

CURTISS "HAWKS" IN THE ARMY

PART 1

by ROBERT L. CAVANACH

One of the most interesting series of airplanes to see service with the United States Army Air Corps during the period of approximately 1925-1935 were the Curtiss "Hawk" biplane fighters. Developed from the Curtiss P FW-8 series, the "Hawks" were used by the elite First Pursuit Group at Selfridge Field and by other squadrons, both line and school.

The following tables present information on such usage. The information is by no means a complete chronological history of specific aircraft, but is believed to be accurate as to serial number, delivery date, disposal and as far as possible, to determine aircraft were assigned on the dates listed. Where squadron assignment could not be specifically determined, no such information is listed. To aid in interpretation of the presented data an example is given:

Curtiss P-1F Air Corps Number 28-72 was delivered in October, 1928 as AT-5A, A.C. No. 28-72. Having been modified to a P-1F configuration, it was on strength of the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Virginia, in June, 1930, serving as airplane number 10. At some time between that date and February, 1933, it was transferred to the 43rd School Squadron, 10th School Group, at Kelly Field, Texas. Serving as airplane number 38 of this squadron, it was wrecked in February, 1933.

It should be noted that the date (s) of squadron assignment are not all inclusive; it is almost a certainty that the aircraft were on the squadron's strength prior to and, in many cases, after the date shown.

The A/C No. column lists the identification number assigned by the using organization to the airplane. Examination of these data for airplanes assigned to the First Pursuit Group leads to an interesting theory: prior to sometime in March, 1929, the 17th and 94th Pursuit Squadrons apparently assigned numbers between 0 and 20 to their aircraft, the number probably bearing a relationship to the number of aircraft on squadron strength; subsequent to March, 1929 and coincident with the arrival of P-1C aircraft, the identification number was obtained from the last two digits of the airplane serial number and earlier series aircraft were renumbered to conform. The 27th Pursuit Squadron did not change to this new method until very late in 1929 or early in 1930 since P-1C A.C. No. 29-252 was airplane number 5 in November, 1929 and P-1C A.C. No. 29-236 was airplane number 36 in May, 1930.

The value of the knowledge of such a numbering scheme is, of course, obvious; if one knows the block (s) of serial numbers assigned to various airplane models, the serial number of a First Pursuit Group airplane can be determined from its identification number. Information not presented indicates that such a scheme was used by the First Pursuit Group until the advent of the "designator" method of identification in 1937. Like many theories, exceptions can be found. Two such exceptions are as follows: 17th Pursuit Squadron P-1 aircraft carrying 200 series identifica-

tion numbers were flown by First Pursuit Group Headquarters' pilots and were assigned to the 17th for maintenance purposes; P-6A aircraft assigned to the 17th utilized the last three digits of the serial number for identification purposes.

A few further miscellaneous comments may be of interest. Missing serials in the P-1D, P-1E and P-1F series are accounted for by AT-4, AT-5 and AT-5A aircraft that were destroyed before being converted. The Z prefix, e.g. ZP-1F, indicated that the aircraft type was considered obsolete for combat purposes. P-1F A.C. No. 28-57 was static tested in late 1934 and/or early 1935 to determine if service usage caused any reduction in strength. Upon examining the distribution of P-6E aircraft, it appears that the 17th Pursuit Squadron received even-numbered aircraft and the 94th Pursuit Squadron was given the odd-numbered ships.

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Sources

- (1) Index to Serial Numbers Assigned to AF and DA Aircraft (1928-31 Dec. 1947), AMC Manual O-07-1.
- (2) Airplane Record at Wright Field, Jan. 1929 to July 1943.
- (3) Serial Number Index USAF Aircraft 1918-1946.
- (4) Mat. Div. A.C. 446 Form dated 10/8/34.
- (5) Various other documents at W-PAFB, Ohio.

