



# **MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE HISTORICAL TRAIL GUIDE 4<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

*"A hike for Scouts"*

*Original trail guide by Martin Emmons (1976)*

*2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Chris Tribble (1989)*

*3<sup>rd</sup> edition by Daniel Ladnier (1997)*

*4<sup>th</sup> edition by T.C. Place (2015)*

## **History of Maxwell Air Force Base**

Maxwell Air Force Base history is rich with memories of famous people and events from DeSoto's visit to the space age. Since 1540 when DeSoto visited the Indian town of Tawassa on the banks of the Alabama River, the flow of leaders in history to this site has continued. Explorers, early pioneers, and present day pioneers have returned time and again.

In February 1910 Wilbur Wright came to the Kohn Plantation, the former location of Tawassa, in search of suitable site to establish a civilian flying school. With the assistance of local businessmen, land was donated and a wooden hanger built to house the Wright aircraft. On March 19, 1910, the Wright brothers opened their school on the site which later became Maxwell AFB. The Wright's closed the school May 27, 1910 and the field lay dormant for the next eight years.

In 1918 local business leaders leased the field for an aviation repair depot and on November 8, 1922, the field was officially named in honor of Second Lieutenant William C. Maxwell, a native of Atmore, Alabama. While on a training flight in the Philippine Islands, Lt. Maxwell's plane developed engine trouble. When an emergency landing was attempted, he saw children playing directly in the path of his aircraft. He deliberately swerved the plane, striking a pole which broke his wing. Maxwell died in the crash. Maxwell Air Force Base is a tribute to his self-sacrifice.

Construction of the first permanent buildings on Maxwell AFB began in October 1927. The mission of the base changed in 1931 when the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Virginia, relocated to Maxwell. The War Department established the Southeast Air Corps Training Center July 8, 1940, with headquarters at Maxwell Field. In rapid succession, Maxwell Field was used as an Officer Candidate School, Advanced Flying Training School, B-24 Navigation School and B-29 transition School. The SEAC was re-designated as the Army Air Forces Eastern Flying Training Command August 23, 1943. It inactivated December 15, 1945.

After World War II, Air University and its five schools, Air Tactical School, Air Command and Staff School, Air War College, Army Air Force School of Aviation Medicine, and Air Special Staff School, under the command of the late General Muir S. Fairchild, emerged. The Korean War began in June 1950, and the Air Force decided to consolidate all its educational activities at Maxwell and nearby Gunter AFB. As a result, in 1954 the construction of the present day academic facilities on Chennault Circle began.

In 1978 the merger of Air University and Air Training Command took place, but in July of 1983 Air University once again returned to major command status. In 1993, during massive restructuring of the Air Force, Air University once again joined with Air Training Command – this time to form a new command, Air Education and Training Command, with the AU commander also serving as the command's director of education.

## **The Boy Scout Trail**

The Maxwell Historical Trail, located on Maxwell AFB, is a 5.2 mile long trail, with an extended version that adds another 7 miles, that highlights the rich history of the area and the Air Force. The trail begins at the base's Maxwell Blvd. gate, and parking for trail walkers is available in the visitor's center parking lot.

The Trail was conceived in 1976 by Boy Scouts of Troop 23, located on Maxwell. Martin Emmons undertook the establishment of the Trail as his Eagle Scout project. The Trail was opened in June of that year, leading walkers past a variety of historic sites.

By 1989 numerous additional historical points of interest on the base had been identified, and 101 base buildings had been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Chris Tribble of Boy Scout Troop 23 undertook the revision of the trail, adding these newly commemorated historical sites, rerouting the trail, and establishing an abbreviated trail for less hearty hikers. He also arranged for placement of a permanent sign to mark the trail's start, and rewrote the trail brochure. The revisions went into effect in January 1989.

The third revision of the trail was accomplished by Daniel Ladnier of Troop 23 as an Eagle Scout project. Changes to street names, additional monuments and historical events taking place since the previous revision were added, and the new trail opened in February 1997.

