

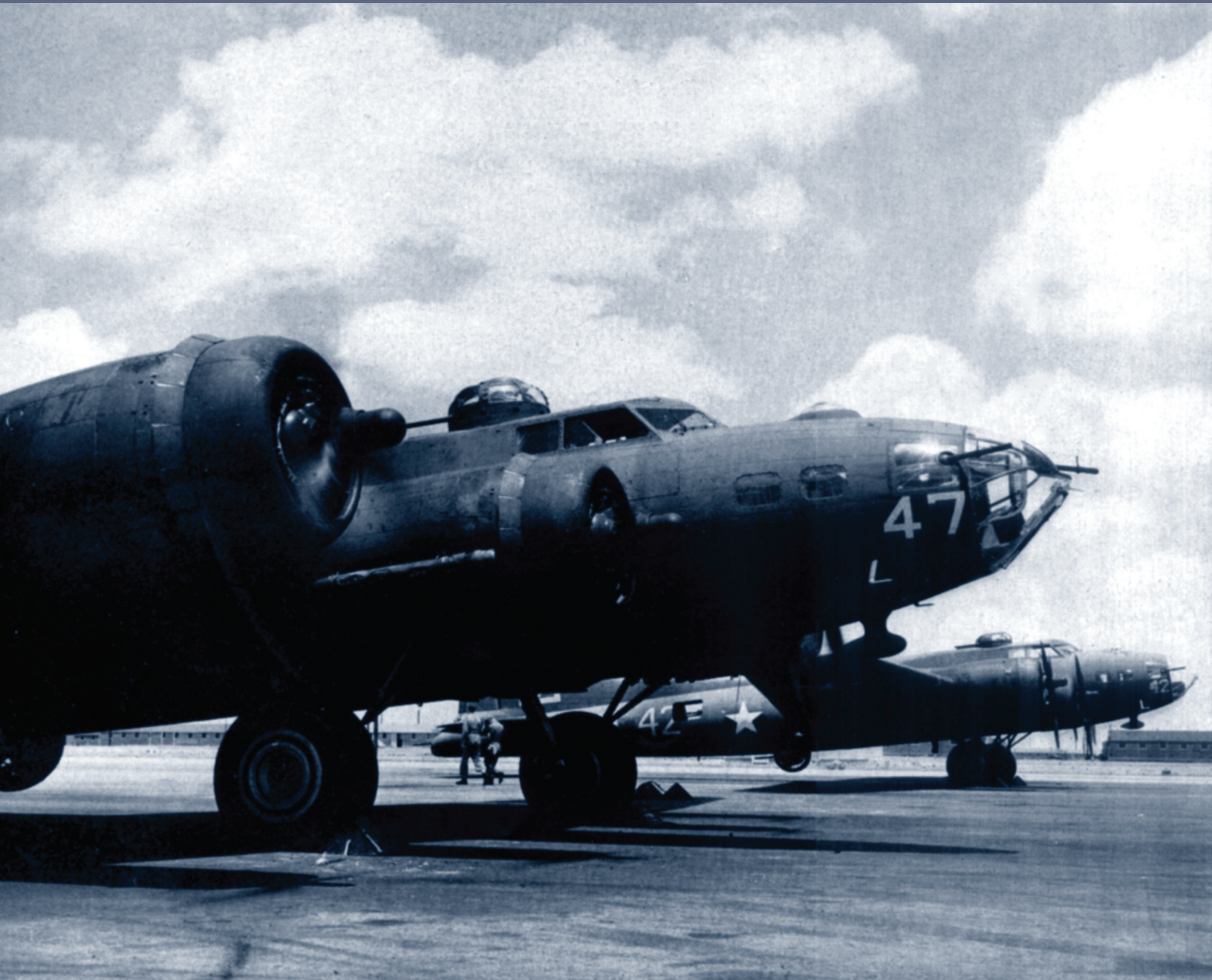
“Keep ‘Em Flying”



THE STORY OF THE HOBBS ARMY AIR FIELD



WILLIAM A. DODGE
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This Historical Narrative Report was funded by the City of Hobbs and has been prepared pursuant to The Memorandum of Agreement dated August 21, 2006 between the City of Hobbs, New Mexico and the New Mexico State Preservation Officer is hereby agreed regarding the Hobbs Industrial Air Park and the Former WWII Hobbs Army Air Field.

Mayor, Monty D. Newman

City Commission:

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Albert Hernandez

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City of Hobbs

Eric Honeyfield, City Manager

Joe Dearing, City Planner.

FEBRUARY 2008



Front Cover: The B-17, "Tootsie," in flight over Hobbs AAF. The aircraft was named after Lovington resident, Virginia "Tootsie" McKibben.

Inside Cover: B-17s lined up on the apron, Hobbs AAF.

“Keep ‘Em Flying”

The Story of the
Hobbs Army Air Field



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SHACK RAT!

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Foreword

Keep 'Em Flying was the national rallying cry picked up by the citizens of Hobbs, Lovington, and their neighboring residents of Lea County in the summer of 1942 as they prepared to welcome the U.S. Army Air Forces to its new training base. As the sounds of road graders, concrete trucks, hammers and saws filled the air around the once quiet ranching country located just outside of the city, servicemen, both young and old in their new khaki uniforms, arrived by the trainload to set up mechanics' shops and a four-engine pilot training school whose graduates would soon be transferred to the battle zones in Europe and the Pacific.

It was an important period in our country's history and for the history of Hobbs, a small community that was founded in 1907 to support scattered homesteads in the far southeastern part of the state, and was later caught up in the oil boom that spread like wildfire across the surrounding caprock country. Those were the boom or bust years nestled around the "Roaring Twenties" and the country's Great Depression. As Hobbs' fortunes were on the upswing in the late 1930s, world events intruded, resulting in the construction and operation of an air base – actually a small town almost half as large as Hobbs itself in those days – that played a short, but significant, role during those uneasy and difficult war years.

Today, more than sixty-five years after the first bulldozers started clearing the land and constructing runways, the site of the former base looks little like its former self. Of course, the runways and parking apron, once lined nose to tail with four-engine B-17 bombers, are still obvious features on the landscape, but except for a couple of worn-out looking concrete structures belonging to that era, there are few obvious signs of the airfield complex that once dominated this piece of ranching country. You can still see the foundations of buildings – regularly spaced rows of concrete piers that once supported barracks, mess halls, and the small storage buildings – amidst the tangle of mesquite trees and clusters of prickly pear cactus, or you may pick out the remains of the large, flat concrete slabs that supported the hangars and large quartermaster warehouses. If you walk to what was the southeast corner of the base (which is now part of the junior college), you'll see the rounded humps of concrete ordnance bunkers – the "igloos" where munitions were stored in these heavily fortified structures. But that is all that remains of the once-vibrant and bustling airfield.



This is the story of Hobbs Army Air Field. It is a story not only of why the base was built, what it looked like, and how it operated, but also a story of how the servicemen and women stationed there lived, what they and the many civilian employees did to support the air field's mission, and what became of the base after the war – and how all this affected the people of Hobbs and Lovington. It is a story of commitment, patriotism, and compassion that helped make this a unique era in our nation's history.



HOBBS ARMY AIR FIELD TIMELINE

- 1907** James Isaac Hobbs homesteads land in Lea (then Eddy) County
U.S. Army Air Corps organized
- 1910-34** Town of Hobbs evolves from a small ranching community to a “boom or bust” oil city
- 1939** War begins in Europe
- 1940** Army Air Corps reorganized as Army Air Forces and begins to increase its number of airfields
- 1941** U.S. attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor (December 7)
- 1942** Hobbs selected for new airfield and training base (February 16)
City purchases land for airfield from B. J. Caudill and D. N. Huston, then leases land to U.S. government for \$1.00/year for 25 years
Construction begins on Hobbs Army Air Field (June)
First class of bombardier students begins (September 7)
First class of 4-engine pilot training begins (December 14)
- 1943** First deployment of Women’s Auxiliary Air Corps arrives (June)
- 1944** Final buildings at airfield completed (April)
- 1945** Germany surrenders (May 7)
Pilot transition training at Hobbs terminated (August)
Japan surrenders (August 14)
Hobbs Army Air Field transferred to Air Technical Service Command and begins to operate as storage facility (October)
- 1946** Hobbs begins ferrying aircraft to National Guard bases



- War Assets Administration begins to sell off excess buildings and structures
- 1947** Most military personnel at Hobbs transferred to Rome, New York
- 1948** Hobbs Army Air Field decommissioned (May 5)
City of Hobbs re-acquires the former airfield (December 23)
City leases apartments at "Air Base City" to local realtor for development of a public housing project to relieve post-war housing shortage
- 1951** City asks Air Force to consider opening a bombardier school at former air base (July 23)
- 1952** Air Force announces it has no plans to re-open air base (October 24)
- 1965** Ocotillo Golf Course opens on the site of the former airfield
- 1966** New Mexico Junior College begins classes on a campus that was once part of the former Hobbs Army Air Field
- 1974** The Llano Estacado Medical Center, built on former airfield property, opens
- 1975** Halliburton Oil Field Services leases property at the Hobbs Industrial Air Park – just east of the former base
- 1982** State constructs McAdams State Park which disturbs much of the former Army airfield
- 1987** The Soaring Society of America makes its headquarters at the former airfield constructing a building near the old flight line and using the runway for glider flying
- 1998** A privately run correctional facility is completed adjacent to the old runway in the southeast corner of former air base
- 2006** The last remaining WW II hangar at the former airfield is demolished due to its unsafe condition



(Above) James Isaac Hobbs, his wife, Fannie, and family. Hobbs established a homestead in 1907.
(Below) The homestead of Ernest and Minnie Byers, daughter and son-in-law of James Hobbs.

The City and its Air Field

Hobbs: The Early Years

In March of 1907, as James Isaac Hobbs and his family were constructing a temporary dugout structure on their recently settled 160 acre homestead near the corner of what is now First and Texas streets, it is doubtful that they could have envisioned the dramatic changes that would take place in the next 35 years on this hot, dry, relatively barren land known as the *Llano*. Over the next few years other homesteaders, mostly Texans, joined the



Hobbs family and formed a loosely knit community of ranchers and farmers. One of these ranchers was a man named D. N. "Nat" Huston, a Texas ranch hand who was encouraged by his former employer to move west and try his luck. Nat Huston found some available land to the northwest of town, along the road to Lovington, and began to accumulate land and cattle – obtaining homestead patents, buying out other landowners, and leasing grazing land from the state.



Early Hobbs Post office.

As the Huston ranch and other homesteaders were developing their land, the small town of Hobbs, New Mexico was taking shape. Originally, town officials had requested the name "Taft," after the sitting President of the United States at that time; however, the United States Post Office assigned the name "Hobbs," instead, so the community of "Hobbs, New Mexico" came into being in 1910. Until 1927, the town was sparsely populated and offered only minimal services – a school and the Hobbs Mercantile Company – to the ranchers and cotton farmers in the area. In 1927, however, this all changed as oil was discovered in large pools below the Llano's surface. Almost overnight, the town exploded with people and activity as oilmen converged on the sleepy ranch town.

The stage was set at Hobbs for the unfolding of one of the last great oil booms of the West – studded with all the classic trappings: Instant towns that operated around the clock, instant wealth pouring from the earth, crews of soiled and sunburned working men, flocks of developers, promoters, adventurers and professional people of every description moving in the vanguard.

- Journalist Gene Hinshaw



(Above) Hobbs school house, circa 1915.

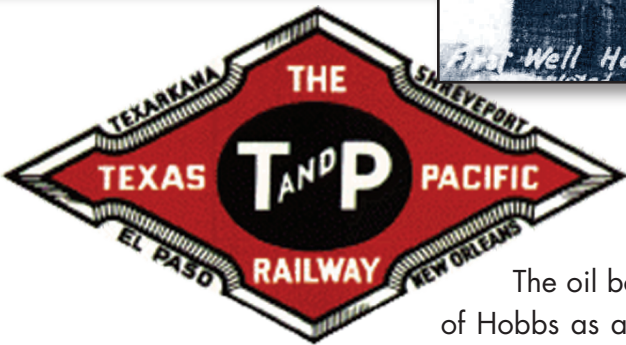
(Below) Early Hobbs Residents Posing in Front of what was then Downtown Hobbs.



THESE PIONEERS SEEM TO KNOW THEIR STUFF
THEY CLAIM THAT HOBBS, N.M. WILL BE THE
NEXT BIG EXCITEMENT. TO SEE THE HOBBS WELL
DEMONSTRATE WILL MAKE A BELIEVER OF
THE MOST SKEPTICAL



(Left) Once the oil boom began, many oil field-related businesses, such as the Oil Well Supply Co., opened in Hobbs. (Center) First wooden oil derrick near the intersection of Stanolind Rd. and Grimes St. in Hobbs. (Right) Downtown Hobbs in 1930. (Below) Hobbs railroad depot, circa 1940s.



The oil boom in southeast New Mexico had a profound effect upon the growth of Hobbs as a community. New hotels, eateries, businesses, and houses sprung up around town; the oil money flowed freely and the population increase created new demands for services and housing. The increase in the number of automobiles caused traffic congestion on the main streets, and the town's nightlife, despite Prohibition, flourished. To better serve the oil fields of west Texas and southeast New Mexico, the Texas - New Mexico Railway, a division of the Texas and Pacific Railway, built 112 miles of rail line from Monahans, Texas to Lovington, including a depot in Hobbs, in 1930. Although the railway was used primarily as a freight line, a one-car passenger train, known as the "Doodlebug," carried Lea County riders to Monahans for connections to transcontinental railroad lines in El Paso. Although the bottom fell out of the oil market in January 1931, causing a brief exodus from the town, economic fortunes reversed themselves three years later, and a steady stream of people returned to the oil fields and the community. By 1937, the three separate communities, Old Hobbs, New Hobbs, and All Hobbs that had developed independently in the 1920s and 30s merged into one municipality, simply called Hobbs. Granted city status by then-Governor Clyde Tingley, the city became a regional trade center for oil workers, ranchers, and farmers, making it one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

Quest For An Airfield

World events intruded upon the fledgling city in 1940. With the war in Europe accelerating, the United States Army Air Corps – soon to be renamed the Army Air Forces – realized that its training facilities for pilots was woefully inadequate should the country enter the conflict. The Army Air Corps, under the command of Major General Henry "Hap" Arnold, finally convinced Congress to appropriate funds to upgrade the training and operational facilities of the Army Air Corps, and soon officers from the training command began to scour the country for sites that would be suitable training bases. As might be expected, there was considerable competition among towns and cities across the country for these bases that would provide an economic stimulus for communities just coming



out of the Depression. The city of Hobbs was one of those communities actively recruiting the Army Air Force for a training center. The Hobbs Daily News-Sun reported in its October 1, 1940, edition that J. Roy Storms, secretary of the city's chamber of commerce, had held a strategy session with city leaders and businessmen to draw the military's attention to the community. The chamber sent a proposal to the Army's Eighth Army Air Corps offices in San Antonio, Texas, detailing some of the benefits of a Hobbs site. The Army replied that a staff officer would make a site visit "in the near future." The Army published the minimum requirements for an air base, including a close proximity to water, gas lines, railroads, and major highways. They also stipulated that the weather should be suitable much of the year for flying. Finally, the Army stated that they would soon be publishing a national list of communities to be surveyed for suitability.

The city had high hopes for being included in that national survey, and for good reason: it met all the criteria set forth by the Army – utility lines could be easily extended to almost any site chosen, water wells would be drilled, the Texas – New Mexico Railway was nearby, and existing highways connected Hobbs with other major economic center in the region. Much to their disappointment, however, Hobbs was left off the first survey list published in February, 1941, although other small New Mexico communities, such as Roswell, Carlsbad, Lordsburg, and Deming, were listed. A response from the state's congressional leadership, particularly Representative Clinton P. Anderson and Senator Dennis Chavez, was quickly delivered to the Army, and within a week Hobbs received a questionnaire requesting information about the city's facilities. Soon afterward, Hobbs was officially included in the War Department's "expanded" potential base list.

As 1941 dragged on there was little action by the Army in choosing potential airfield sites. However, the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, and the declaration of war the following day, gave a new urgency to the need for Army Air Force training bases. On December 18, Major John Armstrong, commander of the Roswell Army Air Field, visited Hobbs to conduct a preliminary investigation of potential sites around the city and discuss the matter with political and business leaders. This meeting was followed by visits from other training command personnel and from the Army Corps of Engineers, who were to oversee the building of the airfield. Although the

Bombers For Bataan--Keep 'Em Flying!



Hobbs Daily News-Sun

MEMBER ASSOCIATED PRESS
VOLUME 14 — NUMBER 210

HOBBS, NEW MEXICO, TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 1942

DIRECT LEASED WIRE

PRICE 5c PER COPY



HOBBS GETS ARMY FLYING SCHOOL

* * * * *
**\$15,000,000 AIRPORT AND CAMP TO BE BUILT
HERE IMMEDIATELY FOR 5,500 MEN, OFFICERS**

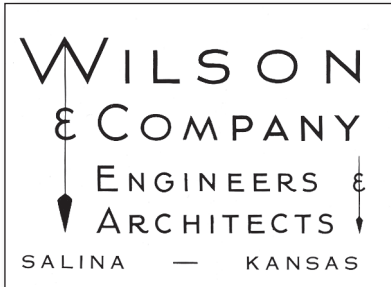
decision to choose Hobbs as a training base was not made public until April 7, the Army actually made its decision in mid-February and had already started planning base construction, shipping steel by train to the site and drilling water wells. In a lease agreement with the United States government dated February 4, 1942, the city of Hobbs was responsible for acquiring "either through voluntary purchase or condemnation" the 2,480 acres necessary to build the airfield, as well as 12 to 15 acres for a radio communications installation, 640 acres adjacent to the airfield for an ordnance installation, enough land for a sewage disposal system, and land for a railroad spur. The city would then lease this land to the government for \$1.00 per year with an option of renewal for 25 years.

Acquiring The Land

The land chosen by the War Department was the ranch lying along the west side of the Hobbs-Lovington Highway, about seven miles northwest of the Hobbs city limits, belonging to the early homesteader Nat Huston and managed by his sons, George and Harry Huston. The Huston ranch house had originally been a line camp shack for the A Ranch owned by Joseph Hall Graham, Nat Huston's father-in-law. Over the years, the house was remodeled and enlarged by the Huston family, who also built the usual collection of ranch buildings, such as corrals, stables, and other outbuildings. (When remodeling the house some years later, Sally Seed, Nat's granddaughter, and her husband, Charlie, found wooden boards from food boxes dating to 1915, which were used because of the scarcity of lumber in Lea County.) The ranch house property was a distinctive feature on the otherwise barren landscape. Huston had developed a unique water collection system that provided ample water for the family and livestock, including cattle from other ranches that were moving to other grazing lands. This water supply supported a substantial stand of majestic cottonwood trees that became a local landmark in this part of the county. However, this pastoral setting was to all change within a matter of months.

In April of 1942, the citizens of Hobbs passed a \$26,000 bond issue to be used for acquiring the land required by the military. The money was used to enter in an institutional lease with the state land office for that part of the base that was on state land, buy land from the Caudill and Huston families, and settle the state-issued grass leases held by Nat Huston. B. J. Caudill was paid \$6,000 for his land holdings, while Huston was paid \$6,700 for his land in the west half of section 7. The Huston family originally balked at the city's offer to pay off grass leases in the south half of section 1 and sections 11 and 12. The Huston ranch land was situated in the center of the proposed air base, and thus was the key component in the land acquisition deal. While he understood that the proposed air field was an important military wartime asset, Nat Huston had spent almost 40 years building up his ranch and land holdings. The ranch house, with its water well and beautiful trees, had become the spiritual center for the family, and the cattle and land were the family's economic lifeline. Huston felt he could not duplicate his land holdings for the price the city was offering, and dreaded the possibility of having to move the ranch buildings from their established setting to a new location. It was an emotionally difficult time for the Huston family, who were torn between being patriotic citizens and losing their beloved ranch. The city was adamant, however, and threatened condemnation proceedings. The case was eventually settled in district court – the Huston family was paid \$8,500, and had to move the ranch buildings off the property before June 1942 or all would be demolished as land for the airfield was leveled and graded. Family members remember sadly watching as bulldozers unceremoniously knocked down the large stand of stately cottonwoods that had marked their home site. The Huston ranch house and some of the outbuildings were moved approximately two miles to the southeast, where the casino and racetrack are located today. Soon afterward, the bulldozers moved in and the fates of both the Huston family and the town of Hobbs were forever changed.

★ Building the Hobbs Army Air Field



THE AIRFIELD'S LAYOUT

Although the site chosen for Hobbs Army Air Field was in the heart of the region's ranching country, the area offered a number of advantages for the establishment of an air base. The area was only seven miles northwest of the city of Hobbs, the commercial center of Lea County, while the Texas-New Mexico Railway coming from Monahans, Texas to Hobbs ran adjacent to the proposed air base. Truck routes, such as Highway 18 – the Hobbs-Lovington Highway – could easily transport construction materials and supplies to the airfield. In addition, the nearby towns of Hobbs and Lovington offered housing, leisure time activities, and a civilian workforce for base construction and operation.

On March 16, 1942, the Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, opened a sub-district office in Hobbs to oversee base construction. Two weeks later, on April 1, Wilson and Company of Salina, Kansas, was awarded an architect-engineer services contract for \$65,000 to design and supervise the construction of Hobbs Army Air Field.

