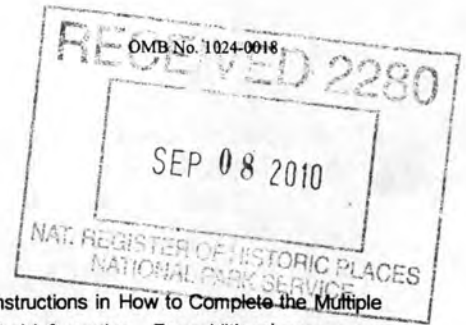


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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

The Development of World War II Air Bases in Kansas (1939-1945)

**C. Form Prepared by**

**name/title** Susan Jezak Ford, Owner

**company** Citysearch Preservation

**street & number** 3628 Holmes Street **telephone** 816-531-2489

**city or town** Kansas City **state** MO **zip code** 64109

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Patricia J. Folmer* DSHPO  
Signature and title of certifying official

8/27/10  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date



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National Park Service

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**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

**Page Numbers**

**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

The Development of World War II Air Bases in Kansas (1939-1945)

3-40

**F. Associated Property Types**

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

41-52

**G. Geographical Data**

53

**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

54

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

**I. Major Bibliographical References**

55-59

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

**Figures**

60-89

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD WAR II AIR BASES IN KANSAS (1939-1945)**

"Ten percent of aviation is in the air, and 90 percent is on the ground." Clement M. Keys, head of the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company.

The state of Kansas and the history of World War II are intertwined, each very much affecting the other. During the Second World War, Kansas became home to 16 Army Airfields and two Naval Air Stations, in addition to auxiliary fields, bombing ranges and aircraft plants. The enormous air bases and activity associated with them impacted surrounding communities, bringing income, jobs and increases in population. The bases would also strain towns, often requiring housing and utilities beyond those available. These issues were usually solved through compromise, making the bases an integral part of the communities for a few years.

The Kansas airfields were literally small cities on very large tracts of land, usually growing to house several thousand recruits and employing many local civilians, including female and African-American workers formerly consigned to agricultural work the service industry.<sup>1</sup> The typical base included dozens of buildings to house and train pilots and their crews, maintain aircraft and guide the aircraft to the Pacific front. The airplanes and crews that came out of the Kansas air bases ultimately had a profound effect on the outcome of the war. The remaining sites are a physical link between Kansas and the role that the bases played during World War II.

**Definitions**

The following definitions are helpful in understanding the layout and workings of the Kansas airfields. In historic documents many of the terms have multiple spellings.

AAF: Army Airfield

Air base: An installation from which a military force initiates operations.

Airfield/ Air field: An area of fields and runways where aircraft can take off and land. The terms "base" and "field" are often used interchangeably in historic documents.

Auxiliary field or Outlying field: A landing field located a distance away from the main airfield or air base.

B-29 Superfortress: A large four-engine bomber built to replace the B-17 Fortress. Also referred to as a Superbomber or Very Heavy Bomber.

NAS: Naval Air Station.

OLF: Outlying field associated with a Naval Air Station.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Fearon, "Ploughshares into airplanes: Manufacturing Industry and Worker in Kansas during World War II." *Kansas History*, Winter 1999/2000, 299.

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**Pre-World War II Aviation in Kansas**

Kansas was home to many inventors and entrepreneurs who tried their hands at building and financing aircraft as early as the late 1800s. Among the scores of plans that were concurrent with Wilbur and Orville Wright but never quite took off were the Gabbey Air-Ship Company of Rossville in 1898, William Purvis and Charles Wilson's 1909 helicopter in Goodland and even Frank Barnett's propelled kite contraption displayed in the *Kansas City Star* in 1897.<sup>2</sup> The machines of these and other Kansas inventors were whimsical and odd-looking but represented the wave of the future as Americans contemplated air transportation.

There are many claims attributing the first Kansas-built airplane to fly successfully. Nearly all of these early machines, most built around 1910, did not fly reliably. The ideas and enthusiasm of most early inventors came to nothing. There are two prominent exceptions in this scenario—Clyde Cessna of Rago and A.K. Longren of Topeka. Longren, an automobile dealer, successfully accomplished sustained, controlled flights in 1911. He went on to set up an airplane factory in Topeka. Cessna, a born tinkerer, also conducted his first public flight in 1911 in Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> He soon moved his manufacturing operation off of his Kingman County farm to a site in northern Wichita. Both men tried mightily but failed to acquire government contracts during World War I.

Kansas proved an ideal location for enthusiasts ready to try their hand with the new mode of transportation. Early landing strips were simply mowed fields on the flat plains. Following World War I, cities began constructing paved runways and municipal airports in earnest. Major air hubs were in place and expanding in Kansas City and Wichita by 1927. The rest of the state followed suit and a dependable network of airports was constructed, with paved landing strips in Topeka, Lawrence, Coffeyville and Garden City.<sup>4</sup>

The Kansas airplane industry vigorously promoted itself. In April 1928, the Wichita Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce sponsored the "All-Kansas Air Tour." Governor Ben Pauleen rode in one of the tour's 30 airplanes accompanied by 100 dignitaries on the longest airplane tour ever taken thus far by a Kansas governor. An estimated 500,000 Kansas residents viewed the event intended to promote new airport construction and procure grass-roots support for the National Aeronautics Association. The week-long April tour visited Wichita, Newton, Hutchinson, McPherson, Salina, Concordia, Abilene, Ft. Riley,

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<sup>2</sup> Frank Joseph Rowe and Craig Miner, *Borne on the South Wind. A Century of Aviation in Kansas* (Wichita: The Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing Co., 1994), 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> Rowe, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Rowe, 89. It is nearly impossible to know the exact number of airports in Kansas prior to the establishment of the Federal Aviation Administration in 1958.

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Atchison, Kansas City, Ottawa, Garnett, Iola, Chanute, Parsons, Coffeyville, Independence, Moline, Arkansas City, Winfield and El Dorado.<sup>5</sup> A second air tour was planned for additional cities in June 1928.

Most Kansas airports of the day were small and located outside of town, consisting of adequate runways and the occasional hangar or passenger building. During the 1930s, airport improvement was one of the primary employment objectives of the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works Administration. In 1937, 200 WPA workers started on a \$287,000 airport in Topeka.<sup>6</sup> WPA funds also constructed runways and/or hangars at Hutchinson Municipal Airport and Manhattan Regional Airport. In addition to employment, the airports provided free entertainment. Citizens would visit the breezy runways to watch incoming planes and possibly catch a glimpse of a famous passenger. The novel craft were soon well established on the prairies of Kansas.

**Army Build-Up in Kansas**

The Army Air Forces are rooted in the August 1, 1907 formation of the Aeronautical Division in the Army Office of the Chief Signal Officer. The air branch of the United States Army took on a new role in March 1935 when the War Department established the General Headquarters Air Force (GHQAF). The purpose of the newly formed GHQAF was to provide air defense and a striking force, including pursuit, bombardment and attack units. With the escalation of the war in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to increase America's air power in January 1939, which he described as "utterly inadequate."<sup>7</sup> The Army air force was eventually placed under the Secretary of War and the War Department General Staff as the main land-based air division of the Army.

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, the European front of World War II (WWII) began. As the Axis forces won several victories between late 1940 and late 1941, the U.S. Army's air forces expanded rapidly. President Roosevelt called up National Guard and Reserve forces in August 1940. He also signed the Selective Training and Service Act in 1940 to fill volunteer vacancies in the army. These movements led to an increase in Army Air Corps volunteers, with young men choosing their area of service rather than being assigned to an unknown branch. Under these stimuli, the number of Air Corps personnel jumped from 20,503 on July 1, 1939 to 152,569 two years later. The Army's 1939 goal of training 1200 pilots a year increased to 7000 in 1940 and then to 30,000 in 1941. By the fall of 1941, the air force contemplated a training rate of 50,000 pilots a year. This increase in air power stressed the need for other aircrew members, ground technicians, instructors and facilities.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rowe, 90-91.

<sup>6</sup> Rowe, 112.

<sup>7</sup> James G. Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (Arno Press, 1980; reprint of 1961 edition by Government Printing Office), <http://books.google.com/books>.

<sup>8</sup> Office of Air Force History, Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II: Volume One: Plans and Early Operations* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 110.

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To meet these rapidly expanding goals, the Air Corps drew on civilian training programs and schools to train new pilots. Civilian pilots were put to use as instructors and to ferry supplies, but the training programs suffered from shortages of time, instructors and equipment, especially airplanes. The expansion of the Air Corps personnel required a comparable growth in its facilities with a need for new airfields for training and new bases for the strategic units ready to take on the responsibility of national defense.<sup>9</sup>

The build-up of Army air bases in the United States took off in 1941. Before January 1939, the Army air force had 17 air bases. By the peak of World War II activity in 1943, the air force had expanded to 783 main and sub-bases and auxiliary fields.<sup>10</sup> When President Roosevelt declared a national emergency on May 27, 1941, a call for increased troops and bases was well underway.

The Army air force committed to building 14 new bases in November 1941. Three Kansas fields—Marshall Field at Fort Riley, McConnell Field in Wichita and Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth—were already in operation at the onset of World War II. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, the Army acquired enough funding from Congress to complete 11 airfields, to develop 105 public airports for Army use and to construct 14 other air stations. The Army air force announced an immediate 1942 objective to increase strength to 115 combat groups, expand pilot output first to 50,000 and then to 70,000 annually and to increase its technician-training rate to 300,000 during the year. The program was approved by the War Department on February 19, 1942.<sup>11</sup> As the Army prepared to meet its manpower goal of 273 combat groups, a need for further expansion of bases was imminent.

The Army's massive development would require a building program of extensive facilities constructed as quickly as possible. Each combat group was planned to have one main base and four sub-bases, plus additional installations for training, maintenance, repair and storage.<sup>12</sup> Major General Robert Olds became the Directorate of Base Services in May 1942 and promptly submitted a plan for the Second Air Force to take on all heavy bombardment training. His proposal to locate new sites in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Montana was approved by the Army air force in early June. All of the new stations requested were in use by spring 1942, including Kansas bases Walker, Pratt, Great Bend, Salina and Topeka. The Third Air Force was also using Marshall Field at Fort Riley for training.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume One*, 111-112.

<sup>10</sup> Office of Air Force History, Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume Six: Men and Planes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 117.

<sup>11</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 148.

<sup>12</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 148.

<sup>13</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 154-156.

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A flurry of lobbying for additional sites began in earnest in early 1942. Kansas Senator Arthur Capper received requests for bases from constituents across the state, including the towns of St. John, Wakeeny, Phillipsburg, Clifton, Eureka and Colby. As field locations were chosen, Capper would typically send a telegram to the local newspaper, mayor or Chamber of Commerce. The telegram would announce that the War Department had authorized construction of an Air Force installation at the city to cost in excess of \$3 million. This routine occurred with each base, even though preparatory survey work often had already begun by the time the telegram was sent.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of 1943, the Army air force had 345 main bases, 116 sub-bases and 322 auxiliary fields within the continental United States.<sup>15</sup> Kansas was topographically an ideal location for airstrips. The flat landscape of the plains could easily accommodate the runways and accompanying facilities required of the powerful World War II aircraft. Construction began on 13 additional major fields on the dates listed below and proceeded rapidly.<sup>16</sup> Army construction in Kansas also included dozens of auxiliary fields. These fields typically had no buildings. Runway configuration for these auxiliary fields ran the gamut from mowed ground to poured concrete.

<b>AAF Field</b>	<b>Onset of construction</b>
Smoky Hill	5 May 1942
Strother	16 May 1942
Coffeyville	1 June 1942
Fairfax	1 June 1942
Independence	6 June 1942
Garden City	16 June 1942
Dodge City	6 August 1942
Topeka	15 August 1942
Herington	September 1942
Walker	14 September 1942
Great Bend	30 September 1942 (estimate)
Pratt	8 October 1942
Liberal	9 January 1943

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Capper Papers on file at KSHS, Topeka.

<sup>15</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 162.

<sup>16</sup> "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer and Autumn 1959.



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**Naval Build-Up**

Along with approving measures to increase the Army's defensive strength, Congress passed the Naval Reserve Act of June 13, 1939. The act was based on the advice of specially appointed Navy boards that recommended the enlargement of 11 existing Naval stations and the establishment of 16 new stations. The boards also advised doubling the number of Navy pilots. The Naval Reserve Act authorized the training of 6000 reserve pilots and the establishment of new training bases.<sup>17</sup>

President Roosevelt's declaration of a national emergency on May 27, 1941 called all naval reservists to active duty. In June 1941, the Navy had 2,172 aircraft. In January 1942 Roosevelt directed the Navy to attain 27,000 planes. This tremendous expansion would require more personnel, the activation of reserve fields and the construction of new air stations. By the end of the fiscal year 1942, the Navy accelerated its training so that 2500 cadets could begin instruction each month.<sup>18</sup>

A series of Authorization Acts passed by Congress in early 1942 approved hundreds of millions of dollars for domestic naval air base construction. Between February and July, new training bases were established at six inland sites across the county to augment older reserve bases in primary flight training. These new bases included those in Olathe and Hutchinson.<sup>19</sup>

By the time the United States entered World War II, the Navy already managed a Naval Reserve Base at Fairfax Field, a municipal airport in Kansas City, Kansas. Year-round training began there in 1939. The North American Aviation Company also had a B-25 bomber factory at the site. With the increase in pilot training, the site became too crowded and hazardous. The Navy purchased land for a new, larger air station in Johnson County between Olathe and Gardner in January 1942. Construction began on January 5, 1942 and was complete in early 1944. The Navy also purchased or leased land in Kansas for up to 14 outlying fields, although not all of these sites were used.

The Navy also approved the establishment of a Naval Air Station near Hutchinson in the summer of 1942. The base was located on a tract approximately seven miles south of Hutchinson and one mile west of Yoder on more than 2500 acres. An additional 3900 acres were leased for up to 20 auxiliary landing fields. Construction began on the base in October 1942.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43, No. 3(Autumn 1977): 351. (KSHS reprint)

<sup>18</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3, Autumn 1977 (KSHS reprint), 352.

<sup>19</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, Chmiel, "Historical and architectural overview of military aircraft hangars." US Army Corps of Engineers online report, 1999, [http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98\\_idx.htm](http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98_idx.htm).

<sup>20</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains During World War II* (Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska, 2008), 246-247.

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**The War and Kansas**

Many of the wartime obstacles that faced Kansans were also nationwide challenges. Citizens learned to deal with shortages of rationed items that included gasoline, metal, tires and food, such as sugar, fats, oils butter and meat. Citizens were encouraged to make do, eliminate unnecessary purchases and reduce their use of driving and heating fuel. There was a continuous push to purchase war bonds, plant a garden or collect scrap metals. Americans and Kansans did as asked and more.

E. Gail Carpenter, a petroleum geologist in Wichita, described the spirit of the town's war effort in a June 1942 letter to members of his Sunday School class serving in the war:

"The kids proudly save their nickels and dimes for War Saving Stamps. The War Bond windows at the banks have customers standing in line every day. Rubber piles grow at the filling station as John Q. gives his last pair of suspenders. The men, who are leaving each week for the Service, are a little older and they have a few less teeth, but they have that same well known determination to get the job done thoroughly and quickly."<sup>21</sup>

By October 1942, further sacrifices were called for, as Carpenter wrote:

"We are now attempting to drive within the national speed limit of thirty-five miles per hour. To tell you the truth, it is such a hard job that it is much more pleasant to ride by train or bus, which is just what the law is supposed to do... We have searched high and low for scrap rubber and scrap metal of all kinds. In two or three weeks we will be rationed to four gallons of gasoline per week."<sup>22</sup>

With most able-bodied men, as well as many women, enlisted in the military, there were shortages of civilian workers to keep the home machinery going. In Kansas, 227,000 male and female Kansans served in the armed forces between September 16, 1940 and June 30, 1946, according to a database compiled by the Kansas State Historical Society. Although draft regulations changed in 1943 so that many farmers and workers were deferred, many enlisted anyway, believing it was their patriotic duty.<sup>23</sup> Of the 227,000 Kansas enlistees, 2535 were women serving as nurses and in the female branches of the army, airforce, coast guard and marines. The civilians who remained in Kansas needed to take over the day-to-day activities in the towns, cities and farms.

Farm workers contributed to the war effort by expanding cropland and production. Despite 15,000 fewer farms in 1945 than in 1935, Kansas farmers enlarged cropland to 5 million acres, an expansion of 22

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<sup>21</sup> "The Newelletters: E. Gail Carpenter Describes Life on the Home Front; Part I" edited by Charles William Sloan, Jr., *Kansas History* 11, No. 1 (Spring 1988), 63.

<sup>22</sup> Sloan, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Caron Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II" *Kansas History* 14, No. 2 (Summer 1991): 85.

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percent. Sales of both cattle and hogs increased two-thirds between 1940 and 1945.<sup>24</sup> As men joined the armed forces or went to work in factories, rural women took over field work traditionally done by men. The Kansas Farm Labor Board reported that the proportion of female farm workers increased by two-thirds from 1942 to 1943.<sup>25</sup> The newly defined tasks included driving tractors, running combines, hauling grain and operating other machinery, with hauling grain the most common job for females.<sup>26</sup> Kansas farm women coped with the addition of the agricultural tasks to their traditional household work by focusing on completing the most pressing jobs and by exchanging labor with neighbors during harvest.<sup>27</sup>

World War II brought a massive increase in airplane production in Wichita, home to Boeing, Cessna, Beech and Culver. Men and women went to work in the factories, which ran 24 hours a day. The city of Wichita set up new bus routes in 1942 to take workers to the factories. *The Wichita Beacon* reported that at least half of the wartime Boeing employees were farm workers from Kansas or other Midwest states who had adapted their farm skills to factory work. The rural workers—accustomed to hard work, having knowledge of farm machinery and knowing how to use hand tools—required less basic instruction in assembly line work. The new factory population included a higher-than-average percentage of women—approximately eight percent of Boeing welders were women and more populated other departments.<sup>28</sup> By May 1944 more than 63,000 Wichita workers were producing airplanes for the military, bringing more than \$2 billion into the city since the United States entered the war. The prosperity that Boeing, Cessna and Beech experienced was shared with other communities through sub-contracts, sending more than \$71 million of work to other Kansas firms, primarily in Coffeyville, Kansas City and Hutchinson.<sup>29</sup>

The WWII airfields in Kansas provided economic booms to nearby communities, beginning with a sudden influx of wages for construction jobs. Each field needed to be surveyed for runways constructed of thousands of yards of concrete. Most fields would require the construction of a multitude of buildings for hangars, housing, warehouses, administration and entertainment. The cost of each major field was projected to be millions of dollars channeled into areas recovering from drought and the Great Depression. The rapid construction of the fields and their associated buildings required many professionals and laborers. Airfield construction was overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers, but often put regional architects and contractors to work as well. For example, most of the Smoky Hill base in

<sup>24</sup> Michael J. Grant, "Food Will Win the War and Write the Peace"; The Federal government and Kansas Farmers During World War II" *Kansas History*, 20, no. 4 (Winter 1997-1998), 249.

<sup>25</sup> Caron Smith, 85. (*Kansas Farm Labor in 1942 and 1943*, Manhattan: Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1944, 23.)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>28</sup> "Many Have Farm Employees Experience" *The Wichita Beacon*, 25 October 1942.

<sup>29</sup> "Kansas Cities Share Wichita Plane Millions" *The Topeka Capital*, 7 May 1944.

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Salina was completed in 1942 with the help of 13 civilian contractors and more than 7000 workers.<sup>30</sup> A newspaper article noted that the work force at the Hutchinson NAS peaked at 2500 in early 1943.<sup>31</sup> Most airfields were completed in 18 months, providing steady employment for those in the construction industry.

Once the bases began operating, there was a need for civilian workers. Locals—often women—were hired as clerical or bureaucratic workers. Civilian workers were also hired for specialized tasks, such as the inspection, repair and maintenance of parachutes. The bases also required civilian mechanics, technicians or electricians.

The arrival of hundreds to thousands of military personnel and their families had profound effects on Kansas towns. Finding housing for troops or their families proved difficult for every new airfield. Homeowners often rented spare rooms to transient families who arrived to spend time with servicemen before they were sent overseas. Local services were often strained, such as a period of time when the commercial laundries in Hutchinson could not meet the demands of the town and the base. Off-duty service men and women spent time and money in local communities, bringing in a badly needed infusion of currency. In time, nearly every town located near an airfield responded with activities and assistance for the bases. Nearby towns collected furniture and reading materials for base “day rooms,” where troops could relax during their free time. And Kansas towns, whether located near a base or not, opened a United Service Organization center to entertain off-duty troops.

The Kansas airfields were part of a nationwide war effort, but also much more. The bases and auxiliary fields provided training for beginner to advanced pilots, as well as training in all facets of aircraft maintenance and support. The four B-29 bases—Great Bend, Pratt, Smoky Hill and Walker—had a profound effect on the war. As the B-29s left assembly lines in 1944, 54 modifications were required to ready them for war. The four Kansas bases served as homes to the crews that converged in early 1944 to modify the early versions of the bombers. The five week struggle to get the planes to the Pacific front became known as the “Battle of Kansas.”<sup>32</sup> The successful transfer of the equipped planes to their destinations overseas gave the US Army a needed edge in the Pacific. The offensive by the airships and their crews readied on the plains of Kansas surprised and weakened a determined enemy. Suddenly faced with the new, monstrous craft, Japan faced the possibility that the war would soon come to an end.

<sup>30</sup> “U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer and Autumn 1959 (KSHS reprint), 42.

<sup>31</sup> “Air Station Not Ready” *The Hutchinson News-Herald*, 5 February 1943, 3

<sup>32</sup> General Curtis LeMay and Bill Yenne, *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Airpower in World War II* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2006), 68-70.

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**Construction**

The Kansas WWII airfields included collections of buildings and structures that often resembled and functioned as small cities. Army buildings and structures were usually classified by function, falling into the categories of airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings. Not every field included buildings in every category, but most of the large fields that became air bases had enough of each type to serve the field's mission and meet the needs of a large base population.

Structures or resources associated with the airfield category serviced the airplanes and their flights. These included runways, taxiways, hangars, bomb storage, parking aprons and control towers. Buildings in the cantonment category provided primarily semi-permanent housing and administration, including barracks, mess halls, commissaries, storage, supply buildings, general administration buildings, guard houses and fire stations. Training buildings served the purpose of training pilots, primarily in classroom buildings. Recreation and welfare buildings functioned to provide entertainment and reflection for the troops, mostly in their off-duty time. This category included recreation centers, swimming pools, chapels, theaters and post offices. Hospitals rounded out the collection of structures to include buildings for tending to the health of the servicemen and servicewomen. This category usually included office buildings, wards, infirmaries, dental clinics, and quarters and housing for nurses.

As new airfields mushroomed across the country, a determination was made whether each base would be of permanent—usually brick or concrete—or temporary—quick, less pretentious—construction. The general trend as the war went on was toward less substantial construction because it became obvious that not all fields would be needed during peacetime.<sup>33</sup> By the time that Kansas airfields were planned, building resources were becoming scarce and construction was usually of the most immediate and least expensive type. These very utilitarian buildings had little architectural style. They were functional, efficient and constructed as often as possible of materials deemed “non-critical” to the war effort.

When the Kansas airfields were built, all military construction was overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps was a technical branch of the Army that specialized in construction and maintained a large and efficient field organization. The task of constructing buildings for the Air Corps was transferred to the Corps of Engineers in November 1940. With little to no experience in building housing and airfields, the Corps grew to meet the challenge of working with its new and unfamiliar assignment. The Corps applied efficient construction methods that had successfully worked in rivers and harbors. The branch streamlined previously unorganized systems for purchasing products and settling local labor disputes and generally speeded up the process of finding good sites, approving drawings and beginning construction.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume One*, 113.

<sup>34</sup> Fine and Remington, 443.



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The Kansas Army airfields reflect decisions made by the Corps to conserve materials in every way possible. In April 1942, a collection of Ordnance and Engineer officers met at Kings Mills, Ohio. They recognized the need to eliminate all critical materials in construction. This would be accomplished by adopting several measures. Non-critical materials would be substituted for critical materials whenever possible. Construction would be limited to bare necessities. Layouts would be more compact to shorten utility lines. Buildings would be fewer. Simple wood framing would be standard. Electrical wiring would be open wire, knob and tube or non-metallic cable. Warehouses would have no sprinkler systems. Hospitals would be the only buildings with air conditioning. Frame sheds would rest on concrete slabs instead of foundations. Specifications called for wood sewer pipes, wooden manhole covers, wood or gypsum lath, and wood or cement-asbestos roof ventilators. The list of economic measures continued on and on.<sup>35</sup>

This comprehensive approach to construction created a series of airfields with very similar appearances. Buildings were minimal, most of semi-permanent construction described as "field of operations" or "mobilization" types. Typical construction for most buildings is described in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* article "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas" of buildings at the Dodge City AAF:

"The arrangement was standard rectangular, with building exteriors consisting of wood sheeting covered with 15-pound felt and asbestos-siding shingles."<sup>36</sup>

From field to field, buildings with similar uses looked alike, despite the fact that local architectural and contracting firms had a hand in their construction. Most barracks had the same appearance at every base, as did classroom buildings, bomb storage buildings, guard houses and hangars. A summer 2008 survey of extant Kansas WWII airfield structures revealed that similar types of buildings had nearly identical dimensions and materials. This is surely due to the fact that plans and construction were pre-determined by the Corps of Engineers.

The layouts of bases also reflected conservation of materials. By 1942, the buildings on bases were arranged into compact blocks of buildings with reduced firebreak distances, narrowed roads, shortened utility lines and decreased overall grading. These measures, instituted across the Corps, resulted in huge savings in materials and in costs.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Fine and Remington, 535-536.

<sup>36</sup> "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer and Autumn 1959 (KSHS reprint), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Fine and Remington, 536,



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The Corps of Engineers also oversaw the construction of the Naval bases in Olathe and Hutchinson. According to a 1999 Corps report, Olathe initially had a single temporary wood hangar and Hutchinson had two temporary hangars.<sup>38</sup> The extant World War II buildings reveal a mode of construction more substantial than the Army's semi-permanent type. Most remaining NAS buildings are of brick and concrete construction. The Hutchinson NAS displays an Art Moderne influence, with clean lines, windows that wrap building corners and wide concrete eaves that contrast with red brick walls. The Olathe NAS buildings display the Art Deco style, featuring concrete sill and lintel courses that contrast with red brick walls, geometricized trim and the occasional stepped parapet. These stylistic details and sturdier construction may be due to the fact that both of the bases were planned for much longer use than the Kansas Army bases.

The build-up of Army bases reached a peak in mid-1943 in training and equipping air forces. After crews were deployed overseas, the time came to curtail activity on domestic bases. As the war in Europe wound down in early 1945 and Japan's surrender came in August 1945, the Army air bases in Kansas and across the country had served their purpose.

After WWII, most Kansas bases were rapidly decommissioned and declared surplus as their purpose came to an end. Twelve of the primary Army Air Fields quickly became municipal airports and several continue in this purpose. Auxiliary fields followed the course of the bases after WWII. Some simply reverted back to agricultural land and some continue in use today as landing strips for crop dusters and private airplane owners. The Olathe NAS became a reserve station and two of its outlying fields became municipal airports. The Hutchinson NAS was reactivated during the Korean War and its two outlying fields reverted to municipal airports. All Army air activity in Kansas was eventually transferred to Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth and Marshall Field at Fort Riley. The Fairfax Airfield jointly served the Air Force and private industry. Walker AAF, the base that was poorly sited but played a very significant role in B-29 readiness, was transferred to the Corps of Engineers and within a few years sold off. The Army Air Forces finally became the United States Air Force as part of the Armed Services Unification Act of July 26, 1947.

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<sup>38</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, Chmiel, "Historical and architectural overview of military aircraft hangars," 1999, [http://owwww.cecar.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98\\_idx.htm](http://owwww.cecar.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98_idx.htm).

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**B-29 Superfortresses and Their Associated Properties**

Kansas airplane manufacturers were responsible for several well-known models of WWII aircraft. The Kaydet bi-plane made by Stearman Aircraft of Boeing proved to be such a simple, rugged craft that it was used for most early pilot training. The North American Aircraft plant in Kansas City began constructing B-25 Mitchell medium bombers in 1941, completing 6608 by the end of the war.<sup>39</sup> Boeing built the B-17 Flying Fortress, a tough four-engine bomber that was known for holding up well in combat. But perhaps the most significant product of the WWII Kansas factories and airfields was the B-29 Superfortress bomber (Figure 1.) Nearly four thousand of the enormous planes were built during WWII—1595 of them in Wichita by Boeing with assistance from the Beech, Cessna and Culver factories.<sup>40</sup>

As World War II progressed, it became clear that there was a need for a large bomber capable of traveling very far distances at very high altitudes. Even before the brand new B-29 was fully developed, General Arnold called for deployment of the aircraft against Axis Europe and Japan. It was soon determined that the B-17s and B-24s already in use in Europe were adequate, but that the Pacific front needed a bomber with a longer range.<sup>41</sup> B-17 airplanes were already fighting in the Pacific in 1942, but the larger, more powerful superbomber loomed on the horizon.

The B-29 was designated the XB-29-BO, experimental bomber type 29 built by Boeing in Seattle. As the first model of the craft was completed in 1942, a new class of superlatives was created to describe it. The earlier B-17 was named the Flying Fortress but the B-29 became known as the Superfortress. The Air Force refused to call the enormous plane merely a "heavy bomber," so the designation of "Very Heavy Bomber" was invented.<sup>42</sup> The first B-29 Superfortress was tested in Seattle in September 1942 and was later known as a million dollar gamble. General H.H. Arnold was positive that the new planes to meet all of his expectations. By going with an untested model, Arnold wagered on Boeing's ability to deliver a new kind of aircraft that would win the war. The superbomber was so highly anticipated that mass production proceeded with no extensive testing of the craft. Arnold also counted on the construction of the effective training fields and bases that the massive planes would require.<sup>43</sup> On June 29, 1943, the first Superfortress rolled off of the Boeing assembly line in Wichita. Boeing broke ground for the plant just

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Macias, "We All Had a Cause; Kansas City's bomber Plant, 1940-1945," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Winter 2005/2006, 248, 261.

<sup>40</sup> Linda McAffery, "The History of the B-29 Superfortress; Text of the Plaques at the B-29 Memorial," <http://www.b29memorial.com>.

<sup>41</sup> Wilbur H. Morrison, *Birds From Hell; History of the B-29* (Central Point, OR: Hellgate Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>42</sup> LeMay, 58.

<sup>43</sup> Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States; The United States Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), 623,

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two years earlier, before the B-29 was even tested. The *Kansas City Times* wrote, "It was a stupendous job which called for all the wizard tactics of the engineers."<sup>44</sup>

The B-29 was the largest bomber in the world, with a wing span of just over 141 feet, an overall height of nearly 28 feet and 99 feet long (Figure 2.) It was light, constructed of aluminum and clad with an outer skin of unpainted aluminum held in place with counter-sunk rivets. The aircraft's long nose protruded far ahead of its long, tapering wings. It had a very high tail to lend stability and its glass nose cone made it easily identifiable. The four 2200-horsepower engines provided twice as much power as the B-17.<sup>45</sup> The B-29 could achieve speeds over 300 miles per hour and could fly at elevations well over 30,000 feet.<sup>46</sup> The plane had a pressurized front cabin and rear gunner's compartment with a connecting tunnel for flying at high altitudes. It could carry 20,000 pounds<sup>47</sup> and could fly over 5000 miles without refueling, allowing it to fly from the United States to the Pacific front without needing fuel, an innovation for the day.<sup>48</sup> Boeing's 3943 WWII B-29s were built in four locations: 1595 at the Boeing Wichita plant; 1001 at the Boeing plant in Renton, Washington; 652 at the Bell Aircraft plant in Marietta, Georgia and 515 at the Glenn Martin plant in Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>49</sup>

In 1943, four Kansas airfields near Boeing's Wichita plant were designated for B-29 preparation and training—Smoky Hill AAF in Salina, Walker AAF near Hays, Great Bend AAF and Pratt AAF. Additional training fields were built in Nebraska at McCook, Grand Island, Harvard and Fairmont. Other fields designated for training B-29 personnel were eventually located in Ohio, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.<sup>50</sup> The exceptional designation as a B-29 station triggered construction that caused the bases to grow practically overnight to accommodate populations that averaged 7000. The large planes would require runways that approached 10,000 feet and huge hangars. The Army was counting on the training and preparation activities at the bases to significantly affect the outcome of WWII.

The Superfortresses and their power soon gained the admiration of their crews, as well as civilians. Tech Sergeant Anthony Ventura described in "The Unsung Plains of Kansas" his first view of the B-29 bomber at the Pratt AAF:

My entrance to the hangar via the rear door was stopped in its tracks.... For there standing before me was the unbelievable sight of the hugest airplane my life had ever witnessed.

This enormous hangar that could normally house dozens of liaison ships had barely enough

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<sup>44</sup> "Sky Dream True" *Kansas City Times*, 16 June 1944 (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13).

<sup>45</sup> "B-29 Is City's Big Contribution to War Effort" *The Wichita Eagle*, 15 June 1944 (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13).

<sup>46</sup> "Boeing B-29 Superfortress" *Aviation*, July 1944, 110.

<sup>47</sup> "Bombers on the Prairie".

<sup>48</sup> LeMay, 181.

<sup>49</sup> McAffery.

<sup>50</sup> McAffery.

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room to shelter this man made miracle that was over 90 feet long. The huge wings had a slight dihedral, pitching the 146-foot wing tips skyward, clearing the walls with little to spare. Special space had to be improvised in the center of the hangar door to allow the vertical stabilizing tail section enough room for the 28 feet of height.<sup>51</sup>

The Kansas B-29 bases provided the important mission of training crews and mechanics to learn and understand the airplanes. Due to the unique craft and its mission, each B-29 air and ground crew would need more operational training, information and skills than ever before required. Each crew member was expected to be an expert in his field and all crews were interchangeable.<sup>52</sup> As the planes became available, the heavy bombardment squadrons practiced the tactics of flying the planes and accurately hitting targets located on the Kansas plains.

Bases for B-29s also required more substantial construction to accommodate the large planes and increased personnel associated with them. B-29s could use 6000-foot runways but needed runways of at least 7000 feet for their maximum loads of 120,000 pounds. Very Heavy Bomber groups required more housing and maintenance facilities than were previously available. The Second Air Force carried the main responsibility for this and by the end of 1943 B-29 training was underway at Salina, Great Bend, Pratt and Walker, plus Clovis, NM.<sup>53</sup>

As Superfortress training began near Salina in the Fall of 1943, the course of war shaped the mission of the airplanes. The B-29 emerged after the tide in Europe had turned. Enemy forces in North Africa had been defeated. The Allies had entered Italy. Hitler's invasion of Russia was ending in disaster. One by one, German cities suffered damaging air raids. In the Pacific, however, industrial Japan was virtually intact. Roads to Tokyo stretched for thousands of miles and attacks so far had had little effect. By placing the Japanese islands within bombing range, the Superfortress made possible a more hard-hitting strategy.<sup>54</sup>

In November 1943, President Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo. The three leaders formed a strategic plan that called for sustained bombing of Japan. As negotiations continued, the Army went to work to transform the new B-29 planes into combat-ready machines. Chiang Kai-shek promised to build airfields at Chengtu if Roosevelt could promise to deliver B-29s by April 15,

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<sup>51</sup> The Pratt Army Air Field History Center, "The Unsung Plains of Kansas." Transcribed by Milt Martin, <http://paaf.indexks.com>.

<sup>52</sup> Morrison, 35.

<sup>53</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 164.

<sup>54</sup> Fine and Remington, 641.

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1944. General Arnold instructed Brigadier General Kenneth B. Wolfe to accelerate B-29 production by bringing in needed personnel from anywhere in the Army.<sup>55</sup>

As B-29s began leaving the factories in significant numbers, Wolfe moved his headquarters to the Smoky Hill AAF near Salina and activated Very Heavy Bombardment groups. The planes that arrived at their designated bases were not ready for war. General Curtis LeMay writes in his book *Superfortress*:

The only problem now was that the planes pouring into Smoky Hill were not ready for combat, and they were still plagued by engine problems. In normal times the assembly line would have been shut down and the problems corrected before planes were built, but these were anything but normal times. Modification centers were set up from Alabama to Colorado to fix the B-29s before they got to Smoky Hill.<sup>56</sup>

Inadequate parts on the early B-29s included carburetor air duct baffles, fuel cells, exhaust cylinders and exhaust valves. The planes were also delivered with nonstandard equipment and incomplete inspections. The flaws had to be fixed before the Superbombers could be sent overseas. The B-29 bases were responsible for preparing the airplanes for their mission. Responsibilities fell to base mechanics and their aides to:

- Replace all engines that were not durable “war” engines
- Strengthen or replace rudders
- Replace all tires on main landing gear systems
- Replace exhaust collector rings that were cracked by engine heat and vibrations
- Raise cowl flaps above the exhaust manifolds to prevent overheating and loss of power
- Install radar systems
- Modify propeller pistons and governors for high altitudes to reduce fuel consumption.<sup>57</sup>

Every B-29 coming off of the assembly line required 54 major modifications, including alterations to the electrical system, fire control system and propeller-feathering system. Eventually these changes would be made on the assembly line, but in early 1944 they were made at the bases with parts retrieved from across the country.<sup>58</sup>

Activity at the Kansas B-29 fields culminated with “The Battle of Kansas” in Spring 1944. General H.H. Arnold arrived at Smoky Hill AAF on March 9, 1944 and asked how many bombers could be ready to leave for interim fields in India the next day. The answer was “none.” Arnold exploded and issued orders

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<sup>55</sup> LeMay, 68-69.

<sup>56</sup> LeMay, 68.

<sup>57</sup> Phillip T. Schulz “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form; Parachute Building,” 13 August 2008.

<sup>58</sup> LeMay, 70.

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that had phones ringing across the country initiating the Salina Blitz, or The Battle of Kansas. Colonels and GI mechanics flew in overnight. Boeing sent 600 civilians from its Wichita plant. Orders were issued that last plane would fly away on April 15.

At the four Kansas B-29 modification centers, workers went on double shifts as the trickle of necessary parts became a landslide. An article in the *Saturday Evening Post* in August 1945 recalled, "Superfortresses unready for battle were delivered to Kansas bases, where bombardment groups were poised for overseas. Army mechanics at Salina, Pratt, Walker and Great Bend tried to button up jobs left flapping." Workers in Salina and the other B-29 bases put in long days to ready the planes for departure. Training engines were taken out and war engines installed. The planes were modified to carry bombs weighing 10,000-12,000 pounds. Every detail on the aircraft was prepared for readiness. The sudden effort coincided with a major winter storm. Work continued around the clock, often outdoors in the wind, sleet and bitter cold due to a shortage of hangars.<sup>59</sup>

General Curtis LeMay describes the importance of the Battle of Kansas in his book *Superfortress*:

For Hap Arnold, The Battle of Kansas was no clever euphemism applied to a logistical setback—it was Stalingrad. It was a battle that *could not* be lost. If it were lost, there would be no tomorrow for the dream of autonomous strategic air power in World War II. In a grand global conflict in which logistics proved again and again to be the critical factor in narrow—yet decisive—victories, the Battle of Kansas was a major turning point.<sup>60</sup>

The Battle of Kansas was won. The last of 150 B-29s left Kansas on April 15, 1944 for bases in India, China and eventually the Marianas Islands.<sup>61</sup> Two months later the bombing of Japan began. The abilities of the massive aircraft were a source of honor for Kansans. *The Wichita Eagle* wrote on June 16, 1944:

"Wichita has the deepest pride in the performance of the B-29's which yesterday undertook their first attack on Japan. These superbombers were designed for such work as the Pacific Ocean demands...The B-29's yesterday brought home to Japan the stark fact that distance is no longer to serve that nation as it has in the past. The B-29's were designed to conquer distance."<sup>62</sup>

The mission to bomb Japanese cities affected the men involved, even with public opinions of the day. Most Americans had strong attitudes after Pearl Harbor regarding terror attacks on civilians. A public opinion poll by Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk on December 10, 1941 revealed that 67 percent of the

<sup>59</sup> "The Battle of Kansas" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13, No. 8 (November 1945), 481-484.

<sup>60</sup> LeMay 69.

<sup>61</sup> Morrison, 39-40.

<sup>62</sup> "The B-29 Attack" *The Wichita Eagle*, 16 June 1944 (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13)



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population favored unqualified and indiscriminate bombing of Japanese cities. Later surveys provided similar results.<sup>63</sup> Most Americans and publications believed that the AAF avoided indiscriminate killing of civilians whenever possible, focusing most bombardment on military objectives.<sup>64</sup> Yet this was not always true. The March 9, 1945 attack on Tokyo was aimed at six industrial targets, many smaller factories, railroad yards, home industries and cable plants. Also targeted was Asakusa Ku, a densely populated area. Ninety thousand to 100,000 people were killed in the attack, many from intense heat from the firestorm, suffocation or burning alive. After the attack, 16 square miles of Tokyo were burned out and over 1 million were homeless.<sup>65</sup> The night attack resulted in the greatest damage so far, destroying 267,000 buildings.<sup>66</sup> Conrad C. Crane writes in *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, "Airmen who returned from the first great fire raid on Tokyo and who had observed from low-level the carnage they caused "handed in their reports with hands that shook, with shock and horror still reflected in their eyes."<sup>67</sup>

Despite such reactions, B-29 crews carried out more raids, since the airmen were certain that such attacks were the only way to end the war quickly. B-29s contributed to the destruction of 180 square miles of 67 cities, killing over 300,000 people and wounding another 400,000. Advanced American tactics and Japanese defenses resulted in the loss of only 437 Very Heavy Bombers during combat, mostly because of technical failures. The fleet of B-29s contributed greatly toward bringing the war to an end. Japan's Prince Konoye credited the bombers by saying, "Fundamentally, the thing that brought about the determination to make peace was the prolonged fire bombing by the B-29s."<sup>68</sup> The final bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were preceded by the dropping of leaflets stating that the new bomb carried by the B-29s would be used to destroy every military resource prolonging the war, ending with the demand, "Evacuate Your Cities!" Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson viewed the atom bomb as contrary to everything he stood for. As the war continued he met drained fatigued European troops headed for the Pacific. Facing the possibility of more war, he approved "the least abhorrent choice" for the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>69</sup>

General Arnold visited the Wichita Boeing plant on August 29, 1945 and summarized the effect of the B-29s on the outcome of the war. "Soon after the Superforts completed their first strikes from the Marianas, the...official Domei broadcast conceded that the planes were an unsolvable problem to them. And from that time on until Hiroshima and Nagasaki felt the final blows carried by B-29s, all America knew that the

<sup>63</sup> Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 29.

<sup>64</sup> Crane, 31.

<sup>65</sup> Crane, 132.

<sup>66</sup> LeMay, 199.

<sup>67</sup> Crane, 49.

<sup>68</sup> Crane, 140.

<sup>69</sup> Crane, 143.

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army air forces and Boeing Superforts could do the job they were assigned.”<sup>70</sup> Due to the foresight of General Arnold, the development of the Kansas B-29 airfields and perseverance during the Battle of Kansas, the B-29 program made a significant impact on the outcome of World War II. The Kansas airfields were a major component in the Battle of Kansas and contributed toward the war’s rapid end.

**Air Fields**

General H.H. Arnold described the needs of the Army air force: “An air force is a balanced compound of three essential ingredients—airplanes, combat and maintenance crews, and air bases.”<sup>71</sup> This balance of aircraft, personnel and base facilities provided the necessary foundation for the needed fighting power, effective training and strategic mobility. An airfield required a minimum of operating runways, a control tower, communication equipment, weather apparatus, night lighting, shops and warehouses. Each unit of the Army air force also supervised sub-bases, auxiliary fields, and bombing and gunnery ranges.<sup>72</sup>

Each base contained dozens, if not hundreds, of buildings to meet these needs. In addition to buildings for the airfield, cantonment (administration, housing, warehouses, utilities and infrastructure) and training, a well-functioning base also included buildings for recreation, welfare and health care. A 1959 article titled “U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas” in *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* lists the buildings constructed at the Coffeyville AAF, a typical Kansas base.

Airfield: 4 runways, 5 taxiways, 3 hangars, parking apron and control tower.

Cantonment: 67 enlisted men’s barracks, 25 cadet barracks, 3 WAC’s barracks, 8 mess halls, 1 guard house, 1 commissary, 13 warehouses, 11 administration buildings, 12 supply rooms, 1 post headquarters building, 6 operations buildings, 1 fire station, 1 telephone building, 1 signal office building.

Training: 1 ground school building, 2 miscellaneous buildings, 6 link trainer buildings, 1 chemical warfare building.

Recreation and Welfare: 17 general recreation buildings, 1 chapel, 1 theater, 1 post office, 1 post exchange.

Hospital: 1 administration building, 5 wards, 1 infirmary, 1 dental clinic, 1 nurses’ quarters, 1 nurses’ recreation building.<sup>73</sup>

A brief description of each Kansas base is given below, including activity prior to World War II as applicable.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> “The Battle of Kansas” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (November 1945), 481-484.

<sup>71</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 119.

<sup>72</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 119.

<sup>73</sup> “U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer and Autumn 1959 (KSHS reprint).

<sup>74</sup> Unless noted, all information on individual bases comes from a comprehensive pair of articles, “U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas,” published in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* in the Summer and Autumn issues of 1959.

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**Coffeyville AAF**

The Coffeyville AAF was sited seven miles northeast of Coffeyville on a tract of land that included more than 1400 acres. Construction began on June 1, 1942 and on June 17 of that year the field was activated. Construction encompassed water distribution, a sewage system, the distribution of electricity and paving access roads. Buildings within the field were noted by use—airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital, listed below.

Airfield: 4 runways from 4100 to 5872 feet long, 5 taxiways between 400 and 2400 feet long, 3 hangars (Figure 32,) parking apron and control tower.

Cantonment: 67 enlisted men's barracks, 25 cadet barracks, 3 WAC's barracks, 8 mess halls, 1 guard house, 1 commissary, 13 warehouses, 11 administration buildings, 12 supply rooms, 1 post headquarters building, 6 operations buildings, 1 fire station, 1 telephone building, 1 signal office building.

Training: 1 ground school building, 2 miscellaneous buildings, 6 link trainer buildings, 1 chemical warfare building.

Recreation and Welfare: 17 general recreation buildings, 1 chapel, 1 theater, 1 post office, 1 post exchange.

Hospital: 1 administration building, 5 wards, 1 infirmary, 1 dental clinic, 1 nurses' quarters, 1 nurses' recreation building.

The budget to build the base was estimated at \$7 million, according to *The Oswego Independent*. The base was undoubtedly good news for the city and local workers, as the article stated, "(The) City of Coffeyville is cooperating in the way of building extensions to their water and electric systems....Thus is another great war industry added to the cluster of similar industries being assembled in this part of the interior."<sup>75</sup>

The Coffeyville AAF's initial mission was to provide basic training for aviation cadets. From the first class in November 1942 until February 1943, approximately 4840 cadets and aviation students began the basic flying course. Due to numerous resignations, serious accidents and other problems, only 3881 successfully completed the course.

When the Third Air Force took over the field in June 1944, the training program switched to training pilots for combat photo reconnaissance. For the next 12 months, over 460 pilots received this specialized training and were shipped overseas for their assignments. Even with the few weeks remaining in WWII, there was no decrease in this specific training.

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<sup>75</sup> "Coffeyville Lands" *The Oswego Independent*, 15 May 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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Coffeyville AAF was scheduled for deactivation shortly after the end of WWII. The facility was given to the city of Coffeyville in the late 1940s for a municipal airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released the deed in 1962.<sup>76</sup> Remains of the Coffeyville AAF include three hangars, a parachute building, water tower, two utility buildings and the two of the three original runways. The buildings are all in good condition and are part of the Coffeyville Municipal Airport.

Coffeyville AAF had four auxiliary fields. No. 1, 206 acres, was approximately 6.2 miles southeast; No. 2, 241 acres, was about 14 miles east, No. 3, 633 acres, was 12.5 miles northeast and No. 4, 241 acres, was nine miles slightly east of north. Of the four fields, only No. 3 was concrete and is the only one extant. Located northeast of Edna, it served as the Edna Municipal airport from the 1940s until the 1970s. The federal government gave the property to the city of Edna in 1948. The FAA ordered the city to repair the deteriorated runways in 1980, but the city of Edna could not afford the \$100,000 cost and chose to give up the property.<sup>77</sup> The land was sold in 1984.<sup>78</sup> The triangular configured runways are now privately owned but can be viewed from the air.

**Dodge City AAF**

A flurry of lobbying in Washington led to the announcement in June 1942 of Dodge City chosen for a field to provide bomber training for the British Royal Air Force (RAF). The site was originally intended as one of the RAF bases planned for western Kansas that also included Garden City, Pratt and Liberal. The RAF did not come to Kansas, but plans for the field continued.

Approximately 2520 acres northwest of Dodge City were acquired from eight property owners through condemnation. An additional 16 acres were purchased for the construction of a railroad spur to the field. Construction began in August 1942, primarily consisting of cantonment, hangars, roads and facilities. Housing was built for nearly 4000 men, a hospital for 177 beds, warehousing with 71,186 square feet and at least four hangars that had space for 165 airplanes. Four runways 6500 feet long, six 75-foot taxiways and an apron 600 by 5300 feet were constructed. Work was complete by December 31, totaling more than \$7 million.

Dodge City AAF was initially designated as an advanced flying school. This soon changed to pilot training and ground instruction on the B-26 "Marauder" medium bomber (Figure 5.) Classes of students also included French nationals and Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

<sup>76</sup> "Gives Up An Airfield" *Kansas City Times*, 3 October 1962 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>77</sup> "Town Gives Up World War II Legacy" *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 23 May 1983 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>78</sup> "Edna Airstrip Out up for Sale Again" *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 18 May 1984 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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The town of Dodge City with its population of about 14,000 was quite welcoming of the base and its residents. Various civic groups furnished day rooms on the base. The base exhibited various types of equipment at the Boot Hill Fair and Rodeo in September 1943. The Dodge City *Daily Globe* frequently published press releases from the base.

When the need for B-26 transition training sharply dropped, training activities on the base stopped in June 1945. The official inactivation process began two days later and was complete by mid-July 1945. The Dodge City AAF and its auxiliary field, Jetmore No. 4 were declared surplus in October, 1946. The property served as the Ford County Airport for a time. It is now agricultural land, storage and a feed lot.

Of the enormous Dodge City AAF, WWII remains found in the summer of 2008 included one hangar (Figures 3 and 4,) three hangar ruins, three storage buildings, runway lights, a water tower and many concrete and brick ruins. Structures on the southwest side of the site include two storage buildings and a set of building ruins. The triangular configuration of runways is now agricultural land.

Land for an auxiliary field was purchased in late 1942 and early 1943. The Jetmore Auxiliary Field, located on 1180 acres six miles south of Jetmore, originally had runways in a butterfly configuration. One concrete runway remains today in good condition. The site, owned by the city of Jetmore, is used primarily by crop dusters.

**Fairfax Field**

Fairfax Field served as a municipal airport before WWII. The airport, located just outside of Kansas City, was dedicated in 1929.<sup>79</sup> The Navy established a presence at the airport in the 1930s. With the threat of war at hand, President Roosevelt called for immediate steps to boost defense of the United States. Training programs at Fairfax increased from taking place just during the summer months to year-round. A 1941 Presidential executive order called all Navy Reservists to active duty. The original four short runways were lengthened to between 4500 and 6500 feet long and a large parking apron was added. Fairfax was now large enough to handle its anticipated capacity.<sup>80</sup>

The War Department announced on December 7, 1940 that a government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) assembly plant would be built on 75 acres adjacent to the west side of the Fairfax Airport.<sup>81</sup> North American Aviation Company was selected as the operation contractor and Fisher Body Division as

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<sup>79</sup> George R. Bauer, *A Century of Kansas City Aviation History; The Dreamers and the Doers* (Kansas City: Historic Preservation Press, 1999), 72.

