

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, CONSTRUCTION SHOPS
(Building No. 49)
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast, 639-661 Birch Street,
Southeast
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-V
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, CONSTRUCTION SHOPS (BUILDING 49)

HABS NO. DC-349-V

- Location:** 639–661 Birch Street SE, Washington, D.C., on the West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital
- Present Owner:** General Services Administration, United States Government
- Present Use:** Vacant, rehabilitation in progress (rehabilitation of St. Elizabeths West Campus in progress)
- Significance:** The Construction Shops building served various important support functions for the west campus throughout its history of use. The building encompasses many of the design principles outlined by Thomas Kirkbride in his publication *On the Construction, Organization, and General Arrangements of Hospitals for the Insane*, which recommended that support operations such as washing, drying, ironing, and baking be conducted in separate buildings, fully detached from the main hospital building. The Construction Shops building represents the distinctive secondary aspect of the physical development of the west campus through the provision of service and support structures that allowed for the partial self-sufficiency of the campus. The Construction Shops building also represents development of a campus-wide infrastructure from the earlier period of the west campus, beginning with initial construction as the Machinery Building in 1854 (when it housed machinery to support gas lighting as well as laundry facilities). As the campus grew, the building was reconfigured and additions were constructed to house a laundry, carpentry and painting shops, and other building maintenance functions.
- The Construction Shops building is also significant for architectural design, as an example of the simple, Italianate-inspired, late nineteenth-century construction on the St. Elizabeths campus. Although the building has received many additions and alterations, the various portions of the building are united in their use of character-defining brick masonry walls and decorative corbelled window hoods; stone trim; wood double-hung windows; slate roofs with dormers; timber and iron structural framing; and interior finishes including wood trim and wood flooring, painted plaster walls, and stenciled decoration.
- Historians:** Mike Ford, Kenneth Itle, Tim Penich, and Deborah Slaton, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1854; 1878; 1899; 1905; 1929¹
2. Architect: Not known
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: St. Elizabeths Hospital (then the Government Hospital for the Insane) was placed under the control of the Department of the Interior by an act of Congress on March 3, 1855. Thus when the various portions of the Construction Shops were constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the hospital was under the control of the Department of the Interior and remained so until 1940, when St. Elizabeths was transferred to the Federal Security Agency. The Federal Security Agency was a new government agency that oversaw federal activities in the fields of health, education, and social insurance. In 1953, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare was created. At that time several of the functions of the Federal Security Agency, including control of St. Elizabeths Hospital, were transferred to the new department.² In 1968, St. Elizabeths was transferred to the National Institute of Mental Health, an agency within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The Institute sought to demonstrate how a large mental hospital could be converted into a smaller, more modern facility for training, service, and research.³ In 1979, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare became the Department of Health and Human Services with the creation of the Department of Education. The Department of Health and Human Services retained control of the St. Elizabeths Hospital west campus until 2004 when the property was transferred to the General Services Administration.⁴ The campus facilities were stabilized and the buildings were mothballed by 2005.⁵

The original Machinery building completed in 1854 included gas lighting equipment and laundry facilities. When the expanded Laundry Exchange portion of the Construction Shops was completed in 1878, the building continued to house gas and coal storage facilities. Laundry facilities, such as washing and ironing rooms, were also located in the building. In 1892, the Boiler House/Ice Plant was completed and provided steam power for the St. Elizabeths campus. As a result, machinery associated with the previous systems, such as engines, gas house, and exhaust fans located in the Laundry Exchange, was abandoned.⁶ Upon completion of the Warehouse/Laundry/Annex (Building 118/118A) in 1952, laundry operations at Building 49

¹ 1855 *Annual Report*, 633–635. A circa 1860 drawing identifies the building as the “Wash, Gas, and Engine House.” An 1860 Ground Plan designed by C.H. Nichols and signed by Thomas U. Walter and President James Buchanan delineates the plan of the structure and refers to it as the “Machinery” building. Existing physical evidence as well as comparison of 1860, 1873, and 1883 Ground Plans.

² *Federal Register*, accessed at <http://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/saint-elizabeth-s-hospital>, January 5, 2012.

³ 1970 *Annual Report*.

⁴ *St. Elizabeths West Campus: Cultural Landscape Report*, Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, and Robinson & Associates, Inc., prepared for the General Services Administration, April 2009, V.2.

⁵ *St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines*, Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates, Inc., Architectural and Historical Research, prepared for the General Services Administration, November 10, 2008, 18. A photograph of the building taken in 2005 by FMG Architects shows the building in a stabilized and protected state.

⁶ 1893 *Annual Report*, 17.

ceased and the building was converted into carpenter, cabinet, mattress, and various other construction shops. This use of the building continued until the entire west campus was vacated.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known
5. Original plans and construction: As part of the original development of the campus, a support building was constructed in 1854 south of the Center Building complex to house the laundry and gas lighting facilities. Initially known as the Machinery building, this structure housed laundry facilities on its second floor and was also known as the Laundry Exchange.⁷ The symmetrical building was oriented on a north-south axis with cross-axis at the center. The basement provided space for a boiler, small gas house, and coal storage. Laundry facilities, such as washing and ironing rooms, were located on the first floor.⁸ The center cross-axis provided space for a large engine and fan room. A drying yard was located along the east side of the building.⁹

In 1878, the Laundry Exchange complex was greatly renovated and expanded. Although limited documentary evidence is available, the new Laundry Exchange apparently incorporated the original 1854 Machinery building. As completed in 1878, the Laundry Exchange likely consisted of a three-unit structure consisting of a two-and-a-half-story north building, a two-and-a-half-story south building, and a one-story cross-axis structure. The north building had a gable roof with pyramidal roof tower extending from the center. The south building had a gable roof with wood-framed gable roof dormer projecting from either side of the roof. The one-story structure had a cross-gable roof and linked the north and south buildings. Based on an 1860 plan of the campus, existing physical evidence, and the 1878 Annual Report, it is assumed that an 1897 archival photograph depicts the 1878 construction.¹⁰

In addition, two wings were constructed in 1878 on east-west axis that extended perpendicular from the west facade of the Laundry Exchange. A two-and-a-half-story brick structure with gable roof, identified as the Sewing Room, extended along the north end of the Laundry Exchange.¹¹ A one-story brick wing, identified as the Carpenter Shop, extended from the center of the west facade.¹² Archival photographs indicate that this structure had a clerestory window and was connected to a one-story shed roof structure that wrapped around the southwest corner of the

⁷ A circa 1860 drawing identifies the building as the “Wash, Gas, and Engine House.” An 1860 Ground Plan designed by C.H. Nichols and signed by Thomas U. Walter and President James Buchanan delineates the plan of the structure and refers to it as the “Machinery” building. Throughout its history, the structure has had many different functions and is referred to by various names such as the Center Lodge, Laundry Exchange, and Upholstery Shop.

⁸ The 1860 Ground Plan lists the floor levels as the “1st Story” and “2nd Story.” The building was sited into the landscape so that the basement was directly accessed from the west and the first floor entered from the north and east.

⁹ A circa 1860 drawing and the 1860 Ground Plan designed by C.H. Nichols and signed by Thomas U. Walter and President James Buchanan. Both cartographic records obtained from the Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰ Existing physical evidence as well as comparison of 1860, 1873, and 1883 Ground Plans. Construction practices and materials of the lower floors resemble those of the Center Building complex. Roof framing is similar to that of the Bakery (Building 46), constructed in 1878.

¹¹ The “Sewing Room” is the name given to the north wing of the building by the 1938 plat map.

¹² The Carpenter Shop was the name associated with the building in the 1938 plat map but does not reflect its original function as a laundry building.

building.¹³ The new construction provided housing for female employees and doubled the size of the existing laundry facility.¹⁴

In 1899, two connected brick structures were constructed to function as the general laundry facility (General Laundry). A two-story structure with a flat roof and projecting brick drip mold, L-shaped in plan, was connected to the south end of the east facade of the Laundry Exchange and extended south. This extension is referred to as the North General Laundry.

