

3rd BALLOON COMPANY

LINEAGE

Co C, 2nd Squadron, 13 Sep 1917
3rd Balloon Company, 19 Jun 1918
Demobilized, 12 Mar 1927

STATIONS

Fort Omaha, NE

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

LTC John A. Paegelow
Cpt Birge M. Clark, 15 Oct 1917
Cpt George F. Parris, *20 Jan 1919*

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Meuse-Argonne
St Mihiel
Lorraine, 31 Jul-4 Sep 1918; 17-21 Sep 1918

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

OPERATIONS

The company was organized at the U. S. Balloon School, Omaha, Nebraska, on September 13th, 1917,

as Company "C", Second Balloon Squadron. Captain John A. Paegelow was the only commissioned officer with the company. Flying Cadets Birge M. Clark, Edgar T. Ferguson and Roger S. McCullough were Acting Lieutenants. The enlisted personnel were mostly men who had received considerable training at the Balloon School. After organization as a company, the balloon was operated two days a week and on other days the company engaged in drill, fatigue and guard duty.

On October 15th, 1917, Major Paegelow was put in command of the 2nd Squadron and 1st. Lieut. Birge M. Clark in command of the Company. When our transportation, consisting of Packard trucks, was received a trial run of 100 miles was made with the entire company, but no technical equipment.

The company was slowly equipped with its technical equipment, and on November 26th, 1917, had everything necessary to operate a balloon except a winch, balloon and parachutes. On this date (November 26th) orders were received for the Second Squadron to entrain for Garden City on the 27th November and all equipment except the personal equipment of the men was turned in.

The Squadron arrived in Garden City on November 30th and did general fatigue until December 7th, 1917, 1LT John S. Martin was assigned to the company on December 6th, 1917.

The squadron embarked on the ship Tunisian, on 10 Dec 1917, at St. John, Canada, with a sufficient stock of mutton, tea and hard bread to carry it through the voyage. On Christmas Day the Tunisian steamed into Liverpool harbor. The squadron remained aboard ship during the day, the men stuffing themselves with Christmas luxuries and getting in shape for the trip to the Continent. France was reached on 27 Dec, and the Squadron marched up the long hill to the British rest camp for temporary station. On 31 Dec, Companies A, B and D left Le Havre, and from that date to the present, the Third Balloon Company was left to shift for itself.

At an early hour on 3 Jan 1918, the company left Le Havre, and went via "Chevaux 8, Hommes 40" to Chalons-sur-Marne.

A site for an American Balloon School was chosen near Cuperly-sur-Marne, about nine miles from Chalons, and seven miles from the front lines. The Third Balloon Company was detailed to construct the Balloon School. Ground was broken, and a few Adrian barracks were constructed. The company then moved from Chalons to Cuperly, and continued its work on the school. Then work was started on the construction of new buildings which soon began to sprout up like newly planted bean seeds. From morning till night the company picked chalk and swung heavy hammers at 20-penny nails, in order that future "balloonatics" might have a comfortable studio. It was extremely cold, and the men suffered from long exposure to the weather, but no relief was given. Bacon and spuds were rationed out daily at 0700 while at dinner and supper the men sat down to huge meals of "14-carat" soup and prunes.

The company never inflated its balloon at Cuperly, but on several occasions maneuvered the balloon of the 48th French Aerostiers. The Balloon School neared its completion by the third week in Mar, thirty-six buildings having been erected and prepared for use.

It was a difficult task to completely camouflage the entire school, and Boche aviators successfully crossed our lines daily, and undoubtedly secured excellent pictures of the local surroundings. A series

of trenches were dug for the use of the men during air raids, and the moonlight nights brought the Huns over the lines in large formations. While a wild-eyed sentry pounded out a warning on a husky screw anchor, the "Galloping Third" hopped out of the barracks and into the trenches. Often the Boche flew back and forth for several hours, dropping bombs and spraying the ground with machine gun fire, while the whole sky went crazy with bursting shrapnel and anti-aircraft shells.

Inspections were not being held as it was considered imperative by the Commanding Officer of the School that work be rushed. From January 28th to February 23rd, Lieut. Clark was in the hospital and the company was commanded by 1st. Lieut. George R. Durkee. Commencing with March 7th, 1918 the company had 1/2 day balloon and infantry drill each day, and worked on the school building the rest of the day. 1st Lieut. Roland T. Ingels joined the company on March 10th.

