

JAMES J. SLOAN

HISTORY OF THE 88th OBSERVATION SQUADRON (SALMSONS)

The accounts of the work of the observation and bombardment squadrons of the American Expeditionary Forces provide heroic reading. Of the 45 active squadrons (those assigned to the front prior to the Armistice) twenty-five, or more than half, were two-seater outfits, (18 observation and 7 bombardment). Of the 493 total battle casualties of the U. S. Air Service, 290 came from two-seaters. And 396 of the 740 Air Service planes on the front at the Armistice were Salmsons, Breguets and DH-4s.

Although the statistics indicate a larger percentage of men and machines involved in observation and bombardment work from March to November 1918, probably less is known of their activity than of the pursuit squadrons. Apparently there was greater glamour in chasing one's adversary than in being the chased. The 88th Observation Squadron was typical of many of the Air Service units. It was formed in Mid-1917, went to France toward the year's end, was in training during much of the first half of 1918, and moved into action in mid-year. Its officer pilots went through Kelly Field training, to Issoudon, and to the Squadron at Observation School, while its observers were selected, for the most part, from infantry, field artillery or cavalry transferees who had decided to fight the war from the air.

The 88th lost six men killed in action, one killed in an accident, and eight wounded. It brought down four enemy aircraft confirmed. Thirteen of its roll received the Distinguished Service Cross, eleven received the Croix de Guerre and there were nine Corps Citations. Its pilot/observer teams had nearly 1240 hours of flying over the lines.

This is the official history of a hard-working Squadron that flew its Salmsons daily on photographic missions, artillery reglages and infantry contact patrols, often under repeated attack by enemy aircraft. Many sorties were flown at such low altitudes that they were constant targets for ground machine-gun and rifle fire, sometimes from both sides. On one such flight the Commanding Officer received damage to his lower wing when an artillery shell, not identified as friend or foe, passed through.

The 88th Observation Squadron went to France in November 1917, and while the pilots went to Issoudon for further flight instruction, the enlisted ranks put in a tour of construction duty at what became the 1st Air Depot at Colombey-les-Belles. From November to February it was cold, rainy and

often miserable, but the Americans accepted it all, and finally on the 1st of February, the squadron moved to Amanty.

Amanty Airdrome was the site of the 1st Corps Observation School, just then being formed. The curricula for the courses were being established with the aid of French officers. No aircraft were yet available and, in fact, conditions were pretty primitive. Major H. B. Anderson was the squadron Commanding Officer, dating from 1 February, and he was also the officer in charge of training, under Major Ralph Royce, the commanding officer of the school.

On the 14th of February Captain Kenneth P. Littauer was appointed to the 88th. He was one of the few two-seater pilots of the Lafayette Flying Corps, and had joined French Aviation in March 1916. When an offer was made to L. F. C. men to enter United States service, he accepted and was commissioned a captain on 1 January 1918. Nordhoff and Hall described Littauer's career in the L. F. C. as follows, thus providing the basic philosophy of the two-seater outfit as no other example could:

"Littauer, known to the Lafayette men as "Kepi", served his apprenticeship at the Front on the old twin-motored Caudron, and was one of the few men who had flown it who could be found to praise this leisurely and vulnerable bird. With the observer and machine-gunner in front, the forward field of fire limited to the space between the propellers, and no protection to the rear worth mentioning it is a wonder that any pilot should have survived a long experience with this type of craft. Kepi did, and accepted with reluctance the newer G. 6 which superseded it.

"His work with C. 74, a Franco-Belgian squadron, was not of a spectacular kind, just the day-in, day-out routine of photo missions, gun spotting and reconnaissance air business which offers little opportunity for brilliant coups and far more than just a share of the dangers of war flying....

"Adventures of this sort, which age many a young pilot prematurely, gave life a certain zest for him during his 14 months with C. 74. He was then transferred to the U. S. Air Service with the rank of Captain and, had he wished to do so, might have gone to the rear as an instructor. But Kepi was no lover of soft billets. Pilots experienced in Corps d' Armee work were badly needed in the Air Service which was dependent for airmen with actual war experience upon the Lafayette Flying Corps."

The following is the narrative report of events, beginning with the work of the Squadron at the 1st Corp Observation School, as taken from Series E, Volume 9 of the Gorrell Report.¹

¹The Gorrell Report, as it is better known, is the Final Report of the Chief of the Air Service, A. E. F., and was compiled by the Commanding Officers and Operations Officers of the U. S. Air Service Squadrons in early 1919. The extensive report is in the War Records Section of the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

On the 22nd of February, 1918, eighteen pilots, fresh from the Issoudon Training School, were assigned to the 88th Aero Squadron. Some few were well acquainted, but the majority had only a speaking acquaintance, resulting in that standoffish attitude characteristic with the young men of America.

This was the first permanent assignment any of the men had received during their military lives. They belonged to an organization; each spoke of pride of "our squadron," and everyone started squadron life with great enthusiasm, determined to make it the best.

Major H. B. Anderson, Commanding Officer of the Squadron, gave the men a royal welcome and he showed a keen interest in their work. His entire time being occupied as Officer in charge of Training at the 1st Corps Observation School, it fell upon Captain Littauer to look after the personal needs. If anyone wanted information he went to the Captain, if he wanted this or that he went to the Captain; or rather the Captain came to him; for he went to no end of trouble to see that everyone was as comfortable as conditions would permit.

The time of the enlisted personnel being entirely occupied by Squadron fatigue, it was Captain Littauer's suggestion that the pilots help construct the Officers' Mess and quarters. This was hailed with enthusiasm; anything to relieve the monotony, the weather prohibiting flying. The buildings were the French "knockdown" type. The whole thing, of course, developed into a lark, and though the first attempt was not a complete success, the kitchen being where the dining room should have been, in a short time all were quartered on 88th Avenue, in the center of a thick woods. Some of the more artistically inclined added rustic porches, benches, fencing, etc. Lt. L. D. Mahan established an excellent precedent as Squadron Mess Officer, his fame extending to neighboring squadrons.

The 88th, 1st, 12th and 91st squadrons composed the 1st Corps Observation Group. Major Ralph Royce, commanding the 1st Corps Observation School for training observers, occupied quarters at the south end of the field. The first official work with the school was attendance at a big party, given by the 1st Squadron to the pilots of the 88th and 91st. It was a great "get-together" and a rousing success, the effects lasting for several days.

As soon as the weather permitted, everyone took from two to five D. C. hops on the A. R. 's. To a pilot who transferred from Nieuports, these large, cumbersome, Depperdussin-controlled ships were a great joke. They were popular with some, but on a whole were thoroughly disliked; at the same time they were entirely successful for training observers.

