

FORT DEFIANCE INDIAN HOSPITAL,  
PHYSICIAN'S COTTAGE GARAGE  
(Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, FD-33)  
Navajo Indian Reservation  
Bonito Drive  
Fort Defiance  
Apache County  
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-227-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY**  
**Southwest System Support Office**  
**National Park Service**  
**P. O. Box 728**  
**Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, Physician's Cottage Garage  
(Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, FD-33)

HABS AZ-227-B

**Location:** Navajo Indian Reservation  
Bonito Drive  
Fort Defiance, Apache County, Arizona

UTM: Zone 12, 673532E, 395781N

**Present Owner:**  
Indian Health Services

**Present Use:**  
The building is currently used as storage for various Indian Health Service and Navajo Nation programs.

**Significance:**  
The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage Garage, constructed in 1930, is significantly associated with the expansion of the original 1912 Fort Defiance Hospital into a 100-bed general hospital in 1929. From the late 1920s to 1942, delivery of government health services to the Navajo Nation proliferated. There was a two-fold increase in the number of medical facilities; specific programs directed at eradicating tuberculosis and trachoma were initiated; and concomitantly, there was a dramatic increase in the number of medical employees. Secondly, the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage Garage is specifically associated with the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage (HABS AZ-227-A) because the garage served as a location for the residents of that cottage to park their vehicles.

**Description:**  
The two-car garage is a wood-frame structure, 20' x 20', with a concrete slab foundation and a conventionally framed hip roof with exposed rafter tails, now covered with asphalt shingles. The walls have a stucco finish, with a decorative diamond, or "jazzed" pattern. The two garage doors, although tilt-up types, were intended to appear as paired diagonal wood plank doors each with three horizontal lights. There is also a simple wood panel 2'-6" door on the north façade, at the rear of the garage.

**History:**  
Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection:  
1930

2. Architect:

Not known. It is likely that the Physician's Cottage Garage was a standard plan rendered by designers or engineers working for the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

The Fort Defiance Physician's Cottage was originally owned by the Office of Indian Affairs, known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) after 1947. The building remained under the jurisdiction of the BIA, Navajo Area Office, until Congress transferred Native American health services to the Public Health Service (PHS), part of the Department of Health Education and Welfare, in 1955. It remained under the control of the PHS under the Division of Indian Health until 1970 when the Indian Health Service (IHS) was created.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Not Known.

5. Original plans and construction:

The garage appears as it did originally, except for replacement roofing.

6. Alterations and additions:

The garage is unchanged, except for a reroofing, with asphalt shingles, probably done within the last twenty years.

## B. Historical Context

The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage Garage is a part of the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital complex (HABS AZ-227) and readers are directed to that record for historic context information on the complex itself.

The Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage Garage is an ancillary building to the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital Physician's Cottage (HABS AZ-227-A) and was constructed to house vehicles that belonged to residents of that cottage. For historic context information on the Physician's Cottage, readers are directed to record HABS AZ-227-A for additional information.

On the remote and rugged Navajo Reservation reliable transportation was second only to the doctor's bag as a necessary part of the physician's arsenal against disease. Just as medical tools had to be protected by a bag, vehicles also needed protection -- especially from the frigid winters in the Fort Defiance area where temperatures regularly dipped to double digits below zero. Maintaining a vehicle in serviceable condition so that it could be ready on a moment's notice to tend to an emergency made a garage a necessary ancillary building to the physician's cottage.

Historian Robert Trennert, in his book-length treatment of physicians working on the Navajo Reservation, noted that "trying to bring medical care to remote parts of the

reservation proved frustrating for government physicians because of the great distances involved and the rugged terrain.”<sup>1</sup> One of the most pressing arguments for the construction of hospitals and medical facilities at central locations on the reservation was the desire to eliminate long and laborious travel on the part of the physicians. Time spent traveling could be better spent doing medical work so it was best to bring the patients to the doctor.

Nonetheless, there remained many times where the physician had to go the patient. This was particularly true in the early years of health service on the reservation when the Navajo were first becoming more accepting of Anglo medicine. Physicians and nurses spent a considerable amount of time in outreach activities during the twenties and thirties before centralized hospitals, sanatoria, and clinics were constructed. For these activities the doctors and nurses needed reliable transportation. Facilities such as garages were a necessary part of the built environment at Fort Defiance.

When officials of the Indian Service began expanding the Fort Defiance Hospital into a 100-bed facility in 1929, having residential facilities for the doctors associated with the hospital was a key component of the building program. When the hospital opened in 1930, two physician's cottages were constructed as part of the project. Each physician's cottage had a garage, of which HABS AZ-227-B is one. Although the White Oak Environmental Alliance 1998 report indicates that the garage was constructed in 1933, it is more likely that the building was constructed in 1930 based on its appearance and association with the Physician's Cottage. Accordingly, 1930 is used as the construction date for this building.<sup>2</sup>

## Sources:

### Published Sources:

#### Books:

Trennert, Robert A.  
1998 White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955.  
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

#### Government Publications:

Kammer, David and Veronica E. Tiller  
1991 Historic Indian Health Service buildings on the Navajo Reservation, Albuquerque:  
Weller Architects.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Trennert, White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> White Oak Environmental Alliance, Navajo Area Indian Health Service Historic Buildings Inventory Forms: Fort Defiance / Window Rock Service Units (Window Rock: Navajo Area Indian Health Service Facility Management Office, 1991), p. 20.

White Oak Environmental Alliance

1998 Navajo Area Indian Health Service Historic Buildings Inventory Forms: Fort Defiance / Window Rock Service Units. Window Rock: Navajo Area Indian Health Service Facility Management Office.

Unpublished Sources:

Archival Collections:

For their 1991 report, David Kammer and Veronica E. Tiller conducted extensive research at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Because that research was already reflected in the report excerpted here, that research was not duplicated for this report. Collections utilized by Kammer and Tiller included the following:

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Public Works Administration Files, 1908-1939, Window Rock Agency, Arizona, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central Classified Files, 1908-1959, Navajo Agencies, New Mexico and Arizona, the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Inspection Reports, Navajo Agency, 1900-1945, National Archives, Washington, D.C

Records of the Indian Health Service 1940-1990 Navajo Area Office, Indian Health Service, Office of Facility Management, Window Rock, Arizona.

Additional primary research for the current report was conducted at the Southwest Regional Branch of the National Archives, now located at Perris near Riverside, California.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None known.

F. Supplemental Material: Sketch floor plans are attached.

**Historian(s):**

Robert G. Graham, Architect, Motley Design Group LLC

Douglas Kupel, PhD, Consulting Historian

Donna Reiner, PhD, Consulting Research Historian

Report Date: October 2010

**Project Information:**

This HABS report was prepared for the owners of the structure, the Indian Health Services, to fulfill mitigation requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, prior to the planned demolition of the structure in 2010. Motley Design Group LLC was the primary contractor, and was responsible for all photography and final document preparation. Douglas Kupel and Donna Reiner, working as a team, provided historic research and Dr. Kupel wrote Part 1: Historical Information.

**Floor Plan**

