

December 2015

## 20th Century Civil Rights and Liberties Film Series *Eyes on the Prize: Awakenings*

On **Tuesday, December 1 at 6:30 p.m.**, the National Archives will screen the documentary *Eyes on the Prize: Awakenings*. Post-film discussion will be led by **Dr. Clarence Lang** and **Professor Madison Lacy** of the University of Kansas. A free light reception will precede the lecture at 6:00 p.m.

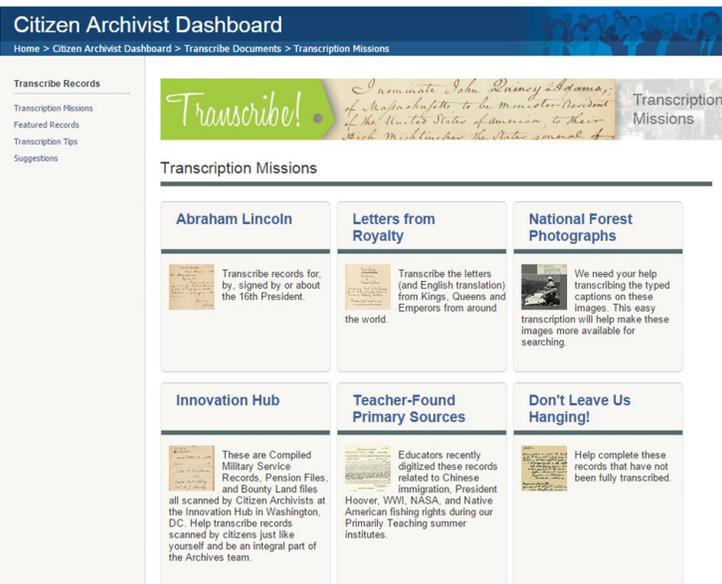
This first episode of the award winning *Eyes on the Prize* documentary series produced by the Public Broadcasting Service and highlights the beginning of the U.S. Civil Rights struggle. Included in the first episode is the Emmett Till murder trial; the arrest of Rosa Parks; and the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott.



This series is presented in partnership with the Greater Kansas City Black History Study Group. To make a reservation for this **free film** call 816-268-8010 or email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov). Requests for ADA accommodations must be submitted five business days prior to events.

## Resources for Educators: Transcription Mission

The National Archives has billions of documents in its holdings. Through our Citizen Archivist program we are asking patrons to help us transcribe some of the millions of digitized pages of records in the National Archives Catalog. Transcription is an important way for us to improve search results and increase accessibility to our historical records.



The screenshot shows the 'Citizen Archivist Dashboard' with a navigation bar and a sidebar. The main content area is titled 'Transcription Missions' and features six mission cards:

- Abraham Lincoln**: Transcribe records for, by, signed by or about the 16th President.
- Letters from Royalty**: Transcribe the letters (and English translation) from Kings, Queens and Emperors from around the world.
- National Forest Photographs**: We need your help transcribing the typed captions on these images. This easy transcription will help make these images more available for searching.
- Innovation Hub**: These are Compiled Military Service Records, Pension Files, and Bounty Land files all scanned by Citizen Archivists at the Innovation Hub in Washington, DC. Help transcribe records scanned by citizens just like yourself and be an integral part of the Archives team.
- Teacher-Found Primary Sources**: Educators recently digitized these records related to Chinese immigration, President Hoover, WWI, NASA, and Native American fishing rights during our Primarily Teaching summer institutes.
- Don't Leave Us Hanging!**: Help complete these records that have not been fully transcribed.

to improve search results and increase accessibility to our historical records.

This past summer, educators in our professional development workshops found and digitized primary sources related to World War I, Chinese immigration, President Herbert Hoover, and Native American fishing rights. These educators hand-picked documents they knew would make useful teaching tools.

Now we are inviting students, teachers, and learners of all

ages to make these primary sources even more accessible by transcribing them. Find out how to get started at [www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/transcribe/](http://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/transcribe/) and click through to "Teacher-Found Primary Sources" on the Transcription Missions page.

