

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL HOSPITAL, MEDICAL WARD B  
North corner, intersection of The Circle  
and Barton Avenue  
Portsmouth  
~~Portsmouth County~~  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1287-H

HABS  
VA  
65-PORTM  
2H-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Northeast Field Area  
Chesapeake/Allegheny System Support Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL HOSPITAL,  
MEDICAL WARD B

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- Location: North corner, intersection of The Circle and Barton Avenue,  
Portsmouth, Virginia  
UTM: 18.383500.4078460  
QUAD: Norfolk South, VA; 1965 (photorevised 1986)
- Significance: Medical Ward B, one of three surviving similar buildings built in 1939, is significant as part of a larger complex of temporary hospital buildings constructed at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital during the World War II era.
- Description: Medical Ward B is the central structure in a row of three similar buildings located directly behind (southwest of) the 1827 Hospital (HABS No. VA-1287-A). Although in its original massing and layout it was a mirror image of Medical Ward C (HABS No. VA-1287-I), located immediately to the southeast across Barton Avenue, alterations to that structure in 1943 made the two wards somewhat dissimilar. Medical Wards A (HABS No. VA-1287-G), B, and C are sited parallel to each other, and face southwest onto The Circle.
- Medical Ward B, characteristic of the nine medical wards built about the same time at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital, was built as a long, rectangular, one-story, wood frame building on a poured-concrete foundation, with a clipped-gable, asbestos-shingled roof. It had asbestos shingle siding, now painted a pinkish-tan color, and single, six-over-six sash windows. The original building comprised a linear ward wing and a cross-axis formed by an open entrance porch on the southeast side, and a short utility wing on the northwest side, arranged in what was referred to as a "half-H" plan. The two ends of the ward wing originally featured a screened, three-bay porch with a double screen door entry. A ramped service entrance opened from the eastern end of the northwest elevation, and featured a one-bay, shed-roofed porch.
- On the interior, the cross-axis produced a roughly symmetrical arrangement of spaces. The central part of the ward wing was unpartitioned, overseen by a central nurse's station just inside the side entrance porch. At both ends of the ward wing, two or three rooms occurred along each side of a central corridor: an office, nurse's room and diet kitchen (serviced via the exterior ramped entry) at the northeast end, and quiet rooms at the southwest end. The utility wing contained toilets, showers, a bath room and a utility closet.

Medical Ward B still retains its original massing, although some exterior alterations have taken place. The side entrance porch on the southeast elevation, now enclosed with one-over-one sash windows, still functions as a central entry point for the building. Both southwest and northeast end porches, originally screened, are now enclosed with paired, one-over-one sash windows flanking central, double-door entries. The entrance on the southwest has a wooden handicapped access ramp in addition to steps.

The distinguishing feature of Medical Ward B, which houses Medical Staff Education and Training, is the degree to which it has retained its original interior layout. The building's central circulation aisle is still apparent throughout the length of the building although several additional offices and cross-walls have been built in the original ward areas. The original nurse's station — now a secretarial/reception station — is a central feature of the interior, and the opposite utility wing still provides toilet, dressing room and storage facilities. In addition, much of the building's original door and window treatment has been retained.

Concrete walks along The Circle and around Medical Ward B lead to the building's entrances, although it is not known from available site plans whether these retain their original layout. Crape myrtle have been planted along the side elevations; pine and magnolia trees also occur along The Circle frontage. The space between Medical Wards B and A is primarily lawn with a variety of shrubs and ornamental trees; a small, one-story, concrete-block electric distribution building and a picnic table are located at the southwestern end of this space which is shaded by a large pine tree. There is onstreet parking southeast of the building along Barton Street.

History:

Medical Ward B was built in 1939 as part of a group of four temporary structures erected behind the 1827 Hospital to serve World War II-era needs. Five additional medical wards (no longer extant) were built to the same design the following year in the southeast portion of the base.

The medical wards were designed by the Navy Department, Bureau of Yards and Docks, under the direction of A.A. Gustafson. The builder is not known. The property is owned by the United States Department of the Navy with caretaker responsibility assigned to the Commanding Officer, Naval Hospital, Portsmouth.

Sources: Class 2 Property Record, Public Works Office, Facilities Management, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA.

Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, "Emergency Hospital Buildings; Ward Location and Existing Grade Plan," October 8, 1939, Shelf file #551-31-200, Bureau of Yards and Docks #134657. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, "Emergency Hospital Buildings; Ward Floor Plans," October 20, 1939, Shelf file #551-31-201, Bureau of Yards and Docks #134377. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, "Emergency Hospital Buildings; Ward Elevations and Details," October 20, 1939, Shelf file #551-31-202, Bureau of Yards and Docks #134378. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

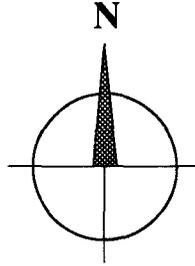
"Map of Norfolk Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Va., Showing Conditions on June 30, 1940," Shelf file #551-3-27, Bureau of Yards and Docks #756058. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

"Map of Norfolk Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Va., Showing Conditions on June 30, 1941," Shelf file #551-3-28. U.S. Navy, Civil Engineering Support Office, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA.

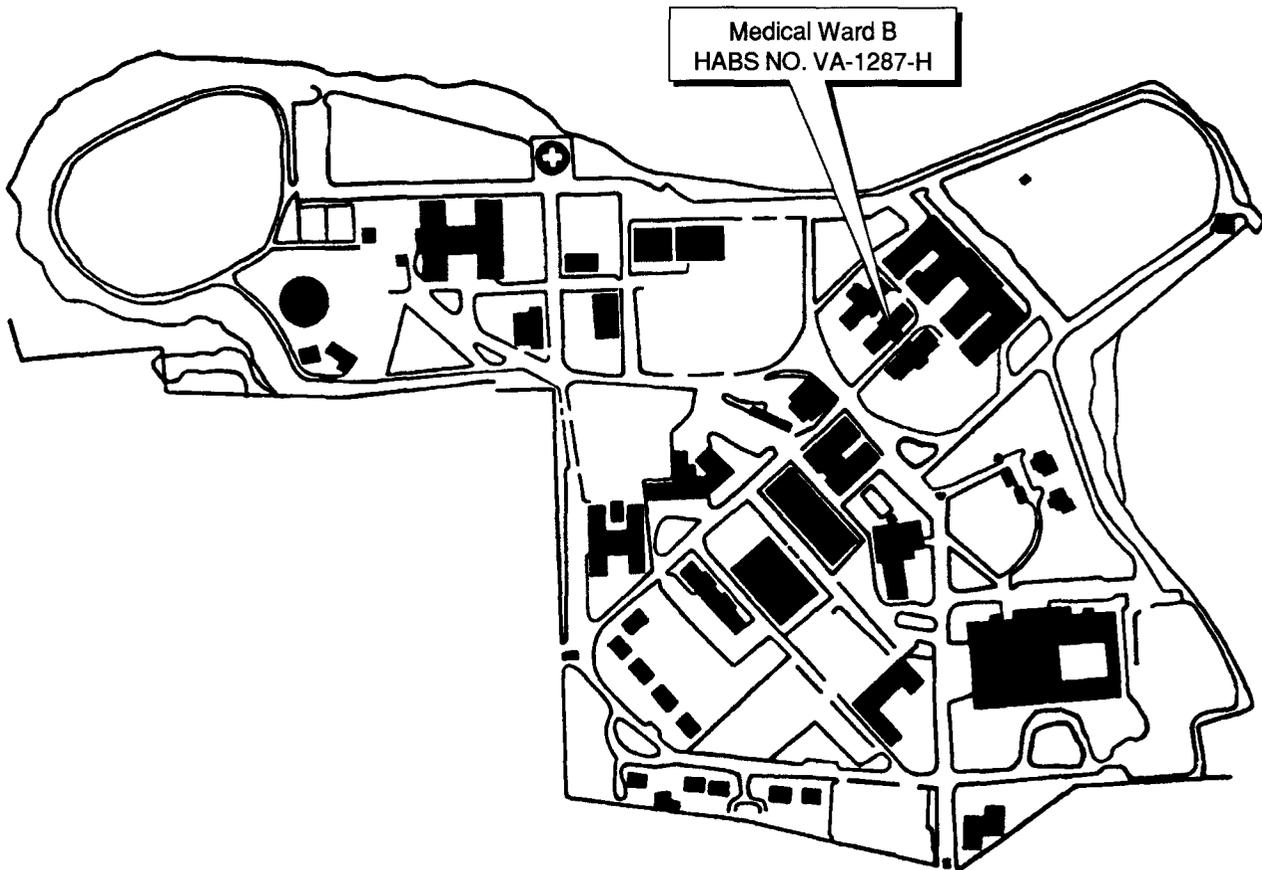
Land and Community Associates, "Medical Ward B; Floor Plan (as of May 1991)," adapted from "Emergency Hospital Buildings; Ward Floor Plans," October 20, 1939 (see above).

