

St. Elizabeth's Hospital, "L" Building (#64)  
2700 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E.  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-349 F

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
221F -

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

ADDENDUM TO:  
ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, L BUILDING  
(Building No. 64)  
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-F  
*HABS DC, WASH, 221F-*

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

ADDENDUM TO:  
ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, L BUILDING  
(Building No. 64)  
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast / Birch Street,  
Southeast  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS DC-349-F  
*HABS DC, WASH, 221F-*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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

### ST. ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL, L BUILDING (BUILDING 64)

ADDENDUM TO  
HABS No. DC-349-F

**Location:** Birch Street, Southeast, Washington, District of Columbia, on the West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital (2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Southeast)

The building is located at latitude: 38.851805, longitude: -76.998563. This point was obtained on February 10, 2017, using Google Earth (WGS84). There are no restrictions on its release to the public.

**Present Owner:** General Services Administration, United States Government

**Present Use:** Vacant (rehabilitation of St. Elizabeths West Campus in progress)

**Significance:** The L Building (Building 64) is significant for its association with the treatment of mental illness on the St. Elizabeths Campus. As one of the new patient residential and treatment buildings constructed on the campus in the twentieth century, the L Building formed an integral part of the function and use of the campus for the treatment of mental illness and related disabilities. The building, along with the other fifteen buildings constructed at that time, was designed with a cottage plan. The plan was developed to promote a home-like atmosphere with patients and live-in staff, which would then translate into a supportive and nurturing environment.

The L Building is also significant for its architectural design. Designed by the noted architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, the L Building together with the other buildings of the lettered group is a notable example of the firm's designs for institutional campuses. Constructed in the early 1900s, the L Building is a part of the campus plan as it developed during the Richardson-era expansion. The lettered building group is united by the campus layout as well as the common use of the Renaissance Revival style, demonstrating the influence of the Palladian villas. The buildings feature brick masonry, large window openings with divided lights, and overhanging roofs covered with clay tile. The Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge buildings were also unique in that they incorporated piazzas into the structure rather than constructing attached wood-framed porches. The expansive piazzas were partially enclosed, and the area of the piazzas exceeded that of the large interior sitting rooms to which they were attached. While many of the buildings have similar plans and architectural characteristics, each was customized to match the unique needs of the user group for which it was designed.

**Historians:** Mike Ford, Tim Penich, Deborah Slaton, and Kenneth Itle, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

## PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1903 (completed)
2. Architect: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge. The services of Boston-based firm Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge were retained on February 5, 1901, for the design of the fifteen buildings for which appropriations had been made. The eleven patient pavilions, which included the L Building, were the first to be designed.

Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge was the successor firm organized by the partners of Henry Hobson Richardson after his death in 1886. Initially, the partners continued to design buildings in the Richardsonian Romanesque style popularized by Richardson for many major institutional and civic buildings. The Richardsonian Romanesque style was characterized by rusticated polychromatic masonry construction with heavy round arches, short but substantial columns, and an overall emphasis on the horizontal. By the early 1900s the firm had begun designing buildings in a more eclectic mix of historic styles. The most prominent style used by the firm at this time was the Renaissance Revival. The Renaissance Revival was typified by characteristics of the Renaissance style such as symmetrical facades, the use of the classical orders, and low-pitched or flat roofs with large overhanging eaves, often with bracketed cornices.

Throughout the 1890s and 1900s, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge completed numerous major building projects including the Chicago Public Library, the Art Institute of Chicago, North Station and South Station in Boston, and numerous other public buildings. At the same time, the firm designed several notable university buildings including structures on the campuses of University of Chicago; Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the University of Nebraska in Lincoln; and Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Two of the most important university commissions received by the firm during this period were for the design of a new campus for the Harvard Medical School in 1906 and to design, with Frederick Law Olmsted, the campus of the new Stanford University in 1888. The design for the Harvard Medical School called for five Renaissance Revival instructional buildings to be laid out in a U-shape around an open green space, similar to the layout seen in Thomas Jefferson's "academical village" at the University of Virginia. The plan for Stanford University also included a series of buildings situated around a large open space. However, at Stanford, the buildings were designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style with some Byzantine influence as well.

In addition to its work at St. Elizabeths during the 1900s, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge designed several other buildings for psychiatric hospital campuses. The firm designed buildings at the Medfield State Hospital in Medfield, Massachusetts, in the early 1900s, as well as the administration building at McLean Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, in 1894. George Shepley died in 1903, shortly after the firm's work at St. Elizabeths was completed.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: St. Elizabeths Hospital (then the Government Hospital for the Insane) was placed under the control of the Department of the Interior by an act of Congress on March 3, 1855. Thus, when L Building was constructed in 1903, the hospital was under the control of the Department of the Interior and remained so until 1940, when St. Elizabeths was transferred to the Federal Security Agency. The Federal Security Agency was a new government agency that oversaw federal activities in the fields of health, education, and

social insurance. In 1953, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was created. At that time several of the functions of the Federal Security Agency, including control of St. Elizabeths Hospital, were transferred to the new department.<sup>1</sup> In 1968, St. Elizabeths was transferred to the National Institute of Mental Health, an agency within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Institute sought to demonstrate how a large mental hospital could be converted into a smaller, more modern facility for training, service, and research.<sup>2</sup> In 1979, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare became the Department of Health and Human Services with the creation of the Department of Education. The Department of Health and Human Services retained control of the St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus until 2004, when the property was transferred to the General Services Administration.<sup>3</sup> The campus facilities were stabilized and the buildings were mothballed by 2005.<sup>4</sup>

Upon its completion in 1903, L Building housed sixty white female patients of the “better class.”

The L Building continued to house patients. By 1979, it housed the Mental Health Program for the Deaf.<sup>5</sup>

The Department of Health and Human Services retained control of the St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus until 2004 when the property was transferred to the General Services Administration.<sup>6</sup> The campus facilities were stabilized and the buildings were mothballed by 2005.<sup>7</sup> The L Building, along with most of the west campus, is currently vacant and has been mothballed.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Horton and Hemenway. The contracting firm of Horton and Hemenway of Rhode Island was awarded the initial construction contract.<sup>8</sup> Construction began with the digging of the foundation in early 1902, with the help of patient labor.

The Lettered buildings, including L building, were constructed simultaneously and featured similar interior finishes and exterior detailing including a Conosera clay tile roof manufactured by the Celadon Terra Cotta Company.<sup>9</sup>

5. Original plans and construction: The L Building was constructed as a T-shaped plan with brick foundation and was situated on the west side of the campus to the north of the Toner Building (no

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<sup>1</sup> *Federal Register*, accessed at <http://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/saint-elizabeth-s-hospital>, January 5, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> 1970 *Annual Report*.

<sup>3</sup> *St. Elizabeths West Campus: Cultural Landscape Report*, Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, and Robinson & Associates, Inc., prepared for the General Services Administration, April 2009, V.2.

<sup>4</sup> *St. Elizabeths West Campus: Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines*, Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates, Inc., Architectural and Historical Research, prepared for the General Services Administration, November 10, 2008, 18. A photograph of the building taken in 2005 by FMG Architects shows the building in a stabilized and protected state.

<sup>5</sup> Comparison of 1945 Building Survey data and building signage on 1979 HABS photo documentation. It is unknown exactly when the change of function occurred but it is likely to have happened in the late 1970s given the changes being made on the west campus.

<sup>6</sup> *Cultural Landscape Report*. V.2.

<sup>7</sup> *St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines*. 18. A photograph of the building taken in 2005 by FMG Architects shows the building in a stabilized and protected state.

<sup>8</sup> *Investigation of St. Elizabeths Hospital: Letter from the Comptroller General of the United States*, 68; 1901 *Annual Report*, 14–15.

