

FORT BOISE, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Boise Barracks, Administration Building)
(Boise Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Building No. 13)
Fort Boise Historic District
500 West Fort Street
Boise
Ada County
Idaho

HABS ID-132-A
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

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Location: Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), Building No. 13, 500 W. Fort Street, Boise, Ada County, Idaho. (See page 11 for a site map.)

The coordinates of the building are Latitude: -43.61972, Longitude: -116.19028. These were taken in 2011 near the front porch entrance using a GPS mapping grade unit accurate to +/-3 meters after differential correction. The building's location has no restrictions on its release to the public.

Present Owner/ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Occupant:

Present Use: The building is vacant.

Significance: In 1863, the Fort Boise military post was established to protect the local mining industry and emigrants from Indian attacks. U.S. Army Major Pinckney Lugenbeel chose the site on July 4 of that year at the intersection of the Oregon Trail and the road to the mines in the Boise Basin. In 1879, although the facilities remained under the authority of the U.S. Army, the name "Fort Boise" was changed to "Boise Barracks". The Administration Building, which was constructed in 1886, served as the headquarters for the Boise Barracks. The building was central to activity, having a connecting path from the Boise Barracks entrance and a boardwalk leading to the Officer's Quarters. From 1886 to 1912, the building was the first place an enlisted person checked into at the Boise Barracks for processing and inoculations. The one-story, rectangular brick building style is Georgian Revival with a hip roof and segmental arch openings braced by sandstone.

Historian: John L. Bertram, April 2011.

Project
Information: Architect Brandon Sheltroun of Houston-Bugatsch Architects, photographer Kevin Schultz, and historian John Bertram prepared the documentation. The Idaho State Historical Society provided historical photographs and newspaper files. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Facilities Management Services, through the assistance of Shawn

Flagstad and Mike Quinn, provided architectural building plans and access to the building.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** 1885 or 1886: The Department of Veterans Affairs Facility Management Service list of campus buildings identifies the date of erection as 1885, while the Bicentennial plaque on the building facade indicates 1886.
2. **Architect:** U.S. Army.
3. **Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:** The U.S. government has been the sole owner and occupant of the Administration Building since its construction in 1886. From 1886 to 1919, the U.S. Army used it for military administration. In 1919, the U.S. Public Health Service opened a hospital on the site, and from 1920 to 1922 the Administration Building was used for hospital administration. In 1938, the site was transferred to the U.S. Veterans Administration, now known as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which continued to use and model the building for health care administration. The building has been vacant since 2009.¹
4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** U.S. Army.
5. **Original plans and construction:** Original drawings were not found. Revisions to the original floor plan drawings in October 1920 reveal that the building was a one-story brick structure with a hip roof and wide porches on both the front and back (see the list of architectural drawings on page 8). Its rectangular building shape measured 38'-0" x 40'-0". The floor plan shows a central hallway, used for waiting, and four offices that were used for staff such as clerk, medical officer, and supervising nurse. Physical examination of the existing structure indicates that window sills, segmental arches, and the foundation are of sandstone. One window on the southeast rear corner remains unaltered with 1-1/4" quarter-round framing, the segmental brick arched opening and the windows being two-vertical lights over-two.
6. **Alterations and additions:** The building has undergone substantial alterations. It appears that little of the original room configuration remains.

In 1920, during use by the U.S. Public Health Service, a 24'-9" x 12'-2" addition was constructed on the east side facing the parade grounds, replacing the wooden porch. The addition included two toilet rooms on one side of a central hall (the first for the building). A boiler room occupied the other side of the hall. Wall radiators replaced the four stoves and the chimneys were removed. Two segmental arched window openings were added on the south side.

¹ *Idaho Daily Statesman*, June 1, 1930, Section Two, p.1.

In 1929, major alterations added wings to both the north and south sides that housed offices and a conference room. These 50'-0" x 36'-0" wings are brick with flat arched window openings with six-over-six double-hung windows. Two-over-two horizontal lights replaced the windows on the south facade of the original building. The wings have a hip roof with a small central square cupola. The foundation of the addition is concrete. A modest porch replaced the original wooden porch and chamfered posts.

