

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE,  
RECREATION BUILDING  
(Youth Center)  
(Building No. 8001)  
1312 LeMay Boulevard  
Black Hawk Vicinity  
Meade County  
South Dakota

HABS No. SD-21-AD

HABS  
SD-21-AD

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

National Park Service  
Midwest Region  
1709 Jackson Street  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-2571

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

### ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE RECREATION BUILDING (Youth Center) (Building No. 8001)

HABS No. SD-21-AD

Location: Ellsworth Air Force Base, 1312 LeMay Boulevard, Black Hawk Vicinity, Meade County, South Dakota.<sup>1</sup>

Significance: Following World War II, the United States saw its former allies in the war become unfriendly, resulting in the onset of the “Cold War”. This Cold War period saw the American military forced to maintain an active defense and readiness posture in the event the Cold War would turn into a real war. This set the stage for the establishment of Ellsworth Air Force Base and its emergence as a major component of America’s Cold War defense network.<sup>2</sup>

In May 1949, the base’s fleet of B-29 aircraft was replaced by new B-36 “Peacemaker” bombers. At the time, the B-36 aircraft was the largest and most significant strategic component of the Strategic Air Command’s (SAC) Cold War arsenal. The B-36 was the first aircraft created specifically to carry nuclear bombs to Soviet and other overseas targets.<sup>3</sup>

In 1950, the B-36 program was assigned RB-36 craft, temporarily shifting the base’s primary mission from one of combat to one of reconnaissance. As a result, the 28th Wing was transferred from the Fifteenth to the Eighth Air Force. The Eighth Air Force was also part of SAC. The RB-36 aircraft operated at the base from 1950 to 1955, completing a number of aerial photography and reconnaissance projects throughout the world.<sup>4</sup>

A new generation of heavy bombardment aircraft, the B-52, began to arrive in quantity in 1955, and were first stationed at Ellsworth in 1957. During that time, continued flight training and a massive program of infrastructure improvements at Ellsworth worked to ensure that the base would remain a state-of-the-art bombardment facility. Construction at the base in the early 1950s included runway improvements, additional hangars, and a variety of support facilities for the personnel assigned to the base. The total number of military and civilian personnel working at the base grew from 3,283 in 1949 to a high of 7,139 in 1954.<sup>5</sup> By 1955 Ellsworth was home to one of the Air Force’s major bomber bases as well as an early repository for components of America’s nuclear weapons stockpile.<sup>6</sup>

The Recreation Building (Youth Center) was constructed in 1954-55 to serve as a center for “supervised youth activities.” The building was donated by the General Richard E. Ellsworth family to serve as a memorial to General Richard E. Ellsworth and twenty-two other base airmen, who were killed in the line of duty in 1953 in an RB-36 airplane crash. The total construction of the building was \$10,035.00. The building was most recently used as a Girl Scout Hut.<sup>7</sup>

Site Context: This building was constructed as a youth center and was located adjacent to the base housing areas on the eastern edge of the base, as well as near the base entrance commonly called the “school gate” because of the gate’s close proximity to the elementary and high schools.

Description: The building style is rustic. It is a 32’ X 38’ log-framed building. The structure logs are approximately 6” in diameter. They are notched at the top and bottom. Corner connections are butt-spiked. Gable ends are in-filled with vertical milled logs. Log purlins are visible in the gable ends. The interior walls are log and the ceiling is tongue-and-groove wood. The roof is a gabled roof with asphalt shingles. The foundation is concrete slab. The windows are double-hung, 1/1 glazing. The front porch on the south side has a fieldstone floor. The porch structure is supported by vertical log support posts embedded in built-up river-rock piers. Horizontal log rails set between the piers form a simple balustrade. There is a large exterior river-rock fireplace and chimney on the building’s south wall. The interior of the building consists of a large meeting room, with smaller kitchen, bath, and utility areas to the east. A second door is located on the west wall.<sup>8</sup>

