

468th AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

56th Aero Squadron (Construction) organized, Aug 1917

Redesignated 468th Aero Squadron (Construction), Feb 1918

Demobilized Jul 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX

Mineola, NY, Sep 1917

Port of Hoboken, NY, Oct 1917

AEF, Oct 1917

Mitchel Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Recruited from among the ranks of volunteers, the 56th and later the 468th Aero Squadron, part of a temporary unit of 1150 men, gathered at Fort Slocum, New York, was organized at Kelly Field, Texas, August 8, 1917, and with about two months training, was ordered to overseas duty. Its war record is that of construction activities in connection with the erection of three of the largest aviation centers accomplished by the Air service in France. These places were the Third Aviation Instruction Center at Issoudun, Indre; Air Service, Production Center No. 2 at Romorantin, Loire et Clere, and the American Aviation Acceptance Park #1 at Orly, Seine. The squadron was a pioneer Air Service Organization, and was with the first 75,000 men sent to France. The men have handled all phases of construction work, but won special mention to the Chief of Air Service for skill and speed in the erection of steel hangars, principally hangars at the American Aviation Acceptance Park #1, at a time when the rapid receipt of planes made these buildings of the utmost importance. This construction activity aided materially in making possible the equipping and dispatching of large fleets of aeroplanes to the American fighting forces at the front, during the St. Mihiel drive, and the final offensive work of the American Forces just before the Armistice was signed by the Central Powers.

The Officers and men of the Squadron answered the call to the colors in the first great wave of patriotism which swept the country following the statement by the President that a state of war existed between the United States and the Central powers. New York led in the number of men furnished, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New Jersey following in the order named. There were no farewell parties or parades or other of the later day enlistment features in connection with the volunteering. America was just awakening to the real seriousness of the war. The organized work of bringing cheer to the recruits en route to and from the training centers was hardly more than under-oneside oration. The men made their decisions quietly, severed business and family connections, and in small groups or individually, made their way from the recruiting stations by train to New York, and from that city by boat to Fort Slocum. Some still smile at recollections of the sold meat sandwich, wrapped in a piece of paper, together with an apple, handed them by the Sergeant of the recruiting station as subsistence on the journey to the Fort, as contrasted by the later "sendoffs" at the railroad station. Fort Slocum was the recruiting center for the Eastern States. Every boat landed scores and scores of volunteers. It was the gathering of all nationalities, all classes, the outpouring from the American Melting-Pot in defense of principles held priceless.

Losing one's individuality and becoming a cog in the great war machine being organized by the government came hard for some. Patriotism as viewed from a comfortable home, to suddenly being called on to obey commands without questioning or reasoning, was quite another matter. It has often amazed the world at the apparent ease with which the American adapts himself to a situation. Here, at the Fort, was real cause for the outsiders, at a distance, to marvel at the ready transformation of civilians into creditable appearing and looking soldiers. Though far from the finished soldier, they represented the rough and ready type of the

American Volunteer. The change was wrought by drill and work of strenuous order. The old-school type of regular Army Corporal and Sergeant were much in evidence from Reveille to taps, and the recruits had it brought home to them that soldiering was a full sized man's job. There are those of the squadron who still have recollections of scrubbing the sea-wall of the Fort with a toothbrush in the chilly hours following midnight, of their first shift as kitchen police, including the initiation into the art of all that goes with the preparation of the arm "chow" and other forms of special duty, the result of failure to remember some phase of their new alley life. But if Cle recruits were worked hard, the sergeants and Corporals likewise exerted themselves, and as a result a steady stream of recruits were arriving at one end of the island and organized units leaving the other.

