

November 2023 Newsletter



Dear Thirsty 13th members, relatives, and friends,

Since the last newsletter June 10, I prepared a presentation and gave it at Oshkosh July 29 about the restoration of *Billie*. I started to write about Army Air Base Kearns, reorganized my Thirsty 13th files, and visited the National Archives and Maxwell to try to determine the locations of two of our camps at Dumbéa and Los Negros. This newsletter includes lists of who was at those two camps and then the camp locations.

I also present four photos from Thomas Wright and an update on recent activities.

With best wishes,
Seth P. Washburne, Squadron Historian
November 24, 2023

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This is the newsletter for the U.S. Army Air Corps 13th Troop Carrier Squadron, 1940-1946, nicknamed “The Thirsty 13th.” This is prepared by Seth P. Washburne, the son of John C. Washburne, navigator 11/42-7/43. Please direct any comments to him at (212) 289-1506, sethpw1@gmail.com, or 5200 Meadowcreek Drive, Apt. 2060, Dallas, TX 75248.

Page numbers referred to are in the book “The Thirsty 13th” unless otherwise stated.

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Please click the hand symbol to make it easier to scroll down.

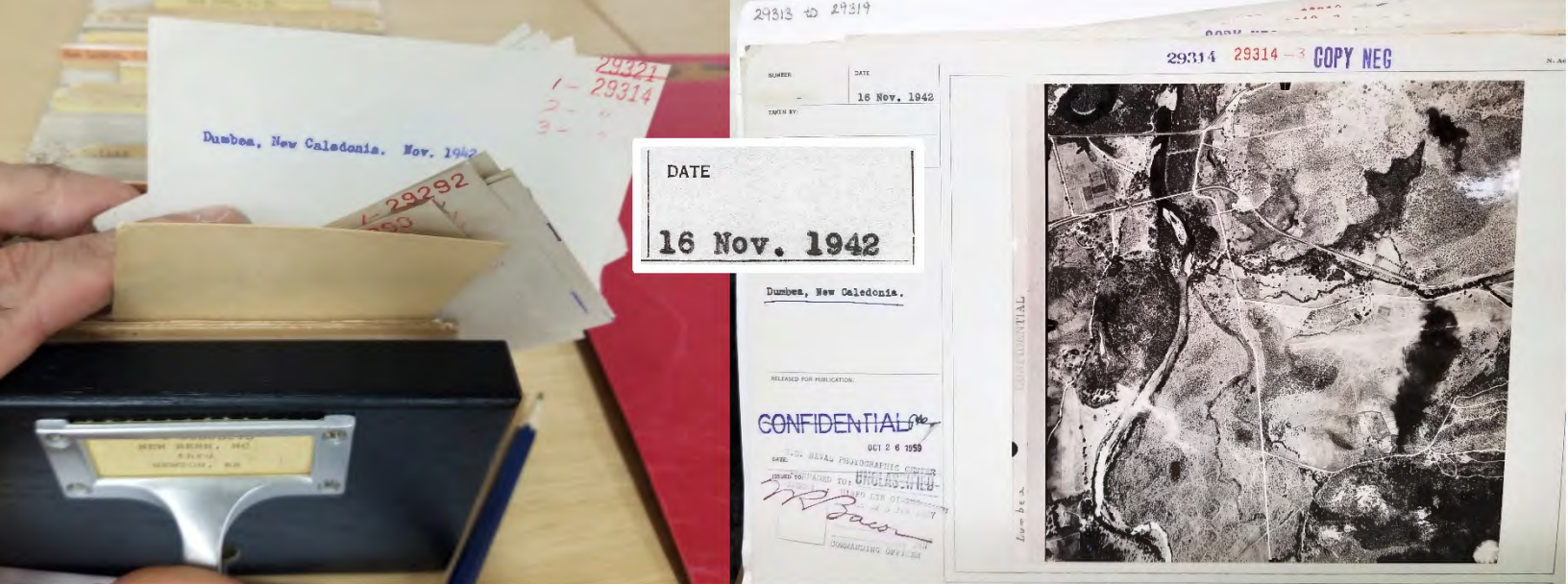
1. Additional History

a. 1942: Location of Dumbéa Camp

If your relative's name appears below, then he was one of the 170 ground crew members of the 13th Troop Carrier Squadron who took the ship to New Caledonia and stayed from November 27, 1942, until December 14 in Dumbéa, New Caledonia. The book has the exact locations of four U.S. camps, and four main overseas camps, but not the first overseas ground crew camp at Dumbéa. The April 2015 newsletter had an estimate, but I wanted additional confirmation. In November 2015, our colleague in New Caledonia, Marcel Claude, emailed me 10 photos taken from the ground level near there in every direction but still this location was not confirmed.

