

Chanute Air Force Base, Headquarters and
Administrative Building
(Building 6)
Senior Officer Row at Galaxy Street
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Chanute Air Force Base, Headquarters and Administrative Building
(Building 6)

HABS No. IL-1185-A

Location: Senior Officer Row at Galaxy Street
Chanute Air Force Base
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

Present Owner: United States Air Force
OL B, AFBCA
501 East Sopwith, Suite A
Rantoul, Illinois 61866

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: From its establishment in 1917 as a military aviation school, until its closure on September 30, 1993, Chanute Air Force Base (AFB) has served almost continuously as a technical training center for the United States Air Force. As one of the oldest military installations in the Air Force inventory, Chanute AFB has played an important role in the development of the American air defense system. Since its construction, the area of the Historic District has served as Chanute's administrative core, and the design and construction of the buildings and structures within the District reflect the extraordinary growth of the installation just prior to and during the early years of World War II. It was during that period that the base was rapidly transformed from a collection of neglected wooden World War I-era buildings into the permanent brick and steel features that remain as the Chanute AFB Historic District.

Building 6 was the main administrative facility for Chanute AFB from its construction in 1941 until the base closed in 1993. It is a key element of Chanute AFB's 1938-41 pre World War II renaissance and embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Office of the Quartermaster General (OQMG) standardized construction of the period. Building 6 retains a high degree of integrity with only minimal modifications.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of erection: 1940-41. Contract completion date, February 9, 1941.
2. Architect: Office of Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force.
4. Contractors: The contract for this building was awarded to T. S. Willis Construction Company, Hayes Building, Janesville, Wisconsin under contract No. W559 Eng-5343 for the sum of \$117,710.00.
5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by the Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Plan Numbers 6627-800 through 6627-826. The flag pole was drawn by Plan Number 6627-C-27 dated 3/17/41.
6. Alterations: Changes to the exterior include the covering of windows, replacing windows with glass block, and replacing doors. The interior has been moderately modified.

B. Historical Context:

Established in 1917, Chanute AFB is one of the oldest Air Force installations in the United States. During World War I, Chanute Field provided pilot training and afterwards temporarily became a storage facility. In 1921, the Air Services Mechanics School was transferred to Chanute from Kelly Field, Texas. When the Wilcox Bill (49 U.S. Stat. 610) was passed by Congress in 1935, the large-scale expansion of Chanute began and, in the next ten years, it changed from a neglected World War I Field into a centralized, subdivision-type collection of brick and steel buildings. More than 200,000 military students would graduate from its various technical schools between 1940 and 1945 and over 1,000,000 students would pass through its doors before its closure in 1993.

In general, the history of Chanute AFB parallels the history of American military aviation and its built environment reflects the economic and military priorities, architectural styles, and concepts of military installation planning common to the OQMG and the Corps of Engineers (COE). The buildings and structures within the Historic District, including this building, reflect Chanute's "Great Renaissance" period (1938-41).

Although authorization for the construction of this building was approved in July 1939, the contractor was not given formal notice to proceed with the contract until February 15, 1940, under the supervision of the Constructing Quartermaster. On December 27, 1940, supervision of all construction at Chanute AFB, including this building, was transferred to the United States Army COE.

Construction went smoothly with nine change orders reflecting minor difficulties encountered. The sum difference of the change orders was \$979.52, resulting in contract costs of \$118,689.52. The total cost of the building, including government costs was \$123,203.65. When completed in March 1941, it housed the Field Headquarters on the first floor and the Air Corps Technical School on the third floor; plans called for the Personnel and Public Relations offices to be located in the basement.

In 1955, the Clerical and Administrative School classrooms were moved out of the building to the Welfare Funds Building. In 1960, the School Secretary's Office was renamed Student Personnel Office, placed under the jurisdiction of the Staff Personnel Office, and relocated to the third floor. In 1970, the following offices were assigned to Building 6: Headquarters, Squadron Section; Plans and Operations Directorate; Administrative Directorate; Personnel Directorate; Staff Judge Advocate; Safety; Information; Chaplain; Comptroller; and the 505th Air Force Band. From its construction until base closure on September 30, 1993, Building 6 was continuously used for offices.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Headquarters Building is boxy and symmetrical with twentieth century Georgian Revival features on the exterior and Modern features on the interior.

