

HISTORY OF THE 486th AERO SQUADRON.

The 74th Aero Squadron was organized on the 13th day of August, 1917, at Kelly Field, South San Antonio, Texas. The personnel was composed of recruits from Fort Slocum, N.Y., Fort Wood, N.Y., and Columbus Barracks, Ohio. Drilling was the daily program, until after having become proficient at same, guard and fatigue duty was substituted. There were many changes in the personnel while stationed at Kelly Field, Texas. A few members of the Organization were sent to training Camps, after having successfully passed the examination for Commission, while some were transferred to other Organizations for military reasons. After every man had received the para-typhoid prophylaxis, (better known as a "Shot in the arm"), and had been vaccinated five or six times, the Squadron was released from quarantine and moved from the tents in which they had been billeted for six weeks to barracks No. 30 at Kelly Field No. 1. From this time until December 15th, 1917, nothing of importance happened, but on this date, First Lieutenant Edgar L. Robinson, was relieved from Command of the Squadron and Second Lieutenant Frederick T. Cerney was directed to assume this responsibility. On this same date orders were issued for the Squadron to proceed to Morrison, Virginia, a small suburb, about seven miles Southwest of Newport News, Virginia. This news was received with acclamation by the members of the Organization, as the personnel was made up largely of men from the North, who were unaccustomed to the climate of

Texas, and the sandstorms for which the state is famous, did not appeal to any of them, so it was with joy that they said "Good-bye" to Sandy Texas, but it was not a very joyous "Hello" that was sounded when Morrison, Virginia was reached on Dec. 21st, 1917. It was not the least bit encouraging to detrain at any Army Camp, about ten per-cent completed, when the Organization was designated as a Construction Unit. This Camp was called the Aviation General Supply Depot and Concentration Camp. Providing one concentrated one's mind on MUD it was the consensus of opinion that the Camp was well named, for there certainly was a general supply of it. Mud and tree-stumps were all that could be seen, wherever there were no barracks or other buildings. When the members of the 74th Aero Squadron, realized that this was to be their home, the space allotted to them, changed its appearance as if by magic. What was once nothing more than a mud puddle soon became a flower garden, for, here and there, men could be seen clad in rubber boots in mud up to their hips, digging out the stump of a tree. Immediately upon our arrival at this Post, First Lieutenant Lilburn H. Steel was assigned to this Squadron and relieved Lieutenant Cerney of the Command. About two weeks later, Captain George W. Price, was assigned to duty as Commanding Officer of the Squadron, relieving Lieutenant Steel, together with his many other duties as Post Construction Officer. On February First the number of the Squadron was changed from 74 to 486, and from this date the duties of the Squadron were confined almost entirely to preparation for Overseas service. Men were constantly being trans-

ferred in and out of the Squadron, due to an epidemic of mumps, which was raising havoc at the Post. The damp climate of Virginia was a radical change from the driness of Texas, which occasioned many bad colds. The Squadron was fortunate however in not having one casualty. On March First, 1918, First Lieut. William L. Terrell, relieved Captain Price of Command of the Squadron and on the Fourth of March the Squadron was ordered to embark for Overseas. It was a happy bunch of men that crossed the gang-plank of the "MADAWASKA", formerly the Imperial German steamship, "KOENIG WILHELM II". The Squadron had been waiting for this eventful day for seven long months.

