



## FACT SHEET

### *Camp Taliaferro*

The camp was a World War I flight-training center run under the direction of the U.S. Army Air Service in the Fort Worth. The camp had an administration center near what is now the Will Rogers Memorial Center complex near University Dr. and West Lancaster Ave.

After America's entry into World War I in April 1917, Gen. John J. "Blackjack" Pershing invited the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to establish training fields in the southern United States where the warmer weather would be more conducive for flying year-round.

In June, the War Dept. inspected six sites around Fort Worth which had been offered by the Chamber of Commerce and by July, RFC representatives from Canada inspected five potential sites in Texas and Louisiana for use during the winter.

After looking at locations in Dallas, Fort Worth, Waco, Austin, Wichita Falls, and Midland, in August the War Dept. signed leases with the RFC on three sites around Fort Worth. Known as the Flying Triangle, these sites were Hicks Field, Barron Field, and Benbrook Field. Construction began in late August and early September 1917.

The Canadians named the training complex Camp Taliaferro after 1st Lt. Walter R. Taliaferro, a U.S. aviator. Taliaferro was killed in an accident at in San Diego, Calif. On Oct. 11, 1915.

The Camp Taliaferro offices for the Air Service and RFC Canada were initially located in the basement of the Chamber of Commerce building in Fort Worth to handle pay, purchasing, and administrative services for their own personnel assigned at the three fields.

Work on constructing the airfield had to be done quickly. Cattle were moved out, and construction crews worked feverishly at the site. U.S. Air Service squadrons which had been training in Canada began arriving in October 1917, and the RFC squadrons began to arrive in early November.

The first winter of 1917-1918 was a challenge. Many men lived in tents in this snowy winter. Canadian cadets were at Benbrook and Everman Fields, while the US cadets and the Canadian aerial gunnery school went to Hicks.

RFC instructors trained about 6,000 men there. In six months, 1,960 pilots were trained, completing 67,000 flying hours on the Curtiss JN4 Canuck, a two-seater biplane weighing 2,100 lb. (950 kg) with a maximum speed of 75 mph (120 km/h).

About 69 ground officers and 4,150 others received training in ground trades and skills. During the winter, eight deaths were due to influenza and 39 RFC personnel died as the result of aircraft accidents, influenza, or other illnesses.

For those who survived the training, combat life expectancy was short. Only two Air Service squadrons—the 17th and 148th Aero Squadrons—saw active service with the British, flying with them until November 1918, after which they were absorbed into the U.S. Air Service.

Thirty-nine officers and cadets died in Texas. Eleven British, Canadians, and Americans remain there, reinterred in 1924 at a Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery plot in Greenwood Memorial Park, Fort Worth. The plot is in Section 5 of the cemetery, at 32-45-47, 97-21-48.

Also interred there are one of their comrades who died in 1975, and the daughter of a Canadian instructor who died as a baby in 1918. A stone monument serves as a focal point on Memorial Day in May of odd-numbered years, when friends of the cemetery support a Remembrance Service, at which people from the three nations remember the sacrifice of those buried there.

Following the departure of the Royal Air Force in April 1918, Camp Taliaferro was closed and each of the 3 fields operated as separate sites. When the RFC Canada arrived in Fort Worth in November 1917, they brought 254 Curtiss JN-4 (Can) license-built aircraft with them for training at the 3 fields around Fort Worth. When they returned to Canada in April 1918, they turned over 180 serviceable aircraft to the Army Air Service.

By then, American and Canadian license-built JN-4s were keeping up with demand.

Besides molding men into lean, mean fighting machines, Camp Taliaferro also molded some long-lasting friendships between the Canadians and Americans.

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