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The Charles Lindsay Gover Collection

Accession #2015-001

Dates: 1941-1945; 1950

Extent: 1 standard and 12 oversized archival boxes; one large portrait

Creators: Charles L. Lindsay and his family

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Language: English, Latin

Finding Aid: Guide is available in-house

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Subject Headings: World War, 1939-1945

World War, 1939-1945 Pacific Ocean

World War, 1939-1945 Naval Operations, American

Gover, Charles Lindsay

Long Island Railroad Company

Railroad accidents-Queens (New York, NY)

Long Island Railroad, railroads-accidents

Related Materials: United States. House. Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. *Long Island railroad: hearing before a subcommittee, December 12, 1950, on accident near Jamaica, N.Y., on November 22, 1950.* Washington: GPO, 1951. Copy included in this Collection. Call number: Y4.In8/4:L85/4

Biographical Note

Charles Lindsay Gover was born on May 30, 1921 in Valley Stream, Long Island, New York. His parents were Catherine Dougherty and Daniel Lindsay Gover. He attended the Cathedral School of St. Paul and graduated from Central High School in Valley Stream. He married Kathryn Driscoll Owens on May 2, 1943. At the time of their marriage, Gover was a seaman first class stationed at the naval base on Staten Island.

Charles Gover served in World War II on the destroyer, U.S.S. Cowpens, stationed in the Pacific. Later he served on a "mine sweeper." He earned six stars; one for each of six major engagements of which he took part. The service stars are worn on a service ribbon. The service ribbon itself indicates the first award, with a bronze service star being added to indicate the second and each subsequent awards.

Injured during combat, he was sent to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Farragut, Idaho. In 1945 while undergoing physical therapy at the Naval Hospital, a large portrait was painted of Gover. The artist's name was Oscar Schoreiweiss. It is not clear if the artist was a patient or a local artist.

Before the war, Charles Gover was employed by Bethlehem Steel Export Corporation. After the war, he was employed as an import, export manager by Livingston and Southard, Inc., of New York.

By 1950, Gover was attending Fordham University and lived in Bellmore, LI, New York.

On November 22, 1950 Gover was killed in the crash of two Long Island Railroad trains in Queens, New York. He was 29 years old and was survived by his wife, Kathryn and three small children.

There is also material in this collection on Thomas M. Owens, a relative of Kathryn Owens. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mackall Owens of Jayne Place, Baldwin, New York. Owens graduated from the College of Medicine at the University of Maryland in 1859. He became a surgeon and served in the U.S. Navy.

Scope and Content

This collection is comprised of two principle events of Gover's life. The first was his active duty in the Navy during World War II on a destroyer in the Pacific. This part of the collection consists of correspondence, pictures, scrapbooks, a large portrait, news clippings, and service medals.

The second part of this collection is focused on one day, November 22, 1950, when a commuter train Gover was riding was hit from behind by another train going 40 miles per hour. It smashed into and under the rear car sending it into the air. Gover was killed along with 78 other passengers. This accident caused a much needed overhaul of the management and operations of the LIRR. Millions of dollars in damages were eventually paid to the victims and their families. In addition, his widow Kathryn Gover, sued the federal government and won.

A copy of the U.S. Congressional House Hearing on the accident is included in the collections.

Also in this collection are materials from Thomas M. Owens, a relative of Kathryn Owens Gover. He graduated from the University of Maryland's Medical School and was a surgeon during the Civil War. This part of the collection includes several medals and framed diplomas.

Collection Outline

The collection has three subgroups.

Subgroup I: World War II

Series 1: Correspondence, pictures and medals.

Series 2: Oversized

Subgroup II: Long Island Railroad Crash, November 25, 2015

Series 1: Newspapers articles (oversized)

Series 2: Two American Flags

Subgroup III: Thomas M. Owens

Series 1: Medals and Diplomas

Subgroup I: World War II

Dates: 1942-1945

Extent: 6 boxes, 8.33 linear feet

This subgroup contains correspondence between Gover and his wife; various naval documents; a sampling of envelopes with "passed by Naval Censor" stamped on them; photographs; news clippings; and other miscellaneous items. There is also a box containing medals awarded to Charles Gover during his naval service. There are two scrapbooks full of photographs and newspaper clippings.