In 1935, the west roof of the original structure was altered to match the hip slope of the wings. At the same time, a more elaborate Georgian Revival porch and second-level balustrade were added across the front of the original building. The front door pilaster casing was embellished by a six-light two-panel front door, which was later replaced. The rear door was also replaced with a contemporary metal one.

In 1946 and again in 1955, the interior of the building was modernized with alterations to the central hall, the toilets, and new counter desks in the waiting room.

In 1968, interior remodeling led to dropped ceilings and wood paneling in the halls and some offices.

B. Historical Context

Fort Boise was rededicated as the Boise Barracks in 1879 following the end of Indian skirmishes. Boise saw considerable public building in the 1880s, as evidenced by the Ada County Courthouse (1881), Central School (1883), the Territorial Capital (1886), and numerous brick commercial buildings and handsome homes. The 1886 Administration Building centralized the organization of the Boise Barracks, and made use of the brick and other building materials that were available in the growing city of Boise. It was sited on the inner edge of the military parade grounds and was connected to the fort entrance by a dirt path. A central hallway connected the building across the parade grounds, via a boardwalk and later a sidewalk, to the Officers Quarters. Also in 1886, the Sonna Reservoir was constructed on the hill above the Officers Quarters.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, the Boise Barracks were slated to be closed. However, the onset of the Spanish-American War (1898) delayed those plans and, instead, the facilities were expanded. By 1902, extensive improvements had been made to the Boise Barracks.² By 1906, the War Department ordered the Idaho City Road through the military reserve closed, and it was relocated, coming into Boise on Reserve Street.

² MacGregor, Carol Lynn. *Boise, Idaho 1882-1910: Prosperity in Isolation*. Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2006, p. 121.

The Boise Barracks was closed in 1912 and the site remained dormant until the U.S. Public Health Service opened a hospital there in 1919³. In 1921, Congress created the Veterans Bureau to centralize all services for veterans, and in 1922 the War Department granted permission to the Veterans Bureau to use the site. In 1929, the Veterans Bureau offices moved from downtown Boise to the Boise Barracks.⁴ In 1932, the main hospital building, No. 5052, later Building No. 67, was completed northwest of the Administration Building and later connected to it by an enclosed hallway. In 1938, the site was transferred to the U.S. Veterans Administration. Its successor, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, operates the VAMC.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

1. **Architectural character:** The building's Georgian Revival style is characterized by a formal arrangement and symmetry. The façade is emphasized by a veranda and second-level balustrade across the front of the original building. Four pairs of square columns support the porch. The hip roof has a gentle pitch and boxed eaves. Windows are six-over-six light, double-hung.

Fort Boise architecture is eclectic, as few buildings are alike. U.S. Army architects, following military tradition, preferred architecture consisting of symmetrical rectilinear buildings with hip roofs, central hallways, and porches, and a commanding presence. Porches front and rear permitted additional patterns of traffic flow and protection from rain or sun as well as an informal gathering place. The Fort Boise site was placed on National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

2. **Condition of fabric:** Fabric is in fair-to-poor condition. The building was vacated and closed due to mold in 2009. Water from outdoor sprinklers, in combination with water in the crawl space trench, led to mold on the first floor. The original 1886 brick facade appears to have been sandblasted to remove paint. The south wing facade brick is showing distress. The interior of the building has been remodeled numerous times and is worn.

B. Description of Exterior

1. **Overall dimensions:** The building is a one-story rectilinear-shaped structure with a rear central rest room addition. The building dimensions are 139'-0" x 37'-0". The central section projects 4'-0" to the rear and includes a 12'-2" x 24'-9" addition.
2. **Foundations:** The central section is sandstone and the wings and rear addition are concrete with a width of one foot. Floor joists are pocketed into the foundation.

