

MOUNTAIN HOME, OLD MESS HALL  
(Mountain Home VA Medical Center)  
Lamont & Veterans Way  
Johnson City  
Washington County  
Tennessee

HABS TN-254-K  
*TN-254-K*

PHOTOGRAPHS

PAPER COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:  
NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
MOUNTAIN BRANCH, MESS HALL  
(Mountain Home Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Building No. 34)  
(James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Building No. 34)  
Lamont & Veterans Way  
Johnson City  
Washington County  
Tennessee

HABS TN-254-K  
*HABS TN-254-K*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

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

## ADDENDUM TO

### NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS – MOUNTAIN BRANCH, MESS HALL

(James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Building No. 34)

HABS No. TN-254-K

**Location:** Lamont and Veterans Way, Johnson City, Washington County, Tennessee

The coordinates for the Mess Hall are 36.308464 N, -82.376207 W, and they were obtained through Google Earth in November 2011 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

**Present Owner:** Department of Veterans Affairs, James H. Quillen VA Medical Center, Mountain Home

**Present Use:** VAMC maintenance shops, Mountain Home Museum, and Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State University offices

**Significance:** The Mess Hall was the visual and practical centerpiece of the Mountain Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS), a Beaux Arts campus of French Renaissance Revival structures built between 1901 and 1905. The NHDVS was a federal institution authorized by Congress in 1865 and charged with caring for Civil War veterans disabled by their military service. The NHDVS held a competition for the design of its ninth branch, to be located in Washington County, Tennessee at the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. The location was chosen at the urging of local Congressman Brownlow for its healthful climate and proximity to underserved veterans in Tennessee and other southern states. Although founded for Civil War veterans of the Union Army, the NHDVS membership had expanded over the decades to include veterans of the Mexican, Indian, and Spanish American Wars. By 1930 the system had eleven branches and became part of the new Veterans Administration.

The winning design by New York architect Joseph H. Freedlander incorporated the latest ideas of comprehensive design and Neoclassicism as taught by the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Freedlander created a hierarchy of communal buildings, barracks, and service functions arranged along a central avenue with views south to the nearby mountains. The Mess Hall is a monumental building centrally located along the main avenue with a tall, ornate clock tower visible throughout the site. The Mess Hall functioned as the main domiciliary dining hall where Mountain

Branch veterans gathered three times a day for meals. The building included staff quarters and extensive kitchen, bakery, and pantry facilities.

Historian: Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Staff Historian

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1902-04
2. Architect: J. H. Freedlander, New York, NY
3. Original and subsequent uses: The Mess Hall originally housed a large dining room, kitchen, bakery, and extensive refrigerator and pantry areas, as well as some staff quarters. It was still used as the main domiciliary dining hall for the VA Medical Center into the 1990s, with the addition of canteen, recreation, and other services. Now the building houses a museum, museum storage, offices, the Cecile Cox Quillen Geriatric Research Laboratory, and various carpentry, plumbing and maintenance shops.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The general contract for the Mess Hall is unknown. Plumbing was done by Farrell Plumbing & Heating, Co., Atlanta.
5. Original plans and construction: Original drawings for the Mess Hall have not been located. Historic photographs indicate that basic form and decorative appearance of the Mess Hall is still intact. Alterations have been more extensive on the interior but historic fabric remains in many areas.
6. Alterations and additions: A number of small additions and alterations have been completed on the Mess Hall over the years. The elevator was added to the northeast corner of the kitchen in 1934. The south side of the kitchen trash room was expanded by 1953. The open end porches for the dining hall were enclosed by 1974. The large dining room was divided by a wall across the east third of the room. The alterations were more extensive in the first floor of the rear service wing, with numerous changes to interior partitions converting the original kitchen and bakery into maintenance shops and medical research space. The most recent renovations took place in 1998.

B. Historical Context: See overview historical context HABS No. TN-254 for additional information on the Mountain Branch and the NHDVS.

The Mountain Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) featured over thirty masonry buildings arranged in a formal hierarchy around a central avenue and secondary axes. All of these buildings were constructed in one campaign between 1901 and 1905. The architect, J. H. Freedlander of New York, created a design vocabulary that unified the more ornate French Renaissance Revival structures with plainer red brick cousins, most buildings sharing unusual layered and bracketed eaves, mansard roofs, and symmetrical plans.

The presence of a complete Beaux Arts complex on the outskirts of a small Tennessee railroad town was quite remarkable. The centerpiece of his design, and the most monumental building was the Mess Hall. Its tall clock tower, ornate decoration, and expansive wings signaled the large institutional scale of the campus and the importance of communal meals for the Mountain Branch members. A writer for the *Architectural Review* offered a short opinion on Freedlander's design, focusing on images of the Mess Hall published in the *Brickbuilder* without text. The piece questions the practicality of the narrow tower entrance for the large numbers using the Mess Hall and prefers the architectural effect of the large east porch. However the tower is praised for its proportions, rich detailing, and composition that give it a "modern character that puts a new face on a venerable problem."<sup>1</sup> The architectural press recognized the central importance of the Mess Hall to Freedlander's design. Each NHDVS branch has a prominent mess hall, often serving as the visual and social focal point of the campus.

The National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (renamed National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1873) was established by an Act of Congress signed by President Abraham Lincoln in March 1865. Federal officials recognized the growing need to care for Union soldiers injured during their Civil War service and subsequently unable to support themselves. This unprecedented federal effort paralleled many state and local initiatives to care for disabled soldiers as the wounded filtered back North after years of fighting. The initial legislation did not specify where the Asylums would be located, but the general understanding was that several sites in different parts of the northern states would be needed. By 1930 when the National Homes were incorporated into the new Veterans Administration, the system had grown to include veterans of multiple conflicts cared for at eleven campuses located around the country.

The eleven historic National Home branches are still part of the vast system of hospitals and other veterans' benefits managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (the Veterans Administration was converted into a cabinet-level agency in 1989). There was a long history of Federal pensions and other financial support for disabled veterans, dating back to a 1776 law enacted by the Continental Congress. In 1833 the Bureau of Pensions was created by Congress, thus inaugurating the first federal veterans' benefit bureaucracy. The Civil War would greatly increase the number of veterans and the size of the federal veterans' pension system. Perhaps the most direct stepping stone to the establishment of the National Asylums was the 1862 General Pension Law. Congress established pensions for veterans disabled by injury or diseases during their service. By allowing for disease-related military disability for the first time, Congress greatly expanded the pension system. Historian Patrick Kelly has analyzed the unprecedented the scope of the National Asylums and the veterans' benefits bureaucracy in the nineteenth century as representing a unique social welfare intervention of the federal government in an otherwise laissez-faire era.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Current Periodicals," *Architectural Review* 11 (June 1904): 170.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 2-4, 18. Kelly relates the unusual benefits of "martial citizenship" to the patronage traditions of the late nineteenth century.

At the Mountain Branch the first structure started and completed was the sprawling “hospital group” which included the administration building (Building No. 69), four pavilion wards attached with one-story corridors and a kitchen/dining hall structure located at the rear of a central courtyard. The hospital kitchen and dining room served as the temporary mess until completion of the main Mess Hall. The next priority was Barracks No. 1 and 2, the ornate structures flanking the Mess Hall, which were under construction by summer 1902.<sup>3</sup> The contract for the Mess Hall, including a dining hall and large kitchen/bakery service ell, was signed on October 6, 1902. The contract cost was \$124,200.<sup>4</sup> The Mess Hall would sit at the center of the Mountain Branch, facing McMahan Avenue. The equally monumental power plant with ornate smokestack was located directly behind the Mess Hall, creating a strong secondary axis.

