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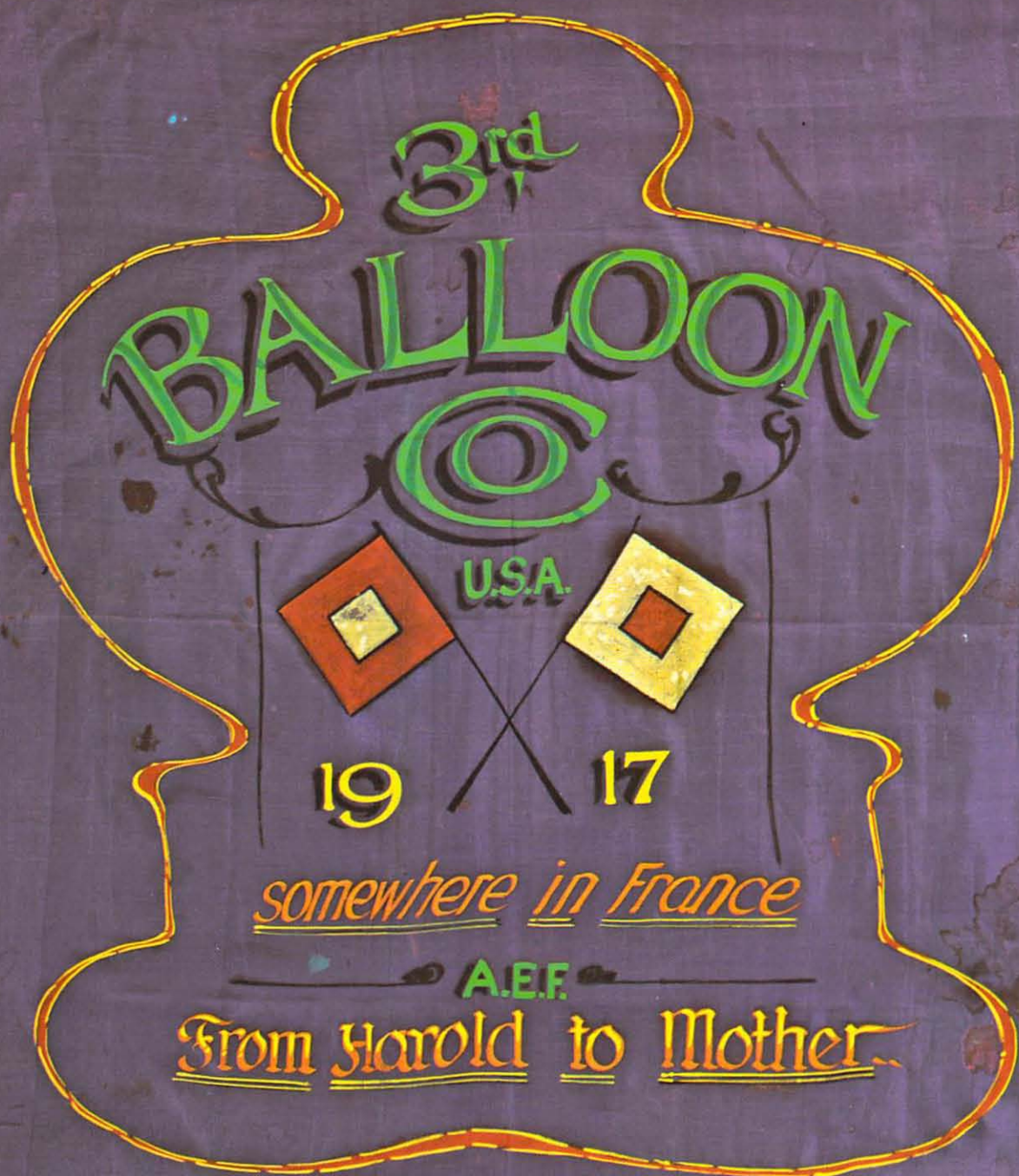
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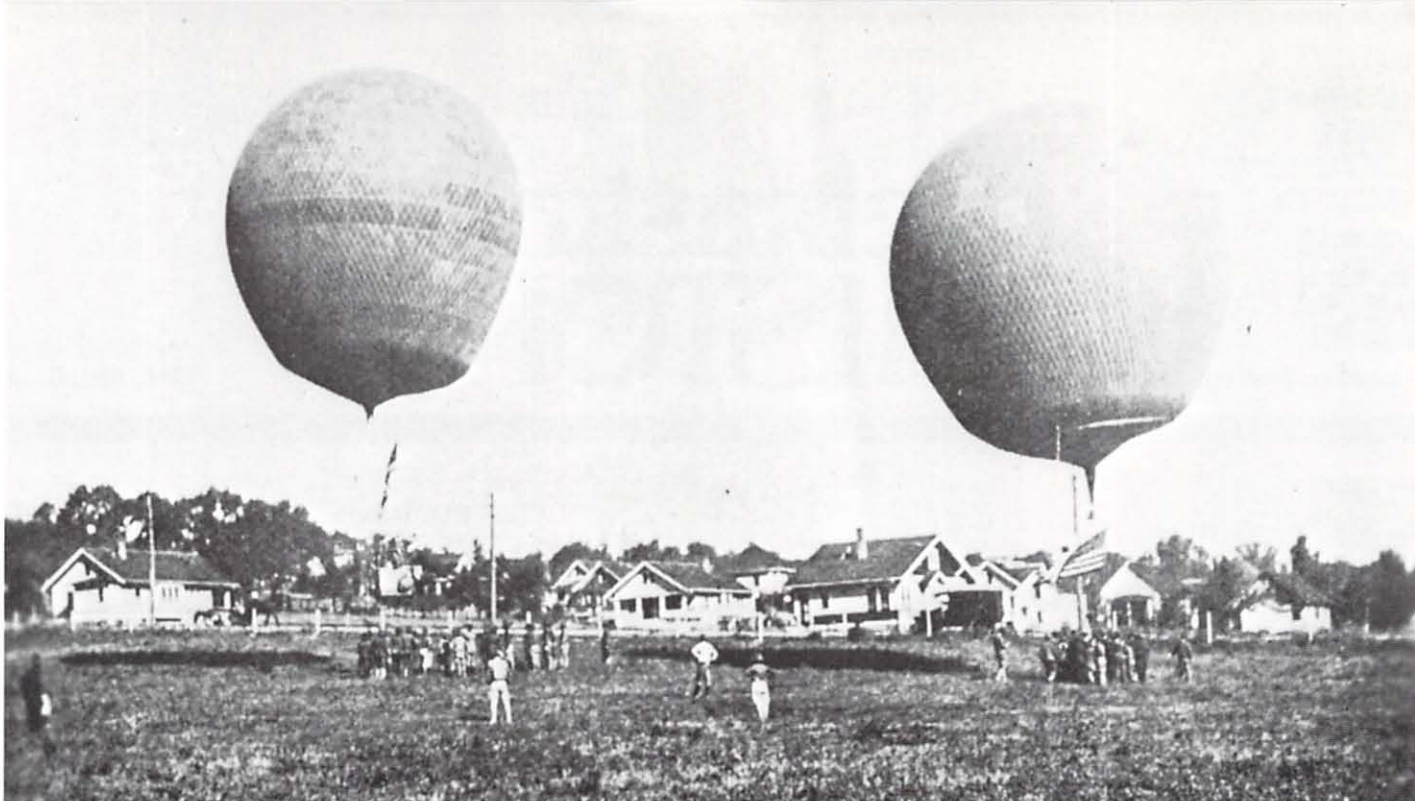
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Fort Omaha balloon school.