At the same time, a three-and-a-half-story brick structure with gable roof and projecting brick drip mold was constructed (referred to as East General Laundry). This building was oriented on an east-west axis and situated at the south end of the North General Laundry addition. Three wood-framed gable roof dormers projected from each side of the slate roof. A chimney stack was located at the southwest corner of the structure.¹⁵

6. Alterations and additions: In 1902, the employee housing area in the Laundry Exchange was converted into a ward for forty female African-American patients. The patients worked in the laundry facility as part of their occupational therapy.¹⁶ Two years later, in 1904, metal-framed fire escapes enclosed in metal-framed cages were constructed by Barber and Ross contractors at the north end of the General Laundry building.¹⁷

In 1905, two separate but similar building additions were constructed. The one-story brick structures had flat roofs and shared common architectural detailing, such as a corbelled brick cornice and corbelled brick drip molds. The first addition (South Addition) extended along the south facade of the three-and-a-half-story portion of the East General Laundry building. The second structure (East Addition) was located along the east facade of the two-story section of the North General Laundry building.¹⁸

A brick structure (Shed Addition) with wood-framed shed roof was constructed along the south facade of the Laundry Exchange and west facade of the General Laundry Building in 1913.¹⁹

In 1929, a one-story brick structure, the Wash Room Annex, was added to the laundry complex. This addition extended perpendicular from the General Laundry, and had brick piers, large window openings between the piers, and a clerestory that ran the length of the structure. At the

¹³ Comparison of 1873 and 1883 Ground Plan and corroborated by archival photographs from 1928.

¹⁴ The 1879 *Annual Report*, 12. Report notes that “. . . . the old laundry has been greatly enlarged and almost wholly remodeled By the addition of a second story good accommodations have been provided for the women employed in this work. . . .” The structure was converted into a Carpenter Shop at a later date. Also, the *Cultural Landscape Report*.

¹⁵ Date of construction derived from 1900 archival photograph and 1899 Ground Plan. Appearance of building derived from 1900 archival photograph, 1922 archival aerial photograph, and existing physical evidence.

¹⁶ 1902 *Annual Report*, 12.

¹⁷ Sixty-ninth Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, *Investigation of St. Elizabeths Hospital: Letter from the Comptroller General of the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, July 1, 1926), 102.

¹⁸ 1905 *Annual Report*, 8; the 1993 Historic Resources Management Plan, building inventory also indicates that an addition was made to the Laundry building. Both portions of the structure are similar in design making it likely they were built at the same time.

¹⁹ Based on the date “10/25/1913” inscribed in the concrete floor just inside the door.

southeast end of the wing was a one-story brick extension. The building functioned as the wash room.²⁰

In 1944, repairs were made to the General Laundry building in response to a fire in the basement. Additional fire escapes were also constructed at this time.²¹

Upon completion of the Warehouse/Laundry/Annex (Building 118/118A) in 1952, laundry operations at Building 49 ceased, and remaining functions were consolidated into the southern and eastern portions of the complex. The Sewing Room, the two north units of the Laundry Exchange, and the Carpenter Shop were demolished by 1956.

Between 1956 and 1972 a one-story flat roof building (Southwest Addition) was constructed on the south facade of the Wash Room Annex. The building was constructed of concrete masonry units and had brick detailing.²² The structure functioned as a garage and service entrance.

In the 1960s, interior renovations were implemented throughout the buildings of the campus to replace electrical wiring and outlets, upgrade plumbing systems, and install fluorescent light fixtures.²³ Existing physical evidence indicates that alterations were made at this time to the electrical, plumbing, and fire suppression systems of the Construction Shops.²⁴

In 1973, a concrete platform was constructed at the west end of the Wash Room Annex building. The loading dock had a metal-framed roof structure with corrugated metal roofing supported on pipe metal columns.²⁵

Archival research and existing physical evidence suggest that other changes were made to the Construction Shops that are not well-documented through available resources. Because of the limited information available, a specific date of construction cannot be identified for the following alterations.

Between 1945 and 1992 alterations were made to the plan of the General Laundry building and Laundry Exchange. Original floor finishes were replaced or covered with linoleum or carpeting.²⁶

By 2002, selected windows along the route of the exterior fire escape were removed, and openings infilled with brick and metal fire escape doors.²⁷ At the same time a second floor was added to the East Addition, which included a flat roof with parapet wall and windows along the east facade.²⁸

²⁰ 1929 *Annual Report*.

²¹ 1944 *Annual Report* from the Construction Department for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1944.

²² Existing physical evidence.

²³ 1961–1968, and 1970 *Annual Reports*.

²⁴ The scope of the work was obtained from undated construction documents. The date of the alterations is unknown but based on the completion date of similar projects at the St. Elizabeths campus is estimated to be 1964.

²⁵ Existing physical conditions and construction documents from 1972 and 1973.

²⁶ 1993 *Historic Resources Management Plan*.

²⁷ Archival photographs from 2002.

²⁸ Existing physical evidence and comparison with archival photographs from 1968 and 2002.

Prior to 2003, window and openings on the west elevation of the two-story volume attached to the Laundry Exchange were removed. Openings were enlarged to accommodate the installation of overhead garage doors and a side entrance.²⁹

A one-story enclosure was constructed along the south facade of the General Laundry. The structure had a concrete foundation wall with corrugated metal siding and shed roof. The structure does not appear on any archival documentation.³⁰

Rehabilitation of the structure for adaptive reuse began in 2011. The Wash Room Annex and the adjacent small additions were demolished in Spring 2012. Plans call for the renovation of the other portions of the building.

B. Historical context³¹

In 1852, St. Elizabeths Hospital was established in large part through the efforts of Dorothea Lynde Dix, who led a national crusade for the ethical and humane treatment of the mentally ill. Under the direction of Superintendent Charles Nichols (1852–1877), the hospital endeavored to become a curative treatment center for the mentally ill of Washington, D.C., and the United States Army and Navy. Patients were grouped into wards by their perceived mental condition and emphasis was placed on creating a peaceful, healthy, and serene family environment in which to rehabilitate.

Initial development on the St. Elizabeths campus was focused on construction of a central patient ward building. Based on the Thomas Kirkbride plan, the design of the Center Building group gave consideration to moral treatment principles by creating a healthy and peaceful environment for patients while separating them into small ward units based on perceived mental condition. Throughout Nichols' tenure, expansion of the St. Elizabeths hospital continued along the Kirkbride plan. The initial development of the campus included a support building known as the Machinery building, constructed in 1854 (later the Laundry Exchange portion of the Construction Shops).

Following the Civil War, Congressional legislation on July 13, 1866, extended medical services at St. Elizabeths to include military veterans seeking medical attention for issues of mental illness.³² The change in administrative policy altered the demographics of the institution and led to a rapid increase in the patient population. New patient facilities were constructed to accommodate the needs and growing number of aging and mentally challenged Civil War veterans. With the exception of minority patient groups, who remained segregated, early expansion efforts focused on continuing Charles Nichols' Kirkbride plan. The Dawes (Building 7), Garfield (Building 5), and Center Building addition (Building 2) were ward wings attached to the Center Building complex and created under Superintendent Nichols to exemplify his principles. Patients were grouped into wards by their perceived mental condition and emphasis was placed on creating a tranquil environment in which to rehabilitate.

²⁹ Comparison of archival photographs from 1935 and 2003 (GSA archive database nos. DC1460SE0P010 and DC1460SEP002).

³⁰ Existing physical conditions.

³¹ A context history for the entire St. Elizabeths West Campus, as well as an overview history of the Shops and Support Structures Group, is to be developed under separate cover as part of this HABS documentation project.

