

56-1791

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

other names/site number 5ME.21405

### 2. Location

street & number 780 Heritage Way, Grand Junction Regional Airport

n/a

not for publication

city or town Grand Junction

X

vicinity

state Colorado

county Mesa

zip code 81506

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national          statewide        X   local

Holly K. North  
Signature of certifying official/Title

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 26 Sept 17  
Date

History Colorado  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
 Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
 County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Barbara Wyatt*  
 Signature of the Keeper

11-13-17  
 Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private  
 public - Local  
 public - State  
 public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box.)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DEFENSE  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

MUSEUM  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: carrier-based aircraft

---

---

---

---

---

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: \_\_\_\_\_

walls: \_\_\_\_\_

---

roof: \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The Torpedo Bomber M (TBM) Avenger Aircraft N53503 is a World War II single engine torpedo bomber in flying condition. The military aircraft was manufactured by General Motors' Eastern Aircraft division in the late winter of 1945, and accepted for service by the United States Navy's Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) on June 1, 1945, with BuOrd number 53503.<sup>1</sup> The aircraft is housed in a hangar located at the Grand Junction Regional Airport.

---

### Narrative Description

The body and wings of the aircraft are made of aluminum. Parts that control the aircraft's movement have an aluminum frame covered with fabric. The cockpit canopy is an aluminum frame with Plexiglass. All are original. The aircraft was designed to attack enemy submarines, naval ships, and ground targets, and as such, was deployed from aircraft carriers stationed in the Pacific Ocean during World War II. Character-defining features include its folding wings, which allowed for efficient storage on the aircraft carrier deck between deployments, and the tail hook arresting gear, which allowed the plane to stop within the short amount of space on the deck when landing.

N53503 is characterized as a TBM-3, with the following general characteristics:

Dimensions: Wing span 52'2", (with wings folded, 16'), length 40'

Height: 16' 5"

Empty weight: 10,843 lbs.

Maximum gross weight with fuel, ordnance: 18,250 lbs.

Power: Wright Twin cyclone R-2600-20 engine, 14 cylinders in two banks of 7, producing 1900 horse power

Maximum speed: 265 mph at 16,000'

Ceiling: 23,400'

Range: 1,130 miles

Fuel: 325 gallons

---

<sup>1</sup> BuOrd was responsible for the procurement, storage, and deployment of all naval weapons from 1862-1959, and became involved with the development of aerial weapons in the early twentieth century. *Bureau of Ordnance*, Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau\\_of\\_Ordnance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Ordnance), accessed November 10, 2016.

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

Oil: 32 gallons

Crew: three, consisting of pilot, gunner, and radio operator

Armament: three .50 caliber machine guns, with two wing mounted and one turret mounted; one torpedo or four 500 pound bombs

Electronics: Voice and morse code communication radios, ASB search radar (airborne radar for detection of ships and surfaced submarines).<sup>2</sup>

### **Visual Markings, N53503**

N53503 is currently painted with markings used by TBM Avengers assigned to VT-84, the so-called "Wolf Gang Squadron" assigned to the U.S.S. Bunker Hill aircraft carrier, CV-17.<sup>3</sup> The aircraft has a historically accurate ocean camouflage paint scheme, with dark blue above and lighter blue-grey underneath. It bears the distinctive white "stars and bars" of United States Naval aircraft employed after June 1943. The vertical white arrow on the tail is characteristic of TBM aircraft assigned to the Bunker Hill prior to July 1945, and aided in identification by ground forces. Similarly, the yellow nacelle (outer casing of the engine) markings around the perimeter of the engine cowling is intended to aid identification and reduce "friendly fire" accidents.

Although the internal airframe structure and its coverings remain unchanged, TBM aircraft underwent continual modification throughout World War II as they operated under extreme conditions. Two types of modifications were the most typical: the upgrading of avionics as radar became more sophisticated, and replacing parts subject to continual wear from repetitive movement, especially engines, but also parts such as shock absorbers and engine mounts.

### **Alterations**

In 1950, N53503 was removed from U.S. Navy service and transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy. While in Canadian service, the aircraft was repainted with Canadian markings, and additional radio equipment was added to support the aircraft's primary postwar mission of anti-enemy submarine patrol in the North Atlantic.