<sup>80</sup> Kathy Daniels, "Olathe Naval Air Station: Sailors On The Plains," *Album Johnson County Museum* 20, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 1.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Macias, "We All Had a Cause: Kansas City's Bomber Plant, 1940-1945," *Kansas History*, Winter 2005/2006, 246-247.

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the major subcontractor. Construction on the plant began on March 11, 1941. The plant opened in early December 1941. The plant's first B-25 airplane was completed December 23, 1941 and christened "Miss Greater Kansas City."<sup>82</sup>

The Army's Air Transport Command initially came to Fairfax Field in the spring of 1943 to transport out the new and modified B-25 planes. A detachment of WASPs was organized at Fairfax in 1944 to help with the ferrying mission. 6609 B-25 Mitchell bombers were produced at the North American Aviation plant next to Fairfax Field. A total of 59,337 men and women worked at the plant from the summer of 1941 until production ended in October 1945.<sup>83</sup>

With increased traffic from the new North American plant on the west side of airport and the increase in Navy pilot training, Fairfax became very crowded. The training pilots had to move. A decision was made to purchase land in southern Johnson County for a more spacious Naval base, the Olathe Naval Air Station.

Production of the B-25s was reduced early in 1945. The Ferrying Division closed its Fairfax operation and Fairfax lost its base status in April 1945. While operating at Fairfax, the group delivered 6202 aircraft to domestic destinations and 251 overseas.

After December 1945 the Air Force used Fairfax nearly exclusively for reserve training. The base was quite cramped, however, and all operations were moved to the Olathe NAS in 1950. General Motors leased the North American Aviation plant for 15 years, expanded onto the runways and then purchased it from the federal government. The original buildings were razed in 1987 for a new GM plant.<sup>84</sup> The Fairfax Field runways are visible in aerial photographs, but no WWII structures are known to remain.

**Garden City AAF**

After a year of lobbying for an air base, survey crews began outlining runways for the Garden City AAF on June 16, 1942. The site was originally intended as a base for the British RAF. When it was realized that the RAF would not come to Kansas, the project came to an abrupt halt. Grading for a new base layout began in August 1942.

The main base at Garden City occupied almost 1585 acres about 11 miles southeast of Garden City. The base was activated in December 1942 and construction topping \$9 million was completed in March 1943. Buildings on 489 acres included 66 barracks with a capacity of 2224 enlisted personnel, 26 barracks to

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<sup>82</sup> Bauer, 86.

<sup>83</sup> Bauer, 68.

<sup>84</sup> Bauer, 90.



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hold 520 cadets, 17 officers' quarters with a capacity of 272, two buildings for nurses' living quarters, a mess hall and a base hospital with 151 beds. Five runways were built measuring between 4960 and 6500 feet long, in addition to five taxiways and a large apron. Three hangars fronted the field.

The base's assigned mission was pilot training for basic students. For a short time in 1944, WASPs were stationed at the field serving as engineering test flight pilots. Flight training began in January 1943 but the need for basic flight training decreased by the end of 1944. Garden City's program was discontinued in November 1944. The base was placed on standby for less than a year, until it was assigned the mission of serving as a storage depot. Storage at the base peaked in July 1945 when it housed 1456 aircraft. Shortly after, the major activity at the base was the removal of the stored planes.

Garden City AAF was deactivated and declared excess in October 1946. The base was transferred to the Corps of Engineers in May 1947. The site currently operates as the Garden City Municipal Airport. Extant World War II structures at the airport include three storage buildings, one concrete pad from a former building site, a former carpenter shop building, an equipment service shop building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Two original runways remain.

Three auxiliary airfields were constructed for the Garden City AAF. Auxiliary Field No. 1 was a concrete pad in a "butterfly" configuration. The field in Gray County, now known as the Ingalls Municipal Airport, is primarily used by crop dusters. Auxiliary Fields No. 2 and No. 3 were bituminous mats. Field No. 2 in Gray County is now agricultural land. Field No. 3 in Finney County is a cattle feed lot.

**Great Bend AAF**

When the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce received an official telegram from Senator Arthur Capper in late September 1942 announcing intentions to build an airfield, preliminary work had already been completed. The site was originally planned to house a field paid for by the Civil Aeronautics Administration and ceded to Barton County and Great Bend after the war's end. Instead, the field was built as an AAF.

Most of the construction was done by the Patti-McDonald Construction Company of Kansas City. Concrete work on the runways and taxiways was done by the W.L. Johnson Construction Company (Figure 6.) The airfield was intended to serve as a satellite of the Smoky Hill AAF in Salina, so the initial collection of buildings was quite basic. After the essential buildings were completed, a service club, theater and bowling alley were added during the summer and fall of 1943. Housing was not completed when the first personnel arrived in early 1943, so the men were housed in Great Bend for a time. Once housing was built, 13 officers and 182 enlisted men moved on to the field. The Great Bend AAF processed heavy bombardment groups. In addition to processing crews, the base also provided flight training, as well as training in "Prisoner of War Behavior and Escape."

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In early March it became known that training personnel for the new B-29 Very Heavy Bomber would begin soon. Great Bend AAF was chosen as one of the bases to participate in the program. This necessitated expansion of the field. Original runways and taxiways were expanded, additional troop housing was built and new hangars were constructed to hold the large planes.

Great Bend readied four Very Heavy Bombardment groups for overseas. Additionally, the base retrained a crew back from Europe for redeployment to the Pacific, making Great Bend one of the first redeployment installations in the country. The base suffered from a shortage of the B-29 aircraft for a period of time, so groups would train on B-17s and B-26s until they received the Superfortresses. The base's population peaked at the end of January 1945, when 6409 personnel were stationed there.

The surrender of Japan brought base activity to a close. The Great Bend AAF was placed on standby at the end of 1945. The field was home to an Air Force reserve unit for a short time in 1950. The site today serves as the Great Bend Municipal Airport. At a June 2008 visit, extant WWII buildings included two hangars, six brick chimneys from previous hangars and two concrete storage bunkers. The triangular runways are still present.

**Herington AAF**

The Herington AAF was located eight miles east of Herington on 1700 acres. Construction began in September 1942 and was completed 14 months later. The Herington AAF base construction included not only many buildings, but also a water storage and distribution system, sewage collection and disposal, an electrical distribution system and storage and distribution of gasoline. The following structures are listed a *Kansas Historical Quarterly* article as part of the field.

Airfield: Three concrete runways more than 6000 feet long and 150 feet wide, four taxiways between 425 and 5919 feet long, three hangars, a control tower, a concrete apron measuring 3384 feet by 400 feet and four parking areas.

Temporary Cantonment Type Buildings: a mess hall, 15 storage houses, four administration buildings, three quarters, 1 barracks, nine technical maintenance shops, seven hospital buildings and 19 miscellaneous structures.

Temporary Theater of Operations Type Buildings: six mess halls, 45 storage houses, 25 administration buildings, 17 quarters, 56 barracks and dormitories, eight technical maintenance shops and 97 miscellaneous structures.

Auxiliaries (off base): gasoline and oil storage area, radio homing station, rifle and pistol range, asphalt storage area.

The base also had a large swimming pool, reportedly the second-largest pool in the state.

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Herington was one of three satellite fields associated with the Topeka AAF for final processing of heavy bombardment crews and equipment before being sent overseas.<sup>85</sup> The first combat crews and airplanes arrived at Herington in late June 1943. Processing each crew member involved completing paperwork and pay, giving physical fitness exams, inspecting clothing and equipment, issuing equipment, assigning and testing aircraft, a prisoner of war lecture, communications instruction, assigning crews and aircraft to overseas missions, briefing on routes to be traveled and arranging departures.

Herington AAF served as primarily a staging area for B-24 crews and planes, with a few B-17 crews, during its first 11 months. During the summer of 1944 it was converted into a B-29 staging area, processing Very Heavy Bombardment crews and aircraft before they were sent overseas.

The field had a huge impact on Herington, a town with a population of around 3000. Married personnel lived off base, as well as the families of the crews being processed. This produced a boom economy in the town and a spate of entertainment. Busses would shuttle people from town to dances held in the field's hangars. Many Herington residents converted portions of their houses into apartments or rented rooms for around \$10 a week. Townspeople volunteered their time at the USO or opened their homes to servicemen for a Sunday dinner.<sup>86</sup>

Activity dropped at the field during the fall of 1945 and the field was inactivated in November 1945. The field was listed as surplus in the fall of 1946. Many buildings were sold and moved to nearby towns. The field became the Herington Municipal Airport. Today it serves the community as the Herington Regional Airport and industrial park. Extant WWII resources include two hangars, several storage buildings, a fire station, a water tower, two pump houses, a pool site, many ruins and a warehouse. One runway is still present. 4300 feet of runways have been removed and are now part of a feed lot.

**Hutchinson NAS**

The Navy began searching for a site for a second Kansas Naval reserve air base in early 1942. With help from the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce, a location seven miles south of Hutchinson was identified. The Chamber's assurance in June that the city would turn over the state fairgrounds for housing and the municipal airport for pilot training clinched the deal. The Navy immediately began purchasing plots of land, most of which was owned by Amish farmers. The farmers cooperated with the Navy, although they were conscientious objectors. The Navy showed its appreciation by allowing the farmers to salvage their farm buildings before construction began.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> The other two auxiliary fields were at Bruning and Fairmount in Nebraska.

<sup>86</sup> Warren Dix, "This is a brief history of the old Herington Army Air Base 1942-1945." On file at the Tri-County Historical Museum in Herington.

<sup>87</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations In Kansas During World War II" *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 1977), 355.

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As construction proceeded, the influx of workers affected the small town of Yoder. The town experienced growing pains with more frequent train stops and the requirement of a larger depot platform. The town's general store frequently ran out of supplies, especially cold drinks during the hot summer of 1942.<sup>88</sup> Shortages plagued the early days of the base's construction. There were shortages of uniforms, training manuals, Navy forms for daily procedures and even pay.<sup>89</sup>

Work at the base progressed rapidly. By the end of September, one 5000-foot runway had already been surfaced and all footings were in for the main buildings. By making use of the fairgrounds, airport and outlying auxiliary strips, pilot training began about three months ahead of schedule in October 1942.<sup>90</sup> The base was officially activated on October 27 as the United States Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Hutchinson, Kansas. It was renamed on January 1, 1943 as the United States Naval Air Station. Construction was completed in February 1943, culminating in a \$14 million station that covered 2500 acres. A spur of the Missouri Pacific Railroad ran to the base, which could accommodate more than 5000 persons. The base included a water system, disposal plant, coal heating plant, barracks, machine shops, hangars, warehouses, commissary, post office, brig, firing range and a recreation building with a swimming pool. Most buildings were of frame construction built to last at least 25 years. The base had two north-south runways crossed by adjacent taxiways (Figures 7 and 8.)<sup>91</sup>

The mission of the Hutchinson NAS was to provide flight training for naval cadets. Primary flight training peaked in November 1944, when there were 774 cadets in instruction. By early 1944, the Navy reduced primary training and the base's mission changed to become an advanced operational center for PB4Y "Liberator" pilots and crews.<sup>92</sup>

Hutchinson NAS also included a contingent of WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. Arriving in June 1943, the women lived on the base and proved themselves efficient workers and "good sailors." It was planned that each WAVE would free a man for service at sea or on an advanced base. By October 1944, 260 enlisted WAVES and 16 officers were at Hutchinson NAS. The base also hired many civilians to relieve sailors for combat. This created some morale problems on the base due to the fact that the civilians were paid at a higher rate than the service men or the WAVES. Other problems with morale occurred in June 1943 when laundry facilities in Hutchinson proved insufficient for the Navy and the Hutchinson citizens. The Navy laundry facilities had not been built and the town's laundries

<sup>88</sup> Building of Naval Base Causes Boom in a Village" *Kansas City Times*, 29 August 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>89</sup> Hurt, 356.

<sup>90</sup> "Speed On An Air Base" *Kansas City Times*, 30 September 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>91</sup> "Big Naval Air Base Is Located In Dry Kansas" *Topeka Capital*, 1 February 1943 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>92</sup> Hurt, 359.

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refused to give priority to the military. A moderately successful "Iron Your Own Shirt" campaign created by the Chamber of Commerce decreased the demand for civilian laundry business enough to meet the needs until the base's laundry was built.<sup>93</sup>

The Navy quickly reduced its number of bases after the war ended. It was announced on September 30, 1946 that the Hutchinson NAS would close immediately. The Navy retained possession of the property and kept a small force on site. The base reopened in 1952 as part of the mobilization for the Korean War and was closed permanently in 1957.<sup>94</sup> The federal government approved the sale of the property to the City of Hutchinson in 1956. The city re-sold it immediately for no profit to the Chamber of Commerce for use as an industrial park.<sup>95</sup> The site today is mostly privately owned. The re-paved runways and buildings abutting them serve as a glider port. Other buildings are used by local businesses and schools. Extant WWII structures include a power plant, storage tanks, hangar ruins, control tower, 2 warehouses, motor pool building and several buildings of unknown use.

Hutchinson NAS required two auxiliary fields. The Hutchinson Municipal Airport served as OLF No. 1 after the two runways were lengthened to 6000 and 7000 feet and lights were installed. The OLF No. 2 was located at the Newton Municipal Airport. Three runways at the field were lengthened to 7000 feet. Quarters for training and storage were also built there.<sup>96</sup> Both sites were returned to their respective cities after the war. Both fields retain most of their WWII runways. A circa 1939 hangar likely built with WPA funds remains at the Hutchinson Municipal Airport. A hangar moved to the OLF No. 2 around 1943 remains on site.

**Independence AAF**

The city of Independence approved \$100,000 in bonds for a municipal airport in August 1941. A site in Montgomery County six miles southwest of Independence was chosen. In early 1942 the government showed an interest in acquiring the site for an Army airfield and training school. In May 1942 the Army notified the Independence mayor that it would purchase approximately 1433 acres in the county for an airfield.

Work began on the base during June 1942. The firm of Black and Veatch of Kansas City was awarded the contract to serve as the architect and engineer. J.O. Burgwin began construction of the air base buildings in August, 1942.<sup>97</sup> A spur of the Missouri Pacific railway was built to the site. By January, the base had

<sup>93</sup> Hurt, 358-359.

<sup>94</sup> "Hutchinson Naval Station to Close" *Topeka Journal*, 22 November 1957 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>95</sup> "Hutchinson To Secure Base Land" *Wichita Eagle*, 15 January 1965 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>96</sup> Hurt, 360.

<sup>97</sup> "Big Days in Air Base History" *The Independence Reporter*, 5 June 1943 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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three concrete runways 5000 feet in length and by February, enough basic housing and utilities to accept the first class of cadets.

Construction of the base cost more than \$48 million and ended in May 1943. The base held a huge open house in early June, 1943. Buildings open for touring included a Link trainer facility,<sup>98</sup> three hangars including a huge engineering hangar at far north end of field, a parachute loft where parachutes were dried, packed and stored, quartermaster warehouses, a clothing and equipment shop where clothing was repaired, barracks, a post exchange, theater, library, club for enlisted men, gymnasium and recreation building, squadron day rooms, hospital and a ground school with classrooms.<sup>99</sup> Most buildings were of temporary wartime construction consisting of tarpaper over wood.

The base provided basic flying training that included practice landings, night navigation, cross-country flights, radio communications, weather information and aircraft recognition. Basic training continued at Independence until January 1945. The field was placed on standby in March. In April, the Army announced that the airfield would be used for the storage of WWII aircraft. Thousands of airplanes were stored at Independence between April 1945 and the fall of 1947 before they were transferred to other fields. After the base was deactivated, the field served Independence as a municipal airport. The field today has just one WWII hangar and two of its three original runways.

The *Kansas Historical Quarterly* notes in a 1959 article that construction on four auxiliary fields located eight to ten miles from the airfield took place during the fall of 1942. The only remaining auxiliary field—named Auxiliary Field No. 9 at Cherryvale—now serves as the Tri-City airport west of Parsons in Labette County. The field retains two of its three original runways.

**Liberal AAF**

Liberal was one of the sites chosen in early 1942 for a potential training base for the British RAF. A notice came from the Corps of Engineers in July 1942 stating that the RAF project had been dropped.<sup>100</sup> The objective of a Liberal airfield was revived at the end of the year. The engineering firm of Murray A. Wilson and Company was granted a contract to survey and lay out an airfield one mile west of Liberal. The national firm of Peter Kiewit Sons Company was chosen as the primary contractor and construction began in early 1943.

<sup>98</sup> The Link trainer, invented by Ed Link in 1927, was a flight simulator that mimicked full motion of operating an airplane's cockpit.

<sup>99</sup> "Independence Army Air Field Opens Gates to Public; Huge Aerial Review Highlights Dedication Ceremony" *The Independence Reporter*, 5 June 1943 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>100</sup> "A Narrative History of Liberal Army Airfield," author unknown. On file at the Mid-America Air Museum in Liberal.



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The field occupied nearly 2000 acres. Construction costs were estimated at \$8 million. Three concrete runways, each 7000 feet long, three taxiways and 276,318 square yards of parking apron were built. Construction included three school buildings, four Link trainer buildings and five hangers—two of steel and three of wood. The base also contained three warehouses for gasoline, a gymnasium, officers' club, service club, theater, chapel, three post exchanges, housing for 4934 men and officers and a hospital with a capacity of 142 beds. Most buildings were of non-permanent construction. A Rock Island railroad spur also ran to the field. An auxiliary field—Gage Field—was built for the Liberal AAF in Oklahoma.

The base's mission was to train pilots of four-engine airplanes. The base was manned well before it was completed. Amidst construction in June, the first B-24 planes landed so training could begin. Most students were newly-commissioned officers that had graduated from twin-engine flight training. The nine weeks of classes were staggered so that a new group entered every four-and-a-half weeks.

With the surrender of Japan in August 1945, the field was placed on standby status at the end of September. During its 27 months of training, the Liberal AAF graduated 4468 four-engine airplane commanders and an additional 1025 pilots from a pre-transition course held in the middle of 1944.

The federal government deeded the property to the city of Liberal in 1948. Over the next decade many of the buildings were sold and removed from the site. Some of the barracks were rebuilt into homes or temporary school and church buildings. As of 1957, 50 of the 90 buildings remained on the base, some rented.<sup>101</sup> The property operates today as the Liberal Municipal Airport. Remaining WWII structures include two hangars, three hangar ruins, seven paint storage buildings, three classroom buildings, four warehouses, a commissary building, utility shop, five sets of foundation ruins, a tetrahedron wind cone and an ordnance field.

**Marshall Field at Fort Riley**

Marshall Field, located northeast of Junction City, is one of the oldest military airfields in the country. The base was used in 1912 to practice firing artillery from airplanes and during World War I for fighter planes and balloons. The main purpose of early Marshall Field fliers was to provide demonstrations and participate in training exercises for Fort Riley's Army Cavalry School.

At the onset of WWII, Marshall Field had two hangars and three grassy landing strips. During the war the three strips were resurfaced and lengthened for more frequent landings by heavier, faster airplanes. The construction resulted in two concrete runways, each 4500 feet long and 150 feet wide, six taxiways and 5400 square yards of parking apron (Figure 9.)

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<sup>101</sup> "Liberal Makes Use Of Former Air Base—Planes, Residences" *Iola Register*, 19 April 1957 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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Marshall remained a fairly small base, serving as a site for tactical air training and as a landing strip for visitors. The pilots presented an air show to 5000 Kansans in August 1945. Field activity quickly decreased after WWII as several squadrons were inactivated. One runway remains today at Marshall Army Airfield as the sole built remnant of WWII.

**McConnell AAF in Wichita**

The city of Wichita has had close ties with the aviation industry since the birth of flight. The city's Municipal Airport dates to 1928, when the Wichita park board purchased 640 acres of flat prairie about six miles southeast of the town. Ground was broken for runways in 1929 and for an Administration Building in June 1930. The building was completed in stages, with the central portion finished in 1935 and side wing extensions in 1942 and 1945.<sup>102</sup>

The Army Material Command was established in the airport's Administration Building in March 1942. The airport at that time consisted of only one hangar and three small warehouses. Wartime efforts increasingly occupied larger portions of the airfield. The five runways were adequate, designed for planes with a 60,000-pound wheel load capacity. The Material Center moved to Oklahoma City in 1945 and the base's wartime mission became to service, dispatch and maintain transient and locally based aircraft. All workers were civilians with a few officers working as supervisors.

The Kansas Air National Guard was activated in August 1941 as the first military unit assigned to the Wichita airport. The 1942 National Guard armory and attached hangar remain on site at McConnell AFB. The structure was built with WPA funds between 1942 and 1947. The building, originally owned by the city of Wichita and leased to the National Guard, is now owned by federal government.

Wichita's Municipal Airport was sold to the federal government in 1951 to take advantage of the nearby Boeing Plant. The base was known at that time as the Wichita Air Force Base. The name was changed to McConnell Air Force Base in 1954 to honor two brothers who served as WWII pilots. McConnell AFB remains an active and restricted base today.

**Olathe NAS**

When Fairfax Field in Kansas City became too crowded for training B-25 bombers, the Navy began looking at nearby sites for a new base. Nationwide, the Navy was looking for civilian airports that could be modified for military use. In January 1942, the Navy chose the Johnson County Airport, located

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<sup>102</sup> Sandra S. Kurt, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Administration Building" 5 February 1990.

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between Olathe and Gardner. The Navy planned that the site would be the largest inland Naval air training base in the country, costing around \$10 million.<sup>103</sup>

Construction began immediately on the 640-acre field and the administration building (Figures 10 and 11.) The Olathe Naval Reserve Aviation Base was commissioned on October 1, 1942. On January 1, 1943, the name was changed to the Olathe Naval Air Station (NAS). Hangars were begun right away by the Swenson Construction Company of Kansas City (Figures 12 and 13.)<sup>104</sup> When completed, base buildings included a hospital, a chapel, water filtration plant, pump houses, central power plant, sewage disposal plant, administration building, control tower, parachute overhaul building, garage, cold storage building, barracks (Figure 14,) drill hall, armory, flight simulator buildings, laundry, fire station and a public works building. A field house measuring 37,000 square feet contained one of the earliest Olympic-sized pools west of Mississippi, as well as a basketball court and a recreation hall with bowling, ping pong and movies.<sup>105</sup> Most buildings were of permanent construction. Construction costs ultimately topped \$13 million.<sup>106</sup>

The Olathe NAS had three runways between 3300 and 3400 feet long.<sup>107</sup> The base also had fourteen auxiliary fields within a 13-mile radius located on leased or purchased land. The initial mission of the Olathe NAS was to provide primary flight training for naval cadets and housing for traveling officials. Pilot training peaked during the spring and fall of 1943, when 1100 pilots came through the base.<sup>108</sup> In September 1944, the airfield received an additional mission to provide support for the Naval Air Transport Squadron Three, which flew cargo, personnel, mail and medical supplies across the country and to the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.<sup>109</sup> The Olathe NAS became known as a Midwest hub for transport, operating as the largest air transport base in the country. The base served in this role through end of WWII.<sup>110</sup>

In late 1946, the Olathe NAS became a reserve station responsible for the training of reservists, air control workers and ground approach operators. It operated until the Navy announced the closure on October 29, 1969 to reduce military spending. The Johnson County Airport Commission acquired the site in 1973,

<sup>103</sup> "A Huge Naval Air Base" *Kansas City Times*, 22 January 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>104</sup> "A Huge Naval Air Base" *Kansas City Times*, 22 January 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>105</sup> Kathy Daniels, "Olathe Naval Air Station: Sailors On The Plains" *Album Johnson County Museum* 20, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 1, 4-6

<sup>106</sup> "Your Kansas City At War; The Olathe Naval Air Station" *Kansas City Star*, 28 January 1945 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>107</sup> "Start Navy Base" *Kansas City Star*, 22 Jan 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>108</sup> Daniels.

<sup>109</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations In Kansas During World War II" *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 1977), 354.

<sup>110</sup> Daniels.

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when it became the Johnson County Industrial Airport.<sup>111</sup> Today New Century AirCenter operates at the site. Extant WWII buildings include the administration building, a hangar, medical center building, warehouse, laundry building, fire station, power plant, cold storage building, garage, maintenance building and two pump houses. The original runways are present and two have been resurfaced.

It is likely that most of the outlying fields (OLFs) associated with the Olathe NAS were either turf or plowed fields. OLF No. 2, located in Olathe, is now the Johnson County Executive Airport. No remaining WWII buildings remain there, but the runways retain much of their original configuration. The Gardner OLF operates today as the Gardner Municipal Airport. Only one runway remains of the original triangular configuration. The site also contains a small Quonset hut hangar reportedly from WWII.

**Pratt AAF**

Construction began on the Pratt AAF in October 1942. The field was located about three miles north of Pratt, a community of about 7000 at the time. Most of the field's buildings were insubstantial, classified by the Army as "theater of operations" type of construction. In early 1943 authorization was given for the expansion of the base. By May 1943, the field contained 60 barracks capable of housing 2460 men. The field was approved for an eventual 72 barracks to house 3060 men (Figure 15) and eight officers' quarters for 522 men. Koss Construction of Des Moines, Iowa built the airfield's massive triangular runways and ramp (Figure 16.)

Pratt AAF's original mission was to process crews for overseas service with the 21<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Wing formed under the Second Air Force. The field was soon re-assigned the mission of providing expedited training to the B-29 combat training program, becoming a base and temporary home for bombardment groups headed overseas. Under this new mission, the base expanded its physical plant and number of personnel. The Salina firm of Busboom and Raugh received contracts in May 1943 to build an additional 16 buildings, including another hangar, barracks, mess halls and recreation centers.<sup>112</sup> Many of the crew members brought families along, increasing the base's population to 7000.<sup>113</sup>

The Pratt AAF was part of "The Battle of Kansas," the rapid thrust to prepare numerous B-29s for transfer to the Pacific in early 1944. Amidst a raging blizzard, crews worked around the clock to ready the large aircraft for war by stabilizing, strengthening and upgrading the planes. The frigid work on the windy prairie was miserable, as reported by Louis E. Coira in February 1944, "...overseas combat would be a relief from what we were experiencing at Pratt, in the Kansas winter."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Daniels.

<sup>112</sup> "Add To Pratt Airfield" *Kansas City Times*, 17 May 1943 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>113</sup> "Pratt Air Field Purpose Changed During War" *Pratt Daily Tribune*, 5 December 1959 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>114</sup> Transcribed by Milt Martin, <http://paaf.indexks.com/eng>.

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After the war's end, Pratt AAF began closing down in November 1945 and was officially deactivated on December 31. The site today is home to the Pratt Industrial Airport. At a visit in July 2008, extant WWII structures included two hangars, two hangar ruins, six storage or warehouse buildings, bomb vaults, a parachute building, machine shop, warehouses and a tetrahedron wind cone. The parachute building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in April 2009. Portions of the original runways are now occupied by a feed lot. The airport is also home to the B-29 All Veterans Memorial.

**Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth**

Sherman Field is located one mile northeast of Fort Leavenworth. Sherman Field's primary purpose since its construction in 1926 has been to provide an airfield for staff and visitors to Fort Leavenworth. In the early 1920s, airplanes landed at an old polo field approximately three miles from the base. An emergency landing strip was laid in 1923 in the field's present location and converted into a permanent field in 1926. The sod surface was converted to three cinder runways in the 1930s. After the United States entered WWII, runways were lengthened and concrete aprons were added at the ends of the main runways. Several temporary buildings were added during the war, including barracks for enlisted men.

Sherman served as a training facility in the early portion of WWII when bases were in short supply. As the construction of bases advanced across the country, Sherman returned to its original mission of providing landing facilities for the Command and General Staff School, for administrative flights and for visitors. After pilots who had received extensive experience were sent to Fort Leavenworth to study, superior airplanes were added to the field's supply, culminating in over 60 warcraft by the end of the war.

Elite commanders flew into Sherman Field, including General H.H. Arnold in 1945, Lt. Gen. Lewis H. Grereton in 1945 and Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1946. After WWII, Sherman Field resumed its low-key profile, especially after the Air Force separated from the Army. The triangular WWII runway configuration has been reduced to a single runway. Although Fort Leavenworth has a fine collection of historic buildings, none constructed during WWII remain.

**Smoky Hill AAF**

Construction of the Smoky Hill AAF began in May 1942 on approximately 2660 acres of land southwest of Salina. The firm of Burns & McDonnell of Kansas City was named the project engineer<sup>115</sup> and Watson Construction served as the contractor.<sup>116</sup> The base was officially named the Smoky Hill Army Air Field in December 1942.

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<sup>115</sup> "An Air Base for Salina" *Kansas City Times*, 29 April 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>116</sup> "Begin On Salina Base" *Kansas City Times*, 6 May 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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The base originally was used to process and stage heavy bombardment units headed overseas in B-17 aircraft. A base handling very heavy bombardment units required substantial facilities. In addition to 365 acres containing buildings, four runways were built between 7500 and 10,000 feet long (Figures 17 and 18.) Twelve taxiways connected the runways and the apron measured 4000 by 600 feet. Most of the construction was completed in 1942 by 13 civilian contractors with more than 7000 workers.

Smoky Hill AAF is perhaps best known as the headquarters of Kansas' WWII B-29 program. The base's mission changed in early 1943 and by the fall the B-29 airplanes began arriving. The base was home to many famous squadrons. It is significant as the birthplace of the XX Bomber Command, which operated in the China-Burma-India theater and the XXI Bomber Command, which directed the B-29s flying from Mariana Islands to Japan. Smoky Hill AAF served as a B-29 training base until the end of the war in September 1945 (Figure 19.) The base enjoyed a good relationship with the town of Salina. The town formed several organizations to entertain and assist the servicemen during the war.

After the war the base came under the authority of the Strategic Air Command (SAC). Except for two years of standby status in 1950 and 1951, the base served the SAC. The base was named the Smoky Hill Air Force Base in 1946 and renamed the Schilling Air Force Base in 1957. When the Department of Defense announced in 1964 that the base would be closed, the city of Salina created a plan for a complex that would serve education, industry and local air traffic.

The base today operates as the Salina Municipal Airport. Many businesses make their home on the site, including several aviation industries, the Kansas Army National Guard, Kansas State University at Salina and the Kansas Highway Patrol Aviation branch. Only two hangars remain of the original WWII complex (Figures 20, 21 and 22.) The original runways have been reinforced and the runway that originally measured 10,000 feet long has been expanded to 12,000 feet.

**Strother AAF**

The two city commissions of Winfield and Arkansas City met in February 1941 to approve the construction of a Class 2 airport on 240 acres with one hangar. The airport was to be centrally located, seven and a half miles from each town. In June 1942, the government became interested in the site as a potential flying school. The two cities also agreed to lease approximately 1400 acres of land to the government for one dollar per year, renewable yearly after 25 years. The site was named Strother Army Air Field for Captain Donald Root Strother, the first Cowley County pilot killed in WWII, over Java in February 1942.

Construction at Strother Field began on May 16, 1942 and was to cost nearly \$9 million. The site eventually included four asphalt runways between 5500 and 5840 feet in length. Four taxiways between 700 and 3500 feet connected the runways. The site contained a multitude of structures that included four



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storage buildings with wood frames and concrete floors, two instructional buildings, six Link trainer buildings, an officers' club, service club, theater, chapel, post exchange, bowling alley, gymnasium, swimming pool, a 141-bed hospital and a library. Housing was also built to accommodate 4404 men and officers (Figure 23.) The base also had several hangars.

From the beginning, the two cities of Winfield and Arkansas City, with populations of 10,000 and 12,000, were enthusiastic supporters of the field. Local citizens planned events and projects to improve the morale of the station.

Although construction was still in progress, the base was activated on November 1, 1942. Strother Field's initial mission was to provide basic training for fighter pilots. In June 1944 the purpose changed to serve as a tactical training station. With the end of the war in sight, the base was deactivated during the summer of 1945. Flight training ceased and the field was placed on standby status as an auxiliary field to Pratt AAF.

Today Strother Field is home to an industrial park jointly owned by Winfield and Arkansas City. The field maintains two of the original runways, which may have a new coating of concrete. The site also includes two of the original hangars that have been expanded into industrial buildings. The hangar on the north end of the field has had several additions and is in deteriorated condition. The hangar on the south end of the field has also received several additions but is a well-maintained home to a General Electric Plant. The field also has two Link trainer buildings that are fairly intact but in fair to deteriorated condition. Several concrete pads and ruins litter the area, which also includes an unidentified building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Much of the original base is covered by modern buildings within the industrial park.

Four auxiliary fields—No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and No. 5—were built concurrently with Strother Field. Fields No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 were presumably turf and have disappeared. Auxiliary Field No. 5, located south of Geuda Springs in Sumner County, currently serves as storage and agricultural land.

**Topeka AAF**

A February 1942 article in the *Topeka Capital* announced the War Department's approval of a site south of Topeka for an Army air base. The base was planned to hold temporary buildings on 1600 acres. Construction estimates were about \$9 million.<sup>117</sup> The Kansas City, Missouri office of Gentry, Boskamp

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<sup>117</sup> "Topeka Army Air Base Site Gets War Department O.K." *Topeka Capital*, 1 February 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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and Radotinsky was soon announced as the architects and engineers of the project.<sup>118</sup> Patti-McDonald Construction Company of St. Louis received the contract to build all housing and hangars.<sup>119</sup>

Work on the airfield runways moved rapidly. Koss Construction of Des Moines, Iowa had the field nearly complete in mid-June, 1942.<sup>120</sup> Early construction included hangars, repair shops, a steam heating plant, fuel storage and three 7,000-foot-long paved runways.<sup>121</sup> When the first troops arrived in August 1942, however, housing was not yet finished. The 227 men and six officers were housed at the Kansas Free Fair grounds in Topeka and fed in a nearby large church dining hall.<sup>122</sup>

By September the Topeka AAF was in use for heavy bombardment training. The base's first mission was to give the heavy bombardment crews and airplanes 30 final days of training before they went overseas. In June 1943 the base's main function changed to preparation of B-17 and B-24 airplanes for combat, in addition to processing and equipping heavy bombardment crews before going overseas. The base began processing B-29 airplanes and crews in early 1945 before sending them off to the Pacific. By October 1945, the base's emphasis was shipping replacement ground personnel overseas.

Activities at the Topeka AAF were greatly reduced in October 1946. During the mid-1940s, the base served as a stopping point for military and civilian cross-country flights, becoming a major air terminal. The base was reactivated during the Korean conflict as the Forbes Air Force Base and continued in its role of training crews for deployment. The field served the Department of Defense until 1973. The 3100-acre site was then gradually transferred to the City of Topeka.

The site five miles south of the city is used as a municipal airport. Approximately 215 acres in the south portion of the field are occupied by the Kansas Air National Guard. The site has been continuously occupied since its construction by the military. Remaining structures from WWII likely include five hangars, three office-type buildings, four warehouses, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways.<sup>123</sup>

**Walker AAF**

Walker AAF was located in Ellis County, mid-way between Hays and Russell northwest of the small town of Walker. Issues related to the field's location arose from the onset of planning and continued for most of the war. Early on, it was determined by a state geologist that the site had the most difficult water

<sup>118</sup> "Army Announces Architects for Bomber Base" *Topeka Journal*, 4 Feb 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>119</sup> "A Young Man Has a Big Job at Topeka Air Base" *Topeka Capital*, 29 June 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>120</sup> "Topeka Air Base Taking On a Finished Appearance" *Topeka Capital*, 16 June 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>121</sup> [http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes\\_AFB.htm](http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes_AFB.htm).

<sup>122</sup> "First Air Base Troops Here" *Topeka Journal*, 1 August 1942 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>123</sup> Survey information was not entered online per instructions from KSHS.

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situation in Kansas. After spending time and funds drilling, it was determined that the most cost-effective method of obtaining water would be to run a line to the Hays water system 12 miles away. Easements were purchased and the line was installed.

The airfield was built on nearly 2000 acres. The W.L. Johnson Co. of Hicksville, Ohio was awarded the contract for construction of the field.<sup>124</sup> Construction began in September 1942 with three concrete runways paved to 8000 feet long. The topography allowed minimal grading at each end so that they could be extended to 10,000 feet (Figure 24 and 25.) Concrete taxiways and an apron measuring 300 by 375 feet were added. The field was originally planned to be very basic. Cantonment of simple construction was built for 1000 men, as well as a dispensary, mess hall and one hangar.

The first military personnel arrived in November 1942. The field was originally intended as a satellite field of the Smoky Hill AAF in Salina. As such, it was used as an overflow field for Smoky Hill's processing of heavy bombardment crews before they went overseas.

Walker AAF was also plagued by morale and housing problems. The field was far from any major cities, so there was little for the men to do. In June 1943 a plan was finally made for building a gymnasium, theater, service club and post exchange. The base also suffered from severe housing shortages, leading to bad relations with the town of Hays until the end of 1943. Another shortage on the field was a persistent scarcity of civilians and enlisted men qualified to work as airplane mechanics, technicians, power plant specialists, electrical specialists and propeller specialists.

The Walker AAF grew larger when its mission expanded in mid-1943 to train B-29 crews for combat. The first B-29s arrived at the field in August. Training crews for the Superfortresses continued at the base until the end of the war. From a spillover field with a handful of buildings, Walker AAF grew to accommodate nearly 6000 personnel stationed at the field in August 1944. Construction of the field cost \$9 million and contained hundreds of buildings including five hangars and additional fields for bombing practice.

Walker AAF was put on inactive status on January 31, 1946 and declared surplus mid-1946. Many of the buildings and equipment were removed before the rest were sold at an auction in 1948.<sup>125</sup> The field was sold to a Hays oil operator at an auction in 1958.<sup>126</sup> The airfield today serves as agricultural land for crops and cattle. At a visit in the summer of 2008, the site included one hangar, four hangar ruins, a concrete storage building, a water tower and many sets of concrete ruins, some containing brick chimneys.

<sup>124</sup> Arthur Capper Papers, KSHS Collection.

<sup>125</sup> "Walker Base Is To Go" *Kansas City Times*, 5 August 1948 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>126</sup> "Bidding Brisk In Auction of Former Base" *Topeka Capital*, 18 December 1958 (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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**ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES**

The Kansas WWII airfields and their sites represent a vast collection of resources that run the gamut from well-maintained buildings in excellent condition to buildings in fair or good condition that have stood the test of time to ruins that simply recall the sites of earlier activities.

The condition of Kansas airfield buildings varies greatly from base to base. All bases have lost significant numbers of WWII-era buildings through either neglect or demolition, but many buildings and sites remain. The best-preserved buildings are typically in use as parts of industrial parks. Large buildings, such as hangars, are often clad in non-historic siding. Structures left in their original condition with no maintenance are usually in the worst condition. Many have simply collapsed or burned. Despite their condition, most historic bases contain buildings that are individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or eligible as a contributor to a historic district. In a 2008 survey of Kansas WWII airfields, 176 resources were identified. Of those resources, 43 were determined individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A further 109 resources could contribute to a historic district. Buildings from the Topeka AAF were not entered into the KSHS online database, so additional buildings there are likely eligible for individual or contributing status.<sup>127</sup>

The WWII airfields of Kansas were constructed between 1939, when the United States began war preparations, and 1945, when the war ended. The airfields and their structures were quickly assembled, usually according to pre-determined architectural plans. Due to the very basic, functional designs of the structures, architectural styles can seldom be assigned to the buildings associated with Army airfields and air bases. Unless noted, most of these simple buildings fall close to the Minimal Traditional Style, devoid of ornament or excess.

Buildings and areas associated with aviation-related facilities are classified into five categories by use: airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings. The property type and significance registration requirements are the same for all properties and are identified at the end of this section. Due to the vast numbers of structures associated with the Kansas air bases, additional discovered buildings may be added to each category.

**AIRFIELD**

**Property Type Description**

Airfield runways and their associated buildings are the most common extant types of WWII resources found in Kansas. These structures and buildings are related to takeoffs and landings of airplanes, as well

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<sup>127</sup> WWII airfield resources can be viewed online at the KSHS Historic Resources Inventory, <http://khri.kansasgis.org>.

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as buildings that serviced the airplanes and their flights. These included runways, taxiways, parking aprons, hangars, wind tetrahedrons and control towers.

Runways, Taxiways, Parking Aprons

Runway design and construction was perhaps the most important focus of each base. All of the newly constructed primary Army airfields in Kansas contained a highly recognizable triangular runway layout. These fields typically had the base's longest runway forming the long side of the triangle oriented north to south. The buildings at these bases were located along the outside of the longest runway. Hangars would face the runway but the remaining buildings were usually arranged in a compact configuration. Three of these fields—Walker (Figure 24,) Coffeyville and Herington—had buildings located on the west side of the field. The remaining Army fields all had buildings placed on the east side of the field. The runways at the Naval Air Stations had slightly different configurations of an "X" intersected by a north-south runway. The buildings of the Olathe NAS and Hutchinson NAS were placed on the west sides of the fields.

Runways not only provided an orientation for the field, but were the most durable component of base construction. The poured concrete runways had to be sturdy enough for the pressures of take-offs and landings. As the war progressed, these demands increased. The introduction of the B-29 Superfortresses required a huge leap in basic construction, presenting the Corps of Engineers with the most difficult technical mission of WWII. The huge airplanes carried heavy loads, had fast landing speeds, pounding vibrations and violent propeller blasts. Their runways needed to be longer, wider, stronger and with easier grades.<sup>128</sup> Each B-29 base had at least one runway 10,000 feet long.

Taxiways and parking aprons were a significant contribution to the runways of the major air bases. Parking aprons, located adjacent to the runways and the hangars, served as storage areas for airplanes that were not housed in hangars. Taxiways, usually located adjacent to or near runways, provided access between the runways and the hangars. These areas were usually poured concrete construction similar to the runways.

*Alterations*

Due to their sturdy construction, most concrete runways, parking aprons and taxiways are still extant and in good condition. A portion of the triangular runways have been removed from some sites but many retain their original configuration, most in good to excellent condition due to their massive materials (Figures 26, 27, 28 and 29.) Auxiliary runways that were turf or bituminous mat, such as those associated with the Garden City AAF, have disappeared. Those that were constructed of concrete retain their dimensions and impact on their environment, even when encompassed by agricultural land. Some, such as

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<sup>128</sup> Fine and Remington, 615.

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the Garden City AAF Auxiliary Field No. 1, serve local pilots and cropdusters (Figure 30.) Others, now located on private land, serve as storage sites for agricultural or road materials (Figure 31.)

Hangars

Airfield hangars, placed on the edge of the concrete apron adjacent to the runways, served as storage for airplanes as they were readied to go overseas. A 1999 Corps of Engineers report entitled "Historical and architectural overview of military aircraft hangars" categorizes the hangars by primary material, such as steel, wood or concrete, and by support type over the hangar bays, such as truss, girder and long-span joist. Corps hangars in Kansas during WWII were built quickly of steel or wood. Steel was a highly desirable hangar material due to its high strength-to-weight ratio and ability to be formed into building components and then easily transferred to its permanent location.<sup>129</sup> Some of the WWII hangars surveyed contained wood frames, an obvious reaction to a shortage of materials during the war. According to the Corps' report, most wood hangars were originally considered temporary war structures. Many of the hangars' side sheds have monolithic concrete supports.

All of the WWII hangars in Kansas were supported by trusses, which are categorized by type. Categories of steel trusses from the early and mid-1940s include Open Arch, Closed Flat Gable and Sawtooth. Wood truss categories are Open Arch, Closed Arch and Closed Flat Gable. The Corps report on hangar design states, "Truss technology for hangar construction is based on bridge design, making it highly suitable for long-span design. Trusses are assembled from individual members, or chords, joined in structural triangles. The members are generally joined by pinned or riveted connections. Truss types are determined by the arrangement of the individual members. The oldest known standing military hangar is of steel truss construction, and the technology is still in use today."<sup>130</sup>

"Round top" hangars were the most common types discovered during the 2008 survey. Many of these hangars with their arched supports remain on their sites and in good condition. Examples of this type can be seen in Coffeyville (Figure 32,) Herington (Figure 33,) Liberal (Figure 34) and Smoky Hill (Figures 20 and 21.) Flat gable hangars follow arched trusses as the second most common extant type in Kansas. Some examples of this type were found in Dodge City (Figures 3 and 4) and Topeka (Figure 35). Truss examples across Kansas even included a Two Monitor Sawtooth roof at the Olathe NAS (Figures 12 and 13.)

<sup>129</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, Chmiel.

<sup>130</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, Chmiel.

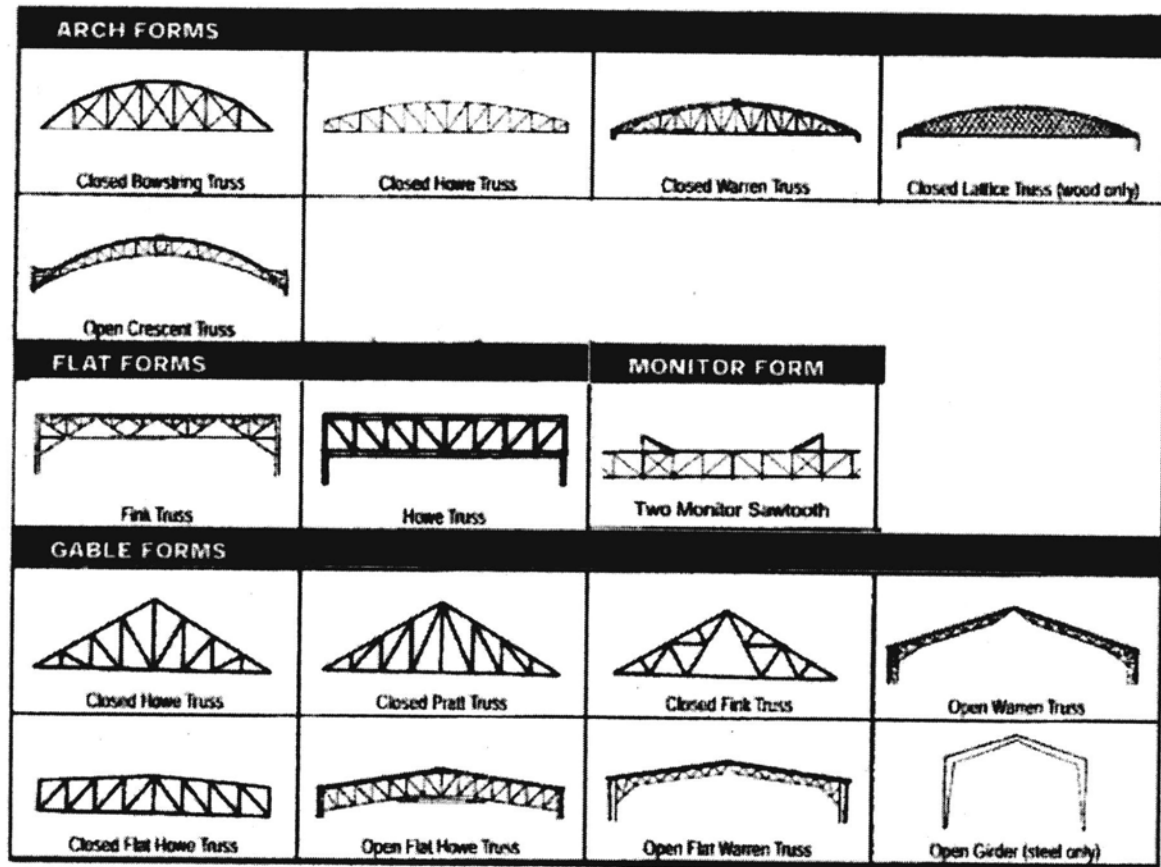


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Standard World War II truss types<sup>131</sup>

A hangar's form and size were often determined by its intended use. Hangars that housed B-29 bombers were up to twice the size of hangars for smaller aircraft. Additionally, B-29 hangars contained openings in the upper portion of the gable to accommodate the airplanes' protruding tails. An example of well-maintained B-29 hangars can be seen in Salina (Figure 22) and Pratt (Figures 36 and 37.)

Hangars in Kansas were usually clad in either metal or composition materials. It wasn't unusual for brick to also cover portions of the exterior. Hangar doors consisted of panels with windows that slid on metal tracks. Supports for doors were encased in their own substantial building components, due to the fact that the door supports withstood greater structural loads and operational stress. Hangar walls usually contained

<sup>131</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, Chmiel.

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large panels of sectional windows. Hangar side sheds housed offices, bathrooms, storage and heating facilities. Brick chimneys were attached to the hangars near the buildings' boilers. At sites where a hangar has burned, it isn't uncommon for the concrete shed and brick chimney to still remain.

*Alterations*

The most common alteration of extant hangars is the application of non-historic siding to the building and/or to the sliding doors. This course has likely saved many hangars from deterioration and allowed the buildings to continue use as storage, businesses or even manufacturing facilities. Exterior cladding often obstructs a hangar's character-defining multi-paned windows, but the windows are often still present. Other alterations to existing hangars include the removal of sliding doors or the construction of new shed additions placed on the sides or rears of the buildings.

Control Tower

Control towers were located adjacent to runways in order to guide takeoffs and landings of aircraft. Most Army control towers were likely built of temporary frame construction, similar to the Smoky Hill tower seen in Figure 18. None of these wood towers were documented as extant during the 2008 survey of WWII resources in Kansas. The tower built for the Hutchinson NAS is the only remaining WWII control tower in Kansas (Figures 38 and 39.)<sup>132</sup> The poured concrete tower with its Art Moderne styling consists of a tower four stories tall attached to an L-shaped office building. Large concrete ledges project above the first, second and third stories of the square tower, which is topped by an octagonal top story.

*Alterations*

Despite its age, the Hutchinson control tower retains a very high degree of integrity in form, placement and materials. Most changes have occurred inside the building, which served as a residence for a short time. Except for breakage of exterior windows, the exterior looks much as it did shortly after WWII.

Wind Tetrahedrons

Wind tetrahedrons were placed within runway configurations to alert pilots to wind direction, rotating with the breezes. The extant triangular structures are approximately 12 feet long, constructed of wood covered with metal and mounted on concrete bases. The structures were found at Garden City, Pratt, Liberal and Strother Field, although others may be found in remote runway areas that have not yet been surveyed.

*Alterations*

The wind tetrahedrons in use today survive due to regular maintenance and upkeep. While the structures themselves have not been significantly altered, they may have received new metal siding, paint and

<sup>132</sup> The control towers attached to hangars at Topeka AAF and Olathe NAS were likely built after WWII.

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lighting. It is likely that the tetrahedrons all originally had lights, but only those at Liberal (Figure 40) and Strother Field still retain their lighting.

**CANTONMENT**

**Property Type Description**

The term "cantonment" usually refers to housing facilities for soldiers, but can also be expanded to encompass buildings for day-to-day operations, storage, housing and administration. This category contains buildings that served as barracks, mess halls, commissaries, general administration buildings, guard houses, fire stations, water towers and parachute buildings. Due to the temporary design of WWII construction, examples of several of these building types are limited to one or are non-existent. For example, no barracks or mess halls were noted in the 2008 field survey. Photographs of barracks at Olathe NAS and Pratt AAF can be seen in Figures 14 and 15. One surveyed building was identified as a former commissary at the Liberal AAF, one building as an administration building at Olathe NAS and two potential fire stations, one at Herington AAF and one at Olathe NAS. Storage buildings are also part of this category, including warehouses, supply buildings, bomb storage and buildings of unidentified storage.

