Chanute Air Force Base, Noncommissioned
Officer Housing
(Building 74)
Curtiss Street
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-X

HABS
ILL
10-RAN.V,
1X-

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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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Chanute Air Force Base, Noncommissioned Officer Housing (Building 74)

HABS No. IL-1185-X

Location: Curtiss 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.

In response to massive World War II mobilization, Building 74 and nine similar duplex units of Noncommissioned Officer Housing (NCO) were built in 1940 on Chanute AFB. The Georgian Revival designed housing was built from Office of Quartermaster General (OQMG) standardized plans. This housing is a contributing element of the Chanute AFB Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of erection: 1940

2. Architect: Office of the Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division

3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force

4. Contractors: William C. F. Kuhne, Rantoul, Illinois (foundation contractor). McDonald Construction Company, St. Louis, Missouri. (superstructure).

5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by the 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).

Buildings 70 through 74 and 86 through 90 were completed in January 1940, at a cost of $18,139 each; Quartermaster General Plan Numbers 625-3570 through 625-3578 were used. William C. F. Kuhne of Rantoul, Illinois was the foundation contractor and McDonald Construction Company of St. Louis, Missouri constructed the superstructure. Changes were made to the original drawings including the deletion of vestibules and sun parlors; these items were deleted by addendum before the contract was awarded.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Noncommissioned Officer Housing (Buildings 70-74 and 86-90) was designed in an early twentieth century Georgian Revival style of architecture.

2. Condition of fabric: This building is in good condition. The interior has been modernized with a new kitchen and bathroom fixtures.

B. Description of Exterior:

This two-story, with basement, rectangular-in-plan duplex is 42 ft by 30 ft and consists of two mirror-image, adjoining, two-bay front, two-bay side residences of classical revival designs. The foundation is poured concrete faced with brick. Exterior walls are red brick laid in common bond (five stretcher rows/ one header row) with crushed stone mortar.

Slightly recessed windows are paired on the first floor front facade and in single arrangements elsewhere. The six-over-six light, double-hung, wood-framed, sash windows have flat plain heads, stone lug sills, and aluminum storms; awning-type basement windows are single light. Two central entrances share a common, wood, heavily entablatured flat head. Individual doorways have a recessed elliptical transom with a molded frame, entablatured square pilasters, shaped stone sills, and aluminum storm doors. Original recessed single doors are wood with six panels. There are shared steps and a stoop with a brick foundation and metal balustrade.

The rear entrances have flat, molded heads and the door/window combination shares a common wooden frame. The single wood door has nine lights (3 rows of 3) above two vertical panels. The side window is six-over-six light, double-hung sash, with a wooden panel below. The rear porch is a double-open porch with a common flat roof, plain cornice, three square entablatured columns, brick foundation, concrete deck and steps, metal balustrade and railing while the rear porch is divided by a three-quarter high clapboard wall with a trellis above. Outside rear entrances to the basement have concrete steps and metal balustrades that are located to each side of the porch.

The hipped roof features clay tile shingles with a capped ridge, boxed cornice with molded fascia and frieze. Off-center interior chimneys, one on each side slope, are brick with a capped head.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: See attached floor plans

2. Summary Description: The interior consists of two identical floor plans that mirror each other. Features include molded trim, boxed radiators, white oak floors, windows with molded heads, wooden, six-panel doors with brass knobs and key plates, and a closed, curved side stairway with maple rail and wood spoke balustrade. The three room first floor includes a living room across the front and a dining room and kitchen across the back. The stairway leads to the upstairs hallway with an original light fixture and ceiling trapdoor to the half attic. There are three bedrooms upstairs and a remodeled bath. The basement is a large open area with a laundry area and a furnace room containing the original boiler.

D. Site:

The Noncommissioned Officer Housing is a group of ten duplex units with two detached garage buildings and two utility vaults. The collection of residential buildings make up a housing complex along Galaxy and Curtiss Streets and form the northwestern boundary of the Chanute AFB Historic District. The residential setting includes sidewalks, large shade trees along the street, a large green space behind the buildings that forms a community backyard, and a playground on the corner of Galaxy and Curtiss Streets.