2. Condition of fabric: Building 6 is in very good condition. Few changes have been made to the exterior; however, the interior has been moderately modified.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Building 6 contains 20,874 square feet. The main section is 73 feet (ft) 10 inches (in.) by 38 ft 4 in. and the two wings are 28 ft 3 in. by 56 ft-4 in. each. The main two and one-half-story, seven-bay section is flanked by rectangular-in-plan, two-story, two-bay wings that give the overall building a U-shape in plan. An elevated basement occupies the total footprint of the building with the main section projecting slightly.

2. Foundations: The foundation is smooth faced sandstone block that rises approximately 5 ft 10 in. above the ground.

3. Walls: The walls are multi-colored brick laid in common bond (five stretcher rows/one header row) with crushed stone mortar. The first- and second-story windows are connected by recessed vertical brick panels. The main section frieze is defined by projecting stretcher brick rows with header brick dentils below; the frieze area on the wings is plain.

4. Structural system, framing: The building has a concrete framework and brick curtain walls with a superstructure placed on a concrete pier footing system. The basement walls are concrete spandrel beams faced on the exterior with limestone from finished grade to the first floor level.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies: A series of granite steps at the front entrance are flanked by low, capped, sandstone platforms. Two granite steps lead to the central rear entrance while the entry on the south-side wing is above ten granite stairs that have a metal balustrade. Below the entrance stoop is a stairway with a metal balustrade leading to a basement entrance.

6. Openings: The central entrances are the foci of the front and rear facades. Each has a two-story, molded-stone block frame with a slightly recessed central panel. On the front, (west) side, this panel consists of a three window series of four-over-four light, double-hung, sash windows; a stone insignia flanked by stipple-filled, recessed vertical panels (two per side); and a recessed, molded, low arch doorway. The door sill is granite. The doors on the front (west) side of the building are modern, double, metal-framed doors with a three-light transom above.

The coat-of-arms above the main entrance is a stone tablet with three feathers representing the three functions of the Air Corps Technical School (ACTS): mechanics, photography, and communication. A fist clenching a key protrudes from the top of the tablet and "SUSTINEO ALAS" is written below. "SUSTINEO ALAS", "WE SUSTAIN THE WINGS" is the motto of the United States Air Force Air Training Command, now known as the United States Air Education and Training Command.

The entrance on the rear (east) side of Building 6 has a molded frame filled with 15 rows of nine square, glass blocks above a pair of modern, metal-framed, glass doors that have a low, single-light transom above. The south, side, wing door has a flat head with a two-row, vertical, stretcher brick surround around a recessed doorway. The original double doors and doorway have been replaced with modern, metal frame, glass doors and a three, vertical-light transom; the original doors were wood, each with six lights above a recessed panel. A six-light transom topped the doors within the wooden frame. An original copper frame lantern remains centrally located over the doorway.

The windows are flat, six-over-six light, double hung, wood framed sash with stone sills. On the third story, (east and west sides), there are a series of six, rectangular, half-windows with plain stone frames that are filled with metal panels decorated with five rows of three chevron-shaped vents. The basement windows vary and are either filled with four rows of five glass blocks, or are wood-framed, three-light casements hinged on the bottom. Some windows have been boarded.

7. Roof: A hipped roof covers the main section of the building; flat roofs cover the two wings. The hipped roof has a steel-truss framework, covered with 2 in. sheathing, roofing paper, and flat red clay tile shingles. The roof on the wings is a 4 in. concrete slab covered with built-up roofing. The main roof has a copper ridge, gutters, and down spouts. An iron-rail balustrade rises above the roof line on the wings and is attached to a stone parapet. Two gabled roof dormers project from the hipped roof, one each on the north and south sides.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: See attached floor plans

2. Summary Description: The interior lobby, staircase, and hallways have Modern features including a recessed-plaster, oval, ceiling dome; an open, three-floor stairway with terrazzo steps and aluminum balustrade with decorative newel posts; and decorative aluminum radiator covers.

