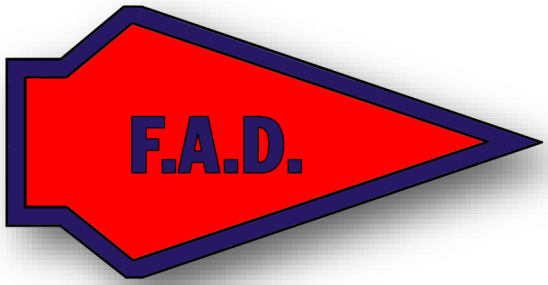
# A Look Back...

## FAIRFIELD AIR DEPOT





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# FAIRFIELD AIR DEPOT

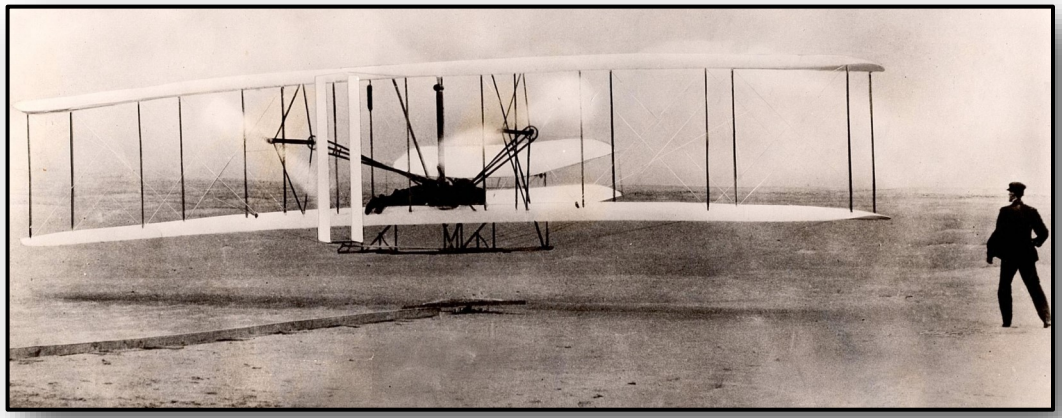
The Fairfield Air Depot began as the Fairfield Aviation General Supply Depot in 1917 as a wartime supply center for the Signal Corps Aviation Schools at Wilbur Wright Field, Scott and Chanute fields in Illinois, and Selfridge Field in Michigan. The depot supplied everything from airplane parts and engines to shoelaces. Over the next three decades, the depot underwent various name changes until its inactivation in 1946 as part of the postwar demobilization. At that time, it was a part of Patterson Field, created on 1 July 1931, named in honor of Lieutenant Frank Stuart Patterson, a native Daytonian test pilot killed in the crash of his DH-4 while testing a machine gun synchronizer over Wilbur Wright Field in 1918. The new Patterson Field incorporated Huffman Prairie, Wilbur Wright Field, and the Fairfield Air Depot Reservation. Although located on Patterson Field, the Fairfield Air Depot retained its title and continued as a major function of the new installation.

The Fairfield depot's normal supply function included furnishing parts and equipment to repair shops and other Air Service installations. By 1927, the Fairfield depot served all Air Service installations east of the Mississippi River, and those in a few states west of the river, as well as depots in the Panama Canal Zone, Hawaiian Islands, and the Philippines. At various times throughout its history, it accepted additional roles. Following World War I, it took on the huge task of inventorying, discarding, and storing war surplus materiel. It also assumed responsibility for overhauling airplane engines when the Engineering Repair Section from the Aviation Repair Depot in Indianapolis moved to Fairfield in 1920. The depot established the supply system and maintenance schedule for the 1924 Round-the-World Flight, controlled the experimental Model Airway System from 1925-1926 (the first airline to provide regularly scheduled flights between fixed points), modified the airplanes used for flying the United States air mail in 1934, and installed and maintained special equipment used during exercises to perfect new bombing techniques and tactics.

The depot's most significant contribution, however, was its role in logistics during World War II when the need for emergency maintenance, repair, and supply work skyrocketed. From the employment of 500 people in 1939, the depot expanded to more than 19,000 workers at its height in 1943. It operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, supplying, maintaining, and repairing all types of war materiel for stateside depots and remote field depots around the world. As one of the oldest depots in the nation, Fairfield was a proving ground for new ideas to streamline the supply system and was selected to train military and civilian employees in repair and supply procedures. Through the Air Service Command, it provided expertise to the establishment, layout, and manning of new depots and sub-depots around the nation. Until the day it closed in January 1946, the depot provided the backbone of the logistics function that Air Force Materiel Command manages to this day.

*Lt Col James A. Mars was the first depot commander from 4 Jan—23 Dec 1918.*

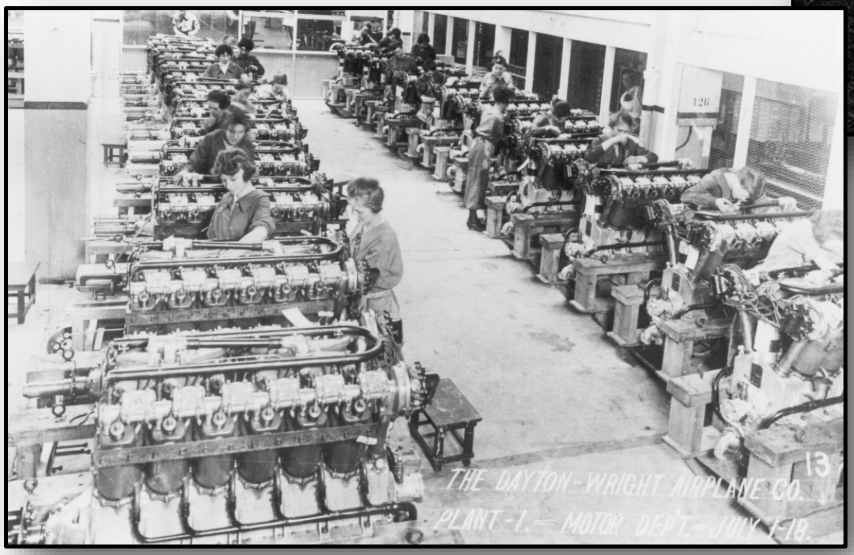
Taken from Aeronautical Systems Center History Office, *Splendid Vision, Unswerving Purpose: Developing Air Power for the United States Air Force During the First Century of Powered Flight*, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 2020, p. 45.



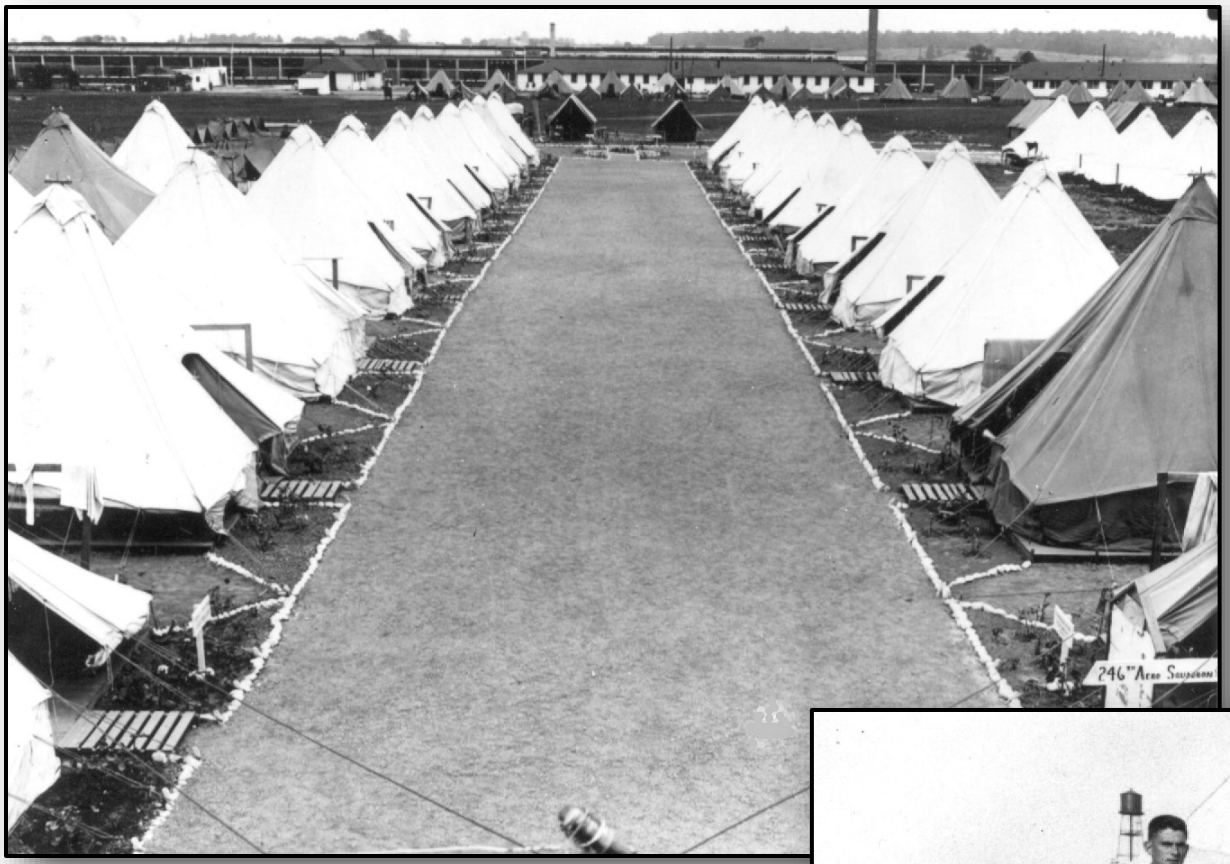
*The first flight of a heavier-than-air machine made by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk in 1903. Orville Wright lies prone while Wilbur had just finished steadying the machine as it slid along the track before take off.*

**Left**: DeHavilland DH-4 airplane fuselages awaiting wings at the Dayton Wright Airplane Company, 24 August 1918. Dayton Wright produced nearly three-fourths of the more than 4,500 British-designed DH-4 airplanes manufactured in the United States between 1917 and 1918.

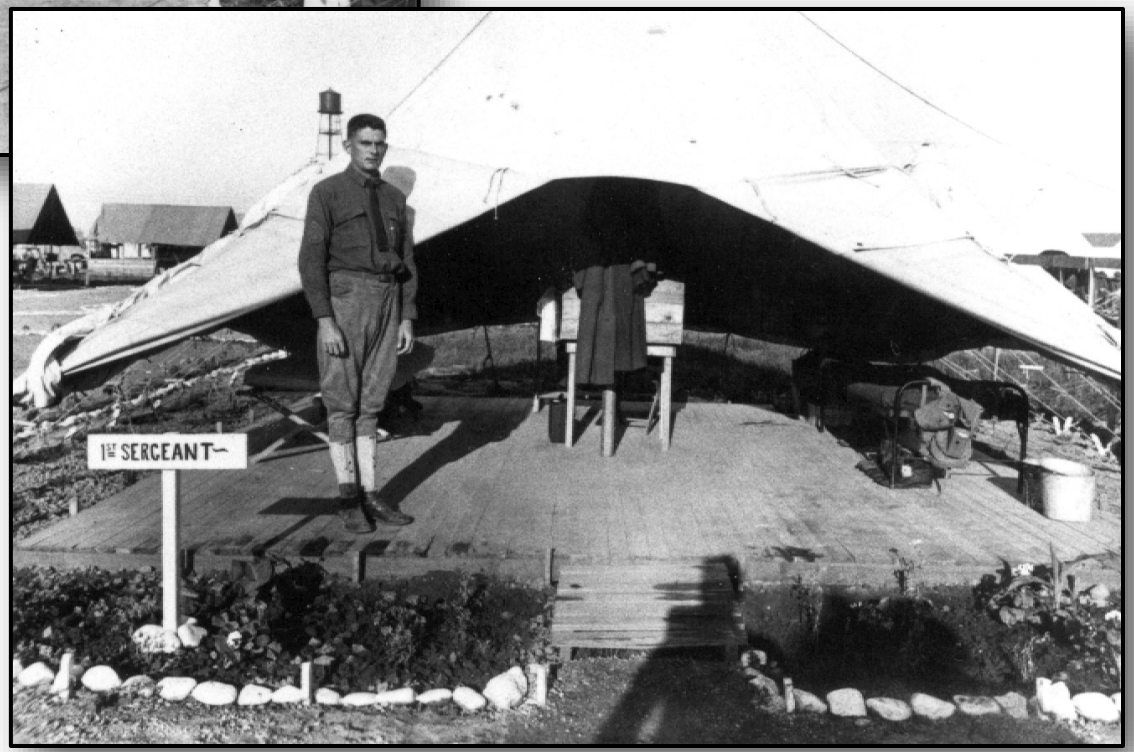

**Right**: Officials of the Dayton Wright Airplane Company pose in front of a DeHavilland DH-4 observation airplane at the Moraine facility, 27 April 1918. **Below**: Women employees work on Liberty V-12 airplane engines in the motor department of Plant Number 1, Dayton-Wright Airplane Company, July 1918. These power plants were installed in DeHavilland DH-4 biplanes manufactured by the Dayton-Wright.




Captions compiled from: Lt F.J. Pendergast, *History of the Air Depot at Fairfield, Ohio, 1917-1943*, Fairfield Air Depot, 1943; Lois E. Walker & Shelby E. Wickam, *From Huffman Prairie to the Moon: The History of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base*, Wright-Patterson AFB, 1986; Aeronautical Systems Center History Office, *Splendid Vision, Unswerving Purpose: Developing Air Power for the United States Air Force During the First Century of Powered Flight*, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 2020; Aeronautical Systems Center History Office, *Home Field Advantage: A Century of Partnership Between Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and Dayton, Ohio in the Pursuit of Aeronautical Excellence*, 2004.

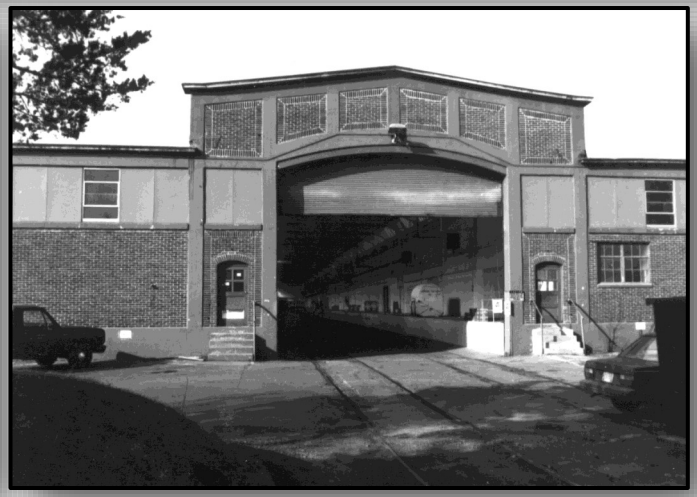


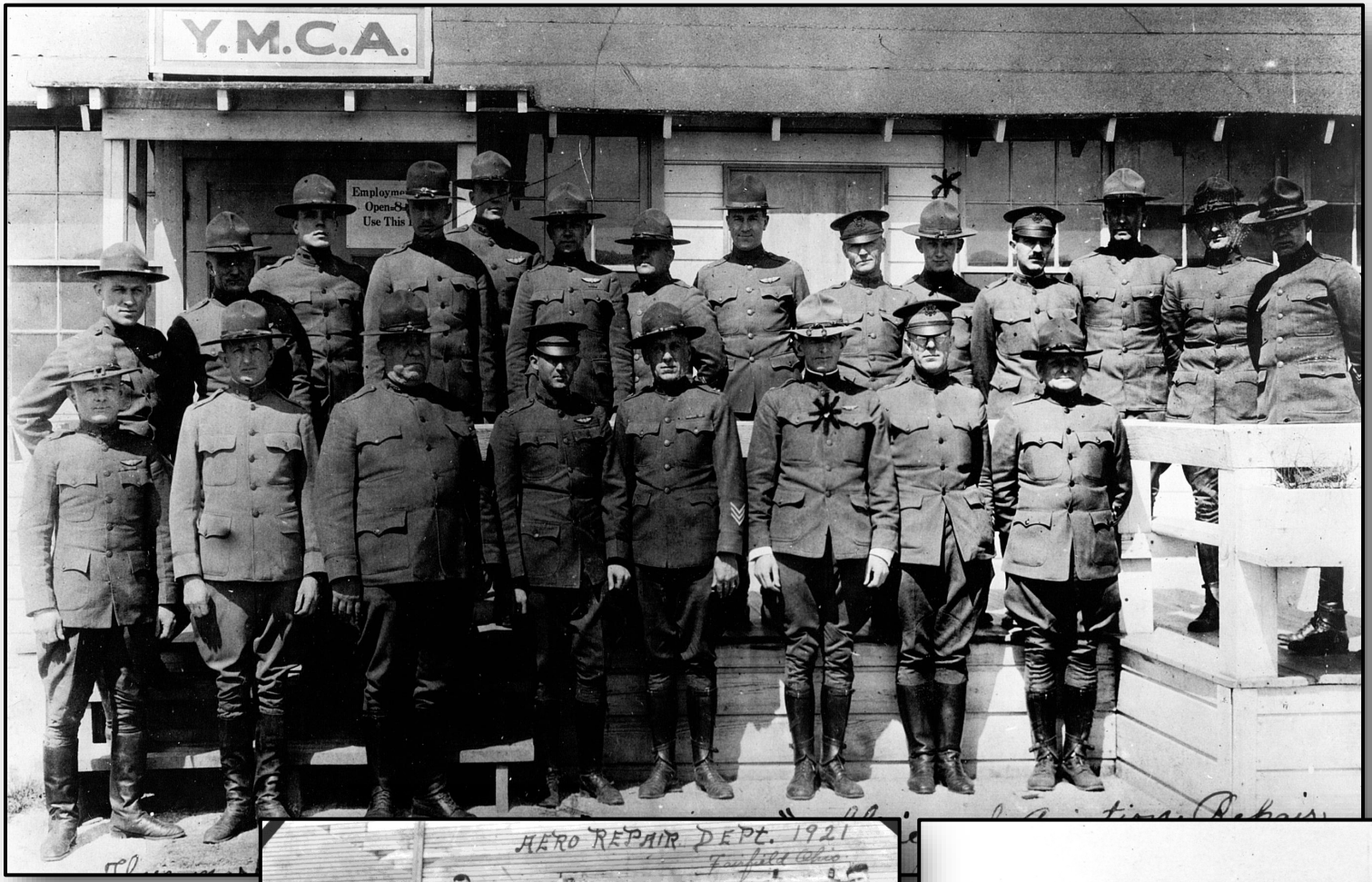

**Left**: Billeting area of the 246th Aero Squadron, Fairfield Aviation General Supply Depot, 1918. The pyramidal tents housed enlisted men, usually six per tent. At the end of the street are smaller, two-man tents of junior grade officers. Behind them stand the mess hall and a truck warehouse. In the far background is Building 1, the Depot headquarters building.