Series 1: Correspondence, pictures and medals

Dates: 1942-1945

Bulk: 1942-1945

Extent: 2 boxes; one box includes his service medals

Arrangement: Chronological

This series contains a collection of U.S. government censored letters sent by Gover to his wife from 1943-1945. A sample of envelopes is included that has Navy Censor stamped on the front. During World War II Naval Intelligence checked all mail sent by naval personnel. The censor's stamp appears on the lower left corner. The letters themselves have sentences or sections cut out. This was done to keep movement of naval forces a secret and not reach the enemy.

There are numerous awards or medals given to Gover during the war as well as other memorabilia; photographs; and news clippings. Among the medals is a good conduct medal. Also are his naval dog tags that have his finger print on them and his naval ID number. Where possible the name of the medal is given.

Series 2: Oversized

Dates: 1942-1945

Bulk: 1942-1945

Extent: 4 boxes and large portrait

Arrangement: By type of material

In this series are two scrapbooks of photographs taken while Gover was in the U.S. Navy, news clippings, and other framed photographs. The first scrapbook contains early pictures of Charles Gover after he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Most of its contents are news clippings of the WWII

battles in the Pacific as the U.S. Navy fought to retake the islands the Japanese had invaded. The second scrapbook belonging to Charles Gover contains many short news clippings as well as additional photos of Gover as well as his family. There are also photographs of his shipmates and the ship's officers. In many photos, names, dates, and a short description are provided. Included also is a pencil sketch of Gover dated 1944. Charles Gover was sent to a Naval Hospital for treatment. While a patient here a large oil portrait was painted of him.

Sub-group II: Long Island Rail Road Crash

Dates: 1950-1951

Extent: 6 oversized boxes; 8.8 linear feet

This subgroup contains numerous news articles about the Long Island Rail Road crash on November 22, 1950 covering several days after the crash. Several of the articles are more than several pages in length with numerous photographs. These photos show the horrific scene that occurred. These articles are from local and national newspapers. The newspaper are arranged alphabetical within each box. Also included in this series are two American flags.

Series 1: Oversized

Dates: 1950-1951

Bulk: 1950-1951

Extent: 4 oversized boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical by name of newspaper; date order within each group of newspapers.

This series contains newspapers articles covering the crash. Many have fold outs of patients in the local hospitals and write ups on the dead.

Series 2: American Flags

Dates: unknown c. 1950

Bulk: unknown c. 1950

Extent: 2 oversized boxes

Arrangement: None needed

This series contains two American flags with 48 stars.

Sub-group III: Thomas Mackall Owens

Dates: 1859 and undated.

Extent: medals; 1 oversized box: 21 inches

Thomas Mackall Owens was a relative of Kathryn Owens Gover. This Sub-Group contains medals given to Owens for his service during Civil War as well as medical diplomas.

Series 1. Medals and Diplomas

Dates: 1859; 1891

Bulk: 1859; 1891

Extent: medals; 1 oversized box

Arrangement: By type of material

Little is known about Thomas M. Owens, M.D. The collection contains his framed diploma from the University of Maryland College of Medicine dated 1859, which is written in Latin. Founded in 1807, the medical school was the first public school of medicine and the fifth oldest medical school in the United States. Also included is a framed award given to him in 1881, bestowing on Owens the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. It notes his medical field as surgeon and his membership in the U.S. Navy and was signed by Rutherford B. Hayes, Commander in Chief (1888-1893). The title of command-in-chief as a title can be used to express executive leadership and can apply to a collegial body. Rutherford B. Hayes was President of the United States and held the title of Commander in Chief (1877-1881). In 1888, he became the commander –in-chief of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. He died in office in 1893. In addition Owens' WWI medals are included here as well. However it is not known if Owens served in World War I.