In 1958, the aircraft passed into civilian hands and operated as an aerial insecticide applicator. In this capacity, the original bomb-bay doors were removed, as were the military markings.

In 1970 the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), an organization dedicated to preserving historic military aircraft, acquired N53503. By that time the aircraft had been effectively abandoned; CAF moved it to an indoor facility in Midland, Texas, where it underwent clean-up and restoration, primarily the installation of the missing bomb-bay doors as well as electrical wiring and hydraulics. In 1985 CAF headquarters assigned N53503 to the Rocky Mountain Wing based in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Since its arrival in Grand Junction, members of the CAF Rocky Mountain Wing have invested in excess of \$250,000 in an ongoing effort to maintain the aircraft in flyable condition and to restore the aircraft to its original World War II condition. Major efforts centered on undoing civilian modifications and included replacement of the turret and bomb bay doors with parts of World War II provenance. In addition, the aircraft is painted in a historically accurate paint scheme, as documented by historic photographs.

---

<sup>2</sup> ASB radar was installed "almost universally" in U.S. naval aircraft during World War II and became known as the "Workhorse of Naval Aviation." It was the first radar to be used in carrier-based aircraft. *Airborne Radar*, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory. <https://www.nrl.navy.mil/accomplishments/systems/airborne-radar/>, accessed November 28, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Although records indicate the plane was part of Naval unit VT-45 in 1945-46 and was assigned to U.S.S. Leyte, anecdotal information provided in a pilot's oral history interview indicates it was later based on U.S.S. Bunker Hill. David Shepard, email to E. Warzel, August 2, 2017.

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

As to be expected with any seventy-year-old flying aircraft, N53503 demands continual attention and regular maintenance to maintain safety of flight and to comply with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mandates regarding airworthiness. To that end, cracked or fatigued metal parts have been replaced whenever possible with World War II vintage replacements; in some instances, however, replacement parts have been manufactured using original blueprints and with FAA approval. CAF Rocky Mountain Wing members estimate that 90 percent of the aircraft is original.<sup>4</sup>

N53503 is unusual in that the Rocky Mountain Wing has the original radios, including the World War II ASB search radar. Some of this radio equipment has been temporarily removed and stored to make room for modern communication equipment required by the FAA. What remains is a substantially unaltered World War II vintage aircraft, with original airframe and a World War II-vintage engine.

### **Integrity**

The TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 has a high degree of integrity, maintaining its historic design, materials, and workmanship. The aircraft is no longer based on an aircraft carrier and does not have integrity of location, but its current home at the Grand Junction Regional Airport has a high degree of integrity of setting, association, and feeling and is in keeping with its historic and current function as an operable aircraft. The aircraft meets the requirements as set forth in the *National Register Bulletin* "Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Historic Aviation Properties."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> David Shepard, interview with E. Warzel, November 21, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> *National Register Bulletin* "Guideline for Evaluating and Documenting Historic Aviation Properties" ([https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/aviation/nrb\\_aviation\\_IV.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/aviation/nrb_aviation_IV.htm), accessed September 26, 2017.)

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MILITARY

ENGINEERING

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1945

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

General Motors/Eastern Aircraft Division

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 is locally significant under Criterion A for Military and Criterion C for Engineering as an excellent and increasingly rare example of the carrier-based torpedo bomber aircraft that had a prominent role in U.S. naval operations during World War II. The period of significance is 1945, the year this airplane was built and in service during World War II.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 is locally significant under Criterion A for Military as an example of the U.S. military's rapid expansion and focus on airpower in response to World War II. Prior to the war, the U.S. military was considerably small for the size of the nation, particularly its fleet of aircraft. With war breaking out in Europe, American leaders recognized the urgent need to prepare for warfare, especially airpower, despite the lack of consensus whether to enter the war or not.

The N53503 is also locally significant under Criterion C for Engineering as an example of the technological advances made during the military's expansion. Private aircraft manufacturers were given the task of developing aircraft that would improve the military's ability to fly faster, carry heavier loads, and for greater distances. The result was the TBF/TBM Avenger aircraft, of which nearly 10,000 were built and delivered to the military. Today, very few of these aircraft remain as a result of scrapping after the war. The N53503 is a remaining example that is also in flying condition and is regularly flown from its airport home in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The period of significance is 1945, the year this airplane was built and in service during World War II.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

### **Development of U.S. Military Air Fleet during World War II**

At the beginning of World War II, the United States was a third-tier military power with an army smaller than Portugal's. Similarly, the air forces of the United States consisted of only 1,700 aircraft. While there was no national consensus for intervention when the war began in Europe in 1939, both interventionists and isolationists found common ground in the notion of preparedness, with airpower viewed as an essential cornerstone.

