

466th AERO SQUADRON  
(FORMERLY 54TH AERO SQUADRON)

From the mass of recruits assembled on July 28, 1917, at Columbus Barracks, Ohio, 150 likely looking men were drawn and sent to Kelly Field, Texas, to form what later became the 54th Aero Squadron and was then changed to the 466th Aero Squadron. It was the idea of these recruits, when they were selected for the Aviation Section, Signal Corps, that they were to begin immediate intensive training as aviators. This dream was dispelled shortly after they arrived at Kelly Field on August 7 and were put to work to learn the intricacies of infantry drill, guard duty and fatigue.

The 54th Aero Squadron was duly organized with Corporal Lee Robinson in charge. At first, tents, quartering from eight to 10 men, were used. Short time later the squadron moved into comfortable barracks, on Field No. 1.

Sergeant Lee O. McQuitty, later commissioned First Lieutenant, took charge of the unit for a short time. Then, on August 27, Major Patrick Frissell, S.C., was assigned as commanding officer and under him the organization was re-organized, equipped and prepared for field service. 27 non-commissioned officers were appointed on September 1, 1917. On September 6, Major Frissell was relieved of command and his place was taken by 1st Lieut. E.A. Lee.

The thing that completely shattered the vision of flying, was the order that the 54th, together with seven other squadrons, was to be turned into a construction squadron, for immediate duty with the American Expeditionary Forces.

Five men who had previously applied for flying commissions were transferred out for flying training. Some mechanics were sent to other squadrons, being replaced by men from the old 50th Squadron.

On September 17, 1917, the 54th Squadron, entrained for Mineola, N.Y., where it arrived on September 21 and was quartered in tents on Field No. 2., the wooden barracks being still under construction. Final equipment, including pistols, was issued to the men and the squadron went through all the preparations for overseas duty. Lieut. Lee was relieved of command on September 26 and Capt. Harold C. Eustis was assigned in his place. Lieuts. C.O. Andersen and Charles Grevemburg were assigned to the Squadron October 8 and 9, respectively.

The eight squadrons, under command of Major J.L. Dunsworth, left Mineola at 1:00 A.M. October 13, 1917, and embarked on the Cunard liner Panonia.

There were, besides the Panonia, 16 freight laden steamers in the convey. During a violent storm near the English coast, the Panonia was lost from the convey and made a run for the coast without protection. She reached Belfast, Ireland, safely on October 28. The following day, with an escort of British destroyers, the trip across the Irish Sea was made and the Panonia put into Liverpool, England, about 5 P.M. October 29.

An all night train ride brought the squadron to Borden, a small British-American rest camp. The squadron went to Southampton November 1 and over the Channel to Le Havre, France, the same day on the small steamer Viper, arriving November 2. After a miserable time in one of the so called "Rest Camps" at Le Havre, the unit entrained again and arrived at Issoudun, worn out by the uncomfortable ride in box cars. Through an error of the Commanding Officer, the squadrons were forced to march a distance of 14 kilometers to the site of the new camp, which was later to become the

largest aviation center in the world. Many men droffed out on the way from fatigue.

Upon the arrival of the 54th and other construction squadrons, the camp was just beginning to show signs of development. All the construction at that time consisted of 15 or 20 large canvas hangars and three or four barracks quartering the 29th Aero Squadron, two small barracks and the modest beginning of the later huge Red Cross Cafeteria. A railroad line connecting the camp with the town of Issoudun had been built previously by a detachment of engineers, and German prisoners and cadets. Rain and mud, with the ground in the hangars as sleeping accommodations and the chill wind whistling through the canvas walls--- this was the environment of the Third Aviation Instruction Center at this time.

Working under the direction of the construction officers, Capts. Frank, Lerner and Schilling and Lieuts. Cobb, Grevemburg, Shea, Hinman and Bowne, the 54th took an active part in the construction of the field and the erection of barracks, ~~were~~ houses, machine shops, train shed and numerous other tasks of general construction. The 54th also did a great of work in connection with the installation of electric lights, telephones, sewers, plumbing and drainage systems. By April 1, 1918, an active Air Service Training Camp had come into being where eight months before ~~was~~ a large patch of French rural scenery existed.

About January 20, 1918, a detachment of 50 men from the squadron were sent to Valentine Field, commanded by Lieut. Bowne, who was also in charge of all construction work at the field. Under very difficult conditions the work was completed in about 45 days including the erection of a Y.M.C.A. hut. In spite of the most unfavorable conditions, a football team was organized by the squadron and was unbeaten during the season.

