



BHC-MSS 0147
Guide to the John D. Cooper Collection
By Meg Rinn

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Cooper, John

Title: Papers John D. Cooper

Dates: 1910-2017; bulk 1910-1948

Quantity: ½ manuscript box, 2 oversize boxes

Abstract: An English immigrant to Bridgeport, John D. Cooper's interest in aviation saw him become an employee of the Curtiss Aeroplane Company in 1910. He traveled primarily in Europe to both sell planes to governments and train their aviators, doing so for four years until 1914.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History:

John D. Cooper was born in England in 1877 and migrated to the United States of American in 1886. While his family started out in New York City, they eventually moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut, residing at 540 Seaview Avenue. Cooper worked a bike shop within the city, but his interest had always been in aviation.

In the early 1900s and into the 1910s, advances in flight were happening at a booming pace. In 1901, Bridgeport resident Gustav Whitehead made the first manned flight, and the Wrights achieved their first flight in 1903. Connecticut in particular had an active aviation scene thanks to people such as Whitehead, making it easy to network, find other flight enthusiasts, and begin to get off the ground.

It is unclear how Cooper came to work for the Curtiss Aeroplane Company, but he was doing just that by 1910. His primary job was to travel Europe and train aviators for European governments, as well as promote Curtiss planes as the best option for purchase. Among the customers that Cooper sold to directly was the Ottoman Empire in the first half of 1914, just before World War One began.

Cooper left Curtiss Aeroplanes in 1914. Following World War One, he established the Cooper Aeroplane Company in Bridgeport's East End, which manufactured planes. It is currently unclear when the company folded, but it is likely due to a combination of larger companies taking over the market and the Great Depression.

John Cooper moved to Santa Barbara, California in the 1940s, and died in February 5, 1959.

Bibliography

Leiser, Gary. John D. Cooper and His Demonstration of a Curtiss Flying Boat in Istanbul, 1914: The First American Aircraft Sold to Turkey. *Turkish Historical Review* vol 8. no. 1 34-53
<https://doi.org/10.1163/18775462-00801002>

Scope and Content note:

The collection primarily consists of postcards and photographs. Cooper traveled extensively as a part of his work with Curtiss Aeroplanes, and the postcards he sent home to his mother (see box 2) help to highlight the true extent of his travels. There are also some additional photographs showing Glenn Curtiss and other co-workers testing or hanging out in aircrafts from 1910-1914, prior to the First World War.

Arrangement Note:

Arranged chronologically with calling cards placed first and items placed last.

Administrative information:

Provenance: 2007.23

Preferred Citation:

John D. Cooper Collection (BHC-MSS 0147), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings*Personal names*

Cooper, John D.

Corporate names

Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company, Inc.

Subject tracings

Aviation

Postcards

Detailed box and folder listing

Box 1

1. Calling cards, undated
2. Scrapbook, c. 1910
3. Photograph, portrait of John Cooper, c. 1920
4. Photographs, Cooper, Curtiss and others, 1910
5. Postcards, 1910
6. CHIRP newsletter, 1936
7. Clippings, 1942-1945
8. Envelope, 1948
9. Secondary research, 2017

Box 2

Postcard album featuring postcards to Cooper's mother

Box 3

Leather chaps, undated

World War I bayonet. C. 1914-1918

Compass, undated

Compass, undated

Knights Templar Cross, Coeur de Lion, undated

Photographs, planes in flight, c. 1910

Naval commission tube, undated

Missing from inventory

1. Postcards, Bleriot monoplane...
2. 2 pilots licenses
3. CHIRP newsletter, August 1935
4. Three booklets of Tydol flying stamp album of American Aviation