



Office of Historic Alexandria  
City of Alexandria, Virginia

# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Briggs Aeroplane

*Alexandria Times*, September 10, 2009

Image: Briggs Aeroplane factory, 1918. Photo, Library of Congress.



Alexandria's maritime and railroad histories are extensive, but the city's past also holds some interesting aviation history. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several companies were attempting to build airplanes for the military, and in October of 1917, the Briggs Aeroplane Company announced it would begin production of airplanes and seaplanes in Alexandria.

Formerly known as Kendrick Aeroplane, Briggs established its factory at St. Asaph and Pendleton streets, where the Portner Brewery once operated. Briggs, named for its general manager A.W. Briggs, a former British Royal Flying Corps aviator, was to build aircraft for the U.S. Navy, including hydroplanes



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that would be tested along the Potomac River. The company constructed a hangar at Jones Point and employed about thirty workers at the factory seen in the 1918 photograph.

On March 13, 1918, the first completed plane emerged from the factory and was moved down the streets to the hangar in anticipation of test flights. Over the next few weeks, Leonard Bonney, an Ohio native who had flown under Orville Wright, completed several test flights and on April 13, Bonney flew the plane to Newport News for delivery to the Navy.

Less than a month later, Briggs resigned from the company, which changed its name to the Alexandria Aircraft Corporation. That summer, the Navy reported that the plane Bonney had delivered did not handle as well as a similar model and had other problems that needed to be addressed. In a letter, the Navy notified Alexandria Aircraft that it did not “look with favor upon further development of your company,” and less than a year after its first plane was completed, the company ceased operation.

*“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*