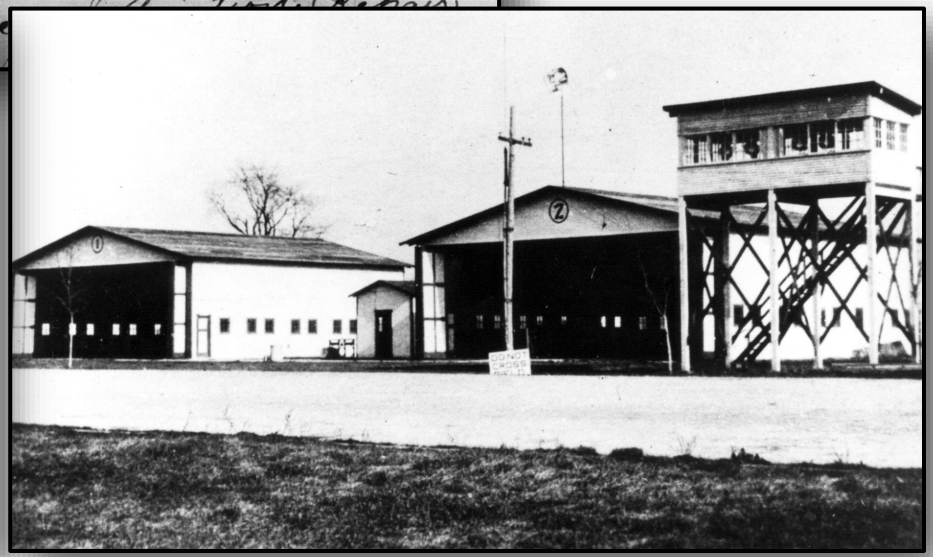

**Right**: First Sergeant of the 246th Aero Squadron, 1918. His quarters were considered somewhat luxurious for the times with a wooden floor and a flower garden (planted and tended by privates). He also had a steel cot with springs (on the right) whereas the lesser-ranking tentmate slept on a springless canvas cot.

**Right:** Headquarters, Wilbur Wright Air Service Depot (Building 1), 1919. This logistics center underwent a series of name changes between 1918 and 1921 but was popularly referred to as the Fairfield Air Depot. **Bottom Left**: Interior view of Building 1 trainway constructed in 1917. During World War II the trainway was used for emergency storage, as shown in 1942. **Bottom Middle:** Building 1, with its covered trainway, is the oldest permanent military building at Wright-Patterson. **Bottom Right:** Interior view, 1940. Signs extended over the platform were color-coded to aid individuals in finding specific articles. Blue signs indicated the location of hardware storage; orange, engine spares; red, airplane spares; and yellow, miscellaneous.



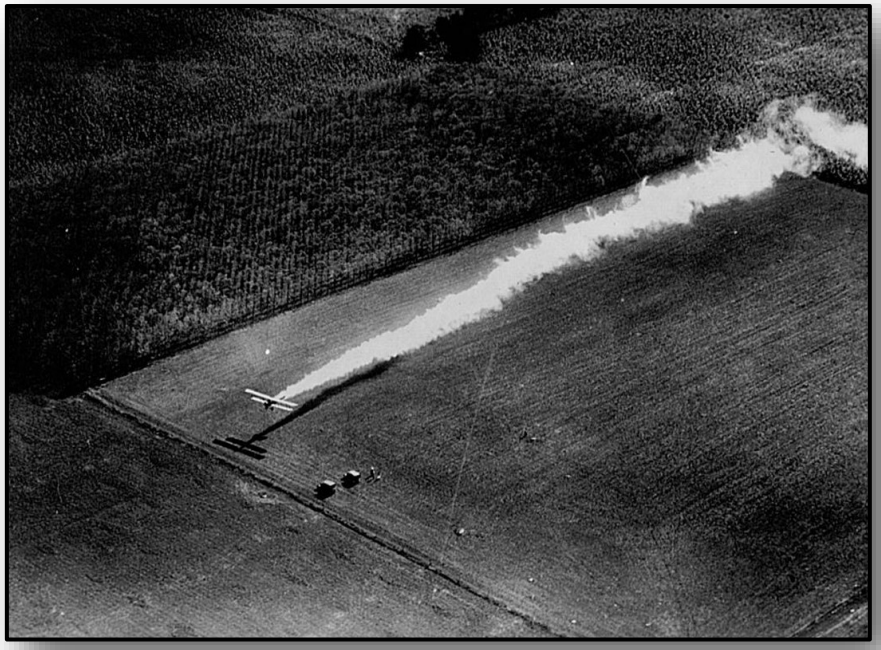


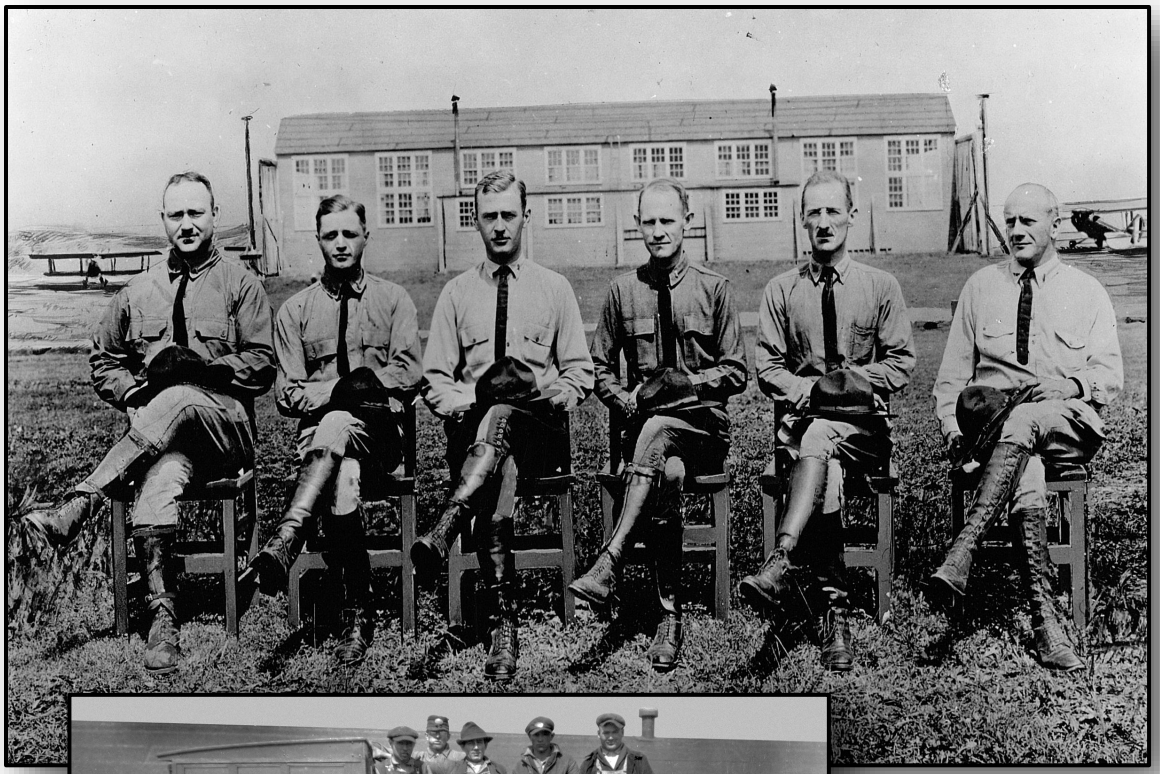




**Top**: Staff officers of the Aviation Repair Depot, Speedway Park, Indianapolis, 1919. They would eventually transfer to Fairfield. Capt S.A. Blair, fourth from left on first row, was the first Engineering Officer of the Depot. Bottom **Left**: Members of the aero repair function, Air Service Supply and Repair Depot, 1921. Many of those pictured transferred to Fairfield from Speedway in 1920. **Bottom Right**: Flightline of the Speedway Aviation Repair Depot, Indianapolis, Indiana, before the facility moved in September 1920 to Fairfield.

Aerial views of Wilbur Wright Field and vicinity in 1920: **Top Left**, West end of the field showing Hoffman Dam and relocated railroad trucks; **Top Right**, View of Wilbur Wright Field and town of Fairfield; **Bottom Left**, Development work with airplane sprays; and, **Bottom Right**, Hoffman Dam under construction at west end of field.






**Top**: Command Officer and Original Staff of the Property, Maintenance, and Cost Compilation Section (PMCCS) of the Supply Division in 1921, later renamed the Field Service Section (left to right): Lt R.V. Ignico, Lt Omar Niergarth, Capt E.E. Adler, Lt J.L. Stromme, Lt. E.R. Page, and Lt. F.P. Kenney. **Middle**: Wilbur Wright Field civilian work crew. **Bottom**: Members of the all-volunteer Wilbur Wright Air Service Depot band, 1919. Although assigned other primary duties at the depot, these musicians furnished their talents and own instruments to play at ceremonies and dances.

**Left**: Dirigible airship on flying field , 1922. This C-5 was used to test new balloon equipment being developed at McCook Field.

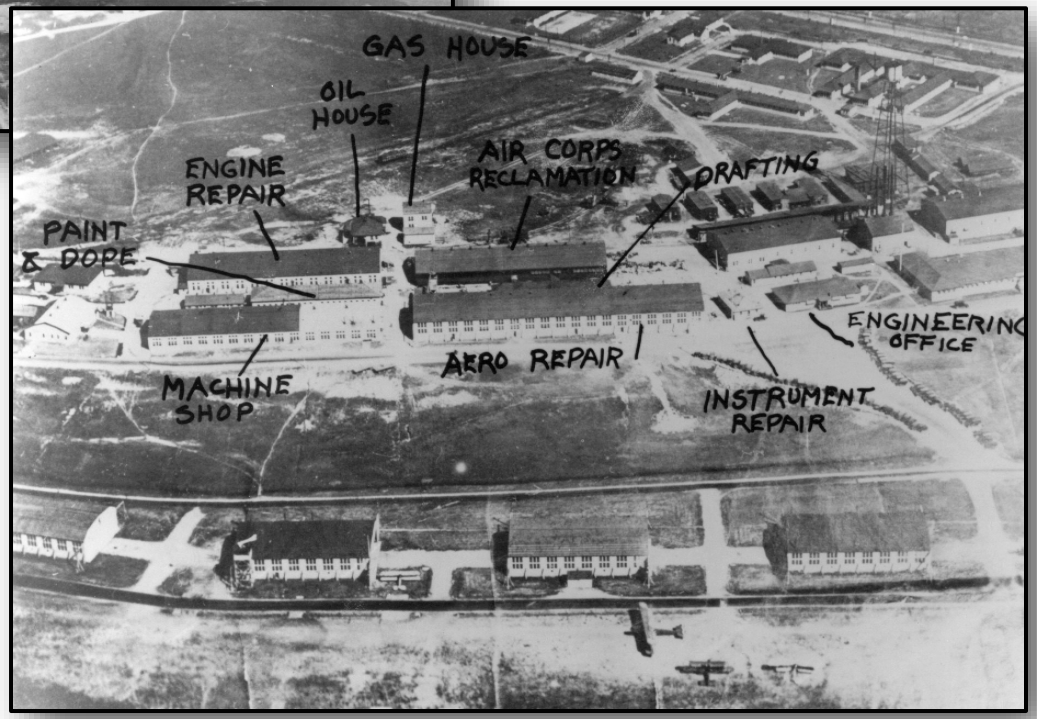
Upon the government's decision to establish a flying field in 1917, the Miami Conservancy District exercised its options and purchased land around Huffman Prairie for immediate possession. A fair schedule of prices for growing crops was set by the District to reimburse farmers whose land was taken with maximum prices paid per acre set—wheat, $40; corn, $35; oats, $25; hay, $20; alfalfa, $25, and pastures, $5. A request to lease 2,075 acres by the government came on 22 May 1917 for the flying field and depot with Capt. C.J. Waring arriving on 25 May to take charge of construction.

**Right**: Aerial view of Wilbur Wright Field showing flooded areas on flying field, 1922.

In December 1920, the Command Officer at Fairfield found it necessary to write the Chief of Air Service requesting a permanent designation be selected for the depot as the name had changed three times (as you will see in the captions) from Wilbur Wright Field, Wilbur Wright Air Service Depot, Air Service Supply and Repair Depot, Aviation Repair Depot, and Aviation General Supply Depot, Fairfield. On 14 January 1921, General Order No. 2 named the depot t the Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot; however, it would still be called various names over the years.

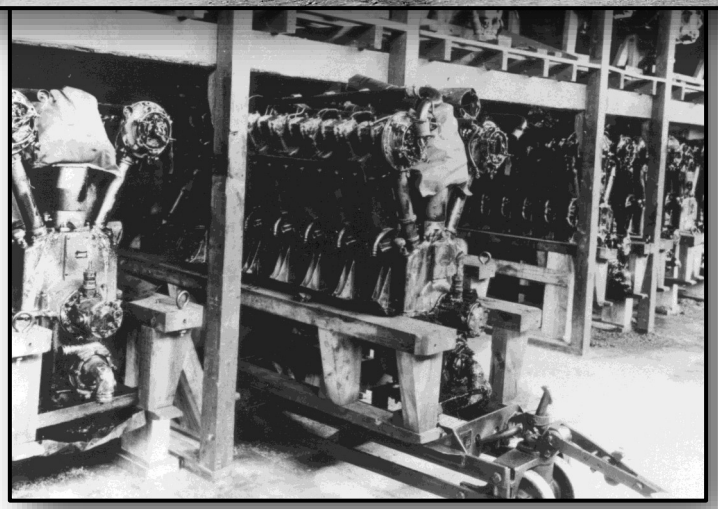
The Type I (single-seat Pursuit, water-cooled engine) 1924 Curtiss PW-8 *Hawk* assigned to the 17th Pursuit Squadron.

**Left**: Fairfield Air Depot and Wilbur Wright Field, April 1922. At left, a line of World War I wooden hangars border the flightline. In the center, maintenance and engineering shops mingle with warehouses and outdoor storage areas managed by the depot. Building 1 is visible at center right.

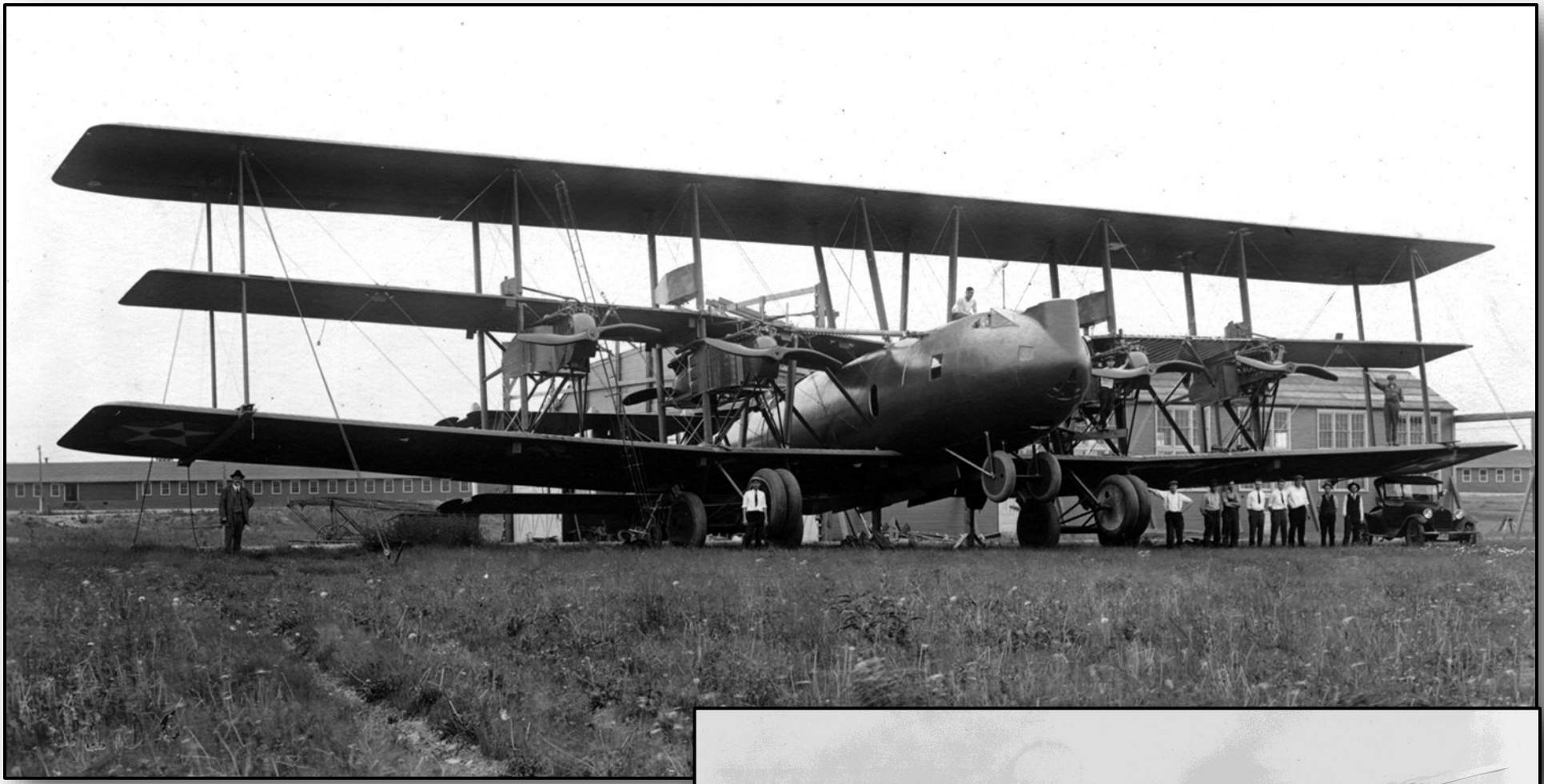



**Right**: Center of aero repair activities near the flightline, Air Service Supply and Repair Depot, 1921 (Building 1 is just outside the viewing top-center).

The Vought VE-7 Bluebird two-place, tractor biplane, first delivered on 11 February 1918 after a response to a government request for an advanced trainer. After successful tests at Vought, the VE-7 and several duplicates shipped to the Airplane Engineering Department in Dayton for official flight and mechanical tests. Pictured is one of the VE-7's utilized by the depot in 1923, notice the Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot insignia painted on the side. The originator was Lt. Henry Mills with A.F. Miller sketching it out. Major A. Robins christening it with painters doing the rest. The pack represented the supply depot, the tool kit represented the repair depot, and the pen behind the ear the property, maintenance and cost compilation.

