



416th BOMB GROUP

2015 REUNION

ALBUQUERQUE, NM



416th FACT SHEET

— INFORMAL INSIGNIA AND MOTTO —

[Note: Part of this fact sheet was excerpted from the 416th Bombardment Group (L) website at 416th.com]

A History. As early as 2005, hundreds of photographs preserved by 416th Bomb Group Aerial Photo Officer Capt Francis J. Cachat began to appear on the Internet which provided a treasure trove of information about the Group and its activities in the air and on the ground during 1944 and 1945. Among these images appeared an insignia [right] that raises questions about its origin and purpose.

In the Operations Lounge at Wethersfield, a table was used to display training and other reading material [far left in the left-hand photo below]. The front of the table was covered by a white cloth on which was sketched the four squadron insignias and a central insignia with a bare forearm rising from a base of fire and holding a lightning bolt [seen in center photo below, close-up in right photo]. On a banner draped across the top is the motto “*Ignis Aurum Probat*”. This phrase come from the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca and translates to English as “*Fire Tests Gold*”. The full phrase from Seneca (from his *De Providentia*, v. 9) is “*Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes viros*” which translates as “*Fire is the test of gold; adversity, of strong men*” indicating that the character of a person or group is tested by difficult circumstances.



Operations Lounge at Wethersfield



White Cloth Covering Table with Insignia Sketches



Cover Cloth with Insignia Sketches – Close Up Detail

The sketches were then painted on the cloth to make a permanent display. This central insignia was unknown to any surviving veterans of the 416th and there was considerable speculation about the unit that it represented. There are no official insignia recorded in Army Air Corps records for the 416th Bomb Group and it is thought that the insignia might be that of a support unit or an unofficial, locally-adopted ensign for the Group itself. The squadron insignias were circular, while the central device was portrayed as a shield. This tends to suggest a central unit with subordinates.



Cover Cloth with Painted Insignia

That possibility is enhanced by the presentation on photos hung in the office of the Group Commander, Col. Mace at Wethersfield [photo at right]. In this arrangement, the central shield is placed somewhat higher in an apparent position of honor. Also, the frame around this image is different than those around the four squadron insignia [below] which match – perhaps because it was a later addition to the display and the original frames were no longer available. It is conceivable that the squadron insignia illustrations were shipped with the Group from the U.S. in January of 1944 and the central shield image was added after the unit arrived in England.



Central Shield in Col Mace's Office at Wethersfield



668th Bomb Squadron Insignia



669th Bomb Squadron Insignia



670th Bomb Squadron Insignia



671st Bomb Squadron Insignia

Part of the mystery was solved thanks to 669th Gunner Frank Basford. Mr. Basford was a tireless advocate for the 416th and was personally responsible for creation of the bronze memorial plaques dedicated at nine prominent sites in the U.S. and abroad. He kept voluminous records of 416th activities after the war and those records eventually passed after his death to the 416th Bomb Group Archive. In one of the folders containing newsletters and reunion records from the post war period, an unattached cover page was found that shows a simplified rendition of the insignia with an unambiguous reference to the 416th Bomb Group.



Simplified Rendition of Insignia Collected by Gunner Frank Basford

A 416th Tribute in 2015. After conducting a new and exhaustive search of military archives, WWII war records, WWII collectibles and memorabilia, and other websites and locations, we never discovered either an official version or an unofficial, color version of the hand-drawn, black-and-white 416th insignia. So, in honor of the 70th year anniversary of the year the 416th Bomb Group was deactivated, we commissioned and produced an artist's color rendering of the central shield and incorporated it into a challenge coin to celebrate the men of the 416th and in tribute to their faithful and tireless patriotic service to the nation.

The artist's rendering remains as faithful to the traditional meanings of the insignia elements as possible. The flames, in yellow-orange and red, signify the heat of battle faced by the 416th as they conducted their missions to engage enemy offensive and defensive capabilities from the air in the face of intense enemy resistance. The unit's motto, "Ignis Aurum Probat" overarches their missions from atop the shield signifying the bravery shown by the 416th in battle. The fist clutching a lightning bolt depicts the ability of the 416th to project their power and might swiftly amidst these flames of battle. The lightning bolt itself is colored gold, the traditional color to signify integrity and valor, and represents the character of the men of the 416th as they conducted their missions. The design is a fitting tribute to the gallantry of the 416th!



Artist's Rendering of Central Shield used in 416th Challenge Coin for 2015