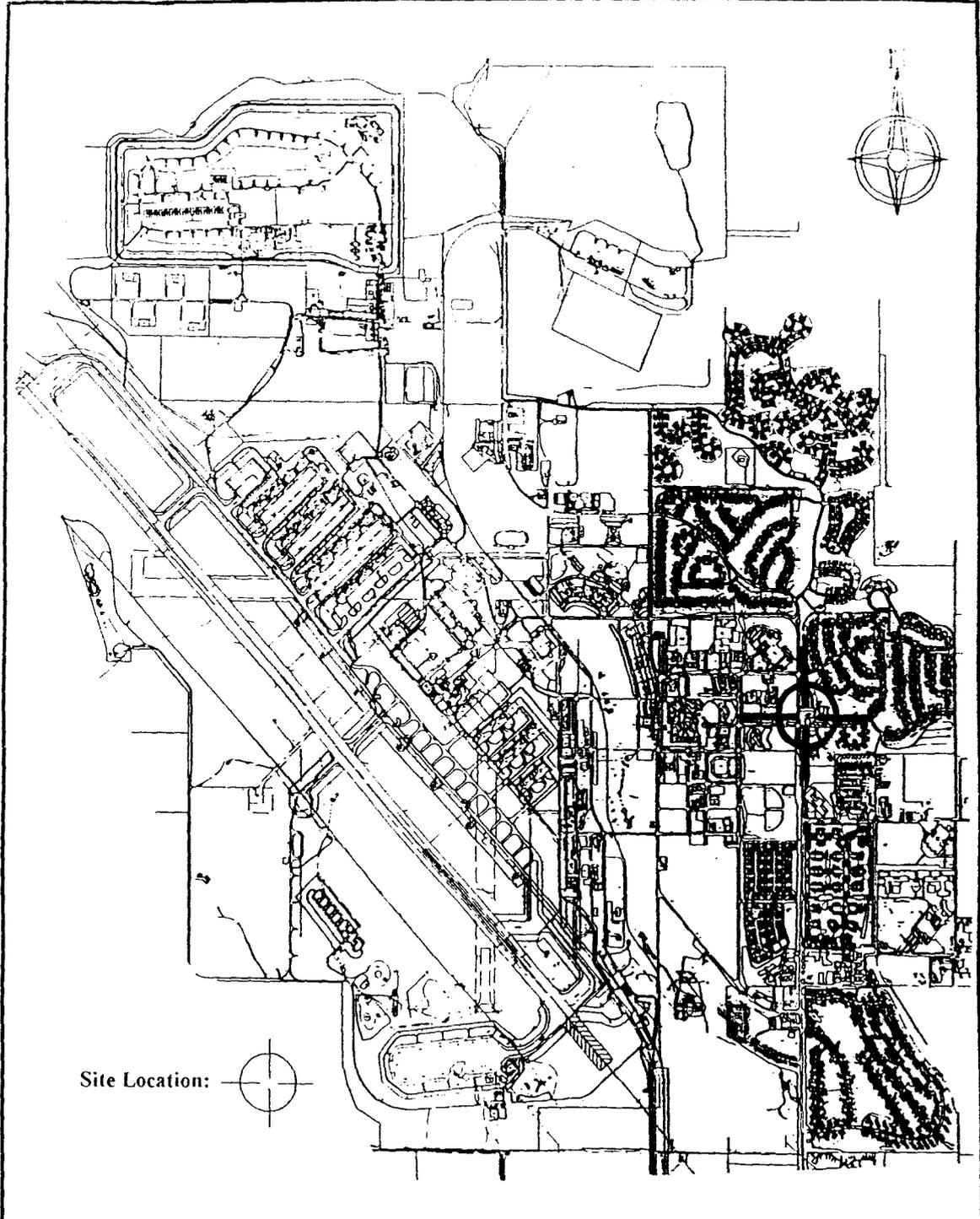
Historian: Lee Geiger, Rapid City, South Dakota, August 2001

Sources: Hufstetler, Mark, and McCormick, Mary, et al, draft, “Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, Statement of Historic Contexts,” Renewable Technologies Inc., Butte, Montana, November, 1995; Hufstetler, Mark, “Ellsworth AFB History Sites Inventory”, 1994; “Real Property Records-Building 8001, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota” Manuscript Records on file at the Real Property Office, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota.

