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Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection - Early Flying Experiences by T. DeWitt Milling

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Ohio Railroad, was the logical choice. A small field had been used during the fall of 1909 by Wilbur Wright in teaching Lieutenants F. E. Humphreys, F. P. Lahm, and B. D. Foulois to pilot the Wright airplane. For the school site an additional two hundred acres was included, affording a maximum runway of approximately 2300 feet in an east-west direction.

[[image]] College Park, Md., 1911 Showing Airplanes and Hangars
With the airplanes ordered and the school site selected, the next problem was the selection and detail of the first officer students who would, on completion of their flight training, become instructors. Since the Wright and Curtiss planes were operated by different types of controls, it was necessary that some be trained by the Wrights at Dayton and the others by Glenn Curtiss and North Island, near San Diego, California. Lieutenants Paul W. Beck, Signal Corps, John C. Walker, 8th Infantry, and G. E. M. Kelly, 30th Infantry, were assigned for instruction in the Curtiss airplane. On completion of their training in the spring of 1911, they were ordered to duty with the Flying Detachment at Fort Sam Houston. For Wright training, Lieutenants Roy C. Kirtland, 14th Infantry, Henry H. Arnold, 29th Infantry, and Thomas DeWitt Milling, 15th Cavalry were selected. Roy Kirtland was ordered to Washington and placed in charge of the College Park School project, his flying training to be delayed until the school was established and in operation. Arnold and Milling were ordered to Dayton.

At the Wright factory, which had been recently built on the outskirts of the city, I was given a warm welcome by Orville Wright and Frank Russell, the first manager of the Wright Company. Frank had supervised the building of the factory, the first ever designed in the country, and had been in charge of the transfer of machinery and equipment to the new plant. Formerly the engines had been made in an old bicycle shop in Dayton and the planes had been assembled in an automobile factory in which floor space had been rented for that purpose. He was one of the non-flying

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