13th TCS Members in the Dumbéa Camp

#	Name	#	Name	#	Name	#	Name
1	Amert, E. R.	45	Franklin, L. E.	89	Moore, J. R.	133	Sodergren, E. W.
2	Anderson, C. L.	46	Fuselier, C. R.	90	Morgan, S. W.	134	Souder, L. W.
3	Angle, W. E.	47	Gallagher, J. F.	91	Morin, R. A.	135	St. Pierre, R. L.
4	Bacon, E. O.	48	Gates, E. N.	92	Myers, R. S.	136	Stainback, A. M.
5	Bakken, M. O.	49	Gee, W. W.	93	Myres, D. L.	137	Stallings, D. C.
6	Barker, O.	50	Germershausen, F.J.Jr.	94	Nelson, L. W.	138	Steele, D. H.
7	Bass, W. H.	51	Geuther, W. J.	95	Nogaj, S. R.	139	Stiers, B. P.
8	Beacorn, D. F.	52	Givens, R. E.	96	Norfleet, M. B.	140	Storbeck, H. W.
9	Belto, E. D.	53	Goessl, M. E.	97	Norris, S. G.	141	Storms, C. W.
10	Bernhard, J. J.	54	Goodwin, W. C.	98	O'Connor, W. J.	142	Strode, E.C.
11	Biedenbach, C. J.	55	Gordon, F. R.	99	Oehm, E. R.	143	Sturgis, B. N.
12	Bond, W. B.	56	Granger, G. E.	100	O'Shea, J. C.	144	Sydnor, K. W.
13	Bowen, H. G.	57	Harper, D. R.	101	Palmer, W. D. Jr.	145	Szafir, E. V.
14	Boyko, W.	58	Hays, C. S.	102	Pasco, V. F.	146	Taylor, R. C.
15	Bradford, J. R. Jr.	59	Hladczuk, J. V.	103	Paucek, J. L.	147	Termini, R. L.
16	Brouse, R. R.	60	Holbrook, J. V.	104	Persen, A. T.	148	Thaute, L.
17	Burgess, M.	61	Hopkins, J. P.	105	Petricola, J.	149	Thompson, D. C.
18	Byrd, W. W.	62	Kimball, M. E.	106	Petry, B. E.	150	Thweatt, O. D.
19	Cameron, R. J.	63	Korty, E.	107	Phipps, W. A.	151	Tustin, W. W.
20	Carruthers, W. E.	64	Kuhl, G. L.	108	Pierce, J. W.	152	Tutella, R.
21	Chapman, W. H.	65	Labedz, C. A.	109	Podolsky (Parkett), E. H.	153	Uhl, D. C.
22	Christie, N. J.	66	Laine, C. O.	110	Powell, D. L.	154	Vallely, B. X.
23	Coker, J. T. Jr.	67	Lamothe, W. W.	111	Power, J. K.	155	Van Ness, O. K.
24	Collart, H. A.	68	Larger, H. F.	112	Price, W. L.	156	Wade, W. C.
25	Cummins, J.	69	Lawrence, E. F.	113	Rapp, A. C.	157	Wallace, J. T.
26	Davis, C. E.	70	LeBlanc, N. J.	114	Reddick, R. H.	158	Wallace, K. D.
27	Davis, W. D.	71	Lee, G. T.	115	Reynolds, G. E.	159	Waller, E. A.
28	Dawson, L. W.	72	Lord, F. M.	116	Riskey, J. E.	160	Weekley, R.B.
29	DeHaan, J. G.	73	Lyle, J. R.	117	Robertson, D. C.	161	Wells, R. S.
30	Delaney, J. A.	74	MacLeod, J. D.	118	Robertson, E. G.	162	White, W. C.
31	Deppe, V. L.	75	Marks, K. G.	119	Samiran, A. R.	163	Whitehead, J. W.
32	Dewey Jr., E. K.	76	Martinaga, J.	120	Schauer, J. R.	164	Wicks, R. M.
33	Duffy, R. C.	77	Matela, F. R.	121	Schertz, C. W.	165	Wilkerson, H. F.
34	Eastburn, A.	78	Mazzone, G. J.	122	Schild, P. T.	166	Windham, E. T.
35	Eatmon, J.	79	McAllister, F.	123	Schmidt, C. L.	167	Wiseman, B. H.
36	Eaton (Eazln), W. L.	80	McDade, F. J.	124	Schmitz, J. D.	168	Wozniak, M. S.
37	Elam, R. K.	81	McGill, C. C.	125	Schroth, A. K.	169	Yeager, E. E.
38	Enfield, C. D.	82	McNulty, J. P.	126	Scott, W. M. Jr.	170	Yeomans, W. C.
39	Fabish, M.	83	Mello, M. A.	127	Scruggs, J. T.		
40	Ferguson, J.B. Jr.	84	Melton, R. E.	128	Setliff, O. E.		
41	Ferguson, M. B.	85	Meyers, C. M.	129	Shearer, W. J.		
42	Finelli, D. J., Jr.	86	Mika, J. F.	130	Sidelko, S. W.		
43	Foster, R. C.	87	Miller, G. J., Jr.	131	Sinclair, R. D.		
44	Franklin, E. H.	88	Mlynek, F. J.	132	Smith, O. E.		



On October 16, 2023, I returned to the National Archives and Records Administration (“NARA”) in College Park, Md., to again search for photos of Dumbéa, New Caledonia, to try to determine our camp location there. I visited the fifth floor still pictures, “Stillpix,” area. I looked in the card catalog for the General Records of the Department of the Navy, 1941-1945, because the Navy was in charge in the South Pacific Area, and looked under New Caledonia, and at 3:28 p.m. found the card above left for a photo of Dumbéa from November 1942, #29314. I used the red book pictured, for category 80-G, to find the box number, and requested the box with this photo.

There were three aerial images. The third one is above right, mounted on cardboard, with a date, inset, of November 16, 1942, eleven days before the 13th TCS ground crew arrived there. I looked at the area I suspected was our camp, and just above it was the area shown below. I was excited to see two long rows of dark tents with a path between them, similar to photos I have. Fuselier and Samiran said we went to an area with tents already set up, so this was consistent.

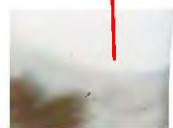
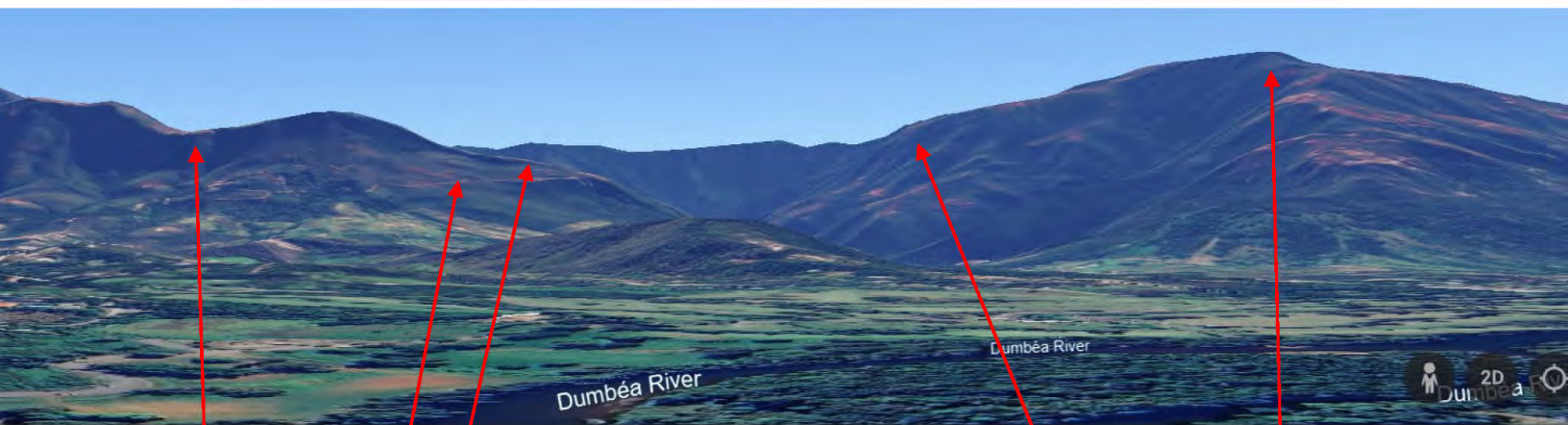


