

The Family of Joseph Walsh
with Appendix *The Legacy of the Lafayette Escadrille*
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Joseph Walsh was born in Weymouth, Massachusetts, just south of Boston, in 1894.

In World War I, Joseph Walsh served in France with the 103rd Pursuit Squadron, the successor of the famed Lafayette Escadrille.

In 1919 Joseph Walsh returned to Massachusetts, where he became a Boston policeman. There he met Catherine Canney, working in service at a Beacon Hill home on Mount Vernon Street.

Catherine Canney had been born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1900. Her family then returned to Ireland. As a young woman, Catherine returned to the United States.



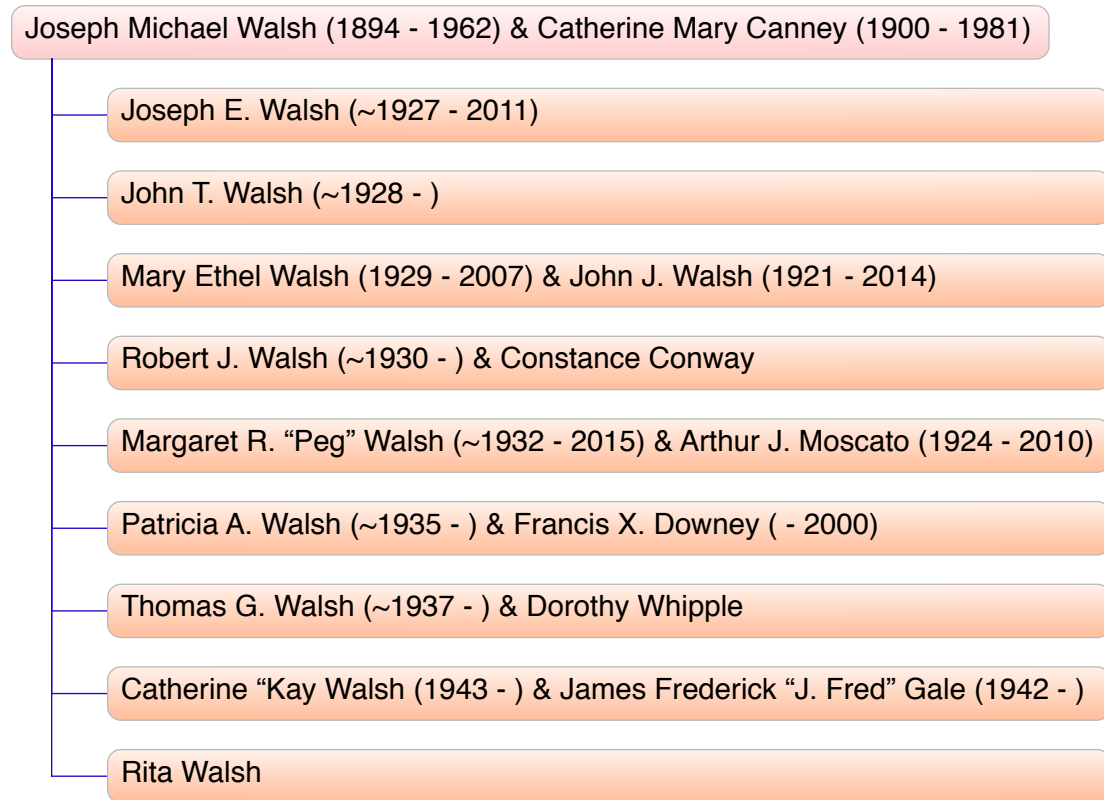
Catherine Mary (Canney) Walsh
c. 1923-24 Age 22 or 23



Joseph Michael Walsh
1919 25 yrs old
Married June 20, 1926

photos courtesy of Catherine (Walsh) Gale

Joseph Walsh and Catherine Canney married in 1926 and raised their nine children in Boston. Six of the children are still living as of 2017.



After retiring from the Boston Police Department, Joseph Walsh worked as a courier, driving between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus in Cambridge and MIT's Lincoln Laboratory in Lexington.