Wilson and Company had a number of military contracts in the state and set up a branch office in Albuquerque to be closer to their job sites. Within the month, work had started on clearing the land and building the runways. Contracts for the construction of the airfield were awarded to three firms, all of whom had extensive experience in building roads, bridges, dams, and airfields in the state. The firm of Parks, Marshall, & McClosky was awarded a contract to build 423 buildings (later modified to include 456 structures) by the end of December, 1942. Hayner & Bruner had a contract to install the utilities on the base, and

three Albuquerque firms partnered to form Allison, Armstrong & Thygesen, who then contracted to build the landing fields, roads, and drainage system.



Aerial View of HAAF under Construction. View to the North. Note Completed Barracks to the East of the Runway.

On June 1, more than 100 workers began grading the airfield's runways and by the end of the month more than 1,000 workers, soon to increase to 3,000 men, were on base, working day and night to meet the scheduled completion deadline of mid-September for the \$10.8 million project. Much of the labor involved pouring concrete slabs, stem walls, and foundation piers. Former Hobbs mayor Max Clampitt was one of the many young men out on the site working for the building contractor:

[My] first chore, and last chore, was pushing the wheelbarrow full of concrete pouring foundations for some of the barracks and buildings out there. [The construction site] was swarming with people doing basically the same thing I was doing, setting the forms, and pouring the concrete and getting ready for the new buildings. Found out I couldn't master [the task] – the wheelbarrows still had metal wheels on them! I lasted about six weeks.

About the same time, the city started construction of a caliche-surfaced road that led from the Hobbs-Lovington highway to the base entrance (now Jack Gomez Boulevard). At the same time, the state highway department fulfilled their commitment to the War Department by re-building the Hobbs-Lovington highway to accommodate the heavy military traffic and freight trucks that would soon be delivering equipment and supplies to the base.

The base was laid out in a generally rectangular pattern with streets aligned along a northwest to southeast axis. Like many new airfields being built across the United States at that time, Hobbs Army Air Field was laid out according to a standardized Army Air Forces plan that created five distinct areas:

- the cantonment, consisting of administrative buildings, officers' quarters, enlisted men's barracks, mess halls, recreation areas, and a base hospital;
- the flight line, including maintenance hangars, aircraft parking, and training buildings;
- the Sub-Depot, where supplies arrived and were stored in warehouses;
- the landing field, with four runways and connecting taxiways; and
- the ordnance area, where ammunition was stored.

The center of the base, containing the post headquarters, communications buildings, enlisted men's mess halls, and recreation buildings, was flanked by squadron facilities. Each squadron had its own barracks, a detached lavatory, a day room for recreation, an administrative office, and a supply building. Raymond Benson was a B-17 mechanic who remembered these barracks as "hot in the summer and cold in the winter." There was no air-conditioning, which made sleeping difficult during the summer. And, he recalled, "the wind blew a lot and sand covered the barrack's interior."

Pilots-in-training, known as "cadets," had living quarters, and their own mess hall, in the northwest section of the base that was separate from the squadron personnel and officers' quarters. Personnel from the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) arrived at the air field in the summer of 1943, after much of the base had been constructed, so their barracks were built across the street from cadets' quarters near the hospital. The hospital was located in the northeast corner of the base, separated by several hundred yards of open ground. Officers' quarters were situated to the south of the hospital on the opposite side of the airfield's main entrance.

The quartermaster's supply warehouses and large warehouses belonging to air command were located at the southern end of the base, near the railroad spur lines. This area was also the site of the motor pool, gasoline and oil storage tanks, and general maintenance buildings. Along the west side of the cantonment area was the



flight line or “ramp” where a majority of the pilot training took place as well as squadron operations and aircraft maintenance. Large maintenance hangars dominated the landscape in this area.

The buildings constructed at Hobbs Army Air Field were classified by the Army as temporary mobilization buildings. These were fast and inexpensive to put up, had few frills, such as heating and cooling units or indoor plumbing, and were built to last less than ten years. The basic rule of thumb for constructing these temporary mobilization structures was to (1) keep the plans and construction methods simple, and (2) get the buildings up as fast as possible. The most common building design at the Hobbs airbase was a wood-frame structure set on concrete foundation piers. These were used for squadron barracks, small supply and administrative buildings, and mess halls. Other buildings were built on concrete slabs set at grade or on reinforced concrete stem walls running the length of the structure. A unique feature at Hobbs was found at the base hospital where the buildings were connected by an enclosed wood-frame walkway set on individual concrete piers.

All necessary buildings for the operation of the base were completed by the spring of 1943. This included living quarters, classroom and training buildings, and even some recreation facilities such as the movie theater. Over time, additional buildings and structures were added such as the large maintenance hangars along the “ramp” (the aircraft parking apron) and a new gymnasium and bowling alley. The servicemen stationed on the base also collected funds to build the after-hours social clubs for officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men. By 1944, the post engineer reported that all major construction had been completed. Landscaping on the base was minimal; however historic photographs indicate there were wispy tree saplings planted near the buildings – most of which did not survive long after the decommissioning of the airfield. Other landscaping features consisted of a kind of 1940s xeriscaping whereby the gravel walkways between buildings were bordered by distinctive white caliche rocks. In addition, many of the squadrons decorated their areas by using different colored rocks to re-create their insignia. The men’s hard work paid off at least in the eyes of Tech Sergeant Glen Raines who remembered, “It was a beautiful base.”

(Opposite) Aerial view of newly completed HAAF, circa 1943. (Below, Clockwise) Landscaping Features. NCO Club Sign. Insignias made from local rock- Base Hospital, Guard Squadron (Note saplings and caliche-rock walkway borders), 342nd Aviation Squadron.





TYPICAL BARRACKS



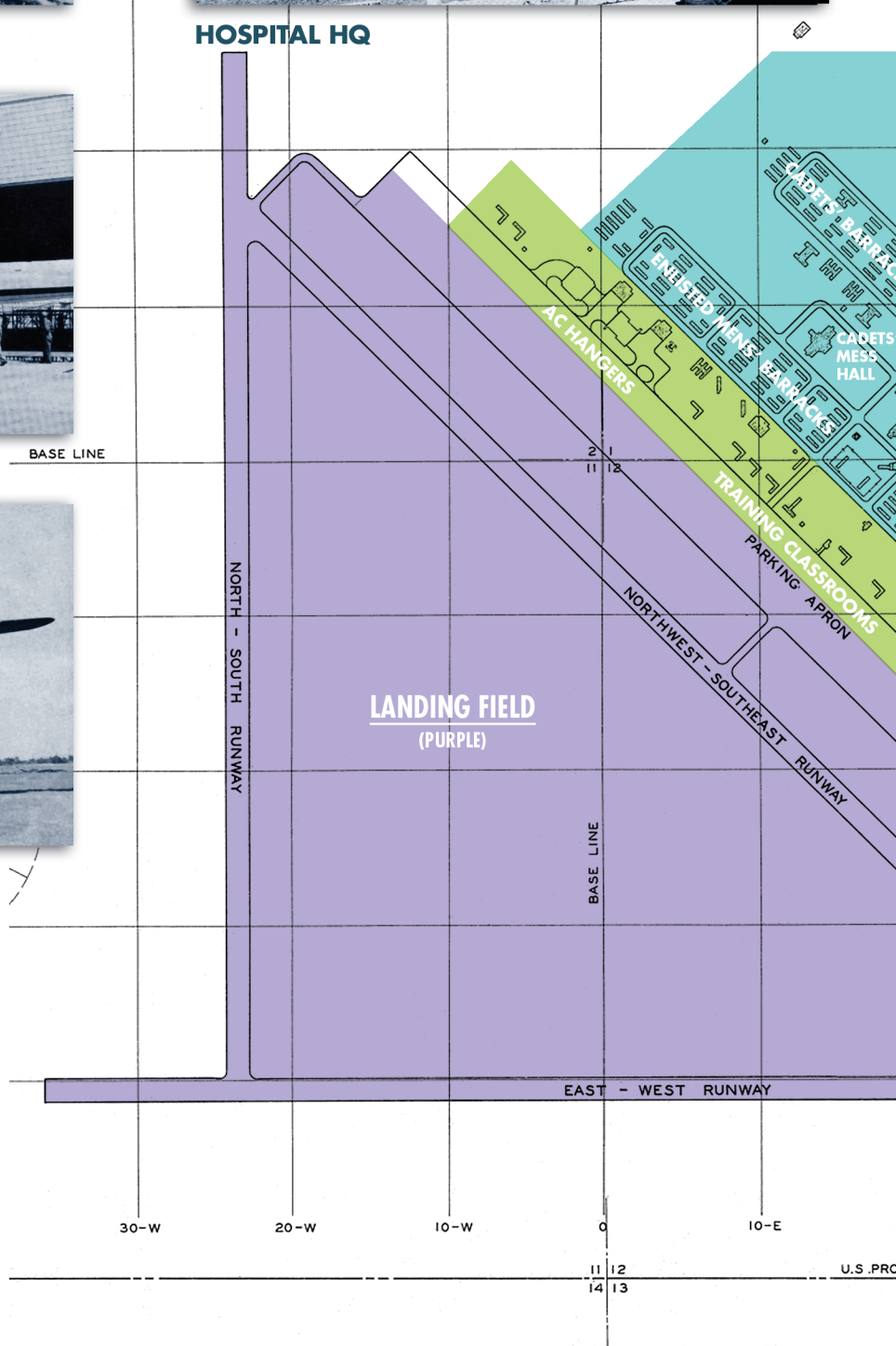
HOSPITAL HQ



AIR COMMAND HANGER



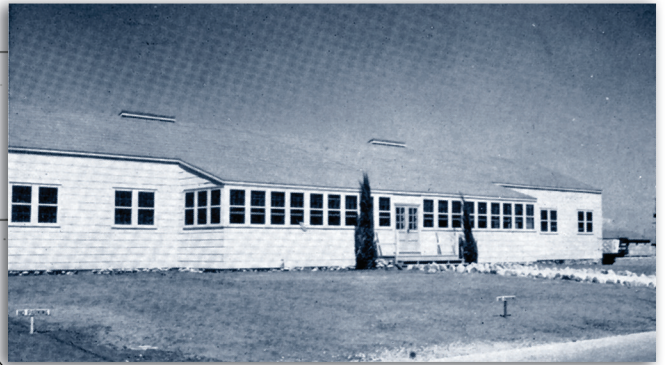
B-17 TAKE-OFF



HOBBS ARMY AIR FIELD, 1942-48



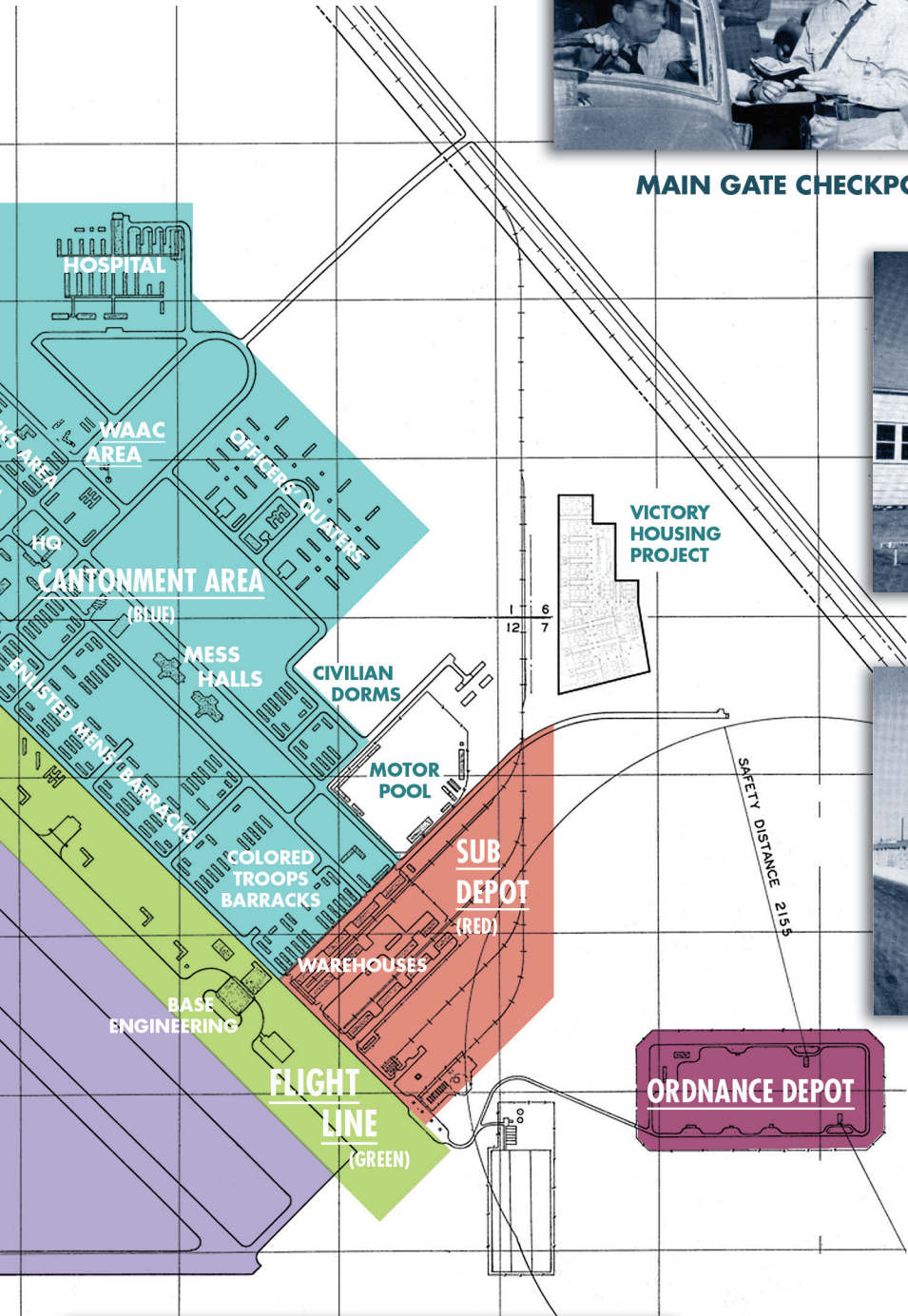
MAIN GATE CHECKPOINT



OFFICERS CLUB



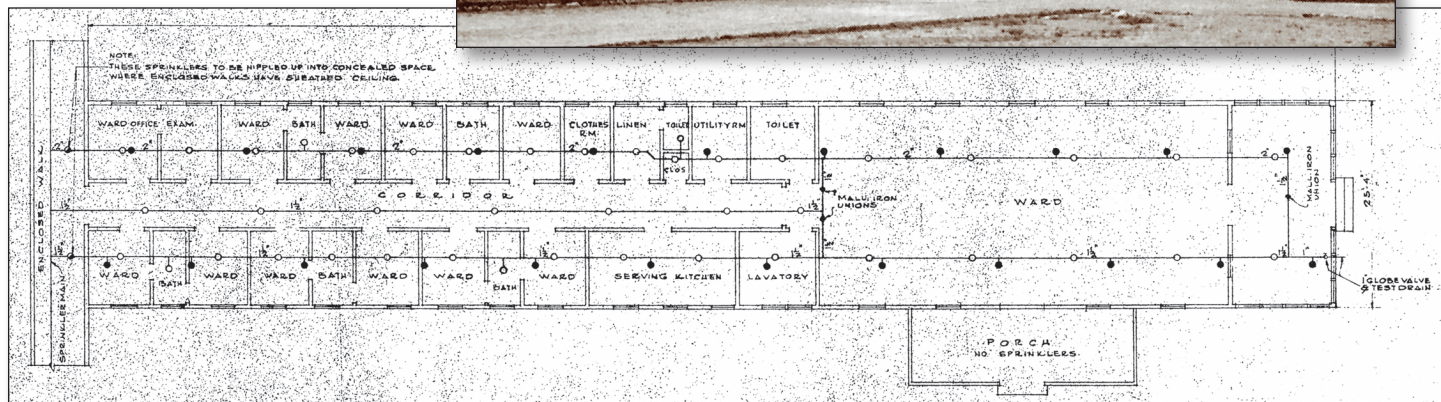
WAREHOUSES



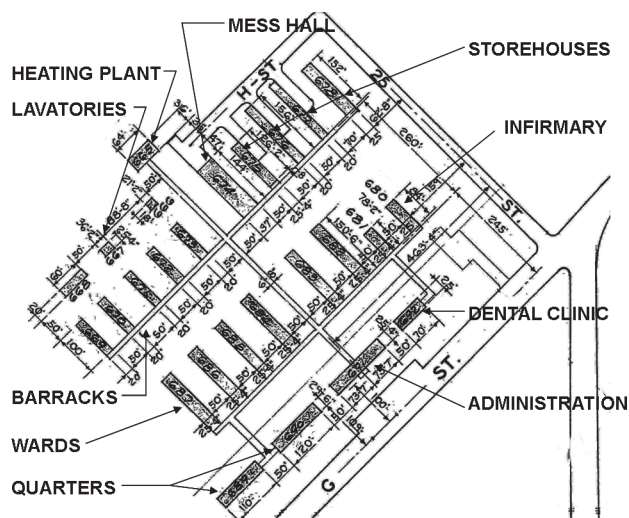
SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUILDING AND CONTROL TOWER

★ ★ AREA DESCRIPTIONS ★ ★

CANTONMENT



(Top) Base hospital showing enclosed walkways between buildings. (Above) Plan drawing of a typical hospital ward at HAAF.

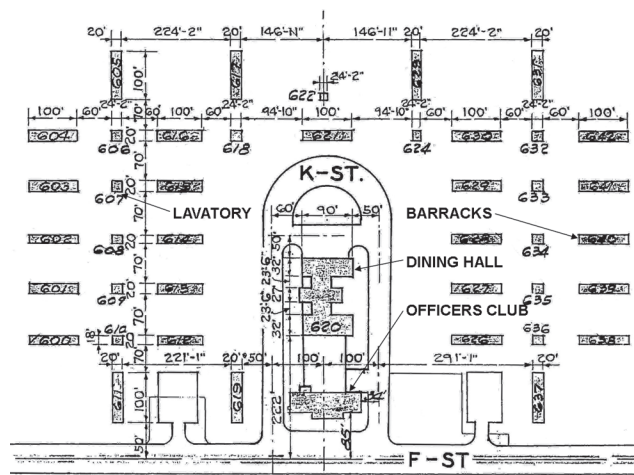


BASE HOSPITAL

The base hospital offered complete medical services including in-patient ward rooms, surgery facilities, and dental care. The medical staff were quartered on site. The facility had its own mess hall and several warehouses to store hospital-related supplies. All the buildings were linked by an enclosed walkway.

OFFICERS' QUARTERS

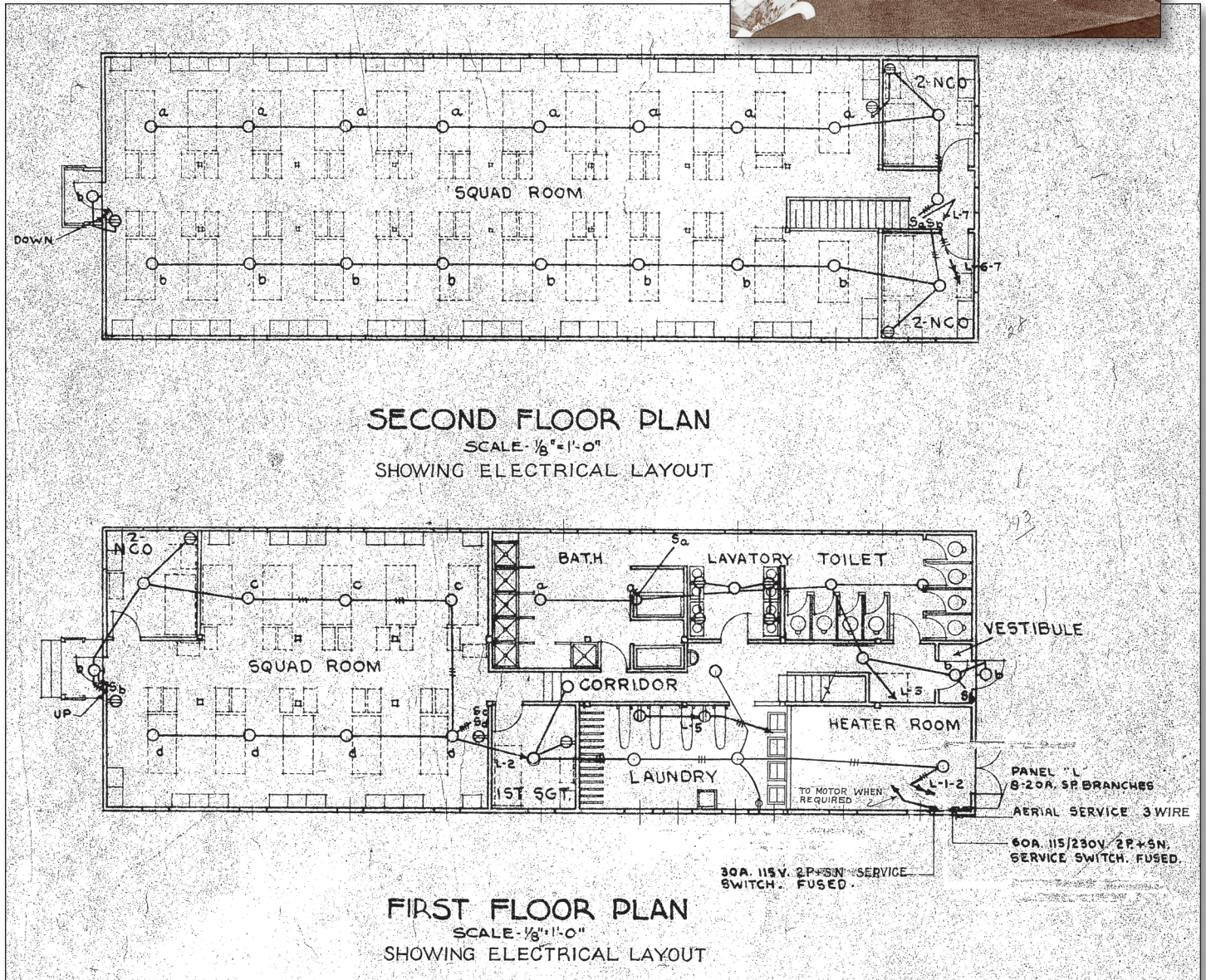
The officers' quarters, located on the east side of the cantonment adjacent to the airfield's main entrance, were set off from the rest of the base by the parade ground and other open space. It included barracks laid out in a U-shaped pattern and interspaced by considerably more latrines than enlisted or cadets housing. In the center of the "U" was the officers' mess hall and the officer's club.



