

National Home for Disabled Volunteer
Soldiers Western Branch,
Single Quarters
(Building 52)
Franklin Avenue
Leavenworth
Leavenworth County
Kansas

HABS No. KS-55-B

HABS
KS-55-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
P.O. BOX 25287
DENVER, COLORADO 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS
WESTERN BRANCH,
SINGLE QUARTERS
(BUILDING 52)

HABS No. KS-55-B

Historic Name: National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Western Branch, Single Quarters (Building 52)
Presently named: Department of Veterans Affairs Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center, Building 52

Location: West side of Franklin Avenue, 0.2 mile north of Riverview Avenue, Leavenworth County, Leavenworth, Kansas

Quadrangle: USGS Leavenworth, Kans. - MO. Quadrangle
Scale: 1:24,000

UTM: Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinate:
15.336330.4349730

Present Owner: Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC

Present Use: Offices of *The Hilltopper*, campus newsletter

Date of Erection: 1892

Architect: Unknown

Significance: The former Single Quarters is significant as an example of simple Victorian residential architecture. It belongs to the group of single family houses built in the 1890s to house staff of the former National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Western Branch. Built as the residence of the Chief Gardener, the building is important for its historical associations with the development of the Home.

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I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The former Western Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was founded in 1885. It was the fifth in a series of 11 branch institutions established between 1867 and 1929. The Western Branch Home, now the Department of Veterans Affairs Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center (DDE/VAMC) has continuously provided residential and medical care for veterans since 1886. The facility embodies the comprehensive federal policies and concepts of health and rehabilitative care provided in a planned community as they originated after the Civil War and evolved into the first half of the twentieth century. The Western Branch has excellent examples of building and landscape architecture, most notably its fine groups Georgian Revival, late Gothic Revival, and Queen Anne style buildings, surrounded by a designed park- and campus-like setting.

The 213.97-acre site is characterized by rolling terrain, tree-dotted lawns, a man-made lake, and curving roads overlooking the Missouri River. The historic buildings constructed between 1885 and the early 1940s are mostly well-designed and crafted examples of popular period Victorian revival styles executed in brick and stone, with a few wood-frame examples. The original planning concept combined civilian and military influences in a planned rehabilitative community. The evolution of the Home into a major regional Veterans Administration medical center in the 1930s is reflected in the building scale and siting.

The employees and administrators were required to live on the grounds, so the Home provided quarters for them. Nearly every building in which a number of civilians were employed had a dormitory in the basement or attic. Separate quarters were provided for the married employees. Money for QSL (Quarters, Subsistence and Laundry) was subtracted from the employees' paychecks.

Building 52 was constructed in 1892 as the residence of the Chief Gardener, Carl Kline, Sr. Mr. Kline came from Germany to serve as the gardener for the Old Soldiers Home. His fine gardening was well-known and admired throughout the region. The gardener's house was carefully sited adjacent to the Governor's Quarters (Building 42, constructed 1887, moved 1930), the Quartermaster's Quarters (Building 45, constructed 1901, moved 1930), the Conservatory (Building 102, constructed 1908, demolished 1945) and the greenhouse (Building 20, constructed 1890-1895, demolished 1946). To the west (rear) and northwest of the house was a beautiful grove of elm trees, and an oak tree graced the front yard (neither extant).

A prominent attraction of the Home was a large floral globe designed and constructed by Mr. Kline at the intersection of Franklin and Riverview Avenues. He built a frame of chicken wire and wooden slats, filled it with dirt, and used different types and colors of plants to represent the continents and bodies of water. It was thought to be the only structure of its kind in the world. Mr. Kline was also responsible for the Conservatory, a large steel and glass structure built in 1908 at a cost of \$5,000. The many flowers, as well as the collection of exotic plants from all over the world, that were grown in the Conservatory and adjacent greenhouse provided flowers for the hospital and dining rooms, for funerals, and for ornamental flower beds located throughout the facility.

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Mr. Kline was responsible for the grounds for several years. Later his son, Carl Kline, Jr. took his place. The Kline family lived in the house for several years, after which time, in the 1930s, it was vacant. Maintenance records reveal no work was undertaken at the house until the house was used as Bachelor Officers Quarters during World War II.

Building 52 served as the Chaplain's Quarters from 1947 to 1979, housing Chaplain James Rogers and family for four years, and then Chaplain Archel and Margaret Meredith and family for 29 years.

