

According to the book "History of Marfa & Presidio County, TX" by Cecilia Thompson (via David Brooks), in April 1942 a site was selected that was 7.8 miles east of Marfa south of US Route 90 for a large new Army Airfield.

The Southern Pacific Railroad tracks run parallel to Route 90 at this area.

The highway & railroad provided excellent logistics support for the new airfield.

The land was owned by Thomas Hendrick & was on lease to W. B. Mitchell & sons for cattle grazing.

The Mitchells agreed to release the land and citizens of Marfa & Alpine jointly purchased the land with a bond issue for \$30,000.

The offer was leased to the Federal Government for \$1 per year, but the Government decided to purchase the land outright, a total of 2,748 acres of land.

Several contractors were engaged to construct the airfield, supervised by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Construction started in early 1942 and was essentially completed by August 22, 1942.

The U.S. Army Air Force Advanced Flying School came into existence at the Marfa AAF at that time.

It took about six to eight weeks before military personnel were fully in place to operate the airfield.

As built during the war, the airfield at Marfa consisted of a total of six asphalt runways (up to 7,500' long),

with an extensive network of taxiways & ramps.

Adjacent to the airfield to the north was an extensive street grid, with a large number of buildings (eventually totaling nearly 250 buildings), including a hospital, barracks, chapel, theater, mess halls, control tower, and hangars.

The initial construction at Marfa cost a total of over \$6 million,

according to the book "The Wings of Change" (courtesy of Steve Cruse).

Training at Marfa AAF commenced on October 30, 1942.

Auxiliary landing fields for the use of Marfa AAF had been provided by action of the Federal Court in El Paso. Condemnation charges were filed for immediate possession of land vital to the successful prosecution of the war.

Four owners were directed to deliver 1,869 acres for landing fields, which eventually included:

Marfa South Aux #1 (15 miles SE of Marfa),

Marfa Aux #2 (10.5 miles WNW of Marfa),

Ryan Aux #3 (16.5 miles WNW of Marfa),

Marfa Aux #4 (4 miles north of Marfa), later reused as Marfa Municipal Airport,

Aragon Aux #5 (8.5 miles WNW of Marfa),

and Marfa Aux #7 (2 miles NE of Marfa).

No "Marfa Aux #6" was ever constructed, and no record exist of where it had been planned to be located.

On 11/25/42, the first shipment of AT-17B twin-engine trainers arrived from Cessna in Wichita, KS.

A flow of aircraft continued to be delivered as training ramped up. The first class started training on December 11, 1942, weeks ahead of planned schedule.

This class (43-B) completed its training on February 6th, 1943.

Fatal accidents were inevitable with the demands of wartime training,

and the first killed at Marfa were Lieutenant Holland & Cadet Hallin.

The flying school experienced a total of 35 accidents during WW2.

By April 30, 1944, the base had a total complement of 3,293 personnel:

575 officers, 2,114 enlisted men, and 604 civilians.

At its peak, Marfa AAF would operate a staggering total of 500 aircraft, according to the book "The Wings of Change" (courtesy of Steve Cruse).