

# The Missing 7<sup>th</sup> Insignia

A Presentation by Charles Gosse  
to the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the  
League of World War One Aviation Historians

April 11<sup>th</sup> , 2015

at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center of the  
Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum



In my presentation to you on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, I discussed my research into the history of The National Air and Space Museum's collection of six original pieces of squadron insignia from the *Lafayette Escadrille* and its successor, the United States Air Service's *103rd Aero Squadron*.



*The Regents and the Secretary of the  
Smithsonian Institution*

*request the honor of your presence  
at the presentation of the*

*Journal de Marches et Operations  
of the Lafayette Escadrille  
by*

*George Spencer Thenault*

*to the*

*Smithsonian Institution, National Air Museum*

*and the opening of a new*

*Lafayette Escadrille Exhibit*

*Friday morning, April 19, 1963*

*eleven o'clock*

*Arts and Industries Building*

*Jefferson Drive between Ninth and Tenth Streets, SW.*

*This invitation admits bearer and guests*

*(over)*

I shared with you how these insignia had been acquired by the museum from the surviving members of the squadrons and their families and shown to the public in a 1963 exhibit here in Washington, D.C., along with the log books of the Escadrille.



Willis



Peterson



Tobin  
or Cannon



Lufbery via  
Thaw



Lufbery via  
Smith



Soubiran

My presentation also discussed the symmetry in how the Indian heads were rendered on the fuselages of the Nieuports and Spads flown by these squadrons, as you can see here. A stencil was made and then placed against the side of the fuselage and a pencil was used to mark out the specific lines that made-up the insignia. The stencil was then flipped-over to be used to create a reverse image on the other side of the fuselage. This design endured through the transition of the Lafayette Escadrille's pilots to the U.S. Air Service's 103<sup>rd</sup> Aero Squadron in February of 1918, the last example on the right being the latest of the six.



A seventh insignia was donated to the museum in 1960 by the brother of Norman Prince, who was one of the founding members of the Escadrille. Norman – seen on the left - was killed in October of 1916. His older brother, Frederick, is on the right. He joined the Escadrille after his brother's death. This presentation is about his donation – the Smithsonian's 7<sup>th</sup> insignia.



The museum kept the record of Freddy Prince's 1960 donation on its books but did not have a photograph of the insignia and could not identify where it had been stored. When you have so many objects to look after and you think you have misplaced one, finding it is almost impossible. This photo is from the last frame of the 1981 movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" depicting where the ark of the covenant was presumably stored without a location identified.

A comment written on an index card in the museum's old, pre-computer files stated: "*Loaned to Dr. Howell - MHT, 8/6*" but no one knew who the good doctor was or if he ever returned the insignia.

Mr. Edgar Howell

August 7, 1962

Philip S. Hopkins

Transfer of Indian Head Insignia of the Lafayette Escadrille

We have selected the insigne which was taken from the Spad flown by Norman Prince, per your request. This can now be picked up at the National Air Museum offices.

Accession No. 1181, 1961-89. Photo attached showing specimen in the frame in which it was received.

cc: Access. File  
NAM 1181

KNN/cmy

Elsewhere in the museum's records was a typewritten memo dated August 7, 1962 - presumably a day after the handwritten note dated "8/6." The memo is from Kenneth Newland, a curator at the National Air Museum, and he is writing to an Edgar Howell - the "Dr. Howell" of the penciled note from the day before - with a subject line of telling him that "Transfer of Indian Head Insignia of the Lafayette Escadrille."

He writes "We have selected the insigne which was taken from the Spad flown by Norman Prince, per your request. This can now be picked up at the National Air Museum offices..."

So what is an “MHT” as in “*Loaned to Dr. Howell - MHT, 8/6*”

I had to put my head back into the days of the Smithsonian of the early 1960s and try to understand their terminology. Eventually, and it took a great deal of sifting and sorting and to-ing and fro-ing, I discovered that it stood for the Museum of History and Technology and that that was the earlier name for the museum we know today as the National Museum of American History.