Historians: M.J. Wuellner, Frederick Schneider, Land and Community Associates, June 1991.

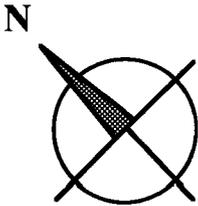
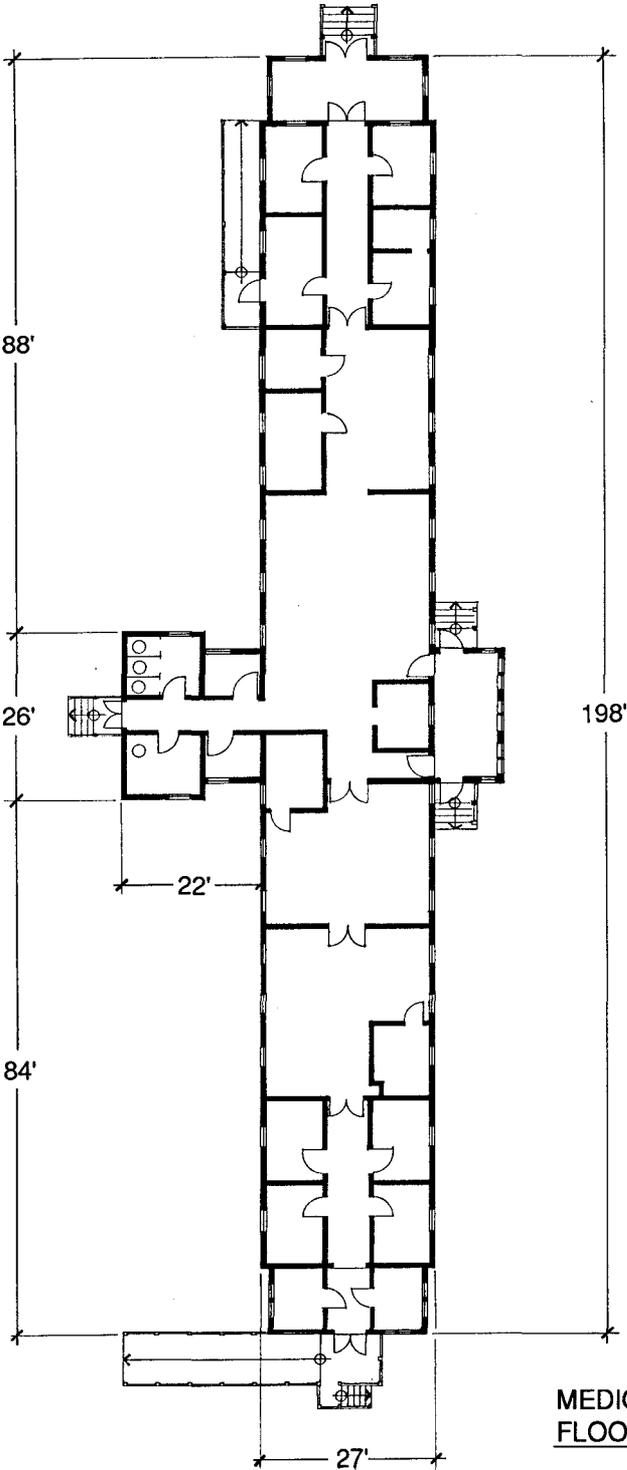
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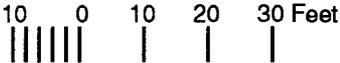
# NAVAL HOSPITAL Portsmouth, Virginia



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MEDICAL WARD B  
FLOOR PLAN (as of MAY 1991)



Scale: 1" = 30 feet