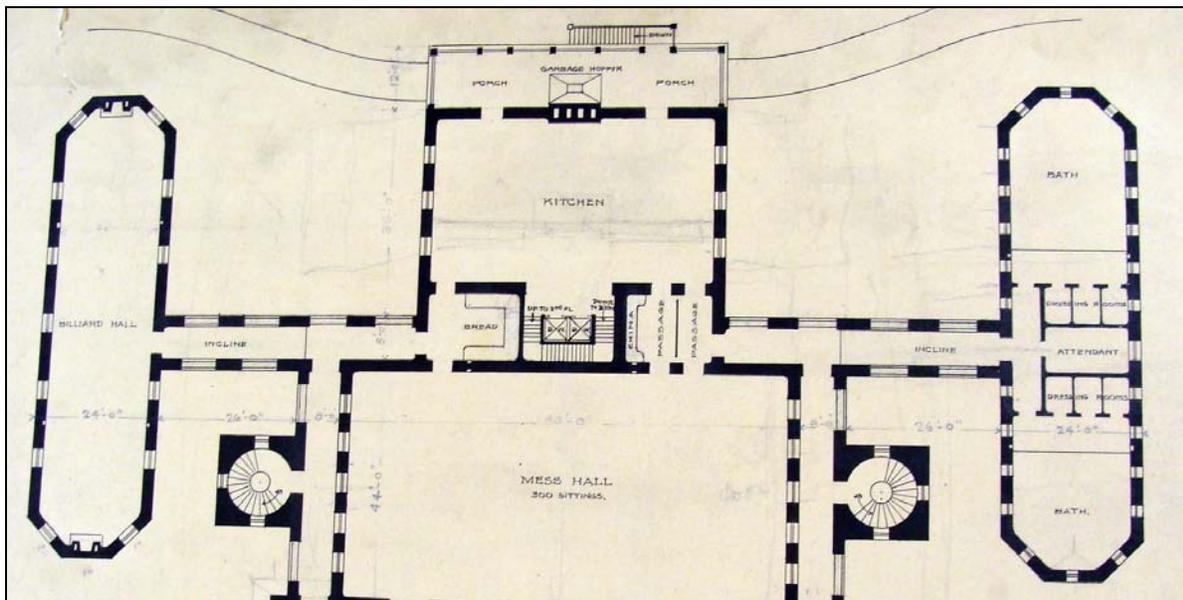


Figure 1: Excerpt of "Proposed Battle Mountain Sanitarium First Floor Plan," c. 1902
Building No. 9 is on the right. Note two plunge baths with dressing rooms.
Source: Kimball Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society

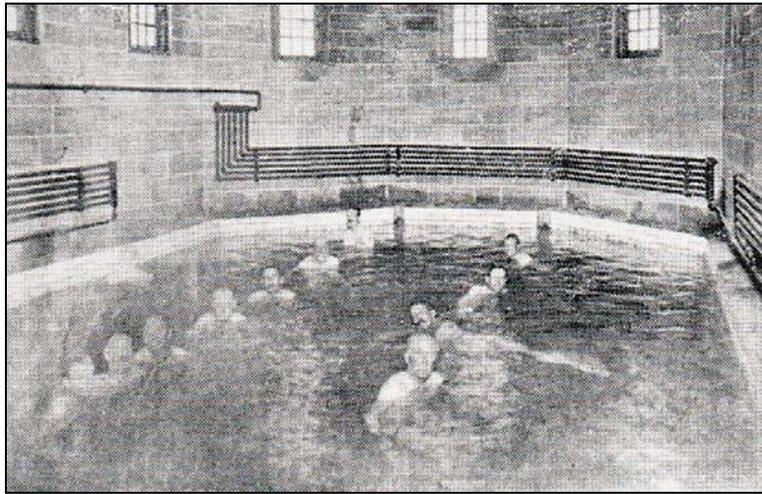


Figure 2: Veterans in the Plunge Bath, n.d.
Source: *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Pictorial Portrayal of the Hot Springs Veterans Administration Center on the Occasion of its Fiftieth Anniversary.*

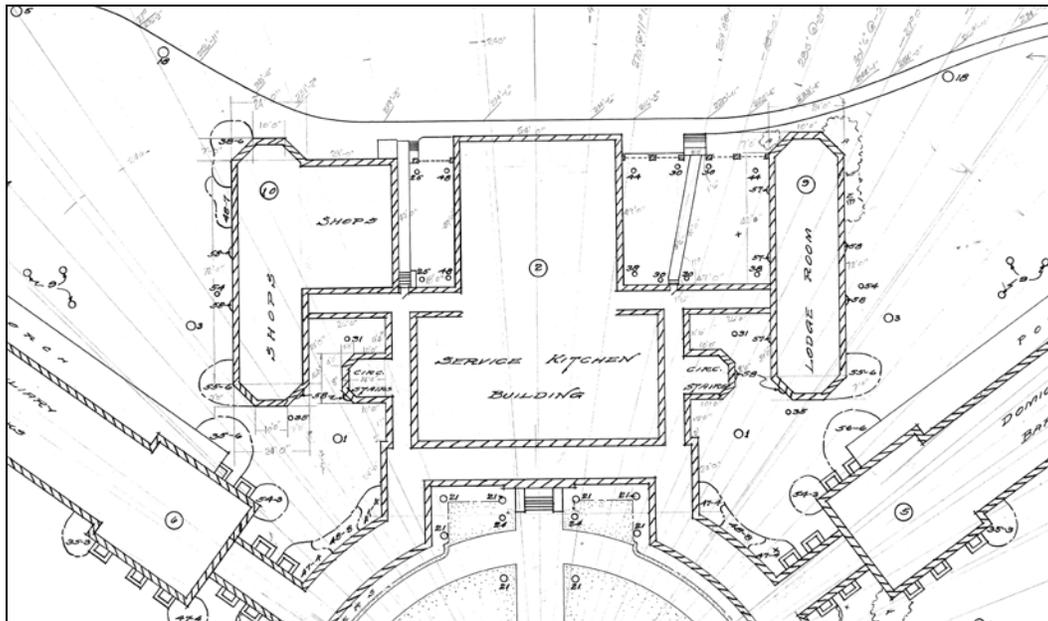


Figure 3: Detail of "Planting Plan, Hot Springs, SD - Buildings Nos. 2, 4 to 7, 9, 10 & Area,"
(4 April 1944)
Source: Hot Springs Campus Drawing Files



Figure 5: Interior of Protestant Chapel, c. 1955
Note original windows have not yet been replaced with stained glass.
Source: Battle Mountain VA Museum Collection