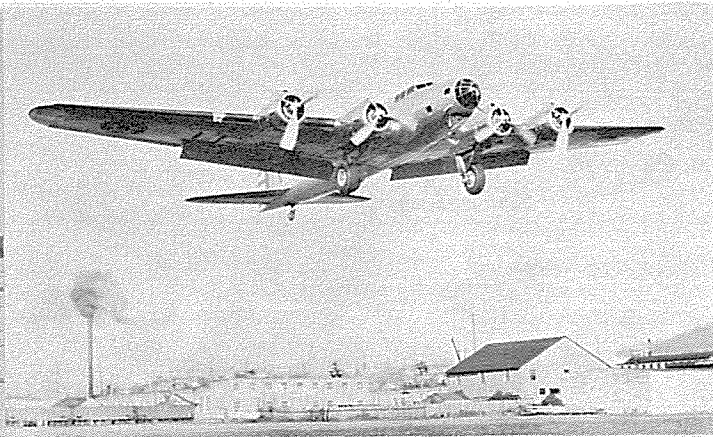




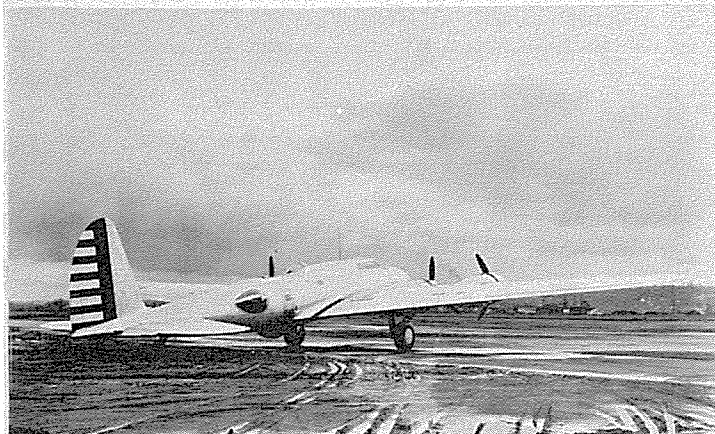
XB-17

(U.S.A.A.C.)



Y1B-17

(Boeing)



Y1B-17A

(Boeing)



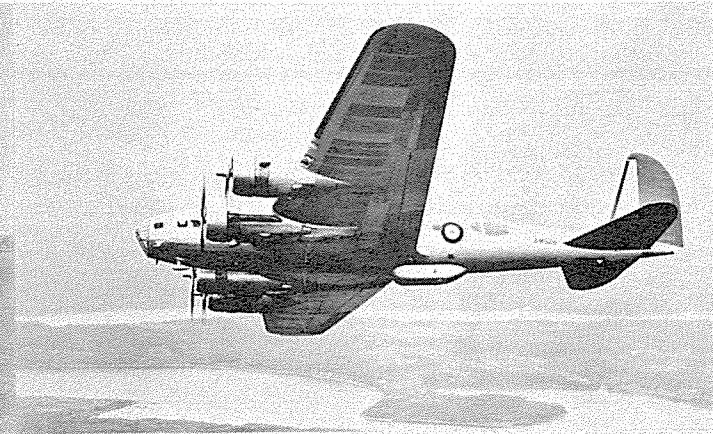
B-17B

(Boeing)



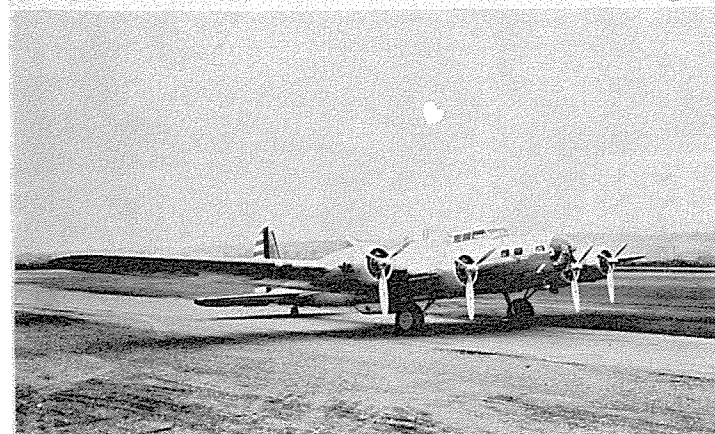
B-17C

(Boeing)



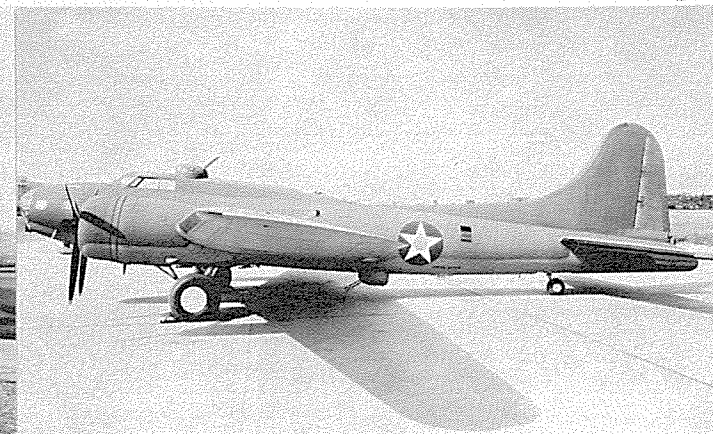
Fortress I

(Boeing)



