

LANDED: THE PURSUIT OF AN ARMY FLIGHT SCHOOL FOR THE CITY OF WICHITA  
FALLS, TEXAS, 1917-1919

by

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THESIS

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father who directed me in so many different pursuits. Through his helpful guidance he instilled within me an appreciation of history. Always supportive, his help made many of my undertakings possible. It is my hope and desire that he would appreciate the study of the topic at hand. It was one of his suggestions...

Thanks Dad,

Love for you always

Lee

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As always, with any research paper, the list of individuals encountered in museums and libraries can become extensive. Some are simply voices at the other end of a telephone call as I sought to gather even the most remote pieces of subject material. A list of names was finally abandoned as the list of multiple individuals became extensive from the following institutions assisting with my inquiries. The staff of the Wichita Falls Public Library, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, TCU Library, the Arlington Public Library, and the University of Texas at Arlington library staff who assisted me in gathering material through the InterLibrary Loan (ILL) services.

Mrs. Lita Watson with the Museum of North Texas History was an original contact with that institution whose assistance was invaluable in the initial stages of my research. Charles Campbell, also with the museum, provided many photographs of Call Field in addition providing me an opportunity to speak at the museum's annual Jenny to Jet fund raiser. UTA's Cathy Spitzenberger from Special Collections, Deborah Ann Barroff with the Museum of the Great Plains, Michelle E. Carreon with the El Paso Public Library, and Melissa Keiser with the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum assisted with photographic files. William (Bill) A. Manchester, MSSI from Fort Sam Houston, Texas was a pleasure to work with. He also provided photos of the First Aero Squadron while humorously correcting my pronunciation of the squadron commander's name. It made an impression to be remembered.

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The members of my thesis committee—Dr. Saxon, Dr. Palmer and Dr. Sandy—deserve a sincere and heartfelt thank you for their support and guidance, and for their assistance in helping me bring this project to completion.

This thesis has been discussed among many friends, co-workers, fellow students, and casual acquaintances. The help of Shari Lashlee, who willingly served as a sounding board on many occasions is highly appreciated. Thanks to all who have listened to me regale them with research findings regarding Wichita Falls, Call Field, or any peripheral history associated with either of these.

I must at last extend my personal appreciation to my family. To my father who initially suggested this subject and to my mother for her encouragement. To my children, Laura, who is always attentive, Lee, who is somewhat of a historian in his own right, and Kate, who always pushes me to excel to success.

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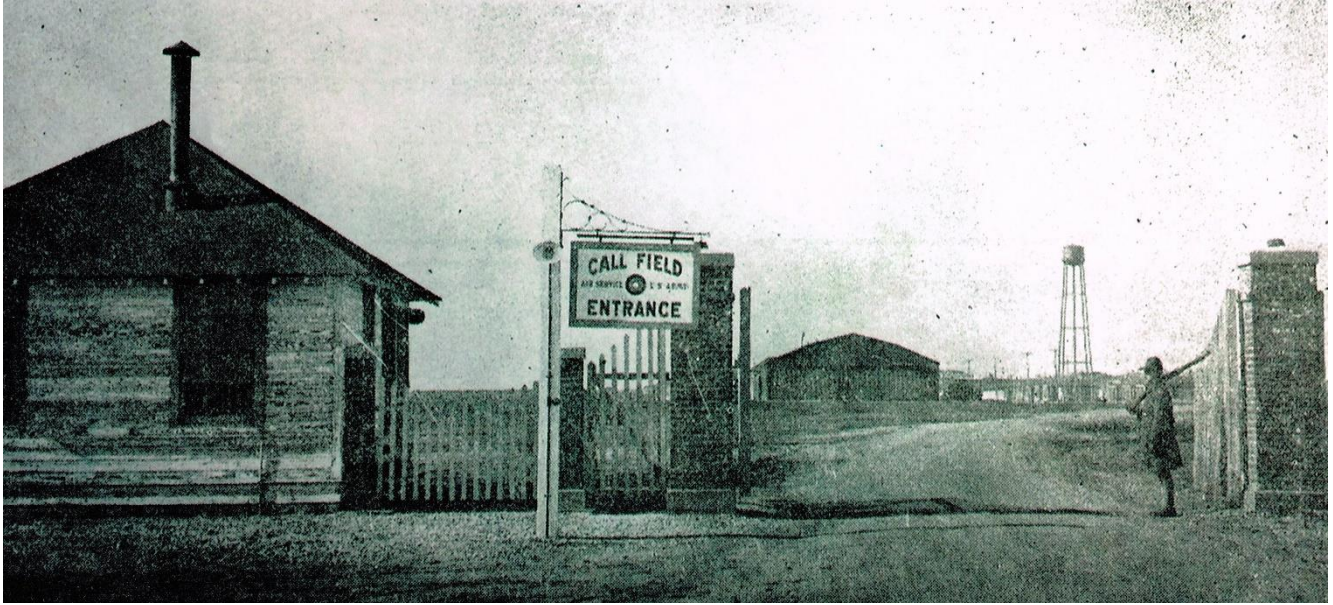


Figure 1. Call Field Main Entrance, ca. 1918. Courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

## ABSTRACT

### LANDED: THE PURSUIT OF AN ARMY FLIGHT SCHOOL FOR THE CITY OF WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS, 1917-1919

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This thesis examines the acquisition of a flight training facility by the city of Wichita Falls, Texas during the early years of the twentieth century. During a period when progressive reform was addressing societal problems, members of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce were diligently working to develop their community. At the time, aviation remained a relatively new technology. Chamber members, Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell, took the lead in the city's attempt to establish aviation as a developmental industry in its local commerce. The legacy left by both men is that of pioneer builders, whose focus for their city ranked first and foremost. Railroads, regional irrigation, milling, and finance comprise a portion of the industries touched by these men. Yet, world events regularly bring about changes which differ from an original plan. In the case of Call Aviation Field, the declaration of war in 1917, committing the United States to the war effort as one of the Allied Forces, did just that. During the previous year, Wichita Falls tried to attract a "permanent" army flight school. Alternatively, the contract for Call Field established a temporary military encampment, which closed eighteen months later, with the end of the war. Using original Chamber of Commerce records, Call Field archives, and newspaper accounts, backed by secondary sources, this study attempts to analyze the city's quest to attract an aviation presence through its relationship with Call Aviation Field.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ▪ iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ▪ iv

ABSTRACT ▪ vii

ILLUSTRATIONS ▪ ix

INTRODUCTION ▪ 1

CHAPTER 1: KEMP and KELL ▪ 7

CHAPTER 2: THE AVIATORS ▪ 32

CHAPTER 3: THE QUEST ▪ 63

CHAPTER 4: WAR POSTURE ▪ 97

CHAPTER 5: CONSTRUCTION ▪ 119

CHAPTER 6: CALL FIELD FLIGHT SCHOOL ▪ 147

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS ▪ 176

BIBLIOGRAPHY ▪ 180



## Illustrations

### Figures

1	Call Field Main Entrance	vi
2	Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1885	10
3	Joseph A. Kemp	12
4	Frank Kell	16
5	The “Colonnade” Pavilion at Lake Wichita	24
6	“Inauguration Day” – Trolley No. 1	27
7	Wichita Falls, Texas 1919 – Sanborn Map	29
8	Kemp burial monument	31
9	Kemp burial monument (inscription)	31
10	Matilde Moisant	41
11	Lieutenant Benjamin D. Foulois	45
12	Aviators at Fort Sam Houston, Texas	47
13	First Aero Squadron	55
14	Curtiss JN-2 – Fort Sill, Oklahoma	72
15	General John J. Pershing	84
16	First Aero Squadron – Casas Grande, Mexico	86
17	President Woodrow Wilson addresses Congress, ca. 1917	105
18	Curtis “Jenny” JN-4D, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1917	124
19	Motor Pool, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1917	125
20	Post Exchange, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1917	127
21	Knights of Columbus Hall, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	130
22	Squadron “B,” Call Field, Texas, ca. 1917	136
23	YMCA, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	143
24	Quartermaster Supply Personnel, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	144
25	Machine Shop Personnel, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	145
26	School Building, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	149
27	Aerial Photograph of Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918	151
28	Airplane crash, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	153
29	Curtiss “Jenny” JN-4D, Call Field, Texas, ca. 1918	163

30	Training Accident (5/18/1918), Call Field, Texas	165
31	Training Accident (7/11/1918), Call Field, Texas	166
32	Call Aviation Field Flight Line, ca. 1918	174
33	Call Field Monument, Wichita Falls Municipal Airport	179

## INTRODUCTION

Call Field...

Strength: One Hundred Officers, Nine Hundred and Thirty Enlisted Men and Numbers of Cadets  
Quartered in Forty-Six Buildings.

Call Field Monument Erected:  
November 1937

This thesis examines the relationship of Call Aviation Field with the city of Wichita Falls, Texas, and the camp's contribution to aviation during the World War I era. A U.S. Army installation located five miles from downtown on the city's south side, Call Field was one of five aviation training facilities in Texas responsible for producing military pilots for the war. The camp existed for only twenty-six months. It originated in August 1917 when the city of Wichita Falls successfully secured a government contract for the flight school. Just over two years later, the military lowered its final flag in October 1919 and returned control of the land and buildings to the municipal leadership. During its existence as a training facility, two squadrons of army pilots earned their wings at Call Field before receiving further assignments in support of the Allied war effort. Those wartime military aviators helped to advance aviation proficiency for the United States, which had long been delayed by the lack of attention from government agencies.

As one of thirty-two military training facilities built across the country to prepare soldiers for wartime duty, Call Field effectively carried out its mission of pilot training.<sup>1</sup> Yet, an appreciation for the importance of these training bases, and particularly Call Field, requires an understanding of how aviation developed in the United States. Prior to the United States' entry into WWI, Wichita Falls was developing an interest in aviation while U.S. military aviators were struggling to advance their programs. In the early years of the twentieth century, the newly emerging technology of aviation attracted the interest of civilian and military enthusiasts, alike. Following America's declaration of war on Germany in April 1917, many municipalities attempted to attract this new industry to their locations to spur economic growth and community expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Call Aviation Field Memorial Exhibit, The Home of Our Curtiss JN4-D "Jenny,"* The Museum of North Texas History (museum collateral – brochure).

A thorough examination of available historical records reveals that Wichita Falls' civic leaders sought something more permanent than what they received in acquiring the cantonment. During the pre-war years, city residents exhibited keen interest in aviation. Civilian air meets took place in Wichita Falls as early as 1911; by the latter part of 1915, the area became acquainted with military aviation. During the months that followed, members of the Chamber of Commerce maintained their new relationship with the aviators who had visited the city. The enactment of the National Defense Act, in July 1916, led to the creation of an air arm as a branch of the Signal Corps. The act also made provisions for the Secretary of War to establish camps for military instruction and training.<sup>2</sup> Quietly implementing a municipal campaign to acquire a camp for Wichita Falls, the chamber, began sending representatives to Washington, DC in late 1916. These events began one year prior to the signing of the contract for Call Field; a time when the United States wanted to remain neutral in the ongoing European conflict, and when U.S. Army aviators were experiencing difficulties flying over hostile terrain along the country's southern border. Wichita Falls' leaders wanted to entice the aviation industry to the area for the purpose of growing its commerce. The possibilities of Wichita Falls obtaining a permanent aviation facility for its industrial base changed on April 6, 1917, when the U.S. entered the war. Instead, immediate wartime needs brought Call Field to the city as a temporary flight training school, which was abandoned at the close of the war. Call Field's relatively short existence constitutes a difference in what the city of Wichita Falls wanted and lobbied for and what it received. This thesis examines the efforts of Wichita Falls' push to acquire a permanent aviation facility, and expands the knowledge of the city's initial relationship with military aviation and Call Field.

This thesis answers the basic question of why Wichita Falls was working to obtain an aviation flight school and factory prior to America's entry into World War I in April 1917. In doing so, the thesis answers the following questions: What was the motive and timeframe for Wichita Falls to try to obtain a permanent aviation facility? Who took the lead in proposing the location, and how did city leaders approach the War Department? What requirements did the War Department place on the city in return for establishing Call Field? How did Wichita Falls

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<sup>2</sup> H.R. 12766 Public, No. 85, Ch. 134, Statutes at Large of the United States of America, National Defense Act of 1916, June 3, 1916, 166, Sixty-Fourth Congress of the United States, Session I, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/39/STATUTE-39-Pg166.pdf>.

respond to the military's contractual requirements? What impact did Call Field have on the city? Was the establishment and short-lived operation of the Call Field flight training school a success or a failure? This thesis will increase the current body of knowledge regarding Call Field, and draw attention to the actions taken by institutions and individuals, alike, and document their impact on the cantonment and Wichita Falls.

With few exceptions, the historiography of Call Field focuses on the eighteen-month period of the flight school's existence. Frequently, sources repeat the same general narrative for Call Field during 1917-1919, citing the plans of civic leaders to campaign for a base in 1917. As one of thirty-two army training camps built to train men for war in Europe, Call Field trained over 3,000 men with two squadrons being sent overseas. To this day, Call Field's history continues to be a source of pride for the city of Wichita Falls. The flight school brought new opportunities to the city and the pride of having the emerging technology of aviation in close proximity. The sources used for this study have been obtained from numerous museums, libraries, and repositories across the country. Seminal works include Louise Kelly's *Wichita County Beginnings*, Steve Wilson's *Wichita Falls: A Pictorial History*, and Jonnie Morgan's *History of Wichita Falls*, which are often cited as a basis for many topics regarding Wichita Falls, and in part Call Field. My initial research used these books to provide a needed background on the city and the camp. However, I had the privilege of gaining access to the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce archives dating from 1915 through 1919. As primary sources, these records proved to be invaluable as they provided original documents covering the chamber activities of the period. From the Museum of North Texas History, I obtained photographs and manuscripts, which brought to life the way soldiers experienced their time at Call Field. I also examined Call Field Headquarters documents at the Fort Worth Regional Branch of the National Archives and Records Administration. Among these original records I was excited to find General Order No. 2 under which Major John B. Brooks took command of the aviation school. Many of the documents in this collection reveal how the field operated, including the arrival of its officers, training schedules, curriculum of the cadets, and graduation lists for the pilots who had completed their training. In some cases, documents also reveal wartime problems related to German heredity and race during the period. Supported by reports of the *Wichita Daily Times* and its sister publications, the *Wichita Falls Record News* and the *Wichita Falls Weekly Times*, a regular section of the *Wichita Daily Times* titled "Call Field

Camouflage” carried aviation stories, which kept citizens of Wichita Falls apprised of the news at the base.

In support of this study’s main question, I have consulted books, articles, other theses and websites to gain insight into the background of individuals influential in the history of Call Aviation Field. Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell are particularly important. These men were well connected locally, regionally, and nationally in numerous industries. They took the lead in the effort to acquire a flight school for the city and were able to use their influence and networks to make this a possibility. Benjamin D. Foulois also played as an indirect influence on Call Field and its acquisition by the city of Wichita Falls. In December 1915, then Captain Foulois was in command of the First Aero Squadron when it stopped in Wichita Falls en route to San Antonio. Foulois was one of the individuals Kemp contacted as efforts began in 1916 to acquire a flight training facility. During the first months of 1917, world events shifted and with them the purpose of the type of flight training facility destined for Wichita Falls. Barbara W. Tuchman’s book, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, provided details of the events that drew the U.S. into WWI. Meanwhile, the autobiography of H. H. Arnold was used in part while researching events of influence in the county’s mobilization efforts. Like Captain Foulois, then Major Arnold became important to Wichita Falls, in 1917, as one of the military review officers searching for locations for potential aviation camps. The books of Frederick Palmer discuss the efforts of then Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to whom the job fell for directing how military camps like Call Field were to be built, the selection and responsibilities of construction contractors, and establishing military standards for the American Expeditionary Forces. Lastly, the post war memoir of John J. Pershing provided insight into the status of the American military as it transitioned from Mexico in 1916 to Europe in 1917. Orders sending him to Europe in May 1917 preempted General Pershing’s visit to Wichita Falls in June.

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter One deals with foundational events that made it possible for Wichita Falls to negotiate an aviation school contract. Led by Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell, during 1916-1919, the actions of these municipal builders prepared the way to successfully bring Call Field to the city.

Chapter Two focuses on Wichita Falls' initial encounters with civilian aviation in 1911, when military aviation was just beginning to emerge. Early army pilots pushed to develop their skills while achieving new records, often under dangerous and deadly conditions.

Chapter Three begins in 1913 as military protocol is established for the First Aero Squadron continuing its training at the flight school in San Diego, California, before transferring to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In November 1915, the squadron departed from Fort Sill, flying newly built airplanes in the first mechanized relocation within the United States. Wichita Falls was the first stop of this cross-country move; the Chamber of Commerce made arrangements to entertain the pilots. Within months of arriving at Fort Sam Houston, the squadron deployed to the Mexican border with General Pershing who was then in pursuit of the Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa. During this same period, Wichita Falls began dispatching representatives to Washington to lobby for a flight training facility, while President Woodrow Wilson maintained his neutrality policies.

Chapter Four begins in January 1917 with Wichita Falls continuing its efforts to attract an army flight training school. As the Mexican expedition proved to be unsuccessful, the President recalled the army from the southern border, while attempting to negotiate an end to the European fighting. Germany's reinstatement of unrestricted submarine warfare and the discovery of a German plot to use Mexico as an ally against the U.S., prompted Wilson to seek a declaration of war in April. U.S entry into World War I altered the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of an aviation facility.

Chapter Five discusses the efforts undertaken during the summer of 1917 to finalize the negotiations for an aviation field. Construction of the camp began immediately, and buildings were rapidly erected. During the following months, support staff worked to make the camp operational as pilots, airplanes, and soldiers arrived for duty.

Chapter Six focuses on Call Field as an active army flight school. The camp increased in size during 1918, awarding officer commissions to graduating pilots on a bi-weekly rotation. When WWI ended, the army abandoned the facility. Wichita Falls' efforts to make the field a permanent installation failed, and the army returned the site to the city.

This thesis draws attention to the actions of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce during the second half of 1916 as they actively lobbied the War Department in Washington, D.C. for a permanent flight school. Considered a successful endeavor when it was constructed in 1917, Call Aviation Field ultimately proved a disappointment for Wichita Falls when it closed in 1919. The declaration of war in April 1917 had altered the country's political climate, and along with it the type of flight school the chamber intended for the city. Instead of diversifying Wichita Falls' economy and boosting its population, the construction and later abandonment of Call Field signaled a missed opportunity for the city's boosters and leaders.



## Chapter 1

If you would see my monument, look around you.....

Joseph Kemp Grave Monument

Securing the contract for Call Aviation Field in 1917 proved to be a significant accomplishment for the city of Wichita Falls, Texas. Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell, members of the city's Chamber of Commerce, led the efforts to bring the flight school to the area. As young men from humble beginnings, each had established themselves as prominent businessmen and public figures, respectively--individuals considered to be among the builders of Texas and the Southwest. Together they were able to use their achievements and connections in banking, railroads, water rights, and other undertakings to meet government contract requirements that resulted in the construction of Call Field at Wichita Falls.



On November 7, 1930, Joseph Kemp sent a telegram to the attendees of the Better Business mass meeting taking place in Wichita Falls. With his customary interest for the welfare of his hometown, he opened his remarks by assuring the attendees that the municipality's current business conditions were no worse than those of other cities across the country. His statement reflected a belief that no other municipality could have boasted of more accomplishments, resources, and opportunities than those the city had come to know during the previous three decades. To him the most important asset the city possessed was its residents, believing that prosperity was achieved through the interest and dedication of its citizenry. He had faith in his home city, writing, "We need only to put our shoulders to the wheel now as we have done in the past."<sup>3</sup> The closing comments of his telegram made up his last official thoughts regarding the development of Wichita Falls. In ill health for some time, his condition had progressively worsened as the years passed. Accompanied by his wife, Flora, he had been on a convalescence trip to the lower Rio Grande Valley when illness forced him to seek medical assistance. On November 16, 1930, Joseph A. Kemp, one of the foremost financiers and leaders in the

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<sup>3</sup> "J. A. Kemp Is Dead," *Wichita Falls Record News*, November 17, 1930, 1. Microfilm from Wichita Falls Public Library, 2012.

Southwest, and one of the individuals responsible for bringing Call Field to the city during WWI, died in Austin, Texas.<sup>4</sup>

## Kemp

Joseph Alexander “Jodie” Kemp was born on July 31, 1861 to William “Billy” T. and Emma (Stinnett) Kemp of the small town of Clifton, located in Bosque County, in Central Texas, where his father had established a mercantile business. Following the recent secession of Texas, William enlisted for Civil War service with the Confederate States of America, while “Jodie” was still an infant. With Billy away, management of the family store was left in Emma’s care. Joseph would later reminisce about Union soldiers camped in close proximity to the family’s home following the war. When Billy returned at the conclusion of the war, he found that some of the debts owed him had been paid with worthless Confederate currency. Fortunately, the settlement of other bills had been satisfied through the transfer of land that offered a basis on which he could reestablish the family’s business. The reconstruction period following the war was not easy; troubles plagued the business. An employee hired to deliver supplies defrauded Kemp, placing a strain on the stability of the store. Leaving with a full wagon of flour destined for the surrounding area, the hired hand disappeared and was never heard from again. Troubles were compounded for the struggling business when the nearby Bosque River overflowed its banks, flooding the town of Clifton and damaging many of the town’s wood-frame buildings, including the Kemp store. In an effort to guard against the potential damage of future floods, Jodie’s father subsequently rebuilt, using stone for the construction of the new building.<sup>5</sup>

Clifton did not provide many of the educational opportunities available in other communities, yet Jodie received what education he could while assisting with the family business. He did, however, develop a fondness for reading and always relished the value of a good book. With little time left for other interests, he became acquainted with another boy in the

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<sup>4</sup> “J. A. Kemp Is Dead,” 1. The Wichita Falls community held Joseph Kemp in high esteem. His eulogy and portrait cover the front page of the *Wichita Falls Record News* the day following his death on November 16, 1930. A two page article reports the details of his death, funeral arrangements, and is followed by a history of his accomplishments from the time of his arrival in Wichita Falls. The *Wichita Daily Times*, sister publication to the *Record News*, the following day records plans for the body of Joseph Kemp to lie in state at the Municipal Auditorium prior to the funeral and interment at Riverside Cemetery.

<sup>5</sup> Louise Kelly, *Wichita County Beginnings* (Burnet, Texas: Eakin Press, 1982), 107.

community named Frank Kell, and the two became good friends. In the coming years, this friendship would endure and develop into a powerful partnership. Jodie and Frank were inseparable, learning to ride, shoot, swim and live life in a small Texas town. At sixteen years of age, Jodie began to learn the importance of responsibility.

By 1879, Kemp's father, having been weakened by his war experiences, could no longer run his mercantile business. The eighteen-year-old Jodie was now in total control of the store. Within two years, the Santa Fe Railroad had advanced, laying tracks northward toward Fort Worth. In 1881, the railroad bypassed Clifton approximately one mile from the town's original location. Most of the town's businesses were able to relocate closer to the rail line, but the stone structure that housed the Kemp's store made this impossible. Kemp came to realize that Clifton could not provide him the future he desired. With this on his mind, Kemp sold his share of the business to his partner in 1882 and prepared to seek his fortune elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Kemp arrived in Wichita Falls in February 1883, after learning of the potential of the rapidly developing town from a business acquaintance. He and his life-long friend, Frank Kell, were now in town to assess the possibilities. Four months earlier, Kemp had married Flora Anderson on October 18, 1882, and she had remained behind in Clifton, while he made the journey to Wichita Falls seeking a better life. Within two months of his arrival in Wichita Falls, Kemp had established himself in business and opened a grocery store on Eighth Street. Flora soon joined him, helping with the books and in the store. The business thrived for Kemp, and he enlarged the store, opening a wholesale division from which he supplied other stores in the surrounding area. Under the name of J. A. Kemp Wholesale Grocery Company, he operated the wholesale portion of his business for thirteen years, from 1890 and 1903. The wholesale component of his store became so profitable that he sold the retail side, and used the funds to purchase property located in the Cherokee County School land located in southeastern Wichita County. Being a land owner was something that he liked, so he acquired as much as he could in the surrounding area.<sup>7</sup>

The City National Bank was chartered in 1890; the following year Kemp was elected as the bank's president. He held this position until 1923, when he became chairman of the board of

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<sup>6</sup> Jonnie R. Morgan, *History of Wichita Falls* (Oklahoma City, OK: Economy Printing Co., 1931), 112-113.

<sup>7</sup> Kelly, 107.

directors, allowing other individuals to run the bank's daily operation. In 1893, a financial recession hit the country. Kemp, one day, noticed from his office window a man across the street who had been watching the bank for some time. Considering what the consequences of this vigil might involve, Kemp left his office with the intention of confronting this individual. He learned that the national economic conditions of the time were the cause of concern for the man, who was worried over the solvency of the bank and the security of its deposits. Offering his guarantee of the bank's solvency, Kemp allayed the fears of the concerned depositor by offering credit at his grocery store in equal amount for any financial loss. The relieved customer left with the satisfaction of Kemp's offer.<sup>8</sup>

Six months prior to his arrival, the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad had come into Wichita Falls on September 7, 1882, temporarily making the town the terminus of the line. Rail service brought a good deal of prosperity to the city, transforming it into a supply hub and market destination for the surrounding area. But by 1892, the rail company began extending its track further westward, threatening the economic advantage to which Wichita Falls had grown accustomed during the preceding decade, when the city was the line's terminus. Passengers and



Figure 2. Early photo of Wichita Falls, Texas, ca 1885. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, Arlington, Texas.

freight potentially would pass through the town instead of arriving in Wichita Falls.

Recognizing the impact of the situation from his Clifton experiences, Kemp opened negotiations with Missouri, Kansas, and Texas (Katy) Railroad officials, whose tracks terminated nineteen miles to the east, in Henrietta, Texas. Due to his aggressive persistence, the company president

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<sup>8</sup> Kelly, 109.

committed to leasing and operating the tracks but only if the extension could be built by the city of Wichita Falls. Undaunted, Kemp organized the Wichita Railway Company in mid-1894 and sold shares raising \$20,000.00. The guarantee of several banks provided additional funding; a permit for a \$275,000.00 Railroad Commission bond secured the agreement between the newly formed railway company and the MK&T Railroad. Due to strong support within the city, financial arrangements for the project were completed within two days. By the spring of 1895, the extension had been completed and a second railway line to Wichita Falls was a reality. Although surprised that the tracks were built, management of the Katy line honored its agreement to lease the tracks from Kemp and his associates.<sup>9</sup>

Morris Lasker of Galveston, a major North Texas land owner, owned the controlling interest in the Wichita Valley Milling Company for which Kemp served as company president. The two men had worked together on several projects, including extending the tracks between Wichita Falls and Henrietta. In 1896, the mill needed a manager to oversee daily business operations, since Lasker's son held little interest in pursuing the profession of milling. Kemp suggested to Lasker that Frank Kell might be the right person for the job. The suggestion was the catalyst responsible for the arrival of his longtime friend and future business associate. Frank Kell moved to Wichita Falls in 1896 and took over the daily management of the Wichita Falls mill.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kelly, 107.

<sup>10</sup> Kelly, 111.

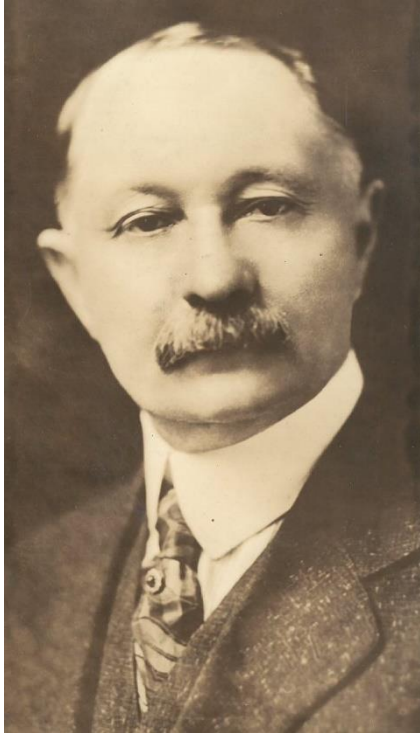


Figure 3. Joseph Kemp, Courtesy of the *Wichita Falls Times & Record News*.

The entrepreneurial Joseph Kemp would be responsible for many projects that benefitted Wichita Falls. In 1910, his holdings included the Wichita Mill and Elevator Company, Wichita Falls Glass Company, the Texas Bottle Company, and the Wichita Falls Traction Company, all businesses in which he held the position of president.<sup>11</sup> An electric rail line was built so that residents could take advantage of public transportation to various destinations within the city. His Wichita Falls Motor Company began operation the following year, manufacturing a vehicle with a reputation for toughness and dependability. Known for its utility, the truck was used by the military, and orders were received from an estimated eighty-seven countries around the globe.<sup>12</sup>

Of all the enterprises in which Joseph Kemp was involved, the one that garnered the most attention was an irrigation initiative for Wichita Falls and the surrounding area. The project was twenty-two years in the making as Texas voters had not yet realized the importance that water could bring to an area. In the decade following his move to the city, Kemp came to believe that the region's farm production could be increased provided it had sufficient water. The surrounding fields contained fertile soil for growing crops, but the region's arid climate meant agricultural yields were consistently low. The original plan proposed by Kemp in 1887 called for a dam to be built on Holliday Creek to form a reservoir for supplying water for the city. To pay for his proposal,

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<sup>11</sup> Kelly, 109.

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Hemphill, "WICHITA FALLS MOTOR COMPANY, 1911-1932," ([txtransportationmuseum.org/history](http://txtransportationmuseum.org/history)), accessed January 24, 2021. Published by the Texas Transportation Museum. On website click: Trucks/Wichita Trucks links. In response to the success of the Wichita Truck, larger manufacturers began offering their own lines of heavy utility vehicles. Eventually the decreased demand for equipment and parts following World War I began to have an effect on the company. The company continued to manufacture its trucks until 1932 under the new name of the Wichita Falls Motor Company. The railroad association that year persuaded the Texas Legislature to impose a 7,000 pound weight limit on trucks using Texas highways, and the company was destined for trouble. Although it suffered through five years of bankruptcy proceedings, the Wichita Falls Motor Company continued to operate until 1938, when it closed its doors just a few years prior to the start of another European conflict.

Kemp aimed to sell public bonds. At the time, the Texas Constitution of 1876 prohibited the sale of bonds that could provide funding for irrigation projects. He began working to change those laws, but was twice defeated in the Texas Legislature. In response, Kemp formed the Lake Wichita Irrigation and Water Company to fund the project with private sources.<sup>13</sup> The city's first major source of water was created with the building of Lake Wichita, a privately owned endeavor promoted by Kemp. In 1893, he and an associate set out in search of a suitable location for a reservoir. Their horseback trip up the Wichita River located a point between two bluffs that would easily allow for construction of a dam and for the release of water to irrigate fields during periods of insufficient rain. However, problems plagued the project as the onset of an economic depression in 1893 led to capital scarcity. On two separate occasions, amendments to the Texas Constitution that would allow funding for the project failed to be approved. Legislation was finally adopted only in 1917, but the economic demands of World War I again prevented progress on the project. Three years later, the effects of a severe drought again brought water supply issues before the voters. This time, and with overwhelming acceptance, the bond issues passed and the irrigation improvements went forward. By 1930, 33,000 thousand acres of land could be irrigated. Wichita Falls now possessed the largest water supply per capita in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Agriculture was not the only industry to benefit from the new water system. The poultry and dairy industries became beneficiaries of Kemp's irrigation initiatives. The number of fowl providing eggs and poultry products increased dramatically on the small farms surrounding Wichita Falls.<sup>15</sup> Dairy farmers also benefitted of the irrigation system. Kemp believed that the area's soil and climate were sufficient for the development of the cattle industry, provided water was made available. In the same fashion that benefited the poultry industry, cattle ranchers were able to provide for their herds in more advantageous ways. The introduction of alfalfa for fodder proved relatively successful. Sweet clover was also introduced, helping to enrich the soil in

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<sup>13</sup> Kelly, 37.

<sup>14</sup> "Death Comes Quickly to J.A. Kemp," *Wichita Falls Record News*, November 17, 1920, 2, microfilm.

<sup>15</sup> Morgan, 214.

which it was planted. Finally, Sudan grass also provided for good grazing of herds that would in turn expand the area's beef and dairy industries.<sup>16</sup>

Not content simply to provide water services to support the agricultural industries, Kemp was a participant as well. As the owner of one of the two herds of Guernsey cattle in Texas, he displayed some of his own livestock at the 1917 Texas State Fair. This particular breed of dairy cattle was said to have been imported from the Guernsey Islands for their milk production. While they were larger animals, their maintenance matched that of other breeds, and yet they were capable of producing more milk than more common Jersey cows.<sup>17</sup> During the fair, local dairy cattle breeders organized a Texas chapter of the Holstein-Friesian Association to promote the raising of Holstein cattle with the national organization. The twenty-member group elected Kemp to direct the organization. The association scheduled its next meeting for December 23, 1917 during the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show.<sup>18</sup>

Kemp was an outspoken proponent of food conservation, and his opinions were sought on the subject of food preparedness. On February 18, 1917, the *Dallas Morning News* ran an article in which he elaborated on the need for farmers and businessmen to work together in securing American food supplies through the Texas Industrial Congress. Kemp put forth the possibility that as the war in Europe continued, food supplies for the countries involved in the fighting would continue to fall short of their population's demand. To solve the problem of feeding both the military and civilian populations, warring countries would increasingly need to find a source for foodstuffs. He stated that European agriculture was at a standstill, with some countries being supported by charity, while others were starving from the effects of the war and famine. His point was that the world needed a larger and more stable food supply. If farmers and

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<sup>16</sup> Morgan, 215

<sup>17</sup> "Guernsey Jerseys at Dairy Display," *Dallas Morning News*, October 15, 1917, 7, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B217737D51F80%402421517-106B217786F4AC80%406-106B2178D638922E%40Guernsey%2BJerseys%2Bat%2BDairy%2BDisplay>.

<sup>18</sup> "Twenty Breeders Organize Dairy Cattle Association," *Dallas Morning*, October 27, 1917: 8, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B21B775C51050%402421529-106B21B7E9D7C86F%407-106B21B9E285443F%40Twenty%2BBreeders%2BOrganize%2BDairy%2BCattle%2BAssociation>.



businessmen cooperated, he believed the United States could provide that assistance. Farmers should be encouraged to engage in the production of primary foodstuffs for the country and to grow surplus crops for the purpose of supplying other markets. While this included foodstuffs of varying kinds such as vegetables and fruits, poultry, and cattle, other crops like cotton might also be grown and processed for sale as well.<sup>19</sup>

Kemp was convinced that businessmen were in a position to provide advice and assistance to farmers to secure the nation's food supply. He considered this a patriotic duty that should be acted upon. He closed his remarks in the article citing the various challenges that had emerged in 1837 when the price of flour and corn drastically rose, placing a hardship on the population and resulting in bread riots in New York. While the South had had plenty of cotton during the Civil War, it did not have a market through which it could dispose of its crops, and was therefore unable to trade for the food needed to supply its troops and population. It was the duty of the farmer to feed not only himself, but the rest of the world as well.<sup>20</sup>

Kemp raised his family, which included five children, in Wichita Falls. He was a Mason, holding the rank of Knight Commander, a member of the Elks Club, the Knights of Pythias and a member of the First Presbyterian Church. It was his nature to be kind, and he often struggled between the dictates of a difficult business decision and the desire to help people and be sympathetic on whatever the matter might be. On numerous occasions he was urged to seek the governorship of the state of Texas. Although interested in political affairs, he never ran for that office.<sup>21</sup>

### Kell

Frank Kell's life was similar to that of his friend, Joseph Kemp. Arriving on the Bosque frontier in the winter of 1852-53, Kell's father, F. M. Kell, was one of the first to settle in the unincorporated area that was still part of the larger McLennan County, where he served as a civic leader active in the affairs of the community. The Kells were part of the pioneering group that

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<sup>19</sup> "Farmers Are Urged to Raise Foodstuff," *Dallas Morning News*, February 18, 1917, 5, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B223F721390EC%402421278-106B2240D82CC4F2%4016-106B2247359B1FED%40Farmers%2BAre%2BUrged%2Bto%2BRaise%2BFoodstuff>.

<sup>20</sup> "Farmers Are Urged to Raise Foodstuff," 5.

<sup>21</sup> Kelly, 109.

helped found the town of Clifton (originally named Cliff Town), which was named in reference to the limestone cliffs that were in close proximity. Indian depredations still occurred in the Bosque region at that time, and raiding parties targeting livestock and other property were frequently encountered by the new residents. In 1857, a party of Kiowa attacked members of the Renfro family killing the men and taking their scalps. Later that same year a band of Kiowa was discovered in the area and a running battle ensued between the raiding party and the pioneers, who included F. M. Kell.<sup>22</sup>

Frank Kell, the third child of Francis M. and Sarah Potter Kell, was born in Clifton, Texas on December 2, 1859. At the age of six, he was enrolled in a private school, instead of

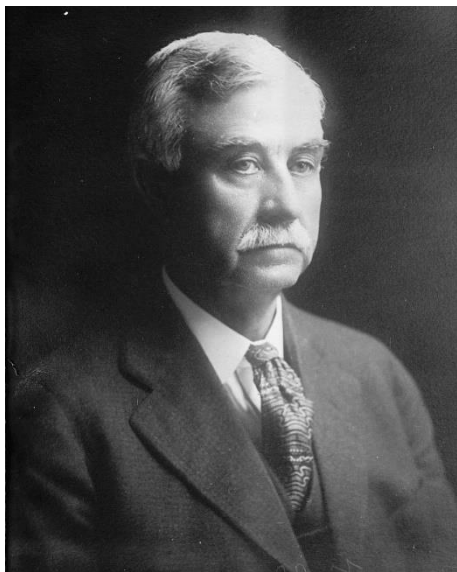


Figure 4. Frank Kell, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

attending the limited public educational offerings of the Clifton community. For the next nine years, he attended school when it was in session, while working in the family mercantile store and on the farm. From these experiences, Frank acquired a thorough knowledge of the cattle business, and spent considerable time on horseback tending livestock.<sup>23</sup> At the age of seventeen, he took over the daily operations of his father's store and was soon introduced to the miller's craft. While working on the farm, he had discovered some discarded equipment from one of the town mills. While tinkering with these tools, he began to expand into small business ventures of his own. In 1877 he moved to Galveston, where he worked in the grain export business,

making the acquaintance of Morris Lasker. Lasker, the owner of several milling concerns throughout the state, would later become one of Kell's business associates.<sup>24</sup>

By 1885, Kell had returned to Clifton and married Lula Kemp, his friend's younger sister. After spending their honeymoon in Wichita Falls, the couple frequently made trips to the

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<sup>22</sup> William C. Pool, *Bosque County: A History of an Agrarian Community* (Kyle, Texas: Chaparral Press, 1964), 61.

<sup>23</sup> J. W. Williams, "Frank Kell," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book, Vol XVII* (October, 1941), 131.

<sup>24</sup> Kelly, 111.

town to visit Jodie and Flora. He had become an important miller in Central Texas, and when it became apparent in 1888 that North Texas wheat production was outperforming that of the Clifton area, he expanded his interests into Wichita County.<sup>25</sup> When he was approached in 1896 regarding his brother-in-law's idea to build a seventeen mile rail extension between Wichita Falls and Henrietta, he declined to take part in the project. Kell was unsure of the need for a second rail line serving the city. Due to the prevailing economic conditions, he was cautious about participating in such a risky plan. Yet, when Kemp proposed that he would be the right man to manage the mill for Morris Lasker, Kell readily accepted the position. Wichita Falls had been on his mind since his initial visit to the town some years earlier. He and Lula moved to Wichita Falls in 1896, and he took over the management of the Wichita Valley Milling Company.<sup>26</sup>

The North Texas grain belt presented Kell with many possibilities for developing a commercial wheat business. While he always considered himself a miller, he proved to be an astute and successful businessman. Under his management, the business expanded, extending out into the surrounding area from his new hometown. To determine the cost of converting wheat into flour, he conducted a review of the mill's fuel consumption. This analytical study compared the type and amount of coal used by the company's furnace to contrive a process that would make the production of flour more efficient. Following the installation of silos for storing pre-processed wheat, the name of the mill was changed to the Wichita Mill and Elevator Company. In 1900, the mill caught fire; Kell rebuilt the plant larger than the previous facilities with a capacity to produce up to six hundred barrels of flour daily. A second expansion soon increased the mill's daily production levels to one thousand barrels of flour. He bought numerous other grain elevators over a wide area so that he could further expand the amount of grain that could be processed. In 1905, he and a partner bought the Vernon, Texas mill, making it an important business asset for that city. Although he had originally declined an offer to enter the railroad business, the need to transport wheat from the surrounding area to his mills led to Kell's new interest in rail line shipping.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Morgan, 70.

<sup>26</sup> Kelly, 111.

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, 111.

The same year that Kell purchased the Vernon mill, he also became a partial owner of the Wichita Railway Company, buying the shares held by Kemp's other partners. On September 6, 1905 he chartered the Wichita Falls and Northwestern Railroad with Kemp who took up the position of President with Kell as Vice-President and General Manager, and R.E. Huff as General Attorney.<sup>28</sup> The planned route originated in Wichita Falls and travelled northwest toward the Red River, extending twenty-two miles across the Texas-Oklahoma border into Indian Territory. The rail line purchased seventeen thousand acres of land from the holdings of North Texas rancher Burk Burnett to acquire the right-of-way for the construction of the track. Under the terms of the sale agreement, Burnett specified that a station would be placed within the boundaries of his Big Pastures land sold to the WF&NW line.<sup>29</sup>

Almost two years later, the company organized an additional venture under the name of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railway Company. Chartered on June 1, 1907, the new rail line was principally owned by Kell, Kemp, and Isaac H. Kempner. The line was primarily used to haul coal from the New Castle, Texas area, and to move cotton and wheat to Wichita Falls. Completed in just over fifteen months, the tracks reached the New Castle destination in September 1908. Land auctions held at various locations along the construction route provided some capital funding. The WF&SR was sold by its original owners to the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas in 1911. Ownership of the line subsequently changed numerous times through either the sale or lease of tracks. Kemp and Kell reacquired the WF&SR line again nine years later, in 1920. That same year, the WF&SR Company was incorporated for the express purpose of extending the existing tracks from New Castle to Dublin, Texas. This established a link between Dublin and Wichita Falls that was effectively completed through a partnership of three rail lines. Beginning in 1927, the WF&SR operated as a leased rail line of the Wichita Falls and Southern Railroad until the two merged on December 31, 1940.<sup>30</sup>

The Wichita Falls and Wellington Railway Company was chartered on March 3, 1910 by Kemp and Kell for the purpose of constructing the Texas portion of a line connecting Altus,

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<sup>28</sup> Kelly, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, 22.

<sup>30</sup> H. Allen Anderson, "WICHITA FALLS AND SOUTHERN RAILWAY," *Handbook of Texas Online* <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/wichita-falls-and-southern-railway>, accessed January 24, 2021. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Oklahoma and Wellington, Texas. A sister line, the Altus, Wichita Falls, and Hollis Railway Company, constructed track on the Oklahoma side of the border. Operating as subsidiaries for the Wichita Falls and Northwest Railroad, both the Wellington and the Altus lines were sold to the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway Company in 1911, along with their parent company. The Wichita Falls and Wellington line would be leased to the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway Company of Texas until the tracks were abandoned in 1958.<sup>31</sup>

Kell's milling business gave him substantial influence in places far from the Wichita Falls area. In 1913 grain producers proposed a readjustment of railroad rates to attain parity with those enjoyed by Texas millers. In what became known as the Transit Case of 1913, a three-sided complaint was created between the Texas Grain Dealers, Texas millers, and the rail lines. Seeking rate parity with Texas millers, grain producers sought to readjust the transit schedules under which their products could be shipped. Millers opposed the plan, hoping to maintain shipping rates at their existing levels. The case was further complicated by rail line operators' declaration that the proposal would undermine railway revenues and lead to a reduction in services and higher costs for shippers. On July 8, 1913, the case came before the Texas Railroad Commission. Frank Kell represented the millers' position.<sup>32</sup> Kell would appear before the Commission on numerous occasions in ensuing years. By 1915, he had come to believe the shipping rates in Texas were "unduly low." Voluntarily appearing before the Commission when they met in Dallas during March 1915, Kell made his argument for allowing state rail companies to recover their costs with an adjustment of their shipping rates.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> George C. Werner, "WICHITA FALLS AND WELLINGTON RAILWAY," *Handbook of Texas Online* <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/eqw13>, accessed January 24, 2021. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>32</sup> "Grain Men Appear before Commission." *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1913, 6, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C49F0F94273F3%402419958-106C49F15680FD20%405-106C49F3374A0501%40Grain%2BMen%2BAppear%2Bbefore%2BCommission>.

<sup>33</sup> "Texas Businessmen Favor Rate Increase." *Dallas Morning News*, March 11, 1915, 7, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C1A744B10FFA8%402420568-106C1A74B1A5A1A5%406-106C1A768C961999%40Texas%2BBusinessmen%2BFavor%2BRate%2BIncrease>.

