

## **The life and times of Howard Athon, a pictorial account**

This is a photograph album containing photographs of Howard Lincoln Athon. He was born and grew up in Quenemo, Kansas. After graduating from high school, he joined the U S. Navy during World War I. When he returned home, he married Roberta in December 1922 and they lived in Gridley, Kansas for about a year. Howard worked in the oil fields until they closed. The Athons moved to Topeka where he went into the flying business. On July 29, 1931 Howard was involved in a flying accident. His two-seater American Eagle biplane fell from 2,000 feet and crashed in the Kansas River, and A. J. McKimmey, the passenger, died instantly and Howard was seriously injured. Howard went on to be an electrician after the accident. His work included wiring at Forbes Field, and several missile sites in northeast Kansas and Sedalia, Missouri.

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***THE LIFE AND TIMES***  
***OF HOWARD ATHON***  
***A PICTORIAL***  
***ACCOUNT***

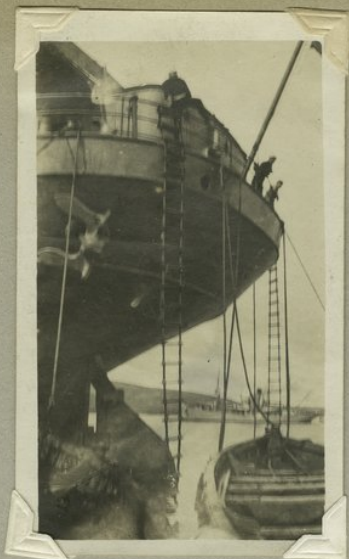
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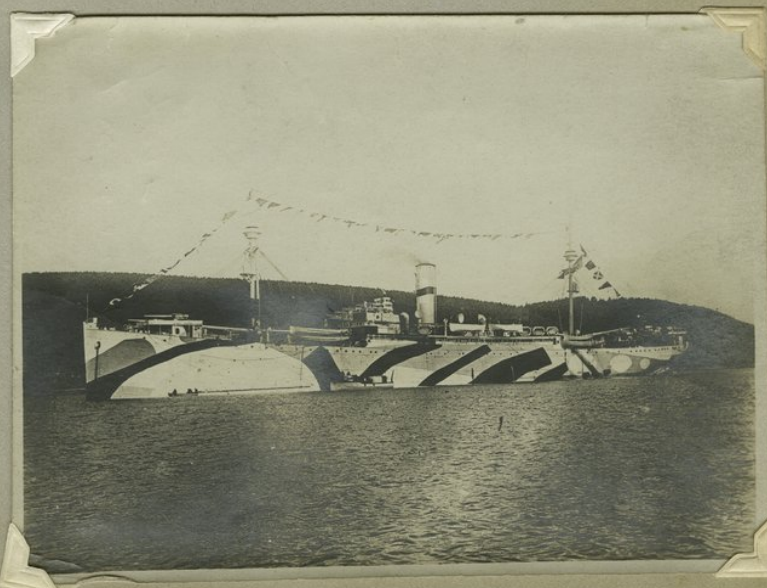
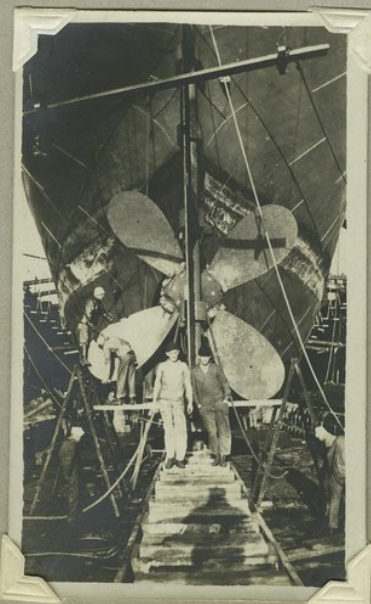
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YNDON, OSAGE COUNTY, KANSAS, THURSDAY, APRIL 24,

### GOB TELLS OF SHIP LIFE

Howard Athon Relates Some Experiences Aboard Vessel

Inverness, Scotland, Feb. 22, '19.

