

From

Balloons



To

Ballistics



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Cover Photo: Bob Freeman performs aerobatics at the Truckee Tahoe Airshow and Family Festival on June 22. A 51 year, 6000 hours pilot, Bob has flown in three world championships with his best finish being fourth place in Slovenia in 2002. He will be performing at the 2024 Longmont Airshow & Expo flying his Extra 330SX aerobatic aircraft. The airshow will be at the Vance Brand Municipal Airport in Longmont on September 14<sup>th</sup>. The flying demonstrations are scheduled to begin at 11:00 am. The Airshow will be free for all ages. (Photo: Joshua Lapum)

## **Your article in Balloons to Ballistics**

The Colorado Aviation Historical Society is soliciting articles that relate to Colorado and aviation from interested contributors. We're looking for submissions that speak to any subject that you would like to see in print (i.e. aeronautical memorabilia, airports, aviators, aviation businesses, astronauts, etc.). If you have something to offer please forward it at your earliest convenience.

Articles should be submitted in a Times New Roman (12 font) format, and have an unjustified right edge. Please do not insert photos into the article, but add them each as an additional jpg. attachment and include a caption for each.

Submit your article(s) or questions to:  
aviator\_b@outlook.com

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## From the President of CAHS

Keith Shaddox



I hope everyone is having a pleasant summer. I have been present for some significant events in late spring and early summer.

As many of you know one of our members, Walt Barbo, turned 100 this spring. There was a birthday party for Walt, sponsored by Colorado Pilots Association and Wings Over the Rockies Museum. There were many CAHS members there, including myself. At last report Walt was still flying his 210.

We were saddened by the passing of Bart Whitehouse. Bart is a laureate in the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame. I flew with Bart on occasion, and he had a smooth feel for the controls on his 206? – 205? He told me it was actually a 205 and half. He will be missed at the banquet this year and on the ramp at Young Eagles flights. Anyone who has ever telephoned Bart will be familiar with his trademark – “Whitehouse here...”

After finding a good home for our Eaglerock and our OX5 engine we are better financially than we have been for some time because of the sale of the OX5.

I was present representing your Society at the Broomfield Grange for a tribute to ‘Lucky’ McGinty. Lucky was a WW2 vet who had a truly stunning record as waist gunner on B-17s over Europe. This was the first of what we hope will be more collaboration with Fred Martin and his History Presents organization. Fred is a remarkable presenter of aviation military history. Find out more at fredtmartin.com.

Please stay tuned for news about our Hall of Fame. We are going to remodel it again. This time we are going to go for brightness and better visibility. We’ll also be sending out information about our next general membership meeting in August. This is probably the most important membership meeting of the year so you won’t want to miss it.

## Mystery Quiz Spring 2024

In each issue of the Journal we will present a photograph from the Society archives and challenge you, the reader, to provide information about the subject. Anyone who responds with the correct answer will be mentioned in the following issue, and the first person to answer will win a CAHS commemorative challenge coin. Send your response to [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com) at your earliest convenience to ensure your submittal is included in the next Journal. Please make certain to include a mailing address where you’d like to receive the coin.

The challenge for the Spring issue was to identify the manufacturer and popular name of this 1929 biplane.



The aircraft depicted in the 2Q24 Mystery Quiz is a 1929 Combo-Wing, model A-12, Alexander Eaglerock, sporting a 150 Hp. Comet engine. The photo was taken at Alexander Field, located at the Alexander factory in Colorado Springs. The aircraft, c/n 785, was sold initially to Kysor E/R Sales, Niles, MI.

The aircraft had a couple of accidents as well as several owners over its brief career. Following an accident at Strathmore, CA on 6/3/1934, this aircraft was de-registered with the CAA.

Congratulations to the winner of this Mystery Quiz; Jeff Cain, of Denver. He responded one hour and five minutes after the Journals publication online. A CAHS medallion has been sent to his residence.

# Bye, Bye, Birdie!

By Brian Richardson

Founded in 1925 by the Alexander Film Corporation, the Alexander Aircraft Company of Englewood (and later Colorado Springs), Colorado was the largest manufacturer of general aviation aircraft throughout the world. Between 1927 and 1928 they produced more than 1,000 various aircraft models.