This is the fourth revision of the trail, created by Thomas C. Place (T.C. Place) of Troop 23 also as an Eagle Scout Project. Changes to the route, creation of a new patch, color pictures and directions were added as part of the trail guide, in addition to adding a monument to the trail.

You can hike the trail for free. A Maxwell Historical Trail patch is available from the Boy Scout Troop 23 to hikers who complete it. The cost is nominal. To purchase patches, e-mail Troop 23 at [troop23maxwell@yahoo.com](mailto:troop23maxwell@yahoo.com).

Although the Trail was designed by and is administered by the Boy Scouts, it is open to other groups also. Trail patches are available to all hikers. Since Maxwell is a U.S. military installation, certain regulations must be followed for entry to the base, and while walking the trail.

Participation of groups in hiking the Trail in no way obligates the U.S. Government or the U.S. Air Force in case of accidents or injuries. For off base groups hiking the Trail, entrance must be made at the Maxwell Blvd. gate. Vehicles will be parked at the Visitor's Center.

### **SOME BASIC TIPS TO FOLLOW:**

- 1. In order to get on base to hike the trail, all adults need a sponsor (one per group), photo ID, and vehicle registration and insurance.** For assistance finding a sponsor, please e-mail [troop23maxwell@yahoo.com](mailto:troop23maxwell@yahoo.com) at least 2 weeks before your hike. Sponsors should contact the 42<sup>nd</sup> Security Forces Squadron at 334-953-7222 several weeks before the scheduled hike to obtain information about specific requirements to enter the base and conduct the hike.
- 2. Entry onto the runways or the parking ramps is prohibited. Swimming by hikers is not permitted anywhere on the installation.**

3. Hikers and their leaders must remain as a group at all times, except in case of emergency, at which time a maximum number of adults will remain with the main group of hikers.
4. Hikers should stay on the trail and walk facing traffic in single file, staying on sidewalks whenever possible.
5. A minimum of two adults must accompany each group with eight or fewer hikers. A minimum of one additional adult must be present for every eight or fewer hikers after the first eight.
6. The Trail is open for hiking every day of the year, sunrise to sunset. It normally takes about two hours to hike the 5.2 mile abbreviated trail and view the points of interest. It takes about 3-4 hours to hike the extended 12 mile trail.
7. Bring water, sunscreen, and snacks. The exchange food court is available for everyone's use.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Security forces (police), emergency medical care, the fire department are available on Maxwell by dialing **911** from any office phone on the base. To report emergency situations over public pay phones on the base, or by cellular phone, call: **911**. This action should be taken **ONLY** during EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

### **The Trail Begins...**

From the Visitor's Center, proceed on Maxwell Blvd. to the start of the trail.

1. **START - ROTC MEMORIAL** – This marker is dedicated to the memory of many ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) generals. A sign about Lt. William C. Maxwell is on one side of the memorial.



Photo by T.C. Place

Continue straight on Maxwell Blvd. and turn right on Poplar St. Immediately on your left is a T-38 Thunderbird.

2. **THUNDERBIRD AIRCRAFT** – This aircraft honors the Thunderbirds, the Air Force Precision Flying Demonstration Team, and represents one of the many aircraft flown by that team. More information is on the plaque.



Photo by Gavin Humelbaugh

Continue on Poplar St.

**3. SENIOR OFFICER QUARTERS –**

On the right as you pass the Youth Center you will see some of the 99 units of the Senior Officer Quarters. Construction on these houses began in January 1932. Over the years such Air Force notables as Generals Claire Chennault, Ira C. Eaker, Muir S. Fairchild, Curtis LeMay and others have occupied them. In 1988 all 99 were added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Continue on Poplar St. to Ash St.  
After crossing Ash Street turn left into the parking lot of the Maxwell Air Park

Photo by Thomas B. Place

**4. PRISONER OF WAR/MISSING IN ACTION**

**(POW/MIA) MONUMENT** –Your tour of the air park begins with a monument that honors all former POWs and MIAs that served their country so well.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**5. B-25 MITCHELL BOMBER –**

To the left of the POW/MIA monument stands a proud airship of the World War II era. Aircraft like this one, manned by crews of six and flying at speeds up to 275 MPH, wreaked destruction on enemy forces in Europe and the Pacific.