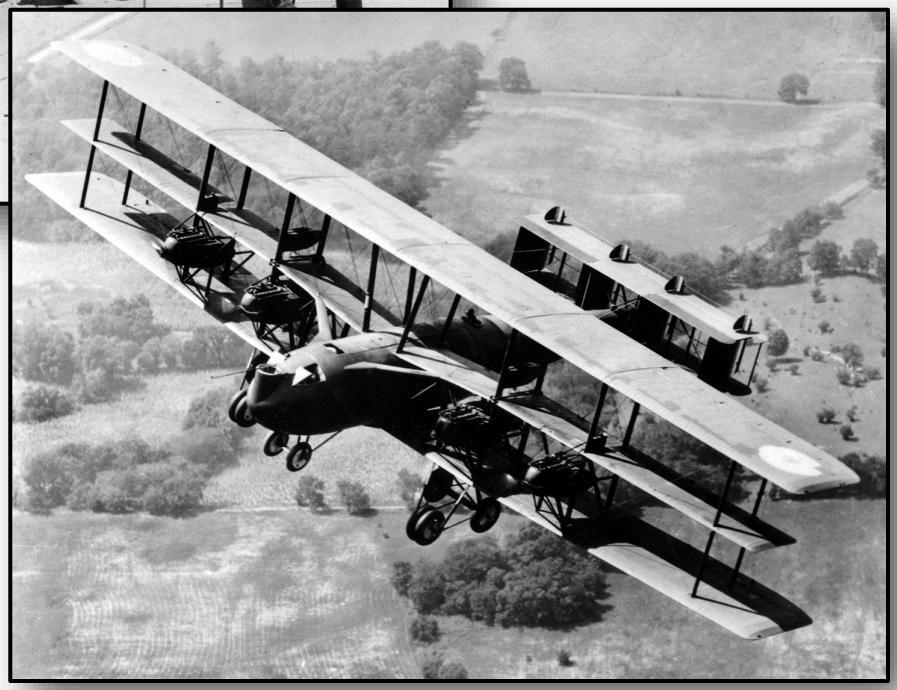



**Left**: Army Fokker T-2 Liberty in which Lt. John A. Macready and Oakley G. Kelly established the duration and distance records in May 1923 as well as making the first in -flight aircraft engine repair by replacing a defective voltage regulator switch. The two flew non-stop, coast-to-coast, from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, New York, to Rockwell Field, North Island, San Diego, California for a total time just under 27 hours. **Middle Left**: Gas for trip. **Middle Right**: Macready and Oakley prior to record-breaking trip in New York. **Bottom Left**: Liberty V-12 engines in storage at the Fairfield Air Depot. Designed basically for the DeHavilland DH-4 observation airplane, these engines remained in the active Air Corps inventory until the mid-1930s.



The Barling Bomber. Twenty-eight feet in height and sixty-five feet in length with a wingspan of 120 feet. Its total gross weight was 42,569 pounds. Assembled at McCook Field and with the Army's Engineering Division insisting on having a hand in the project, the cost for one prototype drove costs to $525,000. On 22 August 1923, The Barling Bomber, the largest airplane in the world at that time, made its first flight at Wilbur Wright Field. Two trucks of four wheels each formed the main the main gear, with an additional pair called "nose-over" wheels farther forward. These front wheels prevented the nose from hitting the ground during takeoff and landing. The tires on the main were 60 inches in diameter and 12 inches wide.


**Left**: A hangar large enough to protect the plane from rainwater was needed as the wings would fill up if left out during a rainstorm. A hangar was built onto the airfield for an added cost of $700,000 to the bomber program.

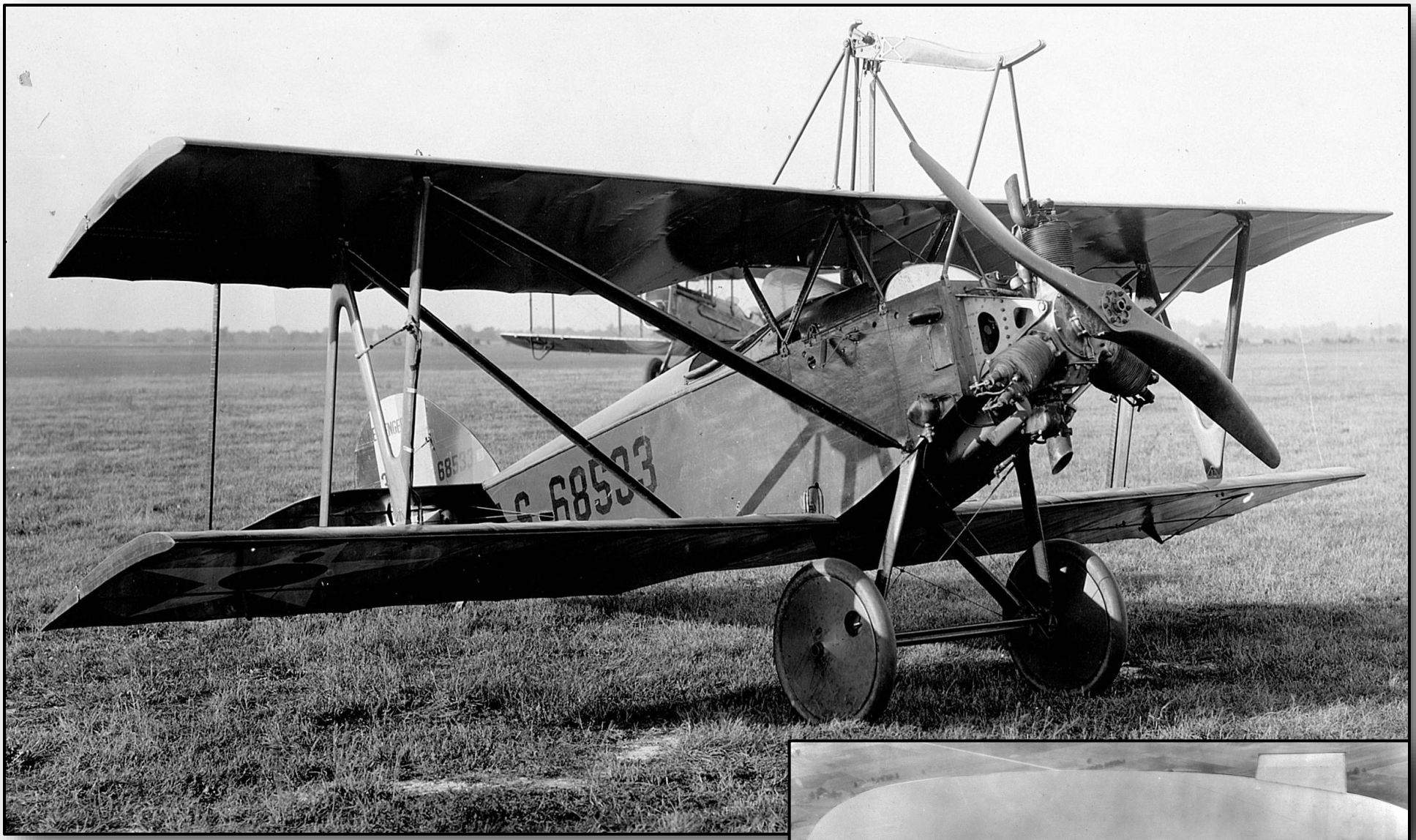


**Right**: During the first flight on 22 August 1923, it was piloted by Lt Harold R. Harris and Lt Muir S. Fairchild, future USAF vice chief of staff. The Barling was also the first airplane to require a flight engineer to assist with flight operations with engineer Douglas Culver performing this duty along with Walter Barling flying as a passenger. The larger bomber lifted from the grass after a 13-second, 960-foot run, silencing critics who said that the plane would roll into Dayton before taking off. During the 28-minute flight, Lts. Harris and Fairchild flew the bomber over Wilbur Wright Field at an altitude of 2,000 feet.


The Barling bomber hangar was completed in March 1924 to house the bomber but also other aircraft were allowed to be worked on in it (pictured above). The hangar was on the north end of the flying field. Despite the bombers early performance, the six Liberty engines could not lift the bomber high enough to safely cross the Appalachian Mountains and unable to make an appearance at a Washington, D.C. airshow. In 1927, after well over $1 million authorized into the one prototype, Congress cut further funding. It was dismantled and put into storage until 1929 when Maj “Hap” Arnold ordered it burned. The hangar would remain in use until 1942 when it was dismantled.

The Martin NBS-1 (MB-2) was the first U.S.-designed bomber, first ordered in June 1920 and replaced the British Handley-Page O-400 and Italian Caproni bombers in the United States from World War I. Derived from the MB-1, the MB-2 sacrificed speed and maneuverability to carry a heavy bomb load. The MB-2 became the Air Service's primary multi-engine bomber until it was replaced by the Keystone bombers in the late 1920s .


Dayton has had significant individuals associated with it in relation to aviation and the Depot would not be left out. Two of its most famous commanders were Henry H. Arnold and Augustine Warner Robins. Then Maj Henry “Hap” Arnold commended Fairfield Air Depot from 25 June 1929 to 30 July 1930 as well as headed up the Field Service Section of Materiel Division during that year. Then from August 1930 to February 1931 was the Executive Officer to the Chief of the Materiel Division at Wright Field. As a major, Robins served as Commander of the Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot from 27 August 1921 to 21 June 1927 and then later the Fairfield Air Depot Reservation from 22 June 1927 to 3 July 1928. He served concurrently as Commander of Wilbur Wright Field from 26 March 1923 to 3 July 1928.





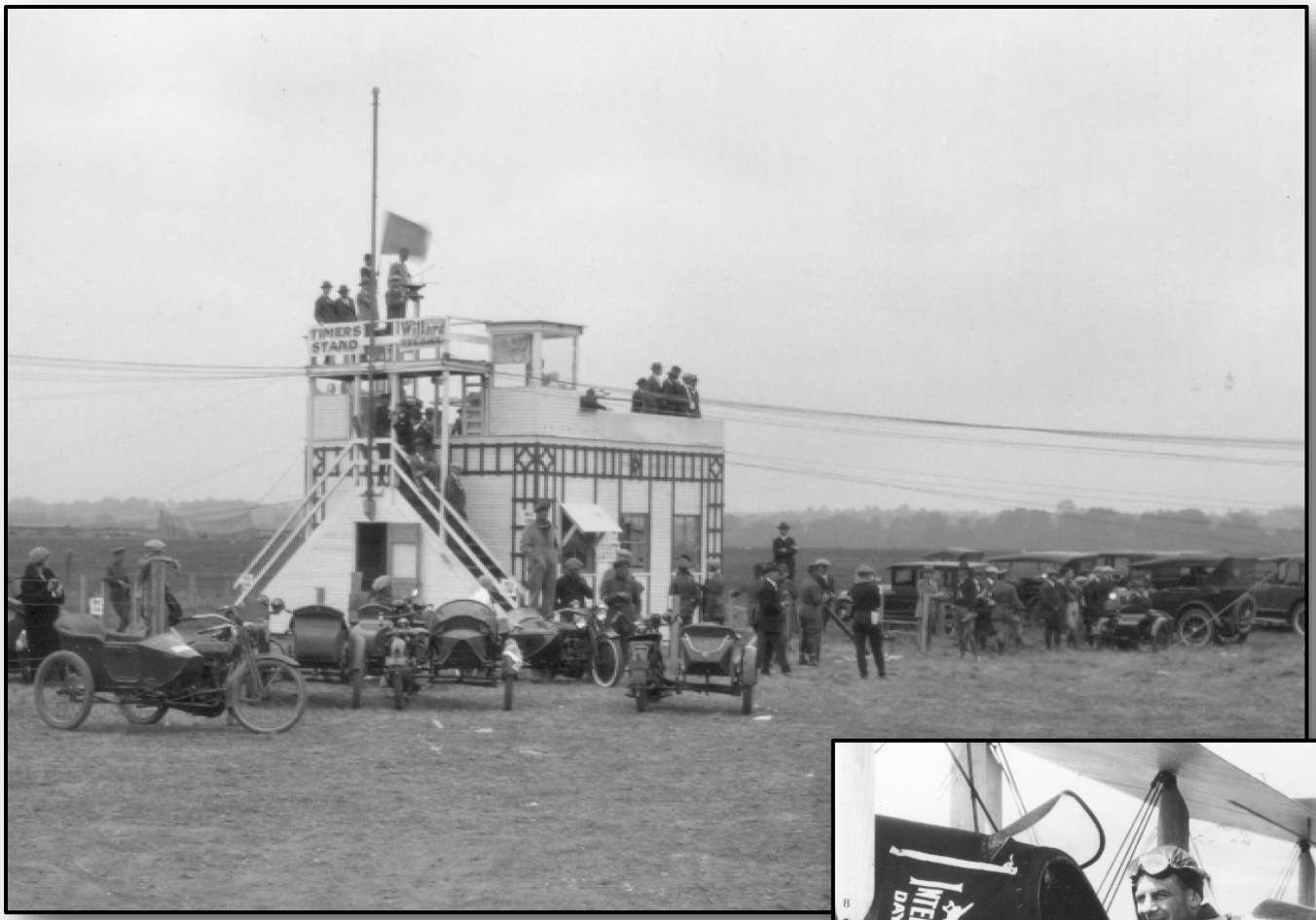
The Sperry M-1 Messenger airplane with an attachment on the top wing that suspended it from US Army dirigible airships (pictured right attached to the TC-7.) The single-place biplane was the smallest airplane ever designed at McCook. The airplane, built to Engineering Division specifications by the Lawrence Sperry Aircraft Corporation, was designed to carry written messages and orders between front lines and higher headquarters. Using the “trapeze hook-up arrangement” on the upper wing, the Messenger hung suspended from the gondolas of the Air Service’s airships.


The first week of October 1924, Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot and Wilbur Wright Field hosted the International Air Races which offered prestigious prices such as the Pulitzer Trophy and $80,000 in prize money to the winners of twelve events. The event sponsored by the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) whose president that year was the President of the National Cash Register Company of Dayton, Frederick Beck Patterson. However, the event was marked with tragedy as the month prior Lt Alexander Pearson (top photograph) died during a practice flight (Pearson Avenue in Area A in named in his honor) and Capt Burt Skeel (bottom photograph), assigned to Selfridge Field, Michigan, was killed when his Curtiss R-6 racer crashed during the Pulitzer Trophy race (Skeel Avenue in Area A is named in his honor).

**Left**: A panoramic view of a portion of the 100,000 spectators at the International Air Races. For safety reasons, a fence and a wide road separated the crowds form the bustling flightline with its noise, dust, fumes, and whirring propellers.

**Right**: Lt. James H. Doolittle (left), famed McCook Field test pilot, his wife Josephine, and Maj. Gen. Mason M. Patrick, Chief of the Army Air Service, discuss the International Air Races underway at Wilbur Wright Field.

**Right**: The Martin NBS-1 in flight at the 1924 Air Races with a mock-up display of New York City constructed on Wilbur Wright Field to demonstrate the tactics, accuracy, and power of aerial bombardment. Held on the third day of the races, the bombing attack on New York was repelled by pursuit aircraft defending the “city.” In a final demonstration, the display was destroyed to show the “power of the bomb.”




**Left**: The Timers' stand for the International Air Races. Orville Wright served as chairman of the timing committee for the prestigious Pulitzer Trophy high-speed race. In the foreground are examples of the most popular modes of transportation for the young and young-at-heart: motorcycles with sidecars.


**Right**: Pilots enroute to the Air Races, including Lt Jimmy Doolittle, publicized the race and generated public enthusiasm.

For more on the International Air Races, see **Flashback: The 1924 International Air Races** at https://media.defense.gov/2020/Aug/06/2002472287/-1/-1/1/FLASHBACK_1924%20INTERNATIONAL%20AIR%20RACES.PDF.


**Above**: Kitty Hawk, the Wright brothers' airplane that made the world's first controlled, powered flight on 17 December 1903 was reassembled and exhibited in the Wright 1910 hangar that still stood on Wilbur Wright Field, erected around 15 April 1904 to accommodate their 1904 "Flyer", an improvement over their 1903 "Flyer." Signs announced that proceeds from this display during the Air Races would go to the non-profit National Aeronautic Association. (This was the last time the airplane was shown before shipment to England in 1928.)

**Above**: An original Wright brothers plane flown at the field in 1924.

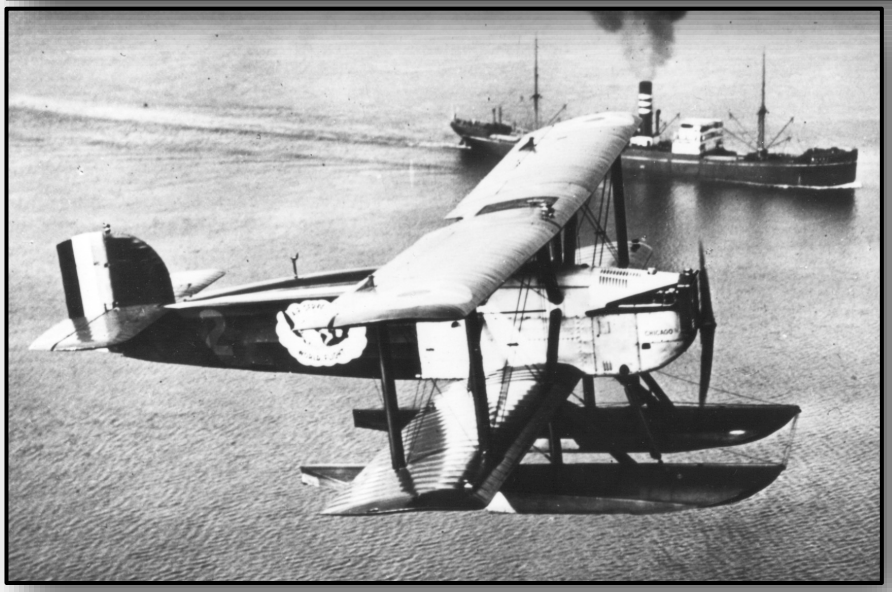
**Below**: Major Augustine Warner Robins and Lt. Charles Thomas welcome Chief of the Air Service Maj. Gen. Mason Patrick and his sister, Miss Patrick, to the 1924 International Air Races.



The Douglas World Cruiser, based upon Douglas's new DT-2, was utilized in the 1924 Round-the-World Flight by eight young flyers dubbed as "Magellans of the Air." A 26,345 mile circumnavigation of the globe (inset), the fliers left Seattle, Washington on 6 April at 8:47 a.m. and landed in Seattle on 28 September. Both Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot and McCook Field played major roles in this mission both from acquisition and testing of the aircraft but to logistical support of the mission with the deployment of not only logistical supplies at stops at various points along the route but deploying logistical officers to scout out ideal stops. Key to the mission was Lt Erik Nelson, who would not only take part in flying the mission but also worked closely the Douglas Airplane Company on the production of the prototype in California and flying it to McCook Field for initial tests. Nelson piloted the *New Orleans*, one of two airplanes to complete the entire journey.


