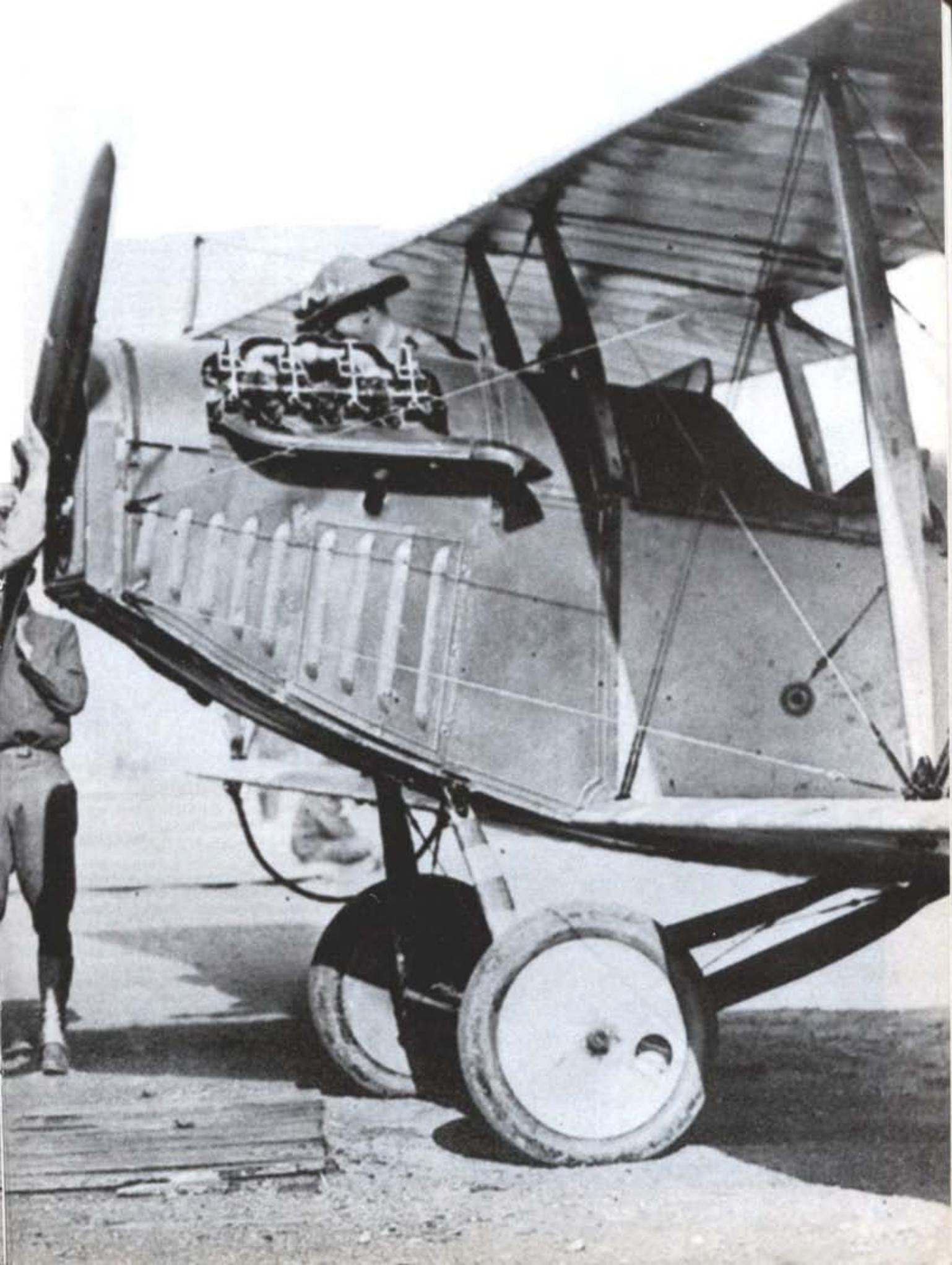


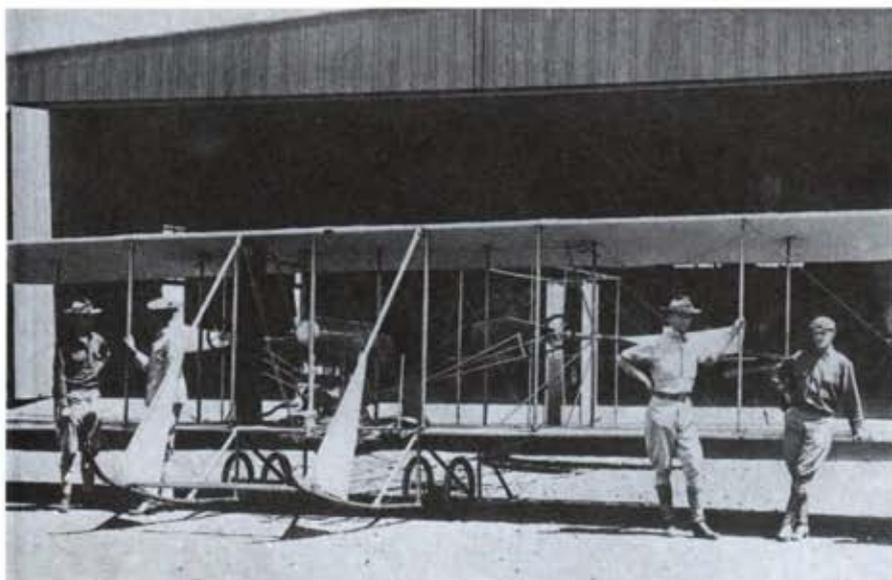
From the earliest days of military aviation, flyers have been drawn to the area around San Antonio.

South Texas Roots

A group of students—as indicated by the white hatbands—receive flight instruction during the early days of Kelly Field.







Military aviation and south Texas came together in February 1910, when Lt. Benjamin D. Foulois (at far right in the photo at left) arrived at Fort Sam Houston, just outside of San Antonio, in search of good flying weather. With a group of enlisted men, spare parts, and long-distance coaching through correspondence with the Wright brothers, he then taught himself to fly.

A few years later, the experience of the 1st Aero Squadron in the Punitive Expedition against Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa highlighted the need for improvements in US airpower. In 1916, Major Foulois received orders to find a location for training facilities for American flyers. He turned again to the San Antonio area. In March 1917, construction began on the concrete and steel hangars that became Kelly Field.

The next month, the first Curtiss JN-4 "Jennys" arrived at the field, piloted by Capt. George Reinburg, Bert Atkinson, and Carl Spaatz, together with Eddie Stinson, a civilian flying instructor who later founded the Stinson Aircraft Corp. in Detroit. The next day, April 6, 1917, the US entered World War I. Soon, 4,400 recruits poured into tents at the field, with the 4th and 5th Aero Squadrons joining the 3d Aero Squadron, along with a Provisional Aero Squadron that acted as a receiving agency for the newcomers.

At right, a group prepares for some aerial class time, circa 1918, while other cadets wait their turns in a small shelter.



When Col. Charles E. Tayman arrived in June 1917 to take control of operations, he found only 25 officers to supervise about 5,700 men. Among his first steps was to name his new command Camp Kelly (changed to Kelly Field six weeks later) in honor of Lt. George E. M. Kelly, the first American pilot to die flying a military aircraft. At left, a class of cadets takes an exam. In 1917, pilot candidates began their military flying careers as flying cadets, taking eight weeks of ground instruction at schools set up at six civilian universities. After ground school came six to eight weeks of flight school. Cadets were then commissioned and went on to advanced school for a month of specialized training in pursuit, bombardment, or observation.



