

Red Cross Complex,

HABS No. IL-1161-A

Administration Building (Building 391)

↪ Southwest Corner of Eagle and Borman Drives

↪ Chanute Air Force Base

Rantoul

Champaign County

Illinois

HABS

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10-RAN.V,

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPY OF MEASURED DRAWING

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Denver, Colorado 80225

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RED CROSS COMPLEX, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (Building 391)

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A. General Statement:

1. History: Groundbreaking for the Red Cross Administration Building occurred during the last week of November, 1941 (Chanute Field Wings 1941c). Official acceptance and occupation of the building by the Red Cross took place during the last week of February; a dedication ceremony was held Sunday, March 15, 1942 (Chanute Field Wings 1942b; 1942d). Based on a 1943 Corps of Engineers drawing (IL-1161-A-13), the main entrance doors were replaced sometime after this date (U.S. Engineer Office 1943). The building was re-sided in 1978, with 1"x12" hard board siding replacing the original 1"x8" shiplap siding. Also at this time, metal gutters and down-spouts were added. Raked molding was removed from the cornice and also from the window heads of the center section of the building (verified by ghosts in the paint and 1943 COE drawing). A handicap ramp and landing were added to the west side of the building in the early 1980s. The apartment kitchen and bathroom were remodeled in 1988 by updating appliances, fixtures, and cupboards. The bathroom window was removed and filled in at this time. The heating, cooling, and ventilation systems have been upgraded over time (date unknown).

2. Architectural Character: The Administration Building retains its original appearance to a degree not commonly seen in extant World War II temporary buildings. An uncredited architect's drawing was included in a base newspaper article announcing the construction of the facility, and appears nearly identical to the building as it stands today (Chanute Field Wings 1941b). It was described in 1941 as a "southern colonial style frame structure," that cost \$21,775, and contained "offices, consultation rooms, a reception room, classroom, and quarters for the field director" (Chanute Field Wings 1941b; 1941c). Differing from most temporary structures of its era, it features the use of decorative moldings on the building's interior and exterior. Mill work on the building takes the form of window hoods, continuous exterior and interior cornices, and interior finish at the windows and doors. The building's other outstanding feature is concealed within the wall separating the reception room from the class room; this entire wall is a wood frame truss serving the dual purpose of vertical roof support and lateral shear wall.

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 2)

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Red Cross Building is itself cross-shaped and composed of three masses measuring 90'-6" in length (north-south) at the longest point, and 37'-6" wide (east-west) at the widest point. Bisecting the building mass into two equal wings is the two-story main portion of the building. The main area measures 37'-6" long (east-west) by 25'-10" wide (north-south). On the west elevation of the building, the main section extends 6'-8" beyond the plane of the lower wings. On the east elevation the projection is decreased to 2'-0", while an 11'-9" porch is added. The lower, one-story portions of the building have identical dimensions measuring 32'-4" long (north-south) by 28'-10" wide (east-west). The entire building sits on a partially exposed basement giving the main area a ridge height of 25'-6" above grade, while the wings' ridges reach only 17'-6" above grade. Differences in window and door placement, use of moldings, and porches produce four distinct elevations.

The north elevation (Photo IL-1161-A-6, Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #3) is marked by four matching windows, three of which are located symmetrically about the central axis of the north wing. To the west, the fourth unit is centered in the 8'-6" extension of the main area, while to the east the mass of the entry porch slightly over-balances the elevation.

The east elevation (Photo IL-1161-A-1, Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #3) is composed of two wings with three windows each, and the main entry is set under a two-story porch consisting of four 1'-2"x1'-2" columns spaced evenly across the width of the main portion of the building. Between the columns, at the first floor level, are a set of double doors and two windows. The doors are centered between the middle two columns, and are capped with a five pane top-light and raking cornice. Flanking the doors are two typical windows with raking cornices. At the second story level, there are three smaller square windows centered between the columns and tight to the porch ceiling. The columns support a full entablature and pediment with a 2'-6" diameter compass-window style attic vent centered in the pediment.