FORT OMAHA BALLOON SCHOOL: ITS ROLE IN WORLD WAR I

By Inez Whitehead

World War I provided the impetus for the development of modern aerial war machines. The captive balloon, used as an observation post, was modernized for twentieth century warfare, and for the next half century was to give its World War I handlers a unique and nostalgic position among veterans of the "war to end all wars."

The balloon was envisioned as a military tool of war as early as the first balloon launching by the Montgolfier brothers in 1783 in France, which took an early lead in military ballooning.¹ In

1793 a government appropriation established a balloon facility, and by 1794 the French had an air force of thirty-four to man their balloons. Messages were communicated to ground crews by means of a cord.² After the balloon was used by the French, military aeronautics lapsed until the 1849 War of Italian Independence, when the Austrians used hot air balloons to float time bombs into Italian territory.³

The opening shots of the American Civil War in April of 1861 brought military balloons to public attention in the United States. Thaddeus Lowe, Union balloon enthusiast, established practical procedures and methods for the use of spherical balloons as observation posts using telegraphic communication to the battlefields.⁴

Ballooning after the Civil War reverted to a sport in the United States, but the nations of Europe organized military balloon schools as part of their armed forces.⁵ In the 1870s and 1880s the British advanced balloon warfare by experimenting with aerial photographic techniques and two-way telegraphic communication. In 1884 they developed portable cylinders which would enable an army to store compressed hydrogen. France, the old balloon pioneer, was still considered the world's finest balloon maker.⁶

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, military application of balloons brought about changes affecting the shape of captive balloons used for observation posts. The spherical shape gave way to a more stable egg-shaped balloon. In 1896 the Germans

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introduced the Drachen, which the allies in World War I nicknamed the "sausage." Much more stable than the old spherical balloon, the cylindrical Drachen was flown at an angle and had two small sails and a rear air sack to aid in control. It was capable of functioning in winds as high as fifty miles per hour, but exerted such great strain on its cable that it sometimes broke.⁷

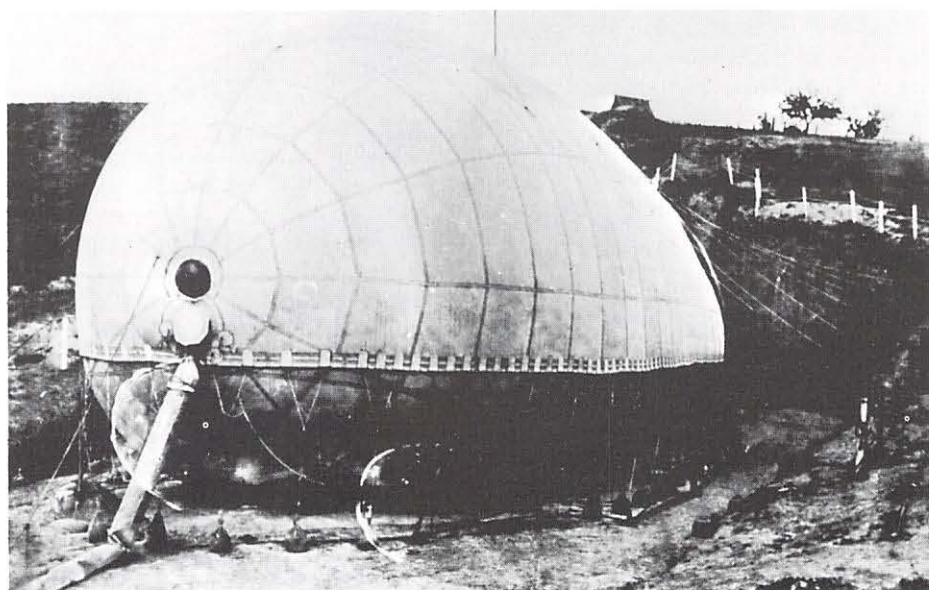
French Captain Caquot, in response to the new German balloon, designed a kite balloon which came to be known as a Caquot. This balloon, allowing less strain on the cables, was divided by a diaphragm into two cells. The top cell was inflated with hydrogen gas to lift the balloon while the bottom portion was filled with air to act as a ballast. Toward the rear of the balloon were portions that served as stabilizers and rudders. The balloon was held captive by four steel cables merged into one central cord.⁸ The Caquot and the Drachen were to be the major observation balloons on the western front in Europe during World War I.