In 1899, troops trained at Fort Leavenworth for the Spanish American War. Subsequently, an annual memorial service was held at the DDE/VAMC. In conjunction with the service, Chaplain and Mrs. Meredith hosted an annual dinner reception at Building 52 for the veterans. This tradition continued into the early 1970's.

Following the Meredith's tenure, the house was the residence of the Chief Nurse, Ritzanna Seaton from 1979-1982. She was the last to occupy the house as quarters. The building subsequently was used for various purposes, most recently as the offices of *The Hilltopper*, the campus newsletter, since 1991.

II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The former Single Quarters, Building 52, is a simple L-plan, wood-frame house with a front porch set in the angle of the L. The house is two bays (30 feet) wide and three bays (42 feet) deep. It has wide eaves and a wood cornice that overhang with no embellishment. The exterior walls are sheathed in asbestos shingles over clapboard, and the cross gable roof in asphalt shingles. The brick basement is fully exposed on the west side. The house has a variety of wood double-hung windows: one-over-one, two-over-two, four-over-two, four-over-four, and nine-over-nine. There are three entrances to the house, two wood panelled and glazed doors at the front porch (east and north sides), and one at the rear (west side). The house, both interior and exterior, is in good condition.

The wood porch has a low hip roof with chamfered posts set in a concrete floor and a beaded board ceiling. Physical evidence reveals the porch was previously screened in (now removed).

The first (main) floor of the house encompasses four rooms, a double parlor, a kitchen/pantry, and a rear office/study. The first floor rooms have narrow board pine floors, with contemporary panelled walls and dropped acoustical tile ceilings. The hallways on the first and second floors have plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings, joined by a wood staircase with square newels and balusters. The entryways to the rooms on both floors have four panel, wood doors. The rooms on both floors are illuminated by overhead lights and/or task lighting.

The second floor encompasses three bedrooms and a bathroom. The bedrooms have narrow board pine floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and simple, unadorned window and door trim. The bathroom has contemporary finishes with tile walls and vinyl floor covering. The basement is unfinished, with brick walls and a concrete floor.

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The Single Quarters faces east onto the main hospital parking lot in a semi-isolated location behind (northwest of) the main hospital (Buildings 88, 89, 90, 91). The house overlooks a grassed and treed recreation area (golf course and baseball diamond) to the west.

Building 52 was constructed in 1892 as the quarters for the Chief Gardener. The building originally consisted of seven rooms with a small basement under the west end and no attic in a T-plan, with a front and rear porch. It had neither a kitchen or plumbing (added in 1926), and was built at a cost of \$2,000. The building underwent little change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, except for routine maintenance, including exterior and interior painting, floor refinishing, and wallpapering. In 1924 the rear porch was enclosed. Two years later, in 1926, the house underwent major remodelling involving the reduction of the number of rooms to six and the addition of a bathroom on the second floor, moving the stairway and rearranging the upper and lower hallways, adding a window upstairs and a door downstairs. A new back porch was added at the southwest corner of the house and the old back porch at the northwest corner was converted to a kitchen with a sleeping porch above. The kitchen and bathroom were added at a cost of \$353.59. It is not documented when electricity was added to the building, and may be an original feature.

Maintenance records reveal the building was vacant in the 1930's and no work was undertaken on the property. It was again occupied during World War II when it was used as Bachelor Officers Quarters.

In 1947, Chaplain James Rogers persuaded the Director of the Medical Center to remodel the house for use as the Chaplain's Quarters. The second floor sleeping porch was enclosed, and the wood clapboards were covered with asbestos shingles. The Rogers family resided in Building 52 until 1950, when Chaplain Archel and Margaret Meredith moved to the house.

The Merediths lived in Building 52 for 29 years, until 1979. During their residence minor changes occurred besides routine maintenance: the colonnade between the living room and dining room was removed to make the space more usable (1959), the front porch was enlarged by one bay (to the north) and enclosed with screens (1960), and the walls were panelled (1967).

No major renovation work besides maintenance has been undertaken at the house since it was used as quarters.

III. SOURCES

A. Collections

Department of Veterans Affairs, Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center, Engineering Services drawings and project files, Leavenworth, Kansas.

B. Major Bibliographical References

Adams, Virginia H.

