

642 AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

123 Aero Squadron (Supply) organized Sep 1917
Redesignated 642 Aero Squadron (Supply), Feb 1918
Demobilized, Jun 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX
Garden City, NY, Jan 1918
Port of Embarkation, Jan 1918
AEF, Jan 1918
Mitchel Field, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 642nd Aero Supply Squadron was organized as the 123rd Aero Supply Squadron, at Kelly Field, South San Antonio, Texas, on September 3rd, 1917. It was composed of a detachment of thirty-five recruits, from Fort Thomas, KY., and one of one hundred and fifteen from Fort Slocum, N. Y.

Lieut. Bernard Kline was placed in command of a number of squadrons including the 123rd. He was assisted by Cadets George B. Cunningham and L. W. Kibler, who took charge of the drills and inspections, and instructed the acting non-commissioned officers in their duties. During the first week the men drilled for a short period in the mornings only, while they were becoming acclimated to the tropical sun of Texas, as all the men were accustomed to the more moderate climate of the Central and Northern States. The balance of the month was devoted to drilling, route marching, and the necessary fatigue work.

Thu first changed the squadron experienced was when seven men were transferred to the 139th Aero Squadron on September 23rd, 1917. They were replaced by recruits from Fort Lawton, Wash. 1st. Lieut. Robert G. Alexander, Jr., was designed on September 23rd 1917, to this squadron as its first commanding officer, and has commanded this organization to date. On October 6th, 1917, the acting non-coms with a few exceptions received their warrants as following Sgt. Major James D. Meenan, 1st Sgt. William S. Rice, Supply Sgt. Lynn A. Morris, Distribution Sgt. Charles B. Montgomery, Drill Sergeants Lawrence Connelli, and Frank McNeill, Duty Sergeant Frank L. Undine, and Michael J. Burns, Mess Sgt John A. Murtha. Squadron Clerk, Sgt. William A. Damm at the same time seventeen Corporals were made.

The early part of October 1917, the Squadron moved from its first line of tents, to Line no. 13. Recruit Camp, Kelly Field, Texas. An appeal was made at the camp for Volunteer for the Balloon School, and six men from this organisation were accepted. On the 15th two men were exchanged with the 98th Aero Squadron, as they were under outgoing orders, Eleven men were sent, to the Signal Corp Detachments Fort Worth, Texas on October 17th, 1917, under Sgt. William A. Damm, who was succeeded as Squadron Clerk by Pvt. Joseph A. Cullen. who was made Sergeant on November 1st, 1917. At this time a number of outgoing Squadrons were brought up to the required strength at the expense of this ration, which we left with but forty-three men.

On October 27th, 1917, Pvt. Terrance J. Horgan was discharged from the service on account of enlisting under age. The Squadron moved again on November 4th, to wooden barracks numbers 45 and 46, on the Main Road, Kelly Field No. 1, for over a month the Squadron marked time. A number of its Noncommissioned officers secured detached duty and some of the men unsuccessfully passed the examination for flying.

On December 10th, Headquarters, began to refill the vacant ranks and by December 27th, the Squadron was up to required strength again, having besides four Medical Corps men attached to it the same night nine Officers as follows, 1st Lieutenants, H. H. Ladd, L. S. Jackson, Roy

Jackson, 2nd Lieutenants, T. P. Robinson, Baylis W. Hunter, W. J. Shirley, Eugene O. Barfoot, Ray D. Magruder, and Arthur E. Stevens, were assigned the Organization from Camp Stanley, Texas, and in addition as Medical officer, Lieut. H. H. Harrod, as this Squadron was under outgoing orders.

On December 28th, 1917, in the midst of one of Texas' sandstorms, this Squadron entrained for Garden City L. I., N. Y., leaving over the Katy R. R. to Houston, Texas, then on the Gulf Coast Line to New Orleans, from there to Meridian, Miss., on the N.O. & N.E., and from there to Bristol, Tenn., on the Southern, taking the N. & Y to Lynchburg, Va., and the Southern again to Washington, D.C.

