

Collection #
M 0828
OM 0422
R2442–2462

VANDIVIER FAMILY PAPERS, 1839–1961

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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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

PROVENANCE: Thomas W. Bower, Washington, D.C., March 2005

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2005.0174

NOTES:

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.

<http://hazefray.org/danfs/escorts/der540.htm> (accessed 8 February 2005)

Franklin *Evening Star*, 18 June 1942, p. 1.

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.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Elba Vandivier Papers, 1907–1916

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Report Cards, 1907–14	Box 1, Folder 1
Greeting and Post Cards, 1908–12	Box 1, Folder 2
School Papers, 1910s	Box 1, Folder 3
Letters and Papers, 1913–15	Box 1, Folder 4
Condolence Letters to Family, Aug. 1916	Box 1, Folder 5
Condolence Letters to Family, Aug.–Dec. 1916	Box 1, Folder 6
Newspaper Clippings, 1916	Box 1, Folder 7
Photograph with Friends, August 1916, n.d.	Visual Collections: Photographs, Folder 1
Documents, 1910s	OM 0422 Folder 1

Series 2: Norman F. Vandivier Papers, 1937–1943

CONTENTS

Letters, 1937–39

Letters, Jan.–April 1940

Letters, May–June 1940

Letters, July–Dec. 1940

Letters, Jan.–April 1941

Letters, May–Sept. 1941

Letters, Oct.–Dec. 1941

Letters, Jan.–May 1942

Letters to Sister, July 1939–May 1940

Letters to Sister, May 1940–March 1941

Letters to Sister, April 1941–April 1942

Official Papers Regarding Death of Norman Vandivier, 1942–43

Letters of Condolence and Related Materials, 1942–43

Navy, Printed Material, 1938–39

Navy Reports and Related Material, 1939–42

Naval Aviator Certificate, 1940

Newspaper Clippings, 1939–42

Medals and Insignias, 1940–45

Squadron Photograph, ca. 1941

Photograph Scrapbook, ca. 1920s–1955

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 10

Box 1, Folder 11

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

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Box 1, Folder 19

Box 1, Folder 20

Box 1, Folder 21

Box 1, Folder 22

Box 1, Folder 23

Box 2, Folder 1

Artifacts: R2442–2462

Visual Collections:
Photographs, Folder 2

Visual Collections:
Album Storage, PAC

Series 3: USS *Vandivier* Materials, 1943, 1955–1961

CONTENTS

Newspaper Clippings, 1943, 1955

Printed Material and Correspondence, 1943, 1955–61

CONTAINER

Box 2, Folder 2

Box 2, Folder 3

Commissioning Ceremonies, 11 October 1955

Box 2, Folder 4

Christening Ceremony Photographs, 11 October 1955

Visual Collections:
Photographs, Folder 3

Series 4: Forsyth and Vandivier Family Records, 1839–1928

CONTENTS

Family Records, 1839–1928

Land Documents, 1851–54

Vandivier Family Photograph Album, ca. 1880s–
1900s

CONTAINER

Box 2, Folder 5

OM 0422,
Folder 2

Visual Collections: Album
Storage, PAA

CATALOGING INFORMATION

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

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
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.