

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Administration Building  
other names/site number Building One

### 2. Location

street & number McConnell AFB  not for publication  
city, town Wichita  vicinity  
state Kansas code 20 county Sedgwick code 173 zip code 67221-5000

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>        </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>        </u> objects
			<u>        </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

*Ramon Powers*  
Signature of commenting or other official

March 6, 1990  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Kansas State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
TRANSPORTATION/Air Terminal (1935-1951)	Vacant

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT	foundation CONCRETE
Art Deco	walls BRICK/STONE
	roof ASPHALT
	other METAL/IRON

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Administration Building, now known as Building Number 1, McConnell Air Force Base, is located at what was the north end of the old Wichita Municipal Airport. It is situated at the south terminus of George Washington Boulevard and is built on a northeast-southwest axis. To the rear of the building is the airfield; parking facilities are to the east and north; a lawn adjoins portions of the building; and the main entrance is landscaped. The reinforced concrete building is sheathed in tan brick and finished in an Art Deco manner. Although the structure was built in stages, the original plans depict its ultimate size. There have been many reversible alterations carried out on the interior since the building was sold to the federal government in 1951. The overall appearance of the building is very close to its original design, testimony to the versatility and soundness of its plan. The Administration Building has been declared surplus and local groups are hoping that it can be converted into an aviation museum. Much of the interior would at that time be renovated to its c. 1945 appearance.

The building consists of a central three-story portion that measures 60 by 160 feet and was built from 1930-1935 and two-story wings to either side of this main rectangular block that were built in 1942 and 1943. The overall dimensions are 60 by 300 feet. Stone coping runs around the entire perimeter of the parapet, and a stone string course runs at its floor level. The Art Deco style is apparent in the broad, flat surfaces of wall broken by step-backs that emphasize doors, windows, and the progression from one section of the building to another; in the strong verticality created by various unbroken two-story elements; in the stepped corners of windows and the inset, stepped and faceted stones at the corners of end bays; and in the panels of stylized airplanes surrounded by chevron patterns.

The portion of the building put up in the first phase of construction consists of the three-story, five-bay, projecting central block and the three-story flanking wings. The three middle bays of the entrance block are recessed between the tower-like end bays. A wide stair flanked by brick walls leads to the three doors in the center bay. A patio runs the length of the entrance block, its low wall consisting of alternating sections of brick and open ironwork with the airplane and chevron pattern. The whole patio wall is capped with stone coping. Originally, passengers could enter the building either through the triple front doors or could be driven beneath the patio and dropped off at the entrance on the ground floor. This driveway has since been closed because of the installation of electrical equipment.

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Probably the most remarkable decorative features of the building occur on the entrance block. These are the large stone window spandrels in the three central bays, and the huge cast stone (essentially a very refined concrete) mural that runs the entire length of the three recessed bays. The three stone panels reflect both the nationalism of the 1930's and the stylization of Art Deco. They consist of a cast stone design in low relief of an eagle with wings spread, superimposed over a stylized pattern of airplanes. The cast stone mural is 37 feet long by 5 feet 4 inches wide and depicts the arrival of Lindbergh of the coast of Ireland. It was designed by L.W. Clapp, a prominent public figure in Wichita who was instrumental in bringing the aviation industry to the city. The color in the mural was obtained by crushing colored bottles in the cast stone mixture.

In the second phase of construction from 1942-1943, the two-story wings were added to either side of the original building. Although detailing is very simple for the most part, the major characteristics of the first block are carried through in the wings. The corner blocks are pulled out from the rest of the building and finished at the upper corners by inset stepped brick piers capped by receding stone planes that resemble stylized linenfold and by stepped architraves.

In rear facade reveals the great length of the building. Although still stepped in and out, the horizontality is emphasized by string courses, window placement and design, and the lack of strong vertical elements. Originally, a large open observation deck jutted out from the center of the building, corresponding to the patio on the front. The wall of the central block behind the deck was bowed. Around 1948 the observation deck was enclosed and another story added above it. Although no longer visible from the outside, the bowed wall is still extant.

The control tower is situated at the western end of the original structure. Originally four stories tall, it had a glass-enclosed fifth story added in 1940. It included heat absorbing glare proof plate glass, steel framing, copper roofing and radio control capabilities.

The original interior finish of the 1930-1935 building has been covered over, except for the terrazzo floors. Photographs show that the lobby area was richly decorated with what has been said to have been mosaic tiles. It is impossible to tell from the photographs if the decoration was tile or was painted. The stylized airplane motif seen on the exterior of the building was carried through in the decoration of the interior.

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In 1946 and 1947 the first floor was redone. The fancy trim work around the doors and on beams and joists was covered over.