Container List

Sub-Group I: World War II

Series 1: Correspondence, Pictures, and Medals

Box 1

- Folder 1: Naval Training Course Certificate, 1942
- Folder 2: Naval messages from ships dated 11/10/1943; 7/12/1941
- Folder 3: Correspondence with wife, 1943
- Folder 4: Correspondence with wife, 1943 (2)
- Folder 5: Correspondence with wife, 1945
- Folder 6: Envelopes 1943-1945 various dates (naval censor stamps)
- Folder 7: The Royal High Court of the Raging Main Subpoena and summons extraordinary
- Folder 8: Miscellaneous items from WWII and Hawaii
- Folder 9: Discharged from U.S. Naval, papers Oct. 1945
- Folder 10: Correspondence after discharge from Navy
- Folder 11: Photographs various
- Folder 12: Card "Our Uncle Sam is fighting Mad"
- Folder 13: Correspondence to Mrs. Gover, 1952
- Folder 14: Farragut Naval Hospital, Sept., 1945 (portrait)
- Folder 15: Book: Winston, Robert A., Aircraft Carrier, 1942
- Folder 16: Task Force sits for its Portrait –anchored in Marshall Island
- Folder 17: News clipping of post WWII years
- Folder 18: Correspondence from the Secretary of the Navy

Box 2

- Interior 2/A: Lt. Thomas M. Owens World War I Victory Medals
- Interior 2/B: Lt. Thomas M. Owens additional medals relating to military service

Interior 2/C: Charles L. Gover Service Medals for Asiatic Campaign Pacific Medals, Good Conduct Medal, and various naval engagements

Interior 2/D: Charles L. Gover Naval Dog Tags and other medals

Interior 2/E: Discharged from Navy and patient US naval #1585, civilian military training corp. marksman

Interior 2/F: Charles L. Gover Naval reserve pin, etc. miscellaneous

Interior 2/G: Charles L. Gover miscellaneous

Interior 2/H: Old display box

Subgroup 1: World War II

Series 2: Oversized

Box 3:

4 framed citations for Gover:

Recommendation to promotion to Ensign, D-V(S), USNR,

Recognition of Service signed by Lyndon Johnson

Honorable Discharge for Charles Gover

American Legion Silver Star Citation signed 8/16/1945.

Box 4:

Scrapbook I: WWII **FRAGILE**

Pages are fragile; please handle carefully.

Box 5:

Scrapbook II: WWII and family photographs. **FRAGILE**

Pages are fragile; please handle carefully.

Box 6:

Folder 1: Capt. McConnell greets the Royal Entourage, January 22, 1944. Photos of the USS Cowpens as it crossed the equator.

Folder 2: *New York Times* (no date). Article on the crew members of the Enola Gaye.

Folder 3: *Journal American* February 18, 1944, "U.S. Knocks on Japan's Front Door—Truk"

Folder 4: *New York Times* August 7, 1946, Front page of the NY Times announcing the "First Atomic Bomb dropped on Japan"

Folder 5: *Newsday* December 7, 1950. Newspaper page remembering Pearl Harbor Ten (10) years later.

Box 7

23 ½ X 30 oil paint portrait of Charles Gover. See scrapbook II for related photograph in Box 5.

Subgroup II: Long Island Railroad Crash

Series 1: Oversized: Newspapers

Box 8:

Folder 1: Miscellaneous newspaper clippings

Folder 2: *Daily Mirror*, November 11, 1950, "Wreck Wrought Horror, Heroism"

Folder 3: *Daily News*, November 23, 1950, And November 11, 1950: "Holiday Eve Tragedy"

Folder 4: *New York Journal—American*, November 24, 1950, "Roused Public Asks Action against LIRR"

Folder 5: *New York Times*, November 24, 1950 "4-Way Investigation starts into Long Island Rail wreck toll now 77 dead, 153 injured."

Folder 6: *New York World Telegram* November 25, 1950, "Embattled LIRR Trustees Make No Move to Quit Posts"

Folder 7: *New York World Telegram*, November 24, 1950, "Action to end LIRR Carnage begun by Aroused Officials"

Folder 8: *Newsday* November 23, 1950, “78 Die in LI Wreck”

Folder 9: *Newsday* November 23, 1950, “78 Die in LI Wreck” extra edition; 2nd copy

Folder 10: *Newsday* November 24, 1950, “5 probes sift wreck blame 77 die, 334 hurt”

Box 9:

Folder 1: Home News Bellmore- 11/29/1950, “1950 a Turbulent Year”

