

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL HOSPITAL,
SHOWER ROOM AND SWIMMING POOL
(Bathhouse and Swimming Pool)
Green Street
Portsmouth
~~Portsmouth County~~
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1287-M

HABS
VA
65-PORTM,
211-

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

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Location: Green Street, Portsmouth, Virginia
UTM: 18.383500.4078280
QUAD: Norfolk South, VA; 1965 (photorevised 1986)

Significance: The Shower Room and Swimming Pool are significant as the first recreational facilities constructed at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital complex. They are representative examples of early twentieth-century bathhouse design and swimming pool technology.

Description: The Shower Room and Swimming Pool are located on the southwest side of Green Street, just north of the Recreation Building (HABS No. VA-1287-N). The complex, which also includes a raised wood deck, a concrete-block filtration/chlorination building and a pump house, is partially enclosed on the south and west by a chain-link fence.

The Shower Room, located southeast of the Swimming Pool, is a small, one-story, flat-roofed, painted concrete building with five-panel wood doors and altered, six-over-six sash windows. The building is distinguished by its half-round, moulded-channel detailing around the door and window openings and framing each wall. The structure, two bays wide by one bay deep, is divided symmetrically into men's and women's shower and toilet facilities. Two corrugated-metal, shed-roofed porches provide open-air changing areas adjacent to each of the shower rooms on the northeast and southwest sides. A supporting pipe-rail structure extends beyond each porch to provide a framework for enclosure material and a shielded entry to the changing areas.

The rectangular, concrete Swimming Pool, oriented lengthwise along a northeast/southwest axis from the Shower Room, is partially elevated above ground level on a painted concrete base with moulded-channel detailing similar to that at the Shower Room. It is surrounded by a concrete deck, accessible by four broad steps from a patio in front of the Shower Room. The concrete deck widens out at the deep (northwest) end of the pool to make room for a diving board (no longer extant). Ladders extend into the pool from the deck at both the deep and shallow ends, and the pool area is lighted by six lampposts. A pipe railing surrounds the pool except where a wood deck with wood railings lies adjacent along the southwest side.

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History:

Available U.S. Navy site plans designate the Shower Room and Swimming Pool as Buildings 139 and 139A, respectively, and the adjacent Recreation Building (HABS No. VA-1287-N) as Building 109. While buildings at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital complex are usually assigned numbers according to their order of construction, Public Works records indicate that the Shower Room and Swimming Pool were built about 1937, five or six years earlier than the Recreation Building despite the latter's lower number designation. A 1936 site plan indicates that five artesian wells, forty-seven feet deep and two feet in diameter, were dug adjacent to the Swimming Pool on the southwest, probably at the same time the pool was constructed. A 1940 site plan indicates that shortly after the wells were dug, a pump house was constructed over the wells to pipe water to the pool; a 1941 site plan indicates that the filtration/chlorination building was subsequently added.

Built to provide recreational facilities for the Naval Hospital personnel, the Shower Room and Swimming Pool are no longer in use due to the recent construction of an indoor pool in the western portion of the naval base.

Although the architect and builder are not known, the Shower Room and Swimming Pool were probably designed by the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks. 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.

"Map of U.S. Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Va., Showing Conditions on June 30, 1933." 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, 1936," Shelf file #551-3-23. 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.

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"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.

"U.S. Naval Hospital Plot Plan," November 25, 1944. Public Works Office Facilities Management, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA.

"General Development Plan, Existing & Planned Peacetime," June 7, 1957. Public Works Office, Facilities Management, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, VA.

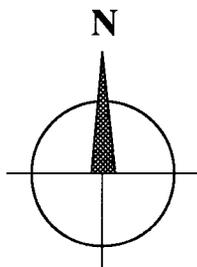
Land and Community Associates, "Shower Room and Swimming Pool," May 1991.

