The Lafayette Escadrille

By
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Please send any correspondence, suggestions and corrections to info@usaww1.com.

November 2013

Sioux Warrior Insignia: This was the symbol of the Lafayette Escadrille both when it flew for the France as well as when it flew for the United States. (Henri Guyot Collection)

Front Cover (Top): “Hostile Sky” by artist Russell Smith.

Front Cover (Bottom): “Along Came the Cavalry” by artist Russell Smith.

Back Cover: Bill Thaw carries the American flag at Chaudun on July 7, 1917. (Photo: Henry Lockhart Jr. Collection)
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The summer of 1914 was the height of an exuberant golden era. The French called it the Belle Epoch, or beautiful period. The large countries of Europe had been at peace since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, when the Prussians crushed France with stunning ease. This great victory permitted Prussia and various small German-speaking states to unite to form Germany. The peace that followed was a record of sorts for modern Europe. Europe was at the apex of her power and the Europeans controlled more of the world than any group of people ever had or ever would. However, religious, linguis-
tic and ethnic lines divided the Balkans in southeastern Europe. In 1912 and 1913, tensions exploded into a pair of Balkan Wars that interrupted Europe’s peace with a preview of unspeakable horrors to come. But those wars ended almost as abruptly as they had started. And Europeans regained their optimism.

Then, in Sarajevo, Austria-Hungary on the morning of June 28, 1914, a poor, frail and blue-eyed 19-year-old of Serbian descent named Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of the mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even though Princip was an Austro-Hungarian, Austria-Hungary used his Serbian descent as an excuse to go to war against tiny Serbia on July 28, 1914, just one month after the assassinations. The flames of war spread quickly, and before it all ended, there would be millions and millions of casualties, and Europe would begin her slow descent from being the power center of the world...

In 1914, Europe’s borders differed from today’s. Poland and various other countries did not exist. Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary were neighbors. Moreover, a series of alliances pledged Russia to defend Serbia, Germany to defend Austria-Hungary, France to defend Russia and Great Britain to defend tiny, neutral Belgium. Great Britain also had the Entente Cordiale with France, which tilted the British toward the French over the Germans. All this was supposed to deter war; instead it catalyzed it.

The Germans declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. The French had thoroughly fortified the Franco-German frontier, thus the next best way to attack France was through Belgium. The Germans invaded Belgium on August 2 and declared war on France the next day. Great Britain issued the Germans an ultimatum to pull out of Belgium. The Germans ignored it, so Great Britain joined the war on August 4. Serbia, Belgium, Great Britain, France and Russia became the Allies. Germany and Austria-Hungary became the Central Powers. In an instant, the world exploded into conflict with a speed and
Enter the Nieuports

Note how much larger the upper wing is than the lower one. The 11 had the machinegun mounted on the upper wing. The hard cable at the back of the gun was a slide used to lower the gun to reach the ammunition drum on top to swap an empty drum out with a fresh one. This plane is at the Musée de l’Air et de l’Espace (the French national air and space museum) at Le Bourget Airport.

Even now, the Red Baron, the Fokker Triplane, the Fokker scourge, etc., remain familiar to many. With a well-justified reputation as great fighter pilots who flew great aircraft, it is easy to forget that the Germans lost the air war. The British documented their many accomplishments, and their Sopwith Camel still enjoys an excellent reputation. Yet the vast impact of French aviators, designers, theoreticians and strategists on the air war is practically forgotten, making the French aviation’s unheralded underdogs.

Yet the French invented manned flight with hot air and hydrogen balloons, and they first used them in war. They invented photography and pioneered cameras for aerial photography. They invented seaplanes in 1905. They later created the first fighter aircraft, invented the biplane fighter, air-to-air rockets, organized fighter groups, origi-
nated both tactical and strategic bombing, and more. They developed more than 200 types of aircraft during World War I and mass-produced many of them.

Though losing important factories and resources to the Germans during World War I, the French produced more aircraft engines than Great Britain and Germany combined. They produced more aircraft than any other nation in the world even though their population was far smaller than that of Germany, the United States, Russia or the British Empire. At the end of the war, the French had more front-line aircraft than anyone else: 3,321 to be exact. The Germans had 2,730, the British 1,758 and the United States 740 which were mostly of French design and construction.\(^{12}\)

The first French star was Roland Garros, the French aviator who invented the fighter plane, and then inadvertently gave his secret away to the Germans. Pre-war, he was already famous for his aerial world records in both altitude and distance. He joined the French Service Aeronautique when the war started. Soon, he and French aircraft designer Raymond Saulnier collaborated on an idea that is absurdly simple in retrospect, yet fraught with technical difficulties. Garros wanted to mount a machinegun to the nose of his Morane-Saulnier Type L parasol monoplane, and fire it through the propeller. It was a radical idea: turning the entire airplane into a weapon. Normally, dueling two-seaters fired broadsides at each other, like cowboys and Indians. The brilliance of Garros was his idea to aim his plane directly at enemy planes to fire at them. An interrupter gear would permit the machinegun to fire through the propeller without hitting it. That was the theory, at least. The reality was that the varied quality of the ammunition and ammo belts meant that some bullets would "hang" when fired and still hit the propeller. Saulnier abandoned the complexities of the interrupter gear and instead affixed defectors to the propellers where the bullets could hit. Voila! the fighter plane.

Garros was successful for a time, surprising German airplanes and shooting down several. He should have stayed over the French side of the lines, but stupidly, did not. One day a mechanical failure
forced him down behind the German lines. Though he tried to torch his own plane, there was plenty left for the Germans to examine once they got there. He spent most of the rest of the war as a POW.\textsuperscript{13}

The Germans took Garros’ Morane-Saulnier to Doberitz near Berlin and evaluated it. A short, slight and young Dutchman with an over-bite named Anthony Fokker quickly figured matters out for the Germans. Fokker took Garros’ deflector blade idea further and built a successful interrupter gear, preventing bullets from hitting the propeller. Next, he mounted his invention to an 87-mph Fokker Eindecker making it the first production fighter aircraft.

The new Fokker swept the skies of Allied aircraft for months and dominated aerial warfare until the spring of 1916 when the Allies finally countered it with their own fighter planes. The best was the new little Nieuport 11 biplane fighter, nicknamed “Bébé” (Baby) due to its small size. It would be the Lafayette Escadrille’s first mount.