WAAC's QUARTERS

The Women's Auxiliary Air Corps arrived on base in August 1943 and were housed in their own area at the corner of E and 9th streets – just across from the cadets' quarters. Theirs were the only two-story barracks on base, and they had their own mess hall and recreation building.

WAAC day room at HAAF.

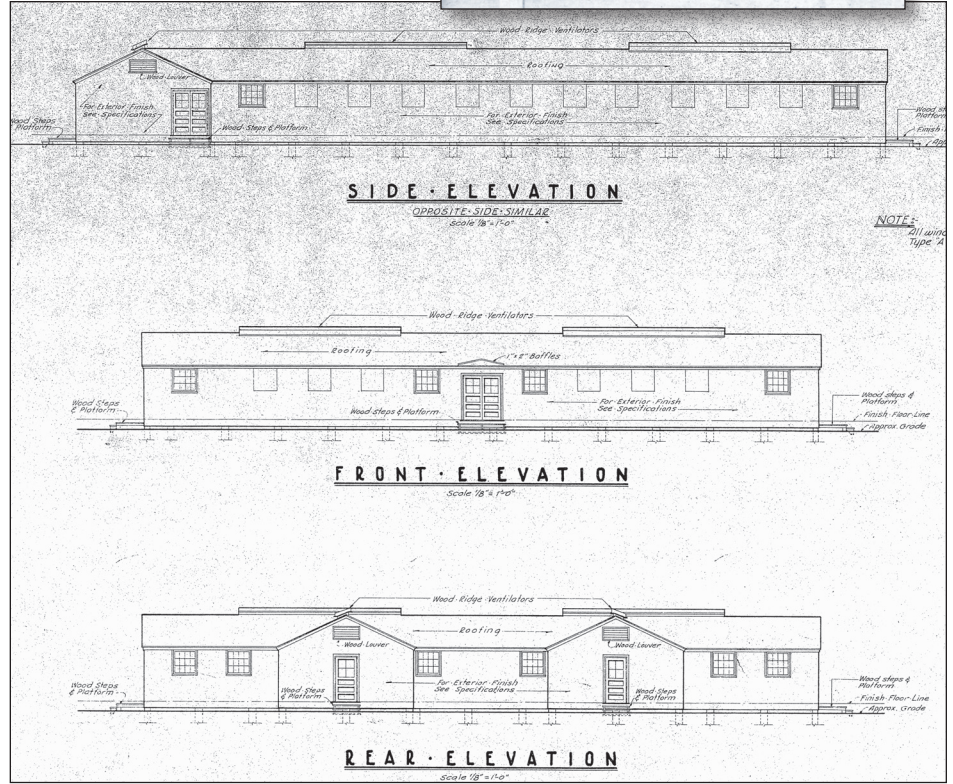
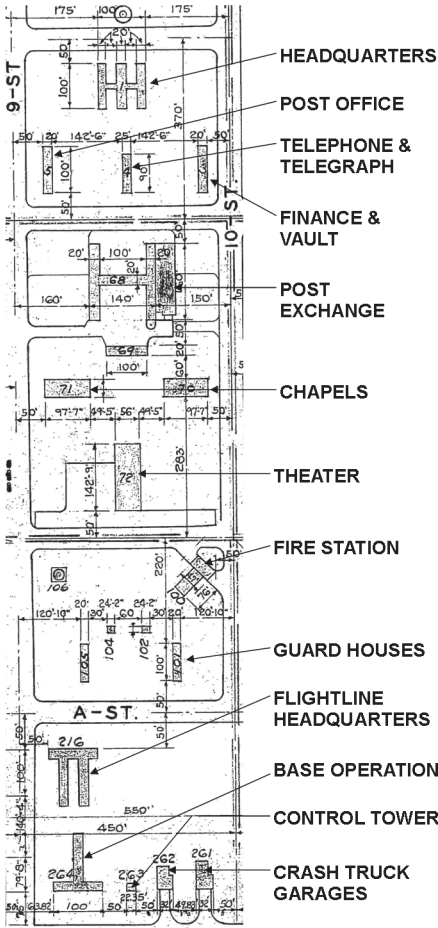


The Hobbs Army Air Field was divided into five distinct areas, some containing several functions, but together working towards a common goal -

Keep 'Em Flying!

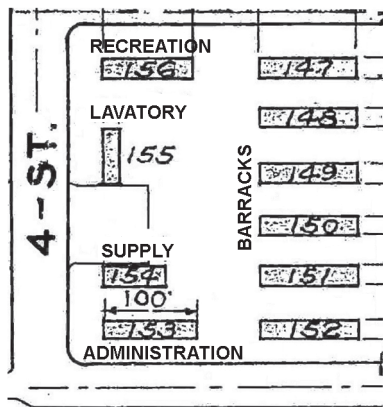
ADMINISTRATION

This area included the Headquarters building, which faced away from the flight line and onto the parade ground. It also had two chapels, the base theater, office support buildings, and the larger recreational facilities. Closer to the flight line, the area also included the fire station, guard houses, and base operations building.



(Above) Plan drawings of HAAF Headquarters Building. (Below Left) Base Theater. (Below Center) Cadets' Mess Hall. (Below) One of the Base's Two Identical Chapels.





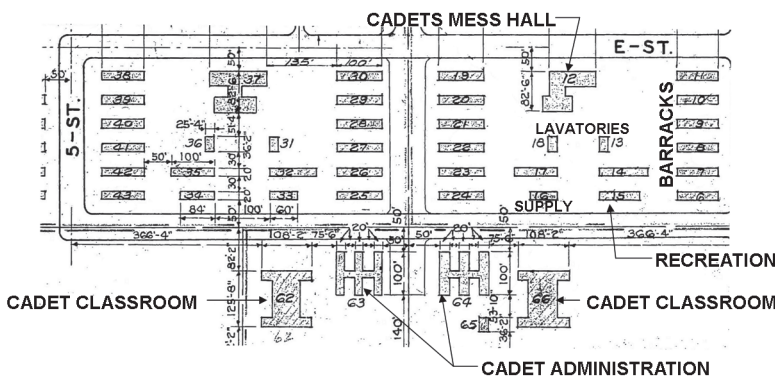
ENLISTED MEN'S QUARTERS

The enlisted men's quarters were arranged by squadrons and were almost identical in configuration, with each area having six barracks buildings, a latrine, a small recreation building (or "day room"), a supply room, and an administrative office.

Typical squadron barracks



CADETS' QUARTERS



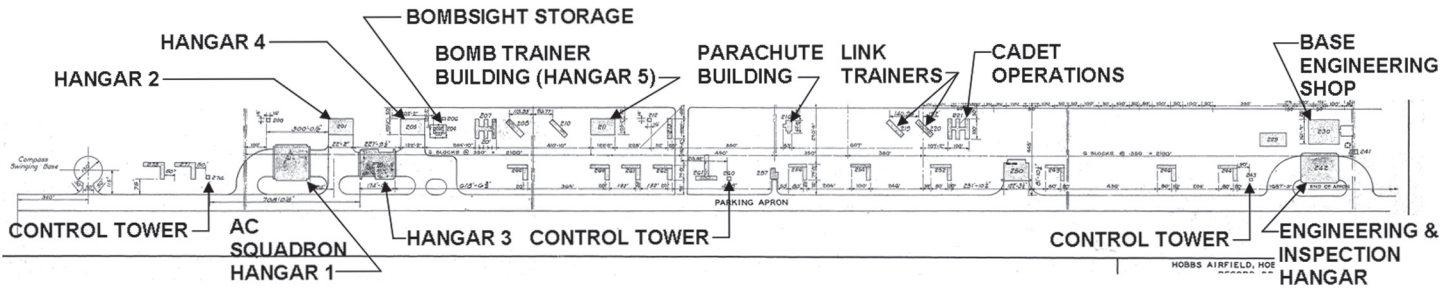
The cadets' quarters were similar in construction to the enlisted men's quarter, but grouped farther to the east of the flight line, and segregated by large classroom training buildings. In addition to standard building types, they also had their own mess halls.



FLIGHT LINE

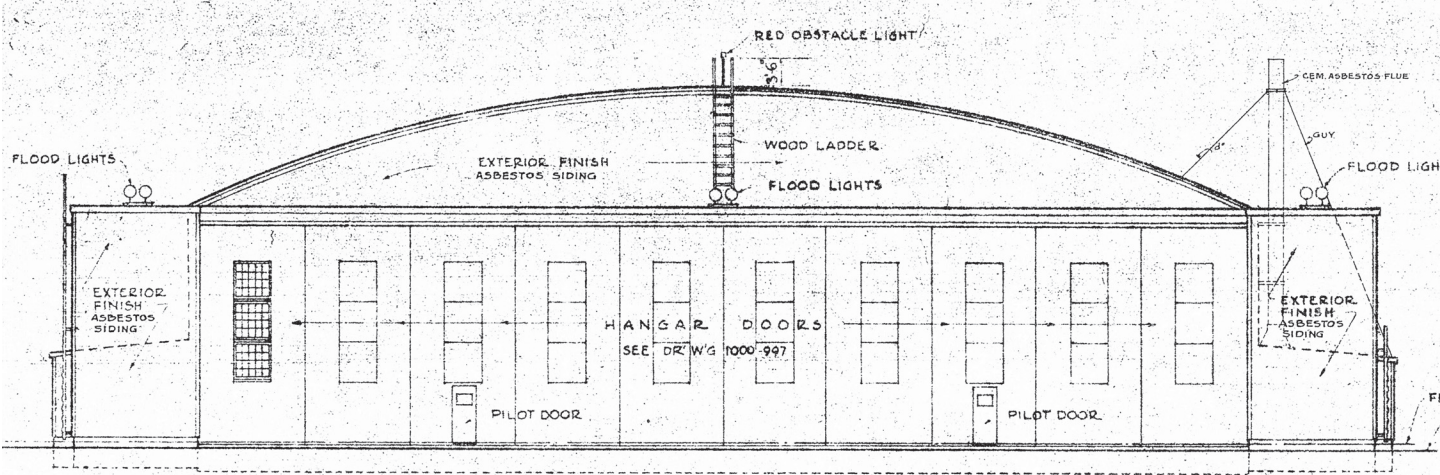
This area was comprised of a number of buildings and structures associated with base operations: hangars, squadron operations, control towers, base engineering facilities, the link trainers and classrooms. The large Air Command (AC) hangars were particularly impressive structures with their large trusses supporting a span of more than 120 feet. The distinctive "L" shaped buildings along with the smaller hangars and link trainers on the line were used by individual squadrons for pilot training. There were three towers along the flight line – two at each end of the ramp and one, the stage control tower, located adjacent to base operations. The first towers built were modeled after fire lookout towers – each had a metal cross-frame support structure with a "cabin" set on top, which was accessed by an open stairway. These were later replaced by more substantial structures with heating and cooling systems. The larger stage control tower had a glassed-in viewing platform that was used by officers to view squadron takeoffs and landings. In addition to the AC hangars, another large building on base housed Base Engineering. This building located at the far south end of the flight line featured sub-floor drain lines to carry away engine oil and other fluids, and a large concrete work platform on which to do major repairs on aircraft components. The engineering complex also included a large hangar and machine shops for specialized maintenance.

(Above) HAAF's first control tower based on a design used by U.S. Forest Service fire lookouts



Flight Line

Standardized Plan Drawing of A.C. Squadron Hangar. HAAF Hangar 1, South Elevation. (Below Middle) Hangar & Operations Area, View to the North. (Bottom) Base Engineering & Maintenance, View to the North.

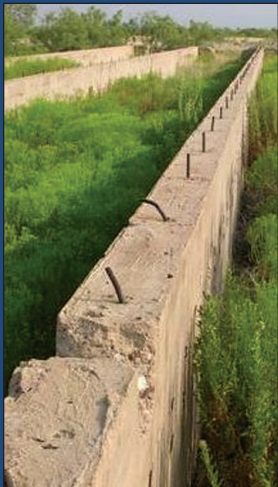


STANDARD CONSTRUCTION METHODS AT HOBBS ARMY AIR FIELD

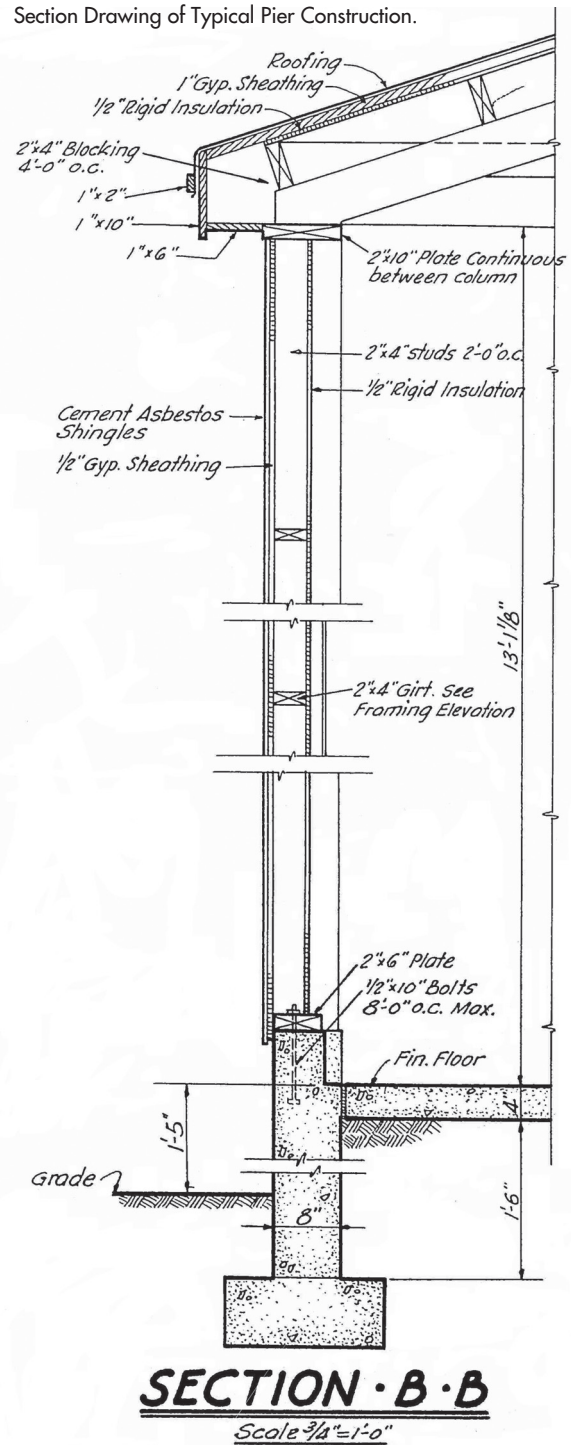
The typical squadron buildings at Hobbs were constructed according to standard military plans that emphasized simplicity and ease of construction. The structures were generally 40 feet wide by 120 feet long and were set on foundations comprised of concrete piers set ten feet apart. The piers were 8 inches square sunk 3 feet into the ground and extending between 3 and 5 feet above the ground surface depending upon the slope of the terrain. A steel bracket was affixed to the pier and a 2 x 8 sill was spiked to the bracket. The sills carried 2 x 8 joists that spanned 10 or 13 feet depending on the building type. Wall studs were 2 x 4s sheathed with Transite – an asbestos-cement siding, which was used at the Hobbs base instead of plywood and shiplap siding. The roof was comprised of 2 x 8 beams with 2 x 6 rafters placed 24 inches on center. The roof was decked with 1 x 8s and covered with rolled roof paper laid from eave to the ridge line from front to back.



Larger buildings or those supporting more weight were set on concrete stem wall foundations laid in 3-foot wide parallel lines running the length of the building. The stem walls were embedded with anchor bolts to attach the wood sills. Other large structures, such as hangars and warehouses, or specialty buildings like lavatories, were built on concrete slabs poured at grade. These structures were also built according to standard military plans that were used at airfields located across the country during World War II.

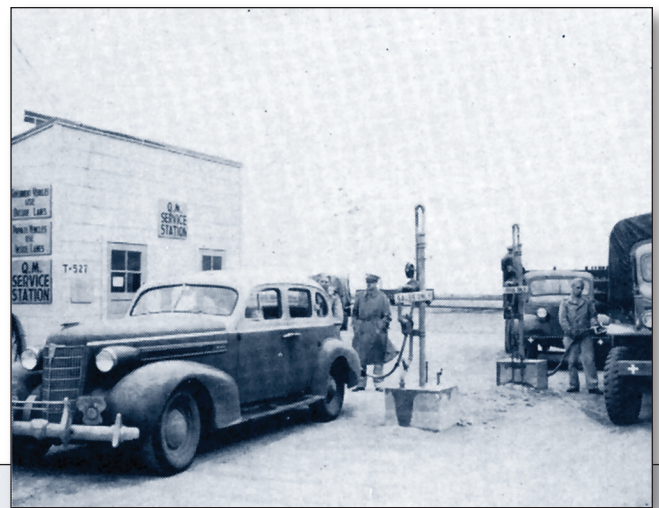
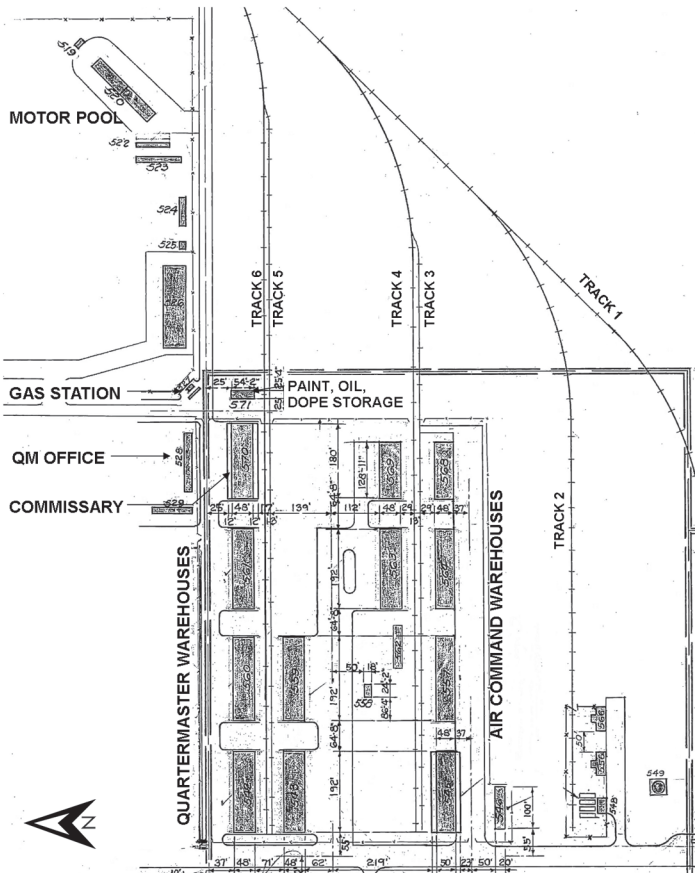


Section Drawing of Typical Pier Construction.



SUB-DEPOT

This area featured the Quartermaster's warehouses that were flanked by railroad spurs to facilitate the loading and unloading of supplies. The area also contained smaller structures for paint, oil and dope storage. The motor pool was located just east of the Sub-Depot, and included the base gas station, vehicle maintenance shops, fuel dumps, and general base maintenance buildings. Because of the large number of civilian employees working in the Sub-Depot, the area had its own commissary building as well.



(Above) Plan of Motor Pool and Quartermaster Warehouses. (Below) View to the Southeast of Warehouses. (Right) "Fill 'Er Up!" Base Gas Station.



AIRFIELD
WAREHOUSE AREA

HOBBS, N.M.
VIEW SOUTHEAST

MAKING THE AIRFIELD WORK

THE MISSION & ITS PEOPLE



B-17s Heading for a mission over Germany.

BASE OPERATIONS

The history of base operations at the Hobbs Army Air Field is a story of multiple missions, each vital to wartime and post-war military objectives. Although the base started its history as a bombardier training school, it quickly changed missions and was known primarily as a four-engine pilot transition school, training cadet pilots to fly the workhorse aircraft of World War II – the B-17 “Flying Fortress” – and prepare them for combat flying. The base also trained four-engine mechanics who then either stayed at the base to keep the training aircraft flying twenty-four hours per day, or were shipped overseas to the European and Pacific theaters. The pilot training employed a formal, if somewhat improvised, curriculum, while the four-engine mechanics on base received both “factory” training and learned the necessary skills “on the job.” Following the war, the airfield again changed missions and the base became a temporary storage field for P-51 Mustangs and A-26 Invaders. Mechanics “pickled” these aircraft for storage and later ferried them to National Guard units across the country.

