FORT BLISS, WILLIAM BEAUMONT GENERAL HOSPITAL, NEUROPSYCHIATRIC WARD
(Building Number 7115)
Beaumont Street
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 728
Santa Fe, NM 87504
Location: Beaumont Street, Fort Bliss, William Beaumont Army Medical Center, El Paso, El Paso County, Texas. The property is bounded by Fred Wilson Road to the north, Dyer Street to the east, Hayes Avenue to the south, and Alabama Street to the west.

Present Owner: United States Army

Original Use: Neuropsychiatric Ward

Present Use: Regional Health Center

Significance: This building is deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A and C as a contributing element to the proposed William Beaumont General Hospital Historic District (WBGHHD). This district encompasses the permanent and semi-permanent buildings constructed in the WBGH area at Fort Bliss between 1921 and 1945. These buildings contribute to the understanding of the hospital's role of providing medical service to thousands of American soldiers and their dependents during periods of both war and peace. The original wards no longer exist; however, the remaining buildings in the proposed WBGHHD depict the administrative, social and recreational environment of the hospital during the period of significance. Even though the period of construction of the buildings within the proposed WBGHHD spans over twenty years, they form a cohesive environment based on architectural styles, construction materials, and geographic proximity. Furthermore, this building meets NRHP criteria in that it possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.
PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Original Construction Date: 1942
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Army
4. Builders, Contractors and Suppliers: J.E. Morgan & Sons
5. Original Plans and Construction: The building essentially retains its original 1942 exterior appearance and building footprint. The interior has retained its original layout, although has been adapted for new uses.
6. Alterations and Additions: On the back courtyard side of the building, between the stairwells, enclosed rooms have been added which originally were left open. Other alterations have been made to the interior finishes and room arrangement during remodeling.

B. Historical Context:

William Beaumont General Hospital was one of the U.S. Army’s five original general hospitals. It opened at Fort Bliss on July 1, 1921 although the facility was not fully completed until the following year. The hospital originally consisted of forty-eight tile and stucco buildings with a bed capacity of approximately 414. The staff consisted of six officers, two nurses, and thirty enlisted men. William Beaumont General Hospital’s original mission was to provide general medical care to border patrol troops stationed at Fort Bliss. By the 1930s, however, the hospital was serving the entire western portion of the Army’s Eighth Corps area, providing health care to soldiers stationed at posts in Arizona, New Mexico, and western Texas.

When Congress authorized a limited peacetime mobilization just prior to the nation’s entry into World War II, the Army initiated a major expansion program at William Beaumont General Hospital to increase its ability to handle the medical needs of the greatly expanding Army. During the World War II era, the hospital received new wards, instructional buildings, quarters, storehouses, repair shops, and recreational facilities. This new construction pushed the total number of buildings at the hospital to 174 and the number of available beds to nearly 6,000. During the war, the William Beaumont General Hospital trained approximately 16,000 medical technicians, including over a thousand
WAC recruits. The hospital became a specialty center for plastic surgery, ophthalmic surgery, neuropsychiatry, and deep radiation therapy. In the last year of the war alone, some 26,358 patients received medical treatment at the hospital.

William Beaumont General Hospital was one of only ten, of the Army’s sixty-three, general hospitals retained after World War II. Besides providing medical care to returning wounded soldiers during the conflicts in both Korea and Viet Nam, the hospital also provided general medicine and surgical services to veterans and personnel at Fort Bliss and other regional military installations. By the mid-1960s, the needs of the Army began to surpass the capabilities of the hospital. Consequently, the Army constructed a new, modern, twelve story facility to the west of the hospital. The new facility, known as the William Beaumont Army Medical Center, opened in 1972 and became the Southwest’s major regional Army medical center.

Building 7115 is a neuropsychiatric ward constructed at the William Beaumont General Hospital in 1942-43. At present, the building is designated as a Medical Administration Building. The original cost for construction was not available.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The building’s architecture is based on the standard WWII barrack design. In lieu of the standard wood frame for this building type, the ward is constructed with stuccoed hollow clay tile. Given this finish the Ward fits in well with the other buildings, having more of a Spanish Colonial style.

2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in good condition. Some of the interior has been covered with newer finishes (i.e. drop ceilings).

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The ward building is an offset I-shape with an overall length of 168’ and a width wing span of 102’. An enclosed concrete paved courtyard is on the back side of the building with a length of 116’ (in between wings), and a total depth of 79’, projecting 30’ past the wings of the building. It is a three story building with 12’-10” floor to floor heights. The floor area is approximately 32,683 square feet.
2. **Foundations**: The foundation is made up of concrete piers and beams with concrete floor slabs and footings.

3. **Walls**: Exterior walls are constructed of hollow clay tile with stucco. A beltcourse runs between the first and second floors.

4. **Structural System**: The structure is a 12” load bearing hollow clay tile wall system and two way concrete frame. Each floor consists of concrete slabs. The roof structure is a concrete slab and heavy wood framing. The roof structure also contains steel at the queen post beams.

5. **Porches, Exterior Stairs**: The front entrance on the southeast side of the building, includes a flight of concrete steps, cheeks, and landings, which lead from the circular drive to the entrance. The rear arms of the I-shaped building, in conjunction with a concrete wall, form an enclosed courtyard. Each arm includes woven wire mesh enclosed porches on both the second and third levels and a woven wire mesh enclosed stairway to the ground. Each arm includes a concrete accessibility ramp and steps.

6. **Chimneys**: None

7. **Openings**:
   a. **Doors**: The front entrance consists of a pair of aluminum and glass storefront doors set within a monumental concrete entry. A cloth, arched awning projects out from this entrance. Steel doors with single narrow lights and wire glass are located in the enclosed porches.
   
   b. **Windows**: Double hung metal windows with fifteen-over-fifteen-lights are used throughout the building. The central bay and returns of wings have double hung metal windows with six-over-six-lights flanking the fifteen-over-fifteen-lights double hung windows. Aluminum screens are used on many of the windows. Several windows overlooking the courtyard have been removed and replaced with louveres. Security bars have been removed from lower sashes. Many elements reflect the original Ward use: spiral balances, wire glass metal windows with fixed stops for upper sash, and divided lights too small to crawl through.

8. **Roof**:
   a. **Shape, Materials**: The roof is a hipped with exposed rafters. Its heavy wood construction includes 2 x 8 rafters, 2 x 6 rafter ties, 1” sheathing, and light gray composition shingles.
b. Dormers, Vents: The hipped roof includes several louvered dormers for attic ventilation. A vent stack runs up the backside of the building and projects past the roof line.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The three-story ward is an I-shaped building with an enclosed rear courtyard. The main entrance to the building is centered within a slightly projecting bay on the southeast facade. The window directly above the entry includes a small balconette. All of the floors contain office rooms off of the double loaded main corridor, and a variety of uses within each of the wings (i.e., library, classrooms, ward, additional offices). The vertical circulation is in the center of the main corridor, as well as at the end of each wing’s porch on the exterior of the building. An elevator is just off to the side of the central stairwell.

2. Stairways: The interior stairwell is concrete and finished with light gray green terrazzo with a dark green terrazzo border. The steps are approximately 5’ in width, with steel hand railings on both sides, and resilient tread covers.

3. Flooring: Terrazzo is used throughout the building. In some of the office spaces carpeting has been laid. The ground floor, in the southwest wing, has 4”x4” orange/brown ceramic tiles. The bathrooms and shower rooms have 1”x2” and 2”x2” random laid ceramic floor tiles.

4. Wall Finishes: Typically, painted plaster walls are used throughout the ward. However, if a wall was added it is of gypsum board. On the ground floor, much of the wall finish is of a 4” x 8” buff/tan glazed hollow clay tile with 2” brown tile strip and a chocolate colored base. Most of the bathrooms have the same glazed hollow clay tile as well. Newer showers also have cultured marble shower partitions.

