

1 OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT

MISSION

LINEAGE

1 Operational Training Unit

STATIONS

Rosecrans Field, MO

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

A small municipal airport with an antiquated hangar as its single building were the only facilities at hand when Majors Curtis A. Keen, commanding officer, and Roy B. Flippin, executive officer, arrived July 6, 1942, to assume direction of Rosecrans Field, the newly acquired Army Air Transport Command base near St Joseph, Mo.

The next day a small contingent of pilots arrived, followed on the second day by gasoline trucks, crash trucks and trailers. On the morning of the third day the first unit of enlisted men arrived and only a few hours later flying operations began.

In July 1942, the base had six tents and three unfinished CCC barracks as its only housing facilities. The commanding officer's headquarters was in a trailer parked near The small hangar now in The middle of the field. All drinking water had to be hauled from Camp Petree in the hills northeast of the field. Missouri mud often made the unsurfaced roads impassable.

But in its first-year Rosecrans Field, named for the first St. Joseph man to die in the air service in World War I, underwent a complete transformation and emerged a full-fledged air base, The home of The First Operational Training Unit of The Air Transport Command. More and more planes of varied types roared over the peaceful Missouri river valley as Training operations steadily expanded.

Three months after the Army assumed control more than 800 acres were added fo the base's area and a Tremendous building program was instituted. By July, 1943, when the base celebrated its first anniversary, one could look out of the control Tower over paved roads, an expansive grassed flying field, miles of completed runways, 35 acres of concrete aprons, three big hangars, 48 barracks and numerous other buildings.

The second year saw further expansion of the base's facilities, a growth in the scope and importance of ifs functions and a shift in commanding officers.

Early in August 1943, Colonel Keen was called to take over an important overseas assignment and after a special retreat ceremony before all his men, Colonel Keen, the "Daddy" of Rosecrans Field, relinquished command to Major William B. Hooton, rangy Texan with ten years flying experience. On the same day, the Army Air Base unit was consolidated with The First OTU, leaving the base a single headquarters.

As an Operational Training Unit of the ATC, Rosecrans Field has been the seat of varied Training programs both for flying officers and enlisted men. The first "pilogators" were trained at Rosecrans in the summer of 1943 in a special Navigation school set up by ATC for pilots. Hundreds of pilots have received Their Instrument Training here. This number includes many WASPs who began coming to The field in January, 1944.

Training offered enlisted men has embraced radio operation, aerial engineering and airplane mechanics. Many radio operators with experience in the India-China wing were returned to Rosecrans Field for advanced training, late in 1943. While here they organized the "Hump Happy Recruits," with membership limited to men who had flown over the Himalayas between India and China.

Early in 1944 an aerial engineering school was moved from Kansas City, Mo., to the base and by April two mechanic courses, one advanced and one basic, were in operation.

For nearly two years' instructors, directors of flying and maintenance personnel of the First OTU have not only 'kept 'em flying," but have taught men and women how to fly with a degree of safety, judgment and skill that makes the delivery of a fighting plane to the other side of the world just a routine hop.

Wherever there are Air Transport Command stations and wherever planes are ferried along the globe-circling routes to the fighting fronts—There will be found officers and men who received some vital portion of their Training in the Ferrying Division's First OTU at Rosecrans Field.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *Rosecrans Field, St Joseph, MO, 561 AAF Base Unit. First Operational Training Unit.* Army and Navy Publishing Co Inc. Baton Rouge, LA. 1943.