Historians:

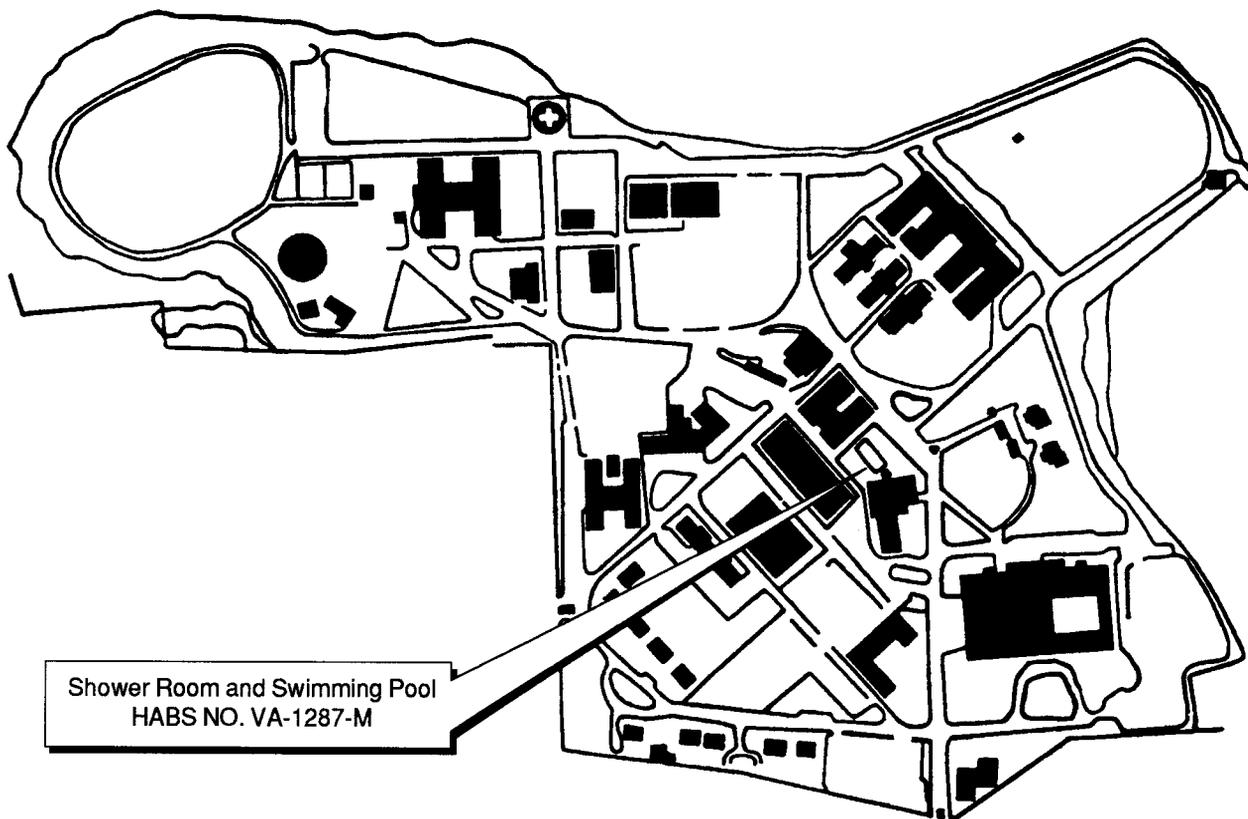
M.J. Wuellner, Frederick Schneider, Land and Community Associates, April 1991.