The south elevation (Photo IL-1161-A-3, Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #4) is much the same as the north, although with different windows at the end of the wing. Rather than typical windows this elevation has two sets of double windows. The sets themselves also differ as the easterly unit is a pair of typical sashes, while the westerly set are

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 3)

substantially smaller. The tops of the windows are in the same plane, but the whole composition is shifted to the west. The window in the main area extension to the west is also present on this elevation.

The west elevation (Photo IL-1161-A-4, Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #4) is the least regular, for while it maintains the massing of the east elevation, the arrangement of openings is very different. Here the north wing is divided roughly into fourths by three typical windows. Abutting the southern-most window is a single door leading to the general office area. The main section of this elevation is identical to the east elevation (without the doors and the porch). The double doors have been replaced with a typical window, and the raking cornices have been removed from all the windows. The south wing is broken by two windows and a door, with the windows at either end of the wing and the door just south of the wing's center line. Before kitchen and bathroom remodeling in 1988, there was a window immediately to the north of the door (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #4). Above the door is a small hip roofed portico, which fits between the top of the door and the eave (Photo IL-1161-A-8). The chimney is also located in this area, north of the wing's center line, and reaches a height of 13'-0" above the ridge.

2. Foundations: The foundation is divided into four areas, three crawl spaces, and a section of full basement which gives access to the crawl spaces (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #1). The largest crawl spaces occur under the main and north section of the building, with a small crawl space at the south end of the south wing. The majority of the foundation is 8" cast-in-place concrete on 16" wide trench footings; the exception to this occurs in the basement area where 12" walls were used on 24" wide trench footings. A system of 5¼" vertical plank formwork was used throughout the building as evidenced in the basement area and crawl spaces. The intermediate columns in all areas rest on circular piers.
3. Wall Construction: The perimeter walls are platform construction using 2"x4" studs 2'-0" on center (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #6). 1"x12" sheathing was used on the entire building and originally covered with a black felt vapor barrier and 1"x8" shiplap siding (now replaced with 1"x12" hard board siding). All corners are flashed with approximately 2" wide light gauge (18 Ga. or 20 Ga.) galvanized steel strips.

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 4)

4. Structural System, Framing: The Red Cross Building uses platform frame construction (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #6). The walls are typically framed from 2"x4" studs at 2'-0" on center. Windows are supported on a single 2"x4" at the sill with a double 2"x4" plate at the head. The platform is made of 2"x10" joists at 16" on center, supported on 6"x10" intermediate (sleeper) beams. In the north wing and the main area platforms, the floor joists span $\frac{1}{3}$ of the area's length rather than the more standard $\frac{1}{2}$ the width. The platform bears on ledges cast in the foundation walls, and is topped with 1" random width tongue and groove subflooring, laid diagonally, covered with $\frac{3}{4}$ "x $\frac{1}{4}$ " oak tongue and groove finish flooring. The roof platform is 2"x10" rafters supported by a 1"x10' ridge board and a double 2"x4" plate at the perimeter. The deck is 1" random width sheathing covered with asphalt shingles. In order to provide the desired clear span in the reception and class rooms, and to bridge the 18'-0" door which opens the two rooms to each other, an elaborate built-up truss carries the roof loads to the foundation (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #6). The truss acts as a shear wall tying the two wings together, and is built of a combination of 2"x4"s, 2"x6"s, and 2"x10"s.

5. Porches, Balconies: There is one original and one later porch on the building. The eastern entry porch is original, and consists of a 26'-4"x11'-9" concrete slab raised 12" to 14" (two steps) above the surrounding grade (Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #2,3). The steps are centered on the porch's 26'-4" side, between the two center columns. The four identical 1'-2" square columns support the pedimented gable roof which covers the porch and the main section of the building. An interesting feature of the porch is the red cross engraved in the center of the floor. Measuring 36" square, the block cross is outlined by a $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep tool joint let into the floor surface and the area bounded by this joint is painted red. The Red Cross insignia can also be found above the double doors where a simple wood cut-out, painted red, is centered between the doors' cornice and the second story window above.

In the early 1980s, a ramp was added to the west side which tracks from the garage and parking area to a 38" x 72" landing at the single door leading to the general office (Photo IL-1161-A-4). The ramp is 38" wide, 12'-0" long, with a site fabricated hand rail of redwood stained 2"x4"s supported by 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter galvanized pipes.

