

# VERNON CASTLE

Vernon Castle was born William Vernon Blyth on May 2, 1887, in England. Castle and his wife, Irene, were superstar ballroom dancers and film stars in the years preceding the war. They lived a golden life in New York society. When the war broke out in Europe in 1914, Vernon returned to England and became a pilot in Royal Flying Corps. After a combat tour in France, he was assigned to No. 84 Canadian Training Squadron and returned to North America. His squadron was one of several sent to Texas. He was killed on February 15, 1918, at Taliaferro Field No. 3 in Benbrook when he took emergency action on landing to avoid colliding with another airplane. Vernon's student pilot and his pet monkey, Jeff, survived the crash. His funeral procession in downtown Fort Worth and services in New York were enormous events with thousands attending. Vernon Castle's story is told in a 1939 motion picture starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers – *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*. There is a local monument to Captain Castle at Vernon Castle Drive and Cozby West Street in Benbrook.

**TAKE AWAY:** A British performer who was very famous before the war trained pilots in Benbrook. He died in a crash there.



Images, Fort Worth Aviation Museum

