

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

M- 35 - 8

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Bethesda Naval Hospital Tower Block

AND/OR COMMON

Building #1, National Naval Medical Center

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

8901 Wisconsin Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bethesda

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth

STATE

Maryland

CODE

24

COUNTY

Montgomery

CODE

031

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER: Medical

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Department of the Navy, Bureau of Medicine & Surgery

STREET & NUMBER

23rd and E Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C.

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Washington and Jefferson Streets

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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## CONDITION

EXCELLENT       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD       RUINS  
 FAIR       UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The National Naval Medical Center was constructed in 1939-42 on a 264.7 acre site on Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda, Maryland, directly opposite that of the new National Institute of Health. The original building which is unaltered today, consists of a 20 story central tower rising above a series of interconnecting three and four story pavilions. It may be roughly divided into the central tower block, or the tower with its two "L" shaped wings oriented toward the Wisconsin Avenue entrance on the west, and the rear pavilions to the east. The modernistic building is neo-classical in feeling, its composition characterized by a strictly formal bilateral frontality. The central tower block is sited on a bluff overlooking Wisconsin Avenue and its architectural presence is directed toward this important approach to the nation's capital. The sweeping greensward of a 9 hole golf course together with a mature foundation planting of yew, maple, oak and sycamore enhances the monumentality of the building. The low lying interconnecting pavilions at the rear of the tower block are inconspicuously sited, screened from view by the landscaping, thus reducing the apparent mass of the hospital complex and emphasizing the soaring verticality, the sculptural qualities of the tower itself.

The main block of the building consists of the tower with its flanking "L" shaped pavilions to the north and to the south as well as a central connector to the east which leads to the minor pavilions at the rear of the complex. Construction is of reinforced concrete and structural steel frame clad in precast exposed aggregate concrete panels. The latter are faced with a combination of translucent and opaque quartz mixed with quartz sand and white portland cement. The fenestration of both tower and pavilions is stacked. Bronze sash alternate with serpentine spandrels to form dark verticals which contrast with the brilliant concrete panels creating the major decorative effect of the facades. The pavilions, by this device, become a neo-classical colonnade which acts as a base for the tower. The development of detail, proportions and rhythm here is sensitive and restrained, subordinated to the volumetric concerns of the composition.

# SIGNIFICANCE

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PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1939-42 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frederic W. Southworth, Na  
Dept. Paul P. Cret, consul

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Maryland was built during the early years of World War II to house the U.S. Navy's principal center for the practice and dissemination of medicine related to the needs of the naval service. The importance which the government attached to this center for education and research in naval medicine is reflected in the evolution of the complex's design which proceeded from rough plan and elevation sketches by Franklin D. Roosevelt on White House stationery to an in-house Bureau of Yards and Docks design effort executed under the close supervision of the noted private consulting architect, Paul Philippe Cret. The twenty story tower block with its two "L" shaped wings enveloping a lawn that slopes down toward Wisconsin Avenue on the east constitutes a landmark of the Bethesda area in the physical sense of the word.

The construction of the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda was the culmination of over a century in the development of medical facilities to serve American naval personnel. Although the Surgeon General of the Navy had advocated the establishment of a school for naval medical officers as early as 1809 it was not until 1878 that a course of instruction at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital was inaugurated after a study was made of medical education practices in Europe. The school thus established found a more permanent home in 1902 at the Old Naval Observatory, 23rd and E Streets, N.W. in Washington, and was augmented by a hospital in 1906. By the mid thirties the growing complex of medical functions at the Observatory site included a dental school, a medical technology school, and the library of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Renamed the Naval Medical Center, this complex of functions had outgrown its facilities at 23rd and E Sts. When the Congress acted in 1937 to fund the construction of a new Naval Medical Center, the Observatory site was abandoned due to National Capital Park and Planning Commission opposition to the negative impact of a large building on the setting of the nearby Lincoln Memorial. Instead, President Roosevelt selected the new site for the center in rural Bethesda.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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- Records of the Naval Shore Establishment, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Archives, Port Hueneme, California
- Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards & Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps 1940-1946 Vol. 1. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947
- "Naval Medical Center" Architectural Concrete. Vol. 9, No. 2

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	31,8	61,0	4,3	1,8	8,3,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING							
C							D						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Building #1 is the tower, the two "L" shaped wings to the north and south, and the eastern connector which attaches it to the rear pavilions (not themselves part of Building #1).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Lawrence P. Earle, Urban Planner

September 1, 1975

ORGANIZATION

Chesapeake Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Building #57, Washington Navy Yard

TELEPHONE

202/433-3387

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is \_\_\_ National \_\_\_ State \_\_\_ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Published by the Geological Survey  
 U.S.G.S. and WSSC

Photometric methods from aerial photographs  
 checked 1956. Revised 1965  
 1927 North American datum  
 on Maryland coordinate system  
 Transverse Mercator grid ticks,

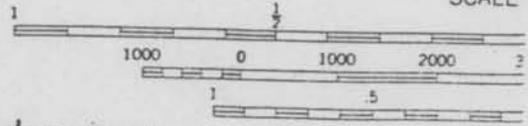
Indicate selected fence and field lines where  
 available on maps. This information is unchecked  
 except where only landmark buildings are shown  
 light-blue pattern  
 inundation to 351 feet



Bethesda Naval Hospital  
 Town Black

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UTM GRID AND 1965 MAGNETIC NORTH  
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



SCALE  
 CONTOUR INTERVAL IS METERS

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL  
 SPECIFICATIONS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL  
 SURVEY AND A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

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NAVAL PHOTOGRAPHIC CENTER  
NAVAL DISTRICT, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20374  
OFFICIAL U. S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH

1600 - 1000 - 220/100 10-70

NO. 1162749 UNIT. PAA  
DATE REC'S 6-75  
PHOTOGRAPHER. PH3 CLAUDE SNEED  
SUBJECT  
BETHESDA, MARYLAND...THE NATIONAL NAVAL  
MEDICAL CENTER.

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*[Handwritten signature]*

RELEASED

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M: 35-8  
~~M: 35-98~~