The men arrived at Fort Slocum in the closing days of July, 1917. It was during one of the hottest spells of weather that the eastern States had baked under in years. The mercury registered above the 90 degree mark. The first days of soldiering were severe under these weather conditions. The men were marched in long details to the examining Physicians, and passed or rejected, as the case happened to be, inoculated against typhoid fever, vaccinated as a preventive against smallpox, made the acquaintance of the army doctor and army dentist, and in the brief breathing spell there were those who recalled the words of General Sherman. The men were kept at the Fort for one week. There were five drill periods each day, and when not on the drill field, the men busied themselves elsewhere, keeping out of sight of the Regular Army Sergeant and Corporal, whom they feared and respected with all the fear and respect of a recruit.

Saturday morning, August 4th, the temporary unit of 1150 men, with as oomelete an equipment as the Fort was able to furnish, lined up for final inspection on the drill field. It was laughable to notice some of the tall, raw-boned Yanks, who wore soldier coat and civilian breeches, the result of the Fort Quartermaster being unable to furnish the proper sizes of clothing. Many of the men, small in stature, wore blouses and breeches slims too large for them, and still others had their breeches tied with string in the absence of belts. The unit was marched to the 'Next at the island for embarkation on the Steamer General Slocum. The men had the first real seriousness of war brought home to them, at the Vtharf, by viewing an armed guard and a flag draped coffin containing the body of one of their number, who had died from the heat, being taken aboard the steamer. The men, disembarked at the Pennsylvania Terminal, and boarded a special train, and the journey was begun toward Texas. The days and nights spent in flying across state after state proved both amusing and novel to the men. Enthusiasm was awakened at every tcsn and city passed, by the appearance of the train filled with khaki uniformed men. Stops were mace in several of the large cities, including Memphis, Tennessee, and the men given a hike. A warm reception was given by the inhabitants and the American Flag was waving from most of the old southern residences.

The unit arrived at Kelly Field on the morning of August 8/17, and detrained at the edge of a large sandy Leuze about five miles south of the City of San Antonio, Texas. The country was level, covered in places by the high western grass, while here and there stretched acres and acres of cactus and thick sage brush. In the distance, appearing dirty and seared against a large

red sun, were low foot hills, and the whole combined to make a wild and uninviting scene to the Northerners. The climate was dry and hot, and different from that of the Northern States. The change resulted in a number of the recruits succumbing to sun stroke and dropping from the ranks near the railroad tracks while awaiting assignment to quarters. They were given prompt attention. The unit was marched thru the high graae to rows of tents called the quarantine camps, divided into squadrons of 150 men each, and given over to the command of a Corporal or Sergeant from the Regular Army, detailed as Acting Commanders by the war Department. These Non-Commissioned Officers were from the southern states, and it is to their credit that they endeavored to treat the men as best possible without relaxing the bonds of discipline.

Corporal M.A. Sundeen was placed in command of the 56th squadron. He had no sooner brought his charges to something like the semblance of order than an aeroplane flew overhead. It was the first aeroplane the new aviation enlisted personnel had seen. Despite the commands of Corporal Sundeen, the military for the brief time being, gave way to sight seeing. It was a laueftable experience. It might be stated that Corporal Sundeen was a small man in stature, but all business and determined to get his squadron into best possible condition. holly Field was still in muoo of an embryo condition as a camp. The squadron was quartered in a row of fourteen tents, extending down one side of the company street. There were approximately h,500 aviation men under canvass. The squadron was kept in quarantine for the next three weeks, luring this time the men completed their Inoculation against typhoid. The daily routine was taken up with drill and the organization of the squadron. The squadron early came into prominence by its baseball team Which met and defeated all other squadrons in the camp, thereby winning the championship. ahe quarantine amp, at this time, was patrolled by guards to prevent the men from mixing with the personnel of the squadrons who had completed their inoculation and vaccination. It did not take the men of the 56th long in figuring wars and means of running the guard lines. A favorite method was to wait until the guard was at one end of his beat, and if wanting to get out of camp, start to walk in towards the tents from a point near the "dead line", and of course the soldier was hissed out by the euard and his broomstick "gun". Or the opposite if the soldier was endeavoring t) get in stamp. The sand storms, peculiar to this region, gave the Northerners many a lively tussle to hold down their tents and property, and earned the name of "Texas." The esprit de corps, which has characterized the squadron, was In reality born by a aroma of fun makers known as the "rata". Among them might be mentioned Pvt lol Harry C. Mitchell, avt lel Patrick P. rorlenza, avts. Henry and James Sullivan, and Sgt. Denial J. O'Boyle. The "rate" were present at every athletic contest, and their rooting anc (sheering produced tee enthusiasm which invariably enabled the squadron team to ems from behind and send the needed runs across the plate. Sergeant William a. Barnett, of Oklahoma City early came into prominence by his ability to daily introduce some new game for his benefit and the education of the over arriving crowd of rookies.

