



Smithsonian  
*National Air and Space Museum*

John Matthew Miller III Collection

Melissa A. N. Keiser

2019

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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<http://airandspace.si.edu/research/resources/archives/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	John Matthew Miller III Collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.2001.0036
<b>Date:</b>	1910-1973
<b>Extent:</b>	0.8 Cubic feet (1 legal document box, 1 slim legal document box, 1 map folder (18 x 48 inches))
<b>Creator:</b>	Miller, John Matthew, III, 1896-
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	John Matthew Miller III (born June 3, 1896) was active in aviation throughout his life, as a naval aviator, air mail pilot, transport pilot, autogiro pilot, flight instructor, aircraft manufacturer, airport operator, agricultural pilot, and helicopter test pilot, working at different times for the United States Navy, the U.S. Aerial Mail Service, Pitcairn Aeronautical Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture; from 1927-1929 Miller operated his own business, the Miller Aviation Corporation of New Brunswick, New Jersey. The collection includes Miller's pilot licenses and log books, scrapbooks, photographs, newspaper clippings and assorted ephemera, predominantly from the 1914 to 1939 period of Miller's life.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): John Matthew Miller III posed standing in front of Pitcairn PCA-2 Autogiro.</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Lee M. Gunther-Mohr, Gift, 2001, NASM.2001.0036.

### Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2019.

### Preferred Citation

John Matthew Miller III Collection, Acc. NASM.2001.0036, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

John Matthew Miller III was born June 3, 1896, at Tacoma, Washington. As a teenager, Miller came east to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and found summer employment with the Burgess Company aircraft manufacturers at Marblehead, Massachusetts. In 1917, following the entry of the United States into World War I, Miller was accepted into the Massachusetts School for Naval Air Service (Flight A Naval Aviation detachment at MIT), and, after two months, moved on to elementary flying instruction at Hampton Roads, Virginia, and then advanced instruction at Pensacola, Florida. He was commissioned into the United States Naval Air Service as an Ensign on March 16, 1918, and stationed at Naval Air Station Rockaway Beach, New York, where he performed patrol and convoy work off New York harbor, until ordered to inactive duty on December 15, 1918. Miller promptly joined the US Aerial Mail Service; after training in Dayton Wright DH-4 air mailplanes at Belmont Park, Long Island, Miller was posted to Bustleton, Pennsylvania, as station manager. Following his two years of air mail service, Miller worked at a number of aviation jobs, including time with the America Trans Oceanic Company (Miami, Florida, 1920), survey flights in Quebec (Canada, 1922), and managing operations for Pitcairn Aeronautical Corporation at their base adjacent to Hadley Field in South Plainfield, New Jersey (the New York terminal for the New York to Chicago and New York to Atlanta air mail routes). Miller was an active member of the New Brunswick (NJ) Aero Club, owners of a Pitcairn PA-3 Orowing based at Pitcairn's field. On August 1, 1927, Miller organized the Miller Aviation Corporation, operating out of New Brunswick Airport (a.k.a. "Miller Field"), a short-lived airfield located southwest of the city of New Brunswick. Miller Aviation offered flying instruction, local sightseeing flights, and charter passenger flights in the mid-Atlantic seaboard region. In 1928-1929, the Miller Aviation Corporation designed, constructed, and tested the Miller (Corp) MCA-1 Amphibian Biplane; sadly, the aircraft crashed during its first ground landing. After his company failed, Miller returned to Pitcairn Aeronautical as an autogiro pilot, making a number of flights through the 1930s for Pitcairn, the US Department of Agriculture, and others. During World War II, Miller temporarily rejoined the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander, serving as a helicopter test pilot at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland. Miller later worked for the Department of Agriculture until his retirement in 1956.

NOTE: John Matthew Miller III (born 1896, died circa 1980s), the subject of this collection, should not be confused with fellow air mail and autogiro pilot John McDonald "Johnny" Miller (1905-2008), occasionally referenced in this collection. Johnny Miller was more closely associated with the Kellett Autogiro Corp (Philadelphia, PA), and was famous for being the first to land an aircraft on the roof of a building.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection contains both original materials and photocopies of materials loaned by the donor for copying. Original materials include Miller's United States Navy Naval Aviator Certificate, an aircraft log book for the Curtiss Seagull "Jacques Cartier" (owned by The Chicago Tribune), a photo album entitled "The Miller Corporation, New Brunswick Airport" featuring images of the Miller (Corp) MCA-1 Amphibian Biplane, assorted loose photographs, correspondence from Robert Woods Johnson (of Johnson & Johnson), two panoramic group photographs of the US Navy Flight A Naval Aviation detachment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1917, newspaper clippings (several covering James G. Ray's autogiro flight over Washington, DC in 1934), assorted ephemera relating to Miller's aviation career,

and two bound books: *Flying Officers of the U.S.N. (US Navy): 1917-1919* and *Saga of the US Air Mail Service: 1918-1927*, (Air Mail Pioneers, Inc., 1962). Photocopied materials include two of Miller's pilot log books, two of Miller's pilot licenses, a scrapbook, and selected pages from additional scrapbooks from which individual photographs were copied by the National Air and Space Museum in 2001. The collection also includes Smithsonian Institution numbered copy prints of these selected photographs.

