ST. ELIZABETHS WEST CAMPUS
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Chapter V: Recent Landscape History 1937-2006

A. RECENT LANDSCAPE HISTORY INTRODUCTION,
TRANSFORMATION AND ABANDONMENT

Development of the hospital landscape continued into the 1940s; however, the most significant impressions had been established during the previous periods. The nature of landscape change during the mid and late twentieth century produced mixed results for the historic campus. Significant alterations included the loss of mature elm trees to disease, the end of agriculture, filling of ravines, the removal of some early structures, and the addition of service structures in the ravines. Many majestic elms were removed as they succumbed to Dutch elm disease leaving voids in the informal but regular tree canopy shading the campus green spaces. Institution wide, the most pronounced development of the hospital occurred on the East Campus across Nichols Avenue, now Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, from the West Campus. Eventually, with the ascendancy of facilities on the East Campus, use of the West Campus dwindled and the historic hospital was largely abandoned.

Construction activity on the historic West Campus after White’s tenure generally consisted of updating existing facilities with a limited number of new and removed facilities (see Figure V.1). Roadways, sidewalks, the circular pond, streetlights, and other small landscape features were changed during the period. The underpass between the campuses was expanded to accommodate two-way automobile traffic. Among the new buildings constructed during this period was the Warehouse and Laundry (Building 118), built in 1952 near Howard Hall. Several of the cottage buildings, including Howard Hall, were demolished in the 1960s as new facilities became available on the East Campus. The demolition included much of Godding’s southern expansion (Toner, Oaks I and II, and the Toner Kitchen). These demolitions changed the spatial organization and visual relationships between open space and building masses that characterized these areas prior to East Campus expansion. Between 1961 and 1966, Interstate 295 was constructed along the river shoreline occupying approximately 15 acres of hospital land. Also as a result of the interstate construction, the railroad spur used to deliver coal to the powerhouse was abandoned and the former track was converted to a road.

Significant landscape changes took place along the northwest and southwest parts of the hospital during this period. The orchard and vineyard area, used by the hospital since its initial construction, was abandoned during the early 1960s. Successional growth of vegetation has obscured the historic purpose of this area, although some farm roadways are still in use and
remnants of farm structures are present in the young forest. Much of the woodland in this area was lost between 1966 and 1978, with additional loss from the filling of ravines.

In 1987, the Federal Government transferred the East Campus (consisting of 118 acres with 42 buildings) to the District of Columbia while the Department of Health and Human Services retained jurisdiction over most of the buildings on the West Campus until 2004, when the property was transferred to the General Services Administration. GSA has held the property since that time and initiated landscape maintenance and facilities stabilization programs. The landscape maintenance program has helped improve the condition of several mature trees but also contributed to the loss of some historic campus features.

This last historical period is the longest and yet the least documented in historic records for the landscape, with the exception of a series of aerial photographs. St. Elizabeths’ annual reports, which continued until 1968, remain the foundation for the chronology for this period, although the level of detail contained in them diminished as the period progressed. A number of plans and aerial photographs inform the history of the campus landscape. Of these, three site plans and seven aerial photographs are included with this chapter:

- 1938 “St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., Key Plan of Buildings” [west of Nichols Avenue], December 14, 1938, Record Group 418, no. 22, National Archives (Figure V.1)
- 1945 Public Buildings Service, “Site Plan, St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C.,” February 1945, *A Report on the Treatment, Administration, and Service Facilities of St. Elizabeths Hospital*, 1945, St. Elizabeths Health Sciences Library (Figure V.2)
- 1947 “Topographic Survey; St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C.” Corps of Engineers, Washington District, War Department, 1946-1947; revised and rendered by Heritage Landscapes, 2005 (Plan V.1)
- 1948 1948 Aerial Photograph, Air Photographics, Inc., photo no. 1948 DC D396, Spring 1948 (Plan V.2)
- 1994 1994 Aerial Photograph, Topozone, April 2, 1994 (Plan V.7)

The 1947 survey and the aerial photographs illustrate the extent of vegetation. Inferences on changes to topography, circulation and other landscape features were derived from the annual reports and the hundreds of photographs from this period. Photographs reviewed include illustrations from the 1945 Public Buildings Service study of the hospital, which document each of the buildings. Numerous aerial photos of different aspects of the campus, as well as
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Heritage Landscapes and Robinson & Associates, Inc.

B. LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION, 1937-1950s

Campus landscape evolution is principally characterized by continuity from the 1930s to the 1950s. Modest changes occur during this period, although much of the landscape character created during the nineteenth and early twentieth century remains intact and demonstrates a high degree of integrity. In this section the history of the campus will be described and illustrated.

B1. Administrative Changes and Treatment Direction

On October 6, 1937 Dr. Winfred Overholser was sworn in as superintendent of St. Elizabeths after having been elected to the position by the American Psychiatric Association. Overholser, who at the time was professor of psychiatry at George Washington School of Medicine and president of the American Psychiatric Association, also had experience in the supervision of large public hospitals which aided his administration of St. Elizabeths. During his tenure as superintendent, Overholser’s ideological conception of mental illness as a physical infirmity and his special focus on the treatment of mentally ill criminals, did not carry direct implications for the evolution of the West Campus landscape. However, the direction of his efforts over his 25-year tenure led to a progressive shift from the historic West Campus to the East Campus.

Administrative changes prior to and during the period resulted in reorganized financial structures and an altered patient composition. These changes influenced hospital resources and decisions on how the campus grounds would be used. Shortly before Overholser became superintendent, the board of visitors, which had advised the superintendent since St. Elizabeths’ inception in 1855, was abolished. At the same time, it was determined that patients from the army and navy would no longer be admitted to the hospital. In 1938 rules for admission for District of Columbia residents were changed. In 1940 the hospital was removed from the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and became part of the Federal Security Agency. Later in 1953, the Federal Security Administration was abolished and its functions, including the administration of St. Elizabeths Hospital, were transferred to the newly created Department of Health Education and Welfare. Due in part to these changes, the older facilities of the West Campus were used with decreasing intensity while the new campus to the east experienced increasing attention and activity. The continued use of the grounds helped to maintain the character of the West Campus landscape although larger structural processes predicted later shifts in the use of space at the institution.