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### Upcoming Events

Unless noted, all events are held at the National Archives  
400 West Pershing Road  
Kansas City, MO 64108

- DECEMBER 1 - 6:30 P.M.  
CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES FILM SERIES: *EYES ON THE PRIZE: AWAKENINGS* WITH DR. CLARENCE LANG AND PROFESSOR MADISON LACY
- JANUARY 21 - 6:30 P.M.  
AUTHOR LECTURE: *A YOUNG GENERAL AND THE FALL OF RICHMOND* BY BILL QUATMAN

## Hidden Treasures from the Stacks

### Moving Pictures *Pirates of the Air* and the U.S. Army vs. Navy balloon race

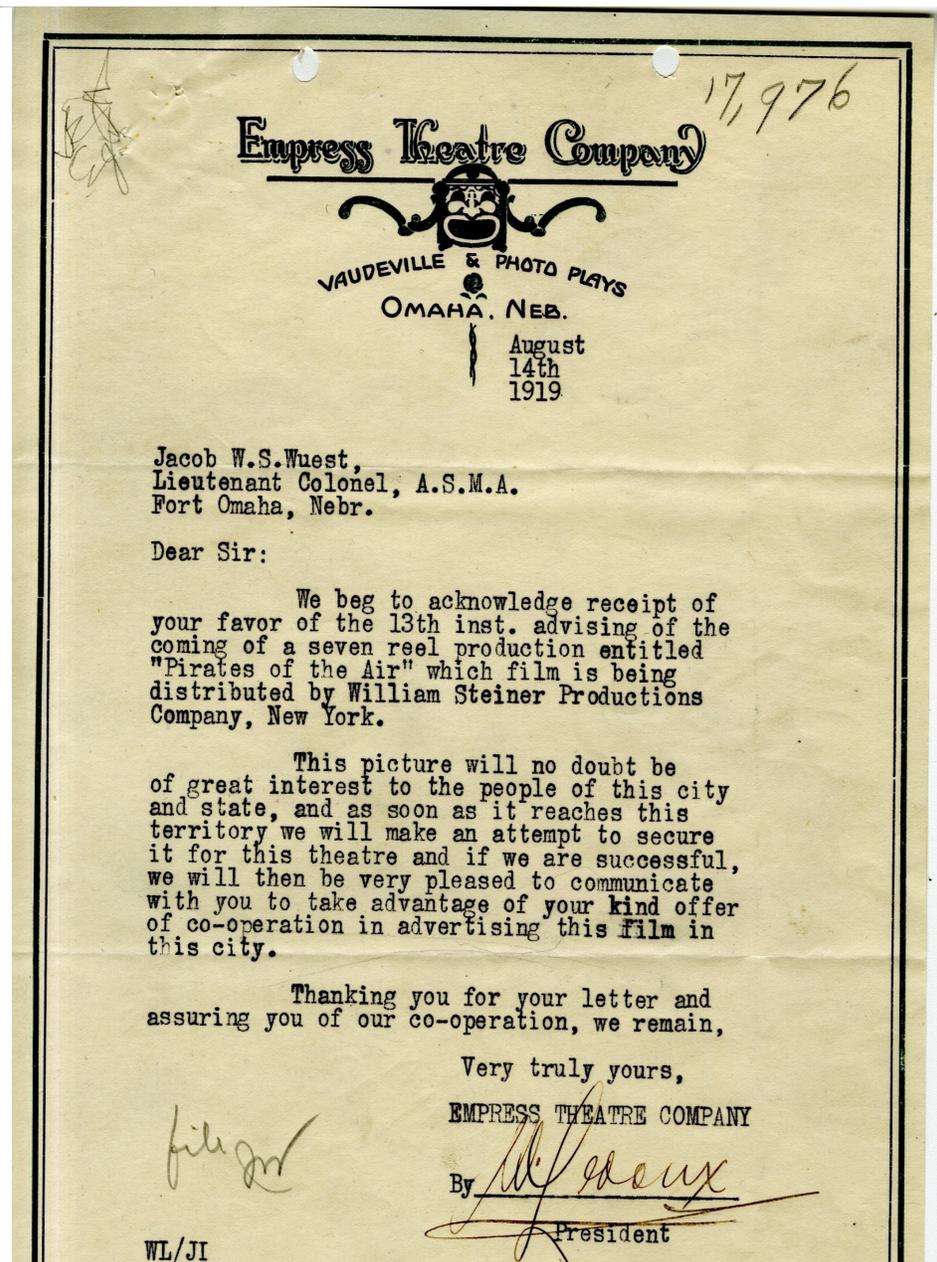
When looking at the general correspondence of a military command in the stacks of records held with the National Archives, one never knows what can be found. While looking at the general correspondence of the U.S. Army Balloon School at Fort Omaha, Nebraska, a file labeled "movies" appears. In the folder there is correspondence on the procurement, procedures, and types of movies officers and enlisted men enjoyed at the assembly hall.

