

MS-372

Sterling B. Smeltzer Curtiss-Wright Airplane Division Collection

**Special Collections and Archives
Wright State University Libraries**

**Processed by:
Nathan Troup
March 2004**

Introduction

The Sterling B. Smeltzer Curtiss-Wright Airplane Division Collection was collected by Sterling B. Smeltzer, an employee of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. Norma Alexander, a relative of Smeltzer left it to her son Kent Alexander in 2005. Wright State University purchased the collection in 2005.

Consisting of 1.5 boxes (approximately 0.75 linear feet) the collection includes handbooks, brochures, files from Curtiss-Wright's Engineering Department, blueprints, photographs, and other published materials.

The materials in the collection span from 1918-1950, but the bulk concerns the time period from 1930-1950. The collection documents early aviation advertising, the development of reference materials for the maintenance of airplanes, and the Curtiss-Wright Engineering Department.

There are no restrictions on the use or access of the Sterling B. Smeltzer Curtiss-Wright Airplane Division Collection.

The Sterling B. Smeltzer Curtiss-Wright Airplane Division Collection is divided into four series:

- Series I: Business Files
- Series II: Published Materials
- Series III: Blueprints
- Series IV: Photographs

Related Collections

Another collection at the Wright State University Special Collections and Archives that may be of interest to those researching the Curtiss-Wright Corporation is MS-356, the Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical Engine Drawing Collection. The collection consists of over 50,000 aircraft engine part and power system drawings. However, the collection is currently unprocessed, and there are **significant legal restrictions on the drawings**.

Biographical Sketch

Sterling B. Smeltzer was born in 1909 in Blair County, Pennsylvania. Graduating from Altoona High School in 1927, he went on to receive his B.A. in Engineering and Structural Design with a secondary major in Art from Carnegie-Tech, the forerunner to Carnegie-Mellon University in 1931. Academically successful, Smeltzer received further education at both the University of California – Los Angeles, and the Ohio State University.

Smeltzer went on to work for the Curtiss-Wright Airplane Company in 1942, and remained there until 1951. Smeltzer worked in the Service Engineering Department in the Technical Publications Group where he was responsible for various handbooks and manuals. He went on to be promoted to the position of Section Head, and later to Service Engineer. As Service Engineer, Smeltzer had jurisdiction over the Industrial Art Section as well as the Handbooks and Bulletin Groups. Smeltzer eventually became the Chief of Field Services of all Curtiss-Wright Airplane Division Products.

In 1952, Smeltzer left Curtiss-Wright to work at North American Aviation, Inc. serving as the General Superintendent of Field Service. Smeltzer retired in the 1980s, and passed away in the early 2000's.

Scope and Content Note

The collection largely represents the type of work the Service Engineering Department and the Technical Publications Group at the Curtiss-Wright Airplane Company performed. In his many positions within the company, Smeltzer worked on, or oversaw many publications including handbooks and brochures. The materials in the collection span from 1918-1950, but the bulk concerns the time period from 1930-1950. The collection is divided into four series: Business Files, Published Materials, Blueprints, and Photographs.

Series I: Business Files

The Business Files consist of technical documents, newsletters, and internal Engineering Department records from 1925-1950. The records contain instructions on the departments drafting procedures, and the maintenance and repair of aircraft. Particular attention should be paid to the Engineering Department folder, which gives insights into how the department was organized, what types of problems it dealt with, as well as information directly relating to Smeltzer as a worker.

Series II: Published Materials

This series contains materials published by both Curtiss-Wright, its subsidiary Travel Air, and other institutions from 1929-1940. Of specific interest are brochures of early model Curtiss airplanes that list the planes specifications and equipment. The brochures also contain pictures of the planes, pilots, and occasionally passengers. There are also two parts price lists for Curtiss "Robin" Airplanes, a dictionary of the 1,000 most used aviation terms and two histories of aviation.

Series III: Blueprints

Consisting of two blueprints from 1915-1918, the series includes a plain view assembly diagram of airplane model JN3 from 1915, and an erection and elevation view for airplane JNGHB.

Series IV: Photographs

The photographs span from 1918-1949 with some gaps. Of particular interest is the folder of Curtiss Airplanes which shows many of the planes in flight, while others show pilots and mechanics. The Foreign Visitors folder has a newspaper article and photograph of Smeltzer with visitors from France and Bolivia. This series also includes a photograph of two women holding oversized Christmas greetings cards, and an unidentified airshow including a picture of the captured German airplane "Alles Kaputt."

Box and File Listing

Series I Business Files			Date
Box	File	Item	
1	1	Assembly and Maintenance Instructions AT-4	[1925]
	2	The Curtiss-Wright Junior	1931, 1934
	3	Curtiss Hell-Diver Airplanes	1932-07-12
	4	Handbook – Model A-12 Airplanes	1933-11
	5	Handbook – Model AT-32 “Condor”	1934-04
	6	Corporate Newsletters	[1941], undated
	7	Perspective Drafting Procedure	1942-1943
	8	Engineering Department	1942-1950
	9	Technical Presentation of the P-47	1944-06-15
	10	Memophone Recorder	1950-11-16
	11	Aps33/APS33a Radar	undated
Series II Published Materials			
	12	Brochures for Early Model Curtiss Airplanes 1 of 3	[1929-1940]
	13	Brochures for Early Model Curtiss Airplanes 2 of 3	[1929-1940]
2	1	Brochures for Early Model Curtiss Airplanes 3 of 3	[1929-1940]
	2	The Curtiss J-N	1920-01-24
	3	Curtiss OX-Motored Standard J-1	1920-01-24
	4	Highlights of Aviation History	1929
	5	Men and Wings	1942
	6	Most-Used Aviation Terms	1941
	7	Parts Price Lists for Curtiss “Robin” Airplanes	1930, 1936
Series III Blueprints			
Oversize		Plain view (assembly) of model JN3, blueprint #4293 *IN OVERSIZE LOCATION 71, FILE 13	1915
Oversize		Erection front elevation, first designed for model JNGHB. Blueprint #87900. *IN OVERSIZE LOCATION 71, FILE 13	1918
Series IV Photographs			Date
Box	File	Item	
2	8	Airshow	[circa 1940s]
	9	Christmas Greetings	1948
	10	Curtiss Airplanes	1918, 1923-1930, undated
	11	Foreign Visitors	1949-11-10