

VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, CONTINUED  
TREATMENT BUILDING NO. 11  
4800 Memorial Drive  
Waco  
McLennan County  
Texas

HABS TX-3488-A  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
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

VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER,  
CONTINUED TREATMENT BUILDING 11

HABS NO. TX-3488-A

Location: 4800 Memorial Drive, Building 11, East side of West Doris Miller Circle in Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), VAMC is 1.4 miles west of 1-35 on New Road, Waco, McLennan County, Texas.

Date of Construction: Completed 1937.

Present Owner/  
Occupant: United States Government, Veterans Affairs

Present Use: Mental health treatment facility that serves both in-patients and out-patients and houses the prosthetics administration.

Significance: Architecturally, Building 11 is an example of a contributing structure in an intact complex of Mediterranean Revival-style institutional-buildings. The complex was built using standardized drawings, the "Architectural Set," of the Veterans Administration (VA) and remains the best example of VA-designed buildings in Texas. Culturally, the VAMC complex represents the country's continuing commitment to the care of disabled veterans. Building 11 was part of the first construction phase of one of the largest mental health facilities in the country. It is also one of the few facilities managed by Veterans Affairs that is devoted to the treatment of mental health.

Historian: Kathleen Fuller Ellinger, The Williams Company, AIA,  
February 1998

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: completed 1937.
2. Architect: VA architects in Washington, DC. The drawings are signed by R. E. Gerard, Acting Sub-Division Chief. Other names on the drawings range from the Administrator's signature to the draftsman's initials.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. government 1937-present.
4. Original and subsequent occupants: The building has been used for continued treatment of both in-patients and out-patients. The basement houses the prosthetics administration. The building has been continuously occupied except during periods of major construction and renovation projects.
5. Builder Contractor: Henry B. Ryan Construction Company of Chicago was responsible for the entire first phase of the project.
6. Original plans and construction: The original drawings were dated August 21, 1935. The available As Built drawings dated November 2, 1959, were signed by R. E. Gerard, Acting Sub-Division Chief, the VA Administrator, Assistant Administrator, Director of Construction, and the Chief of the Technical Division. The floor plans were dated with several revisions in the 1950s but the exterior still retains most of the original character.
7. Alterations and additions: The original bars on the basement windows and the bottom half of the upper windows were removed because they gave the impression of incarceration. Originally, the first and second floors of the western wings had screened porches. Drawings dated January 19, 1983, called for brick infill of the original arched, screened windows, and installation of the aluminum-framed windows visible today. The porches were converted to air-conditioned dayrooms for the patients in the wards. Other alterations performed in the mid-1980s during a modernization movement included the following:
  - Converting the first floor southern porch to a mechanical room and boarding up the screened, arched windows
  - Replacing all of the wood windows with rectangular, aluminum-framed windows, filling in the arch and painting it white
  - Replacing the door with an aluminum storefront system

B. Historical Context:

The VAMC was built in the spirit of caring for veterans and standardizing complexes while addressing the local history and building traditions. After World War I, patriotism was high and many veterans needed physical and mental healthcare. In 1921, President Warren G. Harding created the Veterans Bureau to care for the WWI veterans. The bureau was enlarged, reorganized, and renamed

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the Veterans Administration. Following the design philosophy of military base and post office architecture, the VA design philosophy was based on nationwide uniformity with local diversity. The standard plans created were known as the "Architectural Set". While maintaining standard interiors and massing of the buildings, various architectural elements were applied to the exteriors of the standard set to harmonize with regional characteristics. For example, Mediterranean or Spanish Revival styles were considered appropriate for California, Florida, and Texas, while Georgian or Colonial Revival styles were used in Virginia. The VAMC in Waco appears to be the only VA facility built in the Mediterranean Revival-style.

Waco, Texas, was selected as the site of one of the VA facilities based on location, setting, and politics. The central location in relation to Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin was a big selling point. It was also booming with the cotton trade, the railroad industry, and educational institutions, such as Baylor University. The rural setting of an available 508-acre tract south of the city was important for the size of the campus that was planned and the psychological philosophy, which emphasized occupational therapy. The final selection of the site was supported by the congressional representatives in the area: U.S. Senator Tom Connally (1877-1963) and Representative Oliver Harlan Cross (1868-1960) of Waco. Representative Cross's name was applied to the rail spur of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad to the site.

The VA facility was approved by congress in January 1930. The acreage was acquired by the federal government from Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Stewart for \$79,991. Construction began in April 1931, with the first phase including the Main Building (Building 1), the Administration Building at the complex entrance (Building 2), the kitchen/dining hall (Building 4) that headed the mall created by the H-plan structures (Buildings 9, 10, and 11), and a newer H-plan design (Building 8). The first phase also included various buildings in which patients participated in agricultural activities that served as occupational therapy for the patients as well as a benefit to the hospital operation.

