

B-17 CRASHES 5.8 MILES NORTH OF SHERIDAN, ARKANSAS

MARCH 12, 1943

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS NO. 42-29532 MEMORIAL PARK DEDICATED

OCTOBER 12, 2015

335



B-17 (NOT THE ONE THAT CRASHED)

On March 12, 1943, nine airmen were killed when their B-17 Flying Fortress No. 42-29532 crashed 5.8 Miles North of Sheridan, AR. A small monument marked the location in 1944, and then a Memorial Park was erected in 2015 featuring a replica of a B-17. This park also honors Grant County veterans killed in action since World War I. It also honors both Confederate and Union soldiers who fell during the Battle of Jenkins Ferry which occurred nearby.

HISTORY – THE PLANE

The B-17 was assigned to Smoky Hill Air Field in Salina, Kansas The aircraft had serious problems from the time it rolled off the Boeing assembly line in Seattle, Washington. Confidential Exhibit "I" indicated that engines #1 and 3 had been replaced with only 17 hours and 45 minutes of flight time and engines #2 and 4 were scheduled to be replaced with just 16 hours and 15 minutes of flight time following its scheduled landing in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Flying Fortress only had 25 hours and 35 minutes of flight time before its departure on March 12, 1943, and approximately 28 hours and 20 minutes total flying time at the time of the crash. On February 29, 1943, Special Orders were issued from Washington D.C. for the nine-member crew to "deliver the shipment" (the B-17F) to West Palm Beach, Florida. In addition to the normal nine-man crew, the special orders also directed the following officers to accompany the "shipment" on temporary duty and upon delivery immediately return to Smoky Hill Army Air Field. The four officers that were to be aboard were:

Major Fred T. Crimmins, Provisional Group Commander
Captain Richard F. Ezzard, Provisional Flight Commander
Captain Columbus E. Griffin, Provisional Flight Commander
Warrant Officer J.G. Morris I. Gold, Provisional Group Adjutant

According to the A.C. Order #W535-ac-20292 (1) on March 11, 1943, the aircraft was Condemned. Despite the aircraft being condemned on March 11, the crew followed their new order #13 to depart for Morrison Field on March 12, 1943, at 1300 hours to "ship #9532" to West Palm Beach Florida. From Florida, the crew was to go to Europe to fight in the war. Their orders required commander Davis to fly at 10,000 feet on a direct path from Salina, Kansas to their West Palm Beach, Florida destination but it is clear that something went wrong with the aircraft during their flight over Arkansas that caused severe vibrations and required the crew to alter their course.

The aircraft should have been no closer to Sheridan than 100 miles but due to the severe vibrations, the crew was forced to circle back toward the Northwest in an attempt to either return to Salina Kansas, or land at Adams Field in Little Rock. Newspaper reports stated that the military said that Co-Pilot Robert Turchetto had been in contact with Ada.

The plane crashed at around 4 pm and none on board survived.

The Crew:

Pilot - 2nd Lt. George H. Davis, 22 of Dubuque, Iowa

Co-Pilot - 2nd Lt. Robert V. Turchette, 22 of Newark, New Jersey

The Navigator - 2nd Lt. Leo E. Dolan, 24, of St. Louis, Missouri

The Bombardier - 2nd Lt. Beckett R. Cooke, 21, of Lynden, Washington

The Engineer - Tech. Sgt. Dewitt H. Tyler, 25, of Porterville, California

The Radio Operator - Tech. Sgt. Peter K. Ivanovich, 25 of Bisbee, Arizona

The Waist Gunner - Staff Sgt. Arthur N. Potter, 25, of Springfield, Vermont

The Ball Turret Gunner - Staff Sgt. David G. Secorski, 22, of Detroit Michigan

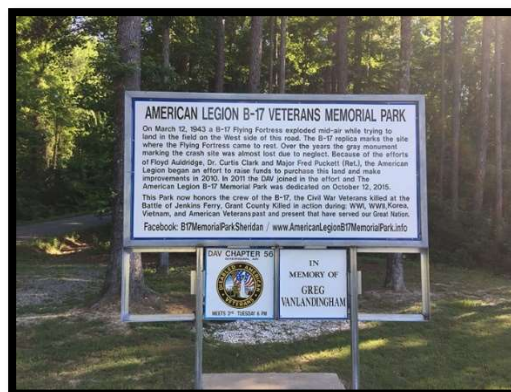
The Tail Gunner - Staff Sgt. Kenneth D. Cain, 22, of Hobbs, New Mexico

THE MEMORIAL



The Original Marker (downtown)

1944, a year after the incident, a stone marker was erected at the crash site dedicated to the memory of the nine airmen who lost their lives.