B2. Development of Grounds and Decline of Agriculture

The campus grounds were maintained and developed through the middle of the century under the new command of Superintendent Overholser. Alvah Godding, son of former Superintendent William W. Godding, likely continued as head of the St. Elizabeths Lawns and Grounds department at this time. The beautification of the large pond south of the Center Building took
place in 1938. Repairs to the basin included a larger water flow. The project included the placement of eight pond lilies in tubs on piers in a circle and the planting of the small island with weeping willow tree and ornamental grasses (see Figure V.3). Other typical efforts included grading and reseeding of the baseball field and lawns around the facilities. Matching pipe railing elsewhere on the campus, a railing was also installed along the road passing the ball field in 1938. Grading and reseeding occurred throughout the 1940s in order to facilitate the use of lawn mowers at the hospital.

By the summer of 1945, William H. Mistr had become head of the Lawns and Grounds department. In the annual reports, Mistr reported “usual” activities for the hospital including the watering of lawns and flower beds, cutting grass, trimming hedges and trees, planting pansies and tulip bulbs, and providing cut flowers and potted plants to the wards. It was noted the area from the pumping station to the Power House was cleared of undergrowth. The department also sprayed oak, elm, and cherry trees on the hospital lawns. In 1945, patients painted approximately 880 settees that were used on the lawns. The following year, the department planted 17,000 plants around the grounds in the spring. Patients continued to be involved in productive labor on the campus. As during the previous year, residents painted 1,350 settees and cleared the wooded area from Power House to pumping station. The greenhouses also produced more than 60,000 cut flowers for the wards (see Figure V.4). They also grew lilies at Easter and poinsettias at Christmas in addition to other ornamental plants.

Patients at the hospital enjoyed the breezes, smells, sights, and vistas afforded by the landscape. In specific instances, views to the grounds from the residents’ windows were recorded in detail. After release from the high-security facility of Howard Hall in 1947, Modernist poet Ezra Pound, perhaps the most famous of the hospital’s inmates, spent several years in the Chestnut ward on the second floor of the wing immediately east of the Center Building. His room was described as looking north toward the tennis court and through hemlock trees toward the Capitol. Later, Pound was relocated to a room overlooking the small formal garden and pond on the south side of the building (see Figure V.5). He met regularly with other poets and scholars on the lawn outside of the Center Building. On April 18, 1958, the indictment against Pound for wartime treason was dismissed and he was released after spending 13 years in public care and custody.

Agricultural production remained a part of the West Campus into the middle of the twentieth century; however, its significance waned with competition for land and the increasing effectiveness of off-site food production and delivery. In 1945 at the end of the Second World War, all food production, including the dairy, piggery, and poultry plant, was reported under farm activity in the annual reports. This signified a change in procedure since for previous decades, the gardens, vineyard, and orchards – all of which occupied land on the West Campus – had been part of the Lawns and Grounds department and reported separately from the Farm department.

In 1945, the orchard produced 100 bushels of apples, 352 bushels of pears and 4,500 pounds of grapes. The following year, the orchard produced only 83 bushels of apples and the vineyard produced 3,500 pounds of grapes. Production figures were not recorded in future reports. The figures indicated a significant decline in harvesting on the West Campus since in 1927 for example 17,700 pounds of grapes and 870 bushels of apples were harvested. A detailed
topographical survey conducted in 1947 indicated the presence of a grape arbor, vineyard, orchard, and “cultivated” ground (see Plan V.1). An aerial photograph taken in the spring of 1948 does reveal evidence of agricultural fields on the northern hillside; however, the orchard area appears much less extensive than in previous years (see Plan V.2).

Horticultural activities continued on hospital lands into the 1950s although the production of livestock gradually ended. St. Elizabeths truck gardens provided 28,675 bushels of green vegetables and “other seasonable” products in 1947. In 1952, the gardens produced nearly 24,000 bushels of green vegetables plus “large amounts” of asparagus, corn, and watermelon. Reports did not specify where the truck gardens were located. Livestock was eventually eliminated during this time. In 1948, the hospital’s dairy herd was consumed or sold “for reasons of economy.” Plans to eliminate St. Elizabeths’ piggery that year were postponed due to an increase in meat prices. Four years later, the piggery on the East Campus was forced to be destroyed after an epidemic.

B3. Evolution of Buildings, Circulation and Infrastructure

Construction activity on the West Campus swelled and shrank as new treatment facilities were relocated to the East Campus between 1930s and 1950s. A new water tank on the East Campus, for example, rendered unnecessary the tall water tank in front of L building (Building no. 64) in 1938 (see Figure V.6). Many of the changes on the grounds during this period resulted from the rise in use of the automobile after the Second World War.

The West Campus was less suited to vehicular traffic since its historic spatial organization had been established prior to the widespread use of the automobile. Vehicles caused traffic congestion, led to the use of curbs, required parking areas, and altered the formerly pedestrian character and scale of the campus. In 1938 concrete roads and curbs were built from the fire house (Building no. 41) past, and including the triangle in front of, Hitchcock Hall (Building no. 37) and on to C Building (Building no. 73). In the coming decades, traffic congestion became a recognized problem and led to the creation of parking lots. Very few parking areas were present in 1947 (see Plan V.1); however, a report from 1952 noted, “With the growth of the number of employees and the increase in the number of those owning cars the traffic problem is becoming a serious one. Expansion is being undertaken of some of the parking areas.”