Floors are terrazzo in the corridors and stair halls, asphalt tile in basement offices, linoleum in offices on the second and third floors, and ceramic tile in the rest rooms. Most of the offices are now carpeted. Most of building has plaster walls, except for certain removable steel partitions dividing larger areas into smaller offices; the walls in the basement are structural glazed units. Ceilings are finished with acoustical tile. Plain wooden doors with four lights with plain, wooden trim are standard.

The building is serviced by high-pressure steam (from the central heating plant), electricity, telephone, water, sanitary sewer, and a storm sewer.

D. Site:

Building 6 is the western focus of the core area of the main administrative portion of the base; it is located at the extreme eastern end of Borman Drive.

A flag pole stands at the entrance to Building 6 which was erected on December 1, 1941. It is located within a circular area immediately west of the building. The flag pole structure (Structure 92) is set into a concrete base and stands 72 ft above the ground.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Original drawings for the buildings on Chanute AFB are currently housed in Building 62, Chanute AFB, Illinois.

B. Historic Views:

A large collection of historic photographs is located in the Museum Building (Hangar 4), Chanute AFB, Illinois.

C. Bibliography:

Cooper, 2nd Lt A. S., 1986. History of P-6 Center Headquarters. Chanute AFB Office of History.

D. E. McGillem and Associates, Inc., 1990. Historic Inventory Chanute Air Force Base.

King, Thomas F. and Paige M. Peyton, 1941. Chanute AFB, Illinois Historic Evaluation.

U. S. Air Force, 1940. Chanute Field, Office of the Constructing Quartermaster, Chronological Report of Construction Program, December 27, pp. 18.

U. S. Air Force, n.d. Completion Report for the Headquarters and Administration Building, Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

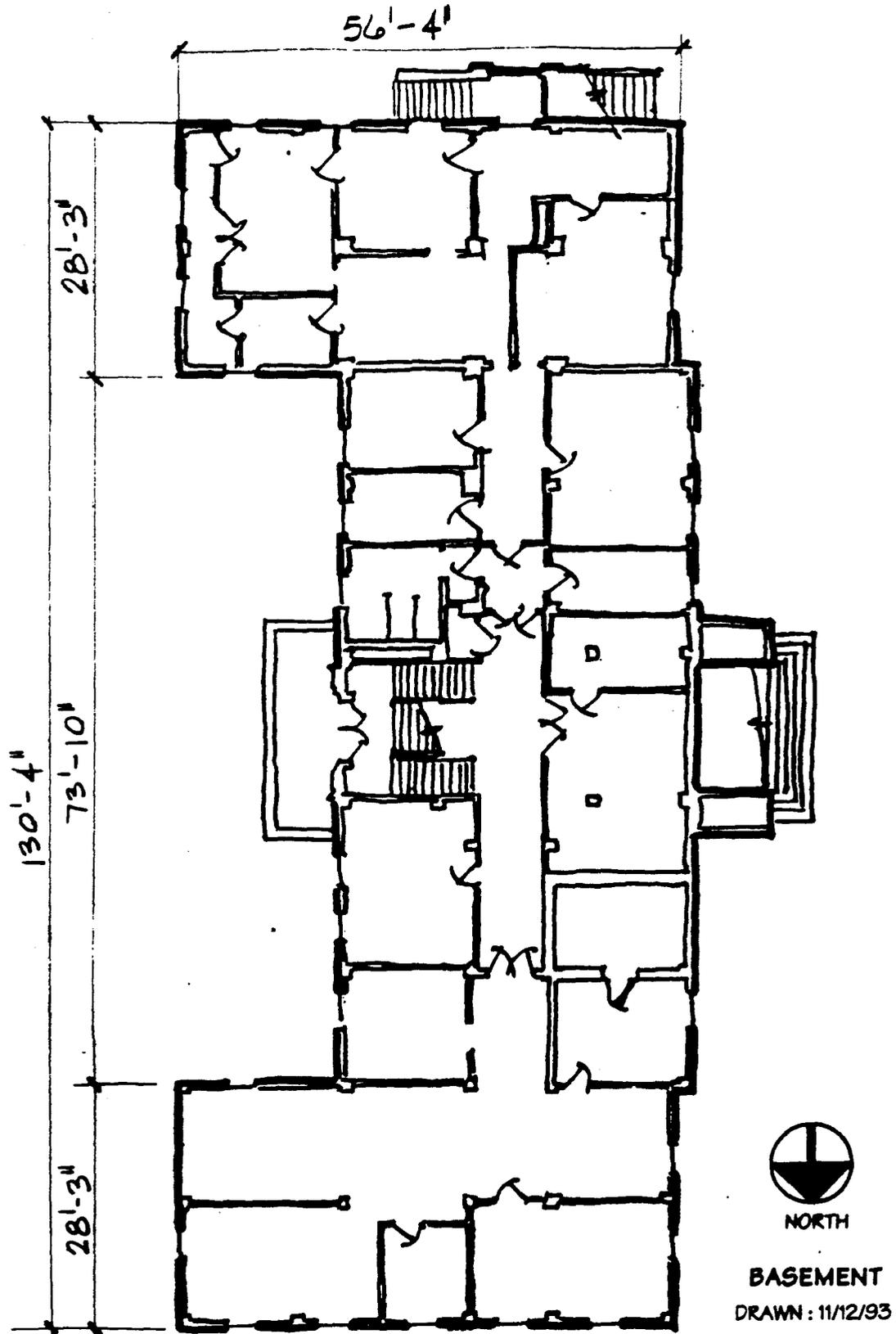
National Register and HABS documentation for the Chanute AFB Illinois Historic District is the culmination of the Section 106 process initiated during the preparation of the Disposal and Reuse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chanute AFB. The EIS was precipitated by the Congressional decision to close Chanute AFB as directed by the Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC) of 1988. A Memorandum of Agreement among the U. S. Air Force, the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Eastern Division, has been drafted.

