

85th AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

85th Aero Squadron (Observation) organized, Aug 1917
Demobilized Jul 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX
Scott Field, IL, Sep 1917
Garden City, NY, Feb 1918
Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, Feb 1918
AEF, Feb 1918
Mitchel Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Winged Cupid with a campaign hat, sitting on the top of the world, is the insignia selected to represent the Eighty-fifth Squadron.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The Eighty-fifth Aero Squadron was an Army observation squadron. It reached the Front at the Toul Airdrome on October 24, 1918, and the next day was assigned to the Fourth Corps Observation Group, First Army. This squadron took part in the Second Argonne-Meuse offensive. It accomplished several missions over the lines in the few remaining days before the Armistice, but was not accredited with any victories nor did it suffer any casualties. It was finally ordered to be demobilized May 11, 1919.

The Unit Construction Company of St. Louis, the contractor for Scott Field, commenced work on the new two-squadron camp on June 27, 1917. As many as 3,000 workmen were employed at one time to push the construction of buildings and the clearing and leveling of the landing field. Within two months, 52 buildings, including quarters for students, officers, instructors, mechanics, and enlisted personnel, six large hangars, machine shops, offices, and mess halls were awaiting occupation by troops en route from Texas. Although the work was not completed until September 1, the date on which the War Department officially accepted the field, the 11th and 21st Aero Squadrons moved into the new barracks and quarters on August 12, and training commenced as of that date. Major J. W. Kurd assumed temporary command of Scott Field.

Other types of instruction developed apace with the flight-training program. Month after month aero squadrons received instruction and practical training in the various jobs related to the actual operations of a combat flying squadron. The 11th and 21st Aero Squadrons left the field before the end of 1917; the 86th departed in mid-February, followed by the 85th, 154th, and 222d, while the 155th, 261st, and 262d, and 263d remained until March. Eight squadrons served overseas, four in France, after advanced training with the Royal Flying Corps in England. Other squadrons were training in England at the close of hostilities. Several squadrons were transferred to camps in the United States.

85th AERO SQUADRON— Commanded by 1st Lieut. Carl E. Felker. The personnel of this organization was composed entirely of men recruited from California. They departed from this field early in February, entraining for Garden City, Long Island, and, were soon on their way to the land, of the Hun. Statistics at Washington show this squadron later developed into one of the most efficient and highly trained aero squadrons on the Western Front.

The Story of the 85th Observation Squadron is not one that will set the world afire, nor will it reflect untold glory on the members of the organization, but it is a fairly interesting tale and another case of history nipped in the bud.

The Squadron first saw daylight at Kelly Field, South San Antonio, Texas, on August 17th, 1917. Practically all of the enlisted personnel hailed from California, and even to-day, though

numerous changes have altered the roster, the majority of the boys are "native sons."

The Winter of 1917-1918 was spent in shoveling snow, changing Commanding Officers and flying at Scott Field. Belleville, Illinois.

March 6th found the Squadron in England with heads held high. Were they not on their way to the front? They were not, for it wasn't until September 9th—six months later—that they landed in France. However, the famous S. S. Olympic had brought the 85th to Liverpool; and after a rest (?) at Winnal Down, Winchester, the twelve-mile hike to Romsey was accomplished as easily as if it had been a hundred. Harlaxton Airdrome, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England, was the scene of much preparation for the terrific campaign to come at least, that was what they told us it was. But as a matter of fact our job was to help in the training of pilots for the RAF, and at the same time to learn some of the ways and methods of that organization.

And then on the 9th of September, we actually did start out for the scene of that terrific campaign in which we were to participate (?) But more about that later.

After reaching Cherbourg, our first port in France, we headed for St. Maixent, the delight of all aero squadrons, to receive equipment.

Then to hill 402, Chaumont, where the Squadron was given the finishing touches and told to "go get 'em". Let us not dwell too long on the Chaumont activities for we are anxious that you should know of the doings of the 85th at the front. Suffice it to say that here Captain Herbert A. Schafner whipped the organization into fighting trim and brought it to Toul Airdrome with blood in its eye.

On November 10th, 1918, led by the Commanding Officer, the 85th Squadron made its first flight over the enemy lines and on the same day at the same time made its last. Though the trip was a reconnaissance expedition to Conflans, there was little military information, other than the presence of "Archies" reported.

At the time of this writing the Squadron is part taking in liaison exercises for the edification of the Infantry, and taking pictures of Lord-knows-what knows-whom. All spare moments are employed in thawing out frozen water-pipes in Rip Van Winkle beards may be eliminated

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.