The Nieuport 11’s innovative biplane design gave it a greater wing area than earlier monoplanes, resulting in more lift across the flight envelope. Consequently, it could sustain lower stall speeds and was more maneuverable than the monoplane designs. However, two wings increased wind resistance and drag, lowered speed and in-
increased fuel consumption. Nevertheless, the French calculated that this was okay.

The underpowered Nieuport 11 could barely carry a single drum-fed Lewis machinegun. The drum only held 47 rounds, which a pilot could empty in just nine seconds if the gun did not jam. This meant sometimes changing drums in mid-air and occasionally even in mid-combat. Georges Thenault reported that the gun jammed in three quarters of all combats. However, the ready availability of the Lewis guns and their relative low weight led to their adoption. Essentially, the Fokker had a great advantage in firepower versus the Nieuport’s advantage in agility. Thenault was still very concerned, writing:

*To put a new drum in—for the 47 cartridges were soon shot away—you had to swing the weapon down by pulling a lever and the wind brought it sharply backwards at the risk of cracking your skull if you didn’t keep your head well down. It was far from an easy job to substitute a full drum for an empty one with your fingers frozen and hampered by thick gloves, and one needed quite a lot of practice to do it properly, especially as one had to use one hand for piloting the ship for fear of getting into a spin.*

*Only a practiced pilot could repair a machinegun jam in the air, so that in a fight there was always the danger of being disarmed against an adversary who could fire five hundred cartridges at a clip.*

The “five hundred cartridges at a clip” referred to the German airplanes equipped with a pair of Spandau machineguns, each equipped with 250-round belts.

The Nieuport had an unusual sesqui-wing, meaning its lower wing was about half as wide as the top one. V-struts and assorted cables joined both wings. Cabane struts, joining the upper wing to the upper fuselage, added rigidity that V-struts alone could not. In addition, it
had slightly swept-back wings, which was rather surprising for a design of this period.

The relatively small mass of the rotary engine and short nose provided wonderful balance and dog fighting agility. The Nieuport essentially swept the skies clean of opposing aircraft as the Fokkers had done before.

They quickly proved a favorite of Allied fliers. Allied aces like Georges Guynemer, Edward Mannock, Albert Ball, Charles Nungesser and the Allied “Ace of Aces” Rene Fonck used them with brutal effectiveness.\(^{15}\)

The French designated their squadrons with an initial or abbreviation corresponding to their units' aircraft types. Thus the Lafayette Escadrille was N.124 while it flew Nieuport 11s, 16s, 17s, a single Nieuport 23 and three Nieuport 24s.\(^{16}\) Later the squadron was re-equipped with Spads, and it became Spa.124.

Though Prince, Chapman, Rockwell and the others settled in quickly, it took several weeks for their planes to arrive. Six Nieuports arrived for them at Luxeuil in May. Three had 80-horsepower engines and three had 110-horsepower. Thenault assigned the 110-horsepower planes to de Laage de Meux, Thaw and himself. Rockwell, Chapman and McConnell each received 80-horsepower planes.\(^{17}\)

The fighters arrived with plenty of spare parts. Unfortunately, the parts were suitable only for older Nieuports. Each plane went through a series of adjustments to ensure that the solitary Lewis gun was fully functional and easy to lower for reloading. The dashboard instrumentation had to be set up. Once all the adjustments were complete, the men took their planes up to get a feel for them. Victor Chapman described his plane:

*I pulled on the motor full force and sailed away. It is a beautifully balanced machine and responds in a twinkling to the commands. Besides one has a great feeling of security*
and strength in its robust form and powerful motor. My! It is heavy for its size. To land well one must let it fall from about a yard and a half, taking care that the tail is well down at the time…

Amazing little things (you would call them big perhaps, because one takes up more room than a couple of limousines; but, as compared to an average aeroplane, which needs a circus tent for shelter, they are small) and so neat and clean-limbed, the eight of them do not half fill up one shed. Most of them have war paint on, — rather handsome, savage without being garish. It is mottled light and dark brown with light and dark green imitation of landscape, the same type that they paint camions, tents, cannons, etc. Mine, however, happens to be a cream-color solid, something new they are trying out; but it gets dirty and needs to be washed daily.¹⁸

All the preliminary prep work was now done. Now it was time to earn their keep, to draw blood and to down enemy aircraft. The Lafayette Escadrille started flying combat missions for the first time on May 13, but the skies always seemed empty. Chapman racked up 27 hours of flying over the next 10 days, but never encountered the Germans.

The squadron needed a first hero. Kiffin Yates Rockwell was it. Rockwell was born September 20, 1892 in Newport, Tennessee. He was handsome, tall, thin, 6’ 4” and armed with brilliant blue eyes. His height towered him over his mates, but it also gave him a stoop.¹⁹

Both of his grandfathers had served in the Confederate Army during the US Civil War. Rockwell attended Virginia Military Institute and then later Washington and Lee University. His French Huguenot ancestors were Rochevilles who immigrated to England, anglicized their name to Rockwell and then migrated to the New World in 1630. This thin sliver of French ancestry connected Rockwell to France.
But when asked why he was fighting for France, he answered simply, "I pay my debt for Lafayette and Rochambeau."

His elder brother Paul volunteered the two of them to serve in the French Foreign Legion. It was famous for throwing its men into insanely tough battles and then getting them killed off. The Rockwell brothers knew this, but did not care. It was about glory and patriotism and not the nine cents per day they earned in French Francs. In May 1915, a bayonet charge near Vimy Ridge in northern France earned Kiffin Rockwell a thigh wound that would hamper his walking the rest of his life.

While convalescing in Paris, Rockwell met Bill Thaw who was helping to organize the Lafayette Escadrille. Clearly, Thaw was persuasive. Rockwell duly put in for a transfer, which came through a month after he returned to his regiment.

On May 18, 1916, Kiffin Rockwell flew his Nieuport 11 to within an adrenaline-pounding 75 feet of a German two-seater LVG observa-
tion plane. The LVG both fired first and hit first. However, Rockwell was untouched, and now he fired back. It was the first time he had seen an enemy aircraft in the air and the first time he had fired his guns in anger. His rounds managed to hit the observer, the pilot and the engine, making them fine shots indeed. Those four bullets won the battle, and now Rockwell had the Escadrille’s first victory. To celebrate, the Escadrille procured an 80-year-old bottle of whisky from Paris and named it the “Bottle of Death.” From then on, when a pilot scored a victory, he was entitled to a shot of it.