The file contains many letters about a film called *Pirates of the Air*. The first letter was from the War Department, Office of the Director of Air Service, dated August 5, 1919. This letter was addressed to the Commanding Officer, Balloon Field, Fort Crook and Fort Omaha, Nebraska. The subject lines stated: Air Service Seven Reel Film, *Pirates of the Air*. The letter was in regard to a film that would be ready for distribution in about ten days and would be distributed by the William Steiner Production Company, Candler Building, New York City. The commanding officer was directed to gain the interest of the local movie theatres to show this film and to take steps to have recruiting details in the vicinity when it was being shown.

The name of the film had to be changed due to copyright, as a silent black and white comedy film released in 1916 had the name *Pirates of the Sky*. Therefore *Pirates of the Air* was renamed *Sky Eye*, and was released in early 1920 as a silent film, directed by Aubrey M. Kennedy, starring Russell Hunt as "Sky Eye" Blake. The filming location was Ellington Airfield in Houston, Texas. The film's narrative follows the life of a wealthy oil magnate, Harry Mangin, who falls in love with his competitor's (James Murdock) daughter, Blanche Murdock. Mangin schemes to ruin Blanche's father so that the girl will be forced to accept his attention. However, Blanche loves "Sky Eye" Blake, an aviator at a nearby aviation field. When Mangin musters his own private air force in order to destroy his rival's oil fields, "Sky Eye" takes to the skies to quell the riot. After several daring escapades, "Sky Eye" Blake captures Mangin and wins Blanche for his bride.

At the time, the War Department thought this would be a great recruiting tool and directed the commanding officer of the U.S. Army Balloon School at Fort Omaha, Nebraska, to take steps to notify local theaters in the area to show the film and make arrangements with the theater management. In addition, the distribution company suggested that the military provide "good talkers" to give a 2-3 minute speech in the theater during the picture and have recruiting details in the vicinity. The thought was that any man would do what it takes to win the girl that he loves, so why not become an aviator?