Dear Folks:—

Will try and answer the most important part of your letters if I have time. So you thought I would be home for Christmas. Maybe I will in 1921. No, I didn't go to Germany to do guard or France either, but could have had the job if I had only asked for it. You asked if it gets cold on the ocean. Well, it gets a little breezy sometimes and the damp cold blows right thru a person. But it is always nice and warm in the gulf stream. We had colder weather on our trip in June than we did in October.

No, I didn't feel much different after the armistice was signed. Only didn't have to stand watch and that helped a lot. Guess we were doing our bit when we worked from 8 A. M. until 4 P. M. and then stood guard we stood four hours in the day and four hours at night. But when a fellow had the 4 to 8 watch morning and night, then had to work from 8 to 4 during the day he didn't have much time to himself. Do you think I ever layed awake at night wondering if we were going to get sunk? Or worried about it during the day? That was the last of my troubles. Many times I wished the ship would sink that is when we were close to land. We were in a rather dangerous situation after the war was over. The last time we went to France, our old Sweede skipper wouldn't get a pilot, and we got lost off St. Nazaire, and ran from 12 midnight until daylight through a field of French and American mines and didn't hit one. How's that for luck?

We have good writing desks. Two dirty boxes one on top of the other and one to sit on. How's that for class? Suppose you know the navy doesn't furnish chairs or beds or any other convenience. Wouldn't know how to use a chair now. That reminds me of a little story told on a Gob who was on a furlough home. His mother asked him to use the same kind of table manners that he used aboard the ship. Some of his girl friends were there and he didn't want to, but the mother insisted so he consented. When supper was ready his mother went to the parlor and announced supper, the boy made one mad rush for the dining room, grabbed a plate and began filling it until it ran over on the table cloth. About this time his mother came in and said, "Why John! What are the rest going to do?" John answered, "To hall with the rest, I've got mine." This is typical of army life too.

Had a bunk to sleep in on the Santiago, but sleep in a hammock now. The bunks were made of a frame of 1 inch gas pipe 30 inches wide and about 6 feet long with canvas bottom. Our mattresses are two or three inches thick.

And you even worry about us getting in a storm. That's nothing, only it's hard to stay in your bunk sometimes. And some of the guys didn't stay in. A few fell out when a ship 42 degrees from straight up, she's getting on her side. We were in a storm one night off Milford Haven, England and got lost and roamed around over rocks and shoals for some time. Sighted the harbor light and sent a message to get in but the English wouldn't open the nets. When they found out it was an American ship they have no use for an American and we despise them. I was on watch the other night at Milford, and the rain and waves were coming in my face until I couldn't see, so I just rolled up in a piece of canvas and crawled down in the look out box instead of looking for lights. We celebrated Washington's birthday by having a few sports consisting of boat races, obstacle race, pie eating contest, dry cracker eating contest, rope climbing and tug of war. In the boat race, shovels were used for oars and was quite laughable. Obstacle race was up and down ladders rigging all over the ship and through a winsil (canvas tube used for ventilator.) Pie eating contest, each man had a whole pie and had his hands tied. The pies appeared to be nice juicy peach, but turned out to be made of dry prunes, raw, cotton, raw beans and peas and cord string, with a few peaches on top. The crackers were hard tack and each person was supposed to eat four, but they slipped part of them in their pockets, and one guy put his extras on an other fellow's pile while he wasn't looking.