After the Spanish-American War, a U.S. Army Signal Corps Balloon Detachment was organized at Fort Myer, Virginia. In 1905 the Signal Corps transferred all balloon school activities to Fort Omaha, Nebraska, which had a large steel hangar, a hydrogen generator, a large capacity gas holder, and a motor-driven compressor for storing gas in cylinders. Two spherical balloons and a German Drachen were used for training. Officers' classes in free and captive balloon flights were held each May. In 1913 the War Department closed the Signal Corps balloon facilities at Fort Omaha, and most equipment was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁹

When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the country found its military unprepared. The importance of German and Allied observation balloons on the battlefield forced a hurried search for balloon facilities. Because Fort Omaha still had the large steel balloon hangar and a hydrogen plant, it was reopened to



Florence Field at Fort Omaha. Courtesy of Douglas County Historical Society.



Balloon bed at Florence Field. Courtesy of Douglas County Historical Society.

become the nation's center for war balloon training. Balloonist Captain Charles DeForrest Chandler took command of the school, followed shortly by Major Frank P. Lahm, and finally by Col. Henry B. Hersey, a former Roosevelt Rough Rider.

The Fort Omaha Balloon School, which eventually would train 16,000 men in balloon skills, began to swell with officer candidates, career military men, and enlisted recruits. Balloon pilots, such as John H. Jouett, Frank Goodall, Leo Stevens, Harold Geiger, Arthur Boettcher, John Paegelow, and Max Fleischmann offered their guidance to launch the flight school.¹⁰ About 1,000 men were trained as officers at Fort Omaha and became expert pilots and observers. Very early twenty-one men from Yale and Columbia Universities arrived for officer training, followed by Harvard men and thirty-nine volunteers from the St. Louis Aeronautical Society. Four weeks of ground school were obligatory. Officers were required to complete seven balloon flights, including both a solo flight and a night flight.¹¹

By July and August of 1917, recruits were arriving in large numbers. Housing was in short supply, the post having only a few brick barracks, headquarters building, guardhouse, small hospital, quartermaster's shack, and a variety of smaller brick buildings for officer housing. Westerners, generally arriving first, were assigned to the available barracks. Easterners, arriving later, had to be assigned to squad tents on the edge of the fort's parade ground. Tent quarters extended into the cold weather.¹² Craig S. Herbert described living conditions:

the first night we were there, we were on a canvas bunk, you know, in the tents, and you have to have a mattress under you because the cold comes up underneath, so I walked up and down in front of the north barracks all night to keep warm . . . but then we got straw mattresses.¹³

Equipment was slow in coming. On hand was a small spherical balloon and a leaky German Drachen. Goodyear Rubber Company supplied versions of



Col. Henry B. Hersey. Courtesy of Douglas County Historical Society.

kite balloons that proved of poor quality, but they soon shipped well-made copies of the Caquot balloon. The Caquot balloon, equipped with a telephone communication system, could be attached to a truck winch, hauled up and down easily, and moved from place to place. Training began in earnest.¹⁴

Parachuting, in its infancy, was tested. Charles L. Hayward described the pioneering effort:

Leo Stevens . . . developed a parachute . . . We weren't quite sure how it would operate, so we took them up in the basket . . . tied four sandbags on . . . We dropped the parachute over from the basket from probably about 1200 foot altitude. Partway down, the chute opened, but the seams split . . . The next one we tried went down okay . . . So we figured we had something . . . Frank Goodale [Goodall] . . . said he would try . . . so he did, and a notice was put up on the bulletin board for all of us who might want to try it.¹⁵

Early in the game, Col. Henry B. Hersey himself impressed officer candidates by making a parachute jump to show his men that he was willing to do whatever he asked of them.¹⁶

On September 15, 1917, the First Balloon School Squadron of four com-

panies was organized at the fort. By September 25 the Second Balloon School Squadron had been formed. Two Goodyear captive balloons were in operation daily at Fort Omaha, and five or six free balloon flights were made each week. None of this was happening too soon, for General John J. Pershing was pressing for American balloon companies in the battlefield zone.¹⁷

Some of the free flights from Fort Omaha were harrowing and made for exciting news copy. One such flight occurred on the morning of September 21, 1917. Pilot Frank Goodall, with four passengers, lifted off from Fort Omaha into an overcast sky. Two hours later Lt. Goodall estimated that they were near Lincoln. Valving down, the balloonists recognized Carter Lake in Omaha. Some three hours after launch, Goodall landed the balloon inside Fort Omaha, 200 feet from the spot where he had launched.¹⁸