From March 10th to March 26th 1st Lieutenants Birge M. Clark and George R. Durkee were put on special duty and 1st Lieut. Roland T. Ingels commanded the company.

On 28 Mar 1918, all troops at the Balloon School left Cuperly for new stations. This movement was carried out, probably because of the impending German advance which was made shortly after. From 31 Mar to 24 Apr the Balloon School, and the Third and Eighth Balloon Companies were stationed at Marigny-le-Chatel, a quiet French village, which boasted of a church, two "epiceries," three cafes, and a muddy creek. General fatigue duties were performed at Marigny, until 24 Apr on which date the Balloon School and two companies separated, the school moving to Bordeaux, and the Third Company going to Camp le Valdahon.

On April 4th 1st Lieutenants Birge L. Clark and George R. Durkee were sent on detached service to the Saumur Artillery School. 1Lt Roland T. Ingels was in command of the company until April 17th when he was relieved by 1Lt Harmon Maier who commanded the company until April 23rd, on which date Lieut Ingels again resumed command. On April 24th the company left by train for Etalans near Camp le Valdahon, arriving there on April 27th. On April 30th Lieutenants Clark and Durkee returned to the company, Lieut. Clark resuming command.

On May 1st the company relieved the 84th French Balloon Company and commenced the operation of a balloon for the Valdahon Artillery School. The company continued this work until July 29th. Artillery fire was adjusted and a large number of artillery officers were taken up in the balloon in addition a great number of smoke bombs were observed by company observers. The enlisted men were given pistol practice, gas mask drill and general balloon and infantry instructions. This was the real period of training for the company.

From 28 Apr to 29 Jul 1918, the company was stationed at Etalans (Doubs), about three miles from Camp le Valdahon, and fourteen miles from the Swiss border. It was at Etalans that the Third Company received its real training for active service on the Front. Up to May 18th the strength of the company had been approximately eight officers and one hundred enlisted men, but on that date the company received 2nd Lieut. William S. Barker and 75 enlisted men, bringing the company to full strength. On 1 May, the company inflated the balloon for the first time since its arrival in France. From that date the company maneuvered its balloon every day when the weather conditions permitted.

The conditions of the company, in respect to its training, discipline, military appearance, and

efficiency, which were at all times a credit to the Balloon Service, was due to the tireless efforts of SFC James H. McBride, who had served as first sergeant of the outfit since 19 Oct 1917, and remained in that position until 21 Aug 1918, when he was transferred to another branch of the service.

On 28 Jul 1918, the company truck train left Etalans, and arrived at a new station near Brouville in the Baccarat Sector. At Brouville the company got its first taste of active service. A schedule calling for balloon maneuvers at all hours of the day and night was carried out. The company worked under the direction of the Sixth French Army Corps, and regulated fire on minor targets within the German lines.

The company went by train and the trucks and equipment overland; the trucks arrived on July 28th and the company on July 31st, 1918. The position occupied was at Brouville, and had been previously occupied by the First Balloon Company. We were under the joint command of the 6th French Corps and the Balloon Wing at Teel. The American Division on the front was the 77th which was relieved a few days later by the 37th Division. Neither division had American artillery and all our work was with French artillery. This was a quiet sector and little work of great military importance was done. The company and officers, received valuable training. 1Lt Charles W. Page, Jr., and Ralph S. Dold joined the company August 4th, 1918.

1 Sep 1918 1LT B. M. Clark and 1LT R. L. Dold jumped; balloon not burned

2 Sep 1918 1LT H.P. Neibling and 1LT G. C. Carroll; jumped balloon 130 burned

A new balloon was obtained from Toul and inflated on September 3rd. On September 4th this balloon was deflated and the company made the trip overland with their own trucks and four borrowed trucks to a position near Menil-la-Tour, arriving before daylight. On September 6th the company rain moved to its position near Mandrel for the St. Mihiel offensive.

At the beginning of the St. Mihiel offensive the Third Balloon Company was in possession of the following transportation:

- 7 Delahaye, 3 ton trucks
- 3 Fiat, 1½ ton trucks
- 2 Motorcycles with side-cars
 - 1 - Indian (serviceable)
 - 1 - Reading-Standard (unserviceable)
- 1 Winch, Caquot
- 1 Tender, Latil
- 1 Touring car, Fiat
- 1 Kitchen trailer
- 1 Water tank

The transportation provided by the equipment table includes three motorcycles with side cars. The absence of two serviceable motorcycles was keenly felt during the first days of the advance because often for the courier work and the necessary liaison mission only sidecars could be used. Eventually, all transportation problems were successfully solved.