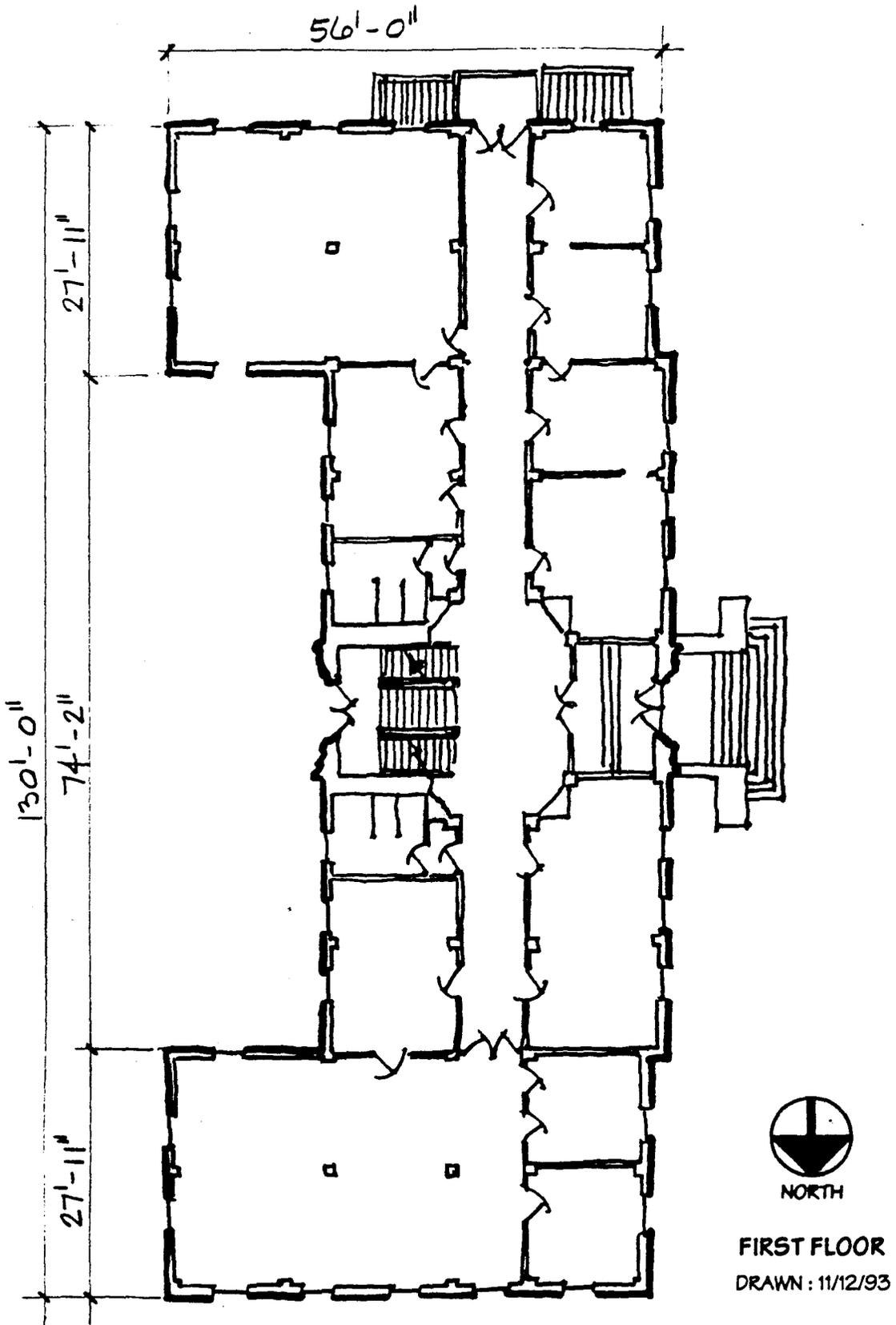
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