By late 1917 it became apparent that more room was needed for balloon training at Fort Omaha. On October 1 Florence Field, 119 acres north of Fort Omaha, was leased by the government. The military put up tents for temporary use. The city of Omaha constructed water, drainage, and sewage systems on the land. Seven fire hydrants were installed. Free of cost, the Omaha Board of Park Commissioners built two miles of road graded and surfaced with cinders. Crews from the fort constructed red slate-roofed buildings — headquarters, barracks, mess halls — painted sage green with ivory trim. Except for interior lighting, the Nebraska Power Company installed a complete electrical system with materials on loan to the government for the duration of the war. The Nebraska Telephone Company added its appliances. Florence Field, connected to the fort by telephone, was enclosed by wire fencing with gates on Thirtieth Street and at the top of the hill on the field's south boundary.¹⁹

By December 1917 three balloon school squadrons were operating in Florence Field. Soldiers were occasion-

Fort Omaha Balloon School

ally seen carrying partially deflated balloons north along Thirtieth Street from the fort to Florence Field.²⁰ In the summer of 1918 French advisers arrived at Fort Omaha to assist in balloon training. In September 1918 field companies established camps in the Calhoun sector, four miles north of Florence Field. Training under simulated battle conditions was added to balloon school instruction.²¹

A variety of balloon skills were taught at Fort Omaha and Florence Field. Aerial location of enemy artillery using a map, aerial photography, parachuting, communication techniques, and general care of the balloon were stressed for officers who would be going up in the baskets. Ground crews, mostly noncommissioned men, were trained in hydrogen balloon inflation, techniques of controlling the balloon, care of communications systems, and bedding a balloon.²² The balloon crew had to be familiar with cordage, knots, gas making, and care of the cable and winches holding the balloon.²³

Hydrogen balloons were dangerous due to the inflammability of the gas. There were some accidents at Fort Omaha and Florence Field. Veteran Earle Reynolds described one such happening:

There was a red-headed kid that was bedding down one of the balloons one night just about dark, and he was putting sandbags on the rope around the balloon to hold it down for the night, and he rubbed his . . . head against the fabric . . . and the static electricity set it [the balloon] afire, and he was killed along with 3 or 4 others who were hurt. . . . [It happened] right in front of the Ft. Crook House.²⁴

Still another accident occurred on May 2, 1918, in Florence Field. Two soldiers were killed and twenty-two seriously burned when static electricity ignited a balloon in its hangar.²⁵

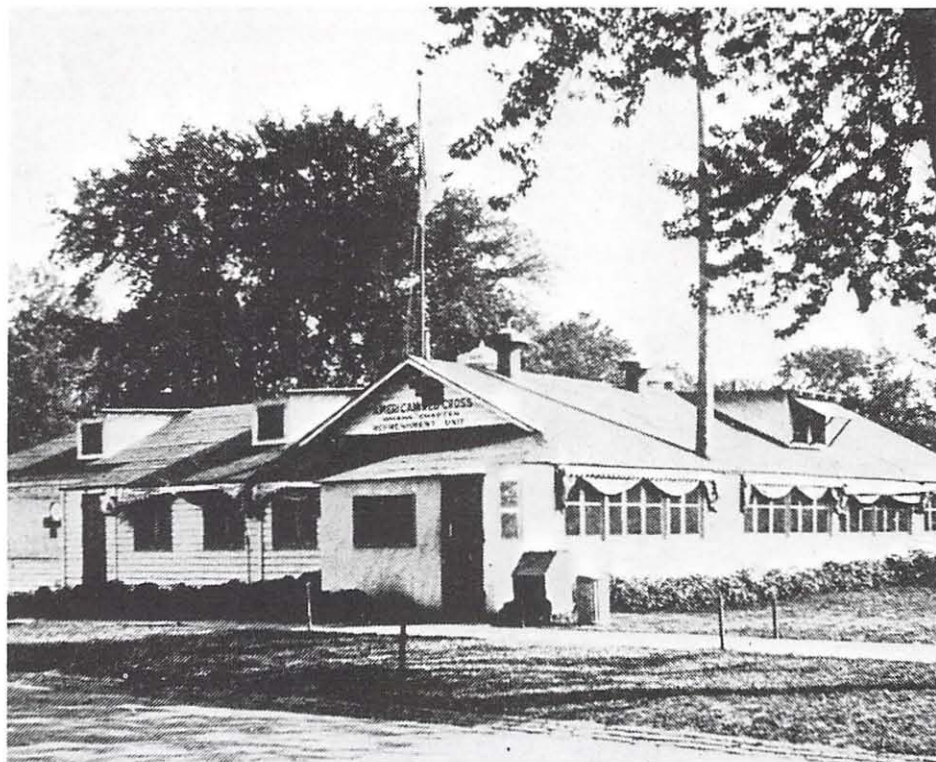
Col. H.B. Hersey, in command of the balloon school from September 1917 to November 1918 described the school's attachment to the Omaha community: "It has frequently been my pleasure to say when speaking of Omaha, that it was the most patriotic city in America during the war."²⁶ Dorothy Devereux Dustin in her book *Omaha and Douglas*

County — A Panoramic History, confirmed Col. Hersey's statement. While America was singing "Over There," the city of Omaha was living its commitment. Omaha was second in the nation when armed forces enlistments were compared to population. It led the nation in Red Cross membership and was the first city to "go over the top" in War Savings Bonds. Its Liberty Loan quota was oversubscribed by 145 percent. The city's schools reflected war fervor: School children volunteered for Red Cross work, learned all four verses of the "Star-Spangled Banner," and knew the "Marseillaise" in English. School principals organized mothers into "block vigilantes," who visited housewives, urging them to refrain from using pork and white flour.²⁷