The work with the school consisted of taking the student observers up on missions: photographic, reconnaissance, infantry liaison, etc. The attitude towards the observers was that of the average, ignorant, young pilot. At first the observers were regarded as a necessary evil, a passenger of no importance whatsoever. As soon as the necessity for and importance of aerial observation was realized, this attitude entirely changed, and ultimately when observers were officially assigned to the squadron they were welcomed with open arms, and immediately made one of "the gang." This training work benefitted not only the student observers, but was of invaluable aid to each pilot; the essential primary training of an observation pilot. Instruction was given on the machine gun range and a course of lectures by American, French

and British Officers were attended at the school.

Many conflicting rumors were floating around in regard to the kind of ships to be used. The squadron began to stock up on all kinds of equipment, including transportation. In April it was decided that Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutters would be used, so Major Anderson and Captain Littauer went to Paris to superintend the requisitions and a detachment of mechanics was sent to a French "Sop" Squadron at Ferme d'Alger. During their absence Lt. Mahan commanded the squadron and Lt. Evans was in charge of flying operations.

In the latter part of April the 90th Aero Squadron arrived, and was quartered in the old school quarters. They were equipped with Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutters and all of the 88th took their first hops in the 90th Squadron airplanes. With the exception of Lt. McNulty's knocking down a tree in landing, there were no accidents. On the 2nd of May, Lieut. Balfay arrived with a truck train and Cadillac touring car. The car was everybody's pride and joy, but it had a very short life as one of the 90th Squadron pilots made a landing on it, duplicating Lt. Carr's feat of landing on a Fiat truck. Neither of the pilots was injured.

The 5th of May became famous for the arrival of the squadron airplanes and the appearance of several pairs of slacks and roll collars. From now on there was work for all. Ships were assigned to pilots, pilots to flights, and flight commanders appointed. Suggestions were requested for a squadron insignia, resulting in the selection of the typical American bucking bronco. The armament was overhauled and synchronized and everything gotten in readiness for the front.

On the 24th the first group of observers arrived and on the 28th the Squadron moved from Amanty to Ourches, about eighteen kilometers southwest of Toul.

On May 30th the Squadron started its operations. Major Anderson, with Lt. Kirwin as observer, and Capt. Littauer with Lt. Rancourt, made the initial flights over the sector occupied by the American 1st Division, although it was assigned to the 26th and later to the 77th. Other flights took up the work and soon the main work became reconnaissance and photography of American positions and wireless exercises with the artillery. On June 16th the 88th had a plane on the front from daylight to dark without a break.

Working in flights, each flight was off every third day so that liaison with Nancy and Toul could continue, and a great deal of dental work was done at Toul. Vacouliers also had a great attraction, its chief claim being that it was where Jean d'Arc took command of the French Army, and a fair brewery. On July 4th Major Anderson was appointed Group Commander, and Capt. Littauer assumed command of the 88th.

July 5th saw the first squadron combat. Lt. Hastings and Lt. Douglas, his observer, were attacked by two Albatros fighters while on reconnaissance and the enemy was driven off by Lt. Douglas' effective fire. Although his aileron controls were shot away, Lt. Hastings succeeded in reaching the air-drome. At this time the 1st Pursuit Group was operating with Nieuport 28's from Toul.

On July 6th the squadron moved from Ourches to Francheville, four kilometers west of Voucauliers on the Chateau-Thierry front. The Squadron



Capt. Kenneth P. Littauer,
C.O., 4 July - 19 Sept.