Construction continued through the winter of 1902 and into 1903. The “Soldiers’ Home Notes” column in the *Johnson City Comet* offered some details on the progress of the Mess Hall, noting on May 28, 1903 that steel girders were being placed in the dining hall and second floor joists in the kitchen wing.<sup>5</sup> A longer description of the progress appeared in late July:

The 40-foot clock tower is up. The dial of the clock is 4 feet 6 inches in diameter, and above this a huge bell weighing 1,500 lbs will be placed. The dining hall is 218 by 74 feet, 16 feet high, and will seat about 1,200 people. It will require about 75 members to wait on the tables. The hall will be completed in September. Since I. T. Binville [partially illegible] has had charge of the carpenters that branch of the work is going right along. Being an old contractor he knows how to push things. He is the right man in the right place. Slating has begun on one end of the big mess hall, but the flooring has not been completed. All the outside walls are furred and lathed, and plasterers have arrived from Philadelphia to begin work at once.<sup>6</sup>

Although the dining hall portion of the building seemed to be moving along, there was still much work to be done on the Mess Hall structure. A construction photograph shows the Mess Hall at this stage in its construction, with exterior walls complete but the roof only partially done (Figure 1). A month later the entire building was almost roofed, but still needed slate and 9,600 yards of interior plaster.<sup>7</sup> Bids were being reviewed for supplying kitchen equipment including ranges, wrought iron shelving, soup and meat boilers, vegetable boilers and steamers, and roasting ovens. The bakery was to have two brick ovens, a “patent dough-kneading machine run by an electric motor [and] a Durand flour sifter. The dining hall would be equipped with a dish-washing machine.”<sup>8</sup> The bell

---

<sup>3</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, “Letter from the President,” *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1902* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1903), 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, “Letter from the President,” *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1902* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1903), 9.

<sup>5</sup> “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 28 May 1903.

<sup>6</sup> “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 23 July 1903.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 20 August 1903.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 27 August 1903.

for the clock tower arrived in September 1903; it would be connected to the clock to ring on the hour.<sup>9</sup>

The Mountain Branch officially opened and began receiving members in October 1903, but only part of the hospital complex was complete. The hospital kitchen and dining hall handled all meals during these early months. The Mess Hall was still in the process of being plastered, having equipment installed, and having the steam pipes tested.<sup>10</sup> The steam pipes were needed for the twenty-eight radiators in the dining room and various pieces of kitchen equipment such as the large coffee urns, vegetable steamers, and dishwasher. In late November, General McMahon, President of the NHDVS Board of Managers, architect J. H. Freedlander, and other officials arrived to inspect the construction progress. At the Mess Hall the plastering was finished and the dining hall floor was nearly complete. The kitchen was ready to receive equipment, and men were at work on the two bake ovens. A “Philadelphia firm” had the contract for the kitchen equipment and ovens.<sup>11</sup>

Finishing the Mess Hall continued through December 1903 and January 1904. The Tennessee Furniture and Supply Company of Johnson City had the contract for 114 ten foot long wood tables with metal trestle bases.<sup>12</sup> In February 1904 it was determined that the radiators blocked the open swing of the windows and needed to be replaced with shorter models. It was also noted that the electrical work was finished, including “about 900 lights of all kinds in the mess hall and kitchen, and there are 3 motors down stairs and one up to run the different machinery” such as the dough mixer.<sup>13</sup> The building was received from the contractor on February 27, 1904 and steps were taken to install the kitchen and bakery equipment.<sup>14</sup>

The Mess Hall was furnished and put into use on July 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>15</sup> A few weeks later, Mountain Branch Surgeon Dr. Robinson told the local newspaper that the members just ate their first meal at the new mess hall and “generally everything is progressing nicely at the home.” Dr. Robinson was a local Johnson City physician who served in the Spanish-American War and returned to a job at the Mountain Branch.<sup>16</sup> The *Johnson City Comet* published a lively account of a typical meal at a Soldiers’ Home branch. The author described the members lining up and filing into the hall to take their assigned seat. Frequently a man would sit in the wrong place and a squabble would break out. These disagreements would be quickly handled by the veterans assigned to

---

<sup>9</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 10 September 1903.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 1 October 1903.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 26 November 1903.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 10 December 1903; 24 December 1903; 31 December 1903; 21 January 1904.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Cunningham, “Soldiers’ Home Notes,” *Johnson City Comet*, 25 February 1904.

<sup>14</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, “Mountain Branch Report,” *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1904* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1905), 199.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Sentinel, “Dr. Robinson Talks of Soldier’s Home,” *Johnson City Comet*, 14 July 1904. Dr. Robinson served in the Sixth Immunes, a volunteer infantry of men thought to be immune to yellow fever because of previously surviving the disease.

guard duty. Once everyone was in place, the sergeant at arms would give a signal to begin eating. The article continues with a description of the waiters' duties:

At the tables there are six in a mess. Sometimes there are six pieces of meat on a platter and very often one man takes two pieces. The one who doesn't get any will send his plate to the kitchen by a waiter to get a piece. Very often you will hear the waiters cry out: "No run on meat!" or anything else they may have to go to the kitchen for. The waiters are all members of the home and are paid \$7.50 to \$10.00 per month. They have a good deal of work to do – wash the bowls, spoons, etc. The big plates and platters go to the dishroom. At some homes the dishes are carried in, but the up-to-date ones have two-wheeling carts and two men cart them out to the cook-room, where they are loaded are brought back and waiters place them on the tables. When the meal is over the dishes are placed at the end of the tables and the men come along with the carts and take them to the dish-room.<sup>17</sup>

The Mess Hall must have been a chaotic place during mealtime, in spite of the regimented procedures. It had a seating capacity of 1,120 men. It employed approximately 29 members as waiters and 21 members to assist in the kitchen.<sup>18</sup> Civilians were employed as cooks and/or bakers at various times. An early interior view of the Mess Hall shows the long rows of tables set for the next meal, with waiters in white uniforms standing at the ready (Figure 2).

Another early image shows the kitchen with several cooks posing in front of an industrial range with a large exhaust hood (Figure 3). The scale of food preparation required commercial-grade equipment of the type found in other large institutions such as hotels. Machinery like the dough mixer for the bakery was so large that it was operated via an electric motor installed below it in the basement. The *Johnson City Comet* included information on the food served at the Homes:

All the meat is cooked the day before it is to be used. When cold the bones are taken, it is sliced, then warmed over and served. Nearly all the meat is cooked by steam but some is cooked on the range. Each man has a pint bowl in which coffee is served for breakfast and dinner and tea for supper. It is seasoned in the kitchen. Wheat bread is used. Some homes have brown bread, some pie and cookies on Sundays; cheese is served once or twice a week.<sup>19</sup>

A sample menu for the Mountain Branch indicates that members were all served the same items at a given meal. Breakfast was a meat-based dish such as corned beef hash or beef stew, with bread, margarine or "oleo," and coffee. The mid-day meal, dinner, was the most substantial. Typical offerings were meat, potato, and vegetable, with bread and coffee. The evening supper was a light meal of items like stewed fruit, oatmeal, or rice

---

<sup>17</sup> Charles Cunningham, "Soldiers' Home Notes," *Johnson City Comet*, 17 September 1903.