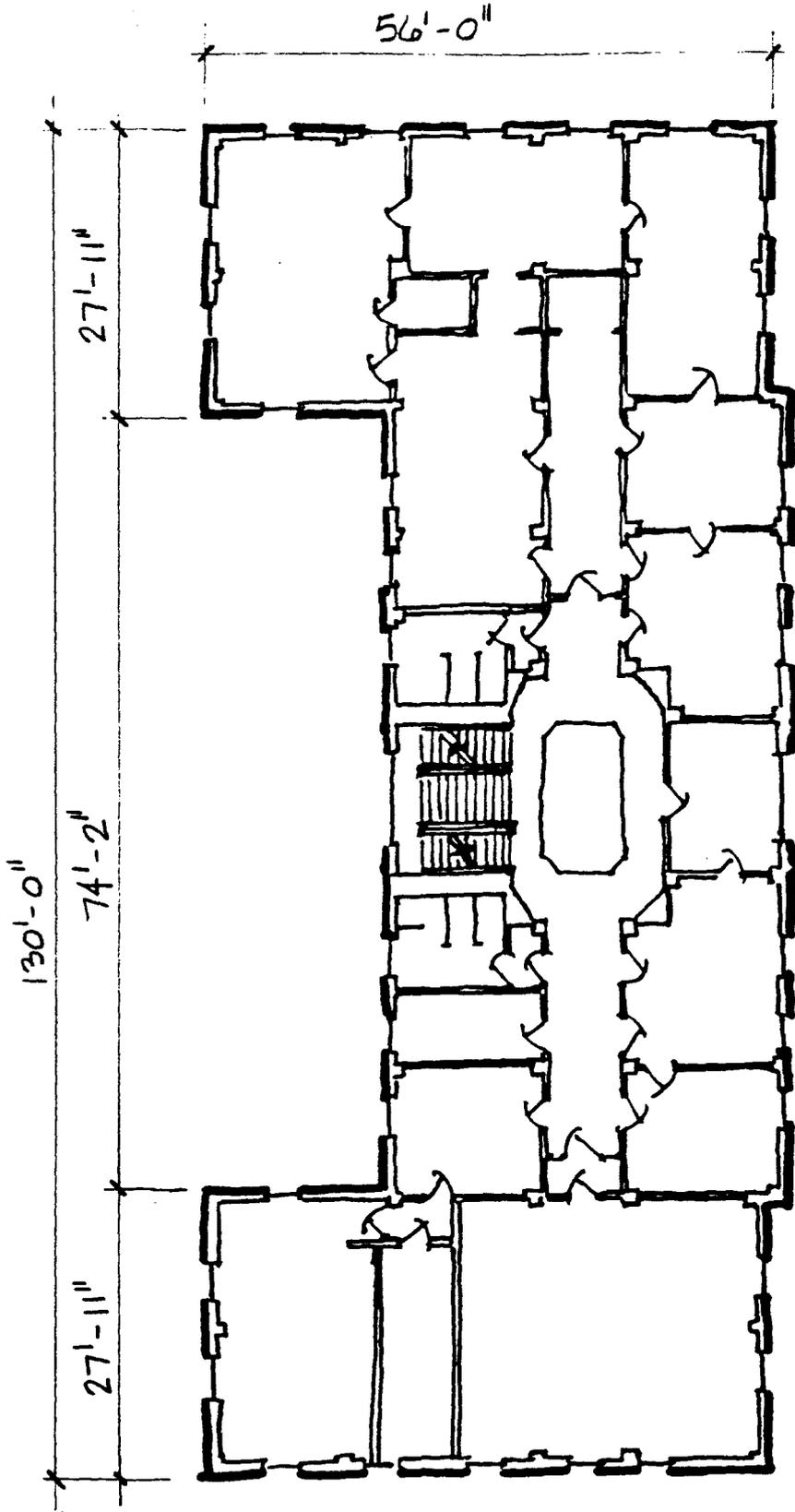
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May 1994



