

# Eglin Field

*A brief history from the beginning to the Cold War*



(01-7075-4)(7-30-35-3209)(12-3000) landing field, Valparaiso, Fla.



*James Plew on horseback*



*Valparaiso golf club*



*Valparaiso Inn*

The Eglin Air Force Base's evolution from an isolated gunnery range to one of the most important installations in the US Armed Forces is a story of immense growth and development. The roots of Eglin reach back to the early 1920s when land developer James Plew invited military aviators from Maxwell Field in Alabama to frequent his resort in Valparaiso, Florida. Through the 1920s and into the 1930s, the military's interest in this area as a base for gunnery and bombing practice intensified, leading to the establishment of the Valparaiso Bombing and Gunnery Range in 1935.





*Eglin Field main gate*



*Headquarters building*



*First paved runway*



*Biplanes taxi on the runway*

The Range was a remote, rustic, and meagerly supported installation — no permanent detachment was stationed here. A rural airstrip, gunnery range, a few buildings and tents supported rotations of enlisted men from Maxwell Field for gunnery training. Valparaiso Bombing and Gunnery Range, redesignated Eglin Field in 1937, steadily expanded in the latter part of the 1930s as a result of the worldwide descent into war.



*New Eglin Field Head Quarters*



*Construction of the expanded runway*



*Officer's bathhouse*



*Expanded construction of administration buildings in Decemeber 1941*

Aviation warfare had advanced to the point that machine gunning and bombing were vital to air tactics and strategy. To train flyers and test new weapons, the Air Corps needed an Air Armament Proving Ground and selected Eglin Field as its home. By the time Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941, Eglin Field bustled with construction projects and personnel. The pace of development and activity surged through the years of World War II to the point that Eglin Field was one of the largest military installations in the United States.



*Women's Army Auxiliary photographer*



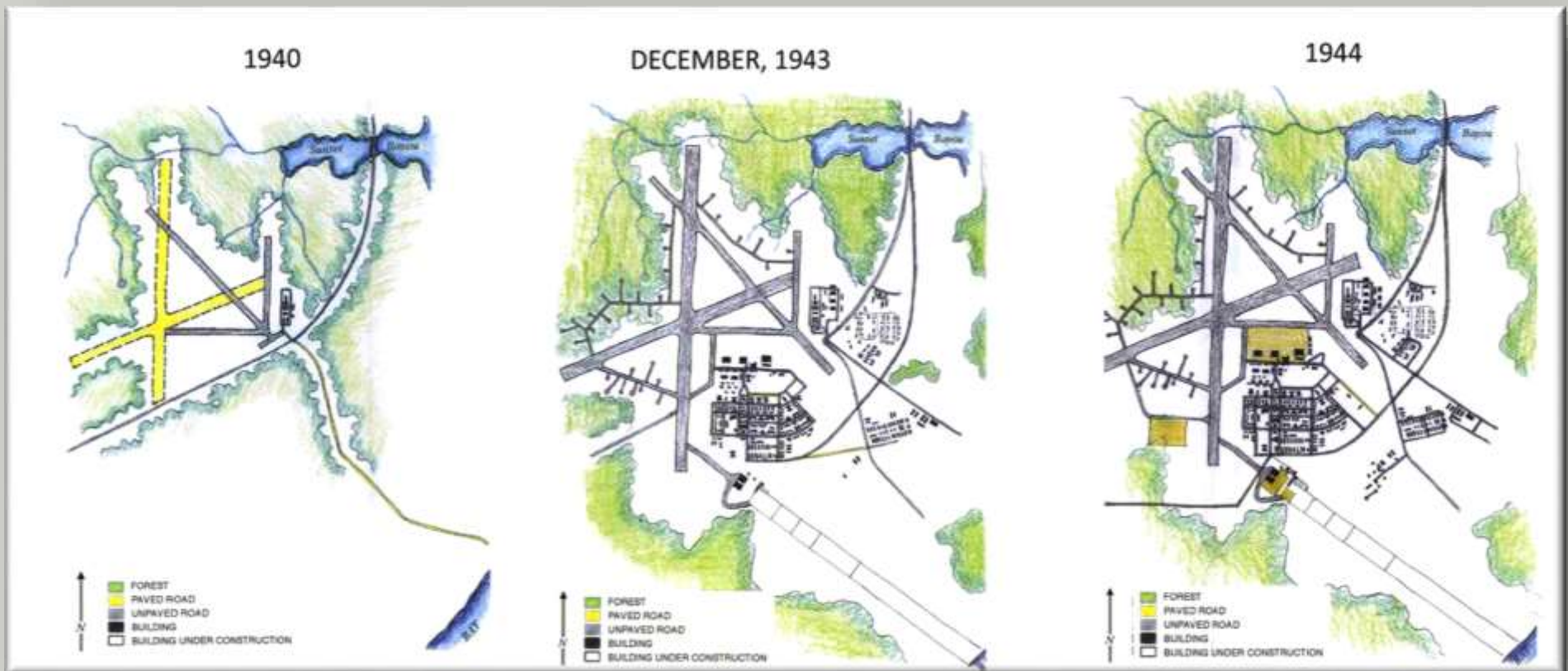
*Women's Army Auxiliary parade on airfield*



