

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Dix Hill, Wake County, N.C.

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Description:

Dix Hill (Dorothea Dix Hospital) presently contains approximately 400 acres. Until recently it consisted of some 1400 acres, mostly undeveloped, but the southern (rear) acreage has been transferred partially to North Carolina State University for development as "Centennial Campus" and partially to the State Farmers' Market. The area of the campus being nominated is the historic core, the pre-1941 historic resources consisting of the front hillside, known as the "Grove," with two entrance gates and a gazebo (counted as one contributing site and three contributing structures); fourteen contributing buildings built from 1898-1939; and two noncontributing buildings, Center Building, built in 1856 but partially demolished and expanded in the past fifty years, and a small engineering office. The campus is roughly divided in half by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad tracks extending behind Center Building, with the front campus sometimes referred to as east campus and the area beyond the tracks sometimes called west campus.

Entering through the Boylan entrance gate or the South Saunders entrance gate, the visitor approaches the hospital along a winding drive which meanders up Dix Hill through a canopy of large oak trees. To the northeast, Dix Hill has a spectacular view of the downtown Raleigh skyline. Center Building, on top of the hill, is barely visible through the trees, even in winter. Two historic buildings flank the Boylan entrance gate: the Gatekeeper's Lodge and the Doctor's Residence, both built in 1923. The Superintendent's Residence, also built in 1923, stands in the west edge of the grove approximately halfway up the hill to Center Building. Four other historic buildings also stand in the front campus area: Anderson Building, the 1915 nurses' dormitory; Harvey Building, the 1924 patients' dormitory; and two staff residences, Buffalo House, built in 1898 and Benner House, built ca. 1925. Center Building, because of its large size, is not visible in its entirety from any vantage point on the grounds. From the front campus, it is screened by large hardwood trees. To the east, west, and south, where the campus is heavily built up with buildings and parking areas, Center Building is more visible. Directly behind Center Building, arranged along Whiteside Drive which is parallel to Center Building, are Spruill Building, a 1935 dormitory; the 1910 Carpenter Shop; the Old Boiler Room of 1910; a 1953 maintenance building; and Hoey Building, a 1939 dormitory. A row of three large 1930s dormitories along Biggs Drive east of Center Building complete the district: Broughton, Clark, and Brown.

This Dix Hill district contains only the densest concentration of historic buildings located on campus. There are approximately 42 buildings directly associated

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with the hospital, and approximately 50 small houses on the entire campus, spread over the 400 acres. To the west and south of Center Building, outside of the district, are several other dormitories, maintenance and storage buildings, the modern chapel, and a cluster of housing. There are some historic buildings located on west campus: Spring Hill (the Theophilus Hunter House), a plantation house built ca. 1820 and remodeled in 1907 which is already listed in the National Register; Kirby Building of 1924, and Adams Building of 1939. These buildings, widely scattered among more recent hospital buildings, are unable to be included in this district because of the high number of less than fifty year-old buildings around them.

Dix Hill Resources Within the Nominated Area:

Center Complex. 820 S. Boylan Ave. This large, complicated assortment of facilities dates from the 1850s through the 1970s. The earliest building has substantial additions built prior to 1941 and all of the buildings have been interconnected by infill construction and covered walkways. The complex comprises the following buildings:

- N 1. Center Building, 1850s through 1970s
- C 2. Old Laundry, ca. 1910
- N 3. Cold Storage Building, ca. 1910 with later additions
- C 4. Kitchen, 1921
- C 5. Canteen, 1921
- C 6. Cafeteria, 1921

A. J. Davis's original Center Building, 726 feet long, completed in 1856, consisted of a three-story Tuscan Revival temple-form administration pavilion on a northeast-southwest axis and flanking long, perpendicular three-story male (#1a) and female (#1b) dormitory wings. The entire building was constructed of stuccoed brick by leading mid-19th century builders in North Carolina, including the Conrad brothers of Lexington and Dabney Cosby of Raleigh. The stucco was scored so that the walls appeared to be smooth-faced stone blocks. The narrow central temple was three bays wide and the wings were recessed from its main facade. The male (west) wing burned in 1926 and was rebuilt within the brick shell. Numerous annexes were added to the rear for additional dormitory, dining, cooking and office space, yet Davis's original building remained in use until 1951. In that year the central pavilion was demolished and a new six-story center section, called McBryde (#1c), designed by architects Wiley and Wilson, was built. This is actually a T-shaped building: the shaft of the "T" is between Davis's wings and the bar of the "T" extends out in front of the wings. In 1975 a surgery wing (#1d) of modern concrete design was added in front of McBryde.

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Summary of Significance:

Dix Hill, now known as Dorothea Dix Hospital, has been the North Carolina hospital for the mentally ill since 1856. After the construction of Broughton Hospital ca. 1880 in Morganton, in western North Carolina, Dix Hill served eastern North Carolina, and following the construction of Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro in the 1890s, Dix has served the central section of the state. It is located on a sprawling campus of approximately 400 acres in southwest Raleigh one and one-quarter miles southwest of the State Capitol. The original building, an imposing Tuscan Revival temple with three-story flanking wings, was designed by A.J. Davis and completed in 1856. The center pavilion of this building was demolished in 1951 and replaced with a six-story hospital called McBryde Building, and in 1975 a surgery wing was added in front of this. Center Building as it exists today is a large noncontributing resource, although Davis' original wings are structurally intact and several later historic wings retain a high degree of integrity. Now attached to Center Building are several originally free-standing buildings dating from the early 20th century, including a laundry, kitchen, cafeteria, canteen and cold storage building; all except the cold storage building remain substantially intact but have been connected to the rest of the "center complex." Fourteen other buildings, two entrance gates, a gazebo and the "Grove," the thirty-acre wooded hill and grassy swale in front of the hospital, were developed between the 1890s and the 1930s and create an ensemble significant in the history of the humanitarian treatment of the mentally ill in North Carolina and in the evolution of architecture and landscape design at state government institutions in North Carolina. Nationally-important architects Davis and A.G. Bauer worked on the campus in the 1800s, and noted North Carolina architect C.C. Hook shaped it in the 1920s. The cultivation of the "Grove" in front of the hospital throughout the period of significance indicates not only aesthetic sensitivity but also the belief that the tranquillity of nature was an important component in the healing process. The overriding importance of Dix Hill is its campus design, of which the landscape is a vital and unifying element.