During the same period that Kell was making his case on shipping rates before the Railroad Commission, he was being considered for a director's position with the newly created Federal Reserve System. Signed into law in late 1913 by President Woodrow Wilson, the Federal Reserve Act created a central banking institution for the United States. With its charter for managing monetary policy, the twelve branches of the new banking system retained authority to issue Federal Reserve Notes or Federal Reserve Bank Notes to serve as the country's currency. Banking associates and friends across the state supported Kell's nomination for a position within the institution. On May 15, 1914, the *Dallas Morning News* reported that the First National Bank of Galveston, through its representative Waverly Smith, had proposed Frank Kell for a Class B directorship within regional Group 1 of the newly established Eleventh District Federal Reserve located in Dallas, Texas.<sup>34</sup> Joseph Kemp, President of the City National Bank of Wichita Falls, and Robert Huff, President of the First National Bank, were among his supporters.<sup>35</sup> The following month, the Federal Reserve Bank publically released its list of director nominees with Kell named as a class B candidate for groups 1, 2 and 3. After his election to the director position, Kell was instrumental in the organization of the bank, serving as part of the committee named to find office space from which the bank would operate. He attended the first official business meeting of the bank held on October 29, 1914, where deposits were received from member banks and the site selected by the building committee was approved

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<sup>34</sup> "Frank Kell Would Accept," *Dallas Morning News*, May 16, 1914, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-10740CD798335000%402420269-10740CD7C61FD730%400-10740CDA937D9FC0%40Frank%2BKell%2BWould%2BAccept>. U.S. Congress, 63<sup>rd</sup> Cong., Sess. 1, 1913, H.R. 7837, Section 4, 5-7. During the 63<sup>rd</sup> Congress, H.R. 7837 (Public Law No. 43) established the "Federal Reserve Act," for the purpose of managing the money supply, commercial paper, and supervision of "national" and associated banks in the United States. Section 4.5 provides for the appointment of the Federal Reserve Bank's board of directors and job requirements. Section 4.8 establishes the process by which directors are chosen, the number of members, length of office, and three director classes designated as "Class A, Class B, and Class C." Class A and Class B directors are elected positions. Class A directors are chosen by and represent the stock-holding member banks. Class B directors are elected from nominated individuals who, at the time of their election, are "actively engaged in their district in commerce, agriculture or some other industrial pursuit." Class C directors are appointed by the Federal Reserve Board.

<sup>35</sup> "Reserve Bank Nominations." *Dallas Morning News*, June 27, 1914, 10, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-10770E4165AA1700%402420311-10770E428EF9D8D8%409-10770E4C35908640%40Reserve%2BBank%2BNominations>.

as a permanent location for the bank. The Dallas office of the Federal Reserve Bank officially opened for business on November 14, 1914, with Kell as one of its directors.<sup>36</sup> When his term of service ended the following year, Kell initially did not seek re-election from the member banks. At the urging of local national bank directors, he subsequently stood for re-election to the position.<sup>37</sup> He served until stepping down following the expiration of his term of office in 1927.<sup>38</sup>

When the United States joined the Allied Forces in World War I, the U.S. Food Administration was charged with the responsibility for managing the food reserves for U.S. troops serving in Europe. Under the direction of Herbert Hoover and operating under the Food Control Act of 1917, the department became the oversight agency for buying and selling foodstuffs during the war. As one of the most prominent southern mill owners, Kell was recruited to help manage the available food supply. On June 30, 1917, he accepted a position on the auxiliary commission of grain dealers for the Southwest region.<sup>39</sup> As part of the food conservation program, “Hooverizing” was promoted to free up resources that might be applied to the war effort. In support of the program, the commission created wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, meatless Tuesdays, and porkless Thursdays and Saturdays. Daily fat and sugar conservation was emphasized. Households were encouraged to plant “war gardens,” and farmers

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<sup>36</sup> "Directors of Bank Begin Organization," *Dallas Morning News*, October 30, 1914, 16, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C26D11F9424E8%402420436-106C26D25121DBB4%4015-106C26D6286E3C95%40Directors%2Bof%2BBank%2BBegin%2BOrganization>.

<sup>37</sup> "Urge Kell's Election," *Dallas Morning News*, October 18, 1915, 7, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C1E585D9B5DD6%402420789-106C1E58C74D83D5%406-106C1E5A5A0FED87%40Urge%2BKell%2527s%2BElection>.

<sup>38</sup> "Frank Kell, Noted Area Builder, Succumbs After Brief Illness, Funeral Set For Thursday Morning," *Wichita Daily Times*, September 17, 1941, 1-2, microfilm.

<sup>39</sup> "Frank Kell Appointed on Grain Commission," *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1917, 3, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B269AE25646B8%402421411-106B269B41E0A6C8%402-106B269E6ED92F8C%40Frank%2BKell%2BAppointed%2Bon%2BGrain%2BCommission>.

were asked to allot space for the cultivation of food crops.<sup>40</sup> During this time, Kell served as chairman of the Feed and Food Division of the Texas Advisory Council and chairman of the Milling Division of Texas and New Mexico under Herbert Hoover, with whom he stayed in close contact. Taking the lead role for the food production campaign in the State of Texas, Kell designated B.F. Johnson as campaign manager, assigning his services to Texas Governor William Hobby. Other participants included the Federal Reserve Bank, the Extension Department of the University of Texas, and the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, among others.<sup>41</sup>

### Friends, Family, Business Partners

Kemp and Kell were astute businessmen, but they were also loved and respected by the community they had helped create. In her book *Wichita County Beginnings*, Louise Kelly describes the pair:

Mr. Kemp was the dreamer, the planner, the persuader; Mr. Kell was the greatest manager. Both had natural business ability, ambition, and patience. Kemp's specialties were water, irrigation, and people; Kell's were milling and railroads... Together they promoted, built, financed or invested in practically every enterprise, business or cultural, that would advance Wichita Falls: banks, railroads, buildings, street railways, lake resort, oil, insurance, and lesser things.<sup>42</sup>

Kemp's generosity was already well known by the time he and Mrs. Kemp donated their former residence, located at Eleventh and Indiana, for the purpose of housing a library in Wichita Falls. Several of the city's civic organizations were planning a fund raising campaign to raise money for the building. The *Wichita Daily Times* of December 16, 1916 published an article

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<sup>40</sup> Katherine Kuehler Walters, "WORLD WAR I," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/world-war-i>), accessed January 24, 2021. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>41</sup> "Campaign for Food Production to Begin," *Dallas Morning News*, January 21, 1918, 1. accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-1068E27C1AB062D8%402421615-1068E27C2C451162%400-1068E27CF94EB067%40Campaign%2Bfor%2BFood%2BProduction%2Bto%2BBegin>.

<sup>42</sup> Kelly, 108-109. Kelly's comments explain the talents and abilities both Kemp and Kell possessed individually. It was through their friendship/partnership that so much was accomplished for the City of Wichita Falls, the North Texas region and beyond.



announcing Mr. and Mrs. Kemp's gift to the community. The provision of the gift required that the city council maintain the building and cover the cost of a librarian. Money collected through civic organizations and the public was then available to purchase books and other materials for the new public library.<sup>43</sup>

Kell partnered with his brother-in-law on many projects in and around the Wichita Falls area. At first they shared office space in the same building, conducting their individual dealings with ease and open doors. As their business ventures grew, the doors to their offices more often remained closed. On one occasion, W.W. Silk arrived at Mr. Kemp's office to purchase some oil stock. As soon as the transaction was complete, Silk walked across the hall and entered Kell's office, where he immediately sold the newly purchased shares to Kell. When the parties involved in the stock trade became known to each other, Kell turned to Kemp and said, "Jodie, hereafter we had better keep the door open."<sup>44</sup>

Kemp and Kell deserve credit for much of the development of Wichita Falls and the surrounding region. Many of the businesses begun under their direction contributed to economic growth and created additional opportunities from which others could benefit. When they negotiated the terms of the right of way for the Wichita Falls and Northwestern railway with Burk Burnett, for example, Burnett specified in the sale agreement that a station must be constructed within the parameters of the ranch land he sold them for the project; Burnett retained the naming rights for the location.<sup>45</sup> Kemp and Kell created the Red River Land Company, selling small 160 acre tracts from the 169,000 acres of farm land and the Red River Valley Township Company, from which they founded a new town and conducted the sale of lots for the

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<sup>43</sup> "Library Building is Given Wichita Falls," *Dallas Morning News*, December 17, 1916, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B34A39757E274%402421215-106B34A3AEE35215%400-106B34A7E5E1F75C%40Library%2BBuilding%2Bis%2BGiven%2BWichita%2BFalls>.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, 133, note 12. The story circulated widely around the Wichita Falls area, being passed on by various individuals relating the inherent humor of the situation. Apparently Silk was having a good time retelling the tale regarding Kemp and Kell's good natured acceptance of their business dealings

<sup>45</sup> Kelly, 134-135.

new town. On June 6, 1907 their Red River Valley Township Company auctioned township lots, which became the town of Burkburnett, Texas.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 5. The “Colonnade.” Pavilion at Lake Wichita, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1910. From the Lester Jones Collection. Courtesy of the Museum of the Great Plains.

Kemp and Kell teamed up again to promote Wichita Falls through a venture that drew visitors to the area from around the North Texas and Oklahoma regions. In 1909, the “Colonnade” was constructed to serve as an entertainment venue along the shore of Lake Wichita. The three-story building included a boardwalk, which extended out over the lake, providing boat docks and a pier from which to fish. A cafe or concession stand was located on the first floor, and a soda fountain occupied part of the second floor. The facility’s original design included a dance floor, which was later converted to a roller skating rink. The grounds of the pavilion boasted the inclusion of dual baseball parks that were used by two different big league teams as training facilities. In addition, a race track was constructed in close proximity with the ability to host various sporting events including horse and motorsport races. Transportation to the shores of Lake Wichita was provided for visitors as well. In 1909 the Wichita Falls Traction Company, another Kemp and Kell business endeavor, extended streetcar service to the attraction. The Lakeside Hotel was built the following year, providing lodging for the increasing number of visitors to the entertainment venue. The facility, however, was plagued by an unreliable power plant. At times electrical current used to power the streetcars failed, leaving riders stranded between the depot and their destination. Following seasonal rains, the roads approaching the resort were at times clogged with mud, stranding vehicles and their

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<sup>46</sup> Steve Wilson, *Wichita Falls: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1982), 112. The U.S. Postal Service initially declined to accept Burk-Burnett as an acceptable name for a post office in 1907. Burnett sent an associate who happened to be in Washington at the time to seek assistance on the matter from President Roosevelt. Roosevelt assured that “Burkburnett” was an appropriate name for the town.

passengers on the way to the resort. The Lakeside Hotel, built in 1910, operated for eight years until it burned in 1918. Following this disaster, interest in the facility waned, and the hotel was not rebuilt.<sup>47</sup>

While the influence of Kemp and Kell extended to the world stage, their efforts focused on Wichita Falls. In 1911, Kemp, along with other stockholders, established the Wichita Falls Motor Company. Over the next twenty-one years the company manufactured products which attained a worldwide demand. Originally built for oil field work, the company's vehicles were adopted by many industries that required rugged, powerful and durable transportation. The company slogan, "the sun never sets on a Wichita truck," suggested the extent of their products' distribution. The heavy duty Wichita truck was sold in eighty-six countries. The onset of World War I led to rapid increases in sales as the company received orders from the American and allied governments. Combined orders from France and Russia accounted for just fewer than four thousand trucks for use as a part of the war effort. The relatively quick conclusion of hostilities after the U.S. entered the war, however, led to the cancellation of sales orders. While the company continued to manufacture its products, the loss of business placed a strain on operations. The depression years of the 1930s again brought decreases in vehicle sales, making it an untenable process for smaller companies and difficult for the larger manufacturers of Ford and General Motors as well. The company was finally forced to close its doors in 1932.<sup>48</sup>

In 1908, Kemp organized the Floral Heights Realty Company (named for his wife) and filed a plat for the creation of a subdivision on April 3, 1909. Investors, large and small, took advantage of the plan and lots were offered for sale in the Floral Heights Addition. During 1910 and 1911, a significant amount of construction occurred, and the Wichita Falls City Council approved the annexation of Floral Heights on February 14, 1910. The city installed sewage, utilities, and other services. Early in 1910, approximately one thousand trees were planted at Mrs. Kemp's request. Floral Heights became a highly successful venture; in May 1912, Kemp began offering home loans with a monthly repayment plan for those property owners holding a clear title to their lot. Many of the property owners took advantage of this offer and by the middle of 1913 the cost of lots in the Floral Heights Addition had risen to between two and three

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<sup>47</sup> Kelly, 37. As the last remnant of the resort, the Colonnade burned on November 19, 1955.

<sup>48</sup> Kelly, 83-84.

times their original price. By the end of the year, the realty company was able to declare a dividend of twenty-five percent of earnings which substantially exceeded the original investment in the Floral Heights Addition. Included as part of the Floral Heights plat filed by Kemp was the planned route for the street car service provided by the Wichita Falls Traction Company, which was owned by Kemp and Kell.<sup>49</sup>

The street car franchise had been submitted in January 1909 and was, within days, accepted and awarded to Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell.<sup>50</sup> In late February, materials and electrical equipment were purchased from the Westinghouse Company of Dallas. Installation of the rail lines began in late March and the rolling stock (street cars) arrived in June. On Thursday, September 9, 1909, the *Wichita Daily Times* ran a front page report on the company's progress. Concern over the street car system's success was beginning to rise with a franchise expiration date just three days away. Further complications arose over the required manufacturer's system certification when the initial Westinghouse representative became ill with a case of appendicitis. The necessity of requesting another individual to provide the inspection placed additional strain on the expiration deadline.<sup>51</sup> On September 11, 1909 the tracks were completed, and company officials reported that the line was operational. While the cars were not running, they had been positioned on the tracks. Following some last minute adjustments by Westinghouse's representative, and with Frank Kell among the passengers onboard, the General Manager of the Wichita Falls Traction Company moved the trolley out of the car barn located at Denver and Ninth Street and headed toward the downtown area on its inaugural run on September 15, 1909.

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<sup>49</sup> Kelly, 68.

<sup>50</sup> "Operation of Car Line Started at Noon Today: History of Street Car Line," *Wichita Daily Times*, September 15, 1909. The *Wichita Daily Times* article of September 15, 1909 lists Henry Sayles, N. Henderson and Charles Malone as the original applicants for the street car franchise application on January 8, 1909. The blanket proposition for the service was submitted by the Wichita Falls City Council on January 13, 1909, with Kemp and Kell accepting and being awarded the franchise the following day, January 14, 1909.

<sup>51</sup> "Street Cars Not yet in Evidence," *Wichita Daily Times*, September 9, 1909, 1, microfilm.

The street car traveled toward the downtown area on Ninth Street, circling the sixteen blocks of the business district before heading west again on Ninth Street. The outbound leg of the circuit traveled back through the Floral Heights neighborhoods before turning southwest on Kemp Boulevard for the trip to Lake Wichita and the aforementioned Colonnade and Lakeside Hotel.



Figure 6. "Inauguration Day – Trolley No.1," Wichita Falls, Texas, September 15, 1909. From the Lester Jones Collection. Courtesy of the Museum of the Great Plains.

In 1915, the southern side of Wichita Falls still consisted primarily of farm land, with wheat serving as the primary crop. The increase in the number of railroads traversing the region meant that more wheat could be planted for processing at local mills. The population expanded as well, as workers found jobs due to the need to manufacture maintenance parts and goods. Kemp and Kell, in conjunction with the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, recognized the potential of creating a concentrated district for manufacturing businesses. They set aside acreage half way between the town and Lake Wichita in an attempt to attract manufacturers to the location. The Ball Brothers Glass Jar Factory was located here. In 1912, a window glass concern located their operations in the same location.<sup>52</sup> Kemp and Kell purchased this business

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<sup>52</sup> Morgan, 210.

two years later. When stores and homes began to appear that would supply and house workers, the district took on the characteristics of a small community itself. Halfway between the Ninth and Kemp intersection and Lake Wichita lay the manufacturing district through which passengers traveled. Being able to take better advantage of connections for their shipping requirements was the rationale for locating manufacturing companies in one district. As indicated on the 1915 Sanborn map of Wichita Falls, the Wichita Valley Rail Road extended to the southwest towards the location of the Ball Brother Glass Company.<sup>53</sup> The same area in the 1919 Sanborn map reveals an extension of the railroad tracks and additional businesses, primarily the Wichita Falls Window Glass Company and the Wichita Falls Motor Company. The location of the manufacturing district and its businesses stood in close proximity to the site where Call Aviation Field stood between 1917 and 1919.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 1915 Sanborn Map – Wichita Falls, Texas. accessed August 8, 2015. [txu-sanborn-wichita\\_falls-1915-01.jpg \(3000×3646\) \(utexas.edu\)](#). Perry Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin, [The University of Texas at Austin \(utexas.edu\)](#).

<sup>54</sup> 1919 Sanborn Map – Wichita Falls, Texas. accessed August 8, 2015. [txu-sanborn-wichita\\_falls-1919-01.jpg \(3000×3702\) \(utexas.edu\)](#). Perry Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin, [The University of Texas at Austin \(utexas.edu\)](#).



Figure 7. Sanborn Map – Wichita Falls, Texas, 1919. Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Kemp and Kell leveraged their experiences in an effort to obtain a flight training school for Wichita Falls, Texas. Their local efforts remain the basis upon which all their other endeavors rest. For Kemp it was the initial grocery store he opened in 1883 in Wichita Falls. Kell's experience is traceable to his beginnings as a miller and milling company executive. Their building and public service projects had made them influential men. Kell's directorship with the 11th Federal Reserve Bank and his work with Herbert Hoover's food programs provided important contacts. For Kell, membership in the National Chamber of Commerce provided opportunities to influence federal policy. Although Kemp declined to run for the governorship of Texas, he did accept an appointment to the Board of Regents for the University of Texas, serving in that capacity from October 1917 until May 1921. Kemp's efforts for improving agriculture programs introduced measures for improving the food supply. In the same manner that they pursued the building of railroads, they would pursue additional possibilities in aviation.

From the hilltop location of Kemp's final resting place, the downtown business district is visible with its streets where he began his first grocery store. To the south are the routes over which Kell's streetcars ran, providing residents with transportation throughout the town. Just slightly to the southwest, Kemp developed the Floral Heights Addition, giving the city a major increase in housing and neighborhoods. Too far in the distance to be seen from this vantage point lies Lake Wichita to the south, Kemp's original effort at supplying a source of water for the area, and the canals to the west through which the surrounding farm land still receives irrigation. Fifteen miles north of Wichita Falls is the location where Kemp and Kell organized a new settlement, which became the town of Burkburnett. Throughout the North Texas region, rail lines radiate in all directions giving evidence of the impact that these men had on the region. Both Kemp and Kell are interred in the Riverside Cemetery in Wichita Falls. It is the epitaph on Kemp's grave monument that so succinctly describes the desire he held for his city.

*"If you would see my monument, look around you."*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph A. Kemp Burial Monument, Riverside Cemetery, Wichita Falls, Texas.





Figure 8. The Kemp burial monument. Riverside Cemetery, Wichita Falls, Texas. Photograph by the author.

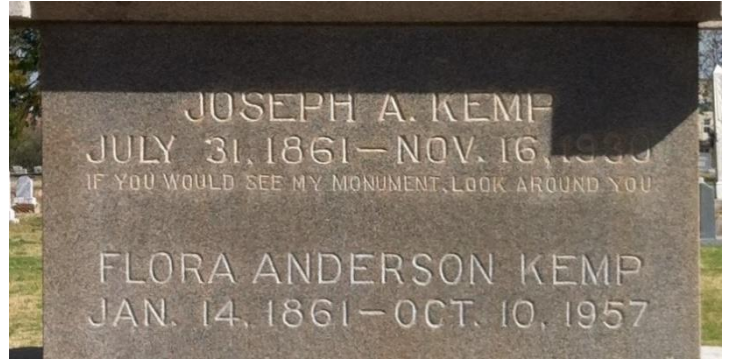


Figure 9. Inscription on the Kemp burial monument. Riverside Cemetery, Wichita Falls, Texas. Photograph by the author.

## Chapter 2

Aeroplanes will first be used for sport. Aeroplane racing is highly exciting and is bound to become popular. The War Departments of various Governments are taking up the study of aviation. Flying machines will have great value for reconnoitering, and they will possibly be put to use in actual defense...

Glenn Curtiss  
*Dallas Morning News*, April 14, 1910

Balloon flight remained the standard for aeronautics during the early twentieth century. In countries around the globe, inventors worked to solve the mystery of aviation. Early attempts to improve on the science of flight remained elusive, and for the United States an embarrassment. Not until 1903, when an aircraft flew for the first time, was the secret of heavier-than-air flight unlocked. But in the United States, another six years would pass before the first aircraft was acquired by the U.S. military in 1909. That same year, prominent citizens of Wichita Falls began to show an interest in aviation, eventually leading to the acquisition of Call Aviation Field. Spectators from the surrounding regions were transported to the city on the rail lines built by Kemp and Kell. There, large crowds assembled to witness air meets and exhibits sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. To establish basic aviation requirements for the country, civilian enthusiasts organized as the Aero Club of America, under whose rules military pilots in the United States first received their certifications. Flying in open cockpit airplanes constructed of sticks and wire, early pilots devised new techniques, pushing themselves and their aircraft to new levels, sometimes with disastrous outcomes.



### U.S. Aviation – Initial Attempts

The potential of aeronautics had been realized long before the beginning of the twentieth century. Although, the technology was necessarily limited, balloon observation platforms were first used in the 1790s to provide strategic information for maneuvering resources to a needed location during a conflict. The United States military first deployed balloons during the Civil War. Primarily used by the Union, under civilian operation, commanders on the ground were able to receive valuable information. Thereafter, interest in the use of balloons fell out of favor

until the Spanish-American War in 1898, when observation balloons entered service again. During that conflict, the United States sent its only balloon to Cuba, using it to observe enemy forces and to direct artillery during the Battle of San Juan Hill. When it moved too close to the fighting, enemy fire disabled the balloon, forcing its removal and further participation in the conflict. Further advances in aviation technology came with the creation of the steerable balloon, or dirigible. By modifying a balloon to a cylindrical shape, gasoline powered engines could be mounted on the sides of compartments attached on the balloon's lower side, providing a steering mechanism. By World War I, German zeppelins provided a steerable aircraft, and with it the ability to drop bombs.<sup>56</sup>

By the conclusion of the nineteenth century many different inventors were working to achieve powered flight with a fixed wing aircraft, including Hiram Maxim of Great Britain, Clement Ader of France, and the American Samuel P. Langley, who was the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute and a bona fide scientist in his own right. Following some initial success with a model aircraft in 1896, Langley received a \$50,000 stipend to develop a full-size flying machine. The dismal failure of his "Aerodrome A" prototype in 1903 proved an embarrassment to the War Department. Because of public pressure, the War Department refused to fund any more of Langley's work. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the science of aviation had a shaky foundation in the United States.<sup>57</sup>

### Heavier-Than-Air Flight

The successful demonstration by Orville and Wilbur Wright, on December 17, 1903, and their achievement of controlled heavier-than-air flight, secured their place in history. But being the first to provide a resolution for heavier than air flight did not produce the same level of interest in the United States as it did in European countries. Great Britain became the first nation to approach the Wrights with a request to purchase an airplane in 1905. Later that same year, France expressed an interest in acquiring one of the Wright's machines. The Wrights requested

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<sup>56</sup> Alfred Goldberg, ed., *A History of the United States Air Force, 1907-1957* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Goldberg, 2. The Aerodrome A was later flown fourteen years later by Glenn Curtiss, a competitor of Wilbur and Orville Wright, who, after making modifications to Langley's original design, sought to show that the equipment was capable of attaining its goal.

performance requirements from the United States, wanting to offer their invention to their own country first. Their inquiries went unanswered due to the Langley experience, which continued to produce a skepticism in powered flight. Not until 1907, through the intervention of the Aero Club of America and President Theodore Roosevelt, did the United States War Department respond with the requested specifications. Negotiations were eventually opened with the potential for the purchase of a Wright aircraft. In response, the Wrights brought a newly designed airplane to Fort Meyer, Virginia in August 1908, where they completed a series of several successful flights, impressing spectators with proof that their flying machine actually did exist. When Orville Wright was injured in a crash on September 17, flights were discontinued. After making improvements to their 1908 airplane, the brothers returned to Fort Meyer the following year. Final demonstrations of the Wrights' airplane began on July 27, 1909, when competitor designs were unable to meet the army's stated specifications. With Lieutenant Frank P. Lahm as a passenger, Orville Wright flew a cross-country speed flight between Fort Myer and Alexandria, Virginia. Achieving a top speed of 42.5 miles per hour, the ten mile round trip was completed in just over one hour and twelve minutes. The flight demonstration secured a contract from the army, \$25,000 in prize money, and an additional \$5,000 for exceeding the stated performance specifications. Press announcements called the plane "Aeroplane No. 1;" the army accepted the equipment on August 2, 1909.<sup>58</sup>

### Wichita Falls and Aviation

In the late fall of 1909, aviation was still a novel attraction, but it was not new to the residents of Wichita Falls. Press outlets from around the country had long carried reports of the advances being made by aircraft developers. On September 15, 1909, the same day that the Wichita Falls Traction Company rolled out its first streetcar, the *Wichita Falls Record News* carried an article recounting the achievements of Glenn Curtiss, who had just won the Gran Prix race for flying.<sup>59</sup> However, it would be almost two years before an actual aircraft arrived in Wichita Falls. On January 14, 1911, Joseph Kemp released a statement to the local press. As

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<sup>58</sup> Goldberg, 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Glenn Curtiss was the developer of the Curtiss aircraft. The Curtiss J4,"Jenny," which he would later develop, was the aircraft used for training pilots in the United States during World War I. The Wrights at this time were abroad selling their aircraft in Germany, having decided not to participate in the contest.

part of his comments, he recounted his receipt of a telegram from the managing representative for the aviation team of McCurdy and Walsh. Under the byline “Want to Put on Aviation Meet,” the article discussed potential arrangements for an aviation show in the Wichita Falls area. Walsh had telegraphed Kemp from Shreveport, Louisiana, seeking possible dates for the prospective event. Kemp had responded via wire requesting the terms under which the event might be considered and the details of Walsh’s proposal. At the time it was considered probable that the proposed contract would be presented to the directors of the Chamber of Commerce for their acceptance. The potential contract called for the meet to be held in Wichita Falls during a span of three days; the multi-day format was proposed as a contingency in case of bad weather. Should weather keep the airplanes on the ground one day, two additional opportunities existed for the completion of their flights. The event was expected to draw thousands to the area to witness the pilots fly their aircraft.<sup>60</sup> Railroad service would allow for the greatest possible attendance for the event. The Fort Worth and Denver, the Wichita Valley, and Katy rail lines were approached to give special rates in the North Texas and Oklahoma region. Walsh’s communications with Kemp indicated that he had previously organized a successful aviation exhibition in Shreveport, Louisiana. Walsh and his flyers were booked for Havana, Cuba, after which they would be available for the meet in Wichita Falls in early March 1911. However, the event remained unscheduled.<sup>61</sup>

The arrival of J. J. Pontius in late July 1911, gave citizens of Wichita Falls their first opportunity to see an aircraft for themselves. A flying demonstration was scheduled for July 28 and 29, 1911 at the Lake Wichita pavilion. The press agent for Pontius approached the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, contracting the event. The ballpark would serve as the field from which flights would begin and end. For the price of seventy-five cents, spectators would witness a demonstration where the pilot and airplane would ascend and return to the field for a landing. Pontius, also known as “The Flying Dutchman,” and his aircraft arrived by train in Wichita Falls on July 26. A crowd of 3,000 spectators gathered two days later to watch the flyer and his airplane, but Pontius was unable to get his Curtiss biplane off the ground due to high winds blowing across the lake. People wandered the grounds of the resort, between the ballpark and the

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<sup>60</sup> “Want to Put on Aviation Meet,” *Wichita Daily Times*, January 14, 1911, 1, microfilm.

<sup>61</sup> “May Secure Meet Early in March,” *Wichita Daily Times*, January 16, 1911, 1, microfilm.

Colonnade which served as a hangar, patiently waiting for the conditions to improve enough for the airplane to take off. Late in the afternoon Pontius made another attempt, but wind conditions again kept the machine on the ground and prevented any further flights on that day. The promoter of the event, G. F. Harris, of the Pan American Aero Co., had the airplane wheeled out of the grandstands to its hangar. At the behest of the Chamber of Commerce, the aero company offered a full refund of the admittance price to all out-of-town attendees needing to board the evening trains. Chamber representatives did not want anyone complaining about mistreatment while visiting the city. The crowd quickly disbursed. Plans were made for another attempt on the following day, weather permitting. Another large crowd was anticipated to be on hand for the second attempt, with a large number of visitors staying over.<sup>62</sup>

By the afternoon of Saturday, July 29, weather conditions were more favorable and another large group of spectators was on hand to witness Pontius fly. Problems again arose when the confines of the ballfield proved too restrictive to allow the plane to take off. The exhibition was moved to an adjoining pasture where another attempt at a successful launch could be tried. The outcome again disappointed the pilot and the assembled crowd. The biplane raced across the field, reaching a speed of approximately forty miles per hour, but failed to leave the ground owing to insufficient power. A recently installed motor was not turning the propeller at a sufficient rate to reach take off. With frustration mounting, Pontius abandoned his flight plans for the day, leaving the equipment with the company's mechanic to repair the problem. The afternoon ended with a belief that the motor problem had been corrected, and a suspension of flying for the day. G.F. Harris again spoke to the crowd, assuring them that Pontius would remain in the area until the promised flights had been achieved.<sup>63</sup>

As the following day, Sunday, was observed as a day of rest, the next attempt to fly was scheduled for Monday. But the promised flight exhibition was never completed, as Pontius had by that time packed up his aircraft and left town. Wichita Falls citizens would wait another nine months before having another chance to witness an airplane fly. The Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce was left to deal with the failed aviation exhibition, referring the problem to Mayor T. B. Noble, J. B. Marlow, and J. C. Tandy, the original chamber members appointed as the

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<sup>62</sup> "Wind Was Too High Flight Abandoned," *Wichita Daily Times*, July 29, 1911, 3, microfilm.

<sup>63</sup> "Motor Worked Badly Pontius Failed to Fly," *Wichita Daily Times*, July 30, 1911, 1, microfilm.

committee to oversee the event. The resolution of the matter was left to the committee's judgment.<sup>64</sup>

Taking up the issue on his own initiative, M. H. Carpenter of Wichita Falls made the trip to Dallas in March 1912, approaching the exhibition manager for the Moisant aviators with a proposition of his own. In his opinion, Wichita Falls deserved a successful aviation meet. He was interested in booking the Moisant Flyers for the city following the conclusion of their Dallas engagement. His comments to the press indicated that he was not a representative of any Wichita Falls organization, but only a "public-spirited citizen" interested in drawing the flyers to his city.<sup>65</sup>

The Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce agreed with Carpenter's sentiments and scheduled the Moisant flying team for an exhibition on April 11-14, 1912. As a prevention against another calamitous event, a flyover of the city was planned to entice public attendance of the meet. On April 10, 1912 the *Wichita Daily Times* carried an article announcing that Monsieur Andre Houpert, a French aviator, would be making an initial flight from Lake Wichita over the city at an altitude of approximately three thousand feet; he would return to the same place at the lake from which he had taken off. While over the downtown area Houpert released a thousand handbills announcing the event. Free passes were attached to some of the circulars admitting the bearer to the entire four-day meet. The plan was threefold in its intention to regain public interest. First, it sought to prove to the citizens of Wichita Falls that the aviators were really able to fly their machines. Second, the possibility of a free pass for the full event was available for those willing to pick up a handbill that had rained down from the sky. Houpert, himself, willingly sought to enhance the publicity of the event, by announcing that a world's speed record might be attempted while the team was in Wichita Falls. (A Moisant monoplane had won and retained the American speed record the previous year against competitors, including the Wright Brothers and the Glenn Curtiss Company.) Excursion rates on railroad lines entering the city were offered for each day of the meet to entice the public. Organizers

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<sup>64</sup> "Chamber Of Commerce Directors Meet," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 1, 1911, 1, microfilm.

<sup>65</sup> "Wichita Faolls [sic] Wants Meet," *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), March 24, 1912, 6, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C3BC5A57781CD%402419486-106C3BC6266DEC1C%405-106C3BCD6ACE5BF3%40Wichita%2BFaolls%2BWants%2BMeet>.

hoped the Northwestern rail line would bring hundreds of interested spectators from as many as twenty Oklahoma towns along the railroad's route. Anticipating that two or three flights would be made the following day, two of the monoplanes were already at the Lake Wichita location. Houpert and Signor Alvarez, another member of the flying team, were confident that if the prevailing weather continued it would offer excellent flying conditions for the exhibition. Accompanied by members of the aviation committee, Houpert, Alvarez, and other members of the aviation party left for Lake Wichita to prepare for the flight across the city.<sup>66</sup>

The following day, the report of a successful flight created interest in the coming event. On Wednesday afternoon, April 10, 1912, Houpert reluctantly postponed the planned flight until the following morning as the wind began to increase, but on Thursday the airplane took off, heading straight toward town at the promised altitude. Reaching the Wichita River, Houpert circled the town and turned the airplane back toward the lake. With the promised handbills and passes dropped, confidence mounted that the first successful flying exhibition would be held in the city of Wichita Falls.<sup>67</sup>

On Thursday, April 11, the opening day of the exhibition, aviation pioneer Mathilde Moisant joined Houpert and Alvarez. Hundreds turned out to witness the flights with takeoff scheduled to begin between 3:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon. Houpert and Alvarez planned for at least one flight each, while Moisant had not decided if she would take to the air for the evening exhibition. Afternoon wind gusts again raised concerns and threatened to frustrate the proceedings though by 2:00 weather conditions improved enough to bolster the pilots confidence.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the improving weather conditions, Houpert and a mechanic ran into mechanical issues with his airplane. The engine backfired with continuing attempts to get the machine running. This led to a small fire that Houpert was able to extinguish before serious damage was done. Inferior fuel that had been obtained from a Dallas-based supplier failed to produce enough power to propel the airplane. The scheduled flights were grounded for the day while a search for suitable fuel was underway. By Friday, the second day of the meet, everything appeared to be in

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<sup>66</sup> "Mons. Houpert Will Fly Today," *Wichita Daily Times*, April 10, 1912, 5, microfilm.

<sup>67</sup> "Houpert Flew Over City Today," *Wichita Daily Times*, April 11, 1912, 1, microfilm.

<sup>68</sup> "Houpert Flew Over City Today," 1.



order. The weather improved and crowds again gathered in expectation of flying at Lake Wichita. The Wichita Falls and Northwestern delayed the departure of its noon train until two o'clock to accommodate the anticipated large number of spectators.<sup>69</sup>

The Moisant aviators traveled the country thrilling spectators with flying exhibitions. The company offered five thousand dollars to any of its flyers who could claim records in speed and/or altitude, wresting them from current record holders. Incentives to attain those records also insured that an exciting exhibition was most often given by the company's flyers. Opportunity for achieving any particular record depended upon the prevailing conditions while in the air, and each of the pilots was prepared to compete for a record any time they ascended. While visiting Dallas the previous month, Andre Houpert found conditions right for attempting to set an altitude record while giving an exhibition of speed and control. As fellow aviators on the ground began to take notice of his intentions, they scrambled to their own airplanes, attempting to take advantage of the same conditions, and potentially attain a record for themselves.<sup>70</sup>

These flying exhibitions caused sufficient excitement in the North Texas and southern Oklahoma regions, yet it was the flying ability of Mathilde Moisant, which proved to be the event's enduring feature. Trained at the Moisant flying school on Long Island, under the instruction of her brother, Albert Moisant, Mathilde was the second woman in the United States to receive a pilot's certification and license, and the holder of the world's altitude record for women.<sup>71</sup> Prior to arriving in Wichita Falls, Moisant had experienced the passing of Cal P. Rogers, a friend and fellow flyer. Rogers' reputation for safety when flying was widely known. His death had impressed upon her the danger associated with professional flying. With this

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<sup>69</sup> "Three Aviators Will Fly Today," *Wichita Daily Times*, April 12, 1912, 1, microfilm.

<sup>70</sup> "Miss Moisant Will Give Last Exhibition Here," *Wichita Falls Weekly Times*, April 12, 1912, 2, microfilm.

<sup>71</sup> "Woman's Monoplane Wrecked and Burned," *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), April 15, 1912, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C3D45A719010C%402419508-106C3D45C4892C4E%400-106C3D486BD78866%40Woman%2527s%2BMonoplane%2BWrecked%2BAnd%2BBurned>. Mathilde Moisant received her certification and pilot's license on August 13, 1911. Her flying career lasted only eight months before she retired from exhibition flying on April 14, 1912 following the meet held at Wichita Falls, Texas, April 11-14, 1912.

recent revelation and the encouragement of her family, Moisant made the announcement at Wichita Falls that she would retire from exhibition flying at the conclusion of the meet.<sup>72</sup>

Weather conditions again plagued the aviation exhibition at Wichita Falls, preventing the pilots from flying as they wished. It was a commonly quoted rule by the aviators, however, that the finish of a meet is generally successful when it follows a disappointing start. The citizens of Wichita Falls were hoping that the stated rule would hold true for their event.<sup>73</sup>

As hoped for by spectators and aviators alike, the final day of the exhibition was a success, as well as the most exciting day. At about six thirty in the evening, Moisant was finishing her third successful flight of the day. Having left the ground at around five o'clock, she had completed a short flight over the field before descending to have the engine fixed. It was her intention to take off again following adjustments to the engine valves. Letting it be known that she considered this to be her last flight, Moisant returned to the plane at the completion of the repairs. She was determined to make it one of the most successful flights of her career. As the crowd watched she ascended into the sky, quickly rising to a high altitude. To the crowd she appeared as a small spec flying high above them. For the next ten minutes, Moisant maintained her airplane at this altitude before returning to the field. As she attempted to land the aircraft, the airplane dipped and struck the ground with a force sending it back into the sky before turning toward the crowd. To avoid the possibility of running her airplane into the crowd, she tried to restart the engine in an attempt to resume flight, and make a better landing. Her efforts to regain control of the situation proved futile. The machine crashed, leaving the engine in the ground and breaking the propeller. Part of the broken prop struck the gasoline tank, igniting a fire that spread quickly, catching the pilot in its flames.<sup>74</sup> While the report of Moisant's near fatal crash made headlines, reports circulated that she displayed a distinctly feminine attitude toward the incident. In an article carried by the *Dallas Morning News*, Moisant emerged from the wreckage of the airplane, and passing through the group of gathered spectators, expressed more concern for her appearance rather than her escape from death.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "Miss Moisant Will Give Last Exhibition Here," 2.

<sup>73</sup> "Will Fly Again This Afternoon," *Wichita Falls Weekly Times*, April 14, 1912, 1, microfilm.

<sup>74</sup> "Woman's Monoplane Wrecked and Burned," 1.

<sup>75</sup> "Snap Shots," *Dallas Morning News*, April 20, 1912, 10, accessed April 29, 2021,

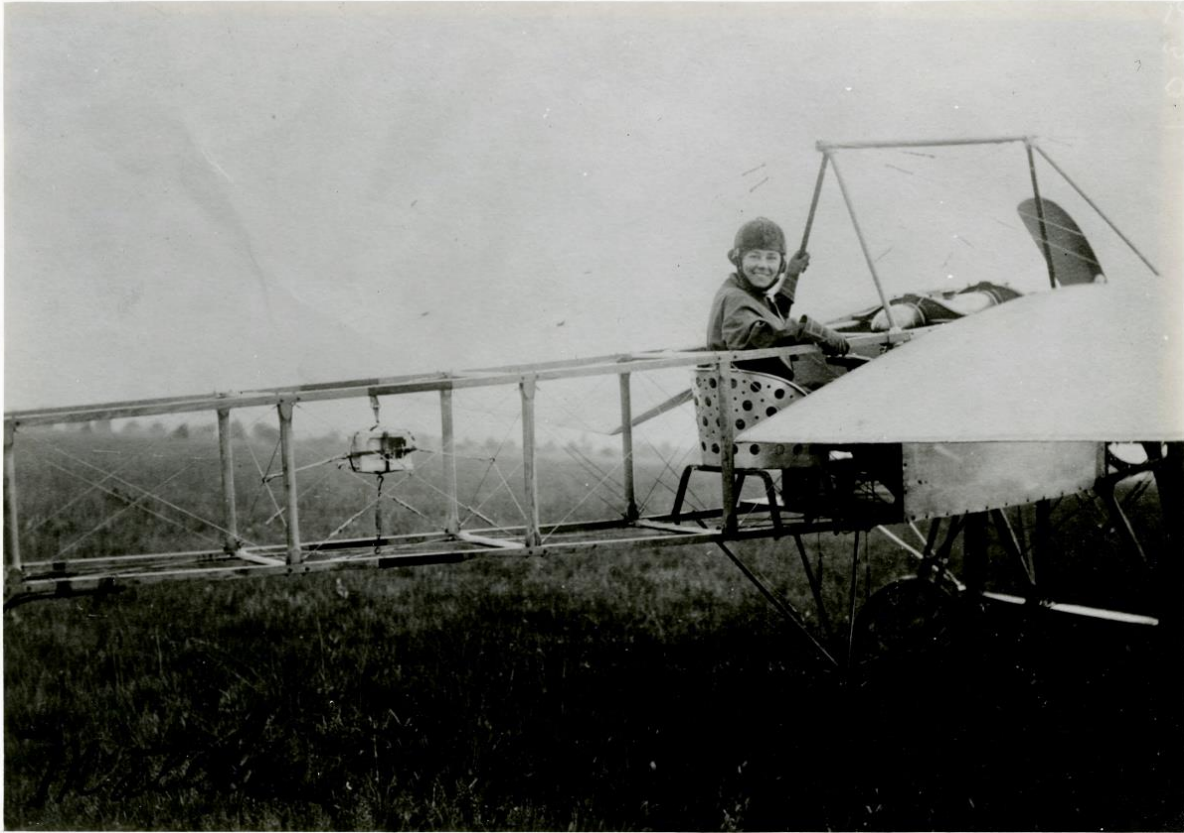


Figure 10. Matilde Moisant, Moisant Family scrapbooks, NASM-SI-73-3564. Courtesy of the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institute.

### Civilian Aviation

The Moisant Flyers were only one aerial attraction in the early 1900's. After Orville and Wilbur Wright had won their contract with the United States, the early days of aviation in the United States remained mostly in the private sector. The Stinson family, based in San Antonio, conducted public flying exhibitions and gave lessons. Katherine Stinson, the fourth female aviator to receive a pilot's license, was soon followed by her brother, Edward "Eddie" Stinson, and her sister, Marjorie. The Stinsons received their flight training from the Wrights, initially performing flying exhibitions before moving to San Antonio, where Katherine and Marjorie

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<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C3263CEF2519F%402419513-106C3264EFE80B8F%409-106C326B2F16D815%40Snap%2BShots.>

taught flying lessons at the family's aviation school. Edward founded the Stinson Aircraft Company.<sup>76</sup>

The first demonstration of powered flight in the state of Texas occurred on February 3, 1910, when Louis Paulham, a French pilot, flew his Farman bi-plane as part of an international aviation meet. The Houston flying exhibition featured Paulham, a co-star of Glenn Curtiss. Paulham held the world altitude record of 4,150 feet at the time, and additional records for endurance and cross country flying. The Wright brothers had taken legal action against Paulham and Curtiss, seeking to prevent the use of their aviation innovations for the profit of others. Paulham's appearance in Houston took place only after judges lifted the Wrights' temporary injunction.<sup>77</sup>

In 1910, anyone possessing a sufficiently daring personality and an airplane could fly. Inspired by Paulham's demonstration, Leslie L. "Shorty" Walker built his own airplane on the basis of Louis Bléroit's model XI and flew it on April 10, 1910. As the owner of several aircraft, Walker flew at the Houston meet the following year. Having flown as an early aviator guaranteed his membership in a group of pilots appropriately called the Early Birds. Founded in 1929, membership in the group required an individual to have piloted an aircraft prior to December 17, 1916.<sup>78</sup>

On March 3, 1910, Otto W. Brodie flew his Herring-Curtiss biplane across the infield of the race track at Fair Park in Dallas making him the first pilot to fly in the North Texas region.<sup>79</sup> Unfavorable wind conditions prevented him from taking the airplane higher than fifteen to twenty feet off the ground on the first day, yet the completion of this initial flight offered the promise of a better exhibition in the remaining days of the aviation meet. At the age of sixteen, he had hopped from one dangerous job to another. He was the youngest aviator, at twenty-two

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<sup>76</sup> Barbara Granson, *Texas Takes Wing: A Century of Flight in the Lone Star State* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2014), 20-27.

<sup>77</sup> Granson, 1-3.