Pedestrian circulation was addressed as well. In 1938 concrete sidewalks were constructed between the Fire House and Hitchcock Hall, and underground passageways connected A, B, and C buildings to M Building. (Building no. 72) The 1903 “subway” connecting the East and West Campuses created such a pedestrian safety hazard and a point of congestion that in 1938 a separate vehicular underpass was constructed parallel to the 1903 passage between the campuses (see Figure V.6). With construction of the new underpass, the original subway was to be reserved strictly for the use of pedestrians. The pedestrian underpass was improved again in 1939 when it was repaved, and steps and a walk were built from it to the employees’ cafeteria.

During the Second World War, little new development activity took place on the West Campus likely because federal resources were directed to the war effort. Work by the construction department mostly consisted of maintenance and repairs. The few projects that did occur were
the result of immediate needs. On account of accumulated storm water, the boundary wall behind
the greenhouse needed to be rebuilt in 1941. That same year, the Red Cross building was
destroyed by fire. Hagan Hall (Building no. 38), a large performance theatre, was constructed
in place of the building next to the first theatre for psychodrama, Hitchcock Hall (see Figure
V.7). Also during the war, weapons positions were constructed near the greenhouses of the
hospital, as documented in a photograph from 1944 (see Figure V.4).

The railroad spur was still in use to deliver coal to the Power House during and after the war; however, the hospital continued to experience difficulty with the location of the track. In 1944, the annual report lamented

An earth slide on our branch railroad track near the group of springs along the
side hill has caused much trouble from time to time during the past year. When
settlement occurred the road bed had to be filled and track re-tamped. The
settlement on the bank was replaced by fill which was believed best for anchoring
into the clay earth underneath, such as broken stone, concrete from road repairs,
discarded paving brick, etc. The water from the several springs was collected and
piped under the track to prevent the seepage from springs saturating the clay
which would tend to cause the ground to slide. The fills which we have made
from time to time apparently have stopped the settlement, as we have experienced
no trouble for some time.

Erosion on the railroad spur tracks required additional treatment throughout the 1940s. The
seepage and settlement were eventually contained. Additional funding for the railroad was
directed to the construction of the locomotive house (Building no. 55) that was constructed north
of the Power House in 1947.

The service landscape of the western hillside near the Power House was being transformed in the
1940s. In addition to work on the coal spur and locomotive house, a new Warehouse, Laundry,
and Shops Building (Building no. 118) was authorized by Congress in 1945 and under
construction by 1949. Located about 100 feet south of the Civil War Cemetery, the new
building was eventually occupied by 1951 after resolving drainage issues (see Figure V.8). More
than $100,000 in additional construction, including a retaining wall, was needed to address these
problems. This same year, the increased need for electric energy led the hospital to purchase
electricity. Although the power plant did continue to produce heat for the hospital, for the first
time in its history the hospital did not generate all its own power. Energy use also grew by 1957
with the expansion and renovation of street lighting.

Reassignment of facility programs and the demolition of older buildings changed the pattern of
the West Campus landscape during the 1950s. The move of the laundry to its new location on the
western hillside allowed the carpenter, cabinet and mattress shop activities to be transferred to
the former laundry building in 1954 (Building no. 49). With this transfer, the buildings that
previously housed work therapy activities were demolished during the year. Similarly, plans
made in 1947 for the replacement of Howard Hall, the West Lodge, and Oaks A, B, and C
buildings were beginning to come to fruition. The appropriations act for 1950 authorized
funding to demolish the Toner and Oaks buildings. Although authorization was received for
the demolition of the buildings in 1950, the need for the bed space delayed the destruction. With the construction of a new Receiving Building east of Nichols Avenue in 1954, the demolition of those buildings was requested again in 1954 and carried out two years later. Similarly, when the maximum security John Howard Pavilion opened on the East Campus in 1959, patients were relocated, opening the older Howard Hall to demolition.

C. LANDSCAPE DECLINE AND STABILIZATION, 1960s-2004

The period from the 1960s to 2004 witnessed the gradual decline of the historic character of the cultural landscape of the hospital. Treatment efforts shifted to the East Campus bringing with them activity and attention that had previously been devoted to the West Campus. After 25 years of service, Superintendent Winfred Overholser retired and was replaced by Dr. Dale Cameron in 1962. Larger movements were already underway at the institution. The character of the grounds changed in relation to the new hospital uses and social trends including the large scale deinstitutionalization of psychiatric hospitals. The West Campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital was eventually abandoned as resources were concentrated elsewhere. The sequence of changes that led to the mothballing and later preservation of the West Campus is described in this section.

C1. Decline of the West Campus Landscape

As in the previous decades, a small amount of new construction and ongoing demolition of older facilities continued from the 1960s through the end of the century. These actions negatively impacted the character of the hospital grounds. By March 1961, Howard Hall was dismantled which changed the spatial relations of hospital grounds west of the Center Building. That portion of the plateau was visually opened with the removal of the building’s mass (see Figure V.9). The same year the Toner and Oaks buildings were demolished, which meant the loss of the outdoor spaces associated with the southern group of Godding’s cottage plan (see Plan V.3). The absence of older facilities was partially offset by new construction, which served to replace the former massing and relationship of the building space to the landscape. Between 1962 and 1963, joining wings were constructed on the Administration Building (Building no. 74). This construction resulted in the removal of the open colonnades connecting the Administration Building to Buildings B and C, thus changing the spatial relationships between the structures and visual penetrability from the central lawn (see Figure V.10).