Joseph and Catherine Walsh died in the Boston area and are interred in St. Joseph Cemetery in West Roxbury.

Joseph and Catherine's daughter, Catherine "Kay" (Walsh) Gale is the maternal grandmother of my youngest grandchild.

Most of the remainder of this report deals with the legacy of the historic Lafayette Escadrille, and primarily the 103rd Pursuit Squadron, with which Joseph Walsh served during World War I.

Appendix - The Legacy of the Lafayette Escadrille

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The Lafayette Escadrille was a World War I French squadron of pursuit aircraft organized in 1916 and consisting of 38 pilots, mostly Americans, who fought on the Western Front under the French flag.



***Mark of Distinction* courtesy of Russell Smith Studios**

From *RussellSmithArt.com*: In *SPA 124 Lafayette Escadrille* Jon Gutman writes, "Another burst of creativity amid the squalor of Cachy occurred when Bill Thaw noticed the Seminole Indian head trademark on crates of ammunition from the Savage Arms Company and ordered one of the mechanics, Cpl. Suchet, to apply it to the fuselage sides of N124's aircraft as a squadron insignia."

The *Mark of Distinction* painting was commissioned by a relative of William Thaw, Mr. William Thaw Whitney. The painting depicts William Thaw, a founding member of the famed Lafayette Escadrille, presenting the Indian Head logo to Capitaine Thenault for approval. Beside the Nieuport is Cpl. Suchet and Whiskey, the famous lion cub mascot of the Lafayette Escadrille.

The United States entered World War I in April 1917 and early in 1918 the Lafayette Escadrille was disbanded, with the squadron's pilots being distributed among several newly-arrived United States squadrons.

The 103rd Pursuit Squadron

Upon disbanding in early 1918, most of the Lafayette Escadrille's American personnel were transferred to the 103rd Pursuit Squadron, which assumed the mantle as the Lafayette Escadrille's successor squadron and continued to use the Lafayette Escadrille's Indian Head logo on their planes.

The 103rd had trained in Kelly Field, Texas and arrived in France in December 1917 without pilots or airplanes. William Thaw from the Lafayette Escadrille, shown in the preceding painting became the 103rd's commanding officer.

The 103rd was probably the first squadron in the U.S. Army's Flying Service to receive pilots and planes in France. It was also the first squadron in the Flying Service to be sent into combat. However, most of its experienced pilots were soon transferred into other squadrons such as the 94th "Hat in the Ring" Squadron and the 103rd did not attain the fame of the 94th Squadron, summarized in the following section.

Family Connection: The enlisted personnel of the 103rd Pursuit Squadron included Joseph Michael Walsh, the maternal grandfather of my former daughter-in-law and the subject of the first few pages of this report.

Annotated 103rd Pursuit Squadron Timeline

- Dates are somewhat inconsistent. The first dates are from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/103d_Aero_Squadron.
- The dates in parentheses are from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Air_Service_American_Expeditionary_Force_aerodromes_in_France.
- I have provided some of the annotated material from other sources.

Timeline Part 1 – Before France

Kelly Field, Texas, 31 August-30 October 1917

Kelly Field is the oldest continually-operating United States military air installation and today is part of Joint Base San Antonio.

Aviation Concentration Center, Garden City, New York, 5 November 1917

In World War I this installation was near Camp Mills on Long Island. From this area many ground units, including the 42nd Rainbow Division, also left for France. Personnel would take trains to the East River, then a ferry to the Hoboken docks opposite Manhattan on the west side of the Hudson River.

Overseas transport: *RMS Baltic*, 23 November-7 December

The *Baltic*, like many ships crossing to Europe during the latter part of World War I, would join a convoy at Halifax, Nova Scotia. Also on the *Baltic* for this crossing were elements of the Iowa National Guard, namely the 2nd Battalion and the Machine Gun Company of the 168th Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division.

Liverpool, England, 8 December

I believe that World War I convoys would often pass the north side of Ireland,

then south to dock at Liverpool.

