

Military Collection
State Archives of North Carolina

Leonidas P. Denmark (WWI 35)
[World War I]

Collection Number: WWI 35

Title: Leonidas P. Denmark Papers

Dates: 1917-1923, 1939, undated

Creator: Leonidas P. Denmark

Abstract

Leonidas P. Denmark served during World War I as an engineer and aviator in the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve and Army Air Force from 1917 to 1919. The collection contains Denmark's service information and military camp training records, his service records, correspondence, and photographs that document his military and post-war life. Denmark returned to the Army Air Corps in 1925 as an instructor. His papers contain correspondence with a woman named Lorena Patterson, who was his pen-pal both during and after WWI, dating from June 1918 to March 1939. The collection also contains unidentified photographs pertaining to WWI training camps, photographs taken from airplanes, and photographs of civilians and landscapes taken or collection by Denmark during his military service.

Physical Description: 24 folders

Language(s): English

Repository

State Archives of North Carolina, 4614 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4614

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing this collection.

Restrictions on Use: There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Preferred Citation

[Item name or title], [Folder Numbers], Leonidas P. Denmark Papers, WWI 35, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

Acquisition

The materials in this collection were received by the Military Collection of the State Archives of North Carolina in two separate acquisitions. These two acquisitions are not related to the donation of Denmark's papers that constitutes the Private Collection PC.1417 at the State Archives. The first acquisition that is part of WWI 35 was from Anne Denmark Beaty in July 2010, a relative of Leonidas P. Denmark, as a gift to the Archives. The second acquisition for WWI 35 was from William Pearson, the grandson of Lorena Patterson (Denmark's war-time penpal) of Redmond, Oregon, in September 2015. The original Denmark collection in the Military Collection was reprocessed in order to add the Pearson donation of correspondence.

Related Material

PC.1417, Leonidas Polk Denmark Collection, Private Collections, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

Separated Material

One oversized certificate from the Unknown Soldiers Ceremony given to Denmark has been relocated to an oversized WWI Papers folder bearing the collection number range for documents stored with this collection's document. The folder is stored in the map case in the State Archives Stacks on Level 3B, with the Military Collection materials.

Processing Information

This collection was arranged by physical format and subject matter of the material, such as military orders, correspondence, and photographs. Military records were arranged in chronological order from his enlistment to his experience as a veteran. There was one oversized item that was removed from the collection to be housed in an oversized acid-free archival file folder. Correspondence was arranged chronologically, with the envelopes for the letters photocopied for preservation purposes due to the adhesive and acids in the original envelopes. Each letter was flattened and stored with acid-free plastic clips for multi-page letters.

The photographs were arranged based on content of the image, as the photographs have no information with them and are undescribed. The photographs had been glued to a blue stock paper (believed originally from a photo album but removed by the donor or a relative). Removal from the thick paper was not done because of the risk of tearing or destroying the image. Excess paper was removed from the backing of each image as much as possible. They were put into acid-free archival plastic photograph sleeves for protection. All of the photographs have been numbered with a soft HB No. 2 pencil on the back, according to the collection number, the folder number, and an individual image number. For example, the number "WWI 35.F22.1" should be interpreted as "WWI 35 collection, Folder 22, Photograph 1."

Processed by: Hannah Hogan, January 2016

Arrangement

These papers are arranged into three separate series based on format and subject:

Series I: Denmark Service Records

Series II: Correspondence to Lorena Patterson

Series III: Photographs

Biographical Note

Leonidas Polk Denmark (who went by “Polk”) was born on December 2, 1892, in Raleigh, North Carolina, to James William and Juanita Polk Denmark. Leonidas Denmark grew up in Raleigh, attending Raleigh public schools. He graduated from North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering (modern-day North Carolina State University) with a degree in civil engineering in 1915. Denmark went to work for the Electric Bond and Share Company, serving as the chief draftsman on topographic survey of the Yadkin River. He left his job to enlist in May 1917 for military service in World War I at the age of 24.

Denmark was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Engineers Reserves in August 1917 at the American University in Washington, D.C. He would be assigned to the 105th Engineer Regiment at Camp Sevier in Greenville, South Carolina. Denmark was sent to seven different training camps before he was called for duty overseas in July 1918. He went on to volunteer for the U.S. Army Air Service, and attended aeronautical training at Post Field on Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in January 1918.