By the 1960s, the increased availability and popularity of the automobile led to significant changes on the campus. Aerial photographs from 1961 and 1966 captured the dramatic expansion of surface parking areas (see Plans V.3 and V.4). Around this time, roads were paved with asphalt and parking areas were created and expanded (see Figures V.11 and 12). Earlier metal lampposts were also replaced with concrete posts and topped by globe lamps. Urban growth and regional traffic planning led to the construction of the Anacostia Freeway (Interstate 295) by 1961 (see Figure V.13 and Plan V.3). Located along the northwestern edge of the hospital, the highway removed about 15 acres from the hospital. As a result of the freeway, a new pumping station (Building no. 16) was constructed down the slope north of the Center Building. The old pumping station remained standing on the opposite side of the freeway.
Also, the placement of the freeway contributed to the abandonment of the coal spur rail line that fed the Power House with coal. “Old No.4,” the coal spur locomotive was one of the last operating steam engines in the country before the tracks were removed (see Figure V.14).

Two changes in the mid-1960s affected the use and visual character of the hospital grounds. St. Elizabeths ended the support of farming and production of food crops in 1965. The decision meant that the former farmland at Godding Croft would be used for recreation and related purposes. The orchard and horticultural areas on the West Campus had already been abandoned (see Plans V.3 and V.4). A second change arrived with Dutch elm disease in the 1960s. Although a small number of individual American elm trees persisted, the majority of these trees once common throughout the landscape were killed by the end of the decade (see Figure V.15).

Large areas of the West Campus landscape were transformed during the middle of the 1960s. The Dawes wing of the Center Building was ceremoniously demolished in 1965. The density of built areas south of the Center Building was rapidly thinning when in the same area, the West Lodge was removed between 1978 and 1983 (see Plan V.5 and Figure V.9). Amidst the demolition taking place on the West Campus, use of the campus and remaining facilities continued, as evidenced by the placement of large cobra-head streetlights by 1979 (see Figure V.16). Also, the remaining ravines and hillsides underwent significant change by mid 1960s (see Plan V.4). Both the ravine northwest of the greenhouses and southern ravines north and west of Q building had been filled along with remnants of historic springs (see Figures V.17 and V.18). The 1966 aerial photograph also depicted extensive earthworks on the northern hillside and along the western hillsides. By the late 1970s, the large reservoir pond south of the Center Building and the smaller fountain in the Detached and Relief building courtyard were removed (see Plan V.5).

C2. Administrative Changes and the Campaign for Preservation

The series of administrative changes at the hospital that began in the 1940s continued through to the end of the period. Organizational uncertainty and the widespread demolition of historic landscapes and structures at the hospital led to a campaign for the preservation of the West Campus. In 1967, the Department of Health Education and Welfare relinquished authority to the National Institute of Mental Health. The Institute planned to demonstrate at Saint Elizabeths that large mental hospitals can serve as community-oriented treatment facilities and assume a key role in the national mental health program. In 1977, concern for the future of the campus by the Institute was manifested in a master plan. In 1980, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was reorganized as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The department retained responsibility for the hospital. Immediately preceding the reorganization, both the East and West Campuses were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The listing was the first attainment of official recognition for the historical significance of St. Elizabeths.

Fragmentation of management responsibility for the West Campus began during the 1980s. In November of 1984, the Saint Elizabeths Hospital and District of Columbia Mental Health Services Act (Public Law 98-621) was signed into law. The law transferred 21 hospital buildings to the District of Columbia. All of these buildings but Hitchcock Hall (Building no.
37) and Hagan Hall (Building no. 38) were located on the east campus. The HHS retained responsibility for 53 buildings and their associated grounds, most of which were on the West Campus. The changes prompted the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the District of Columbia, and the HHS to sign a memorandum of agreement for the protection of historic resources at St. Elizabeths in 1989. In the memorandum, the HHS assured responsibility for the 53 buildings and surrounding landscapes transferred to it in 1984, along with the Civil War Cemetery, the orchard area, vistas of the rivers and the city, and the brick and stone perimeter wall encircling the hospital.

The institutional agreement helped clear the way for the designation of St Elizabeths Hospital as a National Historic Landmark in March of 1991. The first large-scale study of West Campus historic resources occurred in 1993. Devraux & Purnell Architects – Planners created the Historic Resources Management Plan for the District of Columbia. The landscape component by Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc. identified 60 individual landscape features on the St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus that contributed to the hospital’s historic significance. The work was important for creating a baseline assessment of the landscape and for conveying the hospital’s significance to the various property managers.

The West Campus was occupied by the HHS for offices and storage when the hospital holdings were declared in excess of its needs in 2001. After this date many buildings were sealed and the grounds were left without consistent management (see Figure V.19). Still under the jurisdiction of the HHS, the largely abandoned West Campus was accepted by General Services Administration (GSA) on December of 2004.

GSA has held the property since that time and initiated landscape maintenance and facilities stabilization programs. The landscape maintenance program has improved the condition of certain aspects of the hospital landscape but it has also contributed to the loss of some historic vegetation, landscape structures, fences, and other furnishings on the campus. The use of heavy machinery for repairs to the Center Building, for example, damaged the small formal garden by trampling the ornate iron fence, breaking statuary and fountains, and crushing plants. Elsewhere on the campus, similar work has also led to the removal of historic trees, shrubs, vines, and other vegetation due to a lack of awareness of the plants’ historicity. These oversights were recognized by GSA and led to the commissioning of the Building, Landscape, and Archaeological Assessment – St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus (2005) led by Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects. The condition assessment of the West Campus landscape was conducted by Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners. During the assessment process, both campuses of St. Elizabeths were added to the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites in 2005.

