

James M. Shimer Kaiser-Fleetwings papers

05

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Faith
Charlton through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

Last updated on February 05, 2014.

Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	5
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials.....	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	6

Summary Information

Repository	Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library
Creator	Shimer, Jim (James M.), 1914-2007
Title	James M. Shimer Kaiser-Fleetwings papers
Call number	05
Date [inclusive]	1942-1958
Extent	3 linear feet
General Physical Description note	Four boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Established in 1926, Fleetwings, Inc. was an aircraft components factory that moved from Long Island, New York to Bristol, Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1934. Due to the company's success during World War II, Henry J. Kaiser's Kaiser Industries invested in the company and renamed it Kaiser-Fleetwings Corp.; the company folded in 1962. James M. (Jim) Shimer, Jr. (1914-2007) worked there as a technical illustrator. The James M. Shimer Kaiser-Fleetwings papers, 1942-1958, consists of materials relating to James M. Shimer's work as a technical illustrator for Kaiser-Fleetwings. There are a large number of Shimer's drawings of aircrafts, blueprints, technical specifications, photographs of aircraft and of models, and promotional brochures for the aircraft, as well as some of Shimer's employment records and various employee newsletters and publications.</p>

Biography/History

Established in 1926 as a business based on a patented mechanical timing device, Fleetwings reorganized in 1929 as Fleetwings, Inc. and began to manufacture airplanes and aircraft components. Based in Long Island, New York, the company moved to a factory along the Delaware River (previously Keystone Aircraft Corp.) that was located in Bristol, Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1934. The location of the Bristol factory was desirable as Fleetings intended to develop a line of amphibious planes. Since few airstrips existed at the time, many in the industry predicted that the future of flight was in planes that could touch down on water.

Business for Fleetwings ramped up in the early 1940s, especially as Fleetwings began receiving military contracts during World War II. Henry J. Kaiser's Kaiser Industries acquired Fleetwings in 1943, renaming the company Kaiser-Fleetwings Corporation. The Kaiser-Fleetwings XBTK, a dive and torpedo bomber developed for the United States Navy starting in 1944, is its best-known product. Employment at the Kaiser-Fleetwings plant reached its peak in 1944 with over 6,300 employees, but business dropped precipitously after the end of World War II, and again after the Korean War. The company was forced to close its doors in 1962.

James M. (Jim) Shimer, Jr. (1914-2007) was born in Philadelphia and attended Frankford High School. He earned a degree in Industrial Design from the Philadelphia Museum School of Art (now the University of the Arts) in 1937. Soon after, he married Dolly E. Lashley, with whom he had three children. During World War II, Shimer was employed as Assistant Supervisor in the Graphic Art Department at Fleetwings, Inc. After the war, he worked as a technical illustrator in the Aviation Armament Laboratory at the Naval Air Development Center (Johnsville, Pa.) before returning to Kaiser-Fleetwings during the Korean War. In his position as Supervisor of the Graphic Art Group, Shimer prepared technical illustrations to assist in the production of Republic-F-84F fuselages and Martin B-57 wings, among other projects. He retired from Kaiser-Fleetwings in 1955 and moved on to positions preparing technical materials for various other companies. He was a long-time member of the Naval Institute, USAF Museum, American Aviation Historical Society, and the Reading Rail Road Technical and Historical Society, among other associations.

Bibliography:

"James M. (Jim) Shimer, Jr." Obituary found in collection.

Trimble, William F. *High Frontier: A History of Aeronautics in Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

Halper, Evan. "Recalling First Weather Satellite Hurricane Floyd Triggered the Memory of Henry Liese of the Role Bucks County Played as a Pioneer in Aviation History." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. September 20, 1999. Accessed February 15, 2013. http://articles.philly.com/1999-09-20/news/25487523_1_twin-engine-plane-aviation-satellite

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of materials relating to James M. Shimer's work as a technical illustrator for Kaiser-Fleetwings. There are a large number of Shimer's drawings of aircrafts, blueprints, technical specifications, photographs of aircraft and of models, and promotional brochures for the aircraft. (There is also a small amount of the same types of materials for a dishwasher developed by Kaiser.) Also included are some of Shimer's employment records, such as daily schedules and scattered correspondence, and various employee newsletters and publications.

Administrative Information

Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Faith Charlton through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Gift of James F. Shimer, 2010

Processing Information Note

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012-2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library directly for more information.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials Note

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley: Henry J. Kaiser, Jr. Papers, 1937-1961, BANC MSS 88/205 c.

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley: Eugene E. Trefethen, Jr. Papers, 1939-1979, BANC MSS 87/35 c.

Margaret R. Grundy Memorial Library, Bristol, PA: Henry A. Liese collection, 1944-1981.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Fleetwings, Inc.
- Kaiser Industries Corporation
- Kaiser-Fleetwings Corp.

Geographic Name(s)

- Bristol (Pa.)
- Bucks County (Pa.)

Personal Name(s)

- Shimer, Jim (James M.), 1914-2007

Subject(s)

- Aircraft drafting
- Aircraft industry
- Airplanes
- Dishwashing machines
- Korean War, 1950-1953
- Technical illustration
- World War, 1939-1945