

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS,  
CONCRETE PADS  
(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building Nos. 44  
& 45)  
(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)  
(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division)  
VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division  
1 Jefferson Barracks Drive  
Saint Louis  
Independent City  
Missouri

HABS MO-1943-T  
*MO-1943-T*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

### U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, CONCRETE PADS (BUILDINGS 44 AND 45)

HABS No. MO-1943-T

- Location:** Buildings 44 and 45, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive, St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
Building 44 UTM Coordinates 16-----7258623 E-----9966164 N  
Building 45 UTM Coordinates 16-----7258487 E-----9966129 N  
Lat: 38.509198, Long: -90.289432
- Date of Construction:** 1952 Point obtained using Google Earth on 9 March 2012
- Designer:** U.S. Veterans Administration (VA)
- Contractor:** Unknown
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Lower Concrete Pad (Building 44); Observation Deck (Building 45)
- Significance:** These two facilities were built as concrete pads as part of the early 1950s expansion of the hospital to accommodate veterans of World War II and the Korean War. The exact function of the Lower Pad (Building 44) is not known, but the Observation Deck (the upper pad, Building 45) was built as an observation deck so patients and hospital staff could view the nearby Mississippi River. Building 45 is still equipped as an observation deck with benches, a guardrail, and a water fountain.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

These resources consist of two concrete pads located in the southeast portion of the St. Louis Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division. Both facilities are on a fairly steep hillside, landscaped with grass and older oak trees, overlooking the Mississippi River. The facilities sit southwest of the Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25, now used as administrative space); the Lower Pad (Building 44) is further to the east, next to the medical center's boundary fence, and the Observation Deck (Building 45) is uphill and further to the west.

The Lower Pad is a series of concrete pavement slabs that form a long narrow area of pavement next to the chain-link boundary fence for the medical center. The concrete is in a somewhat cracked and deteriorated condition, and at the time of fieldwork, the pavement was partially covered up with logs from a tree that had been recently cut down. A set of concrete steps lead up a hillside to the west of the Lower Pad. The path and steps go up the hillside, providing access to the Observation Deck. A 1959 drawing indicates that the Lower Pad pavement is 6'0" x 107'4", but only about a 10'0" length of pavement was visible at the time of fieldwork.

The Observation Deck is a concrete platform that consists of a poured-concrete wall built into the hillside, and a series of concrete slabs that form a surface. The deck measures 16'0" x 35'4" and is supported on a curved poured-concrete wall approximately 3' tall. On top of the concrete wall is a series of concrete slabs that form a deck of somewhat irregular shape. Mounted on the deck are a metal pipe guardrail, five benches, a trash can, and a water fountain. A lighting fixture is mounted on a metal pole slightly to the west of (uphill from) the Observation Deck. A concrete sidewalk that connects to the south end of the Observation Deck leads uphill and ends at a spot southwest of the former Neuropsychiatric Building (Building 25). The Observation Deck affords a fairly clear view of the Mississippi River, which sits at the bottom of the hillside, below the Observation Deck and the Lower Pad.

**History:**

The official construction date for the Observation Deck and the Lower Pad is 1952, indicating that they were part of the large construction project that took place in 1950-1952 to convert the VA Hospital at Jefferson Barracks from a general medicine facility to a neuropsychiatric hospital. The purpose of the Lower Pad is not clear. The Observation Deck was clearly developed as an outdoor area that staff and patients could use to view the Mississippi River.

The inclusion of an outdoor viewing deck in the redevelopment of the hospital in the early 1950s is consistent with the philosophies of Dr. Paul Haun, a VA psychiatrist who was

influential in postwar VA hospital design, and whose ideas had a strong influence on the design and layout of the VA's neuropsychiatric hospital at Jefferson Barracks. Haun believed in the therapeutic value of time spent outdoors,<sup>1</sup> and so a deck from which to view the Mississippi River was likely viewed as an amenity that would contribute to the well-being of the hospital patients and staff. A 1959 drawing of the structures shows the Observation Deck as a concrete platform with a pipe railing and a bench. The Lower Pad was represented on the drawings as a concrete slab 107'4" long and 6'0" wide.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the Observation Deck is still in place and has the concrete platform, several benches, an older water fountain, and lighting. Only a small fragment of the Lower Pad was found, in a spot directly downhill from the Observation Deck. The Lower Pad is not being maintained and was, at the time of fieldwork, covered with logs from a recently cut tree. Plans for the upcoming improvement of the medical center call for the demolition of several 1950s-era buildings at the complex. However, these plans do not call for the demolition of the Observation Deck or the Lower Pad in the coming years.