*Annual Report of the Board of Regents*

*of the*

SMITHSONIAN  
INSTITUTION



PUBLICATION 4478

*Showing the Operations, Expenditures, and Condition of the  
Institution for the Year Ended June 30*

1961



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1962

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington 25, D.C. - Price \$4.25

U.S. Army and Navy; memorabilia of Norman Prince of the Lafayette Escadrille, from Frederick H. Prince, Jr.; Discoverer XIII,

PRINCE, FREDERICH H., JR., Long Island, N.Y.: Memorabilia of Norman Prince.  
(N.A.M. 1181.)

So with that discovery I started looking up the actual corporate records of these institutions. I found a record of Freddy's original donation in the Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year Ended June 30 1961 shown above. Page 124 states "memorabilia of Norman Prince of the Lafayette Escadrille, from Frederick H. Prince, Jr." and page 132 states "Prince, Frederich H., Jr., Long Island, N.Y.: Memorabilia of Norman Prince. (N.A.M. 1181.)"

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# The United States National Museum

1963 ANNUAL REPORT



Prince, Frederick H., Jr., Long Island, N.Y.: Indian-head insignia of the Lafayette Escadrille Squadron taken from the Spad flown by donor during World War I (244759).

And then I found that two years later the object was again recorded as a donation in the publication The United States National Museum 1963 Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30 1963 shown above. Page 173 states “Prince, Frederick H., Jr., Long Island, N.Y.: Indian-head insignia of the Lafayette Escadrille Squadron taken from the Spad flown by donor during World War I (244759).”

So who is “*Dr. Howell*” as in *Loaned to Dr. Howell - MHT, 8/6*”

From reading the corporate records of these Smithsonian institutions I realized he was non other than a curator at the Museum of History and Technology

So here is what we have:

- A formal accession in the 1961 Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution
- a “loan” to a “Dr. Howell” as the penciled note on the August 6, 1960 index card states
- a “transfer” to an “Edgar Howell” in a typed memo dated the next day, August 7, 1960 who is on the staff of MHT, the Museum of History and Technology, and
- A formal accession in the record The United States National Museum 1963 Annual Report

This is our paper trail.



I wrote to American History in the fall and was invited to visit them and see the insignia, which I did on Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>.



The insignia is of an evolved style that was painted on aircraft of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Aero Squadron from approximately the summer of 1918 onwards.



Note that there is no war paint on the nose or cheeks of the Indian head.



Willis



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My presentation also discussed the symmetry in how the Indian heads were rendered on the fuselages of the Nieuports and Spads flown by these squadrons, as you can see here. A stencil was made and then placed against the side of the fuselage and a pencil was used to mark out the specific lines that made-up the insignia. The stencil was then flipped-over to be used to create a reverse image on the other side of the fuselage. This design endured through the transition of the Lafayette Escadrille's pilots to the U.S. Air Service's 103<sup>rd</sup> Aero Squadron in February of 1918, the last example on the right being the latest of the six.