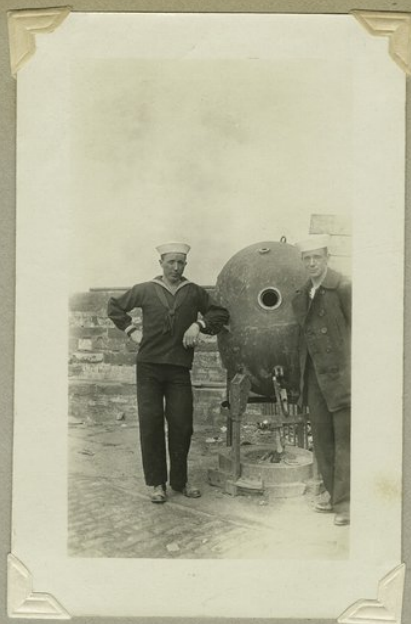
I got liberty every night in Belfast from 5 P. M. to 7 A. M., but didn't see the Belfast castle. But was in the Bluebeard's castle in Nantes. That is quite a place. Didn't have time to go into all the rooms but was down in the dungeon. That was the darkest place I ever saw. The castle was once surrounded by a ditch, filled with water, with draw bridges over it, and part of the bridges are still there. The dungeons are about filled with dirt. The guide told us that when anyone was killed, they were thrown down there and a little dirt carried in and spread over them. This continued until the whole place was filled and there is no way for the dirt to get in.

I was made captain of the hold which pays five bucks a month extra, but was transferred before the month was up. Was recommended for a coxswain rating while on the Santiago, but the skipper didn't like any of the deck force, so would not rate any of them higher than seaman. Never saw any of the German ships, but saw two of their surrendered subs. Was inside of one of them. Thought for a while I was going to be with the bunch that are going to Germany to take the Emperor, the largest ship in the world. Will close for this time.

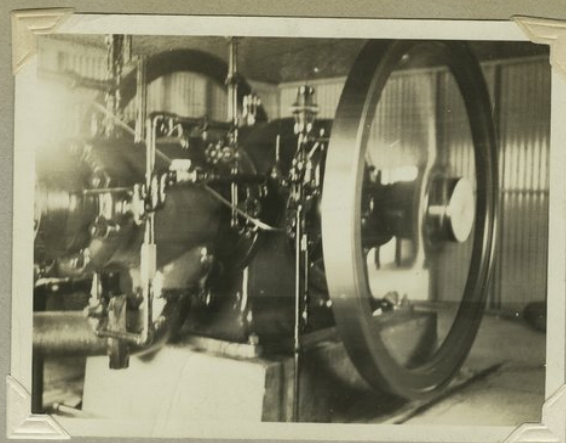
With Love,

Howard Athon.

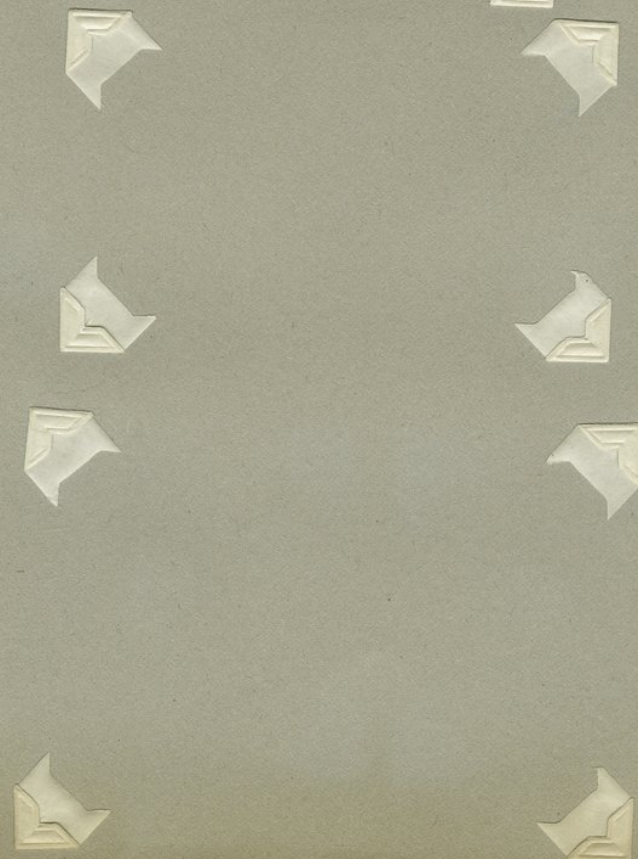
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GOOD FOR  
ONE AIRPLANE RIDE  
WITH  
ATHON BROS.



