

Research Materials/Source Documents
ENLISTED FIRSTS

FILE TITLE: Private Beckwith Havens, First Air National Guard Aviator

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PVT BECKWITH HAVENS

Although the Air National Guard did not become a separate reserve component until 1946, the National Guard aviation program originated even before the Wright brothers were able to convince the U.S. Army that the airplane had military possibilities. On 30 May 1908, the First Aero Company, Signal Corps, New York National Guard was formed at the Park Avenue Armory on 34th Street in New York City. The unit consisted of approximately 25 aviation enthusiasts who volunteered to learn ballooning. The unit financed and built its first aircraft at a cost of \$500. The investment depreciated in 1910 when-the-do-it yourself aircraft crashed on takeoff during maneuvers. In 1911, the First Aero Company made its first successful entry into ~~the~~ heavier-than-air flight when the Curtiss Aeroplane Company loaned it an airplane and a pilot. The pilot, Beckwith Havens, later jointed the unit as a private and is recognized as the National Guard's first military aviator.

The Air National Guard
and
The American Military Tradition

Militiaman, Volunteer, and Professional

by
Charles Joseph Gross, PhD

Historical Services Division
National Guard Bureau
Washington, D.C.
1995

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was substantially smaller than those of its principal adversaries. Second, purely federal reserve forces that focused primarily on support, specialist, and technical missions were established for the first time. The militia, officially renamed the National Guard, won for itself the primary responsibility for providing reserve ground and air combat units. Third, the federal government obtained increased control of and funding for National Guard training, organization, and equipment. In return, the Guard acquired a greater liability for federal service while retaining its state control and responsibilities. Finally, a Reserve Officer Training Corps was established at some colleges and universities to produce reserve officers. Even the introduction of the peacetime draft and large standing forces in 1948 did not alter the fundamentals of that reserve system until it was replaced by the all-volunteer force in 1973. Conscription was grafted onto the traditional volunteer and militia system, while volunteers were recruited for both the active forces and the reserve components, including the National Guard. The draft was used to compensate for shortages of volunteers rather than to allocate the nation's manpower resources systematically.⁸

Adapting to the accelerating pace of technological change was another of Secretary Root's main goals. He wanted the General Staff to keep the Army abreast of "the progress of military science" and adjust its materiel to conditions that it would confront on future battlefields. The chief responsibility for research and development during that period lay with the Board of Ordnance and Fortification. Established in 1888, the board studied the results of various weapons tests during the early 1900s. It endorsed the Model 1903 Springfield rifle first issued in 1905 and retained in service until after the Second World War.⁹

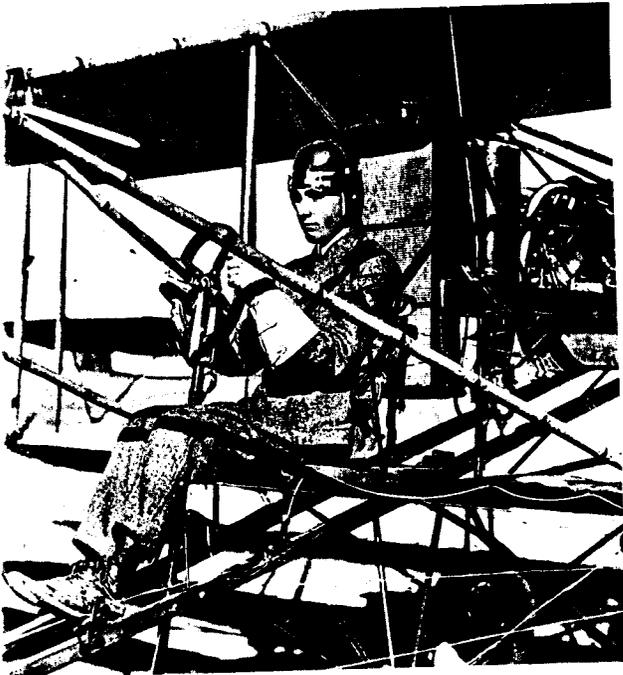
American soldiers were also introduced to machine guns, automobiles, and airplanes early in the twentieth century. The machine gun traced its origins to the Civil War but saw limited service during the Indian wars. Its first significant employment was at San Juan Heights in 1898. In 1904, Secretary of War William Howard Taft de-

cidated that the Maxim automatic machine gun would be standard in the Army although, despite a high-level attention, permanent machine gun companies were not established until 1916.¹⁰