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 5)

6. Chimney: The building has one brick chimney, located near the center line of the south wing (Photo IL-1161-A-3, Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #4). The chimney exits the wing's roof 2'-0" west of the ridge. A 1'-0" high galvanized sheet metal flashing was used to waterproof the stack. At some time the original chimney, approximately 2'-0" square and rising 3'-0" above the ridge, was modified by the addition of two sections. A 3'-0" portion which matches the original cross section was added, then approximately 6'-0" of 18" square flue was added, bringing the chimney to a height of 30'-0" above grade.

7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: There is one set of double doors servicing the reception room, one for the general office area, and one for the apartment. The main entrance through the double doors has been modified as the five pane top-light and moderately elaborate cornice molding are all that remain of the original entry (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #7). The building originally had doors with much larger nine pane lights (estimated at about 3'-0"x4'-0"). These doors were observed in a 1943 photo displayed at the time of our inspection, however, oddly enough the doors in the photo do not match the doors shown on the original elevation drawings. All other entrances to the building are single doors with one standard door used throughout. Measuring 2'-8"x6'-8", the door has a 1'-8"x3'-0" single pane light and a 1'-8"x1'-10" wainscot at the bottom. All have been fitted with screen doors; those leading to the reception room and the general office are wooden (probably not original), and the screen door on the apartment entrance is a modern metal unit.

 - b. Windows: The windows (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #7) are primarily 6 over 6 double hung wood sash units that measure 3'-6"x6'-0". There is evidence that windows in the main area had raking cornices when the structure was built, but they have been removed. In 1988, the window in the apartment bath room was removed and filled in. The south end of the building is the only location where the double hung window pattern changes, and two major differences are found here as the units are hung in pairs, and one set varies in size from the typical sashes. The pair of windows on the southwest corner of the south end of the apartment are smaller than the other windows with each of the sashes measuring 2'-10"x4'-4"; the pattern of 6 over 6 lights is maintained. Like the original front doors, these windows are inconsistent with the 1943 COE drawing as the pairing of

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 6)

units is shown but no reduction in size is indicated. In the reception room and class room, 6 pane center pivot wood sashes, measuring 3'-0"x3'-0", were used at the second story level. There are six of these windows, three in each room, symmetrically arranged about the room's center line. The basement has a six pane wooden casement window located in a large well on the west side of the building which opens to the inside. At some time the window was rehung and the hinges were moved from the right side of the frame to the left side. Of note is the use of finish moldings around the inside of all the windows, as this is not a common detail to buildings of this type and time period.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, Covering: All three sections of the roof are moderate slope Gables (Photo IL-1161-A-3). The roof system uses 2"x8" rafters with 1" random width sheathing, and is covered with red three tab asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The building originally had a moderately elaborate cornice under a deep eave. Two levels of mill work made up the original cornice, which ran the entire perimeter of each section of the building. The same profile mill work was used under the eaves and in the pediments as well. During the 1978 re-siding all of this mill work was removed and replaced with flat facia. Also at this time the eaves were cut back to accommodate the installation of metal gutters and down spouts.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. Basement Plan: The Basement is two rooms (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #1). The large room is 26'-10" long by 21'-6" wide and contains the smaller coal room. The coal room is 7'-6" wide by 10'-6" long, and is 2"x4" stud construction sheathed with 1"x6" tongue and groove boards. Because of its proximity to the furnace, a 4'-0" wainscot of concrete-asbestos paneling was added. This room is not shown on the original plans, nor is the coal chute which leads into it on the elevations. The stairs and the store room are located in the south west corner of the large room. Aside from the stairs, there are two exits from the basement both of which lead into crawl spaces. One hatch is in the south wall, 7'-0" from the east wall and the other is in the north wall,

7

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 7)

8'-0" from the east wall. The building's furnaces and water heater are located near the center of the large room. Also located in the basement is a double well, metal lined, concrete wash sink. This sink appears to be original but no manufacturer or date could be found on it.

