

837 AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

Repair

LINEAGE

837 Aero Squadron

Organized, Feb 1918

Demobilized, Dec 1918

STATIONS

Waco, TX

Garden City, NY, Mar 1918

Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, May 1918

AEF, May 1918

Catterick, England

Flower Down Camp, England

Hucknall, England

Manston, England

Narborough, England

Upavon, England

Waddington, England

Garden City, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 837th Aero Squadron came into existence the first day February 1918, at Waco Texas. Capt. William L. Hayes was designated in command. Captain Hayes was an army man of the old school, a graduate of the Philippines, and a sergeant in the cavalry, until the present state of war, where he was commissioned captain in the infantry, though assigned to the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps

The days following the announcement of the formation of the Squadron was spent in getting the men together in what was then the 53rd Recruit line, Fourth Provisional Regiment, with Major Wuest in command. Those were busy days, drawing clothing and equipment, dodging Texas dust storms, and basking in the intervals of Texas sunshine. On the sixteenth of February notice was sent to the Squadron that it was to be prepared for entrainment in the near future to Aeronautical General Supply Depot and Concentration Camp, Garden City, L. I., N.Y. Followed more busy days, filled with excitement and expectancy, for the order to proceed to Garden City meant only one thing to all concerned, OVERSEAS.

On the 24th of February, 1Lt Hoyt D. Tilford was assigned and reported for duty. On the 27th the Squadron entrained for Garden City, along with the 835th and 836th Squadrons.

Captain Hayes was in command of the train. The route was a circuitous one by the way of Texarkana, Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and the over the Southern Railway to Washington, and to New York, and thence to Garden City, arriving there the 4th of March 1918.

The first days of Garden City were filled with frenzied efforts to secure the final overseas equipment in order that the Squadron might leave within three or four days. The dope was that we were to move inside of a week, but the week came and went, and we lapsed into quarantine thanks to the efforts of some misguided Hospital Officials who insisted that a member of our organization had the dreaded "German" measles despite the fact that no member of the organization was so afflicted.

The days that followed were filled with nothing but inspections, and vague wonderings if we ever would be released from confinement to go overseas. On the 1st of April Captain Hayes was relieved from duty, and ordered to report to Camp Devens Ayer, Massachusetts. Lieutenant Tilford was left in command. On the same date Sergeant Osmund Eversen was discharged to receive a Commission in the Army transport service, being Commissioned, Lieutenant Junior Grade.

April 19, 1918 1st Lieutenant Howell Gilbert reported from Washington as the new Commanding Officer. April 22, 1918 2nd Lieut. James B. Elliott, reported as the new Supply Officer, and 1st Lieut. Hoyt D. Tilford was relieved from duty.

May 5, 1918 orders were received to be ready to move. No destination was mentioned but every knew that it meant overseas, and on the sixth we moved out of Field #2, under confidential orders for somewhere. Our movements so camouflaged that not more than two million people wave us "Goodbye" as moved by train and boat to Hoboken. At Hoboken we embarked on the Cunard liner, "Aquitania," and on the 7th of May, at 8:00 A.M. we steamed out of the harbor. After a splendid trip of seven days we landed in Liverpool, England on May 14th, 1918 there was not a sign of a submarine throughout the trip, and the Aquitania was not escorted except for the last day or two of the trip. The escorts looked mighty good though for they carried the "Yank" flag. The number of troops aboard the Aquitania is unknown to the writer but is generally estimated at 5700, composed of Machine Gun Companies, Infantry, one company of Military Police, and two Aero Squadrons, this, and the 834th.

The Squadron disembarked and limbered up their sea legs by marching to the American Rest camp at Knotty Ash on the outskirts of Liverpool. The "Rest" camp then consisted of half a dozen rows of tents, which were inhabited by a company of Infantry, and some colored Stevedore Detachments. The American Quartermaster had not put in his appearance at that time, and we lived on the famous "English rations" consisting generally of cheese and bread and jam. After fatiguing for eight days the Squadron was moved to the American Rest Camp at Flower Down, Winchester.

At that time the Camp had not been taken over by the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps, and was commanded by Major Roote of the Infantry. We arrived there on the twenty second of May. A few days later the Camp was officially taken over by the Air Service, and Major Page, son of Ambassador Page was sent to take over the Camp.

The "837th" sojourned at Flower Down until the 11th of June, the days being spent in fatigue in cleaning and rearranging the Camp. The paper work required in the A.E.F. was likewise accomplished, and on the 11th the Squadron was moved to Central Flying School, Upaven Pewsey, Wiltshire. The school proved to be a wonderful place for training, the oldest Flying school, in England, and one of the best, if not the best in all of Great Britain.

The men of the Squadron, all experts in their various trades quickly became accustomed to the work, and despite the fact that they had never been close to a plane, soon came to a high state of efficiency. The Squadron was practically ready to go to France as far as train was concerned when the order came through to divide into sections and go to various parts of England for a continuance of the training.

The division as directed was made, and on the 16th of August the sections moved to four different camps, all far removed from each other.

One section went to 15 T.D.S.R.A.F., Hucknall, Notts, England, one to Waddington, in Lincolnshire, one to Catterick, Yorkshire, and the other to Manston, on the Kentish coast. The latter station was then used as a War School by the British, and likewise as a bombing base. The section stationed at Maneton was removed shortly after arrival, to Narborough in Norfolk.

The Squadron remained at the stations named until orders were received to mobilize at American Rest Camp Knotty Ash, Liverpool, on the 25th of November. After arrival there, the necessary paperwork was accomplished, the final inspections had, and on the first day of December 1918, we sailed from Liverpool in the White Star Liner, Adriatic, leaving the dock at 3:55 P.M. After a rough voyage the Adriatic came into the harbor at New York, passing the Statue of Liberty early in the afternoon. The Goddess was the most glorious sight we had seen in many months.

Amidst the mingled chorus of all the whistles in the harbor, the playing of many bands, the shouts and cheers of those on board and those awaiting us, the Adriatic swung into her berth at Pier 60 at the foot of Twenty Second Street, New York City at 4: P.M. on December 11, 1918 thus ending a little over seven months for this Squadron as a part of the American Expeditionary Forces.

The night of the 11th was spent on board ship, and on the twelfth the Squadron was moved to Camp Mills, L. I. N. Y. to be prepared for demobilization, the end of the little part played by this Squadron, in the world conflict.

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.