

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA, COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS HABS No. PA-6206-H
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building A)
South side of Officers Row, Naval Hospital Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS
PA-6206-H

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA, COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS

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Location: South side of Officers Row, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

USGS Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Quadrangle

Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.484780.4417130

Present Owner: United States Department of the Navy

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Building A, constructed in 1935 to serve as living quarters for the Naval Hospital's commandant, was designed and built as an element in the original hospital complex. Building D, the residence of the Executive Officer, was constructed from the same design. With its fellow 1930s Naval Hospital buildings, Building A represents an important example of Art Deco architectural design in an institutional setting.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. PHYSICAL HISTORY:

1. Date of Erection: Building A was built in 1935.
2. Architect: Building A was designed by the firm of Karcher and Smith, which drafted the plans for the overall Naval Hospital Philadelphia complex of 1932.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The United States acquired the land upon which Building A was subsequently built on 11 March 1932 from Samuel S. Simon. The Navy has been the custodian of the property since that time.
4. Alterations and Additions: Physical evidence indicates that the kitchen was renovated around 1976. This remaking of one room, which entailed the application of vinyl flooring and the installation of new cabinets, was evidently the only alteration of any scope undertaken on the building.

B. HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Building A served as the Hospital base commandant's residence from its completion in 1935 until the Hospital's closing in 1993. The building has been unoccupied since the Hospital's closing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT:

1. Architectural Character: Building A is a two-story, flat-roofed, embankment-sited structure built of brick masonry. The footprint of the building's main block is rectangular in shape, but the presence of one-story enclosed porches at either front corner confers an irregularity of shape to the overall structure. Due to the embankment siting, Building A's full basement is revealed toward the rear. The principal or south facade of the main block is of symmetrical three-bay design with the one-story projecting entry bay at the center. The principal facade is flanked by one-story enclosed porches that project beyond the front corners of the main block.

The exterior architecture of the entire original Naval Hospital Philadelphia complex of 1935 exemplifies the Art Deco architectural movement. Building A, like the neighboring senior officers' quarters, Buildings B/C [HABS No. PA-6206-I] and

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Executive Officer's Quarters, Building D, which is identical to Building A, repeats the cream- and buff-colored brickwork, the limestone and aluminum trim, the verticality of design elements, and the Art Deco detailing of Building 1 (HABS No. PA-6206-A) and the other larger buildings of the complex. In its interior, however, and again in a manner similar to the other small quarters, the stylistic character of Building A is representative of Colonial Revival, evinced in an essentially Georgian-type floor plan, crown-molded cornices, six-over-six window sash, a Greek Revival mantelpiece, and a principal stairway with a scrolled handrail and turned balusters.

2. Condition of Fabric: The overall building is in fair condition.

B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

1. Overall Dimensions: The two-story main block measures approximately 40x32 feet. The enclosed porches each project about 10 feet forward or southward of the main block's front or south wall, and 12 feet to both the west and the east, while overlapping the front of the main block by 2 feet. The outer wall of each porch extends approximately 22 feet from south to north, so that the porch considerably overlaps the east and west walls of the main block.
2. Foundations: The foundation consists of poured concrete.
3. Structural Systems/Walls: The walls of the main block are constructed of common bond brick masonry, generally laid with an interval of one header course to every five courses of stretchers. The walls are composed mainly of cream-colored brick, but the space above each window opening is filled by a vertical band of buff-colored brick, embellished with vertical courses of dog-tooth bricks. The exception is the center bay of the three on the east and west walls of the main block, where the spaces above the window openings continue the basic cream-colored brickwork. Limestone coping serves as the cornice treatment. On the front and rear facades, a central segment of the wall approximately 14 feet broad rises about 18 inches higher than the remainder of the wall and resembles a parapet. On both front and rear, this central segment or pier also includes a pair of inset limestone panels near the summit of the wall, aligned vertically and arranged flanking the center bay of the facade.
4. Porches: Flat-roofed, one-story enclosed porches, integral elements of Building A's original construction, are situated against the east and west walls of the main block so as to project beyond the front corners of the structure. Corner piers of brick masonry, capped with limestone coping, support the roof. The porch walls consist, proceeding from base to top, of a brick foundation wall, a course of short vertical

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beaded boards, a band of continuous window frame and sash, and a frieze of aluminum paneling under a coping of sheet metal. The aluminum panels are incised with vertical lines.

