

825 AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

825 Aero Squadron
Organized Jan 1918
Demobilized Sep 1919

STATIONS

Waco, TX
Garden City, NY, Mar 1918
Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, Aug 1918
AEF, Aug 1918
Camp Dix, NJ

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The Eight Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Aero Repair Squadron was formed at the Aviation Camp, Waco Texas, Tuesday, January 28, 1918. The order for the organization of the unit was known as: "G.O.13, par. 2; Hq., Aviation Camp, Waco, Texas," and was signed by Major Rush B. Lincoln, commanding the First Provisional Regiment. The personnel of the new squadron was recruited from Provisional Squadrons 7; 8, 9; 10, 11, 12 and 13. Second Lieutenant Robert Stanley Smilie, formerly Supply Officer of the Tenth Provisional Squadron, was appointed commanding officer.

From its organization until the signing of the armistice the squadron served a total of 287 days. Of this total 215 days were served in the United States; foreign service amounting to 66 days, this time being reckoned from the date of the arrival of the organization in France. Twenty-four days were spent in travel. A total of almost 6500 miles had been covered at the close of the war, making the aggregate mileage for the personnel of the squadron roughly 1,000,000. Two hundred seventeen men have, at various times, been members of the unit. Fourteen officers have been assigned to it, of whom only three regular officers one engineer and one medical officer remain. Of the original enlisted personnel 103 are left.

The squadron came into being on the north end of the company streets of the Ninth and Tenth Provisional Squadron at Waco. Lieutenant Smilie acting as C.O.; Supply Officer and Adjutant, with the cooperation of the men, quickly whipped things into shape. Equipment was checked over, new clothing and supplies drawn and overseas chests built. Regular calisthenics and military drills went on, in charge of sergeants, during the preparation period. Prospect of immediate active service spurred everyone to good effect.

On February 19 Second Lieutenant Peter Wallace McKittrick, who had been adjutant of the Eleventh Provisional Squadron was assigned to the 825th as Supply Officer. Under his direction preparations were completed and everything was in readiness when, at noon, February 25, orders to proceed to the Aviation General Supply Depot and Concentration Camp Garden City Long Island, N.Y. were received. The squadron, moving with record speed, had entrained and was on its way north four hours later.

The route north was thru Dallas, Longview and Marshall, Texas; Texarkana and Little Rock, Ark; Memphis, Tenn.; Kingston and Atlanta, Ga.; Salisbury, N.C.; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, N.J. and New York City. The total mileage covered was 2103. Hikes were made during the trip at Marshall, Texarkana, Memphis and Atlanta.

The squadron arrived at Garden City March 2, took up its quarters in a warehouse and immediately got in shape for overseas duty. Overseas orders, however, failed to appear. Fatigue details, with hikes and drills, passed the time. A move was later made to barracks, with fatigue still the order of the day. Two periods in quarantine marked the months of March and April.

On April 18 Lieutenant McKittrick was assigned to duty with the draft army at Camp Devens,

Ayer, Mass., and left for his new post. His place was taken by Second Lieutenant Russell Griswold Colt. May 7 Lieutenant Colt was relieved from duty with the squadron, Second Lieutenant Philip Kingsland Houston assuming the duties of Supply Officer. Lieutenant McKittrick, having obtained a mutual transfer from Infantry to Signal Corps, returned to the squadron May 28, and was installed as adjutant.

The long-looked for day when the squadron should really start upon the work for which it was organized arrived June 1. On this date the 825th was attached for duty to Group "A", First Provisional Training Wing, and thus became a part of the first American trained Air Service unit. Mitchell Field was the new scene of the organizations activities and the squadron went to work with vigor, setting up hangars and preparing the field for the reception of the aircraft which later it cared for.

For the next three months the squadron was on strenuous duty as the repair unit of what was virtually an air park. It repaired and fabricated plane and engine parts, maintained a crack wrecking crew and upon occasion went out on the dead line and supplied service crews. Its experience varied from big Liberty engine DeHavilands and Curtiss JN4s to tiny Standard scouts and swift Thomas Morse ships. Gnome, LeRhone, Liberty-12; Curtiss and Hispano-Suiza motors were handled by the mechanics of the outfit in satisfactory manner. A large proportion of the personnel also obtained actual flying experience during this period.

The work of the squadron during this period drew the highest commendation from Major C. K. Rhinehart and Major Whitten J. East then in charge of the field. Their appreciation of the squadron was such that when it was ordered overseas strenuous efforts were made to hold it for a continuance of its duties with the wing. These efforts, however, finally failed.

