VANDIVIER FAMILY
PAPERS, 1839–1961

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:
Manuscript Materials: 2 document cases, 2 oversize folders
Visual Materials: 3 folders of photographs, 2 photo albums
Artifacts: 21 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES:
1839–1961
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The papers concentrate on two members of the Vandivier family of Franklin, Johnson County, Indiana: James Elba Vandivier (1899–1916) and Norman Francis Vandivier (1916–1942).

**James Elba Vandivier** was about to enter his junior year at Franklin High School when he drowned in Sugar Creek in August 1916 while on a camping party with friends. Besides being an accomplished musician, he was active in the Cottage Literary Society at Franklin High School.

**Norman Francis Vandivier** was born in Edwards Mississippi but soon moved with his family to Franklin, Indiana where he attended Franklin High School and Franklin College. After graduating from college, he entered the United States Navy on 1 July 1938 as an aviation cadet stationed in Pensacola, Florida. Upon completion of his training on 21 May 1940, Vandivier was assigned to Bombing Squadron 6 on the USS *Enterprise* (CV 6). Vandivier and the *Enterprise* participated in the Battle of the Marshall Islands in January 1942 and flew air cover for the Doolittle Raiders in February 1942. On 3 June 1942 Ensign Vandivier and his squadron (Bombing 6, 3rd Division) took part in the Battle of Midway and formed part of the attack on the Japanese carrier *Akagi*, the flagship for Admiral Nagumo. Despite a desperate fuel shortage, Vandivier and his division successfully completed their mission. Upon his return, Ensign Vandivier radioed that he was out of fuel and crashed his plane into the ocean. Neither Vandivier nor his gunner survived the crash.

For his actions, Vandivier was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. His contribution was also recognized by the naming of John Butler Class destroyer after him in 1943 (USS *Vandivier*, DER 540). The ship was not completed before World War II came to an end and work was suspended in 1947; however, work was resumed seven years later and the *Vandivier* was commissioned on 11 October 1955. The *Vandivier* served as a radar picket ship for the Atlantic Fleet. The ship was decommissioned in 1960 and sunk as a target in 1974.

Sources:
Information in collection.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Elba Vandivier material comprises his school work and items relating to his drowning. Among the items are report cards, school papers and reports, greeting and post cards, and a few personal letters, 1907–1916. Most of this section, however, is comprised of letters of condolence and related items to his family regarding his death.

Norman Vandivier’s papers chiefly consist of letters he wrote to his parents in Franklin, Indiana, and his sister, Rosemary Vandivier in Rushville, Indiana, 1939–42. Vandivier writes while serving in the U. S. Navy as a cadet at the U. S. Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida, awaiting assignment in California and on the USS Enterprise. In his letters, he gives a detailed account of life as an aviator cadet at Pensacola, Oct. 1939–June 1940. He also tells of flying on the Enterprise including the pros and cons of the aircraft he piloted, the times of inactivity both at sea and at Pearl Harbor, and friends aboard ship, August 1940–May 1942. Of particular note is the last letter he wrote to his parents on 27 May 1942 relating the death of one of his fellow aviators. In this letter he states that if he has to die, going down at sea is the way he would choose. He would perish in this fashion less than a week later. There is also a letter to Vandivier’s parents dated 22 October 1942 from their son’s last roommate, Lt. Jg. T. F. Schneider describing his last flight.

Other Norman Vandivier materials include his reports, logs, maps, and related items he used as a carrier pilot. In addition there are letters of condolence and legal papers regarding his death; his medals and uniform insignia, and newspaper clippings regarding his career and death. Also included is a scrapbook of photographs documenting Vandivier’s life from youth through college to the Navy and the christening of the USS Vandivier.

Items in the collection relating to the USS Vandivier include official printed materials and photographs from the official christening ceremony, 11 October 1955, as well as newspaper clippings and a small amount of correspondence, 1943, 1955–61.

Other items in the Vandivier family papers include documents and related items from the Forsyth family of Johnson County, 1839–1928.

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**CATALOGING INFORMATION**

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0828).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.