

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, PUMPING STATION
(Building No. 16)
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-U
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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

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PUMPING STATION (BUILDING 16)

HABS NO. DC-349-U

Location: Sweetgum Lane SE, Washington, D.C., on the West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital

Significance:

As a mid-twentieth-century utilitarian structure, the Pumping Station (Building 16) is not directly related to the historically significant function of the St. Elizabeths West Campus as a place for the treatment of mental illness. However, the Pumping Station is associated with the historically significant physical development of the west campus. In addition, the Pumping Station exemplifies the provision of service and support structures that allowed for the partial self-sufficiency of the campus.

Description:

The Pumping Station is a small, rectangular, single-story masonry structure which measures 51 feet 9 inches by 40 feet 10 inches in plan. The building, which is the northernmost structure on the St. Elizabeths West Campus, rests on a concrete foundation. The brick masonry walls are topped with limestone copings. The brick masonry is laid in a running bond pattern with an alternating header-stretcher course at every sixth course. Aluminum-framed windows are present on the building. The windows are set on limestone sills and have five horizontal lights. The lower two lights are hopper units and the remaining lights are fixed. Metal security screens are affixed to the exterior of all of the windows.

Paired aluminum double doors are centered on the north and south elevations. Each door has a glass panel in the upper portion. A transom window is present over the doors. The doors are situated between two aluminum-framed, five-light windows on each elevation. There are two similar windows on the southern portion of the east elevation. A single aluminum door matching the characteristics of the other doors is present on the north end of the elevation. The west elevation is defined by three typical windows. A scupper with an aluminum downspout is present on the north and south ends of both the east and west elevations.

The Pumping Station extends below grade, creating an interior double-height space, and is entered from grade at the mezzanine level. The lower floor level, which is accessed by three metal staircases, is an open space interrupted by concrete piers that support the mezzanine floor above. The floors in the Pumping Station are concrete. The below grade walls are cast-in-place concrete, while the walls above grade are painted concrete masonry units. The ceiling is exposed concrete.

The west half of the mezzanine level is open to the mechanical space below. A walkway around the perimeter provides access to the exterior as well as to the three offices that occupy the east half of the mezzanine level. The offices are enclosed with metal partition walls, with interior glazing present on the west wall. Within the Pumping Station, a structure composed of painted steel members supports a traveling chain hoist that was used to move the pumping equipment.

The lower level of the building contains six pumps: two 200-horsepower pumps, two 100-horsepower pumps, and two additional smaller pumps. In addition, the mezzanine level houses 2.4 kilovolt electrical switchgear equipment.

History:

The Pumping Station was constructed in 1965 to replace an existing pumping station. The earlier pumping station, built in 1895, was demolished to make way for the construction of the Anacostia Expressway (Interstate 295). Construction of the new Pumping Station occurred at a time when an extensive effort was being made at St. Elizabeths to modernize mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems in the aging west campus buildings. In 1978, new pumping equipment was installed in the Pumping Station.

In 2004, ownership of the St. Elizabeths west campus was transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services to the General Services Administration. The structure was stabilized and mothballed by 2005.

As part of the overall rehabilitation of the west campus for continued use, renovation of the Pumping Station has been proposed.

Sources:

Building Preservation Plan: Pumping Station (Building 16), St. Elizabeths West Campus. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., March 2010.

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

Historians: Mike Ford, Kenneth Itle, Tim Penich, and Deborah Slaton, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE), 2012.

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.