Windall Downs Rest Camp, Winchester, England, 8 December

A measles quarantine kept the squadron in England for over two weeks.

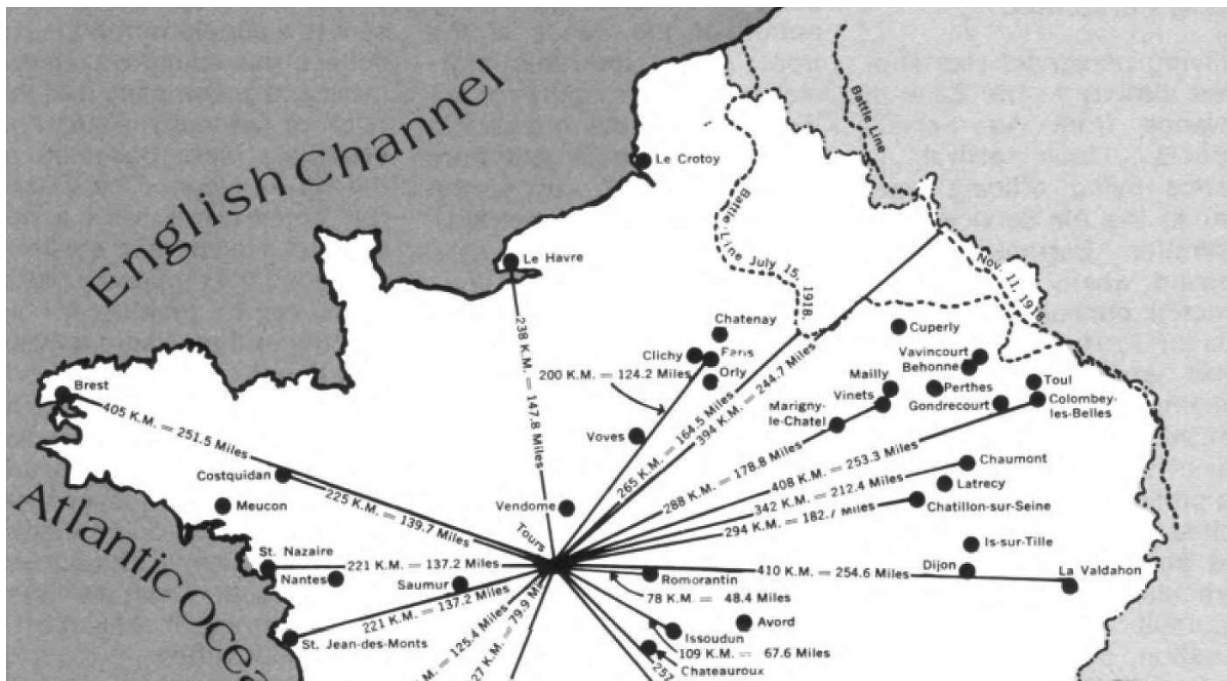
Southampton, England, 23 December

Southampton seems to have been the major transit point from England to France.

Timeline Part 2 - France

The webpage

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Air_Service_American_Expeditionary_Force_aerodromes_in_France provides information about different United States Air Service installations in Northern France during World War I. The following map taken from this webpage, is largely illegible. Nevertheless, I will use it for reference purposes.



American Rest Camp, Le Havre, France, 24 December

Issoudun Aerodrome, France, 28 December

Issoudun, about 50 miles southeast of Tours in central France, appears on the above map. Several temporary aerodromes west of Issoudun were used for training, and personnel of the 103rd helped with construction. All aerodromes in this area subsequently reverted to agricultural use. At this point the squadron had not received its pilots and planes.

18 Feb 1918 – Pilots transferred to the 103rd Pursuit Squadron and the 103rd becomes operational, according to *The U.S. Air Service in World War I*, Volume 3.

The following two combat aerodromes were in the Reims area northwest of Paris.