D. WEST CAMPUS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN 2004

The following narrative describes the character of the landscape around the end of the twentieth century after over six decades of progressive landscape decline. The 2004 Period Plan, Plan V.9, reveals that despite the loss of many significant landscape features since the 1940s, the overall
structure of the landscape and patterns of spatial organization remain intact from previous periods. The period plan draws on aerals, plans, and fieldwork by Heritage Landscapes in order to depict the landscape of the preserved hospital. Character-defining features of the landscape are discussed referring to Plan V.9. The character-defining features described in the text include:

- Natural Systems and Features
- Land Uses and Cultural Tradition
- Spatial Organization and Land Pattern
- Views and Visual Relationship
- Topography and Drainage
- Vegetation
- Circulation
- Constructed Water Features
- Landscape Structures
- Small-scale Features, Site Furnishings and Objects
- Archaeological Sites

The following section refers to these character-defining features and to an 11”x17” fold-out period plan. The plan depicts landscape materials and composition at a scale of 1”= 300’. Existing conditions structures, circulation, and vegetation are highlighted with different colors by type and material and listed in the symbol key. Primary sources of the period plan include a digitized version of the 1947 Corps of Engineers Topographic Survey (Plan V.1), a 2002 Aerial Photograph (Plan VI.1), landscape assessment field notes, observations, and a series of photographs by Heritage Landscapes.

D1. Natural Systems and Features

Natural systems and processes have been modified from the previous period. The Anacostia River remains the primary factor and cause of the natural landforms at the hospital; however, the high terrace of the West Campus has been changed with the filling of large ravines north of the greenhouses and north and west of Q building. Another factor influencing the modification of natural systems is the Anacostia Freeway (Interstate 295) which forms the entire northwestern boundary of the hospital (see Plans V.2 and V.9). Although the land uses surrounding the hospital have been urbanized during the period, the open landscape and growth of vegetation at the hospital serves as a vestige of the former rural region. Due to the gradual disuse of the West Campus, the grounds provide a refuge for wildlife, including deer, wild turkey and several small mammal species.

D2. Land Uses and Cultural Traditions

The land uses and cultural traditions in 2004 are determined by the recent history of abandonment and subsequent stabilization and preservation. Some federal employees maintained office space in the Administration building through 2004, although today the building is unused. Little activity continues at the largely vacated campus. The presence of security personnel and government contracted work crews is increasing on the grounds at the end of the period. Rough tree pruning and mowing of the neglected lawns is commences as part of the campus
preservation effort. Horticultural and patriotic traditions continue at the West Campus in 2004. A community garden program exists near the greenhouses in Unit 3 (see Figure V.20). Produce from the garden crops is sold through the Fresh Vegetable Market at the Josephene Butler Park Center. Also, veneration of the Civil War Cemetery by historical groups continues on the western hillside of Unit 5.

D3. Spatial Organization and Land Patterns

The spatial organization of the hospital remains determined by topography, vegetation, and building mass. The unique patterns established under Nichols and Godding continue to stand out in 2004 even through numerous spatial relationships have been reorganized with the demolition of structures, placement of parking areas, and construction of a few modern facilities. Landscape Unit 4 has undergone substantial change with the removal of Howard Hall and the construction of the new Laundry and Warehouse building. The removal of the nineteenth century cottage buildings in Unit 2 has also modified the smaller scale spatial relationships once associated with the cluster of facilities. The remaining buildings in this area open out to the large central lawn more than in previous periods (see Plan V.7). Historic courtyards and other internalized outdoor spaces are still evident in the landscape although larger park-like areas have been impacted with the loss of trees and removal of structures and landscape furnishings like railings. The southeast lawn near the Allison complex of Unit 1 is one example of this situation. Summerhouses and buildings remain but the railings, benches, shrubs, and many trees are no longer present (see Figure V.19). The discreet landscapes around the Burrows Cottage, Staff Residences, and the Point at Golden Raintree Drive remain in 2004 (see Figure V.20, V.21, and V.22). The spatial context of the Civil War Cemetery area, however, is impacted by the presence of the large Laundry and Warehouse building (see Plan V.9). Spatial organization is also impacted by the growth of the emergent forest on the northern and western slopes of Units 3 and 5. These formerly open areas are enclosed by woodland due to the abandonment of the orchard and railroad in the 1960s.

D4. Views and Visual Relationships

Despite the heavy loss of trees over the period, visual relationships on the West Campus remain constrained by canopy trees over open turf and building mass. In Units 1 and 2, the arboretum-like tree collection and broad lawn areas create distinct green spaces surrounded by historic brick buildings and structures (see Figure V.10). The removal of landscapes and structures during the period influences some visual relationships such as in the area south of the Center Building where the West Lodge, Dawes building, and Howard Hall were replaced by parking lots and a storage facility. The removal of the cottage buildings in Unit 2 has also opened up views from the letter buildings to the central lawn area. Beyond the center of the Units 1 and 2, the expansive vista out to the rivers and downtown are similar to historic views. The field to forest transition in Unit 3 changes the view such that tree canopy forms the ground plane of the view rather than the old agricultural fields and orchard (see Plan V.8). Although the stabilized campus no longer produces power, the two smokestacks of the Power House contrast with the surrounding woodland and draw visual connections between the city core and the West Campus (see Figure V.13).
D5. Topography and Drainage

The natural topography of the West Campus reveals substantial modification since 1937. While the overall form of the plateau is similar to other times in the past, large ravines and hillsides leading from the plateau have been regraded or filled. As noted above, ravines north of the greenhouse and north and west of the Q building have been filled. Drainage pipe has been laid over the excavated and filled areas (see Figure V.18). Earthwork associated with the construction of the highway has altered the topography of most of the northwestern and southwestern half of the campus (see Plan V.4). Only the ravine west and south of the Power House and the ravine east of Sweetgum Lane resemble their historic forms. The filling of ravines also sealed the natural springs and spring houses in the ravines. No apparent springs exist on the West Campus in 2004. From the designed core of the hospital, the underground storm drainage system continues to operate although scouring and erosion of intermittent streams occurs at pipe outlets on the slopes of the plateau.

