John Lansing Callan Papers
A Finding Aid to the Papers in the Naval Historical Foundation Collection in the
Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2010

Contact information: http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Catalog Record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm70052746

Additional search options available at: https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010001

Prepared by J. Butler

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2010
Collection Summary

Title: John Lansing Callan Papers
Span Dates: 1907-1956
ID No.: MSS52746
Creator: Callan, John Lansing, 1886-1958
Extent: 4,000 items
Extent: 14 containers plus 1 oversize
Extent: 6 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm70052746
Summary: Naval officer, aviator, and aviation executive. Correspondence, diaries, notebooks, orders to duty, subject files, awards, biographical file, speeches, articles, newspaper clippings, and printed matter relating to Callan’s personal and business interests in aviation, service in World War I and World War II, and other public service activities.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Alexeyef, Nicholas.
Callan, John Lansing, 1886-1958.
Crowell, Benedict, 1869-1952.
Doolittle, James R. (James Rood), 1815-1897.
Havens, Beckwith.
Schoenfelt, Rudolph E.
Studer, Clara.
Trippe, J. T. (Juan Terry), 1899-
Vucetic, Peter Paul.
White, Jay, 1869-1918.

Organizations
Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920)

Subjects
Atomic bomb.
World War, 1914-1918--France.
World War, 1914-1918--Italy.
World War, 1914-1918--Naval operations, American.
World War, 1939-1945--Italy.
World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons.

Occupations
Aviators.
Businessmen.
Naval officers.
Provenance

The papers of John Lansing Callan, aviator, naval officer, and aviation executive, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1959. A small deposit was added in 1962, and the collection was converted to a gift in 1998.

Processing History

The papers of John Lansing Callan were arranged and described in 1968. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Additional Guides

In 1968, the Library published John Lansing Callan [and] John Crittenden Watson, a Register of their Papers in the Library of Congress.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Lansing Callan is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Lansing Callan are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Lansing Callan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886, June 8</td>
<td>Born, Cohoes, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Graduated, Albany Military Academy, Albany, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1907</td>
<td>Clerk, National Exchange Bank, Albany, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-1910</td>
<td>Sales representative, Standard Oil Co. of New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-1911</td>
<td>Cashier, Commercial Union Cooperative Bank, Albany, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Licensed as aircraft pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1914</td>
<td>Instructor, Curtiss Aeroplane Co., Hammondsport, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Relief pilot; proposed “America” transoceanic flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-1916</td>
<td>Representative in Italy and England, Curtiss Aeroplane Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1917</td>
<td>Instructor, Curtiss Aeroplane Co., Hammondsport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Enrolled as a lieutenant, United States Flying Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duty on Seattle (cruiser)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commanded naval air stations, Le Moutchic, Le Croisic, and Ile Tudy, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Promoted to lieutenant commander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commanded naval air forces in France, Italy, and England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-1919</td>
<td>Duty as naval aide for aviation in Italy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1919  Promoted to commander  
Duty, Paris Peace Conference, Paris, France  
Duty as naval representative of the American Aviation Command to France, Italy, and England  

1919-1920  Duties in aviation section of office of the Chief of Naval Operations; at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla.; and in the Office of Naval Intelligence  

1921  Released from active naval duty  

1921-1929  President and general manager, Airships, Inc., Hammondsport, N.Y.  

1921-1940  Naval reserve officer  

1927  United States representative, Aviation Conference, Pan American Union  

1929  Vice president, American Aeronautical Corp., Port Washington, N.Y.  

1930-1934  President, Industrial Manufacturers Aircraft Associates, Hammondsport, N.Y.  

1935-1937  President, Real Estate Exchange Corp., Albany, N.Y.  

1937-1940  Traffic representative, Pan American Airways  

1940  Recalled to naval duty, Plans Division, Bureau of Aeronautics  

1941  Promoted to captain  
Duty as assistant air and naval attaché, United States embassy, Rome, Italy  

1941-1942  Prisoner of war, Rome, Italy  

1942-1944  Duty as naval attaché, staff of European governments in exile, London, England  

1944-1945  Duty as chief naval staff officer, Rome, Italy  

1945-1946  Duty as president of a general court-martial, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn, N.Y.  