According to the National Register nomination for a TBM Avenger in New Jersey, "In early November 1939, the US Navy approached a number of aircraft manufacturers with regard to designing and building a replacement torpedo bomber for the ageing [sic] Douglas TBD-1 Devastator. The Navy sought a new aircraft that had to be as easy to use from a shore base as from an aircraft carrier; they also wanted a more potent torpedo bomber—one with a greater range, larger payload, faster speed, and tougher resistance to battle damage."<sup>6</sup> After rigorous testing of designs by Vought Aircraft Company and Grumman Aircraft Company, the U.S. Navy accepted the lighter, faster, and greater range design by Grumman, and ordered two prototype torpedo/attack aircraft. The first prototype flew on August 1, 1941. Naval acceptance quickly followed; the original contract for 286 aircraft became an open-ended order in November 1941. Ironically,

<sup>6</sup> Joan Berkey, *TBM-3E "Avenger" Torpedo Bomber Warplane*, National Register of Historic Places nomination form. June 17, 2002; listed February 11, 2003 (NRIS.03000019). On file with New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. Sec.8, p.3

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

Grumman scheduled December 7, 1941, as the date for the dedication ceremony of a new factory in Bethpage, New York, where the new torpedo bombers would be built. News of the Pearl Harbor attack disrupted the ceremony and the plant was quickly closed and searched for saboteurs before reopening.

### **TBF/TBM Avenger Aircraft**

Technology completely changed naval warfare in World War II. The aircraft carrier eclipsed the battleship of World War I as the primary weapon of naval warfare; the Avenger, simply stated, was the dominant naval attack aircraft of World War II. The Avenger represented a huge leap in aviation technology; it was the largest single-engine aircraft of the war, carrying one 2,000-pound torpedo, or four 500-pound bombs. Grumman Aircraft built 2,291 Avenger aircraft during the war, while General Motors (GM) built 7,546, for a total of 9,837. Aircraft produced at the Grumman plant were given the acronym TBF, with "F" as the U.S. Navy's designated letter for that plant; those produced at the GM plant were TBMs, with "M" indicating the GM plant.<sup>7</sup>

The Avenger's first combat action in World War II occurred in the Pacific war's decisive battle of Midway in 1942. It was also the type of aircraft operated by President George Herbert Walker Bush when he was shot down near Iwo Jima. While the TBM N53503 is a late-war example, manufactured in early 1945, it is representative of all TBF/TBM aircraft operated in World War II.

The Avenger's method of attack was dive bombing, or diving to a low elevation (50') and targeting its torpedoes directly into the side of a ship, thereby requiring only a direct line of sight for a successful hit. The earlier method of horizontal bombing, by contrast, consisted of dropping a bomb while the aircraft continued on its horizontal trajectory, thereby requiring complex calculations accounting for variables such as speed, wind, etc., that often did not lead to a successful hit. By the end of World War II, the Avenger distinguished itself as the most successful naval attack aircraft type of the war, flying more missions (over 45,000), and sinking more Japanese ships than any other aircraft. The Avenger sank the world's two largest battleships, Yamato and Musashi, and four additional battleships, eleven aircraft carriers, and ten cruisers. By contrast, none were lost to horizontal bombing by Army planes.

In the post-war era, TBM aircraft continued an important role; in fact, Naval Air Station Denver, (the "world's highest naval air station" also known as Buckley Air Force Base, located at the eastern edge of Aurora) operated a squadron of TBM aircraft in an effort to maintain flight-ready crews during the Cold War era.

