

I.D. #: _____
 _____ Nomination Received
 _____ Determined _____ Eligible _____ Not Eligible
 5/1/1999 HPC _____ Approved _____ Denied
 5/1/1999 Public Hearing _____ Approved _____ Denied
 8/2/1999 City Council _____ Approved _____ Denied

**CITY OF AURORA
 HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**AURORA LANDMARK PROPERTIES
 NOMINATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

Historic Name WATERFOWL PRESERVE, FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

Other Name N/A

2. Address of Property

Street Address S. HUTTON ST. (JUST NORTH OF THE OLD MAIN ENTRANCE GATES)

City AURORA County ADAMS Zip 80045

3. Legal Description of Property

P.M. 6TH Township 3S Range 67W

1/4 of SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 36

Quad Map FITZSIMONS (1965, REVISED 1994)

Lot(s) N/A Block N/A Addition N/A

UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 513260 Northing 4398850

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

4. Present Owner of Property

Name UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Address US ARMY GARRISON, FITZSIMONS Phone 303/361-8270

City AURORA State CO Zip 80045

(If the property has multiple ownership, please give the names and addresses of all owners on one or more continuation sheets)

Property: Waterfowl Preserve, Fitzsimons General Hospital

5. Preparer of Nomination

Name RON SLADEK Date 19 FEBRUARY 1999

Organization TATANKA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.

Address P.O. BOX 1909 Phone 970/229-9704

City FORT COLLINS State CO Zip 80522

6. Classification of Property

building(s) district site structure object area

7. Condition of Property

excellent good fair deteriorated ruins

original location moved (date of move _____)

8. Use of Property

Historic WATERFOWL PRESERVE / FISHING POND

Current WATERFOWL PRESERVE

9. Original Owner A.H. GUTHEIL

Source of Information HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, FITZSIMONS ARMY
MEDICAL CENTER (FRONT RANGE RESEARCH ASSOCIATES,
SEPTEMBER 1998)

10. Year of Construction AFTER 1901 AND BEFORE 1918

Source of Information HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, FITZSIMONS ARMY
MEDICAL CENTER (FRONT RANGE RESEARCH ASSOCIATES,
SEPTEMBER 1998)

11. Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer

UNKNOWN

Source of Information N/A

Property: Waterfowl Preserve, Fitzsimons General Hospital

12. Architectural Style / Engineering Type

NO STYLE

13. Description (Describe the current condition and appearance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

14. Alterations (Describe and date significant changes made to the original property on one or more continuation sheets)

15. Significance of Property

Nomination Criteria:

- 1 - the property (district) exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state or community
- 2 - the property (district) is identified with a historic person or historic group significant to national, state, or local history
- 3 - the property (district) embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable to the study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship
- 4 - the property (district) is representative of the work of a master builder or architect
- 5 - the property (district) contains the possibility of important archaeological discoveries in prehistory or history
- 6 - the district consists of a definite area which, due to its unique location or singular characteristics, represents established and familiar visual features of the neighborhood, community or city

Areas of Significance:

MILITARY

CONSERVATION

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

16. Significance Statement

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Property: Waterfowl Preserve, Fitzsimons General Hospital

17. Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

18. Legislative Information

Aurora Ward #: 1 Name of Representative NADINE CALDWELL

Colorado House District #: 36 Name of Representative STEPHANIE TAKIS

Colorado Senate District #: 25 Name of Senator BOB MARTINEZ

US House District #: 1 Name of Representative DIANA DEGETTE

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION

19. Photocopy of USGS Map showing location of site

20. Site Plan showing site boundaries

21. Black and White Photographs

22. Color Slides

23. Optional Materials

- a. Floor plans showing existing conditions
- b. Landscape plan showing existing conditions
- c. Sequential historic floor plans
- d. Sequential historic site plans

AURORA HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION
CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name WATERFOWL PRESERVE, FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Waterfowl Preserve, as with most of the buildings and features on the Fitzsimons General Hospital property, has not been separated into a parcel of land distinct from the rest of the base. Consequently, it has no lot number or other identifying legal description to distinguish its boundaries from surrounding buildings or properties. Given this unique situation, it is recommended that the boundaries of the property be established as follows:

The boundaries of the Waterfowl Preserve are to be established along the line of the tall chain-link perimeter fence that completely encompasses the site.

This description is suggested to provide reasonable, defensible, and clearly-defined boundaries in all directions. The proposed property line at the perimeter fence is suggested because any further extension of the property line would incorporate the surrounding paved roadway and picnic grounds that are not part of the Waterfowl Preserve itself. The proposed boundaries include the pond, the island, the bridge, the banks, the inflow and outflow gates, and the perimeter trees, all of which are important to the recreational setting and overall historic integrity of the property.

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Property Name WATERFOWL PRESERVE, FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY

The Waterfowl Preserve at Fitzsimons is located in the middle of what is termed "Generals Park," near the southwest corner of the mile square post complex, just north of the original gatehouses at Colfax Ave. and Peoria St. The Preserve is surrounded by a paved perimeter drive, vacant ground to the east, and picnic grounds to the north, south and west. Covering an area of approximately 1.5 acres, the Waterfowl Preserve measures 275' from east to west and 225' from north to south, and is largely occupied by a small pond.

The perimeter of the Waterfowl Preserve is marked by a tall chain link fence capped with barbed wire, inside of which is a narrow flat shoreline area (3' to 5' in width) that is planted with grass and trees. Inside of this landscaped strip the ground drops down into the pond, and the exposed banks are lined with concrete that contains large embedded decorative rocks. Cut into the northeast bank is a small concrete outflow structure with a metal headgate and control wheel. At the center of the pond is a small island, landscaped with grass and trees, that is connected to the north shoreline by way of a concrete pedestrian bridge with wood railings.

The shoreline and island are planted with a variety of mature trees, among them cottonwoods, ash, willow and poplar. Park benches have been placed in several locations along the shoreline and on the island. Wildlife observed in the Waterfowl Preserve include mallard ducks, pigeons, Canadian geese, and large grass carp stocked to control the growth of underwater vegetation.

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Property Name WATERFOWL PRESERVE, FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

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ALTERATIONS TO THE PROPERTY

The Waterfowl Preserve appears to have undergone relatively few alterations since it was constructed prior to 1918 and improved during the late 1920s. The pond and its landscaping appear to be largely unchanged, with other alterations characterized as minor. The only non-original alterations noted include the construction of a modern concrete bridge to the island, the addition of a chain link perimeter fence, and lining of the banks with concrete.

None of these alterations are incompatible with the historic design and use of the Waterfowl Preserve, and are historically important as representatives of the updating of recreational facilities at the post over the decades. All of the alterations are in fact minor, and do not detract from the overall historic appearance and integrity of the Waterfowl Preserve.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Waterfowl Preserve at Fitzsimons General Hospital is similar in both design and appearance to the numerous modestly-developed ponds commonly found in public parks throughout the nation. The pond provides an excellent habitat for waterfowl and is certainly scenic, however in terms of its basic construction and physical layout it does not exhibit designed or engineered characteristics that would distinguish it from other ponds or wildfowl preserves, other than by the fact that it is small and groomed in appearance. As such, the Waterfowl Preserve is significant due to its history rather than for its design.

The Waterfowl Preserve is historically important as one of the few surviving features of the Gutheil Park Nurseries, located on the Fitzsimons property between 1901 and 1918. This prominent nursery, developed by A.H. Gutheil on the northeast corner of Colfax Ave. and Peoria St., supplied many Denver-area homeowners with landscaping ideas and plant stock at a time when the city was expanding tremendously. The pond was originally developed during the Gutheil era to ornament the grounds, providing a scenic setting for the nursery's visitors to enjoy. After entering the nursery through a wrought iron gateway, visitors found themselves driving around this pond, which was surrounded by numerous trees and shrubs. This aquatic feature is important because of its association with the pastoral character of the property prior to the establishment of a military installation there in 1918.

Also of historic significance is the Waterfowl Preserve's relationship to the beautification of the post undertaken during the 1920s under the command of Colonel Paul Hutton. Numerous trees and shrubs were planted, and other landscaping projects undertaken (such as the planting of grass), in an effort to make the otherwise barren post more enjoyable for its residents. The former Gutheil pond was incorporated into this system of landscaping improvements at a time when the military was requesting that its commanders pay more attention to both living conditions and the appearance of their posts. In 1927, Fitzsimons was issued a permit from the US Biological Survey (an agency of the Department of Agriculture) that recognized the pond as an official wildfowl preserve. This was accomplished at a time when refuges were being established throughout the country. Designation of the Waterfowl Preserve represents military efforts to improve living conditions on its installations nationwide during the 1920s, as well as the establishment of a wildlife refuge by a local commander with an early interest in environmental issues. The Preserve is also important as a representative of the post's emphasis upon recreational activities for the enjoyment of its staff, and for the recuperation and health-restoring entertainment of its patients. The most prominent of these was President Eisenhower, who in 1955 fished in this pond while recuperating at Fitzsimons from a heart attack suffered in Denver.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

Prior to 1918, the Fitzsimons property (Section 36) was characterized as a large rural tract of land located on the plains east of Denver and the small town of Aurora. With Federal Highway 40, now known as Colfax Ave., running along its southern edge, the one-mile-square property was occupied by an expanse of short grass prairie, scattered rural residences, orchards and alfalfa fields, and a nursery in the southwest corner. Sold to a small number of investors at public auction on 5 December 1895, Section 36 was still largely undeveloped twenty years later. Among those who invested in a portion of the property was Alfred Henry Gutheil, who was born in Germany in 1864 and arrived in Colorado in 1886. Two years later he became involved in Denver-area real estate, eventually focusing upon speculative development of the plains east of the city.

Gutheil filed a plat of the Gutheil Park Subdivision the day after the 1895 public auction, with the goal of establishing a new residential development on land owned by his Gutheil Park Investment Company. Erecting a large residence near the southwest corner of Section 36 in 1897 (just north of the Waterfowl Preserve and used as the commanding officer's residence at Fitzsimons from 1918 through 1996), Gutheil began to sell five and ten acre lots and planted numerous shade and orchard trees on his property. In spite of his high hopes and financial investment, Gutheil Park failed to thrive as a residential subdivision, most likely due to its rural location a good distance east of the city of Denver and one mile east of the closest trolley station along Colfax Ave.

In 1901, Gutheil embarked on another venture, establishing the Gutheil Park Nurseries around his home, with prominent wrought iron gates marking the entrance on the northeast corner of Colfax Ave. and Peoria St. Ditches were excavated to provide irrigation water from the High Line Canal and Antero Reservoir, and the Gutheil Park Nurseries began to supply Denver-area homes with a variety of both imported and home-grown plantings for their landscaping and gardens. Alfred Gutheil served as a judge in Adams County from 1905 to 1909, and continued to operate the Gutheil Park Nurseries throughout the 1900s and 1910s. It was during the period between 1901 and 1918 that Gutheil excavated and filled the small scenic pond that was later to become the Waterfowl Preserve at Fitzsimons General Hospital. Visitors to the Gutheil Park Nurseries encountered the pond and its surrounding nursery plantings after passing through the main gates and down a short length of the tree-lined entry road. Unusually lush for the otherwise barren prairie, the nursery soon became a recreational attraction for area residents and a showplace for the latest in landscape design and supplies.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

With America's entrance into World War I, the Surgeon General's Office initiated a search for the right location to erect a large Army hospital, and by late 1917 had decided to lease most of Section 36 for this purpose. As a result of this decision, the former Gutheil Park Nurseries, along with much of the rest of Section 36, was redeveloped in 1918 by the Army as it constructed General Hospital No. 21 on the site. On 1 April 1919, the Completion Report prepared for the government stated that "the nursery property, from Colfax Avenue to the Commanding Officer's residence [the former Gutheil home].was developed as a 12 acre park. . . The road from the main entrance curves around a small lake skirts the park and turns north to connect with the principal east and west road from the service entrance." This southwestern corner of the hospital post was reported to contain approximately 25 types of trees and 30 varieties of shrubs, which along with the pond gave the area a park-like appearance even as the remainder of the facility was largely barren of greenery on the dry short-grass prairie.

Patients sent to the Army's new hospital near Denver beginning in 1918 were classified by the European base hospitals as no longer fit for duty due serious injury, permanent disablement, or illnesses requiring long-term care such as tuberculosis. With many of the patients there for extended periods of treatment and recuperation, the Army realized that the facility would require a variety of recreational activities to entertain them, help them recuperate, and to keep their morale high. Societal changes brought about by the Progressive Era and its reformist ideas regarding American leisure, educational, and recreational activities served as a catalyst for widespread change in military policies after 1900. In this particular case, the Medical Department of the Army realized by the beginning of World War I that it had to provide for the long-term welfare of recuperating soldiers and veterans, ensuring that these damaged men would return to happy and productive lives. In addition, the prevailing medical theories of the day stressed the importance of maintaining high spirits among patients struggling with injuries and disease.

To achieve these goals, the military encouraged the Red Cross to establish its Hospital and Recreation Corps to organize and manage recreational programming, and to look after the welfare of soldiers and sailors recuperating in military hospitals across the country. Included among the various educational, entertainment, and recreational activities offered at Fitzsimons by the Red Cross office and by the post itself were trout fishing and bird watching at the post's pond. For both patients and staff, this quiet corner of the post offered a serene place to commune with nature and to perhaps at least temporarily forget about the trauma and sadness associated with the Army hospital complex.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

Because of the Army's placement of its hospital complex toward the center of the one-mile-square property and away from the section's perimeter roads, most of the original buildings were clustered to the northeast of the former Gutheil Park Nurseries. In an early effort to improve the appearance and recuperative atmosphere of the hospital, much of the nursery stock left behind by Gutheil was transplanted to other locations on the base around 1920. Between 1921 and 1925, thousands of additional trees were planted, all of which had to be watered frequently. To accomplish this task, the Army initially used a water wagon pulled by mules. However, this method proved to be inadequate, causing many of the early plantings to wither in the semi-arid climate. Before long, the installation of water wells, cisterns, underground piping, and a water tower ensured that the post would finally have enough water for both consumption and to maintain extensive landscaping. Even though many of the early plantings died, enough survived from the early 1920s that they began to change the previously barren appearance of the central hospital area. The area around the Gutheil pond continued to flourish because of its excellent water source and the fact that it had been groomed and tended for many years prior to the establishment of the hospital post.

On 26 August 1923, command of Fitzsimons General Hospital (the name was changed in 1920) was assumed by Colonel Paul C. Hutton, whose personal interest in horticulture was combined with Army landscaping requirements to change the appearance of Fitzsimons for decades to come. Following newly-issued requirements for increased attention to landscaping at all Army installations, Hutton erected a greenhouse at Fitzsimons in 1923. This original greenhouse was used to grow tropical fruit-bearing plants, from which the ripened fruit was distributed to the patients on the wards. It was reported at the time that he was the first person in Denver to successfully coax many of these tropical plants to thrive in a region where they were completely foreign. (*Municipal Facts*, July-August 1929) A public flower garden planted on the post also provided flowers for the residents and patients, who were free to cut them as they pleased. In addition, the Army required that its post commanders establish nurseries to provide trees and shrubs for their installations. The greenhouse was enlarged between 1924 and 1925 to accommodate the growth of native plants such as pine, cedar and spruce trees, all of which were eventually transplanted throughout the grounds of the hospital. In 1926, two hundred coniferous trees were brought to Fitzsimons from the Pike National Forest above Colorado Springs with the help of the National Forest Service. In all, literally thousands of trees and shrubs were planted at Fitzsimons General Hospital under the command of Colonel Hutton, many of which have matured and are still present there today. The history of the Waterfowl Preserve at Fitzsimons must be viewed within the context of these landscaping improvement projects.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

In 1923, Colonel Hutton received a gift of two mallard ducks, which he placed on the Gutheil-era pond south of the commander's house. In addition to these ducks, other migratory waterfowl such as Canadian geese frequented the pond, many of which gave birth and raised their young there. Before long, a good number of these birds remained at the pond throughout the year. In 1927, Hutton applied for and received a federal wildlife refuge permit (#29756) from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Biological Survey, the predecessor of today's Fish & Wildlife Service. This permit established an official waterfowl refuge at the pond, and allowed the hospital to cull birds when the populations became too great. Those birds chosen to be removed were sent to the post kitchens to provide patients and officers at Fitzsimons with occasional goose or duck dinners. In addition, the pond was stocked with trout (most likely by Colorado's state fish hatcheries) through the 1960s, after which the fish and waterfowl populations there were managed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service's regional office.

Although the first National Parks (starting with Yellowstone in 1872) were not established for the protection of wildlife, they effectively served as refuges as a result of the federal government's protection and management of these lands. The federal system of setting aside wildlife sanctuaries officially began in 1892 when President Benjamin Harrison declared that Afognak Island in Alaska would become a national salmon reservation. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, a national movement spearheaded by vocal naturalist organizations (among them the National Audubon Society and the American Ornithologists' Union) for the protection of America's wildlife had taken root, creating an environment in which the government was pressured to act to protect the nation's natural heritage. The flowering of this movement occurred with the arrival of its most eloquent and powerful spokesman, President Theodore Roosevelt. As the nation's first prominent environmentalist to hold high political office, he announced the establishment in 1903 by executive order of the first federal waterfowl preserve at the 3-acre Pelican Island rookery in Florida (now listed in the National Register of Historic Places). Over the following six years, Roosevelt created another 52 wildlife refuges, all of them on existing federal properties.

Many of these and the other early refuges established over the following decades were devoted to migratory waterfowl. Taking an active role in early wildlife protection, the United States signed international treaties for the conservation of migratory birds and passed important legislation on the issue due to the fact that the numbers of ducks and geese were rapidly declining as a consequence of unrestricted overhunting. The Weeks-McLean Act of 1913 appointed the federal government as the primary protector of migratory game birds.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

In 1918, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act declared that the Biological Survey would henceforth impose strict regulations upon hunting. After a short comeback among waterfowl, their numbers began to drop precipitously during the 1920s due to loss of habitat and continued overhunting. By the mid-1920s, the principle of establishing federal refuges was generally accepted as the keystone of the country's wildlife management program. This principle emerged around the same time that the earlier naturalists and a new generation of environmental scientists were developing an environmental ethic that stressed the importance of preserving all wildlife, not as individual species but as part of more complex ecological systems and habitats than were previously acknowledged to exist. The answer to the vexing problems facing the decimated waterfowl communities was passage of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, which allowed the federal government to use public funds for the purchase of additional lands to establish wildfowl preserves. Maintenance of the refuges and their wild inhabitants was assured with passage of the Duck Stamp Act in 1934, which created a funding mechanism through a federal tax imposed on hunting permits.

Many of the refuges and preserves established during the period between 1900 and the 1930s are located along the four major waterfowl flyways, one of which passes through the Front Range area of Colorado where Fitzsimons General Hospital's Waterfowl Preserve is located. Among these were a number established under joint management agreements between the Biological Survey (later the Fish & Wildlife Service) and the Department of Defense, allowing for the designation of military properties as wildlife preserves. Other federally-owned preserves were managed by state wildlife agencies under similar agreements. As of the mid-1980s, approximately 97 percent of the lands comprising the nation's refuge system were carved from properties already owned by the federal government.

Hunting was never approved at the Fitzsimons Waterfowl Preserve, presumably because it was too small and risky for the use of firearms, although precedent had been set with the opening of the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge to hunting in 1924. The federal permit did, however, allow the post to "sell" excess birds back to the hospital during periods of overpopulation for use in the messes, as previously discussed. The decision regarding whether to allow hunting or fishing at any refuge has historically been the prerogative of the preserve's manager, in this case the commander of Fitzsimons General Hospital. It appears that the trout stocked in the Preserve's pond were never protected by the federal permit or by post decree, and fishing was encouraged as a recreational activity for recuperating patients over many decades.

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HISTORY OF THE FITZSIMONS WATERFOWL PRESERVE

In 1942, an assessment of waterfowl at the Preserve tallied a population of over two hundred geese and ducks. At the time, it was referred to by the *Denver Post* as a "vest pocket game refuge" and the "smallest wildfowl preserve in the United States." (26 June 1942) Throughout this decade, the Waterfowl Preserve was popular as a fishing hole for the patients and children living on the post, and a 1948 article in the *Rocky Mountain News* mentioned that in addition to Canadian geese, the pond was also frequented by teals, greenheads and pintail ducks. (22 September 1948) The birds were fed surplus horse corn and scraps from the mess halls, encouraging them to remain there throughout the year. In 1953, Fitzsimons hosted Huck Finn Day, during which numerous children tried to catch some of the 6" to 12" trout that were found there. It was estimated at that time that approximately 3,000 fish were caught in the Waterfowl Preserve each year. The most famous person known to have fished in the Preserve's pond over the decades was President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who spent six weeks at Fitzsimons recovering from a heart attack suffered while visiting Denver in 1955. The Preserve continued to be used as a fishing pond, bird watching area, and as the centerpiece of the surrounding picnic grounds for the next forty years.

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

Fitzsimons General Hospital, originally designated US Army General Hospital No. 21, was established in 1918 as World War I was drawing to a close. Not long after the nation entered the war in April 1917, the Denver Civic and Commercial Association (predecessor to the Chamber of Commerce) along with other prominent community leaders spearheaded a campaign to convince the military to establish a base in the area. The War Department saw the city's isolation in the interior of the country as less than desirable for a training or supply installation, however it was viewed as an appropriate location for a military recuperation hospital. By this time, the state was well known as a mecca for tuberculars and others suffering from other respiratory illnesses, most of them sent west from the crowded East Coast cities to recover in the high altitude, bright sun, and clean air of Colorado. Many Denver hospitals and sanitariums were developed between the 1890s and 1910s specifically to treat the large numbers of tuberculars arriving in the area, among them the Jewish Consumptives Relief Society campus, Agnes Memorial Sanitarium, Bethesda Sanitarium, Craig Hospital, National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives, and Lutheran Hospital.

With a burgeoning number of soldiers returning from Europe stricken with tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases (as well as suffering from gas attacks and chest wounds), along with Denver's nationally-recognized reputation for the treatment of pulmonary illness, the Army responded positively to the requests of Denver leaders. Colonel George Bushnell, a prominent medical officer in the Surgeon General's office and a leading expert on tuberculosis (he had also spent two years recuperating from the disease in Colorado), was sent west on an inspection tour in November 1917 to locate a possible site for a new Army hospital. After inspecting several properties in the Denver area, Bushnell became most impressed with a 595-acre parcel of rural land on the plains eight miles east of Denver and two miles east of the town of Aurora. This large tract, partly occupied by the A.H. Gutheil Nursery, had a panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains to the west, was at an appropriate distance from Denver for a recuperation hospital (close enough for supplies but far enough to maintain a quiet atmosphere), and was large enough to accommodate the low-density spatial needs of a hospital that would be designed to treat patients with respiratory ailments.

Based upon Bushnell's recommendation of the site, the War Department asked Congress for an appropriation of \$500,000 for the initial development of the property into an Army hospital. In the meantime, the Denver Civic and Commercial Association quickly raised \$150,000 in four days through public subscription, and arranged to purchase the property and secure it for Army use. In addition to private investment, the city of Denver donated \$10,000 and Aurora donated one dollar for every citizen living in the small town adjacent to

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

the hoped-for medical post. Local leaders steadfastly pursued the project, realizing that the hospital would become one of the area's primary government institutions and would be accompanied by tremendous economic benefit to the adjacent communities. Upon purchasing the Gutheil Nursery property for \$140,000, the Denver Civic and Commercial Association became the sole owner of the land, and proposed to lease it to the federal government for a fee of one dollar per year. The War Department accepted the offer and announced its plans to construct General Hospital No. 21.

Ground was broken in April 1918, with construction of the first forty-eight buildings underway the following month. Plans and oversight were provided by the Quartermaster Corps and the Army's Construction Division, with construction completed by the A.C. Lambie Co. of Denver. As with other Army hospitals under the direction of the Surgeon General, General Hospital No. 21 was designed to handle a variety of ailments and injuries. However, because of its location in Colorado this facility was conceived from the beginning to focus upon the treatment of respiratory illness. Wards were constructed as individual buildings rather than as wings of a single large structure, and were designed for the prevailing medical treatment (particularly for tuberculosis) known as heliotherapy, which in practical application meant that patients spent a good portion of each day resting on porches, soaking in the strong rays of the sun and breathing the fresh high altitude air. Over time, however, the effectiveness of this method of treatment was found to be limited to non-respiratory forms of tuberculosis such as that which affected the joints. Treatment regimens also included exercise, rest, special diets, symptomatic remedies, and in some cases surgery.

To allow for the free movement of air, the early ward and infirmary buildings were staggered and separated by wide buffers of open space later landscaped with grass and several thousand trees during the early 1920s. This spacious plan was extended with buffers of varying sizes throughout the post, which was organized in the symmetrical pattern of an army cantonment with the main infirmary, administration, and Red Cross buildings at the center of the complex. In addition, the buildings constructed at General Hospital No. 21 in 1918-1919 were designed according to Army specifications for the southwest region in the popular but restrained Mission Revival style, characterized by exterior stucco, shaped parapets on some structures, and little in the way of ornamentation. This style was maintained with each new phase of construction, and is uniform today except for the main hospital building erected during World War II.

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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF FITZSIMONS GENERAL HOSPITAL

Construction continued at a hectic pace throughout 1918, hurdling the difficulties of labor and supply shortages during the war, with the first group of buildings dedicated in mid-October. Although not officially completed until 1919, the first patients arrived within days of the dedication ceremony, delivered by rail along a Union Pacific spur laid into the post from the north. By Armistice Day on 11 November 1918, only one month after dedication of the first group of buildings, the hospital had reached its capacity of 380 beds. One month later, the facility was caring for 600 patients. With patients streaming into the new facility, the Army realized that it would be inadequate to handle the number of soldiers returning from Europe in need of treatment. A second and then third group of buildings were erected immediately, and within a short period of fewer than two years the post was developed from vacant ground to a fully operational military recuperation hospital and medical training facility. With a capacity of 1200 beds upon completion of the initial round of construction, General Hospital No. 21 became the largest facility of its kind in the world.

Throughout the 1920s, General Hospital No. 21 continued to treat patients damaged by the war and veterans taking advantage of their health benefits, surviving early efforts to close the facility as part of the general demobilization. Valued by the Surgeon General's Office as an important Army tuberculosis hospital, the federal government decided to retain the facility and on 26 June 1920 redesignated the post as Fitzsimons General Hospital, named for William Thomas Fitzsimons, the first American Army medical officer to be killed by enemy fire in World War I. That same year, 3,442 patients were admitted to the hospital, of whom 2,132 arrived for treatment of tuberculosis. Establishing a high recovery rate, the facility became widely known for its success in treatment and for its research into this pulmonary plague that had already killed hundreds of thousands of Americans. Fitzsimons also established its importance during the 1920s as a medical training hospital, not only for those assigned to the post but also for medical personnel sent there from other facilities. By the end of the decade, the facility had grown to a capacity of 2100 beds, and was larger than any other government hospital in the country.

Although the hospital had been operational for only a short time, its impact upon the economy and social fabric of Denver and Aurora was keenly felt by area citizens and community leaders. Local contractors, construction supply houses, and both skilled and unskilled laborers benefited immediately from the construction of the post. Many of the early nurses employed at Fitzsimons came from the population in the surrounding area, and the facility provided advanced training for nurses sent to study there by Denver area hospitals. Personnel stationed at Fitzsimons traveled the few miles to Denver and adjacent Aurora to

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shop and for entertainment not available at the post, and their families often moved to the area as well. Numerous civilians and volunteers were employed throughout various offices and departments on the post, enhancing interaction between the facility and the surrounding community. Included among these were the many local Red Cross volunteers who offered their time and service to the staff and the patients being treated there. In 1929, the federal government signed a long-term lease on the Fitzsimons property with the Denver Chamber of Commerce, ideally ensuring that the facility would remain a vital part of the community for years to come.

During the early 1930s, Fitzsimons General Hospital was plagued by the increasingly costly maintenance of deteriorating buildings and infrastructure, compounded by cutbacks in military finance due to the Depression. Structures erected in 1918 and 1919, many of them designed to be temporary, were requiring large investments in maintenance. The power plant and its steam heating system were also in dire need of significant repair or replacement. Surrounding communities and businesses, by now dependent upon the millions of dollars in revenue generated from Fitzsimons payroll and supply purchases, were again concerned that the hospital would be closed. Although identified by the Army for possible closure in 1932, the hospital admitted over 5,100 patients that year. Even with these numbers being treated, the Surgeon General issued orders in April 1933 that the facility be prepared for closure by the end of June. Shocked at the news, local political and business leaders, with the help of Denver's two major newspapers, immediately mounted a campaign to save Fitzsimons from closure. Colorado's Congressional delegation was notified and led the effort to persuade the Surgeon General's office to improve the facility rather than shut it down. Two years later, the dispute ended when Congress approved the post's funding and a new Surgeon General announced that the hospital would remain open.

By mid-summer of 1935, the War Department requested funds for improvements at Fitzsimons from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which allocated \$282,000 to the project. Within a few months, several hundred workers were busy rehabilitating buildings and infrastructure, improving the grounds, demolishing structures scheduled for removal, and erecting new buildings. After several years of concern over possible loss of the facility, the surrounding communities of Denver and Aurora were finally able to relax their efforts. With world affairs deteriorating by the mid-1930s, the Army was increasing its number of enlisted personnel and gearing up for the looming battle. Taking advantage of these circumstances, Colorado's Congressional leaders approached the Surgeon General with the idea of making Fitzsimons a permanent installation with the construction of a large modern Army hospital.

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The War Department approved this request in July 1936, and the Surgeon General issued orders for the preparation of plans for what was to become the largest general Army hospital building in the country. Completed in December 1941, the main hospital building was accompanied by numerous other structures erected during the build-up for World War II.

Command of Fitzsimons General Hospital was assumed by Brigadier General Omar H. Quade in 1942, who shepherded the facility through the war and an unprecedented period of growth. With America fully engaged in the battle overseas and thousands of patients again streaming into Fitzsimons and its new Art Moderne main hospital building, the Army embarked upon another major expansion of the post. In 1942 alone, \$1.5 million was spent upon buildings and improvements, with new construction predominantly involving the erection of semi-permanent and permanent brick structures, all of which were stuccoed on the exterior to retain the prevailing Mission Revival style.

Fitzsimons General Hospital healed thousands of ill and injured servicemen during World War II, and entered the post-war years with a phenomenal record of success, prepared to provide the best in medical care to veterans, their families, and soldiers injured in wars yet to come. As a general medical hospital, the facility was designated after the war to handle not only respiratory illnesses, but also specialties such as general and orthopedic surgery, thoracic surgery, deep x-ray therapy, and psychiatry. Many Aurora citizens worked at the hospital in civilian positions since the post was established, and a good number of the enlisted medical personnel as well as servicemen treated at Fitzsimons settled in the area, creating even stronger bonds between the post and the surrounding community. After serving the nation throughout the Cold War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War, Fitzsimons finally closed its doors in 1996 and the post is currently being redeveloped for new non-military medical research and treatment uses.

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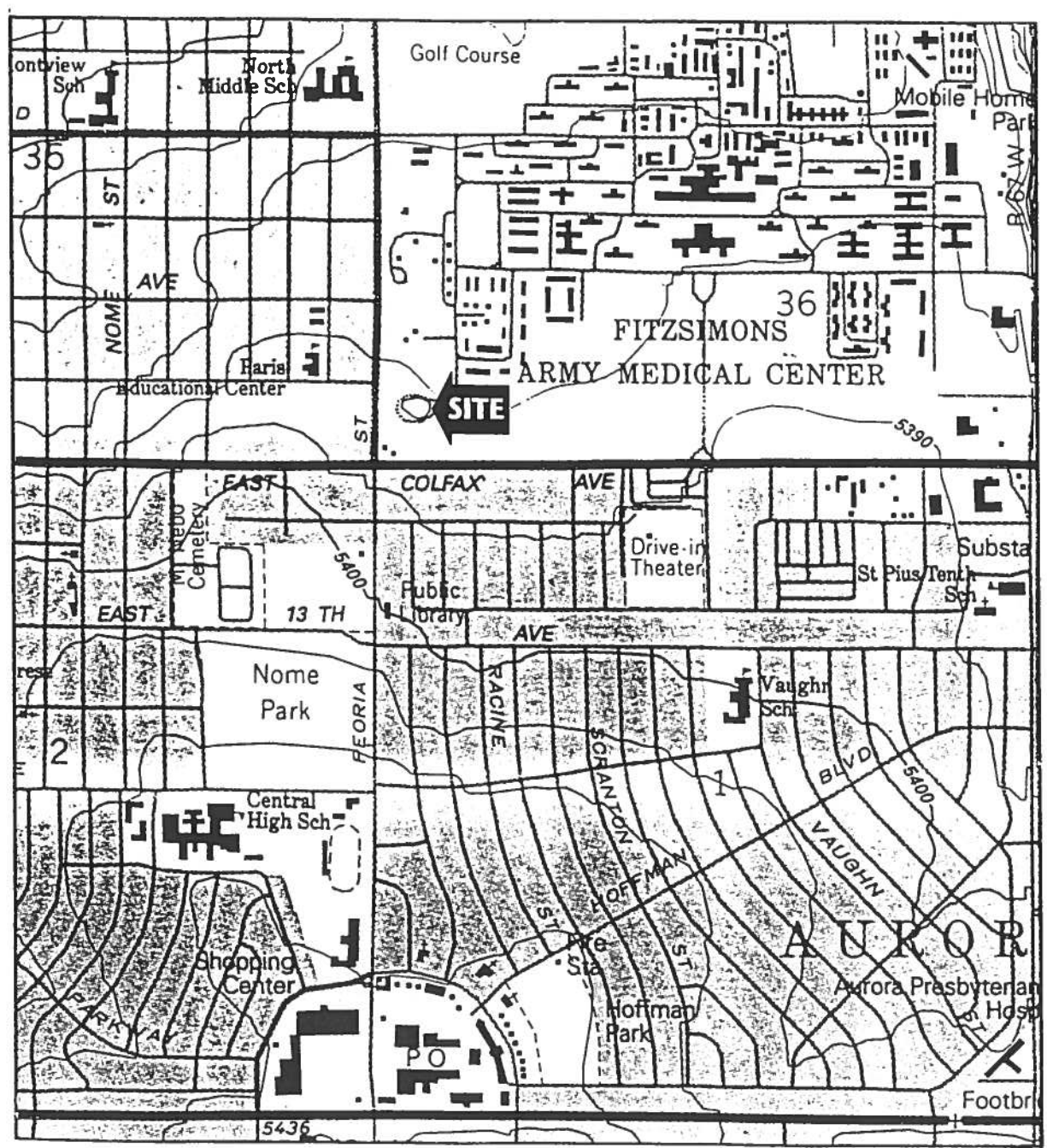
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USGS 7.5' TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
FITZSIMONS QUADRANGLE
(1965, REVISED 1994)



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SITE PLAN

NOT TO SCALE