5. Ceiling Finishes: Typically 2’ x 4’ acoustical drop ceiling panels have been installed. In the bathrooms the plaster finish is still exposed.

6. Openings:

a. Doors: The interior doors are typically hollow core wood with flush metal door frames set into plaster walls. Molded metal door frames are used elsewhere. Some doors have narrow single lights with wire glazing. Those in the corridors have closing and panic hardware.

b. Windows: The interior metal trim is painted.
7. **Decorative Features and Trim:** The most significant feature of the ward building is the nurses’ pass-through stations. The stations have a nurses' office outside of the wardroom with a three bay window projecting into the ward room. A metal flap at the lower edge of the window was used for passing medication through to the patients. Another feature used throughout the building is the glazed hollow clay tile wall finish and terrazzo floor.

8. **Hardware:** Many of the original doors and windows maintain their original hardware of handles, bolts, latches, and kickplates.

9. **Mechanical Equipment:**
   a. **Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning:** The heating, ventilating, and air conditioning duct work is positioned above the drop ceiling. Metal vents are placed within the drop ceiling grid.
   b. **Lighting:** Lay-in fluorescent light fixtures within the drop ceiling are typically used throughout the building. Some rooms contain surface-mounted fluorescent lights. Emergency lights are located throughout the building corridors, stairwells, and wards.
   c. **Plumbing Fixtures:** Many of the bathroom plumbing fixtures and components still remain.

10. **Original Furnishings:** None

**D. Site:**

1. **General Setting and Orientation:** The Neuropsychiatric Ward has been incorporated into the site of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas (Figure 1). The front of the building faces southeast toward a circle drive/parking lot. The northeast side wing facade faces Beaumont Street.

2. **Historic Landscape Design:** The historic landscape of William Beaumont General Hospital was renowned for its beautiful array of shade trees, shrubs, lush lawns and flower gardens. Between the grounds inception in 1920-1921 and the gradual reduction of maintained acreage in the 1950s, the landscape was referred to as the “paradise in the desert.” Gardner William Reeves was most likely in charge of any planting plan or landscape design that may have governed the layout of the grounds. Today, only scattered residual vegetation and landscape features remain, and most of these have been installed since the period of significance. Although there are several trees growing along the facade of Building 7115, these have been planted since the period of significance, and it is unknown
Figure 1: Building Location Map
whether their appearance resembles the historic setting. The remaining landscape is composed of lawn and paved surfaces.

3. Outbuildings: None

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

A. Architectural Drawings: The large format archival architectural drawings were found on file at the Offices of the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics and the Directorate of Environment, Historic Preservation Team, Fort Bliss, Texas. Drawing numbers for the original construction drawings, dated May 1941, are drawing numbers 6289-867, -868, -869, -870, -874, -875, -877, -878, -880, 895-903, 905-908. These include floor plans and details. Repair and renovation drawings, dated June 1951, are drawing numbers 40-01-01 (1, 2, and 3 of 3). These include floor plans, schedules, and details.


C. Interviews: None

D. Bibliography:

Fort Bliss Real Property Management Office - Office of the Quartermaster General Records

Fort Bliss IFSM Data August 1994

Fort Bliss Facility List

Map of Post Area - William Beaumont General Hospital, July 1945

Texas Historic Sites Inventory Form - Texas Historic Commission, July 7, 1989

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None

F. Supplemental Material: None
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The project was sponsored by the Office of the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics, Fort Bliss, Texas. Documentation was coordinated through Ms. Vicki Hamilton, Architect, Office of the Directorate of Environment, Historic Preservation Team, Fort Bliss, Texas. The project was completed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers Construction Engineering Research Laboratories (USACERL). The project was completed at the USACERL Cultural Resources Research Center. Ms. Sheila Ellsworth served as project architect. The project researchers were Mr. Patrick Nowlan, Dr. Susan Enscore, and Ms. Amy Lamb. Mr. Martin Stupich produced the large format photographs included in the report.