1993 Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, Leavenworth, Kansas, Draft National Register Nomination. Submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC.

Department of Veterans Affairs

1985 Commemorative History, 100th Anniversary 1885-1985, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Leavenworth, Kansas. Veterans Administration Medical Center, Leavenworth Kansas. On file at the Department of Veterans Affairs Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center Voluntary Services, Leavenworth, Kansas.

1947 Land and Improvements, Buildings and Plant, Wadsworth, Kansas. On file at the Department of Veterans Affairs Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center Voluntary Services, Leavenworth, Kansas.

Pearsall, Charles M.

ca. 1940 Quartermaster. Maintenance records of Building 52. Filed at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dwight D. Eisenhower Medical Center Library.

C. Personal Communication

Gary Hughes, Editor, *The Hilltopper*, DDE/VAMC, June 1993

Chaplain Archel and Margaret Meredith, Alamo, Texas, June 1993

Grant Walkup, Voluntary Services, DDE/VAMC, June 1993

IV. **PROJECT INFORMATION**

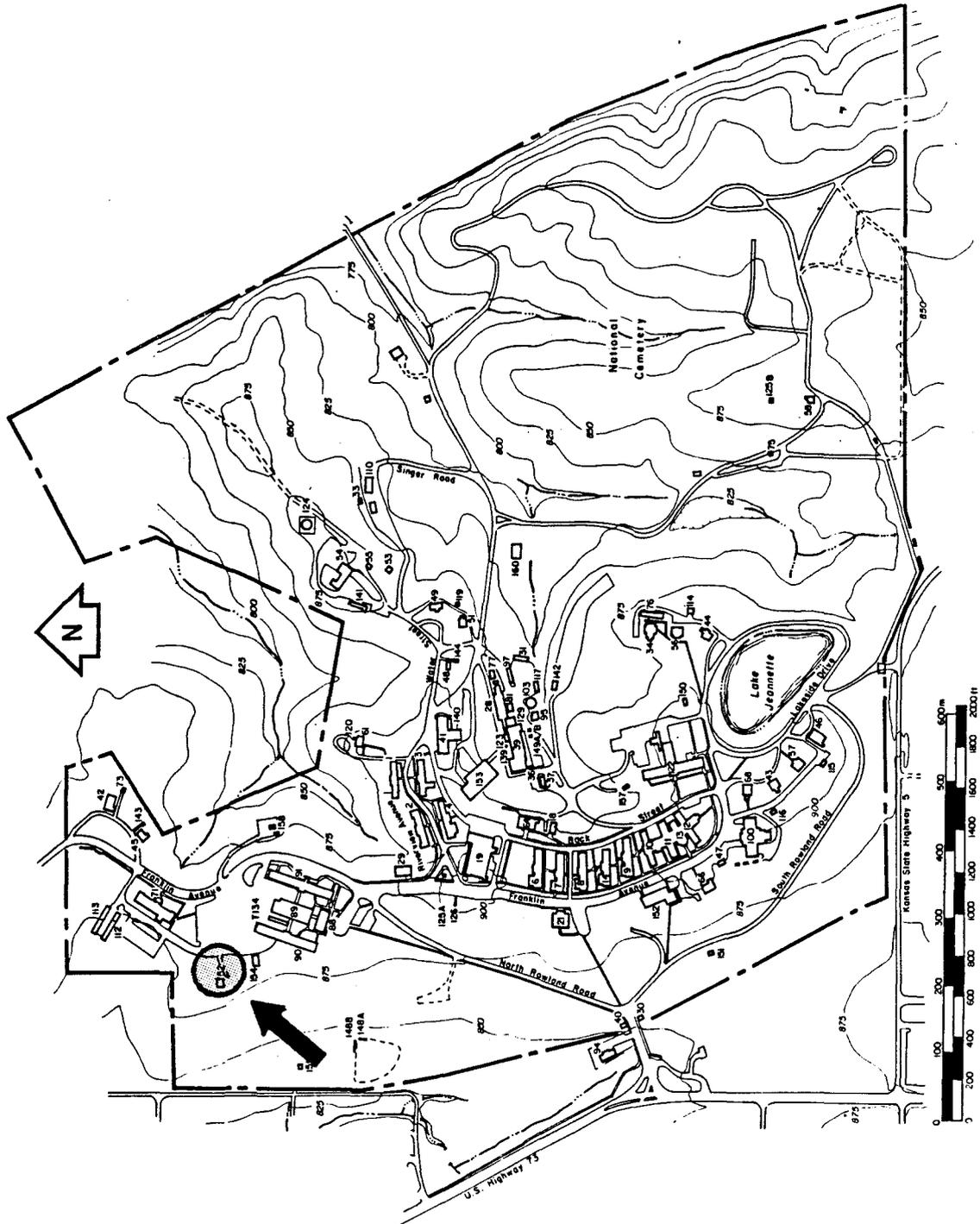
The former Single Quarters is located on the site of the proposed Domiciliary Dietetics and Chiller Plant, with construction proposed to commence in July 1993. The new construction will necessitate the demolition of Building 52. The Veterans Administration, in consultation with the Kansas State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, determined that no prudent and feasible alternatives existed, and that the demolition may proceed provided the building is recorded to Historic American Building Standards.