Entrance to the park

The above sign reads as follows:

On March 12, 1943, a B-17 Flying Fortress exploded in mid-air trying to land in the field on the left side of this road. The B-17 replica marks the site where the B-17 came to rest. Over the years the gray monument marking the crash site was almost lost due to neglect. Because of the efforts of Floyd Auldridge, Dr. Curtis Clark, and Major Fred Puckett (Ret.), the American Legion began an effort to raise funds to purchase this land and make improvements in 2010. In 2011 the DAV joined in the effort and the American Legion B-17 Memorial Park was dedicated on October 12, 2015.

This Park now honors the crew of the B-17, the Civil War Veterans killed at the Battle of Jenkins Ferry, and the Grant County individuals killed in action during WW1, WW2, Korea, Vietnam, and American Veterans past and present who have served our Great Nation. Contacts are:

[Facebook](#): B17MemorialParkSheridan / [Internet](#): www.AmericanLegionB17MemorialPark.info

The marker and even the incident were all but forgotten until 1984 when Boy Scout Jerry Jackson and his father discovered the marker in the woods. **Jackson adopted the restoration of the area as his Eagle Scout project and worked with the Grant County Museum to create a more prominent memorial to the airmen.**

Jackson was killed in a car accident at the age of sixteen in 1986, but his project was continued by the American Legion Post of Grant County. Their efforts resulted in the opening of the Grant County Veterans **Memorial Park on October 12, 2015.** The Memorial Park has a replica of the B-17F Flying Fortress and includes a memorial with the airmen's names inscribed. The park also commemorates fallen Civil War soldiers who fought on both sides at Jenkins' Ferry in Grant County, as well as all Grant Countians who have been killed in combat since World War I.



*The B-17 Replica
Drone View of The Park*



In 2010 plans were put in motion to make a memorial park. All that was at the location was a single monument since 1944. In 2011 construction began and 4 years later in 2015, the park was finished. The American Legion obtained an \$18,000 grant from the Arkansas Department of Rural Services to purchase the 1 acre for the park and to purchase materials to raise the level of the monument site.

The Legion also received other grants from the Arkansas Economic Development District Inc. The total of all grants awarded to date is under \$45,000, but because of individual donations and gifts In-kind, **they have been able to build a veteran's memorial park that is valued at over \$1 million.**



The Monument to the 9 crewmembers' who lost their lives with their individual State flags

At the rear of the plane, there are steps leading to a memorial wall that shows all nine airmen's names, ranks, and flags of their home state. At the rear of the plane on either side of the steps is a wall dedicated to fallen soldiers who lived in Grant County since World War I. *(See above)*

Video of the B17 Memorial Park dedication on October 12, 2015, by Smithfamilycares.com. We would like to thank everyone who helped make this a reality. *(To view...copy and paste the below link into your browser)*

<https://www.facebook.com/B17memorialparksheridan/videos/446293128899348/>

For much more detailed information go to Facebook & Enter: [B-17 Memorial Park.](#)

On the property, monuments are honoring those who died in the nearby **Battle of Jenkins' Ferry.**

DIRECTIONS TO THE PARK

ADDRESS:

1836 County Rd 51, Sheridan, AR

DIRECTIONS:

From the intersection of US-270 and 167 in Sheridan, drive north on US-167 for one mile. Turn left at the stoplight onto AR-35. Drive 2.5 miles. Turn right onto Grant County Rd 51. Drive two miles. You'll see the plane on the right.

R.A. RATES

Worth a detour - <https://www.roadsideamerica.com/about/ratings>

MORE PICTURES FROM THE PARK

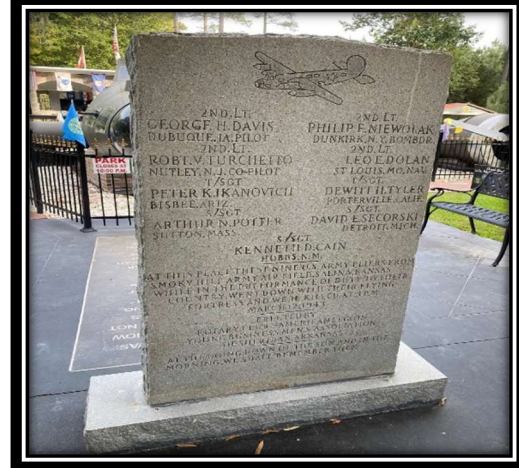




A lone B-17 from Texas flies the park on May 22, 2017

MY SON-IN-LAW, JEFF TINER, AND I VISITED THE PARK IN 2021





DISCLAIMER

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