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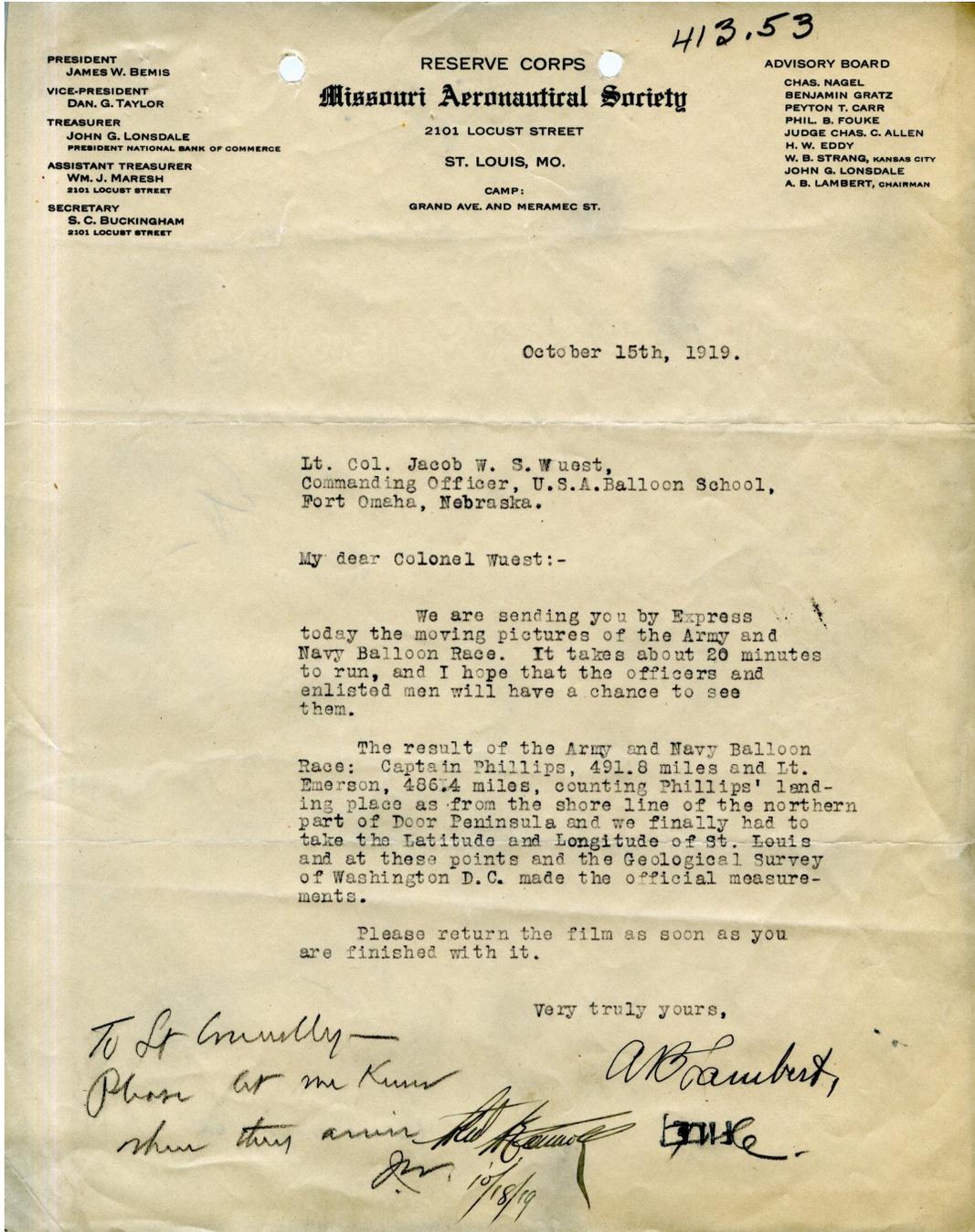
Above: Letter from the Empress Theatre Company to Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Wuest dated August 14, 1919. National Archives Kansas City, Record Group 18, War Department Air Service U.S. Army Balloon School, Fort Omaha, Nebraska, General Correspondence, 1918-1921. National Archives Identifier 617494.

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All a potential soldier had to do was sign up with the U.S. Army Air Service and become an aviator.

As directed, Lieutenant Colonel Jacob W. S. Wuest, the commanding officer at Fort Omaha, contacted movie theaters in the area. Those included: The Empress Theatre, The Sun Theatre, Brandies Theatre, The Rialto Theatre, and the Muse Theatre. The Empress Theatre Company sent a letter to Wuest stating that "this picture will no doubt be a great interest to the people of this city and state, and as soon as it reaches this territory we will make an attempt to secure it for their theatre."

Another letter of interest in the general correspondence file is from Albert Bond Lambert of the Missouri Aeronautical Society advising Wuest that he was sending a moving picture of the first Army and Navy balloon race that had taken place on September 26, 1919, in St. Louis, Missouri. Lambert, for which the St Louis Airport is named after, at this time was the Chairman of the Missouri Aeronautical Society. The society was formed in 1917 to train aeronauts for the war.