5. Chimneys: Although not visible from ground level, a small interior chimney pile penetrates the roof along the central portion of its western elevation.
6. Openings:
 - a. Entries and Doors: The principal entry is set in a one-story pavilion structure, with a recessed doorway and limestone blocks composing the entry lintel and the coping at the top of the pavilion. A stoop made of poured concrete and fitted with a wrought-iron handrail lies before the entry. The entry is fitted with a modern wooden door of the hollow core type, evidently a replacement of the original door. A basement-level entry is located in the center bay of the rear facade and is fitted with a sash door with a single, long, vertical light over a wooden panel. Each of the two enclosed porches has an entry in the center of its front or south facade; this entry holds a sash door with 12 lights over a wooden panel. The single-bay integral basement garage is served by a vehicle entry located in the west end of the rear facade. The vehicle entry is fitted with a four-piece folding overhead aluminum door; the second piece from the top holds four window lights.
 - b. Windows: Each facade of the main block is arranged in three evenly spaced bays. All three bays on the front facade and the two end bays on the rear facade contain paired windows, each pair interrupted by a narrow segment of brickwork. The remaining bays have single windows. The window openings on the main block and the porch are fitted with mainly six-over-six double-hung wooden sash, protected by one-over-one aluminum storm sash. The narrower window openings in the center bays of the east and west walls are fitted with four-over-four double-hung wooden sash, and those flanking the basement door on the rear wall contain two-over-two wooden sash. Not immediately visible from the exterior of the building are the first-story windows positioned on the exterior wall of the main block, but within the enclosed porches, on the east and west walls. These contain four-over-four wooden sash.

The walls of the enclosed porches are fitted with bands of continuous double-hung wooden sash, except for each front or south wall, which has an entry flanked by single six-over-six sash. There are five pieces of six-over-six sash

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on the outer wall of each porch, three pieces of six-over-six on the rear wall, and two narrower pieces of four-over-four on the abbreviated inner wall.

7. Roof:
 - a. Shape and Covering: The flat roof is covered with a built-up asphalt surface. A copper downspout is located on the north side of the west porch.
 - b. Cornice: Limestone coping serves as the cornice.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

1. Floor Plans: The first floor is divided evenly by a center stair passage running the depth of the house, with a toilet room at the rear of the passage under the principal stairway. A spacious living room occupies the entire first-floor area of the main block on the west side of the passage. The southeast quarter of the main block contains the dining room, while the northeast quarter holds the kitchen, a pantry, and an enclosed service staircase. The principal stairway connects the first floor with the second floor only, while the service stairs lead to the basement as well. The openings leading into the living and dining rooms from the passage are relatively broad and are not fitted with doors. The doorways leading to the enclosed porches are located toward the south end of the living room and in the dining room.

The center stair passage occupies the same location on the second floor, with a matching room arrangement on each side consisting of a pair of bedrooms with an intervening bathroom. The bedrooms have built-in closets. The full basement contains a garage with a toilet room on the west side of the main block, a maid's apartment incorporating a bathroom in the northeast quarter, and a storage room in the southeast quarter.

2. Stairways: The principal stairway is of the dogleg type, with an open stringer and a molded handrail supported by turned balusters and newels, the handrail scrolling at the base. The enclosed service staircase is built in a winder design.
3. Flooring: Oak boards compose the flooring on the first and second floors; the basement and enclosed porch floors consist of poured concrete. The floor in the kitchen is covered with a vinyl surface.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls and ceilings are finished with plaster coated with paint throughout the first and second floors of the main block, except for the kitchen,

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where the plaster walls are covered with wallpaper. In the basement the walls are finished with plaster. A wall of structural tile serves as a partition between the garage and the remainder of the basement.