TOPEKA CAPITAL JULY 30 1931

## ONE IS KILLED, ONE BADLY HURT IN PLANE CRASH

**A. J. McKimney Dies Instantly and Howard Athon Seriously Injured as Ship Falls in River.**

**HAD BEEN PRACTICING STUNTS**

**Injured Man Was Preparing To Take Examination for License—Neither Wore Parachutes on Flight.**

Arthur J. McKimney, 38, 530 Emmett street, was killed, and Howard Athon, 704 Kenova Road, was seriously injured when Athon's two-seater American Eagle biplane fell from 2,000 feet and landed in the Kaw river about 7 o'clock last night.

According to Walter Henry, Topeka airport field manager, the two men had gone up so that Athon could practice stunts. Athon was to take his pilot's examination here August 6. Neither wore parachutes, altho Henry says that parachutes had been ordered for them and would have been here this afternoon.

### Hits On Sand Bar.

In its descent, the plane hit the span of telephone wires over the river and was thrown to within about 50 feet of the west bank, where the plane landed partially on a sandbar.

Henry and several other men who had witnessed the fall from the airport hangar, were the first to arrive at the scene of the accident, and succeeded in bringing both men to the river bank. McKimney had a deep gash across his forehead, and Dr. H. L. Clark, county coroner, pronounced death as being instantaneous.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Pugh, whose home is at the airport, were in a nearby field and witnessed the fall. Pugh said that the ship was about 2,000 feet in the air and had just completed a series of spins and wing-overs when the plane fell at about a 45-degree angle. They did not witness the actual crash as trees obstructed their view.

### Breaks Telephone Pole.

The plane hit the telephone wires with such force that the telephone pole on the east bank of the river was broken off.

C. D. Brooyette, of 1436 Polk street, also was an eye witness to the tragedy.

He substantiated the story told by Pugh and Henry, saying that the plane evidently was well in control until it took its final plunge. Brooyette describes the plunge as being like that of an army plane striking at an enemy ship—almost straight down without a swerve.

McKimney had flown planes since shortly after the war. He had owned several planes, and had reconstructed a plane at his motor company shop during the past winter. He was a World war veteran.

### Athon's Badly Hurt.

McKimney was owner of the McKimney Motor Co., and was widely known among Topeka aviation enthusiasts and motor car dealers.

Athon, who was badly bruised and cut, was taken to Stormont hospital in Penwell's ambulance. McKimney's body was not moved until after Dr. Clark had made his examination, and then was brought to the Peabody funeral home.

Athon, who is 30 years old, is married and has two children. He is an employe at state printing plant. He is considered by his associates to be an able, experienced pilot.

A department of commerce inspector will be in Topeka today to examine the wreckage and to determine the cause of the wreck.

McKimney is survived by his wife, Mrs. Mary McKimney; his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Mont McKimney of Tecumseh; four children, all of Topeka; a brother, Frank McKimney of Topeka; a sister, Mrs. Verne Casbier, Topeka.

He was a member of lodge No. 17, A. F. and A. M., a member of Scottish Rite bodies, and of Abigail Shrine.

Funeral arrangements have not been completed.

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Topeka Daily Capital  
July 30, 1931

One is Killed, One Badly Hurt in Plane Crash

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### 'Prairie fire' losing momentum

Topeka State Journal  
Friday, Sept. 3, 1970 9

Trouble Cleaning Shag Carpet?  
Call 266-5364 for a  
free home demonstration  
of the all New  
Kirby Classic III System

By MARY BETH MARKLEY  
... Staff writer

The "magnificent prairie fire" is no longer scorching the prairie.

A proponent in 1874 likened the Women's Christian Temperance Union to a "magnificent prairie fire" for its fervor in the war with Demon Rum and other moral outrages against clean living.

But along with the general crusade against beverage alcohol which brought the hatchet-swinging, saloon-smashing Carry Nation into Kansas, the WCTU fire has been cooled by reason of the advancing age of its membership and the lack of an effective recruiting program.