**Left**: Maj. J.F. Curry (left), Chief of the Engineering Division and future commander of McCook Field, greeted the World Flight pilots upon their arrival in Dayton. They were (l to r): Lt. Lowell Smith, SSgt. Henry Ogden, and Lts. Erik Nelson, Leigh Wade, John Harding, and Leslie Arnold. **Bottom Left**: Douglas World Cruiser Chicago outfitted with twin pontoons for water takeoffs and landings and oceanic flights flies past its US Navy escort. **Bottom Right**: On the return let to Seattle, Washington, the World Cruisers landed at McCook Field on 14 September 1924. The Chicago (number 2) led the flight, flanked by Boston II and New Orleans (number 4).

For more on the Around-the-World Flight, see Looking **Back to...the First Around-the-World Flight** at https://media.defense.gov/2020/Apr/16/2002282344/-1/-1/1/LB_FIRST%20AROUNDTHEWORLDFLIGHT.PDF.

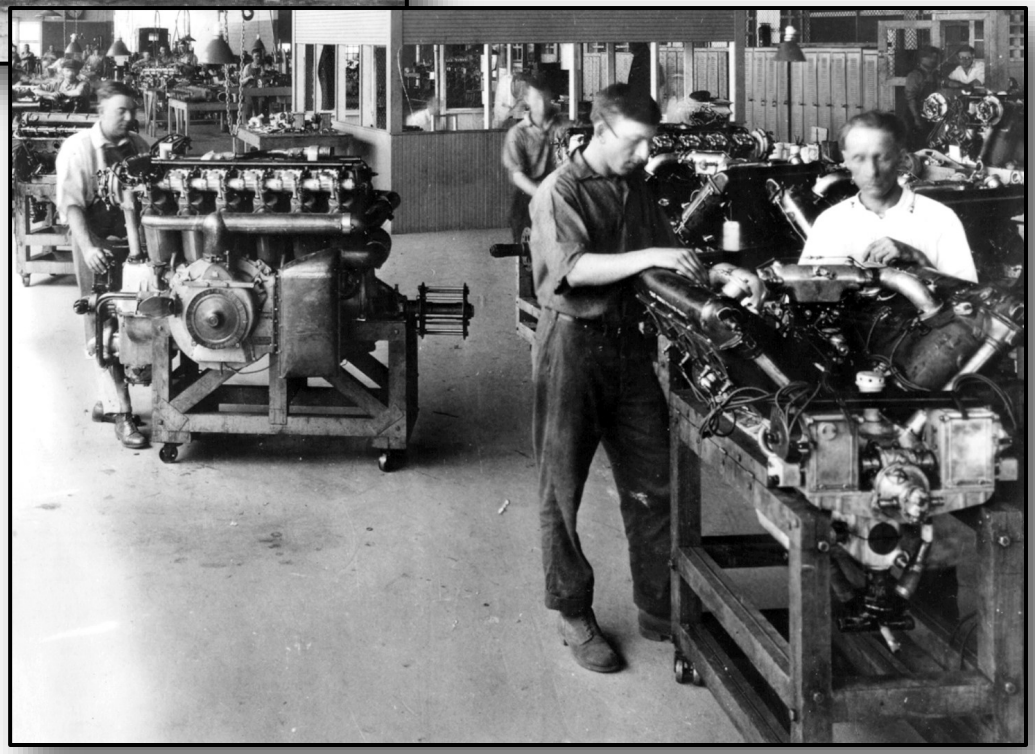


**Right**: Parts trucks, 1925. These trucks were developed for use in the machine and sheet metal shops. Material was kept on wheels in the trucks, except when it was being worked upon at the machines or on benches.


**Below**: Eddie Stinson's Junkers that he flew during his Pathfinder tour shown in Detroit-Chicago Air Service colors that he and Stanley Knauss operated in 1922. Pictured on the flight line at the Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot in 1924.

**Above**: Engine test stands at the Depot around 1926.

**Above**: Rebuilding an airplane fuselage at Fairfield Air Intermediate Depot, 1925. Employee in center is identified as the foreman, Mr. Erwin F. Boger.



**Right**: The engine repair shop at the Depot around 1926. Gentleman on left is working on a Liberty engine while gentlemen in front right are working on a Hispano-Suiza engine.

**Top**: West view of Depot Supply Building 1, taken in 1927. This building was completed in 1918 and was still the supply headquarters at Fairfield.


**Right**: Entrance to Post Headquarters, located in Supply Building 1 in 1927.

**Above**: Unit 1 Hospital and Bachelor Club Annex, built in 1917 and expanded in 1918. Though built as temporary structures, the hospital and many other buildings throughout the installation remained in use for many years. (Photo taken in 1927).

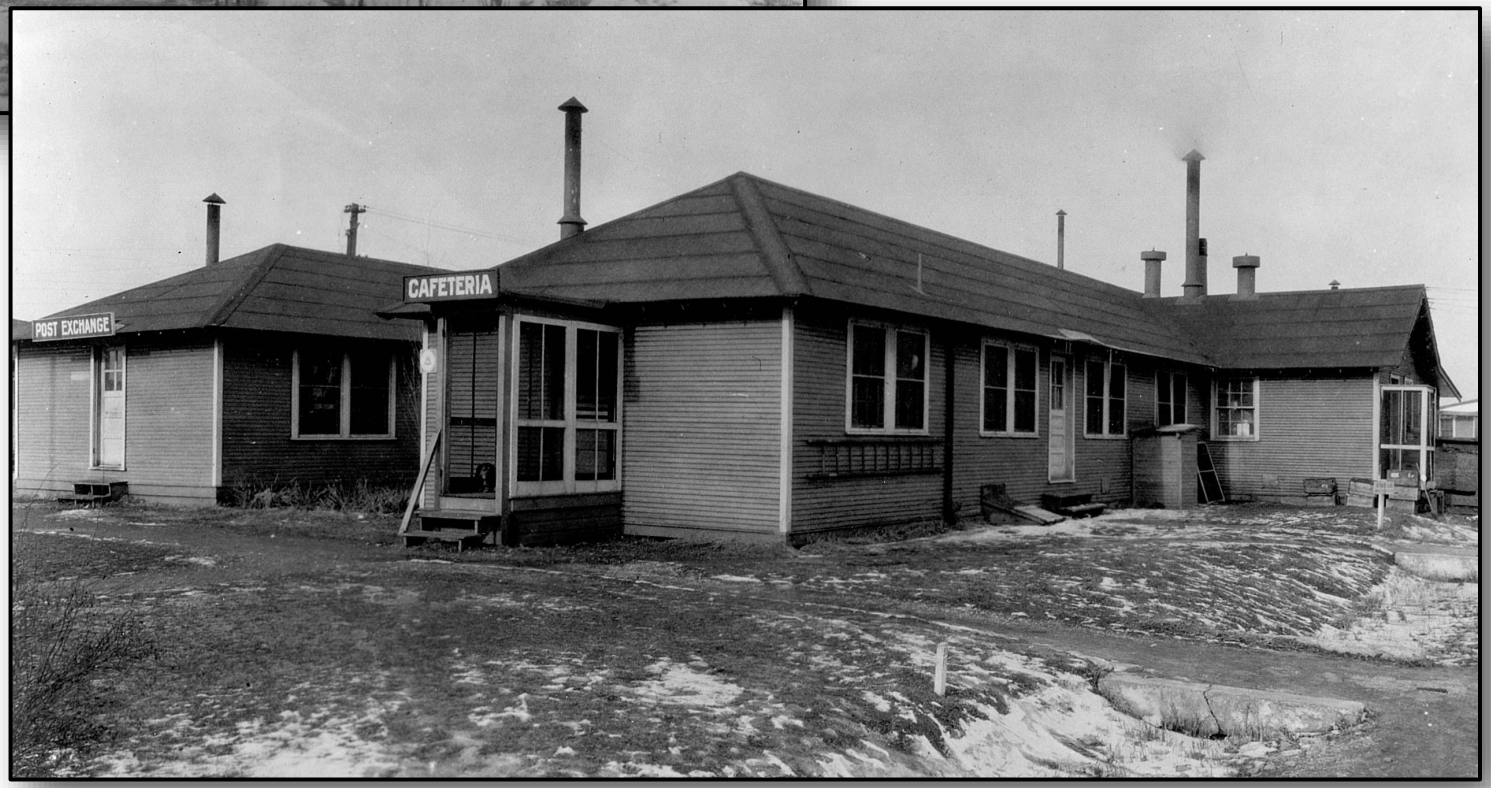
**Right**: Nurses at Wilbur Wright Field, 1918.


**Above**: The parachute repair room pictured in 1927. Major repairs required the replacement of numerous silk panels, and often of packs and harnesses, practically resulting in a rebuilt unit. Chutes were repaired at the machines and repacked on the long tables.

For more on parachutes, see "A Look Back...Development of Parachutes to 1945 at https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/05/2002560252/-1/-1/1/LOOKBACK_PARACHUTE%20DEVELOPMENT.PDF.

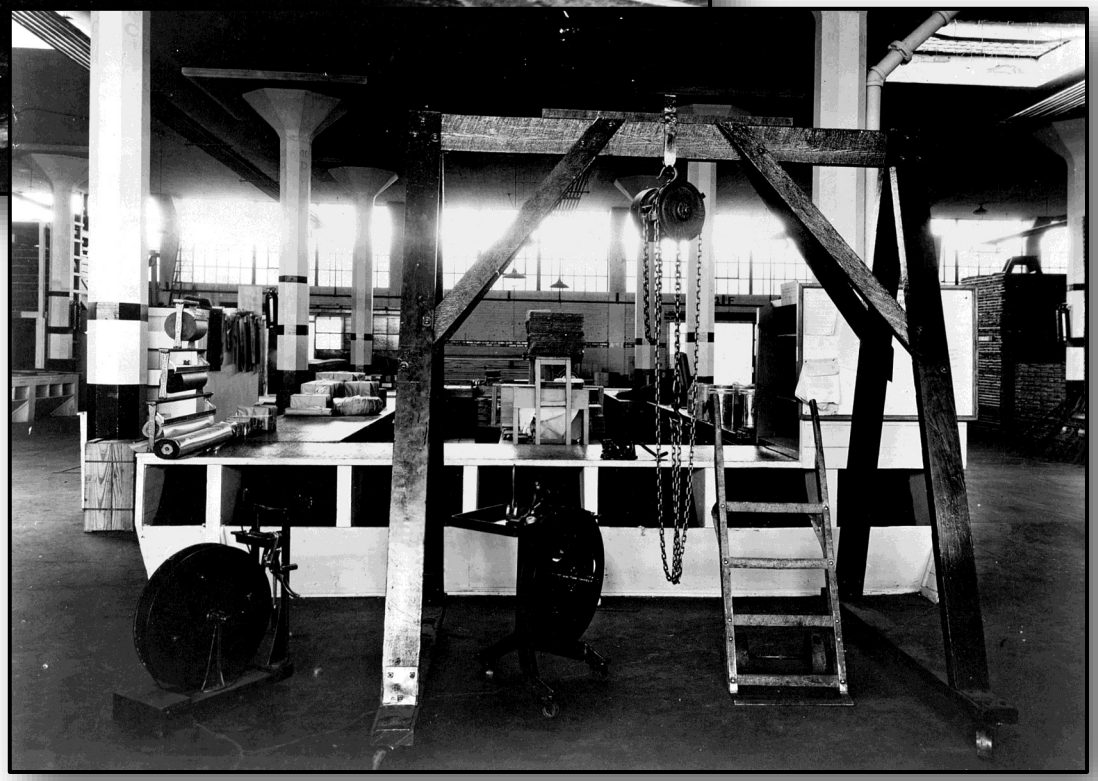
**Right**: The parachute drying room where parachutes were systematically aired and dried to prevent the silk from losing its resiliency or becoming mildewed. Parachutes in service were repacked every thirty days.

**Left**: Bachelor officers' quarters photographed in 1927.

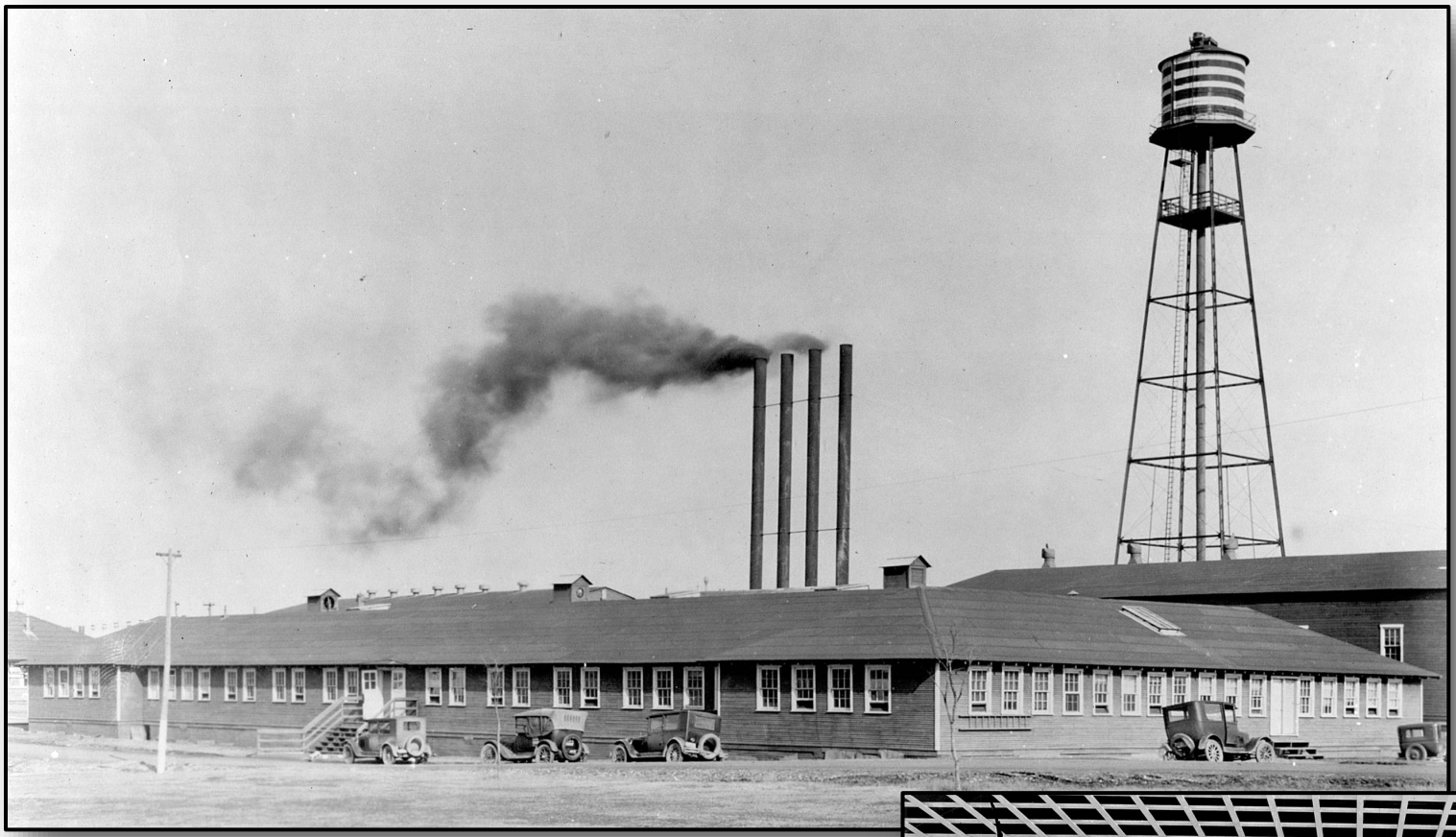



**Right**: Post Exchange and Cafeteria photographed in 1927.

**Above**: View of Fairfield Air Depot in 1927. Cinder path from which planes took off runs from the hangar line toward the bottom left side of the picture. Depot supply is the large building in the background below the communities of Fairfield and Osborn.



**Right**: Shipping department in depot supply pictured in 1927.



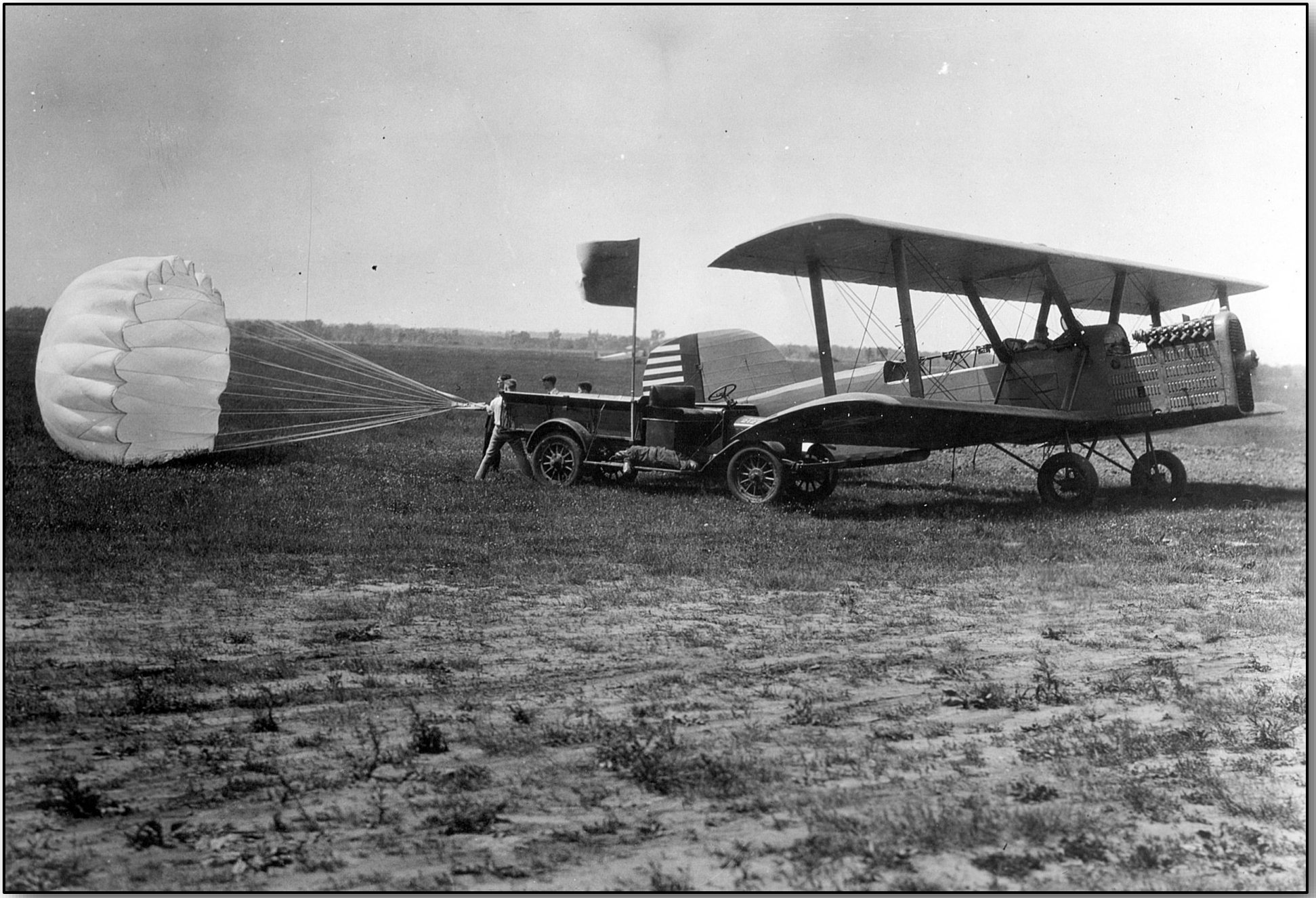
**Above**: Field Service Section offices with the stacks of the central heating plan and post water tower appearing in the background, 1927.