At this point the train was switched to the B. & O. Lines, for Philadelphia, Penn., where the P. & R., and the C.R.R. of N.J carried it on to Jersey City, N.J., thence by ferry to Long City N.Y. by the Long Island Railway arriving at midnight of 2 Jan 1918. The next eleven days were taken up by the hurried preparations for overseas. The Squadron transferred six men out leaving our strength at 148, including the four medical men.

The Squadron was roused at 2 A. M., on the morning of Sunday, January 13th, 1918, and after a hasty breakfast, under full pack, stole silently away, slipping and sliding over the ice sheets that covered the ground; through the deserted streets of Camp Mills around freight sidings, and over railway embankments to Clinton Road Station, where Long island Railway cars awaited us. So well planned and executed was the entire maneuver that not the slightest foreboding disturbed the peaceful slumbers of Germanys keenest super-spies. Over the Long Island Ry., to Long Island City, where the Squadron boarded the ferry boat, that transported the unit to the pier at Hoboken, N. J., where the ex-German Liner, "Kaiser Wilhelm II," now the "Agamenmnon" lay.

As the Squadron was boarding the Transport Pvt. Clair Horton was taken seriously ill, and removed to the hospital at the port of Embarkation. The voyage was quiet and uneventful with the exception of the night of January 18th, when the rudder jammed while a heavy sea was running. During the night the boat pitched so violently that when morning arrived the equipment of the various Squadrons was almost hopelessly mixed. Land was sighted on January 24th, and a few hours later the ship dropped anchor in the harbor of Brest, France. The Squadron, however, did not disembark until Jan 28th, when the troops were taken off by lighter to the quay, and from here marched to the station, where the train, consisting of three first class passenger coaches, and twenty "Vegon" a chevaux" awaited us. The medical Officer, Lieut. Harrod, and the four medical Corp. men were detached to the Naval Base Hospital. No. 1. were two of our men ill with Pneumonia, had been taken.

The train left Brest at 4 P.M. January 28th, arriving at Nantes the next morning at sunrise, and from there southward to St. Maxient, Deux-Sevres, reaching there about 2130 Jan 28, 1918. The squadron was quartered at the Presbytere Barracks where an epidemic of mumps kept us under strict quarantine during our entire stay here, the time being pleasantly spent at drills, guard, lectures, and of course the necessary fatigue work.

During Feb, six men were transferred to us from the 127th Aero Squadron, bringing this organization up to strength for the third time. Shortly afterwards the Squadrons number was changed from 123rd to the 642nd, but its luck remained the same. On February 14th a telegram was received from Headquarters, Air Service, assigning the numbers 29813 to 29952, both inclusive, as the serial numbers for the men of this outfit.

The Squadron left St Maxent on the 28th of February, for Issoudun Indre, arriving at 2100, the next night. It was assigned to Barracks #20, which it still occupies. Once more the Squadron was in quarantine for the month of March, but the gloom this time was lightened by a pay day, the first in three months. The first two months were spent on fatigue work, educational in character, such as, erecting and tearing down hangars, but, some of the men were fortunate enough to procure assignments as P. G. guards, and one is an M. P. at Issoudun.

When men were needed for the new positions constantly opening around the Field Headquarters drew on this squadron until its men were to be found on duty in every line of work.

On May 21st, the Aerial Gunnery Detachment was transferred into this organization a corresponding number of mechanics and clerks were transferred to the 33rd Aero Squadron, while one of our number went to the Post Band.

During this month the men composing Field Service Department, were transferred in from different squadrons, while we lost our P. G. Guards, Post Office Clerks, Machine Shop and Aero Repair men.

The month of July was especially memorable to the enlisted men on account of the great holiday over the fourth, and on the 14th, the greatest of all was the granting of the first seven day leaves from this center.

On the night of August 13th, a fire broke out in the Squadron's mess hall, but, the supplies of corn willy, Gold Fish, and Beans escaped unscathed.

The Squadron was kept hard at work by the ever increasing efficiency of the field whereby the Weekly total of flyers graduated progressively mounted.

Today this Squadron still has the Aerial Gunnery Detachment, Field Service Department, Clerks at Headquarters, Personnel, Headquarters Detachment, Aero Supply and Ordnance Offices.

“We are still a supply squadron.”

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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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.