6

The British Flying Training School

"The air is full of ghosts... They are all whispering."
- An old Native American proverb.

THE NO. 1 BRITISH FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL (BFTS) IN TERRELL holds the distinction of being the first training school of its kind. During World War II, Royal Air Force (RAF)

flight schools in Europe were under constant threat of bombing by Nazi forces. By 1941, the situation had become so dire that the United States Army Air Corps opened seven training facilities across the United States to provide a safe haven for young fighter pilots to train without fear of attack.

Young men arrived in the United States through Canada, often under the cover of darkness and dressed in civilian clothing. Most were as young as 18, many were only children, and all were understandably frightened. They were entering a completely foreign country where everyone was a stranger, and the familiar cultures of their homeland were absent. They could never be entirely sure of their own families' safety back home, where food rationing was severe, and some arrived malnourished and thin. However, upon their arrival and as they lined up for breakfast the next morning, a man behind the chow line who offered them bacon with their eggs greeted them. Coming from the harsh realities of war, these young men quickly formed strong bonds, becoming like brothers, and many would later recall the next six months as the best time of their lives.

During the week, the cadets underwent rigorous training, mastering incredible aerial maneuvers and feats of skill in small airplanes. When they weren't in the air, they spent long hours in the classroom, learning the intricate skills required to operate aircraft and engage their adversaries. These lessons would be put to the ultimate test when they returned home to fight a brutal war with an uncertain outcome. They began their training in Stearman PT-17 biplanes with open cockpits and then advanced to the more sophisticated Harvard AT-6 aircraft. The training was demanding, and lives, including their own, depended on their success. Their country's freedom depended on it. These young men were destined to become heroes.

Out of the 2,200 trainees, both instructors and cadets of the School tragically lost a total of 24 lives. Twenty of these young men now rest in a memorial plot dedicated to them at Oakwood Cemetery on Moore Avenue. This small section of land holding their graves is affectionately known as "a little bit of England." Today, people from all over the world make a yearly pilgrimage to Terrell to honor these young men.

On the weekends, the cadets ventured into town and enjoyed dances, parties, Sunday family dinners, and other events generously hosted by Terrell residents. The Bass-Rutledge Drug Store's Soda Shop was a particularly popular hangout. Many cadets were even given rooms in the homes of Terrell residents, spaces dedicated solely to them. Members of the community would "adopt" a soldier every six months, simply to provide a weekend's respite from life in the barracks. The cadets met young ladies, forged new friendships, and genuinely had a wonderful time. It was a brief but cherished escape for those who might soon face death fighting for their country's freedom. Some of the men who survived the war eventually returned to Terrell, married local women, and embraced the community as their own family. Others who did not survive had written letters home, often expressing their longing to return to Terrell when the war was over. I sincerely believe that many of them did return, in spirit. It's impossible not to be moved by the stories of the No. 1 British Flying Training School.

Every year, remembrance ceremonies are held at the

cemetery, and many attendees attest to feeling the presence of these young men standing beside them. Some say they sense eyes upon them during the ceremonies, as though the cadets are watching as they are honored for their bravery.

At the site of the former school, two original hangars still stand and are currently leased by private businesses. Fragments of the original runway are also identifiable. Recently, the Terrell Heritage Museum acquired both a Boeing AT-6 and a Stearman PT-17 aircraft that were used at the school. The Museum also holds many artifacts and photographs from the school, including pictures of all the graduating classes. One of the largest displays is a map of Texas with Great Britain superimposed over it, with London and Terrell sharing the same point.

I have been told that when the atmospheric conditions are just right, you can hear the faint sounds of young men's voices and laughter carried on the wind as you stand outside the museum. Directly in front of the museum lies the airfield, which was once home to the barracks and the school. If you are fortunate enough to experience this phenomenon, there

is no need to be afraid. It is merely the lingering echoes of the young cadets who left their imprints of joy and camaraderie on the soil, rock, and stone of this place. It's like our own record player of the past, playing on a continuous loop for us to appreciate today. It is the enduring legacy of these young, brave soldiers, a reminder of the time they spent here and their ultimate sacrifice. These boys loved this place, and they loved each other as brothers in arms.

Remembrance ceremonies are held at the cemetery each Memorial Day and Veterans Day. You can learn more about these events, the museum, and the cadets of the No. 1 British Flying Training School by visiting their website at www.bftsmuseum.org. Visitors are welcome and donations are welcome. Admission to the museum is free.

Thank You for Stepping into the Shadows

We sincerely hope you enjoyed this glimpse into the eerie history of our city. These stories are more than just legends; they are the echoes of Terrell's past that still shimmer through the present.

Experience the Hauntings in Person...

If these pages gave you a chill, imagine standing in the very spots where these encounters occurred. We invite you to join us for the **Terrell Ghost Walk**. We will guide you through the historic Small Business District along Moore Avenue, exploring active hotspots and visiting our 150-year-old Opera House—a building that truly has a life of its own.

Continue the Journey...

There are many more stories waiting to be told—from the mysterious magnetic energy of the railroad to the hidden tunnels beneath our feet. To thank you for reading this sample, we would like to offer you a special discount to own the full second edition of *The Ghost Stories of Terrell, Texas*.

Your Special Offer:
Use the coupon code: **20BOOYAH** below at checkout to receive **20% off** your purchase in our online store.

Stay Connected...

We are constantly amping up our online presence and sharing new discoveries. Follow us to stay updated on upcoming tours, special events, and new evidence from our investigations.

Website: TerrellGhostWalk.Com

Email: admin@terrellghosts.com

Join Our Facebook Group For More Paranormal Fun

We look forward to seeing you in Terrell soon. Until then, keep your eyes open—you never know who might be watching.

Brenda Newby & Mary Jo Woodruff
Terrell Ghost Walk Paranormal Investigators