### **TBM Avenger N53503**

TBM N53503 was manufactured by GM's Eastern Aircraft division at its Trenton-Ternstedt plant outside of Trenton, New Jersey, in the late winter of 1945, and accepted for service by BuOrd on June 1, 1945. After the end of World War II the aircraft was one of several thousand for which the U.S. military no longer had a direct need. N53503 was rotated between several collection points until it was one of 117 Avengers transferred from the U.S. Navy to the Royal Canadian Navy in 1950 as authorized by the Mutual Defense Assistance Program. The aircraft participated in the Royal Fleet Review following Queen Elizabeth's coronation (see Historic Photo 2). N53503 left Canadian service and passed into civilian hands in 1958 for the purpose of aerially applying crop pesticides by Simsbury Flying Service based in Simsbury, Connecticut. The Commemorative Air Force, a non-profit organization dedicated to "preserving in flying condition a complete collection of aircraft flown by all military services of the United States," acquired N53503 in 1970 and kept it in a facility in Midland, Texas. The aircraft appeared in the first five minutes of Steven

---

<sup>7</sup> Berkey, Sec.8, p.4.



TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." In March 1985, N53503 arrived in Grand Junction and was placed under the control of the Rocky Mountain Wing of the Commemorative Air Force.

Other TBM examples are located at the National World War II Museum and George H.W. Bush Presidential Library. Less than 200 TBM aircraft are estimated to exist today, and fewer still, less than twenty, are in original, flyable condition. At the end of World War II, the United States destroyed tens of thousands of military aircraft, rendered obsolete by the advent of the jet age. They were scrapped or dumped into the deep ocean. Only later did historians and aviation enthusiasts come to the realization that something of great significance was disappearing. Today, World War II aircraft are prized historic artifacts.

Hundreds of pages of records relating to Avenger N53503 exist in the CAF museum in Grand Junction; these records include decades of logbooks and maintenance records, as well as memoirs of pilots who flew this exact aircraft.

### **Future Restoration Efforts**

Future restoration efforts include restoration of the original radios to their World War II appearance. CAF wishes to reinstall this vintage equipment so that the pilot's compartment is visually identical to the 1945 aircraft, with required modern equipment moved to less visually obtrusive locations. The organization wishes to use the TBM Avenger N53503 as the cornerstone for a continuing program of outreach and education on aviation and World War II history.

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

---

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Berkey, Joan. *TBM-3E "Avenger" Torpedo Bomber Warplane*, National Register of Historic Places nomination form. June 17, 2002; listed February 11, 2003 (NRIS.03000019). On file with New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.

*Bureau of Ordnance*, Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau\\_of\\_Ordnance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Ordnance), accessed November 10, 2016.

Drendel, Lou. *TBF/TBM Avenger Walk Around*. Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger, U.S. Navy Carrier Bombers of World War II*. Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications Inc., 1987.

Fletcher, R.G. *Front Line Avenger Squadrons of the FAA*. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, UK: R.G. Fletcher, 1995.

Francillon, Rene. *Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger, (Aircraft in Profile 214)*. London: Profile Publications Ltd., 1970.

Geelen, Janic. *The Topdressers*. Auckland: NZ Aviation Press, 1983.

Hove, Duane. *American Warriors: Five Presidents in the Pacific Theater of World War II*. Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Burd Street Press, 2003.

Jackson, B.R. and Thomas E. Doll. *Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger (Aero Series 21)*. Fallbrook, California: Aero Publishers, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Supplement to Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger*. Fallbrook, California: Aero Publishers, Inc., 1970.

Kinzey, Bert. *TBF and TBM Avenger in Detail and Scale*. Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc., 1997.

*National Register Bulletin* "Guideline for Evaluating and Documenting Historic Aviation Properties." [https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/aviation/nrb\\_aviation\\_IV.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/aviation/nrb_aviation_IV.htm), accessed September 26, 2017.

Pelletier, Alain. *Grumman TBF/TBM Avenger*. Paris: Ouest France, 1981.

Prange, Gordon William. *Miracle at Midway*. New York: Viking, 1983.

Scrivner, Charles L. *TBF/TBM Avenger in Action*. Carrollton, Texas: Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc., 1987.

Shepard, David. Interview with E. Warzel, November 21, 2016. Transcript on file with History Colorado's Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Denver.

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

Tillman, Barrett. *Avenger At War*. London: Ian Allan Ltd., 1979.