<sup>9</sup> 1901 *Specifications for the eleven patient pavilions*.

longer extant). The design of the structure was influenced by Palladian villas and detailing included quoins, roundels, arched window openings, and colonnaded porticos. The first floor consisted of arched window and door opening with wood-framed windows, multi-light fanlight, and expressed corbelled brick and sandstone voussoirs. Second floor window openings were rectangular and had wood-framed windows with transoms and a brick flat arch with sandstone keystone. The building was surmounted by a wide overhanging clay tile hip roof with bracketed cornice. Brick chimneys extended from the north and south ends of the building, with a louvered octagonal cupola capped by a finial at the roof ridge.<sup>10</sup> The building had brick piazzas that extended from the north and south elevations. The projecting piazzas had brick foundations, and a brick arcade with a decorative wood balustrade supporting an entablature and bracketed roof. The piazzas had clay tile hip roofs and were attached to open terraces that extended along the west elevation of the building.

The original structural drawings indicate that the first, second, and attic floors were to be reinforced concrete with steel beams, while the roof was to be wood-framed.

The interior space was divided into activity and rest spaces, with the living spaces on the first floor and dormitory and bedroom spaces on the second floor. Visitors entered through a small vestibule into open sitting rooms. Piazzas and terraces were directly accessed from the sitting room through a pair of French doors. Beyond the sitting room was a central hall, which provided access to the service spaces and terminated in the communal dining hall. Use of the main cast iron staircase was restricted by a steel-framed heavy-gauge wire mesh enclosure separating the stairs from the hallway. There were two patient dormitory wards on the second floor, located in the north and west wings of the building. Individual patient bedrooms were situated along a double-loaded corridor in the south wing. The basement consisted of mechanical equipment and ductwork associated with the indirect radiant heating system. The building was constructed at a cost of \$58,241.<sup>11</sup>

6. Alterations and additions: After completion and occupation of the building, focus was on the routine maintenance of the structure and improving building conditions. In 1915, the heating system in the L Building was replaced. The original indirect radiant heating system consisted of a heated fan coil located in the basement, which provided conditioned air for the building. New direct radiation heating units were installed throughout the building, as the transition from indirect to direct heating was initiated throughout most of the lettered buildings.<sup>12</sup>

Starting in 1935, metal grilles were installed in all of the lettered building to secure the partially enclosed piazzas. Metal wire screens, erected to help monitor patient access from the building, were coated with red lead primer and painted, and mounted to the brick arcade. These screens enclosed the entire open space of each bay.<sup>13</sup> The project started with the J, K, Q, N, and I Buildings.<sup>14</sup> In 1939, grilles were installed in the L Building. At the same time, grilles were placed on the windows of the dining room. The installation of the grilles followed the removal

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<sup>10</sup> Exterior description generated from 1901 construction documents prepared by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge Architects (DC0107SE-120 to DC0129SE-130), 1901 specifications for the lettered building group, and 1905 archival photographs.

<sup>11</sup> *Investigation of St. Elizabeths Hospital: Letter from the Comptroller General of the United States*, 68

<sup>12</sup> 1915 *Annual Report*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

and replacement of the decorative wood balustrades on the piazzas with brick half walls with concrete coping in 1938.<sup>15</sup>

In 1951, plans were made for the installation of exterior fire stairs on all of the lettered buildings. The metal fire escapes were enclosed in metal-framed wire mesh screens. On the L Building, the fire stair was mounted to the west elevation of the west wing and extended to the ground. An exterior landing was created at the second floor level. The metal landing was accessed from the west wing through a window opening that had been extended and converted into door.<sup>16</sup> Further renovations were made in 1957; however, the extent of the improvements cannot be determined from available archival information.<sup>17</sup>

In 1960, repairs were outlined for the roofs of the piazzas on the J, K, L, and M Buildings. The improvement consisted of the construction of new copper flashing and gutters; replacement of deteriorated wood sheathing, fascia, and structural framing; and the installation of a new clay tile roof.<sup>18</sup> The work was completed by 1962.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1960s, an extensive effort was made at St. Elizabeths Hospital to modernize mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems in the aging west campus buildings. The effort was initiated in response to the series of conflagrations that had plagued the campus for two decades. On April 20, 1961, a fire in the Larch ward of Pine (Building 6) resulted in a patient fatality. The following day, a fire erupted in the K Building that caused extensive damage to the structure and surrounding buildings.<sup>20</sup> Funds were quickly directed by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare toward creating a campus wide plan to improve fire suppression plans, plumbing facilities, heating units, and electrical systems.

In 1963, an \$865,000 appropriation was made for the installation of sprinkler systems in non-fire-resistant buildings. The suppression system consisted of surface-mounted sprinklers installed in every room. That same year, a study of the existing plumbing and electrical systems was initiated. The study led to the appropriation of funds for a multi-million dollar facilities modernization project. Plans for building alterations were generated between 1963 and 1965 and included the replacement of electrical wiring and outlets, upgrades to lavatory and plumbing systems, and the installation of fluorescent light fixtures. The new piping and conduit were installed over finish materials and exposed to view. Construction began in 1966 and continued through 1970.<sup>21</sup> Plans were generated for the installation of the sprinkler system in 1964.<sup>22</sup> Electrical upgrades were outlined in 1965 construction documents.

Other maintenance projects on the L Building in the 1960s included the replacement of historic roofing and floor finishes. In 1963, plans were made for the replacement of the clay tile roof on

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<sup>15</sup> 1938 *Annual Report*.

<sup>16</sup> 1951 construction documents.

<sup>17</sup> 1957 *Annual Report*.

<sup>18</sup> 1960 *Annual Report*.

<sup>19</sup> 1962 *Annual Report*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Annual Reports* from 1961–1968, and 1970.

<sup>22</sup> 1964 construction documents.

the L Building.<sup>23</sup> Four years later in 1967, new resilient flooring was installed over the existing wood substrate.<sup>24</sup>

In 1975, plans were made for the renovation and remodeling of patient-occupied buildings on the west campus. However, a 1968 Memorandum of Agreement stipulated that the renovated buildings would be documented in accordance with Historic American Building Survey (HABS) standards, significant architectural elements removed during the renovation would be stored and archived, and a feasibility study would be conducted for continued use of the campus.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the eleven lettered buildings that functioned as patient wards—the B, C, J, K, L, M, Q, I, N, P, and R Buildings—were documented to HABS standards.

The original wood-framed door with sidelights and fanlight located at the main entrance on the west elevation was removed and a new storefront window with sidelights and glass door was installed. The historic entry appears in 1908 archival photographs but was replaced prior to 1979. Based on similar renovation projects documented for other lettered buildings, it is assumed that the alteration was completed in 1977.<sup>26</sup>

In 1978, a supplemental appropriation of \$52.2 million was approved for the renovation and modification of the hospital. Improvements and upgrades were made to address fire and safety deficiencies, electrical systems, infrastructure improvements, and issues of accessibility. On the west campus, renovations were focused on compliance with accessibility laws and fire code. In 1979, plans were outlined to correct fire safety and accessibility deficiencies. A concrete accessibility ramp was installed on the east elevation of the north wing and alterations were planned for the first floor restrooms. In addition, the metal screens enclosing the interior staircase were removed and upgrades were made to improve fire safety, including enclosing the interior staircase with new partition walls on the first and second floors of the building. A metal screened fire stair was constructed at the intersection of the north and west wings of the building. The associated window opening was converted to a door.<sup>27</sup> The fire stair was similar in plan and materials to the existing fire stair constructed in 1952 along the west wing.

Between 1965 and 1979, partition walls were erected at the west side of the north and south lounges on the first floor, creating offices. Partition walls were also constructed in the ward in the south wing at the second floor, creating more office space.<sup>28</sup>

A 1980 renovation project outlined improvements to the building that included the repair of flooring, windows and doors. Improvements to the plumbing system were also made at this time.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 1963 construction documents.

<sup>24</sup> 1967 construction documents.

<sup>25</sup> 1975 *Annual Report*.

<sup>26</sup> Comparison of 1908 archival photograph and the 1979 HABS photography. Construction documents for the E Building indicate that similar projects were completed on those buildings in 1977.