At 0800 4 Sep, the company truck train pulled out of Brouville, and began its trip through the inky

darkness of a chilly night. Guided by a strip of dark sky which showed through the line of tree tops on either side of the road, the trucks found their way to the edge of a large woods in the Toul Sector, where the company remained for two days. Another move took the outfit into the heart of the Foret de la Reine, where preparations were immediately begun for the attack which was to wipe out the entire salient which the Germans had controlled for four years.

Sept. 5, 1918; Enroute to Foret de la Reine, arriving at 7.00 edge of wood. Weather was rainy. Trucks were sent to Chaudenay to procure hydrogen.

Sept. 6, 1918; Company moved to the part of the Foret de la Reins, south of Manadres. Weather continued rainy; camp was prepared; balloon bed cleared. Winch, which was in need of repair, was sent to wing Headquarters, Toul, and reserve winch of the group was secured. Telephone communication was begun. Two days rations were drawn from Henil-la-Tour. 1Lt William M. Heftye, assigned to duty with company and reported to commanding officer for duty. Cpl. Jack Goodman and Pvt. Irving Kusharkow, on leave at Toul, for observance of Jewish holiday.

Sept. 7, 1918; Balloon bed was completed, water was secured. Gasoline was drawn from the French in Toul. Telephone lines were laid to two ascension points, to 69th Balloon Company, and to 42nd Artillery Brigade.

The St. Mihiel offensive was preceded by many days of inclement weather. This resulted in concealing our movements, in as much as enemy observation was impossible. The bad weather continued during the first two days of the operation rendering balloon work very difficult and at times impossible. The Third Company entered the attack as the balloon of the 42nd Division. All artillery missions assigned to the company were successfully carried out for the artillery brigade of the division. Work was also done for the Corps and Army Artillery located near to our balloon.

On 12 Sep 1918, the company moved to Seicheprey and on 14 Sep 1918 to Saizerais. The work of the company during the first few days following the initial two day attack proved invaluable to the division because through lack of organization ground observation posts were not established and the balloons performed their duties satisfactorily. During two days when many enemy batteries were in action their location was observed by the balloon, and reported by no other sources. A photograph of one of the balloon adjustments revealed an enemy battery destroyed.

The weather during the first two days of the attack prohibited the regulation of artillery fire. The balloons, on subsequent days conducted important and successful adjustments. On 16 Sep the 3rd. Company adjusted 118 shots for batteries of 155s.

The weather was extremely bad during the preparatory stage, and the work of constructing and camouflaging the new position was very difficult. Trenches were dug in ground which was covered with mud a foot deep. Shallow trenches were dug and pup tents pitched overhead, as a shelter for the men at night. Lines were run to many batteries and liaison was carried out with the artillery with which the company operated. The inclement weather served to conceal the movements of our own troops, and all preparations for the attack were successfully made. At 0100 on 12 Sep, the roar of the first run echoed throughout the Foret de la Reine, followed by a bombardment, the intensity of which had never before been equaled. Instead of a heavy return fire, comparatively few shells landed in the sector in

which the Third Balloon was stationed.

At dawn, the balloon ascended in a gale, and remained in the air long enough to give the observers an opportunity to glean the local landscape and witness the rapid advance of the tanks and doughboys, who made record time in clearing out the Boche trenches and flanking Montsec. At 0900, the company prepared to move forward, leaving shortly afterward, and advancing as far as Seicheprey where all traffic was halted because of the congestion of the roads which had been blown away by American artillery. After sending to the rear for rations and supplies the company again moved forward, this time to Maizerais, where it remained during a period of moonlight nights and air raids, until 20 Sep, 1918.

At 0100 on 21 Sep, the company left Maizerais, proceeding by truck train to Ferne de Choisel, in the Verdun Sector. After a twenty-one hour ride the trucks arrived at the new position and unloaded their cargo of anxious men. The balloon was inflated a few days later, and preparations made for another drive. At midnight, or shortly after, on the morning of 26 Sep, the artillery opened up a bombardment which introduced the Meuse-Argonne operations. Considerable difficulty was experienced in breaking up the enemy works, and the advance was slow.

