

Selfridge Field,  
Building #1041, (AB-259A/FPS 6 Tower) (Radar Tower)  
West of E Street, north of D Street  
~~Harrison Township~~, Mt. Clemens Vicinity  
Macomb County  
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-00

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MICH  
50-MTCLE.V,  
100-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SELFRIDGE FIELD,  
BUILDING #1041, (AB-259A/FPS-6 TOWER)  
(Radar Tower)

HAER No. MI-116-00

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: South of North Perimeter Road, east of North-South Ramp  
Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mt. Clemens vicinity,  
Macomb County, Michigan

Quad/UTM: U.S.G.S. New Haven Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 17.349850.4720790

Date of Construction: 1959

Present Owner: Air National Guard  
3500 Fetchett Avenue  
Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, 20762

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The North American Air Defense (NORAD) district  
occupies a distinct complex at Selfridge that was self  
contained and isolated from the rest of the base for  
functional and security reasons. It consists of utilitarian  
structures numbered in the #1000 series erected in the  
late 1950s and early 1960s.

Building #1041 is a utilitarian building whose role in  
providing state-of-the-art radar support was essential in  
the operation of the district. Building #1041 formed an  
integral part of the NORAD regional launch and  
interceptor center that protected the Great Lakes area  
during the Cold War. But the significance of the building  
is best defined as a contributing structure to the entire  
NORAD installation. As a regional command and control  
center for NORAD, responsible for protection of the Great  
Lakes region, the NORAD district was of exceptional  
importance in national defense strategy and is unique in  
Michigan. Except for the removal of the antenna and  
interior electronic equipment, it remains in a virtually  
unaltered state.

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

## II. HISTORY

The "AB-259A/FPS-6 Tower" was designed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District and erected in 1959.<sup>1</sup> A component in the Semiautomatic Ground Environment (SAGE) pioneering air defense system that used electronic controls and powerful radars for rapid data transmission between radars and combat centers using central data processing and large digital computers. Operation in 1958, SAGE was deactivated by 1983.<sup>2</sup> Building #1041 was vacant and remains so after its interior was gutted during an asbestos removal project in the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

## III. DESCRIPTION

This building is a dodecagon (12-sided) plan, two story, structural steel and sheet metal structure, 12 feet 8 inches to a side between reinforced structural concrete caissons linked with 9 inch by 12 inch steel tie beams, 50 feet 6 inches in diameter. This structure is erected on a steel frame and is sheathed in vertically seamed reinforced steel panels. The roof of the structure, which supported the radome, incorporated steel grated catwalks on outriggers that extended beyond the plan of the

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<sup>1</sup>Original construction plans on file, Selfridge Base Museum and Civil Engineers Office

<sup>2</sup>Bright, Charles B. (ed.), Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Air Force, Greenwood Press, New York, 1992, p. 519.

<sup>3</sup>Interview, Eric Reeve, Selfridge Base Environmental Management, October 12, 1995

building's elevations. Chains that are now absent were suspended between steel posts around the periphery of the radome and roof. A steel framework extending from the south catwalk served the radome's monorail. The exterior of the radar building displayed extremely limited fenestration, with steel pedestrian entry doors with two horizontal lights on the west and south panels and horizontal 2-lighted wire mesh windows on the southeast, north and northwest panels. The fenestration on the second story was limited to steel frame windows directly above those occurring in the first story.

The interior is now empty open space on both floors with a steel panel floor between the two. The first floor presents an interior structural pattern of 12 steel I-beams paralleling the building exterior that encircle three large steel poles at the center of the structure. Radar equipment filled the original building and a pressure chamber for the radome was located in the southwest portion of the second story. A steel walled room that survives today is labeled "Tower AB-259A/FPS-6, Presser Ideco Co., U.S." A stairway connecting the first and second floors is located in the southeast part of the structure.

#### IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

##### A. BOOKS

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

\_\_\_\_\_, Guide and Directory, Selfridge Air Force Base, Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, 1960.  
Bright, Charles B. (ed.), Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Air Force, Greenwood Press, New York, 1992.

Narducci, Henry M., SAC and the Alert Program: A Brief History, Office of the Historian, Headquarters, Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, 1988.

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

#### B. PLANS

Original construction drawing, "Foundation Plan, Sections and General Notes, Sheet 6 of 11, Drawing No. 35-03-05 SF 5/1673," U.S. Army Engineer District, Detroit, Corps of Engineers, 9 June, 1959, on file Selfridge Base Museum.

Original construction drawing, "Electrical 1st and 2nd Floor Plans, Sheet 10 of 11, Drawing No. 35-03-05 SF 5/1677," U.S. Army Engineer District, Detroit, Corps of Engineers, 9 June, 1959, on file Selfridge Base Museum.

#### C. INTERVIEWS

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

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

Lt. Colonel Donald O'Dell (ret.), Selfridge Base Public Relations Officer, December 5, 1995.