**Right**: Interior of Officers' Club decorated for dinner in honor of Major General Patrick during his visit for the International Air Races in 1924.

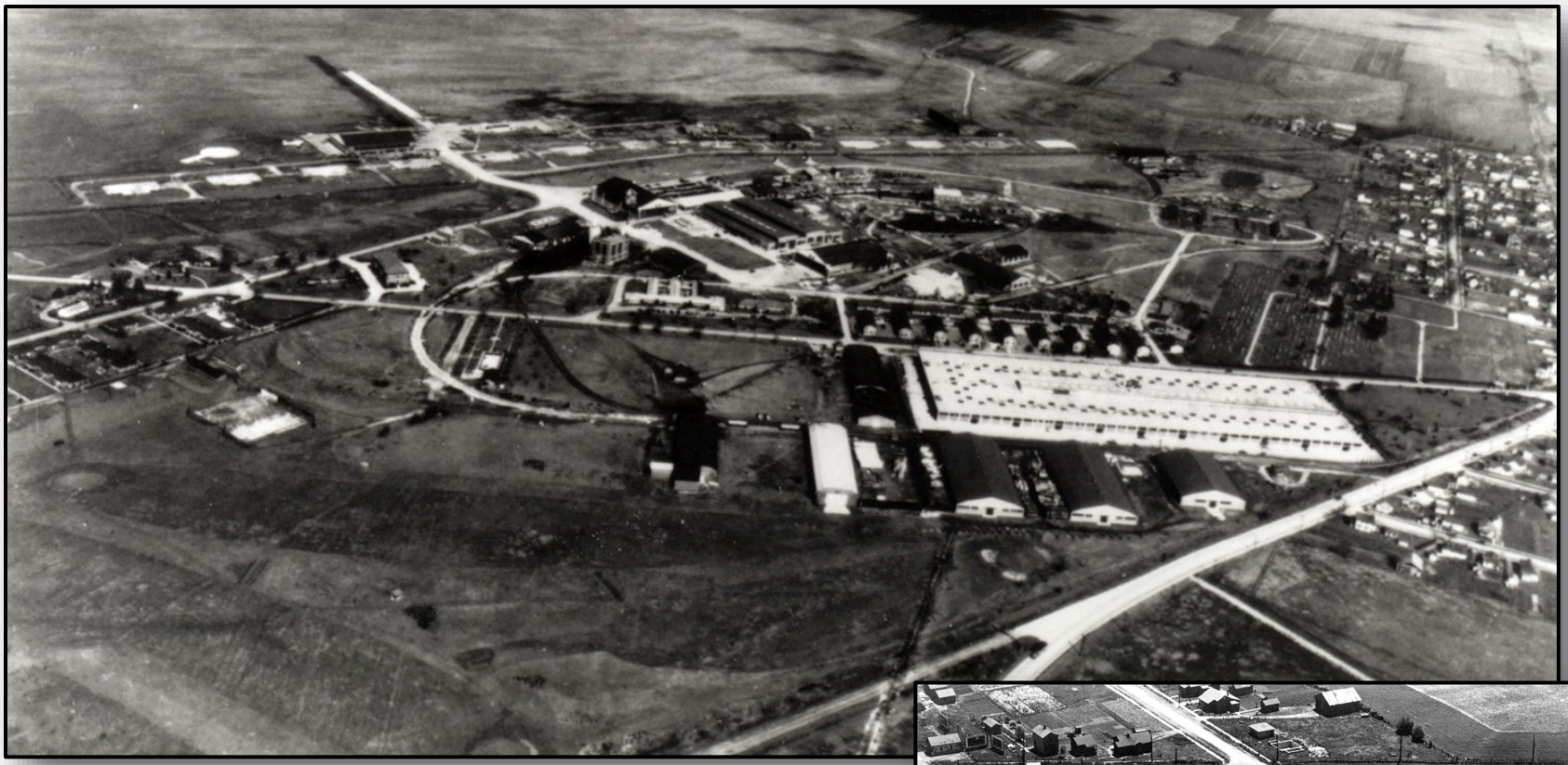
**Top**: Curtis XO-1 *Falcon* pictured on 7 October 1927 with a Liberty engine. **Right**: Wreck of the *Falcon* on 4 September 1929, flown by Lt. George Schulgen, who was saved by his parachute, qualifying him for the caterpillar club. The crankshaft of the Liberty engine broke causing the propeller to fly off near Columbus, Ohio.

View of Fairfield Air Depot from the north in 1927.

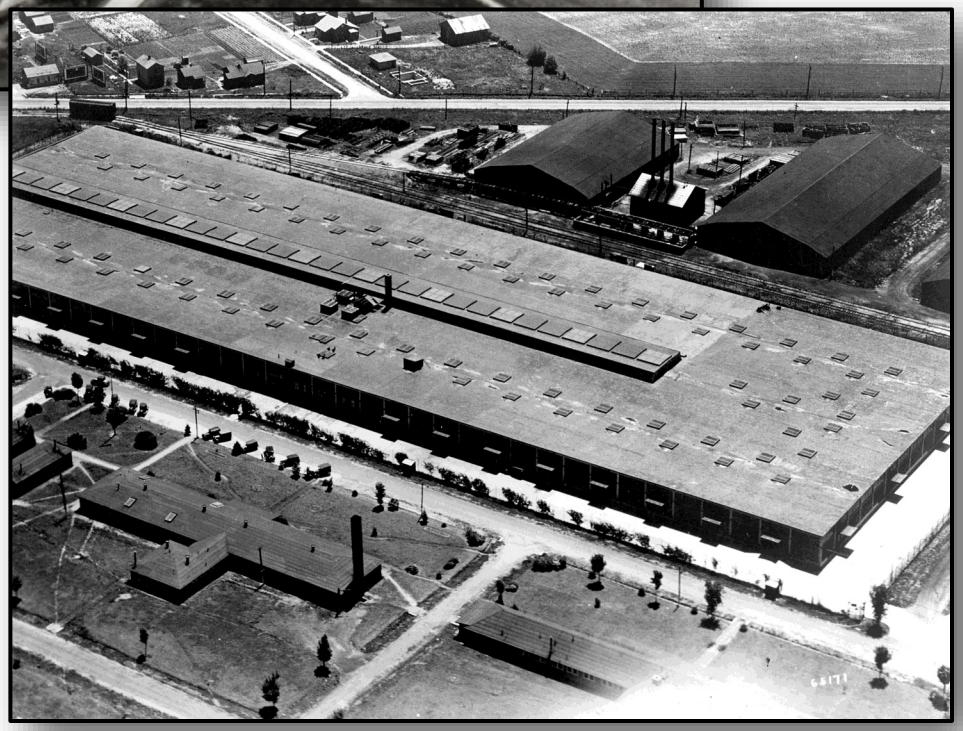

**Above**: Fairfield Air Depot pictured in 1928 with depot headquarters, supply Building 1, in the right center of the picture. **Left**: Concrete servicing line, Barling hangar, and Operations offices pictured in 1928.



Service type parachute inflated by Douglas Observation airplane at depot in 1928. The 175-lb. dummy used for ballast in drop-testing parachutes at Fairfield may be seen on the running board of the truck.

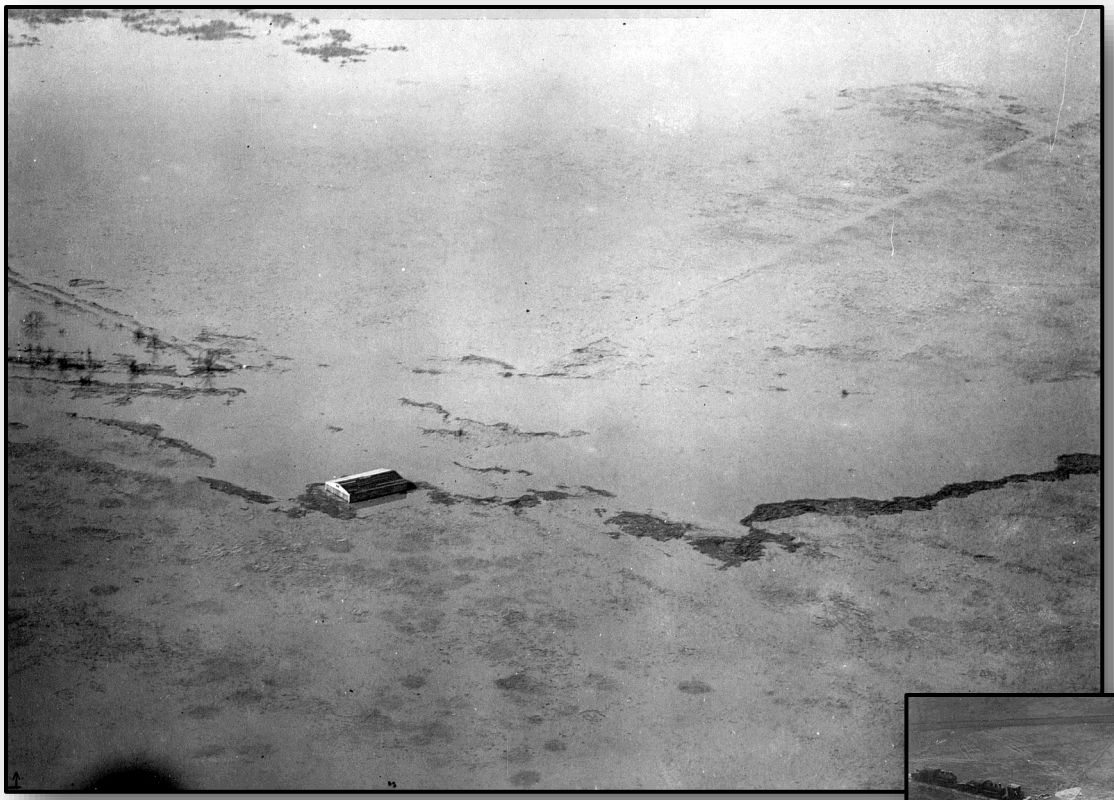


**Above**: Fairfield Air Depot (FAD), Patterson Field. A major portion of Patterson Field was occupied by FAD until the depot closed in 1946. The large building at lower right is Building 1, the original depot headquarters.



**Right**: View of Building 1 in 1928, which served as Post Headquarters and supply warehouse. The Weather Station was originally located on the left side of the roof of Building 1.

Enlisted men’s swimming pool in 1928.



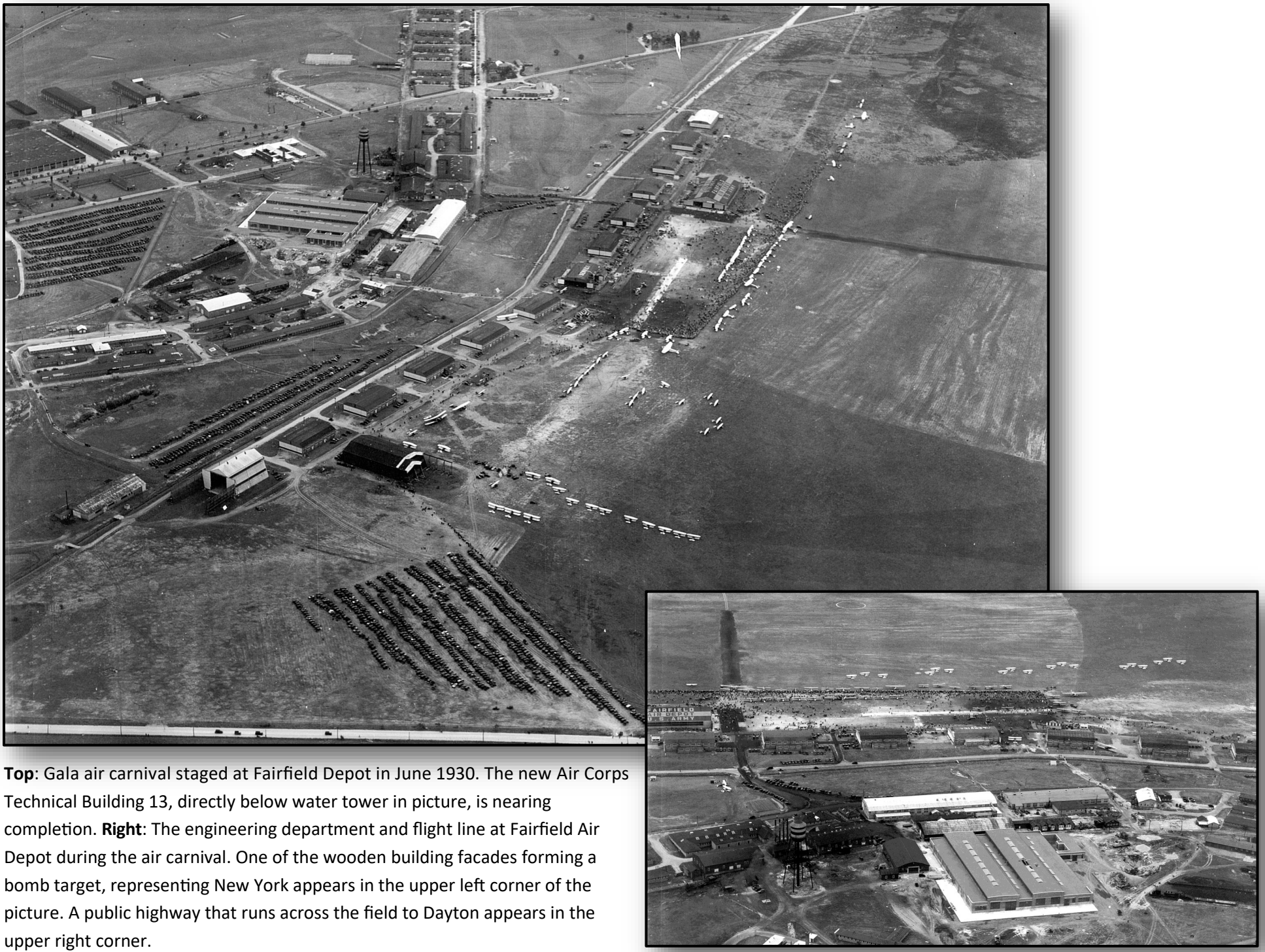
**Left**: Flooded area surrounding hangar on flight line on 24 February 1929. Improved drainage years later would eliminate this issue.

By 1931, the Fairfield Air Depot control area consisted of 23 states containing 28 Air Corps stations out of approximately 50 in the United States. The states were: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

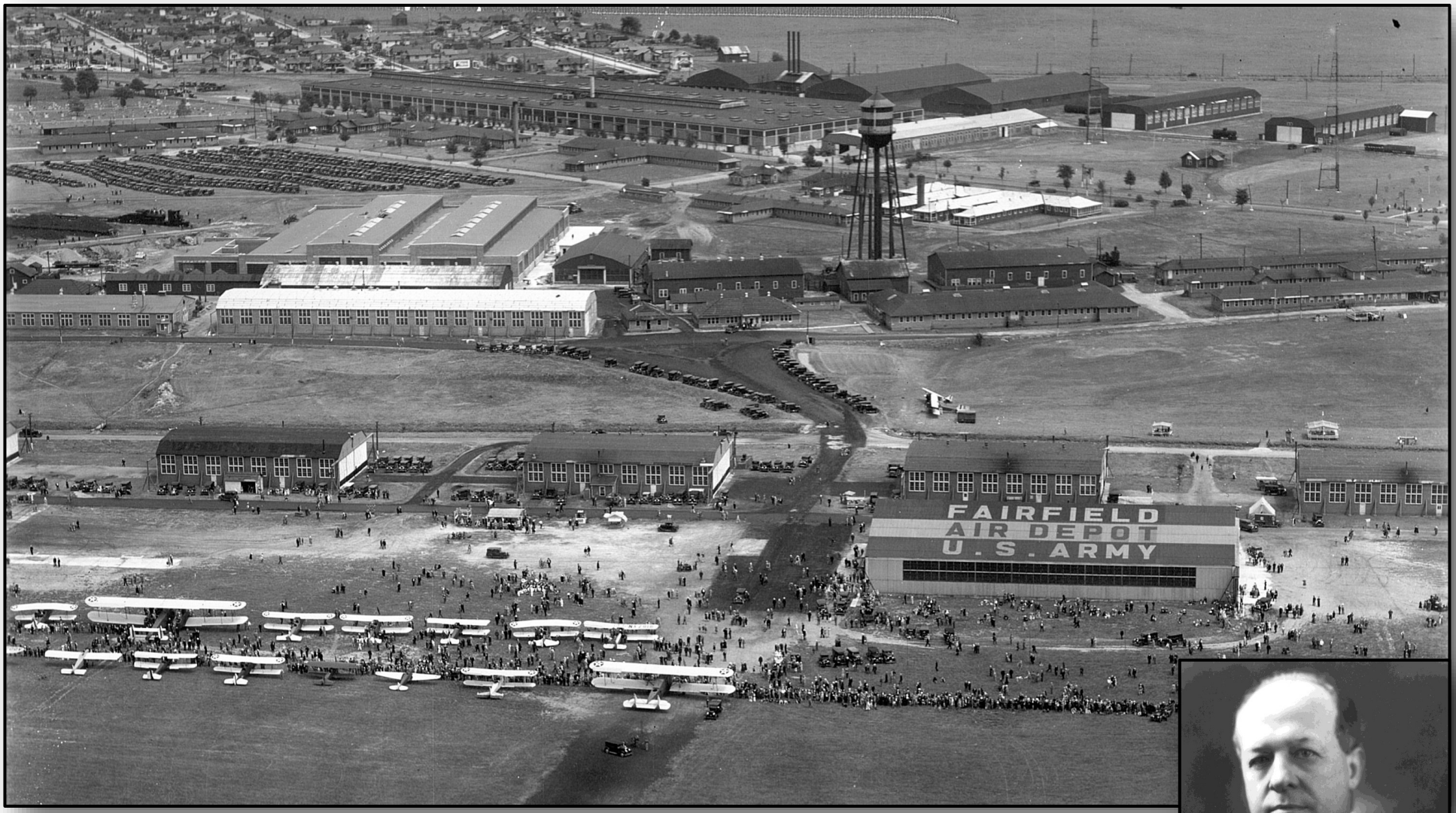

**Right**: Framework of Building 13, engineering department, being erected at Depot in early 1930. In later years the open space around this building was utilized with a heavy concentration of buildings and roadway of the engineering department. Not the absence of paved roads on the post and the smoke nuisance created by “little Pittsburgh,” the main boiler plant.