<sup>27</sup> 1979 construction documents.

<sup>28</sup> These partition walls were constructed sometime between 1965 and 1979 based on construction documents from those years. It is likely the changes were made around 1977 based on the changes in function occurring on the west campus at that time.

<sup>29</sup> 1980 construction documents.

## B. Historical context

A context history for the entire St. Elizabeths West Campus (HABS No. DC-349), as well as a history of the Lettered buildings (HABS No. DC-349-BY), is being developed under separate cover as part of this HABS documentation project.

In 1852, St. Elizabeths Hospital was established in large part through the efforts of Dorothea Lynde Dix, who led a national crusade for the ethical and humane treatment of the mentally ill. Under the direction of Superintendent Charles Nichols, the hospital endeavored to become a curative treatment center for the mentally ill of Washington, D.C., and the United States Army and Navy. Patients were grouped into wards by their perceived mental condition and emphasis was placed on creating a peaceful, healthy, and serene family environment in which to rehabilitate. As the hospital expanded, new construction was focused on extending the existing Center Building complex.

In 1877, William Godding became superintendent of St. Elizabeths Hospital and adopted the principles of his predecessor. Through the moral treatment of patients, it was believed that mental illness could be cured. Godding encouraged the construction of small free-standing cottage buildings to promote a healthy environment and facilitate the orderly segregation of growing patient groups.

The L Building was part of an expansive building campaign initiated by Alonzo Richardson during his tenure as superintendent. When Richardson took office in 1899, St. Elizabeths Hospital was struggling to address issues of overcrowding, an aging building stock, and insufficient infrastructure that were affecting the health and well-being of the patients. Overcrowding had been a point of contention throughout Godding's superintendency and attempts had been made, through the construction of detached building groups such as the Dix buildings (1893) and Allison buildings (1899), to alleviate the situation. However, the aging population of Civil War veterans and their subsequent mental decline exacerbated the challenge of overcrowding.<sup>30</sup>

The Center Building housed the superintendent and staff and was the hub of administrative activity; however, parts of the building were more than forty years old, showing signs of age, and in many ways had proved inadequate in providing a healthy and peaceful patient environment. Additionally, the institutional architecture and divided plan of the Center Building complex did not embody the cottage-plan approach to treating mental illness adopted by St. Elizabeths Hospital under Superintendent Godding's tenure. A new administrative building was required to meet the needs of the growing patient population and reflect the current methods of treatment.

The lack of adequate infrastructure was directly affecting the health of patients and staff. The tunnel and sewer systems were deteriorating and inadequate to meet the needs of the growing campus. In 1900, a 50' portion of the tunnel system, extending from the Boiler House/Ice Plant (Building 52) under the laundry (now the Construction Shops, Building 49), caved in and compromised the structural integrity of the laundry building. Considerable work was required to prevent the building's collapse.<sup>31</sup> By October 1900, a new sewer line was completed that improved discharge of waste to the Anacostia River.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the newly constructed Boiler

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<sup>30</sup> *Cultural Landscape Report.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.3.

House/Ice Plant was generating steam heat and electrical power for the campus at a rate beyond its design capacity.

In 1899, Superintendent Richardson addressed Congress regarding his concerns about conditions at St. Elizabeths Hospital and outlined a plan for an extensive building campaign that would provide adequate space for patients and staff and improve the hospital's infrastructure. Congress responded by approving the Sundry Civilians appropriations acts, which allocated \$1,500,000 for the expansion of the Government Hospital for the Insane to house 1,000 patients and 200 employees through the construction of fifteen new buildings.<sup>33</sup> Funds were provided for eleven patient ward pavilions, of which the L Building is one; a new administration building; and a nurses' home—this group of buildings is collectively referred to as the “lettered” buildings due to their alphabetical monograms. In addition, a power house and kitchen building were included in the initial appropriations for the Richardson-era expansion.<sup>34</sup>

The buildings were designed as cottages. The cottage plan had been used at St. Elizabeth Hospital since 1878, beginning with the construction of Atkins Hall. The plan was developed to promote a home-like atmosphere with patients and live-in staff, which would then translate into a supportive and nurturing environment. The Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge design was unique in that it incorporated piazzas into the structure rather than constructing attached wood-framed porches. The expansive piazzas were partially enclosed, and the area of the piazzas exceeded that of the large interior sitting rooms to which they were attached. The piazzas, porticos, and terraces were used to help identify interior functions and assign hierarchy among the lettered buildings. Buildings that functioned as patient ward facilities—the L, J (Building 60), K (Building 66), M (Building 72), I (Building 95, east campus), N (Building 94, east campus), P (Building 100, east campus), and R (Building 89, east campus) Buildings—were denoted by one-story piazzas that flanked the building and a small entrance portico.

To support his expansion efforts for the campus, Superintendent Richardson invited landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to visit the site and assist in site planning. Olmsted provided written recommendations to help guide the planning of the campus expansion. The existing site plan was generally organized on an axis/cross-axis in relation to the Center Building. This spatial layout minimized the required infrastructure and maximized the surrounding usable farmland. Olmsted felt the site was cluttered and favored a more picturesque landscape in which the buildings were organized by function, took advantage of their natural setting, and were connected by meandering roads and paths.<sup>35</sup> As designed by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, the site plan for the expansion included a formal arrangement of buildings, each placed in a campus-like setting around a central green space. The open spaces included Olmsted-inspired curvilinear roadways and walking paths. Most of the buildings were aligned on a north-south axis, although the Q Building (Building 68) and Power House (Building 56/57) followed a linear axis that responded to the topography of the site.

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<sup>33</sup> Sixty-ninth Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, *Investigation of St. Elizabeths Hospital: Letter from the Comptroller General of the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, July 1, 1926), 68.

<sup>34</sup> *Hearings before the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives on House Resolution 12 to Investigation the Government Hospital for the Insane in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911),7.

<sup>35</sup> *Cultural Landscape Report*. IV. 3– IV.4.

## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The L Building is one of eleven patient ward pavilions, seven on the west campus and four on the east campus, constructed as part of the Richardson expansion. The eleven patient ward pavilions were designed as cottages and were multi-story brick structures on brick foundations, designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. As cottages, the buildings incorporated an open patient dormitory space, communal dining and sitting rooms, and wide piazzas that extended the interior space. The patient wards, along with A Building and Q Building, were constructed as part of the expansion plan. The thirteen lettered buildings were constructed simultaneously and features similar architectural detailing and materials including corbelled brick and buff Ohio sandstone, clay tile roofs, yellow pine flooring, Portland cement and lime plaster walls with white lead linseed oil paint, cast iron staircases, wrought iron balconies, and 4" terra cotta tile partition walls.<sup>36</sup>

The L Building is a two-story structure with a T-shaped footprint oriented on an east–west axis with the main entrance on the east. Projecting from the north and south wings are one-story semicircular covered piazzas. The main portion of the building has cross hip roofs clad with red clay tile. Rising from the intersection of their ridgelines is an octagonal, louvered cupola, whose roof is also clad with clay tile. The one-story piazzas have low-slope conical roofs clad with built-up bituminous membranes which may have originally been designed as walkable surfaces.

Each of the roofs feature projecting eaves with painted tongue-and-groove decking that is supported by carved wood modillions. Except for the cupola, all the eaves have copper half-round rain gutters that are served by copper downspout leaders.

Exterior character-defining features of L Building include the exterior brick and stone masonry; masonry detailing such as watertables, string course, corner quoins, and window surrounds; copper gutters and downspouts, ornamental iron balconies, wood-framed windows, transoms, and sidelights, wood multi-panel doors, clay tile roof with exposed wood eaves and brackets, masonry chimney, and louvered cupola. On the interior, character-defining elements include plaster walls and ceiling finishes such as the coffered ceiling with boxed beams and molding; wood millwork; ventilation grilles, stair treads and risers with metal balustrades; and the fireplaces with brick firebox, wood mantelpiece, and clay tile hearth.