³² *An act to extend to certain persons the privilege of admission, in certain cases, to United States Government Asylum for the Insane*, 39th Congress, 1st sess., July 13, 1866, 89–94.

Under Superintendent William Godding (1877–1899), the philosophy of moral treatment was embraced; however, the development of new patient wards adopted a different architectural form. Starting in 1878 with Atkins Hall (Building 31) and followed by Relief (Building 32) and Home (Building 36), the ward buildings were constructed as detached cottages and clustered into small groups.³³ Each building group was designed and designated for a specialized patient type. The architecture allowed for the orderly separation of patients and maintained the peaceful family atmosphere of the ward units but without the constraints or limitations of a single large building.

As development on the west campus began to expand beyond the Center Building complex, new support facilities were required to meet the growing needs. Throughout the Godding era, free-standing support buildings were constructed at the west end of the campus and clustered around the existing stables (no longer extant). These infrastructure projects were aimed at developing St. Elizabeths Hospital as a self-sufficient campus. Initially, a new Boiler (later Bakery, Building 46), and Bakery (later General Kitchen, Building 45) were constructed on the grounds between the Center Building group and stables. The development was soon followed by the Morgue (The Rest/Circulating Library, Building 40) and Gas House (no longer extant) which were located directly east of the stable. Additions were made to the Construction Shops in 1878 which included an expansion of the Laundry Exchange building and the addition of the Sewing Room, Carpenter Shop, and West Addition.

During the tenure of Superintendent Alonzo Richardson (1899–1903), the St. Elizabeths campus underwent an expansive building campaign to reduce overcrowding and improve infrastructure. Richardson's tenure was cut short by his untimely death; however, his successor, Superintendent William White (1903–1937), oversaw the completion of the expansion project. In 1899, the East General Laundry building was constructed. In 1905, additions were made to the East General Laundry, which included construction of a perpendicular wing (referred to as the North General Laundry) the East Addition, and the South Addition. Throughout the remainder of White's residency, development at St. Elizabeths was focused on the east campus. With few exceptions, new construction on the west campus was concentrated on maintaining and improving the existing building stock to address the growing patient population and changing hospital needs. During White's tenure, the only additions to the Construction Shops consisted of a small Shed Addition in 1913 and the Wash Room Annex, constructed in 1929.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Construction Shops building is composed of several interconnected load-bearing brick masonry buildings of varying ages and types of construction. Two major structures, historically known as the Laundry Exchange and the General Laundry, comprise the major portion of the Construction Shops. Other large components of the building include the East Addition, South Addition, and Wash Room Annex. The buildings were constructed between 1856 and 1929 and range in height from one to three stories. The Construction Shops has a complex history of development which includes extensive alterations, additions, and demolitions, which have greatly affected the configuration and appearance of the building.

³³ Moral is a term used to describe a mentally healthy atmosphere often characterized by a family-like environment and serene setting.

The architectural design of the Construction Shops exemplifies the simple, Italianate-inspired character of late nineteenth-century construction on the St. Elizabeths campus. The various portions of the building are structurally distinct; however, although the Construction Shops were built over the course of fifty years, an effort was made to unify the structures visually with a consistent choice of materials and decorations, such as the brick hood moldings over the windows on the east and north facades. Character-defining features of all portions of the building include red brick laid in a common bond pattern with headers at every sixth course, projecting stone window sills, and simple decoration in keeping with the buildings' utilitarian nature.

The Laundry Exchange is a three-story structure with rectangular footprint and a gable roof with dormers. The one-story West Addition is attached to the west elevation. The General Laundry has an L-shaped plan and extends from the southeast corner of the Laundry Exchange. It is composed of two wings oriented perpendicular to one other: the North General Laundry, which has a north-south axis, and the East General Laundry, which has an east-west axis. The North General Laundry is a two-story building with a shed roof. A small Shed Addition is attached to the west elevation and an enclosure extends along the south elevation. The East General Laundry is a three-story building with gable roof and dormers. The East Addition is a two-story building with a shed roof; this addition extends along the east elevation of the North General Laundry. The South Addition is a one-story, flat-roofed building with sawtooth monitor; this addition extends along the south elevation of the East General Laundry. The Wash Room Annex is a one-story building with rectangular footprint and a shallow gable roof with gabled monitor that extends perpendicular to the west elevation of the North General Laundry. The annex has a small garage addition, identified as the Southwest Addition, at the south elevation. This addition is constructed of concrete masonry. A loading dock with a metal-framed canopy is located at the west elevation of the annex.

2. Condition of fabric: At the time of the field survey for the Historic Structure Reports/Building Preservation Plans project in 2009, the Construction Shops building was in fair to poor condition overall. The exterior masonry, mortar joints, and parge coating had weathering-related deterioration such as eroded mortar joints, staining, spalling, and cracking. Concrete support beams and roof deck slabs at the Wash Room Annex were in poor condition with significant cracking and spalling. Roofs and drainage systems were in fair condition. Several downspouts were missing complete segments and extensive leaking was observed at the North General Laundry, suggesting failure of the shed roof system or drainage. Wood decorative elements including window sills, cornice elements, eaves, and exterior trim were in poor condition with visible deterioration, rotting, and paint failure.

The building interiors were in fair condition, with deterioration of moisture-sensitive finishes, water damage to plaster, and loss of painted finishes. Some areas had been affected by moisture and had widespread organic growth.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 154'-0" by 178'-0" overall
The Laundry Exchange is approximately 46'-0" by 60'-0"
The General Laundry is approximately 130'-0" by 110'-0" and approximately 40'-0" to the peak of the gable roof
The South Addition is approximately 30'-0" by 71'-0"
The East Addition 18'-0" by 54'-0"
The Wash Room Annex is approximately 46'-0" by 77'-0"
2. Foundations: The foundation of the Laundry Exchange is ashlar stone masonry. The foundation of the General Laundry is brick masonry. Newer portions of the building are typically constructed on concrete slab-on-grade foundations.
3. Walls: The exterior walls of the Construction Shops are constructed of red brick masonry. In a few areas, the slope of the site exposes the stone foundation walls. Wall materials and details vary depending on the construction period of the different portions of the building.

At the Laundry Exchange, the walls are red brick laid in a common bond pattern with headers at every sixth course. The mortar joints have been repointed with cement-based mortar and finished with a flush profile. The straightforward design of the walls is enriched with projecting brick hood molds over the windows on the west facade. These windows feature a projecting brick masonry hood. All the windows of feature a simple, squarely dressed stone sill. The lower half of the north facade is clad with cement stucco.

The General Laundry and Shed Addition are masonry structures constructed with red brick laid in a common bond pattern with headers at every sixth course. The General Laundry building is distinguished from the Laundry Exchange by red sandstone windowsills. The sills project from the facade and have a rusticated finish surrounded by a raked border. The window openings of the east and north facades feature projecting brick hood moldings identical to those on the east facade of the Laundry Exchange. The window openings on the south and west facades also have sandstone sills, but their lintels are constructed of two courses of header brick set in a segmental arch with no additional decoration.

The South Addition exterior walls closely match the design of the walls of the General Laundry with similar brick, bond pattern, and decoration. The east facade has a shallow parapet with a concrete capstone, beneath which is a corbelled cornice with dog-tooth moldings. The window openings on the east facade feature the same hood molding that is typical of the Laundry Exchange and the General Laundry, while the windows on the south facade have simple lintels constructed of two courses of header brick set in a segmental arch. The window openings all have sandstone sills.

The East Addition is also constructed of red brick masonry. The first floor door and window openings feature brick hood moldings. The windows have red sandstone sills that are dressed with a rusticated finish surrounded by a raked border. The second floor is also constructed of brick masonry but without ornamentation. The rectangular window openings have steel lintels and brick rowlock sills. On the north wall of the East Addition, a corbelled cornice with detailing similar to the South Addition above the first floor indicates the original height of this addition prior to the construction of the second floor.

