

Chanute Air Force Base, White Hall  
(Building 3)  
Buckingham Palace)  
Jolly Green Street  
Rantoul Vicinity  
Champaign County  
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-B

HABS  
ILL  
10-RAN-V,  
1B-

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, White Hall  
(Building 3, Buckingham Palace)

HABS No. IL-1185-B

**Location:** Jolly Green 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. 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.

Built in response to the pre-World War II massive mobilization, Building 3 was originally a self-contained multi-purpose troop barracks for 2,200 men. It included a barber shop, post office, communications office, mess hall, post exchange (PX), bakery, issue room, day rooms, library, and study halls when it was completed in 1940. At that time, it was one of the largest military buildings in the United States. It is a significant element of the Chanute AFB Historic District.

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## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of erection: 1939-40
2. Architect: Office of the Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force.
4. Contractors: Foundations - A. C. Atherton Company, Chicago, Illinois, (superstructure), Lipman Construction Company, Chicago, Illinois (two contracts).
5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by the Construction Division of the OQMG.
6. Alterations: Both the interior and exterior of this building have been extensively altered and it has suffered structural damage in areas as a result of poor maintenance and modifications. Modifications include enclosing the building's open balconies (which has inhibited proper air flow); replacement of original sash windows with modern, aluminum, single-paned windows; replacement of doors with modern, steel-framed, glass doors; and the addition of interior walls, lowered, acoustical ceilings, and assorted fixtures. A review of documents at the Chanute AFB Civil Engineering Office revealed approximately 50 entries into a log of modifications and repairs to this building. A short history and modification chronology for Building 3 is as follows:

1940-1945	Newly constructed, few modifications, building used as multipurpose troop barrack
1945-1946	Building was a staging area while the base was being used as a military separation center
1952	Building transformed into a classroom and office building
1953	Offices and classrooms rearranged; installation of building inter-communication system; partitioning of large dormitory bays into classrooms and laboratories and installation of a new electrical system; installation of heavy demonstration equipment on second and third floors requiring steel sheeting for weight distribution and shock absorption
1954	Installation of lowered, acoustical ceilings, fluorescent fixtures, and insulated walls for soundproofing; addition of a new building entrance on the west side; installation of a roof-top Weather Training Station; construction of a new driveway to connect the center court to existing driveways; installation of a metal and plaster canopy from the new sidewalk to the main door of the building
1959	Installation of a radome over a tower on the roof; modifications to rooms for the SM-73 Missile Training Facility
1966	New electrical work
1967	Remodeling of Room M-101 for installation of F4C Flight Simulator

- 1969            Remodeling of Room M-101 and perimeter rooms for installation of F4E Weapon System Training Set, creating a controlled access area; modifications to Room I-210 for CT-55 installation
- 1972            - Installation of window air conditioning units
- 1977            Roof fire on the east end of the building
- 1985            nstallation of automatic Fire Detection System
- 1988            Installation of Security Alarm System.

### 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. 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).

The construction of Building 3 began in spring 1939 and was completed in December 1940. A. C. Atherton Construction Company of Chicago was awarded the contract for the foundation and the Lipman Company of Chicago was awarded the contract for the rest of the building. Both Plan Numbers 984-E and a 6627 series were used to complete the building. Initially, it was built as a multipurpose troop barracks with squad rooms, day rooms, and study halls to accommodate 2,200 men.

The mess hall and kitchen were originally designed to feed 2,200 men, but while still under construction, the area was redesigned to feed up to 7,000. By 1941, it housed mostly permanent-party, unmarried men and contained a Field Cafe, PX, switchboard office, study hall, and mess hall. Beginning in 1942, some of the rooms in the building were used as classrooms and a technical library was added in 1943. By 1952 only 1,000 men lived in the barracks and the structure was being converted into a classroom facility. By the end of 1952, all personnel had been moved to I-type dormitories in the western sector of the base.