2. Condition of fabric: At the time of the field survey for the Historic Structure Reports/Building Preservation Plans project in 2009, the L Building was in fair condition overall. The exterior masonry had localized areas of open and eroded joints; displaced and collapsed masonry were observed at the north and south terrace; distress of masonry due to poor drainage was observed at the base of the building; rust jacking and corrosion was observed at railing post bases; localized areas of cracked and spalled limestone units; some areas of clogged, missing, or replaced copper gutters and downspouts; displacement and sagging of the wood roof framing at the corner eaves; paint failure at wood elements; broken sash chords and general distress to windows; and corrosion of the metal at the main entrance balcony. At the interior, much of the original plaster at walls and ceiling was cracked, damaged, missing, or have significant loss of paint. Non-original

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<sup>36</sup> 1901 Specifications for the eleven patient pavilions.

carpeting and vinyl baseboards are in poor condition. Many of the original doors, trims, and finishes have been replaced.

## B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 102'-0" long by 105'-0" wide and 58'-0" tall above grade.
2. Foundations: L Building has masonry foundation walls that enclose a partial basement. The basement is located at the center of the plan and has crawlspaces under the north and south building wings. The crawlspaces are accessible through wall openings at the basement.

The foundation at the front porch and east and west piazzas consists of concrete slab on grade.

3. Walls: The exterior walls of L Building are primarily red brick masonry and limestone. The brick walls are laid in a common bond pattern with headers at every fifth course. The brick units are 8-7/8" x 4-1/4" x 2-3/4" with a 1/2" mortar joint that is struck to a V-shaped profile.

Brick decorative features include projecting brick coursing at corners and at the semicircular piazzas, semicircular window openings, and at panels in the field of wall over the east and west entrance elevations. At building corners, there are projecting brick quoins of alternating widths that extend the full height of the building. Projecting brick quoins are also present at the piers that support the arched openings at the semicircular piazzas. The projecting brick quoins extend and transition into voussoirs at the arched openings. Rectangular panels outlined with projecting brick units are located at the first and second floor of the east and west elevations. Limestone is used for the window sills, at the watertable and belt course, and at keystones, impost blocks, and voussoirs at window openings on the building. The limestone units typically have a tooled finish.

Window and door openings are arranged in a repetitive pattern that divides the elevations into bays. Typically, each bay consists of aligned basement and first floor window openings with two window openings at the second floor level. At the basement level are small rectangular window opening located immediately below the stone watertable. At the first floor, window openings are primarily semicircular arched openings immediately above the stone watertable with the perimeter of the opening defined by projecting brick masonry and limestone keystone and impost blocks. At the main entrance on the east elevation, the semicircular door opening features limestone voussoirs. Rectangular window openings are located at the second floor level and feature limestone sills and brick flat arches with a projecting limestone keystone. Window openings at the main entrance bay on the east elevation are rectangular and have limestone flat arches.

4. Structural system, framing: The brick masonry foundation walls support the steel beams and concrete floor system above. Additional brick masonry piers, centrally located in the crawlspaces under north and south building wings, support the floors. The brick masonry foundations have a continuous course of slate near grade that was added to mitigate rising damp issues within the brick masonry.

The floor assemblies include steel beams that support concrete slabs at the bottom flanges. The concrete slabs are approximately 4" thick and are reinforced with expanded steel diamond mesh. The steel beams support wood floor framing that in turn supports the subflooring and finish flooring above.

The L Building roof framing has 1" plank decking on 2" x 8" rafters spaced about 20" on center. The framing has an approximate slope of 28 degrees and has 6" x 10" valley beams and 4" x 8" hip members. The rafters bear on the exterior walls and on braced timber frames. The timber framing includes 6" x 6" posts, 4" x 6" knee braces, and 6" x 12" beams with pegged mortise and tenon joints. The timber framing is supported by steel beams that span across the building. The timber posts supports have intermittent 2" x 8" horizontal ties nailed to the timber frames that run parallel to the rafters. The steel framing at the ceiling also supports steel channels and metal lath and plaster systems at the second floor ceiling.

The roofs over the piazzas at each end of the building are wood-framed low-sloped conical roofs clad with membrane roofing. The roof framing has been replaced at the south piazza and the rafters include 2" x 6" members spaced 14" on center, and 2" x 10" members. The rafters are supported by the masonry walls and by an 18" deep steel beam that spans across each of the piazza (east to west). The 10" rafters are supported by the curved walls on the north and south ends and converge to a central point on the steel beam. The 6" deep rafters span from the steel beam to the exterior walls of the building. The rafters at the north piazza are clad with a beadboard ceiling and are not exposed to view. The second floor ceiling in this portion of the building includes wood framing that supports the plaster and lath assembly suspended from the trusses.

The perimeter soffits at the roof overhangs are typically framed with 2" x 10" rafter extensions secured to the sides of the primary roof rafters. The lookouts are provided with a continuous ribbon member to help resist the forces from the cantilever. The curved bracket assemblies visible from the building exterior are non-structural decorative elements secured to the bottom of the wood soffits.

A wood-framed cupola centrally located over the building is octagonal in plan with louvers on each of the eight sides. The cupola framing bears on 4" x 12" timbers that are supported by the converging valley beams members of this roof.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: Covered piazzas are located at the ends of the north and south wings. The piazzas are approximately one-story tall, are semicircular in plan, and extend 20' from the building. The foundation consists of a concrete slab upon which there are brick masonry walls topped by a concrete floor structure with perimeter stone trim. Due to the sloping nature of the site, the piazzas have a different relationship to grade. The south piazza is approximately 30" above grade while the north piazza is over 7' above grade. Both piazzas are accessed from a stone stair with brick cheek walls and a pipe metal handrail. The walls of the piazza consist of semicircular arches with expressed brick voussoirs. Non-original brick low masonry walls with limestone coping and non-original steel screens span across each arched opening and enclose the space. The walls support the wood-framed conical roof structure with wood brackets and exposed eaves. To the west of each piazza is an open-air terrace with brick knee wall and piers capped with limestone. The terraces are accessed from the adjacent piazza as well as from a stone stair at grade. The south terrace is also access from a non-original accessibility ramp from the exterior grade.

The main entrance is access from a front porch. The porch is raised approximately 30" above grade and is accessed from a stone stair with pipe metal handrails. The porch has a brick-clad

foundation, a concrete deck with limestone perimeter trim, and brick knee walls with limestone coping.

Above the main entrance on the east elevation is an iron balcony. The balcony consists of a platform with iron handrail consisting of decorative rail and spindles and is supported by eight scrolled iron brackets mounted to the exterior wall. The balcony is painted green.

6. Chimneys: Brick masonry chimneys are centered on the elevation at the end of the north, west, and south wings. The chimneys are approximately 10' tall and 4' wide and have stone coping caps.

7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: The doors are typically boarded up with painted plywood. As viewed from the interior, original exterior doors are set in semicircular openings and consist of wood-framed eight-light double-leaf doors with a fanlight. Four-panel wood-framed screen doors are located inboard of the original doors. Original doors are primarily located at the north and south wings and provide access to the piazza.

Non-original doors include a bronze anodized aluminum door system with fixed sidelights and transom at the main entrance on the east elevation. At secondary entrances and fire escapes, non-original doors are single-leaf or double-leaf contemporary metal-framed doors with a small vision glass panel. Many doors have metal-framed screen doors mounted to the interior face of the door opening with a continuous hinge.

- b. Windows and shutters: The building fenestration consists of wood-framed double-hung windows. At the first floor semicircular openings, the windows include four-over-four wood windows joined by a wood muntin. The assembly is 6' wide and 8' tall (not including the fanlight). The arch of each window is fitted with a fanlight.

On the second floor, the windows are narrower, rectangular openings fitted with what appears to be three-light constructions, but are actually one-over-one units with an operable hopper style transom light at the top. The wood windows are typically fitted with a heavy gauge security screens. All of the window and door openings have been temporarily covered with painted plywood as part of the mothballing of the west campus.

8. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: The building has wood-framed hip roofs at the main portion of the structure. The roof features Conosera clay tile manufactured by the Celadon Terra Cotta Company and has a barrel-profiled clay tile along the center ridge line of each roof that gives the ridge a ribbed appearance.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The roof has wide overhanging eaves that project approximately 5' beyond the edge of the building. The wood sheathing is visible from the underside of the eaves and is painted white. Decorative wood scrolled brackets are spaced approximately 2' apart and support the eave. Below the brackets is a continuous wood trim, painted white. At the edge of the roof is a wood fascia with trim.

A semi-circular copper gutter is mounted to the fascia and supported by metal hangers. Copper downspouts extend from the gutter to grade and are located at the corners of the building.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The building has a wood-framed cupola located at the center of the main roof. The cupola is octagonal in plan and has wood louvers on each elevation. The cupola is capped by a wood-framed octagonal roof with clay tile and a metal spire. The cupola roof features wide overhanging eaves, a wood fascia, and wood brackets.

### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The L Building has a T-shaped plan consisting of a double-loaded corridor that extends through the center of each wing. At the first floor level, the primary space is located at the east entrance and consists of a large sitting room. Within the sitting room is the main stair. Corridors extend to the north, west, and south of the sitting room and provide access to offices and patient rooms. At the end of the north and south corridors are covered piazzas. Historically, the first floor space created by the north and south wings was part of the large sitting room. However, the space was divided by partition walls at a later date. Similarly, the original dining room, located at the far end of the east wing, has been subdivided into smaller office spaces.

At the second floor level, the plan has corridors running east-west and north-south that provide access to patient room and staff offices. Similar to the first floor, the center of the plan as well as the north and west wings historically had large sitting room. The rooms were divided into offices by partition walls at a later date.

2. Stairways: The primary stairway for the building is a double stair located adjacent to the main entrance to the building. The stairway consists of two flights of stairs on either side of the entrance that extend to a common landing. From the landing, is a single flight of double-wide stairs that extends to the second floor. The stairs are wood-framed and have a wood balustrade. Non-original metal handrails and a metal-framed screen have been installed along the stairway.

Other original stairways include a straight cast iron stair that extends from the first floor to the basement.

A metal-framed ship ladder provides access from the second floor to the attic.

3. Flooring: The original flooring consists of concrete at the first floor level and 2-1/2" wide tongue-and-groove wood at the second floor level. At the first floor, the original floor has been covered by carpet or vinyl tile.

The floors are primarily carpeted at the second floor level as well. At some locations, the carpet was applied over the original wood flooring.

At bathrooms, janitor's closets, and kitchens, the flooring is non-original square ceramic tile of various dimensions.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original interior wall and ceiling finishes are primarily painted plaster on expanded metal lath. At interior walls, original plaster was applied over hollow clay tile. Originally, the walls features large arched openings between adjacent rooms at the north and south wings, wood baseboards at interior spaces, and concrete baseboards at the piazzas.

The plaster ceilings at the main entrance hall on the east side of the building feature beams encased in plaster that divide the ceiling in a grid-like fashion into rectangular sections. Throughout the remainder of the building are flat plaster ceilings.

At the basement, the ceilings are flat plaster and the walls are exposed brick masonry, painted white.

Non-original walls are typically drywall and have vinyl baseboards. At some locations, such as at bathrooms, non-original materials including ceramic tile have been applied to the original plaster walls. At a few of the first floor offices, non-original metal-framed acoustic panel ceilings have been installed.

## 5. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: Nearly every original door in the building has been replaced with contemporary units made of wood or metal. Similarly, all the door were originally designed with transom lights, but all of these have been removed and the openings patched with plaster or gypsum board. In addition to all of the interior doors being replaced and the openings modified, there is physical evidence of arched openings in original plaster walls that have been infilled and plastered over.

Original casing was observed at the interior face of exterior door openings and consisted of flat wood trim, approximately 1-1/2" wide, along the perimeter of the opening. The trim was painted white. At all interior door openings, the original casing had been removed.

- b. Windows: Most windows have interior screen windows consisting of either wood frames with metal screens or metal-framed screen doors mounted to the interior face of openings with a continuous hinge, similar to those at exterior doors.

Window openings are typically recessed in the window opening and have trim that consists of 1-1/2" flat trim along the jambs with a 4" wide trim along the head. The sill has a wood stool with a 4" wide apron.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decorative features within the building include chair rail at walls in the main entrance hall at the east side of the building.

Other significant decorative features include fire places located at the end of the north, west, and south wings. The fire places have a brick firebox and surround with a clay tile hearth and applied wood mantel. Above each fireplace is a large mirror with gilded wood frame.

7. Hardware: Original hardware is located at the remaining exterior entrance doors and consists of brass knobs, mortise locks, and escutcheon plates. Hardware at the remaining exterior doors and at all of the interior doors is not original.

## 8. Mechanical Equipment

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Hot water and steam enter the basement through a tunnel from the campus Power House.

The original steam system within the building was an indirect radiant heat system but is no longer functioning. This system provided heat by having separate radiators in the basement/crawlspace, which are encased in sheet metal housing with a duct to convey the heated air to the vertical heating shaft within the interior masonry bearing walls. Indirect radiant radiators were designed to have as much surface area in as little space as possible. Such radiators could accommodate steam or hot water and incorporated a two pipe (flow and return) arrangement. Radiators were made of iron and in shapes to allow for good circulation of steam through them, allow for air circulation around the outside, and provide a large surface area to increase radiation.

Hot water radiators were added to the lobbies, hallways, and rooms when the original radiant heating system was abandoned.

Separate vertical air ducts are provided in the hallways and within most rooms near the ceiling. Exhaust air ducts are provided near the floor where they are vented into the attic. Duct input and exhaust vents are typically capped with cast iron grilles. Active ventilation was promoted by a large electrical fan located in the attic, which pulled air from the exhaust fans into the attic and then evacuated the air through the attic ventilation system.

In recent years, air conditioning was provided in some spaces by window air conditioning units, which have been removed.

- b. Lighting: Most of the interior lighting has been replaced with either fluorescent light units that are hung from pendants or surface-mounted to the ceiling or, at a few locations, suspended in metal-framed ceiling panel gridwork.
- c. Plumbing: Water supply is provided below grade but is typically not located within the subterranean tunnels. All of the water supply and waste management is through cast iron piping that has been repaired in some cases with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) piping.

#### D. Site

1. Historic landscape design: Documentation of the landscape of the west campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital can be found in Historic American Landscape Survey documentation submittal DC-11.

The L Building is located on an oval shaped landscape defined by Spruce, Plum, and Willow Streets in the south central portion of St. Elizabeths West Campus. Originally sited among other ward buildings, the L Building is now situated in the middle of a green space created by the demolition of its closet neighbors, the Oaks A and B and the Toner Building. Approximately 500' to the southwest are the J and K Buildings; 500' to the east is the B Building (Building 75), and to the north is Redwood Drive. The landscape surrounding the L Building gradually slopes toward the north and west, leading a wooded area at the top of the bluff above the Power House and Ice Plant.

### PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: Copies of selected archival drawings for the L Building are included in the attached Supplemental Material. The original photographs and other archival photographic documentation are in the collection of the General Services Administration, the Library of Congress,

the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, or the St. Elizabeths Hospital Health Sciences Library archives on the St. Elizabeths East Campus.

B. Early Views: Copies of selected early and historical views of the L Building are included in the attached Supplemental Material. The original photographs and other archival photographic documentation are in the collection of the General Services Administration, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, or the St. Elizabeths Hospital Health Sciences Library archives on the St. Elizabeths East Campus.

C. Interviews: No oral history interviews were performed for this documentation project.

D. Selected Sources:

*Centennial Papers: St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1855–1955.* Winfred Overholser, ed. Washington, D.C.: Centennial Commission, St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1956.

*Condition & Reuse Assessment: St. Elizabeths West Campus (draft).* Oehrlein & Associates Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration, January 4, 2006.