*Women's Army Auxiliary working control tower*

By 1943, the Cantonment Area and surrounding Proving Ground were well established; the continued growth at Eglin was in personnel. Personnel numbers reached their wartime height of 750 officers and 7,615 enlisted men. In addition, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), a new department of the US Army, established the 720th WAAC Post Headquarters Company at Eglin. The 155 WAAC members stationed at Eglin primarily worked as clerks in the Flight Test Section, Motor Pool, Dispatch, Administration, Photo Lab, Special Weapons, and the Weather Station.





*Area development from 1940 through 1944*

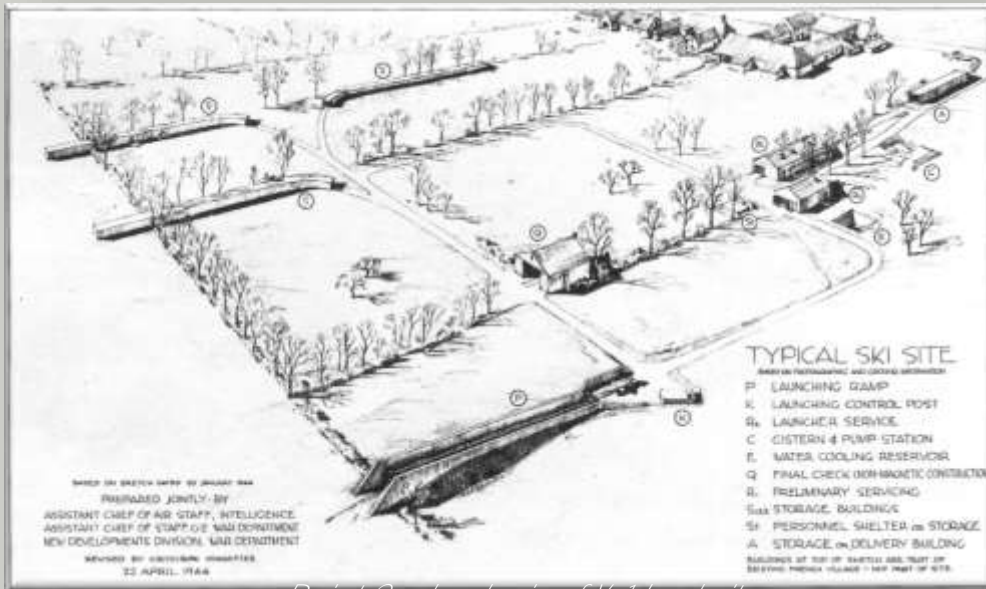
Early in 1944, the Proving Ground Command formed a committee that devised a **Master Plan for Eglin's** future beyond the war effort. One of the main features of the plan was a new runway that could accommodate increased traffic and the B-36,

the largest bomber in the US military. The new construction initiated by the Master Plan continued through the last year of the war and into the postwar period. When World War II ended in September 1945 construction was well under-

way and included:

- 10 Auxiliary Airfields
- 30 Miles of Paved Runways
- 50+ Terrestrial and Water Ranges
- 350 Miles of Paved Roads
- 882 Buildings

The Proving Ground Command at Eglin Field held continued responsibility for high priority testing programs into the closing years of World War II. Eglin hosted important programs such as Operation Crossbow, training for the Doolittle Raiders, and development of the JB-2 rocket during wartime efforts.



