

Hasegawa 1/48 P-40E



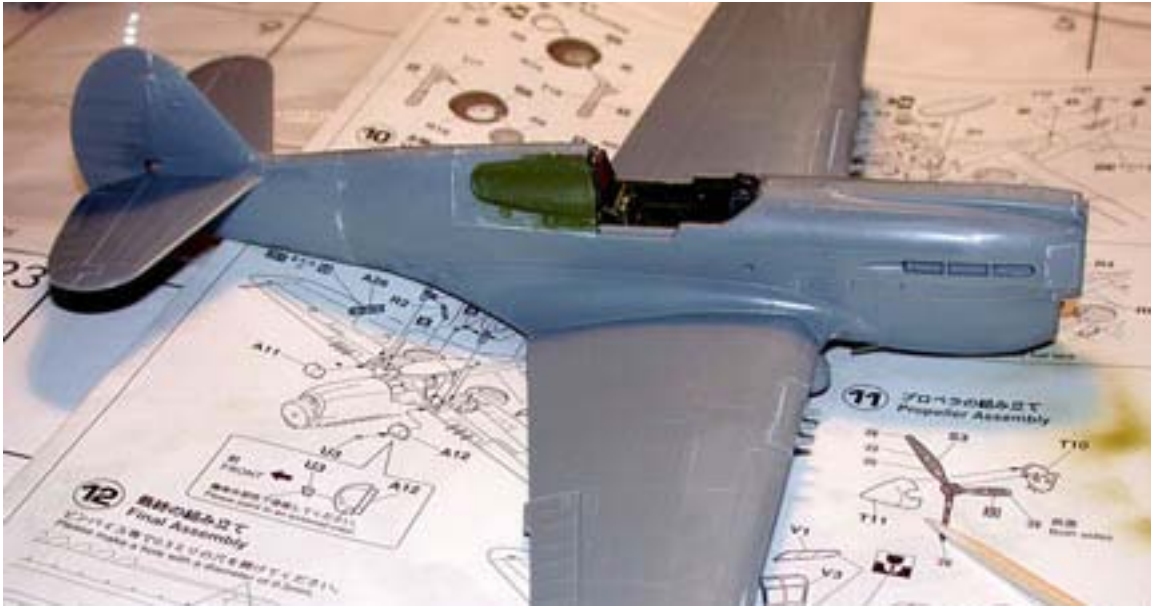
By Mike Hanlon

The definitive US Army Air Corps fighter in the eighteen months following Pearl Harbor, the P-40E fought in the Pacific, China, North Africa and the Aleutians. In addition the Army Air Corps, it was flown by the British, the Canadians, the Australians, and in Chinese markings by the Flying Tigers.

Several manufacturers have molded the P-40E in the past, but no kit has been considered definitive. Enter Hasegawa with their newly released P-40E. While certainly the most accurate and detailed kit produced, the Hasegawa molds are designed to accommodate other P-40 variants (the P-40N has already been released) and as such the assembly of the kit is more complicated than previous manufacturers' efforts.

Assembly starts with the fuselage parts. Each "half" is assembled from four parts. The tail is a separate piece to allow replacement with a longer tailpiece for the P-40K, M and N. The rear cockpit glazing has inserts to allow for the early individual glass panels. The P-40N has a different set of inserts to allow for its later style canopy. Hasegawa's instructions would have you add these parts after the forward fuselage and cockpit area have been assembled, but it makes more sense to assemble each "half" to ensure a minimum of filling. And there will be filling, the rear fuselage is broken in the middle of a panel and so will require some filling. Careful fitting while gluing will make this a minor task. I used Mr. Surfacer and the filling took only a few minutes. The rear canopy sections require more careful filling and sanding and I resorted to

using Squadron White Putty to fill these. The last two inserts are on the forward fuselage and are blanks for the later air filter holes used on the P-40N. These inserts took quite a bit of filing as they want to sink below the level of the surrounding fuselage. On a subsequent P-40N fuselage I followed a suggestion made on Hyperscale to use white glue to attach these pieces. I used Microscale Crystal Clear and sank the piece in place, wiping the excess with a wet paper towel. This has the added advantage of minimizing the seams around the inserts.