Towards the first of September the squadron moved from the quarantine camp to the row of barracks fronting on the long road leading to the city of San Antonio, it was a most welcome change from the tents. The men were quartered in one long barrack each, with a single iron bed for each soldier. The squadron mess hall took up another barrack. There was a shower bath

in the third barrack. it was during this period that Captain and later Major L.A. Walton assumed command. The announcement was made that the squadron, with seven other like organizations, had been designated as construction workers and would form the first unit of this branch of the Signal Corps, to carry the American Flag overseas to France. News that they were soon to be in foreign service spurred the work of preparation. During the day the Squadron drilled morning and afternoon and at the same time the orderly room force under direction of Major Walton was busy completing the equipment.

Major Walton, who was of the flying branch, gave way in command to First Lieutenant John J. O'Rourke. While the days were days of work and steady preparation, the nights were those of enjoyment. The squadron musicians, of whom there were nearly a score, would bring forth their instruments, and would entertain with many a program of ragtime, while song and merriment reigned in the barracks. The squadron figured in one of the most laughable and most talked of incidents in the history of Kelly Field, and the same formed the subject for columns and columns of newspaper space. Occupying the barracks alongside the squadron, was the 57th organization, also designated for construction duty in the first over-seas unit. The mascot of this squadron was a large, white billy goat. One evening a detail from the 57th Squadron with several banners, trumpeters and accompanied by much noise, marched past the barracks of the 56th Squadron parading the goat, and the calls were many "We have be's goat". That was too much for the onlookers, and the assignment of getting back the goat was turned over to threats'. At three o'clock the next morning, the "rat" detail silently crept upon the unsuspecting goat, and while the animal was held anti prevented from making an outcry, within a few inches of the window of the orderly room of the 57th squadron, the detail clipped the goat's mustache and left a large "56" on both sides of its back. So deftly did the detail work that the First Sergeant and the Sergeant Major of the 57th organization had not the least suspicion of the work.

The goat was afterwards placed in the latrine of the 57th Squadron. The First Sergeant of this squadron was the first one to open the door in the morning. The goat butted him full in the stomach and the Non-Commissioned Officer was doubled up as though an express train had hit him. The discovery of the clipping was a signal for a general outbreak, and a demand for revenge on the part of the 57th Squadron, and it was necessary to call out the entire guard of Kelly Field to prevent hostilities. That night a 57th Squadron man issued a challenge to a man from the 56th Squadron;-Sergeant Griffiths, a Penn State Wrestler, and a boxer of no little note responded and a bout was put on at the Y.M.C.A. Griffiths more than upheld our interests. Carrying the incident still farther the next day the Sergeant-Major of the 57th Squadron received the whiskers of the goat by special delivery. A little later a butcher from South San Antonio called at the squadron to buy the goat, being informed by telephone that it was for sale.