After receiving his wings, Leonidas Denmark entered Aerial Gunnery School at Selfridge Field in Harrison Township, Michigan. He would sail for service overseas in Europe in July 1918, arriving in France. Denmark would serve as an instructor for seven months in aerial observation at the 2nd Aviation Instruction Center in Tours, France. He served overseas in WWI until January 31, 1919, and was honorably discharged on February 5, 1919.

While being stationed either in Texas or New Jersey, Denmark met a Miss Lorena Patterson, and the two began corresponding as war-time pen pals. Denmark opened up to Patterson about his thoughts of the war and military training, his personal life, and expectations for the future after the war would end. After the war, Denmark and Patterson continued writing each other, though it would tail off through the 1920s and 1930s. The two continued to update each on developments in their lives during this period.

When he was discharged, Leonidas Denmark returned home to Raleigh, North Carolina. According to his papers, Denmark had a difficult time adjusting to civilian life. He eventually took a position as an engineer for the North Carolina Highway Commission in the Roadway Department. In 1922, Denmark left the Highway Commission to serve as a land grant clerk in the office of the North Carolina Secretary of State, remaining in this position for five years. In 1923, Leonidas Denmark married Anne Burt Stainback.

In 1925, Denmark was called again for active duty in the U.S. Army Air Service Reserves. He was made an Acting Executive Officer of the 81st Division Air Corps at Chattanooga, Tennessee where he trained potential aviators and observers. In 1928, Denmark was transferred from the Air Service Reserves to the Officers' Reserve Corps. Denmark was an active member in veteran affairs after the war, such as attending memorials and social groups, like the Association of the 105th Engineers in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In 1939 he applied, unsuccessfully, for War Veteran's Disability.

From 1931 to 1937, Denmark worked as the Alumni Secretary at North Carolina State University. He returned to the North Carolina Highway Department in 1937 as the Chief Draftsman and Cartographer. In 1960, Denmark retired and spent his free time on doing genealogical research at the State Archives of North Carolina in Raleigh, North Carolina. In the summer of 1964, he became ill. Leonidas P. Denmark died on September 30, 1964, and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh.

Scope and Content

This collection contains military service records, correspondence to a civilian, and photographs pertaining to the military life of Leonidas Polk Denmark. He was enlisted in World War I from 1917 to the close of the war and started as a soldier in the Engineer Corps and ended in the Air Corps Reserve. He was never in any combat due to illness but he trained pilots and took aerial photographs. His papers are broken into three separate series: Series I: Denmark Service Records; Series II: Correspondence to Lorena Patterson; Series III: Photographs.

The first series contains his service records: what camps he was sent to, orders to transfer, medical records, discharge papers, and veteran information once the war was over. He was at several training camps and made his way up rank from Cadet to 2nd Lieutenant, and went from Engineer Officer's Reserve Corps to Air Reserve Corps. Post WWI he was called back to service to train officers in aviation. There are also records of his request to get financial help as a disabled veteran.

His correspondence to a civilian (Miss Lorena Patterson) gives light to his life as a person and time in the war. He writes of his constantly changing surroundings as a soldier in service. For example when he gets to England the first time he notes how much it is like stepping into a Dicken's novel. The first few letters to Miss Patterson are flirtatious but there is no indication that there was a romantic flare between Denmark and Patterson. They were pen-pals during the war and kept writing to each other after the war. The last letter is from Denmark's wife, thanking Miss Patterson for a birthday present she sent their daughter.

The final series of photographs was broken down into three separate categories: training camp photographs, aerial photographs, and miscellaneous. All of the photographs are undated but can be circa dated to 1918 when Denmark was most involved in WWI. The training camp photographs depict various activities the soldiers did, from running drills to bathing. The aerial photographs present images taken from an airplane, some are of the United States, and some were taken of France. The final group is of photographs that did not fit into the previous

categories; there are some photos of civilians, some of landscapes, and some related to military but not in a training camp.

Subject Terms

Persons/Families

Denmark, Leonidas Polk (1892-1964)

Travers, Lorena P.

Places

Camp Sevier (S.C.)

Camp Dick (Dallas, Tex.)

Fort Jackson (S.C.)

Fort Sill (Okla.)

Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey (U.S.)

Raleigh (N.C.)

Selfridge Field (Mich.)