Photo by Dylan Austin

6. **WILLIAM R LAWLEY JR. MEMORIAL** – To the left of the B-25 Mitchell Bomber is the William R. Lowley Jr. Memorial. This memorial honors 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William “Bill” Lawley Jr., who is one of the few recipients of the Medal of Honor to survive his heroic actions.



Photo by Iain Westphal

7. **WRIGHT FLYER REPLICA** – At the opposite end of the red brick “runway” stands a reminder of the earliest days of flight. An aircraft like this one once flew the skies above what was called “Wright Field”, launching America on her journey to the stars in 1903 with her first flight. Made of stainless steel, this is a full-scale replica of the Wright Flyer. Orville can be seen at the controls.



Photo by Dylan Austin

Cross Chennault Circle at the cross walk and turn right, then cross back over Chennault Circle at the next cross walk after Poplar St. Proceed ahead to the F-86 Sabre Jet.

8. **F-86 SABRE JET** – Next is an F-86 Sabre Jet, a Korean War vintage aircraft that carried pilots to speeds of 685 MPH, a significant accomplishment for an aircraft developed in 1947.



Cross Chennault Circle again and turn left. Proceed to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Karl Richter Memorial on your right.

Photo by Dylan Austin

**9. CHENNAULT CIRCLE** – Often referred to as ‘Academic Circle’, this road which encircles the major Air University schools at Maxwell is named in honor of Lt. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault, a native of Commerce, Texas, who died in 1958. Chennault was the famed wartime leader of the American Volunteer Group, the “Flying Tigers,” and commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Force in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. While a member of the Air Tactical School faculty at Maxwell, he authored “Roll of Defensive Pursuit” which forecast World War II fighter tactics. Also while at Maxwell, he organized and led the Air Corps Exhibition Group, “Three Men on a Flying Trapeze,” which was the forerunner of the U.S. Air Force Aerial Demonstration Team, “The Thunderbirds.”

**10. 1<sup>ST</sup> LT. KARL RICHTER MEMORIAL** – This statue memorializes Lt. Karl Richter, who was killed in the Vietnam conflict. His likeness was selected for the statue because his actions reflected the spirit sought in all airmen. Completing his first 100-mission tour of duty, he extended his tour in Southeast Asia for another tour, and had nearly completed his second hundred missions when he was shot down. At the time he was shot down, he had already submitted a request to move from Thailand to South Vietnam for another 100-mission tour.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**11. HISTORIC PLANES** – The first plane on your left is the RF 101 VooDoo. Development of the RF-101 VooDoo, the world’s first supersonic photo-recon aircraft, began in 1956. The aircraft saw much use in the early years of the Vietnam conflict. The RF-101 had a maximum speed of 1,000 mph had a cruise speed of 550 mph, and a range of just over 2,000 miles.



Photo by Dylan Austin

Next to it is the F-4 Phantom II. This two-seat supersonic aircraft, capable of speeds above 1,600 MPH was the workhorse of the war in Vietnam, with several versions capable of conducting reconnaissance as well as serving as a platform for delivery of a variety of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons.



Photo by Dylan Austin

The airplane to the right is the F-105 Thunderchief. Capable of speeds in excess of 1,300 MPH, this Vietnam veteran was originally designed as a fighter/bomber to carry nuclear weapons in an internal bomb bay. Pressed into the conventional role during the War in Southeast Asia, the F-105 proved a strong delivery platform for a variety of weapons. It is perhaps best known for its Wild-Weasel role, cruising over enemy areas to attract surface to air missiles, and then avoiding those missiles while attacking their launching points to suppress further anti-aircraft activity.



Photo by Dylan Austin

The last jet in the line is the F-100 Super Saber. This early version of supersonic fighter aircraft flew at more than 850 MPH and saw considerable service in the Vietnam War. The last active duty operational squadron of F-100s was retired from service in the early 1970's.

Photo by Dylan Austin



Go back to the sidewalk in front of the Richter Memorial, then continue on the sidewalk straight ahead towards the Fairchild Library.