<sup>78</sup> Granson, 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> "Short Flight Made in an Aeroplane," *Dallas Morning News*, March 4, 1910, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106DDE2CAAD5FAEE%402418735-106DDE2CCF80E496%400-106DDE2E0610374B%40Short%2BFlight%2BMade%2Bin%2Ban%2BAeroplane>.

years of age, with a reputation for being reckless. By the time Glen Curtiss offered Brodie a job demonstrating Curtiss aircraft, he was an experienced parachute jumper, dirigible operator, and race car driver. He arrived in Dallas with the intention of providing an exciting flying exhibition for the public. In his opinion the Curtiss racer was the best flying machine at the time, although the aircraft was smaller in size than foreign bi-planes.<sup>80</sup>

The remaining days of the meet proved to be no better than the first. Gusty winds continued to plague any attempts at setting records in any category. The following day, weather conditions were not sufficiently improved for Brodie to achieve his goals. On Saturday, the third day of the meet, Brodie undertook six flights in an effort to meet spectators' expectations. The first five flights proved to have the same results as previous attempts. None had achieved an altitude over an estimated fifty-five feet, preventing maneuvered turns.<sup>81</sup> The sixth and final flight of the day proved to be the most exciting, and perilous. After completing needed repairs following his previous flights, Brodie was determined to fly no matter what the wind conditions. He had the airplane moved to the field in another attempt at providing the promised show. The airplane rose quickly, flying approximately six hundred feet. Following a dip in flight, the machine regained an altitude of twenty feet, covering another three hundred feet before Brodie could make a turn. When a gust of wind caught it from the side the machine was almost immediately thrown to the ground. Brodie was thrown from his seat, hitting the ground just prior to the airplane, which came down on top of him. The pilot survived with a bloody nose and scratches to his face, but the airplane was badly damaged and could not be repaired for further flying. As a result, the aviation meet's sponsors cancelled the last day.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> "First Aeroplane Flights Here Today," *Dallas Morning News*, March 3, 1910, 4, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106DDE2798B7B771%402418734-106DDE27E78E3E63%403-106DDE2992786389%40First%2BAeroplane%2BFlights%2BHere%2BToday>. Brodie intended to pattern his flying program on that of Louis Paulham, using turns, figure eights and dips to entice the crowd.

<sup>81</sup> "Six Flights Made at the Fair Park," *Dallas Morning News*, March 5, 1910, 4, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106DDE321389CD79%402418736-106DDE32604189D9%403-106DDE3455A28206%40Six%2BFlights%2BMade%2Bat%2Bthe%2BFair%2BPark>.

<sup>82</sup> "Aeroplane Wrecked and Aviator Hurt," *Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 1910, 4, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX->

Glenn Curtiss arrived at the Katy Railroad Station in Dallas on his way to San Antonio in preparation for an aviation exhibition beginning on April 21, 1910, where he was to conduct airplane flights. In regards to the Dallas Aviation Meet the previous month, he expressed some interest over the attempt at flying, but only made brief comments referring to Brodie as a “beginner in the world of aviation.”<sup>83</sup> He then turned his focus to the San Antonio meet where he would have five machines on exhibit. Aviators were concerned with wind and the effect it could have on their aircraft in the early days of flying. In his opinion, wind and limited space were factors that could influence any pilot’s ability to control his aircraft. South Texas, he thought, could offer enough space to allow flying to mature. Once in everyday use, he projected, the airplane could be used commercially. It was only a matter of time before it overtook railroads and sea navigation as a form of travel. He maintained that the initial use of the airplane would be in the sporting arena before it gained enough acceptance to become useful to the war departments of interested governments. Militarily, the airplane’s use could provide reconnaissance, or even defensive measures against an enemy.<sup>84</sup>

#### Army Aviation Section - Beginnings

When the Wright brothers won their government contract in 1909, their agreement stipulated that they train two army officers to fly the machine. The Signal Corps chose Lieutenant Frank P. Lahm and Lieutenant Benjamin Foulois for pilot training. Foulois subsequently was chosen to represent the United States at the International Congress of Aeronautics held in Nancy, France. Lieutenant Fredrick E. Humphreys was chosen as a

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106DDE38C2DD7A27%402418737-106DDE3905A1F84E%403-106DDE3DE28C789B%40Aeroplane%2BWrecked%2Band%2BAviator%2BHurt.

<sup>83</sup> "'Aeroplanes Will Be of Value Commercially'," *Dallas Morning News*, April 14, 1910, 5, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106DDD441EE7452C%402418776-106DDD448D9B2ED4%404-106DDD46AAC237B3%40%2522Aeroplanes%2BWill%2Bbe%2Bof%2BValue%2BCommercially%2522>.

<sup>84</sup> “‘Aeroplanes Will Be of Value Commercially’,” 5.

replacement to fill Foulois' vacancy. By October 1909, Wilbur Wright had trained Lahm and Humphreys at the College Park facility in Maryland. Both officers completed their solo flights after receiving approximately three hours of flight training. Between the two officers, only



Figure 11. Lieutenant Benjamin D. Foulois. Photo courtesy of the Fort Sam Houston Museum, Fort Sam Houston, Texas

Lahm received his FAI Airplane Pilot Certificate in October 1909.<sup>85</sup> With Foulois's return from France, Wright and Humphreys coordinated his training between them, amounting to another three hours of instruction. Foulois, however, was unable to complete a solo flight when the airplane crashed with Lahm and Humphreys at the helm. As a consequence of the crash, both officers returned to their original assignments with Lahm reporting to the Cavalry, and Humphreys rejoining the Engineers. Under the command of the Signal Corps, the army now possessed an airplane too badly damaged to fly, and had one partially qualified pilot on flight duty.<sup>86</sup>

Weather conditions during the winter months in the College Park area presented problems for the new aviation section. Airplane construction of the period consisted of a frame supported by wires and canvas that offered a pilot no protection against the elements. Protective clothing for aviators had not yet been developed, and the standard army uniform provided insufficient protection when flying at high altitudes. For these reasons, during the time the airplane was being repaired, the army took

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<sup>85</sup> Juliette A. Hennesy, *The United States Army Air Arm, April 1861 to April 1917*, USAF Historical Studies: No. 98 (Air University, USAF Historical Division, Research Studies Institute, May 1958), 37. FAI Airplane Pilot Certificate #2 was assigned to Lieutenant Frank P. Lahm in October 1909. Other certified pilots were Glenn Curtiss, FAI Certificate #1; Louis Paulham, FAI Certificate #3; Orville Wright, FAI Certificate #4; Wilbur Wright, FAI Certificate #5.

<sup>86</sup> Hennesy, 34-37.

the opportunity to relocate its flying operations. Foulois, along with a support group of enlisted men, disassembled the airplane, moving it to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where they reported in February 1910.<sup>87</sup> Foulois began flying again the following month, receiving his flight instruction through the mail by corresponding with the Wrights. The process of landing was particularly difficult to learn, and put a strain on the aircraft. By September 1910, the airplane had been rebuilt several times and was badly damaged from use. Funding for the aviation section had to be found within the Signal Corps budget, which allotted \$150 to cover fuel and repairs during 1910. Foulois, the army's only aviator, used his personal funds to supply fuel and keep the equipment repaired. Not until March 1911 did the United States Congress appropriate funding for aeronautics. The Signal Corps, having regularly asked for a \$200,000 budget each year, received \$125,000, and immediately ordered additional aircraft for the flight program. The remainder of the money made it possible to begin building a flight school at College Park.<sup>88</sup>

Glen Curtiss, who continued to make aviation advances, moved his flying operations to California in 1911 to take advantage of the favorable weather conditions that location offered. Included as part of the move announcement was an invitation to the army and navy to provide free pilot training for any officers sent for instruction.<sup>89</sup> Three officers were chosen from the army's aviation section, and received orders to report to the Curtiss's San Diego facility in January 1911.<sup>90</sup> Curtis aircraft at the time carried only the pilot, in contrast with Wright aircraft designs, which could carry two passengers. Completing flight instruction required that the pilot learn in stages at the San Diego school. Only after mastering a particular skill was a student allowed to advance to the next lesson. Before finishing their instruction, Lieutenants Paul Beck, G.E. M. Kelly and John C. Walker, Jr., the three aviators assigned to San Diego, received orders to report to Fort Sam Houston. They joined Foulois and the rest of the aviation section in April 1911, where flight practice resumed. On May 10, Lieutenant Kelly crashed the airplane he was piloting, becoming the first fatality of a military aviator in training. The commanding officer of

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<sup>87</sup> Goldberg, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Hennesy, 39-40.

<sup>89</sup> Goldberg, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Goldberg, 6.



the post immediately stopped any flying from his parade ground. Flying was effectively halted at this time until the airplane could return to the school at College Park, accompanied by Lieutenant Beck and the mechanics. Foulois was assigned to the Militia Bureau in Washington, D.C. and relieved from his duties. Upon the aviation section's return to College Park, Lieutenants Henry H. Arnold and Thomas DeWitt Milling joined the unit there as aviators.<sup>91</sup>

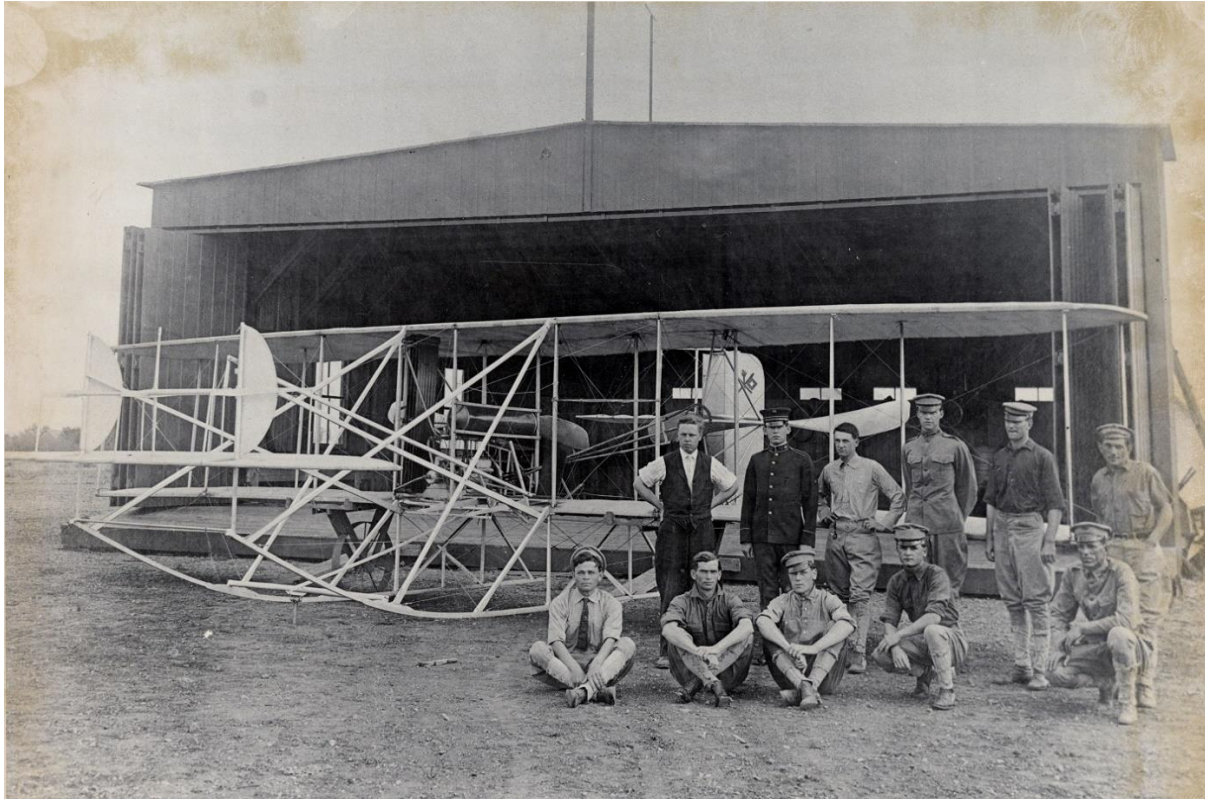


Figure 12. Aviators at Fort Sam Houston, Texas ca. 1911. Photo courtesy of the Fort Sam Houston Museum, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

### Aviation Section – Certification and Advancement

Achievements at the College Park facility during 1911 provided the basis for advances in military aviation. Due to aviation's tenuous beginning in the United States, there were not any processes in place to guide the fledgling air service in its training. The initial Signal Corps pilots

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<sup>91</sup> Benjamin D. Foulois, Major General, with C. V. Glines, Colonel, USAF, *From the Wright Brothers to the Astronauts: The Memoirs of Major General Benjamin D. Foulois* (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), 92-94. Goldberg, 6. Foulois's reassignment to the Militia Bureau in Washington, D.C. resulted from a dispute he had with Lieutenant Beck. Beck had received his training from the Curtiss school, while Foulois was trained by the Wrights. Foulois maintained that Beck, who had previously flown and crashed S.C. #2, the plane in which Kelly was killed, had not maintained proper care of the aircraft.

learned the basic skills by experience and experimentation. Anything that would assist in advancing the possibilities of military aviation was considered and tested. Since the military did not have a pilot certification program, the Aero Club of America fulfilled this function for the United States, having adopted Fédération Aéronautique Internationale requirements as the standard.<sup>92</sup> Arnold and Milling were the first aviators to successfully complete the FAI test on July 6, 1911. Flying was normally done before nine in the morning and after mid-afternoon, when the chance of encountering wind problems could be avoided. When the District of Columbia National Guard requested aircraft at Frederick, Maryland, Lieutenant Arnold and Captain Chandler, flying the Burgess-Wright, successfully made the forty-two-mile flight to deliver the airplane, setting a distance record. A separate airplane piloted by Lieutenant Milling was not as successful. After flying thirty-eight miles, Milling's aircraft experienced engine trouble, and was forced to land four miles short of the Kensington, Maryland destination. The return trip for Arnold and Chandler was not as successful. Navigational landmarks became hard to see when flying close to dusk, forcing them to land and ask directions. Tall grass covered the field they had landed in, hindering their attempt to take off and wrecking the airplane. The two aviators were forced to take the train back to College Park. The following morning, a truck retrieved their aircraft. The prototype of a bombsight, invented by former Coast Guard artillery officer, Riley E. Scott, was tested in October with some success. At the time, the army was not interested in purchasing the device, and further development was halted when Scott left for Paris to compete in a bomb dropping competition. The bombsight he was working on would become the prototype for those used in World War II.<sup>93</sup>

Aviators at College Park also worked on aerial photography. Photographs were taken at 600 feet showing the aviation school. The terrain of the area could be seen very distinctly in additional pictures taken at higher altitudes. When the Chief Signal Officer needed to show the potential of aerial photography, he used the photos taken at College Park and additional photos from the winter camp in Augusta, Georgia to demonstrate the possibilities. Seeking ways to communicate with the ground, smoke was tested as a potential agent for message delivery.

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<sup>92</sup> H. H. Arnold, General of the Air Force, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper & Brothers, New York, 1949), 33. Also, Goldberg, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Goldberg, 6.

Released from the engine exhaust, smoke in dots and dashes fashioned Morse code as a precursor to modern day skywriting. The dark smoke emitted by a pressurized exhaust could be seen for some distance. It was believed that with larger equipment the distance from which it was visible might be increased.<sup>94</sup> Although his assignment with the Militia Bureau kept him in Washington, D.C., Lieutenant Foulois remained involved in aeronautics, helping to develop a radio that might be used for communication between the airplane and the ground. The ability to communicate without landing or flying at lower levels made altitude an important achievement. The War Department was convinced that reaching an altitude of one mile would provide sufficient protection against enemy small arms fire. When Lieutenant Arnold set an altitude record of 3,260 feet, fear of small arms fire striking an aircraft was averted. He later broke his own record, attaining an altitude of 4,167 feet.<sup>95</sup>

Slowly, the War Department began to realize the potential of using aircraft in military operations. Until this time, the specifications that were applicable when the Wrights earned their contract had not been rewritten to accommodate the progress being made by military aviators. With new possibilities of the airplane's usefulness, the need for aircraft that could fly faster and carry more weight was becoming more evident. On September 11, 1911, after consulting the training officers at College Park and further conversations with Orville Wright, Captain Chandler submitted two design proposals: a "Speed Scout" that could fly farther, faster, higher, and be able to stay in the air longer than previous models and a "Scout," possessing capacity to carry two pilots which would make it possible for one pilot to relieve the other during observation flights. In comparison to the lighter and faster speed model, the "Scout" needed to be able to remain in the air longer, cover a greater distance, and fly at slower speeds. The Curtiss Company was the first to meet these specifications. Orders for new airplanes were submitted in December 1911 using the enhanced specifications. Flight tests began in March 1912 with the arrival of the airplanes at the Augusta camp.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Hennesy, 53-57.

<sup>95</sup> Goldberg, 6.

<sup>96</sup> Hennesy, 58. The first "Scout" airplane that was delivered by the Curtis Company in March 1912 was designated S.C. No 8.

In turn, newly approved specifications and abilities of the aircraft made it necessary to re-evaluate skill levels of military aviators. With the enhanced abilities of the new airplanes, aviation training became more comprehensive, forcing student pilots to train at levels that exceeded FAI certification requirements. On February 23, 1911, the War Department submitted a report to the House of Representatives detailing the requirements of a new Military Aviator certification. Requirements for this accreditation were published on April 20, 1912 by the Office of the Secretary of State. A student pilot who completed the training and passed the requirements of the Military Aviators test was to be considered a graduate of the army's flight school automatically. With the requirements of the Military Aviator test surpassing those of the Aero Club's FAI rating, the Chief Signal Officer proposed that students who fulfilled the Military Aviator requirements should also be rated higher. The Expert Aviation rating was approved by the Aero Club's board of governors, and the first Military Aviator certificates were awarded on July 5, 1912.<sup>97</sup>

The aviation section now had five officers, twenty men, and four aircraft.<sup>98</sup> At College Park the weather was turning bad enough to deter any flight training for the student pilots in November 1911. The War Department selected Augusta, Georgia as a location that would provide suitable weather for training the new pilots enlisting for aviation duty. But weather conditions at the Augusta camp during the winter of 1912 were little better than those at the College Park. Most of the winter training was done in a classroom setting, as snow and heavy rain prevented any actual flying. During the four months that the school remained at its winter camp, students were able to fly only forty-seven percent of the time. Inadequate conditions during the winter of 1912 made accidents inevitable, the most notable of which occurring when Lieutenant Kennedy, flying one of the Curtiss single-seat airplanes, crashed and was thrown from his aircraft. Failing to level out properly for his landing, one wheel of the aircraft caught the ground. The force of the impact caused the airplane's frame to buckle, turning upside down.

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<sup>97</sup> Hennesy, 59-60. The first Military Aviator certificates were awarded to Captain Chandler and Lieutenants Arnold and Milling on July 5, 1912.

<sup>98</sup> Hennesy, 54. The aircraft under the command of the Signal Corps Aviation Section when the school moved to its winter site in Augusta, Georgia in 1911-1912 were: 1 Wright airplane, 1 Burgess-Wright airplane, and 2 Curtiss pushers. The officers of the school were Captain Chandler, commanding, and Lieutenants Arnold, Kirtland, and Milling. Arnold, Kirtland, and Milling were Wright trained aviators. The two Curtiss trained pilots were Captain Beck and Lieutenant Kennedy.

Kennedy was spared a fatal injury because he was wearing a leather football helmet for protection. He did suffer several fractured vertebrae, and the force with which his head hit the ground left a five inch deep indentation in the ground. Although Kennedy returned in June, his injuries proved too substantial to overcome. He was later relieved of flight duties. The Augusta winter camp closed on April 1, 1912, and the squadron returned to College Park the following day.<sup>99</sup>

Throughout the remainder of 1912, the officers and men of the aviation service participated in numerous events which served to advance policies and the prospects of military aviation. With the approval of the War Department, Captain Chandler and two officers flew three of the College Park airplanes to Washington, D.C. to participate in an aviation exhibit held at the prestigious Chevy Chase Club on May 6, 1912. Three days later, the club opened a nine-day event in New York, designating May 13 as “Army Day.” A luncheon was held in honor of the army’s aviation section, with Captain Chandler, Lieutenant Milling and Lieutenant Arnold attending as guests.<sup>100</sup>

Captain Chandler made the first night flight on June 12, 1912. Army aviators had been invited to participate in the flyover for the 1912 Army-Navy football game. Experiencing engine trouble following the game, Chandler was delayed in his departure until the problem could be resolved. With the repairs completed, he chose to return to College Park, knowing that it would soon be dark. On the return trip he followed railroad signal lights to guide him to the post where the mechanics, hearing his engine, poured oil on the field and ignited it to guide his landing.<sup>101</sup>

In September, the Fourth International Gordon Burnett Airplane Meet was held in Chicago, with four officers of the aviation section attending. In an attempt to determine the effectiveness of aviation as a military tool, the War Department conducted maneuvers during the fall of 1912 in which the aviation section was used for reconnaissance. The aviators first flew in

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<sup>99</sup> Hennesy, 58.

<sup>100</sup> Hennesy, 61.

<sup>101</sup> Hennesy, 61.

support of the Red forces and then the Blue forces. The results of the games determined that the side with the aviators reconnaissance support held a significant advantage over their opponent.<sup>102</sup>

On October 27, 1912, Lieutenant Arnold and Lieutenant Bradley conducted wireless tests with the *USS Michigan*, communicating between the aircraft and the ship. The following month Arnold again was part of an experiment directing artillery fire from his airplane. While this was an initial trial for the United States, it proved to be a near death escape for Arnold. Flying the newly delivered Wright Scout, a Type C aircraft, designated as S.C. No. 10, he experienced difficulty controlling the aircraft, nearly crashing during a landing. As a result of the experience, he did not fly for some time, and in December 1912 was assigned to a desk job in Washington, D. C. at his own request.<sup>103</sup>

By the late summer and fall of 1912, additional officers had been accepted into the aviation service. In September First Lieutenant Samuel H. McLeany, Lieutenants Lewis H. Brereton, Lewis E. Goodier, Jr, and Loren H. Call of the Coast Artillery Corps, Lieutenants Joseph D. Park and Eric L. Ellington from the Cavalry, and Lieutenant Will Sherman of the Corps of Engineers reported to the flying school at College Park.<sup>104</sup> There were at the time three airplane manufacturing companies in existence: Wright, Burgess, and Curtiss. As student pilots under the new training policies, each officer was required to take a shop course and a flying course at one of the airplane manufacturing plants. Brereton, Goodier, and Park received assignments to the Curtiss factory at Hammonds Port, New York. Call and Ellington were sent to Marblehead, Massachusetts to complete their requirements at the Burgess/Curtiss factory. Call reported to Marblehead in October and Ellington arrived in November. Winter weather in Massachusetts was not conducive to flying instruction, and the students and instructors were sent to Palm Beach, Florida, where they continued training.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Hennesy, 71. Aviators, including B.D. Foulois, were used to scout the position of the opposing forces. First flying for the Red forces, they then scouted for the Blue forces. Foulois was captured by the Red team when bad weather forced him to land, attempting to send a telegram reporting Red positions to the Blue team.

<sup>103</sup> Hennesy, 72. Lieutenant Henry H. Arnold was relieved of flight duties and did not return to flying until 1916. He was assigned to a desk job as an assistant to Major Russel, who was in charge of aviation in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer. Also, Arnold, 41.

<sup>104</sup> Hennesy, 73.

<sup>105</sup> Hennesy, 60.

During November 1912, the weather at the College Park flying school was again too hazardous for flying. As Glenn Curtiss' offer was still in effect, the decision was made to split the aviation section. The Wright airplanes and their pilots were again sent to Augusta, where they would continue to fly during the winter months. Pilots flying Curtiss aircraft, and those airplanes, were sent to San Diego, California, offering new possibilities for pilot training facilities. The College Park flying field was closed on November 18, 1912, and the lease was not renewed when it expired on June 30, 1913. The permanent aviation school was relocated to San Diego.<sup>106</sup>

Weather conditions and engine problems with the Wright aircraft further delayed any flight training through the month of January 1913. Attempts to repair the engines by the aviation school's mechanic proved unsuccessful, forcing the Wright Company to send William H. Conover to resolve the problems. Pilot Oscar Brindley accompanied Mr. Conover whose job it was to ensure that the two Wright Speed Scouts, designated D-1 and D-2, passed their qualifying tests. Between January 30 and February 6, 1913, Brindley was able to pass two out of three of the required tests for the airplane. The airplane failed to pass the final landing test when the wheels got caught in the soft dirt, resulting in the aircraft coming to rest upside down after ploughing the ground. While the pilot received only minor injuries, the plane had to be rebuilt. Once completed, the army accepted the airplane as S.C. No. 19, after initially rejecting of it. It was never flown again, and after being assigned to different posts, the airplane was finally dropped from inventory at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.<sup>107</sup>

#### First Aero Squadron - Texas City, Texas

Late in February 1913, with little flying accomplished, Captain Chandler was encouraging cross country flights with remote landings as part of the exercise. Accepting the invitation to visit a friend, Chandler himself took the opportunity to complete a landing at a remote location. He flew twenty-eight miles south to Waynesboro, Georgia, where he landed in an open field. Following his arrival, expectations he held for spending the night and returning to College Park the following morning quickly changed. That evening he received a telephone call

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<sup>106</sup> Hennesy, 73.

<sup>107</sup> Hennesy, 74.

from the school, advising him that all personnel were being ordered to Texas City, Texas as soon as possible. Mexico was in the midst of a political revolution. A tense relationship had recently developed between that country and the United States on February 22, 1913, when General Victoriano Huerta seized power. With Huerta's forces in control of the country, the United States ceased to recognize the government of Mexico. The following morning, Chandler returned to Augusta, making the flight in thirty-six minutes, and began preparations for the move. The detachment departed by train on February 28, 1913 carrying officers, enlisted troops, airplanes, and the provisions necessary for field maneuvers. Still in Palm Beach, Florida, Lieutenants Call and Ellington were ordered to meet the rest of the aviators in Texas. With the arrival of the train in Texas City, a camp was established, the airplanes assembled, and flying began in the days that followed. On March 5, 1913, the group ceased school operations and provisionally become a separate aviation unit. The aviators officially gained their designation as the First Aero Squadron.<sup>108</sup> Four additional officers were assigned to the First Aero Squadron during the time it was at Texas City.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Hennesy, 76. List of Officers and enlisted personnel assigned to the First Aero Squadron as recorded in Hennesy. Squadron Commander: Captain DeF. Chandler, Adjutant and Supply Officer: Captain Frederick B. Hennesy, Surgeon: First Lieutenant Charles J. Boehs. Company A: First Lieutenant Harry Graham, First Lieutenant Loren H. Call, Second Lieutenant Eric L. Ellington. Enlisted personnel: 24. Company B: First Lieutenant Roy C. Kirtland, Second Lieutenant William C. Sherman, Second Lieutenant Thomas DeW. Milling. Enlisted personnel: 27. List of aircraft assigned to the First Aero Squadron in March 1913 as recorded in Hennesy. Airplanes assigned to Company A: S.C. No. 5, S.C. No. 9, S.C. No. 17, S.C. No. 18. Airplanes assigned to Company B: S.C. No. 3, S.C. No. 11, S.C. No. 12, S.C. No. 13, and S.C. No. 16.

<sup>109</sup> Hennesy, 76. On March 26, Lt. Hugh M. Kelly reported for duty. On May 8, First Lt. Moss L. Love arrived at the camp, First Lt. Townsend P Dodd arrived the following day; May 9, and Lt. J.C. Marrow on May 15, 1913. Captain Chandler was reassigned to the Philippines, with Captain A.S. Cowan succeeding him as squadron commander.



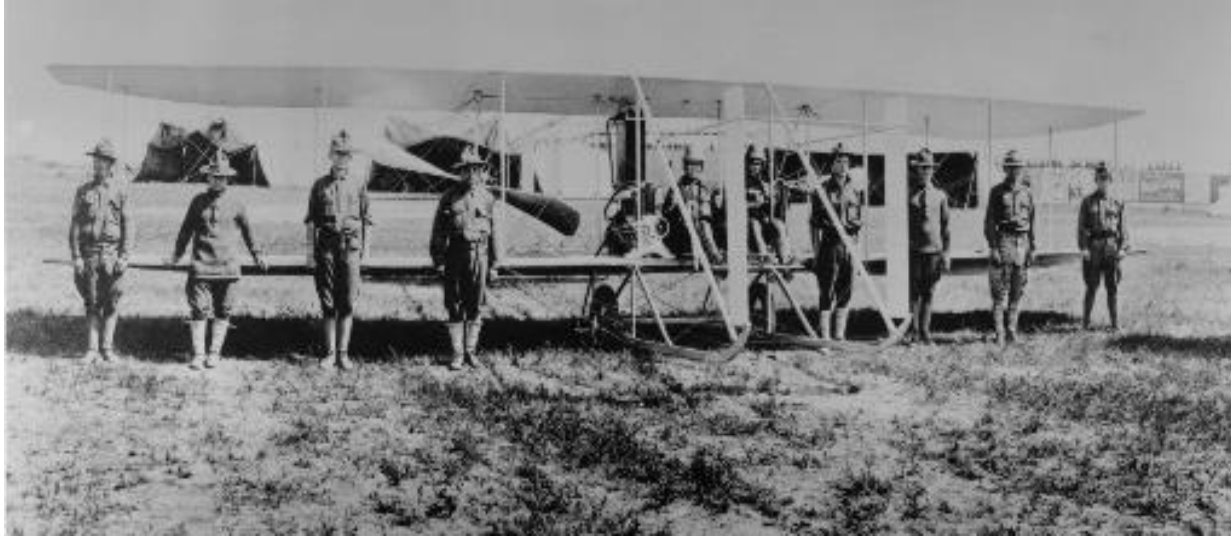


Figure 13. Aviation field and machines First Aero Squadron Texas, photograph, March 1913; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph11555/m1/1/?q=1st%20Aero%20Squadron%20>; accessed April 29, 2021) University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Moore Memorial Public Library.

Although the squadron was rapidly making advances in military aviation, the first ordinance drop from an airplane in the western hemisphere did not occur with the First Aero Squadron, but as part of the Mexican revolution. On May 9, 1913, twenty miles south of Tucson, Arizona, United States marshals seized a Glenn Martin Curtiss airplane belonging to Didier Masson, a French national working for the Mexican Constitutionalist cause. Masson and mechanic Thomas Dean were using the flat country surrounding the Pike Ranch to test the eighty-horse-power engine installed in the aircraft. Officials believed that they were there using the ranch to take off and fly the airplane into Mexico in violation of a presidential proclamation prohibiting the supplying arms and munitions to Mexican organizations. Five warrants were issued from Phoenix, Arizona and served on Masson and Dean, and the aircraft confiscated.<sup>110</sup> Five days later, Masson and Dean turned up in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, dressed in Constitutionalist army uniforms.<sup>111</sup> For two weeks, the airplane remained in Tucson under the

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<sup>110</sup> “May Not be able to Hold Seized Aeroplane,” *El Paso Herald*, March 9, 1913, 5, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph130705/m1/5/>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

<sup>111</sup> “Masson and Dean Escape into Mexico,” *El Paso Herald*, May 10, 1913, 4-A, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph130758/m1/4/?q=Mason%20and%20Dean>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

control of U.S. Federal authorities. On May 19, 1913 it was smuggled by train across the border at Naco, Sonora.<sup>112</sup>

It was rumored that a second airplane had safely arrived in Mexico—the parts delivered by three automobiles. Gravity contact bombs for use in a planned assault on the Federalist naval vessels anchored in Guaymas Harbor were included in the shipment. With the acquisition of the aerial equipment and bombs, Masson and Dean began testing and modifying the aircraft for its role in the battle.<sup>113</sup> Plans for the impending aerial assault were delayed on May 22, when Masson damaged the airplane during a landing at Hermosillo, where flight tests were taking place. The pilot and airplane arrived on May 26 at the Constitutionalist front lines, just north of Guaymas, and immediately began preparing for the anticipated assault. Returning to the United States from its Mexican assignment on June 5, the American collier, *Saturn*, reported that a potential aerial bombing had created a high level of anxiety for the Federalists. With the departure of the *Saturn*, the Mexican gunboat, *Morales*, quickly left for the open sea. On June 28, the battle began with Constitutionalist forces commencing their anticipated attack.<sup>114</sup> The threat of being hit by bombs dropped from an airplane forced Federalist gunboats *Guerrero* and *Tampico* to retreat from the harbor. Initial efforts failed to damage the targets, but the threat forced naval vessels to retreat. Masson made three bombing flights over the harbor, destroying the *Tampico* during its attempt to flee.<sup>115</sup> Continuing to improve on his efforts to deliver aerial

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<sup>112</sup> “May Not be able to Hold Seized Aeroplane,” 5.

<sup>113</sup> “Guard Disappears so Does Airship,” *El Paso Herald*, May 20, 1913, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph130766/m1/1/?q=Guard%20Disappears>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

<sup>114</sup> “Guaymas Attack Begun By Rebels Led By Obregon,” *San Antonio Express*, June 29, 1913, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph433142/m1/1/?q=Led%20By%20Obregon>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>115</sup> “Aviator Destroys Mexican Gunboat,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 29, 1913, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C498FC773EAF5%402419978-106C498FDEB64518%400-106C49912E26D861%40Aviator%2BDestroys%2BMexican%2BGunboat>.

explosives, Masson developed an apparatus that would carry twelve bombs on each flight and a sighting system for delivering them.<sup>116</sup>

Because of the situation in Mexico, the field at Texas City had become crowded with troops, limiting available space where tents lined the sides of the flying field. The United States Congress remained cautious of the political climate in Mexico. In response to the turmoil, the First Aero Squadron, attached to the Army's Second Division, was to remain on post in Galveston and Texas City until ordered to advance into Mexico or the United States recognized the Huerta government.<sup>117</sup>

The First Aero Squadron continued to fly at the Texas City field. On the same day that Masson was dropping bombs, Lieutenant Milling and Lieutenant Sherman completed a flight to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, setting a cross-country flight endurance record for a flight carrying a passenger. The three-hundred-mile trip took three hours and twenty minutes. To achieve the record, the pair remained in the air, circling their destination for another hour and two minutes before landing.<sup>118</sup> During the return trip, on March 31, Sherman took photographs and completed maps of the route to produce a cartographic rendering.<sup>119</sup> For the First Aero Squadron, aerial mapping proved to be a valuable tool. The following month Milling and Sherman coordinated with Lieutenant Kirtland and Lieutenant Ellington on an experimental

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<sup>116</sup> "Masson to Try His Bombs Again," *El Paso Herald*, July 14, 1913, 2, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth130813/m1/2/?q=Masson%20to%20Try%20Bombs>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

<sup>117</sup> "Troops in Texas to Remain Indefinitely," *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1913, 11, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C43A4C7874306%402419861-106C43A5E05E5E31%4010-106C43AEE8BFC7D9%40Troops%2Bin%2BTexas%2Bto%2BRemain%2BIndefinitely>. Representative James L. Slayden of Texas, vice chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs, was a guest of Major General William H. Carter, who reviewed the Army's Second Division mobilized at Galveston and Texas City. He further indicated that the topic of U.S. recognition for the Huerta government would be considered in the coming congressional session.

<sup>118</sup> "Army Aviator in Flight to Post Makes a Record," *San Antonio Express*, March 29, 1913, 6, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth432342/m1/1/?q=ARmy%20AViators>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>119</sup> "Army Aviators Make another Good Flight," *Dallas Morning News*, April 1, 1913, 6, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C438461AD047F%402419859-106C438512CC9C85%405-106C438A9883AA9B%40Army%2BAviators%2BMake%2BAnother%2BGood%2BFlight>.

reconnaissance mission. On May 1, Milling and Sherman left the Texas City camp, flying to Webster, Texas, then on to the town Algoa before returning to their base. During the flight, Sherman again took photographs and drew maps of the simulated “enemy” location. With Kirtland flying, he and Ellington overflew the area around the town of Algoa, making a map showing the location of the opposing forces. Milling then flew the gathered intelligence to the Sixth Calvary, located a short distance away—the receipt of the information considered a substantial success.<sup>120</sup>

On his visit to Texas for a review of the troops, Brigadier General George P. Scriven, Chief of the Signal Corps who had been watching the progress of the army aviators, let it be known that he would recommend establishing a flying school for each Signal Corps Department. It was expected that one of the schools was to be located in Texas at Fort Sam Houston. Texas Congressman James L. Slayden, who had recently returned from Washington, made the announcement, and was also very interested in acquiring a central aviation center and school in the state. During their discussions, General Scriven mentioned that his recommendations would include repurposing the old Fort Sam Houston target range for aviation training.<sup>121</sup> The continuing problem of wind currents in the region had long frustrated early civilian and military aviators alike. It had cost Milling and Sherman a landing skid on their return trip from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Only Milling’s skill as an aviator allowed him to retain control of the aircraft and make a successful landing.<sup>122</sup> Approval of the San Antonio site depended on the amount of funding Congress was prepared to make. Until construction of more permanent aviation facilities could be completed, wind turbulence prohibited flying at the Texas City camp for inexperienced aviators. In June 1913, Scriven transferred a portion of the First Aero Squadron from Texas City to San Diego, where it could continue training in more favorable conditions. Due to the Mexican situation, one company of aviators and their machines remained

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<sup>120</sup> Hennesy, 78.

<sup>121</sup> “Flying Field at College Park, Md., Is Abandoned – Slayden Discusses the School,” *San Antonio Express*, June 6, 1913, 9, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph433253/m1/9/?q=College%20Park>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>122</sup> “Army Aviators Make another Good Flight,” 6.

at Texas City as part of the Second Division.<sup>123</sup> The First Aero Squadron transferred to North Island, San Diego, California, pending the completion of its Fort Sam Houston aviation post.<sup>124</sup>

#### Lieutenant Loren H. Call

On the morning July 8, 1913, Lieutenant Loren H. Call left the Texas City field flying a Wright C model aircraft, designated S.C. No 11. He was taking the opportunity to practice landings to fulfill the requirements of his Military Aviator's rating.<sup>125</sup> The morning was clear, as other soldiers watched his airplane soar to a holding altitude. Lieutenant Call left the field at 6:35 a.m. and ascended to an altitude of approximately 500 feet. Witnesses reported that he maintained this position, circling the area, waiting for others on the ground to mark the target locations for his landings. Approximately ten minutes into the flight, as the airplane was maneuvering a sharp turn, an explosion was heard and the engine stopped; the airplane began to fall from the sky. The aircraft appeared to stutter for an instant before it began its descent. Lieutenant Call was thrown from the pilot's seat and could plainly be seen hanging onto the wing braces, fighting to regain his position as the airplane collapsed on its way to the ground. At about 100 feet, Call attempted to push away from the airplane before he and his machine struck the ground. Witnesses could see that he was in an upright position as he fell, striking the ground feet first. Lieutenant Call and his airplane fell close to the location of the Fourth Field Artillery

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<sup>123</sup> "Signal Corps Chief Declared Texas Atmosphere Unsuitable for the Training of Aviators," *The Houston Post*, June 7, 1913, 12, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph605120/m1/12/?q=Signal%20Corps%20Chief>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>. Transferred to the San Diego location: Captain Arthur S. Cowan, commanding; Captain Hennessy and Lieutenants Milling, Ellington, Kelley, Seidel, Love, Morrow, and Dodd. The First Squadron remaining at Texas City, attached to the Army's Second Division: Lieutenant Harry Graham, commanding; Lieutenants Kirtland, Call, and Sherman.

<sup>124</sup> Foulois. 112-113. Foulois reported to San Diego (November 1913) under the command of Captain Arthur S. Cowan, who was not a flier (i.e. – trained pilot). Flight staff were leaving the school to return to other assignments. Captain Cowan allowed him to take charge since Foulois had arrived with orders to return the school to an organized military unit.

<sup>125</sup> "Air Accident Report Made," *The Houston Post*, July 31, 1913, 3, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph603998/m1/3/?q=Air%20Accident%20Report>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

camp, clearly observed by hundreds of individuals. Others quickly arrived at the site to render assistance.<sup>126</sup>

Members of the Aero Squadron, who had been watching his flight, as the plane fell, summoned Captain D.W. Smith, the squadron's medical officer. At the crash site, the pilot was taken from the wreckage where Captain Smith conducted a hasty examination before having Call transported to the field hospital for a more extensive examination. The fall was fatal. Forced into a forward position as he struck the ground feet first, the impact had shattered his ankles. The tibia of both legs was driven through the soles of his shoes, piercing the ground, and his left femur protruded from the skin, the result of a compound fracture. The ferocity of the impact snapped his spine in half, leaving the lower portion extruding from the body. His face was left untouched, even as he suffered a crushed chest, fractured skull, and damage to other minor bones. Lieutenant Call's death was marked at exactly 6:45 a.m., when the hands of his watch stopped at the time of impact. General Carter, the commander of the Texas City encampment, appointed a board of inquiry to investigate the accident. In the opinion of those at the aviation camp, the cause of the mishap was the result of the aircraft encountering a "warm air current."<sup>127</sup>

Lieutenant Call's remains were sent to Washington, D.C. for burial. Call was transported to the train station for the trip to Washington by an army truck, escorted by the Eighteenth Infantry Band, infantry men and officers of the same regiment, and members of the Aero Squadron. Representing the Aero Squadron, Sergeant Idzorek accompanied Lieutenant Call's casket to Washington and the custody of his parents.<sup>128</sup>

The findings of the inquiry board regarding the accident that claimed Loren H. Call's life were released to the public, on July 30. The Wright C airplane had left the field at 6:31 on July

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<sup>126</sup> "Texas City Army Airman Crushed to Death in Fall," *The Houston Post*, July 9, 1913, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604076/m1/1/?q=Texas%20City%20Airman>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

<sup>127</sup> "Army Airman Killed in Practice Flight," *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1913, 3, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C49F0F94273F3%402419958-106C49F130BD626D%402-106C49F29E9EE3C5%40Army%2BAirman%2BKilled%2Bin%2BPractice%2BFlight>.

<sup>128</sup> "Airman's Body to Washington," *The Houston Post*, July 10, 1913, 3, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph604776/m1/3/?q=Airman%27s%20Body>, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>. Sergeant Idzorek served as the electrician for the First Aero Squadron in 1915.

3, with the pilot climbing to an altitude of 800 to 1,000 feet. Call had been flying toward smooth ground at a distant part of the camp in an attempt to qualify for his Military Aviator rating. Initially, the left wing dropped, but was brought back to a level position. A second time the left wing dropped, forcing the airplane to a forty-five degree angle. Lieutenant Call again attempted to right the aircraft by making a turn to the left and lowering the nose. This nose down position continued until the machine was in a steep downward angle that continued to increase until the airplane returned to earth almost perpendicularly. The wings collapsed at an altitude of 200 to 300 feet as the airplane began to turn upside down, resulting in the crash. In the opinion of the board, the airplane hesitated at the moment it began to turn over. At that time Lieutenant Call climbed out onto the wing in an attempt to regain level flight by bringing the wings back to a level position. He was hanging onto the wing that struck the ground first. The board stated that there had not been any indication of problems with the aircraft or any of its parts until the time that it began to turn over during the flight. Lieutenant Loren H. Call was posthumously cited for his actions, having retained possession until the last moment in an effort to maintain control of his aircraft.<sup>129</sup>



Because of the embarrassment to the War Department over the Langley debacle in 1903, the early years of American aviation were almost entirely left to the province of civilian aviation. While foreign governments began adopting the new technology to their own needs, negotiations between the Wright organization and the United States War Department remained strained. Civilian aviators in the United States, therefore, took the lead in developing certification requirements. Slim budgets hindered development of U. S. military aviation, even as military aviators worked to improve their proficiency. Through 1913, as the First Aero Squadron relocated to Texas City, their aircraft remained a construction of “sticks and wires,” sometimes resulting in fatal consequences. The crash which killed Lieutenant Loren H. Call was just such an example. Within a short number of years, Wichita Falls would begin its quest for a

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<sup>129</sup> “Air Accident Report Made,” 3. Major Andre Brewster, inspector general; First Lieutenant R.C. Kirtland, aero squadron, and Lieutenant H.W. Gregg, Signal Corps made up the board of inquiry appointed by General Carter to investigate the accident.

government aviation contract, and Call would be honored as one of the country's early aviators, with Call Aviation Field carrying his name.



### Chapter 3

Wichita Falls, Texas, Dec.22 –

This city is now thought to have excellent prospects of being designated as the site for one of the army aviation schools for which provision was made by the last Congress.

“To Seek Army Aviation School,” *Dallas Morning News*,  
December 23, 1916

During 1913 and for the next three years, the usefulness of military aviation for the United States remained uncertain, only gaining some recognition by the conclusion of 1916. Other nations, particularly European countries, quickly acquired this new technology, adapting it to their needs and improving the proficiencies of their pilots and equipment. At the time, foreign expenditures for aviation far exceeded any commitments the U.S. made to aviation. For the United States, military aviation remained a minor section of the Signal Corps, even as hostilities erupted in Europe during 1914. In 1915, the First Aero Squadron was temporarily assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma as part of its transfer from San Diego to its new facilities at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. During this time, the squadron tested its equipment and began developing basic military flight procedures. Planning the final transfer, Captain Benjamin Foulois contacted Joseph Kemp while coordinating a stop in Wichita Falls. This contact established the connections which would eventually lead to the acquisition of Call Field. Anticipating an introduction to military aviation, crowds again gathered to see the airplanes as the squadron made its initial landing in Wichita Falls. The pilots, as the guests of the Chamber of Commerce, were entertained with a dinner before continuing on to their next destination of Waco, Texas. Having made their initial layover in Wichita Falls, the squadron’s move to San Antonio in late 1915 successfully tested pilots, airplanes and support vehicles. During its flight from Fort Sill to Fort Sam Houston, the squadron drew the nation’s attention to American aviation. Actual military experience would soon come in 1916, when the squadron was assigned to the Mexican border--an assignment that severely tested the endurance of pilots and equipment.