Tours (France)

Subject—Topical

United States. Army. Infantry Division, 81st

United States. Army. Engineer Regiment, 105th

United States. Army. Officers' Reserve Corps

World War, 1914-1918--Correspondence

World War, 1914-1918--Military personnel--United States

World War, 1914-1918--North Carolina

World War, 1914-1918--United States

Material Types

Correspondence

Photographs

Postcards

Collection Inventory

Series I: Service Records

This series is the largest of the three series. This series contains Leonidas Polk Denmark's original domestic and foreign U.S. military service records and orders. The materials within this series document Denmark's time stationed in at least seven different military camps, training stations, and disembarkation ports from 1917 to 1919, including his time stationed in France. Denmark's original full service record, as well as his veterans' paperwork and Air Corps Reserves service documentation. The series also contains orders from Denmark's superiors regarding troop transfers and station assignments during WWI.

Folder	Description	Date
1	Enlistment Service Record	May 1917
2	Engineer Officers' Training Camp and Camp Jackson Records	April 1917- September 1917
3	Camp Sevier Records	September 1917- December 1917
4	Fort Sill Records	March 1918- April 1918
5	Camp Dick Records	April 1918- May 1918
6	Selfridge Field Records	June 1918- July 1918
7	Overseas Transport	July 1918- August 1918
8	Assignments in France	October 1918
9	Health Records	March 1918
10	Casual Officers' Detachment Records	December 1918- February 1919
11	Discharge Records	February 1919- September 1920
12	Military Financial Records	January 1919, January 1920
13	Unknown Soldier Memorial Service	October 1921- November 1921
14	Air Service Reserve Corps Records	April 1925, January 1928
15	Tennessee Records	April 1928- November 1928
16	Veteran's Disability	June 1930-

		March 1940
17	Miscellaneous	1918, 1921, and 1935

Series II: Correspondence to Lorena Patterson

This series is comprised of letters, postcards, Christmas cards, and photographs from Leonidas P. Denmark, and Mrs. Anne Denmark (his wife) to Miss Lorena Patterson (“Pat”) from 1918 to 1939. A majority of the materials were sent in the years 1918-1919 during World War I. The earlier letters are of a flirty nature to Miss Paterson and speaks to how he portrayed his character. The letters give some information of his current post and where he’s going. The letters describe his different settings, and as much activity of his time in the military he was allowed to provide to his pen pal. The later letters (1920 and onward) talk of his readjustment back home in Raleigh, N.C. The last folder has a thank you note from Mrs. Anne Burt Denmark, Polk’s wife, and an undated Christmas Card.

Folder	Description	Date
18	Correspondence	June 1918- August 1918
19	Correspondence	October 1918- December 1919
20	Correspondence	January 1920- January 1923
21	Correspondence	March 1939

Series III: Photographs

This series contains photographs that were believed to be taken during World War I. None of them are dated, but the content suggests the date to be 1917-1918. It is also unknown who the photographer was. There are several photographs taken from training camps doing various activities, it is unknown which camps they could be of. Then there are photographs that were taken from an airplane, likely to have been from Denmark’s own camera. The last bunch of photographs contain civilians, they could be state side, or from France.

22	Training Camp Photographs	undated
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WWI 35.F22.1: Photograph of unidentified U.S. Army soldier Posing to fire a handgun in an unknown military training camp.

(circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during World War I]

WWI 35.F22.2: Two unidentified U.S. Army soldiers standing in a trench and preparing the trench by sawing a tree trunk in a unidentified training camp.(circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during World War I]

WWI 35.F22.3: Unidentified U.S. Army soldiers working near a muddy shoreline; standing on trunks and leaning against skinny trees in an unidentified training camp (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during World War I]