That this line of tents was our camp is confirmed by:

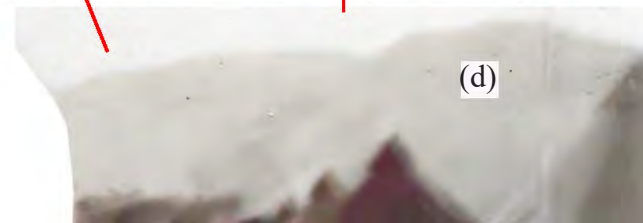


1. Fuselier (Motor Pool 6/42-9/45) said
 - a. “The tracks were a little higher than the road.”
- At right in an old photo the tracks are raised.
 - b. “[We got off the train on the] left side.” – They may have debarked to this field after this station.
 - c. “The train track was on the other side of the road. From the train you’d have to walk across a road in order to get to where the temporary camp was. When we got off the train, we crossed the road, and went to where all the tents was. We didn’t go too far. There wasn’t no road, just a path. It was flat ground there, seemed it was more like a field.” – There was a road by the train station, and they crossed a perpendicular road.
 - d. “That was the main road. It was pretty straight.” - The roads they crossed were not the main roads, but perhaps he confused the road by the train station with the road west of it.
 - e. “The river was a short walk away.” – Yes.
 - f. “The first night we stayed there the tents were already up. I think they called it a ‘casual camp.’” – The photo shows tents here 11 days before. Samiran, too, said “We may have gone to Dumbéa first because the tents were already set up there.”
2. Goodwin said “Dumbéa was a meadow with a river running through it. As you approach the camp, the river was on the right. We were on the east side of the river.” – If approached going south, the downstream part of the river is on the right. This camp location is east of the river.
3. The NARA image has two rows of 9 brown tents, and the image on the middle right of the next page has a similar long line of tents with a main walkway between them.
4. The next page bottom left image has two lines of newer white tents left of the brown ones, and we required two more rows of 10-12 tents to get to ~43 tents, for 170 men at 4 men/ tent.
5. The NARA image has a tree at (a) which appears in the photo on the next page’s bottom left.
6. The photo middle right on the next page, also below, (from Laine in October 2015) has a mountain outline and it is similar to that from Google Earth, below, from this location.

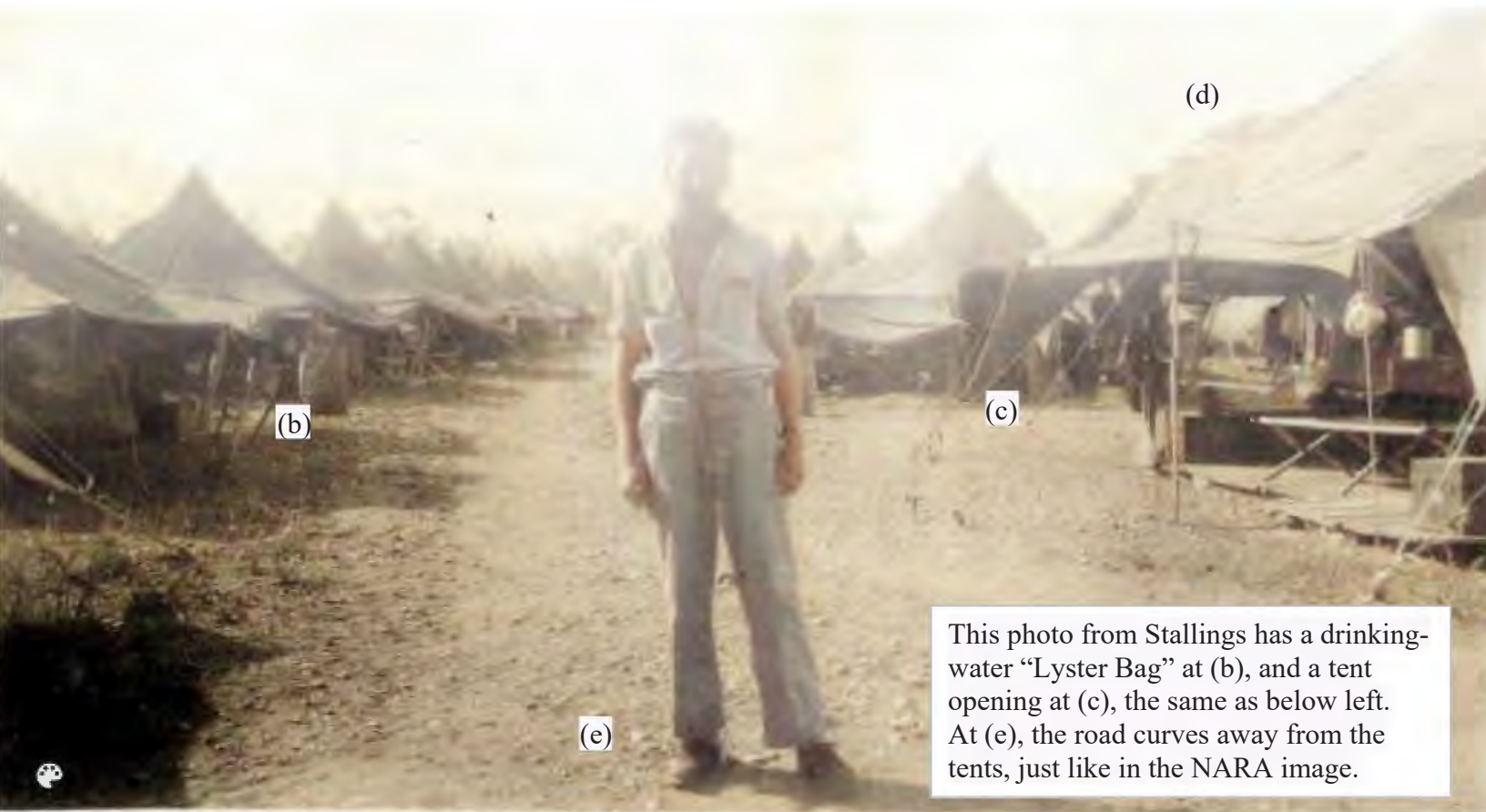
The problem was always what appears to be a mountain at (d) below. Based on the image on the top of the next page from Stallings, (d) may be a tree, also in the railroad photo on the next page.