\_\_\_\_\_. *TBF/TBM Avenger Units of World War 2*. Botley, UK: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Wheeler, Barry C. *The Hamlyn Guide to Military Aircraft Markings*. London: Chancellor Press, 1992

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Commemorative Air Force, Rocky Mountain Wing

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 5ME.21405

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property**

Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>12</u> Zone	<u>713955</u> Easting	<u>4332765</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing	4	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is comprised of the TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 that is 40' long, 52'2" wide (with wings open), and 16' 5" high. The aircraft is housed in a hangar located at the Grand Junction Regional Airport.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The selected boundary applies to the movable structure of the aircraft only.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title	<u>David Shepard, Historic Preservation Officer (for property owner) (edited by E. Warzel)</u>		
organization	<u>Commemorative Air Force, Rocky Mountain Wing</u>	date	<u>May 31, 2017</u>
street & number	<u>230 Red Sand Road</u>	telephone	<u>970-210-5267</u>
city or town	<u>Grand Junction</u>	state	<u>CO</u> zip code <u>81507</u>

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado  
County and State

e-mail davidhshepard@gmail.com

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

---

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503  
Location: Commemorative Air Force Museum, Grand Junction Regional Airport  
Photographer: David Shepard  
Date of Photographs: August 2016  
Digital files on file with Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Denver

Photo No.    Photographic Information

- |    |                                                                                                       |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | Front view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings folded. Mechanic in foreground provides a sense of scale. |
| 02 | Side view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings folded.                                                    |
| 03 | Rear view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings folded.                                                    |
| 04 | Side view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings folded.                                                    |
| 05 | Front view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings unfolded, ready for flight.                               |
| 06 | Side view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings unfolded.                                                  |
| 07 | Rear view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings unfolded.                                                  |
| 08 | Side view of TBM Avenger N53503 with wings unfolded.                                                  |
| 09 | Detail of historically accurate naval star and bar identification marking on rear of fuselage.        |
| 10 | Detail of tail hook arresting gear deployed, for landing on aircraft carrier.                         |
| 11 | Detail of bomb bay.                                                                                   |
| 12 | Detail of landing gear.                                                                               |

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Mesa County, Colorado

Name of Property

County and State

- 13 Identification plate located in landing gear recess, with original World War II markings of "Naval Air Station Norfolk."
- 14 Detail of ball turret.
- 15 Cockpit detail.
- 16 Detail of closed canopy.
- 17 Detail of restored engine and propeller, with historically accurate World War II markings.
- 18 Detail of identification plate on engine: "Wright Cyclone."
- 19 Underside of wing with historically accurate World War II colors, with identifying naval star and bar.

**HISTORIC PHOTO LOG**

- 1. A TBM aboard aircraft carrier in 1945, photograph by United States Navy. Note wings in folded position. Original photo located in Still Picture Branch, (NNSP) records, Department of the Navy, Record Group 80, (RG80), National Archives of the United State, Washington, D.C.
- 2. TBM N53503, flying over Her Majesty's Canadian Navy vessel HMCS Magnificent during Royal Fleet Review by newly coronated Queen Elizabeth, June 15, 1953. Photo by Royal Canadian Navy, original located in Library and Archives of Canada, Military Section, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- 3. TBM N53503, aircraft exterior prior to restoration of exterior paint to World War II markings, Grand Junction, Colorado, 1989, photograph by Robert Duncan. Note wings in folded position.
- 4. TBM N53503 taking off from Grand Junction Regional Airport, Grand Junction, Colorado, March, 2014, photograph by Kent Taylor.
- 5. TBM N53503, interior of fuselage, undergoing safety inspection of structure, Grand Junction, Colorado, April, 2015, photograph by Kent Taylor.
- 6. TBM N53503, after aircraft was painted to match World War II paint scheme of VT-84 squadron, assigned to U.S.S. Bunker Hill. Photo by Robert Duncan, 2016.

