

MS 13

3 November 2023

Schreck, Christopher J.

**WILLIAMS, WALTER S.
27TH AERO SQUADRON
1917-1972
LINEAR FT.: 2
APPROX. NO. PGS.: 2,000**

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The 27th Aero Squadron, known as the “Balloon Busters,” was a United States Army Air Service unit that fought on the Western Front during World War I. The squadron was assigned as a Day Pursuit (Fighter) Squadron as part of the 1st Pursuit Group, First United States Army. Its missions were to escort reconnaissance and bombardment squadrons over enemy territory, perform close air support, destroy enemy observation balloons, and engage in tactical bombing attacks of enemy forces along the front lines.

After the war, the squadron returned to the United States in June 1919 and became part of the permanent United States Army Air Service in 1921, being re-designated as the 27th Squadron (Pursuit). The current United States Air Force unit that maintains its lineage and history is the 27th Fighter Squadron, assigned to the 1st Operations Group at Langley -Eustis AFB in Virginia.

Walter S. Williams was a charter member of the 27th Aero Squadron from its first day of operations through its participation in World War I and became an amateur historian for the group. Williams donated his collection to the Academy in 1972. The collection contains materials gathered by Williams through his service with the 27th Aero Squadron and his subsequent interest in the evolution of the squadron following World War I. More biographical information regarding Williams can be found within the collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists primarily of photo albums and diaries related to the 27th Aero Squadron. These albums contain photographs of the 27th Aero Squadron during their training in Texas and later Canada, and of their participation in World War I. They also include images from the Lafayette Escadrille and of squadron reunions in the 1960s and 1970s. The included diaries describe the formation of the 27th Aero Squadron, its participation in World War I, the quality of the aircraft at the time, and military life among other topics.

All photographs have been removed from their original albums and placed in plastic sleeves for preservation purposes. Page numbers affixed to the plastic sleeves correspond to the page numbers of the corresponding scrapbooks, which have been retained for their inclusion of captions and context. This collection consists of five boxes arranged into three series, outlined in the *Arrangement and Description* section below.

Names: Williams, Walter S.; Vasconcells, Jerry C.; Luke, Frank; Lufbery, Raoul; Compton, Harold C.

Keywords and terms: World War I; World War, 1914-1918; Lafayette Escadrille; 27th Aero Squadron; 1st Pursuit Squadron; Early aviation; Flying Aces; Early military aircraft; Pilots; Diaries; Journals; Camp Taliaferro; Kelly Field; Ft. Worth; San Antonio; Texas; United States; Camp Leaside; Toronto; Canada; Toul Aerodrome; Saints Aerodrome; France

For information on how to cite the materials in this collection, see the Clark Special Collections Citation Guide at <https://usafa.libguides.com/spc>, or contact Clark Special Collections at (719) 333-4674.

ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

SERIES ONE: SCRAPBOOKS, 1917-1972

BOX 1

Folder 1 Scrapbook #1: Photographs. Black album with the words “Photo Album” printed on the front. Captioned photographs, banners, insignias, and artwork are included. Images primarily depict World War I veterans in the early 1970s

Topics: 27th Aero Squadron; Banners; Insignia; Postage Stamps

Folder 2 Scrapbook #2: Photographs. Titled “Kelly Field-Canadian Days, 1917”

Topics: 27th Aero Squadron; Early military aircraft; Pilots; Wreckage; Kelly Field; San Antonio; Texas; United States; Camp Leaside; Camp Borden; Canada; Toul Aerodrome; Saints Aerodrome; Issoudun; Toul; Verdun; Cazaux; France

Names: Corrigan; Grant, Alfred A.; Alexander, A.H.; Green; Dayton, John W.; Staker, John Jr.; Holt, W.S.; Barraca; Rhineland, P.M.; Barraca; Harrington; Krouse; Roberts; Erdman; Williams, Walter S.; Hewett; Miller, Red; Callahan, Larry; Avery, Walt; Buford, Edward; Harkins; Lufberry, Raul

Un-foldered Scrapbook #2: Empty Scrapbook. White with blue flowers. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 2

BOX 2

Folder 1 Scrapbook #3: Photographs. Locations of the 27th Aero Squadron. Titled “27th Squadron WWI Historical Photos.” 1917-1971

Topics: 27th Aero Squadron; French children; Wreckage; Crashes; Early military aircraft; Saints Aerodrome; Alsace–Lorraine; Toul; Domrémy-la-Pucelle; Epiez; France; Kelly Field; Texas; United States

Names: Williams, Walter S.; Hartney, Harold; Ennis, Frank S.; Lyster; Shawhan, Romer; Collishaw; Milne; Luke, Frank; Elliott; Miller; Martin; Nevious; Norton,

Fred; Williams, Harold; Marschall; Raymond; Saxe, Merle V.; Luke, Frank; Lufbery, Raoul; Raymond; Vasconcells, Jerry C.