This report was completed in June and July 1993 by Virginia H. Adams, Architectural Historian and Maureen A. Cavanaugh, Preservation Planner, of the Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The Historic American Buildings Survey large format photography was undertaken in June 1993 by Robert Brewster of Warren Jagger Photography, Inc., Providence, Rhode Island.

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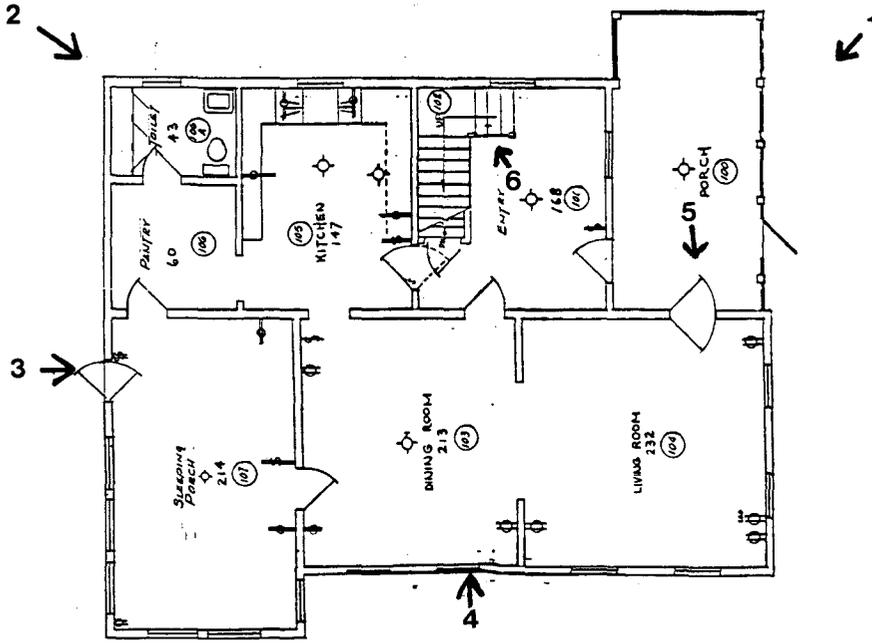
LOCATION MAP

DWIGHT D EISENHOWER VAMC

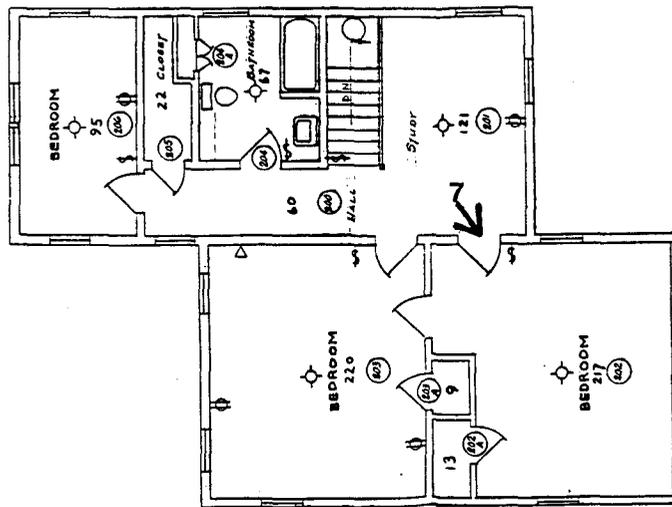


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