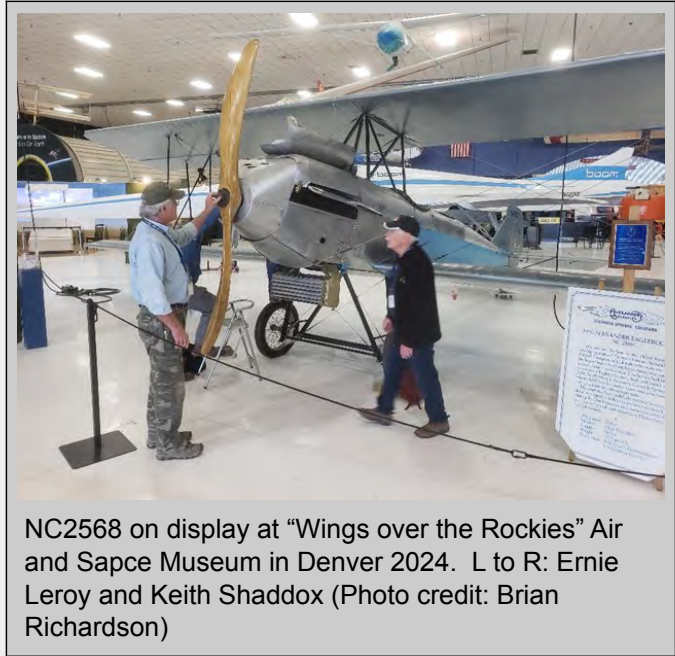
Production of the first model line, commonly referred to as the Alexander Eaglerock Long-Wing,<sup>1</sup> started early in 1926. One of the very earliest off the line was construction number 122, which was actually the fifteenth aircraft built by Alexander at the Englewood plant.

Registered with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as NC2568, it was sold at the factory to Mr. Charles Birt of Guymon, Oklahoma. Mr. Birt used the aircraft for both business and pleasure, operating from a strip on his family farm. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, CAA grounded all non-essential civilian flying around the nation. As a result, Birt removed the wings and tail section from the fuselage. He stored the wings in a barn and the fuselage in a shed, expecting to reconnect them at war's end. Unfortunately, a bolt of lightning took out the barn with the wings and tail feathers – nothing was salvageable. The fuselage languished in the shed on the farm for decades.



NC2568 at home in Oklahoma Ca. 1930s. L to R: Charles Birt and unknown. (Photo credit: Brian Richardson)

In 1958, Colorado Springs entrepreneur Don Bymaster, looking for an Eaglerock to restore, contacted the Birt family and a bargain was reached for NC2568. A near decade long restoration, which consumed 11,000 man-hours, resulted in the Eaglerock being restored to static-display condition.



NC2568 on display at “Wings over the Rockies” Air and Sapce Museum in Denver 2024. L to R: Ernie Leroy and Keith Shaddox (Photo credit: Brian Richardson)

Bymaster placed the aircraft on loan with the CAHS for display at Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum in 1996 and then, in 2003, his estate permanently donated NC2568 to the society. During the past twenty-one years the Eaglerock has been relocated twice - first from Wings in Denver to the Pueblo Wiesbrod Aircraft Museum in Pueblo, then back to Wings.



CAHS Treas. Ernie Leroy, preparing fuselage for loading into trailer. (Photo credit: Brian Richardson)

<sup>1</sup> This version of the Eaglerock derived its name from the short upper wing and longer lower wing, which improved maneuverability at higher field elevations due to the increased ground effect produced.

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### “Birdie” from page 4

Faced with rising maintenance costs, ever-changing display criteria and yet another possible move, CAHS elected to find a solution that would place this extremely rare airplane in a permanent and fitting home. After considering a number of options it was decided that CAHS would donate the Eaglerock to the Antique Airplane Association Air Power Museum in Ottumwa, Iowa, with the sole caveat that it may be restored, but never flown again.



CAHS Pres. Keith Shaddox, moving Eaglerock upper wing panels. (Photo credit: Brian Richardson)

In June, with help from members of Wings Over the Rockies restoration staff and CAHS volunteers, the Air Power Museum retrieved NC2568 in two separate moves and transported it to its new home.

## 2024 Colorado Aviation Classic



The Colorado Aviation Historical Society will once again be holding its antique and classic aircraft judging competition – Colorado Aviation Classic – on Saturday, September 14, 2024, at the Vance Brand Municipal Airport in Longmont. This year’s event will be in conjunction with the Longmont Airport Airshow and Expo The 2024 Longmont Airshow & Expo ([visitlongmont.org](http://visitlongmont.org))

We are looking for a dozen volunteers to help guide aircraft on the ramp, man the society’s hospitality pavilion and/or judge the competition aircraft. You don’t need any special qualifications except the desire to spend the day around some really great aircraft and watch a thrilling air show.