During this period, also, officers were slowly added to the personnel. Second Lieutenant Alfred W. Marriner was assigned as engineer officer July 18; Second Lieutenant Robert R. Williamson joined as armament officer July 24 and Second Lieutenant Russell V. Dunkin added his name to the rolls August 12.

The squadron lost its organizer and commanding officer August 13 when Lieutenant Smilie was promoted to Air Park Officer of Group "A" and relieved of his command. The new commanding officer was Lieutenant McKittrick, who had been adjutant since May 28.

Although rumors of overseas service had been going the rounds for some time practically ever since the organization of the squadron, in fact definite orders were not received until Sunday morning, August 25. The squadron, however was equal to the emergency, and left, fully equipped down to the last button, on the morning of August 31.

The overseas trip was made from Field via the Long Island R.R. to Long Island City. Here the Ferry "Babylon" was boarded and carried the squadron down the river to a dock in the Erie Basin where the British freighter Lycaon, temporarily doing duty as a troopship, was in waiting. Everything and everyone was securely packed aboard that afternoon, but no start was made

that day.

The actual voyage started at 4 P.M. Sunday, September 1, when the "Lycaon" left her berth and joined the convoy in the lower bay. Thirteen ships escorted by the battleship "Montana," a destroyer two submarine chasers, a captive balloon and two naval planes, steamed eastward at sunset.

Glasgow, Scotland reached after an uneventful voyage on September 13. At the Partick station the squadron entrained at 10:10 A.M. aboard a Caledonian Railway train and proceeded a south, through Carlisle, Preston, Crewe, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Oxford and Basingstoke to Winchester arriving here at 1 A.M. September 14. A four-mile hike through a rainstorm brought it to Rest Camp #3, Standon about 2:50 A.M. Extra blankets were immediately drawn and the outfit turned in for a long sleep.

Hikes and drills, with a couple of turns at guard duty, filled in the days spent here and at 2:30 P.M. September 21 the squadron set out afoot for Flowerdown Camp, four miles distant on the other side of Winchester. During the stay at Standon, Second. Lieutenant Lane K. Stone, Isaac K. Jacobs and Malcolm B. Ayres, who had been assigned to the squadron immediately prior to its departure from Garden City, reported for duty.

September 23 First Lieutenant Frank W. Smythe, M.C., was assigned to the squadron as medical officer; Lieutenant Jacobs was relieved and his place taken by Second Lieutenant Frank W. Hoover.

At Flowerdown the squadron's property and equipment was examined by officers designated for that duty and found to be correct. Nothing prevented the departure of the organization for what every man and officer hoped would be active service at the front.

Orders for France being received Flowerdown Camp was left on the morning of September 25. The squadron hiked into Winchester, taking the London and South Western Railway at this point for the port of embarkation at Southampton. Here the transport "Mona's Queen" was boarded and the cross-channel trip started at 5 P.M.

After a rough passage Le Havre was reached early the next morning. The squadron debarked, marched through the waterside district and arrived at Rest Camp #2 about 9 A.M. At 2 P.M. the next day the rest camp was only an unhappy memory and at 4:15 P.M. the squadron was pulling out of Le Havre depot, headed south in boxcars for St. Maixent. A two-day trip brought the organization, on the morning of September 29; to Air Service Replacement and Concentration Barracks (Coiffe Barracks) at St. Maixent.

A halt had to be called here. The squadron's baggage, including, in half a dozen chests, extra blankets and Red Cross supplies, tools and equipment, had been salvaged by army port officers at Le Havre and until fresh supplies to make up the deficiencies could be obtained no move could be made. The deficiencies were finally filled October 10.

During the stay here Lieutenants P. K. Houston and Ayres were relieved from duty, October 2. No assignments to fill their places were made.

October 11 saw the squadron again entrained, this time for a shorter trip to Romorantin, Loir et Cher. This place was reached on the afternoon of October 12. Another hike brought the outfit to Air Service Production Center #2. With one day spent in getting straightened around practically the entire personnel was drafted for work in the various shops and offices of the center.

A month's steady work here resulted in a large number of men of the squadron being recommended by their officers for promotion and the good name which the squadron had earned in Texas, on Mitchell Field and wherever it had worked, was given the O.K. by officers in charge of various sections of the plant.

The activities of the squadron were suddenly curtailed by the signing of the armistice November 11; and Thanksgiving Day witnessed the reception of orders to hold itself in readiness for shipment, to the United States.

Twenty-eight states from Washington to Florida and from California to Massachusetts will receive discharged members of the 825th while two more will be welcomed in Hawaii. Almost exactly half of the personnel will return to the three western states of California, Montana and Washington.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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