

Benjamin Delahauf Foulois Papers

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Revised and expanded by Laura J. Kells

Collection Summary

Title: Benjamin Delahauf Foulois Papers

Span Dates: 1898-1966

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1908-1935)

ID No.: MSS21188

Creator: Foulois, Benjamin Delahauf, 1879-1967

Extent: 17,850 items ; 51 containers plus 1 oversize ; 20.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Military officer and pioneer aviator. Correspondence, diaries, reports, official documents and personnel records, newspaper clippings, and other material relating to Foulois's military career and the development of air power in the United States military.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Foulois, Benjamin Delahauf, 1879-1967.

Organizations

United States. Army--Foreign service--Philippines.

United States. Army--History--Punitive Expedition into Mexico, 1916.

United States. Army. Air Corps.

United States. Army. American Expeditionary Forces.

Subjects

Aeronautics, Military.

Aeronautics--Law and legislation.

Air bases--New York (State)

Air mail service.

Civil defense.

Diplomatic and consular service, American--Germany.

Military attachés--United States.

Spanish-American War, 1898.

World War, 1914-1918--Aerial operations, American.

Places

Mitchel Field (N.Y.)

Philippines--History--1898-1946.

Philippines--History--Philippine American War, 1899-1902.

Occupations

Army officers.

Aviators.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Benjamin Delahauf Foulois, military officer and pioneer aviator, were deeded to the Library of Congress in 1951 by Foulois. They were received by the Library in 1967. An addition to the papers was given by Carroll V. Glines in 1986.

Processing History

The papers of Benjamin Delahauf Foulois were arranged and described in 1968. Additions and revisions were made in 1990 and 1991. The collection was reprocessed in 2005.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Benjamin Delahauf Foulois is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Benjamin Delahauf Foulois are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Benjamin Delahauf Foulois Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1879, Dec. 9	Born, Washington, Conn.
1898	Enlisted, First United States Volunteer Engineers, United States Army Served in Puerto Rico
1899	Reenlisted, Nineteenth Infantry
1899-1905	Served in the Philippine Islands
1901	Commissioned second lieutenant, Seventeenth Infantry
1906	Graduated Infantry and Cavalry School, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.
1908	Transferred to the Signal Corps Graduated, Army Signal Corps School, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. Assigned to balloon detachment, Fort Myer, Va., piloted Dirigible No. 1
1909	Flew with Orville Wright in test flight of Wright flyer, Fort Myer, Va. Received flight training from the Wright brothers
1910	Piloted Military Aeroplane No. 1, Fort Sam Houston, Tex.
1912	Transferred to the Seventh Infantry
1913	Assigned to the Signal Corps, aviation school, San Diego, Calif.
1914	Promoted to captain, Aviation Section, Signal Corps
1916	Commander, First Aero Squadron, Mexican Punitive Expedition
1917-1918	Chief, Air Service, American Expeditionary Forces

1920-1921	Assistant military observer, American Commission, Berlin, Germany
1921-1924	Assistant military attaché, American Embassy, Berlin, Germany
1923	Married Elisabeth Shepperd Grant
1925	Graduated, Command and General Staff School, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.
1925-1927	Commanding officer, Mitchel Field, Long Island, N.Y.
1927-1931	Assistant chief, Army Air Corps
1931-1935	Chief, Army Air Corps, with rank of major general
1935	Retired from military service
1942	Ran for United States Congress
1967, Apr. 25	Died, Andrews Air Force Base, Md.
1968	Published posthumously with Carroll V. Glines <i>From the Wright Brothers to the Astronauts: The Memoirs of Major General Benjamin D. Foulois</i> . New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Benjamin Delahauf Foulois (1879-1967) span the years 1898-1966, with the bulk of the items concentrated in the period 1908-1935. The collection documents Foulois's thirty-seven-year military career beginning as a soldier in the Spanish-American War and ending as chief of the Army Air Corps. It is particularly comprehensive for the World War I period and for Foulois's tenure (1927-1935) as assistant chief and chief of the Army Air Corps. The papers are arranged in five series: [Diaries](#), [Personal Correspondence](#), [Subject File](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [diaries](#) span the years 1898-1926 and record specific activities or tours of duty. The first diaries cover Foulois's service in Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War and in the Philippines during the Philippine insurrection. Diaries relating to his activities in World War I supplement material on the American Expeditionary Forces in the [Subject File](#). Typewritten transcripts accompany the handwritten diaries.