1946  Duty in “Operation Crossroads” (Bikini atomic bomb tests)  

1946-1948  Duty as senior captain, Board of Review for Decorations and Medals, Washington, D.C.  

1948  Promoted to rear admiral  
Retired from United States Navy  

1958, Oct. 9  Died, Kingston, N.Y.  

Scope and Content Note  
The papers of John Lansing Callan (1886-1958) span the years 1907-1956. His career of more than half a century as pioneer aviator, aviation instructor, and leader in the aeronautics industry, plus twelve years of active naval duty, is well documented in this collection. With the exception of a brief period in 1917 spent on board the cruiser Seattle, Callan’s naval career was concerned almost entirely with civil and naval aeronautical activities, which is reflected in this collection.  
The papers consist of diaries, notebooks, correspondence, orders to duty, subject files, awards, a biographical file, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and assorted miscellaneous material and are organized into the following series: Diaries and Notebooks, Correspondence, Orders to Duty, Subject File, Miscellany, and Oversize. Although most of the items relate to Callan’s naval career and experiences in aviation, part of the correspondence also concerns his personal and business interests. The collection also includes copies of his speeches and articles on aviation.  

Callan was a member of a small group of pre-World War I aviators known as the “Early Birds,” who helped pioneer advances in the aviation industry. Earning his wings in 1911, Callan joined the Curtiss Aeroplane Company in 1912. In 1914 he was sent by Glenn Curtiss as a relief pilot and representative to the Azores to make preparations for the proposed transoceanic flight of the twin-engine flying boat “America.” The outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 caused cancellation of this project. Correspondence, reports, printed matter, and financial papers cover the activities mentioned above. Pioneer aviators with whom he became acquainted during this period include Thomas Baldwin, Lawrence Speery, and John H. Towers. Correspondents within the Curtiss Aeroplane Company include A. K. Ainlay, Glenn Curtiss, H. G. Genung, G. Roy Hall, John McNamara, John Scott, Lyman J. Seely, J. P. Tarbox, and Clarence Webster.  

From 1914 to 1916 Callan was the official representative in Italy for the Curtiss Aeroplane Company. Fluent in Italian, he exchanged letters with a diverse group of Italian aviators and government officials. Among the more prominent correspondents in the collection are Enea Bossi, Edgardo Colucci, and Raffaele Perfetti.
Callan's service for the navy in World War I and immediately thereafter is treated extensively in the papers. Included is material on his duty on the Seattle, his service in setting up the first naval air stations in France, and his work on the technical subcommittee for aviation at the Paris Peace Conference. Subsequently he served on other international committees in connection with postwar aviation affairs until he returned to civilian life in 1921.

The records of Callan’s civilian career, between 1921 and 1938, document his business activities and periodic naval reserve duties.

Upon being recalled to active duty in 1940, Callan was assigned to the United States embassy in Rome, where he was interned as a prisoner of war when Italy joined the war on the side of the Axis powers. After being repatriated in May 1942, Callan was active as the naval and air attaché on the staff of the American ambassador to European governments in exile in London and then as the senior American naval staff officer in Italy. Evidence of his wartime duties is interspersed throughout the collection.

In 1946 Callan served as a naval observer in the Bikini atomic bomb tests. The Subject File contains material on the topic under the code name “Operation Crossroads.”

Among Callan’s other prominent correspondents are Nicholas Alexeyef, Richard E. Byrd, Benedict Crowell, James Doolittle, Beckwith havens, J. C. Hunsaker, Rudolph E. Schoenfelt, Clara Studer, Juan Trippe, Peter Paul Vucetic, and Jay White.