*The DHS Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths: Final Master Plan.* Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration. November 10, 2008.

*General Correspondence and Other Records of the Federal Board of St. Elizabeths Hospital.* Records of the Office of the Superintendent, (1855–1967), Record Group 418.

*Historic Preservation Report: St. Elizabeths West Campus,* John Milner Architects. Prepared for the General Services Administration. December 7, 2005.

*Historic Structure Report: L Building (Building 64), St. Elizabeths West Campus, Washington, D.C.* Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration, March 12, 2010.

Library of Congress. Washington, D.C.: Geography & Maps Reading Room. Collection contains various topographical maps for the District of Columbia and St. Elizabeths campus from 1855–1985.

*Maps and Plans of the Government Hospital for the Insane (St. Elizabeths Hospital), 05/27/1839–12/14/1938.* Department of the Interior, St. Elizabeths Hospital (1916–06/30/1940). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital. Entry 20, Records of the Superintendent, Annual Report of the Subordinate Units, 1919–1966.

National Archives and Record Administration. Textual Documents Division. Washington, D.C. Record Group 42, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Records of the Secretary of the Interior.

*Photographic Prints of Buildings, Grounds, and People, 1870–1920.* Department of Health, Education and Welfare, St. Elizabeth Hospital (04/11/1953–08/09/1967). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

*Photographs of Structures at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., 1968.* Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Public Health Service, Health Services and Mental Health Administration, National Institute of Mental Health, Saint Elizabeths Hospital, Office of the Superintendent (04/01/1968–07/01/1973). Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1820–1981. Record Group 418, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

*St. Elizabeths Hospital Historic Resources Management Plan.* Devroux & Purnell Architects-Planners, PC, with Betty Bird, Historian, and Rhodeside & Harwell Inc., Landscape Architects. Prepared for the D.C. Office of Business and Economic Development and the Office of the Assistant City Administrator for Economic Development, Washington, D.C., September 1993.

*St. Elizabeths West Campus: Cultural Landscape Report.* Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, and Robinson & Associates, Inc. Prepared for the General Services Administration. April 2009.

*St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design, & Development Guidelines.* Oehrlein & Associates Architects and Robinson & Associates. Inc., Architectural and Historical Research. Prepared for the General Services Administration. November 10, 2008.

- E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Extensive research on the history of L Building has been performed for this and other studies, as documented in the publications and other sources listed above.

#### **PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION**

This historical narrative was prepared by WJE in conjunction with Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC, who prepared the measured drawings, and Leslie Schwartz Photography, who prepared the photographic documentation. The HABS documentation was completed for the General Services Administration.

**APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS**



*Figure 1. View of patients digging foundation for lettered building, circa 1901. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.*



*Figure 2. Foundation walls of K Building as observed on September 1, 1902. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.*



Figure 3. View of brick foundation walls of J Building as observed on September 1, 1902. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.

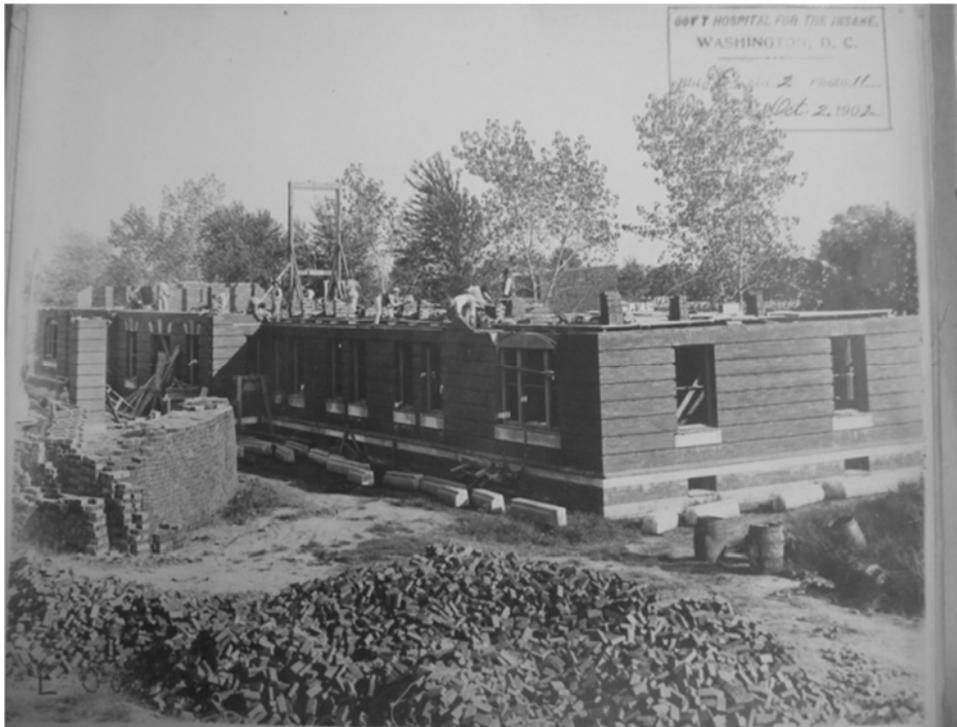


Figure 4. View of B Building construction as observed on October 2, 1902. Note stockpiles of brick and stone in foreground. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.



Figure 5. View of second floor wall construction of C Building as observed on September 1, 1902. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.



Figure 6. View of B Building nearing complete enclosure as observed on September 1, 1902. Source: National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 48, Entry 300, Box 6.

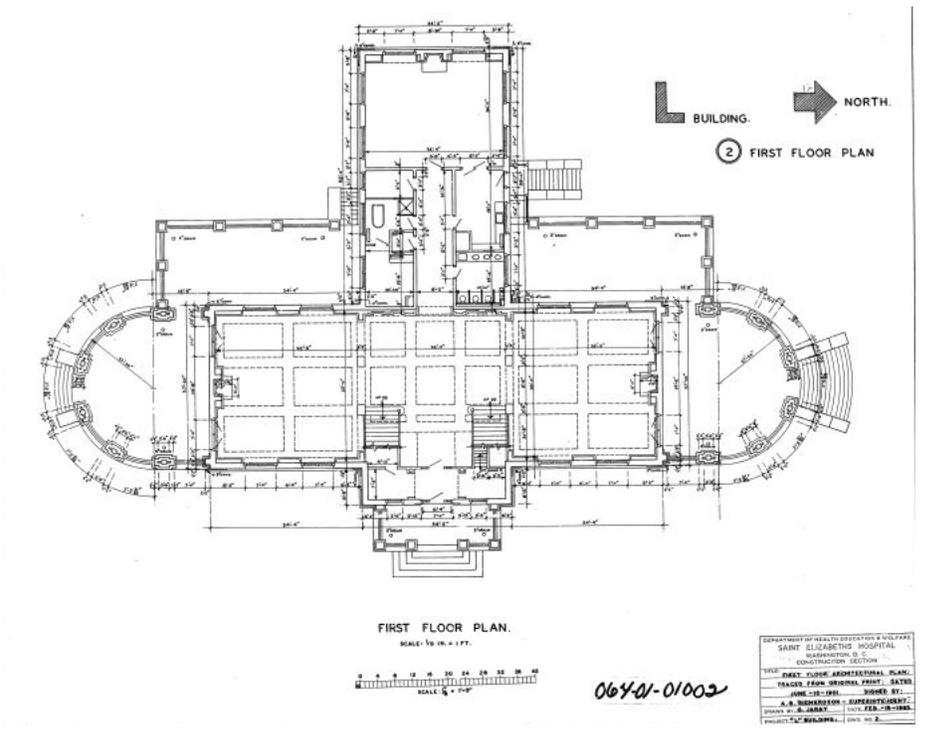


Figure 7. The first floor plan of the L Building as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0101.