**Sources:**

Haun, Paul, and Z. M. Lebensohn. "New Trends in Hospital Design." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948).

U.S. Veterans Administration, *Engineering Maintenance Building No. 17 and Concrete Platforms Nos. 44 and 45, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.* 1952. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

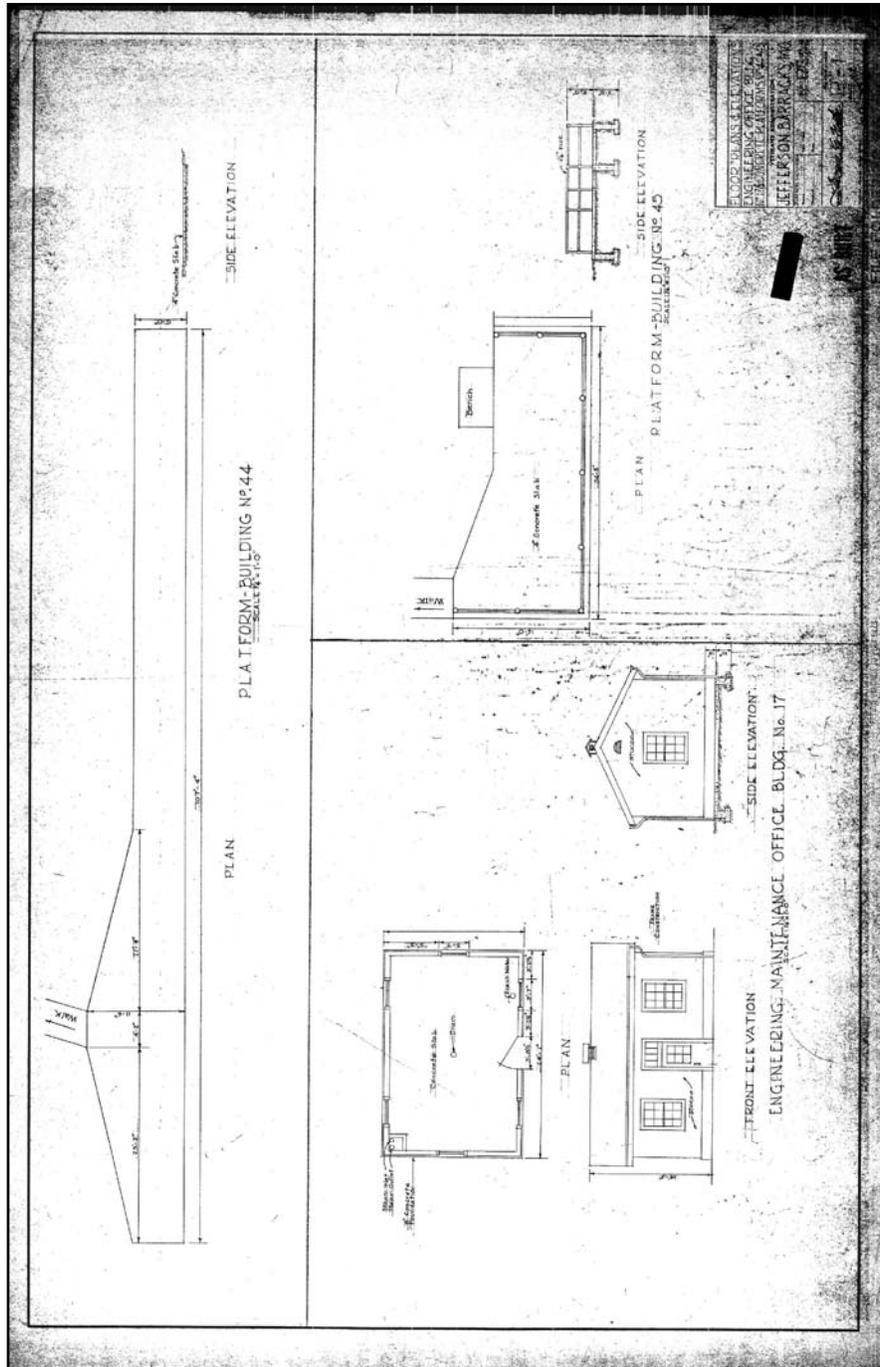
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<sup>1</sup> Paul Haun and Z. M. Lebensohn, "New Trends in Hospital Design," *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 104, no. 8 (February 1948): 555-564.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, *Engineering Maintenance Building No. 17 and Concrete Platforms Nos. 44 and 45, Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.*, 1952, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.



1959 plans of the Concrete Pads (Buildings 44 and 45); drawings also includes plans for the Engineering Maintenance Office (Building 17)