

Garrett Was Combat Aviation Pioneer

The Clemson College Class of 1917 gained fame by volunteering *en masse* to President Wilson upon the United States' entry into World War I. Although known for this collective act, the full measure of the Class's contribution to victory is revealed through the stories of its individual members, members like Claude Stokes Garrett.

Garrett most likely made his 1913 trip from his native Laurens to Clemson by railroad. When he left campus four years later, Garrett, known on campus as "Cush," would be eyeing mankind's newest mode of transportation, heavier-than-air powered flight. Cush was described as "jovial" and judged "an exceptionally good student" by his classmates. He was a member of AIEE, helped manage the football team, served as president of both the Sophomore Dancing and the Laurens County Clubs, and was a charter member and vice president of the Thalian Club. The 1917 edition of *Taps*, the college annual, predicted that Garrett's "strong character and straightforwardness assure for him a very brilliant success in the electrical world." But, it was the aviation world in which Garrett made his mark.

Garrett joined the Army, was sent to Officers Training School at Oglethorpe Training Camp and was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant. He was selected as one of twenty-five from a group of 5,000 to attend DeHaviland DH-4 bomber training in Toronto, Canada. The DH-4 was one of the earliest aircraft designed for the purpose of aerial bombing. Its bi-wing, all-wooden construction featured two open cockpits for its two-man crew. Garrett next proceeded to Camp Dicks, Texas for training in JN4-type aircraft. On January 21, 1918, he departed Camp Dicks for Long Island, New York with the 22nd Aero Squadron, on orders as one of the original "USA Flying Officers." The unit sailed to Liverpool, England on the SS *Adriatic*, arriving there on Feb 16, 1918. The unit was reorganized and Garrett was assigned to the 8th Aero Squadron.

The squadron crossed the English Channel on the night of the 17th, arriving at Le Havre and proceeded to the Air Service Replacement Concentration Center at St. Maixent Replacement Barracks. After a short stay, it was classified as a Corps Observation squadron and ordered to the 1st Observation Group School at Amanty



Airdrome, arriving on 31 July. At Amanty, the squadron was equipped with American-manufactured Dayton-Wright DH-4 aircraft, becoming just the second squadron equipped with these aircraft to reach the Western Front. Due to the short distance from the front, two weeks of intensive training was given to the pilots and observers to prepare them for flying over enemy territory.

On 31 August, Garrett and the rest of the squadron moved by train to Ourches Aerodrome from which the squadron would fly combat missions. There the squadron became part of the IV Corps Observation Group and was attached as a Divisional Observation Squadron to the First Division. The squadron was plunged at once into combat duty, flying photographic and reconnaissance missions over the St. Mihiel Salient. On 29 September, the entire IV Corps Group moved up to Gengault Aerodrome, which is situated about two kilometers northeast of Toul, Mourth, Et Moselle, France. The Squadron remained here little less than a month. During this time considerable work was accomplished. At the suggestion of Col. Kahn, two photographic planes were sent out on single missions with protection, instead of one aircraft. On such a trip made 25 September, a string of pictures covering some forty kilometers were taken. This was one of the longest, if not the longest strip photographed by an American Observation squadron on a single mission. One of the duties assigned the Squadron at this time was to photograph the entire Corps front to a depth of ten kilometers, an area of six hundred square kilometers.

On October 10, Garrett, commander of C Flight, and his copilot/observer 1st Lt. Robert J. Cochran were part of a four-plane formation taking reconnaissance pictures of German positions along the front. Their four-plane group was attacked by twenty-six German aircraft. In the ensuing dogfight, three German planes were shot down—but so was the DH-4 piloted by Garrett. Unit histories report Garrett and Cochran had won the respect and admiration of the men of the Squadron and that their deaths were felt by all.

Claude Stokes Garrett's body was recovered and returned to his unit. He was buried in the St. Mihiel American Cemetery and Memorial at Thiaucont, Lorraine, France where he lies in Plot D. Row 16, Grave 5.

