

656 RADAR SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

656 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron
Redesignated 656 Radar Squadron

STATIONS

Saratoga Springs AFS, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Cpt Fred M. Lagergren, #1955
Maj James A. Hester, #1956

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

P-50/Z-50 – Schuylerville/Sarasota Springs

The 656th AC&W Squadron began operating AN/FPS-3 and AN/FPS-5 radars from this central New York site in April 1952. This site assumed coverage from site L-7 in Schenectady. This site was one of the first to receive an AN/FPS-20 search radar in the spring of 1957. By 1958 the original radars were gone and operations continued with an AN/FPS-20 and a pair of AN/FPS-6 height-finder radars. At this time, Sarasota Springs began providing information to the SAGE system. The search radar subsequently was upgraded in 1961 to become an AN/FPS-65. Major equipment changes occurred during 1963 with the arrival of an AN/FPS-27 search radar along with AN/FPS-26A and AN/FPS-90 height-finder radars. In 1964 this site became an ADC/FAA joint-use facility. The 656th was inactivated in June 1977.

In May 1950 the 656th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was formed and placed under the

immediately turned over to the FAA. Saratoga was also a BUIC (Back Up Intercept Control) site. When I began working at Saratoga, I was put on shift work on the FPS-65 and assigned a partner named George Chan. We happened to be classmates at Keesler. Back at Keesler, George had good naturedly ribbed me when he found out I was being sent to a remote duty site in Iceland and he was going to get a much nicer assignment in Saratoga.

656th Radar Sq (SAGE): assigned 1 Jan 51 at Schenectady, NY, assigned to the 540th AC&W Gp; transferred to the 32nd AD 6 Feb 52; moved to permanent site at Schuyierville, NY Feb transferred to 4707th Def Wg 16 Feb 53; site redesignated Saratoga Spgs AFS, NY 1 Dec 53; transferred to 4622nd AD Wg 18 Oct 56; transferred to Boston ADS 8 Jan 57; redesignated from AC&W Sq to 656th Radar Sq (SAGE) 15 Dec 58; transferred to 35th AD 1 Apr 66; reassigned to 21st AD 19 Nov 69; redesignated 656. Radar Sq 1 Feb 74; inactivated 30 Jun 77.

On a ridge overlooking the historic Hudson River Valley, approximately ten miles southeast of Saratoga Springs sets Saratoga AFS, home of the 656 Radar Squadron

Activated originally as the 656 ACWS the unit occupied temporary quarters at the Schenectady Army Depot in Schenectady, NY utilizing old WW II vintage radar equipment. Following completion of a million dollar construction project, the unit moved to its present location in Stillwater NY and assumed mission responsibility as a manual direction center under the control of the 4707 ADW at Otis AFB, MA. In 1956 the unit became part of the 26 AD. In December 1958 the unit was integrated into the SAGE and redesignated the 656 Radar Squadron (SAGE). Manual control capability was retained until Jul 1965 when the squadron was relieved of responsibility As a NORAD control center and became a Long Range Radar Site.

Progress in air defense procedures and equipment has caused the site to pass through many years of growth and expansion in both equipment and manpower. The original AN/FPS-3 search radar, passed through a full cycle of modernization and finally gave way to high powered AN/FPS-27. Its companion set a lonely AN/FPS-5 height finder radar was replaced by a pair of AN/FPS-6 height finders one of which was eventually replaced with high powered AN/FPS-26. Further modernization included expansion of the GATR facilities and the addition of three unmanned gap filler radar sites.

A great reduction in personnel followed the relinquishment of manual control capability and the assumption of operational and maintenance responsibility of the FPS-27 search radar by the FAA under a joint user agreement.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Unit yearbook. *26 Air Division, Defense. 1956*

Unit yearbook. *32 Air Division. 1955.*