

287th AERO SQUADRON

287 and 112 AERO SQUADRONS, CONSOLIDATED, JAN 1919

LINEAGE

287th Aero Squadron Organized Apr 1918
Redesignated Squadron D, Chanute Field, IL, Jul 1918
Redesignated 287th Aero Squadron, Dec 1918
Demobilized, Dec 1918

STATIONS

Chanute Field, IL
Aviation Gen Sup Dep, Americus, GA

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

287th Aero Squadron
Squadron D
287th Aero Squadron
Wilbur Wright Field, OH
Chanute Field, IL, 27 Jun 1918-15 Dec 1918
Americus, GA

While Chanute prepared to resume training in the spring of 1918, the long dreaded German offensive on the Western Front began. So dire was the peril that the Allies for the first time united under a Supreme Commander, the French General Ferdinand Foch. In July 1918, the massive German fourth drive was stopped, and after three days the Allies under Marshal Foch counterattacked so energetically that the whole aspect of the war shifted irrevocably in a two week period. After the Second Battle of the Marne, the Germans were slowly driven back. While these events were taking place in Europe, Chanute continued to receive and send out squadrons. On 21 May 1918, while the Allies reeled under the German attack, the 112th Aero Squadron arrived from Rich Field in Waco, Texas. A month later, when the United States was pouring soldiers into France, the 267th and the 26th squadrons were ordered overseas. Their place quickly was taken by the arrival on 27 June 1918 of the 287th and the 288th Aero Squadrons from Wilbur Wright Field at Dayton, Ohio. On 20 August, while the Germans fought a desperate rear guard action which cost them a half million men, Chanute sent off the men of the 288th to Selfridge Field, Mt. Clemens in Michigan.* It went from there to New York on its way to Europe.

* Sometime in late July 1918, the squadrons were given letter designations rather than numerical ones. The 38th became A; the 112th, B; the 203rd, C; the 287th, D; and the 288th, E. To avoid confusion, the numeral designation has been retained in this narrative.

And then the war ended. The ringing of the fire bell and the blowing of the light plant whistle at 2 a.m. on 11 November 1918 informed the people of Rantoul of the armistice. Pandemonium broke loose. The energy reserved for so long for the war effort suddenly found a new release. Every conceivable object that would make a noise was brought out and put into use. A huge bonfire was built near the village flagpole and the Kaiser was hung in effigy. Monday was declared a general holiday and a parade was held in the afternoon. There was a victory dance in the evening. Chanute for some reason remained aloof from the initial celebration, and during the morning of the 11th, training continued as usual. The soldiers did not join the village's celebration until the afternoon. There can be at least two explanations for the hesitancy on the part of Chanute. Perhaps the officers in charge remembered the false rumors of the week before, and waited for official confirmation or perhaps they waited until the armistice took effect at 11 a.m. before relaxing. With the armistice, the need for aviators disappeared, and on 19 November 1918 a dispatch from Washington, DC closed Chanute to flying. Cadets already in training had the option of continuing at another field or receiving their discharge. Many wanted out, but still others wanted to go overseas with an occupation army. None wanted to return to Texas. The 38th and 203rd Aero Squadrons were demobilized on 1 December, and by 4 December 1918, the

airplanes were being crated up and shipped out. All restrictions were removed on the comings and goings of the remaining soldiers, and rumors on the future of Chanute were rampant. On 15 December 1918, the 112th and the 287th Aero Squadrons left the field for Americus, Georgia, one of the chief winter flying fields outside of the fields at San Antonio, Texas. Their departure depleted the field's complement to less than 400 men. The two squadrons were amalgamated into the Aviation General Supply Depot Detachment once they reached their destination. Chanute's contribution to the winning of the Great War was highly commendable. Although the exact number of flyers produced by Chanute could not be determined,* the local press noted that of the 8,688 aviators produced at all fields in the United States, Chanute graduated twice as many as the average field while being one of the smallest. In addition, the field had played host to 18 Aero Squadrons, five of which had been recruited and organized at the field. Of the 18 squadrons, the 10th, the 16th, the 152nd, the 153rd, the 173rd, the 174th, the 210th, the 267th, the 268th, the 831st, and the 832nd reached Europe. At least three of the aviators who received training at Chanute became aces by shooting down a minimum of five of the enemy's aircraft.

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Sources