

827 AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

Repair

LINEAGE

827 Aero Squadron

Organized, Feb 1918

Demobilized, Jun 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX

Wilbur Wright Field, OH, Feb 1918

Garden City, NY, Mar 1918

Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, May 1918

AEF, May 1918

South Farnborough, England

Codford, England

France

Mitchel Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

This is the history of an Aero Repair Squadron, organized in the dust and head of Kelly Field, TX, partially trained in Ohio, passing through a seemingly endless quarantine at the port of embarkation; it has finally become an infinitesimal part of the great Army which America has sent to write a new page in the history of the world.

In so great an organization as the AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, the chronicle of any one unit must perforce be of limited interest. But to make a complete record each unit, however unimportant must be represented, and while our career has not been spectacular we have rendered a great deal of hard earnest and unostentatious service in the cause of Democracy. Therefore we endeavor to present an accurate, and we hope a fairly interesting narrative of our wanderings in the Military Service."

We were organized February 11th 1918, at Kelly Field, TX. Men from every occupation and station in life, and practically every State in the Union were represented in the enlisted Personnel. They were drawn from the trade lines of the camp. Where if a chimney sweep or a corporation lawyer was wanted, the Personnel Officer had but to put through a transfer and the thing was done. Such a hybrid collection of trades, nationalities and personalities probably never existed before the founding of Kelly.

After an all day waiting in the mud; the infant organization was taken to Barracks #50, Kelly Field no. 1 and given a good supper, good beds and prospects of new clothing. Thus our real military life begun.

Under the careful kindly, but firm tutelage of Captain Walmsley our first Commanding Officer and 2nd Lt. E. G. Willians, his adjutant, we rapidly grasped the rudiments of drill and military courtesy and customs, and learned something of the part we were to play in the great war. Then we had our first quarantine for Spiral-Meningitis, and languished in quarantine for a week. At this time we lost Captain Walmsley and 2nd Lieut. Harrington, Supply Officer. Their places were ably filled by 1Lt G. W Earhart, of Dayton, Ohio, and Lieutenant Scribner.

During this period we were issued haversacks and pack carriers, and got a new idea of the white man's burden in war time. As soon as the quarantine was lifted we moved to the Second Training Brigade, and two days later rolled our packs for our first long trip. There were few tears shed when the troop train pulled out on the morning of February 25th 1918, and we left Kelly Field forever, we hope.

Our trip north was delightful no "Bully Beef" that trip. We had our kitchen set up, and regular

meals was served enroute. Our trip was broken by parades in New Orleans and Memphis, and it speaks well for the patriotism of the south, that we were lustily cheered in spite of the fact that Privates McGraw and James marched at the head of the column playing "Marching through Georgia" although there is room for argument on the question.

On we sped, the sands and cactus giving way to the semi-tropical vegetation of Louisiana, up through the fertile bottoms of Mississippi across Tennessee, through Kentucky, skirting Indiana, we finally detrained at Osborne, Ohio, and marched to our new home; Wilbur Wright Field. Here we were to receive our first technical training and after surveying our new barracks with its convenient wash room and mess hall, we decided we were in luck.

Life at Wilbur Wright Field was pleasant though uneventful. The old mess kits were layed away, and we enjoyed the unique sensation of eating from plates. Some of our fellows got their first taste of guard duty; and didn't like it. Also we had our first payday. Most of our time was spent at school, where our embryo mechanics[sic] gained a fair idea of the work they were to do. We should have been satisfied, but the call from over-seas was too strong, and we looked forward with longing to the time of sailing.

Some three weeks terminated our stay at Dayton. On the 24th day of March 1918, we boarded another train and went to Minneola, Long Island, New York, and made preparations to sail.

Nothing is more depressing then waiting for transportation. Our stay at Minneola was one quarantine after another. There were many transfers, several old friends going to other outfits, others to the hospital. Frequent cultures were taken, and several fellows found guilty of harboring diphtheria germs. (Cook Riley insisted that a culture be taken of the squadron for tape worm, but his suggestion was unheeded) any how there were a number of new faces in the outfit when we were finally ready to sail.

The never to be forgotten day dawned at last. On the morning of May 2nd 1918, we marched through Camp Mills, "of Rainbow. Division fame" carrying a ton or so of barracks bags in addition to our packs. It was a cruel hike and we were thoroughly tired when we reached the train. Then followed a heart breaking wait on the dock and when we finally got on board the Aberdeen Liner, Demosthenes; we were ready for bed. We slept soundly in spite of the fact that few of us had ever tackled a hammock before.