The Army also tried to embrace the automobile, and the Army's Commanding General, Lt Gen. Nelson A. Miles, proposed creating an embryo automobile corps by dismounting two cavalry regiments. Cavalrymen ridiculed the idea. Later, the Army considered mounting artillery on motor vehicles, but the guns were too heavy. Another impractical idea was to place machine guns on armored cars, but they could not cope with poor roads and bad weather. In 1916, the Army launched a poorly funded truck development and test program before American entry into World War I, but it also failed to produce useful results.¹¹

National Guard aviation essentially emerged as a grass roots effort during the period of organizational and technological innovation in the Army between the Spanish-American War and World War I. On 2 August 1908, the Army formally accepted the world's first military airplane from the Wright brothers. Meanwhile, in April of the same year, a group of enthusiasts who were members of the 1st Company, Signal Corps, New York National Guard, had already organized a "aeronautical corps" at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City to learn ballooning. Although they had received instruction and assembled a balloon, it was not clear whether members of the unit ever actually ascended in it. In 1910, the unit raised \$500 to finance its first aircraft, but the investment disappeared when the plane crashed on takeoff during maneuvers that same year. In 1911, the Curtiss Aeroplane Company loaned the Guardsmen an aircraft and a pilot named Beck with Havens, who later joined the unit as a private and was recognized as the National Guard's first aviator. In August 1912, he flew with the Army in joint maneuvers.¹²

The Guard was a hotbed of early interest in aviation, and there were many efforts to form Guard aero units in various states by civilian flyers, businessmen, and National Guardsmen. They were as interested in promoting the genera-



Beckwith Havens, on loan to the New York National Guard from the Curtiss Aeroplane Co., would later join the Guard as a private and be recognized as its first aviator. (NGB Historical Services Collection)

development of American interest in aviation as they were in establishing Guard air units. For instance, when the Missouri National Guard established a small aero detachment in 1909, all of its personnel were members of the St. Louis Aero Club, which was established to train pilots for the 1907 international balloon races held in that city. The California Guard established an aeronautical detachment in its 7th Coast Artillery Company in February 1911, and Eugene Ely, the detachment's first private, was the first man to launch an aircraft from the deck of a warship. Before he was killed during an air show in Macon, Georgia, in October 1911, Ely was commissioned as the first Guard aviator in California. In May 1912, Lt. Col. Charles B. Winder of Ohio attended the Army's Aviation School at Augusta, Georgia, and became the first Guard officer to win a Reserve Military Aviator (RMA) rating.

A number of states had established small aviation branches within their National Guard organizations by 1916, although aside from New York, none could provide those fledgling air or-

ganizations with anything approaching adequate financial support. Nebraska's experience was probably typical in that respect. The state's experiment with military aviation began in 1913, when members of its Signal Corps branch assembled a Curtiss Model D biplane. The plane probably participated in the branch's annual encampment that year, but there was no official recognition of aviation's existence in the Nebraska Guard. Formal acknowledgement came on 15 July 1915 when the state issued an order organizing its Aviation Corps. Its headquarters was located at the state fairgrounds in Lincoln, and Capt. Castle W. Schaffer was assigned as its chief and was later joined by Ralph E. McMillen, a qualified pilot who was commissioned as a captain. Each of the officers provided his own airplane; and to raise money for the aviation branch, the governor "decided that the aviators should give exhibitions at county fairs and other public gatherings to supplement the very small funds that could be made available from the state."¹³ During the remainder of 1915, the pilots tried to do that but enjoyed little success because of the poor condition of Schaffer's aircraft.¹⁴

The aviation branch was not assigned to either of the state's two infantry regiments. Rather, it operated with either of them as training requirements dictated. In August 1915, for instance, Captain McMillen flew several flights with Nebraska's 4th and 5th Infantry Regiments, and on August 15th, he experimented dropping bombs from the air. Although records were sketchy, apparently most of his flights were visual reconnaissance missions conducted in direct support of the infantry. He also took some aerial photographs. That month, the Aviation Corps added another member when Edgar Bagnell, a private in the Nebraska Guard, was commissioned a first lieutenant in the organization. Schaffer apparently gave up flying after a crash landing at a county fair in Julesburg, Colorado, that summer.¹⁵

There was little financial support for those grassroots aviation efforts by either the states or the federal government, but World War I began to



HAVENS, Beckwith, (Aviator, Special Representative): Born New York City, N.Y., May 29, 1890, son of Abraham Britton and Liela (Beckwith) Havens. Education: Public schools, New York and Calif. Married Angela Cobb of Rochester, N. Y., Apr. 21, 1930.