The Wash Room Annex has exterior walls of red brick masonry in running bond. Between window openings, the brick masonry projects outward as a pilaster. Window sills are formed by a rowlock course of brick. The top of the wall is the exposed structural concrete perimeter beam. The Southwest Addition to the Wash Room Annex is constructed of concrete masonry units with red brick used to frame window and door openings.

4. Structural system, framing: The Laundry Exchange portion has a partial basement level with stone masonry foundation walls that support a series of brick barrel vaults and brick groin vaults at the northwest corner of the building. The vaults have been reinforced with shoring including cast iron columns and tie rods. The brick arches support reinforced concrete beams and columns that are an apparent replacement to the original wood-framed system. The second floor of the Laundry Exchange is framed with 3-inch by 12-inch wood joists spaced at approximately 14 inches on center, and are supported by girders spanning between the exterior walls, reinforced concrete columns, and interior bearing walls. The third floor is framed with 2-inch by 11-inch wood joists spaced at approximately 17 inches on center, supported by the interior and exterior walls. The roof framing is 2-inch by 8-inch (actual) rafters spaced at approximately 23 inches on center. The rafters bear on the exterior masonry walls. Diagonal braces are face nailed to the bottom of the rafters and the ceiling joists at approximately 4 feet on center (at every other rafter and every third ceiling joist).

The General Laundry has brick arch floors at the first and second levels supported by metal floor beams and a wood-framed roof. The floor beams are spaced approximately 4 feet on center, span north-south, and are supported by exterior walls and double wrought iron beams. The double beams span east to west and are supported by the exterior walls and interior columns. The interior columns are brick piers in the basement and cast iron at the first floor. The arches are composed of single-wythe rowlock brick courses and have an amplitude (rise at arch midspan) of about 5 inches between the supports. The gable roof over the East General Laundry portion is framed with four king post trusses that are about 12 feet 8 inches deep, and span about 49 feet north to south across the width of the building between exterior brick masonry walls. The exterior walls are approximately 18 inches thick. The roof has 3-inch by 6-inch rafters spaced at approximately 2 feet that span between the trusses and support three stick-framed gabled dormers on both the north and south sides. The attic has 2-inch by 8-inch floor joists spaced at approximately 16 inches on center that span between the bottom chords of the trusses. The flat roof over the North General Laundry is framed with rafters that span east to west.

The floor of the South Addition has a concrete slab on grade. The roof is constructed with exposed 12-inch-deep steel beams spaced about 8 feet 4 inches on center that support a wood-framed roof and monitor. The roof framing includes three, 3-inch by 10-inch wood purlins that support the roof rafters and align with the monitor framing. The monitor has a shed roof framed with 2-inch by 4-inch members and a continuous row of windows along the south side.

The first floor of the East Addition has a concrete slab on grade. The second floor has 2-inch by 8-inch joists spaced at approximately 16 inches on center, supported by steel beams that span east to west between the exterior masonry wall of the extension and the wall of the General Laundry. The shed roof over this building portion is framed with wood rafters spaced at approximately 2 feet on center.

The Wash Room Annex has concrete floors, beams, columns, and load-bearing brick masonry walls. The elevation of the annex basement matches that of the basement level of the General

Laundry. The annex roof has 12-inch-deep beams that span between sloped reinforced concrete beams (14-inches by 20-inches deep) spaced at 18 feet 4 inches on center. The concrete beams span north to south between the exterior masonry walls and the 14-inch-square interior concrete columns, which are centrally located. The roof has a concrete framed monitor along the ridge east to west, which is supported by 13-inch-deep beams that span between the 20-inch-deep beams and the interior columns. Cast iron columns of varying sizes have been added to support the 20-inch-deep beams at the intersection of the 13-inch-deep beams. The cast iron column layout varies and these columns appear to have been a retrofit. The concrete roof decks are estimated to be approximately 3-1/2 inches thick and have expanded steel diamond mesh reinforcing. The Southwest Addition is constructed with concrete masonry walls that support a flat wood-framed roof. The concrete floors have varied elevations and appear to be part of a former loading dock assembly.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: In the corner formed by the north wall of the General Laundry and the east wall of the Laundry Exchange is a steel fire staircase. It rests on a concrete slab that extends northward and serves as a threshold to the entrance to the Laundry Exchange. The stair is surrounded by a two-story chain-link fence enclosure.

A steel fire escape is attached to the center of the east facade of the General Laundry. It is accessed from the center window bay of the third floor and the third and fourth bays of the second floor.

A small loading dock projects from the middle of the west end of the Wash Room Annex. It has a steel-framed open canopy with a corrugated metal roof.

6. Chimneys: A brick chimney is located south of the dormer on the west face of the Laundry Exchange gable roof. A second large, square chimney stack rises from the southwest corner of the three-story volume of the East General Laundry.

7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Many of the existing doorways have been altered or were created at former window openings. Most of the existing exterior doors are not original and consist of painted single-panel steel doors and steel roll-up overhead doors. One older door exists at the north wall of the Laundry Exchange, where a wood door with twelve small glass lights at its upper half and a brass doorknob leads to an interior stairwell to the second floor.
- b. Windows and shutters: The majority of the windows in the building are wood-framed, six-over-six double-hung windows. A few irregular-sized openings have wood-framed, divided-light pivot or casement sash. At the south and west elevations of the Laundry Exchange, several windows have non-original, horizontally-divided two-over-two double-hung wood sash; these openings originally had ten-over-ten double-hung wood sash.

The South Addition also has wood-framed, six-over-six double-hung windows; at the south elevation, the windows are paired within each masonry opening. The second floor of the East Addition has rectangular two-light fixed steel-framed windows.

The Wash Room Annex has steel industrial-style windows. The typical window group fills one structural bay and consists of three window units: a five-light-wide by four-light-tall unit

at either side and a three-light-wide by four-light-tall unit at the center. Operable pivot sash, three lights wide by two lights tall, are centered within the two large units in each bay.

8. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: The main portion of the Laundry Exchange has a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The west wing of the Laundry Exchange has a shed roof covered with coated sheet metal.

The East General Laundry has a gable roof clad with slate shingles. The West General Laundry has a shed roof covered with coated membrane roofing. The Shed Addition has a shed roof covered with built-up membrane roofing.

The South Addition has a flat roof with a south-facing sawtooth monitor that runs the length of the addition. The wood-framed sawtooth monitor is composed of rectangular window openings, each containing a pair of wood-framed six-light fixed wood sash. Within each opening, the sash are separated by a wide wood mullion. The East Addition has a shed roof covered with membrane roofing.

The Wash Room Annex has a shallow gable roof covered with gravel-surfaced built-up roofing. Running along the middle of the roof is a concrete-framed monitor. The monitor is eleven bays long and two bays wide, and is fitted with eight-light industrial steel sash windows. The Southwest Addition has a flat roof covered with membrane roofing.

- b. Cornice, eaves: The Laundry Exchange roof has a sheet metal ogee gutter attached to the east and west eaves. The gable ends feature a wood soffitted eave that has wood ogee molding capped with sheet metal flashing. Galvanized sheet metal downspouts at the corners of the building discharge rainwater onto grade.

The gable roof of the East General Laundry features a wood soffitted eave and a wood ogee molding, with a sheet metal fascia under a box gutter. The West General Laundry has a projecting eave with a closed wood panel soffit. A sheet metal ogee gutter is attached to the eave. Galvanized sheet metal downspouts are attached to the surface of the west facade and discharge at grade. The soffit and eaves of the Shed Addition are enclosed with vinyl siding. The south eave features a sheet metal half-round rain gutter.

The South Addition has wood eaves with exposed rafters. There is a sheet metal gutter that runs the length of the addition, with downspouts at the east and west ends that discharge onto grade. The East Addition has a wood box eave and a sheet metal ogee rain gutter with a downspout at the northeast corner that discharges at grade.