The next day we sailed. It was not a pleasant trip we were crowded some of us were sea sick and the food was execrable, ancient fish mildewed beef and decomposing rabbit formed the staple part of the menu. Once we had boiled spring chicken on the half shell. Nightly pilgrimages were made in search of more palatable chow, and once there was a small siege on the kitchen. We do not know who was responsible for conditions of things; but the food we got put have been relished only by a buzzard, and the Steward will have a hot old time hereafter if he goes were the fellows hope he does.

The trip was uneventful, calm weather prevailed and the subs gave us a wide berth. The

Infantry outfit on board had an excellent band, and daily concerts helped brake [sic] the monotony. The time dragged, however, and every one was glad when we dropped anchor at Liverpool on the 18th day of May.

We got a royal welcome, every one gave us cheer as we sped through en-route to Winchester, The whole country was like a park, and we decided we would like to stay awhile. We didn't know that we were to spend nearly six months there.

We detrained at the beautiful old cathedral city of Winchester and marched to Flowerdown. Flowerdown was a rest camp, and while we were there our stomachs got a nice long rest. If we had eaten the stuff they gave us on the boat, no doubt they would have needed the rest but as matters stood, the rest was not appreciated. Most of our time there; was spent in drilling, and hiking with packs, though the weather at the time was exceedingly hot, and the marches long, the boys enjoyed them just the same.

While we were there we marched to Morn Hill to attend the Memorial Day services. There was and American Camp there also an American Burial ground, were some of our boys are buried. After appropriate addresses, a beautiful service was rendered over the graves; ending with Taps, and three volleys. The remainder or the day was spent with sports of various descriptions.

We were in Winchester three weeks, and moved to our new training quarters, Farnborough, Hampshire. Farnborough is a lovely old village. It is the home of ex-empress Eugenie of France, and is the last resting place of the late Napoleon III and is only a short distance from the King's summer residence. It was our privilege to be reviewed by His Majesty the second day we were there, and later to be present when Queen Mary reviewed the W.A.A.C.S. at Aldershot.

The five and a half months we spent in Farnborough passed quickly. It was probably the most pleasant period of our Army life. Its proximity to London made weekend visits to that Metropolis possible. Aldershot, a mile away, possessed excellent theatres, Camberly, the seat of the Royal Military Academy was close at hand and offered social opportunities of the best.

At first we were under canvass at Farnborough Common, but later moved to Malpaquet Barracks, one other Squadron was there the 836th. They possessed a Jazz band and staged Yankee dances each week.

The civil population was most kind. Frequent parties were arranged for the yanks, and the fellows were not slow to respond. Many of them lost their hearts to the pretty English girls, and figure on recovering them via the marriage route after being mustered out.

We trained at the southern Aircraft Repair Depot the most important establishment of its kind in England. A place was found for all of us, and we were rapidly transformed to expert workers on all typed of modern airplane, airplane motors and motor trucks. While there we made such a record for efficiency that the British Authorities tried to hold us there for the duration of the war.

But all things come to an end, and our training period was no exception, on the 27th day of October we bade Farnborough farewell and went to Codford St. Marys, Wiltshire. Cordford came be dismissed with a word, it was a typical rest camp. Six days later we embarked from South Hampton on the Steamer "Yale."

On the morning of the 30th we landed at LeHavre, France. Another Rest Camp was our fate. On the way there a big nigger stevedore greeted us with, "you all boys done got here too late", so we judged the war was till going our way. The camp at LeHavre was not the beauty spot of the world. We were headed into gloomy barracks that were furnished with all the comforts of a backwoods county jail. The beds were narrow bunks two story high, with iron slates for springs. In spite of our fatigue we were glad when we were ordered out again.

We marched miles thru the city to the station, where we entrained once more, this time in box oars which bore signs stating that each car would accommodate "40 hommes 8 chevaux".

The 827th does not believe in signs any more. We had to sleep in shifts, The permanent residents of the cars were the only ones accommodated, we were merly the bill ot fare .

After 36 hours of torture we unloaded at St. Maixent. St. Maixent is a very picturesque old town, we were lead to a swell barrack, good beds, and best of all, a real bath house.

Also we connected with the old reliable picks and shovel once more and felt quite at home, while there we heard of Austria's downfall.

We were given new clothing, also as masks, shrapnel helmets, and rifles, and once more fared forth, this time headed for the ZONE of ACTION. We never got there; the end of the war was apparent, and our active service came to and end at AIR SERVICE PRODUCTION CENTER No. 2, were we are quartered at present.

Our career has been uneventful, we are going home with no decorations, no stories of hair breath escapes and the only the fellow with a strong imagination can successfully play Othello on his return. But we have the consciences of having done our bit no less than luckier outfits. It was our misfortune to be held in the S.O.S., but that is not to our discredit, as the work done there was as essential to that done in the Zone of Action. We have neither dodged hardships or shirked responsibility, from the time of our organization to the present time we have given the best we had to the military service and no man or outfit can do more.

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.