The transformation to classrooms took approximately two years to complete. Phase I (January-June 1953) consisted of converting space into administrative offices and Phase II (June 1953-June 1954) included partitioning of larger bays into classrooms and labs by adding insulated walls, acoustic tile ceilings, and fluorescent lights. Phase III (June-October 1954) consisted of moving the main entrance of the structure from the east side to the west side. This included the construction of a semi-circular drive to the new central entrance, and the addition of a metal and plaster canopy from the new sidewalk to

the entrance. This change would directly link the classrooms to the offices of the Technical Training Group Commander and his staff. The total cost of the conversion was \$800,000.

Known in its early years as "Buckingham Palace", Building 3 was officially named White Hall for General Thomas Dresser White (1901-1965) who lived in Rantoul as a child, became a command pilot, and eventually ascended to the position of United States Air Force Chief of Staff.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Though not of any architectural classification, this massive building is symmetrical and has classical details. Its brick construction and features help tie it to the nearby Georgian Revival housing.

2. Condition of fabric: Both the exterior and interior of this building have been extensively altered and it has suffered structural damage in areas as a result of poor maintenance and modifications.

### B. Description of Exterior:

This building is three stories, with a four-story central portion. It is a six-sided, steel-reinforced, concrete and brick structure (approximately 439,000 square feet), built in a symmetrical half-octagon shape. The irregular plan is divided into Sections A through N. The sections along Jolly Green Street are labeled A, B, C, D, and E, with C being the central section; Sections F and G front Sentry Street. Sections M and N are the mess hall and front the intersection of Sentry Street and Curtiss Street while Sections K and L front Curtiss Street. Three interior courtyards are created by two identical corridors, called sections H and J. The built-up roof is flat and hides behind a parapet wall that is capped with stone.

The exterior walls are an autumn blend of brick laid in common bond (five stretcher rows/one header row) with crushed stone mortar. Bays on the front and side facades and Section C are defined by projecting three-story brick piers with beveled stone caps and sills. Many windows appear in paired and triple arrangements and sash windows have flat brick heads and shaped stone sills. All original six-over-six light windows have been replaced with one-over-one-light thermopane. The first floor windows of Section C (west side) are wide, with arched, corbelled-brick heads, four rows of vertical headers, and stone sills. Recessed metal frames hold a triple series of one-over-one light windows.

There are eleven entrances in the perimeter, four of which are drive-through to the courtyard. The two entrances into the central courtyard are the most ornate and are faced with smooth stone one and one-half stories high. Features include stone archivolt, capped heads, a projecting crest above the doorway, and capped-shaped columns. The entrance into the side courtyards have segmental arches of four rows of header brick and each is flanked by brick pilasters with stone caps; granite bases protect the base of the opening. Entrances into sections B, and D, and the courtyard entrances into H and J, are similar to those into the side courtyards, with modern metal-framed glass double doors having side lights and a transom area set within the segmental-arched opening. Sections F, G, I, K, L, and M entrances have a stone frame and pilasters with a brass decorative grille in the transom area and double, modern, metal-framed, glass doors. The entrances

into these sections have granite steps and a large stoop. Original light fixtures flank the doors and Section M has an original industrial size sliding door as well as a large metal roll up door. The entrances into section N are plain with modern doors.

Courtyards are open air with paved surfaces that serve as parking lots. Building facades in the inner courtyard are defined by three-story, projecting, brick pilasters with concrete caps; recessed areas are steel-reinforced concrete and brick. The first-floor heads are arched while the second- and third-floor heads are flat. These spaces, which originally opened to an inner corridor, are now filled with a series of four, six-over-six light, wood-framed windows, with continuous concrete heads. Existing doors opening into the interior courtyards are wood with three horizontal lights over three lower wood panels. The foundation is not exposed and the corner at each wall junction projects outward.

The mess hall wing consists of a two-story, rounded roof section with a one-story, flat roof wing to both sides (east and west). The rounded roof is covered with molded copper sheeting and has a corbelled frieze on each side; the roof-line perimeter parapet is capped with stone. A concrete foundation rises approximately two feet above the ground and the walls are identical to the rest of the building, with the corners of the two-story portion defined by projecting square-brick pilasters with a recessed vertical panel near the top, stone caps, and concrete bases. The upper-story, large windows on the south side are arched with header brick heads and tapering stone sills; other windows match those found on the main section of the building. The south side has a large sliding metal door while the north side of the two-story section has a massive overhead garage door opening, one and one-half stories high, with a flat head and a modern metal door.

### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: See attached floor plans.

2. Summary Description: The inner corridors (along the courtyards) have concrete floors, brick walls and six-over-six light, double-hung, wood-framed, sash windows with flat heads and stone sills on the interior wall. The doors to the inner rooms have six lights over a single panel, a six-light transom and concrete sills. Occasional double door entries have ten-light transoms. Interior rooms have been somewhat modified, but generally, they have exposed beams, plaster walls, acoustical tile ceilings, plain molding, linoleum floors, original radiators, and wood-framed doors; partitions were added in the 1950s. Stairways are metal with iron-pipe balustrades. The kitchen and mess hall have glazed structural tile walls and red quarry tile floors.

### D. Site:

Building 3 is located at the eastern end of the main administrative area of the base and is a dominant feature of this area; its main entrance is on Jolly Green Street.

## 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:

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

King, Thomas F. and Paige M. Peyton, 1991. 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. 7-8.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

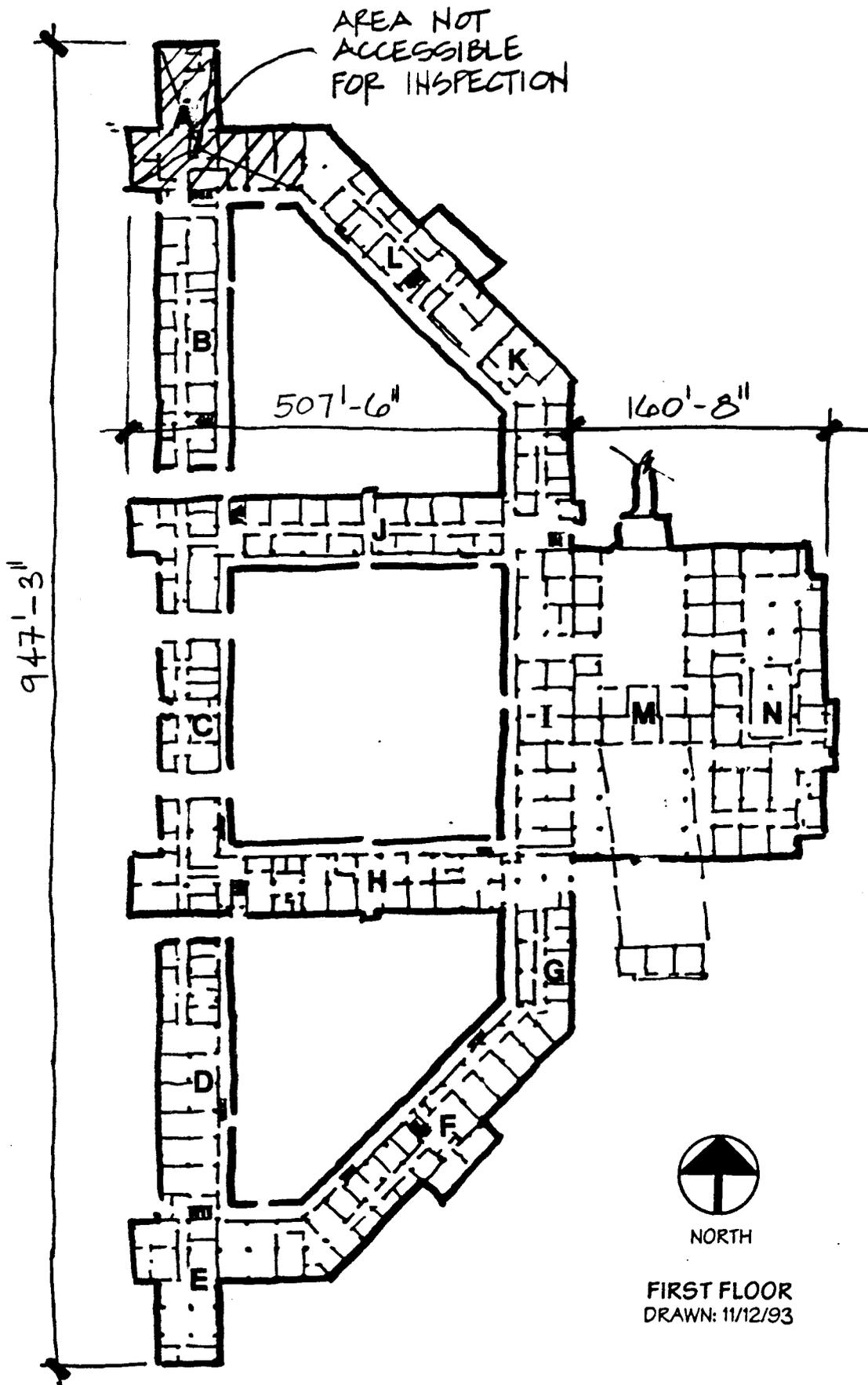
National Register and HABS documentation for the Chanute AFB Illinois Historic District is the culmination of the Section 106 process initiated during the preparation of the Disposal and Reuse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chanute AFB. The EIS was precipitated by the Congressional decision 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.