Storage Buildings

This varied sub-category includes more than 35 remaining structures surveyed in 2008. Storage was essential to the smooth operation of each air base. Supplies for training, maintenance and the routine operations of each field needed to be sheltered and protected. The Kansas airfields hosted a variety of storage buildings, some types widespread and some unique to a particular base.

Examples of small storage buildings include those designated for bomb maintenance and storage. These buildings of poured concrete had metal doors and no windows. Extant examples of this type can be found at Great Bend (Figure 41,) Walker, Dodge City, Herington, Pratt and Hutchinson. Six examples of small, square storage buildings of red brick tile with one window, a wood door and wood roofs are found only in Liberal (Figure 42.) These structures were known as "dope houses" for storage of flammable aircraft paint.

Large storage buildings usually served as warehouses. These wood-framed buildings varied in size but were often among the largest buildings on a base. They typically had flat roofs, large access doors and often an attached concrete loading dock. An example in near-original condition can be found in Garden City, (Figure 43) which retains its wartime-era siding of asbestos shingles. Warehouses that have newer cladding but retain their original configuration can be seen in Hutchinson (Figure 45) and Liberal (Figure 46.) The Garden City AAF site also has a WWII metal storage building, the only one discovered during the 2008 survey (Figure 44.)

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Additionally, many other types of storage buildings in various sizes and materials were prevalent on the bases. The intended purpose of all of these buildings, which may have changed during the war, is not always known. Those that remain in the best condition are constructed of poured concrete, concrete block or stone (Figures 47, 48 and 49.)

Parachute Buildings

Two parachute buildings were identified in the 2008 survey—one at Pratt AAF and one at Coffeyville AAF. The buildings served as sites for the regular inspection, repair and re-packing of parachutes. These duties were performed by military and civilian employees. Parachute buildings are distinguished by two- to three-story towers where the parachutes hung before packing. The frame buildings at Pratt and Coffeyville sit on concrete foundations and are sided with historic clapboards. An adjacent one-story space was used for rolling and assembling the parachutes.

The parachute buildings at Pratt and Coffeyville have been slightly altered with the addition of modern garage doors but both retain high degrees of integrity. The Pratt Parachute Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in April 2009 (Figure 50.)

Fire Stations

The best-preserved fire station noted in the 2008 survey is at the Olathe NAS (Figure 51.) The rectangular brick one-and-a-half- story building has concrete accents that lend it a subdued Art Deco appearance. It contains one wall of multi-paned windows and multi-paned sliding doors. It has changed little in its original appearance and retains a high degree of integrity. A building identified as a previous fire station at Herington AAF is a one-story rectangular building now clad in vinyl siding. Now used as a machine shop for the Herington airport, it retains little architectural integrity.

Water Towers

Although they are non-functioning, at least four examples of AAF water towers still stand in excellent condition, likely due to their simple designs and solid construction. These important airfield features merited construction that surpassed standards for most buildings. Water was often scarce on the Kansas plains and a dependable structure to hold a base's water supply was extremely important. The towers, constructed of either poured concrete (Figure 52) or metal, are simple cylinders that stand two or more stories tall. An opening at the base provides access to the structures. Only one tower, at Coffeyville AAF, has been altered with the addition of a modern top and encircling platform.

Administration Building

The only remaining known WWII building constructed as an administration center is located at the Olathe NAS. This building survives likely due to its brick construction and continued use as an administration

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building. It consists of a central one-and-a-half-story pavilion flanked by one-story wings with rows of windows along the front and back of the building. The subdued Art Deco styling is consistent with other WWII buildings found at the Olathe NAS, but is unique to bases in Kansas. Despite interior alterations and the replacement of the original windows, the building retains a high degree of integrity (Figures 10 and 11.)

Commissary

Only one building in the 2008 survey was identified as a former commissary. The plain, rectangular frame building measures approximately 60 feet wide and 150 feet long. It sits on a foundation of concrete blocks, has a low-pitched gable roof and is clad in vinyl siding. It is currently used for storage. Due to the non-historic siding, it currently has little architectural integrity.

**TRAINING**

**Property Type Description**

The training of crews headed for the Pacific front was an important task assigned to the Kansas airfields. Time was spent in a classroom each day for up to two years, learning specialized tasks and anticipating wartime situations. Learning took place in rectangular classroom buildings.

Classroom and Link Training Buildings

Remaining classroom buildings are of temporary construction, consisting of wood frames, concrete foundations and low-pitched gable roofs. The buildings were originally clad in either wood or asphalt. They typically had several doors and windows.

Two of the original six Link simulation and training buildings remain at Strother Field, despite frequent open exposure to the elements (Figure 54.) The free-standing buildings have clapboard siding. Both retain some original doors and windows and one retains an original brick chimney.

A collection of classroom buildings still stands at Liberal AAF. Each individual building section measures approximately 25 feet wide and between 108 and 125 feet long. Like the buildings at Strother Field, the Liberal buildings have concrete foundations and low-pitched gable roofs. The original wood clapboard siding has been covered with coats of asphalt shingles and stucco. The largest classroom building consists of four rectangular buildings connected by a common perpendicular wing (Figure 53.) Two smaller rectangular buildings stand nearby. All Liberal classroom buildings retain some original windows, doors and light fixtures. Alterations include the installation of garage doors on some of the buildings.

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**RECREATION AND WELFARE**

**Property Type Description**

Recreation and welfare buildings functioned to provide entertainment and reflection for the troops, mostly in their off-duty time. This category included recreation centers, swimming pools, chapels, theaters and post offices. No WWII structures in this category are known to remain in Kansas, except for the Herington AAF swimming pool. Although the pool is likely still present, it is currently a storage site and filled with refuse.

**HOSPITALS**

**Property Type Description**

Hospitals rounded out the collection of structures to include buildings for tending to the health of the servicemen and servicewomen. This category included office buildings, wards, infirmaries, dental clinics, and quarters and housing for nurses. No WWII buildings in this category are known to remain in Kansas.

**EXTANT RESOURCES**

Listed below are extant WWII-era structures and sites found on each field discovered during the summer of 2008. Because the state of buildings can quickly change, the conditions of buildings are not listed.

Coffeyville AAF: Three hangars, parachute building, water tower, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways.

Dodge City AAF: One hangar, three hangar ruins, three storage buildings, runway lights, water tower and many concrete and brick ruins. A collection of buildings on the southwest side of the site includes two storage buildings and a set of building ruins. The triangular configuration of runways is now agricultural land.

Fairfax Field: Some of the Fairfax Field runways are visible in aerial photographs, but no WWII structures are known to remain.

Garden City AAF: Three storage buildings, one concrete pad from a former building site, former carpenter shop building, equipment service shop building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Only two runways remain. Garden City AAF's Auxiliary Field No. 1, located in Gray County, is in good condition. Auxiliary Fields No.2 in Gray County and No. 3 in Finney County are no longer extant.

Great Bend AAF: Two hangars, six brick chimneys next to ruins from previous hangars, two concrete storage bunkers and the triangular runways.



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Herington AAF: Two hangars, several storage buildings, fire station, water tower, two pump houses, pool site, many ruins and a warehouse. One runway is still present.

Hutchinson NAS: Power plant with storage tanks, hangar ruins, control tower, two warehouses, motor pool building and several buildings of unknown use. Some extant structures may date from the Korean War era. One runway has been resurfaced but the runways and taxiways retain their original configuration. Hutchinson NAS's outlying fields were located at the Hutchinson's Municipal Airport and at the Newton Municipal Airport. The runways and circa 1939 hangar at Hutchinson's Municipal Airport are in excellent condition. The hangar and original runway at the Newton Municipal Airport are also in excellent condition.

Independence AAF: One hangar and two of its three original runways. The only remaining auxiliary field for the Independence AAF now serves as the Tri-City airport west of Parsons in Labette County. The field retains two of its three original runways.

Liberal AAF: Two metal hangars, three hangar ruins, seven paint storage buildings, three classroom buildings, four warehouses, brick commissary building, utility shop, five sets of foundation ruins, tetrahedron wind cone and an ordnance field. The triangular configuration of six runways surrounded by a taxiway is still present.

Marshall Field at Fort Riley: One WWII runway.

McConnell AAF in Wichita: 1942 National Guard armory and hangar. The Administration Building, built in stages between 1930 and 1945, is also present. Some remnants of the WWII runways may remain.

Olathe NAS: Administration building, hangar, medical center building, warehouse, laundry building, fire station, power plant, cold storage building, garage, maintenance building and two pump houses. The original runways are present and two have been resurfaced. The runways from the Olathe OLF No. 2 retain much of their original configuration at the Johnson County Executive Airport in Gardner.

Pratt AAF: Two hangars, two hangar ruins, six storage or warehouse buildings, parachute building, machine shop, warehouse and tetrahedron wind cone. Two of the three sides of original runways are now occupied by a feed lot.

Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth: The triangular WWII runway configuration has been reduced to a single runway.

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Smoky Hill AAF in Salina: Two hangars and original runways, which have been reinforced and expanded.

Strother AAF: Two hangars with several additions and changes, two Link trainer buildings, several concrete pads and ruins, building with unidentified use, tetrahedron wind cone, two of the original runways. Strother's remaining auxiliary field No. 5, located south of Geuda Springs in Sumner County, is still present.

Topeka AAF: Five hangars, three office-type buildings, four warehouses, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways likely remain from WWII.

Walker AAF: One hangar, four hangar ruins, concrete storage building, water tower and many sets of concrete ruins, some containing brick chimneys. The triangular runways are still present.

**PROPERTY TYPE SIGNIFICANCE AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

**Property Type Significance**

Kansas retains a wide range of buildings associated with the WWII air bases and airfields. These buildings include those associated directly with the training of pilots destined for overseas duty, but also those that served as part of base life. Properties eligible for listing on the National Register through this MPS are significant under Criterion A for their association with the military during World War II. Some resources may also be eligible under Criterion C for their architectural or engineering significance as examples of WWII-era military architecture and construction.

The Kansas air bases, airfields and auxiliary fields are significant locally due of their strong association with Kansas' role in the nation's military during WWII. The WWII air bases, airfields and auxiliary fields contain property types directly associated with the period of development, 1939-1945. Each field contained at least one of these types and many contained several examples. The fields and their structures also had strong ties with nearby communities as the towns of Kansas contributed to the war effort. Today they still include buildings and sites strongly associated with Kansas' role in military aviation during WWII.

At least four of the bases—Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt and Walker—had such a profound effect on the outcome of WWII that their remaining buildings and fields are significant on a national level for their association with the development and deployment of the B-29 Superfortress bombers. The B-29 activity served as the culmination of the United States air force goal to evolve from a subsidiary of the Army to the premier air power of the world. The Battle of Kansas in early 1944 resulted in the preparation and deployment of crucial B-29 bombers to the Pacific front, along with skilled crews. The air bases of

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Kansas played a crucial role in turning the conflict of the far east, especially the bases at Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt and Walker.

**Property Type Registration Requirements**

The threshold requirement for National Register listing under this MPS is that structures and sites must have been constructed to aid in national defense between 1939 and 1945. All buildings, structures and sites are eligible for listing regardless of property type, building form or style as long as they retain historic integrity. Nominated resources can be classified as districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects. Extant resources may be nominated individually or as part of a historic district.

The building, site, structure or object must retain sufficient integrity in design, materials, workmanship and location to convey its association with its origin. It is important that a building, structure or object remain on the base site, retain its original form and contain a high percentage of original materials. Secondary exterior siding is prevalent on buildings that were originally constructed and intended to be temporary facilities. Allowances for eligibility may be made for buildings with secondary siding if the building's essential physical features that convey its historic form and function are extant. Alterations to the original design may be allowed as long as the features that define the function and design remain intact.

A collection of buildings combined with ruins (Figures 55, 56 and 57) can convey the magnitude of activity associated with an air base during World War II. The grouping can reveal the base's layout, locations of activity and sheer size. To be eligible for listing on the National Register as a historic district, buildings and sites within the district must have a construction date between 1939 and 1945. The district must retain sufficient integrity in design, materials, workmanship and location to convey its association with its original purpose.

Additional structures associated with the WWII-Era Aviation-Related Facilities in Kansas may be added to the compilation and considered eligible for listing on the National Register, either within a new context or under The Development of World War II Air Bases in Kansas (1939-1945).

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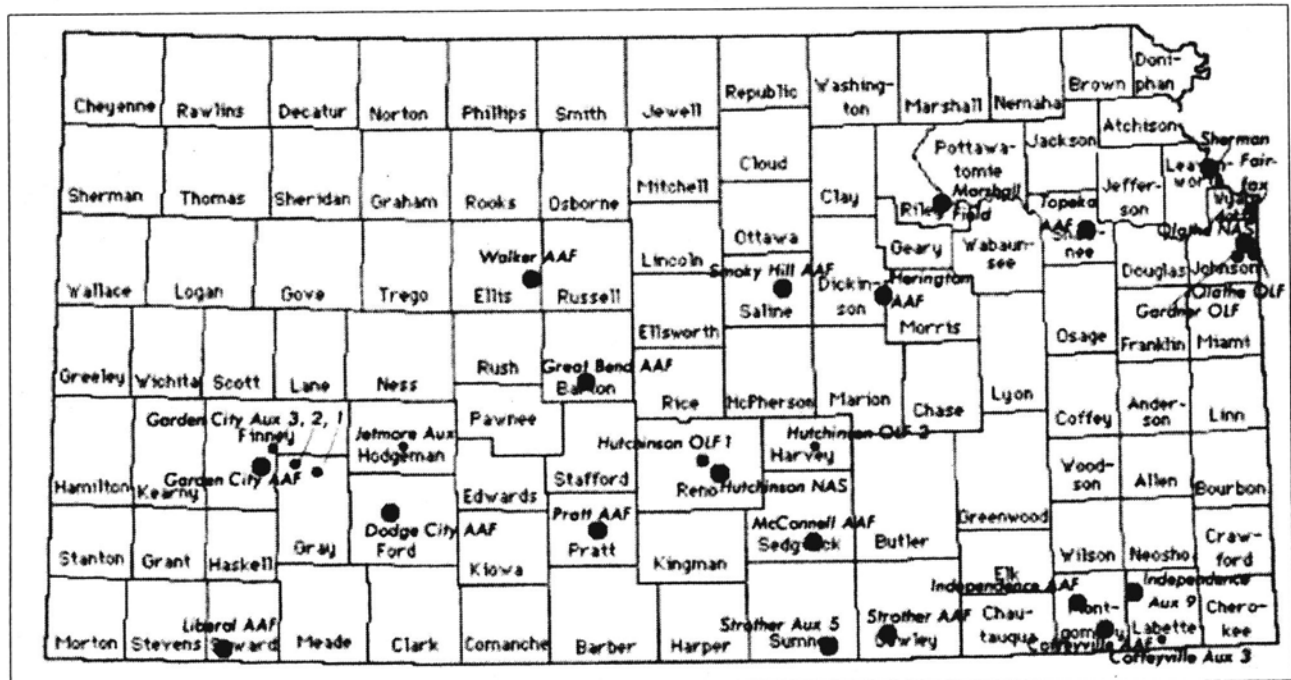
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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Historic resources associated with World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas are scattered primarily in the eastern and southern portions of Kansas. Extant resources were found in Barton, Cowley, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Gray, Harvey, Hodgeman, Johnson, Labette, Leavenworth, Montgomery, Morris, Pratt, Reno, Riley, Saline, Sedgwick, Seward and Sumner counties.



Map of WWII Kansas airfields (Susan Jezak Ford)

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**SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

The *World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas* Multiple Property Submission was prepared during late 2009, following the Summer/Fall 2008 survey of 16 WWII Army airfields, two Naval Air Stations and all known auxiliary fields by Susan Jezak Ford, Citysearch Preservation.<sup>133</sup> The survey identified 176 resources, but there is a potential for more as-yet undiscovered resources. The period of significance begins in 1939 with the country's preparation for activity in World War II and ends with 1945, the year that the war ended.

All surveyed resources were documented, photographed and drawn on a sketch map for each field. Buildings and structures were categorized by use in accordance to the National Park Service bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Historic Aviation Properties*. The Kansas context reflects the construction of physical facilities as the country prepared for and entered the war. The surveyed resources included airfields and their associated buildings, cantonment buildings and training buildings. No recreation and welfare buildings or hospital buildings were identified at this time.

Contextual information came from a vast collection of academic repositories from libraries around the Kansas City area, including archives found at the University of Missouri Kansas City, the Kansas City Public Library and the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. All of the material assembled for this project is archived at the Cultural Resources division of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

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<sup>133</sup> The Fairfax field was not visited. The General Motors assembly plant now occupies the entire site.

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"Your Kansas City At War; The Olathe Naval Air Station." *Kansas City Star*, 28 January 1945. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).



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Figure 1. B-29 Production (KSHS archives)

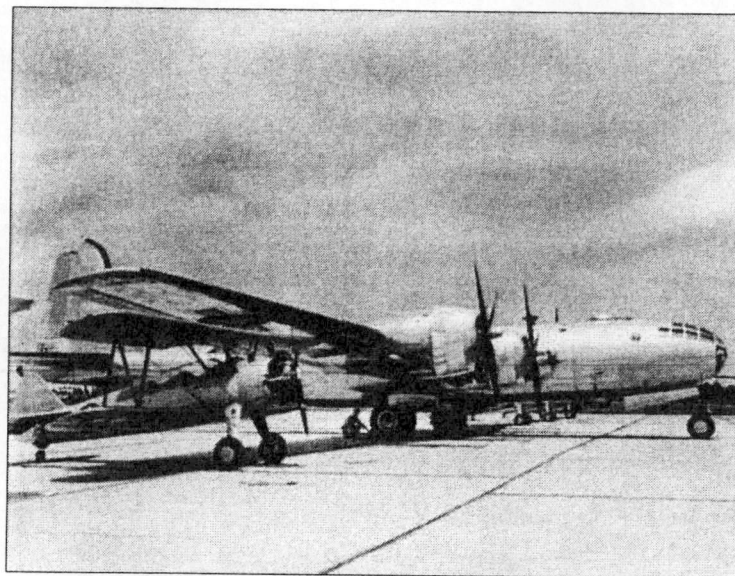


Figure 2. Kaydet and B-29 airplanes (KSHS archives)



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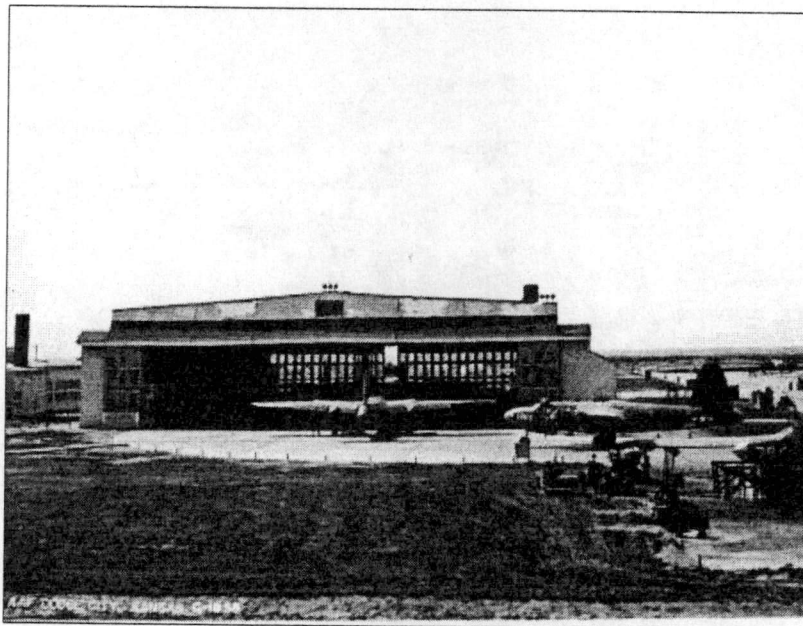


Figure 3. Dodge City Hangar during WWII (KSHS archives)

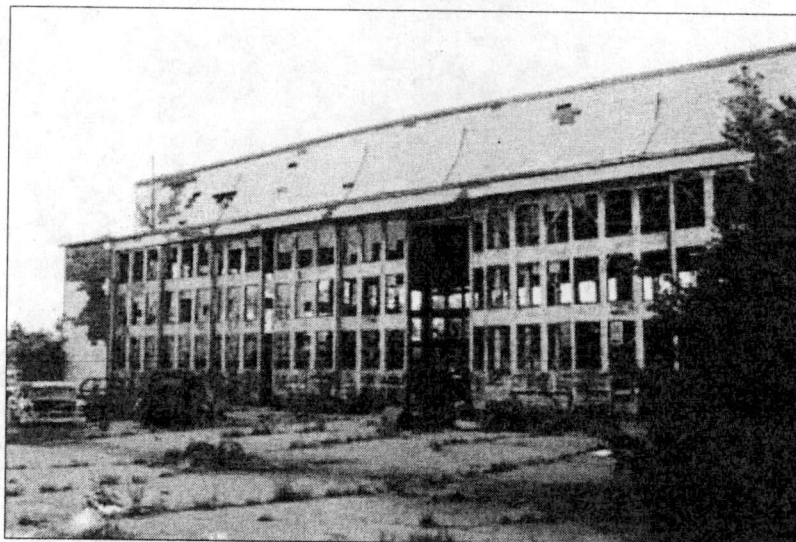


Figure 4. Dodge City AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 5. 1944 photograph of B-26 airplanes in the snow at Dodge City AAF.  
(Wikipedia photograph attributed to Thomas A. Manning, History of Air Education and Training Command, 1942-2002. Office of History and Research, Headquarters, AETC, Randolph AFB, Texas.)

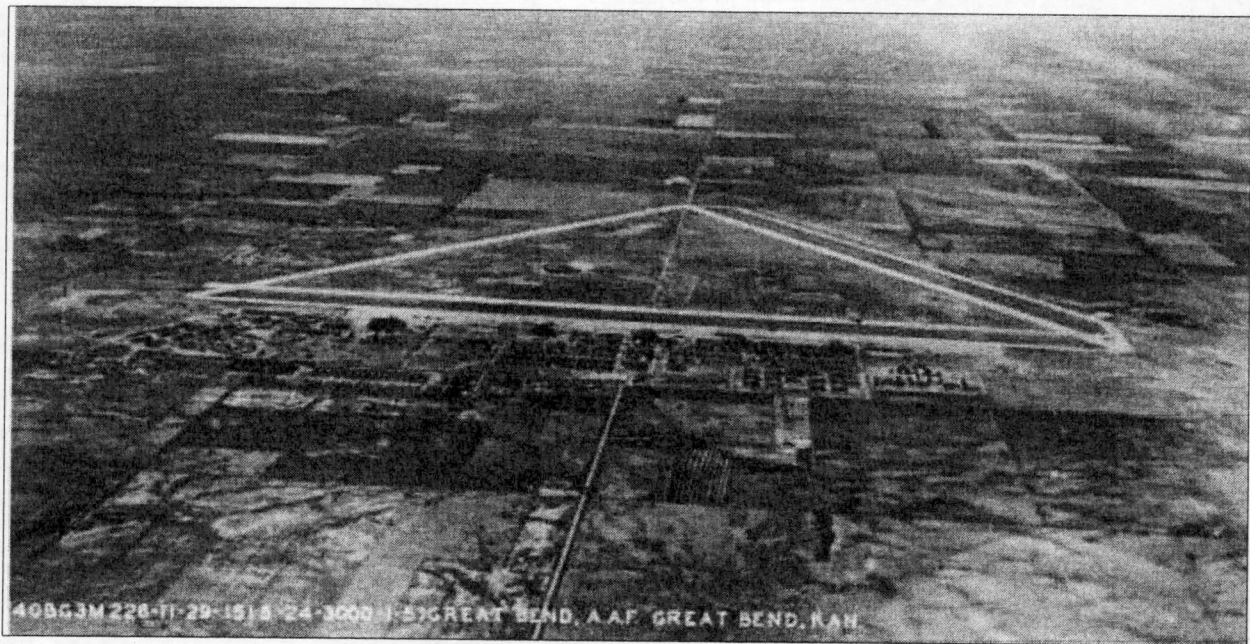


Figure 6. Great Bend AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)

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Figure 7. Hutchinson NAS Field circa 1944

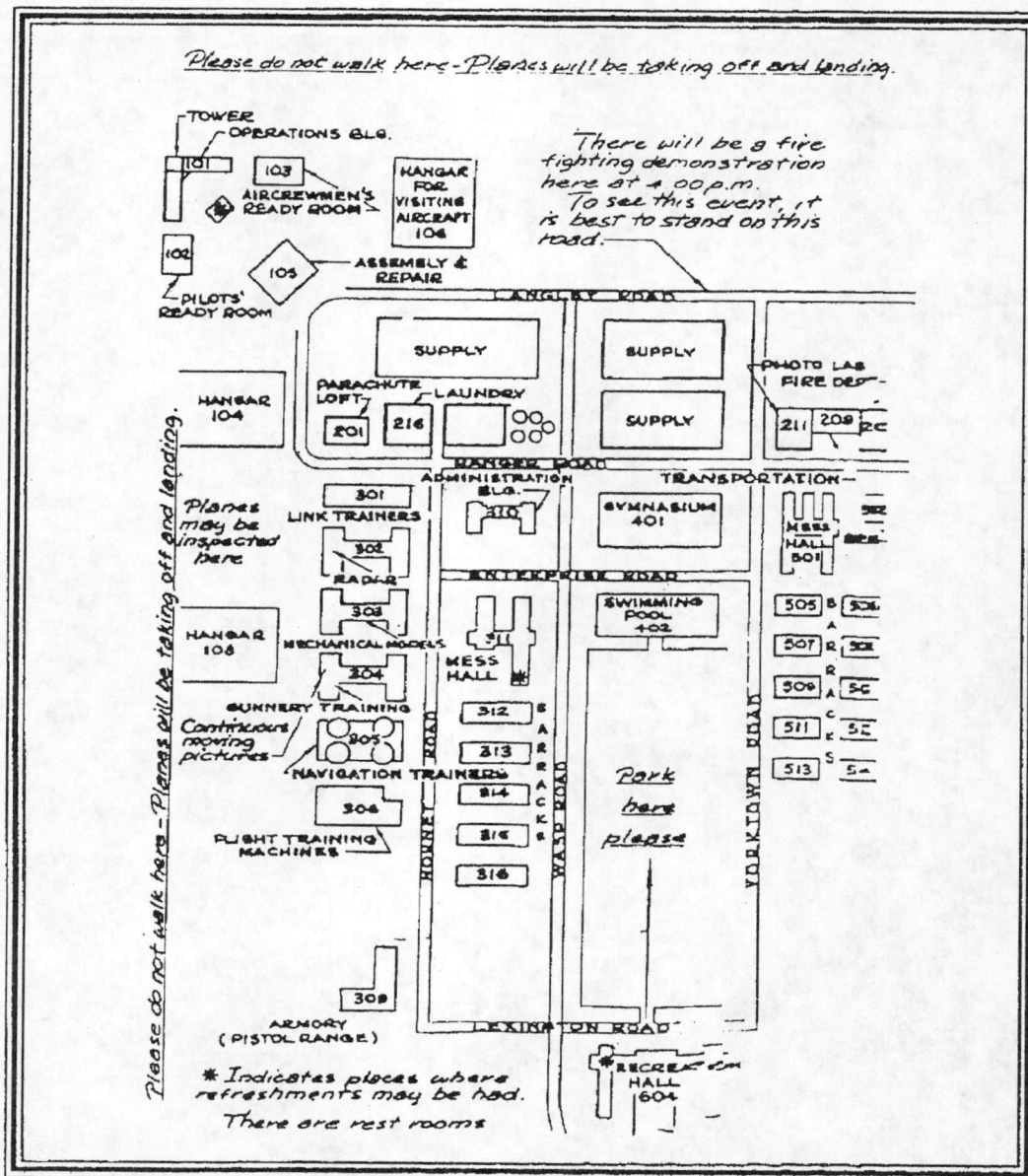


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**Map for public inspection drive through tour, July 4, 1943.**

Figure 8. Partial map of Hutchinson NAS (*Hutchinson News-Herald*)

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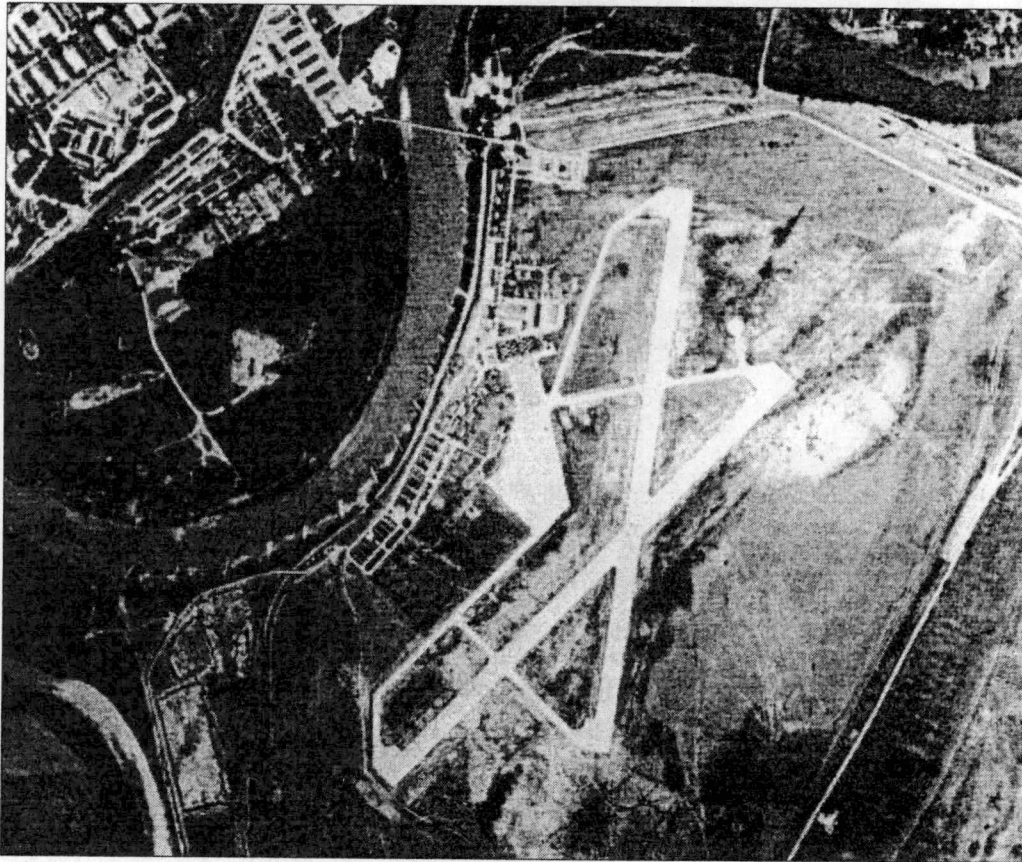


Figure 9. Marshall Airfield, 1943 (Marshall Field archives)

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Figure 10. Olathe NAS Administration Building circa 1942 (Johnson County Museum of History archives)

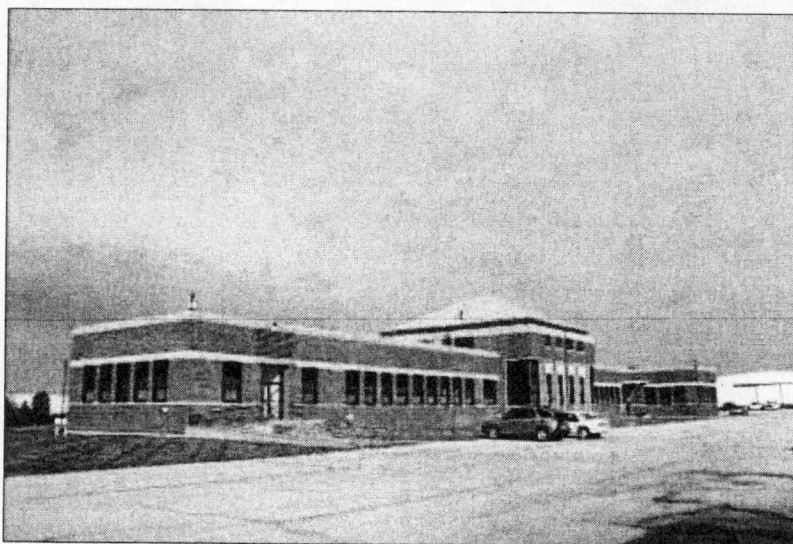


Figure 11. Olathe NAS Administration Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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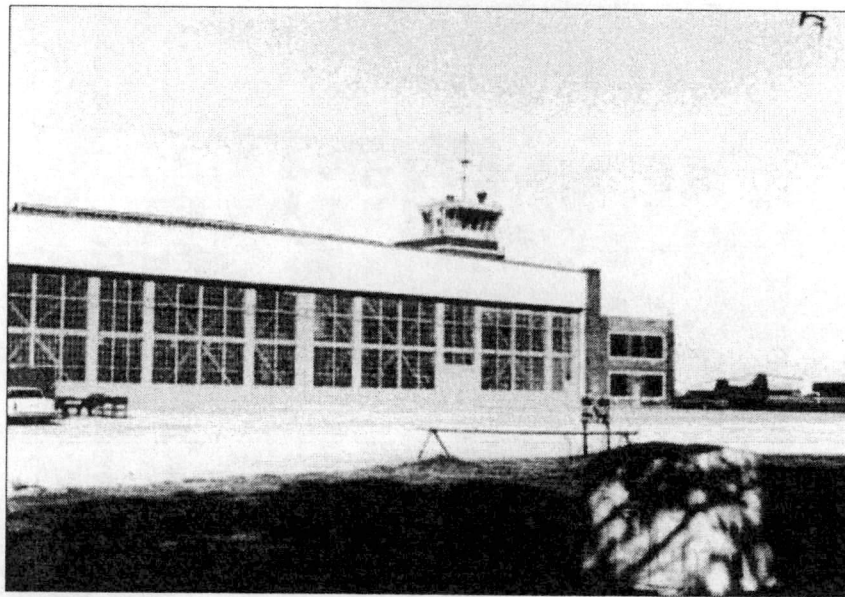


Figure 12. Olathe NAS hangar and control tower circa 1942 (Johnson County Museum of History archives)



Figure 13. Olathe NAS Hangar and Control Tower, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 14. Olathe NAS during WWII (KSHS archives)

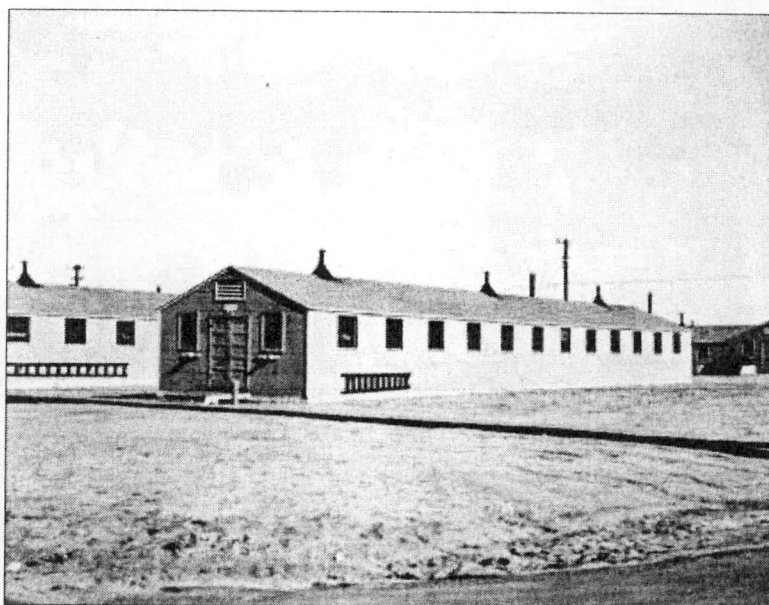


Figure 15. Pratt AAF Barracks circa WWII (KSHS Archives)

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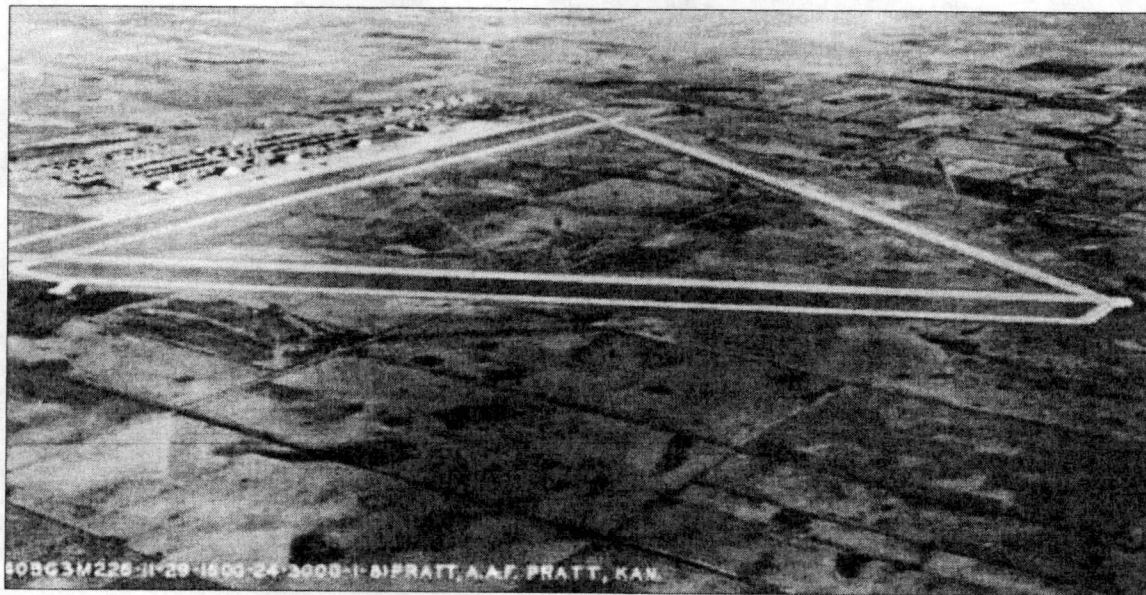


Figure 16. Pratt AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)

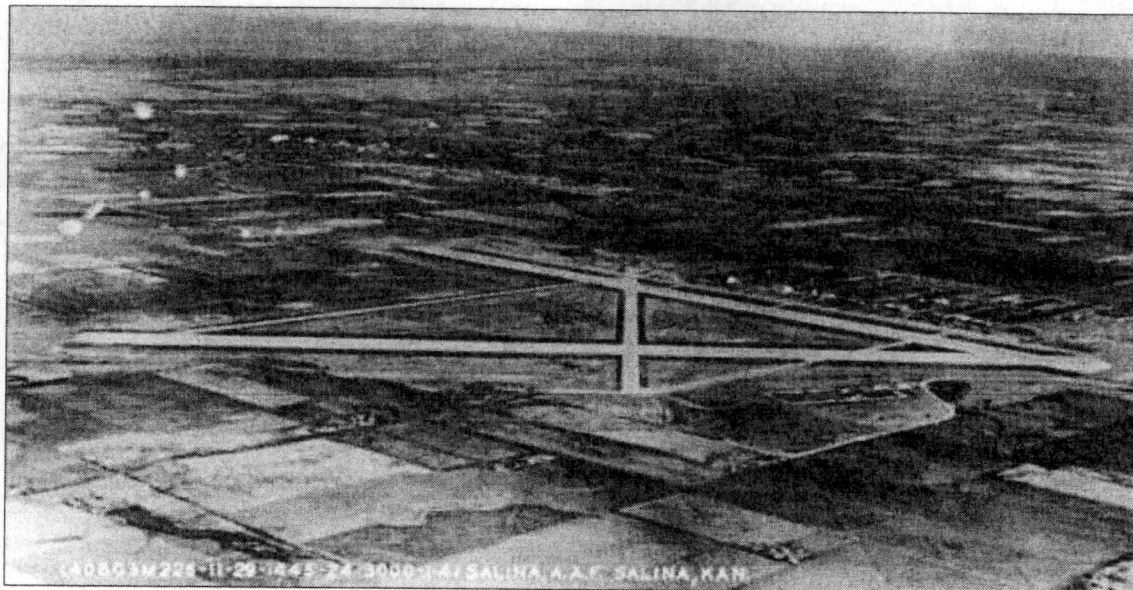


Figure 17. Smoky Hill AAF, circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)



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Figure 18. Smoky Hill control tower, 1946 (KSHS archives)

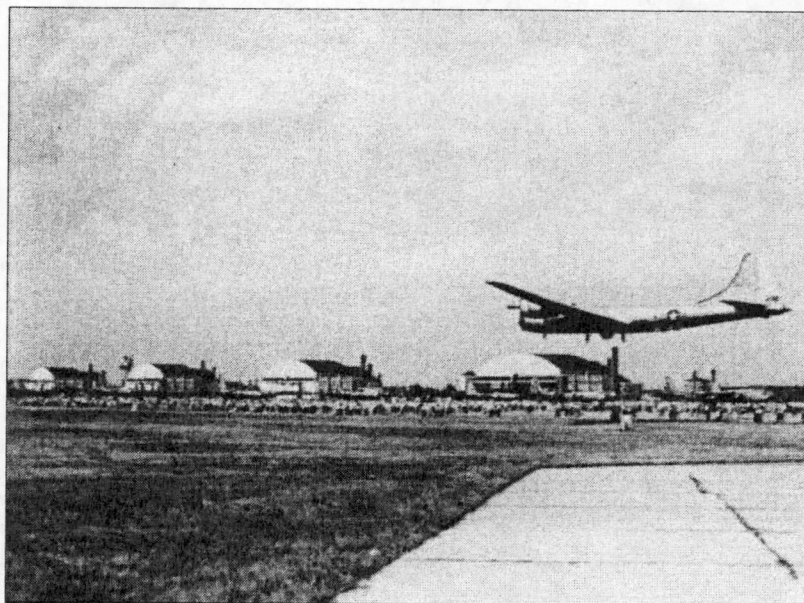


Figure 19. Smoky Hill during WWII (KSHS archives)

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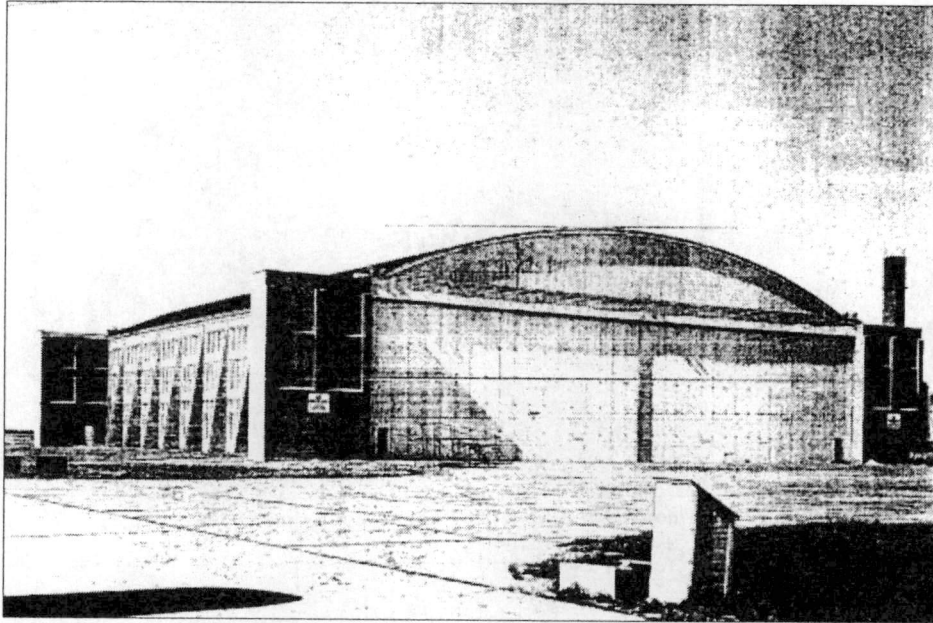


Figure 20. Smoky Hill hangar, 1950 (KSHS archives)

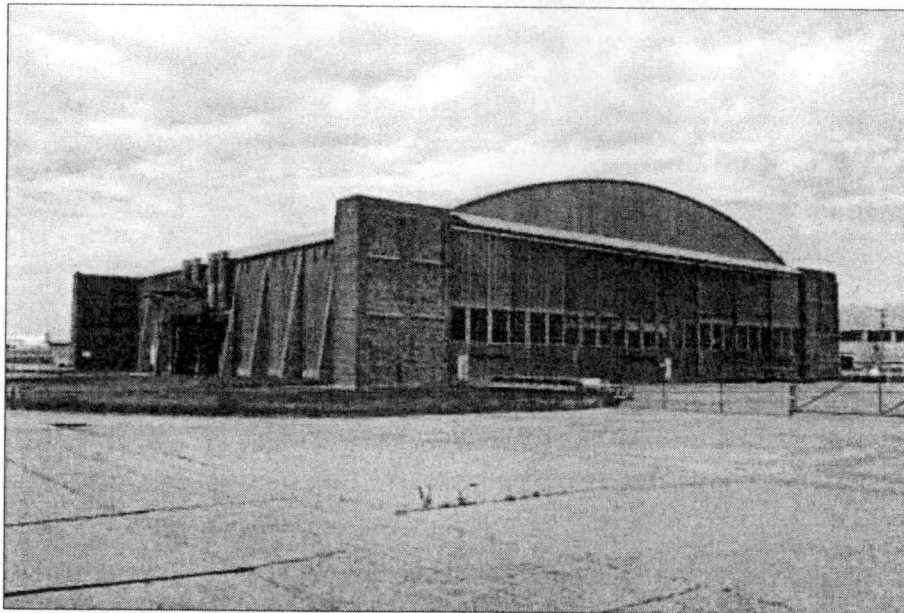


Figure 21. Smoky Hill AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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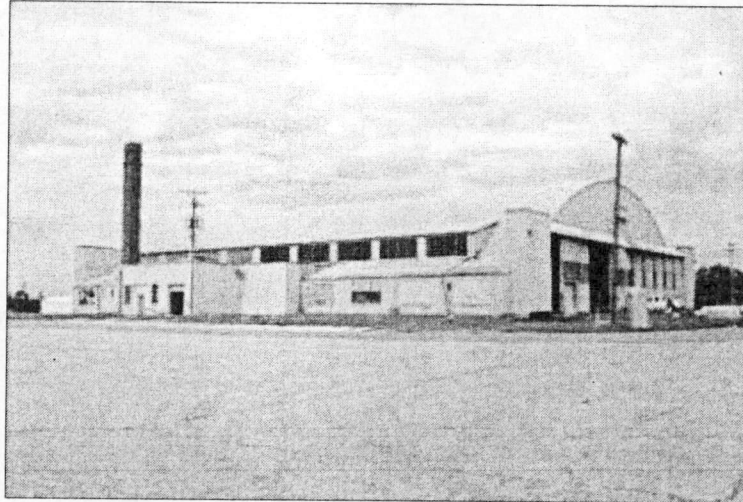


Figure 22. Smoky Hill AAF B-29 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

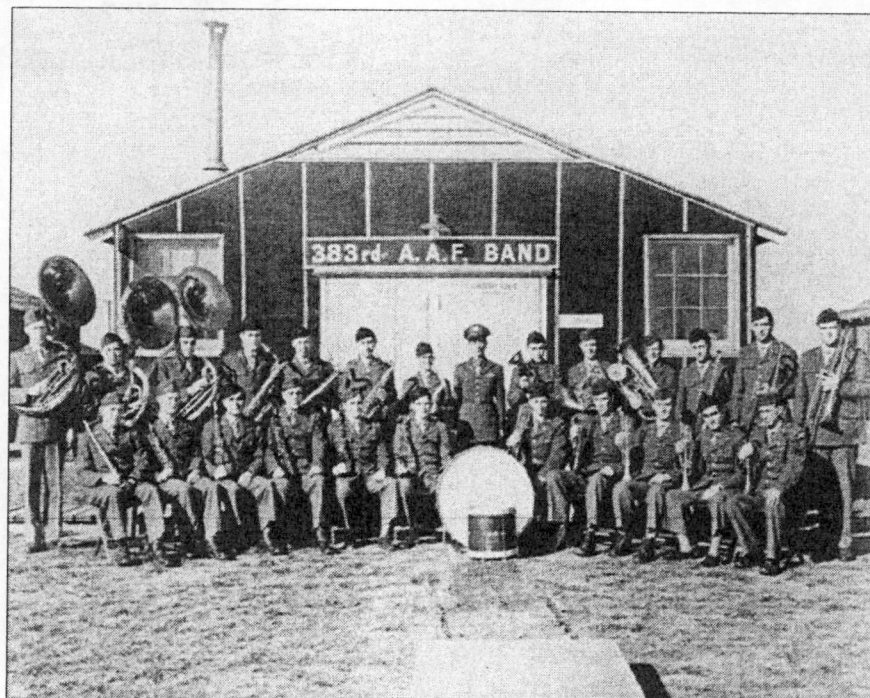


Figure 23. Strother AAF WWII band (KSHS archives)



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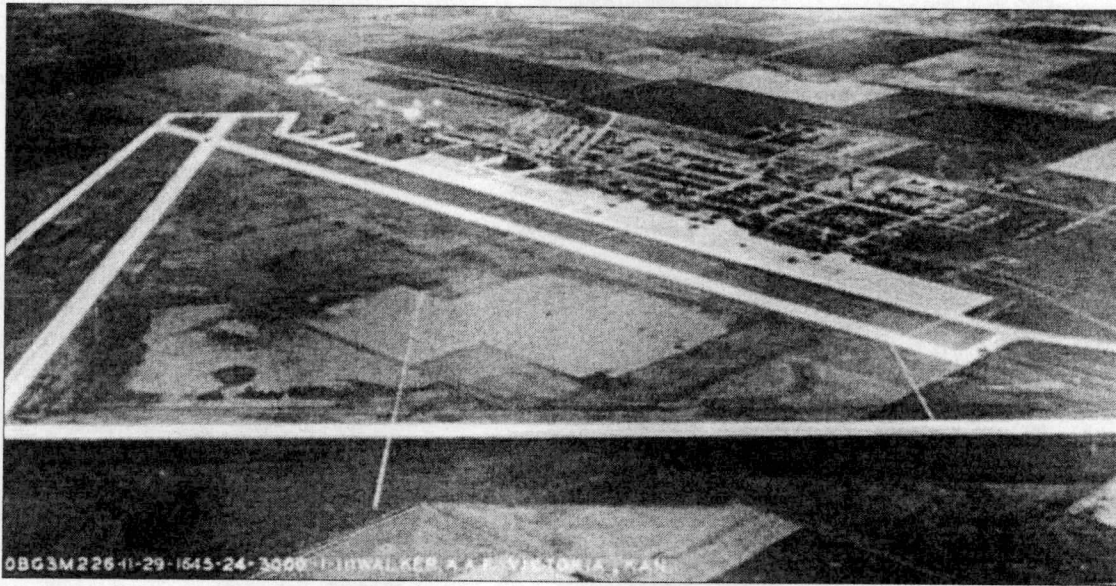


Figure 24. Walker AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)