Abbreviations

A.C.T.S.	Air Corps Tactical School
Pur.	Pursuit Squadron
Sch.	School Squadron
A.C. Det.	Air Corps Detachment
Mat. Div.	Material Division
ACTS Det.	Air Corps Tactical School Detachment
Ser.	Service Squadron
Fly Br.	Flying Branch
FAD	Fairfield Air Depot
ASSC	Airways Section Station Complement
Att.	Attack Squadron
8th Grp.	8th Group Headquarters
2nd Wg.	2nd Wing Headquarters
Selfridge	Selfridge Field, Mt. Clemens, Michigan
Langley	Langley Field, Hampton Roads, Virginia
Chanute	Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois
Kelly	Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas
Edgewood	Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland
Wright	Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio
Bolling	Bolling Field, Washington, D.C.
Ft. Leaven	Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
Fairfield	Fairfield Air Depot, Fairfield, Ohio
Mitchel	Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York
Randolph	Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas
Patterson	Patterson Field, Fairfield, Ohio
McCook	McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio

P-1

A.C. No.	Date Del.	Squadron	A.C. No.	Station	Date	Remarks
25-410	7-25		P-400	McCook	11-26	Surveyed 3-32 as XP-17
25-411	10-25			Selfridge	11-26	
		A.C.T.S.	13	Langley	5-30	Surveyed 7-30 as P-1
25-412	10-25	27th Pur		Selfridge	8-27	Wrecked 8-27 as P-1
25-413	10-25			Chanute	11-29	Wrecked 11-29 as P-1
25-414	10-25	94th Pur		Selfridge	3-26	Wrecked 3-26 as P-1
25-415	11-25					Surveyed 7-30 as P-1
25-416	11-25	94th Pur	9	Selfridge	11-28	
		43rd Sch	42	Kelly	11-29, 2-30	Surveyed 3-30 as P-1
25-417	10-25			Selfridge	4-27, 8-27	Wrecked 8-27 as P-1
25-418	10-25	27th Pur		Selfridge	8-26	
				Selfridge	7-28	Wrecked 7-28 as P-1
25-419	11-25	A.C. Det.		Edgewood	10-27	Wrecked 10-27 as P-1

Note: 25-410 accepted 7-25 as XP-1

P-2

25-420	1-26		P-431	Wright	7-27 to 6-29	Wrecked 3-32 as XP-2
25-421	1-26	94th Pur	12	Selfridge	2-29	As P-1
		43rd Sch	41	Kelly	4-31	Surveyed 8-31 as P-1
25-422	1-26	94th Pur	8	Selfridge	2-29	As P-1A
		A.C.T.S.	14	Langley	12-29	DEPT MECH 4-30 as P-1A
25-423	1-26			Selfridge	9-28	As XP-6
				Selfridge	2-29	Wrecked 2-29 as XP-6
25-424	1-26	17th Pur	8	Selfridge	12-28	As P-1
						Surveyed 6-30 as P-1