On the afternoon of 26 Sep, the balloon was attacked, and burned by two Fokkers. 1LT H.P. Neibling and 1LT G. C. Carroll jumped and balloon 167 burned.

Two days later the company moved forward to Malancourt, over a stretch of road which had been subjected to both friendly and enemy artillery fire. A new balloon was inflated at Malancourt, and a position was taken up nearby to a number of batteries operated by French and American gunners. The new position and all surrounding terrain were subjected to heavy enemy cross fire, and life for the men was anything but comfortable. Several attacks were made on the balloon, but none were successful.

In each offensive the telephone, balloon and machine gun equipment proved adequate. All officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were untiring in their efforts to secure the maximum results from each operation.

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Chronologically stated the Third Balloon Company entered the St Mihiel sector on Sept. 5, 1918, making camp in the wood south of Mandree.

On Sept. 12, 1918, the company moved to Seicheprey and on Sept. 14th 1918 to Saizerais. The work of the company during the first few days following the initial two day attack proved invaluable to the division because through the lack of organization ground observation posts were not established and the balloons performed their duties satisfactorily. During two days when many enemy batteries were in action their location were observed by the balloon, and reported by no other sources.

At 2100 hours on September 21st 1918 the company received orders to proceed overland to proceed to

Ferme de Choisel in the Verdun Sector. Camp was broken, the company leaving about 1.00 hour on the 22nd, and arriving at the new camp at 20.00 hours on the same day. A telephone central was established and the necessary liaison was completed on Sept. 25th. On September 24th the balloon had been inflated and the first ascension was made at 4.00 hours on the morning of the attack, Sept. 26th. In the afternoon, at about three o'clock two Fokkers attacked and burned the balloon, the observers, 1st Lieutenants Harlou P. Neibling, F. A., and 1st Lieutenant George C. Carroll, jumping and landing safely. A new balloon was secured and inflated, and on the morning of Sept. 28th the company advanced to Maluncourt.

The weather was very variable, visibility rarely good, and the roads generally muddy. Every opportunity to serve the artillery or infantry was embraced and the balloon was in the air every moment of good visibility. Though the company acted as Third Corps Artillery Balloon, it worked often with Army and Divisional Artillery. Considerable information was given to the 4th Division. The balloon also gave valuable aid in the repeated attacks near the Madeleine Ferme and the Bois de Cunel, where the Carman resistance was very marked.

9 Oct 1918 balloon attacked, 2LT R.H. Anderson jumped; balloon not burned

On October 11, 1918, the balloon was deflated during the night by shell fire. A new balloon and hydrogen were secured from Ippécourt, and the observation continued uninterrupted until October 18th, when the company advanced to a new position that had been prepared previously near Montfaucon. On that same night the balloon was destroyed by shell fire. A new balloon was procured and inflated.

On 18 Oct 1918, the company again moved, taking up a position on the heights near Montfaucon. The balloon was destroyed that same night by shell fire and a new one was immediately inflated and placed in the air. Repeated attacks on the balloon were made by enemy planes, but the Third Company was fortunate and managed to save the balloon from destruction, while balloons of other companies were daily going up in flames. The men were forced to dig in because of the shell fire and air raids which caused considerable disturbance, but no casualties were suffered during the period in which the company held this position. Telephone lines were daily put out of commission by enemy artillery, and the linemen were kept busy day and night repairing the damage.

On October 24th, the 42nd Balloon Company relieved the Third Company which proceeded to a camp in the Bois de Thierville, to act as the company in reserve. Here, the transportation was completely overhauled, the company issued new clothing, given baths and close order drill.

On November 1st the company relieved the French Balloon Company #73, at Haudainville (Meuse), acting as the balloon of the 17th C. A. C., and later the 2nd C. A. C. Observation was also done for the 35th and 81st Divisions.

On November 3rd, 1918 during the afternoon the Company Commander saw Battery A of the 130th F. The Battery Commander was very anxious to work with the balloon because his former work with balloons has been very satisfactory. Captain Currin, 1st Battalion, 130th F. A. was visited. He is enthusiastic about balloon work and will try to get permission to fire at any target we designate

without waiting for orders from Brigade. He also wants direct lines.

