

First Aero Squadron



The First Aeronautical Division of the U.S. Army was established in August of 1907. The Wright Brothers designed and tested the first military plane delivered to the Army, which met specifications of being able to fly 40 miles per hour, remain aloft for one hour with a crew of two, and be transportable in a four-wheeled, mule driven wagon. The contract with the Wrights also included training of two officers in the "handling and operation of this flying machine."

Although an aviation school was established in College Park, Maryland, and experimental flights were conducted in west Texas, Georgia, Virginia, Ohio, California, and the Philippines, the Signal Corps did not establish the First Aero Squadron until the spring of 1913, when the Second Division was encamped at Texas City.

Here, on an airfield located on the land now part of Bay Street Park, the early aviators with the U.S Army experimented with nine of the Army's Planes for a period of ten months (March 2 through November 28th, 1913.) Eight flying officers, one doctor, and twenty-one enlisted men composed the Aero Squadron, commanded by Captain Charles Deforest Chandler.

Here, flight records for speed and distance were set. Among those young officers assigned to Texas City was Lieutenant Eric Ellington, for whom Ellington Air force Base, south of Houston, is named.