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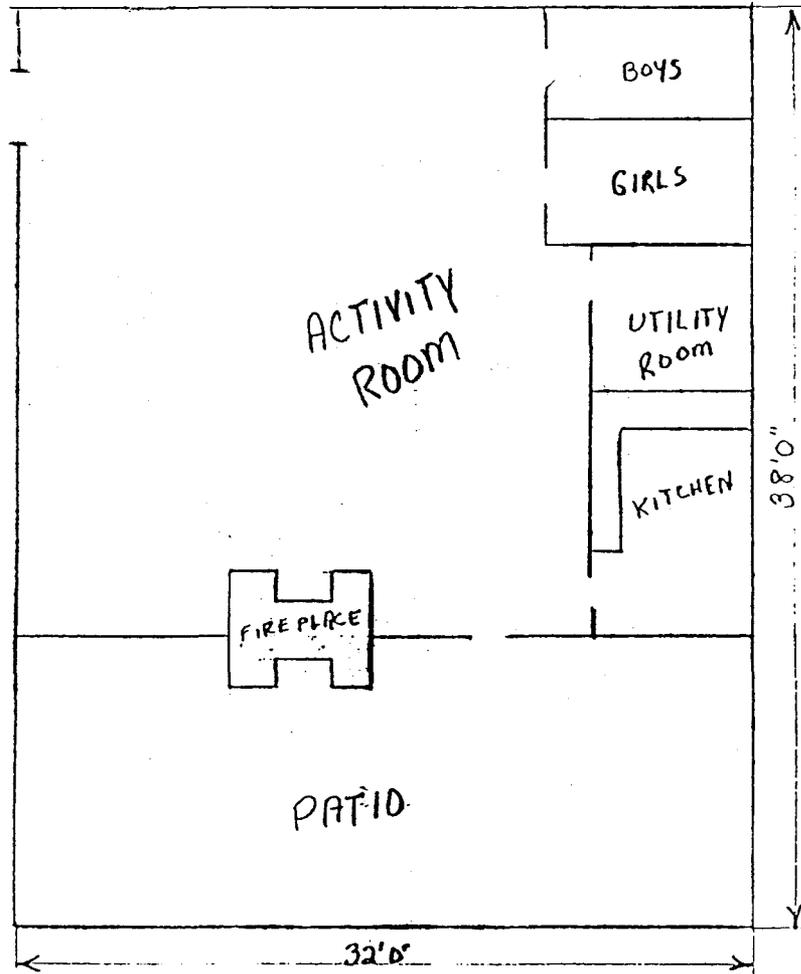
- 1 Hufstetler, Mark, "Ellsworth AFB History Sites Inventory", July, 1994.
- 2 Hufstetler, Mark, and McCormick, Mary, et al, draft, "Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, Statement of Historic Contexts," Renewable Technologies Inc., Butte, Montana, November, 1995, Page 75.
- 3 Ibid., 79.
- 4 Ibid., 80.
- 5 Ibid., 81-82.
- 6 Hufstetler, Mark, "Ellsworth AFB History Sites Inventory," July, 1994.
- 7 Hufstetler, Mark, "Ellsworth AFB History Sites Inventory, " July, 1994.
- 8 Ibid.

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**ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, SOUTH DAKOTA**  
Site Number: MD-EL-EL-00034  
Historic Name: Recreation Building  
USAF Facility Number: 8001  
USAF Nomenclature: YOUTH CEN

Ellsworth Air Force Base  
Recreation Building  
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FLOOR PLAN BLDG 8001  
SCALE - 1/8" = 1'0"