

# Vichy AAF & Vichy GFA (P-70C)

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Yesterday I was at 38-07.9N/091-46.3W -- Rolla National Airport, formerly Vichy AAF, later apparently a NOLF for NAS St Louis (aka Lambert Field)!

Vichy AAF was apparently a sub-base of Sedalia AAF, operated by Troop Carrier Command, with 3 runways, the longest being 5500'. It had housing for 40 Os & 500 Es, per 'Army Air Forces Installations Directory -- CONUS 1 SEP 45'.

A good number of the old DOD office type buildings are still here, in fair to poor condition. One old 2-bay hangar looks to be the only one left from the old days. Parked in front of it (i.e. outside, on the ramp) are an old Navy S-2B, BuNo 136573, and what look like two old DC-3/C-47s, one in USAF markings, but with commercial tail #N1350A, and a heavily cannibalized one (N19721). Inside the old hangar is a Cessna 172, and... a T-28C Trojan (BuNo 140610, I think) & FAA registration N8084V, and a TBM-3E (BuNo 85715?), civil tail # N8VC. Both were in great condition, and seem to be airworthy. I don't think I'd ever really seen a TBM-3 up close before, and I was amazed at how huge the thing is! Even the T-28 was a lot larger than I figured (I'm MUCH more coherent on military jet aircraft).

On the far side of the airport (no buildings, just open field), 3 old DC-3s sat lined up in a row.

I lucked out & came across an old-timer who happens to manage the airfield on the weekends. He said that for several decades, Federal Express used the airfield as a minor hub, using the DC-3s. These days the field has a decent amount of private aircraft, and corporate jets (several corporations, including Briggs & Stratton, have their HQs within about 20 miles of the field). The old military aircraft there are owned by some wealthy guy (obviously!) who operates his TBM-3 & T-28 when he has time for his toys. The 3 DC-3s on the far side of the field have been sitting there for about 15 years, awaiting restoral or ?? I didn't go to that side of the field to check them out up close. I was short on time, there was NOTHING else over there, and I didn't even see an access road. But the S-2B & the one C-47 looked in good shape, but probably not having been flown in years. The S-2B had some markings on the engine nacelle giving maintenance dates, and the latest one I saw was early 1980s.

The former Base Ops building was about 60' x 25' & one story tall, in typical WW-II era architecture (sorry I can't be more specific, but I'm mostly just a Cold War era archaeologist!). It was abandoned, but it's most recent past use was as a cafe. The woman who operated it did well during the Spring & Summer, but not well enough to fiscally survive the Winter. From the outside, it seems to be in very good shape. Many of the other old buildings (misc. admin-type structures and some small barracks) are scheduled to be demolished soon! Apparently the USACE (DERP-FUDS) won't have anything to do with it -- the airfield is looking for bids on their own. Typical asbestos problems.

Other than some of the old military aircraft and a few buildings, there were no remains of AAF/NOLF stuff -- no faded old signs, unique-looking buildings, etc. The old officers housing area was demolished years ago, and I just saw what looked like open land in the direction the old timer gestured towards when he talked about the housing area.

One thing I (thanks to my Cold War era focus) correctly picked out from about a mile away as I approached the aerodrome was a former GAP FILLER Annex RADAR site!! It was on the periphery of the property, and the structures are quite intact, with no fencing around them. The standard metal tower, about 60' tall, and the big radome on top, with a metallic shine to it. As little sense as it makes, it really does seem to be a \*metallic\* radome, with each individual pentagonal-shaped piece joined to the next by what looked like a fiberglass piece about 5" wide.

The associated concrete blockhouse building was right next to the tower. It's the standard square-shape, with a smaller square-shaped section attached. This smaller section is the one that has a lot of ventilation ducts. The door to this smaller section was closed but not-secured, and heck yes, I opened the door! This room \*had\* been the power supply room. It was pretty trashed, but lots of old circuit breaker paneling & misc. debris on the floor. Propped against the wall was a sign about 4'x4' which said something along the lines of "VICHY GAP FILLER SITE, OPERATED BY THE 798th RADAR SQUADRON, AIR DEFENSE COMMAND. FOR OFFICIAL INQUIRIES REGARDING THIS FACILITY, PLEASE CALL BELLEVILLE AFS AT [commercial phone #]" & then a Playboy Bunny logo in the lower right corner.

I took a photo of the sign in-situ, and because it was such a cool find, I temporarily moved that sign outside into the sunlight & took another photo of it before replacing it back in the building & shutting the door.

From inside the power production room, there was no interior door leading into the larger room, and the exterior door that lead into the larger room --where I assume the RADAR gear & personnel had been-- was secured by a padlock.

The old VICHY GFA is at 38-08.14N/091-46.40W. It was in relatively good condition, and I saw no evidence that it had any operational life (JSS, NOAA Weather RADAR, etc.) after GAP FILLER. Per Mark Morgan`s *"Air Force Stations"*, this was site P-70C, and deactivated in 1968. About 20` from the building is some piping sticking out of the soil. It seems like the underground fuel storage tank for the site`s generator is still there.

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