You will need to plan on a full day, between 8 AM and 3 PM. All volunteers will be briefed as to their specific jobs before the air show day. Judges will be using a prepared checklist that provides for a numerical tally, and the judge’s decision will be based on their personal impression of each aircraft. We will also need your tee-shirt size as the City of Longmont will be providing each participant with a cool airshow volunteer shirt.

If you are interested in supporting the society at this event, please contact Brian at [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com) or (970) 405-5377 for more information.

Give a gift membership in the Colorado Aviation Historical Society

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## Forgotten Airfields of Colorado

### Badger Flats Airfield

By Brian Richardson

Just about a one-hour drive west of Colorado Springs on Colorado Highway 24, you will find the northbound turnoff for County Road 31. Most folks use this road to reach the little village of Tarryall, whose population can best be described as only a handful. What few people know is that just a short distance up County Road 31, from the highway, an abandoned military airfield lies between the road and tree line to the west.



Looking west across the runway towards Badger Mountain. (Photo Credit: Brian Richardson)

Situated on the leeward side of 11,294-foot Badger Mountain, the Badger Flats airstrip was constructed in 1952 by the US Army Corps of Engineers to support the Army's Mountain Warfare Training Center at Fort Carson. The Training Center was charged with preparing troops for the conflict in Korea.

Little information about this long forgotten flying field is readily available to the public. Had it not been for an obscure article in the January 8, 1981, Park County Republican, formerly the official newspaper of Park County (now called The Flume), **AvAr's** researchers might not have discovered the origins of this site.

A pedestrian survey of the airstrip was conducted by **AvAr** team members in 2021 and again in 2022. These revealed that at a field elevation of 8,187 feet above sea level there is one 3,135 foot long by 30-foot-wide sod runway, on a magnetic compass heading of 340/160 degrees. The runway surface appears to be in fairly good shape, though I'd be hesitant to land on it in my own airplane. There is no accompanying taxiway. At either end is a small turnaround area. Nearby each of these turnaround areas are the remnants of what appear to have been small maintenance sheds, no doubt housing oil, tools, small parts, etc. These remains consist of rotted, sun-bleached wooden planks and ground anchors, all of which bear signs of having been painted yellow at one time. In several photographs taken by **AvAr** team member Len Wallace in the 1980s, a metal tripod used as a windsock stanchion stood approximately mid-field on the west side of the runway for many years, its fabric sleeve long ago succumbing to the elements. This tell-tale sign of a flying field simply vanished a couple of decades ago; hopefully, it was used at another airport.



Remains of the northern maintenance shed with yellow paint still visible. Note: Authors hat is for scale reference. (Photo Credit: Brian Richardson)

In the largely coniferous forest to the west of this strip can be found obvious signs of a once military presence – rusted C-ration cans. Perhaps ten acres or more in size, the cantonment area is dotted with evidence of use over several years – fire pits, several half-buried trash middens, C-ration and other food-stuff cans still litter the landscape. Undoubtedly a thorough metal detector sweep would reveal much more under the forest duff.

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### “Badger Flats” From page 6



Looking north along runway at Badger Flats. (Photo Credit: Brian Richardson)

When you consider the overall field elevation and predominant crosswinds, then factor in density altitude for a good part of the year, there is little doubt that this small, remote airfield enjoyed a reputation for being difficult to get in and out of. Indeed, the Park County Republican article added that a number of light Army

aircraft were wrecked while using this strip due to treacherous winds.

If you have any information pertaining to this or other forgotten airfields, please consider sharing it with the **AvAr** team at [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com)



The old windsock stanchion at about the mid-field point, on west side of the runway. In the background is Badger Mountain. Photo taken in the early 1990s. (Photo Credit: Len Wallace)