La Noblette Aerodrome, France, 13 Feb 1918 (18 Feb – 10 Apr 1918)

La Noblette Aerodrome was a temporary aerodrome near Mourmelon-le-Grand southeast of Reims and west of Suippes. This general area, north of Chalons, was a staging area for portions of the French Army during World War I and the French Army still has a presence in the area.

Bonne Maison Aerodrome, France, 8 April 1918 (10 Apr – 2 May 1918)

Bonne Maison Aerodrome was a temporary airfield near Fismes, along the Vesle River west of Reims. The 103rd was at Bonne Maison Aerodrome from 10 Apr to 30 Apr, supporting the 4th French Army in the Battle of Lys. During this stay, squadron aircraft appear to have shot down four German planes and one observation balloon.

During the 1918 German spring offensive, the German Army occupied Fismes on 28 May. From 3 Aug - 1 Sep Fismes was recaptured by the United States III Corps in a prolonged and brutal battle that cost several thousand American casualties and destroyed 90% of the historic town of Fismes, in what may have been the most-concentrated urban destruction of World War I.

The following two aerodromes were in extreme northwestern France in the British sector. Movement would have been by train.

Leffrinckouke Aerodrome, France, 30 April 1918

Leffrinckouke is near the North Sea about half way between Dunkirk and the Belgian border.

Crochte Aerodrome, France, 6 June 1918

Crochte is about ten miles south of Dunkirk

Then the 103rd Pursuit Squadron moved again by train, this time to northeastern France. It now comes under U.S. control, previously having been under French or British control.

Gengault Aerodrome (Toul), France, 30 June 1918 (4 Jul – 7 Aug 1918)

Located one mile southeast or northeast of Toul in northeastern France, this was a major airfield that did not revert to farmland after World War I ended. The airfield remained, known as Toul - Croix de Metz, until after World War II. During the German invasion of France in the Spring of 1940, French and Polish aviators stationed at this base put up a heroic defense.

After World War II it was abandoned as an airfield and in the 1950s became a supply depot for the United States Army backing up the U.S. ground forces stationed further east in Germany. In November 1961, it reverted to French Army control. It is now a private industrial park.

Vaucoueurs Aerodrome, France, 7 August 1918 (7 Aug – 20 Sep 1918)

Vaucoueurs is about twenty miles southwest of Toul. The entire Third Pursuit Group, of which the 103rd Pursuit Squadron was a component, was stationed here. This was the squadron's assigned base during the brief St. Mihiel's salient offensive of 12-15 Sep 1918.

Lisle-en-Barrois Aerodrome, France, 20 September 1918 (20 Sep – 6 Nov 1918)

This temporary airfield about ten miles north of Bar-le-Duc and between Chalons and Toul, was the main operating base of the 3rd Pursuit Group, during both the

St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives of September-November 1918. Flights from this aerodrome would sometimes stop at an advanced airfield nearer the front.

Foucaucourt Aerodrome, France, 6 November 1918 (6 Nov 1918 – 5 Jan 1919)

This was a temporary airfield one mile ESE of Foucaucourt-sur-Thabas, between Chalons and Verdun.

Colombey-les-Belles Airdrome, France, 5 Jan 1919

This airdrome appears on the above map. It was eleven miles south of Toul in northeastern France, and was the site of the U.S. Army Air Service's 1st Air Depot.

Brest, France, 6-19 Feb 1919

Brest in Brittany was the major port used in World War I for ships traveling directly between the United States and France. During World War II, German defenders destroyed port facilities in September 1944, preventing its use until after World War II ended.

Repatriation, 1919

I read elsewhere that 103rd Pursuit Squadron personnel then crossed back to the United States from Brest on the armored cruiser *U.S.S. Frederick*. One hopes it wasn't the crossing shown in the following photo:

https://www.reddit.com/r/HeavySeas/comments/5vjaqd/uss_frederick_armored_cruiser_8_exmaryland/

Garden City, New York, 4-18 Mar 1919

This had been the staging area back in November 1917.

Undetermined, 19 March-18 Aug 1919

The 103rd became a unit on paper only on 18 March and was officially demobilized on 18 August.

