

BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, BACHELOR OFFICERS' GARAGE
(Building No. 5175)
Barksdale Field Historic District
Lindbergh Road
Bossier City
Bossier Parish
Louisiana

HABS LA-1247-G
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
100 Alabama St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (HABS)

OFFICERS GARAGE

(Building 5175)

HABS No. LA-1247-G

Location: The building is located on Lindbergh Road (no street number assigned), Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Bossier Parish, Louisiana. Coordinates are: measured from the southeast corner of the structure – Latitude 32.509065, Longitude 93.679476. This coordinate was determined from Barksdale Air Force Base Geographic Information System mapping with a degree of accuracy of +/- 1 meter. This locational data is on a Government system and has no restrictions on its release to the public.

Present Owner/Occupant: The present and only owner and occupant of the building is the Barksdale Air Force Base

Present Use: The building is currently used for storage by various on-base groups.

Significance: Originally constructed in 1933-34 as the Officers' Garage for bachelor officers for the Army Air Corps' Barksdale Field, this building is a contributing building in the Barksdale Field Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992. The building exhibits the architectural characteristics of the French Revival style, unusual for military installations, found throughout the rest of the Historic District. According to the nomination of Barksdale Field to the National Register of Historic Places, Barksdale Field is of state significance because it is "one of Louisiana's most important examples of early twentieth century eclectic (period) architecture, the prevailing American architectural trend of that day. ... Of the dozen or so twentieth century eclectic architectural complexes in Louisiana, Barksdale is important because it is by far the largest, with over 250 buildings. (The others are in the 10-50 building range)."¹

Historian: The Historian for this report was Deborah E. Harvey, MHP, for Outside The Box, LLC, based in Richmond, Virginia. Report completion date: April 5, 2013.

Project Information: This project was sponsored by the Barksdale Air Force Base to comply with a Memorandum of Agreement with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office for mitigation of a Finding of Adverse Effect for the proposed demolition of this building, located in the Barksdale Field Historic District: Marla Poirier, Contracting Officer; Justin Williamson, Contract Point of Contact; Gary W. Mackey, former Cultural Resource Manager; and Nathan Tracer, 2nd Civil Engineering Squadron Architect. The report was produced by Outside The Box, LLC, for H&W Demolition, Inc., General Contractor. Photographer for the project was Andrew Baugnet.

¹ "Barksdale Field National Register District Nomination" (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, 1992), p. 3. Reviewed online at <http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/nhl/>, June, 2012.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Construction of the building was completed February 22, 1934, according to the War Department's Quartermaster of Construction completion report.
2. Architect: The architect is unknown. The design was drawn by the War Department's Quartermaster of Construction staff, so it is assumed the architect was part of the staff.
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: The United States Army Air Corps, subsequently the United States Air Force is the sole owner and occupant of this building. The building was originally constructed as covered parking for bachelor officers. It is currently being used for storage by various on-base groups.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Contractor and builder was Maples Construction Company, Shreveport, Louisiana. The supplier of the original roof tile was Ludowici Roof Tile, New Lexington, Ohio. This company is still in business and still supplies replacement tiles to the base for roof repairs.
5. Original plans and construction: Original drawings for this building were not available. Construction was likely completed February 22, 1934, after the base opened, based on the known date of completion of its companion garage, Building 5163. Though specific information as to cost was also unavailable for this report, it is likely the cost was the same as that of its companion, which was constructed at a cost of \$4,892.16.
6. Alterations and additions: This building originally featured twenty-panel, wood, roll-up garage doors with the top panels glazed.² Those doors were replaced with metal roll-up doors about 1984.³ Between 1942 and 1968, electrical service in the form of single, overhead, switch-operated light bulbs in each garage unit was installed. No other additions or alterations to the building have been made.

B. Historical Context:

World War I signaled to the United States and the rest of the world that aerial warfare training would be a permanent component of military preparedness. As a result, the federal government began improving its training facilities and building new ones. By 1924, the civic leaders of Shreveport, Louisiana, were interested in obtaining a federal military installation for the area, hopefully, a flying field. Early in 1926, they learned that the Army Air Corps planned to increase the 3rd Attack Wing, stationed at Fort Crocket, Texas, by 500 percent. This would require additional facilities and a minimum of 20,000 acres for aerial gunnery practice and a bombing range.⁴

² Strategic Air Command, Barksdale Air Force Base. Drawing No. BRK-B-1291, "Elevations and Floor Plan – BOQ Garages Buildings 5163 & 5175." Shreveport: Strategic Air Command, December 15, 1961.