D6. Vegetation

Vegetation that had been left to grow unchecked is returning under control of maintenance regimes in 2004. Woodland, lawn with mature trees, one small formal garden, a few shrubs, and a small vegetable garden make up the types of vegetation on the West Campus at the end of the period. Recently expanded woodland cover occurs throughout ravines and slopes of Units 3, 4, and 5 that used to be agricultural fields and orchards. Small groups of older trees are present in the ravine along Sweetgum Lane, in the ravine south of the Power House, on the hillside north of Holly Street, and along the southwestern perimeter west of the Q building parking lot (see Plan V.9). Though far fewer than in previous periods, many significant and mature trees cover the lawns of Units 1 and 2. The deciduous, evergreen, and ornamental tree collection still shows remarkable diversity and vigor (see Plan V.8). Shrubs and a few ornamental plants are present in the small formal garden along the southern façade of the Center Building. Shrubs are also present outside of Hagan Hall and vines appear on the arbor near Staff Residence No. 2 (see Figures V.7 and V.21). A small community garden was also established north of the greenhouses and east of Burrows Cottage (see Figure V.20). The garden program was started in 1998 by Urban Oasis and maintained by volunteers under a revocable use permit with GSA. The program ceased in 2005 and has not restarted.

D7. Circulation

The circulation patterns of the West Campus of St. Elizabeths remain generally true to the historic alignments. Graceful drives still fit with the lay of the land. Although paving has changed and some features such as iron bollards and cobble gutters are no longer present in the landscape, the general layout of roads and paths persists into 2004. Many brick paths that were used earlier in the period are now buried (see Figure V.23). Demolition of individual buildings did not affect the circulation system as much as did accommodation for automobile use after the Second World War. The construction of numerous parking areas is the single largest alteration of circulation for the period. Prior to the middle of the century, parking was tucked away rather than placed directly in front of buildings and overtop of former planting areas and lawns(see
Figure V.12). Adjustment of the grounds to automobile traffic is also evident with the subway expansion, seen on Plan V.9. Most trails and paths through the wooded sections of the campus are in disrepair after years of neglect. The former coal spur is converted into a partially paved road that passes by the Laundry and Warehouse building in 2004.

D8. Landscape Structures

Landscape structures on the campus in 2004 include many historic features. The stone and brick perimeter wall along Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue stands in fair condition throughout the period (see Figure V.6). Other stone and brick walls with integrated steps are present around the Ice Plant, Center Building, and other location of the nineteenth century campus. Remnants of demolished structures also make up the body of landscape structures including retaining walls, steps, and curb cuts. Chain link fence is also used as perimeter security and around the Power House ravine although interior fences topped with barbwire such as the fences around B building are not present in 2004 (see Figure V.16). Also sections of aged metal tube railing are found in locations including around the Ice Plant and south of the Center Building (see Figures V.24 and V.25). Other metal fences are found in the small formal garden along the south façade of the Center Building. The Civil War Cemetery also contains a new metal picket fence. Bridges, arbors, and outbuildings are additional landscape structures at St. Elizabeths. A historic brick bridge remains north of the Ice Plant in the ravine and a contemporary bridge in a historic location is present off of Sweetgum Lane in the northern ravine. Landscape buildings on the West Campus include two small summerhouses southeast of the Allison complex and a wire-frame arbor next to Staff Residence No.2 (see Figures V.19 and V.21). Additionally, greenhouses in poor condition are present in Unit 3.

D9. Constructed Water Features

By 2004, large designed water features such as fountains and pools are absent from the landscape. The circular basin south of the Center Building is leveled by the late 1970s. The comparison of the 1966 aerial photographs and 1977 plan reveals that the small fountain in the courtyard of the Detached and Relief buildings is also removed during this period (see Plan V.4 and Plan V.5). A historic drinking fountain and a small pedestal fountain located inside the formal garden to the south of the Center Building were heavily damaged at this time. Metal drinking fountains installed during the period are scattered about the Unit 2 landscape in 2004.

D10. Small-scale Features, Furnishings and Objects

St. Elizabeths contains numerous small-scale features, furnishings, and objects in 2004 although fewer than when the campus was an active psychiatric hospital. The unoccupied grounds hold various benches, signs, lights, flagpoles, historic and modern fire hydrants, metal pedestal grills, and institutional drinking fountains. A few of the thousands of wood and metal settees painted green by patients following World War II are found near buildings, under summerhouses, and in wooded areas throughout Units 1 through 5 (see Figure V.19). Presumably older wood and concrete benches are also present in Unit 2. The full range of lighting installed during the period is present on the West Campus. The original gas lamps are no longer present although the pedestals may remain outside of the south entrance to the Center Building. A few concrete post
lamps remain amidst the abundant cobra-head street lights installed during the 1970s (see Figure V.20). Four contemporary flagpoles are found on the West Campus including at the terminus of the Gatehouse No.1 entrance, northwest of the Center Building, outside of Staff Residence No.1, and across from the entrance of the Administration Building. The location of the flagpole near Gatehouse No.1 may predate the other flag locations. Other objects such as planters and birdbaths also contribute to the character of the landscape and are found near the Center Building garden, behind Hagen Hall, and in a sunken garden at the greenhouse complex. The periodically maintained Civil War Cemetery also contains several stone grave markers. Iron crosses marking graves earlier in the period are not visible on the surface in 2004.