³ *History of U.S. Veterans Hospital "5052"*. Boise, Idaho: Idaho State Historical Society vertical files, "Boise Hospitals," six pages, ca. 1953.

⁴ *Idaho Daily Statesman*, June 1, 1930, Section Two, p.1.

3. **Walls:** Red-brick masonry walls form the building facades. The face of the central building is running bond with the walls three wythes in thickness. The masonry coursing of the wings is common bond, with five stretcher courses to each course of headers. A rowlock header course is used at the bottom-most course of the wings. The mortar joints are flush and are 3/8" wide.
4. **Structural system, framing:** The structure features load-bearing masonry walls. The central section roof structure features hand-stacked wood rafters.
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** The original building featured wood porches across the front and rear facades supported by chamfered posts. In 1921, the rear porch was replaced by an addition housing rest rooms and boiler room. In 1935, a Georgian Revival-style porch was constructed across the original facade. Four pairs of square columns with a square-post balustrade balcony support the 36'-6" x 9'-0" veranda.
6. **Chimneys:** The building originally featured two brick chimneys on each of the north and south side walls that vented wood stoves. Each chimney had a modest decorative band. The chimneys were removed when a boiler and radiators were added in 1921.
7. **Openings:** The building has three external doorways. The original 1886 building featured segmental windows and door arches. The wing add-ons have flat arches.
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** The front door segmental arch was replaced with a flat wood cornice in 1935. The original front door design is unknown. The 1935 front door was a six-light and two-panel and has been replaced by a contemporary metal door. The wood trim surround is comprised of a pair of simple pilasters with cornice.
 - b. **Windows:** The original central section windows remain and are double-hung, two-over-two horizontal lights, with wood sash and sandstone sills. The windows in the wing additions are six-over-six double hung with concrete sills.
8. **Roof:**
 - a. **Shape, covering:** The building features a hip roof covered with composition shingles.
 - b. **Cornice, eaves:** The building features boxed eaves.
 - c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** A single, wooden, square cupola with a pyramidal top is centered on the roof. The original building was capped by a spire and weather vane.

C. Description of Interior

1. **Floor plans:** Measured drawings found include:
 - a. March 31, 1920, Floor Plan Building No. 13, Administration Building Boise Barracks, Boise, Idaho. These drawings show recommended changes and additions. They were examined and approved by Harry L. Wells. They include a blueprint of the original structure showing radiator locations and notes for removing interior dressing rooms and adding toilets and a boiler room. The notes also indicate two new window openings. This floor plan was followed in subsequent drawing No. 50-1300. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
 - b. October 28, 1920, Floor Plan Administration Building, Boise, Idaho. This later hand-dated blueprint shows pencil changes for two central toilets and a small boardroom using part of the central hall. These plans were never constructed. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
 - c. No date, No. 50-1300, Remodeling of Bldg. No. 13-For Administration. U.S.P.H.S. Hospital No. 52, Boise, Idaho. This architectural drawing details the October 28, 1920 concepts. The plans were never constructed. The drawing shows a wood porch on the front and rear with a boardwalk to the Officers Quarters. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
 - d. January 4, 1921, No. 50-1300, Remodeling of Bldg. No. 13-For Administration. U.S.P.H.S. Hospital No. 52. Boise, Idaho. This plan, which was constructed, illustrates a back porch toilet and boiler room add-on and radiator and piping location to heat the building's four offices. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho
 - e. January 16, 1935, No 50-1311, Additions and Alterations Administration Bldg. No. 13 Veterans Administration Facility, Boise, Idaho. This plan is for updated men's and women's rest rooms to accommodate increased staff from the building wings. This plan shows the current location for the building's rest rooms. It details a Georgian Revival veranda and front door. It includes a facade elevation of the wing additions and a building floor plan with uses identified. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
2. **Stairways:** There are no interior stairways.
3. **Flooring:** The original flooring is unknown. The current building features numerous floor coverings. The central section sub-floor is wood tongue and groove.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Finishes have been modernized with contemporary paneling and beige paint.