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, p. 6.

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

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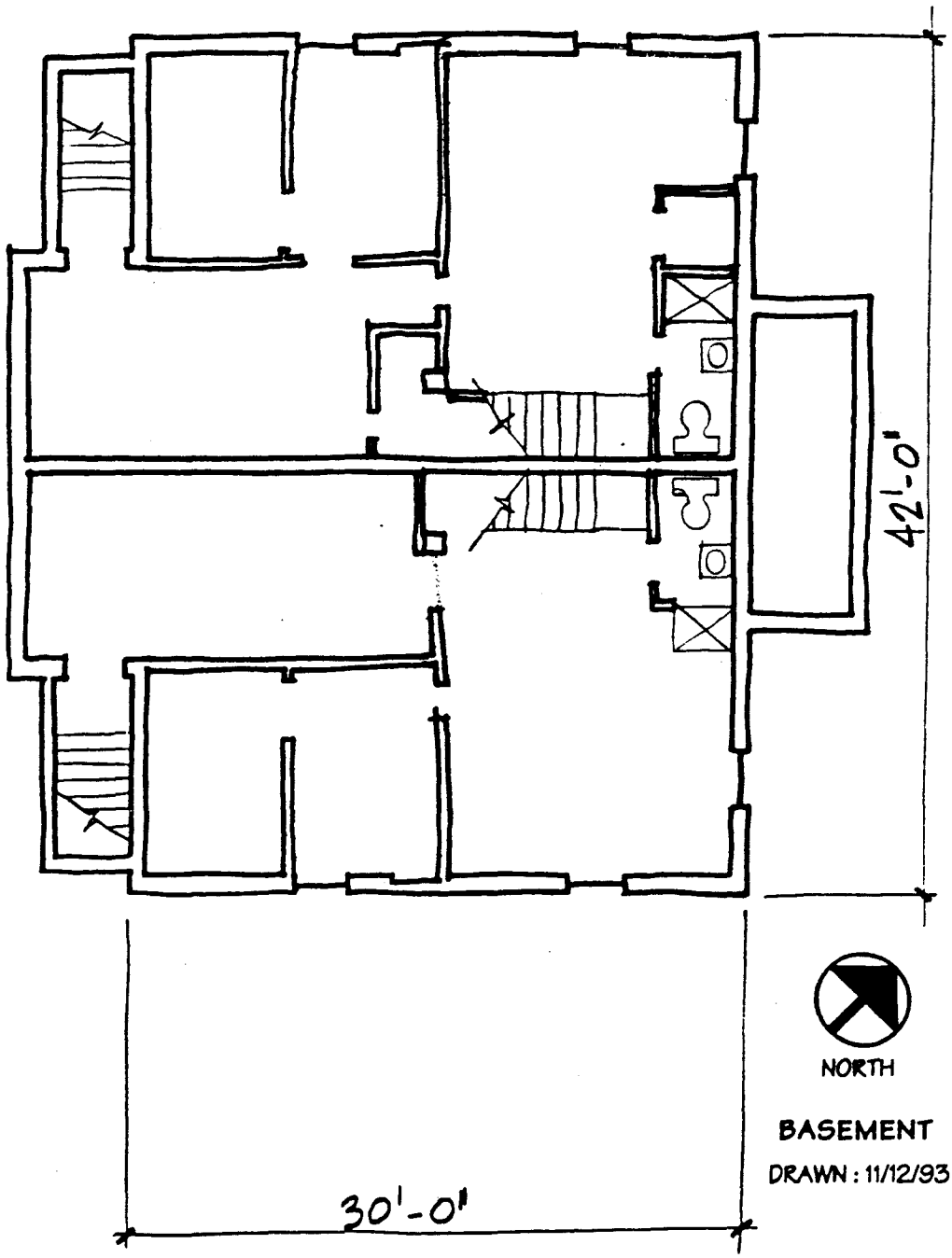
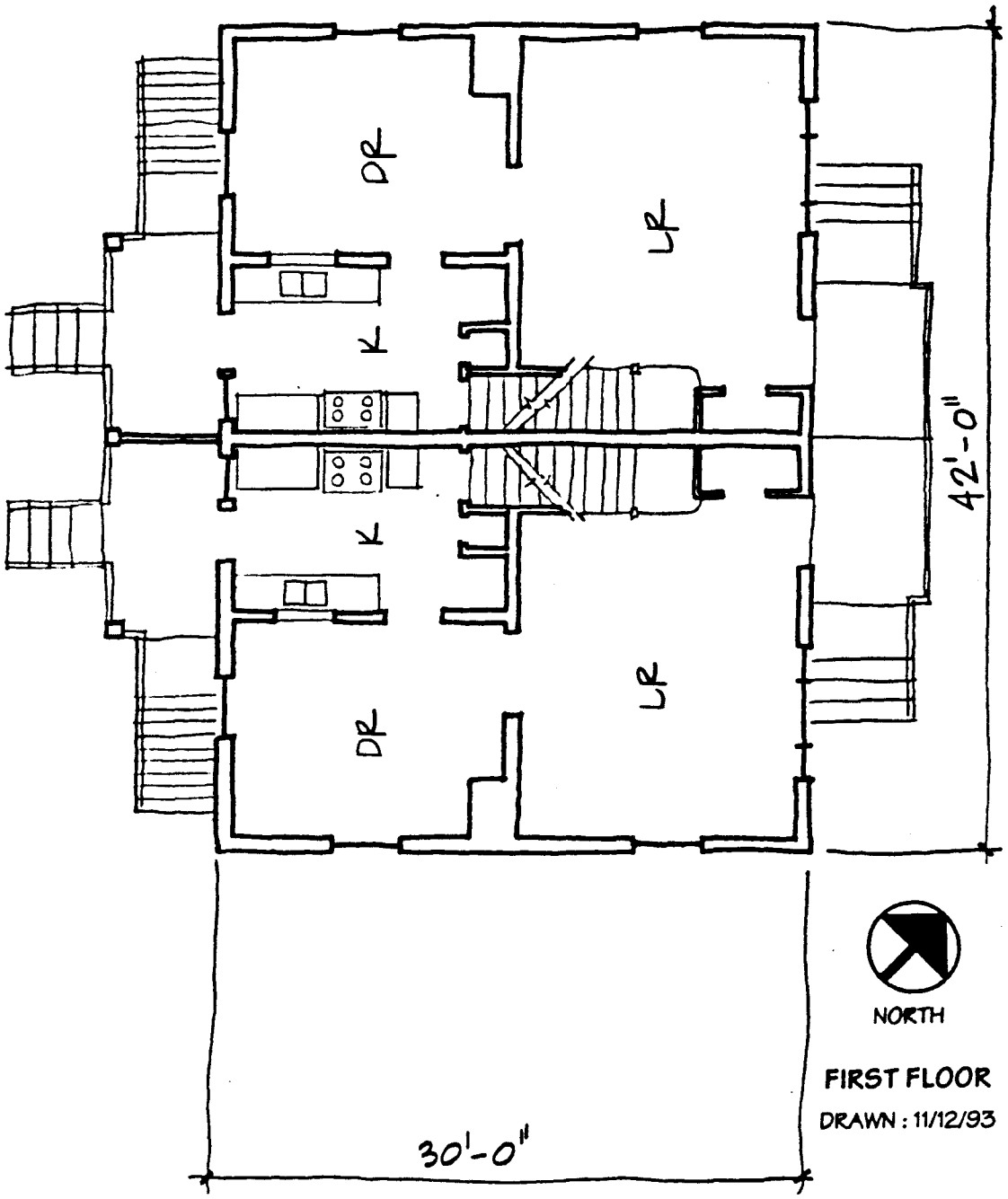
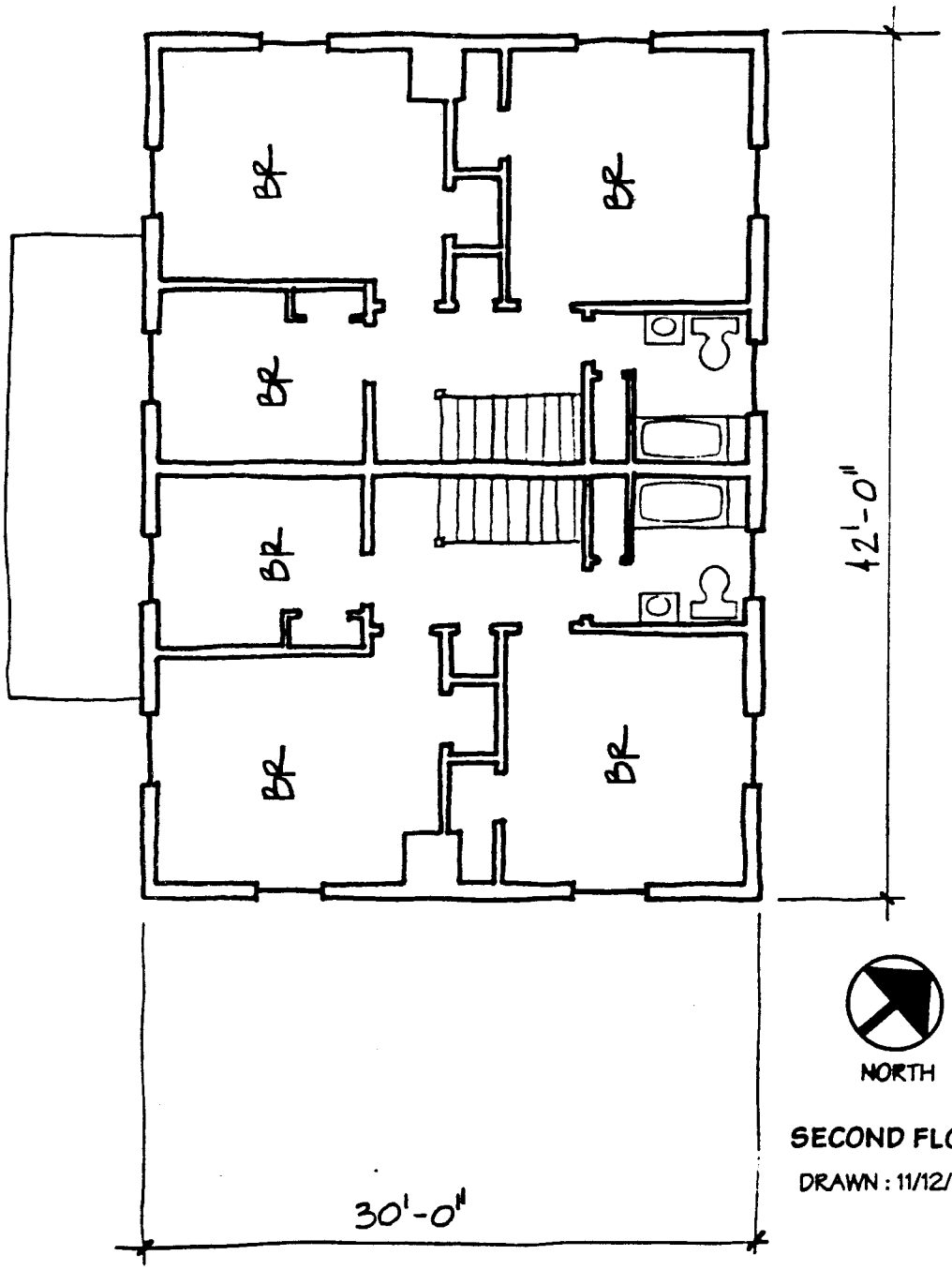


BASEMENT

DRAWN : 11/12/93



FIRST FLOOR
DRAWN : 11/12/93



SECOND FLOOR

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