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## Arrangement

Materials in this collection are grouped into Series by type; materials within a series are generally arranged chronologically, grouped by subject.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics -- Societies, etc.
- Aeronautics, Commercial
- Aeronautics, Commercial -- United States
- Aircraft industry
- Aircraft industry -- United States
- Airplanes
- Autogiros
- Burgess Aircraft Family
- Kellett Autogiro Family
- Miller Corp MCA-1 Amphibian Biplane
- Pitcairn PA-3 Orowing
- Pitcairn PCA-2 Autogiro
- Waco 10 Family (Aircraft)

### Types of Materials:

- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Financial records
- Logs (records)
- Pamphlets
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Scrapbooks

### Names:

- Johnson, Robert Woods
- Kellett Autogiro Corp
- Miller Aviation Corp (John Matthew Miller III) (Aircraft manufacturer) (1927-1929)
- Miller, John Matthew, III, 1896-
- New Brunswick (NJ) Aero Club
- Pitcairn (Pitcairn-Cierva)
- Pitcairn Autogiro Co, Inc.

Pitcairn Aviation

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Log Books and Licenses

- Box 1, Folder 1            Pilot Licenses, 1918-1942
- Box 1, Folder 1            United States Navy Naval Aviator Certificate, John M. Miller, Ensign, U.S.N.R. (Original), February 1, 1918  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 1            United States Department of Commerce Aeronautics Branch Transport Pilot's License, John M Miller (Photocopy), January 20, 1930  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 1            United States Department of Commerce Civil Aeronautics Administration Airman Identification Card, John Matthew Miller (Photocopy), expires April 16, 1942  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 1            United States Navy Certificate of Satisfactory Service, Lt. Cmdr. John M. Miller (Photocopy), June 3, 1942 through November 7, 1945  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 2            Aircraft Log Book, Curtiss Seagull "Jacques Cartier", 1922  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
In the summer of 1922 Miller piloted a Curtiss Seagull owned by *The Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois) from Port Washington, Long Island, New York, to Quebec, and flew sightseeing and survey flights along the St. Lawrence River in the area between Rimouski and Franquelin; following his return to New York he was cited by The Air Board in Ottawa for flying in Canada in an unregistered aircraft.
- Box 1, Folder 3            Aviator's Flight Log Book, 1926 (Photocopy), 1926-1943  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 4            Aviator's Flight Log Book, 1943 (Photocopy), 1943-1954  
[Image\(s\)](#)

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## Series 2: Scrapbooks and Photographs

- Box 1, Folder 5           Scrapbook (Photocopy), 1914-1933  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Photocopies of pages of a scrapbook loaned by the donor for copying by the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in 2001; includes newspaper articles, contest rules for the New Brunswick (NJ) Aero Club Flying Trophy, Miller's 1917 acceptance letter to the Massachusetts School for Naval Air Service, a letter recognizing one year of service to the US Aerial Mail Service in 1919, articles pertaining to Miller's 1918 commission as an ensign in the Naval Aviation Corps, and a promotional pamphlet for the Kellett Autogiro.
- Box 1, Folder 6           Photo album, "The Miller Corporation, New Brunswick Airport", 1928-1929  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Photo album, 27 scrapbook pages, titled "The Miller Corporation, New Brunswick Airport"; includes photographs of the hangar and facilities, Pitcairn PA-3 Orowing, Waco 10, and photographs of the scale wind tunnel test model and completed version of the Miller (Corp) MCA-1 Amphibian Biplane.
- Box 3                    Panoramic Photographs, 1917  
*2 Photographic prints*
- Box 3                    NASM-9A16103: "US Naval Air Service - MIT - 1917", 1917  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Panoramic group photograph of United States Naval Aviation Corps students posed with their commanding officer in Killian Court, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1917. Building 10 and the Great Dome are seen in the center background.
- Box 3                    NASM-9A16104: "FLIGHT 'A' NAVAL AVIATION DET. - AT M.I.T. - AUG. 1917", August 1917  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Panoramic group photograph of students from United States Naval Aviation Corps, Detachment A, posed with their commanding officer outside a building (probably in Killian Court) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 1917.
- Box 1, Folder 7           Original Photographs, 1919-1939  
*20 Photographic prints*  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Informal group of U.S. Navy aviators, "Landing at Grant Park, Chicago, Ill., July 1919," the America Trans Oceanic Company (ATO) modified Curtiss Model H-16 "Big Fish" (1920), Pitcairn PA-3 Orowing, Pitcairn PCA-2 Autogiro, autogiro towing an advertising banner, aerial views of the John Waldron Corp. factory (New Brunswick, New Jersey), two views of Grand Central Airport (Glendale, California), and photographs of the scale wind tunnel test model and completed version of the Miller (Corp) MCA-1 Amphibian Biplane.
- Box 1, Folder 8           Photographs (Photocopies), Negative Nos. 2001-837 to 869, 1914-1939