Folder 2: *Daily Mirror* November 23, 1950; November 25, 1950, “20 Die as LIRR Trains Crash in Queens”; “Dewey Orders LI Trustees Out”

Folder 3: *Daily Mirror*, November 24, 1950, “Wreck Die 77: Inquires On’

Folder 4: *Daily News*, 11/23/1950, “50 Killed, 100 Hurt in L.I. Train Crash”

Folder 5: *Daily News*, 11/24/1950, “Mayor Returns to Probe Crash”

Folder 6: *Daily News*, 11/25/1950, “Get Out, Dewey to L.I. Trustees”.

Folder 7: *New York Post*, 11/24/1950, “Demand Seizure of LIRR” 11/26/1950, “LIRR Trustee Won’t Quit”

Folder 8: *New York Times*, 3/21/1951, “L.I. Road Pressed on Safety Measure”.

Folder 9: *New York Times*, 11/24/1950, “List of the Casualties in the Long Island Collision”.

Folder 10: *Newsday*, 11/ 1950, miscellaneous articles

Folder 11: *Newsday*, December 2, 5, & 13, 1950, miscellaneous articles on the management of the LIRR.

Folder 12: *Newsday*, 2/25/1965, “Governor would buy, Spruce up LIRR.”

Folder 13: *Newsday*, 11/29/1997, Article about the crash in 1950.

Folder 14: *The Southeaster* (Merrick, Bellmore, Wantagh), “Smucker and Delatour Resign, but Jinx Still Rides the Long Island Railroad”

Folder 15: *L.I. Press*, March 21, 1951, “Window Sues U.S. Government in Long Island RR Crash Suit.”

Folder 16: Unknown, Nov. /Dec., 1950 miscellaneous articles.

Box 10:

Folder 1: *Daily Mirror*, Nov. 24, 1950, "Wreck Wrought Horror, Heroism."

Folder 2: *Nassau Daily Review-Star*, Nov. 24, 1950, "Dewey Opens Investigation of L.I. Disaster; Death Toll 77".

Folder 3: *Long Island Daily Press*, Nov. 24, 1950, "In Memoriam Thanksgiving Day- 1950".

New York World/ Telegram and Sun, Nov. 24, 1950, "Ruins of State's Worst Wreck".

Folder 4: Unknown paper, "77 died...These Lived".

Box 11:

Folder 1: *Nassau Review-Star*, Nov. 24, 1950, "Commuters Fed Up, Demand Action by State"

Folder 2: *Newsday*, Dec. 13, 1950, "New Director Advises safety Devices for LIRR".

Folder 3: *New York world-Telegram*, Nov. 24, 1950, "Dewey, Mayor Spur Probe; Stop the Murder! Riders Cry".

Sub-Group 11: Long Island Railroad Crash

Series 2: American Flags

Box 12:

Large American flag (57" x 94") contains 48 stars. Since Charles Gover served in World War II, he may have had an American flag draped over his coffin.

Box 13:

Smaller American flag (31.5 X54) contains 48 stars. It appears that this may have been used as a display at the Gover home.

Box 1:

Folder 19: United States. House. Committee on Interstate and for. Commer. *Long Island railroad: hearing before a subcommittee, December 12, 1950, on accident near Jamaica, N.Y., on November 22, 1950*. Washington: GPO, 1951. Copy included in this Collection. Call number: Y4.In8/4:L85/4

Sub-group III: Thomas M. Owen, MD

Series 1: Medals and Diplomas

Box 2:

The medals belonging to Thomas M. Owens are from the World War I period. They are located in Box 2 and labeled 2A and 2B. There are two Victory War Medals in Box 2A. In side Box 2B there are four (4) medals. They are two Sons of the American Revolution, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, and an American Legion pin.

Box 14:

One certificate and a large framed certificate and a framed diploma. There are a (1) certificate from the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, (2) Military Order in Loyal Legion of the United States given to Surgeon Thomas M. Owens in 1891. The certificated was signed by Rutherford B. Hayes, Commander in Chief of the organization. Third, there is Owens' Medical diploma awarded from the University Of Maryland School Of Medicine in 1859. The diploma is in Latin.