D11. Archaeological Sites

In 2004, archaeological sites at St. Elizabeths included prehistoric and historic remains encompassing Native American, Civil War, and early hospital eras. Known sites at this time include prehistoric remains around the Point of Golden Raintree Drive in Unit 3, the Civil War Cemetery in Unit 5, nineteenth century hospital dump evidence in the Power House ravine of Unit 4, and some evidence of early twentieth century farming operations on the northern slope in Unit 3 (see Plans V.10, V.11 and V.12). Major changes such as filling of the ravines, grading on hillsides and the construction of Interstate 295 obscure potentially important sites of the old wharf and St. Elizabeths pleasure ground sites such as springs.
CHAPTER V: ENDNOTES

9 Wm. H. Mistr to Overholser, July 16, 1945, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 5, 1.
10 It is unknown when Alvah Godding left the position of head of the Lawns and Grounds Department.
11 Wm. H. Mistr to Overholser, July 16, 1945, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 5, 1.
12 Wm. H. Mistr to Overholser, July 16, 1945.
13 Mistr to Overholser, July 20, 1946, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 5, 1-2.
18 Wm. H. Mistr to Overholser, July 16, 1945, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 5, 2.
19 Mistr to Overholser, July 20.
21 Air Photographics, Inc., photo no. 1948 DC D396, Spring 1948, included in Heritage Landscapes, St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus Landscape Assessment Plan, prepared for the General Services Administration, August 31, 2005, 1948-AP.
32 Snyder to Winfred Overholser, Superintendent, July 15, 1946, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 4, 1.
34 Annual Report, 1940-41, 11.
35 Devrouax & Purnell, 2:81.
C. B. Snyder to Winfred Overholser. July 11, 1944, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 4, 1.

Snyder to Winfred Overholser, Superintendent, July 15, 1946, NARA, Record Group 418, Records of St. Elizabeths Hospital, entry 20, box 4, 1.

Heritage Landscapes and Robinson & Associates, Inc.


Air Photographics, Inc., photo no. V615-197(P), March 1961, included in Heritage Landscapes, St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus Landscape Assessment Plan, prepared for the General Services Administration, August 31, 2005, 1961-AP.

Air Photographics, Inc., photo no. V615-197(P), March 1961, included in Heritage Landscapes, St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus Landscape Assessment Plan, prepared for the General Services Administration, August 31, 2005, 1961-AP.


For asphalt roads, see DC0148SE0P001 and DC0066SE0P034, 1963, General Services Administration, Saint Elizabeths Hospital Database, Compiled by Zimmerman Associates, Inc., 2005.

For lampposts see DC0148SE0P001 and DC0066SE0P034, 1963, General Services Administration, Saint Elizabeths Hospital Database, Compiled by Zimmerman Associates, Inc., 2005.


Devrouaux & Purnell, 2:82; Air Photographics, Inc., photo no. V615-197(P), February 1966, included in Heritage Landscapes, St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus Landscape Assessment Plan, prepared for the General Services Administration, August 31, 2005, 1966-AP.


Image nos. DC0129SE0P004 and DC0101SE0P017, General Services Administration, Saint Elizabeths Hospital Database, compiled by Zimmerman Associates, Inc., 2005.


St. Elizabeths Hospital Master Plan, 1977, St. Elizabeths Health Sciences Library.