*Project Crossbow drawing of V-1 launch site*



*JB-2 rocket being moved*



*Doolittle Raiders take off from the USS Hornet*





*Eglin Field Historic District*



*Eglin Field late 1940's to early 1950's*

In 1998 the Eglin Field Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district consists of 32 buildings that are associated with the establishment, development, and operation of Eglin Air Field as an important military training and weapons testing base during World War II. The district contains a variety of buildings associated with many phases of military activity from air field operations, maintenance, testing, training and housing. The following pages highlight some of these structures.





*Building 2 US Army Air Corps Post Head Quarters*

The US Army Air Corps completed the structure known as Building 2 in 1941. The structure served as the Post Headquarters during World War II (1941-1945). Building 2 and an identical structure (Building 357) served as the primary administrative buildings at Eglin Field until 1942. After 1942, Building 2 remained one of several buildings comprising the World War II-era administrative core of the installation. Building 2 replaced two earlier Post Head Quarter buildings constructed closer to the flight line.



*Original Head Quarters building*



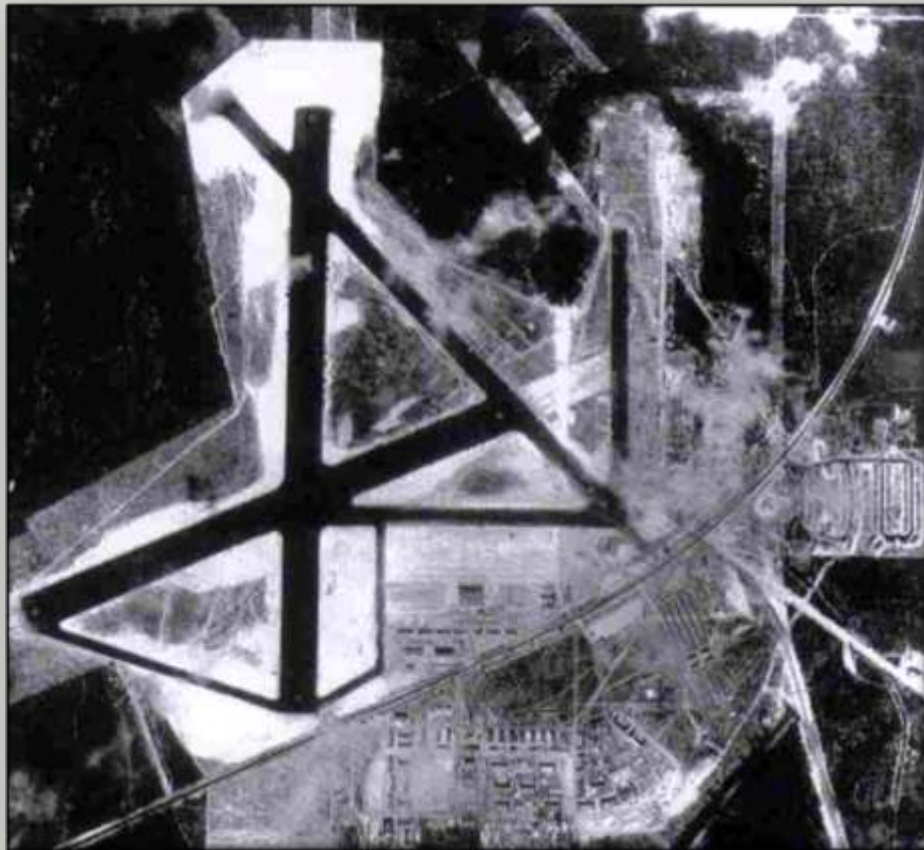
*2nd Head Quarters building*



*Aircraft in front of hanger*



*Hangar 71*



*Eglin Field 1941*

Many of the World War II-era buildings dedicated to equipment inspection and maintenance were completed in March 1941. Buildings 68 and 71 are large aircraft hangars that created the core of the flight line area of Eglin Field during the war years. Other buildings include Headquarters Group Maintenance and Supply Facility Building 37, Air Craft Field and Maintenance Shops Buildings 36 and 38, and Armament Instrument and Inspection Building 44.





