

ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, FAN HOUSE
(Building No. 71)
676-698 Redwood Drive, Southeast
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-BQ
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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, FAN HOUSE (BUILDING 71)

HABS NO. DC-349-BQ

- Location:** 676–698 Redwood Drive SE, Washington, D.C., on the West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital
- Present Owner:** General Services Administration, United States Government
- Present Use:** Vacant (rehabilitation of St. Elizabeths West Campus in progress)
- Significance:** The Fan House (Building 71) is significant as a context structure that contributes to the broader historic character of the St. Elizabeths West Campus. The individual significance of the Fan House is as a support structure that served as a ventilation building, providing exhaust and supply air for the extensive network of underground tunnels connecting multiple buildings. Although of limited architectural significance, the utilitarian structure incorporates Renaissance Revival details and is consistent in architectural character with other campus buildings of the same period.
- 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: 1902¹
2. Architect: Not known²
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 Fan House was constructed in 1902, 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.³ In 1968, St. Elizabeths was transferred to the

¹ *Historic Resources Management Plan*, 77. This document attributes a 1906 construction date to the Fan House. The 1945 Public Buildings Administration survey (GSA archive database no. DC1472SE-PFH006) identifies the Fan House as Building 70 and lists a 1902 date of construction. The 1938 plat map (CL-R-RG 418 no.22.jpeg) lists the Fan House as having been constructed in 1902.

² The architect of the Fan House is not documented in available records. It is possible, although not confirmed by research performed for this study, that this building was designed as part of the building group designed by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge at the same time.

³ *Federal Register*, accessed at <http://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/saint-elizabeth-s-hospital>, January 5, 2012.

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.⁴ 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 Fan House until 2004, when the property was transferred to the GSA.⁵ The campus facilities were stabilized and the buildings were mothballed by 2005.

From its initial construction, the Fan House has been used as a ventilation building for the extensive network of underground tunnels at the St. Elizabeths Hospital.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Horton and Hemenway⁶
5. Original plans and construction: The Fan House was constructed as a one-story brick utilitarian structure with a wood-framed hip roof with slate tile.⁷ The north facade included a six-over-six wood double-hung window and a wood four-panel door with a four-light transom. On the east facade was a wood-framed tunnel exhaust opening with a stone sill. The hip roof featured a rolled metal ridge cap, decorative wood scrolled ornament at the peak, and wood overhanging eaves.⁸ The interior had an exposed concrete floor and brick walls.⁹
6. Alterations and additions: No documentation is available of any changes to the Fan House after its initial construction. Based on physical evidence, few substantive alterations were made.¹⁰ When the existing roof covering was installed, the metal ridge caps and decorative scrolled ornament at the peak were removed.

B. Historical context¹¹

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.

⁴ 1970 *Annual Report*.

⁵ *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.

⁶ *Investigation of St. Elizabeths Hospital: Letter from the Comptroller General of the United States*, 68; 1901 *Annual Report*, 14–15.

⁷ *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, 77.

⁸ 1938 archival photograph (GSA archive database no. DC1472SE-PFH003).

⁹ 1945 Public Buildings Administration survey.

¹⁰ Comparison of photograph from 1945 survey and on-site documentation for *Building Preservation Plan* completed in 2009.

¹¹ A context history for the entire St. Elizabeths West Campus, as well as an overview history of the Systems and Infrastructure Group, is to be developed under separate cover as part of this HABS documentation project.

In 1877, William Godding became superintendent of St. Elizabeths Hospital and adopted the principles of his predecessor. Through the moral treatment of patients, it was believed that mental illness could be cured. During Godding's tenure (1877 to 1899), seventeen free-standing ward buildings were constructed on the St. Elizabeths campus. With the rapid increase in patient population came the need for additional support structures to improve conditions and develop infrastructure. The Detached Dining Hall (Building 33), portions of the Greenhouse complex (Building 20A–H), and The Rest/Circulating Library (Building 40) were built to augment the limited space in the cottage plan buildings, facilitate patient rehabilitation, and initiate scientific research. Infrastructure projects, such as the construction of the Boiler House/Ice Plant (Building 52), the General Kitchen (Building 45), Engine House/Fire House (Building 41), and expansion of the Laundry Building (also known as the Construction Shops, Building 49) were aimed at developing St. Elizabeths Hospital as a self-sufficient campus.