5. **Openings:** There are no notable interior windows or doorways.
6. **Decorative features and trim:** There are no notable decorative features.
7. **Hardware:** All original hardware has been removed or replaced.
8. **Mechanical equipment:**
 - a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** From 1886 until 1921, four chimneys in the side walls provided flues for wood stoves. In 1921, a back porch addition provided space for a boiler that fed steam heat to radiators throughout the building. The boiler was vented by a brick chimney and metal stack. The boiler room was converted to the women's rest room in 1935 and hot water was supplied from the adjacent Building 67. In the 1970s, the building's water heating was converted to geothermal and attic ducting carried forced-air cooling.
 - b. **Lighting:** The original lighting is unknown. Additional windows for natural lighting were added to the south facade in 1921. Exit lighting is recessed fluorescent.
 - c. **Plumbing:** Plumbing was installed in 1921 with one water closet and one sink in each bathroom. The bath rooms were remodeled and expanded in 1935.
9. **Original furnishings:** No original furnishings remain.

D. Site

1. **Historic landscape design:** The one-story rectangular brick building was sited on the inner western edge of the military parade grounds. Fast-growing cottonwood (poplar) trees lined the parade grounds. A dirt path led from the Boise Barracks entrance to the Administration Building. The building's central hall connected to a boardwalk, later a sidewalk, across the parade grounds to the Officers Quarters. A well-used sidewalk along the front of the building connects to Building No. 67 and continues across the Veterans Administration campus. The sidewalk, formerly a roadway, is lined by honey locust trees. Following World War II, the grounds were landscaped and grass and trees replaced what had been sagebrush.
2. **Outbuildings:** A wood-gable-roof woodshed and privy were located to the west of the Administration Building. Presently, a heated corridor structure with utility tunnel below connects the Administration Building to Building 67 to the north. The corridor provides handicap access and utility connections.

Part III. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawings

1. March 31, 1920, Floor Plan Building No. 13 Administration Building Boise Barracks, Boise, Idaho, showing changes and additions recommended. Examined and Approved by Harry L. Wells. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
2. October 28, 1920, Floor Plan Administration Building Boise, Idaho. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
3. No date, No. 50-1300, Remodeling of Bldg. No. 13-For Administration. U.S.P.H.S. Hospital No. 52. Boise, Idaho. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
4. January 4, 1921, No. 50-1300, Remodeling of Bldg. No. 13-For Administration. U.S.P.H.S. Hospital No. 52. Boise, Idaho. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
5. January 16, 1935, No 50-1311, Additions and Alterations Administration Bldg. No. 13 Veterans Administration Facility Boise, Idaho. Source: Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Facilities Management Services, Boise, Idaho.
6. March 2011, VA Bldg. 13 As-Built Plan. Source: Houston-Bugatsch Architects, Nampa, Idaho.

B. Early Views

1. Photograph of the Administration Building with the wood porch facing the parade grounds, ca. 1890. This porch later became the back of the building and was replaced by a restroom and boiler addition. The photograph also reveals that the pyramidal roof was once capped by a spire and weather vane. Source: Idaho State Archives, Idaho State Historical Society 77-180.2/L.
2. Photograph of the parade grounds with the Administration Building near the center, and mature poplar trees enclosing the sides. Source: Idaho State Archives, Idaho State Historical Society 1224-E.
3. Ca. 1920 post card labeled "Headquarters, Boise Barracks, Idaho." The photograph reveals a porch add-on to the west facade covered with vines and a woodshed and privy south of the building. One can see a worn path leading to the building from the entrance gate, the boardwalk across the parade grounds, and stairs to the Officer's Quarters. Source: Idaho State Archives, Idaho State Historical Society 62-86.18.
4. Photograph of the Boise Barracks from foothills, ca. 1902 (photographer Joseph F. Zanlter). This view is from the foothills with the Officer's Quarters in the foreground and the parade grounds and the Administration Building in the center. Source: Idaho State Archives, Idaho State Historical Society E67-73.56.