Benjamin Foulois had always been an outspoken proponent of aviation. The confrontation between Lieutenant Beck and himself over the cause of the crash that killed Lieutenant Kelly had sent him to a desk assignment with the Division of Militia Affairs for the

War Department in Washington.<sup>130</sup> The assignment also gave him the opportunity to present opinions on aviation development based on his experiences. This resulted in a bill, H.R. 28728, which proposed the separation of the aviation section from the Signal Corps in February 1913. While this was a bold move, the fledgling aviation services remained too inexperienced and underdeveloped to effectively make this a possibility. Foulois immediately wrote to the Chief Signal Officer confirming his belief that an aviation section should be established as a separate division of the army, but that the legislation, as presented, was not adequate to make it work. His objections were based on the provisions of the bill that had not considered existing personnel, their experience and rank. Some of the listed requirements called for aviation standards similar to those developed by Britain, France, or Germany. For the United States this type of experience did not yet exist, and would only leave the aviation section in disarray. To further reinforce his remarks, he requested permission, receiving approval to approach Congressman John Q. Tilson, who was a member of the House Military Affairs Committee, regarding the bill.<sup>131</sup> In the House, opposition to the bill proved insufficient to keep the legislation from passing, but it was defeated when it came before the Senate.<sup>132</sup>

During his visit with Congressman Tilson, Foulois learned that the question of flying pay was stalled in the Military Affairs Committee as well. An additional 35 percent of base pay would provide a necessary incentive for attracting new military pilots and overcoming morale problems. Yet, the additional compensation to full-time aviators for hazardous duty met objections from former ground soldiers now serving in Congress. The cost of insurance was becoming prohibitive for civilian and military aviators alike due to the rising number of airplane crashes. Tilson informed Foulois that the opposition to flying pay came from Congressman James Hay of Virginia. With the assistance of acquaintances he had met while returning from France, Foulois decided to try and persuade Hay to change his position on the issue of hazard pay.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Foulois and Glines, 92-93.

<sup>131</sup> During the Connecticut maneuvers in 1912, Colonel John Q. Tilson and his forces captured Lt. Foulois, who was participating as an observation aviator. The aviation section flew during these maneuvers--first for one side, and then the other, to prove the value of observation flights.

<sup>132</sup> Foulois and Glines, 103-105.

<sup>133</sup> Foulois and Glines, 105-106. The acquaintances that Foulois refers to were two single women who also happened to be government civilian employees. Having often mentioned Congressman Hay, Foulois enlisted their

Foulois called Tilson the following week to report on his meeting with Hay, at which time he was informed that the congressman had reconsidered. Included in the provisions of the bill was an appropriation for flying pay, which Hay now supported. On March 2, 1913, the bill was enacted into law. Foulois was ineligible to receive the additional compensation since he was not on full-time aviation status at the time.<sup>134</sup>

Foulois was recalled from his post at Fort Crockett to Washington in August 1913 to appear before the House Military Affairs Committee. He was to be a consultant for the repurposed H.R. 5304 following its failure to pass during the previous congressional session. When he arrived in Washington, he was briefed by Major Samuel Reber, who had assumed command of the Aeronautical Division. The high number of serious accidents in 1913 was a cause of concern on which his advice was sought. Reber was preparing to make proposals that would move aviation in the United States toward a more military posture. He would be using Foulois's previous recommendations for more stringent testing to attain the Military Aviator certification. He was also proposing to create an air depot, activate an aero squadron in support of ground troops, and permanently assign the First Aero Squadron to the Signal Corps Aviation School in San Diego. Congressman Hay had requested that Foulois be consulted, and Major Reber had agreed. Also appearing before the committee was Captain Billy Mitchel, an opponent of Foulois, who in this case argued that aviation was not ready for separation from the Signal Corps. During the hearings, the evidence presented indicated aviation in the United States was not keeping pace with that of other nations. Of twenty-six governments, the United States ranked fourteenth, with an aviation budget of \$435,000. In contrast, Germany ranked number one in expenditures for military aviation, spending \$28 million. Even Mexico was spending \$400,000.<sup>135</sup>

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assistance for an indirect introduction. A poker game was scheduled with Foulois as a highly inexperienced player, catching the attention of Congressman Hay. During the game and after several drinks, the women excused themselves, offering Foulois an opportunity to present his case for hazard pay without confrontation.

<sup>134</sup> Foulois and Glines, 107. Foulois also states that he lost half a month's pay and used a gallon of his friends' booze in the process of recounting to Congressman Hay the dangers of aviation.

<sup>135</sup> H.R. 5304 Public, No. 143, Ch. 186, Statutes at Large of the United States of America, An Act to Increase the Efficiency of the Aviation Service of the Army, and for other purposes, July 18, 1914, 514, Sixty-Third Congress of the United States, Session II, accessed June 24, 2016, [STATUTE-38-Pg514b.pdf \(govtrack.us.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#).

After stating his views on the status of United States aviation, Foulois visited Colonel Reber's office before returning to Fort Crockett, Texas. Reber confided that he needed help getting the school at San Diego in order. Of the original aviators, Captain Chandler and Lieutenants Lahm, Arnold, and Sherman had been relieved of aviation duty, Lieutenant Milling had been sent to France, and the current commanding officer of the aviation school was not a pilot. Reber inquired as to the possibilities of Foulois assisting in the process and returning to flying status. Instead of returning to Fort Crockett as he had planned, Foulois now found himself headed for San Diego. Effectively this assignment returned him to flying duty in November 1913. The following month he arrived in San Diego, joining the Signal Corps Aviation School at North Island. Colonel Reber assigned him to duty, asking him to raise the standards at the school.<sup>136</sup>

Although he was not a pilot, Captain Arthur S. Cowan had been assigned command of the First Aero Squadron when it transferred to the San Diego location from Texas City. Foulois initially spent his time observing the activities at the school and quietly making changes. Through the quartermaster of a neighboring army base, he acquired two dozen pairs of coveralls for the pilots. His first "official" change came when he submitted General Order No. 1. Under the terms of this regulation, the "officers, enlisted men, and civilians" of the school were prohibited from releasing any information regarding the operations of the flight school. The commanding officer would be the only point of contact for releasing information for publication. This was followed with General Order No. 2, requiring all personnel to wear helmets when flying. Flights over land required the wearing of leather jackets, and life jackets were required for those flights over water.<sup>137</sup>

While Foulois officially reported to the commandant, Captain Cowan allowed him to make changes to the flight program, even issuing the orders he had written. Although the initial reception to these changes was negative, positive results rapidly became evident. During the month of January the school worked with navy personnel, conducting experiments for the detection of submarine mines. Cross country flights were again being made, providing valuable

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<sup>136</sup> Foulois and Glines, 112.

<sup>137</sup> Foulois and Glines, 112-113. Foulois reports that he issued General Order No. 1 in consideration of the mental fitness of military aviators and their susceptibility to celebrity status from excessive press coverage. He considered newspaper praise to be a contributing factor in the death of some of the best civilian aviators.

experience with fewer incidents. On February 14, 1914, Lieutenant Townsend F. Dodd, accompanied by Sergeant Herbert Marcus, set an American nonstop duration and distance record by flying a Burgess-Wright aircraft just over 244 miles in four hours and forty-three minutes. Two days later, Lieutenants Carberry and Taliafero set a new army altitude record of 8,800 feet.<sup>138</sup> The only fatal accident in the training program occurred on February 19, 1914 when Lieutenant Henry B. Post crashed into San Diego Bay while attempting to set an individual altitude record. He was flying the old No. 10 aircraft, the same aircraft that had been the cause of Lieutenant Arnold requesting a release from flight duty in 1912. The official report read similarly to the report of Lieutenant Loren Call's fatal accident in Texas City. The findings stated that at an altitude of approximately 300 feet, Post had either fallen or jumped from the aircraft. The report claimed the accident was the result of the aircraft being positioned downward at an unrecoverable angle. Because of the accident which killed Lieutenant Post, Foulois recommended that the Curtiss and Wright sections of the training school be combined. Use of the Wright-B and Wright-C type aircraft was discontinued. The Curtiss aircraft and the Burgess-Wright equipment remained as the school's approved airplanes.<sup>139</sup>

During March 1914, tensions again increased between the United States and Mexico. The War Department ordered an aviation school detachment to Fort Crockett in Galveston, Texas. Anticipating possible combat operations, five qualified pilots, thirty enlisted men, and three Burgess-Wright airplanes were transferred to that location. The majority of the airplanes were now on active duty. Foulois, who was in command of the school while Captain Cowan was on temporary assignment, accompanied the airplanes to their new duty station. Designated the First Company, First Aero Squadron, the detachment arrived at Fort Crockett to find American troops had already deployed to their posts. For the next six weeks the First Company remained

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<sup>138</sup> Hennesy, 76, 87-88. Townsend Dodd reported to flight duty with the First Aero Squadron on May 9, 1913. Lieutenants Carberry and Taliafero arrived in March 1913.

<sup>139</sup> Foulois and Glines, 114. Pilots who learned to fly under the Wright and Curtiss companies had become so divided regarding the aircraft in which they had originally trained, and each group (those trained by Wright, and those trained by Curtiss) attempted to impress their aircraft preference on new recruits. Foulois recommended discontinuing use of the Wright-B and Wright-C aircraft. Aircraft produced in the United States prior to 1914 were built as a "pusher" type with the propeller located directly behind the pilot. A "tractor" type aircraft has the propeller located in the nose as is commonly seen today.

in Galveston, waiting further orders. When U.S. - Mexican tensions eased, the detachment returned to San Diego.<sup>140</sup>

Work at the San Diego school focused on standardizing aircraft specifications. The goal was the creation of a true military aviation section, eliminating factions created by the “Wright” and “Curtiss” camps. The resulting list of specifications would test the competing companies’ resourcefulness for fulfilling a contract. Requirements stated that training aircraft must carry two pilots, have dual controls, and be driven by tractor propulsion. The aircraft must operate at a minimum speed of 40 miles per hour carrying enough fuel for a four-hour flight at the maximum speed of at least 70 miles per hour. Mechanical specifications required the inclusion of a positive-driven fuel pump, tachometer, and a power plant that could be quickly removed. Specifications eliminating friction in the controls and a streamlined design completed the list. The aircraft must be able to be assembled by four mechanics within a two-hour time limit, with disassembly and packing in no more than an hour and a half. To compete, companies were further required to demonstrate the ability to complete a four-hour nonstop flight and a 4,000-foot climb within ten minutes while fully loaded.<sup>141</sup> When ten of the original twelve manufacturers that had applied were unable to meet the requirements, the competition scheduled for October 1914 was cancelled. The only qualifying competitors were the Curtiss and Martin companies. Understanding that the United States was not obligated to accept the equipment of either company, both were allowed to demonstrate their designs. Only the Curtiss Company was able to sufficiently complete all of the requirements.<sup>142</sup>

Congress passed the Aviation Service Act on July 18, 1914, creating the Aviation Service under the command of the Signal Corps.<sup>143</sup> The old Aeronautical Section continued to exist under a reduced capacity, maintaining the remaining balloon equipment, which the army still possessed. As a result of the hearings before the House Military Affairs Committee, the coming 1915 Fiscal Year Appropriations provided \$125,000 for the maintenance of the Aeronautical

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<sup>140</sup> Foulois and Glines, 115. The pilots that Foulois assigned to the First Company were Lieutenants Milling, Taliaferro, Carberry, and Dodd.

<sup>141</sup> Foulois and Glines, 115.

<sup>142</sup> Foulois and Glines, 116.

<sup>143</sup> H.R. 5304 Public, No. 143, Ch. 186, 514.

Section, leaving an appropriation of \$300,000 for the Aviation Section to purchase and maintain its program. Within the next ten days the war in Europe ignited on July 28, 1914, and the prospect of active service became a frequently discussed topic. The United States sought to avoid the conflict, with President Woodrow Wilson declaring a strict neutrality status for the nation.<sup>144</sup>

Little had been accomplished at the flight school during the second half of 1914. Most of the enlisted men assigned to the Signal Corps Aviation School had been detailed to the construction of the new facilities at Fort Sam Houston. Compelled by the use of bombing runs during the Mexican conflict, the bomb sight developed by Riley Scott from the College Park days was brought back for experimentation. With satisfactory results, the bomb sight became part of the aviation school's curriculum, as did training in airplane guns.<sup>145</sup>

Foulois took the opportunity to request the separation of the First Aero Squadron from the school. With this new arrangement the squadron was now able to concentrate more of its efforts on the practical matters of advancing American aviation. To provide needed experience, the First Aero Squadron entered the Mackay trophy competition in December 1914 with six of its existing aircraft. The contest, held for military aircraft, required the successful completion of a reconnaissance flight. With Los Angeles as the starting point, the designated boundaries were the mouth of the San Diego River, La Mesa, and the Lower Otay Reservoir. Only one of the six airplanes that entered the contest successfully completed the flight requirements. Hampered by weather conditions, the other five aircraft developed mechanical problems or pilot difficulties. The lesson learned from the test was that even with experienced pilots and good equipment, adverse conditions under which military aviation would be conducted would require a much larger number of available aircraft. The shaping of a school into a military unit was beginning to have influence, underscoring the reason for Foulois's return.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> "President Requests Absolute Neutrality," *Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1914: 1, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C24EC238B3850%402420364-106C24EC35358282%400-106C24ED5CC03BDE%40President%2BRequests%2BAbsolute%2BNeutrality>.

<sup>145</sup> Foulois and Glines, 117.

<sup>146</sup> Foulois and Glines, 117. Foulois reports that the number of aircraft held by Allied forces at the beginning of World War I totaled 208 (Great Britain, 48; France, 136, and Belgium, 24. Germany had 180+ airplanes).

Glenn Curtiss hired B. Douglas Thomas to design a new series of aircraft following a trip to England in 1913. Thomas had previously worked for the Sopwith and Avro companies. Using his experience, he was instrumental in developing the “J” series of aircraft for the Curtiss Aeroplane Company. A purchase of eight new aircraft became possible through funding provided in the aviation budget. The aircraft arrived in May and June of 1915. With the arrival of the new Curtiss JN2, the familiar shape of a modern airplane began to emerge in the American Aviation Service. Added to the eleven existing airplanes, the Aviation Section now possessed a total of nineteen aircraft. Foulois could now further his efforts to shape the organization into a true military flying section.<sup>147</sup> Shortly after the June delivery of the new airplanes, Foulois received orders transferring the First Aero Squadron to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, effective as of July 25. Until the completion of the permanent accommodations at Fort Sam Houston, set for December 1, the squadron was assigned to participate in developing field artillery drills at that location.<sup>148</sup> Leaving San Diego on July 26, the squadron arrived at Fort Sill, Oklahoma three days later, only to find that there had not been any preparation for their arrival. During the next three weeks, the construction of facilities occupied the squadron’s time as they built a mess hall, garage, and storage buildings. Water lines were installed, and tents were used to shelter squadron personnel and the aircraft.<sup>149</sup> With construction of their facilities occupying their time, it was August 10 before the squadron would fly again. When flying did resume, problems with the new JN2 airplanes quickly became evident.<sup>150</sup>

By August 15, the manpower of the squadron was diminished when two of the airplanes, along with pilots, support personnel, supplies and parts, were ordered to Brownsville, Texas with other Fort Sill troops.<sup>151</sup> Foulois placed Lieutenant Joseph Marrow in command of the detachment, and after receiving a second command the following day, dispatched a second unit.

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<sup>147</sup> Roger G. Miller, *A Preliminary to War, The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron and the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916*. AFD-100928-064 - Air Force History and Museums Program, Washington, D.C., 2003, 7.

<sup>148</sup> “All Over the State,” *The Norman Democrat-Topic*, July 9, 1915: 6, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc120325/m1/5/?q=All%20Over%20the%20State>. The Gateway to Oklahoma History, <https://gateway.okhistory.org>; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>149</sup> Miller, 8.

<sup>150</sup> Hennesy, 147; Miller, 8.

<sup>151</sup> Hennesy, 147; Miller, 8.



The remainder of the squadron remained at Fort Sill, dismantling, inspecting and reassembling the new airplanes. As various parts proved to be of inferior workmanship, they were rejected and returned to the Curtiss Company for replacement. Foulois was determined that the aircraft delivered by the aircraft manufacturer met a satisfactory level of quality upon receipt. On August 12, S.C. No. 47 crashed, killing the passenger, Captain G. H. Knox, and severely injuring the pilot, Lieutenant R.B. Sutton.<sup>152</sup> By September 1, the frustration levels over keeping the airplanes operational were high enough for Foulois and the artillery commander to suspend artillery work pending adequate repairs which could keep the airplanes flying. In a report dated August 13, 1915, Dr. Jerome C. Hunsaker, the assistant naval constructor, stated that tests he made on the JN-2 demonstrated the aircraft to be unstable and dangerous at angles of 12, 14 and 15 ½ degrees. The design flaw placed the upper wing at an optimal angle for lift, while the lower wing created a stall, causing the aircraft to bank too steeply and turn over. The report got the attention of the Curtiss Company, which began designing a refit for the wings and rudders of the JN-2 aircraft.<sup>153</sup>

In Brownsville, Lieutenant Marrow was having a difficult time with the airplanes under his command. While the JN-2 was an attractive design with sleek lines, staggered wings, and long fuselages, it proved to be a highly unstable and underpowered aircraft. Few pilots thought them safe for flying. Because the aircraft required a lengthy field to attain lift, Marrow found the Brownsville site to be too short, and requested a move to a more suitable location. The response received from Colonel Reber ordered him to work with what had been assigned, or be relieved of his command. On September 5, Marrow was seriously injured when he crashed while piloting S.C. No. 46. His replacement, Lieutenant Byron Q. Jones, was not of similar opinion regarding the aircraft, reporting that Marrow was the fault of the crash. Circumventing both Reber and Foulois, the report made it to the direct attention of General Funston, Commanding General of the Southern Department. He ordered that flights of the JN-2 aircraft be discontinued unless absolutely necessary for artillery adjustment.<sup>154</sup> As a result of the crash which injured Marrow,

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<sup>152</sup> “Army Officer Killed, In Flight at Fort Sill Today, Captain is Killed,” *The Daily Ardmoreite*, August 12, 1915: 1, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154299/m1/1/?q=Army%20Officer%20Killed>. The Gateway to Oklahoma History, <https://gateway.okhistory.org>; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>153</sup> Miller, 9-10.

<sup>154</sup> Hennesy, 148.

artillerymen willing to fly as observers in the airplanes were becoming difficult to find. It fell to Colonel Reber to respond to the circumstances and what was known regarding the incident in Brownville, Texas. The problem was averted only because modifications that transformed the JN-2's to JN-3 aircraft were already in progress.<sup>155</sup>



Figure 14. Curtiss JN-2 taking off from Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Courtesy of the Vernon L Burge Collection, AETC Barnes Center, Maxwell AFB.

Flying continued even as preparations began in October 1915 for the move to the squadron's permanent home in San Antonio. Along with the replacement wings and rudders for the JN-2s, two new JN-3 airplanes arrived at Fort Sill. When the Oklahoma Press Association held a dedication of their new location at Medicine Park, three of the pilots and their airplanes entertained newspapermen and their guests. Arriving by train in Lawton, Oklahoma, guests of the press were shuttled past Fort Sill to the dedication site, where they were entertained by the airplanes in an hour long demonstration of flight maneuvers.<sup>156</sup> By the end of the month, all but one of the converted airplanes had effectively become JN-3s, having been refitted with the new parts.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Miller, 11.

<sup>156</sup> "Editors of State Visit New Home Saturday," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, October 4, 1915: 6, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc613875/m1/6/?q=Editors%20of%20State%20Visit>. The Gateway to Oklahoma History, <https://gateway.okhistory.org>; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>157</sup> Miller, 11.

Taking the opportunity offered by the move, Foulois decided to put the squadron to a major test of its ability by ordering a cross-country flight between Fort Sill, Oklahoma and Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Yet with all the preparations that could be made, a portion of the squadron's equipment was forced to be shipped by rail to their destination.<sup>158</sup> November 24 was announced as the scheduled departure date, taking advantage of a period of particularly good weather. Because of the anticipated conditions, the proposed flight was advanced from its original date.<sup>159</sup> Flying the 450 mile distance from Fort Sill to San Antonio approximately simulated the same environment that might be expected under war-time conditions. Geological survey maps of the area made up the cartographic resources of the time. Aviators would be tested by navigating point-to-point over unknown and uncharted territory.<sup>160</sup> Simulated war conditions focused attention on the army transport system, examining the endurance of the equipment. Truck motors operated under extreme conditions with the expectation that they would be able to travel up to eighty miles per day, carrying parts and supplies in support of the airplanes. The resourcefulness and adaptability of the entire organization, and particularly the supply department, would be examined under service conditions. Each airplane was assigned one truck as support, to carry ground crew, tools, parts and other supplies. A machine shop truck was assigned to the squadron carrying a lathe and forge for any needed repairs. For any potential minor emergency repairs, a corps of six motorcycles, which could quickly travel to a specific landing point, were used in the delivery of repair kits to a troubled aircraft.<sup>161</sup>

The relocation trip was divided into several stops at which the public might have an opportunity to witness the pilots fly their airplanes. With the estimate that support equipment could move approximately eighty miles per day, designated towns along the anticipated flight path became stopping points where this could happen. Wichita Falls, Texas was the first stop.

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<sup>158</sup> Miller, 12.

<sup>159</sup> "Aero Squadron to Fly from Ft. Sill to Gulf," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, November 17, 1915, 5, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc618223/m1/5/?q=Aero%20Squadron%20Fly%20From>. The Gateway to Oklahoma History, <https://gateway.okhistory.org>; crediting Oklahoma Historical Society.

<sup>160</sup> Foulois and Glines, 121.

<sup>161</sup> "Aero Squadron to Fly from Ft. Sill to Gulf," 1.

Following an overnight stay in the city, it was planned that the squadron would advance on to Fort Worth, Waco, and Austin. Foulois organized some of the trucks and motorcycles into an advance unit placing Master Signal Electrician Stephen J. Idzorek and Private First Class Westmark in command of the group. The team departed from Fort Sill on November 17 to scout road conditions and prepare a landing site in Wichita Falls for the squadron. The remaining trucks, motorcycles, equipment and personnel under the care of Master Signal Electrician Herbert Marcus and Sargent Vernon L Burge, traveled by train to San Antonio where they would rejoin the rest of the squadron.<sup>162</sup>

Foulois had been in contact with civic leaders of the planned stopping points with the landing requirements of the squadron as part of his preparations for the move. A cleared site of a half mile square and comparatively level landing site was required. In their November 9 meeting, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce appointed T. B. Noble, who had served as part of the committee overseeing civilian exhibitions three years earlier, F.P. St. Clair, and A. L. Huey as a planning committee. The location of an appropriate landing site and arrangements for entertaining the squadron became the committee's assigned task. In a series of correspondence to Mayor Britain, Foulois had advised him of the anticipated move dates and that forty men and six officers comprised the squadron's strength.<sup>163</sup> With this information, Wichita Falls began planning a banquet to honor the aviators, and the chamber appropriated funds for the entertainment of the squadron during its stay in the city. To give the citizens of Wichita Falls the best opportunity to witness the pilots and their airplanes, a potential location on the south side of the city, near the streetcar line, was named as the proposed landing site.<sup>164</sup>

Arriving around noon after the three-hour trip from Fort Sill, Idzorek and Westmark were immediately taken to the chosen landing site on the south side of the Wichita Valley tracks close to the city's Southland Addition. Following an inspection of the tract, Idzorek approved the choice and wired directions to the location to Captain Foulois at Fort Sill. The landing site met the specifications Foulois had communicated, and the afternoon was spent setting signals and marking the ground for the benefit of the aviators. With the landing site established, the

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<sup>162</sup> Miller, 12.

<sup>163</sup> "Army Aviators to Be Here Thursday," *The Wichita Daily Times*, November 16, 1915, 1, microfilm.

<sup>164</sup> "Plans for Visit of Aviation Officers," *The Wichita Daily Times*, November 9, 1915, 2, microfilm.

squadron planned to leave Fort Sill the following morning at 8:00 a.m. and arrive in Wichita Falls at around 9 a.m. The flight plan was to cross the Red River near Burkburnett, turning toward the city and approaching the landing site from the south to take advantage of a head wind while landing.<sup>165</sup>

On Friday morning, November 19, the squadron began taking off from Fort Sill in one minute intervals. Their first stop in Wichita Falls was where they would meet the advance team. Leading the flight, Lieutenant Carberry was the first to take off, rising to an elevation of approximately 4,500 feet. He was followed by Lieutenants Bowen, T. D. Milling, I. A. Rader, and C.G. Chapman. Captain Foulois was the last to leave Fort Sill and the last to land in Wichita Falls. The first leg of the transfer was completed in 38 minutes with the squadron traveling at an estimated speed of 87 miles per hour. As planned, the airplanes circled to the southwest, making their landing approach in the same order in which they had taken off from Fort Sill. All of the aviators had reached the ground within five minutes, taxied their JN-3's into position with all six airplanes lined in a row. For the protection of the engines, canvas tarp coverings were placed over them. The truck convoy and motorcycles that left Fort Sill with the Squadron were not expected to arrive in Wichita Falls until later in the afternoon. Each vehicle, and the equipment it carried, weighed approximately 10,000 pounds, creating problems in crossing the sandy bottoms of the Red River.<sup>166</sup>

The trip from Fort Sill to Wichita Falls had provided a first readiness test for the support vehicles, simulating wartime conditions. Foulois had remained confident that the equipment would prove successful in making the trip. When they did arrive, hangars were assembled for the aircraft and the men of the ground crew set up camp nearby. Shortly after the arrival of the squadron, Idzorek and Westmark departed for Fort Worth. There they would select and mark a landing site for the arrival of the squadron in that city. The afternoon was spent with the pilots explaining the mechanics of their aircraft and relating their flight experiences from earlier in the day. The evening was spent with the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, entertaining the officers and men of the squadron with a banquet held at the Metropolitan Cafe. The evening's

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<sup>165</sup> "Army Aviation Squad Is Ready for Its Long Flight; Representative Here Today," *The Wichita Daily Times*, November 17, 1915, 1, microfilm.

<sup>166</sup> "Aero Squadron Flies from Fort Sill in 38 Minutes," *The Wichita Daily Times*, November 19, 1915, 1, microfilm.

entertainment continued with a boxing match, at which the men of the squadron were the guests of honor. Although satisfied with the outcome of the day's flight, Foulois made the decision to cancel landings planned for Bowie and Decatur. He was anxious to proceed on to Fort Sam Houston before any weather changes that might delay the transfer. Exhibition flights were not planned for any of the cities the squadron would visit. The type of aircraft being flown by American aviators was suitable only for flying reconnaissance missions. None of the aircraft in the United States Army was equipped for dropping bombs or firing guns. With the exception of the two airplanes on assignment at the Mexican border, the entire strength of the United States Air Service was currently on the ground in Wichita Falls. Captain Foulois's intent was to depart the following morning without any fanfare.<sup>167</sup>

Thousands of spectators gathered on Saturday morning, November 20, to witness the departure of the First Aero Squadron. Difficulty in starting one of the aircraft delayed the flight by almost an hour before the problem was resolved. At 9:36, the squadron began to take off with Lieutenant Carberry taking the lead, as he had on the previous day. Captain Foulois was the last to take flight, joining the rest of the aviators as they circled the field before disappearing toward the southeast. The trucks and motorcycles immediately started their movement, taking the Meridian road leading out of town toward Fort Worth. It was reported that one member of the motor detail was injured and sustained a broken arm when he was thrown from his seat as the truck approached Jolly, a small stop just to the southeast of Wichita Falls. Because of his injury, he was placed on a train bound for Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Foulois again altered his plans, changing the flight path to a more southerly direction, which the squadron would take when they departed from Fort Worth on Monday morning.<sup>168</sup>

In just under two hours, the squadron arrived in Fort Worth with a two-night stay planned for that city. As they passed close to Bowie, Texas, the airplanes had encountered substantial wind turbulence, forcing them to a higher altitude. While this higher elevation provided a calmer atmosphere, the temperature at that level was much colder. By the time the aviators arrived at the landing site, they were numb from the cold temperatures. After leaving Wichita Falls, they

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<sup>167</sup> "Aero Squadron Flies from Fort Sill in 38 Minutes," 1.

<sup>168</sup> "Aviators Depart Saturday Morning; Reach Fort Worth," *The Wichita Daily Times*, November 21, 1915, 1, microfilm.

had never descended below 4,000 feet until they landed in Fort Worth, where a crowd of 3,000 spectators awaited their arrival. As the airplanes circled overhead, turning into the wind for landing, people broke for the landing site. Police had a difficult time controlling the crowd, keeping them behind designated lines where they would be safe as the aircraft landed. As they had previously done, Lieutenant Carberry was the first to land, followed by the rest. Captain Foulois was the last to land. Fort Worth officials entertained the squadron as Wichita Falls had done, including a banquet at which the members of the squadron were the guests of honor. The airplanes were on display Sunday, giving spectators an opportunity to view them up close. As planned, the squadron would remain in Fort Worth for two days--the only planned stop of that duration.<sup>169</sup>

Monday morning the pilots started their engines in Fort Worth before a crowd of 10,000 spectators that had assembled to see them take off for their next stop in Waco. Weather conditions were good as the aviators prepared to get underway to their next destination. Humidity, while good for the powerful engines which drove the airplanes, created a hazy sky limiting visibility for the pilots. As the routine morning drill of starting the engines began, the large crowd began to encroach onto the field, making it difficult for police to keep spectators in the viewing area. This delayed the scheduled departure time until a safe lane could be opened from which the airplanes could take off. Finally, with the crowd contained, the squadron began to take off in their usual formation order, with Lieutenant Carberry in the lead. Cheers arose when Lieutenant Milling waved to the crowd as he passed by, rising to assume his position. Captain Foulois received another cheer from the crowd. The crowd had expected the squadron to affect a quick getaway, but instead the flyers treated them to a thrilling exhibition of maneuvers, rising to about 1,000 feet and circling the field before taking their formation and turning toward Waco. With the last airplane in the air, the motorcycles and trucks began their departure, heading for the Waco road. It would be nightfall before the trucks were expected in Waco to rejoin the squadron. The spectators that had come to see the aviators depart lingered until the last of the airplanes were only tiny specks in the sky.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> "3,000 Gather to Witness Army Aviators' Landing; No Exhibition Flights," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 21, 1915, 1, microfilm.

<sup>170</sup> "10,000 See Six Aeroplanes Off," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 22, 1915, 1, microfilm.

The airplanes left “Foulois’s Landing” on the southeast side of the Fort Worth field at 8:31 a.m. on Monday, November 22 and were seen passing Cleburne, 30 miles south of Fort Worth, at 9:30.<sup>171</sup> Twenty-five minutes later another report located them passing Hillsboro at 9:55. The two-day stay in Fort Worth had not been uneventful. On Sunday evening, a funnel had tipped over during the refueling of one of the trucks. Gasoline spilled from the funnel and was ignited from a lantern that was being used as a work light. While none of the airplanes were damaged, one of the half-ton transports did catch fire and burned, destroying an aircraft motor valued at \$2,700.<sup>172</sup>

After battling choppy winds, the pilots and their airplanes arrived in Waco from Fort Worth at 10:40 that morning. As the squadron approached their destination, the Young Men’s Business League sounded a siren whistle and Aviator O. E. Williams ascended, in his balloon, to an altitude of one thousand feet, marking the location of the landing field. Approximately 4,000 spectators greeted the squadron when they landed. By the end of the day, up to 20,000 people had visited the Huckabee tract camp on the west side of Waco to get a closer look at the pilots and their airplanes. The support vehicles, which had left Fort Worth in pursuit of the airplanes, arrived in Waco that evening, immediately heading for the camp site. The officers were the guests honor at a noon luncheon held by the Waco Rotary Club and were further entertained in the evening, attending a play featuring a popular actor at the Waco Auditorium. In keeping with their schedule, the squadron planned to leave Waco the following morning at 8:30 and fly to Austin.<sup>173</sup>

The third segment of the transfer did not meet with the same success as the previous two flights. Leaving Waco, Carberry failed to take the wind into consideration when setting his course. As a result, he mistook the planned navigational landmarks and drifted off course by fifty miles, leading three of the other aircraft along the same path. Only Lieutenant Bowen, who was following the rail lines at a lower altitude, and Lieutenant Milling, using a compass course,

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<sup>171</sup> “10,000 See Six Aeroplanes Off,” 2. Ryan’s pasture on the south side of Fort Worth was designated by municipal officials as “Foulois’s Landing” while the squadron was in the city.

<sup>172</sup> “Waco Reached by Aero Squad Today,” *Wichita Falls Daily Times*, November 22, 1915, 1 microfilm.

<sup>173</sup> “U.S. Air Squadron on Time at Waco,” *Temple Daily Telegram*, November 23, 1915, 1, accessed May 18, 2021. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph474814/m1/1/?q=Air%20Squadron%20Time>. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.



arrived in Austin in good time, and without incident. After making an unscheduled stop to get their bearings, the remaining aircraft made it to the Austin destination four hours later. On a trip planned to test the efficiency of the squadron, this miscalculation in direction provided valuable training for the pilots. From this experience would come recommendations for revising government maps of the area. The officers had used postal maps that showed rail lines, but not natural landmarks that could be used for navigation between two points.<sup>174</sup>

Trouble for the squadron continued while they were in Austin. The area was experiencing high winds with storms expected. Captain Foulois, hoping to fly to San Antonio without delay, was forced to change plans. Engine trouble plagued some of airplanes as they airplanes lined up for takeoff late in the afternoon. With worsening weather conditions and motor troubles, Foulois ordered the flight postponed. The hope was for the squadron to fly to Fort Sam Houston the following morning, and squadron mechanics worked to overhaul the engines in preparation for that departure.<sup>175</sup>

Thursday, Thanksgiving morning, weather conditions continued to keep the airplanes grounded. Not until conditions improved would they be able to complete their final flight. Foulois issued orders for the airplanes to be covered in their protective canvas awnings until such time as the weather was appropriate for flying. The stay in Austin lasted for two days before the squadron was able to complete the final leg of the transfer.<sup>176</sup>

The First Aero Squadron arrived at their new facilities on November 26, 1915, completing the flight from Fort Sill, Oklahoma without incident to the airplanes. The pilots arrived in formation order around mid-morning. While Austin lies to the northeast of San Antonio, an adjustment in course was made to take advantage of wind conditions while landing. All of the airplanes approached the landing site from the southeast, which had been marked with

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<sup>174</sup> "Aviators Drifted Far from Course," *Temple Daily Telegram*, November 24, 1915, 1, accessed May 18, 2021. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth474800/m1/1/?q=Aviators%20Drifted%20Far>. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>175</sup> "Airmen Are Stuck at Capital City," *Temple Daily Telegram*, November 25, 1915, 1, accessed May 18, 2021. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth474146/m1/1/?q=Airmen%20are%20Stuck>. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>176</sup> "Aeroplanes May Fly Today," *Temple Daily Telegram*, November 26, 1915, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth474146/m1/1/?q=Air%20Squadron>. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

a white canvas to guide their way. Each pilot successfully guided his aircraft to the point marked on the field. The large crowd that had gathered to witness the arrival of the airplanes was treated to an aerial demonstration, when Lieutenant Carberry did a “loop the loop” maneuver three times before spiraling down to land his aircraft. Captain Foulois expressed his satisfaction in the trip, declaring it a complete success. Designed as a test to measure the readiness of United States aviation, this was the longest flight that the squadron had ever undertaken. The new series of Curtiss engines had performed well. Costs were kept relatively low, with few mishaps. For their accomplishment, Foulois and the squadron received a commendation from the Chief Signal Officer.<sup>177</sup>

The stops made by the First Aero Squadron along their journey to San Antonio in 1915 gave them the opportunity to promote aviation as essential for military success. The trip did highlight the difficulty the support vehicles experienced in keeping up with the aviators. While the airplanes could complete a flight in minutes, the trucks and motorcycles arrived at their destinations hours later, proving the need for supply stations for aviation support. Included in his comments before Fort Worth officials, Foulois had expressed his belief that the warring European nations were taking full advantage of the benefits that aviation could offer. The victor in the European conflict would emerge as the strongest nation on earth. That strength could be used to dictate circumstances to which the United States would be forced to acquiesce. It was Foulois’s belief that the United States was far behind Europe in developing an air department capable of defending the country. He requested that the businessmen of the community give consideration to supporting “preparedness” as a plan of defense for the United States. As part of a preparedness plan, the air service would be further developed--airplanes could best be used for reconnaissance and the dropping of bombs.<sup>178</sup>

The conflict that had erupted sixteen months earlier in Europe, was now focusing debate in the United States on its own military readiness. The Wilson administration had taken leadership of the country, and the president sought to maintain a position of neutrality in foreign

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<sup>177</sup> “Army Airmen Are at End of Journey,” *Temple Daily Telegram*, November 27, 1915, 1, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth471878/m1/1/?q=At%20End%20of%20Journey>. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Abilene Library Consortium.

<sup>178</sup> “Aero Head Pleads for Readiness,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 21, 1915, 6, microfilm.

affairs. This concept had worked well when the turmoil in Mexico was threatening the U.S.-Mexico border. In 1913, Wilson initiated a policy of non-intervention, disallowing the sale of any munitions to any organization in Mexico.<sup>179</sup> The same approach the following year did not receive as much support as it had previously. In answer to a press question regarding any U.S./European plans for responding to the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, the president's only response was, "The United States has never attempted to interfere in European affairs."<sup>180</sup> A formal position of non-intervention in Europe was adopted due to subjects of the belligerent nations living in the United States. Additionally, there were U.S. citizens residing within the countries at war. On August 4, 1913, Wilson issued a Proclamation of Strict Neutrality, under which the terms of the United States relationship with the combatant countries were enumerated.<sup>181</sup>

The president's efforts to keep the conflict confined to Europe quickly became challenged by concerns that the United States might be drawn into the war. On September 27, 1914, a series of articles written by former President Theodore Roosevelt began appearing in the press, rebutting the peace initiatives of neutrality. Roosevelt argued that the United States should increase its military, enabling it to respond to any aggression towards the United States by the warring countries.<sup>182</sup> Roosevelt was soon joined by others who began speaking out in support of a preparedness movement.<sup>183</sup> The cause for preparedness was reinforced when a German U-

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<sup>179</sup> "Our Mexican Policy," *New York Times*, August 28, 1913, 8, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/our-mexican-policy/docview/97504640/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>180</sup> A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2013), 334. Wilson's comment was made during a press conference held on July 27, 1913. The war in Europe began the following day, July 28, 1913.

<sup>181</sup> "President Wilson Proclaims Our Strict Neutrality; Bars All Aid to Belligerents and Defines the Law," *New York Times*, August 5, 1914, 7, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/president-wilson-proclaims-neutrality-united/docview/97514496/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>182</sup> "Col Theodore Roosevelt Writes on What America Should Learn from the War," *New York Times*, September 27, 1914, SM1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/col-theodore-roosevelt-writes-on-what-america/docview/97539645/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>183</sup> "Urges Army Raised To War Strength," *Dallas Morning News*, December 10, 1914, 5, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C27D9B5AF7B1E%402420477-106C27DA2A6B7B60%404->

boat sank the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. Among the passengers of the ship were 128 Americans, who lost their lives in the attack.<sup>184</sup> Wilson continued to maintain that the most favorable position for the United States was peaceful neutrality. The president again spoke of the example of peace that the United States should set in a speech given on May 10, 1915.<sup>185</sup> On August 19, 1915, with the loss of two more American lives, the White Star Liner *Arabic* sank after being attacked by a German submarine.<sup>186</sup>

Political pressures began to force President Wilson to change his neutrality policy. When the Sixty-fourth Congress convened on December 7, 1915, the topic of military preparedness, and its cost, was discussed during the initial sessions. The president appeared before legislators to present his plan.<sup>187</sup> He expressed his belief that the country would be better served setting an example of peaceful neutrality backed by a strengthened military position. The topics of his speech laid out a proposed increase in military spending, raising enlistment numbers in the army and the navy over a period of five years. Because the United States relied so heavily on the navy for protection, additional battleships, cruisers, destroyers, tender, along with a hospital ship were part of the proposal. To counter the activities of the warring powers patrolling sea lanes and disrupting economic maritime trade, the creation of a Merchant Marine service was proposed, with ships owned and operated by the government. Wilson presented a funding plan that involved a tax on sugar and the sale of bonds to offset to the expense of the proposed programs. He presented two additional internal proposals for consideration of the Congress. In support of the military increases, a transportation proposal sought to enhance the country's aging railroad

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[106C27DBF9911795%40Urges%2BArmy%2BRaised%2Bto%2BWar%2BStrength](#). Secretary Garrison of the War Department presents a report to President Wilson advising an increase in U.S. military strength.

<sup>184</sup> Berg, 362-363.

<sup>185</sup> "Not Force but Argument, President Wilson's Policy Announced in Speech," *Dallas Morning News*, May 5, 1915, 1, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106C19975A49F542%402420629-106C1997701BE030%40-106C1999155BB64A%40Not%2BForce%2Bbut%2BArgument%252C%2BPresident%2BWilson%2527s%2BPolicy%2BAnnounced%2Bin%2BSpeech>. In this speech President Wilson made the statement: "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a Nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right."

<sup>186</sup> Berg, 369.

<sup>187</sup> "Preparedness Is Keynote of President's Message Read to Congress Today," *Wichita Weekly Times*, December 10, 1915, 2, microfilm.

system. The second proposal was for rural credit, making possible the purchase of farmland and, in turn, supplementing food production. This was Wilson's new doctrine of Pan-Americanism, under which the United States would defend its interests, but also the rights of those with similar causes.<sup>188</sup>

Three months later, Pancho Villa led an incursion of Mexican soldiers across the border attacking the town of Columbus, New Mexico on March 9, 1916. Congress was still working to meet the requirements of an increased military commitment. Communications between Washington and the Army's Southern Department located at Fort Sam Houston rapidly determined the action that was to be taken. The following day, March 10, instructions were issued from the War Department regarding the United States response. The orders to General Funston instructed him to include the First Aero Squadron, which was to be used in an observation capacity. The president was insistent that the airplanes be strictly limited to that role. Colonel Reber, responding to General Scriven's inquiries regarding the airplanes, stated that the squadron could be ready for deployment almost immediately. In fact, with two officers on detached assignment, and only five of twenty-three student pilots with enough experience to be placed on active duty, the squadron was limited in its options. Foulois and his men immediately began assembling their equipment upon hearing of Villa's raid. Aircraft presented a problem. Foulois knew firsthand from his Fort Sill experiences that not all of the JN-3 aircraft would be ready for flying at any particular time. Optimally, readiness for full capacity in field operations required that the squadron have twelve airplanes that were operational, twelve in reserve, and twelve replacements. He was forced to dispute the instructions of General Funston, who had initially ordered that six airplanes were to be deployed, leaving two in reserve at Fort Sam Houston. Lieutenant Cowan, at the San Diego school, was ordered to send spark plugs and other parts. Transport vehicles were needed to move the squadron and its equipment, although few were available. Foulois was instructed to lease vehicles from civilian companies through the quartermaster in San Antonio. When the Aero Squadron departed for the Mexican border, it did so with all eight of its airplanes, seven transport trucks, and the parts from the Aviation School.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> "Preparedness Is Keynote of President's Message Read to Congress Today," 2.

<sup>189</sup> Miller, 14.



Figure 15. General John J. Pershing. Photo courtesy of the El Paso Public Library, El Paso, Texas.

The First Aero Squadron served in varying roles during the twelve-month period in which it was detailed to the U.S./Mexico border as part of General Pershing's Punitive Expedition from March 1916 to February 1917. Transporting an army in the early twentieth century still required railroads, wagons, and pack mules. With circumstances denying the use of Mexican rail lines, the problem of providing for animals in a terrain consisting of deserts and mountains with few roads forced General Pershing to turn to the unproven use of motorized vehicles. The army that deployed to Mexico in 1916 had little experience with mechanized mobilization. From the experience gained during their

Fort Sill to Fort Sam Houston transfer, the First Aero Squadron used its know-how to transport men and supplies to locations in Mexico where they were needed. Trucks ordered for the regular army arrived in Columbus unassembled. Foulois assigned the squadron's engineering section with its machine shop and additional men to assemble the new vehicles. At the end of four days of hard work, the trucks were ready to be used for transporting men and supplies to field locations within Mexico. By the time Pershing left Mexico, the Punitive Expedition had been transformed from an animal-powered force to one powered by the gasoline engine, largely through the efforts of the First Aero Squadron.<sup>190</sup>

Early in the afternoon of March 19, Foulois and his pilots received orders to report to General Pershing at Casas Grandes. The pilots took off in their JN-3s around 5:00 p.m. to make a flight that extended over a hundred miles.<sup>191</sup> It would be dark by the time that they could complete a trip of that length; only Lieutenant Dodd had any experience flying after sundown. The pilots had been instructed to follow the airplane in front of them, which became impossible in the increasing darkness. Four of the airplanes were forced to land at La Ascensión, about half

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<sup>190</sup> Miller, 18-19.