The contest was held at Meramec Park (formerly Priester's Park) at Grand Boulevard and Meramec Street. In this contest, pilots could land for food or other provisions, provided they did not add any gas to their balloon. Despite this opportunity, all of the pilots opted for a nonstop flight.

The result of the race took a few days to determine. Race organizers took latitude and longitude measurements of St. Louis with the help of the Geological Survey Society of Washington D.C., who established the official measurements. The race was won by the Army #1 balloon with Captain E. P. Phillips, a St. Louis resident at the helm. He traveled 491.8 miles to Door Peninsula in Michigan. Second place was won by the Navy # 52 balloon with Lieutenant Emerson at the helm with 486.4 miles; Navy # 50 finished third; and Army # 3 finishing last. Both the Army and Navy had one balloon each disqualified due to gas leakage.

The town of Omaha became headquarters for the Military District of Nebraska Territory in 1862. It is not known whether the "post at Omaha" was located on the same site as the later Fort Omaha. Omaha was made headquarters for the Department of the Platte

Above: Letter from Albert Lambert, Chairman of the Missouri Aeronautical Society to Lieutenant Colonel Wuest dated October 15, 1919. National Archives Kansas City, Record Group 18, War Department Air Service U.S. Army Balloon School, Fort Omaha, Nebraska, General Correspondence, 1918-1921. National Archives Identifier 617494.

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in April 1866. The present site of the fort was selected by Major General C. C. Augur and inspected by General William Tecumseh Sherman, for whom it was first named "Sherman Barracks." In 1869 the post became Omaha Barracks, and in December of 1878, it was designated Fort Omaha.

By 1895, the Army had found the fort too small for its needs and established a new post, Fort Crook, south of the city which eventually evolved into Offutt Air Force Base. The garrison at Fort Omaha was withdrawn in 1895, and the post remained unoccupied for ten years. A new stable and a new administration were constructed in 1904 and 1905 when the post became a school for non-commissioned officers of the Army Signal Corps. This operation ended in 1913 and it was not until 1916 that the fort was again utilized. In 1916, the U.S. Army Air Service, 9th Naval District, Balloon and Airship Division opened one of the largest training centers for observation balloon crews in the United States at Fort Omaha.

Researchers who explore the holdings of the National Archives often discover it can pay to look at general correspondence records of an organization as true hidden treasures can be found. The National Archives at Kansas City holds two dozen cubic feet of general correspondence records of the Balloon School between 1918-1921. For more information visit [www.archives.gov/research](http://www.archives.gov/research).

## National Archives at Kansas City Holiday Hours

Nationwide, the National Archives and Records Administration will observe holiday hours in November and December 2015; and January 2016. Below are details on which days the National Archives at Kansas City will observe holiday hours.

Wednesday, November 25 - facility hours, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Thursday, November 26 - closed all day for Thanksgiving Holiday  
Friday, November 27 - regular facility hours, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 24 - facility hours, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Friday, December 25 - closed all day for Christmas Holiday  
Thursday, December 31 - regular facility hours, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday, January 1 - closed all day for New Year's Holiday

Right: Cartoonist Clifford Berryman notes some of the reasons friends and foes of President Theodore Roosevelt are thankful on this national holiday: potential 1908 Presidential candidates thankful he won't run for a third term; Congress thankful they have a three day break from his exuberant dynamism; William Jennings Bryan thankful that Democrats did so well in New York even though they lost the Gubernatorial race; workers at the new Panama Canal thankful Roosevelt has concluded his harrying visit there. Record Group 46, Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789-2015, Berryman Political Cartoon Collection, 1896-1949. National Archives Identifier 6010671.



**HOURS OF OPERATION:** Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed on weekends and Federal holidays. Hours are subject to change due to special programs and weather. The National Archives is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, Missouri, 64108.

The National Archives at Kansas City is home to historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by Federal agencies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

For more information, call 816-268-8000, email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) or visit [www.archives.gov/kansas-city](http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city).



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