

Chanute Air Force Base, Fire and Guard House
(Building 43)
Curtiss Street at Galaxy Street
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-H

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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

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(Building 43)

HABS No. IL-1185-H

Location: Curtiss Street 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: Leased by the Village of Rantoul, Illinois

Present Use: Fire Department /Police Station

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.

In response to massive pre-World War II mobilization, the Fire and Guard House was built in 1940 to house two fire trucks, an ambulance, a crash truck, 44 prisoners, 10 firemen, and 11 guards. The building 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: 1940.
2. Architect: Office of Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division.
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force.
4. Contractors: Brockmeyer Construction Company, St. Louis, Missouri.
5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by the Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General.
6. Alterations: The construction of an additional vehicle bay was completed in 1951.

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).

Authorization for construction of the Fire and Guard House was given by Congress as part of a \$5,359,500 total package that also included headquarters and administration buildings, hangar/school units and service units. The builder was the Brockmeyer Company of St. Louis, Missouri that submitted the low bid of \$75,158. The building originally housed two pieces of fire equipment, one ambulance, and one crash truck; a one-story cell block to the northeast housed 44 prisoners. The second floor dormitories over the equipment bays could accommodate 10 firemen and 11 guards. The facilities had separate toilets and officers' rooms.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Fire and Guard House is a brick utilitarian building and does not fit into an established architectural classification.

2. Condition of fabric: The Fire and Guard House appears to have been maintained and is in good condition. The one-story wing and the two-story living areas were recently remodeled.

B. Description of Exterior:

This is an irregular-in-plan building that has a two-story main section with a one story, one fire truck bay to each side; a one-story addition to the southwest containing another fire truck bay (with a shed roofed section to the rear); and a one-story wing to the northeast containing offices. The main section is symmetrical with a square tower protruding from the roof line on the east side. The foundation is concrete with a beveled head which rises approximately two ft above ground level.

The front facade is defined by projecting brick corners and a central, tall, one-story stone facade that has a granite base. The exterior walls are primarily autumn-range brick laid in common bond (five stretcher rows/one header row) with crushed stone mortar. Four of the fire truck bays have brick arched openings with metal roll-up doors containing three rows of three lights each. The two central bays have stone archivolt and frame; the two outer bays have three header brick arches. The fifth fire truck bay has a flat stone head.

The main non-vehicular entrance is located at the junction of the main building and the office wing. It is flanked by projecting brick pilasters with stepped stone heads and a segmentally arched stone head above a modern metal door with sidelights and a painted transom. The other entrances to the building are modern metal doors with or without painted transoms within flat head heads.

The one-over-one light, double-hung, wood-framed, sash windows with flat heads have been replaced with aluminum framing and the rear windows have shaped, stone-lug sills, some of which have been removed.

The flat roof is hidden behind a brick parapet wall with a stone frieze and slightly projecting stone cap. Copper down spouts decorate the walls in several locations.

The original Tudor style light fixtures with copper frame and white glass remain intact on the front facade. A large "CHANUTE FIRE DEPT." sign is attached to the stone.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: See attached floor plans.

2. Summary Description: The original fire truck portion of the building remains with an exposed metal beam ceiling, concrete floor, and yellow glazed block walls. The rest of the building has recently been remodeled with new wall, ceiling, and floor coverings.

D. Site:

The Fire and Guard House is located at the northernmost end of Jolly Green Street within the Chanute AFB Historic District.

