

Chanute Air Force Base, Utility Vault
(Building 83)
Galaxy Street
Rantoul Vicinity
Champaign County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-AF

HABS
ILL
10-RAN.V,
IAF-

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 83)

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Location:

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:

Utility Vault

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 83 was built in 1940 as a utility vault to house transformers for the Noncommissioned Officer Housing. It 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 Quartermaster General (OQMG), Construction Division
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force
4. Contractors:
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).

Building 83 was built in 1940 as a utility vault to house transformers for Noncommissioned Officer Housing, Buildings 86-90. The building was constructed at the same time as the housing and garages, under a Purchase and Hire contract, and supervised by the Constructing Quartermaster.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Building 83 is a utilitarian brick building and does not fit into an established architectural classification.
2. Condition of fabric: This building is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

Building 83 is a small, rectangular-in-plan, (9 ft 4 in by 11 ft 4 in), one-story utility building on a concrete foundation. The exterior is red brick laid in common bond (four rows of stretcher bricks/one row of header bricks) with crushed stone mortar and is the same as the adjacent houses and garage buildings. There are no windows and it has only