4



(d)



(d)

(b)

(c)

(e)

This photo from Stallings has a drinking-water "Lyster Bag" at (b), and a tent opening at (c), the same as below left. At (e), the road curves away from the tents, just like in the NARA image.



(a)

(b)

(c)



(d)

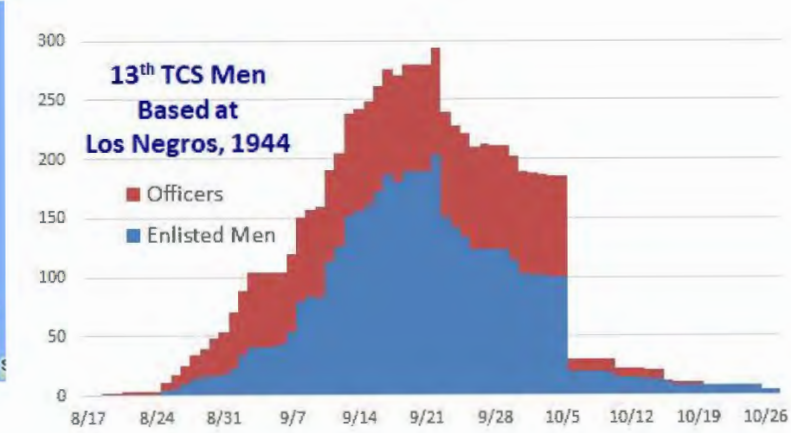
(a)

I am quite sure this was our camp location. I consider this now finalized.



(d)

5



b. 1944: Location of Los Negros Camp

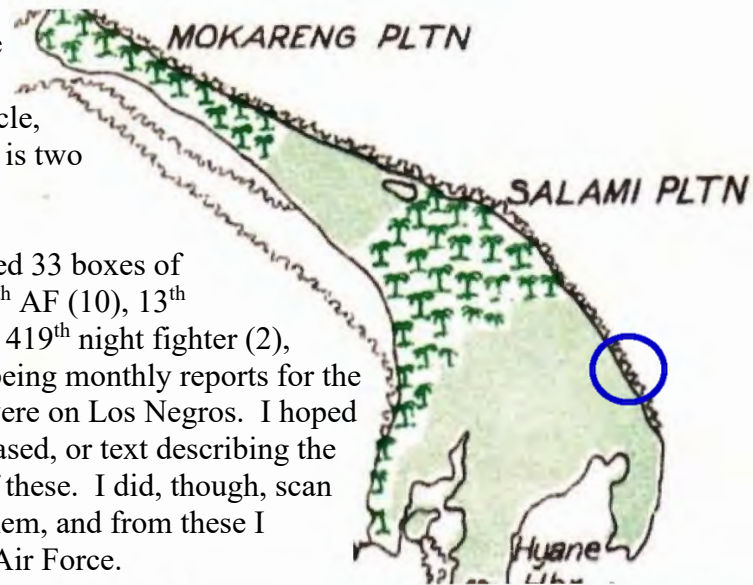
In August 1944, the 13th TCS headquarters was at Espiritu Santo, #1 in the map above left. Our air echelon was temporarily on Guadalcanal, to save the 4-hour flight back east to our camp. From August 24 to September 22, 1944, the air echelon moved to Los Negros, as shown above right, until 293 men were there 9/22/44. On October 5, most men moved to Wakde, and others moved to our next main camp, Biak, the fifth marker above left. A total of 318 members of the Thirsty 13th were assigned to Los Negros, and these are listed on the next page.

Our monthly reports said nothing about where we were. A report stated the 63rd TCS “provided food and quarters to flight crews of the 13th and 64th.” The 63rd TCS August 1944 report states on August 13, 1944, they went to the 13th Air Force Casual Camp until moving to their new area August 25. The chart above shows we had only 2 men assigned there before August 25, so almost all went to the new area, but the prior temporary flight crews were at the casual camp. The 63rd noted the new camp had “an ocean view and breeze.”

The 13th, 63rd, 64th and 403rd monthly reports had only the five photos below. The 403rd TCG August report stated we “moved into an area [previously] occupied by a Bombardment Group.”

On March 4, 2015, I obtained from the National Archives Cartography area an aerial photo of Los Negros taken August 10, 1944, but could not find in it the buildings in the photos below. In the July 2019 newsletter, I noted I visited Maxwell AFB and looked through the 307th Bombardment Group files and saw the same huts in the first two photos below and a caption that this was in the [Salami \[palm tree\] Plantation](#). Online I found the map below with this plantation location.

Driedger stated we were about two miles from the airfield, but there were two airfields from which we flew. In the book, I estimated we were at the blue circle, 2 miles from Momote in the south, but this plantation is two miles from Mokerang in the north.



On October 23, I visited Maxwell AFB and ordered 33 boxes of files, for the 307th BG (2 boxes), 371st BS (4), HQ 13th AF (10), 13th Bomber Command (4), and the 5th AF’s 424th BS (4), 419th night fighter (2), 23rd BS (1), 31st BS (6), and 72nd BS (0, microfilm), being monthly reports for the months March to September 1944 when these units were on Los Negros. I hoped to find a map of the area showing where units were based, or text describing the camp location, or an aerial photo, but I found none of these. I did, though, scan 12 photos from the HQ 13th AF files, and colorized them, and from these I was thrilled to determine the location of the HQ 13th Air Force.





HQ 13th Air Force Location

The photo above, numbered 487, dated 8/11/44, is a view looking NW, N or NE because the sign shadow is on this side, and this is 2° south of the equator, and the NOAA solar calculator has the sun on this date always from the north. The near trees are not palm trees, the distant trees are and are parallel to the road. In the aerial view 8/10/44, below right, I determined this is in the direction of the blue arrow.

The photo below, #488 8/11/44, next after the above photo, was labeled “Office buildings, HQ Area.” The men’s shadows are at a 90° angle to the shadow above, so it is a view 90° to the right. The background trees are not palm trees. I determined this is the view in the direction of the pink arrow. The building fronts are in groups of 2, but one has a 3rd building at the yellow arrow for a “U.”