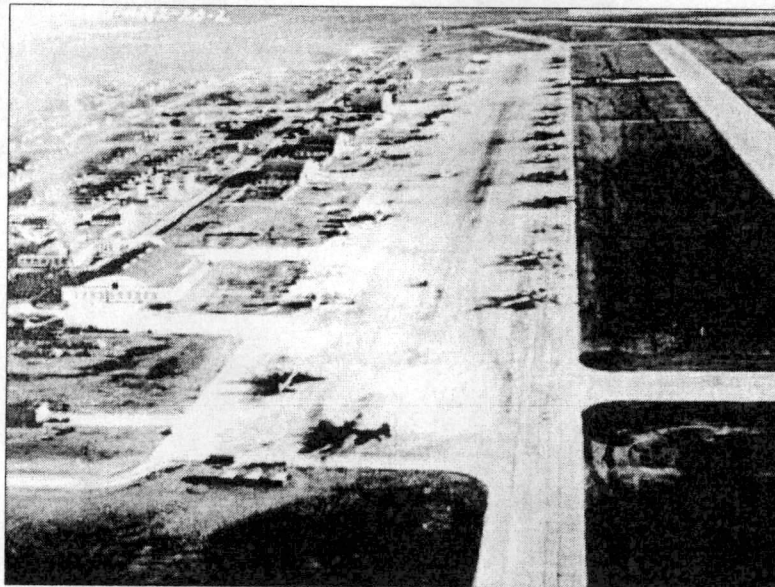


Figure 25. Walker AAF during WWII

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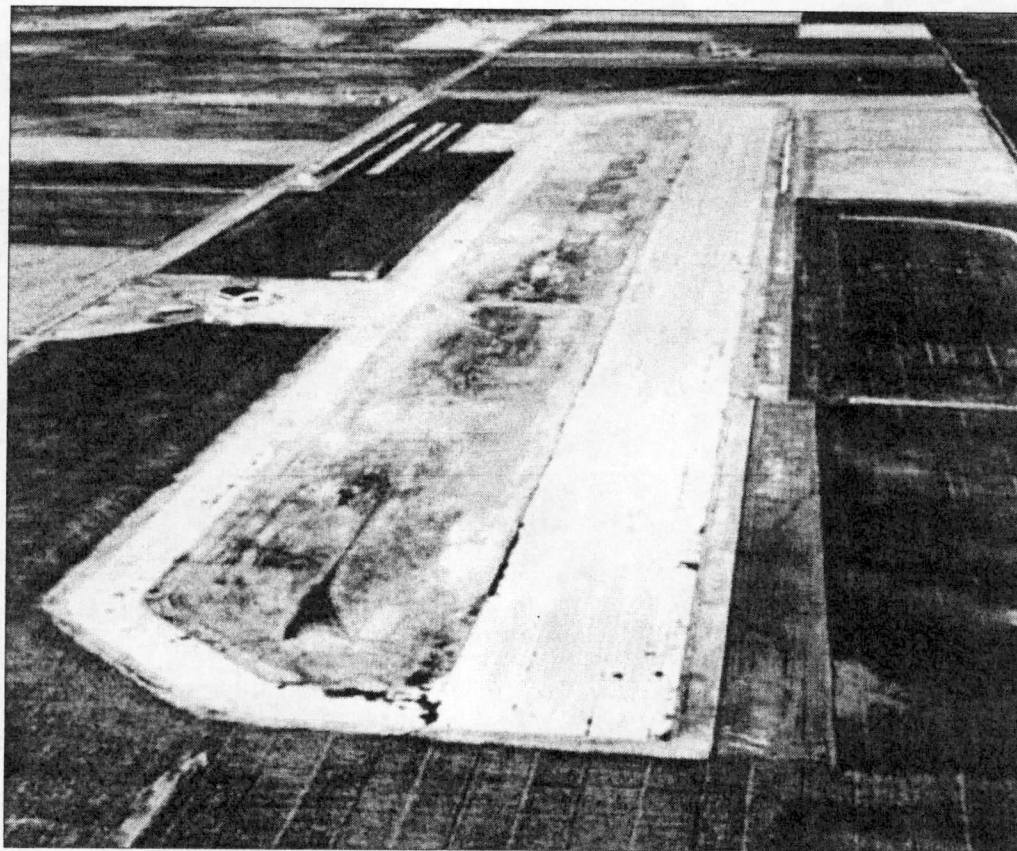
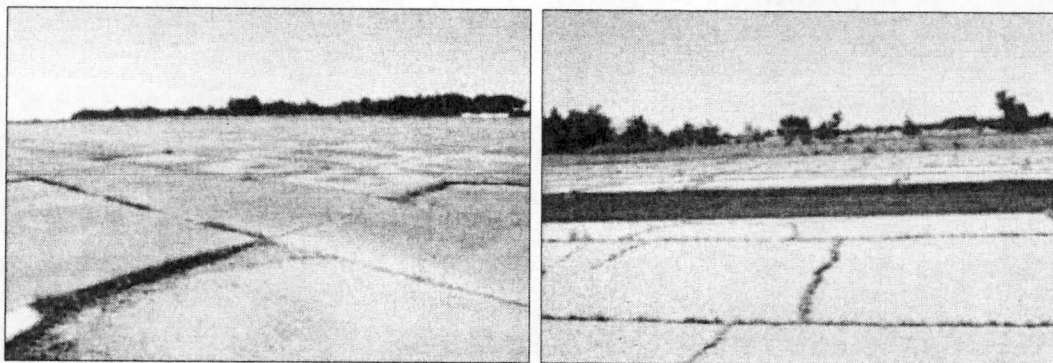


Figure 26. Historic photograph of Hutchinson OLF No. 2



Figures 27 (left) and 28 (right). Hutchinson NAS Runways, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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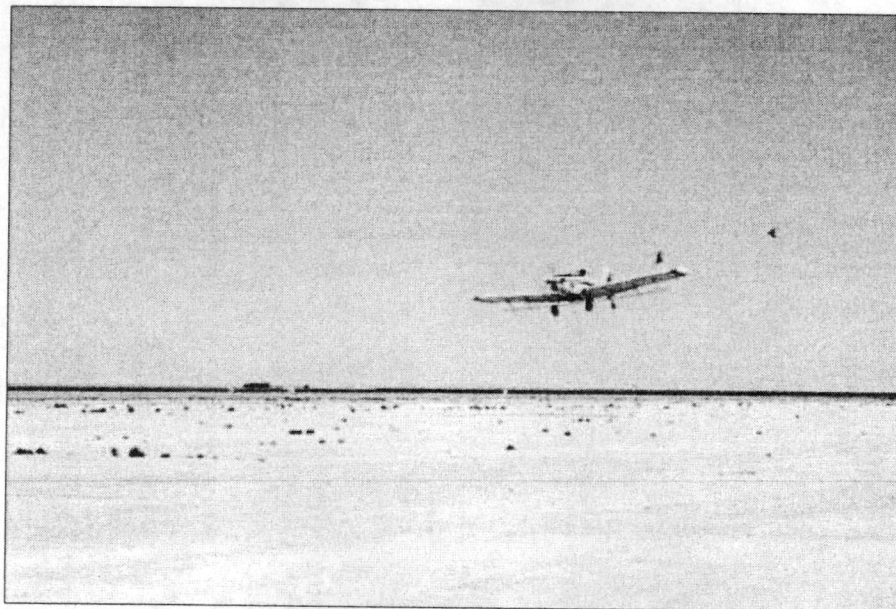
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**Figure 29. Topeka Runway, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 30. Garden City Auxiliary No. 1, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



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Figure 31. Strother Auxiliary Field No. 5, 2008 (Terraserver photograph)

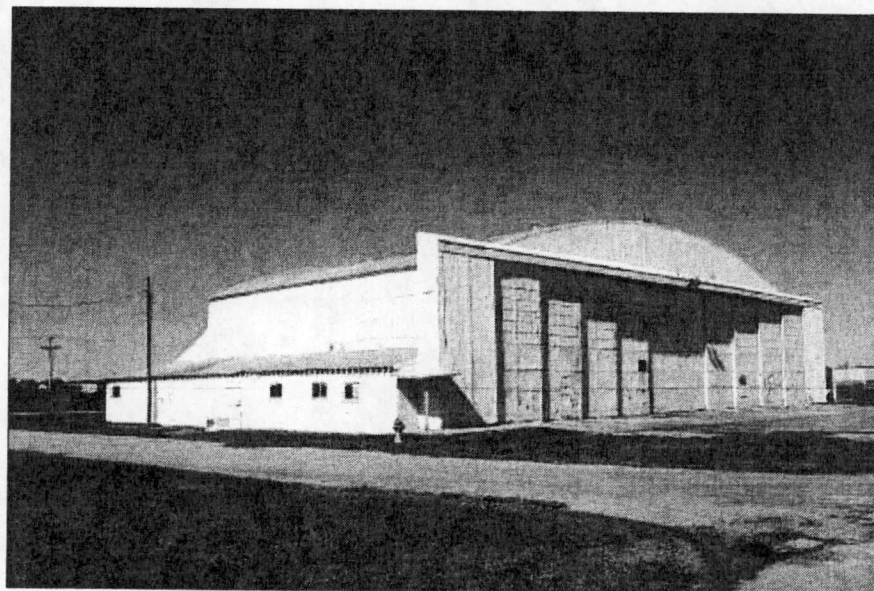


Figure 32. Coffeyville AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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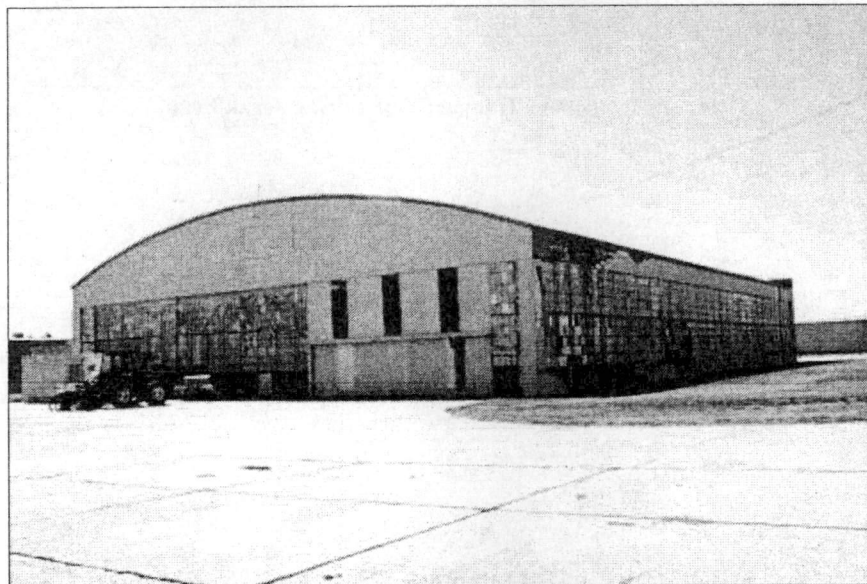
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**Figure 33. Herington AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 34. Liberal AAF B-24 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**

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**Figure 35. Topeka Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



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Figure 36. Pratt AAF B-29 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

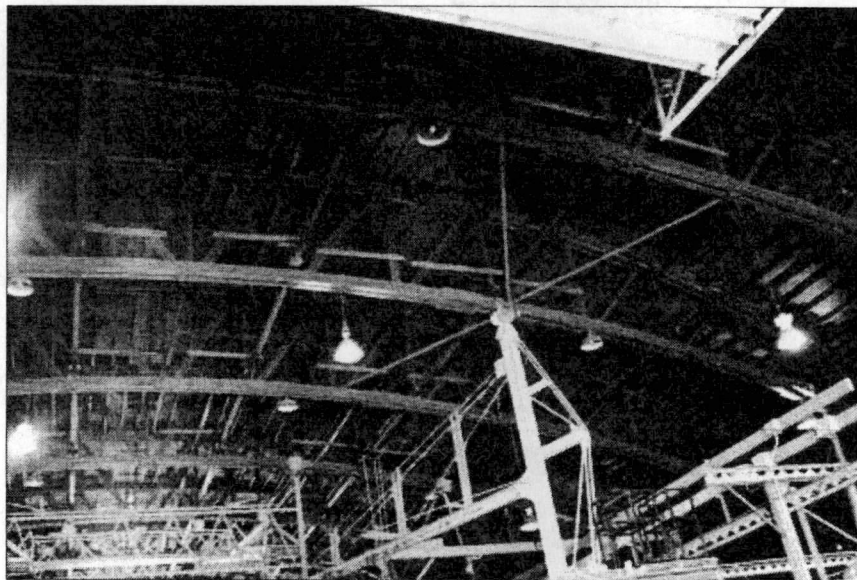


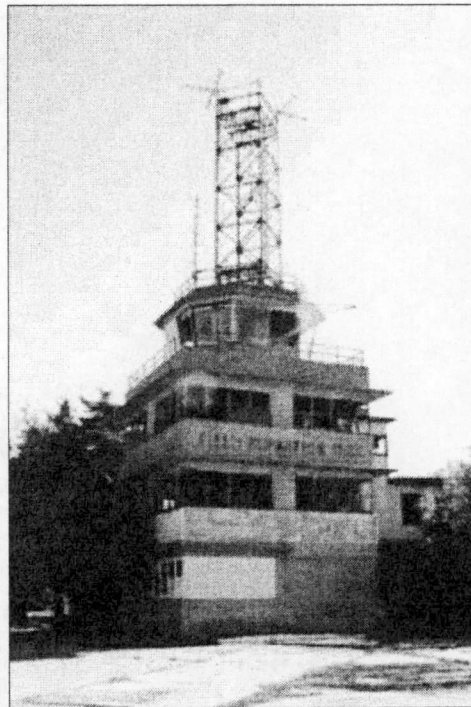
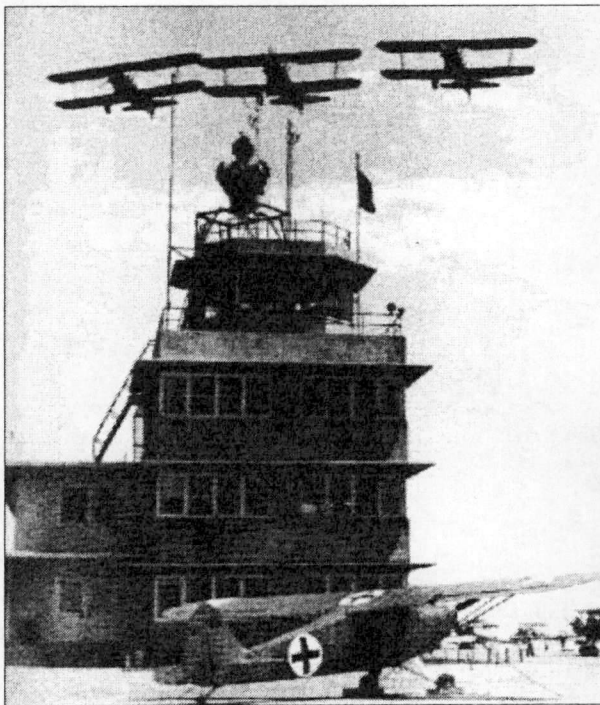
Figure 37. Pratt AAF B-29 Hangar trusses, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figures 38 (left) and 39 (right). Hutchinson NAS Control Tower circa 1950 and 2008

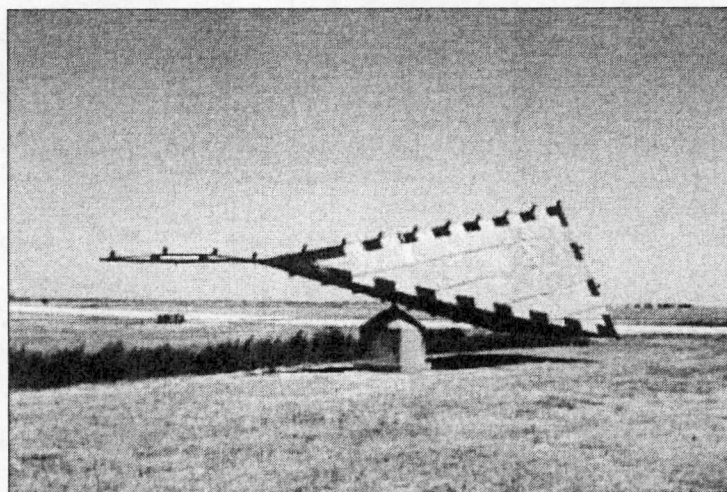


Figure 40. Liberal AAF Wind Tetrahedron, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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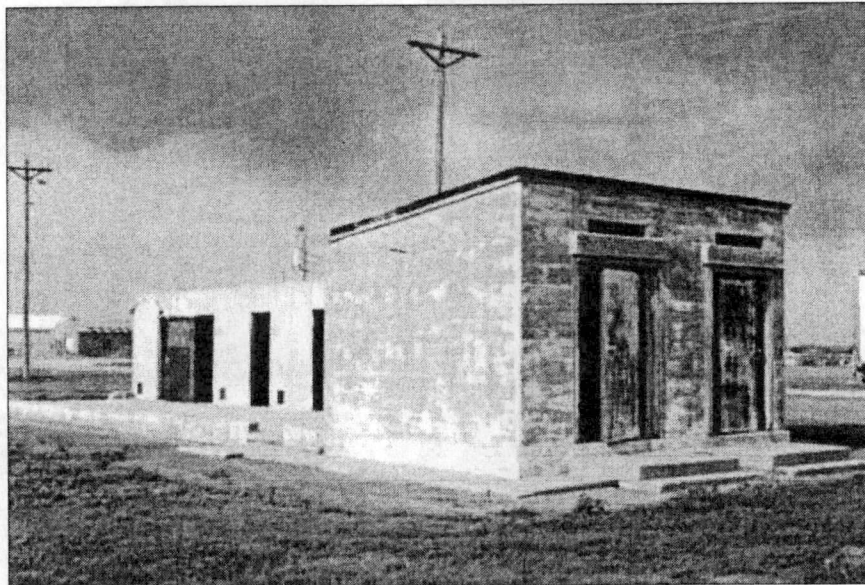


Figure 41. Great Bend Bomb Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

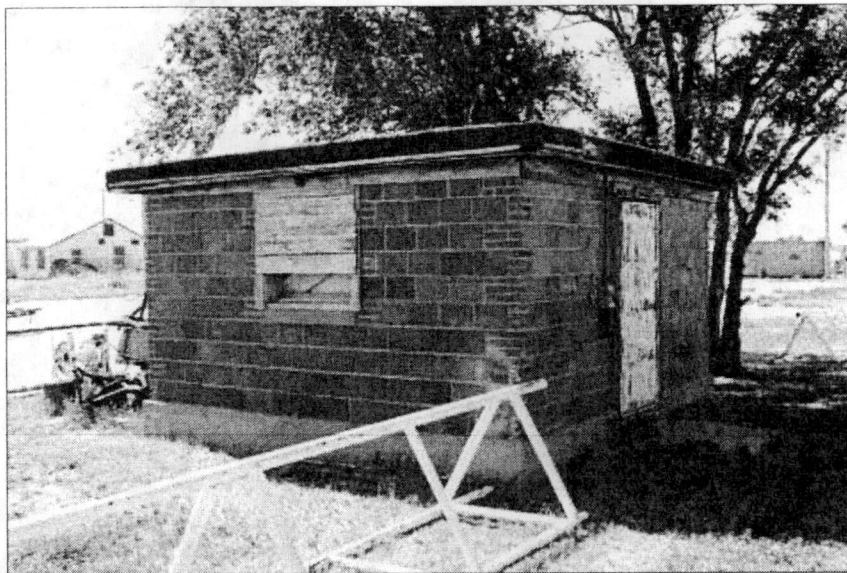


Figure 42. Liberal AAF paint storage building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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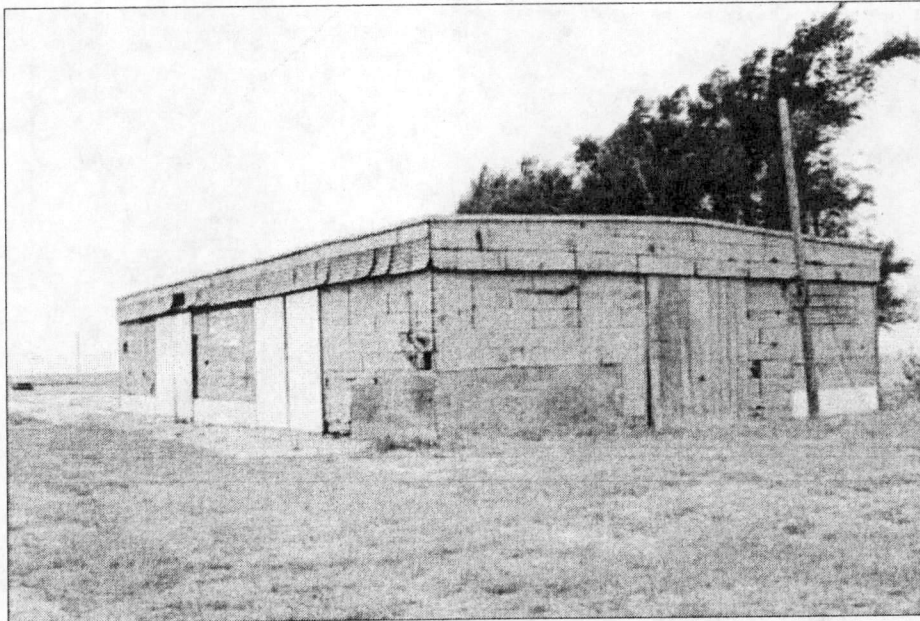


Figure 43. Garden City Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

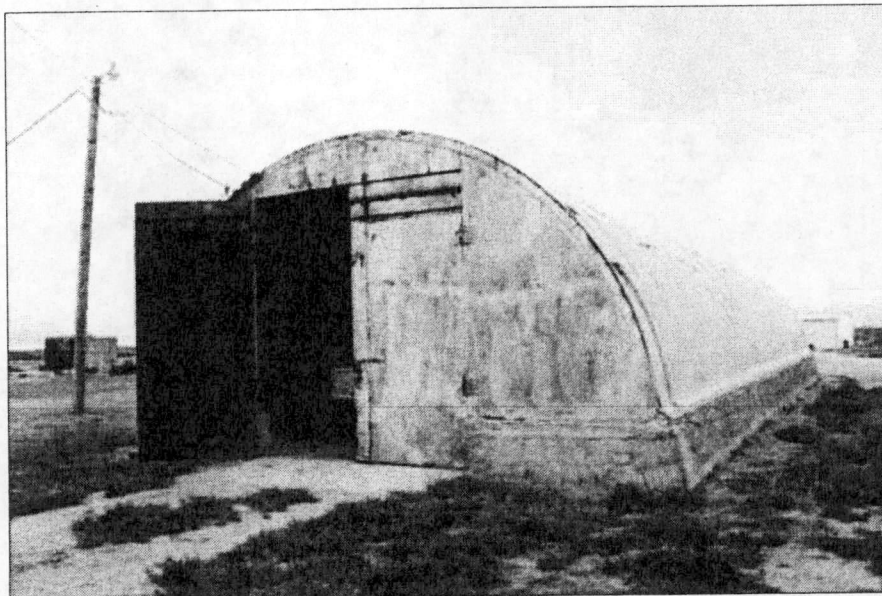


Figure 44. Garden City Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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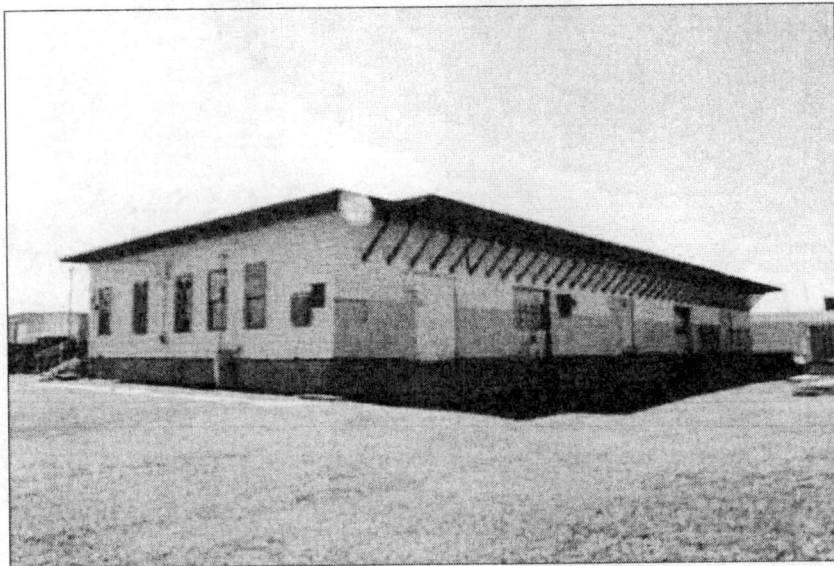


Figure 45. Hutchinson NAS Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

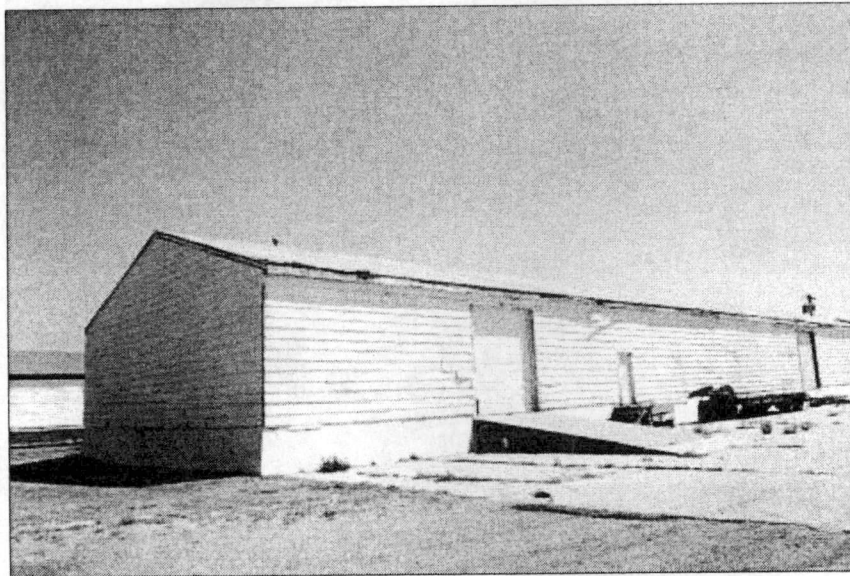


Figure 46. Liberal AAF Warehouse, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

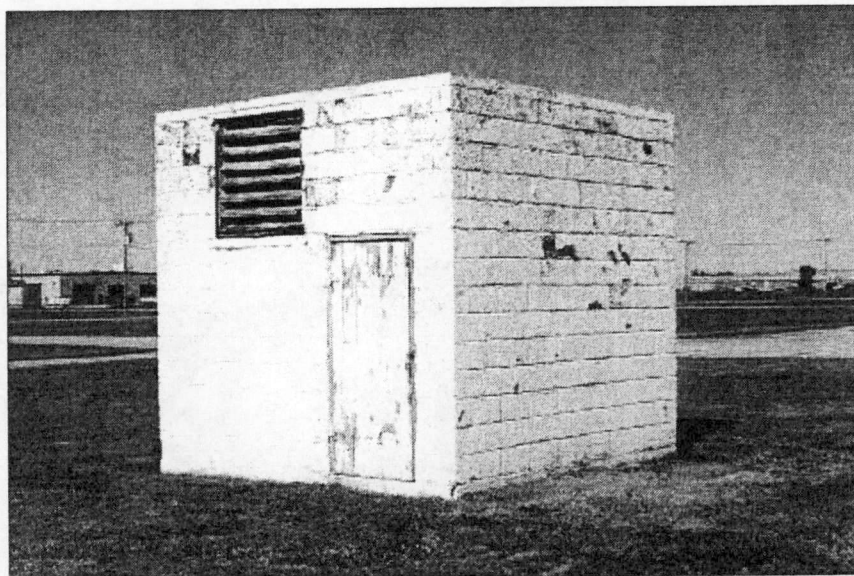
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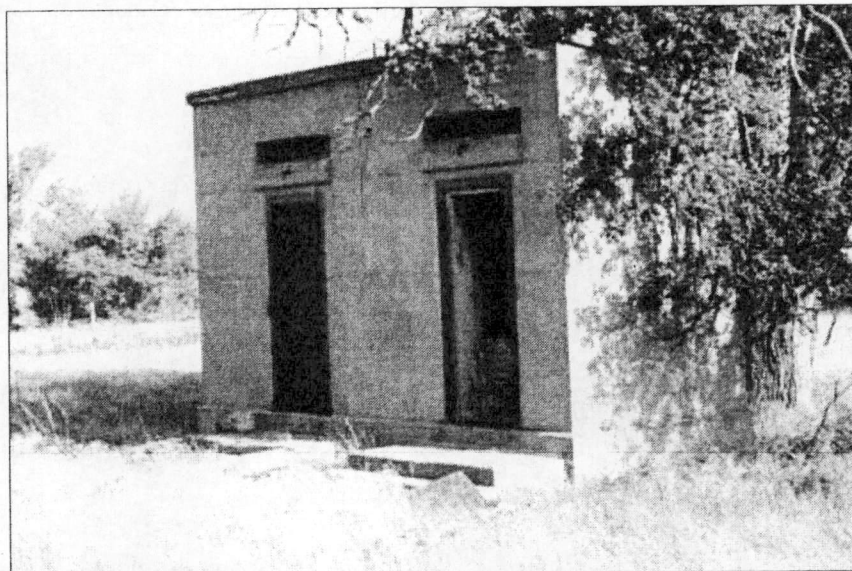
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**Figure 47. Coffeyville AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 48. Dodge City AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



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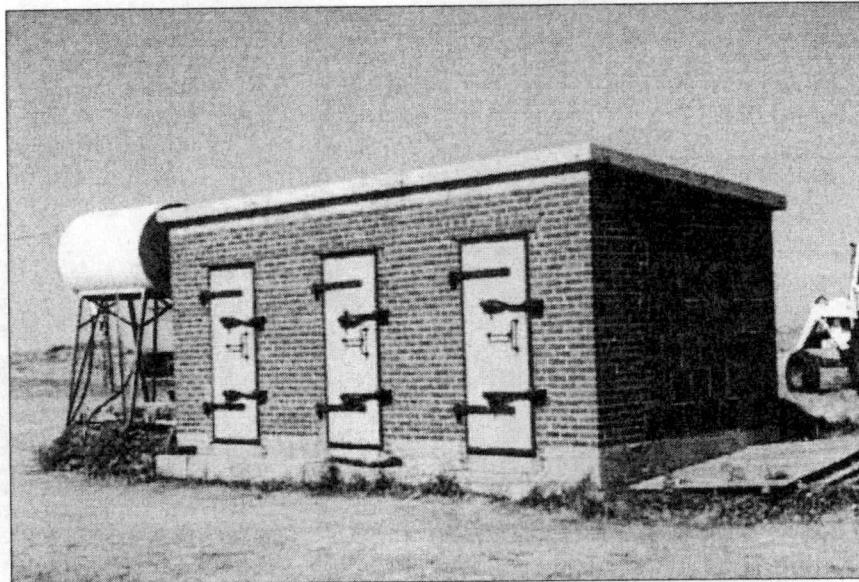


Figure 49. Dodge City AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

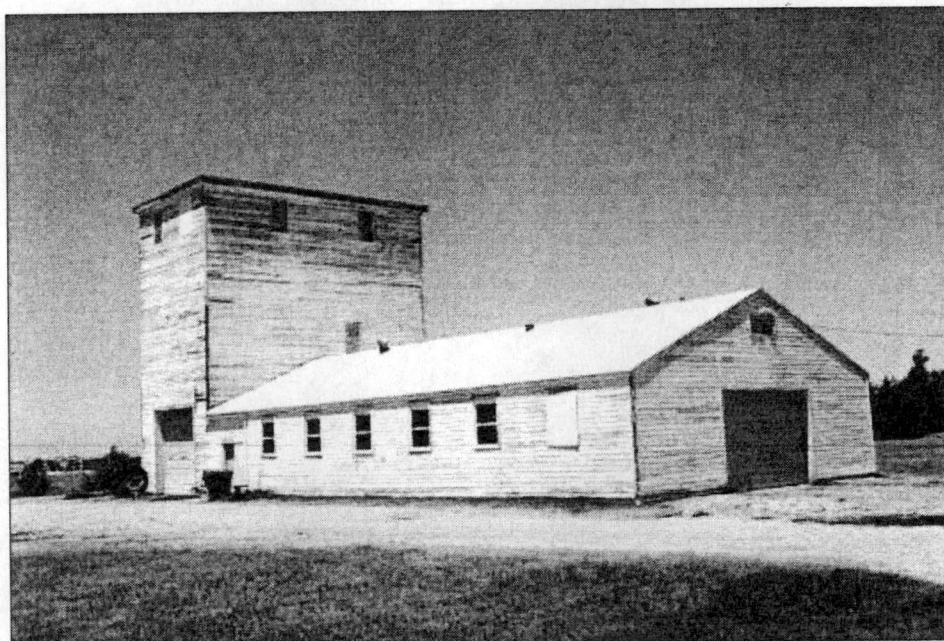


Figure 50. Pratt AAF Parachute Building, NRHP, 2008(Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 51. Olathe NAS Fire Station, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

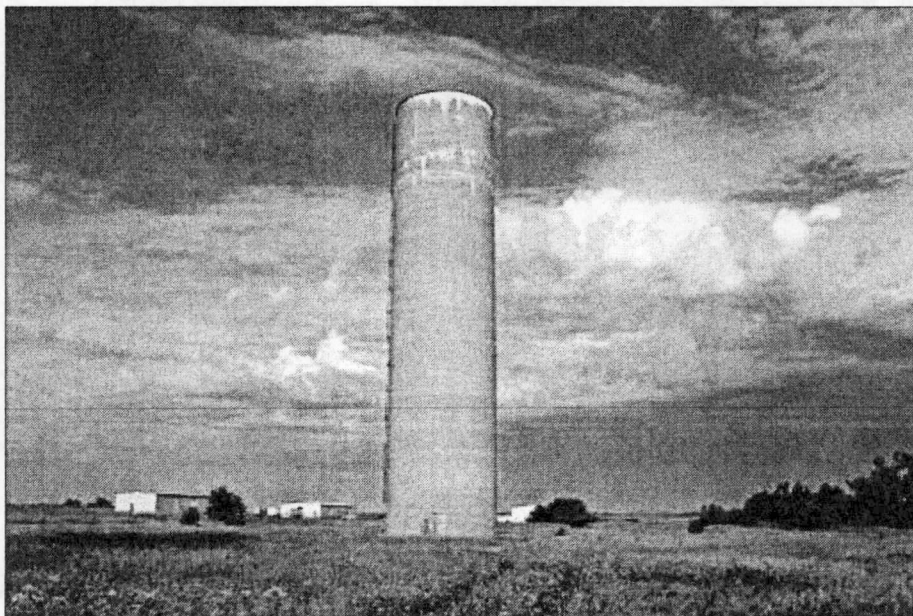


Figure 52. Herington Water Tower, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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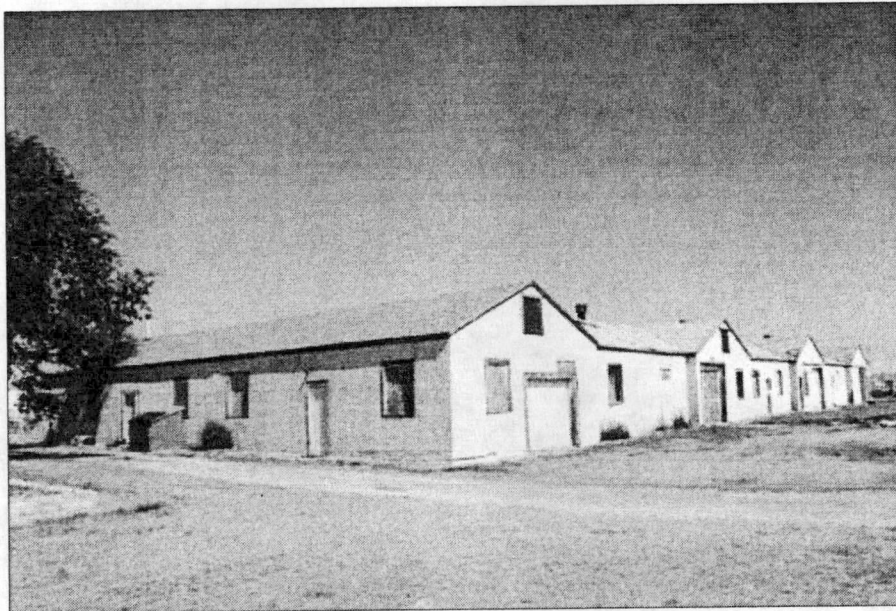


Figure 53. Liberal AAF Classroom Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

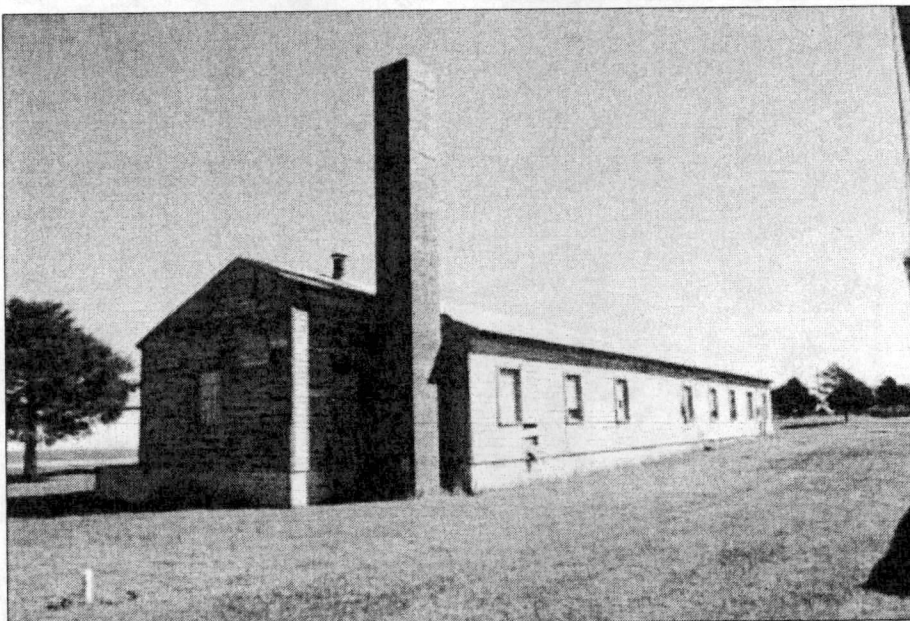


Figure 54. Strother AAF Link Trainer Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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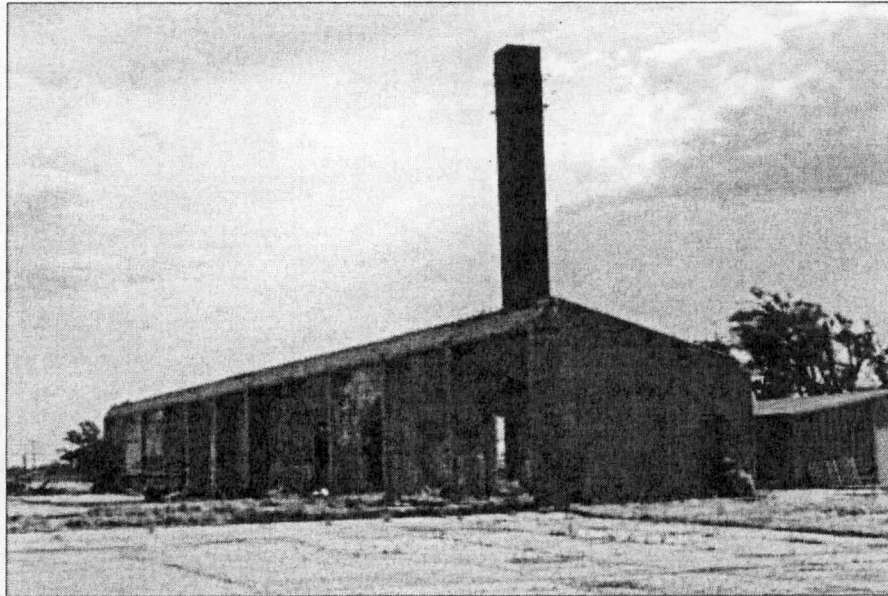


Figure 55. Great Bend Ruins, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

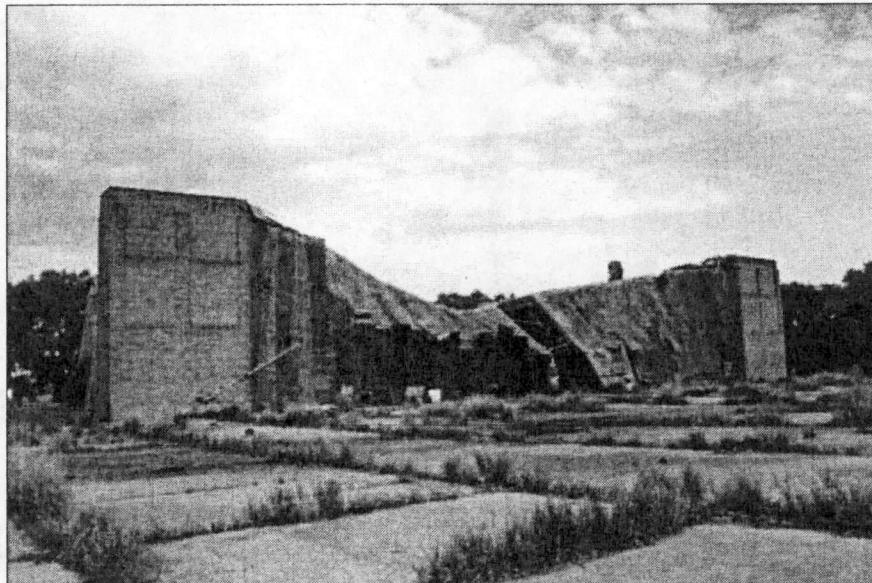


Figure 56. Walker AAF Hangar Ruin, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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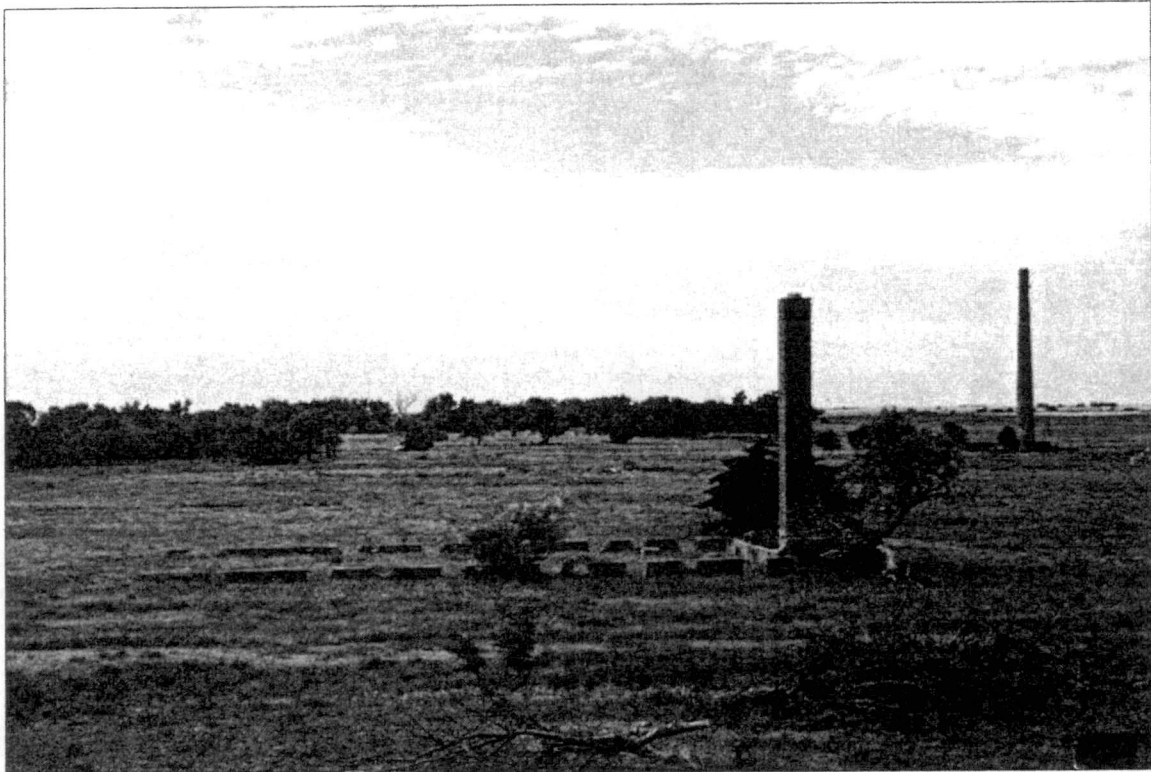


Figure 57. Walker AAF field of ruins, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: COVER DOCUMENTATION

MULTIPLE World War II Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: KANSAS, Multiple Counties

DATE RECEIVED: 09/08/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/23/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 64501087

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N  
NEW MPS: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

\_\_\_ACCEPT \_\_\_RETURN \_\_\_REJECT \_\_\_DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*See attached comments*

*\*Signature is necessary as  
commenting official (SLR) prepared  
& certified nom. (see EA. App. VII.2)*

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER L McClelland

DISCIPLINE History

Phone 202-354-2258

Date 10-23-10

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y)N see attached SLR Y(N)

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

## **World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities in Kansas, MPS**

### **Comments**

Recommendation: Return for further development of Section F, Property Type Analysis, and Section H, Methods.

The historic context for the theme of defense-related aviation in Kansas is exceptionally detailed and appears to be comprehensive, noting the extensive operation of large and small facilities in the wartime efforts. The multiple property document combines a discussion of the theme with the findings of a 2008 survey of surviving resources. The theme is directly related to the known WWII air facilities operated by the U.S. defense efforts as Army airfields, naval air stations, and auxiliary airfields. Particularly critical to the outcome of the war and the defeat of Japan was the role Kansas facilities played in the preparation and deployment of B-29 bombers, in what has been called the "Battle of Kansas." These efforts were primarily directed at training airmen and pilots and the retrofitting and staging of aircraft to serve in the Pacific theater. Some facilities were in close proximity to private facilities involved in war industry, such as the Boeing facility at Wichita.

Most of the Kansas facilities were decommissioned at the end of the war, many becoming municipal or county airports and/or industrial parks. The theme covers a very brief period of time, making it difficult for earlier or continuing associations with local or regional aviation to be combined in the evaluation of historic districts. Unfortunately only remnants of the WWII facilities remain, either as runways or as isolated hangars. In the places where facilities were simply abandoned, ruins exist. We are told that 176 resources were identified in the 2008 survey of 16 Army airfield, two Naval Air stations, and all known auxiliary fields, but others likely exist. Forty-three have been evaluated as individually eligible and 109 resources eligible as contributing resources of a district. The possible historic districts are not identified in the document, nor are the complex issues surrounding the evaluation of fragmented and ruined resources. There is no information on how integrity/eligibility was determined in these cases. Eligible resources are defined simply as those dating to the brief period of significance and having historic integrity. Further analysis of the survey findings is needed as a basis for setting the registration requirements for each property type and for determining what kinds of integrity are critical to the ability of surviving resources to convey their significance.

Unfortunately although the MPS alludes to historic districts as a property types, it does not explain what concentration of resources qualifies an area as a district. Nor does it address the various problems (such as loss physical integrity, value, or information potential of the vast number of resources that exist in remnant or ruinous condition) that complicate their identification and evaluation. Instead the default seems to be the identification of historic buildings, of which only a few types were actually the subject of the affiliated survey. Although runways are mentioned in section E and F, there is no discussion as to when they have integrity and are individually eligible. The MPS does not

take into consideration the potential information value that remnants and archeological resources might possess.

The submission is being returned for further information related to Section F, the property type analysis and Section H, survey and evaluation methodology. The registration requirements should set forth the conditions necessary for an individual remnant (e.g. a runway or single standing hangar) to convey a significant association with the historic facility despite the loss of a substantial portion of the original facility operating during WWII. A different set of requirements may be developed for properties eligible under Criterion A (for its role or association) and those under C (as a type or method of construction).

#### Section F: Property Types

Please provide a more detailed definition of eligible property types and the conditions whereby they may be individually eligible or contribute to a historic district. When an MPS is developed in conjunction with a field survey, the context and the survey should inform the discussion of eligibility. If an inventory of eligible properties has resulted, the registration requirements can be drawn from the decisions on what has been determined eligible. This process is also useful for discussing the specific problems that those making evaluations are likely to face and for explaining a rational justification for decisions. The registration requirements should explain how the decisions regarding eligibility were made and how they can be applied to existing resources known or yet to be discovered.

Please provide a list of registration requirements that takes into consideration the various issues that complicate the identification of associated resources as well as historic districts. For example, the narrow period of importance associated with WWII aviation activities means that short-lived facilities may be non-existent or exist as fragmented remnants; in other cases WWII resources may have been absorbed into larger facilities that have served as municipal or county airports since the end of WWII. In the latter case the WWII resources may form one layer of significance in a district that represents a longer period of activity and physical evolution. The current documentation does not account for these possibilities.

Each resource type should be discussed in terms of its role, ability to evoke historic associations related to the whole. The requisite degree and types of integrity may vary from facility to facility; this might make it reasonable to have different requirements for auxiliary airfields than for large complex air bases or naval stations. Some resource types will inherently be more important than others because of the primacy of their role or their rarity today. For example, it seems that a triangular set of runways would be discussed as a highly important structure, that under most conditions will qualify as individually eligible because it remains strongly evocative of its military use and associations under Criterion A, whereas an auxiliary storage building by itself would be less likely to convey its role without the presence of other related buildings and structures. In some cases hangars might meet Criterion C for the design of the truss system, in others they may

meet Criterion A for their essential function in conjunction with the "Battle of Kansas" or the operation of a key repair facility. A surviving educational building in a facility known for its training mission be more likely to be individually eligible than a surviving storage building. Clearly one would expect large hangars sized to shelter B-29s to be individually eligible on former bases known to have contributed to their mobilization and deployment in WWII.

The results of the field survey should be analyzed further to 1) draw generalizations about how commonplace is the survival of runways and associated buildings such as administration buildings, classrooms, or hangars, and 2) make determinations about how much of a resource must be intact for eligibility and what aspects of integrity will be most important. For example, do all three of the runways in a standard formation need to be intact for eligibility, and what condition is required for remnant portions to be eligible. The fact that so many of the bases exist as remnant ruins warrants a discussion of possible eligibility under criterion D (historic archeology) and the types of research questions such sites can address. Even if this aspect of inquiry goes beyond the scope of the current research, the possibility should be raised and reference made to the need for further evaluation and consideration of the value of information that such remnant resources may yield.

Ideally an intact historically associated facility would be a historic district with several contributing components, perhaps an administration building, storage sheds, multiple hangars, wind tetrahedron, and a triangular set of runways. The likelihood of finding such an intact cluster today is highly unlikely due to a variety of factors. The evaluation of abandoned facilities will pose different issues from those absorbed into later, larger facilities. For example, one should consider the extent to which foundations, collapsed buildings, and abandoned runways may convey historic associations and be classified as contributing resources in a historic district. Conversely, one might consider the effect that later adaptive reuse and improvements have had on the integrity of resources dating to the World War II era. How does one account or take into consideration earlier or later associations that may be part of the facility's historic evolution and may add to its significance over a longer period of time (such as Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth). Some of the more intact examples may have had important roles in Cold War. Isn't it worth mentioning that the WWII facilities/remnants are one layer of a long, continuing record of accomplishment and association with military history. In the case of facilities that were absorbed into municipal or regional airports, it is possible that remnant resources illustrate the origins of the airport in a period of war and an adaptation of these facilities to civilian use. It might be helpful to identify the facilities where an eligible historic district has been identified and use these examples as a basis for explaining the qualities that must be present to convey the historic facility's significance.

Another issue to address is the removal of buildings (especially temporary or demountable ones) from the decommissioned bases and airfields; there may be certain resource types that will simply no longer exist because they were relocated and/or disposed of. What generalizations can be drawn about the standard practices of the army and navy in distributing surplus buildings to other locations and for other postwar uses

(e.g. relocation to active installations, college campuses where housing was in critical shortage, etc.). Another issue to consider is whether there are circumstances where a relocated resource may meet the Criterion Consideration for moved buildings, and will convey its significance despite relocation on or off the grounds of the historic facility.