B-17D

(Boeing)



B-17E

(Boeing)

WORLD WAR II PHOTO PAGE

by

Gerald H. Balzer

Fortress Genealogy

The Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortress" was the first airplane to demonstrate the significance of air power as a strategic weapon and as such became one of the most famous aircraft of World War II. Before the B-17, the airplane was considered as merely an adjunct to the ground forces - a field piece with extended range. The performance of the B-17 and other aircraft that followed it, forceably revised the role of the airplane in the minds of the military.

No. 1: XB-17. Designed for a competition organized by the Army Air Corps, the XB-17 first appeared on Boeing drawing boards in 1933. The prototype was built during 1935 and made its first flight on 28 July 1935. The aircraft was destroyed in an accident on 30 October 1935 when an Air Corps crew took off with the controls locked.

No. 2: YB-17. Thirteen YB-17's were built for service testing. These aircraft differed from the XB-17 by featuring a redesigned landing gear (a single oleo strut as compared to the double strut of the XB-17), 1,000 HP Wright Cyclones instead of the 750 HP Pratt and Whitney R-1690-E engines, and heavier armament.

No. 3: YB-17A. The 14th YB-17 (static test airplane) was completed as the YB-17A (later B-17A) for experimental tests at the request of the Army Air Corps. These tests included the installation of four General Electric turbo-superchargers for high altitude operations.

No. 4: B-17B. The B-17B was the production version of the YB-17/YB-17A and featured a redesigned nose that eliminated the drag producing notch noticeable in earlier models. A contract for 39 B-17B's was awarded to Boeing on 9 November 1937. The first flight of the B-17B was on 27 June 1939.

No. 5: B-17C. The B-17C was an improved version of the "B" model. The major changes in the B-17C were improved engines, flush gun emplacements and a ventral bath-tub gun emplacement. A total of 38 aircraft were contracted for delivery in 1940.

No. 6: Fortress I. The B-17C was supplied to the RAF where it was designated "Fortress I." These aircraft (a total of 20) were assigned to the Coastal Command and in June of 1941 experienced their first combat with an attack on the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau in the French port of Brest.

No. 7: B-17D. The B-17D, a further modification of the B-17C, incorporated self-sealing fuel tanks, increased armor plating, revised engine cowl flaps, and improved armament. It was with a B-17D that Captain Colin Kelly made his celebrated attack.

No. 8 & 9: B-17E. The B-17E was the result of major design changes brought about by combat requirements. Most significant of the changes incorporated were the redesign of the vertical fin, the addition of the tail gun emplacement, and the addition of two powered turrets, the lower one being remote controlled. This ventral gun emplacement was later revised to a manned ball turret (AF s/n 41-2505 to 41-2669 incl. and 41-9011 to 41-9245 incl.). Gun calibre was increased from .30 to .50, making the B-17E the most heavily armed bomber in combat.

No. 10: B-17F. The B-17F replaced the "E" model on the assembly lines in the spring of 1942. It differed from the B-17E by some 400 changes, the most obvious of which was the one-piece clear plastic nose.

No. 11: B-17G. The B-17G was the last production model of the B-17 and differed from its predecessor primarily by the incorporation of two .50 calibre guns in a remote controlled chin turret.

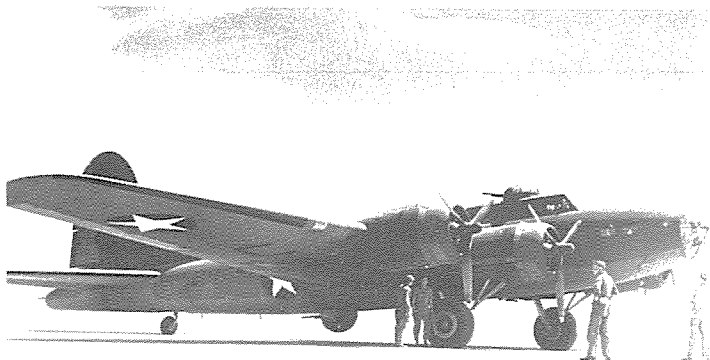
No. 12: XB-38. The XB-38 was a re-engined B-17E with modifications being carried out by Vega, a Lockheed subsidiary. The Wright Cyclones of the B-17E were replaced by the Allison V-1710-89 engines with all major modifications being made forward of the existing firewall. The production version of the B-38 was to have been an Allison powered B-17F.

