

John Lansing Callan Papers

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

Prepared by J. Butler



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

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Collection Summary

Title: John Lansing Callan Papers

Span Dates: 1907-1956

ID No.: MSS52746

Creator: Callan, John Lansing, 1886-1958

Extent: 4,000 items; 14 containers plus 1 oversize; 6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: 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 Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Alexeyef, Nicholas.

Byrd, Richard Evelyn, 1888-1957.

Callan, John Lansing, 1886-1958.

Crowell, Benedict, 1869-1952.

Doolittle, James R. (James Rood), 1815-1897.

Havens, Beckwith.

Hunsaker, Jerome C. (Jerome Clarke), 1886-1984.

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.

Operation Crossroads, Marshall Islands, 1946.

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.

Administrative Information

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

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1886, June 8	Born, Cohoes, N.Y.
1905	Graduated, Albany Military Academy, Albany, N.Y.
1905-1907	Clerk, National Exchange Bank, Albany, N.Y.
1907-1910	Sales representative, Standard Oil Co. of New York
1910-1911	Cashier, Commercial Union Cooperative Bank, Albany, N.Y.
1911	Licensed as aircraft pilot
1911-1914	Instructor, Curtiss Aeroplane Co., Hammondsport, N.Y.
1914	Relief pilot; proposed "America" transoceanic flight
1914-1916	Representative in Italy and England, Curtiss Aeroplane Co.
1916-1917	Instructor, Curtiss Aeroplane Co., Hammondsport

1917	Enrolled as a lieutenant, United States Flying Corps Duty on <i>Seattle</i> (cruiser) Commanded naval air stations, Le Moutchic, Le Croisic, and Ile Tudy, France
1918	Promoted to lieutenant commander Commanded naval air forces in France, Italy, and England
1918-1919	Duty as naval aide for aviation in Italy
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

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1	<u>Diaries and Notebooks, 1914-1919</u> 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 <i>Seattle</i> (cruiser) and at Le Moutchic, France, in 1917. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 2-5	<u>Correspondence, 1909-1956</u> Letters received and copies of letters sent, including business, personal, general, and official correspondence, memoranda, and related reports. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 6	<u>Orders to Duty, 1917-1948</u> Orders to duty from Callan's enlistment in the navy to his retirement. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 7-9	<u>Subject File, 1912-1950</u> Printed matter, correspondence, reports, blueprints, clippings, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by subject or topic and therein chronologically.
BOX 10-14	<u>Miscellany, 1907-1955</u> 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.
BOX OV 1	<u>Oversize, undated</u> Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Diaries and Notebooks, 1914-1919 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 <i>Seattle</i> (cruiser) and at Le Moutchic, France, in 1917. 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.
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

Subject File, 1912-1950

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 8	1946-1947 (4 folders)
BOX 8	Report, 1945-1947
BOX 8	World War I recommendations, 1919-1920
BOX 8	Inter-American Commission on Commercial Aviation, 1927
BOX 8	Naval officer commission recommendation, 1937-1950
BOX 8	"Operation Crossroads," 1945-1946
BOX 9	Paris Peace Conference, Aeronautical Technical Subcommittee, Paris, France, 1919
BOX 9	United States embassy, Rome, Italy, 1941
BOX 9	United States Naval Air Station, Le Moutchic, France, 1917-1918
BOX 10-14	Miscellany, 1907-1955 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.
BOX 10	Awards and decorations, 1917-1948, undated
BOX 10	Biographical file, 1914-1955, undated
BOX 11	Drawings, blueprints, and maps, undated
BOX 11	Financial papers, 1915-1923, 1942-1952
BOX 11	Identification and membership cards, 1912-1954, undated
BOX 11	Lists and addresses, 1934-1954, undated
BOX 12	Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps, undated <i>See Oversize</i>
BOX 12	Newspaper clippings, 1912-1954, undated
BOX 13	Notes, memoranda, and fragments, 1918-1952, undated
BOX 13	Photographs, undated
BOX 13	Photomaps of Europe, undated
BOX 14	Printed matter, 1907-1954, undated
BOX OV 1	Oversize, undated Maps, charts, photographs, and photo maps. Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Miscellany
BOX OV 1	Maps, charts, photographs, and photomaps, undated (Container 12)