

FORT BLISS, WILLIAM BEAUMONT GENERAL HOSPITAL,  
MEDICAL SUPPLY WAREHOUSE

HABS No. TX-3339-K

(Building Number 7133)

Lazear Street

El Paso

El Paso County

Texas

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Southwest System Support Office  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 728  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

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- Location: Lazear Street, Fort Bliss, William Beaumont Army Medical Center, El Paso, El Paso County, Texas. The property is bounded by Fred Wilson Road to the north, Dyer Street to the east, Hayes Avenue to the south, and Alabama Street to the west.
- Present Owner: United States Army
- Original Use: Medical Supply Warehouse
- Present Use: Inactive
- Significance: This building is deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A and C as a contributing element to the proposed William Beaumont General Hospital Historic District (WBGHHD). This district encompasses the permanent and semi-permanent buildings constructed in the WBGH area at Fort Bliss between 1921 and 1945. These buildings contribute to the understanding of the hospital's role of providing medical service to thousands of American soldiers and their dependents during periods of both war and peace. The original wards no longer exist; however, the remaining buildings in the proposed WBGHHD depict the administrative, social and recreational environment of the hospital during the period of significance. Even though the period of construction of the buildings within the proposed WBGHHD spans over twenty years, they form a cohesive environment based on architectural styles, construction materials, and geographic proximity. Furthermore, this building meets NRHP criteria in that it possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Original Construction Date: 1933
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Army
4. Builders, Contractors and Suppliers: J.E. Morgan & Sons
5. Original Plans and Construction: Rectangular in plan, the building essentially retains its original 1933 exterior appearance and building footprint. The main floor is open plan, free span space as originally designed. The basement (lower) level has structural concrete columns.
6. Alterations and Additions: The exterior configuration is one large mass, still maintaining the original character of the building. Only a small utility structure with stuccoed walls and a flat roof has been added to the east elevation. Within the interior the only addition is an unfinished stud wall with a chain link fence, located near the northwest end, by the stairs.

B. Historical Context:

William Beaumont General Hospital was one of the U.S. Army's five original general hospitals. It opened at Fort Bliss on July 1, 1921 although the facility was not fully completed until the following year. The hospital originally consisted of forty-eight tile and stucco buildings with a bed capacity of approximately 414. The staff consisted of six officers, two nurses, and thirty enlisted men. William Beaumont General Hospital's original mission was to provide general medical care to border patrol troops stationed at Fort Bliss. By the 1930s, however, the hospital was serving the entire western portion of the Army's Eighth Corps area, providing health care to soldiers stationed at posts in Arizona, New Mexico, and western Texas.

When Congress authorized a limited peacetime mobilization just prior to the nation's entry into World War II, the Army initiated a major expansion program at William Beaumont General Hospital to increase its ability to handle the medical needs of the greatly expanding Army. During the World War II era, the hospital received new wards, instructional buildings, quarters, storehouses, repair shops, and recreational facilities. This new construction pushed the total number of buildings at the hospital to 174 and the

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number of available beds to nearly 6,000. During the war, the William Beaumont General Hospital trained approximately 16,000 medical technicians, including over a thousand WAC recruits. The hospital also became a specialty center for plastic surgery, ophthalmic surgery, neuropsychiatry, and deep radiation therapy. In the last year of the war alone, some 26,358 patients received medical treatment at the hospital.

William Beaumont General Hospital was one of only ten of the Army's sixty-three general hospitals retained after World War II. Besides providing medical care to returning wounded soldiers during the conflicts in both Korea and Viet Nam, the hospital also provided general medicine and surgical services to veterans and personnel at Fort Bliss and other regional military installations. By the mid-1960s, the needs of the Army began to surpass the capabilities of the hospital. Consequently, the Army constructed a new, modern, twelve story facility to the west of the hospital. The new facility, known as the William Beaumont Army Medical Center, opened in 1972 and became the Southwest's major regional Army medical center.

Building 7133 is a warehouse constructed at the William Beaumont General Hospital in 1933. The first floor of the stuccoed brick building is empty. The lower level is used for storage. The original cost for construction was \$13,559.73.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The warehouse includes a combination of Spanish Colonial and American Bungalow elements in a more simplified version of both styles. The Spanish Colonial style is evident in the roof and stucco finish. Bungalow elements are the eave overhangs, exposed rafter ends, and stucco finish. This building includes a full length dock.
2. Condition of Fabric: The exterior of the building is in fairly good condition. The interior has retained its original character of a large space with open steel trusses, brick walls, large steel windows, and swinging garage doors. The building does have broken wire glass, broken door panels, and the original asbestos shingle roof has been replaced with composition shingles. The overall fabric of the building has been preserved.

