

173rd AERO SQUADRON

LINEAGE

Organized Dec 1917

Demobilized Mar 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX

Chanute Field, IL, 23 Dec 1917-12 Feb 1918

Garden City, NY

Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, Jun 1918

AEF, Jun 1918

Garden City, NY,

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

As winter approached, it became uncertain whether the field could be kept open. Colonel Jones traveled to Washington DC in early November 1917 to attend a special meeting of commanding

officers of 15 aviation fields. He returned in mid-month with the news that the field would remain open, but flying would be suspended on 15 December. Actually bad weather prevented flying after 7 December and on the 13th the 39th Aero Squadron left for Rich Field at Waco, Texas, to continue flying training there. Later in the month, the field sent 20 Standard planes and 15 Hall-Scott motors to Wichita Falls and 39 Curtiss planes to Kelly Field. Only a few planes remained at Chanute for officers' winter flying. Until the 152nd, 153rd, 173rd, and 174th Aero Squadrons arrived from Kelly at Christmas time, the departure of the 39th left only the 38th squadron to man the field. In time, the 38th became the headquarters squadron with the nickname of "Home Guards."

The two squadrons finally left Rantoul on 10 February 1918, a full six weeks after having been ordered to be ready at a moment's notice. Two days later the 173rd and 174th squadrons also left for Garden City. Immediately after their departure, Chanute began recruitment for three new squadrons designated the 83rd, 267th, and the 268th Aero Squadrons. In mid-February 1918, 175 men came from Camp Custer, Michigan, and were divided between the 267th and the 268th. On 26 February, 150 men arrived from Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri, to augment the 83rd. On the same day the 831st and the 832nd Aero Squadrons arrived from Kelly Field bringing the total number of squadrons at Chanute to six. The new squadrons prompted a flurry of activity as the field prepared for a resumption of flying training. Nearly 1,500 men were crowded into barracks built to house 1,000 men. A new wing was built on the hospital, and Chanute's first five nurses arrived on 9 March 1918. "Daily sick call . . . increased noticeably." The nurses arrived just in time to help prepare the 83rd, the 831st, and the 832nd for departure. Those going to France were given a series of six shots and had their teeth examined. Any teeth thought possible of giving any trouble in France were pulled. The camp dentist in March was pulling 25 to 50 teeth per day. The 83rd Aero Squadron left on 23 March 1918 for Langley Field, Hampton, Virginia, and the 831st and 832nd left the following day for Hempstead and Garden City, New York, respectively. While these three squadrons prepared to leave, Chanute began to organize its fifth new squadron. Designated the 203rd, it was to be a school squadron composed largely of mechanics. On 19 March, it was augmented by 15 men from the Marmon Auto School in Indianapolis, Indiana. Three Rantoul ladies organized the mess for the new squadron.

Within three months after the opening of Chanute Field, trained squadrons, of about 150 men each, were transferred to depots in the East for overseas assignments. The 10th and 16th Aero Squadrons were the first to leave, followed closely by the 39th. The first two squadrons were shipped overseas; the 39th was sent to Waco, Texas. In December, the 152d, 153d, 173d, and 174th Squadrons reported from Kelly Field, Texas, to fill vacancies in shops, hangars, and classrooms; the 210th Squadron was organized at Chanute Field from local recruits. Classes were conducted daily in every branch of aviation related to the maintenance and repair of airplanes, including specialized training for mechanics, carpenters, riggers, and hangar men.

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.