

17th BALLOON COMPANY

MISSION

LINEAGE

Balloon Company No. 17, organized, Jan 1918
Balloon Company No. 17 (Coast Defense), 17 Oct 1921
Redesignated 17th Balloon Company, 12 Feb 1923
Demobilized, 28 Feb 1927

STATIONS

Fort Omaha, NE
Camp Morrison, VA, Sep 1918
Port of Embarkation Newport News, VA, Oct 1918
Europe, Oct 1918
Camp Lee, VA, May 1919
Fort Crook, NE, May 1919
Fort Omaha, NE, Jun 1919
Kindley Field, PI, 1920-1922
Inactive 1922-1927

ASSIGNMENTS

27th Balloon Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

1LT John J. Dillon
1LT Guy F. Donohoe, 1 Mar 1918
Cpt Harry T. Lewis, Jan 1920
Cpt William B. Mayer, 18 Nov 1920
1LT Elmer J. Bolling, 11 May 1921
1LT Neal Creighton, 7 Jun 1921
Cpt Ivan B. Snell, 2 Feb 1922
1LT Neal Creighton, 25 Aug 1922-1 Sep 1922
Inactive 1 Sep 1922-28 Feb 1927

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 17th Balloon Company was organized at Fort Omaha, Nebraska. The commissioned personnel of the organization consisted of First Lieutenant John J. Dillon, commanding, First Lieutenant C. C. Brown and Second Lieutenant George A. Phillips. The enlisted personnel consisted of seven men transferred to organization from the First Balloon School Squadron on January 27, 1918.

The Headquarters of the organization was located in Garage No. 1 until March first when it was moved to the South Barracks. On this date the release of First Lieutenant John J. Dillon, commanding and the assignment of First Lieutenant Guy F. Donohoe to command was effected.

The company supplied the guard for Florence Field in turn with the other overseas companies.

On the 11th day of March, 197 men from recruit lines Kelly Field, Texas were assigned to the company. Then followed busy days of organizing the company to full strength, and transferring men to and from the company. The company organized and started its own mess on this date. Company was put in quarantine indefinitely. On March 12th First Lieutenant James B. Kile was assigned to company as Medical Officer.

On March 15th the first non-commissioned Officers were appointed, consisting of two Sergeants and six Corporals. On March 23rd the Medical Detachment was attached to company for duty.

On April 2nd, 56 privates of the company were transferred to out-going companies, and on following day 86 men from Fort Logan Colorado were assigned to company, These days showed intense activity about the headquarters of the company.

On the 6th day of April the Company took part in the Liberty Day parade. The company started

from the Post at noon and was taken by street car to point where parade started. Company marched a distance of about 5 miles thru the main streets of the city, On April 9th the company was released from quarantine and the men were allowed on pass to the city of Omaha.

On April 10th a School for enlisted specialists opened and classes were started in telephony, gas, instruction, cordage and N.C.O. Balloon instruction, Machine Gun, trucks and winch instruction, In order that a company fund might be had for the purpose of purchasing Athletic goods, phonograph, etc. for the use of the men, a dance was given on Friday night, April 19th at the De Luxe Dancing Academy in the city of Omaha. At the dance a fund of \$1185.00 was realized. On this same date Lieutenants Gerald Towle, James Reber, Frank Cimmino were ordered to Columbus, Ohio for the purpose of taking a course for Adjutant Officers at the Ohio State University.

The next event of note was on May 30th, Decoration Day, when Company took part in the Decoration Day Parade, marching thru the streets of the City of Omaha with other troops from Fort Omaha and Fort Crook.

On or about June 11th the company was complimented by Lieutenant Colonel Hersey for the manner in which Company Balloon was hauled down on position 11, South Field. Balloon ascended in a high wind with two passengers. While balloon was in the air one fin and the rudder of balloon broke, causing the balloon to dive and swing uncontrolled. Balloon was hauled down in this condition without the use of a spider and without injury to the passengers.

On June 24th telegram was sent to Adjutant General reporting Corporal Charles Bennett as a deserter. On this date the Company including Officers was restricted to the Post for one week for being late at Reveille.

On July 8th company received notice at eleven o'clock to move to Florence Field into tents, At 1:00 P.M. Company left South Barracks by truck for Florence Field.

During the first weeks of the company's stay at Florence Field, company was engaged in digging balloon beds and working on Bomb Proof Chart room. Company was flying balloon whenever weather would permit.

On August 3rd Company was ordered to proceed by marching with pack to a position seven miles north of Florence Field, Fort Omaha, Nebr. Company broke camp at Florence Field about 6:00 A.M. and arrived at new camp site, known as Ponca Creek Camp, about 11:00 A.M. On the afternoon of this day a location for Balloon Bed was found and the construction of Bed was begun. At noon August 4th Balloon Bed was completed and a new balloon inflated, ready for use. On the afternoon of this day the Company marched to Rifle Range, a distance of about two and one half miles and took their first instruction in target practice with the rifle. From this time until date of return to Florence Field, company was regularly engaged in Rifle and Pistol practice, and by alternating the personnel of the Balloon Detail, every man of the company received instruction in both Range Practice and Balloon work in the Field.

On August 7th the balloon was maneuvered across country over trees, wires and fences about 1½ kilometers west of camp and was sent up on the winch and in a position which permitted the concealment of winch after balloon was in air. A temporary bed for one night's location was made at this point. On August 10th balloon was maneuvered from temporary position to Walker's Trench, a distance of six kilometers where it was turned over to the 16th Balloon Company and maneuvered to Position 41 Florence Field.