The Wash Room Annex has a concrete deck eave that overhangs the north and south elevations of the building. The eave fascia has wood blocking visible from the underside and covered by a metal roof flashing.

The Southwest Addition has wood trim at the roof perimeter, capped with sheet metal flashing at the cornice. It has sheet metal ogee gutters attached to the eaves on the south facade. A single sheet metal downspout attached to the southwest corner of the building discharges at grade.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The Laundry Exchange roof has gabled dormers on its east and west slopes. Both dormers are located south of the center of the building but are not aligned along the same east–west axis. Each dormer is fitted with a pair of six-over-six double-hung wood windows that are separated by a wood muntin. The dormers feature incised wood decoration in their architrave. The dormers, their cheek walls, and roofs are clad with asphalt shingles.

The East General Laundry has three symmetrically placed gabled dormers on each face of the gable roof. The dormers have incised door architraves whose pattern matches the dormers on the Laundry Exchange. Each dormer has paired six-over-six double-hung wood-framed windows.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The floor plans of the Construction Shops reflect the phased development and complex history of the building. As discussed above, the building is composed of several interconnected buildings of varying ages, types of construction, and architectural character.

The interior of the Laundry Exchange building consists of a basement, two floor levels, and an attic, none of which is aligned with the adjacent floor levels in the North General Laundry. There is no interior access between the Laundry Exchange and the rest of the Construction Shop buildings. In addition, the basement and first floor of the Laundry Exchange have no interior connection between these levels and have separate entrances from the exterior. At the basement level, the Laundry Exchange has a series of interconnected rectangular spaces corresponding to the various phases of construction of this portion of the building. The first floor level is partitioned into several rooms, with larger spaces at the north half and smaller closets and a bathroom at the south half. The southeast corner of the first floor is a storage room accessible only from the first floor of the adjacent General Laundry. The second and third floors of the Laundry Exchange are partitioned into a series of small rooms. The second floor has a central corridor running north-south.

The General Laundry is comprised of two sections: the North General Laundry and the East General Laundry. The North General Laundry is a two-story building with basement, and is connected to the one-story Wash Room Annex at the basement level, as well as the South Addition at the first floor level and the East Addition at the first and second floor levels. The East General Laundry is a three-story structure with basement and attic that is linked to the North General Laundry at the first and second floor level.

The basement level of the General Laundry is mainly unexcavated, although a full basement exists under the south half of the North General Laundry. This basement connects to the main level of the Wash Room Annex. The first floor of the North General Laundry is one large space that is open and connected to the East Addition and the South Addition. A small office is partitioned at the southwest corner of the South Addition. The first floor of the East General Laundry is partitioned into a series of storage rooms. At the second floor, the North General Laundry is partitioned into a north room and a south room. The second floor of the East Addition is partitioned into three storage rooms. The second floor of the East General Laundry has a large, almost square room at its east half and a series of smaller rooms at its west half. The third floor of the East General Laundry has a large main room at the west end, leading to a central east-west corridor that connects to five smaller rooms at the east half of the building.

2. Stairways: There is one primary staircase at the northwest corner of the East General Laundry connecting all levels of the General Laundry. The enclosed stairwell has a U-shaped staircase with cast iron stairs and a wood-framed window at each stair landing.

A second interior staircase is located in the Laundry Exchange portion of the building. The single steep flight of stairs connects the second and third floor levels. A staircase also leads from an exterior door to the second floor of the Laundry Exchange.

3. Flooring: The first floor rooms of the Laundry Exchange typically have vinyl tile applied to a concrete floor; ceramic tile is used in the bathroom. The second and third floors of the Laundry Exchange have unstained tongue-and-groove hardwood flooring and 7-1/2-inch-tall wood baseboards that likely date to the 1878 construction of this portion of the building.

The typical flooring at the General Laundry, South Addition, and East Addition includes exposed concrete flooring at the basement and second floor levels, carpet or vinyl tile flooring at the first and third floor levels, and unstained tongue-and-groove planks at the attic level. In shower and bathroom areas, the flooring is typically red quarry tile.

The Wash Room Annex has red quarry tile flooring. The Southwest Addition to the Wash Room Annex has exposed concrete flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The rooms at the first floor of the Laundry Exchange have flat ceilings composed of plaster on metal lath, and gypsum board walls with vinyl baseboards. The second and third floors of the Laundry Exchange have painted plaster on wood lath walls and ceilings, likely dating to the 1878 construction of this portion of the building.

Typical wall finishes throughout the General Laundry building consist of plaster applied to a brick substrate, although alterations to the interior are distinguished by the use of different substrate materials such as wood lath on wood framing, hollow clay tile, and concrete masonry units. Ceiling finishes differ with each floor level. Typically, the ceilings of the basement and first floor are composed of brick arches spanning between iron beams. The arches remain exposed and are finished with plaster and paint. The second and third floor ceilings are constructed of wood and finished with plaster. At the first floor of the East General Laundry and South Addition, the ceiling finish consists of non-original acoustic tile set in a suspended ceiling grid. The suspended ceiling hangs 2 feet below the existing original plaster ceiling.

The East Addition has an exposed wood joist ceiling at the first floor level. At the second floor level, the ceiling is clad with gypsum board attached to the wood framing.

The one-story Wash Room Annex has a board-formed concrete ceiling supported by concrete beams and piers, and exposed brick walls.

5. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Due to the utilitarian nature and numerous alterations to the Laundry Exchange, General Laundry, East Addition, South Addition, and Wash Room Annex buildings, there are few examples of a typical interior door. Throughout the building, there are metal-clad doors, industrial fire doors, steel roll-up doors, wood multi-panel doors with glazing, and contemporary flat-panel hollow-core wood doors. The original interior doors for

the Laundry Exchange and General Laundry appear to be four-panel wood stile-and-rail doors set in wood frames.

Interior door openings at the Laundry Exchange have molded wood trim and jambs with 6-1/2-inch-tall plinth blocks. At the General Laundry, South Addition, and East Addition, the doorways are surrounded by wood trim and are capped by a wood cornice. At the second and third floors, doors have wood-framed operable three-light transoms. Door openings within the Wash Room Annex consist of simple exposed masonry openings with a segmental arch.

Exterior doors throughout the building are set in a simple exposed masonry opening with segmental arch.

- b. Windows: The windows of the General Laundry and first floor level of the Laundry Exchange are surrounded by painted wood casings and have molded sills with aprons. The headers feature a projecting wood architrave or cornice. At the second and third floor levels of the Laundry Exchange, windows have painted wood casing and a molded sill but no decorative header.

The East General Laundry contains wood-framed fixed interior clerestory windows located at partition walls that divide the various rooms.

Window openings at the South and East Additions are set into a simple exposed brick masonry opening with segmental arch. Clerestory windows at the South Addition are divided by wood mullions and have wood casings and apron.

The Wash Room Annex features multi-light steel-framed industrial-style windows along the north and south walls set in simple exposed brick masonry openings with a concrete header beam. Wood-framed windows within the structure have an exposed masonry opening with segmental arch. Monitor windows are set within the exposed concrete structure and separated by concrete mullions.

6. Decorative features and trim: At the Laundry Exchange, some walls at the first floor and all areas of the second floor have a wood picture rail. At the second floor, some rooms have a painted stencil decoration on the plaster walls just below the picture rail. Rooms at the first floor level have a vinyl baseboard, while rooms at the second floor and attic have a 6-1/2-inch-tall wood baseboard.

A the General Laundry building, the first floor of the North General Laundry features fluted cast iron columns that support the structural framing. A built-in bookcase is recessed in the masonry exterior wall of the East General Laundry. The bookcase has wood trim and shelves and is capped by a wood cornice.

At the Wash Room Annex, cast iron fluted columns with decorative capitals support concrete girders that span the length of the building.