---

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

---

name Commemorative Air Force, Rocky Mountain Wing  
street & number P.O. Box 4125 telephone 970-254-0693  
city or town Grand Junction state CO zip code 81501



TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

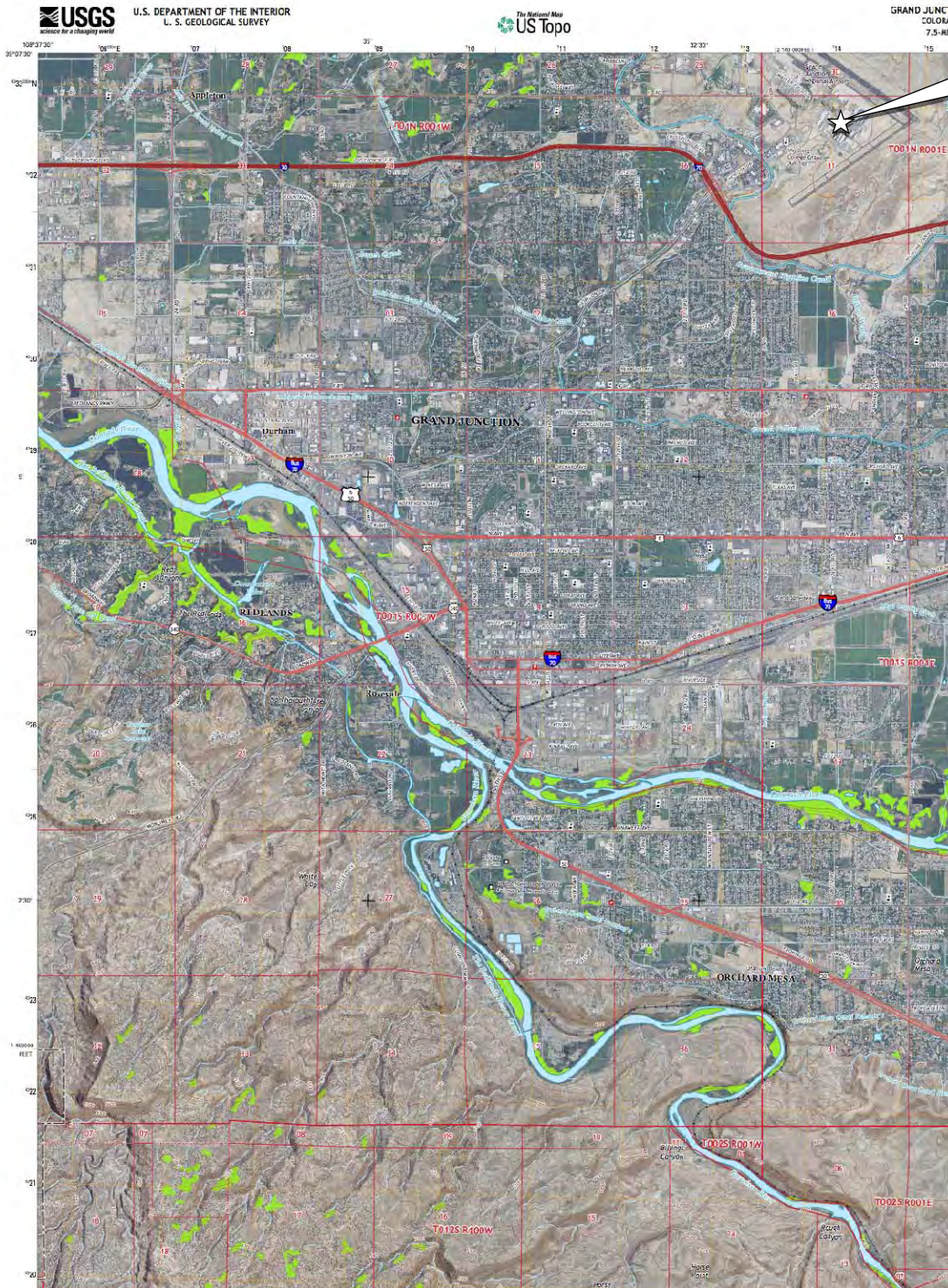
County and State

**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

Grand Junction Quadrangle, Colorado

7.5 Minute Series

7.5 Minute Series denotes location of runways and airports at Grand Junction Regional Airport, at upper right, but does not contain street level detail. Street level detail defined on following maps, and satellite image.