Military personnel at the airfield included not only enlisted men and officers, but members of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). There were two units of African-American enlisted men, referred to in the vocabulary of the day as “Colored Troops.” Civilians also made major contributions to base operations – at its height of operations, Hobbs Army Air Field employed almost 1,000 civilians in clerical jobs, supply and motor pool positions, and as mechanics. These men and women, officers and enlisted men, worked night and day to ensure that the aircraft were kept in safe flying condition, the men and equipment were properly supplied, and that the cadets were efficiently and expertly trained to carry out their military mission.

The Hobbs Army Air Field began as a bombardier school with 80 cadets and 20 instructors who arrived at the newly-built, if mostly unfinished, air base on September 7, 1942. This first and only class of bombardiers to train at Hobbs was met with half-constructed quarters that barely qualified as living facilities. The barracks lacked heat, running water, or even doors, windows, or screens; by day, the buildings were uncomfortably hot, and by night cold autumn winds swept off the plains and through the unfinished structures. Despite primitive living conditions, the cadets began training at the base that fall, using AT-11 aircraft, a two-engine plane that the Army employed for bombardier training. On November 21, 1942, 69 out of the original 80 cadets in the bombardier program graduated.



The AT-11 bomber was the first aircraft stationed at HAAF used for bombardier training

Before the bombardiers had even finished their schooling, however, a directive was issued from the West Coast Training Command stating that as of October 1942, the Hobbs Army Air Field would become a multi-engine pilot training school – one of just three B-17 training bases in the United States along with Hendrick Field in Sebring, Florida, and Lockbourne Army Air Field, near Columbus, Ohio. To accommodate its new mission, the airfield's runways were quickly lengthened and improved to handle the larger B-17 aircraft. The AT-11s and their pilots were assigned to other bases, such as the Deming Air Field, and new mechanics and instructors specializing in four-engine aircraft arrived at Hobbs to re-train the personnel on how to maintain the new aircraft. The terrain around Hobbs and Lovington was ideal for this mission, since Lea County had ample space to practice bombing runs, and land available to construct auxiliary fields to practice landings and takeoffs through repeated "touch-and-go" maneuvers.

For the rest of the war, the Hobbs Army Air Field would train pilots and mechanics to fly and repair the four-engine B-17. The first B-17 aircraft arrived at Hobbs in mid-December of 1942, along with the first class of 46 four-engine pilots that included an affable cadet from Hollywood, California, named Jimmy Stewart. One hundred four-engine mechanics were also transferred to the airfield from Hendrick Field to form the nucleus of B-17 maintenance crews, while pilot instructors from Lockbourne were sent to both Hobbs and to Hendrick Field. The number of cadets in training as "Officer Student Pilots" peaked in early 1945, when a total of 162 B-17s sat on the ramp at Hobbs waiting for the young cadets to take them up.

In May of 1945, as the war in Europe ended, the number of B-17 pilots needed in the Pacific theater was substantially reduced; however, the Hobbs Army Air Field continued to instruct pilots already in training. Nonetheless, approximately 440 "pre-aviation cadets" who were stationed at the base while awaiting the start of their training were told that no more pilots were needed and that they had been dropped from the "aircrew training program." On V-J Day, August 14, 1945, when the war against Japan ended, four-engine transition training was briefly terminated even for the cadets already in classes. However, Army command soon decided that those who volunteered to remain in the post-war Army Air Forces would be allowed to continue in a scaled-back program.

As 1945 came to a close, it appeared that the end was near for the Hobbs Army Air Field. However, the base had not quite ended its usefulness for the Army Air Forces. On October 16, 1945, base command was transferred to the Central Flying Training Command at Randolph Field in Texas, which halted inactivation activities, and transferred Hobbs to the 4160th Army Air Forces Base Unit Command Technical Service Command effective November 10. The airfield's new mission was to mothball aircraft and store them until they were moved to a permanent base.

By August of 1946, a total of 1,600 aircraft had been flown to the Hobbs Army Air Field for storage – primarily the Douglas A-26 Invader, an "attack bomber" that at the time was the fastest U.S. bomber in service, and the P-51 Mustang, a sleek, speedy fighter plane, which was often used as an escort plane for B-17 bombers during daylight bombing raids over Germany (B-17 pilots lovingly called the scrappy P-51's "Little Friends"). Storage of airplanes entailed a labor-intensive process called "cocooning" or "pickling," that removed the plane's external paint and specific external gear elements, sealed the plane's openings with a plastic coating, and applied an asphalt-based coating and sun-reflective aluminum paint to the aircraft surfaces. The process ensured that all excess moisture and humidity were absent before the



P-51 fighter planes were B-17 pilots' "Little Friends." They were later "pickled" and stored at HAAF.

plane was placed into storage. That same August, the Hobbs Army Air Field storage mission was modified to include the processing and ferrying of stored aircraft to permanent airfields. By January 1, 1947, a total of 997 A-26 and 776 P-51 aircraft were parked wing-to-wing across the base's land field. At the same time, the number of personnel was reduced to just 11 officers and 19 enlisted men. (By contrast, on December 31, 1943, at the height of the war, the complement of base personnel was approximately 3,200 enlisted men and 360 officers.) During 1947, more than 2,000 aircraft were processed out of storage and transported to other Army air fields. Hobbs also changed commands again that year, this time becoming part of the 59th Air Depot.

By April 1, 1948, it seemed a forgone conclusion that the base would soon be permanently closed. All remaining military personnel had departed Hobbs and later that month full-scale deactivation was underway. Trainloads of materials were shipped off the base; aviation gasoline was transported to Roswell, New Mexico, and almost all vehicles were gone from the site by April 21. On May 1, the Department of the Army declared the Hobbs Army Air Field as "surplus" and transferred the base to the War Assets Administration on May 18. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers was assigned the task of readying the airfield for final disposal of the airfield's buildings, equipment, and supplies.



As members of the United States Armed Forces you do not have to be told of the magnitude and importance of the task that lies before you. At every base, station, and training field of the United States Army Air Forces you are preparing yourselves for the great test of arms which will prove that the forces of democracy can destroy the evil power of the totalitarian nations.

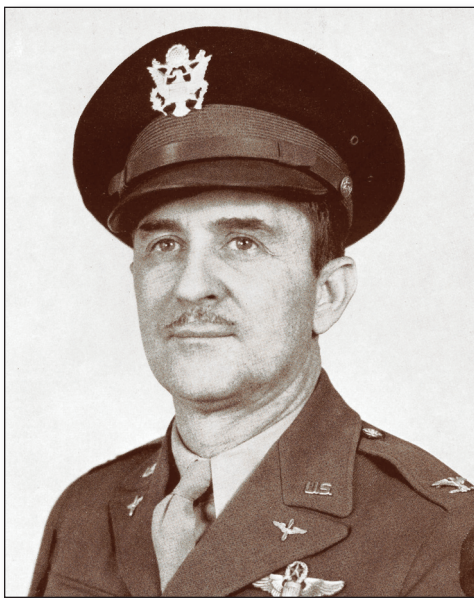
Henry "Hap" Arnold
Commanding General U.S. Army Air Forces

BASE PERSONNEL

The success of the Army Air Forces' training facilities during World War II was due in large part to the leadership of the command structure. Commanding Officer of the U.S. Army Air Corps was Major General Henry "Hap" Arnold, who recognized in 1939 that the United States air forces were woefully under-prepared and ill-equipped to enter the world-wide conflict rapidly unfolding around the globe. Arnold convinced military planners and congressional leaders that facilities, airplanes and pilot training all needed dramatic upgrading. His bold initiative led to the dramatic pre-war and wartime build-up that eventually gave the United States an air force that remains unrivalled to this day. Arnold was a pioneer in other ways as well. He was the only man ever to become a major general in two branches of the armed services (the United States Army Air Forces and the United States Air Force, where he was the first and only General of the Air Force, equivalent to a five-star general). Arnold learned to fly from the pioneering Wright brothers, and served as the commanding officer of the Army Air Forces throughout World War II.

Second in command was Major General Barton K. Yount, the Commanding General of the Army Air Force Training Command. Yount and his 160 staff officers directed the air crew training program from oak-finished offices rented in the Texas and Pacific Railway Station in Fort Worth. He was the first Commanding General of the Army Air Force Flying Training Command, serving in that role from 1942-1945. In this role, he oversaw the training and curriculum for flight crews at training bases across the United States, including Hobbs Army Air Field. The western arm of the Army Air Forces Flying Training Command, known as the Army Air Forces West Coast Training Center, was headquartered in Santa Ana, California, and directly supervised the training activities at Hobbs. The Training Center was commanded by Yale graduate Major General Ralph P. Cousins who had taken command of the facility from General Yount in January, 1942, after serving on the staff of General Arnold.

In May 1942, even before the first barracks were constructed, Colonel Milton Murphy arrived in Hobbs as the first base commander and took up residence on East Corbett Street. Working from a temporary office at City Hall, Colonel Murphy oversaw the hiring of the first group of civilian mechanics, welders, and electricians, and sent them to Houston, Texas for training. He also supervised the earliest grading and construction of the fledgling airfield's runways and the construction of the base's first building phase. It was under Colonel Murphy that the first and only class of bombardiers was trained.



Colonel Joseph Bailey, Commander of HAAF, oversaw B-17 pilot training

When the mission of Hobbs Army Air Field changed, a new commanding officer took charge of the air base on October 22, 1942. Colonel Joseph Bailey had previously been stationed at Merced Army Flying School in California, so he was a logical choice to take charge of the first airfield in the West Coast Training Command to train B-17 pilots. Bailey spent ten days observing B-17 pilot training at Hendricks Field in Sebring, Florida, to prepare for his new command. His own credentials as a pilot were quite impressive. Upon his arrival at Hobbs, he had the rating of "Command Pilot," meaning he had at least 4,500 hours of pilot time. Bailey commanded the base for almost two and one-half years, overseeing the completion of the airfield as well as the graduation of most of the B-17 cadet classes. At the end of the war, the commanding officer at Hobbs was Lt. Colonel William Clark, who was in charge when the last class of 205 aviators graduated on August 14, 1945.

The Hobbs Army Air Field was a relatively large "temporary base" consisting mainly of officers and enlisted men, but also skilled and unskilled civilian employees. Military personnel were either "assigned" to the base, which meant they were ordered there for permanent duty, or "attached" to the base or a unit, which meant they were temporarily stationed at the airfield. At the height of the war (late 1943 and 1944) there were over 3,200 enlisted men, and 350 officers. According to the airfield's 1943 yearbook, the military contingent was comprised of 15 squadrons, including five 2-engine flying squadrons and six bombardier training squadrons (designations left over from the bombardier school) that were used both for training and maintenance, a base headquarters squadron, an aviation squadron, a guard squadron for internal security, a weather squadron, and a 39-member Army Air Forces band. Other men on base were assigned to a medical detachment, quartermaster company, and signal company.

The size of squadrons at Hobbs varied. In 1942, the 387th Headquarters and Airbase Squadron was composed of 371 men, most of them at the rank of private. A captain was the commanding officer of this squadron, and he was listed in the 1943 yearbook as having three supporting officers (a supply officer, a first lieutenant, and a second lieutenant). The rest of the men in the squadron were noncommissioned officers at the rank of sergeant and corporal, and below them were the enlisted men who filled out the majority of the squadron's ranks. The flight training squadrons also varied in size. The 1943 yearbook shows that the 953rd two-engine flying training squadron consisted of 176 men, plus the commanding officer, a captain, and a second lieutenant who was an engineering officer.



(Above) HAAF Cadets During Classroom Session and Insignia Patch Worn by Cadets

While squadrons consisted of personnel who were permanently assigned to the base, such as officers, mechanics, and laborers, the cadets – the pilots-in-training – stayed at the base for about nine weeks to complete their training. These men also spent additional time in pre-aviation training positions, doing mundane tasks around the base while awaiting the start of their training. Pilot training itself included both classroom and flight training. When they left Hobbs, they were usually assigned to another base for advanced flight training before being shipped overseas for combat duty. Those cadets who “washed out” for one reason or another before their training was completed often were assigned to other positions on base. Some became office workers while others joined the maintenance squadrons.

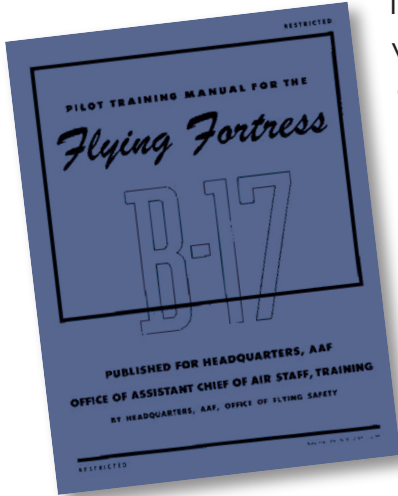
The initial jobs on base were primarily connected with the base construction. Beginning in the late spring of 1942, about 100 civilian workers began grading the land in preparation for the airfield's runways. By late June, more than 1,000 workers were pouring concrete, framing buildings, and installing utilities at the base. Common laborers earned 59 cents per hour, and skilled laborers were paid \$1.50 per hour, which were good wages for the time. Overtime pay was time-and-a-half, and weekend work was compensated at the same rate. In addition to temporary construction work, more than 430 local residents, most from the nearby towns of Hobbs and Lovington, became full-time civilian employees during the base's three years of operation. By employing civilians, the Army could make up for critical manpower shortages that occurred throughout the war. The civilian employees did a number of jobs. They filled clerical jobs – including 100 typists at the Hobbs airfield – performed aircraft maintenance, and worked in the Quartermaster supply warehouses, motor pool, fuel and oil service areas. They also worked as electricians, welders, sheet metal workers, and in other skilled labor jobs.



Among the civilian employees at Hobbs was a group of twenty female aircraft mechanics who arrived from Duncan Field in San Antonio in December 1942 to work at the airfield's Sub-Depot. They worked in the propeller shops, electronic repair shops, and machine and sheet metal shops on base. These employees had been some of the first local residents to be selected by the Army Air Forces for specialized training even before base construction got underway. They included Mrs. Anna Christmas, who trained as a propeller mechanic. Before the war, she had been a practical nurse and had four grandchildren at the time she went to work on the base. When asked why she went through all the effort to be retrained, she replied that she had always been fascinated by machinery and wanted “to make a contribution to winning [the] war.” Mrs. Naomi L. Hogue was the circulation manager for the Hobbs Daily News-Sun when she left for Texas and came back as a mechanic; and Mrs. Lila Herman went to

training, to learn landing gear repair, how to install wires and cables on the aircraft, and engine installation. She returned to Hobbs to join her husband, who worked on base as a propeller mechanic.

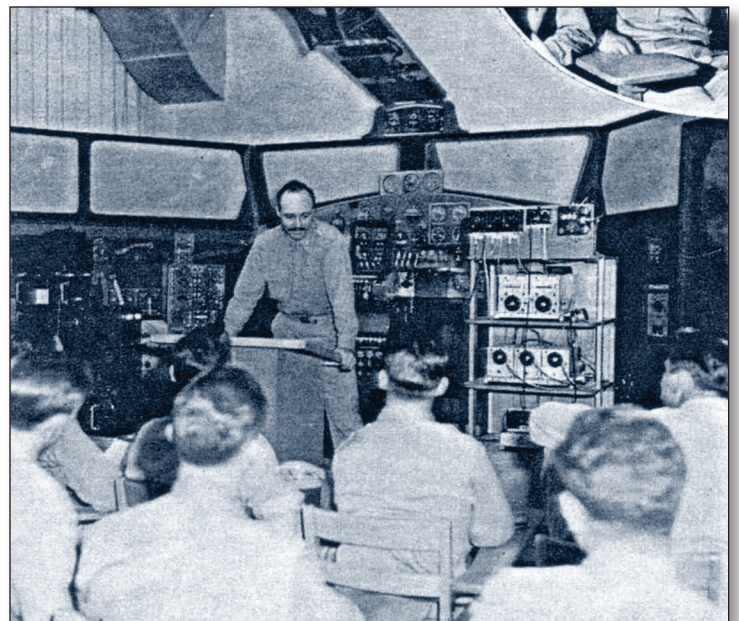
Pilot Training



The primary mission at the Hobbs Army Air Field was the training of pilots. The cadets who came to the airfield were pilots who already knew how to fly, but they needed additional schooling, called "four-engine transition" training which meant they were learning how to fly large, four-engine B-17 bombers. However, when transition training was first initiated, there were no Army Air Forces instruction manuals for B-17s, no training aids or set curriculum, and only a handful of qualified instructors. Trainers at Hobbs as well as at the other two B-17 training fields in the U.S. were essentially inventing the curriculum as they went along, revising and refining it after each class graduated. When a training manual specifically for B-17 bomber pilots was finally issued in 1944 by the Army Air Forces, the opening paragraph in the Foreword written by commanding officer General "Hap" Arnold emphasized the contributions made by the instructors whose efforts had produced it:

This manual is the text for your training as a B-17 pilot and airplane commander. The Air Forces' most experienced training and supervisory personnel have collaborated to make it a complete exposition of what your pilot duties are, how each duty will be performed, and why it must be performed in the manner prescribed. The techniques and procedures described in this book are standard and mandatory. In this respect the manual serves the dual purpose of a training checklist and a working handbook. Use it to make sure that you learn everything described herein. Use it to study and review the essential facts concerning everything taught. Such additional self-study and review will not only advance your training, but will alleviate the burden of your already overburdened instructors...This is essentially the textbook of the B-17.

Developing the curriculum was in part an experimental effort, which was constantly being evaluated and modified. The training goals, however, were quite simple: Train the pilots and move them to the combat zones as quickly as possible. The instructors had nine weeks to graduate each incoming class. A pilot's training day ran from 6 a.m. to midnight and included long-range weekend flights that lasted at least 10 hours. A cadet's total flying time over the nine weeks was 105 hours, including instrument training, formation flying, day and night landings, and altitude flying. In addition to the time spent in the air, every cadet was given 1) a thorough course in Army Air Forces technical orders and regulations on flight safety; 2) instruction on how to file flight plans; and 3) an understanding of base operations. They learned to use the aircraft's radio

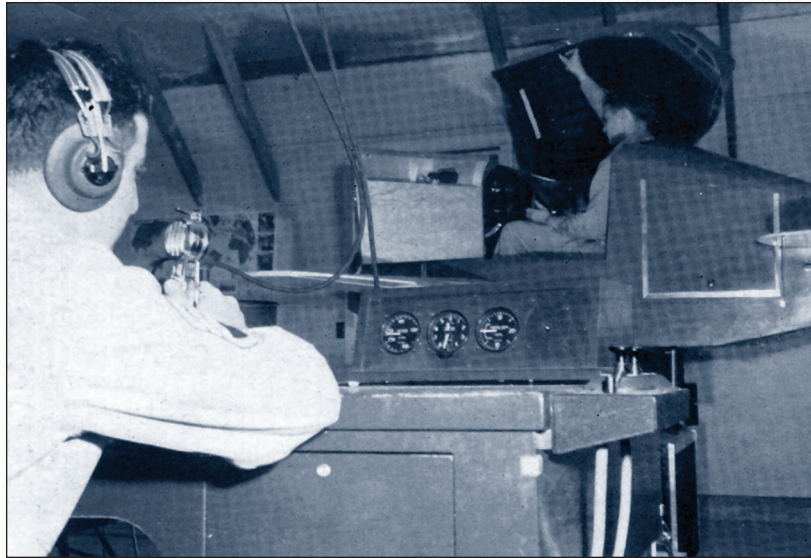


HAAF cadets learn the B-17 instrument panel in classroom mock-ups.

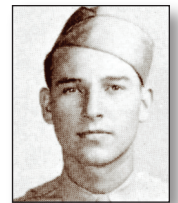
as well as oxygen and navigation equipment on board. Cadets were instructed in how to handle emergency procedures such as runway overshoot, engine failure, engine fires, and landing gear failure. They were also taught how to properly abandon an aircraft, both in-flight and in the case of a crash landing.