7. Hardware: Original interior doors have round brass knobs and backplates.

8. Mechanical Equipment

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The rooms are heated by cast iron radiator units and pipe radiators that are attached to the walls, typically beneath windows.
- b. Lighting: The majority of the rooms are illuminated by suspended fluorescent light fixtures. Electrical fixtures and conduit are mounted on the walls and ceilings. At the second and third floors of the Laundry Exchange, the rooms are lit by ceiling-mounted single lamp bases fitted with incandescent bulbs and glass shades.
- c. Plumbing: Plumbing supply and waste is composed of cast iron pipes and fittings with some additions in polyvinyl chloride (PVC).

D. Site

1. Historic landscape design: Documentation of the landscape of the west campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital can be found in Historic American Landscape Survey documentation submittal DC-11.

The Construction Shops building is situated at the top of the west campus plateau and overlooks the Ice\Boiler Plant (Building 52) to the south. To the east is the Fire Station (Building 41) and Rest\Circulation Library (Building 40). Birch Street runs north of the Construction Shops and separates it from the General Kitchen (Building 45).

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None available
- B. Early Views: Copies of selected early and historical views of the Construction Shops are included in the attached Supplemental Material. The original photographs and other archival photographic documentation are in the collection of the General Services Administration, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, or the St. Elizabeths Hospital Health Sciences Library archives on the St. Elizabeths East Campus.
- C. Interviews: No oral history interviews were performed for this documentation project.
- D. Selected Sources:

Centennial Papers: St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1855–1955. Winfred Overholser, ed.
Washington, D.C.: Centennial Commission, St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1956.

Condition & Reuse Assessment: St. Elizabeths West Campus (draft). Oehrlein & Associates
Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration, January 4, 2006.

The DHS Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths: Final Master Plan. Oehrlein & Associates
Architects and Robinson & Associates. Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration.
November 10, 2008.

General Correspondence and Other Records of the Federal Board of St. Elizabeths Hospital.
Records of the Office of the Superintendent, (1855–1967), Record Group 418.

Historic Preservation Report: St. Elizabeths West Campus, John Milner Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration. December 7, 2005.

Historic Structure Report: Construction Shops (Building 49), St. Elizabeths West Campus, Washington, D.C. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, March 12, 2010.

Library of Congress. Washington, D.C.: Geography & Maps Reading Room. Collection contains various topographical maps for the District of Columbia and St. Elizabeths campus from 1855–1985.

Maps and Plans of the Government Hospital for the Insane (St. Elizabeths Hospital), 05/27/1839–12/14/1938. Department of the Interior, St. Elizabeths Hospital (1916–06/30/1940). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital. Entry 20, Records of the Superintendent, Annual Report of the Subordinate Units, 1919–1966.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 42, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Records of the Secretary of the Interior.

Photographic Prints of Buildings, Grounds, and People, 1870–1920. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, St. Elizabeth Hospital (04/11/1953–08/09/1967). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

Photographs of Structures at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., 1968. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Public Health Service, Health Services and Mental Health Administration, National Institute of Mental Health, Saint Elizabeths Hospital, Office of the Superintendent (04/01/1968–07/01/1973). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

St. Elizabeths Hospital Historic Resources Management Plan. Devroux & Purnell Architects-Planners, PC, with Betty Bird, Historian, and Rhodeside & Harwell Inc., Landscape Architects. Prepared for the D.C. Office of Business and Economic Development and the Office of the Assistant City Administrator for Economic Development, Washington, D.C., September 1993.

St. Elizabeths Hospital Tunnel Inspection Report. Burgess & Niple, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., February 2006. Accessed through the General Services Administration archives.

St. Elizabeths West Campus: Cultural Landscape Report, Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, and Robinson & Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration. April 2009.

St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines. Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates, Inc., Architectural and Historical Research. Prepared for the General Services Administration. November 10, 2008.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Extensive research on the history of the Construction Shops has been performed for this and other studies, as documented in the publications and other sources listed above.

F. Supplemental Material:

1. Historic Structure Report: Construction Shops (Building 49).
2. Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.
3. Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.
4. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0P034.
5. National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 418, image P-153.
6. GSA archives, image DC1472SE0P035.
7. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0P205.
8. Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.
9. GSA archives, image DC1456SE0P008.
10. GSA archives, image DC1460SE0P003.
11. GSA archive, image DC1460SE0P004.
12. GSA archive, image DC1460SE0P002.
13. GSA archives, image DC1460SE0P001.

PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

This historical narrative was prepared by WJE in conjunction with Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC, who prepared the measured drawings, and Leslie Schwartz Photography, who prepared the photographic documentation. The HABS documentation was completed for the General Services Administration.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

CONSTRUCTION SHOPS (Building 49)
St. Elizabeths West Campus
639–661 Birch Street SE
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. DC-349-V

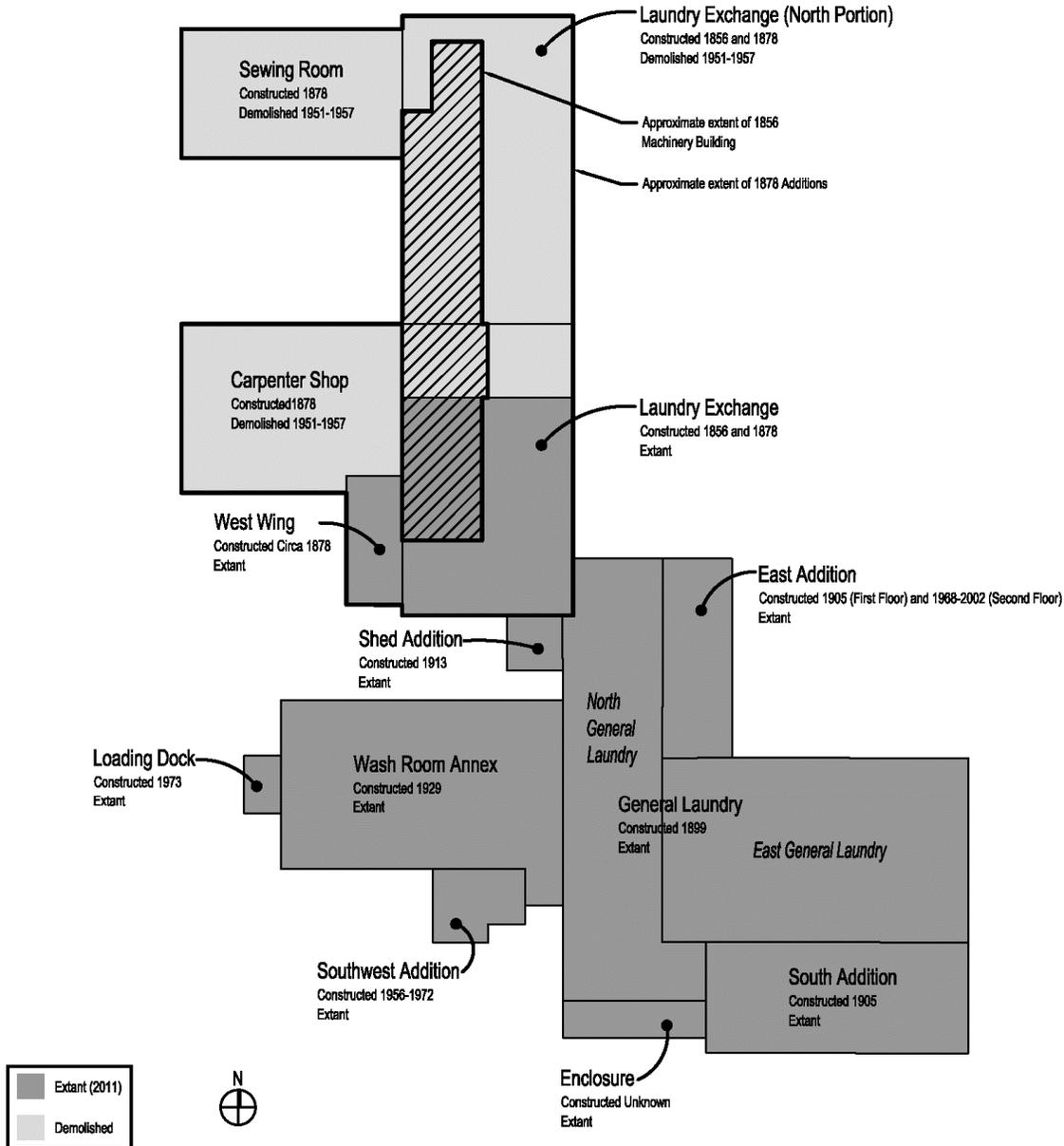


Figure 1. Source: Historic Structure Report: Construction Shops (Buildings 49)

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL
CONSTRUCTION SHOPS (BUILDING 49)
HABS No. DC-349-V
SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL (Page 2)



Figure 2. Source: GSA archive, image DC1472SE0P034.