<sup>18</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, "Mountain Branch Report," *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1905* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1906), 74.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Cunningham, "Soldiers' Home Notes," *Johnson City Comet*, 17 September 1903.

pudding with bread and coffee or tea.<sup>20</sup> Members dissatisfied with the Mess Hall could get a meal and a bottle of beer at the Branch hotel for 25 cents.<sup>21</sup>

In 1911, the Mess Hall employed a civilian as head baker for \$50 a month and a member as head cook for \$40 a month.<sup>22</sup> By 1916 some repairs were needed and procedures had been adjusted. The floors in the bakery and the dining room were in bad shape and needed to be replaced. Maximum seating at mealtimes was reduced to 880 men from 1,120, probably to alleviate crowding. Civilian women had largely replaced members as wait staff, although three male waiters including one member remained. This shift was part of a larger trend at the Homes towards employing civilians rather than members. Of the sixteen men employed in the kitchen, nine were members. Five civilian women rounded out the kitchen crew.<sup>23</sup>

With the advent of World War I the Homes would need to serve a new generation of disabled veterans. The great influx of new veterans, many young men with acute medical or psychiatric conditions, tested the capacity of the entire federal veterans' benefits system. Within the NHDVS, World War service men were admitted via an Act of Congress on October 6, 1917. There was a growing realization that meeting new demands for more sophisticated medical care would require substantial reorganization. Acknowledging the failings of the current decentralized system and faced with a large increase in tubercular members, the Board unanimously adopted a resolution in 1919 to convert the Mountain Branch into a tuberculosis sanatorium.<sup>24</sup> Authorization to proceed with the conversion was granted in September 1920. A committee of consultants, along with NHDVS officials such as Chief Surgeon James A. Mattison, surveyed the Branch to recommend tuberculosis sanatorium alterations.<sup>25</sup> The Mess Hall continued to function as the primary dining hall for the ambulatory patients.

Around 1928, members of Congress began advocating for restructuring federal veterans' services. NHDVS Board President General George Wood defended the purpose and efficiency of his agency:

The National Military Home is to-day an important part in the Government's plans for caring for its disabled soldiers, with the demand for its care constantly increasing. It is believed that ... its work is being done efficiently and economically and with justice to both the Government and the members of the home. The board feels that the plans for expansion are fully justified by present

---

<sup>20</sup> Martin V. Brady, *Picturesque Mountain Branch National Soldiers' Home Tennessee* (Johnson City: Martin V. Brady, 1908).

<sup>21</sup> Charles Cunningham, "Soldiers' Home Notes," *Johnson City Comet*, 17 September 1903.

<sup>22</sup> Inspector-General's Office, *Inspection Report – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1911), 66.

<sup>23</sup> Inspector-General's Office, *Inspection Report – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1916), 42.

<sup>24</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, "Letter from the President," *Annual Report of the NHDVS for the Fiscal Year 1919* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Lester Harris Post No. 98, American Legion, *The National Sanatorium* (Lester Harris Post No. 98, c. 1922), 21. This interesting publication, located in Special Collections, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is a guidebook produced by the American Legion post established at the Mountain Branch by young World War I veterans.

conditions, and confidently hopes that Congress will carefully consider the recommendations and furnish the needed relief.<sup>26</sup>

Between 1907 and 1919 no substantial construction was undertaken anywhere in the system, but at the end of the war the potential membership had increased tenfold. In 1929, the state soldiers' home in Bath, New York became the eleventh branch of the NHDVS. This transfer was a partial solution for the rapidly rising demand in the late 1920s.<sup>27</sup>

At this time three different agencies served veterans – the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, the Pension Bureau, and the Veterans Bureau. Various restructurings were considered; the most straightforward and ultimately successful proposal was combining all three agencies under a new Veterans Administration. This proposal was approved by Congress on July 3, 1930 and instituted through an executive order. The NHDVS Board of Managers resisted the initial proposals, but finally their eleven branches were folded into the new VA. The NHDVS was no longer an autonomous agency; now their primarily domiciliary services were just one of many offered by the Veterans Administration.<sup>28</sup>

Colonel Lee B. Harr became director of the Mountain Home in 1936 and served until 1966, overseeing the transition into a VA Medical Center during the post-World War II years. During his tenure in the late 1930s, a terrazzo floor was installed in the Mess Hall. The existing wood beams were reinforced with steel girders to support the weight of the new floors.<sup>29</sup> During World War II the quarters on the second floor of the service ell were designated a female civilian employee dormitory.<sup>30</sup> There was a major influx of new patients during the 1950s due to the large number of World War II veterans and eligibility rules that allowed treatment of any medical problem for those in financial need.<sup>31</sup> The interior layout of the Mess Hall and its functions remained largely unchanged in this period. The small offices flanking the tower were designated for the waiters, dietician, assistant dietician, and clerk.<sup>32</sup>

Under the Veterans Administration, the Mess Hall continued to be a central structure at the Mountain Home. Plans from 1953 provide numerous details about the use and equipment, particularly in the service ell (Figure 4). The space at the south side of the service ell immediately adjacent to the dining hall was the dishwashing area. Next was the kitchen, with a loading platform and trash room extension to the east. Equipment in the kitchen included a large set of ranges in the center of the room, steamers, urns, and kettles along the south wall and

---

<sup>26</sup> NHDVS Board of Managers, "Letter of the President," *Annual Report of the NHDVS for the Fiscal Year 1928*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1929), 6.

<sup>27</sup> "Inspector General's Report – NHDVS" published in *Construction at Soldiers' Homes, Hearings Before the Committee on Military Affairs*, House of Representatives, 71<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1930), 76.

<sup>28</sup> Judith Gladys Cetina, "A History of the Veterans' Homes in the United States, 1811-1930," (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1977), 382-383.

<sup>29</sup> "Main Mess Hall Floor – Building No. 34," (5 January 1939), PLIARS database, VACO.

<sup>30</sup> "Main Mess & Kitchen – Building No. 34," (9 May 1943), PLIARS database, VACO.

<sup>31</sup> *75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Veterans Administration Medical Center – Mountain Home, 1903-1978*, n.p., Mountain Home Collection, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU.

<sup>32</sup> "Dining Hall and Kitchen Building 34," (31 August 1953), PLIARS database, VACO.

roasters and deep fryers along the north. A center hall through the middle section of the ell was flanked on the east by a series of walk-in refrigerators, pantry, and bakery store room. On the west was an entry hall with employee dining rooms on either side. The bakery was located at the north end of the ell, with the extension at the north wall containing the ovens and proofing room. The basement contained an employee locker room and bathrooms, refrigeration machinery, food preparation space, and additional cold storage including meat, dairy, and vegetable refrigerators and an ice cream room (Figure 5).

In spite of the growing emphasis on outpatient medical care, the Mountain Home continued to provide both domiciliary services and inpatient hospital care; in 1959 there were an average of 1,781 domiciliary members.<sup>33</sup> Domiciliary service veterans housed in barracks one through 6 and no. 20 (the guardhouse) were served their meals in the main dining room. The Mess Hall was operated as part of the Domiciliary Division of the Dietetic Service, serving all ambulatory members. A 1959 booklet for the Mountain Home declared that “the main objective of the Dietetic Service is to meet the dietary physiological and psychological needs of the patient in a manner which makes a maximum contribution to his recovery from illness and maintained rehabilitation in the community.”<sup>34</sup> The Domiciliary Division served approximately 5,500 meals a day. In addition, the Domiciliary Division supplied all the meats, eggs, cheese, and bakery items for hospital dining rooms as well. In 1965, the refrigeration, dishwashing, ice machine and other equipment was upgraded. The old ammonia refrigeration units were replaced by modern Freon ones. The block ice machines were removed in favor of machines that made cube ice. Stainless steel rotary ovens were used to prepare meats in a way more appetizing than the old steam method.<sup>35</sup> By July 1974, the main dining room had a partition wall across the west one-third. This space was divided into several rooms including a vending machine area, retail sales and storage, and a barber shop. The end porches were enclosed by this time. The east end of the basement had been excavated and was being used as a recreation room.<sup>36</sup>

An important new era began for the Mountain Home when the U.S. Congress passed the Teague-Cranston Act in 1972. Also called the “Veterans’ Administration Medical School Assistance and Health Manpower Training Act,” this legislation funded construction of medical schools at five VA facilities through partnerships with local universities. Neighboring East Tennessee State University established its College of Medicine at the Mountain Home, admitting its first students in 1978. The Mountain Home was in need of renovations by the late 1970s. The availability of construction funds and personnel from the medical school helped revitalize veteran care. In 1979 the west side of the basement below the dining hall was excavated and made into a canteen with its own kitchen and dishwashing facilities.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> *Veterans Administration Center Mountain Home, 1903-1959*, (1959), 1. Mountain Home Collection, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Veterans Administration Center Mountain Home, 1903-1965*, (1965), 14. Mountain Home Collection, Archives of Appalachia, ETSU.