**Left**: Building 13 was the primary engine overhaul and aero repair facility.


**Right**: Aero Repair Section in Building 13 during World War II.

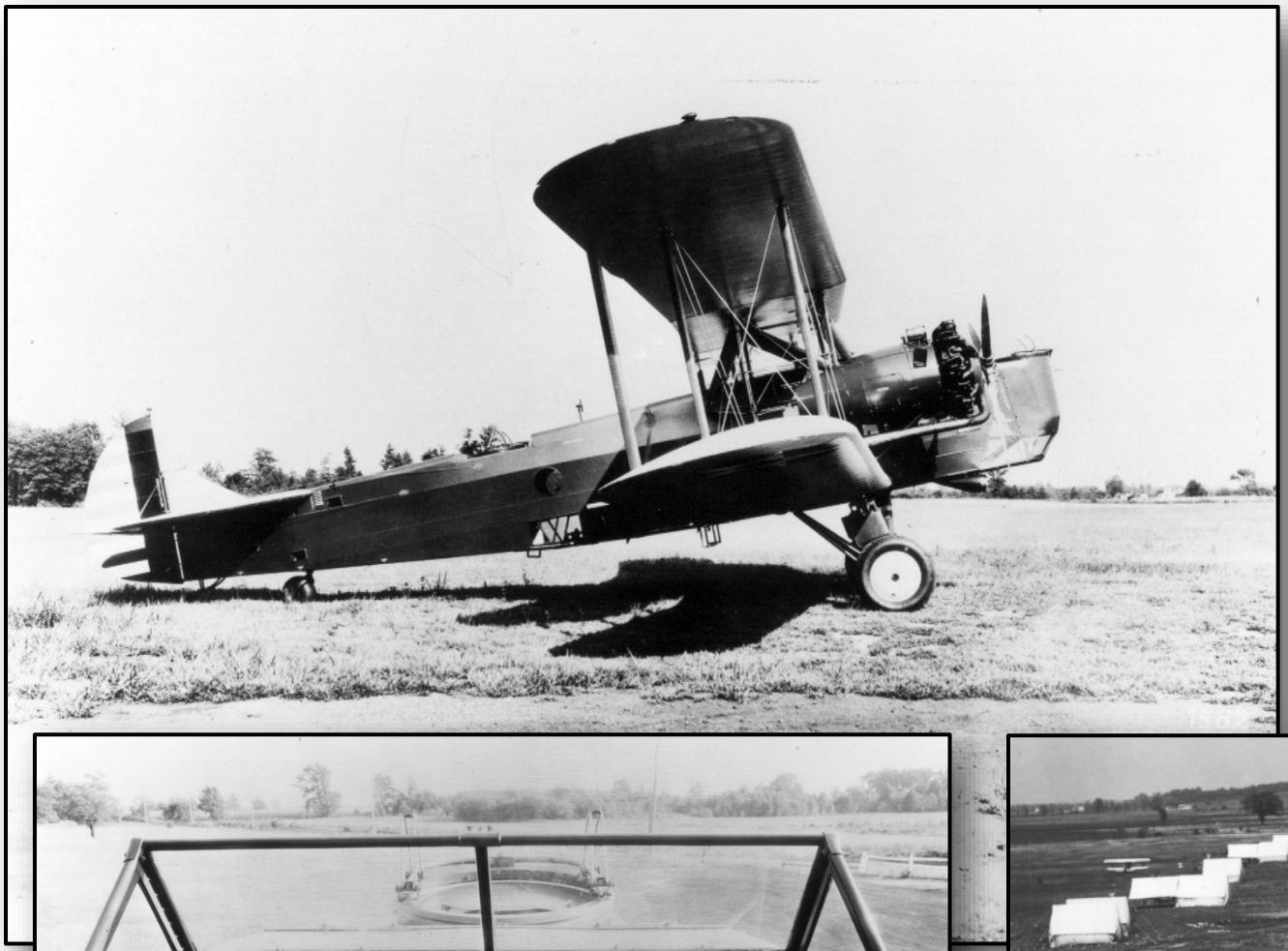


**Top**: Gala air carnival staged at Fairfield Depot in June 1930. The new Air Corps Technical Building 13, directly below water tower in picture, is nearing completion. **Right**: The engineering department and flight line at Fairfield Air Depot during the air carnival. One of the wooden building facades forming a bomb target, representing New York appears in the upper left corner of the picture. A public highway that runs across the field to Dayton appears in the upper right corner.

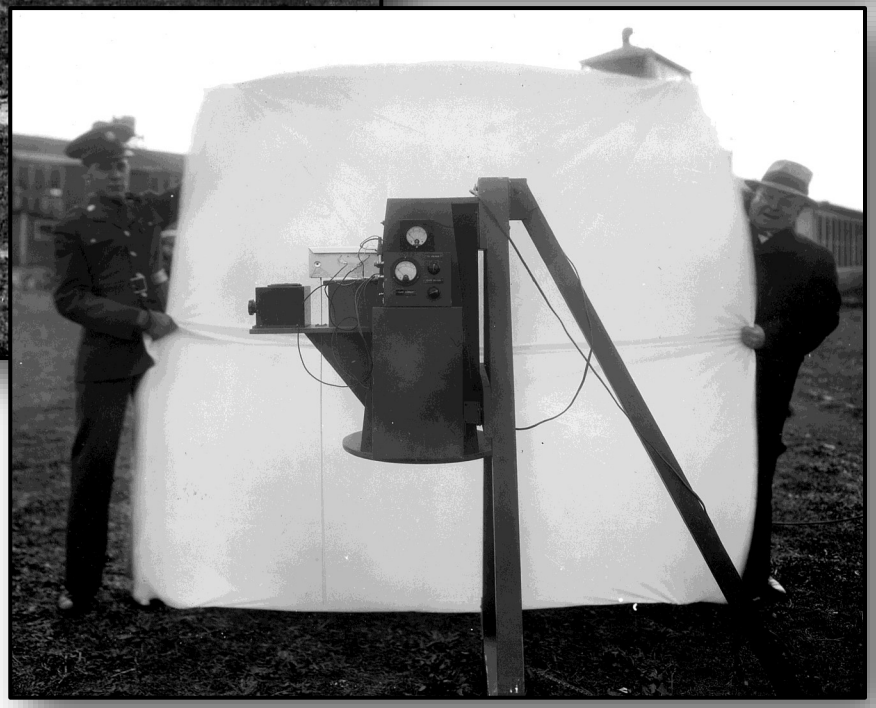



**Top**: Aerial view of the Air Corps Carnival at Fairfield Air Depot, 1930. Thousands of spectators attended the airshow and carnival on the Fairfield Air Depot Reservation flightline. In the foreground a "modern" steel hangar (now Building 145 in Area A) carries the inscription "Fairfield Air Depot U.S. Army." FAD Headquarters (Building 1) can be seen at the top center. **Right**: Benjamin D. Foulois enlisted in 1898 with the Army Corps of Engineers and commissioned in 1901 as a lieutenant of Infantry. After initial instruction in 1909, he served as the Army's only pilot for most of 1910. He flew Signal Corps Number One at Fort Sam Houston with correspondence instruction with the Wright Brothers. In November 1917, a temporary brigadier general, he was named Chief of Air Service for the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France. In December 1927, he was promoted to permanent brigadier general. In June 1929 he assumed command of the Air Corps Materiel Division at Wright Field.


From 15 to 30 May 1931, the largest peacetime maneuvers in Army Air Service-Air Corps history were held on the Fairfield Air Depot Reservation. These photographs show the First Provisional Air Division parked beside the flightline of World War I wooden hangars with the growing towns of Fairfield and Osborn in the background. The First Provisional Air Division was commanded by Brig. Gen. Benjamin D. Foulois, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, HQ Army Air Corps. Stretching down the length of the field, a fleet of 672 airplanes participated in the maneuvers.



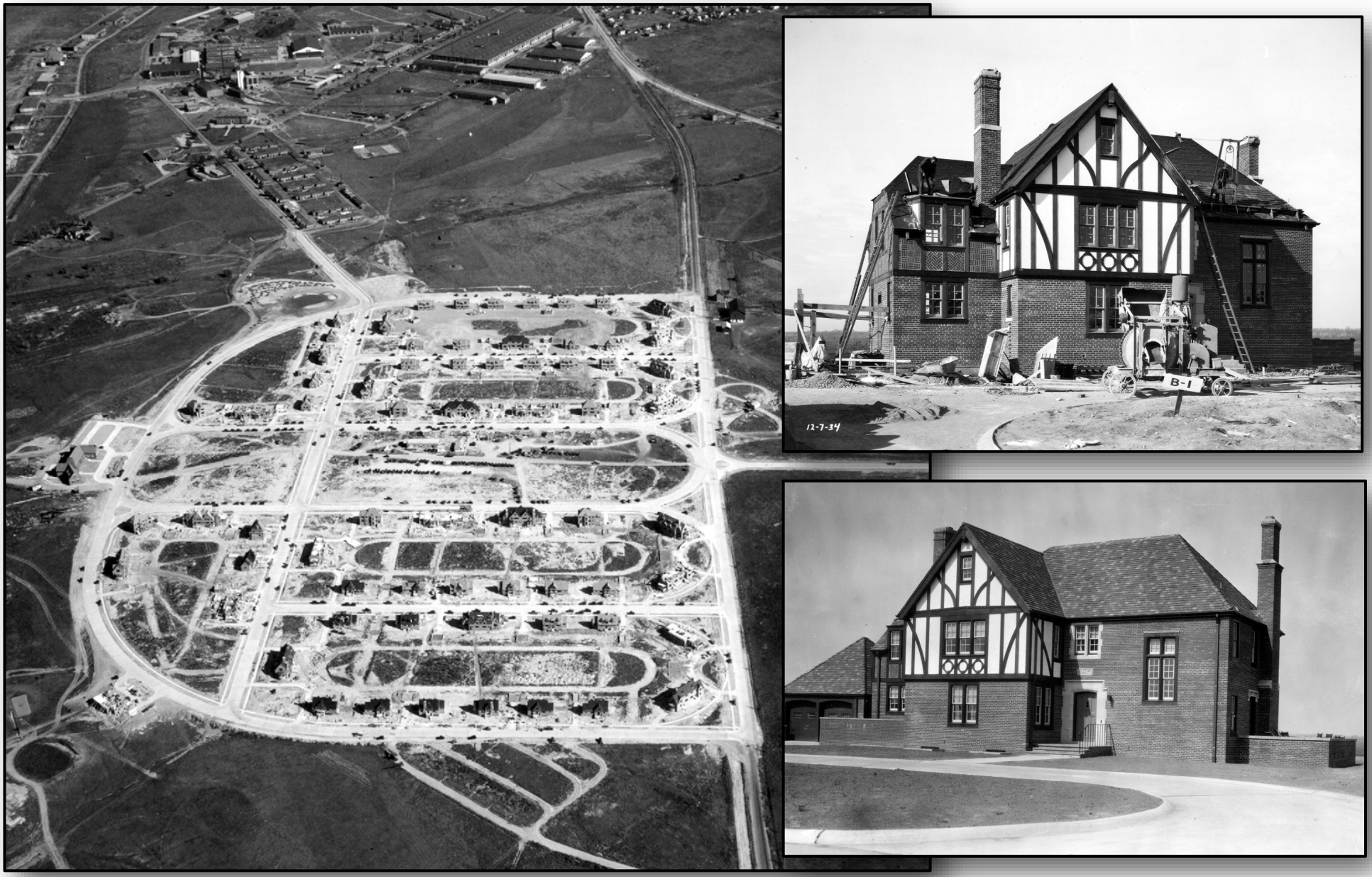
**Top**: Keystone B-6A pictured in 1931. Keystone B-4A and B-6A bombers were modified at Fairfield Air Depot for use by the Air Corps in flying the US air mail in 1934. **Bottom Left**: Keystone B-6A cockpit. **Bottom Right**: Spectators walk the main road paralleling the flightline during the 1931 Air Corps maneuvers.



**Above**: Targets on the bombing range in the vicinity of the Mad River (top right) pictured in 1934. **Top Right**: Radio Meterorograph (or Radiosonde) unit in tempering cabinet inside Weather Station pictured in 1938. This unit was suspended below a balloon about 6-feet diameter which carried it up into the air where it transmitted data as to the relative humidity, pressure, and temperature of the upper air. When expansion of the balloon in the rarefied upper air eventually would cause it to burst, the unit was floated to earth on a parachute. **Bottom Right**: Ground receiving set which recorded transmissions of weather data from device in picture above. Civilian is J.L.H. Paulhus, US Weather Bureau expert on radio meteorographs.

Building 11 (Area A) served as Patterson Field Headquarters from 1933 to 1948

The Officers' Club (Building 800) was completed on 13 October 1934 and opened to all officers stationed at both Wright and Patterson Fields. The swimming pool complex was a gift from Lt Frank S. Patterson's mother, Julia Shaw Patterson Carnell. The pool was dedicated in memory of the test pilot in 1936. It was completed in 1937 and remained in service until 1997.



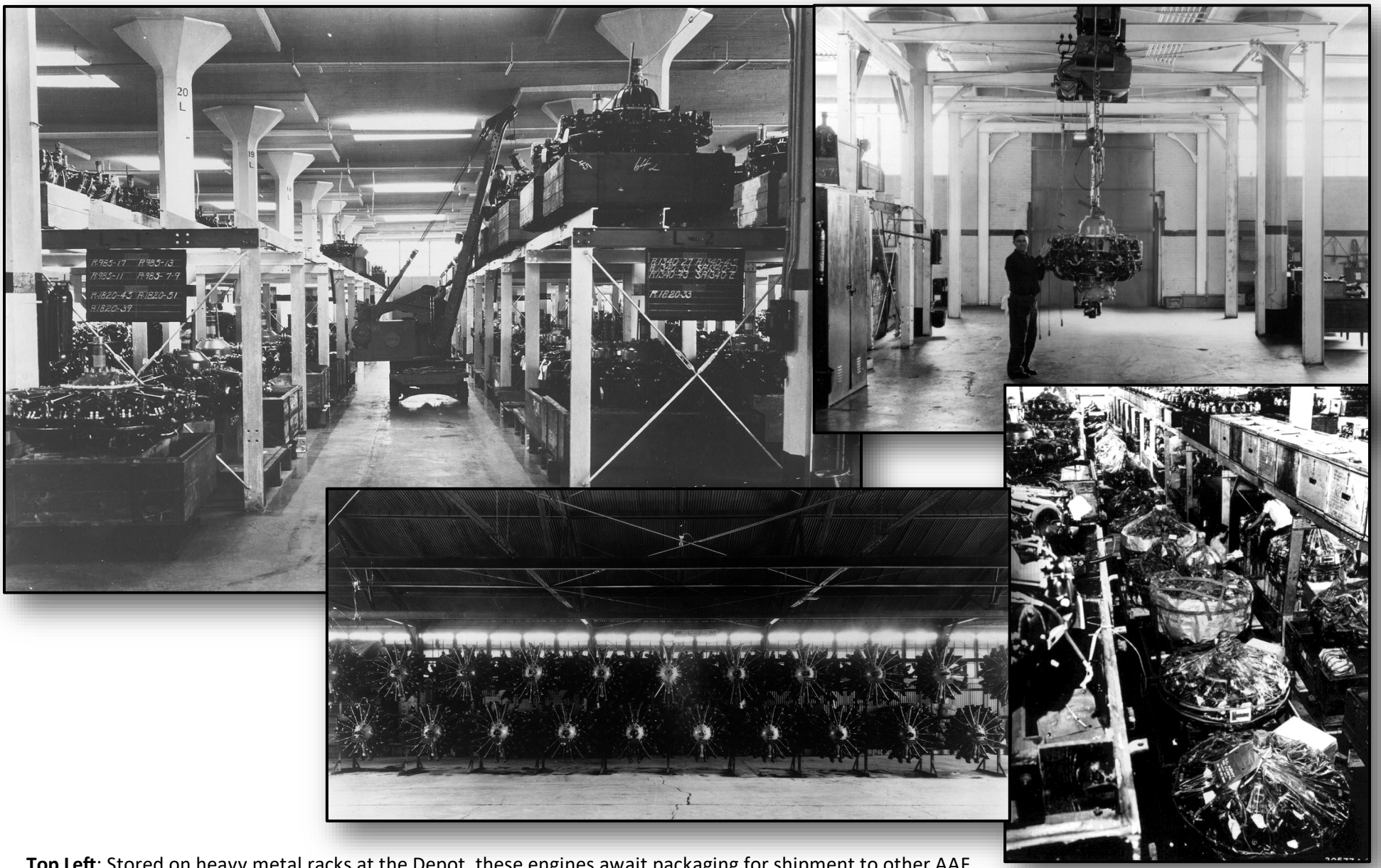

**Above**: Officers' brick quarters (commonly known the Brick Quarters) under construction on Patterson Field, 24 October 1934. The Officers' Open Mess is already complete at center left. **Top Right**: The first house completed on "B" Street (now Brett Drive) in early 1935. **Bottom Right**: Building 700 (served as commander's residency), shortly after completion. The first resident of the home was Brig. Gen. Augustine Warner Robins, Commander of the Air Corps Materiel Division at Wright Field from 1935 to 1939.

**Above**: The transient camp on the Fairfield Air Depot Reservation, near the present day Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command Building 262, in 1934. Unemployed workers during the Depression years were fed and housed at this camp and paid nominal wages in return for light work performed about the Reservation. **Right**: Transient work crews graded the landscape for construction of the Brick Quarters.

Aerial view of Patterson Field in 1935. The Springfield turnpike running horizontally through the center of the picture, and the Dayton road in the lower left section, had not as yet been removed. The new highway following the railroad around the border of the field is plainly visible. All hangars have been removed from the Second Unit, leaving only cement bases visible near the center of the picture


**Left**: View of Patterson Field and vicinity from the east in 1939. The highways cutting the field appear to be no longer in use. The cinder landing strip in front of Operations has been paralleled with a concrete strip. The Officers' Quarters are fully completed.