Landing and takeoffs were key instructional elements, including how to handle the airplane without flaps or power, how to use high and low approaches, how to land and take off in cross-wind conditions, and the effects of landing and taking off under maximum loads. They also spent numerous hours learning to fly at night and under conditions of minimum visibility, using the link trainer, a device that simulated instrument-only piloting – or as the mechanics called it, “Flying blind!” The link trainer taught the student pilot to rely on his instruments, not on his senses, when flying in adverse conditions. The link trainer went through all the motions of an aircraft and, as the 1943

airfield yearbook put it, this piece of training equipment “gave the student pilot under the hood plenty to think about.” Tech Sergeant Glen Raines was a mechanic at Hobbs with the 308th HQ Squadron who was also certified as a flight engineer. He remembers going up with a cadet crew when they were scheduled to do their instrument flying:

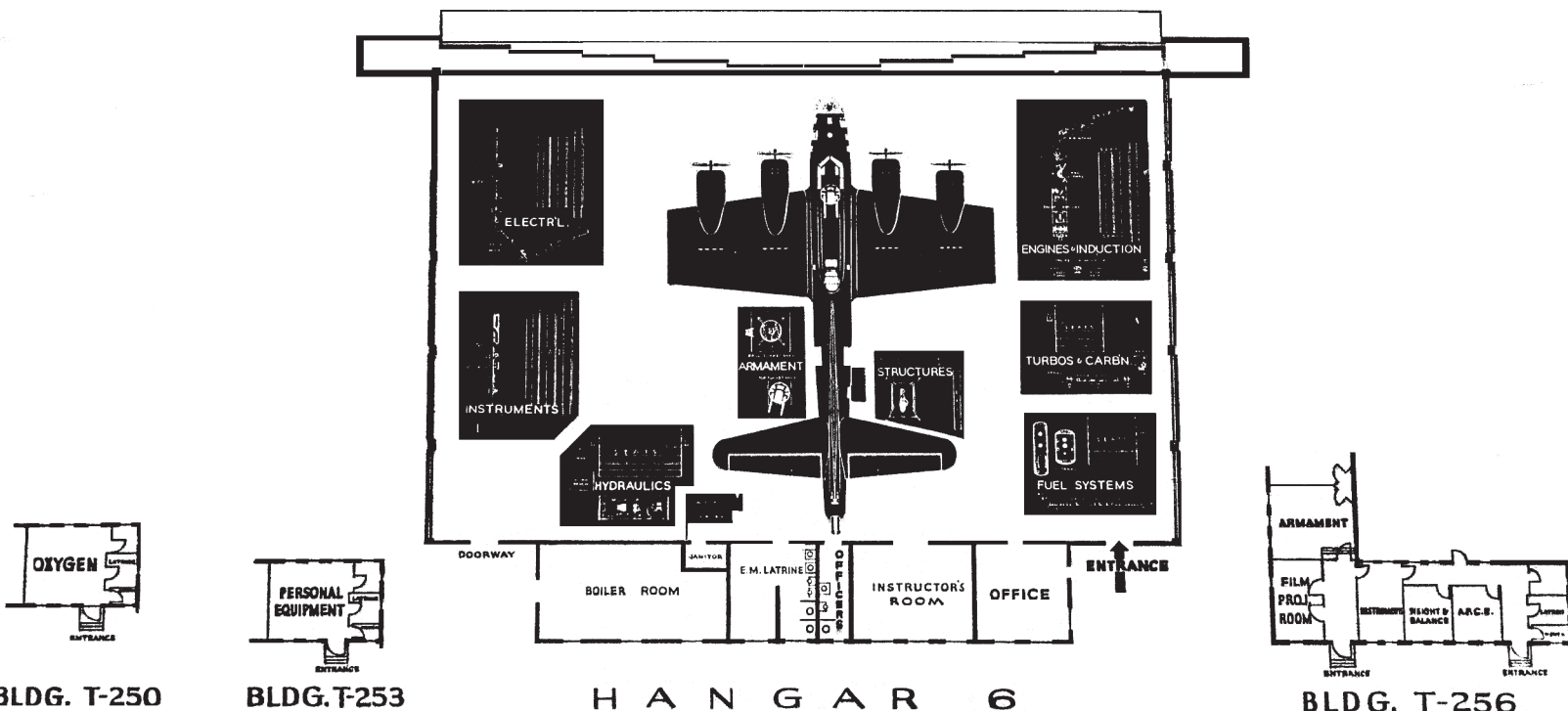


(Left) Cadet pilots at HAAF Practiced Instrument Flying in the Link Trainer. (Right) Hobbs Resident T/Sgt W. Glen Raines was Stationed at HAAF. (Below) Squadron Hangars were set up for Cadet Training.



MASTER LAYOUT OF MAINTENANCE ENGINEERING CLASSES

HELD IN HANGAR - 6 AND ADJACENT BUILDINGS



I would sit between the pilot and copilot, and they would fly with a shade over the windshield because they were flying blind – and sometimes it got a little rough on those boys just for the first time landing an airplane blind – it was an experience for me, too! -T/Sgt W. Glen Raines

The cadets were also taught how the four-engine aircraft worked. They were instructed in the components of engine mechanics, hydraulics, fuel systems, and other aircraft systems by members of the various maintenance squadrons. One of the hangars on the flight line contained a large-scale mock-up of the B-17 operating systems to facilitate this instruction.

Other training at the base included instruction in chemical warfare for non-commissioned officers, and advanced training in chemical warfare for unit “gas officers.” A “bomb approach school” was started at Hobbs in January 1944, which focused on training pilots for bombing runs. Training consisted of theory classes in bomb approach, five hours of bomb approach flight training, and formation flying at high altitude. There was also basic training at the Hobbs Army Air Field, which consisted of small arms firing, gas protection, security and camouflage, and map reading.

AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE

To keep aircraft aloft twenty-four hours a day, B-17s were subject to routine inspections for every 25 hours of flying time. Ken Lemmons, a B-17 mechanic stationed in England during the war, summarized these inspections, thus:

After twenty-five flight hours, we would pull the Cuno oil filter between the two bottom cylinders and check to see if there were any bronze or steel particles that might be trapped. If so, it could mean a possible bearing failure. After fifty hours of flight time, we would remove the cowling from around the engines, check for leaks and anything loose, and do modifications that might need to be done. In general, we did a closer visual check than on the twenty-five hour inspection. The hundred-hour inspection was more thorough. We'd remove the cowling, probably change spark plugs, the fuel filter, and the carburetor air filter. If one of the engines were showing [sic] a blow-by from the breather on top of the wing, we'd run a compression check. This was a good time to change the engines, even though it meant we'd be down for a day or two.



[M]y men and I didn't 'take-off' in these planes like the flight crews did; we didn't have the horrific memories of air battles and wounded comrades, but we shared the burden of it with them. We dedicated ourselves to giving them the best piece of machinery possible to fly. We couldn't man the guns with them but we could, at least, take away the worry of a less than perfectly air worthy craft. It was on these four hardstands that I dedicated myself to the task. They became 'our planes.' We just lent them to the air crews during the day.

Ken Lemmons, B-17 Mechanic

Mechanic training consisted of formal factory training classes and classes taken at the air base. Some mechanics, particularly the temporary civilian employees, learned "on-the-job." Four-engine mechanics were also trained at Hobbs beginning in January 1943, with the first class consisting of 48 students and 16 instructors. The mechanics had six weeks of classroom training on B-17 engines and then two weeks of "practical" training on the flight line itself. Topics included aircraft structures, propellers, engines, hydraulics, and electrical instruments. At the height of mechanics training, there were 400 mechanics-in-training and 24 instructors. Tech Sergeant Glen Raines spent six weeks at the Boeing Aircraft School in Seattle learning, as he put it, "just about everything there was to know" about the aircraft. Raines became a mechanic section supervisor and aircraft inspector, as well as a certified flight engineer who averaged about four hours flying time per month with the instructors and cadet pilots to make sure the planes were running in tip-top condition.

On the other end of the scale were young men like Hobbs resident Oreath Cecil who was only seventeen years old when he moved to Hobbs with his family in March of 1943. Cecil soon found work at the air base as a civilian mechanic whose primary job was to replace gas tanks located on the wings of the B-17. He recalled:

[I had] no previous mechanical training. I had come up from a farm over in West Texas here, and we starved to death on a dry land farm. So we moved here [to Hobbs] and my dad and mother had themselves a little help-yourself laundry. So, I had never worked anywhere before the base. I trained on the job. I checked out a toolbox with all the tools you would need to do a particular job. These planes had big pieces of sheet metal that had thousands of screws in them. They had to be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch apart [and] we didn't have electric screwdrivers. You had to take all these screws out by hand, with a hand screwdriver! You'd have to have four or five jacks, because these tanks were probably 2 feet thick, 10 feet long, 7 or 8 feet wide, and they had about four of those tanks – two on each side of the wing. You'd have different things [to do] every day; there was always something different to do.

HAAF maintenance shop squadron, 1945



Raymond Benson was a mechanic from Moscow, Idaho, who after high school took a job at the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle making parts for the B-17. Upon his arrival at Hobbs Army Air Field, Benson had originally planned to train as a flight engineer, but a propensity for airsickness resulted in his transfer to the 960th Bombardier Training Squadron where he was appropriately assigned to the parts supply section. He remembered that often the inexperienced mechanics, who were still learning their job, would not know the name of the B-17 part they needed. Ray would then head to the flight line and identify the correct part.

Each aircraft maintenance squadron consisted of 43 enlisted men plus civilian employees. Using the concept of production line maintenance, specialized teams of men and equipment performed specific maintenance tasks in an allotted amount of time. This "moving-line" system rolled the aircraft through the work line utilizing two larger hangars and two smaller ones. Maintenance personnel (100 men and women per shift) worked in three shifts, 24 hours per day, to perform routine inspections and correct other problems reported by the flight crew. If extra work was needed, an aircraft was pulled out of line to perform the repairs. Engines were regularly replaced, and the old engines returned to the factory to be rebuilt, while smaller parts were serviced at specialized shops located on base. Squadrons also had personnel who were qualified flight engineers who flew the aircraft on "test hops" following repairs.

An Army Air Forces report, prepared in late 1944, gives a narrative snapshot of how much time was spent on aircraft maintenance at the Hobbs Army Air Field during the period of heaviest training and activity. The average cadet flew fourteen hours per week, which added up to 18,827 total hours in September and a record 20,194 hours in October. With this many hours being logged on the 95 B-17 aircraft, mechanics had to work long hours to keep

up the scheduled maintenance.

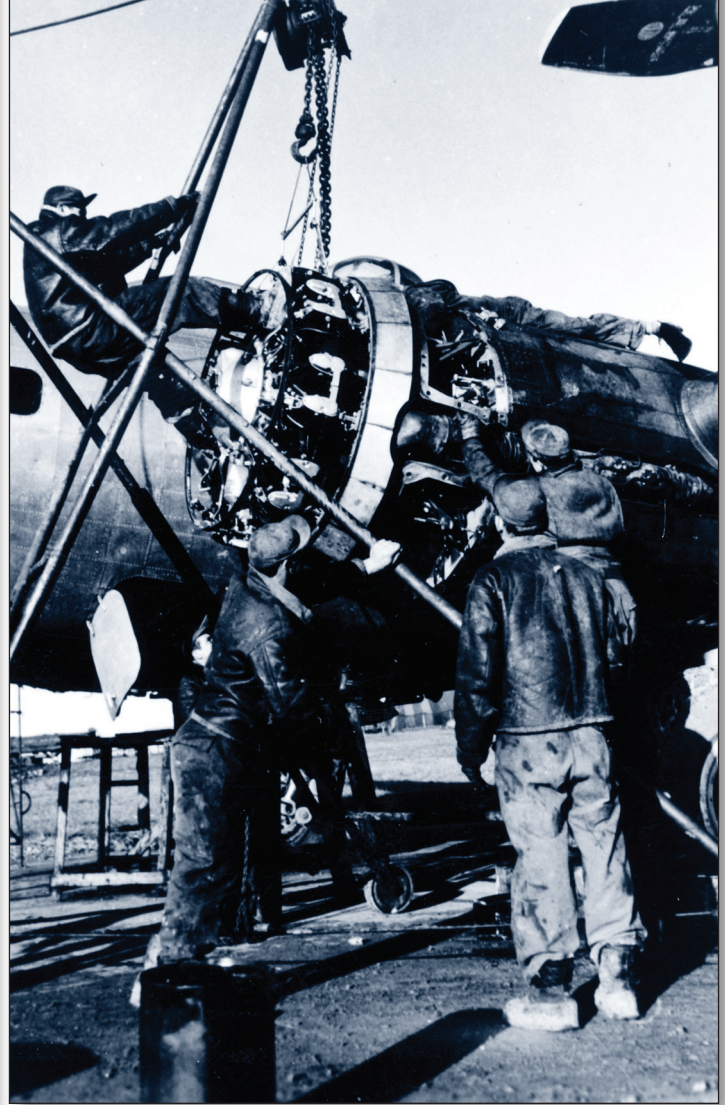
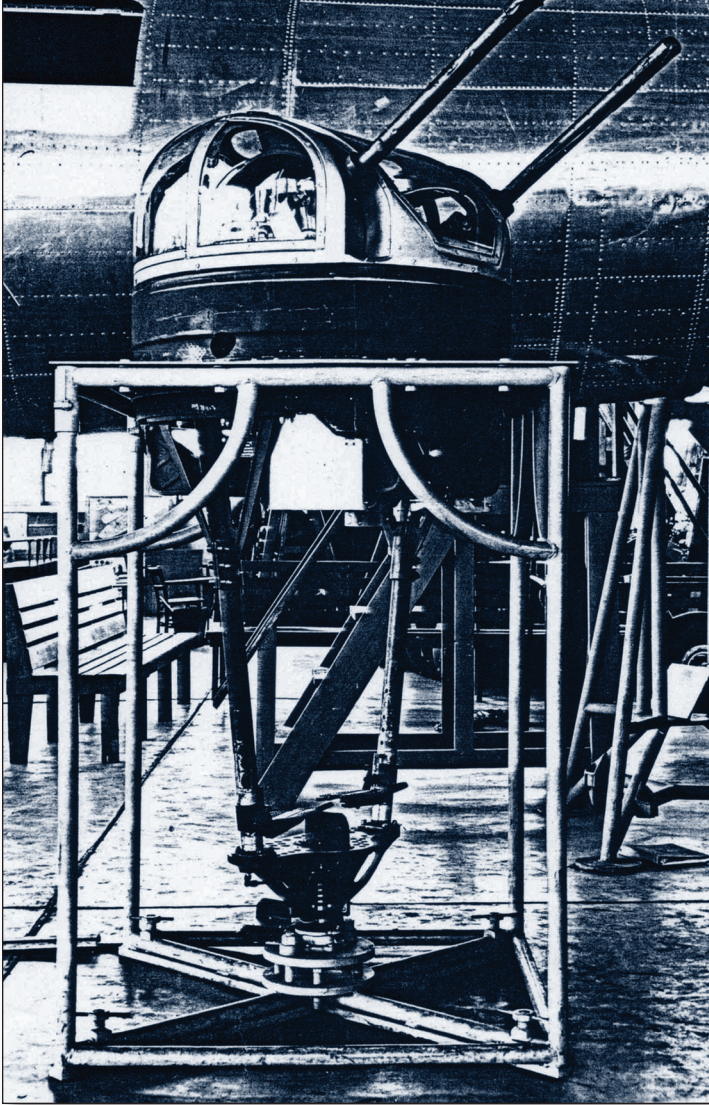
In those two months alone, a complement of 65 officers and 2,000 enlisted men worked day and night to change out engines, landing gear, aileron brackets, and superchargers. In addition, the flight line personnel also serviced any AT-6 and AT-7 aircraft (known as "butterflies") that were being used as training planes.

There were three "echelons," or groupings, of maintenance activities performing tasks on the production line. The number of men and/or the simplicity of the operation dictated the echelon ranking. Echelon 1 was work that could be accomplished by one man using simple tools; Echelon 2 was heavier work requiring the use of hydraulic jacks; and Echelon 3 required a group of shops doing

The HAAF became quite adept in four-engine maintenance. In July 1945, The Hobbs Daily News-Sun (7/11/45) reported that a HAAF maintenance squadron had replaced two aircraft engines in two hours - a task that normally took four and one-half hours to replace just one engine.



B-17 mechanic servicing the prop.



(Left) B-17 Turret Removed for Repairs. (Right) Pulling a B-17 Engine.

highly specialized work with immovable machinery. Line personnel were grouped in 5 maintenance “flights,” each with an officer in charge and functioning as a separate unit. Four flights were devoted to Echelon 1 work and maintenance, and one flight was dedicated to Echelon 2 work. Flight 5 carried out the “production line” work and featured specialized crews who did general inspections, checked electrical systems, and performed second echelon maintenance tasks. Since it was discovered that crews could “pull off” failed engines much faster than new engines could be uncrated, assembled, and readied to replace the old engine, there was also a specialized crew assigned to “dress” new engines and ready them for installation. Lovington native Don Yarbrow was only seventeen years old when he worked in the propeller shop at the airfield and would watch the “engine builders” ready the engines for installation. As he remembered:

Only GIs would do that kind of job and it was called engine builder. They took those engines off, they shipped them back to [the factory], and they refurbished them. They sent them back in essentially new condition. But when they sent them off, they took all the peripheral stuff off of it – the starter, generator, magnetos, pumps, all that stuff, so that when they came back, the engine builders put all those [parts] back on.

Planes moved through the production line on a prescribed schedule and following completion of the repairs and maintenance, they were flown on “test hops” during which flight engineers with pilot certification performed take-offs and landings to test the aircrafts flightworthiness before they were returned to training duty.



The Quartermaster and Sub-Depot

Quartermasters were the main supply officers of the military and they faced unprecedented challenges during World War II. As the supply lifeline of a unit, the quartermaster and his officers were responsible for managing the food, clothing, equipment, petroleum, and general supplies necessary to operate the Hobbs Army Air Field. They needed to procure, store, and distribute these supplies, and they needed to be competent and honest administrators in order to fulfill their tasks. The 909th Quartermaster Company employed warehousemen, bookkeepers, shoe repairmen, truck drivers, stock clerks, and administrative clerks. The Sub-Depot also employed a large number of civilians – a total of 252 in 1943.

The Sub-Depot was located at the southern end of the flight line near the southeastern corner of the base. Six railroad spur lines connected the area with the Texas-New Mexico Railway line that ran along the east side of airfield and brought most of the supplies and equipment to the base. The area consisted of the Quartermaster's office and eleven large warehouses. The warehouses were used to process and store Air Command parts and equipment, as well as quartermaster supplies. Railroad cars delivered everything from uniforms to shipments of oil and fuel to replacement aircraft engines.

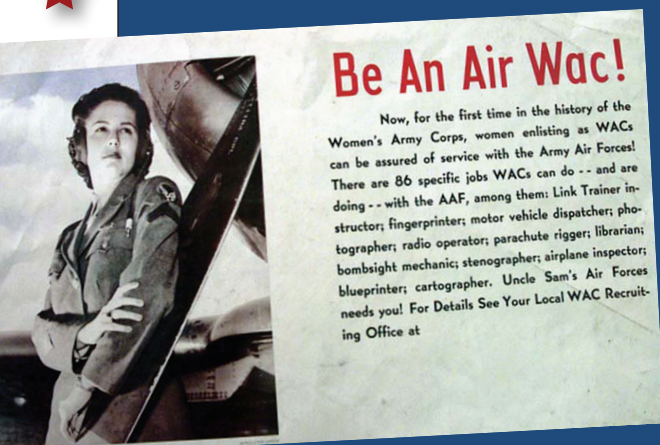
(Left) HAAF Civilian Quartermaster Inventories Flight Jackets. (Center) Receiving Supplies at the Quartermaster's Warehouse. (Right) Assembling Shoes was a Part of the Quartermaster's Responsibilities.



WAACs at the Hobbs Army Air Field

World War II was a harbinger of change on many fronts, including that of the status of women and the way they were perceived on the home front. In addition to popular images of "Rosie the Riveter," the iconic symbol of women workers who performed traditionally male factory jobs during wartime, women also began to make further inroads into the military itself. One of the building blocks of today's military started in World War II with the formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, or WAAC. The WAAC provided female support personnel for all branches of the armed services, although the Army and the Army Air Forces were the main benefactors from this organization.

The first contingent of WAACs arrived at the Hobbs Army Air Field on June 16, 1943, from Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. They were primarily support personnel, such as clerks, bookkeepers, cashiers, and phone operators. Their mission as support staff was in keeping with the ideas of the first director of the auxiliary corps, Major Oveta Culp Hobby, who had been Chief of the Women's Interest Section in the Public Relations Bureau at the War Department. Hobby wanted the WAACs to appeal to the middle American sensibility of the time. At the outset of the war, the women did not perform men's work and certainly did not serve in combat duty; rather, the women who contributed to the war effort as members of the armed services would perform jobs "where women's hands and women's hearts fit naturally. WAACs will do the same type of work which women do in civilian life. They will bear the same relation to men of the Army that they bear to the men of the civilian organizations in which they work."



The WAACs began as the brainchild of Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, who wanted to ensure that women had the same legal protections and benefit status of their male counterparts in the military, which they had not possessed when they did volunteer and contract work during World War I. Rogers did not achieve this goal, since compromises were necessary to obtain passage of a congressional bill creating the WAACs. The Army would not allow women to enter directly into its ranks but would provide them with food, uniforms, living quarters, pay and medical care. They would not serve in the Army, but would serve with the Army; hence their designation as an "auxiliary" arm of the service. Women officers could not command men, and they

still did not receive overseas pay even if they served overseas, nor did they receive government life insurance, veteran medical coverage, and death benefits. Still, a separate service for women was created when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the bill on May 14, 1942. As Major Hobby saw it, WAACs would be trained to perform non-combatant military jobs and thus "free a man for combat."

In time, the Army Air Forces received forty percent of all WAACs in the Army, and found them to be able employees who could fill numerous types of positions. WAACs working with the Army Air Forces were eventually assigned as "weather observers and forecasters, cryptographers, parachute riggers, link trainer instructors, bombsight maintenance specialists, aerial photograph analysts, and control tower operators." A few were also assigned flying duties, although in non-combatant situations. In keeping with this growing acceptance of women's skills in various non-combat skill positions, later WAAC arrivals at Hobbs performed specialized tasks, including working as photographic technicians, radio mechanics and operators, and mechanics on the flight line. They lived in their own facilities consisting of a two-story barracks building with interior plumbing and laundry, their own mess hall, and a day room.

Eventually, the WAACs became the Women's Army Corps (WACs), and instead of serving with the Army they were a part of the Army. Major Hobby was promoted to the rank of Colonel, and women could serve with the same rank hierarchy as men, although they still did not serve in combat.

The “Colored Troops” at Hobbs Army Air Field

“I am an *invisible man*. . . I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.”

Ralph Ellison, Prologue, *Invisible Man*, 1952

The United States military in World War II mirrored many facets of the culture of its time, and the social and professional status of minorities was no exception. Like the African-American narrator of Ellison’s 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, people of color in the era tended to be relegated to background, supporting roles, sometimes made so inconspicuous by their separation from mainstream white culture that they felt “invisible.” And with a few exceptions, during World War II, the last war the United States fought with an entirely segregated military, this metaphorical invisibility continued. The war would contribute to a shift in attitudes, however, that was in no small part influenced by the role that black troops played in the war effort.