³ Strategic Air Command, Civil Engineering, Barksdale Air Force Base. Drawing No. BRK-79-0025, "Replace Overhead Doors – Bldgs 5163 & 5175." Shreveport: Strategic Air Command, July 2, 1984.

⁴ U.S. Air Force. "Barksdale Air Force Base – Fact Sheet," p. 2. Reviewed online at <http://www.barksdale.af.mil/library/factsheets/>, June, 2012.

In response, the wealthiest taxpayers of the city and Bossier Parish formed a Citizens Committee and "hired a young crop duster, an Air Corps captain named Harold Ross Harris, to fly over the local area and find a suitable site for an airfield."⁵ After Harris reported his site selection(s), the Citizens Committee traveled to Washington, D.C., to present the case to the government for placing the 3rd Attack Wing in Shreveport. Following the return of the delegation, the Army sent investigators to Shreveport to verify that the site was suitable for the Army's purposes as a flying field. According to the nomination of Barksdale Field to the National Register of Historic Places,

"The heavily wooded site initially suggested to the government was rejected because it might prove too dangerous for low flying aircraft. The local Citizens Committee speedily suggested the present site, which at the time was flat cotton land dominated by the huge L.R. Kirby Cotton Plantation. Because it was highly developed agricultural land, its acquisition would involve a large capital outlay. Acquiring the land was quite a task because there were 128 separate tracts involving 800 owners. A fleet of attorneys worked to clear the numerous titles, and Shreveport citizens voiced their endorsement of the project by approving a \$1,650,000 bond issue to help finance the land purchase."⁶

The announcement came in December, 1928, that the Shreveport-Bossier City area had been chosen as the new home of the Third Attack Group.⁷ In November, 1930, the Mayor of Shreveport officially transferred the site to the federal government, which began constructing the new airfield in 1931.

Consistent with the Army's directive to use architectural styles evocative of the prevailing local culture and history, the architect for the Construction Division of the Quartermaster Corps and the Chief of the Army Air Corps chose a style then called French Colonial style for the new base in response to the early French influence on the culture and architecture of Louisiana.⁸ This influence is heavily seen in southern cities of Louisiana, especially in New Orleans, but it also reached into northern Louisiana, particularly in Natchitoches, the oldest city in Louisiana, only a few miles south of Shreveport. Today, this architectural style is known as French Revival or French Eclectic due to its association with the Eclectic Movement in architecture popular between 1915 and 1945, though the trend toward reviving historic architectural styles began in the late nineteenth century with the French Beaux Arts Movement.⁹

French Revival, or French Eclectic, style is characterized by steeply-pitched hip roofs, small roof or wall dormers, and brick, stone, or smooth stucco wall cladding. The airfield's buildings are generally of the symmetrical subtype of this style, with a roof ridgeline parallel to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Unknown author, p. 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, p. 1.

⁹ Virginia and Lee McAlister, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), p. 387.

the front of the building, symmetrically-arranged doors and windows, with the front entrance centered on the building, and "façade detailing...inspired by smaller French manor houses..." including double-hung or casement sashes and corner quoins.¹⁰ The design of the buildings at the new airfield was more evocative than architecturally accurate, as it borrowed from several centuries of French architecture, "often mixing different periods in the same building."¹¹ Nevertheless, "Captain Norfleet Bone, the landscape architect assigned to the Barksdale project, described the rising buildings as 'resembling a little French village.'¹² This "little French village" eventually consisted of 264 buildings deployed on a Beaux Arts axial plan layout.¹³

At the time of its construction, the new base was the world's largest airfield at 21,705 acres. "About 150 men and 350 mules" graded the new landing field, plowing under 1,400 acres of cotton and planting it in Bermuda grass.¹⁴ Before it was even completed, the first combat group, the 20th Pursuit Group, moved onto the base on Oct 31, 1932 with two squadrons.¹⁵

On February 2, 1933, the new field was formally dedicated and named Barksdale Air Field in honor of World War I veteran flyer and test pilot, Lieutenant Eugene Hoy Barksdale. Lieutenant Barksdale died when the Douglas O-2 observation airplane he was flight testing went down. Though he deployed his parachute, it caught on the bracing wires of the wings, which severed the parachute lines and caused Barksdale to fall to his death. Nearly 60,000 people, many of them "distinguished civilian and military visitors from the Shreveport area and Washington, D.C., attended Barksdale Field's dedication ceremonies," including Assistant Secretary of War, F. Trubee Davison, who was the keynote speaker. Unveiling a large portrait of Lieutenant Barksdale, he officially inaugurated the newest, and largest, Army Air Corps base.¹⁶