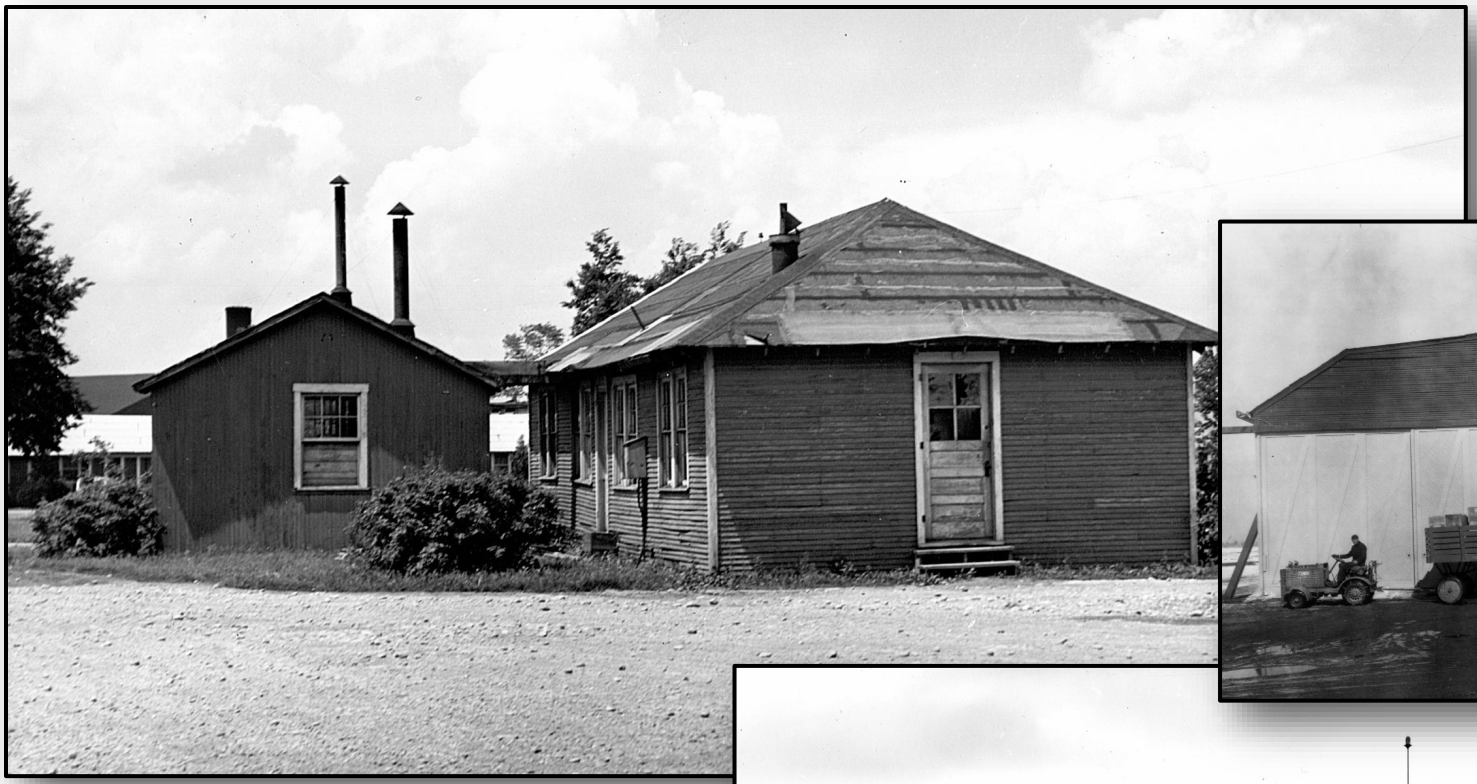

**Right**: Eastern view of Patterson Field in 1939 showing radio towers in the foreground and depot supply just above. The small buildings along depot supply were joined by annexes and converted into one large structure during the expansion program of World War II.




**Top Left**: Stored on heavy metal racks at the Depot, these engines await packaging for shipment to other AAF depots and overseas. **Top Right**: During overhaul, engines were carried by means of an overhead system of electric hoists. **Bottom Left**: Airplane engine storage at the Depot in 1933. **Bottom Right**: These engines were carefully wrapped in Pliofilm and crated to survive shipment to all parts of the world.

Brig. Gen. Merrick G. Estabrook Jr. (pictured left), oversaw many of the dramatic changes that occurred at Patterson Field immediately prior to World War II and during the early years of the war. He served as commander of both Patterson Field and Fairfield Air Depot from 1939 to 1943. According to many who served under him, General Estabrook spent long days and nights, at the expense of his own health, overseeing the massive construction projects and supervising a steadily increasing number of staff members. His right-hand men were Chief Warrant Officer Charles M. “Smitty” Smith (pictured right) and Post Adjutant Maj Eugene M. Becher, veterans of operations at the Depot. The relatively quiet and closely-knit Patterson Field community of the 1930s disappeared almost overnight as the post became a center of wartime activity.

Construction projects underway in the engineering department in 1940.



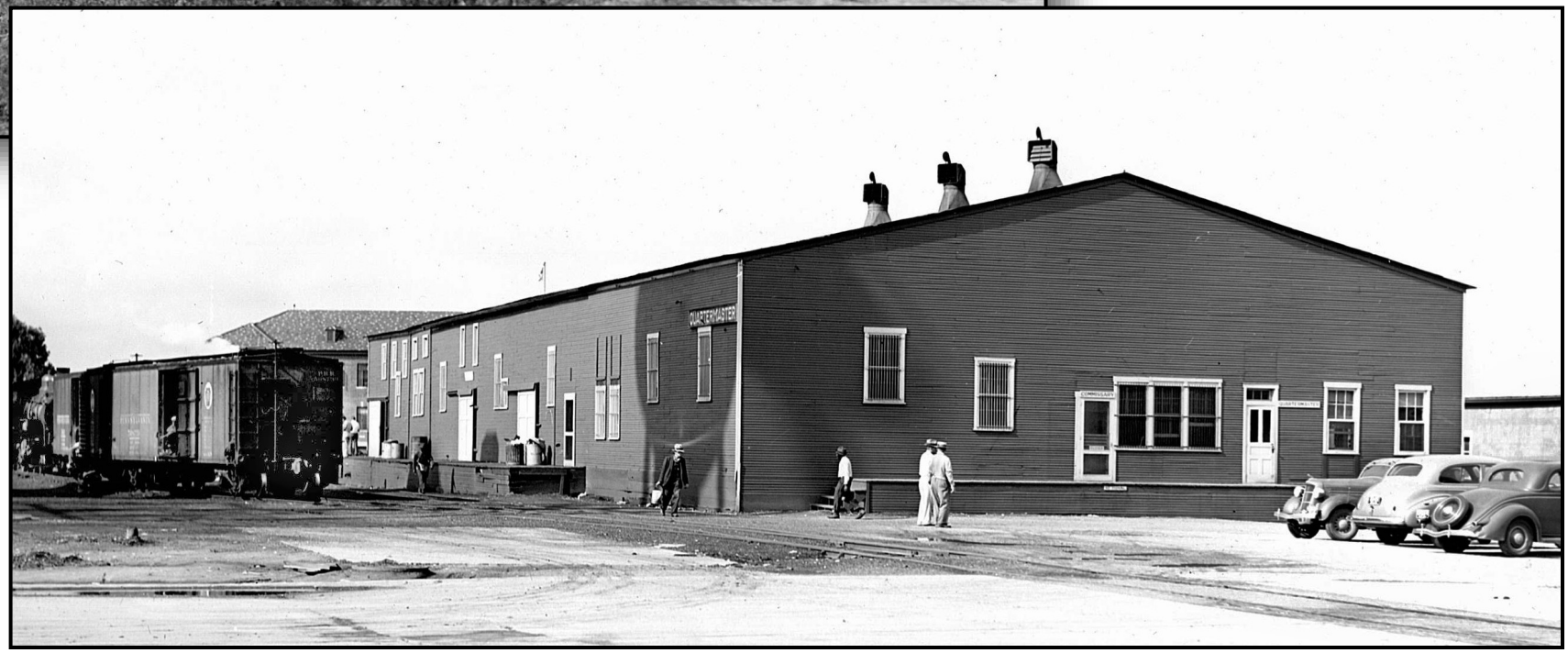


**Top**: Radio Station, June 1940. **Middle**: The Patterson Field Air Transport Terminal served the field's needs during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1943, a new terminal, Building 146, was constructed on the site of the old Barling bomber hangar.

**Right**: Post Operations building, June 1940.

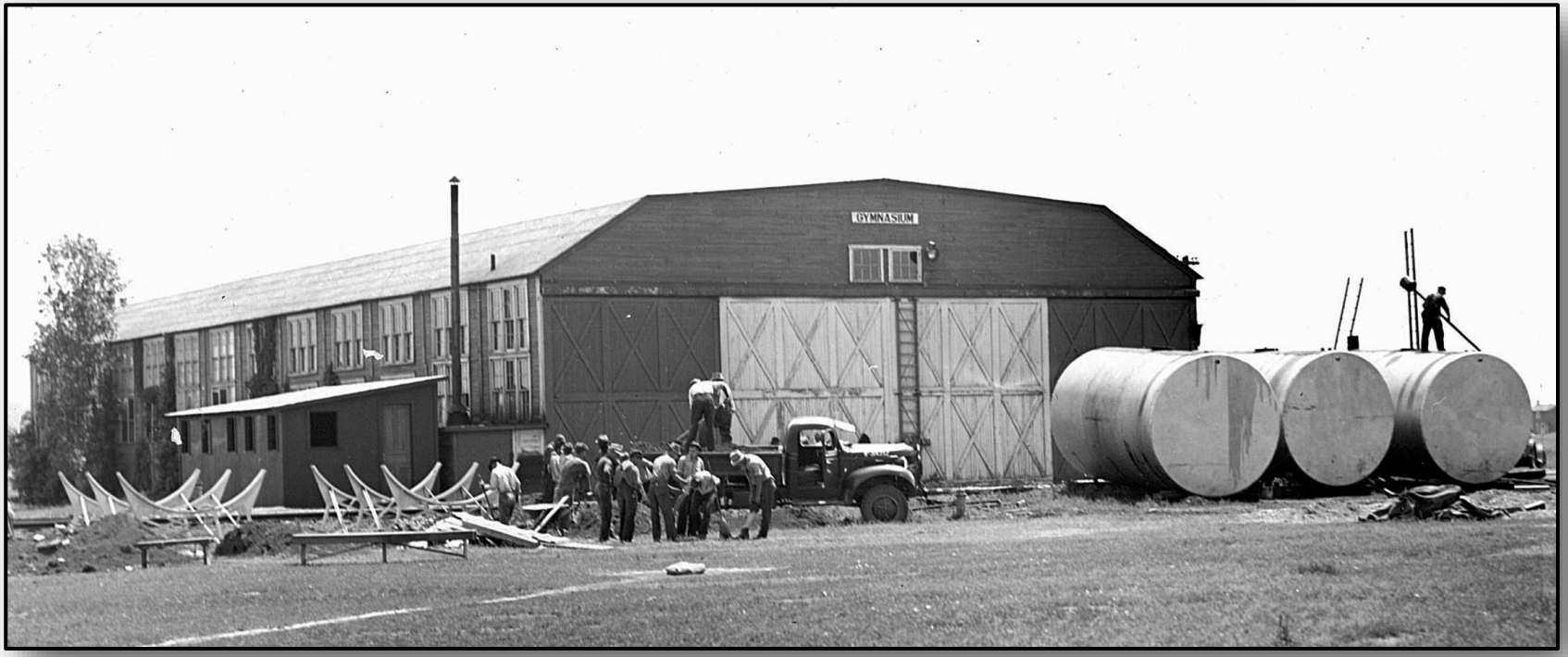
**Left**: Post hospital, 1940.

After Pearl Harbor, it became evident that the maintenance and repair of the American fleet, then building, would have to be decentralized and facilities located throughout the nation. As one of the oldest permanent repair depots, Fairfield stepped up in the aid in the establishment, layout, and manning of these new installations. The Depot played a pioneering role in setting up the earliest sub-depots in the central and southeastern United States as well as providing trained officers and civilians to activate and man these new air depots.



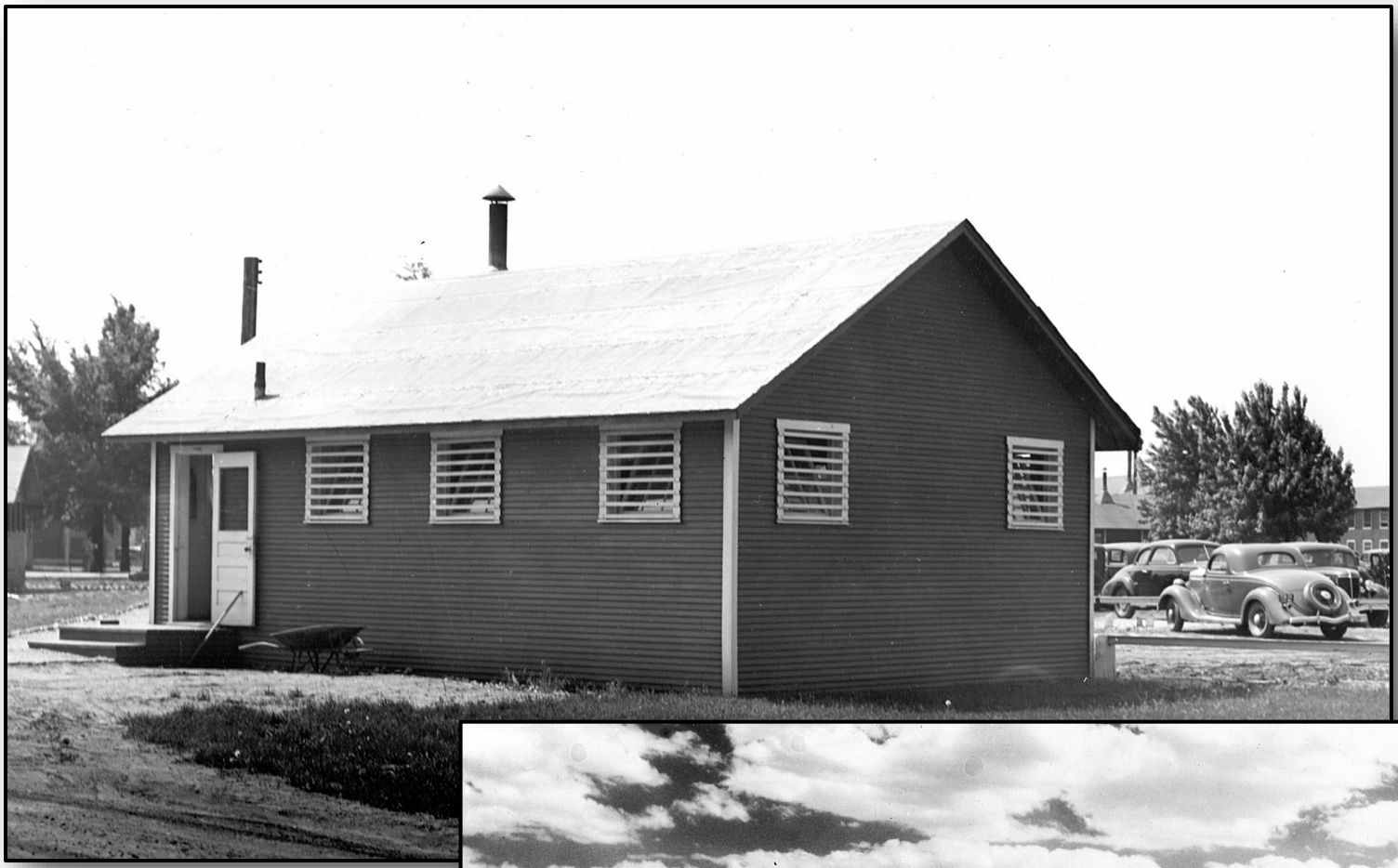

**Right**: Quartermaster Commissary, 1940.


**Left**: Post Exchange during World War II, the PX sat across the street from the Post Headquarters (Building 11), adjacent to present-day Building 10.



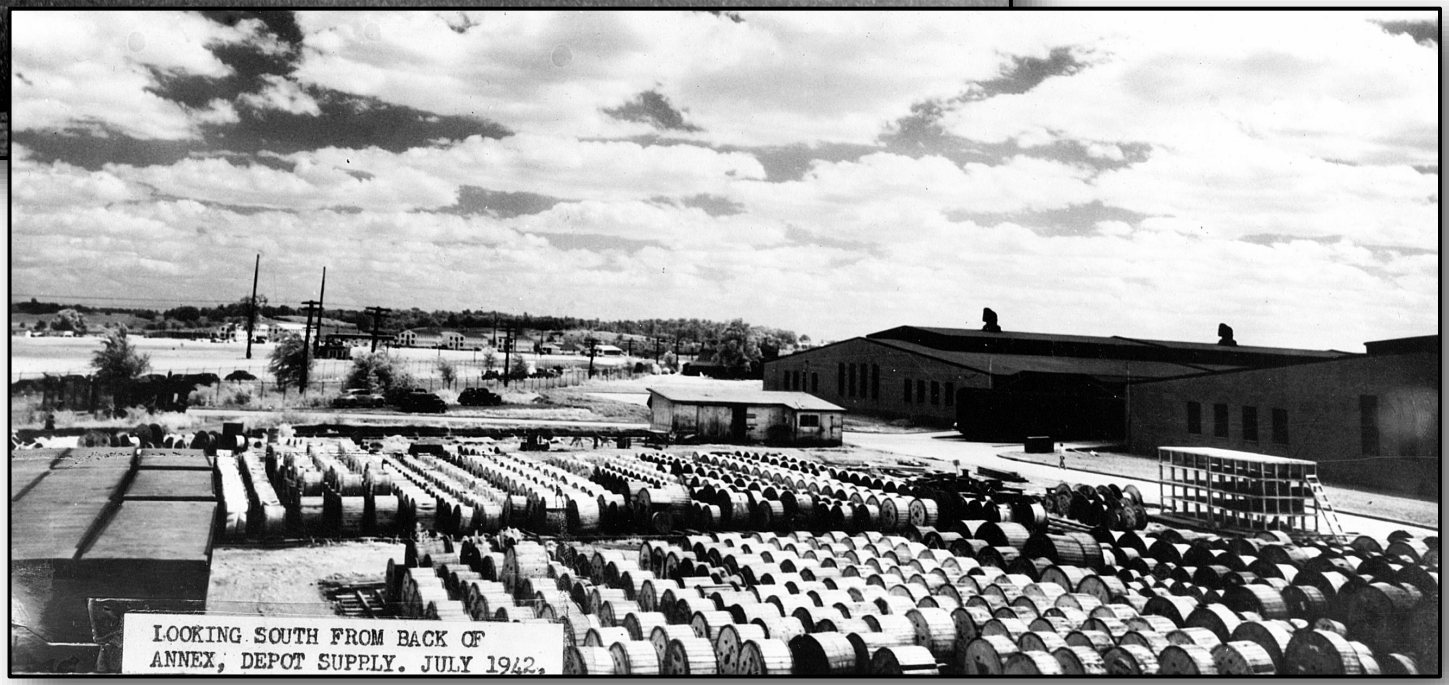

**Right**: Post Gymnasium. Gasoline storage tanks being installed nearby in June 1940.


**Top**: One of the several mess halls for enlisted personnel that was on Patterson Field. **Bottom**: Q.M. Utilities building, June 1940.



