

FORT BLISS, WILLIAM BEAUMONT GENERAL HOSPITAL,
NCO QUARTERS

HABS No. TX-3339-Q

(Building Number 7184)
McCaw Street
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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- Location: McCaw 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: NCO Quarters
- Present Use: Vacant
- 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: 1923
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Army
4. Builders, Contractors and Suppliers: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: The building essentially retains its original exterior appearance and building footprint. The interior has retained its original layout, and most of the finishes.
6. Alterations and Additions: Although the NCO quarters has maintained its original character, it has been slightly altered throughout the years. The front porch, which was once open and covered, has been recently enclosed and turned into closet space. This change caused the living room window to be converted to a door. The sun porch was also enclosed, and double-hung windows have been added. A pantry in the kitchen has been removed.

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 number of available beds to nearly 6000. 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 7184 is one of eleven stuccoed tiled quarters for non-commissioned officers constructed along Fred Wilson Road at the William Beaumont General Hospital between 1921 and 1925. At present, the building is unoccupied. The original cost for construction was \$4,485.00.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The NCO quarters depicts the bungalow style of architecture. This style is evident in the building's massing, compact floor plan, low-pitched roof with unenclosed eave overhangs, exposed rafter ends, building materials, and front porches with columns.
2. Condition of Fabric: The exterior of the building is in fair condition. It has been completely boarded up with plywood, and the heat and water have been disconnected. The interior has retained its original character, and much of its original detailing, with the exception of the alterations to the porches.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The NCO quarters is 38'-9" deep, including the porches, and 30'-8" in width. It has a height of 9'-5" from ceiling to finished floor. The floor area is approximately 1,065 square feet.
2. Foundations: The foundation is a concrete pier and beam system with footings.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are constructed of hollow clay tile with stucco.
4. Structural System: The structure is a 10" load bearing hollow clay tile wall system on a concrete foundation. The roof structure is a wood structural system.
5. Porches, Exterior Stairs: This structure includes two porches. One was originally considered the front porch and is on the north facade. This porch has been converted into closet space and permanently enclosed with stuccoed hollow clay tiles. The original entrance has been moved recently, just east of the porch where there was originally a window opening. Concrete steps and a stoop lead up to this new doorway entrance. The second porch was originally a sun porch and is on the south facade. This has been enclosed, and sheathed with clapboard siding above an exposed brick foundation. Double hung windows were added. Five concrete steps lead up to the rear porch entrance on the east facade. Concrete steps lead down to the basement on the east side.
6. Chimneys: A brick chimney is located at the center of the quarters.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Both the north entrance and the east back entrance have five panel wood doors. However, both have been boarded up with plywood from the exterior. There are double storm doors on the east facade which open to steps to the partial basement.
 - b. Windows: The windows throughout the house are double-hung six-over-six-light wood windows. Like the doors, the windows have been boarded up with plywood from the exterior.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, Materials: The roof is a square shape hip with exposed rafter ends. A shed roof projects from the eave of the main building to cover the rear porch. It is constructed of 2x rafters with 1" wood sheathing, finished with composition shingles.

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- b. Dormers, Vents: Two small shed roof louvered vents are on the roof facing to the west and east.
- C. Description of the Interior:
1. Floor Plans: The NCO quarters is irregular in plan. It is a one-story structure with a partial basement, with two projecting enclosed porches. The primary entrance is on the north facade.
 2. Stairways: None
 3. Flooring: The floor finish varies throughout the building. The living room is finished with hard wood floors, the kitchen has linoleum, the bathroom has small original ceramic tiles. Vinyl tiles are used in the bedrooms, closets, rear porch and hallway.
 4. Wall Finishes: The interior walls are plaster finished with paint. The interior finish to the walls in the porch is painted hard board.
 5. Ceiling Finishes: The ceilings are finished with painted plaster. The back porch uses hard board for the underside of its shed roof.
 6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: All of the interior doors are five panel wood doors with one light hopper transoms. The door from the back porch to the kitchen has a four light fixed transom.
 - b. Windows: The interior finishes on the windows is paint.
 7. Decorative Features and Trim: Wood baseboards are located throughout the living room, bedrooms, kitchen, and closets areas. A picture rail is in the bedrooms, 6" down from the ceiling and just above the window trim. The transoms on each of the interior doors are decorative features of the NCO quarters.
 8. Hardware: The interior wood doors retain their original handles and latches. The windows have their original hardware latches.

9. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning: Vents for the heating, air conditioning, and ventilation system are positioned in the floors.
- b. Lighting: Incandescent lighting with glass diffusers is used in the bedrooms. Bare incandescent bulbs are used on the porches, and in the kitchen. A wall mounted-incandescent with a glass shade is used in the bathroom.
- c. Plumbing Fixtures: Original plumbing fixtures are in the bathroom.

10. Original Furnishings: Cabinets and counters still exist in the kitchen areas.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The NCO quarters 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 north toward, but is fenced off from, Fred Wilson Road, but the entrance on the rear on the east side is considered the more prominent entrance, where the south facade faces McCaw 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 7184 is located in the original 1920s construction area, where the landscaping of the hospital grounds was most extensive. Currently, the surrounding landscape, like Building 7184, is completely abandoned. It is composed of invasive grasses, weeds, shrubs and small trees.
3. Outbuildings: None

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- A. Architectural Drawings: The large format archival architectural drawings were found on file at the Offices of the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics and the Directorate of Environment, Historic Preservation Team, Fort Bliss, Texas. Drawing number for the

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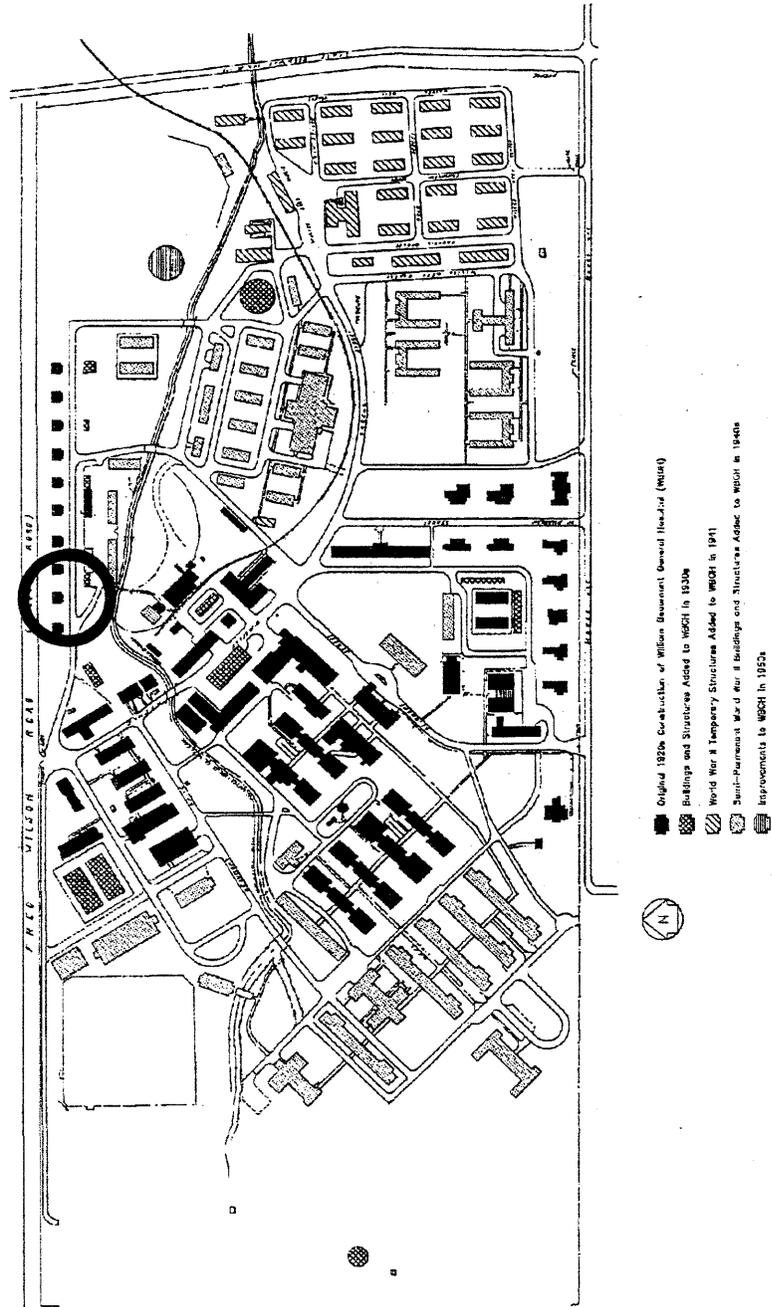


Figure 1: Building Location Map

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original construction drawings, dated March 1922, is drawing number B2-16. This drawing includes plans, elevations, sections, and details, along with a site plan. The existing conditions were documented, dated February 1957, with the drawing number WB-326. The building was documented with a small scaled plan dated to 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

D. Bibliography:

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

Fort Bliss IFSM 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.