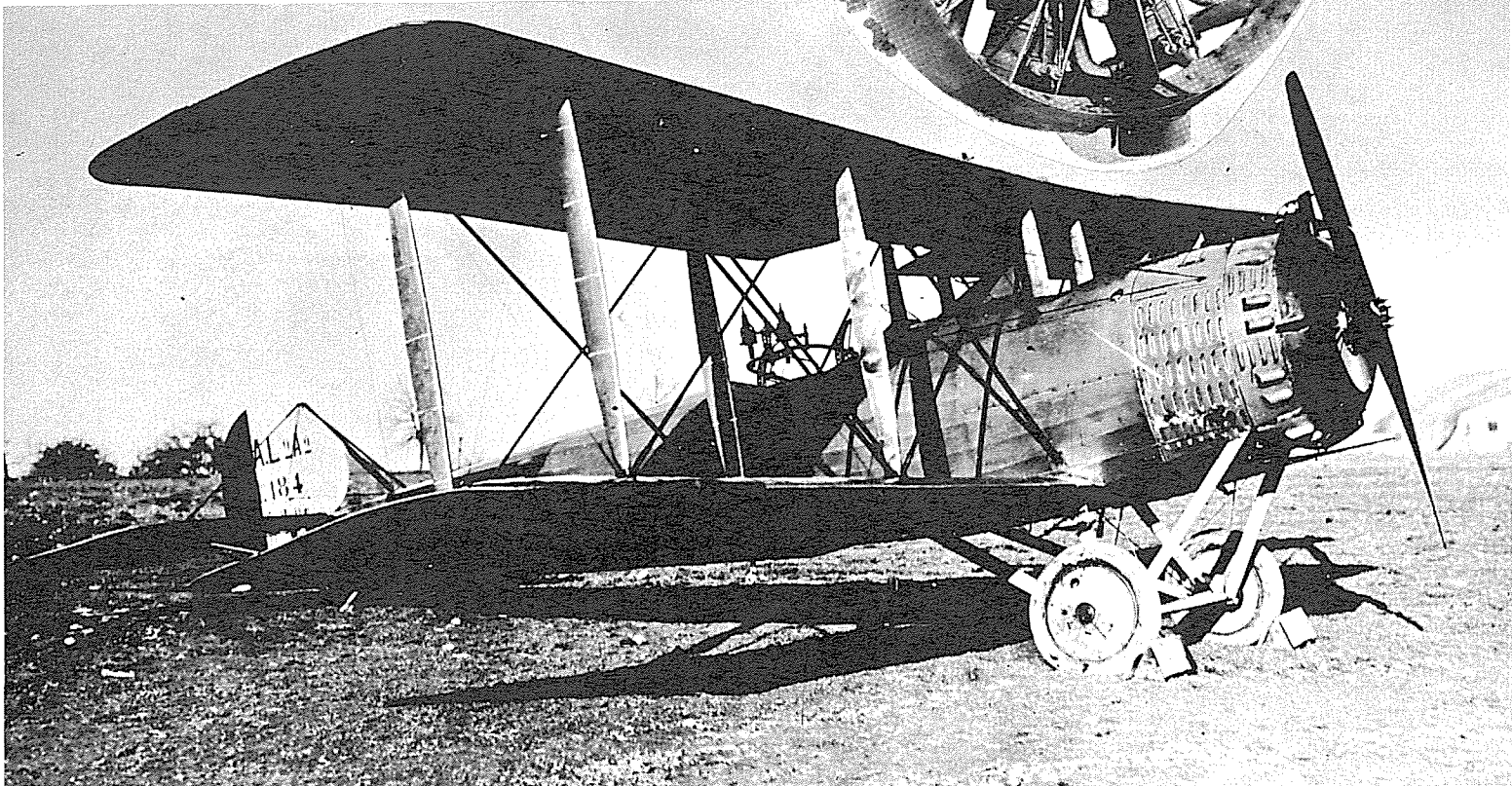
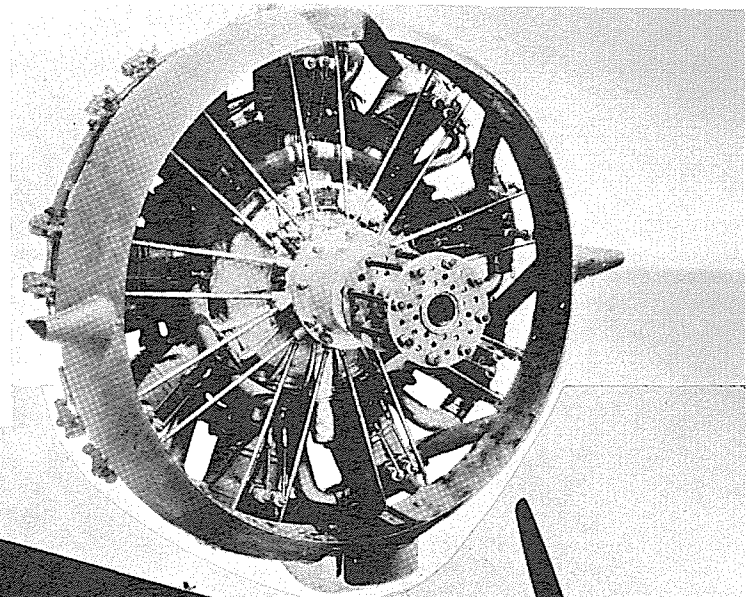
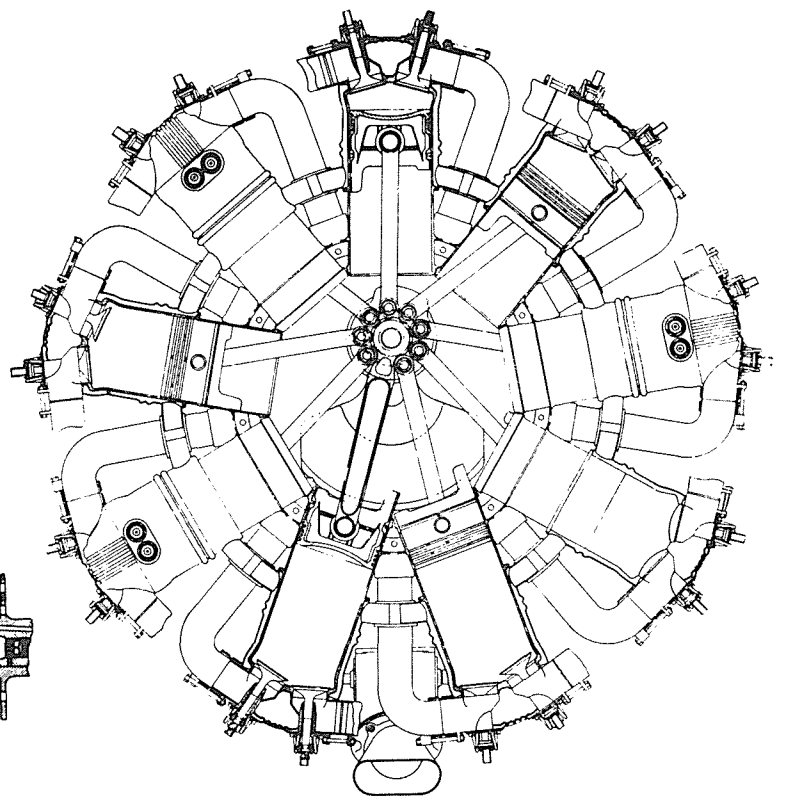
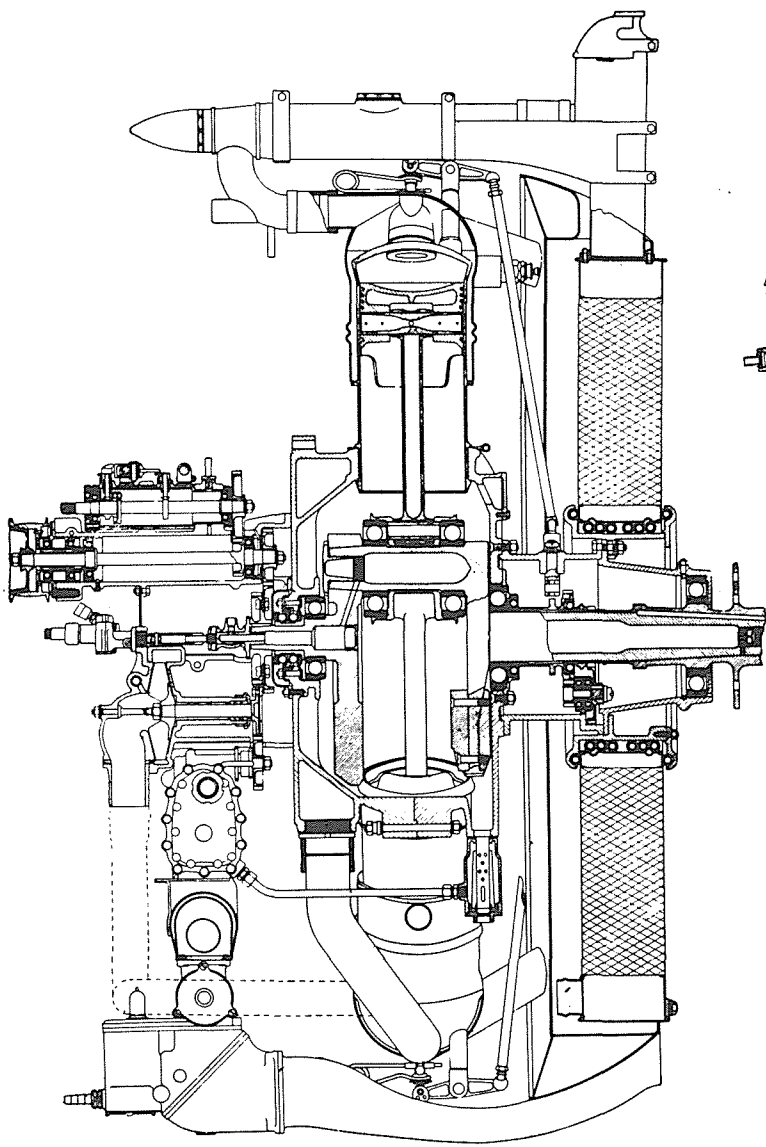
INSIGNIA of the 88th

