



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

1912 International Gordon Bennett Race Membership Certificate

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2023

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	1912 International Gordon Bennett Race Membership Certificate
Date:	1912
Identifier:	NASM.1987.0119
Extent:	0.05 Cubic feet (1 folder; Document; 9.2 x 24.5 inch (24 x 62 cm))
Language:	English .
Summary:	This single-item collection is a Membership Certificate issued by The Aero Club of Illinois for Club-sponsored aviation events relating to the 1912 Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy competitions held in the Chicago metropolitan area in September 1912. This unused three-part certificate, Number 7445, is intact and consists of a souvenir certificate, a stub to identify the holder, and a set of 20 coupons, each good for admission to a specific day's events.
Digital Content:	Image(s): NASM-9A19788: Certificate issued by The Aero Club of Illinois for the 1912 Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy competitions in Chicago. Image(s): 1912 International Gordon Bennett Race Membership Certificate

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

W. J. Dixon, gift, 1987, NASM.1987.0119.

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2023.

Preferred Citation

1912 International Gordon Bennett Race Membership Certificate, Acc. NASM.1987.0119, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

In 1908, James Gordon Bennett, Jr. (1841-1918), publisher of the *New York Herald* newspaper, announced a prize for the fastest speed by an airplane over a closed course. Bennett, a wealthy American yachtsman and sporting enthusiast, had already established international competitions awarding Gordon Bennett trophies for automobile racing (Coupe International, 1900), and ballooning (Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, 1906). The first Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy competition was held at Reims, France, in August 1909, with races held annually through 1913. The last race was held in 1920, following World War I. Under the terms of the competition, the home country of the winner of a race was obliged to host the following year's race. In 1911, the Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy was won by American Charles Weyman, consequently the 1912 race was held in Chicago under the auspices of the Aero Club of America and the Aero Club of Illinois. The competitions occurred at three different locations in the Chicago metropolitan area: the Gordon Bennett Race Course at Clearing Aerodrome (Clearing, Illinois) on September 9, 1912; the International Aviation Meet at Cicero Flying Field (Cicero, Illinois) on September 12-15, 1912; and the Airboat Meet and Exhibition Flying at Grant Park (Chicago, Illinois) on September 16-21, 1912, where hydroaeroplanes were housed at the Club's Clarendon Beach Airboat Station. The 1912 Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy was won by Jules Védrines, flying a Deperdussin 1912 Monocoque Racer.

Scope and Contents

This single-item collection consists of an elaborate "Season Subscription Membership Certificate", [1] issued by The Aero Club of Illinois to provide the owner with entry to twenty days of Club-sponsored aviation events relating to the 1912 Gordon Bennett Aviation Trophy (International Gordon Bennett Race) competitions held in the Chicago metropolitan area from September 1 through 20, 1912. (The actual events were scheduled September 9 through 21, 1912.) The three-part certificate, "issued to subscribers of at least \$10 for the 1912 events of The Aero Club of Illinois, entitled them to admission to every event given by the club, to members' enclosures and all other members' privileges, including inspection of hangars." [2] The main portion of the certificate features an illustration of the Trophy at center and portraits of the previous Trophy winners: Glenn H. Curtiss (1909), Claude Grahame-White (1910), and Charles Terres Weyman (1911). A fourth space is left open for a portrait of the winner of the 1912 competition to be added later. The stub and coupons at the right side of the certificate were designed to be detached and used as admission tickets; for example, coupon number 17 would admit the stub holder to Club events occurring on September 17, 1912. This certificate, Number 7445, was never issued and is intact.

[1,2] *Official Souvenir Program, Aviation Events, Nineteen Hundred Twelve, September 12th to 21st*, The Aero Club of Illinois (Chicago, Illinois), 1912.

Arrangement

Single-item collection.

Bibliography

Official Souvenir Program, Aviation Events, Nineteen Hundred Twelve, September 12th to 21st, The Aero Club of Illinois (Chicago, Illinois), 1912; photocopy via National Air and Space Museum Technical Reference Files, Acc. NASM.XXXX.1183, Events Series, Folder J1-1912-100-01, 1912 Chicago, Cicero Aviation Meet (Midway) & Gordon Bennett Race [Documents].

Foxworth, Thomas G. *The Speed Seekers*, New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1976; pages 26-27.

Gwynn-Jones, Terry. *Farther and Faster: Aviation's Adventuring Years, 1909-1939*. Washington, D.C., and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Aeronautics -- 1910-1920
Aeronautics -- Competitions

Places:

Chicago (Ill.)