Below, #542 8/24/44, with a flagpole, bridges over a water drainage ditch, a curved road, and thatched-roofed buildings, with a background of palm trees is the view in the direction of the red arrow.



At right is the 8/10/44 full aerial photo. The HQ 13th AF was at the blue circle. A current satellite image is inset, showing the Salamei Seventh Day Adventist church which is now roughly across the street.

It remains to find the 63rd TCS camp in which the 13th TCS and 403rd TCG stayed.

The 13th AF had the table below listing units assigned to Los Negros and other places around August 1944. The numbers of men are the totals in each unit, not the numbers assigned to Los Negros. The units assigned to Los Negros are in a table below right. Those with a red background moved out before we started moving in 8/24/44. We, the 403rd, 63rd, and 64th moved to the prior camp of #9, the 307th Bomb Group.

It is not clear when #1 to #5, with a yellow background, left. Our camp was probably close to the 13th HQ area.

The 307th Bombardment Group has a website with maybe 2,000 photos, but they are not sorted by base, and one cannot tell if they are from Guadalcanal, Los Negros, or Morotai, and none include buildings in the 13th TCS photos, so were not helpful.



13th Air Force			
		Off	Enl Total
Hq & Hq Sqdn Thirteenth AF	719	Los Negros	192 701 893
25th Stat Control Unit		Los Negros	13 45 58
50th MRU		Los Negros	2 25 27
5th AAF CCU		Guadalcanal	9 23 32
600th AAF Band		Los Negros	11 26 37
7th Tech Air Com Sq		Guadalcanal	11 114 125
905th Engr Hq Co		Guadalcanal	10 203 213
955th Engr Topo Co		EnRoute	9 197 206
410th Sig Co, Avn		Los Negros	13 223 236
425th Sig Bv Cons Bn		Admiralty	19 462 481
Hq, 4th Photo Gp, Ron		Guadalcanal	19 66 85
17th Photo Recon Sq		Enroute	42 341 383
6th Photo Tech Sq		Guadalcanal	64 202 266
Hq, 403rd TC Gp		Los Negros	25 112 137
13th TCSq		Los Negros	100 271 371
63rd TCSq		Los Negros	96 279 375
64th TCSq		Los Negros	89 254 343
2d AAF Emerg Rescue Sq		Blak	78 225 303
Bomber Command			
Hq & Hq Sq, XIII Bomb Comd		Guadalcanal	73 255 328
398 Sig Co, Avn		Guadalcanal	4 185 189
Hq, 5th Bomb Gp (H)		Guadalcanal	34 231 265
23d Bomb Sq. (H)		Guadalcanal	115 486 601
31st Bomb Sq. (H)		Guadalcanal	106 473 579
72d Bomb Sq. (H)		Los Negros	111 484 595
304th Bomb Sq. H		Los Negros	109 507 616
Hq, 307th Bomb Gp (H)		Los Negros	34 59 93
370th Bomb Sq (H)		Los Negros	95 523 618
371st Bomb Sq (H)		Los Negros	101 537 638
372d Bomb Sq. (H)		Los Negros	92 540 632
424th Bomb Sq (H)		Los Negros	109 539 648
Hq, 42nd Bomb Gp. (M)		Sansapor	27 67 94
69th Bomb Sq. M		Sansapor	75 384 459
70th Bomb Sq. M		Sansapor	88 393 481
75th Bomb Sq. M		Sansapor	87 376 463
100th Bomb Sq. M		Sansapor	89 387 476
390th Bomb Sq. M		Los Negros	87 373 460
868th Bomb Sq. H.		Los Negros	88 466 554
866th Chem Co, Air Opns. (H)		Sansapor	5 133 138
Fighter Command			
Hq & Hq Sq, XIII Ftr Comd		Sansapor	62 270 332
Hq, 18th Ftr Gp, TE		Sansapor	28 206 234
12th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	50 294 344
44th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	59 291 346
70th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	50 292 342
Hq, 347th Ftr Gp, TE		Sansapor	25 109 134
67th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	50 272 322
68th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	55 294 349
339th Ftr Sq, TE		Sansapor	54 269 323

13th Air Force Units at Los Negros, August (?) 1944
Total men in units. All men were not at Los Negros

#	Unit	Off.	Enlist.	Total	From	To
13th Air Force						
1	Hq & HQ Sqdn 13th AF	192	701	893	June	Sept
2	25th Statistical Control	13	45	58	Not found	
3	50th MRU	2	25	27	Not found	
4	600th AAF Band	0	37	37	Not found	
5	410th Signal Co., Avn	13	223	236	Not found	
XIII Bomber Command						
5th Bombardment Group						
6	72nd Bomb Sq. (H)	111	484	595	4/15	8/19
7	394th Bomb Sq. (H)	109	507	616	4/13	8/25
8	868th Bomb Sq. (H)	88	466	554	3/20	8/29
9	HQ, 307th Bomb Gp (I)	34	59	93	4/29	8/24
10	370th Bomb Sq. (H)	95	523	618	5/13	8/22
11	371st Bomb Sq. (H)	101	537	638	5/13	8/22
12	372nd Bomb Sq. (H)	92	540	632	5/13	8/22
13	424th Bomb Sq. (H)	109	539	648	5/13	8/22
14	HQ, 403rd TC Group	25	112	137	8/30	10/4
15	13th TCS	100	271	371	Partial	
16	63rd TCS	96	279	375	Partial	
17	64th TCS	89	254	343	Partial	
Total		959	4,686	5,645		



The 403rd report called the above huts the Officers' Area.
 The wide building was the 307th chapel, later 403rd administration.
 The third was the 307th Officers' Club.