Members point to different reasons for lack of younger blood in the organization: a general lack of interest from younger people in service organizations; the demands of job and family on the time and energy of working mothers, and the lure of recreation which competes for leisure time.

The changing tactics of the WCTU itself have changed its image from a militant to a sedate educational force, even though the goal of promoting "clean living" remains unchanged.

Members once gathered and marched into the saloons and petitioned bartenders to stop selling liquor. Then they would pray and sing.

Today the WCTU warfare is waged with the weapons of lectures, filmstrips and pamphlets. The WCTU also works with other organizations which discourage the use of alcohol and other drugs. The WCTU continues to petition, but it directs its petitions now to the politician, rather than to the bartender.

The Kansas WCTU was organized by Mrs. M. B. Smith of Lawrence, who served as state president from 1878 to 1879. Little is now known about the first few years of the Kansas chapters.

Today three Topeka Unions — Highland Park, Anna Gordon and East Topeka-Oakland — and one Holton union make up District VIII of the Kansas WCTU. The district now has less than 100 members.

State membership totals about 2,000, including youth members.

In the early years, between 1881 and 1884, membership in Shawnee County alone grew from 40 to more than 500. Many of these were young children.

There were eight registered unions in Shawnee County from 1917 to 1924. Another was added in 1927. In 1935 the



ROBERTA ATHON  
... heads Highland Park Union

county had 300 WCTU members.

Most members who talk about declining membership blame the lack of successful recruiting. They give various reasons for the lack of recruiting success.

"The young people are just not so eager to get involved, says Mrs. James Hatfield of Clay Center, president of the Kansas WCTU.

Mrs. Howard Athon, president of Highland Park Union, says young women just don't have the time. Most young women today are not only wives and mothers, but also are working women.

A woman who is required to work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., then come home and cook and keep house for her family is just too exhausted to attend meetings, she says.

Despite these problems, women are just as attuned to problems with alcoholism, they are just having to fight it individually, rather than collectively, Mrs. Athon says.

The prospect of continuing membership losses in lieu of recruitment discourages some members.

Mrs. Bruce Hoffman of Kingman,

president of District IV, one of the few members in their 30s, felt the WCTU has not tried hard enough to keep current members interested.

If the unions would plan activities that are more attractive to younger women, they would join, she says.

Mrs. Glenn Karns of Pratt, state recording secretary, says younger women aren't joining because as working women they are more likely to seek recreational activities than service work after their working day.

"When Friday comes, we want to go to the beach or the bowling alley or to the golf course," she says. "But I realize that if we don't get a resurgence of interest in these things, the organizations are going to wither and die."

None of the officers and members interviewed blamed changing social mores and attitudes for decreased interest in the WCTU.

WCTU membership continues strongest in the smaller Kansas communities, Mrs. Athon says. Women in the larger cities probably face more political resistance. Many of the young women who would like to become involved might just assume it is not worth trying.

Officers say the political resistance has been felt in the work in schools. Once teachers sought WCTU members for lectures against problems with alcohol and drugs. They do so less readily now.

The only way to get the WCTU work done now is through proper channels, Mrs. Athon says.

"You can't go to just anyone and say anything, you've got to go to the authorities."

One group with which the WCTU works is the Kansas United Dry Forces. The Rev. Richard Taylor, executive director of the Dry Forces, says he is not concerned about the WCTU's drop in membership.

"I know the WCTU is getting discouraged because there are no young members, but I think people are just getting tired of going to meetings. I tell them to write letters and pray."

Although the Rev. Taylor sees a necessity for such organizations, he believes the real strength is in individuals.

"Individuals in Kansas are tremendously concerned," he says.

"The only reason the WCTU or we have any victories at all is because we're stating the truth."

Mrs. Athon says she has friends who smoke and drink. She respects their right to do so and does not pretend to be more righteous than they.

The Kansas WCTU has been involved in projects other than fighting alcohol and other drugs.

At one time, the Kansas unions were responsible for originating a Cookie Jar. They filled an eight-gallon jar in the chaplain's tent at Ft. Leavenworth with cookies in 1924 because homemade cookies carry a motherly message of "love and concern."