Colors: Horse & rider,
violet outlined in black.
Background: yellow at base
blending to pink at top.
Outer circle: black.



Lt. Floyd E. Evans,
C.O., 19 Sept. - Armistice.

The upper picture is said to include all squadron officers as of 25 October 1918 and therefore should show (pilots) Comey, Bernheimer, Evans, McCordic, Page, Hastings, Heilbrun, Babcock, McNulty, Barrows, Marshall, Murphy, Ensign, Hogan and Grant; (as observers) Wagner, Wheeler, Jordan, Trickey, Carl, Cordier, Link, Anderson, Knight, Southall, Signer, Nickell, Crawford, Olston, Burditt, Jones and Hale; (as Machine Gunner) Foster; (and ground officers) Boykin, Knowles, Segaitz, Vrooman, Lustig, and Jackson.



started moving on Sunday morning, July 6th, the first trucks leaving immediately after mess. The truck train was on a two day's schedule under the command of Lieuts. Powers and Balfeg, billets being provided for the men enroute by Lieuts. Wheeler and Boylan who had left the night before. As in all such moves the chief mechanic flew with his pilot and the observers motored, a trip of about eight hours in a touring car. This was the best weather the Squadron ever had for a move. The first ship left about eight o'clock. The new field was easy to find as it was enclosed on three sides by individual Besseneau hangars and wheat fields. The 1st and 12th American Squadrons and the 280th French Squadron, comprising the 1st Corps Observation Group and all using Salmsons, were already operating from the field.

The officers lived in the farmhouse and the men in the barn, while Capt. Littauer and Lt. Evans were quartered in the house across the road. The field was large and level, but surrounded on all sides by ripe grain. A good landing in the wheat was practically impossible and several planes crashed due to motor trouble.

About the 10th of July every man had to cut down his baggage to a minimum, the excess being shipped to Paris for storage. Orders were received that the Squadron should be ready to move on an hour's notice. Boche bombers were up every night and the field was under fire from a long range gun. The last German offensive started early on the 15th and it was in this drive that the Marines in Belleau Woods, and the 3rd Division East of Chateau-Thierry so distinguished themselves.

An advance field with half a dozen individual hangars had been established at Marass Park, just North of the Marne, near La Perth-sous-Jouarre. It was a poor field, but each day the Squadron had a messenger plane and three alert planes on duty from daylight until dark. A woods two kilometers away was under shell fire, so there was plenty of excitement. July 17th, at Marass, was full of incidents. Lt. Hastings, taking off at Francheville, broke his tail, so that when he landed at Marass his tail was held on with but two wires. Lt. Murphy landed short of the field in the wheat - a salvage job. At noon an engineer sergeant reported there were two German spies in the locality dressed as American officers. There were no calls for duty and rain prevented the evening reconnaissance.

On July 18th, the real work started--Marshall Foch's great counter-offensive. From this date until the 30th, the work consisted of contact patrol and low reconnaissance. Every pilot and observer was on alert from daylight until dark, ready for call. The first machine would take off before daylight and the last would land in the dark by flares. On July 18th, Lt. Evans was shot down on contact patrol by a machine gun from the ground and was wounded in the leg. He became dizzy from pain and loss of blood, but Lt. Merrill oriented him and directed the course until a landing was made in a field behind the allied lines. Evans was sent directly to a hospital and returned to the squadron in August.

On July 19th, Lt. Babcock, with Lt. Douglas as observer, was machine-gunned from the ground. His intake manifold was shot away and a strut shattered, so he landed at Marass and flew back to the airdrome in one of the reserve ships.

On the 20th, the British R. A. F. started to arrive in Sopwith "Camels." For the next ten days, the sky was black with Sops. The Boche became conspicuous by their absence. In addition there were many French and English bombing squadrons. As suddenly as they arrived, these reinforcements departed, the result being that this concentration of the German Air Force was opposed only by seven American squadrons, four chasse and three observation.

During all of this period, the Squadron was terribly handicapped with the Sopwiths. They were absolutely unfitted for work at the front. The motors were second hand when received by the squadron, so about the middle of July, they started going bad and the few serviceable ones had to be on the schedule continuously. On the 18th of July the first Salmsons were received and work with them started immediately. Until the end of the war, the 88th operated as a Salmson Squadron.

On the 30th of July the 88th was relieved by a French squadron and on August 4th moved to Ferme-de-Greves, Southeast of Chateau-Thierry. The move from Francheville to the field at Ferme-de-Greves, near Crezancy and Conde-en-Brie was a distance of about 60 kilometers and was easily covered in a 30 minute flight or 2-1/2 hours by truck. There were two French Squadrons on the field, the 237th and the 284th. The field was the farthest point of the German advance in that sector and had been vacated by them on July 18th in the Allied counter-offensive. The ground was covered with shell holes which had recently been filled with soft earth; and although it was a very large field, the shell holes made good landings difficult.

Some of the French Officers were billeted at Greves farm. Only a part of the Squadron was put there and the rest were at neighboring farms. All of the houses were riddled with shell holes and the poor quality of billets and the assigning of them lost the billeting officer most of his popularity.