- Un-foldered Scrapbook #3: Empty Scrapbook. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 1
- Folder 2 Scrapbook #4: Personal Diary of the War, 1917-1919. Handwritten diary-type scrapbook written by Walter S. Williams containing an account of 27th Aero Squadron activities. Also includes photographs and newspaper clippings compiled by Williams. Entries contain names of personnel assigned to the squadron, types of aircraft flown, battles fought, and the location of bases to which the squadron was assigned. 1917-1919
- Folder 3 Scrapbook #5: Walter Williams Diary and Biography, 1917-1919. Typewritten diary compiled by Williams consisting of the same material as described in Scrapbook #4. Also includes photographs, insignia, and correspondence not found in other scrapbooks. 1917-1919

BOX 3

- Folder 1 Scrapbook #6: Photographs. Titled "27-Squadron." 1917-1972
- Topics: 27th Aero Squadron; Royal Flying Corps Canada; Early military aircraft; Kelly Field; Benbrook Field; Camp Taliaferro; Ft. Worth; San Antonio; Texas; United States; Toul Aerodrome; Verdun, France; Camp Borden; Camp Leaside; Toronto; Canada
- Names: Lufbery, Raoul; Luke, Frank; Elliot; Roberts, Ivan; Harvey; Robins; Ordway, Fred; Harris, Don; Plyler, Ed; Klingman, Ed; Wright, Art; Alderman; McDonald, Mac
- Un-foldered Scrapbook #6: Empty Scrapbook. Green with 27th Aero Squadron insignia on the cover. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 1
- Folder 2 Scrapbook #9: Photographs. No title. Consists primarily of photographs from squadron reunions, though some WWI-era photos are also included. 1917-1972
- Topics: 27th Aero Squadron; Reunions; Banners; Camp Taliaferro; Ft. Worth; Texas; United States; Toul; France; Camp Leaside; Canada
- Names: Hartney; Grant; Raymond; Juday; Heath; Flanner; Williams, Walter S.; Williams, Frank; Harvey, Fred; Robbins
- Un-foldered Scrapbook #9: Empty Scrapbook. Red with 27th Aero Squadron insignia on the cover. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 2

BOX 4

- Folder 1 Scrapbook #10: Photographs. Titles "Officers of 27th Aero Squadron- Commemorative Medals of France." Images depict the Lafayette Escadrille

World War I flyers and their aircraft. Also included are photographs of the German leader, Hermann Goering, and American flying ace Frank Luke. 1917-1971

Topics: Lafayette Escadrille; Early military aircraft; Mascot lion (Whisky); Chaudun; France; Chateau Thierry; German Pilots; Wreckage;

Names: Prince, Norman; Cowdin; Thaw, Bill; Rockwell, Kiffin; Paelka; Rockwell, Paul; Hall, Bert; Avery, Walt; Lufbery, Raul; Kaye, Sam; Blodgett, Dick; Hall, James; Dolan, Charles H.; Hill, Dudley; Hinkle; Marr; Goering, Hermann; Udet, Ernst; Hoskier, Ronald W.; Chapman, Victor; Campbell, Courtney

Un-foldered Scrapbook #10: Empty Scrapbook. Red with 27th Aero Squadron insignia on the cover. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 1

Folder 2 Scrapbook #12: Photographs. Titled "Lafayette Escadrille WWI." Contains photographs from the World War I-era and much later from 27th Aero Squadron reunions. 1917-1964

Topics: Lafayette Escadrille; Early military aviation; Pilots; Toul Aerodrome; 27th Aero Squadron; Reunions; DeHavilland 4-B; German casualties; Monuments; Flying aces; Epiez Aerodrome; 1st Pursuit Group; Loring; Maine; United States; Toul; Lorraine; France

Names: Davis, Michael F. Grant; Raymond, Robert; Hartney, Harold; Norton, Fred; Vasconcells, Jerry C.; Dawson; Luke, Frank; Williams, Frank; Williams, Walter S.; McLaughlin, Edward J.; Harlow, Donald L.

Un-foldered Scrapbook #12: Empty Scrapbook. Spiral-bound album with blue and green flowers on the cover. Includes captions and context for photos in Folder 2

SERIES TWO: PAPER MATTER

BOX 4

Folder 3 27th Aero Squadron History. A typed narrative with notes (1918) and a handwritten narrative (1968), both written by Walter S. Williams

Folder 4 Correspondence between Williams and others regarding the history of the 27th Aero Squadron. 1968-1972

Folder 5 27th Aero Squadron Roster, 1917

Folder 6 Biography of Harold C. Compton, Commander of the 27th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (ADC)

SERIES THREE: SOUVENIRS, 1917-1955

BOX 5

Mess kit inscribed by Williams

Inscribed piston head, Curtiss O.X.5 training plane engine, Taliaferro Field, Fort Worth, Texas,
Nov 1917

Banner, USAFA, 21 Aero Squadron, 1 May 1955

Two panoramic photographs of the 27th Aero Squadron, 1917-1919