During the Vietnam War, the national WCTU, along with the Youth Temperance Council, raised thousands of dollars to buy cold soft drinks to be dispensed by the USO.

In the early days of the WCTU, state unions established "schools for wayward girls." Kansas unions built one of these in Beloit in 1888.

One year later the state legislature took charge of the school under the title "The Kansas Girls' Industrial School."

The WCTU pushed the spread of coffee houses and reading rooms as local projects.

The Kansas WCTU operated the Carry A. Nation Home in Kansas City, Kan., for elderly women for 40 years.

Although the WCTU today is responsible for upkeep of a Medicine Lodge home honoring Carry Nation, Carry Nation was neither a member of the WCTU nor truly representative of that organization's activities. The WCTU acted in a quieter manner, Mrs. Karns says.

"The WCTU's plan was to pray in the saloons — they didn't go to break," Mrs. Athon says.

As violent as Carry's actions were, however, some WCTU members might admit secretly rooting for her.

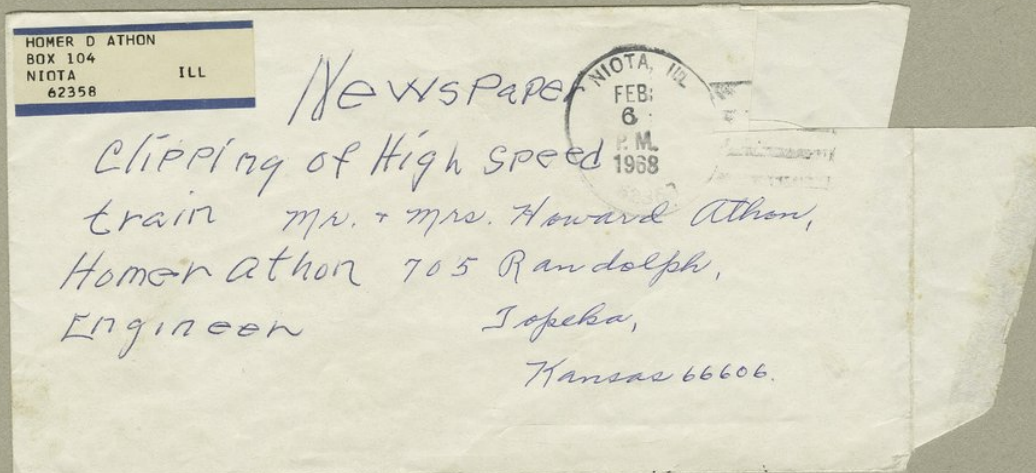
"I think she was an encouragement for women to stand on their feet, and I admire her for it," Mrs. Athon says. "If somebody was selling liquor to my

husband and he was already dead drunk, I'd go in and knock their heads off. And it's not because I'm violent, I just love my husband."

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### New Train Zips In, Out of City

What has been described by the Santa Fe as the world's fastest freight train zipped in and out of Fort Madison and Shopton late Wednesday afternoon on its inaugural run to Los Angeles.

Santa Fe's new "Super C" designed to make the run between Chicago and Los Angeles in 40 hours, stopped at Shopton at 5:24 for a crew change and left one minute later.

#### Crew Members

At the controls as the train pulled into Shopton was Engineer H. D. Athon of Fort Madison. The Fireman was A. T. Dohman, also of Fort Madison.

Other members of the crew were Conductor G. Dickinson and Brakemen H. Bussell and L. Brackett, all of Chillicothe.

The out-going crew was composed of Engineer J. W. Zemlicka of Fort Madison, Conduc-

tor Frank Green of Marceline and Brakemen Francis Rippenkroeger and R. C. Hanson, both of Fort Madison.

The Santa Fe announced plans for the new freight service last fall.

The "Super C" will be a daily service, except Sunday, between Chicago and Los Angeles.

Units in the inaugural run were two new 3,600-horsepower diesel locomotives, seven "piggy-back" cars, a Pullman, a test car and the way car.