The H-plan structures used some of the "Architectural Set." This is evident in the specific construction documents because they reference detail numbers on drawings for other buildings. Building 7 and Building 11 were most similar in plan and construction. Building 7 was finished in 1939. The campus was designed with the patients' privacy and security in mind. The H-plan structures, including Building 11, have the public access facing the street and the patients' entry faces the mall/interior yard. Building 11's public access faces west and the patient access faces east.

Building 11 has served as a continued treatment facility that included resident patients, out-patients, and various administrative offices. It has evolved with the changing mental health treatment philosophy and building technology. In 1937, Building 11 was constructed with patient wards ranging from three to twenty-seven beds. As the new treatment philosophy suggested more patient privacy, the larger wards were broken into one- and two-bed rooms. The original bars on the windows were removed because of the jail-like appearance. It was also designed without air-conditioning. One of the original screened porches was enclosed to hold a mechanical room, and the others were enclosed to enlarge the patient dayrooms to allow for television viewing areas and more interior recreation space.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is an example of the Mediterranean Revival-style.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions of west elevation: 186'-3" L x 43'-0" T. The building is two stories with a half basement. The five-bay side faces West Doris Miller Circle and features a double stair that rises to the decorative entry.
2. Foundation: The foundation is a concrete footing system.
3. Walls: Above grade the foundation walls are faced with cast stone to the bottom of the window sills. Above this base, the walls are faced with red brick. A thin horizontal band of stone wraps the building at the center of the basement windows. A terra cotta ledger divides the building at the first floor.
4. Structural system: Reinforced concrete frame with hollow building tile infill.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The entries on the west side are centered on the main spine of the building. The basement entry is a roman arched opening with a wrought iron gate. The main entry is a terra cotta and brick arched opening. It is flanked by square and round terra cotta pilasters with composite capitals. The roman arch is filled with herringbone brick pattern. Terra cotta brackets line the arch.
  - b. Windows and shutters: All existing windows are rectangular aluminum-framed single-hung windows. The second floor windows were originally arch top double-hung windows, and the rest of the arched masonry opening was infilled and painted white. All sills are terra cotta. Terra cotta brackets exist below sills at the entry.
6. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The main spine of the building has a gable roof and the two wings terminate with a hip. The roofing consists of mission, or "Spanish," tiles.

- b. Cornice, eaves: The building has open eaves and accents the rafter tails painted white on the majority of the side. The entry has a gable end with a terra cotta cornice that includes cable molding and dentils with a corbelled, scalloped brick relief below.
  - c. Dormers, cupolas, and towers: The center of the main spine projects above the spine and has a dormer above the entry.
- C. Description of Interior:
- Not applicable, Exterior only

### Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: The extant drawings of the VAMC Building 11 are dated August 21, 1935, and signed by R. E. Gerard. The floor plans have revision dates in the 1950s. The drawings are housed at the VAMC-Waco Architect's office. At the time of this report, the office was in VAMC-Waco, Building 2, Room #2B-103.
- B. Early Views: Photographs are housed at the VAMC -Waco Architect's office. At the time of this report, the office was in VAMC-Waco, Building 2, Room #2B-103. These early views include: two aerial photographs of the entire site (one ca. 1940 and the other ca. 1950); one photograph of the west side of Building 11, on perspective (mid-1960s); and one photograph of the public side of Building 7 (ca. 1940).
- C. Interviews: Interviews conducted include the VAMC Architect at the time of the report, Paul McComb, and the Facility Engineer, Paul Batterton, on February 18, 1998.
- D. Bibliography:

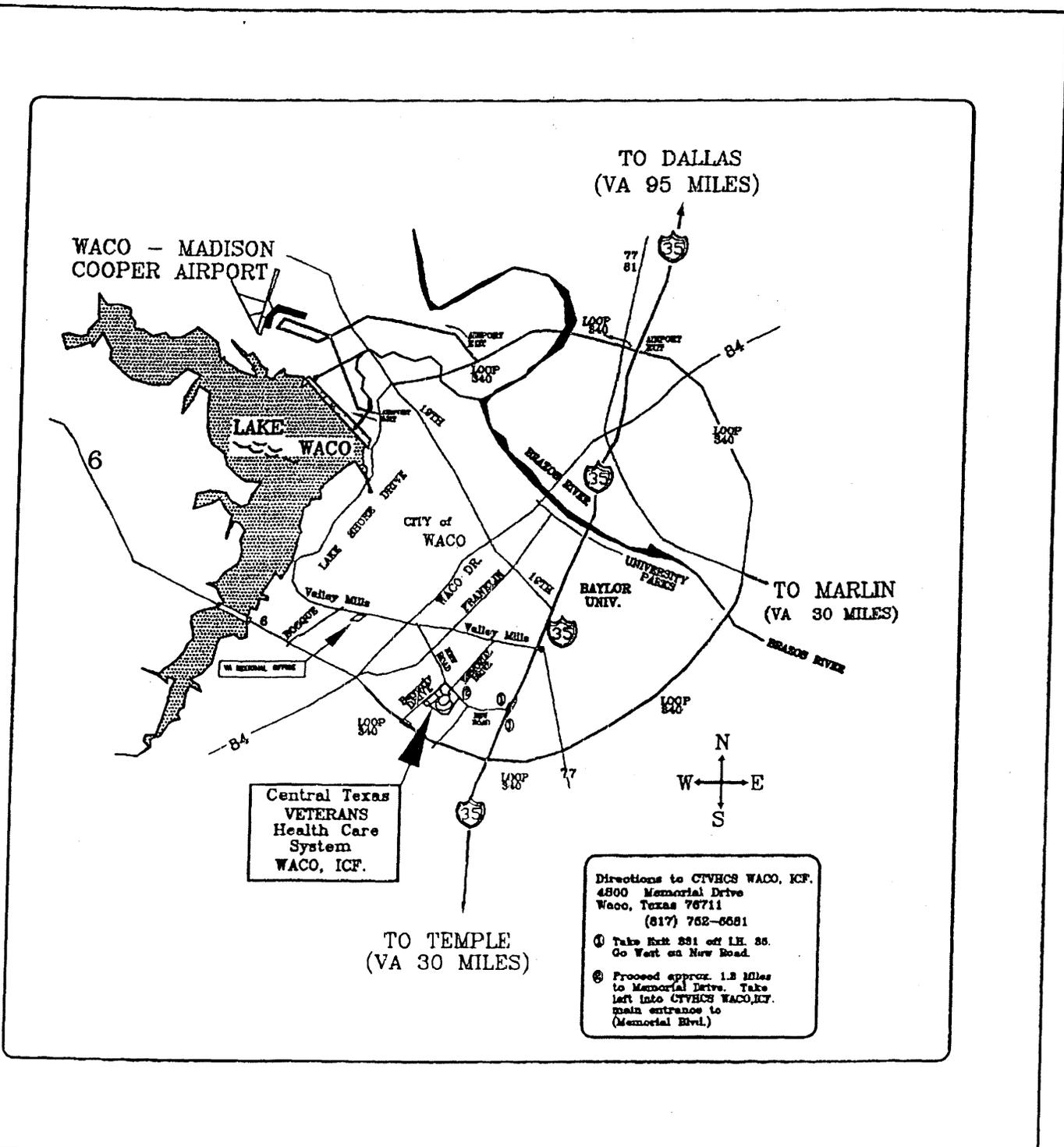
Roy Eugene Graham, AIA and Associates in assoc. with Michael C. Quinn. Historic Preservation Plan for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center--Waco Texas. May 1994. Copies are available through the VAMC - Waco Architect's office. At the time of this report, the office was in VAMC Building 2 Room #2B-103.
- E. Likely sources not yet investigated:
  - a. *The Federal Architect* (October 1944) was devoted to veterans' hospitals.
  - b. The National Register Nomination for the VAMC campus to be designated as a historic district.
- F. Supplemental Material:

Drawings of floor plans, elevations, and details available at the VAMC-Waco Architect's office. At the time of this report, the office was in VAMC Building 2 Room #2B-103.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The purpose for conducting this Level 2 HABS documentation relates to the planned modifications to Building 11, which will expand the building size and move the west side into the U-shaped courtyard. Garza/Bomberger & Associates of San Antonio are the project architects and have prepared renovation plans and specifications. Contractor bidding is complete and the construction phase will commence in 1998.

This report was prepared by Kathleen Fuller Ellinger, associate architect with The Williams Company, AIA, in the spring of 1998. The HABS documentation was completed by The Williams Company, AIA in Austin, Texas, Kim A. Williams, AIA, principal, as consultant to Garza/Bomberger & Associates in San Antonio, Texas, Vaughn Bomberger, principal. The Williams Company, AIA, can be contacted at P.O. Box 27294, Austin, Texas 78755 or telephone 512/346-8546. Large-format photographs were contributed by Barry Hodson of Austin, Texas, a self-employed photographer.



WACO - MADISON  
COOPER AIRPORT

TO DALLAS  
(VA 95 MILES)

Central Texas  
VETERANS  
Health Care  
System  
WACO, ICF.

Directions to CTVHCS WACO, ICF.  
4800 Memorial Drive  
Waco, Texas 76711  
(817) 762-6681  
① Take Exit 231 off I.H. 35.  
Go West on New Road.  
② Proceed approx. 1.3 Miles  
to Memorial Drive. Take  
left into CTVHCS WACO, ICF.  
main entrance to  
(Memorial Blvd.)

TO TEMPLE  
(VA 30 MILES)

TO MARLIN  
(VA 30 MILES)

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FACILITY PLOT PLAN