The terrazzo floor with a large inlaid compass at the entrance remains, as do the iron railings at the stairways. The double-story space of the lobby has been reduced to one story and partitions have destroyed the original spacious elegance of this terminal building. Because the U.S. Air Force has not been properly maintaining the building for the past several years, there is now a serious water seepage problem.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1930-1935

1930-1940

Significant Dates

1935, 1943

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

THOMAS, GLENN H.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Wichita since the first decade of the twentieth century has been an integral part of the history of aviation and aeronautics. By 1930 it was widely known and accepted as the Air Capital of the World. The Municipal Airport became one of the best in the nation with the construction of the Administration Building. Built of reinforced concrete and sheathed in a tan brick facade, it embodied the latest in both construction techniques and artistic taste. Although not completed until 1943, the building follows the plans that Glen H. Thomas drew up in 1929. Practical and widespread aviation is a relatively recent phenomenon. Many of the material manifestation of the increasing popularity of aviation are less than fifty years old, and yet are very valuable as reminders of the pioneer days of that industry. At the time it was built in the 1930's Wichita's Administration Building was considered to be one of the finest terminal buildings in the country. Wichita's airport facilities enabled it to establish and maintain its position as one of the leading air fields and aeronautics centers in the United States.

Wichita's involvement with aviation dates back at least to 1908 when the first known exhibitions were staged. The first airplane show was held May 4-6, 1911. In 1916 Clyde Cessna moved to Wichita to build airplanes. As early as 1918 the Wichita Chamber of Commerce had a committee actively working to promote aviation activity and the city's first airport was developed through their efforts that same year.

Great interest developed in aviation throughout the nation in the 1920's and Wichita was one of the leaders. In 1924 the National Air Congress was held in Wichita on October 11 and 12. More than 100,000 people from Kansas and surrounding states attended to watch the country's foremost military and civilian pilots participate in various races, contests and exhibitions. To handle the affair the Wichita Chapter of the National Aeronautical Association was organized. The land used for the congress was a flat piece of unbroken prairie southeast of town known locally as the "California Section." Five years later it became the Municipal Airport.

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The first commercial aircraft manufacturing was begun in Wichita by the Swallow Company in 1919-1920. By 1929 Wichita had 11 firms engaged in aircraft manufacturing plus a wide variety of support industries. By that same year 25 percent of the aircraft in use in the country had been made in Wichita. Such people as Walter Beech, Clyde Cessna, E.M. Laird, Lloyd Stearman, Jake Moellendick and others were prominent in aircraft companies. In August, 1927, the Chamber of Commerce had begun proclaiming "Wichita--The Air Capital."

The goal of the Chamber of Commerce, the Wichita Chapter of the National Aeronautical Association and other local aviation enthusiasts was to make Wichita a center of the aviation industry and a stopping place for passenger and air mail service. To do that it was necessary to have an airport with refueling capabilities, maintenance hangars and administrative buildings to handle passengers and air mail.

The 640 acres of the "California Section" were purchased by the city park board in 1928. Plans for development were quickly prepared under that board's direction. By the spring of 1929 Wichita's Municipal Airport was well on its way to becoming a top grade airfield. A municipal hangar (no longer standing) was the first building constructed in 1929. It was of brick and steel construction and designed so that the sides could be opened its entire 270 foot length, permitting easy storage and retrieval of planes. By May, 1929, architect Glen H. Thomas of the Wichita firm Harris and Thomas was working on plans for the Administration Building which among other things was to serve as headquarters for Transcontinental Air Transport, Western Air Express, and National Air Transportation. Construction was to be financed by a local bond issue. The estimated cost was \$150,000. In June, the city was also erecting a small building to house the \$25,000, thirty million candle power BBT Light that would illuminate the entire 640 acre airport. Also recently completed was the U.S. Government radio broadcasting station near the airport. It housed equipment for broadcasting weather reports and flying conditions to planes within a 250 mile radius.

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On June 28, 1930, city officials and local aviation leaders participated in groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Administration Building. Excavation work was begun on July 1 by the contractor, Blaser and Vollmer of Wichita. Because of financial difficulties (this was during the Great Depression) the building was not completed until 1935. Dedication ceremonies were held March 31. The crowd size was held down by poor weather but an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 came to hear the speeches, view the exhibits of various aircraft and watch an abbreviated version of the scheduled air show. Walter Vincent of the park board made the presentation speech, turning the building over to the Mayor, Schuyler Crawford. The cost of the building was placed at \$25,000.

Wichita's municipal airport was cited over and over again as an exemplary complex. Charles Lindbergh stated in 1929 during one of his visits to Wichita that there was no reason "why Wichita should not continue to be one of the most widely known of air centers." Arch N. Booth, aviation secretary of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce, wrote in June, 1930, that the "municipal airport is one of the best in the entire country, covers 640 acres, situated on a well drained and gently rolling stretch of Kansas prairie that never has been touched by a plow and is well set in native sod. The port is being developed to meet the requirements of the department of commerce for AIA rating." After the dedication ceremony of the Administration Building in March, 1935, it was reported that widely-traveled pilots felt Wichita had one of the finest terminals in the United States; and in 1936 Captain James B. Gordon, procurement planning representative of the material division of the U.S. Army Air Corps, called Wichita's airport the best in the country.