The earliest letters in the [Personal Correspondence](#) series were written to his mother by Foulois as a young soldier (1898-1905) in Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Much of the later correspondence is dated after his retirement. Included are letters from military officers, pioneer aviators, aviation writers, and historians and Foulois's detailed responses to inquiries regarding the early days of military aviation.

The largest series in the Foulois Papers, the [Subject File](#), contains official documents relating to the different phases of his career and chronicles the development of military aviation from its beginnings in 1908 until 1935. Assigned to the office of chief signal officer of the Signal Corps in 1908, Foulois was involved in testing the first dirigible airship submitted to the army by Thomas S. Baldwin and worked with Orville and Wilbur Wright on testing the first airplane purchased by the army. Following instruction by Wilbur Wright in 1909, Foulois was sent to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, with Aeroplane No. 1 and told to learn to fly and maintain the army's only airplane. Material from this period contained in the "Aviation duty, Signal Corps" file includes a logbook for Aeroplane No. 1 and notebooks kept by Foulois.

Files on the First Aero Squadron commanded by Foulois concern training aviators and the use of planes in the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916-1917. Foulois served as chief of air service, American Expeditionary Forces, in World War I, and his files document the supply, training, organization, and operations of air units, his service on the Inter-Allied Aviation Committee of the Supreme War Council, and his work on the air terms of the treaty ending the war. Files from his service

as commanding officer at Mitchel Field include a letter from Charles A. Lindbergh thanking him for his assistance in preparing for Lindbergh's transatlantic flight.

Issues covered during Foulois's tenure as assistant chief and chief of the Army Air Corps include organizational and war plans, research and development, the procurement of aircraft, and army airmail operations following the cancellation of contracts between the United States Post Office and commercial airlines in 1934. Also treated are his work as a member of the War Department Special Committee on the Army Air Corps (known as the Baker Board) which studied military aviation and the charges made against him during an investigation by Subcommittee Number 3 of the House of Representatives Committee on Military Affairs into profiteering in military aircraft. Foulois's activities following his retirement are documented in files on civilian defense and his civil defense work in New Jersey during World War II, his unsuccessful campaign for United States Congress, and speeches and speech notes.

Scrapbooks in the [Miscellany](#) series contain newspaper clippings and magazine articles covering Foulois's activities from 1908 to 1966, including the early days of aviation in the United States military. Other items relate to the filing scheme prepared by United States Air Force staff for Foulois's papers together with an inventory of his personal effects.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Diaries, 1898-1926](#)
- [Personal Correspondence, 1898-1966](#)
- [Subject File, 1904-1966](#)
- [Miscellany, 1903-1966](#)
- [Oversize, 1915-1942](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-2	<u>Diaries, 1898-1926</u> Diaries and typewritten transcripts. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 2-7	<u>Personal Correspondence, 1898-1966</u> Letters received and sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 7-41	<u>Subject File, 1904-1966</u> Correspondence, memoranda, reports, notes, speeches and writings, official documents and personnel records, flight records, transcripts, charts, maps, telegrams, printed matter, and other documents. Arranged alphabetically by topic and type of material and therein chronologically.
BOX 41-51	<u>Miscellany, 1903-1966</u> Clippings from scrapbooks relating to Foulois's career, unbound clippings files, other printed matter, notes on aviation history, file plans and inventory, and card files. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX OV 1	<u>Oversize, 1915-1942</u> Blueprints, plans, charts, maps, and a campaign poster. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-2	Diaries, 1898-1926 Diaries and typewritten transcripts. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	1898-1909 (11 folders)
BOX 2	1914-1926 (6 folders)
BOX 2-7	Personal Correspondence, 1898-1966 Letters received and sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 2	1898-1900 (6 folders)
BOX 3	1901-1905, 1915-1931 (14 folders)
BOX 4	1932-1949 (12 folders)
BOX 5	1950-1958 (10 folders)
BOX 6	1959-1963 (10 folders)
BOX 7	1964-1966 (7 folders)
BOX 7-41	Subject File, 1904-1966 Correspondence, memoranda, reports, notes, speeches and writings, official documents and personnel records, flight records, transcripts, charts, maps, telegrams, printed matter, and other documents. Arranged alphabetically by topic and type of material and therein chronologically.
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Subject File, 1904-1966

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Miscellany, 1903-1966

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