HISTORY

63rd Army Air Forces Contract Pilot School (Primary)
Raymond-Richardson Aviation Co.
Douglas, Ga.

Activation to 7 December 1941.

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CHAPTER I
LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF STATION

The 63rd Army Air Forces Contract Pilot School (Primary) is located one and three-fourths miles south of Douglas, Georgia in Coffee County. The Airport property faces the Douglas-Pearson Highway on the east and the Douglas-Millacoochee Highway on the west. The Georgia and Florida Railroad borders the property on the west with a siding for use of this station.\(^1\)

The Airport is located in the heart of an agricultural area and the surrounding property is used for this purpose. Tobacco, cotton and peanuts are the predominant crops. The land in this section of Georgia is of a gentle, rolling nature with scattered wooded areas. The property on which this Field is built is 255 feet above sea-level.\(^1\) The average elevation of Coffee County is 200 feet.\(^1\)

The top soil is of a brownish-gray color. Analysis of this soil is 86% sand, 9.4% silt, 4.6% clay. The sub soil is 75.6% sand, 6% silt and 16.4% clay. It has good physical characteristics and is well suited for agricultural use.\(^1\)\(^2\)

The normal annual temperature of this area is 66\(^\circ\) with an annual average rainfall of 50.18 inches.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Report of Georgia Coastal Plain Experimental Station, Tifton, Georgia
\(^2\) Report from Coffee County Commissioner's Office, Douglas, Georgia
The town of Douglas is typical of the average small southern town. It has an annual income of $203,214.58 with a banked surplus of $556,438.87. It has 6 miles of paved streets and 12 miles of paved sidewalks with an adequate sanitary sewer system and water facilities. The town is run by a city manager and a commission consisting of three men. It has paid Fire and Police Departments with a Health Commissioner. The population of the town is 5,175 people.  

Douglas is adequately served by both rail and motor transportation and is readily accessible to the main cities of the Southeast.
EARLY HISTORY OF THE POST

The history of the 63rd Flying Training Detachment, Douglas, Georgia, began, not as might be expected on 5 October 1941 when it was formerly activated, but two years earlier in the spring of 1939. At that time, Mr. Wesley Raymond, of Macon, Georgia, then engaged in the operation of Civilian Pilot Training schools, became interested in Douglas, Georgia. Working in close collaboration with President J. M. Thrash, of South Georgia College and with the Civil Aeronautics Authority, he established a CAA program at the college. It was this CAA program which was to form the core of the large Air Corps training school here, although, of course, Mr. Raymond had no way of knowing that such was to be the case.¹

However, such was the foresight of Mr. Raymond, that when the Army began looking around for a suitable site for a Primary school early in 1941, the amount of time required to convert the College airport into a fairly complete Army field was practically negligible.

The first committee organized among the local populace to work with Mr. Raymond on enlarging the Airport and converting the CAA program into an Army Training School for Aviation Cadets, was set up by Mr. Noah Holton, Commissioner of Coffee County. His

¹ Interview of President J.M. Thrash, South Georgia College
5 October 1943
committee included many of the outstanding leaders of the County and town and they were instrumental in bringing about a favorable public reaction to the whole plan, without which nothing constructive could have been done. For the town has been solidly behind the Flying Cadets ever since.

The Committee also acted as liaison between the military authorities and the townspeople. In an interview with Colonel Weaver, Commanding Officer of the then Southeast Training Center at Maxwell Field, Alabama, they were assured that an Army training school would be located at Douglas if land for the principal air field and for two auxiliary fields were procured and developed, and if certain other essential requirements were met. All plans and agreements were met and completed on 15 May 1941 and the City and County constructed the Airport proper. Work on the two auxiliary fields was also started.

Contracts were let for the construction of hangers, barracks, mess hall, infirmary and ground school buildings. All of this construction work began on 29 June 1941.

Every citizen of Douglas was given an opportunity to take part in the development of this school when an election was held to determine whether or not a bond issue would be voted to defray a portion of the expense involved. The citizens of Douglas approved the bond issue by an overwhelming majority and Coffee County made its financial contribution through the issue of funds to augment the

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2 Interview of Noah Holton, Commissioner, 7 October 1943
3 Interview of C.W.O. Pohlkotte, 4 October 1943
bond sale. This was done on 21 August 1941. On 23 August 1941, the post was formally activated, per A.O.O. "Designation of Civil Schools", dated 15 August 1941.