<sup>36</sup> “As Built Plans – Building No. 34,” (3 July 1974), PLIARS database, VACO

<sup>37</sup> “Excavate Basement Building 34,” (15 August 1979), PLIARS database, VACO.

The Mess Hall continued to be used as for food service, but new functions began to be added reflecting use of the building by both the VA Medical Center and the College of Medicine. A 1991 plan shows a partition wall added to the west side of the kitchen to create a laboratory space. Bathrooms were installed on the west side of dishwashing room. In spite of these changes the Mess Hall was still being used as a dining hall with full-service kitchen and bakery, in addition to a canteen and recreation space in the basement. In 1998 another renovation removed or replaced some of the 1970s changes such as vinyl covered gypsum wall board. At the time of the Mountain Home Centennial in 2003, the Mess Hall no longer was used primarily for food service. It housed the Mountain Home Museum, ETSU College of Medicine bookstore, the veterans' canteen service, and research laboratories for Extended Care Service and the medical school. The Museum at Mountain Home was founded in 1995 to interpret the development of health care in South Central Appalachia through exhibits and collections. Currently the Mess Hall houses research laboratories (now called Cecile Cox Quillen Geriatric Research Laboratory), the museum, offices, and maintenance workshops for the VA Medical Center.<sup>38</sup> The Mountain Home was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011, the highest recognition for a historic site in the United States. The Mess Hall continues to function as a centerpiece of this historic campus.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Mess Hall is a brick and limestone masonry French Renaissance Revival building that serves as the central focal point of the Mountain Branch's Beaux Arts campus. The Mess Hall's most distinctive feature is its tall central clock tower with elaborate terra cotta ornamentation and a pyramidal roof. The symmetrical building is basically T-shaped in plan, with monumental one-story wings flanking the tower on the main block, and a perpendicular rear ell formed by a one-story connecting hyphen and two-story service structure originally housing the kitchen, bakery, staff quarters, and other related support functions.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. The Mess Hall has some water infiltration in an area of the service ell, but is otherwise in use and well maintained.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Mess Hall is 251 feet, ½ inch wide at the dining room block and 267 feet, 4 ½ inches deep from the tower to the end of the service ell. The tower rises 86 feet, 3 ½ inches to its ball finial.
2. Foundations: Exterior foundations walls are formed by dressed limestone blocks with light vertical scoring. The uppermost block has a cavetto curve on the top edge. The height of these

---

<sup>38</sup> "As Built for Building 34," (October 1991), Drawing Files, Planning and Design Office, Quillen VAMC, Johnson City, TN; Special Insert, "Mountain Home/100 Years," *Johnson City Press*, 25 September 2003.

walls is approximately four to five feet, depending on the grade level which slopes down towards the south. The foundation has periodic rectangular perforations for ventilation.

3. Walls: The Mess Hall has red brick walls laid in a Flemish bond pattern, with large sections of tan brick at the corners and around openings. The tan brick is laid flush with the red, but has notched edges to creating the appearance of quoining. There are projecting limestone block belt courses level with the lower edge of the first floor windows and along the upper edge of the walls. These belt courses have a smoothly dressed limestone block with a thinner section of tapered molding below. Another flush band of tan brick runs horizontally along the center point of the wall. The service building has larger areas of red brick without the vertical sections of tan at the corners, while the wall surfaces of the main block are a more lively composition of alternating red and tan brick and limestone. The main block also has tan brick areas below the lower belt course and above the upper one. Tan brick spandrels project below each window opening. Elaborate terra cotta cartouches are located on each upper corner of the dining room wings. These high relief cartouches have a shield on a scrolled and beribboned base, flanked by fruit and floral garlands and topped by a high-relief ram's head. A fork, spoon, and pot are incorporated into each lower scrolled corner of the cartouche base as subtle references to the building's function.

4. Structural system, framing: The Mess Hall was constructed with load-bearing brick walls, concrete footings for wood posts, wood beam roof trusses, and steel girders spanning the dining room. The roof of the dining room main block is wood post and beam with common rafters and a few metal tie rods. The former kitchen and bakery areas in the service wing have large wood trusses. The trusses in the former kitchen combine wood beams and angled members with vertical metal rod bracing. A V-configuration at the center has a horizontal wood brace at mid-level. One kitchen truss is different, with a lattice configuration. The structural system has been modified over the years to include additional steel girders and concrete posts. These changes were required to support the terrazzo floors added in 1939 and the basement excavation during the 1960s and 1970s.

5. Porches: The Mess Hall has large enclosed porches on each end of the main block that were originally open. The porches were enclosed by 1974. These porches each have a low pitched hipped roof lower than the main block roof level and a limestone foundation matching the rest of the building. The roof is supported by pairs of tan brick square columns located near the corners and single columns flanking the center entrance steps. Each column sits on a limestone and tan brick plinth and has a limestone cap. Two pairs of short cross beams with curved ends sit in alternating directions between the columns and roof beams, creating a pergola effect. The exposed rafter ends also have a curve and notch design. Each porch has a concrete floor, pilasters along the wall at the dining room, and painted brick enclosure walls. The brick infill walls have sets of three six over six replacement vinyl-clad wood sash windows with concrete sills. The muntins are inside the double pane glazing and the interior pane is removable. Each porch has two sets of side by side two leaf metal and glass commercial doors. At the east porch (now part of the Carpenter Shop) these doors are accessed via wide concrete steps with metal handrails at the center and sides. At the west porch (entrance foyer for the museum) the

doorways are accessed via a long concrete ramp situated perpendicular to the building. A short concrete staircase is located on either side of the ramp near the doors.

**Stoops:** There is an original low stoop located at the central tower entrance on the south elevation with limestone knee walls and seven steps that gradually become narrower towards the top. This stoop does not have a landing but goes from the top step directly to the door threshold. An added metal handrail is located at the center of the staircase.

Another original limestone stoop with knee walls is located at the center of the west façade of the rear ell. Nine steps gradually narrow to the doorway threshold. The stoop is arched over a window well below. This stoop provided access to the employee quarters entrance. A metal pipe rail is located at either side of the stair.

A concrete stoop was added to the south façade of the east dining room wing to allow access via a modified window opening. This stoop has seven concrete steps and large landing, with metal railings at the steps and around the landing.

There are several additional utilitarian stoops and loading docks located around the rear ell and rear elevation of the main block. Two concrete stoops are located on the north façade of the main block, east of the ell. The one closer to the east corner is parallel to the wall while the one closer to the ell projects perpendicular to the wall. These stoops have metal pipe handrails. Several loading docks are located along the east side of the rear ell. A concrete loading dock with steps projects from the east side of the original kitchen. Another long and narrow brick and concrete dock with concrete steps is located across three bays between the former kitchen and bakery. A later covered loading dock with an electronic lift is located at the east side of the former bakery. Metal steps and a concrete and metal platform are located near the northwest junction of the ell and main block. A concrete stoop with concrete steps is located on the north façade of the main block, west of the ell.

