

**Military Collection**  
**State Archives of North Carolina**

**Edgar N. Linker Papers (WWI 70)**  
[World War I]

**Collection Number:** WWI 70

**Title:** Edgar N. Linker Papers

**Dates:** August 1917 to March 1919

**Creator:** Edgar N. Linker

**Abstract**

The Edgar N. Linker Papers is composed of correspondence, a menu, and brief service sketches, documenting the World War I U.S. Navy service of Edgar N. Linker of Iredell County, North Carolina. Linker served in the Navy from June 1917 to April 1919. Linker was stationed at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Newport, R.I.; U.S. Naval Training Camp in Portsmouth, N.H.; and aboard the *USS Des Moines*. The majority of Linker's service was aboard the Navy cruiser *USS Des Moines (C-15)*. The bulk of the collection is composed of letters written by Edgar Linker to his parents and siblings back home in North Carolina, particularly to his parents in the Mooresville area of Iredell County. Many of his letters were written while the *Des Moines* was in port at various locations around the Atlantic, including in New York City; Charleston, South Carolina; and Newport News, Virginia. Some letters discuss Linker and his family's experiences around the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918.

The collection also contains an original *USS Des Moines*' 1918 Thanksgiving Day menu. Other interesting items include two short biographical sketches that document the military service of Edgar N. Linker, one which was handwritten by Linker himself after the war.

**Physical Description:** 0.4 linear feet

**Language(s):** English

**Repository**

State Archives of North Carolina, 4614 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4614

**Restrictions on Access:** There are no restrictions of accessing this collection.

**Restrictions on Use:** There are no restrictions of using this collection.

## **Preferred Citation**

[Item name or title], [Box Number], [Folder Numbers], Edgar N. Linker Papers, WWI 70, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

## **Acquisition**

The collection was donated to the Military Collection at the State Archives of North Carolina from George E. McCormack Jr. of Midlothian, Virginia, grandson of Edgar Linker, in March 2017.

## **Processing Information**

This collection did not have an original order when it was received by the State Archives from the donor. The letters were folded, and many were stored in their original envelopes. A number of letters were undated, or are individual pages of letters for which the other sheets are missing. The collection is arranged by the format of the materials, then chronologically within the archival folders.

Correspondence is arranged within folders chronologically based on the dates written on the letters or from a circa date taken from the letters' envelopes. Letters for which only month and year could be determined were added within a folder at the end of that month's set of dated letters. All envelopes were discarded after any necessary information was added in pencil to the letters. Envelopes with unique information or dates were photocopied and attached to each letter, using an acid-free plastic clip.

**Processed by:** Jacob T. Parks; Matthew M. Peek, May-June 2017.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged by format, then chronologically within folders.

## **Biographical Note**

Edgar Neel Linker was born in Iredell County, North Carolina on June 27, 1897, to Wade Hampton and Margret Jane (who went by "Jennie") Linker. Wade Linker was a farmer. Linker was the oldest of seven children, which included Mary Elizabeth, James, Charles, Hazel, Robert, and Ray.

Edgar Linker enlisted in the U.S. Navy on June 23, 1917, in Raleigh, N.C., at the U.S. Naval Recruiting Station there. He would attend training at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Newport, Rhode Island, from June 1917 until September 13, 1917. While in Newport, Linker served in the Fourth Regiment; while there, he received a promotion from Apprentice Seaman to Seaman Second Class. After his training in Newport, he was transferred for additional training to the U.S. Naval Training Camp in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he was stationed from around September 14 to October 17, 1917.

After his training, Edgar Linker reached the rank of Fireman Third Class, and was assigned for duty aboard the *USS Des Moines* (C-15), a protected cruiser of the Denver class. The *Des Moines* would have protected troop transport ships from Germany U-boats and mine fields while in convoys between the United States and Europe. According to letters from Linker, the Cruiser also helped transport troops to and from Europe. Linker served aboard the *Des Moines* from October 1917 to April 2, 1919. During this period, he would reach the ranks of Fireman Second Class and Fireman First Class, respectively. Linker remained with the rank of Fireman First Class until his discharge. It appears that, with the Armistice in November 1918, that Linker and the *Des Moines* were stationed in New York City until his formal discharge from active Navy service on April 2, 1919. Linker returned home to his family on April 3, 1919.

