



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Robert S. Sanford Collection

2004

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Robert S. Sanford Collection
Date:	(bulk 1917-1970)
Identifier:	NASM.2004.0063
Creator:	Sanford, Robert S., 1897-1981
Extent:	0.55 Cubic feet (1 box, 1 folder in oversized box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of material relating to both Robert S. Sanford's World War I service and his work in Alaska with the US Bureau of Mines. The material relating to his service with the 139th Aero Squadron includes the following: a series of over 100 letters from Sanford to his family from 1917-1919, chronicling his entry into the military, training stateside, his overseas deployment and service in the Toul sector; nine photographs of Sanford in uniform or of aircraft in France; a May 4, 1918 copy of "Plane News"; and a small brown diary with entries written by Sanford from 1917 to 1918.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Bonnie Gitlin, Gift, 2004, NASM.2004.0063

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Patricia Williams, 2004. Digital assets attached by Allan Janus, 2020.

Preferred Citation

Robert S. Sanford Collection, NASM.2004.0063, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Robert S. Sanford (1897-1981) served as an airplane mechanic for the 139th Aero Squadron during World War I. The 139th was assigned to the First Army on June 12, 1918 and engaged in the Toul Sector. They ceased operations on December 11, 1918. After the war, Sanford was employed by various private mining companies in South America, Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon, Canada and Oklahoma. He joined the US Bureau of Mines in 1940, and in 1943 was the district engineer in charge of the mineral development program in Alaska. While there, he found large oil areas on the Arctic slope. In the early 1950s, Sanford served with the State Department, on loan from the Bureau of Mines, as a mining consultant to Afghanistan, India, and Nepal. He resigned from the Bureau of Mines in 1966.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of material relating to both Robert Sanford's World War I service and his work in Alaska with the US Bureau of Mines. The material relating to his service with the 139th Aero Squadron includes the following: a series of over 100 letters from Sanford to his family from 1917-1919, chronicling his entry into the military, training stateside, his overseas deployment and service in the Toul sector; nine photographs of Sanford in uniform or of aircraft in France; a May 4, 1918 copy of Plane News; and a small brown diary with entries written by Sanford from 1917 to 1918. The material relating to his work with the United States Bureau of Mines includes the following: two brown notebooks containing Sanford's notes on his work in Alaska, including flying information; one notebook containing photographs of Alaska, mostly of hunting and fishing; a few letters from Sanford in Alaska to his family; negatives from Alaska; newspaper articles about Sanford's contributions to finding the Alaskan oil fields; a certificate given to Sanford for crossing the Arctic Circle as a passenger of Wien Alaska Airlines in 1945; and a 1947 Wien Alaska Airlines, Inc. calendar.

Arrangement

The Robert S. Sanford Collection is arranged by content type.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Mining
- Oil wells -- United States
- World War, 1914-1918
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Aerial operations, American -- France

Types of Materials:

- Calendars
- Certificates
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Negatives
- Photographs

Names:

United States. Army. Air Service. 2d Pursuit Group. 139th Aero Squadron
United States. Bureau of Mines

Places:

Alaska

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Robert S. Sanford's Letters Box 1; Written in USA and Overseas, 1917-1918
Box 1, Folder 2	Robert S. Sanford's Letters Box 2; Overseas - from France, World War 1
Box 1, Folder 3	World War 1 Diary and Photographs
Box 1, Folder 4	U S Bureau of Mines Notebooks
Box 1, Folder 5	Miscellaneous Alaska Material
Box 1, Folder 6	Alaska Photo Album and Negatives