#### Section H. Methodology

This section needs to be expanded by explaining the way in which the complex issues related to WWII facilities have been considered in preparing the MPS. Part of the discussion should be devoted to describing the field survey in greater detail and part to explaining how the survey findings were analyzed and used as a basis for evaluating eligibility and setting registration requirements. The current property type analysis does not indicate that a thorough analysis has been done, making the MPD Form incomplete but also posing the question of how rational and solid the basis was for making eligibility decisions for the surveyed resources. In proceeding with the revision of the form, it will be necessary to determine what factors were considered in making the decisions about eligible resources at the close of the survey and to discuss these factors to the extent that can be used as a basis for long-term registration requirements. Additional analysis and an alternative approach (based on the issues raised above) may become necessary. The statement of methodology should identify any known limitations of the approach taken in the recent survey and in the preparation of the multiple documentation form.

If there are any further questions about these comments and recommendations, please contact Linda McClelland at 202-354-2258 or [linda\\_mcclelland@nps.gov](mailto:linda_mcclelland@nps.gov).



## National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.



xx            New Submission            Amended Submission

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

I. The Development of World War II Air Bases in Kansas (1939-1945)

### C. Form Prepared by

name/title Susan Jezak Ford, Owner

organization Citysearch Preservation

date           

street & number 3628 Holmes Street

telephone 816-531-2489

city or town Kansas City

state MO

zip code 64109

e-mail           

### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

(           See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zelmer DSHPO  
Signature and title of certifying official

8-3-12  
Date

            
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Alexis Abernathy  
for Signature of the Keeper

9/26/2012  
Date of Action

## World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas

Kansas

Name of Multiple Property Listing

State

**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD WAR II AIR BASES IN KANSAS (1939-1945)

"Ten percent of aviation is in the air, and 90 percent is on the ground." Clement M. Keys, head of the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company.

The state of Kansas and the history of World War II are intertwined, each very much affecting the other. During the Second World War, Kansas became home to 16 Army Airfields and two Naval Air Stations, in addition to auxiliary fields, bombing ranges and aircraft plants. The enormous air bases and activity associated with them impacted surrounding communities, bringing income, jobs and increases in population. The bases would also strain towns, often requiring housing and utilities beyond those available. These issues were usually solved through compromise, making the bases an integral part of the communities for a few years.

The Kansas airfields were literally small cities on very large tracts of land, usually growing to house several thousand recruits and employing many local civilians, including female and African-American workers formerly consigned to agricultural work the service industry.<sup>1</sup> The typical base included dozens of buildings to house and train pilots and their crews, maintain aircraft, and guide the aircraft to the Pacific front. The airplanes and crews that came out of the Kansas air bases ultimately had a profound effect on the outcome of the war. The remaining sites are a physical link between Kansas and the role that the bases played during World War II.

#### Definitions

The following definitions are helpful in understanding the layout and workings of the Kansas airfields. In historic documents many of the terms have multiple spellings.

**AAF:** Army Airfield

**Air base:** An installation from which a military force initiates operations.

**Airfield/ Air field:** An area of fields and runways where aircraft can take off and land. The terms "base" and "field" are often used interchangeably in historic documents.

**Auxiliary field or Outlying field:** A landing field located a distance away from the main airfield or air base.

**B-29 Superfortress:** A large four-engine bomber built to replace the B-17 Fortress. Also referred to as a Superbomber or Very Heavy Bomber.

**NAS:** Naval Air Station.

**OLF:** Outlying field associated with a Naval Air Station.

#### Pre-World War II Aviation in Kansas

Kansas was home to many inventors and entrepreneurs who tried their hands at building and financing aircraft as early as the late 1800s. Among the scores of plans that were concurrent with Wilbur and Orville Wright but never quite took off were the Gabbey Air-Ship Company of Rossville in 1898, William Purvis

<sup>1</sup> Peter Fearon, "Ploughshares Into Airplanes: Manufacturing Industry and Workers in Kansas During World War II," *Kansas History* 22 (Winter 1999/2000): 299.

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and Charles Wilson's 1909 helicopter in Goodland and even Frank Barnett's propelled kite contraption displayed in the *Kansas City Star* in 1897.<sup>2</sup> The machines of these and other Kansas inventors were whimsical and odd-looking but represented the wave of the future as Americans contemplated air transportation.

There are many claims attributing the first Kansas-built airplane to fly successfully. Nearly all of these early machines, most built around 1910, did not fly reliably. The ideas and enthusiasm of most early inventors came to nothing. There are two prominent exceptions in this scenario—Clyde Cessna of Rago and A.K. Longren of Topeka. Longren, an automobile dealer, successfully accomplished sustained, controlled flights in 1911. He went on to set up an airplane factory in Topeka. Cessna, a born tinkerer, also conducted his first public flight in 1911 in Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> He soon moved his manufacturing operation off of his Kingman County farm to a site in northern Wichita. Both men tried mightily but failed to acquire government contracts during World War I.

Kansas proved an ideal location for enthusiasts ready to try their hand with the new mode of transportation. Early landing strips were simply mowed fields on the flat plains. Following World War I, cities began constructing paved runways and municipal airports in earnest. Major air hubs were in place and expanding in Kansas City and Wichita by 1927. The rest of the state followed suit and a dependable network of airports was constructed, with paved landing strips in Topeka, Lawrence, Coffeyville and Garden City.<sup>4</sup>

The Kansas airplane industry vigorously promoted itself. In April 1928, the Wichita Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce sponsored the "All-Kansas Air Tour." Governor Ben Pauleen rode in one of the tour's 30 airplanes accompanied by 100 dignitaries on the longest airplane tour ever taken thus far by a Kansas governor. An estimated 500,000 Kansas residents viewed the event intended to promote new airport construction and procure grass-roots support for the National Aeronautics Association. The weeklong April tour visited Wichita, Newton, Hutchinson, McPherson, Salina, Concordia, Abilene, Ft. Riley, Atchison, Kansas City, Ottawa, Garnett, Iola, Chanute, Parsons, Coffeyville, Independence, Moline, Arkansas City, Winfield and El Dorado.<sup>5</sup> A second air tour was planned for additional cities in June 1928.

Most Kansas airports of the day were small and located outside of town, consisting of adequate runways and the occasional hangar or passenger building. During the 1930s, airport improvement was one of the primary employment objectives of the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works

<sup>2</sup> Frank Joseph Rowe and Craig Miner, *Borne on the South Wind: A Century of Aviation in Kansas* (Wichita, KS: The Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing Co., 1994), 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 89. It is difficult to determine the exact number of airports in Kansas prior to the establishment of the Federal Aviation Administration in 1958.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 90-91.



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Administration. In 1937, 200 WPA workers started on a \$287,000 airport in Topeka.<sup>6</sup> WPA funds also constructed runways and/or hangars at Hutchinson Municipal Airport and Manhattan Regional Airport. In addition to employment, the airports provided free entertainment. Citizens would visit the breezy runways to watch incoming planes and possibly catch a glimpse of a famous passenger. The novel craft were soon well established on the prairies of Kansas.

### Army Build-Up in Kansas

The Army Air Forces are rooted in the August 1, 1907 formation of the Aeronautical Division in the Army Office of the Chief Signal Officer. The air branch of the United States Army took on a new role in March 1935 when the War Department established the General Headquarters Air Force (GHQAF). The purpose of the newly formed GHQAF was to provide air defense and a striking force, including pursuit, bombardment and attack units. With the escalation of the war in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to increase America's air power in January 1939, which he described as "utterly inadequate."<sup>7</sup> The Army air force was eventually placed under the Secretary of War and the War Department General Staff as the main land-based air division of the Army.

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, the European front of World War II (WWII) began. As the Axis forces won several victories between late 1940 and late 1941, the U.S. Army's air forces expanded rapidly. President Roosevelt called up National Guard and Reserve forces in August 1940. He also signed the Selective Training and Service Act in 1940 to fill volunteer vacancies in the army. These movements led to an increase in Army Air Corps volunteers, with young men choosing their area of service rather than being assigned to an unknown branch. Under these stimuli, the number of Air Corps personnel jumped from 20,503 on July 1, 1939 to 152,569 two years later. The Army's 1939 goal of training 1200 pilots a year increased to 7000 in 1940 and then to 30,000 in 1941. By the fall of 1941, the air force contemplated a training rate of 50,000 pilots a year. This increase in air power stressed the need for other aircrew members, ground technicians, instructors and facilities.<sup>8</sup>

To meet these rapidly expanding goals, the Air Corps drew on civilian training programs and schools to train new pilots. Civilian pilots were put to use as instructors and to ferry supplies, but the training programs suffered from shortages of time, instructors and equipment, especially airplanes. The expansion of the Air Corps personnel required a comparable growth in its facilities with a need for new airfields for training and new bases for the strategic units ready to take on the responsibility of national defense.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>7</sup> James G. Maurer, ed., *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961; reprint, Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 7 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Accessed online 24 May 2012 <<http://books.google.com/books>>.

<sup>8</sup> Office of Air Force History, Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume One: Plans and Early Operations* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 110.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 111-112.

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The build-up of Army air bases in the United States took off in 1941. Before January 1939, the Army air force had 17 air bases. By the peak of World War II activity in 1943, the air force had expanded to 783 main and sub-bases and auxiliary fields.<sup>10</sup> When President Roosevelt declared a national emergency on May 27, 1941, a call for increased troops and bases was well underway.

The Army air force committed to building 14 new bases in November 1941. Three Kansas fields—Marshall Field at Fort Riley, McConnell Field in Wichita and Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth—were already in operation at the onset of World War II. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, the Army acquired enough funding from Congress to complete 11 airfields, to develop 105 public airports for Army use and to construct 14 other air stations. The Army air force announced an immediate 1942 objective to increase strength to 115 combat groups, expand pilot output first to 50,000 and then to 70,000 annually and to increase its technician-training rate to 300,000 during the year. The program was approved by the War Department on February 19, 1942.<sup>11</sup> As the Army prepared to meet its manpower goal of 273 combat groups, a need for further expansion of bases was imminent.

The Army's massive development would require a building program of extensive facilities constructed as quickly as possible. Each combat group was planned to have one main base and four sub-bases, plus additional installations for training, maintenance, repair and storage.<sup>12</sup> Major General Robert Olds became the Directorate of Base Services in May 1942 and promptly submitted a plan for the Second Air Force to take on all heavy bombardment training. His proposal to locate new sites in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Montana was approved by the Army air force in early June. All of the new stations requested were in use by spring 1942, including Kansas bases Walker, Pratt, Great Bend, Salina and Topeka. The Third Air Force was also using Marshall Field at Fort Riley for training.<sup>13</sup>

A flurry of lobbying for additional sites began in earnest in early 1942. Kansas Senator Arthur Capper received requests for bases from constituents across the state, including the towns of St. John, Wakeeny, Phillipsburg, Clifton, Eureka and Colby. As field locations were chosen, Capper would typically send a telegram to the local newspaper, mayor or Chamber of Commerce. The telegram would announce that the War Department had authorized construction of an Air Force installation at the city to cost in excess of \$3 million. This routine occurred with each base, even though preparatory survey work often had already begun by the time the telegram was sent.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of 1943, the Army air force had 345 main bases, 116 sub-bases and 322 auxiliary fields within the continental United States.<sup>15</sup> Kansas was topographically an ideal location for airstrips. The flat

<sup>10</sup> Office of Air Force History, Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume Six: Men and Planes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 117.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-156.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Capper Papers, filed at Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

<sup>15</sup> Office of Air Force History, *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume Six*, 162.

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landscape of the plains could easily accommodate the runways and accompanying facilities required of the powerful World War II aircraft. Construction began on 13 additional major fields on the dates listed below and proceeded rapidly.<sup>16</sup> Army construction in Kansas also included dozens of auxiliary fields. These fields typically had no buildings. Runway configuration for these auxiliary fields ran the gamut from mowed ground to poured concrete.

AAF Field	Onset of construction
Smoky Hill	5 May 1942
Strother	16 May 1942
Coffeyville	1 June 1942
Fairfax	1 June 1942
Independence	6 June 1942
Garden City	16 June 1942
Dodge City	6 August 1942
Topeka	15 August 1942
Herington	September 1942
Walker	14 September 1942
Great Bend	30 September 1942 (estimate)
Pratt	8 October 1942
Liberal	9 January 1943

### Naval Build-Up

Along with approving measures to increase the Army's defensive strength, Congress passed the Naval Reserve Act of June 13, 1939. The act was based on the advice of specially appointed Navy boards that recommended the enlargement of 11 existing Naval stations and the establishment of 16 new stations. The boards also advised doubling the number of Navy pilots. The Naval Reserve Act authorized the training of 6000 reserve pilots and the establishment of new training bases.<sup>17</sup>

President Roosevelt's declaration of a national emergency on May 27, 1941 called all naval reservists to active duty. In June 1941, the Navy had 2,172 aircraft. In January 1942 Roosevelt directed the Navy to attain 27,000 planes. This tremendous expansion would require more personnel, the activation of reserve fields and the construction of new air stations. By the end of the fiscal year 1942, the Navy accelerated its training so that 2500 cadets could begin instruction each month.<sup>18</sup>

A series of Authorization Acts passed by Congress in early 1942 approved hundreds of millions of dollars for domestic naval air base construction. Between February and July, new training bases were established

<sup>16</sup> "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (Summer/Autumn 1959): 129-157; 334-360.

<sup>17</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43 (Autumn 1977): 351.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

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at six inland sites across the county to augment older reserve bases in primary flight training. These new bases included those in Olathe and Hutchinson.<sup>19</sup>

By the time the United States entered World War II, the Navy already managed a Naval Reserve Base at Fairfax Field, a municipal airport in Kansas City, Kansas. Year-round training began there in 1939. The North American Aviation Company also had a B-25 bomber factory at the site. With the increase in pilot training, the site became too crowded and hazardous. The Navy purchased land for a new, larger air station in Johnson County between Olathe and Gardner in January 1942. Construction began on January 5, 1942 and was complete in early 1944. The Navy also purchased or leased land in Kansas for up to 14 outlying fields, although not all of these sites were used.

The Navy also approved the establishment of a Naval Air Station near Hutchinson in the summer of 1942. The base was located on a tract approximately seven miles south of Hutchinson and one mile west of Yoder on more than 2500 acres. An additional 3900 acres were leased for up to 20 auxiliary landing fields. Construction began on the base in October 1942.<sup>20</sup>

### The War and Kansas

Many of the wartime obstacles that faced Kansans were also nationwide challenges. Citizens learned to deal with shortages of rationed items that included gasoline, metal, tires and food, such as sugar, fats, oils butter and meat. Citizens were encouraged to make do, eliminate unnecessary purchases and reduce their use of driving and heating fuel. There was a continuous push to purchase war bonds, plant a garden or collect scrap metals. Americans and Kansans did as asked and more.

E. Gail Carpenter, a petroleum geologist in Wichita, described the spirit of the town's war effort in a June 1942 letter to members of his Sunday School class serving in the war:

The kids proudly save their nickels and dimes for War Saving Stamps. The War Bond windows at the banks have customers standing in line every day. Rubber piles grow at the filling station as John Q. gives his last pair of suspenders. The men, who are leaving each week for the Service, are a little older and they have a few less teeth, but they have that same well known determination to get the job done thoroughly and quickly.<sup>21</sup>

Pedrotty, Michael A., Julie L. Webster, Gordon L. Cohen, Aaron R. Chmiel, "Historical and architectural overview of military aircraft hangars." US Army Corps of Engineers online report, 1999. ([http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98\\_idx.htm](http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98_idx.htm))

By October 1942, further sacrifices were called for, as Carpenter wrote:

<sup>19</sup> Michael A. Pedrotty, Julie L. Webster, Gordon L. Cohen, and Aaron R. Chmiel, "Historical and Architectural Overview of Military Aircraft Hangars" (US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center, 1999). Accessed online 24 May 2012 < [http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98\\_idx.htm](http://owwww.cecer.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98_idx.htm) >

<sup>20</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains During World War II* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska, 2008), 246-247.

<sup>21</sup> Charles William Sloan, Jr., ed., "The Newelletters: E. Gail Carpenter Describes Life on the Home Front; Part I" *Kansas History* 11 (Spring 1988): 63.



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We are now attempting to drive within the national speed limit of thirty-five miles per hour. To tell you the truth, it is such a hard job that it is much more pleasant to ride by train or bus, which is just what the law is supposed to do... We have searched high and low for scrap rubber and scrap metal of all kinds. In two or three weeks we will be rationed to four gallons of gasoline per week.<sup>22</sup>

With most able-bodied men, as well as many women, enlisted in the military, there were shortages of civilian workers to keep the home machinery going. In Kansas, 227,000 male and female Kansans served in the armed forces between September 16, 1940 and June 30, 1946, according to a database compiled by the Kansas State Historical Society. Although draft regulations changed in 1943 so that many farmers and workers were deferred, many enlisted anyway, believing it was their patriotic duty.<sup>23</sup> Of the 227,000 Kansas enlistees, 2535 were women serving as nurses and in the female branches of the army, airforce, coast guard and marines. The civilians who remained in Kansas needed to take over the day-to-day activities in the towns, cities and farms.

Farm workers contributed to the war effort by expanding cropland and production. Despite 15,000 fewer farms in 1945 than in 1935, Kansas farmers enlarged cropland to 5 million acres, an expansion of 22 percent. Sales of both cattle and hogs increased two-thirds between 1940 and 1945.<sup>24</sup> As men joined the armed forces or went to work in factories, rural women took over field work traditionally done by men. The Kansas Farm Labor Board reported that the proportion of female farm workers increased by two-thirds from 1942 to 1943.<sup>25</sup> The newly defined tasks included driving tractors, running combines, hauling grain and operating other machinery, with hauling grain the most common job for females.<sup>26</sup> Kansas farm women coped with the addition of the agricultural tasks to their traditional household work by focusing on completing the most pressing jobs and by exchanging labor with neighbors during harvest.<sup>27</sup>

World War II brought a massive increase in airplane production in Wichita, home to Boeing, Cessna, Beech and Culver. Men and women went to work in the factories, which ran 24 hours a day. The city of Wichita set up new bus routes in 1942 to take workers to the factories. *The Wichita Beacon* reported that at least half of the wartime Boeing employees were farm workers from Kansas or other Midwest states who had adapted their farm skills to factory work. The rural workers—accustomed to hard work, having knowledge of farm machinery and knowing how to use hand tools—required less basic instruction in assembly line work. The new factory population included a higher-than-average percentage of women—approximately eight percent of Boeing welders were women and more populated other departments.<sup>28</sup> By May 1944 more than 63,000 Wichita workers were producing airplanes for the military, bringing more

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>23</sup> Caron Smith, "The Women's Land Army During World War II" *Kansas History* 14 (Summer 1991): 85.

<sup>24</sup> Michael J. Grant, "Food Will Win the War and Write the Peace: The Federal Government and Kansas Farmers During World War II" *Kansas History* 20 (Winter 1997-1998): 249.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 85. (*Kansas Farm Labor in 1942 and 1943*, Manhattan: Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1944, 23.)

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 86.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>28</sup> "Many Have Farm Employees Experience," *The Wichita Beacon*, 25 October 1942.

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than \$2 billion into the city since the United States entered the war. The prosperity that Boeing, Cessna and Beech experienced was shared with other communities through sub-contracts, sending more than \$71 million of work to other Kansas firms, primarily in Coffeyville, Kansas City and Hutchinson.<sup>29</sup>

The WWII airfields in Kansas provided economic booms to nearby communities, beginning with a sudden influx of wages for construction jobs. Each field needed to be surveyed for runways constructed of thousands of yards of concrete. Most fields would require the construction of a multitude of buildings for hangars, housing, warehouses, administration and entertainment. The cost of each major field was projected to be millions of dollars channeled into areas recovering from drought and the Great Depression. The rapid construction of the fields and their associated buildings required many professionals and laborers. Airfield construction was overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers, but often put regional architects and contractors to work as well. For example, most of the Smoky Hill base in Salina was completed in 1942 with the help of 13 civilian contractors and more than 7000 workers.<sup>30</sup> A newspaper article noted that the work force at the Hutchinson NAS peaked at 2500 in early 1943.<sup>31</sup> Most airfields were completed in 18 months, providing steady employment for those in the construction industry.

Once the bases began operating, there was a need for civilian workers. Locals—often women—were hired as clerical or bureaucratic workers. Civilian workers were also hired for specialized tasks, such as the inspection, repair and maintenance of parachutes. The bases also required civilian mechanics, technicians or electricians.

The arrival of hundreds to thousands of military personnel and their families had profound effects on Kansas towns. Finding housing for troops or their families proved difficult for every new airfield. Homeowners often rented spare rooms to transient families who arrived to spend time with servicemen before they were sent overseas. Local services were often strained, such as a period of time when the commercial laundries in Hutchinson could not meet the demands of the town and the base. Off-duty service men and women spent time and money in local communities, bringing in a badly needed infusion of currency. In time, nearly every town located near an airfield responded with activities and assistance for the bases. Nearby towns collected furniture and reading materials for base “day rooms,” where troops could relax during their free time. And Kansas towns, whether located near a base or not, opened a United Service Organization center to entertain off-duty troops.

The Kansas airfields were part of a nationwide war effort, but also much more. The bases and auxiliary fields provided training for beginner to advanced pilots, as well as training in all facets of aircraft maintenance and support. The four B-29 bases—Great Bend, Pratt, Smoky Hill and Walker—had a profound effect on the war. As the B-29s left assembly lines in 1944, 54 modifications were required to ready them for war. The four Kansas bases served as homes to the crews that converged in early 1944 to

<sup>29</sup> “Kansas Cities Share Wichita Plane Millions,” *The Topeka Capital*, 7 May 1944.

<sup>30</sup> “U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (Summer/Autumn 1959): 129-157; 334-360.

<sup>31</sup> “Air Station Not Ready,” *The Hutchinson News-Herald*, 5 February 1943.

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modify the early versions of the bombers. The five week struggle to get the planes to the Pacific front became known as the "Battle of Kansas."<sup>32</sup> The successful transfer of the equipped planes to their destinations overseas gave the US Army a needed edge in the Pacific. The offensive by the airships and their crews readied on the plains of Kansas surprised and weakened a determined enemy. Suddenly faced with the new, monstrous craft, Japan faced the possibility that the war would soon come to an end.

### Construction

The Kansas WWII airfields included collections of buildings and structures that often resembled and functioned as small cities. Army buildings and structures were usually classified by function, falling into the categories of airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings. Not every field included buildings in every category, but most of the large fields that became air bases had enough of each type to serve the field's mission and meet the needs of a large base population.

Structures or resources associated with the airfield category serviced the airplanes and their flights. These included runways, taxiways, hangars, bomb storage, parking aprons and control towers. Buildings in the cantonment category provided primarily semi-permanent housing and administration, including barracks, mess halls, commissaries, storage, supply buildings, general administration buildings, guard houses and fire stations. Training buildings served the purpose of training pilots, primarily in classroom buildings. Recreation and welfare buildings functioned to provide entertainment and reflection for the troops, mostly in their off-duty time. This category included recreation centers, swimming pools, chapels, theaters and post offices. Hospitals rounded out the collection of structures to include buildings for tending to the health of the servicemen and servicewomen. This category usually included office buildings, wards, infirmaries, dental clinics, and quarters and housing for nurses.

As new airfields mushroomed across the country, a determination was made whether each base would be of permanent—usually brick or concrete—or temporary—quick, less pretentious—construction. The general trend as the war went on was toward less substantial construction because it became obvious that not all fields would be needed during peacetime.<sup>33</sup> By the time that Kansas airfields were planned, building resources were becoming scarce and construction was usually of the most immediate and least expensive type. These very utilitarian buildings had little architectural style. They were functional, efficient and constructed as often as possible of materials deemed "non-critical" to the war effort.

When the Kansas airfields were built, all military construction was overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps was a technical branch of the Army that specialized in construction and maintained a large and efficient field organization. The task of constructing buildings for the Air Corps was transferred to the Corps of Engineers in November 1940. With little to no experience in building housing and airfields, the Corps grew to meet the challenge of working with its new and unfamiliar assignment. The Corps applied efficient construction methods that had successfully worked in rivers and

<sup>32</sup> General Curtis LeMay and Bill Yenne, *Superfortress: The Boeing B-29 and American Airpower in World War II* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2006), 68-70.

<sup>33</sup> Office of Air Force History, *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume One*, 113.

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harbors. The branch streamlined previously unorganized systems for purchasing products and settling local labor disputes and generally speeded up the process of finding good sites, approving drawings and beginning construction.<sup>34</sup>

The Kansas Army airfields reflect decisions made by the Corps to conserve materials in every way possible. In April 1942, a collection of Ordnance and Engineer officers met at Kings Mills, Ohio. They recognized the need to eliminate all critical materials in construction. This would be accomplished by adopting several measures. Non-critical materials would be substituted for critical materials whenever possible. Construction would be limited to bare necessities. Layouts would be more compact to shorten utility lines. Buildings would be fewer. Simple wood framing would be standard. Electrical wiring would be open wire, knob and tube or non-metallic cable. Warehouses would have no sprinkler systems. Frame sheds would rest on concrete slabs instead of foundations. Specifications called for wood sewer pipes, wooden manhole covers, wood or gypsum lath, and wood or cement-asbestos roof ventilators. The list of economic measures continued on and on.<sup>35</sup>

This comprehensive approach to construction created a series of airfields with very similar appearances. Buildings were minimal, most of semi-permanent construction described as "field of operations" or "mobilization" types. Typical construction for most buildings is described in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* article "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas" of buildings at the Dodge City AAF: "The arrangement was standard rectangular, with building exteriors consisting of wood sheeting covered with 15-pound felt and asbestos-siding shingles."<sup>36</sup>

From field to field, buildings with similar uses looked alike, despite the fact that local architectural and contracting firms had a hand in their construction. Most barracks had the same appearance at every base, as did classroom buildings, Norden bombsight storage buildings, guard houses and hangars. A summer 2008 survey of extant Kansas WWII airfield structures revealed that similar types of buildings had nearly identical dimensions and materials. This is surely due to the fact that plans and construction were pre-determined by the Corps of Engineers.

The layouts of bases also reflected conservation of materials. By 1942, the buildings on bases were arranged into compact blocks of buildings with reduced firebreak distances, narrowed roads, shortened utility lines and decreased overall grading. These measures, instituted across the Corps, resulted in huge savings in materials and in costs.<sup>37</sup>

The Corps of Engineers also oversaw the construction of the Naval bases in Olathe and Hutchinson. According to a 1999 Corps report, Olathe initially had a single temporary wood hangar and Hutchinson

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<sup>34</sup> Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States; The United States Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), 443.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 535-536.

<sup>36</sup> "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 25(Summer/Autumn 1959): 129-157; 334-360.

<sup>37</sup> Fine and Remington, 536.



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had two temporary hangars.<sup>38</sup> The extant World War II buildings reveal a mode of construction more substantial than the Army's semi-permanent type. Most remaining NAS buildings are of brick and concrete construction. The Hutchinson NAS displays an Art Moderne influence, with clean lines, windows that wrap building corners and wide concrete eaves that contrast with red brick walls. The Olathe NAS buildings display the Art Deco style, featuring concrete sill and lintel courses that contrast with red brick walls, geometricized trim and the occasional stepped parapet. These stylistic details and sturdier construction may be due to the fact that both of the bases were planned for much longer use than the Kansas Army bases.

The build-up of Army bases reached a peak in mid-1943 in training and equipping air forces. After crews were deployed overseas, the time came to curtail activity on domestic bases. As the war in Europe wound down in early 1945 and Japan's surrender came in August 1945, the Army air bases in Kansas and across the country had served their purpose.

After WWII, most Kansas bases were rapidly decommissioned and declared surplus as their purpose came to an end. Twelve of the primary Army Air Fields quickly became municipal airports and several continue in this purpose. Auxiliary fields followed the course of the bases after WWII. Some simply reverted back to agricultural land and some continue in use today as landing strips for crop dusters and private airplane owners. The Olathe NAS became a reserve station and two of its outlying fields became municipal airports. The Hutchinson NAS was reactivated during the Korean War and its two outlying fields reverted to municipal airports. All Army air activity in Kansas was eventually transferred to Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth and Marshall Field at Fort Riley. The Fairfax Airfield jointly served the Air Force and private industry. Walker AAF, the base that was poorly sited but played a very significant role in B-29 readiness, was transferred to the Corps of Engineers and within a few years sold off. The Army Air Forces finally became the United States Air Force as part of the Armed Services Unification Act of July 26, 1947.

### B-29 Superfortresses and Their Associated Properties

Kansas airplane manufacturers were responsible for several well-known models of WWII aircraft. The Kaydet bi-plane made by Stearman Aircraft of Boeing proved to be such a simple, rugged craft that it was used for most early pilot training. The North American Aircraft plant in Kansas City began constructing B-25 Mitchell medium bombers in 1941, completing 6608 by the end of the war.<sup>39</sup> Boeing built the B-17 Flying Fortress, a tough four-engine bomber that was known for holding up well in combat. But perhaps the most significant product of the WWII Kansas factories and airfields was the B-29 Superfortress bomber (Figure 1.) Nearly four thousand of the enormous planes were built during WWII—1595 of them in Wichita by Boeing with assistance from the Beech, Cessna and Culver factories.

As World War II progressed, it became clear that there was a need for a large bomber capable of traveling very far distances at very high altitudes. Even before the brand new B-29 was fully developed, General

<sup>38</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, and Chmiel, "Historical and Architectural Overview of Military Aircraft Hangars."

<sup>39</sup> Richard Macias, "We All Had a Cause: Kansas City's Bomber Plant, 1940-1945," *Kansas History* 28 (Winter 2005/2006): 248, 261.

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Arnold called for deployment of the aircraft against Axis Europe and Japan. It was soon determined that the B-17s and B-24s already in use in Europe were adequate, but that the Pacific front needed a bomber with a longer range.<sup>40</sup> B-17 airplanes were already fighting in the Pacific in 1942, but the larger, more powerful superbomber loomed on the horizon.

The B-29 was designated the XB-29-BO, experimental bomber type 29 built by Boeing in Seattle. As the first model of the craft was completed in 1942, a new class of superlatives was created to describe it. The earlier B-17 was named the Flying Fortress but the B-29 became known as the Superfortress. The Air Force refused to call the enormous plane merely a "heavy bomber," so the designation of "Very Heavy Bomber" was invented.<sup>41</sup> The first B-29 Superfortress was tested in Seattle in September 1942 and was later known as a million dollar gamble. General H.H. Arnold was positive that the new planes to meet all of his expectations. By going with an untested model, Arnold wagered on Boeing's ability to deliver a new kind of aircraft that would win the war. The superbomber was so highly anticipated that mass production proceeded with no extensive testing of the craft. Arnold also counted on the construction of the effective training fields and bases that the massive planes would require.<sup>42</sup> On June 29, 1943 the first Superfortress rolled off of the Boeing assembly line in Wichita. Boeing broke ground for the plant just two years earlier, before the B-29 was even tested. The *Kansas City Times* wrote, "It was a stupendous job which called for all the wizard tactics of the engineers."<sup>43</sup>

The B-29 was the largest bomber in the world, with a wing span of just over 141 feet, an overall height of nearly 28 feet and 99 feet long (Figure 2.) It was light, constructed of aluminum and clad with an outer skin of unpainted aluminum held in place with counter-sunk rivets. The aircraft's long nose protruded far ahead of its long, tapering wings. It had a very high tail to lend stability and its glass nose cone made it easily identifiable. The four 2200-horsepower engines provided twice as much power as the B-17.<sup>44</sup> The B-29 could achieve speeds over 300 miles per hour and could fly at elevations well over 30,000 feet.<sup>45</sup> The plane had a pressurized front cabin and rear gunner's compartment with a connecting tunnel for flying at high altitudes. It could carry 20,000 pounds<sup>46</sup> and could fly over 5000 miles without refueling, allowing it to fly from the United States to the Pacific front without needing fuel, an innovation for the day.<sup>47</sup> Boeing's 3943 WWII B-29s were built in four locations: 1595 at the Boeing Wichita plant; 1001 at the Boeing plant in Renton, Washington; 652 at the Bell Aircraft plant in Marietta, Georgia and 515 at the Glenn Martin plant in Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>40</sup> Wilbur H. Morrison, *Birds From Hell: History of the B-29* (Central Point, OR: Hellgate Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>41</sup> LeMay and Yenne, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Fine and Remington, 623.

<sup>43</sup> "Sky Dream True," *Kansas City Times*, 16 June 1944. (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13).

<sup>44</sup> "B-29 Is City's Big Contribution to War Effort," *The Wichita Eagle*, 15 June 1944. (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13).

<sup>45</sup> "Boeing B-29 Superfortress," *Aviation*, July 1944, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Les Kinderknecht and Jason Cromer, producers, "Bombers on the Prairie" (Bunker Hill, KS: Smoky Hills Public Television, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> LeMay and Yenne, 181.

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In 1943, four Kansas airfields near Boeing's Wichita plant were designated for B-29 preparation and training—Smoky Hill AAF in Salina, Walker AAF near Hays, Great Bend AAF and Pratt AAF. Additional training fields were built in Nebraska at McCook, Grand Island, Harvard and Fairmont. Other fields designated for training B-29 personnel were eventually located in Ohio, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.<sup>48</sup> The exceptional designation as a B-29 station triggered construction that caused the bases to grow practically overnight to accommodate populations that averaged 7000. The large planes would require runways that approached 10,000 feet and huge hangars. The Army was counting on the training and preparation activities at the bases to significantly affect the outcome of WWII.

The Superfortresses and their power soon gained the admiration of their crews, as well as civilians. Tech Sergeant Anthony Ventura described in "The Unsung Plains of Kansas" his first view of the B-29 bomber at the Pratt AAF:

My entrance to the hangar via the rear door was stopped in its tracks.... For there standing before me was the unbelievable sight of the hugest airplane my life had ever witnessed. This enormous hangar that could normally house dozens of liaison ships had barely enough room to shelter this man made miracle that was over 90 feet long. The huge wings had as light dihedral, pitching the 146-foot wing tips skyward, clearing the walls with little to spare. Special space had to be improvised in the center of the hangar door to allow the vertical stabilizing tail section enough room for the 28 feet of height.<sup>49</sup>

The Kansas B-29 bases provided the important mission of training crews and mechanics to learn and understand the airplanes. Due to the unique craft and its mission, each B-29 air and ground crew would need more operational training, information and skills than ever before required. Each crew member was expected to be an expert in his field and all crews were interchangeable.<sup>50</sup> As the planes became available, the heavy bombardment squadrons practiced the tactics of flying the planes and accurately hitting targets located on the Kansas plains.

Bases for B-29s also required more substantial construction to accommodate the large planes and increased personnel associated with them. B-29s could use 6000-foot runways but needed runways of at least 7000 feet for their maximum loads of 120,000 pounds. Very Heavy Bomber groups required more housing and maintenance facilities than were previously available. The Second Air Force carried the main responsibility for this and by the end of 1943 B-29 training was underway at Salina, Great Bend, Pratt and Walker, plus Clovis, NM.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Anthony Ventura, "The Unsung Plains of Kansas" (Pratt, KS: Pratt Army Air Field History Center, Transcribed by Milt Martin, 2010. Accessed 24 May 2012 <<http://paaf.indexks.com/eng/Army-Air-Fields/Kansas-AAF/Pratt/346th-BG/Stories/The-Unsung-Plains-Of-Kansas>>.

<sup>50</sup> Morrison, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 164.

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As Superfortress training began near Salina in the Fall of 1943, the course of war shaped the mission of the airplanes. The B-29 emerged after the tide in Europe had turned. Enemy forces in North Africa had been defeated. The Allies had entered Italy. Hitler's invasion of Russia was ending in disaster. One by one, German cities suffered damaging air raids. In the Pacific, however, industrial Japan was virtually intact. Roads to Tokyo stretched for thousands of miles and attacks so far had had little effect. By placing the Japanese islands within bombing range, the Superfortress made possible a more hard-hitting strategy.<sup>52</sup>

In November 1943, President Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo. The three leaders formed a strategic plan that called for sustained bombing of Japan. As negotiations continued, the Army went to work to transform the new B-29 planes into combat-ready machines. Chiang Kai-shek promised to build airfields at Chengtu if Roosevelt could promise to deliver B-29s by April 15, 1944. General Arnold instructed Brigadier General Kenneth B. Wolfe to accelerate B-29 production by bringing in needed personnel from anywhere in the Army.<sup>53</sup>

As B-29s began leaving the factories in significant numbers, Wolfe moved his headquarters to the Smoky Hill AAF near Salina and activated Very Heavy Bombardment groups. The planes that arrived at their designated bases were not ready for war. General Curtis LeMay writes in his book *Superfortress*:

The only problem now was that the planes pouring into Smoky Hill were not ready for combat, and they were still plagued by engine problems. In normal times the assembly line would have been shut down and the problems corrected before planes were built, but these were anything but normal times. Modification centers were set up from Alabama to Colorado to fix the B-29s before they got to Smoky Hill.<sup>54</sup>

Inadequate parts on the early B-29s included carburetor air duct baffles, fuel cells, exhaust cylinders and exhaust valves. The planes were also delivered with nonstandard equipment and incomplete inspections.

The flaws had to be fixed before the Superbombers could be sent overseas. The B-29 bases were responsible for preparing the airplanes for their mission. Responsibilities fell to base mechanics and their aides to:

- Replace all engines that were not durable "war" engines
- Strengthen or replace rudders
- Replace all tires on main landing gear systems
- Replace exhaust collector rings that were cracked by engine heat and vibrations
- Raise cowl flaps above the exhaust manifolds to prevent overheating and loss of power
- Install radar systems

<sup>52</sup> Fine and Remington, 641.

<sup>53</sup> LeMay and Yenne, 68-69.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



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- Modify propeller pistons and governors for high altitudes to reduce fuel consumption.<sup>55</sup>

Every B-29 coming off of the assembly line required 54 major modifications, including alterations to the electrical system, fire control system and propeller-feathering system. Eventually these changes would be made on the assembly line, but in early 1944 they were made at the bases with parts retrieved from across the country.<sup>56</sup>

Activity at the Kansas B-29 fields culminated with "The Battle of Kansas" in Spring 1944. General H.H. Arnold arrived at Smoky Hill AAF on March 9, 1944 and asked how many bombers could be ready to leave for interim fields in India the next day. The answer was "none." Arnold exploded and issued orders that had phones ringing across the country initiating the Salina Blitz, or The Battle of Kansas. Colonels and GI mechanics flew in overnight. Boeing sent 600 civilians from its Wichita plant. Orders were issued that last plane would fly away on April 15.

At the four Kansas B-29 modification centers, workers went on double shifts as the trickle of necessary parts became a landslide. An article in the *Saturday Evening Post* in August 1945 recalled, "Superfortresses unready for battle were delivered to Kansas bases, where bombardment groups were poised for overseas. Army mechanics at Salina, Pratt, Walker and Great Bend tried to button up jobs left flapping." Workers in Salina and the other B-29 bases put in long days to ready the planes for departure. Training engines were taken out and war engines installed. The planes were modified to carry bombs weighing 10,000-12,000 pounds. Every detail on the aircraft was prepared for readiness. The sudden effort coincided with a major winter storm. Work continued around the clock, often outdoors in the wind, sleet and bitter cold due to a shortage of hangars.<sup>57</sup>

General Curtis LeMay describes the importance of the Battle of Kansas in his book *Superfortress*:

For Hap Arnold, The Battle of Kansas was no clever euphemism applied to a logistical setback—it was Stalingrad. It was a battle that *could not* be lost. If it were lost, there would be no tomorrow for the dream of autonomous strategic air power in World War II. In a grand global conflict in which logistics proved again and again to be the critical factor in narrow—yet decisive—victories, the Battle of Kansas was a major turning point.<sup>58</sup>

The Battle of Kansas was won. The last of 150 B-29s left Kansas on April 15, 1944 for bases in India, China and eventually the Marianas Islands.<sup>59</sup> Two months later the bombing of Japan began. The abilities of the massive aircraft were a source of honor for Kansans. *The Wichita Eagle* wrote on June 16, 1944:

<sup>55</sup> Phillip T. Schulz, "Parachute Building" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 13 August 2008).

<sup>56</sup> LeMay and Yenne, 70.

<sup>57</sup> "The Battle of Kansas" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13 (November 1945): 481-484.

<sup>58</sup> LeMay and Yenne, 69.

<sup>59</sup> Morrison, 39-40.

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Wichita has the deepest pride in the performance of the B-29's which yesterday undertook their first attack on Japan. These superbombers were designed for such work as the Pacific Ocean demands...The B-29's yesterday brought home to Japan the stark fact that distance is no longer to serve that nation as it has in the past. The B-29's were designed to conquer distance.<sup>60</sup>

The mission to bomb Japanese cities affected the men involved, even with public opinions of the day. Most Americans had strong attitudes after Pearl Harbor regarding terror attacks on civilians. A public opinion poll by Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk on December 10, 1941 revealed that 67 percent of the population favored unqualified and indiscriminate bombing of Japanese cities. Later surveys provided similar results.<sup>61</sup> Most Americans and publications believed that the AAF avoided indiscriminate killing of civilians whenever possible, focusing most bombardment on military objectives.<sup>62</sup> Yet this was not always true. The March 9, 1945 attack on Tokyo was aimed at six industrial targets, many smaller factories, railroad yards, home industries and cable plants. Also targeted was Asakusa Ku, a densely populated area. Ninety thousand to 100,000 people were killed in the attack, many from intense heat from the firestorm, suffocation or burning alive. After the attack, 16 square miles of Tokyo were burned out and over 1 million were homeless.<sup>63</sup> The night attack resulted in the greatest damage so far, destroying 267,000 buildings.<sup>64</sup> Conrad C. Crane writes in *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, "Airmen who returned from the first great fire raid on Tokyo and who had observed from low-level the carnage they caused "handed in their reports with hands that shook, with shock and horror still reflected in their eyes."<sup>65</sup>

Despite such reactions, B-29 crews carried out more raids, since the airmen were certain that such attacks were the only way to end the war quickly. B-29s contributed to the destruction of 180 square miles of 67 cities, killing over 300,000 people and wounding another 400,000. Advanced American tactics and Japanese defenses resulted in the loss of only 437 Very Heavy Bombers during combat, mostly because of technical failures. The fleet of B-29s contributed greatly toward bringing the war to an end. Japan's Prince Konoye credited the bombers by saying, "Fundamentally, the thing that brought about the determination to make peace was the prolonged fire bombing by the B-29s."<sup>66</sup> The final bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were preceded by the dropping of leaflets stating that the new bomb carried by the B-29s would be used to destroy every military resource prolonging the war, ending with the demand, "Evacuate Your Cities!" Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson viewed the atom bomb as contrary to everything he stood for. As the war continued he met drained fatigued European troops headed for the Pacific. Facing the possibility of more war, he approved "the least abhorrent choice" for the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> "The B-29 Attack," *The Wichita Eagle*, 16 June 1944. (KSHS Archives Clippings K629.13)

<sup>61</sup> Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 29.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>64</sup> Lemay and Yenne, 199.

<sup>65</sup> Crane, 49.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

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General Arnold visited the Wichita Boeing plant on August 29, 1945 and summarized the effect of the B-29s on the outcome of the war. "Soon after the Superforts completed their first strikes from the Marianas, the...official Domei broadcast conceded that the planes were an unsolvable problem to them. And from that time on until Hiroshima and Nagasaki felt the final blows carried by B-29s, all America knew that the army air forces and Boeing Superforts could do the job they were assigned."<sup>68</sup> Due to the foresight of General Arnold, the development of the Kansas B-29 airfields and perseverance during the Battle of Kansas, the B-29 program made a significant impact on the outcome of World War II. The Kansas airfields were a major component in the Battle of Kansas and contributed toward the war's rapid end.

### Air Fields

General H.H. Arnold described the needs of the Army air force: "An air force is a balanced compound of three essential ingredients—airplanes, combat and maintenance crews, and air bases."<sup>69</sup> This balance of aircraft, personnel and base facilities provided the necessary foundation for the needed fighting power, effective training and strategic mobility. An airfield required a minimum of operating runways, a control tower, communication equipment, weather apparatus, night lighting, shops and warehouses. Each unit of the Army air force also supervised sub-bases, auxiliary fields, and bombing and gunnery ranges.<sup>70</sup>

Each base contained dozens, if not hundreds, of buildings to meet these needs. In addition to buildings for the airfield, cantonment (administration, housing, warehouses, utilities and infrastructure) and training, a well-functioning base also included buildings for recreation, welfare and health care. A 1959 article titled "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas" in *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* lists the buildings constructed at the Coffeyville AAF, a typical Kansas base.

**Airfield:** 4 runways, 5 taxiways, 3 hangars, parking apron and control tower.

**Cantonment:** 67 enlisted men's barracks, 25 cadet barracks, 3 WAC's barracks, 8 mess halls, 1 guard house, 1 commissary, 13 warehouses, 11 administration buildings, 12 supply rooms, 1 post headquarters building, 6 operations buildings, 1 fire station, 1 telephone building, 1 signal office building.

**Training:** 1 ground school building, 2 miscellaneous buildings, 6 link trainer buildings, 1 chemical warfare building.

**Recreation and Welfare:** 17 general recreation buildings, 1 chapel, 1 theater, 1 post office, 1 post exchange.

**Hospital:** 1 administration building, 5 wards, 1 infirmary, 1 dental clinic, 1 nurses' quarters, 1 nurses' recreation building.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> "The Battle of Kansas" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13 (November 1945): 481-484.

<sup>69</sup> Office of Air Force History, *Volume Six*, 119.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (Summer/Autumn 1959): 129-157; 334-

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A brief description of each Kansas base is given below, including activity prior to World War II as applicable.<sup>72</sup>

### Coffeyville AAF

The Coffeyville AAF was sited seven miles northeast of Coffeyville on a tract of land that included more than 1400 acres. Construction began on June 1, 1942 and on June 17 of that year the field was activated. Construction encompassed water distribution, a sewage system, the distribution of electricity and paving access roads. Buildings within the field were noted by use—airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital, listed below.

**Airfield:** 4 runways from 4100 to 5872 feet long, 5 taxiways between 400 and 2400 feet long, 3 hangars (Figure 32,) parking apron and control tower.

**Cantonment:** 67 enlisted men's barracks, 25 cadet barracks, 3 WAC's barracks, 8 mess halls, 1 guard house, 1 commissary, 13 warehouses, 11 administration buildings, 12 supply rooms, 1 post headquarters building, 6 operations buildings, 1 fire station, 1 telephone building, 1 signal office building.

**Training:** 1 ground school building, 2 miscellaneous buildings, 6 link trainer buildings, 1 chemical warfare building.

**Recreation and Welfare:** 17 general recreation buildings, 1 chapel, 1 theater, 1 post office, 1 post exchange.

**Hospital:** 1 administration building, 5 wards, 1 infirmary, 1 dental clinic, 1 nurses' quarters, 1 nurses' recreation building.

The budget to build the base was estimated at \$7 million, according to *The Oswego Independent*. The base was undoubtedly good news for the city and local workers, as the article stated, "(The) City of Coffeyville is cooperating in the way of building extensions to their water and electric systems.... Thus is another great war industry added to the cluster of similar industries being assembled in this part of the interior."<sup>73</sup>

The Coffeyville AAF's initial mission was to provide basic training for aviation cadets. From the first class in November 1942 until February 1943, approximately 4840 cadets and aviation students began the basic flying course. Due to numerous resignations, serious accidents and other problems, only 3881 successfully completed the course.

When the Third Air Force took over the field in June 1944, the training program switched to training pilots for combat photo reconnaissance. For the next 12 months, over 460 pilots received this specialized training and were shipped overseas for their assignments. Even with the few weeks remaining in WWII, there was no decrease in this specific training.

<sup>72</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all information on individual bases comes from a comprehensive pair of articles, "U.S. Army and Air Force Wings Over Kansas," published in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* in the Summer and Autumn issues of 1959.

<sup>73</sup> "Coffeyville Lands," *The Oswego Independent*, 15 May 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).



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Coffeyville AAF was scheduled for deactivation shortly after the end of WWII. The facility was given to the city of Coffeyville in the late 1940s for a municipal airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released the deed in 1962.<sup>74</sup> Remains of the Coffeyville AAF include three hangars, a parachute building, water tower, two utility buildings and the two of the three original runways. The buildings are all in good condition and are part of the Coffeyville Municipal Airport.

Coffeyville AAF had four auxiliary fields. No. 1, 206 acres, was approximately 6.2 miles southeast; No. 2, 241 acres, was about 14 miles east; No. 3, 633 acres, was 12.5 miles northeast and No. 4, 241 acres, was nine miles slightly east of north. Of the four fields, only No. 3 was concrete and is the only one extant. Located northeast of Edna, it served as the Edna Municipal airport from the 1940s until the 1970s. The federal government gave the property to the city of Edna in 1948. The FAA ordered the city to repair the deteriorated runways in 1980, but the city of Edna could not afford the \$100,000 cost and chose to give up the property.<sup>75</sup> The land was sold in 1984.<sup>76</sup> The triangular configured runways are now privately owned but can be viewed from the air.

### Dodge City AAF

A flurry of lobbying in Washington led to the announcement in June 1942 of Dodge City chosen for a field to provide bomber training for the British Royal Air Force (RAF). The site was originally intended as one of the RAF bases planned for western Kansas that also included Garden City, Pratt and Liberal. The RAF did not come to Kansas, but plans for the field continued.

Approximately 2520 acres northwest of Dodge City were acquired from eight property owners through condemnation. An additional 16 acres were purchased for the construction of a railroad spur to the field. Construction began in August 1942, primarily consisting of cantonment, hangars, roads and facilities. Housing was built for nearly 4000 men, a hospital for 177 beds, warehousing with 71,186 square feet and at least four hangars that had space for 165 airplanes. Four runways 6500 feet long, six 75-foot taxiways and an apron 600 by 5300 feet were constructed. Work was complete by December 31, totaling more than \$7 million.

Dodge City AAF was initially designated as an advanced flying school. This soon changed to pilot training and ground instruction on the B-26 "Marauder" medium bomber (Figure 5.) Classes of students also included French nationals and Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

The town of Dodge City with its population of about 14,000 was quite welcoming of the base and its residents. Various civic groups furnished day rooms on the base. The base exhibited various types of equipment at the Boot Hill Fair and Rodeo in September 1943. The Dodge City *Daily Globe* frequently published press releases from the base.

<sup>74</sup> "Gives Up An Airfield," *Kansas City Times*, 3 October 1962. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>75</sup> "Town Gives Up World War II Legacy," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 23 May 1983. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

<sup>76</sup> "Edna Airstrip Out up for Sale Again," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 18 May 1984. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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When the need for B-26 transition training sharply dropped, training activities on the base stopped in June 1945. The official inactivation process began two days later and was complete by mid-July 1945. The Dodge City AAF and its auxiliary field, Jetmore No. 4 were declared surplus in October, 1946. The property served as the Ford County Airport for a time. It is now agricultural land, storage and a feed lot.

Of the enormous Dodge City AAF, WWII remains found in the summer of 2008 included one hangar (Figures 3 and 4,) three hangar ruins, three storage buildings, runway lights, a water tower and many concrete and brick ruins. Structures on the southwest side of the site include two storage buildings and a set of building ruins. The triangular configuration of runways is now agricultural land.

Land for an auxiliary field was purchased in late 1942 and early 1943. The Jetmore Auxiliary Field, located on 1180 acres six miles south of Jetmore, originally had runways in a butterfly configuration. One concrete runway remains today in good condition. The site, owned by the city of Jetmore, is used primarily by crop dusters.