On 11 September, the first fleet of five PT-17 airplanes flew in. During this month training of flight instructors and aircraft mechanics began. All pilots were taught Army flying in a refresher course before being assigned as cadet instructors.

On 4 October, more planes arrived and on 5 October, the first class of Cadets appeared. Flight training started, as originally scheduled.

Typical of the men who were behind the work of bringing the 63rd Flying Training Detachment into being is Mr. Wesley Raymond, President of the Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company. Born in Nova Scotia, Mr. Raymond served with the first New Brunswick regiment in World War I. After the War he came to Brooklyn and became interested in flying at old Hazelhurst Field, now the Roosevelt Field. In 1920 he moved to Florida and started an aviation business of his own in Orlando, having purchased a number of surplus planes left over after the war, and operated this company until 1924. He then moved to Punta Gorda where he was in the aviation, real estate and construction business.

Lakeland, Florida, was the next scene of his aviation career.

4 Interview of Fred Ricketson, Editor Coffee County Progress 4 October 1943
5 Morning Report, 31 August 1941
6 Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 14 October 1943
and in 1926 he helped develop and operate Halderman-Elder field there.

In 1929 Mr. Raymond started a new phase of his career, being connected with Bird Aircraft Corporation of Brooklyn, covering the Eastern States. He was connected with Kinner Airplane and Motor Company in Glendale, California in 1932–33 and in 1934 became sales representative for Beech Aircraft, covering practically the entire country. His was the job of presenting the first Jacobs powered Beechcraft to the nation.

After visiting all parts of the United States during his positions with the various airplane companies, Mr. Raymond decided to start an airport and airplane sales business of his own in 1936. He selected Macon, Georgia as the best place to go into business, its central location being a principal factor in this decision.

In Macon Mr. Raymond helped with the development of Herbert Smart Field and other aviation activities. In conjunction with the City of Griffin he aided in the development of an airport in that city and upon its completion organized a branch flying school there. He opened a similar branch school in Cochran in 1938.

Another branch school was opened in conjunction with President J. M. Thrash of South Georgia College in Douglas in 1939. At that time Mr. Raymond was operating four schools, under the Civil Pilot Training Program, Griffin, Cochran, Douglas and Macon. It was this school at Douglas which formed the basis for most of his later plans as explained above. 7

7 Interviewed Mr. Wesley Raymond, 14 October 1943
Mr. Richardson, another partner in the deal, had also had a varied range of experiences in aviation. He owned his own field and planes in Laurens, South Carolina, and was the State Director of sales for Luscombe Airplanes. He came to Douglas from Laurens.

Although it was adequate for the purpose of training Civilian Pilot Trainees in their little Piper Cubs, the field as it was taken over by the Air Corps in October 1941 was not quite large enough to take care of all takeoffs and landings in a North or South direction. Hence all classes made their take-offs and landings to the East or West, no matter how the wind shifted.

The old South Georgia College Airport, a small landing strip measuring 800 feet by 2600 feet, which now comprises the northeast corner of the main field, was utilized as the base of operations originally.

Certain landmarks, typical of the pioneering stage of the detachment, still remain. One of the richest in tradition is the little wooden shack, standing near the site of the present Mess Hall. In its original glory it was the executive office of Lt. Brett and his staff. Now it houses paints and other materials.

The Operations Office was situated in the old hangar at the College airport. The only existing portion today is the concrete slab which was the floor of the office, visible from the highway.

8 Interview of Mr. Robert Richardson, Vice President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 10 October 1943
as one passes the northeast part of the main field.

By October 1941, many changes had been effected and the detachment was ready for the first class of cadets. The Mess Hall and two barracks were complete, pine trees and stumps had been cleared and building was feverishly under way, making the first definite step in the development of the post.

In almost all other respects the post was complete when the first cadets moved in. Building construction was 75% completed, based upon a class of 100 cadets, and since only fifty arrived in the first batch, they were more than adequately cared for. There were eighteen mechanics, sixteen flight instructors and 2 ground school instructors, as well as the necessary Army officers and personnel to take active charge of the post.
CHAPTER III

BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF PERSONNEL.