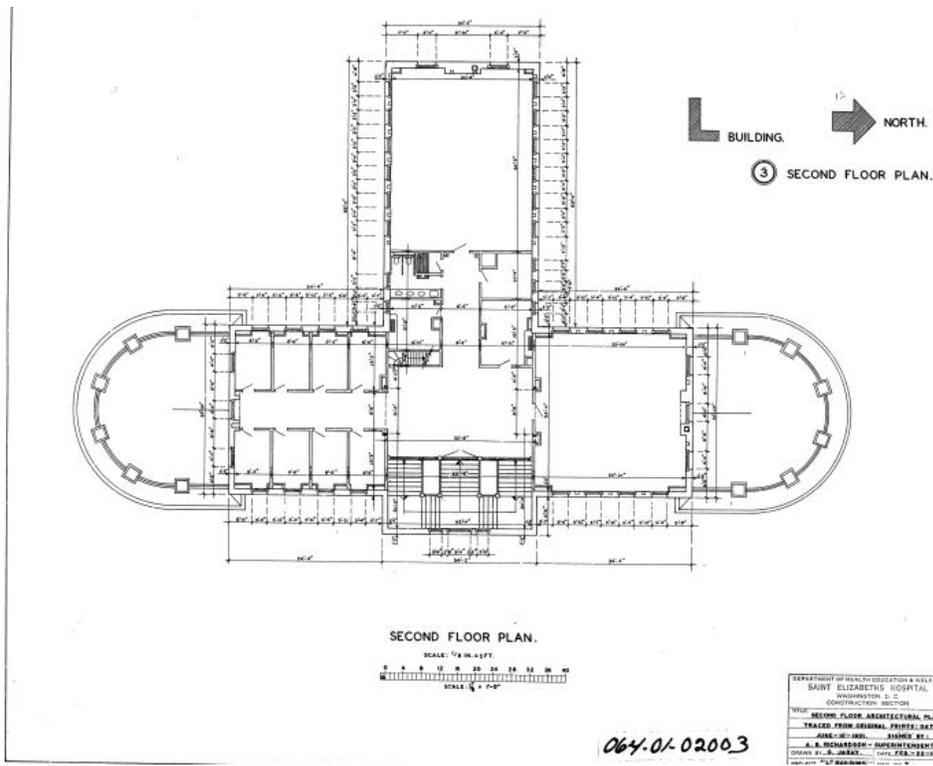


Figure 8. The second floor plan of the L Building as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0102.

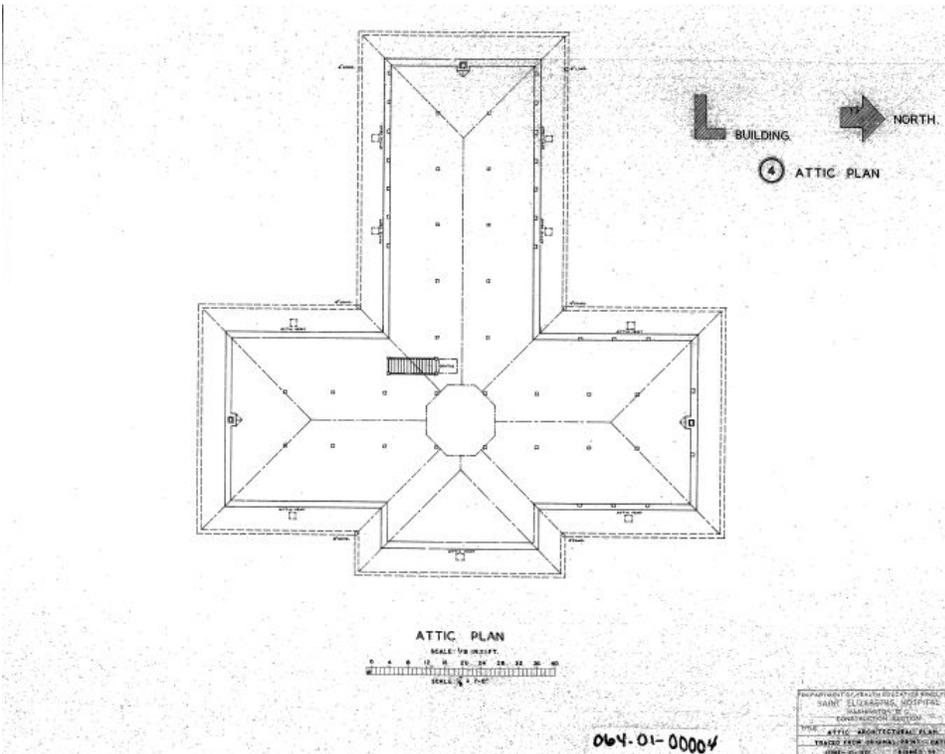


Figure 9. The roof plan of the L Building as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0103.

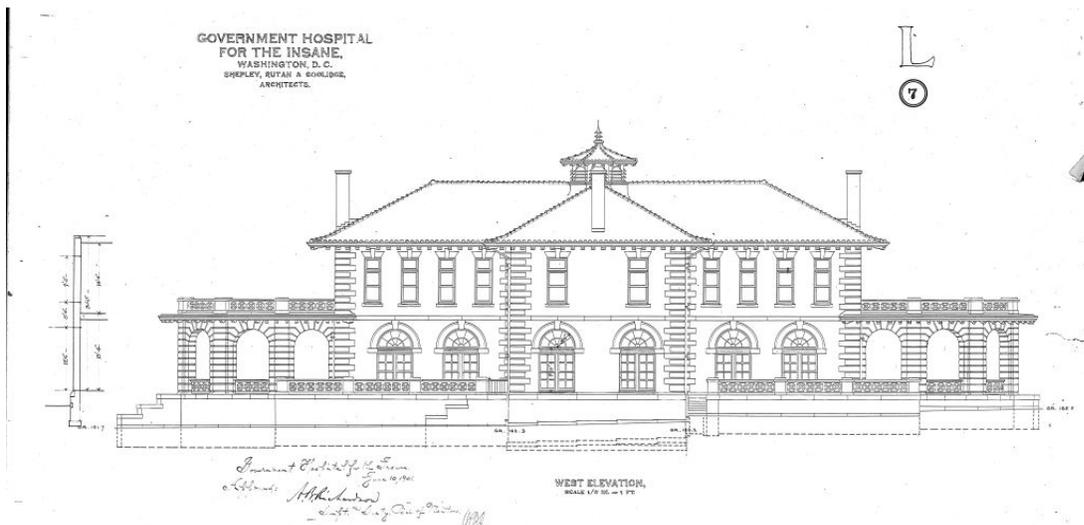


Figure 10. L Building west elevation as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0127.

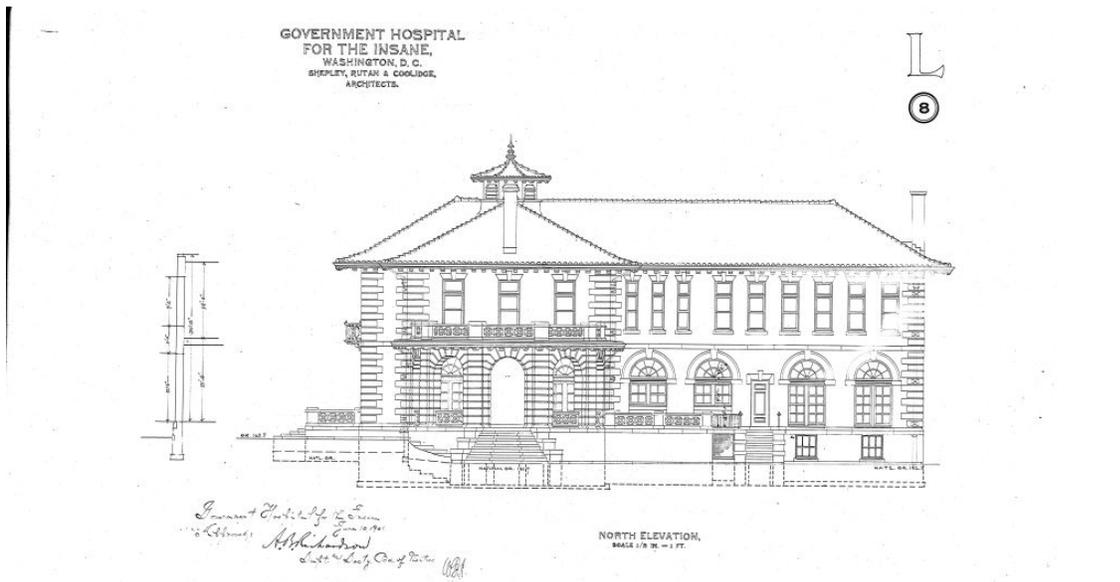


Figure 11. The north elevation as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0128.