6. **Chimneys:** Two large square red brick ventilation chimneys are located at the rear elevation on either side of the ell. The base of each chimney is integrated into the exterior wall of the ell; the shaft pierces the roof eave of the main block. They have pyramidal roofs with exposed rafter ends and louvered openings near the top on all four sides. Each chimney has a band of tan brick below the louvered openings and near the service building connector, and a tan brick corbelled cap. There numerous metal ventilators in the service wing roof, particularly over the former kitchen area. Historic images show that the Mess Hall originally had six more brick chimneys, each with a band of tan brick each the cap. Four were located at the kitchen, one at the bake oven, and one near the center of the service ell (Figure 6).

#### 7. Openings:

a. **Doorways and doors:** The most prominent doorway is the main dining room entrance at the base of the tower in the center of the main block. This round arch opening interrupts the raised bands of brick on the lower section of the wall. The arch has an elaborate terra cotta hood which is framed by ornamentation including oval cushion-like projections on the voussoirs and a keystone featuring a high relief bust of Athena, the

goddess of war, on a field of crossed swords and spears and curving large volutes with a small eagle and ribbon decorations. A bracket with a volute and shell motif sits at each spring of the arch, below the limestone belt course that extends across the arch to the edge of the opening. The arched upper portion of the opening has been infilled with brick and the door replaced by aluminum and steel commercial doors and sidelights and transom with jalousies.

A prominent doorway is located at the center of the west façade of the service building, originally providing an employee entrance. This rectangular opening is framed by large, flat sections of tan brick with notched edges. The tan brick extends from foundation to eaves. The rectangular doorway has a tan brick jack arch with a limestone keystone. A limestone overdoor is supported by curved brackets at each corner and includes a wide cavetto molding along the top, creating a decorative hood. The opening has been reduced by red brick infill and the door replaced with a simple metal door with two over two lights in the top half.

The doorways added to the end porches on the main block are side by side pairs of two leaf aluminum doors with glazing in the top two thirds, set directly into the brick infill walls. The push bars and fixed handles are on opposite sides, suggesting that one set of doors was an entrance and the other an exit. The doors now inside these porches were the original exterior doorways into the ends of the dining room. Here three wide, two leaf openings have metal doors set directly into the brick wall. These plain doors are recent replacements. They have a square fixed opening near the top with wire glass and auto closer mechanisms.

The Mess Hall has several below-grade basement doorways accessed via ramps or stairwells. These doorways are utilitarian with aluminum frame glazed doors or metal doors with two over two lights in the top half set directly into the brick walls. One original basement opening is now under a loading dock on the east side of the service building. Older or original openings appear to have thick metal rails around the stairwell, while newer or modified ones have thinner metal rails.

Additional exterior doorways providing access to the first floor are located at the various stoops. Like the utilitarian basement level openings, these doorways tend to be simple with replacement metal or wood doors set directly into the masonry wall. Most are solid or with small square fixed windows. The openings on the north façade of the main block east wing appear to be a modified round arch window openings with brick infill and plain solid rectangular doors.

b. Windows: The Mess Hall has large regularly spaced round arch window openings along the north and south sides of the main dining room block which create the appearance of an arcade on these façades. The replacement vinyl-clad, wood window sashes consist of a pair of six over six faux divided light windows separated by a flat mullion inside the double pane glazing. The arch fanlight is filled by an aluminum sash with four triangular faux divided lights. These windows only vaguely approximate the

original French window wood sash, which had eight lights for each tall thin leaf and an eight-light divided fanlight with a curved muntin. Each opening has a wide limestone sill formed by the belt course (except those converted into doorways) and a wide notched frame of tan brick laid flush with the wall surface. Each opening also has a terra cotta keystone in the form of a curved volute draped with a ribbon-wrapped garland and topped with a high relief cluster of flowers, oak leaves, and acorns. Many of the window openings on the north façade have been reduced in size by brick infill for doorways or smaller window openings. A window opening was cut into the side wall of the small office adjacent to the east side of the tower.

The typical first floor window openings in the service wing rear ell are smaller rectangular openings with a segmental or jack arch. The segmental arch openings located on the east façade of the service building have an additional embellishment of an elongated limestone keystone. The simplified limestone and brick belt course forms the window sills. Various window openings on the service buildings have been modified or infilled with brick, but their locations are still clearly visible. Many of the unaltered windows still have the original wood sash. The segmental arch openings have a double hung eight over eight window with a curved upper rail. A wide center mullion creates the appearance of French windows. The simpler jack arch openings have a six over six divided light, double-hung wood sash.

The second floor, or attic story, of the north end of the service building has thin rectangular window openings sheltered by the roof eaves. These openings appear singly, or in pairs or triples separated by an eave bracket and a section of brick wall. Each grouping shares a plain limestone sill. These windows are set directly into the brick wall and have a six divided light wood casement.

Metal frame storm windows or screens have been added to some of the service building ell window openings.

Typical basement windows are a six over six wood sash for scaled to fit various opening sizes.

## 8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The complex roof profile of the Mess Hall reflects the various functional spaces contained inside. The largest portion of the Mess Hall roof is the mansard over the dining hall main block. This roof still has slate on the lower slope and a replacement rubber composite above, separated by copper flashing. There used to be three skylights in this roof; only the metal frame one at the center is still intact. Two lower extensions for offices flanking the tower on the south have half mansard roofs sheathed with slate. The connecting hyphen for the service building has a flat roof resurfaced with rubber composite. The service building roof has a shallow I-shaped form oriented perpendicular to the main block with a central mansard roof connecting to cross mansards at either end. The original kitchen located adjacent to the connecting hyphen on the south has a large monitor creating a skylight on the upper slope of the mansard.

The monitor has clerestory windows and a standing seam metal roof. The center and north cross mansard have slate sheathing on the lower slope and a replacement rubber composite above, separated by copper flashing. A small shed roof extension at the north end of the service ell housed the bakery ovens and proofing room. This roof is sheathed with dark gray composite shingles. There is another lower extension on the east side of the kitchen (originally the trash room) with a slate and rubber composite mansard roof.

b. Cornice, eaves: The Mess Hall has wide open eaves with bead board soffits now covered with vinyl siding. The rafter ends are exposed and project from a bead board fascia. Wood brackets support the soffits with a long rectangular section over a curved and notched profile. The cornice brackets rest on a limestone belt course with brick above. On the main block the brackets are evenly spaced; on the service building they are irregular, sometimes placed in pairs or offset to accommodate a window opening. The office and kitchen extensions have the open eaves with exposed rafters and sections of tapered molding. The bakery oven extension has an overhanging eave with a continuous soffit. The flat roof connector has a brick parapet with limestone coping.

c. Tower: The clock tower rises over 86 feet from grade at the center of the Mess Hall front elevation. It has four levels – the ground level entrance foyer, second floor with access to the dining hall attic, third floor housing the clock, and an open fourth level sheltered by a pyramidal roof. On the exterior, the lower section of the tower is a robust limestone base. The elaborate door surround, described above, extends above the base. The shaft consists of red brick laid in a Flemish bond with wide sections of tan brick at the corners. The brick is laid flush with notched seams between red and tan creating a quoin appearance, like the walls on the rest of the Mess Hall. The second floor level is indicated by a group of three tall slit windows located on the south, west, and east facades. These openings have a jack arch and a plain sloped limestone sill. Each contains a tall single light wood casement.

The clock level has a large illuminated clock face and a horizontal band of tan brick on all four elevations; these are white opaque plastic with black Roman numerals. The clock faces are in-kind replacements for glass originals. Each round clock opening has a wide terra cotta frame. An oval cushion, like the ones on the door vouissors below sits at the top framed by volutes and ribbons. Flat limestone blocks sit on either side of the circular frame. The top half of the frame is covered with a high relief floral and fruit garland, with small sections hanging below the side blocks. At the center bottom of the frame sits a high relief male lion head flanked by volutes and ribbons, with a section of garland hanging below. Each corner of the tower has a massive ram's head and garland cartouche like the ones on the main building (see Walls section above for detailed description).