On May 20, 1916, the Escadrille moved 125 kilometers north by northwest from Luxeuil to Behonne, near Bar-le-Duc. Bar-le-Duc was the start of the 35-mile-long Voie Sacrée (Sacred Way), a narrow and winding country road that was the logistical lifeline to Verdun,
The Lafayette Escadrille

transporting men, munitions, mail and more to supply the beleaguered French Army. It was the first move of many to come. In fact, there would be nine bases in all for the Escadrille of which Luxeuil and Chaudun would be used twice each. Along the way, the unit would move from one end of the Western Front to the other and to many points in between.

Figure 16: Map of Lafayette Escadrille Bases
(Narayan Sengupta/Google)

Note: The numbers indicate the order of the Escadrille’s bases. The Escadrille used Luxeuil and Chaudun twice each. The bases were as follows: Luxeuil-les-Bains, 4/16/16; Behonne (billeted at Bar-le-Duc), 5/20/16; Luxeuil-les-Bains, 9/18/16; Cachy, 10/18/16; Ravenel, 1/26/17; Ham, 4/7/17; Chaudun, 6/4/17; St. Pol-sur-Mer, 7/17/17; Senard, 8/11/17; Chaudun, 9/28/17; La Noblette, 12/7/17. Most of the fighting over Verdun occurred
while the Escadrille flew from Behonne. The national boundaries depicted on this map are the current borders and not those of 1914-1918.

Deep ravines around their new aerodrome at Behonne made landings tricky, but somehow they arrived without cracking up any planes. They lived and lunched in an abandoned villa at 77 Boulevard de la Rochelle in the center of Bar-le-Duc. Such was their reputation for good food and great company that French pilots often dropped in for lunch to meet the Americans and socialize with them.

![Figure 17: Map of the Verdun area, early February, 1916](image)

_Note: The large pentagon at the center of Verdun is the Verdun Citadel. The small pentagons are some of the smaller fortresses defending the city. The Germans attacked from the shaded area, at the north (top) of the map._

Not surprisingly, the Escadrille was at Behonne to fly over Verdun. Those missions started on May 22. The Battle of Verdun was the greatest battle of the war. It had begun on February 21, 1916 with the largest artillery bombardment in history as 150,000 German troops swept south to take the city.
The Germans had planned well; the barrage killed many French troops outright and totally stunned the bewildered survivors. German stormtroopers equipped with powerful and terrifying flamethrowers, introduced at Verdun for the first time, advanced to exterminate French troops still sheltering in prepared positions.

Verdun was more fortified than almost any other city on earth. At the center of town was a large and imposing underground citadel burrowed into a hill. This citadel defined Verdun. A ring of steel-reinforced thick concrete fortresses designed to provide mutually supporting covering fire protected the city. They might have been impregnable. However, in the opening days of the war, the French stripped whatever men and artillery they could from their fortresses and sent them to the front lines. The forts were almost toothless. Nonetheless, though plastered with thousands of shells, the forts of Verdun held on until they were amorphous heaps of concrete. Surrounding villages and vegetation were permanently obliterated and depopulated forever. Individual fortresses, like Fort Douaumont and Fort Vaux, became famous because of the French resistance in holding them until they fell, and because of the casualties required to retake them.

Initial progress was easy and collapse seemed awfully eminent. Then the French stabilized their lines, surprising the Germans and perhaps even themselves. Over the next few months, the battle became the bloodiest battle of all time. Women became widows and children became fatherless. The quagmire bled France white. Unfortunately for the Germans, it bled them white too. By the time the Battle of Verdun ended ten months later, there would be 700,000 killed in action and 300,000 other casualties.¹

The Germans fought superbly at Verdun. At first, their aviators dominated the air battle above the city. The Escadrille joined the hellish

¹ In comparison, the entire US Civil War had about 212,000 killed in action and a million total casualties.
fray in this context. It flew patrols in concert with other French escadrilles, three to six planes at a time, each in a different altitude band. Bert Hall was the first to score over Verdun. He destroyed a two-seater on May 23. It was the unit’s second victory. Now it was his turn to drink from the Bottle of Death.

On May 24, a reserved 31-year-old named Raoul Lufbery became the squadron’s first new member. Interestingly, he had been the first American to sign up for the French Service Aéronautique when he joined on August 31, 1914. He was unassuming, short and stocky. Be he would soon emerge as the squadron’s top ace and its great celebrity.

Lufbery was a bit different from the others. For one, he had a French accent. Two, he was born in France. He was born on March 21, 1885 in Chamalières, a small village just a kilometer west of Clermont-Ferrand in central France. His mother was French and his father an American named Edward Lufbery. They had three sons, including their youngest, Raoul. His full name was a typical French four-part name: Gervais Raoul Victor Lufbery. Lufbery’s mother died when he was just one. Edward left young Raoul with Anne’s parents, returned to America, remarried, settled down and had more children.

Lufbery longed to see his father again. But first, as he got older, he worked in chocolate factories in the Loire Valley city of Blois as well as back in Clermont-Ferrand. In 1906, accompanied by his middle brother Charles, Raoul took a trans-Atlantic liner to the United States in search of his father. By sad coincidence, Edward had just set sail for France. They would never meet. Lufbery worked odd jobs, heading to New Orleans and elsewhere before joining the US Army. He shipped out to the Philippines, earned acclaim as the best sharpshooter in his regiment and became a naturalized American.

He continued his journey around the world. In 1912 in Calcutta, India, he met a French stunt-pilot named Marc Pourpre. Lufbery signed on as Pourpre’s mechanic, and the two became best friends. When
The war started, they left for France as quickly as possible. Since Lufbery was a naturalized American, he had to join the French Foreign Legion. Pourpre joined Escadrille N.23 and got Lufbery assigned as his mechanic. But then on December 2, 1914, Pourpre died in a plane crash devastating Lufbery. It was a mechanical failure rather than the Germans that killed Pourpre, but to Lufbery, it had happened because of the war. He swore to avenge his friend, leading him to learn to fly and then to the Lafayette Escadrille.

Bill Thaw scored first after Lufbery joined. It was on May 25. He modestly absolved his own skill. “I just murdered him. He never saw me,” Thaw wrote chillingly. Attacking without warning was hardly chivalrous, but it also improved the one's odds of survival. Thaw was lucky that he figured out the method early. Many never did. However, stealth and surprise were the ideals of scoring and surviving. In time, Thaw would earn three more victories.