### Fairfax Field

Fairfax Field served as a municipal airport before WWII. The airport, located just outside of Kansas City, was dedicated in 1929.<sup>77</sup> The Navy established a presence at the airport in the 1930s. With the threat of war at hand, President Roosevelt called for immediate steps to boost defense of the United States. Training programs at Fairfax increased from taking place just during the summer months to year-round. A 1941 Presidential executive order called all Navy Reservists to active duty. The original four short runways were lengthened to between 4500 and 6500 feet long and a large parking apron was added. Fairfax was now large enough to handle its anticipated capacity.<sup>78</sup>

The War Department announced on December 7, 1940 that a government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) assembly plant would be built on 75 acres adjacent to the west side of the Fairfax Airport.<sup>79</sup> North American Aviation Company was selected as the operation contractor and Fisher Body Division as the major subcontractor. Construction on the plant began on March 11, 1941. The plant opened in early December 1941. The plant's first B-25 airplane was completed December 23, 1941 and christened "Miss Greater Kansas City."<sup>80</sup>

The Army's Air Transport Command initially came to Fairfax Field in the spring of 1943 to transport out the new and modified B-25 planes. A detachment of WASPs was organized at Fairfax in 1944 to help with the ferrying mission. 6609 B-25 Mitchell bombers were produced at the North American Aviation plant

<sup>77</sup> George R. Bauer, *A Century of Kansas City Aviation History: The Dreamers and the Doers* (Kansas City: Historic Preservation Press, 1999), 72.

<sup>78</sup> Kathy Daniels, "Olathe Naval Air Station: Sailors On The Plains," *Album Johnson County Museum* 20, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 1.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Macias, "We All Had a Cause: Kansas City's Bomber Plant, 1940-1945," *Kansas History* 28 (Winter 2005/2006): 246-247.

<sup>80</sup> Bauer, 86.

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next to Fairfax Field. A total of 59,337 men and women worked at the plant from the summer of 1941 until production ended in October 1945.<sup>81</sup>

With increased traffic from the new North American plant on the west side of airport and the increase in Navy pilot training, Fairfax became very crowded. The training pilots had to move. A decision was made to purchase land in southern Johnson County for a more spacious Naval base, the Olathe Naval Air Station.

Production of the B-25s was reduced early in 1945. The Ferrying Division closed its Fairfax operation and Fairfax lost its base status in April 1945. While operating at Fairfax, the group delivered 6202 aircraft to domestic destinations and 251 overseas.

After December 1945 the Air Force used Fairfax nearly exclusively for reserve training. The base was quite cramped, however, and all operations were moved to the Olathe NAS in 1950. General Motors leased the North American Aviation plant for 15 years, expanded onto the runways and then purchased it from the federal government. The original buildings were razed in 1987 for a new GM plant.<sup>82</sup> The Fairfax Field runways are visible in aerial photographs, but no WWII structures are known to remain.

### Garden City AAF

After a year of lobbying for an air base, survey crews began outlining runways for the Garden City AAF on June 16, 1942. The site was originally intended as a base for the British RAF. When it was realized that the RAF would not come to Kansas, the project came to an abrupt halt. Grading for a new base layout began in August 1942.

The main base at Garden City occupied almost 1585 acres about 11 miles southeast of Garden City. The base was activated in December 1942 and construction topping \$9 million was completed in March 1943. Buildings on 489 acres included 66 barracks with a capacity of 2224 enlisted personnel, 26 barracks to hold 520 cadets, 17 officers' quarters with a capacity of 272, two buildings for nurses' living quarters, a mess hall and a base hospital with 151 beds. Five runways were built measuring between 4960 and 6500 feet long, in addition to five taxiways and a large apron. Three hangars fronted the field.

The base's assigned mission was pilot training for basic students. For a short time in 1944, WASPs were stationed at the field serving as engineering test flight pilots. Flight training began in January 1943 but the need for basic flight training decreased by the end of 1944. Garden City's program was discontinued in November 1944. The base was placed on standby for less than a year, until it was assigned the mission of serving as a storage depot. Storage at the base peaked in July 1945 when it housed 1456 aircraft. Shortly after, the major activity at the base was the removal of the stored planes.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 90.

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Garden City AAF was deactivated and declared excess in October 1946. The base was transferred to the Corps of Engineers in May 1947. The site currently operates as the Garden City Municipal Airport. Extant World War II structures at the airport include three storage buildings, one concrete pad from a former building site, a former carpenter shop building, an equipment service shop building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Two original runways remain.

Three auxiliary airfields were constructed for the Garden City AAF. Auxiliary Field No. 1 was a concrete pad in a "butterfly" configuration. The field in Gray County, now known as the Ingalls Municipal Airport, is primarily used by crop dusters. Auxiliary Fields No. 2 and No. 3 were bituminous mats. Field No. 2 in Gray County is now agricultural land. Field No. 3 in Finney County is a cattle feed lot.

### Great Bend AAF

When the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce received an official telegram from Senator Arthur Capper in late September 1942 announcing intentions to build an airfield, preliminary work had already been completed. The site was originally planned to house a field paid for by the Civil Aeronautics Administration and ceded to Barton County and Great Bend after the war's end. Instead, the field was built as an AAF.

Most of the construction was done by the Patti-McDonald Construction Company of Kansas City. Concrete work on the runways and taxiways was done by the W.L. Johnson Construction Company (Figure 6.) The airfield was intended to serve as a satellite of the Smoky Hill AAF in Salina, so the initial collection of buildings was quite basic. After the essential buildings were completed, a service club, theater and bowling alley were added during the summer and fall of 1943. Housing was not completed when the first personnel arrived in early 1943, so the men were housed in Great Bend for a time. Once housing was built, 13 officers and 182 enlisted men moved on to the field. The Great Bend AAF processed heavy bombardment groups. In addition to processing crews, the base also provided flight training, as well as training in "Prisoner of War Behavior and Escape."

In early March it became known that training personnel for the new B-29 Very Heavy Bomber would begin soon. Great Bend AAF was chosen as one of the bases to participate in the program. This necessitated expansion of the field. Original runways and taxiways were expanded, additional troop housing was built and new hangars were constructed to hold the large planes.

Great Bend readied four Very Heavy Bombardment groups for overseas. Additionally, the base retrained a crew back from Europe for redeployment to the Pacific, making Great Bend one of the first redeployment installations in the country. The base suffered from a shortage of the B-29 aircraft for a period of time, so groups would train on B-17s and B-26s until they received the Superfortresses. The base's population peaked at the end of January 1945, when 6409 personnel were stationed there.

The surrender of Japan brought base activity to a close. The Great Bend AAF was placed on standby at the end of 1945. The field was home to an Air Force reserve unit for a short time in 1950. The site today serves as the Great Bend Municipal Airport. At a June 2008 visit, extant WWII buildings included two



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hangars, six brick chimneys from previous hangars and two concrete storage bunkers. The triangular runways are still present.

### **Herington AAF**

The Herington AAF was located eight miles east of Herington on 1700 acres. Construction began in September 1942 and was completed 14 months later. The Herington AAF base construction included not only many buildings, but also a water storage and distribution system, sewage collection and disposal, an electrical distribution system and storage and distribution of gasoline. The following structures are listed a *Kansas Historical Quarterly* article as part of the field.

Airfield: Three concrete runways more than 6000 feet long and 150 feet wide, four taxiways between 425 and 5919 feet long, three hangars, a control tower, a concrete apron measuring 3384 feet by 400 feet and four parking areas.

Temporary Cantonment Type Buildings: a mess hall, 15 storage houses, four administration buildings, three quarters, 1 barracks, nine technical maintenance shops, seven hospital buildings and 19 miscellaneous structures.

Temporary Theater of Operations Type Buildings: six mess halls, 45 storage houses, 25 administration buildings, 17 quarters, 56 barracks and dormitories, eight technical maintenance shops and 97 miscellaneous structures.

Auxiliaries (off base): gasoline and oil storage area, radio homing station, rifle and pistol range, asphalt storage area.

The base also had a large swimming pool, reportedly the second-largest pool in the state.

Herington was one of three satellite fields associated with the Topeka AAF for final processing of heavy bombardment crews and equipment before being sent overseas.<sup>83</sup> The first combat crews and airplanes arrived at Herington in late June 1943. Processing each crew member involved completing paperwork and pay, giving physical fitness exams, inspecting clothing and equipment, issuing equipment, assigning and testing aircraft, a prisoner of war lecture, communications instruction, assigning crews and aircraft to overseas missions, briefing on routes to be traveled and arranging departures.

Herington AAF served as primarily a staging area for B-24 crews and planes, with a few B-17 crews, during its first 11 months. During the summer of 1944 it was converted into a B-29 staging area, processing Very Heavy Bombardment crews and aircraft before they were sent overseas.

The field had a huge impact on Herington, a town with a population of around 3000. Married personnel lived off base, as well as the families of the crews being processed. This produced a boom economy in the town and a spate of entertainment. Busses would shuttle people from town to dances held in the field's hangars. Many Herington residents converted portions of their houses into apartments or rented rooms for

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<sup>83</sup> The other two auxiliary fields were at Bruning and Fairmount in Nebraska.

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around \$10 a week. Townspeople volunteered their time at the USO or opened their homes to servicemen for a Sunday dinner.<sup>84</sup>

Activity dropped at the field during the fall of 1945 and the field was inactivated in November 1945. The field was listed as surplus in the fall of 1946. Many buildings were sold and moved to nearby towns. The field became the Herington Municipal Airport. Today it serves the community as the Herington Regional Airport and industrial park. Extant WWII resources include two hangars, several storage buildings, a fire station, a water tower, two pump houses, a pool site, many ruins and a warehouse. One runway is still present. 4300 feet of runways have been removed and are now part of a feed lot.

### Hutchinson NAS

The Navy began searching for a site for a second Kansas Naval reserve air base in early 1942. With help from the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce, a location seven miles south of Hutchinson was identified. The Chamber's assurance in June that the city would turn over the state fairgrounds for housing and the municipal airport for pilot training clinched the deal. The Navy immediately began purchasing plots of land, most of which was owned by Amish farmers. The farmers cooperated with the Navy, although they were conscientious objectors. The Navy showed its appreciation by allowing the farmers to salvage their farm buildings before construction began.<sup>85</sup>

As construction proceeded, the influx of workers affected the small town of Yoder. The town experienced growing pains with more frequent train stops and the requirement of a larger depot platform. The town's general store frequently ran out of supplies, especially cold drinks during the hot summer of 1942.<sup>86</sup> Shortages plagued the early days of the base's construction. There were shortages of uniforms, training manuals, Navy forms for daily procedures and even pay.<sup>87</sup>

Work at the base progressed rapidly. By the end of September, one 5000-foot runway had already been surfaced and all footings were in for the main buildings. By making use of the fairgrounds, airport and outlying auxiliary strips, pilot training began about three months ahead of schedule in October 1942.<sup>88</sup> The base was officially activated on October 27 as the United States Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Hutchinson, Kansas. It was renamed on January 1, 1943 as the United States Naval Air Station. Construction was completed in February 1943, culminating in a \$14 million station that covered 2500 acres. A spur of the Missouri Pacific Railroad ran to the base, which could accommodate more than 5000 persons. The base included a water system, disposal plant, coal heating plant, barracks, machine shops, hangars, warehouses, commissary, post office, brig, firing range and a recreation building with a

<sup>84</sup> Warren Dix, "This is a brief history of the old Herington Army Air Base 1942-1945." On file at the Tri-County Historical Museum in Herington.

<sup>85</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, "Naval Air Stations In Kansas During World War II" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43(Autumn 1977): 355.

<sup>86</sup> "Building of Naval Base Causes Boom in a Village," *Kansas City Times*, 29 August 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>87</sup> Hurt, 356.

<sup>88</sup> "Speed On An Air Base," *Kansas City Times*, 30 September 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

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swimming pool. Most buildings were of frame construction built to last at least 25 years. The base had two north-south runways crossed by adjacent taxiways (Figures 7 and 8.)<sup>89</sup>

The mission of the Hutchinson NAS was to provide flight training for naval cadets. Primary flight training peaked in November 1944, when there were 774 cadets in instruction. By early 1944, the Navy reduced primary training and the base's mission changed to become an advanced operational center for PB4Y "Liberator" pilots and crews.<sup>90</sup>

Hutchinson NAS also included a contingent of WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. Arriving in June 1943, the women lived on the base and proved themselves efficient workers and "good sailors." It was planned that each WAVE would free a man for service at sea or on an advanced base. By October 1944, 260 enlisted WAVES and 16 officers were at Hutchinson NAS. The base also hired many civilians to relieve sailors for combat. This created some morale problems on the base due to the fact that the civilians were paid at a higher rate than the service men or the WAVES. Other problems with morale occurred in June 1943 when laundry facilities in Hutchinson proved insufficient for the Navy and the Hutchinson citizens. The Navy laundry facilities had not been built and the town's laundries refused to give priority to the military. A moderately successful "Iron Your Own Shirt" campaign created by the Chamber of Commerce decreased the demand for civilian laundry business enough to meet the needs until the base's laundry was built.<sup>91</sup>

The Navy quickly reduced its number of bases after the war ended. It was announced on September 30, 1946 that the Hutchinson NAS would close immediately. The Navy retained possession of the property and kept a small force on site. The base reopened in 1952 as part of the mobilization for the Korean War and was closed permanently in 1957.<sup>92</sup> The federal government approved the sale of the property to the City of Hutchinson in 1956. The city re-sold it immediately for no profit to the Chamber of Commerce for use as an industrial park.<sup>93</sup> The site today is mostly privately owned. The re-paved runways and buildings abutting them serve as a glider port. Other buildings are used by local businesses and schools. Extant WWII structures include a power plant, storage tanks, hangar ruins, control tower, 2 warehouses, motor pool building and several buildings of unknown use.

Hutchinson NAS required two auxiliary fields. The Hutchinson Municipal Airport served as OLF No. 1 after the two runways were lengthened to 6000 and 7000 feet and lights were installed. The OLF No. 2 was located at the Newton Municipal Airport. Three runways at the field were lengthened to 7000 feet. Quarters for training and storage were also built there.<sup>94</sup> Both sites were returned to their respective cities after the war. Both fields retain most of their WWII runways. A circa 1939 hangar likely built with WPA

<sup>89</sup> "Big Naval Air Base Is Located In Dry Kansas," *Topeka Capital*, 1 February 1943. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>90</sup> Hurt, 359.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 358-359.

<sup>92</sup> "Hutchinson Naval Station to Close," *Topeka Journal*, 22 November 1957. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>93</sup> "Hutchinson To Secure Base Land," *Wichita Eagle*, 15 January 1965. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>94</sup> Hurt, 360.

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funds remains at the Hutchinson Municipal Airport. A hangar moved to the OLF No. 2 around 1943 remains on site.

### Independence AAF

The city of Independence approved \$100,000 in bonds for a municipal airport in August 1941. A site in Montgomery County six miles southwest of Independence was chosen. In early 1942 the government showed an interest in acquiring the site for an Army airfield and training school. In May 1942 the Army notified the Independence mayor that it would purchase approximately 1433 acres in the county for an airfield.

Work began on the base during June 1942. The firm of Black and Veatch of Kansas City was awarded the contract to serve as the architect and engineer. J.O. Burgwin began construction of the air base buildings in August, 1942.<sup>95</sup> A spur of the Missouri Pacific railway was built to the site. By January, the base had three concrete runways 5000 feet in length and by February, enough basic housing and utilities to accept the first class of cadets.

Construction of the base cost more than \$48 million and ended in May 1943. The base held a huge open house in early June, 1943. Buildings open for touring included a Link trainer facility,<sup>96</sup> three hangars including a huge engineering hangar at far north end of field, a parachute loft where parachutes were dried, packed and stored, quartermaster warehouses, a clothing and equipment shop where clothing was repaired, barracks, a post exchange, theater, library, club for enlisted men, gymnasium and recreation building, squadron day rooms, hospital and a ground school with classrooms.<sup>97</sup> Most buildings were of temporary wartime construction consisting of tarpaper over wood.

The base provided basic flying training that included practice landings, night navigation, cross-country flights, radio communications, weather information and aircraft recognition. Basic training continued at Independence until January 1945. The field was placed on standby in March. In April, the Army announced that the airfield would be used for the storage of WWII aircraft. Thousands of airplanes were stored at Independence between April 1945 and the fall of 1947 before they were transferred to other fields. After the base was deactivated, the field served Independence as a municipal airport. The field today has just one WWII hangar and two of its three original runways.

The *Kansas Historical Quarterly* notes in a 1959 article that construction on four auxiliary fields located eight to ten miles from the airfield took place during the fall of 1942. The only remaining auxiliary field—named Auxiliary Field No. 9 at Cherryvale—now serves as the Tri-City airport west of Parsons in Labette County. The field retains two of its three original runways.

<sup>95</sup> "Big Days in Air Base History," *The Independence Reporter*, 5 June 1943. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>96</sup> The Link trainer, invented by Ed Link in 1927, was a flight simulator that mimicked full motion of operating an airplane's cockpit.

<sup>97</sup> "Independence Army Air Field Opens Gates to Public; Huge Aerial Review Highlights Dedication Ceremony," *The Independence Reporter*, 5 June 1943. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)



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### Liberal AAF

Liberal was one of the sites chosen in early 1942 for a potential training base for the British RAF. A notice came from the Corps of Engineers in July 1942 stating that the RAF project had been dropped.<sup>98</sup> The objective of a Liberal airfield was revived at the end of the year. The engineering firm of Murray A. Wilson and Company was granted a contract to survey and lay out an airfield one mile west of Liberal. The national firm of Peter Kiewit Sons Company was chosen as the primary contractor and construction began in early 1943.

The field occupied nearly 2000 acres. Construction costs were estimated at \$8 million. Three concrete runways, each 7000 feet long, three taxiways and 276,318 square yards of parking apron were built. Construction included three school buildings, four Link trainer buildings and five hangars—two of steel and three of wood. The base also contained three warehouses for gasoline, a gymnasium, officers' club, service club, theater, chapel, three post exchanges, housing for 4934 men and officers and a hospital with a capacity of 142 beds. Most buildings were of non-permanent construction. A Rock Island railroad spur also ran to the field. An auxiliary field—Gage Field—was built for the Liberal AAF in Oklahoma.

The base's mission was to train pilots of four-engine airplanes. The base was manned well before it was completed. Amidst construction in June, the first B-24 planes landed so training could begin. Most students were newly-commissioned officers that had graduated from twin-engine flight training. The nine weeks of classes were staggered so that a new group entered every four-and-a-half weeks.

With the surrender of Japan in August 1945, the field was placed on standby status at the end of September. During its 27 months of training, the Liberal AAF graduated 4468 four-engine airplane commanders and an additional 1025 pilots from a pre-transition course held in the middle of 1944.

The federal government deeded the property to the city of Liberal in 1948. Over the next decade many of the buildings were sold and removed from the site. Some of the barracks were rebuilt into homes or temporary school and church buildings. As of 1957, 50 of the 90 buildings remained on the base, some rented.<sup>99</sup> The property operates today as the Liberal Municipal Airport. Remaining WWII structures include two hangars, three hangar ruins, seven paint storage buildings, three classroom buildings, four warehouses, a commissary building, utility shop, five sets of foundation ruins, a tetrahedron wind cone and an ordnance field.

### Marshall Field at Fort Riley

Marshall Field, located northeast of Junction City, is one of the oldest military airfields in the country. The base was used in 1912 to practice firing artillery from airplanes and during World War I for fighter planes

<sup>98</sup> "A Narrative History of Liberal Army Airfield," author unknown. On file at the Mid-America Air Museum in Liberal.

<sup>99</sup> "Liberal Makes Use Of Former Air Base—Planes, Residences," *Iola Register*, 19 April 1957. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

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and balloons. The main purpose of early Marshall Field fliers was to provide demonstrations and participate in training exercises for Fort Riley's Army Cavalry School.

At the onset of WWII, Marshall Field had two hangars and three grassy landing strips. During the war the three strips were resurfaced and lengthened for more frequent landings by heavier, faster airplanes. The construction resulted in two concrete runways, each 4500 feet long and 150 feet wide, six taxiways and 5400 square yards of parking apron (Figure 9.)

Marshall remained a fairly small base, serving as a site for tactical air training and as a landing strip for visitors. The pilots presented an air show to 5000 Kansans in August 1945. Field activity quickly decreased after WWII as several squadrons were inactivated. One runway remains today at Marshall Army Airfield as the sole built remnant of WWII.

### McConnell AAF in Wichita

The city of Wichita has had close ties with the aviation industry since the birth of flight. The city's Municipal Airport dates to 1928, when the Wichita park board purchased 640 acres of flat prairie about six miles southeast of the town. Ground was broken for runways in 1929 and for an Administration Building in June 1930. The building was completed in stages, with the central portion finished in 1935 and side wing extensions in 1942 and 1945.<sup>100</sup>

The Army Material Command was established in the airport's Administration Building in March 1942. The airport at that time consisted of only one hangar and three small warehouses. Wartime efforts increasingly occupied larger portions of the airfield. The five runways were adequate, designed for planes with a 60,000-pound wheel load capacity. The Material Center moved to Oklahoma City in 1945 and the base's wartime mission became to service, dispatch and maintain transient and locally based aircraft. All workers were civilians with a few officers working as supervisors.

The Kansas Air National Guard was activated in August 1941 as the first military unit assigned to the Wichita airport. The 1942 National Guard armory and attached hangar remain on site at McConnell AFB. The structure was built with WPA funds between 1942 and 1947. The building, originally owned by the city of Wichita and leased to the National Guard, is now owned by federal government.

Wichita's Municipal Airport was sold to the federal government in 1951 to take advantage of the nearby Boeing Plant. The base was known at that time as the Wichita Air Force Base. The name was changed to McConnell Air Force Base in 1954 to honor two brothers who served as WWII pilots. McConnell AFB remains an active and restricted base today.

<sup>100</sup> Sandra S. Kurt, "Administration Building" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 5 February 1990).

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### Olathe NAS

When Fairfax Field in Kansas City became too crowded for training B-25 bombers, the Navy began looking at nearby sites for a new base. Nationwide, the Navy was looking for civilian airports that could be modified for military use. In January 1942, the Navy chose the Johnson County Airport, located between Olathe and Gardner. The Navy planned that the site would be the largest inland Naval air training base in the country, costing around \$10 million.<sup>101</sup>

Construction began immediately on the 640-acre field and the administration building (Figures 10 and 11.) The Olathe Naval Reserve Aviation Base was commissioned on October 1, 1942. On January 1, 1943, the name was changed to the Olathe Naval Air Station (NAS). Hangars were begun right away by the Swenson Construction Company of Kansas City (Figures 12 and 13.)<sup>102</sup> When completed, base buildings included a hospital, a chapel, water filtration plant, pump houses, central power plant, sewage disposal plant, administration building, control tower, parachute overhaul building, garage, cold storage building, barracks (Figure 14,) drill hall, armory, flight simulator buildings, laundry, fire station and a public works building. A field house measuring 37,000 square feet contained one of the earliest Olympic sized pools west of Mississippi, as well as a basketball court and a recreation hall with bowling, ping pong and movies.<sup>103</sup> Most buildings were of permanent construction. Construction costs ultimately topped \$13 million.<sup>104</sup>

The Olathe NAS had three runways between 3300 and 3400 feet long.<sup>105</sup> The base also had fourteen auxiliary fields within a 13-mile radius located on leased or purchased land. The initial mission of the Olathe NAS was to provide primary flight training for naval cadets and housing for traveling officials. Pilot training peaked during the spring and fall of 1943, when 1100 pilots came through the base.<sup>106</sup> In September 1944, the airfield received an additional mission to provide support for the Naval Air Transport Squadron Three, which flew cargo, personnel, mail and medical supplies across the country and to the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.<sup>107</sup> The Olathe NAS became known as a Midwest hub for transport, operating as the largest air transport base in the country. The base served in this role through end of WWII.<sup>108</sup>

In late 1946, the Olathe NAS became a reserve station responsible for the training of reservists, air control workers and ground approach operators. It operated until the Navy announced the closure on October 29, 1969 to reduce military spending. The Johnson County Airport Commission acquired the site in 1973, when it became the Johnson County Industrial Airport.<sup>109</sup> Today New Century AirCenter operates at the

<sup>101</sup> "A Huge Naval Air Base," *Kansas City Times*, 22 January 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Daniels, 4-6.

<sup>104</sup> "Your Kansas City At War; The Olathe Naval Air Station," *Kansas City Star*, 28 January 1945. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>105</sup> "Start Navy Base," *Kansas City Star*, 22 Jan 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>106</sup> Daniels.

<sup>107</sup> Hurt, 354.

<sup>108</sup> Daniels.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

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site. Extant WWII buildings include the administration building, a hangar, medical center building, warehouse, laundry building, fire station, power plant, cold storage building, garage, maintenance building and two pump houses. The original runways are present and two have been resurfaced.

It is likely that most of the outlying fields (OLFs) associated with the Olathe NAS were either turf or plowed fields. OLF No. 2, located in Olathe, is now the Johnson County Executive Airport. No remaining WWII buildings remain there, but the runways retain much of their original configuration. The Gardner OLF operates today as the Gardner Municipal Airport. Only one runway remains of the original triangular configuration. The site also contains a small Quonset hut hangar reportedly from WWII.

### Pratt AAF

Construction began on the Pratt AAF in October 1942. The field was located about three miles north of Pratt, a community of about 7000 at the time. Most of the field's buildings were insubstantial, classified by the Army as "theater of operations" type of construction. In early 1943 authorization was given for the expansion of the base. By May 1943, the field contained 60 barracks capable of housing 2460 men. The field was approved for an eventual 72 barracks to house 3060 men (Figure 15) and eight officers' quarters for 522 men. Koss Construction of Des Moines, Iowa built the airfield's massive triangular runways and ramp (Figure 16.)

Pratt AAF's original mission was to process crews for overseas service with the 21<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Wing formed under the Second Air Force. The field was soon re-assigned the mission of providing expedited training to the B-29 combat training program, becoming a base and temporary home for bombardment groups headed overseas. Under this new mission, the base expanded its physical plant and number of personnel. The Salina firm of Busboom and Raugh received contracts in May 1943 to build an additional 16 buildings, including another hangar, barracks, mess halls and recreation centers.<sup>110</sup> Many of the crew members brought families along, increasing the base's population to 7000.<sup>111</sup>

The Pratt AAF was part of "The Battle of Kansas," the rapid thrust to prepare numerous B-29s for transfer to the Pacific in early 1944. Amidst a raging blizzard, crews worked around the clock to ready the large aircraft for war by stabilizing, strengthening and upgrading the planes. The frigid work on the windy prairie was miserable, as reported by Louis E. Coira in February 1944, "...overseas combat would be a relief from what we were experiencing at Pratt, in the Kansas winter."<sup>112</sup>

After the war's end, Pratt AAF began closing down in November 1945 and was officially deactivated on December 31. The site today is home to the Pratt Industrial Airport. At a visit in July 2008, extant WWII

<sup>110</sup> "Add To Pratt Airfield," *Kansas City Times*, 17 May 1943. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>111</sup> "Pratt Air Field Purpose Changed During War," *Pratt Daily Tribune*, 5 December 1959. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>112</sup> Louis Coria, "Memories - The Battle of Kansas" (Pratt, KS: Pratt Army Air Field History Center, Transcribed by Milt Martin, 2009. Accessed 24 May 2012 < <http://paaf.indexks.com/eng/Army-Air-Fields/Kansas-AAF/Pratt/40th-BG/Stories/Memories-Battle-Of-Kansas> >.



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structures included two hangars, two hangar ruins, six storage or warehouse buildings, bomb vaults, a parachute building, machine shop, warehouses and a tetrahedron wind cone. The parachute building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in April 2009. Portions of the original runways are now occupied by a feed lot. The airport is also home to the B-29 All Veterans Memorial.

### **Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth**

Sherman Field is located one mile northeast of Fort Leavenworth. Sherman Field's primary purpose since its construction in 1926 has been to provide an airfield for staff and visitors to Fort Leavenworth. In the early 1920s, airplanes landed at an old polo field approximately three miles from the base. An emergency landing strip was laid in 1923 in the field's present location and converted into a permanent field in 1926. The sod surface was converted to three cinder runways in the 1930s. After the United States entered WWII, runways were lengthened and concrete aprons were added at the ends of the main runways. Several temporary buildings were added during the war, including barracks for enlisted men.

Sherman served as a training facility in the early portion of WWII when bases were in short supply. As the construction of bases advanced across the country, Sherman returned to its original mission of providing landing facilities for the Command and General Staff School, for administrative flights and for visitors. After pilots who had received extensive experience were sent to Fort Leavenworth to study, superior airplanes were added to the field's supply, culminating in over 60 warcraft by the end of the war.

Elite commanders flew into Sherman Field, including General H.H. Arnold in 1945, Lt. Gen. Lewis H. Greer in 1945 and Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1946. After WWII, Sherman Field resumed its low-key profile, especially after the Air Force separated from the Army. The triangular WWII runway configuration has been reduced to a single runway. Although Fort Leavenworth has a fine collection of historic buildings, none constructed during WWII remain.

### **Smoky Hill AAF**

Construction of the Smoky Hill AAF began in May 1942 on approximately 2660 acres of land southwest of Salina. The firm of Burns & McDonnell of Kansas City was named the project engineer<sup>113</sup> and Watson Construction served as the contractor.<sup>114</sup> The base was officially named the Smoky Hill Army Air Field in December 1942.

The base originally was used to process and stage heavy bombardment units headed overseas in B-17 aircraft. A base handling very heavy bombardment units required substantial facilities. In addition to 365 acres containing buildings, four runways were built between 7500 and 10,000 feet long (Figures 17 and 18.) Twelve taxiways connected the runways and the apron measured 4000 by 600 feet. Most of the construction was completed in 1942 by 13 civilian contractors with more than 7000 workers.

<sup>113</sup> "An Air Base for Salina," *Kansas City Times*, 29 April 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>114</sup> "Begin On Salina Base," *Kansas City Times*, 6 May 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

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Smoky Hill AAF is perhaps best known as the headquarters of Kansas' WWII B-29 program. The base's mission changed in early 1943 and by the fall the B-29 airplanes began arriving. The base was home to many famous squadrons. It is significant as the birthplace of the XX Bomber Command, which operated in the China-Burma-India theater and the XXI Bomber Command, which directed the B-29s flying from Mariana Islands to Japan. Smoky Hill AAF served as a B-29 training base until the end of the war in September 1945 (Figure 19.) The base enjoyed a good relationship with the town of Salina. The town formed several organizations to entertain and assist the servicemen during the war.

After the war the base came under the authority of the Strategic Air Command (SAC). Except for two years of standby status in 1950 and 1951, the base served the SAC. The base was named the Smoky Hill Air Force Base in 1946 and renamed the Schilling Air Force Base in 1957. When the Department of Defense announced in 1964 that the base would be closed, the city of Salina created a plan for a complex that would serve education, industry and local air traffic.

The base today operates as the Salina Municipal Airport. Many businesses make their home on the site, including several aviation industries, the Kansas Army National Guard, Kansas State University at Salina and the Kansas Highway Patrol Aviation branch. Only two hangars remain of the original WWII complex (Figures 20, 21 and 22.) The original runways have been reinforced and the runway that originally measured 10,000 feet long has been expanded to 12,000 feet.

### **Strother AAF**

The two city commissions of Winfield and Arkansas City met in February 1941 to approve the construction of a Class 2 airport on 240 acres with one hangar. The airport was to be centrally located, seven and a half miles from each town. In June 1942, the government became interested in the site as a potential flying school. The two cities also agreed to lease approximately 1400 acres of land to the government for one dollar per year, renewable yearly after 25 years. The site was named Strother Army Air Field for Captain Donald Root Strother, the first Cowley County pilot killed in WWII, over Java in February 1942.

Construction at Strother Field began on May 16, 1942 and was to cost nearly \$9 million. The site eventually included four asphalt runways between 5500 and 5840 feet in length. Four taxiways between 700 and 3500 feet connected the runways. The site contained a multitude of structures that included four storage buildings with wood frames and concrete floors, two instructional buildings, six Link trainer buildings, an officer's' club, service club, theater, chapel, post exchange, bowling alley, gymnasium, swimming pool, a 141-bed hospital and a library. Housing was also built to accommodate 4404 men and officers (Figure 23.) The base also had several hangars.

From the beginning, the two cities of Winfield and Arkansas City, with populations of 10,000 and 12,000, were enthusiastic supporters of the field. Local citizens planned events and projects to improve the morale of the station.

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Although construction was still in progress, the base was activated on November 1, 1942. Strother Field's initial mission was to provide basic training for fighter pilots. In June 1944 the purpose changed to serve as a tactical training station. With the end of the war in sight, the base was deactivated during the summer of 1945. Flight training ceased and the field was placed on standby status as an auxiliary field to Pratt AAF.

Today Strother Field is home to an industrial park jointly owned by Winfield and Arkansas City. The field maintains two of the original runways, which may have a new coating of concrete. The site also includes two of the original hangars that have been expanded into industrial buildings. The hangar on the north end of the field has had several additions and is in deteriorated condition. The hangar on the south end of the field has also received several additions but is a well-maintained home to a General Electric Plant. The field also has two Link trainer buildings that are fairly intact but in fair to deteriorated condition. Several concrete pads and ruins litter the area, which also includes an unidentified building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Much of the original base is covered by modern buildings within the industrial park.

Four auxiliary fields—No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and No. 5—were built concurrently with Strother Field. Fields No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 were presumably turf and have disappeared. Auxiliary Field No. 5, located south of Geuda Springs in Sumner County, currently serves as storage and agricultural land.

### Topeka AAF

A February 1942 article in the *Topeka Capital* announced the War Department's approval of a site south of Topeka for an Army air base. The base was planned to hold temporary buildings on 1600 acres. Construction estimates were about \$9 million.<sup>115</sup> The Kansas City, Missouri office of Gentry, Boskamp and Radotinsky was soon announced as the architects and engineers of the project.<sup>116</sup> Patti-McDonald Construction Company of St. Louis received the contract to build all housing and hangars.<sup>117</sup>

Work on the airfield runways moved rapidly. Koss Construction of Des Moines, Iowa had the field nearly complete in mid-June, 1942.<sup>118</sup> Early construction included hangars, repair shops, a steam heating plant, fuel storage and three 7,000-foot-long paved runways.<sup>119</sup> When the first troops arrived in August 1942, however, housing was not yet finished. The 227 men and six officers were housed at the Kansas Free Fair grounds in Topeka and fed in a nearby large church dining hall.<sup>120</sup>

By September the Topeka AAF was in use for heavy bombardment training. The base's first mission was to give the heavy bombardment crews and airplanes 30 final days of training before they went overseas. In

<sup>115</sup> "Topeka Army Air Base Site Gets War Department O.K.," *Topeka Capital*, 1 February 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>116</sup> "Army Announces Architects for Bomber Base," *Topeka Journal*, 4 February 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>117</sup> "A Young Man Has a Big Job at Topeka Air Base," *Topeka Capital*, 29 June 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>118</sup> "Topeka Air Base Taking On a Finished Appearance," *Topeka Capital*, 16 June 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>119</sup> "Strategic-Air-Command.com," Accessed online 24 May 2012 <[http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes\\_AFB.htm](http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes_AFB.htm)>.

<sup>120</sup> "First Air Base Troops Here," *Topeka Journal*, 1 August 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

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June 1943 the base's main function changed to preparation of B-17 and B-24 airplanes for combat, in addition to processing and equipping heavy bombardment crews before going overseas. The base began processing B-29 airplanes and crews in early 1945 before sending them off to the Pacific. By October 1945, the base's emphasis was shipping replacement ground personnel overseas.

Activities at the Topeka AAF were greatly reduced in October 1946. During the mid-1940s, the base served as a stopping point for military and civilian cross-country flights, becoming a major air terminal.

The base was reactivated during the Korean conflict as the Forbes Air Force Base and continued in its role of training crews for deployment. The field served the Department of Defense until 1973. The 3100-acre site was then gradually transferred to the City of Topeka.

The site five miles south of the city is used as a municipal airport. Approximately 215 acres in the south portion of the field are occupied by the Kansas Air National Guard. The site has been continuously occupied since its construction by the military. Remaining structures from WWII likely include five hangars, three office-type buildings, four warehouses, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways.<sup>121</sup>

### Walker AAF

Walker AAF was located in Ellis County, mid-way between Hays and Russell northwest of the small town of Walker. Issues related to the field's location arose from the onset of planning and continued for most of the war. Early on, it was determined by a state geologist that the site had the most difficult water situation in Kansas. After spending time and funds drilling, it was determined that the most cost-effective method of obtaining water would be to run a line to the Hays water system 12 miles away. Easements were purchased and the line was installed.

The airfield was built on nearly 2000 acres. The W.L. Johnson Co. of Hicksville, Ohio was awarded the contract for construction of the field.<sup>122</sup> Construction began in September 1942 with three concrete runways paved to 8000 feet long. The topography allowed minimal grading at each end so that they could be extended to 10,000 feet (Figure 24 and 25.) Concrete taxiways and an apron measuring 300 by 375 feet were added. The field was originally planned to be very basic. Cantonment of simple construction was built for 1000 men, as well as a dispensary, mess hall and one hangar.

The first military personnel arrived in November 1942. The field was originally intended as a satellite field of the Smoky Hill AAF in Salina. As such, it was used as an overflow field for Smoky Hill's processing of heavy bombardment crews before they went overseas.

Walker AAF was also plagued by morale and housing problems. The field was far from any major cities, so there was little for the men to do. In June 1943 a plan was finally made for building a gymnasium, theater, service club and post exchange. The base also suffered from severe housing shortages, leading to

<sup>121</sup> Survey information was not entered online per guidance from Kansas SHPO staff.

<sup>122</sup> Arthur Capper Papers, KSHS Collection.



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bad relations with the town of Hays until the end of 1943. Another shortage on the field was a persistent scarcity of civilians and enlisted men qualified to work as airplane mechanics, technicians, power plant specialists, electrical specialists and propeller specialists.

The Walker AAF grew larger when its mission expanded in mid-1943 to train B-29 crews for combat. The first B-29s arrived at the field in August. Training crews for the Superfortresses continued at the base until the end of the war. From a spillover field with a handful of buildings, Walker AAF grew to accommodate nearly 6000 personnel stationed at the field in August 1944. Construction of the field cost \$9 million and contained hundreds of buildings including five hangars and additional fields for bombing practice.

Walker AAF was put on inactive status on January 31, 1946 and declared surplus mid-1946. Many of the buildings and equipment were removed before the rest were sold at an auction in 1948.<sup>123</sup> The field was sold to a Hays oil operator at an auction in 1958.<sup>124</sup> The airfield today serves as agricultural land for crops and cattle. At a visit in the summer of 2008, the site included one hangar, four hangar ruins, a concrete storage building, a water tower and many sets of concrete ruins, some containing brick chimneys.

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<sup>123</sup> "Walker Base Is To Go," *Kansas City Times*, 5 August 1948. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

<sup>124</sup> "Bidding Brisk In Auction of Former Base," *Topeka Capital*, 18 December 1958. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358)

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### ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

The property types related to the historic contexts covered in *World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas* include buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts associated with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. The period of significance extends from 1939, when the United States began war preparations, to 1945, when the war ended. The property types and registration requirements are based on a comprehensive field survey of all World War II-era airbases in Kansas in 2008 and archival research. Research identified sixteen Army Airfields and two Naval Air Stations constructed in Kansas for World War II training. The locations of additional extant auxiliary fields and outlying fields were also identified. Each known site was visited, except for the Fairfax field in Kansas City, Kansas that is now occupied by General Motors. Site visits were made to a total of 28 fields to survey 172 resources. The same level of access was not granted to each site, and as a result, some facilities were better documented than others. As a result, future surveys may add to or alter what is known about the property types that follow.

Kansas retains a wide range of resources associated with the operation of World War II-era airfields. These resources include those associated directly with the training of pilots destined for overseas duty, but also those that served as part of base life. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war that their remaining resources are potentially significant on a national level. Specifically, these bases were the locations of the development and deployment of the B-29 Superfortress bombers. The B-29 activity served as the culmination of the United States air force goal to evolve from a subsidiary of the Army to the premier air power of the world. The Battle of Kansas in early 1944 resulted in the preparation and deployment of crucial B-29 bombers to the Pacific front, along with skilled crews. The remaining World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war. The fields and their resources had strong ties with nearby communities as the towns of Kansas contributed to the war effort. Today many of these bases still include resources associated with Kansas' role in military aviation during World War II.

When assessing National Register eligibility, resources on World War II air bases pose unique challenges having to do with temporary construction, ruins and remnants, relocated resources, and layers of history. Buildings were often constructed quickly and inexpensively for temporary use, which explains in part why bases have lost many resources from the mid-twentieth century. This explains the utilitarian nature of the buildings' appearance and materials, and it also may explain why those buildings have certain alterations, such as newer exterior siding (metal or vinyl). Remnants of resources and ruins are a common feature at these airfields, and these may be helpful in interpretation and understanding how a base was organized and functioned. Although no instances were documented in which resources were relocated within a base, the temporary nature of some airfield resources certainly allows for this circumstance to arise. Additionally, these bases often include layers of history that are not confined to the period of significance (1939-1945). A few airfields existed prior to the late 1930s military buildup and many of the airbases reverted to municipal or regional airports after the war. Consideration should be given to these unique challenges when assessing eligibility.

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Resources associated with wartime air bases are classified into categories by function of the individual resource: airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings. The property types and subtypes outlined below are organized around these general functional classifications. All but one property type (hospitals) is represented on today's airfield landscapes. Some fields retain multiple examples of some property types, such as storage buildings and hangars. The property types also account for the eligibility of potential historic districts and ruins.

When considering the significance of a specific resource, it is important to consider its functional importance as it related to the operations of the base. The property types and subtypes outlined below can be generally divided into two groups that address functional importance. Primary resources – those that were key to the operation of the base – generally include the following:

- Airfield Property Type (which includes Runways/Taxiways/Parking Aprons; Hangars; Control Towers; Tetrahedron Wind Indicators).
- Education and Training Property Type
- Parachute Buildings Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Select top secret storage facilities, such as the Norden Bombsight Vaults

These primary resources noted above should be given more consideration toward individual eligibility, especially given the importance and the rarity of the particular resource. Other factors to consider when determining individual eligibility include integrity and what else is remaining on the associated base.

Secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – generally include the following property types and subtypes:

- Storage Buildings Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Fire Stations Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Water Towers Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Administration Building Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Commissary Property Subtype of Cantonment
- Recreation and Welfare Facilities Property Type
- Hospitals Property Type

These secondary resources should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their functions. They could be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, architecture and integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase. For example, the survey of airbases revealed only two extant fire stations (Olathe NAS and Herington AAF), but the Herington example is ineligible due to alterations. The Olathe NAS fire station, which is a brick building that retains excellent integrity, is individually eligible for its architecture and association with the wartime buildup of the base.

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### Significance & Registration Requirements - General

Below, the historic district property type is followed by property types and subtypes defining specific resources classified by their uses during World War II. While representatives of each property type may vary in physical appearance from another property type, all of the resources share at least a few common attributes, particularly in areas of significance and, in some instances, registration requirements. In the interest of preventing repetition, the common attributes are discussed first.

Resources are most often significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the resources must retain integrity of design, feeling, and association, and should be considered in light of the rarity of the resource type and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

Some resources are significant under **Criterion C** in the areas of **architecture** and/or **engineering**. To be eligible, the resources must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. When assessing a resource for individual eligibility, key elements include mass, form, and plan. Integrity of materials – particularly exterior siding – should be considered in light of the temporary nature of many airbase buildings and their rarity. When assessing groups of resources, key factors include the arrangement of resources and the impact of demolition and newer construction.

Few if any resources are significant under **Criterion B** for an association with a significant individual. The 2008 survey of airbases revealed no resources potentially significant under Criterion B. In rare instances where Criterion B may be warranted, the resource must be associated with an individual who was integral to base operations during World War II and contributed to the success of the war effort. The accomplishments of a significant individual should have occurred during the period of significance and be associated with the resource. Unless other justification is made, the area of significance is **military**.

Resources significant under **Criterion D** must have the potential to yield important information that contributes to the understanding of World War II-era aviation in Kansas. Criterion D is most often applied to archeological sites, but it can also be applied to buildings, structures, and objects if they are the principal source of the information that is being sought. When it comes to World War II-era airbase resources, those in ruins are the likely candidates to warrant justification under Criterion D. The exception might be a building – such a hangar – that has the potential to yield information about construction technology. The areas of significance might be **military, architecture, or engineering**. However, given the level of primary source documentation compiled by the military and others on these resources, it is unlikely they will justify significance under Criterion D.

The eligibility of resources that have been relocated should be carefully evaluated in order to meet the requirements of **Criteria Consideration B – Moved Properties**. Resources that have been moved off the base with which they are associated are not eligible under this multiple property nomination. If a relocated resource's original location is especially important in interpreting its significance, such as a tetrahedron wind indicator, it may not be eligible unless its new location is on the same base and represents the same qualities. If a resource's



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original location is not critical in interpreting its significance, such as a storage building, and has been relocated within the boundaries of the base as it existed during WWII, it may be individually eligible or contribute to the significance of a historic district.

When evaluating resources associated with World War II air facilities, it is preferable to first determine if there is the potential for a historic district. No airbase survives completely intact from the World War II era, and several now function as part of local or regional airports, as industrial parks, have been largely abandoned or parceled and sold. Thus a historic district may comprise resources representing various functions that related to wartime base activities. Although the buildings within the district may not possess individual significance, they may contribute to a larger concentration of resources that convey significant aspects of World War II-era aviation history. A historic district should be anchored by at least one primary resource, such as a runway or hangar that depicts a key function of the air base, and other secondary resources that supported the base.

### **PROPERTY TYPE: *WWII-Era Aviation-Related Historic Districts***

#### **Description**

A World War II-era aviation-related historic district includes a grouping of historic resources, which may contain buildings, structures, objects, sites, or other landscape features including roads, structural remnants, or foundation remnants. The individual resources generally reflect these World War II air base functions: airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings.

Buildings were often constructed quickly as temporary buildings. Generally, resources reflect a utilitarian appearance and with inexpensive semi-permanent materials. Although some hangars had steel frames and some buildings were constructed of brick or tile, most support buildings sat on concrete foundations and were of frame construction and often clad in little more than plywood and tarpaper. Extant buildings are often vacant, unused, or used as storage, and have been minimally maintained. Remnants of resources and ruins are a common site at these airfields, and should be considered as contributing elements if they can assist in interpreting how a base functioned and was organized.

A few airfields existed prior to the late 1930s military buildup and many of the airbases reverted to municipal or regional airports after the war. There may be examples of resources that reflect earlier and later periods of development, and this should not hinder historic district eligibility. In fact, resources from these other periods of development may lend significance by documenting transitions in use and development.

There was not a standardized size for these airfields, but the Kansas bases were generally developed on tracts measuring from 1,400 acres to over 2,500 acres. Auxiliary fields were smaller and typically occupied only hundreds of acres. Each base contained dozens, if not hundreds, of buildings. In addition to buildings for the airfield, cantonment (administration, housing, warehouses, utilities and infrastructure) and training, a well-functioning base also included buildings for recreation, welfare and health care. Construction was limited to the necessities. Layouts were designed to be compact to shorten utility lines.

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Simple wood framing was standard. In many instances, concrete pad foundations are all that remain of buildings, and these are a reflection of the organization and layout of the base.

### Significance & Registration Requirements

The Kansas World War II airfields included collections of buildings and structures that often resembled and functioned as small cities. Army buildings and structures were usually classified by function, falling into the categories of airfield, cantonment, training, recreation and welfare and hospital buildings. Not every field included buildings in every category, but most of the large fields that became air bases had enough of each type to serve the field's mission and meet the needs of a large base population.

As new airfields mushroomed across the country, a determination was made whether each base would be of permanent—usually brick or concrete—or temporary construction. The general trend as the war progressed was toward less substantial construction because it became obvious that not all fields would be needed during peacetime. By the time that Kansas airfields were planned, building resources were becoming scarce and construction was usually of the most immediate and least expensive type. These very utilitarian buildings had little architectural style. They were functional, efficient and constructed as often as possible of materials deemed “non-critical” to the war effort.

When assessing the potential for a historic district, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war that their remaining resources are significant on a national level. The remaining World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war. Using historic photographs and other primary source documentation, note what resources remain from the World War II era in comparison with any historic resources that fall outside the period of significance. Other historic contexts may need to be developed in order to justify the significance of historic resources that fall outside the period of significance (1939-1945).

Next determine if there are any primary resources – those noted above that were key to the operation of the base during WWII – as it is important for a potential district to be anchored by at least one primary resource. Integrity of location, association, and setting are important for historic districts. However, losses of individual buildings have often occurred, and in many instances, ruins or concrete pad foundations are all that remain of buildings. These resources generally are not individually eligible, but can contribute to a historic district as they are a reflection of the organization and layout of the base. Contributing ruins include foundations that convey the size and scale of a building and that lends to the understanding of the physical organization of the base resources. Solitary chimney ruins also may be contributing if they convey the size, scale, or function of a building or structure.

The following registration requirements apply to historic districts in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

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Historic districts are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. These districts may have developed quickly as part of the massive wartime construction effort or have been part of an existing airfield. Should older resources remain, they should be examined for significance that pre-dates the war and their use during World War II.

Historic districts also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the areas of **architecture** and **engineering**. Although few architectural stylistic references are found on Kansas' World War II airfields, this Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the layout of the base and the unique examples of engineering such as runway or hangar design.

### **PROPERTY TYPE: *Airfield***

Airfield runways and their associated buildings are the most common extant types of World War II resources found in Kansas. These structures and buildings are related to takeoffs and landings of airplanes, as well as buildings that serviced the airplanes and their flights. These included runways, taxiways, parking aprons, hangars, wind tetrahedrons and control towers. Descriptions of and registration requirements for these subtypes are outlined below.

### **Airfield Property Subtype: *Runways, Taxiways, Parking Aprons***

#### **Description**

Runway design and construction was perhaps the most important focus of each base. All of the newly constructed primary Army airfields in Kansas contained a highly recognizable triangular runway layout.

Typically, a base's longest runway formed the long side of the triangle and was oriented north to south. The buildings at these bases were located along the outside of the longest runway. Hangars faced the runway but the remaining buildings were usually arranged in a compact configuration. Three of these fields—Walker (Figure 24), Coffeyville, and Herington—had buildings located on the west side. The remaining Army fields all had buildings placed on the east side. The runways at the Naval Air Stations had slightly different configurations of an "X" intersected by a north-south runway. The buildings of the Olathe NAS and Hutchinson NAS were placed on the west sides of the fields.

Runways not only provided an orientation for the field, but were the most durable component of base construction. The poured concrete runways had to be sturdy enough for the pressures of take-offs and landings. As the war progressed, these demands increased. The introduction of the B-29 Superfortresses required a huge leap in basic construction, presenting the Corps of Engineers with its most difficult technical mission of World War II. The huge airplanes carried heavy loads, had fast landing speeds, pounding vibrations and violent

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propeller blasts. Their runways needed to be longer, wider, stronger and with easier grades.<sup>125</sup> Each B-29 base had at least one runway measuring 10,000 feet long.<sup>126</sup>

Taxiways and parking aprons were a significant contribution to the runways of the major air bases. Parking aprons, located adjacent to the runways and the hangars, served as storage areas for airplanes that were not housed in hangars. Taxiways, usually located adjacent to or near runways, provided access between the runways and the hangars. These areas were usually poured concrete construction similar to the runways.