- 12. FAIRCHILD LIBRARY** – Directly behind the Vietnam Aircraft is the Air University’s Fairchild Library, named after General Muir S. Fairchild who drew the plans for Air University and served as its first commander. Fairchild also served as Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, being appointed in 1948. The library houses one of the finest collections of military references anywhere.

From here, turn right onto the inner circle. You will continue on the path of this circle through stop #20.



Photo by Iain Westphal

- 13. AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE (Bldg. 1402, ACSC)** – The first building on your right is the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC). This building provides classroom space for Air University’s intermediate professional military school which equips officers at the grade of major to prepare for the added challenges they face as they move to positions of increasing responsibility. Named Spaatz Hall, the building is dedicated to General Karl “Tooe” Spaatz who was Commanding General of the Army Air Forces and the first U.S.



Photo by Donna Place

Air Force chief of staff following the Air Force’s becoming a separate service in 1947. Famed as a flyer during World War I and World War II, he commanded the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Forces in Europe and during the latter conflict.

**14. DESOTO MONUMENT** – As you continue inside of Chennault Circle you will see the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), which occupies space in the same building as Fairchild Library, on the left. The white stone monument in front of the entrance to the AFHRA describes the site of the Indian town of Tawassa, once populated by the Alabama Indians. Hernando DeSoto and conquistadors camped near the town in 1540. Upon leaving, the Indians gave DeSoto 30 female baggage carriers in return for 30 knives and 30 mirrors. The site was visited two centuries later by the French-Canadian explorer, Sieur de Bienville, the founder of New Orleans and Mobile.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**15. AIR WAR COLLEGE (AWC) (Bldg. 1401)** – The building directly across from the DeSoto monument is named Anderson Hall for Major General Orvil A. Anderson. General Anderson was responsible for the organization of the Air War College in early 1946 and assumed command of that school in June of that year. He was a veteran pilot and an exponent of airpower and strategy. He was born in Springfield, Utah, May 8, 1895. The Air War College is the Air Force's senior professional military education school graduating approximately 250 lieutenant colonels and colonels per year from all branches of the U.S. military, allied nations, and select federal civilian employees from various federal agencies. As with Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College, Air War College grooms its graduates for ever increasing levels of responsibility, preparing them to make full use of aerospace power in accomplishing the Air Force mission.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**16. AIR FORCE WARGAMING INSTITUTE** (Bldg. 1406) – As you continue the hike, on your left is the Air Force Wargaming Institute. Here, approximately 25 war games are conducted annually involving over 6,000 players. Leaders and future leaders of the Air Force and other services “fight” computer simulated wars, testing their ability to use doctrine, test and develop plans and strategies to deal with any challenges to our national security.



Photo by Dylan Austin

**17. LEMAY CENTER FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION** (Bldg. 1400) – On your right directly across from the Wargaming Institute, the Lemay Center houses the Air Force College for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education. Its mission is to develop warfighters for the joint and combined team through doctrine, education and wargaming. The building is named for Brigadier General Kenneth N. Walker, an Air Corps Tactical School instructor from 1929-1933. He was a strong proponent of bombardment by aviation and was a driving force in the creation of much of the doctrine which so vitally affected the outcome of World War II. He was killed in action in January 1943 on a mission against shipping in the harbor of Rabaul, New Britain in the Pacific Theater. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**18. EAKER CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** (Bldg. 1404) – Continuing along the inner circle, on the right is the Parker Hall. Parker Hall houses the Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development. Its mission is to provide the highest quality, multi-disciplined professional continuing education and training that drives the future success of Air Force. DoD,



Photo by Iain Westphal

and international students. General Eaker, one of the recipients of a Congressional Gold Medal of Honor for major contributions in aviation, helped to form U.S. strategic doctrine. The building is named in honor of Major General James E. Parker, U.S. Army, who was an instructor at the Air Corps Tactical School between August 1935 and July 1940. General Parker was killed in flight on March 19, 1946.