Efforts were made to give the company training in concealment of balloon and to obliterate tell tale tracks and winch ruts which might indicate activity, and also in handling a balloon so that it might be quickly put away without discovery. Also a plan for a fake balloon bed designed to draw shell fire away from real position and camp was worked out and explained to those interested in this work.

On Aug 1st 10th Company returned by marching with packs through rain and mud to Florence Field, arriving in camp about noon, ten men, non-commissioned officers, were left behind as soorers and markers.

The first death in the company was on August 12th when Private Clarence E. LaBelle died of Acute Atrophy of the Liver.

Second Lieutenant Howard H. Braden was assigned to the company as Personnel Officer on August 18, 1918 also First Lieut Hiram H. Avery was assigned same date as Medical Officer.

On August 23rd, the company was put under quarantine in quarters and guards placed about company. On this date Company was ordered to proceed to Morrison, Virginia upon receipt of transportation. On account of measles breaking out, the company was held in quarantine until September 13th on which date the company entrained at Union Station Omaha, Nebraska at 2:00 P.M. On August 28th the company demonstrated a new method of Balloon Drill and Balloon maneuvering to Lieutenant Colonel Hersey and other Officers interested in balloon work at Florence Field.

Company took a twelve mile hike about the outskirts of the City of Omaha with light pack on September 4, 1918.

As above stated Company entrained for Camp Morrison, Virginia on September 13th. The company was enroute the 13th, 14th, 15th and arrived in Camp Morrison, Virginia about 12:20 A.M on the 16th day of September. While enroute a change in First Sergeants was made.

As soon as company arrived at Aeronautical General Supply Depot and Concentration Camp, it was fully equipped for oversee service. Company took part in all drills and formations while at Camp also supplied all necessary guard and fatigue when called upon to do so.

On October 4th the company took part in a review before Brigs General Hutchinson on Camp Parade grounds in celebration of the 4th Liberty Loan Day. Company subscribed over \$18,000.00 of the 4th Liberty Loan issue.

It was about this time that the men in company took the Influenza and for several days there were over 100 of the company carried on sick report. As a result of the epidemic four of our number died, namely: Private Mont Wilson, Chauffeur Walter Burke, Private John W. Waldie and Private Tames A. Hipp. On this date, October 4th, 42 of the enlisted men who were either sick in Hospital or unfit for oversee service were transferred in exchange for men fit for oversee duty.

Per Confidential Orders dated October 19, 1918 the company was ordered to leave the barracks at 12:30 PM for Port of Embarkation Newport News, Va., October apt 1918 at which time trucks conveyed company to Pier. Company went aboard United States Transport Duca D'Aosta about 2:00 P.M. and remained at Pier until 3:50 P.M. October 21, 1918.

Without incident the Duca D' Aosta left dock with two other transports. Company took part in ship drills, fire drills and furnished the necessary guard while aboard the ship enroute.

Company was transferred from ship to lighters and landed on the docks at Brest, France November 3, 1918. Company was formed at about 4:00 P.M. and proceeded by marching with packs to Pontanezen Barracks, a distance of about 4 miles. Arrived at camp about 7:00 and quartered in tents, On November 4th the company furnished a detail of 98 men, 3 sergeants in charge of Lieutenant Gerlinger reporting at sorting docks, Brest at 7:00 P.M. On November 5th, 7th and 8th company furnished the necessary details for sorting docks at Brest, and the guard details when called upon to do so.

On November 9th the company was up at 4:30 A.M. and rolled packs and left camp at 7:30 A.M. for Kermer tracks, Brest. Company entrained in box cars and left Brest at 10:35 A.M. for Camp Souge Balloon School. Company enroute on the 10th and detrained at Camp De Souge about 9:30 A.M. on November 11th; proceeding by marching with full pack to Balloon School. Company pitched shelter tents and erected kitchen about 12:00 o'clock noon.

Arrival in France 3 Nov 1918

Arrival at the front

Days ascensions made in S.O.S

Days ascensions made in Z.O.A

Total days ascensions made

Number of ascensions made in S.O.S.

Number of ascensions made in Z.O.A.

Total number of ascensions made

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

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

Total number of hours in the air

Artillery adjustments in S.O.S.
Artillery adjustments in Z.O.A
Total number or artillery adjustments
Enemy shells observed
Enemy aircraft observed
Enemy balloons observed
Enemy artillery batteries observed
Enemy traffic on road and railroad observed
Smoke, fires and flares observed
Explosions observed
Jumps from basket
Balloons attacked
Balloons burned
Balloons destroyed
Observers killed
Observers captured

Arrived at the port of Newport News, VA, on 4 May 1919 on the U.S.S. Susquehanna as Balloon Company No. 17.

Transferred to Camp Lee, VA, and arrived there on 8 May 1919.

Transferred on 17 May 1919 to Fort Omaha, NE.

Departed the port of San Francisco on 5 April 1920 on the U.S.A.T. Sherman en route to the Philippines.

Arrived 4 May 1920 at Manila, PI, and transferred to Kindley Field, PI, on the same day.

Redesignated as Balloon Company No. 17 (Coast Defense) on 17 October 1921.

The company's mission in the Philippines was to provide aerial observation and fire adjustment service for the Coast Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays.

Inactivated on 1 September 1922 at Kindley Field and 8th Airship Company made Active Associate.

Assigned to the 27th Balloon Group on 6 February 1923.

Redesignated as the 17th Balloon Company on 12 February 1923.

The 2nd Observation Squadron made Active Associate on 14 March 1923 in lieu of the 8th Airship Company.

Designated mobilization training station was Kindley Field 1923-27.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 10 Sep 2011

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Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.