25 August 1941

1st Lieutenant W. P. Brett reported for duty and assumed command in compliance with paragraph 75, W. D. Special Orders No. 190, dated 15 August 1941.

2nd Lieutenant Thomas E. Persigner reported for duty per paragraph 25, Headquarters Fourth Corps Area, Special Orders No. 191, dated 15 August 1941 and was appointed Detachment Supply Officer and Adjutant.\(^1\)

2nd Lieutenant John T. Stickney reported for duty paragraph 25, Headquarters Fourth Corps Area, Special Orders No. 191, dated 15 August 1941 and was appointed Detachment Engineering Officer, Operations Officer and Public Relations Officer.\(^1\)

\(^1\) General Files
The first cadre of enlisted men reported for duty. They were: T/Sgt. Homer C. Dickerson, Pvt. 1st/cl Sp. 3 Cl. Roy Osborne, Pvt. 1st/cl William L. S. Keen, per paragraph 13, Special Orders No. 228, Headquarters Air Corps Advanced Flying School, Maxwell Field, Alabama, dated 22 August 1941.¹

2nd Lieutenant Elgin B. Rittenberry reported this station in compliance with paragraph 29, Special Orders No. 197, Headquarters Fourth Corps Area, dated 22 August 1941 and was appointed Assistant Engineering and Assistant Operations Officer.¹

T/Sgt. James M. Johnson reported for duty per paragraph 1, Special Orders No. 104, Headquarters Air Corps Training Detachment, Albany, Georgia, dated 25 August 1941. St/Sgt. Charles W. Gammon reported in compliance with

¹ General File
28 September 1941

1st Lieutenant Peter Leone was assigned for duty as Flight Examiner and Medical Officer per paragraph 58, Special Orders No. 218, War Department, Washington, D. C.

Per paragraph 1, Special Orders No. 30, Headquarters Maxwell Field, Alabama, dated 1 October 1941, Pvt. 1st/cpl Reginald E. Fulmer and Pvt. Ralph A. Williams reported to the Medical Department. This completed the basic military personnel of the Detachment.
Two male and four Civil Service employees were employed as authorized by the Fifth United States Civil Service District, Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. Robert Russell reported to this station in compliance with letter, Southeast Air Corps Training Center, Maxwell Field, Alabama, 30 September 1941, as Athletic Director. This completed the personnel connected with the Army activity at this Detachment through 7 December 1941.2

This was the original group of Officers and enlisted men sent to Douglas to set up and put into operation the 63rd Air Corps Training Detachment. All of the Officers who reported were flying officers. On 24 September 1941, 2nd Lieutenant Albert C. Spinks reported this station per paragraph 51, Special Orders No. 220, Headquarters Fourth Corps Area, dated 18 September 1941, to take over the duties of Adjutant.1

The flying department was under the supervision of Mr. Brinkerhoff. Roland Q. Newman had the title of Stage Commander.

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1 General File
2 Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 11 October 1943
and had direct supervision over the instructors. At the beginning of operation there were sixteen instructors employed. The problem of finding qualified instructors was not as difficult as it might have been in that Mr. Raymond, Mr. Richardson and Mr. Brinkerhoff had many contacts with pilots due to their previous activities in flying. Mr. Raymond brought several of his key personnel in from the four CAA schools that he was operating at that time. These pilots all had complete flying and instructing experience but had not been orientated in the Army method of flying. Lieutenant Brett went through the procedure with Mr. Lape and each pilot was instructed in Army methods. With the beginning of the school class twenty-three instructors were on hand with thirteen men in the Refresher School.

The Maintenance Department was set up with eighteen mechanics, most of whom had had previous connection with the three company officials. The first Superintendent of Maintenance was a chronic alcoholic and it was necessary to replace him after four weeks employment.

The first class of Aviation Cadets reported this station on 3 October 1941 in compliance with paragraph 1, Special Orders No. 34, Headquarters Maxwell Field, Alabama, dated 1 October 1941.

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2 Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 11 October 1943.