P-1A

26-276		43rd Sch		Kelly	10-26	As Fokker D.VII for "Wings"
		27th Pur	4	Selfridge	7-28	
26-277	4-26			Selfridge	8-26	Surveyed as P-1A, 10-26
26-278	4-26	17th Pur	4	Selfridge	1-29	Class 25 6-29 as P-1A
26-279	4-26	A.C. Det.	31	Bolling	3-28, 10-28	
		43rd Sch	48	Kelly	7-31	Wrecked 7-31 as P-1A
26-280	5-26	Mat. Div.	P-508	Wright	1-29 to 6-30	Wrecked 6-30 as XP-1A
26-281	5-26	43rd Sch		Kelly	10-26	As Fokker D.VII for "Wings"
		94th Pur	5	Selfridge	8-28	Surveyed 5-31 as ZP-1A
26-282	5-26					Surveyed 8-31 as ZP-1A
26-283	5-26	17th Pur		Selfridge	12-28	
		A.C. Det.		Ft Leaven	11-29	Surveyed 1-31 as ZP-1A
26-284	5-26	94th Pur	10	Selfridge	3-29	
		43rd Sch	49	Kelly	7-31	Wrecked 7-31 as ZP-1A
26-285	5-26					Surveyed 6-31 as ZP-1A
26-286	6-26	17th Pur		Selfridge	3-27	Surveyed 10-30 as P-1A
26-287	5-26	27th Pur	3	Selfridge	5-29	
		43rd Sch	43	Kelly	12-29 to 8-31	Surveyed 12-31 as ZP-1A
26-288	5-26		P-574	Wright	9-29	Surveyed 12-30 as P-1A
26-289	5-26	43rd Sch	48	Kelly	12-29	Wrecked 12-29 as P-1A
26-290	6-26	17th Pur		Selfridge	3-27	
			P-474	Wright	8-27	
		27th Pur		Selfridge	2-29	
		A.C.T.S.	A	Langley	8-29	
		A.C.T.S.	3	Langley	8-30 to 10-30	Wrecked 10-30 as P-1A
26-291	6-26	27th Pur	7	Selfridge	5-29	
		A.C.-Det.		Fairfield	9-29	Wrecked 9-29 as P-1A
26-292	6-26	43rd Sch		Kelly	1-27	As Fokker D.VII for "Wings"
		94th Pur		Selfridge	9-28	Wrecked 9-28 as P-1A
26-293	6-26	94th Pur	10	Selfridge	4-28	
		94th Pur	3	Selfridge	5-28, 3-29	Wrecked 3-29 as P-1A
26-294	6-26	A.C. Det.	34	Bolling	9-28	Wrecked 9-28 as P-1A
26-295	9-26	Mat. Div.	XP-488	Wright	8-28, 4-29	Surveyed 11-29 as XP-6A
26-296	7-26	Mat. Div.	P-526	Wright	4-29	
		43rd Sch	31	Kelly	2-31	Wrecked 2-31 as P-1A
26-297	6-26	27th Pur	9	Selfridge	4-29	
		43rd Sch	47	Kelly	12-30	Wrecked 12-30 as P-1A
26-298	7-26			Wright	8-27	
		43rd Sch	23	Kelly	3-31, 7-31	Surveyed 12-31 as ZP-1A
26-299	7-26	43rd Sch	47	Kelly	7-30	Wrecked 7-30 as P-1A
26-300	10-26					Surveyed 7-31 as XP-21A

Note: 26-296 delivered as XAT-4 on 7-26, modified to P-1A configuration.

P-1B

A.C. No.	Date Del.	Squadron	A.C. No.	Station	Date	Remarks
27-63	3-28	A.C. Det.	35	Bolling	8-28	
		43rd Sch	11	Kelly	6-31	Surveyed 9-31 as P-1B
27-64	9-27	18th Hq.	36	Bolling	8-27, 6-28	Surveyed 1-31 as P-1B
27-65	11-26	A.C. Det.	37	Bolling	10-28, 29; 3-29	
		43rd Sch	68	Kelly	1-32	Wrecked 1-32 as P-1B
27-66	3-27	94th Pur	5	Selfridge	2-29	Wrecked 5-29 as P-1B
27-67	9-27					Wrecked 6-29 as P-1B
27-68	11-27	Mat. Div	P-457	Wright	2-29 to 4-30	Surveyed 2-31 as P-1B
27-69	12-26	27th Pur	5	Selfridge	7-29	Wrecked 7-29 as P-1B
27-70	12-26					Surveyed 6-31 as P-1B
27-71	12-26	Mat. Div	P-523	Wright	2-29 to 7-29	Surveyed 2-33 as XP-1B
27-72	1-27	27th Pur	0	Selfridge	5-29, 8-29	
		27th Pur	72	Selfridge	8-30	Surveyed 8-30 as P-1B
27-73	1-27	27th Pur	13	Selfridge	2-29	Surveyed 8-32 as P-1B
27-74	1-27			Selfridge	7-28	Wrecked 7-28 as P-1B
27-75	1-27	27th Pur	10	Selfridge	2-29	
		27th Pur	75	Selfridge	8-30	
		43rd Sch		Kelly	2-32	Wrecked 2-32 as P-1B
27-76	1-27	27th Pur	7	Selfridge	10-29	
		27th Pur	76	Selfridge	6-30	Wrecked 6-30 as P-1B
27-77	1-27	27th Pur	2	Selfridge	7-29	Surveyed 1-32 as P-1B
27-78	1-27	27th Pur	11	Selfridge	6-28	
		ACTS Det.	47	Chanute	8-31	Class 25 8-32 as P-1B
27-79	2-27			Selfridge	7-27	Wrecked 7-27 as P-1B
27-80	1-27	Mat. Div.	P-462			
27-81	1-27	94th Pur	11	Selfridge	8-28, 9-29	Surveyed 1-32 as P-1B
27-82	3-27		P-260	Wright	1-28	
			P-573	Wright	4-30	
		43rd Sch	39	Kelly	11-31	Wrecked 11-31 as P-1B
27-83	2-27	17th Pur	201	Selfridge	1-29	
		27th Pur	83	Selfridge	6-30	
		43rd Sch	42	Kelly	4-31, 7-31	Wrecked 7-31 as P-1B
27-84	2-27	17th Pur		Selfridge	12-27	
		27th Pur	12	Selfridge	8-29, 11-29	
		17th Pur	84	Selfridge	8-30	Surveyed 4-32 as P-1B
27-85	2-27	ACTS Det.		Chanute	8-28, 9-28	
		94th Pur	85	Selfridge	8-29	Wrecked 8-29 as P-1B
27-86	2-27			Selfridge	2-28	Wrecked 2-28 as P-1B
27-87	3-27		P-461	Wright	1-29	
		A.C.T.S.	7	Langley	5-30	Wrecked 5-30 as P-1B