#### Officials Aboard

Aboard the train were Santa Fe President John Reed, Vice President of Operations R. D. Shelton and Vice President of Traffic T. M. Calazza.

The train left Chicago at 2 p.m. Wednesday. It is scheduled to arrive in Los Angeles at 4 a.m. Friday. The 40-hour trip cuts about 20 hours from

the fastest existing freight schedules, it was reported.

Santa Fe officials said the train may arrive in Los Angeles sooner if operating conditions permit.

"The 'Super C' enables us to compete aggressively for high-rated traffic now moving via highway or air," Reed said. "If this concept of high-speed, premium-rated service proves successful, we will give consideration to expanding it to other points."

The "Super C", Reed said will provide second morning delivery, compared to the average rail service of fourth morning delivery.

The train is carrying a variety of products, including food, auto parts, electrical and communications equipment, radio and television receivers and general merchandise.

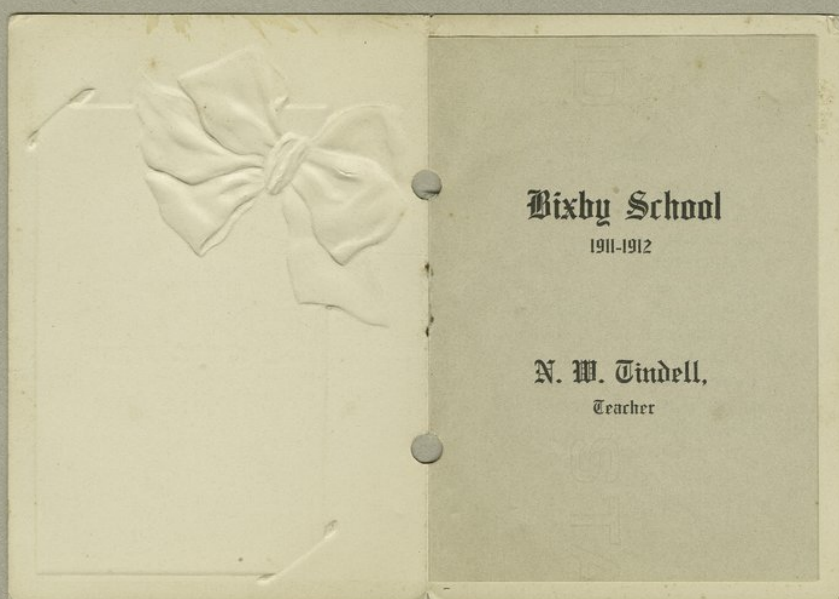
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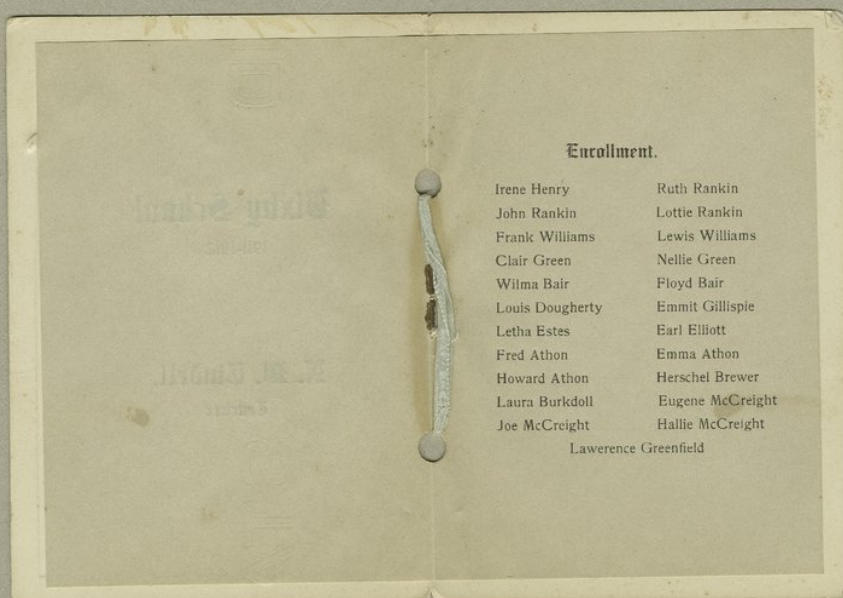
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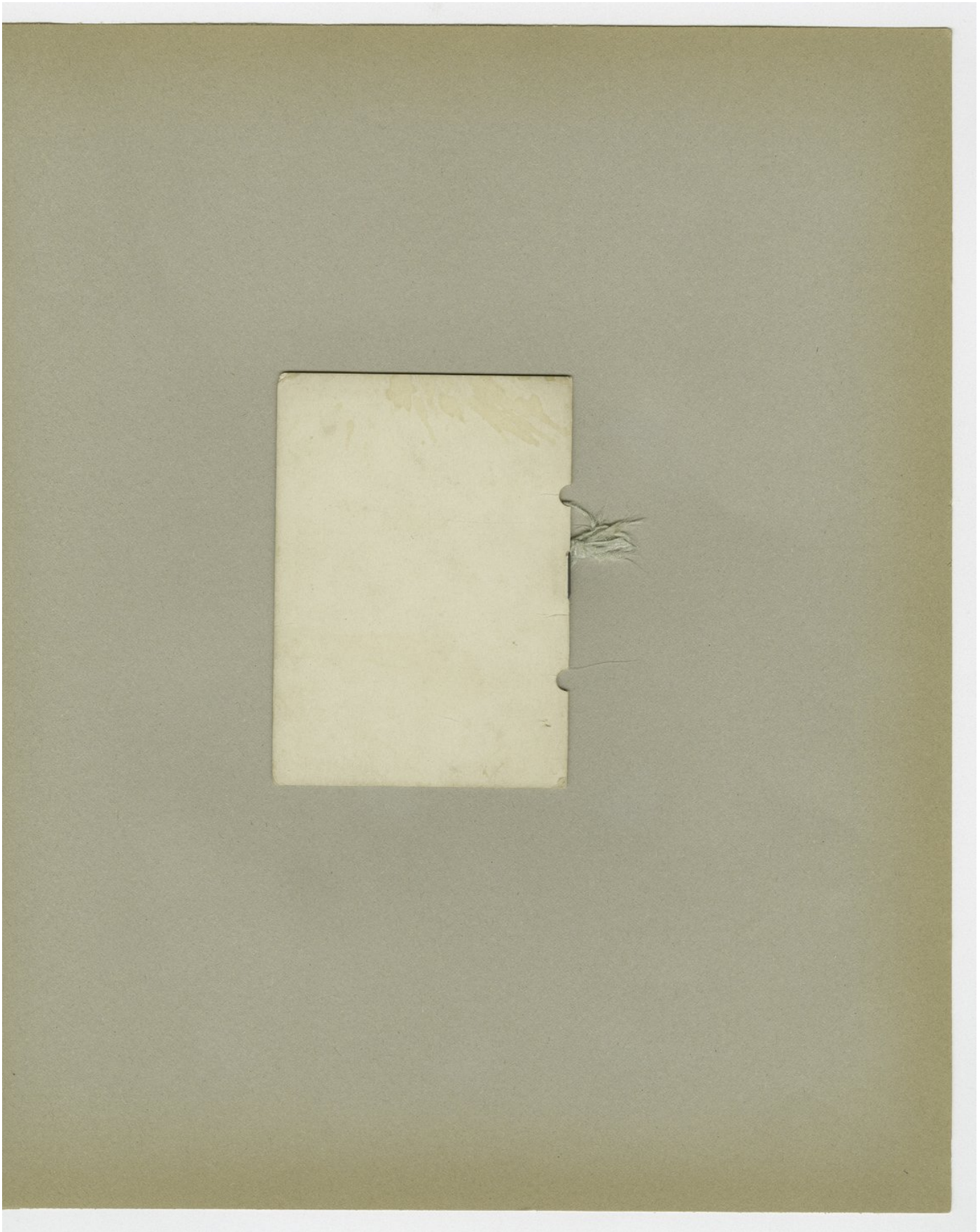
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