5. Openings: The doorway and window architraves throughout the first and second floors are trimmed with relatively simple curving moldings. The doors fitted to the interior doorways are wooden and of simple two-panel design.
6. Decorative Features and Trim: In all of the first- and second-floor rooms, including the porches, the walls are trimmed with wooden baseboard and cornice molding. The most elaborate cornice work is found on the first floor in the stair passage, living room, and dining room, where crown molding has been lined with additional molding applied to the ceiling. The interior porch cornice bears simpler crown molding. The cornice trim on the second floor is limited to a simple quarter-round molding.

A fireplace is located in the living room, the chimney breast projecting from the center of the west exterior wall. The wooden Greek Revival mantelpiece is decorated with triglyphs, and the hearth is composed of brick. Wooden built-in bookshelves are set to either side of the chimney breast.

The kitchen was renovated around 1976, with modern, built-in, suspended cabinets.

7. Mechanical Equipment: The heating system operated via radiators concealed within the walls of the main block, with the heat diffusing to the rooms through metal grates installed in the wall surface. The enclosed porches are equipped with freestanding radiators. Most of the electrical system's fixtures have been removed. An exception is the dining-room chandelier, an example of 1930s Colonial Revival design. Exposed pipes for the plumbing are suspended from the basement ceiling.

D. SITE:

Building A is the westernmost in a row of three quarters buildings for senior officers (Buildings A, B/C, and D, the latter being identical to Building A) that extends eastward from the front plaza of the hospital complex. Like its fellows, Building A faces south across its strip of front lawn toward the public thoroughfare of Pattison Avenue, with direct access to the street from its cement front walkways. There is a walkway for each of the building's three front entries. The original perimeter fence of wrought-iron bars, fixed in a base of poured concrete, is accompanied on its interior side by a later chain-link security fence that continues along the west side of the building. The lawns around Building A are shaded by mature hardwood and evergreen trees, and shrubbery lines the building on every side. A

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driveway serving the building's rear basement garage connects with Officers Row, an internal roadway on the Naval Hospital property. A stepped retaining wall constructed of cream-colored brick extends along the driveway from the rear of the building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