After the war, Edgar Linker returned home to live with his family in the Mooresville area of Iredell County, N.C., and worked as a clerk for a wholesale store by 1920. Linker married Grace A. Evans on November 28, 1922, in Iredell County. By 1940, the Linker family had moved to Davidson, N.C., where Edgar was working as a policeman at Davidson College. Linker and his family stayed in Davidson through the 1980s. Edgar N. Linker died in July 1984.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection is composed of correspondence, a menu, and brief service sketches, documenting the World War I U.S. Navy service of Edgar N. Linker of Iredell County, North Carolina. The letters in the collection were written by Edgar Linker to his parents and siblings back home in North Carolina. Many of the letters were addressed to his mother Jennie Linker, but often had the opening heading for his whole family in which he referred to them as “homefolks.” This was a common greeting from WWI service personnel, when they relied on one family member to spread the information in the letters to the rest of the family.

The correspondence contains information on his time while stationed for Navy training at the U.S. Navy’s Newport Naval Training Station in Rhode Island, where he trained in the summer of 1917 (**see Box 1, Folders 1-2**). In a letter to his father dated August 9, 1917, Linker referenced a speech given by James W. Gerard, the former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, who was speaking to the sailors (**see Box 1 Folder 1**). Additional correspondence reflects Linker’s training at the U.S. Navy’s Portsmouth Naval Training Camp in New Hampshire during the fall of 1917 (**see Box 1, Folders 2-3**).

The bulk of the collection is composed of Linker’s correspondence while he was serving aboard the Navy cruiser *USS Des Moines* from October 1917 to March 1919. Many of his letters were written while the *Des Moines* was in port at various locations around the Atlantic. The ports from which Linker wrote while on the *Des Moines* were regular stops on the cruiser’s route to Europe, including New York City; Charleston, South Carolina; and Newport News, Virginia. Some letters of interest concern the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918 (**see Box 1 Folders 12**). Linker also writes about his mailing the *Des Moines*’ 1918 Thanksgiving Day menu home for the family to see what they were eating (**see Box 1, Folder 12 for the letter; see Box 1, Folder 17 for the original menu**).

The collection also contains two short descriptions of Linker's Navy service, which list dates he returned home and mention his assignments during the war. One of the lists is believed to have been made by Linker's mother, and contains some slightly inaccurate dates. The other short service sketch—a 1 ½-page sketch written by Edgar Linker after the war—provides very basic service information from Linker's perspective (see **Box 1, Folder 18**).

## **Subject Terms**

### **Persons/Families**

Linker, Edgar N. (Edgar Neel), 1897-1984

### **Places**

Iredell County (N.C.)  
Mooreville (N.C.)  
Naval Station Newport (R.I.)  
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (U.S.)  
Newport (R.I.)  
Portsmouth (N.H.)

### **Subject—Topical**

Des Moines (Cruiser : C-15)  
World War, 1914-1918--North Carolina  
World War, 1914-1918--United States

### **Material Types**

Correspondence

## Collection Inventory

<b>Box/Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
1/1	Correspondence	August 1917
1/2	Correspondence	September 1917
1/3	Correspondence	October 1917
1/4	Correspondence	November- December 1917
1/5	Correspondence	January-February 1918
1/6	Correspondence	March 1918
1/7	Correspondence	April 1918
1/8	Correspondence	May-July 1918
1/9	Correspondence	August 1918
1/10	Correspondence	September 1918
1/11	Correspondence	October-November 1918
1/12	Correspondence	December 1918
1/13	Correspondence	January-February 1919
1/14	Correspondence	March 1919
1/15	<i>U.S.S. Des Moines Letters</i>	Undated
1/16	Miscellaneous Correspondence	Undated
1/17	<i>U.S.S. Des Moines</i> Thanksgiving Day Menu	November 1918
1/18	Brief Service Sketches	Undated