November 8, 1918; No liaison was made by the observers of this company during the past week for the following reason: During the greater part of the week the maneuvering Officer was ill and unable to attend to his regular duties. One observer, 1st Lieut. Duncan Largdon, was sick and there remained with the company three observers only, and the Company Commander. Since this week has been our first in this sector the company commander, and often one observer, were busily engaged in liaison work with the Artillery. On account of establishing camp, training student observers, and other company duties, no observer could be spared for this work.

November 10, 1918; The Company Commander was in liaison with G-2, the Chief of staff, and the Chief Signal Officer of the 81st Division. An attack was made by the division but owing to the weather and other causes, practically all Divisional telephone lines were out of order. The balloon lines were able to work and our central took care of all priority calls during the day between the division and forward areas. During a part of the day telephone communication with the advance headquarters and the division could be had only through our central. Our Radio was asked to serve the division and was placed at the disposal of the division.

Also, on 10 Nov, the balloon was attacked and burned by a single Fokker which came through the haze at an extremely low altitude, and made its get-away with amazing rapidity. 1LT G. C. Carroll and 1LT F. D. Cummings jumped. Immediately a new balloon and hydrogen were obtained from Fromoreville, and the balloon was ready for ascension on the morning that the Armistice became effective.

The next day brought the signing of the Armistice, which was a long looked for relief to the entire company. A more regular schedule of operations was affected, and the men once more had an opportunity to enjoy spare hours which were not to be found before the Armistice.

From November 11th to November 25th, the balloon made daily ascensions possible, observing the progress of the evacuation, and instructing the student officers attached to the company.

On 23 Nov 1918, the company moved to the Balloon Concentration Camp at Ville-sur-Cousances. General fatigue duties were performed there, and a daily schedule of drill and athletics was carried out.

On November 25th, the balloon was deflated and the company moved by truck to balloon concentration camp near Ville-sur-Couevanceo. Here a new camp was established, equipment cleared and repaired, transportation, overhauled, and infantry drill and instruction in Manual of Arms (rifle and pistol) to the company.

On December 5th, ten extra trucks were loaned to the Third Company by the balloon 1st Army. These trucks were loaded with 390 tubes of hydrogen, (French), and on December 6th, the company moved overland, enroute to Germany.

On 6 Dec 1918, orders were received assigning the Third Balloon Company to the Army of Occupation. The company left the balloon camp on 6 Dec and went by truck train to Machtum, Luxembourg, where it remained until 18 Dec 1918.

On the morning of December 7th, the company reached Machtum (Luxembourg) reporting upon arrival to the 7th Army Corps. The company was billeted and given daily drill and instruction.

The company was transferred to the Third Army Corps on December 17th and moved, upon orders, on December 18th to Niederberg, Germany. The night of December 18th was spent at Muden, Germany, and the following night at the permanent camp at Niederberg where first class billets and quarters were obtained for all officers and men.

Since arrival in Germany equipment has been cleaned, trucks overhauled, clothing issued, and systematic and graduated drill and instruction given to company. A recreation room has been provided, a band organized, entertainment given jointly with the First Balloon Company. On December 25th, the enlisted men's mess of the First and Third Balloon Companies were combined.

On 19 Dec the truck train carrying the Third Balloon Company arrived at Niederberg, Germany, a small German village on the east side of the Rhine River, and about three miles from Coblenz. The trip from France to Germany was without incident, and the "Galloping Third" crossed the Rhine ahead of all other Air Service units.

Cpt. Birge M. Clark, who had been in command of the organization since 15 Oct 1917, was relieved from duty with the company on 20 Jan 1919, and ordered to the United States.

Arrival in France 28 Dec 1917

Arrival at the front 31 Jul 1918

Days ascensions made in S.O.S. 22

Days ascensions made in Z.O.A. 61

Total days ascensions made 83

Number of ascensions made in S.O.S. 126

Number of ascensions made in Z.O.A. 147

Total number of ascensions made 73

Total number of hours in air S.O.S. 153.54

Total number of hours in air Z.O.A. 370.04

Total number of hours in the air 523.58

Artillery adjustments in S.O.S. 23

Artillery adjustments in Z.O.A. 36

Total number or artillery adjustments 59

Enemy shells observed 694

Enemy aircraft observed 854

Enemy balloons observed 101

Enemy artillery batteries observed 41

Enemy traffic on road and railroad observed 135

Smoke, fires and flares observed 402

Explosions observed 11

Jumps from basket 9

Balloons attacked 10

Balloons burned 3

Balloons destroyed 4
Observers killed
Observers captured

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.