![Figure 18: Lufbery, Thaw and Hall head off on a dawn patrol (Painting by Russell Smith)](image)

Thaw and Lufbery became fast friends, passing plenty of time together even when not flying. Their exploits included fishing and collecting mushrooms. Bert Hall wrote, “Lufbery is a mushroom hound. Every time it rains he goes out and gathers some mushrooms.” The N.124’s chef invariably put the mushrooms to good use in various dishes. Bert Hall reported that their time not flying was spent talking about flying or women. Life in the air was dangerous, but on the ground, it was pretty good.
In contrast to straight shooters like Thaw and Lufbery, Bert Hall was quite a character. He liked to play loose with facts, but a few things appear certain. For starters, his real name was Weston Birch Hall.

With his thin frame, long nose and beloved Kepi hat, he looked far more Gallic than American. Yet Hall was born in 1885 in Higginsville, Missouri (in Lafayette County, no less). After that, much of what he has said about himself is questionable. According to himself, he learned to fly in France in 1910. He confessed to switching allegiances effortlessly to whoever was paying his bills.

Figure 19: Bert Hall
(Willis B. Haviland Historic Collection)
He wrote that he was the sole pilot of the Ottoman Air Force during its 1913 war against Bulgaria, but when the Ottomans stopped paying him, he jumped ship and flew for the Bulgarians. Later he joined the French Foreign Legion and next signed up to fly for the French. If Hall really had any flying experience before he got to the Escadrille, then he concealed it well. Thenault wrote about Hall’s getting into a training plane for the first time in 1915:

[Hall and another American] had said they were pilots and now it was up to them to prove it. One of them, Bert Hall, played the bluff out. He climbed alone into the machine that he was to try. It was the first time in his life that he had seen an aeroplane close to.

Off he went zig-zagging like a drunken duck, actually left the ground, but crashed headlong into the wall of a hangar. The machine was in pieces, but they picked him up unhurt to hear their verdict on his qualifications as a pilot. Then he began his training at the beginning.29

On August 21, 1915 while flying for the French Escadrille MS.38, Hall notched a victory, making him the first American ever to shoot down an enemy airplane.30 Next, he helped found the Lafayette Escadrille.

Captain Thenault, well aware of the expertise of their German opponents, wanted to ease his men into combat. Nonetheless, they kept patrolling. On about May 25, they were above Verdun, Fort Douaumont and Fort Tavannes. Etain was a few kilometers off to the east. There a herd German two-seaters materialized below and in front of them. They quickly counted a dozen. This was big game. Thenault wanted to hold his men back, but someone, Thenault was not quite sure who, dove on the Germans anyway. Rather than abandon the errant pilot to his fate, the rest of the patrol followed, closing at full speed and soon opening up with their guns. Thenault described it so:
Everyone picked out his opponent, but the Boches (Germans) were so startled to see this pack of devils falling upon them that they turned tail and ran for all they were worth. Then our machineguns came into play and the Boches replied.

Everyone of us was so busy that he lost sight of his comrades and watched only the enemy, who tried to meet us from in front and on the flank and above all were anxious not to let us catch them in the rear during their flight. They dived for home and we followed them. At least three enemy were seriously hit and landed one after the other. I saw two
of our machines turn back towards our lines, also hit as we learned afterwards...

It was time to make back for our lines. The retreat was carried out in good order; the Boche had been attacked too savagely to think of pursuing us, and by good fortune there were none of them up above. Nothing worse than the disagreeable boom of their guns followed us homewards. At last we saw the lines in the distance; then passed the enemy’s "sausages," (observation balloons) beyond them our own lines, and so back again into calm...

I landed. A big fellow, his face all covered with blood, was waiting for me. It was Kiffin Rockwell, who burst into a flood of abuse against Germany and her disloyal methods. In fact an explosive bullet had burst on his windshield and cut his upper lip. A slight wound, which only lent fuel to his ardor... I learned that Thaw had had an arm broken by a bullet, but that he had managed to land nearly dead-beat on a ground near the lines close to the fort of Tavannes right on top of the Cotes de Meuse. He had been picked up by one of our Regiments and taken to the Hôpital de Dieu.\footnote{31}

Clyde Balsley and Charles “Chouteau” Johnson both arrived on May 29 becoming the Escadrille’s second and third new pilots. Laurence Rumsey and Dudley Hill arrived at the beginning of June. Rumsey was from Buffalo, New York. He was a Harvard graduate and had played on the Harvard ice hockey team. Dudley Hill was born in Peekskill, New York on October 6, 1893. Thanks to a rough game of ice hockey, he had been blind in one eye since age 15. On top of that, he also had a burst eardrum. Though little inclined academically, he attended Cornell for a few months and then New York University for a month. Despite these problems, he joined the Lafayette Escadrille.\footnote{32} Now the squadron’s strength stood at 14 pilots and officers.

“Bar-le-Duc is in a valley, quite a pretty town,” wrote Rumsey about their new home before adding the following:
We live in a villa overlooking the town. It belonged to an artist, as it has a studio with skylight, etc., is surrounded by gardens, and it is very pretty and pleasant. We all eat together, two majors, two captains, two lieutenants, and about ten of us... From high up the country beyond Verdun looks just like a plowed field. It is all brown, and all the trees have been swept away by shells and fire...\(^{33}\)

Only the Lafayette Escadrille was fully equipped with Nieuport 11s, he noted, “and we are going to try and deliver the goods.”\(^{34}\)

On the morning of June 19, Kiffin Rockwell, Norman Prince, Clyde Balsley and their Captain Georges Thenault brawled with what they reported as 40 German planes a few kilometers northwest of Verdun. The number seems high, and an accurate count would have been impossible. Nonetheless, if the number was even half that, then attacking the Germans was immeasurably brave, foolish and insane.

Balsley remembered how it played out:

We climbed to an altitude of between twelve and fifteen thousand feet, and began flying in wide circles, retaining our battle formation. When we reached a point almost directly above Dead Man’s Hill (Hill 304 Mort Homme), the clouds nearby suddenly opened, and the air was filled with German airplanes. We had been aware that concealing themselves behind clouds was a favorite trick of the Hun flyers, but despite our alertness they had fairly trapped us this time. It was useless to fight, since we were greatly outnumbered. A real battle of wits began. Around and around us the Huns flew, their machineguns spitting streams of lead. We dived, spun, zoomed, resorted to every trick that we knew might force an opening for escape.

Captain Thenault, Rockwell and Prince succeeded, and got away. My own machine was surrounded by a cordon of enemy planes that I found impossible to penetrate.
A German dived, and sailed along a little below me. I caught a fairly good aim with my machinegun, and fired twice. His plane rocked as though it were hit; then he swung about and started toward me.