TBM Avenger  
N53503,  
5ME.21405

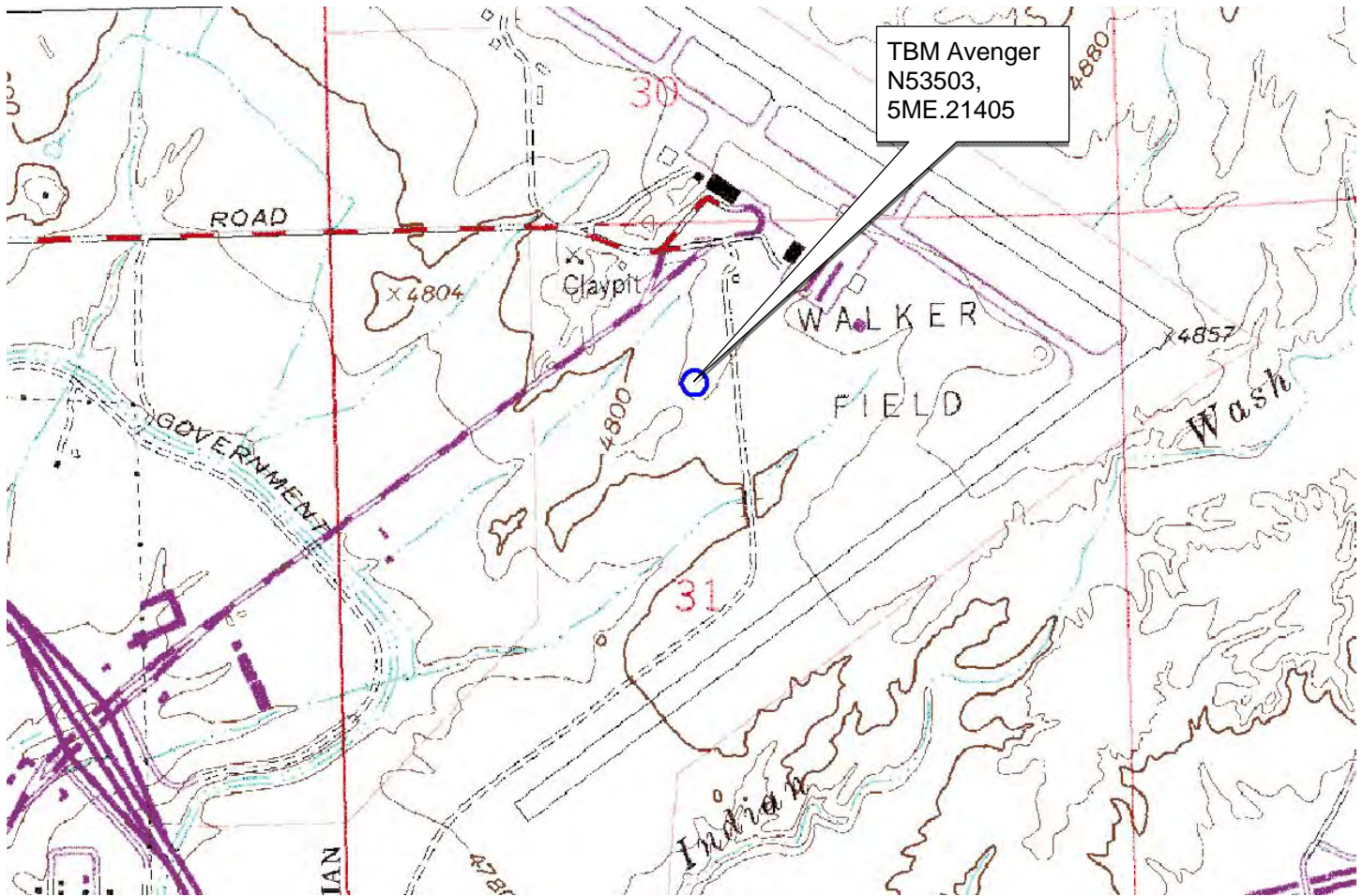


TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State



TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State





TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

## HISTORIC PHOTOS



HP1. A TBM aboard aircraft carrier in 1945, photograph by United States Navy. Note wings in folded position. Original photo located in Still Picture Branch, (NNSP) records, Department of the Navy, Record Group 80, (RG80), National Archives of the United State, Washington, D.C.

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State



HP2. TBM N53503, flying over Her Majesty's Canadian Navy vessel HMCS Magnificent during Royal Fleet Review by newly coronated Queen Elizabeth, June 15, 1953. Photo by Royal Canadian Navy, original located in Library and Archives of Canada, Military Section, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.



