

# Project Pioneer:

## Ret. Maj. Gen. Franklin O. Carroll



Maj. Gen. Franklin Otis Carroll is widely known for being the first AEDC commander, but his contributions to the center are far greater.

“General Carroll personified the vision and tenacity it took to make technology and testing a central focus within the Air Force,” said Gen. Ronald Yates, former commander for Air Force Systems Command and Air Force Materiel Command at the Carroll Building renaming dedication in 1991. “Without his foresight and commitment, we might not be standing here today. We’re here today only because he fought for AEDC in the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill and in every other corner of government that he thought could make this become a reality.”

Born Feb. 10, 1893 in Washington, Ind., he attended the University of Illinois at Champaign, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering in 1915. He was quickly called to active duty after graduation with the 101st Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, Illinois Guard and served with General Pershing’s Expeditionary Force searching for Poncho Villa.

After returning home for a short three weeks, he was recalled to active duty when his State Guard Unit reactivated and was assigned to Officer’s Training School at Fort Sheridan, Ill. There he volunteered for the Signal Corps, Aviation Section and in late 1916 was sent to Kelly Field in San Antonio, for flight training. He became a pilot instructor in his remaining time at Kelly Field in 1918.

General Carroll attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1920 where he earned an advanced engineering degree in aeronautical engineering. Except for occasional assignments elsewhere, General Carroll spent a significant part of his career at Wright Field.

These were exciting times at Wright Field witnessing a revolution in aircraft design, materials, manufacturing and performance.

Many may not realize it but General Carroll summoned a world-renowned aerodynamicist by the name of Dr. Theodore von Kármán to Wright Field to explain to senior officers whether it was possible to design and build a plane that could fly 1,000 miles per hour.

At Wright Field, General Carroll was chief of the engineering division, a position that gave him a say on every major experimental and engineering project during World War II.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, General Carroll approved the creation of new laboratories for aero medical research, communications and navigation and radar. He oversaw plans that expanded Wright Field’s experimental facilities, including the world’s most powerful wind tunnel and other tunnels for vertical, transonic and supersonic testing of aircraft and associated equipment and components.

In 1949, he became the first commanding general of the Air Engineering Development Division, established to oversee the creation of AEDC, which in 1951 was rededicated as AEDC. While here, General Carroll oversaw the center during its construction and early operation.

He retired from the Air Force in 1953 after 41 years of service. General Carroll passed away in 1988 at the age of 95.

Among his many medals, General Carroll held the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the World War I Victory Medal, the Mexican Border Service Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Asian-Pacific Theater Medal and the Occupational Medal (Japan).

The Engineering Analysis Facility (EAF) was dedicated June 21, 1991 in honor of General Carroll. The \$14.7 million, 126,000 square foot facility has office space to approximately 600 operating contractor personnel.

The Carroll Building provides AEDC with centralized engineering analysis and computer operations. These operations were spread across the base before the establishment of the building.



AEDC Commander Maj. Gen. Franklin O. Carroll, right, welcomed Gen. Hoyt S. Vanderberg, chief of staff, U.S. Air Force, who was also present for the dedication.