Location: Keams Canyon, Hopi Indian Reservation, Navajo County, Arizona
USGS Keams Canyon, AZ, 7.5 minute quadrangle (provisional edition), 1991
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 12.573100.3963325
Situated at the head of a cul-de-sac on an unpaved road just above the old hospital, one-half mile east of Hwy. 264.

Owner: Indian Health Service, Phoenix Area Office, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services

Use: Vacant; the building will be transferred to the Hopi Tribe.

Significance: Indian Health Service Building 104 (locally known as the “Rock House”) is currently an abandoned dwelling structure located near the old Public Health Service (PHS) hospital site in Keams Canyon. It was built in 1933 to provide additional living quarters for government personnel working in the agency town. The building was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 under Criterion C for its vernacular style that reflects Native traditions and incorporation of the natural landscape; and under Criterion D for its potential to contribute information to the building’s history.
Description:
Building 104 is a single-story, square structure; approximately 1,139 square feet in size. The walls are made of rusticated ashlar sandstone and incorporate two sandstone outcrops on its north and south sides. The building sits on a poured concrete foundation. Sandstone parapet walls are found above the roofline on the building’s north and south ends. A brick chimney sits in the structure’s northwest corner, but is not integrated into the structure, which suggests it is a later addition. The windows are 1/1 wood casements with wood surrounds, concrete lintels, and sandstone sills. The building has a low-pitched gable roof covered with roll roofing. The interior
space was originally divided into four rooms with a doorway centered on the west wall. A two-
room, wood-sided addition with a shed roof is located on the structure's east elevation. This
addition houses a utility room and bathroom and adds 175 square feet to the building. It is
thought that this addition was built in the 1950s. A date of “1933” was carved into the stone
masonry above the lintel just south of the main entrance. This is thought to record the original
date of construction.

History:

General Context – The history of the U.S. Government’s involvement in Indian health care dates
as far back as 1824, when the Indian Office – forerunner of today’s Bureau of Indian Affairs
(BIA) – was organized under the War Department. The Indian Office sent Army doctors to
communities in Indian Country to provide health care service to indigenous populations. The
Indian Office was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1849, where it continued the
policy of providing health care, although it was often substandard, since health care for Indians
was not a high federal priority. The Medical and Education Division was created within the
Indian Office in 1873.

Despite instituting Western medical practices on the reservation, the percentage of Indian
children and adults receiving the benefits of this health care was still very small, and Indian
people continued to be ravaged by diseases of European origin, to which Indians had little or no
natural resistance. In response to this problem the 1928 Meriam Report severely criticized
existing federal Indian policies for fostering poverty and unhealthy living conditions among
Indians, and subsequently the Division of Health was created within the Indian Office. The
1933 appointment of well-known Indian reformer John Collier as Commissioner of Indian
Affairs signaled the beginning of a new era in federal Indian policy, and by 1942, there were 78
general hospitals and 12 sanatoriums built exclusively to serve Indian people.

After the Second World War, Congress instituted a policy of termination signaling another
change in Indian policy direction. Under this policy, the federal government hoped to assimilate
Indian people once and for all into mainstream American culture, and attempted to have Indian
and non-Indian populations share facilities, including health care facilities. In 1954, Public Law
83-568 transferred health services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Public Health Service
(PHS); within the PHS, the Indian Health Service (IHS) was then created. The PHS and IHS are
within the Department of Health and Human Services. Since then, all health care facilities have
been under the umbrella of the IHS.

Despite hopes to the contrary, the transfer of health services out of the BIA did not significantly
improve the quality of Indian health care. The policy of termination was abandoned in the early
1960s, signaling yet another shift in the direction of federal Indian policy, during which
additional funding was once more put into Indian-specific health care programs and facilities,
and in particular into sanitation facilities construction, in hopes of improving environmental
living conditions for Indians on reservations. Two acts passed in the 1970s re-emphasized health
care under the new federal policy of Indian self-determination: the 1975 Indian Self-
Determination Act (Public Law 93-638) which offered Indians the option of managing their own health care, and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (P.L. 94-437), amended in 1980, which had a stated goal of elevating the health status of American Indians to that of the general population.\(^5\) The role of the IHS, and of the federal government, continues to evolve as many tribes begin to assume more and more responsibility for meeting their own health care needs.

**Local Context** – Keams Canyon was named after the Englishman Thomas Varker Keam who established a small trading post located at Peach Orchard Springs at the far eastern end of the Hopi Reservation in the 1860s. In 1867 the U.S. government selected the site to build the first government school for the Hopi villages. Soon thereafter the Office of Indian Affairs (later known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs) built additional facilities to carry out federal Indian policy, including the first medical facility in 1877. By the end of the nineteenth century, Keams Canyon became an administrative and trading center (called *Pongsikui* – "government town" – by the Hopis) that became the hub of social and commercial interaction between Hopis and government agents, doctors, and traders.\(^6\) In 1913 a new hospital building was constructed on the hill overlooking the town. Numerous houses, including Building 104, were built throughout the first half of the twentieth century to house government employees and traders. Upon its creation in 1955, the Indian Health Service acquired the medical-related buildings and some of the residences, including Building 104. By the end of the twentieth century, Keams Canyon as a government center had largely been abandoned. Many of the BIA offices were relocated to the Hopi village of Kykotsmovi, site of the Hopi Tribe's governmental offices, and new schools and a new hospital were constructed outside of the canyon closer to the Hopi villages.
Sources:


3 Townsend, “Indian Health,” p. 32.


Additional Sources Consulted:
Hopi Agency Files, Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA.

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Supplemental Materials:
North Elevation - PHS Indian Hospital - Keams Canyon, Building 104
1/8" = 1'-0"

East Elevation - PHS Indian Hospital - Keams Canyon, Building 104
1/8" = 1'-0"
HABS NO. AZ-223-A (Rock House) Southeast Corner Showing Addition

HABS NO. AZ-223-A (Rock House) Shed Roof Addition
HABS NO. AZ-223-A (Rock House) East Elevation

HABS NO. AZ-223-A (Rock House) North East Corner Showing Interface with Sandstone