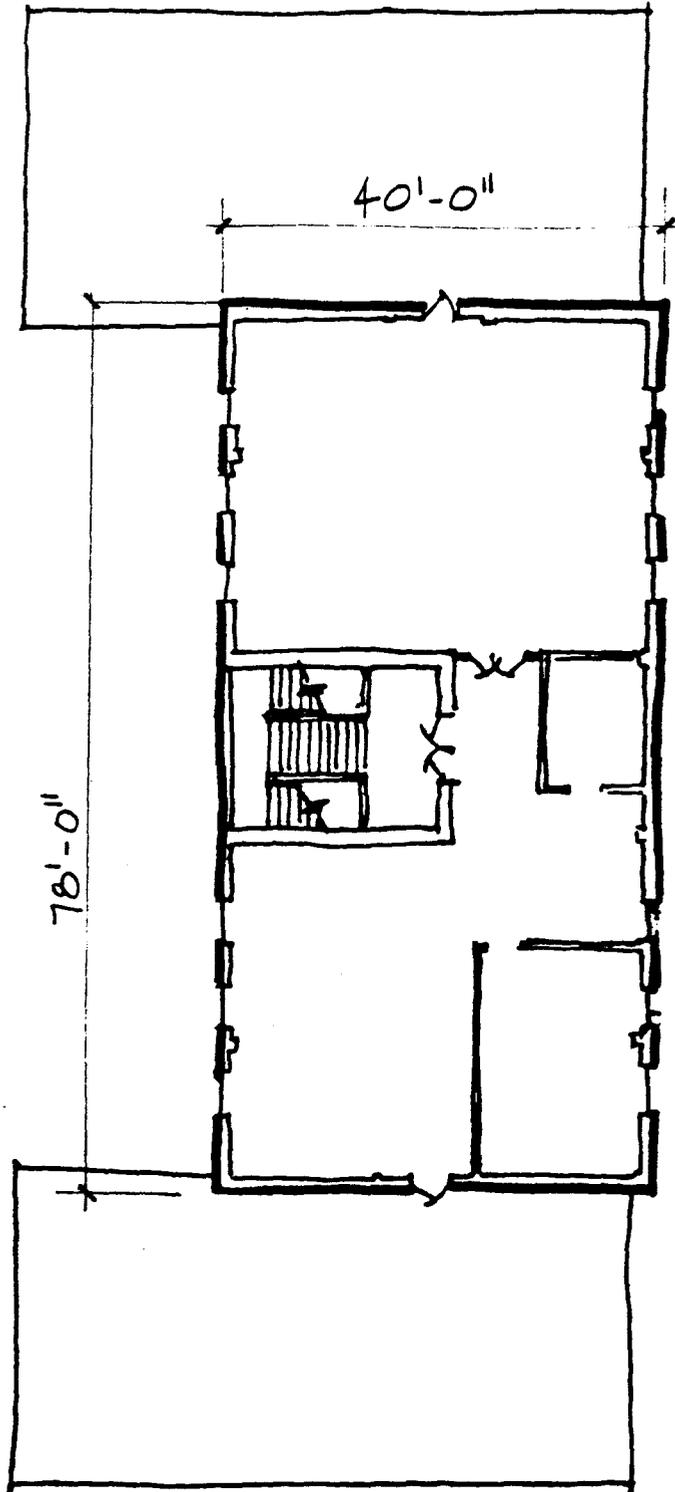




NORTH

SECOND FLOOR

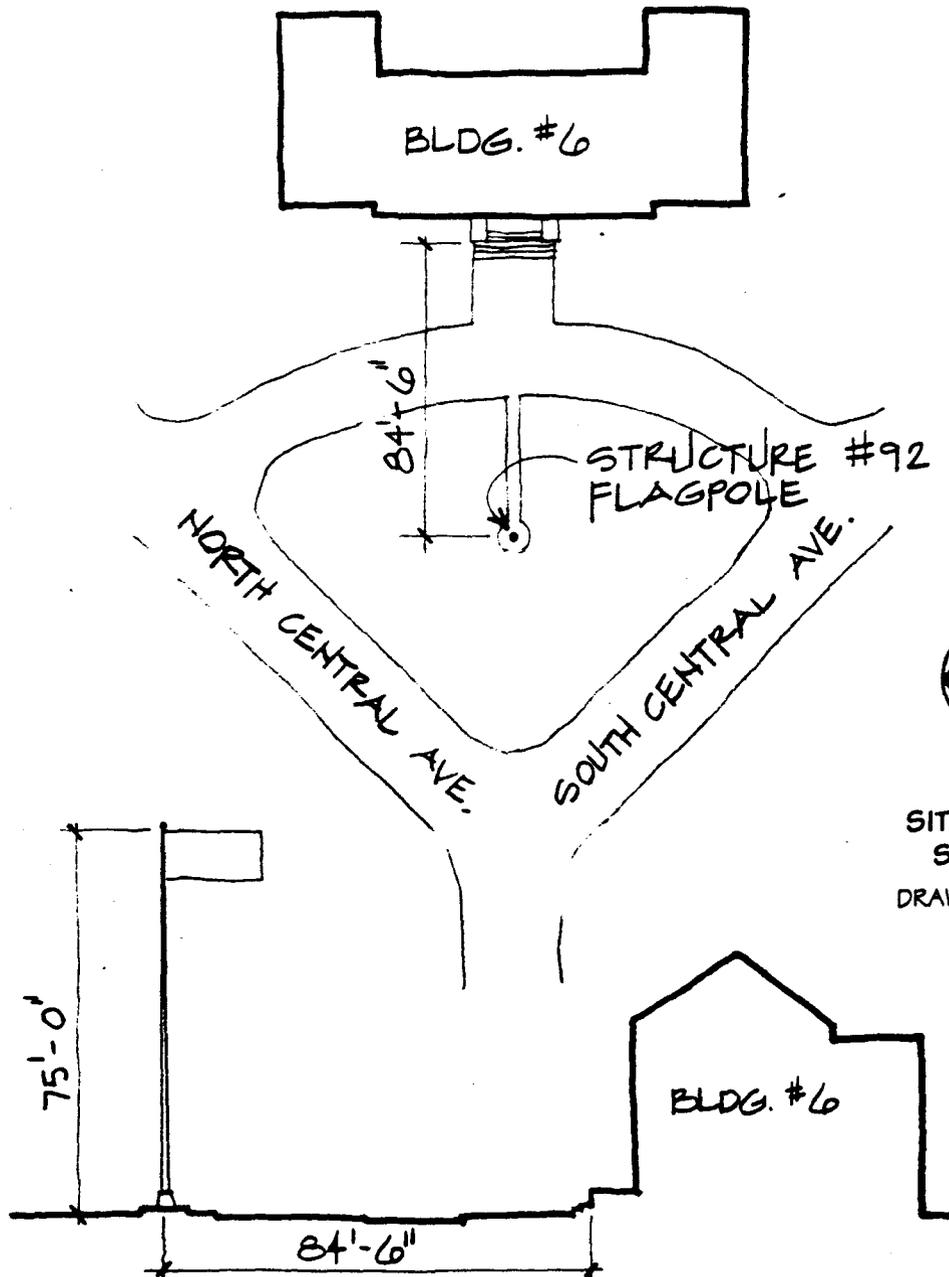
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NORTH

THIRD FLOOR

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NORTH

SITE PLAN &
SECTION

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