

Fort Sill has long aviation past

Did you know Henry Post Army Airfield is named in memory of Lt. Henry B. Post, a pioneer military aviator, who was killed in an air-plane accident near San Diego, Calif., in 1914 while attempting to set an altitude record.



Did you know?

By Col. Raymond Lacey
Fort Sill Garrison commander

In 1915, the first air unit in the U.S. military service, the 1st Aero Squadron, commanded by Capt. (later Maj. Gen.) Benjamin D. Foulois, was stationed at Fort Sill for experiments in the aerial observation of artillery fire.

Fort Sill was the first tactical station for this unit. While here, the squadron made the first aerial mosaic, or aerial photograph, using a Brock automatic camera.

The first squadron cross-country flight of the Air Service began at Fort Sill when six Curtiss "Jennies" of the 1st Aero Squadron flew from Fort Sill to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, a distance of 439 miles.

On March 15, 1916, while still assigned to Fort Sill, this squadron became the first U.S. air unit to go combat ready in the field when it began operations with Gen. Blackjack Pershing's expedition into Mexico.

The school for aerial observers, flying balloons and fixed-wing craft, was established at Henry Post Field in 1918. By 1922, it was estimated that more miles were flown at Fort Sill than

at any other field in the United States. During the next two decades, many squadrons, equipped with a variety of aircraft, were based here and trained here. In 1942, Air Corps facilities at Post Field were turned over to Army Aviation.

Birth of Army air

On June 6, 1942, as a result of the "Class Before One" experiment, the War Department established Army Aviation at Fort Sill. The Department of Air Training, directed by Lt. Col. (later Brig. Gen.) William W. Ford, received 19 students for Class One Aug. 1, 1942.

On Nov. 9, 1942 Army Aviation entered combat when an L-4 flew from the USS Ranger during the invasion of North Africa. Army Aviation was so successful in World War II, that in August 1945 it was made organic to all combat branches of the Army.

Until 1946, when the first concrete runway was poured, students landed on the grass near the hangars.

The increased demand of Army Aviation by all arms and services so rapidly

increased the volume of training that on June 6, 1953, the Department of Air Training was deactivated and the U.S. Army Aviation School was established at Fort Sill.

The continued growth and worldwide support by Army Aviation caused it to out-grow its birthplace and in August 1954, the Army Aviation School moved to Fort Rucker, Ala.

Army Aviation has a new home, but Fort Sill has never wavered in its support. In the intervening years, Fort Sill has been the home of many Army Aviation units, particularly, those of medium and heavy lift capability and has made many contributions to Army Aviation's expansion from the "Grasshopper" to the Airmobile Division.

Current operations

The Airfield Operations Division at Fort Sill is an organization that works to support today's units and Soldiers. Henry Post Army Airfield has the proven capability of deploying Fort Sill's combat assets using C-17 Globemaster III and C-130 Hercules aircraft. In the



Courtesy photo

Fort Sill's airfield, and the buildings lining it, looked quite a bit different in this photo from 1935. Aircraft would take off and land in the grass along the right side of the buildings. McNair Hall, which was new at this time, and the Old Post Quadrangle, would be out of frame to the left.

past five years, airfield operations has supported the mobilizing of three National Guard combat aviation brigades and numerous medical, medium and heavy lift helicopter and fixed wing battalions.

The Airfield Operations Division works diligently to provide excellent customer service and superior aviation support. They also provide important airfield facilities and services for joint training with other services and allies.

Military units and commanders may request eight- to 90-passenger operational support aircraft to support their unit's missions and training at no cost by submitting requests for MILAIR

to the airfield operation office in Building 4907 on Post Road or by calling 442-6160.

The Airfield Operations Division coordinates all airfield operations and infrastructure maintenance activities to support a safe operating environment. Furthermore, they ensure statutory and regulatory compliance with Army, Installation Management Command and Federal Aviation Administration regulations and they coordinate with the Army Aeronautical Services Agency and Army Air Traffic Control Activity. They also provide flight management services to aircrews.

Operational hours are Mondays through Fridays

from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and other times to support mission requirements. If you have questions about Henry Post Army Airfield or Airfield Operations Division Services, please contact Randy Palmer, airfield manager, at 442-4643 or randy.c.palmer@conus.army.mil.

To reach me

To send questions or comments to me, please e-mail fscms@conus.army.mil or you can mail your comments to Commander, USAG-Fort Sill, 462 Hamilton Road, Suite 120, Fort Sill, OK 73503.

Thanks and have a great Fort Sill day.

Sill shorts

Motorcycle rally

The Fifth Annual Freedom's Thunder Motorcycle Rally is today. The free safety ride is open to the public and there are many new features including a 70-mile route and a more convenient staging area. On site registration is available beginning at 7:30 a.m. today. **All military motorcyclists on post are required to attend the motorcycle safety briefing from 9:15-9:45 a.m. in Sheridan Road Theater.** The ride afterward is optional. For more information, call Staff Sgt. Michael Chavers at 558-1095 or

919-2964, or the installation safety office at 442-4215/4466.

Veterinary clinic

The Fort Sill Veterinary Clinic is closed through Monday to move back to the renovated clinic. There are no services during this time. For more information, call 442-3416.

Living history

Dr. Doug Mishler, portraying President Teddy Roosevelt, will give a living history performance June 6 at 1 p.m. at Nye Library. Mishler will also give a workshop

on Roosevelt June 7 at 10 a.m. at the library. For more information, call 442-6744.

Education fair

More than 25 accredited colleges, universities and vocational schools will be on hand to provide education information to Soldiers, family members, retirees and DoD civilians June 9 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Harry S. Truman Education Center on Sheridan Road.

Reclamation sale

The next Fort Sill Reclamation

Sale is June 12 from 8 a.m. to noon at Building 2102 on Curry Road. The sales are for active-duty military only and military ID card must be shown before purchase. All sales are cash only. For more information, call 442-2712.

Recycling hours

The Fort Sill Recycling Center has switched to summer hours. Until further notice, units may drop of recyclables for the "Cash for Trash" program Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call 442-5712.

TRICARE brief

The next TRICARE/RACH brief is June 15 at 10 a.m. in PMETS Classroom #2 in the Reynolds Army Community Hospital Outpatient Clinic. For more information, call 558-2319.

NAF jobs

The Non-Appropriated Fund job information center is on the north side of the civilian personnel advisory center. The information center has also increased its hours to 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 442-5526.

the Cannoneer

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