After the fuselage halves had been filled I turned to the cockpit interior. Curtiss used a variation of interior green, which has been cleverly dubbed Curtiss interior green. The few photographs show that this color is not that different from interior green so I just went with Gunze Sangyo's interior green with a dark wash and drybrushing. The seat was often left in unpainted aluminum, which I found out after I had already painted mine green. There is a seat frame part D3 which will break when you remove it from the sprue. I just glued it back together and attached it to the seat and then added Eduard colored photo-etched seat belts. The instrument panel can be painted or Hasegawa provides three separate decals. I used the main panel decal and painted lower panels myself. Forward of the cockpit is the trunking for the oil coolers. Once assembled the interior takes a little fiddling to get into the fuselage, but once set in place fits well and the fuselage can be assembled without difficulty. The final pieces added were the oil cooler intake lip and the carburetor intake lip. Both these pieces require minor filling and sanding to blend in.

Turning to the wings you are once again face with inserts. P-40D's, L's and early N models had two guns in each wings instead of four. Unless Hasegawa intends to make Merlin engined P-40L's this makes little sense. Only fifty D models were made and none saw combat. The early four gun N models also never saw

combat and retained panels and fittings for all six guns. The lower ejection chute inserts fit perfectly with no filling necessary. After the wings have been assembled the inserts for the machine guns can be added. These require careful fitting and will still require some filling and sanding. From here the rest of the kit assembles easily with no real problems until you get the rear cockpit windows. Great care must be taken when removing them from the sprue. Mine started to fracture at the attachment point. The pieces are also oversized and required careful sanding to achieve a reasonable fit.



Once everything was assembled it was time to paint. P-40E's came from the factory in two color schemes, Olive Drab over Neutral Gray or Dark Green, Brown and Gray camouflage. Technically camouflaged P-40E's were designated P-40E-1's and were intended for the RAF. After the US entered the war, large numbers of these aircraft were diverted from the RAF order and sent into combat with the Army Air Corps in China, Australia and New Guinea. The camouflage colors were supposed to match RAF Dark Green, Dark Earth and Sky. The paints used by Curtiss were supplied by DuPont and approximated, but did not match the RAF colors. The RAF underside color, Sky was a pale greenish color. Curtiss misinterpreted this color and used a light gray called Sky Gray instead. Some illustrations show P-40E's in British desert camouflage of Dark Earth, Middlestone and Azure Blue. This was not a factory scheme, the RAF repainted North African based P-40's at local depots so it very unlikely that such schemes were in use in Australia or New Guinea. For my P-40, I used Tamiya Sky Gray for the undersides. For the brown, which was lighter than RAF Dark Earth, I used Gunze Sangyo RAF Dark Earth lightened with Vietnam Tan FS 30219. For the dark green I used Gunze Sangyo Green FS 34092. No samples for these colors have been found so you have leeway in choosing which colors to use.

Curtiss used hard masks for camouflaged aircraft, so after painting the aircraft brown I blew up the Hasegawa camouflage pattern to 1/48 scale on a copier and cut paper masks for the wings and fuselage. The wings are a piece of cake, applying two-dimensional masks to a three dimensional fuselage is much more interesting and typically takes about three different painting sessions to get right.

The problem with building a newly released kit is that aftermarket supplies are not usually available. This is particularly true of canopy masks. As a result I had to mask the canopy frames with scotch tape, a scalpel blade and my own shaky hands. I managed, but E-Z Masks have really spoiled me. They are not always perfect, but they are close.

After painting the canopy remember to paint the edges of the rear glass with the exterior camouflage color. If you don't, light will catch the edges of the clear part and make it look silver.



For markings I chose Lt. Sidney Woods aircraft "ARIZONA" from the 49th Fighter Group based in New Guinea in 1942. Woods later went on to command the 4th Fighter Group in the ETO.

The Hasegawa P-40 series is a leap beyond previous P-40 kits. Given the breakdown of the kit molds Hasegawa can easily do a P-40M with parts from the currently released E and N models. A P-40K is possible but would require a different tailpiece. The Merlin series is possible though less likely as it would require new forward fuselage pieces as well as carburetor and oil cooler trunking.

All in all a very detailed kit that requires some modeling skills to fit and blend the fuselage and wing inserts. With all of the markings available this will prove to be a very popular series of kits.