3 Civilian Personnel and Construction Report, File 319.1, 12 September 1941.
fifty, thirty-two completed their training here.\(^1\)

On 6 November 1941, Class 42 E reported for duty in compliance with paragraph 11, Special Orders No. 14, Headquarters, Air Corps Replacement Training Center, Maxwell Field, Alabama, and was composed of fifty-three men.\(^1\)

The Ground School at the beginning of the first class consisted of two instructors but this figure was doubled when the second class arrived.\(^3\)

Before the school was actually established and construction and grading was in process, the civilian officials of the Raymond-O'Neal Aviation Company were: Wesley M. Raymond, President; L. C. Raymond, Vice-President; B. P. O'Neal, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer. Before actual operations began Mr. O'Neal withdrew and Robert Richardson became Secretary-Treasurer with Mr. George Brinckenhoff as Director of Flying and Mr. A. C. Burnett, Director.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) General File

\(^2\) Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 11 October 1943

\(^3\) Civilian Personnel and Construction Report, File 319.1, 12 September 1941
CHAPTER IV
ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The administrative organization of the 63rd Flying Training Detachment is typical of Army Primary Schools throughout the Training Command. At the activation of this station the necessary departments were put into operation to carry out the proper functions of the school. The officer and enlisted personnel was very limited. Consequently each man had many duties to perform. The administrative departments that were set up to carry out the Army duties in the training program and coordinate the civilian and Army efforts were: Commanding Officer, Adjutant, Personnel Officer, Commandant of Cadets, Intelligence Officer, Public Relations Officer, Morale Officer, Engineering Officer and Operations Officer.1

1 Interview of G.W.O. Jack A. Pohlnotte, 4 October 1943.
The Raymond-Brinckerhoff Aviation Company was the successor to the Raymond-O'Neal Aviation Company.

The Raymond-O'Neal Aviation Company was granted a charter by the Superior Court of Bibb County, Georgia on 30 May 1941 and it commenced business on 1 June 1941 with a capital of $25,000, paid in cash by B. P. O'Neal, Jr., and with an authorized capital of $100,000.

Although B. P. O'Neal, Jr. contributed the entire amount of the cash capital, it was agreed that 137 1/2 shares of the capital stock should be issued to Wesley N. Raymond, his wife and son, and 62 1/2 shares to B. P. O'Neal, Jr. and his wife. This distribution of the stock was occasioned by reason of the extensive work previously performed over many months by Raymond in making the arrangements with the City of Douglas and Coffee County for the building of an airport in Douglas and the agreement to lease the same to the corporation for five years for a consideration of $1.00 per year.

Wesley N. Raymond was elected President. L. C. Raymond,
his wife, was elected Vice-President, and R. F. O'Neal, Jr. was elected Secretary-Treasurer.

At the time of organization the corporation contemplated that $25,000, with the aid of a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, would be sufficient capital to build and operate a school for the training of aviation cadets in compliance with the requirements of the Army.

The Air Corps Headquarters at Maxwell Field were pressing for speed; and therefore, even prior to the approval of the loan by the R. F. C., the corporation let contracts for the construction of barracks, hangars and other buildings necessary for the school. At the same time the corporation applied for a loan of $250,000 from the R. F. C. construction immediately commenced.

About 15 July 1941, the R. F. C. refused to make the loan applied for and notified the corporation they would only consider a loan on a basis of two-thirds of the appraised value of the security offered.

This refusal very much alarmed O'Neal and he reached the conclusion that the venture was too speculative to risk further money in the enterprise. He notified Raymond that he was through and it was his opinion that the corporation should be placed in receivership in order to distribute the money on hand evenly
between all creditors. He refused for any further funds to be withdrawn from the corporation to keep construction moving.

Raymond spurned the idea of abandoning the enterprise and immediately set out to raise the $100,000 capital, the amount suggested by the R. F. C.

In the meantime in order to keep construction going he personally met the payrolls and guaranteed the materialmen against loss to get the necessary material on the ground.

By 7 August he had interested A. C. Burnett, of Boston, Massachusetts, and George Brinckerhoff, of College Park, Maryland, in the project. He personally raised $25,000 cash by the pledge of his stock in Raymond Aviation School, Inc. at Macon, Georgia and by a mortgage of his airplanes.

On this last date the financial structure of the corporation was reorganized. Raymond paid O'Neal $10,000 cash and gave him his note for $15,000 and O'Neal transferred to him his 62 1/2 shares of stock. He resigned as Secretary-Treasurer and severed all connections with the corporation. A. C. Burnett and George Brinckerhoff each paid into the corporation $37,500 in cash for 375 shares of stock. Messrs. Brinckerhoff and Burnett each directed that 41 2/3 shares of their stock be issued to Raymond.

