

The mandated schedule was, by any standard, urgent. Notified about the project on Jan. 4, 1941, the Corps began construction May 2, 1941, and completed the job Sept. 30, 1942.

Meanwhile, the nation at war could not wait for the building to be completed. The plant produced its first heavy bomber on Aug. 15, 1942 — 45 days before the building was complete.

Before military construction was phased out in 1945, the plant had employed as many as 23,000 people and had produced 952 of the famed B-24 heavy bombers. "The Liberators," as the B-24s were called, were among the most essential tools used to win World War II. Every 19.5 hours during peak manufacturing, the production line yielded another B-24, each 66 feet long with a 110-foot wing span, ready to carry a 10- to 12-man crew to battle zones. The plant also built or modified nearly 6,000 other planes, including the Army A-24 dive bomber, A-20 Havoc, and the B-17 Flying Fortress.²



The war couldn't wait for dedication of bomber plants at Tulsa, above, and Oklahoma City, below. While the buildings were still under construction, both began cranking out B-24 and C-47 airplanes, at a rate faster than a plane per plant per day.



Photo courtesy Tinker AFB Department of History