

798 RADAR SQUADRON (SAGE)



MISSION

LINEAGE

798 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron
Redesignated 798 Radar Squadron (SAGE)

STATIONS

Belleville, IL

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj John W. O Gootee, #1957

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

"Activated 1 May 51 Belleville AFS IL; assigned to 546th AC & W group; transferred to 159 AC & W Gp 4 June 51; transferred to 33d Air Division 6 Feb. 52; transferred to 20th Air Division 1 March 56; transferred Kansas City ADS 1 January 60; transferred to Chicago ADS 1 Jul 61; re-designated from AC & W Sqd. to Radar Squadron (SAGE) 1 March 62; transferred to 20th Air Division 1 April 66; reassigned to 30th Air Division 1 December 67; discontinued 18 June 68."

The U.S. government acquired this property, which at one time was a turkey farm, in 1949. Construction began the same year for an early warning radar site. This site would be included in the U.S. Air Force's network of early warning radar sites. Construction was completed in the late spring of 1951 and this site was officially designated the 798th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron. At the same time the 798th companion Squadron the 113th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was activated. The 113th was soon replaced by the 85th FIS which was located at Scott AFB.

The 798th AC & W Squadron was initially staffed by two Air National Guard units that were activated for that specific purpose. One unit was from Denver CO and the other unit was from Southern California. Both units arrived here in May/June 1951.

From the very beginning, due to the nature of our assignment, this site was clothed in secrecy. The town people and even the personnel at Scott Air Force Base knew little to nothing about this location. In these early years there are a number of stories that newly assigned personnel can tell about their endeavors to locate this 798th Squadron.

The first Commanding Officer was Major Walter J. Sherrell from the Air National Guard unit from Denver, CO. Major Sherrell served as the Commanding Officer here until August 1953 when he was replaced by Major John F. Cercak. The first public acknowledgement of this radar site was from a press release published in the Belleville News Democrat dated 11 November 1951. It addressed the mission of the Squadron and read in part,

" Our job involves the use of radar to detect the approach of enemy planes which might attack the St. Louis area. We are also charged with directing the U.S. Air Force fighters to intercept any attacker in this area. This organization is part of the 33d Air Division with headquarters in Oklahoma City and under the Central Air Defense Force, and the Air Defense Command." As the years passed the mission and operations of the Squadron changed. On 1 July 1959 our sister Squadron the 85th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was inactivated. Nike Ajax and Hercules missiles replaced the F- 86 Sabrejets as the local air defense guardian. The 1st Missile Battalion, who became tenants of this site, controlled from here its four firing batteries which ringed the Scott/St. Louis area. Then in 1962 the 798th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was re-designated the 798th Radar Squadron (SAGE). Thus, the Squadron converted from a ground

control intercept station to a semi-automatic ground environment surveillance station. That's when a simple radar scope became a GDP or Graphic Display Position indicator.

Made obsolete by technological advances this radar site was abandoned in 1968. The last Commanding Officer of the 798th was Lt. Col. Brady A. Miracle. According to a first-hand witness, on 23 June 1968 all the equipment had been shipped, the buildings were closed and secured , including the housing area, and the keys to the main gate were turned over to Scott Air Force Base who became guardian of this site. The last chapter in the book on the 798th Squadron was finished.

23 Jun 1968 After closing and securing all buildings, the last commander of the 798th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron turned over responsibility for Belleville Air Station (locally known as Turkey Hill) to Scott AFB. The 798th officially inactivated on 1 Dec 1968.

1 May 1951 The 798th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron activated at Belleville Air Station, Illinois (locally known as Turkey Hill). The unit provided early warning detection of hostile air intrusions to air defense units based in the local area—primarily at Scott AFB.

798th Radar Sq (SAGE): activated 1 May 51 at Belleville AF , IL, assigned to 546th AWN Gp; transferred to 159th ACW Gp 4 Jun 51; transferred to 33rd AD 6 Feb 52; transferred to 20th AD 1 Mar 56; transferred to Kansas City ADS 1 Jan 60; transferred to Chicago ADS 1 Jul 61; redesignated from AWN Sq to 798th Radar Sq (SAGE) 1 Mar 62; transferred to 20th AD 1 Apr 66; reassigned to 30th AD 1 Dec 67; discontinued 18 Jun 68.

The 798th AC&W Squadron began operations at Belleville in May 1952. The site used AN/CPS-4 and AN/FPS-3 radars. The AN/FPS-3 remained in operation until 1963. The site fed data to a SAGE center beginning in 1962. A variety of height-finder radars were used at Belleville. In 1963 two AN/FPS-6 sets stood guard. Later, during the mid-1960s this site operated with an AN/FPS-66. The 798th was deactivated in June 1968.

798 Belleville AFS, IL CPS-4; FPS-3; FPS-6 (2) FPS-66A; FPS-6 (2) May-52
18-Jun-68 Site located on Turkey Hill a few miles south of Scott AFB, IL. USAF site shared with Army for Nike missile-defense system (SL-47DC).

Air Force Lineage and Honors
Created: 29 Jul 2020
Updated:

Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit history. *20 Air Division (Defense). 1957.*