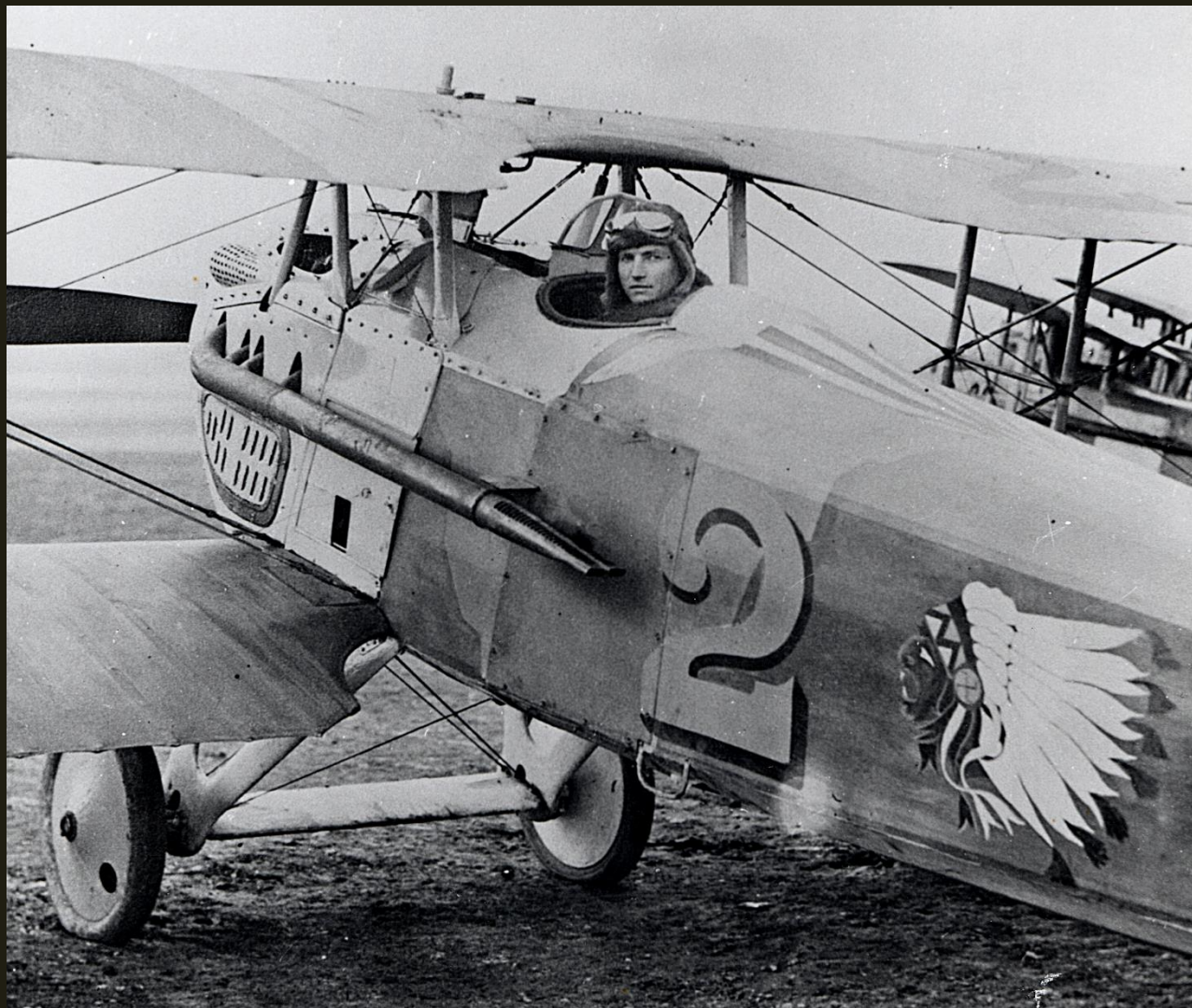




Other than the paint attaching in some places to the underside of the frame's glass, the insignia is in very good condition.



The longerons line up as expected.



I sent my research to Alan Toelle and he was able to find a photo of the specific aircraft from which this insignia was cut. Alan identifies it as a Kellner-built Spad X.III. Note the elaborate wing insignia painted on the turtle deck just behind the cockpit.

(Photo courtesy of Alan Toelle)



You can see in this comparison of the American History example and the photo from Alan that these are the same insignia.



Alan and I have been trying to figure out which 103<sup>rd</sup> Aero Squadron pilot is sitting in the cockpit of the Spad marked "2." One possibility is Doyen "Dink" Parsons Wardwell, who is seen on the right and left side of the above group with the image of the pilot in the cockpit in the center as a comparison.

In a letter dated July 27, 1918, to his wife, Wardwell wrote: I have just had a brand new machine given to me with a more powerful motor and two machine guns. I haven't flown it yet but I am going to try it out tomorrow if it is a good day." According to the logbook of the 103<sup>rd</sup>, this was Kellner-built Spad XIII S. 4517.

In his diary entry for July 30, 1918 he wrote "No. 2 has "took" its last flight. I show poor judgment and bust up. Luckily nothing more than a fair-sized headache."

In his letter dated August 2, 1918, to his wife he wrote: "No, I haven't a Boche yet or no Boche has me, but I came near getting myself the other day. I had "23" assigned to me. Well, between poor judgment and motor failure at the crucial moment"

Though he later refers to his aircraft as "23," it appears more likely to have been "2."