At the Hobbs Army Air Field, the African-American troops of the 342nd Aviation Squadron and the 1013th Quartermaster Platoon were known as “Colored Troops.” These troops consisted of mechanics specializing in B-17 engine exchanges, and worked in warehouses and the supply depot. This squadron also had five men who were qualified to fly “test hops” following repairs.

(Left) An endless task – filling out the paperwork at the 342nd Aviation squadron building. (Below) HAAF’s 342nd Aviation squadron’s baseball team.

These enlisted men were separated into their own units and had their own barracks, which were located near the southern end of the cantonment and were physically separated from other squadron barracks by a stretch of open space. They also had their own mess hall, recreation buildings and their own sports teams. Although they were separated physically from the rest of the base, their commanding officers were white. Interestingly, although some of the airfield’s former workers remembered seeing the African-American troops working on the flight line and knew where the “colored” barracks and “colored” mess hall were, few knew any details about their work responsibilities on base.



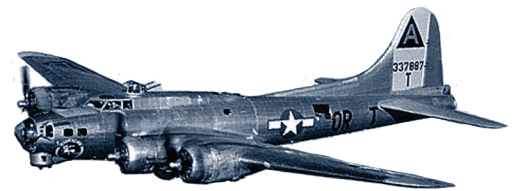
The separation of the living quarters and recreation areas for the 342nd Aviation Squadron and the 1013th Quartermaster Platoon from those of the rest of the military personnel at the Hobbs Army Air Field reflected the segregated armed forces of the United States during World War II. Over 2.5 million African-American men and women registered for the draft during the war. Probably the most famous of those associated with the U.S. Army

Air Forces were the Tuskegee Airmen. These men of the 332nd Fighter Group flew as bomber escorts on missions over Europe, and through their considerable prowess, had great success in protecting their assigned bomber squadrons. Most of the half-million or so African-American soldiers who served during the war, such as the "colored troops" at Hobbs, were assigned to supply and construction units, and together with the more glamorous black troops in combat, established a distinguished record and helped lead to the integration of the Armed Forces after the war's end.



"Juke Time" at the 342nd.

B-17 Bombers



The B-17's incredible capacity to take it -- to come flying home on three, two, even one engine, sieve-like with flak and bullet holes, with large sections of wing or tail surfaces shot away -- has been so widely publicized that U. S. fighting men could afford to joke about it. But the fact remains: the rugged Forts can take it and still fly home. Why? The B-17 is built for battle. Its wings are constructed with heavy truss-type spars which tend to localize damage by enemy fire so that basic wing strength is not affected. Because of its unusual tail design, the airplane can be flown successfully even when vertical or horizontal tail surfaces have been partially destroyed, or with one or more engines shot away. Even when battle damage prevents use of all other control methods, the autopilot provides near-normal maneuverability. There are many other reasons. But perhaps the most important of all is the fact that every man who flies one knows that the B-17 is a pilot's airplane. It inspires confidence and warrants it.

For the fulfillment of its intended function it demands just one thing: pilot know-how.

- Forward, "Pilot Training Manual for the Flying Fortress B-17", 1944



Three Examples of damaged B-17s that despite heavy enemy fire were able to return to their Bases in England.

The Boeing B-17 bomber, known as the “Flying Fortress,” was the pre-eminent long-range heavy bomber of its era. B-17s dropped more bombs on targets in Europe during the war than any other U.S. aircraft. During the course of the war, the United States Eighth and Fifteenth Army Air Forces conducted strategic daytime bombing sorties against German civilian and military targets such as cities, factories and battlefields in Western Europe, complementing nighttime sorties by the Royal Air Force. It was also used, although to a lesser extent, in the Pacific theater of the war. The well-armed B-17 was known for its ability to defend itself, although mission survival rates improved dramatically after the development of long-range fighters (such as the P-51 Mustang) capable of escorting them to and from their strategic targets.

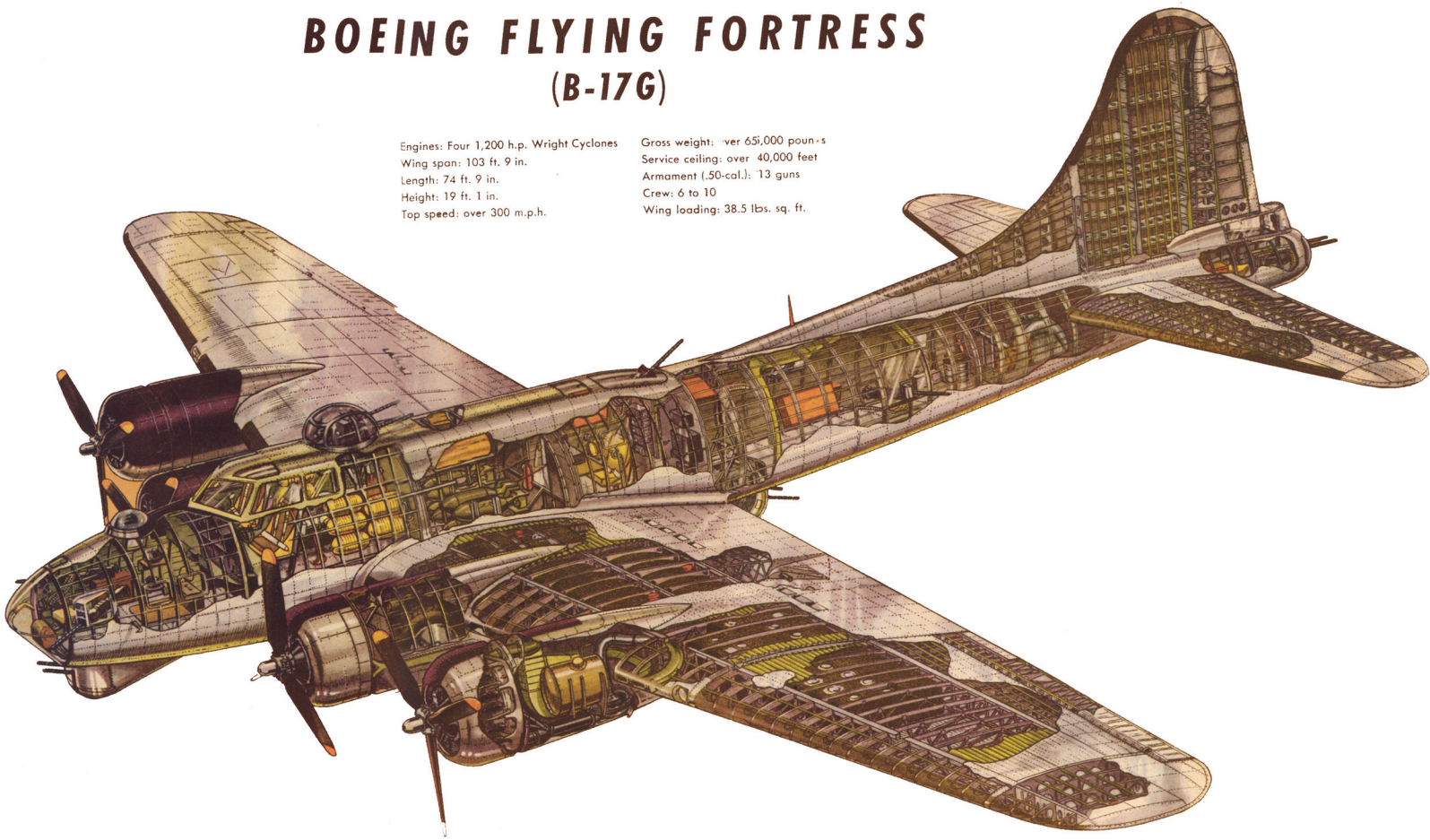
The B-17 was developed as a result of a U.S. Army Air Corp competition announced in 1934 to find a replacement for various bi-plane bombers still in service. The air corps specified a multi-engine aircraft with a range of at least 2,200 miles, a maximum speed of 250 mph, and a bomb-load capacity of at least 2,000 pounds. The Boeing Aircraft Company of Seattle, Washington, won the design competition and despite a crash during a demonstration for the Army Air Corps on October 30, 1935, that killed two people, the Army ordered 13 “YB-17s” for further development. The test model underwent an additional four years of costly testing and modifications until the first “operational variant,” dubbed the B-17A, was delivered by Boeing to the Army on January 31, 1939. When the first prototype model of the B-17 rolled out of the Boeing factory, Richard Williams, a reporter for the Seattle Times, remarked that with its five .50 caliber Browning machine guns, it looked like a “Flying Fortress.” The nickname stuck and the plane became something of a media star during the war due in no small part to its colorful designation – so much so that Boeing copyrighted it for its marketing value.

By the time the first B-17s were delivered to the Hobbs Army Air Field for training purposes in 1942, several versions of the bomber had been produced and many had already been used in battle. The aircraft was constantly being modified and upgraded during the course of the war, and thus the first classes of cadets who trained in the outdated B-17D and B-17F models flew planes that bore little resemblance to the better handling models they would fly in combat. Between 1936 and 1945, 12,731 B-17s in various prototypes and operational models were produced at an approximate cost of \$238,329 per plane. The B-17E was the first model mass-produced for combat and featured the tail gun turret. It had nine machine guns and a 4,000-pound bomb load with a crew of two pilots, a bombardier, radio-operator, and five gunners. The E model, of which 512 were produced, became the workhorse of the Eighth Army Air Force in Europe starting in January 1943. The next model, the B-17F, added a “chin turret” machine gun to defend against a frontal attack. A total of 3,405 B-17Fs were produced. The final production model, the B-17G, increased its weaponry to 13 machine guns and a 9,600 pound maximum bomb load. It could fly at a “service ceiling” altitude of 35,600 feet. A total of 8,680 B-17Gs were produced before the end of the war. After the war ended, the majority of these planes were taken out of service and sold for scrap. Of the nearly 13,000 planes produced, only about 40 airframes (that is, the mechanical structure minus the engines) still survive today.

BOEING FLYING FORTRESS (B-17G)

Engines: Four 1,200 h.p. Wright Cyclones
Wing span: 103 ft. 9 in.
Length: 74 ft. 9 in.
Height: 19 ft. 1 in.
Top speed: over 300 m.p.h.

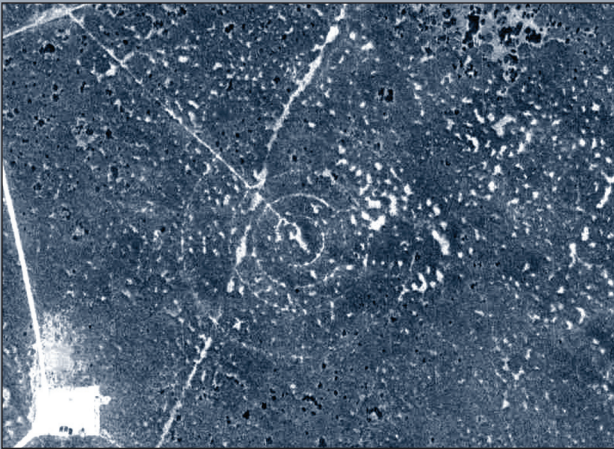
Gross weight: over 65,000 pounds
Service ceiling: over 40,000 feet
Armament (.50-cal.): 13 guns
Crew: 6 to 10
Wing loading: 38.5 lbs. sq. ft.



The Liberty Belle, one of the Few Remaining B-17s Still in Flying Condition.



Auxiliary Fields, Bombing Ranges, and Other Sites

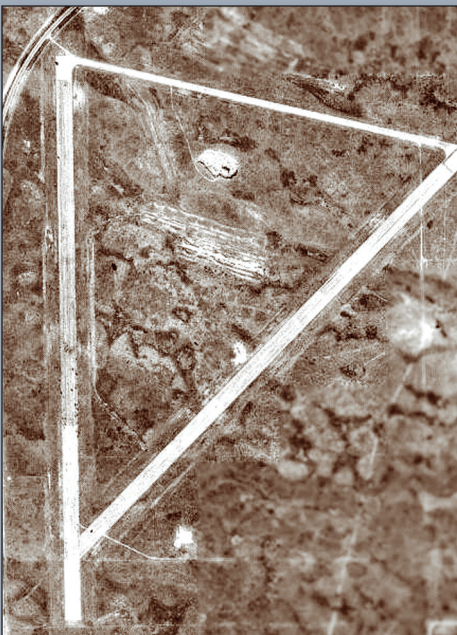


To train B-17 bomber pilots and bombardiers, the Hobbs Army Air Field needed to have off-base facilities to use as practice bombing ranges ("PBRs") and auxiliary landing fields ("ALFs"). Lea County was sparsely inhabited range and farm country, and so it offered a number of ideal sites for bombing target practice and takeoff and landing practice. There were seven practice-bombing ranges within a 40-mile radius north and west of Hobbs. The appearance of these practice bombing ranges was sometimes practical and sometimes fanciful, ranging from the concentric circles of a conventional "target" to the outlines of enemy ships or buildings. These outlines were

made by scraping away the thin topsoil that characterizes the region to expose the underlying caliche, a layer of calcium carbonate otherwise known as "hardpan." From the air, the exposed hardpan appeared in stark white outline against the surrounding soils, which provided a clearly visible target for pilots and bombardiers that can still be seen today. Bombing practice was held day and night. Don Yarbro, a Lovington native, remembered one evening he and his father were driving home from Roswell when they passed a PBR with its targets lit:

They had lights on it [the PBR] somehow. It was really weird 'cause I had never seen it. And they had that whole country out there, out west and around Tatum, just lit up like crazy. And I never saw it again. It must have been a test.

The airfield had two Auxiliary Landing Fields, numbers 1 (also called "Knowles Field") and 4 (numbers 2 and 3 were never built). They had concrete runways and were used by the cadet pilots for "touch and go" landing exercises, a practice maneuver in which pilots would land aircraft and take off again without coming to a complete stop, sometimes circling the air field and performing repeated touch-and-goes to gain proficiency. ALFs were also used



for emergency landings. These auxiliary fields had no permanent structures on them, although the Army occasionally stationed civilian firefighting crews there or set up mobile tracking towers. Today, some of these runways are overgrown with grasses, which conceal the crumbling concrete beneath, while others have been re-used as drill pads for oil exploration.

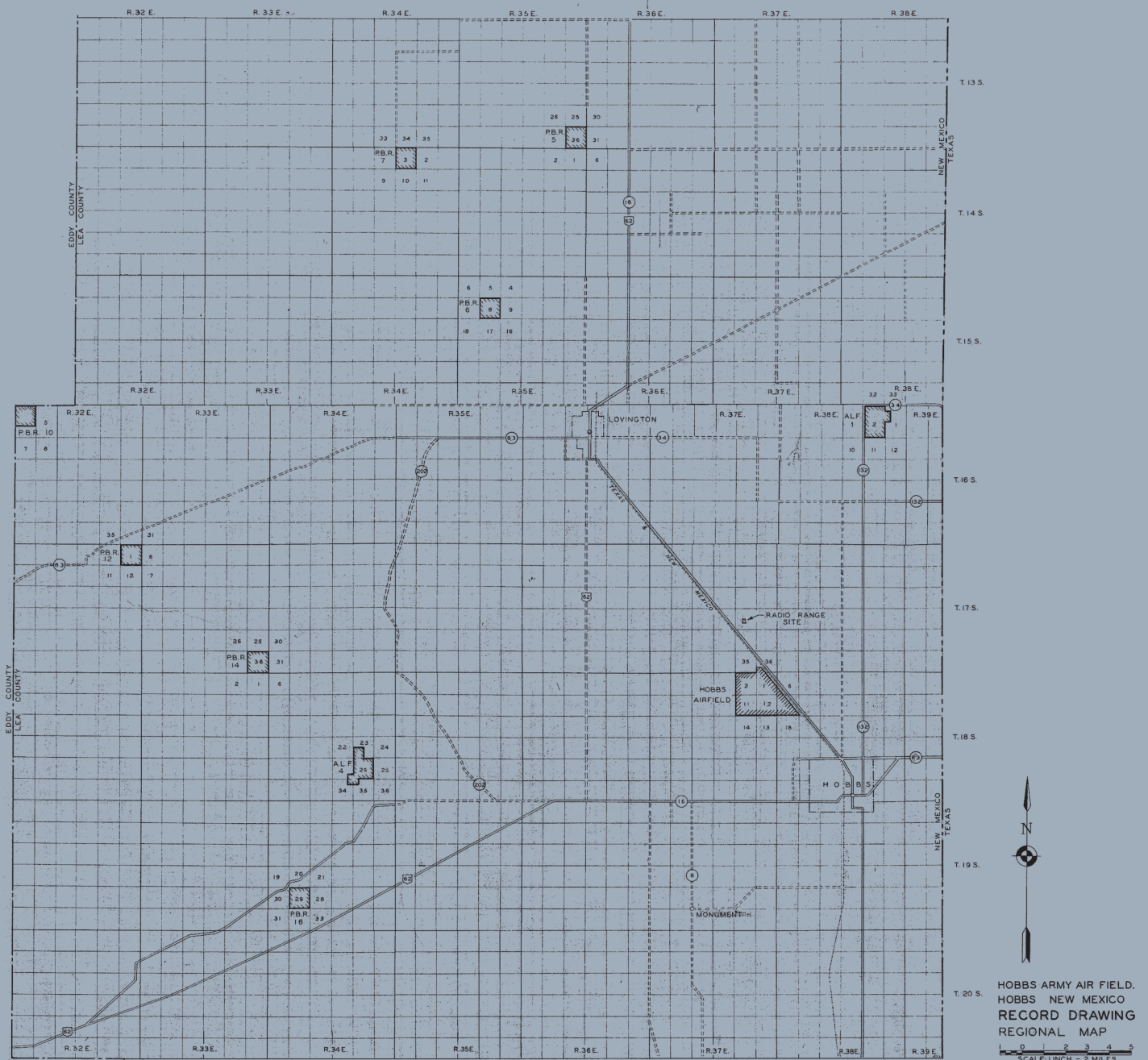
(Top) Concentric circles mark the "target" at a Hobbs practice bombing range. (Left) Auxiliary Landing Field no. 1 (also known as Knowles Field. (Right) Auxiliary Landing Field no. 4. Note land disturbed by oil drilling rigs.

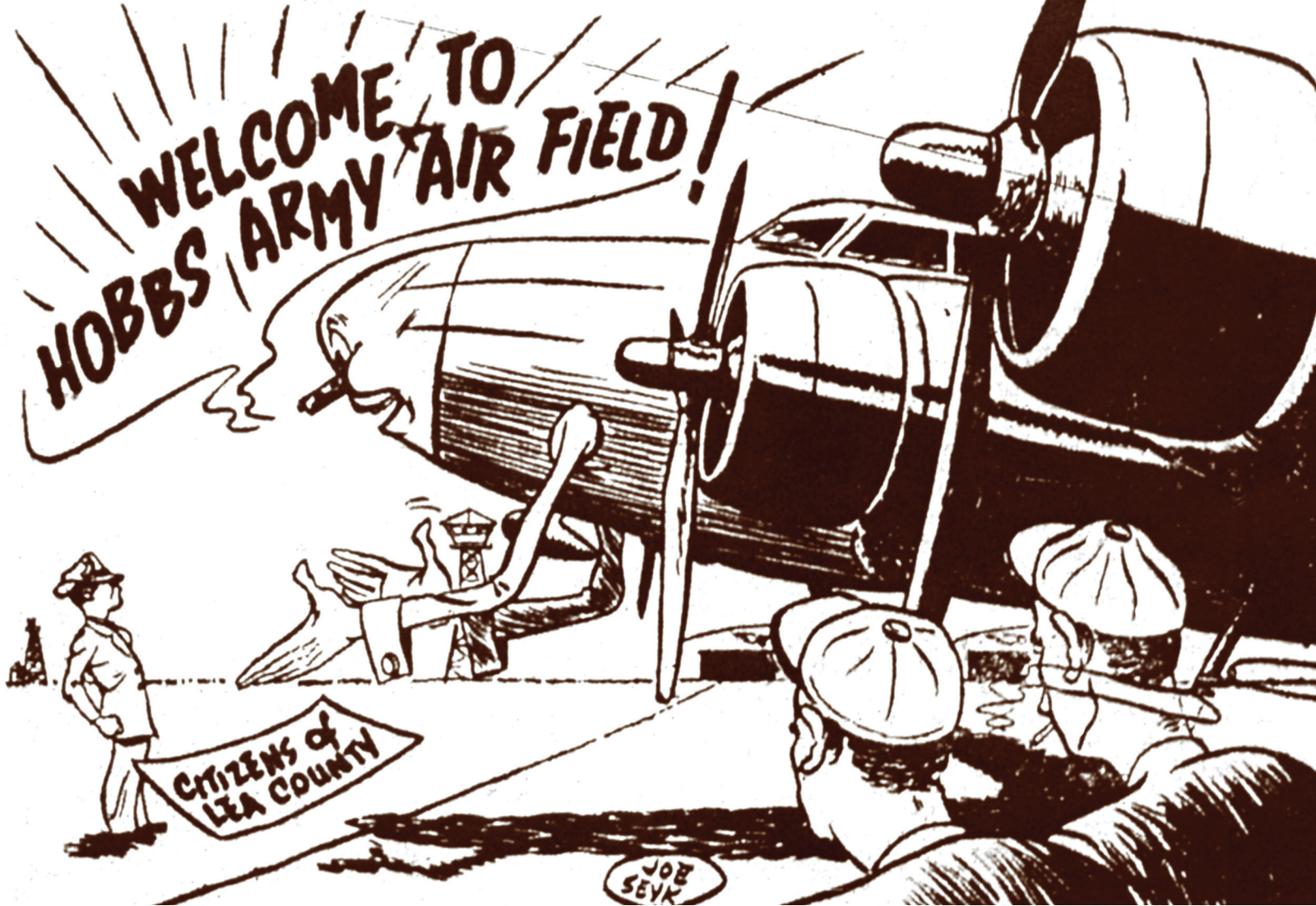


Three miles due north of the airfield's north-south runway, on the east side of Route 18 to Lovington, was the radio range. Recently demolished, the small rectangular, pitched-roof structure sat on a slight rise in the otherwise flat landscape; it contained a transmitter that sent out coded signals in all directions, so that aircraft could determine their bearings.

