

**MS-293**

**91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron  
American Expeditionary Force**

**Special Collections and Archives  
Wright State University Libraries**

**Processed by:  
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## **Introduction**

The photographs of the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron of the American Expeditionary Force were purchased from Zita Books in New York, New York by Wright State University Special Collections and Archives on March 14, 2000.

The collection includes photographs of the 91<sup>st</sup> Squadron, hangars and airfields, aerial views of German and French cities and fields, and the banner image of the 91<sup>st</sup> Squadron.

The photographs of the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron of the American Expeditionary Force date between 1918 and 1919. This collection depicts the airmen and operations of the Squadron during the end of World War I and the months following.

There are no restrictions on the use of the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron of the American Expeditionary Force photographs.

## Historical Background

During World War I, the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron of the American Expeditionary Force operated reconnaissance missions 15 to 25 miles beyond enemy lines. They informed A.E.F. Headquarters of movements on roads and airdromes and in railroad yards, which they observed from above 15,000 feet; they also reported on supply and ammunition dumps.

The 91<sup>st</sup> Squadron arrived in Liverpool, England with the 90<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> Squadrons in November 1917 and traveled to Hill 402 to construct an airfield next to the American Expeditionary Force Headquarters in Chaumont, France. The squadron then traveled to Amanty, France where a school for pilots was operated. However, flight training was delayed by the lack of adequate airplanes; well into 1918, only worn-out Dorand, Sopwith and SPAD aircraft were available for use. Sixteen Salmson airplanes arrived by May of 1918, enabling the Squadron, with mediocre gunnery training, to begin operations.

The Squadron's first mission into enemy territory occurred on June 3<sup>rd</sup> from their base of operations at Gondreville, France near Amanty. The two-person crews of pilot and observer were subject to enemy aircraft attacks and anti-aircraft guns. There was a high rate of death, disappearance and injury, particularly for observers in the last months of the war. By the end of World War I, six pilots and three observers in the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron had become prisoners of war and three pilots and eight observers had been killed. Twenty-one enemy aircraft had been eliminated.

From February 14 to September 15, 1918, Major John N. Reynolds led the Squadron. In September 1918 Major Reynolds became Commanding Officer of the newly-created Army Observation Group, which consisted of the 91<sup>st</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadrons. Leadership of the 91<sup>st</sup> Squadron transferred to Lieutenant Everett R. Cook, who served as Commanding Officer until the Armistice.

On June 28, 1919 the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron was demobilized from active duty in Europe; it was remobilized on June 30 for duty in the United States.

## Scope and Content Note

The 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron photographs document the history and operations of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe at the end of World War I and the following months. Through these photographs, researchers may gain insight into the geography and aircraft of World War I as well as the men who served in the 91<sup>st</sup> Squadron.

The collection includes 39 photographs dating between April 1918 and March 1919. About half of the photographs are undated, but are from the same period. The photographs depict airplanes and airfields, the men who served in the squadron, the squadron's banner design, and aerial observation views of French and German cities and sites including Coblenz, Trier, Dierdorf, Bendorf, Sinzig, Blagny, and Carignan.

Photocopies of excerpts from the book *Wings of Honor: American Airmen in World War I* by James J. Sloan, Jr. are included in the box. These include a brief history of the 91<sup>st</sup> Observation Squadron and a listing of Commanding and Operations Officers and Combat Airmen.

## Container Listing

<b>Box</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	1	91 <sup>st</sup> Squadron with banner	n.d.
1	2	Winning photograph of the Third Corps Horse Show in Neuwied, Germany by the 91 <sup>st</sup> Squadron for the Meuse-Argonne Cup Photographic Contest	March 7, 1919
1	3	91 <sup>st</sup> Squadron in front of airplane	n.d.
1	4	91 <sup>st</sup> Aero Service Squadron, 1 <sup>st</sup> Army Observation Group, American Expeditionary Force	1918
1	5	Banner image of knight and devil	n.d.
1	6	Men with engines and propellers	n.d.
1	7	91 <sup>st</sup> Squadron	n.d.
1	8	Men in line on field	Jan 6, 1919
1	9	Aerial shot of hangars and airplanes	n.d.
1	10	91 <sup>st</sup> Squadron	Jan 10, 1919
1	11	Airplanes burning	n.d.
1	12	Airplanes burning	n.d.
1	13	Airplanes in pile on field	n.d.
1	14	Airplanes in pile on field	n.d.
1	15	Dismantled aircraft in field	Nov 20, 1918
1	16	Dismantled aircraft in field	Nov 20, 1918
1	17	Sgt. Kelly and Sgt. Scott in front of airplane	n.d.
1	18	Men and women in mess hall with Christmas tree	Dec 25, 1918
1	19	Airplane, left side	June 14, 1918
1	20	Aerial view of field	n.d.
1	21	Aerial view of Airdrome, Karthouse, Coblenz looking NE	Jan 10, 1919
1	22	Aero Squadron Headquarters	Nov 15, 1918
1	23	Zeppelin Hanger at Trier, Germany	Dec 15, 1918
1	24	Aerial shot	Nov 2, 1918
1	25	Aerial view of city and right wing	n.d.
1	26	Aerial view of city	n.d.
1	27	Aerial view of Blagny, France	Nov 4, 1918
1	28	Aerial view of river and roads	n.d.
1	29	Aerial view of Carignan	Nov 4, 1918
1	30	Aerial shot	n.d.
1	31	Aerial view of neighborhood and bridges	n.d.
1	32	Aerial view of fields SW of Dierdorf, Germany	Feb 14, 1919
1	33	Aerial view of Sinzig Castle looking North	Feb 13, 1919
1	34	Aerial view, SW of Bendorf, Germany	Jan 7, 1919
1	35	Sectional panorama of Coblenz from water tower, Airdrome	Jan 16, 1919
1	36	Aerial view of ruins	n.d.
1	37	Dismantled airplanes in field	n.d.
1	38	Aerial view of city bridges	n.d.
1	39	"Gefangene Amerikaner," American captives	April 20, 1918