WWI 35.F22.4: Unidentified U.S. Army soldiers participating in the training activity Tug-of-War. There are multiple groups going at once, and commanding officers are looking on with their backs to the photograph. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.5: Unidentified U.S. Army soldiers participating in training activities. Four groups of eight-ten men are running with logs while one soldier on the right forefront looks on [possibly a commanding officer] (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.6: Unidentified U.S. Army soldier carrying a rifle Walking toward the camera through a tent row in an unidentified training camp. Another soldier walks away from the camera. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.7: Scene of an unidentified training camp with tents set up on the left and right side of the photograph (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.8: Four unidentified U.S. Army soldiers drinking hot beverages and eating sandwiches in an unidentified training camp. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.9: Six unidentified U.S. Army soldiers bathing-brushing teeth, combing hair, holding a towel-outside in an unidentified training camp. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.10: Construction on barrack "E" with lumber and crates in the front of the photo and an unidentified man not in uniform walking behind the lumber. There are two men in uniform by the lumber pile. (circa 1918) [believed to have

been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.11: Large group of unidentified U.S. Army soldiers on a an unidentified dock and in two small boats. The boats are still tied up to the shore and a third boat is empty. Some men are in full uniform others have on pants and white t-shirts. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.12: Group of unidentified U.S. Army soldiers constructing (probably a dock) on the shoreline in an unidentified training camp. There is a ferry boat in the background and a small row boat in the fore-front. A second group of men are on the dock that leads to the ferry and are also building. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F22.13: View from the beginning of a dock in an unidentified body of water with small boats on both side, approximately 7 on each side. A group of unidentified U.S. Army soldiers stands at the end of the dock. Some men are getting in the boats, some are tying/untying knots on the dock and the rest are on the dock conversing and inspecting.(circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

23

Aerial Photographs

undated

WWI 35.F23.1: View from an unidentified airplane flying over an unidentified area. A wing and part of the body of the plane is visible in the photograph. The ground below has buildings and roads below. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F23.2: Aerial view of downtown Washington D.C. [possibly taken from the Washington Monument]. The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is in the foreground and the Capitol Building is in the center(circa 1917) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F23.3: Aerial view of the front of a large estate in France. A manor house is in the center of the photograph and it's gardens extend to the forefront of the photo. Trees surround the house and garden, and there is a body of water behind the house. Fog is rising from the water and the trees, and smoke is coming out of the chimneys of the house. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F23.4: View of a city in France [possibly Angers, France]. There is the tip of a gothic style building in the forefront. Buildings

and rooftops are visible in the center, forefront, and background of the picture. A river runs in the left background of the photo in an open area. There is an illegible stamp on the lower right corner of photo but the word “Angers” is clear. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F23.5: Aerial view of an airfield in France with air hangers and air crafts visible in the center and background of the photograph. On the left center of the photo a large house is visible on the outskirts of the base. The airfield is surrounded by open grounds and fields. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

24

Miscellaneous Photographs

undated

WWI 35.F24.1: Two unidentified women sitting on a fallen tree trunk in a field of tall grass with trees in the background. One woman has a hat in her lap the other is holding something small in her hands. Both are wearing long skirts with white collared shirts. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.2: Unidentified man stands in front of a touring motor vehicle on an unidentified street. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.3: Two unidentified adults and three unidentified children standing candidly in front of a motor vehicle [possibly a family preparing to pose for a photograph] The youngest boy has on a button-up shirt with the sleeves rolled up, a tie, knickers, and is barefoot. The girl is in a light colored long-sleeved dress and a hat with socks and buckle shoes. The woman wearing a light colored long sleeved top tucked into a dark skirt, with a hat on top. The man is in a suit with a tie, and the older boy is in a button up short-sleeved shirt and tie, with pants, socks and shoes. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.4: Unidentified cross tombstone in an unidentified cemetery. There are five other unidentified tombstones and memorials. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.5: Barbed wire on the beach and dunes of an unidentified coast [probably France] (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.6: Eleven unidentified Army soldiers and a little girl in a light colored short-sleeved dress stand posing in front of a marble building. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.7: Candid of the backs of unidentified soldiers on an airfield [probably in France]. A few men are next to an aircraft, some are sitting on wooden crates, lounging on the grass, and the rest are huddled together. (circa 1918)
[believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.8: Photograph of Leonidas Polk Denmark and his Brother, James William Denmark. Both in their military uniforms. An unidentified older woman stands between them [possibly their mother]. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

WWI 35.F24.9: Unidentified soldier stands with pack on his back and rifle in his right hand. Caption on the back reads “In the camp uniform with full equipment-taken the last day of the hike.” Another soldier is in the center kneeling and looking at his pack. The foot and butt of a rifle of another soldier is on the left edge of the photograph. (circa 1918) [believed to have been taken during WWI]

Oversized Item 1

Certificate for the nomination of Denmark to be a Delegate at the Unknown Soldier Ceremony in Washington D.C.

November 1921