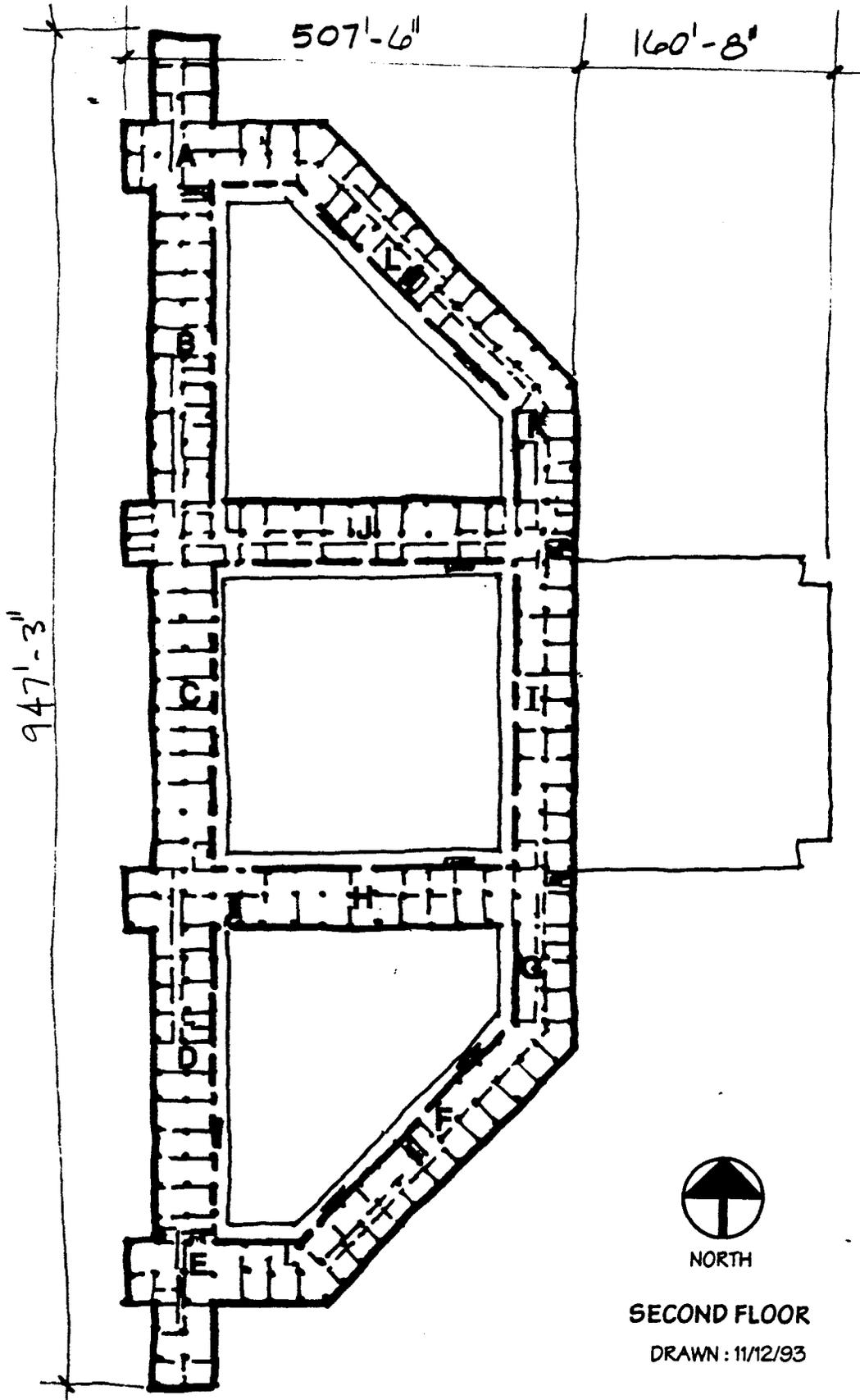
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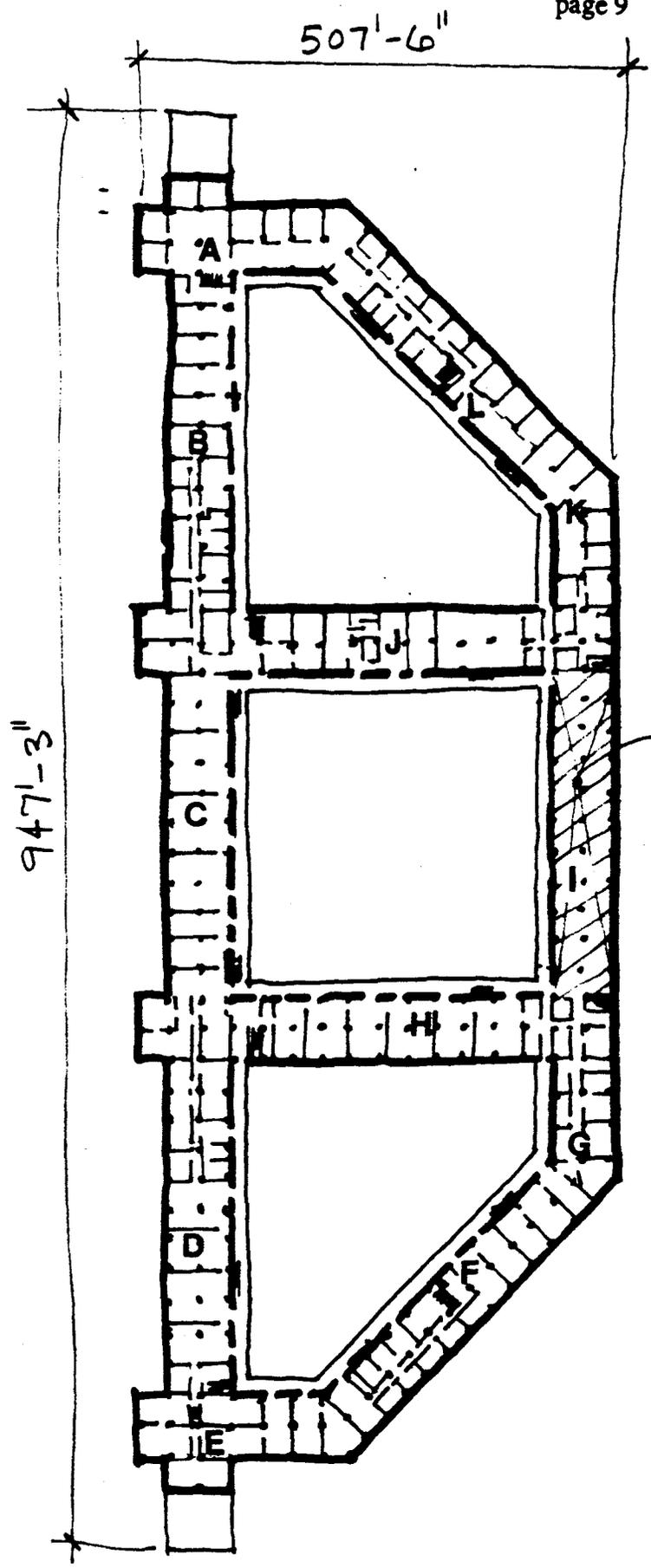
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AREA NOT  
ACCESSIBLE  
FOR INSPECTION



NORTH

THIRD FLOOR

DRAWN : 11/12/93