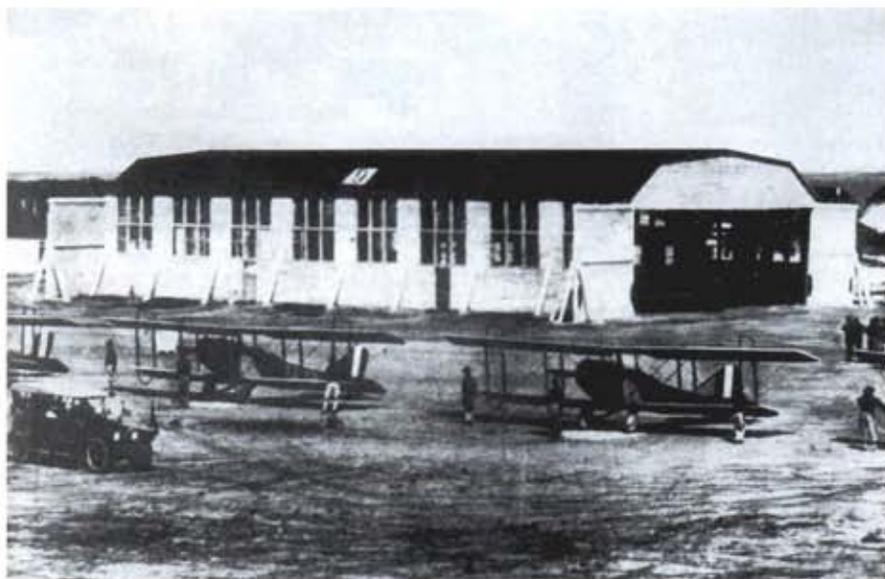
Only four months after construction began on Kelly Field, it became obvious that more space was needed. Eventually, plans were made for six Kelly Fields, most of them auxiliaries. Above is the flight line at Kelly Field Number Two. It became the center for flight training, able to accommodate 500 students, 75 instructors, and more than 200 airplanes. Kelly Field Number One remained the center for repair, maintenance, supply, reception, and training. Today, the F-16s of the 149th Fighter Wing (ANG) operate from a location near this mile-and-a-half-long collection of buildings.

Flight-training activities increased rapidly, despite the problems of beginning a training program from scratch. In February 1918, the students accumulated 9,500 flying hours. On March 18 alone, with more than 100 aircraft available to them, the cadets logged 1,033 hours. By August, however, the number of cadets dropped to less than 300. Nevertheless, by the Armistice on November 11, 1918, 1,459 pilots had graduated from flight training at Kelly Field, and 298 instructors had completed the advanced course.



Among the early trainees in south Texas was Charles Lindbergh (third from the left in this photo at Brooks Field), who graduated in March 1925. To his left is one of his instructors, Lt. Claire L. Chennault.

Kelly Field Number Five became Brooks Field in February 1918, named after Cadet Sidney J. Brooks, a San Antonio native who was in the first class of eleven cadets to arrive at Kelly. He was the first training fatality at Kelly. At right is a view of part of the Brooks Field cadet complex, used for training World War I pilots. After the war, pilot training was phased out, and the advanced flying school closed its doors in May 1919. Brooks then became a balloon and airship school until a series of accidents led to the transfer of airship training to Scott Field, Ill., in June 1922. Primary flying training opened again during that same month.



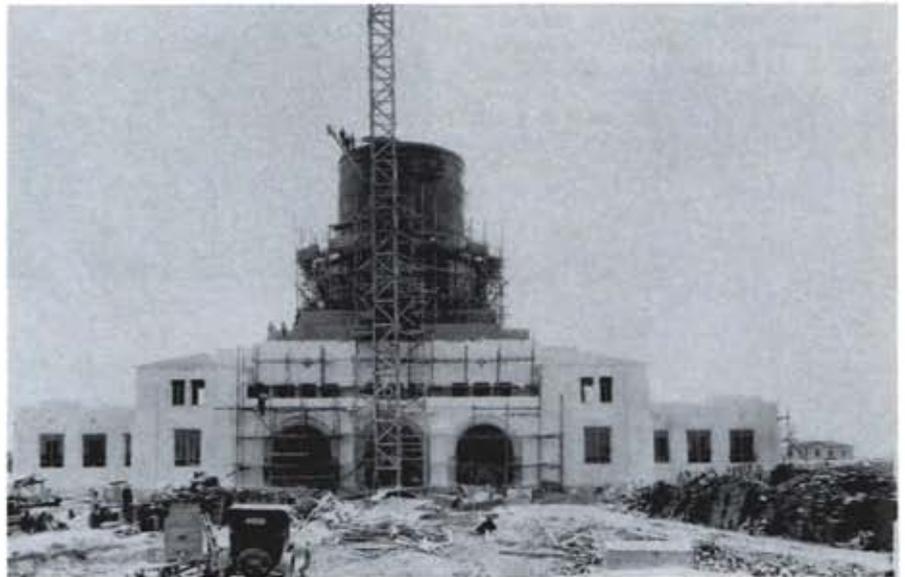
Some of the aviators who got their start at Brooks were Nathan F. Twining and Thomas D. White. The latter succeeded the former as USAF Chief of Staff. Primary flying training remained at Brooks until October 1931, when Randolph Field took over the responsibility. Early in World War II, Brooks Field became the AAF Advanced Flying School (Observation) and, in 1943, the AAF Pilot School (Advanced Two-Engine). The School of Aviation Medicine first relocated here in 1926, moving into a huge hangar that formerly housed dirigibles. The much smaller Hangar 9, shown at left, circa 1920, today is home to the Museum of Flight Medicine.