### *Alterations*

Due to their sturdy construction, most concrete runways, parking aprons and taxiways are still extant and in good condition. Fifteen of the 19 runways surveyed still function as part of a working airfield. Those sites where the function has shifted away from aviation, such as agricultural use, have changed more dramatically and, as a result, the runways retain less integrity.

Of the 19 runways surveyed in 2008, 13 originally featured a triangular configuration. Just three of those 13 retained an intact triangular configuration, four had just one segment missing, and most are in good to excellent condition (Figures 26, 27, 28 and 29). In those instances where a portion of the runway has been removed, their original configuration is still apparent (such as at Pratt).

Regarding materials, three of the 19 runways have been partially or completely paved with asphalt, but still maintain the original configurations. Auxiliary runways that were turf or bituminous mat, such as those associated with the Garden City AAF, have disappeared. Those that were constructed of concrete retain their dimensions and impact on their environment, even when encompassed by agricultural land. Some, such as the Garden City AAF Auxiliary Field No. 1, serve local pilots and cropdusters (Figure 30). Others, now located on private land, serve as storage sites for agricultural or road materials (Figure 31).

### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

Airfield runways, taxiways, and parking aprons facilitated the takeoffs and landings of airplanes. These resources are primary resources – key to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register.

By the end of 1943, the Army air force had 345 main bases, 116 sub-bases and 322 auxiliary fields within the continental United States.<sup>127</sup> Kansas was topographically an ideal location for airstrips. The flat landscape of the plains could easily accommodate the runways and accompanying facilities required of the powerful World War II aircraft. Army construction in Kansas also included dozens of auxiliary fields. These fields typically had no buildings. Runway configuration for these auxiliary fields ran the gamut from mowed ground to poured concrete. Bases for B-29s required more substantial runway construction to accommodate the large planes and

<sup>125</sup> Fine and Remington, 615.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Office of Air Force History, *The Army Air Forces in World War II; Volume Six*, 162.



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increased personnel associated with them. B-29s could use 6000-foot runways but needed runways of at least 7000 feet for their maximum loads of 120,000 pounds.

When assessing the eligibility of an airfield runway, taxiway, and parking apron, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war that their remaining runways are significant on a national level. The runways on World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war.

Airfield runways, taxiways, and parking aprons are primary resources – those that were key to the operation of the base during the war. Integrity of design, location, association, and setting are important for runways. The loss of original materials is not as important a factor if the runway generally retains its original configuration. These resources are individually eligible and can contribute to a historic district.

The following registration requirements apply to runways, taxiways, and parking aprons in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Airfield runways, taxiways, and parking aprons are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. Although the 2008 survey did not document intact segments of runway pre-dating World War II, they should be examined for significance that pre-dates the war and their use during the war.

Airfield runways, taxiways, and parking aprons also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **engineering**. This criterion is likely best justified by discussing the engineering, construction techniques, and materials used in the development of the runway and how the runway design impacted the layout of the base. To be eligible, the runway, taxiway, and parking apron must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design.

### Airfield Property Subtype: *Hangars*

#### Description

Airfield hangars, placed on the edge of the concrete apron adjacent to the runways, served as storage space for airplanes as they were readied to go overseas. Twenty-one hangars and 20 hangar ruins (foundations and/or partial structural remains) were identified in the 2008 survey. Seven bases contained at least two extant hangars: Coffeyville (3); Great Bend (2); Herington (2); Liberal (2); Pratt (2); Smoky Hill (2); and Strother (2).<sup>128</sup>

<sup>128</sup> The B-29 hangar at Pratt AAF was demolished in 2009.

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A 1999 Corps of Engineers report entitled “Historical and architectural overview of military aircraft hangars” categorizes the hangars by primary material, such as steel, wood or concrete, and by support type over the hangar bays, such as truss, girder and long-span joist. Corps hangars in Kansas during the war were built quickly of steel or wood. Steel was a highly desirable hangar material due to its high strength-to-weight ratio and ability to be formed into building components and then easily transferred to its permanent location.<sup>129</sup> Some of the World War II hangars surveyed contained wood frames, an obvious reaction to a shortage of materials during the war. According to the Corps report, most wood hangars were originally considered temporary war structures. Many of the hangars’ side sheds have monolithic concrete supports. All of the World War II hangars in Kansas were supported by trusses, which are categorized by type (see figure 58).

Categories of steel trusses from the early and mid-1940s include Open Arch, Closed Flat Gable and Sawtooth. Wood truss categories are Open Arch, Closed Arch and Closed Flat Gable. The Corps report on hangar design states, “Truss technology for hangar construction is based on bridge design, making it highly suitable for long-span design. Trusses are assembled from individual members, or chords, joined in structural triangles. The members are generally joined by pinned or riveted connections. Truss types are determined by the arrangement of the individual members. The oldest known standing military hangar is of steel truss construction, and the technology is still in use today.”<sup>130</sup>

“Round top” hangars were the most common type noted during the 2008 survey. Many of these hangars with their arched supports remain on their original sites and in good condition. Examples of this type can be seen in Coffeyville (Figure 32), Herington (Figure 33), Liberal (Figure 34) and Smoky Hill (Figures 20 and 21). Flat gable hangars are the second most common extant type in Kansas. Some examples of this type were found in Dodge City (Figures 3 and 4) and Topeka (Figure 35). Truss examples across Kansas even included a Two Monitor Sawtooth roof at the Olathe NAS (Figures 12 and 13).

A hangar’s form and size were often determined by its intended use. Hangars that housed B-29 bombers were up to twice the size of hangars for smaller aircraft. Additionally, B-29 hangars contained openings in the upper portion of the gable to accommodate the airplanes’ protruding tails. An example of well-maintained B-29 hangars can be seen in Salina (Figure 22) and Pratt (Figures 36 and 37).

Seventeen of the 21 surveyed hangars have metal or asbestos siding, which were likely later alterations to original wood or brick exterior treatments. It wasn’t unusual for brick to also cover portions of the exterior. Hangar doors consisted of panels with windows that slid horizontally on metal tracks. Supports for doors were encased in their own substantial building components, due to the fact that the door supports withstood greater structural loads and operational stress. Hangar walls usually contained large panels of sectional windows, and at least seven of the 21 hangars surveyed have original windows, although some are covered behind newer exterior siding. Hangar side sheds housed offices, bathrooms, storage and heating facilities. Brick chimneys were attached to the hangars near the buildings’ boilers. At sites where a hangar has burned, it is common for

<sup>129</sup> Pedrotty, Webster, Cohen, and Chmiel.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

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the concrete shed and brick chimney to still remain as a ruin, which would contribute to a potential historic district.

### *Alterations*

The most common alteration of extant hangars is the application of non-historic exterior siding to the building and/or to the sliding doors. This course has likely saved many hangars from deterioration and allowed the buildings to continue use as storage, businesses or even manufacturing facilities. Exterior cladding often obstructs a hangar's character-defining multi-paned windows, but the windows are often still present. Other alterations to existing hangars include the removal of sliding doors or the construction of new shed additions placed on the sides or rears of the buildings.

### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

Hangars facilitated the year-round storage and maintenance of airplanes and are one of the key distinguishable features of World War II-era Kansas airbases. These resources are primary resources – significant to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register.

When assessing the eligibility of a hangar, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war that their remaining hangars are significant on a national level. The hangars on World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war.

Integrity of design, location, association, and setting are important for hangars. The loss of some original materials, such as exterior siding, is not as important a factor if the hangar generally retains its original form, massing, and truss system. These resources are individually eligible and can contribute to a historic district.

The following registration requirements apply to hangars in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Hangars are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the hangar must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the war effort.

Hangars also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the areas of **architecture** and/or **engineering**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the engineering and construction techniques used in the development of the hangar, the hangar's materials, type of truss system, and how the hangar design impacted the organization of surrounding base features. To be eligible, it must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing, form, and the truss system. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

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### Airfield Property Subtype: *Control Tower*

#### Description

Control towers were located adjacent to runways in order to guide the takeoffs and landings of aircraft. Most Army control towers were built of temporary frame construction, similar to the Smoky Hill tower seen in Figure 18. No extant wood towers were documented during the 2008 survey of World War II -era Kansas airbases. The tower built for the Hutchinson NAS is the only remaining World War II control tower in Kansas (Figures 38 and 39).<sup>131</sup> The poured concrete structure with its Art Moderne styling consists of a tower four stories tall attached to an L-shaped office building. Concrete ledges project above the first, second, and third stories of the square tower, which is topped by an octagonal top story.

Despite its age, the Hutchinson control tower retains a very high degree of integrity, particularly regarding design, location, and materials. Most changes have occurred inside the building, which served as a residence for a short time. Except for breakage of window panes, the exterior appears much as it did shortly after the war.

#### Significance & Registration Requirements

Control towers facilitated the takeoff and landing of aircraft and are one of the key distinguishable features of World War II -era Kansas airbases. These resources are primary resources – significant to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register.

When assessing the eligibility of a control tower, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war, but these bases no longer retain a World War II-era control tower. Therefore, the control towers on World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war.

Integrity of design, location, association, and setting are particularly important for control towers. The loss of some original materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type. These resources are individually eligible and can contribute to a historic district.

The following registration requirements apply to control towers in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Control towers are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the control

<sup>131</sup> The control towers attached to the hangars at Topeka AAF and Olathe NAS were likely built after World War II.



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tower must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the government's wartime aviation operations.

Control towers also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture** and/or **engineering**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the architectural style exhibited on the building, the tower's materials, and how its appearance was impacted by the design of the surrounding base features. To be eligible, the control tower must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### Airfield Property Subtype: *Tetrahedron Wind Indicators*

#### Description

Tetrahedron wind indicators were placed within runway configurations to alert pilots to wind direction, rotating with the breezes. The tetrahedron always points into the wind and shows pilots approaching the airport the correct direction to make their landing approach. The extant triangular structures are approximately 12 feet long, constructed of wood covered with metal, brightly painted, and mounted on a pivot with a concrete base. It is likely that the tetrahedrons all originally featured lights to aid in navigation, but only those at Liberal (Figure 40) and Strother Field still retain their lighting. The 2008 survey noted four tetrahedrons – at Garden City, Pratt, Liberal, and Strother Field – although others may be found in remote runway areas that have not yet been surveyed.

The wind tetrahedrons in use today survive due to regular maintenance and upkeep. While the structures themselves have not been significantly altered, they may have received new metal siding, paint and lighting.

#### Significance & Registration Requirements

Tetrahedron wind indicators assisted pilots approaching the runway by indicating the direction of the wind. These objects are primary resources – significant to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register.

When assessing the eligibility of a tetrahedron, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war, that their remaining tetrahedrons are significant on a national level. The tetrahedrons on World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war.

Integrity of design, location, association, and setting are particularly important for tetrahedrons. The loss of some original materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type. These resources are individually eligible and can contribute to a historic district.

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The following registration requirements apply to tetrahedrons addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Tetrahedrons are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. Its original location is not as critical under Criterion A as it is under Criterion C, but it must retain a runway setting on the base it was associated with during World War II.

Tetrahedrons also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **engineering**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the engineering and construction techniques used in the development of the tetrahedron and how its placement was impacted by the layout of the base and local wind conditions. To be eligible, the tetrahedron must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing, form, and location. Placement in its original location interprets its significance relating to its engineering, local wind conditions, and the layout of the runway.

### **PROPERTY TYPE: *Cantonment***

The term "cantonment" usually refers to housing facilities for soldiers, but can also be expanded to include buildings for day-to-day operations, storage, housing, and administration. This category contains buildings that served as barracks, mess halls, commissaries, general administration buildings, guard houses, fire stations, water towers and parachute buildings. Due to the temporary design of World War II-era airbase construction, examples of several of these building types are limited to one or are non-existent. For instance, no barracks or mess halls were noted in the 2008 field survey. Historic photographs of barracks at Olathe NAS and Pratt AAF can be seen in Figures 14 and 15. One surveyed building was identified as a former commissary at the Liberal AAF, one building as an administration building at Olathe NAS and two potential fire stations, one at Herington AAF and one at Olathe NAS. Storage buildings are also part of this category, including warehouses, supply buildings, Norden bombsight storage vaults, and buildings of unidentified storage.

### **Cantonment Property Subtype: *Storage Buildings***

#### **Description**

This varied sub-category includes more than 35 extant structures surveyed in 2008. Storage was essential to the smooth operation of each air base. Supplies for training, maintenance and the routine operations of each field needed to be sheltered and protected. The Kansas airfields hosted a variety of storage buildings, some types widespread and some unique to a particular base. Unique to the Liberal base are six examples of small, square storage buildings of red brick tile with one window, a wood door and wood roofs (Figure 42). These structures were known as "dope houses" for storage of flammable aircraft paint known by the same name.

Large storage buildings usually served as warehouses. These wood-framed buildings varied in size but were often among the largest buildings on a base. They typically featured flat roofs, large access doors, and an

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attached concrete loading dock. An example in near-original condition can be found at Garden City AAF (Figure 43), which retains its wartime-era siding of asbestos shingles. Warehouses that have newer cladding but retain their original configuration can be found at Hutchinson (Figure 45) and Liberal (Figure 46). Also at Garden City is the only wartime metal storage building documented during the 2008 survey (Figure 44), and the only Quonset storage building noted in the survey.

Additionally, many other types of storage buildings in various sizes and materials were prevalent on the bases. The intended purpose of all of these buildings, which may have changed during the war, is not always known. Those that remain in the best condition are constructed of poured concrete, concrete block, or stone (Figures 47, 48 and 49).

### Significance & Registration Requirements

When assessing the significance of a storage building, determine its function during the period of significance (1939-1945). Generally, storage buildings played a secondary or support role on the base, despite the considerable space they occupied on the base and the many resources were devoted to their construction.

These secondary resources should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their functions. They could be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, architecture and integrity, what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase, and documented significance.

The following registration requirements apply to storage buildings in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

To be eligible under **Criterion A** in the area of **military**, the storage building must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the federal government's wartime aviation operations. The historic function must be documented and its significance justified to warrant individual eligibility.

To be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture**, the storage building must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### Cantonment Property Subtype: *Norden Bombsight Storage Vaults*

#### Description

Norden Bombsight Storage Vaults were constructed during the build-up of the Kansas airbases during World War II. The five extant examples were found at Dodge City, Great Bend (Figure 41), Herington, Pratt, and Walker, and they have the same materials, dimensions, and arrangements. They typically include one or two one-story poured concrete buildings with slightly sloping shed roofs – most featuring a total of seven vaults. Some vaults, such as the ones at Pratt, were built in two phases, with the second generation vaults being enclosed by a wood-frame structure. Today, all that remains of these vaults on any of the bases are the concrete

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vaults, each with their own metal door (although some are missing) and a concrete slab. The Pratt vaults are the best documented and are similar to the National Register-listed vaults at McCook Army Air Field in Nebraska.

### Significance & Registration Requirements

The vaults provided a secure space to store, maintain, and issue the Norden Bombsights, which were classified as secret during most of World War II. Developed in the 1920s by American engineer Carl L. Norden for the US Navy, these instruments were key in conducting precision strategic bombings during the war.

Bombsight storage vaults are primary resources – significant to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register or contribute to a historic district.

The following registration requirements apply to the vaults in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

These resources are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. They were constructed during the war.

The vaults also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **engineering**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the vault's materials, how its function played a role in its appearance, and its association with surrounding base features. To be eligible, the vault must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials, massing, and form is important in conveying its significance.

### Cantonment Property Subtype: *Parachute Buildings*

#### Description

Two parachute buildings were identified in the 2008 survey—one at Pratt AAF and one at Coffeyville AAF. The inspection, repair, and re-packing of parachutes occurred in these buildings. These duties were performed by military and civilian employees. Parachute buildings are distinguished by two sections – a roughly 40-foot tall parachute loft and a short, gabled, one-story parachute packing area. The frame buildings at Pratt and Coffeyville sit on concrete foundations and are sided with historic wood clapboards. The parachute buildings at Pratt and Coffeyville have been slightly altered with the addition of modern garage doors but both retain high degrees of integrity.

### Significance & Registration Requirements

Although simple in design with little architectural ornamentation, its form and appearance reflect its intended use as a facility for inspecting, packing, and repairing parachutes during World War II. These buildings are primary resources – key to the operation of the base during the war – and have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register or contribute to the significance of a historic district.



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The Pratt Parachute Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 22, 2009 (Figure 50). It is potentially nationally significant as a primary resource located on one of the four bases associated with the Battle of Kansas and the B-29. The Parachute Building is among the most intact of the base's World War II-era resources, and it was listed in the National Register under criteria A and C in the areas of military and architecture.

The following registration requirements apply to the parachute buildings in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Parachute buildings are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. These primary resources developed quickly as part of the massive wartime construction effort.

Parachute buildings also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the design and form of the building and how it conveys its historic function. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### Cantonment Property Subtype: *Fire Stations*

#### Description

Each airbase had a fire station, but only one retains integrity. The best-preserved fire station noted in the 2008 survey is at the Olathe NAS (Figure 51). The rectangular brick one-and-a-half-story building has concrete accents that lend it a subdued Art Deco appearance. It contains one wall of multi-paned windows and multi-paned sliding doors. It has changed little in its original appearance and retains a high degree of integrity. A building identified as a previous fire station at Herington AAF is a one-story rectangular building now clad in vinyl siding retaining little architectural integrity. At the time of the survey, it was used as a machine shop for the Herington airport.

#### Significance & Registration Requirements

These buildings are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their functions. They can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, architecture and integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase. For example, the survey of airbases revealed only two extant fire stations (Olathe NAS and Herington AAF), but the Herington example is ineligible due to alterations. The Olathe NAS fire station, which is a brick building that retains excellent integrity and is individually eligible for its architecture and association with the wartime buildup of the base.

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Integrity of design, association, and setting are particularly important for fire stations. The loss of some original materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type.

The following registration requirements apply to the fire stations in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Fire stations are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the station must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the government's wartime aviation operations. The historic function must be well documented and its significance justified to warrant individual eligibility.

Fire stations also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the design and architectural style of the building and how it conveys its historic function. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### **Cantonment Property Subtype: *Water Towers***

#### **Description**

Although they are non-functioning, at least four examples of AAF water towers still stand in excellent condition, likely due to their simple designs and solid construction. These important airfield features merited construction that surpassed standards for most buildings. Water was often scarce on the Kansas plains and a dependable structure to hold a base's water supply was extremely important. The towers, constructed of either poured concrete (Figure 52) or metal, are simple cylinders that stand two or more stories tall. An opening at the base of the tower provides access to the interior. Only one tower, at Coffeyville AAF, has been altered with the addition of a modern top and encircling platform.

#### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

These structures are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their significance. However, they can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

Integrity of design, association, and setting are particularly important for water towers. The loss of some original materials or the addition of newer materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type.

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The following registration requirements apply to the water towers in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Water towers are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the water tower must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the government's wartime aviation operations. The historic function must be well documented and its significance justified to warrant individual eligibility.

Control towers also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **engineering**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the tower's materials and how its placement was impacted by the design of the surrounding base features. To be eligible, the water tower must retain integrity of key character-defining elements in order to convey design. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form.

### Cantonment Property Subtype: *Administration Buildings*

#### Description

The only known remaining World War II building constructed as an administration center is located at the Olathe NAS. This building survives likely due to its brick construction and continued use as an administration building. It consists of a central one-and-a-half-story pavilion flanked by one-story wings with rows of windows along the front and back of the building. The subdued Art Deco styling is consistent with other WWII buildings found at the Olathe NAS, but is unique to bases in Kansas. Despite interior alterations and the replacement of the original windows, the building retains a high degree of integrity (Figures 10 and 11).

The construction of the administration building at McConnell AAF pre-dates the period of significance (1939-1945). It was part of the city's Municipal Airport, which dates to 1928. Ground was broken for runways in 1929 and for an Administration Building in June 1930. The building was completed in stages, with the central portion finished in 1935 and side wing extensions funded by the Works Progress Administration in 1942 and 1945. The Administration building was listed in the National Register in 1990.<sup>132</sup>

#### Significance & Registration Requirements

Administration buildings facilitated the business operations of World War II-era Kansas airbases. These buildings are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their significance. However, they can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

<sup>132</sup> Sandra S. Kurt, "Administration Building" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 5 February 1990).

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Integrity of design, association, and setting are particularly important for administration buildings. The loss of some original materials or the addition of newer materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type.

The following registration requirements apply to the administration buildings in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Administration buildings are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the administration building must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the war effort. The historic function must be well documented and its significance justified to warrant individual eligibility.

Administration buildings also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the design and architectural style of the building and how it conveys its historic function. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### Cantonment Property Subtype: *Commissaries*

#### Description

Only one building in the 2008 survey was identified as a former commissary. The unadorned, rectangular frame building measures approximately 60 feet wide and 150 feet long. It sits on a foundation of concrete blocks, has a low-pitched gable roof and is clad in vinyl siding. It is currently used for storage. It retains its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, but the historic exterior materials are obscured by vinyl siding.

#### Significance & Registration Requirements

Each base had a commissary that sold food and supplies to the personnel or workers at the base. These buildings are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their significance. However, they can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

Integrity of design, association, and setting are particularly important for administration buildings. The loss of some original materials or the addition of newer materials is not as important a factor, particularly given the rarity of extant examples of this property type.

The following registration requirements apply to commissaries in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:



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Commissaries are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the commissary must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the war effort. The historic function must be well documented and its significance justified to warrant individual eligibility.

Administration buildings also may be eligible under **Criterion C** in the area of **architecture**. This Criterion is likely best justified by discussing the design and architectural style of the building and how it conveys its historic function. Integrity of materials is not as important as retaining massing and form. Additions should not overwhelm the original structure or obscure key elements.

### **PROPERTY TYPE: *Training Buildings***

#### **Description**

Extant classroom buildings are of temporary construction, consisting of wood frames, concrete foundations, and low-pitched gable roofs. The buildings were originally clad in either wood or asphalt. They typically had several doors and windows.

The Link trainer, invented by Ed Link in 1927, was a flight simulator that mimicked full the full motion of operating an airplane's cockpit. Two of the original six Link simulation and training buildings remain at Strother Field, despite frequent open exposure to the elements (Figure 54). The free-standing buildings have clapboard siding. Both retain some original doors and windows and one retains an original brick chimney.

A collection of classroom buildings still stands at Liberal AAF. Each individual building section measures approximately 25 feet wide and between 108 and 125 feet long. Like the buildings at Strother Field, the Liberal buildings have concrete foundations and low-pitched gable roofs. The original wood clapboard siding has been covered with coats of asphalt shingles and stucco. The largest classroom building consists of four rectangular buildings connected by a common perpendicular wing (Figure 53). Two smaller rectangular buildings stand nearby. All Liberal classroom buildings retain some original windows, doors, and light fixtures. Alterations include the installation of garage doors on some of the buildings.

#### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

The training of crews headed for the Pacific front was an important task assigned to the Kansas airfields. Time was spent in a classroom each day for up to two years, learning specialized tasks and anticipating wartime situations. Learning took place in rectangular classroom buildings. Although these resources are not necessarily easily distinguishable from other base buildings, they were extremely important to the mission of the bases and are classified as primary resources. They have the potential to be individually eligible for the National Register or contribute to the significance of a historic district.

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When assessing the eligibility of a training building, first determine the level of historic significance. Four bases in particular – Smoky Hill, Great Bend, Pratt, and Walker – had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war that their remaining hangars are significant on a national level. The training buildings on World War II air bases, airfields, and auxiliary fields of Kansas that are not associated directly with the B-29 are significant on a statewide level because of their strong associations with Kansas' role in the outcome of the war.

Integrity of design, association, and setting are important for training buildings. The loss of some original materials, such as exterior siding, is not as important a factor if the building generally retains its original form and massing.

The following registration requirements apply to training buildings in addition to the general significance and registration requirements noted above:

Training buildings are significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **military** for their direct association with the federal government's wartime aviation operations from 1939 through 1945. To be eligible, the building must be located on a World War II-era airbase in Kansas and have been used as part of the war effort to train military personnel.

It is less likely that training buildings will be eligible under **Criterion C** in the areas of **architecture** or **engineering** due to their rudimentary and simplistic construction. Exceptions to this, though, might include buildings that reflect a particular interior design or arrangement that is specific to training buildings. More research would be needed to fully develop these arguments.

### **PROPERTY TYPE:** *Recreation and Welfare Facilities*

#### **Description**

Recreation and welfare buildings functioned to provide entertainment and reflection for the troops, mostly in their off-duty time. This category included recreation centers, swimming pools, chapels, theaters, and post offices. Only one World War II-era structure of this type was documented in 2008 – the Herington AAF swimming pool. It was not readily accessible, but appeared to be in deteriorated condition as the site is currently used for storage and the former pool is filled with refuse.

#### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

Off-duty recreation was important to maintaining order on military airbases. Although military men and women sometimes traveled off-base to nearby communities during their off-duty hours, many remained on the base. Library rooms, movie theaters, and physical recreation facilities could be found on most bases. Buildings that housed these services were not always easily distinguishable, while some structures, such as swimming pools were quite recognizable.

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These facilities - should any remain – are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their significance. However, they can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

Integrity of design, association, and setting are important for recreation and welfare facilities. The loss of some original materials, such as exterior siding, is not as important a factor if the building or structure generally retains its original form and massing.

Regarding registration, the general significance and registration requirements noted above are applicable until more information is revealed through the survey of extant recreation and welfare facilities.

### **PROPERTY TYPE: *Hospitals***

#### **Description**

Hospitals functioned to tend to the health and wellbeing of servicemen and servicewomen. This category included office buildings, wards, infirmaries, dental clinics, and housing for nurses. No World War II-era buildings of this property type were identified in the survey or are known to remain in Kansas.

#### **Significance & Registration Requirements**

These facilities - should any be discovered during future surveys – are secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – and generally should be given more consideration toward eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their significance. However, they can be considered for individual eligibility when weighing such factors as rarity, integrity, and what other World War II resources remain on the associated airbase.

Integrity of design, association, and setting are important for hospitals. The loss of some original materials, such as exterior siding, is not as important a factor if the building or structure generally retains its original form and massing.

Regarding registration, the general significance and registration requirements noted above are applicable until more information is revealed through the survey of extant recreation and welfare facilities.

#### **List of Known Extant Resources (2008)**

Listed below are extant World War II-era structures and sites found on each field discovered during the summer of 2008. Because the state of buildings can quickly change, the conditions of buildings are not listed.

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### Coffeyville AAF:

Three hangars, parachute building, water tower, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways.

### Dodge City AAF:

One hangar, three hangar ruins, three storage buildings, runway lights, water tower and many concrete and brick ruins. A collection of buildings on the southwest side of the site includes two storage buildings and a set of building ruins. The triangular configuration of runways is now agricultural land.

### Fairfax Field:

Some of the Fairfax Field runways are visible in aerial photographs, but no WWII structures are known to remain.

### Garden City AAF:

Three storage buildings, one concrete pad from a former building site, former carpenter shop building, equipment service shop building and a tetrahedron wind cone. Only two runways remain. Garden City AAF's Auxiliary Field No. 1, located in Gray County, is in good condition. Auxiliary Fields No.2 in Gray County and No. 3 in Finney County are no longer extant.

### Great Bend AAF:

Two hangars, six brick chimneys next to ruins from previous hangars, two concrete storage bunkers and the triangular runways.

### Herington AAF:

Two hangars, several storage buildings, fire station, water tower, two pump houses, pool site, many ruins and a warehouse. One runway is still present.

### Hutchinson NAS:

Power plant with storage tanks, hangar ruins, control tower, two warehouses, motor pool building and several buildings of unknown use. Some extant structures may date from the Korean War era. One runway has been resurfaced but the runways and taxiways retain their original configuration. Hutchinson NAS's outlying fields were located at the Hutchinson's Municipal Airport and at the Newton Municipal Airport. The runways and circa 1939 hangar at Hutchinson's Municipal Airport are in excellent condition. The hangar and original runway at the Newton Municipal Airport are also in excellent condition.

### Independence AAF:

One hangar and two of its three original runways. The only remaining auxiliary field for the Independence AAF now serves as the Tri-City airport west of Parsons in Labette County. The field retains two of its three original runways.



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Liberal AAF:

Two metal hangars, three hangar ruins, seven paint storage buildings, three classroom buildings, four warehouses, brick commissary building, utility shop, five sets of foundation ruins, tetrahedron wind cone and an ordnance field. The triangular configuration of six runways surrounded by a taxiway is still present.

Marshall Field at Fort Riley:

One WWII runway.

McConnell AAF in Wichita:

1942 National Guard armory and hangar. The Administration Building, built in stages between 1930 and 1945, is also present. Some remnants of the WWII runways may remain.

Olathe NAS:

Administration building, hangar, medical center building, warehouse, laundry building, fire station, power plant, cold storage building, garage, maintenance building and two pump houses. The original runways are present and two have been resurfaced. The runways from the Olathe OLF No. 2 retain much of their original configuration at the Johnson County Executive Airport in Gardner.

Pratt AAF:

Two hangars, two hangar ruins, six storage or warehouse buildings, parachute building, machine shop, warehouse and tetrahedron wind cone. Two of the three sides of original runways are now occupied by a feed lot.

Sherman Field at Fort Leavenworth:

The triangular WWII runway configuration has been reduced to a single runway.

Smoky Hill AAF in Salina:

Two hangars and original runways, which have been reinforced and expanded.

Strother AAF:

Two hangars with several additions and changes, two Link trainer buildings, several concrete pads and ruins, building with unidentified use, tetrahedron wind cone, two of the original runways. Strother's remaining auxiliary field No. 5, located south of Geuda Springs in Sumner County, is still present.

Topeka AAF:

Five hangars, three office-type buildings, four warehouses, two utility buildings and two of the three original runways likely remain from WWII.

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Walker AAF:

One hangar, four hangar ruins, concrete storage building, water tower and many sets of concrete ruins, some containing brick chimneys. The triangular runways are still present.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Historic resources associated with World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas are found on former airfields scattered primarily in the eastern and southern portions of Kansas. Extant resources were found in Barton, Cowley, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Gray, Harvey, Hodgeman, Johnson, Labette, Leavenworth, Montgomery, Morris, Pratt, Reno, Riley, Saline, Sedgwick, Seward and Sumner counties.

See map – Figure 59.

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### SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The *World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas* Multiple Property Submission was prepared following a 2008 survey of 16 World War II Army airfields, two Naval Air Stations, and all known auxiliary fields by Susan Jezak Ford, Citysearch Preservation.<sup>133</sup> The focus of the survey was World War II-era resources specifically relating to the aviation-related military build-up in Kansas. The survey identified 176 resources, but there is a potential for more as-yet undiscovered resources. All surveyed resources were documented, photographed and drawn on a sketch map for each field.

As discussed in greater detail in *Section F – Associated Property Types*, resources on World War II air bases pose unique eligibility challenges having to do with temporary construction, ruins and remnants, relocated resources, and layers of history. Much of the World War II-era airbase landscape has transitioned leaving some former bases with little more than ruins. Assessing integrity was and will continue to be the most challenging factor in determining eligibility.

The survey and subsequent research revealed obviously eligible resources, such as hangars and runways, which played important roles in the military build-up and eventual outcome of the war. The multitude of unidentified storage buildings and ruins hardly seemed equal to other more significant resources. As a result, a resource's functional importance became key to assessing significance and determining eligibility, and a system of categorizing resources as primary and secondary was developed. Primary resources – those that were key to the operation of the base – include runways, hangars, control towers, wind tetrahedrons, education buildings, parachute buildings, and select top secret storage facilities. Secondary resources – those that supported the key operations of the base – include storage buildings, fire stations, water towers, administration buildings, commissaries, recreation and welfare facilities, and hospitals.

The registration requirements place more emphasis on the significance of primary resources, which are generally seen as potentially individually eligible. When dealing with secondary resources, the registration requirements encourage their eligibility as contributors to a historic district where physical context can help interpret their functions.

Contextual information provided in Section E came from academic repositories and libraries around the Kansas City area, including archives found at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the Kansas City Public Library, and the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. All of the material assembled for this project is archived at the Cultural Resources Division of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

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<sup>133</sup> The Fairfax field was not visited. The General Motors assembly plant now occupies the entire site.

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Strategic Air Command website. ([http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes\\_AFB.htm](http://www.strategic-air-command.com/bases/Forbes_AFB.htm).)

"Topeka Air Base Taking On a Finished Appearance." *Topeka Capital*, 16 June 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

"Topeka Army Air Base Site Gets War Department O.K." *Topeka Capital*, 1 February 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

"Town Gives Up World War II Legacy." *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 23 May 1983. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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Ventura, Anthony. “The Unsung Plains of Kansas.” Pratt, KS: Pratt Army Air Field History Center, Transcribed by Milt Martin, 2010. Accessed 24 May 2012 <<http://paaf.indexks.com./eng/Army-Air-Fields/Kansas-AAF/Pratt/346th-BG/Stories/The-Unsung-Plains-Of-Kansas>>.

“Walker Base Is To Go.” *Kansas City Times*, 5 August 1948. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

“A Young Man Has a Big Job at Topeka Air Base.” *Topeka Capital*, 29 June 1942. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

“Your Kansas City At War; The Olathe Naval Air Station.” *Kansas City Star*, 28 January 1945. (KSHS Archives Clippings K358).

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Figure 1. B-29 Production (KSHS archives)

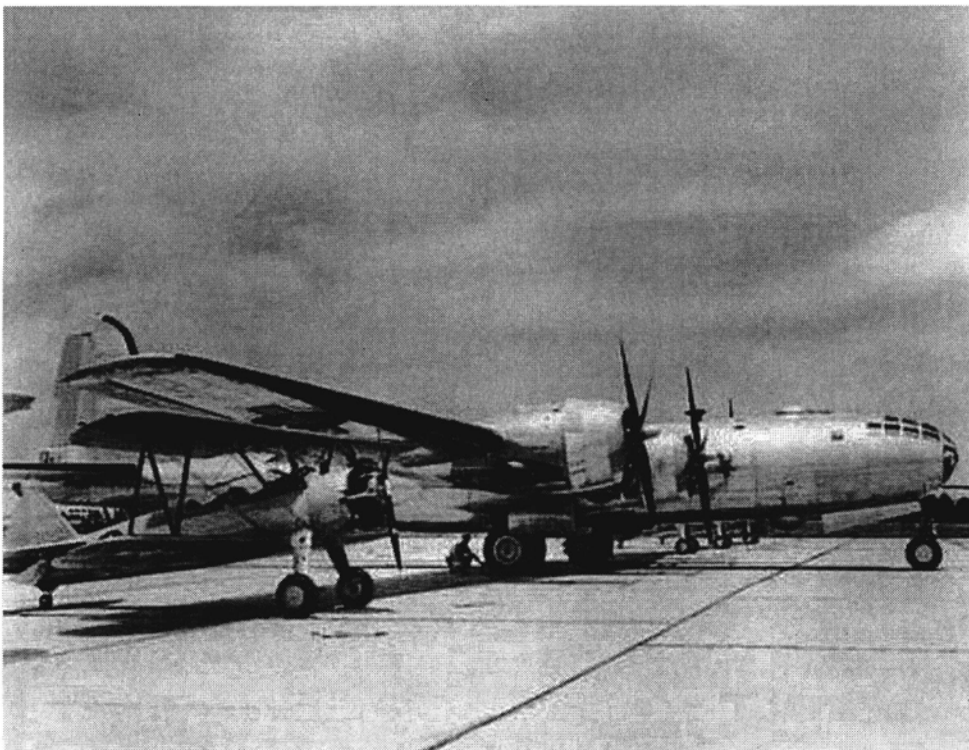


Figure 2. Kaydet and B-29 airplanes (KSHS archives)



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Figure 3. Dodge City Hangar during WWII (KSHS archives)



Figure 4. Dodge City AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 5. 1944 photograph of B-26 airplanes in the snow at Dodge City AAF.  
(Wikipedia photograph attributed to Thomas A. Manning, History of Air Education and Training Command, 1942-2002. Office of History and Research, Headquarters, AETC, Randolph AFB, Texas.)

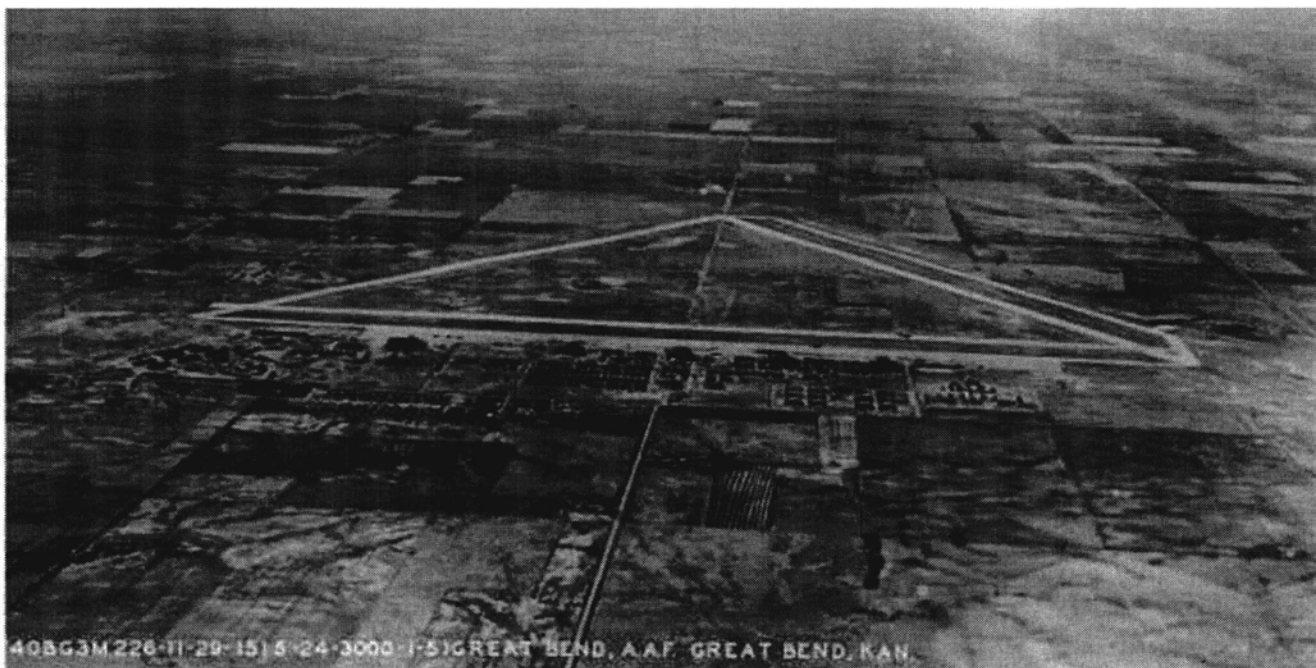


Figure 6. Great Bend AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)

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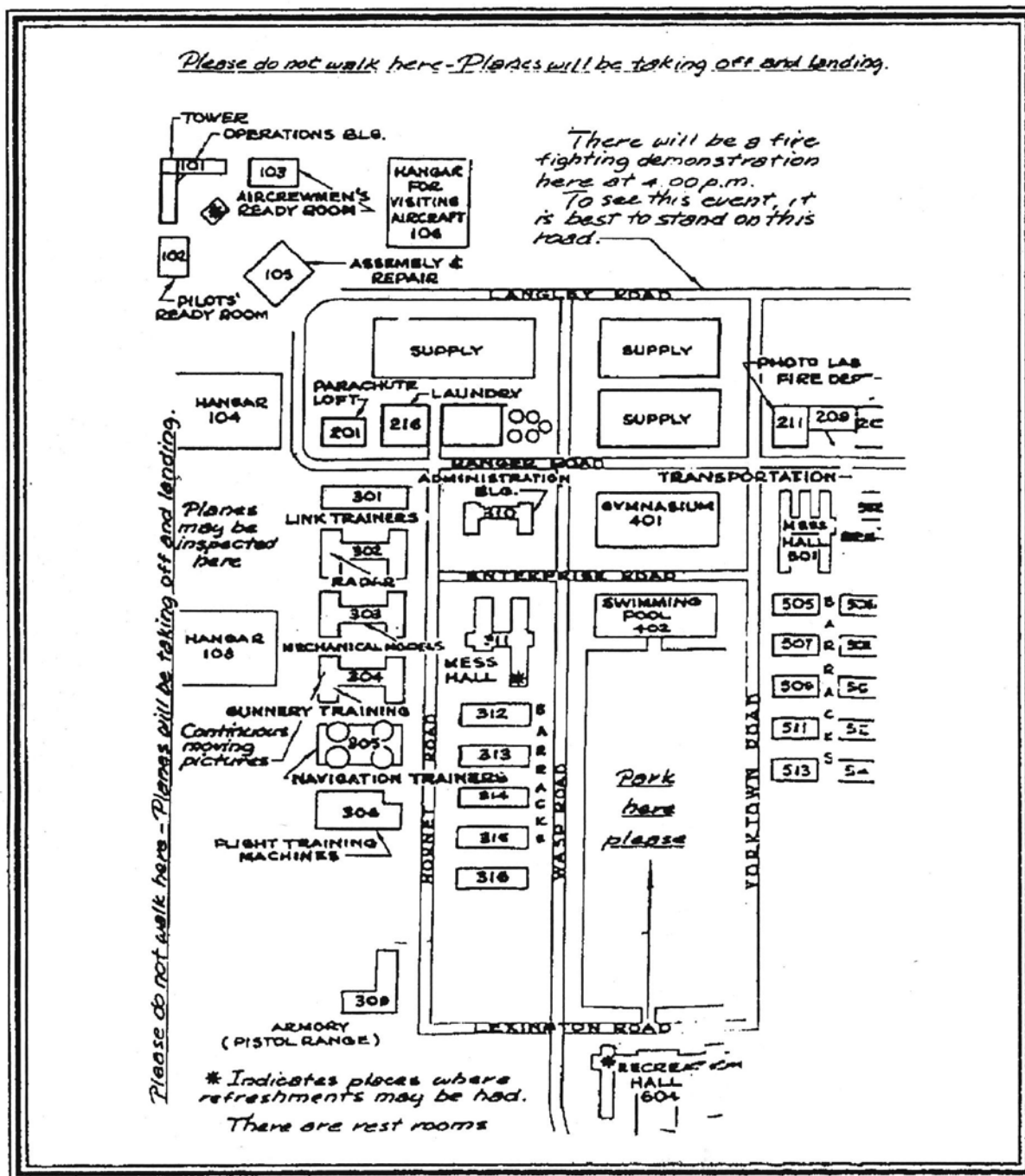
Figure 7. Hutchinson NAS Field circa 1944

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Map for public inspection drive through tour, July 4, 1943.

Figure 8. Partial map of Hutchinson NAS (Hutchinson News-Herald)



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**Figure 9. Marshall Airfield, 1943 (Marshall Field archives)**



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Figure 10. Olathe NAS Administration Building circa 1942 (Johnson County Museum of History archives)



Figure 11. Olathe NAS Administration Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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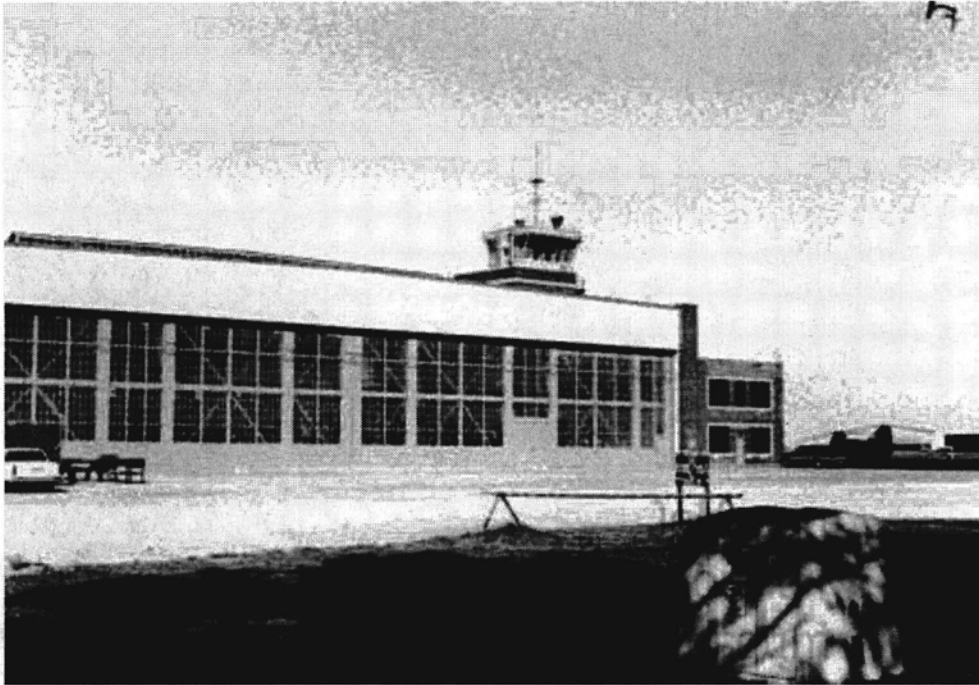


Figure 12. Olathe NAS hangar and control tower circa 1942 (Johnson County Museum of History archives)



Figure 13. Olathe NAS Hangar and Control Tower, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 14. Olathe NAS during WWII (KSHS archives)

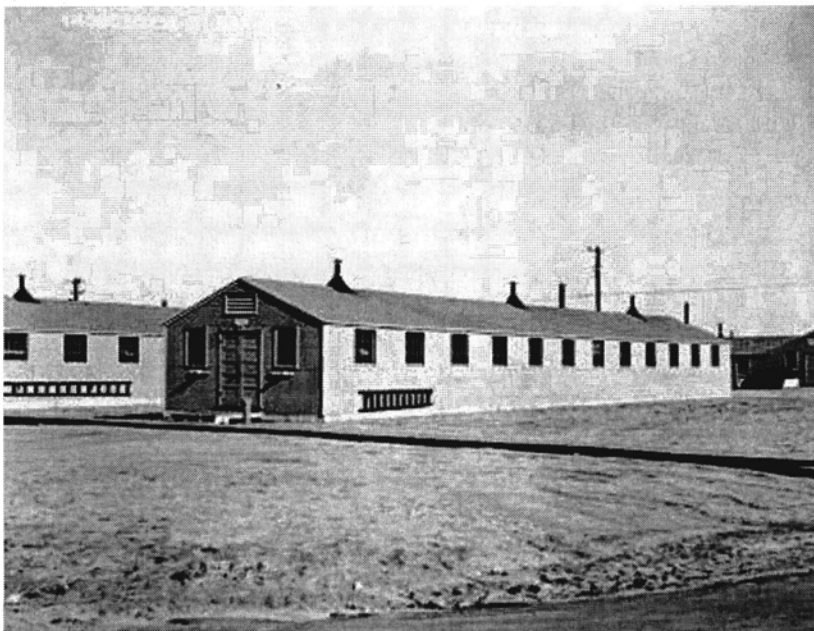


Figure 15. Pratt AAF Barracks circa WWII (KSHS Archives)

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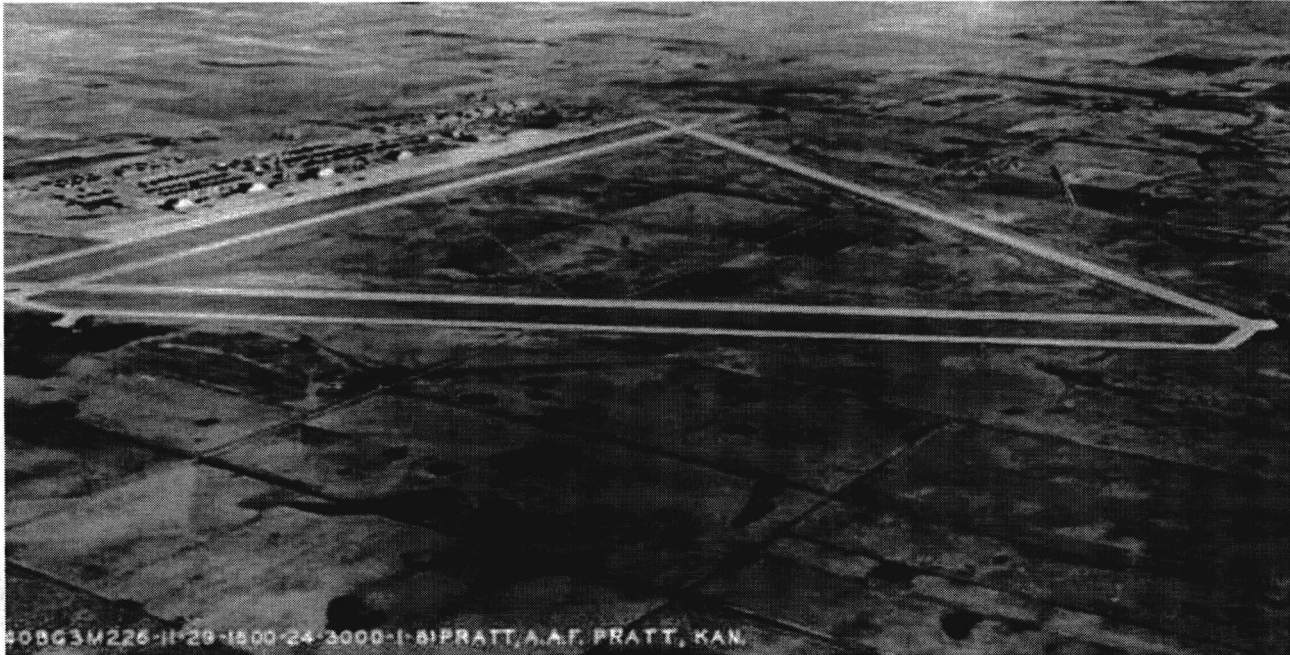


Figure 16. Pratt AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)



Figure 17. Smoky Hill AAF, circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)



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Figure 18. Smoky Hill control tower, 1946 (KSHS archives)

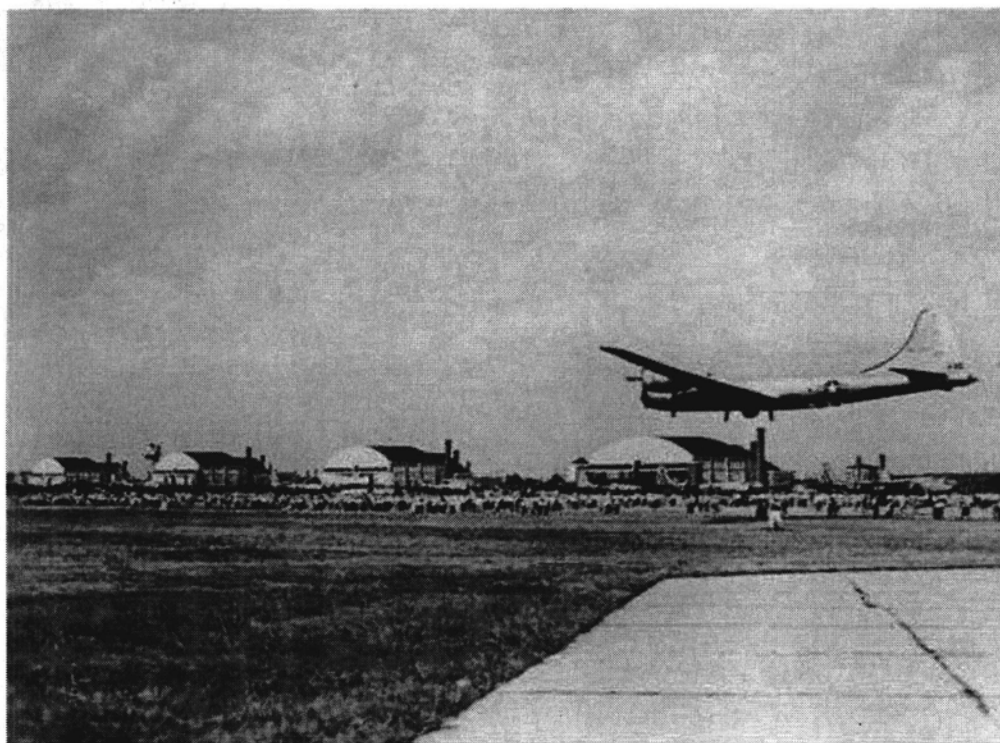


Figure 19. Smoky Hill during WWII (KSHS archives)