- 19. SQUADRON OFFICER COLLEGE** (Bldg. 1403) –Next, on the right, is the Squadron Officer College. Within this college is Squadron Officer School (SOS), which is the first professional school in the Air University (AU) system. This building, named Harmon Hall after Lt. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, houses the first level of officer professional military education, preparing captains with about 7 years of service to move into positions of higher authority. General Harmon was Commandant of the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field in 1935. His B-24 Liberator was lost on a flight between Kwajalein Atoll and Hawaii in February 1945.



Photo by Iain Westphal

- 20. DESERT STORM MEMORIAL** – Across from SOS is a memorial to the men and women who served in the war against Iraq.

Continue along the inner circle to the sidewalk in front of the Fairchild Library, then go back to the Richter Memorial, and turn right. Cross the street at the Twining crosswalk.



Photo by Iain Westphal

**21. B-52 “BUFF”** – This Stratofortress bomber had a crew of six, and flew about 600 MPH. American pilots flew B-52’s extensively in the Vietnam War. The bomber was put in service in the mid 1950’s and is expected to remain operational through the 2040s. Next on this road is the MH-53M Helicopter.

Photo by Dylan Austin



**22. MH-53M “PAVE LOW”**– This aircraft was a long range Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopter. It had a crew of six, and served as a long–range transport/supplier for Special Forces, in any weather or time conditions.

Cross Ash Street and continue to Maxwell Blvd. Turn right on Maxwell and walk to Lemay plaza (Cross the street at the traffic light on Mitchell St.). As you walk on Mitchel St. on your right are two of the buildings referenced in stop #24. Turn left on Lemay Plaza and continue to the next stop.

Photo by Iain Westphal



**23. AUSTIN HALL** (aka, the Prop ‘n’ Wings) (Bldg. 800) – This building, built in 1931 with an addition completed in 1934, is named after Lt. Charles B. Austin. Lt. Austin was an outstanding pioneer instructor of the Air Tactical School from 1924-1928. He was a native of Illinois and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of DePauw University. He died in July 1928 after a lengthy illness. The building was named for him three years later as an inspiration for future students of airpower, and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

Turn around to go back to Maxwell Blvd. Across the street and to the left



Photo by Mrs. Westphal

is Bldg. 836, your next stop. LeMay Plaza turns into Sycamore St. at the Maxwell Blvd. intersection. Continue straight onto Sycamore St.

**24. FORMER COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE**

(Bldg. 836) –This building (on the left) as well as the buildings on the right were originally dormitories for enlisted men. Building 836 is named after General George B. Simler, a former commander of Air Training Command and the creator of the Community College of the Air Force. The building served as the location of the

Photo by Dylan Austin

Community College of the Air Force until 2008. It is the oldest permanent structure on Maxwell AFB and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.



Continue on Sycamore St. then turn left onto Ash St.

**25. 1930's HANGER - (Bldg. 843)** This hanger is one of four identical airplane hangars constructed along the Historic Flight line in 1931 at a cost of nearly \$126,000. Hangars provide an enclosed space for maintenance and shelter for aircraft during storms.

Continue to the corner of Ash St. and Selfridge St. On your right is a circular patch of grass with a white stone monument in the middle.



Photo by T.C. Place

**26. WRIGHT BROTHERS MONUMENT –**

This monument is located inside the traffic circle in the front of base operations. On this spot stood the hanger of the 1910 Wright brothers flying school. Behind the hanger was the 192 foot grass runway used to launch the Wright’s pusher type biplane.

Go back to the corner of Ash St. and Arnold St. Continue straight onto Arnold St. to Maxwell Blvd., turn right, continue to Selfridge St. and turn left. Keep walking until you get to Arnold St. (This is the other end of Arnold St. from the monument)



Photo by Gavin Humelbaugh

**27. OLD BIRMINGHAM HIGHWAY –** The corner of Selfridge and Arnold Streets once served as Maxwell’s entrance. Originally, Selfridge St. was the highway to Birmingham, with the railroad tracks running parallel.

Turn left on Arnold St. The 4<sup>th</sup> building on the left is the **TROOP 23 SCOUT HUT**. Turn around to go back to Selfridge St. and turn left. You will pass the back of the **EXCHANGE FOOD COURT** on your right. You may want to pause here for drinks/snacks. Continue to the traffic light on Mitchell St. and turn left. Cross Mitchell St. at the traffic signal and proceed on the right side of the road. Turn right on Kirkpatrick Ave., then left on Hansell St. Stop 27 is on your right.