P-1D

Note: AT-4 delivery date shown. Service usage as P-1D's on dates indicated.

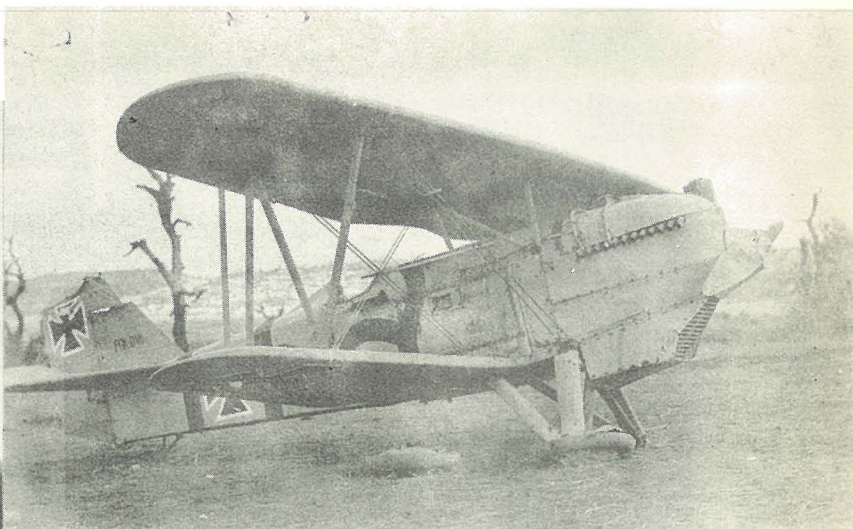
27-88	5-27	43rd Sch	5	Kelly	1-29	
		43rd Sch	1	Kelly	12-29, 10-30	Surveyed 4-32 as P-1D
27-90	5-27					Wrecked 5-30 as P-1D
27-91	5-27	43rd Sch	11	Kelly	3-30, 5-30	Wrecked 5-30 as P-1D
27-92	5-27	43rd Sch	15	Kelly	9-30, 11-31	Wrecked 11-31 as P-1D
27-93	5-27	43rd Sch	5	Kelly	4-29, 6-29	Wrecked 6-29 as P-1D
27-94	5-27	43rd Sch	4	Kelly	5-30	
		43rd Sch	20	Kelly	4-32	Wrecked 4-32 as P-1D
27-96	5-27					Wrecked 6-29 as P-1D
27-97	5-27	43rd Sch	12	Kelly	8-29	Wrecked 5-30 as P-1D
27-214	5-27	43rd Sch	9	Kelly	8-29, 8-31	Wrecked 8-31 as P-1D
27-217	5-27	43rd Sch	16	Kelly	8-29, 2-31, 8-31	
		43rd Sch	53	Kelly	7-32	Wrecked 7-32 as P-1D
27-221	5-27	43rd Sch	1	Kelly	4-29	
		43rd Sch	5	Kelly	11-31	Wrecked 11-31 as P-1D
27-222	5-27	43rd Sch	6	Kelly	3-31	Surveyed 4-32 as P-1D
27-223	6-27	43rd Sch		Kelly	3-32	Surveyed 3-32 as P-1D
27-224	6-27	43rd Sch	8	Kelly	8-29	
		43rd Sch	18	Kelly	12-30, 5-31	Surveyed 8-31 as P-1D
27-225	6-27	43rd Sch	2	Kelly	12-30	Wrecked 12-30 as P-1D
27-226	6-27	43rd Sch	10	Kelly	6-31	
		43rd Sch	47	Kelly	7-32	Wrecked 7-32 as P-1D
27-227	6-27					Surveyed 6-32 as P-1D
27-228	6-27	43rd Sch	8	Kelly	8-31	Surveyed 8-32 as P-1D
27-230	6-27	43rd Sch	13	Kelly	9-30	Wrecked 9-30 as P-1D
27-231	6-27	43rd Sch	17	Kelly	12-29, 9-30	Wrecked 9-30 as P-1D
27-232	6-27	43rd Sch	14	Kelly	11-29	Surveyed 12-31 as P-1D
27-233	6-27	43rd Sch	3	Kelly	9-29	Wrecked 9-29 as P-1D
27-234	6-27	43rd Sch		Kelly	5-29	Surveyed 4-32 as P-1D
27-236	6-27	43rd Sch	20	Kelly	8-29, 4-30	
		43rd Sch	12	Kelly	7-30, 11-31	Surveyed 1-32 as P-1D
27-237	6-27	62nd Ser		Brooks	12-29, 6-30	
		43rd Sch	4	Kelly	1-32	Wrecked 1-32 as P-1D