During World War II part of the facility was used by the War Production Board. In December of 1944 Wichita's airplane factories were reported to have constructed 22,334 airplanes and 750 gliders since the beginning of war production. They had contracts totalling \$2,446,000,000.

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The Administration Building was supervised and managed by the city park department from the time of construction until the municipal airport was sold to the federal government in 1951. The base was first known as Wichita Air Force Base, but the name was changed to McConnell Air Force Base in 1954 to honor two Wichita brothers who were B-54 pilots in World War II.

From 1951 to 1958 the facility was used primarily for training SAC B-47 crews. The Boeing Aircraft Company had a lease on part of the building from 1956 and 1963 and used it for engineering, management and production of the B-52 aircraft. From 1963 to 1971 it was used by the Tactical Air Command for training F-105 crews. After that it served as the administration center for personnel and transportation at McConnell. The control tower was used for training tower personnel. The building has now been phased out of use and declared surplus to the government's needs. It is the hope of local aviation groups and enthusiasts that the building will be acquired locally for use as an aviation museum.



**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bulletin No. CS-18A, Cast Stone Institute. Factors Determining Quality in Cast Stone.  
Wichita Eagle. June 20, 1930; June 22, 1930; Jul, 1930.  
Wichita Manazine. July & Aug., 1927; Nov 1928; March, July & Aug., Nov., 1929;  
Jan., 1930; Feb., 1936; Dec., 1944.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

384 CSG/DEER, McConnell AFB, KS 67221-5000

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 

1	4	6	5	2	3	8	0
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4	1	6	6	1	9	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

That portion of the NE 1/4 of NW 1/4 of S12 T28S R1E which the property occupies.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This structure occupies its original site at what was the Wichita Municipal Airport, now McConnell Air Force Base.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title SANDRA S. KURT, Real Property Officer date 5 Feb 90  
 organization 384 CSG/DEER telephone AC 316 652-4472  
 street & number McConnell AFB state KS zip code 67221-5000  
 city or town Wichita

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Wichita Eagle. June 21, 1930, "Expect Thousands for Celebration at Airport June 28th."

Wichita Eagle. March 31, 1935, "Local Firms Build New Air Structure."

Wichita Century (Wichita, Wichita Historical Museum Association, Inc., 1970)  
pp. 129-264, Long, R.M.

Wichita Magazine. July, 1929, pp. 6-8, 12. "Men of Vision and Courage Made Wichita the Air Capital."

Wichita Eagle. April 1, 1935, "More Than 10,000 Brave Raw Weather to View Dedication of Wichita Airport Building."

Wichita Magazine. May, 1929, pp. 6, 13, "Municipal Airport to Be One of Nation's Best."

Wichita Eagle. July 31, 1929, "Park Board Ready to Finance Large Airport Building."

Wichita Eagle. March 29, 1935, "Prepare Elaborate Aero Exhibits for Sunday's Big Show."

Wichita Magazine. August, 1929, pp. 6-8, 18, "Public's Interest and Acceptance Helped Make Wichita the Air Capital."

Wichita Magazine. February 26, 1930, p. 41, "Wichita Is Built on Service."

Wichita Magazine. July 23, 1930, p. 9, "Wichita Is Still 'The Air Capital.'"

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Wichita Magazine. December 14, 1944, pp. 5, 6, 10, "Wichita Manufactures 22,334 War Planes."

Wichita Eagle. June 22, 1930, "Wichita Presents Strong Claim to Air Capital Title."

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Wichita Magazine. November 1928, p. 5, "Wichita's Aeronautics in Tremendous Expansion."

Wichita Eagle. June 20, 1930, "'Wichita's Airport Is One of State's Beauty Spots Now."

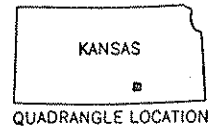
Wichita Eagle. July 1, 1930, "Work on Two Major Aviation Projects Off to a Good Start."



EAST WICHITA INTERCHANGE 1.3 MI.  
EL DORADO INTERCHANGE 2.2 MI.

Administration Building, Wichita  
Municipal Airport  
(Building No. 1)  
McConnell Air Force Base  
UTM Reference  
14 652376 4166200

(ROSE HILL)  
6559 11 SW



C. 20242

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1970. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

WICHITA EAST, KANS.  
N3737.5—W9715/7.5

1961  
PHOTOREVISED 1970

AMS 6559 III NE—SERIES V878

TAB B