Photo by T.C. Place

**28. CIVIL AIR PATROL NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (CAPNH)**

– This is the HQ for the Civil Air Patrol, which provides aerospace education, youth-oriented programs, and emergency services. The CAP has been headquartered at Maxwell AFB for over 60 years.

For the 5.2 mile trail, continue on Hansell St. to E Schumacher Ave., then turn right. Head down E Schumacher Ave, which curves



Photo by Thomas B. Place

to the right. Turn left on Kirkpatrick Ave, then left on Twining St. Continue on Twining St. to Ash St., the base pool will be on the right. Turn right on Ash St. then turn right on Poplar to head back to the Visitor's Center parking lot on Maxwell Blvd.

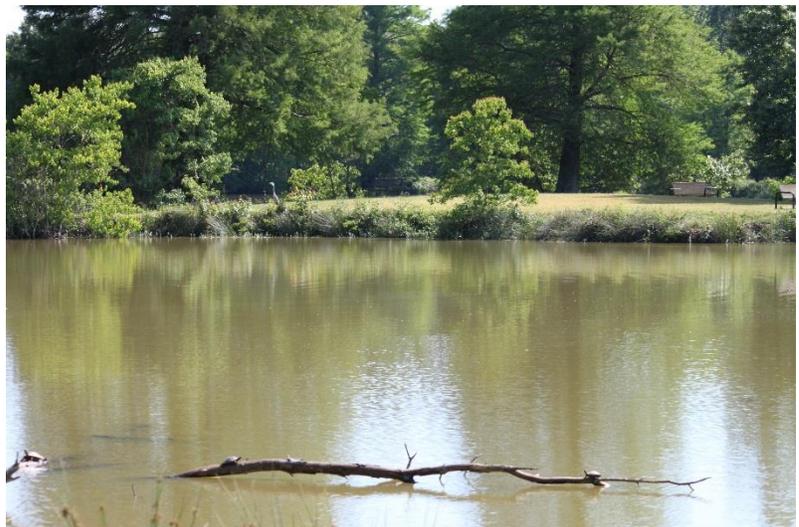
For the extended version of the trail (the green route), which adds 7 miles, walk down Hansell St. Turn right on White Ave., turn left onto Mitchel St., and then turn right onto Selfridge St. After the gas station, turn left onto Chanute St., (the Base Exchange Food Court is on your right) then left onto Kelly St. Just before the gate, turn right onto March St. Follow this road for about a mile. Shortly after the softball fields on the right, turn left onto the lane to Hopper Lodge.

- 29. HOPPER LODGE** (Bldg. 1110) – This recreation facility was named for lieutenant Colonel William Hopper, Jr., the Deputy Director of supply and Services for the 3800<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing in the early 1960's.

Go back to March St. and continue on about a quarter of a mile. Go past the Family Campground then the base lakes will be on the left and soccer fields on the right.



- 30. BASE LAKES** – These two lakes are the central focus of a recreation area for Air Force personnel and their families. They offer a serene area for picnicking, fishing, and offer a pastoral background to the base's Family Campground.



Continue on March St. a few miles, then turn right onto Chennault Circle. Walk around the outside of the circle to Twining St. Turn right onto Twining St. then turn left onto Ash St. Turn right onto Poplar St., then proceed to the parking area at the Visitor's Center.

# Geocaching

This trail has three unofficial geocaches placed along it. Two are along the 5.2 mile long trail and the third is on the 7 mile extension.