13th TCS Camp Location

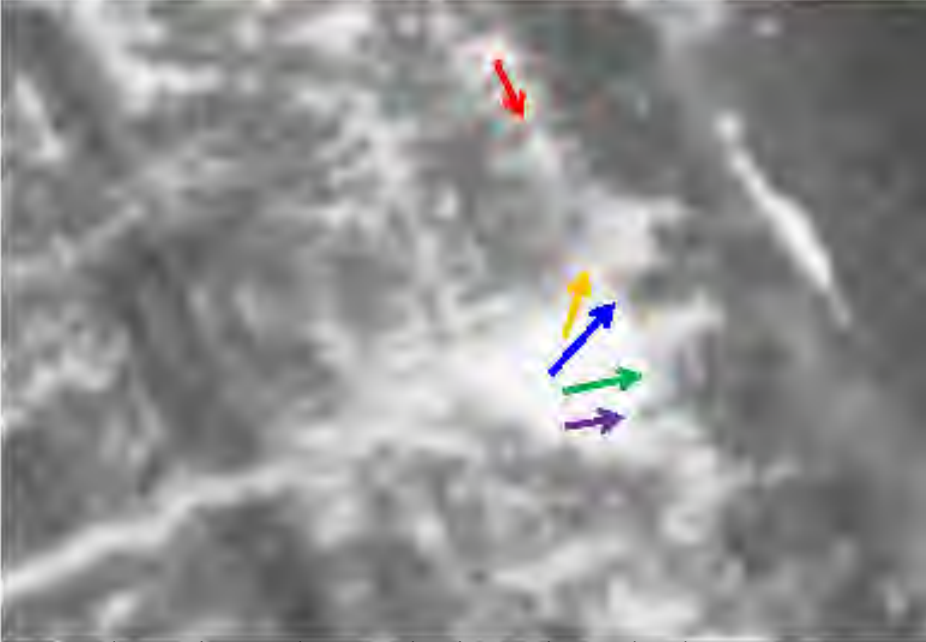
The buildings in the image above have thatched roof which will appear dark in the 8/10/44 aerial at right similar to the HQ 13th AF buildings.

On November 3, at 4:12 p.m., after 15.5 years, I finally determined where this camp was. The photo above is taken in the direction of the red arrow.

The man walks with a row of huts on his left, on a path with palm tree shadows, the same as at right.

The center building is at the blue arrow, with a big tree on the water side.

The building on the right is at an angle to the center one and is at the green arrow. The small square building on the right edge above is at the purple arrow. The top image shows a clearing at that end. The twin palm trees are at the orange arrow. I initially wrote this up with the man walking in the clearing, then noticed the shadows near him, and moved him back, leading to the "ah-ha!" moment.



Baseball diamond converted to a movie theater? →

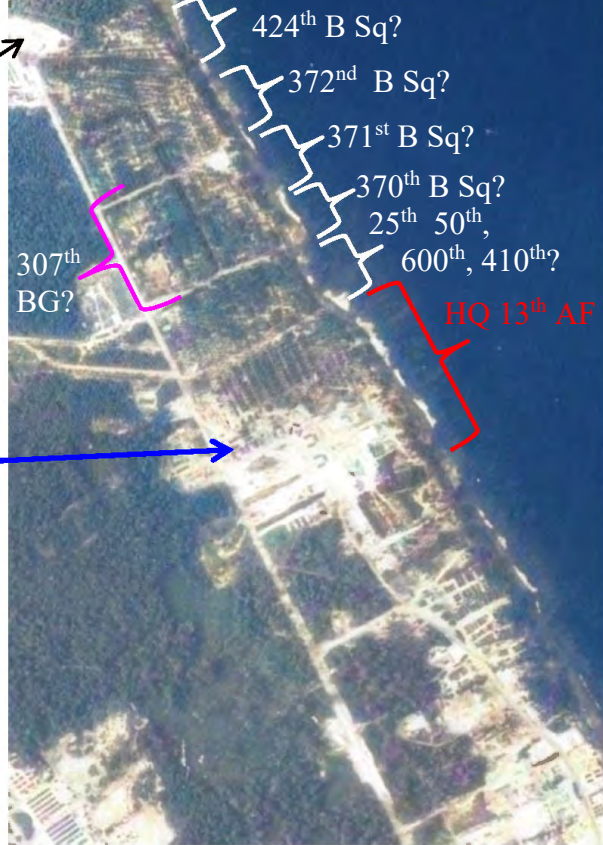
13th TCS Camp Location

As noted above the entire 63rd Troop Carrier Squadron (in our same 403rd Group) moved to Los Negros. They moved first to a 13th Air Force Casual Camp and then to the area previously occupied by the 307th Bombardment Group. The 403rd Group and 13th TCS were billeted by the 63rd TCS so we were together.

At right in the 8/10/44 aerial, colorized, is the east coast of Los Negros, showing in the HQ 13th Air Force site with the horseshoe-shaped building groups. South of this are no palm trees and many no-shade areas, but we and the 307th were in palm tree-covered areas and had few open areas, meaning we were north of the HQ area.

As shown in the prior table, the HQ had a staff of 893 men, so likely filled the entire area outlined in red at right. North of the HQ area are 5 areas, if the top two are each two. The 25th Statistical Control Unit, 50th MRU, 600th AAF Band, and 410th Signal Co. (Avn), may have been in the next camp north of HQ.

The 370th, 371st, 372nd, and 424th Bomb Squadrons, each with an average 634 men, may have been arranged numerically as shown the aerial at right. Each of these squares is about 500 feet x 1,000 feet vs. our Biak camp for 400 men was about 500 x 300. The 307th Group with 93 men may have been in the estimated 370th and 371st block, to be close to HQ, but also close to its squadrons. The 403rd September report noted "A fine movie area has been constructed on a baseball diamond at Los Negros" and that may be the area in the aerial's top left. The three 5th AF units, the 72nd, 394th, and 868th, not in the 13th AF, averaging 588 men each were perhaps somewhere else. This helped me focus on the area where I found our camp location on the prior page.



Enlisted Area

I have 7 photos in our enlisted men's area, including the four below.
1 – a wide, unshaded road, perhaps in the direction of the yellow arrow.
2 – Wright, parallel to the palm trees perhaps the red arrow.
3 – (from Sidelko), a not-palm tree in the distance, the blue arrow?
4 – Surnack and Oehm in front of a long building next to another, with a rows palm trees perpendicular to these, estimated at the purple arrow.



Our enlisted area could also have been north of the north E-W road. It cannot be determined from the aerial images because mostly shaded.





At the top is “Pilots at beach on off-duty hours, Los Negros, Hq 403rd Troop Carrier Group” in September 1944. Above is “307th Beach Area, Los Negros, 307th Bomb Group Photo Lab – July 1944.” The distant tree in both photos has the same lower branch and leaf profile so is estimated to be the same tree. In both photos above, the waves break far offshore, but at the point get closer to shore.