In 1926, the Air Corps established a single command for all flying training, the Air Corps Training Center, with Brig. Gen. Frank P. Lahm as its first commander. He soon realized that the Air Corps needed additional training facilities in the San Antonio area, and this led to the acquisition in 1928 of 2,350 acres of land northeast of San Antonio. The site became Randolph Field, whose original main gate is in the photo at right. The field, which has since doubled in size, was named after Capt. William M. Randolph, of Austin, Tex., who had completed pilot training at Kelly Field and had been the adjutant of its advanced flying school. He had been on the naming committee for the new field when he was killed in a takeoff from Gorman Field, Tex., in February 1928.





Randolph Field was designed even before its site had been selected. For his own amusement, 1st Lt. Harold L. Clark, who had received some training as an architect before enlisting for military service, had sketched the consolidated training center's layout on scraps of paper. "Air City" revolved around a central hub, with concentric streets surrounding it, and ramps and runways located on three sides of the circle. This circle within a square perimeter was divided into four quadrants—three for the primary, basic, and advanced flying schools and the fourth for the shop and service functions. Lieutenant Clark had also designed the facility to avoid the disadvantages of Kelly Field, where prevailing winds forced landings to be made over the hangars. General Lahm liked the plan, and, after some controversy over the revolutionary design, construction began in 1928.



At top is an aerial view of Randolph Field under construction. Also under construction, above, is an Air Force icon that Lieutenant Clark originally designed to enclose a water tower, with administration buildings at its base. Nicknamed the "Taj Mahal," it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