CURTISS "HAWKS" IN THE ARMY - PART I

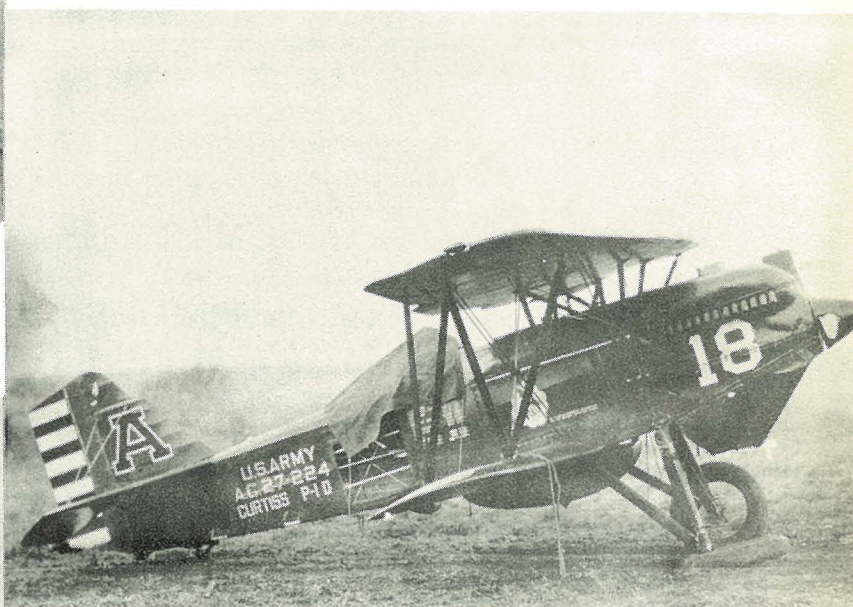
Photos by Robert L. Cavanagh



Above - P-1C No. 29-229 with 17th Purs. Sqdn. markings as of Summer, 1930
Below - P-1C No. 29-240 of same unit but with markings as of Spring, 1929



Curtiss "Hawk" P-1A, No. 26-281, as decorated for use in the Paramount motion picture "Wings"



Above - P-1D, A.C. No. 27-224, 43rd School Sqdn.
Below - P-1F, A.C. No. 28-64, 43rd School Sqdn.





Curtiss P-1A, 17th Pursuit Squadron, Ser. No. unknown. Placard on right side of cowl reads "Pilot - Cadet Jones"



P-1B, No. 27-84, 27th Pursuit Squadron, taken at Selfridge Field.
USAF photo #32481 A.C.