During the second week of September the squadron received its complete "O Equipment", including overcoats, heavy woolen underwear, trench shoes, and all that was necessary for field work and duty. The men were interviewed by Major Walton and Lieutenant J. O'Rourke as to their construction ability and tradesmanship, and tentative details were arranged under the

schedule provided by the signal Corps branch Of the Army. Orders to nave were received September 15th, and it was on the afternoon of September 17th, about 5 o'clock, that the eight squadrons of approximately 1250 Officers and men formed on the large, sandy drill ground in heavy marching order, and at command swung on to the road leading to the station at South San Antonio. There were many calls of goodbye and good-luck and "get the Kaiser" from "Y" workers and interested citizens and soldiers of more recently organized squadrons. It took three special trains to carry the squadrons and their baggage. The 56th and 57th Squadrons occupied the third train, which was in command of First Lieutenant J. O'Rourke. The men had Pullman coaches, and the outsides were lavishly labeled with chalk inscriptions telling that the organizations were on their way tJ Berlin, bound for overseas service, and the like. The trip Northward occupied three days and three nights. It was a trip of one rousing reception after another through every town and pity along the railroads. Stops were made at several of the larger Southern Cities, including Memphis, Tenn. and Little nook. Ark, and among the many sots of hospitality extended was the serving of apple pie by the Confederate Women's Relief Auxiliaries. everywhere en Soule the enthusiasm in response to the call to arms nos noticeable. The squadron arrived at eineola late in the afternoon of September 20th. The change from the hot dry temperature of Texas, with its sands and warm sun, to the chilly salt breezes coming in from Long Island Sound, resulted in the men making immediate use of all the issue of Winter Equipment. The squadron was quartered in tents in Field No. 2, Captain Jesse D. Meads, of Detroit, Michigan, assumed command of the squadron September 27th. He gave the organization the benefit of his long experience with the Engineering Company of the Michigan National Guard.

The squadron was at Mineola, for twenty-three days, and this period was a most important one in the history of the organization. The men were thoroughly drilled in infantry maneuvers. The tentative lists of appointments of non-commissioned officers, as called for by the construction squadron table of organization, were revised, and with very few exceptions, the men selected proved their worth and justified their appointments by excellent work done in France. The squadron received its construction material, and the mass of equipment was placed in readiness for shipments. Each man was thoroughly equipped, and the squadron made a most favorable impression at the final inspection prior to sailing.

Twenty-One of the forty-eight States are represented in the enlisted personnel of the squadron, i'ow York leading with a total of thirty-seven, Massachusetts being second with twenty-seven and. Pennsylvania third with nineteen. The States and number of men representing each are as follows: New York 37; Massachusetts 27; ?Pennsylvania 19; New Jersey 15; abode Island 4; Michigan 2; Connecticut 4; Illinois 3i Missouri 2; Washington 2; ilew Hampshire 2; Louisiana 2; Indiana; Virginia 1; West Virginia; Iowa 1.

Twenty-dline trades and occupations are represented as follows; Electricians 16; mechanics 27; Clerks. 25; Carpenters 8; Chauffeurs 8; Plumbers 6; ilailrosie men 5; Moving picture operator 1; Farmers 2; elechr1 engineer 1; Butcher *; Inspector 1 Blacksmith 3; Tool-makers 1; Teamster 1; fitter 1; Painters3; Salesmen 2; civil engineer 2; gall hand 1; miner 1; manufacturer 1; cooks 3; photographer 1; surveyor 1; draftsmen 3; tinsmiths 1; laborer 1;

bricklayer 1.

Commanded by Major Lunsford, of the flying section of the signal Corps, the unit of eight squadrons, composed of approximately 1250 Officers and men, left Mineola, N.Y., shortly after midnight October 14th, marching through the rear of the flying field, through knee high grass, in a severe rain and sleet storm to Camp Mills, the home of Rainbow Division, to Garden City, where troop trains were boarded carrying the organizations to Long Island. The Officers and men, such as ordered, were permitted to snatch several hours sleep on the floor of the railroad station at this place. A ferry transported the unit to Pier No. 54, East River, New York, arriving at 9 A.M. The Squadrons marched directed the Transport, the "S.S. Pannonia" of the English Cunard Line. The ship was of ten thousand tons, five hundred and forty-one feet long, with a speed of fifteen knots an hour, having seen eighteen years of service. The ship, mounted one three inch gun on her stern. The Captain was a man named Simpson. Ole willingness to run chances with the German Submarines kept the Command Company hiring new crews.