b. First Floor Plan: The floor plan (Drawing IL-1161-A, Sheet #2) is divided into three areas: administration in the north wing, reception room and class room in the main area, and the field director's apartment in the south wing. The administration area is divided into four offices and a storage room. The general office (Photo IL-1161-A-10, Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #2,5) occupies the southern third of the wing and opens into the reception room through a 12'-6" wide flat arch. According to the 1943 COE drawing (Photo IL-1161-A-13), there was originally a railing separating the two rooms. There is a standard door from the general office to the class room. Leading north from the general office is a hallway which divides the remainder of the wing in half. On the east side of the hall are two approximately equal size offices each with a window in its south east corner. West of the hall are the storage room and another office. Occupying the south-east quarter of the storage room is a shower room. This room is accessible through a door in the hall or through a window between it and the storage room that provided ventilation for the shower.

The main portion of the building is divided between the equally sized reception room and the class room which are separated by the truss wall (Photos IL-1161-A-9, IL-1161-A-11, and IL-1161-A-12, Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #2,5). Originally the rooms could be closed off with sliding doors, but these wooden doors have been replaced by an accordion style plastic unit. During inspection of the building and grounds the original doors were found in the garage in good condition, but without their hardware. The sliding wall seems to have consisted of eight doors of two different widths (two 15" wide wing doors and six 31" wide units). Three doors lead south from the reception room; two access the public washrooms, the third leads to the apartment.

The apartment is divided by a hall running north-south (Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #2,5). To the east and west of this hall are two smaller rooms and the bath room. The rooms are of equal size, and each has a closet and a single window. Located in the south-east corner of the wing is the largest room, with three windows and two closets. The door leading into the kitchen is in the center of this room's west wall. The kitchen and the stairs to the basement

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 8)

occupy the remainder of the wing. The kitchen itself has three windows, a pair over the sink on the south wall, and one in the west wall. The north wall door leads to the stair landing which also serves as the entry for the unit. In 1988 both the kitchen and bath room were remodeled, primarily by updating appliances, fixtures, and cupboards, with little change in plan except the removal of the bathroom window.

2. Stairways: There is only one internal stairway; it leads from the apartment kitchen to the basement (Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #2,5). It is of wood construction consisting of 12, 2"x10" open treads supported on 2"x10" stringers. When the coal room was added, 1"x6" sheathing was tacked to the back of the upper half of the stairs.
3. Flooring: Oak tongue and groove flooring was used throughout the building (Photo IL-1161-A-9). In the reception room, office hallway, general office, and shower room the wood flooring is still exposed and is in moderately good condition. In the private offices, the class room, and the apartment carpet has been installed (Photos IL-1161-A-10, and IL-1161-A-12). In the public washrooms, and the apartment kitchen and bath, linoleum tile was laid over the wooden flooring. In the public rest rooms green and black marbled tile was used. This is probably what was used in all tiled areas originally, but during the 1988 remodeling the apartment kitchen and bath were changed to tan speckled tile.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Throughout the public portions of the building a standard finishing scheme was used. The lower 4'-0" of the walls are a smooth fiber board wainscot. Above the wainscot 1'-4"x8'-0" strips of fiber board were used. The board has a pattern of vertical reveals which are intended to hide the joint between the sheets themselves as well as enliven otherwise dull walls. The pattern is a single reveal, 1¼" from either edge of the sheets which appear to have a tongue and groove edge system allowing the joints to occur slightly off the center line of the supporting studs. In the reception and class rooms where the ceiling is taller, a picture rail was used to hide the joint between the fill sheets and the filler piece which finishes the walls. In all the rooms a millwork cornice was used at the top of the wall. All ceilings are a 16"x32" fiber board tile. Evidence exists in several areas that the nailing system used to hold the tiles in place has failed. Both walls and ceiling are painted pastel tones. Two decorating modifications have occurred. First, in the class

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 9)

room and general office areas the wainscot has been covered with dark brown simulated wood grain paneling (Photo IL-1161-A-12). Second, the entire ceiling of the north east office has been replaced with 4'-0"x8'-0" of fiber board held in place by 1"x3" battens.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: There are three styles of panel doors present, with a standard two panel arrangement being most common. This door was used at all but three locations. The door into the shower room, and the door between the general office and the hallway, have louvers in place of a lower wainscot. The door which leads into the apartment is a five panel door with equally sized, horizontally set panels. The entire composition is slightly above center.