No. 13: XB-40. The XB-40 was an escort fighter variant of the B-17F. It incorporated heavier armament including a second dorsal power turret and was intended to be interspersed among the bomber formations to increase the collective defensive fire power.

No. 14: PB-1. The PB-1's were B-17G's signed over to the U.S. Navy by the Air Force. They were used primarily for anti-submarine service and later for experimental purposes. The aircraft shown is carrying a free-flight model of the Grumman F8F "Bearcat."

No. 15: PB-1G. The PB-1G was a modification of the B-17G for the Coast Guard, with bombing equipment and armament removed. Provisions were made to sling a lifeboat (parachute dropped) beneath the fuselage for rescue work.

No. 16: PB-1W. The PB-1W was a B-17G modification ordered by the U. S. Navy and specially fitted with early warning radar. These aircraft had sealed bomb bays and extra internal fuel tanks for extended range.

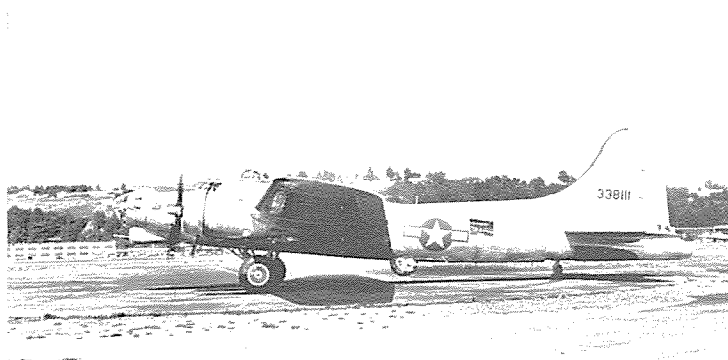


B-17E

(Boeing) B-17F

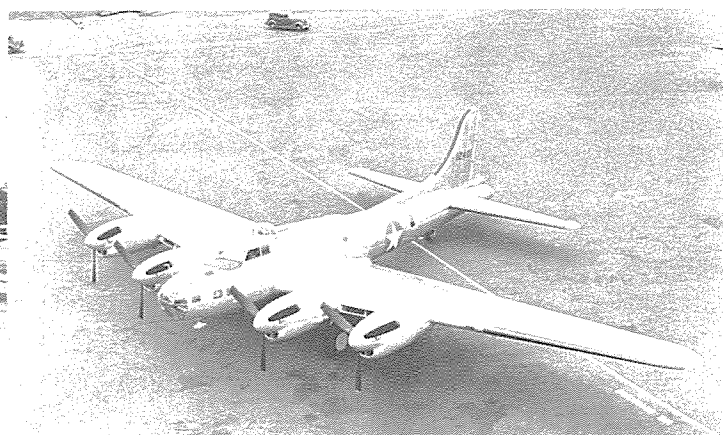


(Boeing)

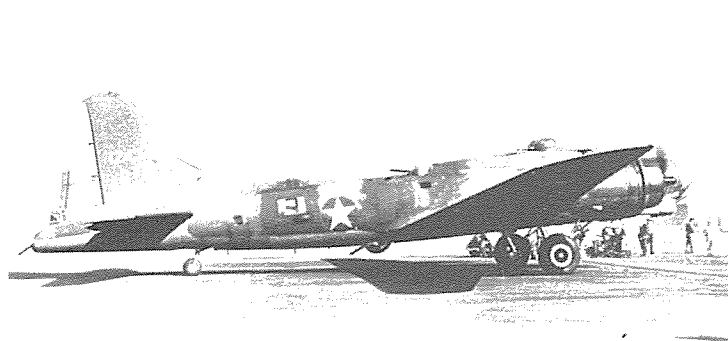


B-17G

(Boeing) XB-38

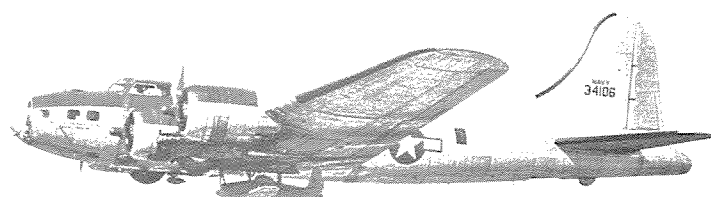


(Lockheed)



XB-40

(Boeing) PB-1

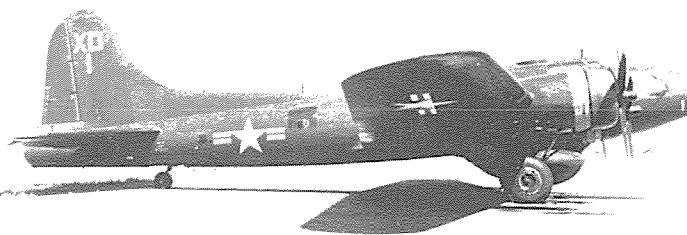


(Boeing)



PB-1G

(Boeing) PB-1W



(Boeing)