Twelve other merchant ships and oil "tankers", together with the "Tagus", an English troop ship carrying 2000 British Colonials from the West Indies, sailed with the Pannonia. Most of the ships were so slow that the Pannonia could do no better than nine knots an hour, and keep with them. An English Cruiser, the Aocksborough, cleared the way, sailing on the right of the ship formation. The cruiser served solely as protection against possible German raiders that might be plying the Atlantic. The trip required sixteen days and the route was along the banks off the New England States to Halifax(though this place was not sighted), thence striking across the Atlantic, circling the North Coast of Ireland, through the Irish Sea to Liverpool Harbor. A stop was made in the Harbor of 'Oelfast, Ireland over the night. The total distance covered was about 3700 miles, and 3500 miles was made with but the protection of the cruiser.

The Pannonia encountered one of the stiffest Northwest gales in years. The wind registered seventy miles an hour. The ship. was forced, for a day and a night to turn in its course and sail towards New York.

Submarine alarms were frequent. The ships would run up strings of signals and turn in zigzag fashion. The first alarm was wig-wagged while the ship formation was but a day out from New York. The sighting of a school of whales was the cause. Sounds of heavy gun firing were heard from on October 19th and 20th. The English Cruiser several times disappeared over the horizon line. It was during this time the American troop ship "Antilles was torpedoed with a loss of seventy Americans. A message from a German Naval Base to German Submarines in the Atlantic was captured by the wireless operator of the Pannonia on the evening of October 25th. The message was sufficiently decoded to learn that it was giving the location of "American Troop Ships". Orders were given, as a result, and the Pannonia tacked and for the first time steamed at full speed, leaving the rest of the ship formation. Two English Torpedo boats nicked up the transport in the Irish Sea and acted as Convoy.

Before arriving in Belfast Harbor, the ship's wireless reported two extremely fast German Raiders had met and sunk two British Torpedo Boats and eight unarmed Merchantmen. This

added to the general strain. Extra lookouts, four from each squadron, were selected to watch from all quarters of the transport. The troop ship Tagus was reported lost with the 2000 British Colonial Troops, and repeated calls were sent from the wireless of the British Torpedo Boats acting as convoy in an effort to locate this ship. The Tagus was reported safe the next morning, and several hours later all ships made the harbor. The Officers and men of the unit lived, ate and slept with life preservers for sixteen days and nights, and the strain was such that an emergency call to quarters, caused several to faint and a number broke down and cried. The Pannonia showed no lights whatever at night.

The name plate of the Pannonia was removed the second day out from New York. The English slag was flown but seldom. For any of the Officers or man to smoke on deck at night was to invite instant arrest by the guard. During the last part of the trip life rafts were distributed about the decks and the life boats were provisioned and made in readiness for instant use. The other preparations for abandoning ship were very complete.

The dash from Belfast Harbor to Liverpool was particularly exciting, in view of the activity of German submarines in these waters. The Pannonia steamed at top speed and the torpedo boat convoy circled and re-circled the troop ship, maintaining the sharpest of lookout. The Pannonia entered Liverpool Harbor shortly after one o'clock on October 29th. The health of the Officers and men during the trip was excellent. There was not a single death. The troops aboard the British Tagus, five weeks at sea, suffered several. Due to sickness, 500 of the men had to be carried ashore on stretchers. This delayed the landing of the American unit seven hours at the Princess Landing. The squadrons made a most favorable impression on the British Officers assisting in the disembarkation. The trip was ended as it began in a driving sleet and snow storm.