Figure 3. Source: National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 418, image P-153.



Figure 4. Source: GSA archives, image DC1472SE0P035.

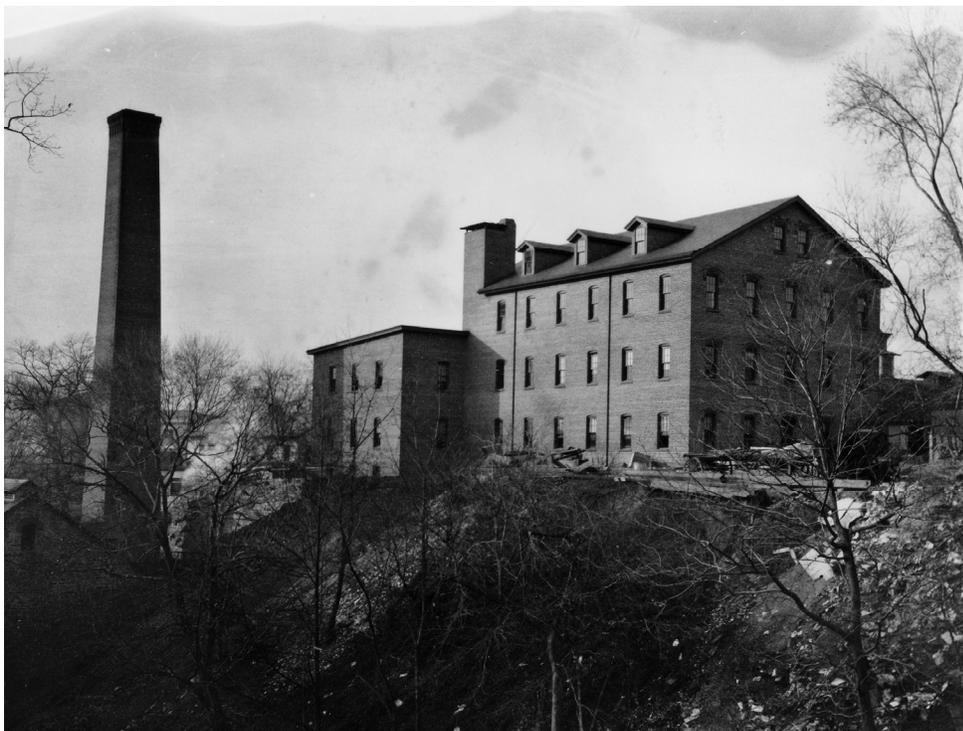


Figure 5. Source: GSA archive, image DC1472SE0P205.



Figure 6. Source: GSA archives, image DC1456SE0P008.



Figure 7. Source: GSA archives, image DC1460SE0P003.



Figure 8. Source: GSA archive, image DC1460SE0P004.



Figure 9. Source: GSA archive, image DC1460SE0P002.



Figure 10. Source: GSA archives, image DC1460SE0P001.