The open fourth level of the tower is surrounded by tan brick walls with large square openings at the center of each elevation. There is a shallow balcony at each opening with a turned wood balustrade and low rail. Each balcony is supported by large angular wood brackets at each corner with a simple congé profile and angular guttae, or drops, along

the bottom edge. Smaller plain brackets are located on either side of each large one. Tall wood columns located at either side of each opening have Ionic capitals adorned by bunches of grapes and lion heads. The columns are constructed from a series of tall wedges. A wide wood cornice is located above, with a pair of vertical eave bracket extensions located at each corners. These brackets are visually similar to those supporting the balcony. The wide, open eaves above have the same brackets, bead board soffit and fascia, and exposed rafter ends as the main building below. The roof has a large copper round ball finial at the peak.

Inside the open platform the floor has a rubber composite covering and the ceiling is wood bead board. A bronze bell is located here (see below).

d. Dormers: One small semicircular dormer is located on the south roof slope of the former kitchen trash room. This dormer is sheathed with copper and has a two light window.

### C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The Mess Hall's major interior space was the open dining area in the main block. The east two thirds of this space is still intact and houses museum exhibits. The west section of the dining hall was partitioned by 1974 into several rooms. These are now occupied by museum collections, storage, and maintenance offices. Two small offices flank the entrance foyer on the south; the connecting doors between these spaces have been closed up. The long rear service building ell, formerly the kitchen, storage, bakery, and staff quarters, has been repartitioned on the first floor, extending the original double loaded corridor through the original kitchen and dishwashing room. New bathrooms and a geriatric research laboratory are located on the west side of the hall while the east is the open space of the carpentry shop, which occupies part of the former kitchen. The intact trusses are visible from here over the added lower ceilings on the west.

The double loaded corridor repeats in the basement with wood and wire storage cages. Originally the main block basement was unexcavated, but canteen and recreation spaces were created at this level in two separate campaigns. Now there are maintenance shops on the east side of the dining hall basement and a double loaded corridor of offices on the west.

The second floor in the center of the service building seems to retain its original configuration of a double loaded corridor with staff rooms (now offices) and a bathroom.

2. Stairways: The major interior spaces of the Mess Hall – dining room, kitchen, and bakery – were each one monumental story, making vertical circulation secondary. Most important is the series of stairways providing access to the upper levels of the tower. There is a spiral metal stair from the southwest corner of the entrance foyer to the second floor of the tower. The main block attic can be accessed here. At the second floor, a wood stair with quarter turn landings rises from the east wall clockwise around to the west. This stair is secured by a locked wood gate. Another

wood stair with a quarter turn landing rises from the northwest corner of the clock level along the north wall to the open upper level.

The other original stairway is located on the northeast side of the center service ell building, providing access to the refrigerators and pantries in the basement and staff quarters on the second floor. A straight run of stairs between the basement and first floor, and first and second floors is divided by a large stair hall landing at the first floor. Each stairway has a metal carriage, steps, and balustrade with a wood newel post and handrail. A second wood hand rail is mounted on the wall. No-skid plastic covers the treads and risers.

There is a service elevator located on the east side of original kitchen traveling to the basement. This elevator was added in 1934. An added loft area in the former bakery has a makeshift wood stair.

3. Flooring: Tan terrazzo floors and baseboards are located throughout the first floor including the former dining room, office near the tower, service building hall and first floor stair landing, all bathrooms, bakery and kitchen areas. The terrazzo replaced the original wood floors c. 1939. The entrance foyer has herringbone pattern red brick floors with a tan brick border. The second and third floors of the tower and the main block attic have wood floors. The basement and sections of the former kitchen have a six inch square red quarry tile floor and baseboard. Vinyl tile or commercial grade carpet is covering the floors in the second floor staff quarters of the service building and the basement of the dining room block. The end porches and portions of the basement have concrete floors.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The Mess Hall has plaster walls and ceilings in the former dining area, and offices flanking the tower. Exposed beams in the plaster ceiling have decorative recessed coffers. Pilasters are located along the exterior walls between each window opening, with decorative caps and bases. The caps have a band of trim with two raised circles above. Two scrolled brackets rest above on a top band of trim and the coffered ceiling beam. A wood cornice appears at the top of the walls.

The entrance foyer has brick walls, a tall gray marble baseboard, and a wood cornice around the high plaster ceiling. A projecting corbelled brick belt course is located about three feet above the floor. The interiors of the upper tower levels are unpainted brick, with unfinished ceilings.

In the service building, there is terrazzo wainscot in the former kitchen and bakery, as well as the second floor bathroom. Another bathroom in the bakery area has a wainscot of pale green and white square ceramic tiles. Recent plasterboard walls create partitioned spaces in areas of the service building first floor. Modern acoustic tile drop ceilings appear in these areas as well. In the former bakery and kitchen areas the open trusses are still visible. The second floor former staff quarters have plaster walls and ceilings.

The basement has painted brick walls and an unfinished ceiling, except the drywall in the added offices on the west side of the main block. The enclosed porches also have painted brick walls

with pilasters. The brick pilasters have wood trim caps and a plinth cap formed by the limestone belt course. The fiberboard ceiling also has a band of wood cornice trim.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The Mess Hall has variety of original, altered, and added doorways and doors. The original doorways are rectangular openings with thick tapered wood trim with mitred corners. The original unaltered doorways appear at the main block offices and attic, and portions of the service building ell, particularly the second floor staff quarters. These doorways have original wood panel doors with two tall vertical trimmed recesses over one horizontal. The door at the office on the east side of the foyer has been modified to contain fixed glazing in the vertical recesses and a metal grille in the horizontal.

The connecting doors between the entrance foyer and offices are taller segmental arch openings with two leaf wood doors. These openings have a brick frame on the foyer side, with the opening infilled. On the office side the doors and thick wood trim are intact.

Doorways at the end porch and service building entrances of the dining room have been reduced in size and now contain plain metal doors in metal frames with push bar hardware. These doorways still have large decorative hoods consisting of projecting cornices supported by scrolled corner brackets with guttae on the bottom edge; these hoods are now high above the reduced opening.

Various added partition walls – across the dining room, in the service ell – have plain wood doors in modern metal frames with simple knob, push bar, or lever hardware. The doorway at the former kitchen has a two-leaf wood door with small square openings containing fixed wire glass. Two earlier plain wood doors with metal ventilation grilles near the bottom were added for the closets at the north wall of the service building first floor stair landing.

A rolling overhead door is located at the loading dock on the east side of the service building. There is a counterweighted hatch door opening in the ceiling of the tower to the open platform. Small hatch openings are located in the ceiling of each main block office.

b. Windows: The replacement windows in the monumental round arch openings of the main block are set directly into the masonry wall without applied trim. Inside the main block offices and the former bakery area, the wood sash windows have wide tapered trim with mitred corners and deep apron sills. The trim is plainer in the service areas than the offices. The second floor casement windows in the staff quarters and around the upper walls of the former bakery have wide flat trim with mitred corners. The casements have metal lever latch hardware.

The sets of three tall thin windows at the second floor of the tower are set directly into the brick wall with a small jack arch above each opening. Each set of three shares a simple wood sill with apron. Each single light casement has a small wood knob.

There are three metal frame casement windows on the south side wall of the kitchen trash room. The clerestory windows around the kitchen area monitor are pairs of two light sash.

The remaining skylight in the dining room is a square coffered opening divided into nine unequal lights (small corners squares and a large center section) with opaque frosted glass. Currently a metal grille covers the opening. The dining room had two other skylights which have been removed.