- Beckwith Havens began his business career as an automobile salesman in 1908. Turning to aviation in 1910 he became a pilot for the Curtiss Exhibition Co. until 1914. Next he acted as foreign representative for the Denby Motor Truck Company, 1914-20. During the world war he served as a test pilot and instructor in the U. S. Naval Air Service. From 1920 to 1928 he was vice-president of Airships, Inc. In 1928 he became sales manager for the Loening Aeronautical Engineering Co. He has been special representative and aviation specialist for the Vacuum Oil Co., New York City, since 1930.

- While with the Curtiss Exhibition Co. (1911-14) he served as exhibition and demonstration pilot. He carried the second air mail, Savannah, Ga., Nov., 1911; flew all over the United States, Canada and Cuba, 1911, 1912 and 1913; made the first flight over Havana, Cuba, in 1911; won the Great Lakes Race, Chicago to Detroit, in 1913, and was awarded the Aero and Hydro Trophy and the Detroit Country Club Cup. He won the Curtiss Gold Medal for the first long distance flight in a flying boat, Chicago to New York, via the Great Lakes; made the second flight down the Hudson River, New York, and the first flight up this river, and made the first trans-continental flight in an amphibian (a Loening), New York to San Diego, Calif., in 1928.

- Private Pilot license No. 2207; F.A.I. certificate No. 127; Naval Aviator No. 457. **Member:** American Legion, Quiet Birdmen, Early Birds, Veterans Corps of Artillery-Society of the War of 1812. **Club:** New York. **Author:** In Defense of the Dirigible, 1922. **Home:** 145 E. 92d St., New York City. **Business:** 61 Broadway, N. Y. (Photo, Underwood & Underwood Studio).

HALLEY, Walter F., (Aviator; Aircraft Executive): Born Rapid City, S.D., Mar. 15, 1895, son of James H. and Lottie (Smith) Halley. Education: Rapid City (S.D.) High School; Harvard Military Academy; Cornell Univ., 1917. Married Esther Lanphere, of Rapid City, S.D., Apr. 10, 1924.

- During the world war, Walter F. Halley served in the U. S. Army air service from April, 1917, to June, 1919, being discharged with the rank of 1st lieutenant, A.S. While overseas he was first a member of the 11th Aero Squadron, 1st Bombardment Group, and later with the Army of Occupation was assigned to the 166th Squadron.

- Following the war he served as assistant cashier for

BLAIR, Shiras Alexander, (Army Officer, - Air Corps): Born Mobile, Ala., Sept. 23, 1891, son of Frank Gamble and Edna Ellison (Shiras) Blair. Education: Staunton Military Acad., 1907-09; Univ. of Ala., 1909-13. Married Thelma Wood of Indianapolis, Ind., Oct. 7, 1920. One child—Barbara Shiras.

- While engaged as an electrical engineer for an electrical testing laboratory in New York in 1913-14, Shiras A. Blair became interested in aviation and in the latter year entered the employ of the Sperry Gyroscope Co., Brooklyn, N. Y., as an electrical and aeronautical engineer, and during this period qualified as an airplane pilot. He assisted with the development of the gyroscope stabilizer for airplanes and an aerial torpedo. He also invented an automatic time operator for telephones and a cleaning apparatus for airplane parts.

- He served in the N. Y. National Guard, 1913-16, and during the World War entered the Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps and was commissioned a 1st lieutenant. Later he was promoted to a captain, Air Corps, Regular Army, and for a time was executive officer, March Field, Riverside, Calif. He is now stationed at San Francisco.

- **Member:** Phi Kappa Sigma. **Address:** Air Corps, Crissy Field, Presidio of San Francisco, Calif.

BROSSY, Frederic A., (Aviator): Born Detroit, Mich., Mar. 25, 1902, son of Francis E. and Carolyn (Gray) Brossy. Education: Detroit Univ. School, 1908-18; Blair Acad., 1918-19; Univ. of Mich., 1919-21; Univ. of So. Calif., 1922; Calif. Inst. of Technology, 1922-23. Married Elizabeth Higman, of Los Angeles, Sept. 2, 1924. Children—Betty Louise, Frederic A., Charlotte.

- In 1928 Mr. Brossy enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve and received his flight training. In March, 1929, he was commissioned an ensign (AF), U.S.N.R.

