1st Marine Aviation Force
Finding Aid

Archives Branch
Marine Corps History Division
Quantico, VA
2018
Introduction

The Archives Branch supports the professional military education requirements of Marine Corps residential and distance learning programs. They are the chief repository for reporting units as well as for personal papers of current and veteran Marines. The Archives is open without appointment to both military and civilian patrons, and a professional archivist is always available for assistance. Patrons may bring laptops, digital cameras, and personal scanners for use in the reading room.

Contacting the Archives Branch

Physical address: 2044 Broadway Street, Quantico, VA 22134
Phone: 703-784-4685
Email: mcu_archives@usmcu.edu
Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Collection Summary

Title: 1st Marine Aviation Force Collection
Collection Number: COLL/1012
Physical Characteristics: 7 standard legal size document boxes; 3.5 linear feet
Span Dates: 1916-1919
Language: English
Creator: N/A

Administrative Information

Restrictions: Collection is open to all researchers

Preferred citation: Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information:

1st Marine Aviation Force Collection, COLL/1012, [Folder heading], Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Provenance: The 1st Marine Aviation Force Collection papers were transferred from the Marine Corps Historical Center to the Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections Branch at Quantico in 1999.
Historical Note

With the entrance of the United States into World War I, the Marine Corps underwent a period of rapid expansion. This expansion led to the development of Marine aviation. The initial organization called for two units: the 1st Aeronautic Company, which conducted anti-submarine operations using seaplanes, and the 1st Aviation Squadron, destined to support the Marine Brigade already en route to France. These designations went into effect on 14 October 1917. The 1st Aeronautic Company let the way into service. On 9 January 1918, the Company departed Philadelphia (after training at Cape May, NJ) for the Azores, where it carried out anti-submarine operations under the command of Francis Evans. The October 17 1918 the 1st Aviation squadron departed for training at the Army Aviation School in Mineola, Long Island, New York, commanded by Captain William M. “Mac” McIlvain's.

On 11 March 1918, Captain Alfred Cunningham received orders to organize and take command of a Northern Bombing Group, formed by combining Roy S. Geiger’s Aviation Detachment at Philadelphia and Captain McIlvain's 1st Aviation Squadron. Dubbed the 1st Marine Aviation Force, Cunningham’s squadrons arrived in France on 30 July 1918.

The eager pilots, having arrived ahead of their planes, began flying bombing and combat missions with the RAF. It was a trial by fire that honed the fledgling aviators’ abilities and resulted in numerous casualties. On 14 October 1918 the Marines engaged in their first mission in their own aircraft, an attack on a German-held railyard in Belgium. Between 14 October and 11 November the Marines carried out 14 raids, attacking enemy railways, supply depots, and airfields without the aid of fighter plane escort.

On 22 October 1918 the Marines lost their first aircraft to enemy action, when 2d Lieutenant Harvey G. Norman was shot down by German fighters. The 1st Marine Aviation Force departed France in December 1918.

Scope and Content

The 1st Marine Aviation Force Collection contains rosters, orders, memoranda, messages, muster rolls, correspondence, casualty reports, aviation logs, and other information.

Notable items include the war diaries of the 1st Aeronautic Company, which document the daily occurrences of the Company while conducting anti-submarine operations in the vicinity of the Azores; muster rolls of the Marines who flew missions as part of Squadron 267 and Squadron 268 of the Britain’s Royal Air Force; the operation reports of Squadrons A, B, and C; and foundational correspondence of the Northern Bombing Group from the early days of the 1st Aviation Force in France.
Box List

Box 1  1st Marine Aviation Force Records
Folder 1.  Roster of Marines with Royal Air Force, 1918
Folder 2.  Roster of Marine Day Wing, 1918
Folder 3.  US Naval Forces Operating in European Waters
Folder 4.  1st Marine Aeronautic Company, Azores, War Diary, February-May 1918
Folder 5.  1st Marine Aeronautic Company, Azores, War Diary, June 1918-January 1919
Folder 6.  US Naval Forces, Correspondence, January-May 1918
Folder 7.  US Naval Forces, Pauillac, France, Orders, January-December 1918
Folder 8.  1st Marine Aviation Force History, Source Material

Box 2  1st Marine Aviation Force Records
Folder 1.  Northern Bombing Group, Correspondence, March-November 1918
Folder 2.  Northern Bombing Group, Correspondence, April-December 1918
Folder 3.  1st Marine Aeronautic Company, War Diaries, August-September 1918
Folder 4.  1st Marine Aeronautic Company, War Diaries, October-December 1918
Folder 5.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Miscellaneous, April-December 1918 (1 of 4)
Folder 6.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Miscellaneous, April-December 1918 (2 of 4)

Box 3  1st Marine Aviation Force Records
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Folder 2.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Miscellaneous, April-December 1918 (4 of 4)
Folder 3.  Orders, May-September 1918
Folder 4.  Northern Bombing Group, Officer's Orders, October 1918-May 1919
Folder 5.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Reports of Work, June-October 1918
Folder 6.  Aviation Logs, Curtiss Flying Boat and Wright Hydroaeroplane

Box 4  1st Marine Aviation Force Records
Folder 1.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Personnel Rosters, July-October 1918
Folder 2.  Rosters August-December 1918
Folder 3.  Muster Roll Index, Accident Report, Nicaragua
Folder 4.  A and B Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force, Operations Reports and Record of Events
Folder 5.  C Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force, Operations Reports and Record of Events
Folder 6.  7th Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force, Operations Reports and Record of Events
Folder 7.  Monmouth, Casualty Reports
Folder 8.  1st Marine Aviation Force, Morning Reports, Daily Log

Box 5  1st Marine Aviation Force Records
Folder 1. US Naval Aviation Forces, Dunkirk, France, Personnel
Folder 2. Northern Bombing Group, Reports, Bulletins, Orders, August-October 1918
Folder 3. Northern Bombing Group, Reports, Bulletins, Orders, October-November 1918
Folder 4. US Naval Aviation Forces, East Leigh, England, Reports, September-November 1918
Folder 5. Northern Bombing Group, Pilots and Observers, 8th Squadron
Folder 6. Personnel Records, 8th Squadron
Folder 7. Northern Bombing Group, Muster Rolls

Box 6  
1st Marine Aviation Force Records

Folder 1. D Squadron, 1st Marine Aviation Force, Orders, Memoranda, Messages
Folder 2. Northern Bombing Group, Messages, September-October 1918
Folder 3. Northern Bombing Group, Messages, October 1918
Folder 4. Northern Bombing Group, Messages, October-November 1918
Folder 5. 1st Marine Aviation Force, Messages, November 1918
Folder 6. Orders, Memoranda, Correspondence, 1917-1918
Folder 7. Pamphlets/Rosters
Folder 8. Cavalier Magazine, Medal of Honor

Box 7  
1st Marine Aviation Force Records

Folder 1. Marine Flying Field, Miami Syllabus, Correspondence, Manuscript
Folder 2. Short History of the 1st Marine Aviation Force
Folder 3. US Naval Aviation Detachment, Reports, Instructions, Orders
Folder 4. Casualty Reports, Letters of Condolence