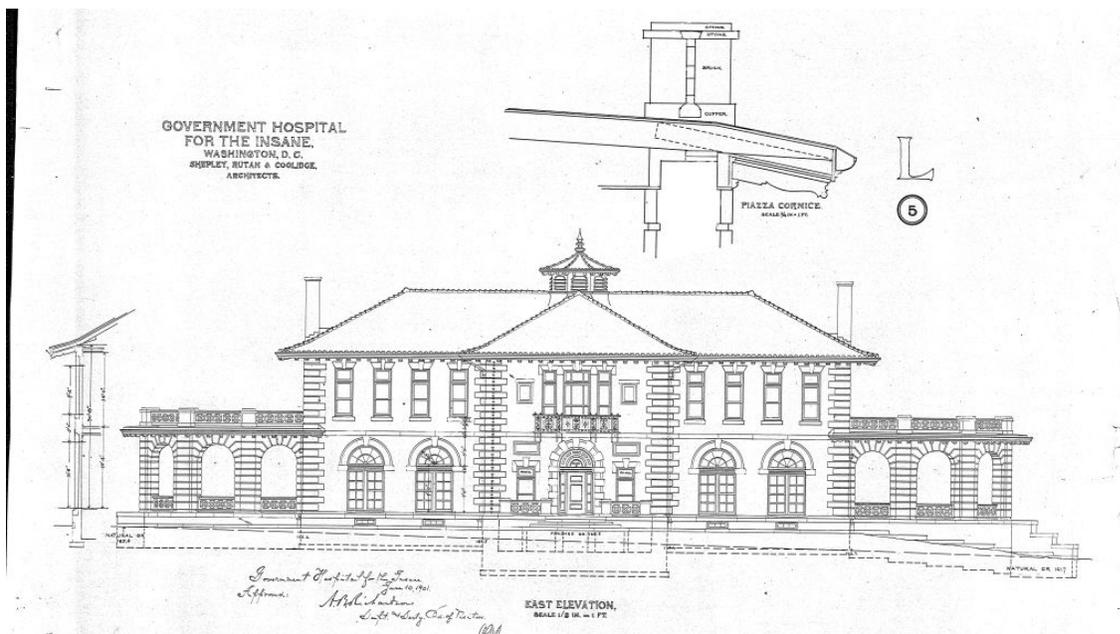


Figure 12. The east elevation as depicted in 1901 construction documents. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0129.

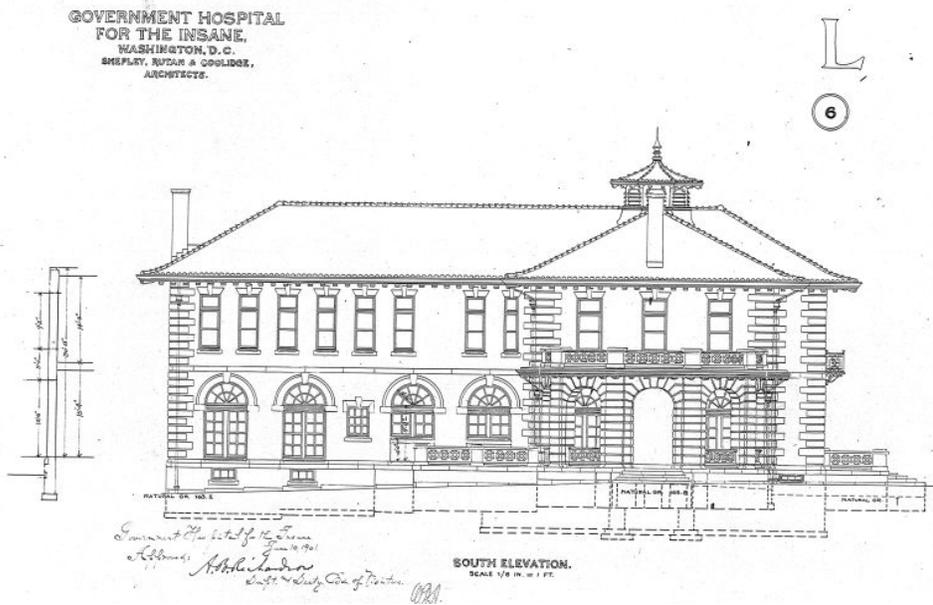


Figure 13. The south elevation as depicted in 1901. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0130.

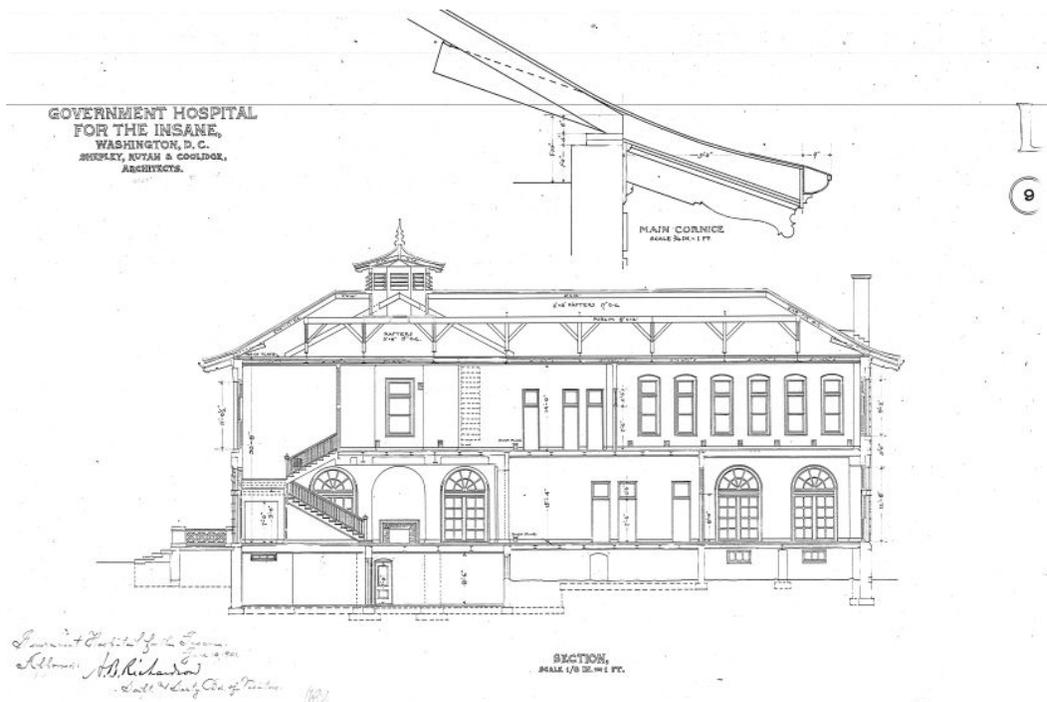


Figure 14. A transverse section of the L Building as depicted in 1901. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0115.



*Figure 15. View of the L Building from the southeast, circa 1905. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0P020.*



*Figure 16. Bird's eye view of the L Building, circa 1904. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0P006.*



Figure 17. Interior view of the main reception room with sitting room beyond, 1905. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0P001.



Figure 18. The dining room as it appeared in 1905. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0P002.



*Figure 19. View of the sewing room, circa 1905. Source: GSA archives, image DC0107SE0P005.*