(Left) Abandoned HAAF Radio Range, Demolished in 2007.

(Below) 1943 Map Showing Locations of HAAF Auxiliary Land Fields and Practice Bombing Ranges.





Bringing the World to Hobbs

The Air Base & Its Neighbors

In September of 1942, the towns of Hobbs and Lovington and all of Lea County welcomed the servicemen arriving to staff the Hobbs Army Air Field. As noted in newspaper articles of the day, the communities were “glad to become in a small way part of the U.S. Army.” Churches, civic organizations, and businesses went out their way to make the men comfortable in their new and often unfamiliar-looking surroundings. “Victory Belles” (young women associated with the local USO Club) socialized with the boys and provided dance partners at the local events. The Hobbs Chapter of the American Women’s Voluntary Services held open houses that served light refreshments, offered reading and writing materials, and played games each weekday evening for the enlisted personnel. The coming of the Army Air Field meant that the small, rural town of Hobbs – which some thought was located at “the end of the world” – was about to become a different kind of place, one where people gathered from all over the country and mingled albeit often for only a few months at a time. For many, Hobbs was a way station for people heading to another place – another air base, another assignment, another part of the world. Hobbs became something of an unlikely melting pot, and the town was never quite the same afterwards.



I met people that I would never have met before.

- Doris Baty

As expected, the construction and operation of the Hobbs Army Air Field resulted in a significant boost to the job market in the nearby towns of Hobbs, Lovington, and other small ranching communities in Lea County. Almost a thousand construction workers, including skilled carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, together with unskilled day laborers, helped build the airfield between June 1943 and April 1944, putting money in the pockets of people just a few years removed from the country's most severe depression in history. Once the base opened, some 800 to 1,000 civilians found full-time employment at any given time as office clerks, maintenance personnel, and warehouse employees. These workers earned federal pay rates, which quickly translated into more cash entering the local economy through spending at grocery and clothing stores, restaurants, and other local establishments. Doris Baty was a Lovington resident during the war and worked for the director of flying and training at the airfield. She said:

When we were working civil service, we thought we were in the money!



(Above) Corner of Broadway and Shipp, Downtown Hobbs, Circa late 1930s. (Below) Neithercutts Dress Shop Took Out Ads in the Daily News-Sun Supporting the HAAF Troops and Held Special Sale Days such as this One in the Early 1950s.



In addition, the military personnel on base spent money "in town" as well. The only downside to this abundance of new cash in the community was the lack of merchandise to buy due to wartime shortages and rationing. Certain kinds of clothing were in short supply, as were automobiles, since most of the nation's automakers were

building jeeps and tanks rather than roadsters and the rubber for tires that came from the jungles of the Far East was for the most part controlled by the Japanese. And, of course, gasoline was severely rationed in order to meet the fuel needs of military vehicles.





ROOSEVELT WAFFLE SHOP

WELCOMES
**The Boys at the Hobbs Army
Air Base**

We Specialize In . . .
CHARCOAL STEAKS

HONOR ROLL

*We Honor our Comrades fighting in the
Armed Forces of the United States*

**WELCOME TO HOBBS
OFFICERS AND CADETS**

WE CARRY A COMPLETE LINE OF REGULATION MILITARY
SHOES—AA TO E WIDTHS
MAKE OUR STORE YOUR HEADQUARTERS
BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

103 West Broadway

Given Bros Mail Orders Filled

Hobbs Only Exclusive Shoe Store
Use Our Lay-A-Way
Fred D. Newman, Mgr.

VICTORY

WELCOME TO HOBBS

Buy Bonds

Buy Bonds

W. E. BENNETT LUMBER CO.

W. E. Bennett Phone 157

218 S. Leach

KEEP 'EM FLYING

KEEP OUR WINGS ABOVE THE ENEMY!

As you can see, it's a tough and the best to fight. But they can't fly over the
clouds of our big planes. It's the best kind of plane this year. They
can't fly over the mountains and you! Put every dollar you can
spare in War Bonds. Buy them every day. Buy them every day. Buy them every day.
Everybody can give up history — a hot breakfast!

Everybody . . . Every Pay Day . . . 10¢ in War Bonds!

HOBBS LIQUOR STORE

215 1/2 W. Broadway Phone 112

WELCOME . . .

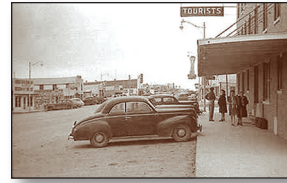
TO VICTORY

U.S. ARMY AIR FORCE

The Coffee Shop is now under new management—
Serving Breakfast, Lunches and Dinners
K. C. Steaks Served Exclusively
Open 5 a. m. till 11 p. m.

HARDEN HOTEL AND COFFEE SHOP

421 E. Main Phone 501



HOUSING SHORTAGE

(Left) Many Officers and their Wives Stayed at the Hardin Hotel – Hobbs’ Finest. (Center) Soldiers and Families Awaiting Arrival of the Train at the Depot at the Corner of W. Broadway and Grimes, Circa 1943-44. (Right) Small Hotels such as this one in Downtown Hobbs were used to House Soldiers Stationed at HAAF.

A major problem afflicting small towns across the country was the severe housing shortage created by the construction of new Army air bases next to their communities. Although military personnel were discouraged from bringing their families to the airfield in part because of the severe housing shortage in the region, many officers arrived with their wives and quickly confirmed the fact that there was no place to live. This was the case even for enlisted men, whose numbers just after the base opened were larger than the number of barracks constructed could accommodate. Coming off the troop trains, the men stayed wherever they could find lodging – in hotels such as the Hardin Hotel, the finest in town; in people’s homes where an extra bedroom might be available after a son had left to join the armed forces; and even in temporary dormitories set up in the Hobbs High School gymnasium. Max Clampitt recalls what happened to his room when he left for the service:

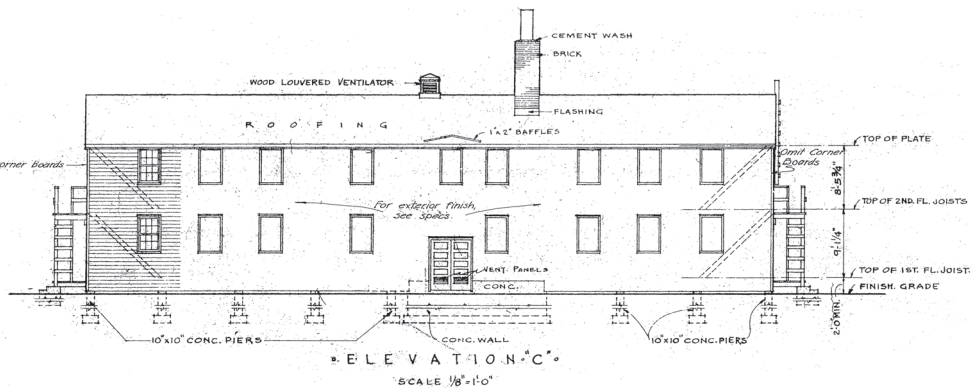
My mother and dad lived in a four-bedroom house up on North Grimes, and of course when I left that left a bedroom open. They rented it out to soldiers and their wives who could stay as long as they were stationed [at the Hobbs Army Air Field].



(Above) Hobbs’ Simple Housing Stock was in Short Supply after Building the HAAF. (Below) Two-story Dormitories were Built at HAAF to House Essential Civilian Workers.

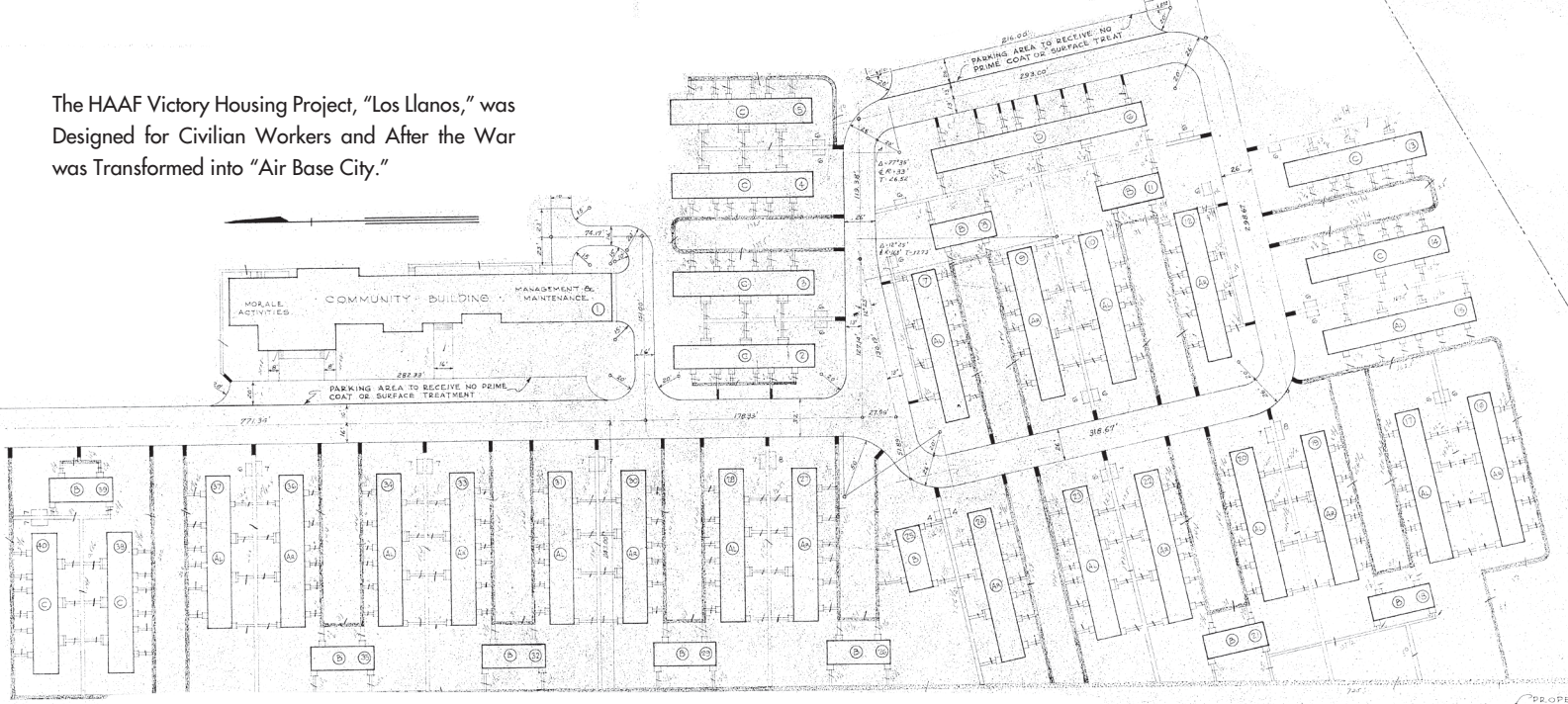
The shortage of lodging was due not just to the influx of military personnel, but the general lack of housing in Hobbs. Just before the war began, the town had experienced several boom years in the oil industry, which meant oil field workers had rented most of the available housing in the town. And since oil workers were classified as “essential” wartime personnel as long as the boom continued, they kept working the fields and did not leave town. The problem was also exacerbated by the fact that construction projects, such as houses or commercial buildings, were virtually non-existent due to a lack of materials. In addition to the soldiers and oil field workers, experienced civilian workers were needed for aircraft maintenance and other specialized positions at the airfield, which necessitated bringing in these people from other parts of the country.

To help alleviate the housing shortage for these civilian workers, in December of 1942 the base quickly built two 2-story dormitories (one for men, one for women) near the quartermaster’s shops. There were 50 tenants on each floor, along with communal showers and



a laundry room in the women’s dorm. Room rents ranged from \$15.00 per month for a single occupancy to \$10.00 for a double occupancy, which included utilities, linens, and household equipment. These were quickly

The HAAF Victory Housing Project, "Los Llanos," was Designed for Civilian Workers and After the War was Transformed into "Air Base City."



filled and in 1944 a complex of apartments, called Los Llanos – a part of the federal Victory Housing Program – were constructed on the east side of the railroad spur lines in the southeast corner of the base. This civilian housing complex, also called "Air Base City," contained 184 units, but there was always a waiting list to get in. Many workers still had to use the temporary quarters set up in the USO club in Hobbs or even sleep in their cars. This housing shortage continued through the history of the airfield. Even as late as July of 1947, while original barracks were being sold and moved off-base, civilians were moved out of Air Base City and trailer homes were brought on site to accommodate the men of the 59th Air Depot unit, who arrived prior to base deactivation to clear out stored aircraft and excess supplies.



Getting Around Town

While military personnel living off-base had special gasoline rationing coupons that allowed them to drive from their home to the base, local residents had to make major adjustments in their lifestyles in order to get to those high paying jobs at the airfield, or even to go out on a date. Public transportation, in the form of buses, and carpooling (or "car-share" as it was commonly known) became not just matters of patriotism but facts of life.

Hobbs resident Jean (Seaburn) Mumford, who worked at the Hobbs Army Air Field as a secretary at headquarters, recalled taking a bus to and from the base every day. The bus picked her up one block west of Turner and Broadway in downtown Hobbs. Some mornings, if she arrived early enough, she could stop by a little restaurant next to the bus stop and have two eggs, bacon, toast and jelly, and coffee – all for 15 cents!



The Bus to the HAAF Stopped at the Corner of Broadway and Turner in Downtown Hobbs making it a Busy Intersection for Soldiers and Civilians alike.

Kenneth Burns of Lovington was a laborer who was hired to help build runways between his junior and senior years in high school in 1942. He

recalled car-sharing with another high school classmate who was a carpenter's helper at the base. Max Clampitt, who poured concrete at the airfield in the summer of 1942, remembers catching a ride with other laborers every morning on a flatbed truck at the corner of Broadway and Turner.

Gladys (Caudill) Jelineck grew up in Hobbs and met a young enlisted man from Idaho, Robert Jelineck, who was stationed at the airfield. They were married shortly after the war ended. She recalled that romance for young couples during the war was challenging. "Dating was limited due to the shortages of transportation, tight flying schedules and low [military] salaries," Jelineck remembered. "For most airmen a date in town meant hitching a ride with a buddy or a civilian worker or a five-mile ride to Broadway by bus and walking from there, making certain to allow time to return to the base by curfew. Car pooling and double dates became popular and common in order to conserve on gasoline."



Al's State Line Bar was a favorite local nightspot. "Yeah, hell it was some place . . ." - Glen Raines, mechanic at HAAF.

Night Life & Home-Cooked Dinners

The town of Hobbs was a place where military personnel could get away, at least for a few hours, and blow off steam at a local night spot – referred to by locals as "honky-tonks." Hobbs had several of these establishments, such as the "State Line Bar," "Little Tokyo," and the "Ramona." The men at the Hobbs Army Air Field worked long, hard hours and when they had time off, many enjoyed getting a cold beer, dancing, or just sitting back and socializing outside the barracks environment. As one might expect, these places tended to get pretty raucous on Friday and Saturday nights. Max Clampitt remembered:

There was a nice dance hall at George's Restaurant down in the south part of town. The best dance floor in town. And they had live music and it was a good place to eat.

And, speaking of dance halls, Nancy (Cutler) Good recalled:

We had guys from everywhere, and we danced up a storm at night! We would dance all night and then have to get up real early and go to work!

For a more subdued evening's entertainment off-base, there was the Hobbs USO club. A typical weekly program included a "favorite records hour" featuring popular Gershwin tunes or Strauss waltzes, bingo, dance lessons, community sing-alongs, and ping-pong tournaments. There were also three movie theaters in town, one of which allowed servicemen in for free.

Fourth of July parade down Broadway, 1944





The Soda Fountain at Jackson Drugs, a Favorite Hobbs Hangout at 201 W. Broadway.

Hobbs always celebrated holidays, and often organized parades for not only the benefit of local townspeople, but the servicemen as well.

The town had a number of restaurants and diners where the men could get away from mess hall "chow," and while this type of meal was an improvement, what servicemen really enjoyed was being invited to someone's home for dinner. These "home-cooked" meals made a lasting impression

on both the serviceman and the families who entertained them. Gladys (Caudill) Jelineck worked at the local Hobbs Chevrolet automobile dealership and lived with her family who regularly had young soldiers over for dinner. She remembered:

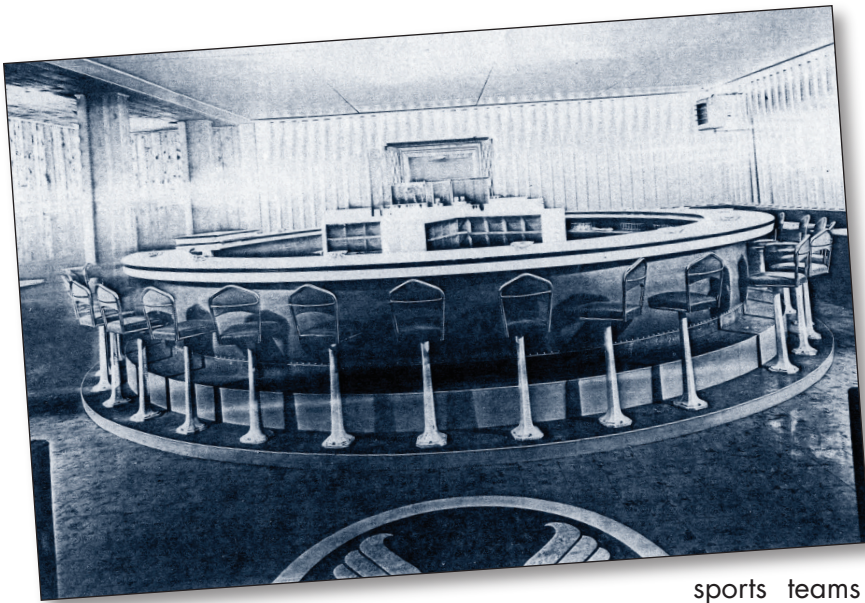
We always invited the fellows home to eat with us when we could. My mother had five girls, and we might bring home three or four [servicemen]. My mother always worried if we were going to have enough, but she always managed to have enough for us, and they always felt comfortable in our house.

In exchange for an evening "at home" the enlisted man or officer would talk about their hometown or, if they were cadet pilots, they would recount their exploits flying the B-17 and what they anticipated next as they moved into combat zones. Families in both Hobbs and Lovington were generous in opening up their homes to these men, which often resulted in lasting friendships, or sometimes even romance and marriage.

The Reel, One of Hobbs' Three Movie Theaters Operating during the War, 1938.



Free Time on Base



It was three months before a recently arrived soldier could get a pass to leave the base. To keep the men entertained, the base offered several recreational opportunities. There was a bowling alley, two swimming pools, a gymnasium with hardwood basketball and handball courts and conditioning equipment, and several organized



sports teams to play on. A base library offered a quiet space to read or write letters home. One could take in a movie at the base theater or have a chocolate shake at the soda fountain. There was also night life on base. In May 1943, a new officer's club opened just west of the officer's dining room. It featured a stylishly furnished lounge, and the gala opening night featured a performance by the "Jive Bombers Orchestra," who entertained 500 officers and their guests. There was also a non-commissioned officer's club, and in August 1943, enlisted men celebrated the opening of their own Service Club that had a jukebox and a small dance floor. The interior of this new facility was designed by a Corporal William Price of the 387th squadron who, before the war, had been an interior designer in Hollywood. He also designed the interior furnishings for the officer's club and for the base movie theater. Dance partners were recruited from Hobbs and the young women called themselves the "Plane Janes." They regularly took the bus from the town to the base, danced at either the officers' club or the NCO club and then caught the bus home.

The base was also on the rounds for touring USO shows that featured big-name Hollywood stars. Soon after the base opened, the famous ventriloquist/comedian Edgar Bergen and his sidekicks, Charlie McCarthy and Knucklehead Smith, entertained the soldiers. On November 10, 1943, as part of the first anniversary of the airfield's opening, a young songstress named Dinah Shore flew into Hobbs and was met by an enthusiastic crowd of enlisted men and officers. She put on two shows, one in the large maintenance hangar for the enlisted men and the other at the officer's club, where she obliged several young men with a dance between songs. Dorris (McKibben) Yarbrow of Lovington recalls hearing the story of Miss Shore driving down the flight line in an open jeep, her hair blowing in the wind, and then tossing her hairbrush into the crowd. This base birthday bash included a military parade, aerial review, a tour of the base's aircraft, ground school, and mechanics area, and a cadet graduation ceremony attended by more than 4,000 Lea County residents.



(Top Left) The Lounge in the HAAF Officers' Club. (Top Right) Relaxing at the NCO Club. (Left) Citizens of Lea County Visit the HAAF Open House, 1943.

(Right) Songstress Dinah Shore Dances with an Unidentified Officer at the CO Club during her Appearance at the HAAF Open House, November 16, 1943.
(Below) HAAF Open House Program.



in front of post operations.