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. 10-11.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

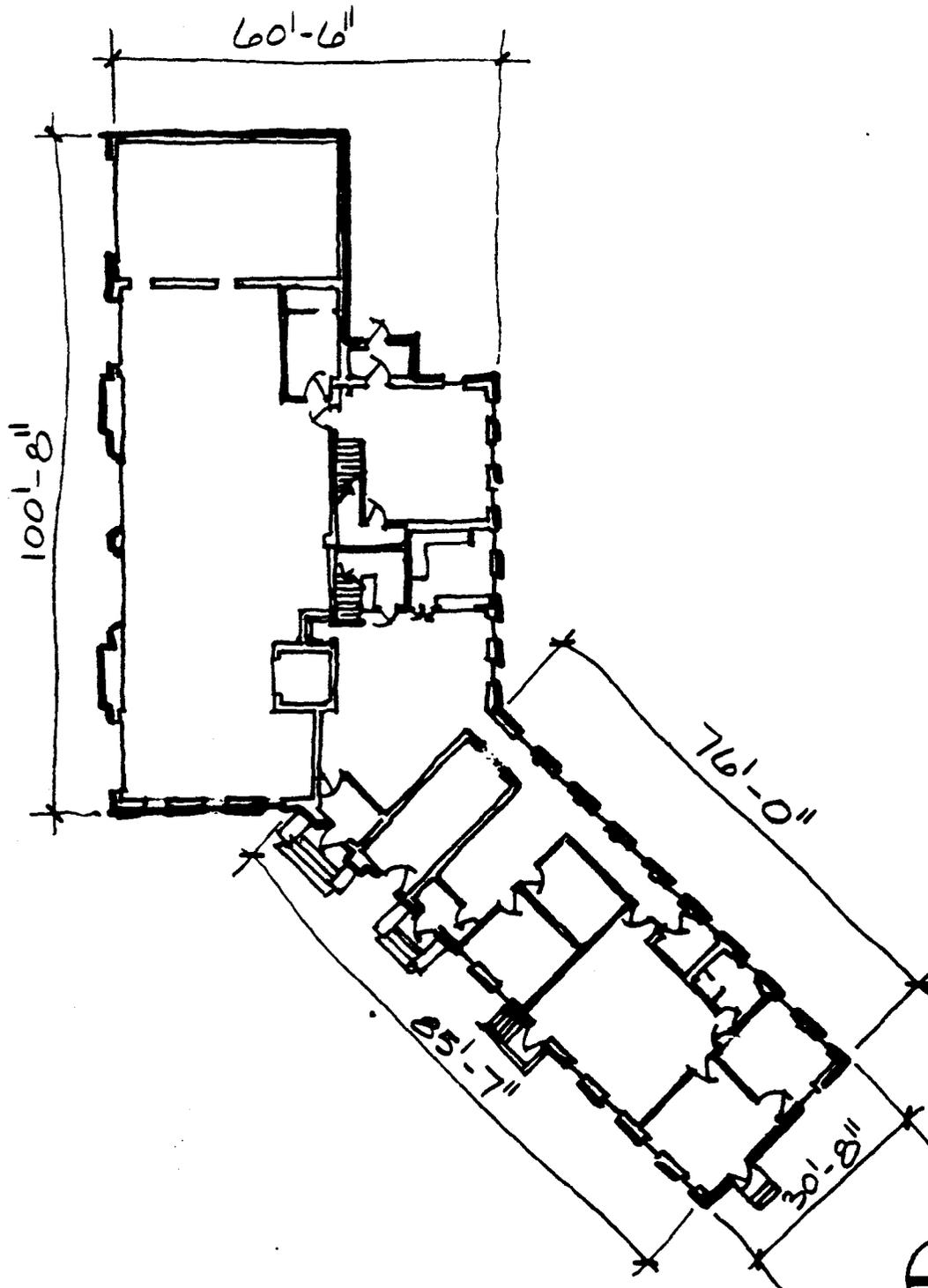
National Register and HABS documentation for the Chanute AFB Illinois Historic District is the culmination of the Section 106 process initiated during the preparation of the Disposal and Reuse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chanute AFB. The EIS was precipitated by the Congressional decision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

Prepared by: Ana B. Koval, Architectural Historian
Architectural Resources Group
Pier 9, The Embarcadero
San Francisco, California 94111

and

Paige M. Peyton, Historian
The Earth Technology Corporation
1461 East Cooley Drive, Suite 100
Colton, California 92324