6. Decorative features and trim: In addition to the scrolled bracket door hoods and pilaster caps in the dining room, the interior support columns have decorative caps. These square wood columns have pairs of scrolled brackets at two sides along the ceiling beam. Below this section is a short scrolled bracket on the opposite sides, with a raised circle on the two faces below the ceiling brackets. A band of trim wraps around the columns below these features, and then an approximately two foot long raised panel, with a stylized guttae drop, is located underneath the band on each side of the column.

7. Hardware: The typical historic door hardware is a round metal knob with a plain escutcheon.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The Mess Hall originally had radiator heat supplied via a central steam plant and natural ventilation. Most of the radiators have been removed, but a few remain, including a ceiling mounted radiator in the basement. Later ductwork and vents for a forced air HVAC system are located in the dining room attic. Large ducts and a fan are incorporated into the top of the skylight. Window unit air conditioners are installed in several service ell second floor rooms.

b. Lighting: Fluorescent tube light fixtures hang from the ceiling beams in the former dining room. A massive wrought iron lantern with incandescent bulbs hangs from the ceiling of the entrance foyer. A wall mounted porcelain bathroom fixture is located over the sink in the staff quarters bathroom on the second floor. Other areas of the building have modern fluorescent lighting fixtures.

c. Plumbing: The bathroom on the second floor of the service building, originally for the staff quarters, retains historic fixtures and finishes dating to the early/mid-twentieth century, including two marble shower stalls with terrazzo bases. Three marble toilet stalls with two leaf louvered wood doors on spring hinges. The six wall mounted vitreous china sinks have mixer faucets. There are several wall-mounted glass shelves with metal support brackets.

Another bathroom located in the former bakery area (first floor) has metal toilet stall dividers and wall-mounted vitreous china sinks. More recent women's and men's bathrooms are located on the west side of the service building connector. A small water

closet with toilet and wall mounted sink is located in the office on the east side of the entrance foyer.

d. Walk-In Refrigerators: Several large walk-in refrigerators are still extant in the basement and first floor of the rear ell. One is located along the east side of the first floor hall, another is in the former trash room on the east side of the kitchen, and several line the hall on the basement level below. These refrigerators have stainless steel doors and the interiors were not accessible. A few have temperature gauges over the door labeled “American.”

e. Clock: A clock is located at the third level at the tower, with a face on each tower elevation. It was manufactured by E. Howard and Company, Boston. The clock mechanism is located at the center of the third level, with rods and gears on each side extending to each clock face. The pendulum hangs down through a slit in the floor and is enclosed in a wood box. Counterweight shafts and pulleys are located at each corner and connected to the mechanism with wire cables. The clock faces have been replaced with plastic, but the Roman numerals are consistent with the historic faces. The clocks are backlit with fluorescent lights.

f. Bell: A large bronze bell manufactured by E. Howard Clock Co., Boston is located in the upper open platform of the tower. It hangs from a large overhead beam. The pull chain is threaded through a hole in the floor for interior access.

#### D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The Mess Hall was set back from McMahon Avenue (now Dogwood Avenue) with a large open lawn bisected by concrete paths. Benches were placed along the paths for the members. The fountain in front the Mess Hall was moved to that location from the hospital courtyard in 1983. Construction of the Clinical Services Building (Building No. 77) eliminated the hospital courtyard and its original fountain needed a new home.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Architectural drawings:

- Freedlander’s original drawings of the Mountain Branch Mess Hall have not been located.
- Later drawings indicating changes over time are housed in the PLIARS database administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO), Washington, D.C. or the drawing files of the Planning and Design Office, Quillen VAMC, Johnson City, TN:
  - “Elevator for General Mess Hall,” (16 February 1934), VACO.
  - “Main Mess Hall Floor – Building No. 34,” (24 August 1936), VACO [plans].

- “Main Mess & Kitchen – Building No. 34,” (9 May 1943), VACO [includes elevations and sections].
- “Dining Hall and Kitchen Building 34,” (31 August 1953), VACO [plans].
- “Main Mess & Kitchen – Building No. 34,” (28 June 1963), VAMC [elevations].
- “As Built Plans – Building No. 34,” (3 July 1974), VACO.
- “Excavate Basement Building 34,” (15 August 1979), VACO [plans].
- “As Built for Building 34,” (October 1991), Quillen VAMC [plan].

B. Early Views: The Mountain Home Museum has a number of early photographs of the Mess Hall in its photographic files, including a construction image (see Figures). The earliest interior views seem to be published in Martin V. Brady, *Picturesque Mountain Branch National Soldiers' Home Tennessee* (Johnson City: Martin V. Brady, 1908). This source also includes a number of exterior views. In addition three early exterior views of the Mountain Branch Mess Hall were published in the *Brickbuilder*, 13, no. 5 (May 1904).

#### C. Selected Bibliography:

##### Collections and Archives –

*Johnson City, Tennessee -*

The Museum at Mountain Home, Quillen VAMC.

Drawing Files, Planning and Design, Quillen VAMC.

Archives of Appalachia, Sherrod Library, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee [Mountain Home Collection and vertical file].

Microforms and Periodicals, Sherrod Library, East Tennessee State University [Johnson City newspapers].

*Knoxville, Tennessee-*

Special Collections, Hodges Library, University of Tennessee.

McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knox County Public Libraries.

*Washington, D.C.-*

Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office [VACO] Library [NHDVS Annual Reports and Inspection Reports].

Mountain Home files, Federal Preservation Officer, Office of Construction and Facilities Management, VACO.

PLIARS drawing database, Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office, Washington, DC (VACO).

Published Sources and Reports –

Board of Managers – National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, *Annual Reports*, various years starting in 1867; many volumes include *Proceedings* of the Board of Managers meetings.

Brady, Martin V. *Picturesque Mountain Branch National Soldiers' Home Tennessee*. Johnson City: Martin V. Brady, 1908.

“Current Periodicals,” *The Architectural Review* 11, no. (June 1904), 170-171.

Cetina, Judith Gladys. “A History of the Veterans Homes in the United States, 1811-1930,” Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1977.

Edwards, Charles. *Souvenir Book: National Military Home, Tennessee*. Johnson City: Charles Edwards, 1909.

Inspector General. *Annual Report of Inspection - National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1894- . [author name and exact title vary]

Julin, Suzanne. “National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers – Assessment of Significance and National Historic Landmark Recommendations.” 2008. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C..

Kelly, Patrick. *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Lester Harris Post No. 98, American Legion. *The National Sanatorium*. Lester Harris Post No. 98, c. 1922.

*Souvenir Book, National Soldiers Home*, Johnson City, TN: Muse-Whitlock Co., Printers, c. 1911.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Mess Hall (Building No. 34) at the Mountain Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was undertaken in 2011 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs division of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Office of Construction and Facilities Management, Kathleen Schamel, Federal Preservation Officer. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine Lavoie, Chief, HABS; by Douglas Pulak, Deputy Federal Preservation Officer, DVA; and by Kevin Milliken, Assistant Chief, Engineering Service, James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center (QVAMC). The field work was undertaken and the measured drawings were produced by Project Supervisor Mark Schara AIA, HABS Architect; by HABS Architects Paul Davidson, Daniel De Sousa, and Jason McNatt; and by Architecture Technician Michael Ellingson

(Hampton University). The historical report was written by HABS Historian Lisa P. Davidson. The large format photography was undertaken in 2008 by HABS Photographer James W. Rosenthal. Assistance was provided by Martha Whaley, Museum at Mountain Home, Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State University; Aaron Prozak, Engineering Technician, QVAMC; and by the QVAMC facilities maintenance staff.

