

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA, CONVALESCENT WARD
(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building 54)
South side of Jackman Road, Naval Hospital Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6206-F

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
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200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NAVAL HOSPITAL PHILADELPHIA, CONVALESCENT WARD

(Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Building 54) HABS No. PA-6206-F

Location: South side of Jackman Road, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

USGS Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.484420.4417360

Significance: Building 54 is one among a connected complex of 12 Convalescent Ward buildings (47 through 58) that were constructed in 1945 to house convalescent wards and specialized therapeutic facilities for injured service personnel. Buildings 51 through 58 were extant as of September 1999; Buildings 47 through 50 were demolished during the 1970s. Three of the 12 buildings, 51, 52, and 56, were designed and built specifically for the rehabilitation of wounded and maimed sailors and Marines. These three buildings served Occupational Therapy, Acoustic Clinic, and Rehabilitation of the Blind functions, respectively, although in outer form they are similar to the other nine buildings that originally composed the Convalescent Wards complex. Naval Hospital Philadelphia was a principal center for the treatment of blind and hearing-impaired Navy and Marine Corps veterans and for the rehabilitation of those who had undergone amputation.

Description: The eight long, one-story Convalescent Ward buildings that remain compose a connected complex located between Park Avenue on the south and Jackman Road on the north; these two thoroughfares are among the Naval Hospital's internal roadways. The extant Convalescent Ward complex is situated toward the west end of the Hospital property. Prior to the removal of the four westernmost of the original component structures, Buildings 47 through 50, the complex extended fully to the western boundary of the property. The complex is arranged with four buildings on each side (north and south) of an arterial corridor structure aligned east to west. This corridor, which as originally built extended eastward to join the south end of the neighboring Galley and Mess Hall (Building 59; HABS No. PA-6206-G), is designated as four consecutive individual structures (Buildings 51½, 53½, 55½, and 57½). Each of the structures is positioned between a corresponding pair of Convalescent Ward buildings.

Seven of the eight Convalescent Ward buildings (all except Building 52) are each shaped as a long, relatively narrow rectangular block, with an abbreviated wing projecting eastward from the center. The outer end of the building, i.e., the end opposite the link to the arterial corridor of the overall complex, is occupied by an enclosed porch. In the five buildings originally designated as regular patient wards, Buildings 53, 54, 55, 57, and 58, the entire main block apart from the porch was arranged as a single open ward with 38 patient beds and a central nurses' station.

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The wing contained a central passage flanked by a pair of rooms on each side, which were generally toilet and washrooms. Building 51, the Occupational Therapy building, and Building 56, the Ward for Rehabilitation of the Blind, were designed with divergent main-block arrangements incorporating corridors and multiple rooms of varying size, although their wings and enclosed porches were disposed as were those of the regular wards. The entries for all of the Convalescent Ward buildings, including Building 52, were located in the center of the porch end wall, on the west side opposite the wing, and via the connecting corridor.

Building 52 departed further from its fellows with regard to shape and plan, being designed with a cross wing at the north end and an abbreviated east wing approximately twice as broad (measuring north-south) as those of the other wards. Unlike the east wings of the other buildings, which were sheltered under cross-gable roofs, the east wing of Building 52 was covered by constructing the gable roof of the main block in three segments of varying height. The broader, higher roof of the center segment extends to shelter the east wing. Building 52 lacks an enclosed porch. The main block is organized with a long central corridor lined by rooms on both sides; most of these spaces are designed as "lip reading rooms," but also include offices, toilet rooms, a waiting room, an examination room, and two auricular training rooms. The cross wing at the north end is arranged with its own corridor along the south side, in addition to the continuation of the building's central corridor, and contained a workshop and several rooms designated for training and testing activity. The east wing includes a lecture room and the Acoustic Clinic's Records Office.

The exterior and interior architectural detail of the Convalescent Ward buildings is typical of the Naval Hospital's wartime construction. The buildings are constructed of concrete-block masonry. The cross-gable roofs are supported by wooden trusses and covered with asphalt shingle over concrete plank. Composition board fills the gables and forms the plain frieze that serves as the cornice treatment. The wooden window sash and frames are intact; the sash is of the double-hung two-over-two type with the lights aligned horizontally. The window sills are composed of cast concrete. The enclosed porch situated at one end of most of the buildings is fitted with two triple windows on each of its three elevations. A concrete chimney in a nearly central position pierces the roof of each building. Building 52 is additionally fitted with two metal ventilators near the north end. The long roof slopes of the Convalescent Ward buildings are punctuated by low, shed-roofed dormer structures housing louvered vents. For Buildings 51 and 53 through 58, these dormers are evenly spaced along the length of each building, with three on each westerly slope and two on each easterly slope (the central space on the easterly slope is occupied by the cross gable

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formed by the wing). Building 52, with its somewhat divergent plan and roof shape, has three dormers on each side.

The interior finish of the Convalescent Ward buildings consists largely of asphalt tile floor covering, plasterboard for older wall surfaces, drywall of more recent type for partitions representing later alterations, and acoustic tile ceiling. Building 52 is again an exception to the general pattern of the complex in that most of its walls are finished with acoustic tile, an element of the building's original design. Among the eight extant buildings, only the three originally designated for rehabilitative therapy (Buildings 51, 52, and 56) retain their essential configuration as built. In one of the five patient wards, Building 54, alteration in plan has been relatively limited. Its main block remains one large space except for small offices inserted in the southeast and northwest corners. The other four ward buildings, however, have been extensively rearranged in plan over the decades, evidently to accommodate changes in function.