HP3. TBM N53503, aircraft exterior prior to restoration of exterior paint to World War II markings, Grand Junction,

TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State

Colorado, 1989, photograph by Robert Duncan. Note wings in folded position.



HP4. TBM N53503 taking off from Grand Junction Regional Airport, Grand Junction, Colorado, March, 2014, photograph by Kent Taylor.



TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503

Name of Property

Mesa County, Colorado

County and State



HP5. TBM N53503, interior of fuselage, undergoing safety inspection of structure, Grand Junction, Colorado, April, 2015, photograph by Kent Taylor.



HP6. TBM N53503, after aircraft was painted to match World War II paint scheme of VT-84 squadron, assigned to U.S.S. Bunker Hill. Photo by Robert Duncan, 2016.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



















COMMEMORATIVE AIRFORCE  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN WING  
GRAND JUNCTION, CO.  
TBM-3E NL53503

NO PUSH





NO PUSH

COMMEMORATIVE AIRFORCE  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN WING  
GRAND JUNCTION, CO.  
TBM-3E NL53503













LIPB  
RAPT









0760 000 0000 11-00  
0760 000 0000 11-00  
0760 000 0000 11-00  
0760 000 0000 11-00

DWG NO. R6501A-  
SER NO. N4G1103  
LOW 22.0  
HIGH 49.0

PLATE WITH SERIAL NUMBER AND IDENTIFICATION





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 9/28/2017      Date of Pending List: 10/26/2017      Date of 16th Day: 11/13/2017      Date of 45th Day: 11/13/2017      Date of Weekly List: 11/16/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |                                                     |                                             |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG                        |                                             |

Accept       Return       Reject      11/13/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Barbara Wyatt      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2252      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.





**COMMEMORATIVE  
AIR FORCE**



**TO:** Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board  
**FROM:** Rick Taggart, Chair Grand Junction Regional Airport Authority  
**DATE:** September 14, 2017  
**SUBJ:** TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 nominee

More than 70 years ago a generation of Americans were summoned to serve the United States of America during World War II. Through years of combat American service members overcame some of the most unforgiving conditions in modern warfare. We honor the Americans who gave their lives.

Their legacy lives on in the hearts of the American people; and more than seven decades later, we renew that call to honor and reflect. Help us pay tribute to all veterans and to the most outstanding torpedo bomber of World War II by nominating the Commemorative Air Force – Rocky Mountain Wing TBM Avenger Aircraft to the National Register of Historic Properties.

In addition to being an important part of history, the TBM Avenger Aircraft and the Commemorative Airforce Museum in Grand Junction inspire young people about aviation throughout Colorado. The United States is facing a serious pilot shortage. Inspiring the youth of our region to pursue opportunities in aviation is very important.

The Grand Junction Regional Airport is proud to support the Commemorative Air Force Rocky Mountain Region. We hope History Colorado will recognize the TBM Avenger Aircraft and the work it does to educate and inspire young people about aviation. The TBM Avenger keeps aviation history alive in Colorado and throughout the United States.

On behalf of our Board of Commissioners I am pleased to endorse the Commemorative Air Force nomination of this historic aircraft to the National Register of Historic Properties. This will help them continue their important work throughout our community and State.

Respectfully,

*Rick Taggart (by: Victoria Hightower)*

Rick Taggart, Chairman

Chair, Grand Junction Regional Airport Authority



September 27, 2017

Mr. J. Paul Loether  
Deputy Keeper and Chief, NR and NHL Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

We are pleased to submit for your review the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination for the TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 (5ME.21405) in Mesa County, Colorado.

The Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the nomination at its meeting on September 15, 2017. The board voted unanimously to recommend to the State Historic Preservation Officer that the property met the criteria for listing in the National Register.

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the TBM Avenger Aircraft N53503 to the National Register of Historic Places.

We look forward to the formal listing of this property. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 303-866-4683 or by email at [erika.warzel@state.co.us](mailto:erika.warzel@state.co.us).

Sincerely,

Erika Warzel  
National and State Register Historian  
(303) 866-4683  
[erika.warzel@state.co.us](mailto:erika.warzel@state.co.us)

Enclosures

CDs (2)  
Signature Page