PART V. ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1: Mountain Branch Mess Hall Construction, c. July 1903  
Source: Museum at Mountain Home



Figure 2: Interior of Mess Hall Dining Room with Waiters  
Source: Museum at Mountain Home

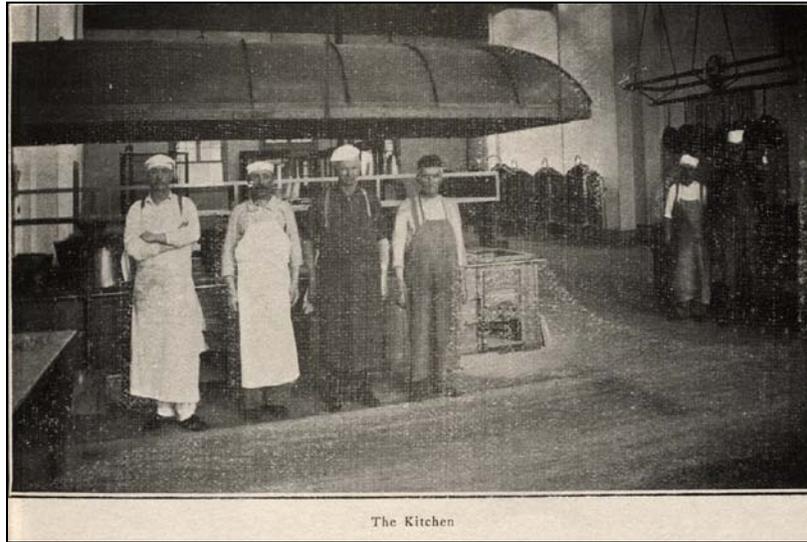


Figure 3: Interior of Mess Hall Kitchen with Staff, c. 1908  
Source: Martin V. Brady, *Picturesque Mountain Branch National Soldiers' Home Tennessee*.  
Johnson City: Martin V. Brady, 1908.

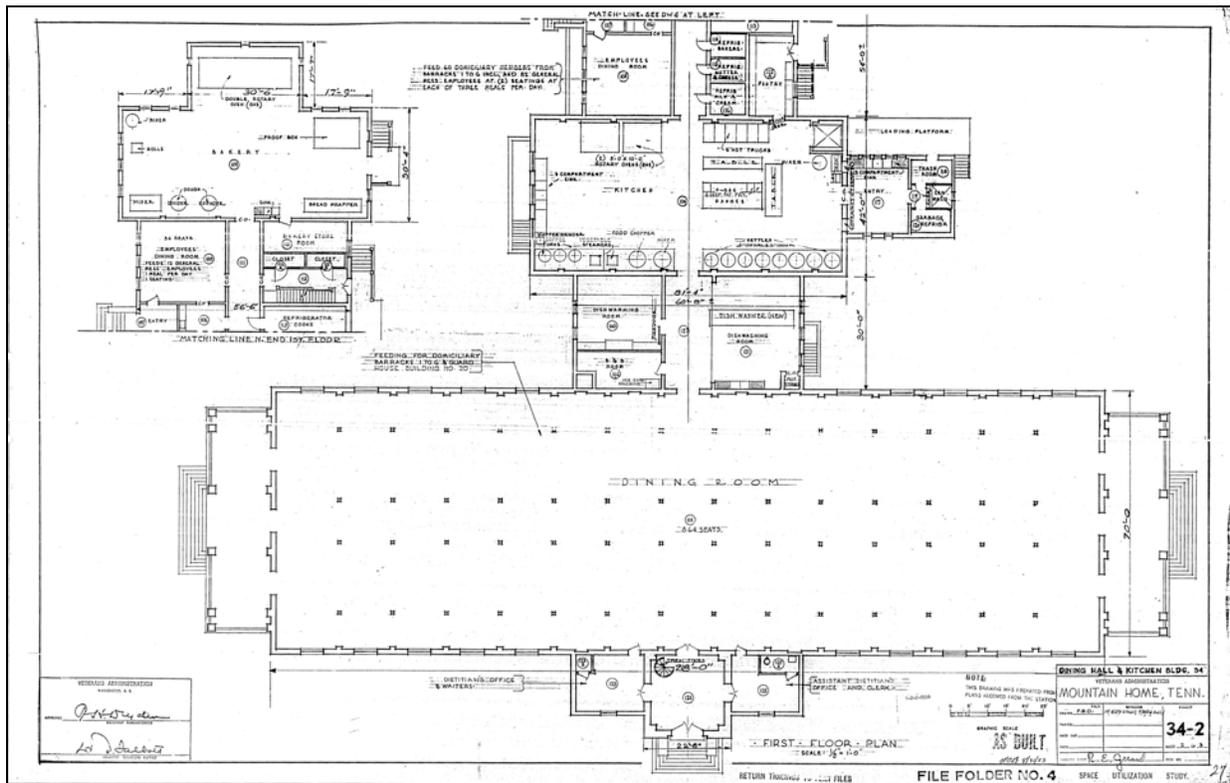


Figure 4: First Floor Plan of Service Ell,  
Source: PLIARS database, VACO

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS –  
 MOUNTAIN BRANCH, MESS HALL  
 HABS No. TN-254-K  
 (Page 26)

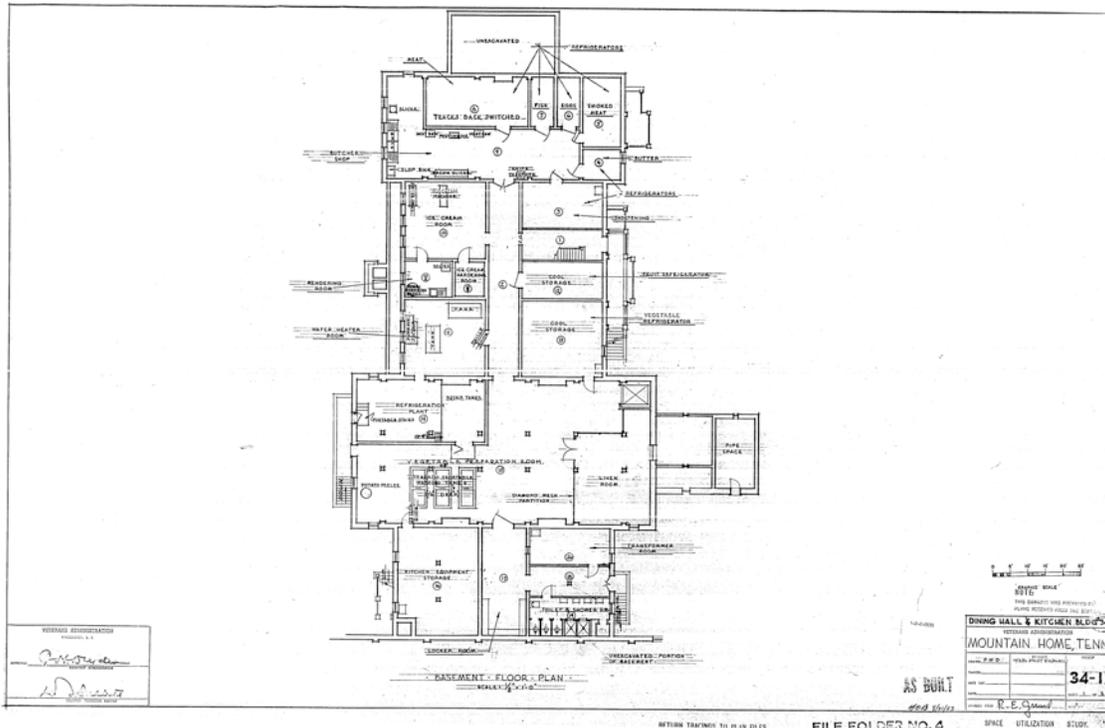


Figure 5: Basement Plan of Service Ell,  
 Source: PLIARS database, VACO



Figure 6: Rear view of Mess Hall from northwest with service ell in foreground, c. 1930  
 Source: Museum at Mountain Home