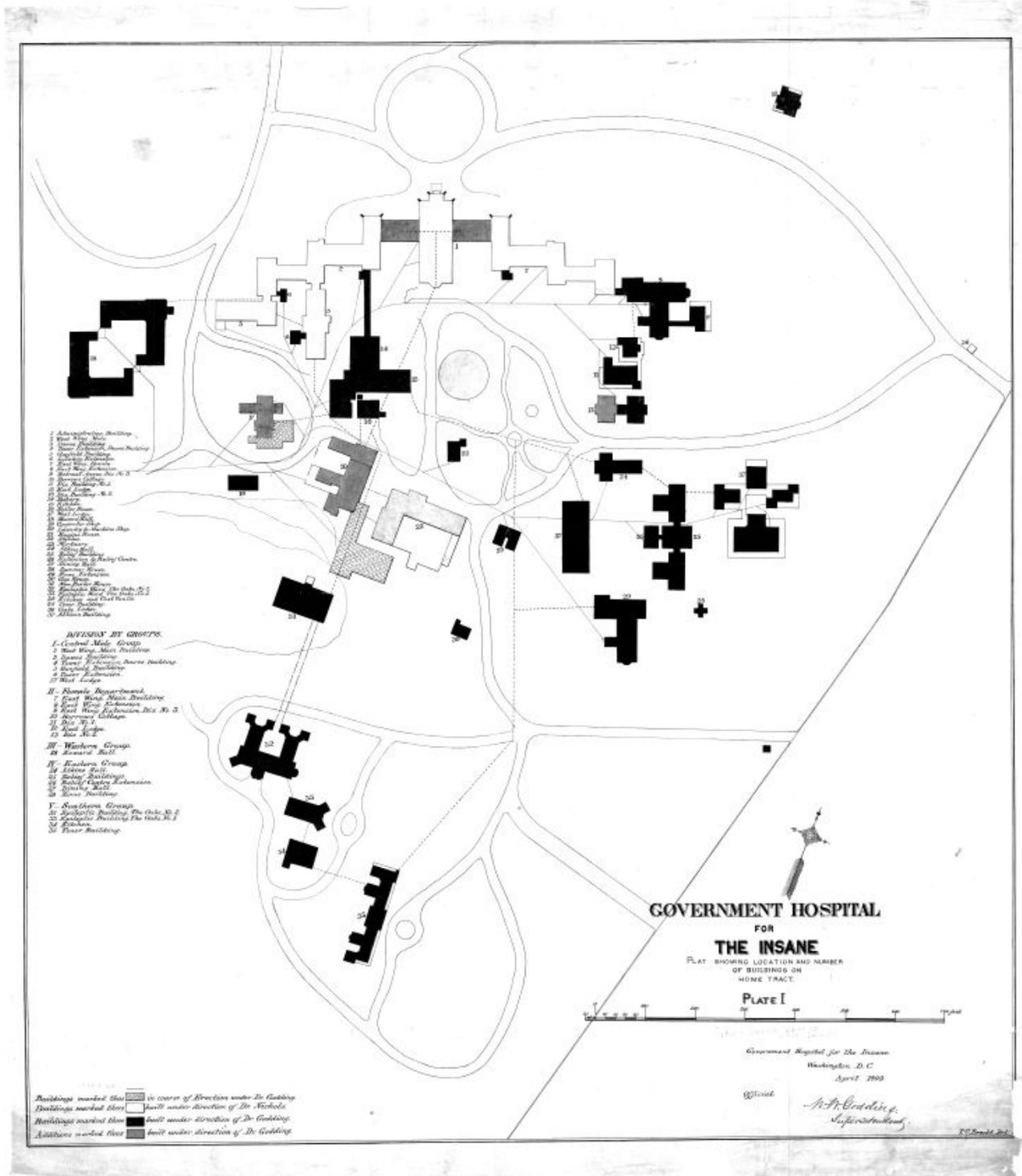


Figure 11. Source: Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

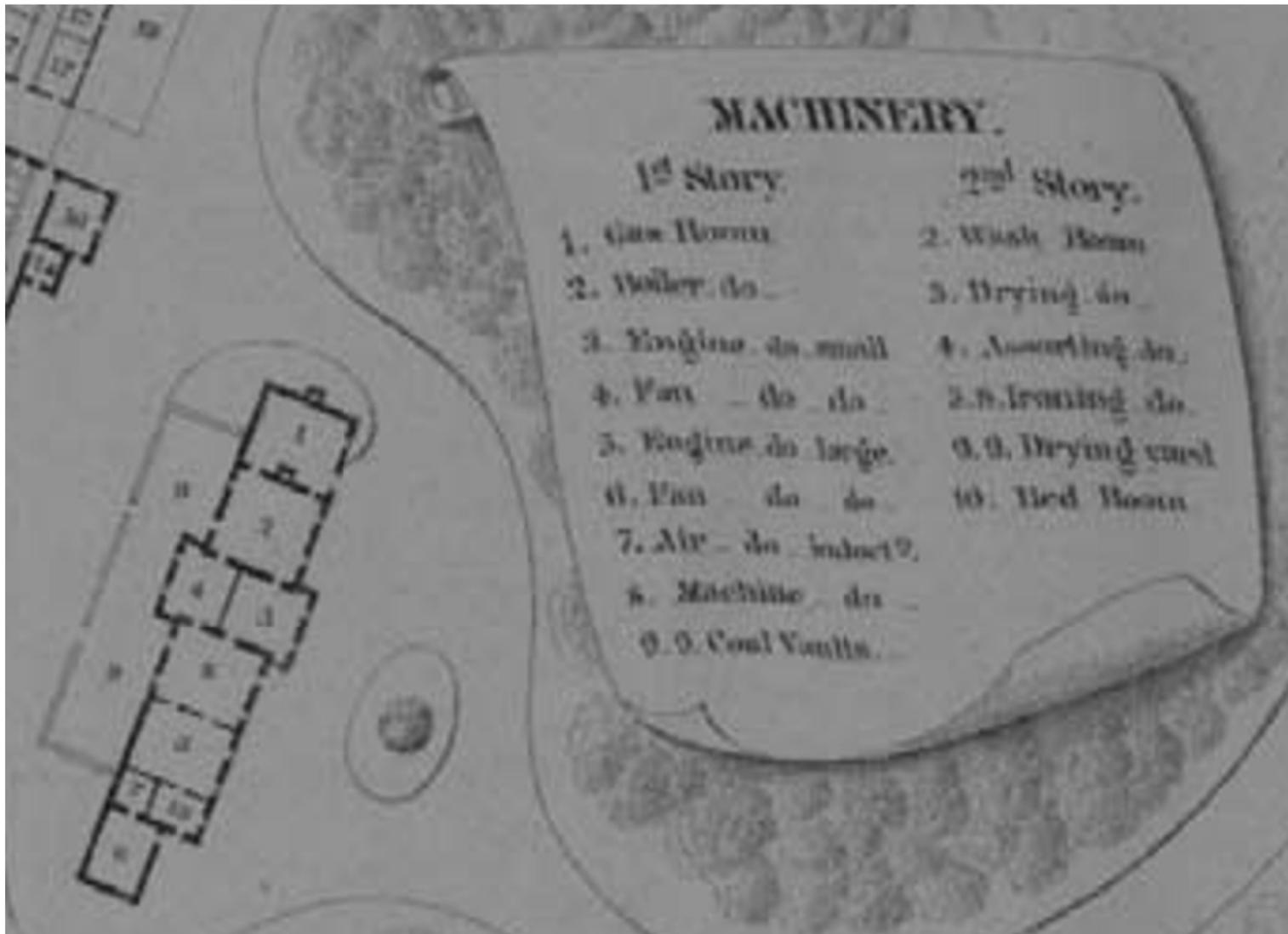


Figure 12. Source: Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

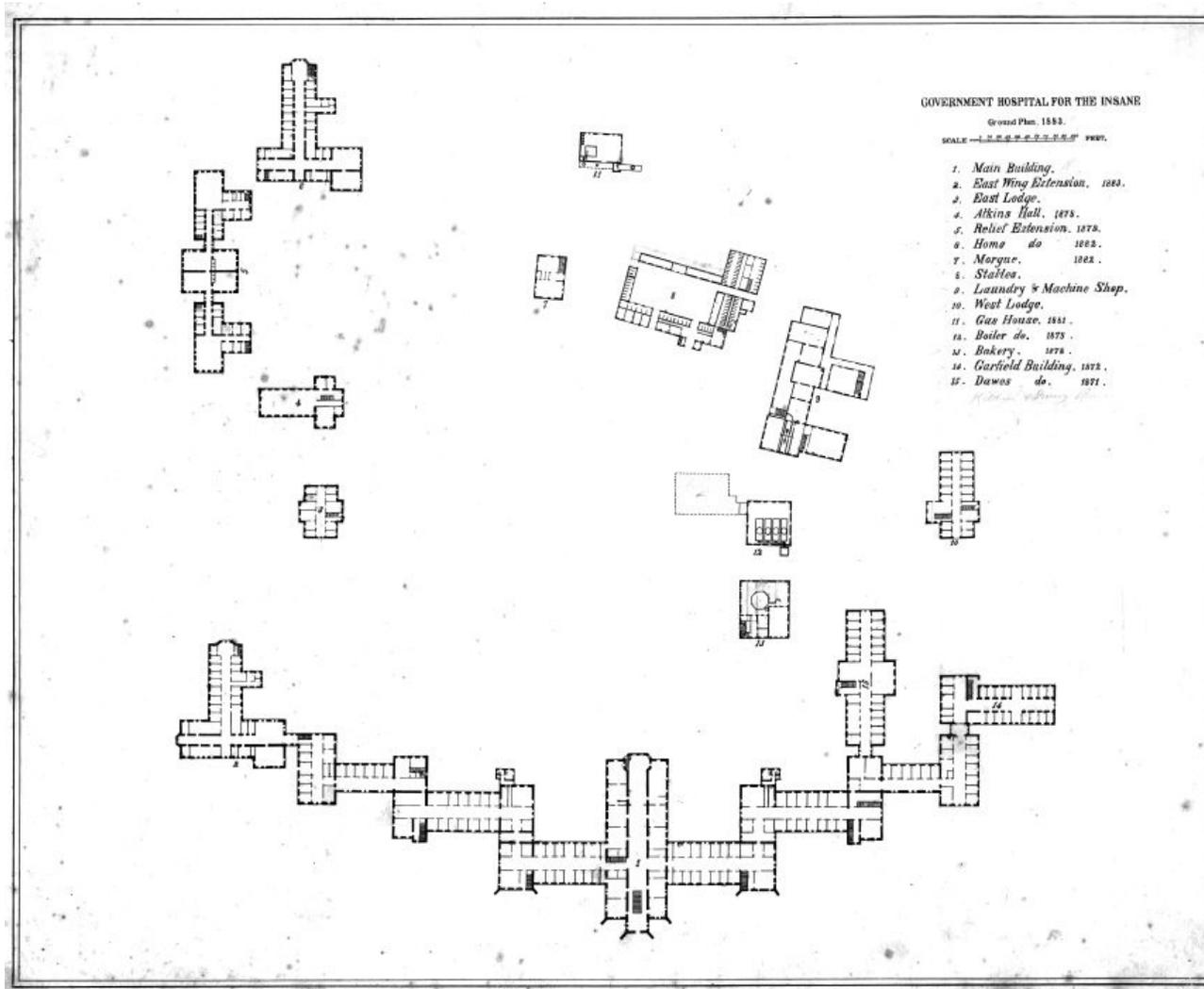


Figure 13. Source: Records of St. Elizabeths [Cartographic Record], Record Group 418; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.