When I tried to shoot a third time the rifle jammed. In vain I tugged with it. Suddenly I was lifted almost out of my seat, my head swam dizzily, my legs became limp and heavy, releasing the controls. The machine spun over on its back, and bounded wildly downward.

I was conscious enough to realize that I had been severely hit and that the machine had fallen into a dangerous, perhaps fatal, spin. I gathered all the strength that remained in me, and fought the controls.

As if by a miracle, the little "ship" suddenly righted herself and "straightened out." The ground was only a few hundred feet below, and the battle had been fought at an altitude of twelve thousand feet!35

With only three weeks of service under his belt, Balsley was out. He had taken an explosive round in the hip, intestines and pelvis, but somehow was still alive. This made him the first American to go down in combat and the first to survive being shot down.

Rockwell and Thenault returned to base in one piece, but with their machines riddled by German bullets.36 They had failed. Nevertheless, the French and American press went agog over their bravery.

Balsley would remain hospitalized for the next year and a half. He spent the first six weeks in a French 30-bed hospital room with horribly wounded men dying all around him. It was near the front. The beds were always full. The only time a bed went empty was when a man died; his body was removed and another wounded man added in his place. The sheets weren’t washed. The men weren’t bathed. The
doctors, nurses and orderlies were overworked and overwhelmed. It was brutal all around. During that time, Balsley underwent various treatments including a hip replacement surgery, which seems surprisingly advanced for the time. Doctors removed pieces of the round, extricating six at first, and ultimately more than 40. After six weeks, he went to the American Hospital at Neuilly, on the outskirts of Paris. There the treatment was more leisurely and more sanitary. His mates dropped in occasionally to visit him when they were in Paris. And, on at least one occasion, he spent a week at the front with them, grounded, but still thrilled to be with them.37

Several threads united the Escadrille’s pilots. They were generally older than the typical front line flier. Several were 30 or older. Except maybe only Bert Hall, none was married or had any children. Several were connected to France by their French descent, French birth or having lived in France. Didier (pronounced “Dee-dyeh”) Masson was a perfect example. He was 30, single and born in France.

Incidentally, Masson arrived on June 19, making up for Balsley’s loss. In theory, during its history, the squadron consisted of 38 Americans and their four French officers. However, the truth is that Masson was possibly still a French citizen when he joined the Lafayette Escadrille. Regardless, he joined, no doubt, because he had lived in the United States for several years prior to the outbreak of the war and felt a strong allegiance to it.

Victor Chapman found that his combats were fruitless no matter how hard he tried. They often involved chasing un-escorted German LVGs that were able to escape by diving away faster than the 80-horsepower Nieuports.

On June 23, Clyde Balsley called from the hospital requesting that his friends bring him some oranges, which was all the doctors would allow him to eat due to his intestinal damage. Chapman, determined to help his suffering friend, took off with a crate of oranges for Balsley. In the skies above Fort Douaumont northeast of Verdun, he
ran into the Germans he thought had shot down Balsley and immediately engaged them in combat. A French pilot witnessed the fight:

*Figure 21: Victor Chapman*  
(Willis B. Haviland Historic Collection)

*Three Nieuports attack five German machines, that at this moment they saw a fourth Nieuport arriving with all speed who dived in the midst of the Germans, that two of the Germans dived towards their field and that the Nieuport fell through the air no longer controlled by the pilote. In a fight it is practically impossible to tell what the other machines do, as everything happens so fast and all one can see is the beginning of a fight and then, in a few seconds, the end. That fourth Nieuport was Victor and, owing to the fact that the motor was going at full speed when the machine fell, I think that he was killed instantly.*

[^38]
Thus, Chapman was the first American aviator to die in combat and the first American flier to die fighting for France. “His was the boldest, most loyal, soul among us,” remembered Clyde Balsley.39 “Poor Victor Chapman,” grieved a saddened Norman Prince who further eulogized his friend by writing:

He was of tremendous assistance to me in getting together the Escadrille. Victor was as brave as a lion and sometimes he was almost too courageous, — attacking German machines whenever and wherever he saw them, regardless of the chances against him. Victor was killed while attacking an aeroplane that was coming against Lufbery and me. Another unaccounted for German came up and brought Victor down while he was endeavoring to protect us. A glorious death — face a I’ennemi and for a great cause and to save a friend!40

Victor Chapman’s funeral was on the American Independence Day, July 4, 1916. The date was clearly deliberate since it was a full 12
days after his death. A Madame Verrier wrote about the funeral to Victor Chapman’s father telling him about it:

*The ceremony was very touching in its simplicity. The chancel was draped with two great flags and decorated with flowers; two small flags and other flowers were on the altar. The women about me were in tears. It was a sad celebration of your Independence Day, and brought home to me the beauty of heroic death and the meaning of life.*

When we first learned of the event, and after the first moment’s stupor had passed, we felt a renewal of energy. Everyone is talking of this disinterested devotion,—much greater even than that of our own men, who are fighting for their own country as well as for ideal ends. But the self-sacrifice of this one who comes to us, and places himself at our side, for no other reason than to make right triumph over wrong, is worthy of peculiar honor... Wherever I go I am asked about him. Never since the outbreak of the war has public sentiment been more deeply aroused.\(^{41}\)

It was just one of many tributes from his peers, mechanics, political leaders and private citizens.

Thirty-year-old Elliot Cowdin was medium in height, medium in build and sported a thick mustache. He was from a prominent New York City family, and he had graduated from Harvard in 1909. He was already a combat veteran when he joined the Lafayette Escadrille. In fact, he had started flying at the front in May 1915. Along the way, he flew with the French bombardment squadron VB.108 as well as the Nieuport fighter Escadrilles N.38, N.49 and N.65.\(^{42}\) Even while helping to form up the Lafayette Escadrille, Cowdin was already fighting bravely over the skies of Verdun. For his time with those four squadrons, he had received three citations from a grateful French military. Former French Commander-in-Chief General Joseph Joffre signed two of them. The third citation conferred the *Croix de Guerre* upon Elliot, mentioned his bravery in attacking a
patrol of 12 German planes and his having shot down one of them. Nonetheless, two days after Chapman’s death, Elliott Cowdin, nerves frayed and nursing ulcers, decided to leave the Escadrille. He never returned.

