

Chanute Air Force Base, Water Tower  
(Structure 44)  
Extender Street  
Rantoul Vicinity  
Champaign County  
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1185-AM

HABS  
ILL  
10-RAN.V,  
1 AM-

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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Location:

Extender 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, IL 61866

Present Occupant:

Not Applicable

Present Use:

Water Tower

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 World War II massive mobilization, Structure 44, a 300,000 gallon water tower was constructed in 1939. It is a contributing element of the Chanute AFB Historic District.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of erection: 1939
2. Architect: United States Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Army, United States Air Force
4. Contractors: United States Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District
5. Original plans and construction: Plans for the building were drawn by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District.

### 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 Office of Quartermaster General and the Corps of Engineers. The buildings and structures within the Historic District, including this water tower, reflect Chanute's "Great Renaissance" period (1938-41).

This water tower was completed in 1939 for \$28,735, according to plans drawn by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District (Plan No. 6627-C-370); it is one of two 300,000 gallon water towers built at Chanute during the pre World War II build up. This tower was constructed to to service the east-central portion of the base and the second tower (also built in 1939) was built to service the western sector.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Structure 44 is a water tower which consists of a 300,000 gallon reservoir tank that is supported by six vertically angled "Z" brace steel girders. The round squat tank is covered with riveted metal sheets and a large tubular hollow pipe extends from the flat base of the tank to the ground. The girders are reinforced with two rows of horizontal girders and guy wires that cross in the resulting three sections. The base of the vertical supports are embedded in square concrete footers and reinforced with steel braces. A stairway on the southwest side, which is protected by a founded steel cage, leads to a walkway that encircles the tank near its base. The walkway has a metal balustrade with crossed supports.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Original drawings for Structure 44 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, 1940. p. F-16.

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

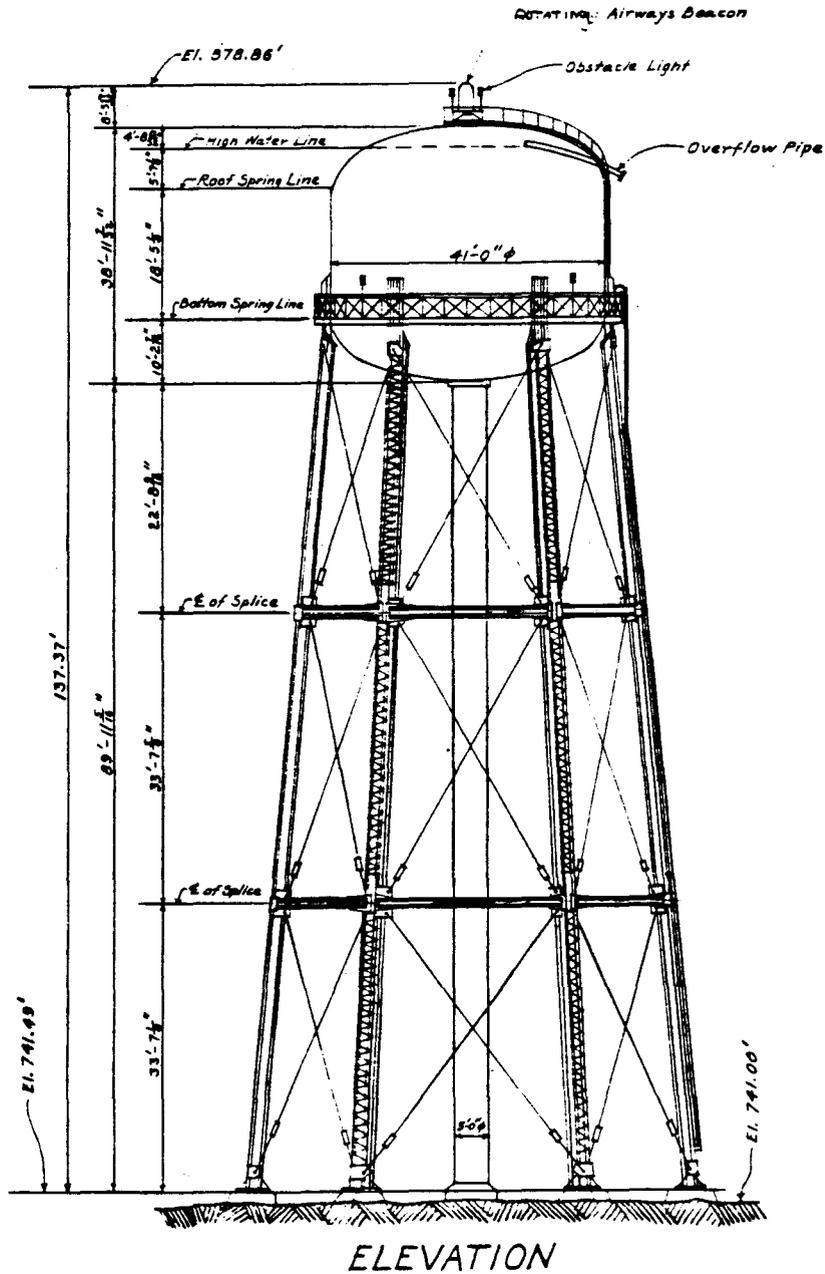
National Register and HABS documentation for the Chanute AFB Illinois Historic District is the culmination of the Section 106 process initiated during the preparation of the Disposal and Reuse Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Chanute AFB. The EIS was precipitated by the Congressional decision 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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ELEVATION  
DRAWN: NOV. 23, 1942