The 3rd Attack Wing, with its two subordinate combat groups, the 20th Pursuit Group and the 3rd Attack Group completely occupied the base by the mid-1930s, training flyers in gunnery and bombing skills. At the onset of World War II, the airfield specialized in training bomb crews instead of pursuit and fighter crews and hosted "complete military maneuvers" intended to simulate combat conditions in Europe. These maneuvers were attended by General Dwight D. Eisenhower and General George C. Marshall, among other dignitaries. The 17th Bomber Group led by General Jimmy Doolittle, famous for his "daring raid on Tokyo" trained at Barksdale Field, as did Free French and Nationalist Chinese aircrews.¹⁷

After World War II, Barksdale Field became the headquarters for the Air Training Command. When the U.S. Air Corps became an independent branch of the military, the U.S. Air Force, the field was renamed Barksdale Air Force Base, January 13, 1948.¹⁸

Between the end of its initial construction and the end of World War II, very little building took place at Barksdale Field. After the war, a new campaign of building began, but it

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 387-388.

¹¹ Unknown author, p. 1

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ U.S. Air Force, p. 2

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 3.

generally was located on the perimeter of the existing base, not within its core. For this reason, the original core of the base remained very much intact. By the 1990s, only about 5% of the buildings of the original construction period were non-contributing when the main base was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. According to the nomination, “[t]he district’s collection of buildings is virtually the same as it was on the eve of America’s entry into World War II.”¹⁹ Barksdale’s original main base, from the Shreveport Gate to the flightline and from the Bossier Gate to Hoban Hall, containing 265 buildings, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in April, 1992, representing Louisiana’s largest intact collection of twentieth-century Eclectic Movement architecture.²⁰

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This building generally reflects the French Revival architectural style used throughout the Barksdale Field Historic District, though in a more utilitarian version. Featuring stucco-finished walls and a clay tile hipped roof, this building is contributing in the Historic District.
2. Condition of fabric: All materials appear to be in good condition except the wood members which have suffered some termite infestation in the past. Although there are no longer active termites, the damage was not repaired. These features are in fair condition. Additionally, the clay roofing tiles are discolored, though no broken tiles were observed.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: According to the War Department’s Quartermaster for Construction report, the dimensions of this building are 18’-8” x 170’-8” for a total area of 3,186 square feet. No measurements were taken to verify these dimensions.
2. Foundations: The foundation is a reinforced concrete slab on continuous reinforced concrete footing. Stem walls of footing present as a water table and are finished with Portland cement stucco and painted.
3. Walls: Perimeter walls are terra cotta structural tile finished with Portland cement stucco and painted. A plate bearing the building number is affixed to the south-east corner of the building.
4. Structural system, framing: Bearing walls are salt-glazed terra cotta structural tiles, formerly called “fireproof construction.” Wood trusses secured to a wood sill plate on the perimeter walls support the roof decking. There are no interior supporting walls. Partitioning of garage spaces consists of lumber frames covered in metal wire mesh, sometimes augmented with sheets of plywood or lengths of lumber.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: There are no porches, stoops, balconies, or bulkheads. The apron in front of the garage is pebble-dashed concrete.
6. Chimneys: There are no chimneys.

¹⁹ Unknown author, p. 2.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 3 and U.S. Air Force, p. 4.