The top photo is estimated to be in the direction of the yellow arrow. This is an unshaded sandy point similar to that in the photo. South of this is a curved shoreline with the surf getting closer. The tree is estimated to be at the red arrow. The shoreline north of this is mostly straight. There is a curved shoreline south of this, but it is longer, and the surf seems closer than above.

The area below left now looks as shown below right, with the 307th Group area outlined.



COMPANY MORNING REPORT

ENDING 2400 16 September 1944

STATION Espiritu Santo

ORGANIZATION 13th Tr Conv Sq 403d Tr Conv Sq 447

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CO
0 614 130 AC	Pyre, Donald L.	1st Lt	
12 076 970	Berry, Frank J. V.	sgt	
46 703 485	Wilson, Malcolm B.	1st Lt	
13 452 675	Wright, Thomas M.	sgt	
43 450 250	Wilkerson, Harry J.	1st Lt	
43 134 413	Davis, Chester B.	sgt	
43 675 251	Mattes, William B.	1st Lt	

Above 3 officers and 6 Sgt or to 1st Lt (none)

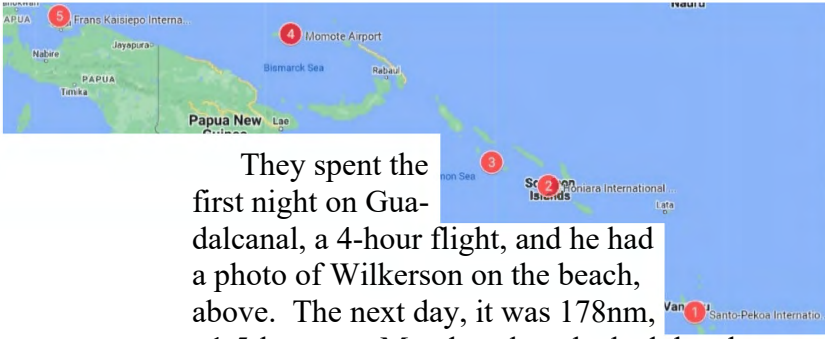
Los Negros per 7000 403d Tr Conv Sq 447

Los Negros 1200



c. 1944: Photos from Thomas Wright - Move from Espiritu Santo to Los Negros

Wright worked in telephone and telegraph with Wilkerson. As shown above, from the morning report for September 16, 1944, these two, sheet metal worker CE Davis, and typist Mattes departed Espiritu Santo at 12:00 to fly to Los Negros as ground crew relocating to Biak.



They spent the first night on Guadalcanal, a 4-hour flight, and he had a photo of Wilkerson on the beach, above. The next day, it was 178nm, ~1.5-hours, to Munda, where he had the photo top right at the "SCAT CANTEEN" of maybe Wright. At right at Munda are Mattes, CE Davis, and Wilkerson, in a view facing SE, with mountainous Rendova Island in the background.



Behind them is C-47 43-15241. It does not have a star above the number so was not a 13th TCS C-47. We had 43-15240. This may be of the 63rd or 64th TCS and the 3 switched to this C-47 at Guadalcanal.

Below left is Munda Airfield in a view facing east. The vegetation near the red arrow was later cleared, such that this was a big open area where the 13th TCS typically parked. The photo above is in the direction of the red arrow below and at right. Rendova Island is visible in the above photo behind the tail of the distant plane. This was exciting for these ground crew men.



July 29	10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Spy Pilot	Gary Powers Jr.
July 29	11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.	My \$2 Million Restoration Nightmare	Seth Washburne
July 29	1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	The Aileron Patent Story	Russell Klingaman

2. Squadron Related Activities

a. Spoke at Oshkosh AirVenture2023 about the C-47 *Billie* Restoration

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) held its first gathering in 1953, and in 1970 moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. For the last 53 years, they have gathered here, now during the last week of July. I spoke at this in 2015 about “How to Research a Military Unit.”

On March 10, I went to their website and registered to speak about restoring the Thirsty 13th C-47 *Billie*. On **June 22**, I received an email that I was scheduled for Saturday, **July 29**, their biggest day, 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. I spent much time June 22 to July 29 preparing a presentation.

I spoke at the same small Hilton Theater where I spoke in 2015, and above is a photo of a board outside this theater. There were 33 presentations going on at the same time, so I did not expect a crowd. There were about 20 people at any one time, and 20 watching from the hall, some who would sit down. Afterwards, several people came up and said they liked the presentation. I hope to make this into a longer write-up.

b. Started Researching Camp Kearns

The last newsletter had a map from Amelang of Camp Kearns in Salt Lake City, a staging area for men headed to the Pacific. I ordered documents from Maxwell, and on **July 19** received about 16,000 PDF pages, and started to create a free PDF about Kearns. On **October 23** at Maxwell, I scanned 157 images and photographed 79 pages about Kearns. Many Thirsty 13th men passed through Kearns. This project is now on hold while I work on other projects.

c. Consolidated my Thirsty 13th Files

I have had four external drives, and about 20 USB drives with Thirsty 13th items, mostly backups of the same files but sometimes files were on only one device. In **August**, I went over all of these, and consolidated everything on one solid-state-drive, and a back-up of that. I still need to rearrange a lot of the files. This may help in the future if I want to put all my pictures online for people to look at. I have about 86,000 Thirsty 13th files, but many are duplicates, e.g., I start with one image, then crop and adjust it for another. This was a huge job.

d. Ewan Stevenson Alerted me to Thomas Wright Photos

On **September 8**, I received an email from my colleague, Ewan Stevenson, in New Zealand, alerting me that some Thirsty 13th photos were being offered on eBay, below left. Some photos were the same as in the Thomas Wright collection I scanned, below center, from his daughter, Karen, August 22, 2017, but hers were in a scrapbook. The eBay seller replied to my inquiry: “They originated from an auction in the small town of Shipman, Illinois,” 45 miles north of St. Louis, perhaps from Karen’s sibling. I have not been able to contact Karen.