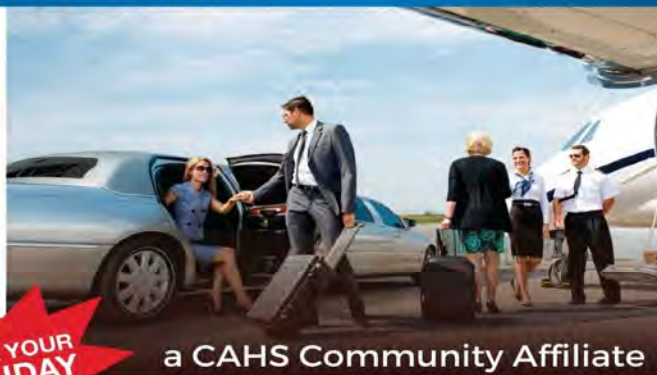
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## Notes from the Field

# Casper Mountain Bomber Crew Dedication

By Mark Milliken

About 50 million years ago, a 20-mile-long granite block punched 5000 ft up through the earth's crust near Casper, WY. The east-west granitic mountain now stands 4000 ft. above the high plains of central Wyoming near Casper, Wyoming.

Aircrews arriving at Casper Army Air Base for combat training during WWII were likely not interested in the geology of Casper Mountain. But those who trained on Gulf Coast flatlands may have been alarmed by such a formidable stone monolith located so close to the base.

The USAAF was also concerned. Two navigational flare beacons, separated by five miles, were installed on the mountain crest. They provided a visual corridor for bomber crews flying over the mountain at night.

Training missions across Wyoming at night during the war were especially difficult, owing to poor equipment, poor weather, incomplete training, and little or no visual ground references.

Aircrews' initial concerns about the nearby mountain hazard would prove to be mostly unfounded. Sadly, the eight-man crew of 2nd Lt. Richard Zorn would prove to be an exception to the rule.

Near midnight on June 17, 1944, Lt. Zorn's B-24J #42-100023 was returning to the base after a navigation training mission. Flying westward along the mountain crest south of Casper, Lt. Zorn was apparently intent on using the western beacon to guide him northward into the Casper area.

The B-24J then began a descending right turn onto a northward heading toward the beacon and home. We'll never know why the aircraft was flying so low over rugged terrain with no visual ground references. In total

darkness, the aircraft collided with terrain on top of Casper Mountain near a road today called Micro Road. At impact, the plane was still in the gentle right turn initiated after passing the Vanhorn cabin.

Were both altimeters incorrect? Was the aircraft damaged at the Vanhorn cabin? If so, was the descent profile not correctable? No mention of mechanical issues was made in the accident report.



The crew members of B-24J 42-100023 pose for the traditional crew photo (courtesy of Mark Milliken)

Cabin residents Fred Vanhorn and his wife heard the plane coming. Fred reported to the USAAF that all four engines were operating normally. It was so low that Fred was sure it would crash into his cabin. Indeed, the aircraft seemed to Vanhorn to have brushed the tree tops. The plane exploded, sending debris through the forest. There were no survivors.

The main part of the wreckage tumbled 660 ft. downhill on the north slope of Casper Mountain, shedding a trail of debris on a heading toward the flare beacon. A fire was reported by other aircraft in the area. Fred Vanhorn drove to the scene, but could do nothing. Soon after, the coroner recovered the young men and sent them home to their families.

In 2022, the Friends of the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum in Casper, confirmed the crash location to be on private land. Landowners were aware of a crash, but no one on the mountain knew it was Lt. Zorn's B-24J. The Friends began an ancestry journey to locate living relatives and plan a memorial service.

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“Bomber” continued from page 8

On June 17, 2024, the 80th anniversary of the tragedy, 21 crew relatives from all over the country were hosted by the Friends in Casper. A military funeral service was conducted by the Wyoming Army National Guard including a gun salute, taps, and folded flags ceremony. Families of three crewmen received folded flags.

The Zorn crew most assuredly approved.



Nephew of crew member receives the folded flag from Wyoming National Guard Honor Guard (Photo: Mark Milliken)

Editor’s Note: *Casper resident Mark Milliken has been an active AvAr team member since 2018, coordinating several of the team’s expeditions throughout Wyoming. Working through the Friends of the Wyoming Veterans Memorial Museum, Mark has helped to broaden public awareness of the service and sacrifice made by many young aircrew in the state during World War Two, and has managed to raise the necessary funds to have impressive monuments dedicated at a number of these sites. This article is a summary of mark’s after action report entitled, “Casper Mountain Claims a B-24 Crew, Then Hosts Their Families 80 Years On.”*



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## Mystery Quiz Spring 2024 (1Q24)

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The challenge for this issue: Identify the manufacturer and model of this early airliner, seen here at Denver Union Airport.



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