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B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The warehouse is 120' by 48'. The first floor has a height of 11'-0" from the finished floor to the bottom of the trusses. The basement level has a height of 7'-4" from the finished floor to ceiling. The floor area is approximately 11,290 square feet.
2. Foundations: The foundation is poured concrete pilasters and square columns, with a basement slab.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are stuccoed cinder brick.
4. Structural System: The structure is an 8" load bearing brick wall on concrete columns with flared capitols. Engaged piers support the bolted and riveted steel trusses and 3"x6" wood purlins.
5. Porches, Exterior Stairs: A concrete loading dock spans the entire length of the southwest elevation. The loading dock is ramped at the west end and has steps at the east end.
6. Chimneys: None
7. Openings:
  - a. Doors: Two loading dock and one basement double doors are braced frame, vertical board inward opening. The single five-panel door has six lights in the door's upper one-third. The door includes a three-light transom.
  - b. Windows: The building has awning-style, with central pivot, steel windows containing twelve lights. They have concrete lintels, and cast stone sills. Four north side basement windows are sealed with plywood. Originally these were ten-light, central six-light pivot windows.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, Materials: The roof is a gable-on-hip with louvers set into the gables. It is constructed of 4"x8" wood purlins, with 1" wood sheathing, and composition shingles. Crown moulding is located at the eave fascia and intersection with the wall. Soffits are beaded board.
  - b. Dormers, Vents: Three-light window in gable.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The first floor of the warehouse is an open plan, free span space as originally designed. The basement is open with concrete columns at approximately 15' on center. The basement (lower) level has structural concrete columns spaced 15' on center.
2. Stairways: An L-shaped stairwell, with concrete steps and black-coated steel railings, is at the southwest corner of the warehouse.
3. Flooring: The flooring is exposed concrete on both the first floor and basement level.
4. Wall Finishes: The exterior wall finish is painted stucco. The interior wall finish is exposed brick with pilasters for the first floor, and exposed concrete with pilasters for the basement level.
5. Ceiling Finishes: There is no finished ceiling. The steel trusses, wood purlins, diagonal and lateral sheathing are exposed. The basement ceiling is exposed concrete.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors: Only exterior doors.
  - b. Windows: Same as exterior.
7. Decorative Features and Trim: The decorative features are exposed structure and materials. The most significant, not necessarily decorative, of these features are the exposed steel trusses and the concrete columns with flared capitols in the basement.
8. Hardware: The loading dock double swinging doors still retain their original spring latches and metal sliding tracks. The sliding tracks limit the inward swing of the doors.
9. Mechanical Equipment:
  - a. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning: Vents are on the fascia. Three-light steel wire-glass windows on the first floor.
  - b. Lighting: First floor original light fixtures are attached to the bottom of exposed steel trusses. In the basement are bare incandescent bulbs attached at the ceiling.
  - c. Plumbing Fixtures: Extensive exposed piping runs the perimeter and up the pitch of the roof to the sprinkler heads. This is also seen in the basement around the perimeter walls.

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10. Original Furnishings: None

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The warehouse has been incorporated into the site of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas (Figure 1). The front of the building faces northeast ward towards Lazear Street.

2. Historic Landscape Design: The historic landscape of William Beaumont General Hospital was renowned for its beautiful array of shade trees, shrubs, lush lawns and flower gardens. Between the grounds inception in 1920-1921 and the gradual reduction of maintained acreage in the 1950s, the landscape was referred to as the "paradise in the desert." Gardner William Reeves was most likely in charge of any planting plan or landscape design that may have governed the layout of the grounds. Today, only scattered residual vegetation and landscape features remain, and most of these have been installed since the period of significance. Building 7133 is located in the original 1920s construction area, where the landscaping of the hospital grounds was most extensive. Currently, it is surrounded by open paved surfaces and no vegetation.

3. Outbuildings: None

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

A. Architectural Drawings: No original large format archival drawings were found on file at Fort Bliss, Texas. Only one record drawing with a small scale floor plan and section was found which was dated May 3, 1940.

B. Early Views: A collection of historic photographs is housed in the Office of the Directorate of Environment, Historic Preservation Team, Fort Bliss, Texas.