7. Gutters and downspouts: The original copper half-round gutters and round downspouts have been removed, but the fastenings are still attached to the building.
 8. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The only doors are metal, roll-up, overhead garage doors, which replaced earlier wood overhead garage doors in 1984.²¹ The original doors were 20-panel wood doors with the top row glazed.²² Openings have metal frames. Affixed above each opening is a plate bearing the letter identifying the garage space. There are no personnel doors.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are twelve-light fixed metal sashes with cast concrete sills. Some window lights have been painted on the exterior. There are no shutters.
 9. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is a simple hipped roof, covered in red clay roofing tile which is not original to the building. However, according to Base Real Property Officer, Richard Parent, the base routinely collects clay tiles in good condition from other buildings and re-uses them as roofing material. Additionally, according to Nathan Tracer, Base Architect, the producer of the original tile, Ludowici Roof Tile, of New Lexington, Ohio, is still in business, and the base purchases replacement roofing tile as needed. Based on the condition of the tile, it appears that this roof is either original or recycled roofing tile rather than new tile.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves are closed and have a simple wood fascia with wood shingle molding.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There are no dormers, cupolas, or towers.
- C. Description of Interior
1. Floor plans: This building is a simple, one-story rectangle with seventeen openings for garage doors on the east side of the building and seventeen window openings on the west side of the building. There are no walls on the inside of the building.
 2. Stairways: There are no stairways in this building.
 3. Flooring: The flooring is smooth-finished concrete.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls finishes are the glazed inside of the terra-cotta structural hollow tile perimeter wall. There is no ceiling; the wood trusses are exposed.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are no interior doors.
 - b. Windows: Windows are fixed, twelve-light, metal sashes. There is no interior molding or trim around the windows.
 6. Decorative features and trim: There are no decorative features or trim in this building.
 7. Hardware: The only hardware in this building is the metal tracks upon which the roll-up metal garage doors run and the metal garage door handles, neither of which is contributing.
 8. Mechanical equipment:

²¹ Strategic Air Command, Civil Engineering, Barksdale Air Force Base. Drawing No. BRK-79-0025, "Replace Overhead Doors – Bldgs 5163 & 5175." Shreveport: Strategic Air Command, July 2, 1984.

²² Strategic Air Command, Barksdale Air Force Base, Drawing No. BRK-B-1291.

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: There are no heating, air conditioning, or ventilating systems in the building.
 - b. Lighting: Lighting consists of single, overhead, switch-operated incandescent lights in each bay, which is not original to the building.
 - c. Plumbing: There is no plumbing in this building.
- D. Site
1. Historic landscape design: This building is situated in the original Beaux Arts axial plan of the base, but it has no landscaping features of note. The lot on which the building sits is grassed on the back and sides of the building, and the concrete apron covers the front of the lot from the building to the street.
 2. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings associated with this building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings (All drawings are held at 2nd Civil Engineering Squadron Historical Archives, Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Louisiana, Timothy Walsh, Archivist):
1. Strategic Air Command, Barksdale Air Force Base. Drawing No. BRK-B-1291, "Elevations and Floor Plan – BOQ Garages Buildings 5163 & 5175." Shreveport: Strategic Air Command, December 15, 1961. This is an As-Built drawing of these buildings.
 2. Strategic Air Command, Civil Engineering, Barksdale Air Force Base. Drawing No. BRK-79-0025, "Replace Overhead Doors – Bldgs 5163 & 5175." Shreveport: Strategic Air Command, July 2, 1984.
- B. Interviews:
1. Gary Mackey, former Cultural Resource Manager and Environmental Planner, 2nd Civil Engineering Squadron, 334 Davis Ave. W, Ste. 206, Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Louisiana. Interview by Deborah E. Harvey, June 5-6, 2012.
 2. Richard Parent, Real Property Officer, 2nd Civil Engineer Squadron, 334 Davis Ave. W, Suite 200, Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Louisiana. Interview by Deborah E. Harvey, June 6, 2012.
 3. Nathan E. Tracer, Base Architect, 2nd Civil Engineering Squadron, 334 Davis Ave. W, Ste. 319, Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Louisiana. Interview by Deborah E. Harvey, June 5-6, 2012.
- C. Selected Sources:
1. Secondary sources
 - a. Fleming, John, Hugh Honour, and Nikolaus Pevsner, eds. *Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Fifth Edition*, New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
 - b. Mackey, Gary, comp. "Barksdale Field Historic Structure Data Base," not published, various dates. This is a data base containing building biographies written by Gary Mackey, a PowerPoint presentation of views of the historic structures in the Barksdale Field National Historic District, and a list of "buildings and structures with National Register status" at the Barksdale Field Air Force Base.
 - c. McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

- d. U.S. Air Force, "Barksdale Air Force Base – Fact Sheet," p. 2. Reviewed online at <http://www.barksdale.af.mil/library/factsheets/>, June, 2012.
- e. Unknown author. "Barksdale Field Historic District National Register Nomination," Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office: Baton Rouge, LA, 1992. Reviewed online at <http://www.crt.state.las.us/hp/nationalregister/nhl>, June 2012.

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