

March Air Force Base, March Field, N.C.O. Garage
(Building 257)
(March Air Reserve Base)
Moreno Valley
Riverside County
California

HABS No. CA-2353-B

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
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(Building 257)
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Location: Building 257 is an automotive garage located on the east side of L Street north of X Street within the March Field National Register Historic District of March Air Reserve Base. The property is located in the city of Moreno Valley, Riverside County, California.

The property is located in the *Riverside East* USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangle map. The building is located at latitude: 33.894883, longitude: 117.252597, with the coordinate taken at the center bay of the garage on the east side of the building using Google Earth. The coordinate's datum is North American Datum 1983. The building has no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Building 257 is a contributor to the March Field National Register Historic District. The district is significant at the state level in the areas of military history and architecture, with a period of significance of 1928-1943, the time in which the base was laid out according to its master plan. March Field served as the key training and bombardment facility for the Army Air Corps (Air Force) on the west coast. The architectural significance of the district is threefold. March Field is a distinguished example of a military base laid out according to important city planning principles of the 1920s, featuring an integrated City Beautiful design in the Mission Revival Style. Second, March Field was designed by master architect Myron Hunt and is the only known military base designed by him. Lastly, much of the construction of the district utilized hollow wall concrete construction methods, and is a significant representative of this method of construction.

Description: Building 257 is a six-bay garage unit constructed of hollow clay tile with a gently sloping steel deck built up roof. Each bay is accessed through metal roll-up doors. As constructed, the garage was built with a pair of side-hinged wood plank doors filling the opening of each bay, however this configuration was replaced with the metal doors at an unknown date.

The garage was constructed in the Officers' Quarters of March Field, and served a cluster of adjacent residences. With its stucco finish, the garage modestly replicated the Mission Revival Style of the residential development. Currently, the structure is in an acute state of structural deterioration. The foundation of the hollow clay tile building has shifted and the tiles are cracking at the joints, making the building's condition hazardous.

History:

March Air Force Base was established in 1918 as Alessandro Aviation Field and re-named March Field later that year. Following World War I the base was partially shuttered and reduced to caretaker status by 1923. In 1926 Congress established the U.S. Army Air Corps creating a distinct organization within the U.S. Army to pursue the burgeoning field of aeronautics. Congress authorized a five year spending plan to provide facilities for the new corps. Redevelopment of March Field was an integral part of this five year plan.

Construction of a new March Field was significant as it was the first peacetime construction of a complete airfield. Development of the base was a collaborative effort between the Quartermaster Corps, commanding officers, and local architects including Myron Hunt. The result was a plan organized according to the principles of city planning and the City Beautiful movement popular at the time. The buildings for the base were designed in a comprehensive Mission Revival style.

Building 257 was constructed in 1932 in the Officers' Quarters sector of March Field and was one of seventeen nearly identical automobile garages designed to serve the residents of the Officers' housing area (garages identified as Buildings 112, 113, 116, 165, 175, 178, 179, 180, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 331, 362, and 364). All of the garages were of the same plan and of hollow clay tile construction, with the only difference being the number of bays in each garage. Thirteen of the garages were built with six bays, one with four bays, one with eleven bays, and two with twelve bays. While the structures were relatively utilitarian in form and plan, they modestly replicated the Mission Revival theme of the site, with stucco finishing and wood plank doors. Further, they were an important element of the integrated functional design of the site and served as key support features to the installation.

During World War II, March Field became one of the largest Air Force bases in the country, with a primary mission to provide facilities for the testing of new aircraft. Camp Haan, an anti-aircraft artillery camp, was constructed nearby in 1940 by the War Department and later merged with the main facility, thereby greatly increasing the overall size of the base and creating two geographically defined portions, “West” and “East” March. The construction of most of the wood-frame “700 Series” barracks, warehouses, supply buildings, and administrative buildings in 1941 and 1942 represented the apex of the World War II construction period, and were indicative of the rush of temporary construction accompanying the war-time build-up. This temporary construction did not conform to the Mission Revival development of March Field and does not contribute to the district.