**Above**: Post Guardhouse, June 1940.

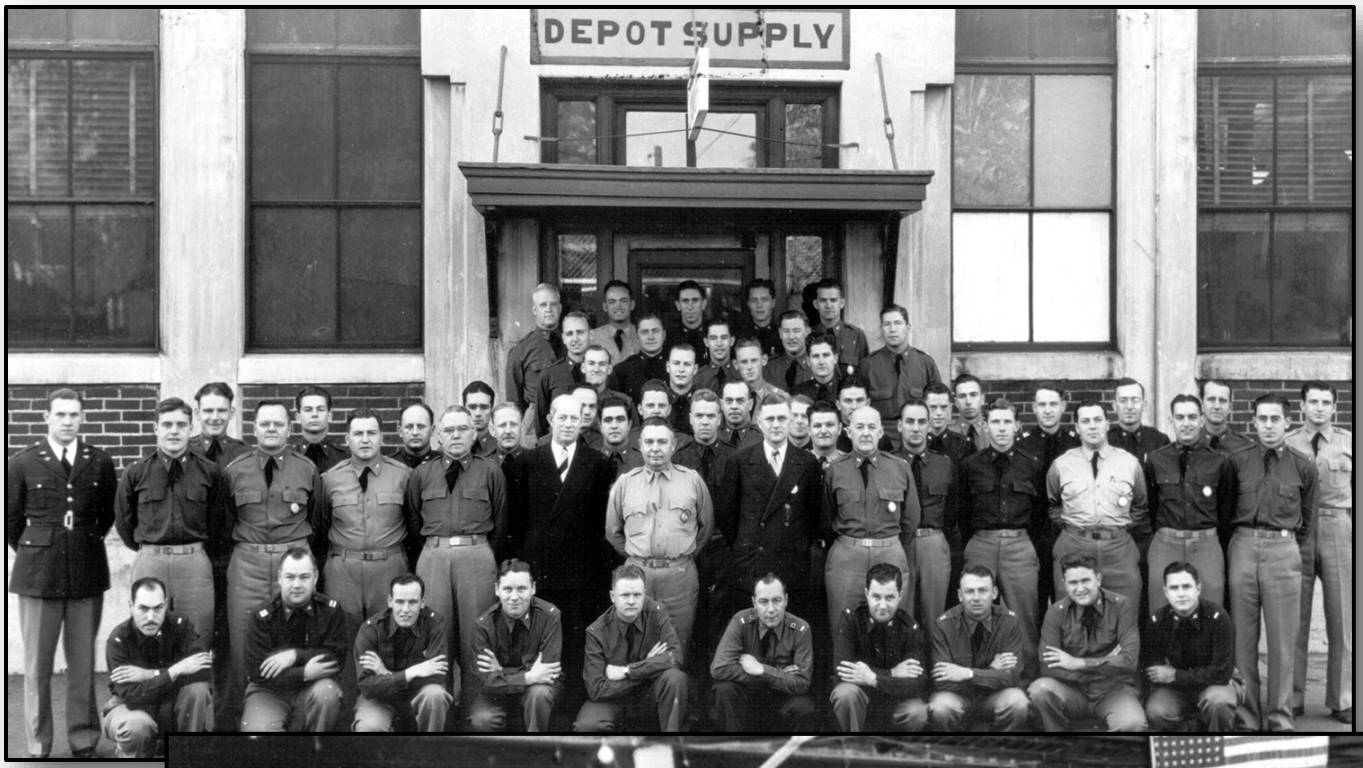
As forces moved across Europe and new tactics were introduced by modern aerial warfare, normal supply and maintenance procedures became obsolete requiring new thinking and planning. A highly mobile military organization was devised to provide complete supply and repair facilities for aviation units based on combat areas with these units formed and trained at Fairfield beginning in 1941. Personnel consisted of teams of specialists capable of fixing all ailments of combat aircraft.




**Right**: Outdoor storage in July 1942.


**Left**: Base Operations (Building 206), completed in December 1941 on the Patterson Field flightline contained the Fairfield Air Depot-Operations (FADO) Hotel for transient pilots in the center portion of the building.


**Left**: The FADO Hotel provided comfortable, though crowded quarters for visiting pilots.
**Right**: Pilots register at the FADO Hotel.




**Top**: Officers of the Fairfield Air Depot Supply Department in front of Building 1 in 1941. **Bottom**: Fairfield Air Depot's packing and crating shop. Employees constructed custom wooden boxes for equipment shipments.


**Top**: Building 219, completed in 1942, was one of two hospitals serving Wright and Patterson Fields during the war years. The second hospital was a cantonment-type temporary facility in Wood City (now known as Kittyhawk). **Right**: Interior view of the cantonment-type hospital in Wood City.

Fairfield Air Depot was responsible for Phase I (activation and unit training) and Phase II (group training). **Top Left**: Members of the 407th Service Squadron, Chinese-Americans from across the country. They received their technical training here at the Depot from 1943 to 1944. **Top Right**: Enlisted mechanics in training at the Depot for subsequent transfer to other AAF depots in the U.S. and abroad. **Bottom**: Enlisted mechanics received hands-on training in critical armament repair work.



**Left**: Civilian workers in the Supply Division at the Depot hoisting a XB-19 tire. The Douglas XB-19 was intended to test flight characteristics and design techniques for giant bombers; however, advances in technology made the XB-19 obsolete before it was completed. The only items that remained, really, were two of its enormous main landing gear tires (one of which is on display in the Early Years Gallery at the National Museum of the USAF).

**Right**: Civilian workers move hoist material to train cars.


Members of the Fairfield Air Depot baseball team picture in 1933.


Patterson Field, 1943, showing the build-up that occurred in the early years of World War II.
In the foreground are numerous depot maintenance and storage buildings essential to wartime depot operations.


**Top Left**: Warehouse operations in Building 258. **Top Right**: The Depot leased storage space in roughly fourteen buildings in the Springfield area to augment warehouse space available at Patterson Field. The Fulton Iron Works building (pictured), leased in May 1942, provided 175,000 square feet of storage feet of a conglomeration of all types of supplies.

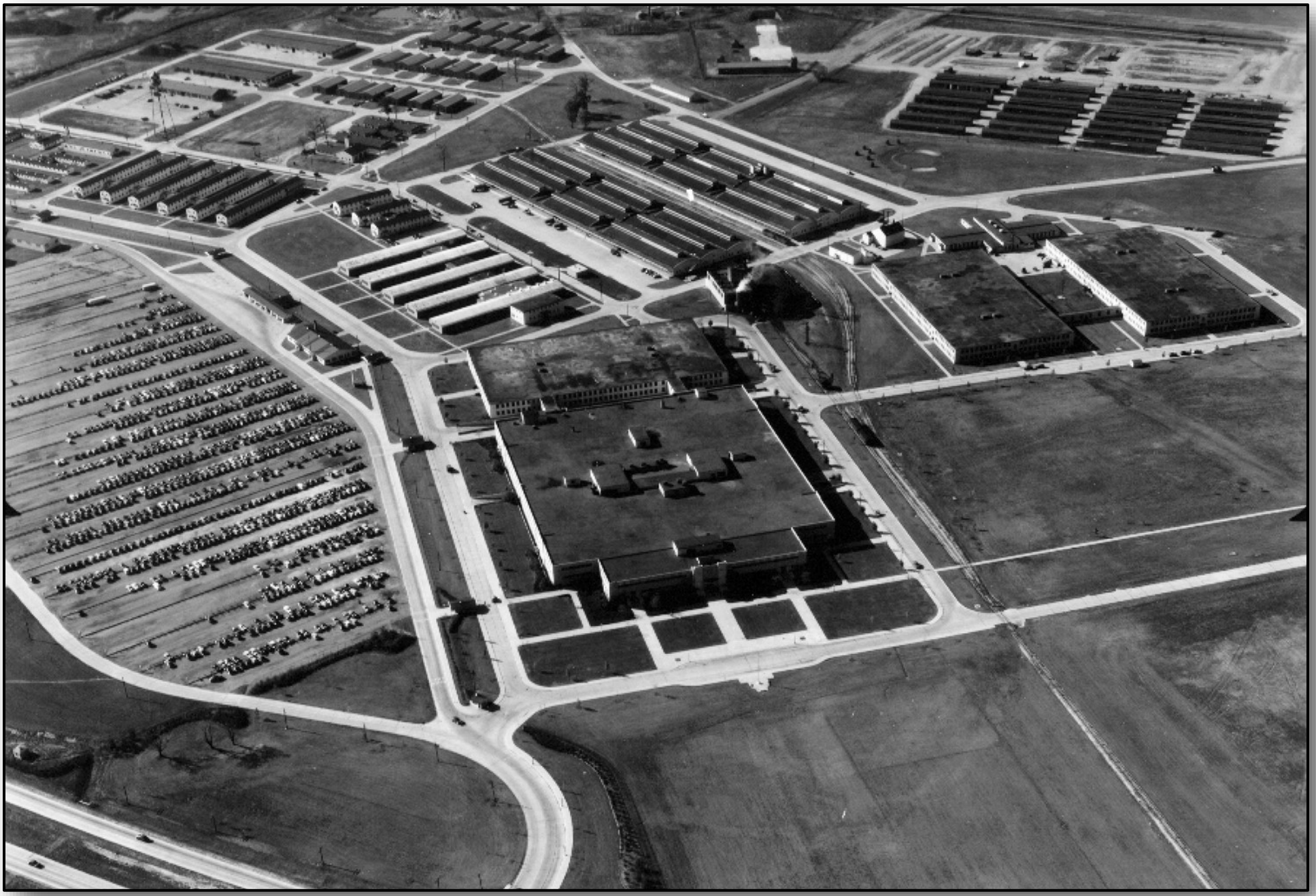
**Right**: The Greenwalt Building in Springfield leased in June 1942 to augment warehouse space with its 142,000 square footage of space used to house stationary and aircraft combat materials.

Patterson Field and Depot, 1942.


**Above**: The Air Service Command (ASC) emblem, as shown on the Command flag, was displayed above the main entrance of the building.

**Above**: Air Service Command Headquarters moved from Washington, D.C., to Building 262, Patterson Field, in December 1942.

**Right**: Building 262 under construction in 1942.

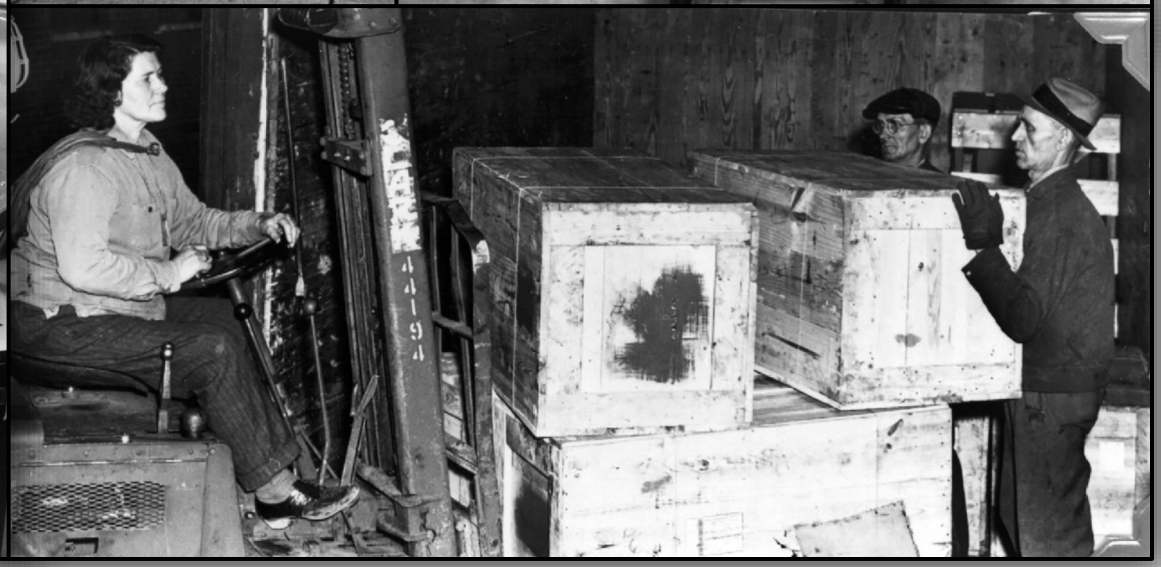


Buildings 262 and 262-A, at center, are flanked by row after row of warehouses and barracks. Large buildings at center right are Buildings 287 and 288. The large Air Service Command complex initially consisted of the Headquarters buildings, the large warehouses, and officer and enlisted housing for all ASC troops. The Civilian Club (Building 274) was completed nearby in 1944.

**Above**: Building 89, constructed in 1943, was an engine overhaul and repair facility and later served as home of the US Air Force Museum from 1954 to 1971.


**Right**: Final Assemble Section of the Engine Repair Section within Building 89.

Women employees were recruited by Air Service Command to fill many critical jobs at the Fairfield Depot. Top two photographs, women worked side-by-side with men overhauling engines in Building 13 and 89 on Patterson Field in the top two photographs. Bottom left, women employees perform intricate repairs and maintenance on aircraft instruments. Bottom right, women filled jobs in storage and maintenance previously reserved for men.

**Above**: The Aero Repair Training School held in Building 1084 at Fairfield Air Service Command.

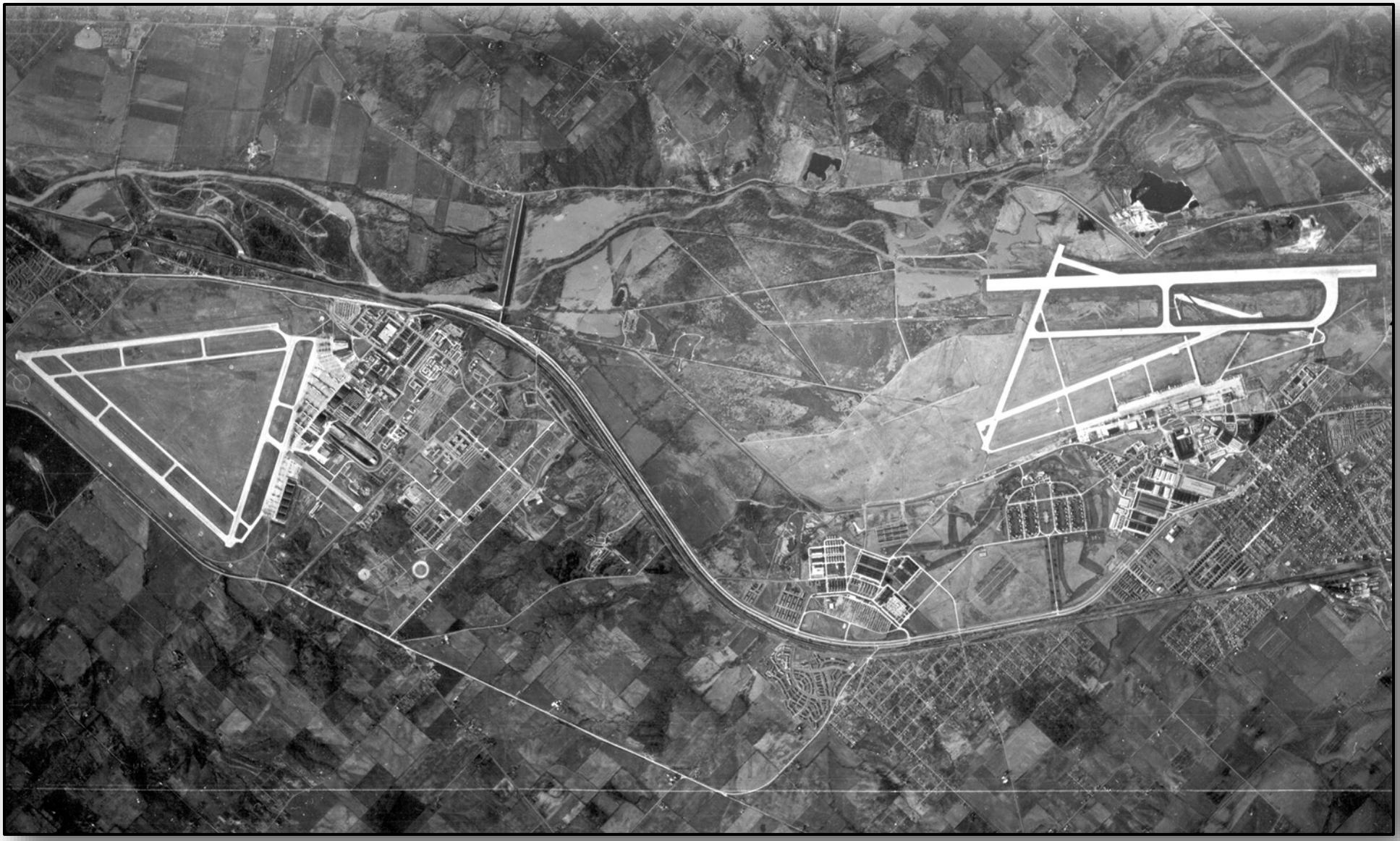
**Right**: Air depot repair squadrons were trained at Patterson Field through the Aero Repair Training School to perform all of the functions of a mobile miniature depot at remote field locations.


Test pilot Lt. Frank Stuart Patterson was killed in the crash of his DH-4 biplane while testing a machine gun synchronizer over Wilbur Wright Field on 19 June 1918.

**Left**: Lt. Frank Patterson (standing sixth from left), with fellow test pilots, May 1918. **Bottom Left**: Army Air Service DH-4 #32098, assigned to Lt Frank Patterson and his aerial observer Lt. LeRoy Swan for conducting machine gun tests at Wilbur Wright Field. Contrary to popular belief, their fatal accident was not caused by gunfire shattering the propeller blades but by the shearing of a tie rod, which allowed the wings of the aircraft to fold back and separate from the fuselage. **Bottom Right**: Following a military funeral on 21 June 1918, Frank Patterson was buried next to his father in Woodland Cemetery, Dayton.

Completed Patterson Field runway complex, 1945.

Patterson Field, 1947, just prior to its merger with Wright Field to form Wright-Patterson AFB.
Another merger was also eminent—the adjacent towns of Fairfield and Osborn merged to become the City of Fairborn in 1950.



Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, 1950.



# AFMC History & Heritage Program

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