The best day of all was, March 21st, 1918, when one hundred and fifty men, all members of the 486th Aero Squadron marched down the long gang-plank of the good ship which had convoyed them across the mighty Ocean and for the first time in most of their lives, landed on the soil of France. Saint Nazaire was the port at which the Squadron disembarked and from this town the Squadron was marched to what was called a rest camp about three miles outside the city limits. Here, it was assigned to barracks, in which were installed double-deck wooden bunks. Even though the bunks were made of wood, they were accepted without comment for, after that march of three miles, with packs weighing about seventy-five pounds, the ground itself would have made an excellent place for sleeping. It was impossible to secure rations for the first meal and this made it necessary for the Squadron to eat it's first

meal in France at the Casual Mess. After discovering that there was already a line-up of Soldiers about a mile long, waiting to be fed at this kitchen, most of the men decided that they were more tired than hungry. The Squadron was allowed to rest-up for two days, and on Sunday March 24th were ordered to proceed to the town of Romorantin, in the Department of Loire-et-Cher. Every one had visions of the front line trenches, and were greatly disappointed upon consulting a map. It was situated more than a hundred miles behind the lines. We were consoled only with the thought that the stay here would be as brief as that at Saint Nazaire. This trip was one that will never be forgotten by any member of the 486th Aero Squadron. The train was made up of, third-class French coaches, which are divided into four compartments, each compartment accommodating eight people very uncomfortably. Eight soldiers were piled into each of these compartments, together with his pack containing all of his belongings and rations, which consisted canned tomatoes, corned beef, bread and jam. Sleeping was out of the question that night and it was a great relief to all, when the train pulled in at the station of Romorantin at eight o'clock the next morning. Another hike of about five miles, brought the Squadron to the Camp, which has been it's home ever since.

This Camp was called, Air Service Production Center Number 2, and consisted of about five Aero Squadrons and a small

detachment of Engineers, when the 486th Aero Squadron arrived. There was no water system and transportation was very scarce. Many difficulties arose which were new to troops, fresh from the good old United States, but still the spirit never faltered. The day after our arrival at Air Service Production Center No. 2, the Squadron was detailed to duty with the Engineering Department, and assigned to the task of building barracks for incoming troops. This was a very tedious task for the surrounding country was nothing but a dense wood and the trees had to be pulled out by the roots in order to provide for clear space. This feat was accomplished by the means of a rope tied around the tree and was then pulled by the men. Every man was ready for bed after a day's work of this kind. During this period the personnel of the Squadron remained unchanged, with the exception of one man who was left at the Hospital at Saint Nazaire and has since returned to the United States. On March 29th, the first
/man to be sent on detached Service was sent to Paris and three days later two others followed him. They were envied by every man in the Squadron. The personnel was now made up largely of mechanics, but still the Squadron as a whole was making a good showing at Construction work. During the month of April not more than three days passed during which it did not rain, causing the Camp to take on the aspect of a lake and each barracks resembling a large boathouse, which however did not cause any falling off in the work. Large warehouses as well as barracks were now taking form and what at one time was nothing more than a forest, soon began to look like a hugh

industrial center. A water system was installed and electricity finally became a realization. The Sun came out in May and dried up the muddy roads and fields caused by the rains of April. This served to make living accommodations more agreeable and the men began to take a liking to France. About this time the Base Ports were calling for men to convoy trucks and automobiles to Air Service Production Center No. 2. The men of the 486th Aero Squadron, were very anxious to perform this duty and many of them by so doing had a wonderful opportunity of seeing France. The dusty roads of white sand and sleepless nights did not hold them back in the least and they responded energetically to the call. Consequently Air Service Production Center No. 2, not only became a great Aeroplane Assembling center, but also a Transportation Center. The space allotted to the Transportation Department at the entrance to the Camp, was literally covered with trucks of all descriptions, automobiles, motorcycles, with and without side-cars and all sorts of trailers. It seemed that the 486th Aero Squadron could perform any duty to which it was assigned. As a Construction ^{Unit} they made a name for themselves, which could not be beaten, as was evidenced by the manner in which the Officers in charge of Construction spoke of the Squadron. About this time a Production and Maintenance Division was organized at this Post, to which the 486th Aero Squadron was immediately assigned to duty. This ^{Division} ~~Unit~~ was in charge of the assembling, overhauling and testing of all Liberty Aeroplanes to be sent to the Front, together with other types of Planes

such as French Spads and Nieuports. The Organization was the first Squadron to be assigned to this Division and installed practically all of the machinery now in use at the various plants. Later the Personnel was distributed as follows;

43 men assigned to Machine Shop at Plant 2-A,
26 Men assigned to research work on Liberty Motors and,
fine instrument repair work,
24 Men assigned to Flying Field and divided into crews,
12 men assigned to Armament Dept, assembling machine
guns for the Aeroplanes.