The first death in the unit was that of Corporal Frank M. May who died on pneumonia January 3 and was buried with military honors in the camp cemetery at the Third Aviation Center.

On February 1 the Squadron number was changed and the new designation, 466th Aero Squadron, took effect. The personnel during the Winter remained almost intact with the exeption of the assignment of additional officers to the unit. Capt. Nathaniel M. Lerner was assigned to the squadron November 18, 1917, Capt. Russell E. Hinman and Lieuts. Charles S. Pillsbury and Louis F. Schultz were assigned on November 22, 1917, and Ist Lieuts. Frederic Bowne and Edward H. Shae on December 25. After living for a month in the hangars the squadron moved into more comfortable quarters December 8 upon completion of the wooden barracks.

During this time Capt. Eustis was transferred, with five men, to take command of the Headquarters Detachment and Ist Lieut. Anderson took command of the squadron. Availing themselves of the opportunity to join service squadrons, 36 mechanics were transferred into the 30th and 33rd Aero Squadrons. Their places in the 466th were taken by men from the 400th Squadron, formerly the 29th, bringing the 466th up to full strength again.

On the morning of March 19, 1918, the squadron moved to Air Service Production Center No. 2, near Romorantin, Loire et Cher, about 40 kilometers from Issoudun, under command of Capt. Eustis who had been relieved from duty with Headquarters Detachment. Here, with the other construction squadrons, a great deal of work was done in constructing barracks, numerous airplane assembly and salvage plants, spare parts

divisions, gun ranges, hangars, a large flying field and a testing field. Working directly under officers from the engineering department, the 466 non-commissioned officers were placed in complete charge of several important jobs such as bombing plants, post power house, saw mill, water towers, etc. Other men of the squadron held important posts in the radio department of the P & M division, quartermaster's office, post headquarters, railroad and transportation offices, etc.

Thirty men from the 90th Division, recently landed in France, were transferred into the squadron on August 12, 1918, to replace men who had been taken out for work with squadrons at the front. In the meantime, on August 5, Capt. Eustis had again relinquished command when he was transferred to other work at Colombey-les-Belles. Capt. W.A. Campbell, commanding officer of the 487th Aero Squadron, was attached for command taking up his new duties immediately. M.S.E.'s Matthews and Irwin applied for non-flying commissions, the former successfully passing the Air Service examination for non-flying officers at Tours and the latter being sent to Engineers Army School at Langres for training.

The squadron was busily engaged on its work when the armistice was signed November 11, 1918.

(Prepared by Lieut. George W. Sutton, Jr., Tank Corps, USA, from squadron history furnished by Capt. W.A. Campbell, A.S., Commanding)

Roster of Officers of the 466th Aero Squadron  
since its organization.

Major	Patrick Frissell
Capt.	Nathaniel M. Lerner
"	Harold C. Eustis
"	Russell E. Hinman
"	W. A. Campbell
1st. Lt.	Everette A. Lee
" "	C. O. Anderson
" "	Carlos E. Grevemberg
" "	Charles S. Pillsbury
" "	Frederic Bowne
" "	George De Lisle
" "	Louis F. Schultz
2nd. Lt.	Edward H. Shae
" "	Frank S. Welsh
" "	William L. Parsons.

ADDITION TO HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE 466th AERO SQDN.  
FORMERLY THE 54th AERO SQUADRON

For the four or five weeks following the signing of the armistice the Squadron continued its construction duties on the field, consisting of the completion of building projects commenced prior to Nov. 11/18. Regular details were sent out until Dec. 16/18 when orders were received to prepare the organization for its return to the United States.

On Dec. 16/18 Captain William A. Campbell was relieved of command of the Squadron and 1st Lieut. George W. De Lisle assigned to command. All post duties were immediately suspended and infantry drill and inspections became the order of the day, and squadron equipment was reduced to "Equipment A." Drills and inspections were held daily in the spacious airplane assembly plant 1-A by Captain McNabb, commander of the Post Guard.

On Dec. 22/18 Lieut. De Lisle was relieved of command and Captain Nathaniel M. Lerner, A.S., formerly with the organization as First Lieutenant, was assigned to command. At 10:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 26/18, orders were received to proceed to Brest from where the organization would embark for the United States. Final preparations were quickly made, new men transferred into the squadron to bring it up to its required strength, and a medical corps consisting of Captain Clinton C. Cady and four enlisted men were attached. The 466th, together with the 480th, 481st and 493rd Aero Squadrons left Romorantin station at noon, Dec. 27/18, and arrived at Brest at 11:00 p.m., Dec. 28/18. After a march of about five kilometers they arrived at Camp Pontanezen where they were quartered in tents.