

0. PICTURES OF WWI AVIATORS - Story Preface

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Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Although planes were used by both sides during WWI, they were still primitive. The war started less than eleven full years after the Wright brothers flew their first powered flight in December of 1903. This photo, from 1916, depicts how machine guns could be mounted on a parasol monoplane. Image online via the BnF (Bibliothèque nationale de France), département Estampes et photographie, EI-13 (474).

The National Archives and the Library of Congress have digitized pictures of WWI-era planes, pilots and general war activities. This overview begins with President Wilson before Congress - on the 3rd of February, 1917 - announcing the official break in relations with Germany.

Companies manufacturing war materiel had to greatly increase production. Before the war, for example, America had few military airplanes:

- The Dayton-Wright Airplane Company put a completed plane on display at one of its plants.
- To shape helmets, the Philadelphia company of Hale & Kilburn used a large press.
- Chain screens on steel helmets - made by the E. J. Codd Company in Baltimore - were designed to protect soldiers' eyes from exploding fragments.

Conducting a reconnaissance mission was not as simple as flying over an area of the ocean, like we do today:

- Returning from a U-Boat scouting party, an aerial naval observer had to descend from a "Blimp" type balloon. He is somewhere along the Atlantic Coast.
- Lieutenant Kirk Booth, of the U.S. Signal Corps, had to be lifted skyward by a giant Perkins man-carrying kite. He practiced at Camp Devens in Ayer, Massachusetts.

Becoming a pilot, a job which promised a very short life expectancy, was not easy:

- Prospective airmen (like this would-be aviator on March 19, 1918) had to endure the "falling test" which assessed a person's equilibrium.
- Marjorie Stinson was the only woman to whom a WWI-era pilot's license was granted by the Army & Navy Committee of Aeronautics.
- Captain Edward Rickenbacker became America's top World War I ace. He was officially credited with downing twenty-two enemy planes.
- Germany's Manfred von Richthofen - more popularly known as the "Red Baron" - was the leading ace of the great war. Scoring twenty-one hits during April of 1917, he downed eighty enemy planes before he was taken

out himself on April 21, 1918.

- It wasn't only African-American pilots who endured U.S. military discrimination, as [this scene](#) at Camp Gordon, Georgia depicts.

American pilots, many of whom would be combat-trained by veterans of the *Lafayette Escadrille* and the Lafayette Flying Corps, prepared for war with their primitive-appearing planes:

- 1st Lieutenant Joseph E. Carberry, from South Carolina, was an [early pilot](#) who, in 1914, trained at Rockwell Field in San Diego, California.
- Lieutenant Earl Carroll, a prominent composer, was also a full-fledged aviator in the U.S. Service. He flew, in 1918, what was then dubbed a "[fast scout machine](#)."
- 2nd Lieutenant Lawrence S. Churchill also trained at Rockwell Field in 1915. One needed to dress warmly to fly planes of that era.

Bombs, dropped from airplanes, were not the only means of inflicting deadly damage on the enemy:

- The largest French gun [320 mm] is shown here at the [moment of firing](#) during a night bombardment.
- During the day, a French cannon sent projectiles into the German lines. Gunners had to protect their ears from the noise of the explosion.
- About three hundred feet above the fighting line, a daring French photographer took a rare photograph of French troops on the Somme Front, [launching an attack](#) against the Germans.

European children suffered greatly during the war. Not only were they among the estimated 4 million civilians who died, they endured fear, displacement and serious injuries:

- Germany's Great Air Raid on London sent many [wounded school children](#) to the hospital, in 1915.
- The American Red Cross established a home for [refugee children](#) at Grand Val, near Paris. The strain of war showed in their faces.
- Belgian [school children](#) were able to spend a bit of time on the coast near Dieppe, Belgium. The American Red Cross sponsored the outing.
- While waiting for a train, French [refugee children](#) - en route to a safer location - were able to have bread and milk which was supplied by a soldiers canteen.

People everywhere longed for the war to be over. Even a rumor, that an armistice would end hostilities, caused great celebrations:

- Word spread throughout Times Square, on the 7th of November (1918), that Germany was about to surrender. Even when the government quashed the rumor, people continued [to celebrate](#).
- When the actual armistice was announced - on November 11, 1918 - [thousands gathered](#) on Philadelphia's Broad Street, celebrating on all sides of a replica Statue of Liberty.