The Squadrons marched to the Riverside Station, but a short distance from the dock, and entrained in special (Roaches for the railroad journey across England to Aldershot, where was located the Borden Rest Camp. The wind was blowing in from Germany as the trains left Liverpool, and the Americans witnessed gigantic searchlights sweeping the heavens, one of the many precautions against the dreaded German Air raids. A stop was made at Birmingham shortly after midnight. Men supplied with hot coffee. Aldershot was reached shortly after 8 o'clock. The Squadrons remained in tents at this camp for two days, early on the morning of the second day being sent racing to the fields and nearby woods by an air raid alert. The squadrons entrained again Nov. 1st, and proceeded to Southampton, crossing the English Channel in the Huntscaft, a captured German raider, converted into a cattle boat, arriving at Le Havre, France, the next morning. The Squadrons stopped at the English Rest Camp At Le Havre over night, and entrained in French trains for Issoudun, the home of the 3rd Aviation Instruction Center, early the next morning, arriving at about 10 o'clock on the morning of November 4, 1917.

The squadrons had to march from the Issoudun Station to the site of the Aviation Center, seven miles, and the march taxed the physical endurance of the men, the result of the long and tedious journey by transport and rail, from the States. The squadrons discovered upon

completing the march that the site covered scores of acres. There was a Headquarters Building, a Post Hospital, three barracks one of which was occupied by Officers as a Headquarters building, a small generating plant, and a small Quartermaster Supply depot. The construction work was but little more than started, the work being in charge of a small detachment of engineers, French laborers, cadet aviators and German prisoners. The squadrons were marched to the bluff or slight plateau overlooking the center and quartered in two rows of portable aeroplane hangars. Bales of straw were issued and these thrown on the ground, and the men spread their blankets and were permitted to rest until the following morning. The rainy season was on, and a majority of men of each squadron had but little of their field equipment, due to the baggage being held on the docks at Liverpool.

The roads were but makeshift, worse than many in the backwoods sections of the States. A one track railroad, of pioneer order, connected the camp with the town of Issoudun. The mud was from six inches to over a foot in depth and clung to the shoes of each man until he would give a kick, when a large ball would go flying from the bottom of his shoes. This process had to be repeated frequently. It was necessary for the squadrons to carry water for cooking purposes nearly half a mile through the fields, and the cooking was done in the open. Those who wished to make their toilet or shave had to search for a wagon rut and take the water from the same with a tin cup or can. A bath could only be obtained by details, aided by lanterns, walking through the mud from the hangars to the headquarters building at night, and from there taking trucks to Issoudun, to the municipal bath house.

Though the center had been little more than started, the American Red Cross had a small building and a small band of earnest working American Red Cross workers headed by Miss. Uivenwilson, and they worked early and late dispensing chocolate and sandwiches to the officers and men.

The squadron took an active part in the construction program from the first. First Lieutenant Alexander L. Garred took charge of the road construction. First Lieutenant Frederick L. Speed was placed in charge of the construction office. The first job given the squadron was that of excavating and laying a line of four, six and ten inch sewer pipe from the hospital to a line below the railroad tracks, a distance of about three hundred yards. Chief Maurice J. Weeneberger, was placed in charge of the guards watching the details of five hundred German Prisoners being used for construction work. Sgt. Joseph P. Romano, directed a large detail engaged in rebuilding the railroad line between the center and Issoudun. Private George L. McCoy had charge of the surveying work of the center. Master Electrician Samuel L. Burdick designed the sewerage disposal and incinerating plants, the rifle and machine gun ranges, and did other designing work for the Ordnance Department, working under the direct supervision of Mr. Sreeman, the civilian Ordnance expert from Washington, D.C. Sgt. Frank Rollins, had charge of the details which ran a telephone line from the Center headquarters to Valentine Field, a distance of five miles. Sergeant Joseph E. Carlson was the Center Blacksmith. Sgt. Alfred E. Griffiths, directed the details handling the work of unloading the long trains of supplies and aeroplanes daily arriving at the Center. Sgt. Harry U. Saxe, supervised the details working on the roads. Sgt. Reuben Swanson, Sgt. Hayden, and Sergeant William A. Barnett were at the

head of the details electrifying the Center.