- He was assistant manager for the L. C. Brossy Dyeing Co., 1924-28, automobile salesman for the Packard Motor Car Co., 1928-29, and since 1929 has been a test pilot for this latter company, at Detroit, Mich. At Jacksonville, Florida, (May 25-28, 1931) Frederic A. Brossy and Walter Lees in a Packard-Diesel powered Bellanca monoplane established a new world's non-refueling endurance record when they remained aloft for 84 hours, 33 minutes.

- Transport Pilot license No. 6184. **Member:** Beta Theta Pi. **Home:** 155 Grosse Pointe Blvd., Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich. **Business:** Packard Motor Car Co., Detroit, Mich.

NUTT, Arthur, (Aeronautical Engineer and Executive): Born New Rochelle, N. Y., Feb. 6, 1895, son of Charles and Ada Sophia (Robinson) Nutt. Education: Grade schools, Worcester, Mass., 1900-08; Classical High School, Worcester, 1908-12; Worcester Polytechnic Inst., 1912-16; B. Sc. in mechanical engineering Mar-

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GENERAL HISTORIES

Prelude to the Total Force:
The Air National Guard
1943-1969

Charles Joseph Gross
Air Force Systems Command

OFFICE OF AIR FORCE HISTORY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C., 1985

Introduction

The shadow of the Minuteman statue falls across the village green in Lexington, Massachusetts. The statue symbolizes America's oldest military legacy, the citizen-soldier. In colonial times, minutemen were members of small elite companies within the organized militia. They agreed to turn out for immediate service in defense of their communities while the more cumbersome ordinary militia units were being assembled. Today their historic role is perpetuated by the Air National Guard, an elite volunteer force of citizen airmen maintained in a high state of operational readiness as a reserve component of the United States Air Force (USAF).

Although it can trace its heritage to the colonial minutemen, the Air Guard is a relatively young and comparatively unknown military organization. It did not become a separate reserve component until 1946. However, the National Guard's aviation program was well established long before then. The program originated even before the Wright brothers were able to convince the U.S. Army that the airplane had military possibilities. On May 30, 1908, the First Aero Company, Signal Corps, New York National Guard, was formed at the Park Avenue Armory on 34th Street in New York City. It consisted of approximately twenty-five aviation enthusiasts who had volunteered to learn ballooning. Two years later, the unit financed and built its first aircraft at a cost of \$500. The investment depreciated in 1910 when the do-it-yourself aircraft crashed on takeoff during maneuvers. In 1911, the First Aero Company made its first successful entry into heavier-than-air flight when the Curtiss Aeroplane Company loaned it an airplane and a pilot. The pilot, Beckwith Havens, later joined the unit as a private and is recognized as the National Guard's first military aviator. When he flew the unit's airplane at joint Army-National Guard maneuvers in 1912, the regular Army contributed only two flying machines to that affair.¹

Through World War I the development of National Guard aviation remained limited. An aeronautical detachment was established in the California National Guard's Seventh Coast Artillery Company in February 1911. The Missouri National Guard organized a Signal Corps air section the following month. New York's National Guard organized its Second Aero Company at Buffalo in 1916. These small units were largely the product of the initiatives of local aviation enthusiasts. State or federal financial support for these programs was minimal. Aircraft and balloons were purchased almost entirely through private contributions. In 1915, for example, the Aero Club of America equipped New York's First Aero Company with five airplanes costing \$29,500. And, in 1916, when New York's two National Guard aviation companies were mobilized (the first such



y) Mitchell advocated National Guard infan-



A searchlight and floodlight operated by the 1st Aero Company, New York ANG, at Mineola Field, Long Island.

Courtesy New



thorne Bolling (center) leads the first mass flight of military aircraft in Nov. 18-19, 1916. Captain Bolling was the first commander of New Company. (A National Guard Heritage Painting by Woodi Ishmael)



(Above) Private First Class Beckwith Havens, the National Guard's first military aviator, on an aerial photo mission in Texas. Havens flew his Curtiss plane in joint National Guard-Army maneuvers in Connecticut in 1912.

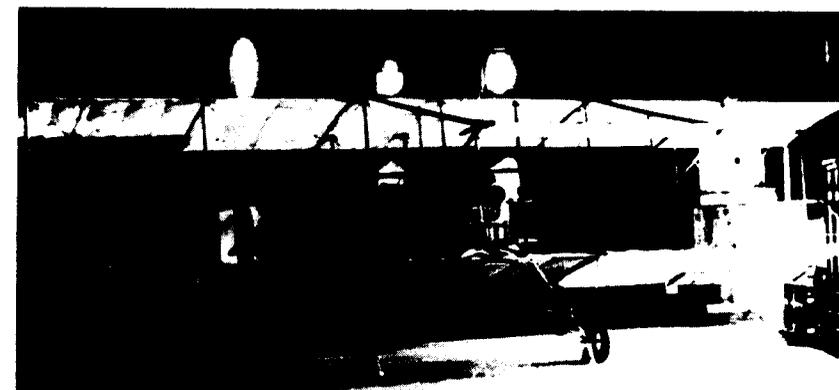
Courtesy National Gu



(Right) Lapel device worn by members of New York's 1st Aero Company.