The 94th Pursuit Squadron

The following two former Lafayette Escadrille pilots were assigned to the 94th Pursuit Squadron, which became known as the “Hat in the Ring” Squadron (see the squadron's insignia in the following photograph). The 94th Squadron had the World War I record for kills of German aircraft, and as of 2016 is still in existence.

- Raoul Lufbery, an American born in France, helped to train a fledgling pilot named Eddie Rickenbacker, who earlier had been a mechanic and race car driver. Eddie Rickenbacker became the leading American ace of World War I. Raoul Lufbery was killed in May 1918.
- James Norman Hall, an Iowan and Grinnell College graduate, was shot down in April 1918 and spent the rest of the war in German prison camps. Later he moved to Tahiti and coauthored a book called *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

Eddie Rickenbacker, World War I's leading American ace, had a momentous life:

- Eddie and associates owned the Indianapolis Speedway from 1927 to 1945, then selling it to Tony Hulman of Terre Haute. As of 2017 it is still owned by the Hulman family.
- Eddie purchased Eastern Air Lines in 1938.
- Eddie nearly died in a DC-3 crash near Atlanta in 1941. In 1942 Eddie was on a B-17 that ditched in the South Pacific. The crew drifted for 24 days before being rescued.



Eddie Rickenbacker in a 94th Pursuit Squadron plane - 1918
(courtesy of pinterest.com)

As noted earlier, during World War I both the 103rd and 94 Pursuit Squadrons drew elements of their cadre from the Lafayette Escadrille. Consequently in 1924 the history of the 103rd Squadron was merged into the 94th Squadron history, which then assumed the mantle as the successor of the fabled Lafayette Escadrille. Today the 94th Fighter Squadron flies the F22A Raptor and is based at Langley Field, Virginia.

Acknowledgments, Sources and Further Reading

About the Joseph Walsh Family and Boston:

- John T. Walsh has researched the Walsh family tree. He is the source of the Walsh family history and photograph early in this report.
- Joseph Walsh and Catherine Canney are said to have met on Mount Vernon Street in Boston. For an interesting article about this street, see <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/11/travel/living-the-life-of-a-bostonian-on-beacon-hill.html?pagewanted=all>

About the Lafayette Escadrille and its successors:

- While working at Grinnell College in the 1970s, I often had lunch with Mary Klausner, the college archivist. Through her I learned of James Norman Hall, his connection to Grinnell College, and his eventful life.
- Living in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1979-83, one couldn't avoid hearing tales of the Hulman family of Terre Haute. Tony Hulman purchased the Indianapolis Speedway from Eddie Rickenbacker in 1945 and the Speedway is still owned by the Hulman family.

My childhood interest in Eddie Rickenbacker began with the story of his crew's survival on the Pacific during World War II and was rekindled when I realized his connection to James Norman Hall and to Tony Hulman.

- *Like a Thunderbolt - the Lafayette Escadrille and the Advent of American Pursuit in World War I* by Roger G. Miller, 2007, <http://www.afhso.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-100526-048.pdf>
- <http://www.forgottenairfields.com/france/lorraine/meurthe-et-moselle/toul-croix-de-metz-s1147.html>
- Hall, James Norman and Charles B. Nordhoff. *The Lafayette Flying Corps*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920. Various books have been written about the Lafayette Escadrille. This may be the first. It marks the beginning of the long collaboration between Hall and Nordhoff, the most memorable result being the 1932 novel *Mutiny on the Bounty*.
- Hall, James Norman, *My Island Home*, 1952. This is James Norman Hall's autobiography, published posthumously.

Sources specific to the 103rd Pursuit Squadron in World War I:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/103d_Aero_Squadron
- The San Diego Air and Space Museum, located in Balboa Park near the San Diego zoo, is restoring and digitizing the World War I squadron logs. See <http://sandiegoairandspace.org>.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUWeshXG-O8> (This video of 103rd Pursuit Squadron members and planes is of better quality than most World War I film.)