Sgt id vdilliam J. Cleeland, an experienced steel and iron worker was given general supervision of the erection of the large tower and storage tank supplying the center with water. The tower had been partly erected, and the work was being pushed with all speed as it was necessary to carry water over half a mile to the construction squadrons, ohen Sgt. Cleeland, with the natural interest a man showe in his line of work, inspected the structure. His criticisms resulted in an order to rebuild the tower and he was placed in charge of the work. Tho work on the tower and tank was completed in a satisfactory manner. Sgt. Cleeland, from this time, was kept detailed on this line of construction work.

The squadron was moved into barracks December 8th/18. During this period the squadron was ongagad in erecting sectional barracks, erecting the two buildings housing the activities of the Young Mens Christian Association, and the machine shops of the center. The squadron continued at the Center until February 17th, being then ordered to the Air Service, 'production Center #2 at itomorantin. The individual value of tee squadron was shown by the Commanding Officer of the Center detaching fifteen men required to carry on the different construction work still in progress. Several of the men were later transferred back to the squadron at the direction of the Chief of the Air Service.

TheA,S,, production denter No. 2 was still in its infancy when the squadron arrived and became a part of the construction force. The first work assigned to the squadron was that of completing the single line railroad connecting the center with Qievres. This road was of special importance as over it was hauled all the supplies for the Center from Tours. The squadron was next assigned the work of erecting the first steel warehouse of the center. The work was done so satisfactorily, that the organization was kept at this class of construction activity. Sgt lel Yoilliam J. Cleeland again demonstrated his ability, and of such value was his work that he was transferred from the squadron, upon the departure of the squadron from the Center, promoted to the grade of Master Electrician, and given entire charge of the steel construction. The squadron did considerable general construction work at this Center, but it was the work on the steel construction that added considerably to the record written at issoudun.

The squadron was moved from eomorantin to Orly Field, the home of the American Aviation Acceptance Park #1, fourteen: kilometers south of Paris, on May 30, 1918. Captain Meads was detached from the squadron to remain, at Romorantin. First Lieutenant Alexander L. tarred was made Squadron Commander in his place, assuming command just before the organization left Romorantin and bringing it to Orly Field. The squadron continued its record in the short time that it was commanded by Lt. Garred. Captain Meads again assumed command of the squadron on June 8th. The Park had been little more than started when the squadron arrived, together with the 464th Aero Squadron. The German Armies were making their drive on Paris at this time and Paris was being raided almost nightly by German Squadrons. Shortly after the arrival of the two construction squadrons, 300 3-ton trucks were dispatched to the field as a possible emergency measure. he squadron did considerable work erecting sectional barracks, building roads, installing three 10,000 gallon gasoline tanks, and then was ordered to erect large steel

hangars. The importance of these steel hangars overshadowed everything else, as constantly increasing quarters were urgently needed for the planes being prepared for the Et. Mihiel drive. The Park was originally directed to furnish 25 aeroplanes a day for the American Fighting Squadrons, and that their number was increased to as high as 87 aeroplanes a day, to a considerable measure due to the work of the squadron. Colonel Baldwin recognized the work by directing a letter of commendation to the Chief of Air Service, and the telegram in response is one of the cherished records of the squadron.

The squadron organized the first orchestra in the American Air service headed by Sgt Leobert H. Lemming of Buffalo, N. Y. By popular subscription a piano was purchased at Issoudun. The orchestra, assisted by a detail, loaded the piano on a truck and then proceeded to give a much appreciated concert in that ancient town. The orchestra, in the year and a half of its existence, has furnished music for all the social events at Issoudun, Lomontin and Orly, and in addition has made a number of trips to the different American Hospitals here its musical programs were appreciated by the rounded soldiers. The squadron also originated the so-called "Liberty Club" of Orly, a movement which later spread to other organizations. Thursday of each week was given over to Squadron night, the men making their own program. The wide variety of talent shown attracted considerable attention and also afforded much interest and entertainment for the men.

468th Aero Squadron 1st Lieutenant Frederick I. Ordway transferred from Group Headquarters and assumed command.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.