C. Selected Sources

1. Bibliography

a. Primary Sources and Unpublished Sources:

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Idaho Daily Statesman (Boise, Idaho)

June 1, 1930 Section Two, p. 1 (photograph of Administration Building)

May 9, 1937 Section Two, p. 1 (photograph of Administration Building)

July 5, 1970 p. 8-B c. 1 (photograph of Administration Building)

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b. Secondary Sources:

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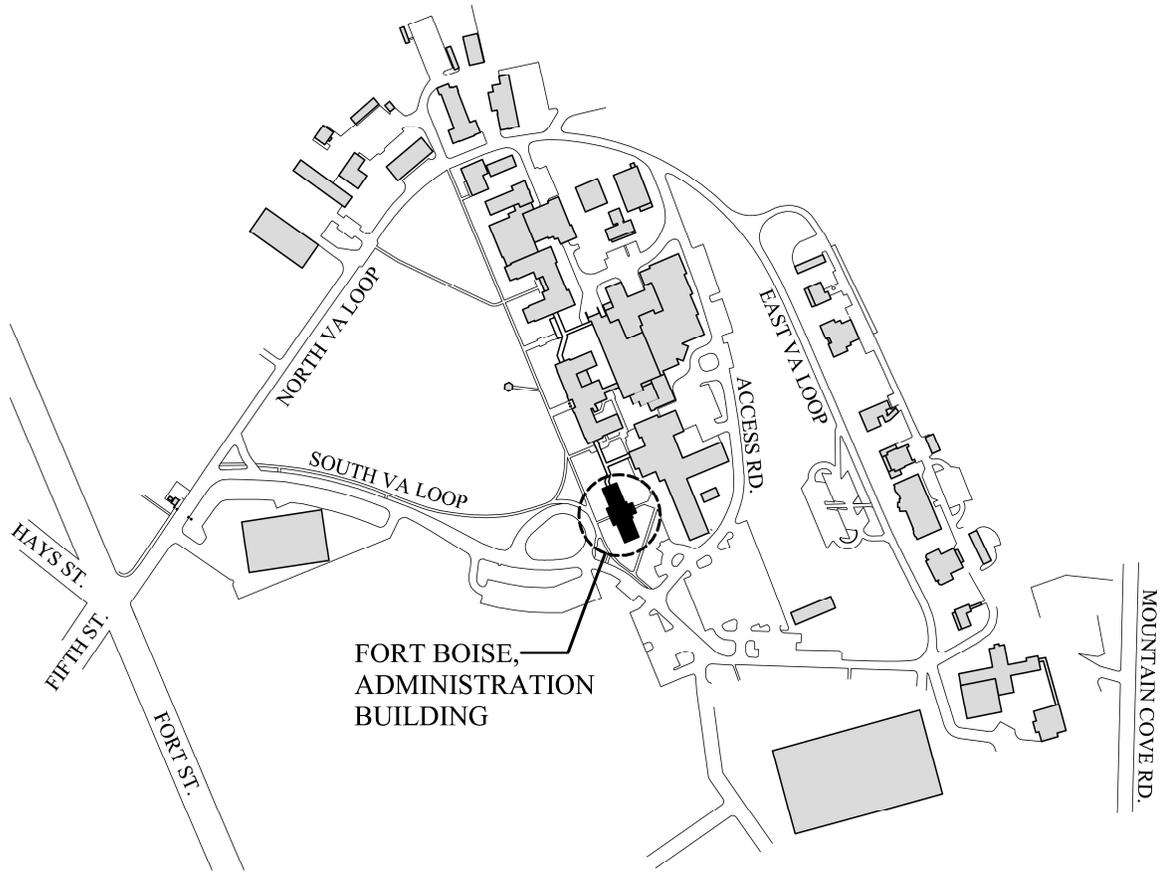
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 **SITE MAP**
BOISE VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEDICAL CENTER

