



**Leavenworth Building 19 – From the SW – Renovated Office Building**

Project Name: **Leavenworth Building 19**

Project Location: **Leavenworth, Kansas**

Completion Date: **2011**

Size: **66,000 sq ft**

Architect: Treanor Architects, P.A. – <http://www.treanorarchitects.com/>

General Contractor: Straub Construction – <http://www.straubconstruction.com/>

Special Non-Profit Partner: Historic Preservation Partners – <http://www.YourHistoricPartner.com/>

Awards: 2011 J Timothy Anderson Award for Excellence in Historic Rehab (NH&RA)

2012 Capstone Award – Office (Kansas City Business Journal)

2012 Palladio Award (Traditional Building Magazine)

2012 Award for Excellence (Kansas Preservation Alliance)

**Project Description:**

In response to the VA's need for a Consolidated Patient Account Center (CPAC) serving the Central Plains region of our country (VISN areas 15, 19, and 23), Pioneer Group proposed renovating the

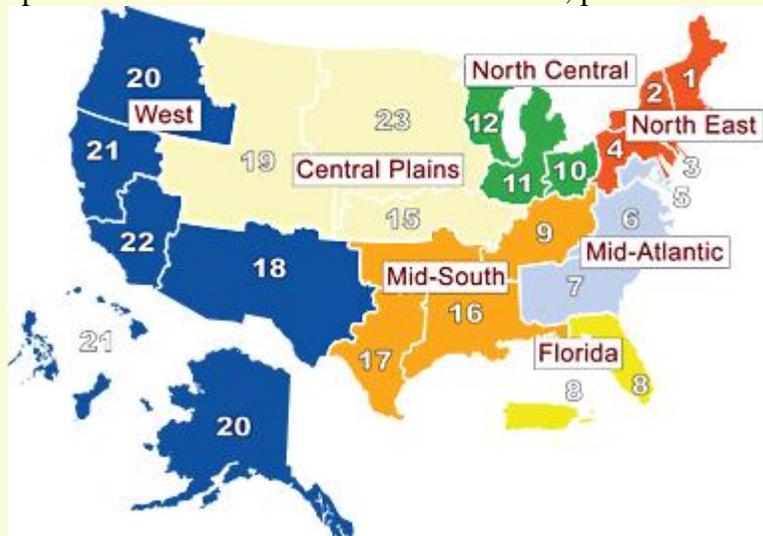
historic mess hall building on the Leavenworth VA campus that is included in its Eisenhower Ridge development. This alternative keeps the VA function right on a VA campus, utilizes a 120 year old historic building built for veterans, and utilizes the advantages provided by the existing Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) designed to preserve a piece of veteran heritage. The renovation preserved the historic appearance of the building, but included all the modern amenities for a state-of-the-art office building.

## CPAC

The Consolidated Patient Account Center (CPAC) was a new initiative by the VA's Chief Business Office to improve revenue collections within the Veterans Health Administration. CPAC establishes an industry-modeled, regionalized billing and collection system. Through a pilot program in Asheville, North Carolina, the CPAC model established proven results in enhanced cash collections, process

integration and standardization. The increased revenue can be directly used to expand and improve services for our nation's veterans. This is part of the VHA effort to seek reimbursement, and to retain collections from third-party health insurers.

Based upon the success of the pilot program, the VA developed a national plan to add six additional regional consolidated centers. To the right is a map indicating the seven regions across the country. The CPAC National Strategy was formally approved by the Under



Secretary for Health in September 2008. On October 10, 2008, President George W. Bush enacted the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Improvements Act mandating the national implementation of the CPAC business model within VHA over the next five years. One can find more information at the CPAC web page: <http://www1.va.gov/CBO/cbo/cpac.asp>.

## EUL

This historic mess hall building is part of an Enhanced Use Lease (EUL). The VA had determined they no longer needed 38 buildings on the Leavenworth VA campus, and were considering demolishing those buildings. In 2005, rather than tearing the buildings down, the VA entered into a 75-year Enhanced Use Lease with Eisenhower Ridge Association that provided for both preservation and development of the 38 buildings and 52 acres included in the lease. This project demonstrates an opportunity to renovate one of those buildings again to serve the VA, and thereby allow the VA employees to be located immediately adjacent to, and with ready access to, the rest of the VA functions in Leavenworth.

## **BUILDING 19 (historic Mess Hall)**

The proposal, initially submitted in December 2008, recommended renovating the mess hall building to CPAC specifications, and subleasing the structure back to the VA. This building contains more than 60,000 square feet of net usable space, and was able to be renovated to accommodate the proposed 400-person CPAC. After renovation, the building includes all the modern conveniences of today's construction, plus the beauty and grandeur of the historic structure. This renovation project also matches well with the VA's federal historic preservation mandates encouraging adaptive reuse of these historic buildings, as noted in the VA Handbook, and the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to providing first class administrative space in an ideal location on the VA campus, this renovation project also enhanced the beauty of the existing campus by restoring an important historic facility not only to its original appearance, but to a useful life once again actively serving our veterans.

At the top of the page is a photo showing the exterior of the historic mess hall building located very prominently right in the center of the VA campus (across from the main flagpole). Here is an old penny postcard featuring the dining room as it originally existed on the first floor of that mess hall building.



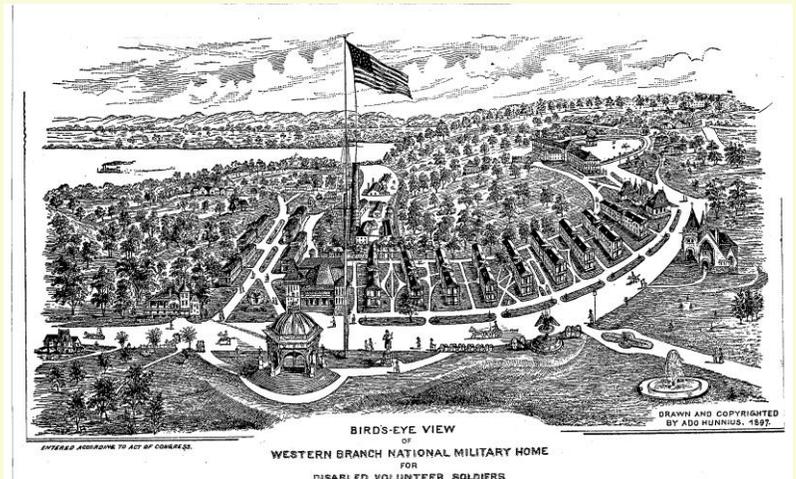
This magnificent structure was one of the original buildings and a cultural center serving the Leavenworth campus since 1887. While the original design was made very open to accommodate dining for 2,000 veterans three times per day, the large open spaces now provide an opportunity to accommodate almost any office layout with great flexibility. The lower level has a loading dock now help facilitate the equipment needed for a large CPAC, and that floor also had a very open floor plan which allowed us to accommodate even more offices.

The upper level once served as a ballroom, so it too had a very open floor plan, and has some beautiful architectural details that help make the office environment more pleasant.

## **LOCATION / CAMPUS SETTING**

Being part of the VA's EUL to Eisenhower Ridge, the building now has a City of Leavenworth street address (3819 Franklin Ave); however, this building still is most readily recognized by veterans, VA employees, and the general public in and around Leavenworth by its historic veteran use or its historic VA building number – the Mess Hall, or Building 19. This building now provides the VA with a fully-renovated administrative center located in a prime office district with attractive, prestigious, professional surroundings having a prevalence of tasteful rehabilitation in modern use. The streets and public sidewalks surrounding this building are well-maintained to the highest standards by the VA. The renovation project added more than 400 additional parking spaces to accommodate the CPAC employees and guests. This prime location also enjoys ready access to a variety of inexpensive and moderately priced fast food and/or eat-in restaurants located within a mile of the VA campus.

The 1887 Pen and Ink drawing of the Leavenworth campus shown to the right, and the recent aerial photo of the campus shown below, both demonstrate the beauty of this campus, the tastefulness of the historic buildings, and the prominence of the building's location (the Mess Hall Building 19 is near the lower-left corner of both photos). The setting for this building places it prominently along the ridge serving as the backbone of the Leavenworth VA campus.



## HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

This building is on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the historic district named, “Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.” The District qualified for historic listing because of its architectural and historical significance, with additional emphasis on the District’s landscape design.

The historic background begins shortly after the Civil War. The VA Leavenworth campus began construction in 1885. By 1890, approximately 40 buildings were erected and comprised a coherent planned community for Civil War veterans, similar to other branches of the National Home. The campus included barracks, mess hall and kitchen, administration building, staff housing, chapel, hospital,

amusement halls, quarters, shops, laundry, stable, greenhouses, agricultural buildings, and other facilities. In 1930, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was incorporated into the newly created Veterans Administration, and this property was designated a VA Medical Center. Since that change, medical programs predominated, rather than home programs.



In 1995, a new domiciliary building was built on the Leavenworth campus, and a majority of the old barracks, mess hall, and other supporting facilities were vacated.

With the vacated buildings no longer used to support the medical center’s mission, they became available for adaptive reuse and redevelopment to serve new purposes.

As for the historic significance of the landscaping and the setting of this building, according to the documents successfully nominating this property for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, the original landscape architect focused the design on accentuating the natural beauty of the ridge:

“The 213.97-acre site is characterized by rolling terrain, tree-dotted lawns, a man-made lake, and curving roads. ... The original site plan ... is thought to have been the design of landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland. ... the design incorporates the natural north-south ridge as the long spine of a roughly C-shape layout of roads and buildings. Franklin Avenue (originally called Front Street) and a secondary road, Back Street, follow the ridge. ... The domiciliaries (and other buildings) are oriented east-west, perpendicular to the ridge, making maximum use of the linear site and taking advantage of breezes and vistas.”

H.W.S. Cleveland (1814-1900) attended an innovative school that emphasized landscape study and an organic approach to art. Following this influence, he advocated a starkly simple and natural style of design that respected local landscape features and disdained superfluous decoration. Cleveland created designs for parks, cemeteries, boulevards, and subdivisions following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. He also designed park systems for several other cities, including Boston (1856), Brooklyn (1867), and Minneapolis (1883). In his design for Minneapolis, he connected lakes, parks, and other landscape features with parkways. Cleveland stated that landscape architecture involved not just “decorating” the landscape, but commented it was a landscape architect’s duty to design parks, residential and commercial landscapes always with careful consideration to the environment around them, and to be ever mindful of how future generations would make use of them. This Leavenworth campus is an excellent example of H.W.S. Cleveland’s work, and still is enjoyed by those who work or visit here 120 years after he completed his design.