[Image\(s\)](#)

Photocopies of album pages loaned by the donor for copying by the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in 2001 indicating the 33 photographs copied; annotated with Smithsonian Institution negative numbers. Subjects include various Burgess and Burgess-Dunne aircraft, Curtiss Model E, Sturtevant S floatplane, and the America Trans Oceanic Company (ATO) modified Curtiss Model H-16 "Big Fish."

Box 1, Folder 9

Copy Photographs, Negative Nos. 2001-837 to 869, 1914-1939  
*33 Photographic prints*

[Image\(s\)](#)

Copy print photographs made by the Smithsonian Institution (SI) in 2001 of 33 photographs loaned by the donor in 2001 (see photocopies in Box 1, Folder 8); annotated with Smithsonian Institution negative numbers. Subjects include various Burgess and Burgess-Dunne aircraft, Curtiss Model E, Sturtevant S floatplane, and the America Trans Oceanic Company (ATO) modified Curtiss Model H-16 "Big Fish."

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## Series 3: Loose Materials

- Box 1, Folder 10 U. S. Aerial Mail Service, 1918-1920
- Box 1, Folder 10 "Pilot's Daily Report" / "Belmont Park to Bellefont", 1918-1920  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Course headings for four legs of the air mail route from Belmont Park (Long Island, New York) over New Jersey to Bellefont (Pennsylvania) typed on the back of a blank "Pilot's Daily Report" card; signed G. G. Budwig.
- Box 1, Folder 10 "Bellefont - Cleveland" Strip Map, 1918-1920  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Air mail pilot's strip map for the route between Bellefont (Pennsylvania) to Cleveland (Ohio); autographed by John M. Miller.
- Box 1, Folder 11 U. S. Navy Certificate, Promotion to Lieutenant, August 9, 1924  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 12 Aero Club of New Brunswick (N.J.), 1930-1934  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
One share of common stock, owned by Miller, of the Aero Club of New Brunswick, New Jersey, Inc.; 8th Anniversary Banquet menu.
- Box 1, Folder 13 Correspondence with Robert Woods Johnson, 1930-1935  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Correspondence between John Miller and Robert Woods Johnson (of Johnson & Johnson) concerning flying, operating, and purchasing autogiros, current aviation news, and toothbrush design; also includes Miller's handwritten account of his autogiro crash with a student pilot on Saturday, August 10, 1935, at Pitcairn Field.
- Box 1, Folder 14 Pitcairn Aeronautical Corporation, 1930-1935  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Several loose sheets of Miller's figures on the operating costs of a Pitcairn cabin autogiro, and a breakdown of the marketing needs and possibilities; newsletter *Autogiro News*, August-September 1933.
- Box 1, Folder 15 Newspaper Clippings, 1924-1969  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
Assorted newspaper clippings, several covering James G. Ray's autogiro flight over Washington, DC in 1934.  
  
Images of articles from *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* are not displayed due to copyright issues. Please contact the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives if you wish to access this material: <https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>
- Box 1, Folder 16 Miscellaneous, 1935-1973

- Box 1, Folder 16 Letter, Bureau of Air Commerce authorization for autogiro flights for Dutch Elm Disease Eradication Project, September 25, 1936  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 16 Eastern Air Lines envelope addressed to Miss Mary Lee Miller, "Via Autogiro flown with first Air Mail Carried from a Post Office Roof, Pilot James G. Ray", postmarked May 25, 1939  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 16 Paper, "Dual Spray Equipment for Airplane Spraying Tests", March 1951  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 16 John Miller biographical sketch "from the Story of Flight A, 1917-1918", circa 1960s-1970s  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 16 Booklet, "Hadley Field 1924-1968: Commemoration Ceremonies, June 9, 1973", 1924-1973-06-09  
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 1, Folder 17 US Airmail Service commemorative ephemera, 1968, 1981  
[Image\(s\)](#)  
First day cover (1968) of the 50th Anniversary of US Airmail Service (\$.10) with accompanying informational card about de Havilland DH-4 "Old 249" (NASM artifact) as well as a packet of "Aviation Pioneers: A Collection of US Stamps Item No. 8919" (issued 1981).

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## Series 4: Books

Box 2, Folder 1

Book, "Flying Officers of the U.S.N. (US Navy): 1917-1919", 1919

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 2, Folder 2

Book, "Saga of the US Air Mail Service: 1918-1927," Air Mail Pioneers, Inc.,  
1962, First Edition, 1962

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