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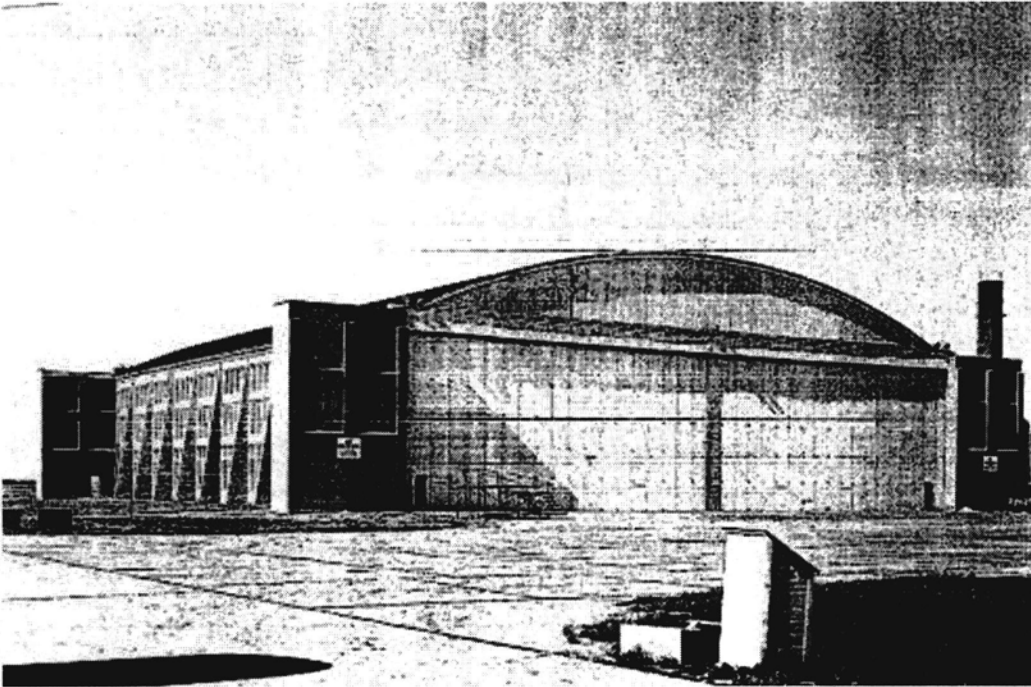


Figure 20. Smoky Hill hangar, 1950 (KSHS archives)



Figure 21. Smoky Hill AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 22. Smoky Hill AAF B-29 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

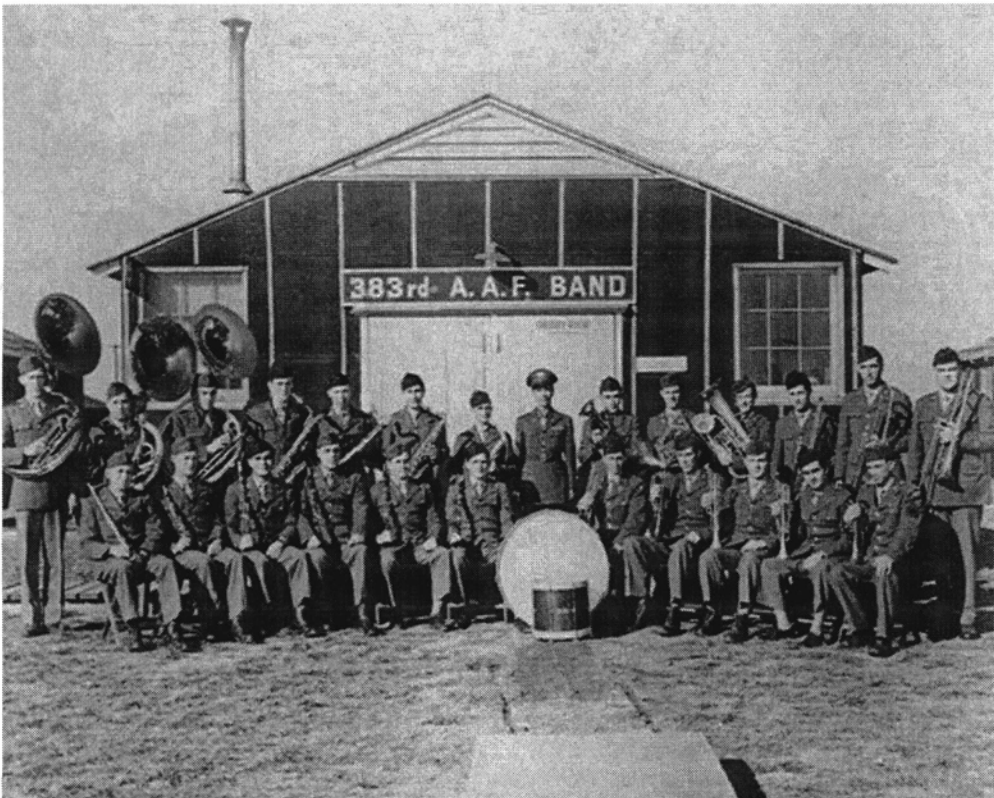


Figure 23. Strother AAF WWII band (KSHS archives)

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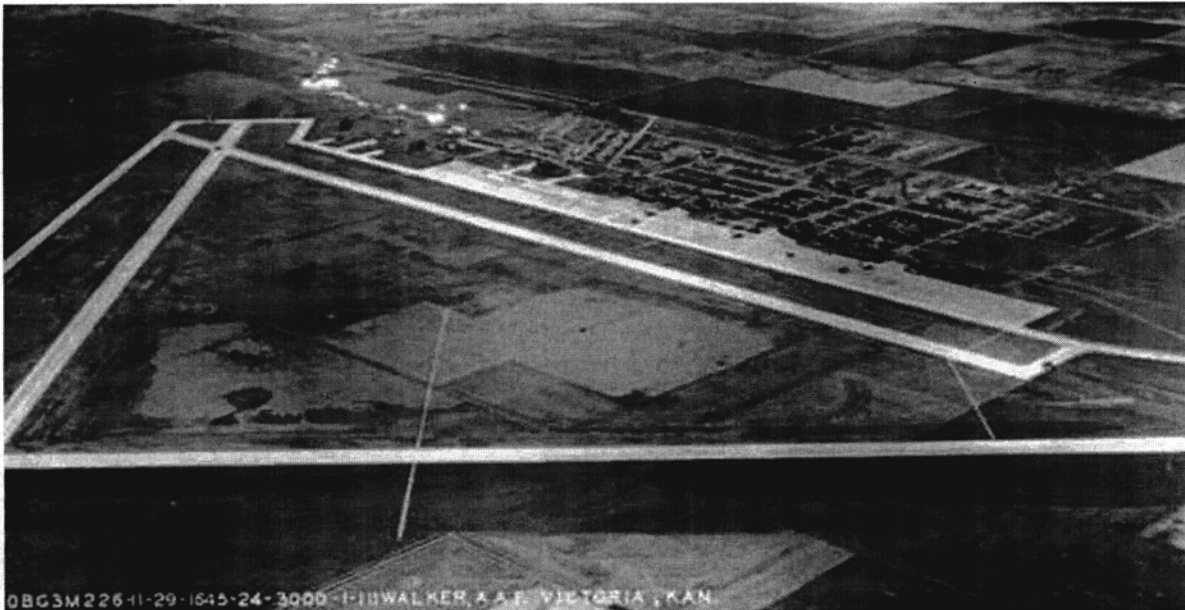


Figure 24. Walker AAF circa 1944 (Collection of Phillip T. Schulz)



Figure 25. Walker AAF during WWII

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**Figure 26. Historic photograph of Hutchinson OLF No. 2**



**Figures 27 (left) and 28 (right). Hutchinson NAS Runways, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



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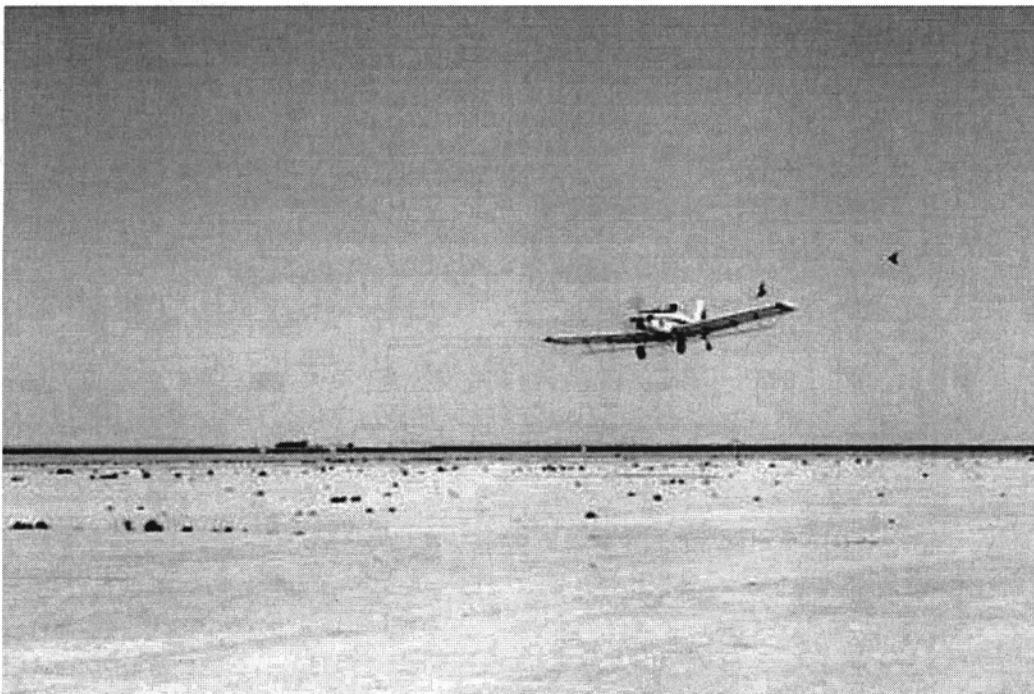
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**Figure 29. Topeka Runway, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 30. Garden City Auxiliary No. 1, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



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Figure 31. Strother Auxiliary Field No. 5, 2008 (Terraserver photograph)

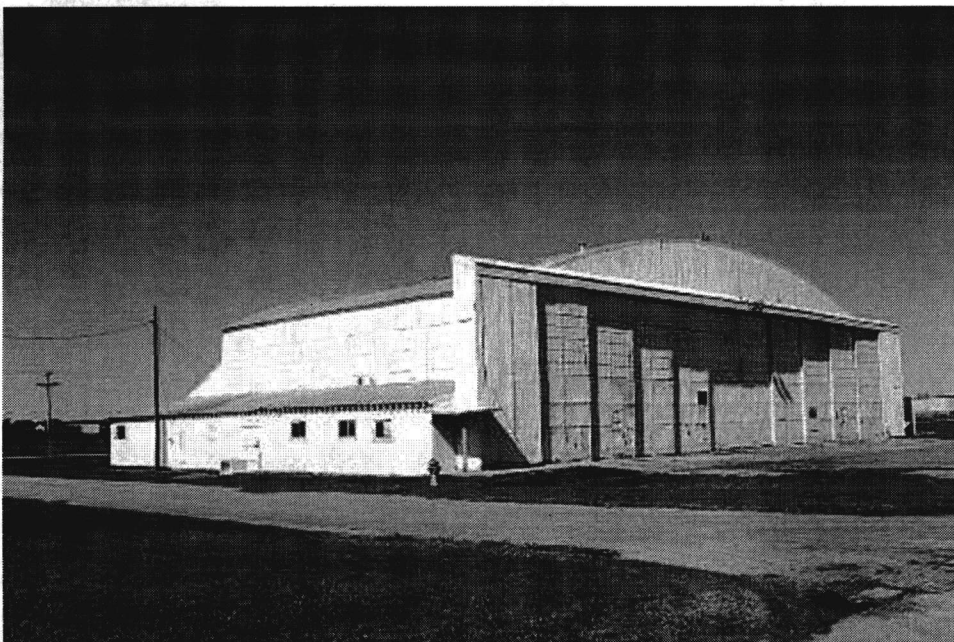


Figure 32. Coffeyville AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 33. Herington AAF Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

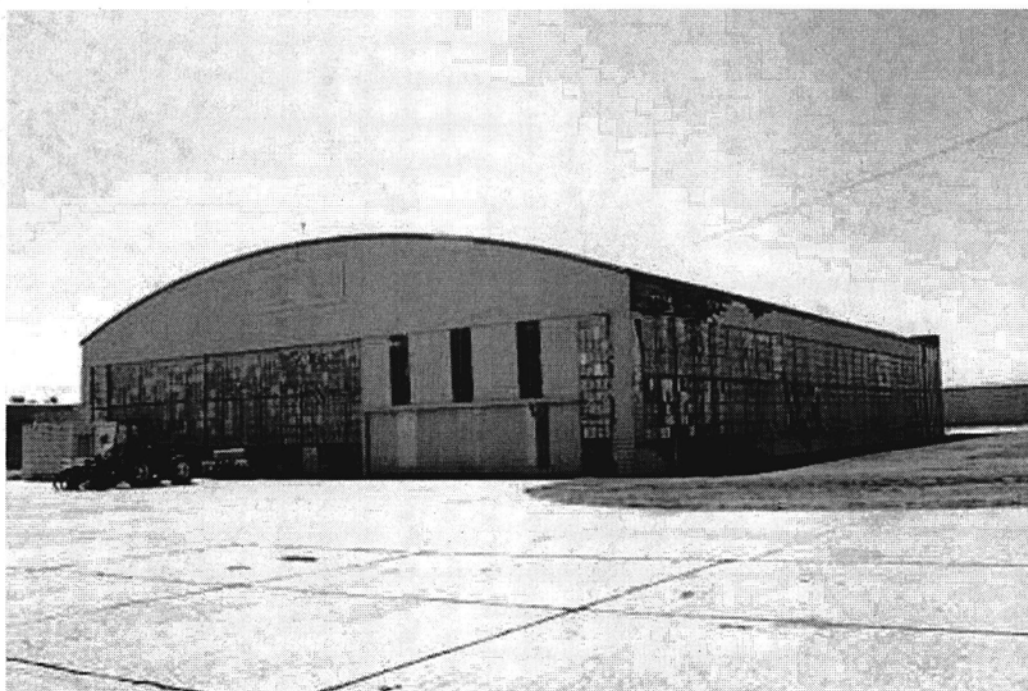


Figure 34. Liberal AAF B-24 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 35. Topeka Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



Figure 36. Pratt AAF B-29 Hangar, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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Figure 37. Pratt AAF B-29 Hangar trusses, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



Figures 38 (left) and 39 (right). Hutchinson NAS Control Tower circa 1950 and 2008

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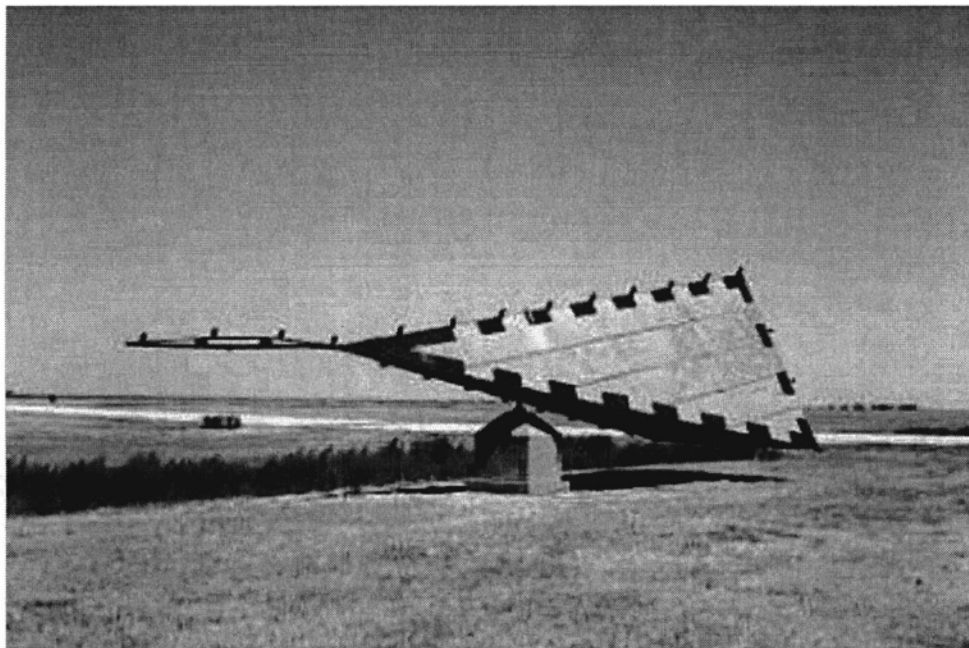


Figure 40. Liberal AAF Wind Tetrahedron, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

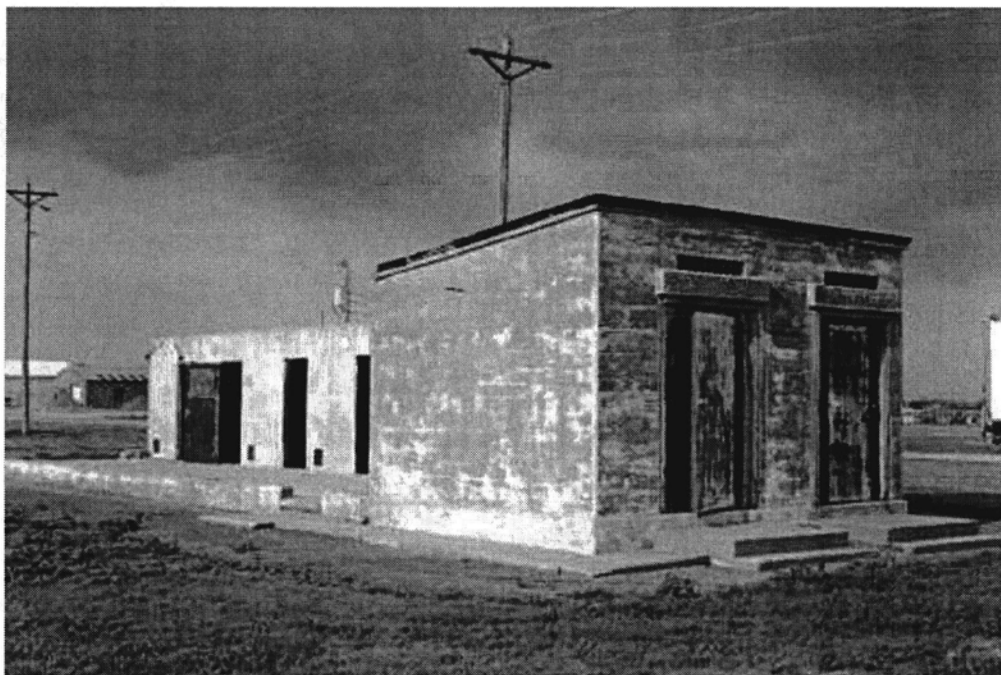


Figure 41. Great Bend Bombsight Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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Figure 42. Liberal AAF paint storage building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

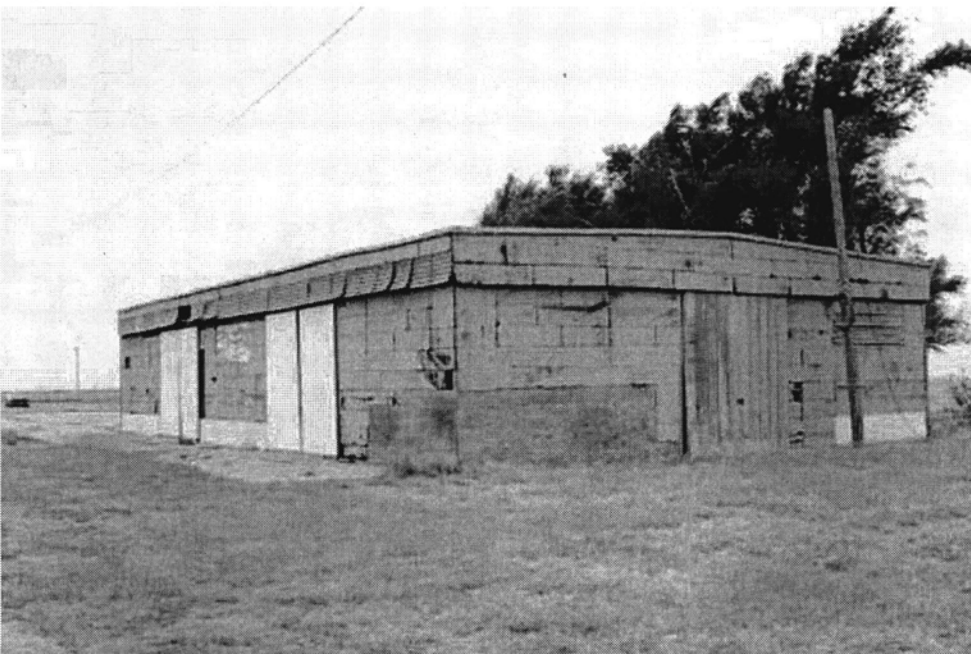


Figure 43. Garden City Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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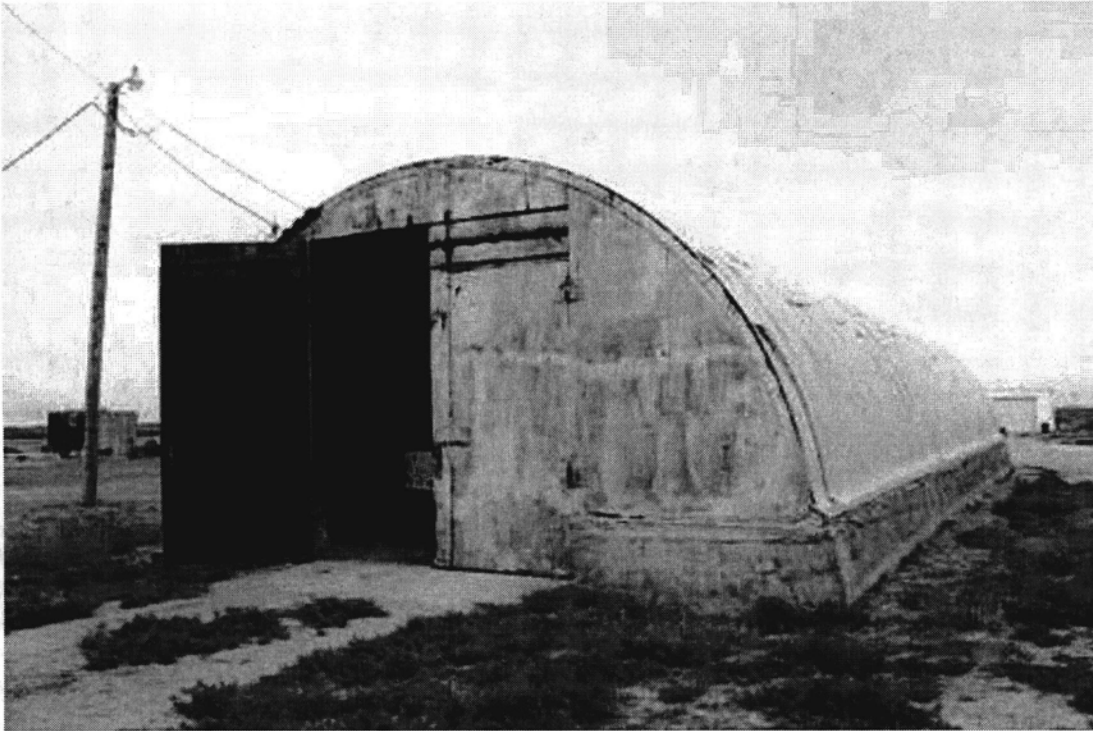
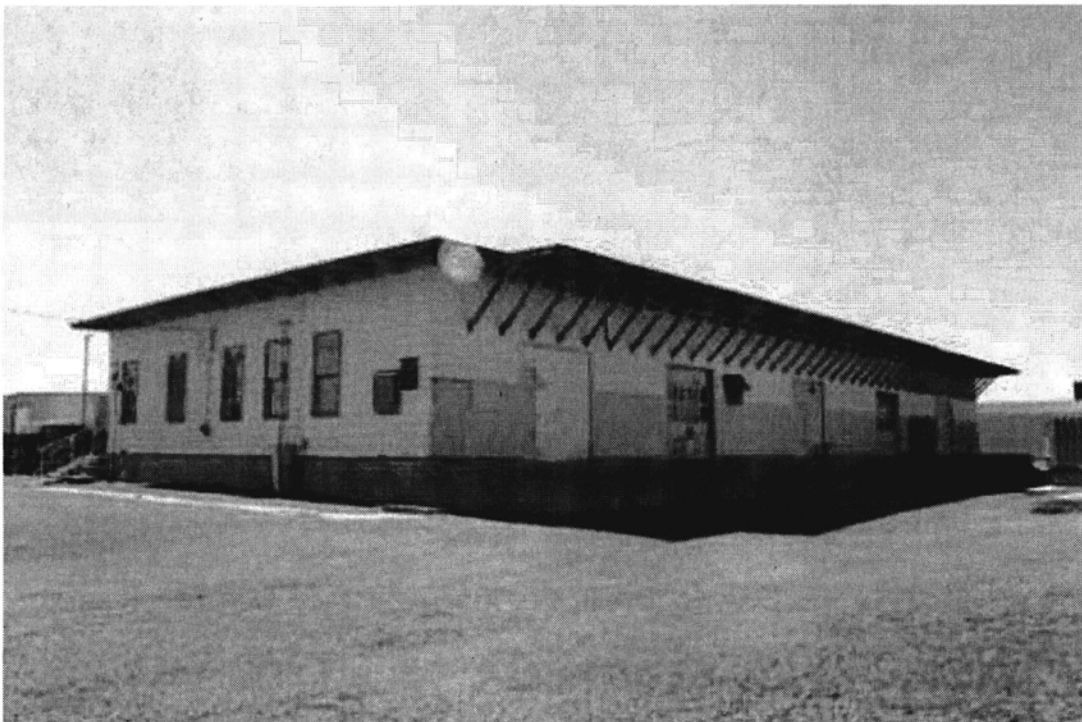


Figure 44. Garden City Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



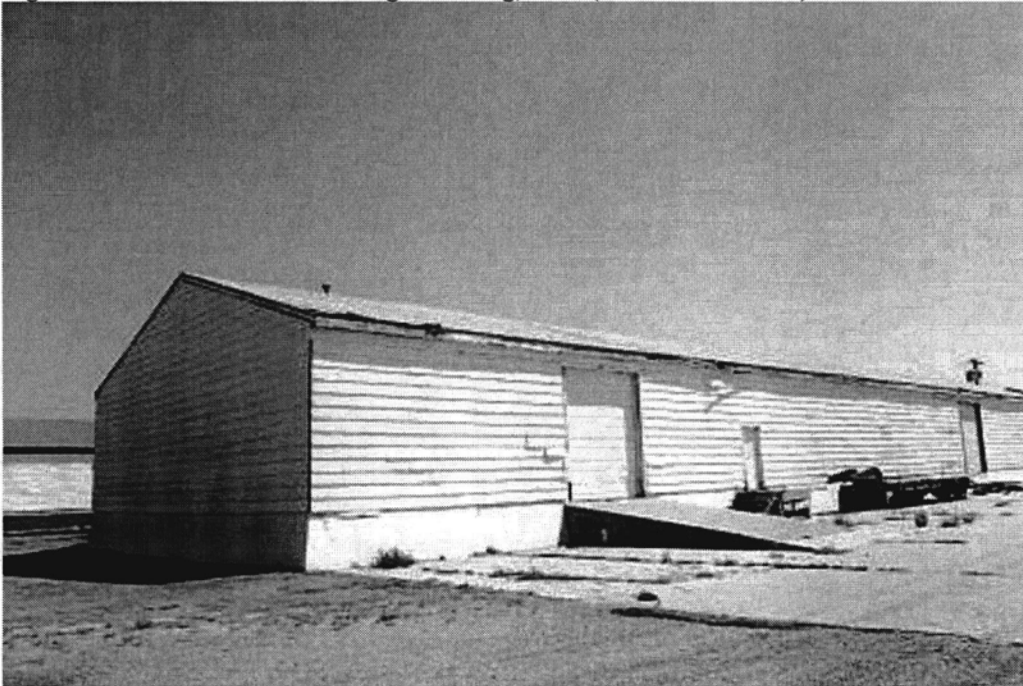
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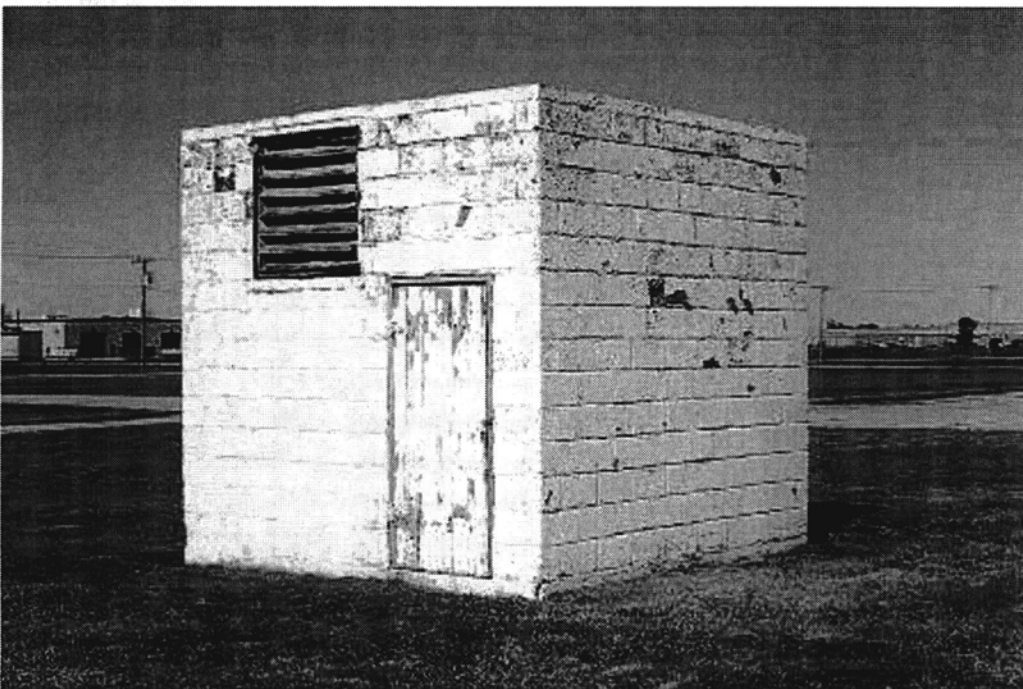
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**Figure 45. Hutchinson NAS Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 46. Liberal AAF Warehouse, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 47. Coffeyville AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**

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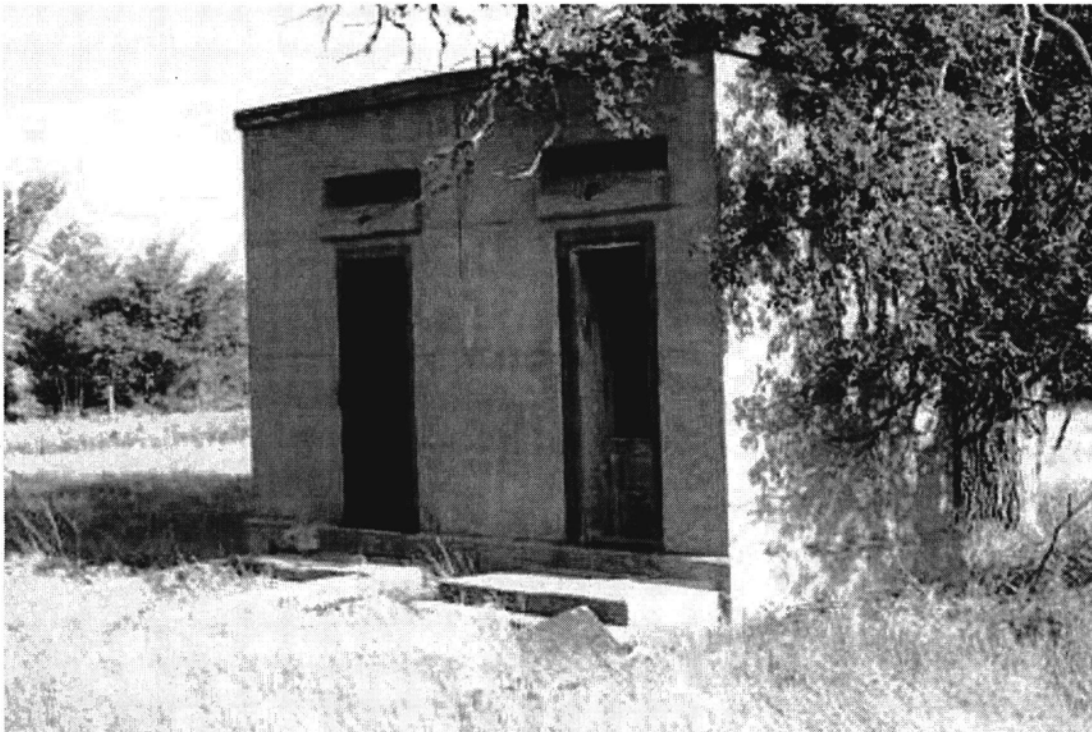


Figure 48. Dodge City AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



Figure 49. Dodge City AAF Storage Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



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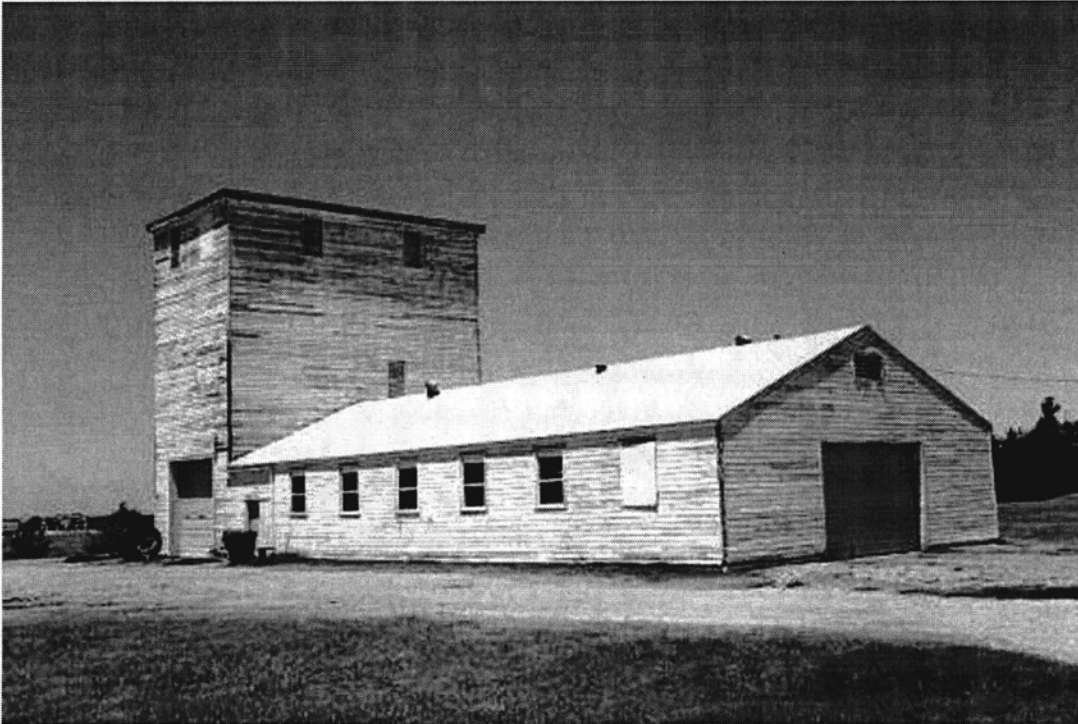


Figure 50. Pratt AAF Parachute Building, NRHP, 2008(Susan Jezak Ford)



Figure 51. Olathe NAS Fire Station, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

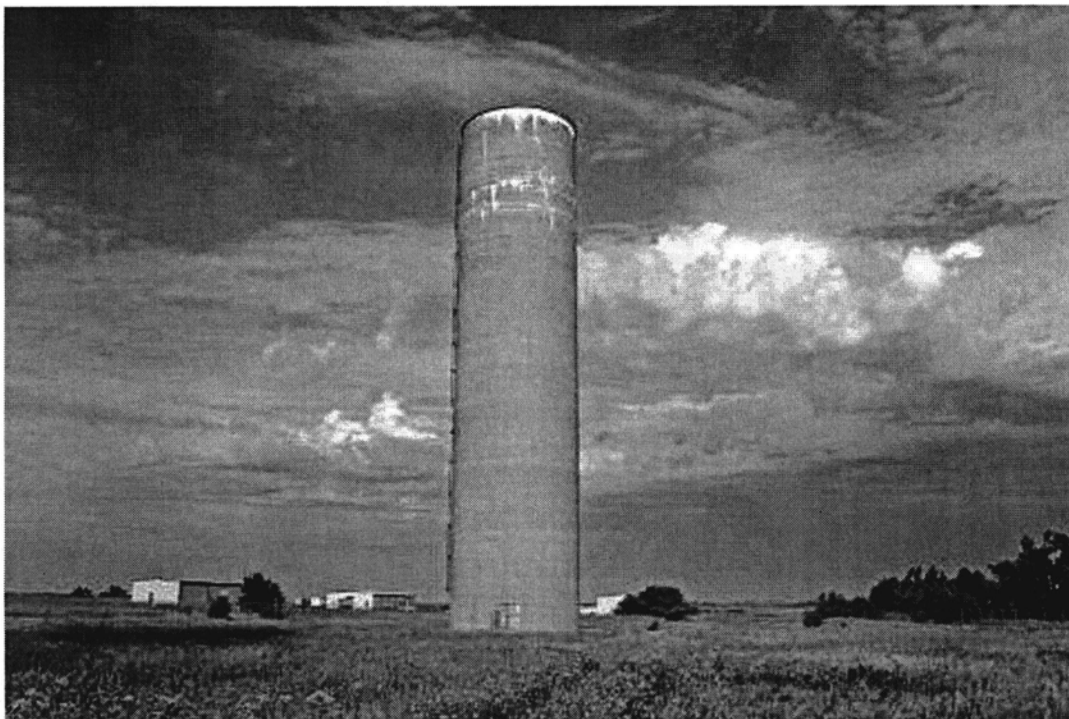


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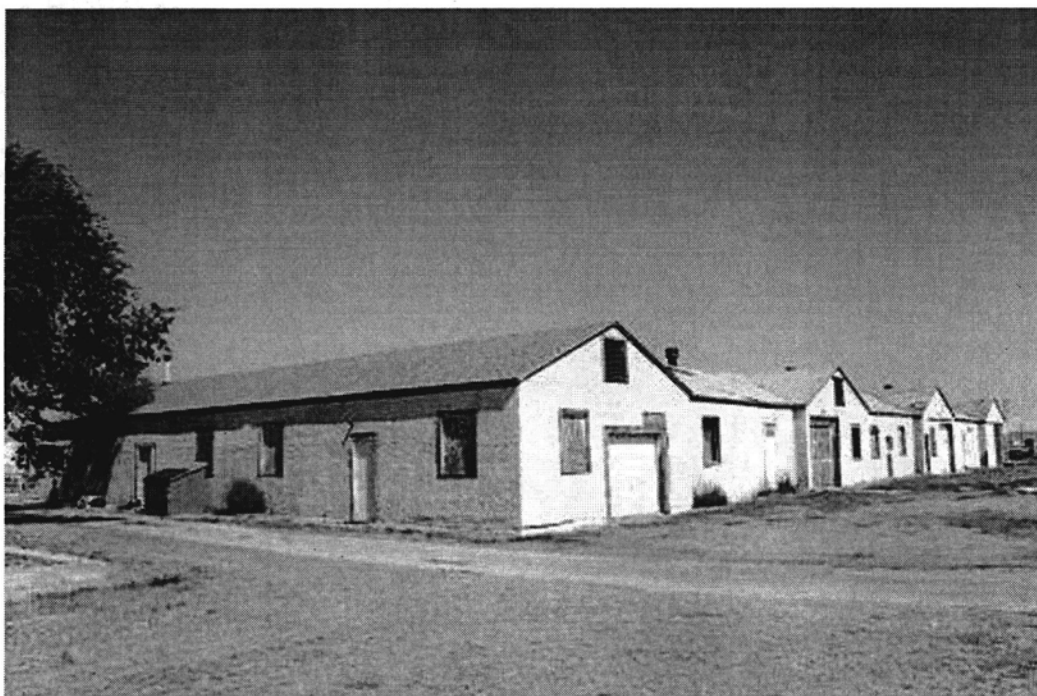
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**Figure 52. Herington Water Tower, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**



**Figure 53. Liberal AAF Classroom Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)**

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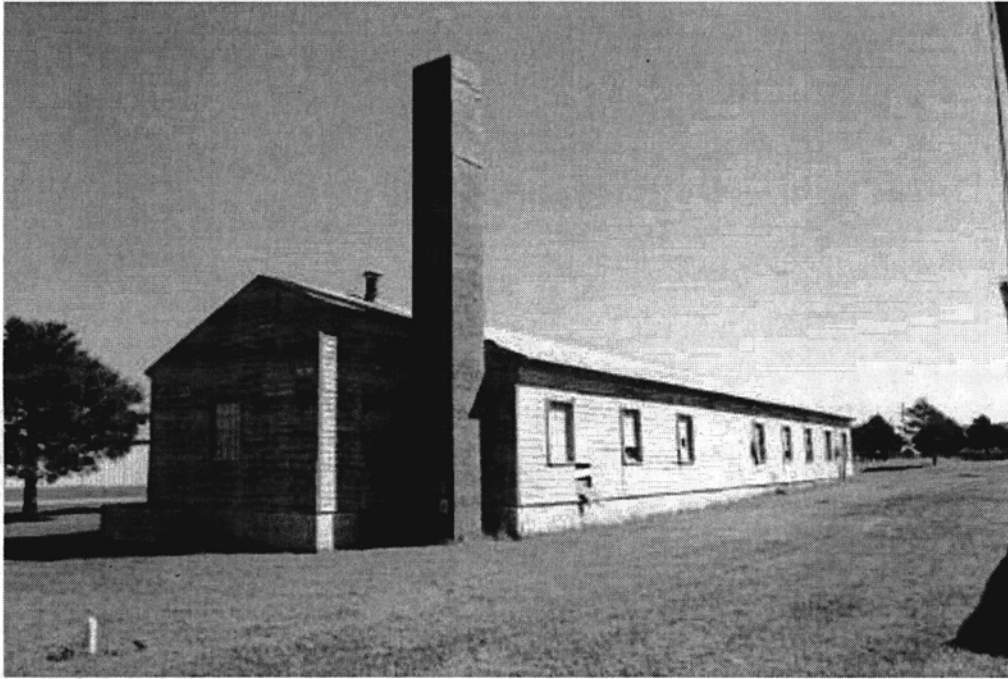


Figure 54. Strother AAF Link Trainer Building, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

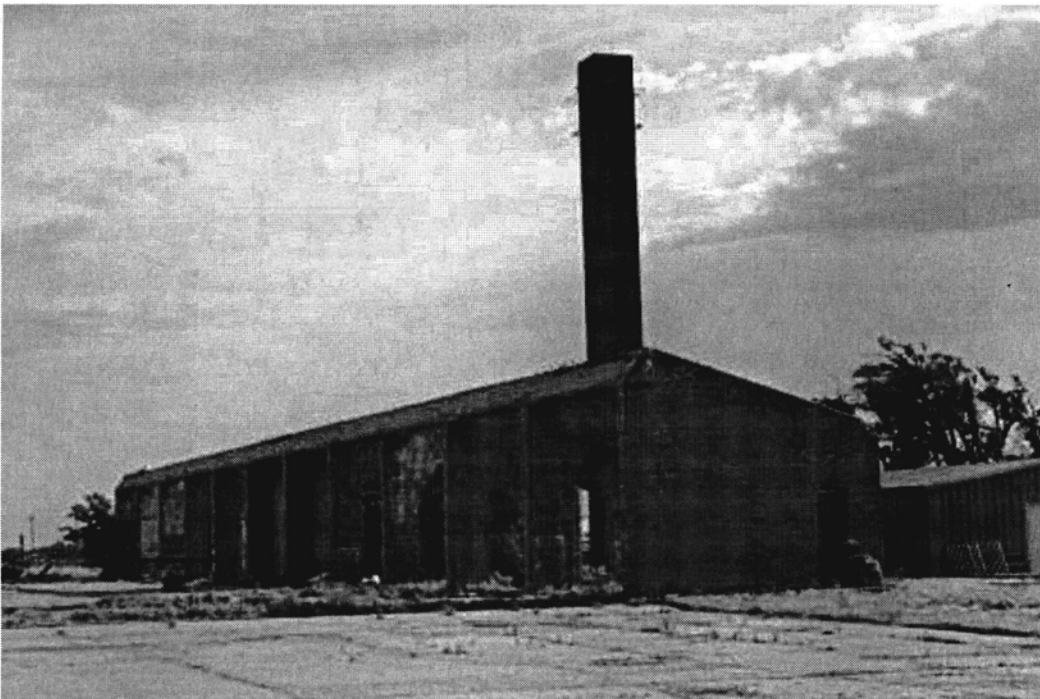


Figure 55. Great Bend Ruins, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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Figure 56. Walker AAF Hangar Ruin, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)



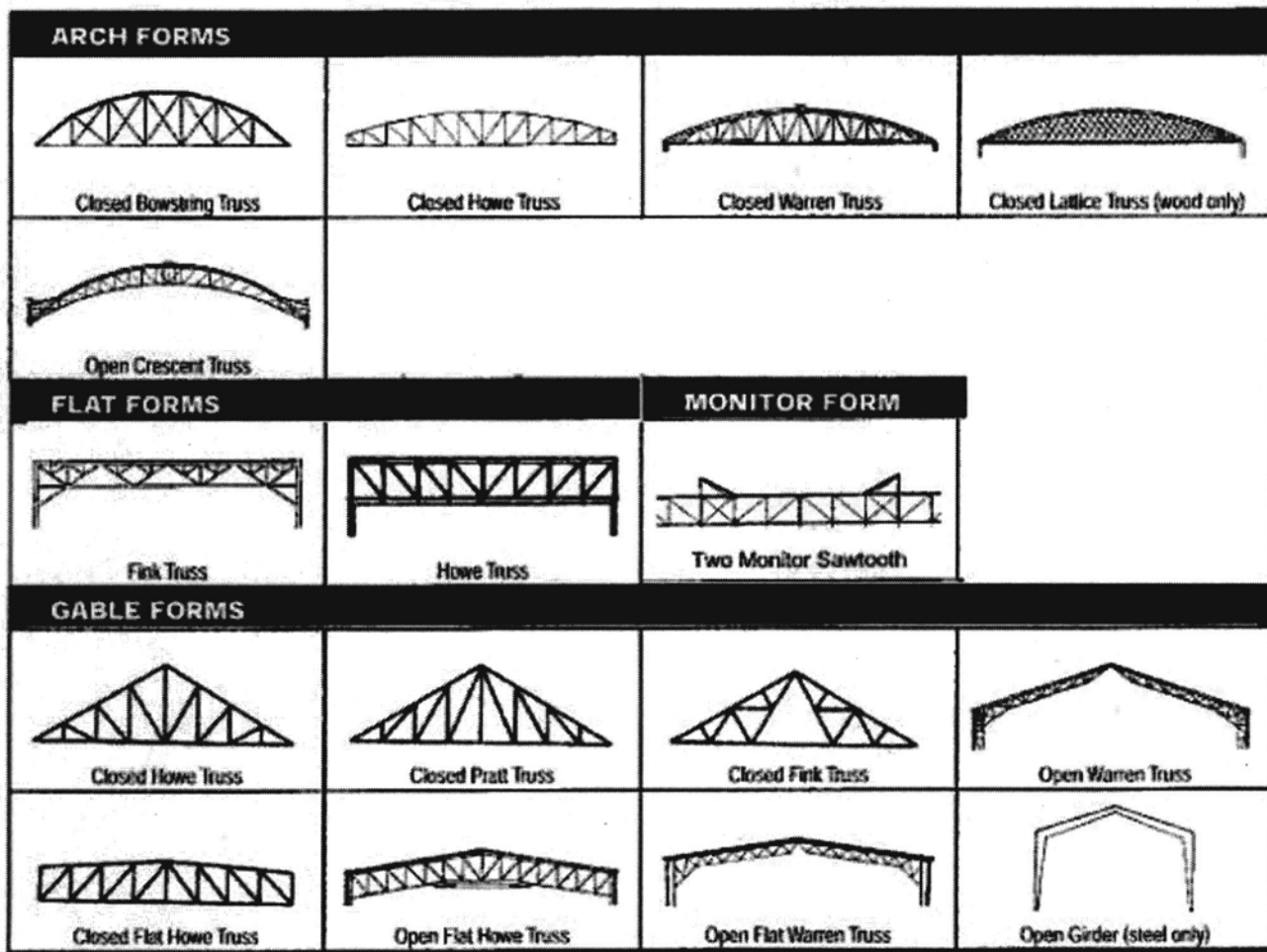
Figure 57. Walker AAF field of ruins, 2008 (Susan Jezak Ford)

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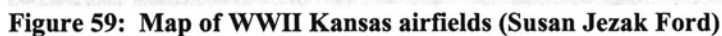
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**Figure 58. Standard World War II Truss Types.** Source: Michael A. Pedrotty, Julie L. Webster, Gordon L. Cohen, and Aaron R. Chmiel, "Historical and Architectural Overview of Military Aircraft Hangars" (US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center, 1999). Accessed online 24 May 2012  
[http://owwww.cecerc.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98\\_idx.htm](http://owwww.cecerc.army.mil/techreports/Webster98/webster98_idx.htm)

## World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION of COVER DOCUMENTATION

MULTIPLE World War II Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: KANSAS, Multiple Counties

DATE RECEIVED: 08/10/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 09/26/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 64501087

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N  
NEW MPS: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

X ACCEPT \_\_\_\_\_ RETURN \_\_\_\_\_ REJECT 9/26/12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

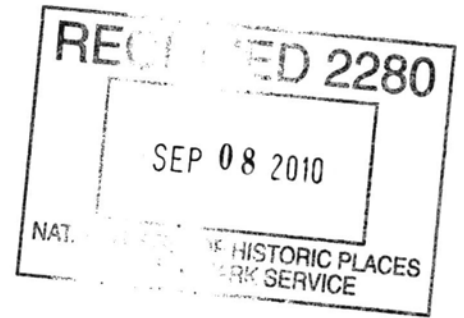
REVIEWER A. Benally DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

# KANSAS



Kansas Historical Society  
Cultural Resources Division

MARK PARKINSON, GOVERNOR

September 3, 2010

Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, N. W.  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor (MS 2280)  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Please find enclosed the following National Register documents:

- Phillipsburg Community Building – Phillipsburg, Phillips Co., Kansas (new submission)
- World War II-Era Aviation-Related Facilities of Kansas MPDF (new submission)

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I may be reached at 785-272-8681 ext. 216 or [smartin@kshs.org](mailto:smartin@kshs.org).

Sincerely yours,

Sarah J. Martin  
National Register Coordinator

Enclosures