No overlap Age 23



25% overlap



50% overlap



100% overlap

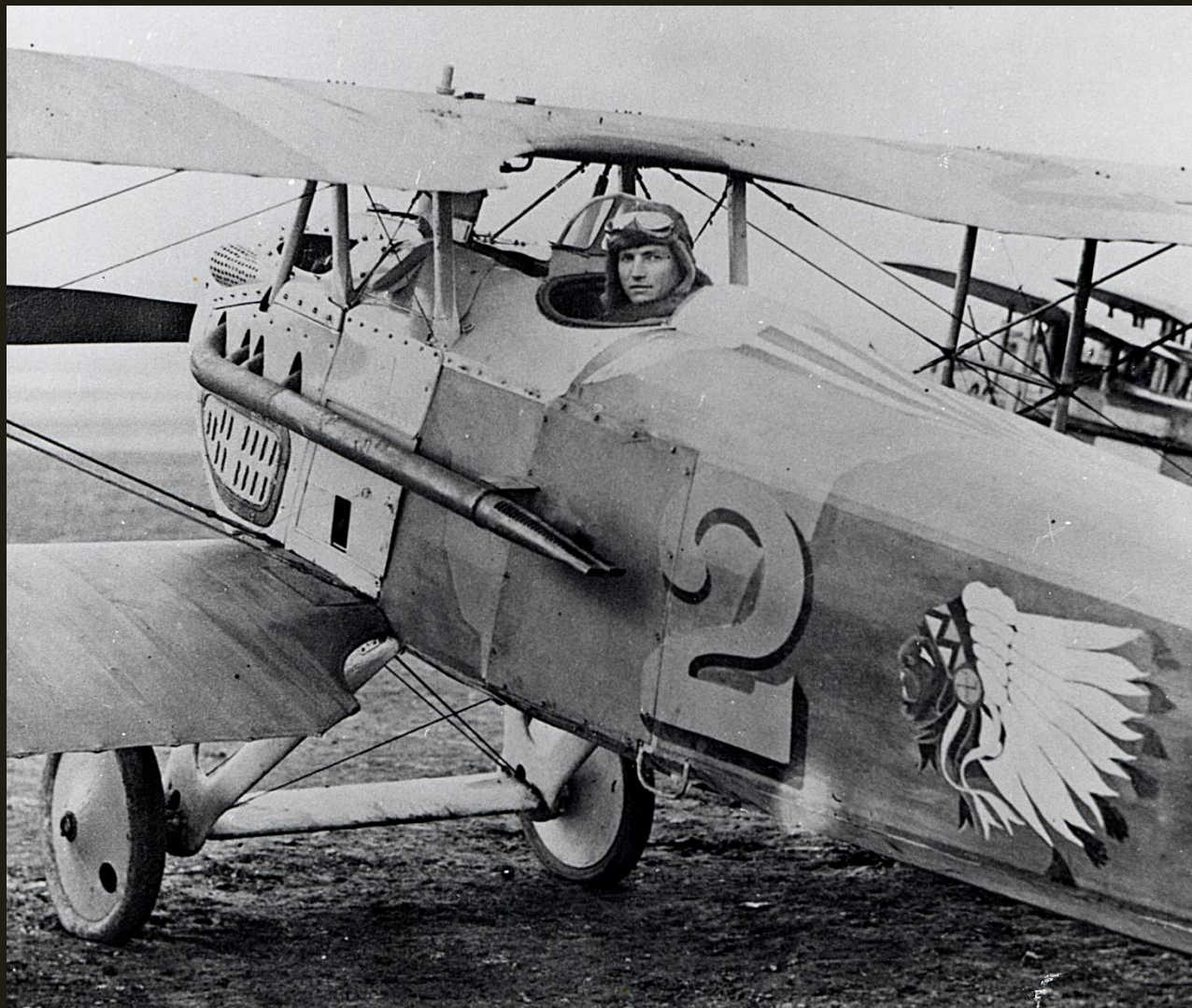


1916 Northwestern  
Yearbook Age 21



1916 Yearbook  
Salesmanship Club

Eugene B Jones is also a possibility in that he more closely resembles the pilot. The series of four photos above show, beginning on the left, the original image of the pilot in the cockpit and then, progressing from left to right, Jones's photo overlaid on top of that image and made transparent to a degree of 25% of the original, then 50% and then 75%. The two photos on the next line are from Jones's college yearbook. There is no direct link in the squadron logbook to a Kellner-built Spad X.III which he might have flown, however.



Of course, the possibility exists that the pilot in the cockpit is a ferry pilot transporting the aircraft either to or from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Aero Squadron. Our research continues.

(Photo courtesy of Alan Toelle)