The Squadron was assigned as the Corps Squadron to the 3rd U. S. Army Corps and the front lines were then south of the Vesle River running between Courlandon and Bazaches. Allied troops were pushing the Germans back gradually and they resisted strongly and showed intentions of making a final stand along the Vesle. The town of Fismes was in the center of the sector, the mill stack making a good landmark in foggy weather. Some part of this town, held alternately by Americans and Germans, was always on fire so that no report of a mission was complete without the statement "Fire in Fismes." On the first day the squadron started reconnaissance missions of the Corps front and gave protection to the French photographic planes. The 6th PhotoSection joined the 88th then and it was assigned all the photo missions required from then on. In addition to the ordinary vertical photographs, Lieutenant Stevens, the photo officer also took some very valuable obliques of the entire front. The oblique camera then became part of the equipment, so arranged that both the camera and machine guns could be operated from the rear tourelle. Infantry liaisons with American troops were carried out each morning until they reached the Vesle River where the Germans made a determined stand until the first week in September. On August 7th, one of the 88th's planes on a reconnaissance broke up a formation of bombers which was harassing the 4th Division. A great many reglages were successfully carried out with the 28th Divisional Artillery and with the Corps Artillery.

On August 9th, Lieutenants Page and Rancourt, while doing a reconnaissance were attacked over Bazaches by six enemy Pfalz. Although Lieut. Rancourt was wounded three times in the leg by their first burst, by skillful maneuvering and good shooting the pair managed to bring one of the Boche down out of control and drove the others off. On August 11th, on a photo mission, a formation of five planes was attacked by eleven Germans. Lieutenants McClendon, Plummer and Burns were killed and Lieut. Jordan was wounded. Lt. Hitchcock was piloting the plane in which Lt. Burns was killed and although his control surfaces were partly shot away he succeeded in getting back to the field with Lt. Burns' body.

Other combats during the month were those of Lieutenants Babcock and Palmer, attacked by eleven enemy while protecting a photo mission; Lieutenant Bernheimer and Bagby, attacked by twelve while in pursuit of one triplane; and Lieutenants Comey and Trickey, attacked by two while performing an artillery adjustment. On September 2nd a reglage mission to adjust fire of the 55th C.A.S. was assigned Lieutenants Comey and Bagby, with Lieutenants Page and Carl, and Hitchcock and Moore for protection. Eight enemy planes were met and in the course of the combat Lieutenants Hitchcock and Moore were killed and Lieut. Page was forced to land on a French field south of Reims. The leader of the German patrol was shot down and crashed near Romaine.

During the advance of our troops across the Vesle River it was decided that the airdrome was too far from the front and the 88th moved up to Goussancourt, about 25 kilometers from Ferme-de-Greves. This new position was about 10 kilometers from the front, and aerial combats took place almost over the field. At Goussancourt several infantry liaisons were carried out successfully during one of which Lieut. Wagner, flying with Lieut. Heilbrunn was slightly wounded in the foot. Successful photo missions, protected by pursuit squadrons, were made covering the heights along the Aisne River. When the 3rd Corps was relieved by the French about September 8th, the Squadron was moved back again to Ferme-de-Greves for a two day's rest.

During almost the entire time that the squadron had been on the Vesle front the enemy had air superiority in its sector. The squadron reported few American pursuit planes operating on the front, perhaps two flights a day, while Germans could be seen in large formations. In the latter part of August a French group, which included the squadron of the French ace, Lt. Georges Madon, came to work on that front. Several Boches were shot down and the advantage turned in favor of the 88th. On clear nights enemy aircraft passed over on bombing trips but did not pay them a visit.

The day before the St. Mihiel attack the squadron received orders to move with all possible speed and to report at Souilly for such duty as called for by the 5th Observation Group. The Squadron Commander reached Ferme-de-Greves late on the night of 11th September with the orders for change of station. The Squadron flew its planes to Souilly the following morning and made two reconnaissances that afternoon. That evening the flying personnel of the squadron included sixteen pilots and eleven observers, all available for duty, and fourteen airplanes. One hundred and fifty kilometers had been covered in its change of station, on a forenoon blustery with wind and rain.

The Souilly field had adequate hangar and barracks space for only two American Squadrons. The 99th and 104th American Squadrons and a French Escadrille were under orders to report to the Souilly field, and arrived between the 11th and 17th. On the 14th the 88th Squadron moved again to the Pretz-en-Argonne Airdrome, fifteen kilometers Southwest of Souilly.

During the St. Mihiel assault the 88th Squadron worked along the north end of the battle line with the 26th Division. There was only one combat; Capt. Littauer and Lt. Boyd were shot down while protecting a photo mission plane from the 99th Squadron. Enemy pursuit planes cut Capt. Littauer out of position and attacked him alone. His plane was practically riddled, and the punctured radiator finally forced him to land. Lt. Boyd was shot several times in the legs and arms, but assisted Littauer in directing his course.

On 17 September the squadron was relieved from duty with the 5th Obs. Group and reassigned to the 3rd Army Corps, and Capt. Littauer acted as Chief of Air Service for the Corps. Training exercises were carried out with the 4th, 33rd, 79th and 80th Divisions, and when the Argonne-Meuse offensive got under way the Squadron carried out its daily work with these divisions, although technically under command of the 3rd Army.

The weather plagued all Air Service units throughout the months of September to November. A review shows that of the total of 61 days from September 12th to November 11th, 11 days were fair, 20 were cloudy, 15 included fog and 15 were rainy; about fifty percent in all were suitable for photo missions. The squadron moved to Souilly on 20 September, with orders to remain back from the lines during patrols to minimize evidence of the coming attack. Alert batteries of artillery were assigned and practice missions carried out for familiarizing the teams with the territory.

The Argonne-Meuse offensive opened on 26 September, and continued in great intensity during the remaining weeks of the War. Lt. Loud and his Observer, Capt. Trickey were shot down in flames on the 28th. Lt. Loud died the next day from burns received, but Capt. Trickey had managed to climb out on the wing and escaped with slight burns. Capt. Babcock and Lt. Bagby, observer, went out on an assignment to find and strafe enemy troops thought to be crossing a bridge at the right of their sector. Other valuable reconnaissances were carried out. On the 29th Lt. Gifford was severely wounded by ground machine gun fire while determining the line of the left division. In fact, this was one means of finding the forward line of the infantry, by observing enemy fire from the ground. During the first week in October the squadron succeeded in finding nearly two-thirds of the enemy's artillery locations in the area opposite the 3rd Army Corps. An "Enemy Battery in Action" map was kept in the Operations Office, and although many wireless messages were sent from the planes to the ground, the maps prepared by the squadron from intelligence received while in the air were most effective in advising the U. S. Corps Artillery commands.