The first is a magnetic bolt attached to a smaller wheel of the Buff. Coordinates: N 32°22'56.3376", W 86°20'46.9212"

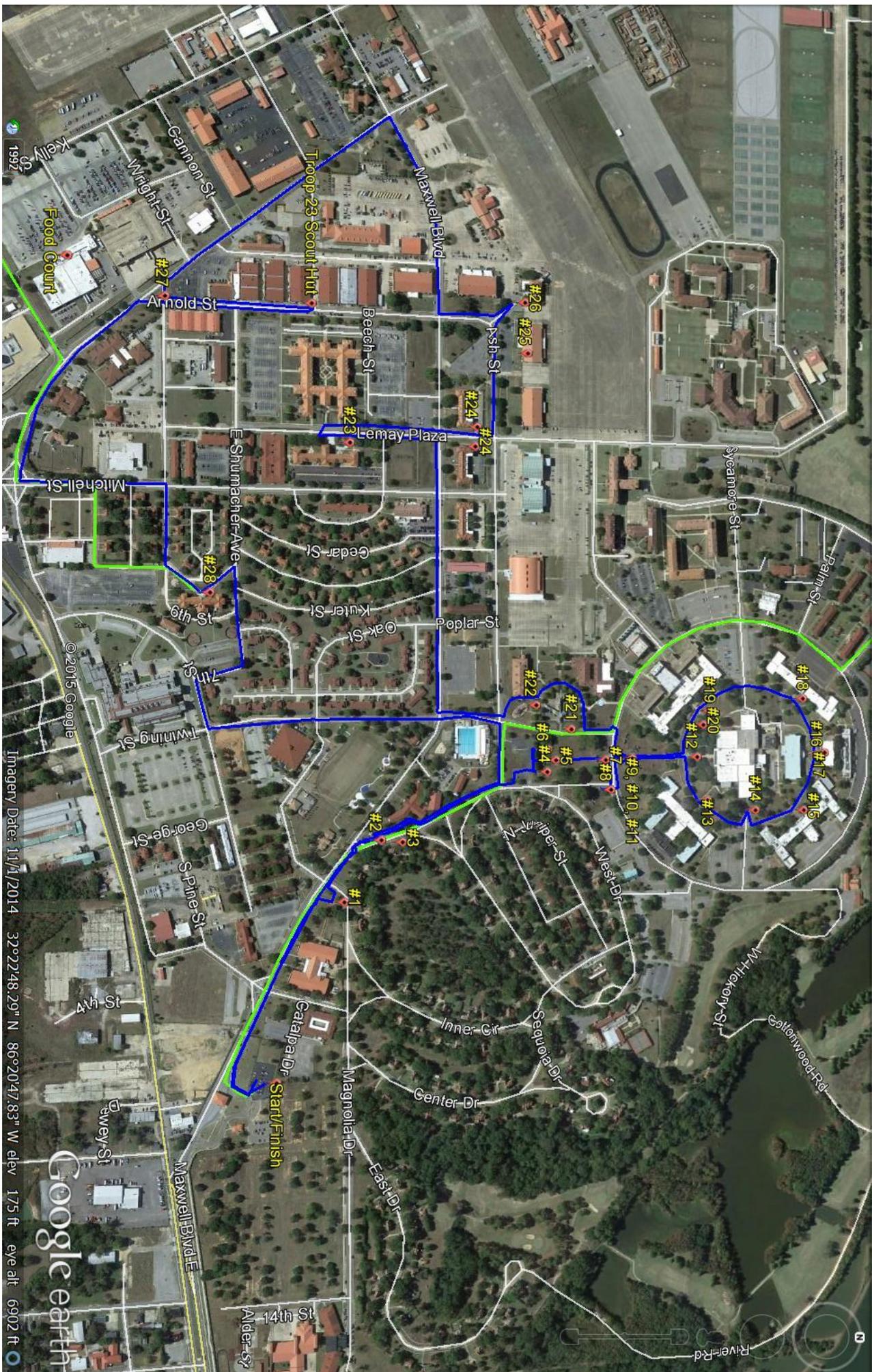
The second is a miniature ammo can hidden next to the largest of the three bushes around the Wright Bros. Memorial. Coordinates: N 32°22'52.3884", W 86°21'14.1984"

The third is a fake rock near the Hopper Lodge. As you approach the lodge there are two "islands". On the left island, about a foot away from a cement crack is the rock. Also, be careful when opening it. Coordinates: N 32°22'2.0748", W 86°22'14.7684"



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# 5.2 Mile Trail Map



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