<sup>191</sup> Miller, 20. Lieutenant Dodd and Captain Foulois flew in S.C. No. 44, Lieutenants Kilner in S.C. No. 42, Dargue in S.C. No. 43, Bowen in S.C. No. 48, Chapman in S.C. No. 53, Carberry in S.C. No. 45, Gorrell in S.C. No. 43, and Willis in S.C. No. 41.

way to Casas Grandes. Of the remaining four aircraft, three continued on. Unable to see in the dark, they became separated from the rest, but continued flying until forced to land. The following morning the four airplanes that had remained together took off, continuing their flight while scouting for the other separated pilots. Arriving at Casas Grandes, Foulois was informed that Pershing's headquarter was actually at Colonia Dublán, fifteen miles away. While landing at this second site, Lieutenant Bowen's aircraft caught a small whirlwind and crashed. Lieutenant Dargue, one of the missing pilots, had arrived only a short time earlier after successfully landing the night before and waiting for morning to resume his flight. Lieutenant Kilner had experienced engine trouble, forcing him to return to Columbus. Kilner took off at dawn, after mechanics spent the night replacing his aircraft's engine, arriving just ahead of the four leading airplanes. Lieutenants Willis and Gorrell remained unaccounted for as the rest of the squadron assembled at Colonia Dublán.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Miller, 21. Colonia Dublán is a Mormon colony. Lieutenant Dargue was able to land there the following morning, reporting that he was unable to keep visual contact with the rest of the squadron when his JN-3 did not rise as fast as the other airplanes.



Figure 16. First Aero Squadron refueling at Casas Grande. Photo courtesy of the El Paso Public Library, El Paso, Texas.

On March 20, 1916, the First Aero Squadron began flights that would test their skills. These experiences would make them seasoned aviators over the next month. Pershing's orders required reconnaissance flights following the Mexican Northwestern railroad south toward the Cumbre Pass. The terrain of the Sierra Madre Mountains proved to be treacherous. The aviators were introduced to difficult flying conditions they had never previously encountered. Colonia Dublán sits at an altitude of approximately 5,200 feet above sea level. The mountain peaks through which they were flying reaching 9,000 feet. The JN-3 airplanes were not powerful enough to fly at these altitudes, carrying pilot, observer, and fuel. Air currents rising through the mountain crags and outcroppings caused severe turbulence, sometimes forcing pilots to return to



the camp, unsuccessful in their mission.<sup>193</sup> Pershing's reports to General Funston regarding the need for more powerful aircraft were met with skepticism.<sup>194</sup>

Taking off at noon on March 20, Dodd and Foulois quickly began experiencing trouble. At 10,000 feet, the jagged peaks and rugged canyons of the Sierra Madres produced severe wind currents, which posed problems for the pilots. The next day the squadron was ordered to locate Colonel Erwin and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry somewhere in the Galeana Valley. Dodd and Foulois were able to locate the camp where they landed and delivered messages. Finding that the column was out of rations and their field radio inoperable, the pilots returned through heavy winds to their camp, and Foulois dispatched seven cargo trucks with supplies to Erwin's camp.<sup>195</sup>

During the next month the squadron was busy making reconnoiter flights, delivering communications and mail in support of the efforts to locate an elusive Villa. Good news for the squadron arrived on March 21 with the appearance of Lieutenant Willis, one of the missing pilots. After losing sight of the other airplanes, he had continued flying until darkness and a lack of fuel forced him to land. Although Willis was left uninjured, the landing had badly damaged his aircraft. He had followed the Mexican Northwestern Railroad until he located U.S. troops. The following day, Foulois dispatched Lieutenant Dargue to look for Lieutenant Gorrell, hoping that he might be located somewhere near where Willis had landed.<sup>196</sup> The effort to locate Gorrell was unsuccessful, but on March 23, four days following the squadron's late flight, he arrived in camp after having paid a Mexican man \$8.00 to lead him to U.S. troops. He had attempted to return to the airplane with fuel and fly to his destination, but while taking off in a rain storm the

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<sup>193</sup> "Aviators Encounter Problems in Mexico," *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1916, 2, accessed September 8, 2016, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2CD41F4E2358%402420951-106B2CD451448706%401-106B2CD60E12128D%40Aviators%2BEncounter%2BProblems%2Bin%2BMexico>. The wind in Mexico was the worst that the squadron had experienced since the Mackay trophy completion in 1914.

<sup>194</sup> Miller, 23. The altitude of Casas Grandes is one mile above sea level. In the Sierra Madre Mountains, the passes that connect Casas Grandes and the Galeana Valley rise to the level of 6,000 to 7,000 feet. The Cumbre Pass is at 9,000 feet. At this altitude thinner air has an effect on the amount of power required for an aircraft to maintain flight. This is what the non-flying commanding officers did not understand. In his response to Pershing, the non-flying Funston did not understand that higher altitude was having a negative effect on the performance of aircraft that flew acceptably in the lower altitudes surrounding San Antonio.

<sup>195</sup> Miller, 23-24.

<sup>196</sup> Miller, 24.

aircraft was damaged, again forcing him to land. When a supply truck happened to pass close by, Gorrell caught a ride and arrived at Colonia Dublán.<sup>197</sup>

By the end of the month, the First Aero Squadron had settled into delivering mail and dispatches up and down Pershing's extended line of communications. On March 30, Foulois had presented the general with a list of options for using the aircraft. Included in this list was the suggestion for discontinuing communication flights as soon as radio-telegraph communications were established. Pershing accepted this option the following day, but little changed in the squadron's activities. By March 31, the squadron had lost two of its aircraft to crashes; five of the six remaining airplanes continued flying dispatches and mail. During the following week, Lieutenant Christie flying S.C. No 42 patrolled the area between San Geronimo and Las Cruces. Lieutenant Gorrell in S.C. No 52 worked the area southeast of Bachiniva. The remaining pilots delivered mail.<sup>198</sup>

The line of pursuit was at this time 400 hundred miles in length.<sup>199</sup> With tensions rising over the presence of U.S. troops, Pershing decided to seek assistance from the United States government representative in Mexico. Foulois was ordered to deliver the request to Marion H. Letcher, U.S. Consul General in Chihuahua City. Concerned that there might be trouble, Foulois dispatched two airplanes carrying duplicate messages. Once landed, the observer would deliver the message to the Consulate, while the pilot remained with the airplane. Lieutenants Dodd and Carberry in S.C. No. 45 landed north of the city, while Lieutenant Dargue and Foulois flying S.C. No. 43 went to the south side. Dodd did not experience any hostility while delivering the message directly to its destination. Dargue and Foulois drew the attention of a hostile crowd that included Mexican national police, when they landed on the south side. Ordering Dargue to join the others, Foulois started for the city, stopping to convince the police not to fire their weapons at the aircraft. Instead they arrested him, taking him to the local jail. Only with the assistance of an American national in the crowd was Foulois able to get a message to the

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<sup>197</sup> Miller, 28.

<sup>198</sup> Miller, 33.

<sup>199</sup> "Pershing's Line 400 Miles Long," *New York Times*, April 9, 1916, 19, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/pershing-s-line-400-miles-long/docview/97956760/se-2?accountid=7117>. Communications were carried along this line of columns aided by the First Aero Squadron. There was also a reported sighting of Villa who, it was determined, was wounded to the extent that his injuries required his men to carry him on a stretcher.

Counsel General. He was freed following a lengthy wait in the local jail by the military governor of Chihuahua, who ordered a guard placed on the airplane. Avoiding confrontations, Dodd and Carberry were able to leave immediately. Dargue and Foulois were forced to spend the night in the Consulate when their aircraft was damaged by the crowd throwing rocks. With repairs made the following morning, Dargue and Foulois flew back to San Geronimo carrying Letcher's response to Pershing.<sup>200</sup>

On April 14, two more airplanes were lost. S.C. No. 52 was badly damaged after Lieutenant Rader attempted a landing on rough ground while delivering dispatches to Major Howze of the 11<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Unable to make repairs, Rader was forced to abandon his aircraft and join Howze's column. The pilots, after reaching a consensus that S.C. No. 42 was beyond repair, scavenged the aircraft for parts. The lower wings were mounted on S.C. No. 45, replacing damaged parts from the Chihuahua mob incident. The unusable parts of the airplane were destroyed.<sup>201</sup> It was left to the remaining three airplanes to fly more often and at longer distances. Five days later, on April 19, with Dargue and Willis flying a reconnaissance mission, the engine in S.C. No. 43 began to vibrate badly and lose power. Flying over rugged terrain, Dargue attempted to salvage the flight. The most reliable of all the First Aero Squadron's aircraft, No. 43, was unable to return to level ground. It came to rest at a steep angle, wrecked on the side of a mountain, which injured Willis. The two aviators were forced to abandon the airplane and make a grueling two-day hike to San Antonio de los Arenales.<sup>202</sup>

General Pershing ordered the First Aero Squadron back to Columbus on April 20, to pick up new airplanes, which had arrived. During the one-month period that the squadron was flying missions, it had lost six of the eight aircraft that had left Fort Sam Houston to be part of General Pershing's Punitive Expedition into Mexico. The airplanes had proven to be too underpowered for flying at the higher altitudes of the Sierra Madre Mountains, and could not withstand the extremes of the Mexican desert. Only when the complaints of the pilots reached the newspapers did their non-flying army superiors and the United States Congress take any action to supply

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<sup>200</sup> Miller, 35-36.

<sup>201</sup> Miller, 39.

<sup>202</sup> Miller, 40-41. The mission included the taking of photographs. The camera and plates were ruined in the crash and were abandoned with the wreckage of the airplane.

more modern and powerful aircraft.<sup>203</sup> On the same day the squadron returned to Columbus, General Pershing reported that the efforts to apprehend Pancho Villa under the defined guidelines were not successful. To accomplish his objective would require that he seize control of the state of Chihuahua and its railroads. The proposal exceeded the limits that the Wilson administration was willing to approve. An escalated commitment in political and military activity would further strain relations between the United States and Mexico. The hunt for Pancho Villa came to a close at the end of April 1916. Reorganizing his command, Pershing concentrated his forces in the state of Chihuahua, where they aggressively patrolled their assigned areas. The assignment was amended to a mission of watchful presence. The army would not advance any further south.<sup>204</sup>

For the United States, the development of a military aviation program was already far behind other nations when the First Aero Squadron made its flight from Fort Sill, Oklahoma to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in 1915. Four months following the outbreak of European hostilities, the *Wichita Falls Daily Times* carried an article on November 18, 1915 in which Master Signal Electrician S. J. Idzorek described the readiness of the army's air service.

The United States Army has twenty aeroplanes. The average life under war conditions such as now prevail in Europe is seven hours.

That is the "preparedness" of the aerial branch of Uncle Sam's fighting forces. Using one aeroplane at a time, the United States has enough to last six days, under war conditions if the president's [sic] plans receive the indorsement of Congress, however, the aerial department will be materially increased.

Not only are many machines put out of commission by gun fire, but when operating in rough country where suitable landing places are scarce, aeroplanes are frequently disabled in making landings, which it appears, is the most difficult part of flying.

The European armies are getting very expert in shooting aircraft. They have guns which can be elevated to an angle of 90 degrees and contrivances which enable them to get the altitude very quickly. Machines are being "winged" with much more regularity now than in the early days of the war.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Miller, 43. Congress passed an "urgent deficiency act" on March 31, 1916. Under the terms of this emergency appropriation action, \$500,000 was approved for the purchase of 24 new aircraft. Eight new airplanes with supporting equipment (trucks, portable machine shops, cameras, and other materials) were designated for the First Aero Squadron.

<sup>204</sup> Miller, 42.

<sup>205</sup> "United States Unprepared from Aerial Standpoint," *Wichita Daily Times*, November 18, 1915, 9, microfilm. This interview was printed in the Wichita Falls newspapers prior to the First Aero Squadron's departure from Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

As part of Pershing's Punitive Expedition, the First Aero Squadron remained in Mexico until February 1917.<sup>206</sup> By the time the squadron left the Mexican border, Idzorek's predictions had proven correct. The airplanes, which were originally taken into Mexico, were unusable at the end of the one month in which they had flown missions. Replacement equipment proved to be of inferior quality and power. Pilots were unable to fly under conditions which European aviators were experiencing daily. For the United States Army, the expedition had provided a training ground in military tactics, influenced by the introduction of mechanized equipment. While the mission might be considered a failure, it secured General Pershing's standing with the Wilson administration.<sup>207</sup> In his report, Pershing praised the efforts of the aviators, who, he noted, excelled in their efforts despite inadequate equipment and supplies.<sup>208</sup>

Because of the Wilson administration's policies, the disquiet of war was not at the time a concern for the United States. The president was aware of a significant German presence working internally to incite conflict within Mexico, which had the potential of distracting the United States. If the United States became militarily engaged on its own southern border, Germany would be able to prosecute its policy of submarine warfare more freely.<sup>209</sup> The president had so far steadfastly maintained a position of neutrality for the country, countering the exerted pressures of preparedness leaders like Theodore Roosevelt. But political stresses, created by the sinking of the *Lusitania* and Pancho Villa's attack on Columbus, New Mexico, were enough to sway Wilson's thinking toward preparing for the country's defense. On June 3, 1916, the United States Congress passed the National Defense Act of 1916, greatly expanding the United States military. Under the terms of this new legislation, the army began to acquire the resources needed to develop an aviation arm. As a distinct section of the Signal Corps, the Air Corps now received funding for personnel increases and training during peacetime and

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<sup>206</sup> Miller, 48.

<sup>207</sup> Miller, 50. For the United States Army, the Punitive Expedition saw, for the first time, the use of automotive vehicles, radios, automatic weapons and airplanes. This had an influence on the way it conducted its operations.

<sup>208</sup> Miller, 51.

<sup>209</sup> Berg, 393.

conflict.<sup>210</sup> In celebration, numerous cities throughout the United States held preparedness parades. President Wilson, himself, led the Washington preparedness parade to the White House on June 14, 1916, where he gave a Flag Day speech.<sup>211</sup> With the support of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, on July 2, Wichita Falls held its own preparedness parade.<sup>212</sup>

With the possibility of acquiring an aviation base for their locality, the North Texas towns which the squadron had visited began making preparations to lobby for a base. Wichita Falls immediately began working to persuade the government to consider it a possible candidate. On July 12, 1916, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce hired B. F. Johnson to fill the office of secretary. The chamber had been without an incumbent in that position for some time, with the secretary position filled in the interim by assistant secretary, John W. Thomas. Johnson, who at the time was the secretary for the chamber of commerce in Gainesville, Texas, was approached earlier in the year, but at the time declined the position in Wichita Falls. When his circumstances changed allowing him to make a move, the Wichita Falls position was still available, and he was immediately elected to fill the opening.<sup>213</sup>

To offset an aviation deficiency in the United States, the Executive Committee of the Aero Club of America submitted a plan to army officials. The proposal carried two provisions subsequent to the terms of the preparedness act passed by Congress and signed by President Wilson. The committee proposed to make up the deficiency in military aviators by supplying the needed personnel to organize twelve aero squadrons under the National Guard. Sportsmen,

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<sup>210</sup> H.R. 12766 Public, No. 85, Ch. 134, Statutes at Large of the United States of America, National Defense Act of 1916, June 3, 1916, 166, Sixty-Fourth Congress of the United States, Session I, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/39/STATUTE-39-Pg166.pdf>.

<sup>211</sup> "President in Washington," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1916, 3, accessed April 29 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/president-washington/docview/97911096/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>212</sup> "Preparedness Parade for Wichita," *Dallas Morning News*, July 3, 1916, 1, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B30C67A559324%402421048-106B30C690290139%40-106B30C7A5339FBF%40Preparedness%2BParade%2Bfor%2BWichita>.

<sup>213</sup> "Johnson Will Go to Wichita Falls," *Dallas Morning News*, July 13, 1916, 10, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B302A45D056D5%402421058-106B302AFAF41EBE%409-106B302E069A617F%40Johnson%2BWill%2BGo%2Bto%2BWichita%2BFalls>.

businessmen, and other civilian aviators formed into reserve units, would continue to train under the direction of the regular army and offer available support in the case of an emergency. Second, a volunteer must have the recognized aviation pilot certificate and pass a physical examination sufficient for active duty. Those selected would be sent to one of the training camps where they would work to attain a Junior Military Aviator rating. Until the army could sufficiently train regular aviation personnel, members of the Aerial Reserve Corps would remain on active duty, serving at the rank of First Lieutenant, receiving reimbursement for the cost associated with obtaining the pilot certificate, and being paid for the time they remained on active duty.<sup>214</sup>

Captain Foulois separated from the First Aero Squadron in September 1916, taking command of the new military aviation center close to Fort Sam Houston on November 6. The new facility would serve the United States as its lead post, with additional aviation stations scattered around the country.<sup>215</sup> Plans for the development of the army's aviation section were released in mid-October 1916. Congress had appropriated \$13 million, which was placed under the charge of the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps. The plan was introduced with a "tentative system" providing for an increase in offices and enlisted men selected from the regular army, the Enlisted Reserve Corps, and the National Guard. All personnel were to be trained, including the enlisted ranks of mechanics and chauffeurs. The section would consist of 206 officers, equal in rank to the Signal Corps, up to the rank of major. Citizens of the United States between the ages of 21 and 30, who wanted to apply for commissions, were directed to the Adjutant General of the Army. An applicant must provide proof of a college education and be of good moral character to be accepted. Those in the Enlisted Reserve Corps were allowed to apply at the age of 18 and up to 45. They were further required to be citizens of the United States, or declared their allegiance, be able to read and write English, and provide two certificates of good moral character. Plans for the enlisted ranks provided for a strength of 2,715, divided into 54 master

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<sup>214</sup> "Plans for New Air Corps," *The New York Times*, July 19, 1916, 6, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/plans-new-air-corps/docview/97885838/>.

<sup>215</sup> "To Establish Aviation Post," *Dallas Morning News*, November 7, 1916, 2, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B3458F848E3A1%402421175-106B345932AC1F4C%401-106B345AE53BB07B%40To%2BEstablish%2BAviation%2BPost>.

signal electricians, 190 first-class sergeants, 271 sergeants, 543 corporals, 1,381 first-class privates, and 276 privates, and required commitment of four years of active duty service.<sup>216</sup>

With Germany increasing its U-boat attacks on merchant vessels sailing the Atlantic, hostilities between the warring powers continued to escalate. By mid-November 1916 the extent of German actions had placed it on the verge of violating previous non-aggression pledges that the Imperial German Government had made to the United States. The sinking of the *SS Marina* in late October confirmed that Germany was planning to renew its submarine war operations. German Under-Secretary Zimmerman claimed his country sank the ship because it carried ammunition and other contraband to its enemies. The United States maintained that the *Marina* was a government-chartered vessel. Under this designation, a ship chartered by a government is not a transport and could only be attacked if the crew was directed by its Admiralty to resist any attack. Accompanying the controversy, rumors began to circulate that Germany planned to station ships off the American coast from which it would supply its submarines.<sup>217</sup>

President Wilson continued to work for a cessation of hostilities in Europe without a military commitment from the United States. On December 18, 1916, he directed a communication be sent to both the Central and the Allied Powers. He requested each side to state the terms under which they would be willing to cease hostilities and negotiate a peaceful resolution of grievances. Made by Secretary Lansing, the announcement of this communication at first seemed to indicate the possibility of a U.S. mobilization. Lansing later that day revised his statements to resolve any misunderstandings. While the request did not contain any threat of the United States entering the war, it did continue to arouse complaints against Wilson's policies.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> "Army's Aviation Plans," *New York Times*, October 15, 1916, 9, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/army-s-aviation-plans/docview/97845009/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>217</sup> "Submarine Rumors Reach Washington," *New York Times*, November 16, 1916, 2, accessed May 1, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/submarine-rumors-reach-washington/docview/97825445/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>218</sup> "No Threats in Note to Warring Powers," *Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1916, 1, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B34D2A78BEA81%402421220-106B34D2C25F0BD2%400-106B34D4712B9A14%40No%2BThreats%2Bin%2BNote%2Bto%2BWarring%2BPowers>.



On December 5, work had already begun in Wichita Falls for attracting an airplane factory and a flight school to the area close to Lake Wichita. J. A. Kemp, representing the Chamber of Commerce, was already in Washington to extend an invitation to the War Department for the placement of an aviation school in the city.<sup>219</sup> Later in the month, Secretary B. F. Johnson was dispatched to Washington for the purpose of securing the army aviation training school.<sup>220</sup> This was the culmination of an enthusiastic campaign to attract the attention of army officials and secure a flight school for the area. Upon his return, Johnson expressed his opinion that Wichita Falls held an excellent chance of being named as the location of the school. An inspection visit was scheduled for the following week, with the proposed site located in close proximity to Lake Wichita. At the direction of the chamber, Johnson offered a proposition calling for Wichita Falls to donate 600 acres of land next to Lake Wichita, which would be used for construction of the school. Passage of the bill which created the Aviation Section had not provided for accepting donations, however, Colonel Squire assured Johnson that the gift would be accepted, and made it a test case before the War Department. Sponsorship of the amendment fell to Senator Morris Sheppard and Congressman John H. Stephens of the Texas delegation—Texas legislators who planned to present the document to Congress. While the details of the agreement were being negotiated, an area close to the lake was designated as a landing area. It was anticipated that army aviators would frequently be in Wichita Falls. Major Benjamin D. Foulois had been Captain Foulois during his last visit to the city. Along with the other aviators, he had taken notice of the advantages surrounding the lake area.<sup>221</sup> He was scheduled to visit Wichita Falls the following week to confirm the potential benefits of choosing the city for the award.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> “Big Aviation Camp Likely for This City,” *Wichita Daily Times*, December 22, 1916, 2, microfilm.

<sup>220</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, December 5, 1916.

<sup>221</sup> “Big Aviation Camp Likely for This City,” 2.

<sup>222</sup> “To Seek Army Aviation School,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 23, 1916, 8, accessed May 11, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B34D909D9BA98%402421221-106B34D9A866EEEE%407-106B34DC1CFCF59B%40To%2BSeek%2BArmy%2BAviation%2BSchool>.



At the close of 1916, aviation in the United States had received its most strenuous test up to that time. Experience on the Mexican border had provided valuable information on the dismal endurance of American aircraft and the exceptional service of its aviators. The benefits of an American aviation service were beginning to be recognized. At the same time, world events were focusing attention on the United States, forcing it into a war against the desires of the incumbent presidential administration. The result was the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, which increased the strength of the United States military, including the army's Aviation Section. As specified by the new legislation, Wichita Falls immediately sought to participate in the placement of an army flight training school through its chamber of commerce. Working with aviators and congressional leaders in submitting legislative amendments, the membership of the chamber aggressively sought to secure the award of the contract. While it was thought that Wichita Falls had an excellent opportunity for obtaining the desired army aviation school, the prospects of an award would, in the coming months, become modified, setting the stage for establishing a wartime training camp known as Call Field.

## Chapter 4

Mr. Kemp brought up the question of [the] Aviation Camp, and upon his recommendation a motion prevailed that this Chamber of Commerce authorize [a] contract to be made that we will stand back of it financially and be responsible for whatever amount is necessary to land the Camp.

August 14, 1917  
Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce Minutes

In January 1917, Wichita Falls was continuing its efforts to attract an army flight training school. During this same period the status quo of the European conflict was about to be altered, increasing pressure on the United States to enter the conflict. The war was rapidly depleting the resources for both the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungry, and Italy, and the Triple Entente alliance of France, Great Britain, and Russia. Germany's strategic conclusion was that it could successfully attain victory through unrestricted use of its submarine fleet. The success of the campaign depended on the ability of attracting the attention of the United States to its own southern border--a plan into which Mexico fit perfectly. In contrast, the British and French wanted the United States as an ally-- one that could provide vast munitions and food supplies. During the first months of 1917, President Wilson steadfastly continued to keep the country out of the war, withstanding criticism for his neutrality policies from within the United States and without. Not until Whitehall's Room 40 decoders uncovered what became known as the Zimmermann cable, was the British Naval Intelligence section able to provide verifiable evidence of a German proposal for the United States southern border, convincing the U.S. that it must commit to the war. Wilson's realization that the country was being forced into the conflict changed his thinking, sending him to seek congressional approval for a declaration of war. With the United States poised to enter the war, the creation of flight schools like Call Aviation Field became a national priority.



Many of Wichita Falls' residents turned their attention to the skies on Friday evening, January 7, 1917, with the report of an airplane flying over the city. Approaching from the south, the pilot circled the town twice before flying off toward the north. Speculation among witnesses tended to indicate their belief that this was the aviation visit from San Antonio that had been

reported earlier. Accounts received from Abilene and San Angelo declared that people in those cities had seen an unknown aircraft as well. Attempting to ascertain the purpose of the flight, Wichita Falls officials contacted Fort Sill, Oklahoma, but were unsuccessful in confirming the mission or the identity of the pilot and aircraft.<sup>223</sup> The following week, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce dispatched B.F. Johnson to San Antonio in order to meet with army aviators regarding the Wichita Falls site inspection and inquire regarding the status of plans for the placement of an aviation school.<sup>224</sup> Under the command of Major Foulois, the army was in the process of expanding its facilities to Camp Kelly, south of Fort Sam Houston, increasing concern that San Antonio was making an offer to the government similar to that of Wichita Falls.<sup>225</sup>

For some time, the Mexican situation, which had drawn General Pershing and the army to Mexico, had been an unsuccessful mission for the U.S. Since October of the previous year, the two countries had been attempting to negotiate a peaceful resolution. Under the terms of the Atlantic City Protocol, the United States agreed to withdraw from Mexican soil, and the two countries jointly agreed to patrol their common border. Security against border incursions like the Villa raid on Columbus, New Mexico could be assured for the United States. For Mexico, under terms set by the Carranza administration, the removal of American troops provided an acknowledgment of its sovereignty.<sup>226</sup> At the direction of the President Wilson, orders were issued to General Pershing on January 27 for the withdrawal of American forces from Mexico.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> "Airplane Flies over This City," *Wichita Daily Times*, January 7, 1917, 4, microfilm.

<sup>224</sup> "Member List Is Approved Today," *Wichita Daily Times*, January 12, 1917, 2, microfilm.

<sup>225</sup> "To Establish Aviation Post," *Dallas Morning News*, November 7, 1916, 2, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B3458F848E3A1%402421175-106B345932AC1F4C%401-106B345AE53BB07B%40To%2BEstablish%2BAviation%2BPost>.

<sup>226</sup> "Border Commission Reaches Agreement," *Dallas Morning News*, November 25, 1916, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B33FC39D0D2DF%402421193-106B33FC565E7139%400-106B33FDF643B5EF%40Border%2BCommission%2BReaches%2BAgreement>.

<sup>227</sup> "American Punitive Expedition Now on Way Home from Mexico," *Dallas Morning News*, January 28, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B29FFADC2E198%402421257-106B29FFC6C21E60-106B2A034031C93F>.

Rumors began circulating of swift moving Mexican forces pursuing the withdrawing U.S. troops and the Villista occupation of abandoned U.S. camps. In response, two army airplanes were ordered to Dublan from where they flew reconnaissance missions in support of cavalry patrols.<sup>228</sup>

Although the experience had provided the army with a relatively small but seasoned fighting force, the original objectives of the expedition were not met.<sup>229</sup> In addition to the experiences gained from the U.S. Punitive Expedition into Mexico, Washington began to realize that access to prostitution and alcohol were moral considerations affecting the field deployment of troops. As a result, regulations would soon become an operational requirement.<sup>230</sup> Relative to the health and wellbeing of the forces deployed in the field, the war department had begun to compile data from the Mexican expedition. Troops encountering problems with prostitution and the availability of alcohol while in Mexico gave evidence that vice control could make for a more efficient army. Compared to an individual admitted to an infirmary, a healthy individual provided the American Armed Services with the most effective soldier. For the American military, this could be accomplished by providing soldiers with a structure of moral and social support. As much as was possible, an environment that simulated the homes, communities and social habits of the American soldier provided for the best army.<sup>231</sup>

At the same time that the United States was withdrawing from Mexico, Wichita Falls was taking steps to provide a desirable environment for the location of a school. The Chamber of Commerce authorized Secretary Johnson to San Antonio to confer with army aviators regarding an aviation training camp. In anticipation of any formalized requirements on the part of the federal government, the city began working to meet military rules. In January 1917, Wichita

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<sup>228</sup> “Aeroplanes Cover Pershing’s Retreat,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1917, 7, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/aeroplanes-cover-pershing-retreat/docview/99926723/se-2?accountid=711>.

<sup>229</sup> “Pershing’s Troops Now out of Mexico,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 1917, 7, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/pershings-troops-now-out-mexico/docview/99918261/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>230</sup> H.R. 12315 Public, No. 277, Ch. 395, Statutes at Large of the United States of America, An Act to Further Regulate Interstate and Foreign Commerce by Prohibiting the Transportation therein for Immoral Purposes of Women and Girls, 36 Stat. 825, June 25, 1910, Sixty-First Congress of the United States, Session II, accessed November 29, 2016, <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/36/STATUTE-36-Pg825a.pdf>. In early 1917, prostitution and alcohol became co-linked as a moral issue.

<sup>231</sup> Frederick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker: America at War, Volume II* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1931), 292.

Falls responded to developing regulatory guidelines that were considered vital to the public health and welfare--enhancing the possibility of a government contract. Sheriff Hawkins of Wichita County served eviction notices to the business owners and proprietors of disorderly houses in the “segregated district” in late January, and orders to close their vice houses effective on February 1.<sup>232</sup>

The goal of obtaining the flight school contract occupied the business of Wichita Falls Chamber members, while international relations held the attention of the federal government. President Wilson’s request for terms of negotiation received its first response from Germany in a wired communication dated December 27, 1916, acknowledging the Central Powers agreement with Wilson’s suggestions, and stating a willingness to negotiate an end of hostilities.<sup>233</sup> The Allied response from Britain and France was received two weeks later, on January 10, 1917. The two countries took considerable time in drafting a lengthy joint communication concerning their position. The document expressed the determination of the Entente Allies to seek a conclusive victory over their German antagonists.<sup>234</sup> Speaking before the U.S. Senate on January 22, the president responded to the two cables. His comments offered some indication of the thoughts from which his request for each combatant’s terms of negotiation had come. While some individuals were appeased, others were angered when he suggested an extension of the Monroe Doctrine to the world stage. It was another attempt by Wilson to get a peaceful resolution--a continuation of his efforts for keeping the United States out of the conflict.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> “District Must Close Feb 1,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 24, 1917, 10, microfilm.

<sup>233</sup> “Text of Germany’s Note to President Wilson, Proposing Peace Conference of Belligerents,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1916, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/text-germanys-note-president-wilson-proposing/docview/97811374/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>234</sup> “Text of Allies’ Reply to Wilson,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/text-allies-reply-wilson/docview/98060404/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>235</sup> “‘Lasting Peace for Europe Can Not be a Peace of Victory for Either Side’--Wilson,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 23, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B29E16160E8EA%402421252-106B29E1712D5256%40-106B29E2E8FB0335%40%2522Lasting%2BPeace%2Bfor%2BF%2BEurope%2BCan%2BNot%2Bbe%2Ba%2BPeace%2Bof%2BVictory%2Bfor%2BEither%2BSide%2522%2B---Wilson>.

The president's continued efforts to keep the United States out of the European conflict proved to be short lived. On January 31, Germany informed the United States of its intent to resume unrestrained submarine warfare the following day.<sup>236</sup> It was a strategy Germany hoped would prevent Britain and France from obtaining supplies, forcing the Allies into conceding the conflict. German U-boats would sink any neutral or enemy merchant ships found within a zone ranging from north of the British Isles and extending into the Mediterranean waters around Greece.<sup>237</sup> On February 3, the president again appeared before a joint session of Congress, informing members of the German communication. The response was a break in diplomatic ties between the United States and Germany.<sup>238</sup> By the end of the month the president was again before Congress. Since his previous appearance, two American ships had been sunk, the *Housatonic* and the *Laman M. Law*, both carrying non-combatant cargos. Other neutral nations were hesitant to join the United States in preventing further maritime deprivations. Wilson requested Congress to support a policy of armed neutrality for American merchant ships.<sup>239</sup>

While Washington was occupied with international affairs, business in Wichita Falls continued. At a time when the president stood before Congress requesting support for his armed neutrality policy, J.A. Kemp appeared before the Texas Industrial Congress promoting the benefits of safe farming. The fact that the war had drained the resources of European countries, including food supplies, was easily understood. So devastated were the people of the countries involved, and so great their need for food, that European demand could easily drain the food supply of the United States when maritime shipping was restored at the conclusion of the war. This would require food production on both a large and small scale. Support of farmers and agricultural work could provide the food needed to feed the people of the world.<sup>240</sup> But farmers

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<sup>236</sup> "A Ship a Week for US: To and From Falmouth on a Prescribed Route," *New York Times*, February 1, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/ship-week-us/docview/99928236/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>237</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 137-140.

<sup>238</sup> "Text of President Wilson's Address," *New York Times*, February 4, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/text-president-wilsons-address/docview/99920533/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>239</sup> "Text of President Wilson's Address to Congress," *New York Times*, February 27, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/text-president-wilsons-address-congress/docview/99904528/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>240</sup> "Timely Advice," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 21, 1917, 8, microfilm.

needed the ability of getting water to their crops. Kemp expressed this same theme of preparing to assist the European nations while speaking at the Texas Bankers Association Seventh District meeting. He directed his comments at the issue of water resources--an issue that, to him, remained important.<sup>241</sup> An amendment to the state constitution was before the Texas Legislature seeking to grant water improvement districts more authority. Since 1893, Kemp had worked to ease state water regulations so that irrigation of the farmland surrounding Wichita Falls might become a reality. Approved by the 35<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature on March 19, 1917, H.B. No. 237 successfully amended the laws, which had prevented water districts from establishing conservation programs. Under the new regulations, construction of reservoirs that would supply water to their surrounding areas became possible.<sup>242</sup>

Anticipated assistance in re-supplying food in Europe following the war involved banks and railroads in the United States as well. Water resources would give farmers the ability to grow crops, but also involved the costs for seed, equipment, and an ability to transport their crops to market. As a director for the Eleventh District of the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas, Frank Kell's service had been continuous since 1914, when the institution had been established. He was in attendance for the re-election of the executive officers for that organization in January 1917.<sup>243</sup> Kell was considered an important individual. Although he and Joseph Kemp had, by this time, sold their railroad interests to the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas (Katy) Railroad, Kell remained an influential voice for appropriate regulation of rail services. His opinion regarding S.B. 219 appeared in the newspapers as a dissenting voice for the regulation of interstate commerce. Known as the "Shreveport Case," the bill had originated from complaints brought by

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<sup>241</sup> "Food Shortage to Follow War, Bankers Told," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 22, 1917, 1, microfilm.

<sup>242</sup> [HB 237 CH 88, Texas General Laws 35th Regular Session, Relating to providing a more adequate system of laws relating to irrigation and declaring the unappropriated waters of the State the property of the State.](#) accessed July 14, 2021, Under the provisions of H.R. No. 237, which amended the Texas Constitution, control of water rights was placed under districts established to raise funding for the management and conservation of the water resources of the state. Texas was divided into three districts designated to the northern, eastern, and western regions of the state. The power of oversight for these districts was placed under the jurisdiction of the Board of Water Engineers established by the Thirty -Third Texas Legislature in 1913.

<sup>243</sup> "Officers of Reserve Bank Are Re-Elected," *Dallas Morning News*, January 5, 1917, 5, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2A328DB004A6%402421234-106B2A32E043B3BB%404-106B2A34D24AC462%40Officers%2Bof%2BReserve%2BBank%2BAre%2BRe-Elected.>



Louisiana regarding interstate shipping rates. The proposed legislation could be construed as retaliatory on the part of Texas, opposing a decision of the Interstate Commerce Commission. As such, he could not support the bill or its attempt to control railroad shipping. He responded that the rail companies, either right or wrong in their setting of shipping rates, were not the initial cause of an imperfect circumstance. It was his belief that action against the railroads should not occur and that the proposed S.B. 219 legislation could not be considered an example of good government.<sup>244</sup>

During the last days of the second congressional session, approval of the president's armed neutrality policy stalled. For those legislators who desired a war commitment, Wilson was again refusing to accept the responsibility for protecting American interests in the world. Stirred by Germany's bold aggression, the House passed the armed neutrality bill on March 2, sending it to the Senate for consideration.<sup>245</sup> There, the stage was already set by those individuals wishing to contest the legislation. Debate over the merits of the bill and its legality brought to light a law preventing merchant ships to be armed for action against vessels of a friendly nation.<sup>246</sup> For individuals opposing the legislation, arming the country's merchant fleet guaranteed entry into the conflict for the United States. Since the United States had, until this time, attempted to maintain a position of friendship with the German Empire, the bill never left the Senate. The 64<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned on March 4, 1917 with the bill unpassed.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> "Contrary To Good Government," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 15, 1917, 6, microfilm.

<sup>245</sup> "House Passes Armed Neutrality Bill by Vote of 403-13," *Dallas Morning News*, March 2, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2376AB9E46CC%402421290-106B2376BACA425B%400-106B237804018D9C%40House%2BPasses%2BArmed%2BNeutrality%2BBill%2Bby%2BVote%2Bof%2B403%2Bto%2B13>.

<sup>246</sup> "Piracy Statute Blocking Wilson," *New York Times*, March 5, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/piracy-statute-blocking-wilson/docview/99954106/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>247</sup> "Armed Neutrality Bill in Danger," *Dallas Morning News*, March 4, 1917, 8, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2397DADD66BE%402421292-106B239A0C046654%407-106B23A21CF26AFD%40Armed%2BNeutrality%2BBill%2Bis%2Bin%2BDanger>.

On March 1, the Associated Press news services began reporting on the Zimmerman document detailing a German plot against the United States.<sup>248</sup> The files that would provide verification of authenticity were contained in the records of the State Department through which it had been passed on January 17, 1917. The plot was to keep the United States occupied with its southern border and thereby unable to help with Britain and France. In return Mexico would regain its lost territory of Texas, Arizona, and California for assisting Germany in its war efforts. The revelation of the scheme forced a pivotal change in the president's thinking and his efforts to keep the United States uninvolved in the war.<sup>249</sup>

The hostile actions of the German government, through its resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and the plot to use Mexico and Japan against the United States, provided the reasons that changed the president's mind, bringing the United States into WWI. U.S. entry into the war could no longer be prevented. On March 9, President Wilson issued the order to arm American merchant ships.<sup>250</sup> Nine days later, three American ships were sunk with loss of life from two of the vessels.<sup>251</sup> In response, the president called Congress back into session for April 2, two weeks earlier than its previous schedule. The potential for war between the United States and Germany was becoming increasingly likely.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> "Germany Plotting to Involve Mexico and Japan in War with United States; Texas, New Mexico and Arizona Carranza's Share of Spoils for Causing Japan to Turn Traitor to Entente," *Dallas Morning News*, March 1, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B23277102C8A7%402421289-106B23277957E64F%40-106B2328ED3D2F9D%40Germany%2BPlotting%2Bto%2BInvolve%2BMexico%2Band%2BJapan%2Bin%2BWar%2Bwith%2BUnited%2BStates%253B%2BTexas%252C%2BNew%2BMexico%2Band%2BArizona%2BCarranza%2527s%2BShare%2Bof%2BSpoils%2Bfor%2BCausing%2BJapan%2Bto%2BTurn%2BTraitor%2Bto%2BEntente>.

<sup>249</sup> Tuchman, 168-173, 182.

<sup>250</sup> "President Wilson Orders American Merchant Ships Armed: Congress Called to Meet April 16—Peace or War Up to Germany," *Dallas Morning News*, March 10, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B22DDB86FE30D%402421298-106B22DDCE10F697%40>.

<sup>251</sup> "Three American Ships Are Torpedoed With Probable Loss of Life," *Dallas Morning News*, March 19, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B232DD1C38346%402421307-106B232DDF5F1F30%40-106B232ED052EAD1%40Three%2BAmerican%2BShips%2BAre%2BTorpedoed%2Bwith%2BProbable%2BLoss%2Bof%2BLife>.

<sup>252</sup> "Congress Called to Meet April 2 to Consider War With Germany," *Dallas Morning News*, March 22, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B232DD1C38346%402421307-106B232DDF5F1F30%40-106B232ED052EAD1%40Three%2BAmerican%2BShips%2BAre%2BTorpedoed%2Bwith%2BProbable%2BLoss%2Bof%2BLife>.

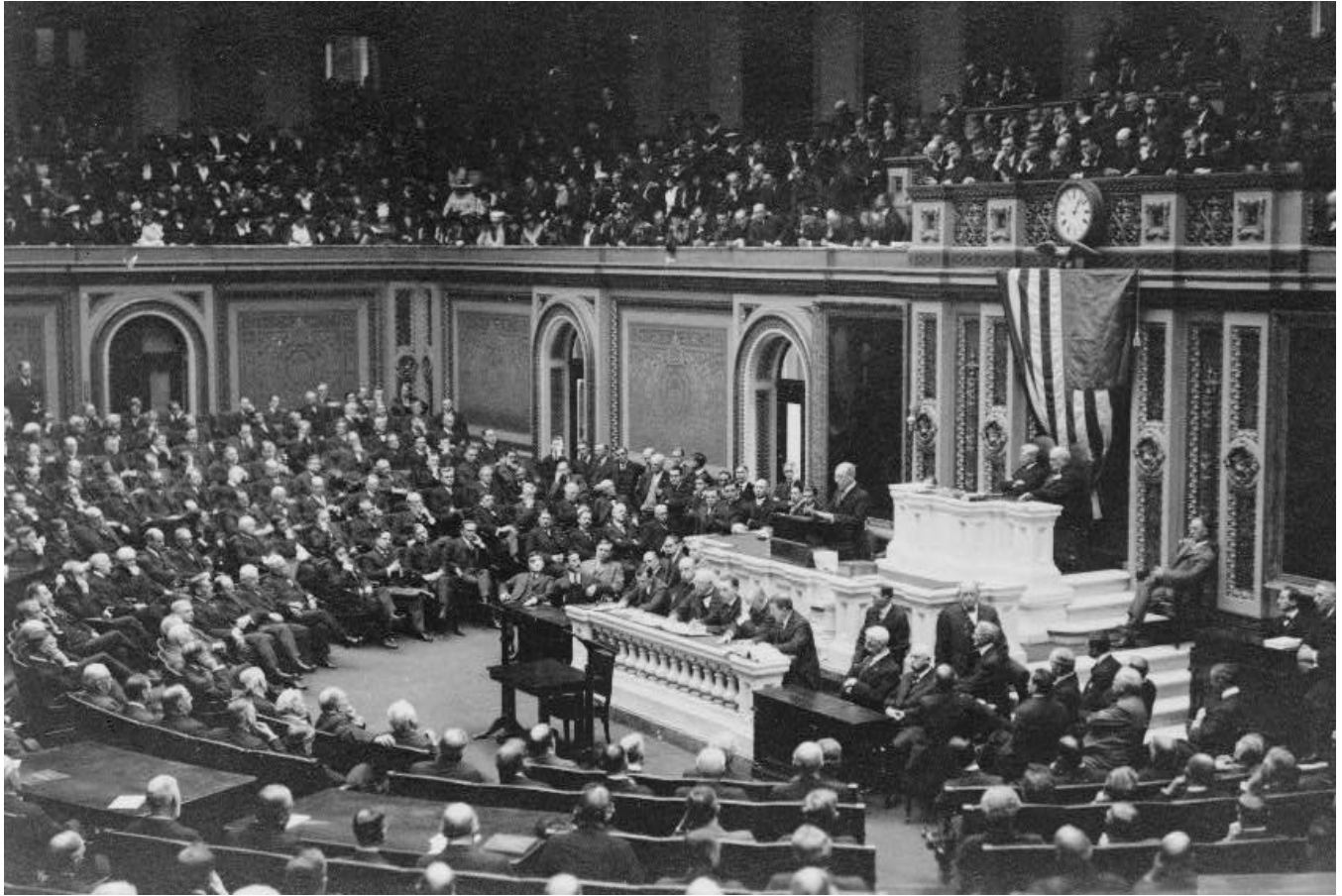


Figure 17. President Woodrow Wilson addresses Congress, April 1917. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Wilson requested that the assembled legislators declare a state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government. His comments covered the immediate past, in which he referenced his request for arming American merchant ships during the policy of neutrality. This, he acknowledged, had become a failed policy, one that he had sought to implement until forced into a more extreme position by the actions of the German government. Now he submitted to Congress five points considered important for effectively winning the war against Germany. He sought the immediate cooperation of the United States with the governments of those countries already at war with Germany. To support the Entente Powers he proposed the extension of liberal financial credit, effectively combining the resources of the

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[com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B233E1C9ABF94%402421310-106B233E2E88A6D3%400-106B23401DE21151%40Congress%2BCalled%2Bto%2BMeet%2BApril%2B2%2Bto%2BConsider%2BWar%2Bwith%2BGermany](http://com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B233E1C9ABF94%402421310-106B233E2E88A6D3%400-106B23401DE21151%40Congress%2BCalled%2Bto%2BMeet%2BApril%2B2%2Bto%2BConsider%2BWar%2Bwith%2BGermany).