During the tenure of Superintendent Alonzo Richardson (1899–1903), the St. Elizabeths campus underwent an expansive building campaign to reduce overcrowding and improve infrastructure. The Fan House was completed as part of this program. Richardson's tenure was cut short by his untimely death. His successor, Superintendent William White (1903–1937), oversaw the completion of the expansion project.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Fan House is a one-story utilitarian brick masonry building with architectural detailing inspired by the Renaissance Revival-style. It has a concrete foundation and wood-framed hip roof with composite shingle roofing. The structure features wood-framed windows and doors. Character-defining features include its brick masonry, brick relieving arches over door and window openings, wood-framed window and transom, wood multi-panel door, beadboard eaves, hip roof form, and connection to the campus-wide tunnel system.
2. Condition of fabric: At the time of the field survey for the Historic Structure Reports/Building Preservation Plans project in 2009, the Fan House was in fair condition overall. The roof soffit boards showed signs of moisture penetration, brick walls exhibited efflorescence and minor cracking along mortar joints, and wood window and door units exhibited peeling paint and weather related deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 17'-0" by 19'-0" rectangular building, 13'-6" to the peak of the roof
2. Foundations: The foundation is a concrete slab on grade.
3. Walls: The building has load-bearing brick walls that are laid in a common bond pattern with a header row every sixth course. The brick walls extend slightly below grade to the concrete foundation slab.
4. Structural system, framing: The structure has exterior load-bearing brick walls set on a concrete foundation and a wood-framed hip roof. The brick walls are 13 inches thick. Each window and

door opening has a brick relieving arch. The roof is framed with 2-inch by 6-inch rafters spaced at 24 inches on center, supporting 1-inch-thick plank decking, with a slope of about 26 degrees.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: None present.
6. Chimneys: None present.
7. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: The building is accessed from an exterior door opening with brick relieving arch in the brick masonry wall. The exterior door opening has a painted wood frame and contains a pair of narrow, two-panel wood doors with a four-light wood transom window above and a stone sill.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The Fan House has window and ventilation openings with brick relieving arches in the brick masonry wall. A window unit with a painted wood frame, six-over-six double-hung window, and a stone sill is located to the right of to the main entrance door on the north elevation. A metal security screen is installed within the exterior frame. A second opening on the east elevation contains a large metal exhaust vent.
8. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: The Fan House has a hip roof covered with composite shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The roof has projecting eaves and a beadboard soffit. Gutters are located at the roof perimeter with downspouts at the northeast and southwest corners.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None present.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The Fan House is a one-room structure with no interior partitions or walls. The building is nearly square in plan.
2. Stairways: None present.
3. Flooring: The interior floor is concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The brick masonry and wood roof framing and sheathing are exposed to the interior, without additional wall and ceiling finishes.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are no interior doorways.
 - b. Windows: The window has a wood sill and frame but no trim. The window opening has a wood lintel and brick relieving arch exposed to the interior.
6. Decorative features and trim: None present.

7. Hardware: The original wood two-panel doors have keyed deadbolts, mortised hinges, and a metal surface door bolt mounted to the interior face of the door. Other hardware is missing.
8. Mechanical Equipment
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The Fan House was constructed to house the exhaust fan for the west campus underground tunnel system. The building contains a large exhaust fan unit with fan drive engine manufactured by B.F. Sturtevant of Boston, Massachusetts, as indicated by a brass plaque mounted on the unit.
 - b. Lighting: There are no interior lighting fixtures present. Electrical power is supplied by exposed metal conduit.
 - c. Plumbing: None present.

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 Fan House is situated at the far southeast end of the west campus, west of the Employee Cafeteria (Building 70) and south of the M Building (Building 72). The Fan House sits on a knoll above the road leading to the pedestrian and vehicular tunnel that extends below Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and connects the west campus with the east campus.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None available.
- B. Early Views: Copies of selected early and historical views of the Fan House 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:

Annual Reports of the Board of Visitors and the Superintendent of Construction. Government Hospital for the Insane, 1861–1867, 1869, 1872, and 1875.

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.

Correspondence and Promotional Literature Relating Primarily to the Selection of Hospital Sites by the Federal Board of Hospitalization. 1928–1943. Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

Correspondence and Other Records Relating to Administrative Matters, 1909–1929. Records of the Office of the Superintendent, (1855–1967). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

D'Amore, Arcangelo R. T., ed. *William Alanson White: The Washington Years.* Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976.

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.

Building Preservation Plan: Fan House (Building 71), St. Elizabeths West Campus, Washington, D.C. Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, March 12, 2010.

Letters Sent, "Executive Series" 1857–1906. Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Record Group 418.

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 Fan House has been performed for this and other studies, as documented in the publications and other sources listed above.

F. Supplemental Material:

1. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0P046.
2. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH003.
3. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH002.
4. GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH001.

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

FAN HOUSE (Building 71)
St. Elizabeths West Campus
Redwood Drive SE
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. DC-349-BQ



Figure 1. Source: GSA archives, image DC1472SE0P046.



Figure 2. Source: GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH003.



Figure 3. Source: GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH002.



Figure 4. Source: GSA archive, image DC1472SE0PFH001.