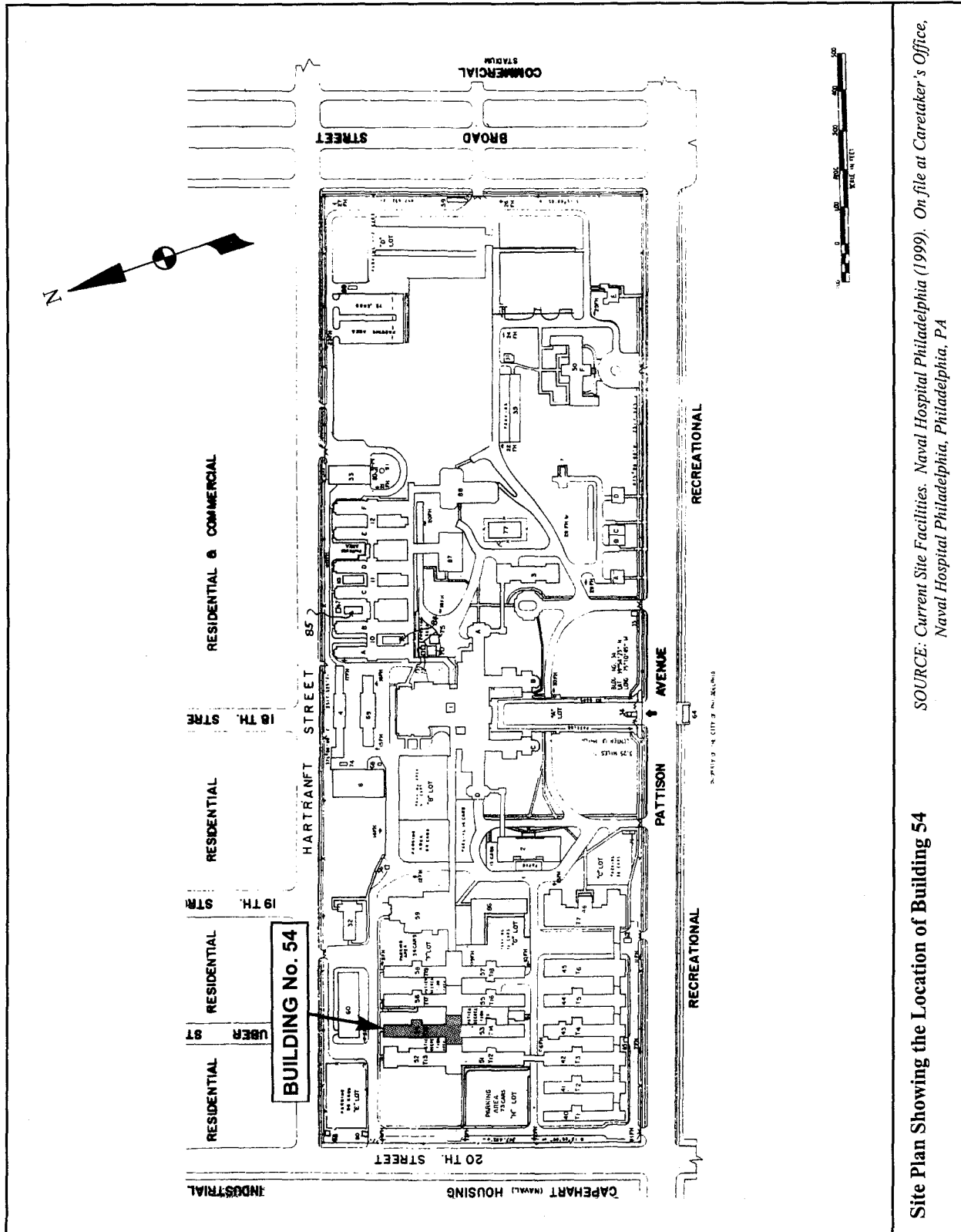
History: The Convalescent Wards were built to house recuperating service personnel. Three of the original 12 buildings contained specialized rehabilitative therapeutic facilities for veterans who had been blinded, suffered hearing impairment, or endured amputations. The complex was built as part of the expansion of Naval Hospital Philadelphia that took place during World War II and its immediate aftermath. The designs for most of the constituent buildings were finished by the firm of Karcher and Smith in November 1944. A revision of the Building 52 plans was produced in March 1945, and in July 1945 a complete revision was made of the plans for Building 51, which was redesignated from a regular ward to Occupational Therapy. During the 1970s, four of the Convalescent Wards, Buildings 47 through 50, were demolished. In recent decades, the buildings have served a variety of purposes, functioning as administrative space, storage, laboratory space for ship equipment work, and a clinic facility for drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Sources: U.S. Department of the Navy, Northern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Cultural Resources Survey Form, Building 54, Naval Hospital Philadelphia. Prepared by John Milner Associates, Inc., West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1993.

Original architectural and engineering drawings, Bureau of Yards and Docks Nos. 345605 through 345634 (1944), and Public Works No. C15694 (1945). On file at the Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Historian: Philip E. Pendleton, Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., September 1999

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Site Plan Showing the Location of Building 54 SOURCE: Current Site Facilities. Naval Hospital Philadelphia (1999). On file at Caretaker's Office, Naval Hospital Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA