



Plans and Construction of Military Hospitals

United States Architect Who Assisted in the
Erection of Military Hospitals in France Out-
lines Plans Adapted to American Requirements

By Charles Butler, in "Architectural Forum."

“WAR HOSPITAL” covers a multitude of varying types of building with varying destinations, from the hole in the ground in the front line trench to the great physical re-education centres in the rear, and includes canal boat, railroad train hospitals, hospitals for contagious diseases, rest camps, etc.

The hospitals, however, to which I refer especially in the present article, are those for the general care of wounded and sick, and it may, perhaps, be easiest to classify them by their geographical relation to the front. I speak, I may say, entirely of the French front, as my experience at the British front is extremely limited.

I should perhaps preface my remarks with an explanation of just what my relation to the French army was, and how I happened to have the opportunity to gain some knowledge of French war hospitals.

As a member of the American Relief Clearing House I was at work in Paris in the fall of 1915, when Dr. Carrel, who knew of my having made a special study of hospital planning in America, asked me to prepare for him the plans for a small 100-bed unit, to be erected closer to the front than his hospital at Compiègne, then under shell fire and likely to be evacuated any day.

Administration difficulties in regard to the admission of foreign nurses to the advanced zone of the army prevented the erection of this hospital, and the destruction of the 380 mm. gun which was shelling Compiègne ended the necessity of evacuating, so the project was dropped; but the Deputy Minister of War in charge of the Medical Service (there are three assistant Ministers of War in France for Munitions, Supplies and Medical Service) expressed his interest in the plans and asked me to bring them to him. It turned out that it had been planned to hold a competition for a model portable house type of hospital to be erected near Paris and to serve as a type for future base and home hospitals; but after looking over our plans the minister remarked that a competition did not

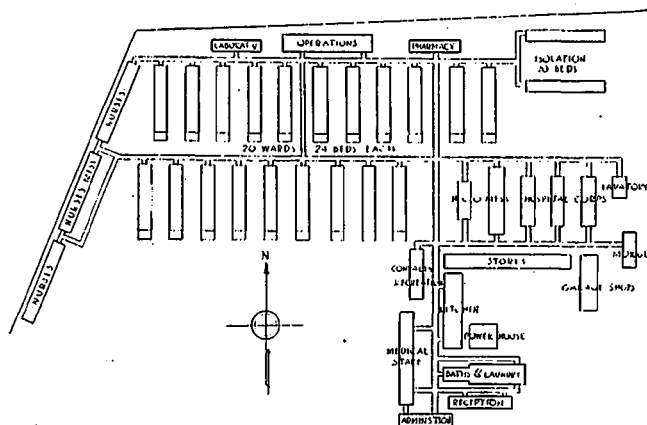
seem necessary, and I volunteered my services to work out this model plan. A very excellent site was selected just outside the Bois de Vincennes, the great park to the east of Paris corresponding to the Bois de Boulogne on the west. At my request, M. Pellechet, a former fellow student at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, was to his considerable annoyance dug out of his second line trench and brought back to help me on the work. Dr. Dumont, a prominent young civilian surgeon, similarly mobilized for the war, was shortly after added to our combination, and we three working together have since very considerably influenced the design of French war hospitals.

All France is divided into two parts, the army zone—and the rest. The zone is a strip, on the average, thirty miles wide, parallel to the front, into which one only penetrates by the permission of the Grand Quartier Général. In this zone lie the front line hospitals, ambulances, dressing stations, etc.

The grouping of these services is about as follows: In the front line trench is what is known as the *Abri du Blessé*, a

hole in the side of the trench, where the wounded man is put to get him as much as possible out of danger till he can be moved to the advanced dressing stations which lie fifty yards or so behind the front line trenches. This dressing station, or *poste de secours*, is presided over by an assistant surgeon, probably a medical student when war began. From the dressing station, which is always underground and contains perhaps a dozen bunks, the wounded man is transported, as soon as the firing slackens sufficiently, through the *boyau*, or communication trench (*boyau* means bowel, and the convolutions of the communication trench for the purpose of localizing the effect of bursting shells fully justify the name), back to the battalion dressing station, perhaps a mile away.

You can imagine just how painful is the trip through this mile of winding trench. Various types of stretchers are used, perhaps the most satisfactory being the hammock stretcher hung from a pole carried on the shoulders of the



Plan for 500-Bed Base Hospital, Vincennes, Paris, France