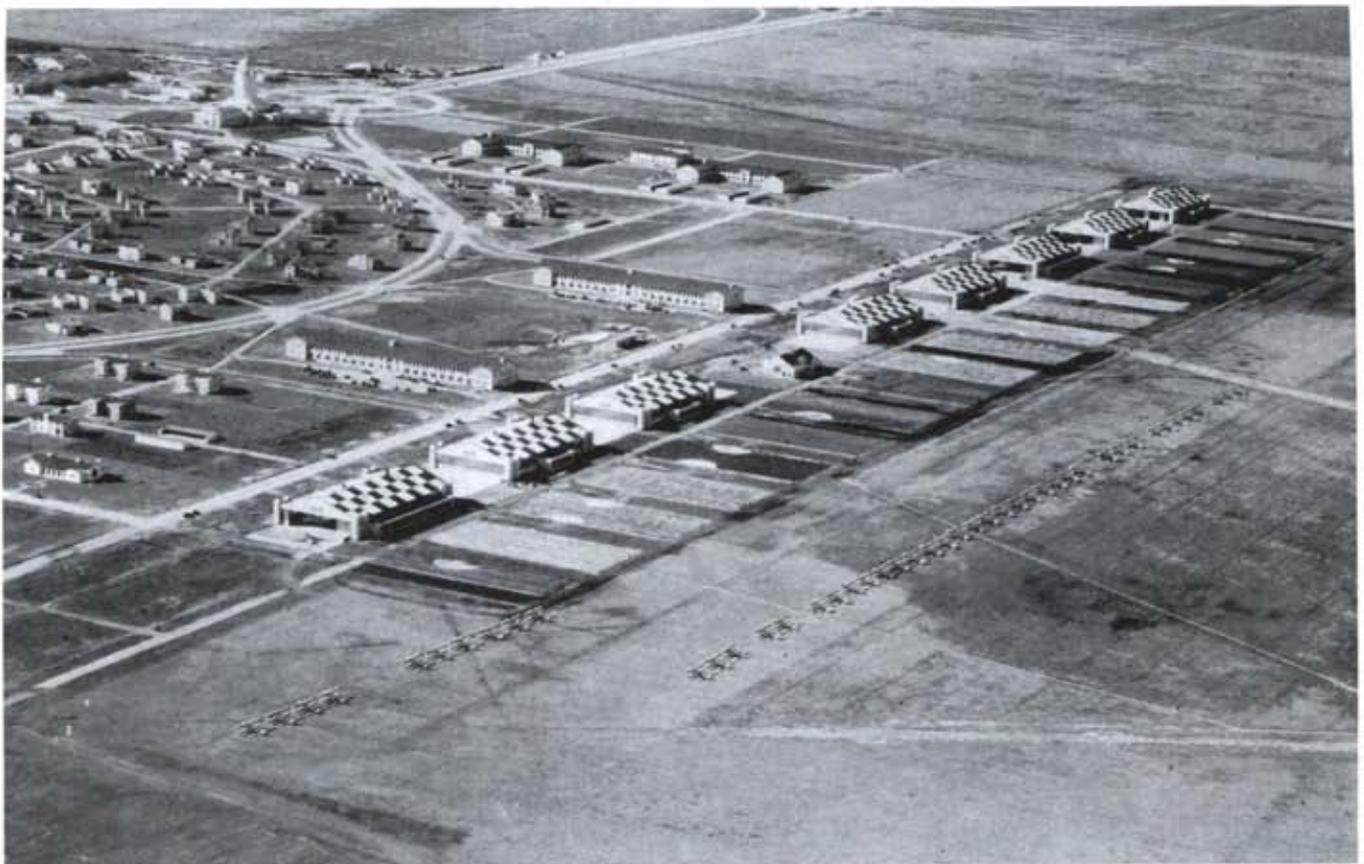


On the far left stands the completed Taj, its Spanish Colonial Revival style contrasting with the rustic structure in the foreground, the first filling station on base. In 1931, gas at these pumps cost about 18 cents per gallon.

Some consider the buildings at Randolph to be the most beautiful of any Air Force base. Many were designed in the Spanish Mission style, with the red tile roofs, stucco, and hollow clay tile typical of the area. At right is the base chapel, patterned after two historic San Antonio missions. Spanish colonial law exempted incomplete buildings from taxation, so in keeping with what became a custom, the chapel was left unfinished, lacking the cupola on its right tower.



In October 1931, Randolph became headquarters for the Air Corps Training Center, and its first pilot training class of 210 cadets and 99 student officers began training the next month at the "West Point of the Air." Along with intensive military training, cadets at Randolph in the 1930s received instruction on flight theory, navigation, meteorology, maintenance, gunnery, radio code, and the internal combustion engine. Primary training back then amounted to 61 flying hours—31 hours of dual instruction and 30 solo hours. Cadets went on to four months of basic training at Randolph before proceeding to advanced training at Kelly Field.



Above is a view as familiar to pilots today as it was during the 1930s and 1940s—Randolph Field's Taj Mahal, circular street pattern, and flight line.

The BT-9s at right were a common sight at the field from the mid-1930s, when the Army Air Corps adopted the BT-9 as a standard basic trainer, using it throughout World War II.

As the US mobilized after Pearl Harbor, aviation cadets began to arrive in Texas in large numbers. In June 1942, the War Department formally separated part of Kelly Field into an installation called San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, where a preflight school, classification center, and medical training hospital were located. About 90,000 candidates for flying training passed through this preflight school before it was closed in April 1944. When this training ended, the center shifted focus to personnel reassignment and separation and, at its large regional hospital, rehabilitation. In 1947, the base received a new name, Lackland Air Base, after Brig. Gen. Frank D. Lackland, who originated the idea of an aviation cadet reception and training center for Kelly Field.

After 1946, Lackland earned its nickname "The Gateway to the Air Force." Except during such periods as the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, it has been responsible for the military indoctrination of all Air Force basic trainees.



With rich histories dating to military aviation's first days and their ties to legendary Air Force figures, this quartet of bases in south Texas had a key role in laying the groundwork for USAF's past 50 years as an independent Service.

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