Somehow, the pilots kept their sense of humor. Part of that showed up in how they named their planes. Most of them used an initial or their initials on both flanks of the fuselage. Accordingly, Bill Thaw was “T” and Raoul Lufbery was “RL” and so on. However, Rumsey had a bit more fun with his and had “RUM” painted on both sides. Bert Hall had “BERT” painted on one side, but then “TREB” painted on the other. “Pilots can now tell who I am, no matter how they pass me. Not that it matters a damn who I am, but just the same, they can tell if they wish,” wrote Hall, no doubt with a smile on his face.43

Figure 23: Rumsey’s Nieuport at Behonne
(Greg VanWyngarden Collection)

The new Anglo-French offensive on the Somme started on July 1, 1916. It was a needless fight artificially manufactured to siphon German pressure off Verdun. It turned into a great bloodbath. On The British single-handedly suffered 60,000 casualties on the first day, making it the worst one-day loss in British military history. Still, the Germans did pull men, planes and much more away from Verdun to the Somme, and it eased pressure on Verdun. Fewer German planes, new French tactics, and the preponderance of Nieuports, which were, plane for plane, as good or better than the opposing fighters, restored French aerial superiority in Verdun’s skies.
Rumsey reported that the Germans “seldom come across, except in swarms, and they beat it back quick before we are up.” Though flying twice a day some days, on others they flew less “as we usually sleep or relax as much as possible,” wrote Rumsey.\textsuperscript{44}

![Figure 24: Lafayette Escadrille at Behonne (Virginia Military Institute)](image)

\textit{Note: From left to right are Alfred de Laage de Meux, Charles Chouteau Johnson, Laurence Rumsey, James McConnell, Bill Thaw, Raoul Lufbery, Kiffin Rockwell, Didier Masson, Norman Prince and Bert Hall.}

On Bastille Day, July 14, 1916, the Lafayette Escadrille received a nice surprise: famed French ace Charles Nungesser.\textsuperscript{45} He dropped in on the Lafayette Escadrille at Behonne and decided to spend a few days operating with the Americans. Nungesser was an athletic, blond, charismatic storm of a man who would attain 45 confirmed victories. He would end the war as the third highest-ranking French ace behind Rene Fonck (75 victories) and Georges Guynemer (53 victories). He had only 10 victories when he arrived at Behonne, but at this stage in the war, such numbers marked him as an amazing fighter pilot. In fact, even Guynemer only had 10 victories at the time, and Fonck had yet to score any. Consequently, Nungesser was already famous throughout France.
Had the war not intervened, Nungesser surely would have continued his previous trajectory working at his uncle’s Brazilian sugar plantation. Astoundingly, he survived being wounded or injured 17 times in combat, plane accidents and car accidents. Whether this proved him a great pilot or just a reckless one is ample fodder for debate. Regardless, such exploits made him legendary. And he was always ready for a great party, conjuring them up easily when needed.

Figure 25: Nungesser with the Lafayette Escadrille  
(Greg VanWyngarden Collection)

Officially, Nungesser belonged to French Escadrille N.65. However, while hospitalized in early 1916, he worked out a deal allowing him to fly with any squadron he wanted. He chose the Lafayette Escadrille. He arrived sporting two rows of gold teeth, fresh souvenirs of surgery after a recent crash in January. He stayed with the Americans for a month and a day, and patrolled repeatedly in that time. A week after arriving, he downed an enemy Aviatik on July 21.

Nungesser now had 11 victories, surpassing Georges Guynemer. The only Frenchman with more confirmed victories was the dashing Jean Navarre, with 12. However, Navarre had just been knocked out of the war on June 17 leaving Nungesser as the most victorious pilot flying for the Allies. His win was credited to the Lafayette Escadrille. He would hold the lead over Guynemer until August 17, but never regain it after that.
One day Nungesser and Bert Hall visited Paris. They bumped into suspected spy Mata Hari and deliberately fed her a load of misinformation, which she duly passed on to her handlers in Berlin.

In this time, Kiffin Rockwell shot down two more German planes, scoring first on June 24 and then on July 27. Raoul Lufbery notched up his first victory on July 31.

On August 1, Bert Hall and Norman Prince took off from Behonne to hunt enemy observation balloons. Prince had a marvelous new weapon in his hands: a Nieuport with eight Le Prieur rockets. They were mounted four apiece to the outside of his V-struts. The rock-
ets were too inaccurate to attack fast and agile enemy planes, but they were perfect for slow and large enemy observation balloons.

Prince’s plane had the rockets, and Hall was there to escort him in case enemy fighters showed up. The pair found an enemy balloon northwest of Verdun and about 40 kilometers north of Behonne near the road connecting the towns of Montfaucon to Varennes. Hall described what happened next:

*It was a perfectly clear day and realizing this, we went as high as our Nieuports would carry us so as to fool the German observers as long as possible. When we got into the right position, we nosed over and started diving... with the sun at our backs, and were not observed until we had gained a great speed.... Every anti-aircraft battery in the neighborhood opened up. It was a veritable hail-storm of bullets. But there was nothing for us to do, now that we had started. Down, down, down we went, until we came within range of the great lumbering gas bag.*

The Germans vainly used an electrical cable winch to try to lower their balloon out of harm’s way. But the two Nieuports were much faster. Prince held his fire so long that Hall figured his rockets had shorted. They had not. Prince just wanted to make his volley count. It was all or nothing with the rockets, and once he pushed the cockpit contact to fire them, they would all fire off.

> All of a sudden, a streak of fire shot ahead of us. It was [Prince’s] sky rockets. From where I was, they seemed to have landed in the very middle of the balloon. Then I saw both German observers go over the side. The next moment their parachutes opened and they sailed down to safety.

> As I pulled away, a long column of fire shot skyward. We had jumped our first balloon, but not without considerable risk to ourselves.
Ground fire riddled their mounts, and the wings of Hall’s plane collapsed as soon as he landed back at Behonne. Still, the pair escaped bodily harm. That night everyone celebrated, but the downed balloon was never confirmed.

Raoul Lufbery scored another pair of victories over Verdun’s Fort Vaux on August 8, 1916. He ended that day with a hat trick giving him four victories total.

That same day, Lieutenant de Laage de Meux, Prince and Rockwell went patrolling. De Laage was both brave and popular with his Americans pilots who were often closer to him than they were to Captain Thenault. His English was good, and he was always in the thick of the action. He had already served in the cavalry and been wounded in combat even before flying Caudrons for Escadrille C.30 and joining the Lafayette Escadrille.

