SUMMARY INFORMATION

Title:  John O.W. Donaldson Correspondence  
Dates:  1917-1919  
Accession #:  2008-095  
Creator:  Donaldson, John O.W. [Owen Willson], 1898-1930  
Physical Description:  0.42 linear feet (1 box)  
Languages:  Collection material in English.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition:  
The John O.W. Donaldson Correspondence was donated to Special Collections and Archives by Thea C. Furman, granddaughter of Nannie Donaldson Furman, in November 2008.

Related Material:  
• Furmaniana file, John O.W. Donaldson

Digitized Copies:  
A portion of the collection was digitized and is included in the Digital Collections Center.

Biographical Sketch:  
Son of Thomas Quinton and Mary Elizabeth (Willson) Donaldson, John O.W. Donaldson was born at Fort Yates, North Dakota on May 14, 1898. His siblings were Mary Sue, Thomas Quinton, and Augustus Hoke Donaldson.

John’s father, T.Q. Donaldson (1864-1934), a Greenville native, was a U.S. Army officer who rose to the rank of Major General in WWI. John’s mother, Mary Elizabeth (Willson) Donaldson (1872-1959), born in Marion, S.C., was the daughter of Rev. Dr. John O. Willson, President of Lander College. Donaldson was related to James C. Furman and first wife, Harriett E. Davis.
through his paternal aunt, Nannie Donaldson, who was married to James C. Furman’s son, Davis C. Furman.

Donaldson spent his boyhood in Greenville, S.C., living with his aunt, Nannie Donaldson Furman, attending Greenville High School and then Furman University for his freshman year, 1915-1916. He entered the College of Civil Engineering (then called Sibley College) at Cornell University in 1916; entered the aviation ground school for summer 1917, was then commissioned as a Lieutenant in spring 1918, and assigned to active duty overseas. Attached to the Royal Air Force, he was posted to 32 Squadron on 3 July 1918 and claimed seven Fokker D-7s in less than two months.

Donaldson was shot down and captured by the Germans on September 1, 1918, but escaped the next day. He was recaptured on September 9, escaped again three days later, reaching Holland the following month and then England only a few days before the end of the war. He and several other flyers were received by King George V at Windsor Castle. Although Donaldson had never actually flown with the U.S. Air Service while in combat, he was promoted to captain in the U.S. Army and was decorated with the British Distinguished Flying Cross, the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross, and the Belgian Croix de Guerre.

Captain Donaldson remained in the U.S. Army Air Service for several months after the war and participated in the U.S. Army’s Air Service Transcontinental Air Race in October 1919. He resigned his commission in 1920. Donaldson graduated from Cornell University in 1921.

During the 1926 to 1930 period, he was president of Newark (New Jersey) Air Service, Inc. After winning two races at an American Legion air meet in Philadelphia, he was killed on September 7, 1930 when his plane crashed during a stunt-flying performance.

Donaldson was married to Harriet McCullough of Atlanta, Ga. in 1922. They had no children.

In 1951 the Greenville Air Force Base was renamed Donaldson Air Force Base, in honor of Captain John O. Donaldson.

**USING THE COLLECTION**

**Access Restrictions:** None.

**Preferred Citation:** [Identification of item], John O.W. Donaldson Correspondence, Acc. 2008-095, Special Collections and Archives, Furman University, Greenville, S.C.

**ARRANGEMENT**

This collection is arranged chronologically.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection consists of correspondence written by John O.W. Donaldson during WWI while with the Royal Air Force in England, to his parents and to his aunt, Nannie Donaldson Furman, wife of Davis Furman. There is one letter from his brother, Augustus “Gus” written to his Aunt Nannie, on stationery with a USNA (United States Naval Academy) insignia.

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Folder 1 - Correspondence 1917-1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gus</td>
<td>Aunt Nan</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>July 29, 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nannie Furman</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>October 23, 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nannie Furman</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 14, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nannie Furman</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>June 23, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>His parents (forwarded to Nannie Furman)</td>
<td></td>
<td>October 31, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nannie Furman (Card informing her John arrived safely overseas)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nannie Furman</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>November 12, 1919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Folder 2 - Envelopes, 1918 and undated

- Envelope addressed to Mrs. Davis Furman, 1918

- Envelope, handwriting “letters written while with Royal Air Force in England, Data concerning John O. Donaldson.”