HOBBS ARMY AIR FIELD

COLONEL JOSEPH P. BAILEY
Commanding Officer

MAJOR WILLIAM H. STUART
Assistant Director of
Station Services

MAJOR WILLIAM K. HOUSTON
Adjutant

Guests

Brig. Gen. Martin F. Scanlon,
Commanding General,
38th Flying Training Wing

Col. William B. Offutt
Commanding Officer,
Kirtland Field

Col. John P. Ryan,
Commanding Officer
Carlsbad Army Air Field

Col. Donald B. Phillips,
Commanding Officer,
Marfa Army Air Field

Col. Henry B. Fisher,
Commanding Officer,
Ft. Sumner Army Air Field

Mayor Guy B. Rogers,
Hobbs, New Mexico

Mayor Leonard Richards,
Lovington, N. M.

Brig. Gen. Kenneth McNaughton,
A-3, Headquarters,
Flying Training Command

Col. Milton M. Murphy,
Commanding Officer,
Deming Army Air Field

Col. John C. Horton,
Commanding Officer,
Roswell Army Air Field

Col. Orin J. Bushey,
Commanding Officer,
Pecos Army Air Field

Mayor R. C. Curry,
Eunice, New Mexico

Mayor D. W. Justis,
Jal, New Mexico

MISS DINAH SHORE



12:15 P.
1:00 P.
2:00 P.

Reviewing Officers:

Brig. Gen. Martin F. Scanlon
Commanding 38th Flying Training Wing

Brig. Gen. Kenneth P. McNaughton
Headquarters, Flying Training Command

Col. Joseph P. Bailey
Commandant

- 2:30 P. M.—Inspections of exhibit guest squadrons: 956th Twin Engine Flying Training Squadron and the 958th Twin Engine Flying Training Squadron followed by inspection of production line maintenance and Hangar No. 6.
- 4:00 P. M.—956th Twin Engine Flying Training Squadron and the Hangar No. 6.
- 4:00 P. M.—Graduation of Four Engine Pilot Transition Class 43-4-H, at Post Theatre.
- 5:30 P. M.—End of Open House. Visitors to leave Field.
- 7:00 P. M.—G. I. Show in Hangar No. 4 for enlisted men and their guests only. Featuring Miss Dinah Shore, radio, stage screen star. Also the San Angelo Cowboy Band.
- 8:00 P. M.—Officers' formal dinner dance, Officers' Club. Guests: Miss Dinah Shore, San Angelo Cowboys.

A guide system has been established to enable conducted tours of the field. Visitors are requested to stay with guides.



Adult residents of Lea County were not the only ones who were involved in the war effort as seen in this 1942 photograph of Billy McKibben and his cousin Dorothy Sherrill. Billy was a first grader at Lovington Elementary School when he was named "Victory King" for buying the most U.S. Savings Stamps and exchanging them for war bonds. Billy wears a "uniform" given him by family friend, Harold "Buck" Rogers, who was the official photographer for the HAAF.

Farewell to the Hobbs Army Air Field

Decommissioning the Air Field

With the war over, the Army Air Force was faced with the task of deciding which training bases to decommission and which ones could contribute to the post-war air force mission. Although the majority of these air fields were designed and built as temporary facilities, there were some, such as the Roswell Army Air Field or Kirtland Field in New Mexico, that were converted to permanent air bases for the soon-to-be established United States Air Force. Naturally, for economic reasons, most cities located near these temporary air fields hoped that their base would be chosen to remain open.

It appears from official Army documents that the Hobbs Army Air Field was a "borderline case" with regard to closure. The air field had originally been scheduled to close on October 31, 1945; however, this directive was almost immediately cancelled when the Army Air Forces decided to assign the base to the Air Technical Service Command for use as an aircraft storage facility. This mission was terminated on May 1, 1948, when the Air Force declared the facility as "surplus" and transferred it to the War Assets Administration for final disposal of all buildings, structures, and equipment. Even after ownership of the base was transferred to the City of Hobbs in December of 1948, the Air Force entertained proposals from the city and the state's congressional delegation to reopen the base. It was not until October of 1952 that the Department of Defense officially shut the door on reopening the former air field.

Although the base was officially declared as surplus in May of 1948, the Army began disposing of excess property as early as November of 1945. Despite the fact that Army officials had no authority to dispose of any structures or equipment to individual citizens (that would come later under the authority of the War Assets Administration), they began the process of decommissioning the base by boarding up unused buildings and shipping equipment and supplies to other military bases across the country. "Scrap" lumber, created by the "inadvertent" demolition of excess buildings, was used to build crates and packing cases for the materials to be shipped out.

By 1946, still prior to the base being declared surplus, newspaper advertisements in the Hobbs Daily News-Sun offered fuel cells from the air field for sale. Readers were told they could be used for "feed and water troughs, rowboats, duck-blinds, sandboxes, and chicken coops" and ranged in price from \$1.00 to \$3.25 depending upon size. Also on sale were a variety of excess goods and materials, such as desks, chairs, filing cabinets, window coverings, small motors, wiring, plumbing, paint, pipe, and an assortment of tools.

In the spring of 1947, perhaps forecasting events to come the following year, the War Assets Administration began to authorize the selling of buildings to individuals or groups. In February of that year, C. T. Rice, an authorized disposal agent, advertised Army barracks buildings for sale, calling them the "biggest value in years" and offering a 10 percent discount to World War II veterans. Sealed bids were opened in May for 112 former air field buildings, including 32 barracks, 16 administration buildings, 12 recreational buildings, and 11 officers' quarters. By the end of 1947, there were only 194 buildings (out of more than 350) still intact on the air base. Also in May, one

of the base chapels went up for sale. The building included heating equipment, electrical fixtures, and all seating, with the caveat that the structure and equipment were to be sold in "as is" condition. The sale was also conditioned by the stipulation that the building be maintained as "shrines or memorials, or used for religious purposes, and not for any commercial, industrial or other secular use."

The War Assets Administration was in charge of the sale of excess property and they grouped the buildings and structures into lots that were bid on by individuals, public institutions, especially nearby school districts, and local churches. Individuals often resold single buildings or structures to general public. Because of the wartime restrictions on constructing new, non-military, buildings, coupled with the baby boom following the war, school districts were in desperate need of additional classrooms, lavatories, and general purpose structures. They found that the enlisted men's barracks, officer's quarters, and recreational buildings at the Hobbs Army Air Field were well-suited to meet these needs. Lea County Schools in Jal, Tatum, and Eunice purchased several of these buildings for pennies on the dollar, as did the Guadalupe County, Eddy County, and Roosevelt County school districts. Lovington and Hobbs

These Two Buildings are Thought to be Former HAAF Barracks that were Moved to Lovington and Converted into Teacher Housing.



COPY No. 4, DELIVERY ORDER - To be retained by shipper
 W.A.S. ADMINISTRATION
 Address: Regional - Box 722-15th St., Denver, Colo. DOCUMENT NO. 1801850
 WAS-141 180

APRIL 1946

SOLD TO: School District #1, Lea County, Lovington, New Mexico LOCATION CODE 222
 SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS - ROUTING AND DELIVERY

SHIP TO: Hobbs Army Air Field, Hobbs, New Mexico

SALE DATE: 6-30-47 SALE NO.: 290 TERMS: Cash SALESMAN: [blank]
 REGION: 9 DISTRICT: [blank] PROGRAM: Real Prop. TYPE: [blank] DISPOSAL METHOD: [blank] SALES SECTION: [blank]

PROPERTY LOCATION: Hobbs Army Air Field, Hobbs, New Mexico
 SEND DELIVERY ORDER TO: Office of Real Prop. Disposal, 717 Kittredge Building, Denver, Colorado
 DEC. AGENCY - ADDRESS - PLANOR NO.: ND, Office of Chief, United States Army, Washington 25, D.C.

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	U OF M	SALES PRICE	UNITS SOLD	NUMBER OF UNITS SHIPPED
1	Building No. T-314	1	\$575.00		
2	Building No. T-446	1	159.60		
3	Building No. T-629	1	31.50		
4	Building No. T-208	1	55.75		
5	Building No. T-630	1	31.50		
6	Building No. T-613	1	150.00		

OWNING AGENCY NO. 6-1053

PAYMENT RECEIVED IN FULL - Receipt #3359255 - \$1005.55

NON-REIMBURSABLE TO OWNING AGENCY

NARMR-HOB-0343

PRIORITY OR VETERANS CERTIFICATE NO.:

SHIPPER IS AUTHORIZED TO SHIP PROPERTY DESCRIBED HEREIN IF SHIPPED ON COMMERCIAL B/L RETURN 2 COPIES THEREOF IF SHIPPED ON GOVERNMENT B/L RETURN 4 COPIES TO TRAFFIC DIVISION, W.A.A.

WAR ASSETS ADMINISTRATION

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1945-20878

purchased the largest number of structures probably due to the low cost of moving them to the nearby towns; however, some excess buildings were moved as far away as Espanola, New Mexico, north of Santa Fe. While most of the surplus buildings were purchased for short-term use, until more permanent school buildings could be funded, the Immanuel Baptist Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church, both located in Hobbs, took ownership of the two chapels located on base and continue to use them today. St. Helena's Church, also in Hobbs, was a big user of surplus buildings as well. Eastern New Mexico College (now University) and New Mexico A&M (now State) University both acquired several buildings, as did the local unit of the New Mexico National Guard, which took over the warehouses and the ordnance structures at the far south end of the base.

Individuals acquired buildings as well. Max Clampitt remembered a physician from Eunice, New Mexico, who bought two of the smaller buildings and put them together and lived in those until he could get a new home built. According to the Army's disposal lists, two local residents, Jasper Jones and John Keller, each bought dozens of structures, and ironically, B. J. Caudill, the one-time landowner of what became the Hobbs Army Air Field, purchased two barracks located on his former property.

(Above) A Copy of the Original Delivery Order Issued by the War Assets Administration in June 1947 to the Lovington School District for the Sale of Six Surplus HAAF Buildings. "The Immanuel Baptist Church (Insert, shown in 1973) and the Ebenezer Baptist Church (shown in 2007) were the Two HAAF Base Chapels Moved to Hobbs After the War. Originally Built using Identical Plans, the Ebenezer Church Later Remodeled its Steeple and Added a Brick Façade.





Message from the Past

As the Hobbs Army Air Field was under construction in the summer of 1942, building materials were in scarce supply for all but those activities that were directly related to the war effort. So when “scrap” lumber resulting from base construction was given away to anyone who wanted stop by and collect it, local residents eagerly snapped it up. Ross Black of Lovington was an eleven-year-old boy when he and his brother, Eddie, went with their father to the construction site to pick up some of this coveted lumber so that they could build a chicken coop in their backyard.

As they roamed about the partially built air field, the boys stopped for a moment to watch carpenters hammering together wood frame buildings in what would become the base hospital area. Wanting to leave his “mark” on a structure, Eddie found a pencil and wrote a brief note on one of the building’s wall studs. The brothers then went on their way, collected some lumber for the chicken coop project, and returned to their home just up the road. The war came and went, as did the base and its thousands of military and civilian personnel. For decades, Eddie’s note remained hidden and all but forgotten.

In the late 1960s, many years after the Hobbs Army Air Field had closed and after most of its buildings were little more than concrete foundations in the grass, a friend of Ross’ purchased one of the few remaining structures left on the old base site. Curious about the present appearance of the air field he had seen decades before while it was still under construction, Ross accompanied his friend to pick up the building, little realizing that he was about to travel back through time.

To his amazement, while he and his buddy were dismantling the structure, Ross discovered the “note” written by Eddie on a wall stud some 25 years earlier. Ross realized that this was the very same building on which Eddie had scrawled a note so many years before. As he pondered this discovery, the decades seemed to melt away, and for a moment Ross Black was restored to his eleven-year-old self again, wandering with his young brother Eddie among the busy sights and sounds and sawdust smells of the budding Hobbs Army Air Field of 1942.

Most of these buildings were only used a few years by the schools or individuals before they were demolished or fell down on their own.

On March 28, 1948, the Hobbs Daily News-Sun ran the headline, "HAAF Goes Back to Nature." The paper reported that only one Army officer, a Major A. A. Chamberlain, together with 50 civilian employees, was left on base to coordinate the final stages of base shutdown before the War Assets Administration took control of the property in May. In the meantime, the federal government began negotiations with the city of Hobbs for the return of the airfield to the city. In December, Hobbs received a quitclaim deed from the government, giving the city ownership of the former air base. This deed came with the stipulation that the base be maintained as an airport and that the federal government could take back the property in case of a national emergency.



Post-War Redevelopment

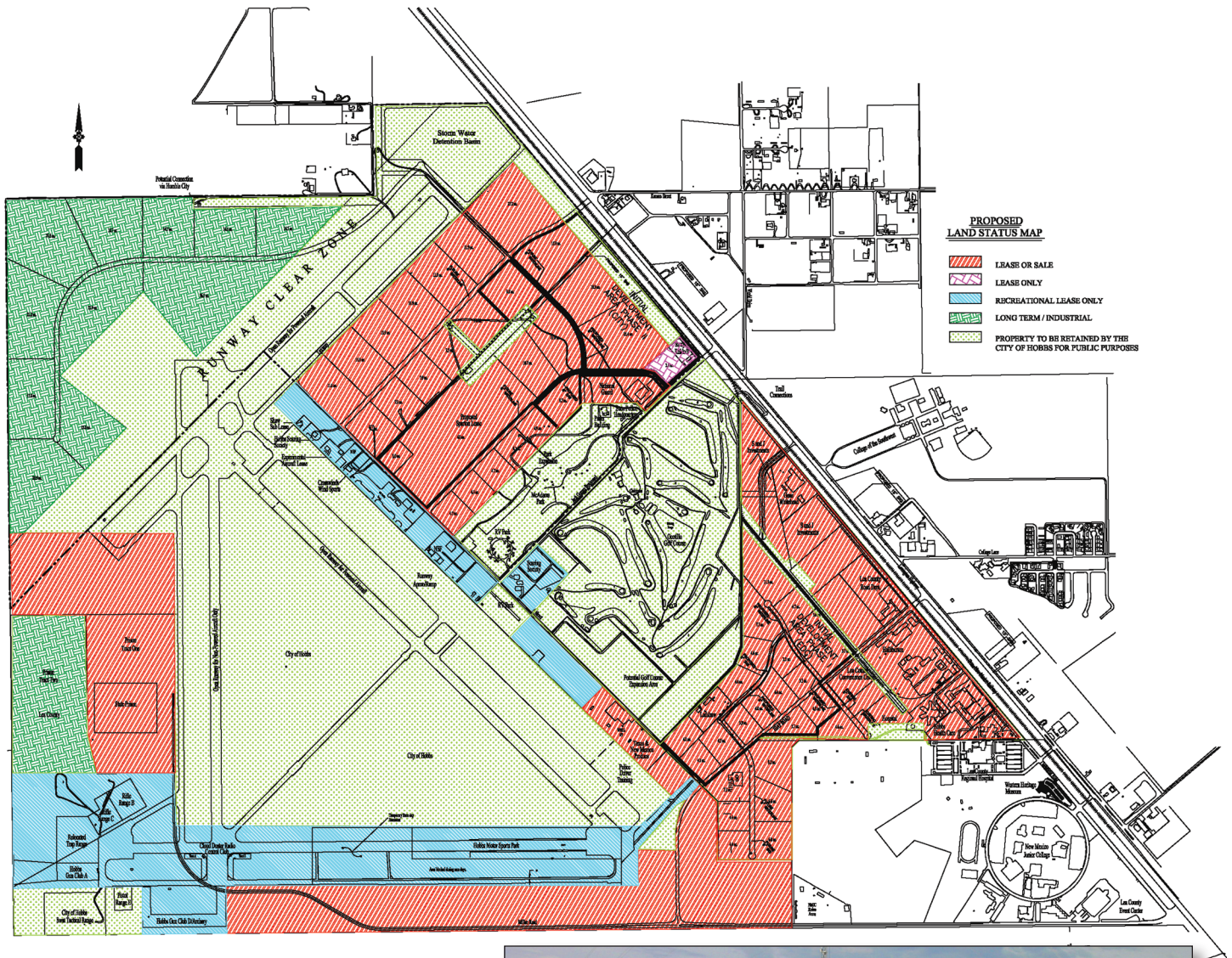
With little hope of convincing the Air Force to re-open the base, the city began to make other development plans. While excess buildings continued to be auctioned off, in 1953 the city decided to rehabilitate the "Los Llanos" Victory Housing Project for use as apartments to alleviate the severe housing shortage that arose following the war. Re-named "Air Base City," the property had 176 apartments, a church, a self-serve laundry, grocery store and drug store. The city even repaired and redecorated the former air field's theater and gymnasium. A nine-hole golf course was completed by the end of 1954. The city entered into a contract with local realtors to manage the rental properties; however, the two parties eventually had a falling out, the city abandoned the project, and the houses and other buildings were eventually sold or demolished.

In the 1960s, the city of Hobbs turned to the idea of developing the former Hobbs Army Air Field into a recreation area and industrial park. The nine-hole golf course built in the mid-1950s was enlarged to 18 holes in 1965 and encompassed areas formerly used for officers' living area, including the officers' club and dining facilities, several squadron barracks, two of the three enlisted men's mess halls, and part of the motor pool area. Max Clampitt tells the story of how a retired Air Force general-turned-entrepreneur came to town in the late 1960s and proposed the idea of turning the old airfield into an intercontinental airport. The city invested funds in some rehabilitation projects at the former base; however, in the end, the venture never materialized. As Max remembers: *The deal fell through, and he left town in the dark of the night.*

(Above) Aerial View of the Former HAAF Showing the Ocotillo Golf Course and the Newly Built Correctional Facility (Left of Runways), Circa 1998. (Below) Refurbished HAAF Control Tower and Remnant Hangars along the Flight Line, 1973.



Nonetheless, the failed endeavor did revitalize an interest developing the long-dormant property – now called the Hobbs Industrial Air Park. In 1975, Halliburton oil field services became the first major lessee on land along Highway 18, while other smaller organizations, such as Hobbs Motor Sports and the National Soaring Society, leased parts of the landing field in the 1980s and 1990s for drag racing events and a glider field, respectively. Other parcels were sold to a private company (Cam-Hobbs), to Lea County for construction of a correctional facility and medical center, to the State of New Mexico for a new National Guard Armory, and to the New Mexico Junior College for a new campus, which included the Hobbs Army Air Field’s ordnance area. (Several armament “igloos” are still used today as storage facilities by the college.) Other improvement to the property included the construction of the Harry McAdams State Park, which is now owned by the city. This beautiful park, with its picnic areas, ponds, grass and large shade trees, occupies land that formerly included the base headquarters, administrative area, and parade ground.



(Above) Map of the Hobbs Industrial Air Park, Formerly the HAAF. (Left) Former HAAF Underground Storage Magazine, or “Igloo,” Now Located on the Campus of the New Mexico Junior College, 2007





(Above) View to the Northeast of Harry McAdams Park, the Site of the Former HQ Area and Parade Ground for HAAF. (Left) Former HAAF Air Command Hanger, now Located at the Lea County Airport.



The construction of the park, golf course, and other new buildings resulted in obliterating nearly all traces of buildings and foundations associated with the former Hobbs Army Air Field. Other large buildings, such as the hangars, stayed around through the 1970s. They were used for a variety of purposes – everything from warehousing potatoes to

building the huge radio antennas (82 feet in diameter) for the Very Large Array, one of the world's premier astronomical radio observatories located on the Plains of San Agustin 50 miles west of Socorro, New Mexico. Other buildings received a less kind fate. In April of 1950, there was an abortive attempt to move a large hangar to the Lea County airport when a strong wind gust destroyed one-half of the structure en route. Some years later, an Air Command hangar was successfully transported to the airport and rehabilitated for use by the Confederate (now Commemorative) Air Force. The last remaining squadron hangar was torn down by the City of Hobbs in 2006 after it fell into disrepair and thus became a safety hazard.

Today, you have to search carefully through the thick stands of mesquite and patches of prickly pear cactus to find the remnants of foundations that supported barracks, hospital wards, and recreation buildings. The larger buildings, such as warehouses, flight training buildings, and the base gymnasium, are more obvious because of their sheer size, but still pose a mystery to the casual visitor. Along the flight line, the steel rails that once moved the massive hangar doors are still visible in the concrete, but the massiveness of these structures can only be understood through old photos and architectural drawings. Instead of B-17s roaring down the runways to embark on training hops, weekend drag-racing enthusiasts now race down the asphalt for a quarter of a mile and then brake to a stop; or gliders silently set down on the concrete where mechanics once scrambled to ready their assigned aircraft for the next training mission. But late in the day, with the sun setting across the llano, if you squint and scan the landscape, you can almost see the men and women, military and civilian, as they hurry across the air field to the operations buildings, the hangars, classrooms, mess halls, and barracks, as they engaged in a fight for freedom that defined their generation and the century itself.



(Clockwise, From the Top) View of the Former Base Hospital Looking North Showing the Concrete Stem Walls that Once Supported a Storehouse, 2007. Rows of Concrete Piers that Once Supported the Hospital Buildings, View to the Northeast, 2007. The Last Remaining Squadron Hangar from the HAAF Era. It was Damaged by a Wind Storm and Demolished in 2005. Looking West along the Flight Line at Vaults that once Housed the Top-secret Norden Bombsights, 2007.



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Doris J. Baty	Nancy (Cutler) Good
Raymond Benson	Gladys (Caudill) Jelineck
Ross Black	Julia "Imojene" (Hendricks) McClure
Kenneth Burns	Jean (Seaburn) Mumford
Oreath Cecil	Bill Pevey
Max Clampitt	W. Glen Raines
Mark Cotton	Sally H. and Charlie Seed
Alice H. Cushing	Don and Dorris Yarbrow

Illustration Credits

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