Omaha's population, like others in the country, was conserving food in an effort to feed soldiers and Allies. Omahans ate victory bread, gave up

sweets, had meatless days, and baked with alfalfa flour. Guided by strong Red Cross leadership, they collected nut shells and fruit pits to make gas masks for the battlefield. Adults made surgical kits for the battlefield and comfort kits for the soldiers. Red Cross volunteers were on hand to provide refreshments, medical aid, showers, and entertainment to the troop trains passing through the city, and they made weekly visits to the sick at nearby military establishments.²⁸

The sudden emergence of the Fort Omaha Balloon School caught Omaha by surprise. Milton Darling, a retired art dealer, was among the first to discover the early recruits, mostly in civilian attire, as they congregated about the Douglas County Courthouse. Darling took several to the home of civic and social leader Mrs. Luther Kountze, wife of an Omaha banker.²⁹ The following morning Mrs. Kountze



Red Cross canteen at Fort Omaha. Courtesy of Douglas County Historical Society.

and other women appeared at the fort with baskets of edibles. A makeshift canteen was set up, with window counters facing fort property. Shortly thereafter, Commandant Hersey gave permission for the building of a canteen adjoining the fort. Soldiers were able to eat in sheltered seating on federal property, while servers worked on private property. Under the direction of Mrs. Kountze and 250 Red Cross volunteers the canteen served an average of 1,000 men a day. Profits were donated to the mess funds for overseas companies. The Fort Omaha canteen was so successful that it became a model for others around the country.³⁰

The canteen rapidly became the fort's social center. On August 3, 1917, the *Omaha Daily Bee* reported:

Bachelors Galore Among the Soldier Boys Keep Omaha Girls at Home and Dan Cupid Has a Big Job on His Hands . . . Such a fluttering of hearts when the twilight hop invitations go out from Fort Omaha . . . a regular bachelors' colony. There is Major Hersey, the acting commandant, to begin at the top . . . Then there are that dandy bunch of eight Yale boys and a whole group from Columbia.³¹

On November 28, 1917, the *Omaha Daily Bee* signaled the departure of the balloon school's Second Squadron:

Thanksgiving Day plans in hundreds of Omaha homes will be upset by the departure of the

soldiers, who had become extremely popular with Omaha folk . . . Squadron members had won their way into the hearts of many Omaha girls.³²

The nearly flawless relationship between the Omaha community and the fort was punctuated now and then by a few incidents.

On January 31, 1918, the *Omaha Daily Bee* cautioned mothers to keep their daughters away from Fort Omaha and warned of penalties if they did not.³³ Balloonist veteran Daniel Carlquist recalled that a soldier at the fort "got a girl in trouble." According to Carlquist, soldiers at the fort were irritated by the *Bee* article and asked the editor to retract it.³⁴

Local Omaha groups frequently entertained soldiers at Fort Omaha. Pianos and phonographs were donated. When the Florence Field facility was established, services of the community were extended to that post. The Knights of Columbus built a recreation center, and the YMCA erected a large tent during the summer season.³⁵

Veteran balloonist Charles Brown recalled his service in Omaha:

Toward the last we could ride street cars for nothing, you could go to the show, you could go to the dances, it didn't cost you nothing. Sometimes you

could even go into a restaurant and get a cup of coffee and maybe a hamburger and . . . they didn't charge.³⁶

Veteran Charles L. Hayward remembered the numerous invitations Omaha homes and clubs extended to Fort Omaha men. Reminiscing about the Carter Lake Saturday night dances, he said the "nice gals" made it quite a social affair for the fort's men.³⁷

Veteran Alvin A. Underhill recalled that catching the street car right outside Fort Omaha's front gate got the fort's soldiers quickly to downtown Omaha's entertainments. He remembered a special evening when Ak-Sar-Ben honored and entertained the fort's soldiers.³⁸

In September 1917 the First Balloon School Squadron left Fort Omaha, assigned not to Europe, but to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to establish another balloon school. Pershing was pleading for men overseas, but training facilities had to be expanded. The Second Balloon School Squadron, consisting of four companies, was the first unit to be sent overseas. It left on November 27, 1917. The Third Balloon School Squadron left the fort for overseas duty on January 17, 1918. The Fourth left on February 6, 1918, and the Fifth on Feb-

Third Balloon Company from Fort Omaha at Koblenz, Germany.



Fort Omaha Balloon School

ruary 25, 1918.³⁹ More squadrons soon followed.

