

Selfridge Field,
Building #853, (North-South Runway Extension
and Alert Apron Control Vault) (Electric Switching Station)
North of Taxiway H, east of North-South Runway
~~Harrison Township~~, Mt. Clemens Vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-JJ

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1JJ-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GREAT LAKES SYSTEMS OFFICE
1709 JACKSON STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-2571

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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SELFRIDGE FIELD
BUILDING #853,
NORTH-SOUTH RUNWAY EXTENSION AND ALERT APRON CONTROL VAULT
(Electric Switching Station)

HAER No. MI-116-JJ

Location: East of North-South Runway, north of Taxiway H
Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mt. Clemens vicinity,
Macomb County, Michigan
U.S.G.S. Mount Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.349590.4718860

Significance: This structure was erected near taxiway H to control runway light operations and was later expanded to function as a standby power facility. It represents the utilitarian buildings erected at Selfridge as the base expanded to meet its Cold War era defense mission. Its functional nature is typical of the spartan buildings built for the military during this period. It was an important facility in operation of Selfridge's runways and therefore is directly related to the base's Cold War training objectives.

Description: This single story, T-plan concrete block structure rests on a reinforced concrete slab and is shielded by a low pitch shed covered in tar and gravel. It displays steel framed windows and steel entry doors. It results from two construction episodes. The original control vault is a rectangular plan 32 x 48 foot structure, while the Standby Power Building, forming an off-center base of the T-plan, is 15 feet 4 inches wide and extends southward 32 feet 8 inches. The principal (east) elevation of the building is composed of three steel pedestrian entry doors in the original vault unit and a pedestrian entry door and flanking steel window in the generator building. Both components display concrete lintels and sill and a concrete fascia at the roof. The south elevation is composed of three bays, with steel frame windows in the vault flanking the generator building extension which presents a pair of steel louvered vents. The west elevation consists of a single steel window in the generator unit that occurs above steel louvered vent and a mirror image of the three pedestrian access doors to the vault that occur on the facade. The north elevation consists of four symmetrically placed steel frame windows in the vault building.

The interior of the vault is divided into three horizontal 10-foot wide bays partitioned by concrete block walls extending between 10 inch square reinforced concrete pillars. The northernmost bay

is subdivided into a western Work Room and an eastern Control and Parts Room, the central bay is a Regulator Room that contains constant current regulators, and the southern bay is a Transformer Room. The Generator Room occupies the entire southern unit of the component buildings. The generator, which rests on a raised concrete platform, contains an automatic transfer switch whose sensors start the generator when power fails. Associated switching gear is located in the southeast corner of this unit.

History:

This building was erected in 1951 from plans by the Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District, and in 1958 it was expanded by the addition of a "Standby Power" unit designed by Giffels and Rossetti, Architects and Engineers of Detroit, Michigan for the Department of the Air Force Air Defense Command Directorate of Installations.¹ It continues in use as a backup generator unit today and as an electrical service office and shop.

Sources:

Anonymous, Brief History of Selfridge Air Force Base, 1917-1960, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1960.

_____, Guide and Directory, Selfridge Air Force Base, Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, 1960.

Nigro, Louis, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, An Unofficial History, unpublished ms., Public Information Office, Selfridge ANG Base, Michigan, 1977.

Original copy of construction drawing, dated December 14, 1952, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army Office of the District Engineer, in possession of Selfridge Base Museum, Mt. Clemens, Michigan. Architectural and Electrical, Sheet 24 OF 29.

Photographic copy of construction drawing, dated October 29, 1958, Giffels and Rossetti, Architects-Engineers, Detroit, in possession of Selfridge Base Museum, Mt. Clemens, Michigan.

¹Original construction plans on file, Selfridge Base Museum and Civil Engineers Office

Selfridge Field,
Building #853 (North-South Runway
Extension and Alert Apron Control Vault)
HAER No. MI-116-JJ
Page 3

Standby Power Unit, Architectural, Addition to Bldg. 853, Sheet
3 OF 12.

Interview, Colonel Robert Stone (Ret.), Curator, Selfridge Base
Museum, October 13, 1995.

Interview, Eric Reeve, Selfridge Environmental Management,
October 12, 1995.

Historian:

William E. Rutter
Midwest Environmental Consultants, Inc.
May, 1996