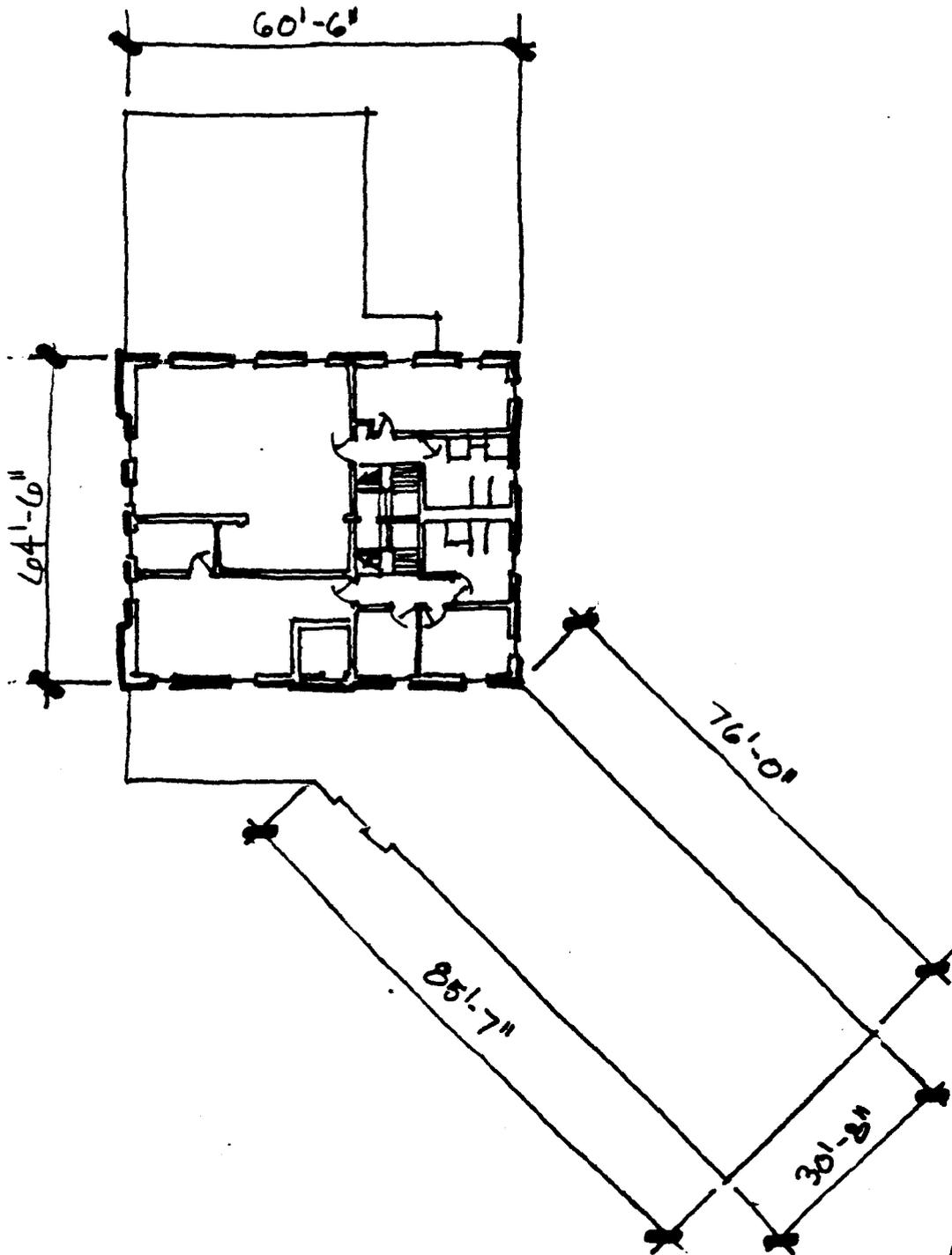
May 1994



NORTH

FIRST FLOOR

DRAWN : 11/12/93



NORTH

SECOND FLOOR

DRAWN : 11/12/93