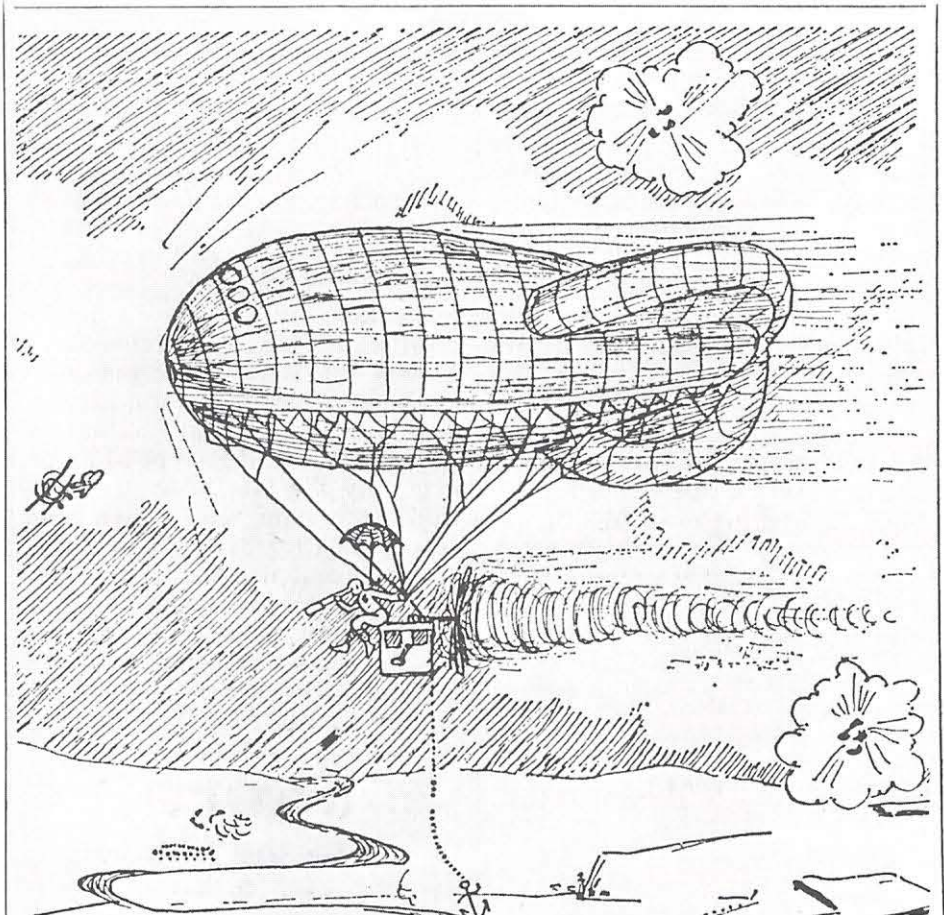
Veteran Hayward has left a description of battlefield activities of balloon squadrons in the war zone in France:

While the winch-truck moved the balloon forward, it was followed by its tender, with its lookouts and machine guns for protection. The tender also carried the other guns, ammunition, roadwork equipment, a variety of supplies and parts. Most of the men walked. During the move, the balloon would attain an altitude of 3,400 to 3,600 feet, dependent upon visibility, sun heat and wind speed. In position, the winch-truck would be firmly grounded electrically and six 3-man machine gun and lookout teams would immediately locate on a 200-foot radius circle around the winch.⁴⁰

Another veteran, Craig Herbert, described balloon company duty on the front:

[We were] plunging into the darkness with a 92 foot long balloon containing 23,200 cubic feet of explosive hydrogen, either "walking it" or elevating it above, weighted with sandbags, attached by cable to the winch truck, through smoldering, rubble-strewn villages, over shell-pocked or mined roads, across deeply-muddied open fields and barbed-wire to avoid traffic-blocked roads. Maneuvering it around trees, bridges . . . [and] . . . laying out miles of telephone wires to battery controls, then ready to move up again in twenty-four hours; shelled and machine gunned by day, bombed by night; fighting off aerial attacks with machine-guns and automatic rifles; frantically carrying 200 pound hydrogen cylinders on shoulders . . . to inflate another balloon . . . after one had been shot down . . . personnel weakened by inhaling phosgene or chloride gas, suffering from dysentery . . . soaking wet from almost continual rain . . . uniforms crawling with cooties . . . eating magotty food.⁴¹

Officer observation duty with the balloon usually meant three flights daily, with pulldowns in the morning and early evening. With the winch-truck camouflaged, two observers would be sent up to locate enemy positions, gunfire, and troop movements. Field artillery was directed and redirected to enemy targets by telephone communication. Maps had to be updated by observers in the basket. Planes could be ordered in for closer inspection of the enemy. Later veteran Hayward was asked if he had felt like a sitting duck in the basket, and he answered, "We didn't have time to think anything. We thought nothing. We were busy every second. Whatever



DARE-DEVIL BALLOONIST SNEAKING BEHIND ENEMY LINES
(Cartoon swiped from AEF Balloon Book, drawn by Fred Cross).

From Haul Down and Ease Off, Summer 1972, published by the National Association of American Balloon Corps Veterans.

you could see across the line, you were telling Intelligence."⁴²

Balloon observers were busy, but they had to be alert for danger too. Intelligence suffered when a balloon was lost, as it took many days and great labor to haul in the necessary equipment needed to replace a balloon.⁴³ Enemy aircraft could send a shell through the balloon, causing the hydrogen to ignite and explode. A balloonist's parachute was located on the outside of the balloon basket,

unfolding as it was pulled out. As the parachutist jumped, the flimsy cords attaching it to the basket broke.⁴⁴

Few balloon observers looked forward to jumping from the basket. A jump might be avoided if the ground crew had time to maneuver the balloon to low altitude, but minimum height for a jump was 500 meters.⁴⁵ Jumps were risky. The parachute might not open or the burning balloon could fall on the parachute and ignite it. Ground crews had to be skilled with balloon



From Haul Down and Ease Off, Autumn 1971, published by the National Association of American Balloon Corps Veterans.

manipulation to save parachuting men. Even if the parachutist escaped all these hazards, he might be killed by enemy aircraft fire as he jumped.

The Third Balloon Company's experiences illustrated the difficulties and dangers which confronted military balloonists during World War I. Leaving Omaha from Union Depot, they were transported to St. John's, Canada. Embarking on the ship *Tunisian* from St. John's, Third Company arrived in Liverpool, England, and were shipped out to Le Havre, France, where they were assigned to a balloon school training camp at Cuperly-sur-Marne, seven miles from the front. The winter weather was bad, and illness broke out, causing some of the men to be hospitalized. At Etalens, the company finally received training on a scheduled basis for duty on the front.