On September 12, I received the photos, with 5 pages, 2-sided, below right. These had the photos of Wright, Wilkerson and Davis moving to Los Negros on page 13. Thank you, Ewan!





e. Met Son of Clare C. Park, Pilot, Commanding Officer, 12/43-5/45

Clare Chancey “Pat” Park (1919-1995), from Metropolis, Ill., flew a C-47 overseas with the first 13 planes of the 63rd TCS in August 1943. In 11/43, we got new Commanding Officer Wilson, who graduated from West Point, and he brought Park over to the 13th TCS as our Operations Officer December 9, 1943. Park flew at least 50 missions with us. On September 10, 1944, he became the next Commanding Officer, and served in this role until May 23, 1945. I first contacted Park’s son, Richard (“Rich”), in 2017, and he lives about 30 miles from me.

On **September 23**, I had the pleasure of meeting Richard Park for the first time. He is 73 and had never been up close to a C-47 or DC-3, and so I suggested we meet at the Commemorative Air Force’s Dallas Squadron at Lancaster Airport, 13 miles south of Dallas. Rich was impressed with the size of the plane, this being an R4D variant. He sat in the pilot’s seat, as shown below.



Afterwards, we looked in on my hangar with the 13th’s C-47 *Billie*, then had lunch at the airport cafeteria. Rich brought his dad’s collar pins, and the biggest sugar “cane knives” I have seen, below. He said his dad had these hanging over their home’s fireplace.

During a summer before the service, Rich’s dad and uncle rode a Harley Davidson motorcycle from Illinois to Glacier National Park, Mont., where they drove tour buses for the summer. After the war, his Dad was a master woodworker, with a lathe and other tools. Rich stated: “Everything was signed, dated, and appreciated by others [often shared]. He played golf, did gardening (always had great tomatoes), and kept an immaculate yard. He was a sportsman, and with dogs he hunted quail, and sometimes geese and ducks. We ate what was killed - no waste.”

It was nice to learn more about our Commanding Officer Park.





f. Visited NARA College Park and Maxwell AFB to Find Photos

On October 16-17, I returned to the National Archives, above left, in College Park, Md., for 2 days to search for photos of Dumbéa and Los Negros and was excited to find the aerial photo of Dumbéa herein on page 3 which led to my determining the location of this camp after 15.5 years.

On October 23, I returned to the Air Force Historical Research Agency (“AFHRA”) reading room, above right, at Maxwell AFB. I was there from 8:30 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. I scanned photos and maps which I had seen in PDFs from 14 boxes for Kearns, to get better quality, but most of the time was searching files (monthly reports) in 33 boxes for information about Los Negros for the 13th Air Force units in the table on page 9. Search AirForceHistoryIndex.org for 0013.

I hoped to find a map or description of the camp locations, but the unit files only said, “moved to Los Negros.” I hoped to find useful photos, but most were not useful. I did, though, find the HQ 13th AF photos on page 8 from which I determined its location. Knowing that location, I was then able to look nearby and determine our camp location at Los Negros, too, which was a thrill.

g. Learned Location of Officer Individual Flight Records

While I was in the AFHRA reading room at Maxwell, a contractor, George Cully, who has been a big help to us, walked in and worked near me. Next to me was another contract researcher from Tennessee. Soon, also walked in a former contract researcher, Randy, these being all prominent AF research contractors. I asked them where I could find the flight manifests completed for all our flights and turned in at the airfield and none knew where these were. However, Randy mentioned that [the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis has every officers’ Form No. 5, Individual Flight Record, shown below, listing every flight they ever went on.](#) The May 2020 flight lists had air crews that flew on overnight missions, but not their flight hours and not same-day missions. Those lists also did not have flights before August 1943.

I might go to St. Louis and photograph these, to a) potentially learn where the men were in training, b) get a list of flight hours in the US, c) get the flight hours and pilot-navigator crews before August 1943, d) get the same day missions, and e) get total flight hours in the 13th TCS.

These IFRs are typically one page per month. We had 266 pilots and navigators who served for a total 2,787 months, so there would be 2,787 microfilm images, each with about 30 lines of flights about 81,000 numbers to type into a spreadsheet and double-check and analyze. This will take a lot of time, but I might go to St. Louis to get and then analyze these Form 5s.

Members:	26-Aug-22		24-Nov-23		Add	Need
Contacts	650	80%	651	80%	1	164
Death Dates*	812	100%	813	100%	1	0
Resting Places*	757	93%	760	93%	3	53
On FindaGrave* **	593	80%	611	82%	18	131

* Death Dates percent and "Need" exclude 2 living.

h. Added One Contact

Benjamin C. Brewer was one of the first nine pilots to join the 13th TCS, in June 1942. He named his plane *Screwball* and flew it to New Caledonia. For 15 years I have wanted to find his relatives, and knew his son was in Montgomery, Ala. On October 13, 2023, I found an address for his son, Alan, and mailed a letter, asking him to please call me, and also mentioning I might stop by October 23 when in Montgomery. He received my letter, but thought I was looking for items and had nothing to share so did not call, so I stopped by October 23 at 5:50 p.m. To my delight, Alan was home and let me in, and his brother, Davis, was there, too. I told them about my research. When I got home, I spent 10 hours creating a 184-page PDF with pages from the book and adding items about Brewer. I emailed this to Davis. It was good to resolve this and add one more to our count of contacts. I need one more contact to be at exactly 80%.

My “dashboard” was last in a newsletter August 22, 2022, and appears again above right. We added 1 contact for Brewer, 1 death for Gagliardi, 3 resting places, for Abelseth, Hemstalk, and W. Gray, and 18 FindaGrave pages (added to my virtual Thirsty 13th cemetery on that site), for Abelseth, Bernard, Braham, Browne, Byrd, Creelman, Cummins, DeAmbra, W.Gray, Hammond, Hemstalk, Kime, McGill, Nogaj, Payne, Schenk, Steele, and Termini.

It is my goal to contact relatives of the 164 members for whom I have never contacted a relative, to send them items and learn whether they have any items that can add to the history. Since December, my SpokeO subscription had a problem, so I avoided using it, but this was resolved in October. I devoted time this year to writing projects about my Mom, her Uncle Felix, and my ancestor Seth Pomeroy. I plan to search for more Thirsty 13th items in 2024.

3. Conclusions and Thanks

Determining the locations of these two camps at Dumbéa and Los Negros solved the two biggest Thirsty 13th mysteries. I have spent time every year for 15.5 years to determine these, and so it is huge to finally know these. Below is one part of our enlisted area at Los Negros, also of the 307th, but it is all under the trees so does not appear in any aerial photos.

Thank you to Ewan Stevenson for notifying me about the Wright photos. - Seth

