



36.1997.1 and 36.1997.2 Freeman Field
Jackson County
Marker Text Review Report
01/27/2012

Marker Text

Activated December 1942 as U.S. Army Air Forces advanced training school for World War II twin engine pilots; graduated over 4, 000 by February 1945. Construction of 413 structures and four 5, 500-foot runways supervised by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; named for Indiana pilot Captain Richard S. Freeman (1907-1941). Deactivated in 1948.

Report

The file for the Freeman Field marker contains adequate primary sources supporting the text of the marker. However, the marker omits mention of the 1945 mutiny of Tuskegee Airmen, a pivotal event in the desegregation of the United States Air Force, which took place at Freeman Field. This review attempts to provide sources of information on the mutiny and the airmen.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the United States Armed Forces began recruiting greater numbers of African Americans for segregated "Negro units." By 1941, the Air Corps formed an African American fighter squadron of 47 officers and 429 enlistees to train at Tuskegee Field in Alabama. The 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Starting in 1943, some airmen saw action in North Africa and the Mediterranean, while the 477th Bombardment Group "fought a more insidious war at home."¹

The Air Force set up a training school for African American navigators and bombardiers of the 477th, first at Selfridge Field in Michigan and then Godman Field in Kentucky. In 1943, racial tension over black officers being denied entrance to the officers' club resulted in the 477th being relocated to Freeman Field in Seymour, Indiana where there were two clubs.² At Freeman Field, one club was designated for "trainees" and another for "supervisors." However, the divide became racial as all black airmen were designated "trainees," even the "captains, lieutenants and flight officers ---several of them overseas veterans and proud wearers of the Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart."³ This racial separation was in violation of Army Regulation 210-10 which outlawed segregated clubs in 1940. The men challenged this unequal treatment by forcibly entering the white officers' club on April 5, 1945. Approximately sixty officers were arrested, with more arrests April 7 and 8.⁴ Intense pressure from civil rights advocates, including the NAACP, and the media and public resulted in "momentous changes."⁵ The colonel who had set up the clubs was let go, most of the airmen were released with only a reprimand. While three were court-martialed for having "jostled" the provost guard outside the club, only one, Bill Terry, was found guilty and sentenced to a small fine.⁶

The controversy resulted in the War Department revising regulations on segregation and ended segregated officers' clubs. Since then, the mutiny at Freeman Field has been viewed as a "bellwether for integration of the U.S. military." In 1995, the Air Force set aside Terry's conviction.⁷

Links

"American Visionaries: Tuskegee Airmen," National Parks Service,
<http://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm> (modified April 2000).

"Freeman Field," The Indiana Historian (June 1998) <http://www.in.gov/history/2501.htm>



36.1997.1 and 36.1997.2 Freeman Field
Jackson County
Marker Text Review Report
01/27/2012

“Freeman Army Air Field Museum,” Brochure. Accessed January 26, 2012 through <http://www.jacksoncountyin.com/images/freemanairfield.pdf>

Haulman, Daniel, “Tuskegee Airmen Chronology,” Air Force Historical Research Agency, <http://www.tuskegee.edu/Uploads/files/About%20US/Airmen/TuskegeeAirmenChronology.pdf> (December 2010)

Murphy, John, “Freeman Field Mutiny: A Study in Leadership,” <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/acsc/97-0429.pdf>

“Red Tail Reborn,” PBS Documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/redtailreborn/> (posted 2008).

“Red Tail Squadron,” Commemorative Air Force, <http://www.redtail.org/> (posted 2011).

“Tuskegee Airmen,” exhibit, National Museum of the United States Air Force, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=1356> (last updated February, 2011).

Tuskegee Airmen Archive, University of California, Riverside Library, <http://library.ucr.edu/tuskegee/> (modified January 2012).

Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. <http://www.tuskegeeairmen.org/> (Modified January 2012).

“Tuskegee Airmen,” United States Air Force, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123016224> (posted February 2009).

Indianapolis Recorder Articles:

“Arrest 60 Air Officers: 3 Held – Pilots Defy Segregation at Ind. Camp,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 14, 1945, 1. Accessed through IUPUI Digital Collections: <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/IRecorder&CISOPTR=94383&REC=14>

“Plan Changes to Aid Airmen - Army Officials Chart Future of Bombardiers,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 28, 1945, 1. Accessed through IUPUI Digital Collections: <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/IRecorder&CISOPTR=94415&REC=15>

“At Godman Field - Shift of Col. B. O. Davis Causes New Queries,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 30, 1945, 1. Accessed through IUPUI Digital Collections: <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/IRecorder&CISOPTR=94568&REC=34>

“3 Air Officers Acquitted, in Freeman Field, Ind., Case,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 14, 1945, 1. Accessed through IUPUI Digital Collections: <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/IRecorder&CISOPTR=22067&REC=14>



36.1997.1 and 36.1997.2 Freeman Field
Jackson County
Marker Text Review Report
01/27/2012

¹ James Allison, "Mutiny at Freeman Field: The Life and Art of James Gould Cozzens," *Black History News and Notes* 92 (May 2003) 4-8.

² "Negro Flyers to Be Trained at Freeman Field," *The (Valparaiso) Vidette-Messenger*, February 20, 1945, 4 (accessed through newspaperarchive.com); "Freeman Field to Be Reactivated," *Tipton Daily Tribune*, February 22, 1945, 8 (accessed through newspaperarchive.com); Allison, 6.

³ "Arrest 60 Air Officers: 3 Held – Pilots Defy Segregation at Ind. Camp," *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 14, 1945, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*; Allison, 6.

⁵ "Plan Changes to Aid Airmen - Army Officials Chart Future of Bombardiers," *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 28, 1945, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*; "At Godman Field - Shift of Col. B. O. Davis Causes New Queries," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 30, 1945, 1; "3 Air Officers Acquitted, in Freeman Field, Ind., Case," *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 14, 1945, 1.

⁷ Allison, 6-8.