

Fairchild PT-19A



PT-19A

Army SN: 41-20388 N55406

and its WWII Service: Line Number 64 Cimmarron Field, Oklahoma 1942-1944

In 1938, while most military pilots were still receiving their initial training in biplanes, Fairchild Aircraft recognized the need for a new design more closely approximating the more advanced types of aircraft the trainees would soon be flying. The result was the development of one of the most innovative and effective primary training planes ever designed, the Fairchild Primary Trainer ("PT"). The Fairchild PT was given its factory model number M-62 and its official name, the Cornell. The first prototype flew on May 15, 1939 and later that year won a fly-off competition against 17 other designs for the new Army training airplane. Fairchild was awarded its first Army PT contract for an initial order of 270 airplanes on September 22, 1939.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 demand for military pilots skyrocketed making it necessary for Fairchild Aircraft (FA) to look for subcontractors to assist in meeting the demand for it's PTs. Soon, four North American subcontractors were signed up; one Canadian

company, Fleet Aircraft (F) and three U.S. companies, Howard Aircraft (HO), St. Louis Aircraft (SL) and Aeronca (AE) as well as Fabrica do Galeao (FG) in Brazil.

Three basic variations of the Fairchild PT were produced, the PT-19, PT-23 and PT-26. All three versions used the same basic airframe. The first and most common, the PT-19, is an open cockpit design and features Fairchild's Ranger engine with its six inverted inline cylinders. The PT-26 is the Canadian version of the PT-19 and features a sliding canopy and cockpit heating system for protection against the Canadian winters along with a few other differentiating features.

Between 1940 and the end of production it is believed that 7,443 airplanes were produced, the breakdown between models being 4,527 PT-19's, 1,790 PT-26's and 1,126 PT-23's. The total number produced over the life of the design is believed to be in excess of 8,130 airplanes. By 1944, more World War II pilots had received their first introduction to military flight in Fairchild PT's than in any other aircraft. This number includes not only US and Canadian students but pilots from Great Britain, France, Norway, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Rhodesian and India.



MORE ABOUT PT-19A N55406 AND CIMARRON FIELD, OKLAHOMA

Fairchild PT-19A, Army SN 41-20388 was built at the Fairchild Aircraft factory, Hagerstown, Maryland in early 1942. The aircraft was received by the U.S. Army Air Force on January 24, 1942 at a cost to the Army of \$9,823.00. On January 30, 1942 the aircraft was delivered to the 310th Elementary Flying Training Detachment, 31 st Flying Training Wing, AAF Flying Training Command at Oklahoma Air College on Cimarron Field, Oklahoma.

Cimarron Field was located twenty miles west of Oklahoma City and one mile south of Yukon, Oklahoma on what were 240 acres of wheat fields. It was the far-sightedness of Clarence Page, a World War One Army officer and pilot that resulted in this airfield being constructed in 1941. Page was a reserve officer in the Army, and with war clouds on the horizon realized that he would be called to active duty. Page felt that the European War would eventually involve the United States, and felt that he could be of best use to his country by helping to train the pilots that he knew would be needed. Many in Washington agreed. Page met with General H.H. "Hap" Arnold in Washington and at that meeting Arnold said that if Page was recalled to active duty he would be "just another over-age colonel in command of some base."

But by training thousands of young pilots to fly under contract to the Army, he would make a great contribution. General Arnold concluded by asking Page to begin looking for a suitable site for a training field. So it was that Cimarron Field came to be.

As a civilian operated flight school under contract to the U.S. Army, the Oklahoma Air College was supplied with training aircraft by the Army Air Force. Fifty Fairchild PT-19's ("PT" standing for Primary Trainer) were supplied to Cimarron Field in late 1941, with another 50 arriving in early 1942.

This PT-19A was one of the second batch. Painted in the pre-war Army training scheme of blue and yellow, this PT-19 retained this paint scheme through its entire career with the Oklahoma Air College, even though the Army adopted overall silver for its training aircraft manufactured after May 30, 1942. More unusually, the aircraft of the Oklahoma Air College retained the red center spot in the white star, a tradition since 1927, long after it was abandoned in August 1942 due to its similarity to the Japanese national insignia. Aircraft operated by the Oklahoma Air College also carried the marking "ED" along with the line number on the vertical fin and upper wing surfaces. The "ED" denoted that it was a civilian operated flight school under contract with the Army.

PT-19A 41-20388 was assigned line number 64 when it arrived at Cimarron Field in late January, 1942. We know this is the correct line number because of a common but little known practice of base mechanics. To avoid mixing the removable metal skin panels of one airplane with those of another during routine maintenance, the mechanics would write the aircraft's line number on the *inside* of the panels. Despite many exterior re-paintings over the years, no one had ever removed the original line number "64" found inside, just as it was written by a Cimarron Field mechanic over fifty years ago.

When Cimarron field closed in July of 1944 this aircraft was transferred to the 2533rd Army Air Force Base Unit, AAF Training Command at Goodfellow Army Air Field at San Angelo, Texas. On October 6, 1944, the aircraft was declared surplus to requirements and transferred to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation at Helena, Arkansas, where it was sold as surplus for \$770.00.

This PT-19A is owned by Greg Herrick of Jackson, Wyoming and was restored by the father and son team of Joe and Mark Denest, West Chester, Pennsylvania. It joins the two other examples of the Fairchild PT series which are owned by Greg: PT-23-SL N64097, also restored by the Denests which was named Best Primary Trainer at Oshkosh '95, and Fairchild PT-26A N63568 which won Outstanding Closed Cockpit Monoplane at Oshkosh in back in 1982.

We hope you enjoy our Fairchild PT-19A and take just a moment to reflect on the particularly important role this and other training planes played in our victory in WWII.



Specifications:

Fairchild PT-19A Army SN: 41-20388 N55406

Mission:

WWII Primary Trainer (PT)

Designed and Manufactured by:

Fairchild Aircraft, Hagerstown, Maryland USAAF Model: PT-19A

Civilian Model: M62A

USAAF Identification Number: 41-20388

Manufacturer's Serial Number: T42-1394

Engine: Ranger, inline inverted 6 cylinder 175/200HP

Propeller: Sensenich, two-bladed, fixed pitch, wood

Delivered to: US Army Air Force, January 24,1942

Original Cost: \$9,823.00

Assigned to: 310th Elementary Flying Training Detachment, 31st Flying Training Wing, AAF Flying Training Command

Based at: Oklahoma Air College on Cimarron Field, Oklahoma

Line Number: 64

Total PT-19's manufactured: 4,527

Estimated Number Flying Today: 247

BASIC CONSTRUCTION

A two place, tandem seating, cantilever low-wing monoplane with fabric-covered welded steel tube fuselage, fixed landing gear, plywood-covered wood center section, outer wing panels and tail assembly.

Original USAAF Performance Specifications

Takeoff speed: 60-65 mph

Best Climb Speed: 80 mph Best

Gliding Speed: 80 mph

Rate of Climb: 760 fpm

Service Ceiling: 12,000 ft

Cruise RPM: 2065-2230 rpm

Cruise Speed: 113 mph @ 2230 rpm

Stall Speed: 58 mph

Fuel Capacity: 45 gallons, 40 useable

Range w/40 gallons: 240/340 statute miles

Wing Span: 36'-0"

Gross Weight: 2,520 lbs.