On the days of good weather all types of reconnaissances were carried out, but the weather rendered photography impossible most of the time. On 20 October Lts. Bernheimer and Bagby, observer, carried out a successful mission in spite of foul weather. For this, the General Commanding the 3rd Army Corps wrote, "The dangerous task undertaken by you to secure information at what appears to be a critical time this morning is fully

realized. I therefore desire to thank you for your good work and for the information brought back so promptly. . . " A photo mission plane was sent out on 23 October, protected by two other planes from the Squadron and five Pursuit planes. Four Fokkers attacked as the mission plane crossed the lines and were driven off; and seven Pfalz dove on the photo plane as it was completing its sortie, after taking 35 photo plates. Three of the enemy were reported as shot down, and the following day confirmation was received for two of these. The pilot/observer teams participating were Capt. Babcock and Lt. Wheeler, Lts. McCordie and Powers, and Lts. Grant and Foster. The same order giving confirmation also confirmed the plane, a Fokker, shot down on the 22nd by Lt. Grant and Signer.

The final assault on the enemy was stepped up from the 1st of November. However, fog and rain kept the 88th from photography work, and most of the sorties were at low level to determine locations of the American infantry positions. Propaganda leaflets were dropped over the enemy lines, and newspapers supplied by the Y. M. C. A. were dropped on American positions. Many of the pilots and observers were eager to get into the final action, some going out on voluntary line and reconnaissance patrols, and one of the teams carried 3 bombs obtained from a nearby bombing squadron to drop on the enemy.

The Squadron moved, on November 4th, to Bethelainville and was here when the Armistice was signed.

The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to the following:

Captain Philip R. Babcock, A.S. (Pilot)
 Captain Kenneth P. Littauer, A.S. (Pilot)
 1st Lt. Ralph B. Bagby, F.A. (Observer) with silver star
 1st Lt. Louis G. Bernheimer, A.S. (Pilot) with bronze oak leaf
 1st Lt. Joel H. McClenden, A.S. (Pilot) killed in action
 1st Lt. Richard C. M. Page, A.S. (Pilot) with silver star
 1st Lt. John I. Rancourt, F.A. (Observer)
 2nd Lt. Theodore E. Boyd, F.A. (Observer)
 2nd Lt. James S. D. Burns, Inf. (Observer) killed in action
 2nd Lt. Roger W. Hitchcock, A.S. (Pilot) killed in action
 2nd Lt. John W. Jordan, F.A. (Observer)
 2nd Lt. Charles W. Plummer, F.A. (Observer) killed in action
 2nd Lt. Joseph A. Palmer, F.A. (Observer)

The Croix de Guerre was awarded to Capt. Babcock, and Lts. Bagby, Page, Rancourt, Hitchcock and Plummer and:

Capt. Floyd E. Evans, A.S. (Pilot)
 1st Lt. Pitt F. Carl, Jr., F.A. (Observer)
 1st Lt. George M. Comey, A.S. (Pilot)
 1st Lt. Harold W. Merrill, F.A. (Observer)
 2nd Lt. Frank M. Moore, F.A. (Observer)

Major Littauer (he received his promotion shortly after the Armistice) also had received the Croix de Guerre (French), Croix de Guerre (Belgian) and the Order of Leopold (Belgian) while a pilot with the French Army. General Bullard, the Commanding General of the 3rd Army Corps, awarded Corps Citations to Officers Bagby, Carl, Comey, Heilbrum, Page, Wagner, Hitchcock, Moore and Wheeler.

Probably the best picture of the 88th Squadron's combats was included in General Mason Patrick's award of the D. S. C. to Lt. Babcock (later Capt.):

"For extraordinary heroism in action near Fismes, France, 11 August 1918. Under the protection of three pursuit planes, each carrying a pilot and observer, Lts. Bernheimer and Jordan in charge of a photo plane successfully carried out a hazardous mission over the enemy lines to the River Aisne. The four American ships were attacked by twelve enemy battle planes. Lt. Bernheimer, by coolly and skillfully maneuvering his ship, and Lt. Jordan, by accurate operation of his machine gun, in spite of wounds in shoulder and leg, aided materially in the victory which came to the American ships, and returned safely with 36 valuable photographs. The Pursuit plane operated by Lts. Hitchcock and Burns was disabled while these two officers were fighting effectively. Lt. Burns was mortally wounded and his body jammed the controls. After a headlong fall of 2500 metres, Lt. Hitchcock succeeded in regaining control of his plane and piloted it back to his airdrome. Lts. McClenden and Plummer were shot down and killed after a vigorous combat with five of the enemy's planes. Lts. Babcock and Palmer, by gallant and skillful fighting, aided in driving off the German planes and were materially responsible for the successful execution of the photographic mission.

"I take great pleasure in handing you this decoration..."

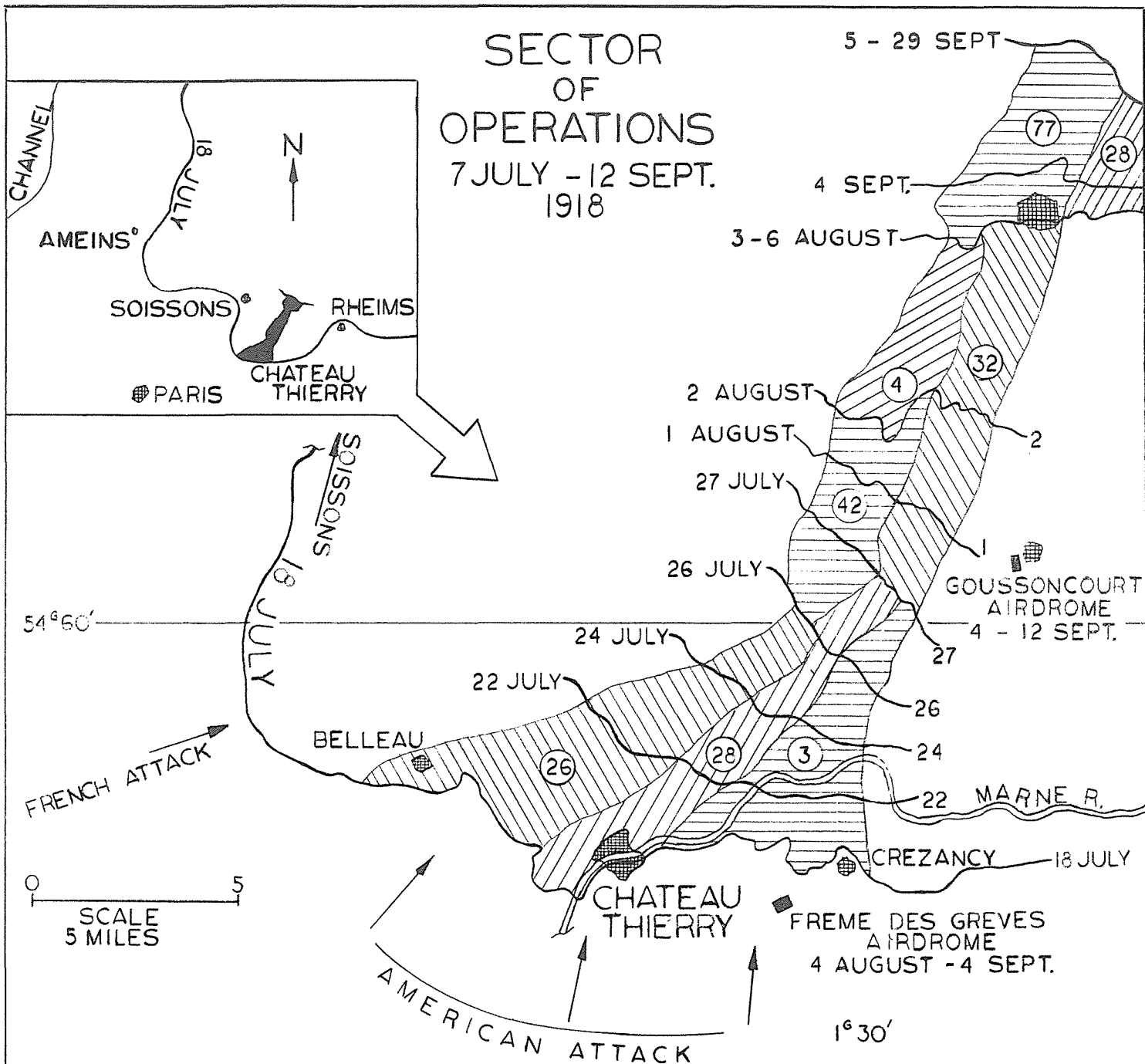
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In a resume of this nature, due to its brevity, the complete story of the actions by the 88th Observation Squadron cannot be adequately told. Much has to be read between the lines. One insight is given by the report filed by Capt. Babcock after the war ended, regarding operations of the squadron and methods of carrying out missions. Covering reconnaissance, he said:

"This is perhaps the greatest field of observation work, which takes the pilot on both sides of the enemy lines at altitudes from 1000 to 200 metres. There is no protection for this work, so a pilot has to take care of himself..."

After the Armistice the 88th obtained more favorable quarters at Villers la Chevre, and later moved up to Treves Airdrome, an old Zeppelin Field between Euren and Zewen, where it observed, for a while, the troop movements of the Army of Occupation. Schools were set up and courses of instruction given to many air and ground officers and the men were kept as busy as possible until the final day arrived for return to the States in May of 1919.

# SECTOR OF OPERATIONS 7 JULY - 12 SEPT. 1918



## 88TH AERO SQDN. (OBSERVATION)

This map shows the sector of operations to which the 88th Observation Sqdn. was assigned, beginning with the Chateau Thierry Offensive. French Divisions had been replaced by U.S. 1st Army troops, the 26th, 28th and 3rd Divisions in the lines from Torcy (left of Belleau) to Crezancy. It was the duty of the 88th Sqdn. to observe the day to day positions of U.S. troops as they advanced against the German.

The last German offensive of the War was launched in this area on 15 July and within 3 days expended itself. Marshal Foch immediately ordered the counterattack on 18 July and it was rapidly pressed until the entire Chateau Thierry Salient was reduced. On 26 July the 42nd Div. replaced the 26th and next day the 32nd Div. replaced the 28th and 3rd in the narrowing salient. By 4 August the lines were greatly straightened, relieving Paris of the threat of nearly four years during which German Armies had been within but a few miles. The 4th Division took over from the 42nd for a day and then it, with the 32nd, was replaced by the 77th and 28th Divisions in the Vesle Sector. But, on 12 Sept., the 88th Sqdn. was moved to Souilly to take part in the St. Mihiel Offensive.

FRANCHEVILLE  
AIRDROME  
7 JULY - 4 AUG.  
COULOMMIERS

## 88th OBSERVATION SQUADRON (Salmons)

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt. L.D. Mahan, 7 Oct. 1917 - 1 Feb. 1918  
 Maj. H.B. Anderson, 1 Feb. - 4 July  
 Capt. K.P. Littauer, 4 July - 19 Sept.  
 Lt. F.E. Evans, 19 Sept. - Armistice

## AIRCRAFT USED

Sopwith "1½ Strutter", 130 H.P. Clerget  
 5 May - 18 July  
 Salmons S.A.L.2A2, 230 HP Salmons A-9  
 18 July - Armistice

## FLIGHT COMMANDERS

"A" Fl. Capt. K.P. Littauer, 28 May - 12 Sept.  
 Lt. F.E. Evans, 12 Sept. - 19 Sept.  
 Lt. P.H. Babcock, 19 Sept. - Armistice  
 "B" Fl. Lt. F.E. Evans, 28 May - 12 Sept.  
 Lt. P.H. McNulty, 12 Sept. - 19 Sept.  
 Lt. E.A. Hastings, 19 Sept. - Armistice  
 "C" Fl. Lt. T.A. Box, 28 May - 20 July  
 Lt. P.R. Babcock, 20 July - 19 Sept.  
 Lt. R.C.M. Page, 19 Sept. - Armistice