As the trio flew around, Rockwell got separated from the other two. He soon found two German fighters on his tail “filling my machine full of holes,” as he put it. Unknown to the Germans, De Laage’s guns were jammed. Regardless, he dove into the fray. The Germans, spooked by his bluff, abandoned Rockwell and headed home. Bert Hall wrote, “Lieutenant de Laage never mentioned it and even now

Figure 27: Thenault confers with de Laage  
(Greg VanWyngarden Collection)
denies that it ever happened. Thereupon, de Laage goes up in our estimation.”

Rockwell confirmed de Laage’s bravery, writing, “I am certain that at that moment he saved my life as he has done many times before.”

Figure 28: Lt. Alfred de Laage de Meux
(Willis B. Haviland Historic Collection)

Charles Nungesser left the Escadrille on the 15th. On the 16th, Lufbery was awarded both the Croix de Guerre and Médaille Militaire capping an auspicious start for the determined new pilot.

The Germans could still dish out heavy damage. One of their pastimes was to overfly the Escadrille’s base of Behonne on their way to
bomb the town of Bar-le-Duc. Sometimes, as Bert Hall recalled, they hit Behonne too:

_They came in groups of twenty or thirty and did a great deal of harm to the town. Once we had to rise and fight them while a hail of bombs were falling round us on the field with their horrible whistling as they fell – Ugh! It’s a most unpleasant position to be sitting out in the middle of an aerodrome in a machine whose motor is slow in starting while bombs are falling all around you... Until you start you keep thinking that each bomb... is coming for you._

On one occasion Hall and Prince took off but were quickly forced back down with holed fuel tanks.

The epic battle of Verdun had been an incredible baptism of fire, but now their time at Behonne was coming to an end. The Lafayette Escadrille had fought 146 combats, scored 13 confirmed victories, suffered one death and three men wounded. Now, thanks in part to their work, the skies over Verdun were mostly in the hands of French squadrons. On September 18, the unit returned to Luxeuil.

Raoul Lufbery was a quiet, modest man who hardly fit the profile of a fighter. And yet whatever it was that made him so brave and tough in the air was part of him on the ground. It was at this time that Lufbery, on leave in the beautiful cathedral town of Chartres, telegrammed Thenault to say that he was in prison for having knocked six teeth out of a railway employee’s mouth in a fistfight. Of course, Thenault bailed him out, and then Lufbery returned to the unit.

Leave time was precious and fleeting. Luckily taking the train into Paris was cheap, costing only a few Francs and usually only taking a few hours. Of course, there were many compelling reasons to go there. First, Paris was full of war widows and other women starved for male companionship. Second, Paris had benefited from approximately 1,900 years of development to approach perfection. Even in war, it was still the most beautiful city in the world. It was spectacu-
larly resplendent, full of grandiose architectural masterpieces and the world’s greatest art collection. Yet, the Escadrille’s main hangouts were not the cultural masterpieces like Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arc of Triumph, the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower, by far the tallest building in the world. Instead, it was the six-story Hotel Chatham by the Place Vendome where they gathered for martinis.

On one such trip into Paris, Bill Thaw spotted an newspaper ad selling a one-month old lion cub for 500 Francs. The cub had been born on a merchant ship sailing the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to France. It sounded exciting, so all the pilots chipped in to buy him. Thaw took him to Paris’ Gare de l’Est train station, boarded him in a passenger compartment on the train to Luxeuil, and did all he could to pass him off as an exotic African dog. A little squeaky roar quickly betrayed his real identity. The frightened passengers and the train conductor quickly ended Thaw’s plans, booting both him and his cub off the train. Undeterred, Thaw quickly had a cage built for the cub, now named Whiskey, and then Thaw departed for Luxeuil. Whiskey duly followed his new master to Luxeuil several days later, albeit traveling in the luggage wagon this time. The cub became a guest at the Hôtel Pomme d’Or (Hotel of the Golden Apple) where the innkeeper’s two daughters figured out that he enjoyed eating bread and milk. The cub was quickly tamed and became just about everyone’s favorite companion. Along with Thenault’s Alsatian dog Fram, Whiskey became a constant and very popular presence on base.

Over the next few days until September 23, the Lafayette Escadrille upgraded to Nieuport 17 fighters. The Nieuport 17 was essentially an improved Nieuport 11. It had a 110-horsepower Le Rhone 9 cylinder rotary engine. Instead of the cumbersome Lewis gun mounted above the top wing of the Nieuport 11s, the 17 sported a solitary 250 round belt-fed Vickers machinegun mounted ahead of the cockpit and synchronized to fire through the propeller. The belt feeds could jam, but overall the gun was tremendously reliable. Above all, it did not require the convoluted gymnastics required to change drums as did the Lewis guns. Machineguns heated up extremely quickly when being fired. The Vickers could theoretically fire off all 250 rounds of am-
munition in one burst; however, the longer a gun fired, the more likely it was to overheat, which would cause the gun to jam. The solution to overheating was a water-filled metal casing surrounding the gun barrel, which gave the Vickers gun (and other belt-fed machineguns) an extra thick appearance.

Like the Lewis gun, the Vickers gun was invented for infantry. Pilots found while flying that the frigid air cooled guns down. The water was superfluous and unnecessary weight, so planes flew without water in the metal casings.

Also on September 23, Lufbery and Rockwell took off together in their new 17s and then went into combat over an Alsatian village with a very long name: Hartmannsweilerkopf. German-sounding place names were typical in Alsace. It was about 40 kilometers almost due east of Luxeuil. Things quickly went wrong. Lufbery’s gun jammed as soon as he started firing, and so he decided to return to a friendly aerodrome. While leaving the combat area, he was hit by three German rounds. Rockwell followed Lufbery down long enough to watch Lufbery land safely, but then turned back toward Hartmannsweilerkopf. Why he did so is anyone’s guess. It was needlessly reckless. Perhaps he thought that he could pick up an easy victory. Soon enough, Rockwell started skirmishing with three German planes over the town of Thann, a few kilometers short of Hartmannsweilerkopf. It was there that the observer of an Albatros two-seater he was attacking shot him. Rockwell’s Nieuport tumbled out of the sky, the wing separated, and he hit the ground just a few kilometers from where his first victim had crashed back in May.