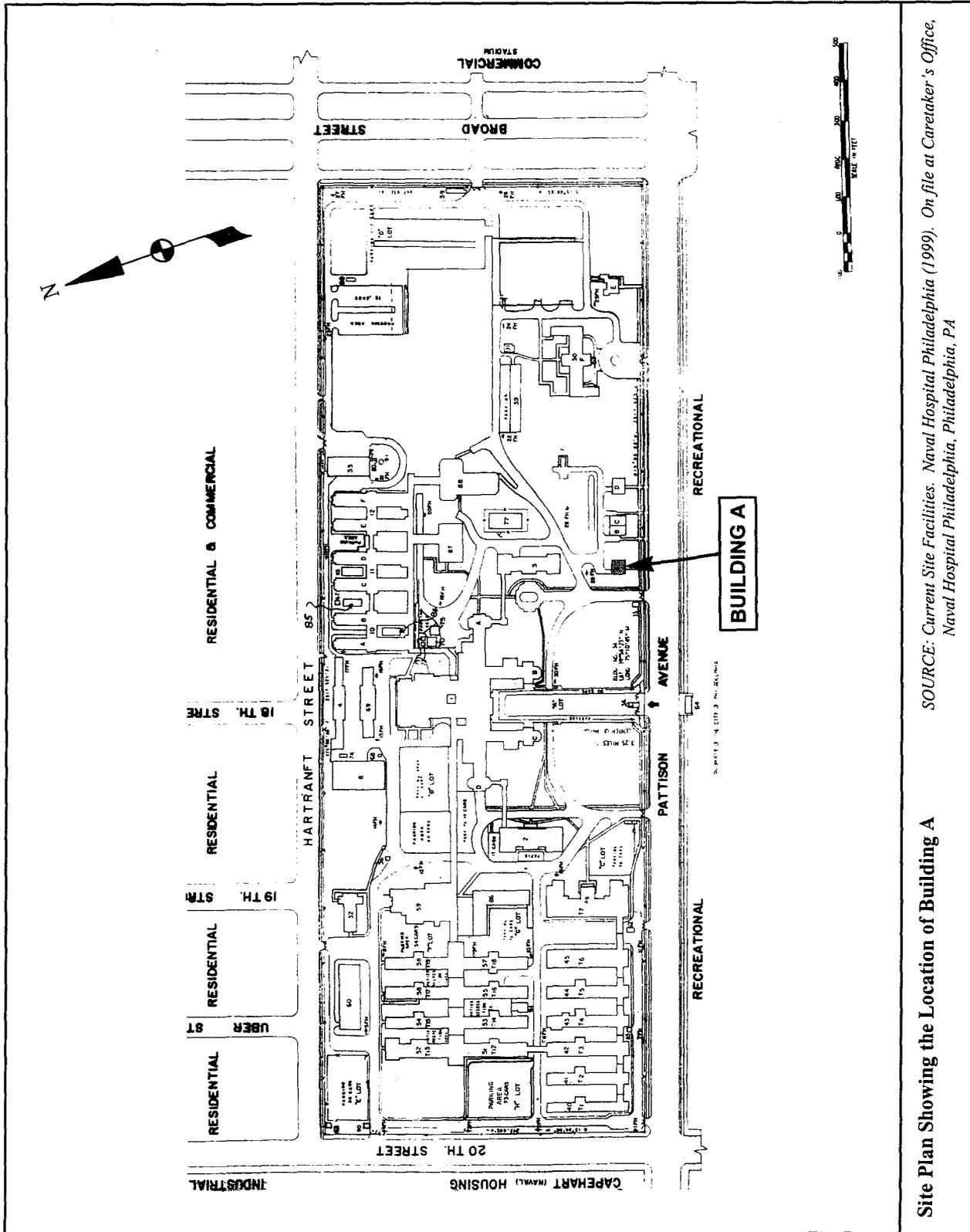
- A. Architectural Drawings: Bureau of Yards and Docks Nos. 115400 through 115641 (1932). On file at the Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- B. Cultural Resource Documentation: U.S. Department of the Navy, Northern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Cultural Resources Survey Form, Building A, Naval Hospital Philadelphia. Prepared by John Milner Associates, Inc., West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1993.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

In 1990 the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended that Naval Hospital Philadelphia be closed. Several earlier studies conducted during the 1970s and 1980s had concluded that construction of a new hospital would be more efficient than fitting modern medical facilities and equipment into the existing building. In 1993 the Navy closed Naval Hospital Philadelphia and began studying reuse options for the site, including the disposal of the property. In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Navy's Northern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NORTHNAVFAC), undertook an architectural and historical study of the Hospital property in order to evaluate its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, NORTHNAVFAC determined the Hospital eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district under Criterion A, for its association with naval medical facilities during World War II. Naval Hospital Philadelphia served as a center for all naval patients with residences east of the Rocky Mountains who required amputation, orthopedic, or prosthetic services, and as a treatment center for hearing- and vision-impaired veterans of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. NORTHNAVFAC also determined the original 1930s core of the Hospital as eligible under National Register Criterion C, as an architecturally coherent complex of Art Deco-style buildings. As a result of these findings, the Navy undertook this documentation of Building A and eight related buildings within the historic district, as well as the compilation of the historical narrative overview of the facility, prior to the Hospital's final disposition.

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SOURCE: Current Site Facilities. Naval Hospital Philadelphia (1999). On file at Caretaker's Office, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Site Plan Showing the Location of Building A