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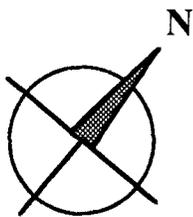
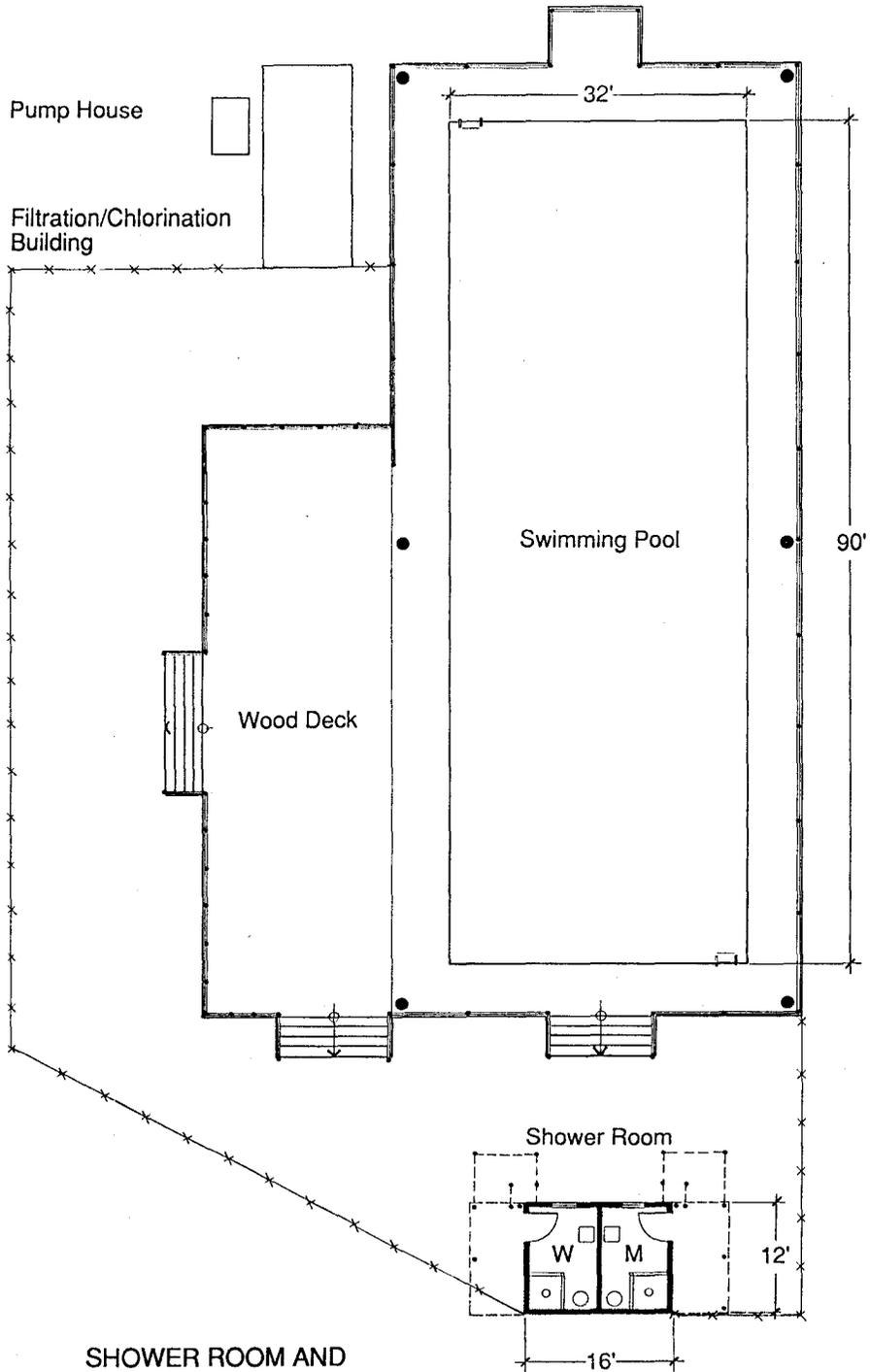


NAVAL HOSPITAL Portsmouth, Virginia

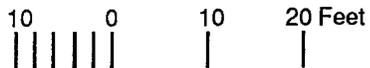


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Scale: 1" = 20 feet