On July 28, 1918, Third Company was moved to Brouville on the front line. There they experienced three balloon attacks by German airplanes. On the second attack, Lt. Brige M. Clark and Lt. Ralph S. Dodd were forced to parachute. On the third attack, Lt. George C. Carroll and Harlow P. Neibling were fired upon as they parachuted from the balloon.⁴⁶

On September 4, 1918, Third Balloon Company participated in the St. Mihiel offensive and then moved on to Maizerais. Later in September the company was sent to Ferme de Choisel in the Verdun sector and participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. There balloons around them were attacked and burned. When a German Fokker attacked the Third Company balloon, a dramatic fifteen minute duel between the Fokker and an American plane took place. Later, two Fokkers did succeed in destroying Third Company's balloon, forcing its officers to jump. A skilled ground crew was able to maneuver the burning balloon to avoid the parachutes of the men.⁴⁷

On September 28 the Third Company balloon was moved to Malancourt, where it experienced heavy crossfire. Balloons all around them

Fort Omaha Balloon School

were attacked and damaged. In one harrowing episode, Lt. George C. Carroll, under attack from German planes, made preparations to jump and then decided to risk staying in the balloon when he thought machine gunners would be able to keep enemy planes at bay. In October Third Company's balloon was destroyed and a new balloon had to be inflated. Telephone lines proved defective and carrier pigeons were then used for communication.⁴⁸

On October 24, 1918, Third Balloon Company was relieved from heavy duty at the front by the 77th French Balloon Company. The men were sent to Bois de Thierville for a seven-day rest. On November 1 Third Company was back at the front near Haudainville, where a single German Fokker attacked and burned the balloon and got away. On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed, and all hostilities ceased. Thereafter Third Company was assigned to the Army of Occupation.⁴⁹

World War I saw the United States create an air service from practically nothing. According to H.A. Toulmin, chief of the Air Services Coordinating Staff, the Balloon Division set a record of wartime success. By the end of the war, thirty-five balloon companies had been sent to France, seventeen of which were assigned to the First and Second Armies at the front. Their record was impressive: balloon ascensions — 5,866; enemy infantry sighted — twenty-two times; and enemy traffic on roads and railroads reported 1,113 times. The United States had twelve balloons destroyed and thirty-five balloons burned. Observers had to jump from the basket 116 times but had few mishaps.⁵⁰

Seventeen balloon companies sent to Europe saw action at the front. Of these seventeen companies, thirteen had been organized at Fort Omaha. Fort Omaha's Second Company set a record of 244 days on the battlefield. The Balloon Corps earned its share of military decorations. Fifteen men

received the Distinguished Service Cross. Col. Charles DeForrest Chandler and Lt. Col. John A. Paegelow received both the Distinguished Service Medal and the Legion of Honor. The French nation also awarded the Croix De Guerre to nine American balloonists, the Order Of Aeronautique to one, and the French Citation to thirteen.⁵¹

Shortly after the war, *The Gas Bag*, unofficial Fort Omaha newspaper, quoted Col. Henry B. Hersey, later stationed with the American Expeditionary Force in France, in a letter addressed to Col. Jacob W.S. Wuest, then commandant of Fort Omaha:

I am now getting the companies ready to return to the states. In this connection, I wish to say that I have recommended that all balloon companies be sent to Fort Omaha for mustering out . . . It will probably require quite an effort on the part of the Omaha people to get it ordered.

Since coming over here, my opinion of Fort Omaha has risen still higher for it is an actual fact that no balloon school in the world has done as good work, taking all together, as Fort Omaha.

I knew that we had been doing good work but I did not realize it at the time how favorably we would compare with the work done at other schools . . .

Please remember me kindly to all the good friends at Fort Omaha and in the city of Omaha when you see them.⁵²

Col. Hersey had great loyalty to Omaha. Some of the companies did return to the fort for termination of service. In 1921, however, the government moved the entire Fort Omaha Balloon School to Belleville, Illinois, where it eventually was phased out of existence.⁵³

In the ensuing years, numerous Balloon Corps veterans returned to their wartime home in Omaha. Organized in 1932, the National Association of Balloon Corps Veterans held fifty reunions before their numbers dwindled and the group disbanded. The roster of alumnae included many military career men: Commandants Chandler, Lahm, and Hersey; Jacob W.S. Wuest, Hersey's replacement; John A. Paegelow and Frank Kennedy, who both commanded military bases after World War I; Leo Stevens; Oscar Westover, later chief of the United States Army Air Corps; and Orvil

Anderson, famous for later stratosphere flights.⁵⁴

Some Balloon Corps veterans went on to achieve success in civilian life. Ashley McKinley became a famous aerial photographer and surveyor and flew over the south pole with Byrd. Frank Goodall became a motion picture magnate. Albert Bond Lambert headed a large pharmaceutical firm in St. Louis and helped sponsor the Lindbergh flight across the Atlantic. Max Fleischmann became head of Fleischmann Yeast Company. Hoke-smith O'Kelley became a candidate for governor of Georgia.⁵⁵

Balloon Corps reunions in Omaha were special. Veteran Charles Brown said this: "I can truthfully say . . . Omaha treated us servicemen better than any port or place in the United States."⁵⁶

The tie of affection between the balloon school and the city of Omaha was strong. The February 1938 issue of *Haul Down and Ease Off* included the following reunion call:

Every Sandbagger who trained at Ft. Omaha has probably cherished at one time or another, a desire to return to his Alma Mater where he won his spurs as a full fledged gasbagger. To most of us, old Fort Omaha with its campus-like parade ground, its old buildings, and the fine hospitality, so typical of the citizenry of Omaha, represent without question, the finest memories of our war time service.⁵⁷

Omaha citizenry, with its preserved Fort Omaha, has not forgotten the glamour and excitement of Fort Omaha's snappy balloon cadets. The balloon school was a bridge (of sorts) between nineteenth and twentieth century warfare. The Fort Omaha men of World War I occupy a unique niche in local and in military history.