United States with theirs. He called for the United States to organize and mobilize an initial armed force of 500,000 troops as prescribed by the statutes of the United States. This could be supplemented with additional enlistments in the same number as needed or as training of the forces might allow. The final point was the raising of war funds through equitable taxation in such a manner so as to prevent the United States from borrowing money.<sup>253</sup>

Across the country, tabloids carried articles of acceptance for the president's address and positive support for his actions.<sup>254</sup> The resolution having already been written after seeking the recommendations of the State Department and receiving the approval of House committees acknowledged that a state of war now existed between the United States and Germany. It further directed the president to use the entire strength of the country's military and naval forces, along with the resources of the United States government, to bring the conflict to an effective conclusion. Approval in the Senate was quickly confirmed, with their endorsement returned two days later. Senators approved the resolution with an 82 to 6 vote before forwarding it on to the House for consideration. The six dissenting votes were cast by those members who had frequently opposed Wilson's policies as hostile.<sup>255</sup> In a session ending at 3:30 A.M. on April 6, the House of Representatives passed the war resolution with a vote of 373 to 50, before forwarding it to the White House. The president signed the war resolution and issued a proclamation of war just after 1:00 pm on April 6, 1917.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> "President Asks for War Against Germany and for Army of 500,000: Wilson Greeted with Deafening Cheers as He Enters House to Deliver Address," *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2487D5B679D6%402421322-106B2487EAD10E35%400-106B248989FB5474%40President%2BAsks%2Bfor%2BWar%2BAgainst%2BGermany%2Band%2Bfor%2BArm%2Bof%2B500%252C000>.

<sup>254</sup> "Newspapers of the Nation Commend Wilson's Step," *Houston Post*, April 3, 1917, 3, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph609217/m1/1/?q=Newspapers%20of%20the%20Nation%20Commend>, accessed July 15, 2021, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>.

<sup>255</sup> "Resolution Declaring State of War Exists Passed by Senate," *Dallas Morning News*, April 5, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2496461FB978%402421324-106B2496592A63F1%400-106B249804A66E9B%40Resolution%2BDeclaring%2BState%2Bof%2BWar%2BExists%2BPassed%2Bby%2BSenate%252C%2B82%2Bto%2B6>.

<sup>256</sup> "President Signs War Resolution and News is Flashed to Warships," *Dallas Morning News*, April 7, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2496461FB978%402421324-106B2496592A63F1%400-106B249804A66E9B%40Resolution%2BDeclaring%2BState%2Bof%2BWar%2BExists%2BPassed%2Bby%2BSenate%252C%2B82%2Bto%2B6>.

Between the United States and its new allies, the massive amount of work for mobilizing the country's diplomatic, economic, and military preparation had begun. First to be accomplished was the transmission of copies of the resolution and proclamation to all foreign ministers to be forwarded on to their governments. Under the new war status, restrictions on the actions of armed merchant ships no longer existed, and the Treasury Department was ordered to cease transmitting the armament capacity of merchant ships entering American harbors. In concurrence with the seizure of German ships already in American harbors, it was expected that Entente war vessels would be withdrawn from the western Atlantic, although they would soon be given free entry into American harbors as American naval patrols took effect. Almost immediately words of congratulations and demands began to arrive from France and Britain, desperately requesting the needed assistance of their new American ally.<sup>257</sup>

In addition to the extension of credit to America's new allies came the financial liability of clothing, housing, and equipping 500,000 new members of the military. Clothing, equipment, tools, and other supplies required additional labor to produce the needed items for the soldiers fighting the war. This created a level of cooperation between labor and business interests which had not previously existed. Before the war began, in 1914 economic conditions in the United States were stagnant, with little opportunity for workers to improve their position. By the time the country had committed itself to the conflict, prosperity had risen to significantly higher levels. Still, ramping up production required the cooperation of industrial enterprises and workers. Covering the cost of manufactured goods prior to the receipt of funding made some executives anxious over the possibility of bankruptcy. Only with persuasion were they moved to accept their responsibility. Laborers seeking to improve their working conditions sought a reduction in weekly working hours. Secretary of War Newton Baker refused to entertain any adjustment to labor conditions due to the Allied expectations and the demands of wartime production. Workers who had migrated from European countries, and who frequently sympathized with the Central powers, were more pacifistic in their attitude toward the war. Their perspective changed when the newly instituted draft forced enlistment of their sons and

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<sup>257</sup> "President Signs War Resolution and News is Flashed to Warships," 1.

acquaintances for military duty. It now became important for everyone to support the war effort by working to ensure that the troops had adequate clothing and dependable equipment.<sup>258</sup>

Supplying the army with weapons was more difficult than producing clothes and supplies. By the time the war had begun in 1914, munitions development had advanced into specialized weaponry. Each nation sought to gain an advantage by protecting the security of its latest innovation in ordinance. British soldiers initially forced to hold positions against intense fire could only respond with inferior artillery until manufacturers improved on their designs. German planners drew on experience from the Russo-Japanese War and the use of heavy caliber weapons and machine guns used in that conflict. Effectively, this familiarity placed them in a more advantageous position militarily than that of the French forces. This tactical knowledge proved effective even while all of the participants were drastically underestimating the amount of bullets they would expend and the associated cost.<sup>259</sup> Although the sinking of the *Lusitania* almost two years earlier had created a possibility that the United States would be forced into the war, very little preparation had been made for military provisions prior to the declaration of April 6. It was the responsibility of the General Staff and the War College to conduct studies of different possibilities, developing response strategies for the contingencies that might arise. But, under budgetary constraints issued by Congress in 1914, the General Staff in Washington had experienced a reduction in staff. Few of the remaining officers had the necessary experience to carry out such operations, and this made it more difficult to raise a military force responding to the call of war.<sup>260</sup>

The War Department originally planned to provide tents for housing troops during training. However, it was quickly determined that the cost and availability of materials under the existing conditions made canvas housing too costly. A second training facilities proposal considered using wood for the flooring and walls, with canvas roofs. The realization that twice as many individuals could be housed under a roof covering two stories brought the final approval of design plans for structures built entirely of wood. With toilets and washrooms on one end,

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<sup>258</sup> Fredrick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker, America at War, Volume I* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1931), 264-265.

<sup>259</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 271-272.

<sup>260</sup> Pershing, 28.

this layout became the standard under which housing for the army would be provided. National Guard troops would remain housed under canvas tenting, mostly in the southern states. Still, there remained an immense amount of coordination required between contractors and labor, including skilled and unskilled workers, to construct the additional sixteen cantonments across the country for the army. Continuing to debate the emergency appropriations, Congress had not yet approved any funding for building the camps. Construction companies were being asked to commit to massive projects under conditions that might prove unsuccessful.<sup>261</sup>

Decisions regarding camp locations created strong competition between municipalities vying for the award of a government contract. To qualify for consideration a location had to be able to provide sufficient clear acreage, access to a nearby railroad, and a good water supply. The General Munitions Board added further requirements pertaining to the availability of materials and their delivery. Communities had to be willing to place a hold on their local construction projects, allowing skilled and unskilled labor time to complete the construction of a camp. The process of deciding where to locate became so time-consuming that Secretary Baker ordered September 1, 1917 as the deadline for completion of each of the sixteen camps for the army, aviation fields, and additional constructions.<sup>262</sup>

As difficult as it was to raise and equip the forces, the fact that the air department had been left immensely under-developed quickly became evident. Between the initial flight of the Wright brothers in 1903 and the outbreak of the war in 1914, European countries had outdistanced the United States in their development of military aviation. France led in aviation spending with an appropriation of seven million dollars for the development of its air arm. Russia and Germany had appropriated significantly less than France, with aviation budgets of three million dollars each, while one million dollars was spent on Japan's aviation program.<sup>263</sup> Congress had passed the Aviation Act of 1914, with an appropriation of \$300,000 for American aviation, representing a four percent investment compared to the French program.<sup>264</sup> Secretary Baker, who had taken office at about the same time that General Pershing had advanced into

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<sup>261</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 234-237.

<sup>262</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 242-243.

<sup>263</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 280.

<sup>264</sup> H.R. 5304 Public, No. 143, Ch. 186, 514.

Mexico, acknowledged the inferiority of the army's airplanes, and was determined to reorganize the aviation section. He understood the frustration of the men flying for the United States and serving under the direction of non-flying commanders.<sup>265</sup> All eight of the airplanes initially sent to Mexico in the search for Poncho Villa were out of service within the first month of the expedition through use or accident.<sup>266</sup>

The United States had acquired fifty-nine airplanes for its military aviation program by the beginning of 1916. Of these, twenty-one of these aircraft had been condemned, eleven destroyed in accidents, three badly needed repair, leaving twenty-three available for active service.<sup>267</sup> Baker recalled Colonel George O. Squier, the United States military attaché in London, to take charge of the aviation section reorganization. As chief of the Signal Corps, Squier increased the number of planes to 72 and had another 302 on order by December 1916. During the initial months of 1917, following Baker's review of aviation, seven regular army air squadrons began the organization process. Stationed at Columbus, New Mexico, the First Aero Squadron was at full complement of personnel and equipment. The First Company, Second Aero Squadron in Manila, was in the process of expanding. The Third Aero Squadron, practically complete with personnel, was being organized in San Antonio, along with the Fourth and Fifth Aero Squadrons. The organization of the Sixth and Seventh Aero Squadrons for assignment to Fort Kamehameha, Honolulu, Hawaii and Panama, respectively, had just begun the selection of officers, material and enlisted personnel. To expand the Aviation Section, Squier sought funding from Congress, which adjourned on March 4, without considering the appropriation request.<sup>268</sup>

Following the army's withdrawal from Mexico in late January, General Pershing returned to El Paso to resume command over that portion of the border. But, on February 19, 1917, the death of Major-General Fredrick Funston altered this assignment. Pershing was ordered to Fort

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<sup>265</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 284.

<sup>266</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 283.

<sup>267</sup> Hennessy, 156. Of the 23 airplanes available for service, 4 seaplanes were in Manila, 2 flying boats and 9 trainers were at San Diego, and 8 airplanes were on the Mexican border with the Pershing Expedition.

<sup>268</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 284.



Sam Houston as Commander of the Southern Department, becoming Funston's successor.<sup>269</sup> Serving in this capacity, he sought to emulate the actions of Army Chief of Staff Hugh L. Scott and Major-General Leonard Wood, accepting an invitation to participate in the 1917 Texas Girls Honor Guard encampment.<sup>270</sup> Organized in 1916 when the army was sent to the Mexican Border, the Honor Guard offered women between the ages of 14 and 30 an opportunity to serve as war relief representatives. An auxiliary organization to the Red Cross, the Honor Guard sold Liberty Bonds, offered social outlets for soldiers, and supported those injured in war, their families, and the general public. Annual encampments provided members training first aid, social service, nursing, and practical military instruction. An army officer was on duty for each of the training camps.<sup>271</sup> General Pershing accepted the invitation to serve as the attending army officer for the encampment to be held beginning June 18 in Wichita Falls. To ensure camp safety for 3,000 girls, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce provided sanitation and police for the grounds of the Lake Wichita site. Leading families of the city acted as chaperones and two doctors were in attendance during the ten-day event.<sup>272</sup>

General Pershing arrived in Washington on May 10 for a meeting with Chief-of-Staff Major-General Hugh L. Scott. As he had assumed, he was to command a division in France, and discussions moved to the needed preparations for that assignment. To his astonishment, he realized that very little had been done to implement plans for placing an army into the European war theater. As such, there was little that could take place the following day when he met with the Secretary of War. Their discussions left Pershing believing that he was to take command of a division; he left the meeting with basic plans for infantry and artillery regiments, but very little

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<sup>269</sup> John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces, *My Experiences in the World War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Limited, 1931), 24.

<sup>270</sup> "Pershing to Be at Encampment," *Wichita Weekly Times*, March 23, 1917, 2, microfilm.

<sup>271</sup> "May Organize Girls' National Honor Guard," *Dallas Morning News*, July 30, 1916, 12, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B30A3ED9859B4%402421075-106B30A716D32BBA%4011-106B30B01289C5D7%40May%2BOrganize%2BGirls%2527%2BNational%2BHonor%2BGuard>.

<sup>272</sup> "Wichita Falls Arranging For Girls Honor Guard Camp," *Dallas Morning News*, June 3, 1917, 6, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B263430991D99%402421383-106B26356FBAB414%4017-106B263B80943666%40Wichita%2BFalls%2BArranging%2Bfor%2BGirls%2BHonor%2BGuard%2BCamp>.

detail. It was urgent that preparations be made as promptly as practical. It surprised him when he was called back to the secretary's office and informed he had been appointed to serve as Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) by President Wilson. His orders were to choose his staff and depart for France immediately.<sup>273</sup>

Secretary Baker had called a conference of military leaders to discuss the number of rifles, machine guns, light and heavy artillery, ammunition and airplanes available to the U.S. troops. The nation's inventory consisted of 285,000 Springfield rifles, 400 light field guns and 150 heavy field guns, but the army did not have enough armaments to deploy in the field. In 1916, Congress had appropriated \$12 million for the purchase of arms, but at the time there were only 1,500 guns of various makes that were available for issue. Following test firings in the spring of 1917, orders for the Vickers-Maxim heavy machine gun that had been placed the previous year were cancelled and replaced with an entirely different weapon. Until enough of these weapons could be manufactured, the United States was forced to purchase its machine guns from France. Small arms ammunition could easily be supplied since manufacturers were already providing that commodity for the Allies' Enfield rifles. Thanks to his service on the Mexican border, Pershing understood the benefits to having a mechanized army. For reconnaissance missions, he would rather have an airplane than an entire regiment of mounted cavalry.<sup>274</sup> He was highly critical of the state of United States military aviation in 1917. Of the 55 airplanes in the Air Service, Pershing considered 51 obsolete and the remaining 4 obsolescent.<sup>275</sup> The annual reports of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics supported his position. The country was significantly unprepared to provide pilots or airplanes to the war effort. It was estimated that only a little over fifty percent of the 65 officers and 1,000 enlisted men of the Signal Corps Air Service could actually fly. Of these, less than twenty percent could pass the operating requirements of the current battle conditions. This meant that the United States had an estimated six pilots available for active duty, none of whom had any experience with aircraft guns, bombs, or bombing devices.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Pershing, 28-29.

<sup>274</sup> "Aeroplane's Value Seen by Pershing," *Wichita Daily Times*, December 21, 1916, 9, microfilm.

<sup>275</sup> Pershing, 37.

<sup>276</sup> Pershing, 36-37.

Two days prior to General Pershing's departure for France, the deficiency of the air service became strikingly evident. A cable, addressed to President Wilson from French Prime Minister Alexandre Ribot, delineated the Allies' expectations of the American contribution to the air war. By the spring campaign of 1918, the United States was expected to form a flying corps equipped with 4,500 aircraft, including personnel and material, 5,000 pilots and 50,000 mechanics. Congress recognized the air program's deficiencies. Using the French request as their basis, it appropriated \$640 million for aviation in July 1917.<sup>277</sup>

Enlisting volunteers in the armed forces under the original plan failed to supply the needed troops, prompting the president to take Secretary Baker's advice and implement a selective draft. Although neither man was in favor of conscription, it was the only solution to meeting the military's recruitment goals.<sup>278</sup> The Draft Act of May 18, 1917 empowered President Wilson to increase the military strength of the United States by 500,000 enlisted men. June 5 became the designated day for voluntary registration.<sup>279</sup> By the end of the month, less than fifty percent of the war quota for building the army had been reached. Recruiting officers attempted to dispel the belief that an individual could no longer register prior to the deadline. Those eligible young men who would voluntarily enlist were better prepared to receive their choice of assignments and opportunities for advancement. Recruiting stations throughout the country opened, offering an opportunity to enlist for active duty. Among the permanent recruiting stations opened in North Texas was one located in Wichita Falls.<sup>280</sup>

The decision for the location for the army camps and the millions of dollars to be spent on facilities and their related supplies rested with the Secretary of War. Delegations from across the country arrived in Washington to submit their cases for directing funds toward their municipalities. Due to the large number of representatives offering the benefits of their

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<sup>277</sup> Pershing, 37-38.

<sup>278</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 184.

<sup>279</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 215.

<sup>280</sup> "Army Needs Recruits; May Volunteer Until Drafted, *Dallas Morning News*, May 31, 1917, 15, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B256EE540CF80%402421380-106B257034AFF887%4014-106B25745C00D67D%40Army%2BNeeds%2BRecruits%253B%2BMay%2BVolunteer%2Buntil%2BDrafted>.

locations, cities were directed to submit their requests through the local department commanders. Because of the intensity of the competition, a directive for streamlining the process was issued by the War Department, which instructed department commanders to appoint a board of officers to visit recommended sites. Reports on those deemed to be the most acceptable would be submitted back to Washington for consideration. Inspection criteria included transportation by rail or water, area sanitation, community moral standings, conditions of law enforcement, and the ability of the proposed site to adapt to the needs of the training camp.<sup>281</sup>

Secretary Baker appealed to the governors of the various states for their cooperation in ensuring that each camp and its surrounding area be kept free of improper and immoral influences, protecting the soldiers from contact with saloons and prostitutes. A community that could not strictly meet these conditions was subject to losing the government's consideration.<sup>282</sup> On the same day that the Draft Act was signed into law, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce released a press statement that their city was prepared to offer a camp site to the army. The statement included an invitation to the camp locating board to visit the city and inspect the site near Lake Wichita.<sup>283</sup> With a decision close at hand, the aviation school topic was again discussed during the chamber meeting on May 22. At this time Secretary Johnson recommended that the matter be temporarily tabled until an announcement of a final decision was received.<sup>284</sup> Four weeks later, the War Department announced that Wichita Falls would receive an aviation camp. Additional camps would be located at Fort Worth and Dallas. Each cantonment would serve as a training camp comprised of two squadrons. The aviation section in San Antonio dispatched Captain Maxwell Kirby to conduct an inspection of each proposed camp sites. Additional plans for three aviation camps in San Antonio, capable of accommodating four

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<sup>281</sup> Palmer, *Volume I*, 239-240.

<sup>282</sup> "Baker Makes an Appeal for Clean Army Training Camps," *Dallas Morning News*, May 26, 1917, 2, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B253FB595C428%402421375-106B253FE5665614%401-106B25419709BCBE%40Baker%2BMakes%2BAppeal%2Bfor%2BClean%2BArmy%2BTraining%2BCamps>.

<sup>283</sup> "Wichita Falls Wants Army Camp," *Dallas Morning News*, May 19, 1917, 14, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B250BB37C0FDA%402421368-106B250CD8C7665E%4013-106B251076EFD44A>.

<sup>284</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, May 22, 1917.

squadrons, each were announced in the same report. At these posts, enlistees would receive initial training before being reassigned to the subsidiary camps.<sup>285</sup>

On May 29, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce addressed the issue of selling Liberty Bonds to support the war. Frank Kell entered a motion for the creation of a Liberty Bond committee consisting of fourteen members. Five members from the Chamber of Commerce were chosen to serve, including Kell and Marlow. The remaining committee seats were filled with representatives from county banks.<sup>286</sup> At the following meeting, Kell suggested that a meeting of the citizenry be called to discuss the sale of bonds before discussion turned to aviation. B. F. Johnson had been in communication with Dr. Reath, a representative of the Aviation Department, who had indicated to him that Wichita Falls had a “quite promising” chance of receiving a training school. He believed that of the three cities in Texas which had been inspected, Wichita Falls had the best chance of being accepted.<sup>287</sup>

At the conclusion of Captain Kirby’s inspection trip, many of the proposed sites he had visited were eliminated. Some of the entries were too small to meet government requirements, which specified a square mile of level land, free of obstructions with a nearby source of water. Others were passed over because they were not close enough to a railroad and did not have the potential for construction of a spur to the site. Fort Worth, Dallas, and Wichita Falls remained the leading locations within the state for aviation camp placements.<sup>288</sup> Kirby returned to San Antonino to complete his report after which the location of the camps would be announced. For those sites chosen, work on the schools would begin approximately three weeks following the decision.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> “Three More Aviation Camps for San Antonio,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 27, 1917, 2, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B261952B3C35A%402421407-106B2619772C7288%401-106B261AD84D47C2%40Three%2BMore%2BAviation%2BCamps%2Bfor%2BSan%2BAntonio>.

<sup>286</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, May 29, 1917.

<sup>287</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, June 6, 1917.

<sup>288</sup> “Aero Captain Impressed by Sites Offered for Aviation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 28, 1917, 1, microfilm.

<sup>289</sup> “Aviation Camp Sites at Wichita Falls Inspected,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 30, 1917, 8, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX->

For the second time in 1917, Wichita Falls took action, complying with Secretary Baker's request for keeping army camps free of improper and immoral activities, bringing legal action against businesses involved with those services. On July 19, the county attorney issued citations against owners and operators of "disorderly houses" and saloons operating in and around the city. Thirty-eight notices had previously been issued with plans existing for the delivery of additional citations. This would be a continuation of proceedings begun five months earlier under which owners and proprietors of disorderly houses in the segregated district had endured a thirty-one day closure of their businesses in an effort to keep prostitution at bay around the camps.<sup>290</sup>

Henry Arnold had been serving in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer in Washington since his request to be relieved from flight duty in 1914. Now a major, he was the youngest individual to have attained that rank. When the War Department organized its inspection boards on July 25, Arnold was appointed. Overseas, the inspection board assembled in Paris charged with examining aviation officers' fitness for the junior military aviator rating. The second board, to which Arnold was appointed, remained in Washington with the same assignment.<sup>291</sup> Two weeks later he arrived in North Texas as part of the team inspecting aviation training camp locations. Following visits to Dallas and Fort Worth, the army delegation arrived in Wichita Falls.<sup>292</sup> Although hopeful, the reception committees of each city that the inspection team visited did not get definitive comments from the officers. The officers complimented the communities and the people in each town, but left without any further comments. As ordered, their findings

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106B262F15007C73%402421410-106B262F9A5A32A5%407-106B2631F2ADA358%40Aviation%2BCamp%2BSites%2Bat%2BWichita%2BFalls%2BInspected.

<sup>290</sup> "Wichita Falls to Close Its 'District'," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 19, 1917, 3, microfilm.

<sup>291</sup> "Air Boards Here and Abroad to Examine Military Aviators," *New York Times*, July 24, 1917, 1, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://login.ezproxy.uta.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/historical-newspapers/air-boards-here-abroad-examine-military-aviators/docview/99815223/se-2?accountid=7117>.

<sup>292</sup> "Officers Inspect Sites for Aviation Training School," *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1917, 1, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-10740EB95D131D80%402421446-10740EBB5140A810%4034-10740EC188B9D748%40Officers%2BInspect%2BSites%2Bfor%2BAviation%2BTraining%2BSchool>.

would be reported back to Washington, where the final decision would be made by the war department.<sup>293</sup>

Joseph Kemp reported on the visit of the army inspection team when the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce met again on August 7. As with the other municipalities, the officers had been congenial, expressing that the suggested locations met the required criteria, yet had not offered any further comments. Kemp felt that indications made by the officers tended to favor the location that Wichita Falls had offered. Although a favorable outcome seemed possible from the inspection, Kemp thought it would be wise to send Chamber Secretary Johnson to the nation's capital. It would be Johnson's assignment to make sure that the interests of Wichita Falls were represented for the awarding of a flight training school contract. With the motion seconded, Johnson was authorized to represent the city of Wichita Falls and instructed to leave for Washington.<sup>294</sup> The following day, newspapers carried the announcement that Johnson had been dispatched to Washington, where he would present a formal application for an aviation training camp.<sup>295</sup>

Kemp continued the discussion of the aviation camp at the chamber's regularly scheduled meeting the following week. It was his recommendation that the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce authorize a contract to be made with full financial backing, and that the chamber underwrite whatever amount should be needed to acquire the camp contract. Discussions followed over the cost of extending water mains and power lines to the camp, with a committee appointed to review the matter.<sup>296</sup> On August 23, 1917, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce ratified a resolution entering into a ten-month lease with the United States

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<sup>293</sup> "Army Men Visit Aviation Sites," *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1917, 5, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-10740EB95D131D80%402421446-10740EB9A857B688%40-10740EBCE5ED51F0%40Army%2BMen%2BVisit%2BAviation%2BSites>.

<sup>294</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, August 7, 1917.

<sup>295</sup> "Wichita Falls Want Aviation Camp," *Dallas Morning News*, August 8, 1917, 2, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-10740ECE1BBC1518%402421449-10740ECE4D7D3F40%401-10740ECFC14E07B8%40Wichita%2BFalls%2BWants%2BAviation%2BCamp>.

<sup>296</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, August 14, 1917.

government. Annual renewals of the lease agreement were listed with an option to buy the property at any time during the term of the agreement for: “Blocks fourteen, (14); fifteen (15); twenty two, (22) and twenty three, (23); League one, (1): Denton County School Land of Wichita County, Texas.”<sup>297</sup>



Conditions in the United States changed during the first three months of 1917. At the close of the previous year, Wichita Falls was attempting to attract the government’s attention to its potential for the placement of a flight school. Pilots that had visited the area previously expressed their belief that it could be of benefit in the development of military aviation. Those who had an interest in aviation knew it to be of benefit and could see the potential it might hold for the future. The Mexican border problem still had not provided the impetus for the United States to bring aviation to the forefront of preparedness. It was the conditions which drew the United States into the Great War that changed the environment in which Wichita Falls was working to attract the army’s attention. As long as President Wilson kept the United States out of the conflict, the status of aviation in Washington remained under-appreciated. When Wilson’s neutrality policies became unsustainable due to the Zimmermann document and German submarine warfare, the possibilities for remaining neutral disappeared. The call to action ultimately revealed how far behind the United States was militarily. With the receipt of the Ribot cable from France, attention became acutely focused on aviation. Entering the European conflict forced the country to rapidly mobilize all aspects of its military. Wichita Falls’ status shifted from one of a few cities seeking a base to one of many attempting to attract the attention of the government. The leadership of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, through the actions of Joseph Kemp and Frank Kell, sought to acquire an aviation field—a goal of civic leaders for several years, even before the outbreak of WWI.

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<sup>297</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, August 23, 1917.



## Chapter 5

January 4, 1918  
General Order No. 2

The undersigned assumed command of the Signal Corps Aviation School at this post command of this post, (Call Field) pursuant to Paragraph 75, Special Orders 280, War Department, Washington, D.C., December 31, 1917.

John B. Brooks, Major  
Signal Corps, Commanding

On the evening of August 20, 1917, B. F. Johnson, Secretary for the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, cabled J. A. Kemp. The negotiations for locating an aviation base in Wichita Falls had been successful. He was returning to Wichita Falls with the leases and contracts for an aviation camp in his possession. The completion of the agreement required the signatures of city officials, yet this would only secure the land and set monetary specifications of a business agreement. The United States government would not agree to any further concessions until the city had proven that it could satisfy previous requirements derived from promises made. It would require efforts on the part of both the local community and the federal government to accomplish all that needed to be done in a short amount of time. The citizens of Wichita Falls were called to a mass meeting where they were informed about the commitments the city had taken on through the Chamber of Commerce, and what they should expect. The acquisition of the aviation camp, soon to be Call Aviation Field, was to provide a new, exciting, and hopefully permanent industry for the area. Airplanes soon filled the skies and soldiers were seen throughout the community.



With the September 1 deadline for deciding the location of the aviation camps approaching, Wichita Falls' representatives needed to make every effort to secure a contract. After B. F. Johnson arrived in Washington, he found that acquiring any government contract required an exceptional amount of effort to finalize a request; the process of completing paperwork had to follow exacting procedures. Once begun, time for preparing the final papers moved at an agonizingly slow pace. Attempting to expedite the process, Wichita County Attorney and Chamber of Commerce President R. L. Huff wired instructions to Johnson giving him the power to sign any agreements associated with the camp on behalf of Wichita Falls. In a

return wire to J. A. Kemp, Johnson stated that he was returning home as quickly as possible. Government officials had declined to accept Huff's telegram as sufficient proof of Johnson's ability to close the contract. Extreme care was being taken to protect the government against any mistakes in the leases and contracts for the camps during the negotiation process. Johnson boarded the next available train back to Wichita Falls, carrying the government lease and contract documents requiring the signatures of chamber officers.<sup>298</sup>

As with many of the representatives who went to Washington seeking to present the advantages of their municipality, Johnson arrived believing that he would be able to conduct his business relatively quickly. He learned that to get anything done in the nation's capital an individual must adapt to Washington's bureaucratic ways. Anxious to conduct his business, Johnson arrived on site early, awakening the janitor and waiting for him to dress and have his breakfast before unlocking the door that would admit him into the War Department offices. Office staff arrived around nine in the morning, followed by the department heads at ten o'clock. The first duties of the day began with the staff reviewing the morning's correspondence. This was followed by lunch, at which time Johnson would have an initial opportunity to conduct his business. Understanding that he would be responsible for payment of the lunch bill, Johnson returned with a substantial expense report in addition to the contracts. Over the course of two mornings, he had followed the same plan of rousing the janitor, and in the process, drawing the scrutiny of a Secret Service officer who it seemed trusted no one.<sup>299</sup>

Fulfilling the promises that Wichita Falls had committed to was already underway at the time the contracts and leases arrived back in Wichita Falls with the secretary. On August 7, Kemp announced that negotiations with the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad (KATY) had concluded and an agreement had been reached. His past associations with the rail company offered personal connections with railroad officials with whom he could negotiate. The rail company agreed to lay the tracks to the aviation site. Generously exceeding what might be expected from other companies, the KATY Railroad had agreed to cover the estimated \$15,000 cost for the mile and a half of track, with no charge to the chamber of commerce. In addition,

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<sup>298</sup> "Johnson Coming Home to Get Aviation Camp Contracts Signed Up," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 21, 1917, 1, microfilm.

<sup>299</sup> "Contract Awarded for Aviation Camp Here," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 27, 1917, 5, microfilm.

the issue of supplying water to the site was being handled by F. N. Lawton, who had been dispatched to Dallas to make the arrangements.<sup>300</sup>

The Mexican experience of the previous year had made it clear that a soldier's health and wellbeing was vitally important to maintain an effective fighting force. Any soldier confined to an infirmary would be ineffective in the fulfillment of his duties. To ensure that the temptations of alcohol and prostitution remained far removed from the training camps, the War Department implemented a five-mile rule around each cantonment. Vice districts within this radius would not be tolerated, and the penalty for not enforcing the requirement would be the loss of a contract. In a letter directed to the mayors of each municipality vying for a base, Secretary of War Baker directed attention to the regulations prohibiting prostitution and alcohol. It would be necessary for local authorities to work with the army to provide a wholesome environment surrounding the camps. The location of the camp lay to the southwest of Wichita Falls, five miles from the city. For the second time since the beginning of 1917, Wichita Falls made efforts to control its "red light" businesses.<sup>301</sup>

Wichita Falls had long been willing to offer more than 600 acres to the government for an aviation school.<sup>302</sup> Now, in consideration of a contract, the land needed attention to bring it into compliance with War Department requirements. In a special meeting on August 23, 1917, the Chamber of Commerce discussed making the camp location ready for construction. Preparatory costs for providing water and additional requirements were estimated at \$12,000; Kell suggested that the money could be raised without a bond issue. Following a vote of approval, a committee was named to raise these funds while a second committee was created to oversee the preparation of the camp site land.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> "Katy Will Lay Tracks to Site Aviation Camp," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 17, 1917, 2, microfilm.

<sup>301</sup> "War Department's Rigid Rules on Vice Resorts," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 22, 1917, 6, microfilm.

<sup>302</sup> "To Seek Army Aviation School," *Dallas Morning News*, December 23, 1917, 8, accessed July 19, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B34D909D9BA98%402421221-106B34D9A866EEEE%407-106B34DC1CFCF59B%40To%2BSeek%2BArmy%2BAviation%2BSchool>.

<sup>303</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, August 23, 1917.

After the contracts and leases were signed on August 23, the construction of the camp began. The Gilsonite Company of Dallas received the contract from the federal government to build the camp facilities at Wichita Falls. Having completed several large construction projects in Dallas, the company was of sufficient size that it would be able secure the labor and materials needed to manage the project. The company's representative, W. B. Jones, arrived in Wichita Falls on August 27; work on the aviation camp began four days later.<sup>304</sup> The first building to be constructed provided temporary office space for the company. Improvements to the camp property began with the filling of an irrigation ditch. The following day, the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway (KATY) began laying the track that would connect the camp to the existing rail lines.<sup>305</sup>

As anticipated by the General Munitions Board, construction of the camps required a large number of skilled and unskilled laborers. Recognizing that the influx of construction workers would overwhelm the lodging facilities of Wichita Falls, on August 27, 1917, the Chamber of Commerce placed a request for assistance on the front page of the *Wichita Daily Times*. The citizens of Wichita Falls were asked to open their homes to accommodate arriving workers, if they had available space to rent. The effort to coordinate available housing with the needs of the labor force would be through the chamber.<sup>306</sup> Plans for the camp included the construction of twelve hangars to house the seventy-two airplanes expected to be assigned to the field. These would have to be large enough to accommodate several aircraft when not in use. A machine shop would be located in close proximity to the hangars. During the construction phase, various buildings around the city would be used as camp offices until the camp headquarters could be constructed. Once completed, the administration building would handle the business of operating the camp with the offices for the department heads, quartermaster, officers, and telegraph staff resided at this location. Since housing would be required to accommodate two squadrons of fliers and additional support personnel, seven to eight two-story

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<sup>304</sup> "Contract Awarded for Aviation Camp Here," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 27, 1917, 5, microfilm.

<sup>305</sup> "Work on Wichita Falls Aviation Camp is Begun," *Dallas Morning News*, September 1, 1917, 4, accessed April 12, 2017, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B276D62469735%402421473-106B276DB929CD5E%403-106B276FDB9F21EB>.

<sup>306</sup> "Want Rooms for 2,000 Carpenters," *Wichita Daily Times*, August 27, 1917, 1, microfilm.

barracks with toilet facilities built to the specifications of the War Department would need to be constructed for this purpose. Officers would have separate housing accommodations, requiring additional buildings. A five-hundred-gallon water tank provided water to the camp. The construction of roads allowed access to each of these locations throughout the camp.<sup>307</sup>

By the end of September, thirty buildings had been roofed and their exteriors finished. Work on the hangars was being completed and the roads cut. The remaining job of painting the buildings was about to begin, along with painting the one hangar that was nearly completed. Positioning the trusses for each of the hangars required a great deal of manpower and coordination when moving them into position. Up to fifty men working together would move the beam to the place where it would later be hoisted into position by a pulley system strong enough to lift it thirty feet to the hangar ceiling.<sup>308</sup>

Airplanes constructed of wood and canvass could more easily be damaged by landing on too hard of a surface. Maintaining a natural surface would better ensure less time that an airplane would be out of service and unable to fly while undergoing needed repairs. To accommodate the JN4 aircraft, the flying field required much attention to make it ready for use. Teams of men worked grading the field, raising clouds of dust as they removed small mounds of dirt, filling hollows with the excess soil that would ultimately render a surface smooth and level for taking off and landings.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> “Many Buildings Required for Aviation Camp,” *Wichita Daily Times*, August 26, 1917, 6, microfilm.

<sup>308</sup> “Aviation Camp Building Program Being Pushed to Completion with Greater Speed than Shown Before,” *Wichita Daily Times*, September 28, 1917, 3, microfilm.

<sup>309</sup> “Aviation Camp Building Program,” 3.



Figure 18. Curtiss JN4 “Jenny” takes off from Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1917. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

The first officer assigned to active duty at the aviation field, Dr. Curtis Atkinson, arrived in Wichita Falls on September 10, 1917. Atkinson’s was charged with overseeing the water conditions of the camp during its construction. The U.S. military had experienced problems with sickness and intestinal illness from unsanitary water conditions at aviation fields in other parts of the United States. As a result, the eight fields opened in Texas each had a medical officer assigned to monitor water purity during their construction. As a First Lieutenant in the Medical Corps, his assignment was to serve as a sanitary officer, reporting on any concerns related to the water supply. During 1917, Wichita Falls was in the midst of a drought, experiencing a shortage of clean water. To purify its water, the city used chloride of lime as part of an old-fashioned process. Atkinson approached city officials with a request to replace the outdated process, which was denied by the City of Wichita Falls. Knowing the seriousness of the situation, he approached the Chamber of Commerce seeking a resolution to the water problem. Purity of water was a promise that was made to acquire the aviation camp contract.<sup>310</sup> Following several meetings on the subject, the Chamber of Commerce authorized Atkinson to order the new equipment and have it installed on the camp water tower.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Curtis Atkinson and Ethel Dulaney, “*Dr. Curtis Atkinson*,” Library of Congress, Texas, Manuscript/mixed Material, accessed May 24, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh002303/>. The city of Wichita Falls was using chloride of lime to purify water at the time. Atkinson requested a liquid chlorinator, considered to be an updated process for water treatment.

<sup>311</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, March 8, 1918.

Within the month, the aviation field was beginning to take shape. The land, which had previously been pastures and wheat fields, was now becoming one of the thirty-two army training camps scattered across the country. By October 14, with the work continuing at a significantly accelerated pace, sixty-five percent of the camp had been completed. These buildings would provide workspace for personnel in support of the aircraft and pilots. In addition to the twelve hangars, which protected the airplanes, were facilities for the quartermaster supply, school building, aero repair shop, machine shop, black smith shop, and motor testing plant. As with any community, there existed a need for services providing food, individual necessities and recreation. These amenities could be obtained at the supplies building, bakery and mess halls, commissary, and YMCA. Charged with keeping vehicles running was a garage, providing the maintenance of the motor pool.<sup>312</sup>



Figure 19. Motor Pool, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1917. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

In a statement released by the War Department in Washington, D.C. on October 19, 1917, the names of the aviation fields under construction became known to the public. In this way distinguished airmen who had died in service to the United States would be honored. The

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<sup>312</sup> “Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One,” *Wichita Falls Times*, May 12, 1957, microfilm.

1913 training accident at Texas City which claimed the life of Lieutenant Call qualified him for this honor. The aviation field located at Wichita Falls would be named for Lieutenant Loren H. Call of the Coast Artillery Corps.<sup>313</sup>

The terms of the Ribot cable had set the aviation standards by which the United States now struggled to meet. The Bolling Commission had determined that the country's aviation manufacturers would be unable to meet Allied expectations by the spring of 1918. Aircraft that could meet the demands of the ongoing conflict would have to be obtained from allied manufacturers until the United States could reach more advanced levels of design and production. In light of the growing need for manpower, half-trained pilots and mechanics were sent to Europe where they would complete their schooling and receive additional instruction before joining the war effort. Aviation fields, like Call Field, in the United States trained new pilots and mechanics in aviation basics, after which they were reassigned to other posts for more advanced training.<sup>314</sup>

The need to rapidly create an American military air arm required a training program already in existence. This was readily provided by the Royal Flying Corps with over two years' experience with the war. While differences in military bearing and requirements existed between the United States and its allies, a basic curriculum which a potential aviator must pass to become a pilot was adopted by the American schools. Based on the Canadian model, new recruits prepared in a three-month course from which they would graduate with a Reserve Military Aviator (RMA) rating. Civilian flying clubs had already established a presence at some of the larger educational institutions in the United States, allowing for an easy transition to military ground schools. In addition, the universities of California, Texas, Illinois, Cornell, Georgia Tech, M.I.T., Ohio State, and Princeton had established ground schools. These learning centers offered

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<sup>313</sup> "Name Aviation Fields For Famous Flyers," *Dallas Morning News*, October 20, 1917, 3, accessed October 20, 2017, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B21918409FBB8%402421522-106B2191A9167A02%402-106B2192F08FC2DC%40Name%2BAviation%2BFields%2Bfor%2BFamous%2BFlyers>.

<sup>314</sup> H. H. Arnold, General of the Air Force, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 54-55.



mechanic training, in addition to programs in aerial photography, engineering, and for adjutants.<sup>315</sup>



Figure 20. Call Aviation Field Post Exchange, ca.1917. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

By the first few days of November, Call Field had passed numerous inspections with favorable reports. Furniture and supplies began arriving on an almost daily basis.<sup>316</sup> Fifty-eight structures were near or at completion, including the administration building, officers' quarters, barracks, mess halls, bakery, supply storage, and post exchange. Working areas included a "dope house" in which the compounds for covering the canvas skins of the aircraft were stored. Hangars, blacksmith shop, repair shops, and machine shops were in place to provide maintenance of the airplanes. On November 4, Call Aviation Field was declared to be eighty-five percent complete, and would soon be of sufficient capacity to begin accepting pilots.<sup>317</sup> It

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<sup>315</sup> Hiram Bingham, *An Explorer in the Air Service* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 20-22. Bingham's experience as a former military man, explorer, and professor offered a unique set of criteria from which General Squier believed he was uniquely prepared to assist in establishing an American flying program.

<sup>316</sup> Newspaper Clippings, October 30, 1917, Binder #23, Military, Montague, Monuments, MPEC, Museums – Call Field Tab, Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

<sup>317</sup> "50 Years Ago," Newspaper Clippings, November 11, 1917, Binder #23.

was anticipated that the airplanes would begin arriving at any time while officers were expected to begin arriving within the week.<sup>318</sup>

On October 30, 1917 Major John B. Brooks was appointed to command the Call Field aviation school. He had first entered the army in 1912 as a second lieutenant of cavalry. He was attached to the Signal Corps Aviation Section and was sent to San Diego, California for flight training. Subsequently, he was a member of the First Aero Squadron that served under General Pershing's Mexican expedition. During the earlier months of 1917, Brooks had been sent to Hawaii with the Sixth Aero Squadron, before returning to Washington D.C., where he was assigned to the office of the Chief Signal Officer prior to being assigned to Call Field.<sup>319</sup>

Major George Krapf arrived at Call Field on October 20, 1917. Until the arrival of the commander, he was the most senior officer, overseeing the camp's completion became his responsibility. A 1913 graduate of West Point, he, too, had accompanied General Pershing to the Mexican border, where he served in the infantry. While there, the potential of aviation caught his attention and upon his return from the Mexican campaign he went to Kelly Field in San Antonio, where he earned a Junior Military Aviator pilot rating.<sup>320</sup>

The flight instructor for the camp, Major Leo Walton, arrived at Call Field on November 10. After graduating from West Point in 1915, his first assignment had sent him to Mexico with the Pershing expedition. As a cavalry officer, he was able to closely observe the operations of aviators flying reconnaissance missions in that campaign. Recognizing the potential of military aviation, Walton decided to refocus his attention on flying. By August 1917, he had earned his Junior Military Aviators rating at Brooks Field in San Antonio before being assigned to the Call Field school.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Newspaper Clippings, October 25, 1917, Binder #23.

<sup>319</sup> "Major General John Bernard Brooks," Office of the Secretary of the Air Force (Public Affairs), accessed November 22, 2017, <https://www.af.mil/DesktopModules/ArticleCS/Print.aspx?PortalId=1&ModuleId=858&Article=108027>.

<sup>320</sup> George W. Krapf, obituary, West Point Association Graduates, accessed November 27, 2017, [West Point Association of Graduates \(westpointaog.org\)](http://WestPointAssociationofGraduates.org).

<sup>321</sup> "Aviation Instructors Will Arrive Soon," *Dallas Morning News*, November 11, 1917, 7, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B28150AD8E984%402421546-106B28157142F788%406-106B2817683C16A0>.

During November 1917, the number of officers and soldiers increased to around 600.<sup>322</sup> At the beginning of the month, six pilots arrived from the aviation school in San Diego, California. A second group of Signal Corps soldiers arrived at the camp on November 25; two days later fifteen student pilots arrived on November 27. Men and equipment arrived at Call Field by train on the rail extension that had been built two months earlier. The 164<sup>th</sup> Squadron, under the command of Lieutenant Homer K. Gordon, arrived at Call Field from Kelly Field in San Antonio on November 29. As a complete, self-contained, aviation unit, the squadron was equipped to build and operate the airplanes. Before long, seven of the aircraft had been unloaded from the train cars and assembled, while an additional nine carloads of airplanes and equipment which had accompanied the 164<sup>th</sup> remained to be unloaded.<sup>323</sup> Fifteen more students arrived from Austin on the following day.<sup>324</sup>

In fall 1917, the influx of training centers offered a chance to see up close the activity that these installations produced. Texas was believed to have the largest number of soldiers in training in the country, with its army camps and aviation fields. Thousands of motorists were expected to take to the roads, making the drive to and through the larger cities where they might visit relatives in the service of their country or pilots in training flying their airplanes.<sup>325</sup> In anticipation that an aviation event would draw visitors to the city, the Wichita Falls chamber of commerce looked to schedule a flying exhibition. Discussions with camp authorities indicated that with enough army personnel serving as guards, the potential for allowing the public to be admitted to the aviation camp was good.<sup>326</sup>

For some men assigned to Call Field and other mobilization camps, this would be their first experience away from home. The United States, having established standards of conduct

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<sup>322</sup> "Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One," *Wichita Falls Times*, May 12, 1957, 4DD, microfilm.