*Building 35 Aircraft Field Maintenance*



*Building 38 Air-Craft Maintenance*



*Building 30 oil, paint and dope storage*

Numerous buildings were constructed to support the airfield. Building 35 was built from a Supply and Day Room plan featuring a study, day room and offices. However, when completed in 1941, the building served instead as an Aircraft Field Maintenance Shop. Building 38 was used for Air Craft Maintenance while Building 30 was used for oil, paint and dope storage.



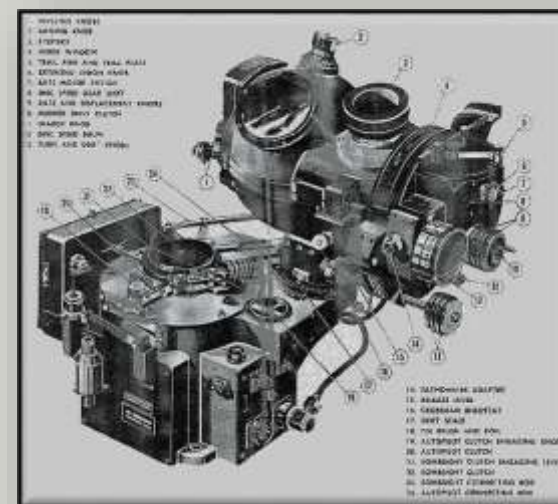


*Building 44 Armament Instrument and Inspection Building*

Building 44 was an Armament Instrument and Inspection Building when completed in 1942. This fortified structure features steel doors, bulletproof glass, and trap doors, all of which were intended to protect it against a potential attack. The purpose of the structure was to store, calibrate, test, and maintain Norden bombsights and Sperry gunsights.



*Sperry Gunsight*



*Norden bombsight*



*Ashley McKinley on Byrd Expedition*



*Building 6*

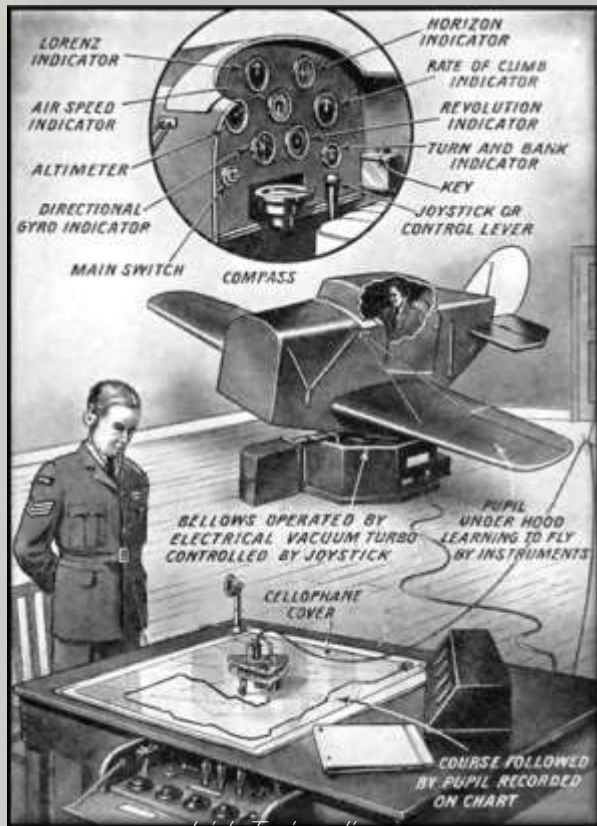
Building 6 represents the Headquarters of the Arctic, Desert, and Tropic Information Center (ADTIC) which was established as a temporary quarters at Eglin in 1942. The ADTIC was the descendant of the Army Air Forces Cold Weather Testing Detachment, which had studied how cold weather affected aircraft prior to the war. Col. Ashley McKinley, a veteran of cold-weather flying, advised the USAAF to rebuild and expand the Detachment to include tests on the performance of armament, clothing, oil, fuel, and other equipment in addition to aircraft. McKinley also advised the USAAF to test these components under every type of extreme weather as opposed to cold weather alone and also issue and disseminate publications related to their research. The rebuilt and expanded Detachment became the ADTIC.