Heritage Landscapes and Robinson & Associates, Inc.
68 Responsibilities for components of the Building, Landscape, and Archaeological Assessment – St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus included Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects for building assessment, Heritage Landscapes for landscape assessment and Hunter Research for project history and archaeology.
69 Patricia O’Donnell, Peter Viteretto, Gregory De Vries, Tamara Orlow, and Thomas Helmkamp, St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus Landscape Assessment Plan, Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners (authors), Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects (team leader) for U.S., General Service Administration, 2005.
Figure V.1: The 1938 “St. Elizabeths Hospital, Key Plan of Buildings” identifies buildings on the West Campus. After White’s tenure, construction activity was generally limited to updating existing facilities and removing old facilities as development of the East Campus continued. The water tower in front of the L building was one of these structures removed by this time. (CL-R-RG 418 no. 22.jpeg)
Figure V.2: “Site Plan, St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington D.C.” shows the increasing complexity of the spatial organization of St. Elizabeths in 1945. The node of four buildings constructed east of Nichols Avenue at the beginning of the century has been expanded into a formal arrangement of more than a dozen buildings. The significant addition of the Warehouse and Laundry Building is planned, but not yet built, on the West Campus. The legend identifies buildings by color. Yellow: Hospital and Receiving and Patients Dormitories, Orange: Administration, Brown: Guards, Red: Service, Pink: New, Purple: Residential, Blue: Assembly and Recreation, Green: Farm. (CL-R-1945 pbs survey.jpeg)
Figure V.3: Some distinctive landscape features of the West Campus were maintained into the 1960s as shown in this 1963 photograph. This circular pool to the south of the Center Building was first constructed in the 1890s as a water reservoir and later renovated with water lilies, ornamental grasses and a weeping willow. According to aerial photographic records the pool was removed between 1966 and 1978. (CL-0066SE0P001.jpeg)
Figure V.4: The greenhouses at St. Elizabeths produced several thousand cut flowers for the wards, including Easter lilies and poinsettias around the holiday seasons. Patients helped in the production of these facilities throughout the 1940s. Also note the World War II gun towers and utility lines in the view. (CL-DC1449SE0P011.jpeg)
Figure V.5: This October 1, 1944 view of the grounds looking towards the circular pond south of the Center Building is similar to the view of poet Ezra Pound’s room during his stay at St. Elizabeths, with large overstory deciduous and evergreen trees scattered over a turf grass lawn. However, because documentation suggests Pound’s room was on the north side of the building, he would not have had a view to the south pond. (CL-DC1472SE0P071.jpeg)
Figure V.6: This circa 1940 shows the newly completed underpass connecting the East and West Campuses. Originally built in 1903, the underpass was expanded in 1938 for the increasing numbers of pedestrians and vehicles. The expansion created additional passages, retaining walls, and curbs. Also note the steps and guide rails previously constructed and the East Campus water tank, visible in the background. (CL-DC1472SE0P045.jpeg)
Figure V.7: Hagan Hall (Building no. 38) was constructed circa 1940s. The building was located adjacent to Hitchcock Hall (Building no. 37), a large performance theatre, with several site amenities. This image dating to May 1, 1968 shows several shrubs along the foundation, paved and unpaved walks, parking areas, benches, and a pedestrian-style lamp around Hagan Hall. (CL-DC1454SE0P001.jpeg)
Figure V.8: Clearing of the woodland hillside and construction of the Warehouse and Laundry Building adjacent to the Civil War Cemetery in 1949 required ongoing work including a retaining wall and erosion control, as this 1952 photograph depicts. Drainage issues also slowed the progress on construction, though the building was occupied by 1951. (CL-DC1470SE0P009.jpeg)
Figure V.9: This 1983 aerial view shows the altered spatial organization of the West Campus as vehicular parking has increased and older facilities were removed. The white building in the center and surrounding parking marks the location of the former Howard Hall and the exterior walls of its enclosure, a facility for the criminally insane. The removal, along with the demolition of the West Lodge, drastically altered the spatial configuration by opening up the west edge of the plateau. (CL-DC1472SE0P011.jpeg)
Figure V.10: Further alterations to buildings throughout the time period changed the relationship between building and landscape. The open colonnades of the Administration were removed when the adjoining wings were constructed in 1961. The landscape offered fewer trees at this point and more open lawns. Also note the cobra-style light fixture and the steam heat escaping from an underground tunnel. (CL-DC0137SE0P040.jpeg)
Figure V.11: Throughout the 1960s, the square footage of concrete and bituminous pavement increased as new roads and walks were constructed. The circuitous road adjacent to the powerhouse and a section of parking near the B building were two projects undertaken at this time. (CL-DC1472SE0582.jpeg)
Figure V.12: Changes in the landscape occurred with the addition of several parking lots throughout the mid twentieth century. Open green lawns with gardens and trees were replaced with impervious surfaces for parking. Often spaces immediately adjacent to buildings were converted to parking as shown in this 1968 photograph of the south side of the Pine and Willow buildings. (CL-DC1442SE0P002.jpeg)
Figure V.13: A circa 1955 aerial oblique photograph shows the urban growth and development that changed the contextual setting of the hospital in the mid twentieth century. Creation of the adjacent Anacostia Freeway (now Interstate 295) during this time removed about 15 acres from the hospital acreage and helped spur the adjacent growth. (CL-DC1472SE0P069.jpeg)
Figure V.14: Around 1960 “Old No. 4 is still huffing and puffing” as one of the last remaining operating steam locomotives in the country. The train operated on the coal spur at St. Elizabeths delivering coal to the power house to produce heat and electricity. During the construction of the adjacent interstate, the coal spur was removed from the grounds. (CL-DC1472SE0D004.jpeg)
Figure V.15: Once prevalent throughout the St. Elizabeths landscape, American elms declined and were removed in the late 1960s due to the advance of Dutch Elm Disease. This 1966 photo shows one of the remaining American elms on the grounds with a plaque donated and erected by the local Garden Club. (CL-HL-GC-Label-04-28-1966.jpeg)
Figure V.16: “Photograph of ‘B’ Building showing fence and barbed wire. Photo taken: November 1981” illustrates the continued use of the older buildings on the West Campus. Though other facilities were demolished, others such as the B building remained in use as evidenced by the chain link fence and large cobra-head streetlights. (CL-DC1335SE0P010.jpeg)
Figure V.17: During the 1960s, some of the downslope ravines at St. Elizabeths were filled, as seen in this photograph of the filling of the ravine west of Building Q (Building 68) in 1963. Filling the ravines altered the topography and drainage of the site. (CL-DC1472SE0P133.jpeg)
Figure V.18: Clearing and filling of ravines on the West Campus throughout the mid 1960s changed the spatial organization of the hospital with the leveling of grounds, opening of views, and filling of historic springs. The ravine shown here is in the process of being filled; the height of the manhole will be the top of the grade as the filling is complete. (CL-DC1472SE0P113.jpeg)
Figure V.19: After nearly two decades of occupying the St. Elizabeths grounds, the Department of Health and Human Services declared the site too large for its needs in 2001. Unused buildings were sealed and mothballed at this time. Many small scale features and furnishings remain, including the green painted settees under the summer house shelter. (CL-DC1345SE0P017.jpeg)
In 2002, the grounds between the greenhouses and Burrows Cottage displayed a large vegetable garden as part of a community garden program. Produce was sold through the Fresh Vegetable Market at the Josephene Butler Park Center; however, today, the garden is no longer in existence. Site lighting has also changed; cobra-head lights, such as the one pictured above, are found throughout. (CL-DC1447SE0P009.jpeg)
Figure V.21: The spatial arrangements of the landscape surrounding the staff residences remains mostly intact today. This 1968 photograph illustrates the original condition with several trees, shrubs, fences, and a metal arbor. (CL-DC1446SE0P001.jpeg)
Figure V.22: Numerous canopy trees and under story shrubs are displayed in the landscape surrounding the staff residences in 1968. In 2006, this extensively landscaped area remained with few alterations. Also note what appears to be an earth circular drive. (CL-DC1444SE0P001.jpeg)
Figure V.23: This 1968 image shows the character and the landscape features of the area surrounding Relief (left) Allison B (Right). The open colonnade links the buildings together, while providing a spatial relationship with the outdoors. The curvilinear brick path provides access to the buildings and views to the adjacent flower bed, while the numerous benches provide seating. Today the historic brick paths are buried. (CL-DC1345SE0P001.jpg)
Figure V.24: Small scale features within the West Campus help create the composite character evident today. Metal railings, stone retaining walls, a pedestrian-scale light fixture, and adjacent railroad tracks comprise the service landscape along the west side of the Ice Plant. (CL-DC1461SE0P001.jpeg)
Figure V.25: Though the St. Elizabeths landscape has declined over the years with successional, opportunistic volunteer vegetation, the overall structure and some small-scale elements remain such as the metal railing at the Ice Plant seen here in 2003. Current landscape maintenance and facilities stabilization aims to improve the condition of the hospital grounds. (CL-DC1461SE0P005 2003.jpeg)