

Chanute Air Force Base, Quartermaster Warehouse
(Building 61)
Northeast corner of Extender Street and Sopwith Street
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

HABS No.

IL-1185-L

HABS

ILL

10-RAN.V.

IL -

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, Quartermaster Warehouse
(Building 61)

HABS No. IL-1185-L

Location: Northeast corner of Extender Street and Sopwith Street *HABS*
Chanute Air Force Base *ILL*
Rantoul Vicinity *10-RAN, I.*
Champaign County *IL*
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.

In response to massive World War II mobilization, Building 61 was built in 1939-40 as a Quartermaster Warehouse. Building 62, an identical building constructed at the same time, was built to the west, as an Air Corps Warehouse. Both of these buildings are contributing elements of the Chanute AFB Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of erection: 1939-40
2. Architect: Office of Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force
4. Contractors: T. S. Willis, Janesville, Wisconsin (superstructure); A. Smith and Company, Chicago (foundation).
5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by OQMG Construction Division.

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).

Two warehouses, the Air Corps Warehouse (Building 62) and the Quartermaster Warehouse (Building 61), as they were originally known, were constructed in 1939-40 by T. S. Willis Co. of Janesville, Wisconsin; A. Smith and Company of Chicago completed the foundations. Willis Co. constructed the shell and furnished the buildings for \$38,900. Both buildings were originally built with shipping platforms on both sides, one for trucks and one for rail, and each was divided into three sections by brick fire walls and "intercommunicating automatic metal clad fire doors." The Air Corps Warehouse has a cold storage room designed for the storage of Air Corps fur clothing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Building 61 is utilitarian in design and does not fit into an established architectural classification.
2. Condition of fabric: This building is in fair to good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

Building 61 is a one-story, rectangular-in-plan, reinforced brick structure approximately 75 ft by 355 ft; its concrete foundation has a beveled head. The front-facing, medium-pitched gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is finished with plain eaves and an aluminum verge and frieze board. The building has an addition to its north end that matches the original building.

Exterior walls are red brick laid in common bond (five stretcher rows/ one header row) with crushed stone mortar and there is a circular vent in each gable end with header bricks outlining the opening. Windows have flat brick heads with radiating voussoirs, metal frames, and concrete sills. The original windows are metal frame with 32 lights (four rows of eight) and with the center two rows hinged; some windows are tall and extend to the frieze. The building has numerous entrances.

The main entrance to Building 61 has modern, double metal framed glass doors with an original 30 light transom above. All original entrances are single or double metal doors with four lights in each door and a metal-framed, multi-light transom above (24 lights over the single doors and 30 lights over the double doors). The building also has large metal garage doors with multi-lights; several garage doors have been replaced with rolling metal doors.

The front entry stoop and stairs are concrete with a metal pipe railing and a high, wide loading dock runs the full length of both long sides. Ramps and metal stairs with pipe railings lead to the loading dock.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: See attached floor plans.

2. Summary Description: The interior of Building 61 remains as a large warehouse-type space with brick walls dividing the interior into four warehouse bays; metal roof trusses are exposed. Only the south end of Building 61 has been modernized, with dropped ceilings and carpet; however, Building 61 appears to have been enlarged to the north at some time, as the original exterior walls are visible in that section of the building.

D. Site:

Building 61 is located on the northern end of the Chanute AFB Historic District adjacent to several other warehouse and maintenance buildings.

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. 4-5.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

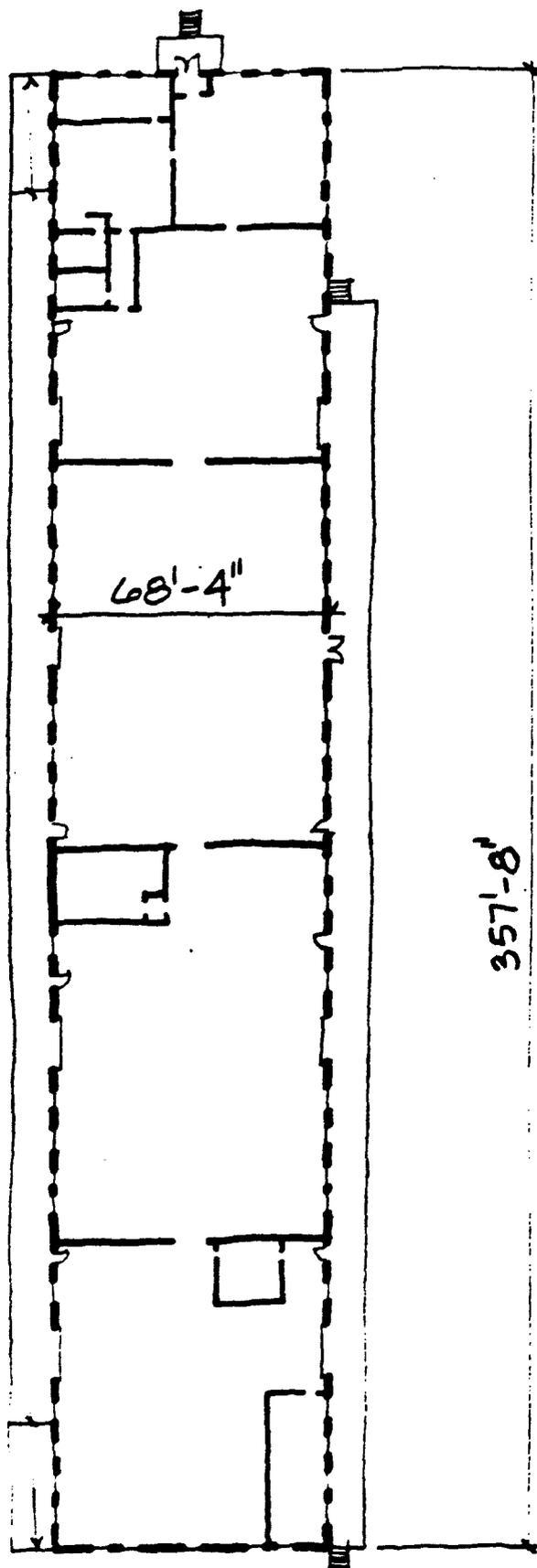
National Register and HABS documentation for the Chanute AFB Illinois Historic District is the culmination of the Section 106 process initiated during the preparation of the Disposal and Reuse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chanute AFB. The EIS was precipitated by the Congressional decision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

GROUND FLOOR

DRAWN: 11/12/93