C. Interviews: None

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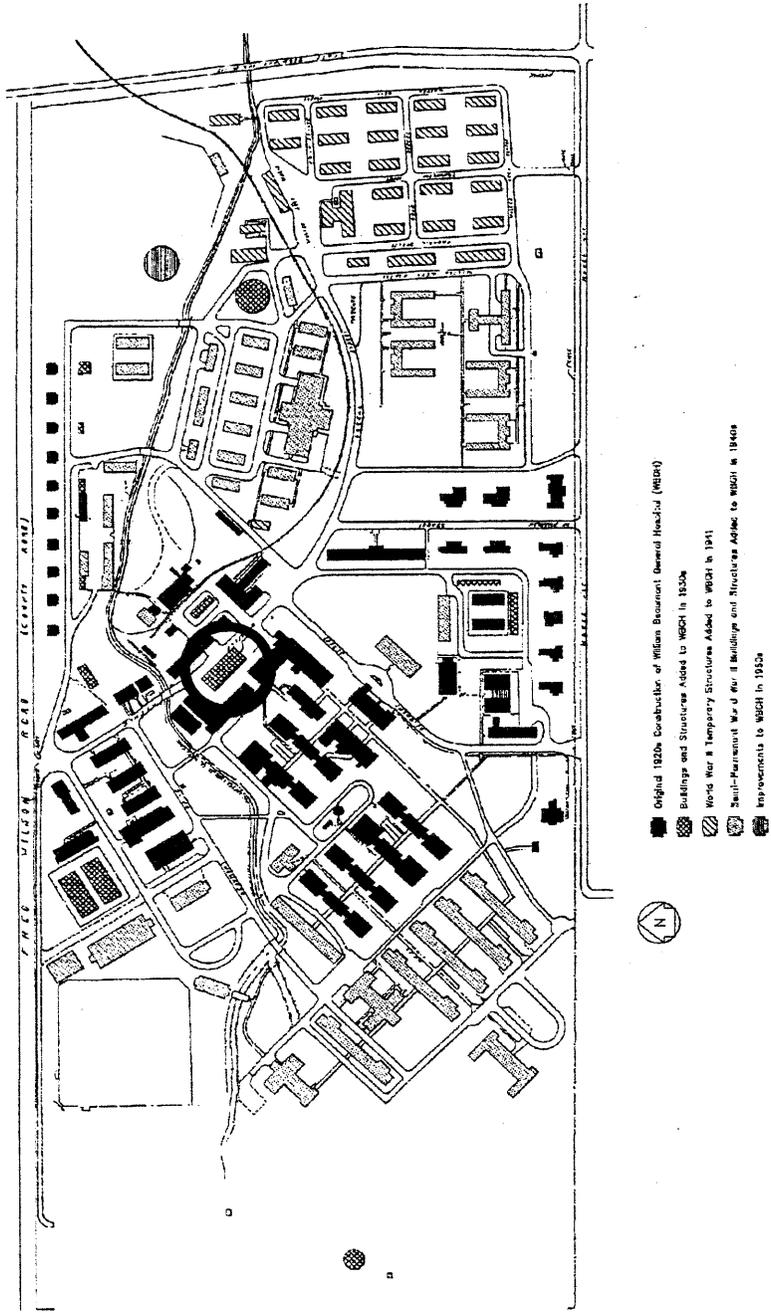


Figure 1: Building Location Map

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D. Bibliography:

Fort Bliss Real Property Management Office - Office of the Quartermaster General  
Records

Fort Bliss IFS Data August 1994

Fort Bliss Facility List

Map of Post Area - William Beaumont General Hospital, July 1945

Texas Historic Sites Inventory Form - Texas Historic Commission, July 7, 1989

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None

F. Supplemental Material: None

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The project was sponsored by the Office of the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics, Fort Bliss, Texas. Documentation was coordinated through Ms. Vicki Hamilton, Architect, Office of the Directorate of Environment, Historic Preservation Team, Fort Bliss, Texas. The project was completed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers Construction Engineering Research Laboratories (USACERL). The project was completed at the USACERL Cultural Resources Research Center. Ms. Sheila Ellsworth served as project architect. The project researchers were Mr. Patrick Nowlan, Dr. Susan Enscoe, and Ms. Amy Lamb. Mr. Martin Stupich produced the large format photographs included in the report.