The balance of the Personnel was assigned to Plants 1-A, 1-B, 2-B and 2-C, and were engaged in technical work of all descriptions. About 70% of the Non-Commissioned Officer personnel were put in charge of the various Departments in these plants and after this was accomplished a night shift was organized in the different plants. So the members of the 486th Aero Squadron, were now working day and night and Aeroplanes were being assembled in large numbers and sent to the Front. On August 13th, 1918, the anniversary of the Organization of the Squadron was celebrated and on September 21st, 1918 each member of the Squadron could be seen wearing the Gold Service Chevron representing six months of service in France. On this same date 21 of the original members of the Squadron were transferred to the First Air Depot at Colombey-les-Belles, which was not very far from the fighting lines. These men were in high spirits when informed that they were to be sent to the Front, but the rest of the men were very sorry at not having been selected. The Squadron was then filled up with Casuals from a Replacement Squadron. This left only fifty per-cent of the original members of the Squadron. Shortly after

these men were transferred, an epidemic of Spanish Influenza broke out and claimed many soldiers as victims. Up until this date the Squadron had been quite fortunate in not having any deaths. Private Martin Sanders, whose home was in Richmond, Utah, was transferred to the 486th Aero Squadron from the 1106th Aero Replacement Squadron, on October 5th, 1918. Three days later he complained of being sick and was sent to the hospital for treatment. On October 21st, 1918 about 10 AM he died of Broncho Pneumonia. He was buried with Military honors, the whole Squadron attending the funeral. His name will always be remembered by every member of the 486th Aero Squadron. Many other members of the Organization were attacked with this disease, but all were fortunate enough to recover with this one exception.

From this date there was nothing further worthy of mention. The Squadron continued it's daily routine of work, under the Supervision of the Production and Maintenance Division.

ROSTER OF ALL OFFICERS ATTACHED TO 486 AERO SQUADRON
SINCE TIME OF FORMATION.

2nd Lieutenant Joseph Bernard, A.S.,	Assigned January 9, 1918
1st Lieutenant William H. Bestwick, A.S.,	Assigned January 8, 1918
1st Lieutenant Edgar L. Bradley, A.S.,	Assigned January 31, 1918
2nd Lieutenant Frederick T. Cerney, A.S.	Assigned December 14, 1917
2nd Lieutenant Luther G. Franklin, A.S.	Assigned December 18, 1917
1st Lieutenant Herbert Godwin, A.S.	Assigned January 8, 1918
2nd Lieutenant Raymond C. Long, A.S.	Assigned January 8, 1918
2nd Lieutenant Howard Meixner, A.S.	Assigned January 8, 1918
2nd Lieutenant Herman C. Meyers, A.S.	Assigned January 7, 1918
1st Lieutenant Glenn R. Miller, A.S.	Assigned February 2, 1918
1st Lieutenant James L. Pede, Q.M.C.	Assigned December 26, 1917
2nd Lieutenant Herbert B. Pope, A.S.	Assigned January 26, 1917 8?
Captain George W. Price, A.S. -	Assigned December 26, 1917
1st Lieutenant Edgar L. Robinsen, A.S.	Assigned September 15, 1917
1st Lieutenant John J. Small, D.R.C.	Assigned February 22, 1918
1st Lieutenant Lilburn H. Steel, A.S.	Assigned December 21, 1917
Captain Fletcher B. Taylor, M.R.C.	Assigned January 18, 1918
1st Lieutenant William L. Terrell, A.S.	Assigned February 26, 1918