Those recovering Rockwell’s body found that the Albatros had fired explosive bullets. One had blown his throat open, probably killing him instantly. His death made the New York Times and other newspapers on the 24th. He was buried the next day at the Escadrille’s base of Luxeuil in a ceremony “worthy of a general.” His final tally was three German airplanes confirmed, but he had claimed other victories that were not confirmed. He had survived just four months after his first victory, and now he was the second American pilot to
die in combat in France. The French posthumously awarded Rockwell with the *Médaille Militaire* and the *Croix de Guerre* with two palms. The extra palms were each the equivalent of an additional *Croix de Guerre*. They also now promoted him to *Sous Lieutenant* (Sub-lieutenant), which he had been recommended for prior to his death.\textsuperscript{56}

By this point, Norman Prince had also downed three German planes, but then his fate turned. James McConnell described what happened:

\begin{quote}
*On the 12th of October, twenty small aeroplanes flying in a 'V' formation, at such height that they resembled a flock of geese, crossed the Rhine River, where it skirts the plains of Alsace, and, turning north, headed for the famous Mauser works at Oberndorf. Following in their wake was an equal number of larger machines, and above these darted and circled swift fighting planes. The first group of aircraft was followed by British pilots, the second by French, and four of the battle planes were from the American Escadrille. They were piloted respectively by Lt. de Laage, Lufbery, Norman Prince and Masson. The Germans were taken by surprise, and as a result few of their machines were in the air. The bombardment fleet was attacked, however, and six of our planes were shot down, some of them falling in flames. As the full capacity of a Nieuport machine allows but a little more than two hours in the air the avions de chasse (fighter planes) were forced to return to their own lines to take on more gasoline. The Nieuports having refilled their tanks, went up to clear the air of any German machines that might be hovering in wait for the returning raiders. Prince found one, and promptly shot it down. Lufbery came upon three and he promptly disposed of them.*
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
*Darkness was rapidly coming on, but Prince and Lufbery remained in the air to protect the bombarding fleet. Just at nightfall, Lufbery made for a small aviation field near the lines, known as Corcieux. Slow-moving machines, with*\end{quote}
great planning capacity, can be landed in the dark, but to try to feel for the ground in a Nieuport, which comes down at about a hundred miles an hour, usually means disaster. Ten minutes after Lufbery landed, Prince decided to make for the landing field. He spiraled down through the night air and skimmed rapidly over the trees bordering the Cormieux field. In the dark he did not see a high-tension electric cable that was stretched just above the tree tops. The landing gear of his airplane struck it. The machine snapped forward and hit the ground on its nose. It turned over and over. The belt holding Prince broke, and he was thrown far from the wrecked plane.  

The results were horrifying. Prince broke both of his legs and fractured his skull in the crash. His broken legs were set a few kilometers away at a hotel in Gerardmer, France, and the situation must have looked better. Unfortunately, an undetected cerebral hemorrhage meant that the sand was draining out of his hourglass. Lufbery had shot down his fifth enemy aircraft on the same mission, making him an ace. Three days later Prince died of his injuries. He was buried with full honors at Luxeuil as a squadron of airplanes dropped flowers from above. Elliott Cowdin said that at least Prince “lived long enough to see his long-cherished ideas successfully carried out and the Lafayette Squadron at the height of its success.” Two of Prince’s uncles were present at the funeral. They predicted to Thenault “his death will not be in vain for hundreds of others in America will come to take his place. Even after his death he will be serving France.” They were right: over the next two years, a flood of American aviators arrived in France to fight the Germans.

The Escadrille had only another week in Luxeuil before it was time to move again. Their British and Canadian friends gave the men of the Lafayette Escadrille a going-away party. “[They] all seemed to be sorry that we were going,” Laurence Rumsey wrote in his journal, probably feeling the same way.
Toward the end of the war, Roland Garros escaped from the Germans. He flew in combat for a period, but then was shot down and killed a month before the end of the war. The stadium for the French Open tennis tournament is named after him.

Thenault, *The Story of the Lafayette Escadrille Told by its Commander, Captain Georges Thenault*, 24, 41-42. McConnell, *Flying for France with the American Escadrille at Verdun*, 83-84. In contrast to what Thenault wrote, James McConnell wrote home that their first five Nieuports came already equipped with a solitary Vickers gun capable of firing five hundred rounds per belt.

Franks, *Nieuport Aces of World War I*, 34.

Thenault, *The Story of the Lafayette Escadrille Told by its Commander, Captain Georges Thenault*, 66. Thenault references the Fougerolle Villa as where the Escadrille was planning to spend its winter months without explicitly saying whether or not it was where they were already housed. The Willis B. Haviland Scrapbook of the Lafayette Escadrille identifies the address of the billet in Bar-le-Duc as 77 Boulevard de la Rochelle.

Edward’s father Charles Samson Lufbery had emigrated from Great Britain to the United States in the mid-19th Century, settling in New York. There he married Anne Weaner Phebe and had numerous children including their eldest named George and their second child Edward. George moved to Chamalières in 1870 and started a chemical factory. Edward joined him in 1876 and soon met and married a local woman named Anne Veissiere. Correspondence with Franck de Magalhães, Directeur de Cabinet, Mairie de Chamalières, May, 2010.
34 Rumsey, “Training an Aviator in France,” p. 266.
36 Thenault, The Story of the Lafayette Escadrille Told by its Commander, Captain Georges Thenault, 58-60.
37 Parsons, I Flew with the Lafayette Escadrille, 121-128.
38 Chapman, Victor Chapman’s letters from France, 41-42.
43 Hall, One Man’s War, 149.
44 Rumsey, “Training an Aviator in France,” p. 266.
46 Mason, How High Flew the Falcons, 126-127.
48 Hall, One Man’s War, 162-163. Most photographs depict four Le Prieur rockets on each side of a plane. However, Bert Hall noted that the total number on Prince’s plane was six. Perhaps he was mistaken.
49 Hall, One Man’s War, 162-164.
50 Hall, One Man’s War, 162-164.
51 Hall, One Man’s War, 170. It is worth noting that in Hall’s retelling of the story, it was Prince rather than Rockwell who was saved by de Laage. It was Hall who mentioned that the patrol was made of Prince, Rockwell and de Laage.
53 Hall, One Man’s War, 63-64.
54 Hall, One Man’s War, 64.
55 Hall, One Man’s War, 65.
56 It is worth noting that Kiffin Rockwell is still buried in Luxeuil-les-Bains. However, his tombstone notes that he fell at Rodern, in Alsace, which is approximately 60 kilometers north of Thann and 50 kilometers north of Hartmannswillerkopf.
58 A number of Norman Prince’s artifacts are on display at the Stephen F. Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum.
59 Elliott Cowdin, “How the Famous Lafayette Escadrille was Started,” 264.
60 Thenault, The Story of the Lafayette Escadrille Told by its Commander, Captain Georges Thenault, 87.