*Testing cold weather*



*Altitude test*



*Link Trainer diagram*



*Building 34 Link Trainers facility*

Eglin AFB World War II-era buildings dedicated to equipment testing and training included Building 34 was built in 1941 as a facility for Link Trainers, a flight simulator the USAAF used to train pilots. Edwin A. Link developed the Link Trainer in the 1930s. Amusement parks and private pilots were his first customers; however, in the late 1930s, the US Army came to view

Link's flight simulator as a means to prevent primary flight training accidents. As the United States entered World War II, the US Army ordered 10,000 Link Trainers for the Air Force, and they were installed at various USAAF training bases.



*Link Trainer*



*Link Trainer*





*Building 40 and 41 Parachute Tower and Packing Room*



*Building 40 and 41 Parachute Tower and Packing Room*



*Parachute Packing Room*

Buildings 40 and 41 were likely constructed using Type Y plan used for Supply and Day Room buildings but the facility was used for packing and maintaining parachutes. The original “Parachute Tower” on the east end of Building 40 is 37 feet tall with a concrete pit at the base for heating units. The tower was used for the washing, drying and repair of parachutes and life rafts. A second 51 foot tall tower was added in the mid 1950’s. Building 41 is the “Packing Room”.



*Marine Operations Building on Weekly Bayou*



*Marine Operations Building on Weekly Bayou*



*Eglin Field boat squadron boat*



*Eglin boat squadron*

Located along Weekly Bayou, Marine Operations consisted of a Crash Section, General Purpose Section and a Tug and Barge Section. The Crash section recovered downed aircraft and crew in overwater accidents. The General Purpose Section cleared private boats from bomb testing areas and maintained security of the marine bombing ranges. The Tug and Barge Section barged equipment, coal and cargo.



*Officers Housing Georgia Avenue*



*Enlisted Men barracks*



*Enlisted men in front of barracks*

Housing at Eglin throughout the war was in short supply to the extent that many of the families of Eglin's officers and enlisted men resided in civilian, off-base housing, or in temporary structures. Ten identical housing units were designed and mostly completed in 1941. They were each one story, encompassed 2,700 square feet and were designed to house sixty-four men.





*Building 4 Chapel*



*Building 4*



CHAPEL WEDDING

*Wedding in Building 4*

Throughout the war, Building 4, the Chapel, was the worship place for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish individuals on the installation. The Chapel featured red steeples and a vestibule with the post chaplain's office and a cloakroom. There was a 15-singer choir loft upstairs, and the auditorium could hold 600 people. The pews were made of solid oak and the pulpit was built in such a manner that it could be moved to the side or middle of the rostrum. The Chapel also had a moveable altar that could be pulled out the rear of the rostrum for use as needed for the different services. In addition to serving as the site of weekly religious services, the Chapel hosted many weddings during the war years.

Eglin AFB is preparing for the future by transforming buildings and infrastructure to increase capacity and capabilities for advancing warfighting-enabling technologies. At the heart of NexGen Eglin is the transformation of the Eglin Field District. This area will undergo rebuilding, renovation, and redevelopment to increase security, capability and capacity while preserving the original Headquarters.



*T-38 Talons flying in formation*



*Maintainer and pilot discussing their F-22A*



*96th Test Wing F-15*