<sup>323</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 29, 1917, Binder #23.

<sup>324</sup> "Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One," 4DD, microfilm.

<sup>325</sup> "Numerous National Army Camps and Aviation Fields Expected to Bring Thousands of Motorists to Texas," *Dallas Morning News*, October 14, 1917, 16, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2168BAC1DD1F%402421516-106B216B63CAF811%4053-106B2173EC55FF91%40Numerous%2BNational%2BArmy%2BCamps%2Band%2BAviation%2BFields%2BExpected%2Bto%2BBring%2BThousands%2Bof%2BMotorists%2Bto%2BTexas>.

<sup>326</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 30, 1917, Binder #23.

intended to protect the health of its soldiers, requested assistance of the governors of the various states in which training camps had been placed. The intent was to keep the area surrounding military camps free of saloons and prostitution.



Figure 21. Knights of Columbus Hall, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

To control the potential problem of alcohol, a number of military police were detailed to Call Field. Published warnings to owners and individuals regarding the issue of alcohol to soldiers were carried in the *Wichita Daily Times*, reminding them that any violations would be prosecuted by federal attorneys under the laws of the United States.<sup>327</sup>

Providing recreational and wholesome activities for the young men assigned to the camp required community assistance to maintain a semblance of old social ties. To coordinate these recreational opportunities, the Chamber of Commerce appointed a board made up of R.O. Harvey, F. N. Lawton and P.H. Pennington. Through the efforts of this group and the manager of the St. James Hotel, A. A. Dixon, parlor space in the hotel was set aside for use by Call Field soldiers. This offered the men from the encampment a place to meet, and writing materials were

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<sup>327</sup> Newspaper Clippings, December 19, 1917, *Binder #23*.

provided for correspondence to friends and family. Organizations like the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, and others offered leisure entertainment to fulfill this need.<sup>328</sup> Joining in on this arrangement, the Elks Lodge provided similar accommodations for the soldiers.<sup>329</sup> The churches of Wichita Falls, as well, opened their doors to the enlisted men and cadets of Call Field. The First Presbyterian Church, the First Baptist Church, and the First Methodist Church often helped to entertain men from Call Field. Arranged by church women, these informal gatherings offered a social atmosphere with games and refreshments provided.<sup>330</sup> Other entertainment opportunities were offered by community leaders on several occasions. Mrs. J. A. Kemp, her daughter, Bertha Kemp, and Willie Mae Kell, daughter of Frank Kell, were often among those listed as sponsors informally hosting some of the aviators.<sup>331</sup> During the holiday season in 1917, residents of Wichita Falls, who had sons serving the country away from home, extended invitations through the Red Cross for Call Field soldiers to come for Christmas dinner.<sup>332</sup>

All training camps were required to provide entertainment for the soldiers assigned to their locations. Under the recommendations of the Commission on Training Camp Activities, entertainment included motion pictures and vaudeville programs featuring live entertainers. Within each camp, singalongs and amateur dramatic programs became regular events.<sup>333</sup> The YMCA at Call Field provided a place where the soldiers regularly held Stunt Night. Organized by cadets and officers, these activities proved to be very popular with the men, and frequently included a musical group made up of cadets called the Jazz Band.<sup>334</sup> Soldiers from Call Field

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<sup>328</sup> War Department, *The War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities* (Washington D.C.: United States War Department, 1917), 4.

<sup>329</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 10, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>330</sup> "Wichita Falls Churches to Entertain Flyers," *Dallas Morning News*, January 2, 1918, 1, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-1068E2B52E35D52E%402421596-1068E2B543CD6BA5%400-1068E2B68A9225E8>.

<sup>331</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 21, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>332</sup> Newspaper Clippings, December 11, 1917, Binder #23.

<sup>333</sup> *The War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities*, 8.

<sup>334</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 21, 1918, Binder #23.

requested Sunday motion picture shows as entertainment, giving them some place to go when off duty.<sup>335</sup>

In keeping with the War Department's directive for providing a moral environment, community leaders of Wichita Falls continued in their efforts to provide wholesome entertainment for the troops. Reports in the local newspapers carried descriptions of social events held to honor Call Field officers and their wives. Games, such as bridge, forty-two, and pool, provided the entertainment, with refreshments adding to the enjoyment of these occasions.<sup>336</sup> Entertaining the cadets continued as a way for Wichita Falls to support the war effort. In addition to privately hosted social gatherings, churches offered soldiers a place to relax and engage with local residents in ways that were similar to their own hometowns. The First Baptist Church opened its doors for its Young Women's Auxiliary to host a gathering of soldiers.<sup>337</sup> Serving as the venue used to honor the men of Call Field, dances were held at the Pavalion at Lake Wichita with the Katz Orchestra providing the music for the evening.<sup>338</sup> Coming together to support soldiers at the camp, women representing the various churches of the city were put in charge of opening and furnishing the Hostess House housed in the Call Field Tabernacle. The formal opening of the facility was attended by representatives from various Wichita Falls civic organizations. Volunteers coordinated through this organization offered a clothes service each Friday where soldiers could have uniforms mended.<sup>339</sup> Each year the Red Cross Canteen Committee provided a list of residents willing to invite soldiers into their homes for the holidays, where a home setting with a good meal could be had. The relationship between the soldiers of Call Field and the residents of Wichita Falls continued for as long as the camp remained in existence.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Newspaper Clippings, December 14, 1917, Binder #23.

<sup>336</sup> Newspaper Clippings, March 14, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>337</sup> Newspaper Clippings, May 20, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>338</sup> Newspaper Clippings, June 10, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>339</sup> Newspaper Clippings, July 8, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>340</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 23, 1918, Binder #23.

In contrast, businesses providing alternative entertainment were held accountable for operating within the designated five-mile radius of the air field. During the month of April, pool halls and similar establishments were raided by military police from Call Field accompanied by federal and county officers. One hundred and fifty men of draft age were arraigned and locked up for being found on site during the raid.<sup>341</sup> Brought before a federal court, the businesses involved were cited on charges of pro-Germanism and disloyalty associated with selling alcohol to soldiers and operating a “disorderly house” within five miles of the camp.<sup>342</sup>

Limited flying began at Call Field during late November and continued throughout December 1917. Two trial flights over the city were made on November 25.<sup>343</sup> But in the early days of December, Washington was becoming anxious over the progress of the camp. Krapf’s response is indicative of the speed at which the construction of Call Field had progressed. By December 8, the only two instructors on site were busy testing new aircraft. Five airplanes were expected to be put into service later in the day and instruction started. With only small tools available, instruction on maintaining the Hall-Scott aircraft engines was further hindered by tools that had not yet arrived. It would be several days before more aircraft were placed into commission.<sup>344</sup>

By December 22 the staff of the aviation camp was complete with the exception of Major Brooks, who had not yet arrived. As each individual had reported for duty, he had served as the field commander until relieved of that obligation by a more senior officer. Major Krapf, a junior flier, acting in place of Major Brooks, was the camp commandant. Major Walton, also a junior flyer, and Lieutenant H. M. Pierce, a reserve corps flyer, both served as flying instructors. Major H. C. Pratt was the quartermaster, and Captain Curtis Atkinson headed the medical department. The remainder of the staff consisted of First Lieutenants Harold Imbrie, John Pollock, Charles A. Sheedy, L. H. Lee, H.K. Gordon, C. L. Vreeland, H. D. Horner, R.T. Rooney, H. M. Pierce, Frank A. Farmer, R. C. Thaxton, C.D. McCoy, J.P. Whittinghill, and Joseph E. Hutchinson.

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<sup>341</sup> Newspaper Clippings, April 13, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>342</sup> Newspaper Clippings, April 23, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>343</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 25, 1917, *Binder #23*.

<sup>344</sup> Major Krapf to Air Training, Signal Officer, Washington, D.C., December 8, 1917, response to telegraph “why no planes in commission,” Record Group 18-347, Box 15, Field Installations, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, General Correspondence (347), National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

Second Lieutenants Victor Schmid, G. G. A. Draper, J.R. Barksdale, G.A. Draper, J. B. Barksdale, George Englehart, Joseph H. Young, Fred S. Benson, Carlton C. Russ and Conn Brown.<sup>345</sup>

During the month of December, staff officers at Call Field worked to get the aviation field into service. In addition to opening the camp, officers spoke with civilians about enlistment in the aviation services. Major Walton took the time to respond to a letter from one young man interested in pilot training. In his return communication he offered direction to the nearest recruiting station and instructions on the process of enlisting. Major Krapf further asked the Dallas recruiting office if there had been inquiries related to Call Field. Applicants routinely passed through Fort Sam Houston for final enlistment testing. At Love Field in Dallas, a group of interested applicants was tested at that location. Responding to Krapf's inquiry, the Dallas recruiter suggested that applicants interested in Call Field might be sent there directly to complete the examination process.<sup>346</sup>

In a weekly report written on November 24, 1917, Major Krapf listed the number of cadets and enlisted men that had arrived to date: thirteen cadets, six of whom had arrived from the San Diego flying school and were awaiting their pilot commissions, were joined by fourteen enlisted men of the Sixth Aero Squadron.<sup>347</sup> Three days later, he was making inquiries of his own regarding supplies needed to support these men and the soldiers that were soon to arrive. There had not been any response to a requisition for Class A uniform supplies needed for Call Field.<sup>348</sup> After waiting ten days, this remained a concern with the arrival of three squadrons anticipated any day. Furthermore, another detachment of men was expected to arrive by

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<sup>345</sup> "Official Staff of Call Field," *Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1917, 5, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-106B2901B38E2DD4%402421585-106B290219892961%404-106B29040598F572%40Official%2BStaff%2Bof%2BCall%2BField>.

<sup>346</sup> Commanding Officer to Recruiting Officer, Dallas, Texas, November 27, 1917, "Information for Application for Enlistment" Records of the Army Air Forces, RG18-347, Box 15, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>347</sup> Major George Krapf, Acting Commander of Call Field to Chief Signal Officer, Washington, D.C., November 24, 1917, "report of personnel strength," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>348</sup> Major George Krapf, Acting Commander of Call Field to Chief Signal Officer, Washington, D.C., November 27, 1917, "inquiry regarding clothing (uniforms) supplies," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).



November 30. On November 27, Krapf issued another inquiry about parts for maintenance of the Hall-Scott engines used in the aircraft assigned to the field. He had been in contact with the Hall-Scott Company, which was unable to locate any order for parts destined for the camp.<sup>349</sup>

On November 30, Krapf received a communication from Washington informing him to expect approximately 160 more student cadets by mid-December. Although this unusually large influx of students would place a strain on the school, wartime circumstances made it necessary. Call Field was not alone in being ordered to expedite its training curriculum.<sup>350</sup> The following day Krapf was informed that the Fuel Administration did not have any record of an order for fuel being placed for Call Field. If he would resubmit the request by telegraph, the fuel would receive expedited delivery.<sup>351</sup> Responding to his status report from November 24, orders had been issued for the 165<sup>th</sup> and 198<sup>th</sup> Squadrons to proceed to Call Field. This would leave the school one squadron short of its authorized strength. The commanding officer at Kelly Field had been instructed to assemble an additional squadron, less twenty men, for assignment. Upon its arrival, the fourteen cadets and six enlisted men of the Sixth Aero Squadron became part of a newly created squadron.<sup>352</sup> The 165<sup>th</sup> Squadron under the command of Lieutenant Englehart, and the 198<sup>th</sup> Squadron commanded by Lieutenant Draper, arrived at the camp on the same day that Krapf sent this communication. The 192<sup>nd</sup> Squadron arrived a few days later. Once these four groups had arrived, they were re-designated, becoming the training squadrons for the cadet pilots. The 164<sup>th</sup> became Squadron "A"; 165<sup>th</sup> was a service squadron; 192<sup>nd</sup> became Squadron "B"; and 198<sup>th</sup> became Squadron "C."<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Major George Krapf, Acting Commander of Call Field to Chief Signal Officer, Washington, D.C., November 27, 1917, "inquiry regarding spare parts for Hall-Scott engines," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>350</sup> Major John Bartholf, by authority of the Chief Signal Officer to Acting Commander, November 30, 1917, "cadet assignments to Call Field," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>351</sup> Lt. Colonel Bane to Acting Commander, Call Field, December 1, 1917, "fuel orders and expedited delivery by Fuel Administration," RG18-347, Box 5, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>352</sup> Lt. Colonel Bane to Acting Commander, Call Field, December 6, 1917, "assignment of enlisted men," RG18-347, Box 5.

<sup>353</sup> Center for Military History United States Army, CMH Pub 23-5, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior Directory of Troops, Volume 3, Part 3* (1931-1949, repr., Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1988), 1031-1034.



Figure 22. Training Squadron "B," Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1917. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

By early December operation reports had reached Washington D.C., prompting inquiries into the status of the aviation field. Concerned by the lack of flying, the War Department wanted to know the operational status of the field. Krapf, in his capacity as acting commander for Major Brooks, sent a telegraph on December 8 indicating the troubles he faced in getting the field operational:

Reference telegram of today as to why no planes in commission only two instructors here until yesterday. Fourteen were to have reported by Wednesday. Four reported today. Two instructors used since reporting for testing new ships and learning stick control. Five ships put into commission this afternoon and instruction started. Handicapped by tools. None have yet arrived and it is necessary to borrow or purchase locally small tools used in adjusting Hall Scott engines. Will have thirty ships in commission in a few days.<sup>354</sup>

Five days later, he again reported difficulties getting the field operational. During the last few weeks of December 1917 into January 1918, Wichita Falls experienced an exceptionally cold winter; Krapf had difficulty keeping planes in the air. Even if parts for the Hall-Scott engines could be obtained, frigid temperatures played havoc with the aircraft. During the week prior to December 15, the thermometer fell to five to ten degrees Fahrenheit at night. Such low

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<sup>354</sup> Major Krapf to Air Training, Signal Officer, Washington, D.C., December 8, 1917, response to telegraph "why no planes in commission."

temperatures could adversely affect idle engines, increasing the potential for motor damage if they were not properly warmed prior to starting. Although the construction of the aviation camp was nearly complete, there were still additional installation projects left unfinished. As of the middle of December, the aircraft were not protected from freezing conditions. While the hangars offered shelter from wind and rain, overnight temperatures inside the structures would be approximately the same as outdoors. Krapf made an expedited request for equipment to heat the buildings.<sup>355</sup>

The issue of heating the hangars was resolved on the same day, and Krapf notified Washington in a separate communication. Hangar specifications had included two heaters per building, which had been removed from the original installation schedule. With the construction company still on site, the company was able to correct the error with approval of the work. Installation of the heater flues would require a significant amount of expert work and could be accomplished by a company that was already familiar with the construction of the structures.<sup>356</sup> In the interim, the Airplane Engine Department offered advice for operating the Hall -Scott engines during cold weather. With a spark plug adjustment, the engines would have considerably less trouble operating in cold weather.<sup>357</sup>

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, President Wilson issued a proclamation to minimize any potential threat from German aliens already residing within the country. Consisting of twelve original regulations for “alien enemies,” the proclamation established requirements for individuals of foreign birth. Those who had not already completed the process of naturalization, declaring allegiance to the United States, faced the possibility of drawing the scrutiny of a U.S. marshal, or other officers as the president might designate. Any individual believed to be supplying aid to the enemy could be detained and held or imprisoned as a foreign agent. In November 1917, eight more regulations were added to the law, increasing it

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<sup>355</sup> Major Krapf to Chief Signal Officer, Air Training Division, Washington, D.C., December 13, 1917, “problems with Hall-Scott engines and unheated hangers in freezing weather,” RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>356</sup> Krapf, to Air Executive, Signal Office, Washington, D.C., December 21, 1917, “Reference heating of hangers specifications....,” RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>357</sup> Lt. Colonel John W. Bartholf, Chief Signal Officer of the Army to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 27, 1917, “Starting and running Hall-Scott engines during cold weather,” RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

to twenty directives governing the actions of those who were in some way associated with Germany and its allies.<sup>358</sup>

In and around Wichita County were small farming communities with high concentrations of German-born residents. Many had been in the area for such a long time that their loyalty to the United States was unquestioned in their local communities. For individuals who had completed the naturalization process, there was little to fear. Being labeled as “enemy aliens” became a reality for those who had not begun or completed the naturalization process. This was contrary to Texas law, which afforded a person of foreign birth the right to vote, acquire property and enjoy all the privileges of full citizenship upon first filing papers to begin the naturalization process.<sup>359</sup> Under the restrictions of the president’s proclamation, individuals of “enemy” status were restricted in movement and location in relation to government property in the form of a federal or state military installation, including aircraft stations. Among the additional restrictions added in November 1917 was the stipulation that an individual with German connections was prevented from flying in an aircraft.<sup>360</sup> The impact of the Alien Enemy Proclamation became evident on the same day that Major Krapf was dealing with the effect of the elements on the aircraft engines. Washington was requesting a report on the number of soldiers at the camp who were born in Germany, Austria, Belgium, or Turkey. The status of these soldiers assigned to Call Field and who had completed the naturalization process was to be indicated in the report.<sup>361</sup>

In response to the earlier requests for tools and parts, Krapf received word that the Quartermaster Department was doing everything possible to expedite the shipment. Clothing, however, could not be promised due to the lack of available supplies.<sup>362</sup> For the purpose of providing some level of training for soldiers arriving at Call Field, a request was submitted for

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<sup>358</sup> “Alien Enemy Presidential Proclamations,” *U.S., President, Proclamation, “Alien Enemy Regulation” Statutes at Large*, Vol. XL, Part 2, 1651-1652, accessed March 6, 2018, [Alien Enemy Presidential Proclamations \(viu.ca\)](http://www.viu.ca).

<sup>359</sup> “Some Wichitans ‘Alien Enemies,’” *Wichita Daily Times*, April 8, 1917, 8, microfilm.

<sup>360</sup> “Alien Enemy Presidential Proclamations,” 1651-1652.

<sup>361</sup> Harrison-Fort Sam Houston, Texas to Commanding Officer Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 13, 1917, telegram – “report number of subjects of (foreign descent),” RG18-347, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>362</sup> Office, Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 14, 1917, “2. Referring to aviation clothing...,” RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

two hundred Springfield rifles. It was found that many of the new recruits were not familiar with the use of a rifle, having not been instructed in infantry drill. The intention was to provide training with standard firearms, which would prove to be of benefit in the future.<sup>363</sup>

A December 18 communication provided some relief for the heating of the aircraft hangars. Krapf's reply about problematic motors and his request for heating equipment had been noticed in the office of General Squier. Approval was granted for the local purchase and installation of stoves and heating equipment for warming the airplane hangars. Included with the approval was the assurance that the general's office could be contacted if further assistance was required.<sup>364</sup>

Krapf added six instructors to the staff of the aviation school on December 18, bringing the total of Junior Instructors to twelve.<sup>365</sup> Anticipating that some of the civilians hired might prove to be ineffective, he requested approval to create additional positions, bringing the total to fifteen.<sup>366</sup> Disagreeable weather kept the airplanes on the ground, preventing pilot training. For most of a week, the camp had experienced fog and drizzle with few opportunities to fly. As such, Krapf telegraphed San Antonio with a request for approval to occasionally use Sunday for training sessions. The request was denied.<sup>367</sup>

Three weeks following the initial inquiry into available spare parts for maintaining the Hall-Scott engines, the problem remained. Rebuilding the motors had not yet become necessary, but the lack of parts would soon force some aircraft to be taken out of service for maintenance. Krapf again pressed for an answer regarding the delivery of equipment and parts.<sup>368</sup> Anticipating

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<sup>363</sup> Major Krapf, Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 18, 1917, "You are authorized to purchase locally....," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>364</sup> Squier per Dade to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, to The Chief Signal Officer of the Army, December 15, 1917, "Rifles for Call Field," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>365</sup> Major Krapf, Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, to The Chief Signal Officer, Air Division, December 18, 1917, "Employment Civilian Instructors," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>366</sup> Krapf, to Air Training, Signal Office, Washington, D.C., December 19, 1917, "Request authority to employ fifteen for present....," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>367</sup> Saltman per Dade to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 22, 1917, "No flying instruction....," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>368</sup> Major Krapf, Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, to The Chief Signal Officer of the Army, Air Division, Material Section, Washington, D.C., December 19, 1917, "equipment," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

that repairs to the airplanes would have to be done before supplies were received, Lieutenant Imbrie contacted the commanding officer at Love Field in Dallas. It was his intent to send a supply officer from Call Field to Dallas to discuss the repair depot and supplies at that location. In response to Imbrie's inquiry, the Love Field commander responded with a wire on the same day. It was agreeable for a supply officer to come to Love Field for discussions.<sup>369</sup> Major Krapf was working at the same time to get the parts necessary for keeping the airplanes flying. Call Field was struggling to stay operational and would soon have airplanes out of commission. On December 21, he contacted the Signal Office in Washington, making a case for obtaining parts from some of the northern air fields.<sup>370</sup>

By the end of December 1917, Major Krapf was again reporting to Washington the reality of his concerns over equipment and parts. He now had twenty aircraft that were out of commission due to weather conditions. High winds had left seven airplanes with broken rudders, twisted center sections, and damaged wings. Burned engine valves in nine airplanes were causing problems, with one needing a complete overhaul. Another had a defective magneto, while the remaining airplanes were still being assembled. Again, he reported that without tools and parts for the engines, little could be done. With the temperatures falling to around ten degrees at night, efforts were made to keep the motors from freezing by using a mixture of boiling water and oil and covering the radiators, but it was of little help.<sup>371</sup>

Fire apparatus for use in the hangars began to arrive in the latter part of December. Under the terms of its contract, the Gilsonite Company was responsible for obtaining equipment capable of responding to emergencies involving fire. Included in the delivery was one motor driven chemical engine with a forty-gallon tank, a hand-drawn chemical extinguisher with two thirty-six-gallon tanks, and five carts capable of carrying five hundred feet of two-and-one-half inch hose. While the motor-driven engine and the hand-drawn extinguisher had arrived with their associated fire hose, only one of the hose carts was equipped. Various sizes of smaller fire

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<sup>369</sup> Netherwood to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, December 20, 1917, telegram- "... your supply officer..." RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>370</sup> Krapf, to Air Training, Signal Office, Washington, D.C., December 21, 1917, "understand that northern fields have spare parts," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>371</sup> Krapf, to Air Training, Signal Office, Washington, D.C., December 28, 1917, "...twenty ships out of commission for following reasons," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

extinguishers, axes, and fire buckets made up the remainder of the delivery. The Office of the Chief Signal Officer was notified of the equipment on hand, the equipment that was still anticipated along with the shortage of hose. Hose nozzles, axe brackets, and the undelivered part of the order continued to be needed. To the extent of the equipment which had been received, all the apparatus had been tested and found to be in serviceable condition. One fire practice drill had been conducted, with plans for additional practice to test the fire orders as they had been issued.<sup>372</sup>

Responding to an inquiry from the Signal Corps' Air Training Office over the status of Call Field, Krapf pointedly reiterated the problems which continued to plague the completion of the camp.

Reference your telegram December twenty seven regarding condition of Call Field. Work not being done includes installation of heat apparatus in dope house, installation of water pump, completion of surfacing of roads and drainage. Nothing started on frost casing for water tank or street lighting yet. Flying field to be rolled in sports next week. Construction Superintendent states finishing touches completed January nineteen. Call Field not excellent for flying thermometer near zero at times and violent winds blow three days per week. Principle necessity is heating hangars garage machine shop and aero repair as low temperatures would greatly handicap work in these buildings. Twenty-thousand-gallon reserve reservoir should be built for fire protection as city water pressure may fail. Water reservoir to use over water at test stand necessary because of dangerously low water in city reservoir.<sup>373</sup>

The problems reflected the urgency with which the country had entered WWI. Between August 31, when construction began and early November, the camp was eighty-five percent complete. By the end of December 1917, it was approaching completion. Within 122 days from its beginning, Call Field had advanced from 600 acres of farmland into an operational military installation. The camp's hospital, managed by Captain Atkinson, was one of the first structures to be constructed. Housed within the facility were medical and surgical departments, a pharmacy,

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<sup>372</sup> Major Krapf, Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, to The Chief Signal Officer, Air Division, Training Section, Washington, D.C., December 29, 1917, "fire apparatus," RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>373</sup> Major Krapf, Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, to Air Training, Signal Office, Washington, D.C., undated, "reference your telegram December 27 regarding condition of Call Field." RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

X-ray department, and dental office. A separate building was used for administering tests qualifying potential aviators for the physical requirements of flying.<sup>374</sup>

Six barracks were constructed for housing men assigned to the camp. These two-story structures, complete with toilets and washrooms, could accommodate 175 men each. Officers were quartered in separate buildings, with six houses being supplied for their use. In correlation, six mess halls kept post personnel fed, supplemented by a bakery, where additional goods could be purchased. Since making the five-mile trip into Wichita Falls required time and coordination with train schedules, opportunities were limited for obtaining anything that might be needed on short notice. The post exchange carried essential supplies that might be needed by soldiers, offering an alternative for making a trip into town for toiletries and other items.<sup>375</sup>

To keep enlisted men occupied and entertained during off duty hours, the YMCA occupied a building where they could gather and socialize. From the experiences of the Mexican Expedition just over one year earlier, the United States military had determined that providing young men, possibly away from home for the first time, a wholesome environment made for a better and healthier armed force. Engaging in activities like basketball, football, and baseball not only provided physical activity, but helped develop the moral character that the Wilson administration desired for the military. A separate Officers Club provided a place for them to gather and socialize.<sup>376</sup>

Under the Army Signal Corps, Call Field's mission required the education of aviators and enlisted personnel for aviation service. Officers entering the aviation services were first assigned to one of eight colleges or universities with aviation programs, where they received ground school instruction before being assigned to one of the airfields for further training.<sup>377</sup> At Call Field, a school building had been constructed for the continued education of aviation students

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<sup>374</sup> Curtis Atkinson and Ethel Dulaney, Library of Congress.

<sup>375</sup> "Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One," 4DD, microfilm.

<sup>376</sup> "Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One," 4DD, microfilm.

<sup>377</sup> H. H. Arnold, General of the Air Force, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper & Brothers, New York, 1949), 55-56. The colleges and universities participating in aviation training were California, Cornell, Georgia Tech, Illinois, M.I.T., Ohio State, Princeton, and the University of Texas. These institutions provided training for ground schools, twenty-eight mechanic schools, two then four photo schools, engineering officers school, adjutant school, and artillery observation school at Fort Sam Houston.



covering a curriculum that included mathematics, army paperwork, photography, reconnaissance, and theoretical flying. Soldiers could also enroll in YMCA-sponsored educational classes for algebra, English, geography, and geometry.<sup>378</sup>



Figure 23. YMCA, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca.1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

The largest and most recognizable of Call Field's buildings were its twelve hangars, built to house between four to eight aircraft each. Close by, several additional structures contained departments for maintenance services and the camp's mechanical equipment. The quartermaster supply housed in the administration building held the supplies for the camp. Parts and materials needed to keep the aircraft flying were maintained in the aero supplies building. Three separate buildings, housing the aero repair shop, the motor testing plant, and the mechanics shop, were built to support the aircraft. The blacksmith shop was responsible for the parts and items requiring manufacture. The garage maintained the camp's motor pool vehicles.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Enrollment List of Educational Classes, Army Y.M.C.A., undated, RG18-347, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth (RM-FW).

<sup>379</sup> "Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One," 4DD, microfilm.



Figure 24. Quartermaster Supply and Personnel, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Call Field, as a military camp, consisted of forty-six buildings.<sup>380</sup> By the end of December 1917, work was nearing completion so that the army could take possession of the camp. With the installation of street lights, the field was now considered fully operational. Major John B. Brooks, the commanding officer for Call Field, had arrived from Washington D.C., his previous assignment, relieving Major Krapf of his command of the camp. As a cavalry officer, Major Brooks was accompanied to his new post by his horse, for which an additional structure was quickly assembled for housing the animal. On January 4, 1918, under Special Order No. 2, Brooks officially assumed command of the Signal Corps Aviation School at Call Field.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> "THEN.....and NOW," *Wichita Falls Times and Record News*, June 22, 1952, 3, microfilm.

<sup>381</sup> General Order No. 2, January 4, 1918, "The undersigned assumes command...at this post (Call Field)...," Records of the Army Air Forces, Record Group 18-350, Box 1, Field Installations, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, General Orders (350), National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).



Personell of Machine Shop

Figure 25. Personnel of the Machine Shop, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca.1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.



In just over four months after the U.S. government awarded an aviation camp contract to the City of Wichita Falls, over 600 acres of open farmland southwest of the city was converted into a small settlement of its own. Complete with its railroad connection, 50,000-gallon water tank, streetlights, and numerous structures from which it would conduct aviation training, Call Field brought a new excitement to the region. Construction of the camp brought a large of number of workers needed to complete buildings and install plumbing and electrical connections before soldiers could arrive. The increase in laborers offered residents opportunities to rent rooms and sell merchandise during the camp's construction, thus boosting the local economy. Although the town was five miles away, residents welcomed the soldiers who began arriving at the field for training, seeking to provide entertainment and activities for them. As buildings became usable, staff officers worked to make the camp operational. Supplies in the way of clothing were sometimes not easily obtained. Fuel was at times in short supply, influencing the

amount of flying that could be accomplished. Equipment and parts, used to maintain aircraft, were sometimes delayed or overlooked. Weather could also be a problem for keeping the airplanes flying. By the end of December 1917, construction was complete enough for the camp to take on its role as a flight training school. The commanding officer, Major Brooks, took control of the camp in early January 1918, reflecting the fact that Call Field was ready to begin training pilots.

## Chapter 6

Call Field at Wichita Falls will be finally closed October 1, and the planes sent to Fort Worth.

*Wichita Falls Daily Times*, September 13, 1919.

During the first weeks of January 1918, activity at Call Field began to take on an increasingly normal camp routine. With control of the property transferred to the government, oversight of the camp now resided with the commanding officer. Call Field had attained the status of a fully functional flight training facility and school. Recruits assigned to the station became the trained soldiers the United States needed for the war effort. Expectations were high at the beginning of 1918, with Wichita Falls' hopes that the camp and its soldiers would bring added notability to the area. But in January 1918, dangerous winter conditions moving through the country created problems, especially in the North Texas area where extreme temperatures were experienced. On some days, flying was delayed due to inclement weather. When the temperature was suitable enough for flying, large groups of citizens gathered outside the gates of the field to witness pilots and their aircraft completing their flight maneuvers. As an expression of pride in the camp, the City of Wichita Falls and its citizens provided accommodations for off duty troops. This "home away from home" met with the military's goal of taking care of young men, who were on their own for the first time. Even soldiers who did not make their home in Wichita Falls following the war remembered fondly their assignment to Call Field.



During January 1918, Call Aviation Field began to serve its purpose as a facility training soldiers destined for war duty in Europe. Working on aviation and related educational topics needed to keep the flying units operating, cadet pilots, mechanics and support soldiers now occupied barracks and classrooms. Pilot training for cadets originated at a college or university where future airmen received instruction in military studies, signaling, gunnery, theoretical and practical flight theory, airplanes, engines, and aerial observation. Adapted from the Canadian model, eight universities with engineering and military courses in their programs became leaders

for ground school instruction.<sup>382</sup> The University of Texas in Austin was one of the largest ground schools, with its Department of Engineering providing basic training for war service. Seven hundred young men enrolled for aviator training at the university, which aspired to double its program enrollment.<sup>383</sup> To record progress, a pilot's book was issued to each student, documenting the time spent on the various subjects.<sup>384</sup> Upon completion of ground school, a cadet received a field assignment for their primary aviation training. Only with a training instructor's recommendation could a cadet solo for the first time. It would take six to eight weeks of flight training for a cadet to earn his wings. After successfully completing training classes, which included fifty hours of flight time, a student pilot earned a flight rating and proceeded to advanced training.<sup>385</sup>

While an individual could request an assignment, commanding officers from the primary schools, for the most part, determined to which training branch the aviator was sent. Advanced flight training assignments were determined more by the pilot's abilities rather than the grades received from his primary studies. The newly commissioned pilot was then sent to one of three specialized programs. Individuals suited for pursuit schools trained as fighter pilots, flying single-seater aircraft at higher altitudes. Admission to the pursuit pilot schools was usually given to aggressive individuals. Observation and bombing school pilots flew two-seaters. Working as a team, the pilot and an observer trained to fly missions scouting for and photographing enemy positions. During their training, bomber school pilots and a bombardier also flew a two-seater aircraft, preparing for nighttime flights conducted behind enemy lines.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training, 1907-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Programs, 1999), 112.

<sup>383</sup> "University Aviation School to be Largest in Its Class," *Dallas Morning News*, January 11, 1918, 3, accessed November 6, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-1068E23673FED9F3%402421605-1068E236ACD77793%402-1068E2380959B6ED>.

<sup>384</sup> Pilot's Book: U.S. School of Military Aeronautics, C.M. Odgen, Records of the Army Air Forces, Record Group 18-354, Box 6, Field Installations, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, Flying Cadet Detachment Subject Files (354), National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>385</sup> Cameron, 113. Flight ratings designations: Reserve Military Aviator, R.M.A., or Junior Military Aviator, J.M.A.

<sup>386</sup> Cameron, 131.

Flight training had begun at Call Field during the last weeks of December, with classes scheduled by squadron. Cadets received further instruction on various topics, including aircraft and motors, gunnery, telegraphy, mapping, and photography.<sup>387</sup> A full curriculum of instruction consisted of eight weeks of training. Initially, Call Field students arrived from the various ground schools operated by the colleges and universities. This process eventually gave way to military instruction at primary training fields prior to being assigned to the locations where they would undergo training and receive their R.M.A. certifications and commissions.<sup>388</sup>

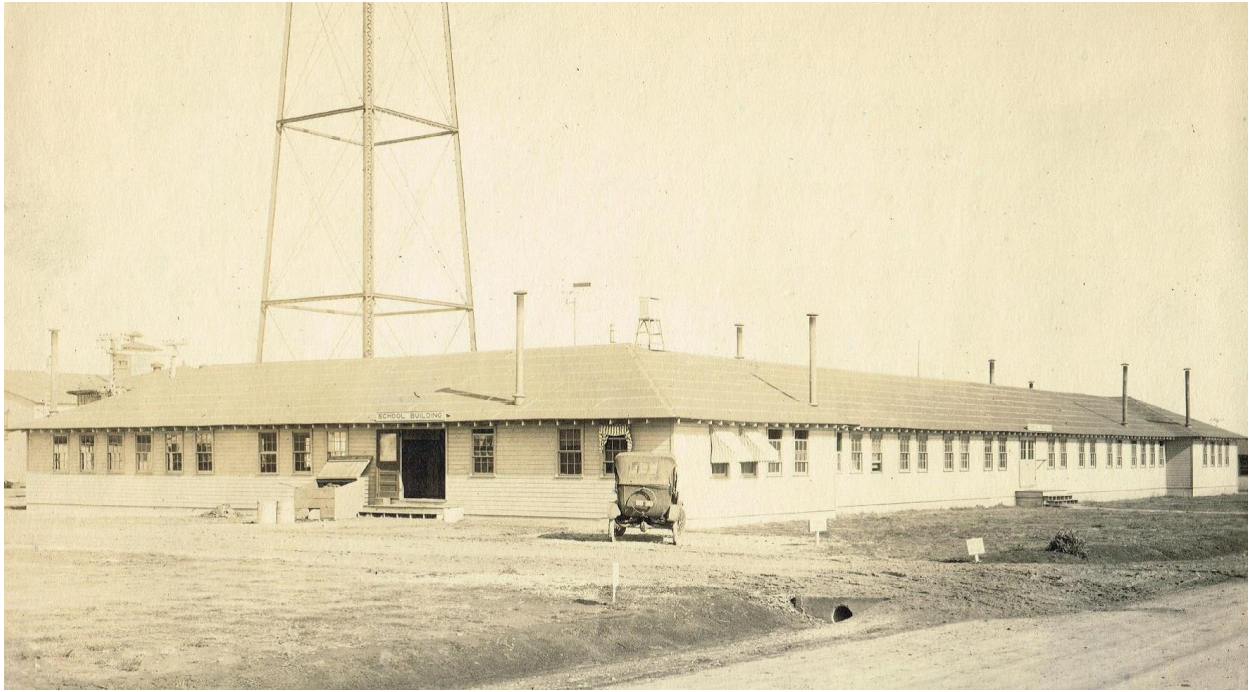


Figure 26. School Building, Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Ten days into January 1918, a severe weather system swept across the country significantly dropping temperatures and creating blizzard conditions, which forced flying to stop. Freezing temperatures, wind, and snow fell on most of Texas for several days, reaching as far south as Galveston and Laredo. Call Field reported that thermometer readings showed the temperature had fallen to seven degrees below zero. Heavy snow fall and low temperatures

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<sup>387</sup> General Order No. 11, December 14, 1917, Instruction Calls for Flying Cadets, RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>388</sup> "Plant to be Enlarged and Only R.M.A. Will be Received at Camp," *Wichita Daily Times, Part Three – Call Field Camouflage*, May 26, 1918, 11, microfilm.

created problems in the North Texas area, forcing the closure of schools and factories to conserve gas pressure. To make supplies last, customers seeking coal as a heating source were limited to \$1.00 per purchase by the local coal company.<sup>389</sup> Temperatures considered to be extreme on the ground would be severely colder at higher altitudes. Pilots flying in an open cockpit aircraft would encounter diverse weather conditions with the risk of exposure to wind and cold a potential danger. Cold weather conditions also raised concerns over possible damage to the airplanes. Absent engine additives (anti-freeze), frozen water in an engine could cause severe damage to an aircraft motor. On January 14, Call Field stopped flight training until the conditions improved. During the inclement weather, indoor training classes continued, ensuring the safety of the pilots and cadets. Other locations throughout the state had similar experiences, discontinuing their programs until more appropriate weather returned.<sup>390</sup>

As conditions improved, operations began to normalize at the camp. After being ordered to Call Field in November from the San Diego flight school, Alfred B. Booth, C. H. Rickhard, Ernest S. Mason, Millard E. Rollins, St. John Eaton, and Harold Hanes were the first cadets to receive officer commissions. These new officers became part of the training staff, working to train new recruits.<sup>391</sup> In the case of Lieutenants Mason and Hanes, Mason served as a test pilot for all airplanes assigned to Call Field, while Hanes became an instructor in acrobatic flying.<sup>392</sup>

Specializing as an observation school, Call Field's curriculum was written for pilots training to gather photographic information and observe enemy positions. In the latter part of January 1918, construction began on a building for the teaching of aerial photography.

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<sup>389</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 11, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>390</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 14, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>391</sup> "Six Lieutenants at Call Field Receive Commissions at Last," *Wichita Weekly Times*, January 16, 1918, 6, microfilm.

<sup>392</sup> "Lieutenant E.S. Mason Startles People of Frederick, Okla.," *Wichita Daily Times, Part Three – Call Field Camouflage*, May 26, 1918, 11, microfilm.





Figure 27. Photographic view over Wichita Falls, Texas, ca 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Learning to use the specially designed cameras, processing film, and printing photographs was added to the pilots' extended training. On February 7, the Office of the Chief Signal Officer requested a report showing the type and number of aero cameras available at Call Field. The supply officer responded with a list of the two aero cameras in inventory. The camp's photographic laboratory was completed within the week. Although some equipment had been received, a course outline had still not been established and an instructor was needed. For this purpose, Brooks requested that an officer experienced in photographic work be sent to the school.<sup>393</sup> Washington responded that the assignment of a photographic officer and additional instructors had already taken place. The course syllabus for instruction of pilots and observers

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<sup>393</sup> Commanding Officer, Call Field to the Chief Signal Officer, Washington D.C., February 13, 1918, "Photographic Officer," RG18-354, Box 2, Flying Cadet Detachment Files, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

would be made available upon this officer's arrival.<sup>394</sup> Two airplanes had been identified for use for the photographic training classes. As ordered, these Standard JR1 aircraft remained under maintenance of the Call Field Engineering Department, but could only be used with the expressed permission of the Photographic Section.<sup>395</sup> Although delayed, the anticipated arrival of the photographic detachment was set for March 20, and assurances confirmed that the airplanes assigned to the program were ready for use.<sup>396</sup>

Major Brooks reported that there had been no official photographic record of wrecked aircraft kept for Call Field. Believing it to be important, three weeks earlier he had ordered that photos of accident sites be made and appointed an enlisted man as the camp's official photographer. For the security reasons stated above, these records were being kept in the confidential files of the school. Washington's response stated that the photographic records of crashes were of no material value and the practice was to cease, especially when fatalities had occurred.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Office of the Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, February 19, 1918, "Photographic Officer," RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>395</sup> Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, March 2, 1918, "Standard JR1 planes for photographic purposes," RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>396</sup> Memorandum to Commanding Officer, March 18, 1918, "Standard JR1 photographic machines ...in commission on Wednesday March 20<sup>th</sup>," RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>397</sup> Commanding Officer, Call Field to The Chief Signal Officer, Air Division, Training Section, Washington, D.C., February 13, 1918, "Photographs," RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).