It is difficult to put aside the extreme suffering and misery which [the war caused](#) for so many people. But at its end, one positive fact was clear to all: The future of powered flight was very bright indeed.

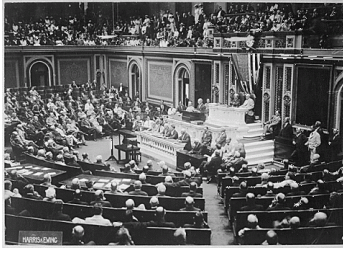
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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Media Stream



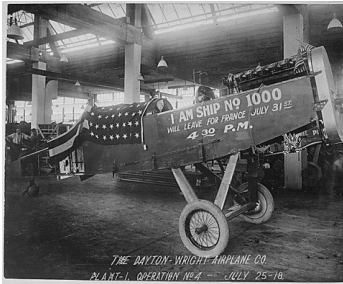
President Wilson Addressing Congress

Photo by Harris & Ewing, online courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC identifier: 533722

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Dayton-Wright Plane Display - World War I

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. NARA identifier: 533465

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Helmet with Chains for Eye Protection

[Image online](#), courtesy U.S. National Archives. NARA identifier: 533656

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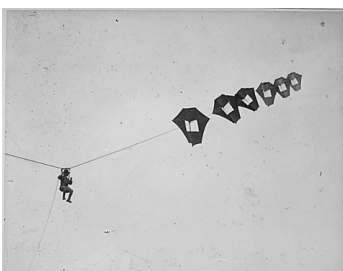


Aerial Naval Observer

1918 photo by Central News Photo Service, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Man-Carrying Reconnaissance Kite - 1918

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Falling Test - Pilot Qualification in 1918

Photograph by Underwood & Underwood. Online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Marjorie Stinson - WWI-Era Female Pilot

Photograph by Harris & Ewing. Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Captain Edward Rickenbacker

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Rickenbacker Credited for Saving Lt. Jimmy Meissner

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Scene at Camp Gordon - Segregation in WWI

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Belgian School Children on a Red Cross Outing

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. NARA identifier: 533651

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Celebrating Germany's Pending Surrender

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. U.S. National Archives' Local Identifier:165-WW-77C(17)

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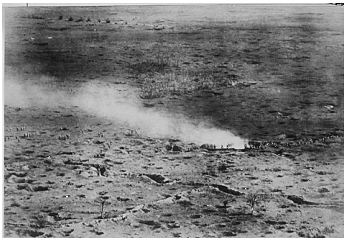


French Gun Firing

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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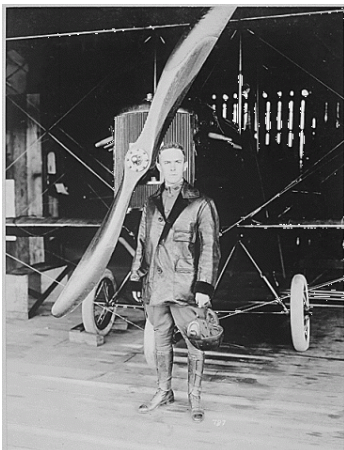
French Troops Attack on the Somme Front

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. NARA identifier: 533678

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Joseph E. Carberry - 1914 Pilot

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Lt. Earl Carroll

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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French Refugee Children in WWI

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. U.S. National Archives' Local Identifier:165-WW-180A(41)

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Refugee Children in France - Victims of WWI

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Wounded School Children in London - WWI Victims

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Armistice Day - Philadelphia Mass Gathering

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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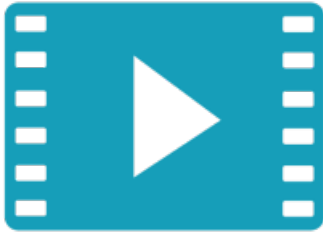
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Source: gettyimages / Bibliothèque nationale de France



Manfred von Richthofen - Death of the Red Baron

Archival footage from the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces. (It is believed that Australian gunners were, at least in part, responsible for downing von Richthofen's plane.) Video online, courtesy Australian War Memorial Channel at YouTube.

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