b. Windows: One set of interior windows was present in the building. Located in the administrative storage room, they served as ventilation for the shower room. The window is a pair of single pane casement windows hinged into the storage room. The hinges and center latch appear to be original. A slide bolt was added to the left hand casement at a later date. Opaque textured glass was used in these windows.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: The use of decorative trim is unusual for the time. Typical temporary military buildings from this period evince the heavy emphasis placed on the conservation of materials, usually requiring the elimination of all decorative details. Building 391 breaks this pattern with decorative moldings both on its exterior and interior (Drawings IL-1161-A, Sheets #5,7). On the interior, four basic molding profiles were used (Photo IL-1161-A-11). A standard 5" top beaded base board was used throughout the building, with a piece of quarter round trimming the base board at the floor line. At the top of the wainscot, a 2" high fascia with small quirk beads top and bottom was used to hide the seam between the two types of wall board used. In the reception and class rooms, with a taller ceiling, an intermediate picture rail was needed and a simple ¾" high half round was used. The ceiling cornice and window and door frames possess an identical profile - a low relief ogee with a ¼" squared top edge. The most elaborate molding used is found under the window sill and is a combination of ovolo and cove with a ¼" top fillet.

7. Hardware: All the door and window hardware appears to be original with no especially interesting features.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

a. Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation: The fact that the building now uses two oil fired Cleveland, Dornback furnaces and has a coal room is proof that the H.V.A.C. system is not original. The large patch in the base of the chimney also supports this conclusion.

b. Lighting: The original fixtures are partially intact, with the globes and incandescent bulbs removed and fluorescent tube fixtures added. The update was accomplished by suspending the new fixtures on chains hung on hooks in the ceiling, and simply plugging the new units into the old sockets (Photo IL-1161-A-10). There are two original light fixtures left in the building, both in the public rest rooms. They have white ceramic squares built up in three concentric tiers, with an elliptical frosted globe open on the bottom to allow access to the bulb.

c. Plumbing: There are no signs of major plumbing changes. Aside from such minor changes as replacement of faucets and some control valves under the sinks the original piping is intact. All but one fixture in the public rest rooms are original. Both sinks are the wall hung type manufactured by the U.S. Co., and each bears the date 1941. The men's room stool is the only original unit left in the building. It appears to come from the Gerber Co., and be a model K57. The fill tube and float in the unit have been replaced. The stool in the women's rest room was replaced some time after 1972 with a Mansfield of unknown model.

d. Fixtures: The only other original fixtures also occur in the public rest rooms and consist of one of the following in each rest room: two National towel dispensers, two 2 hook chrome coat hooks, two wall mounted chrome soap dishes, and two round topped mirrors; no chrome fixture had a manufacturer's mark. There were two additional original bath fixtures: a wall mounted glass holder in the women's room, and the toilet paper holder in the men's room. Most interesting are the mirrors; each is 10" wide and 17½" tall at the top of the arch. 1½" down from the top edge, and centered in the middle, is an etched flower and vines. The flower has six petals with a hexagonal center and measures 2" across. On either side of the flower are vines which curve toward the bottom parallel to the arch of the top. Each vine is 4" long and consists of a segmental stem and twelve leaves.

RED CROSS COMPLEX,
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building 391)
HABS No. IL-1161-A (page 11)

9. Original Furnishings: There is a moderate collection of original furniture remaining, including: 4 single drawer tables, 6 seven drawer desks, 1 three drawer typing stand, 1 four drawer card file, 2 coat racks, 3 letter bins, 2 rolling desk chairs with arms, 1 without arms, 2 straight backed chairs, 6 dining type chairs, 1 deck chair and 2 cabinets, one with legs and one without (Photos IL-1161-A-9, IL-1161-A-10, IL-1161-A-11, and IL-1161-A-12). All pieces seem to have come from the Missouri Furniture Co., St. Louis, evidenced by affixed stamps and tags. Also original are 7 Shaw-Walker five drawer file cabinets, and a Safe Manufacturers National Association floor safe.

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