Figure 28. Airplane crash at Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

For some time, personal photos had been prohibited on the grounds at the camp. Whether officer or enlisted, personnel arriving at the camp with cameras were required to check in their equipment with the commanding officer or ship it back home for security purposes. The reason for taking such care was concern over seemingly innocent photos of the camp or its aircraft providing a valuable source of information for the enemy.<sup>398</sup> Some local residents of the small communities surrounding Wichita Falls were of German heritage. Security concerns at Call Field over photographs, whether official or private, and the potential for enemy subversion, were not unfounded. When the United States entered the war, President Wilson had issued a proclamation limiting the activities of aliens already residing within the United States. During November 1917, Major Krapf had responded to Washington's request for a roster of soldiers at Call Field who were of German, Austrian, Belgian, or Turkish descent. Washington was again

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<sup>398</sup> "Pictures to be Taken of City From Clouds, Aerial Photography Is Next Step to be Taken by Aviators," *Wichita Daily Times, Part Two – Call Field Camouflage*, January 27, 1918, 1, microfilm.

requesting clarification for the number of soldiers at Call Field who were of foreign birth and the extent to which they had become naturalized.<sup>399</sup>

An accurate accounting of the number of foreign-born American soldiers and their locations was unavailable through War Department records, so commanding officers of the various cantonments were instructed to submit reports directly to the Bureau of Naturalization under the U.S. Department of Labor. In January, only one soldier at the camp was listed as a previously naturalized citizen. Private Harry Vogel was assigned to the 165<sup>th</sup> Squadron, and it was reported that he had sent for his documents to prove his status.<sup>400</sup> Subsequent communications discuss additional soldiers whose suitability for service was being affected by their country of birth. It is unknown what actions caused serious trouble for Private Vancel Katics, assigned to the 192<sup>nd</sup> Squadron. An inquiry from Fort Sam Houston regarding his “alien” status briefly discussed his situation, offered a period of consideration, and requested a decision regarding his acceptance of a discharge. The response from Call Field indicates that the offer was unnecessary since Private Katics was incarcerated until May 15. At the conclusion of his confinement, Private Katics was discharged.<sup>401</sup> The purpose of the inquiry was for a planned immediate naturalization of all American soldiers--an action pending Congressional legislation.<sup>402</sup> Individuals discharged from service were not allowed to leave the country until their specific status could be reviewed. Until a determination of individual cases could be made, discharged soldiers were transferred to depot brigades for processing.<sup>403</sup>

On January 20, the commanding officer, Major Brooks, issued a general order describing guard duties for the camp and assigned specific posts. Henceforth, all entry to the camp was to

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<sup>399</sup> Commanding Officer, Call Field to The Chief Signal Officer, Air Division, Training Section, Washington, D.C., February 13, 1918, “Photographs,” RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>400</sup> C.O. 165<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron to Commanding Officer, Call Field, January 31, 1918, “Enemy Aliens—165<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron,” RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>401</sup> Department Adjutant to Commanding Officer, Call Field, March 15, 1918, “Requesting report, alien enemies,” RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>402</sup> The Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas from Richard R. Campbell, Commissioner of Naturalization, April 10, 1918, “naturalization of all American soldiers,” RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>403</sup> The Adjutant General of the Army to the Commanding Generals of all Departments..., May 21, 1918, “Retention of aliens pending investigation of their cases,” RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

be through the main gate. Working parties that had received passes through an officer or NCO, and had been approved by the commander, were allowed access at other entrances. An exception to the order applied to train crews servicing the camp through the railroad spur built and operated by the KATY Railroad, which had been negotiated by the Chamber of Commerce to meet government contract requirements.<sup>404</sup>

Under General Order No. 4, the commandant of cadets was given responsibility for the supervision of cadet training, their discipline, and the coordination of academic courses and flying instruction. The commanding officers of cadet detachments retained their same duties and continued as before under the commandant's supervision. This resulted in an amendment to the regulations governing flying cadets, which reflected the command structure. General Order No. 5 provided for daily service calls. General Order No. 6, dated January 29, called the troops to muster by squadron with their uniforms and equipment for the review of the commanding officer.<sup>405</sup>

From the lessons learned in Mexico, the United States was resolute in protecting the health of its troops. Early in 1917, the War Department had issued regulations limiting the availability of alcohol around its military camps. For each of its encampments, a five mile rule was implemented where alcohol was prohibited and enforced by the local municipalities. Although it was subsequently rescinded, Major Brooks issued General Order No. 9 on March 9, stating that no one assigned to Call Field would be allowed to enter the store, which had opened just outside the main gate. To enforce the directive, the gate guard was ordered to arrest any soldier seen entering that store.<sup>406</sup>

While the requests for "enemy alien" reports continued, camp inspections created additional administrative work for the commander. The findings of an inspection dated February 19 listed numerous deficiencies requiring immediate corrections. Of principal concern was the manner in which the airplane motors and propellers were maintained. Noted was the fact that

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<sup>404</sup> General Order No. 3, January 20, 1918, "Detailed Guard Duties and Assigns Specific Posts and Duties," RG 18-350, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>405</sup> General Order No. 6, January 29, 1918, "Troops to muster by squadron..." RG18-350, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>406</sup> General Order No. 9, March 9, 1918, "No men of this post will be allowed to enter the store..." RG18-350, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

this equipment was not covered following flying hours. Other parts were found to be improperly stored and cared for; their only protection from dampness and deterioration was from being locked up beneath a roof. The only spare motors available were those used for instruction; they, too, were not protected from dampness and dust. The recreation buildings were found to be extremely dirty, representing a “lack of appreciation” for the YMCA and the Knights of Columbus organizations that provided the facilities.<sup>407</sup>

The infirmaries were also reported to be dirty and unsanitary. This was ordered to be corrected immediately and a report returned on the condition of the infirmaries. Barrack mess halls, kitchens and equipment were noted as dirty. Observation of the bakery showed it to be dirty, unsanitary and run without any supervision or management. The telephone service for the quartermaster was poor and required improvement. The final page of the inspection report offered recommendations for correcting the conditions and effectiveness of the camp.<sup>408</sup>

Major Brooks immediately ordered the commander of cadets to review the deficiencies listed from the inspections regarding the barracks and correct the problems that had been reported.<sup>409</sup> The quartermaster’s office was ordered to correct problems with the bakery. Orders for daily inspections of the bakery were issued and the distribution of baked goods controlled.<sup>410</sup> The post surgeon received a similar list detailing problems of cleanliness and sanitation, for which Brooks ordered immediate action to be taken. Reports on the status of actions taken in resolving the problems were due by March 2.<sup>411</sup>

First Lieutenant J. E. Hutchinson, the commanding officer of the 198<sup>th</sup> Squadron, responded on February 28 that the problems with the barracks and mess halls under his command had been corrected. Daily inspections had been ordered with any violation of orders

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<sup>407</sup> Chief Signal Officer of the Army to Commanding Officer, February 19, 1918, “Corrections required by Report of Inspector,” RG18-350, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>408</sup> Chief Signal Officer of the Army to Commanding Officer, February 19, 1918, “Corrections required by Report of Inspector.” RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>409</sup> Commanding Officer to the Commandant of Cadets, Call Field, February 19, 1918, “Report of the Inspector General,” RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>410</sup> Commanding Officer to the Quartermaster, Call Field, February 19, 1918, “Report of Inspector General,” RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>411</sup> Commanding Officer to the Post Surgeon, Call Field, February 19, 1918, “Report of the Inspector General,” RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

noted and dealt with.<sup>412</sup> A similar response was received on March 2 from the commanding officer of the 164<sup>th</sup> Squadron, First Lieutenant H. K. Gordon. The problems with the barracks and mess halls were resolved, and a cooks' school was started to ensure sanitary food handling conditions were practiced.<sup>413</sup> On the same date, the quartermaster returned a report stating all of the reported problems had been addressed. To ensure that the bakery remained properly maintained for future inspections, it was cleaned and the distribution of baked goods placed under the control of the quartermaster's office. Captain Atkinson, the camp's surgeon, responded that the problems attributed to the hospital had been cleaned up with the last inspection of the facility done on February 26.<sup>414</sup>

A quick resolution for cleanliness and equipment maintenance was resolved by delegating oversight of those deficiencies to the commandant of cadets and the squadron commanders. Other problems were not as easily corrected. During the month of March 1918, Major Brooks continually answered additional inspection reports. Responding on March 6, the initial items of concern were for the location of the camp. While the camp did have rail service, it was provided by a trunk spurred off of a main rail line, making it difficult for both passengers and freight traffic to reach the destination. The region's potential of extreme cold in winter and extreme heat during the summer months affected flying. This made Call Field comparable to flying fields in the north that experienced weather related problems. Flights were frequently delayed due to high winds and weather conditions worsened by the lack of rainfall to the area. With little rain, grass did not grow on the field, which created dusty conditions that were hard on the aircraft and scattered dirt over the installation.<sup>415</sup>

During the middle of March 1918, sanitary services at the camp were disrupted when low water pressure made water for drinking or hygiene unavailable for most of a twenty-four hour

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<sup>412</sup> Commanding Officer, 198<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron to Commanding Officer, Call Field, and February 28, 1918, "Report of Inspector General (response)," RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>413</sup> C.O. 164<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron to the Commanding Officer, Post, March 2, 1918, "Result of Inspector General," RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>414</sup> Surgeon, Call Field to the Commanding Officer, Call Field, March 2, 1918, "Report of Hospital," RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>415</sup> Chief Signal Officer of the Army to Commanding Officer, Call Field, March 6, 1918, "Report of Inspector," RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

period.<sup>416</sup> With little precipitation during the first months of 1918, providing water for Call Field and the city of Wichita Falls was placing a strain on Lake Wichita. Contractually, the military's preferential access to the available water supply created the potential of a disruption of water service to the civilian population. Had Joseph Kemp's water initiatives been undertaken earlier, the water supply problem might have been of less concern. Not until 1917 had legislation passed amending the manner in which funding could be raised for water projects under the state constitution.<sup>417</sup> Wichita Falls took steps to ration the water supply. Wells were dug in the river bed, providing some relief, although the result was an inferior water quality. With the lake in peril of failing, the military contemplated abandoning Call Field. This action was averted because of reassurances by Robert Huff, President of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce. Under an agreement reached between the city and the military's representative, Colonel Lewis, U.S. Army Sanitary Inspector, Call Field would be furnished 100,000 gallons of potable water daily and the installation of a chlorinating plant at a cost of \$750 to insure water quality. Still, a concern remained over the adequacy of the amount of available water. The anticipated growth of the camp had to be considered due to the increase in students and support personnel already arriving for training. The amount of water to be supplied was amended to 125,000 gallons daily and a manual control for the chlorinating plant added when it became evident that the camp population would increase.<sup>418</sup>

Conditions in late March forced the drastic reduction of water service to city residents. For one hour in the morning, one hour during mid-day, and one hour in the evening, civilian residents could collect water for their personal use.<sup>419</sup> Only fate prevented the necessity of this decision being implemented. On the day that water service was to be turned off to the city main lines, heavy rain fell on the water shed filling Lake Wichita in a matter of hours. The crisis was averted and normal activity returned to Wichita Falls and Call Field, although a precarious sense of safety continued for several months.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Newspaper Clippings, March 13, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>417</sup> "Death Comes Gently to J.A. Kemp at Austin," *Wichita Falls Record News*, November 17, 1920, 2, microfilm.

<sup>418</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, March 5, 1918.

<sup>419</sup> Newspaper Clippings, March 29, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>420</sup> "Further More and However," April 2, 1948, Binder #23.



A topic related to Call Field's water requirements was the adequacy of equipment available for combating fires. Major Krapft had reported the receipt of firefighting equipment in December as the field was approaching completion. While the inventory of equipment supplied by the contractor met the requirements for responding to a fire, the inspection again drew attention to the unreliable water service. Lt. Colonel Matthews closed his remarks stating "the government has here a valuable plant that could be wiped out entirely by fire, because of lack of water."<sup>421</sup> The remainder of the report reviewed the items that Major Brooks ordered corrected. In most of the instances each item was judged satisfactory.<sup>422</sup>

Considering the full scope of the report, a generally positive view of Call Field emerges. For all the inconveniences caused by the elements and weather that hampered the mission of the school, there existed an attitude that these conditions would be overcome with no excuses ever offered. Compliments noted in Colonel Matthews's final comments include remarks about Call Field as a facility run in a businesslike manner. Discipline was noted as good, as was the military bearing and appearance of both the officers and enlisted personnel. With the exception of the lack of compass equipment for flight training, the flight school received favorable comments. The inspection concluded that Call Field was well administered by Major Brooks and that his influence would produce good results. It was the weather conditions of the region that caused negative comments about the facility:

That no further enlargement of this field be made owing to the defects and difficulties as set forth above. It is not believed that the output of this station, owing to its location, can ever be brought to the maximum. Greater care should have been used in the selection of some of these sites for the work of this important branch of the service. The same care and judgment should have been exercised as is shown by the business man in the selection of a site for the location of a manufacturing plant. It is a question whether or not it would be good business policy for the Government to abandon this station, and use the money it would take to run it, upon some other station, located at a more favorable point. The present commanding officer, I believe, fully concurs in my views upon this subject. However, as long as the plant is in being, every effort should be made to give its management the support it deserves, and, if the station is to be continued, a salvage house should be built as above suggested, as well as several more hangers. This, however should not be done until the whole matter is carefully thought over, and decided

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<sup>421</sup> Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, March 6, 1918, "Report of Inspector," 2, RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>422</sup> Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, March 6, 1918, "Report of Inspector," 3-4, RG18-347, Box 16, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

upon by a board of competent officers of the Signal Corps, one at least, of whom should be the present commanding officer, or some other officer of equal judgement who has had actual experiences on this field. This board should carefully consider the metrological records of this locality for some years back, and give the matter the full attention it deserves.<sup>423</sup>

Having served just three months at Call Field, Major Brooks was ordered to the flight school at Scott Field, Illinois. His successor, Major James R. Alfonte took command of Call Field on April 8, 1918. Entering the service as second lieutenant in December 1911, Alfonte was first assigned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas with the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry until September 1913. He was then transferred to Galveston, remaining there from February 1913 to April 24, 1914. During the Mexican expedition, he was stationed at Vera Cruz with the Seventh Infantry, where he remained from April 28, 1914 to November 28, 1914. He became regimental quartermaster for the Seventh Infantry in late November 1914, and was stationed at Galveston, El Paso, Douglas, Arizona and Nogales, Arizona. He advanced to first lieutenant in July 1916, when he joined the newly formed Thirty-Fourth Infantry. In September 1916, Alfonte was sent to the Aviation School in San Diego and completed training as a Junior Military Aviator in May 1917. Upon graduation from flight school, he was commissioned as a captain and sent to San Antonio, serving as assistant flying officer in charge at that location. As commander, he worked to increase the efficiency of the flight school, earning the appreciation and support of the men who served with him at Call Field.<sup>424</sup>

Among the Allies, the most effective teaching method was debated to determine how American pilots should be trained. Resembling the Curtiss method, the French *Roleur* training only allowed pilots to advance once they had mastered a specific skill. The British Gosport method paired a student with an instructor, one-on-one, learning highly advanced flying maneuvers almost from the beginning. While British pilots might be combat ready within five weeks, the number of students was limited due to a dearth of instructors. In their training programs, French and British aviators were using more powerful equipment than the JN-4s that made up the American training fleet. Adopting either method required that the current American

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<sup>423</sup> Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, "Report of Inspector," 12.

<sup>424</sup> "Commanding Officer of Call Field," *Call Field Engineer* Vol. 1, no. 4 (August 15, 1918), 3, Midwestern State University Library, Special Collections, Wichita Falls, Texas.

inventory of airplanes be abandoned for more advanced aircraft. After considering the proposed training possibilities, and unconvinced of the benefits, the Division of Military Aeronautics retained the American requirement of fifty hours of flying time for primary training.<sup>425</sup> At Call Field, Major Brooks issued Special Order No. 4, dated January 21, placing the commandant of cadets in charge of discipline and general instruction of the cadet squadrons assigned to the post.<sup>426</sup>

Flying at Call Field began in November 1917, with staff officers who already had their wings flying the airplanes that they brought with them. Training for newly enlisted cadets arriving from the ground schools began at Call Field in December 1917. Technical instruction was taught by a civilian Academic Board, which provided the teaching staff. At the time, a shortage of available army officers limited flight instructors for the flying fields. To resolve this shortage, some of the first ground school graduates were sent for instructor training, after which they returned to teach flight school candidates. As discussed above, the first commissions awarded at the camp were to cadets from the San Diego school. Some of these officers later served as training instructors for the new cadets, barely preceding the next wave of incoming students. The civilian faculty developed the training curriculum for the subjects a cadet was expected to master.<sup>427</sup>

Cadets arriving at Call Field were assigned to one of the four squadrons, designated as squadron "A," "B," "C," or "D." Each squadron followed a schedule of classes teaching theoretical and practical subjects. Scheduled by squadron, cadets attended flying classes, infantry drill, regulations and practical drill, practical airplanes and motors, gunnery, and buzzer practice and study. Other classes included sketching (following the completion of 36 hours of airplanes and motors), telegraphy, map reading and sketching or miniature range photography. The Dual Class, First Solo Class, Second Solo Class and Cross Country Class designated

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<sup>425</sup> Cameron, 127-128. *Roleur* (French) training adopted a technique similar to the Curtiss method of instruction. Cadets used an aircraft that did not have enough power to attain flight. In effect the equipment was used to learn to maneuver on the ground before graduating to a more powerful aircraft. Gosport (British) training was conducted as one on one instruction between instructor and student until the cadet proved his ability to advance to the next level of training.

<sup>426</sup> Special Order No. 4, "The Commandant of Cadets will be in charge..." January 21, 1918, RG18-351, Records of the Army Air Forces, Record Group 18-351, Box 1 Field Installations, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, Special Orders (351) National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>427</sup> Cameron, 113-114.

sessions teaching the various subjects. Each designation carried with it specific flying requirements with four to nine hours flying in the Dual Class. Ten hours of flying were allotted to the First Solo class and five hours of flying for the Cross Country Class.<sup>428</sup> Subject to weather, instruction moved into classrooms or hangars for classes. Cadets that found themselves with non-classroom time were expected to report to the appropriate locations assigned for physical training, gunnery practice, or radio instruction. Depending on the level of flight training a cadet had completed determined his assignments while he was not on the flight field.<sup>429</sup>

Learning to fly in a wartime environment was a perilous endeavor in 1918. As the principal trainer aircraft, the “Jenny” (JN-4) consisted of little more than a wooden frame covered in canvas painted with a lacquer to provide substance and color. The pilot controlled fuel pressure by using a handle that pumped gasoline to the motor. To keep the motor operating required four pounds of pressure, while exceeding this measurement increased the chances of an engine malfunction or explosion. Serving as navigation guides, railroads, highways and other landmarks supplemented a compass. Depending on the wind conditions, flying time could be up to an hour and a half with a range of 100 miles. Considered the most reliable piece of equipment, the altimeter in the airplanes sometimes registered 1,000 feet while on the ground. Pilots had to learn to adjust the equipment before taking off to be certain of their flying altitude.<sup>430</sup> Flight speed could be estimated by the pitch of the flying wires which supported the wing struts. The higher the pitch, the faster the airplane was traveling. Flying into a headwind, however, rendered this calculation useless, as a plane flying under such conditions would take longer to pass a particular mark on the ground. Weather in North Texas often created adverse flying conditions with wind and sand blowing across the rolling plains of the region. Pilots who earned their commissions also developed a sense of confidence that if they could fly at Call Field, they could fly anywhere.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> General Order No. 11, December 14, 1917, “Instruction Calls for Flying Cadets,” RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>429</sup> “Instruction Schedule for Cadets during Flying Weather,” March 28, 1918, RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>430</sup> “Historic Call Field Trained Pilots for World War One,” *Wichita Falls Times*, May 12, 1957, 4DD, microfilm. The elevation of the Wichita Falls area rises to 912-1240 feet above sea-level.

<sup>431</sup> “Then... and Now,” Newspaper Clippings, June 22, 1952, Binder #23.



Figure 29. Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny,” Call Field, Texas ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

The “Jenny” served as the primary trainer airplane for the United States. The Curtiss JN-3 was the airplane flown by the First Aero Squadron when they moved from Fort Sill to San Antonio, and accompanied General Pershing to Mexico in 1916. When the United States entered WWI in 1917, the Curtiss Company had an order for 600 aircraft, which it contracted out to several aircraft manufacturing companies. During the summer and fall of 1917, Curtiss fulfilled the order with the model JN-4A. This iteration replaced the original Curtiss controls with a stick control. By the spring of 1918, the JN-4D was the airplane most cadets learned to fly. Like its predecessor, the JN-4D was equipped with dual stick control, but was now powered by the new water-cooled Curtiss OX V-8, ninety horsepower engine. The stability and power inherent in this equipment made it the preferred trainer, but a shortage of spare parts continued to keep many airplanes out of service.<sup>432</sup>

In late spring, the school at Call Field began receiving the new JN-4D models for pilot training. During June the older airplanes were disassembled, packed up and prepared for shipment to Love Field. Flying was expected to resume by the end of the month, with the new

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<sup>432</sup> Cameron, 123-124.

airplanes being assembled more expeditiously than originally planned.<sup>433</sup> Call Field was to be made a school of advanced instruction, and, in a press release, Major Alfonte noted changes to the training process for new cadets. As soon as the current class of cadets that had started at ground schools were trained and commissioned, the collegiate system of training would be discontinued. Instead, the instruction of cadets for R.M.A. certification would begin at fields like Call Field for flight training. As one of three fields chosen for advanced work in Texas, the new school would retain all the current departments while introducing new courses. Acrobatic flying, military formation flying, cross country flying, wireless communication, aerial gunnery, and photographic work became part of the R.M.A. training taught in advance courses. It was anticipated that as a result of the change more commissioned pilots were expected to complete their training in a shorter amount of time.<sup>434</sup>

As an important component of flight training, acrobatics included skills that allowed the student to gain confidence in controlling his aircraft. Acrobatics also helped the instructor identify those cadets who would be the most successful in specialized schools. An introduction to skidding, side slips, stalls, loops, spins and cross wind landings was expected to give the cadet enough experience to fly the airplane. Through this experience, it was expected that a pilot would gain experience of flying an airplane and have the knowledge of how to get out of trouble should he encounter a problem.<sup>435</sup> Stunt flying often placed pilots in dangerous conditions requiring skill to recover control of their aircraft. A spinning nose dive, considered to be the most dangerous of all stunts, could be responsible for up to ninety percent of all fatal crashes if not properly controlled. Responsible for teaching stunt flying, Lieutenant Harold Haynes instructed cadets in the proper techniques for surviving in the air.<sup>436</sup> Although Call Field

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<sup>433</sup> Newspaper Clippings, June 23, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>434</sup> "Plant to Be Enlarged and Only R.M.A. Will Be Received At Camp," *Wichita Daily Times, Part Three – Call Field Camouflage*, May 26, 1918, 1, microfilm.

<sup>435</sup> Chief Signal Officer of the Army to Commanding Officer, Call Field, February 13, 1918, "ACROBATICS," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>436</sup> "Stunts In the Air: 'Spinning Dive'," *Wichita Daily Times, Part Three – Call Filed Camouflage*, May 26, 1918, 11, microfilm.

maintained one of the best records among the army training schools, accidents were not unknown at the camp.<sup>437</sup>



Figure 30. Crash at Call Aviation Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas

Crashes often proved fatal. Pilots unable to regain control of an airplane faced circumstances that could potentially cost them their lives. Bailing out of an airplane was impossible because pilots were not equipped with parachutes due to weight and space limitations. This meant that forced landings occurred frequently, sometimes with fatal results.<sup>438</sup> Among the accidents that occurred at Call Field, three crashes stand out as examples of the potential hazards of learning to fly during WWI. Two aviators died when fire broke out in the airplane they were flying. While they were able to land the aircraft, both men were burned almost beyond recognition and subsequently died of their injuries. Two more fatalities occurred when a student and his instructor became caught in an upside down position. Unable to correct the aircraft's attitude, both were killed in the resulting crash. Another young pilot broke both of his legs, both arms, and had his jaw crushed when he wrecked his plane.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> "Then... and Now," Newspaper Clippings, June 22, 1952, Binder #23.

<sup>438</sup> "Desolation Is All That Remains of Call Field's Gate," April 17, 1937, 1, Binder #23.

<sup>439</sup> "Wartime Flying at Call Field Was Risky Business, Says Wichitan," November 2, 1937, Binder #23.



Figure 31. Airplane crash - Call Aviation Field, Texas ca. 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.

One of the first flight related fatalities at Call Field occurred on February 8, 1918. While on a solo flight, Cadet Hubert P Game of Oakland, California died when the airplane he was flying crashed on the flying field. Game was working to complete the requirements for his commission around 9:50 a.m. when the accident occurred. Five days later, although no one was injured, an airplane caught fire, damaging two other machines that were close by.<sup>440</sup> Another cadet was killed the following month during a solo flight. Falling near the gunnery range located at the west end of the air field, the airplane had been in a nose down position when it crashed and exploded upon impact.<sup>441</sup> In August 1918, Cadet Ellis Babcock was killed when his aircraft fell from an altitude of 2,000 feet as he was completing a looping maneuver. The airplane landed upside down, but witnesses reported that it had been in a nose dive just before impact.<sup>442</sup> Accidents claimed fifteen lives during the life of the aviation school. The last one occurred on July 25, 1919, during the final transfer flight as personnel were moving equipment to Love Field.

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<sup>440</sup> Newspaper Clippings, February 8, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>441</sup> Newspaper Clippings, March 27, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>442</sup> Newspaper Clippings, August 30, 1918, Binder #23.



Lieutenant Edward Anderson's plane crashed on its approach, and was the final causality associated with Call Field.<sup>443</sup>

Not all flight accidents ended in the loss of life. In late February, a cadet managed to land his airplane in a tree top. Only another peculiar incident would out do the comic ribbing the pilot received by fellow cadets and in the press. One week later, another cadet managed to land his airplane on the flatcar of a train standing at the Wichita Southern tracks. While the pilot was temporarily knocked unconscious, members of the train crew reported that he was not seriously injured.<sup>444</sup> A non-human fatality did occur when a coyote took up the sport of chasing low flying airplanes. While landing, civilian instructor Harmon Norton struck the animal with a wheel of the aircraft ending the coyote's game. For his trouble the coyote was transformed into a rug for Mr. Norton.<sup>445</sup>

The impact of "enemy alien" status held consequences for commissioning pilots for active duty as well as exemplified in the case of Cadet Fred Madel, Jr. Madel, who most likely arrived at Call Field in December 1917, appeared on the list of potential graduates submitted by Major Brooks dated March 30, 1918.<sup>446</sup> He again is listed as a potential graduate in the class scheduled to be completed two weeks later in communications between Major Alfonte (now commanding officer at Call Field) and Washington D.C. to the chief signal officer.<sup>447</sup> Training records show that he had completed the required subjects through April 18, 1918. Under the original application, in which a cadet had entered the air service, a parent's place of birth was not required. Due to new rulings on pilot commissions within the two week period between these lists, no cadet whose parent had been born in Germany would be commissioned until being fully investigated by the Intelligence Section of the War College.<sup>448</sup> Officers in charge of cadet

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<sup>443</sup> "Desolation Is All That Remains of Call Field's Gate," April 17, 1937, 2, Binder #23.

<sup>444</sup> Newspaper Clippings, February 20, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>445</sup> Newspaper Clippings, April 17, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>446</sup> The Commanding Officer to The Chief Signal Officer, March 30, 1918, "Roster probable Graduates from April 1<sup>st</sup> to 15, 1918," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>447</sup> Commanding Officer to Chief Signal Officer, April 16, 1918, "Report of Probable R.M.A. Graduates," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>448</sup> Office of the Chief Signal Officer to Commanding Officer, Call Field, April 16, 1918, In accordance with a new ruling....," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

detachments were notified, and they responded with reports for their squadrons of men who had given Germany as their father's birthplace. Madel was among the six men who indicated Germany as the birthplace of their father.<sup>449</sup>

As subsequent classes of students graduated, and the cadets received their R.M.A. ratings and officer commissions, Fred Madel was forced to wait while the investigation into his family background continued. A telegraph, dated June 21, 1918, from Washington regarding a status update request stated that he had not been reported as a cadet with a German-born father.<sup>450</sup> During the following months, there was little to do but wait for investigators to work through the process. By September, there remained four names for which family background investigations were still pending. Inquiries seeking reasons for the delay were now becoming more frequent. From the original list dated April 23, only Madel and one other cadet had not been cleared to receive their commissions during the subsequent six months. Beginning with the commandant of cadets, this inquiry was passed through by Call Field's commanding officer to the director of military aeronautics in Washington, D.C.<sup>451</sup>

Efforts to obtain a decision on the Madel investigation increased during the month of October. Fred Madel was becoming impatient with the amount of time it was taking to confirm his father's status as a citizen of the United States. On October 15, the commandant of cadets received a ten-point letter from Madel seeking resolution of his case. Madel's letter began with a statement of facts regarding the lengthy delay from April 18, 1918 when he passed his R.M.A. tests, through the middle of October. Since that time he had been allowed only twenty minutes of flying time to maintain his flying skills. Although he had trained in a standard airplane, he had been recommended as a pursuit pilot by the time he had completed his courses. Since his training contrasted with the amount of flying time he logged during the last six months and the type of aircraft he had trained in, the outcome might prove unacceptable should he be sent to an advanced flying school. He had been informed by the Department of Justice that its investigation

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<sup>449</sup> To Lt. Schmidt, Adjutant, April 23, 1918, "The following men of the Cadet Detachment have given birthplace of fathers as follows," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>450</sup> Western Union Telegram to CMSG Officer, Call Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, June 21, 1918, "Re Letter June Fifteenth," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>451</sup> Commandant of Cadets, Call Field through Commanding Officer to Director of Military Aeronautics, Washington, D.C., September 15, 1918, "Report on Authorizations for Commissions," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

had satisfactorily concluded around August 1, 1918. As of that result, and the service he had rendered from his enlistment in October 1917 to date, Madel pressed for the matter to be reviewed in Washington, hoping for a settlement of the case. He was willing to appear before the Board of the War College to assist in resolving any unanswered questions. If the previous suggestions were not acceptable, he suggested that he be granted an honorable discharge at his own request. Rather than prolong any further inactivity, a release from duty would be better than not using the skills for which he had trained. If, however, the commission was to be approved, Madel asked that it be backdated to the previous April when he had passed his R.M.A. exams. Since he had been born in 1891, to a parent who had been naturalized in 1892, Madel felt that the courtesy of a timely resolution was due to him.<sup>452</sup>

On the same date that Madel submitted his written request to the commandant of cadets office, it was passed on to Call Field's commanding officer. The following day, October 16, Major Alfonte added comments to the inquiry confirming that the cadet had passed his R.M.A. exams on April 18 and asking for a reason for the delay.<sup>453</sup> The reply, dated October 23, was that Madel's case was still under investigation by the Military Intelligence Division. Upon receipt of a favorable report regarding his loyalty, his commission would be approved.<sup>454</sup> In a communication from Air Training Personnel in Washington D.C., Madel received notice of his commission as a second lieutenant – air service aeronautics, effective on November 3, 1918.<sup>455</sup> Major Alfonte requested that Madel be assigned to duty at Call Field, but his orders transferred him to Books Field in San Antonio, to which he departed on November 15, 1918.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> CL Fred Madel, Jr. (cadet) to the Commanding Officer, Call Field, Texas, October 15, 1918, "Delayed Commission," RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>453</sup> Headquarters, Call Field to Division of Military Aeronautics, October 16, 1918, "2<sup>nd</sup> Ind, File 220.1, Madel, Fred, Jr., " RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>454</sup> War Department, O.D.M.A. to Commanding Officer, Call Field, October 23, 1918, "3<sup>rd</sup> Ibd. Madel, Fred, Jr." RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>455</sup> To Call Field from Director of Military Aeronautics, Washington D.C., November 3, 1918, "...the following cadets were commissioned..." National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>456</sup> From Call Field (Alfonte) to Division of Military Aeronautics, Washington, D.C., November 5, 1918, "...request assignment to this station." RG18-354, Box 2, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

Forty new cadets arrived in March for pilot training at Call Field.<sup>457</sup> Throughout the summer of 1918, training continued as commissions were awarded to graduates, now second lieutenants, and new orders sent them to new assignments.<sup>458</sup> On October 7, Call Field was placed under quarantine as the 1918 flu epidemic hit the camp. On a Sunday afternoon, with a football game in progress, the camp was filled with soldiers and visitors from Wichita Falls, when men began arriving at the hospital for treatment. Major Atkinson, who was at the game with Major Alfonte, was contacted and the decision was made to quarantine Call Field. For the rest of the day ambulances continued to deliver those with symptoms to the hospital. All afflicted soldiers were given appropriate care in battling their illness. By the following morning, the medical department had reached its capacity. Enlisted men of the medical department were removed from their quarters to tents, and barracks were used as emergency hospital rooms. A supplemental hospital was installed in an empty barracks used to house cadets. This hospital extension was assigned its own medical officer, staff of enlisted men, and separate cooks to further separate the sick for the general population. The sick were initially triaged to this location, and those who became very sick or developed pneumonia were moved to the hospital for treatment. Convalescing patients were moved to the emergency facility creating available hospital space for those who were most ill. Due to the number of influenza cases that occurred, the normal schedule for flight instruction became almost non-existent. As a result, the mortality rate from the disease was kept low due to the quick action taken by the medical staff. Compared to other military camps, Call Field ranked among those with the best record in battling the flu in the United States.<sup>459</sup> Over the following weeks, the epidemic receded and training returned to a normal schedule.<sup>460</sup> With the quarantine lifted, social activities at the field and in Wichita Falls were again an anticipated off duty pastime. The Soldiers Club in downtown Wichita Falls was

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<sup>457</sup> Newspaper Clippings, March 5, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>458</sup> Commanding Officer to Chief Signal Officer, March 30, 1918 through June 14, 1918, Report of Probable R.M.A. Graduates and Duty Assignments, RG18-354, Box 1, National Archives at Fort Worth, Texas (RM-FW).

<sup>459</sup> Curtis Atkinson, Major M.R.C., Post Surgeon, Call Field Hospital, "Reminiscences Centered Around Call Field," North Texas Trail Tracers Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1995), 13-16, Binder #23. Captain Atkinson was promoted to Major on March 27, 1918.

<sup>460</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 9, 1918, Binder #23.

again open for the enjoyment of the soldiers. The Civic League and other municipal clubs provided meals, with the schedule calling for the Lions Club to provide entertainment.<sup>461</sup>

Coinciding with the return to regular army life came the announcement that an armistice agreement had been reached, and the war had ended as of November 11, 1918. For the soldiers stationed at Call Field, changes began almost immediately. By November 21, twenty cadets in the midst of their aviation courses requested that they be allowed to complete their training for commissions instead of being discharged from service.<sup>462</sup> At their regularly held meeting of November 27, 1918, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce approved a motion asking the government to make Call Field a permanent cantonment.<sup>463</sup> B. F. Johnson, Secretary for the Chamber of Commerce, issued a statement shortly after announcing that efforts were being made to have Call Field made a permanent military encampment. Letters were read at the next chamber meeting, which had been received from the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Thomas B. Love, and U.S. Senator Morris Sheppard. Both men had responded positively regarding their efforts to assist in retaining Call Field for the area. Frank Kell had also received a letter from Dr. John T. M. Johnston requesting that the chamber designate a representative to meet him in Washington on December 16. Dr. Johnston was to make introductions and present the issue of Call Field to members of Congress. Appointed as the chamber's representative, Joseph Kemp was accompanied by Frank Kell and Secretary Johnson for the meetings.<sup>464</sup> Resolving the question of Call Field's permanency was not an easy matter. Following a report by Johnson, the chamber concluded that it was necessary to make a stronger effort to retain the field, and President R. E. Huff requested that Mr. Kemp take the matter up with the War Department.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 17, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>462</sup> Newspaper Clippings, November 17, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>463</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, November 27, 1918. Upon a motion by Mr. Lawton, it was approved that the chamber of commerce president submit a request for the government to retain Call Field as a permanent cantonment.

<sup>464</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, December 3, 1918.

<sup>465</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, December 24, 1918.

With the sudden end of the war, the United States found that the Aviation Service now had an excess of pilots required for peacetime. Anticipating the coming discharge of officers, cadets and enlisted men to civilian life, the Chamber of Commerce sought to attract all those interested to locate at Wichita Falls when their service was completed.<sup>466</sup> Printed in the December 15, 1918 issue of *The Call Field Stabilizer*, a full page letter from Huff, President of the Chamber of Commerce, invited the men of the fighting branches to consider Wichita Falls as a place to locate. The list of opportunities Huff cited included the oil industry, which had grown rapidly during the preceding months with a need for skilled labor to assist in its growth. Because there were many projects in the planning stages, Wichita Falls needed carpenters and other builders to construct the homes and offices associated with that growth. Irrigation and the farming and ranching industries also needed workers. Six railroads could provide excellent opportunities for shipping and manufacturing concerns, supporting all of the opportunities he had listed.<sup>467</sup>

During December 1918, a rapid demobilization effort began to have an impact on the training camp. Only those close to graduation completed their training at Call Field. On January 17, 1919, Call Field graduated the last of its cadets, which included Joe Carrigan, the only man from Wichita Falls to receive a commission from the school. Major Alfonte received notice that all cadets would be ordered to Love Field in Dallas for the completion of their flying courses.<sup>468</sup> Instructions were issued for the discharge of civilian instructors still working for the government by the end of the month.<sup>469</sup> As the new year began, January brought a rapid reduction of personnel at the field, leaving only 200 enlisted men and 11 officers. Lieutenant E. C. DeMontel was left temporarily in command, when Major Alfonte received orders assigning him to another post. No longer in need of the airplanes used for training, the government put many of the aircraft up for sale.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Newspaper Clippings, December 8, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>467</sup> R.E. Huff, President, "A Message from the President of the Chamber of Commerce," December 15, 1918, repr., *The Call Field Stabilizer*, Vol. 1 No. 8, Twenty-first Anniversary of Call Field Veterans Association, Wichita Falls, Texas, (June 1940), 1.

<sup>468</sup> "Joe Carrigan is Among Graduates from Call Field," *Wichita Daily Times*, January 19, 1918, 3, microfilm.

<sup>469</sup> Newspaper Clippings, December 15, 1918, Binder #23.

<sup>470</sup> Newspaper Clippings, January 15, 1919, Binder #23.

The next commander to take charge of Call Field arrived in March to relieve Lieutenant DeMontel, who had been ordered to Petersburg, Virginia. At the time of Major D. W. Russell's arrival, the personnel strength of the camp was again cut to sixty-five enlisted men and seven officers. With the airplanes gone and the men discharged, very little happened during March 1919. Only the occasional visit of flyers transferring airplanes to Post Field broke the monotony of the assignment.<sup>471</sup> After receiving notification that funding for Call Field had failed to gain congressional approval, the Chamber of Commerce began looking for other uses for the property.<sup>472</sup>

On April 3, a large fire at the camp destroyed a wooden storage building, damaged thirty automobiles, and caused extensive damage. Only through the efforts of the resident soldiers and a hastily organized bucket brigade was further damage prevented.<sup>473</sup> With workers seeking the opportunities that Huff had listed in his invitation to the soldiers, a large influx of people to the Wichita Falls area was creating a housing shortage. In an effort to alleviate the problem, the chamber approached the War Department about the possibility of using the facility as a housing location. Tents could be used to supply the number of shelters needed and the kitchens used to supply meals. The suggested cost to a worker was set at \$2.00 per week for a tent with a bed and meals. As an addendum to the proposal, use of the hospital was also added to the request. Committees were named for the purpose of negotiating for the use of the camp.<sup>474</sup> While Kemp and Johnson were in Washington, they were able to negotiate the sale of forty-seven military tents, complete with wooden floors for an acceptable price, and the Wichita Falls Housing Corporation wired the money for the purchase.<sup>475</sup>

The summer months of 1919 saw the final dismantling of the camp. With the exception of five hangars, the War Department sold the Call Field buildings to the Wichita Falls

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<sup>471</sup> "Orders to Further Reduce Number Of Men At Call Field," Newspaper Clippings, *Wichita Daily Times*, March, 1919, Binder #23.

<sup>472</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, March 11, 1919.

<sup>473</sup> Newspaper Clippings, April 4, 1919, Binder #23.

<sup>474</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, March 11, 1919.

<sup>475</sup> Newspaper Clippings, April 22, 1919, Binder #23.

Chamber of Commerce. The purchase of the property provided a more controllable housing arrangement than letting rent profiteering take hold.<sup>476</sup> Major Russel and a small group of officers remained into July to oversee the crating and removal of any remaining equipment, usually sent to Love Field.<sup>477</sup> With the airplanes and personnel gone, the final flag was lowered on October 1, 1919, and Call Field was finally closed.<sup>478</sup>



Figure 32. Call Aviation Field Flight Line, ca 1918. Photo courtesy of the Museum of North Texas History, Wichita Falls, Texas.



Call Field had experienced a soft opening in January 1918 when Major Brooks took possession of the cantonment from the Gilsonite Company. Very quickly the flight school began to commission pilots, sending them to further assignments, some to Europe and the war. As could be expected at a flight school, accidents occurred, some with fatal results, others with less tragic outcomes. Hampered by the climatic conditions of the North Texas area, the aircraft could not always operate in the most efficient manner. The men who learned to fly at Call Field felt that they could fly anywhere after training under such adverse conditions. The JN-4 “Jenny,” a reliable training aircraft, was stable yet slow compared to the airplanes being flown in the European war theater. Still they were little more than sticks and canvas with an engine attached.

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<sup>476</sup> Newspaper Clippings, May 8, 1919, Binder #23.

<sup>477</sup> Newspaper Clippings, July 2, 1919, Binder #23.

<sup>478</sup> Newspaper Clippings, September 13, 1919, Binder #23.



Enhanced models arrived just in time for a disruption of flying due to the 1918 influenza outbreak. This was immediately followed by the cessation of hostilities and the end of the war. So quickly did the closure of the field take hold that some of the cadets worried over their ability to complete their training. Existing for only eighteen months, Call Field trained men to fly in response to the call of their country.

## Chapter 7

It has been the dream of my life to see this one of the most powerful cities of Texas. I have done all I could... but I am only willing to step down when this dream comes true.

Joseph Kemp, 1920  
*Wichita County Beginnings*,  
Louise Kelly

## Conclusions

Wichita Falls' efforts to acquire a permanent flight school and airplane factory in 1916 were an endeavor to grow the city by increasing its industrial base—an aggressive vision that proved to be premature and unsuccessful. Passage of the National Defense Act of 1916 on June 3, 1916 appropriated funding for an expansion of U.S. military aviation. Recognizing the economic possibilities which this offered, Wichita Falls' leaders “quietly” approached army representatives in Washington during the late summer of 1916, opening negotiations for installing a permanent “army flight school and factory” near Lake Wichita—an effort designed to gain an economic edge over other municipalities.<sup>479</sup> During peacetime, provisions of the National Defense Act limited the size of the regular army. The aviation section, as a part of the Signal Corps, was excluded under the law. Instead, the president was charged with determining the size of the Signal Corps, including the aviation section, in accordance with the needs of the army. During the second half of 1916, a period of peace prevailed in the United States—a time in which a small military force remained acceptable, since Woodrow Wilson kept the country neutral and out of the conflict in Europe. The need to mobilize a military force, including an aviation section, had yet to arrive.

Wichita Falls continued to pursue the possibility of an army flight camp throughout the fall and winter of 1916. Chamber of Commerce minutes, dated December 5, 1916, record the efforts made to “further urge the army” to build close by.<sup>480</sup> While chamber minutes reflect continued negotiations and newspapers reported possible visits of army officials, the reality of obtaining an army facility began to appear questionable. In January 1917, as Wichita Falls was making its case, the army leased land in San

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<sup>479</sup> “Big Aviation Camp Likely for This City,” 2.

<sup>480</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, December 5, 1916.

Antonio for the expansion of its aviation post. Construction began in March 1917, and on May 5, 1917, the Third Aero Squadron arrived. Located five miles south of San Antonio, the flying field was intended to be the largest permanent flying facility in the country. The aviation camp became Camp Kelly (Kelly Field) in May 1917. The field served as a principal aviation camp, at which the majority of new aviation units was organized.<sup>481</sup>

When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the country began a rapid mobilization of its military. For Wichita Falls, WWI offered a renewed opportunity for obtaining a flight school. When the chamber met on May 22, 1917, Secretary Johnson reported that he had been in communication with the aviation department in San Antonio—advising the chamber to table work on the flight school until the army could make a decision on wartime training camps.<sup>482</sup> Promoting its resources during the summer of 1917, the city was able to satisfy the War Department’s contract requirements. Wichita Falls did get its flight school, but it proved to be temporary.

When the war ended in late 1918, the city’s original hope for Call Field as a permanent aviation facility was dashed. Under the terms of the National Defense Act, peacetime military quotas returned. Due to Call Field’s construction as a wartime training camp, the army considered it to be a “temporary” facility. Now with a surplus of military camps and supplies, members of Congress began debating the resolution of war debts and the payment of contractors. Attempting to counteract the closure of its aviation camp, the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce dispatched representatives to Washington during December 1918. Assistance from Senator Morris Sheppard and Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Thomas B. Love brought assurances that they would do all they could to retain Call Field as a permanent aviation camp.<sup>483</sup> Representative John H. Moon of Tennessee introduced H. R. 13308 to the U. S. House of Representatives on December 2, 1918. Titled the Post Office Appropriation Bill, the bill passed on February 28, 1919, containing limited appropriations for aerial mail service. The bill first proposed the aerial delivery of mail using army aircraft and pilots—a proposal allowing for the

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<sup>481</sup> Center for Military History United States Army, CMH Pub 23-5, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior Directory of Troops, Volume 3, Part 2* (1931-1949, repr., Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1988), 915-917.

<sup>482</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, May 22, 1917.

<sup>483</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, December 3, 1918.

continued existence of temporary facilities like Call Field. Pub-Law No, 299, enacted February 28, 1919, appropriated funding for the United States Post Office, ending on June 30, 1920. In its final submission, and after numerous debates and amendments, provisions for retaining facilities like Call Field had been removed.<sup>484</sup> The minutes of the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, dated March 11, 1919, record that Wichita Falls' attempt to retain Call Field had failed passage in Congress.<sup>485</sup>

Wichita Falls continued its efforts to establish an aviation presence in the city. The Chamber of Commerce received a proposal on February 11, 1919, from the Southwestern Securities Company. The offer included making the city a part of a permanent aerial route for service between Kansas City, Oklahoma City and Houston.<sup>486</sup> In a separate offer, the Fort Worth Aerial Transposition Company submitted a similar proposal, requesting the use of sixty acres from the former aviation field. The chamber's secretary was instructed to further pursue the proposal from both companies.<sup>487</sup> Staffed by former army aviators, on April 26, the initial flight of the Fort Worth aviation company transported a passenger between Wichita Falls and Fort Worth.<sup>488</sup>

Following its closure, Call Field's legacy continued to be a benefit to the city. With the exception of its hangars, which had housed the airplanes, the army returned the field to the City of Wichita Falls. Its barracks, which once housed soldiers, were used in housing construction workers arriving to further build Wichita Falls. Used for fair grounds, polo grounds, and private flying lessons, the land once occupied by Call Field is

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<sup>484</sup> H.R. 13308 Public, No. 299, Ch. 69, Statutes at Large of the United States of America, An Act making appropriations for the services of the Post Office Department for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1920, February 28, 1919, Sixty-Fifth Congress of the United States, Session II, accessed October 6, 2021, [STATUTE-40-Pg1189a.pdf govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com](#).

<sup>485</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, March 11, 1919.

<sup>486</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, February 11, 1919.

<sup>487</sup> Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce minutes, February 20, 1919.

<sup>488</sup> "Aerial Passenger Line Makes First Trip to Waco," *Dallas Morning News*, May 17, 1919, 5, accessed October 18, 2021, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.uta.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A0F99DDB671832188%40EANX-1068DAA367BE668C%402422096-1068DAA3B80CC5AF%404-1068DAA5B77CDD36%40Aerial%2BPassenger%2BLine%2BMakes%2BFirst%2BTrip%2Bto%2BWaco>.

now filled with homes, churches, and businesses. Undaunted, and still interested in aviation, Wichita Falls opened Kell Field in 1928, its first municipal airport, some eleven miles north of where Call Field was located.<sup>489</sup> Sheppard Field (now Sheppard Air Force Base) was built in 1941 as a WWII army air corps training center, incorporating Kell Field as part of its construction. In honor of its predecessor, the flag pole, which once stood in front of Call Field's headquarters, was moved to Sheppard Air Force Base. Only a street and a monument remain to commemorate Call Field. Yet, for the city of Wichita Falls, a sense of pride remains over its original training camp known as Call Aviation Field.



Figure 33. Call Field Monument - Wichita Falls Municipal Airport, courtesy of the Wichita County Historical Commission, Wichita Falls, Texas, accessed September 16, 2021, <https://www.wichitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/call-field-memorial.html>.

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<sup>489</sup> Kell Field, Wichita County Historical Commission, accessed September 16, 2021, <https://www.wichitacountyhistoricalcommission.org/kell-field.html>.

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