Midway Airport,
South Terminal
(Chicago Midway Airport,
South Terminal)
Cicero Avenue (State Route 50),
between 55th and 63rd Streets
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-305

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
100A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MIDWAY AIRPORT, SOUTH TERMINAL HABS No. IL-305
(Chicago Midway Airport, South Terminal)

Location: Cicero Avenue (State Rte. 50), between 55th and 63rd Streets, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. It is approximately 5 miles north of Adlai E. Stevenson Expressway (Interstate 55).

Present Use: The building is no longer used as a terminal. It has been replaced by the larger and more recently built building five long blocks to the north. It is presently used by the U.S. Weather Bureau and the U.S. Customs offices.

Significance: The passenger terminal building is a small, neat structure in reinforced concrete International Style and may be one of the oldest airport buildings in the country.

Date of erection: 1931, according to Building Permit No. B38335 on file at the Administration Building, Midway Airport.

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Construction plan:

a. Overall dimensions: 255' north to south, 70' east to west (paced dimensions).

b. Layout, shape: Central two-story volume containing the waiting room, about 70' by 75'. Projecting one-story portions 60' by 40' on each side of the central volume. Brick addition and stone addition at rear, one story. The front faces east.

c. Number of stories: Two in the central portion, one at each of the sides and at the rear.

d. Number of bays: Seven in north to south direction.

2. Foundations: Concrete.

3. Walls: Concrete spandrel walls below and above rows of continuous sash. The concrete surface shows the evidence of the wood form boards slightly. The surface is rough and has been painted. The most recent paint is a light blue-grey multicolored paint flaked off in many places. The one-story addition directly in back of the waiting room is of stone construction using rather large, smooth finished blocks of limestone about two feet high and three feet or more in length. There is, in addition, a brick addition

to the north of the stone addition, filling in the corner of the plan. Both the brick and the stone additions are coated with multicolored paint in light blue-grey. When the construction was completed, the terminal walls were white.

4. Structural system, framing: The first floor is framed in concrete cast-in-place joists at about three feet on center. Corrugated metal forms were used for these.

5. Porches: On the east side (street side, or front side of the terminal) metal canopies have been built across most of the width of the building. These are in disrepair.

6. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: New stainless steel exterior doors have been installed in the main waiting room on both the street and the field side of the building, and from the vestibule to which these doors connect and the waiting room. Above the street side entrance door a stainless steel emblem of aviator's wings hangs in front of the transom, with traces of its painted decoration remaining. This door has stepped back jambs, and the upper corners of the transom are cut across at a forty-five degree angle.

   b. Windows: The exterior sash appear to be of stainless steel and are part of a later remodeling. The stone addition has double-hung wood sash and the brick addition has double awning wood sash.

7. Roofs:

   a. Shape, covering: The roofs are flat with parapet walls.

   b. Towers: Two roof structures of corrugated metal have been constructed over the north one-story wing of the concrete structure, and there is a steel tower platform about fifteen feet high in the same general location. There are radar and other communications antennas on the platform of the tower. A small observation "tower" is at the rear and center of the original building, projecting above the other roof levels.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

   a. First floor: The waiting room is in the middle of the building and has a clear span of about forty feet. To the north and to the south (the front of the terminal faces east)

are the projecting wings of the same span, but one story in height. Offices, restaurant, and related small rooms occupy these wings. To the east and to the west the original building has three projecting bays. Across the rear of the building are the later additions of brick and of stone construction.

b. Second floor: Offices occupy the second floor above the projecting bays on the east side, and the observation tower and offices occupy the corresponding space on the west side.

2. Stairway: Steel checkered plate treads and landings on steel stringers.

3. Flooring: Resilient, in general.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The present lobby ceiling is a suspended ceiling with corrugated translucent plastic panels concealing fluorescent lighting fixtures. This sort of ceiling was first in general use in the early 1950s. Other ceilings are exposed, smooth-finished plaster acoustical tile.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Wood, flush.
b. Windows: (Not recorded).

6. Decorative features and trim: There is little that has survived the remodeling. According to Walter Wright's 1931 article in The Chicago Visitor, "Passenger terminal for Chicago's Municipal Airport", the lobby originally contained the following: classic pilasters with grooved surfaces; capsule-shaped suspended lighting fixtures; modern looking armchairs; dark-stained wooden doors and frames; dark marble baseboard; and marble floor.

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: Central.
b. Lighting: Electric, conventional fixtures (fluorescent, etc.).

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The east (front) side of the building is parallel to South Cicero Avenue and approximately opposite 63rd Street. The west side of the building faces toward the airfield. Paved parking areas and an access drive surround the property. A chain-link fence guards the airfield.

2. Outbuildings: In Walter Wright's 1931 article in The Chicago Visitor, "Passenger terminal for Chicago's Municipal Airport", there were nineteen hangars, for the use of storage and periodic check-ups of the resident planes.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

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