**Arrangement of the Papers**

This collection is arranged in six series:

- Diaries and Notebooks, 1914-1919
- Correspondence, 1909-1956
- Orders to Duty, 1917-1948
- Subject File, 1912-1950
- Miscellany, 1907-1955
- Oversize, undated
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td><strong>Diaries and Notebooks, 1914-1919</strong></td>
<td>Diaries for the years 1917 to 1919 and notebooks beginning in 1914. The focus is on aviation with the exception of a record of Callan’s duty on the <em>Seattle</em> (cruiser) and at Le Moutchic, France, in 1917. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 2-5</td>
<td><strong>Correspondence, 1909-1956</strong></td>
<td>Letters received and copies of letters sent, including business, personal, general, and official correspondence, memoranda, and related reports. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 6</td>
<td><strong>Orders to Duty, 1917-1948</strong></td>
<td>Orders to duty from Callan’s enlistment in the navy to his retirement. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 7-9</td>
<td><strong>Subject File, 1912-1950</strong></td>
<td>Printed matter, correspondence, reports, blueprints, clippings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by subject or topic and therein chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 10-14</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1907-1955</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence, biographical material, charts and maps, financial papers, lists and addresses, newspaper clippings, notes and memoranda, photographs, photomaps, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, undated</strong></td>
<td>Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</table>
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Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1 | 1914-1919, undated |
| **BOX 2-5** | **Correspondence, 1909-1956**  
Letters received and copies of letters sent, including business, personal, general, and official correspondence, memoranda, and related reports.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 2 | 1909-1915 |
| BOX 3 | 1916-1918 |
| BOX 4 | 1919-1945 |
| BOX 5 | 1946-1956, undated |
| **BOX 6** | **Orders to Duty, 1917-1948**  
Orders to duty from Callan’s enlistment in the navy to his retirement.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 6 | 1917-1948 |
| **BOX 7-9** | **Subject File, 1912-1950**  
Printed matter, correspondence, reports, blueprints, clippings, and miscellaneous material.  
Arranged alphabetically by subject or topic and therein chronologically. |
<p>| BOX 7 | “America” flight proposed, 1914 |
| BOX 7 | Campini-Caproni jet airplane controversy, 1922-1923, 1950 |
| BOX 7 | Convention to establish rules for aircraft navigation, 1917-1919 |
| BOX 7 | Curtiss Aeroplane Co., 1912-1917 |
| BOX 7 | Blueprints |
| BOX 7 | Contracts |
| BOX 7 | Invoices |
| BOX 7 | Miscellany |
| BOX 7 | Press releases |
| BOX 7 | Specifications |
| BOX 7 | Decorations and medals |
| BOX 7 | Board of Review |
| BOX 7 | Awards for foreign officials, 1946 |
| BOX 7 | Chronological file |
| BOX 7 | 1944-1945 |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>1946-1947</td>
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<td>(4 folders)</td>
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<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>Report, 1945-1947</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>World War I recommendations, 1919-1920</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Commercial Aviation, 1927</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>Naval officer commission recommendation, 1937-1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 8</td>
<td>“Operation Crossroads,” 1945-1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 9</td>
<td>Paris Peace Conference, Aeronautical Technical Subcommittee, Paris, France, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 9</td>
<td>United States embassy, Rome, Italy, 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 9</td>
<td>United States Naval Air Station, Le Moutchic, France, 1917-1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Miscellany, 1907-1955</td>
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<td>BOX 10</td>
<td>Awards and decorations, 1917-1948, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 10</td>
<td>Biographical file, 1914-1955, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 11</td>
<td>Drawings, blueprints, and maps, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 11</td>
<td>Financial papers, 1915-1923, 1942-1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 11</td>
<td>Identification and membership cards, 1912-1954, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 11</td>
<td>Lists and addresses, 1934-1954, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 12</td>
<td>Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps, undated See Oversize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 12</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings, 1912-1954, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 13</td>
<td>Notes, memoranda, and fragments, 1918-1952, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 13</td>
<td>Photographs, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 13</td>
<td>Photomaps of Europe, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 14</td>
<td>Printed matter, 1907-1954, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td>Oversize, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td>Miscellany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td>Maps, charts, photographs, and photomaps, undated (Container 12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>