Courtesy New York ANG

(Below) Biplane owned by Philip Wilcox—the 1st Aero Company's first aircraft.



Courtesy New York ANG

John J. Pesch, ANGUS
Air National Guard

1974-1976

John T. Guice, ANGUS
Air National Guard

1977-1981

John B. Conaway, ANGUS
Air National Guard

1982-

Notes

Introduction

1. "The Air National Guard," *Air Reservist*, Feb 1966, pp 4-5; NGB "Brief History of Air National Guard Mobilizations," Fact Sheet 302-76 (Washington, 1976), p 1; Jim Dan Hill, *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1964), pp 519-20; Juliette A. Hennessy, *The United States Army Air Arm, April 1861 to April 1917*, USAF Historical Studies: No 98 (Maxwell AFB, Ala., USAF Historical Division, Research Studies Institute, Air University, 1958).
2. "The Air National Guard," p 2; NGB, Fact Sheet 302-76, p 1.
3. Hill, *Minute Man*, pp 521-22; NGB, Fact Sheet 302-76, p 1; Henry G. Pearson, *A Businessman in Uniform, Raynal Cawthorne Bolling* (New York, 1923), pp 247-251; Alfred Goldberg, ed, *A History of the U.S. Air Force, 1907-1957* (Princeton, N.J., reprint of 1957 publication), pp 16, 22, manuscript prepared by U.S. Air Force Historical Division.
4. NGB, Fact Sheet 302-76, p 2.
5. Hill, *Minute Man*, pp 526-28.
6. *Ibid.*, pp 534-35; NGB, Fact Sheet 302-76, p 2.
7. John Rhea, "A Vital Link," *Guardsman*, Sep 1977, p 1; intvw, author with Col Melvin E. Gourdin, Assistant to the Commander for Operations and Logistics, Air Reserve Forces, HQ Air Force Logistics Command, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, Apr 16, 1980; National Guard Association of the United States, "Fiscal," *Redbook for 1980*, pp 1-2, 15-23.
8. Very little scholarly attention has been devoted to the Air Guard. Outstanding general works on American military history like Russell F. Weigley's *American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York, 1973), and Walter Millis' *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* (New York, 1958), scarcely mentioned the Air Guard. Existing published scholarly literature on the National

Guard including Martha Derthick's *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), and William H. Riker's *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy* (Washington, 1957), concentrate on its domestic political dimensions. Jim Dan Hill's *Minute Man* is defensive in tone and emphasizes the Army National Guard. Broad works on aviation like Robin Higham's *Air Power: A Concise History* (London, 1972), virtually ignore the Air Guard. Institutional histories such as Carroll Glines' *The Compact History of the United States Air Force* (New York, 1973), and Goldberg, *History of USAF to 1957* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), provide little information on the Air Guard. Martin Binkin's policy-oriented *U.S. Reserve Forces: The Problem of the Weekend Warrior* (Washington, 1974), provides a more substantial introduction to the issues generated by the costs, roles and mobilization performance of America's military reserve forces. Binkin, a retired Air Force colonel, argued that those forces could be cut by one-third thereby realizing an annual savings of \$1.4 billion. His study stresses "heavy" cuts in the army reserves, "substantial" cuts in the naval reserve, and "some" cuts in the air reserves. He also urged merger of the administrative headquarters of the Army Reserve and National Guard, on the one hand, and of the Air Force Reserve and Air Guard, on the other. However, Binkin's work is flawed by exaggerated estimates of the savings to be realized through the mergers of reserve components and inaccuracies in the statistical bases of its arguments. Unpublished scholarly research on the Air Guard is difficult to identify. One example of this genre is Frank L. Howe's M.A. thesis, "A Bombsight for a Freight Train: The Air National Guard, Air Defense, and Federalization, 1946-1950" (Columbus, Ohio, Ohio State University, 1972). Howe's work is supplemented by a series of studies completed by guardsmen who were students at the Air University, Maxwell AFB, Ala.