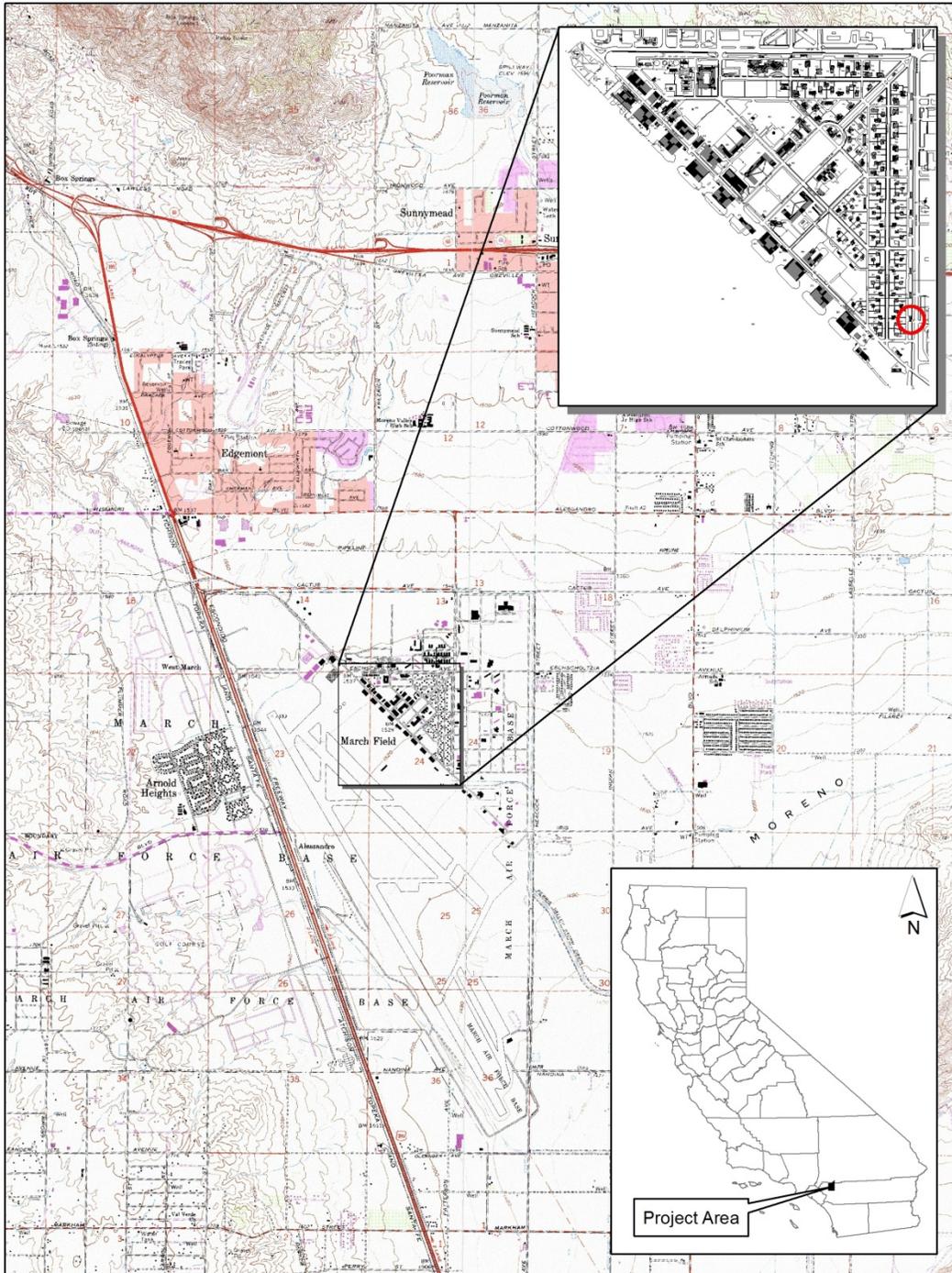
Following the end of World War II, as Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased, March units were assigned to the Tactical Air Command (TAC), becoming a TAC base that provided air support for ground troops. The Air Force established new wings and squadrons to fulfill this newly defined role, and the base began serving as an operational fighter base. In 1949, March AFB was assigned to the Strategic Air Command (SAC), which was primarily responsible for the deterrence of, and response to, foreign nuclear aggression. During this period, a spate of continued construction occurred at the base, including a Combat Operations Center, control tower, hangars, and other mission and personnel support facilities. Similarly, none of this ongoing construction conformed to the significant early design of the base.

In 1993, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) recommended the base for realignment, and in April 1996 the installation was officially realigned from an Air Force Base to an Air Reserve Base. The realignment included the disposal of much of the acreage and real property formerly occupied by the base. The current March Air Reserve Base includes only a portion of the March Field Historic District.

Currently, the garage is vacant because of its deteriorated state. Prior to this it served as a general storage facility for the Reserve Base.

- Sources: Stephen D. Mikesell and Stephen R. Wee, JRP Historical Consulting Services, "National Register Form for March Field Historic District," March Air Force Base, Riverside County, California, April, 1992.
- March Air Reserve Base Real Property Records, on file at the March Air Base Wing Commander's Office.
- March Field Museum Archives and Historic Photograph Collection.
- Historian: Stephen R. Wee and Polly Allen, JRP Historical Consulting, LLC (JRP). October 2011.
- Project Information: JRP recorded Building 257 under the HABS program under contract with March Air Reserve Base (MARB) in compliance with the "Memorandum of Agreement between the United States Air Force Reserve Command and the California State Historic Preservation Officer, regarding the demolition of Building 257," signed January 11, 2011. The building is being demolished because of acute structural deterioration that has left the building in a hazardous condition. HABS documentation of the building is included as a stipulation in the Memorandum of Agreement. The documentation was prepared in coordination with the Pacific West Region of the National Park Service.

LOCATION MAP



SITE PLAN



SKETCH PLAN