Therefore, on 7 August 1941 the $100,000 cash capital of the...
corporation was represented by 1,000 shares of stock, each of the 3 stockholders owning 333 1/3 shares of stock. Robert Richardson, the son-in-law of A. C. Burnett, was elected Secretary-Treasurer to succeed O'Meal and Mr. Burnett was elected a Director.

On 7 August 1941 the corporation secured an amendment to its charter changing its name to Raymond-Brinkerhoff Aviation Company and increasing its authorized capital stock to $150,000.

The corporation reapplied to the R. F. C. for a loan, which was approved in the sum of $192,000. The R. F. C. required that the stockholders provide additional cash of $12,500, which was provided by the officers as donated surplus.

Construction was never stopped and the school was ready for its first class of fifty cadets on 4 October 1941 in accordance with its contract with the United States.

During the course of the construction Wesley Raymond loaned to the corporation, without security, $15,000, which loan was not repaid until payment by the Defense Plant Corporation of the purchase price for the plant of the company. Also, Mr. A. C. Burnett made a personal loan of $10,000 to the corporation without security. During the course of the construction the company also borrowed from the Coffee County Bank in Douglas and the Citizens & Southern National Bank in Macon, $5,000 and $25,000, respectively, upon the personal endorsement of Raymond, Richardson and
Robert Richardson also loaned the corporation $7,000 without security. ¹

¹ Written Statement by Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 10 October 1943
CHAPTER VI
CONSTRUCTION

The original plans for the construction of the Primary School called for barracks, two hangars, a mess hall, hospital, recreation building which housed the barber shop and canteen, and a ground school building. These plans were based on a cadet personnel of 100 per class. When the first class of fifty men arrived, construction was 75% complete. All of the original buildings were of a permanent hollow tile construction with white painted exterior. They held four cadets to a room with a latrine housing 2 commodes, two showers to each two rooms.¹

The architect for the building project was Stefan H. Zacher of Miami, Florida, while the contractor was the C. F. Wescott Construction Company also of Miami. The building contract was at cost plus a fixed fee of $12,500. Original construction cost was $273,933.²

The construction of the flying field and two auxiliary fields was done by the City and County. The flying field was still under construction 4 October 1941 when the first class arrived, being 35% complete.²

One auxiliary field was under construction and was 25% complete. The second field that was to be furnished by the City

¹ Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 11 October 1943
² Interview of Mr. Robert Richardson, Vice-President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 10 October 1943
and County was not yet under construction although the site had been selected. When the second class arrived one auxiliary field was 45% complete and a landing strip 2500 x 1000 was available for use.  

The first class used the original field of the South Georgia College airport, which was 800 x 2600. In November, when Class 43 E arrived, parts of the new construction on the airport were usable. It was an L shaped area with two strips, East-West 2500 x 1200 feet, North-South 2300 x 1200. The acreage of the main base was 482 3/10 acres. The building area occupied 40 acres, the balance being available for expansion of the flying field.  

The first auxiliary to be constructed was Tanner-Ewing Field, named for the property owner. This was acquired by the City of Douglas and Coffee County for the school and rented for $1,00 per year. This field was 168 acres. The Southeast-Northwest runway is 3200 feet, while the Northeast-Southwest runway is 2280 feet. The field is 3 air miles southwest of the main base on the Axon Highway. This property has been acquired for five years or the duration of the war.  

Kight Field was also furnished by the City and County for $1.00 per year. It is 1.76 acres. The East-West runway is 3060 feet, North-South 3200 feet. It is 9 air miles northeast of the

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3 Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 10 October 1943
Interview of Mr. Wesley Raymond, President, Raymond-Richardson Aviation Company, 10 October 1943.
Prior to 7 December 1941 only two classes had seen the inside of the 63rd Flying Training Detachment. It was a period of orientation, a time for getting settled and for ironing the wrinkles out of the training. It would be impossible to gage the progress of the Detachment in this period since there could be no yardstick by which it might be computed. Suffice to say, the Detachment had the usual troubles and overcame them, had no big worries but lots of little ones and altogether was a normal school of its type.