NOTES

¹"Military Units-Balloon Corps," Vertical Files in Douglas County Historical Library.

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³Ibid., 79, 81, 95.

⁴Eugene B. Block, *Above the Civil War* (Berkeley, California: Howell-North Books, 1966), 76, 93-94.

⁵Jackson, *The Aeronauts*, 98.

⁶Charles DeForrest Chandler and Frank P. Lahm, *How Our Army Grew Wings* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1943), 76.

⁷Calvin Goddard, "Balloons in War," vol. 2 of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1957), 1,011.

⁸"Military Units," Vertical Files.

⁹Chandler and Lahm, *Wings*, 81-82, 100, 105.

¹⁰"Military Units," Vertical Files. *Sunday Omaha World-Herald*, June 19, 1938.

¹¹*Sunday Omaha World-Herald*, June 19, 1938.

¹²Dorothy Devereux Dustin, *Oral Interview with Earle Reynolds, 1984-1985* (Douglas County Historical Library), 58-59.

¹³Dorothy Devereux Dustin, *Oral Interviews with Nine Balloon Corps Veterans, 1981* (Douglas County Historical Library), 149-50.

¹⁴"Military Units," Vertical Files.

¹⁵Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 97-98.

¹⁶"Military Units," Vertical Files.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, "Military Units," Vertical Files.

¹⁸*Sunday Omaha World-Herald*, June 9, 1938.

¹⁹S.R. Kirkpatrick, *Fort Omaha-Florence Field Balloon School Scrapbook, 1917-1919*, Appendixes A and B, 12-15.

²⁰Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Reynolds*, 56-61.

²¹Kirkpatrick, *Fort Omaha-Florence Field Scrapbook*, 13-15.

²²Bedding a balloon involved deflating it and grounding it in a protected area by weighing it down with sandbags. Sometimes a windbreak was dug with pick and shovel.

²³Dustin, *Oral Interview-Reynolds*, 56-61.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 57.

²⁵Kirkpatrick, *Fort Omaha-Florence Field Scrapbook*, 10.

²⁶Milton Darling, *Fort Omaha Balloon School Scrapbook, 1917*. Chandler and Lahm had short tenures at the Fort Omaha Balloon School. Her-

sey was commandant from September 1917 to November 1918. Respected and admired for leadership and enthusiasm, he was well liked by both his men and the Omaha community. *Omaha Daily Bee*, February 5, 1918.

²⁷Dustin, *Omaha and Douglas County - A Panoramic History*, 97. Dorothy May Cathers, "Civilian War Activities in Omaha During World War I" (Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1952), 3.

²⁸Cathers, "Civilian War," 3. Ted Metcalfe, ed., *A Story of Good Work Well Done, Being a History of the Omaha Red Cross*, n.d.

²⁹Darling, *Fort Omaha Scrapbook*.

³⁰*Sunday Omaha World-Herald*, June 19, 1938.

³¹*Omaha Daily Bee*, August 3, 1917.

³²*Ibid.*, November 28, 1917.

³³*Ibid.*, January 31, 1918.

³⁴Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 113-14. Omaha newspapers during World War I printed a number of stories noting loose behavior at public dance halls. A community effort was made to change them. A number of Fort Omaha Balloon School veterans recalled the dances as an important part of Omaha entertainment. Veteran Daniel Carlquist spoke of an altercation one evening at the Carter Lake Dance. It was resolved by application of military discipline. Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 115-17.

In January of 1918 newspapers reported the suicide of a balloon cadet in a downtown Omaha hotel and the arrest of a woman charged with bigamy. The woman, though already married to a draftee, had married a Fort Omaha soldier. It was

thought she had planned to collect two allotments.

³⁵Cathers, "Civilian War," 1. Kirkpatrick, *Fort Omaha-Florence Field Scrapbook*, Appendix A.

³⁶Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 143.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 99.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹William Frederick Collins, William O'Neill Goodwin, and Joseph E. McGlynn, *History of Fort Omaha in Douglas County Historical Library*.

⁴⁰"Military Units," Vertical Files.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.* Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 107-108.

⁴³"Military Units," Vertical Files.

⁴⁴C.H. Claudy, "Our Aerial Sausages," *Scientific American* (November 23, 1918): 408-409.

⁴⁵"Military Units," Vertical Files.

⁴⁶*Third Balloon Company* (United States Army, 1919), 5, in Douglas County Historical Library.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁰H.A. Toulmin, Jr., *Air Service-American Expeditionary Force* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1927), 273.

⁵¹"Military Units," Vertical Files.

⁵²*The Gas Bag*, January 24, 1919.

⁵³Cathers, "Civilian War," 92.

⁵⁴*Sunday Omaha World-Herald*, June 19, 1938.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Dustin, *Oral Interviews-Balloon Corps Veterans*, 142.

⁵⁷*Haul Down and Ease Off* (February 1938).