## ASSIGNMENT AND TRANSFER LIST (Cont'd)

| NAME                      | Pilot or Observer Branch | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG. | SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. |                                              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|----------------------------------------------|
| Capt. Kenneth P. Littauer | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | † C.O. of 88th Sq. ‡ C.O. 1st Corps Obs. Gp. |
| Lt. George M. Comey       | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Louis G. Bernheimer   | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Floyd E. Evans        | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | ♂ Captain. † C.O. of 88th Sq.                |
| Lt. Fletcher L. McCordic  | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. George M. Curphy      | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Thomas A. Box         | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To Night Obs. Gp.                            |
| Lt. Lawrence C. Brower    | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To S.O.S. as instructor                      |
| Lt. Richard C.M. Page     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Edmund A. Hastings    | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. William W. Foster     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Lewis V. Heilbrun     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Philip R. Babcock     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | ♂ Captain.                                   |
| Lt. Peter H. McNulty      | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | ♂ Captain.                                   |
| Lt. John T. Fairall       | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To S.O.S. as instructor                      |
| Lt. Joel H. McClendon     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | K.I.A.                                       |
| Lt. Joseph H. Carr        | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Victor M. Hasselman   | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To Staff, 3rd Army Corps A.S.                |
| Lt. Howard T. Douglas     | O Inf.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To Oper. Off., 3rd Army Corps                |
| Lt. Stephen S. Barrows    | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Edward W. Wagner      | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Frank M. Moore        | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | K.I.A.                                       |
| Lt. Joseph A. Palmer      | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Charles W. Plummer    | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | K.I.A.                                       |
| Lt. Thomas A. Kirwan      | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To 4th Corps Obs. Gp.                        |
| Lt. Harold W. Merrill     | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To Night Obs. Gp.                            |
| Lt. John I. Bancourt      | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Wounded, to hospital                         |
| Lt. Einar W. Chester      | O Inf.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To hospital                                  |
| Lt. Paul C. Boylan        | O Cav.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Theodore E. Boyd      | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Wounded, to hospital                         |
| Lt. Everett S. Hartwell   | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Returned to U.S.                             |
| Lt. Curtiss Wheeler       | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Paul J. Mathis        | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| NAME                      | Pilot or Observer Branch | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG. | SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. |                                              |
| Lt. John W. Jordan        | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Wounded. To Gp. HQ.                          |
| Lt. James S.D. Burne      | O Inf.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | K.I.A.                                       |
| Lt. Roger W. Hitchcock    | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | K.I.A.                                       |
| Lt. Harold F. Marshall    | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Joseph M. Murphy      | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Wounded, to hospital                         |
| Lt. Charles T. Trickey    | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | To G-3, 1st Army                             |
| Lt. Ralph B. Bagby        | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Charles E. Ensign     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. John P. Child         | **S.O. Inf.              |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Pitt F. Carl          | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. A.J. Cordier          | **S.O. F.A.              |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Charles C. Gifford    | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Wounded, to hospital                         |
| Capt. John A. O'Keefe     | **S.O. F.A.              |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Harmon C. Padon       | **S.O. F.A.              |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Perry A. Thompson     | **S.O. Inf.              |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. William A. Hogen      | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Harold E. Loud        | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Died of wounds                               |
| Lt. Sidney B. Grant       | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Robert S. Link        | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Morse A. Anderson     | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Alonzo L. Knight      | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. George W. Ellis       | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      | Relieved from duty                           |
| Lt. Hubert F. Southall    | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. John W. Signer        | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Francis B. Foster     | *M.G. A.S.               |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Harry B. Nickell      | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Capt. Alan Crawford       | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Frank M. Olston       | O F.A.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Capt. Rollin A. Burditt   | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Adam C. Jones         | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Dudley H. Hale        | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Frederick L. Fish     | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Thomas F. Cook        | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Thomas F. Rochester   | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Lawrence D. Hammond   | P A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Russell M. Neff       | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Michael C. Elliott    | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Clyde O. Braden       | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Harold P. Rounds      | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |
| Lt. Paul E. Todd          | O A.S.                   |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |                                              |

88th SQUADRON OFFICERS FROM THE G. D. E.  
(Groupe des Divisions d'Entrainement)

Although the 88th went "operational" on 28 May, it contained certain officers who were among the earliest of Americans to get into combat flying, outside of those Americans who volunteered for the R. F. C. or French units as foreign nationals. These were pilots and observers of the G. D. E., a personnel pool, established to feed American officers into French squadrons as rapidly as they became available from the schools.

(Note: the 17th and 148th Pursuit Squadrons were composed of pilots trained by the R. A. F. and who went into action in early 1918 with R. A. F. squadrons. See A. A. H. S. Journal, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter, 1959.)

Perhaps the earliest of any of the A. S. Army Officers, whether of the Air Service or of other branches, to go into an active unit was Lt. Thomas A. Kirwan (Observer), F. A. He was assigned to the Xth French Army, Esc. 55 which operated in the Soissons sector. According to G. D. E. records he was with Esc. 55 from 4 February to 4 March and was then transferred to the IVth Army, Esc. 51 where he served from 10 April to 20 May. Lt. Kirwan was posted to the 88th Sq. on 24 May. He did not remain there long, however, and was promoted to Captain and transferred, in late June, to the 4th Corps Observation Group. Other officers who went through French training and into the 88th Sq. were: (all observers)

|                              | French Army | Escad. | Rep'd.   | Transferred |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------|----------|-------------|
| Lt. R. D. Bagby, F. A.       | IVth        | ?      | 8 June   | 14 July     |
| Lt. S. S. Barrows, F. A.     | IIInd       | 287    | 8 April  | 24 May      |
| Lt. T. E. Boyd, F. A.        | IVth        | 40     | 10 April | 26 May      |
| Lt. P. C. Boylan, Cav.       | IVth        | 71     | 17 April | May         |
| Lt. E. W. Chester, Inf.      | IVth        | 71     | 17 April | May         |
| Lt. H. T. Douglas, Inf.      | IIInd       | 287    | 8 April  | 20 May      |
| Lt. E. S. Hartwell, F. A.    | IVth        | 260    | 10 April | 20 May      |
| Lt. V. M. Hasselman, F. A.   | IVth        | 227    | 8 April  | 17 May      |
| Lt. J. W. Jordan, F. A.      | VIIIth      | 71     | 8 April  | 9 June      |
| Lt. Harold W. Merrill, F. A. | IVth        | 260    | 10 April | 1 June      |
| Lt. F. M. Moore, F. A.       | VIIIth      | ?      | 8 April  | 24 May      |
| Lt. J. A. Palmer, F. A.      | VIIIth      | 258    | 6 April  | 20 May      |
| Lt. C. W. Plummer, F. A.     | VIIIth      | 258    | 8 April  | 20 May      |
| Lt. J. I. Rancourt, F. A.    | IVth        | 51     | 10 April | 1 June      |
| Lt. C. T. Trickey, C. A. C.  | IVth        | ?      | 8 June   | ?           |
| Lt. E. W. Wagner, F. A.      | VIIIth      | ?      | 8 April  | ?           |
| Lt. Curtiss Wheeler, F. A.   | VIIIth      | 71     | 8 April  | ?           |
| Lt. P. J. Mathis, F. A.      | VIIIth      | 258    | 8 April  | 15 May      |
| Lt. J. S. D. Burns, Inf.     | VIIIth      | 41     | 8 April  | May         |

This part of the G. D. E. came into being in early 1918 when the 1st Corps Observation School was being organized at Amanty. Some 88th Pilots served for a time as pilots for the school and when the observers completed the course they went out, through the G. D. E. personnel post to the French units. They received an average of ten hours of war flying and as a result, when the 1st, 12th, 88th and 91st Obs. Squadrons went into operation, they were practically experienced.